



SSA Rec Parent Handbook

This handbook is meant to provide our parents, both returning and new, with a handy resource to help them best prepare for their child's participation in a soccer program at the club.

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Southern Soccer Academy Swarm FC - The Club

Southern Soccer Academy Swarm FC is a 501-(c)(3) not-for-profit community soccer organization dedicated to providing training and league play for 3-19 years-old boys and girls of all ability levels and backgrounds. The club, in its various forms, has been in existence since 1982 and has locations within the metro Atlanta area in Paulding, Cobb, Bartow, and Coweta counties, and in Glynn County, and on Jekyll Island.

The club in its current form came about as the 2012 merger of a number of pre-existing soccer clubs in the southwest, west, and northwest areas of metro Atlanta. The club's membership now exceeds 7,000 players on 500+ teams, making it one of the largest soccer clubs in the Southeastern US.

The club combines two types of youth program:

1. A local, low-cost, parent and volunteer-coached program that emphasizes participation in a team sport with a focus on a healthy lifestyle, supported by a no-try-out/no-cut policy
2. An elite-level, professional-staff-coached program dedicated to providing our players with the opportunity to participate in the highest levels of competitive youth soccer in the state of Georgia and beyond.

SSA Programs

Recreational

Ages U4 - U19

The SSA Recreational Program is for players new to the game and for parents of experienced players looking for a fun, purposeful, and low-cost program in the fall and/or spring. The club has a no try-out/no cut policy and players of all ability levels are encouraged to participate.

Registration for the Spring season starts in mid-November and ends late January. Registration for the Fall season starts mid-May and ends late July. Teams are coached by volunteer/parent coaches, and in the U5 and older age groups, play a season of games against other Recreational teams per the 'Games and Practices' information below.

Pre-Academy

Ages U5-U7

SSA Pre Academy is a program for soccer players that offers an alternate developmental pathway to our traditional Recreational program. It aims to accelerate the technical and tactical development of players looking to participate in the U8-U12 academy program and the U13 and older Select program. SSA Pre Academy is a seasonal program designed for the passionate, motivated, and advanced U5-U7 player who fosters the desire to be challenged in every aspect of their game by training in a professional environment overseen by SSA staff coaches and alongside like-minded players. Players are assigned to rosters on a weekly basis and play either in-program scrimmages at the weekend, or against other Pre-Academy teams from other metro-Atlanta area SSA locations.

Academy

Ages U8 - U12

The SSA Academy Program is for players looking for a high-quality training and playing environment under the supervision of experienced and qualified staff where an enthusiasm for, and a commitment to, the game is nurtured and rewarded. Players typically go through a 'tryout' assessment in late May for the entire year or in Dec or Jan for just the Spring season, though players may join at other times of the year if space is available. The program is generally regarded as the starting point for players interested in moving into our Select/Regional/MLS-Next teams and playing HS and College soccer in the future.

Select

Ages U13-U19

The program is coached by experienced and qualified coaches and players are assigned to teams through a series of tryouts in late May/early June to play in state and regional leagues.

SSA Locations/Venues

As a not-for-profit community sports organization, SSA has access to various county and city owned-and-managed soccer parks that are typically leased based on a per-player usage fee payable by SSA to the governmental entity. Additionally, we have our own complex, Marathon Park, located in Austell, GA. From time-to-time, we may also partner with churches, school boards, private schools, and indoor soccer venues to access additional field space when needed.

Our seasonal usage of these venues is subject to city or county rules and regulations, while day-to-day access is subject to limitation based on the city or county's judgment of the playability of the fields after heavy rainfall etc. In most instances, the decision as to whether a particular venue will be open or not will be made by 4pm on weekdays or by 7am on Saturdays and 9am on Sundays. As soon as the club receives word from our city and county contacts on our access to the fields on any particular day, this information will be made available on our website field status page found [HERE](#).

Games and Practices

Recreational games are scheduled in one of three ways:

1. 'In-House' - SSA teams from one location play other SSA teams from the same location.
2. 'Intra-League' - SSA teams from one location play 'In-House' as described above as well as against teams from other nearby SSA locations.
3. 'Inter-League', where SSA teams play Recreational teams from other metro-Atlanta clubs.

