



OFFICIAL MEMBER

GIRLS ECNL FAQs

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ECNL OVERVIEW

What is the Elite Clubs National League?

The ECNL was founded in 2009 as a nation-wide youth soccer league geared toward the elite female soccer player. It was formed by forward-thinking Directors of Coaching across the country who saw a need for change in and special commitment to improving the daily environment for American elite female youth soccer players. These Directors came together and collaborated to build what would become the top female youth development platform in the world. The grass roots leadership and cooperation was unprecedented in American youth soccer, and the ECNL continues to be the most progressive and innovative development platform in the country.

The ECNL has four primary platforms:

- **Competition:** The competition platform is comprised of eight regional conferences and tiered levels of national competition to allow the best match-ups across the league. The ECNL also hosts National Events across the country to give member clubs the opportunity to compete against non-conference teams.
- **Player Identification:** The ECNL Player Identification Program is intended to provide a better, more efficient, and streamlined process for identifying players with the potential to play with the US Soccer Youth National Teams, and to provide additional exposure and opportunity to top players across the ECNL. The ECNL Player ID Program identifies the top players in the ECNL and then provides opportunities for these players to be seen and trained by U.S. Soccer National Team staff.
- **Club and Coach Development Platform:** ECNL Coaching Development Initiative (CDI) consists of educational seminars put on by various staff, each scheduled around an existing ECNL National Ongoing education is a key part of being a professional, and is an expectation of being a member of the top girls developmental league in the country.
- **H.E.R. Platform:** H.E.R. is an acronym for “Health & Education Resources” and is a platform designed to provide information, tools, and opportunity for female athletes.

In short, ECNL will serve as the primary form of competition for the club’s top girls teams in the U13-U19 age groups.

What are the benefits of playing ECNL?

The primary benefits for joining the league benefit the top-tier female athlete with:

1. Increased level of competition;
2. More meaningful matches;
3. Quality coaching; and
4. Greater exposure to college coaches (see College Recruiting)

AGE GROUPS, TEAMS, AND COACHES

What age groups are participating? What leagues will non-ECNL teams participate in?

Loudoun Soccer will field an ECNL team in each of the following age groups for Fall 2019-Spring 2020: U13 (2007s), U14 (2006s), U15 (2005s), U16 (2004s), U17 (2003s), and U18/U19 (2002s and 2001s).

Below is a graphic of the pyramid hierarchy Loudoun Soccer U13-U19 teams will play in beginning Fall 2019:



Loudoun Soccer's continued participation in and support of CCL will allow players not yet ready to compete at the ECNL level (or those who do not wish to do so) an opportunity to play competitive matches in what is regarded as the top league in the DC Metro area.

Younger girls teams (U12 and below) will continue to participate in CCL, CCL 2, NCSL, and ODSL; no change will occur for those age groups.

Boys teams will continue to participate in the Boys ECNL, USYS National and Regional Leagues, CCL 1, CCL 2, NCSL, and ODSL.

Who are the ECNL team coaches?

Coaching assignments for Loudoun Soccer ECNL teams are available under Girls ECNL Staff. They will be highly qualified, committed, and licensed coaches.

Loudoun Soccer's ECNL program will be led by Evans Malyi, Assistant Technical Director.

Additional support will be provided by assistant coaches, speed/agility trainers, and goalkeeper coaches.

How does the ECNL coach interact with the Travel coaches in the age group?

The ECNL coach and Age Group head coach (Red team coach) collaborate to manage entire age group, specifically:

- Player development and progression
- Dual Rostering
- Club Passing
- Cross-team training (e.g. Red players train up with ECNL, Black train up with Red, etc.)

ROSTER SIZES, TRYOUTS, SELECTIONS, & UNIFORMS

How many players will be selected for each team?

Anticipated roster sizes for ECNL teams are:

U13-U14: 16-18

U15: 18-20

U16-U18/U19: 18-22

Larger player pools may be carried U15-U18/19 to account for increased commitment, injuries, and high school play; this is similar to most top-tier Travel teams currently roster more than 18.

Only 18 may dress per game. Players selected to ECNL are expected to receive opportunities in ECNL matches – otherwise we will look to club pass from the Red team to ensure playing time.

Club-pass opportunities may occur for Red (CCL) team players for ECNL matches or events (similar to current structure within Travel)

The maximum roster size per ECNL team is 30.

How are ECNL teams formed?

ECNL teams will be formed via Identification (ID) sessions, which will take place before the traditional tryout period in May/June. These ID sessions are open to all players via Talent ID Centers. Players must first register for these ID Centers AND be invited to attend a specific session, which is used to ensure a high-performance playing environment.

