



# Recreational Player Pathways

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# Introduction

Where did you start your playing career?



# Introduction

“Virtually all players start at the recreational level.”



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# Why Children Play Soccer

- To have fun
- To be with their friends
- To make new friends
- To improve and learn
- To feel good
- To wear the stuff

# Why Children Quit Soccer

- Criticism and yelling
- No playing time
- Over-Emphasis on winning
- Poor communication
- Fear of making mistakes
- Boredom/not learning

# US Youth Soccer Player Participation Objectives

- Fun! It is critical that players involved in youth soccer enjoy the game in which they are playing.
- Development: A necessary element to support fun, without it training and games get stale because there is no improvement.

# Recreational Soccer

## Definition of Recreational:

- Activity that refreshes and recreates; activity that renews your health and spirits



# Highlights of Recreational Soccer

- The Recreational player is of any age and is interested in playing in a less committed environment.
- Seasons are typically shorter, tournaments are fewer, traveling is less, and coaches are volunteer-based.

# Highlights of Recreational Soccer

- Recreational soccer is open to all players and is primarily devoted to the enjoyment and development of soccer players.
- No tryouts are required to join a team.

# Highlights of Recreational Soccer

The Recreational level of play is an ideal and vibrant entry point for the player who wants to be introduced to the game, play with friends, and participate on a team.



# Highlights of Recreational Soccer

- Recreational soccer is purely for the enjoyment of the sport, and not as much focus is placed on advanced technical and tactical instruction or wins.
- Still a need for qualified coaches



# Characteristics of Recreational Play

- Two year age groups are typical
- Wide range between the most skilled player and the least skilled player
- Wider age gaps create greater differences in physical, mental and social development

# Characteristics of Recreational Play

- Enthusiasm and dedication also varies widely
- Outlet for energy and enthusiasm, for others it is an imposed activity
- Random selection process means, player skills are all across the spectrum

# Characteristics of Recreational Play

- Players may be as much as three grades apart in school
- Participation stretches from always there to when it is convenient.
- Parents often sign a player up for the next season without the child being involved in the process.

