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To: OSA Coaches across the province
From: Alex Chiet – OSA Chief Technical Officer
Date: Monday 29th August 2011
Re: Coaches – LTPD Update

One of the many things that has become even clearer to me since I came to Canada from New Zealand and joined the OSA in April is this: **how** we engage and develop young athletes is tremendously important.

Of course without you, our coaches, we don't have soccer at all. It's that simple. I have a great deal of respect for those who provide this essential service for our youth, and do it with skill and passion.

As you all spend a great deal of time on soccer fields, by now most of you have been made aware of some of the new things that are upon us as coaches within Ontario. Specifically, I am referring to the mandate from the Canadian Soccer Association (CSA) to introduce Long-Term Player Development (LTPD) across the country.

Let me provide some background, and a bit of an update.

LTPD is certainly not new. It is rooted in work done many years ago around what was called "Long-Term Athlete development". This approach looked at athlete development in a holistic, integrated manner. In soccer terms, LTPD has already been in place—and very successfully so—for some time in many of the world's most advanced soccer nations.

I should add that LTPD is steeped in years of research and a great deal of science. Here in Ontario, we have the opportunity to implement an Ontario-specific model that takes into account the demands and needs of our "market"—Ontario's young soccer players.

Youth coaches at the Club level have always been and will always be one of our most precious resources. We understand that thousands of individuals dedicate their time for countless hours year-round to help make the soccer experience the best it can be for all of the young boys and girls who want to explore and grow in this great sport.



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And from visiting many soccer fields over the past few months, I well realize coaches are already doing some great work. Kids are smiling and enjoying their training. So it's not like we're doing "everything wrong". Far from it.

But that said, we need to ask ourselves: can we do even better?

One of the realities is that we need to ensure that we are not falling even further behind successful soccer nations in a couple of key and very visible areas: our ability to retain youngsters in our sport for the sheer love and enjoyment of the game and at the same time, that we move forward, not further back, in our ability to identify, train and truly *develop* our most high-level talents.

One of the key aspects of achieving both of the above is where you fit the puzzle—coaching. While I have no doubt the majority of our coaches at both the recreational and competitive levels do an admirable job, I'm sure most of us recognize we can do even better overall for our young athletes.

With that in mind, the CSA has introduced a new coaching curriculum which will offer a modern path for coaches to follow and will also provide fresh ideas that mesh with the values supported through LTPD. Wherever you are or will be coaching through the Seven Stages of the LTPD program (starting with "Active Starts" and "FUNdamentals" all the way through to "Active for Life"), it will be vitally important that you remain current in your own personal coaching progression and development, so in turn you can continue to help our young players right across the province.

We want to provide you with all the tools you will need to do an even better job than ever before. Our new coaching curriculum, along with the phased-in implementation of LTPD principles, will allow us to do exactly that.

Most importantly, we want to make sure that those youngsters who come to soccer will want to stay and will truly love their experience, whether they play "for fun" or also want a challenging competitive experience. The better we "coach", the more kids will enjoy and stay in the sport.

At the higher competitive levels, LTPD will allow us to re-shape our League structures, and support an environment that is less about "winning" and much more about developing the actual mental and physical skills needed to be a really good player. From now on, we will be much better able to identify, train and develop players for our new regional teams, and ultimately give more kids—regardless of where they live or play soccer— a chance to become great players and represent our community, province and our country.



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We will be introducing some aspects of LTPD in 2012, with a phased-in approach in subsequent years. It's critically important that we move together, in the same direction. With that in mind, upcoming coaching certification programs will begin the process of preparing all of us for what lies ahead.

I have communicated with Club head coaches, and recognize that you will also have questions as we move along. Please keep an eye out for more detailed information in the months to come. 2012 will be a very important year in Ontario for our great sport and you can continue to make a huge difference in the lives of our young players in every corner of the province.

Thank you,

Alex Chiet
OSA Chief Technical Officer