

## WELCOME TO EMERALD COAST UNITED

We are pleased that you have decided to participate in what we hope will be a fun and rewarding soccer experience for you and your child. To assist you in getting better acquainted with Emerald Coast United (ECU) we have prepared this Club Handbook. While we have made considerable effort in preparing this handbook, we realize that it can never cover every issue that might arise. If you encounter a problem not covered here, please ask your coach, team manager, or any ECU Board Member for further assistance.

ECU brings together parents with greatly differing levels of soccer sophistication. Parent experiences with soccer range from those who played soccer in college or beyond to those with absolutely no real experience or understanding of the world's most popular sport. *Regardless of your experience with the game, we recommend reviewing the rules of the game of soccer on the Florida Youth Soccer Association website [www.fysa.com](http://www.fysa.com) and the standards of conduct for players and fans in this Handbook.* For all parents, we have attempted to answer in this Handbook some of the recurring questions about the Club, its philosophy, and the Club policies regarding practice, try-outs, costs and many other topics.

The sport of soccer is growing dramatically in this country, and every season brings new ideas at all levels. Therefore our philosophies are also continuing to evolve, and our policies, we hope, continue to be molded and reshaped in ways that will better serve the needs of each player and of the Club as a whole.

We sincerely welcome your suggestions, as well as your participation in the workings of the Club. **This is your Club.** It takes a tremendous effort to accomplish all that must be done in order to sustain a successful soccer program--the care of the fields, tournament arrangements, uniform arrangements, state and local registrations, practice organization, and much more. Too often the responsibility falls on the shoulders of a very few. We always are looking for volunteers and earnestly solicit your participation. If you are willing, we have a job for you.

Please read carefully the information in this Handbook. Your familiarity with what is contained here will help ensure that you and your child have a fun and rewarding ECU Soccer experience. All recommended changes, additions, and/or deletions to the information in this handbook should be provided in writing to an ECU board member. The Handbook is maintained by the Board. This Handbook will be reviewed annually, at a minimum, or earlier if deemed necessary by the ECU Board of Directors. If contents of this handbook conflict with the Bylaws, the Bylaws will take precedence over this handbook.

The handbook and by-laws are posted on the ECU website at [www.emeraldcoastunited.com](http://www.emeraldcoastunited.com).

Note: for purposes of this handbook, a “club member” is defined as a registered ECU soccer player, coach, trainer, manager, administrator, director and parent in good standing. A member in “good standing” is defined as one whose balance is zero through the current month, i.e. all required registration, tryout, uniform and session fees are paid in full and member is in good disciplinary standing with the club. Members not in “good standing” are not eligible to vote during the Annual General Meeting (See Section 9).

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## **1. MISSION, PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY**

**Emerald Coast United** (ECU) was established in January 2007, the result of a merger between Northwest Florida Soccer Club / Force and Wave Futebol Club. Operation of ECU **began** June 2007 with the purpose to develop, implement and promote a comprehensive youth soccer program across Northwest Florida, and to provide education and training as defined by the United States Soccer Federation (USSF). Our commitment is to teach our young players the necessary fundamentals of the game while instilling a sense of pride and enjoyment. The development of technical and tactical skills is the distinguishing goal of our club. A proven cycle of education and training will be used for the development of individual player skills and implementation of team training and expectations.

The purpose of ECU shall be to develop, implement and promote a comprehensive youth soccer program across Northwest Florida to provide education and training as defined by the United States Soccer Federation (USSF).

### **The mission of Emerald Coast United (ECU)**

Our mission is to provide our soccer players with the best technical training and playing environment necessary to reach the highest possible level of play. A vertically integrated technical skills and tactical development program is used to provide the opportunity for ECU players to progress to their maximum ability and potential. The keys to our success include a professional coaching and training staff, oversight by a focused board of directors, and equipment and fields necessary to facilitate a positive training environment.

### **The goals of our Club are:**

- 1) Recruit top quality (licensed) coaches
- 2) Provide a high level of training of fundamental soccer skills and tactics for both individual play and team play
- 3) Create a safe, secure, and enjoyable environment where players can achieve their full potential
- 4) Foster the development of physical, mental, social, and emotional fitness
- 5) Foster a Club atmosphere in which the good of the whole Club is valued as well as the needs of the individual
- 6) Offer the opportunity for children to experience the sense of pride and accomplishment that comes from dedication and teamwork
- 7) Develop and promote club player's skills to compete at the Middle School, High School, National and Collegiate levels
- 8) To have as much fun as possible
- 9) To work with our local communities to promote soccer within the region
- 10) Develop the reputation as one of the "premier" soccer clubs in the United States

When players reach the travel level, we ask that they commit the time and effort necessary to bring about self-improvement and to contribute to the goals of their team. We make the same demands on the ECU coaching staff. Selection to a travel level team requires a full year commitment. We take pride in the fact that our Club is not just a loose collection of individual teams, but a true soccer club

in which teams get to know each other and support each other, on and off the field. Older soccer players are enlisted to help at practices as a role model for the younger teams, and to help at summer camps and clinics.

## **2. ASSOCIATION IDENTIFICATION/AFFILIATION**

ECU is an affiliate member league and will comply with the authority, rules, and guidelines of the Florida Youth Soccer Association (FYSA). FYSA is, in turn, recognized by the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) as the controlling authority for the development of youth soccer in the State of Florida. The USSF is, in turn, a member of the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the worldwide administrator of our sport, and the creator of the World Cup. All of our rules and policies are derived from the international FIFA "Laws of the Game". Competition sanctioned by ECU will be in compliance with these rules including future special provisions or modifications FYSA may develop to accommodate our youth players.

## **3. NATIONAL AFFILIATION**

ECU shall be an affiliate of and comply with the authority, rules and guidelines of the United States Soccer Federation (USSF). This affiliation is predicated upon shared goals and objectives leading to the advancement of youth soccer.

## **4. COLORS**

The colors of ECU shall be Green and Blue and they will be used in all official emblems or other insignia used to promote or identify ECU.

## **5. ORGANIZATION, ADMINISTRATION & OFFICERS**

The administrative organization of ECU shall be identified as that of a Board of Directors consisting of twelve (12) members. The Board of Directors shall consist of the President, Vice President/Sponsorship, General Manager, Boys Registrar, Girl's Registrar, Treasurer, Dues Collection, Secretary, Tournament Director, Website Coordinator/Uniform Coordinator, Scholarship/Fundraising Director, and Director of Coaching/Player Development (DOC).

Board Member Eligibility: Any interested party in the local area may be a Board Member with the ECU Board; however, in order to be considered a voting member of the Board you must be related to or a legal guardian of a currently registered player in good standing with ECU. Board Members must also be able to attend the majority of Board Meetings held on a monthly basis during their term in office and actively participate in the positive promotion and operations of the Club.

The duties and responsibilities of the Board of Directors are documented in the Emerald Coast United By-Laws, Section 2.

## **6. DIRECTOR OF COACHING AND TECHNICAL TRAINER**

ECU employs the services of a professional soccer Director of Coaching and Technical Trainer. The DOC general duties and responsibilities are documented in the Emerald Coast United By-Laws, section 2.3.3. The DOC's detailed duties and responsibilities are documented in the ECU / DOC Professional Services Contract Agreement.

## **7. TECHNICAL TRAINER**

ECU employs the services of a professional Technical Trainer. The Technical Trainer's detailed duties and responsibilities are documented in the ECU / TT Professional Services Contract Agreement.

## **8. ECU MEETINGS**

Meetings Of The Board Of Directors - per ECU By-Laws section 3.3

The Board of Directors shall hold such meetings as are necessary to the timely conduct of its business in support of the advancement and betterment of ECU soccer. The Board will meet not less than six (6) times a year. Voting by proxy is not permitted. Telephonic conference calls shall be considered a meeting provided the rules of a quorum is met. Individual Board members may make their inputs known, to include voting, via telephone.

Meeting location and time will not be changed within 72 hours of the scheduled board meeting unless meeting location is no longer available or location must be changed to accommodate expected attendance.

Meeting Quorums / Board of Directors meeting – per ECU By-Laws section 3.3

A quorum must be present at the beginning and throughout a meeting for business to be conducted. As a point of order, should it be noted that a quorum no longer exists, the meeting may be recessed in order to obtain a quorum. If a quorum cannot be re-established, the meeting shall be adjourned. A quorum shall be a minimum of eight (8) Board Members present (ECU By-Laws section 3.3).

Voting Procedures – All Meetings – per ECU By-Laws section 3.3

The Board of Directors shall have one (1) vote each when voting on motions presented before the board, except the President and the DOC. The President shall vote if there is a tie vote.

Annual General Meeting (AGM) - per ECU By-Laws section 3.2

ECU Board of Directors shall convene an AGM for the purpose of an annual report on the status of the activities of the club, election of the ECU Board of Directors and such other agenda items determined necessary per the ECU By-Laws, Section 3.2.

## **9. ECU STANDING COMMITTEES**

Establishing Committees

The ECU Board of Directors shall establish such standing and/or special Committees deemed necessary to conduct the business of ECU. Further, the Board President is authorized to select the

Chairperson of each Committee, if a Board member is not already designated Chairperson in their duties, with ratification by majority vote of the Board of Directors. The Chairperson of each Committee shall select the Committee members from a list of club member volunteers with ratification by majority vote of the Board of Directors.

