



# Parent Handbook

Fredericksburg Soccer Club Incorporated  
[www.fredericksburgsoccer.org](http://www.fredericksburgsoccer.org)  
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## **Section 1.1 - Our Philosophy**

Our philosophy centers on player development. Player development is a paradigm that focuses on developing each individual player to their full potential instead of focusing on team accolades. This paradigm promotes the development of creative, skillful, and intrinsically motivated players. This approach provides a player the best opportunity to reach their goals whether it's earning more playing time, making the high school team, college team, etc.

Winning is important but development is more important. We want our players to not fear failure by taking risks and making mistakes in order to improve. We want our players to strive for excellence and focus on task mastery. This approach may result in less wins but the players turn out more skillful in the long run compared to players in a win-first environment. We impress upon our players the following philosophy.

1. Play the game the right way
2. Individual merit is rewarded
3. Exhibit good sportsmanship
4. Play to win but never at the expense of the first 3 items

At the youth level, the measurement of success is the improvement of players over time. Yes, winning games is great. We want our players to have a competitive attitude and strong desire to win. However, winning in itself does not measure player improvement or if a coach is doing a good job. If a team wins most of their games but the players don't improve, then the season is a disaster. This situation happens quite a bit in youth soccer.

## **Section 1.2 – Implementation of our Philosophy**

In order to implement our philosophy, it is critically important to understand that our program operates under the following paradigm:

- A player is a member of the club and not a specific team.
- Improvement and learning are more important than being on a specific team
- Merit determines playing time and player placement
- Everyone is expected to embrace challenges and adversity
- A player will receive coaching from more than 1 coach on a regular basis

We operate under this paradigm to provide players an opportunity to be successful. In order for players to grow, players must be able to conquer adversity. If things are easy, the player will not grow.

The final decision on all soccer issues resides with the coaching staff, Technical Director, and Executive Director. These decisions include but are not limited to game day decisions, playing time, roster selection, coach selection, league selection, tournament selection, season schedule, etc. All decisions must have technical justification. If there is no technical justification, the decision does not occur.

### **Section 1.3 – Structure**

The club's objective is to field two teams in each age group that operate under a different "level". Each level is designated as "orange" or "white". The "orange level" team has the most competitive and demanding environment. The "white level" team has the 2nd most competitive and demanding environment. This setup allows players to play in an environment that is appropriate for them.

### **Section 1.4 – The Coaches**

The Club's Technical Director selects the coaches for each age group. The players will experience working with more than one coach during the course of a season. It is important that the players are not in a paradigm where they see the same coach the entire season.

The technical director places a coach where they are most effective at teaching. Some coaches will only coach certain age groups. Other coaches will remain with their age group year (example 96-97 age group) as the player pool increments into the next age group (example U15s move onto U16s).

Coaches are employees of FSCI. Coaches work for the club as a whole and not strictly for individual teams. FSCI reserves the right to change the coach of a team or age group at any point in time.

### **Section 1.4 – Tryout Event**

The club holds tryout events towards the end of each season. The tryout event is merely a door that allows a prospective player possible entry into our travel program. Although existing players do not "try out" again at the "tryout event", existing players must participate in the tryout events. Existing players work with the prospective players that are trying out.

### **Section 1.5 - Player Placement and Selection**

Players are selected and placed on the rosters of specific teams. The selection criteria is based on asking the following question. If a player is placed on a specific roster, will that player have the best opportunity to get playing time? If the answer is no, then the player will not be placed on that specific team roster.

On the basis of merit, a coach can move a player from between different levels or age groups at any point during a player's tenure in the club. In other words, a player's placement can change within a year, month, or the very next day after joining the program. FSCI reserves the right to combine age groups for a game or event on a temporary or permanent basis.

Team rosters are dynamic and fluid. In other words, rosters can change at any point during the season because the needs of player development outweigh the needs of the team. Teams in our program are never "an island unto themselves" because our teams are centrally managed by a individual functioning in the role of Technical Director.

