Our Philosophy

Since 2004 Rush Pikes Peak has continued to push player development in all arenas. This constant drive to develop players at all levels is demonstrated in the process the club has titled "Player Movement." The process by which a player moves from one roster to another is based upon the player's individual abilities, performance, and evaluations from the Head Coach and Director of Coaching. Player movement has become at times a very controversial topic with numerous opinions. However, the process has clearly proven beneficial to a large number of individual player's growth and development and therefore will remain a major tool within the club's operating strategy. The following guideline outlines the reasoning and mechanics involved with Player Movement.

First, try and simplify the process to the fundamental reason for coaching youth soccer. All of us are here to develop soccer players. That is simply a fact and our excellence as a club is due to that simple focus! Therefore when looking at the players the Head Coaches, Assistants and Directors of Coaching must ask themselves the same questions with every player:

How does the player perform in games?

Is the level of the game too high and therefore they give the ball away, hide and don't compete and never touch the ball? Is the level of the game too low? Do they score in every game, or dribble by most opponents with ease and as a defender does the opponent only rarely beat them? With most of the players the level is suitable, they are challenged but find success, they are highly productive in a few games, but average in most.

In the promoting of a player we are looking for certain characteristics. Does the player posses one or a mixture of the following traits: technical speed, tactical speed, pure physical speed and a strong psychological demeanor?

In the relegating of a player we are looking at the same characteristics but the player has been found to be lacking in these areas.

How are the players training habits?

The player will demonstrate these through their commitment level and intensity and excitement during training.

Is movement in the player's best interest?

If the player is moving up will this what they really want to do based on the expectations of the next level? If the player is moving down will this ensure more playing time in an environment they will enjoy? Will they be competitive at that level?

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Is movement in the team's best interest?

In the opinion of many this is where the process becomes difficult. We all know that it is not easy to give up top players. However, we all must remember that we are here for the development of the individual players and we must do what is in their best interest. For example, Aleisha Cramer and Conor Casey both missed USYS Regional and National Championship events at 18 and 19 so that they could train and compete with US National teams. How is this in the best interest of the team? It required other players to step up and take on new roles within the team. It is an opportunity for other players to grow up and be developed. This is the same process regardless of what level it takes place within the club, from Advanced to Academy. This is why the club has a competitive branch, to give players the opportunity to compete at the highest level that they can.

Answering these four questions regarding each individual on a team will demonstrate the necessity for Player Movement with regard to each individual situation. All parties involved should give this considerable thought before a player is asked to move teams. The mechanics of how a player is actually moved requires a great deal of clear communication and solid decision making between the Director of Coaching and the Head Coaches involved.

This process of Player Movement begins each year with Player Placement meetings that occur before tryouts and continues throughout the spring and fall seasons. Throughout the year it is critical that the Head Coach and Director of Coaching communicate with regard to all phases of Player Movement. The following outlines the general mechanics of this process:

> The Director of Coaching must give final approval to any player movement. Any attempt by a coach to circumvent this process for team or personal benefit will not be tolerated.

> The process begins with the Pre-Placement meetings that occur each year before tryouts. At this time the Head Coach should come prepared to nominate players for both relegation and promotion. The Head Coach must discuss their thoughts with the Director of Coaching prior to this meeting. Head Coaches should use the form in this manual to help prepare for this meeting. Head Coaches should be a bit "pushy" with regard to player promotion, as it is their job to promote players. Proper promotion demonstrates a coach's true abilities. Head Coaches should also be prepared to give a realistic and relevant assessment of a player they are relegating.

> In the promotion of a player there is no ladder. For example a player from an Advanced team can go straight to the Nike team. A player can jump up to as high a level team as is necessary to ensure their development. In relegating a player, players should not normally be dropped more than one team; from Swoosh to Advanced 1 for example. Usually this drop is sufficient and we want to try and keep players playing. If dropping two teams is a possibility, speak with a Director of Coaching and they will make the final decision. A player being dropped can also be looked at to move up an age group if an appropriate level can be found.

After Tryouts

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After the actual tryout has ended, "New Players," (those from outside the club) are factored in at a meeting usually directly following the field session. We pick the best players at this time; regardless of where they come from. The club is loyal to players within the club first, but if a player from outside the club demonstrates that they are clearly better then the one inside the club they should be offered a place on the roster.

