



ECNL Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Elite Clubs National League (the “ECNL”)? The ECNL is a national youth soccer league founded in 2009 for U15, U16 and U17 girls for the purpose of providing the highest level of competition and the best developmental environment for American female youth soccer players, as well as an identification program for identifying players for US Soccer Youth National Teams. The 2009-2010 season was the ECNL’s inaugural season. Today the ECNL has expanded to U14 - U19 ages.

Why was the ECNL founded? The ECNL was founded by many of the best female youth soccer clubs throughout the country based on the belief that elite female player development in the United States needed a structure that would reduce the total number of games on the schedule and increase the number of meaningful, quality games. The ECNL sets forth a vision that provides a clear path to that goal: a national competition schedule and a national identification program linked to that competition, and an organization in which best practices in player development can be shared throughout the country.

Who plays in the ECNL? For a complete list of member clubs, please go to www.eliteclubsnationalleague.com.

What does moving to the ECNL mean for SCUFC? It affords us the opportunity to continue our club-centric model in a more competitive development environment.

What does moving to the ECNL mean for our players? It will offer a stronger competition model for player development while offering a proven college track path.

Does the move to ECNL impose a greater time commitment, such as more practice sessions per week? Where will the practices be held? No, our development model is unchanged. Teams will practice 3 times per week. This is determined by the club. The main training facility for ECNL teams will be at the BB&T and new Monticello Rd. complex (opening in Fall 2018), however teams will have the availability to train at any of the facilities as determined by the club.

Will the club continue the "play-up" policy or will players be rostered only on their age appropriate team? This depends on each player’s development track, as well as our competition schedule. We want to offer the best development model possible for each player.

How is the ECNL different from other female soccer leagues in maximizing player development?

Competition: First, the ECNL provides the opportunity for the best female youth soccer players in the country to compete against each other – one of the requirements for maximizing player development. Because the ECNL only includes the best clubs in the country, every ECNL game is exceptionally competitive and played at a significantly higher speed with more physical, psychological, technical and tactical demands on the players than the “average” game. The consistency of this competition and the demands it imposes creates more skillful, intelligent, and focused players. Second, in order to maximize the competitive level of each ECNL game, the ECNL only schedules 1 ECNL game per day per team, and no more than 3 days of ECNL games in succession. This aids in reducing burn-out and fatigue from game-to-game.

Substitution: The ECNL limits the number of substitutions in each ECNL game by prohibiting reentry of players in each half. In other words, once a player is subbed out of an ECNL game, the player may not re-enter the game in that half of play. This forces players to maintain their concentration and work-rate for far longer periods of time than in most other competitions, and helps to prepare them for competition at the national and international level. In other words, without the massive substitution patterns common in other youth soccer events, players in ECNL games are forced to adapt to the physical and psychological demands of playing for 90 minutes without a break and without the “cushion” of temporary substitution to re-energize or re-focus.

Roster Rules: The ECNL allows a flexible roster of up to 26 players per team, and allows players to be rostered on multiple teams within their ECNL club. In addition, the ECNL allows players to move from one team roster to another from day-to-day, allowing players to play in different age groups in the same event. (Note: A player may only play in 1 ECNL game per day.) This allows talented players to “play-up” against older players when a club determines it is in the best interests of the player to do so in order to maximize challenge and learning.

Calendar Congestion: By guaranteeing member clubs with the opportunity to play the best clubs in the country on a regular basis, and by providing an additional identification program within these games, the ECNL schedule allows member clubs to reduce the total number of games played by their teams and players each year. This provides each member club with more time for training to develop each player, and provides players more time for recovery and rejuvenation over the course of the year.

Standards and Recommendations: The ECNL provides a recommended set of minimum standards and expectations for players and staff of ECNL member clubs to create a more professional soccer environment. In addition, the ECNL provides member clubs with the opportunity to share best practices in player development and club organization and administration to improve the daily experience of the players.

Can a player that participates in the ECNL also participate in high school soccer? Yes. The ECNL schedules are created to insure that all players that participate in the ECNL also have the opportunity to play high school soccer. There will be less direct conflicts with HS Soccer as a member of ECNL. When there are conflicts our approach will continue to be based on a “health conscious” approach to player development. We will continue to protect our players based on the individual’s periodization plan and the collective needs of the age group.

What is the ECNL Player Identification Program? The ECNL has created a unique identification program in conjunction with US Club Soccer’s id2 identification program to provide another alternative for players to be identified for US Soccer National Teams. The ECNL player identification program identifies the best players in the ECNL through a combination of independent scouting and coaching recommendations. Players identified in this program will be invited into a special ECNL / id2 National Camp, where they will be evaluated and trained by US Soccer National Team coaching staff.

