



YOUTH SOCCER

SPONSORSHIP AND MERGERS

With the recent news of neighboring clubs changes, United FC is consistently being asked about the club mergers, and the perceived sponsorship opportunities from overseas professional teams, who in some cases have world renowned names and reputations. As a club, United FC would like to provide you and the community at large with some insight as to why our club has never pursued any of these options to date.

United FC is currently beginning its 20th year as a Premier Travel Soccer Club. Although approximately 4 years ago our name was modified from Birmingham United to United FC-Michigan, we have consistently maintained our soccer philosophy.

The following is a brief sample of the many inquiries and questions our coaching staff have received over the last several months.

Q. How has the club evolved over the last 20 years?

A. We began with 4 travel soccer teams. Currently we have a youth recreation soccer league with over 500 players enrolled. We also have close to 50 premier travel soccer teams with over 650 players. More importantly, due to a highly qualified coaching staff, the quality of our players has improved significantly each and every year.

Q. Why has United FC never pursued the option of aligning itself with a high profile overseas professional team as other local clubs have done?

A. We believe there is no real tangible benefit to our club members. One of United FC's club owners, Ian Fairbrother was a 5 year professional player with Liverpool FC. As a former player of the club, and a current member of the P.F.A. (Professional Footballers Association), this option has been provided to him over the last 6 or 7 years, however, Ian and club co-owner Andy Chapman believe that 99% of their players are on the American journey. They will encourage their players to embark on playing the sport at high school and for those players who have the ability, desire, and dedication, the staff will support their journey as a college athlete, with achieving their education as the primary goal.

Q. Why do these professional teams seek out American youth clubs?

A. The professional clubs are motivated to spread their brand across the global soccer spectrum. They want to sell their shirts in the American market and in most, if not all cases, have American youth soccer clubs pay the significant additional fees for the pleasure of doing so. The professional clubs may send a youth soccer coach over to the foreign club, give them a few Skype sessions or open up their youth curriculum, but we believe there is no real tangible benefit to American youth players.

Q. Why is United FC not merging with any other organizations?

A. United FC does not see any real need to fix something that is not broken! As a club, we have been diligently examining our current player birth year pools for next year and we are very excited about the way these new potential rosters look! We have a lot of interest in our program this year and families can see that the United FC- Michigan Family atmosphere is unique. We are a progressive club sensitive to the parent/player scheduling challenges in today's fast paced world. We have a lot of high quality players and teams, we will continue to stay consistent, so that our players and parents know what to expect.



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Q. Are you saying that no player has an interest or desire to play overseas?

A. No. We are saying that this is not the journey for 99% of the youth players in our community and Michigan in general. The facts also support this. There are very few Michigan youth players currently under a professional playing contract with a top European soccer club.

Q. United FC has conducted European tours for some of its current teams?

A. Yes we have. The players immersing themselves in a European soccer culture for a couple of weeks with their team mates is a great cultural experience for the kids. Ian has taken multiple teams to England, and the Norway Cup Tournament in Oslo. Greg Perkins has also taken teams to London utilizing Andy Chapman's connections with both the English Football Association and West Ham United. Coach Christos Karatsikakis has also taken his current U15 Boys to both London and Greece last summer.

Q. Is it not a good opportunity and a significant value add for club players to have opportunities with these overseas teams?

A. Yes it is, but only for the small percentage. As an organization, we just do not believe the whole club should be subsidizing these opportunities. Andy Chapman made a phone call this season to have one our U13 Boys go and train with West Ham United's Academy for 10 days. Coach Greg Perkins escorted him over, and it was a fantastic experience for him. This can be achieved on merit, with a phone call to our contacts. It does not take the whole club to change its name and identity to achieve these goals.

Q. Surely purchasing a uniform package is the same no matter what you choose to call yourself?

A. Not necessarily. Purchasing uniforms from these international soccer brands, usually online, means that the parents money will go directly overseas at the point of purchase. At United FC, although our uniforms are a Nike product, our money is spent locally with a sports shop business, which in turn supports the local community.

