



EDEN PRAIRIE SOCCER CLUB

PASSION • RESPECT • EXCELLENCE

EPSC-The Early Days

“Dave Ellingson and John Parrington Founded the Eden Prairie Soccer Club in The Summer of 1980. Dave handled the administrative duties while John focused on the on-field training and coaching the players. The initial funding of the club’s first team was sponsored by Eden Prairie’s Schooner Days and for about the first 2 years it was free to participate until the club started to expand and uniform costs entered the equation. The inaugural jerseys were a very ugly dark orange in color with white numbers and a white covered wagon logo representing Schooner Days.

Dave Ellingson also commissioned one of the first soccer goals in Eden Prairie to be made. It was welded together by another EP parent based on some basic plans. The goal turned out to be slightly smaller than regulation size and instead of traditional netting the goal frame was surrounded on 3 sides and top by wire chain link fencing material. It was stored in the school yard at Prairie View Elementary School. The material of choice turned out to be fortuitous for use as a practice goal as the player using it for practice without a goalie could shoot on the goal and the ball would bounce back out at the player. This allowed for more repetition as the player did not have to dig the ball out of the back of the goal. The chain link material also made the goal great to climb on at recess turning the soccer goal into a bit of a jungle gym playground apparatus.

The first year the club only had one team. With soccer still in its early stages of development in EP there was not a lot of depth to choose from. The team was coached by Liverpool England native John Parrington and made up of players ranging from 13 years old to recent 18-year-old high school graduates. As a result of the age of the players, it played in the most competitive the U21 age group as it did not qualify for the next age group down, which at the time was the U18 age group. A 13-year-old up against college players made for quite an interesting learning curve. With a lack of regulation sized fields in Eden Prairie, combined with the distance for other teams to travel, “all the way out to Eden Prairie”, the home field the summer of the first year was at Fort Snelling. The team was made up of only boys but in later years and before the adoption of a girls’ soccer team at Eden Prairie High School the club integrated girls onto boys’ teams to allow for participation for both genders.

You’ll Never Walk Alone: As a result of Coach Parrington’s industrial English background the club had some English soccer culture bestowed upon it. English soccer terms were used by the club:

- Forwards were strikers
- Midfielders were halfbacks
- Defenders were fullbacks
- Goalies were reluctantly called the keepers by the hockey minded players
- Fields were pitches
- Cleats were boots

The club later moved away from the orange as a club color to Liverpool red with black shorts and red socks after Mr. Parrington purchased a team’s worth of Liverpool Umbro kits on a trip back to Liverpool, You’ll Never Walk Alone. The EP players thought it made sense as the high school colors were red and black.

Coach Parrington was an all-county (all-state) player in England and took great pride in teaching the players to play game properly with, toughness and pride in your performance. A formal training program and formation of play was adopted, a sweeper stopper 4,3,3, and was later used by Vice Thomas in his first year as varsity coach for the high school team.

