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North Tacoma Soccer Club: Player Development Pathway

This document explains the journey of a player that participates in our programming from the earliest opportunity (NORTAC Sparks) until they graduate from high school.

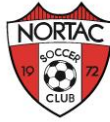
What is North Tacoma Soccer Club?

North Tacoma Soccer Club (which we abbreviate to NORTAC") is the entity for which all of our programs operate.

Historically, a rapidly changing youth soccer landscape in America has resulted in many clubs merging, and no longer providing a club name that represents their community. Despite these changes, **NORTAC has retained its community identity**, and is now one of the oldest clubs in WA having been in existence for over fifty years!

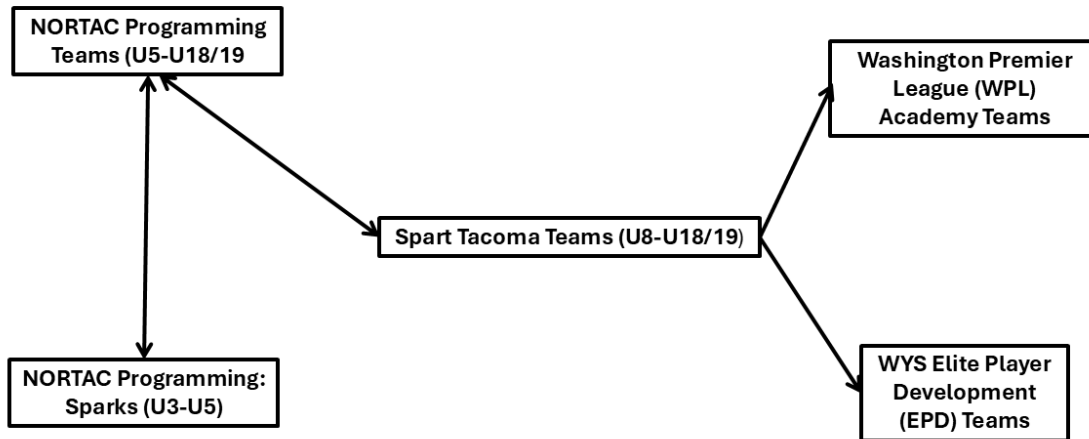
What is Sparta Tacoma?

Sparta Tacoma is the highest level of teams operating under NORTAC.



North Tacoma Soccer Club: Player Development Pathway

NORTAC Player Pathway

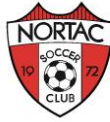


In the visual, what does the “U” mean?

The “U” stands for “under.” A U8 team for example will have players that are eight or under. Each age group in the club will have a corresponding birth year that gets updated each subsequent year. This year (2025) for example, the U8 age group consists of players born in 2017. When Sparta Tacoma teams are next formed in May, the U8 age group will consist of players born in 2018.

Description of Player Development Pathway

Players can start their journey with us as a three year old in the NORTAC Sparks program. After graduating from this program, players from the ages of four to eighteen (U4 to U19) have the opportunity to continue in NORTAC programming or potentially transition to a Sparta Tacoma team from U8 (currently birth year 2017). Players can also transition from Sparta Tacoma teams to NORTAC Programming teams (hence lines in the visual with arrows on both sides).



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North Tacoma Soccer Club: Player Development Pathway

While participating on a Sparta Tacoma team, players may be selected to participate in supplemental programming (see below) that further enhances their development by providing the highest levels of competition in the State. One of our most important objectives is to develop as many players for these supplemental programs as possible.

WPL Academy

WA State Elite Player Development

Club Principles

Program Standards

The highest standards are expected in all aspects of every NORTAC team. ***Alignment*** in understanding and execution of optimal behaviors to maximize the potential of each player and experiences of each family are facilitated through:

Coach Agreements

Parent Agreements

Player Agreements

Style of Play

All teams in NORTAC and Sparta Tacoma have an ***aligned style of play***. This is a team-orientated style with an emphasis on players demonstrating game intelligence, rather than a “kick and rush” style that is overly reliant on fewer players, at the expense of developing other players on the team!