In the youngest age groups (U5 - U8) these games are almost exclusively 'in-house'. As teams move into the U10, U12, and U14 age groups though, 'intra-league' games are more likely to be introduced into the schedule. By U16 - U19, games are generally 'inter-league' requiring greater travel around the metro Atlanta area.

SSA produces a separate 'Game Day Handbook', available on the website, covering the rules and set-up for games themselves.

Weekday practices are scheduled for all age groups except the U4 age group. Teams are typically scheduled for one practice per week in the younger age groups, while two practices per week are more common in the older age groups. Schedules do vary by location and age group though, so please refer to the location website for specific details.

Parental Involvement

Players respond best to a recreational environment where coaches, referees, and parents share the same goals and expectations. As such, your role as a parent in supporting and encouraging your child, both on and off the field, will play a big part in ensuring that your child is having fun and has the opportunity to reach his/her full potential. The following are things to consider when attempting to provide a positive soccer environment for your child to develop:

A) Whose needs and expectations are met? Children play sports to have fun, be with their friends and learn new skills. However, on occasions, this experience can be negatively affected by parents who live vicariously through their children and become too involved, sharing in the credit when the child has done well in sport or has been victorious. Other parents can take the game too seriously and become nervous before his/her child's game, or have a difficult time bouncing back when their child's team suffers a defeat.

B) Role modeling - Parents need to keep in mind their responsibility to model good behavior to their child. Staying positive on the sideline, no coaching from the sidelines, and treating everyone with respect, are just a few examples of positive role modeling. SSA has created the 'Respect' program to help parents, coaches, and referees focus on this. For more information, please visit our website.

C) Be your child's best fan - Support your child unconditionally. Do not withdraw love when your child performs poorly or his/her team loses. If your child's team loses but played his/her best, help them to see this as a "win."

D) Support all players on the team - Your child's teammates are not the enemy. When they are playing better than your child, he/she has a wonderful opportunity to learn.

E) Help your child keep priorities straight - A youngster needs help balancing schoolwork, friendships, and other commitments besides soccer, but having made a commitment to soccer, he/she also needs help to make sure he/she is fulfilling her obligation to the team.

F) Have Fun - enjoy watching practices and games. In developing your child in the game of soccer the best parents can do is to help instill a love for the game. No athlete ever made it at the highest level without a real and undying love for the game.

SSA Respect Program

Southern Soccer Academy encourages all parents, referees, and coaches to recognize the shared responsibility that they have when it comes to providing a safe, welcoming, and nurturing environment for all our players as our players learn the game of soccer. When the relationship between these parties is mutually respectful, the game of soccer can not only be a wonderful opportunity for youngsters to enjoy a physical activity, but also provide them with valuable life-lessons along the way.

There are times unfortunately when the behavior of those entrusted with building a positive environment for our players is less than desirable, leading to the creation of an antagonistic environment that is to the detriment of our young players. If referees, coaches, and parents are able to recognize these kinds of negative behaviors and focus on instead acting in a respectful manner to each other, everyone will benefit.

Parents and coaches also have a responsibility to recognize and address the kinds of sideline behaviors that create an antagonistic relationship with referees. As a consequence of these kinds of antisocial behaviors, clubs across the state are having to replace older, experienced referees (who are dropping out of youth soccer) with younger, inexperienced referees, leading to the potential for a short-term decline in the quality of the refereeing at the average soccer game until these young referees gain more experience. In worst cases, clubs are struggling to ensure that every game has a full complement of referees, leaving some games with no qualified and experienced officials at all, obliging coaches or parents to step in and 'volunteer' referee as a consequence.

If coaches and parents can appreciate the long-term benefits of working in a respectful manner with younger referees in particular, rather than becoming distracted in the short term by 'blown calls' or a referee's lack of experience, the referee pool itself should become deeper and more qualified/experienced leading to a better experience for everyone in the future.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is the registration process?

Southern Soccer Academy uses the Playmetrics platform for all registration and payment processes. Once an account is created, a parent/guardian will be able to manage all aspects, including registering for individual programs and making payment(s) to secure a place on the program itself.

