CAYSA Academy Changes, Fall 2019

CAYSA, working with the Directors of the Academy programs approved by STYSA for the 2019-2020 seasonal year, decided to make some substantial changes in the Academy program this year. We've been encouraging clubs to try things in different ways in their Academy programs over the past 3 years. We're taking the positive results seen from some of those methods and sharing them with all of our clubs so all the players in the Academy program can benefit.

Clubs have the flexibility to teach players the way they think will best develop them while we bring all the teams together so players face as many different opponents as possible.

Since Spring 2016 CAYSA has encouraged clubs to focus on individual player development rather than team results, part of US Soccer's Player Development Initiative. A team of 10 with 2 exceptional players could be a team that's good at winning games, but it doesn't give the other 8 kids much chance to improve as players. We want to improve every player, including those exceptional kids!

This fall we're trying something new with the league structure. We're giving club Academy programs even more flexibility in some ways and bringing all the teams together for some events in order to increase the variety of on-level opponents faced by each player. This should allow them to face more players with a larger variety of skills and approaches to play, giving each player more opportunities to play in their optimal learning zone. That's where the players are testing their knowledge and skills and learning the most from the game. Ideally, coaches of "opposing" teams are working together to make the game as competitive as possible, letting more kids spend more time in "the zone."

If your club hasn't been very involved in adopting the new intent and methods of the Academy program as a whole, this could feel very different. Many people used to view the old Rec+ program as the junior version of select, where players were chosen based on existing skills and more or less started playing other strong players at a younger age. The system in place since Spring 2016 is to develop those already-strong players into even better players while bringing other players up to the higher level of skills and understanding. **Better developmental environment = better players, and more of them.**

Fall Schedule

Three are 3 friendlies weeks, 1, 2, 4.

Festivals will involve every team, so some teams will play against others they might not otherwise have seen. There are 3 Festivals, weeks 3, 6, 9.

We'll be adjusting brackets after the first Festival, so teams that previously might never have had a close game (by wins or losses) will be moved to a more appropriate bracket. Big wins/losses don't help any of the players on the field develop their skills as a player, so it's to everybody's benefit to better balance the games.

The second and third Festivals will be scheduled with the league games, so there should be 7 games against different opponents after any bracket adjustments.

If your club's Academy has been on the cutting edge, you'll notice some changes in scheduling and Festivals.

If your club has been more conservative about adopting some of the changes, you'll find 2 games each day on Festivals, probably more coordination between coaches of "opposing" teams as they work together to create the most competitive game (balanced, so it's testing every player on the field), and scheduling differences.

For everybody, the later start of the "CAYSA" games part of the season is new. There's still room for clubs to try new things. More games or more training during friendly weeks? How much player movement between teams at Festivals? Mostly keep a team structure or adjusting "teams" once or more during the season to give players experience with more teammates and how they play? Those are up to your club and Academy Director. CAYSA provides the format and structure within which as many of those approaches can coexist so we can see which club's system results in better players who love the game and their progress in it.