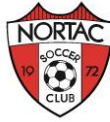


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North Tacoma Soccer Club: Player Development Pathway

Comparison of NORTAC Programming and Sparta Tacoma

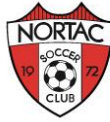
Variable	NORTAC Programming	Sparta Tacoma
Age Groups	U3-U18/U19	U8-U18/U19
Tryouts	No	Yes: U15+ Boys in February, all other age groups April/May.
Coaches	The majority of coaches are volunteers. Supplemental programming (e.g. winter and summer) may include compensated coaches.	Coaches are compensated. Head Coaches must have a minimum coaching diploma obtained through the <u>United State Soccer Federation</u> or <u>United Soccer Coaches</u> .
Opportunity	Depending on coach availability, any player will have the opportunity to participate. Players may request friends to participate with (<i>requests are not guaranteed</i>).	Player selections are primarily through tryouts. <i>Teams are selected based on a player's relative ability.</i> In general the older the age group, the more selective the selection process becomes.
Participation in Games	Minimum 50% of available game minutes if practice attendance is consistent.	Minimum 40% of available game minutes <i>if practice attendance is consistent and behaviors are optimal.</i> The percentage may be lower in a tournament knockout game or game of a similar significance.



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North Tacoma Soccer Club: Player Development Pathway

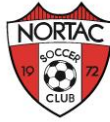
Variable	NORTAC Programming	Sparta Tacoma
Cost	2025-2026 rates (per fall/spring season): Sparks \$165 All other age groups: \$185 Pricing for other supplemental programs will vary.	2026-2027 rates (excluding uniforms): U8-U10: \$1330 U11+ \$1700 Prices are pro-rated for families that do not join the program at the start of the year.
Uniform Required	Yes - red NORTAC jersey. Black shorts and socks purchased by families.	Yes - uniform cycle is every two years.
Leagues	Sparks: no games. U5-U8: In-house (local and designed by NORTAC). U9+: In-house if possible; outside league if necessary: <u>PCSA</u> (fall only) <u>SSUL</u>	<u>Washington Premier League (WPL)</u> <u>Elite Academy (Boys U11+)</u>



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North Tacoma Soccer Club: Player Development Pathway

Variable	NORTAC Programming	Sparta Tacoma
Player Movement Between Teams	In an NORTAC in-house league, there are no age group restrictions. Most players will play within their own birth year. <i>If participating in the PSCA or SSUL leagues , players are not permitted to play on a team that is a younger birth year to their own.</i>	Players are not permitted to play on a birth year below. With the exception of WPL teams participating in the “Super League” and the season ending (State Cup) tournament, player movement can happen during the year between tiered rosters.
Game Day Formats	Sparks: N/A U6: 2v2/3v3 U7: 3v3 U8: 4v4 U9+U10: 7v7 U11+U12: 9v9 U13+: 11v11	U8: 5v5 or 7v7 (TBD) U9-U10: 7v7 U11+U12: 9v9 U13+: 11v11
Schedule Summary	8-10 week fall and spring seasons. Supplemental winter and summer programming.	U8-U14 boys and girls tryouts in April or May U15+ boys tryouts in February High school aged teams may participate in a winter league. 2/3 x Summer Tournaments (typically local; one may involve more travel). Fall and spring league seasons (no summer league season). Our highest level teams may participate in regional programming.



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North Tacoma Soccer Club: Player Development Pathway

Variable	NORTAC	Sparta Tacoma
Practice Schedule Summary (per week)	Sparks: 2 x 45 minutes U6-U8: 2 x 60 minutes U9-U10: 2 x 75 minutes U11+: 2x 90 minutes	U8-U10: 2-3 x 75-90 minutes U11+: 3x90 minutes
Game Schedule	Typically one game each Saturday.	Typically one game per weekend. Occasional double header weekends Games may be Saturdays or Sundays. All U8 - U10 WPL games are held at a centralized location (<u>Starfire Sports</u> is one of the primary locations).
Practice Times	Between 5 and 8. Typically younger teams practice earlier. Typically younger teams will practice earlier.	Between 5 and 9. Typically younger teams practice earlier.
Typical Practice Venues	Fall: Vassault, Heidelberg, SERA Winter: Annie Wright Schools and St Pats. Spring: Heidelberg Complex, Jefferson Park, Vassault Park.	Silas, Hunt, Hilltop Heritage, Mason, Truman.
Financial Aid	No	Yes. Click here for more information.
Payment Plans	No	Yes, monthly payment plans are available.



North Tacoma Soccer Club: Player Development Pathway

FAQ's

What is the Washington Premier League?

It is a league operated by US Club Soccer, a national organization that operates leagues in most of the States. All Sparta Tacoma teams participate in this league. Different levels are offered for each age group. The highest level of play within the WPL is called the "Super League." Super league winners have the opportunity to compete on a Regional and National level. US Club soccer also runs Regional and National player identification events.

