

STL CITY Soccer Club Offers Free Professional Training for Alton Kids

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - The St. Louis CITY Soccer Club has made it to Alton with their Play On program, which provides free soccer training to youth in the area.

The program encourages kids to engage in play-based practice where they learn technical skills and decision-making. In collaboration with [Student Athletes Leading Tomorrow \(SALT\)](#), the Play On program provided a winter session in Alton with professional coaches and several kids who attended every week.

“Everything is play-based, so we are using a play-practice-play approach where the kids have lots of little small-sided games that we do to promote their soccer IQ, not only the technical abilities, but really developing them making smart decisions on the field,” explained Sascha Bauer, Director of Regional Training and Education with St. Louis CITY SC. “We have a very holistic approach. We want to promote life skills development in sports, as well, so we always promote emotional and social skills in the training sessions that they’re able to hopefully transfer into other areas of life.”

Bauer said the program aims to “tackle the pay-to-play model” so soccer is more accessible to kids throughout the Greater St. Louis region. The Play On program also works with kids of all skill levels. Bauer noted that the winter session has welcomed participants who are just learning how to play, a few who play in recreational leagues, and others who have played club soccer for years.



“We know 99% will not play pro, but the more we impact kids everywhere in the city and around the city, the better the quality will get of youth soccer,” he said. “We’re trying to cater to everyone that is interested in playing soccer on a regular basis. We offer weekly training and we don’t want to substitute anything that’s already happening. We are offering this program as a complementary offer to what the kids are already doing.”

In addition to scouting the talent and providing a free activity for kids, Bauer said the Play On program also allows them to bring together kids from across the region. The winter session will conclude with a tournament in which the kids are put into teams and play against each other throughout the day. Bauer pointed out that this allows kids from different areas to work together while practicing the skills they have learned.

“They’re going to play in one team with kids from other neighborhoods, kids that would maybe normally never play with and learn from each other, learn about each other and pursue a common goal or a mutual goal that they have for that day, like being as successful as possible in the tournament,” he said.

The program has received positive feedback from the parents and kids. While they will not be offering a spring session in Alton, Ferguson and Fairmont will both offer spring sessions, which start in late March. For more information, visit the [official Play On webpage](#).