A player's placement will only be based on the needs of player development and merit. Placement will NEVER be based on the following criteria:

- to benefit individual teams
- popularity
- "My friends are playing on a certain team".
- Parents want a player to play on a certain team

## **Section 1.7 – Player Evaluations and Removal**

The coaches constantly evaluate players at practices and games. The evaluations are not performed at the tryout events the club holds periodically for prospective players. In a sense, every day is a tryout because coaches are constantly evaluating a player over their body of work.

Every year, a player will be notified whether or not they are in "lock status". "Lock status" means that a player does not need to tryout and can register in the program for the following soccer year. Players that are not in "lock status" will have to tryout again at the tryout events the club holds. A player can be removed from the program at any time if there is a commitment, discipline, effort, or performance issue.

## **Section 1.8 - Additional Opportunities to Play**

Players have the opportunity to regularly play or practice with other age groups or levels on the basis of merit and with the recommendation from the coaching staff. A player can benefit from this approach as follows.

- Experience playing with different players or with players outside of their immediate social circle.
- The experience can provide additional incentive for players to perform well with their own team.
- Experience a different set of challenges. These challenges provide important lessons on how to learn from more experienced players, how to play at a faster pace, etc.

## **Section 1.9 - Playing up in an Older Age Group**

Under certain circumstances, a player can benefit from being placed on the permanent roster of a team in an older age group. The circumstances that a player will be allowed to age-waiver onto a team in an older age group are as follows:

- It is in the best interest of the player's development.
- The player has the ability to compete well in the older age group.
- Player will receive significant playing time in the older age group.
- The player has a good grasp of the fundamentals in his current age group.



## **Section 2.1 - Roles of Team Managers and Coaches**

Each age group has a Team Manager that helps with administrative items. Team Managers are volunteers appointed each season by the coach and approved by the Executive Director. The Team Manager is the point of contact for the following items:

- Player Registration
- Ordering uniforms
- Weekly schedule reminders
- Collecting forms such as medical releases, PPAs, etc.
- Coordinating other administrative logistics

Coaches are responsible for the “teaching”, technical soccer decisions, and some of the administrative items. The coach is the point of contact for the following items:

- Talking to parents on any issues covered in the “Club Rules” document such as playing time, commitment, conduct, etc.
- Everything else

Team managers are not a sounding board for complaints. If there is an issue, please resolve the matter with the coach of your child’s age group. The coach has final say for all matters pertaining to their specific age group. The Executive Director or Technical Director will NOT overrule a coaching decision or discuss playing time issues. The club rules are very clear on these topics.

## **Section 2.2 - Registration**

Each player must be properly registered in the club. The player registration checklist contains the registration requirements. The registration checklist is located in the handouts page within the travel program section of our website. Below are some highlights on registration requirements:

- Each player in the travel program must have a “player pass” and a medical release form on file for the current “soccer year”. The “soccer year” is the period of time from August 1 of the current year to July 31 of the following year.
- Each player in the travel program must have a Player and Parent Agreement form on file for the current season.

## **Section 2.3 - Payment**

The Age Group plan document lists the payment deadlines. Payment must be made online thru our registration system. There are no refunds on any money submitted to the club.

It is important to make payment by the assigned deadlines. If a player misses a payment deadline, the player shall not participate until the payment for that deadline has been submitted. This applies regardless of whether any previous payments have been made. Financial assistance is available for qualified players. See the executive director for details.

## **Section 2.4 - Uniforms, Club Gear, and Merchandise**

Each player must purchase the required uniform items. This includes the practice shirt and the keeper jersey if applicable. Please do not make alterations to any uniform items such as names on the back of a jersey, extra embroidery, etc. It's tacky when players do not abide by the club standard. If alterations are made, players may need to purchase a replacement item.

There are no refunds or exchanges on any uniforms, merchandise items, or club gear items. These items are customized and the vendor does not accept returns. Please try on all uniforms, merchandise items, and club gear items prior to purchasing. Ask your team manager to try on items.

Players must receive approval from the club regarding their uniform number. If you order a uniform with the wrong uniform number or wrong size, you will need to order another uniform at your expense.

