



Frequently Asked Questions about the Elite Clubs National League

The following “frequently asked questions” are provided to give basic information about the ECNL, and are grouped into eight basic categories: (i) Background of the ECNL; (ii) Player Development in the ECNL; (iii) Competitive Structure of the ECNL; (iv) the ECNL Player Identification Program; (v) Collegiate Recruiting and the ECNL; (vi) the ECNL National Championship; (vii) Future Years of the ECNL; and (viii) Administration of the ECNL. For more information about the ECNL, please contact your local ECNL club or for general questions about the ECNL, christian@fcmilwaukee.com and dbracken@ohioelite.com.

Background of the ECNL:

What is the Elite Clubs National League (the “ECNL”)?

The ECNL is a national youth soccer league founded in 2009 for U15, U16 and U17 girls for the purpose of providing the highest level of competition and the best developmental environment for American female youth soccer players, as well as an identification program for identifying players for US Soccer Youth National Teams. The 2009-2010 season is the ECNL’s inaugural season, during which each ECNL team will play 9 regular-season games and 2 post-season games.

Why was the ECNL founded?

The ECNL was founded by many of the best female youth soccer clubs throughout the country based on the belief that elite female player development in the United States needed a structure that would reduce the total number of games on the schedule and increase the number of meaningful, quality games. The ECNL sets forth a vision that provides a clear path to that goal: a national competition schedule and a national identification program linked to that competition, and an organization in which best practices in player development can be shared throughout the country.

Who plays in the ECNL?

In 2009-2010, the ECNL will consist of 40 of the best female youth soccer clubs from across the country. For a complete list of member clubs, please go to www.usclubsoccer.org or www.eliteclubsnationalleague.com. Each member club will have 1 team in the U15, U16, and U17 divisions of the ECNL.

Why should I play in the ECNL?

The ECNL was formed with one driving purpose: to improve the developmental environment for elite female soccer players. In order to accomplish this, the ECNL has several specific objectives: (i) increase the frequency with which the top players in the country have the opportunity to compete against each other; (ii) decrease the number of uncompetitive games for the top players in the country so that these players can train more frequently; (iii) increase the collegiate recruiting exposure for top players; and (iv) provide an alternative identification program for these players to be identified for US Soccer Youth National Teams.

Every member club of the ECNL is dedicated to accomplishing these objectives. By coming together into the ECNL, ECNL member clubs can help to make the changes necessary to accomplish these objectives far more quickly, efficiently, and effectively.



Player Development in the ECNL:

How is the ECNL different from other female soccer leagues in maximizing player development?

Competition: First, the ECNL provides the opportunity for the best female youth soccer players in the country to compete against each other – one of the requirements for maximizing player development. Because the ECNL only includes the best clubs in the country, every ECNL game is exceptionally competitive and played at a significantly higher speed with more physical, psychological, technical and tactical demands on the players than the “average” game. The consistency of this competition and the demands it imposes creates more skillful, intelligent, and focused players. Second, in order to maximize the competitive level of each ECNL game, the ECNL only schedules 1 ECNL game per day per team, and no more than 3 days of ECNL games in succession. This aids in reducing burn-out and fatigue from game-to-game.

Substitution: The ECNL limits the number of substitutions in each ECNL game by prohibiting re-entry of players in each half. In other words, once a player is subbed out of an ECNL game, the player may not re-enter the game in that half of play. This forces players to maintain their concentration and work-rate for far longer periods of time than in most other competitions, and helps to prepare them for competition at the national and international level. In other words, without the massive substitution common in other youth soccer events, players in ECNL games are forced to adapt to the physical and psychological demands of playing for 90 minutes without break and without the “cushion” of temporary substitution to re-energize or re-focus.

Roster Rules: The ECNL allows a flexible roster of up to 26 players per team, and allows players to be rostered on multiple teams within their ECNL club. In addition, the ECNL allows players to move from one team roster to another from day-to-day, allowing players to play in different age groups in the same event. (A player may only play in 1 ECNL game per day.) This allows talented players to “play-up” against older players when a club determines it is in the best interests of the player to do so in order to maximize challenge and learning.

