



PURDY PERFORMANCE

Players at Purdy Performance aspire to play high level soccer and have goals to play professionally or in college. To achieve these goals picking the right club, team, and coach will play a large part in their development and success as soccer players.

The most important advice we can give is to play with the best team and the best coach!

The following information will help guide you in making an educated decision for your player's development.



1. KNOW YOUR PLAYER'S GOALS

Does your child want to be a professional soccer player, play in college, make the high school team, or just play for fun?

Playing for College and Professional Leagues

If your child's desire is to play at the highest levels, it is critical to choose a team that will make a positive impact on his/her technical development. Technical skills need to be developed at a young age (U7-U14); make sure that a potential team will challenge your player at the very highest of levels and give them a firm, technical foundation.

American and European academy scouts begin to look at players as young as 8 years old. Because of this consider trying out for clubs that have national development programs, development academy teams, state teams, and teams that play at the highest competitive levels; this will give your player the best opportunity to be noticed.

Playing for High School Teams

Often high school teams rely more on a player's athleticism than technical skill. For example, some coaches may favor a player's size and speed over technical skills and ability. Traditionally, this is not the best pathway to college and professional levels. If your player would like to play high school and then college and/or professional leagues, take into consideration the high school coach's attention to technical training of players.

Playing for Fun

If your child enjoys playing soccer strictly for the fun and social aspects of the game, recreational leagues are the best place to start. Recreational leagues generally focus on having fun rather than on technical development and winning. Teams are put together randomly, and often these leagues are less expensive since the coaches volunteer their time. Practices are usually less structured, games are less competitive, and the level of play drops dramatically around the age of 11 as that is when many players choose to join more competitive leagues.

2. TRYOUT FOR MULTIPLE TEAMS & CLUBS

You will want your player to try out for several teams; keep their options open and remember that the more exposure your player receives the better. Trying out for multiple teams/clubs will allow your player to become experienced with the "tryout" process and confirm that your player and club are the right fit.

It is always important to do some research during the tryout period; find out the club's culture, philosophies and policies by speaking with club representatives and members.

3. RESEARCH TEAMS & CLUBS

Tryout for teams that have the best coaches and best players. You will have to do some research to answer the following questions.

- ▶ Is the team progressing from year to year?
- ▶ Is your child going to be challenged on this team?
- ▶ Is your child going to be the top player, or are there other players that will drive your player forward?
- ▶ What style of play do they focus on? Is it more technical based (known as "possession oriented" play) or is there a heavy reliance on athleticism (known as "direct" play).

Go to wiyouthsoccer.com to look at team records and see where they placed in their conference.

League Levels (Listed Lowest to Highest)

- Classic 2 (local)
- Classic 1 (local)
- State (statewide)
- State Premier (statewide)
- Regional Conference League (aka "MRL" Midwest Region)
- Youth Soccer National League (nationwide)

3. RESEARCH TEAMS & CLUBS CONTINUED...

Make sure that a club's curriculum lines up with your player's long term goals. Information you will want to look for:

- ▶ **Types of Teams.** Does the club have State, MRL (Midwest Conference League), or Youth National League teams? (These types of teams play at a high competitive level.)
- ▶ **Background of the Director of Coaching ("DOC").**
- ▶ **Background of Technical Director/s.**
- ▶ **Club culture and Philosophy Statement.**
- ▶ **Player Training Curriculum.** This focuses on individual player skill development.
- ▶ **Team Training Curriculum.** This focuses on team tactics, team formation/s, style of play and other team related concepts.
- ▶ **Connections to higher level organizations.** Does the club have connections with colleges, national team programs, professional clubs, etc.?
- ▶ **Philosophy of Development.** The club's position on the balance between player development vs. team development.



4. GET TO KNOW THE COACH

A player's coach is one of the most influential persons in their soccer development. Be sure to find out the following information:

Playing and Coaching Experience

- ▶ Did the coach play in college/professional and what division?
- ▶ How much coaching experience does he/she have?
- ▶ What soccer coaching licenses have they obtained?

Coaching Continuity

- ▶ How long have they coached this team? (Continuity is important; look for a team that has had a consistent voice and continual success.)
- ▶ What success has the coach had with past teams?

Treatment of Players

- ▶ Does the coach motivate players through encouragement or fear? Positive methods focus on motivation, inspiration, player expression etc. Fear tactics may allow for some short term results but might also compromise a player's confidence and create long term negative effects on a player (i.e. performance anxiety, insecurities, lack of passion for the game, fear of failure etc.)

Game Day Philosophies

- ▶ What are the coach's philosophies regarding game day rosters and playing time? (This may make a difference in playing time for your player.)

Purdy Performance recommends finding a coach that favors the development of player skills over winning games, especially during the younger ages. Find a coach that balances a player's development with fostering a passion for the game. Coaches that build up players will create confidence and the results and experience will be more rewarding long term. Never place your child with a coach that will inhibit his/her love for the game, especially at an early age.

5. GET TO KNOW THE TEAM

Always talk to the coach before you accept a position on a team. Some questions you will want to ask are:



- ▶ What is your policy on playing time?
- ▶ What type of team and individual goals have been established?
- ▶ Are there opportunities for my child to "play up" based on their skill level, rather than their age group?
- ▶ Do you move players to different teams during the season?
- ▶ How many practices will there be each week?
- ▶ What policies are there if my child plays another sport?
- ▶ How has the team progressed from year to year?
- ▶ Do you have additional trainers?

5. GET TO KNOW THE TEAM CONTINUED...

Technical development at an early age (U7-U14) is crucial, so consider asking if the team's focus is more on winning or on technical development. Teams that focus on winning games often rely on athleticism and physical play vs. technical and tactical development; remember that college and professional scouts look for technically and tactically aware players.

Keep in mind that while being the top player on a team is great, it may not be great for your player's overall development. You will want to surround your child with players that are better than him/her; players that are always the best on their team often become stagnant in their development.

While it is tempting to pick teams based on where your child's friends are, it is often not the best developmental situation for high level players. To compete at these higher levels, having a strong technical background is a non-negotiable. Pick your child's team based on where they will develop these technical skills; don't worry, they will make new friends!

"If you want to be the best, surround yourself with those who are better than you."



6. ASK QUESTIONS AND LISTEN WISELY

Feel free to ask other parents what a team and club is like. It is important to get a feel for a potential team's players, parents, and coach.

However, avoid making decisions based on another parent's opinion of what's best for your child's development. If you are questioning what is best for your player, be sure to do your own research and/or ask an expert.

7. THE TRYOUTS

Remember that your player has been practicing all year so they are ready!

As a parent, the best thing you can say to your child before tryouts is to *have fun* and *give 100% effort*.

FINALLY...

These decisions are not easy!

Do as much research on teams and clubs as you can. Make sure your player's goals are aligned with the team and club that you choose and ensure that your child is surrounded by the right people.

The extra effort on your part can make an enormous difference in how much your child enjoys playing, how he/she improves during the season, and how successfully they move towards their long term goals.

Create Your Own Future!

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