



Northern Lights Soccer Club

A division of

Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association

Player Assessment FAQ's

(frequently asked questions)

(Revised 6/15/07)

Please Note: As Northern Lights Soccer Club continues to grow we remain focused on providing a quality program at a reasonable price. We have published this list of questions because we want the public to understand how and why we make decisions that affect our membership. Our Club must abide by mandates established by MYSA and ARAA their respective policies and rules. Northern Lights Soccer reserves the right to change this document at any time without notice as this document is a work in progress.

Northern Lights Soccer Club

Player Assessment Frequently Asked Questions

Player Assessment Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

What is the purpose of assessments?

The objective of assessments is to place players at the most appropriate playing level for their ability, giving them the greatest opportunity for success, improvement, and enjoyment. This is a difficult task, for several reasons:

- No evaluation system is perfect
- We are bound by roster sizes, and sometimes have more players than spots at a given playing level
- Players want to play with friends
- Players don't want to change teams

What teams use this process?

All traveling boys and girls team's, ages U9 through U19

Can anyone attend assessments?

NLS holds open assessments; anyone can participate in player assessments that are interested in playing soccer with NLS. No roster spots are held or guaranteed for team members from the previous year.

Who decides how assessments and team formations are executed?

The Northern Lights Soccer Committee has responsibility for creating, modifying, and communicating the *processes* and *policies* that govern assessments and team formation. The Coaching Director, along with many volunteers, is responsible for executing these processes.

Who will be assessing the players?

The Northern Lights Soccer Committee uses an outside company to do our assessments so it is fair and unbiased to. We have contracted with a company that does this type of assessments process for many Clubs in the metro area. We have checked with other Clubs who have used them and they have been very happy with the results.

How are assessment policies communicated?

This document will be published on the ARAA/NLS website and distributed to coaches. This document will also be available at assessments and distributed with registration materials.

Why are assessments held in August and September?

August and September assessments give us several advantages:

- Assessments are held early, so we don't lose players to other Clubs
- Team formation can be completed so that players can play in winter leagues together. Teams may wish to begin indoor training programs during the winter.
- Assessments can be held outdoors, on natural grass, which keeps the cost down and allows kids to play on a surface they are familiar with
- Team meetings can be held over the winter, to start preparing for tournaments, and we can get a head start on uniforms orders.
- Players are in good physical condition immediately following the soccer season, and are not "rusty" after the winter.

What happens if a player misses assessments?

If a player misses assessments due to:

A major injury (e.g. broken bone) or a major illness

The player may be placed on a team at the discretion of the Coaching Director. This action will not count as a Coach's Pick. The player must have contacted the Coaching Director or other committee member about their injury or illness in advance of assessment day. The player will still be required to register for assessments and pay the assessment fee. The player may also have the option of waiting until spring and completing player assessments at that time (if make-up assessments are necessary).

A minor illness (e.g. cold, allergy)

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The player may be placed on the lowest level team, room permitting. The player may also have the option of waiting until spring and complete player assessments (if make-up assessments are held). A Coach's Pick may be used for the player.

Other reasons (forgot, vacations, conflicts)

The player may be placed on the lowest level team, room permitting. The player may also have the option of waiting until spring and complete player assessments (if make-up assessments are held). A Coach's Pick may be used for the player.

New registrations (throughout fall and winter)

The player may be placed on the lowest level team, room permitting. The player may also have the option of waiting until spring and complete player assessments (if make-up assessments are held). A Coach's Pick may be used for the player.

All players will pay the assessment fee.

What if a player arrives late, leaves early or can only attend one portion of the assessments?

Missed skill drills

If a player misses the entire set of skill drills, they will be assigned an overall skill score equal to the lowest score of all assessment participants minus 1, for the purposes of player ranking.

If a player begins the skill drills, but becomes injured or otherwise unable to finish, for the drills they did not complete, they will be assigned a score equal to the lowest score of all assessment participants (for that specific drill) minus 1.

Missed small-sided games

If a player misses the entire set of small-sided games, then they will be deemed to have missed assessments entirely, even if they attended skill drills.

If a player arrives late or leaves early, they must have attended at least 2/3 of the games to be deemed present. Their scores from those games will be averaged for the games missed.

Can a player be assessed for an older age group (“playing up”)?

