

House & Development Team: Building a Healthy PGYSA

How our House League and Development Team programs work together to support player enjoyment, development, and a strong, sustainable club.

Our Goal

At PGYSA, we're working to build not just strong teams, but a strong club—one where every player, recreational or competitive, feels included and supported.

Why we include House for Development Team players

- **Steady teams & access**

Healthy registration numbers keep House teams viable and welcoming for new and returning players across our community.

- **Joy & open play**

House is a lower-pressure space for creativity, experimentation, and simply enjoying the game—an important balance alongside competitive demands.

- **Club connection**

Seeing Development Team players in House helps younger players find role models and strengthens the sense of “one club.”

- **Whole-player growth**

Children need the right mix of success and failure. Playing at different levels, with different kinds of challenges, allows them to test new techniques, feel the joy of success, and build resilience through mistakes. Much like school-yard soccer or pond hockey, these **implicit learning** experiences add up over time, shaping well-rounded players and people.

- **Regular competition in the North**

In larger communities and bigger centres, competitive soccer outside of House League often begins at U11, when clubs can play against neighbouring clubs regularly. In our community, the reality is different: limited competition has always been the main concern raised by coaches. House League provides consistent game time for all players, ensuring they have meaningful opportunities to play every week.

- **Protecting long-term team viability**

When small groups are pulled from House at ages U9–U12 to form Development Team player-only teams, the remaining pool often becomes too thin. As players grow and the game expands to 8v8, 9v9, and eventually 11v11, numbers can fall short—especially as some children choose other sports, families move away, or interests shift. We've seen this cycle repeat many times. By keeping as many players involved and connected through House and Development Team play for as long as possible, we protect the viability of full-sided teams and ensure no group is left short-handed.

Coach Recruitment & Development

Our players are not the only ones learning, our coaches are too. House League plays an essential role in the recruitment and development of new and emerging coaches. Just as players need different levels of challenge, coaches also benefit from 'underload' situations where the environment allows them time on the grass to build confidence. In House, coaches gain extra hours to practice managing groups, teaching effectively, and presenting soccer specific content. These experiences prepare them to step into Development Team and Development Team environments with stronger skills and greater confidence.

During the Saturday Game Days, these same coaches are able to learn how to apply the practice messaging to game situations. This used to occur only when teams would travel and coaches were learning while under the stress of playing against teams in tournaments. With the house league, coaches can apply the references they are learning within the game environment with less stress and clear thinking.

Multi-Sport Balance

Sport was once seasonal, and moving from one activity to another was the norm. Children might play soccer in the spring, baseball in the summer, hockey in the winter, and try many other activities in between. That variety builds physical literacy, avoids burnout, and keeps sport fun.

If a child chooses not to play soccer for a phase so they can explore other sports, that is completely logical—and fully supported by the club. Our role is to welcome them back when they're ready and help them continue their journey with confidence.

What We Hear From Parents?

“My child needs more challenge.”

We understand. Development Team training already provides higher demands. We position House as complementary, time to try new ideas without the pressure to perform. There is no magic number but we feel appropriate levels of success and failure are important. ‘25/50/25’, means 25% of the time for development your child should find the environment challenging where they may experience more unconscious stressors, 50% of the time they should find the learning environment balanced so equal amounts of success and failure (well matched opposition and challenge from curriculum) and 25% where they are having a great deal of success and able to attempt new and novel solutions. It is the balance that has helped to create all top players.

“Schedules feel full.”

We respect that parents choose what fits their child’s wellbeing. Our menu of House, Development Teams, and development options is designed so families can pick a path that works. There are many options from House to House & Development Team to House, Development Team and Academy, and the list goes on including adding other sports and other interests. Every family has to find their balance.

“Can my child play other sports or take breaks?”

Absolutely. Again, we respect multi-sport participation and family balance. Choose the program mix that supports your child’s health and joy. Parents have to choose the best balance for their children.

“Is House participation mandatory for Development Team participation?”

House remains part of our current structure because it supports a healthy club and accessible soccer for all. We review this regularly as the club grows and changes. Families must register for House in order to play participate in the Development Pool.

“What if my child feels unchallenged in House?”

Encourage them to use the House Program as a creativity lab. Try new positions, take risks, and enjoy being on the ball. There is not a top player in the world who did not train in underload (less challenging) environments.

Looking ahead

As the club grows, we’ll continue to review the balance between House and Development Team to support both recreational and competitive players. The majority of families tell us this structure works well today; we will keep listening and improving.

Message to Parents

Thank you for your ongoing support and for sharing your perspectives. Together, we can keep PGYSA welcoming, fun, and development-focused for every player.