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TECHNICAL REVIEW

The technical representatives from the following groups and/or organizations that will receive this document to review for technical merit and validity once it is approved internally by the General Secretary of US Soccer are:

- Advisory Council of National State Director's of Coaching
- American Youth Soccer Organization
- National Association of Competitive Soccer Clubs
- National Soccer Coaches Association of America
- National State Director's of Coaching
- United Soccer League / Super "Y" League
- US Soccer Federation National Team Coaches
- US Soccer Federation National Staff Coaches
- US Youth Soccer Association

RECOMMENDED GAME FORMS FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

- To promote the implementation of small-sided games as the vehicle for match play for players under the age of twelve throughout the United States.
- To promote and encourage an appropriate developmental environment for players that is based on both age and ability characteristics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Age / Item	U.6	U.8	U.10	U.12	U.14	U.16 - U.18
Game Form	3v3	4v4 (5v5)	7v7	9V9	11V11	11V11
Game Duration	4x8	2x20	2x25	2x30	2x40	2x40 / 2x45
Substitution	Free	Free	Free	Free	No re-entry in half	Per FIFA
GK Status	None required	No in 4v4 - Use field player 5v5	Players rotate as GK in game	GK share time in order of priority	GK chosen based on ability	GK chosen based on ability

JUSTIFICATION

- Using small-sided games for match play for players age 6-12 creates more involvement in the game, increases contact with the ball, provides greater opportunities to solve problems in the game and ultimately, provides the player with more enjoyment
- During the ages of 6-12, players develop a basic understanding and passion for the game. By creating an environment that fosters development throughout this age period, players will either excel and become top players or they will continue to enjoy the game at their own level of ability and eventually enjoy watching the game being played.
- Players must be challenged at their own age/ability levels to improve performance. Too many players on the field of play negatively effects this learning process and create poor playing habits and limit the players understanding of the game.
- Children come to soccer practice to have fun. They want to run, touch the ball and play a game. The environment which we place players in during practice and games should promote all of these desires. It is important during this period of **basic** education that we provide countless opportunities for players to enjoy and master the fundamentals of the game.

DEVELOPMENT OF GOALKEEPERS

ISSUE

- The implementation of goalkeepers within youth soccer is an issue that creates considerable discussion among coaches. Requiring a player to be only a goalkeeper at too early of an age may have a negative effect and eliminate them from future participation in soccer.
- Children grow at different rates and times. It is impossible to predict who will be the best goalkeeper at age twenty when they are ten. Early selection as a goalkeeper may not be in the player's best long-term interest.
- Development of a goalkeeper must be carefully monitored and conducted. The progressive teaching of technical skills is important given the concerns for safety within the position.

RECOMMENDATION

- The status for goalkeepers within the following game forms follows:

U.6 / 3v3	No GK required
U.8 / 4v4	No GK required
U.8 / 5v5	Rotate field players as goalkeeper
U.10 / 7v7	GK is included within team - Players identified within team who like playing goal - Rotate these players as GK
U.12 / 9v9	GK's identified within team – GK's share time but in order of priority determined by the coach
U.14 / 11v11	GK chosen on ability and contribution to the team

JUSTIFICATION

- Goalkeeping is an aspect of the game that must be encouraged and taught. However, the timing of when a player "becomes a goalkeeper" is an important aspect in player development that must not be ignored or overlooked.
- Given the physical and mental growth of young children (U.8) the introduction of a GK at too early an age is not appropriate and has a low level of priority.
- Attrition will naturally occur as players get older. Over time they will determine what position they are most comfortable playing. Exposure to various positions within the team provides countless opportunities for players to develop. Restricting a player to one position inhibits the player's long-term development and may cause the player to lose interest and drop out of the game.

MAXIMUM COMPETITION PER DAY:

ISSUE

- Multiple games being played on one day or one weekend and its effect on the quality of the experience and development of the individual player
- Playing schedules that include so many tournaments and games that there is never an "off season" for players.

RECOMMENDATION

- For tournament managers and schedulers:
 1. Players allowed to play a maximum of one full-length game plus overtime period per weekend
 2. Where multiple games are a necessity:
 - a) Schedule full-length games with a day of rest between games
 - b) Play shortened halves for games played on back-to-back days
 - c) For players U.14 a maximum of 100 minutes of competition per day
 - d) For players U.15 and older a maximum of 120 minutes per day
 1. Modified FIFA rules apply - no re-entry after substitution
 2. Kick-off times for games should allow players a reasonable opportunity to prepare properly for competition. This encompasses rest and recovery, nutrition and adequate time to warm-up.
- Coaches prioritizing events
 1. Objectives are identified and a seasonal plan is developed that balances practice, competition, rest and recovery.
 2. The best interests of the player must be considered when scheduling competition. The quality and the choice of the events must be carefully considered when developing a seasonal plan.

