Taking Your TOPSoccer Programs To The Next Level

Thursday, January 14, 4:15 Central

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Session Goals:

• Help start-up or stagnant programs grow and become more sustainable
• Proven strategies from people who have seen it, done it
• Addressing four key areas/elements of TOPSoccer development:
  • Coaching
  • Buddies
  • Activities
  • Management
Coaching Development – Shawn

Why this is important:
• Improves confidence on the field
• Keeps your energy “fresh”
• Keeps you from becoming stagnant
• Expands your reach and your networks
Coaching Exchanges

• Agree to switch with another coach at another program
  • Healthy way to socialize
  • Learn new techniques

• Ask a club coach to assist and cultivate
  • Great recruitment tool
  • Helps spread awareness of your program
  • Get buy in for the help in the future
Online Education

• Various organizations provide online trainings and discussions
• Every coaching topic is relevant
• Be active on the chat and ask questions
• Follow up with presenters to build your network
Utilizing Technology

- Create content for social media
- Offer Zoom training for players
- Phone video homework/challenges for players
Advocacy Within State Association

• Present at AGMs and other coaching education offerings
• Invite your State Association Board members, staff, DOC/TD, and ODP coaches to attend a session. Get them out there!
• Do some work with the State Chair
• Write an article for their communications
Joining Coaching Groups

- United Soccer Coaches
- Disabilities Allies Council
- US Soccer Foundation
- Network with AYSO coaches
- Utilize Twitter & LinkedIn
Cycle Guest Coaches (And Players) From Competitive Teams From Other Clubs

• Learn from their ‘best drills’
• Have their players participate and model activities and help ‘coach’
• Look for clubs that have the potential to host a future program
Buddy Development – Dave

Why this is important:

They are the lifeblood of successful programs!
Buddy Education

• In addition to the pre-season training session
• Pick a weekly topic, disability
• Let them know schedule in advance
• Provide written materials during the pre-session time, and review
• Link to certain players who participate in the program to make it real for them
• Follow-up with email afterwards with pdf of materials in case they want to share
Buddy Recognition

- Pizza party
- Secret Santa event
- Roller rink event
- College soccer game with tailgate party
- High School Senior day (ask them to bring their parents)
Develop A Scholarship Program

• Not necessarily expensive
• Formal application process
• Ask for donations, build into budget
• Example:
  • Soccer Association of Boca Raton
  • TOPSoccer partnered with George Snow Foundation - $7,500
Assign Certain Buddies For Select Activities

• Do you have ‘same’ Buddies come early and stay late
• Don’t take advantage of them!
• Assign Buddies on a schedule
• Offers a more equitable approach to doing the work
Establish Core Service Clubs As Perennial Program Volunteers

• Identify Key Club, National Honor Society, IB, or other clubs
• Commit to TOPSoccer as a core student initiatives every year
• Contact next year’s officers before this year ends
• Attend meetings live or via Zoom
Activity Development - Shawn

Why this is important:

- Create new opportunities for our players
- Expand your program options
- Improve upon what you already have in place
- Engage with other programs – more socialization
Adding More Competition

• Game days with other programs
  • Games for those who want to play
  • Skills stations

• Unified format
  • Increases the tempo and competition levels

• Pool players from various teams
Adding Specialized Equipment

- Parachutes
- Hurdles
- Ladders
- Balance beams
- Tunnels
- Time Clocks
Make Your Own Equipment

- Plastic landscape containers
- Used tire ‘rims’
- Ladders (PVC pipe and rope)
- Find a “handyperson” in your parent group to help
- Options are endless
Festivals

• Designate a date each season to meet with other programs
• Split up groups of like ability for games
• Have some fun skills competitions – awards for different levels
• Party atmosphere
League Games

- If you have enough players, establish teams in a league format separate from your typical sessions
Disability Specific Teams

• Form additional teams separate from TOPSoccer training
• Special Olympics
• Paralympic teams
• Pool players from various programs if necessary
Mastery Levels

• Create skill stations and time trials to challenge different levels of players
• Patches/Ribbons for completing a set of skills
• Promote achievements on social media
Invite Guest Speakers To Present Topics To Parents

• OT, PT, SLP
• Local colleges, universities, and social service agencies
• Other disability organizations
• Look for free speakers or find some way to have them underwritten by a grant or similar
Management Development – Dave

Why this is important:

Want something that will be easy to implement and last (after you have moved on)!
Succession Planning

• Identify candidates and cultivate early
  • Make it easy for them to start
  • Get them involved with basic help
  • Take pictures and promote their involvement, let their friends “like” their actions online
• Always be looking
  • Life happens; have a backup plan
  • Be specific when asking parents for help
  • UseSignUp Genius to make it less ‘confrontational’
  • Get new club coaches involved (make it a requirement at the club level)
• Attend club BOD meetings and let needs be known in that environment
Financial Stability

• Consider small registration fee if you are not doing so now
  • Gains buy-in, some commitment from parents
  • Offer scholarships to people who have hardships

• Be prepared to ask for donations
  • Have a form/ letter ready to go; dollar amounts; 501-c-3 status

• Tap into local community or national grant programs (Target, etc.)
  • Have description of your program, community/geography you serve, and numbers of players, parents, Buddies (eyeballs, shoppers!) you bring

• Gain commitment from host club for annual underwriting funds
  • Get it written into the Bylaws - $X per player

• Carryover to future years – team account – no commingled funds
Partnering With Other Agencies

• Network with other agencies and work together to offer programming that doesn’t conflict with each other
• Promote awareness and player sharing between both groups
• Work with park districts that offer programming. Work together, share resources
Community Awareness

• Seek local press – community issue writer in local paper (not necessarily sports-related)
  • Be prepared to provide a picture and name of player, parent who will offer glowing praise
  • Include podcasts and school papers
• Buy promotional signage, giveaways
  • Feather flags, a-frame banners to promote the program as people walk by
• Attend school district agency/ resource fairs
  • Staff a table, engage with parents (giveaways)
• Find service clubs (Kiwanis, Lions, etc.)
  • Money, services (food!) to donate
Growth Management

• Want to grow program (players) but will always have some attrition
  • Take new players even midway through season
  • Accept younger players (reduce minimum age)
    • Be careful to have younger Buddies, and keep activities simple)

• Consider splitting up program to offer it at two different times, back-to-back
  • Need ½ as many Buddies, field space, etc.
  • Make sure safety still #1
    • Promote kids who ‘play older than their age’
Summary Takeaways

• Reflect on what your program can be in the future
• Don’t be afraid to try new things and make mistakes – adapt!
• Get more people involved; don’t handle everything yourself
• Network with peers and state/regional offices
• Check in regularly with your state and regional TOPSoccer chair
Shameless Plug

2021 TOPSoccer Virtual Symposium
Wednesday evenings in March
7-9 PM (eastern) each night, with
two select speakers
FREE!

Watch for correspondence from US Youth Soccer regional and state
TOPSoccer Chairs, and social media
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