#### Term Limits

The chairperson shall serve for a term limit as determined by the President and/or the Board of Directors.

#### Duties And Responsibilities

The ECU Board of Directors shall define the duties and responsibilities of Standing Committees, with specific authority for the development of policies and procedures within the scope of their Committee title. Modification, changes, deletions, or additions to policies and/or procedures shall be within the authority of the Committees, requiring ratification by majority vote of the Board of Directors.

#### Standing Committees

The following Committees are authorized but not limited to:

- 1) ECU-hosted Tournaments
- 2) Uniforms
- 3) Rules & Disciplinary

### **10. MEMBERSHIP, REGISTRATION & TERMINATION**

Membership in Florida Youth Soccer Association (FYSA), and its members, shall be open to soccer players, coaches, trainers, managers, administrators, and officials not subject to suspension under USSF Section 4, Bylaw 241 and to any amateur soccer organization in FYSA's territory. FYSA will not discriminate against any individual on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, age, sex, ethnic or national origin. In keeping with its purpose to develop and educate youth for the advancement of youth soccer, ECU shall offer membership to all residents of Okaloosa County and surrounding counties in the Florida Panhandle for the purpose of playing competitive travel soccer. Any person, without regard to political preference, age, race, religion, or gender who meet the following qualifications shall be eligible to be a member and vote on all matters of ECU:

- a. Is a resident of Florida, or surrounding state
- b. Is a member of FYSA
- c. Whose player's annual registration, tryout, uniform and session fees are current and player is in good disciplinary standing.

ECU members consist of the following per ECU By-Laws, section 1.3: Players, Parents, Coaches, and Board Members.

The ECU official soccer season begins on August 1st and ends May 31st of the following year. Membership with ECU begins once registration for the upcoming season has been completed. Completion of registration is defined as all paperwork being completed and turned into the appropriate

board member and payment of the registration fee has been processed. Individual membership ends when the ECU official soccer season is over with the following exceptions.

If the player signs up for the fall season only, then that player's membership ends the day prior to spring tryouts for that season. If a player signs up for the spring season only, that player's membership begins on February 1st and runs through May 31st. If a player originally signs up for the fall season only, but then decides he/she wants to return in the spring season, then that player's membership and registration will continue on through the spring season as long as the player is in good standing.

If a player is injured during the course of the season and is officially released from practice and games due to the injury, that player maintains his/her membership for the duration of the season in which they registered.

If a player moves away from the area and their dues are refunded according to the ECU Handbook, that player's membership is terminated as they are no longer playing for ECU.

ECU begins conducting registration after the State Cup Finals, which are held in the May/June time frame. While registration may, from time to time begin earlier, the regular registration deadlines are firm. After the regular registration closing dates, additional registrations are only accepted on a "waiting list" basis. Players on the waiting list will only be accepted if places remain on existing team rosters and no players are available from the player pool. Maximum team roster sizes are established by FYSA. Unless a player has participated in the past 12 calendar months and his/her records are on file, all players are required to provide valid proof of date of birth by producing one of the following documents:

**1) NEW TRAVEL REGISTRANTS - THE ONLY VALID PROOFS OF BIRTH ARE:**

- Birth Certificate (Government Certified Copy)
- Uniformed Services Identification and Privilege Card (DD Form 1173) issued by the uniformed services of the United States
- Birth Registration issued by an appropriate government agency or board of health records
- Passport, (may be expired)
- Alien Registration Card issued by the United States Government
- Certificate issued by the Immigration and Naturalization Service attesting to age
- Current Driver's License (or Learner's Permit)
- Unexpired federal, state, or local government identification card if documentation of date of birth is required (i.e., "walker" ID)
- Certification of a United States citizen born abroad issued by the appropriate Government agency

**2) PREVIOUSLY REGISTERED TRAVEL PLAYERS - THE ONLY VALID PROOFS OF BIRTH ARE:**

- Previous year's USYSA member pass
- Any documents listed for new registrants

## **TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP**

A member shall cease to be a member of ECU if:

- a. Such member resigns by giving notice in writing to the club's Board of Directors; or
- b. The Board of Directors vote to terminate the membership of such member on the grounds that such member has ceased to be qualified and eligible, or
- c. A majority of members vote to terminate a membership by a special vote called for that specific purpose.
- d. A terminated member will not receive a refund of fees paid for the current year.

Players/Parents are also required to provide a **completed medical release form that has been notarized which must be on file with the club prior to the start of any practice or games**. Failure to provide all documentation and information necessary to complete registration will result in that player not being registered and thus unable to compete.

## **11. TRYOUT PROCESS**

In the summer of each year team selections are accomplished through a four day series of tryouts and coaching assessments. Summer tryouts are open to all individuals, including players from other clubs, and each team will go through the tryout or reselection process every summer. There will only be one regularly scheduled summer tryout session. Tryouts will be held in late May or early June.

For potential players that moved to the area during the summer months and missed the first tryout date and for potential players that were unable to attend the tryout and received an excused absence from the General Manager, they will be allowed to tryout during the first week of fall practice provided there are roster slots remaining in the their age group. Examples of reasons for missing the first tryout session are illness, injury, family vacations, etc. The DOC may also hold tryout sessions at regularly scheduled practices throughout the season. Tryouts between the fall and spring seasons are typically held in January or at team practices for new players.

Tryout registration and tryout fees are required prior to the player beginning the tryout sessions. A check or cash can be used to pay tryout fees. Tryout fees will be processed immediately and are non-refundable.

Tryout announcements will be posted on the ECU Web site and advertised in the local and regional papers. Individual teams may also hold tryouts/coaching assessments mid-year between the fall and spring seasons as the need for additional players arises and with the approval of the Director of Coaching. **Players who are currently carded with another club** must complete all necessary transfer paperwork prior to attending a tryout, practice or game. Individual teams will work through the club to advertise the dates, times, and locations of the tryouts.

The mechanics of the tryout process are the responsibility of the Director of Coaching and Player Development (DOC). The Board of Directors assists the DOC with the administration responsibilities (tryout registration, fee collection, pictures, etc.) associated with tryouts.

**All potential players are required to tryout in their true age group regardless of the player's previous team history.** The tryout sessions will be divided by age group, and will consist of drills, exercises and scrimmages designed to allow the selection committee to evaluate the skill, desire, attitude and potential of each player. Normally, the club will schedule 4 days of tryout sessions in the same week. Each potential player will be required to attend 2 of the 4 sessions during the week on the days designated for their age group but are encouraged to attend all four sessions. The events to be evaluated will be determined by the ECU Director of Coaching and Player Development. The Director of Coaching and Technical Trainer will select a committee from his staff and from past, current, and/or future Club coaches. ECU Board members will not be on the committee that conducts the tryout process unless one of the board members also happens to be a coach and has been invited by the Director of Coaching to participate on the evaluation and team development committee. Each player will be evaluated at each event using a scale of 1-5. A score of 5 is well above average, a score of 1 is well below average, and a score of 3 is considered average. Normally, an overall average score of 3 is the minimum required for a player to receive an invitation to play in the new season. Players will be notified of Club acceptance no later than a week after the tryouts. Players will be notified they were selected for a Club team but not identified as a specific team—allowing maximum flexibility to create “true age group” teams after the results of supplemental tryouts.

Any player who has previously been a member of Emerald Coast United or is known to the Director of Coaching and any Coach for ECU but is unable to attend Fall or Spring tryouts due to injury or other legitimate reason\*, may be reserved a roster spot in their age group (or skill equivalent age group) until such time as they are able to tryout. This player will also be allowed to register, but at the first available opportunity (when seasonal practices begin) must tryout with their perspective team. The decision to reserve a roster spot lies within the discretion of the Coach for the team in which the player is eligible to play and the DOC.

\*Legitimate Reason – must be submitted in writing and approved by General Manager.

## **12. TEAM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

The actual teams are formed based on age groups / skill level. The DOC has the responsibility and authority to allow players to play-up in appropriate age groups. The same committee that conducted the evaluations for acceptance into the Club will conduct the team formation process. ECU Board members will not be on the committee that conducts the team development process unless one of the board members also happens to be a coach and has been invited by the Director of Coaching to participate on the evaluation and team development committee. In the event more than one team can be formed within an age group, two teams in that age group may be formed at the discretion of the Director of Coaching and Player Development. The teams will remain together for one year (i.e., two seasons) after which all players again tryout and the teams are reformed. Teams will not be neighborhood based.

Players may be offered spots (Select team, Youth Development Program, Training Pool) within the club as appropriate with their current skills.

### **Vertical Integration System**

Emerald Coast United has implemented a vertically integrated ability appropriate player selection, team formation, player performance evaluation and an open door training policy that enables players to train and play with ECU teams according to physical, technical, tactical and psychological abilities. A vertically integrated technical skills and tactical development program is a method in which player performance is constantly evaluated by the clubs Director of Coaching, Coordinator of Player Development and senior staff coaches and based on those evaluations players may be allowed to play at a higher performance level appropriate to that players, technical, tactical, physical and maturity level. This system gives players an opportunity to work hard, show commitment and a desire to improve performance level and be rewarded by being given opportunity to firstly train with players who have consistently performed at a higher level and secondly, if approved by the Director of Coaching, be allowed to play with teams of a higher level. This system also allows for underperforming players to be able to train and play with ability appropriate players and teams.