SSA will accept registrations through the registration deadline as listed above, or until a program is full (whichever comes first). Once a player is registered AND PAID, our administrative staff will begin the process of assigning the player to a program team working to the schedule above. In situations where a registration has been completed but space is not available, a full refund will be issued.

What is a waitlist?

For some of our programs, the number of player registrations we receive exceeds the roster space available. In these instances, we create waitlists to allow a provisional player registration that can be activated in the event that additional teams are created, or registrations completed earlier in the registration window are canceled. Registrations to waitlists are not charged.

What happens once registration closes?

1. Our administrators work to assign over 4,000 players to almost 350 teams across all our locations, looking to ensure that players are evenly spread across all the teams to provide a reasonable depth of squad for practice and games. As they go through that process, they will be taking late-registered players from the wait list and adding them into teams where space exists.

2. At the same time, our administrators will match coaches to teams, using information shared with them by the Rec Director.

3. Schedule regular-season games, looking to have the schedules released to SSA membership approximately 10 days before the first weekend of the season for the majority of the age groups.

If you have any questions about the process, please feel free to check the website for latest updates, or contact your location Rec Director or administrator.

How and when do I order a uniform?

Uniforms are ordered through our online vendor and delivered directly to your home. We recommend placing your uniform order as soon as possible to ensure receipt prior to the first weekend of the season. Details on the process can be found on the SSA website.

When will I hear from my child's coach?

Rosters are shared with coaches 1 week before practices are scheduled to start. Coaches will then start to reach out to their players for a general introduction, along with details on practice times and fields.

What is the program refund policy?

Once a player is registered and placed on a team, no refund of fees will be issued. Refunds for registrations canceled prior to the rostering process are at the club's discretion.

Are rained out games and practices made up?

Practice and game schedules are subject to effects of the weather and other factors outside of the control of the club and cannot be guaranteed.

In the event of rain-outs, the club will look to ensure that a minimum of 7 game dates are played across the season. Make-up practices are subject to field and coach availability.

SSA General Code of Conduct

In general, children's sports are supposed to be fun - for the children. To that end, the following Standards of Conduct are set forth by Southern Soccer Academy to govern the behaviors of players, coaches, volunteer staff, and spectators before, during, and after SSA-sponsored soccer activities:

1. All members of the club are subject to the Operating Policies and the Bylaws of the club. Failure to comply with a club, team, or specific activity rules is cause for discipline and/or dismissal from Southern Soccer Academy, and removal from game facilities.
2. No player or coach will be excluded from participation, or discriminated against in the club due to race, creed, religion, sex, or national origin.
3. All members will respect one another and the integrity of the game.
4. The coach shall assume responsibility for all actions of players, spectators, and parents during game play.
5. All coaches (volunteer and paid) and team managers will familiarize themselves with all club documentation regarding player safety in general and prevention of abuse in particular, including, but not limited to, the KidSafe program.
6. A consistently positive attitude shall be conveyed towards players, coaches, officials, and spectators.
7. The club shall expect genuine cooperation between coaches within their own age group and all the others.
8. No ill-tempered behavior shall be displayed.
9. No remarks shall be addressed to opposing players, coaches, spectators, or to referees, except when comments convey genuine friendship and respect, or direct response to questions by the game official.
10. Use of profane language is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.
11. There will be "zero tolerance" for assault upon, hazing, disorderly conduct toward, harassment of, intimidation of, or discrimination against any player, coach, referee, parent or spectator.
12. Smoking, vaping, or alcohol consumption is not permitted during soccer activities.
13. Destruction of property or violation of State and Federal laws is cause for dismissal from Southern Soccer Academy.
14. The use of noise-making or amplifying devices is prohibited.
15. Parents should sit on the opposite side of the field from the coaches when possible. No-one apart from authorized individuals such as players, coaches, and official team managers are allowed to sit on the team bench.

Please note that a violation(s) of the above code of conduct by a current member of the club (coach, player, parent, or any combination of these) may result in a disciplinary process through which membership status within the club may be altered or revoked entirely.

