



Academy Program Handbook

(As of January, 2025)

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INTRODUCTION

MISSION

Dubuque Soccer Club's mission is to provide high level instruction, competitive, and recreational soccer programs for boys and girls between the ages of 3-18. The club guides players through their development, based on their commitment, ability, and desire to compete. At every level, the club provides superior coaching to all players, regardless of ability or economic circumstance, in a fun, inclusive learning environment.

CLUB VISION

Cultivate **skill, tactical awareness, competitiveness, and sportsmanship** in every player.

Develop a reputation as a **respected, high-quality soccer club** as well as a worthy opponent.

Play with **dignity and tenacity**; Emphasize **mental toughness, determination, discipline, and character**.

Our goal is to **offer motivated players the highest quality coaching and team support**, ensuring they gain **valuable exposure at the most competitive levels**. This commitment will **maximize the potential for DSC players** to pursue future soccer opportunities.

Maintain an **enjoyable and fun club atmosphere**.

Be creative and innovative in the continuing development of our club.

VALUES

The club strives to help each player realize their soccer potential, while using the sport to teach the values of **character**, **teamwork**, **perseverance**, and **sportsmanship**.



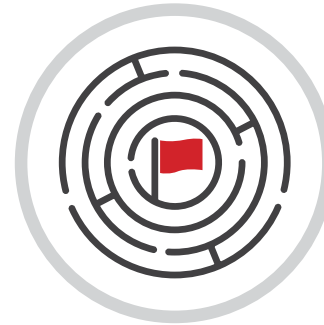
Character

We emphasize the importance of integrity, respect, and sportsmanship both on and off the field and foster a supportive and positive environment for all players.



Teamwork

We highlight the importance of collaboration, communication, and mutual support, which together create a cohesive environment where players can thrive and achieve collective success.



Perseverance

We encourage players to overcome challenges, remain dedicated in the face of adversity, and continuously strive for improvement, both individually and as a team.



Sportsmanship

We promote respect for opponents, fair play, and graciousness, regardless of the game outcomes, which cultivates a positive atmosphere and teaches important life lessons both on and off the field.



ABOUT THE CLUB

DEVELOPMENTAL

Ages u3-u9

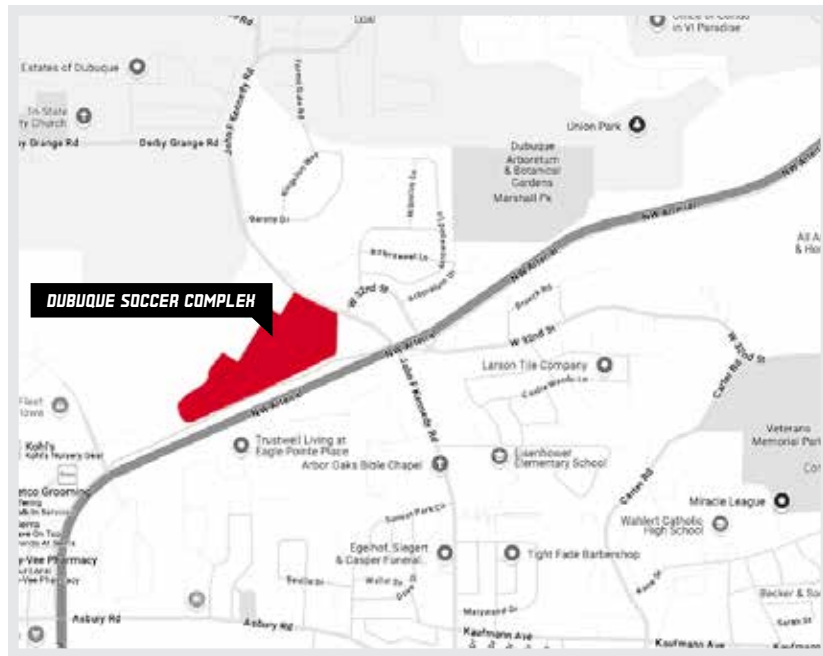
The Developmental Program provides a non-competitive setting where kids can learn to play soccer and have a great time on the field! Format features once a week, all-in-one practice/play sessions. Registration is for each season—spring, summer, and fall.

ACADEMY

Ages u8-u18

The Academy Program provides next-level training focused on technical and tactical skills. This is a year-long program consisting of fall, winter, and spring seasons. Training twice weekly with regionally-located games each season plus tournaments.

TRAINING FACILITY



12896 John F Kennedy Rd, Dubuque, IA

HISTORY

Dubuque Soccer Club had its humble beginning on the front porch of Jim Ott's home in the summer of 1987. Jim, Chuck Isenhart, Dave Maier, Doug Schmidt, Mike Klass, Doug Storley, and Tom Holscher met to form Dubuque Soccer Club.

The original club comprised four teams (U12, U14, U16 and U19 boys). It was the intent to take teams to the first Iowa Sports Festival. The player selection process was simply to ask AYSO coaches to recommend players.

The first season was not very successful. This didn't stop the growth of Dubuque Soccer Club. Within four years, DSC grew from four teams to eleven.

In the words of Dave Maier, "In the beginning when we participated in tournaments, the comments were, 'Oh good, here comes Dubuque,' and it wasn't long before that changed to 'Look out, here comes Dubuque.'"

Thanks to the diligent work of these men and so many others, we have a thriving organization that continues to provide Dubuque-area youth an exceptional opportunity to work together as a TEAM and share the rewards of a job well done.



