

February 9, 2016

Smithtown Kickers Soccer Club Members,

As you all may be aware by now, the US Soccer Federation (USSF) will be shortly implementing changes to the birth year mandates. This means that US Youth Soccer competitions will be based on the age group cut offs of January 1 through December 31st of that given year instead of the current August 1st through July 31st age groups. Once this is finalized and the dates for this implementation are set, there WILL certainly be changes to our current travel teams. Unfortunately there are a lot of rumors and speculation as to what will happen to a given player or team, but we can tell you that until you hear from your Board of Directors for the Smithtown Kickers, not your trainer, nor your team manager or another parent, it will be all speculation and may not be how your club will ultimately decide to handle this transition process.

Your Board of Directors for the Smithtown Kickers has begun to review our current team make ups with regards to birthdates and realize that changes will need to be made to most teams. This will be common to every club and every team, not just Smithtown. Again we are very fortunate that we are one of the larger clubs on the island with plenty of resources and will do everything in our power to make the transition a smooth one. We will also work to make sure every player currently in the Smithtown Kickers Club will have a place to play in the club.

Our club participates in various leagues, LISJL, ENY, ENYPL, Region1 , EDP and NPL. The leagues will all need to conform to this age group mandate, but could possibly have different implementation dates. Some may start the transition beginning August 1, 2016 and some by August 1, 2017. Again, until the USSF finalizes their mandate and all the leagues governed by USSF finalize their plans, the Board cannot start their review of each leagues decision to see how we will need to tailor our decisions and method of compliance. In all cases we will work towards the implementation as efficiently and as smoothly as possible.

Within the next month we should have all the final information on this mandate and will then hold a special general meeting solely on this topic, for our teams, players and parents to come in and discuss the clubs plan on compliance. We are in the process of securing an auditorium in one of the school buildings and as soon as we finalize a date and time, we will email our club members.

In addition to help make this transition run as smooth as possible, the Board has appointed a Boys and a Girls coordinator, to aid our Travel Director and help answer any team and player questions and concerns. We will introduce these coordinators at the special meeting.

Again we ask you to be patient and understanding as this mandate has caused a lot of confusion, concern and not to mention anxiety. We just ask that you give us the opportunity to adjust to the mandate and to do what is best for our club, teams and players.

Below, I have included a document from US Soccer regarding Player Development Initiatives Frequently Asked Questions, which explains some of the rationale as to why these changes are being made and how it will affect all levels of play in all age groups and in all clubs.

Thank you for your continued support, our Club would not be as great as it is if it were not for all our volunteers and members.

The Smithtown Board of Directors

A bend in the road is not the end of the road... unless you fail to make the turn. ~Author Unknown



Player Development Initiatives Small Sided Standards & Birth Year Registration Frequently Asked Questions

General

Please review the [Player Development Initiatives](#) and see below for more information.

Why are these changes being made?

The current landscape is inconsistent and not as successful as it could be when it comes to player development. Through these initiatives, U.S. Soccer aims to develop players with more individual skill, intelligence, creativity and confidence. These changes also provide a consistent approach across the country while challenging the status quo of our soccer landscape by focusing on the development of the individual versus the success of a team. Parents can also have a better understanding of exactly what they should expect from a soccer program for their children.

Are these changes aligned with the U.S. Soccer Development Academy?

Yes. These initiatives align the entire youth player development environment with the proven approach and success of the Development Academy program. Clubs, coaches and parents who are in programs external to the Development Academy are encouraged to incorporate these philosophies of player development. These initiatives fully support the existing technical framework of the Development Academy, which serves as the model for development across the country.

How do these changes affect the current soccer landscape?

U.S. Soccer recommends putting these initiatives into place as a best practice beginning in August of 2016, as they will be mandated in August of 2017. This provides organizations two full years from the announcement in August 2015 to plan on how to best implement the initiatives in the future. Please contact your local soccer leaders for more information on how they plan on implementing these changes.