SSA Safe Soccer Program

SSA's 'Safe Soccer' Program is a program derived from US Soccer's Safe Soccer Program that is designed to help foster a safe environment for every child who participates in any SSA-sponsored activity. It is a program designed to inform all volunteers, parents, coaches, referees and staff/employees about the risks associated with youth soccer programs, as well as define prohibited conduct, outline background screening policies, provide education and training, offer reporting procedures, define limits on one-on-one interactions, and detail enforcement and the associated review/grievance process.

For details about the program, please click [HERE](#).

Kicking-Is-Not-Soccer - GA Soccer's K.I.N.S. Philosophy

Southern Soccer Academy supports GA Soccer's Kicking Is Not Soccer (KINS) philosophy for Under-6 to Under-12 soccer players. For most, the Recreational Program at these ages is essentially the players' first experience with the game of soccer, so it is important for the players to be given the opportunity to develop in a fun and purposeful environment.

Main Objectives:

To promote and emphasize the skill of dribbling at the U6 through U12 age groups, and discourage aimless kicking of the ball. When young players are conditioned to just kick the ball forward as far as possible, their skill development is stunted, making it harder for them to reach their true potential. Dribbling is the foundation and preparation for all the other fundamental skills of soccer, such as controlling, passing, and shooting. Laying the proper dribbling foundation at the youngest years will enhance the player's ability to improve all soccer skills. No matter what level the players will end up playing, recreational or select, they will derive increased pleasure from the game if they can control the ball better and become more adept at manipulating it.

To promote decision making by the players on the field and reduce their dependence on adults for problem solving. Soccer is a player's game, meaning that it's the player who must make the decisions on the field. Every time your child goes to the ball, his/her first touch on the ball should be a soft one, providing the opportunity to create time to make the best decision as to dribble, pass or shoot. There is a strong correlation between the ability to dribble and the ability to pass. This is because both of these skills require the ability to shift body weight quickly from one foot to the other and balance on one foot while propelling the ball with the other. Once a player becomes a good dribbler, he/she automatically starts to look up and survey the field in between touches, increasing the chance of a pass.

SSA Soccer Talk

The following are soccer terms that you may hear on and/or around the soccer fields!

ADVANTAGE – A decision by the referee to disregard a foul by the offending team if a stoppage in play would benefit the team that committed the violation. This allows the team on offense to maintain its playing advantage.

BEAT – To get the ball around an opponent by dribbling or shooting.

BICYCLE KICK – A player extends both legs up in the air over his or her head and, using a bicycling-type motion, kicks the ball backward before falling to the ground.

BREAKAWAY – When an attacker with the ball makes it past the last defender and is on his way toward the goal for a one-on-one with the goalkeeper.

CHARGING – A method of unbalancing the player who has possession or is attempting to gain possession of the ball. The maneuver can be made by the elbow, up to and including the shoulder, against the opponent's shoulder to gain an advantage; permissible only when the ball is playable (i.e. within three feet).

CHIP – A short, lofted pass or shot.

CLEARING – Happens when a team kicks the ball out of its defensive zone, ending an offensive threat by the opposing team.

CORNER KICK – Awarded to the attacking team if the defense knocks the ball out of bounds over their own end line. The kick is taken from the corner arc nearest where the ball went out of bounds. Opponents must be at least ten yards away from the ball when the kick is taken (modified for small-sided games). A goal can be scored directly from a corner kick.

CROSS – A pass in which the ball is kicked from one side of the field to the other side.

DANGEROUS PLAY – Play that is likely to cause injury. Examples are high kicking, playing while lying on the ground, or playing the ball while it is in possession of the goalkeeper.

DEFENDERS – Defenders (also called fullbacks) are responsible for winning their team possession of the ball and stopping the opponents from advancing the ball. They primarily function in the defensive third of the field.

DIRECT KICK – Awarded when a serious foul is committed against another player. This is a free kick in which a goal can be scored directly by the kicker. Opponents must be at least ten yards away from the ball (modified for small-sided games), but the player taking the kick may do so without waiting if he/she wishes. The ball is not in play until it has traveled its own circumference. The ball must be stationary when kicked and the kicker may not touch the ball a second time until it has been played by another player (of either team). Some fouls resulting in a direct kick are holding, striking, tripping, pushing, and hand balls.

