



## President's Report 2018 Annual General Meeting

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Upon assuming the role of President of New York State West Youth Soccer Association (NYSWYSA) in 2015 I presented an introductory presentation to our membership that identified the five most important factors that we must continuously strive toward to effectively serve our membership and youth soccer.

- Being Nimble & Flexible
- Feet on the Ground
- The "WOW" Factor
- Regional and National Leadership
- Creating Soccer Fans for Life

Since 2015, our state association Board of Directors and State Staff have continued to keep these factors at the forefront of all that we do. They remain highly relevant. I am proud to be associated with our dedicated state staff, our Board of Directors, and our member clubs and leagues who serve youth soccer. This report will highlight the key accomplishments during the 2017/2018 fiscal year and present a couple of new initiatives that NYSWYSA plans to launch during the 2018/2019 fiscal year.

New York State West Youth Soccer Association and our membership benefit from the corporate sponsorships and cooperative partnerships that support the programs we administer. On behalf of NYSWYSA, thank you.

- Dick's Sporting Goods
- Pullen Insurance
- Demosphere
- Apparel Providers, We Got Soccer & NIKE
- Sports Logic

### **BEING NIMBLE & FLEXIBLE**

- State Office Location
  - o Effective October, 2018 we completed the sale of our state office building in Corning, NY and moved into our new office location in Rochester, NY. We are confident this move enhances our ability to serve our membership.
- Player Recruiting Best Practices
  - o The competitive recruitment of youth players was identified by our membership as a key issue across our NYSWYSA footprint. Having solicited input from our membership and having researched how other state associations manage player recruitment, we determined that establishing a Recommended Player Recruitment Best Practices policy was the optimum approach. Our belief is that a strict policy or rules regarding player recruitment would have been difficult to enforce. Our recommended policy has been distributed to the membership and is accessible on our web site. We believe it effectively addresses the expressed concerns of our members, but will also continue to monitor this issue over time.
- Transition of new Executive Director and Operations Manager
  - o Executive Director Alex Brame completed his first year with us in May, 2018. During this time he has actively traveled throughout our state association to meet with our



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members, the result being that he has a valuable insight to our members' needs and objectives. He has accomplished this without the benefit of a transition with our former Executive Director and it is a credit to him how effectively he is managing our state operations and staff.

- Operations Manager Charley Marshall assumed his role in September, 2017, allowing a very short transition with retiring manager, Tim Mellander. With one year of experience in our state association along with his boundless enthusiasm and penchant to adapt quickly he is a valuable asset.
- Our state Technical Staff, led by Technical Director Dean Foti in coordination with Assistant Technical Director Scott Craig and Director of Coach Education Chris Hershey, continues to amaze me with their ability to adapt to continuously evolving national player and coach development directives. Significant results this past year include the highly successful rollout of the new US Soccer Coach Licensing platform, and the continuing support to our clubs with the Player Development Initiatives.

### **FEET ON THE GROUND**

- Our Grass Roots Festivals (indoor and outdoor) continue to grow and reach throughout all areas of NYSWYSA.
- New US Soccer Coach Education roll-out
  - The grass roots coaching courses are highly successful and in high demand. Again, much credit for this goes to our technical staff in their approach to literally getting out to all districts within NYSWYSA to deliver instructional content.
  - Also exciting is that the demand for the new D License course is extraordinary.
- **Women's Coach Mentor Program:** This is an important new initiative that NYSWYSA will be instituting in 2018/2019. The primary objective of this program shall be to increase the number of licensed, qualified, female soccer coaches for youth soccer programs, with a secondary goal of encouraging them to continue as coaches long-term, including advancing their coaching credentials. Watch for our up-coming posting for a volunteer to chair this effort.

### **"WOW" FACTOR**

- Grass Roots Festivals: These deserve another "shout-out". Throughout the NYSWYSA region we hosted numerous indoor and outdoor soccer festivals again this past year. These events continue to be highly successful as demonstrated by the high level of participation.
- Risk Management
  - NYSWYSA is very fortunate to have Mike Kozak on our staff to manage the Risk Management processing. Honestly, in large part due to Mike's knowledge and experience, NYSWYSA's Risk Management processes are already among the best in the country.
  - Nationally, as many of you know, there is increased importance being placed on the need for even more comprehensive background checks for youth soccer adult leaders, volunteers, coaches, etc. Simply put, it is for the safety of the children. This has resulted in the expectation that all state associations further enhance how we process background checks. We recently announced that the cost of processing NYSWYSA Risk



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Management passes is increasing. This is a direct result of the rising cost of background checks.

