

Waterford Soccer Club Travel Team Policies

Introduction

The following document describes the policies which Waterford Soccer Club (WSC) uses to administer its Travel Soccer program. While the club by-laws provide the high level structure of the club, its Executive Board, and its operations as an entity, this document exists to provide fair and equitable policies for the Board, parents, volunteers, and players to use in the day-to-day operation of the club for providing a travel soccer program. It is meant to be comprehensive and address most situations that arise in administering the program, and it is intended that exceptions to these policies are very rare.

The policies were drafted by a committee of parent volunteers consisting of coaches, WSC Board members, and parents not involved in the administration of the club. The committee represented a number of different viewpoints, as well as a variety of experience and expertise.

The committee spent considerable time discussing the policies contained within. The discussion began with historical practice in the club, the methodologies employed by other clubs in our area, and recommendations from our governing bodies, Southeastern Connecticut Junior Soccer Association (SECJSA), Connecticut Junior Soccer Association (CJSA), and US Youth Soccer (USYS). The committee discussed each policy at length and drafted text to both pay deference to historical practice and to be forward-looking in achieving the goals the club has declared for its future. The output of this committee, which consists of this document, was endorsed by the WSC Board on a rolling basis and compiled for final approval on March 12, 2015.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the WSC travel program is fielding competitive teams of players with skill levels capable of competing with other area towns on an equal basis and properly representing the town with competitive sportsmanship. Travel teams will be defined as any team leaving the town of Waterford to play another district team, or any Waterford team that is hosting a team from another town while being sponsored by WSC. These guidelines apply to all levels of district play, and the club's Executive Board shall resolve any questions regarding the interpretation of these guidelines. These guidelines can be amended by appointment of an Executive Committee to carry out such action within the By-Laws and philosophy of the WSC.

The scope of this document is primarily WSC district travel teams. As such, the same or different policies may be used for administering the Recreational program within the club, as makes sense for that program. In certain instances, these policies extend to the Recreational

program where it is appropriate. As an example of such, the policy regarding “playing up” necessarily straddles the boundary between U8 and U10 programs (as of this writing, the U8 age level is Recreational, and U10 is travel). Similarly, the roles and responsibilities for coaches, assistants, and coordinators will be similar for both programs.

Philosophy

The Waterford Soccer Club has an attitude that fosters player development in a competitive environment. The club strives to improve the quality of play and values the development of players over a “win-at-all-cost” mentality. This ensures that all WSC players on district travel teams receive adequate coaching, fair treatment, and equal playing time to include all field positions at both practice and games.

Player Registration and Evaluations

Player registration for the fall season typically occurs during the month of April, and during the month of February for the spring season. Players who do not register by the deadline may be allowed to register, with late fee, at the sole discretion of WSC. Hard deadlines are necessary, since a large number of events such as uniform orders, player evaluations, team selection, etc. are dependent upon timely registration. Exceptions will be made only for players who moved to Waterford with the last 6 months.

Player Assessments

Player Assessments will be held annually to determine player skill level for the purpose of team selection in the coming year. Evaluations are held so the club may field one or more Classic teams and equally distribute player talent among the remaining Recreational teams, including Rec Plus. All travel players are required to participate in evaluations regardless of whether they want to be considered for the Classic team. If a player is unable to attend evaluations for any reason, they must notify the Director of Coaching (DOC) in writing with the reason. Players who have not been excused from evaluations by the DOC are unlikely to be placed on a Classic team, and will be placed at the discretion of the club without appeal.

Player Assessment is the responsibility of the DOC, who may delegate any or all of the duties to the Age-Level Coordinator(s) (ALC) or other designee for a particular age group. Player Assessments are conducted by at least 3 coaches per age/gender group or anyone specifically invited by the DOC. Assessment criteria will be decided by the DOC in advance of the sessions and a standardized evaluation form will be used by all evaluators. Criteria will be written clearly and concisely such that all players of a given player age/gender (e.g. U10 boys) will be

evaluated in the same way, and players of equal ability should receive similar scores by all coaches. Criteria will be posted on the WSC website for all players and families to review.

At the assessment session, a bib-number will be assigned to each player, and this number will be worn by the players at all assessments they attend. Evaluation records will be completed by coaches and will be kept by the DOC for the purpose of team selection (draft) for both Classic teams and Rec Plus teams. These records are property of WSC. Parents can request to view the evaluation of their child if they would like and discuss the evaluation with the DOC.

