

Youth Soccer Special Report:
Making Sense of Soccer in the United States

GLOSSARY / DEFINITIONS

(Information compiled from the official web sites of the various organizations)

United States Soccer Federation: The USSF is the governing regulatory body for the sport in the United States and manages the country's National Team program. The USSF is made up of several member organizations such as USYS, AYSO, MLS, USL, WUSA, SYL, US Club Soccer, USASA, state associations, etc.

State versus Federal Rights: As with the U.S. government, the nation's soccer body is comprised of state and federal organizations which have differing laws and administrative procedures. The advent of national youth leagues has led to disagreement over whether the national or state bylaws should preside over these organizations with member clubs who are also members of state associations.

United States Youth Soccer (USYS): Approximately three million players between the ages of 5-19 are registered with the U.S. Youth Soccer Association, which maintains a network of 55 state associations. Programs are administered with the help of over 300,000 coaches and 500,000 volunteers. U.S. Youth Soccer offers both recreational and competitive programs. The recreational programs offer great opportunities for players primarily interested in fun, fitness and friendship. Small-sided games are encouraged for players under the age of 10. For more advanced players, U.S. Youth Soccer offers competitive or select leagues under local or state rules. In addition, U.S. Youth Soccer offers TOP Soccer (The Outreach Program for Soccer) for young athletes who are mentally or physically challenged and Soccer Start for young people living in economically disadvantaged areas. Every year the USYS also stages a National Youth Cup with eight different national titles up for grabs in boys and girls soccer for youth players from Under-16 through Under-19. The Under-19 Boys' James P. McGuire Cup is the most prestigious of the competition's trophies, dating back 62 years to 1935. First competed in 1980, the J. Ross Stewart Cup for Under-19 Girls is the oldest women's youth trophy.

American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO): Founded in 1964, the AYSO is a national association affiliated with U.S. Soccer and operates soccer programs with more than 650,000 children participating throughout the U.S. and Russia. AYSO operates programs so young people can learn to develop a positive self image, self confidence and other character traits through their interest and participation in the sport. AYSO's success has been based on the philosophies of "Everyone Plays" and "Balanced Teams," ideas originated more than 30 years ago by founder Hans F.E. Stierle. AYSO requires every player to play at least half of every game and that teams are balanced every year to assure fair play. Other AYSO tenets include open registration, positive coaching and good sportsmanship. AYSO is a volunteer-driven organization of more than 260,000 parents and friends who serve as coaches, referees and team administrators. A full-time staff of approximately 40 individuals administers AYSO from the organization's National Support Center in Hawthorne, California.

National Association: An amateur sports organization that has soccer teams competing in each of at least 26 states of the United States, with at least 1,000 players in each of 26 states of the United States and at least 200,000 players in the United States and is a member of the Youth or Adult Council. USYSA and AYSO are National Associations.

United States Olympic Committee: The USOC is the custodian of the U.S. Olympic Movement and is the moving force for the support of sports in the United States that are on the programs of the Olympic and/or Pan American Games. The USOC is recognized by the International Olympic Committee as the sole agency in the United States whose mission involves training, entering and underwriting the full expenses for the United States teams in the Olympic and Pan American Games. The USOC operates three separate training centers, the Colorado Springs Olympic Training Center located in Colorado Springs, Colo.; the Lake Placid Olympic Training Center located in Lake Placid, N.Y.; and the ARCO Olympic Training Center located in Chula Vista, Calif. Each complex includes state of the art training facilities, living quarters for elite athletes, sports medicine availability and athletes have access to an extensive sports science department at the Colorado Springs location. The USOC approves the U.S. trial sites for the Olympic and Pan American Games' team selections. Once an athlete has successfully qualified for the Olympic Games by virtue of their trials finish, the athlete must be accepted by the USOC before he or she can compete as part of the U.S. Team. The USOC also supports the bids of U.S. cities to host the winter or summer Olympic Games or Pan American Games. Cities are selected after a review of all the candidate locations and a voting procedure is completed. The USOC endorses one city per event as the U.S. bid city.

Olympic Development Program: Perhaps a common misconception, ODP is not an individual entity but is in fact a program licensed to individual organizations by the USOC through the governing body of U.S. Soccer. Programs already in existence can also be granted ODP status if they meet the criteria provided by USSF, making them official programs within the National Team identification and development system. The USOC holds all rights to the ODP designation and can assign or retract programs and licenses as deemed necessary. ODP is the identification system for the National Teams. The two avenues for ODP identification are through league play in the Super Y-League and through tryouts conducted by the various state associations.

U.S. Club Soccer: US Club Soccer is a non-profit organization committed exclusively to the support and development of competitive soccer clubs. It is founded on the belief that soccer clubs, which are in the business of elite player development, need an organization of their own to foster growth, address concerns, and sanction and provide programs with a minimum of rules and restrictions. US Club Soccer is a member (National Affiliate) of the United States Soccer Federation (USSF), and as such may register players, and sanction teams, local leagues, tournaments and programs.

State Soccer Associations: Each state, in general, has its own individual governing body for youth soccer. These organizations are independent of one another and, for the most part, are autonomous from the United States Youth Soccer Association, but must abide by the U.S. Soccer Federation's bylaws. Each state has variances in rules and regulations from the others.

Super Y-League: As the first building block in the USL pyramid, the Super Y-League, an Olympic Development Program (ODP) of the United States Soccer Federation and United States Olympic Committee, is the only North American youth soccer league for elite level players. The top one percent of youth soccer players from U14 to U17 will battle week in and week out across the North America's premier youth soccer in hopes to claim the league title. As the base of the USL system, the SYL is specifically designed for players that aspire to compete at the highest levels within the professional, National Team, or international ranks. The SYL contains youth development teams of many senior USL and Major League Soccer teams, and the top youth clubs throughout the weekend.

United States Amateur Soccer Association: The USASA is responsible for developing the sport for players over the age of 19. Within USASA, local clubs are affiliated with leagues, which, in turn, are affiliated with their state associations. A competitive-oriented organization, the USASA helps develop club and select teams on a national basis for both men and women. As part of that development, the USASA stages the annual Philips Electronics National Cup Finals, which features champions from each of the four U.S. Soccer regions (Regions I, II, III and IV) squaring off in 10 age brackets (men's and women's Under 20, Under-23, Over-30, Open and Amateur). The USASA, in association with the U.S. Soccer Federation, helps stage the annual Lamar Hunt U.S. Open Cup, the oldest annual tournament in the United States.

Other/National Affiliate: The USSF has several affiliation distinctions. Other Affiliates are amateur organizations that have soccer teams competing in less than 26 states of the United States but in more than three states of the United States and is not a member of either the Youth or Adult Council. National Affiliate applies to amateur organizations that have soccer teams competing in at least 26 states of the United States. As a National Affiliate member, the Super Y-League receives a seat on the Board of Directors for U.S. Soccer.