Who is required to follow these initiatives?

All of U.S. Soccer's membership is required to put these initiatives into place no later than August of 2017. This includes, but is not limited to, all youth members and their respective competitions: State Associations, US Youth Soccer, US Club Soccer, AYSO, SAY, etc.

Birth Year Registration

Why is birth year registration going into effect for all levels of play and all age groups?

Having players train and play according to their age and developmental stage supports the objectives of the small sided standards by focusing on the physiological and developmental needs of the player. This change is meant to better safeguard the development of youth players at all ages and levels.

Why can't there be different standards for recreational and competitive teams?

There is no universal definition of what separates recreational from competitive soccer. In addition to supporting the overall objectives of player development, U.S. Soccer believes that having separate registration systems based on undefined levels of play would create unnecessary confusion, and this would not provide a consistent approach across the soccer landscape. Players should also be provided the opportunity to develop to best of their abilities regardless of the level of play they are participating in.

Is my son or daughter still going to be able to play with his or her friends and classmates?

The answer to this depends on a variety of factors, and one major consideration is how your club is making teams. Playing on a team with all of your friends isn't always a reality in the current environment. This is similar to not having all of your friends in the same class or classes at school. Another factor is that the age cutoff used for school registration varies across the country. This means that there are already a variety of unique player age and grade combinations. Participation in scholastic sports can also impact the composition of some teams, so clubs should plan accordingly for players leaving club soccer for school sports. The placement of individual players on specific teams will remain a function of the local club and league to help find the players the best possible environment for their development.

Don't you realize that you're breaking up my existing team?

U.S. Soccer recognizes that making these changes can impact existing teams in the short-term. However, players joining and leaving teams is something that already happens regularly throughout country. There are a variety of factors that require teams to evolve and adapt including players maturity rates, moving away, focusing on new interests or their soccer abilities differentiating from their peers. Again, both small sided standards and birth year registration support the development of the individual player as a priority over a team success.

How can teams continue to be registered together?

Players still have the ability to "play up" with older teammates. In addition to being on a team with their peers, "playing up" can also allow players to compete in a more challenging environment, which can aid in their future development.

Will a player miss any time playing soccer due to the change to birth year registration?

No. Players will have the ability to play with their birth year team, or “play up” with teams in older birth years.

What is “playing up” and are players able to “play down”?

Players have the ability to “play up” with teammates at older age groups, based on birth year. Players are not permitted to “play down” with teammates at younger age groups, based on birth year.

What is “relative age effect”?

Relative age effect (RAE) refers to the selection bias towards players born earlier in the calendar year. Registering players according to birth year will help everyone understand and better identify the potential for bias. Birth year registration is not intended or expected to eliminate relative age effect.

How does this change fix “relative age effect”?

The player development initiatives do not claim to fix this issue. However, having players grouped by birth year does make it easier to understand for parents and coaches.

How do I determine the birth year used for a competition?

Birth year registration should be based on the year in which the season ends. For example, if a season begins in the fall of 2017 and ends in the summer of 2018 (ex: 2017-18 season), the players would be registered based on their age in the year 2018. Competitions that take place in a single year (ex: fall of 2018 only) should use that year to determine birth year. To simplify determining the age group, just subtract the birth year from the year the season ends.

Year Season Ends – Birth Year = Age Group:

- 2017-18 – 2003 = U15
- 2022-23 – 2016 = U7
- 2018 – 2012 = U6

Please refer to the Birth Year and Season Matrix for more detailed information.

What are some practical approaches to help manage the team environment?

Embrace the diminished role of the team concept at younger ages and have players participate as a pool of players. One method is to try using mixed age groups for teams based on the small sided standards. An example of this would be a U11/12 team instead of separate U11 and U12 teams. For younger ages, you could create teams based on the first and last 6 months of the year so that players are organized Jan. to June and July to Dec. Offering multiple teams per birth year can help diminish the effects of RAE and assist with managing scholastic sport participation.