

# The Emerald Express



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**In this Issue, we look at the difference between a “League” and a “Club”, and how “Club” plays an important role in the development of a Soccer Player.**

## Introducing our New President - Eric Grabau

Hello Soccer Families,

Several months ago, I was elected to the position of Club President by the Board of Directors. I am very excited to serve and it is a privilege to be associated with the best Club in the State of Colorado. While I may be slightly subjective, there is no reason why we should not all have equally as much pride in being a part of the renaissance that St. Vrain Football Club is bringing to the local soccer community.

We have experienced exponential growth over the past three years and the future outlook is bright. We currently have 1400+ kids in our recreational program and 300+ in the advanced program. Where we had a solitary advanced team three years ago, we now have 10 and are expecting to add to that total in the coming summer months. Our staff has grown to 4 full-time members and 10 part-time, and we plan to grow further still. One of our new hires created a new position specific to Camps and Clinics, if you haven't seen the offerings for the Spring and Summer of 2011, check out the information available online. Within our staff, we have 2 out of the few “A” licensed coaches along the Front Range, which is a huge win for a developing club. Along with the growth we have begun to witness the development of players as the Green and White have begun to take top honors in both Competitive and Recreational tournaments across the state.

As we grow and compete to be the best statewide soccer club we have turned our focus on continuing to develop our coaches. I am very excited to reveal that we are turning part of our office into a Training Center. It will provide a place where our top coaches will host training sessions, lectures and community events for other coaches to make sure your kids are getting the best training possible.

We are finalizing a new contract with a different corporate vendor and evaluating the price structure for our club, to ensure that we boost the amount of support, visibility and brand recognition within the state of Colorado. Our goal is simple: to keep our prices lower than other big clubs in the area, but also ensure that we have the resources to retain our excellent staff and develop strong coaches who will continue to give back to SVFC.

It is an exciting time to be part of SVFC. Stop by the office in the next months, let our staff introduce themselves and enjoy all the opportunities St. Vrain Football Club has to offer! So, hop on board, strap in and hang on, it's going to be an exciting ride.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Letter from Our New President	1
The Difference Between a Club and a League	2
Importance of Age-Specific Training	3
Calendar	4
In Case you missed It	4

### IMPORTANT DATES:

- *May 2-Current U8 Coaches Meeting*
- *May 3-Current U9 Coaches Meeting*
- *May 5- Current U10 Coaches Meeting*
- *May 6- Early Registration Opens*
- *May 9-U10 Boys Parents Meeting regarding options at U11*
- *May 12-U10 Girls Parents Meeting regarding options at U11*
- *May 13-Kick-A-Rounds*
- *May 20-Kick-A-Rounds*
- *May 24-27-Pre-Tryout Camp*
- *May 31-Jun 3- Tryouts*

# The Importance of “Club” in a Players development

There’s a difference between a “Club” and a “League” - Is it just Jargon or is there more to it?

Much of soccer jargon can be semantics. So before we get too in depth in this conversation, we need to establish exactly what it is we are talking about. A “League” is a collection of teams from various places all competing against each other for honors. A “Club” is a single organization that works together for the betterment of the local soccer community. Most leagues are made up of different clubs. Think about Major League Soccer (MLS) and the local Colorado Rapids Club. The Rapids participate in the MLS, but also have teams (including youth) competing in The Colorado League. However, all of those players are part of the same Club.

Across the United States there are hundreds of Youth Soccer Clubs all trying to compete and develop soccer players of the highest caliber. Yet, with all of the growth our game has seen, there are some clubs that continually rise to the top and are becoming nationally recognizable to the soccer community.

Are these clubs just blessed with good players? Yes and No. Good players don’t grow on trees, they are grown through a club system. So while gifted players may have started at that specific organization, they were given a chance to flourish through the years in a quality training environment and program. As our own club continues to grow, we have begun laying the foundation for players, future and present, to develop and play at the highest level they are capable. Many of these things are large and recognizable, while some are small yet still can have the same influence on a players development. Here are just a few:

## Age Groups

One of the easiest ways to see how club plays a large part in development is by looking at the age divisions. In the big picture, all of these kids are members of the same club, and therefore the players, coaches and parents should all be working toward the same goal; player development. While teams compete on Saturday, the result isn’t nearly as important as watching the players grow. The Club is structured so that every child has an opportunity to play and succeed in-house, before they begin to search out competition from other clubs.

In the coming years, the club will have a full curriculum established for players 4-18 to follow so that all players are getting the same message across an entire age group. In this newsletter we have an entire column dedicated to the importance of age specific training (Page 3) and why it is so important for players to get the same message regardless of score, coach or competition.

*A “Club”  
develops the entire  
soccer community.*

## The Role of Reversible Jerseys

While the obvious role of a reversible jersey is to differentiate one team from another as cost effectively as possible, it also allows for a convenient training tool. As we mentioned earlier, while players and coaches may be in different player groups, we are all part of the larger picture that is SVFC. On Saturdays, if a game isn’t competitive, players are no longer being developed. On one hand, you have a team getting whooped, and kids lose interest in the game of soccer, I think we can agree that isn’t in the best interest of the soccer community. On the other hand, there is a group that is not being challenged, because the game is too easy. Well, not only can they also become bored, but some pretty bad habits can be learned and difficult to break as they get older.