How is the ECNL player identification program different than other identification programs? The ECNL identification program is different and has several unique components compared to than other identification programs. First, there is no charge to the player to be identified (there is no tryout fee). Second, the player is identified in her natural team environment (there is no tryout or tryout camp). Third, the ECNL identification program does not add additional events to the calendar for identification (the players are identified in their natural environment while competing in ECNL events). Fourth, the only cost for the player for participation in the ECNL / id2 National Camp is the cost of travel to and from camp. All other costs (hotel, food, ground transportation, facility usage, coaching, etc.) is subsidized by the ECNL, US Club Soccer, and Nike.

Can a player that participates in the ECNL also participate in the USYS ODP program? Yes. The ECNL player identification program is one of several different identification programs provided by different organizations for the elite youth soccer player to be identified for US Soccer Youth National Teams. The ECNL does not impose restrictions on players to prevent them from participating in any other identification program. Many players that participate in the ECNL will participate in USYS ODP or other identification programs, and some players that participate in the ECNL will not participate in USYS ODP or other identification programs. These choices will be made by individual players according to their own interests and desires.

How will the ECNL change college recruiting? The ECNL brings together the best female soccer clubs in the country to compete against each other. The competitive schedule for these games for the entire year is determined at the beginning of the year, and, as such, college coaches can more easily plan their recruiting calendar to insure that they see all the players in which they are interested – and see them competing against the best players in the country.

Why should I play in the ECNL if I intend to go to college close to home? NCAA Division I, II and III college soccer programs recruit nationally, and opportunities to play in NCAA Division I tend to go to players from nationally competitive teams. Elite players maximize their opportunities to be recruited for college and to be identified for the national team by playing against the top talent from around the country at the best college showcases. The ECNL guarantees their players the opportunity to play the best players in the country, at the biggest showcase events, every year.

When are tryouts?

Tryouts for ECNL and Pre-ECNL age groups are late spring. We will have rolling Identification Days beginning in April. We

also will host formal tryout events for our pre-ECNL age groups (U9-U12) in May. The tryout schedule will be posted on our website at www.southcarolinaunitedfc.com no later than April of each year.

What is the difference between USYSA and ECNL?

At SCUFC the top selected players will be rostered on an ECNL team. The ECNL will start with the 2004 age group and go up through the 2000/1999 age group. Players will be selected for these teams at tryouts in May 2017. The next levels of players will play in the Region III Premier League (1999-2004), if available, and SCYSA state leagues. In the 2006 and 2005 age groups, these age groups will be considered "Pre-ECNL". The top players selected will play in the SCYSA State leagues and Region III Premier League, if qualified.

How long is the ECNL season?

Barring any changes from the ECNL, the regular season is August through February. In the fall, there are 4 selected dates at home and 4 selected dates away versus the SC/NC/VA teams. If teams qualify in their age groups, there is post season play in the months of June and July.

Season:

ECNL U14 Conference Competition commitment:

- Fall – Home/Away with conference opponents = 14 games (7 home & 7 away)
- Cross Conference Tournament (Fall or Spring) = 3 games
- Spring – Home/Away with conference opponents = 14 games

ECNL U15-U18 Conference Competition commitment:

- Fall - Home/Away with conference opponents = 14 games (7 home & 7 away)
- National Event Competitions (age group dependent) = 3-9 games

National Showcase Events/Play-offs:

The U15-U18 age groups *feature 2 flights* for the ECNL National Event Competitions

ECNL National Event Competition commitment by age:

- U14 – ECNL Cross-Conference Tournament + ECNL National Championship if qualified
- U15 – 2 National Events + ECNL National Championship if qualified
- U16 – 3 National Events + ECNL National Championship if qualified
- U17 – 3 National Events + ECNL National Championship if qualified
- U18/19 – 1 National Event + ECNL National Championship (top 8 teams only)

How many players can be rostered for each match? 18 players can be rostered for each match.

What league will Pre-ECNL teams play in? Pre-ECNL age groups 2006 & 2005 will participate in SCYSA State League.

What tournaments will Pre-ECNL teams participate in? Pre-ECNL teams (2006 & 2005) tournament schedule will be determined by the club. You can expect 3 per season including both local tournaments as Carolina Cup and St. Pats.

Will ECNL teams ages U14 and up (2004-1999) participate in the South Carolina State Cups? No.

What is a Discovery player? A "Discovery Player" is a player that is not a full-time member of the ECNL Club to which she is registered. A Discovery Player may appear on an active roster for a team of a non-ECNL Club, or a non-ECNL Team of another ECNL Club. In order to be considered a Discovery Player, a player must be explicitly designated as such on the ECNL Roster before such player participates in any ECNL Competition. Discovery Players are eligible to participate in all ECNL Competitions. 2004-2001 teams may have 2 Discovery Players. 2000/1999 teams may have up to 4 Discovery Players.

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