

The chances of my child getting a scholarship or playing professional sports are so slim, why should I introduce them to sports?

A study of CEO's revealed that the majority of them participated in organized sports at some level. There was also a Harvard Business School study of roughly 30 graduates who had become entrepreneurs, and almost all the respondents reported playing individual or team sports during their early years. Sports participation offers many benefits transferable to non-sports activities. These include:

- Focus
- General health and fitness
- Confidence gained from meeting challenges
- Life lessons such as: Commitment, Hard Work, Perseverance, and Teamwork
- Strong friendships that start young and can last for years
- Social Skills

Why have people joined the North Hunterdon Soccer Club (NHSC)?

The reasons can be as varied as the players and their parents, but some reasons that others have joined club soccer include:

- To have fun.
- To make friends with children with similar attitudes.
- A chance to play with the same players on a year-to-year basis.
- A chance to have the same coaching staff every year, so my player's talents, strengths, weaknesses and personality do not have to be re-learned by a new coach every season.
- To play more often than once a week.
- To develop skills in a consistent environment
- To allow the player to make an impact that is appreciated.
- To play with players who have similar levels of interest in soccer.
- To challenge my player at a higher level.
- A higher level of competition for my player than what they could get from recreational soccer.
- To prepare for Middle School and High School soccer.
- To get a higher level of coaching and professional training.
- A chance to make friends with parents who think like I do.
- My child loves soccer and can't get enough of it.
- They're not challenged by recreational soccer anymore.
- To help my child learn the life skills that competitive sports offers.
- To give my child an appreciation for physical fitness.

How do I know if my player is ready for club/travel soccer?

There are several telltale signs. Look for some but not necessarily all of these – in no particular order:

- They look like they are having fun when they are playing.
- They're one of the best players on their recreational team.
- They look forward to practice and games.
- They seem to have "taken to" soccer.
- They enjoy a challenge
- They have a "can-do" attitude.
- They play soccer on their own, outside of recreational soccer environment.
- They watch soccer on TV.
- They don't like to lose.
- They have a big motor, that is, they have a lot of energy.
- They have the speed of a sprinter and the endurance of a marathon runner.
- They are intelligent, creative, and/or logical ...or you want them to be.
- They have friends who are playing in the club.

Why do people stay in the club?

Again the responses are as varied as the players. The quick answer would be that they found the club offered them what they were looking for (see above questions). The long answer would be that the club offers a place where players build a foundation for a lifelong appreciation of physical fitness, enjoy the many benefits of being part of a longstanding team, develop their strengths, work on their weaknesses, and get satisfaction from improving themselves.

Isn't it too much of a time commitment?

Club/Travel soccer suffers from this misconception. It is a commitment but so is anything worthwhile. And it is not really that much more of a commitment than other activities your child has to choose from. If your player is ready for travel soccer, it can be great chapter in your child's life as well as your life as a parent.

How many games are there?

All teams play 10 games in the Fall and 10 games in the Spring.

When are the seasons?

The 1st game in the Fall season is usually the 3rd weekend of September and the last game is usually before Thanksgiving, or the last weekend in November. The first game in the Spring Season is usually the 3rd weekend of March and the last game is usually the 1st weekend in June. Most teams begin practice schedules in advance of the game schedule to get ready for the season.

Can my player play only one season?

The league that NHSC participates in (Mid-NJ) requires registration for two seasons and NHSC teams play in both Fall and Spring seasons. In rare cases (oldest ages) teams have been a one season team.

What if my player wants to play year round?

This is at the coach's discretion, but some teams do winter training on a much less intense schedule and some enter winter leagues if desirable. The club does reserve time at local indoor facilities for teams to train and does offer several professional trainer sessions during the winter months. Summer soccer is less structured.

What does the club do over the summer?

There are no league games over the summer. Some teams do hold informal training sessions over the summer but it varies from team to team.

What if my player plays another sport that conflicts with the soccer seasons (baseball, softball, lacrosse, football)?

