



Academy Rules and Administration Manual

Why An Academy Program?

The U9 and U10 age groups are very important to the development of youth soccer players in Iowa and it is vital to create an appropriate developmental environment without making the environment too competitive or restrictive, resulting in players leaving the sport.

Many players in the U9 and U10 age group participate together irrespective of skill, athletic ability or physiological size and there are a number of positive and negative outcomes of organizing U9/U10 soccer this way.

Positive:

- Recreational soccer is very inclusive and anyone can play.
- Participants can play with their friends or be grouped into neighborhood teams.
- Players are not labeled.
- Weaker players can learn from stronger players.

Negative:

- More athletic/skillful/physically mature players often dominate games, frustrating the weaker players and not giving them enough time with the ball to encourage improvement.
- More athletic/skillful players often become frustrated because the less athletic/skilled players do not offer the level of competition necessary in games and practice for effective player development.
- When the more skillful/athletic players move to a competitive team at U11 many of the less athletic/skillful or multi-sport athletes discontinue playing soccer because the team often breaks up.
- In many instances, the coach of a U10 team is often the parent of a more athletic/skillful player. When the coach's son/daughter moves to a competitive team at U11, the recreational team is left without a coach, again leading to a greater chance of a team breaking up.

ISA believes that the U9/U10 Academy Program accommodates different athletic abilities and levels of play and there are many benefits for U9/U10 players, such as:

- By grouping the less skillful/athletic players together they will experience more success and hopefully have more fun, which will create a better learning environment and potentially increase longevity in the sport.
- If more skillful/athletic/physically mature players play and train together, regardless of coaching, it will create a better learning environment.
- If team members remain consistent and move from one age group to another as a team, the team is more likely to stay together.

- If the coach remains consistent and moves from one age group to another with the team the team is more likely to stay together.
- New players entering the sport at U9/U10 will be exposed to a more developmentally appropriate entry level of play.

ISA Academy League History

- U9 Academies began play in the fall of 2008 with 6 clubs and 24 teams participating. In spring 2010, 8 clubs and 62 teams participated in the league.
- The Academy league is called the ISA Academy League and is administered by ISA.

League Format

- Teams will play 7-8 league games per season.
- Games cannot be rescheduled unless cancelled due to adverse weather conditions. Cancelled games will be rescheduled by the individual clubs, not ISA.
- Games can be scheduled on Saturday or Sunday.
- Member clubs will be responsible for referee assignment. The ISA Academy League will not assign referees.
- Schedules will be posted on the ISA Academy League website.

Team Formation

- If a club offers an Academy program, players must have the option of registering for recreational or Academy play. Players registering for Academy play cannot be turned away and must be assigned to a team.
- Academy teams cannot be formed on the basis of talent and must be formed as true recreational teams. Randomly assigned at U9 and manipulated accordingly, to ensure equity in competition.
- Academy teams will be mixed each **season** by at least 50%. This will improve the developmental environment and continue to place the focus on the individual, not the team.
- Maximum roster size is 10 players, recommended roster size is 8 players.
- Free movement of Academy players is allowed in Academy clubs to fulfill fixture commitments.
- Double rostering is not allowed for players registered to an Academy program.
- Guest playing is not permitted on non academy teams.
- Academy clubs must follow an 80/20 registration policy for their select U11 programs. Exceptions may be made if prior approval is received from the league director.

Playing Rules

- USYS Small-Sided game rules will apply to all Academy play.
- Academy clubs must follow existing recreational play guidelines e.g. 50% playing time guarantee etc.
- Referees cannot issue red or yellow cards. Referees can ask coaches to remove a player from the field for a "cooling off" period.

Academy Club Rules

- Each coach working with or on the sidelines with an Academy team must have at least a USSF E-License coaching qualification.
- Academy Directors must have at least a USSF C-License or USYS National Youth License (or obtain the license within 1 year of becoming an Academy director).
- Academy teams must train at least once per week in a group setting instead of training as a single team. This creates more diverse training environments and places the focus on the individual instead of the team.
- Academy players must train at least twice per week during the season.
- Academy teams must have strict parent behavior guidelines to ensure the correct developmental environment is created. (ISA will create these guidelines).
- Clubs must work hard to educate their parents to ensure that parents sign up their child for the correct level of play.
- Academy clubs are strongly encouraged to offer additional training opportunities for their recreational players.

