

INDIANA FIRE JUNIORS

Player and Parent Guide 2021-2022

U8-U12 Youth Academy

U11-U12 Identification and Development Platform

Club Mission Philosophy

Curriculum and Player Development

Player and Team Selection

Identification and Development Platform

Rosters

Tryout Dates

Playing Time

Roster Changes and Player Movement

Seasonal Training Schedule

Games and Competition

Balance of School and Sports

Biannual Evaluations

Questions for the Coaching Staff

Parent Support for Games and Training

Club Administration, Team Managers and Treasurers

Hotels and Travel

Feedback

U13-U19 Preparation

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, Player Development, Core Values

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. Positional versatility is also essential for long-term development and players will experience a greater understanding through playing various roles within the team.

The fall and spring curriculum will be executed in one-week and two-week blocks based on the components listed below, while the winter training period will have a stronger focus on individual technical development and creativity. Each curricular theme listed here is deconstructed and presented in clear instructional pieces for training application.

- *4v4, 7v7, 9v9 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, which lay out where players currently stand, and contain suggestions about players moving to a different team.

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 (some 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.

U9-U12 players are selected to ability-based teams in the following order: IDP (U11, U12 only), Red, Red II, White, White II, and placed 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.

- U8 (2013, 2014) teams play 4v4 with 6 players per team preferred
- U9-U10 (2012, 2011) teams play 7v7 with 10 players per team preferred
- U11-U12 (2010, 2009) teams play 9v9 with 12 players per team preferred

U8 players are placed in a mixed group for the initial phase of training and games in the fall. Players are gradually positioned in teams and training groups according to ability as we move into September. U9-U12 rosters are established at the conclusion of the tryout and assessment period in June. We know there is no perfect evaluation system for players, especially in a two-day window, and we will move players to appropriate teams during the fall or winter if there is a demonstrated need for adjustment.

Identification and Development Platform (IDP)

Our top teams at U11 and U12 will compete within various competitive formats: Mid-America Academy League (boys), Pre-ECNL (girls), and Indiana Soccer League (boys and girls). The primary purpose of the IDP is to provide players in Central Indiana with a direct pathway to our teams in the MLS Academy League and the Elite Clubs National League. Players on IDP teams will participate in a summer camp, train four days per week in the fall/spring, and their winter training program will include a Speed, Agility, Quickness, Technical component in addition to practice. IFJ is the only club in Indiana to offer the Identification and Development Platform.

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.

Core Values:

Family - Gratitude - Discipline - Integrity - Competitiveness - Excellence - Passion

Playing Time

Player development is our primary objective and a team may appear to struggle during a contest because players are placed in unfamiliar positions or the “best” players may not be on the field at a given time. This does not mean winning and/or competing to win is not important. Competing to win is an incredibly important aspect of development but winning is not always the most important measurement of success at this time.

Players will be expected to play for longer periods of time between substitutions and should not be rotating every 3-6 minutes like you may experience at some other clubs. This provides players an opportunity to manage the game effectively and develop stronger positional roles and responsibilities. On most occasions one or two players will be replaced during a substitution rather than a group of players. This provides an opportunity to focus on each player entering and exiting and offer the necessary feedback/communication/coaching at that time.

We anticipate that players get an appropriate amount of playing time during each contest. It is nearly impossible to get equal playing time during a game, but playing time will likely be balanced throughout the season for our U8-U10 players. For our U11 and U12 Red and White teams, competition for time on the field becomes an extension of player development. There are many situations when playing time may be tilted toward those who are playing best (tournaments, key league games, etc.). The objective is to provide a balance among development in proper game situations, learning to compete at a high level, and competing to win.

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 (IDP to Red, Red to IDP, White to Red, Red to White, U10 to U11, etc.) 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 with the majority of games and tournaments taking place during the fall and spring.

Fall: August through October or early November, 75-90 minute sessions, U11 and U12 IDP and Red teams have four practices per week, all other U8-U12 teams practice three times per week

Winter: November and December (3-4 weeks), January through March (10 weeks), 60-75 minute sessions, all teams practice two days per week

Spring: April to the first week of June, three practices per week, 75-90 minute sessions, U11 and U12 IDP and Red teams have four practices per week, all other U8-U12 teams practice three times per week

The U8 Academy trains daily as a group. Teams in the U9-U12 age groups are typically paired with compatible team for daily training (U9 Red with U9 Red II, U12 IDP with U12 Red). Our winter training sessions are focused on individual technical development and practice times are scheduled in one-hour blocks. All IFJ players are encouraged to play futsal in addition to training during the winter.

