



GALAXY ALLIANCE SOCCER CLUB

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CLUB SOCCER OVERVIEW

This document is intended to provide an introduction to club soccer for new participants and those wishing to have a better understanding of the club system and how it works.

WHAT IS CLUB SOCCER?

As discussed herein, "Club Soccer" is an umbrella term for the network of independent, privately-run organizations that provide opportunities for kids (typically 8-18 years old) to play soccer at all levels in both recreational and competitive programs. It is a soccer program that is separate from and parallel to AYSO, YMCA, Municipal and other recreational leagues and organizations.

Club soccer teams are typically comprised of boys or girls within single year groupings (U9, U10, U11...up through U19). A player may play "up", or on teams that are older than his age group, but not below his age. The age cutoff date is usually July 31, so kids with birthdays from August 1 of a given year through July 31 of the following year will be grouped in one age division (e.g., a boy born on August 1, 1997 will be a "B97" player, and a girl born on July 31, 1998 will be a "G97" player),

WHAT IS A SOCCER CLUB?

A soccer club is a collection of affiliated teams that is organized under one system of management, usually a board of directors, that sets forth a common set of goals and philosophy (ideally). A typical soccer club may have 10 to 15 teams, with some of the larger "super clubs" having up to 50 teams in their competitive divisions. Some clubs are run as non-profit tax-exempt organizations, usually with volunteer board members and administrators. Others are run by professional coaches on a for-profit basis. Most soccer clubs hire professional coaches for their teams in the interest of i) minimizing the inherent conflicts of interest associated with having parent coaches and ii) maintaining a high standard of coaching for their players.

CAL SOUTH

The California State Soccer Association - South (Cal South) governs the club soccer world from San Luis Obispo to the U.S.-Mexico Border (there is a Cal North as well). Cal South is the official youth and adult state soccer association of the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) and United States Youth Soccer, representing 250 member leagues and clubs with more than 130,000 registered players. Most southern California soccer club activities fall under the jurisdiction of Cal South. Cal South's website is <http://www.calsouth.com/en/>.

COAST SOCCER LEAGUE

Most Los Angeles area club teams participate in the Coast Soccer League, the largest and one of the most competitive soccer leagues in the country. CSL has over 180 soccer clubs, over 2,200 teams, and more than 35,000 players who will participate in over 15,500 games played on 540 fields throughout the Southern California area, from San Luis Obispo to the U.S.-Mexican border. CSL is a private enterprise and is run independently of Cal South. The CSL website is <http://www.coastsoccer.com/>. In the San Diego area, the

Club Soccer Overview

July 6, 2011

Page 2 of 5

dominant club soccer league is called the Presidio Soccer League <http://www.presidiosoccer.com/>.

Bracketing: Within CSL, teams compete against others in their own age division in the following brackets:

Bracket	Starting Age	# of Teams in Division
Bronze	U09	8 teams
Silver	U09	8 teams
Silver Elite	U10	8 teams
Gold	U11	U09-U13: 8 teams, U14-U19: 12 teams
Premier	U16	12 teams (invitation only)

With few exceptions, all new teams in CSL begin at the Bronze level (some U09 teams will start at Silver). Teams in a bracket are grouped (usually geographically) into pools that play each other during the regular league season. So a Bronze team based in Santa Monica will most likely play other Bronze teams from the Westside of Los Angeles, the South Bay (El Segundo, Torrance, etc.), Downtown LA or the like. The winner of the bracket gets “promoted” to the next level (e.g., from Bronze to Silver) for the following year’s league season. At the Silver level and above, the last place team in a bracket will typically get “relegated” to the next lower level for the following season. Depending upon a team’s performance (in both League play and League Cup, discussed below) and the dynamics of the other brackets, CSL could selectively promote a second or third place team and relegate a second to last place team.

Laddering: Many soccer clubs have multiple teams at the various ages and brackets. Clubs often employ a “laddering system” whereby the top players are migrated to the team in the highest level bracket, with the other team(s) providing more game time and development opportunities for the lesser skilled players. For instance, the larger clubs might have up to three teams in an age division (the maximum allowed by CSL), with a Gold, Silver and Bronze team each providing an appropriate level of competitiveness and training for the skill and commitment level of its players.

