

## **AGM Report November 2009**

### **Coach Education and Player Development**

#### **Glen Buckley, State Director of Coaching**

The 2008/2009 year has been challenging in many ways for the department. Our business like many has been fighting the economic climate and the difficulties of this period.

Understandably people are being careful with their choices of where to spend what little expendable income they may have. Consequently our enrollment was slightly down. We still completed many courses across the state and as the year came to an end we began to see an upturn in attendance at workshops and the request for courses began to increase. The 2009-2010 season has begun very briskly with over 150 coaches attending education courses in September alone.

Many clubs/organizations made contact through their ADOC or me to discuss various ways in which we could get involved. The services the State Association can provide are slowly beginning to be noticed by the membership. The arrival of Amy Gush in the state office has increased our visibility in your inbox due to her attention to marketing our products and events.

Many organizations have and are now requiring all their coaches to be educated and carry a coaching certification or License. If for no other reason club board members should lessen the liability issues that could arise by having coaches in charge of teams without a certification. It is hard I know for organizations to make that stand for fear of not having enough coaches. All I can tell you is clubs who have done it have not seen much dissent or waves of players leaving their organizations. The odd one yes, however I urge all of you to take this stand then there will be the same standards wherever they run to. At the end of the day having someone in charge of training and games that has been given a course in organization and age appropriate activities based on the characteristics and capabilities of the age group they work with can only be good for player development.

The Youth Module courses we offer are a 4 hour course that does just that. It is designed for the new coach of player's age 5 through 10.

In addition the E , D , C ,B or A license coach can attend and will further educate themselves in areas none of those licenses cover and so add to their knowledge.

The intermediate course we offer is a state certification that is geared for the coach that finds they are having to play games in organized leagues for the under 8 through under 10 age player. That is a large percentage of the coaches out there.

The intermediate course was written and produced for that reason. It is a 6/7 hour course that can be done on one weekend day or two weekday evenings. The time commitment is much less for the busy parent coach. The Buffalo western NY league the last couple of years have been pro active in this area. Finding and offering E and Intermediate courses for their member club coaches. Kudos to them. Syracuse CNYJSL also tried.

**I ask all leagues to help your members and in the long run yourselves by contacting us to host a league sponsored course.**

Our independent state leagues offer U8 through U10 travel soccer. This is driven by parents who claim the “recreational” play in their organization or district is not challenging their child. That may be true in some cases. Would it not be beneficial for clubs to offer help to the recreational programs within their towns. Indeed start their own in house program and set up a small sided environment for 8 to 10 year olds. **We have in the past helped create such environments for some clubs and are ready to help you.** Those that have gone this route have seen success. No teams, just groups of players with trained facilitators to oversee their development. The push from parents to take their “Mia Hamm” to be challenged by travel would decrease and players could be properly prepared for travel soccer to begin at U11 in an 8v8 or 9v9 environment.

At the league meetings the ADOC’s and I attend we constantly hear of the difficulties in simply creating an environment for the games to take place. Not enough fields, not enough referees, coach and parent abuse of referees and toward each other.....thank goodness we do not play for points and standings in those young age groups or we would probably have world war three out there!

I saw way too many games that were blow outs taking place this summer. It’s a numbers game; the old saying of quality not quantity should perhaps be revisited here. The leagues are in an impossible position of trying to create a challenging level of play for all. Frankly that is an impossible task. We have learned from studies by experts in cognitive, physical, and psychological development what is appropriate for young athletes at this age. But have we really learned or listened as we continue to place children in inappropriate environments? There are not enough children ready for this challenge, some yes, but they are in the minority.....problem is everyone thinks they have a child who is ready.

I do have some thoughts and perhaps some suggestions to help the current U8 through U10 environment that I would be more than happy to discuss with any interested clubs, leagues or other organizations.

## **Basically it would be to provide state wide “District Development Centers”**

Just some of the benefits in this program would be

*1 Less Travel*

*2 No teams*

*3 Freedom of movement of players into groups of like ability*

*4 Stress free*

*5 Practice to game ratios increased*

*A practice to game ratio of 3 to 4 practices to 1 game could easily be formulated which is the major ingredient in player development.*

*6 Less coaches needed, no referees [unless for training purposes] no travel across the district, less tournament play. All in all a much more manageable environment than that in which our league administrators, referee leaders and coaches currently find themselves in.*

*7. Exposure to qualified coaches whose focus is development and not on winning games.*

**If the league and club presidents would like to discuss further I am a phone call away to make a meeting happen. Other State Associations offer district training centers independent of the leagues and clubs. I believe that is crazy. It should be a joint venture if we all want to see a quality environment for the growth not only of the players but the game in our state.**

The launch of our “**Coach Development Initiative**” has been a little while in arriving but the details of which you should now all be aware of. Please consider sponsoring a young person to take part in this project it can only be a positive investment in the future of your club and the game. The details of the program are available at today’s meeting. This year’s program is about to begin, but please keep in mind the program for next year and begin to identify young individuals that you think would fit the required criteria.

Lastly, I would like to make a final request to all clubs to work with your neighboring organization to host a coach education course. Many clubs do not have enough to fill a course from your ranks. Working together with a neighboring organization will make the task a little easier. Please contact your respective ADOC or myself to discuss your education needs.

As always it is my honor and pleasure to serve you as the State Director of Coaching. If there is anything I can do to help you I am a phone call or email away to discuss the content of this document or any other subject.

Good luck

Glen Buckley

State DOC