Tournaments/Festivals

- ISA will offer one Academy festival per season. The fee to participate in the Academy Festival is \$115.00 per team. (\$125.00 per team fall 2011)
- Festival participation is mandatory for all teams registered to the Academy program unless prior arrangements are made with the League Director. Academy clubs (not teams) will be billed for festival participation at the conclusion of the event.
- Only players registered to an Academy team are allowed to participate in Academy events, this includes league play, Academy festival or approved tournaments. Exceptions may be made if prior approval is received from the league director.
- Academy clubs can only play in tournaments approved by the Academy program. Approved tournaments for the 2010 spring season include the CR Chill Out and Kohl American Cup.
- Academy players are not restricted from playing in non USSF Affiliate events e.g. The Iowa Games or indoor events. USSF affiliates include, USYS and US Club Soccer.
- Academy teams can only play in a maximum of three outdoor tournaments/festivals per season one of which is the ISA Academy Festival.
- At the discretion of the league director recreational and non academy teams will be allowed to participate in Academy Festivals.

Disciplinary Procedures

Any club found to violate any rules or section of these rules will be subject to the following disciplinary procedures:

- Verbal or Written Warning
 - Probationary Period
 - Fine - \$250.00 first offense, \$500.00 second offense
 - Suspension of Academy Status
- The league director will determine the severity of the rules violation and the disciplinary measures to be handed out.
 - A "club" constitutes all players, coaches and officials operating on behalf of that club in the Academy Program.

Appeal/Hearing Procedures

- Upon receipt of a letter informing the club of the disciplinary measures the affected member club shall have seven (7) days to file a Letter of Appeal.
- The Letter of Appeal will contain a request for a hearing, the names and address of any witnesses that the member will produce at the hearing and a list of any and; all evidence and/or documents he/she plans to produce at the hearing.
- The club will then mail or e-mail the letter of appeal to the League Director.
- The League Director will designate a date and format for the appeal hearing in cooperation with the appealing club.
- The League Director will convene an appeals committee, which will be comprised of the Academy Director (or their representative) from each Academy club.
- The League Director who will serve as mediator.
- Each member the appeals committee may only vote to:
 - Uphold the probation, fine or suspension
 - Modify the probation, fine or suspension
 - Overturn the probation, fine or suspension
- Each Academy club is allowed one vote and a majority vote is needed to uphold, modify or overturn a disciplinary action. Appealing clubs are not considered voting members.
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Academy Application

- Clubs must follow a set of developmental rules before they can offer an Academy program. If clubs do not meet or comply with the development rules they will be denied Academy status.
- The application deadline for Academy status for the fall 2010 season is May 15, 2010. No applications will be accepted after this date or accepted mid-season.
- The application fee for Academy status is \$175.00 per year (fall 2010) (includes fall and spring season).
- The team fee is \$25.00 per team, per season. (fall 2010)

Challenges

The main goal of the Academy proposal is to improve the training environment at U9 and U10 and hopefully increase longevity in the sport for all recreational players, by tailoring the playing environment to the developmental characteristics of each player.

The biggest challenges will be:

- Clubs that abuse the program by charging excessive fees.

- Clubs that neglect their developmental players and do not offer additional developmental opportunities. Consideration must be given to players that develop later than other players.
- Ensuring that Academies do not become more restrictive to players, i.e. they will exhibit less creativity and freedom because as “Academy players” winning becomes more important.
- Educating parents to sign up for the program that is most appropriate to the developmental characteristics of their child.
- Educating parents concerning the overall purpose of the program.
- Educating parents and coaches to create the correct developmental environment (less parental pressure) and that the development of the individual at U10 is more important than team results.

Academy v Recreational – How to Choose

Information Posted On Club Registration Form

The difference between participating in an Academy program or recreational program lies in the level of investment, commitment, and interest among 8 and 9 year olds and their parents/guardians. The Academy is best suited for those who want a higher level of instruction and play. Academy players will tend to be more dedicated to the game, the ball, and their individual and collective development.

For more information, please visit the ISA website academy page at www.iowasoccer.org/U09_Academy

Information Posted On The Academy Club Website and ISA Website

Listed below are the characteristics of typical players who would participate in an Academy Program. If your child displays a majority of the characteristics listed they are probably more suited to that level of play. However, it should be noted that during a player’s soccer development they may move back and forth between academy and recreational play.

- Demonstrates sound technical skills (control, dribbling, and shooting)
- Physically stronger than most players within their age group
- Athletically quicker than most players within their age group
- High level of coordination and good agility
- During games is aggressive in their attitude and approach to getting involved
- During games tends to dominate the play
- Demonstrates high level of focus and concentration during practices and games
- Started to narrow down the number of extra-curricular activities
- Soccer is a high priority
- Practices with a ball in their own time outside regular schedule of games & practices
- U9 player who will try-out for the U11 competitive age group in the following year