

SYC SPOTLIGHT

ISSUE 1 • JAN 2026

SYC TRAVEL SOCCER MAGAZINE



NATIONAL CHAMPIONS





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*Esteban Maldonado, SYC Travel
Soccer Technical Director*

Dear SYC Families,

As we close out an incredible 2025, we're proud to reflect on the growth of SYC and the community that continues to drive it forward.

A COMMUNITY AND A VISION

When I moved to Springfield community 10 years ago, I felt that SYC was a "sleeping giant." When the opportunity arose almost seven years ago to join SYC, I did not hesitate to take on this new role within the community. I now have three children—two girls and one boy—playing in the SYC Travel Soccer program, and I am excited for them to enjoy their soccer experience alongside yours, supported by our talented coaches and diverse community.

On my first meeting with the SYC coaching staff in February 2019, I told them that I wanted SYC to be the destination club for player development in the DMV. At the time, that goal may have seemed ambitious. Looking back now, the club has come a long way in the past 6 years. We are proud to have brought the best national platform leagues in the nation to SYC, and we've seen:

- Hundreds of players move on to play in college
- More than 30 players selected for various national youth teams
- Growth into one of the largest travel programs in Northern Virginia
- The development of strong, technically-sound players leading to some of the most exciting teams in the DMV area.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE (continued...)

EXPECTATIONS ON THE SIDELINES

SYC families are among the most passionate supporters in youth soccer, and that energy is an essential part of who we are. As we prepare for another exciting year, I want to share an important reminder:

We must always demonstrate our best behavior on game days.

Please continue to cheer loudly for your players and their teammates, and enjoy the games with pride and enthusiasm. At the same time, let's remain respectful toward opponents, officials, referees, and coaches. Our collective sportsmanship is just as important as our performance on the field.

PARTNERING FOR THE FUTURE

The SYC Travel Soccer leadership team is always open to your feedback and ideas to help enhance the experience for our players. We are committed to strengthening connections within our community—players, families, local businesses, and partner organizations—to create more opportunities to come together and support one another.

Please never hesitate to reach out with thoughts, suggestions, or new ideas. We are excited for the future of SYC Soccer and everything we will accomplish together.

Here's to an exceptional 2026 soccer year. Thank you for being part of SYC and for trusting us with your child's soccer development.

Best,

Este



2025 A YEAR OF EXCELLENCE



#1 YOUTH BOYS CLUB

#3 YOUTH GIRLS CLUB
(Rankings App)



1 MLS NEXT NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

3rd National Championship in club history



5 MLS NEXT HOMETOWN TEAMS QUALIFIED FOR NATIONAL PLAYOFFS

Most in the DMV



2 NATIONAL SEMIFINALISTS



2025 VYSA BOYS COMPETITIVE COACH OF THE YEAR



IN OUR INAUGURAL SEASON OF GIRLS ACADEMY:



2 GA TEAMS QUALIFIED FOR NATIONAL PLAYOFFS



SOUTH MID-ATLANTIC GA CONFERENCE CHAMPIONS



6

EARNED THEIR USSF NATIONAL B LICENSE

3

EARNED THEIR USSF NATIONAL C LICENSE

Many others continued their coaching education.

1 UNDEFEATED GA TEAM

2 UNDEFEATED GA ASPIRE TEAMS



NCAA COLLEGE COMMITMENTS



9 PLAYERS CALLED TO YOUTH NATIONAL TEAMS



7 NATIONS

USA, Honduras, Peru, El Salvador, Bolivia, Poland, and Palestine

3 PRO SIGNINGS

(France, USA, Honduras)

1 CALLED TO THE SENIOR NATIONAL TEAM

19 U.S. ID CENTER INVITATIONS

Boys & Girls



7 PLAYERS JOINED TOP MLS PRO ACADEMIES



VIRGINIA STATE CUP



SYC captured more VA State Cup Final Four appearances & championships than any other VA club

Accepted into **MLS NEXT Academy**, **GA Aspire**, and **USL Youth**.



2026-27  MLS NEXT  GIRLS ACADEMY

ID SESSIONS

U13-U19



REGISTRATION NOW OPEN
sycva.com/TravelSoccer



**PEPE
MALDONADO**

U13
2026/27

**HEAD
COACHES**



**ANDREW
TERAN**

Fall 2025 USYNT ID CENTER INVITEES

This fall, several SYC standouts across our U14 & U15 boys and girls teams earned invitations to the U.S. Soccer Talent ID Centers — elite training environments designed to identify and develop the nation's top young players and a key pathway to the Youth National Teams.