Families of players interested in ECNL must be patient during this process, as it is different than the traditional Travel tryout schedule. Most if not all players registered for ECNL Talent ID Center will be invited to attend at least one. Current Loudoun Soccer players will continue to be assessed within their current team and age group.

For more information on Talent ID Centers, visit the Girls ECNL Talent ID Centers page. Invitations to join an ECNL team will be extended on a rolling basis.

Are girls allowed to play-up in ECNL?

Playing up (playing on an older team) is permitted in ECNL, as it is in Loudoun Soccer. However, Loudoun Soccer believes a talented player should only play-up an age group if they excel at that level; players who compete or merely survive while playing up often fail to develop to their fullest potential, because certain elements of their game are compromised in a bigger, faster environment.

Given the competitive environment ECNL teams are expected to create in training and experience in competition, most if not all team members will play in their age group. Families who wish for their child to play-up must first receive approval from Evans Malyi, Loudoun Soccer ECNL Director.

What happens if my child tries out for an ECNL team but is not selected?

All players who try out for ECNL but are not selected are strongly encouraged to attend the club’s Travel tryouts in May and June for potential selection to our Red team that competes in Club Champions League.

Will ECNL teams wear different jerseys?

ECNL teams will wear the same jerseys as the rest of the Travel teams in the club, but will have an ECNL patch on their sleeve. Additional items exclusive to ECNL players may be added to the existing uniform package.

GAME, EVENT, AND TRAINING COMMITMENT

What is the game and event schedule going to be?

ECNL competition includes a combination of league schedules and event (tournament) play. Certain age groups include post-season competition in June and possibly July if they advance. Please review the chart below to read the expected competition formats for each age group.

Age Group	Conference (League) Schedule	ECNL Event Schedule	ECNL Post-Season Schedule
U13	Traditional league schedule in Fall (Sept-Nov) and Spring (March-May)	One showcase per year	None – season concludes in May
U14	Traditional league schedule in Fall (Sept-Nov) and Spring (March-May)	One showcase per year	Top teams in each conference qualify for ECNL Champions League event in June

U15	Traditional league schedule primarily in Fall (Sept-Nov) with potential matches in Winter (Dec-Feb) to minimize conflicts with High School season in Spring.	Two showcases per year	Top teams in each conference qualify for ECNL Champions League in June with winners advancing to ECNL Finals in July; or for ECNL North American Cup or Showcase Cup in June.
U16	Traditional league schedule primarily in Fall (Sept-Nov) with potential matches in Winter (Dec-Feb) to minimize conflicts with High School season in Spring.	Three showcases per year	Top teams in each conference qualify for ECNL Champions League in June with winners advancing to ECNL Finals in July; or for ECNL North American Cup or Showcase Cup in June.
U17	Traditional league schedule primarily in Fall (Sept-Nov) with potential matches in Winter (Dec-Feb) to minimize conflicts with High School season in Spring.	Three showcases per year	Top teams in each conference qualify for ECNL Champions League in June with winners advancing to ECNL Finals in July; or for ECNL North American Cup or Showcase Cup in June.
U18/U19	Traditional league schedule primarily in Fall (Sept-Nov) with potential matches in Winter (Dec-Feb) to minimize conflicts with High School season in Spring.	At least one showcase per year	Top teams in each conference qualify for ECNL Champions League in June.

Are the substitution rules the same as other leagues?

At U14 and above the ECNL limits the number of substitutions in each ECNL game by prohibiting re-entry of players in each half. In other words, if a player is subbed out in a half, the player is not able to return in that half of play. This helps players maintain their concentration and work rate for far longer periods of time than in most other competitions. ECNL players are forced to adapt to the physical and psychological demands of playing extended minutes, similar to what they'll experience if they compete in college and other higher levels of play.

How do the showcase tournaments work?

ECNL Showcase events are held as three-day tournaments (one game per day) throughout the year, which allows teams to play opponents from other parts of the country, and attract college coaches to the U15-U19 events.

National Events are held in November-May to better coincide with the college recruiting period. They are typically 3-day events (1 game per day) and are held Fri-Sun or Sat-Mon on holiday weekends.

U15 teams attend two events, U16-U17 teams attend three events, and U18/U19 attend at least one event.

Optional events for U13 and U14 teams are available, often in conjunction with these national events. However, participation in these events is optional for these youngest age groups. Due to geographic distance, it is unlikely U13 and U14 teams will participate but are expected to attend the U13/U14 Showcase in May.