Playdates and tournaments are selected and scheduled based on age-appropriate and ability-appropriate criteria. The Club develops a tentative team schedule at the beginning of each season that is finalized by the team. The Club pays for Club-sponsored playdates and tournaments for each team, and pays the coach travel for these sponsored activities. The Club also hosts the Destin Soccer Rodeo (October) and Emerald Coast Cup (April) which is free for each Club team as long as the parents volunteer as field marshals, etc. to support the tournament.

Younger teams (U10-U12) play locally within the Florida panhandle and lower Alabama. Overnight stays are discouraged for these ages.

Older teams (U13 and up) travel regionally to gain better competition and exposure.

#### **a) Select teams**

Select teams are established based on gender, age group, and player ability criteria. When necessary to allow players to achieve their full potential, the DOC may allow players to play up in their age group or when there are not sufficient numbers of players in the age group to form a team. Players shall be placed on age-appropriate/ability appropriate teams. Teams train 2 times per week on a set schedule.

##### **1) Two teams / same age group**

In the event that two (2) teams can be formed within the same age group, the teams will be formed using the “Premier” & “Select” team concept. Based solely on the tryout evaluations and the recommendation of the Director of Coaching and Technical Trainer, the “Premier” team will be formed by selecting the players with the highest skill levels. If there is an even number of players each team will be formed with an equal number of players. If there are an odd number of players, the additional player will go to the “Premier” team. In the event one team is short of players for a game/tournament, the other team may provide guest players provided it does not adversely affect scheduled game/tournament play for the team they have been assigned to at the start of the fall season.

“Premier” and “Select” teams will be scheduled at skill-appropriate playdates and tournaments.

## **2) Roster changes – all teams**

Players will mature at different levels through the season. The DOC has the responsibility and authority to determine and implement roster changes through the season. Suggested times to make roster changes are as follows: August / September (after 3 weeks of initial team practices) and December/January (prior to Presidents Cup/State Cup roster freezes).

Once a player is selected for a roster change, the DOC will schedule a meeting with the player’s parent, coach, and ECU GM or President. The DOC will present the reasons for the roster change. Discussion will follow. If consensus is not reached, the DOC & GM will determine if a formal meeting is needed to resolve the issue. If needed, a formal meeting will be scheduled with the DOC, player’s parent(s), and Club Board of Directors.

## **b) Youth Development Program**

The Youth Development Program (YDP) is the training and development activity for younger players aged 6-10. YDP participants train 2 times each week and may enter the ECU-hosted tournaments as a team. No additional playdates or tournaments are scheduled/sponsored by the Club.

## **c) Training pool**

Players not selected for a team will be offered the opportunity to be placed in the ECU training pool. Training pool player will pay a reduced fee. Training pool members are considered full fledge Club members with all rights of membership while in good financial and disciplinary status. Members of the pool will train weekly and are the first considered for filling ECU guest player positions.

The mechanics of the training pool are established by the DOC, depending on the number of Training Pool participants. Training pool players may train with teams or separately based on number of pool players.

## **d) Open Door Training Policy**

Emerald Coast United has adopted an Open Door Training Policy which allows players who want to train more often, the opportunity to receive extra training opportunity by being allowed to train with other players and teams of similar age, maturity and appropriate technical and tactical ability. This means that a player who is committed to improving performance may, with the approval of club’s Director of Coaching, train with other players and teams as well as the team they are rostered to, provided that the receiving coach agrees. In the event of a coach not agreeing to allow a player to train with his/her team, player desiring of extra training will be allowed to train with player pool under the supervision of club’s Coordinator of Player Development.

The Open Door Training Policy enables the more committed player to develop improved performance by offering them increased opportunity to improve game, physical and mental skills in an appropriate training environment.

Club registration is conducted separate from the tryout process. Club registration fees will not be processed by the Club until it has been determined the player has been accepted to play with a Club team and all necessary paperwork (player contract, medical release, etc.) is completed. Club registration requirements are detailed in Section 11.

**e) Player Expectations**

- 1) Players are expected to make soccer their “primary” sport
- 2) Players should be dedicated to working hard at practice and on their own
- 3) Players are expected to be at scheduled practice practices and games on time and dressed, ready to play. If your player is unable to attend a scheduled practice or game, please conduct the coach or manager – pre-plan if at all possible.
- 4) Players shall respect their coach and teammates at all times.
- 5) Players are expected to travel to all scheduled games and tournaments.

**f) Parent Expectations**

- 1) Involvement in club soccer requires a commitment of time and money
- 2) Financial aid is available as needed. Those players receiving financial aid are expected to attend all practice and games.
- 3) Conflicts will arise in attending games or practices – please contact the team manager or coach. Repeatedly missing practices or games can jeopardize the player’s roster slot.
- 4) No one other than the ECU coaching staff or ECU official may sit with the players on the team bench during a game.
- 5) Parents should speak up during parent meetings and voice concerns to the team manager
- 6) Ignore adverse conditions such as bad referees, name calling, foul language, negative behavior by opposing team parents, etc. If the adverse condition(s) is affecting the safety of the players, contact your team manager, team coach, or other club official immediately.

**13. PLAYERS PLAYING UP OR ON OPPOSITE SEX TEAM**

Players are strongly encouraged to play on teams within their own age groups. Prior to being assigned to a team of the opposite sex or an older age group, the player in question must be observed by the Director of Coaching and Technical Trainer and by the coach of the receiving team for which the player is being considered. If DOC, in consultation with the coach of the receiving team determine the player will clearly benefit from moving up or playing on a team of the opposite sex, a **recommendation for that particular player “To Play Up” or “To Play on a Co-Ed Team” will be made to the Club Board of Directors. The Club Board of Directors will vote on the recommendation and the player will be approved to play on the perspective team if the majority of Board votes in favor of the recommendation** and if the action to move the player does not prevent the formation of a team in the player’s normal age group. The decision to authorize a player to play on a team of the opposite sex or to play-up rest solely on a recommendation by the DOC and a **majority vote** of the Club Board of Directors. The Club Board of Directors must approve or disapprove the recommendation in writing and maintain this written decision for the balance of that season. Players desiring to play on a team of the opposite sex or play up must go through this process each year regardless of their past playing history with another club or with ECU.

There is one exception when a player may play up two-age groups older. If there is no team either in the players year group or one year group older for the child to play on, a player may be authorized to play up two age groups provided the player's parents agree, the Director of Coaching and Player Development authorizes it, the gaining coach is in agreement, and the ECU Board of Directors **approves it by majority vote**. This should only be allowed in extreme and unusual circumstances. Other possibilities should also be explored to the maximum extent possible, such as the child playing in their own age group or one age group older but on a team of the opposite sex, before they receive approval to play up two age groups.

## **14. GUEST PLAYING / DUAL ROSTERING**

### **14.a&b) Guest Playing**

In connection with tournament play, teams are allowed to take guest players. In addition, players from ECU may be invited to appear as guest players with other club teams.

The following policy concerning guest players is per FYSA. The ECU process – following the FYSA requirements, is shown in Section 14.b

### **14.a FYSA Guest Players Policy** (Per FYSA Section 208, FYSA By-Laws & Rules)

FYSA teams may include guest players, if allowed by the rules of a specific competition. These guest players must be registered with FYSA or another US Youth Soccer affiliate organization. FYSA players may be allowed to guest play with another FYSA team or with another US Youth Soccer affiliate, if proper permission is granted by that player's original registering club.

- A. Permission of the player's current primary affiliate must be granted in writing by use of the FYSA guest player form.
- B. Permission to guest play may be denied by the affiliate at its discretion.
- C. Coaches desiring a player to guest play must obtain permission from the registering affiliate's agent of record, or designee, prior to contacting the player. Failure to obtain permission prior to contact shall be evidence of poaching as defined under Rule 401.5.
- D. The guest player request form shall specify the dates and competition to which permission is granted. If the request is intra-club no special permission is required.
- E. Players who guest play shall not be allowed to transfer to the team or affiliate with whom he/she has been a guest player for the remainder of the seasonal year unless written permission is granted by the original affiliate. (Intra-club transfers are exempted with permission of the affiliate.)

Playing a "guest player" without proper permission may result in a charge of playing an ineligible player under Rule 401.3 and/or falsification of a roster as defined under Rule 505.4

### **14.b ECU Guest Player Policy**

Guest players for teams may be found within ECU or outside ECU. Guest players provide a way for teams to compete in tournaments that they may not be able to participate in, or provide additional

players when the team has a limited roster. However, guest players are not intended to replace rostered players by seeking better players from other clubs. There is no rule about guest players starting or their playing time, but coaches should be aware of parent's sensitivities towards these non-paying players.

Pool players shall be limited to guest playing two times per season. Beyond that, the BOD may impose additional fees or require them to switch to regular player status. Likewise, guest players from another club shall be limited to guest playing for ECU two tournaments per season.

If a team needs guest players, the coach should first contact the ECU DOC. ECU pool players or players who play for other ECU teams should be considered first. Section 14.b.1 outlines the process to follow for using guest players from within ECU. Section 14.b.2 outlines the process to follow for using non-ECU guest players.

