

Dear GYSA Club member,

As a new season approaches, the GYSA board wanted to communicate with our membership to clarify some core beliefs and answer a question that many of you have had regarding how our teams are rostered. GYSA places strong focus on promoting player development, fostering a supportive team environment and player enjoyment of the game. This is reflected in the Club's mission statement and has been true since it's founding in 1995.

As a bit of background, GYSA is among the fastest growing and largest travel soccer clubs in the state, having grown from 185 players to 267 players between Fall 2010 and Fall 2012 alone. Most of this growth has been in the younger age groups, where last year for example we fielded at least two teams for every age group and gender for our U9, U10 and U11 teams. Consistent with the mandate of Soccer Maine that is designed to maximize player development, it is the Club's practice to field "balanced" rosters in the U9 - U11 age groups when we have sufficient player numbers to fill more than one team.

This fall, for the first time in many years we are likely to field multiple teams for each gender at the U12 age group. While fielding competitive teams is always a Club goal, we believe at certain age levels primary attention must be given to player development and player enjoyment of the game. Given this philosophy, the GYSA Board has decided to follow Soccer Maine's recommendation for the U12 age group and *the Club will "balance" its rosters in the U12 age group this fall, with the goal of having those teams be as equal in ability as possible.* In the U13-U14 age groups (in the instances when we have sufficient numbers to roster two teams) GYSA will develop rosters based on like player ratings which result from May assessments. This has not been an easy decision for the board, which has been discussing this issue for the past two years. We have received lots of good feedback from many of our coaches and members, and ultimately we decided that a balanced roster approach at U12 was most appropriate for GYSA. We believe that by fielding balanced rosters, our club will develop a higher quantity of well-rounded players than if we fielded A/B rosters at this age group. A few key reasons behind the decision are:

1. GYSA feels that balancing its U9-U12 teams is complementary with the 6 vs 6 and 8 vs 8 formats used at these levels. Proper focus can then be placed on small-sided play and small group tactics for all players. This approach will give all players a chance to understand the game at its most fundamental aspects and prepare them for 11 vs 11 full field and expanded roster play once they reach the U13/14 levels. GYSA's ability to compete at the U13/14 level will be a direct result of the success we have in developing our players and teams at younger age groups.
2. In recent seasons (most notably last season) the Metro Division and Soccer Maine experienced a significant number of lopsided games, a very significant portion of which involved weaker teams for a club fielding two teams in an age group (i.e., "B" teams). This led to a good deal of frustration on the part of many teams, many cases of dispirited players who were on the wrong end of a blowout, and a playoff format which was skewed by the inability to accurately gauge the quality of a team. These

types of results benefit neither the teams nor the players involved.

3. For the past several years, GYSA has consistently balanced its younger teams and focused on skill development and small-sided play. Not surprisingly we have seen highly competitive teams who continue to grow and enjoy the game with each new year. Extending this practice into the U12 age group will continue to allow development in a format familiar to our young players.

GYSA recognizes that there will come an age when grouping players of like abilities will be the best way to ensure enjoyment of the game and development at the appropriate level of play. GYSA strongly believes that it is possible to field teams which consistently grow, compete and develop in their enjoyment of the game. We believe the approach to roster creation described above is a key component in meeting those goals.

If you have questions about this policy, please feel free to seek out myself, Jim Shimansky (our Coaching Director) or a Board member. We appreciate your feedback and look forward to a great upcoming season.

Best Regards,

Rob Callahan