

EEYS Information Note How Teams are Formed

“How do you pick teams?”

“Who decides who plays with who and on what team?”

“Why isn’t my son or daughter playing with their best friend?”

Some of the most frequently asked questions we get at the Club are about how teams are put together. Parents and players often want to know how we assign players and coaches to specific teams. This note is intended to provide some insight into exactly that process, so that everybody has a better idea of the work going on behind the scenes, before those team lists show up in the paper. It is important to remember that our first and foremost aim is to provide an opportunity for a safe, fair and fun soccer experience for all players.

The people who make up the teams are members of the Club’s board of directors. They are often assisted in that task by members of the soccer community who are familiar with many of the children in a particular age group. Coaches are not directly involved in the making up of the teams they will coach. However, coaches are indirectly involved by completing simple player evaluations at the end of the soccer season. These evaluations are used by the Club to assist in forming teams in the following year.

Step one in the team formation process is to consider requests from sponsoring organizations and businesses. These are often requests for a family member or child of a staff member to be on the sponsored team. Next, the Club considers the requests of volunteer coaches and assistant coaches. As many parents want to coach their own children, which is why many have volunteered in the first place, these requests are given priority consideration. The soccer season would not happen without the support of our generous sponsors or the dedicated volunteers who coach our teams.

Once the above requests have been organized, the Club uses multiple sources of information to finish assigning players to teams:

- Gender and Age – Within each age division, we try to balance the number of boys and girls and the number of younger and older players among the teams.
- Basic Stats – Attendance, goals and assists from the previous year are considered to try and ensure a fair distribution of the higher-scoring players.
- “Keeper” Preference – In the older age divisions we also consider the distribution of players who prefer to play keeper to ensure they all don’t end up on the same team.
- Coaches Evaluation Forms – strong consideration is also given to the information provided in the player evaluations submitted by the coaches at the end of last season to ensure a fair distribution of skilled players.

Through this process the Club is trying to ensure an overall balance among all teams so that no team has any advantage over any other team. Competition is a part of the game, but to ensure a fair, fun and safe soccer season for all participants, we would like all teams to have the same chance at success.

It is in this context, and with all of the above information, that we then turn to additional requests by parents for siblings, cousins and friends to play together. There are times when some siblings, including twins, do not want to play on the same team, regardless of what mom or dad may want. Children from the same family who are playing in the same age division will be placed on the same team, unless otherwise noted on a registration form.

For the other personal requests, greatest consideration is given to mutual requests. What this means is that Johnny indicates on his registration form that he wants to play with Joey, and Joey indicates on his registration form that he wants to play with Johnny. This ensures that teams are not created by a chain of requests; that is to say, player A wanting to play with B, and player B wanting to play with C, and so on and so on. In the end, efforts are made to fulfil reasonable requests but the Club makes no guarantees that all requests will be met.

Occasionally, requests are made for players to play up or down an age division because of skill level or to play with a sibling. The Club does not support these requests. We believe that children should play with others their own age and at similar stages of social and emotional development. There will always be individual players that are more skilled and more physically advanced than their teammates. By limiting age divisions to consist of only a two year age split, we try to limit the differences brought about by age and physical development.

In using the process described above, we try to ensure the balanced formation of teams. However, a wide diversity of skills and abilities is part of playing in a house league and there is more to your child's summer soccer experience than the time spent on the field. Social and emotional connections are equally important as part of a team.

Once teams are formed and published there are often requests for players to be switched from one team to another. The Club does not support these requests except under extenuating circumstances or where an error has been made. A request for a move of just one player can often set off a chain reaction of other moves to maintain the balance among teams while continuing to honour requests that were known at the time the teams were created.

It is important for parents and players to understand the logistical challenges and complexities of team creation that arise when faced with a large number of personal requests for placements. Many hours of work in a very short period of time go into

organizing over 800 players across 7 age divisions into 58 balanced and equitable teams. To make changes late into such a process is not a reasonable task.

On a final note, please consider carefully your requests for player placements and team mates and your rationale for why children should play together. All games are played at the same location, on the same night, at the same time every week. Car-pooling is not a strong rationale for why players need to play on the same team whereas a simple mutual request to play together would suffice. These requests should not create unreasonable expectations of a volunteer-based organization working on behalf of the whole community of players and their families.

Registrar,
East Elgin Soccer