



Statement From the Southern Minnesota Soccer League

September 7, 2021

Earlier this year, a number of Southern Minnesota Soccer Clubs came together to discuss the everchanging youth soccer scene in our state. A number of challenges have impacted clubs in our region in the past few years. The majority of metro area clubs have joined a private and exclusive league not open to our clubs. Season by season, travel times have increased with opponents and scheduling becoming less predictable. Disparity in competitiveness has increased while positive player experiences have decreased. The formula that Minnesota has relied on to balance leagues with comparable competition is no longer viable. The COVID pandemic also impacted what used to be normal summer and fall soccer.

While the game continues to evolve throughout the country, youth soccer in Minnesota has been stalled and in some cases participation has dropped.

Recognizing many challenges, an alliance of clubs has agreed to take control of this regions base levels of "classic" traveling soccer. To serve the widest participation levels where the most kids play and want a fair competitive experience, the **Southern Minnesota Soccer League** has been formed.

The "SMSL" has a mission to serve both established and growing soccer communities of Southern Minnesota. SMSL will provide competitive leagues in classic levels of Black and Blue (Black the higher designation). Leagues will be offered in two-year bands which will help clubs better plan, level and challenge players season to season as they develop. Predetermined two-year bands (12U, 14U, 16U and 18U) are common throughout soccer and provide more flexibility for clubs and teams when compared to single year teams where depth can be an issue in smaller clubs and lower levels.

SMSL will also focus on ages 10U and younger and redefine how the small sided game should be played when considering player development as the priority. Our league will specifically rely on expertise from our member clubs' Directors of Coaching. We will use US Soccer's "Player Development Initiatives" to guide our offering of competition in the developmental ages and 7v7 game. SMSL will also recognize all recreational and in-house soccer models to help expand the base of our game in the communities of Southern Minnesota.

The **membership of SMSL** recognizes the critical role of the Minnesota Youth Soccer Association (MYSA). Clubs are encouraged to remain members of the MYSA both as a resource of soccer support and to utilize, when qualified, the higher level, statewide leagues and cups.

SMSL will be affiliated with **US Soccer** and **USSSA Soccer** and is committed to providing quality traveling soccer experiences while fostering and growing the game throughout the region.