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To: OSA Membership

From: Alex Chiet – OSA Chief Technical Officer

Date: 15th December 2011

Re: The OSA Board of Directors supports the OSA technical strategy regarding implementation of Long-Term Player Development

I wanted to provide a bit of an update (before we hit the Holiday period and everyone is quite properly engaged in other matters!) with regard to how things are progressing around preparations for the implementation of Long-Term Player Development (LTPD).

On the weekend of December 10-11, the Board of The Ontario Soccer Association approved a number of items that will help in terms of “next steps”, including the allocation of financial resources to help drive the process. Importantly, the Board also supported the recommendations from our Technical Advisory Council (TAC) in terms of our strategic direction. Let me highlight a few things:

- We are continuing on a path of a “**phased-in**” implementation of LTPD. We recognize that for some, we won’t be moving fast enough; for others, it may seem too sudden. But at the end of the day our first priority, really, is making sure that this critically important initiative is implemented credibly and effectively for those we are here to serve—our young players across the province, whether they play at the recreational level or at the more competitive levels. So, if it takes a bit longer, but we get it “right” for our youth players, then we are doing our job.
- 2012 will be very much about information gathering so that our ultimate decision-making around implementation is based on actual data, research and facts, not simply “opinions”. We will gather valuable information from some pilot projects at the young ages. Ongoing education and growing awareness around what LTPD is and what it really means—while also dealing with the misinformation that continues to mount—will be a vital part of our efforts next year as well.
- One of the biggest challenges is our ongoing re-structuring of the entire “competitive” structure. As you can appreciate this is no small task, and members of our TAC have been working diligently to develop **a) a coherent player pathway** and **b) a player-centered competitive structure** that will develop our players’ *skills* more than ever before in an environment that will be healthy for everyone—players, coaches and referees—wherever they live in the province of Ontario.



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- As we have stressed in earlier updates, we are indeed (at the younger ages, U8-U12) moving away from standings, wins and losses and keeping scores. We are not, however, “killing competition” as some have continued to suggest. We are, though, re-building a broken system, starting with the youngest ages. There will be plenty of opportunities to train, develop and compete all the way along. And, by the time more talented players are at the proper age to begin focusing on game competition, they will have the chance to participate in a highly competitive league environment from U13 onwards.
- Some decisions have been undertaken already: looking ahead to 2013, there will no longer be an Ontario Cup tournament for male or female players at the U12 level. (There will be an Ontario Cup in 2012 for those who will be U12 players next year, but it will be the final year for the Ontario Cup for U12's.)
- We will continue to maintain an Ontario Cup format for U13 and older teams.
- This will dovetail with the incoming “no scores, no standings” approach that will be in evidence beginning in 2013 at the U12 and younger ages for all District and OSA leagues. The full OSA Board has approved this approach in principle to ensure the LTPD playing format is being followed in every jurisdiction by 2013.
- At the same time, work continues on the development of a new competitive league structure from U13 and up. Rather than the old promotion/relegation system, which saw too many abuses (including “poaching” of players and efforts to build “winning” U8, U9 and U10 teams with the biggest, strongest players), teams will be part of the new leagues based on standards that individual Clubs must meet—including their ability to adhere to LTPD initiatives. This work is still ongoing, and we will provide you with updates as soon as we have more detailed information and more specifics to share.
- It is important to note that Clubs that do not reach the set standards will receive support and development from The OSA and Districts to progress and reach those standards if they aspire to do so. Our goal is to help provide the best environment possible for the players and coaches to enjoy the soccer within their club.
- With the above in mind, 2012 will be very important in terms of communication as we work to ensure there is a consistent, harmonized approach across the province starting in 2013.

The Technical staff is thrilled that the Board has seen fit to support our efforts in terms of not only philosophy but also resources. I will repeat what I have said previously: we know change is often difficult, but tremendous progress is already being made. Mark Marshall I and recently conducted workshops for coaches and Technical Directors in six regions of the province, and we could feel the desire for progress and real change, in terms of how we deliver the soccer experience for youngsters.



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There will be resistance and there will be bumps in the road along the way. We understand that. As I mentioned earlier, for some, this is all happening too slowly and for others it is too much, too soon. But we are really and truly being guided by what has already been happening for years in the best soccer nations around the globe. Our players and soccer stakeholders throughout Ontario deserve the best that we can provide. And we aim to provide exactly that, even if we make a few mistakes along the way.

Long-term, I hope that even those who now feel we are on the wrong road will be able to look back and say, "we really did do the right things for the most important stakeholder of all: the young boys and girls who play soccer".

I wish you all a warm and festive Holiday season.

Best regards,

Alex Chiet
OSA Chief Technical Officer