### **REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

- NYSWYSA continues to be active representing our membership at the national level with US Soccer and US Youth Soccer. Among others, these efforts include active roles including the following.
  - o Advocating for national candidates who we believe are most qualified to lead critical youth soccer initiatives.
  - o Lobbying for governance, policy issues, and player development initiatives that represent NYSWYSA members' stated concerns and interests.
  - o Advocacy for grass roots soccer resources.
- US Soccer Annual Meeting
  - o US Soccer President Election: Carlos Cordeiro was elected in February. He is very supportive of improving the landscape of youth soccer and we have established a good working relationship with him and other US Soccer staff members. Prior to his election, NYSWYSA representatives met in person with many of the candidates to vet their respective stance on key issues and to assess their candidacies.
  - o Youth Soccer Leadership Task Force
    - US Soccer recently formed this task force. It is comprised of leaders from each of the national youth soccer organizations and is charged with the mission to collaboratively work to improve the fractionalization of youth soccer.
- US Youth Soccer (USYS)
  - o Newly Elected USYS Chair: Peter Zopfi was elected in July as the new USYS Chair. Peter brings a breadth of leadership skills and extensive youth soccer experience to this position.
  - o USYS Rule 201 Changes: The concept of increasing the flexibility for players to register and play soccer across state association borders has been discussed by the USYS Board of Directors for the past year, with input from the state associations. This is nothing new for NYSWYSA, as we have for a long time maintained a process to enable players to register for league play across state borders. Proposals are being evaluated for modifying Rule 201, which specifies the registration requirements across borders. The proposals are in the review stage. NYSWYSA's stated position to USYS on this issue is as follows:
    - New York State West Youth Soccer Association (NYSWYSA) fully supports the intent of the USYS Rule 201 proposed amendments that players should be allowed to play anywhere they choose to, including across State Association borders. NYSWYSA believes that this is in the best interest of the players.
  - o US Youth Soccer Organizational Growth Committee
    - Growth in the number of youth soccer players is a top priority, locally and nationally. USYS recently formed a committee comprised of select representatives from around the country to identify sustainable concepts for accomplishing this mission. NYSWYSA was selected to participate on this committee. We will keep you posted on progress periodically. The top issues



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that affect growth, as identified by state associations across the country are listed below.

1. Market-share competition between National Youth Soccer organizations with key issues to address being the fragmentation of programming, standardization, collaboration toward the greater good of soccer.
2. Youth membership growth.
3. Affordability and accessibility to participate in soccer.
  - For grassroots soccer players across urban, suburban, and rural areas.
  - For top-tier players who may not have financial resources to participate in elite programs.
4. Referee retention and development
5. Coach Education availability, accessibility, affordability, and standardization.
6. Parent education.

### CREATING SOCCER FANS FOR LIFE

- "Why is this concept of Creating Soccer Fans for Life" so important in all that we do?
  - *The result of focusing on this concept will be the creation of a true soccer culture in the United States. From the youngest of children to adults, if they are fans of the game they will continue to participate in the sport throughout their lives as either adult players (recreational or professional) or simply as fans attending and watching games. This cultural change will significantly contribute to sustainable growth in youth participation and the sport. Therefore, all that we as soccer leaders do should focus on this premise.*
- Relative to the previous year, registered youth players within the NYSWYSA footprint declined from 56,000 to 53,400. Clearly this is disappointing. However, the trend is consistent with the trend of local population demographics.
  - We are not deterred from our long-term goal of increasing membership to 70,000. To accomplish this despite lower population numbers, growth must come from increased participation at the youngest ages, meaning that we must more effectively market soccer as a best-choice option as a healthy, fun option for children. NYSWYSA will continue to do our part to continuously identify programs and services that will assist our members with facilitating their own growth in youth soccer participation.
    - NYSWYSA has the staff, the experience, and the knowledge base to guide and counsel our members on how to optimally organize and run youth soccer programming. If you are not doing so already, we encourage you to take advantage of it.
    - Beginning in the Spring of 2019, NYSWYSA will pilot **Introduction to Youth Soccer Days**. We intend to trial this initiative in districts selectively at first, and if successful to expand it to all districts over time. The sole purpose of this effort will be two-fold.



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1. Market the sport to children primarily between the K-to-5th Grade ages, especially those not already participating in the sport.
2. Help our member clubs and leagues grow participation in their respective youth soccer programs.

**Introduction to Youth Soccer Days** will be comprised of annual NYSWYSA-sponsored soccer play and information days (one in Spring and one in Fall). At these events we intend to have active, informative, interaction with attending parents for the express purpose of making them aware of the types of soccer programs, the clubs, and the leagues that are available within our footprint.

NYSWYSA is and continues to be very busy with our commitment to supporting youth soccer in general and our membership. On behalf of NYSWYSA, thank all of you, our members, for the work that you do.

Respectfully Submitted

Curtis R. Regruit  
President, New York State West Youth Soccer Association