



April 8, 2017

Parents and Players,

If you are receiving this email then, "Thank You" for allowing me the opportunity to coach your son in either high school or club soccer the past several years.

I have been asked by more than a few for my thoughts/preferences for club soccer and Summer Camps. I will address camps at a later date when I collect more information, but since the area clubs are posting their tryout dates now, I will provide my thoughts on those at the forefront.

From the outset, I will apologize for the diatribe, but I know that there are thousands of dollars invested in your son's club soccer experience, so I figure that your monetary effort is worth my time in this regard.

In general, I try to remain as objective as possible with these things and keep separate my high school affiliation/commitments from my club. I know that there are allegiances existent within the soccer community and different clubs, etc. I know I coach for one of those clubs (Congaree Rapid FC).

With that in mind, in regards to club, my answer is simple: **Please do what you feel is in the best interest of your child/family.**

In doing so, I believe it would be best to take certain things into consideration. All of this is my opinion of course:

The first thing I will tell you is that club soccer is an expensive proposition, more so than many sports, unfortunately. Most clubs in the area have some sort of scholarship option available to players in need. If cost has been a traditional barrier to entry for your son in regards to club, please contact me privately. If time commitments (i.e., your son plays another sport and you do not think a club will accept that) are an obstacle, I have solutions for you. Again, contact me privately.

When it comes to soccer development, there are two real ways, under the current American club soccer model that players can properly develop their skills – good coaching and excellent competition (in practice and matches). The ideal model would be to have both. I would love to have your son playing under an excellent coach at the highest level possible for their current skill-level this fall.

With that in mind, I think all three clubs in the area offer this best case scenario in some form or fashion. It just depends on the player. In the Midlands area you have GPS (formerly Liverpool/Lexington), SC United FC (SCUFC), and Congaree Rapid Football Club (CRFC). All three clubs have different price points, gear costs, training sites (for travel considerations), and coaching staffs.

Check with your local high school and compare! Those teams should have players on current Varsity/JV rosters that have played club at one, if not all three, over some period of time. Some of the boys can probably speak better to their individual experiences. I do think there are certain things you as parents/players should consider outside of price, location, etc.

I sometimes shudder when I hear our boys say things like "Oh he's on an Elite team. He must be good!" While this may be the case, there are two reasons why this approach is problematic.

First, from the standpoint of a high school coach, the "Elite, Challenge, PMSL, etc.", metrics do not add up. Currently, at most Midlands' high schools' the Varsity roster is a conglomeration of players who did not play club soccer up to players who are on Challenge/Elite teams, all ages 15-18. And, for the most part, these teams are doing just fine!

This mentality also tends to label kids and stifle their development in two ways. First it proposes that kids who are not deemed "Elite" are not very good or will never be as good. Secondly, it proposes that kids who are "Elite" don't have much left to learn. Both

of these are somewhat fundamentally untrue and are results of our current educational structure (AP/IB = "smart", Other = "dumb") than anything else. It creates this artificial plateau effect for our athletes.

I have had players at CRFC who played in the PMSL and went on to play at the collegiate level and were All-State High School players, Clash of the Carolinas participants, North/South Classic members, etc. I don't think anyone with dreams of playing at the next level should forego those due to not making a certain team. In truth, I unfortunately hear this sentiment from other coaches around the area and parents more so than I do the players themselves (at least initially, before it trickles down to the player), which is unfortunate.

Your son could quite possibly be better served playing 80 minutes a game at a lower level under a good coach rather than sitting the bench for 80 minutes at a higher level. However, the inverse could also be true! Depending on how good the training is, if you are looking for overall development, this will all depend on how the player, coach, and family frame the scenario. For example with our Varsity team, while I believe that everyone should be given a chance to prove themselves, essentially playing time must be earned. My philosophy on this differs slightly in club because we generally have less players available (18 compared to 20-25) and most players are at a similar level, therefore playing time is somewhat more equally distributed.

When considering this notion: the higher the level, the larger expectation for everything. That includes: time; performance; attitude; discipline; etc. That is fair enough and mirrors how Varsity players are treated.

Further, I think it is a perfectly logical/reasonable question to ask your coach/club their philosophy on playing time at tryouts or any other time. This is a "question," not a demand. This should aid someone in making an informed choice.

In general, when asked, I would say that if your son tries out at multiple places and has options, pick the higher level team. They should be training with better players, competing against better players, and though I cannot say this is always true, often times – the higher the level, the better the coach. I would also encourage them to potentially tryout at different places, so that they have options, if you are not currently satisfied with your son's situation.

After all of that being said, here are the collected tryout dates of the three local clubs in the area:

#### [GPS \(Liverpool\)](#)

- 5/16 - 6-8PM
- 5/18 - 6-8PM
- 5/20 - 6-8PM

#### [SC United FC](#)

- 5/21 - Times vary based on age - check the link
- 5/23 - Times vary based on age - check the link
- 5/25 - Times vary based on age - check the link

#### [CRFC](#)

- 5/22 - 7-8:30
- 5/24 - 7-8:30
- 5/30 - 5:30-7

Click the links provided for more information on registration, etc.

If I can be of any more assistance in this process, please do not hesitate to ask or reply.

Keep Kicking,  
Coach Kyle