



## Report of the Technical Director Dean Foti

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Growing the game of soccer and enriching the experiences of all those involved with the sport continues to be a core value of NYSWYSA's service to our membership. In 2017-18 programming stretched across all levels of play and into every corner of the Western New York footprint. The Olympic Development Program, NYW Player Development Academy, Coaching Education, Recreation Soccer services/support/events, Futsal, TopSoccer and providing Player Development Initiative (PDI) technical support to our many clubs and leagues, are but a few of the ways in which we interact with our vast and varied youth soccer community. In 2017-18, our work in these areas has been important in helping us continue to establish and develop valuable relationships with our membership. As always, we aspire to serve, engage and be a resource to all of our NYSWYSA members.

### **Olympic Development Program**

The NYW ODP program continues to be a leader in US Youth Soccer's East Region. Participant numbers remain stable (NYW sent 14 teams to the ODP Tournament), players/teams continue to develop/excel and 21 NYW ODP players were identified as Regional Pool selections (validating the tremendous work that our member clubs do in developing some of the region's top players).

At the ODP Tournament this past year, where boys and girls teams in the three oldest age groups (i.e. U-15's, U-16's & U-17's) compete for a Region I Championship, NYW sent two teams through to the Region I Final Four, with a third team missing out on the honor after losing out on a tie-breaker in the group stage. While no team came home with a regional championship in 2018, it should be noted that this marks an unprecedented five



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consecutive year run that saw NYW take home at least one regional championship.

As noted above, 21 players were selected to regional pools (down slightly from 25 in 2016). These players will now compete for spots on their respective age group regional teams, which travel and compete both domestically and internationally. Inclusion on these teams provides invaluable soccer experiences and tremendous exposure to both college and youth national team scouts.

Traditional ODP (U13-U17) numbers remain consistent and stable, with a slight 3% decrease in participants. The U12 ODP developmental program experienced a sizable increase of 63% from a year ago. For the fourth consecutive year, the ODP program will once again serve well over 700 players.

It bears repeating each year, but I would again like to acknowledge and applaud the exceptional work that our member clubs and their fine coaching staffs do, in continuing to develop talented players within the NYW footprint. I am committed to continuing to build relationships and, meet, interact and collaborate with as many club coaches as I possibly can. As always, my goal is to make the ODP program a valuable and viable supplement to the outstanding work that the club coaches do in developing their players. Our goals are the same - to provide the players of NYSW with good soccer experiences that will help each one of them reach their potential. By working together and being flexible we can optimize the number of these experiences that we provide to them (without overloading them). I welcome and value the input that I have received from many coaches and I am always willing to work together to create a compatible



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calendar for our NYW players. It is important that we all recognize that this is an ongoing process and that each year presents its own set of challenges. I admire the fine work that our NYW clubs do in developing players – your outstanding work shines through every time your players take the field, no matter what jersey they are wearing.

### **NYW Player Development Academy**

The NYW Player Development Academy, which takes place each fall and is open to all boys and girls ages 9 to 14, was conducted at four sites throughout the NYW footprint (Buffalo, Elmira, Rochester and Syracuse). In an effort to foster our region's young talent, the Academy is designed to expose young players to focused training sessions provided by nationally certified coaches. The Academy stresses a curriculum focused on improving fundamentals via a heavy emphasis on technical work and small sided games. The program stresses fun and progress in a positive learning environment.

In 2017, participant numbers dropped 19% from last year. The decrease can be attributed in large part to the dropping off-line of the Binghamton and Watertown Academies. It should also be noted that the ever increasing number of fall soccer leagues emerging for these particular age groups, as well as, the increasing number of fall tournaments/jamborees, is playing a part (and will continue to do so as we move forward) in the downward trend in these numbers.



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### Coaching Education

The US Soccer Coaching Education Department's redesign of entry level coaching courses has been completed. The Grassroot Licenses (both the online and the 4-hour in-person versions), as well as the newly redesigned D-License all came online during the 2017/18 cycle. Our delivery of all entry level course offerings during 2017 were put on hold as the E-License was being phased out, the D-License content was being revised, the Grassroot Licenses content/delivery methods were being finalized and our staff was attending instructor certification workshops in preparation for teaching the revised material. All courses are now all up and running full steam ahead.

