

Grafton Soccer Club Team and Player Placement Policy

The Grafton Soccer Club (GSC) offers In-town and Travel soccer programs for both the fall and spring soccer seasons. The In-town program is comprised of two groups, U6 and U8 and is offered to players in grades Kindergarten through second grade. The Travel program is comprised of three groups, U10, U12 and U14, and is offered to players in grades 3 through 8. High School level teams are offered only when a volunteer coach recruits a team. Please note that grades mentioned herein are guidelines. Actual placements are based on player birthdates in accordance with the Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association (MYSA) age eligibility and age groups definitions.

In-Town Program (U-6 and U8) Team and Player Placement

The In-Town program is recreational and non-competitive. No scores or standings are kept. It is the intent at this level to encourage the “fun of soccer” and to introduce the game to all that are interested. Team selection will support the overall goals of the In-Town program and age group player curriculums.

For U6, teams will be formulated randomly with some consideration to geographical proximity and any special parent requests (practice night, specific coach, friends, carpooling, etc) made at the time of registration. The age group coordinator will be responsible for this process. Teams will be reviewed with coaches prior to parents being informed.

For U8, teams will be formulated primarily based upon coaches’ evaluations with a goal to balance teams as best as possible by both skills and age. While we strive to meet this goal we realize that this is not always the outcome, and, if the need arises, mid-season adjustments can be made to schedules at the discretion of the age group coordinator to compensate for any significant imbalance between teams. Parent’s requests made at the time of registration will be considered but cannot always be acted upon. A collaborative process involving the age group coordinator and all the coaches will be used to create balanced teams.

For both U6 and U8 coordinators will determine the number of teams based upon total enrollment and the optimal team size defined in the age group curriculums adjusted based on coach availability as necessary.

Travel Program (U-10 through U14) Team and Player Placement

U10 thru U14 teams will play in the Midland Area Youth Soccer League (MAYSL). MAYSL is known as the “travel league” because competition is against neighboring towns. This league offers 3 divisions. Divisions 1 and 2 are considered competitive while Division 3 is recreational. For more information about league policies visit their website at www.maysl.com.

MAYSL has strict guidelines for team placements based on past season records, overall skill level of the team and team average age. Based on the total number of teams entered in an age group, MAYSL may require a town to place teams in all divisions. The GSC will attempt to place at least one team in each age group, however, based on the league criteria and registration numbers this may not always be possible. Also due to the natural player skill

distribution there will be more teams placed in lower divisions than in higher ones. Typically the GSC will have one Division 1 team, 1 to 3 Division 2 teams and 2 to 4 Division 3 teams depending on the number of registered players. The teams are formed by placing similarly skilled players together in the division that best matches the overall skill level of the team. It is the mission of the GSC to provide each player with the opportunity to be challenged, to succeed as a soccer player and to have fun. The best way to accomplish this is to place similarly skilled players together on the same team and to play against teams of similar skill.

The desired outcome is that all GSC teams be competitive for the majority of games within a season (i.e. not winning or losing by a large margin). The GSC recognizes, however, that every town in our league has their own philosophy and guidelines for team and player placement and this many times leads to a wide variety of skill levels of teams within each division. Consequently, there may be teams that may not have a competitive season despite our best efforts to place them in the right division. The GSC looks at all GSC team records after each season relative to the MAYS league groups and will attempt to adjust team placements the following season for all teams that did not have at least half of their games be competitive. Again it needs to be stressed that this is a process with many variables, and it may take several seasons to adjust a team to the correct divisional placement. This variety is sometimes more pronounced at the recreational level since there is only one recreational level.

Team Formation

The GSC utilizes its age group coordinators to facilitate and lead the process of forming teams, subject to review and approval of the Board of Directors. At the end of each season, coaches are required to fill out detailed evaluations of each player and recommend the division that best matches the player's skills for the upcoming season. When forming teams, the age group coordinators rely heavily on these past coach evaluations. A collaborative process involving the age group coordinator and coaches will be used to create teams. The process may require that all coaches and the age-group coordinator meet to discuss what is in the best interest of **all** the children. The decision to have a meeting or not will be at the discretion of the coordinator, taking into account the time elapsed since the last meeting, the size of the age group, the number of new vs. returning coaches and time restrictions resulting from coaches availability and league deadlines. As a minimum, however, team and player placements will be discussed with coaches via phone or email for each season.