This is at the coach's discretion. Some coaches are fine with some practices being affected but prefer a commitment be made to games. To use softball as an example, there are only 10 soccer games in a season but there are 20, or more, softball games, so it may be best to expect more time be devoted towards soccer. Other coaches (typically at the upper aged groups) want a higher level of commitment to soccer from all players.

How far away will we have to travel for games?

Half of all games are home, so 5 of the games each season will be in town. Most of the rest of the games are at away fields that are typically 30-45 minutes drive time from Hillsborough. Some examples of AWAY fields include: Bridgewater, Branchburg, Montgomery, Readington, North Brunswick, East Brunswick, Hopewell, Edison, Warren. On occasion, drive time could be at or near 1 ½ hours, but this is the exception, not the rule.

When are the games?

U-8 teams play their games on Saturday. All teams at U-9 and above play on Sunday. Game times are not fixed each week but typically they have start times of between Noon and 5:00.

What does the “U” in front of the number mean?

It means that player is under a certain age (U-14 = under 14 years old). More specifically, it means that particular player has a birthday prior to July 31st, of a specific year. For example, as of May, 2008, a U-14 player, [for Fall '08], would have to have a birthday on or prior to July 31, 1995. All you need to do is have a birth certificate to prove age and the club can place the player in the right age group. See the website for specific dates that correspond to each age group.

What is “playing up” and can my player do it?

Playing up means the player’s age would place them in a certain age group [say U-9] but they have the skills to be able to “play up” on an older team [say a U-10 team]. Playing up is at the discretion of the NHSC board and Director of Player Development

How long are games?

Games for U-7 and U-8 are 50 minutes: 4 quarters. U-9 and U-10 are 60 minutes: 15 minute quarters. U-11 and U-12 are 70 minutes: 35 minute halves. U-13 and U-14 are 80 minutes: 40 minute halves. U-15 thru U-19 are 90 minutes; 45 minute halves.

Who runs each practice?

The club provides professional trainers to run two practices per week during fall & spring seasons.

How much practice time is there?

A team will practice twice a week during the fall and spring season. Some teams have 3 practices a week. Each training session is at least 1-1/2 hours in length

What if we have difficulty getting our player to a weekday evening practice, because of work demands?

Carpools are lifesavers for most parents. Chances are that your player will have a teammate who lives near you and mutually beneficial schedules are routinely worked out between the parents.

Where and when are practices held?

Practices are typically held at Foran Field in Clinton. Occasionally teams may be at other fields but that will be a special circumstance. Practices sessions are during the week

Can NHSC teams use the High School turf field?

Yes, the club was involved in getting the turf field at the High School and it does have access to the field on a limited basis.

Isn't club/travel soccer too competitive? How much playing time will my player get?

It is club policy that on younger teams (U7-U10), coaches play everyone at least a half of the game because these teams are described as “instructional”. Depending on the roster size and the skill level of the team members, every player may not get **equal** playing time. It is important to note that as a travel team, the level of competition is higher and there is an expectation that the players who are playing at a higher level will play more. At U-11 and above, the teams are no longer “instructional”, they are “competitive”.

How is playing time determined?

Naturally most coaches will evaluate players based on their physical skills and their general fitness. However, also very important is a player's attitude and how committed they are, for example: to practices, to effort, to doing their best and to trying to get better.

Is this a “Win At All Costs” club?

As a travel club, winning is important to players because competitive players gravitate to club soccer. However, while some coaches and some teams are more competitive than others, however the club's philosophy is that teams should always “strive to win” but not take the win at all costs approach.

What about Sportsmanship?

All coaches, players and parents are required to sign a pledge to maintain sportsmanship. It's called S.A.G.E. for “Set A Good Example” and a sample is available on the website.

What does flighting mean?

Teams will be placed in a flight that corresponds to its competitiveness. Flight 1 comprises the most competitive teams and as the flight number increases, the level of play is less competitive. For a given age group there may be as many as 10 flights. Teams are placed in a given flight to try to make the games competitive. Ideally if your team is in the right flight, it will win half its games and lose the other half. If a team is undefeated it means it should be playing in a “higher flight” - flight 2 instead of flight 3. If it is winless, it should be playing in a “lower flight” – flight 5 instead of flight 4. Teams are re-flighted after every **season**. This is intended to allow a team to play at its most appropriate competitive level. The coach requests a flight and the league determines where a team should play, based on win/loss record, goals scored, number of teams in each flight, etc.

