

Olympic Development Program.

PURPOSE

The Olympic Development Program was formed to identify a pool of players in each age group from which a National Team will be selected for international competition; to provide high-level training to benefit and enhance the development of players at all levels; and, through the use of carefully selected, licensed coaches, develop a mechanism for the exchange of ideas and curriculum to improve all levels of coaching.

PHILOSOPHY

The purpose of the Olympic Development Program is to identify players of the highest caliber for U.S. National Teams. It is therefore believed continued consistent identification of this caliber player will lead to increased success in the international arena.

HISTORY

In 1977 it became evident to then United States Youth Soccer Association (USYSA) Chairman, Don Greer, that with the vast geographic area of the United States and the meteoric rise in membership, some method had to be devised to identify the especially gifted soccer players who were potential National Team members. Thus, the original USYSA Select Team Program was formed with Peter Jebens as the first National Chairman.

Following the format of other USYSA committees, one member was appointed from each of the four Regions. This committee then met and formulated the basic policies for the Program. The primary purpose then, as now, was to identify and then train a pool of players to represent the United States in international competitions for youth national teams.

In 1979 Ozzie Gencoz of Seattle, Washington replaced Peter Jebens as National Chairman, and from his professional background as an aeronautical engineer came flow charts, multi-year plans and an expanding organization for the Select Team Program. State Associations were encouraged to develop programs which supported and worked in tandem with National and Regional programs. 1982 saw the beginning of a formalized program for girls with the addition of a full committee (one member from each Region), also under Ozzie Gencoz's direction.

From 1982 until the present, international events for youth national teams have increased substantially and the USYSA Select Team Program has kept pace by instituting trials and player pools for five age groups in the boys' program, and three age groups in the girls' program. Also keeping pace with current needs was the renaming of the program, first to "Junior Olympic Development Program" and then to "Olympic Development Program" as it is known today.

CURRENT ORGANIZATION

There are two National Chairmen, one for the girls' program and one for the boys' program, each with a committee comprised of one administrator and one coach from each Region. Within each Region, each State Association has an Olympic Development Administrator and State Select Team Coach. Many states conduct five programs (13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 years of age). The selection process requires a player to comply with his or her State Association's requirements for tryouts and, if successful, will be named as a member of the State Team. Regions conduct camps and/or competitions for the State Teams from which a Regional Team is selected. The National Team Program utilizes a National Camp and/or Competition for the four Regional Teams where the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) National Coaches select a player pool for their respective USSF National Teams.

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STATE SELECT TEAM PROGRAM / OLYMPIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Player development is a long process, which begins at the local level. The State Select/Olympic Development Program is greatly dependent upon the local coaches, both recreational and competitive, who instill the fundamentals of the game and consistently provide training and games to all the players across the state.

Most players do not advance from the club level directly to the regional or national levels in one step. The National program depends on states and regions to help in this scouting process. Therefore, exposure to the regional and national levels is gradual and begins with encouragement, development and identification at the district and state levels.

Initial involvement in State Select/ODP, following registration with the program, begins with players participating in an evaluation session or trial at the district level. Skill level of players will be and evaluated by a team of coaches, who will select those to advance to the State Evaluations. From the State Evaluations, a pool of players in each age group will be selected to train under the direction of the State Select Team Staff. From the pools, teams (as many as 18 players, plus 4 alternates) will be selected to attend sub-regional events and regional camps. The regional coaching staff will further evaluate these players.

Commitment to the program is absolutely necessary in order to receive the greatest benefit. We do understand that players sometimes have other obligations and we make every effort to work with family and school conflicts. However, there comes a time when everyone must define their priorities and make choices accordingly. Longevity in the program is not a guarantee for selection, but it is a contributor to the overall benefits an individual will receive from State Select/ODP. Understanding that the goal of State Select/ODP is to identify the best players in the state, the selection process will be ongoing. Likewise, the training aspect of State Select/ODP is continuous. Players must know and recognize their personal objectives for participating in order to have the most positive experience.

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Players who wish to attend Tryouts are to wear shinguards, bring their own ball, water and a white and dark T-shirt to the tryout. In addition, they must remember to not wear anything that indicates their league affiliation or prior ODP participation.

Who pays for the program?

ODP camp fees, travel expenses, and training fees are paid by the players involved.

Who is eligible?

You must be a U.S. citizen and meet the age requirement for the established age groups in order to participate in the ODP (if citizenship eligibility requirements can be met by the date of the next international event that a player can participate in, that player may try out for the ODP).

Is the ODP going to interfere with my league schedule?

Participation in the ODP is designed to complement the players' normal involvement with their league or club. ODP functions are outside of and in addition to, league or club practices and matches.

What should I do if there is a schedule conflict between my league team and the ODP?

League games take precedence over ODP practices or exhibition games. ODP players will not be disciplined for missing an ODP practice to fulfill their league game commitment, provided that the players notify their ODP coach.

Can I try out again if I fail to make the program in a given year?

Yes, you can. Every year you will have an opportunity to try out for the ODP. A number of current national team players did not make the program every time they tried.