



Report of the Technical Director

Dean Foti

November 14, 2023

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 2022-23 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 2022-23, our work in these areas has been important in helping us continue to establish, maintain and develop valuable relationships with our membership. 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. The ODP experience continues to provide first class training that supplements the soccer experiences players receive with their school and club teams, thereby accelerating each player's ability to reach their full potential. Forty-one NYW ODP players were identified as East Regional Pool selections and five were selected to their respective age group's East Region ODP Team (validating the tremendous work that our member clubs do in developing some of the region's top players).

Traditional ODP (12U-17U), Pre-ODP (11U) and 19U ODP participant levels collectively showed a slight decrease of eight percent. While Traditional ODP (12U-17U) participant numbers remained the same as in 2021/22 they still have not fully recovered to their pre-COVID levels. Similar to last year, NYW sent nine teams to the 2023 ODP Tournament instead of the usual full complement of twelve teams (i.e. one team in each of the six age groups on the boys and girl side).

In 2022/23, the ODP Northeast Sub-Regional event in Albany continued to expand in size and scope. The event, previously held as "Friendlies" between only NYW and Eastern NY ODP teams, now includes multiple ODP state teams from the East Region. The late April event included teams from MA, EPA, CT, VT, NH, and NJ, in addition to NYW and ENY. The event now represents a second competitive ODP event where ODP players have the opportunity to be scouted and evaluated by the ODP East Region Coaching Staff as well as numerous college coaches.



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In 2023, the ODP Tournament was conducted at two sites. The 12U, 13U and 14U age groups participated in a festival format at PA Classics Park in Manheim, PA (the youth club alma mater of Christian Pulisic, whose finger prints and financial backing were evident by virtue of the first class amenities displayed throughout the entire park). The 15U, 16U and 17U's also participated in a festival format at Tuckahoe Turf Farms in Hammonton, NJ. This event was embedded in an EDP hosted club tournament on the same weekend, the benefit of which was the ability to capitalize on the plethora of college coaches a combined event would ultimately attract. Unfortunately, one day of this three-day event was cancelled due to a dangerous Air Quality Index (AQI) alert caused by Canadian wild fires.

As noted above, forty-one players were selected to attend their respective regional ID camps. Five players were selected to their respective age group's East Regional ODP Team (as compared to six in 2022). They will travel to Orlando, FL in late January of 2024 to the ODP Inter-Regional Event. Here, in addition to competing against the regional teams from the South, Midwest and West regions, players vie for selection to their respective age group ODP National Teams. The ODP National Teams will then compete against top domestic and international competition at tournaments in Dallas, TX (Dallas Cup) and Orlando, FL (Rayados Easter International Cup) in the spring of 2024.

ODP participation whether it be at the state, regional or national level continues to provide invaluable soccer experiences and tremendous exposure to both college and youth national team scouts.

It bears repeating every year - I would like to acknowledge and applaud the exceptional work that our member clubs and their fine coaching staff 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 NYW with good soccer experiences that will help each one of them reach their full 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.



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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 2022, participant numbers reflected a decrease of almost thirty percent. Reaching beyond the scope of this annual report (which would not normally include this past fall's 2023 Academy data), it is pertinent to report that with the forty-four percent increase in 2023 Academy participation this past fall, the program is now back in line with pre-COVID participation levels.

Coaching Education

Lead Coach Educator, Dave Kreger is in the midst of giving the NYSWYSA Coaching Education Program a makeover. In 2022/23 the number of coaching education courses conducted rose by twenty percent and the number of coaches educated increased significantly by eighty-seven percent as compared to 2021/22. Twenty-four total courses educated the three hundred and sixty coaches (including ninety women). Coach Kreger initiated new State Level I and II Courses and will re-introduce State Level 101/201 as well as a State Level GK Course in the coming year.

The most popular Grassroots License continues to be the 9v9 (eleven courses) and the 11v11 (seven courses). We conducted two D-Licenses, twenty total Grassroots Courses and two State Level Courses.



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We are proud to continue to provide coaching education courses exclusively for women (i.e. women candidates taught by a woman instructors). In conjunction with our Women Coaches Initiative, Diana Groth spearheaded the Women in Coaching Day where she conducted two Grassroots Licenses (9v9 and 11v11). These courses were offered free of charge to women candidates who met the Women's Initiative Program requirements.

