



Report of the Technical Director

Dean Foti

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 2020-21 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, TopSoccer, Introduction to Youth Soccer Events and the Women's Coaches Initiative, are but a few of the many ways in which we interact with our vast and varied youth soccer community. In 2020-21, our work in these areas has been important in helping us continue to establish and develop valuable relationships with our membership. While we have all grown into adapting to life amidst a pandemic our mission remains the same - 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. Despite the pandemic and a delayed start to the ODP season, participant numbers were slightly up, players/teams continued 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).

Traditional ODP (12U-17U) remained the same in numbers, while both the Pre-ODP (11U) and 19U ODP both showed an uptick in the number of players participating. However, the effect of the pandemic was notably felt in the spring of 2021. A crowded spring high school sports calendar that saw several sport seasons condensed into April, May and June created numerous conflicts for many ODP players. As a result, NYW sent 13 teams to the ODP Tournament – breaking a remarkable string of ten years in a row where NYW sent at least 14 teams per year.



Report of the Technical Director

Dean Foti

New in 2020/21 was a warm-up event to the ODP Tournament - the East Region ODP Sub-Regional held in Albany, NY. NYW ODP teams traveled to Albany for the one-day event, playing games against ENY-South ODP and ENY-North ODP teams. Plans are to expand the event to include New England ODP teams in 2022.

After a COVID induced absence in 2020, the ODP Tournament returned at two sites for the 2021 cycle (Lancaster, MA and Kirkwood, DE). The 12U, 13U and 14U age groups participated in a festival format, while the 15U, 16U and 17U's played a competitive championship format. The NYW ODP teams competed at the Delaware site with the likes of MD, VA, EPA, NJ, among others. The NYW 16U girl's team went unbeaten in group play, the semis and championship final on their way to taking home the East Region ODP Championship.

As noted above, 21 players were selected to their respective regional pools (identical to the number of players selected in the 2019 pre-COVID cycle). These players will now compete for spots on their respective age group regional teams, which travel and compete domestically for inter-regional competition (in late November 2021 in Orlando, FL). Players vie for selection to ODP national camp and eventually age group ODP national teams that will travel to play in international competitions. ODP participation whether it be at the state, regional or national level provides invaluable soccer experiences and tremendous exposure to both college and youth national team scouts.

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



Report of the Technical Director

Dean Foti

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 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 unique 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 2020, participant numbers dropped 9% from the previous year. The decrease can be attributed in part due to the dropping off-line of the Binghamton Academy for the 2020 season and the existing player/parent hesitations regarding “return to play”.



Report of the Technical Director

Dean Foti

Coaching Education

During 2019-20, when the pandemic descended upon us, the US Soccer Coaching Education Department worked tirelessly to adapt its coaching education program so it could/would be operational during the unprecedented times that would follow. NYSWYSA Director of Coaching Education, Scott Craig, led the way during this period in developing, conducting, and piloting the Grassroots and D-License courses in within our footprint that evolved into what we see today.

Due to Covid-19 and multiple restrictions on travel, US Soccer initiated a “blended” Grassroots and D-Course option. This means that part of the courses were to be delivered via the internet, hosted by a US Soccer Educational Staff member, and part of the courses were still hosted on the field “in person”. This new process was applauded by candidates and instructors alike and continued into the 2020/21 cycle. It has been further refined and streamlined with plans to continue it into 2021/22.

In 2020/21, despite the pandemic, the number of coaching education courses conducted continued to trend upward. A total of 20 licenses were conducted with a total of 337 candidates (as compared to 18 courses and 310 candidates last year). The most popular Grassroots Licenses were the 9v9 (6 courses and 92 candidates) and the 11v11 (6 courses and 97 candidates). Additionally, a total of 6 D-Licenses were conducted with a total of 120 candidates in attendance (as compared to 4 licenses and 82 candidates last year). In conjunction with our Women’s Coaches Initiative, we introduced 3 Grassroots Licenses and a D-License with particular focus on women coaches. The C-License which we were granted permission by US Soccer to conduct in 2020, but had to cancel due to COVID, was rescheduled and conducted in 2021. Scott Craig hosted the course which was the first in 9 years within our Western New York footprint. The C-License was attended by 26 candidates.



