



What is “Select Soccer” for SYSA families?

Seattle Youth Soccer Association (SYSA) is comprised of thirteen recreational-level (REC) clubs that provide an excellent introduction to the sport of soccer. Most players and their families find REC soccer to be the right balance of convenience, cost and competition as they balance school and other activities. By nine or ten, however, some players are ready for a more challenging soccer experience. This article provides SYSA families with an overview of Select soccer, emphasizing offerings for younger players and taking into account some of the practical considerations for SYSA families.

Significant changes for Seattle Select Soccer for 2010

2010 has been, and continues to be, a year of significant change in the Seattle soccer landscape. SYSA is an associate of our state organization, Washington Youth Soccer (WYS), and its clubs offer a range of recreational (REC), Select, and Premier – the highest level of Select – programs. REC teams generally play within the city and in citywide tournaments; Select and Premier teams compete in leagues and tournaments at the district and state level. Emerald City FC (ECFC), previously the designated Premier club within SYSA, announced a move to a completely separate soccer organization (US Club Soccer) outside of the WYS and SYSA family. This means that ECFC teams will no longer play in State Premier leagues and State tournaments beyond the current season. In July of 2009, SYSA approved the formation of Seattle United [www.seattleunited.com] which will now serve both Select and Premier players in Seattle.

How does Select Soccer differ from Recreation Soccer?

SYSA REC clubs focus on making REC soccer as enjoyable as possible for the majority of players so that they not only improve their skills, but develop a life-long love of the sport. SYSA REC clubs also work to make the team experience as positive as possible for both players and their families. These clubs have adopted a number of policies over the years to further these goals. The following list compares REC and Select soccer in SYSA. Some of the policies below are SYSA rules; others the clubs’ view of how to best serve their youth soccer players:

Rec Soccer	Select Soccer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No tryouts; players are assigned to teams by REC club registrars (after that age teams generally stay together). Every player is assured of being assigned to a team. REC Clubs assign U-11 teams to SYSA Association play at either a Bronze, Silver or Gold level. Players generally play in their age group. Teams are encouraged to give all players equal playing time; at a minimum, all players should play half of each game. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Players must compete for a spot on a team. There are city-wide tryouts (described below) for teams starting at U-11 as well as individual team tryouts for regional older teams. Players must compete each year to <u>keep</u> their place on a team. Historically, however, incumbent players have had a slight advantage over new players because they are known to the coaches. This means it has been more difficult for a REC player to make a select team at U-12 and above than it is at U-11 when teams are first formed.

- Practices and games are optional. A child won't lose their spot on the roster due to absenteeism.
- Practices are on local fields and players are generally from a club geography play in that geography.
- Rosters are often at SYSA maximums (for example, 14 players at U-11) to give as many players as possible the opportunity to play on a team.
- REC teams almost always have volunteer (unpaid) coaches, typically parents. No coaching license is required.
- Practices start in August and games run into November. The December All-City Tournament and Spring Soccer are optional. The cost is typically less than \$100 for the fall season.

- Select clubs typically have at least an "A" team and a "B" team for each age group. Some clubs outside of Seattle have 8 or 10 teams for the younger age groups.
- Players can be from anywhere, though most are Select players on Seattle United teams come from SYSA member clubs.
- Teams typically practice 10 or 11 months of the year with the focus on fall league play. As a general statement, Citywide (premier) teams train more months than Regional (select) teams.
- Most teams take part in state-wide tournaments in the winter. Teams use the spring and summer for training with the occasional scrimmage or tournament.
- While teams encourage participation in other sports, players may risk losing playing time if they consistently miss practices and games. In extreme cases, players may lose their spot on the team.
- Fees range from roughly \$900 to over \$2,200 depending on a number of factors, including the tier of play (citywide/premier or regional/select), whether the coaching is paid or volunteer, length of season and the number of tournaments entered. Teams may offer scholarships. The cost can increase with older teams, largely due to greater travel.
- Players are allowed to play-up in age based on ability. This is relatively rare, one or two players a team. An exception is "developmental" teams discussed below.
- Teams are required to have a Licensed coach who is typically not a parent. Teams may also pay to have a professional trainer and may supplement training with required or optional clinics (such as speed training and goalkeeper training).

Citywide (Premier) versus Regional (Select) Soccer

The broad term “Select Soccer” encompasses two levels of play in SYSA/Seattle United – Citywide (Premier) and Regional (Select). As the term implies, players are selected through tryouts for both categories of teams. Citywide (premier) is the more competitive of the two; though in the past there have traditionally been several levels of Citywide (premier) league play. Select teams range from the quality of a good REC team to those that can compete with Citywide (premier) level teams.

