

Club Soccer

By Leanne Rose

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We are a California homeschooling family. My 14 year old son is a talented soccer player and after competing in AYSO (open to all) he tried out for a more competitive "Club Soccer Team". In Calif. these are under the jurisdiction of California Youth Soccer Association but I believe most states have their own version of this next level after AYSO. This is the level of play (in California) that the college coaches are looking at. There are scouts at many of the tournaments we go to. Colleges look at, but are not really interested in, the player's high school careers. We have been told repeatedly that it doesn't matter if the player has any high school playing experience! It is my understanding that most soccer scholarships are awarded from performance on the club soccer team level. (Check out the "college" section of the CYSA site for info)

Another arena open to homeschoolers interested in college soccer scholarships is participation in the "Olympic Development Program" which is the program used to select the National Team members and begins at age 13. We participated in the regional and state levels last year - after attending a tryout open to everyone. We saw many college recruiters at the state tryout tournament watching the 17 year old players. They are changing the tryout method this year and the player will have to be recommended at the regional level by a coach, and then will be observed. (This is discussed on the above web site under the O.D.P. section).

To find out about club team openings in our area we checked at the local soccer store where they regularly posted flyers for tryouts. We had called some numbers in the phone book under soccer listings but didn't have any luck that way. Our AYSO coaches were also not informed about what was available at this level.

Our soccer club practices from the beginning of February until the end of November, and ODP continued for a short time after that. They have monthly tournaments from March until August, which usually involve traveling, and then play in a league from August until November. They practice 4 to 6 hours a week; and most Saturdays, during league play, are spent traveling to games. Homeschooling is well suited to this schedule - and has been a blessing to us because we have a 45 minute drive just to get to practice!

The high school soccer season here is from November until February. During this time, my son and another player not participating in high school soccer, continued to train privately with their coach twice a week. This kept his skills sharp, and his energy level under control! He would have liked to play on a high school team, but the local school district that we're in doesn't allow participation so far, and I couldn't get past the secretary at our local private Catholic high school, which is the only private high school in our area with a soccer team. One smaller school near us (not our district) said that he could play if he took at least one class all year AND they would have to approve our curriculum. It is a 20 minute drive in the opposite direction from the way we go to soccer practice - so wasn't really an option - but it was interesting that the athletic director at this school reaffirmed to me that participation in club soccer was the only route to a college soccer career for most boys.

I would be happy to answer any questions about this option for homeschoolers. It has certainly worked for us!

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