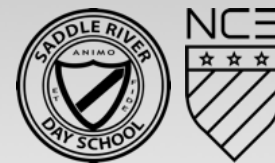


# NCE SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

High-Performance Academic & Soccer Program



Daily Elite Training. Academic Integrity. Long-Term Development.  
In Collaboration With Saddle River Day School



## INTRODUCTION

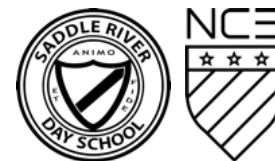
The NCE School of Excellence is a full-time, high-performance academic and soccer environment designed for players who are serious about their development and for families who understand that environment shapes outcomes.

This is not an additional training session added to an already crowded schedule. It is a structured, integrated model where education, training, physical preparation, and competition operate within one coordinated framework.

At its core, the School of Excellence is built on a simple principle: once a young player begins to pursue meaningful goals, the quality of the daily environment becomes decisive. Coaching standards, academic accountability, physical load management, and behavioral expectations must align. When they do not, development becomes inconsistent and reactive.

The School of Excellence removes unnecessary friction. Training is embedded into the school week. Academic support is structured and monitored. Competition is selected to reinforce learning. Physical development is planned, not accumulated.

The objective is not to accelerate shortcuts. It is to create a stable, demanding environment where serious young players can progress responsibly – as students, as athletes, and as people.



## WHY ENVIORNMENT MATTERS?

At 14, I left home to attend the FA National School of Excellence at Lilleshall, a decision that, at the time, felt daunting but ultimately shaped the course of both my career and my character.

It was the first time I had lived away from my family, the first time football and education were not competing priorities but deliberately integrated into a single, disciplined daily structure, and the first time I truly understood what a high-performance environment demanded of a young player.

From the moment I arrived, the standards were unmistakably high. It was an intense environment for a teenager, not because anyone was shouting about excellence, but because excellence was simply expected. We trained every day with purpose and precision, and we were accountable for our actions in a way that left no room for excuses or complacency. If your habits slipped, it was addressed. If your focus wavered, it was corrected. Responsibility became part of your identity.

At the same time, education was never treated as secondary. Our schoolwork was structured, monitored, and protected within the schedule. There was clarity in how the days were organized, routine in how we approached our responsibilities, and intention behind everything we did. Nothing felt improvised. Nothing was accidental.

Those years shaped my development long before I signed a professional contract, because they formed the habits and standards that later environments would demand of me...

# SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

HIGH PERFORMANCE SOCCER PROGRAM



...When I left Lillehall to join Manchester United, the intensity increased and the margins for error became even smaller, but the underlying principles were exactly the same – discipline, attention to detail, personal responsibility, and a commitment to daily excellence. The difference was not in philosophy, but in consequence.

Because I had experienced that structure at fourteen, I was prepared for what came next.

The School of Excellence, delivered in collaboration with Saddle River Day School, is built directly from that lived experience.

It is not based on theory, trends, or marketing language. It is built on a clear understanding of what genuine development environments require if young players are to reach their potential.

I have seen first-hand that players do not progress by chance. They rise – or fall – to the standards of the environment around them.

Environment shapes behavior, and behavior ultimately shapes progression.

The School of Excellence exists to ensure that environment is deliberate, structured, and strong enough to bring out the very best in those who enter it.

*John Curtis*



**JOHN CURTIS**  
SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE LEAD

- Former Premier League Player
- 300+ Professional Apps
- England Youth International
- UEFA & USSF A Licenses
- USSF Coach Educator



**HUGO GUZMAN**  
BOYS PROGRAM LEAD

- USSF Academy Director & USSF A License holder
- Extensive youth coaching & development experience
- Led elite academy programs (NYCFC, Met Oval, Sacramento)



**SCOTT MIDDLEMASS**  
GIRLS PROGRAM LEAD

- 14+ year professional player in England, Norway, China & US
- Various UK/US Coaching licenses
- Deep expertise in long-term youth player development



“

Players entering the **School of Excellence** should expect a noticeable shift in how their time, energy, and focus are supported – both on and off the field. The School of Excellence is demanding by design. It is intended for players who want to be challenged in a constructive way and for families who value **clarity, balance, and meaningful development** over short-term reassurance or quick rewards.



## Additional School of Excellence Staff



**Lee Broster**

SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE GK  
LEAD



**Diego Martinez**

SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE  
SPORTS SCIENTIST

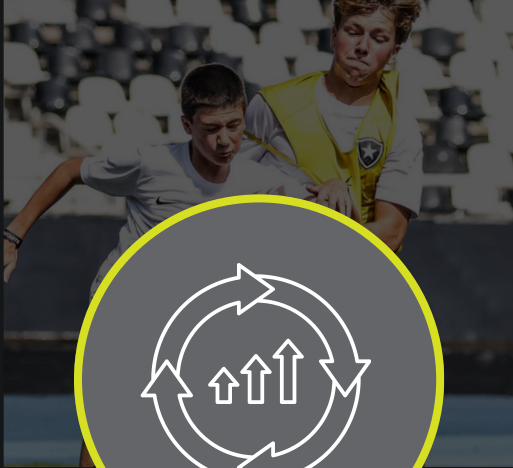
- MS Kinesiology
- BS, Exercise Science
- NASM Fitness & Nutrition Certification
- USSF D License



**PJ Petrow**

SRDS  
STAFF LIAISON

- USSF B License
- SRDS Athletic Director



**HIGH-  
PERFORMANCE  
TRAINING**

*Pages 8-13*



**COMPETITION &  
GAMES PROGRAM**

*Pages 14-19*



**PERFORMANCE,  
MEDICAL & SPORTS  
SCIENCE PROGRAM**

*Pages 20-23*



**EDUCATION &  
WELFARE**

*Pages 24-30*



**MONITORING  
PLAYER PROGRESS**

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**ADDITIONAL  
INFORMATION**

*Pages 33-53*



## HIGH-PERFORMANCE TRAINING

The Training Program within the NCE School of Excellence is designed to deliver a daily, high-quality development environment aligned with elite European academy standards, while fully respecting academic priorities and player welfare.