Report of the Technical Director

Dean Foti

The current 2021-22 schedule for Grassroots, D-License and the rollout of the new Coach for Community courses can be found on our website. Please be sure to check the website regularly for scheduling updates as courses are routinely added throughout the year. The new Coach for Community (zoom presentation) will be a free program where participants will learn about creating a positive, fun and player centered environment using US Soccer methodology (Play, Practice, Play). Upon completion of the presentation attendees will receive a voucher to access an online US Soccer Grassroots course free of charge. Questions regarding this program, upcoming course offerings and/or opportunities to host a course should be directed to Assistant Technical Director and Director of Coaching Education, Scott Craig (scraig@nyswysa.org).

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. The NYW ODP program coaching staff includes current head or assistant college Coaches (nearly half of the staff), the ODP curriculum includes counseling/educating players on the college recruiting process, ODP teams play in recruiting events in front of college coaches and the 19U ODP training program is designed specifically to provide training for the serious and committed player who aspires to play in college (and includes spring scrimmages against college opponents that provide players with invaluable experience and a preview of what the game is like at the next level). NYSWYSA also promotes the State Cup (National Championship Series) final four to collegiate coaches and provides participating team rosters to college coaches at the event. 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 won't have to leave New York State to find that place.



Report of the Technical Director

Dean Foti

Membership Development

Assistant Technical Director, Diana Groth leads our efforts to attract new players to the game through a variety of initiatives, projects, and programs.

Our free “Introduction to Youth Soccer Days” program was created in the months just prior to COVID’s arrival and was subsequently sidelined due to COVID. It re-emerged in 2021. The program is offered throughout our Western New York footprint in rural, suburban, and inner-city locations. In an effort to attract new first-time players and their parents to the game, we treat them to a fun day of soccer and then connect them to local recreation soccer programs in hopes that they get involved at their local level. Prior to the COVID shutdown 6 events were held (i.e., Arcade, Brockport, Buffalo, Johnson City, Lakewood, Rochester) attracting nearly 300 first time players. The program started up again this past summer with two events in Buffalo, one in Rochester (and another scheduled next month in Cortland). If you are interested in hosting an “Introduction to Youth Soccer Day” event in your area, please contact Diana Groth directly: dgroth@nyswysa.org

A year ago, Diana Groth started NYSWYSA’s E-gaming program which connects members with opportunities to participate in local and regional E-sports tournaments. This rapidly growing market has gained popularity with soccer players at all levels as well as provides another pathway to attract new players (who were previously non-soccer players). NYW E-gamers participated in 2 tournaments last year (i.e. VA, NJ) and were kept abreast of opportunities to participate in others throughout the region. Information on the upcoming 2021 holiday tournaments can be found on our website.

The Women Coaches Initiative continued the important work of supporting women in coaching. As chair of the Women in Coaching Committee, Diana Groth conducts quarterly meetings and spearheads the committee’s efforts



Report of the Technical Director

Dean Foti

to conduct Women In Coaching webinars that highlight prominent women in soccer (i.e. Tracy Hamm, UEFA A-License, Head Coach UC Davis, Sarah Lowdon, USSF A-License, Director of Operations, University of Florida, Sarah Milner, Female Health and Performance Specialist), provide coaching education for women (i.e. women focused Grassroots and D-License courses) and develop a soon to be launched women coaches mentorship program aimed at attracting, developing, supporting, retaining and promoting women soccer coaches.

Efforts continued to be made with regard to exploring opportunities for in-school and/or after-school soccer for elementary school age children. The focus last year shifted from after-school programming to potentially piloting an in-school program in partnership with USYS/US Soccer Foundation. Discussions with program organizers during the year have been productive and are continuing. The program would provide soccer instruction/activities during school, within the existing physical education curriculum. Elementary schools in the Rochester area are currently being sought/evaluated.

Additionally, the quarterly "Soccer for Soccer" newsletter, a coaching resource for grassroots coaches, continues to be published and circulated via the weekly NYSWYSA Newsletter. All past editions of the "Soccer for Soccer" newsletter are saved and archived on our website.