#### **14.b.1 Intraclub (within ECU)- contact registrar at least 3 days before playdate**

1. The requesting coach or manager emails the coach and manager of the team that the player is registered to. The DOC and the club registrar are both copied on this email.
2. The coach of the player's primary team either approves or disapproves the request – the coach should respond to the other coach, registrar, and DOC as a minimum.
3. If the other coach cannot support the request, the requestor coach will discuss the need with the DOC. Other players within the club or outside the club will should be discussed. The process starts over again.
4. If the other coach approves the request, then the registrar, DOC, and requesting coach will be notified as in step 2.
5. Once the Registrar has approval from both coaches, then the registrar will notify both coaches, the DOC, GM , and both team managers that the player(s) has been approved to guest play.
6. The registrar will generate an event roster for the requesting team.
7. An approved request from the coaches (step 4) must be received by the registrar at **least 3 days** (i.e. approval Wednesday if playing Saturday) **prior to play**. Otherwise, the event roster **will not be processed and the request fulfilled**.
8. Upon receipt of registrar's email, the managers exchange the player pass, medical release, etc..
9. This process should be done promptly and cooperatively.

#### **14.b.2 Interclub (between clubs) - contact registrar at least 5 days before playdate**

##### **Player(s) from other clubs guest playing for ECU**

1. If ECU players are not available to guest play, then the following process is used.
2. A requesting coach or manager emails the registrar requesting that a club be contacted for a guest player (need guest player's full name). The registrar is the official point-of-contact between ECU and other clubs. This request must be sent to the registrar at least 5 days prior to play ( i.e. email Monday if playing Saturday).
3. The registrar sends a copy of this email to the DOC and GM (information).
4. The ECU Registrar then contacts the other club registrar to with the request for guest player(s).
5. The ECU Registrar continues to be the contact point for ECU with the other club.
6. Once the other club responds to ECU's guest player request, the ECU Registrar will distribute this information to the DOC, GM, team coach, and team manager.

7. Once the request is approved and received from the registrar, the ECU team manager or coach may contact the player, player's parents, or player's team manager directly to coordinate the player pass, medical release, and guest player form.

8. This process must be followed – direct contact with another club's player or parent may result in a charge of poaching with heavy consequences from FYSA.

#### **ECU players guest playing for other clubs**

9. If ECU guest players are requested by other clubs, the ECU Registrar is contacted immediately. All requests need to be routed to the Registrar.

10. The ECU registrar then sends the request to the ECU DOC and team coach, who discuss the request and either approve or disapprove the request. Note – the player(s) parents may be contacted for input by the team coach prior to finalizing a decision.

11. The decision made by the DOC and coach is communicated to the ECU Registrar, who then communicates the decision to the other club.

12. If the request is approved, managers of the affected teams will coordinate directly with each other and their respective Registrars to implement the approved action.

13. If questions arise throughout the process, please contact the ECU Registrar for guidance.

14. This process should be done promptly and cooperatively.

15. Adherence to these procedures will help foster understanding of responsibilities and communications flow.

#### **14.c) Dual Rostering**

A player may only be officially listed on a maximum of two rosters at the start of each season. Prior to the start of the season, that player must specify, in writing, which team is their primary team and which is their secondary team. This selection must be made clear to the head coach of each team prior to the start of the season. In the event that the schedules of the two teams conflict in any way, the player will play with the team they have designated their primary team. A conflict is defined as:

(a) The Primary and the Secondary teams are playing each other, or

(b) The Primary and the Secondary teams are playing in the same tournament, or

(c) The Primary and the Secondary teams are playing in different tournaments on the same weekend.

A waiver releasing this player from a conflict is up to the discretion of the Primary team's head coach, when ECU is the Primary team.

### **15. TRAVEL PARENT & PLAYER CONTRACT**

If your child is selected to become a travel level player, he/she and their parent/guardian will be asked to sign a Parent & Player Contract and the Sport Parent Code of Conduct. As the Contract indicates, it is important that, before you and your child accept our invitation, you both understand the obligations that come with becoming a member of a competitive soccer team. At this level of competition, success and fun on the soccer field do not come without some extra effort. The will to win is not enough; you and your child must also have the will to prepare to win. As a result, each year we ask all players to formally acknowledge that, for their own good and that of their team, they are expected to attend practice, to practice properly, and to do all that they are asked to do to become skilled soccer

players and a contributing part of their team. As a parent, we need your assistance in helping your child understand the nature of the commitment you both are making and the importance of keeping that commitment. If you review with your child the Contract, and treat it seriously, we believe that it will help the player understand his/her responsibilities. Before your child begins the fall season on an ECU team, we must receive a copy of the Contract signed by the player and one of his/her parents or legal guardians. Contracts are returned to and maintained by the General Manager.

Breach of this contract during a season (Fall or Spring) will result in disciplinary actions within the club and FYSA. Examples of disciplinary actions could be: A Warning; Suspension of 1 game; Suspension from 1 tournament; Suspension for a season (fall or spring); Suspension for 6 months; Suspension for 1 full year; complete removal. Each violation will be handled on a case-by-case basis with regards to the final decision on the administering of punishment. Refer to Section 29 and 35 for more information.

**Trial Period:**

All players who register have the option to ask for a release by August 31. The annual fee will be pro-rated (1/8 of annual fee will be held), registration fee will not be refunded. For players who register after the season begins, the trial period is 2 weeks after signing of the player/parent contract.

**16. CLUB FEES**

The Board of Directors establishes an operating budget for each seasonal year (June 1 – May 31). The team fees are determined after the budget is prepared. Any funds leftover at the end of the season in the team accounts will be returned to the club general budget.

**Fee Credits (Injury, Moving from the area)**

Players who are injured and are not able to participate in training or games for one month or more are entitled to a pro-rated fee refund. The General Manager must be informed immediately (with copy to team coach and team manager) in writing (email, letter, etc.) of the injury. A doctor's excuse must be received within 1 week of the reported injury. The injury time is determined using the date that the injury is reported and the date that the player is released by the doctor and/or parent to begin training. The refund shall be paid at the end of the season.

Players who move from the area during the season and request a release are entitled to a pro-rated fee refund. The move must be at least 100 miles from the residence noted at time of registration. The refund shall be paid within 1 month of the player release.

**Uniform Buy-back Policy**

ECU will buy-back uniform jerseys and shorts that are in good condition. The rate will be up to 50% of the original purchase price. The Uniform Coordinator handles all uniform buy-backs.

**17. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

If your child needs financial assistance or special arrangements in meeting club costs, you should submit a written request to the ECU Board of Directors (c/o Club Treasurer) for consideration. The written request should be in the form of a scholarship request or extended payment plan. Both of these forms can be found on the website under forms.

## **18. WHAT DOES TRAVEL COST?**

One of the many reasons why soccer ranks second in popularity among all team sports in the United States with kids 6 to 11 years of age is that soccer is a relatively inexpensive sport. However, if you move into the Travel program, parents can expect higher costs than those encountered in recreational programs. With the support of a great many volunteers, including our coaches, parents and sponsors, the cost of being a travel player is less than might be expected. To aid you in your planning, we are providing the following, general outline of the types of costs that can be expected. Because these costs vary from year to year, it is impossible to provide specific cost information. However, at the beginning of each soccer season, your team manager and/or coach can provide you with a list of expected costs for the following fall or spring season at your request. Parents and players are financially responsible for, and expected to participate in, the fall and spring seasons plus all of the team's scheduled tournaments.

ECU fees are paid by the fall and cover a long list of expenses. Some of these include FYSA Registration Fees, field rental fees, Director of Coaching, Technical Trainer & staff salaries, equipment, etc. We are a non-profit corporation and we do not receive direct state, city, or county support. We make every effort possible to keep our expenses at a reasonable level.

### **Additional Costs**

By careful planning and by taking advantage of volunteered transportation, the cost of tournament play can be greatly reduced. In addition, transportation and lodging costs will be necessary for tournaments held at locations that prevent travel back and forth to your home (i.e. Jacksonville, Florida or Atlanta, Georgia). Each player must also provide for his/her own personal equipment (e.g., uniform, shoes, shin guards (mandatory), soccer ball, etc.)

Younger teams (U10-U12) play locally within the Florida panhandle and lower Alabama. Overnight stays are discouraged for these ages.

Older teams (U13 and up) travel regionally to gain better competition and exposure.

## **19. TEAM SCHEDULES**

Team schedules will be prepared by the coach with the assistance of the team manager and approved by the DOC. Once approved, changes to the schedule must be submitted to the DOC for approval. The DOC will provide the General Manager a copy of the schedules so that a master schedule can be generated for the club and travel costs can be anticipated.

## **20. TEAM FUNDRAISING**

In view of the considerable costs that can be associated with the Travel Program, ECU allows individual travel teams to engage in limited fund raising activities. At the same time, ECU has an interest in assuring that fund raising efforts do not conflict with policies or with the activities of the club or with other club teams. As a result, team managers will ensure all individual team fund raising activities are cleared in advance with the club Board of Directors. Because ECU may, from time to time, enter into sponsorship agreements with various entities, all teams are required to obtain approval prior to concluding any team specific sponsorship agreements.

## **21. TRAVEL PLAYER PARTICIPATION IN TOURNAMENTS**

Because of the importance of tournament play to the development of a team, all ECU travel players are expected to participate. This means that all players will share in team tournament expenses, unless they are injured and cannot attend. To aid you in planning, you should know that ECU teams participate in several tournaments that take place every year. Please plan your child's schedule so as to allow him/her to be available to participate. Parents should look to their coach/team manager for more specific information about tournament schedules. In addition to the scheduled league games, ECU teams may also participate in tournaments on Thanksgiving weekend, Memorial & Labor Day weekends, during Christmas holidays, and/or Easter holidays.

