

Space Coast United Soccer Club Youth Development Program (YDP)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Youth Development Program (YDP)?

The Youth Development Program is a new initiative that focuses mostly on child and player development in an environment that promotes experimentation and creativity and is intended to promote a player's life-long love of the sport. The YDP puts the needs of the children first and provides a higher level of technical and tactical training in a fun and rewarding environment. This program is, essentially, giving the game back to the kids.

Who is eligible to participate in the YDP?

All rising U6, U7, U8, U9 and U10 players will participate in the YDP. There is no selection of or rating of players for entry into this program.

What is the structure of the YDP training sessions?

Unlike traditional recreational soccer, all players within a respective age group will be practicing together. One caveat to that is that family's of the players can choose at which site they prefer to participate, Wickham Park or Viera Regional Park. We will incorporate station training for the children, dividing the large group into several smaller groups that will rotate between stations training on different aspects of the game. Players will work on age-appropriate technical skills and begin their "love-affair" with the ball under the guidance of licensed trainers and volunteer game day managers and the YDP Director. Of course, every training session will include small-sided games for the players to play. The emphasis in training will be on skill development in a self-assuring, stress-free environment.

What is the frequency of the training sessions?

All U6 players will be training one time per week at their preferred location. The U7 and U8 players will be training one to two times per week, also at their preferred location, and it is at their discretion as to how many sessions they prefer to attend weekly. The U9 and U10 players will train two times per week at their preferred location. Exact times and days for training will be made after registration and may include two age groups; ie: U7 and U8, or simply one.

Who facilitates this program?

The players will be under the immediate direction of the YDP Director and their staff of Nationally Licensed Instructors. All Trainers will have, at a minimum, their National 'D' license and either the age appropriate Youth Module or the highly coveted National Youth License.

What will the YDP game-days look like?

The Space Coast United YDP will not have fixed rosters for the season. Players will be grouped into teams prior to game-days with the intention of providing competitive games. On game-days, players may be moved between teams in an effort to field two very competitive squads.

How many games will be incorporated into the YDP?

Much like the traditional recreational model, the YDP will follow the same schedule for practicing and games. The players will play 10 games during the fall season and for those that play in the spring, another 10 games. We may opt to play multiple games in a few weekends so that families do not have to come to the park each and every weekend, and as a result, there will be more time for other [family] commitments or activities.

What is the format for game-day play?

Players in the U6-U8 age groups will play 4v4 just like the traditional recreational soccer league in the past. Similarly to that, the U9-U10 will play 6v6 and we will now introduce goalkeepers into the play (and training of them, as well). The 4v4 games will have two 20 minute halves with a five minute intermission. Rosters will be made with the intention to allow each player 2/3 of the game as opposed to ½ the game as before. U9-U10 players playing 6v6 will play 25 minute halves with a 5 minute intermission and the rosters for them will also be constructed in an effort to allow each player to play 2/3 of EVERY game. As stated previously, if one group is short on players on game-day, players can be moved between teams in an effort to balance the numbers for competition purposes. One of the greatest benefits of this type of format is the ability to allow **EACH** player the *sustained* play they need in order to develop. Also, with this approach, we have the flexibility to allow for numerous types of formats: coed, multiple ages, and tiered play, when appropriate. Players that demonstrate a higher level of ability and insight into the game may be afforded an opportunity to “play-up” when it is deemed appropriate.

What happens if the scores are lop-sided?

It is highly regarded that a major contributor to player development is the role that the games play. That said, if there is a game where the performance by one group significantly outweighs another, we have the flexibility to make the necessary adjustments for ALL players to benefit. With that understanding, this program allows for the flexibility to move players between teams, even from another game, in an effort to balance the performance. A highly competitive game provides the best possible outcome for the players.

Who helps facilitate the games for the players?

Prior to each game, a volunteer Game Day Manager, much like our current Recreational Coach, will be assigned to each squad. Game Day Managers work under the direction of the YDP Director and staff and help organize the players and make substitutions. Very little, if any, active instruction is required from the Game Day Manager. We are giving the game back to the children by letting them play *their* game!

What does it mean to be a Game Day Manager?