### **Purpose:**

- Develop technically excellent, tactically intelligent players
- Build strong learning habits and professional behaviors
- Support long-term physical development and injury resilience
- Ensure consistency of coaching, language, and methodology across all age groups

Training is the primary driver of player development. Games exist to support and test training outcomes.

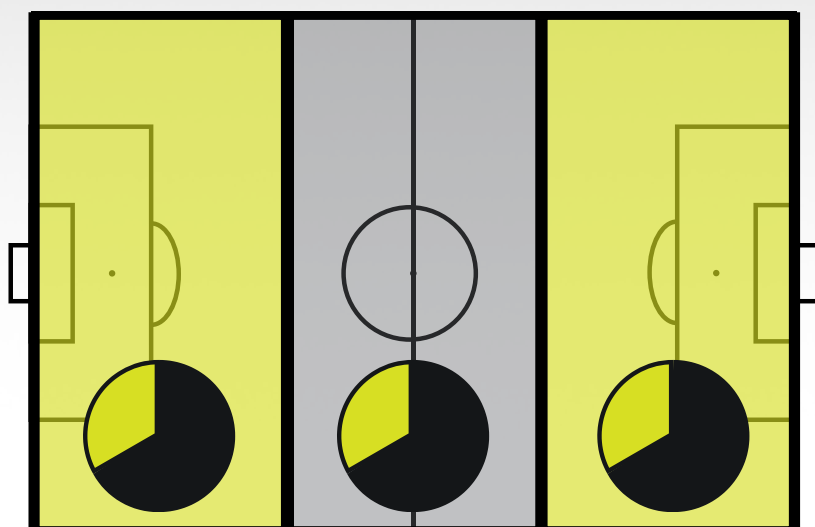
## TRAINING PHILOSOPHY

**The School of Excellence Training Program** is built on the following core principles:

- Player-centered development over team outcomes
- Long-term progression over short-term performance
- High standards combined with age-appropriate expectations
- Consistency of methodology across the program

Training sessions are designed to be:

- Intense but controlled
- Challenging but supportive
- Demanding of concentration, effort, and accountability



### **The Four Phases of the Game:**

- 1) Attacking
- 2) Defending
- 3) Transition to Attack
- 4) Transition to Defend

Built around the 4 phases of the game - The School of Excellence Curriculum will cover **Attacking, Defending, Transition to Attack and Transition to Defend**, across the thirds of the field. This framework ensures that all players receive a comprehensive training program

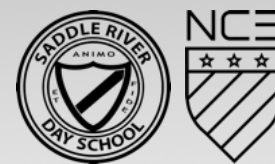
## WEEKLY TRAINING MODEL

Training is delivered year-round and embedded into the school week.

- Technical-focused sessions: Ball mastery, receiving, passing, and execution under pressure
- Tactical-focused sessions: Game understanding, positional responsibilities, and decision-making
- Game application sessions: Small-sided and conditioned games to apply learning in realistic contexts

The exact number of sessions and session length varies by age phase and academic schedule.

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
8:00AM - 9:30AM	Training	Gym Session	Training	Training	Classroom Session	Study Support & Classroom Session	Games
9:30AM - 3:00PM	Classes	Classes	Classes	Classes	Classes	Games	Games
3:00PM - 5:00PM	Study Support & SRDS Sports	Study Support & SRDS Sports	Study Support & SRDS Sports	Study Support & SRDS Sports	Study Support & SRDS Sports	Games	Games
5:00PM - 8:00PM	SRDS Sports, Free time or homework	SRDS Sports, Free time or homework	SRDS Sports, Free time or homework	SRDS Sports, Free time or homework	SRDS Sports, Free time or homework	Free time	NCE Training



## Foundation Phase (U12–U14)

Middle School Grades 6–8

### Training Focus

- Technical confidence & repetition
- Comfort on the ball under pressure
- Basic game understanding
- Enjoyment & intrinsic motivation

### Session Characteristics

- High ball contact
- Small-sided formats
- Simple tactical messages
- Emphasis on effort, attitude, & curiosity

### Physical Focus

- Physical Literacy – agility, balance, and coordination through multi-sport movements and bodyweight exercises
- Introduce gym based sessions to functional strength
- Introduce basic plyometrics into strength program

### Performance Focus

- Uphold School of Excellence Philosophy, Vision, Values and Culture
- Communication
- Teamwork/Cooperation
- Relationships
- Reflection
- Goal-setting
- Imagery
- Bullying
- Problem solving
- Self talk
- Time management
- Changing circumstances
- Learning to compete



## Youth Development Phase (U15–U18)

### Upper School Grades 9–12

#### Training Focus

- Consistency of performance
- Game management & role clarity
- Preparation for college & professional environments
- High standards of professionalism & self-regulation

#### Session Characteristics

- More complex game scenarios
- Increased cognitive challenge
- Introduction of detailed positional work
- Continued emphasis on technical quality at speed

#### Physical Focus

- Enhanced Physical Literacy - agility, balance, and coordination through multi-sport movements and bodyweight exercises. Introduce more cognitive load.
- Increase Formal Strength Training & Progress power training
- Progress plyometrics program with strength & power program
- Progress core training
- Progress mobility training with focus on ankles, knees, hips and pelvis

#### Performance Focus

- Uphold School of Excellence Philosophy, Vision, Values + Culture
- Communication
- Teamwork/Cooperation
- Relationships
- Reflection
- Goal-setting
- Imagery
- Bullying
- Problem solving
- Self talk
- Time management
- Changing circumstances
- The "Wellness" Habit
- Nutritional Literacy
- Lifestyle Coaching
- Dealing with Pressure
- Learning to compete

## Position Specific GK Training (U12–U18) School Grades 6–12

### Key Training Competencies

- Handling
- Distribution
- 1v1 Situations
- Diving
- High Balls & crosses
- Decision Making
- Awareness
- Support
- Positioning

### Physical Focus

- Similar to outfield players but with position specific S&C and mobility work around the upper body.