## **22. SAFETY POLICY**

The safety of all of our members is our paramount concern. Therefore, ECU requires coaches, team managers, parents, and players to act immediately to avoid or correct any unsafe condition or behavior that they might witness. Parents and players must report all unsafe conditions that they might encounter to their coach or team manager within 24 hours. Coaches and team managers will, in turn, immediately report the incident to an ECU board member. The board member must, in turn, notify the ECU Board President who will take immediate steps to correct the unsafe condition. In addition, the following safety rules apply:

- 1) Games and/or practices will cease immediately once lightening has been observed in the area. Play/practice will not resume until 30 minutes after the lightning detector no longer shows lightning in the area.
- 2) No player will be allowed to climb on goal posts, fences, or trees while at practice or a game
- 3) Coaches will not leave any field until all players have been picked up by a parent or guardian
- 4) Coaches must become familiar with basic first aid procedures and attend such courses when offered by the club

## **23. DRUG AND ALCOHOL POLICY**

It is the firm commitment of ECU to take an active role in the prevention of drug and alcohol abuse. Our zero tolerance policy for both coaches and players while at either games or practices is no drugs,

no alcohol, no smoking, and no destructive or abusive behavior. We require the same of parents and spectators when in the presence of any players. We will involve ourselves with the player and parents any time that a situation has an impact on our club or its members. It is important that we be able to trust our parents and players to obey club rules. Violation of this policy may be the basis for suspension or dismissal from the club. If an incident occurs while at a tournament, it may be required that a player return home early without finishing the tournament. As our players get older, they are expected to be positive role models for the younger children, not only on the soccer field, but also in all areas of social behavior.

## **24. INSURANCE COVERAGE**

The insurance provided through the FYSA affiliation may change in its exact coverage from year to year. The precise terms of the insurance coverage are available at the Florida State Soccer Association offices or through FYSA District representatives. In general, the FYSA insurance provides coverage for all players registered with the United States Youth Soccer Association while participating in sanctioned play or practice under the supervision of an authorized official, while traveling directly to and from player practice, and while participating in other scheduled group activities under the direct supervision of an authorized official. The benefits provided include an accidental death benefit and accidental medical expense benefits. For current and more exact information, or if you have questions, contact your coach or the Florida Youth Soccer Association at (407) 852-6770 or [info@fysa.com](mailto:info@fysa.com)

## **25. UNIFORM POLICY**

As a condition of membership in ECU, all Select teams (U10-U18) are required to wear the ECU uniforms that are specified by the club. The club will maintain extra uniforms for guest players. Players on select teams and pool players shall not abuse the use of guest uniforms as a way to avoid purchasing their own uniform. Whenever a player is in uniform, he/she is representing the club and he/she shall wear the uniform properly and with pride in accordance with the following guidelines:

- 1) Jerseys will always be tucked into shorts whenever you are wearing the uniform (not just during the game). (Not applicable to goalies wearing specially designed jerseys)
- 2) Uniform socks will be pulled up when you have them on.
- 3) Socks must always cover shin guards.
- 4) Arrive at games fully dressed, with shoes on and securely tied.
- 5) Leave your watches, all other jewelry, and hairpins (except for rubber bands or other elastic bands) at home or in your equipment bags.
- 6) Players should remember to always bring both uniform jerseys to every game.
- 7) A ECU practice jersey will be worn to/during each official team practice.
- 8) If sliding pants are worn, we recommend they should be the same color as the team colors and must not extend below the uniform shorts (does not apply to goalies wearing specially designed padded shorts).
- 9) Uniforms may not be artificially altered from the way it was manufactured in any way, shape, or form.

## **26. ECU-HOSTED TOURNAMENTS AND FUNDRAISING**

ECU hosts two tournaments per year—The Destin Soccer Rodeo in the fall and the Emerald Coast Cup in the spring. All ECU members are expected to volunteer for these tournaments, whether their child's team is playing in the tournament or not. Failure to help support the club by volunteering time at these tournaments may result in a \$50.00 fine. Parents who are able to provide additional support should volunteer for the tournament organizing committee.

ECU may seek additional fundraisers throughout the year to supplement the scholarship fund or general budget. All ECU members are expected to participate in any club-wide fundraising.

## **27. TEAM ORGANIZATION**

The organization of soccer teams is necessarily built around the coaching staff. ECU coaches, unlike coaches in some clubs, are considered part of the club support structure. All coaches are expected to provide support to other teams from time to time. Teams are organized as follows:

1) **Head Coach**. A Head coach will be designated for each team. He/she should be your first contact in the event of a problem. The head coach is responsible for the development, overall management, and discipline of the team. The ECU DOC, TT, or another ECU coach may participate, from time to time, in team practices and games. ECU is proud of its coaches, and we, through our extensive licensing efforts and coach clinics, have made considerable effort to provide your children with the best-available teachers of the game. Please give the coach your support and assistance. Parents will not be assigned as the Head Coach of their child's team. This rule does not apply to the U-9 and U-10 age group teams and can be waived by the BOD on a case by case basis upon recommendation of the DOC.

A coach can be assigned the same team for a period of two consecutive seasons. The coach maybe assigned the team for one additional season (2 + 1 rule) upon approval of the DOC and the BOD.

The Head Coach is ultimately the only person totally responsible for the actions of the team, which includes the players, assistant coaches, team parents and spectators. Therefore, the Head Coach will have the final word of all matters that are related to the team. The Head Coach responsibilities include:

- (a) Responsible for establishing and communicating team policies and coaching philosophy. The team coaching philosophy shall be based upon a commitment to fair play and fair treatment for all players. It shall be dedicated to developing individual player's skills and team tactics; it shall also focus on improving the individual physical fitness of each player and it shall minimize pressure on players.
- (b) The Head Coach is responsible for assisting the Director of Coaching and Player Development in selecting players based on the tryout results.

- (c) Responsible for selecting and working with the Team Manager to ensure the many management tasks associated with running the operations of the team are completed in a timely and efficient manner.
- (d) Responsible for the team schedule: This will include scheduling practice dates, times and locations, scrimmages, and also working with the club in selecting tournaments for the team to participate in. Normally the team will enter all ECU sponsored tournaments and will assist the club with conducting the tournaments. For all other tournaments, many issues must be considered and discussed with the players and parents, such as the reputation of the tournament, the level of competition, the travel time, distance and cost.
- (e) Responsible for determining each player's position and playing time, as well as determining the coaching strategy and tactics for games.
- (f) Responsible for conducting periodic player evaluations and communicating with players and parents on the progress of the player's progress including both soccer skills development and physical fitness.
- (g) Maintain a basic knowledge of first aid treatment for minor sports related injuries.
- (h) Responsible for attending all ECU coaches meetings.

2) **Team Manager/Assistant Team Manager**. The Team Manager(s) is an invaluable member of the team organization. The manager handles many of the administrative aspects of the team, such as uniform issues, team telephone list, special notifications, and other items to help the coach with all of the time-consuming administrative details. If you are interested in becoming a team manager, or assisting the team manager, please contact your coach. It is highly recommended that the team manager have a personal computer, an internet connection and be computer literate. Some of the Team Manager's duties are outlined below:

- (a) Assisting with communication between the Coaching staff and the team.
- (b) Registering the team which includes developing, submitting and maintain the official team roster, to include player additions, drops, and transfers.
- (c) Maintains the Player and Coach Pass Identification Cards.
- (d) Maintains the Player Medical Release Form.
- (e) Establishes, maintains, and distributes the team phone and E-mail tree.
- (f) Publishes and distributes the team's game schedule, field directions and maps. (Note: This information will also be passed to the club Web Master for posting)
- (g) To work with each family to determine which volunteer position(s) they will accept, and to assign others as needed.
- (h) Supporting and working with the General Manager to complete applications for all tournaments that the team decides to participate in.
- (i) Coordinating and attending all team and tournament meetings.
- (j) Maintaining important documents such as rules, procedures, bylaws, etc. The team manager will also make these documents available to the coaching staff and other team parents when needed.

3) **Other Volunteers**. As was mentioned in the introduction of this Handbook, the demands of running a successful soccer program are tremendous. If you have a skill, or no skill but a desire to serve, we have an opportunity for you! Help in keeping and setting up a team tent,

assisting with transportation, organizing game refreshments, and volunteering during tournaments are just a few of the many ways in which a parent can make a very important contribution to a child's soccer experience.

## **28. APPLICATION TO COACH**

Applicants for travel team coaching positions must submit a written application to ECU. The ECU DOC and GM will maintain a file of these applications. The Director of Coaching will review all applications and make selection decisions for available travel coaching positions. These selections will be approved by the ECU Board of Directors. ECU will publish announcements of coaching vacancies or the requirements for coaches for new travel teams in the club newsletter and/or on the ECU Website. An advertisement in a local newspaper will only be required if there are insufficient applications for coaching positions on file.

Application packages should contain a resume of the applicant's references, experiences in coaching soccer, current USSF certificate or equivalent, reasons for wanting to become involved in the travel team program, letters of recommendations from previous clubs that include club contact information, and any other pertinent information.

Minimum training requirements for an ECU travel coach is a USSF approved 'E' license or foreign equivalent. The club may grant exceptions, but all travel coaches must achieve the USSF 'E' license by the end of the second season of travel coaching.

Any applicant selected to coach an ECU travel team may not coach more than a total of two club teams in any one season. The Director of Coaching will advise each applicant of the disposition of his or her application and reasons for non-selection, if applicable.

