

Deltona Age Group Growth Strategy

Board Position Paper

Background:

With a commitment to accept and develop every player interested in learning to play, comes a need to plan for accommodating that next player.

When the club focused on building one strong team, and cutting the weakest players, we placed ourselves on a path of decline, as the only way to add a team was to bring an entire team in from elsewhere, typically the YMCA. As it was rare for enough new interested players, within the same age group to appear at the club at the same time the next team rarely formed. Each interested player would be told there was no room. So even though we may have 14 kids express interest as individuals all 14 would be told there is no room.

Similarly, the loss of a few players could mean the end of a team. Whether defecting to another club, moving to another city or learning to drive and developing other interests.

Conversely, when we commit to accepting all players, we build a path to grow, and over time we naturally expand until we can spin off another team. This creates depth that allows us to survive a player or a few players departure. This also provides opportunities for motivated players to play on multiple teams, a catalyst to more rapid development of player, club and yes team.

As such, a club will struggle to grow or to maintain a critical mass unless it accommodates all players regardless of skill level. If you want to have a strong premier program, one has to build a development program.

With a background on the need to build an accepting team culture, comes the need to plan for growth. If we have 14 players on an 11 v 11 side, how do we get to two teams which will require 22 players in order to field there team? What happens to player 15 through 21? Or similarly if we have two teams of 14 players how do we get to three teams that will require 33 players? What happens to player 29 to 33? How do we prepare players, parents and coaches for the fact that as we add players we will naturally need to spin off new teams, and as such no team is forever. How does this change if one of our teams is a state-cup team with great chemistry? How do we align the entire organization to our long term goals for the betterment of the club, and ultimately their team?

These key decisions need to be made early, and communicated throughout the club as they have significant impact on key concerns and management policies downstream. If one opts to build large teams, and then split into smaller teams, then playing time is likely to become an issue and point of stress between players, parents and coaches. If one opts to divide quickly into small units, supplementing the team with players dualing on multiple teams, one must manage dualing and the issues this creates between teams, who has priority, how will we schedule, and will our players be fresh to play?

Does the decision vary with player's ages? At ages U-16 and under, our players cannot drive, and tend to show up or be delivered to practice consistently. Driving age groups have more opportunities and as such are more likely to miss practices and games, as such these coaches tend to favor or need to run larger roster sizes approach 22, despite the fact that only 18 will be selected or available to dress, or show-up. As such, yes, age can also impact team formation, beyond the mere number of players needed to start the game.

Ultimately, it always comes back to what is in the best interest of the player's development? More play time. This means we are better seeking to manage dualing considerations than play time considerations, and as such the club is best rewarded by favoring small team formation supported with dualing opportunities.

With the extensive background in place. This is the current strategy the club intends to pursue in regards to its desire, plans and needs to grow.

Building from 3 to 4 teams:

The club as a maximum roster size of 16. This means that as we approach 16-16-16 we have 48 players, which is sufficient to field 4 teams of 12 (12-12-12-12) and augment with 8 dualing payers (2-2-2-2) to field a sideline of 14-14-14-14 at each game. Clearly expanding from 3 or more teams incrementally, is not a significant problem. This changes when we consider earlier growth needs.

Building from 2 to 3 teams:

The club has a maximum roster size limitation of 16. This was imposed specifically to insure playtime opportunities. As two teams max out their rosters they approach 16+16=32. Ideally we would like to have 3 teams of 14 or 42 players. We have to manage the growth from 32 to 42.

Option 1: Build LARGER teams of 18 (18-18), then split into three teams of 12 (12-12-12) augmented with 4 players (2-2) dualing between each team. The issue here is that while building to 18-18 we are reducing play time, and building up team stress as a result of pressure to compete for the limited time. 4 players get additional time, and only on average each player is only playing 22/36 less than 2/3 of the game. This runs counter to our desire to maximize play time, and is not likely to build strong supportive teams.

Option 2: Build smaller teams and rely on dualing more extensively. So 16-16 would split into 10-11-11 with 7 players (3-4) dualing between teams. No we have 7/32 or almost 1 in 4 players is getting more time, and 32/33 on average everyone has to play almost the entire game.

Conclusions:

1. Build 11 v 11 teams to 16, then split into 3 teams of 10-11-11, which will create a need for 7 players to dual.

Building from 1 to 2 teams.

The club maximum roster size limitation is 16. We need 22 players (11-11) to field two unique starting line-ups. So with the 17th player, one must look to move to 8-9 with 8 kids dualing (4-5). This is clearly the most difficult growth step. As such, where possible 2-year age groups should be combined so as to insure the existence of 2 teams, as this facilitates the formation of the next team.

Conclusions:

1. **Age Group Bracket Formation** - Rather than have two neighboring age groups of one team, we are better served to have a single combined age group serving 2 years with 2 teams.
2. **Importance of Dualing on Managing Initial Club Growth** - In the event that we are seeking to grow within an age group, teams of 16 will be split into teams of 8 and 9 with substantial dualing opportunities in order to maintain space to grow. One must commit to growth, split and declare the teams else one cannot grow and will be forced to send players away, or limit play time.