Team Selection

Team Selection aims to achieve the following goals:

- Select one or more Classic teams comprised of the best players for the age/gender level.
- Create teams with an equal distribution of player talent and experience throughout the remaining Rec Plus teams.
- As much as possible, develop continuity among teams and players from season to season. This is more easily implemented as well as expedient in the spring, attempting to keep players and teams together from the fall season.

Ideal team size shall be the number of players required by the district plus 4 with a margin of +/-1 player. For example, SECJSA requires U10 to play 8v8, therefore the team size would be 12 +/- 1 player. Team size will generally be governed by the number of players in the program at each age level with an aim to achieve the team size stated above. Deviations should be rare, and team size should be decided solely due to the number of registered players and available coaches, not “personal preference.” While acknowledging that smaller teams provide greater playing time, teams may also be short players if there is a high absentee rate.

The team selection process will be led by the ALC and DOC. All coaches in the coaching applicant pool for a given age/gender are eligible to participate in team selection and are given equal say in the process of identifying or nominating players for a Classic team. It is especially important that coaches who were present at evaluations be present for team selection.

Player evaluations will be used to select the best players for consideration for the Classic team. For a single Classic team, a pool of players will be created using the evaluation scores, the size of the pool being the number of players required by the district times two. From this pool of players, using the previously established evaluation scores, a Classic team will be decided by majority vote. In the event there are enough players with an adequate score for making a second Classic team, at the agreement of the majority present, a second Classic team may be formed. In the case of more than one Classic team within an age level, the decision on how to

create those teams will be determined by the ALC and coaches with consideration of what is best for the players, program and future team. (i.e. whether to create two balanced Classic teams or an older team and developing team).

Coaches for all teams will be determined after the players for Classic team(s) are identified. A coach(es) for the Classic team(s) will be selected from the pool of coaching applicants by the DOC. The remaining teams are then divided as discussed below.

After selection of the Classic team(s), the remaining players will be distributed to Rec Plus teams using a draft system based firstly on the scores received during evaluations. Other consideration may be given to the players' school districts, keeping players and coaches together for continuity reasons, and parental requests. The main focus and goal of team selection will be to create balanced teams that can compete in a Rec Plus program with other towns' teams.

A draft will be conducted with all Rec Plus coaches present. Draft order will be determined randomly, and selections will be performed in a reverse order draft system going from 1 thru X, then X back to 1 (snake draft). Once teams are established, situations may occur where players are moved to other teams for a variety of reasons. This can be done via a written e-mail to the ALC who will then determine whether to move a player or not after consulting with the coaches affected. Common reasons for this would be parental request, transportation, logistics, practice times, placement with classmate, or specific coaching request. Player trades should be relatively rare, and consideration should be given how the trade affects both teams.

If the number of registered players dictates fewer teams than coach applicants then the ALC and DOC will choose coaches based upon coach selection guidelines (See Coach Selection/Roles and Responsibilities). Anyone not chosen to coach will have first opportunity of assistant coach per coaching guidelines. As stated there, each team is required to have an assistant coach.

Team Selection for Spring Season

The club recognizes that the spring is traditionally the primary season for a number of other sports. Due to the competition for players who play other spring sports, it is not possible to keep all fall teams together in the spring. The following will be the guiding principles for spring Team Selection:

- Teams will be kept together from the fall to the extent possible. This does not guarantee that if a player was a Classic player in the fall that they will be one in the spring.
- Next, based on registration numbers, players will be assigned to teams using fall player evaluation scores and any information submitted by coaches which would more accurately represent the players ability since evaluations. For both Classic and Rec Plus, players will be assigned following the same procedure as they were assigned in the fall, described above.

- Coaches are encouraged to “share” players as needed and in accordance with District rules to “fill in” as needed due to schedule conflicts, vacations, etc. Coaches who “borrow” players are encouraged to contact the borrowed player’s coach to ensure there is no conflict. Selection of players to borrow should consider giving everyone an opportunity for extra playing time, not just select players.
- With regard to selection for the Classic team for the spring, the club will NOT make selections based on players “expected” commitment. However, the expectation is that players are able to make a majority of team events (practices, games). Parents should consider their player’s ability to dedicate themselves to the team they are assigned. For players doing 2 or more sports in the spring, parents should consider yielding their position on a Classic team so that another child who is only playing soccer will have the opportunity to be on the Classic team.