## **29. COACHING ASSIGNMENTS PROCESS**

### Section A. Development and Implementation of Coaching Assignments

1. The Director of Coaching (DOC) is responsible for identifying and determining coaching assignments for each season. The DOC should discuss potential coaching assignments with each coach individually and may ask for group input at a coaching meeting prior to the start of the new season.
2. The DOC develops a payment rate based on coaching licenses and coaching experience.
3. The coaching assignments and payment rates are reviewed with the ECU Board of Directors prior to the start of each season.
4. The General Manager must sign each coaching contract. Once the General Manager signs the coaches contract, it is considered finalized and in effect for the season.
5. Up until the General Manager signs the coaching contract, no legal contract exists. The General Manager will sign the contract prior to the start of training.
6. The General Manager will make a copy of the contract for each coach and hold the original in a file.
7. The DOC is allowed to make changes in coaching assignments prior to the start of the season as outlined in Section B.

#### Section B. Coaching Assignments Changes / Prior to start of season

1. The DOC has the responsibility and authority to make coaching changes prior to the season. Coaching changes will not be made until consensus is reached between the DOC and coach.
2. When a coaching assignment needs to be changed prior to the season, the DOC will notify the General Manager and then discuss the change with the affected coach(es). If the coach(es) agree(s), the DOC will implement the change and notify the General Manager and ECU Board of Directors.
3. If the coach(es) do(es) not agree with the change(s), the DOC will notify the General Manager who will set-up a meeting with the affected parties and discuss the issue.
  - a. If consensus is reached, the DOC will implement the change and notify the ECU Board of Directors.
  - b. If consensus is not reached, the issue will be forwarded to the ECU Board of Directors for discussion, review, and determination.
4. Changes made prior to the season will be shared with the teams whose coaching assignments have changed.

#### Section C. Coaching Assignment Changes / During the season

1. The DOC has the responsibility and authority to make coaching changes during the season. If the change is due to a performance issue, the DOC shall have implemented prior to this discussion a performance improvement plan for the coach (see Section D). Coaching changes will not be made until consensus is reached between the DOC and coach.
2. When the DOC deems that a coaching change needs to be made, the following process shall be followed.
3. DOC shall notify the General Manager (who will notify the ECU Board of Directors) in writing of the required change. The written description shall include reasons for change in the coaching assignment.
4. The General Manager shall review the requested change and discuss with the ECU Board of Directors.
5. The General Manager shall schedule a meeting with the affected coach and DOC to discuss the issue. If consensus is reached, the change will be made. If consensus is not reached, the issue will be added to the agenda for ECU Board Only business, and discussed as part of the Board Only business with the affected coach and DOC. Note: If the Board determines that team player/parent input is needed, the Board will schedule a separate meeting.
6. Changes made during the season will be shared with the team affected in a timely manner.

#### Section D. Performance Improvement Plans

1. If the DOC deems that a coach is not performing to his expectations, the DOC shall develop a performance improvement plan. The goal of the performance improvement plan is to set specific goals with a timetable.
2. This plan will be reviewed with the coach and implemented. A copy of the plan will be forwarded to the General Manager.
3. The DOC will review plan status with the coach routinely.
4. Once the plan's goals have been achieved, the plan will be marked completed. The DOC shall review routinely to confirm that the goals are being maintained.

5. If the coach fails to successfully complete the plan's goals, the DOC shall use Section C to make a coaching change.

### **30. COACH COMMITMENT & BEHAVIOR**

As part of the ECU commitment to excellence, we require that all of our coaches make the following commitment to the club, its players, and their parents to provide instruction and guidance that channels the individual efforts of players and parents into an extraordinary team experience. To achieve the goal of building a competitive and cohesive team, ECU expects that each coach:

- 1) Plan and supervise practice sessions that are fun and instructive.
- 2) Prepare for each game by creating a strategy suitable to the team and its opponent.
- 3) Motivate and teach with positive reinforcement.
- 4) Treat players, parents, opponents, and referees with respect.
- 5) Observe and apply the rules of ECU and our team in an evenhanded manner.
- 6) Balance the desire to win with the goal of insuring that all players have the opportunity to play and contribute.
- 7) Work with ECU DOC to develop and monitor team expectations

Among the requirements for ECU coaches are the following:

- 1) Attend all practices and games. If a conflict arises, ensure that a suitable substitute has been arranged for and properly briefed.
- 2) Conduct yourself in a professional manner at all times.
- 3) Ensure that players do not engage in any unsafe behavior and take immediate action to correct such behavior when it is observed.
- 4) No foul language or abusive conduct.
- 5) Conduct a team meeting not less than ten days prior to the first game to discuss team/ECU philosophy, establish practice schedules and locations, and organize parental support.
- 6) No smoking in the presence of players.
- 7) No alcoholic beverages in the presence of players.

When traveling with the team:

- 1) Remain aware of your players' whereabouts and behavior.
- 2) Behave in a professional manner at all times.
- 3) Set schedules and informs players of all activities.
- 4) Ensure that all administrative details are properly conducted in a timely manner.
- 5) No smoking in the presence of players.
- 6) No alcoholic beverages in the presence of players.

ECU coaches are encouraged to attend coach education seminars, workshops, classes etc.

All coaches must have pre approval by the ECU board to attend a course for which they want reimbursement. On successful completion of course a copy of the license, diploma must be forwarded to the club DOC and General Manager.

1. ECU will pay for all FYSA “E” license courses for ECU coaches who do not have a current coaching license. Coach is responsible for any travel, hotels, meals etc.
2. ECU will pay for all FYSA “D” license courses for ECU coaches who do not have a current coaching license or who have an “E” license. Coach is responsible for any travel, hotels, meals etc.
3. All other coach courses are the responsibility of the coach. ECU encourages coaches to further their education with higher level courses. The ECU board will set coach education policy each year. The coach education policy will be documented in the coach handbook.

When you have completed your course you must forward a copy of the license awarded General Manager.

If a coach wishes to attend more courses in a calendar year, other than ECU approved coach education, they will be responsible for all course expenses including tuition.

Your highest license will determine your ECU coach level (1-6). You will be paid at that level from August 1 for 1 contract year.

A coach will remain at the same level for the remainder of the ECU calendar year.

### **31. COACH’S CODE OF ETHICS CONTRACT**

I hereby pledge and promise that I will always strive to be a positive influence to the players by following the Code of Ethics detailed below:

- 1) I will place the emotional and physical well being of my players ahead of my personal desire to win.
- 2) I will treat each player as an individual, with respect, while remembering the emotional and physical development of his or her age group.
- 3) I will do my best to promote and provide a safe playing environment for my players.
- 4) I will always show respect for players, other coaches, and game officials.
- 5) I will lead by example, demonstrating fair play and sportsmanship at all times.
- 6) I will do my best to organize practices that are fun and challenging for all my players and focused to meet the needs of the team in terms of skills and tactical development.
- 7) I will remain updated on the laws and rules of the sport and do my best to teach these rules and laws to the players.
- 8) I will do my best to be at practice at least 15 minutes before scheduled start time and will remain afterwards until all players are picked up. If I must miss a practice, I will coordinate to ensure another coach will be available to handle the team or I will notify parents of a cancellation. The team will never be left unsupervised under any conditions.

- 9) I will do my best to arrive at game locations at least 1 hour prior to scheduled start time so that I can handle the administrative matters as coach. If I must miss a play date, I will ensure another coach is available to perform these duties.
- 10) I will make myself available to players and parents for questions, meetings, or discussions as it relates to an individual's involvement with my team.
- 11) I will work hard to help my team reach its full potential and achieve the goals that we, as a team, agree upon.
- 12) I will behave in a professional manner at all times.

### **32. PARENTS CONDUCT & BEHAVIOR**

I hereby pledge and promise that I will always strive to be a positive influence to the players by following the Code of Ethics detailed below:

- 1) I will remember that the game is for the players, and that competing is more important than winning.
- 2) I will always show respect for players, other coaches, and game officials.
- 3) I will lead by example, demonstrating fair play and sportsmanship at all times.
- 4) I will ask my child to treat other players, other coaches, and officials with respect.
- 5) I will always be positive.
- 6) I will always allow the coach to be the ONLY coach.
- 7) I will not get into an argument with opposing team's parents, players, or coaches.
- 8) I will not come onto the field for any reason during the game.
- 9) I will not criticize the game officials.
- 10) I will not possess alcohol, tobacco, or drugs during or after any game or at any time at the field and/or game complex.
- 11) I will respect the volunteer positions of the Board Members or others operating within the boundaries of their duties/responsibilities to ECU.

#### **Conduct at Games**

Soccer games are as exciting for parents as they are for their children. That's great. For many of the spectators, however, soccer is a sport about which they know very little. They want to support the team, cheer for the team, and encourage their child. Occasionally, this enthusiasm combines with a parent's lack of familiarity with the game, or lack of knowledge of the coach's instruction to the team, in a way that causes problems.

Parents are encouraged to cheer for their player and the team, and applaud good plays. However, **coaching from the sidelines** or **directing negative comments** at the players is **inappropriate and unacceptable**. In fact, under the rules referees are authorized to card a coach whose parents behave in a way that reflects negatively on the game.

Coaching from the sidelines means yelling directions to players about their positioning, coverage, strategy or tactics. Parents should refrain from coaching their children, but should instead let the team coaches direct the team.