### Performance Focus

- Similar to outfield but with position specific focus around concentration, resilience and emotional regulation.

### Tactical Characteristics

- Decision Making – Identifies & Chooses best option, understands risk & reward & looks to exploit opposition weakness
- Aware of game situation & best outcome
- Reads the game & anticipates upcoming scenarios
- Effectively assesses situations when closer to the goal
- Consistently moves to provide good angles to receive ball
- Shows understanding of angles & distances of support
- Clearly understands the GK's role within the team
- Understands GK role when playing out from the back
- Demonstrates understanding of establishing def unit line & depth
- Adjusts position to maintain optimal starting position
- Understands how to organize defenders from Set Pieces
- Links with defensive unit providing good covering positions



## COMPETITION/GAMES PROGRAM

The Games Program within the NCE School of Excellence exists to serve long-term player development, not short-term results, league standings, or exposure outcomes.



### **Purpose:**

- Reinforce learning from the training program
- Accelerate decision-making under realistic pressure
- Expose players to a variety of playing styles and competitive environments
- Benchmark development against appropriate domestic and international standards

**Training always dictates games. Games never dictate training.**

Built on four integrated game types, each with a clear and distinct developmental role.

## Friendly Games

Friendly games are the primary external competition vehicle across all age groups within the School of Excellence.

### **Characteristics:**

- Hand-selected opposition (6-8 games per season)
- Flexible rules, minutes, and formats

### **Ability:**

- Play up or down age groups
- Manipulate game constraints to reinforce weekly training themes
- Control physical, cognitive, and emotional load

Friendly games provide maximum control and alignment between training objectives and competitive application.

NCE Regularly arranges showcase games versus MLS Clubs like **Philadelphia Union** and **New York City FC**.

## Tournament Play

Tournament play is used selectively to expose players to heightened competitive environments and unfamiliar opposition.

### Characteristics:

- Limited and strategic use (~2 events per season)
- Clear developmental objective defined for each event
- Never used as a replacement for weekly training priorities

At high school age groups, tournaments may include the presence of college coaches. Exposure is considered a byproduct, not a driver, and no recruitment outcomes are implied or guaranteed.

### Tournaments Planned for 2026-27

- EDP Fall Cup
- FC Delco Showcase
- EDP Spring Cup
- Jefferson Cup
- NCE Winter Showcases
- NCE Summer Showcase

## International Events

International competition is a core and inclusive component of the School of Excellence Games Program. All School of Excellence players have access to international competition as part of their development pathway.

### **Characteristics:**

- Delivered through specially curated NCE international tours
- Matches played against international academies and elite development environments

### **Used to expose players to:**

- Faster tactical tempo
- Different playing styles and cultural contexts
- Increased problem-solving demands

### **Structured Parameters:**

- International competition takes place mostly during school vacation periods
- Integrated into the annual training and games calendar
- Volume and frequency are managed to protect player welfare and academic priorities

### **NCE International Tours 2026–27**

- Brazil
- England
- Italy
- Sweden

## Internal Games

Internal games are treated as an equal-value component of the Games Program and are often the highest learning tool per minute.

### **Characteristics:**

- Mixed-age and mixed-role formats
- Coach-controlled scenarios and constraints

### **Used to:**

- Reinforce tactical concepts
- Accelerate leadership and communication
- Manage player load
- Replace unnecessary external fixtures

## Selection, Rotation, and Minutes

There are no guaranteed minutes selection and rotation are based on:

- Physical readiness and welfare considerations
- Individual development objectives
- Training performance

The program actively avoids:

- Tournament stacking
- Excessive travel
- Back-to-back high-load weekends

Minutes are managed intentionally, not accumulated.

## Evaluation of Games

Games are evaluated against development criteria, not results.

### **Key evaluation markers include:**

- Execution of training principles
- Quality of decision-making
- Tactical understanding and positional discipline
- Behavior, professionalism, and response to adversity

Win-loss records are documented but are not used as measures of success.

## Summary

The NCE School of Excellence Games Program provides a controlled, development-led competitive framework that integrates domestic, tournament, internal, and international competition. It is intentionally designed to mirror best practice within elite academy environments while remaining independent from school and state athletic structures.



## MEDICAL & SPORTS SCIENCE PROGRAM

The Medical & Sports Science pillar exists to support long-term player availability, resilience, and sustainable performance, not short-term physical outputs.

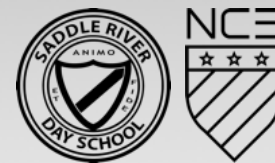


### **Purpose:**

- Reduce injury risk & time
- Support healthy growth, maturation, and movement
- Align physical preparation with training, games, & travel demands
- Educate players to take ownership of recovery, preparation, & lifestyle habits

### **Key Principles:**

- Movement quality before load
- Long-term athletic development over short-term fitness gains
- Individualisation based on growth, maturity, and playing demands
- Integration with football training rather than separation from it



## Physical Performance Leadership

Diego Martinez – Head of Physical Performance, leads all physical development strategy within the School of Excellence.

### **Responsible for:**

- Movement screening and baseline assessment
- Injury prevention frameworks
- Load coordination across training, games, and international competition
- Liaison with coaching staff to align physical and technical demands

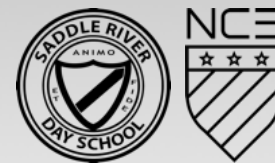
### **Injury Prevention & Load Management:**

The School of Excellence prioritises availability as a key performance indicator.

