

Shenandoah County Soccer League

Travel Soccer Handbook



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Introduction to Travel Soccer

The Shenandoah County Soccer League (SCSL or “the League”) provides a travel soccer program for those players and coaches looking to challenge themselves above the recreational level. Travel teams offer players who have the potential, drive, and desire to compete at a higher level the opportunity to test themselves against players from other localities. The primary focus of the travel program is player development through quality coaching and greater competition, both externally (against other teams) and internally (for playing time).

Differences between Recreational and Travel Soccer

RECREATIONAL: Most players begin playing soccer at the recreational level. SCSL’s recreational program is the primary reason the League exists. From the League’s By-Laws:

The primary purpose of the League is to provide every child who wishes to play soccer the opportunity to do so while learning the fundamentals of the game in a safe and nurturing environment, keeping in mind at all times the League Motto: “Soccer is about learning and having fun!”

Recreational teams are formed based on a player’s age. The school a player attends is strongly considered when placing players on a recreational team. There are no try-outs for recreational soccer, and playing time is divided fairly evenly among the players. The League does not track the results of recreational games in order to help players, coaches, and parents enjoy soccer.

TRAVEL: Travel soccer is, at its core, competitive. Players compete at try-outs in order to be selected for a team, at practices in order to receive more playing time, and during games against equally or more talented players from other localities. Participation in the SCSL travel program is not limited to residents of Shenandoah County.

Each player’s amount of playing time is at the discretion of the team’s coach. Unlike recreational soccer, all players may not receive equal playing time. Each coach continually determines the player’s level of skill and adjusts playing time accordingly. Playing time will be dependent upon performance at practice and at games.

The commitment required of travel players and their parents is much greater than that of recreational players, both in the travel required for away games and also mentally. Playing time will decrease if travel players do not work hard at practices and do not demonstrate a good attitude when receiving instruction or correction from a coach.

The League assumes a player who voluntarily signs up for travel soccer is motivated and disciplined enough to succeed. Players who demonstrate laziness or insubordination will not do well in travel soccer.

Travel Soccer Code of Conduct

The League takes pride in the sportsmanship of its players, volunteers, and spectators. While the coaches will help to remind players of their responsibility to maintain composure and exhibit the highest level of sportsmanship, it is of utmost importance that the players, parents and siblings also show the same level of respect and sportsmanship to all players, coaches, and officials. Positive support will help all of the players and the Shenandoah County Soccer League program.

SCSL will enforce the following policies for travel participants:

- Do not, under any circumstances, shout abusively at your child or any other child. Abusive verbal behavior by parents or adult volunteers will not be tolerated. Violators may be asked to leave the venue and may be sanctioned.
- Verbal or physical abuse of any coach or referee will not be tolerated and violators may be sanctioned.
- Do not coach your child or other children from the sideline during the game. Please make only positive comments to the players. Our coaches will provide instructional input during games.

Travel Soccer Requirements

Every player who intends to participate in the SCSL travel program must provide a photo which meets Virginia Youth Soccer Association (VYSA) requirements and a copy of the player's birth certificate. Foreign-born players may need to provide additional documentation depending on the age at which the player entered the United States, and the country of origin, due to regulations established by FIFA.

Failure to provide a birth certificate or additional required documentation in a timely manner will result in the player's inability to participate in the SCSL travel program. SCSL must provide documentation to VYSA for every travel player in order for ages and eligibility to be verified by VYSA staff. There will not be any exceptions made to this requirement.

Travel Soccer Practices, League Games, and Tournaments

Travel teams practice at least two times a week for approximately one and one-half hours each practice. As with games, practices are mandatory, as they are vital for individual player development and also for development and cohesiveness of the team. Punctuality is expected.

Travel games may be scheduled on Saturdays or Sundays. The League and the team's coach or manager may not be able to change the date of a travel game. The schedule traditionally consists of 8-10 league games, half of which are played at SCSL's home fields (the SoccerPlex) and the other half away. Typically away games are a 1 to 2 hour drive from the area depending on where the player lives and the travel league in which the team participates.

The fall season begins the weekend after Labor Day and extends through mid-November. The spring season begins in March and may extend through mid-June.

Travel teams may play pre-season, mid-season, or post-season tournaments (3-4 games in a 2- or 3-day weekend). Players are expected to be available to play in tournaments. Each team will determine the tournament(s) they want to attend depending upon the age group and competitive level of the team. Any additional fees which are due as a result of a team's participation in a tournament will be collected by the team manager from the parents.

Travel Soccer Tryouts and Player Placement

Annual Tryouts

SCSL holds annual open tryouts in the spring to form teams for the following travel soccer year (fall and spring). These tryouts will be advertised via the League website, via email updates to the League's list of participants, and via other means such as social media. Travel tryouts may be scheduled for a weeknight and a Saturday, or just a weeknight; travel tryouts will not be solely held on a Saturday.

The League may require pre-registration by players before tryouts begin. This pre-registration ensures the League is able to confirm the player's age and contact the player's parent(s) or legal guardian(s).