Coach Selection/Roles and Responsibilities

The aim of coach selection is to pair each team with a qualified, dedicated coach who will develop the team and its players for competition with other towns. Coaches vary substantially, and this section outlines the minimum qualifications as well as the roles they are expected to play. This section also outlines how coaches are chosen from the coaching pool.

Age Level Coordinators (ALC’s):

- Responsibilities:
 - Assist the DOC with the administration of the age level, including the following, if delegated by the DOC:
 - Conducting Player Evaluations (see Player Registration and Evaluations)
 - Team Selection (See Team Selection)
 - Identification and recruitment of coaches to fill the coaching pool for the age level
 - Distributing age-specific coaching information, session plans and instructional materials for coaches
 - Distribution and collection of team equipment
 - Serve as the first point of contact for conflict resolution for any issues between parents and coaches for that age level.
 - Escalate issues to the DOC as necessary to maintain consistency with this policy document.
- Qualifications:

- Written request to the DOC expressing their request along with experience, skills and background.
- Familiarity of the players and families at that age level is highly recommended, but not required.
- Number of ALC's:
 - Each age level will have a minimum of one age level coordinator, handling both boys and girls.
 - Each age level will have a maximum of two age level coordinators with one designated for boys one designated for girls.
- Selection:
 - Potential ALC's will submit a request for the position to the DOC prior to the team draft.
 - ALC's are selected by the DOC and approved by the Board for a given season.
 - In the event that there are no requests for the age level coordinator position the Director of Coaching will nominate a coach for the age level.
- ALC as a Coach:
 - While it is preferred, it is not a requirement for the ALC to coach a team. Nor does being the ALC ensure they will coach a team. ALC's interested in coaching a team must participate in the same process as coaches listed below. The ALC is not empowered to assign coaches to a team unless that role has been delegated to them by the DOC.

Coaches:

- Responsibilities:
 - Attend all coaches meetings required by the DOC, the SECJSA, or CJSA.
 - Conduct practices to develop the skill levels of all players.
 - Schedule and attend district games.
 - Monitor the health and safety of all players on the team.
 - Ensure play is in accordance with USYS, CJSA and WSC policies and recommendations.
 - Communicate game and practice schedule with parents.
 - Immediately notify the club and its officers if there is any suspicion of a concussion or injury requiring more than basic first aid.
 - Appointing a surrogate in the event that he/she is unable to attend to a team function.
- Qualifications:

- Potential coaches must check either the head coach or assistant coach position boxes at the time of player registration or submit in writing to the Director of Coaching a desire to coach.
- All coaches will be required to complete the following and submit to the Director of Coaching before they can be selected to coach a team:
 - CJSA approved background check
 - Written proof of Concussion Training
 - Signed Club Safety Policy
 - Written proof of basic First Aid Training
- Classic (District Level A) Coaches: Minimum of 3 years' soccer coaching experience at a competitive level with sufficient knowledge of the techniques and tactics for the age level. Coaching experience does not have to be through Waterford Soccer Club.
- Number of Coaches:
 - A single person will be named head coach for each team. This person assumes all responsibility for the team, including its players, parents, assistants, volunteers.
- Selection:
 - Coach selection is at the discretion of the Director of Coaching with approval by the Executive Board.
 - Coaches are selected for the duration of a season (fall, spring).
 - The DOC may request a brief written application of experience, skills, licenses, diplomas, and background, etc., from coaches. Coaches are welcome to submit same to the DOC without being specifically requested to do so.
 - The DOC will use any of the following in their decision pertaining to coach selection:
 - Seniority within the Waterford Soccer Club
 - Written resume of coaching experience and background, including coaching licenses and diplomas
 - Coach Evaluations
 - In the event of several candidates interested in the same coaching position, the DOC and Executive Board will have the ultimate decision.
 - Coaches are selected for a given season (e.g. fall or spring). Their role may be extended as the DOC decides.

Assistant Coaches:

- Qualifications:

- Assistant coaches must adhere to the same requirements as coaches.
- Quantity:
 - At a minimum, all travel teams will have one assistant coach and a maximum of two assistant coaches. Any disagreements will be decided by the DOC and Executive Board.
 - Other volunteer helpers for the team are always welcome, however, they must complete a CJSA background check.
- Selection:
 - Assistant coaches will be identified by the Coach and/or age level coordinators and recommended to the Director of Coaching for endorsement.
 - In situations where there are extra candidates for head coach positions, those coaches not chosen will be given first opportunity for assistant coach positions.
 - Assistant coaches are selected for a given season.