REGISTRATION AND MEMBERSHIP

Summary

Our interested and new players go through a streamlined process to find the right team based on their age, experience, and ability. Annual fees cover registration, training, and league games. Optional tournaments allow participation in more competitive events throughout the season for an additional fee.

INTERESTED/NEW PLAYER PROCESS

It is the goal of Dubuque Soccer Club to maintain an appropriate number of players on every team in the DSC Academy Programs.

Trial Practice

New players will have the opportunity to attend four training sessions with the DSC Academy Team they are interested in joining.

Players must have an intention of potentially joining an Academy Team in order to participate.

After the 4th training session (or before, if they are ready) a new player must decide if they are willing to commit to the appropriate Academy Team for the remainder of the yearlong playing season or for the entirety of the upcoming yearlong playing season.

When the new player makes the decision to commit to the appropriate Academy Team, the fee will be prorated for the remainder of the yearlong playing season.

The prorated fee will be based upon 3 playing seasons for players in the U9-U14 age group. The prorated fee will be based upon 2 playing seasons for players in the U15-U18 age group.

Player Placements

Player placement evaluations are to be held at the Dubuque Soccer Complex, 12896 John F. Kennedy Road in early June. Information regarding exact dates and times and registration information for the event will be announced in May. All current and potential players are highly encouraged to attend the evaluations in order to be correctly placed on the upcoming year's teams.

Determining the Appropriate Team

Players will be placed into the appropriate Academy Team based upon the player's birth year. (IE - Players will play with the age appropriate DSC Academy Team upon becoming a member of the DSC.)

EXCEPTION - Players who are classified in a younger age group due to their birthday BUT are in a school grade similar to a majority of a team have the ability to request to play in the older age group. (IE - A player who is technically a U11 by birthdate but is enrolled in a school grade similar to the majority of U12 players can request to play in the older age group.)

Tournament Interest and Availability

Upon placement on an Academy Team, coaches will inquire about your player's interest and availability for the upcoming season's tournaments via TeamSnap. Please note that tournaments are optional and an additional fee.

Coaches will communicate the tournament rosters to the players and parents after the teams have been registered for the tournaments. After tournament rosters have been established, the Treasurer will invoice for tournament fees.

REGISTRATION

As the Academy Program requires a year long commitment, registration needs to be completed by July 1.

Academy Registration

Academy registration is conducted via GotSport using credit or debit cards. Registration fees encompass training sessions and league games for the fall, winter, and spring seasons. Players have the option to enroll in a payment plan that spreads the fees over four months. For those who join the Academy Program mid-year, a prorated fee will apply. For instance, if a player enrolls at the start of the winter session, they will only be responsible for two-thirds of the annual Academy fee.

Camp Registration

Throughout the year, we offer various camps that are independent of the Academy Program. Participation in these camps does not require enrollment in the Academy but provide players with additional opportunities to enhance their skills. Registration for camps is processed through Demosphere using credit or debit cards.

ANNUAL FEES

Annual costs go towards coaching staff salaries, league fees, facility maintenance and/or rental, equipment purchases, travel expenses, and administrative operations.

AGE	COMMITMENT	INVESTMENT
U8-U11	Training: 2x/week Seasons: Fall, Winter, Spring (approximately 4 league game days in Fall and Spring). League: Eastern Iowa Youth Soccer League (EIYSL) <i>Game locations are within 120 miles of Dubuque.</i>	\$700/year
U12-U14	Training: 2x/week Seasons: Fall, Winter, Spring (approximately 4 league game days in Fall and Spring). League: EIYSL (U12) and Club Development League (U13/14)	\$775/year
U15-U18	Training: 2x/week Seasons: Fall (approximately 4 league game days in Fall), Winter (training and tournaments) League: CDL	\$525/year

Financial Aid

While we believe our fee structure is competitive, we recognize that for some, this fee may be prohibitive. It is the policy of DSC to assist those members who need financial assistance so that an individual's ability to pay dues is not a sole deterrent of playing soccer. For additional information regarding qualifications or to receive an application, contact treasurer@dubuquesoccer.org.

TOURNAMENT FEES

Tournaments are *optional* and are an additional cost (not included in annual player registration fees and are the responsibility of the members of the tournament teams.)

Upon placement on an Academy Team, coaches will inquire about your player's interest and availability for the upcoming season's tournaments via TeamSnap.

Tournament cost includes:

- Tournament registration fees as set by the event organizers
- Head coach compensation (only one coach is paid per game)
- Head coach mileage reimbursement per IRS guidelines
- Head coach meal stipend
- Head coach hotel reimbursement (if applicable)
- Payment processing fees

All tournament-related costs will be equally divided among all DSC players participating in that tournament. Parent coaches will be eligible for mileage reimbursement, meal stipend, and hotel reimbursement only if they serve as the head coach for the entire tournament duration.

Payment Responsibility

Once a coach has finalized a tournament's roster and released it to the team, all players on the roster are responsible for the associated tournament fee. If a player's availability changes after final rosters are announced, the player will still be responsible for the fee and cannot have it refunded or abated. The unavailable player may work with the coach and other players to try to find a replacement player. Given the rostering requirements for tournaments, any replacement player needs to be approved in advance by the coach. In that scenario, the players and parents may work out an arrangement between themselves in regards to the tournament fee. The original player on the roster will still be held responsible for the fee.

Payment Options

Tournament costs are invoiced once per season (fall, winter, and spring) through Intuit. Funds from the Family Fundraising Account will be automatically applied to the invoice total, with any remaining balance payable via credit or debit card, bank ACH, PayPal, Venmo, or Apple Pay.