Implications:

1. **Dualing Interest** - We need to be asking whether players are interested in dualing as part of our registration effort, as these players will be strategically important to the growth of our club.
2. **Age Group Bracket Formation** - Age groups which be formed in a manner that allows the club to field a minimum of 2 teams, to facilitate comfortable team growth and balance play time and dualing needs.
3. **Age Group Coaching Coordinator** – As coaches we take pride in our team’s accomplishments and our player’s development, as such we emotionally may not wish to see our team re-structured as we grow. Typically, it is the development coaches that see candidates that have developed sufficiently to warrant an evaluation on the premier team. As such the development coach may be the best candidate as the age group coordinator. The development coach and premier coach should be operating as a team for the development of the entire age group, in so doing strengthening depth of players.
4. **Coach Recruitment** - We must recruit coaches in order to be ready to fill our need for additional quality coaches.
5. **Managing Parent Expectations** - Parents must be informed at team formation that we intend to expand the club, as such as soon as we begin nearing 16 player on each team we will be looking to split the team in order to maximize play time, and to develop a structure that allows players to play at their development level and to advance as they become ready between teams.
6. **Club Strategy Impact on Coaches** - Coaches must be aware of the big picture and the fact that until we achieve 4 teams in an age group we will be seeking numbers. Once we have 4 teams

we can field a D1, D2, D3 and D4 team allowing our players to play and be coached at their appropriate level. Teams would still advance as their skill levels progress.

7. **Player Movement** – Players should be moved with an eye towards how the club is seeking to grow in order to minimize player movement and disruption. A 12 year old player should not be moved from a U14 team to a U12 team simply because we need space for another 16 player, as this could be perceived to be a demotion. The player might be rostered to the U12 as their primary, but continue to dual to the U14s while helping the U12s. Knowing this is in preparation for the next team formation at which time the teams will be re-evaluated and re-structured.

| U- | Start | Ideal Size | Max Roster | Number Players at Split | Split to 2 | | | | Dualer Team 1 | Dualer Team 2 | Total Dualer | Dualer /Team | % Dual |
|----|-------|------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|--------|--|--|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------|
| | | | | | Team 1 | Team 2 | | | | | | | |
| 8 | 6 | 8 | 11 | 12 | 6 | 6 | | | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 33% |
| 10 | 8 | 10 | 14 | 15 | 7 | 8 | | | 3 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 33% |
| 12 | 8 | 10 | 14 | 15 | 7 | 8 | | | 3 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 33% |
| 14 | 11 | 14 | 16 | 17 | 8 | 9 | | | 6 | 5 | 11 | 6 | 65% |
| 16 | 11 | 14 | 16 | 17 | 8 | 9 | | | 6 | 5 | 11 | 6 | 65% |
| 18 | 11 | 16 | 20 | 21 | 10 | 11 | | | 6 | 5 | 11 | 6 | 52% |

| U- | Start | Ideal Size | Max Roster | Number Players at Split | Split to 3 | | | | Dualer Team 1 | Dualer Team 2 | Dualer Team 3 | Total Dualer | Dualer /Team | % Dual |
|----|-------|------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|--------|--------|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------|
| | | | | | Team 1 | Team 2 | Team 3 | | | | | | | |
| 8 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 21 | 7 | 7 | 7 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 14% |
| 10 | 8 | 10 | 14 | 29 | 9 | 9 | 11 | | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 7% |
| 12 | 8 | 10 | 14 | 29 | 9 | 9 | 11 | | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 7% |
| 14 | 11 | 14 | 16 | 33 | 11 | 11 | 11 | | 3 | 3 | 3 | 9 | 6 | 27% |
| 16 | 11 | 14 | 16 | 33 | 11 | 11 | 11 | | 3 | 3 | 3 | 9 | 6 | 27% |
| 18 | 11 | 16 | 20 | 41 | 13 | 13 | 15 | | 3 | 3 | 1 | 7 | 6 | 17% |

| U- | Start | Ideal Size | Max Roster | Number Players at Split | Split to 4 | | | | Dualer Team 1 | Dualer Team 2 | Dualer Team 3 | Dualer Team 4 | Total Dualer | Dualer/Team | % Dual |
|----|-------|------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|--------|--------|--------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|--------|
| | | | | | Team 1 | Team 2 | Team 3 | Team 4 | | | | | | | |
| 8 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 31 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 10% |
| 10 | 8 | 10 | 14 | 43 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0% |
| 12 | 8 | 10 | 14 | 43 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0% |
| 14 | 11 | 14 | 16 | 49 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 13 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 6 | 14% |
| 16 | 11 | 14 | 16 | 49 | 12 | 12 | 12 | 13 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 6 | 14% |
| 18 | 11 | 16 | 20 | 61 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 16 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 6 | 5% |