



## **1. Purpose**

This policy is intended to support coaches with clear, practical guidance for:

- Player selection for the Prairie Soccer League (PSL) season, and
- Managing interest of Junior players (playing up an age group) within the Alliance Academy pathway.

The goal is to help coaches make consistent, development-first decisions, reduce grey areas, and ensure that all movement discussions are aligned, professional, and supportive of both the player and the broader Alliance environment.

This document should be read as a coach handbook / standard operating procedure (SOP) with professional judgement expected, within the framework below.

## **2. Guiding Principles**

All player selection and movement decisions must align with the following principles:

- Long-Term Player Development (LTPD): Decisions prioritize the player's physical, technical, tactical, and psychosocial development over short-term results.
- Appropriate Challenge: Players should be placed where they are most likely to be stretched, supported, and successful.
- Consistency & Equity: All players are evaluated using common criteria and processes.
- Transparency: Clear communication with players, parents, and coaching staff is essential.
- Protection of Younger Teams: Movement of junior players must not undermine the integrity, competitiveness, or development of younger Alliance Academy/PSL teams.

## **3. Scope**

This policy applies to:

- All SYSI Alliance Academy/PSL teams (U14–U17), and
- All Alliance Academy/PSL coaching staff, including Head Coaches, Assistant Coaches, and the Technical Lead.

## **4. PSL Player Selection Framework**

### **4.1 Primary Selection Pool**

The primary selection pool for each PSL team will be:

- Current-age Alliance Academy players, and
- Eligible players identified through the formal PSL Tryout & Evaluation Process.

### **4.2 Evaluation Inputs**

Player selection decisions may be informed by:

- In-season Alliance Academy evaluations and reports
- Formal PSL tryouts (where required)
- Training observations
- Match performance data
- Physical maturation considerations
- Attitude, coachability, and commitment

Final selection decisions rest with the Head Coach, in consultation with the Technical Lead.



## **5. Junior Player Movement (Playing Up) – Guiding Position**

Junior player movement (i.e., a player being considered for an older age group) is:

- An option, not an expectation
- Intentional and selective, not routine
- Driven by readiness and development, not short-term needs

As a guiding rule, players should remain in their natural age group unless there is a clear developmental case for increased challenge.

When considering junior player movement, coaches should weigh:

- The player's current development stage
- The physical and emotional demands of the older age group
- The player's role, confidence, and progression within their current team
- The impact on the younger Alliance Academy/PSL team environment

## **6. Mandatory Protocol for Coaches Considering a Junior Player**

No Head Coach may directly offer, imply, or promise a roster spot to a junior player without following the protocol below.

### **Step 1: Internal Assessment**

The interested Head Coach must conduct an initial internal assessment considering:

- Technical and tactical suitability
- Physical readiness and injury risk
- Psychological readiness (confidence, resilience, adaptability)
- Role clarity (expected minutes, role on the team)

### **Step 2: Consultation with Technical Lead (Mandatory)**

Before any external discussion:

- The Head Coach must consult the SYSI Alliance Technical Lead
- The consultation must include:
  - Rationale for considering the junior player
  - Intended role and expectations
  - Assessment of developmental risk vs reward

#### **Outcome:**

- Approval to proceed to observation phase, or
- Direction to defer or decline consideration

### **Step 3: Consultation with Current (Younger) Team Head Coach (Mandatory)**

If the player is currently rostered on a younger Alliance Academy or PSL team:

- The younger team's Head Coach must be consulted prior to any player/family discussion
- Input must be sought on:
  - Player development trajectory
  - Training habits and load
  - Leadership role within the current team

This step ensures alignment and avoids conflicting messaging.



#### **Step 4: Observation / Trial Phase (If Approved)**

If progression is supported the player may be invited to:

- Selected training sessions, and/or
- Controlled evaluation opportunities

Conditions:

- No guarantees of selection
- Training load must be monitored
- Duration and scope of observation must be clearly defined

#### **Step 5: Technical Review & Recommendation**

Following the observation phase:

- The Head Coach provides feedback to the Technical Lead
- A joint recommendation is made:
  - Proceed with formal consideration, or
  - Retain player in current age group

### **7. Communication Protocol with Players & Families**

#### **7.1 Shared Messaging Principles**

All conversations about junior movement should:

- Be exploratory, not assumptive
- Avoid promises, guarantees, or implied outcomes
- Reinforce that playing up is a developmental opportunity, not a promotion or status marker

Language should focus on learning, challenge, and fit — not roster outcomes.

#### **7.2 Timing & Coordination**

Families should only be approached after alignment between:

- The interested Head Coach
- The Technical Lead
- The player's current (younger) Head Coach

Where appropriate, messaging should be coordinated or supported by the Technical Lead to ensure clarity and consistency.

### **8. Tryout Registration & Exceptions**

Junior players may be:

- Required to register for PSL tryouts, or
- Exempted at the discretion of the Head Coach and Technical Lead

Decisions will be based on:

- Evaluation history
- Current Alliance Academy status
- Developmental appropriateness

### **9. Safeguards & Review**

- All junior movement decisions will be documented
- The Technical Lead retains the right to:
  - Pause or reverse a decision if risk outweighs benefit
  - Recommend alternative development strategies



This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure alignment with:

- Canada Soccer LTPD principles
- SYSI Alliance strategic objectives
- PSL competition standards

#### **10. Summary**

Junior player movement is a development tool, not a default pathway. When handled well, it can accelerate growth; when handled poorly, it can disrupt confidence, teams, and long-term progression.

This standard operating procedure ensures coaches are supported with:

- A clear decision-making framework
- Consistent internal alignment
- Player-first safeguards

The shared objective is to move players when it helps them most, while preserving the integrity of the full Alliance Academy & PSL pathway.



## Appendix A: Coach Quick Reference

### Considering a Junior Player? Ask Yourself:

1. Is this about the player's development — not a roster gap?
2. Can the player physically and emotionally handle the jump?
3. Is the player considerably of a higher standard than the majority (50% plus one) of Senior players?
4. Is there a clear role and learning opportunity?

### Before Any Approach to the Player/Family:

- Consult the Technical Lead

## Appendix B: Alignment with Alliance Academy & PSL Pathway

All decisions under this policy directly support the SYSI Alliance player pathway:

- **U11–U13:** Foundation development (Futsal & skill acquisition)
- **U14–U15:** Transition to higher-intensity competitive environments
- **U16–U17:** Performance-focused PSL preparation and execution

Junior player movement should only occur when it strengthens the player's long-term position within this pathway, not when it bypasses critical development stages.

Movement decisions should always consider:

- Future age-group leadership opportunities
- Appropriate exposure timing
- Sustainable progression toward PSL and post-youth pathways



**Appendix C: PSL Tryout & Junior Movement Decision Tree – Flowchart**

