

ODP...Yes or No???

By Tom Turner, Region II Women's Head Coach

As I go through the Districts watching soccer games, this is the question asked most often. "ODP - Yes or No?" Just returning from a Workshop in Dallas, our Region II Head Coach Tom Turner shared this article with us so in turn I would like to share it with you. - Dianne Jimenez, OSYSA Girls ODP Administrator

Region II Olympic Development Camp: The Dual Purpose

By Tom Turner, Region II Women's Head Coach

There are two primary purposes for the regional camp. The first, and most narrow purpose, is the selection of the best 18 players in each age group to represent the region at the national tryouts. This is done through a series of pool selections which provide opportunities for selected players to compete against each other in training activities and competitive matches. Pool activities are held in the mornings and players are moved in and out of the pools by virtue of their performance in training sessions and matches.

The second function is more important for the development of soccer in the region. Of the 250 players who come to Regional Camp in each group, only 15% (36) will be named to a regional pool, and only 7% (18) will represent the region at an inter-regional event. The 85% who are not chosen to the regional pool still represent the bulk of the better players in Region II and, as such, are very important to the overall development of soccer. Each year, a coaching focus is chosen for the camp which seeks to highlight problem areas identified at the inter-regional events. These areas may range from simple, but critical, elements such as body preparation and vision, to more complicated problems such as combining or possessing in the attacking third. In all field activities, the focus is incorporated into live training games rather than static or artificial exercises. Training sessions always include the elements of transition, direction, scoring, and play to large goals with goalkeepers. Defining and redefining positional responsibilities is crucial to developing players' understanding, and is therefore a recurring theme in the regional camp experience.

Coaching development is also considered a crucial part of the regional camp experience. State age-group coaches are often young, inexperienced and working their way through the levels of the national licensing programs. As such, they are still developing their understanding of coaching methodology and a sense of coaching priorities. By working closely with regional staff during the daily coaching sessions, region-wide approaches to coaching are developed and common problems are addressed in activities which are challenging to both players and coaches. With very few opportunities available for coaches to learn from more experienced practitioners, the regional camp provides one of the most valuable developmental arenas outside of the national coaching schools.

So why should an average state team player with only an outside chance at a regional pool go to camp? The benefits are numerous:

- The regional staff is the most qualified of any camp staff in the country. Each coach has a USSF A License.
- The state team player trains with the best players in his/her state before and during regional camp.
- The state team player has the opportunity to compete against the majority of the region's best players, including regional and national team players.
- Each year, over 50 college coaches attend the camp to watch young talent and many of the regional staff are themselves college coaches.
- "ODP State Team" is a valuable marker on a soccer resume.
- No other camp focuses as much attention on developing functional tactical awareness.
- No other camp offers only A License coaches and costs less than \$500.00.
- National Team personalities are a regular feature of the regional camp.
- The pressure to win is secondary to playing the type of constructive soccer the United States National Teams have become so noted for playing.