BC Soccer Primer League (BCSPL) Age Group Changes 2023+

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Background

The BC Soccer Premier League (BCSPL) was established in 2010 as a standards-based development environment for girls and boys aged U13 to U18. It is positioned as the highest level of youth development community soccer within BC. Its purpose is to bring together identified players from the BC Soccer membership in training and game environments to support overall development. As well as providing further opportunities for player identification into higher levels of play including, BC Soccer Provincial Programming, University, League 1 BC, Professional, and National teams programming and progressing into adult community soccer.

The BCSPL is also designed to support the development of coaches and referees, who are required to attain a minimum level of certification to ensure high standards are in place. This is complimented with ongoing technical support through the BCSPL Participating Clubs, BC Soccer, and Canada Soccer.

Annual Review

On an annual basis, BC Soccer through a consultation process gathers formal feedback on the BCSPL, its Rules & Regulations, and technical standards in two ways:

1) through the BCSPL club feedback survey, and
2) through individual club meetings conducted by the BCSPL General Manager.

The purpose of the consultation process is to provide an opportunity for all BCSPL Club Leadership to share feedback on the previous year's BCSPL experience with the intent to support BC Soccer on shaping the BCSPL for following year's implementation and beyond. In addition to the consultation process with the BCSPL clubs, BC Soccer works with Canada Soccer and its Technical Department in further aligning the BCSPL Rules & Regulations (technical standards) with the Canada Soccer Player Development Program standards and/or to meet specific Provincial needs.

From this year's consultation process there were two key outcomes that will impact what the BCSPL will look like from September 2023 and beyond, which include:

- *The New Intake Age Group of the BCSPL will be the U14 Intake (2011 Birth Year) for September 2024*
- *The New Exit Age Group of the BCSPL will be the U17 age group (2007 Birth Year) for 2024 onwards*

We understand that these changes directly impact players, parents, and coaches, therefore for more information on the rationale support the changes to the BCSPL, please see the following FAQs provided.

The New Intake Age Group in the BCSPL will be the U14 Intake (2011 Birth Year) for September 2024

In September 2023*, across the province, all U13 age groups will commence 9v9 small side game formats which is aligned with the direction from Canada Soccer. This change impacts the BCSPL as this standards-based level of play is based on 11v11 game formats. Therefore, in September 2023 the U13 Intake age group (2011 Birth Year) will not be participating in the BCSPL. This age group's selection process will be delayed by one year until September 2024 at the U14 Intake age group within the 11v11 game format. The 2011 born players will continue to participate in their regular soccer environment with their club teams utilizing the 9v9 small-sided game format.

*Some leagues in BC already use 9v9 or smaller sided game formats for the U13 age group.

Why is BC Soccer making this change?

There are many benefits for children to remain playing small-sided soccer for a longer period, including more 1v1 and 2v2 attacking and defending experiences, more opportunity for touches on the ball as well as more focus on technical player development rather than the team tactical side of the game in an 11v11 game format which should occur as players age.

Further and very importantly, this change delays early player selection and supports more players in a wider pool to continue to play together and develop in small-sided games formats and in local league soccer. This change delays selection for a further year, allowing the player to continue to develop at their own rate and ability to be more appropriately placed in the right playing environment for the Under 14 age group and above. This shift also provides for one more year of growth, socially and emotionally, thus hopefully better supporting the player as they are introduced to the selection process into the BCSPL (a wider provincial league).

Ultimately, this change puts the player and their development at the decision-making forefront and is in alignment with Canada Soccer recommendations of the Under 13 age group playing 9v9.

Who does this change impact?

In the first instance, the 2011 birth year group of players are impacted as their entry into the BCSPL is delayed by one year. This also impacts future years with the same situation.

What does this change mean for the 2011 Birth Year player?

For the 2011 birth year group it means that instead of joining the BCSPL in September 2023 at the U13 (intake), they will join the league in September 2024 at the U14 (Intake) level.

When and how will this be implemented?

2023

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
		U12						U13			
		2011 Birth Year						2011 Birth Year			
		9v9 or below						9v9			
		Local District League						Local District League			

2024

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
		U13						U14 (Intake)			
		2011 Birth Year						2011 Birth Year			
		9v9						11v11			
		Local District League						BCSPL			

The New Exit Age Group of the BCSPL will be the U17 age group (2007 Birth Year) for 2024 onwards

Commencing Spring 2024, the U18 age group will be phased out of the BCSPL. The last year of participation will be Phase 1 of 2024 (2006 Birth Year).

In 2024 the new exit age group of the BCSPL will be the U17 age group (2007 Birth Year). This means the U17 age group will only play in Phase 1 in 2024 completing their participation with Provincial Championships in June 2024.

Why is BC Soccer making this change?

There are many reasons why this change is being implemented, including:

- Aligning to Canada Soccer
- Providing opportunity for progressive players (University identified/committed) to experience adult soccer environments at the U18+ age group to further support their development.
- Providing opportunity for more community/recreational players to play within the U18 youth community/recreational playing environments.
- Supporting the transition of youth to adult soccer in the various playing environments provided.
- Allowing BCSPL clubs to focus on a core age range of players from U14 to U17 age groups.
- Considering the financial cost to the parent and aims to remove this.

Who does this change impact?

In the first instance, the 2007 birth year group of players are impacted as well as future birth years with the BCSPL ending at the U17 age group after the (Provincial and National Cup Competitions) in the middle of 2024 and beyond.

What does this change mean for the 2007 Birth Year player?

For the 2007 birth year group it means that their last year of participation in the BCSPL will be Phase 1 of 2024.

When and how will this be implemented?

2023

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
		U16						U16			
		2007 Birth Year						2007 Birth Year			
		11v11						11v11			
		BCSPL (Phase 1)						BCSPL (Phase 2)			

2024

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
		U17						U18*			
		2007 Birth Year						2007 Birth Year			
		11v11						11v11			
		BCSPL (Phase 1)						Youth Division 1 or Adult			

*U18 on the coastal season (Based on school year and not the calendar year).