

INDIANA FIRE JUNIORS

Player and Parent Guide 2021-2022

U13-U19 Travel Teams

Club Mission and Philosophy

Curriculum and Player Development

Player and Team Selection

Rosters

Tryout Dates

College Recruitment

Playing Time

Roster Changes and Player Movement

Seasonal Training Schedule

Games and Competition

Balance of School and Sports

Player Evaluations

Questions for the Coaching Staff

Parent Support for Games and Training

Team Managers and Treasurers

Hotels and Travel

Feedback

Competitive Platforms and Player Pathways

Core Values:

Family – Gratitude – Discipline – Integrity – Competitiveness – Excellence – Passion

Club Mission

The Indiana Fire Juniors mission is to create a positive culture for players, staff, and families to come together and formulate common goals through the world's most popular game. Our club believes in core values that encourage growth in areas of leadership, emotional control, social skills, and overall professional character.

Indiana Fire Juniors offers a variety of programming from entry level learning experiences to competitive travel, as well as the highest youth platforms in the country. Individuals are awarded the opportunity to play for passion, physical fitness, social engagement, team camaraderie, competition, desire to make youth national teams, and compete for college/professional contracts.

Club Philosophy

Indiana Fire Juniors is built on the belief that the most successful soccer clubs in the world have a clear philosophy of play, which aligns with the vision of the club and is representative of the surrounding community. This philosophy of play is part of the DNA of the club and every technical decision is built around this philosophy.

Curriculum and Player Development

Each unique player at IFJ needs the proper setting to learn, create, play, and enjoy the game. IFJ desires a culture of constant improvement, high demands, competing at all times, self-confidence, confidence in teammates, assertive communication, and positive influences.

Our coaching staff implements training sessions according to a curriculum established by the Technical Director and Technical Staff. All members of the coaching staff are provided with daily sessions and each coach has the freedom to develop and apply specific sessions directly related to the topic or theme.

The fall and spring curriculum is designed using tactical periodization in larger spaces to learn team functions through phases of play. The winter training period will have a stronger focus on individual and small group principles as the space is smaller and no longer replicates large number activity.

- *11v11 Systems of Play*
- *Back Half and Front Half Attacking*
 - *Building out of the Back*
 - *Actions to Goal*
- *Transition: Attack to Defend*
 - *Counter-Pressing*
- *Front Half and Back Half Defending*
 - *Pressing*
 - *Protect the Goal*
- *Transition: Defend to Attack*
 - *Counter-Attack*
 - *Maintain Possession in Opponent's Half*

Our Core Values are Family, Gratitude, Discipline, Integrity, Competitiveness, Excellence, and Passion. We attempt to see that players acquire the appropriate skills, understanding, and support for each of these principles and their opportunities for growth on and off the field.

Core Values:

Family – Gratitude – Discipline – Integrity – Competitiveness – Excellence – Passion

Player and Team Selection

Our goal is to create appropriate teams for all players who desire to play with IFJ. Our coaches have observed all of the IFJ players throughout the year and have a good understanding of where kids need to be positioned if there were no new players entering the picture. At various periods during the year, IFJ coaches submit depth charts to the Technical Director, which lay out where players currently stand within their team, and contain suggestions about player movement.

During the tryout process, we attempt to group kids by ability fairly early and make changes based on performance throughout the session. We will make observations and assessments of new players (many have been observed during the year), use our understanding of IFJ players, determine how all of the players compare, match-up, play together, and then generate the best teams possible.

U13-U19 players are selected to teams (MLS/ECNL, Red, White, Navy) according to ability and using the following components as the basis for evaluation.

- ✓ *Passion and Ambition – willing to make sacrifices on and off the field to win*
- ✓ *Technical Proficiency – able to do their job with excellence within our style of play*
- ✓ *Tactical Intelligence – executes their role tactically and understands game situations*
- ✓ *Character – always fights for the win, focused, high energy, bullet-proof mentality*
- ✓ *Physical Qualities – high level athletes in relation to speed, aerobic capacity and power*

The desired roster size for a team in each age group is listed below. While we try to make the rosters meet the ideal quantity, the number of participants or skill sets of players may create a situation where we do not have the perfect number.

