

VI. TEAM FORMATION

A. Team Formation Objectives

Loudoun Soccer's mission is to provide a safe and fun environment that teaches fair play and good sportsmanship, and to provide the best opportunities for soccer development for all ages.

Coaches are Loudoun Soccer's greatest resource. The coaches' influence on the players' development environment is more significant than any other Loudoun Soccer resource. The first objective of the Loudoun Soccer's team formation process is to select the most qualified coaches who are committed to Loudoun Soccer's mission.

Player assignment must be fair and impartial. The second objective of the Loudoun Soccer team formation process is to assign players to teams in an equitable manner so that all players have equal opportunity to play in an optimal development environment.

B. Team Formation Roles

1. Age Group Coordinator (AGC)

The Age Group Coordinators (AGCs) have the primary responsibility for forming recreational teams within Loudoun Soccer. Each AGC is responsible for one or more age groups within an area and may be responsible for both boys and girls or a single gender. AGCs are selected by and work under the direction of the Regional Commissioners. The AGC works closely with the Administrative Staff who provides the AGC with player registration and wait list information. An AGC may communicate with AGCs in other areas to develop the best mix of team sizes and players or to transfer players to a different area of play.

AGCs generally have the following responsibilities:

- Determining team counts
- Selecting team coaches
- Assigning registered players to teams
- Accepting players from the wait list to fill teams
- Distributing rosters to coaches

In addition, AGCs may also be delegated responsibility for assigning team practice times and distributing equipment and/or schedules to coaches. Each Regional Commissioner shall identify the specific responsibilities of the AGCs within his/her region.

2. Regional Commissioner/SFL Program Manager and Mini Program Manager

The Regional Commissioner is responsible for all teams formed within his or her region and has oversight over the team formation process for Age Groups U6 through U12. The

SFL Program Manager is responsible for all teams formed for Age Groups U13 through U19, and the Mini Program Manager is responsible for all teams formed in the U4 and U5 Age Groups.

The Regional Commissioner, SFL Program Manager and Mini Program Manager select the AGCs and approves all coach selections and team assignments prior to distribution to coaches. In addition, a Regional Commissioner may establish region-specific policies and procedures in consultation with the Program Manager.

In consultation with the Program Manager, the Regional Commissioners, SFL and Mini Program Managers handle any issues associated with the interpretation, implementation, and enforcement of policy within their region. All requests for policy exceptions are escalated to the appropriate Program Manager.

3. Recreational Program Manager

The Recreational Program Manager oversees all Recreational Programs. The Program Manager has oversight of Regional Commissioners, SFL Program Manager and the Mini Program Manager. The Recreational Program manager will resolve all conflicts in policy interpretation, approve certain policy decisions (i.e., out of age group), and address any exceptions to policy. Such decisions are passed to the Loudoun Soccer Vice President of Recreation for review. Any association member, AGC, or Regional Commissioner may bring team formation issues to the appropriate Recreational Program Manager for resolution.

4. Vice President of Recreation

As the Director of Operations, the Loudoun Soccer Vice President of Recreation has oversight of the Mini Soccer, House and Loudoun SFL Teams and all applicable processes, including team formation. The Vice President is the next level of issue resolution above the League Commissioners.

The Vice President establishes the operations calendar for the season that details the dates associated with team formation and reporting of team information. In addition, the Vice President ensures that the Administrator has sufficient staff to support player registration.

5. Administration Staff

The Administrative Staff includes the Loudoun Soccer Administrator, and one or more administrative and clerical assistants. The Administrative Staff registers players after verifying correct registration information, proper fees, and proof of age. The Administrative Staff provides the AGCs, Regional Commissioners, League Commissioners, Vice President and President with the initial player registration data

(Approximately 2 wks after the end of regular registration). Following regular registration, the Administrative Staff periodically distributes a wait list of players who

have not been registered pending acceptance by the AGCs. Once approved, wait listed players are added to the list of registered players. The updated registration data is also periodically distributed. Registration updates are made as necessary, but usually at least once per week.

6. Coach

AGCs may consult coaches in the interest of forming well-balanced teams, but the coach does not have a direct role in team formation. Coaches may **not** accept registration forms or guarantee placement of any player on any team.