The Club will create whenever possible pure age group teams. There are a few situations that would be an exception to this rule. Examples of such situations include:

- Blending two ages because of insufficient numbers at each age group to create a team.
- A player playing with their school grade (i.e. a U13 who is in 8th grade).

The vast majority of players are better served by playing with their age group. However, players not meeting the above exceptions may apply for permission to tryout at an older age group by contacting the Coaching Director prior to their age-appropriate assessments. Be prepared to tell the Coaching Director:

- Player name, age, current team, current coach
- Reason for request (exceptional ability, August birthday, etc.)

Important: If the player does not make the top team at the older age group, would they still desire to play at that age group (i.e. on a C2 or C3 team)? Or would they prefer to remain at their age-appropriate level? Players must answer this question in advance of assessments, when they apply for permission to tryout at an older age.

Permission to assess at an older age level will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Coaching Directors. The Coaching Directors will consider several factors:

- Parent and player wishes
- Opinion of current coach regarding players' ability
- Competitiveness of teams at each level
- Size of player pool at each level

The Coaching Director will inform the player if they have been granted permission to attend the upper level assessments. Players assessing at an older age group will be notified of their team placement in the same manner as all other players.

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What will I need when I check in for assessments?

Online pre-registration and online payment is highly encouraged. Upon arrival you will need to complete a player assessment registration form and pay the assessment fee if you have not already done so online. Players should not wear a Club jersey, Northern Lights or otherwise. Players must wear shin pads. Players should wear cleats; bring a ball, and plenty of water.

What types of evaluations are covered in assessments?

Evaluations are based upon a combination of Skill Drills (40%) and Small-Sided Games (60%).

What is involved with Skill Drills?

Several drills have been selected by the company hired to oversee our assessments. Drills will cover such things as running, dribbling, shooting and 1 v 1 play to assess offensive and defensive skills.

Drill layouts are measured and set up in advance. All drills consist of an objective measurement (i.e., a timing, count, etc.) rather than a subjective evaluation. If weather forces a cancellation, Northern Lights will attempt to hold a make-up date.

For each drill, a relative ranking of player scores will be calculated. The player's average rank over all drills generates an overall Skill Drill score, which constitutes 40% of their overall ranking.

What is involved with Small-Sided Games?

These games provide players the opportunity to show technical ability, tactical understanding, athleticism, and attitude.

Players will play short games (less than 10 minutes). Each team will have three to five players. If an uneven number of players are in attendance, one game may have an uneven match (i.e. 3v4).

Evaluation is subjective. All evaluators of Small-Sided Games are independent, qualified, paid evaluators.

Northern Lights volunteers will participate to handle such logistics as check-in, field marking, player rotation, and so forth. Northern Lights coaches are encouraged to attend, and may take notes privately, but may not provide instructions or feedback during assessments.

Players will be rotated through games using a pre-defined rotation system. It is our intention that players play with and against many different assessment participants, and are seen by different assessment evaluators.

What are evaluators looking for?

Technical skills

- Individual ball skills, passing, receiving, shooting, jockeying, tackling

Tactical ability

- Movement with and without the ball, vision, decision-making, speed of play, transition play, communication

Athleticism

- Speed, quickness, aggressiveness, "heart"

Attitude

- Sportsmanship, respect for others and the game

NOT

- Who wins the games, who scores the goals

Scoring:

Players will be scored in 4 categories with the maximum points for each being 15.

- Passing Skills
- Speed & Agility
- Anticipation & Awareness
- Defensive Skills

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Do defenders score poorly in Small-Sided Games?

Good defenders score well in Small-Sided Games, because good defenders have good skills, and tactical ability. Players who “hang way back” and do not engage in play do not score well, but this is not the behavior of good defenders. Players who simply “boot” the ball will also score poorly; again, this is not what good defenders do. Defenders need the same ball skills as forwards and midfielders. Defensive skills (including jockeying and tackling) are needed by all positions, and are part of what is being looked for by evaluators.

What happens to the assessment score data?

After assessments, the independent evaluators tally all scores and generate a report for our Club. This information will be confidential and will not be shared until the team selection process begins. Northern Lights Soccer Club reserves the right to not publish raw data.

How are Goalkeepers evaluated?

