

SANFORD AREA SOCCER LEAGUE
2010 CHALLENGE/CLASSIC TRYOUTS & TEAM SELECTION PROCESSES

In order to provide players with the most fun and best possible development environment, they should be playing with and against players of similar ability on a regular basis. In order to group players by ability, they must be evaluated. SASL evaluates players and selects teams based on a combination of Tryout Evaluations and Season Evaluations. The process is designed to be as thorough, accurate and fair as possible, while keeping costs, administrative burden and player/parent time commitment at reasonable levels.

As described in more detail below, it is important to emphasize that the Tryout Evaluation is the first and primary determinant of a player's team placement. This puts all players on an equal footing each Spring and gives each player a "clean slate" opportunity to demonstrate their abilities in an unbiased and thorough tryout involving all players in the age group.

Tryout Evaluations

- Tryouts are held each Spring for each age group.
- Players are evaluated by coaches, primarily in small-sided games (3 v. 3 to 8 v. 8). If numbers and field space permits, they may also be evaluated in a full-sided 11 v. 11 match.
- Efforts are made to ensure that players play with and against different players over the course of the tryout process.
- SASL tries to maintain a player/coach ratio of no more than 15 to 1.
- Evaluators may or may not be coaches who also train some of the players being evaluated.
- Players are evaluated for skill, athleticism and attitude on a scale of 1 to 5.
- The evaluators are asked to recommend a *tentative* competition level (Recreation, Challenge or Classic).

Importance of Tryouts

- *Tryout Evaluations are the first and most important determinant of a player's team placement.*
- Any player wanting to maximize their chances of making the team of their choice should participate in both tryout sessions.
- A player should not miss their designated tryout date(s) except in extreme circumstances i.e. serious illness or injury. Any player who misses both tryout dates must present their reason in writing to the SASL Board of Directors and then a determination will be made as to whether the child will be allowed to participate in a supplemental tryout.

Season Evaluations

- Challenge/Classic team coaches will be evaluating each player on their team using identical evaluation forms to ensure consistency and comparability across teams.
- The coaches are asked to “force rank” the players with no more than 1/3 being ranked in any of the highest, middle or lowest categories.
- Players are evaluated for skill, athleticism, and attitude on a scale of 1 to 5.
- The coach also has the option of providing brief comments about each player.

Team Selection Process

- The SASL Tryout Committee collates the Season Evaluation and Tryout Evaluation data for each age group.
- Players are initially ranked by tryout scores and grouped into preliminary “Recreation Player (R)”, “Potential Challenge Player (CH)” and “Potential Classic Player (CL)” groups.
- The Season Evaluations of all “borderline” players (those near the cutoff lines between “CL” and “CH” or between “CH” and “R” teams) are carefully reviewed. Further discussions with coaches may be needed for clarification of their season evaluations.
- The “borderline” players’ rankings are then adjusted, when appropriate, to create revised team groups.
- In most cases, the proposed team selection is then discussed with the relevant coach.
- Coach input may result in one or two final adjustments to the final team selection.
- Team selections are then finalized by consensus of the full Tryout Committee in a series of meetings.

Effectiveness of Selection Process

- This process is similar to that used by a wide variety of soccer associations, premier clubs and other soccer and athletic organizations.
- Experienced observers agree that this process, though not perfect, generates very accurate placement of players.
- Over the course of 2 to 3 hours of tryout matches, it is very rare that a player fails to play at their “true” playing level (be that level weak, average or strong).
- Despite the extensive nature of the evaluation process, it remains difficult (by definition) to make reliable distinctions between players with very similar abilities.

Mistakes and Differences in Perception

Despite all reasonable efforts to make fair and good decisions, some mistakes will be made when evaluating approximately 150 – 200 players. In addition, there will inevitably be differences between some parents' perception of their child's ability and the perceptions of the coaches and evaluators. SASL fully understands that differences in perception can create disappointment and frustration on the part of the players and parents affected.

However, SASL is committed to providing a quality soccer opportunity to all players, regardless of which team they are selected for (i.e., skill training, appropriate level competition, etc.). Thus, disappointing decisions need not derail a committed, enthusiastic soccer player's development. To stay on track, however, it is critical that the player and the parents do their best to stay positive and take advantage of the opportunities they have to improve over the year so that they are well positioned to "succeed" at the following year's tryouts.