Game Day Managers are critical to making the Youth Development program a success for the children. They will work with the YDP Director and the training staff and participate in the weekly training. Game Day Managers will be Space Coast United volunteers and fill out all applicable FYSA Forms, including the necessary background check, again much like our current Recreational coaches. As stated previously, the Game Day Managers will assist in the daily training sessions and help organize the players on game-day. An inherent benefit for all the Game Day Managers is the ability to regularly work with the training staff and improve their coaching techniques and styles. Space Coast is committed to raising our level of coaching knowledge and experience and this program is a great way to accomplish just that. It cannot be stressed enough how critical the Game Day Managers and overall volunteerism will be for the YDP and the children. The players will be getting a high, yet appropriate level of instruction and the need for administrative assistance from the parents will be paramount.

Where will the YDP take place?

With such a large geographical area that represents our club, we have the flexibility to offer alternatives that meet the needs of each of the families represented in the club. Family's will choose at which venue to train and games will be split between the parks (Viera and Wickham) as in the past.

Why this change???

There are multiple reasons for this change that all have one central theme...the children! The question that needs to be asked is this, "Have we been putting the needs of the **children** first? National statistics indicate 75% of players between the ages of 12-14 years old quit playing organized sports. That number jumps to 85% by the time they turn 16! This is a fact, and we see it in our own club today. Due to the physical and mental challenges and necessary maturity required to play the game at the highest levels, we're losing players before anyone knows whether they will truly excel in the sport of soccer. Our mission as soccer facilitators should be to keep these players playing soccer as long as possible. We are joining a national initiative that drastically reduces the emphasis on short-term gain (an over-emphasis on winning) and instead focuses on long-term benefits. In other words, we are going to focus on the reasons why children play sports. They play because of the challenge, to learn new things, because they get to be with their friends, to make new friends and simply because it's fun.

What will the YDP do to the competitiveness of our players at Space Coast?

With the long-term focus on the needs of the players, we strongly believe that we will be able to develop more quality players with this approach. This program is designed to develop more highly skilled players than our current recreational/competitive model. Another immediate benefit of the YDP will be a larger pool of better developed and knowledgeable players. Inherently, we will also build a stronger sense of club-loyalty, something greatly missing at present. As more players and families meet one another, a sense of togetherness and spirit of community will be built in the club. Finally, we anticipate that the YDP will nurture a passion for and a life-long commitment to athletics.

How will the parents know which team to cheer for?

This is the best part...they won't. Suddenly, the focus turns to performance and away from outcome and as a result, what every parent should want: to watch their children participate in athletics and have fun. The focus of the YDP will be on the development of the player and their passion for and enjoyment of the game. Parents can now concentrate on the most important thing: their relationship with their child.

What is the future of the YDP?

We intend to augment this program as players get older and provide the best possible environment for each player to reach their full potential as a soccer player. We know there will be some growing pains, and we are giving ourselves the flexibility to adjust for that.

Logistics?

Cost?

It may seem with this new program that there will be cost increases associated with it, but the Club has made it so there is not a significant increase. The cost of the program will be about the same as was Recreational soccer this past year.

Uniforms?

Uniforms will be very simple. All players will need two game-day and training T-shirts and the club is getting those at very little cost.

Travel?

There will be no significant travel for players and families in the YDP. We are part of a state-wide endeavor and could incur some sanctioned events that require minimal travel, but only for those that prefer to participate. There will be no travel for the U6 children and if any for the U7 and U8 children, it will be local and very infrequent, possibly once per season and again only for those that prefer to participate. The U9 and U10 children will have the option of attending a state-wide sanctioned event once per year (likely during the spring season) in addition to local travel once per season. To be absolutely clear, for those that do not choose to participate in these sanctioned events facilitated by the state (FYSA-Florida Youth Soccer Association), there will be regular games at our home sites, so everyone will still have an opportunity to do what they want most...to play!

What is the calendar for this program?

Much like the traditional recreational soccer, there will be a fall season and a spring season. The fall training season will begin in mid-August and match-play will begin in early September. The season will run through early November. Spring YDP will begin in late February with games starting promptly in early March and will conclude in mid-May. There will be 10-12 games per season.

Are we alone in this?

Absolutely not! We are actually behind in getting this type of program started. As stated earlier, this format has already begun and been mandated as the norm in numerous other states. Here in Florida, there are many soccer clubs having already begun this approach. We are joining Rockledge Soccer Club, Central Florida United (East Orlando/Winter Springs), First Coast Soccer Association (Jacksonville Beach), Plantation (Ft Lauderdale), Kendall (South Florida) and the entire of Region C over on the Florida west coast including Hillsborough County, Pinellas County, Pasco County, among others. It can be said that this approach is the future and will be the standard in the years to come.