### **Approach includes:**

- Baseline physical screening on entry
- Ongoing monitoring of training and game load
- Adjustments during periods of rapid growth or increased competition
- Proactive management of cumulative fatigue

The goal is to prevent avoidable injuries and support consistent development.



## Medical Provision

Medical services are provided through trusted external partners to ensure specialist expertise and independence.

### **This includes:**

- Access to qualified sports medicine professionals
- Injury diagnosis and treatment pathways
- Return-to-play protocols coordinated with School of Excellence staff
- Medical decisions prioritise player health and long-term welfare over short-term availability

### **Sports Psychology Support:**

Psychological support is available through outsourced sports psychology provision.

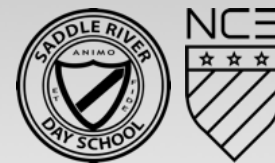
### **This may include:**

- Support around confidence, focus, and emotional regulation
- Coping strategies for pressure, setbacks, and transitions
- Guidance during injury rehabilitation or pathway transitions

Support is used to enhance wellbeing and learning, not to create performance pressure.

# SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

HIGH PERFORMANCE SOCCER PROGRAM



## Recovery, Education & Lifestyle

A full time development program require participants to be fully prepared both physically & psychologically. Knowledge of optimal Recovery & lifestyle practices are critical for enhanced development.

### Players are educated on:

- Recovery strategies
- Sleep, nutrition, and hydration principles
- Travel management during competition and international tours
- Personal responsibility for preparation and self-care

Education is age-appropriate and reinforces habits required for long-term success.

### Integration Across the School of Excellence:

The Performance, Medical & Sports Science Program is fully integrated with:

- Training Program – aligning physical demands with learning objectives
- Games Program – managing load across domestic, tournament, and international competition
- Monitoring & Review – informing IDPs and development planning

### Summary:

The Medical & Sports Science pillar ensures that School of Excellence players are physically prepared, medically supported, and educated to sustain high performance over time. By combining strong internal leadership with specialist outsourced support, the School of Excellence delivers a responsible, modern, and development-focused performance environment.



## EDUCATION & WELFARE

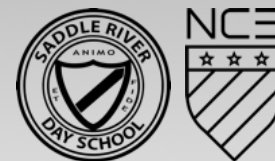
The Education & Player Welfare Program ensures that academic progress, personal development, and wellbeing are prioritized alongside soccer development within the School of Excellence.



### **Purpose:**

- Protect academic standards and school engagement
- Support emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing
- Create safe, supportive, and professional learning environments
- Develop responsible, resilient, and self-aware young people

The School of Excellence is built on the principle that players cannot perform, develop, or thrive in soccer unless they are supported as students and people first.



## Academic Priority & Integration

Academics are non-negotiable within the School of Excellence.

### Key Principles:

- Academic commitments always take precedence in cases of conflict
- Training and games are structured around the school timetable
- Attendance, effort, and conduct in the classroom are monitored
- Where training or competition impacts the school day: Structured academic catch-up support is provided
- Players are expected to take responsibility for completing missed work The School of Excellence works collaboratively with the school to ensure academic integrity is maintained at all times.

### Communication & Partnership with Families:

Player welfare is best supported through clear and honest communication with families.

### Our Commitment:

- Transparent expectations
- Appropriate communication channels
- Collaboration when concerns arise
- Families are viewed as partners in supporting player wellbeing, development, and balance.

## Saddle River Day School



**RANKED AS ONE OF THE BEST K-12  
PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN NJ**

**100% ACCEPTANCE RATE TO 4-YEAR  
COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES**



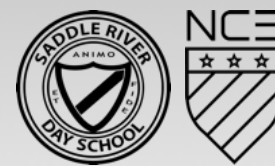
**CLASS SIZES OF 12 ENSURES  
INCREASED INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION &  
HIGH ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

**30+ ADVANCED PLACEMENT & COLLEGE  
COURSES AVAILABLE**



# SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

HIGH PERFORMANCE SOCCER PROGRAM



## Emotional & Psychological Support

The School of Excellence recognizes that soccer development places emotional and psychological demands on young athletes.

### **Support includes:**

- Creating an environment where players feel safe to speak up
- Encouraging self-awareness, resilience, and emotional regulation
- Access to outsourced sports psychology support when appropriate
- Psychological support is used to enhance wellbeing and learning, not to apply performance pressure.

Psychological support is used to enhance wellbeing and learning, not to apply performance pressure.

### **Behavior, Standards & Accountability:**

Players are expected to meet clear standards in:

- Behavior
- Attitude
- Effort

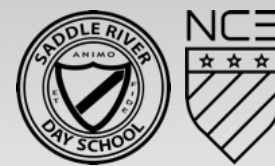
Respect for peers, staff, and the learning environment

Standards apply equally across: Training, Games, School, Travel and International Tours

Failure to meet standards is addressed through education, accountability, and support—not punishment alone

# SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

HIGH PERFORMANCE SOCCER PROGRAM



## Academic Support & Study Structures

School of Excellence players will miss certain classes due to their athletic commitments. Academic Support and study structures exist to ensure learning isn't compromised by reduced time in class.

### **Support includes:**

- Guided study periods aligned with training schedules
- Structured time-management expectations
- Support in developing effective learning habits

The objective is not to reduce academic demand, but to help players manage high expectations across school and sport.

### **Player Welfare & Safeguarding:**

Player welfare is embedded into the daily operations of the School of Excellence.

### **This includes:**

- Clear safeguarding policies and reporting structures
- Appropriate supervision during all School of Excellence activities
- Behavioral standards that prioritize respect, safety, and inclusion

All staff adhere to safeguarding requirements and best practice at all times.

