

Eau Claire United Soccer Club Tryout Policy

Approved by the ECU Board of Directors in May 2018

1. Introduction

The goal of the Eau Claire United (ECU) tryout and team formation process is to place players in a way supporting the club mission of “*developing players to their highest competitive level.*” There is no perfect evaluation process, but the aim of the club is to provide a developmentally-appropriate and clearly-defined process that utilizes the input and expertise of our coaches while also providing a system of checks and balances with the use of outside evaluators.

To provide a more complete evaluation of a player’s Technical, Tactical, Physical, and Mental sides of the game, players will be placed based on data acquired via a combination of a designated one- or two-day training/tryout session with similarly-aged players, coach in-season evaluations, and, when logistically achievable, a live-game setting.

2. Determination of Club Teams

Before the formal tryout process, the Boy’s and Girl’s Director, with input from the appropriate coaches and others as deemed necessary, will make recommendations as to what teams will be formed for the upcoming Fall and Spring/Summer Seasons. These determinations will be made based on player numbers at a given age group, perceived skill levels of a given age group, past league performance of teams, and other considerations (including but not limited to player retention, commitment levels, and physical limitations). The ensuing Player Evaluation Process will utilize these recommendations to place players onto teams that provide the best opportunities for development to their highest competitive levels. This determination process may include recommendations for balanced teams at U11+ age groups. On recommendation from the evaluators at a given age group after the Player Evaluation Process, the original team determination can be re-evaluated.

3. The Player Evaluation Process

The Player Evaluation Process is multi-faceted, combining Tryout Evaluations, Live-Play Evaluations, and In-Season Evaluations to best determine the most appropriate playing level for a given player.

All of the evaluations will be based on assessing a player’s Technical, Tactical, Physical, and Mental sides of the game. The exact weighting of the various aspects of the game will vary depending on the age and skill level of the evaluated group (for example, the tactical aspect of the game is much more important for an older player trying out for a premier-level team than for a U9 player). An example of the unscored evaluation sheets used during any of the evaluation components can be provided to players and/or parents upon request to better clarify any questions about the specific categories being evaluated. Scores from the three different evaluation components described in further detail below will be compiled and used to tier the players for team placements.

Though the different aspects of the game may be weighted differently based on the age group, the weighting of the three evaluation components, assuming the presence of two external evaluators, will consistently be weighted as follows:

- 50% of the player’s score derived from the Tryout Evaluations (divided evenly between the assessments of the head coach and the two external evaluators)

- 33% of the player's score derived from the Live-Play Evaluations (divided evenly between the assessments of the two external evaluators)
- 17% of the player's score derived from the In-Season Evaluations.

a. Tryout Evaluations

The tryout evaluation is the primary tool utilized by the club for player placements. The club values providing every player, regardless of their past playing experiences, with the opportunity to demonstrate their playing abilities with other players at their age level.

U10 and younger age groups will have a single tryout evaluation day, while U11 and older age groups will have two evaluation days when possible. Players are encouraged to attend both evaluation days if possible, and are required to attend at least one of the evaluation days. If a player is unable to attend at least one evaluation day, written communication of this should be made at least 2 weeks prior to the tryout date so that effort can be directed toward providing an alternate evaluation (see details below). Each tryout evaluation will consist of a 2-2.5 hour session led by the Head Coach and/or Age Group Lead of the age group and two other external evaluators. The external evaluators will be assigned based on their experience to complement that of the Head Coach; the goal will be to pair head coaches with less experience with external evaluators with more experience to help facilitate the process.

Each evaluation day will consist of roughly the same setup, with the exact details determined by the head coach and external evaluators. The sessions will begin with a dynamic warmup (10-15 minutes), followed by a short skill session (10-15 minutes) that is designed to provide players with many touches on the ball. The majority of the evaluation session will be focused on small-sided games with rotating teams so that players can be evaluated relative to their peers in a game-like setting. Small-sided games will be used to maximize the number of touches a player will receive during the evaluation session and thus provide a more comprehensive skill evaluation than could be accomplished in a full-sized game competition. If time remains at the end of the scheduled evaluation session, full-size games may be played to supplement the already-collected evaluation data.

b. Live-Play Evaluations

Player evaluations made by the external evaluators during a live league or tournament game are meant as a complementary tool to be used for player placements. Evaluations made during game settings help assess a player's Tactical and Mental components of the game which can be more difficult to accurately assess during the evaluation days described above.

During live-play evaluations, the same two external evaluator assigned for the tryout evaluations are selected for the review. The evaluators will again be assessing the four main aspects of the game. The head coach will be consulted with prior to the game and encouraged to play all players over the course of the game to ensure that all players have an opportunity to demonstrate their abilities in a game setting. If a player is unable to attend the reviewed game, reasonable effort will be made to make the live-play evaluation during another competition, ideally within a week of the tryout evaluation, with at least one of the two external evaluators.

The results from the live-play evaluations will be compiled along with the tryout evaluation data and the in-season evaluations to contribute to a player's overall ranking and subsequent player placement.

c. In-Season Evaluations

Eau Claire United coaches are required, as part of their contractual obligations, to provide in-season evaluations of their players. Like the other evaluation processes, the in-season evaluations will also focus on the players' Technical, Tactical, Physical, and Mental sides of the game. Coaches are expected to use these evaluations as a starting point for conversations with individual players on how they can best develop their soccer abilities. These evaluations will be used as a supplemental component to the dedicated tryout evaluations and live-play evaluations to assist in player placements. In-season evaluations will be completed by the head coach at least one week prior to the scheduled Tryout Evaluation at the age group.

d. Alternate Evaluations

One of the main goals of having a multi-faceted and player-centered approach to player placement is to provide a comprehensive collection of a player's abilities to enable the most appropriate placement. Ideally, a player will be evaluated by all three evaluation tools, which provides the most information and thus a more accurate placement.