SCDSL / Other Leagues: A new soccer league named the Southern California Developmental Soccer League was formed in the Spring of 2011. The league currently consists of approximately 32 clubs containing an estimated 700 teams. While this league is still in its infancy, its formation has already had a substantial impact on club soccer in Southern California. For more information and status updates, visit <http://www.scdslsoccer.com/>.

CLUB SOCCER SEASON & SCHEDULE

Most soccer clubs have activities for 10 months out of the year, running from the beginning of August through early June. These activities can be broken out as follows:

Pre-Season Training: The Club’s seasonal activities typically commence in late July or early August when teams begin conditioning and training for the fall Coast Soccer League season. Teams often attend club-sponsored camps and conditioning programs in addition to the regular two or three practices per week, and often compete in tournaments and scrimmages in preparation for league play. The pre-season training is an important part of

Club Soccer Overview

July 6, 2011

Page 3 of 5

the club soccer world and players are expected to be in town and available for these sessions.

Coast Soccer League Play: League games in CSL normally begin the weekend after Labor Day. Depending upon age and division of play, a team will play between ten and fourteen league games between September and early November. Most teams will have one or two games per weekend, which can be on Saturday and/or Sunday (but usually not two games on the same day), or sometimes a bye. Teams within each division will normally play each other twice, with each team playing one home game and one away game. So in an eight-team division, each team would play 14 games (7 x 2). In a bracket of 12 (Gold and Premier) each team will play each other once, resulting in an 11 game season.

A CSL-sponsored tournament called League Cup takes place over several weekends toward the end of the league season and is technically considered part of “regular season” play. All participating teams are seeded against the other teams in their age group based upon their position in the standings in mid season. Strong performance in League Cup can influence a team’s consideration for promotion within the CSL bracketing system for the following season. When League Cup is finished, all regular season play in Coast Soccer League is completed.

Post-Season Activities: After League season is completed, younger players (8th grade and under) will continue to train and play in scrimmages or tournaments, taking some time off over the winter holidays, resuming again in January to begin preparing for the State or National Cup tournaments in February. Most High School aged players cease all club activities after League Cup, and remain on hiatus from December until the end of the high school season in February. High school players then return to train and play with their club team when their seasons are finished in late February or early March, when they too begin to prepare for State or National Cup. When teams are finished with the State/National Cup tournaments, they may play in a variety of other tournaments until summer break starts in the early part of June. Many teams choose to play in Coast Soccer’s Spring League, which runs from early March through May. Most club teams break for a portion of June and July each summer.

Recruiting & Tryouts: While many coaches and managers scout and recruit all year long, the “recruiting season” typically begins in the early spring (March), normally after the State Cup tournament is completed (which often signifies the official end of a player’s obligations to a team). Clubs and teams may hold formal tryouts, or simply invite players to come to regular practices with the team for evaluation. Most teams will have made roster changes & recruiting selections by June, when team managers begin to request contracts and payments from players for the new season. However, CSL doesn’t require teams to “lock” their rosters until August, just before the fall season begins. After the “roster freeze” date, players who are registered with one team may not switch teams until the end of the League season. Unregistered players may be added to a team’s roster at any time.

POST-SEASON TOURNAMENTS

After the conclusion of League play, club teams usually participate in a combination of club-sponsored tournaments and League or Cal South sanctioned tournaments.

Club Soccer Overview

July 6, 2011

Page 4 of 5

State Cup: State Cup is a CYSA (Cal South) sanctioned event that begins in February for younger teams and April for older teams. State Cup is similar to League Cup with the exception that teams that are outside of CSL (including the San Diego (Presidio) League and Central Coast teams) also compete. <http://www.calsouth.com/en/statecup/>

National Cup: This is US Club Soccer's national championship competition. U-13 through U-17 winners from each Regional advance to the National Cup Finals to determine a national champion team in each age division. This tournament is usually appropriate for only the most competitive teams (typically Gold and Premier level). There are two levels of competition available: "Super Group" (most competitive); and "Premier." <http://www.calsouth.com/en/nationalcup/>

California Cup: Known as "Cal Cup", this is another CSL-sponsored tournament that is an alternative to National Cup. U09-U13 teams play in February, and U14-U19 teams play in April. <http://www.cslcalcup.com/>

Club-Sponsored Tournaments: There are many individual club organized tournaments that take place throughout the year, concentrated in the periods prior to major CSL events (fall season, League Cup, State Cup, etc.). These provide opportunities for club teams to "tune up" for upcoming events, try out new players, lineups and strategies. Most club teams play between 4 and 6 tournaments a year.

