



Barcelona United – Sporting Columbus Partnership **SC and BU to cooperate at the high school levels**



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Contact: Jeffrey Warren, 614.284.9746 (Sporting Columbus) or Mike Simmons, 614.746.5375 (Barcelona United)

COLUMBUS - Barcelona United and Sporting Columbus are excited to announce the establishment of a strategic partnership for high school age players at both clubs. Barcelona United and Sporting Columbus both share proud histories in their respective communities for their focus on player development and their successes on and off the field. Working together will only further the opportunity for players on the east side of Columbus and beyond to compete at the highest level.

Under the partnership, the clubs will continue to operate independently from the U6 to U14 age groups but will work closely together to share coaching education and resources, facilities, collaborative trainings, and many other areas that will enhance the player development pathway and overall family experience at all levels of the game.

At the high school age groups (U15 -U19) the clubs will combine under the Sporting Columbus name. The high school program's soccer operations will be overseen by a committee made up of leaders from each club. The committee will determine coaching assignments, player selection, and league and showcase selection, as well as oversee the college recruiting process for all players within the program.

Dave Merrick, Sporting Columbus director – girls programming, says “As the Sporting Columbus Girls transition into the ECNL RL platform through The Great River Conference, the partnership with Barcelona United increases developmental opportunities of players on the east side. This is a win-win for both clubs as top players have access to a top competitive platform.” “With our Sporting Columbus boys program transitioning into their high school age groups, our partnership with Barcelona United will not only keep the levels of our boys' teams high enough to compete in the some of the top club soccer leagues and showcases, but it will also continue to provide higher quality developmental opportunities for our players. This collaboration is a bonus for both clubs!” says Geoff Starks, Sporting Columbus director – boys' programming.

Statement from Barcelona United –

Barcelona United Board members are delighted to announce the formation of this relationship with Sporting Columbus. Both Sporting Columbus and Barcelona United bring an unparalleled commitment to excellence and strong developmental programs to their respective club programs. We will now be doing so at the high school levels under one umbrella. Scott Philabaum, Barcelona United Board President, says “We feel we have found our perfect partner in Sporting Columbus. We both strive for the same type of team oriented-culture, competitive landscape, and player development. Our partnership will bring that under one roof and allow more opportunities for the high school age groups. Additionally, the announcement of Sporting Columbus being accepted into the prestigious ECNL-RL league gives our players the opportunity to earn a spot playing on the highest-level teams....and on the east side. We are excited to start this journey together!”



Jeffrey Warren, president of Sporting Columbus is excited that “working together instead of independently will only strengthen each other’s program and provide the best experience on and off the field for the players.”

ABOUT SPORTING COLUMBUS

Sporting Columbus aspires to be the finest youth sports organization and an integral part of player growth (on and off the field). By promoting development and sportsmanship in an enjoyable environment, Sporting Columbus encourages a healthy lifestyle and love of sports in its players. Sporting Columbus was founded in 2018 by Dave Merrick, Geoff Starks, and Jeffrey Warren, partners over the past 24 years in various youth sports ventures including seven years as Columbus Crew SC player development directors. Each founder brings his own set of skills from coaching to business development that overlaps and works well together to set up Sporting Columbus to succeed at achieving its mission.

About Barcelona United

Founded in 2011, Barcelona United brings an exceptional, professionally run youth soccer program to Pickerington and Central Ohio. Club directors and coaches have developed a first-class soccer program that includes a professional coaching staff and a professional soccer curriculum. We are committed to providing an unparalleled experience for all who have an interest in the sport of soccer. We promote the spirit of sportsmanship, the electricity of competition, and the importance of pure enjoyment of the game. We provide the opportunity to play developmental and competitive soccer and specialized training programs to all who participate. All players will learn and have an understanding that they all play an important and vital role in the success of their fellow players, teammates, and the club in which they represent.