



GALAXY ALLIANCE SOCCER CLUB

IS MY KID READY FOR CLUB SOCCER?

This document is designed to help parents determine if their player should consider joining a soccer club, or continue playing in AYSO (or other recreational leagues).

What Coaches Look For: Just because a club coach makes an offer to a player doesn't necessarily mean that the kid is "ready" for club soccer. But if enough coaches and/or others tell you that your kid "has what it takes" to be successful in club soccer, you should listen. Most coaches look for these basic elements when evaluating his prospects for a player's long-term development and advancement:

- **Talent:** Does the player have an innate talent for soccer? Basic ball-handling skills come naturally and easily.
- **Athleticism:** Does the player have the speed, agility and physicality to compete at the higher levels as he matures in soccer?
- **Coachability:** Does the player have the focus, drive, eagerness to learn, and desire to succeed and win?

Soccer-Centric Kid: If the kid is screaming for more, higher-level soccer and is frustrated with the lack of challenge or focus in AYSO or other rec leagues, then parents shouldn't discourage them from checking out club as an option. An experienced soccer professional might describe him as the kid that comes home from school every afternoon and has to bang the ball against the garage or dribbles through the hallway on the way to dinner. And most annoyingly, pounds the ball underneath his/her desk while doing homework. That kid, who has posters of his favorite soccer heroes and teams plastered over his walls, can't turn off the Fox Soccer Channel and that just has to eat, drink and sleep soccer, is a strong candidate for club. But if your kid still wants to prioritize baseball, basketball, skiing or other sports, then he might not be ready to join a club soccer team. Soccer clubs typically don't discourage kids from playing other sports or having other interests, but the expectation is that soccer needs to take precedence over all other extracurricular activities.

Soccer-Centric Family: Behind every great soccer player is a committed family who is willing to make the sacrifices required to help their kid realize his/her aspirations. While soccer shouldn't necessarily dominate your family's schedule and leave little possibility for the elusive "balance" that most of us seek, parents need to be prepared for club soccer to be a major portion of their lives.

When is the Right Time?: What is the optimal age to have your kid start playing club soccer? It depends entirely upon the kid. A basic concept that might help with the decision would be "Don't Push 'em, Don't Hold 'em Back". Avoid putting your kid on a club team just because his friends are doing it, or because he complains a little about the AYSO team he was just on, or because you like the prestige of being associated with club soccer. But if there are clear indications that your kid is ready, even at an early age, encourage them to go to the next level and join a club team - no age is "too young". Professional coaching and greater competition will help them develop quickly and keep them motivated.

Club soccer isn't appropriate for every player. But for the right kid, at the right time, with the right organization and coach, it can be a tremendously fulfilling experience.

For more information about **Galaxy Alliance Soccer Club**, please visit www.galaxyalliance.org.