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LTPD Technical Advisory Council meetings conclude with renewed commitment to athlete-centered development in Ontario

The recently-struck Long Term Player Development (LTPD) Technical Advisory Council (TAC) wrapped up two days of meetings on Wednesday, June 22.

The TAC is comprised of technical specialists representing player, coaching and referee development from Clubs and Districts across Ontario. Importantly, the group reflects the wide geographic spectrum that the OSA represents.

The two days focused on how the OSA can best implement LTPD. Importantly, the research and science behind the value of LTPD is well established and has proven successful in soccer countries around the globe. Here in Ontario, we have the opportunity to put our own stamp on this process to best serve the interests of everyone who plays the game—and is part of soccer— in the province.

While LTPD may sound like a new or even revolutionary step, it is in fact based not only on science and research but common sense. LTPD principles support what the OSA is supposed to be about: to ensure that soccer is fun for everyone at all levels of play, at all ages, everywhere in Ontario.

As part of this approach, it means the OSA will focus on developing skills from the earliest ages. At the early ages (U4-U12), we are moving over time toward less emphasis on scores and winning and losing and much more on coaching, training, touches on the ball and development for players.

Our overall goal is to ensure those who play soccer will stay with the sport. The LTPD pathway allows all involved to reach their potential and stay involved for as long as possible.

For the elite player, we are moving toward an enhanced competitive structure at U13 and beyond that ensures we are able to identify more talented players than ever before and give those young players the opportunity to receive better coaching and training. The structure will allow more youngsters to have broader development opportunities than ever before and our elite player pool will be enhanced.

Our new LTPD-oriented coaching curriculum, as advanced through the Canadian Soccer Association, is a crucial component of the LTPD roll-out and delivery. We are planning Learning Facilitator Workshops in September which will help prepare our facilitators who will coach coaches to ultimately be ready for the new first four LTPD coaching courses that will be available in 2012.



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OSA Chief Technical Officer Alex Chiet took part in the TAC sessions and indicated that the group will play an invaluable role in helping the OSA shape the implementation of LTPD. “We recognize that ‘change’ is always a challenge, and is sometimes resisted. That said, we are setting important benchmarks and timelines that are achievable. While we don’t want to rush the process, it is important that we move forward. I’m very pleased that this group of leaders on our TAC are so passionate about doing what is right and best—not for a particular region or Club, but what will be in the best interest of the development of every young player in our province, no matter where those players live. We are working on a clear player development pathway that will benefit all participants.”

OSA President Ron Smale echoed Chiet’s comments, saying, “Many of our Clubs are already taking a leading role in implementing various elements of LTPD. Now, our challenge is to help shepherd this process along to make sure no one is left behind and that we identify what resources are required to make this integration as seamless as possible. This is an exciting time for the OSA. We’ve never been in a better position to bring about constructive, positive change for all of our players, coaches and referees. We will be communicating with all of our constituencies—from Districts and Clubs to coaches, referees and parents”.

Importantly, TAC members will continue to meet on a regular basis in smaller groups, to help firm up specific next steps in terms of coaching development procedure and a review of a proposed competitive league structure that works best for young players. A wide range of communication tools are being explored going forward, including video, web site announcement updates, e-mails and more town hall meetings.

Smale added, “We could have selected dozens of additional individuals to be part of this council, because we have so many capable and experienced soccer people in Ontario. That said, we had to find a balance and create a working group that was small enough to be effective. The OSA will take a strong leadership role in this process, but we are pleased that this has been and will continue to be an inclusive, collaborative process. Large clubs, small clubs, Academies, game officials and many others are all part of TAC. I look forward to seeing real progress in the weeks ahead as we move along the implementation curve.”

OSA will welcome the input of the membership at the appropriate times in the process. We fully expect there will be debate and discussion, but, we are committed to—and are moving ahead with—Long-Term Player Development, because it is a proven approach to supporting our young players, coaches and officials in the best possible manner.