



LEAGUE DECISION SHEET

Every league in the Michigan pyramid on one sheet — what it costs, how far you drive, and whether high school soccer still fits.

There is no "best" league — there is the one that fits your player, your calendar and your budget. Use the two columns families actually decide on: **travel** and **high school**. Costs are typical all-in season ranges, not dues alone.

TIER 1 · NATIONAL ELITE			
LEAGUE	SEASON COST	TRAVEL	HIGH SCHOOL
MLS NEXT Homegrown Boys	\$4,000– \$14,000	Regional Midwest/Great Lakes conference play (OH, IL, IN, WI) plus national events like MLS NEXT Flex and Fest that usually mean flights.	Effectively year-round. Playing high school soccer requires a formal waiver signed by the principal, club director, and a parent — and many MLS NEXT boys skip high school soccer entirely.
ECNL Boys & girls	\$5,000– \$15,000	Midwest Conference spans MI, IL, WI, MN, MO, KS, NE, IA — regular multi-state weekends plus 2–3 national showcases a year (FL, AZ common).	Allowed and planned for — calendars are built around the relevant MHSAA season, and most elite Michigan girls play both.
GA Girls	\$5,000– \$10,000	Multi-state Midwest conference play plus national showcases.	Allowed — calendars schedule around the spring MHSAA girls season.

TIER 2 · NATIONAL SECOND TIER

LEAGUE	SEASON COST	TRAVEL	HIGH SCHOOL
MLS NEXT Academy Boys	\$3,000– \$9,000	Regionally focused regular season, so most league weekends are drivable. National exposure still exists through the eight regional MLS NEXT Cup Qualifiers, MLS NEXT Cup and MLS NEXT Fest.	Allowed. This is the headline difference — MLS NEXT states Academy Division players are permitted to participate in high school soccer, and the regular season is built around high school calendars. In the Homegrown Division high school play requires a waiver and is often declined.
ECNL-RL Boys & girls	\$3,000– \$6,000	Mostly in-state for Greater Michigan Alliance play; regional playoffs if qualified.	Calendars generally avoid the relevant MHSAA season for each gender.
NAL Boys & girls	\$2,500– \$7,000	Regional club-vs-club fixtures plus national playoff and showcase events for qualifying teams.	Generally scheduled around school seasons, but confirm the specific calendar with the club.
ODP Boys & girls	\$0– \$500	Occasional weekends: statewide ODP events, plus interregional camps if selected.	No conflict — events are scheduled outside league play and around school seasons.

TIER 3 · NATIONAL TEAM-BASED & SCHOOL

LEAGUE	SEASON COST	TRAVEL	HIGH SCHOOL
N1 Boys & girls	\$2,500– \$5,000	Michigan + northern Indiana by design — travel reduction is an explicit N1 goal.	Season calendars avoid the relevant MHSAA season for each gender.
High School Boys & girls	\$0– \$400	Local conference plus state tournament runs.	This is high school — the question is how club fits around it. See the full explainer.

TIER 4 · STATEWIDE

LEAGUE	SEASON COST	TRAVEL	HIGH SCHOOL
MSPSP Boys & girls	\$1,500– \$5,000	Statewide — most games within a 1–2.5 hour drive, geographic flighting at lower divisions.	Fall/spring calendars avoid the relevant MHSAA season for each gender.
DA (U11–U12) Boys & girls	\$1,200– \$3,000	In-state, regional groupings.	Not applicable at these ages.
GLPL Boys & girls	\$2,000– \$5,500	Primarily in-state weekends, with regional/national qualifiers only if the team advances.	Works around the MHSAA seasons like the rest of the MSYSA structure — this is a lane where playing high school soccer is normal, not negotiated.

TIER 5 · REGIONAL TRAVEL

LEAGUE	SEASON COST	TRAVEL	HIGH SCHOOL
MYSL Boys & girls	\$800– \$2,500	Local — mostly within metro Detroit.	Calendars avoid the relevant MHSAA season at high-school ages.

TIER 6 · RECREATIONAL

LEAGUE	SEASON COST	TRAVEL	HIGH SCHOOL
Rec / AYSO Boys & girls	\$75– \$300	Within town.	No conflict.
TOPSoccer Boys & girls	\$0– \$100	None. Sessions are local, at your own or a nearby club.	No conflict.

ASK YOURSELF FIRST

Is my player giving up high school soccer?	If no, that rules out some lanes immediately — start there, not with the badge.
How many hours in the car can we truly do?	Two national-platform weekends a month is a family decision, not a soccer one.
Will they play, or sit?	Minutes at a lower tier beat a bench role at a higher one, every time, at every age.
What happens if it doesn't work out?	Clubs re-tryout every June. Almost nothing decided at 12 is permanent.