All players are evaluated during these tryouts by the team coaches and additional evaluators. Players will be grouped based on their birth year in order to identify which players are above average for their age. Players may be grouped together in different birth years; for example, a player born in 2004 may be grouped with the players born in 2003.

Players cannot tryout or play in an age group for which they are too old. Even if they miss the cutoff by one day, they cannot play 'down' in an age group.

Falsifying the player's age in order to try out for an age group for which the player is not eligible is forbidden. If the League Board of Directors determines a player or a player's parent or legal guardian deliberately registered the player with an incorrect age, the player will receive a ban from participation in League programs for one (1) year or longer, at the discretion of the League Board of Directors.

Travel teams may hold mid-year tryouts between the fall and spring seasons if there are more roster positions than rostered players. If tryouts are held, there must be at least two (2) tryouts held before January 31, and the tryout locations, dates, and times must be provided to the League for dissemination at least two weeks before the first tryout date.

Travel teams may add players after the annual tryouts even if those players did not participate in the annual tryouts under the following conditions:

- The number of players who attended the annual tryouts in a particular gender and age group is fewer than the available roster positions for that team,
- The player who is added must provide all of the information required during the annual tryout registration process,
- The coach must communicate to the League who the player is and the special circumstances which prevented the player from participating in the annual tryouts, and
- The player may not play out of her or his age group.

Team Creation

The League will form travel teams based on the participation in annual tryouts held each spring and the League's judgment regarding available and qualified coaches. Travel teams will be composed of players from age groups assigned by the League defined by gender and birth year(s). There shall be no more than one (1) travel team per age group per travel league; exceptions may only be made for multiple "high school" (16U-19U) teams in the fall season.

State and national associations restrict the number of players on each travel team depending on the age group.

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|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| • 9U & 10U teams | 7 vs. 7 game format | 10-12 players on each team |
| • 11U & 12U teams | 9 vs. 9 game format | 12-14 players on each team |
| • 13U – 15U teams | 11 vs. 11 game format | 16-18 players on each team |
| • 16U – 19U teams | 11 vs. 11 game format | 16-22 players on each team |

If the League determines more than one “high school” travel team for a particular gender will participate in a specific travel league, players will be divided between the teams by one of the following methods:

- Season-specific registration (one team may play in the fall and spring, but the other team only plays in the fall)
- Age-specific assignments (one team may consist of older players, such as 18U-19U, and the other team younger players, such as 16U-17U)
- Geographic assignments (players may be assigned based on geographic area and/or by the high school at which the player attends)

Player Placement

Players who are selected based on their performance at tryouts are placed on age-appropriate teams. If invited to participate in the travel program, players are expected to play for the travel team to which their age group is assigned. No player will be allowed to play for a travel team composed of age groups younger than the player (“playing down”).

A player may play out of her or his age group only with permission of the League Board of Directors. Only playing in a higher age group will be considered. Permission to play out of an age group may be granted for the following reasons:

- Family considerations
 - The player has a parent who has been appointed as a head or assistant coach of a travel team, or
 - The player has a sibling of the same gender who is no more than two (2) birth years older than the player in question, and who has accepted an invitation to play on a travel team, and the coach of the travel team with the higher age group is also willing to accept the younger sibling.
 - Permission for a player to participate in a higher age group due to the aforementioned family considerations shall remain in effect until such time as the condition is no longer valid.
- Player ability
 - Players may participate in a higher age group if the League determines the player has the ability and maturity to successfully compete against and interact with older players.
 - The League will only consider granting a player permission to play in a higher age group if a request is made by joint agreement of the player’s parents or legal guardians, the coach of the travel team comprised of the player’s proper age group, and the coach of the travel team comprised of the higher age group to which the player would be transferred. Such a request must be made in writing to the League Board of Directors no later than July 1.

- Before approving a transfer, the League Board of Directors will consider whether the player would benefit more from participating as a “guest” player with the higher age group team while remaining rostered and practicing with their assigned team.
- A player will not be allowed to “play up” if granting the request will result in the original assigned team no longer having enough players to field a full team plus three (3) substitutes.
- The determination to allow a player to “play up” must be made each year and any previous decision by the League Board of Directors regarding the request shall not be considered in the determination to grant any future requests.
- Parental request not to have a specific coach
 - Parents or legal guardians may request for their player-child to not have a specific coach if there is a conflict. The request to not have a specific coach, along with a description of the conflict and previous attempts to reach reconciliation, must be made in writing to the League Board of Directors no later than June 1.
 - The coach in question must be informed of the parents’ request, provided a copy of the request, and will be allowed to provide a written statement to the League Board of Directors validating or disputing the description of the conflict.
 - A decision whether to grant the parents’ request will be made by the League’s Board of Directors. If granted, a request to not have a specific coach does not guarantee an invitation to play on any other travel team sponsored by the League.
 - If granted, the request not to have a specific coach shall remain in effect while the coach and the player participate in League activities.

Decisions made by the League Board of Directors regarding player placement will be final. If a request to play out of an age group is denied and the player subsequently decides not to participate in travel soccer, the player will not be eligible for a refund of any funds already paid.