NYSWYSA was one of the first state associations granted permission to conduct a pilot Grassroot course (which we did by conducting a full capacity in-person 7v7 Grassroot License at the 2017 AGM weekend). Another twelve Grassroot Licenses (169 coaches) were conducted through the end of August, 2018. Characterized as a license that is low barrier, low cost, with age appropriate content and minimal time commitment (4 hours) truly makes this by far our most popular course. We have already surpassed last year's numbers in just the first quarter of 2018/19.

Shortly after US Soccer imposed moratorium, we conducted our first new-format D-License in May of 2018. With the tidal wave of Grassroot courses now being conducted and the fact that they are the new pre-requisite for the D-License, we will see a larger pool of potential D-License candidates. In anticipation of that, we will schedule additional D-Licenses for 2018/19.



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Many thanks to Director of Coaching Education, Chris Hershey and Assistant Technical Director, Scott Craig for successfully navigating NYSWYSA through this transition period and spring-boarding us off to an unprecedented start in booking, filling and conducting these new Grassroot and D-Licenses.

### **Connecting Kids to Colleges**

NYSWYSA remains committed to bridging the gap between youth players who aspire to play at the collegiate level and the college coaches who scour the landscape looking for talented players to add to their rosters. To this end, many of our programs are conducted with this notion in mind. Whether it involves the ODP program, where half of our coaching staff members are current head or assistant college coaches or the State Cup (National Championship Series), where we provided participant team rosters to over 50 college coaches at the 2017 championship finals at SUNY Cortland, we remain committed to connecting kids to colleges. If you want to play collegiate soccer, we want to help you find the place that's right for you – chances are you don't have to leave New York State to find that place.

### **Recreation Soccer**

In 2017/18, Director of Recreation Soccer, Tom Darpino and Assistant Technical Director, Scott Craig delivered extraordinary service and programming that demonstrated NYSWYSA's commitment to the recreation soccer community. Recreation Festivals/Youth Development Days (in conjunction with the Rochester Rhinos and the Syracuse Silver Knights), Jamborees, Indoor Soccer/Futsal events, Grassroots courses and numerous



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consulting ventures have enriched player, coach and parent experiences far and wide. Further details are provided in the Assistant Technical Director's Report. We are proud that programming and services provided to the membership in this area reached well into the thousands.

### **TOPSoccer:**

TOPSoccer (The Outreach Program for Soccer) is a New York State West and US Youth Soccer official program. This program is designed for children with disabilities, ages 5 to 21. The program accommodates all disabilities whether mental or physical. This is an exciting program that brings the joy of playing soccer to players who have not traditionally had a place in the youth soccer system. A detailed report of the activity in this important program during 2017/18 can be found in program director, Scott Craig's Assistant Technical Director's Report.

### **US Soccer Mandates:**

On September 1, 2015, NYSWYSA first posted information regarding US Soccer Mandates. Since that time, we have worked diligently to provide the most up to date information to help our membership with the transition and implementation of these mandates. US Soccer's Player Development Initiatives, which included the move to a calendar year age matrix, Small Sided Games revisions (IE. "Modified Laws of the Game" for players at the 6U, 8U, 10U and 12U - including restrictions on heading), and the Recognize to Recover program (US Soccer's Player Health and Safety Program) have all been prominently chronicled and displayed on our website. While change is never easy, and the rollout of these mandates took



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some twists and turns and tweaking before arriving at their current state, the entire NYSWYSA staff has been at the forefront answering questions, clarifying information and providing tips on how to best transition into compliance with the mandates. Whether providing/communicating interpretations, attending town hall /league meetings or providing membership grant programs (IE. goals), we are happy to be a reliable resource to our members.

The close of the 2017/18 season brings us to three years since the mandates were first announced. We are confident that our membership has taken the necessary actions to pull themselves into alignment with the mandates. We would like to express our gratitude to all NYSWYSA club and league leaders for their efforts to get us to this point and for their commitment to best practices for youth players in NYSWYSA.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Dean Foti  
NYSWYSA  
Technical Director