Family Fundraising Accounts*

DSC conducts fundraisers throughout the year, enabling your player to earn funds for both the club and their personal Family Fundraising Account. All funds collected in the Family Fundraising Account are held in a separate DSC savings account designated for the players. These funds may only be used for tournament registration and will automatically be applied to tournament registration invoices.

**Players do not have access to their Family Fundraising Account funds for cash requests. Any remaining balance in a Family Fundraising Account at the conclusion of a family's involvement with DSC will be considered a donation to DSC and allocated to the organization's general operating fund.*

UNIFORMS

Players are expected to wear approved club attire during training sessions and matches.

Uniforms

A link to your player's personalized store on soccer.com will be provided before the Academy season commences. Uniform kits are refreshed every two years, and a selection of DSC fanwear is also available for purchase.

Training Session Requirements

Training shirt, black shorts, black socks

Training shirts are ordered by the club separately and will be distributed prior to the first practice. Training black shorts and socks are ordered through Soccer.com.

Game Requirements

Home Games - all red kit

Away Games - all red kit preferred but if opposing team has similar color, then the alternate jersey (white) will be worn.

DSC is proud to partner with Soccer.com for Academy Uniforms. If you need to order a uniform, you will be sent an email from Soccer.com with ordering information after completing registration. Uniforms are on a two year rotation. Players are required to reorder every cycle.

MEMBER COMMITMENT

Dubuque Soccer Club (DSC) is committed to providing a premier environment to develop youth soccer players from the ages of U3-U18. In order to fulfill this goal, DSC requires families and players in our Academy Programs to commit for the entirety of the soccer year.

The yearly financial commitment will allow DSC to appropriately organize, schedule, roster, and develop players from both the individual and team aspects. (Refunds will only be authorized for families moving away from the Dubuque area and season-ending injuries certified by a medical doctor.)

As well, in order to maintain appropriate player development over the long term, it is essential DSC has the ability to understand and structure appropriate environments. DSC values our players' and families' commitments, and it is the goal of DSC to continually provide an appropriate environment for our players to develop within.

The guidelines below are necessary and essential for DSC to maintain a positive player development environment:

1. Players who register with DSC Academy Program are strongly encouraged to continue with DSC throughout their youth soccer career. Players and families remaining committed to the Academy Program will benefit everyone associated with DSC in the long-run.
2. Should a player decide to exit the Academy Program and register/participate in another soccer program, that specific player cannot be guaranteed a roster spot on a DSC team in the future.
3. If DSC is unable to provide an appropriate environment for a specific player, that player may register with another soccer program and will have the opportunity to rejoin DSC in the future.*
4. A player who has participated in other soccer organizations prior to join DSC, will have the ability to join DSC at any point throughout their youth soccer career.*
5. A player who makes the decision to discontinue their membership with DSC Academy Program to pursue another activity other than soccer, may rejoin the Academy Program in the future.*

*Based on the Player Placement process described on pages 21, 22, and 23.

AGE GROUP GUIDELINES

Age groups are based on the year the player was born. Use the chart to the right to determine which age group your child would play in.

Players' age groups are based upon the start of the DSC Soccer Year (August).

In alignment with U.S. Soccer, there may be changes to how some players are classified for the 2026-27 season. More details will be available prior to the player placement for the 2026-27 season.

NOTE: DSC Coaches and the Director of Coaching may recommend an age group for a player different than the guidelines presented in the chart on the right based on developmental appropriateness. See "Player Development" section for additional details.

	SEASON			
	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
2023				
2022				U6
2021			U6	U7
2020		U6	U7	U8
2019	U6	U7	U8	U9
2018	U7	U8	U9	U10
2017	U8	U9	U10	U11
2016	U9	U10	U11	U12
2015	U10	U11	U12	U13
2014	U11	U12	U13	U14
2013	U12	U13	U14	U15
2012	U13	U14	U15	U16
2011	U14	U15	U16	U17
2010	U15	U16	U17	U18
2009	U16	U17	U18	
2008	U17	U18		
2007	U18			



PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

MISSION

Dubuque Soccer Club's mission is to provide high level instruction, competitive, and recreational soccer programs for boys and girls between the ages of 3-18. The club guides players through their development, based on their commitment, ability, and desire to compete. At every level, the club provides superior coaching to all players, regardless of ability or economic circumstance, in a fun, inclusive learning environment.

LEAGUE GAMES PHILOSOPHY: OVERVIEW

League games prioritize player growth and skill enhancement over competition. These games are designed to create a supportive environment where young athletes can learn the fundamentals of the sport, develop teamwork and communication skills, and gain confidence on the field.

Focus and Playing Time

The primary focus of league games is to develop players' technical, tactical, physical, and mental abilities. While player growth and development remain our top priority during league play, DSC coaches still aim to create opportunities for players to compete at a high level and strive for success.

Coaches will make a good faith attempt to have all players receive meaningful playing time each league game, provided they consistently demonstrate a strong level of commitment and engagement in training sessions and games

All players rostered on a team will generally be given equal opportunity regardless of If a player is technically "playing up" or "playing down." However, Coaches reserve the right to roster extra players as subs as long as it is communicated to the player and parents.

Rostering Guidelines

Once the season schedule for league games has been released by the Director of Coaching (DOC), the head coach will communicate with the entire team through TeamSnap to confirm player availability. Parents are asked to respond promptly and by the stated deadline to confirm their child's availability.