How does the post-season work?

The top 32 U14 teams and the top 16 U18/U19 teams will advance to the ECNL Champions League (National Playoffs) in June, with a winner determined at that event.

The top 64 U15-U17 teams will advance to one of three post-season events held concurrently in June:

- The top 32 teams compete in ECNL Champions League (National Playoffs), with the final four advancing to the ECNL Finals in July;
- The next 16 teams compete in the North American Cup; and
- The next 16 teams compete Showcase Cup. Teams that fail to finish in the top 64 do not participate in the post-season event.

Do ECNL teams attend other tournaments (like WAGS and Jefferson Cup)?

Yes, ECNL teams may participate in high profile outside events like Jefferson Cup and the WAGS Tournament, at the discretion of the club. U15-U18/19 teams will participate in the Loudoun Soccer College Showcase.

Will ECNL teams participate in State Cup?

Most likely no. Although there are no rules prohibiting ECNL teams from doing so, the schedule and commitment make participation in USYS State Cup, Regional Championships, and National Championships difficult. U13 ECNL teams may participate due to the lack of a regional ECNL event in June.

How much travel is involved in participating in the ECNL?

Loudoun Soccer teams will compete in the Mid-Atlantic division, which includes clubs from Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Bus trips may be organized for longer-distance away games to better manage the travel requirements and costs. Saturday-Sunday matches are

often coordinated for longer road trips (e.g. two games in South Carolina on one weekend) to better manage the schedule.

Compared to our top-tier girls teams that have competed in USYS National League and various showcase tournaments, the total amount of travel may actually be less.

What is the expected training schedule?

Loudoun Soccer ECNL teams will train three times per week during their competitive seasons. U13 and U14 ECNL teams will NOT participate in Training Academy (TA) but instead will train as a team for their third session.

Training sessions are expected to occur at Loudoun Sports Park, Evergreen Sportsplex, Bolen Park, and area High Schools.

Some training sessions may include sports performance sessions, classroom sessions, and video analysis.

Is this a year-long commitment, or are breaks scheduled in the calendar?

The ECNL commitment is 10-months, similar to the current Travel team commitment. Breaks will be scheduled around the competition schedule to permit appropriate rest and recovery for all players. U15-U19 ECNL teams are expected to have a lesser commitment in the spring so that players may participate for their high school teams.

ECNL teams will begin informal sessions during the summer months, similar to other Loudoun Soccer Travel teams.

COSTS

What are the costs associated with playing for an ECNL team?

Costs associated with participating on a Loudoun Soccer ECNL team will be similar in structure to Travel teams (club fee, team fee, individual travel fees, uniform fee, etc.). Fees can be seen in full at the Uniforms & Fees page.

Financial Assistance

Loudoun Soccer is committed to ensuring that all potential players have the opportunity to receive the benefits of participation in our programs regardless of race, economic status and/or physical limitations. As part of that commitment, Loudoun Soccer is pleased to offer a Financial Assistance program to help families offset fees associated with the Boys ECNL program. Please see the Uniform & Fees page for more information on how to apply.

COLLEGE RECRUITING

How is participating in ECNL beneficial for college recruiting?

ECNL teams attract college coaches given the level of play associated with this league. Additionally, the showcase events provide a convenient opportunity for college coaches to attend in order to evaluate and recruit numerous players and teams.

The ECNL is comprised of 80+ of the most competitive clubs across the country. Over the course of the playing season, clubs gather to participate in five (5) ECNL National events and one (1) National Playoff event (how many events of the five is dependent upon age group). In order to make life easy for the college scouts and maximize collegiate exposure, games are all scheduled and held at one soccer complex. To further work with the college scouts and their schedules, National Events are hosted from November through June, avoiding conflict with the women's college soccer regular season. The benefits of having the National events scheduled over an eight-month period allow:

- The college coaches the ability to observe and evaluate the players from one region to the next;
- The college coaches to have multiple evaluations throughout the year;
- The clubs to pre-plan their competitive calendar to coincide with their regional calendar and HS calendar; and
- The college coaches to pre-plan their recruiting calendars for the season.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND QUESTIONS

Where can I find more information?

Parents are encouraged to learn more about the Girls ECNL at the ECNL website. The presentation from our introductory Girls ECNL Town Hall Meeting can be viewed on the Program Info page.

Families may also contact Evans Malyi, Loudoun Soccer Assistant Technical Director and Girls ECNL Director, at evans.malyi@loudounsoccer.com.