### **Summary:**

The Education & Player Welfare Program ensures that the School of Excellence develops well-rounded student-athletes who are supported academically, emotionally, and socially. By prioritising education and wellbeing alongside soccer, the School of Excellence creates a sustainable, ethical, and high-performance environment that prepares players for success both on and off the field.



## PERSONAL PERFORMANCE PATHWAY

Our Personal Performance Pathway develops better young people through sport.



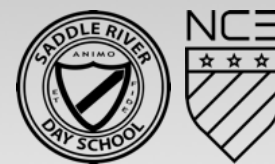
Using sport as the starting point, the program helps athletes build character, leadership, self-awareness, psychological strength, and a clearer understanding of the opportunities available beyond the field. The goal is to help young athletes become better people, stronger leaders, and more prepared for life, education, sport, and future careers.

### **Core Pillars:**

- Character
- Leadership
- Personal Growth
- Psychological Performance
- Opportunity & Enlightenment
- Personal Performance Planning

# SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

HIGH PERFORMANCE SOCCER PROGRAM



The Personal Performance Pathway is delivered through a structured 12-week program exclusively in our School of Excellence program at Saddle River Day School.

Each week focuses on one core pillar and one specific competency. Athletes are introduced to key personal development concepts, challenged to apply them in sport and life, and supported through reflection, feedback, and review.

Parents receive a clear view of the purpose of the program, the areas being developed, and how each athlete is being encouraged to grow as a person, leader, and performer.

## **Character**

Developing the standards, values, and behaviors that shape the person behind the athlete.

## **Leadership**

Helping athletes learn to lead themselves first, then positively influence others.

## **Personal Growth**

Building self-awareness and helping athletes understand who they are, what they value, and how they make decisions.

## **Psychological Performance**

Strengthening how athletes respond to pressure, feedback, failure, setbacks, and expectation.

## **Opportunity & Enlightenment**

Exposing athletes to the wider world of sport, education, business, leadership, and life beyond playing.

## **Personal Performance Planning**

Turning personal development into a structured, measurable, and reviewed process.

## **Program Promise**

We will help athletes become more than better players. We will help them become better people, better leaders, and better prepared for life beyond sport.



# MONITORING PLAYER PROGRESS

Every School of Excellence player is supported by an Individual Development Plan (IDP). IDPs are based around the NCE Player Performance Profile and provide detailed feedback across 5 categories.

### Purpose:

- Guide training focus
- Inform game exposure decisions
- Structure feedback and review conversations

### Player Performance Profile:

- Technical
- Tactical
- Physical
- Psychological
- Social



## TEST ATHLETE

GK

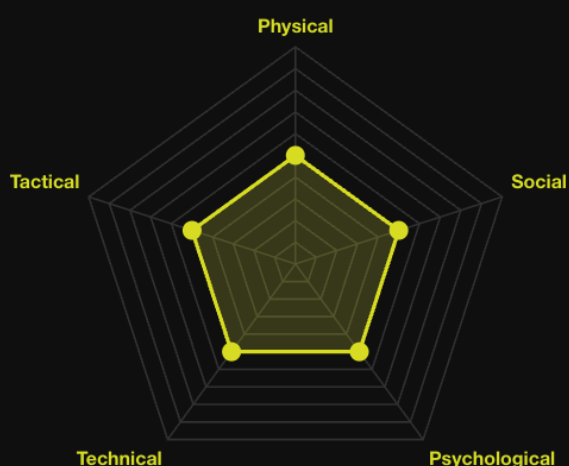
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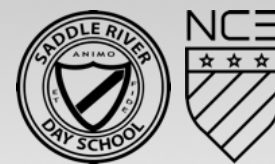
GENDER

Male

### PERFORMANCE ANALYTICS



Each Category is divided into competencies and each competency divided further into measurable characteristics detailing a comprehensive framework to measure progress.



## Review Cycle

Player development is reviewed on a structured and predictable cycle.

### **Ongoing Review:**

- Informal, day-to-day feedback within training and games
- Reinforcement of strengths and identification of learning areas

The objective is not to reduce academic demand, but to help players manage high expectations across school and sport.

### **Formal Reviews:**

- Scheduled review points during the academic year
- Involves the player and appropriate School of Excellence staff
- Focuses on development progress, engagement, and next steps

Reviews are honest, constructive, and development-focused.

### **Player Feedback & Ownership:**

Players are encouraged to take active ownership of their development.

### **This includes:**

- Understanding their IDP priorities
- Reflecting on performances and behaviors
- Engaging in review conversations

The aim is to develop independent, self-aware learners rather than passive participants.



## FACILITIES

High-performance player development requires facilities that are reliable, accessible, and appropriate to the stage of development.



### **Philosophy:**

The School of Excellence is intentional in how it deploys facilities. The objective is not minimal provision, but high-functioning, fit-for-purpose infrastructure that supports daily excellence across all areas of the program.

### **Key Characteristics:**

- Consistency
- Quality
- Integration
- Efficiency

# SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

HIGH PERFORMANCE SOCCER PROGRAM



## Primary Campus Facilities

The School of Excellence is based on the Saddle River Day School campus, which is currently undergoing a major high school development project.

As part of this build, SRDS is delivering:

- One full-size turf soccer field
- Two full-size natural grass soccer fields

These outdoor facilities will serve as the primary training and preparation base, allowing year-round access, controlled scheduling, and reduced travel.

This stability supports consistent training standards, appropriate load management, and the protection of academic time.

### **Additional Facilities:**

- School Gymnasium: indoor training, movement work, and modified sessions
- School Weight Room: supporting age-appropriate physical development
- Indoor Athletic Spaces: used for conditioning, recovery, and performance education
- Classrooms and Learning Spaces: that support academic integration, guided study, and educational delivery

This combination allows soccer, physical performance, and academics to operate as a single, coordinated system, rather than as competing demands on a player's time.

# SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

HIGH PERFORMANCE SOCCER PROGRAM



## Supplemental Facility

During winter months and periods of inclement weather, the School of Excellence utilizes **Superdome Sports** in Waldwick, New Jersey, a nearby full-size indoor soccer facility.

The proximity of Superdome Sports ensures training continuity without excessive travel or disruption, allowing indoor usage to support – rather than compromise – academic balance, recovery, and daily routine.

The School of Excellence is strategically located to serve families across the greater New York metropolitan region.

The Saddle River Day School campus sits within close reach of key population centers in Northern New Jersey, New York City, and Southern Connecticut, making the program accessible without the excessive daily travel often associated with elite youth soccer environments.

### **Location & Accessibility:**

The Saddle River Day School campus sits within close reach of key population centers in Northern New Jersey, New York City, and Southern Connecticut, making the program accessible without the excessive daily travel often associated with elite youth soccer environments.

Major highway and transport routes allow efficient access from:

- Bergen, Essex, Morris, and Passaic counties in New Jersey
- New York City and surrounding boroughs
- Westchester County and Southern Connecticut

This central location directly supports the School of Excellence's commitment to reducing unnecessary travel, protecting academics, and maintaining a sustainable daily routine for players and families.



## **TALENT IDENTIFICATION & RECRUITMENT PROGRAM**

The Talent Identification & Recruitment Program ensures that players entering & progressing through the School of Excellence are evaluated on long-term potential, not short-term ability or physical maturity.

### **Purpose:**

- Identify players who can thrive in a high-performance, learning-focused environment
- Protect the integrity & standards of the School of Excellence
- Ensure appropriate challenge & progression for all players
- Maintain alignment with NCE principles & School of Excellence values

### **Talent Identification Philosophy:**

- Potential is prioritized over early performance
- Technical quality & decision-making outweigh physical dominance
- Attitude, coach-ability, & learning mindset are essential
- Recruitment supports development; it never drives the program

The School of Excellence does not recruit to win games or build teams for short-term success.

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## Entry Routes Into The School of Excellence

Players may enter the School of Excellence through multiple routes:

- Assessment events & trials
- Recommendation from NCE staff or trusted partners
- Progression from existing NCE programs
- Progression from SRDS soccer programs
- Direct application with supporting playing background

Players are assessed against the same criteria at all entry routes

### **Technical**

Comfort on the ball under pressure  
Quality of first touch, passing, & receiving  
Ability to execute techniques at speed

### **Tactical**

Game awareness & decision-making  
Understanding of space, timing, & positioning  
Ability to solve problems independently

### **Psychological**

Coach-ability & openness to feedback  
Resilience & response to challenge  
Work ethic, focus, & competitive behavior

### **Physical**

Movement quality & coordination  
Long-term physical potential (not current size or strength)

### **Social**

Leadership & Accountability  
Communication, Commitment & Professionalism

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## Selection Decisions

Selection into the School of Excellence is based on:

- Assessment performance over time
- Observations in training & game environments
- Alignment with the School of Excellence learning & behavioral standards

### **There are:**

- No guarantees of acceptance
- No guarantees of playing time
- No guarantees of progression beyond the School of Excellence

### **Review, Progression & De-selection**

Talent identification is an ongoing process, not a one-time decision.

### **This includes:**

- Regular review of player development & engagement
- Honest feedback with players and families
- Support for players whose needs may be better served in a different environment

Where appropriate, de-selection is handled transparently & respectfully, with the player's long-term wellbeing in mind.

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## Ethical Recruitment Standards

The School of Excellence is committed to ethical recruitment practices:

- No inducements or guarantees tied to selection
- No promises of exposure, scholarships, or advancement
- Clear separation between recruitment & game outcomes

The focus remains on development, education, & welfare at all times.

### **Summary:**

The Talent Identification & Recruitment Program ensures that the NCE School of Excellence attracts & retains players with the mindset, ability, & potential to benefit from a high-performance development environment.

By prioritizing long-term growth, ethical practice, & transparency, the School of Excellence maintains the integrity & quality of its pathway.



## COLLEGE PATHWAY PROGRAM

College preparation & progression are embedded across the School of Excellence, rather than delivered as a standalone program. Key elements are intentionally integrated into existing pillars:

- **Games Program:** Showcase events, college-attended fixtures, & invited college coach involvement at U16–U18 are built into the annual competition plan.
- **Coaching Program:** Ongoing, honest evaluation & level guidance are provided through daily contact & long-term observation by senior NCE staff.
- **Monitoring, Review & Audit:** College readiness, level matching, & next-step planning are addressed within player reviews & IDPs.
- **Education & Player Welfare:** Academic standards, eligibility awareness, & transition support are managed as part of the wider student-athlete framework.

As a result, all SOE graduates leave the program with enhanced college soccer opportunities, informed by continuous evidence rather than one-off events. Standalone pathway features (such as residential camps or combines) may be used selectively as supplementary experiences, but they do not define the SOE college pathway.

This integrated approach ensures clarity, consistency, & credibility while keeping development, not recruitment, the primary driver.

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## Key College-Specific Features for SOE Players

While the college pathway is embedded across the School of Excellence, families & players will experience a clear set of college-specific features designed to support progression into collegiate soccer environments.

