



## OSA Long Term Player Development October Update

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As we come to the end of October, I wanted to provide everyone, as promised, with some additional information about the steps The Ontario Soccer Association is taking with regard to the planning and eventual implementation of the Long-Term Player Development (LTPD) program throughout the province.

Hopefully you received my earlier update, forwarded to you after we initially brought together a group of soccer leaders from different parts of Ontario for meetings back in June.

Importantly, in September, the full Board, comprised of the 21 Districts of the OSA, gave its unanimous approval to—and support of—LTPD.

On the heels of that decision, the Technical Advisory Council (TAC) came together again last week, and made significant progress in key areas to help us move forward with LTPD.

But first, as we occasionally receive feedback that some Clubs are not receiving our updates and therefore may not be fully aware of where things are at, here is a brief summary of LTPD principles:

- LTPD starts with the U4 and up Active Start category and carries through to the Adult Active for Life stage. We want everyone who comes to our great sport to love the experience and stay and play—for life, regardless of his or her individual talent level.
- LTPD emphasizes the need for an even better soccer experience for all young players, not only elite players. This approach to player development is so common in other parts of the (successful!) soccer-playing world that there is no specific terminology applied to the approach. It's just the way things are done. The focus elsewhere is simply on developing players, not winning games, at the early youth levels.
- LTPD is not a revolutionary approach. It is simply moving us closer to world standards, in order to meet established “best practices” when it comes to training programs and player and coach development. The science and research behind the value of LTPD is clear, and we can provide you with all the examples and documentation you need to explain this approach to fellow coaches, parents and administrators.
- Our Clubs are already doing some great things, and this will only make the delivery of the soccer experience for coaches and players even better, from U4 right through to Adult soccer.
- Within weeks you will start to see the fruits of the new coaching curriculum that has been in development, as we unveil our updated coach education and development programs.
- LTPD is not only better for the recreational player who wants to simply be active, stay fit and enjoy the soccer experience, but also for the “elite” player who wants a future in the sport. Better training, a focus on individual skills development, less focus on winning and more opportunities to be identified at the local and regional level for higher levels of competition will make this program a success.

Here are some of the highlights of what we have achieved along with planned next steps coming out of the most recent TAC meeting:

- Based on our current plan, LTPD will be phased-in, starting in 2013, with the broader “roll-out” expected over the next 6 to 8 years.
- Some Clubs and Districts have already begun, informally, to move in this direction at the youngest ages, with outstanding results and very positive feedback from parents.

- Our current player pathway is so broken, confusing and fragmented that we can no longer avoid the “elephant in the room”. We have to develop a pathway that not only makes sense for but is also in the true best interests of young players.
- One of the biggest challenges we will deal with is the re-shaping of the current competitive structure. TAC will be recommending to the OSA a league structure that will emphasize skills development at the youngest ages (U4 to U12) with a more appropriate practice-to-game ratio and less emphasis on “winning games” and much more on enhancing skill development of all players.
- With the above in mind, we plan to move to a league and competition structure that is not about individual team promotion and relegation, but rather centered on player development with a Club focus. That is, over the next two years, we will introduce a competitive structure based on specific standards. The detailed criteria are still being finalized, but in short, individual Clubs must meet certain minimum standards (registration, staffing, program delivery, number of certified coaches, the ability to implement true LTPD principles, etc.) to meet various designated levels.
- The process of evaluating standards will need to be fully objective and transparent, and will also ensure that grassroots development is foremost in everyone’s mind to facilitate cooperation between Clubs and what is best for individual players—not local “politics”.
- A high-performance league for talented male and female players will be established under the governance of the OSA. The league will use the abovementioned Club standards rather than the current promotion and relegation system to ensure we provide the finest training and player development system we possibly can throughout every corner of the province.

There is a great deal of work to do in the weeks, months and the years ahead. 2012 will be critically important for the TAC, as the Council will focus on creating broader awareness of LTPD and helping to educate leaders across Ontario about how we can move forward together in a healthy and cooperative fashion.

We fully understand there will be questions and challenges. Aware of that reality, we will diligently work to do things “right” rather than rush ahead. We will be phasing-in LTPD while respecting the fine work that is already being done in so many Districts and Clubs across the province.

Beyond the upcoming coaching courses that we are offering, there will be meetings across the province in 2012 to answer questions, consult and help explain the plans for LTPD and what it means for Clubs, large and small, within the OSA. We look forward to working with you in developing an exciting future for soccer within Ontario.

Kind Regards

Alex Chiet  
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