Final roster decisions will be made by the DSC coach(es) and/or the DOC based on team needs and other considerations.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY: DEVELOPMENTAL APPROPRIATENESS

Ensuring developmental appropriateness is key to fostering a positive and effective learning environment for all players. Decisions about age-group placement, will prioritize the physical, emotional, and cognitive needs of each player to support their growth and long-term development.

Age Group Flexibility

There is potential for players to “play up” or “play down” an age group, but this decision will be made carefully and collaboratively by the team coach of the player’s designated age group, the team coach of the potential age group, and the DSC Director of Coaching (DOC).

With the current model of grouping teams together for training sessions, coaches have the ability to have players play up or down in training sessions as the coach sees fit. When it comes to playing tournaments or league games additional consideration will be required between the coaches and the DOC.

Benefits of Flexible Rostering

- **Increased Player Development:** Allows players to more confidently experience different positions and roles with players with similar skill levels.
- **Reduced Burnout:** Prevents overuse injuries and mental fatigue by avoiding an excessive gap in skill level.
- **More Opportunity for Success:** Ensures that all players have an increased opportunity to develop and contribute, boosting morale and motivation.
- **Increased Player Retention:** By offering a more balanced and inclusive experience, flexible rostering can reduce the likelihood of players quitting due to frustration or lack of confidence.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY: PLAYING UP

There is potential for players to “play up” an age group, but this decision will be made carefully and collaboratively by the team coach of the player’s designated age group, the team coach of the potential age group, and the DSC Director of Coaching (DOC). With the current model of grouping teams together for training sessions, coaches have the ability to have players play up in training sessions as the coach sees fit.

When it comes to playing tournaments or league games additional consideration will be required between the coaches and the DOC.

Playing Up

The following factors, based on the Iowa Soccer Association (ISA) framework, will guide decisions about playing up:

- **Physical Development:** Is the player physically ready and skillful enough to compete with older, more mature players? Early developers may sometimes benefit from playing up to face appropriate challenges.
 - **Tactical Development:** Playing up should challenge players to solve problems like making quicker decisions or relying less on physical attributes. However, being physically advanced doesn’t automatically mean a player is tactically ready.
 - **Technical Development:** Parents and coaches often confuse physical development with technical skills. Early developers may dominate games due to their physical maturity, but this doesn’t always equate to advanced technical ability. Late developers, conversely, may appear less impactful but can still possess strong technical skills.
- **Mental Development:** Playing up can introduce mental stress due to higher competition and increased expectations. This can result in feelings of self-doubt or pressure to prove themselves. Strong support from coaches, parents, and teammates is crucial to maintaining confidence and fostering growth.

DSC will ensure that playing up aligns with the player’s best interests for development and enjoyment. The decision will be reviewed regularly to ensure continued appropriateness.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY: PLAYING DOWN

In some cases it is most beneficial to the player to “play down” an age group, but this decision will be made carefully and collaboratively by the team coach of the player’s designated age group, the team coach of the potential age group, and the DSC Director of Coaching (DOC). With the current model of grouping teams together for training sessions, coaches have the ability to have players play down in training sessions as the coach sees fit.

When it comes to playing tournaments or league games additional consideration will be required between the coaches and the DOC.

Playing Down

In some cases, it may be necessary for a player to “play down” an age group to better support their development. This decision will also be guided by the Iowa Soccer Association (ISA) framework and will focus on the following considerations:

- **Physical Development:** If a player’s physical growth is significantly behind their peers, playing down may allow them to develop without undue physical challenges.
- **Tactical Development:** Players struggling to keep pace with tactical challenges in their age group may benefit from playing down to focus on understanding and solving game-related problems at a more manageable level.
- **Technical Development:** When a player’s technical skills are significantly behind their peers, playing down can provide opportunities to build a stronger technical foundation without the pressures of higher-level competition.
- **Mental Development:** Playing within their appropriate developmental level can help players regain confidence, reduce stress, and rekindle their enjoyment of the game.

DSC will ensure that playing down aligns with the player’s best interests for development and enjoyment. The decision will be reviewed regularly to ensure continued appropriateness.

In both instances, decisions to play up or down will be made collaboratively by the player’s head coach, the prospective team’s head coach, and the DOC. If deemed appropriate, the player’s head coach will share the recommendation with the parents to gather their feedback and insight. Based on those discussions, the head coach will determine the next steps: moving the player up, moving the player down, or keeping them in their current age group.

The primary focus will always be on the long-term development and well-being of the player.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY: PLAYER PLACEMENT (MID-SEASON)

The DSC Academy offers mid-season player placement trials, allowing new players to attend up to four training sessions with the team. Following these sessions, players must decide whether to commit to the team for the remainder of the season, with prorated fees based on the number of remaining playing seasons.

Trial Practice

Trial Practice (Mid-Season Player Placement) Guidelines

- **Eligibility:** “New Players” may attend up to four training sessions with the DSC Academy Team they are interested in joining.
 - **Intent to Join:** Players must have the intention of potentially joining the DSC Academy Team in order to participate in the trial sessions.
 - **Commitment Decision:** After the fourth training session, or earlier, provided the coach first deems the player to be developmentally appropriate for the team, the “new player” will decide if they are willing to commit to the appropriate DSC Academy Team for the remainder of the yearlong playing season or for the entirety of the upcoming year long playing season.
- **Prorated Fees:** If the “new player” commits to the team, the fee will be prorated based on the number of playing seasons remaining:

For players in the U9-U14 age group, the prorated fee will cover the remaining two (or one) playing season(s).

