

What is Recreational Soccer?

It's the Player's Game

Now what does “recreational soccer” mean?

So you have heard the term before, but do you really know what “recreational soccer” is? There are no legal definitions, no US Youth Soccer rules, policies or regulations. One of the most often used terms is one of the least defined. Soccer has created a new meaning for the word recreation and the word recreational.

US Youth Soccer does offer a partial definition in its “[Policy on Players and Playing Rules](#)” in the definitions section when it states:

“**recreational league**” means an intraclub league in which—

- a. the use of tryouts, invitations, recruiting, or any similar process to roster players to any team on the basis of talent or ability is prohibited;
- b. (the club administering the league accepts as participants in the league any eligible youths (subject to reasonable terms on registration)
- c. a system or rostering players is used to establish a fair or balanced distribution of playing talent among all teams participating; and
- d. league rules require that each player must play at least one-half of each game except for reasons of injury, illness, or discipline.

“**recreational team**” means a team that participates in a recreational league.

However the section head note states that “... the ... definitions are suggested for use by State Associations to facilitate communication and understanding among them...”

Each state association has its own definition and implementation but there are common perceptions of what people mean when they refer to recreational soccer.

Let us look at those perceptions.

Some common perceptions of recreational soccer are:

- Made up of players assigned to team in a random manner without regard to the ability of the players – as opposed to “travel” soccer where the players are selected to be on a team through some sort of tryout or selection process.
- “Less competitive” than “travel” soccer.
- “Lower intensity” for training and practices.
- “Less travel”, fewer games
- “Less skilled” players.
- “Less experienced” coaches.
- Beginning players
- Annual or biannual shuffling of players to new teams,
- And there are a lot more perceptions.

Recreational soccer is defined in the common mind by what it is not and not what it is. A similar situation exists in the definition of amateur versus professional athletes.

Recreational soccer: Is that soccer program that is primarily devoted to the enjoyment and development of soccer players without the emphasis on travel or high level competition. The purpose of recreational soccer is to provide an opportunity for the participants to have fun, learn the sport and develop life skills including a life long love of the game.

Recreational Player – a player who is randomly assigned to a team without regard to his/her abilities and skills.

Recreational Team – teams formed randomly to play soccer.

Recreational League – leagues composed of teams formed in a random manner.