Similarly, it is inappropriate to direct negative comments at any of the players, our own as well as opposing players, or the referees. Foul language will not be tolerated at any time. Referees who hear such comments or language directed at either themselves or players on the field are authorized to card the team's coach and, depending on the circumstances, may even eject the coach and the offending parent(s).

We do not wish to curb your enthusiasm for the game. We do wish to make sure that your enthusiasm is channeled in a way that will be helpful, complies with the rules of the game, and is consistent with the coach's instruction to the team. In this spirit, please keep these suggestions in mind as you attend ECU soccer games:

1) **Do Not Yell At The Referee** -- It is our goal to build not only good soccer players, but good sportsmen and women. Your positive, or negative, example at games will either greatly reinforce, or significantly undermine, that effort. The coach or team captain has principal responsibility, although limited latitude, in speaking with the referee. Let them do their job when, and if, they feel it is necessary.

2) **Know Something About The Rules Of The Game** -- Sometimes, parental ill-will toward the referee is based upon a parent's ignorance of the rules of the game. Common problems are the understanding and application of the rules governing off sides and illegal contact. For your education, **we recommend parents review the FIFA Laws of the Game**. The FIFA Laws of the Game can be found under the Rules and Regulations section of the **Florida Youth Soccer Association website ([www.fysa.com](http://www.fysa.com))**.

3) **Encourage - Do Not Criticize** -- One of our goals is to help your child play good soccer. No less important is our goal to make every effort to insure that your child has fun. Your child understands the team's high expectations of him/her and feels the peer pressure to do well. You can best help by confining your talk during the game to positive encouragement. The discussion later in this Handbook on becoming an "All-Star Parent" may be helpful to you in this regard. If possible, be quietly enthusiastic and supportive. However, for those of you whose participation in and familiarity with other sports (football, basketball, baseball and so on) have ingrained in you an irresistible need to yell and scream during a sporting event, then we make the following suggestions as **examples of acceptable cheers**:

- (a) **"Win the ball!"** - The team that is aggressive in gaining and keeping possession of the ball usually wins.
- (b) **"Let's go (team name)--you can do it!"** - A good, general-purpose yell for a parent who feels compelled to yell something. It fits almost every occasion.
- (c) **"Nice pass (or "shot", or "throw-in", or "tackle", or "save", and so on)"** - A nice, short yell, for a parent concerned that if too much is said, ignorance of the game may be revealed.
- (d) **"Keep hustling, (team name)"** - Another good, all-purpose yell.

## **Prohibited Comments**

**Any sentence or phrase that** starts with, ends with, or **includes** the word, "**Referee**" or "**Linesman**". For example, "Are you blind, Referee?" or "She's off sides, Mr. Linesman--get in the game!"

**"Kick it hard!" or "Send it"** - Possession of the ball is a primary goal in soccer. We are not playing "kickball." We try to teach the kids to pass the ball to teammates or to open space where teammates can win the ball. At times, because of defensive pressure or the proximity of the ball to our goal, we coach them to clear the ball long. But, unbridled encouragement of the kids to "kick it hard" can often be confusing.

**"Go get the ball!"** - Be careful with this one. Winning the loose ball is important. But, we do not want to play "bunch ball," where all of the players run all over the field chasing the ball in a pack. Maintaining space, trusting your teammates to do their jobs, maintaining positions of support and attack are important.

**Any negative comment directed at any player, especially your own child.** This is the rule that separates the "All-star Parents" from those sorry few who lose sight that in the end it's only a children's game. When the votes are counted, into which group will you fall?

## **All-Star Players Deserve All-Star Parents**

A few years ago, Dr. Rob Gilbert wrote an article in the National Soccer Coaches Association of America Journal on how to be an all-star parent. As your child moves toward more competitive soccer, take a minute to consider Dr. Gilbert's **Three B's For All-Star Parenting**:

- 1) **Be There** -- You can never hope to be an all-star parent unless you show up at games. Regardless of the skill level of your child or the success of the team, go to the games. Be supportive. Don't be a fickle, fair-weather fan.
  
- 2) **Be Positive** -- When your child puts on his/her uniform, stop being a parent and become a fan. There is no trick to learn his/hers. You already know what to do. Remember how you behaved when your child was learning how to walk? You were a fan and a supporter, weren't you? You applauded the "downs" as well as the "ups." You never said things like, "Why are you moving so slowly?" or "How come the kid next door is walking better than you?" or "Why do you keep making the same mistakes?" Why should it be any different now that your child is an athlete? Your job is not to be the coach or the expert. Be a fan. On the sidelines, if you can't say something positive, don't say anything at all.
  
- 3) **Be Seated** -- Even though it is good to be positive, it's not good to over do it. Don't stick out. Be an admirer - not a cheerleader. Players should not confuse your voice with the public address system.

Once you start to become a positive, acknowledging fan, an interesting thing may happen. Your child will want you at the games. You will know that you are considered an important member of your child's personal all-star support team.

### **Parent / Player Suspension from Team Events**

**Undisciplined or disruptive player or parent behavior:** Players and Parents are expected to conduct themselves, at all times, in a manner that reflects favorably upon themselves, their team and their club. In the event of undisciplined or disruptive behavior, every effort will be made by the coach to counsel with the player and/or the parent/guardian in order to call attention to the behavioral problem and to allow for corrective action. However, if the coach determines that the behavior is not being corrected, and such behavior is disruptive to the team, they may decide to suspend the offending player or parent from team practice/training sessions and/or games.

Failure to comply with this handbook may result in the suspension of your privilege to participate in ECU and FYSA sanctioned events, for the following periods:

**1<sup>st</sup> offense suspension minimum thirty (30) days to a maximum of five (5) years**

**2<sup>nd</sup> offense suspension for a minimum of one (1) year to a maximum of ten (10) years**

**3<sup>rd</sup> offense suspension for a minimum of five (5) years to a maximum of fifty (50) years.**

**NOTE: Any individual charged with a violation of this Code of Ethics shall be afforded due process as defined in FYSA's rule section 507 before the implementation of any suspension.**

### **33. REFEREES**

There is a real shortage of qualified, experienced referees in the State of Florida. We have some very good soccer referees, but we also sometimes encounter referees who, through lack of experience, do not make proper calls. We teach our players to think of the referee as a part of the soccer field. The field may be hard, bumpy, covered with water, short, long, and so on. The condition of the field and the weather are circumstances over which we have no control. We teach your kids not to worry or complain about those conditions over which we have no control. We try to adjust to them, but we do not yell or scream at the rain or the bare spots on the field. Try to think of the referees in the same way.

In order to fill the need for qualified referees in Florida, all soccer clubs should encourage their youth soccer players to become certified referees. Please remember the relative youth and inexperience of some of our referees. Let's not do or say anything that might discourage these kids from continuing as referees, and thereby add to our existing shortage of qualified referees.

From time to time for reasons beyond the control of ECU, referees will not be available for a scheduled game. When this occurs, spectators and/or coaches are not authorized to step in to provide the necessary officiating to play the game. This is due primarily to safety and insurance reasons. In cases like this, all parties are asked to conform to the highest standards of impartiality and good sportsmanship. While ECU makes every reasonable effort to ensure referees are assigned to all games and regrets those occasions when they do not appear, the absence of referees is not grounds for any refund, full or partial, of player fees.

### **34. PRACTICE ROUTINE**

Without regular and proper practice, soccer skills and tactics cannot be mastered. We ask of the ECU coaches a tremendous commitment of their time, and we expect the ECU players to be willing to make the same commitment. We know that many of our players have other interests and demands on their time, but we believe that it is very important that you make every effort to have them attend each practice session. At an early stage in their development, these children are capable of moving beyond "kick ball" and learning some good soccer skills. They will need those skills if their team is to be competitive. So please make every effort to arrange schedules to allow time for soccer practice.

ECU teams *generally* will practice twice each week during the soccer season. Fall season practice will begin in August and continue through November. For the spring season, practice will begin in by February and end in May. The times and days of your team's practice will be set by the club and by your child's Coach. Ideally, your child's team will have one practice devoted principally to soccer skills and one practice session during which team tactics are taught. Each of these sessions is important.

Please send water in a plastic bottle with your child to each practice. It is important to replace liquids lost from perspiration. Also, please ensure that your child brings the proper equipment to each practice and is not wearing any jewelry.

### **35. GAME & PRACTICE GUIDELINES**

The training program and individual training goals are designed to address both individual player and team deficiencies identified in practice sessions and in games. Player development is judged, in part, by how the players respond to the game situations-- what decisions are being made, how they are being executed, and so on. The objective of the coach is to maximize successful on-field experiences for each player, minimize opportunities for failure (because, for example, the player might not be ready to meet certain demands of the game), and use the games as a teaching and developmental opportunity. **Mistakes are expected and will be tolerated by all members of the ECU family!**

Individual development, however, will not be compromised to meet artificial expectations of playing time. The amount of time a player is on the field does not equate with success. Determining playing time for each player is a complex process involving many considerations--for example, player's physical state of development (balance, strength, muscular control, etc.), physical endurance, mental acuity, the nature of the opposition, the speed of the game, emotional state, technical ability, and on and on. Players left on the field too long often find ways of responding to situations that are not consistent with good play and long-term development. Each player develops at their own pace, and the coach accepts the responsibility of ensuring that game-day experiences are both rewarding and positive, provide a basis upon which the coach can further develop the player in the practice sessions, and leave the player feeling as if their successes far out-numbered their mistakes.

