

Parent's Guide to AOE / Select Soccer

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Introduction

Henry County Soccer Association has more than 1200 boys and girls, ages 4-18 playing soccer on our recreational league teams, Our Thunder Soccer Club (TSC) has approximately 250 players, that play on our Select or Academy of Excellence teams. HCSA/TSC is a member of the Georgia State Soccer Association (GSSA) which governs Georgia Youth Soccer Association (GYSA) of which we are affiliated. HCSA/TSC operates under the overall direction of the Board of Directors. The members of the Board are elected by vote of all members of the club (each family in good standing with one or more children playing HCSA/TSC soccer is eligible to cast one vote). The Select/AOE program operates under the direction of the Director of Coaching as well as the board of directors.

Select/ AOE Goals

Except in the Academy of Excellence, Teams are assigned to a particular division based upon their level of play. Teams can get promoted to a higher division or relegated to a lower division at the end of each season based on their win/loss record. For this reason and others, Select soccer inevitably becomes quite competitive.

If your child is considering trying out for a TSC Select/AOE team, or is already on a TSC Select/AOE team, we are confident that you will be pleased with the experience.

Although TSC Select/AOE teams operate independently, they are still part of the club and share several key characteristics:

- The team seeks to provide training and competition at the highest level attainable for its level of skill, interest, and dedication.
 - The team seeks to improve team members' self-esteem and self-confidence through athletic participation and success
 - The team promotes fitness and fun through affiliation and mastering skills of the game in a competitive environment
 - The team seeks to meet the highest standards of sportsmanship
 - The team seeks to create a sense of identity and camaraderie among its team members
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Pros and Cons of Select/AOE Team Membership

Experienced Select/AOE team parents know that membership on a TSC Select/AOE team can be a defining aspect of their son or daughter's childhood, creating lifelong memories and friendships. Most TSC Select team members, when they reach middle and high school, play for

their school team as well as continue with a TSC Select team. It is the goal of the TSC Select teams to have its players well represented on the area school teams, the district and state Olympic Development Program (ODP) player pools, and playing at the college level.

Selection to all TSC Select Teams is competitive, and therefore, making the roster and staying on the roster has to be earned on the basis of the player's performance and commitment during the season and annual tryouts. TSC provides at least one if not two teams per age group representing 12 to 36 roster slots depending on the roster size. If your child has above average soccer ability, and you and your child are ready to make the commitment that a Select/AOE team requires, there is a good likelihood that your child would be selected for a Select team by the time your child plays in the U-13 bracket.

Parents should keep the following factors in mind when considering whether trying out for a Select team is right for your child and family.

- TSC Select Teams require that your child play at a high level relative to the rest of their age group. It also requires a continued commitment in time and energy from both players and family to maintain that level of play.
- Most TSC Select Teams play approximately 15 – 20 games per season.
- Most TSC Select Teams operate a 9 – 11 month per year program, including outdoor league play during fall and spring, tournaments and camps at various times throughout the year, and indoor play or clinics during the winter.
- Most TSC Select Teams train twice per week and are encouraged attend additional training offered by TSC.
- Most TSC Select Teams games are on Saturday, but there can be Sunday games as well.
- Location for league games generally depends on the league and division standing, the location for league games may be one hour to four hours away. A team would have ½ its games at home and ½ at another location.
- Most TSC Select/AOE Teams participate in between one and three tournaments per season.
- Older TSC Select Teams will participate in out-of-town tournaments each season.
- TSC Select Teams U-13 and older may participate in the State Cup tournament.
- TSC Select/AOE Teams participation can be expensive – league and club fees, uniforms and equipment, travel costs, tournament fees, and training costs.

TSC Select Teams

All TSC Staff coaches are recommended by the Director of Coaching, and approved by the Board. This recommendation and approval is made after a careful examination of the coach's credentials and team organization.

Most professional coaches carry advanced state and national coaching certifications, have extensive high-level playing experience, and are highly recognized trainers and clinicians. While a TSC Select Team is coached by a professional coach, the team manager acts as a representative to the Board in dealing with team matters. The team manager is also responsible to the Board for assuring that the team operates in accordance with TSC rules and policies and that the team conducts itself in a manner consistent with the TSC culture.

A TSC Select/AOE team can also supplement its program with additional resources such as advanced training services provided by outstanding trainers, specialized positional training (e.g. goalkeeper training, C.A.S.E, MOMMERTZ, 4v4 league), advanced licensing courses for coaches, various indoor leagues during the winter, and specialized camps.

