



West Orange United. F.C.

Fall 2020 FAQs

What is “Return to Play” and where are we in it?

The State of New Jersey has issued rules for the return to youth sports through a series of Executive Orders and Department of Health Guidelines. As of July 14, the current state of those rules and guidelines are contained here: [NJDOH Guidance for Sports Activities, issued July 9, 2020](#). The Township of West Orange has adopted guidelines for the use of its fields that essentially mimic the State requirements. Both refer to the [CDC Considerations for Youth Sports](#) published by the CDC. New Jersey Youth Soccer has taken these guidelines and developed a Return To Play plan specific to soccer, providing information and resources to help soccer clubs like ours continue to make soccer available to our kids through these challenging and ever-changing times. We have posted some of these items under the “Return to Play 2020-Covid” tab on the Travel Soccer page of the Mountain Top Website. This [NJYS Return to Play Infographic](#) summarizes the 4 phases of the NJYS Return to Play plan.

The New Jersey Department of Health guidelines allowed youth soccer, as a “medium contact” sport, to return to full play beginning July 8. Soccer games and tournaments are taking place now throughout the state. This essentially means that teams compete as usual on the field, with certain restrictions on the sideline including social distancing where possible, no sharing of equipment, temperature/health checks before sessions, no high fives or similar celebrations or greetings, and spectators required to maintain social distancing or wear face coverings. We are in Phase 4 of the [NJYS Return to Play Infographic](#).

WOUFC deliberately scheduled summer training to start after Phase 4 began. But recognizing that many of our players have been isolated in their homes for the past months and that players and families may be nervous about returning to a group setting, when the program began last week we elected to start with social distance training (as was required in Phase 3) rather than jump right into scrimmages (as permitted in Phase 4). This gave players the chance to be at the field together and work on their skills as they got used to the “new normal” of temperature checks and restricted contact. We have volunteers on hand to remind players, coaches and families of the requirements, and we are happy to report that even the youngest players acclimated very well. These sessions will evolve into the scrimmage-based practices our players are used to as coaches feel the players are ready, while maintaining social distance and other precautions off the field.

What is the plan for travel soccer this fall?

As of now, we are preparing for a regular fall season. The leagues we play in have opened registration and plan to schedule a regular season of 8-10 games. Teams will travel as usual, although flights may be organized to keep teams a little closer to home if possible. Social distancing, face covering and other requirements will continue for parents, coaches and referees, and for players at any time they are not actively engaged in play.



What precautions will WOUFC take to protect our players, coaches, families and community from COVID-19?

As of now, we expect to continue the precautions we have put in place for our summer session. Specifically, while players will play as usual on the field, we will require social distancing off the field, reduce contacts wherever possible, forbid sharing of equipment, and enforce social distancing/mask requirement among coaches, volunteers and spectators. Shared equipment – cones, balls, etc. – will be disinfected frequently. No pinnies will be used. No high fives, handshakes or other celebrations or greetings involving close contact will be permitted. Health checks prior to practice and games will likely continue. Anyone entering the field area may be subject to a temperature check. This [Letter to Parents](#) for the summer session will give you a good idea of what we have in place at this time.

Why are you opening soccer registration now, when everything feels so uncertain due to COVID-19?

The simple answer is that putting together a soccer season takes significant lead time and effort at both the league and club level. The leagues have pushed back their deadlines as far as they are able, and to ensure that our teams can play we have to register them on time and collect the paperwork and other information needed to obtain new player passes for all of our players and approximately half of our coaches. Once players' paperwork is submitted, the process of obtaining passes is completely outside of our control and subject to a major backlog at the start of every fall season (as every player in the state needs a new pass). If we want teams to have the chance to play this fall, we simply have to start that process now.

Despite coming out of Spring 2020 at a loss (due to expenses incurred leading up to the season), we have kept the fee at \$425 for Fall 2020 and pushed back payment dates to July 31, August 15, September 15 and October 15. We will not begin registering and collecting for the Spring 2021 season until after that date. If further extending payment dates would help your family, please contact us and we can make arrangements.

Will teams be the same?

Our goal is to maintain the rosters we had set going into the Spring season as much as possible, but some changes will be needed. Teams aging up into a new division (e.g. moving from 7v7 to 9v9 play) may need additional players, and we expect that some players will opt not to return this fall due to COVID-19 concerns or for other reasons. It's possible that teams or age groups may be combined for the Fall.

We will not be hosting traditional tryouts, but potential new players will have the opportunity to try out during our summer sessions. Tryout information will be posted shortly, but if you know anyone interested please have them reach out.

Why are the high school teams following different rules?

High school sports are governed by the NJSIAA, which has imposed different rules on the return to high school sports. High school teams have different considerations than youth sports, including busing, availability for practices when students will not be physically present at school every day (or even at all) and the traditionally very intense and demanding pre-season training they normally do.



What about the EFT?

The Essex Fall Tune-Up is soccer tournament co-sponsored by West Orange United and the Livingston Soccer Club. It generally takes place on the first weekend of the fall season on fields throughout West Orange and Livingston. It is our major fundraiser for the year and gives our teams with a weekend of soccer to bond with teammates and get ready for the fall season. This year would have been the 19th annual EFT.

Last week the EFT Committee announced that the 19th EFT will be postponed until 2021. This was a difficult decision, but with the complexities we face in preparing for the upcoming school year and fall season and uncertainties as to public gathering limits and other issues that would affect the running of the Tournament, the Committee decided that postponement was the safest and best course.

What if the situation in New Jersey changes?

Obviously this situation is very fluid, and may change at any time. We have been following developments at the state level closely, participating in weekly webinars with New Jersey Youth Soccer, attending regular Morris County and Northern Counties league meetings, and have convened a group of local soccer clubs to share ideas, advice and experience as we navigate this time. We will adapt our plan as appropriate if guidelines are loosed or tightened up during the fall season.

What if we have special health concerns in our family or are not comfortable with our player participating in a “regular” soccer season?

We know that every family is different, and we fully support your decision to return to soccer **if and when** you are ready. If you are not comfortable registering your player for the fall season, please don't feel pressure to do so. We anticipate that there will be families who choose to sit this season out, and we understand and support that decision. If we are able to provide purely social distance-based training for players who require it, we will look to do so.