



February 28th, 2020

We are excited to announce the merger of two of the largest competitive clubs in the Southwest Missouri area. Sporting Springfield and Demize Academy/Lady Demize will merge together starting with the June 2020 tryouts for the 2020-2021 soccer season. Together this merger will build a one of a kind soccer organization within the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) and the best club in southwest Missouri, all while creating more opportunities for players to develop and compete at the highest level.

This new organization will provide players enhanced training, opportunities at all levels of soccer, and provide opportunities for coaching development within the club. The club will have a staff that includes all levels of USSF sanctioning including the A Youth, A Senior, B, C, and D licensed coaches. Additionally, the club will have USSF Grassroots Licensed instructors plus various United Soccer Coaches licenses to provide coaching education and development for its staff. The joining of these coaches, ideas, and talents will build on our collective strengths, draw additional high level coaches, players, and provide greater opportunities for all.

This merger represents approximately 900 players at the competitive and recreational levels. Currently the two clubs compete in the National Premier Soccer League (NPSL is a minor league), Premier Arena Soccer League (PASL is a semi-professional league), Women's Premier Soccer League (WPSL is a semi-professional league) and at the youth level in the USYS National League (Midwest Conference), Heartland soccer league, Heartland Futsal League, St. Louis Youth Soccer Association, and the Lake Country Soccer (LCS) league. Locally this past fall these two clubs achieved Champion or Runner up in 8 of the 9 boys divisions and 6 of the 7 girls divisions in LCS league play. Additionally, they had 5 Heartland division Champions in KC this fall. At the U8 and under ages these two clubs represented 31 of the 54 (or 57%) of the teams at LCS in the fall of 2019. In addition to all of the local success, the two clubs have achieved

- 1 US Club u23 Co-National Championship
- 2 US Club Regional Championships
- 1 USYS Futsal Regional Championship
- 7 USYS Futsal National Semi-Finalists
- 1 USYS Futsal National Finalist
- 7 Missouri State Cup Championships (6 boys and 1 girls)
- 5 Missouri State Finalists (4 boys and 1 girls)
- 8 MYSA Presidents Cup Championships (5 boys and 3 girls)
- 2 US Youth National Team program players
- 2 USYS ODP National Team players
- 1 USYS Futsal National Team program player
- 11 players invited into United States Development Academy Programs (9 MLS, 2USL)
- Approximately 50 players signed to professional contracts domestically or internationally
- Numerous Valedictorians, Salutatorians, Class Presidents and more
- 1 US Military Academy at West Point Graduate
- 2 US Military ROTC collegiate scholarship recipients
- Over \$100,000 raised for local charities

So, this merger provides players at all levels the opportunity to learn, develop and grow as a soccer player to any level of competition that they may want.

What will our new Club be called?

Sporting Springfield will be the name of the club. However, an adjustment to the logo will occur to represent the Demize Academy and Lady Demize heritage.

What will this mean for my daughter / son regarding their current 2020 spring team?

Teams will remain as currently formed and with the same game kits, so no changes are expected during the spring 2020 season.

How does this benefit my child?

1. More players = more teams
2. More teams = more opportunities to play
3. More opportunity for kids to be positioned on teams that are best suited to their skill development needs
4. More coaching talent to expose to players
5. A comprehensive youth Futsal program
6. Additional summer training opportunities for High school Boys and Girls with the NPSL and WPSL respectively

What is the expected timeline for integration?

Expect nothing to change with the existing teams structures until the summer tryouts, at which point new teams will be created and coaches assigned.

There has always been a focused rivalry between the clubs, how do you expect teams / coaches to integrate?

Both clubs in the past have been very passionate about providing the best development opportunities available to its players. Obviously this has led to competition which is a productive result. Over time, we have come to realize that as a unified group we could provide greater opportunities to our players, parents, coaches, and the community based on the various synergies created through a merger (more competitive teams, more coaching resources, more age group availability, abilities to bring competition to SWMO instead of always having to travel, etc). Going forward, we expect an easy integration of players and teams with the understanding that kids love to compete, learn together, experience success together and develop together. This new unified organization will foster all of the above in a better fashion than that of a divided soccer environment. There will obviously be a time period of nervousness, anxiety, and feelings of insecurity as the kids and parents initially get to know each other, but this is expected and part of any new initiative. However, we are very confident that the initial forming/storming stages will be very short as we all begin to experience and understand the numerous advantages outlined above. As teams are formed we expect that coaches will not only provide integration opportunities to players on the field, through practice and competition, but also through team building events and community activities (all of which help to develop cohesive teams and accelerate the familiarity process).

Does this mean we need to purchase new uniforms?

We are working diligently on opportunities to create limited costs/discounts for the uniform aspect. Once those are finalized we will communicate them to all.

What will happen to my dues, will it cost me more to play soccer now

We do not project that this merger will impact overall club dues/fees.

Is this one club absorbing the other or is this considered an equal merger?

This is an equal merger. Coaches from both of the clubs will be integrated, players intermingled, and there will be a clear focus on how to best deliver the optimal experience for the players.

Here are the positions of the Coaching leaders of this new organization

Eric Sorlie – Executive Director of Coaching
Chris Hanlon – Director of Coaching
Gerard Barbero – Boys Director of Coaching
Vern Croft – Girls Director of Coaching
Christy Kononiuk – Technical Director
Chuck Mantia – Youth Director

Where / How can I get more information

We understand that change can be a bit confusing/unsettling in its initial phases. Thus, we will be scheduling a "town hall" meeting where parents can come and ask questions of the combined leadership of the new club. Know that we are still working out all of the intricacies and details, so there might be some areas that are still in an undecided state. However, we want to be as transparent as possible in this process because we are all very excited about the new opportunities this will bring to all of our players. Information about the when and where of the town hall meeting will be released soon. Please monitor the Sporting Springfield social media pages (Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram) for information. Additionally, an email with this information will be sent to all current Sporting Springfield, Demize Academy and Lady Demize families.