

Cherry Hill Soccer Club

Celebrates Excellence



From tots, to recreation level, to top-flight travel teams, the Cherry Hill Soccer Club remains at the top of its game. Formed in 1972 as the township's first soccer organization, the Club continues to live up to its motto: "Our goal is to have fun."

Nowhere is this more evident than in the club's recreation division. Boys and girls can join the Club as early as age 3 in the Soccer Tots program. According to Mark Pattison, president of the Club's recreation division, "I love to come out on Saturday mornings and watch the kids in the Tots program. Not only do you get to see the kids learning the game for the first time but you also see the parents, grandparents, and siblings getting involved as well. We bring the entire family into the soccer experience."

One visit to the Croft Fields proves his point. On a recent Saturday morning, kids in matching bright blue uniforms took the field and were joined by their parents for a game called "Robot." The game not only taught basic soccer skills, such as dribbling techniques, but also gave these young players and their parents the opportunity to learn and play together.

As the Tot players left the field with their smiles and snacks, the older recreation players took over, each with their own soccer ball provided to them by the Club. "At the recreation level, we focus on learning skills and enjoying the game," said Pattison. "We receive tremendous positive feedback from our parents because they know their kids are not only improving their skills, but they are also learning about teamwork and having fun."

The small-sided fields help. "There are no kids picking the grass in right field in our Club," said Pattison. He emphasized that "at the recreation level, it is important to play on smaller fields and with fewer players on each team. That way, each player gets more involved in the game. When they do that, they can't get lost or discouraged."

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More on Page 6

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From the Cover

As the players' skills develop along with their love of the game, the Club provides them with the opportunity to transition from recreation to travel soccer. The Club allows players at age 7 to choose between recreation or travel. The Club's travel division is unique in that it caters to players of all skill levels. "Our travel philosophy," said division President John Martines, "is to make sure that every player that wants to play travel soccer in our town gets the opportunity to do so."

In that respect, the Cherry Hill Soccer Club stands out from other local clubs. "We recognize that there are players in our Club who can succeed at the highest levels and, for those players, we field teams in the top flight divisions. But we also realize that there are other players who love the sport just as much but whose skills are better suited for the middle or lower flights. We field teams at those levels as well. It's a win-win for everybody," explained Martines.

Every player gets an equal chance to excel within their own skill level. At no additional cost to parents, the Club provides its travel players with paid professional trainers who work side-by-side with the Club's own coaches, all of whom are licensed by US Soccer, to provide top flight instruction.

The teams not only participate in the prestigious South Jersey Soccer League and the South Jersey Girls Soccer Association, but the Club also pays for its travel teams to participate in local and national soccer tournaments and festivals. "The kids really love the tournaments," said Martines. "Not only do they get to play against competition from other states and regions, but the players and parents really bond with each other. It's safe to say that a number of lifelong friendships were born at these tournaments."

Club President Paul Besancon emphasized that, despite all of the on-the-field success the Club has enjoyed, it remains focused on fulfilling its motto. "When you say your goal is to have fun, you have to deliver on that promise each week," said Besancon. "I think we do that as well as anyone can."

More information about the Cherry Hill Soccer Club can be found at the Club's Website at www.cherryhillsoccer.com where you can learn more about the Club's philosophy and register to join both the travel and recreation divisions. The Club is more than happy to answer any questions sent to recreation@cherryhillsoccer.com or travel@cherryhillsoccer.com. [Adv.]