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Important update on U9 soccer 2012 soccer

Some variations to how districts will implement LTPD changes

March 7, 2012 - Changes to the way 9-year-old soccer players will learn and play the game are to be phased in with some variations by Winnipeg's five soccer districts starting in 2012, with a view to having complete implementation of shared standards in 2013.

Some districts and community centres recently asked the Winnipeg Youth Soccer Association for additional time to implement all the new Long-Term Player Development (LTPD) guidelines for 9-year-olds. WYSA agrees it is important to be flexible as it rolls out these constructive changes to coaching, training and playing the game.

While all districts and the Greater Council of Winnipeg Community Centres have committed to a standard LTPD approach for soccer programs for ages 4-8, there will be some variations from district to district in how 9-year-old soccer is delivered in 2012.

The Winnipeg Youth Soccer Association, which includes representation from the district associations, has been working for more than a year with the Manitoba Soccer Association to develop a new Winnipeg-focused plan for the LTPD program. LTPD focuses first on coaching the coaches with a much simpler certification process that allows coaches to gain the training they need based specifically on the age of the children they're coaching.

LTPD also recommends moving to small-sided games which give each player more time on the ball and therefore more opportunity to improve their skills. Additionally, LTPD emphasizes exciting and fun training sessions instead of focusing solely on game results.

"Our goal was to move all Winnipeg 9-year-old players to a 6-versus-6 league format this spring," said Alastair Gillespie, WYSA president. "While our consultation involved representation from recreational to premier soccer, it's clear that we have to continue that work as some districts and community centres have told us there are still concerns about the need to inform parents and players and to upgrade infrastructure. We have met and discussed the situation and have agreed that the best approach for this year is for each district to implement U9 changes according to their individual preparedness."

"The districts are the ones who administer their leagues at the 9-year-old level and are the service providers to community centres, so we recognize the need for flexibility this year," said Gillespie. "We still have a strong consensus around the table that all districts will continue to move towards full and consistent implementation of LTPD guidelines. For our part, WYSA recognizes the need to consult with and listen to the entire soccer community as we go."

LTPD guidelines are based on best practices derived from some of the most successful soccer countries in the



world. Implementing the program is a requirement of the Canadian Soccer Association and Sport Canada.

"These changes will help us teach our kids the game better, give them more confidence and skill, and all of that is designed to lead to more participation and an enhanced level of skill across the board," said Gillespie.

Recreational (community centre) soccer

Each soccer district administers its own league for recreational (community centre) soccer at the U9 level.

Fees are determined by individual community centres based on all input costs including league administration.

In addition to district league play, individual teams will be able to play teams from other districts and cities as part of various tournaments, including WYSA's Children's Hospital Tournament in June. Starting this year, 9-year-olds at the Children's Hospital Tournament will play a 6-versus-6 format.

City wide developmental (advanced) soccer programs

Developmental soccer programs - which are geared for players seeking a much higher level of skill development and training - will shift to a 6-versus-6 format. Developmental programs can prepare players for advanced soccer programs including provincial and national teams, and university or professional teams.

Districts field teams in this more competitive city-wide league. Districts oversee competitive training programs under higher level coaches.

The developmental league is administered by WYSA. Fees are determined by individual district clubs.

For more information about 2012 youth soccer in your area, please contact:

St. Charles Soccer Association (www.stcharles-soccer.com)

Serving the city's Western Neighbourhoods.

FCNW (www.fcnorthwest.com)

Serving the city's Northwest Neighbourhoods.

Phoenix Soccer (www.phoenixsoccer.ca)

Serving the city's Northeast Neighbourhoods.

Winnipeg South End United (www.wseu.ca)

Serving the city's Southwest Neighbourhoods.

Bonivital Soccer (www.bonivitalsoccer.com)

Serving the city's Southeast Neighbourhoods.