

How to Pick a Classic Team!

The Classic Division is the highest level of inter-district team play offered by PA West Soccer. Playing in the Classic Division involves a greater time commitment and a greater financial commitment to the sport. One of the questions asked most often is, "How do I pick a Classic team for my son or daughter?"

It is important to remember the three stages of player development as noted by Bruce Arena, former US Soccer Men's National Team Coach. Essentially Bruce states that from 6 to 10 years of age children are in the "turn on" phase, from 10 to 14 years of age in the "technical development" phase and from 14 to 18 years of age in the "competitive learning" phase. Hence, as parents of an U11 child in the "golden age of motor learning," finding an environment that prioritizes player development and focuses on teaching excellent soccer technique is paramount. Furthermore, during the U12 to U14 ages the team coach is often the most important element in this environment.

Recommended Questions:

Q: Does the team/club have a written philosophy?

A: Ideally clubs should have a mission statement that discusses issues such as player development. If they do not, ask the Director of Coaching or Coach to put down his ideas on player development in writing (i.e., a letter).

Q: What is the club/team's position on roster stability?

A: The club's goal should be to develop excellent players over the long-term, rather than to recruit for success.

Q: What is the U12 team coach's philosophy?

A: Bill Beswick (a sports psychologist who works with pro teams in the English EPL) views the coach as the most influential person during the development phase. So, what is the coach's position on teaching technique, developing committed players, making soccer fun, fueling soccer "ambitions" and keeping players "hooked?" Is the coach interested in short-term success (winning now) or is there a commitment to developing players over the long-term who are able to excel? Everything the U12 coach does should be shaped by a commitment to player development. Players should be able to play multiple positions, should receive intensive technical training, should be indulged to experiment on their individual skills, should not get too much tactical training, should play in tournaments "out of state," etc.

Q: What are the coach's credentials?

A: We cannot forget that coaches are teachers. Hence, coaches should be licensed. The "A" license is the highest available award from the USSF. However, the "B," "C" and "National D" also indicate that coaches have shown an ability to coach at a higher level.

Q: Is the coach supportive of team players participating in PA West Soccer player development programs?

A: Does the coach support US Youth Soccer's Olympic Development Program? Can you miss try-outs to attend player PA West Soccer player development programs?

Q: How does the team/club handle player-coach issues?

A: Clubs usually do not give refunds because of their financial commitments. But what is their approach if the coach fails to prioritize player development? Will the club intervene?