C. Team Formation Policies

1. Registration Deadline

There will be a defined registration deadline date set by the Loudoun Soccer Executive Board, after which late fees will be imposed. The registration deadline will be well publicized in Loudoun Soccer mailings, on the Loudoun Soccer web site, and in the local newspaper. Players may register by mailing in completed registration forms, or bringing them to any scheduled walk-in registration, or the Loudoun Soccer office. Previously registered Loudoun Soccer players will be mailed a registration form to their last current address known by Loudoun Soccer. For new players, registration forms will normally be available through the local schools, libraries, community centers, participating sport shops, and AGCs.

2. Proof –Of-Age

Proof-of-age is required for all new registrations and must be provided anytime that it is requested by the Administrative Staff.

Proof of age shall consist of a birth certificate, a Uniformed Services Identification and Privilege Card (DD Form 1173) issued by the uniformed services of the United States, a birth registration issued by an appropriate government agency or board of health records, a passport, an alien registration card issued by the United States Government, a certificate issued by the Immigration and Naturalization Service attesting to age, a current driver's license, an unexpired federal, state, or local government identification card (if documentation of date of birth is required), or a certification of a United States citizen born abroad issued by the appropriate government agency. Hospital, baptismal, or religious certificates will not be accepted. [USYSA]

3. Date of Registration

The Official Registration Date of a player is determined by the time of completion of one of the following processes:

- Date of Registration (including payment in full) through our on line registration service. Registration is not complete unless a confirmation email is received by registrant.
- The postmark date if registration and payment in full is mailed.
- The date that registration form and payment in full is walked in and accepted at the office (302B Industrial Ct.) or alternate walk in registration site.

If a registration form is returned due to incorrect fees, an improper or incomplete form or lack of proof of age, the Official Registration Date will be the postmark date of the corrected forms or fees, or the noted date documented by the administration verifying that said documents or fees were walked into the office. If online registration is not completed in its entirety, the registration date will be the date of fee payment and confirmation email is automatically returned. The Administrator will note all Official Registration Dates in the Registration System

4. Properly Registered Players

Only Loudoun Soccer Administrative Staff can register a player. A player cannot be placed on a team until he/she has been properly registered.

5. Late Registration

Late registration players are those whose dates of registration are later than the deadline date. Instead of immediately being registered, late players will be placed on a wait list to be drawn upon to fill existing teams that do not have the maximum allowable numbers of players assigned. Late players are individually approved for registration by the AGCs as they fill open spaces on teams.

6. Refunds

a) Unable to Place

Inevitably, the AGC will not be able to place some players in any of their desired areas of play due to limits in available teams, fields, or coaches, or because of a lack of players. In most instances the players in this circumstance will be those who registered late; however, in some smaller areas there may be an insufficient number of players to form teams in some age groups. If a player cannot be placed on a team, the registration fee will be fully refunded.

An AGC will notify any player that he or she is unable to place prior to the first practice. In general the AGC should notify the player whenever they suspect that they will not be able to place them and give them an opportunity for an alternate area of play before teams in other areas fill up. Whenever possible, a player who cannot be placed on a team will be placed on a wait list until the second game on the season. The Administrative Staff will fully refund the fee payment of all players on the wait list after the second game.

b) Requested Refund

Requests for refunds must be made in writing to Loudoun Soccer and will be processed by the Administrative Staff. AGCs and other Loudoun Soccer officials cannot accept refund requests. The deadline for requesting a refund is the Saturday prior to the first practice; all requests must be postmarked by then. Requested refunds for children who can be placed on a team on or before the first day of practice will be assessed a \$15 processing fee.

Loudoun Soccer

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7. Everyone Plays

All players shall be treated equally when being considered for team placement. The priority will be given to players is based on their date of registration. On-time registered players have priority over late registered players. The AGCs shall make every reasonable effort to place all on-time registered players on a team. Within reason, exceptions may be made to other Loudoun Soccer policies to facilitate the placement of an on-time registered player on a team. AGCs should anticipate and prepare for the placement of a certain number of late registered players, however allowing policy exceptions in this case is discouraged.