Information on how to purchase uniforms, club gear items, and ordering policies are available on our website's uniform and club gear webpage. If you have any questions, please see your team manager.

## **Section 2.5 - Club Logo**

The club logo or any of its intellectual property is not to be used for merchandising or other purposes without the express written consent from the Executive Director. Using the logo for an individual team website or on a personal website is permitted. All other usages are strictly prohibited.

## **Section 2.6 - Schedule**

The club operates with three core seasons each year – a fall season, winter season, and spring season. The fall season typically starts in August and ends in November or December. The spring season starts in March and ends in June. The winter season starts in early January and ends in late February. There are offseason events held in the summer. Those events are purposely light in duration and intensity to prevent burnout.

The official calendar of all events will be posted on the age group's webpage. Please reference the calendar frequently.

The club cannot provide an exact game schedule for the league or tournaments prior to the first practice. The club has no control over the game schedule because the league and tournaments themselves generate the schedule. The club can provide the tournament weekends and give a rough idea on the potential dates for league games.

- The league schedule is typically released a couple of weeks prior to the first game. In the fall, the league starts around early September. In the spring, the league starts in late March or early April
- Tournaments usually release their game schedule 1-2 weeks prior to the date of the tournament event.
- Games can be played at any time on Saturday or any time on Sunday.

## **Section 2.7 - Cancellations**

Practices or games maybe cancelled due to inclement weather or unforeseen circumstances. This information will be posted on the club's social media pages.

With regards to potential inclement weather, we do not make cancellations based on weather forecasts or by a certain time. For example, we have to actually see that a storm exists or see via radar that a storm arriving at our location is inevitable. We have run into situations where there is a 100% chance of storms and nothing happens. Assume practices or games are ON unless stated otherwise thru social media.

Players will cease participation in outdoor events when there is thunder. If thunder can be heard, lightning is present. No player will be forced to play during thunder or feel pressured to do so.

## **Section 2.8 - Role of Parents**

The club encourages parents to support their child's interest in the game in a manner that supports the spirit of youth sports and fair play. It is important to remember that this is a game for the kids to enjoy and experience. Parents should not be emotionally wrapped up in the game. To ensure that the kids are having a positive experience and get the most out of the program, please note the following items:

### **1. Communication**

- Parents must not "coach from the sidelines" during games and practices. This kills the enjoyment for the players.
- Refrain from criticizing your child's performance. The coach will offer constructive criticism in support of your child's development.
- On transporting your child home, please be supportive and always place the primary focus on the positive aspects of their game.
- Do not criticize your child's coach to your child or other parents. If you are not happy with the coach you should raise the issue with the coach.
- Do not criticize the players, their opponents, their parents, or the referee.

- Finally, remember that this is just a game. It's not life or death. There are far more important things in life than getting angry at a bad referee call or the outcome of a game.

## 2. Responsibility

- Develop a responsibility in children to bring their own uniform, equipment, and water bottle. Please don't carry these items to the field for them.
- When age appropriate, encourage your child to communicate issues with the coach. If your child is having difficulties or needs to miss a team event, encourage your child to speak directly to the coaches. It builds character.
- Encourage your child to take responsibility for their performance and to not place blame on others.
- Allow your child the freedom to play with their team without your active presence and evaluation. If you must stay at the field, please find something else to do. This "responsibility taking" is a significant part of maturing and allowing your child to claim ownership of all aspects of the game.

## 3. Good Habits

- Monitor eating and sleeping habits. Be sure that your child is eating the proper foods and going to sleep at a reasonable hour.
- Help your child to focus on the performance and not the result.
- Ask your child to focus on their skills and what they learned at practice



## **Section 3.1 – A Word about Practice**

The heart of what we do centers on practice. Practice is the most important event during the week because it's the only place where learning and improvement occur. It's the only time when the coach has the most influence. Learning and improvement does not occur on game day. Unlike other sports such as basketball or football, coaches have limited influence on game day because there are no timeouts, set plays, etc. Soccer is a player's game, not a coach's game.