- U13-U14 teams play 11v11 with 16-17 players per team preferred
- U15-U17 teams play 11v11 with 17-18 players per team preferred
- U18-U19 teams play 11v11 with 18-20 players per team preferred

Tryout Dates

The dates for tryouts are typically posted in early April following Indiana Soccer Association's release of allowable tryout dates. All of our tryout information will be posted on the IFJ website, <http://www.indianafirejuniors.com/tryouts>, as soon as it is available.

College Recruitment

Selecting and being selected for college can be an overwhelming task for juniors and seniors in high school. We want to help ease some of the anxiety by providing a recruiting seminar, and information for any player who is looking to play at the next level. Our directors and coaches have built many relationships with college coaches over the years and have a clear understanding of the rules and guidelines that need to be followed during this process. We will provide the necessary support for choosing either Division 1, 2, 3 or NAIA level schools.

Core Values:

Family – Gratitude – Discipline – Integrity – Competitiveness – Excellence – Passion

Playing Time

Each player selected has proven he or she is a quality player and able to make a contribution to their team, but the job has only started with being named to the team. Healthy competition among teammates will be elevated by the number of quality players vying for opportunities on the field.

Each player is evaluated according to his or her contributions as a team member through the demonstration of components: passion and ambition, technical proficiency, tactical intelligence, character, physical qualities. Players are also measured by the consistent exhibition of improvement in these areas in training and games and their ability to utilize new skills learned during training.

Playing time is earned; it is neither given nor guaranteed and no player is entitled to it.

Roster Changes and Player Movement

The club's intent is to continually challenge those advancing inside their current teams by ensuring they compete within the appropriate playing group. For some players this means training or playing with an older age group, a team at a higher level, or with the Indiana Fire MLS/ECNL. The club must also ensure those who are not keeping up with their current team/peer group get paired with players of similar skillsets. These changes could take place at any period during the year.

- Throughout the year players may train or play "up" in addition to playing with their current team.
- Players who struggle in a particular environment may be given opportunities to play in a more appropriate setting to gain confidence or develop a certain skillset. This could take place at anytime during the year and the players would remain with their current team.
- The coaching staff will make determinations about players who may need a more urgent roster change and communicate with families as needed.
- In many cases players excel in these opportunities whether playing up or playing down. In seldom cases, players may have social difficulties sharing groups, therefore communication is important between parents and staff to learn more about the child's experience.

Each scenario provides appropriate developmental opportunities for the players and the teams involved. The IFJ Coaching Staff and the Director will make all decisions about player movement and we will communicate any changes and meet with each family involved.

Core Values:

Family – Gratitude – Discipline – Integrity – Competitiveness – Excellence – Passion

Seasonal Training Schedule

All training takes place at Grand Park on the grass and turf fields. In the winter months our teams practice inside the Grand Park Events Center. The season is approximately ten months in length for the U13-U14 teams and approximately 7 months in length for the U15-U19 teams.

Fall: Beginning of August thru end of October or early November, three to four practices per week pending the program, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, 75-90 minute sessions. U15-U19 team training will begin once high school soccer season ends.

Winter: December (2-3 weeks), January thru March (10 weeks), two practices per week, days can vary, 60-75 minute sessions

Spring: March/April to the first week of June, three to four practices per week pending the program, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, 75-90 minute sessions

Teams generally practice individually with a specific team coach, but teams may also be paired together to offer duel coaching and game-related activity.

Players should arrive 10-15 minutes prior to training to allow optimal mental and physical preparation. Players should be dressed in IFJ training gear, shin guards and proper footwear.

Games and Competition

U13-U14 Teams

- 16-20 league games
- 2-4 Friendly matches
- 2-3 Tournaments/Events with the potential for 1-2 out of state. 3-4 games in each tournament.