Parent Dos and Don'ts

Coaching a Select/AOE team can be a gratifying and wonderful experience, but it can also be a demanding and sometimes very frustrating experience. A successful staff soccer coach must be an effective trainer and teacher of fundamental soccer skills; must be an effective soccer tactician, must be able to motivate and relate to young people; must be an effective communicator with parents; must also be able to communicate with referees; must be a good organizer; and must be able to operate the team effectively with regard to a myriad of tasks, including outfitting the team with appropriate equipment and uniforms, plus management of team finances.

A staff coach must also make numerous unpopular decisions, including not selecting or dropping children from the team, playing players in positions that they or their parents do not enjoy; and adjusting the playing time in ways that frequently do not provide for equal playing time to all players. Experienced Select/AOE soccer parents appreciate and understand the following "dos and don'ts".

- Do attend games and cheer for the team and your child
- Do participate in the operation of the team. It is not just TSC's team, or the coach's team, it is your team as well. There are several critical jobs that need to be filled including Team Manager, Tournament Coordinator, Equipment Manager, Treasurer, Field Set-up, etc.
- Do make your player available on time (including the designated warm-up period) for all regular season games, tournaments, and scrimmages.
- Do minimize potential schedule conflicts. If there is a problem, be sure to talk to your coach in advance
- Do expect that the staff coach will be honest and candid with you about your child's status and, on older teams, that the staff coach will provide your child with periodic performance evaluations
- Do expect to get advance notice from the staff coach if your child is at risk of being dropped from the team and an opportunity to work on areas that need improvement. If your child is about to be cut from a Select team, discuss this situation with the coach and consider moving your child to another, more appropriate team (if available).
- Do expect, especially for the younger teams, that the coach will be receptive to your child's participation in other sports or activities – but do not expect the staff coach will always acquiesce if your child misses games or tournaments because of your child participating regularly in another activity.
- On older teams, do expect your coach to facilitate your child's participation on school teams, ODP, or other select sports teams.
- Do expect fair and courteous treatment of players and parents by the staff coach. Never tolerate rude or abusive treatment of any kind. Discuss any such behavior with the coach and contact the Director of Coaching for further actions.
- Do expect dedication and hard work from the staff coach
- Do expect openness and honesty from the staff coach
- Do expect competence in teaching fundamental soccer skills
- Do expect the staff coach to make player safety a priority and not to insist that your child play if not properly warmed up, or is injured or sick.
- Do expect that the staff coach will enjoy working with young players; will have fun coaching and will create a fun environment for the players; and will be enthusiastic about every player on the squad.

On the other hand, as a Select/AOE parent:

- Don't expect that your child will necessarily have equal playing time each game
- Don't expect the coach to honor requests for playing time in a particular position
- Don't expect your child to be guaranteed a permanent position on a Select team. Players must make the squad during each annual tryout, and sometimes, may also be cut between the fall and spring seasons.
- Don't position players or yell out coaching-style instructions from the sidelines.
- Don't expect that the coach will welcome or permit you to volunteer to help at practices. The coach should run a well-organized and structured practice and should require that players receive consistent training at practices. If you desire to help, let your staff coach know and the coach can assess the needs of the team and what role, if any, you can perform.
- Don't yell at referees. You will be expelled from the sideline and the staff coach will receive a yellow or red card if your behavior is sufficiently disruptive.
- Don't argue or fight with parents from the opposing team
- Don't talk to the coach about player issues during a game
- Don't make negative comments about other children on the team
- Don't permit your child to try out for other soccer teams without letting the coach know that you are considering moving your child
- Don't wait until just before the start of the season to move your child to a new team. If you are going to move your child, notify the coach early. It is very frustrating to a coach, and unfair to the team, when a player leaves the team without sufficient notice to permit the team to accept or recruit a replacement

Finally, do not judge the staff coach by their win/loss record. TSC Select/AOE teams participate in very competitive leagues. Moreover, the level of playing talent among TSC Select/AOE teams varies substantially. A team may win frequently one season, and then lose frequently the next season after being promoted to a higher division. Teams and staff coaches provide their players with opportunities for fun, recreation, skill development and competition in a safe environment while promoting good sportsmanship, camaraderie, and positive social outlet. Regardless of the team's win/loss record, judge the TSC Select/AOE coach by these standards.

We hope that you are proud of your child for having the ability, the work ethic, and the dedication to participate in the TSC Select/AOE program. If your child has tried out for a team and was not selected, we encourage you to continue to participate in HCSA recreational soccer programs while you improve your skills so that you can be selected for a Select team. Many TSC players try out many times before making a team. All of us at TSC hope that you, your player, and your family will enjoy the TSC Select/AOE team experience.