## **Section 3.2 - Tournaments**

Most tournaments are weekend long events. At least 3-4 matches are played during a 48-72 hour time period. The length of each match is close to a full duration match. Granted, tournaments can be fun for the players because of the number of matches played and the camaraderie of being together with teammates. However, tournaments that are formatted in this manner are not conducive to player development. Therefore, the club minimizes the participation in tournaments that schedule multiple games in a short time period with matches that are close to full duration.

Soccer is a physically demanding game. In order to perform at a top-level, players need adequate rest and recovery time before games. Tournaments that schedule multiple games in a short time period do not provide adequate rest and recovery time for the players. It's physically impossible for players to play at a top level when playing 3-4 games of almost full duration within 48 hours. The quality of the performance decreases as each game is played because the kids are playing fatigued or the kids pace themselves; which goes counter to player development. It's important to note that many countries in the world do not have tournaments in this format and often place limits as to the maximum number of minutes a player is allowed to play in a day.

The club encourages tournaments that are in compliance with the recommendations in the USSF Player Development Guidelines. The ideal tournament participation conditions are that players play in only one game per day or play no more than a game's worth of minutes on one day. In addition, tournaments that schedule multiple games in a short time period are beneficial strictly as a way to get fit before the league season or as a fun event at the end of the season.

## **Section 3.3 - Soccer Rankings**

Youth soccer ranking websites exist to rank individual teams for a specific geographic area. The ranking systems weigh tournament results heavily in their systems.

The rankings have little value in light of the preceding section on tournaments. If the club made the primary focus of tournament participation about winning, then player development is sacrificed. Developing players is the first priority for our club.

### **Section 3.4 - Breaks from Soccer**

The game is physically demanding. It is important that players take care of their body to prevent physical and mental burnout. Players should integrate adequate rest and recovery time into their schedule. Mental and physical burnout is one of the reasons why the youth soccer dropout rate is 50-70% by 14 years old. It is not prudent for players to play soccer non-stop during the year. It does not help improve the player. It only leads to burnout and promotes the onset of overuse injuries.

The offseason is important because the body needs time to recover after a travel soccer season. There is nothing wrong with playing the occasional pickup game or occasionally touching a ball. However, it is not wise for players to participate in a multitude of camps or leagues during the offseason. Those activities are physically demanding and cut into rest and recovery time. Extra rest rather than extra training best serves each player. The players will be mentally recharged and physically ready when the new season starts. The body is being pushed beyond the point of diminishing marginal returns if a player doesn't take a break.

It's important to show up to practices and games well rested and hydrated. It's important to not participate in physically demanding activities prior to games or practices. When a player shows up tired, their performance drops.

### **Section 3.5 - The Promise of College Soccer and Scholarships**

Our club will never promise families that their child will get a full college soccer scholarship in order to have them in our program. This behavior exists with some coaches and soccer organizations. Our club considers this behavior unethical because it's misleading. The reality is that full soccer scholarships are rare. There isn't much money in soccer and it's amazing how many buy into the college soccer scholarship myth. There is more academic money available than athletic money.

Some members of our coaching staff have been through the college recruitment process as both a player and as a coach. Some of our coaches have coached players that went on to play college soccer. Based on our experience, here are some misconceptions on college soccer.

- It doesn't matter how good you are, if you don't have the grades, you aren't going to play. The first question that a college coach asks concerns grades.
- Full rides are rare to almost non-existent. The NCAA only allows 9.9 full athletic scholarships at D1/ D2, and none at D3. Those 9.9 scholarships are split between the 25-30 kids on a team assuming that the school fully funds all 9.9 scholarships. If you are pushing your kid to play solely for the full scholarship, you are in for disappointment. Plus, why would a freshman that's unproven at the college level get a full ride over a returning player that's proven at that level?

- The recruitment process is time consuming. Soccer is not a big money sport like college football so scouts are not everywhere. As coaches, we spent a considerable amount of time networking with college coaches, sending recommendation letters, providing player profile books to scouts, etc.
- It's hard to predict with any certainty that a player at a young age will eventually play in college or pro. If a player is a top player at a young age, there is no guarantee that the player will be the top player in the age group at an older age. Motivation changes occur as a kid grows from 10 to 18 years old.