For players in the U15-U18 age group, the prorated fee will cover the remaining playing season.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY: PLAYER PLACEMENT (BEGINNING OF SEASON)

Player Placement Guidelines

1. Purpose of Player Placement

Player Placements at DSC are designed to evaluate players and determine the best placement for their development within the program. Rather than a traditional “pass/fail” tryout, our player placement process focuses on assessing where each player will thrive—whether that’s within their age group or another age group, depending on technical, tactical, physical, and mental abilities.

2. Timing of Player Placements

Player Placements will take place at the end of the Spring season, allowing coaches to assess players after they’ve had a full year of development and experience.

The timing ensures a smooth transition into the next season and gives coaches a comprehensive understanding of each player’s strengths and areas for growth.

3. What to Expect During Player Placements

- **Evaluation Criteria:** Players will be assessed on their technical skills, tactical understanding, physical abilities, attitude, and potential for growth.
- **Game-Like Scenarios:** The majority of the player placement will involve individual ball control, small-sided games, and large-side game-like activities that allow coaches to evaluate players technical, tactical, physical, and mental abilities.

4. Placement Philosophy

- **Age Group Placement:** Most players will be placed within their age group, but there may be opportunities for some players to move up or down an age group based on their tactical, technical, physical, and mental abilities. This ensures every player is challenged appropriately and has the best opportunity to develop.
- **Development First:** The goal is to place players where they can learn, grow, and thrive while building confidence in their abilities.
- **Unique Cases:** In rare instances where a player is not developmentally appropriate for the Academy program, parents will be contacted directly by the Director of Coaching (DOC) to discuss alternative pathways and recommendations for their child’s continued development.

5. Post Player Placement Communication

- **Placement Decisions:** Parents will receive an email or notification with their child’s placement shortly after player placement concludes. If the recommendation is for a player to move up or down an age group, this will be communicated clearly and an opportunity to ask questions will be provided. This decision will be a collaborative process (parents, coaches, DOC, and player if appropriate), with the final choice ultimately resting with the parents/child.
- **Team Acceptance:** Families will be asked to confirm their child’s spot on the team by a specified deadline to ensure any necessary registration and ordering of uniforms can be completed prior to the start of the fall season.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY: PLAYER PLACEMENT, CONT.

Player Placement Guidelines (cont.)

6. Preparing Your Player for Player Placements

- **Encourage Preparation:** Encourage your child to attend training sessions leading up to player placements to ensure they're prepared and confident.
- **Emphasize the Importance of Attitude:** Focus on effort, attitude, and sportsmanship—coaches value players who are team-oriented and coachable.
- **Avoid Comparison:** Remind your child that player placements are not about comparison to others but about finding the best fit for their growth and enjoyment of the game.

7. Supporting the Process

- **Parent Role:** Encourage your child prior to player placements, but allow the coaches to focus on evaluations without interference or sideline coaching.
- **Trust the Process:** Our experienced coaching staff is committed to making thoughtful placement decisions that prioritize your child's long-term success and love of the game.

8. Questions or Concerns

If you have any questions about the player placement process or what to expect, please don't hesitate to reach out to the DOC. DSC staff is here to support you and your player every step of the way!

TOURNAMENT PHILOSOPHY: OVERVIEW

Tournament games at DSC prioritize competitive results while maintaining a focus on player development, with roster decisions based on commitment, engagement, and readiness to meet the team's competitive demands.

Focus and Playing Time

The primary focus of tournament games (i.e., any games outside of the DSC league schedule) will be on achieving competitive results. While player growth and development remain priorities for the DSC coaching staff, tournaments provide a unique opportunity for coaches, the team, and individual players to focus on preparation and execution with an emphasis on game outcomes.

Playing time and roster decisions may be influenced by several factors, including player attitude, commitment to training (attendance), commitment to games (attendance), player engagement (willingness and capacity to learn and improve), and overall player ability (technical, tactical, mental, and physical skills).

All players rostered on a team will generally be given equal opportunity regardless of if a player is technically "playing up" or "playing down". However, Coaches reserve the right to roster extra players as subs as long as it is communicated to the player and parents.

Rostering Guidelines

Once priority tournaments are identified by the Director of Coaching (DOC), the head coach will reach out to the entire team through TeamSnap to confirm availability. Parents should respond promptly and by the stated deadline to indicate their child's availability.

The tournament roster may include fewer players than those available. Final roster decisions will be made by DSC Coach(es) and/or the DOC based on several team and individual factors. These factors include the ideal roster size for the tournament, player commitment and engagement in trainings and games, and each player's current developmental level and readiness for the team's competitive demands. This approach is designed to provide a positive and competitive experience for all DSC players.

NOTE: While tournaments will generally prioritize outcomes, there may be instances where the club provides the opportunity to simply play versus outcome. In these cases, the coach will communicate that objective.

PLAYER EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

Effective communication is vital to the success of our soccer program, fostering a supportive environment for both players and parents.

Please see "Parent Communication Guidelines" on page 41 for additional information.

We encourage open dialogue between parents, players, and coaches, allowing everyone to share their thoughts and concerns at appropriate times throughout the season. This collaborative approach helps ensure that players receive the guidance they need while also promoting personal responsibility and growth.

