

How does ODP fit into Today's Competitive Soccer Landscape?

In my years with the Maryland Olympic Development Program (ODP), this is consistently one of the most common questions that I receive either from parents or coaches. While it is not always phrased the same way, the question is always driven by the same goal - how does the ODP environment as a pathway help my player to develop?



When comparing ODP to various other player pathways within Maryland, it is immediately apparent that with such a diverse landscape, there must be a pathway for every player, as there is not a one-size-fits-all approach. ODP allows for players who have a great home training environment to not only be challenged in new and different ways, but also bridges the gap to programs that might train too much for family schedules or are simply too far to be feasible.

As a club neutral program (i.e., players remain with their club teams), Maryland ODP works WITH clubs of every level, to help develop and promote players. In 2020, the state player pools (we form pools of players NOT team rosters) represented 90+ clubs from across the state, with clubs from the smallest to largest, having their players enjoy success in our program. Bringing together players from such diverse backgrounds, enables our training environments to harness the best of each players' abilities and exposes them to new challenges. This unique experience has shown to accelerate growth AND reintroduces the knowledge gained BACK into their home environment as a benefit to the club team as well as to the individual players.

Our state coaching staff of 37 represent 22 youth clubs with 33% also having collegiate coaching experience. Holding a range of USSF/UEFA licenses from the minimum of USSF D through the apex USSF A (including Goalkeeper Licenses), our coaches utilize the framework of our programs curriculum to provide meaningful and competitive training sessions that utilize the most up to date methodologies to challenge the players throughout the full ODP cycle.

We aim to promote as many players as possible through the ODP experience. For some, this means going on to play at the regional and national level. For others, this means developing and making the next team on the club side. For all, this means exposure to college coaches - both on the field and in the classroom through educational opportunities.

These elements combined with the exciting opportunities to play against state teams from Virginia to Maine (at the state level and beyond for players promoted to the regional and national level), create a competitive environment that is truly unique in today's landscape. Whether a player participates for just one year or from 12U-18U, the experience will undoubtedly change them both on and off the field and we are thrilled that MSYSA plays a part in that journey.



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ODP Director