

Report to the NY West AGM, November 17, 2007

By Glen Buckley, NYSW Director of Coaching

This has truly been a remarkable year, both for myself personally and for the NYW organization.

On a personal note, in March of this year I became a full-fledged US Citizen. I, along with 100 others, was sworn in, in Rochester.

Other personal news is that I have agreed to a new contract with NYSW to serve until 2012 as the State Director of Coaching. I have been proud to serve you these past eight years and look forward to doing so for at least another five. The lifespan of a State Director of Coaching across the country has traditionally been two to three years. Sadly many State Associations do not treat the role or position with the respect it deserves. Thankfully that trend is changing. I will be forever indebted to the officers of NYSW for giving me the opportunity to serve you. I have enjoyed the role and look forward to the next five years with the same if not more passion and drive for the task ahead as I had on arriving here in 1999. I would like to thank the board of NYSW for the support and faith they have put in me to serve you and the coaches and players of this great Soccer state that I am proud to call my home. I promise to be available, courteous and candid at all times. You can also rest assured that even though it may not seem like it at the time, every decision I make will be made with the best interest of the children and ultimately the game of Soccer as my primary concern. Thanks again for allowing me to represent and serve you!

I hope that we can continue the player development initiatives that I have asked you to support these past eight years. We have made great strides in the small sided game area. It is my hope that the final phase of small sided games [8v8 or 9v9] for the U12 age group will be completed across the state in the early part of this 5 year term of my new contract. I would also like to see us progress in four other areas.

1. The first of which is the number of tournaments that our state hosts and the number in which our players participate. Per capita we host as many tournaments in a shorter period of time as any other state in the nation. In the interest of player development I would like to see that number reduced.

2. Second, I would like to see clubs/organizations explore the possibility of employing full time Directors of Coaching. The role of Club Director of Coaching is now a bone fide profession in the United States. We have sadly fallen behind many other states in this area that is critical to player development. A few clubs have succeeded in this area during my tenure. However, compared to other states with the same size clubs and similar number of players, we are way behind. It is not uncommon for a state with 250 or so organizations [We have 260 organizations in NYSW] to have 20, 30 of those organizations employ full time directors of coaching. We currently have 1 full time and a few part time.

3. I would like to see clubs implement mandatory coach education for anyone coaching within their organizations. We have a whole range of coach education courses available from 4/5 hour Youth Modules to 36 hour D licenses. Even coach clinics specifically tailored toward certain age groups can be designed for the individual organization. There really is no reason for clubs not to support this issue with regards to their club volunteers. And having a Club Director of Coaching would clearly help implement this.

4. Lastly, but by no means least, I would like leagues, clubs and coaches alike to work together to try to encourage a practice to game ratio of 3 to 4 practices to one game for all travel teams no matter what age or level. I can tell you that with league and tournament schedules the way they currently are, the practice to game ratio on average is 3 to 4 games to 1 practice! That is not preparing players for the game either technically or tactically, actually it is quite the opposite, we are setting the players up for failure. Also see note 2 above to help implement this.

The role of the state DOC is becoming very diverse. As the game expands I find myself being sought after to answer more and more questions in areas where I had not been involved in the past. Clubs, coaches, parents and players are hungry for information. As we improve our marketing tools and reach into the homes of our players and coaches the quest for knowledge is growing.

The new Associate Director of Coaching [ADOC] program launched earlier this year is going to be a great resource for everyone.

My four assistants, Maureen Dracup, Chris Hershey, Jim Hewlet, and Mark Spacone are talented, dedicated individuals who are available to all of you as and when you need them. We are already working with many clubs across the state, but we want to hear from YOU! There is no limit to what we can offer you. However, that takes a call or email from you. I encourage you to contact the ADOC in your area. Be it individual team training, coach education courses, workshops or clinics.....we will design a program that fits your requirements. No one will be refused and no task will be too large or too small. We can help in trying to help you build a program to meet some of the goals I have set for the state listed above.

We will take a new direction this year in the content of the training sessions for ODP Players. We have always said that ODP stands for "Opportunities to Develop Players". With that in mind we are extending the thought to "giving the game back to the players". Basically we are going to set up our indoor training sessions based on the Ajax and Manchester United 4v4 Academy system. Over the years we have focused on technical and tactical themes throughout the winter portion of our season. This year we will play small sided games in various 4v4 environments. The games will be on small, tight fields, will be played with Gk's, to end lines, to small and large goals with players playing for periods of time before moving to the next 4v4 environment. It will be highly competitive and hard work. We are eliminating the classroom portion of the day. Instead we will use that time to have open discussions with the players on self training, and solicit feedback on the next period of training for that day. We will hold mini competitions where players will play with and against different members of the pool. There will be very little coaching by our staff. More observation and coaching the individual during the flow of the game or at natural stoppages is the new teaching methodology being used by coaches across the world. The overall theme is "Give the Game Back to the Kids". Hey it seems to be working for Manchester United and Ajax, so what do we have to lose? Only time will tell. I suspect it will probably take us two or three years or so before we see an improvement in the technical execution of the players along with their decision making abilities. More details will follow in other publications and on the ODP pages of the NY West website.

As always I am more than happy to hear from any of you about any subject as long as it has Soccer involved somewhere. As you know I am a "Soccerholic" and enjoy nothing more than talking about the world's greatest game for 3 or 4 hours.....