### College Coach Involvement (U16–U18)

- College coaches are invited to work directly with School of Excellence players during the U16–U18 age phases
- Involvement may include on-field coaching sessions, training observations, & feedback discussions
- This allows college coaches to assess players within a daily training environment, not just showcase matches

### Showcase Events

- School of Excellence players participate in showcase events that are integrated into the Games Program
- Showcases are selected based on quality of opposition, environment, & alignment with development objectives
- These events provide exposure opportunities while remaining consistent with School of Excellence training priorities
- School of Excellence will have access to NCE College Showcase games vs pro academy programs

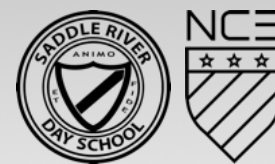
### Professional Highlight Reel (Included for All Players)

Every School of Excellence player receives a professionally produced highlight reel as part of full-time enrollment

- Footage is drawn from School of Excellence training, games, & approved showcase environments
- Reels emphasize decision-making, tactical understanding, & work rate rather than isolated highlights

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## **One-to-One College Guidance**

- Players & families receive individual guidance throughout the college process
- Support includes level-matching advice, timeline planning, & communication strategy with college coaches
- Guidance is evidence-based & informed by long-term observation, not short-term performance

## **Education & Information Sessions**

Structured sessions for players & families covering:

- College soccer pathways & levels
- Recruiting timelines & expectations
- Academic eligibility considerations

Education is designed to remove uncertainty & support informed decision-making

## **Supplementary NCE College Opportunities (Optional)**

- NCE Residential College Pathway Camps
- NCE College Combines

These opportunities may be used selectively to add context and experience but are not required for college progression within the School of Excellence pathway.

Together, these features ensure that School of Excellence players are well-prepared, well-informed, and well-positioned to pursue college soccer opportunities upon graduation.

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## Parent Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

### **Is this designed to replace club soccer?**

Yes. The School of Excellence is structured as a complete development environment. Players train five to six times per week within the school schedule, supported by integrated physical preparation and controlled competition. Adding external club commitments would create unnecessary physical load and conflict with the program's structure. The model is designed to replace, not supplement, traditional club schedules.

### **How many training sessions take place each week?**

Training is embedded into the academic timetable and delivered consistently throughout the year. Session frequency and duration vary slightly by age group, but players should expect regular morning training, structured physical development sessions, and additional game-based learning within the weekly schedule.

### **Typically:**

- 4 x 90 minute Training Sessions
- 1 x Formal 60 minute S&C Session
- 1 x 60 minute Tactical Classroom Session (Video Analysis)
- 1 x 60 Minute Performance Classroom Session

*Contact/Training Time (Excluding Games) ~ 9 hours per week*

### **What happens during the high school soccer season?**

School of Excellence players can play for the SRDS High School team. While playing with the SRDS team School of Excellence players are not permitted to join School of Excellence programming. HS players will rejoin the School of Excellence program once the HS soccer season has completed.

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## **How is academic progress protected?**

Academics are non-negotiable. Training is scheduled to minimize disruption to core classes, and structured study periods are built into the week. Where occasional academic time is missed due to competition or travel, guided study and monitored catch-up systems are in place. Classroom conduct, attendance, and performance remain central expectations.

## **What if my child struggles academically?**

Academic standards take precedence. If a student's academic performance declines, training and competition exposure may be adjusted until stability is restored. The objective is to develop disciplined student-athletes, not to separate academic and athletic accountability.

## **How are playing time & selection decisions handled?**

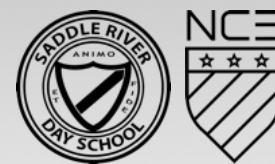
There are no guarantees of playing time. Selection, rotation, & minutes are managed according to individual development needs, physical readiness, & training performance. The program avoids tournament stacking & excessive accumulation of minutes. Decisions are made in the best interest of the player's long-term progression.

## **How is player progress measured?**

Each player follows an Individual Development Plan aligned with the NCE Player Performance Profile. Progress is reviewed through ongoing daily feedback & formal review meetings during the academic year. Development is evaluated across technical, tactical, physical, psychological, & social categories rather than through match results alone.

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## **How is physical health and injury prevention managed?**

Baseline screening, load coordination, & structured strength development are embedded into the weekly program. Physical preparation is aligned with training & competition demands. Access to qualified medical professionals & rehabilitation support is built into the framework. Long-term availability is prioritized over short-term performance.

## **What international opportunities are available?**

International competition is integrated into the annual calendar, typically during school vacation periods. These experiences are structured to expose players to different playing styles & environments while protecting academic priorities. Participation is managed responsibly & does not replace core training.

## **What happens if a player plateaus or no longer fits the environment?**

Development is reviewed continuously. Honest communication with families is central to the process. If a player's needs are better served in a different setting, that transition is handled transparently and professionally. Decisions are guided by long-term wellbeing and realistic pathway alignment.

## **Is college placement guaranteed?**

No. The program does not guarantee recruitment outcomes. College progression is supported through structured guidance, evidence-based evaluation, & exposure opportunities integrated into the Games Program. Development remains the primary driver; exposure is a byproduct of performance & readiness.

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## **How large are the training groups?**

Cohort sizes are controlled to ensure appropriate challenge, coaching attention, & training intensity. Grouping decisions are based on age, development stage, & performance level to maintain a serious learning environment. (Typically 12-18 players)

## **How do parents stay informed?**

Clear communication channels are established from the outset. Formal review meetings are scheduled during the academic year, & day-to-day feedback is delivered directly to players. Families are viewed as partners in supporting standards, balance, & long-term progression.

# SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

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## Summary

A complete academic and high-performance environment — intentionally built for ambitious young players.

The NCE School of Excellence, delivered in collaboration with Saddle River Day School, is not an add-on. It is not supplemental training. It is a fully integrated academic and elite soccer model designed to replace traditional club soccer with a more advanced, development-driven structure.

This program was built to eliminate the fragmentation that defines the conventional club pathway.

Instead of evening training layered onto long school days, development is embedded within the academic schedule. Daily, professionally delivered sessions ensure consistency, intelligent load management, and long-term athletic availability. Competition is selected to reinforce learning objectives — not to accumulate games or chase standings.