Player placement on teams is based primarily on coach evaluations from the most recent season with consideration to prior evaluations, additional coach input and other factors. Based on the coach evaluation process, players are selected to Division 1, 2 and 3. Within each division, teams are equally weighted as best as possible. Since age groups span two years (i.e. 3rd and 4th graders in U10) coordinators will attempt to either create teams of a single school grade age, or if the team is comprised of both grades, that there is close to an even split between the two school grades if possible.

Requests for certain coaches and keeping teams together will not be honored. As a natural outcome of the player and team player placement process, however, it is likely that a core group of players will end up on the same team for several seasons because of similar skill level. It is equally as likely, however, that players may be switched up or down in divisions from season to season based on the coach evaluations and individual players development. Teams may also be re-configured fall to spring since the number of players and coaches vary from season to season.

Parental requests will be considered, but they may not be acted upon due to the team and player placement complexities and objectives.

Player Evaluations by Coaches

Evaluations cover a wide range of skills and ability assessments. Evaluations are based on versatility, specific skills, attitude, work ethic, and are not solely based on who scores the most goals. Each season, coaches are required to recommend division placement for the following season for each player.

Requests to Move Player to Different Age Group

Requests to move players to a higher age group than their age allows require the approval of the GSC BOD. These requests are usually only approved for players wishing to move up to play with their school grade, contingent that the skill level of the player falls within the skill level of that age group. Requests to move players up because of the skill level of a player are not allowed until U12 in accordance with MYSA guidelines.

Requests to play in a younger age group are only allowed with the approval of the GSC AND the travel league if applicable and are considered only under special circumstances.

All requests must be made in writing to the GSC Board of Directors before the registration deadline each season.

Coach Placement

Once the number of teams in each division is determined, coaches are selected. Coaches will be selected and placed on a team based on their child's evaluated placement and NOT the coach's experience or request. Occasionally if a very experienced coach is needed to coach a higher level team, an exception may be made (subject to approval by the BOD) to allow the coach's child to play up a division. At times, coaches need to be recruited from the pool of players within the given division.

Preference will normally be given to coaches who have obtained one or more coaching license(s). GSC strongly encourages all coaches to obtain coaching license(s). The **GSC reserves the right to deny a coach the opportunity to coach or assistant coach a team.**

Playing Time

It is the objective of the GSC that all players will play a reasonably equal amount of time during each game. However, it must be understood that this may not be possible at each game. Coaches will attempt to balance playing time as best as possible over the season. Factors that can effect equal playing time during games include: large rosters, highly competitive game situations (for Divisions 1 and 2 only), individual player behavior, and frequency of a stoppage in play that allows for substitutions. Specializing in positions is not a reason to significantly limit game playing time.

Tryouts

The GSC believes coach evaluations are the most accurate way to evaluate players for our soccer club. Tryouts are a one day snapshot of a player's ability and will not necessarily highlight all skills or weaknesses. If a player has been misplaced during one season, the coach's evaluation will point this out, and the player will be placed in the appropriate division in the next season. It is not economically feasible or in the best interest of the club to outsource a large scale tryout scenario to place teams.

Recruitment

While our Club does not actively recruit players from other towns, we may offer players that don't have a team in their own town an opportunity to join GSC if space is available. This is usually done when we are looking to fill out a roster to ensure our team has enough players.

Playoffs

In the spring, MYSA (massyouthsoccer.org) offers state-wide play-offs for Divisions 1 and 2, at the U12, U14 and HS levels. The champions of our travel league (as determined by end of season league playoffs) go on to represent our league at the state tournament against other Massachusetts travel leagues' champions. This tournament is called the Massachusetts Tournament of Champions (MTOC). The travel league (MAYSL) may also offer a recreational tournament for Division 3, U12 and U14 during the spring season. There are no playoffs for U10 in the fall or spring, and no playoffs for any age group in the fall. The fall season is strictly for development purposes.

Placement Appeals and Team Selection and Placement Committee

Placement appeals will only be considered for travel teams. Player placement appeals must be requested in writing to the GSC Registrar within 5 days of player placement notification. After 5 days the request will not be acted upon, but will be recorded for future consideration. All requests will be reviewed by the Team Selection and Placement Committee which may include at least three of the following club officers: the GSC President, Vice President of Travel, Vice President of In-Town, Age Group Coordinator and Coach Development Director. The committee will provide a written response within 5 days of the request. If requested, parents requesting the appeal should be prepared to attend a hearing on the matter at the convenience of the committee. If the committee finds that the player is misplaced, they will attempt to place the player on the appropriate team. This may not be possible based upon available space on the appropriate team within the current season. In this situation, the placement may have to be corrected the following season. ***All decisions of the committee are final.***