

## 2011 “TRAPPED YEAR”

### 2025/26 Soccer Year

In the U.S. Youth Soccer, a “trapped year” (also called a “long year” or locked year) refers to a group of players who are ineligible to play high school soccer and simultaneously age out of certain youth soccer age groups, effectively being “trapped” between systems. This is a result of the U.S. Soccer birth-year registration system, which does not align with the school year calendar used by most high school sports.

### What is the Trapped Year?

- Definition: A trapped year occurs primarily in the U14/U15 age group (players born in the second half of the calendar year).
- These players are typically in 8th grade, but their birth year aligns them with 9th graders in the soccer system.
- This leaves them ineligible for some youth competitions with their peers and not yet able to play high school soccer with their grade-level classmates.

### Example: 2011 Birth Year (Trapped in 2025–2026)

- Players born in 2011 will be considered U15 for the 2025–2026 season.
- However, some of those players will still be in 8th grade, while many U15 players are starting 9th grade and playing high school soccer.
- This means 8th graders born in 2011 can’t play high school soccer yet, and their club teams may be missing many players who are in high school, leaving them without a full team or consistent competition.

### Why It Happens

- In 2016, U.S. Soccer moved to calendar-year registration (Jan 1–Dec 31), shifting away from the school-year model (Aug 1–July 31).
- This aligned U.S. youth soccer with international standards but disrupted alignment with U.S. school and high school sports systems.
- The result: some kids play up or down a grade level in soccer, causing the trapped year phenomenon.

### Impact on Players

- Reduced team options during the fall season.
- May need special programming, like High School Academy programs for “locked” players.

- Can experience fewer games, less development time, or disconnection from teammates.

## **Recent Developments**

- US Youth Soccer has announced a return to school-year age groupings starting in 2026.
- This change is intended to eliminate the “trapped year” and better align with the U.S. education and high school sports systems.

### **Bend FC 2011 Competitive, Select, and Premier**

The 2011 age group is part of the Bend FC High School Academy program. While most players are preparing to enter high school, we also have a number of players heading into 8th grade. These players are often referred to as “locked” or “long year” players due to the birth year/school year split.

U.S. Youth Soccer (USYS) has announced that it plans to return to school-based age groupings in 2026 to help eliminate these splits in the future.

Bend FC—through OYSA—has the opportunity to register one or two 2011 teams in a Fall league specifically designed for 8th grade players in this unique situation. These teams will compete against other clubs with similar rosters. Participation in this league is entirely optional.

Given that we currently have three full 2011 girls teams, we anticipate forming one or possibly two teams for the Fall season, depending on interest. The season will include:

- 8 league games
- 2 practices per week (September through November)
- A program fee of \$150 per player

We expect 25–35 players may participate in this optional 8th-grade Fall program.

Registration will open on August 1, 2025.

Right now, our Directors of Coaching are gathering interest data to determine how many teams to register.

If you have any questions—whether your player is entering 8th grade or high school—please don’t hesitate to contact your coach or Director Greg Ryan directly.