



Playing Up Policy:

The Clarksville Soccer Club recognizes that player development is best achieved when players compete at their appropriate “soccer age” in training or game situations. The majority of CSC players will play within their natural age group because this aligns with their “soccer age” group as well. Natural age groups are defined by the age matrix/birthdate cutoffs provided by US Youth Soccer and adhered to by the Tennessee State Soccer Association.

However, we recognize that in certain cases, providing opportunities for a player to train or compete in an older age group may be appropriate for their development. While we support the idea of continuing to challenge and develop our players by offering opportunities to “play up,” it is not appropriate for all of our players.

Any decision regarding “playing up” will be made solely at the discretion of the Director of Coaching and the coach/coaches who evaluate the players during tryouts and throughout the season. The initial decision regarding a player’s ability to “play up” will be determined following tryouts, and that player will be officially rostered on a team that is appropriate for his/her “soccer age.” This initial decision will be based on the player’s demonstrated performance throughout the previous season and their performance during tryouts.

However, this decision is not the final decision for the entirety of the season. The developmental needs of players are continuous and require regular evaluations throughout the season. Any opportunity to “play up” does not entitle a player to additional opportunities in the future. These opportunities are earned through a player’s commitment, dedication, effort, and a consistent demonstration of abilities that exceed those of players within their own age group. The club reserves the right to reverse any decision, at any time, if the coaching staff feels that this would benefit the developmental needs of the player.

The request to “play up” is only initiated from the coaches involved and/or the Director of Coaching. These “playing up” opportunities can occur in several forms:

1. By Practicing Up: A player may be permitted the opportunity to attend additional practice sessions with a team of an older age group.
2. By Guest Playing Up: A player may be asked to guest play for an older age group CSC team for games or for tournaments.
3. By Rostering Up: A player may be rostered officially on a team of an older age group.

Allowing players to practice up, guest play up, or roster up with older age groups impacts the experiences and opportunities for players in both the older age group and the player’s natural age group. Therefore, the decision to have a player “play up” will be made with the developmental interest of players in both age groups, and not just the development needs of the player who is being considered for “playing up.” As a result, the opportunities for a player to train or compete with older age groups may be limited by the club in the best interest of the development needs of all players.

The following guidelines will be utilized when evaluating a player for the opportunity to “play up.”

1. Technical Ability – A player must demonstrate a high degree of individual skill which translates to competitive game situations. In addition, a player’s individual skill must meet or exceed the technical abilities of other players within the age group that the player wishes to “play up” with.
2. Physical Ability – A player must exceed other players within their age group in physical strength, physical fitness, and speed. They must have ability to mix well with players of the older age group. Therefore, their physical abilities must meet or exceed those of the other players within the group that the player wishes to “play up” with.
3. Cognitive and Psychological Ability – A player must surpass other players within their age group in game awareness and general knowledge of the game. To include the mental strength that will be necessary when dealing with older and physically superior opponents.
4. Social and Emotional Ability – A player must be able to interact with players within the older age group on and off the field (training, games, and social gatherings). Also, a player must possess an emotional maturity similar to those of the players in the older age group that the player wishes to “play up” with.
5. Player Commitment, Dedication, and Effort – An opportunity to “play up” can be presented in the form of training sessions and/or games that are in addition to the player’s regularly scheduled training sessions and games. Therefore, a player must have a high level of commitment to the sport of soccer. In addition, the player needs to demonstrate high attendance and a continued strong work ethic during all of their training sessions and playing opportunities to both qualify for and to continue “playing up.”

As with any policy or rule, exceptions or unique circumstances may exist. The following is not an all-inclusive list of exceptions, but this list shows a few exceptions to the guidelines for a player’s ability to “play up.”

1. If CSC does not have enough players in a specific age group to form a complete team, then age groups may be merged to fill out the roster and allow players opportunities to continue their soccer development with CSC.
2. If a new player moves to the area after tryouts and team formation, then space may not be available in their natural age group. That player may be allowed to “play up” after being evaluated by our coaches and DOC. However, this player will be evaluated with their regular age group for the next season.
3. CSC may ask a player to “play up” to balance out numbers and playing opportunities between teams as well.

This goal of this policy is to provide a learning environment that balances the needs of our players to be challenged, and the needs of our players to succeed. A player that is “playing up” in any manner should not be overly challenged in a manner that prevents them from succeeding or provides them with excessive frustration. Players that are “playing up” in any manner should not be precluded from playing with their natural age group. When a player who has been “playing up” is asked to play with their natural age group, they should not view this as a demotion; rather they should view this as an opportunity to gain/regain confidence and an opportunity to improve the development of the team they will join.

The club also understands that some players may need to be given additional opportunities to develop in age groups that are younger than their natural age group. Therefore from time to time, players may be afforded additional opportunities to learn and develop with a younger age group team. This too should not be viewed as a demotion; rather it should be viewed as an opportunity for the player to demonstrate their new skills and abilities in an appropriate “soccer age” environment. As a result, these opportunities will further player development and increase the player’s self-confidence on the field.

"Grand-fathering" a player who has been playing up for one or more years will be taken into consideration, but allowing them to continue to "play up" will not be automatic. A player's development needs change from season to season, and our goal is to place a player on a team that is developmentally appropriate. Therefore players will need to be re-assessed throughout the season and throughout their career as a competitive soccer player.

In general, CSC reserves the right to move players from roster to roster and team to team when it serves the best interest of a player's development and/or team continuity for a particular age group.