8. Teams

Recreational teams consist of a head coach and a set of rostered players assigned to the head coach by an AGC for the duration of the season. The coach may choose one or more assistant coaches and request team parents as volunteers for various team “administrative” functions, such as snack coordinator, etc.

9. Team Balance

Team parity during play is an important component in providing an optimal development environment. A primary goal of each AGC is to establish a fair and balanced distribution of playing talent among all teams in their age group and area. The AGCs shall make every reasonable effort to achieve this goal.

10. Area of Play

Whenever possible, players shall be placed in the first choice area of play as indicated on their registration form. If there is no available space in the player's age group, then they should be placed in the second choice area of play and so on. If the player did not list an alternate choice, the AGC may (but is not required to) call the parents to determine if there is an alternate choice. Transferred players shall be handled in the same manner as if they had listed the alternate area as the first choice. Transfers should be done as soon as the AGC knows that the player cannot be placed in on a team and must be acknowledged by the receiving AGC. To update the master database, the Administrative Staff should be notified when players are transferred between one area and another.

11. Team Size

a) House League

The target size for House League teams is shown in the table below. The House League target team sizes are designed to support the following considerations for fielding a team for a game:

- Every player must play at least two quarters per game in a field position.
- Playing goalkeeper does not count as a field position.
- The majority of players will play in at least three quarters of a game.
- With one player absent, no player will be required to play more than three quarters.
- A team can be fielded with two players absent.

House League Target Team Size:

Age Group	Target Team Size	Min Team Size	Game	Goal-keeper
U4	10-12	NA	Activities only	N
U5	9	8	3v3 Dual Game Format	N

U6	9	8	3v3 Dual Game Format	N
U7 – U8	7	6	4v4	N
U9 – U10	9	8	6v6	Y
U11 – U12	12	11	8v8	Y

In anticipation of late registrations or player transfers from other areas, teams may initially be formed with fewer players than necessary to field a team during a game. The Regional and League Commissioner shall be notified if a team has less than the minimum number of players after the first practice.

In certain areas, to support placement of on-time registered players, the number of players on the team may have to be increased beyond the target number. The Regional Commissioner shall be notified any time an AGC must exceed the target team’s size.

b) Suburban Friendship League

For SFL teams aged U13 and older, the minimum number of players on a team is eleven and the target team size is fifteen or more players. U13-U14 teams should be assigned no more than sixteen players. U16 & U19 teams may be larger than eighteen players as necessary to support on-time enrollment numbers in each region (due to the fewer number of teams).

12. Team Continuity Recreational teams are formed for one season only. Teams are officially established when the AGC provides the player roster to the head coach that has been selected for the team. Teams are disbanded after the last game of the season. Team continuity refers to the placement of coaches and players together on the same team from one season to the next.

a) House League

Youth players get the widest possible benefit from experiences with a variety of teammates and coaches. Under **no circumstances shall team continuity take precedence over team parity and balance within an area of play.**

b) Suburban Friendship League

When forming new U13 teams in the fall season, SFL AGCs shall make team parity the team formation priority, as it is in House League teams. SFL Players are older and are starting to develop deeper social bonds. Playing with an identifiable group becomes a component in player retention making team continuity a more important factor in forming teams. Following their first season on a SFL team, players may choose to be placed with the same coach and teammates that they played with in the previous soccer season. Such requests should be made on the player's registration form. When there is space available on SFL teams, coordinators shall consider team balance when assigning players to the team. Space on teams may not be reserved for returning players who register late if doing so would adversely affect team balance. In any case where keeping a team together would prevent other players from playing, players shall be distributed among two or more teams in a balanced and fair manner. This most commonly happens in the fall when SFL teams move up an age group level.

13. Age Groups

Loudoun Soccer follows birth date ranges for its age groups as set by US Youth Soccer Association. In all but an extremely small number of instances, it is most appropriate for a player to play in their proper age group. Except as noted below for children of August/September birthdays wishing to play with their grade, any request to play in other than the players' default age group must be approved by the appropriate Regional and League Commissioners and the Loudoun Soccer Vice President. Play-up decisions shall be copied to the Loudoun Soccer President. Out-of-age group decisions are in effect for one season only, and must be requested again each season, if desired.