#### **a) Playing Time**

While ECU does not require a specific amount of **playing time** for players during games, it does require that all players receive equitable playing time during practices and scrimmage games. ECU does recommend that each player receive some playing time during each game/tournament. The

decision as to the amount of playing time for each player during games solely resides with the team coach. ECU travel soccer teams pursue the ultimate goal of winning their games/tournaments and coaches must have the capability to make the decisions that continue to allow their team to remain competitive throughout the season. Coaches should consider the importance of the games/tournaments when deciding playing time for players (friendly games vs. league games vs. major tournaments). Coaches and parents should understand the following two conditions when discussing player-playing time:

- 1) **No Practice . . . No Play.** It is important to come to practice regularly. You cannot miss practice or practice poorly and expect to improve. If you have a problem attending a practice, give your coach a call, in advance, if possible. On a case-by-case basis, the coach has the authority to make playing time allowances for players who miss practice due to illness, travel, and other reasonable conflicts.
- 2) **No Proper Practice . . . No Play.** Proper practice means that you:
  - (a) Pay attention to the coaches in practice
  - (b) Make an effort to improve your skills at practice
  - (c) Practice at game speed (learning to do a skill in slow motion will not help in a game)
  - (d) Do not distract others at practice

Parents are encouraged to attend all training sessions and games/tournaments. The team coaches are responsible for training the team's players and request that parents refrain from coaching their player or any other player on the team unless specifically asked to do so by the coach. Any parent with questions about a player's development as it relates to playing time, positions of play, individual player progress, or any other matter related to the playing of a game, should consult with the coaches following one of the practice or game/tournament sessions. If a coach is constructively asked to explain their reasoning for the amount of playing time, or any other issue they feel is a problem in dealing with their child, the coach will provide a detailed explanation to the parent, to include suggested ways the player and the parent can help change or correct the situation.

The coach must be available on the field for at least 15 minutes after the scheduled start of practice. In the event that a practice is to be cancelled, other than for weather related events, the coach will contact the DOC. This will be put into effect for the spring 2008 season.

### **36. INCLEMENT WEATHER PROCEDURES**

Your coach and/or team manager is your first and best source for the status of games or practice that may be affected by inclement weather. Club or tournament representatives will notify Coaches/team managers. The coaches/team manager in turn will notify team members via the phone roster. Parents and players must realize coaches and team managers may have very little time to get the word out. Therefore, please ensure that you keep your phone rosters readily available and your information on the roster remains accurate. If you have a cellular phone please ensure your cellular phone information is included on the roster information to allow the changes to get to you wherever you may be.

**Practice Sessions** - Please remember that, although it may be raining in your part of town, it may not be raining at the practice fields. When in doubt, please show up for practice.

**Games** - Even if it is raining, the games will be played unless authorities (see above) have closed the fields or there is a threat of lightning. Soccer is a game that is played in all weather conditions, and it is necessary that all players and parents learn that this is part of the commitment to the game. For travel teams it is the responsibility of the home team to advise the visiting team coach of any game cancellations or field changes. Again, please contact your coach or team manager if you have doubts. If you have not heard from your coach or team manager, please show up at the game to ensure that your team does not forfeit.

### **37. GAME DAY PREPARATION**

Your child cannot keep that commitment if he/she does not get proper rest and has not eaten properly. Soccer is a very demanding sport. Your child can be prepared to do his/her best, to help his/her team, and less likely to suffer injury, if he/she observes a few basic guidelines:

- 1) Avoid spend-the-night parties on the night before a game. More than a few soccer games have been knowingly "forfeited" the night before the soccer match. Fatigue as a result of too little sleep also raises the risk of injury.
- 2) Build up body fluid before the game. Start drinking water as much as 24 hours before the game, and try to take in as much proper fluid as possible right up to game time.
- 3) Eat sensibly, especially on the day of a game. For instance, milk, peanuts or carbonated drinks before a game will shorten a player's wind. Half-time refreshments should be limited to a moderate amount of water, or perhaps a very diluted Gatorade-type drink. Too much water, or any kind of food and drink containing sugar, will cause the blood to leave the muscles and travel to the stomach, causing your child to be sluggish in the second half.
- 4) Make certain that you have proper equipment, and bring them to each game. Proper fitting shoes and shin guards are essential. Watches, jewelry, and barrettes should be left at home or in your bag.
- 5) Arrive at each game in plenty of time to warm-up properly. The coach/team manager will provide your team with a game schedule that will list the "Report Time" for each game. Please leave home in time to have your child at the game, fully dressed, and ready to warm-up substantially prior to game time. A pre-game warm-up to get an abundant flow of blood to the muscles, followed by sensible, slow stretching activities designed to increase flexibility and minimize the possibility of muscle pulls or injury, are of vital importance.
- 6) Be active in other areas, such as swimming and biking, which build stamina and strength. It can help to ward off injuries.

- 7) Treat minor injuries promptly and properly. For muscle strains and bruises, remember the principle of "R-I-C-E" -- Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation. Your team should arrange to have ice available at every game for quick application to twisted ankles or knees.
- 8) Let your coach know before practice or a game of any condition that might affect your ability to play. Seek early medical help for physical problems that persist. Do not practice or play if you have reason to believe that it may aggravate an injury.
- 9) Call in advance to tell your Coach if you will miss a game.

### **38. PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING PROBLEMS / CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

#### ECU Authority and Responsibility to Discipline

Step 1. When trying to resolve issues with a player, coach, or team, please look first to the team manager for the handling of any problems that you encounter. Please address playing time issues with the coach, not the manager. If you feel the problem is still unresolved, consult with the team coach.

Step 2. Consult with the team coach. If, after consulting with the coach, you still feel that additional attention to the problem is needed, then you may refer the matter to the Director of Coaching and General Manager.

Step 3. The Director of Coaching is available to resolve player/team issues while the General Manager will work to resolve administrative issues. If this issue can not be resolved during Step 3, it is referred to the ECU Board of Directors.

Step 4. The Board of Directors may resolve the issue or refer this issue to a Rules & Discipline committee.

ECU reserves the right to review administrative and programmatic organization and the performance of its members to assure compliance with the Bylaws and Rules of the club and the Bylaws and Rules of club higher-level associations. When the member is found to be in violation of such, ECU shall have authority to require appropriate corrective action, discipline and/or sanctions. Specific procedures for intervention, review, investigation and disposition as well as disciplinary actions, penalties, and restrictions shall be established within the Rules & Discipline (R&D) Committee. When problems are referred to the R&D Committee, a hearing may be held and appropriate remedial measures may be directed.

ECU has the authority to discipline its members for misconduct and/or conduct contrary to the Rules of the organization and association. To that end, ECU Board of Directors shall provide for the timely hearing of all protests prior to rendering a decision and/or imposing discipline or sanctions. The ECU Board of Directors shall be responsible for documenting their actions and for advising all participants of their right to appeal and the correct process for doing so.

ECU is required to provide procedures for fair and impartial hearings on any charges prior to imposing discipline or sanctions. Further, their protest and appeal procedures must be in conformity with those of FYSA. Acknowledgment of this responsibility is part of the requirements for affiliate membership.

### Rules & Discipline (R&D) Committee

The ECU R&D Committee is charged with the responsibility for investigating internal club complaints and disciplinary problems. The R&D Committee activities will be under the overall direction of the General Manager, the R&D chairperson (chair). The R&D chairperson will nominate four other volunteers from the community (need not have current ECU players or affiliation) to serve as committee members. All nominees must be approved by majority vote of the ECU Board of Directors prior to assuming office. The R&D Committee will meet within 30 days of an alleged violation of rules or actions requiring disciplinary measures to review current procedures or otherwise as needed to investigate alleged violations of rules or to impose disciplinary measures as deemed necessary. The chair, or his/her designee, and any two other committee members will constitute due representation at meetings. A committee member may not sit in a matter where there is a clear conflict of interest.

Following an investigation of an alleged violation, the R&D Committee will submit a report of their findings and recommendations to the ECU Board of Directors for final disposition and imposition of punishment or penalty. The R&D Committee is responsible for, but not limited to, the following:

- 1) Maintaining records of all investigative actions of rules violations.
- 2) Conducting hearings to enforce penalties for violations of the Laws of the Game and/or all ECU Bylaws and Rules.
- 3) Investigating and conducting hearings, as appropriate, to determine, assess, and enforce penalties where violations of rules occur.
- 4) Periodically reviewing Rules and Discipline policies, including the minimum penalties for misconduct, and recommending changes to the ECU Board of Directors as needed.

Failure to comply with this handbook may result in the suspension of your privilege to participate in ECU and FYSA sanctioned events, for the following periods:

**1<sup>st</sup> offense suspension minimum thirty (30) days to a maximum of five (5) years**

**2<sup>nd</sup> offense suspension for a minimum of one (1) year to a maximum of ten (10) years**

**3<sup>rd</sup> offense suspension for a minimum of five (5) years to a maximum of fifty (50) years.**

**NOTE: Any individual charged with a violation of this Code of Ethics shall be afforded due process as defined in FYSA's rule section 507 before the implementation of any suspension.**

### Appeals

Members may appeal ECU Board of Director decisions directly with the board or with FYSA. ECU Board members and FYSA Officers and Directors shall resolve issues in a fair, timely, and impartial manner as part of the primary responsibility of their office. The R&D Committee will establish appeal processes.