

**SALT LAKE CITY, Utah (February 16, 2005)** - For more than 40 years, Dr. Thomas Fleck has fostered the physical, mental and emotional growth and development of America's youth through the sport of soccer at all levels of age and competition, the mission of US Youth Soccer. Dr. Fleck was recognized for his service tonight as the inaugural recipient of the US Youth Soccer Excellence in Youth Coaching Education Award at the US Youth Soccer State Directors of Coaching Annual Meeting held in conjunction with the US Youth Soccer adidas® Workshop and Coaches Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The Excellence in Youth Coaching Education Award was designed to honor a lifetime of dedication where one has with integrity, honor, humor and humility made extensive and far reaching contributions to the process by which youth soccer coaches are educated in America. The award marks yet another achievement in the life of the 67-year-old Philadelphia native.

"Dr. Fleck embodies a living legend to future generations of educators on and off the field of play," said David Messersmith, president of US Youth Soccer. "His footsteps have permanently marked the landscape of youth soccer coaching in America and we hope this award continues his legacy to those who will further the efforts laid by Dr. Fleck."

The former General Secretary of US Youth Soccer, Dr. Fleck is one of the original National Staff Coaches with U.S. Soccer and served as an instructor for U.S. Soccer for 30 years. Recognized as the leading authority on youth soccer development and education, Dr. Fleck was the primary author of the National Youth License as well as the US Youth Soccer Assistant Coach Series and Parent Coach Primer used by coaches across the nation and specifically in the various State Association Coaching courses.

"Dr. Fleck's impact on our sport is profound," said Sam Snow, director of coaching education of US Youth Soccer. "Tom has educated and influenced generations of American soccer coaches and is a pioneer in the growth of our sport during the 'soccer boom' of the 70's and 80's."

A former Director of Coaching and Player Development for the Idaho Youth Soccer Association, Dr. Fleck, prior to his current position, was the Director of Coaching for the Florida Youth Soccer Association for 13 years.

One of the most widely recognized members of the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA), Dr. Fleck was presented the 2004 Honor Award for a lifetime of service from the NSCAA earlier this year, the association's most esteemed award. President of the NSCAA for two years (1984-82), Fleck was instrumental in the establishment of the NSCAA Academies, the association's soccer coaching education division. He served as a member of its teaching staff for more than a quarter of a century. He also represented the U.S. Soccer Federation as the technical advisor for the 1980 World Youth Championship in Tunisia, as well as the 1994 World Cup hosted by the United States.

Inducted into the Eastern Pennsylvania Soccer Hall of Fame in 1996, Fleck also participated in the torch relay for the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympic Games.