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**THE GIRLS ACADEMY STRIKE A STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP WITH MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER AND A PARTNERSHIP WITH US YOUTH SOCCER**

THE GA SERVES AS US YOUTH SOCCER’S PREMIER GIRLS PLATFORM IN A PARTNERSHIP IN CONJUNCTION WITH MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER

(October 22, 2020). The Girls Academy (GA) has announced both a new strategic relationship with Major League Soccer (MLS) and a partnership with US Youth Soccer (USYS).

MLS and the GA have entered a strategic relationship to further connect and collaborate on the youth soccer development space. As such, MLS Vice President and Technical Director of Player Development, Fred Lipka, will hold a position on the GA’s Technical Advisory Committee, led by GA Commissioner, Lesle Gallimore, and help guide the evolution and transformation of soccer development in the U.S. Overall, four individuals associated with MLS NEXT will serve on the Technical Advisory Committee, including Lipka, one MLS Academy Director, the Youth Director of one of MLS NEXT’s elite member clubs, and another MLS NEXT-focused staff member. The other three joint committee members will be determined in the near term.

This collaboration will deliver a true pyramid for female youth players in the US, with the GA serving as the USYS premier girls platform in conjunction with MLS (USYS Partner).

“MLS is committed to supporting girls soccer and the Girls Academy through a mutual sharing of our expertise and vision. Girls soccer is a crucial piece of growing the game in North America and something MLS is eager to support,” said Lipka. “We believe in this project which is player centric, standards driven and where the coaches and educators are the pillars to create the right teaching and learning environment. We also share common values with the GA leadership group and its new Commissioner Lesle Gallimore, and we’re excited at the prospect of creating positive synergies between boys and girls youth soccer in the U.S.”

“The strategic relationship with Major League Soccer and our partnership with USYS is one that has been built on hours upon hours of discussions as they relate to commonality of purpose and vision for the betterment of girls elite soccer in the United States,” said Lesle Gallimore, GA commissioner. “Our player-centric discussions as they relate to technical standards, education, and coach development have been inspiring. The Girls Academy, in very short order, has shown the power of passion and purpose. It became apparent throughout that we are valued both by the MLS and USYS for our knowledge, integrity, and vision for what we can do collectively to advance the game for girls and women in the United States.”

MLS and the GA are collaborating to reimagine the way players learn and grow while working in concert on the girls and boys side of the youth game. Areas of emphasis in the relationship will include:

- Establishing academy standards throughout coaching, individual player development and staffing
- Competition including opportunities at showcase events
- Talent identification in partnership with USYS
- Enhanced coaching education opportunities

Further adding to the robust nature of the relationship is GA and MLS partner, USYS.

“We are very excited about the potential of this partnership which will set a precedent for the GA now and into the future. It illustrates an investment into youth female soccer in the US by connecting like-minded organizations that are truly vested into the every day environment of not only the club; but most importantly, the player,” said Wes Schevers, Girls Academy President. “Standards, connectivity and collaboration are paramount and will serve as the bridge between the GA, USYS and MLS. The foundation for a comprehensive, game-changing platform has been built with a holistic approach centered around its players.”

Guided by forward-thinking leaders, USYS is the ‘home’ of the GA for league sanctioning and player registration. The GA will operate in an autonomous manner as an affiliate member at the top of the USYS youth development pyramid. The partnership provides USYS with their first-ever top-level national girls’ club platform and programming in the country.

“We believe that soccer has the power to strengthen and unite communities”, said Skip Gilbert, USYS CEO, “This belief drives our focus and programming to support pathways for all players. We believe that the GA, through their outstanding leadership, including Lesle Gallimore, in partnership with USYS will allow us to construct new programming and pathways for competitive girls players. This partnership can unite communities from every state to help identify the best players our country has to offer. Together, we can help girls find the right pathway for themselves both on and off the field of play.”

The GA retains all governance and decision-making control over the league and has access to the best soccer minds in MLS and USYS to allow for solidified structuring of the GA to pave the way for long-term success and innovation for the GA players and clubs alike.

The GA is the *only* all-girls national youth soccer platform in the United States. The GA is also the only youth girls soccer league that actively engages the voice of the GA players and clubs to take true ownership in the league. The season kicked off in August with showcase and Talent ID events scheduled later this season. The GA will be accepting applications for the 2021-2022 season soon. For more information visit [www.GirlsAcademyLeague.com](http://www.GirlsAcademyLeague.com) or email [media@girlsacademyleague.com](mailto:media@girlsacademyleague.com).

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**About the Girls Academy (GA):** The GA is the leading youth development platform for the best female soccer players in the United States, which includes 7 conferences, 69 clubs, and over 7,500 players across the nation. The GA is the national youth soccer platform that actively engages the voice of the players and clubs to take real ownership in the GA. This collaborative philosophy creates a culture guided by a shared set of core values, which produces an unparalleled experience uniquely designed in the best interest of the players. The GA embraces the desire of club members and GA players alike to maintain an unrivaled standard of excellence in coaching, competition, and regional and national showcase events throughout the year. The GA is committed to cultivating an environment that empowers each player to reach their best potential as an exceptional athlete and human being by celebrating the player's journey with a lifelong love of the game through competition, showcases, and camaraderie.

**About Major League Soccer (MLS):**

Headquartered in New York City, Major League Soccer – celebrating its 25th Season in 2020 – features 26 clubs throughout the United States and Canada, in addition to future expansion teams in Austin, St. Louis, Sacramento, and Charlotte. For more information about MLS, visit [www.MLSsoccer.com](http://www.MLSsoccer.com).

**About the United States Youth Soccer Association (US Youth Soccer):**

US Youth Soccer, the largest youth sport organization in the country, is on a mission to provide world-class support, resources and leadership, helping every member fulfill their goals, on and off the field of play. US Youth Soccer registers nearly 3 million players annually. Through its programming, resources and leadership, US Youth Soccer is advancing the game for its 55 Member State Associations, 10,000 clubs and leagues and nearly 1 million administrators, coaches and volunteers. US Youth Soccer connects families and communities to the power of sports and its shared love of soccer. US Youth Soccer provides a path for every player, offering programs that provide a fun, safe and healthy environment for players at every level of the game. We Are Youth Soccer. For more information, visit [www.usyouthsoccer.org](http://www.usyouthsoccer.org).

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