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**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 U13 - 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](http://www.eliteclubsnationalleague.com).

**Does playing in 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 Southeastern Freight Lines Soccer Center complex and SCUFC West Soccer Complex however teams will have the availability to train at any of the facilities as determined by the club.

**How much travel is involved in participating in the ECNL?**

Our teams will compete in the Mid-Atlantic division, which includes clubs from Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Bus trips may be organized for longer-distance away games to better manage the travel requirements and costs. Saturday-Sunday matches are often coordinated for longer road trips (e.g. two games in Virginia on one weekend) to better manage the schedule.

**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.

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 Conference Selection 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 throughout the year. 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](http://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 2009 age group and go up through the 2003/2004 age group. Players will be selected for these teams at tryouts in May 2021. The next levels of players will play in the ECNL Regional League (2003-2009) and SCYSA state leagues. In the 2010 these age groups will be considered “Pre-ECNL”.

**How long is the ECNL season?**
Barring any changes from the ECNL, the regular season is August through February. If teams qualify in their age groups, there is post season play in the months of June and July.

ECNL competition includes a combination of league schedules and event (tournament) play. Certain age groups include post-season competition in June and possibly July if they advance. Please review the chart below to read the expected competition formats for each age group.

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| **Age Group** | **Conference (League) Schedule** | **ECNL Event Schedule** | **ECNL Post-Season Schedule** |
| U13 | Traditional league schedule in Fall (Sept-Nov) and Spring (Feb-May) | Two ECNL showcases per year | Top teams in each conference qualify for ECNL Champions League event in June |
| U14 | Traditional league schedule in Fall (Sept-Nov) and Spring (Feb-May) | Two ECNL showcases per year | Top teams in each conference qualify for ECNL Champions League event in June |
| U15 | Traditional league schedule in Fall (Sept-Dec) with potential matches in Winter (Jan-Feb) to minimize conflicts with High School season in Spring. | Two ECNL showcases per year | Top teams in each conference qualify for ECNL Champions League in June with winners advancing to ECNL Finals in July; or for ECNL North American Cup, Showcase Cup or Open Cup in June. |
| U16 | Traditional league schedule in Fall (Sept-Dec) with potential matches in Winter (Jan-Feb) to minimize conflicts with High School season in Spring. | Three ECNL showcases per year | Top teams in each conference qualify for ECNL Champions League in June with winners advancing to ECNL Finals in July; or for ECNL North American Cup, Showcase Cup or Open Cup in June. |
| U17 | Traditional league schedule in Fall (Sept-Dec) with potential matches in Winter (Jan-Feb) to minimize conflicts with High School season in Spring. | Three ECNL showcases per year | Top teams in each conference qualify for ECNL Champions League in June with winners advancing to ECNL Finals in July; or for ECNL North American Cup, Showcase Cup or Open Cup in June. |
| U18/U19 | Traditional league schedule in Fall (Sept-Dec) with potential matches in Winter (Jan-Feb) to minimize conflicts with High School season in Spring. | At least one showcase per year | Top teams in each conference qualify for ECNL Champions League in June. |

**Season:
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ECNL U13-U14 Conference Competition commitment**:

* Fall – Home/Away with conference opponents
* National ECNL Event - Fall
* NCFC Showcase Tournament
* Carolina Cup Tournament
* Spring – Home/Away with conference opponents
* St. Patrick’s Tournament
* National ECNL Event - Spring

**ECNL U15-U19 Conference Competition commitment:**

* Fall - Home/Away with conference opponents
* National Event Competitions (age group dependent)

**National Showcase Events/Play-offs:**The U15-U18 age groups potentially ***feature 2 flights*** for the ECNL National Event Competitions
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**ECNL National Event Competition commitment by age:**

* U13 – 2 National Events + ECNL National Championship if qualified
* U14 – 2 National Events + 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 (2nd Optional) + ECNL National Championship (top 8 teams only)

ECNL Showcase events are held as three-day tournaments (one game per day) throughout the year, which allows teams to play opponents from other parts of the country and attract college coaches to the U15-U19 events.

**202-22 National Events (Tentative)**

ECNL U13/U14 Showcase | September 2021 | Richmond, VA

ECNL Phoenix (Fall) | November 2021 | Phoenix, AZ

ECNL Greer (Fall) | December 2021 | Greer, SC

ECNL Florida | January, 2022 | Sanford, FL

ECNL Texas | February, 2022 | Houston, TX

ECNL U13/U14 Showcase | May, 2022 | Greer, SC

ECNL New Jersey | May, 2022 | Somerset, NJ

ECNL National Playoffs (TBD)

ECNL Finals (TBD)

**How many players can be rostered for each match?** Only 18 may dress per game. Club-pass opportunities may occur for ECNL Regional team players for ECNL matches or events.

**Who is the primary contact for Girls ECNL and ECNL Regional?**

Tomasz Kluszczynski, ECNL National – Tomasz@southcarolinaunitedfc.com

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