How much will it cost to have my player in the club?

The annual fees for the 2010/2011 season is:

- U-8 to U-10 teams: \$575.00 (\$300.00 paid by July 1 & \$275.00 paid by January 15)
- U-11 to U-14 teams: \$650.00 (\$350.00 paid by July 1 & \$300.00 paid by January 15)
- More competitive teams may have additional costs based on trainers as game day coaches, additional winter training, additional tournaments, state cup, etc. These are based on the goals of the team.

What is included in the fees?

- Training, 2 sessions per week during each of the fall and spring seasons
- League registration fees
- Referee fees,
- 1 tournament allowance per team (\$500 per team, per year)
- Team equipment – balls, flags, etc.
- Indoor winter training – 6 weeks (3 sessions with trainer)
- Goalkeeper training sessions throughout each season
- Training Jersey (1 per player per year)

Are uniforms included in the fee?

Uniform costs are additional. However, uniforms are usually used for at least 3 seasons. By that time, players typically outgrow them. This cost is not fixed since it depends on the negotiated price with the suppliers/distributors. In the past, players have been fully outfitted with very high quality: shorts, 2 jerseys, and 2 pairs of socks for approximately \$95. But it is impossible to predict future costs.

Is there a fundraising requirement for the parents?

The club currently has no fundraisers.

Who are the coaches?

Typically, at younger ages (U-8 to U-10) the coaches will be parents with coaching experience. All coaches must become licensed with at least an “F” license, which involves taking a short course. As the kids reach U-11 and higher, the club strongly encourages its coaches to continue their soccer education and earn at least an “E” license. Many NHSC coaches have “D” licenses and higher. As players get older, professional trainers play a larger role

Who are the professional trainers?

Among the training services provided to teams in the club are: UK Elite, Far Post Soccer and Soccer Centers.

Are any members of the club's staff, board members or officers paid?

NHSC is a 100% volunteer organization. Only professional trainers are paid.

How many players are there on a team?

For the small-sided teams (U-7 thru U-10), the maximum roster size is 14 players. For these ages, there are 8 field players plus the goalkeeper. These teams play on a field that is smaller than a full field. The roster size of a given team is at the coach's discretion, but it is unusual to carry the maximum.

For full-sided (U-11 and above), the maximum roster size is 18. For these ages, there are 11 field players plus the goalkeeper. These teams play on a full field. Again, how many are carried on the roster is at the coach's discretion, but it is unusual to carry the maximum.

Do teams compete in tournaments?

NHSC encourages teams to participate in tournaments. These are in addition to the 10-game season. The club funds a dollar figure that can be applied to [only] tournaments. The team is not restricted to that dollar figure. Each team decides how to spend these tournament dollars and also how many tournaments to enter. Fees above the club contributed amount are the team's responsibility.

When and where are the tournaments?

This is at the coach's discretion, but there are tournaments in NJ: Hopewell, Hazlet, East Brunswick, Branchburg, Bridgewater and many other places. Some of them are over the holiday weekends, for example: Columbus Day, Memorial Day, and Labor Day. Some teams have also gone out of state [Hershey].

How many tournaments do teams enter?

This is at the coach's discretion, but most teams enter at least one tournament per year.

How long do tournaments last?

Typically they cover 2 or 3 days and there are 3-4 (total) games involved.

Are tournaments mandatory?

This is at the coach's discretion. They are not part of the regular season game schedule but they are enjoyable for the players. They see new teams and have a chance to win participation awards or trophies (only U-11 and above).

Can I help the team/club in other ways besides coaching?

Absolutely! Team parents are critical to a successful team and club. Team parents can help with uniforms, parties, tournaments, scheduling and hundreds of "other little things" that mount up. This is a volunteer organization so help is needed at all levels of the club.