

DECISION NOT EASY, BUT FFC TO MOVE ADULT PROGRAM FOCUS TO CCL PRO23

BY TOM LEISS

FFC Social Media / News / Communications Director

Email: tleiss@fredericksbugfc.org

Twitter: [@TomLeiss](https://twitter.com/TomLeiss)

The choice to make the change didn't come easy and was something current Fredericksburg FC adult program founder Grover Gibson had to think long and hard about.

In order to continue developing the entire club, from youth programs through adult, the decision was recently made to move FFC's adult program focus from the National Premier Soccer League (NPSL) and Women's Premier Soccer League (WPSL) to the Club Champions League Pro23 (CCL Pro23) program.

Many factors went into the decision, but the goal of providing the best possible development scenario for Fredericksburg-area players, was one of the top reasons according to Gibson. That path has steadily grown since the club established an adult-level program with a Premier Development League (PDL) team in 2011.



weight representing our senior-tier programs.”



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The NPSL was a bit of a new concept in the Mid-Atlantic region when Gibson started the program in 2013 as RVA FC before merging it with the FFC program in 2015 after he was elected club president.

The club won the NPSL National Championship in its inaugural season using mostly college and over-aged players, but it has steadily incorporated more local players into the fold in the four years since.

Those were definitely exciting times, but Gibson said he's, "just as excited about seeing what our young FFC players are capable of at the CCL Pro23 level."

"Last year, it was about providing an opportunity for a lot of our younger players," he expanded. "This year, we will continue focusing on opportunities, but will combine that with the pressure of wanting to compete and win the CCL Pro23 league."



The Pro23 league allows teams to add college and over-aged players to their rosters, just like NPSL and WPSL. With that rule still in play, the club will still look to add these players because the experience they bring can only continue to help the club's younger players develop.

Fredericksburg-area native Ryan Zinkhan, a member of the club's 2013 NPSL championship side who is tabbed to be the men's program coach, said the Pro23's multi-season program will provide the additional bonus of more training. This, along with continuing to have older, more experience players around, will give FFC's younger players something others don't always get until they get to college.

"Allowing these youth players to experience a year-round training program, while training and competing with older players will better equip and prepare our players for the next level," said Zinkhan who played four years at the University of Virginia, helping the Cavaliers win the NCAA Division I National title in his senior season (2015). "It gives the youth players a small glimpse of what that next level might look like."

The recruiting process is just getting underway for both the men's and women's 2018 programs, so no players have been confirmed at this time, but the club expects to have a minimum of 5-10 college players involved in each.



The club will continue to build, adjust and adapt to whatever best suits its players and their development. Meaning, a return to the NPSL and/or WPSL in the future is not out of the question. “No doors have been closed,” according to Gibson, but it will all depend on if the club's needs and what those leagues are offering later on down the road are a good fit for each other.

“In the beginning we supported PDL, then we moved to NPSL, now we have merged, for the time being, into CCL Pro23. The markets are always changing in the U.S.... It's mostly about adapting to what best fits your needs and purpose,” Gibson said. “As long as we are covering all tiers for our Fredericksburg-based players to play at all levels, then we are meeting the exact goals we have always had in place.”

To learn more about the FFC CCL Pro23 program, [Click Here](#), or visit the club's website at www.fredericksburgfc.org.