



Dear Sparta Families,

Beginning with the 2026/2027 season, US Youth Soccer, US Club Soccer, and American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) are enacting a change to the age group formation cut-off date. This means that soccer leagues nationwide will be moving away from a **birth-year** registration model (age groups based on a January 1 - December 31 timeframe), towards a **school-year** registration model (age groups based on an August 1 - July 31 timeframe).

[Statement from national governing bodies regarding the age group cut-off change](#)

This will impact how Sparta teams and rosters are formed because the cut-off date determines a player's age group placement. In order to remain eligible for participation in competitive leagues within the region, including the WPL and EA, the school-year registration model will take effect with Sparta tryouts for the 2026-2027 season.

Please Note:

- This is **not** simply a shift to grade-based soccer teams. There will continue to be mixed-grade teams.
- Although Washington schools use a September 1 school year cut-off date, the soccer age group cut-off date of August 1 was determined at the national level.
- Competitive soccer clubs throughout our region will be implementing the age group cut-off change, so we can expect to see ripple effects in competitive play across all teams and all age groups.

2026-2027 Age Group Assignments:

Age Group	Players born between	Sparta Team	
		Boys	Girls
U8	8/1/2018 - 7/31/2019	B18-19	G18-19
U9	8/1/2017 - 7/31/2018	B17-18	G17-18
U10	8/1/2016 - 7/31/2017	B16-17	G16-17
U11	8/1/2015 - 7/31/2016	B15-16	G15-16
U12	8/1/2014 - 7/31/2015	B14-15	G14-15
U13	8/1/2013 - 7/31/2014	B13-14	G13-14
U14	8/1/2012 - 7/31/2013	B12-13	G12-13
U15	8/1/2011 - 7/31/2012	B11-12	G11-12
U16	8/1/2010 - 7/31/2011	B10-11	G10-11
U17	8/1/2009 - 7/31/2010	B09-10	G09-10
U18/19	8/1/2007 - 7/31/2009	B07-09	G07-09



Sparta Tryouts:

- Will be held in February 2026 for U16+ boys age groups, and in May 2026 for all others.
- Players will try out “on age” based on the school year registration model (Aug 1 – Jul 31).
- Players will continue to be evaluated based on the quality of their football ability.
- Before tryouts, Sparta coaches will be encouraged to perform player observation sessions, including hosting open sessions for the players moving into their age groups. Dates and times will be announced to membership once they are scheduled.
- Coaching teams will work together to share information about transitioning players, while also prioritizing an objective assessment of their football ability.
- See [Sparta Tryout FAQs](#) for more information.

There may be exceptions to the requirement that players try out and play *on age*. Any “play up” requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and must be approved by the Director of Coaching prior to tryouts (e.g. a player may not attend tryouts for an older age group without permission).

See league specific play up rules: [WPL \(rule 303\)](#), and [EA](#) (pages 4, 7, and 14).

Potential reasons a *play up* request might be approved:

- Goalplayers, if a team in the age group above does not already have a goalplayer.
- If allowing play ups would mean that an age group team can be formed.
- If a player isn’t consistently reaching *optimal overload** in training **or** in game settings within their own age group.

***Optimal Overload**, means *there is a consistent level of challenge when a player performs their football actions, specifically in terms of the quality of players they are playing against in training and games.*

It’s important to note there are potential benefits for those transitioning players who will compete *on age* in their new age group, including: having a bigger impact on the newly transitioned team, increased playing time, the flexibility to play across multiple age groups, and the stability of not needing to change teams again at a later date.

While it is understandable that such a significant change might cause hesitation and initial unease, please know that Sparta coaches and leadership will continue to work together to develop an intentional approach to navigating the shift. As always, a firm commitment to individual player development remains Sparta’s top priority. With player selection principles firmly in place, and ongoing collaboration and shared feedback between coaching teams, we are confident that we will manage this transition in the best way possible.

Thank you for your continued support!

NORTAC Executive Board and Director of Coaching