

To: All Member Organizations, Affiliates and Families

From: Chris Branscome, Chief Executive Officer

RE: US Soccer Player Development Initiatives

CC: Board of Directors, Staff

On August 24th, US Soccer announced a bold initiative to enhance the development of soccer players throughout the country. Eastern Pennsylvania Youth Soccer followed that announcement with a statement of support. At that time, we asked that everyone be patient as there were some issues in need of resolution and that we anticipated other questions to arise.

The key issues are mandated standards for small-sided games and the change in registration from a seasonal year to the calendar year. This mandate applies to all member organizations of US Soccer. Many of the questions can be answered by reviewing the information provided by US Soccer on their website. There is a video presentation as well as a power point presentation to help guide you.

Our staff has helped provide a synopsis of the changes. We still recommend reviewing what US Soccer has created.

Small-sided Games:

Over the better part of the past 15 years, recommendations from US Youth Soccer have been in place. The field size and number of players is quite similar to the new standards set by US Soccer. The charts are available on EPYSA.org, as well as US Soccer.com. There are some new rules and field markings that have been created to make these games a better teaching and learning environment.

Very simply, all soccer U-8 and below will be played 4v4. U9 /U10 will become 7v7 (including goalkeepers) and U11/U12 becomes 9v9. All 11-a-side soccer begins at U13. Roster sizes for small-sided games has not yet been determined.

Another unique feature is that for U6 and U7, games will be played in four eight-minute quarters, with a five-minute break in between quarters. However, at U8 the game will be played in three 15-minute periods, with a 10-minute break in between. Quarters and periods will provide the opportunity to establish a flow to the game and allow substituting in a more uniform way to eliminate the disruption that normally occurs. At U9 and up, play will be in the customary halves.

A unique rule for 7v7 features a "build out line" to encourage players to develop their skills unpressured when playing out of the back on a goal kick or from the goalkeeper. Those rules and field diagrams can be found on EPYSA.org.

Standards for field and goal size have been included in this initiative. The field sizes shown in the documents are the maximum sizes. Fields can be smaller, but the size shown is the standard to which US Soccer desires. Goal sizes should be viewed similarly. The sizes listed are the standard. Each club should work to achieve the standard, but that does not mean new goals must be purchased immediately. The next opportunity a club has to replace old goals, the purchase should reflect the sizes established by US Soccer.

Birth Year Registration:

The developmental initiative focuses on the change of registration from the “seasonal year” or “school year” to the calendar year, or birth year of the player. The primary reason is to move the United States to the FIFA standard. It should be noted that up until 1992, we did register players by birth year, so we would be returning to a past practice. Simply put, registration will be based on birth year, January 1st to December 31st.

Earlier this month, the US Youth Soccer Board of Directors approved a motion for the implementation of the mandated registration change for all US Youth Soccer programs and competitions for the 2016-17 year. The US Youth Soccer programs and competitions that will introduce the birth-year registration in the **2016-17** soccer year include, but are not limited to, the following:

- US Youth Soccer National Championships Series — including national, regional and state competitions
- US Youth Soccer Presidents Cup — including national, regional and state competitions
- US Youth Soccer National League and Regional Leagues
- US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program

Therefore Eastern Pennsylvania Youth Soccer will move forward in the 2016-17 seasonal year with all of its programs and competitions registering by birth year as well.

The new seasonal year begins September 1, 2016. None of these changes will go into effect prior to that day. However, planning should begin soon. Spring tryout dates and team selections will require attention. Educating players and their families will necessary. Leagues and tournaments should begin to prepare for the adjustments. An important note is that these standards will be firmly applied to travel soccer.

For intramural and recreational leagues, we will continue to work with those groups to find solutions to work towards the US Soccer standards. We believe that variances may be applied in certain instances to meet the local needs to continue to develop players and grow the game. This may be especially true with our youngest players who have been traditionally grouped by grade, or by logically combining appropriate ages simply to form teams or leagues.

An obvious issue is the possibility and probability of changes to the makeup of current teams. The practice of “playing up” has always and still remains an option for individuals and also for some teams. If you wish to keep your team together, US Soccer suggests you play up. These are decisions for your club and your constituents to consider. State Cup rules will be addressed shortly that may affect roster decisions at U12 and below.

This was an important announcement, but the timing was difficult as all of our members were in preparations for the start of this season. We delayed this response until we had some of our own questions answered as well as provide some space and allow you to begin this season with as much attention as it deserves. There is ample time for discussion and planning in preparation of 2016-17. Our board and staff will continue to provide updates as we receive them. If you have further questions or need assistance regarding these US Soccer initiatives please feel free to contact us.