



7601 Martin Grove Road
Vaughan, Ontario
L4L 9E4

Tel: 905-264-9390
Fax: 905-264-9445
E-mail: theoasa@soccer.on.ca

To: OSA Membership
From: Alex Chiet (Chief Technical Officer)
Mark Marshall (Manager of Coach Development)
Date: Friday 25th November 2011
Re: Club Head Coach Workshop Update

Other than our young soccer players themselves, perhaps the most important “faces” of The Ontario Soccer Association’s mission to deliver Long-Term Player Development (LTPD) in Ontario are the coaches who deliver soccer programs in every corner of the province.

And within that group of valued educators, our Club Head Coaches are our leaders—the individuals who forge lasting relationships with their local soccer community and provide a range of training programs for players of all ages, skills and interests.

With that in mind, one of our most important recent initiatives, as we gear up for the phased-in implementation of LTPD from 2013 and beyond, has been working with our Club Head coaches (CHC’s) and Technical Directors in a series of special workshops designed to help them prepare to shepherd in the introduction of LTPD as seamlessly as possible at the Club level.

We have just completed five workshops—in Sudbury, Ottawa, St. Catharines, Kitchener as well as in the Greater Toronto area.

Each session focused on key elements of LTPD:

- the Ontario-specific LTPD vision
- the new Canadian Soccer Association coaching curriculum
- implementation timelines
- the absolute importance of ongoing education
- two-way communications in the weeks and months ahead to ensure we meet this significant challenge.

It’s fair to say that these workshops were very successful, for a number of reasons. First, they were **very well attended**, so it is clear our coaching leaders understand the magnitude of the work ahead of us and are obviously committed to the process we will work through together in the months and years ahead.

Second, there was a great deal of back and forth discussion (and debate!) in every session. Understandably, coaches wanted to understand why LTPD is so important, and what “proof” there is that this approach to developing athletes is indeed relevant in the world of soccer.



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We were hopefully able to explain to everyone's satisfaction that the research and science behind this is not only well-documented but is not in fact "new". This approach has been in place for some time now in most of the top soccer-playing nations around the world. It is so common that that many soccer bodies around the world don't have a "name" for it—it's just what they do.

Importantly from an OSA perspective, we appreciated that there was so much genuine enthusiasm in evidence during the workshops. It's clear that we are all involved because we want to help young athletes move ahead and we all have a strong desire to make soccer in Ontario what it should—and can—be. Sometimes we forget that about each other, and may well end up inadvertently working against one another. But we were encouraged to see the experience, passion and commitment so apparent in each workshop with our coaches.

While many of the elements of LTPD will require a bit of a cultural and attitude shift (away from "winning" and "scores" at the young ages and more emphasis on proper training and true player development), it's also important to recognize that our Clubs have already been doing great work. LTPD will simply enable our Clubs and coaches to do an even better job of reaching out to our young players, whether they are at the recreational or more competitive levels. Without question, LTPD will provide an even better experience for recreational players who want to stay fit and simply strive to have good old-fashioned "fun" in their extra-curricular activities. And for the aspiring elite player, many more of them will have the opportunity to really grow in the sport and to be seen and identified over a much longer period of time under the new competitive structure (and regional-provincial assessment approach) that is currently being developed.

Going forward, it will be crucial that everyone in our sport—Districts, Clubs, coaches and all of us at the OSA—are unified and work in harmony for the betterment of the game and everyone connected to it, be they players, coaches, referees or parents. Once we acknowledge the elephant in the room—that Canadian soccer has fallen behind in many ways and that it is well past the time to finally put the development of our young players first—then we can do the things that need to get done to move this great game along in Ontario, and across Canada.

(If you are interested in seeing some of the recent workshop video footage, please visit the [OSA LTPD Learning Facilitators Workshop](#) videos on The OSA News Bulletin section of our web site.)



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With a unified, understandable player pathway, appropriate practice to game ratios, improved coaching programs and a healthier learning environment for talented players, our game can grow to the heights it should here in Canada.

We can debate forever what is “wrong” with Canadian soccer, but by believing in—and actually implementing—a philosophy that truly puts the player first, we will go a long way toward fixing a system that has slowly broken down, despite some very good intentions over the past couple of decades.

2012 will be a key year for us, as we will devote significant time and energy around creating a broader awareness and understanding of LTPD and what it really means. We will continue to address the “misinformation” that is out there and also gather information that will allow us to begin delivering against real international soccer standards—and important timelines—in 2013 and beyond.

It has been invaluable for us to once again get out from behind a desk and work directly with those who make soccer happen in Ontario. We will continue to do that throughout the next twelve months, as will members of our Technical Advisory Council (TAC), who are working diligently to build a player pathway and competitive structure that will put the player first.

We want to stress that as important as these changes are (and many would, understandably, like us to move more quickly!) we all need to remain patient. It will take time to make this work effectively right across Ontario, but we will succeed, because we need to do this right for our young players. Change won't mean perfection, but it will mean a better, clearer pathway and training approach that puts our players first.

Thank you for your continued support, we will continue to provide you with regular updates.

Alex Chiet
Chief Technical Officer

Mark Marshall
Manager of Coach Development