Relief of Calendar Congestion: By guaranteeing member clubs with the opportunity to play the best clubs in the country on a regular basis, and by providing an additional identification program within these games, the ECNL schedule allows member clubs to reduce the total number of games played by their teams and players each year. This provides each member club with more time for training to develop each player, and provides players more time for recovery and rejuvenation over the course of the year.

Standards and Recommendations: The ECNL provides a recommended set of minimum standards and expectations for players and staff of ECNL member clubs to create a more professional soccer environment. In addition, the ECNL provides member clubs with the opportunity to share best practices in player development and club organization and administration to improve the daily experience of the players.

The Competitive Structure of the ECNL:

How is ECNL competition structured?

Each age group in the ECNL is divided into 2 flights based on team competitiveness: “Challenge A” and “Challenge B.” During the regular-season, teams within each flight will compete against each other at a combination of some of the nation’s best college showcase events and stand-alone ECNL events. At the end of the regular-season, every ECNL team in both flights will meet at the ECNL National Championship for post-season placement games. At the end of the ECNL National



Championship, individual age group champions and an overall club champion will be crowned, 3 teams from Challenge A will be relegated to Challenge B for the next season, and 3 teams from Challenge B will be promoted to Challenge A.

What are the ECNL events for the 2009-2010 season?

ECNL games are played at a combination of existing collegiate showcases and stand-alone ECNL events. Member clubs select three of five of the available regular-season events based on their own scheduling needs and desires. The regular-season ECNL events for the 2009-2010 season are:

1. The Eclipse Invitational ECNL Event in Libertyville, IL, from August 14 – 16, 2009.
2. The Final Four Showcase ECNL Event in College Station, TX, from December 4-6, 2009.
3. Disney's Soccer Showcase presented by Chelsea FC in Orlando, FL from December 31 – January 3, 2010.
4. The Las Vegas College Showcase ECNL Event in Las Vegas, NV, from March 13 – 15, 2010.
5. The PDA College Showcase ECNL Event in Zeraphath, NJ, on Memorial Day Weekend 2010.

Additionally, every ECNL team will also participate in the ECNL National Championship. The 2009-2010 ECNL National Championship is in Seattle, WA, from July 15 – 18, 2010.

Can ECNL teams participate in USYS leagues and the USYS state cup, regional, and national championships?

Yes. Any team participating in the ECNL may still participate in their local, state and regional leagues, and in the USYS state cup, regional, and national championships. The ECNL is not prohibiting teams from its member clubs from participating in these competitions.

Can a player that participates in the ECNL also participate in high school soccer?

Yes. The ECNL schedules are created to insure that all players that participate in the ECNL also have the opportunity to play high school soccer. The ECNL is not prohibiting players from its member clubs from participating in high school soccer.

The ECNL Player Identification Program:

What is the ECNL Player Identification Program?

The ECNL has created a unique identification program in conjunction with US Club Soccer's id2 identification program to provide another alternative for players to be identified for US Soccer National Teams. The ECNL player identification program identifies the best players in the ECNL through a combination of independent scouting and coaching recommendations. Players identified in this program will be invited into a special ECNL / id2 National Camp in March 2010, where they will be evaluated and trained by US Soccer National Team coaching staff.



What is the cost of the ECNL player identification program?

The ECNL player identification program comes at no cost to ECNL players. ECNL players will be scouted and identified in their regular team environment, without the added time and expense of multiple try-outs or mini-camps. Additionally, the cost of participation in the ECNL / id2 National Camp for those players selected will be covered by the ECNL, US Club Soccer, and Nike; the only cost for selected players will be travel to and from the camp itself.

How is the ECNL player identification program different than other identification programs?

The ECNL identification program is different and has several unique components compared to other identification programs. First, there is no charge to the player to be identified; there is no try-out fee. Second, the player is identified in their natural team environment; there is no try-out or try-out camp. Third, the ECNL identification program does not add additional events to the calendar for identification; the players are identified in their natural environment while competing in ECNL events. Fourth, the only cost for the player for participation in the ECNL / id2 National Camp is the cost of travel to and from camp. All other costs (hotel, food, ground transportation, facility usage, coaching, etc.) is subsidized by the ECNL, US Club Soccer, and Nike.

