



INDIANA FIRE ACADEMY NORTH

Professional. Affordable.

Player and Parent Guide Academy and Travel Programs

CONTENTS:

- Club Mission
- Club Philosophy
- Core Values
- Player Development Pathway
- Curriculum
- Player and Team Selection
- Identification Centers and Showcase Development Platform
- Rosters
- Tryout Dates
- College Recruitment
- Playing Time
- Roster Changes and Player Movement
- Seasonal Training Schedule
- Typical Yearly Games and Competitions
- The Academy and Travel Soccer Commitment
- Absences
- Player Action Plans
- Questions for Coaching Staff
- Parent Support for Games and Training
- Feedback
- Club Staff Directory

CLUB MISSION

The Indiana Fire Academy (IFA) North mission is to provide all children, regardless of economic circumstances, with the opportunity to develop to their full potential through the pursuit of excellence at all levels of youth soccer.

IFA North offers a professional and affordable developmental environment for all levels of play—from entry level learning experiences to competitive travel, as well as the highest youth platforms in the country. Individuals are awarded the opportunity to play for passion, physical fitness, social engagement, team camaraderie, and all levels of competition, including college and professional contracts.

CLUB PHILOSOPHY

IFA North is built on the belief that the most successful soccer clubs in the world have a clear philosophy of play, which aligns with the vision of the club and is representative of the surrounding community. This philosophy of play is part of the DNA of the club and every technical decision is built it.

CORE VALUES

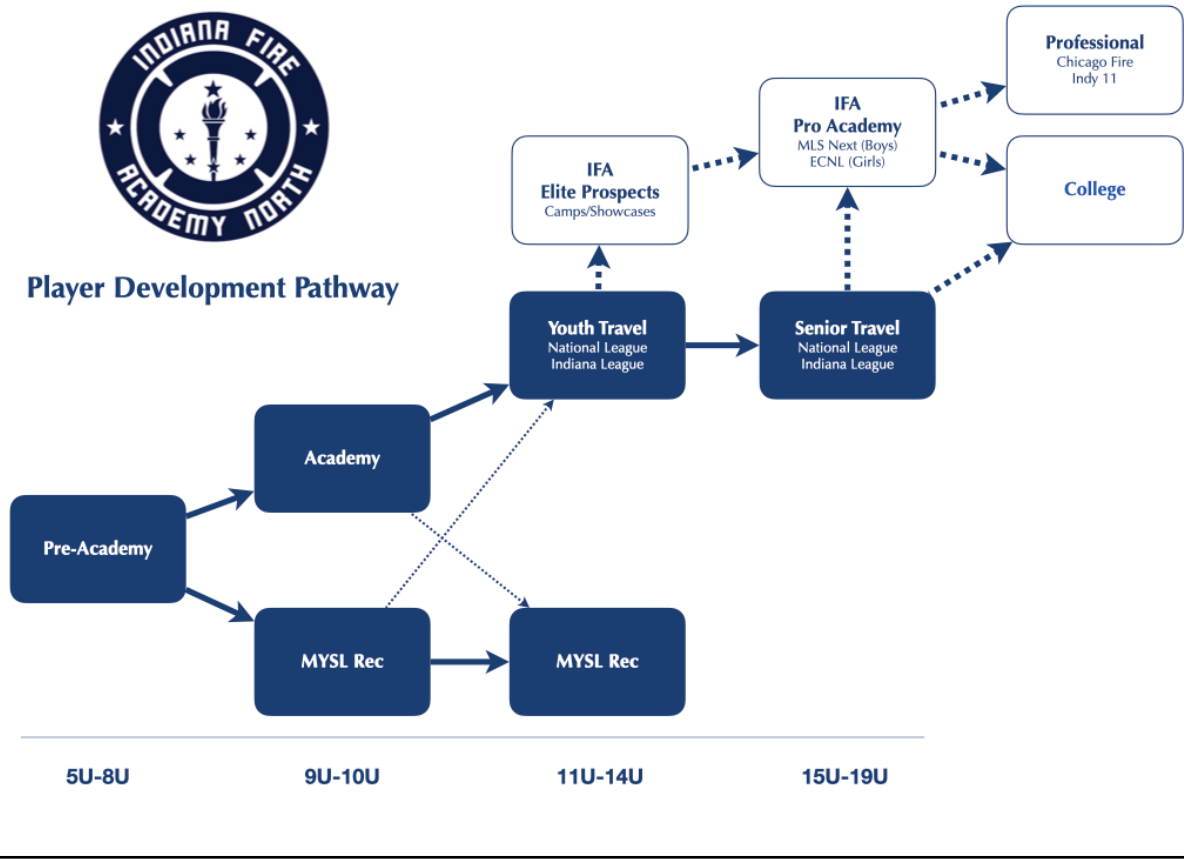
Our club believes in a set of core values that encourage growth in areas of leadership, emotional control, social skills, and overall professional character. Our core values are Family, Gratitude, Discipline, Integrity, Competitiveness, Excellence, and Passion. We attempt to see that players acquire the appropriate skills, understanding, and support for each of these principles and their opportunities for growth on and off the field.