Considerations:

1. Parents and players should feel free to communicate with the coach and ask questions but should use their best judgment in selecting an appropriate time.
2. Players are encouraged to speak up and communicate for themselves at appropriate times.
3. Coaches are expected to communicate openly, honestly, and professionally with each player about their progress.
4. Player-Coach and Player-Parent-Coach conferences are encouraged at appropriate times during the year.



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Summary

Players are expected to **demonstrate commitment, teamwork, and sportsmanship on the field**, while parents play a vital role by **supporting their children and fostering a positive team environment**. Coaches are responsible for **guiding player development, implementing training strategies, and ensuring a safe and inclusive atmosphere for all team members**.

PLAYER RESPONSIBILITIES

Upholding responsibilities is vital for soccer players, as it fosters accountability, discipline, and teamwork. By embracing their roles, players not only improve their skills but also build trust and camaraderie, creating an environment where everyone can thrive and succeed together.

Be Present and Punctual

DSC Players are expected to be punctual and attend at least 80% of all scheduled DSC activities. We understand there can be conflicts with other activities, and we encourage multi-sport athleticism. Please communicate these conflicts to your coach in a timely manner

Give it Your All and Stay Positive

Give your full effort during training and games while maintaining a positive attitude, both on and off the field.

Be an Effective Communicator

Support your teammates, and work collaboratively during training and games. Communicate openly with coaches and teammates about any concerns or issues.

Be a Good Teammate

Encourage your teammates, help them when they need it, and listen to their ideas. Soccer is a team sport – prioritize team goals and decisions over individual interests.

Be Coachable and Driven to Improve

Take initiative in improving individual skills through extra training while being open to constructive feedback and work on areas for improvement.

Respect Coaches and Officials

Follow the directions and guidance of coaches during training and games. Show respect to referees and officials, regardless of decisions made.

Be Prepared

Come to training and games with the appropriate gear (uniform, cleats, shin guards, etc.). Ensure that personal equipment is in good condition and ready for use.

Arrive at training in approved DSC training apparel and wear appropriate uniforms on game days.

Represent the Club Positively

Showcase the club in a positive light in and out of the soccer environment, including on social media. Upholding the club's values and culture in all interactions.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

When parents uphold their commitments to positivity, support, and involvement, they strengthen the team community, foster trust between players and coaches, and contribute to the overall success and enjoyment of the season.

Be Supportive

Encourage and support your child in their soccer journey, celebrating their efforts and achievements.

Foster a Positive Environment

Promote a positive team culture by discouraging negativity or criticism of teammates, coaches, or officials.

Maintain Healthy Communication

Maintain open lines of communication with coaches regarding your child's progress, goals, and any concerns. Inform coaches in advance if your child will miss training or games.

Be Committed

Ensure your child attends all training sessions, games, and team events, emphasizing the importance of commitment to the team.

Respect Coaches' Decisions

Trust and respect the coaches' decisions regarding player positions, strategies, and playing time.

Encourage Independence

Allow your child to take responsibility for their development by encouraging them to communicate with coaches and seek feedback.

Provide Necessary Equipment

Ensure your child has the required gear for training and games, including appropriate footwear and safety equipment.

Manage Expectations

Keep realistic expectations regarding your child's performance and development, understanding that growth takes time.

Be Engaged within the Club

Be willing to help with team activities, such as organizing events or fundraising.



POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Summary

Here are the essential guidelines designed to **ensure a safe, respectful, and enjoyable environment for all players, coaches, and families.**

Following these policies will help us foster a positive experience on and off the field, promoting teamwork, sportsmanship, and community spirit.

SIDELINE POLICY

As a Parent/Guardian of a young soccer player, it is essential to understand the importance of your conduct during the game. Encouragement and positivity will help our teams be successful on the field.

Abstain from making comments about the referees and the decisions they make throughout the game.

Spectators should realize that referees sometimes make mistakes – even those officiating at the highest levels of play. When parents begin to focus on referees, so do our players. This leads to our players losing focus on what is important...playing! Ultimately we should not have any negative interactions/comments with the referees, before, during, or after the game. Parents and spectators are not permitted to disparage, ridicule, or otherwise engage in threatening or harassing conduct toward an official, coach, or player at any time.

Refrain from coaching/making coaching points throughout the game to individual players and/or the team.

Too much information creates a very difficult environment for players to focus and reach their potential. Allowing the players to make decisions on their own and be creative enables better development.

Sit back and enjoy the game!

There is no doubt soccer is a very passionate game. Enthusiasm and encouragement are great assets, but please continue to be self-aware and willing to “take a step back” when emotions get the best of you. Understanding that we want our players, teams, coaches, and parents to continue to have a passion for the game of soccer will help create a positive and encouraging environment that will allow us all to enjoy the beautiful game!

Focus on the benefits of the game rather than the score.

Far too often parents focus on the score in a game rather than the experience their child has while playing youth sports. While it is natural to want to win, parents need to keep focus on the larger picture.

Think when interacting with opposing fans.

Avoid confrontation with opposing team parents, spectators, coaches, and players. Represent DSC as a club and your child in a respectful manner.

TRAVEL POLICY

DSC assumes no responsibility or liability whatsoever for travel associated with DSC training sessions, league, or tournament play. Carpooling and other cooperative transportation arrangements solely involve players and parents. The Club is not involved in said travel arrangement nor is the Club in any way responsible for making such arrangements. Accordingly, parents and players who have reached the appropriate driving age as stipulated by the law, expressly agree to hold the Club, its officers, and directors, harmless from any and all liability stemming from, or arising out of, injuries or death related to the transportation of players to and from Club training sessions, league, or tournament play. As for players driving, it is our recommendation that there should be no unaccompanied minors in a vehicle. As a player within the Club, travel around the county is anticipated and expected, and all players will be required to participate in every event unless injured. Certain travel rules are Club specific, but other rules and guidelines can and will be set by individual teams.