Lastly, members may have noticed NYSWYSA has had a greater social media presence in 2020/21. As our social media coordinator, Diana Groth, has been successful in giving NYSWYSA programming/resources along with other fun/interesting youth soccer content, a greater presence in this space via her daily work across our many social media platforms. Her efforts in this area are yet another way in which we are trying to expand soccer awareness and attract new players to the game.



Report of the Technical Director

Dean Foti

Recreation Soccer

Prior to COVID, we made a conscious decision to take an active role in helping identify, supply and replenish recreation programs with players. The advent of our “Introduction to Youth Soccer Days” program was to be a major vehicle in which to accomplish this goal. It still is, but the COVID crisis put a serious damper on our efforts to establish a consistent schedule of events, which in turn would have given us the opportunity to be in direct communication with recreation programs when an event was held in their area. These contacts would also be the pathway to identify, communicate and direct technical services to member recreation clubs. While we work to get this established, I encourage all recreation programs to reach out directly to us for technical support and we will do our best to assist you in any way we can: Dean Foti (dfoti@nyswysa.org), Scott Craig (scraig@nyswysa.org) and Diana Groth (dgroth@nyswysa.org).

In 2020/21, we resumed “Introduction to Youth Soccer Days”, conducted several Grassroots coaching courses and conducted a Fall Festival (Webster, NY) in conjunction with the NYW Champions Conference. We look forward to the near future when we can get back to staging unencumbered our usual number of Recreation Festivals/Jamborees, Indoor Soccer/Futsal events, Grassroots courses, Intro to Youth Soccer Days, coaching clinics and the numerous consulting ventures that have enriched player, coach and parent experiences at the recreation level.

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 and 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.



Report of the Technical Director

Dean Foti

TOPSoccer programs in previous years were conducted in Binghamton, Syracuse, Rochester, Canandaigua, Olean and Buffalo. Due to the effects of the pandemic many programs were understandably shut down in 2019/20 with some just recently starting to reappear. In 2021 programs were conducted in Rochester (Empire United), Southern Tier (Fredonia, abbreviated schedule) and Binghamton (Binghamton University). The innovative TOPSoccer program in Binghamton was initiated in 2019 at Binghamton University and designed as a student run TOPSoccer program serving the surrounding community. Binghamton University students get certified as TOPSoccer instructors/buddies and then proceed to lead the sessions and conduct the program. The initial pilot program gained official sponsorship by the BU Student Association. Assistant Technical Director, Scott Craig designed and led the project. He has since, fine tuned it and is working with USYS TOPSoccer officials to expand the program to campuses regionally and nationwide.

If you know of someone who might enjoy participating in a TOPSoccer program or someone who might like to volunteer (i.e., start/host a program, become a session leader, or participate as a “TOPSoccer Buddy”, etc.) please contact Scott Craig directly (scraig@nyswysa.org).

Youth Soccer Amidst a Pandemic:

Our entire NYSWYSA staff, including Executive Director, Alex Brame, Director of Operations, Pam Whitcomb and our entire Technical Staff (Dean Foti, Scott Craig, Diana Groth), have strived to continually be a reliable resource to our member leagues, clubs, players, coaches, referees, administrators, volunteers and the entire youth soccer community as it relates to navigating local, county and New York State COVID protocols and safety guidelines. We have worked hard over the past year to provide accurate interpretations and timely assistance (i.e., via the “Return to Play Update” link on our website, weekly “NYSW Newsletter” and periodic email



Report of the Technical Director

Dean Foti

blast updates to our membership) in an effort to help keep everyone informed and safe as we all navigate playing soccer amidst a pandemic.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the entire NYSWYSA membership for continuing to make health and safety your top priority in 2021/22. As we move out from under the cloud of this pandemic, please know that we are always here to support your efforts to find innovative ways to continue to play, promote and grow the game of soccer.

Best wishes for a happy and healthy holiday season!

Respectfully Submitted,
Dean Foti
NYSWYSA
Technical Director