Core Values:

Family – Gratitude – Discipline – Integrity – Competitiveness – Excellence – Passion

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

IFA North is proud to provide a player development pathway that allows youth players to enjoy soccer at all ages and at all levels. This Player and Parent Guide covers those players within the **Academy** and **Travel** programs.



CURRICULUM

Each player at IFA North needs the proper setting to learn, create, play, and enjoy the game. IFA North desires a culture of constant improvement, competing at all times, self-confidence, confidence in teammates, assertive communication, and positive influences.

Our coaching staff implements training sessions according to a curriculum established by the Technical Director and Technical Staff. All members of the coaching staff are provided daily sessions and each coach has the freedom to develop and apply specific sessions directly related to the topic or theme. Positional versatility is also essential for long-term development and players will experience a greater understanding through playing various roles within the team.

The fall and spring curriculum will be executed in one-week and two-week blocks based on the components listed below, while the winter training period will have a stronger focus on individual technical development and creativity within a competitive futsal framework. Each curricular theme listed below is deconstructed and presented in clear instructional pieces for training application.

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- Systems of Play: 4v4, 7v7, 9v9, and 11v11.
- Back Half and Front Half Attacking
 - Building Out of the Back
 - Actions to Goal
- Transition: Attack to Defend
 - Counter-Pressing
- Front Half and Back Half Defending
 - Pressing
 - Protecting the Goal
- Transition: Defend to Attack
 - Counter-Attacking
 - Maintaining Possession in Opponent's Half.

PLAYER AND TEAM SELECTION

Our goal is to create appropriate teams for all players who desire to play with IFA North. Our coaches have observed all of the IFA players throughout the year and have a good understanding of where kids need to be positioned if there were no new players entering the picture.

During the tryout process, we attempt to group kids by ability fairly early and make changes based on performance throughout the session. We will make observations and assessments of new players, use our understanding of existing IFA North players, determine how all of the players compare and play together, and then generate the best teams possible.

9U-19U players are selected to ability-based teams and placed using the following components as the basis for evaluation.

- *Passion and Ambition—willing to make sacrifices on and off the field to win.*
- *Technical Proficiency—able to do their job with excellence within our style of play.*
- *Tactical Intelligence—executes their role tactically and understands game situations.*
- *Character—always fights for the win, focused, high energy, bullet-proof mentality.*
- *Physical Qualities—high level athletes in relation to speed, aerobic capacity, and power.*

The desired roster size for a team in each age group is listed below. While we try to make the rosters meet the ideal quantity, the number of participants or skill sets of players may create a situation where we do not have the perfect number.

- 9U-10U: teams play 7v7 with 10-11 players per team preferred.
- 11U-12U: teams play 9v9 with 12-13 players per team preferred.
- 13U-14U: teams play 11v11 with 16-18 players per team preferred.
- 15U-19U: teams play 11v11 with 18-20 players per team preferred.

TRYOUT DATES

The dates for tryouts are typically posted in early April, following Indiana Soccer Association's release of allowable tryout dates. All of our information will be posted on the IFA North website.

