



# *Ipswich Youth Travel Soccer*

## Team Selection Criteria and Process

Each year several questions, concerns and issues arise regarding the team selection process for Ipswich Travel Soccer. This memo is designed to try and convey the thought process and mechanics of selecting the teams in the hope of letting parents and players get a better understanding for said process.

### **Player Assessments**

As with every youth sport, the team selection process is an inexact science. Ipswich Youth Soccer does its best and strives to be as objective as possible by providing for and utilizing multiple factors in the team selection process. The factors include the following:

#### *Existing Coach Evaluations:*

Perhaps the most important evaluation tool is the opinion of the player's existing coach. Each year just prior to tryouts, all coaches and assistant coaches are asked to complete and submit individual player evaluations and overall rankings of their existing team. The coach is in the best position to observe and report on a player's development over a full two term season (Fall and Spring seasons amount to about 20 weeks). In this regard, the coach evaluation not only provides input on basic soccer skills (size, speed, dribble, passing and kicking ability) but also comments on intangibles such as a player's attitude, coachability, aggressiveness, and game sense.

#### *Director Assessments:*

Throughout the season, Directors of the Ipswich Youth Travel Soccer Board attend as many games as possible regardless as to whether they have a player on a particular team. The result is an objective and unbiased assessment of a team's stronger and weaker players under game conditions.

#### *Tryout Evaluations:*

Before teams are selected, each age group is invited to attend two tryout sessions. Given the least amount of weight, tryouts are conducted by volunteer evaluators typically consisting of existing and former coaches. Attending both sessions is not mandatory but attendance at both provides the evaluators with a better opportunity to take a closer look at border line players as well as players new to town or the league.

### **Team Designations**

Typically, each age division within Essex County Youth Soccer will include two school grade levels. For instance, the U14 grouping is made up of 8<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders, the U12 grouping is made up of 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders. IYS has followed the lead of several other towns within Essex County by adopting a Three Tiered team selection process. This means that within each grouping, the first tier will be a Senior team which is comprised of the highest ranked and best players of the older grade level in that grouping. This is typically the Division 1 representative from the town within that grouping. The second tier will be a junior team comprised of the highest ranked and best players of the younger

grade level in that grouping - typically the Division 2 representative from the town within that grouping. The third tier are teams comprised of the remaining players who are pooled and are placed on teams consistent with skill level, regardless of grade. These teams, depending on assessed skill level are typically either low Division 2 or somewhere in Division 3

### **The Team Selection Process:**

The number of teams within each grouping will be dictated not only by the number of players trying out per grouping but also the skill set of players as well. Roster sizes are established by Essex county guidelines and must be considered when determining the number of teams the town will field and in many circumstances, players may not be selected to play for a team.

Once all evaluation data has been compiled, it is made available to prospective coaches for consideration and discussion. This may be done via a formal coach's selection meeting or via telephone or email. First priority for player selection is given to the coach of the Senior team. It is preferred that the Senior coach limit player selections to those players in the older grade of a grouping. In some circumstances, although rare, if a player from the younger grade is a stand out player and it is apparent that the player, from a skill perspective, could play on the senior team then all coaches are polled as to whether this should be done. Usually, the parents of the player are also consulted to determine and confirm suitability.

Preference is then given to the Coach of the Junior team. Again, players available for assignment to this team are limited to those players from the younger grade within the grouping.

The selection of the 3<sup>rd</sup> tier teams can sometimes be the most challenging. Consideration is given to groupings of returning players within a certain skill level. The result is that one team will be selected as the town's "C" team for that grouping. The coach of this team will have preference for making roster changes and selecting players from the remaining pool of players considering all of the above mentioned evaluation criteria. This process is repeated until all remaining players have been assigned to teams or been determined not suitable for travel soccer.

Each year several inquiries are made as to why certain teams remain together while others are dismantled or "reorganized". This is the result of the aforementioned selection process which generally results with the higher ranked players remaining on the same team with little to moderate player changes. With that said, it is not unusual for the top tiered teams to drop and/or add 1 to 4 players. Most of the team "reorganization" occurs in the lower tiered teams which are selected based upon the evaluation criteria. Above all, ultimate consideration is given to the intended division, and thus talent level, for the team during the upcoming season. Thus, although 2 players may be friends and have played together for years, the team selection process, including the evaluations from coaches, directors and tryout evaluators may dictate that the players be separated due to a difference in skill level.

Ipswich Youth Soccer does everything in its power to create an enjoyable and educational experience for its players. We are hopeful that the parents and players understand the amount of time, effort and energy exerted by its directors in being as objective as possible with regard to team selection.