The model is based on proven player development principles used within leading European academy systems: structured daily repetition, controlled competitive exposure, progressive physical planning, and clear behavioral standards.

Academics remain uncompromised. Structured study periods, monitored progress, and SRDS's established academic systems ensure that intellectual growth advances alongside athletic development. Every player operates from an Individual Development Plan aligned to the NCE Performance Profile, measuring progress across technical, tactical, physical, psychological, and social domains. Expectations are explicit. Feedback is systematic. Accountability is daily...

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The School of Excellence is designed for ambitious student-athletes prepared to operate within a high-standard, professionally structured environment – and for families who value long-term growth over short-term recognition.

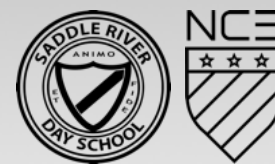
This is not club soccer with more training.

It is a purpose-built alternative – a refined, aligned, and professionally structured model designed to maximize development while protecting education.

For the right player, it represents a fundamentally better pathway.

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## Financials

### 2026/27 School of Excellence Fees

Elementary School – N/A

Middle School (Grades 5-8)

**\$3,999.00**

Upper School (Grades 9-12)

**\$3,999.00**

Payment Plan Available (10% Charge)

By May 31<sup>st</sup> – **\$1,000.00**

Non-Refundable Deposit

- 1<sup>st</sup> Installment Aug 31<sup>st</sup>: **\$1,398.90**
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Installment Oct 31<sup>st</sup>: **\$1,000.00**
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Installment Feb 31<sup>st</sup>: **\$1,000.00**

#### Included:

- Annual training program
- Annual games program & tournaments
- Annual S&C Program
- All Video analysis sessions
- Individual Development Plan
- Annual Performance Education Program
- Spring & Fall Sunday Evening NCE Training Sessions at SRDS

#### Not Included:

- Uniforms ~ \$300
- International Games Program
- Transports Costs
- SRDS Tuition

### Financial Aid is Available to help cover tuition costs.

Grade	2026-27 Tuition	Meal Plan	Tech Plan
6-7	\$43,050	\$1,785	\$1,275
8	\$45,000	\$1,785	\$1,275
9-11	\$54,100	\$1,885	\$1,275

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## SOME OF THE PLAYERS WE'VE HELPED



## Admissions Process



Request Information

Schedule a Call

Determine Eligability

Schedule a Campus Visit

Apply Online

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## Significant Dates & Schedule

The School of Excellence operates within the Saddle River Day School academic calendar while maintaining a structured year-round performance framework. The dates below outline key academic milestones & how the School of Excellence integrates within them.

### August 2026

- *August 17* : SRDS Fall Sports Begin

School of Excellence Upper School athletes participating in SRDS Fall Teams begin high school season commitments. SOE programming pauses for those athletes during the official high school season. Physical monitoring guidance remains available.

- *August 31* : Orientation (All Divisions)

Mandatory for all School of Excellence families. Program overview, standards briefing, IDP process explanation, & annual expectations outlined.

### September 2026

- *September 1* : First Day of Classes

Official start of full School of Excellence weekly training model for all enrolled players not in SRDS Fall season.

- *September 10 – 11* : MS/US Grade Level Field Trips

Modified training schedule where required.

- *September 21* : No School

Optional performance session (TBC).

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## October 2026

- *October 3* : Homecoming

Adjusted weekend competition schedule where necessary.

- *October 10 - 11* : EDP Cup Fall 2025
- *October 12* : Faculty Professional Development Day (No Classes)

Modified training day.

- *October 22 - 23* : Parent-Teacher Conferences

School of Excellence Formal Review Window #1

Individual Development Plan progress discussions aligned with academic conferences.

## November 2026

- *November 21 - 22* : FC DELCO Fall Showcase
- *November 23 - 27* : Thanksgiving Break

No academic classes.

Optional training block (local players).

## December 2026

*December 18* : Last Full Day Before Winter Break

Mid-Year Performance Review Window.

Load adjustment period begins prior to break.

## Winter Break Period

Modified training schedule.

Individual performance plans issued.

## January 2027: Physical Reassessment Period

- *January 4* : School Resumes

Full weekly model resumes.

Mid-year screening and strength progression evaluation.

- *January 16* : NCE Winter Showcase #1
- *January 18* : Martin Luther King Jr. Day (No School)

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## February 2027

- *February 6* : NCE Winter Showcase #2
- *February 15* : Presidents Day (No School)

## March 2027

- *March 6 - 7* : Jefferson Cup Boys
- *March 13 - 14* : Jefferson Cup Girls
- *March 19* : Parent/Teacher Conference Day (No Classes)

School of Excellence Formal Review Window #2.

- *March 22 - April 2* : Spring Break. Primary International Tour Window.

## April 2027

- *April 5* : School Resumes

## May 2027

- *May 3 - 14* : AP Examination Period

Reduced load protocol for Upper School athletes. Training volume adjusted to protect academic performance.

- *May 19* : Graduation (6 PM)

Upper School recognition.

- *May 22 - 23* : EDP Cup Spring
- *May 31* : Memorial Day (No School)

## June 2027

- *June 7 - 11* : Exams (Grades 6-11)

Reduced load protocol. Training intensity adjusted.

- *June 14* : Last Day of Classes

Formal Review Window #3.

Year-end Individual Development Plan summary issued.



## Useful Links

**[NCE Soccer Homepage](#)**

**[Saddle River Day School](#)**

**[SRDS Admissions](#)**

**[Schedule a Visit](#)**

**[SRDS Tuition Fees](#)**

**[Online Application](#)**

## School of Excellence Contacts

**[School of Excellence Lead - John Curtis](#)**

**[SRDS Athletic Director - PJ Petrow](#)**

**[SRDS Director of Admissions - Geoffrey Bowman](#)**



# SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE

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*Now Accepting Applications for Fall 2026*