



HOBOKEN UNITED

Age Group Changes
for 2026-2027





Why the change?



“Following extensive review and discussion, US Youth Soccer, AYSO, and US Club Soccer have collectively decided to move to an age group player formation cycle that runs from August 1 to July 31, starting with the 2026-27 season/registration year. **This change was made based on additional critical feedback, data, and expert input to better align players with their school-grade peers. Our associations feel that this age group player formation will be the most inclusive and help increase participation.**

US Youth Soccer CEO Tom Condone addressed the adjustment to the registration process: “At US Youth Soccer, our mission is to support the development of every player. After careful collaboration with our partners and listening to our membership, **we believe this shift to an August 1 player formation cycle better aligns with school calendars, supports social and individual needs, and ultimately enhances the youth soccer experience for families across the country.**”



Why the change? (continued)

There are multiple reasons for this change.

First, the Aug. 1 age group cut-off most effectively reduces the number of “trapped players” in youth soccer and reduces negative impacts on these players at multiple stages of their career. “Trapped”

players are those who, due to soccer age group cut-offs, are in an older soccer age group than their school year. Trapped players have significantly reduced competition opportunities and disrupted training experiences in 8th grade (when most of their team is in high school) and are similarly negatively impacted four years later when players from the older soccer age group, but who are still in high school, are moved down into the same soccer age group.

“That’s a huge number of kids who have been adversely affected by the January 1 cut-off date. While coming to this decision has taken additional time, improving the experiences of hundreds of thousands of players was worth the extra time to gather research – particularly team rosters with graduation years and school start dates – and most importantly, listen to the youth soccer community.”

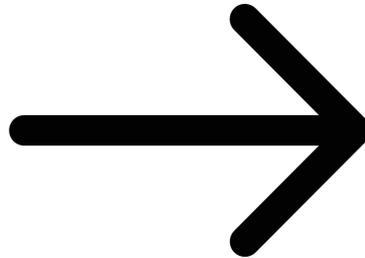
Second, an Aug. 1 age group cut-off best aligns soccer age groups with school year ages, maximizing the number of players who participate in soccer programs with their school-year friends. This alignment has a positive correlation with increased numbers of youth players entering and staying in the sport.



What does this mean?



Beginning Fall 2026





TRAPPED PLAYERS

Q: What is a 'trapped player'?

A: A 'trapped player' is defined as a player who has been a grade younger than the majority of the players on their team. So when most of the team enters high school (9th grade), this player remains in 8th grade.

The majority of players in high school play for their high school in the fall, leaving this 'trapped player' without a fall team.

By changing the age cut-off, it reduces the amount of 'trapped players' as the majority will now be aligned with their grade. There may still be some players affected if their birthdate/grade do not align with the August 1 cut-off, but the number of affected players is significantly reduced.



WHAT TO EXPECT

- Spring 2026 season cut-off dates do not change
- Tryouts (mid-April 2026)
 - Tryouts required for all internal/external players
- Evaluation by Red Bull staff
- Team Formation following new system
- Team Invitations (early- May 2026)



Age Chart: Beginning Fall 2026

	Age Group	Typical School Grade	Eligible Birth Date Range
7v7	u8	2nd Grade	Aug 1, 2018 - July 31, 2019
7v7	u9	3rd Grade	Aug 1, 2017 - July 31, 2018
7v7	u10	4th Grade	Aug 1, 2016 - July 31, 2017
9v9	u11	5th Grade	Aug 1, 2015 - July 31, 2016
9v9	u12	6th Grade	Aug 1, 2014 - July 31, 2015
11v11	u13	7th Grade	Aug 1, 2013 - July 31, 2014
11v11	u14	8th Grade	Aug 1, 2012 - July 31, 2013
11v11	u15	9th Grade	Aug 1, 2011 - July 31, 2012
11v11	u16	10th Grade	Aug 1, 2010 - July 31, 2011
11v11	u17	11th Grade	Aug 1, 2009 - July 31, 2010
11v11	u18	12th Grade	Aug 1, 2008 - July 31, 2009



FAQs

Q: My player was born between August 1 and December 31. When will I find out what team they will play on?

A: All team invitations will be sent early-mid May 2026.

Q: My player has been playing with the same team for a few years and would like to continue playing with them. Is there anything I can do to ensure that this happens?

A: Teams will be formed based on their birthday + where they fit best developmentally. The team formation process will not be aimed at keeping existing teams together.



FAQs (continued)

Q: My player would rather try out with a different age group. Is this possible?

A: Tryouts will be based on the age group the player's birthdate places them in. Red Bulls trainers may choose to look at a player with an older age group if they feel it is a better fit.

Q: Is this a national rule change or does it vary by state/league?

A: This rule change applies to all teams and leagues in the United States except for MLS Next.



FAQs (continued)

Q: When does the new cut-off officially take effect?

A: Fall 2026

Q: Will there be multiple tryout dates?

A: At this time we plan on having a single tryout date, it will be rain or shine.

Q: Who can I contact at the club if I have concerns about my child's placement?

A: Please email registrar@hobokenunited.com but understand that conversations now are purely informational and all team placement decisions will be made after the tryout.



FAQs (continued)

Q: Why does my child need to try out? They have been playing with Hoboken United for a few years; the Red Bull trainers know how they play.

A The tryout process is about seeing the cohort of players in one space, at one time, and less about evaluating individual player skills.

Q: My child has never been to a tryout and is nervous. What do I tell them?

A: Tryouts are a normal part of competitive travel sports. Having experience in the try out process is a crucial skill to learn. Doing this in a comfortable environment surrounded by friendly faces is a great opportunity to experience the tryout process in a lower-stress environment.



FAQs (continued)

Q: Will tryouts be open to players who do not currently play with HU?

A: Yes. Registration for tryouts will open a few weeks prior to the date. All players will have to be registered in order to attend.