

# **New York State West Youth Soccer Association 2010 Year End Report**

## **TOPSoccer**

### **The Outreach Program for Soccer**

TOPSoccer is a community-based training program for young athletes with special needs. The program, designed and administered by U.S. Youth Soccer and its volunteer TOPSoccer Committee, provides meaningful learning, development and physical participation opportunities for these young athletes through the game of soccer. The emphasis of this program is on just that – development, training and meaningful participation – rather than on competition.

TOPSoccer was formed to perpetuate the U.S. Youth Soccer mission statement, which is, “to foster the physical, mental and emotional growth and development through the sport of soccer at all levels of age and competition”. Their goal is to enable the thousands of young athletes with disabilities to develop their physical fitness, technical skills, courage and self esteem through the joy and excitement of playing soccer. This program accommodates all disabilities, whether mental or physical, and brings the joy of playing soccer to players who have not traditionally had a place in the youth soccer system.

#### **TOPSoccer is designed for children with disabilities – ages 5 to 21 – and focuses on the following:**

1. Placement of players by ability, not age
2. Emphasis on ability, not disability
3. Player involvement
4. Meaningful experience for players
5. Achievement of individual goals
6. Dependability and stability of coaches
7. FUN!

The key to our successful programs has been finding the right ‘head coach’ to lead. The traits needed to run a program like this is not to necessarily know how to coach at a highly competitive level such as ODP, but to have a lot of energy to show the players that it can be fun to run around, kick a ball, run and get it, play chase with a ball at our feet, and to see how many cones we can knock over. As a coach, it’s important to be able to adjust and change on the fly if an activity is not working on a given day. The success of TOPSoccer is based on kids having fun, not teams winning games.

**New York State West Youth Soccer Association** is presently running five TOPSoccer programs within our region, located in Amherst, Buffalo, Elmira, Rochester and Watertown.

**Amherst TOPSoccer** -

Amherst Soccer Club runs two programs a year (and is looking to add a third) under the tutelage of Brendan Murphy and Rob Anderson. The programs run during fall/early winter and late winter to coincide with the Buffalo programs. Each session has about 30 players and 45 volunteers. These volunteer numbers show the advantage of a “club run” program and the success they can have in getting volunteers to help our TOPSoccer programs.

**Buffalo TOPSoccer** -

We had another successful year beginning with our spring session at Sahlen’s Sports Park – 87 players and 50 volunteers were part of this great experience! We were also able to participate in the AIM Tournament in May with a one-day TOPSoccer Jamboree – 15 players and 12 volunteers enjoyed the wonderful setting. Our summer session was enjoyed by all at the West Seneca Soccer Complex. This summer’s session had 65 players and 35 dedicated volunteers.

**Elmira TOPSoccer** -

This new addition to NYSWest TOPSoccer started with a 4-week program in September. This inaugural program was a success for the 10 players that participated under the leadership of Jonny Sinclair. The next program is planned for spring 2011.

**Rochester TOPSoccer** -

Rochester’s program is going through some growing pains, which is actually good as word has spread that Rochester has an up and coming TOPSoccer program again. This program takes place at the Doug Miller Indoor Facility. The most recent program had 20 players and approximately 15 volunteers under the on-field leadership of Bill Testa, the off-field help of Gina Alger to increase public awareness, and the watchful eye of Roger Best to make sure it ran as smoothly as possible.

**Watertown TOPSoccer** -

This first-year program took place at the local YMCA. They had three organized sessions all under the leadership of Chris Pacilio. The first session was in April and had about 10 children and 10 volunteers participating, and the summer session grew to 30 players and 15 volunteers. We were proud of their jump start and also their initiative to have twelve of their TOPSoccer kids participate in the league’s end-of-summer festival with 70 other teams.

## **2010 Highlights**

- Starting programs in Watertown and Elmira.
- TOPSoccer Buffalo made a connection, through Sahlen’s Sports Park, with the W-league women’s professional soccer team (who went on to become champions!). Their

coaching staff ran one of our kids' practices this spring and everyone had a great experience.

- Many thanks to Dean Foti, (NYSWest Technical Director), for bringing in a Paralympics soccer player to the Rochester TOPSoccer program to talk with the kids about his experiences at the national team level.

### **Future Goals**

We will continue to offer 6 to 8 week programs throughout the year in communities that have established TOPSoccer programs.

All programs will continue to try to increase their volunteer base through the local high schools, colleges and club teams. These dedicated volunteers, as 'soccer buddies', can earn volunteer credit hours for school if they have this requirement. I believe our volunteer base is filled with outstanding young adults that make our programs such a success, but we are always looking for more volunteers who want to help out our young soccer players.

We will continue to offer 1-day TOPSoccer jamborees as a way to introduce TOPSoccer to any club or community.

The time has come – we need to train more coaches and coordinators to run TOPSoccer programs throughout our NYSWest communities. We want to offer coaching clinics to clubs so programs can benefit from being run by qualified and knowledgeable leaders.

I think looking into the Syracuse, Binghamton and Cortland markets should be a goal for NYSWest in trying to connect with the local clubs, colleges and universities for volunteers and leadership. The hiring of a "professional staff person for TOPSoccer" as was mentioned in October would greatly facilitate the expansion, coordination, and consistent quality of our programs throughout the many communities and vast area that NYSWest governs.

Respectfully,  
Scot C. Boniface  
NYSWest TOPSoccer Coordinator