US SOCCER TALENT ID CENTER USA

2011 • U15
SEPTEMBER 17TH
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA

4



BRINLEY
MANCINI

US SOCCER TALENT ID CENTER USA

2011 • U15
SEPTEMBER 17TH
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA

6



VICTORIA
GINES

US SOCCER TALENT ID CENTER USA

2011 • U15
SEPTEMBER 17TH
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA

10



JULIANA
MALEKZADEH

US SOCCER TALENT ID CENTER USA

2012 • U14
SEPTEMBER 17TH
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA

3



QUINN
SPURLOCK

US SOCCER TALENT ID CENTER USA

2012 • U14
SEPTEMBER 17TH
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA

4



MADELYN
BECKMAN

US SOCCER TALENT ID CENTER USA

2012 • U14
SEPTEMBER 17TH
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA

13



LEIGH
MARCH

US SOCCER TALENT ID CENTER USA

2011 • U15
SEPTEMBER 17TH
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA

7

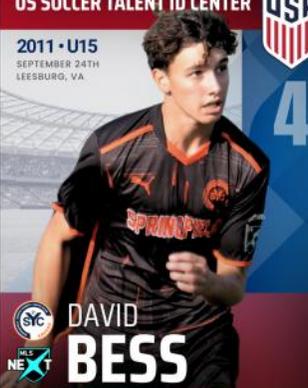


KATE
FUERST

US SOCCER TALENT ID CENTER USA

2011 • U15
SEPTEMBER 24TH
LEESBURG, VA

4



DAVID
BESS

US SOCCER TALENT ID CENTER USA

2011 • U15
SEPTEMBER 24TH
LEESBURG, VA

40



JOSHUA
DARYOES

US SOCCER TALENT ID CENTER USA

2012 • U14
SEPTEMBER 24TH
LEESBURG, VA

1



LEO
CHASE

US SOCCER TALENT ID CENTER USA

2012 • U14
SEPTEMBER 24TH
LEESBURG, VA

8

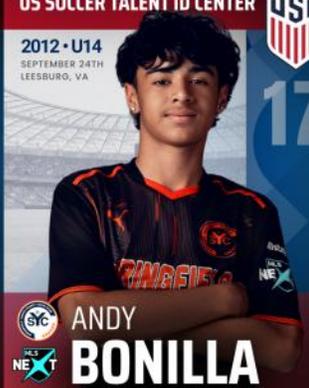


SANTIAGO
RIVERO

US SOCCER TALENT ID CENTER USA

2012 • U14
SEPTEMBER 24TH
LEESBURG, VA

17



ANDY
BONILLA

US SOCCER TALENT ID CENTER USA

2012 • U14
SEPTEMBER 24TH
LEESBURG, VA

19



KAIDEN
HECTOR

US SOCCER TALENT ID CENTER USA

2012 • U14
SEPTEMBER 24TH
LEESBURG, VA

21



MAYOWA
SALU

US SOCCER TALENT ID CENTER USA

2012 • U14
SEPTEMBER 24TH
LEESBURG, VA

33



TYSON
THOMPSON



2024/2025 BOYS COMPETITIVE **COACH OF THE YEAR**

CONGRATULATIONS TO

Hasan GHALEB

**Awarded VYSA'S 2024/2025 Boys
Competitive Coach of the Year!**

Coach Hasan had a fantastic year with his teams. He led the 2012 SYC MLS Next Homegrown team to the MLS Next Cup National Championship, making them the first-ever Virginia team to win a national championship in MLS Next. He also coaches the 2018 Boys, who claimed the Rising Cup Championship earlier this year.

Technical Director, Este Maldonado, shares his thoughts, "It's hard to find a coach as passionate and as committed as Coach Hasan 'El Turco.' Not only is he a great coach, but he is also a team player within the SYC coaching staff. He's often the first to help cover other coaches when needed. We have worked together for more than a decade, and I have seen him make a positive impact on hundreds of players. This award is well deserved, especially after winning the MLS Next Cup National Championship."

Coach Hasan Ghaleb — the SYC Family is incredibly proud of you!



**'OF THE YEAR'
ANNUAL
AWARDS
WINNERS**



NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

SYC Makes History!

2012 MLS Next Are National Champions
& 2011 MLS Next Battled to the Semifinals!

What a moment for SYC soccer! We are absolutely thrilled to celebrate the **SYC 2012 MLS Next team** for capturing the club's third National Championship!





The boys delivered a spectacular performance, going head-to-head with the top teams in the country, including formidable MLS Pro academies, to emerge victorious—an incredible achievement for these young athletes.





But the success didn't stop there! A massive congratulations also goes out to the **2011 MLS Next Boys**. Led by Coach Alex, the team had a phenomenal run to the National Semifinals, coming agonizingly close to the Championship game before falling just short on a heartbreaking penalty shootout vs MLS Pro Academy Houston Dynamo. Congrats on a truly great run, boys!