The table below summarizes some of the key differences between Citywide/Premier and Regional/Select:

	Citywide/Premier	Regional/Select
Level of Play	Competes against the strongest teams in the state though there have been at least three levels of play to accommodate B teams and weaker clubs.	Wide competitive range, but generally quite a bit higher than REC. The strongest Select teams compare with a strong Citywide/Premier “B” team.
Game Locations	For U-11 games are local (Puget Sound). For older teams, league games can be in Spokane, Tri-Cities and Vancouver.	League play against teams primarily from King County but also Snohomish, Skagit and Whatcom counties.
Cost	Over \$2,000 plus out-of-pocket travel	\$900 to \$1,600 plus out-of-pocket travel
Coaching	Very experienced coaches plus a professional coaching director. A large coaching staff provides support in case a coach can’t make a game or practice.	Licensed coaches that are either paid or volunteer (“community” teams).
Practice Locations	Locations can be throughout Seattle and Shoreline. An effort may be made to standardize teams’ training to specific locations.	At fields located in the Region hosting the team (North, West, Northeast, Central/South).
Teams	The goal for 2010 is to offer an A team and a B team at each age group from U-11 through U-18.	Depends upon interest and ability of players that participate in tryouts.
Tryouts	Players must compete for their spots each year. Competition increases for spots on older teams.	Less competition due to narrower interest in these teams. However, players must try out each year.

Seattle United

Seattle United will offer citywide (premier) teams made up of the strongest players in Seattle and Shoreline chosen in citywide tryouts in March, April and May of 2010. These teams will compete in the highest level of play in the State and will offer outstanding professional coaches and trainers. Both an A team and a B team will be offered at each age.

Seattle United will also offer regional (select) teams through four neighborhood Regions: North (Hillwood, Shorelake); West (Magnolia, Ballard, Queen Anne, Woodland); Northeast (Lake City, LVR); and Central/South (Capitol Hill, McGilvra, Mt Baker/Lakewood, Beacon Hill and La Liga). The goal of regional select teams is to have as many practices as possible in their Region to reduce the amount of driving involved. [Since Premier teams draw from the entire city, these teams practice in locations closer to I-5.]

There will be two types of Select teams offered within the Regions:

- Classic Teams – These teams will have a paid coach/trainer and play a longer season – from tryouts through one of the State Championships in January through April.
- Community Teams – These teams will have an unpaid (volunteer) coach approved by the Regional Committee resulting in a lower cost. The season will be shorter as well; a summer tournament or two and fall league play. Some teams may opt to compete in one of the winter State tournaments.

The 2010 Tryout Process

The Seattle United structure will allow players and parents to attend one set of tryouts for all of the select teams in SYSA. Tryouts will be preceded by parent information nights that will allow parents to meet the coaches for the various teams and learn more about the various teams available. Before you begin this process, make sure you know what age bracket your child will compete in. A separate tryout information sheet includes details on tryout dates, age brackets, pre-registration, and what to expect at tryouts. Always refer to www.seattleunited.com for the latest tryout and club news.

Tryouts are probably harder for parents than the players. Parents watch on the sidelines and worry not only about how well their child is playing, but also about whether or not the coaches have a chance to see their child's play. With so many kids playing all at the same time, and with no individual drills or skill evaluations, it's unclear how the players are being evaluated. However, these sessions do allow the coaches to see all of the players in a relatively short period of time. And, the more sessions your child attends, the more visibility they'll receive.

An important thing to keep in mind is that the coaches are, for the most part, life-long soccer players. This gives them the ability to quickly evaluate each player. While parents focus on such obvious factors as how many goals their child scores, the coaches look for things most parents miss – the ability to use both feet, field vision, body position, communications, effort, and teamwork.

It is very difficult to say what percentage of those attending the tryouts will be selected by either citywide (premier) or by a regional (select) team. If you assume two citywide (premier) U11 teams (an "A" team and a "B" team) each selecting 14 players, and between six and ten regional (select)

teams also with rosters of 14, the large majority of players trying out for select soccer do find a team. A wild card will be the number of, and demand for, the Select teams in each Region. This is particularly true for the Community teams as the number and location of these is driven by parent/coach interest.

Finding the Right Team

Deciding which team is the best fit is probably easiest for players wishing to play on the strongest team they can. Seattle United's two citywide (premier) teams at each age group are the obvious choice. There are also premier programs located outside of Seattle. The closest are Northwest Nationals in south Snohomish County, Crossfire Premier in Redmond/Bellevue and Highline Premier in Burien. ECFC will offer teams as well, but will play in US Club as opposed to the State's Premier League.

Select can be a good alternative for the player that's not quite talented enough to make citywide (premier), but is ready to move beyond REC. Even players skilled enough to make a citywide (premier) team may not want to play citywide (premier) soccer because it is too serious or may conflict with other sports. Select is lower-key, involves less travel, is less expensive and may provide the right balance between soccer and other interests.

SYSA believes that a select soccer program should be player-centric. It believes that the best soccer experience for kids occurs when they are playing with and against players of similar ability and commitment to the game. SYSA supports select soccer play because it provides an option for players who have advanced beyond the competition available to them at the recreation level.