Playing Up Policy

WSC believes that players develop best when they are challenged in age-appropriate play at all levels of the game. As such, the club will strive to place players with others of similar age. The club defines player age as follows:

- First according to the CJSA age matrix, which uses player age as of August 1 as the cutoff point.
- The club also allows for players to be “age-appropriate” according to school grade, to account for children born between Aug 1, and Dec 31 who have moved to the next grade up. In this way, players remain with their classmates to the extent possible.

The club recognizes that at any age level, players possess a wide range of size, skill, and ability. In rare instances, the club has a need for players at the next age level and a player has characteristics (e.g. physical size, skill, mental toughness, or game sense) that would allow them to be successful at the next age level. Rostering a player at an age level older than defined above is considered “playing up.” In these instances, after considering the development of the player as a whole, the club may wish to move a player to the next age level for a given season. The club will seek parent/guardian permission prior to moving the player up.

Fall Season

The following is the procedure for allowing a player to play up for the Fall Season:

- Coach or coaches at the next higher level demonstrate to the DOC that there is a need for a player from a lower level to play up.
- Coaches and ALC for the lower level develop a list of players who may be successful at the next higher level.
- The DOC will evaluate all players on this list to determine which players should be moved up.
 - o In the case of U8 player moving to U10, the DOC will observe the potential player at a practice or in a game.
 - o In the case of U10 and higher player moving up to another travel age group, the DOC will use player ranking from the player evaluations to make the decision. In the event a recommended player did not attend evaluations, the DOC may observe the player in either a game or practice setting.
- Parents of the player being requested to play up will be contacted by the DOC and given the option to have their player play up or remain at their age appropriate level. If the selected player wishes to remain at their age appropriate level, the next player on the list will be selected.
- Players accepting the new level will be rostered on the higher level team for the duration of the season and will no longer be allowed to play (including practice) at the lower level.

Parent requests for their child to play up will be considered by the club in accordance with the above guidelines. If the club does not have a demonstrated need, or based on player evaluation by the coaches, ALC, or DOC, the request will be denied and the parent will be notified by the DOC. In such cases, the player may be referred to a number of local Premier and Elite programs.

The club also wishes to foster a sense of team spirit and belonging. As such, temporarily playing up, either in practice or games is prohibited. A child either plays up, or stays at their age appropriate level, but a player cannot play at more than one age level, even temporarily.

There will be no allowance for any player to play up more than one level.

Appeal of any aspect of this policy should be directed first to the Director of Coaching.

Spring Season

During the spring season, WSC will allow players who were not age eligible for a higher level in the fall, but who will be age eligible for the next level in the coming fall to play at either their current age level, or the age level they will qualify for in the fall, at their discretion. In other words, they will be allowed to “play up” in the spring. This provides an opportunity for players to get accustomed to the higher level during the spring, which is typically less competitive and less formal than fall. This may be especially useful for players who will be moving from recreational programs (U8 and under) to travel programs (U10 and above). Players wishing to exercise this option should indicate the level they wish to play on the spring registration form or by notifying the DOC. Players must also receive a recommendation from their fall coach before exercising this option.

Definitions

Director of Coaching (DOC) – WSC Officer who is charged with overseeing the quality and execution of the club’s programs and coaches. A more detailed description of the roles and responsibilities of the DOC are outlined in the Waterford At-Large Board Roles and Responsibilities Document.

Age-Level Coordinators (ALC) – ALC’s serve as a central point of contact for a given age level. See their roles and responsibilities here: (Coach Selection/Roles and Responsibilities)

Classic – A highly competitive traveling team which plays at the highest level in town club soccer. It is also referred to as the “A” team. Players for this level are selected from the player pool because of experience and soccer aptitude. The main goal of play at this level is competition.

Rec-Plus – A traveling team which is not Classic. Also referred to as a “B” team. Players for this level are assigned via a draft, and may have widely varying levels of soccer experience. While a score is kept, the main goal of play at this level is player development and enjoyment.

Recreational – A non-traveling program where WSC teams play other WSC teams. Can also be used to refer to non-competitive travel soccer.

Premier – An highly competitive traveling team which consists of players from different towns. Travel is beyond the SE CT area to play against other Premier clubs.

Coach – Any person who has expressed an interest in coaching a travel team, either as a head coach or as an assistant coach.

Draft – Also known as team selection.