To all the players on both teams, the dedicated parents, and the exceptional coaching and support staff—**Coach Hasan, Eddie, Coach Alex**, and everyone involved—a heartfelt thank you for your commitment and hard work. These milestones are a testament to your effort.

The future of SYC soccer is exceptionally bright!

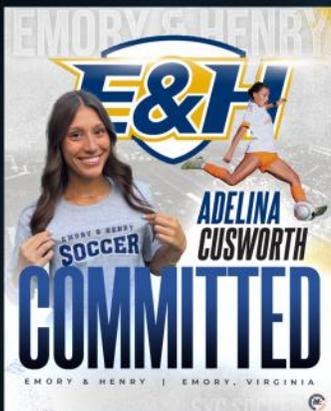
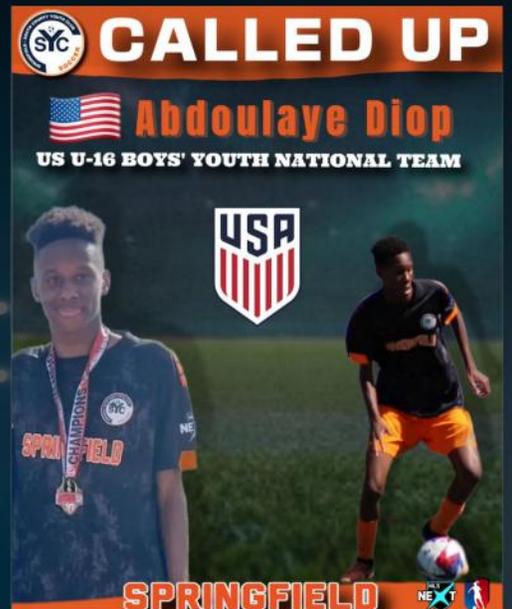
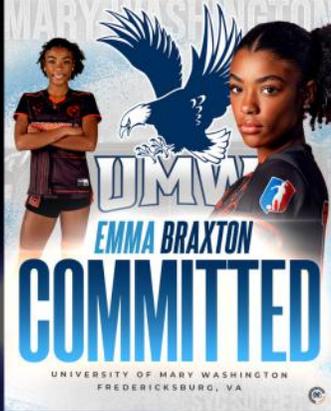


Photos by John Chase | @chasetheimages



MLS NEXT CUP 2025 U13 CHAMPIONS

- #1 Leo Chase
- #8 Santi Rivero
- #9 Kwasi Minta
- #17 Jace Argentina
- #33 Tyson Thompson
- #61 Omer Gumruk
- #62 Aiden Zepeda
- #64 Logan Wynn
- #67 Matthias Puma
- #71 Andy Bonilla
- #78 Paxton Davis
- #80 Aaron Benitez
- #81 Eamonn Hammond
- #84 Daniel Cruz
- #88 Kaiden Hector
- #90 Jonah Abate
- #97 Mason Cox



SYC ON THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE & STAGE

5 BENJI VELASQUEZ
SOCCER

DEFENSIVE
PLAYER
OF THE YEAR

5 *Benji*

FIRST TEAM

30

DAVIS
ISABELLE

SENIOR D

ATLANTIC EAST CONFERENCE

FIRST TEAM GOALKEEPER

SUNYAC

SENIOR - OLIVIA ROUSE - SPRINGFIELD, VA

23

MIDFIELDER
OF THE YEAR

BEN FISHER

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

13

BLANCO
ARIANNA

FIRST-YEAR

ATLANTIC EAST CONFERENCE

FINAL

Jordan × Palestine

2 December 2025
Prince Abdullah Al-Faisal Sports City Stadium
19:45 CMT+3
بتوقيت القدس 18:45

D, ABDEEN
7

#17 *Tobi Mills*

Second TEAM ALL-REGION

SECOND-TEAM
WOMEN'S SOCCER

10

NATALIE SANTANGELO

UNITED SOCCER COACHES
ALL-REGION III
2025

JEREMY ORELLANA

Claró



SYC ANNOUNCES AGE GROUP UPDATE

FAQ

We are announcing an important change to how age groups are formed for all SYC Soccer programs (Travel and Recreation), beginning with the Fall 2026–2027 seasonal year.

SYC will transition from a Calendar-Year system (January 1 – December 31) to a School-Year system (August 1 – July 31) for player placement. This change follows guidance from national associations such as US Youth Soccer. While it may feel like a big adjustment, our goal is to make this transition smooth and positive for every SYC player.

