

Overview of the 2026-27 Programs

Academy Program

The Academy Program is designed for players ages 7 through 11 and provides a developmental environment focused on technical growth, game understanding, and competition against other Metro Atlanta soccer club academy programs.

Typically, Academy teams participate in:

- Approximately 10 league games per season
- 2 tournaments per season (Fall and Spring)

Tryouts are required for participation, and players are placed into pools and teams based on their overall skill level and developmental needs.

Academy Team Structure

U8 - U11 Age Groups

The following team hierarchy is utilized:

- Elite Pool
- Gold Pool
- Silver Pool

U12 Age Group

The following team hierarchy is utilized:

- Pre-ECNL Pool
- Elite Pool
- Gold Pool

Select Program

The Select Program is designed for players ages 12 through 18 and provides opportunities to compete within state, regional, and national league platforms.

AFU Select teams participate in multiple competitive league structures, including:

- Elite Clubs National League (ECNL)
- ECNL Regional League (ECNL-R)
- National1 League
- Southeastern Clubs Champions League (SCCL)

The number of games played varies depending on the age group and league platform in which the team competes.



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Seasonal Structure

- U13 and U14 teams participate in both Fall and Spring seasons.
- U15 through U19 teams typically complete the majority of their regular season competition during the Fall season.

Tryouts are required for all Select teams, and players are placed based on their overall skill level, development, and competitive readiness.

Select Team Hierarchy

The Select Program utilizes the following team structure:

- ECNL
- ECNL-R
- Elite
- Premier Gold
- Premier Silver
- Silver
- Bronze



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Leagues

Elite Clubs National League (ECNL)

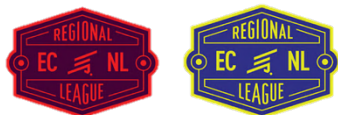


The Elite Clubs National League (ECNL) is the top development, identification, and competition platform for youth soccer players in the United States.

The structure of the Southeast Conference varies slightly between the boys and girls divisions; however, both platforms provide high-level competition against top clubs throughout Metro Atlanta as well as leading organizations from across the region, including Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

Teams are anticipated to compete in approximately 16 league matches annually, in addition to participating in tournaments, showcases, and national events.

Atlanta Fire United's top-level U13 through U19 boys and girls teams will compete in the ECNL Southeast Conference.



ECNL Regional League (ECNL – RL)

The ECNL is the nation's leading youth soccer development platform. To broaden access to high-level competition, ECNL has expanded its structure through the creation of the ECNL Regional Leagues (ECNL-RL). This league serves as a second tier within the ECNL framework, designed to enhance alignment and collaboration among teams of varying levels within ECNL member clubs, while also providing opportunities for teams and players from other clubs to develop through consistent, high-quality competition.

The Southeast Conference structure will differ slightly between the boys' and girls' programs but will feature competition against clubs throughout Metro Atlanta as well as teams from across the region, including Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

AFU's second-tier U13 - U19 boys and girls teams will compete in the ECNL Regional League Southeast Conference.



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National 1 League



The National 1 League is the top team-based competition in US Club Soccer and US Youth Soccer, elevating teams across the county into a unified national competition platform that culminates in the ECNL Conference League Playoffs and Finalist the post season. Beginning with its inaugural season in 2026-27, the National 1 League brings together established league platforms, US Club Soccer's National Premier Leagues and US Youth Soccer's National League.

We have submitted an application for AFU's Elite U13–U19 boys and girls teams to compete in the National 1 League Southeast Conference and are currently awaiting confirmation from the league operator.

Southeastern Clubs Champions League



The Southeastern Clubs Champions League (SCCL) is a top-tier league established by leading clubs across the Southeast under the auspices of US Club Soccer, providing high-level competition and player exposure.

AFU's Premier (including select Elite) U13–U19 boys and girls teams, along with U11 Elite pools and U12 Pre-ECNL and Elite pools, will compete in the SCCL.

Academy

Our Academy Program at Atlanta Fire United introduces players in the U6–U11 age groups to a more competitive soccer environment. The Academy is built around a development-first philosophy that emphasizes learning the game through creativity, enjoyment, and attacking play.

High-quality training sessions led by Academy staff form the foundation of each player's development. Training activities are designed to support growth across all key areas, technical, tactical, physical, and psychological.

Players compete against top Metro Atlanta clubs, providing an appropriate level of challenge and a strong developmental platform for long-term progression.



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Tryouts

Tryouts, Evaluation & Team Placement Process

Tryout registration is currently open, and we encourage all players interested in Academy, SCCL, ECNL-R, or ECNL opportunities with AFU for the 2026-27 soccer year to register as soon as possible if they have not already done so. Please note that registration does not create any commitment; it simply allows us to plan appropriately for the upcoming season.

At AFU, our priority is to provide the strongest possible development environment for every player. Team placement is based on matching each player with the appropriate level of play, where they are both challenged and able to experience success.

AFU will utilize ID sessions and tryouts as part of the overall evaluation process. In addition, the coaching staff will collaborate through ongoing communication and evaluations to ensure that each returning player's full 2025-26 season is considered. This includes seasonal performance, previous evaluations, technical and tactical development, demonstrated progress, maturity, mentality, and overall body of work.

Current and former coaches, along with program directors, will all contribute to the player evaluation and placement process for the 2026-27 season.

Tryout Timelines

U8-U14

- Field Evaluations: May 18 – May 20
- Roster Selection & Team Placement Offers: May 20 – May 26
- Acceptance Letters: May 20 – May 31
- Team Meetings: Details TBA

U15-U19

- Field Evaluations: May 26 – May 29
- Roster Selection & Team Placement Offers: May 29 – June 4
- Acceptance Letters: May 29 – June 9
- Team Meetings: Details TBA

Acceptance letters will be sent via email by the Monday following tryouts, and players will have 48 hours to accept in order to secure their roster spot.

We appreciate your support and understanding throughout the tryout process. If you have any questions at any time, please feel free to reach out to your coach or any AFU staff member, and we will be happy to assist.

If you have not received an invitation by the Monday following tryouts, please contact the appropriate program director for your child's age group.

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