Games and Competition

U8-U10 Teams

- 16-20 league games in the local area and within 30-45 minutes of Grand Park
- Two to four friendly matches
- Two to four tournaments/events within the local area, 3-4 games in each event
- All teams play in the Central North Conference (CNC): Indiana Fire Juniors, Dynamo FC, Indy Premier SC, Carmel FC, Hoosier FC, USAI, FC Pride, St. Francis

U11-U12 Teams

- 16-20 league games in the local area or within the state, subject to the level of team play (IDP, Red, Red II, White, White II) and the league requirements
- Two to four friendly matches
- Five or six tournaments and events with the potential for one or two to take place out of the state, with three to four 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 the U8-U12 age groups. Some families and players are able to balance multiple activities, while some kids choose to focus on soccer at an early age. IFJ supports multi-sport participation but we anticipate that IFJ players will make soccer a primary focus during the fall and spring seasons

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 (late September) and in the middle of the spring season (April). The Action Plans are specific to each age group and connected to the curriculum, instruction and expectations, within both training sessions and match play. Parents will also receive a copy of each Action Plan and they are welcome to meet with the coaching staff and review the evaluation.

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. It is important that each player is prepared with all equipment for practice: shin-guards, proper shoes, a properly inflated ball (unless the coach states otherwise), and plenty of water.

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, warm-up, shin-guards, proper shoes, a properly inflated ball, and plenty of water. Players need to have these items accessible while on the bench and during the warm-up. The extra uniform pieces, water, etc. should be with the player and not in the car or with mom or dad.

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.)
- ✓ Do not attempt to get your child's attention during the warm-up or game.
- ✓ 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 (U10, U11, U12)

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.

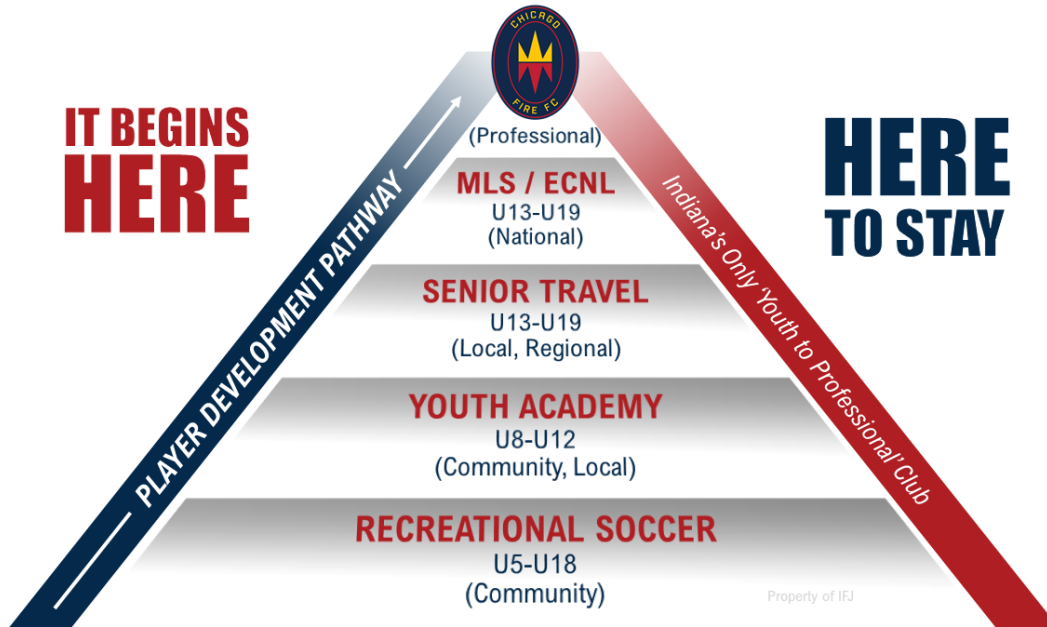
Feedback

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