Travel Soccer Costs

There are various fees associated with participation in a travel program. These fees include league, VYSA, and SCSL registration and insurance fees.

Each player will be required to pay a fee depending on whether the travel team will compete for a full or partial year. Fees for travel teams which will compete in the fall and spring (full year) will be \$300. Fees for travel teams which will only compete in the fall (partial year) will be \$150. Fees will be collected by the League.

Uniforms

SCSL travel teams compete in a standard uniform. The home uniform is an orange shirt with orange shorts and orange socks. The away uniform is a white shirt with orange shorts and white socks. All shirts will carry the SCSL logo above the left breast. All shirts will carry the player's number on the front and on the back. Uniforms are to be clean at the start of each game with jerseys tucked neatly into shorts during play.

A player's number is assigned by the team coach. It is the team's decision whether to include the player's last name on the back of the shirt.

Beginning with the Fall 2020 season, shirts, shorts, and socks that are purchased by the player will belong to the player, and the player will be responsible for replacing any article which is lost or outgrown.

Team managers will have information concerning the current version of each article. Many teams order uniforms in bulk. Fees for uniforms will be collected by the team manager.

Fundraisers

Additional costs may be required for the purchase of equipment (benches, tents, practice/game balls, etc.) and for those teams wishing to participate in tournaments or indoor leagues during the off season. In lieu of collecting additional fees, fundraising activities may be held throughout the year. Players and parents are expected to participate in fundraising.

Travel Soccer Refund Policy

The League assumes a player who voluntarily signs up for travel soccer understands and accepts the commitment to participate for the duration indicated during tryout registration (full year or fall only).

If a player decides not to play after accepting an invitation to join a travel team, that decision must be communicated to the League and the coach of the travel team no later than July 31 for the fall season or January 31 for the spring season. No refunds will be granted for withdrawals which occur after those dates.

Players whose requests to play out of their appropriate age group are denied and subsequently decide not to play travel soccer will not be eligible for a refund, but the funds may be used to pay for recreational soccer registration.

Travel Soccer Team Management

A SCSL travel team is created by and does not exist separately from the League. Since 2017, travel teams which are created by the League Board of Directors do not have a separate legal status and as such do not maintain separate bank accounts. The League collects and disburses funds on behalf of travel teams unless otherwise described in this handbook.

A Team Manager conducts administrative duties for the team and communicates various team activities to the players and parents. These duties may include collection of uniform or tournament fees, and distribution of uniforms which were ordered through the team. This person volunteers their time to keep the team's administrative matters organized, and the League expects each player and parent will give them their full cooperation.

Travel Soccer Requirements for Adult Volunteers

A head coach, assistant coach, or team manager is an adult volunteer with the League and is subject to any training or behavior requirements set by the League, VYSA, US Soccer, or FIFA. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Criminal background checks,
- SafeSport or abuse awareness training,
- Head injury awareness training, and
- Coaching instruction provided by US Soccer.

It is the responsibility of the adult volunteer to be aware of the appropriate requirements for her or his position, complete all required training, and provide proof of completion of said training in a timely manner. Failure to comply with all requirements will result in the inability to serve as a volunteer with the League.

Travel Soccer Oversight

SCSL travel teams are created by the League Board of Directors, which holds the final authority on all matters pertaining to SCSL travel soccer.

The head coach of a SCSL travel team is appointed by the League Board of Directors based on the individual's qualifications and past performance as a volunteer with the League.

Assistant coaches (if any) and the team manager of a SCSL travel team are appointed by the head coach. There must be a head coach and a team manager on a travel team; the League recommends 3-4 adult volunteers on each travel team.

Concerns, Complaints, or Grievances

If the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of a travel player have a concern about another player or the parent/legal guardian of another player, this concern should be brought to the attention of the head coach or team manager for resolution.

If the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) of a travel player have a concern about the behavior of any adult volunteer on the travel team, this concern should be brought to the attention of the League Board of Directors via the grievance procedure outlined in the League's By-Laws (section 7). A grievance or complaint must be written and include the following:

- a. The name, and title if known, of the individual against whom the grievance or complaint is raised;
- b. A brief summary of the conduct, attitude or statements observed upon which redress is sought;
- c. A brief factual statement of the circumstances under which the alleged misconduct occurred or the statements etc. were made;
- d. The names, addresses, and telephone numbers, if known, of any eyewitnesses to the incident;
- e. The name, address, and telephone number of the person filing the grievance or complaint.

All written grievances or complaints which contain the aforementioned information will be investigated by the League according to the procedures in the League's By-Laws.

Appeals Process

The following is the appeals process for SCSL travel soccer. Please address your concerns to the appropriate level and only bring the matter to the attention of a higher level if you are not satisfied with the response (or lack of response) you receive.

Head Coach
SCSL Travel Commissioner
SCSL League Commissioner
Executive Committee of the SCSL Board of Directors
SCSL Board of Directors
Adjudication Committee of VYSA