Travel rules for the club include:

- Respect for the property of others, including hotel property, etc. and respect for other guests and hotel staff.
- Players always need to be accounted for with either a parent, chaperone, coach, or other designated person.
- Team meetings, training, meals, and other activities set by the coach are mandatory and players are responsible for being punctual, with absence or tardiness limited to situations where prior permission has been given by the coach.

- Teams are expected to stay together in the same hotel whenever possible, if rooming assignments are necessary, players are expected to honor assignments made by the coach.
- Curfew will be set by team coach, honored by all players, and supported by parents and chaperones.
- As representatives of the Club, decorum and manners are expected through the entire trip.
- Players will not, under any circumstances, operate rental vehicles.
- Respect for fellow players, families, chaperones, and all others in authority.
- All movie selections at a hotel will be approved by the parent, chaperone, or other designated person.
- No costs will be levied against a room account without permission of a parent, chaperone, or another designated person. Additionally, families of Club players are also expected to observe Club travel rules and any other applicable Club or team specific rules while traveling and staying in hotels with a Club team. Parents should be mentors and leaders for the players and teams!

PLAYER PICK UP POLICY

DSC strives to provide an environment that is positive and encouraging for all of our players. Please understand that no item is of greater concern than the safety of every player involved with our club. This policy is designed to protect your child. Your support of the policy is not only appreciated, but necessary to ensure that we keep kids safe.

Our coaches are required to stay on the field until the last player has been picked up. This policy applies to all players registered with the DSC Academy Program and is designed to ensure your child's safety.

1. Coaches will report any player(s) who are not picked up within 10 minutes of the end of any DSC sponsored activity to the Director of Coaching.
2. Director of Coaching will follow up with the player's parent/guardian to document the incident.
3. Player(s) continually picked up late from the end of DSC activities: DSC Director of Coaching will contact parent / guardian to inform of potential financial and/or membership implications. We ask that all parents work with us to ensure your child's safety by dropping off and picking up your child on time.
4. Player arrival: Players are to arrive at least 15 minutes prior to training. If a coach is not present, the parent is to stay until a coach arrives.

“GUEST PLAYING” POLICY

During the soccer year (August - June) any DSC player who wishes to attend a soccer event outside of DSC activities (training sessions, league games, tournaments, state/national sponsored activities) must get written consent from the Director of Coaching. These outside events must not conflict with any DSC activity, which are the priority. Failure to obtain consent from the DOC could lead to a suspension of the player’s registration card used for league matches and tournaments.

SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

In order to maintain equity across DSC and our teams, it is essential that all teams and coaches adhere to the training and annual schedules. Please refrain from scheduling any DSC related activities during off times scheduled by DSC as well as cancellations. We understand the desire to continually develop our players, but it is essential to maintain consistency as well. Use of DSC fields, equipment, resources, coaches, etc. is not permitted during unscheduled events. There are liability issues that can arise when individual teams begin to take it upon themselves to train during “off times.” DSC understands there may be times, due to unique circumstances (State Cup, etc.), teams will need to train/play during “off times.” Please contact the DSC Director of Coaching first if you feel it necessary for your team to train during an “off time.”

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

Abiding by the rules is essential for maintaining a fair, respectful, and positive environment that fosters teamwork and enhances the overall experience for everyone involved. Having a clear violation policy is crucial to address any breaches effectively and fairly.

Most minor violations of this Member Handbook should be resolved within the team, through the team manager and team coach. Serious or unresolved violations should be reported initially to the Director of Coaching (DOC), who may involve the Board of Directors, if deemed necessary.

The DOC will conduct a review of the situation and may present the findings to the Board of Directors, which will make the final determination of what action, if any, may be appropriate. If action is necessary, the available options range from a caution or warning, to requiring a personal apology, probation, service work, suspension from playing or attending games, or as a final step, expulsion from DSC. If asked to leave the club, both the parent and player may be asked or required to attend a hearing before the Board of Directors. As a participant, you are responsible for your own actions and will be held accountable for them.

A low-angle photograph of several soccer players on a green field. The players are wearing blue and red uniforms. A white soccer ball is on the ground in the center. The background is slightly blurred, showing more players and the field.

GAME REGULATIONS

Summary

To ensure maximum development, Dubuque Soccer Club utilizes age-appropriate field sizes and rules that encourage skill acquisition and teamwork. We use the correct ball sizes for each age group, enhancing players' comfort and effectiveness during practice and games, while adhering to specific soccer rules tailored for different age levels.

GAME STANDARDS

	GAME FORMAT				Ball Size	FIELD STANDARDS	
	Players	Goalkeeper	Game Time (minutes)	Offside		Field Size Ranges (L x W in yards)	Maximum Goal Size (L x W in feet)
U8	4v4	No	10-min. Quarters	No	3	25-35 x 15-25	4 x 6
U9	5v5	Yes	25-min. Halves	No	4	25-35 x 15-25	6.5 x 18.5
U10	7v7	Yes	30-min. Halves	Yes	4	55-65 x 35-45	6.5 x 18.5
U11	7v7	Yes	30-min. Halves	Yes	4	55-65 x 35-45	6.5 x 18.5
U12	9v9	Yes	30-min. Halves	Yes	4	70-80 x 45-55	7 x 21
U13/14	9v9 (EIYSL) 11v11 (CDL)	Yes	30-min. Halves	Yes	5	70-80 x 45-55	7 x 21
U15+	11v11	Yes	40-min. Halves	Yes	5	100-120 x 55-75	8 x 24

What are the benefits to Small-Sided Games for players?