Existing players within the club must be evaluated via at least two of the three evaluation methods described above. If such a player misses either the Tryout Evaluation or the Live-Play Evaluation, the player will be evaluated via the remaining two evaluation tools. If such a player misses both the Tryout Evaluation and the Live-Play Evaluation, reasonable effort will be made by the tryout committee to schedule an alternate evaluation during which at least one of the two external evaluators attend an already scheduled team practice or game. In the case of injuries or other unforeseen circumstances, placement will be made based on the head coach's recommendation in concert with recommendations of at least one other club coach familiar with the player.

New players to the club must be evaluated during the Tryout Evaluation. All players, regardless of their status with the club, are encouraged to attend all of the available evaluation days if possible. New players to the club must attend at least one of the evaluation days. If a player is unable to attend at least one evaluation day, written communication of this should be made at least 2 weeks prior to the tryout date so that effort can be directed toward providing an alternate evaluation, likely in the form of joining an already scheduled team practice of a team at their natural age group during which the head coach and at least one of the two external evaluators would attend.

4. Goalkeeper Tryouts

Goalkeeper-specific tryouts will be a component of at least one of the two days of the Tryout Evaluation process for all ages U13 and up. The other aspects of the Player Evaluation Process will remain unchanged for goalkeepers.

For age groups younger than U12, goalkeeper tryouts will not be a designated component of the Tryout Evaluation process. Players at these age groups will be developed on their overall soccer

abilities in line with the club philosophy of developing a complete player over developing a positional player at the younger age groups.

5. Placement Outside of the Natural Age Group

Players will be evaluated via the Player Evaluation Process described above based on the team and age group at which they are currently playing. Recommendations can be made to tryout at an advanced age group by the head coach and the external evaluators for players that are deemed exceptional, and only if there is a strong case to be made that the player cannot reasonably develop to their highest competitive level at their natural age group. Such a player would then go through the above-described Player Evaluation Process at the advanced age group. If not placed on the team at the advanced age group, they would be recommended for placement back at their natural age group.

Requests to play outside of a player's natural age group that are made outside of the above-described method should be communicated directly with the Boy's and Girl's Directors for further evaluation.

6. Placement of New Players Mid-Season

In circumstances where a new player registers with the club in the middle of a season or in-between the Fall and Spring/Summer seasons, players may be given the opportunity to be placed on a team only if roster sizes permit. Such a player would be evaluated per the guidelines established for a new player undergoing an Alternate Evaluation. As described above, the evaluation would consist of joining an already scheduled team practice of a team at their natural age group during which the head coach and at least one external evaluators would attend. Such players will be placed at the top team at their natural age group if and only if roster size permits and the player would be within the top half of this top team.

7. Player Placement Announcements for U11+

The Player Evaluation Process should culminate with the Tryout Evaluation sessions. Immediately following the second Tryout Evaluation session, the head coach, the two external evaluators, and an outside team formation representative will place players onto the recommended club teams at the respective age groups based on the data acquired during the three-part evaluation process. During this Team Formation meeting, the roster of the most competitive team at the age group will be determined. In very rare instances when the scoring process does not seem to coincide with the observations of the head coach, alternate evaluators, and/or team formation representative, the Boy's or Girl's Director will be brought in to oversee and evaluate placements outside of the defined scoring process.

Communication to players and parents of players on the roster of the most competitive team at the age group will be made within 72 hours of the final Tryout Evaluation session. Players and parents of players will be expected to accept or decline their spot on this top team within 24 hours of the announcement. Players unable to accept their spot within this time frame will relinquish their placement on the roster, and alternates pre-determined at the Team Formation meeting may be recommended for placement on the team. Such players will be contacted and the same 24 hour standard will be held to for the accepting or declining of the roster spot.

Communication of player placement for the remaining teams at an age group will be made within 48 hours after the top team roster at the particular age group is finalized. Players and parents of players will be expected to accept or decline their spot on the team within 72 hours of this communication.

When balanced teams at an age group are recommended, communication will be made within 72 hours of the final Tryout Evaluation session, and players and parents of players will be expected to accept or decline their spot on the team within 72 hours of this communication.

8. Player Placement Announcements for U10 and Younger Age Groups

Immediately following the Tryout Evaluation session(s), the head coach, the two external evaluators, and an outside team formation representative will place players onto the recommended club teams at the respective age groups. During this Team Formation meeting, the goal will be to balance the skill level among the recommended teams. Communication of placements to players and parents of players will be made within 72 hours of the final Tryout Evaluation session. Players and parents of players will be expected to accept or decline their spot on the team within 72 hours of this communication.

9. Teams with Incomplete Rosters

One of the goals of Eau Claire United is to provide all players with the opportunity to play at their highest competitive level. Occasionally, specific age groups may not have enough players to create a fully-rostered team. In these instances, the club and the parents of the under-rostered team(s) will develop a plan to combine age groups together to create a team or make plans to recruit enough players at the age level to be able to form a team. Players recruited through this effort after the Team Formation process will generally only be placed on the team for which they were recruited.