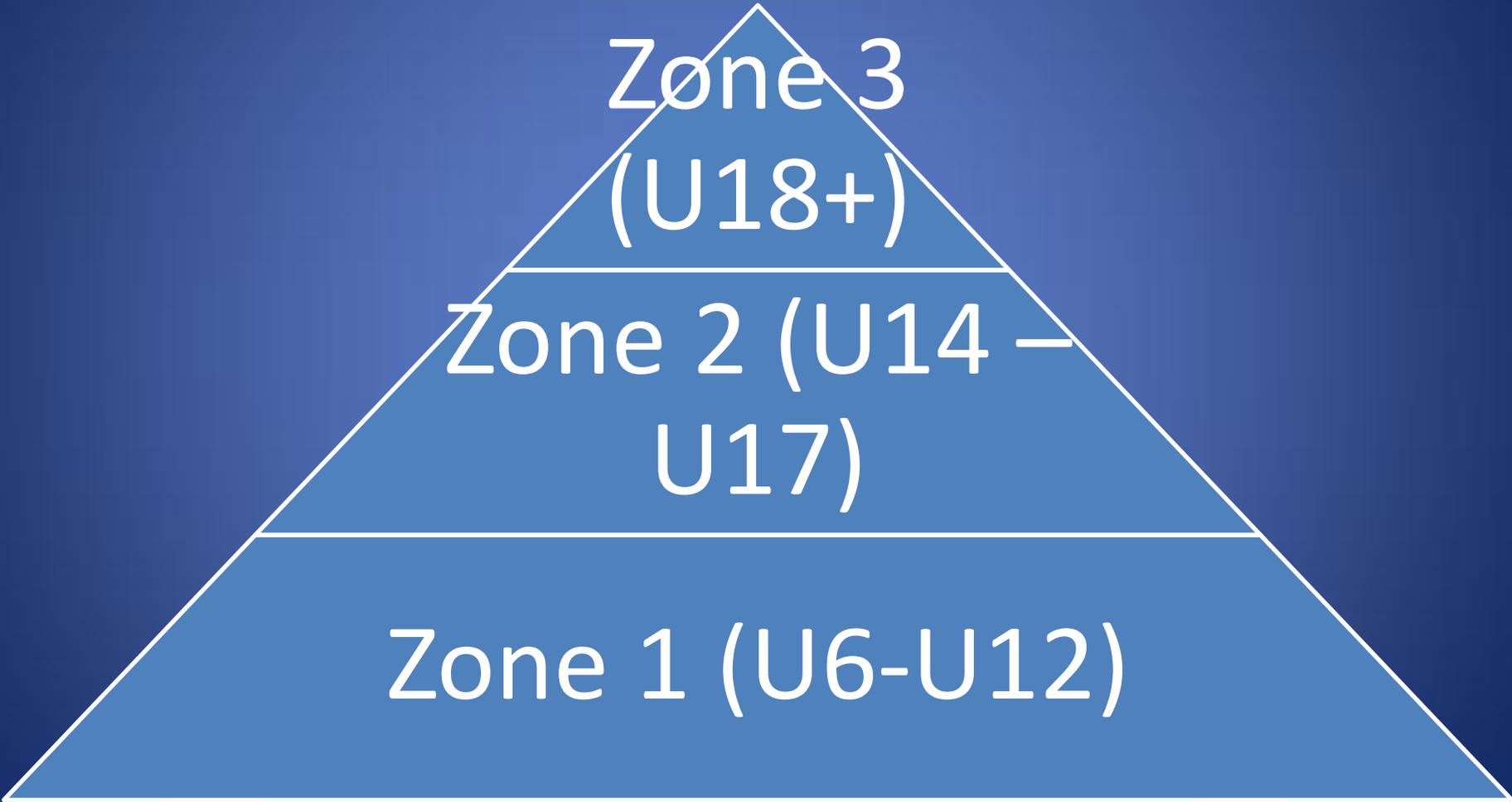
# The Pleasure and Participation Model

- Active participation is emphasized
- Participation is reason for involvement in sport
- The participant and opponent are important
- The opponent is seen as valued
- The participant's control of his or her body and objects in the environment provide satisfaction

# The Pleasure and Participation Model

- Domination and victory are not requisites of satisfaction
- Decisions are shared
- Cooperation is desired and expected
- Power is shared
- There is give and take between coaches and athletes

# Where Does Recreational Soccer Fit?



Zone 3  
(U18+)

Zone 2 (U14 –  
U17)

Zone 1 (U6-U12)

# Where Does Recreational Soccer Fit?

- The process of playing the game, rather than the score.
- Focus is on players' improvement of ball skills, understanding of the rules of the game, playing fairly and learning general game principles.

# Facts and Figures

- Approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the U. S. Youth Soccer membership plays “recreational soccer”

# Recreational Program Examples

- Church Leagues
- City Leagues
- Club Based Programs

# Example Pathways

- Catholic Youth Soccer League (CYSL) – Omaha, Nebraska
  - Based around each parish in the Omaha area
  - U4 up through U14 teams
  - In-house and intra-parish competition

# Example Pathways

- Club-based programs
- Professional clubs that offer both recreational and competitive soccer programs
- Recreational program is the typical and traditional entry into the club

# Example Pathways

- City League/Program
- YMCA
- Players sign up and are assigned teams through a community or area program

# Nationwide Competitions

- Kohl's American Cup
- US Youth President's Cup

# American Cup

- The Kohl's US Youth Soccer American Cup provides recreational youth soccer players an opportunity to experience a consistent and high quality statewide tournament in a fun, family-like atmosphere. It fosters stimulation and excitement about soccer in an effort to increase the recreational players interest in and love for the game.