IFA ELITE PROSPECTS PROGRAM

As part of our affiliation with the Indiana Fire Pro Academy, our 11U-19U players will have the opportunity to take part in various IFA Platforms.

Winter ID Camps. Each winter, our 11U-12U top teams participate in local ID Camps. IFA Pro Academy staff will bring up players from their top teams to play with our players. The camp serves as a fine developmental experience in its own right, and serves as an introduction to the ID process for players and families, giving the Pro Academy staff an early look at players within IFA North.

Elite Prospects Camp. Every summer, an IFA Elite Prospects Camp will take place at Grand Park. Within every IFA Network club, the top players from each age group (11U-16U) will be selected to participate in the camp. The camp will provide an excellent environment for like players to train, compete, and be identified for additional opportunities within the IFA Network.

Indy Eleven Pre-Season Camp. Every July, select players from IFA North may be invited to join the Indy Eleven Pro Academy teams for their pre-season camp. The camp provides a unique opportunity for our players to train with the best for an extended period of time.

IFA Network Additional Platforms. The camps set the stage for participation in other IFA platforms through the year. Opportunities will include participation in Showcases on the Elite Prospects Team, and participation in the top youth platforms in the country (MLS-Next for boys and ECNL National for girls), as well as secondary platforms.



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COLLEGE RECRUITMENT

Selected and being selected for college can be an overwhelming task for our high school players. We want to help ease some of the anxiety by providing a recruiting seminar each spring with information for any player who is looking to play at the next level.

Additionally, as part of the support we provide, IFA North has secured a membership to the Soccer Parenting Resource Center for all parents in the club. At the Soccer Parent Resource Center, you will find courses, videos, monthly webinars, articles and interviews with tips, advice, guidance and support. You can access the resource center from our website.

PLAYING TIME

At all ages, development is our primary objective. We strive to give all players an appropriate amount of playing time during each contest.

For 9U-10U, we attempt to give all players equal playing time. It is nearly impossible to ensure equal playing time during a single game; but, we will try to balance out playing time over the course of the season. At these ages, a team may appear to struggle during a game because players are placed in unfamiliar positions or the "best" players may not be on the field at a given time. This does not mean winning and/or competing to win is not important. Competing to win is an incredibly important aspect of development, but winning is not always the most important measurement of success at this time.

For 11U-12U, competition for time on the field becomes an extension of player development. There are many situations when playing time may be tilted toward those who are playing best (key league games, etc.). The objective is to provide a balance among development in proper games situations, learning to compete at a high level, and competing to win.

For 13U and older teams, playing time is earned; it is neither given nor guaranteed and no player is entitled to it. Each player selected has proven to be able to make a contribution to their team, but the job has only started with being named to the team. Healthy competition among teammates will be elevated by the number of quality players vying for opportunities on the field.

ROSTER CHANGES AND PLAYER MOVEMENT

With a focus on individual player development, the club's intent is to continually challenge players by ensuring they compete within an appropriate playing group. At the end of each season, the coaches will evaluate each player and, in coordination with the Director, review each roster to make decisions about team transfers for the following season.

Coaches will rate each player 1-4. Those players rated 4 are regarded as team standouts and the coaching staff will look to give them an increased challenge by moving them to a stronger team. Those players rated 1 are regarded as below the team standard and the coaching staff will look to move them to a more suitable team.

The player evaluations are done at the end of each season. Our objective is to remain focused on player development and to put players in the best possible environment for them to learn and develop.

Playing up with an older age group. For players rated 4 who are on the top team in their age

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group, the club looks to move them to the top team on the older age group. Decisions to have players play up an age are carefully considered. The coaching staff generally will not move a player up unless that player will be one of the top 5-7 players on the older team. Players playing up need to be starters on the older team and be receiving quality minutes in games in order for the move to make good sense. All decisions to move players up an age are done in consultation with the family. In cases where a player is rated highly on the top team, but it does not make sense to move them up, we will look to give them opportunities in-season to be challenged.

Moving players in-season. It is rare to permanently move a player from one team to another in-season; however, in-season player movement may take place in the following manner.