But with one simple flip of the jersey, we can change the landscape of the match. We can once again pique the interest of players who were over-matched and we can force those players who were not being challenged to continue working. The Jersey is not just to differentiate between two different player groups, but to provide learning opportunities and to remind us that we are all members of the same club. Development is much more important at the younger ages than the score-line, which is why score is not kept.

## The Community Support Structure

When many people think of SVFC, they think of their own coach or player group. That’s not necessarily a bad thing, but there is so much more to being a part of a club of 1700+ players. Apart from the size of the club, our membership comes from a number of different back-

grounds and professions, and that diversity benefits the whole. From helping out fellow coaches run a session, sharing ideas and knowledge of the game, to customer service, the club is headed in a

fantastic direction. If we are all truly working toward the same goal, then the community itself can create its own support structure. Obviously, direction comes from the

staff and BOD, but players help each other in training every day by working hard to become better. Coaches help educate each other by sharing information, training ideas and working together to manage matches in order to develop players on the sidelines. Parents help each other support the players and coaches and many times disseminate information people may have missed. With those things in place, a sense of community is formed.

From an education perspective, the club has implemented a program to send coaches (at no net expense to them) to courses that will help them learn the game of soccer as that knowledge will benefit the players over the course of time. Our hope is that coaches will help each other as well by sharing that knowledge and not just keeping it to themselves. That in turn will be the gift that keeps giving and will raise the whole level of soccer in the area.

Because soccer is the most popular game in the world, and because it should be available to all people, the Club, and therefore the community, provides scholarship opportunities to families for whom cost becomes the issue. SVFC believes that nobody should be excluded that wants to play and we strive to find a place for everyone to play the game of soccer.

With such a diverse club and a community beginning to come together, there is no question that we will begin to make a name for ourselves and become a club that is recognized state-wide and then eventually nation-wide. While there will be growing pains and changes throughout the development process, we need to remember that to facilitate the end goal, we are all on the same team.

*“To Create a love for the  
game through a positive  
environment that  
develops skills, character  
and excellence”*

## The Importance of Age-Specific Training

Many of us have seen lovely displays of talent on television. In sports especially, highlights are all the rage. In Soccer, watching a 50 yard switching ball played out wide, a cross served in, and a player running on to head the ball into the back of the net is a thing of beauty. Of course, there's a lot going on there, and the players on TV are the final polished product. They are what the younger players dream of one day becoming. That is soccer, that is the big picture. But what isn't seen, is the years of development that occurs before those players make a highlight reel.

Imagine ordering a soccer player from a catalog and having to put it together from an instruction manual. Sure, you can skip a step here and there, but is it going to work as well as the one you saw on TV? Doubtful. There are steps to follow, a foundation to be laid and groundwork to be done. Skipping ahead doesn't paint a complete picture for a player. Instead, we have players who "can" do something, but don't know "why" to do something, which leads to slow decision making on the field. Or worse yet, players who know they are supposed to do something (because they've been told to), but don't know why, and can't quite accomplish it either.

So how do we develop the complete player? What we teach 14-year olds in the advanced program is different than a 7-year old learning to enjoy the game. Well, the Club is broken into age groups to help the coaches with age-specific topics. These groups and topics are divided by the physical and mental development of the different age groups. Our job as youth coaches is to prepare players for the next level, whatever that may be, not to win games.

At the youngest ages (U4-U6), kids are still developing motor skills (and for years to come) along with social skills. Players at this age are too young to be involved in any structured, organized soccer program. The activities they are involved with should encourage children to explore their physical abilities, while also including a ball with which to play. *The soccer ball should be considered a toy.* The focus should be on groups of players rather than teams.

As the players move into the U7/U8 age groups it is important to keep in mind that these children are still young. By the end of this phase (around 8 years

old) children are beginning to be able to apply past experience to the present situation. For example, at a very basic level, they can remember what they were shown or what they tried with the ball from last practice. At the same time, this ability is not present on a consistent basis. They cannot imagine consequences (ie: if you do this, what will happen?) Let them learn through experience.

No need to replicate organizational schemes that older teams are doing. Concepts such as combination play or positions should not be introduced at this age.

As the players move on to the U9/U10 age group, there are some children that are becoming more physically mature. Among your group, there are now some bigger and faster players whose eye-hand and eye-foot coordination is a little ahead of the majority of your players. Some of your players may also demonstrate a greater capacity to stay focused for longer periods of time. At the same time, they are still people of action rather than thought. Explanations must still be brief, concise, and purposeful. Care should be taken with players, regardless of athletic ability, to address ball skill, especially in tight spaces. The faster, stronger players should not be encouraged to use their athleticism to solve all their problems. Building comfort with the ball at ages nine and ten will provide them with a variety of crucial tools they will need as they get older, and the level of ball skill and athleticism rises.