# American Cup



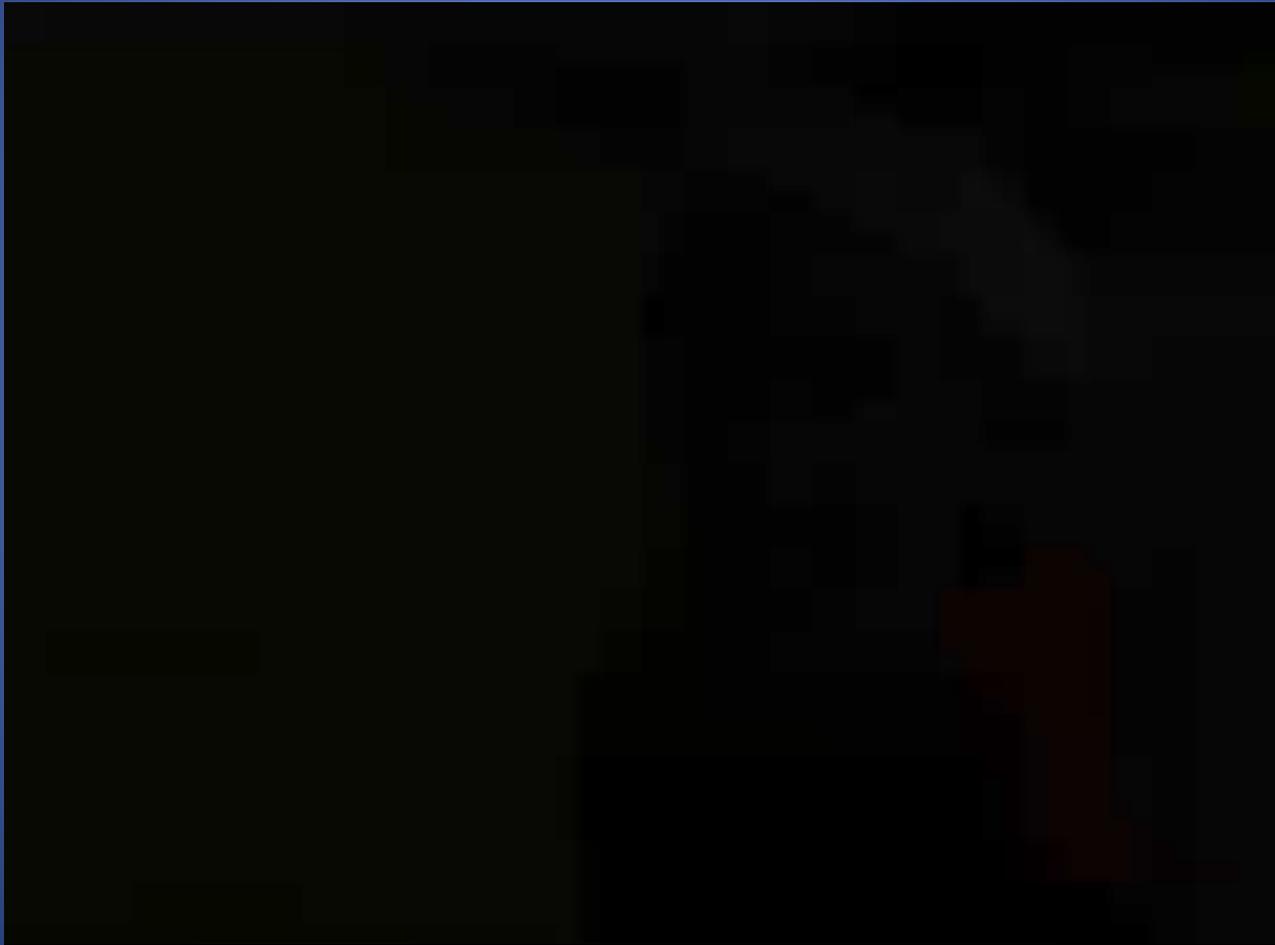
- The Kohl's American Cup provides recreational players with the opportunity to participate in an original event outside of their normal league play.
- The American Cup gives State Associations another benefit to bring even more service to current members and a tool to use in increasing membership enrollment.

# American Cup

- Nationwide, more than 65 Kohl's American Cup events are scheduled annually
- Provides all participants with the opportunity to experience a consistent and high-quality tournament in a fun, festival-like atmosphere.



# Kohl's American Cup Highlights



# Presidents Cup

- The US Youth Soccer Presidents Cup is designed for those teams seeking additional challenges to play against teams of similar abilities for a national title.



# Presidents Cup

- US Youth Soccer Regional Presidents Cup events will determine the regional qualifiers that will compete in the US Youth National Presidents Cup.
- Regional winners in the Under-14 through Under-17 groups, both boys and girls, will vie for the national title.



# Presidents Cup

- The cup provides a progressive, competitive experience to teams that might not otherwise get the opportunity to participate in a series of unique experiences
- Highlights competition, camaraderie and community from the state to regional to national levels of US Youth Soccer.

# Presidents Cup Highlights



# Options for the Recreational Coach

- US Youth National Youth License
- USSF “E” & “D” Licenses
- State Association hosted youth modules and special topics courses

# Conclusion

Recreational soccer is arguably the most important aspect of soccer we have in this country.

Recreational soccer programs and competitions need to be celebrated, encouraged, and developed if we are to grow soccer into a main stream part of our culture

# References

- Snow, S. (2012). US Youth Soccer Director of Coach and Player Development Manual – Recreational Soccer. Retrieved November 28, 2012 from [http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/assets/1/3/US\\_Youth\\_Soccer\\_Player\\_Development\\_Model.pdf](http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/assets/1/3/US_Youth_Soccer_Player_Development_Model.pdf)

# References

- Washington Youth Soccer Association, “About Recreational.” Retrieved November, 28, 2012 from:  
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# Questions, Comments, Concerns