JUSTIFICATION

- Entering too many competitions/tournaments can have a long lasting negative effect on the development of the player's skills, fitness and health.
- A scheduling approach that maximizes opportunities to achieve peak performance for important competitions also minimizes the chances of over-training and injuries from overuse as well as maintaining the player's interest and motivation.
- Soccer is a test of skill not survival. Quantity alone does not improve the quality of the game. More games and tournaments do not necessarily improve the player's performance.
- Practicing or playing games where players are "going through the motions" due to fatigue or lack of interest reinforce bad habits, retard their development and increase the risk of injury.

ABILITY TO PLAY UP

ISSUE

- The majority of clubs, leagues and district, state or regional Olympic Development Programs in the United States allow talented, younger players to compete on teams with and against older players. This occurs as a natural part of the development process and is consistent throughout the world. Currently, there are isolated instances where rules or policies have been imposed that restrict the exceptional player from "playing up." These rules regarding this issue vary. Some absolutely will not allow it. Others establish team or age-group quotas while the most lenient review the issue on a case-by-case basis.
- Associations that create rules restricting an individual player's option to play at the appropriate competitive level are in effect impeding that player's opportunity for growth. For development to occur, all players must be exposed to levels of competition commensurate with their skills and must be challenged constantly in training and games in order to aspire to higher levels of play and thus maintain their interest and passion for the game.

RECOMMENDATION

- When it is appropriate for soccer development, the opportunity for the exceptional player to play with older players must be available. If there is a concern regarding the individual situation, the decision must be carefully evaluated by coaches and administrators familiar with the particular player. When faced with making the decision whether the player ought to play up, adult leadership must be prepared with sound rationale to support their decision. Under no circumstance should coaches exploit the situation by holding players back in their quest for winning team championships, nor should parents push their child in an attempt to accelerate their ascension to the top of the soccer pyramid. In addition, playing up under the appropriate circumstances should not preclude a player from playing in his or her own age group when it is evaluated to be in the best interest of the players' development.

JUSTIFICATION

- The development of players and advancement of the overall quality of play in the United States is the responsibility of every youth coach, administrator and policy maker. It is our obligation to provide an environment where every player is provided the opportunity to improve and gain the maximum enjoyment from his or her soccer experience. All decisions in youth development must be focused on enhancing the playing environment and ultimately, what is in the best interest of the player.
- The playing environment must provide the right balance between challenge and success. The best players must have the opportunity to compete with and against players of similar abilities. Players with less ability must be allowed to compete at their own ability level in order to enjoy the game and to improve their performance.
- Exceptionally talented young players competing with and against older aged players have been an integral part of the game since its inception. Players who possess a soccer maturity beyond that of their peers should be encouraged to "play up" in order that their development is accelerated. Consider these examples of playing up: Pele played for Brazil in his first World Cup as a 17 year old; Mia Hamm received her first call to the US Women's National Team when she was 15; Landon Donovan played in his first Men's Senior National Team game when he was 18.

JANUARY 1st BIRTHDATE FOR REGISTRATION

ISSUE

- The August 1st birth date versus the January 1st birth year: continues to cause confusion in all areas of soccer life in the United States and does not mirror the process of player development world-wide.
- US Soccer player registration dates should duplicate international standards and criteria for competition.

RECOMMENDATION

- To create a rule change that would establish January 1st as the consistent date for player registration
- To implement the rule change by phasing in the change in birth date beginning with January 1, 2003

JUSTIFICATION

- The change to August 1st for determining the playing age was intended to keep players in the same school year together for their soccer teams. Although this in fact may accomplish that for some players, it may no longer represent the majority. Using the August 1st date for club team formation and the use of January 15th for other aspects of soccer throughout the world has caused and continues to cause confusion at recreational, selective, elite, professional and national levels for players, coaches parents, team managers and registrars alike.
- The January 1st date is used worldwide. All FIFA events use January 15th. Nationally, January 15th is used for all our developmental programs. The Olympic Development Program and national teams program for both men and women at all ages, are in alignment with the rest of the world. One date makes sense and will greatly simplify the registration process.

CLUB REGISTRATION vs. TEAM REGISTRATION

ISSUE

- Registering players to a club rather than a team provides for fluid movement between teams and levels based upon the needs and abilities of the player.
- By registering players to a club rather than a team increases the opportunities for players to gain experience and playing time as determined by the Club's Director of Coaching.
- Club registration embraces the concept of "playing up" and positively influences the player by providing easy access to an increased level of competition.