It is our belief that goalkeepers should possess the same footskills as field players; in addition, the goalkeepers should be skilled at duties pertaining to their specialized position. At younger ages we will not be evaluating goalkeepers because we feel that almost everyone should be trying to play this position. As our youth get older and as teams are promoted, we will incorporate goalkeeper skills into our assessment package. For example, at the ages of 10 or 11 there will be no goalkeeper assessments; at ages 16 and 17 or at Classic 1 and Premier divisions we will have goalkeeper assessments. At this time, Goalkeeper skills will be included with coaches’ input for the younger ages and lower divisions.

How are coaches chosen?

The Coaching Director will ask coaches if they desire to continue coaching. The selection of coaches is made at the discretion of the Coaching Director, with final approval required by the NLS Committee. The coaching director will consider several factors when selecting coaches:

- The desire of last year’s coach
- Input obtained from parents and players throughout the year
- Coaches evaluations
- The results of assessments, if the coach is a parent at the age group
- Number of players from previous year’s team
- Coaching experience and education

Each position will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Coaching a particular team or level one year does not guarantee that a coach will be asked to coach the team in following years. It also does not guarantee that the coach’s child will automatically make the team. However, in some cases, a player may be elevated to a higher team in order to have a highly-regarded coach continue working with an existing team (which counts as a Coach’s Pick).

How are teams formed from the assessment results?

Team Formation for U10 players at the Maroon and Gold Levels

- The evaluators will determine how many players are qualified to play in the maroon level. If at least 8 players qualify as maroon players, a maroon team may be formed of the top 8-10 players from the evaluation rankings.
- The coach may then coach pick 1-2 players from the group of true age players.
- The coach will pick no more than 2 players and the maximum roster size is 12.
- Players not assigned to a maroon team will be distributed equally between gold teams by the Coaching Director. Adjustments to gold teams may be made to accommodate coaching assignments and siblings. Players who wish to play-up will be assigned to teams if space allows.
- All team formations are subject to MYSA policies & rules and may be altered to adhere to MYSA changes.

Team Formation for U11 players for Classic 2 and Classic 3 Levels

- The top 10 players from the evaluation rankings automatically make the Classic 2 team.

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- The coach may then coach pick, from the evaluation ranking list, 1 to 4 players depending upon how many s/he chooses to carry, up to a maximum roster size of 14.
- Players not qualifying for the Classic 2 level team will be equally distributed between the Classic 3 level teams by the Coaching Director.
- All team formations are subject to MYSA policies & rules and may be altered to adhere to MYSA changes.

Team Formation for U12 players for Classic 1, 2, and 3 Level

- The top 8 players from the assessment rankings, who were on last year's U11 highest-level team roster, automatically make the highest-level U12 team no matter where they scored, per MYSA policies & rules. If there were 2 teams at the same level, highest team will be determined by highest points in league play from previous summer. This ensures the core group returning and rewards their efforts from the previous year.
- The next highest ranking 3 players from assessments will make the highest level U12 team whether or not they were on the previous year's roster of the highest U11 team
- The coach may then coach pick, from the evaluation ranking list, 1 to 3 players depending on how many s/he chooses to carry, up to a maximum roster size of 14.
- Players not qualifying for the highest-level team at U12 will be placed on the next level team(s) based on their ranking by the evaluators, and the coaching director.
- The Coaching Director will form the initial roster with the next 10 highest ranked players, allowing the coach 1-4 picks from the remaining players
- All team formations are subject to MYSA policies & rules and may be altered to adhere to MYSA changes.

Team Formation for U13 – U19 players for Classic 1, Classic 2 and Classic 3

- The top 12 players from the evaluation rankings, who were on last year's highest-level roster, automatically make the team no matter where they scored. This ensures the core group returning and rewards their efforts from the previous year.
- The coach will then coach pick, from the evaluation ranking list, the next 4 to 6 players depending on how many s/he chooses to carry, up to a maximum roster size of 18.
- Players not qualifying for the highest-level team at U13-U16 will be placed on the next level team(s) based on their ranking by the evaluators and the Coaching Director. The Coaching Director will form the initial roster with the next 11 highest ranked players, allowing the coach 1-7 picks from the remaining players
- All team formations are subject to MYSA policies & rules and may be altered to adhere to MYSA changes.