With fewer players on the field and a smaller field on which to play the game, the players are more directly involved in the action of the game. That equates to more enjoyment in playing, more contact with the ball, more tactical decisions made and executed, and more physical movement, which improves the player's physical fitness.



COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

Summary

Effective communication is essential for fostering a positive environment within Dubuque Soccer Club, and our communications matrix outlines the various channels club information is dispersed. We also **strongly encourage parents to become involved through committees and volunteer opportunities**, as their participation enhances the overall experience for our players and strengthens our community.

COMMUNICATION MATRIX

The chart to the right is a guide for communication best practices. It is not intended to limit, but rather levelset expectations throughout the club.

MARKETING

Marketing initiatives can be valuable for communication, Facebook and other social media platforms should be considered supplementary rather than primary channels for outreach.

PARENT-INITIATED COMMUNICATION

Parents and individual teams occasionally establish their own communication channels. While this is not encouraged, for some teams it's a common practice. Please note that DSC is not responsible for monitoring these channels or verifying their accuracy.

	TeamSnap	Email	Facebook	Website	Handbook
DUBUQUE SOCCER CLUB					
<i>From Board to Club:</i>					
Club-wide time sensitive information	X	X			
Club-wide NON-time sensitive information			X	X	
Policies and procedures				X	X
DEVELOPMENTAL					
<i>From Program Director:</i>					
Club-wide time-critical information		X		X	
Additional opportunities (DSC camps/external camps)		X	X	X	
Game schedules		X			
Weather-related delays		X	X		
Communication to coaches		X			
ACADEMY					
<i>From Director of Coaching:</i>					
Club-wide critical information (Kit ordering)		X			
Club-wide communication (Registration deadlines)		X	X		
Additional opportunities (Internal or external - camps, ODP info, etc)	X	X			
<i>From Treasurer and Registrar to Parents/Players:</i>					
Financial correspondence		X			
<i>From Individual Coaches to Parents/Players:</i>					
Training information	X				
Festival Information	X				
Tournaments	X				
Weather-related delays	X				
Game recap communication	X	X			

WEATHER POLICY

Every effort is made to hold training sessions and games as scheduled. In the event of inclement weather, DSC is committed to the players' safety.

A decision whether to close the fields due to weather is made by 2PM daily. However, due to changing weather conditions, sometimes a later notification becomes necessary. Field closures will be communicated to the Academy via TeamSnap and by email for Developmental.

If a training session or game is stopped due to lightning, all players and parents must go to their cars immediately and wait for further notification from DSC or the DSC Coaching Staff before returning to the fields.

As soon as any decisions on field closings or re-openings are made, parents will receive an email or text message via TeamSnap (Academy) and email (Developmental).

League game and tournament cancellations are determined by the policies of the respective gaming leagues, tournament sponsors, and clubs on whose fields the games are played. For further information on league game cancellations, please visit the appropriate website.

PARENT COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

When parents communicate professionally and with constructive solutions, they enhance the team community, build trust between players and coaches, and play a crucial role in creating a successful and enjoyable season for everyone.

Encourage Independence

Support your child in communicating with their coach. This fosters their confidence and responsibility in their development.

Be Solution-Minded

When raising concerns, come prepared with potential solutions or suggestions. This proactive approach fosters a constructive dialogue.

Promote Team Spirit

Show support for the team's overall goals and values, emphasizing teamwork and sportsmanship above individual interests.

Communicate Appropriately

Address concerns with the appropriate individuals rather than engaging in gossip. This helps ensure issues are addressed effectively and maintains a positive atmosphere.

STEP 1: Discuss the problem with the Coach. If not resolved then...

STEP 2: Discuss the problem with the Director of Coaching. If not resolved then...

STEP 3: Discuss the problem with the Board.

Keep Discussions Professional

Focus on your child's development and the team's goals rather than personal grievances or frustrations.

24-HOUR RULE

Parents must follow the 24-Hour Rule, if you have a problem with a player, parent, or coach. Give a problem one day to settle before initiating communications. Often, just waiting a day to digest the events allows someone to gain perspective on the situation. When a concern still exists, the player, parent, and/or coach should follow the steps listed above.

CLUB ENGAGEMENT

At Dubuque Soccer Club, we believe that a strong community is the backbone of our success. Your involvement not only elevates our club but also creates lasting memories for our players.

Why Your Participation Matters

Parent presence at events fosters a sense of belonging and teamwork. When parents engage, it shows our young athletes that we're all invested in their growth and development both on and off the field.

Volunteer Opportunities

There are countless ways to get involved! Whether you're helping with onboarding new players, organizing events, or coaching, your contribution makes a significant impact. Here are a few ways you can volunteer:

Team Management: Help organize team activities, tournaments, and fundraisers.

Coaching: Contribute by helping out on the field and being willing to learn more about the game of soccer!

Board and Committee Roles: There are several roles with various time commitments that are always in need of a hand!

Build Community Connections

Volunteering isn't just about helping out; it's about building relationships. Connect with other parents, coaches, and players, and create a supportive environment where everyone thrives.