

GEORGIA SOCCER U-10/U11/U-12 ACADEMY PROGRAM

The Academy Program was officially launched in 2001 in the U-10 age group after 3 years of experimenting with pilot projects involving 6 clubs. The program was gradually expanded to U-11 and U-12 and it grew rapidly in terms of participants to include virtually all member affiliates. Currently, many clubs have player numbers that support a U8 and/or U-9 pre-academy program.

In the Academy program, clubs register their players as a pool as opposed to set teams and players are free to move from team to team as needed. Games are all friendly and no scores or standings are kept. The traditional select program no longer exists in these age groups and State Cup at U-12 has been eliminated.

The Academy is currently administered by the Select Committee of the state association as it is considered the select development program and is governed by select rules. Because of the select program definition, academy players register for a seasonal year with the academy program at their league of choice. Player movement is governed by select registration, transfer, and release rules as defined by Georgia Soccer – Youth Rules. Rules for recruitment of academy age players are also outlined in the Georgia Soccer – Youth Rules and are very strict.

U-10, U-11, and U-12 players can play up and across age groups within the Academy teams in their club as deemed appropriate by the individual member affiliates and the Academy staff of those associations.

The program's objectives:

- To eliminate keeping scores and reduce pressure on players and coaches to get results.
- To emphasize individual player development and especially individual technical development.
- To reduce the excessive travel around the state for games.
- To reduce the possibilities of mismatched opponents and lopsided scores by allowing clubs to do their own scheduling.
- To reduce the number of games played in a year and increase the number of training opportunities.
- To encourage clubs to use nationally licensed coaches at the U-10/U-11/U-12 Academy level.

The program's benefits to our clubs and to players:

- Grows a 'CLUB' concept with a club loyalty as opposed to individual team mentality.
- Professional coaches taking over administration and training of younger ages.
- Increased player enrollment and larger membership at the club.
- Increased pool of players for older teams with improvement in quality of players.
- Provides a good introduction to competitive (select) soccer for players transitioning from recreational soccer.

Georgia Soccer Recommendations (not mandatory):

- All players train together in a pool environment. Each club can decide if the pool environment is at an age group level or program level.
- Although there are no restrictions, Georgia Soccer's recommendation is for a maximum of 35 games per year and 3 in-state tournaments per year. Participation in out-of-state tournaments is allowed, but not recommended
- Academy Program Director should be a nationally licensed coach.
- All Academy staff should have a National Youth License.
- Clubs should implement a parent education program and player evaluations.
- Clubs should provide a minimum of 3 training sessions per week.
- Players should not play more than 80 minutes per day.
- Recommended game format* 6v6 at U-10; 8v8 at U-11 and U-12

*Georgia Soccer rules state 6v6 for U-10, 8v8 for U-11 and either 8v8 or 11v11 for U-12 Academy play.