

# **Michigan State Developmental Soccer League**

## **Mission Statement**

The purpose of the Michigan State Developmental Soccer League is to provide the best environment for the development of youth soccer players below the age of 12 through a league environment that encourages fun, creativity and competitiveness.

### **MSDSL Objectives and Benefits**

The Michigan State Developmental Soccer League is the select developmental program for boys' and girls' teams from U-8 through U-12 for its participating clubs. The league is administered by representatives from each member organization.

#### **Program Objectives:**

- To reduce the emphasis and pressure on players and coaches to earn results.
- To emphasize individual player development and especially individual technical development.
- To reduce the excessive travel around the state for games and reduce the number of weekend match dates, increasing valuable time for families.
- To reduce the possibilities of mismatched opponents and lopsided scores by allowing clubs to do their own divisioning.

#### **Program Benefits:**

- Free and open player movement within the club's teams.
- Growing a 'CLUB' concept with a loyalty to and acknowledgement of the club, as opposed to individual team mentality – players and families are part of something bigger than their individual team.
- Professional coaches taking over administration and training of younger ages.
- Increased player enrollment and participation in the club.
- Increased pool of players for age groups with improvement in quality of players.
- A better introduction to 'Select' competitive soccer for players preparing for state and region-wide leagues and events in their future years.

## Michigan State Developmental Soccer League

**What:** The Michigan State Developmental Soccer League is a competitive league for girls and boys ages U8 through U12. The league offers 6v6, 8v8, and 11v11 divisions based on age and playing ability. It is the first league specifically designed for player development, organized by soccer professionals.

**Who:** Several of the most recognized, successful and pioneering soccer clubs in Michigan with track records of developing players, including the Michigan Jaguars, TNT Dynamite (Lansing), Livonia City Soccer Club, Force FC (Bloomfield), Canton Celtic, and Waza F.C. (Livonia)

**When:** League play consists of two seasons: fall and spring, and each season consists of 8-10 games per team. The fall season begins in August and concludes in November; the spring season begins in April and concludes in June. The league's inaugural season kicks off August 2009.

**Where:** Most if not all games will be played on Match Days, when clubs will travel to one site, where each team will play two games; Match Days will take place over approximately four Saturdays each season. Clubs petition to host Match Days, with venues determined by size, quality and quantity of fields, and geography. Games not played on Match Days will be scheduled as One-offs (self-scheduled matches between the two teams). An end-of-season event may be held for all participating clubs to attend

**Why:** To improve the player development environment; the foundation of good habits in older age groups is built in the youngest age groups. The current state of youth soccer places an inordinate emphasis on results (winning and losing), forcing coaches, players and parents to sacrifice elements of player development in favor of team performance. While results are significant – every team steps on a field planning to win – individual player development becomes a secondary focus, as teams are more concerned with how results may promote them or relegate them to a different division. Long-term development – which affords players the opportunity to make and learn from mistakes in a game, and to play multiple positions -- is undercut in favor of short-term success; this league aims to place individual player development at the forefront.

**How:** By increasing roster fluidity, reducing roster-size minimums and eliminating promotion and relegation. Players will be allowed to move between teams in their club in an age group and in older age groups for games through its club pass-card system, and dual registration is permitted. This roster fluidity allows coaches to place players in a variety of playing environments, granting the players the right combination of success and challenges; smaller roster sizes translates into more playing time for each player. The new league **will not** promote or relegate teams based on game results; club directors will determine team placement into divisions, with results a factor in the decision but not *the* factor.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q. What are the major advantages to playing in the MSDSL?**

A. The MSDSL is designed by several of the most successful, respected and brightest youth soccer coaches in Michigan, with individual player development at its forefront. Continuing the trends across the country and following the United States Soccer Federation's "Best Practices," the MSDSL is a league geared toward developing players first instead of developing teams. While competition is a vital element, it is not the only measurement of success; an individual's skill with the ball – their control and their creativity – and vision on the field must not be compromised.

The fewer restrictions and rules – smaller roster sizes for increased playing time, roster fluidity to allow players to play games with and against a variety of levels – as well as its scheduled Match Days creates an improved format for player development.

### **Q. Who will we be playing?**

A. The founding members of this league include Canton Celtic, Force FC, Livonia City Soccer Club, Michigan Jaguars, TNT Dynamite and Waza FC; all six clubs register teams in this league. Clubs wishing to participate in this league must file affiliation paperwork.

### **Q. What is meant by "Match Days?"**

A. Match Days are pre-scheduled weekend game days where participating teams play two games at a common location, freeing valuable time for families.

### **Q. Why are Match Days a better playing format than my current league's schedule?**

A. Match Days allow entire clubs to travel together with their teams u12 and younger to one venue, creating a tournament or festival atmosphere and improving club unity and camaraderie. Families with multiple children in the club save on time and travel, and coaches and club directors are able to evaluate and coach multiple players and teams during this time. The club pass-card system allows for extra fluidity in rosters, giving players the opportunity to play with and against a variety of competition.

### **Q. How many Match Days are there in a season?**

A. There will be approximately four Match Days in each season (spring and fall). Teams will play two games per event day; games not scheduled on Match Days will be played as One-offs, or self-scheduled games. Teams play approximately eight games per season.

### **Q. What is the playing format?**

A: The following divisions and formats will be provided for boys and girls:

6v6: U8, U9, U10

8v8: U10, U11, U12

11v11: U12