When a player is older and is serious about wanting to compete at the next level, that player will have the opportunity in our program. Please see our college recruitment program webpage on our website.

### **Section 3.6 - School Soccer**

Our travel soccer environment offers experiences that do not occur in a school soccer environment. The reverse is also true. Some of our coaches are in the unique position of having played and coached in both the travel and school environments.

The school soccer environment provides players with a social environment. Players are representing their school in their community. There is generally more attention given to school events by friends, media, and the general public. As coaches, we all played high school soccer and enjoyed the experience.

Our travel soccer environment provides players with the best instruction, best competition, and most opportunities for advancement under a curriculum model. Travel soccer is generally for the more serious player that seeks to better themselves as a player. Recruiting by college scouts occurs at travel soccer events. It rarely occurs in high school soccer.

Strictly from a technical soccer perspective, our travel soccer environment is superior in terms of competition, instruction, and quality for the following reasons

- Our travel program operates under a curriculum model. School soccer does not operate under a curriculum model to develop players
- Our travel program has mandatory coaching education standards. School soccer programs do not set any coaching education standards with their coaches.
- Learning and improvement only occur at practices. The quality of the practices is critical to developing players. Our combination of a curriculum and coaching education standards is a combination that does not exist in school soccer.
- The competition in travel soccer is much higher than school soccer.

### **Section 3.7 - Leagues in Perspective**

There is too much emphasis in youth soccer on the need to play in certain travel leagues or certain divisions within a travel league. This emphasis is misguided because it misses a fundamental point. The majority of time that a player spends is at practice.

Practice is the only forum where improvement occurs and where the coach has the most influence. Therefore, practice is more important than games in player development.

There are no major differences between the travel leagues in Virginia other than a prestige factor. The competition between the different leagues is not significantly different. No travel league is perfect or significantly better than other leagues.

Every travel league has flaws that counter player development. The organizational structure of travel leagues promotes too many conflicts of interests. Often times, politics is prioritized over merit in the decision making process.

For example, applying for membership into a travel league is a political process. It's not a process based on merit. The member clubs in a league must vote on your membership. Typically what happens is that neighboring clubs campaign against the club applying for membership with the justification that the area cannot support another club. It's a clear conflict of interest.

For a player to reach their goals, it comes down to the quality of the coaching at practices. Travel leagues have very little to do with player development. No one league stands out above other leagues. Leagues do not develop players. Coaches develop players.

### **Section 3.8 - Guest Playing with Outside Clubs**

Guest playing with a team outside our club is strictly prohibited because it is both a conflict of interest and a disruption to our travel program.

Per the club rules, players must abide by the commitment rules of our program. This includes all our practices, games, rest periods, and other events. It is disrespectful to one's teammates, coaches and to the travel program to miss our events in lieu of another travel club's events.

Yes, we firmly believe in the right of a player to play at the club of their choice. If a player wants to play at our club or another club, it is their right. However, it's not appropriate to play for two clubs simultaneously. That's just a matter of principle.

Guest playing with an outside club is nothing more than a recruitment tool for the other club. It doesn't serve any other purpose. It doesn't provide a unique opportunity or any benefit for the player. The player that guest plays with the outside club does not regularly practice with the outside club yet receives playing time. The player hasn't earned their minutes nor has been coached by the outside team coach. How is the guest player going to be effective? The other club can look for guest players within their own club if they badly need players.

It is important to note that we do not allow players from outside our club to guest play with teams in our club. That's a matter of principle because the outside player did not pay dues or regularly attend our practices. To allow a player from outside our club to take playing time away from players within our club is simply not right. If a coach within our club needs a guest player, then our coach would look internally for that player.

The notion that a player would make another club's events a priority over our events is disrespectful to our program. No consideration should ever be given to events at other clubs. If a player participates in our program, our program must be the priority.