- Players in need of a greater challenge may train or play "up" with a stronger or older team in addition to playing with their current team.
- Players benefitting from a lesser challenge may play "down" in a more appropriate setting in addition to playing with their current team.

In most cases, players excel in these opportunities, whether playing up or down. In rare instances, players may have social difficulties; therefore, communication is important between parents and staff to learn more about the child's experience.

Each scenario aims to provide appropriate developmental opportunities for the players and the teams involved. The IFA North Coaching Staff and Directors will make all decisions about player movement and will communicate any changes with each family involved.

SEASONAL TRAINING SCHEDULE

Outdoor training takes place at Bontrager Fields in Middlebury, as well as on occasion at Woodlawn Park in Ligonier and Memorial Park in Goshen. During the winter months, our teams train primarily at the Goshen Soccer Academy in Goshen. The soccer year is approximately 10 months long.

- Fall: August through October or early November. 60 minute sessions for 9U/10U teams. 75 minute sessions for 11U/12U teams. 90 minute sessions for 13U and older teams.. 9U-10U teams have two practices per week. 11U and older teams practice three times per week. Supplemental training opportunities are offered as well.
- Winter: November through mid-March (16 weeks—breaks during Holidays). 60-90 minutes sessions dependent on age. All teams train at least one time per week. More advanced teams may train two times per week. Our winter training sessions are focused on individual technical development within a futsal format.
- Spring: Mid-March through the first week of June. 60 minute sessions for 9U/10U teams. 75 minute sessions for 11U/12U teams. 90 minute sessions for 13U and older teams.. 9U-10U teams have two practices per week. 11U and older teams practice three times per week. Supplemental training opportunities are offered as well.

TYPICAL YEARLY GAMES AND COMPETITIONS

9U-10U Teams:

- 16-20 outdoor league games in the local area.
- 16-20 indoor futsal league games in Goshen.

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- 1 outdoor tournament (during the fall in Middlebury).

11U-12U Teams:

- 16-20 league games in the local area or state, subject to the level of team play and league requirements.
- 16-20 indoor futsal league games.
- 2-4 outdoor tournaments with potential for 1-2 out of state.
- 1-2 indoor futsal tournaments in the Michiana area.

13U-19U Teams:

- 16-20 league games in the local area or out of state, subject to the level of team play and league requirements.
- 2-6 outdoor tournaments with potential for 2-4 out of state.
- 2-4 indoor futsal tournaments or college showcases.

THE ACADEMY AND TRAVEL SOCCER COMMITMENT

IFA North understands that our players will be engaged in activities outside of soccer. We do not expect our Academy and Travel players to dedicate their lives to soccer at an early age to the exclusion of other activities. On the contrary, we recognize that a multi-sport experience, especially from ages 6 to 12, enhances long-term development as a soccer player.

Yet, while we recognize that specialization in one sport during the early ages is not ideal, limiting participation in soccer to just three months out of the year is inadequate for competitive players. For this reason, *academy and travel players are expected to participate in fall, winter, and spring play*, even if in a more limited capacity for one of those seasons. Coaches will make accommodations for players who may have conflicts due to basketball or baseball/softball, just as they will make accommodations for players in music or other academic or extra-curricular activities; but, there is an expectation that such players will still be a consistent, if more limited, presence throughout the fall, winter, and spring seasons.

ABSENCES

Religious holidays/observances, family weddings, reunions, emergencies—players should spend time with family on these occasions and are excused from practice and/or games on these days. When possible, please inform the coach at least one week in advance for any absences.

There will be other occasions when a player has a conflict with a practice or a game. At such times, families are expected to notify the coach. A commitment to the team entails consistent participation. Unexcused absences will result in diminished playing time. Excessive unexcused absences may result in removal from the team.

PLAYER ASSESSMENTS

Each player will receive a Player Assessment near the middle of the spring season. The assessments are specific to each age group and connected to the curriculum, instruction, and expectations within both training sessions and match play. Parents will also receive a copy of each Player Assessment and they are welcome to meet with the coaching staff to review and discuss.