The current 2023-24 coaching course schedule 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. Questions regarding Coaching Education, upcoming course offerings and/or opportunities to host a course should be directed to Dave Kreger, Lead Coach Educator (coachinged@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 youth soccer 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 and assistant college coaches, the ODP curriculum includes counseling/educating players on the college recruiting process, ODP teams played in two recruiting events in front of college coaches (the ODP

Northeast Sub-Regional and the East Region ODP Tournament) and the 19U ODP training program is designed specifically to provide training for the serious and committed player who aspires to play in college. In 2022/23 our oldest NYW ODP players gained invaluable experience and a preview of what the game is like at the next level by playing in spring collegiate exhibition games (IE. the girls participated in the Buffalo State Bengal Classic vs. Buffalo St., D'Youville College and Alfred St., the boys participated in an exhibition vs. SUNY Geneseo. NYSWYSA also promote the State Cup (National Championship Series) final four to collegiate coaches and provides participating team rosters to college coaches attending the three-day 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.



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Membership Development/Recreation Soccer

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

Our free “Introduction to Youth Soccer Days” (IYS) program was created to identify, engage and introduce new first time players and their parents to the game. The free program is offered throughout our Western New York footprint in rural, suburban and inner city locations. Participants are treated to a fun day of soccer after which they are provided with the resources to help them connect to local recreation soccer programs. In 2022/23, we held five IYS events that were attended by one-hundred and thirty-three players.

The Women Coaches Initiative continued the important work of supporting women in coaching. Diana Groth spearheaded efforts to conduct Women in Coaching webinars that highlight prominent women in soccer (i.e., Stephanie Gabbert, “Empowering Girls to Become Powerful and Confident Women of the Future”), social events, as well as coaching education (Women in Coaching Day) and mentorship opportunities aimed at attracting, developing, supporting, retaining and promoting women soccer coaches (i.e., Candice Fabry, Fearless & Capable Women). Additionally, a record ninety women coaches came through our coach education/licensing program in 2022/23.

We continued exploring and expanding opportunities for after-school soccer for elementary school age children. The program provides soccer instruction/activities on a weekly basis after school. We are currently operating at four elementary schools in the Rochester area with the future goal of building that number up to ten. Future aspirations for the program include expansion into to the Buffalo and Syracuse districts.

In 2022/23, the quarterly “Soccer for Soccer” newsletter, a coaching resource for grassroots coaches, was again published and circulated via our weekly NYSWYSA Newsletter. All past editions of the “Soccer for Soccer” newsletter are saved and archived on our website.



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Lastly, in the past year NYSWYSA has worked to improve its social media presence. Improving our presence in this space will continue to be a priority as we seek to effectively communicate programming information, technical and administrative resources, along with other fun, interesting and engaging youth soccer content across our social media platforms. Improvements in this area are yet another way in which we are trying to expand our reach, create soccer awareness and attract new players to the game.

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 exciting program brings the joy of playing soccer to players who have not traditionally had a place in the youth soccer system.

In 2022/23, TOPSoccer programs were conducted in various locations around Western NY (i.e., Binghamton, Rochester and Southern Tier). TOPSoccer programs are club sponsored and conducted at the direction of NYSWYSA member clubs and supported in various ways by NYSWYSA (i.e., technical and administrative support, equipment, USYS resources, etc). We are holding a TOPSoccer Jamboree on Dec. 16, 2023 in the Buffalo area and are in current discussions to re-establish a permanent program in that area. We are also still actively looking to establish consistent programming in the Syracuse area.

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 Dean Foti (dfoti@nyswysa.org). Please visit our website to learn more about the TOPSoccer program nearest you.



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Good of the Game:

By virtue of our roles in youth soccer, no matter how big or small, we are all stewards of this great game. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the entire NYSWYSA membership for taking that responsibility seriously. As always, we are here to support your efforts to find innovative ways to continue to promote and grow the game of soccer. With the 2026 World Cup around the corner, we will once again showcase the great game of soccer in our country. With that comes the unique opportunity to attract new players, coaches and fans. As we move forward into 2024 and in the lead up to this global event, be mindful that if we do this right, we can emphatically and forever elevate soccer in the pecking order of sports in the United States. Let's capitalize on this great opportunity and make soccer THE sport of choice for every youngster in America.

Best wishes for a happy and healthy holiday season!

Respectfully Submitted,
Dean Foti
NYSWYSA
Technical Director