Can a player that participates in the ECNL also participate in the USYS ODP program?

Yes. The ECNL player identification program is one of several different identification programs provided by different organizations for the elite youth soccer player to be identified for US Soccer Youth National Teams. The ECNL is not imposing restrictions on players to prevent them from participating in any other identification program. Many players that participate in the ECNL will participate in USYS ODP or other identification programs, and some players that participate in the ECNL will not participate in USYS ODP or other identification programs. These choices will be made by individual players according to their own interests and desires.

College Recruiting and the ECNL:

How will the ECNL change college recruiting?

The ECNL brings together the best female soccer clubs in the country to compete against each other in 5 regular-season events and 1 post-season event. However, for the first time ever, the competitive schedule for these games for the entire year is determined at the beginning of the year. As such, college coaches can more easily plan their recruiting calendar to insure that they see all players in which they are interested – and see them competing against the best players in the country.

How will ECNL games be played at collegiate showcases?

To insure maximum exposure for ECNL players, all ECNL games will be played at adjacent fields and at similar times at all ECNL events. At some events, ECNL games will be played on their own independent site. The ECNL is working with each showcase to insure that the ECNL games are provided maximum exposure, and that the “drawing power” of every ECNL club is combined to increase attendance of college coaches for all teams. Additionally, due to the structure of the ECNL, ECNL members are guaranteed acceptance into the collegiate showcase events at which their ECNL regular-season games are played.



Why should I play in the ECNL if I intend to go to college close to home?

NCAA Division I, II and III college soccer programs recruit nationally, and opportunities to play in NCAA Division I tend to go to players from nationally competitive teams. Elite players maximize their opportunities to be recruited for college and to be identified for the national team by playing against the top talent from around the country at the best college showcases. The ECNL guarantees you with the opportunity to play the best players, at the biggest showcase events, every year.

The ECNL National Championship:

What is the ECNL National Championship?

The ECNL National Championship is the post-season event for all ECNL teams, held in the summer of each year. The ECNL National Championship will be the largest gathering of elite youth female soccer players in the United States, and will be one of the most exciting soccer events on the calendar. In 2009-2010, each ECNL team will play 2 play-off games at the ECNL National Championship based on their final regular-season standings, and each team will also have the opportunity to play an additional friendly against another ECNL team.

The ECNL National Championship will provide unparalleled competition and collegiate recruiting exposure to all ECNL players, and will be one of the highlights of every player's youth soccer career.

Future Years of the ECNL:

What are the expansion plans of the ECNL in future years?

The ECNL plans to grow its membership and increase the number of ECNL games offered to each member club in 2010-2011. New clubs must be approved for membership by the existing member clubs, and the existing member clubs must approve changes to the competition format. Details on this expansion will be provided in early 2010.

How are clubs admitted into the ECNL?

Applications for the ECNL will be made publicly available in December 2010, and new clubs will be accepted in February of 2010 for the 2010-2011 season. Any club interested in participating in the ECNL is invited to apply. The application process will consider each club's history of player development and club success, coaching staff qualifications, club administrative resources, club facilities, and a variety of other factors.

Administration of the ECNL:

How is the ECNL operated?

The ECNL is a non-profit member-based organization. The ECNL member clubs elect the Board of Directors of the ECNL to govern and administrate the ECNL. Member clubs also approve the annual budget, the competition format, and the admission of new members. By operating in this manner, the ECNL provides an avenue for sharing and implementing the best thoughts and practices of many of the best female youth soccer clubs throughout the country in order to improve the developmental experience of all participating players.



What is the cost to participate in the ECNL?

There is an annual membership fee for participating in the ECNL. In 2009-2010, the annual club fee is \$2250 per member club. This fee covers the cost of operating the ECNL, the costs of the ECNL National Championship, and the cost of the ECNL player identification program. The annual fee will change each year, based on the budget approved by the member clubs. In addition, member clubs must also pay the entry fees for participating in the regular-season ECNL events to the event host (collegiate showcases and independently hosted events).

Are ECNL players or teams prohibited in participating in USYS ODP or the USYS State, Regional, and National Championships?

No. Many players that participate in the ECNL will participate in USYS ODP and the USYS State, Regional, and National Championships.