



## **MEMORANDUM**

**Date:** April 24, 2007

**TO:** US Youth Soccer Board of Directors *via email*

**FROM:** Jim Cosgrove, Executive Director

**SUBJECT:** USSF Player Development Task Force

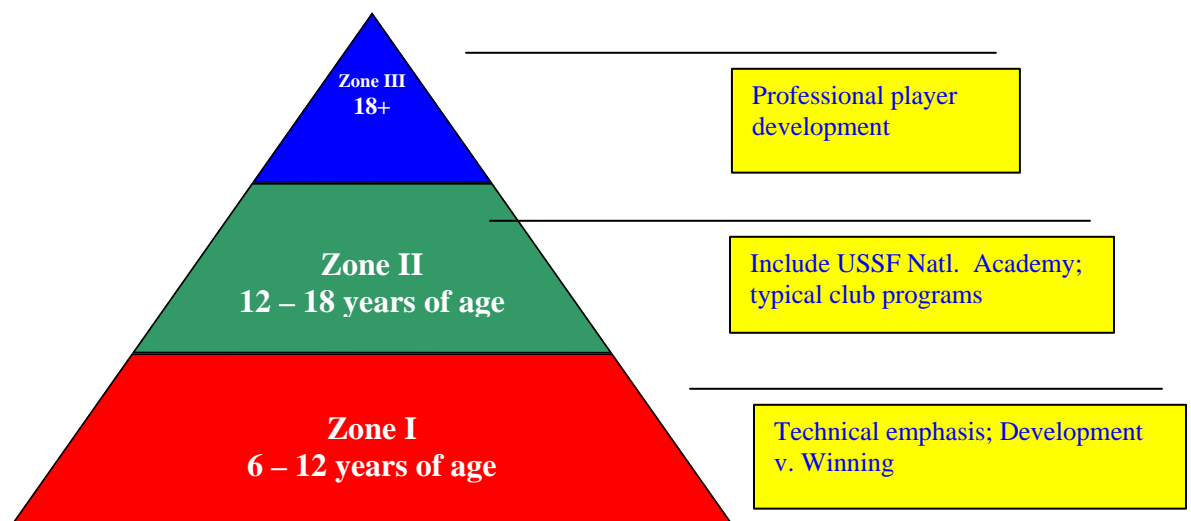
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Last year, President Sunil Gulati appointed a USSF Player Development Task Force. The Task Force is composed of the following: Kevin Payne, Chair; and Members Jerome de Bontin, Dr. Bob Contiguglia, Ivan Gazidis, Tommy Kain, Francisco Marcos, Tab Ramos, Bob Jenkins, Paul Caligiuri, Dan Flynn, Jay Berhalter, and ex-officio members Sunil Gulati, Bob Bradley, Thomas Rongen, and John Hackworth. Other organizations were invited to have representation. Representatives include Mike Sweeney and Derek Armstrong from US Club Soccer, Matt Wiebe from Super Y, Alfonso Modelo, Piotr Nowak, John Ellinger, Marco Etcheverry, Nelson Rodriguez, Jim Moorhouse, Mike Gressle, and Tom King. Several months ago, Kevin Payne invited President Larry Monaco to attend the Task Force meetings or send a US Youth Soccer representative. Larry designated me to be the US Youth Soccer representative.

The Task Force has the following objective:

The objective of the Player Development Task Force is to identify opportunities to improve player development in the United States at all levels. The Task Force will provide recommendations to the U.S. Soccer Board of Directors and the National Council for investments in player development and formed Study Groups to focus on key areas. The Study Groups are the Country Study Group which will seek to gain insight and knowledge on player development in other countries and clubs; the Outreach Study Group which will seek to identify strategies to reach players outside of the traditional youth system in the Hispanic and African American communities; and the Marketing/Education Study Group which will seek to communicate the educational message to a broader audience. The Task Force's primary concern is specifically with male player development. It has held 2 meetings that US Youth Soccer has been invited to attend. Following is a summary of what happened at those meetings.

- I. First Meeting: Future Concepts/Vision
  - a. Change is necessary to create success at the international level, i.e., Men’s World Cup
  - b. Problem: our players simply are not good enough in all elements of the game at this level and specifically technically
  - c. How to address: significant large scale change with support from all corners
  - d. Objective is to win the World Cup
  - e. Necessary to provide concepts to the USSF Board with a vision for future direction
  - f. Determination was made that players develop in the zones below and each zone has it specific implications



- II. Second Meeting: US Soccer National Academy Program- Zone II
  - a. A majority of the time spent at the second meeting was in discussing this program
  - b. It would be an extension of the men’s national team program into the club structure
  - c. 60 – 80 current clubs would be invited to join with teams in the 15 and 16 male age groups initially; 4,800 players potentially will participate
  - d. Players would spend a majority of soccer time in training with their respective club that would meet to be determined requirements to be a part of the Academy. This team or teams would remain a part of the club.
  - e. USSF would provide a curriculum to the Academy clubs
  - f. Teams would be formatted in 30 player groups in 15 and 16 year old age groups, but that would not preclude players from “playing up”
  - g. Teams would play approximately 30 games per year with rosters made of 18 players (discussion occurred regarding the remaining players and the intent may be to create two teams, A & B)

- h. Most games would occur locally with some “Nike Friendly” type of competitions created; not necessarily a nation-wide league
  - i. There would be no championships or “league” winners
  - j. Emphasis on development not winning
  - k. No absolute prohibition on participation in other activities, but it would not be encouraged as philosophically appropriate
  - l. No fees and no consideration of providing resources to the clubs yet...
  - m. The Nike Premier clubs were invited to participate in a round table discussion with USSF and Nike regarding this and the response was reported to be positive
- III. Study Groups. The Task Force has established the following study groups:
- a. Country Study Group
    - i. Gain insight and knowledge by gathering detailed information from specific countries
    - ii. Review of other Federation activities
    - iii. Review of foreign club activities
  - b. Outreach Study Group
    - i. Identify strategies to increase ability to reach outside the traditional youth soccer system
    - ii. Hispanic market analysis
    - iii. Inner city market analysis
  - c. Marketing/Education Study Group
    - i. Identify strategies to increase ability to communicate the educational benefits of this process of player development to a broader audience
    - ii. This will also include efforts to create new Federation policies to manage developmental environments, i.e. small-sided games, coaching education, and other standards
- IV. My take
- a. Philosophically, the desire to create better environments for all players is an appropriate direction
  - b. There remain numerous barriers to execution
    - i. Social and cultural elements that emphasize continuing education
    - ii. Economics of the club infrastructure
    - iii. Marketing of the clubs themselves
    - iv. “Pay to play” system that we currently have where players and their families provide the resources
    - v. Return on soccer investment
    - vi. Metrics of success
    - vii. Determination of the club participants and the potential subsequent fracturing of that infrastructure
    - viii. Continued choices in the soccer marketplace (If this gets implemented, it does not mean that other programs just stop)

- ix. The Title IX issue of fairness as this is targeted at just the male side
  - x. Even if you select the “best” clubs, what about elite players not in those clubs or on those teams who may be as good, if not better, than many of the players on those club teams?
  - xi. What is the status, if at all, of ODP?
- c. We should use the opportunity to “level the playing” field with other youth members through the policy process because in most cases the Best Practices document is not being followed by other Organizational Members
- d. US Youth Soccer must maintain and enhance the quality of our programming to ensure viable options in the marketplace; this is necessary for our members as well