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QUESTIONS FOR COACHING STAFF

Each coach is here to help—do not feel as if you are bothering the coach by asking a question. Please notify the coach at any time if you have a concern about your child or feel that the coach needs to be aware of issues that the player may not want to discuss (health or personal issues, family, school, etc.).

If a player has questions or anxieties regarding playing time, positions, or areas of improvement, please encourage your child to speak with the coach. It may help to send a text or email in advance of the player's communication and the coach can help get the conversation started. This is a good opportunity for your child and we are here to support this process.

If a meeting needs to be established with the parents, please let us know. We prefer for the player to be included in all soccer related discussions if possible. Each coach can create an improvement plan and provide suggested activities for completion outside of team practice.

There are understandable times when parents can become frustrated or protective in regard to a child. Unless the safety of a player is involved, please adhere to the following sequence for concerns with playing time, positions, and game related issues:

- 1) Wait 24 hours following all games and events.
- 2) Initiate communication with the head coach.
- 3) If the issue is not addressed appropriately, please contact the Technical Director.
- 4) If a concern remains, please contact the Executive Director/Director of Coaching.

We rarely see issues arise to this magnitude and they most often relate to miscommunication or a simple misunderstanding. When these scenarios develop we know how important it is for everyone to take a breath and approach the matter with the proper perspective and demeanor.

PARENT SUPPORT FOR GAMES AND TRAINING

If a player has a conflict with any scheduled practice or game, please notify the coach and update TeamSnap. The consistent use of TeamSnap is tremendously helpful for our staff. Please use the availability function and make updates as needed.

Parents are welcome to observe training, but need to be respectful of the instruction that is taking place. Please remain off the game fields during all practice sessions and avoid communication with the players on the team. The IFA North training shirts are to be worn for all practices.

Please help your child, the other members on the team, and the coaching staff by arriving on time or early for training and games. Practices will begin at the time listed on the schedule. Unless otherwise notified, players should be ready to warm up 30 minutes prior to each game at the appropriate field. Please allow extra time for unfamiliar game locations and tournament parking.

Players should always be prepared with home and away uniforms. Needed equipment for every game: home and away uniforms, shin-guards, proper shoes, and plenty of water.

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Most parents are great fans and supportive on the sideline. We appreciate the excitement and enthusiasm that takes place during games and we want the families and players to enjoy the experience. We all want to support good sportsmanship and avoid inconsistent or conflicting communication from two sidelines.

- ✓ Keep comments positive.
- ✓ Refrain from "coaching" from the sideline during games (pass it, run, dribble, mark up, kick it, move here/there, get the ball, etc.)
- ✓ Avoid information and/or instruction directed at your child or other players during games.
- ✓ Refrain from all comments to any referee.

An important part of development requires players to make decisions for themselves on the field with limited instruction from the sideline. It is incredibly beneficial for parents to follow these guidelines to create the best environment for all players involved in the game. We appreciate your support.

For more information and help with parenting your soccer player, please visit the Soccer Parent Resource Center on our website.

FEEDBACK

We always want to improve the experience for each player at IFA North. Please contact Vincent Baltazar or Christian Hall at any time if you have ideas or suggestions that you feel will create a stronger environment at IFA North. For other questions or inquiries, please see our Staff Directory list below.

CLUB STAFF DIRECTORY

Position	Name	Email
Executive Director	Vincent Baltazar	vincent@magicsoccerclub.com
Technical Director	Christian Hall	christian@magicsoccerclub.com
Rec League Director	Katie Pickard	mysl@magicsoccerclub.com
Pre-Academy Director	Katie Pickard	mysl@magicsoccerclub.com
Administrator	Leah Hill	admin@magicsoccerclub.com
Bookkeeping	Michele Beechy	mbeechy@teledata.us.com
Manager Coordinator	Jessica Purkey	jbmpurkey@gmail.com
Family Liaison	Dely Muñoz	delymunoz23@gmail.com
Fields Manager	Mike Stemm	mwstemm53@gmail.com
IFA Affiliate Director	Tony Jacklin	tjacklin@indianafirejuniors.com

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