U15-U19 Teams

- 8-10 league games
- 2-4 Friendly matches

2-3 Tournaments/Showcases with the potential for one or two to take place out of the state, 3-4 games in each tournament

Core Values:

Family – Gratitude – Discipline – Integrity – Competitiveness – Excellence – Passion

Balance of School and Sports

Academic activities or responsibilities should be a priority and we expect that kids will be exploring the athletic and social benefits of multiple sports and activities at all age groups. Some families and players are able to balance multiple activities, while some kids choose to focus on soccer at this age. IFJ supports multi-sport participation but we anticipate that IFJ players will make soccer a primary focus during the season.

Absences

Religious holidays/observances, family weddings, reunions, emergencies – Players should spend time with family on these occasions and are excused from practice and/or games on these days. When possible, please inform the coach at least 1 week in advance of the holiday or observance.

Player Action Plans

Each player receives an Action Plan (evaluation) near the middle of the fall season (U13/U14), after the fall season (U15-U19) and in the middle of the spring season (U13-U19). The Action Plans are specific to each age group and connected to the curriculum, instruction and expectations, within both training sessions and match play.

Questions for Coaching Staff

Each coach is here to help - - Do not feel as if you are bothering the coach by asking a question. Please notify the coach at any time if you have a concern about your child or feel that the coach needs to be aware of issues the player may not want to discuss (health or personal issues, family, school, etc.).

If a player has questions or anxieties regarding playing time, positions, or areas of improvement, please encourage your child to speak with the coach. It may help to send a text or email in advance of the player's communication and the coach can help get the conversation started. This is a good opportunity for your child and we are here to support this process.

If a meeting needs to be established with the parents, please let us know. We prefer for the player to be included in all soccer related discussions if possible. Each coach can create an improvement plan and provide suggested activities for completion at home.

There are understandably times when parents can become frustrated or protective in regard to a child. Unless the safety of a player is involved, please adhere to the following sequence for concerns with playing time, positions, and game related issues:

- 1) Wait 24 hours following all games and events.
- 2) Initiate communication with the head coach.
- 3) If the issue is not addressed appropriately, please contact the Director of Coaching.
- 4) If a concern remains, please contact the Technical Director.

We rarely see issues arise to this magnitude and they most often relate to miscommunication or a simple misunderstanding. When these scenarios develop we know how important it is for everyone to take a breath and approach the matter with the proper perspective and demeanor.

Core Values:

Family – Gratitude – Discipline – Integrity – Competitiveness – Excellence – Passion

Parent Support for Games and Training

If a player has a conflict (performing arts concert, academic field trip, school function, family vacation, etc.) with any scheduled practice or game, please notify the coach and update TeamSnap. The consistent use of TeamSnap is tremendously helpful for our staff. Please use the availability function and make updates as needed.

Parents are welcome to observe training but need to be respectful of the instruction that is taking place, remain on the sidewalk during all practice sessions, and avoid communication with the players on the team. The Indiana Fire Juniors training kit is worn for all practices.

Please help your child, the other members on the team, and the coaching staff by arriving on time or early for training and games. Practices will begin at the time listed on the schedule. Unless otherwise notified, players should be ready to warm up 30 minutes prior to each game - - at the appropriate field, ready to play. Please allow extra time for unfamiliar game locations and tournament parking.

Players should always be prepared with home and away jerseys, shorts and socks. Needed equipment for every game: home and away jerseys, home and away shorts, home and away socks, shin-guards, proper shoes, and plenty of water.

Most parents are great fans and supportive on the sideline. We appreciate the excitement and enthusiasm that takes place during games and we want the families and players to enjoy the experience. We also want to support good sportsmanship and avoid inconsistent or conflicting communication from two sidelines.

- ✓ Keep comments positive.
- ✓ Refrain from “coaching” from the sidelines during games (pass it, run, dribble, mark up, kick it, move here/there, get the ball, turn, etc.)
- ✓ Avoid information and/or instruction directed at your child or other players during games.
- ✓ Refrain from all comments to any referee.

An important part of development requires players to make decisions for themselves on the field with limited instruction from the sideline. It is incredibly beneficial for parents to follow these guidelines to create the best environment for all players involved in the game - - We appreciate your support!