RECOMMENDATION

- Players should be allowed to register directly to a club. Club player passes rather than team player passes would be issued. Players would be restricted from playing down in competitions that are below their own age.
- Tournaments or cup competitions may freeze rosters prior to beginning to prevent changes in the roster during the actual competition period.
- Players would be limited to playing only one game per day regardless of the age grouping.
- Club Directors of Coaching would oversee technical decisions relative to player development to ensure they are being made in the best long-term interest of the players' growth and development. Team coaches would not be able to hold players back when it is in their best interest to play up.

JUSTIFICATION

- The development of players is enhanced whenever the possibility of "playing up" is provided. The current system of team registration does not allow for this process to occur.
- The movement of players between teams within the same club is an accepted practice within clubs throughout the world. This creates a challenging and stimulating environment for player development.
- See section on "Ability to Play Up"

FESTIVALS vs. TOURNAMENTS

ISSUE

- Teams are participating in a vast number of tournaments each season. The participation in these tournaments by youth teams often creates a "win-at-all" cost attitude and has a negative influence on player development.
- This high level of participation in tournaments effects the development of the player in the following way:
 - a) time is reduced for development, i.e. practice
 - b) excessive play at competitive tournaments is detrimental to individual growth and development
 - c) winning becomes the main issue for the coach rather than the long term development of the player

RECOMMENDATION

- For players below the age of ten a festival format should replace a tournament structure. Festivals feature a set number of games with no elimination or ultimate winner.

JUSTIFICATION

- Festival formats lessen the "win-at-all" cost approach. Coaches can focus on issues that pertain to player development within the game without the fear of elimination from the tournament.
- Festivals provide a round-robin approach to the scheduling of competition rather than an elimination process. Recording of team standings, game scores, etc. would not be necessary.

REQUIRED LICENSING

ISSUE

- To create minimum educational and licensing requirements for coaches in the United States.
- To establish required levels of coaching licenses that are commensurate with the level of play and needs of the coach.

RECOMMENDATION

- To implement the license requirements established and recommended in 1998 by the Coaching Department of the United States Soccer Federation.
- Implementation to be achieved nation-wide by December 31, 2004.

JUSTIFICATION

- By improving the level of coaching expertise at all levels of play we can positively influence the environment for player development.
- By establishing minimum educational and licensing levels a consistent methodology for teaching the game is established and embraced throughout the United States.
- Coaching education provides instruction on creating an appropriate training environment that minimizes the risk of injury and also provides information on the prevention and care of injuries.
- Requiring minimum educational and licensing levels reduces liability and the risk of claims against negligence.
- To ensure that the United States has an equal opportunity for education and achievement in the game as our foreign counterparts. Most countries now require mandatory licensing for coaches.
- Influencing professional standards of those involved in coaching are achieved through licensing education program. Like many other national governing sports bodies in the United States who have established mandatory coaching education requirements, i.e., softball, ice hockey, US Soccer seeks to achieve the highest possible standards in the game.

RECOMMENDED MINIMUM LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

"Pro" License	Professional Coaches, National Team/Staff Coaches, Collegiate Head Coaches, Club Directors of Coaching/Technical Directors, Head Regional ODP Coaches
"A" License	National Instructional Staff, Regional ODP Team Coaches, Collegiate Assistant Coaches, State Directors of Coaching, State ODP Head Coaches, Club Age Group Directors of Coaching
"B" License	State Instructional Staff, State ODP Assistant Coaches, Club Team Head Coaches of Elite Level Teams U.16 or older
"C" License	State or Regional ODP Coaches-in-Training, Head Coaches of Selective/Elite Level Teams of U.14 or older
"D" License	Head or Assistant Team Coaches of Selective/Elite Level Teams U.12 or older - Course is the first licensing course offered under US Soccer Federation auspices
"E" Certificate	Assistant Coaches of Selective Level Teams 12 years or older - Course provides basic instruction for coaches coaching teams playing eleven-a-side
"F" License	State Directors of Coaching, State Instructional Staff of Youth Modules, Club Directors of Coaching, Coaches of Grassroots/Selective Level Teams
Youth Module - Level 3	For Coaches working with players U.12 - Grassroots
Youth Module - Level 2	For Coaches working with players U.10 - Grassroots
Youth Module - Level 1	For Coaches working with players U.8 - Grassroots

DEFINED LEVELS OF SOCCER PARTICIPATION

ISSUE

- The lack of a common language to describe the various levels of soccer participation in the United States.
- The use of terms such as recreational, competitive or travel fail to adequately address the various levels from a qualitative perspective.

RECOMMENDATION

- US Soccer has defined the following five levels of participation and/or programming that currently exists in the United States
 1. Grassroots - The broad base entry level of soccer. This is the foundation of the talent pool.
 2. Selective - This level involves a process or method of identification and selection to enable participation in a competitive program.
 3. Elite - This level includes programming appropriate for players with the potential to become full-time professionals.
 4. Professional - This level includes programming within US Soccer's existing 1st and 2nd Division leagues for men or women.
 5. National - This level includes players who are in US Soccer's National Team Program, regardless of age.