Team Formation for U14 – U19 players for Premier

- The top 10 players from the evaluation rankings, who were on last year's highest-level roster, automatically make the team no matter where they scored. This ensures the core group returning and rewards their efforts from the previous year.
- The coach will then coach pick, from the evaluation ranking list, the next 4 to 6 players depending on how many s/he chooses to carry, up to a maximum roster size of 18 (for U14-U16) or 22 (for U17-U19).
- All team formations are subject to MYSA policies & rules and may be altered to adhere to MYSA changes.

What are Coach's Picks, and how do they work?

A Coach's Pick is a change that a coach is allowed to make to the assessment-produced roster. Coach's Picks are not required; they are optional for coaches.

Coach's Picks are intended to be used to:

- Use the coach's knowledge of the players, including attributes such as cooperation, attendance, and so forth
- Allow the coach to select a player who missed assessments

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- Allow the coach to select a player who simply had a bad day during assessments
- Allow the coach to add players from late registrations
- Allow the coach to select a particular keeper, or part-time keeper

What constitutes a Coach's Pick?

A single Coach's Pick could be used to:

- Add a player to the roster who was not placed there as a result of assessments (i.e. increase the roster size). For example, to add a player who was ill or absent.
- Remove a player from the roster who was placed there as a result of assessments (i.e. decrease the roster size). For example, to remove a player who the coach knows has a very poor attendance record.
- Swap one player for another (essentially adding one player and removing another player at the same time). Note that both parts of this swap (the adding and removing) must be done at the same time. If a coach removes a player, then adds another at a later date, it would count as two Coach's Picks.

Each of the above constitutes a single Coach's Pick.

Can a Coach's Pick be used on late registrants?

Yes. The coach may desire to leave roster spots open and save one or more Coach's Picks for late registrations. If the coach has used all available Coach's Picks, then late registrants will be placed at the discretion of the NLS Committee or spring assessments.

Can a Coach's Pick be used on the coach's child?

Yes, on occasion. Coach selection is made at the discretion of the Coaching Director, subject to approval by the NLS Committee. If the Coaching Director decides that a particular coach would be the most appropriate selection for a particular team, then the coach may use a Coach's Pick on their own child if necessary.

Can Coach's Picks be used on players from different age groups?

No. Coach's Picks may only be used for players at the age group of the team; except where school grade is equivalent.

Can the coach replace players who leave the team after it's formed?

If a player decides to leave the team (and is released by NLS) after the team is formed:

- If that player was a Coach's Pick, then the coach "recovers" the pick and may use it again on a different player
- The player can be replaced by the next player in the ranking from the assessments, subject to the discretion of the Coaching Director (this depends on when the player leaves; the Coaching Director needs to ensure the viability of the lower team). The player may be replaced by a Coach's Pick, if the coach has any unused picks remaining.

When will I be notified of my team placement?

It is our desire to notify players of their status as quickly as possible. However, we have adapted a policy to not release U9 thru U14 results until after the fall season is complete (late October). Results will be published on the Northern Lights website when the entire age group is completed (not just one team). Individual scores are not published, and player listings will be in alphabetical order (not rank order from assessments). Under no circumstances are Coach's Picks revealed.

What should I do if I think my child should have been placed on a higher-level team?

First, recognize that the assessment process is not perfect. However, parents and players must recognize that every effort has been made to remove bias from the process. We have many examples of players who were placed on a lower level team for a year, then re-made the top team in subsequent years. While this can be distressing to players and parents in the short-term, sometimes players in this circumstance have their most enjoyable years, as they play significant minutes and assume leadership roles. Players at all levels receive the same curriculum of professional training.

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It is often easy (and natural) for parents to view their own child in an overly optimistic light. In the long run, it is much better for a player to play at a level commensurate with their ability than to be elevated beyond their current skills.

We had fun this year. Can't we keep the team together for next year?

While we're glad that your current season was enjoyable, we are committed to our philosophy of open assessments. Players develop at different rates, and movement between teams from year-to-year is common. We also have new players in the community every year. Hopefully, as players play with different teams from year to year, they will develop even more friends.

If I volunteer for the board, or other NLS positions, will my child be shown any preference?

No. As much as we'd love for you to volunteer, it doesn't change your child's evaluation or team placement. No preference is given to children of committee members or other NLS volunteers. Committee members' children are currently playing at all levels within the Club.