To help families understand what this means, we've created a FAQ with answers to common questions. If you still have questions email us at: SoccerAdmin@sycva.com

What's Changing?

Starting with the 2026–2027 seasonal year, US Youth Soccer (USYS) announced a new age group classification system for youth players. This change applies to all SYC competitive (Travel) and Recreational players, except MLS NEXT Homegrown teams.

Why Are Age Groups Changing?

US Youth Soccer and US Club Soccer are making this change to:

- Increase participation at younger age levels
- Keep more kids playing through high school
- Align with the nationwide soccer season (Aug 1 – July 31)
- Better match school calendars so kids can play with classmates and enjoy a stronger social and developmental experience

What is the “age group transition”?

Starting in 2026–27, age groups will be based on school year (Aug–July) instead of calendar year (Jan–Dec).

Will it affect the current season (2025–26)?

No. The calendar-year system stays in place through the 2025–26 season (ends summer 2026).

Does it affect all leagues?

- No. MLS NEXT Homegrown will keep Jan–Dec age groups.
- All other leagues will switch to the new system (Girls Academy, MLS NEXT II Academy Division, GA Aspire, EDP, National League, NAL, ACELA, and NCSL).

STARTING FALL 2026/2027



AGE GROUP	BIRTHDATE
19U	8/1/07 - 7/31/08
18U	8/1/08 - 7/31/09
17U	8/1/09 - 7/31/10
16U	8/1/10 - 7/31/11
15U	8/1/11 - 7/31/12
14U	8/1/12 - 7/31/13
13U	8/1/13 - 7/31/14
12U	8/1/14 - 7/31/15
11U	8/1/15 - 7/31/16
10U	8/1/16 - 7/31/17
9U	8/1/17 - 7/31/18
8U	8/1/18 - 7/31/19
7U	8/1/19 - 7/31/20
6U	8/1/20 - 7/31/21

Will registration be based on school grade?

Not exactly. Age groups are still based on birth date, but the window shifts to August–July, which aligns closer to school grade.

Which players are most likely to stay in their current group?

Players born August–December will likely remain in their current age group. Example: A player born in October 2016 (currently U10) will stay U10 for 2026–27.

Can my player “play up” to stay with their team?

Play-up requests are reviewed on a limited, case-by-case basis and must be approved by SYC Technical Leadership. Decisions are based on the player’s overall development, ability to safely compete at the higher level, and maturity — not grade alone. Approval is not guaranteed.

How do I know my child’s new age group?

Refer to the US Soccer Age Group Matrix chart above or [click here](#) to use US Soccer’s online tool to input your player’s date of birth, and the results for the August 1 - July 31 formation cycle will indicate the associated age group for the 2026-2027 season.

<https://www.ussoccer.com/ecosystem-review/player-registration/age-group-calculator>

When will tryouts and registration happen?

Details will be shared in early 2026.

Still have questions? Please email us at

SoccerAdmin@sycva.com

MOMENTS

Media Day

Photos by VivaMedia | @ MyVivaMedia





Congrats to the **2012 and 2013 GA Aspire teams** for going undefeated in league play, finishing 10-0-0, and most likely qualifying early for the GA Aspire National Playoffs. Both squads have put in a ton of hard work and are coached by **Coach Marcelo**. Way to go, girls — and Coach Marcelo!



UNDEFEATED



Coach Laura Glew, Girls DOC, shares: “The GA Aspire platform is new to SYC, and we are excited to showcase our girls in this amazing new league that puts female athletes first. We’re also happy that our younger two teams have done so well in year one, proving how bright the future is for our girls’ program.”



SYC SPOTLIGHT

A LOOK INSIDE THE SYC TRAVEL SOCCER COMMUNITY

BE IN THE SYC SPOTLIGHT!

**We want to feature YOU
in the next edition of SYC Spotlight!**

Teams or Individuals are invited to submit:

- Announcements for approved SYC Team Fundraisers
- Photos (games, practices, team bonding, events...)
- Stories (game recaps, player highlights, special moments...)
- Quotes (from players, coaches, or parents...)

Submission Guidelines:

- Announcements must be sized at 8.5" wide x 5.5" high (half-page size) provided as a shared Canva document, .JPG, .PNG, or PDF.
- Stories / written content must be proofread and submitted in editable text format (Word doc, Google Doc, or pasted into the email body).
- Photos: JPEG or PNG format, max file size 10MB each
- Permissions: By submitting, you confirm you have permission to share all content and grant SYC full rights to publish it in print or online.
- Publication: Submissions are subject to review and does not guarantee publication.

Send submissions or questions to media@sycva.com

- Please include team name, photo credits (if applicable) and primary contact person with all submissions.





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SYC GEAR

bit.ly/shopSYC