JUSTIFICATION

- In order to address the technical needs of each level and to identify the various organizations or initiatives contributing to the development of soccer the various level of participation and/or programming were required.

Current Structure of Player ID and Development Initiatives

Core Programming

Men's National Teams	Women's National Teams
National	
MLS A-League P-40 NPSL	WUSA
Professional	
Regional ODP USSF/MLS Youth Project USSF Scouting Program USSF Multi-Cultural NTC Scouting	Regional ODP USSF/MLS Youth Project USSF Scouting Program USSF Multi-Cultural NTC Scouting
←Elite→	
State ODP	State CDP
←Selective→	
USSF Scouting Program USSF Multi-Cultural NT Coach Scouting USSF Club Development	USSF Scouting Program USSF Multi-Cultural NT Coach Scouting USSF Club Development
←Grassroots→	

Adjacent Programming

Adjacent Programming

USL (D3, PDL)
ESP Camp
National Cups
District ODP
Super Y League
H.S./College
Clubs (USYSA & USASA)
Tournaments
NACSC
State/Reg. Cup

USL (W-League)
ESP Camp
National Cups
District ODP
Super Y League
H.S./College
Clubs (USYSA & USASA)
Tournaments
NACSC
State/Reg. Cup

Peripheral Programming

Peripheral Programming

AYSO/SAY
SITS
AMERICA SCORES
YMCA Boys/Girls Clubs
Parks/Rec.
Camps

USYSA (leagues, associations, and clubs)

USYSA (leagues, associations, and clubs)

AYSO/SAY
SITS
AMERICA SCORES
YMCA Boys/Girls Clubs
Parks/Rec.
Camps

AYSO/SAY
SITS
AMERICA SCORES
YMCA Boys/Girls Clubs
Parks/Rec.
Camps

TECHNICAL COMPONENTS FOR A TOP CLUB

ISSUE

- To enhance the environment for club soccer where the day-to-day process of player development is carried out.
- An absence of criteria that establishes minimum standards for clubs on a national scale inhibits the development of players due to a lack of these key ingredients or components.

RECOMMENDATION

- The following key ingredients or components would be found in a top-level club in the United States. Clubs wishing to achieve the status and recognition of a top club in the United States would include the following in their program:
 - a) Mission Statement & Philosophy
 - b) Goals & Objectives based on player development
 - c) Business plan to achieve goals & objectives
 - d) Technical plan describing the player development functions of the club
 - e) Director of Soccer/Coaching who provides technical leadership and oversight for club and player development functions
 - f) Player Identification process for talent discovery (internal/external)
 - g) Range of player services (regular player evaluation, parent support program, college search process)
 - h) Facilities for training and competition that are controlled by the club
 - i) Technical infrastructure providing developmental pathway for players ages U.8 and up
 - j) Balance of competitive opportunities at state, regional and national levels (based on ability levels of players/teams)
 - k) Connection to senior level soccer (top amateur to professional)
 - l) Staff to support functions of club (administrative, technical and medical)
 - m) Qualified technical staff (licensed coaches appropriate for the level they are working)
 - n) In-service training program for the club's technical staff
 - o) Financial plan providing stability

JUSTIFICATION

- Currently youth clubs are the main provider of a pre-professional education within the player development process. Without the direct involvement of professional soccer in youth development, clubs within the United States must provide this important component of the player development process.
- There currently exists a wide range of club models within the United States. **These clubs function without any standardized** criteria or requirements for their role within player development. By providing a "blue print" for the development of a top club we can positively influence the growth and development of club soccer and subsequently improve the process for player development.

MODIFIED LAWS FOR AGE APPROPRIATE COMPETITION

Age/Item	U.6	U.8	U.10/U.12	U.14	U.16	U.18	
Ball Size	3	3	4	4	5	5	
Field Size (Recommended)	30x20	40x20 - 4v4 40x25 - 5v5	70x50	100x65	1 10x70	1 15x70	120x75
Referees	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Assistant Referees	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Roster Limits	10	12	14	16	18	18	18
Offside	No	No	Top of Penalty Area	FIFA	FIFA	FIFA	FIFA
Goal Size	4.5x9	4.5x9 - 4v4 6.5x12 - 5v5	6.5x18.5	7x21	8X24	8X24	8X24
Goal Kick	N/A	N/A	From Top of Penalty Area	From Top of Penalty Area	FIFA	FIFA	FIFA
Corner Kick	N/A	N/A	From Corner of Penalty Area and Goal Line	From Corner of Penalty Area and Goal Line	FIFA	FIFA	FIFA
Ball in Play	Kick-In	Kick-In	Throw-In	Throw-In	Throw-In	Throw-In	Throw-In