



NEWS RELEASE

MLS NEXT Announces Expansion Clubs for the 2025-26 Season

Seven clubs to join top tier of the program beginning in the fall of 2025

New MLS NEXT competition tier to launch with more than 220 clubs

NEW YORK (Friday, February 28, 2025) – MLS NEXT today announced seven new clubs that will join the program’s top-tier beginning in the 2025-26 season. Each new member is committed to elite player development and providing athletes with the resources to reach their full potential. MLS NEXT also introduced the teams that will be participating in the new competition tier, which was previously announced in January. The new tier will have over 1,300 teams from more than 220 clubs competing in regional divisions that are run by leading local operators.

Of the new clubs joining the top level of MLS NEXT, Albion SC Colorado, Michigan Futbol Academy, Northern Virginia Alliance, The Football Academy, and Tulsa Greenwood SC will provide a full player pathway, competing in all age groups of MLS NEXT competition from U13 to U19. Tulsa Greenwood SC will mark the first MLS NEXT club in Oklahoma, marking the 34th different state to have an MLS NEXT team along with the District of Columbia.

Three clubs with MLS NEXT Pro affiliations will join in the fall – Chattanooga FC (U13 to U15), Huntsville City FC (U13, U14), and Michigan Futbol Academy (U13 to U19). Huntsville City is the first MLS NEXT Pro affiliate to launch an MLS NEXT academy independent of its MLS club, while Michigan Futbol Academy will be affiliated with the recently announced MLS NEXT Pro team in Grand Rapids. Chattanooga FC, which started competing in MLS NEXT Pro in 2024 as an independent club, was previously announced as joining MLS NEXT in 2025-26.

The seven expansion clubs who will debut in 2025-26 are:

- [Albion SC Colorado](#) (Boulder County, Colo.) – U13, U14, U15, U16, U17, U19
- [Chattanooga FC](#) (Chattanooga, Tenn.) – U13, U14, U15
- [Huntsville City FC](#) (Huntsville, Ala.) – U13, U14
- [Michigan Futbol Academy](#) (Grand Rapids, Mich.) – U13, U14, U15, U16, U17, U19
- [Northern Virginia Alliance](#) (Leesburg, Va.) – U13, U14, U15, U16, U17, U19
- [The Football Academy](#) (Florham Park, N.J.) – U13, U14, U15, U16, U17, U19
- [Tulsa Greenwood SC](#) (Tulsa, Okla.) – U13, U14, U15, U16, U17, U19

“After a rigorous expansion process, these clubs demonstrated a thoughtful commitment to player development that will be extremely valuable to our program,” said MLS NEXT General Manager Kyle Albrecht. “We are excited to welcome all the expansion clubs that will be joining across both MLS NEXT tiers and look forward to the impact they will make. The interest from across the ecosystem emphasizes MLS NEXT’s standing as one of the most elite platforms for player development in the world.”

MLS NEXT annually manages a thorough expansion process to select new clubs to compete in the upcoming season. Several factors were considered, including specialized training plans, experienced

coaching, effective player identification and recruitment, high-quality facilities, cutting-edge technological opportunities, defined player pathways, and collaboration with local MLS clubs. Off the field, clubs were required to demonstrate a mission-aligned culture with core values, overall community engagement, holistic development strategies, a strong commitment to access and representation, robust financial aid and scholarship programs, and a forward-thinking leadership team. These characteristics ensure that chosen clubs align with MLS NEXT's standards for accessibility, representation, and player development within North America's most elite platform for youth soccer.

New MLS NEXT Tier Teams and Divisions

MLS NEXT also announced the division structure and participating teams in the new tier of competition, which was previously unveiled in January. The new tier will feature more than 1,200 teams from more than 220 clubs across regional divisions during the regular season. Of those clubs, more than half previously competed outside of MLS NEXT. Each division will be managed by leading league operators across the youth landscape with a strong commitment to player development – the National Academy League (NAL) operated by 3Step Soccer, Elite Academy League (EAL), Sporting Development League (SDL), Cobalt Sports, and Cal North Soccer Association.

Regular season play will begin in September 2025, which will be accompanied by regional tournaments and an opportunity to attend MLS NEXT national events, as well as coaching development and education programs. The regional tournaments will serve as qualifying for a championship event at the MLS NEXT Cup Playoffs later in 2026. These events will be marquee talent identification opportunities for college, professional, and national team scouts to evaluate players. Players competing in the new tier will also be eligible to play high school soccer.

A full breakdown of the divisions and participating clubs is available [HERE](#).

For more information on MLS NEXT and its member clubs, please visit [MLSSoccer.com/MLSNEXT](https://mlssoccer.com/MLSNEXT).

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About MLS NEXT

Launched in 2020, MLS NEXT is the most elite platform for youth player development in North America. With a commitment to innovation and providing access and representation, MLS NEXT players receive the best training and coaching as they prepare for their futures, both in soccer and in life. Throughout a season, MLS NEXT hosts four marquee events across the country, including the Generation adidas Cup, which features MLS academies playing against the top international clubs. Membership for the 2024-25 season included 29 MLS academies, 122 Elite Academies (151 total clubs), 753 teams and over 16,000 players across the U.S. and Canada. Official partners of MLS NEXT include adidas and Allstate. For more information about MLS NEXT, visit www.mlssoccer.com/mlsnext.