For the first time, we are playing teams and players from other clubs who may not have the same development philosophy as us. It is highly encouraged to emphasize a skillful approach, even though this may result in conceding goals or losing games in the short term.

Competition is a central element in a player's development. At the youth level, a competitive environment should not be a result-oriented environment. THE DIFFERENCES MUST BE CLEAR. The result is just one indicator of performance at this age, and it is *not* the most important one.

Matches are important as a means to player development (enjoyment,

ball skill, insight, and fitness), not as the aim. Focus on the process and performance rather than the outcome, but be prepared for the possibility that your team may lose some games in the short term with this approach. Keep in mind that it is actually easier to win games at this age group with teams that are "organized" but lack skill. Placing the more physically mature players down the middle of the field and just asking players to "kick it down the middle" or only allowing players to specialize at one position may lead to more victories... however, *it does not effectively teach the players the game and prepare them to continue on in the sport.*

Remember, these are young children who have several more years to go before they will have all the tools needed to attempt soccer in the adult form. The best path to truly preparing them for the adult game is not have them practice at playing the adult game; rather it is by giving them repeated opportunities to experience soccer in a more manageable form for their age.

Between the ages of 12 and 14, children often experience a physical growth spurt that affects their balance and coordination. Oftentimes, they gain physical strength and power, but temporarily lose agility. As soccer players, this means potentially losing some control over the ball. If the technical foundation is not strong, soccer is no longer fluid and fun for the players.

It is at this point that these players may move toward sports where it is easier for them to achieve some level of success – more traditionally 'American' sports that demand "hand-eye" coordination such as baseball, basketball, and football. It is critical that we ensure that the players are getting the necessary technical foundation at the younger ages. This may prevent the loss of players during their middle school years who are capable and athletic, yet lack the foundation to pull them through their temporary physical awkwardness.

*Continued on Pg 4*

**"Our job as youth coaches is to prepare players for the next level, whatever that may be, not to win games."**

[www.StVrainFC.com](http://www.StVrainFC.com)

We are also on FaceBook

And Twitter!



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## Calendar Of Events

May 2nd - Current U8 Coaches and Managers Moving to U9 Meeting

May 3rd - Current U9 Coaches Meeting - The Outlook for the next 2 years

May 5th - Current U10 Coaches Meeting regarding options at the U11 age groups

May 6th - Fall 2011 Registration Opens

May 9th - U10 Boys Parents Meeting regarding options at the U11 age groups including the Advanced program and pre-register for Try-Outs

May 12th - U10 Girls Parents Meeting regarding options at the U11 age groups including the Advanced program and pre-register for Try-Outs

May 13th - U10 Kick-Arounds @ Longmont Estates

May 20th - U10 Kick-Arounds @ Longmont Estates

May 24th - 27th - Pre-Tryout Camp

### Tryouts:

Tuesday, May 31 and Wednesday, June 1

**4:30-6:00PM:** U11 Girls, U12 Girls, U14 Boys

**6:15-7:45PM:** U11 Boys, U12 Boys, U13 Girls

Thursday, June 2 and Friday, June 3

**4:30-6:00PM:** U13 Boys

**6:15-7:45PM:** U14 Girls

## In Case you missed It...

Here were two videos that were in the text of previous issues:

Video on the Offside rule: <http://www.dynamic-thought.com/Offside.swf>

Video on Sideline Behavior from the English FA: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r0qGeADPzAs>

In relation to the Age specific training article, the USSF has just released a similar Study:

<http://www.ussoccer.com/Coaches/Coaching-Education/Coaching-Home.aspx>

### *The Importance of Age-Specific Training, cont. from Page 3*

At the end of it all, we must keep in mind that soccer is an adult game that we are asking kids to play. It makes no sense to put more kids on the field faster, so they get less time on the ball, just so the game looks like it does on TV sooner. By breaking the game into manageable chunks, we can prepare kids for the next piece of the picture that will be introduced at the different stages of development. Starting with smaller numbers, the kids will have more time on the ball, and coaches/parents have more opportunity to coach fundamentals and make sure that every player has a chance to learn and develop an understanding of 1v1 situations. Then eventually, we can add in some improvisation. After the

kids begin to improvise in a small picture by themselves, we can start letting them all improvise together, which is how the big picture begins to take form.

By skipping steps, we are leveraging the future of a player by doing what is effective now for results that kids won't remember ten years down the road. Even worse, we could be hastening the player drop off that is so evident at the older ages.

Along with the essence of "Club", we have the potential to create an entire soccer community based on good fundamentals and developing players who love the game of soccer for their entire lives, not just while they win. Every practice and every game

should be looked at as small "victories" within the realm of player development. Seeing the practice topics come out in the games should be seen as a positive outcome, well before the score line is considered. Did players work hard? and Did the Players get better today? Are far more accurate ways of seeing potential outcomes than comparing kids to each other through a score. Almost anybody can teach "winning" soccer, but player development requires skill, dedication and patience. As a Club, we all need to be dedicated to the same end goal, player development. Rome was not built in a day, and neither is a quality soccer player.