DRIBBLE – The basic skill of advancing the ball using a continuous series of short touches with the feet.

DROP BALL – A ball held by the referee and allowed to fall directly to the ground between the two opponents. The ball is in play after it touches the ground. A drop ball restarts the game after play is stopped for no penalty situation (e.g. after an injury). The ball is dropped where it was

last in play or at the nearest point outside the penalty are. A goal may be scored directly from a drop ball.

DUMMY – Describes a fake move by a player who intentionally allows the ball to go past him or her in an attempt to put a defensive player out of position.

FORWARDS – The forwards (also called attackers or strikers) are the team's primary offense. Their role is to advance the ball and score goals and primarily function in the attacking third.

FREE KICK – Awarded by the referee due to an infraction of the rules. The kick is taken by the non offending team, generally, from the spot in which the infraction took place. The defending team must be a minimum of 10 yards away from the ball (modified for small-sided games). There are two kinds of free kicks (direct and indirect), determined by the severity of the infraction.

GOAL – A one point score occurring when the whole of the ball passes entirely over the goal line, between the vertical goal posts and under the horizontal crossbar.

GOAL AREA – A rectangular area extending from the goal line. Used to designate where goal kicks are taken.

GOAL KICK – Awarded to the defensive team when the attacking team knocks the ball out of bounds over the end line. The kick may be taken by a defensive player (often the goalkeeper) from any point within the half of the goal area nearest where the ball went out, and must clear the penalty area before being touched by another defensive player. Extremely rare and unlikely, but a goal can be scored directly from a goal kick while a player cannot be offside from his/her own team's goal kick.

GOALKEEPER – Player who functions primarily in the penalty area and whose major responsibility is to prevent the opponents' shots from entering the goal for a score. The goalkeeper is the only player allowed to touch or pick up the ball with his/her hands, and may only do so when the ball is in his/her penalty area. The keeper is the team's last line of defense.

HALF VOLLEY – Kicking the ball just as it is rebounding off the ground.

HAND BALL – A foul where a player (other than the keeper in the penalty area) deliberately touches the ball with his hand or arm. The opposing team is awarded a direct free kick.

HAT TRICK – Three goals scored in a game by a single player.

HEADER – Describes the action of a player hitting the ball with his or her forehead in an attempt to make a pass, block a shot, or put a shot on goal.

HIGH KICK – A violation on a player who swings his or her foot close to and above the waist of an opposing player. This foul generally results in a direct kick.

HOLDING – When an opponent's movement is obstructed with either hands or arms, a direct free kick is awarded.

INDIRECT KICK – Awarded when an infraction of the rules has taken place or a less serious foul has been committed. On an indirect kick, a goal cannot be scored unless the ball touches at least one other player from either team. Some minor fouls or infractions resulting in an indirect kick are offside and dangerous play.

JUGGLING – Keeping the ball in the air with any part of the body (no hands or arms). Used for developing coordination and ball control.

KICK OFF – Officially begins the game at each half and restarts the game after a goal has been scored. The kick-off must travel toward the opponent's goal. The ball is in play when the ball is

kicked. The player kicking off must not play the ball again until another player of either team has played it. If the ball is kicked backward, then it never went into play and the kick is retaken. If the kicker touches the ball a second time without another player touching it, then the opposing team is awarded a free kick. Opponents must be at least 10 yards away (modified for small-sided games) from the ball in their own half of the field when the kick off is taken.

MARKING – Closely defending a player to prevent him from receiving the ball or advancing the ball by dribbling or passing.

MIDFIELDERS – Midfielders play behind the forwards and in front of the defense and their job is to assist both of these groups. Generally, they function in the center or neutral third of the field and tend to receive the ball from the defenders and advance it to the forwards to score goals.

NUTMEG – also called Megs, occurs when a player dribbles or passes the ball through the legs of an opponent.