Age Groups for Fall 2007 - Spring 2008: See Link in Coordinator Center

a) Playing-Up – August/September Birth Dates

Loudoun Soccer's age groups are based on the player's age on August 1st of the Fall to Spring soccer year. In many instances, children born in August and September will be attending one grade higher than most of the children in their age group. On request, players with August or September birthdays may play-up an age group to play with other players in their grade. Parents should be cautioned, because this places the player in an environment where they may be less skilled than most of their teammates. This type of request must be made on the player's registration form. Play-ups under this condition may be restricted due to team formation restrictions in the gaining age group.

b) Playing-Up – Based on Ability

Players that should be playing-up an age group based on ability are extremely rare. To be beneficial to the player and the player's teammates, a player who is playing-up must be able to perform at an average to above average skill level for that age group. When determining if a player should play-up based on ability, the following must be considered:

- Physical Characteristics – size, speed, strength
- Individual Skill Level – ball handling and control
- Emotion Maturity – ability to interact with other players and handle different competitive levels
- Mental Development – ability to understand teamwork and the dynamics of the gam

Failure to account for all these factors can be detrimental to the development of the player and his or her teammates. Requests to place players in an older age group must be made in writing detailing why this player and the player's teammates will benefit from playing in an older age group. Independent verification of the player's ability shall be required before a decision will be made by Loudoun Soccer.

c) Playing-Down

A written justification is required with a play-down request. Play-down requests are only granted if there is physical or mental justification. Additional information may be required (e.g., a doctors note) before the request is granted.

d) Teams Playing-Up

Play-up requests shall only be considered on an individual basis and never on a team basis.

e) Playing Out Of Age Group – Last Resort for Player Placement

As a last resort, under certain circumstances (usually in small areas), it may be necessary for an AGC to consider placing a player on a team out of his/her age group in order to maximize the number of on-time registered players placed or to fill teams to their target size. Because this decision may affect team parity and/or player development, any consideration to play a player out of his/her age group for these reasons shall be done in conjunction with the Regional Commissioner. Approval shall be obtained from the player's parents, League Commissioner, and Loudoun Soccer Vice President prior to final placement.

14. Special Requests

Occasionally players will make requests on their registration form for special needs due to personal conflicts or hardship. Requests are also often made for reasons of convenience

or personal preference. Special requests can make team formation complicated for the AGCs and put them in a position to arbitrarily accept some and deny others. Honoring special requests shall not be put at a higher priority than team balance. In no case shall any special request be guaranteed to be granted.

15. Resource Limitations

Specific areas may experience limitations in resources that limit the number of teams that can be formed. Resources in this situation primarily include fields and coaches. In a situation where there are more players than available teams, the players shall be placed on teams in order of their registration date. Players not placed on a team shall be transferred to their alternate area of play or designated to receive a refund. AGCs shall inform the players when this situation occurs. Exceptions may be made for children of coaches, AGC, and other league volunteers.

16. Coach Selection

Loudoun Soccer coaches are the primary influence on player development and project an image of Loudoun Soccer to the members and the community. Loudoun Soccer coaches are expected to show respect for the all members of the Loudoun Soccer community at all times, including players, parents, referees, volunteers, school employees, and employees of Loudoun County. In addition, Loudoun Soccer coaches must also demonstrate respect for Loudoun Soccer's policies and procedures and the Laws of the Game.

AGCs should select coaches based on training, experience, ability, and the image of Loudoun Soccer they project. No coach is guaranteed to be selected simply because they coached in a previous season, but that should be one of the first considerations. Regional Commissioners shall approve all coach selections prior to the notification of each coach's selection. Regional Commissioners may be aware of circumstances that may either encourage or discourage the selection of a particular coach. When two coaches of apparently equal standing are being considered for the team, the AGC may choose to alternate the coaches from one season to the next.

17. Team Formation Policy Exceptions

Unless addressed otherwise in this document, all requests for exceptions to the team formation policies must be approved by the responsible Regional and League Commissioners and reviewed by the Vice President and President. AGCs should not speculate on the success of any policy exception request to any member.