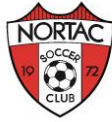
On the boys side, our top (Red) teams from U11+ participate in the Elite Academy league. See [here](#) for the league website and [here](#) for our FAQ's.

Why does NORTAC prioritize in-house programming for NORTAC teams?

- All games can be local.
- We can manage the structure of the league to best suit the development of our players (e.g. players can play in a lower age group).
- We have more influence over the style of play, and what and how the players are taught.
- Easier management of coaching and parent behavior, leading to a safer and more positive learning environment.
- More opportunities for our senior players to become a referee and give back to their community.
- More efficient way for us to identify players that can play at a higher (Sparta Tacoma) level.

Can a player play for both their school and NORTAC or Sparta Tacoma?

Yes. Typically if a player plays on their High school team, there will be no club practices or games during that time period.



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North Tacoma Soccer Club: Player Development Pathway

U15 club teams will contain both 8th and 9th grade players. If there are enough 8th grade players within an age group, the club has the option of entering an 8th grade club league at the same time as the High School season in the WPL "Trapped" League.

What is the club's stance on players participating in more than one sport when participating in NORTAC or Sparta Tacoma programming?

Below are principles that need to be considered:

- Participating in more than one sport **will not prevent** a player being selected for a Sparta Tacoma team.
- Depending on intensity, participation in any sport will result in a certain amount of fatigue. Accumulation of fatigue can result in increased injury risk and a lower level of performance, especially within players going through a growth spurt, if recovery between activities is not sufficient.
- Football is a very demanding sport physically, relative to other sports, so players being "overscheduled" can easily lead to decreased "freshness" especially as the year progresses.
- In general, higher levels of attendance will lead to higher levels of improvement and performance for both the individual and their team.
- Families should not register their child for a NORTAC programming team if they cannot commit to at least half of the team events offered.
- Families should not register their child for a Sparta Tacoma team if they cannot commit to *most* of the team events offered.



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North Tacoma Soccer Club: Player Development Pathway

What is the club's stance on playing on a team in a higher age group?

It is permitted, but ***extremely rare***, especially for Sparta Tacoma teams. A prerequisite is that the player has to be ranked the number one player in terms of relative competence of players in the age group above. Ultimately, it has to be the best decision developmentally for the player. Final decisions on "play-ups" are made by the Director of Coaching in collaboration with age group leaders or NORTAC Programming Coaches.

To what extent is there player movement in Sparta Tacoma age groups with multiple teams?

Movement between teams is permitted and will always be based on the relative competency levels of the players. Within an age group, movement from a lower tier team to a higher tier team is more likely (tier 1 rosters are typically smaller to accommodate these changes).

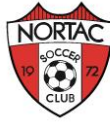
If a Sparta Tacoma age group has multiple teams following tryouts, players **will not** be immediately assigned to a specific team, but will be offered a place in the "age group." Preliminary rosters will be announced at the latest possible point before the beginning of the fall season, to accommodate changes in competency levels over the summer season.

Players playing on a team within the highest division of the WPL (Super League) are not permitted to guest play for a team in a lower division while they are on the Super League team roster. This does not mean they are guaranteed to stay on the Super League roster.

More information on the management of multiple teams within a Sparta Tacoma age group can be found [here](#).

Are tryouts the only time to join a Sparta Tacoma team?

No. All NORTAC coaches are expected to facilitate talent identification by providing communication to the Director of Coaching on players that have excelled in NORTAC programming. These players may be invited to practice with a Sparta Tacoma team between tryout sessions.



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North Tacoma Soccer Club: Player Development Pathway

Open training sessions are also sometimes held between tryouts for all age groups. For families that might be interested, there is no cost to participate in these sessions.

They are a great way to get to know the coaches and players, and get a better understanding of how Sparta Tacoma programming works.

Fees will be prorated for families that join Sparta programming between tryouts.

Once my child is in the Sparta program, do they have to try out again every year?

Yes.

What are success criteria for Sparta Tacoma programming?

In addition to our universal club goal of our players becoming better people through soccer and maintaining their lifelong love of the game, our biggest aims are to:

- develop as many players and coaches as possible from our NORTAC programming that transition to a Sparta Tacoma team.
- develop as many players as possible to get selected for higher level of soccer (State Teams, Sounders FC Academy, College and Professional) during and after their time with us.

Who should I contact if I have additional questions regarding NORTAC or Sparta Tacoma?

Dave O'Neill (NORTAC Director of Coaching):

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Cell: (253) 304-2464