HIGHER-LEVEL YOUTH SOCCER PROGRAMS

Separate and parallel to the club soccer system are upper-echelon programs that exist to develop the most talented and promising soccer athletes in the country. The primary goal of these programs is to build the most competitive U.S. National Team possible and to enhance the overall level of youth soccer in the United States. These programs are having a dramatic impact on the club soccer system, forcing massive alliances of the largest domestic and international clubs intending to attract the top talent in various regions around the country.

Olympic Development Program (ODP): US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program (ODP) was formed in 1977 to identify a pool of players in each age group from which a national team could be selected for international competition. The Cal South ODP program is open to all eligible youth soccer players within the confines of Cal South. Players can be selected for ODP through the recommendation of club technical directors, directors of coaching, team coaches and even opposing club coaches. Recommended players will be scouted in league play from September through December and at the Cal South State Cup and National Cup competitions. <http://www.calsouth.com/es/odp-programs/>.

Development Academy: Created in 2007, the Development Academy program is a partnership between U.S. Soccer and the top youth clubs around the country to provide the best youth players in the U.S. with an every day environment designed to produce the next generation of National Team players. The Academy's programming philosophy of increased training, less total games and more competitive games is based on U.S. Soccer's Best Practices utilized by the U-17 U.S. National Team Residency program. <http://www.ussoccer.com/Teams/Development-Academy/Academy-Overview.aspx>.

USSF ID2 Program: Established in 2004, US Club Soccer's id2 national identification and development program provides an opportunity for the country's top youth talent to be

identified and developed for possible inclusion in U.S. Soccer's National Team programs. Any coach is able to recommend qualified players with national team potential for inclusion in the id2 program. http://www.usclubsoccer.org/main.aspx?sec_id=20&guid=3c1422e1-d5ce-45c5-98d2-b02731598798.

WESTSIDE LOS ANGELES YOUTH SOCCER CLUBS

As of Summer 2011 there are currently six youth-oriented soccer clubs on the Westside of Los Angeles, with approximately 1,500 kids playing on a total of 89 teams:

Club Name	# Teams	Location	Notes
Galaxy Alliance Soccer Club	20	VA Field	CSL
Santa Monica United (SMU)	18	Webster M.S.	
Pacific Coast Soccer Club (PCSC)	18	Various	
Westside Breakers	15	VA Field	SCDSL, mostly girls
Brazil Stars Soccer Club	10	Culver City	City Soccer spinoff
Beverly Hills Futbol Club	9	Culver City	
West Coast Soccer Academy	8	University High	
City Soccer Club	7	Culver City	

Each of these clubs has its own character and system of governance. SMU, Westside Breakers and PCSC are run with fairly strong centralized structures with dominant coaching leadership that sets the tone and direction for the clubs. Galaxy Alliance has historically provided less strict top-down governance, empowering its team managers and allowing each team to impose its own structure and culture, but provides support services, organization and consistency of vision for its teams. City Soccer Club, West Coast Soccer Academy, Brazil Stars and Beverly Hills Futbol Club have been run by entrepreneurs for whom soccer is a business. Each has its advantages and disadvantages, and there is much debate over which club and format creates the best teams and player development.

Growth of Westside soccer clubs is substantially restricted by lack of available field space. The Coast Soccer League has recently requested that Westside clubs limit their growth so as to avoid further game scheduling challenges. Because of the complex sharing arrangements for Westside fields, games for Westside clubs are the only ones in the CSL system that must be scheduled manually.

RESOURCES

The following links will provide more information about club soccer and the topics discussed above.

Cal South	http://www.calsouth.com/en/
Coast Soccer League	http://www.coastsoccer.com/
U.S. Soccer Federation	http://www.ussoccer.com/default.aspx
U.S. Club Soccer	http://www.usclubsoccer.org/
Galaxy Alliance Soccer Club	http://galaxyalliance.org/