While setting up the roster we use the following guidelines:

Academy U11 & U12	14-16 players	Advanced U11 & U12	15-16 players
Academy U13 & U14	15-16 players	Advanced U13 & U14	16-17 players
Academy U15 & U16	16-18 players	Advanced U15 & U16	16-18 players
Academy U17 & U18	18 players	Advanced U17 & U18	18 players

All teams above U15 should try and carry two Goalkeepers.

These numbers are a guideline and exceptions are made with the approval of the Director of Coaching.

Constant evaluation of the players must be taking place from the first training session through the rest of the year. Directors of Coaching track this process in logbooks. Through the season Head Coaches need to make sure to have regular discussions with regard to players with the Director of Coaching and the other Coaches in their age group.

Actual player movement during the season is rare and should occur for one of the following reasons:

> Numerous injuries create low numbers, and then a player(s) is asked to move up.
> A player clearly demonstrates they are misplaced either too high or too low. This type of movement usually comes via a recommendation from the Director of Coaching.
> In severe cases a player is disruptive to the team.

The circumstances of each case are different, but in general these are the main reasons for Player Movement during a season.

There are several means by which we can look at a player in a new environment before an actual transfer takes place. The first is to train the player with a new team. *These sessions are designed to help the player develop and may or may not result in a permanent transfer. During the actual season these sessions are primarily for the development of the players* .
This should first occur under supervision of the Director of Coaching at a staff training session. If it occurs outside of this session the Director of Coaching must have prior knowledge. These types of sessions are absolutely necessary for players to develop, and we as coaches must encourage them. However, Head Coaches are responsible to *clearly* communicate with the other coaches in their age group and the Director of Coaching prior to the training session. The second major way of looking at a player is to "Guest Play" in a tournament. This allows the coach to look at a player with the team in

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a competitive environment for several days. Guest playing should be done as often as possible without disturbing team's schedules. We want to give players as many opportunities to play as possible. Again, this form of Player Movement may or may not result in a transfer.

Tryouts

Rush Pikes Peak holds tryouts twice a year. The tryout for girls U11 through U18 and boys U11 through U14 occurs in the last week of May and first few days of June. The boys U15 and above takes place in late October or early November. Tryouts are held to assess players from outside the club who are interested in joining the Rush. Players are placed in one of two areas the Academy, which consist of the Nike and Swoosh teams, or the Advanced, which encompasses between one and five teams. These tryouts run from a two hour session to several sessions over a number of days and usually consist of 4v4, 7v7, and 11v11 games. Current Rush players do not have to attend tryouts, they simply need to make their intentions to return known to their Head Coach. The reason current Rush players are not mandated to attend is that they are being evaluated over an entire year. This is the proper method of evaluating players. Rush players are promoted and relegated throughout the year, and discussed in pre-tryout meetings held every year, before any of the "new" players are added into the equation.

Tryouts in and of themselves require a tremendous number of man hours to hold, and the environment created is to judge a player's abilities in a couple of hours. This is an extremely difficult process, and clearly not the most ideal. For example, if in an elementary educational setting a student were tested only once per year, in a test that they only have two hours to complete, it would be difficult to judge how much they've truly learned, whereas if a student was tested on a regular basis with their progress being monitored regularly it is more likely they will learn. Therefore, the club has selected the method of Player Movement based on what is in the player's best interest.

Tryouts for Under 11

The tryouts for U11s operate in a very similar manner to all other tryouts. Players play games, usually 4v4 or 7v7, where they are evaluated on their individual soccer abilities. Every player is given a number and the Directors of Coaching and staff begin the process of forming groups of players with like abilities. The players are placed, according to ability, into the Academy or the Advanced division of the club. This process takes place over three separate days of training. It is in the best interest of the player to attend all three tryouts. However, if they are unable to attend all three they need to make it known to a Director of Coaching. During these three days, individual players may receive phone calls regarding their place within the competitive program. All of the players should receive a phone call within 72 hours of the final tryout date. Rush Pikes Peak will make anywhere from three to seven teams per age group depending upon the quality and number of players available at this time.

Conclusion

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Player Movement is a critical component of player development and is a necessity. In this club and country there is not nearly enough movement to accelerate a player's growth. In all honesty, the Directors of Coaching are pushing for a player to belong to a club not an individual team. This would allow player movement to occur weekly with no penalty, similar to the European club structures. Players could move up and down teams and age groups with no penalty based upon their performance in games and training. This is an ideal situation for player development, and clearly in the player's best interest. It is not yet a reality, but in the coming years, we must be prepared and excited for this opportunity to develop players in an even better environment.

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