Core Values:

Family – Gratitude – Discipline – Integrity – Competitiveness – Excellence – Passion

Club Administration, Team Managers, and Team Treasurers

The club administrators, team managers and team treasurers are essential volunteers and a significant help to all of us - - we would not survive without their support. Each team has a manager and treasurer to assist with various needs of the team and club (tournament and play registration, team/referee fees, etc.). The manager is often the messenger for various needs of the club or coaching staff. Please be aware of this before sending an email/text or making a call to the manager.

It is helpful to avoid asking the club administration or team manager any question beginning with “Why, What, Where, How, When, Will, Does the coach _____?” Please understand that the Technical and Coaching Staff make decisions related to rosters, schedules, playing, coaching, and training. If there is a question or situation that the coach needs to address, please contact the coach directly.

Hotels

Tournaments offer wonderful opportunities for great times of fun on and off the field, but there are some activities players are to avoid when in the hotel: running in the hallways, kicking, bouncing, heading, or dribbling a soccer ball, loud and obnoxious behavior, wearing cleats, jumping on and off beds, and swimming between or before games. Players are asked to exhibit their best behavior when staying in hotels in order to be exceedingly respectful of the other guests.

We encourage teams and families to eat together on Saturday night of an event when traveling, as this is a great opportunity to develop relationships and build team solidarity. The time and location will be determined pending game times and hotel and restaurant locations. In order to save on expenses and time, food will often be delivered to the hotel rather than taking a large group to a restaurant.

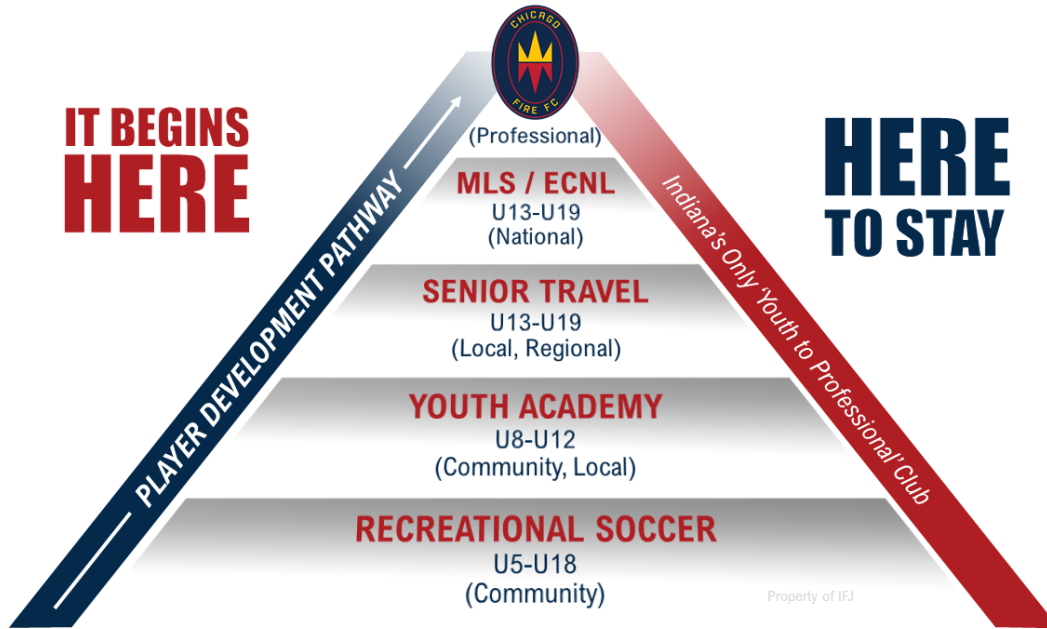
Feedback

We always want to improve the experience for each player at Indiana Fire Juniors. The club holds several “Town Hall” gatherings and we will also send requests for feedback at various periods throughout the year. Please contact me at anytime if you have ideas or suggestions that you feel will create a stronger environment at IFJ.

Core Values:

Family – Gratitude – Discipline – Integrity – Competitiveness – Excellence – Passion

Indiana Fire Juniors Competitive Platforms and Player Pathways



Core Values:

Family – Gratitude – Discipline – Integrity – Competitiveness – Excellence – Passion