

To: Bend FC Members

From: Executive Director Donnie Emerson

At Bend FC, we believe every player deserves the right environment to grow, compete, and enjoy the game at a level that matches their goals and development. For the 2026/27 season, the club is proud to provide multiple pathways that support players and families across every stage of the soccer journey.

In 2025/26, the addition of Girls Academy Aspire (GA Aspire) represented a major step forward for the club and for girls soccer in Central Oregon. GA Aspire provides Bend FC athletes with access to a nationally recognized platform that emphasizes player development, recruiting exposure, competitive balance, and family experience. The league's club-driven structure allows Bend FC to actively help shape the environment our players participate in, rather than simply follow decisions made elsewhere.

Most importantly, GA Aspire aligns closely with Bend FC's values. The platform supports high school soccer participation, encourages balance and wellness, and creates meaningful opportunities for female athletes both on and off the field. Through regional league play, national showcase events, and connections to the growing women's professional game, GA Aspire creates an exciting future for Bend FC players aspiring to compete at the collegiate and professional levels.

The Bend FC Technical Team believes GA Aspire is one of the most progressive and player-centered environments in youth soccer today. The platform's focus on women in the game, leadership opportunities, player wellness, and long-term development makes it an outstanding fit for Bend FC girls and families. With an Oregon-based structure and regionalized travel model, GA Aspire also allows players to access elite opportunities without the excessive travel demands often associated with national platforms.

On the boys side, Bend FC is equally excited about participation in Elite Academy (EA2) for 26/27. EA provides a strong developmental environment with high-level regional competition and meaningful pathways for ambitious players. The platform is designed to balance competition with long-term growth, allowing players to challenge themselves while still maintaining balance with school, family, and high school soccer participation.

Elite Academy offers Bend FC boys teams increased visibility, stronger recruiting opportunities, and alignment with evolving national development structures. The league's collaborative structure also gives clubs a voice in shaping the player experience. Bend FC believes EA is an excellent fit for players who are seeking elevated competition and development while remaining in a positive, player-focused environment.

Bend FC remains deeply committed to its teams competing within Oregon Youth Soccer Association (OYSA) and National 1 competitions. OYSA continues to provide a valuable and developmental environment for players throughout the state of Oregon. The league offers

balanced competition, community-centered experiences, reduced travel demands, and strong opportunities for players to continue growing their love for the game.

For many players and families, OYSA and National 1 provide the ideal environment for long-term development, confidence building, and enjoyment of soccer. Bend FC strongly values the role these leagues play in supporting player retention, multi-sport participation, local rivalries, and community engagement. The club believes not every pathway needs to look the same for players to be successful.

Bend FC's overall structure is designed to create opportunities for every athlete:

- GA Aspire for girls seeking a national-level platform and recruiting exposure
- Elite Academy for boys pursuing elevated regional competition and long-term development
- OYSA and National 1 for players seeking strong developmental environments with balanced competition and local accessibility

Together, these pathways allow Bend FC to continue building a complete club model where every player can thrive, develop, and enjoy the game in an environment that matches their goals and aspirations.