

## The Nashoba United Evaluation & Placement Process

As June arrives, so does the time for soccer evaluations. Even the word may send shivers up your spine.

How will my child perform? How will he/she be evaluated? Will he/she make the team?

This can be a stressful time, but this article will hopefully shed some light on the selection process for all of our NU travel teams.

The first thing to know is that NU does not cut anyone. Every child that participates in the evaluation process will be placed on a team for the upcoming fall season.

Our evaluation process is designed to place similarly skilled players together in order to provide an environment most conducive to improvement and fun.

The placement process happens over the course of the summer. Everyone that has been through the process before is familiar with the end of year evaluations the program holds each June. In these sessions, our coaches and age directors are asked to come and score the players over 2 sessions. In the Skills session, all of the players complete a set of drills that are scored by the evaluators. Players are evaluated on foot skills ability and overall ball control. In the 3x3 or 4x4 sessions, small area games are set up to evaluate true soccer game skills. Players are evaluated on competitiveness, creativity, vision and soccer IQ.

What is not as commonly known is that these sessions are only one part of the placement process. If your child played in the NU program in this or any recent season, they were evaluated by their coach during the entire season. Each coach is asked to score each player on 11 attributes, and rank the players on the team. This is done by the head coach as well as all assistant coaches and turned into the age coordinators at the end of every season.

At this point, we have a mountain of data on each player in the system. Some of this data is generated by someone who never saw your child before. Some of this data is generated by coaches that spent 3-4 months with your child. The data comes from many angles, and is very thorough. At this point, our age coordinators compile all this data for us, and ranks every player in each age group. This list is reviewed with a first pass by the NU board to make sure there are no obvious errors. NU has done this process in the past, and what we find is that this first pass is amazingly accurate.

Based on the number of players in each age group, the list is divided to make as many teams as makes sense for the number of players. We call this Version 1.

Version 1, including the evaluation's raw data, is shared with Head Coaches. There is detailed discussions at this meeting about the Version 1 list. Any disagreements are voiced, discussed, and finally decided. This becomes Version 2.

Version 2, not including raw evaluation data, is shared at a general coaches meeting, with all the current coaches. We now have many more points of view, so any discrepancy missed so far is generally found. More discussions take place, and if need be, changes are made. We are now at version 3 of the team list, and we consider this final. This is the list that is announced prior to the start of the next season.

It is important to note that coaches for next year's teams have not been selected at this point. Only after the final Version 3 placement list is complete do discussions begin on who will be the coach. It is also important to note that because this is a regional program, each team may have practices and games in either of the three towns: Lancaster, Bolton and Stow. The field that each team uses is a decision based upon each coach's preference and field availability.

As a parent on the outside of this process, there are a few tips to be shared.

If your child, who played in NU this year, has an “off” night at the evaluation process, it will have very little effect on placement. As mentioned, there are coaches who spent several months with your child, and their opinion will be heard.

The same is true of missing the evaluation process, but this is not an excuse to skip, nor is it a reason for any player to “mail it in” at the evaluation process. We are looking to see the best from every player, and this is their chance to shine and show us what they have. Determination and attitude play a big part in this game, and a bad attitude at evaluations will be noticed.

Once team placements are announced, please remember that this process is not about making the best, super, winning team. This process is about putting your child in the best position for them to improve, develop and most importantly, have fun. A child placed inappropriately will not be happy and will not improve as he/she should. We strive to create a love of the game where your child can’t wait to get to the pitch.

Remember, the team placements have been reviewed by no less than a half dozen people, most of whom have played this game or coached for many years. Your child was not missed or passed over.

If your child is a “bubble” player, meaning they are right on the line between 2 teams, consider the difference. If your child is in the bottom half in terms of skill for a team, he/she will touch the soccer ball less, be less involved in the play, and struggle with confidence. “Playing up” does not produce better players. If your child is in the top half of skill on the team, they will be more involved in the play, touch the ball more, and gain confidence. Confidence is critical to this game at every level. If you rob your child of that early, it is very difficult to regain.

We look forward to another successful season in 2016-17.

Sincerely,

Nashoba United Board of Directors