

The Nashoba United Evaluation and Team Placement Process

As June arrives, so does the time for soccer evaluations. This can be a stressful time, but this article will hopefully shed some light on the selection process for all of our NU travel teams.

The first thing to know is that NU does not cut players. Every child who registers will be placed on a team for the upcoming season. The evaluation system is designed to place similarly skilled players together in order to provide an environment most conducive to improvement and fun.

The evaluation system has two parts. First, at the end of each season, all coaches are asked to score each player using [this form](#). This is done by the head coach as well as all assistant coaches and turned into the age coordinators at the end of every season. Then, in June, our club hosts a Spring Jamboree where players are evaluated by professional coaches from the Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association. They will participate in a skill session and a scrimmage. The results of the jamboree are sent to the age coordinators for consideration. The club has two data sets on each player in the system. Some of this data is generated by someone who does not know the player and some of this data is generated by coaches who have spent 3+ months with the player. The data is multifaceted and thorough. After viewing all the data, our age coordinators rank every player in each age group. The coordinators then divide the group into tiered teams.

(Note: Nashoba United Soccer is a member of the Nashoba Valley Youth Soccer League. In this league, and all soccer leagues around the state, teams are tiered by ability/experience starting in the third grade. It is necessary for Nashoba United to tier our teams to remain competitive in our league and our state.)

Once teams are formed, coordinators seek the input of previous and future coaches as well as board members to ensure there are no glaring errors. This system is used to make sure all kids can engage in developmentally appropriate, competitive play regardless of skill level. Although not an exact science, our Age Coordinators work hard to ensure team placement is fair and appropriate for every player.

When teams are finalized, the age coordinator places each team in a league division depending on what their readiness appears to be as they seek to compete against other towns. Division I teams are the only teams that qualify for the Tournament of Champions and so this decision is made carefully.

Most of our soccer players are club members for many years. It is important to note that team placement can fluctuate over time for multiple reasons. First, we account for the age differential among players not to mention differences in the timing of physical development (ex. The Boys 5/6 Division 1 team will likely have more 6th graders than 5th graders. So, a 5th grader placed on a Division 3 team might be placed on a Division 1 team as a 6th grader). In addition, grade five is when Lancaster and Stow merge programs and must share the available spots on each team; NVYSL does set roster limits. Also, teams get larger as the kids get older requiring fewer teams. There are other considerations that play a minor role (e.g coach availability, “playing up” policy, etc.).

So, how can we encourage our kids to work hard no matter what team they are placed upon?

For better or worse, no team placement is forever which means each season is a new opportunity for players to grow and progress. Tell your kids that the letter or division attached to their team’s name does not define them, their team or their teammates – but their attitudes and work ethic surely will. Encourage your kids to do their best, no matter what the circumstance. This kind of perseverance will pay dividends throughout their lives.