OFFICIALS – also called Referees, protect the players and enforce the rules. The referee officiates the games and is on the field with the players. The referee keeps the official time. The assistant referees (ARs) each patrol one half of the field, from the opposing sidelines. Their job is to provide assistance to the referee only. They use a flag to signal to the referee and to the players when the ball is out of bounds, when a player is potentially offside, or they have seen a foul committed. The referee makes the final determination whether or not to blow the whistle.

4 OFFSIDE – Occurs when a player positions himself nearer to the opponent's goal line than both the ball and the second-to-last opponent **except when the ball is in play from a goal kick, a corner kick, or a throw, or if the player is in his/her defending half of the field**. No fewer than two defenders (usually the goalkeeper and one other defender) must be nearer to the goal line than the attacker. The person advancing with the ball must be the first to cross the line of defense. A player in an offside position is only penalized if, at the moment the ball is played by a teammate, he is, in the opinion of the referee, involved in active play, interfering with play or any opponent, or gaining an advantage by being in that position. When a player who is in an offside position receives the ball from a teammate or is involved directly in the play, an offside is called and an indirect free kick is awarded to the defense.

OUT OF BOUNDS – The ball is in play unless the entire ball passes beyond all of the sideline (touchline) or goal line (end line).

PASS BACK – A deliberate pass by a defensive player back to his or her own goalkeeper in the penalty area. The keeper may only pick up the ball if it was headed back. If passed from the feet, the keeper may not use his or her hands; otherwise a free kick is awarded to the opposition.

PENALTY AREA – A marked rectangular area extending 18 yards from the goal line (modified for small-sided games). Goalkeepers can only use their hands within their penalty area. Any foul on the defending team results in a direct kick inside this area. Any foul on the attacking team results in a penalty kick.

PENALTY KICK – A direct kick is awarded to the attacking team when a defender inside his own penalty area commits a major foul. The kick is taken from the penalty spot. Only the kicker and the goalkeeper are allowed in the penalty area. Goalkeepers are allowed to move laterally along the goal line while waiting for the kick to be taken. The player taking the kick must kick the ball

forward and may not touch the ball a second time until another player of either team has played it. A goal may be scored directly from a penalty kick.

PENALTY SPOT – A mark on the field from which penalty kicks are taken; also called the penalty mark. It is located 12 yards from the goal line (modified for small-sided games), equally spaced between the goal posts.

RECEIVING – When a player uses his body to slow down and control a moving ball. Most often this is done using the chest, thigh or foot.

RED CARD – When a player receives this, he is immediately ejected from the game. The team may not replace this player and will play down a man for the remainder of the game. Results from serious misconduct, violent play, offensive language, or intentionally denying a goal.

SLIDE TACKLE – An attempt by a defender to take the ball away from a dribbler by sliding on the ground feet first into the ball. The sliding player must first touch the ball before making contact with the other player - otherwise it is a foul.

SUBSTITUTES – Any player who does not start the game, but is eligible to come off the bench. Substitutes may only enter the field with the referee's permission during a stoppage of play, and when their team has possession of the ball on throw-ins and goal kicks.

TACKLE – A method of gaining possession of the ball from an opponent by use of the feet. Unnecessary roughness and use of the hands are not permitted.

THROW-IN – The only time a field player may use their hands. Used to bring the ball back in play after it has crossed out of bounds on the sidelines. Two hands must be used and the ball must be thrown from behind the player's head. Both feet must be on the ground and behind the sideline.

TOUCH – Describes a player's contact with the ball. A "one touch" is to receive and pass the ball in one kicking motion.

TRAPPING – The ability of a player to control the ball after it has been passed to him or her. The chest and foot trap are the most commonly used techniques.

TRIPPING – If a player uses any part of his body to trip an opposing player, a direct kick is awarded.

VOLLEY – A kick made while the ball is in the air, before it touches the ground. Can be for a clearance or to shoot on goal.

WALL – On a direct or indirect free kick, defensive players may line up side-by-side ten yards away from the ball (modified for small-sided games). This is done in an effort to block a direct line to the goal.

YELLOW CARD – Also called a caution or booking. Shown to a player by the referee for dangerous or unsportsmanlike behavior. If a player is shown two yellow cards in one game, it results in a red card and that player is ejected from the game.