



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Southeast Soccer Club Announces Age Group Alignment and Player Formation Updates Beginning 2026/2027 Season

**Connecticut - February 2026** - Southeast Soccer Club (SSC) today announced updates to its player age group and team formation structure, aligning with the national youth soccer standard that moves from a January 1 - December 31 cut-off to an August 1 - July 31 age group window, effective beginning with the 2026/2027 seasonal year.

This change follows the official decision announced on June 10, 2025 by the national governing bodies of youth soccer, including U.S. Youth Soccer, U.S. Club Soccer, and AYSO, after an extensive review of the developmental, social, and competitive impact of the current age band system. As a club governed by U.S. Youth Soccer and the Connecticut Junior Soccer Association (CJSA), Southeast Soccer Club will implement these changes to ensure continued alignment and eligibility within all sanctioned competitions.

### Age Group Alignment Overview

The table below outlines the transition from the current **2025/2026** age group model to the new U.S. Soccer mandated **2026/2027** August 1 - July 31 age group window.

Age Group	2025/26 Season (Jan 1 – Dec 31)	2026/27 Season (Aug 1 – Jul 31)	Typical Grade
U-6	Born Jan 1, 2020 – Dec 31, 2020	Born Aug 1, 2020 – Jul 31, 2021	K
U-7	Born Jan 1, 2019 – Dec 31, 2019	Born Aug 1, 2019 – Jul 31, 2020	1 <sup>st</sup>
U-8	Born Jan 1, 2018 – Dec 31, 2018	Born Aug 1, 2018 – Jul 31, 2019	2 <sup>nd</sup>
U-9	Born Jan 1, 2017 – Dec 31, 2017	Born Aug 1, 2017 – Jul 31, 2018	3 <sup>rd</sup>
U-10	Born Jan 1, 2016 – Dec 31, 2016	Born Aug 1, 2016 – Jul 31, 2017	4 <sup>th</sup>
U-11	Born Jan 1, 2015 – Dec 31, 2015	Born Aug 1, 2015 – Jul 31, 2016	5 <sup>th</sup>
U-12	Born Jan 1, 2014 – Dec 31, 2014	Born Aug 1, 2014 – Jul 31, 2015	6 <sup>th</sup>
U-13	Born Jan 1, 2013 – Dec 31, 2013	Born Aug 1, 2013 – Jul 31, 2014	7 <sup>th</sup>
U-14	Born Jan 1, 2012 – Dec 31, 2012	Born Aug 1, 2012 – Jul 31, 2013	8 <sup>th</sup>
U-15	Born Jan 1, 2011 – Dec 31, 2011	Born Aug 1, 2011 – Jul 31, 2012	9 <sup>th</sup>
U-16	Born Jan 1, 2010 – Dec 31, 2010	Born Aug 1, 2010 – Jul 31, 2011	10 <sup>th</sup>
U-17	Born Jan 1, 2009 – Dec 31, 2009	Born Aug 1, 2009 – Jul 31, 2010	11 <sup>th</sup>
U-18	Born Jan 1, 2008 – Dec 31, 2008	Born Aug 1, 2008 – Jul 31, 2009	12 <sup>th</sup>
U-19	Born Jan 1, 2007 – Dec 31, 2007	Born Aug 1, 2007 – Jul 31, 2008	College
U-20	Born Jan 1, 2006 – Dec 31, 2006	Born Aug 1, 2006 – Jul 31, 2007	College



## **Transition to School-Grade Player Formation**

SSC is aware that Connecticut recently changed its school enrollment age window from January 1 – December 31 to September 1 – August 31. In addition, it understands that Rhode Island, utilizes a similar September 1 – August 31 window.

The recent change and the misalignment of current cut-offs with U.S. Soccer mandates create challenges for our current and future player pools. U.S. Soccer and the various governing bodies established new guidelines intending to align team groupings with players' academic grade levels, and this intent will drive SSC's approach to team groupings during the transition.

To address these challenges, SSC has decided on the following approach:

- SSC will transition all age groups to align with the new U.S. Soccer mandates (September 1 – August 31).
- All newly formed SSC teams will abide by this age group designation.
- SSC will work to align all current teams as closely as possible with players' actual school grades (i.e., 4<sup>th</sup> graders with 4<sup>th</sup> graders, 5<sup>th</sup> graders with 5<sup>th</sup> graders).

SSC recognizes that changes of this nature can impact players differently. Any players affected by this transition will be supported thoughtfully and individually. All decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the full scope of each impacted player's development, including technical, tactical, physical, mental, and social factors.

This player-centered approach reflects SSC's continued commitment to holistic development and long-term success.

## **Impacted Players Currently on 2025/2026 Rosters**

The club has identified roughly 40-45 players on the current 2025/2026 rosters who may be affected by the new age-group alignment based on their birth year. Over the next 2–3 months, SSC coaches and staff will communicate closely to address each individual player's development and determine the most appropriate pathway for their continued growth.

Any decisions regarding placement or progression, outside of the aligned guidelines, will be made collaboratively and will be discussed directly with players, their families, and the SSC coaching staff. SSC truly values and appreciates the impact this change may have on players and families and remains committed to managing this transition with care, transparency, and empathy.



## **Can a Player Play Up an Age Group?**

SSC has always supported and elevated players who demonstrate exceptional ability across all **five pillars of development**: technical, tactical, physical, mental, and social.

If a player is evaluated within the top 3 players of their age-group roster, and a consensus among the coaching group determines that the player would also rank within the top tier of the age group above, SSC retains the option to promote that player to play up an age group.

## **What's Next?**

The 2026/2027 team selection process will begin in **Mid-April/May**. Building on the success of the restructured 2025/2026 selection process, SSC will again support its coaches in offering early roster spots and providing candid feedback **prior to Team Selection Week** scheduled for May 26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>.

Players currently within the SSC system who have performed, and continue to perform at a high level across all five developmental pillars throughout the spring season may be rewarded with early 2026/2027 roster offers. However, in keeping with our belief in fairness and meaningful evaluation, **no early roster offers will be extended until at least 50% of the spring league schedule has been completed.**

## **Why This Change Matters**

The updated age group model is designed to:

- Better align soccer teams with school-year peers
- Reduce the number of players negatively impacted by misaligned age bands
- Improve long-term player retention and enjoyment
- Strengthen team dynamics and social development
- Support clearer and more consistent player development pathways

SSC believes this shift will enhance the overall player experience and reinforce the club's mission to develop confident, capable athletes both on and off the field.

## **Commitment to Families and Players**

SSC understands that transitions bring questions, and the club remains committed to open communication, transparency, and support throughout the process. Families are encouraged to speak directly with their player's coach regarding individual circumstances.

*"Our responsibility is to guide this transition with care, clarity, and a player-first mindset," club leadership added. "We are confident this change strengthens our environment and better supports the long-term development of every player in our club."*




## **About Southeast Soccer Club**


SSC provides a comprehensive, development-focused soccer experience for players of all levels. Governed by U.S. Youth Soccer and the Connecticut Junior Soccer Association (CJSA), SSC is committed to fostering technical excellence, strong character, and a lifelong love of the game in a positive and supportive environment.


The club's long-term goal remains graduating at least **50% of every senior class** to continue their soccer careers at the collegiate level.

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