



Elite Clubs National League

Club Affiliation or Merger Policy

PURPOSE:

This ECNL Club Affiliation or Merger Policy (the “Policy”) establishes the factors by which the Elite Clubs National League will evaluate club affiliations and mergers for determining compliance with ECNL Bylaws, ECNL Membership and Participation Agreements and ECNL Competition Rules. These criteria are established to provide guidance when ECNL clubs are developing potential formal relationships with other clubs.

NOTE: It is advised the clubs share potential merger or affiliation plans with the ECNL in advance to identify any concerns or compliance issues with respect to ECNL rules, regulations and policies.

CLUB MERGER REQUIREMENTS:

A merger is the formal unification of two or more clubs into one legal entity and structure. In order to constitute a formal merger between two or more clubs, the following items must be satisfied:

- 1) An executed, legally binding written agreement between the clubs that outlines in detail:
 - a. The legal entity, leadership and governance structure;
 - b. The financial contribution or responsibility of each club or entity; and
 - c. Dissolution, exit or termination provisions.
- 2) The same name, logo and uniforms must be used on all teams in the entity.
- 3) All staff and teams must ultimately report to one Director of Coaching or Executive Director.
- 4) All ECNL teams must use the same complex for home competition.
- 5) The ECNL receives a copy of the:
 - a. Executed merger agreement, or
 - b. Merger documents filed with the appropriate state government entity.

Upon receipt of the above information, ECNL will determine whether to accept or reject the merger with respect to existing or future ECNL membership and compliance with ECNL Competition Rules.

CLUB AFFILIATION REQUIREMENTS:

An “affiliation” between two or more clubs is a cooperative relationship between clubs in the interests of long-term player development through establishment of a “feeder” or “affiliate” club or other relationship. In order to constitute an affiliation between two or more clubs, the following items must be satisfied:

- 1) A written agreement between the clubs that outlines in detail:
 - a. The age groups and genders that are involved and impacted, and how players are selected for the ECNL or ECNL RL program;
 - b. The effect on the player pool in all age groups, particularly young ages prior to combination of the clubs’ player pools;
 - c. The staffing plan and how coaches will be selected for the ECNL and / or ECNL RL age groups, including merging and overlapping of staff from different entities;
 - d. The player selection, scouting or feedback process for players from each club in the Pre-ECNL age groups, or on non-ECNL teams in ECNL age groups;
 - e. Training schedule, including the location, frequency, and staffing of the ECNL and ECNL RL age groups;
 - f. Plans for how training curriculum, philosophy, and ratios will be managed across the affiliates to ensure consistency; and
 - g. The entity to which all ECNL player dues and registration fees are paid, and the entity responsible for all financial matters related to ECNL players and teams
- 2) A common branding protocol (name, logo, patch, and uniform) must be outlined in detail to visually illustrate the affiliation on the field and to the public. This protocol may include use of the same logos and names on all teams, use of patches on jerseys when different club names are involved, or any other protocol that the ECNL in its sole discretion finds to be accurate and transparent as to the nature of the affiliation.

- a. **NOTE: It is not permissible to create an affiliation with another independent club in order to license or outsource operation of an ECNL or ECNL RL program to that club.** An affiliation is intended to provide improved player pool quality or depth through connecting multiple clubs that each ultimately provide players into the ECNL and / or ECNL RL program(s) that are directly operated by the club and approved to participate in the ECNL or ECNL RL by the ECNL at its sole discretion.
 - b. **NOTE:** Affiliated clubs are not permitted to use ECNL or ECNL RL branding on uniforms, and any usage in promotion or advertisement must be in reference to the base ECNL or ECNL RL club.
- 3) The term of the agreement, and any termination date or clauses must be provided.
 - 4) All ECNL and /or ECNL RL staff and teams must ultimately report to one Director of Coaching or Executive Director. For clarification, teams in an ECNL Regional League program may report to a different director than teams in the ECNL program, provided that all teams in the ECNL ultimately report to one Director with total technical authority over all teams.
 - a. **Note: Different reporting relationships for the ECNL and the ECNL RL program shall not be construed as allowing or approving a club to “license” or “outsource” the operations of any ECNL or ECNL RL program to a different club – which is expressly prohibited.**
 - 5) All ECNL teams and ECNL RL teams must use the same complex for home competition. The complex must be the same for ECNL teams and ECNL RL teams unless the ECNL in its sole discretion approves use of different complexes for teams at different levels.
 - 6) Authorized leadership of each club in the affiliation must execute the agreement.
 - 7) The ECNL receives a copy of the executed affiliation agreement.

Additional Considerations:

In reviewing a proposed affiliation, the ECNL will consider, without limitation, the following additional factors in approving or denying the affiliation:

- 1) The distance between the clubs and their primary training facilities and/or player pools.
- 2) The number of affiliations in which the club(s) are involved, and the number of training sites, divisions, locations, or other affiliations the club(s) operate or support.
- 3) The league participation of each proposed club, particularly with respect to the number of national leagues that club participates in and the potential impact of these competitions on the player pool.
- 4) Previous violations of ECNL Competition Rules by the clubs, particularly with respect to Discovery Players, roster rules, or recruitment / anti-tampering rules.
- 5) The degree of compliance and alignment of the club(s) with the ECNL Club Structure Policy.
- 6) The number of players expected to be used from each affiliated organization in the ECNL or ECNL RL rosters, such projected number also to be reviewed during the season to determine where player development is truly taking place.
- 7) Any other factor that the ECNL deems relevant.

Upon receipt of the above information, the ECNL will determine to accept or reject the affiliation with respect to ECNL participation and rostering. Affiliations are closely scrutinized to determine compliance with the above criteria.

NOTE: The ECNL may rescind approval of any affiliation: (i) at any time if it is determined that information submitted regarding the affiliation was inaccurate, falsified, or misleading; and (ii) prior to the beginning of the competition season if the ECNL determines that the affiliation is not in the best interests of the league and its competition structure and standards.

The ECNL Club Structure Policy is in addition to this policy. For clubs that have dispersed operations, the ECNL may review one or both policies in determining compliance with rules and regulations.

**If an ECNL registered player appears on a league roster for a team outside of the ECNL Member Club (including without limitation a team in an affiliate club), the player must be listed as a discovery player within the ECNL and ECNL RL. However, if the player is rostered to another team within the primary ECNL Club (not an affiliate), then the player is a full-time registered player.*