



DECEMBER 2025

Welcome to the Michigan State Youth Soccer Association's (MSYSA) monthly newsletter! Stay in the loop with the latest game updates, major announcements from US Youth Soccer, and highlights you won't want to miss. Whether it's big news or key recaps, we've got you covered! Stay informed. Stay inspired. Stay in the game!

TOURNAMENT SACTIONING

Tournament sanctioning for all 2026 events is currently open, and must be completed by February 1, 2026. Clubs and leagues planning to host tournaments in 2026 are encouraged to review the sanctioning process and ensure all materials are submitted before the deadline. For complete details and step-by-step guidance, please visit the [Tournament Sanctioning page](#).

MSYSA CELEBRATES 50TH ANNIVERSARY IN NEW YEAR

On January 19, 2026, MSYSA will celebrate its 50th anniversary of serving the youth soccer community in Michigan. For five decades, MSYSA has been dedicated to growing the game, supporting players, coaches, referees, and families, and creating opportunities for young athletes across the state to thrive. As we look ahead to the next 50 years, we are grateful to everyone who has been part of our journey and invite you to join us in celebrating this incredible milestone! Stay tuned in our next newsletter and on our social media accounts for our reveal of the 50th Anniversary MSYSA logo!



WINTER STATE CUP

With teams now officially selected, we're excited to share the elite U13 and U14 boys clubs that will compete in this winter's single-elimination tournament, showcasing the very best youth talent Michigan has to offer. The field represents a strong mix of top platforms, including MLS Next, ECNL, NAL, and NLC, highlighting the depth and competitiveness of the state. Competing in the U13 division are: DCFC City 13B Rouge; MI Jaguars MLS Next Academy 2013; MI Jaguars MLS Next United Academy

2013; Midwest United FC U13 MLS Next HG; Midwest United FC SCOR 13B Black; and Sports Plus Academy 2013 Gold. The U14 division will feature: BC Fire SC 2012B Blue; DCFC City 12B Rouge; Legends FC 2012B Black E64RL; MI Jaguars MLS Next Academy 2012; MI Jaguars MLS Next United Academy 2012; and TBAYS North Storm '12B White.

The tournament will begin with self-scheduled first-round matches between December 13, 2025, and January 25, 2026, followed by Semifinals on January 30 in Grand Blanc and Midland, and the Finals on February 1 in Wixom. With so much talent across both age groups, we're looking forward to an exciting winter competition filled with high-level matches, intense moments, and opportunities for these teams to prove themselves on a statewide stage.

To see results, schedules, and standings, [click here](#).

SPRING STATE CUP & JUNIOR STATE CUP APPLICATIONS OPEN

The 2025-2026 MSYSA State Cup and Junior State Cup applications are now open, and teams across Michigan are invited to compete in one of the state's most prestigious tournament pathways. The Spring State Cup is available to U13 Girls and U13-U19 Boys teams, with preliminary matches taking place March 7 - May 3, 2026. Quarterfinal and semifinal rounds will follow on May 15 - 17, and champions will be crowned during Finals weekend, May 29 - 31, 2026. The entry fee is \$795 per team, with an additional \$150 required for non-affiliated teams. All applications must be submitted no later than 12 PM on January 28, 2026. Submit your applications [here](#)!



The Junior State Cup invites U10 - U12 MSYSA-affiliated boys and girls teams to compete in an exciting, development-focused statewide competition. Preliminary matches run concurrently with the older age groups, March 7 - May 3, 2026. Round of 16 and quarterfinals will take place May 15 - 17, followed by semifinals and finals May 29 - 31. The cost to participate is \$595 per team, and the application deadline is also 12 PM on January 28, 2026.

To submit an application for Spring State Cup, [click here](#).

To submit an application for Junior State Cup, [click here](#).

OLYMPIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM 25/26 SEASON

The ODP season is entering an exciting stretch as we head into January, with final training sessions scheduled for both boys and girls in the 25/26 cycle. Once these sessions wrap up, ODP State Teams will officially be announced! In addition, MSYSA is proud to be sending eight ODP teams to Arizona from January 2-5, 2026, for the ODP Far West



Championships - an incredible opportunity for our players to compete at a high level and represent Michigan on a regional stage.

Looking ahead, registration for Spring ODP101 and GKA opens in early January, offering valuable developmental programming for players preparing for future ODP opportunities. Season 26/27 ODP registration will open on March 1, and our PreODP program for 2016 birth year players will launch in mid-February. As a special benefit, PreODP participants will receive 10% off their ODP tryout registration when they sign up. With new opportunities on the horizon, it's shaping up to be an exciting year of growth and development for Michigan's rising soccer talent!

GLEANERS FOOD DRIVE RESULTS

MSYSA is proud to share the success of the Gleaners Food Drive held in conjunction with ODP Winter Training on November 9. Thanks to the generosity of our ODP players, families, and staff, we collected an incredible 673 pounds of food, which will help provide approximately 505 meals to individuals and families in need across our community. This outstanding effort reflects the strong sense of teamwork and compassion within the Michigan soccer family.

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who contributed and helped make this food drive such a meaningful success. Giving back is an important part of the ODP experience, and it was inspiring to see our players support the community beyond the field. Thank you for helping MSYSA and ODP make a positive impact - both in soccer and in the lives of others.

MSYSA SPRING 2026 REGISTRATION REMINDER

As we prepare for the upcoming Spring 2026 season, MSYSA would like to remind all clubs and teams of the key registration deadlines. All Spring 2026 registration data must be finalized in GotSport by April 22, 2026, at 11:59 PM.

Please ensure that all players, coaches, team officials, and rosters are fully updated and accurate before the deadline to avoid any eligibility issues as the season begins.

Additionally, the final registration payment for Spring 2026 is due to MSYSA by May 25, 2026. Clubs are encouraged to plan ahead and complete payments on time to ensure a smooth start to competition. We appreciate your attention to those important dates and look forward to another successful spring season across Michigan!

2026 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING INFORMATION

Mark your calendars! The 2026 MSYSA Annual General Meeting (AGM) will take place on Saturday, February 14, 2026, at 8:30 AM. This year's meeting will be hosted at The Henry Hotel, located at 300 Town Center Dr., Dearborn, MI 48126. The AGM is an important opportunity for member clubs and leagues

to come together, discuss key initiatives, and help shape the future of youth soccer in Michigan.

A special room rate of \$194 is available for attendees who book a standard room with check-in on February 13, 2026, and check out on February 14, 2026. [Click here to book your room!](#) We look forward to seeing our members in Dearborn this February for another productive and collaborative Annual General Meeting!



MSPSP

MSPSP is gearing up for an exciting Spring 2026 season, and now is the perfect time for teams, clubs, and families to get connected! [MSPSP is now on Facebook](#), offering a new space to stay updated on league news, reminders, and trends, while also giving teams, parents, and players a place to interact directly with the league. Be sure to give the page a follow and check out the MSPSP Fall 2025 Division Champions list, now available online. Spring 2026 team registration is officially [OPEN](#) in GotSport, with clubs encouraged to begin enrolling their teams early. To assist with the registration process, MSPSP is hosting two optional Pre-Registration & FAQ Meetings via Zoom on [January 7th](#), open to all club administrators who support team registration.

The MSPSP Spring 2026 Season runs March 6 - June 12, with the Team Registration Deadline on January 17 and the Player & Roster Deadline on January 24. The league offers five competitive tiers across both Statewide and Regional formats to help teams find the right balance of competition and travel. Boys' age groups span U13 through U18/19, while girls' divisions include U13, U14, and U15 Supplemental. Teams can expect an average of 8 matches, with division structure influencing final totals. For clubs new to MSPSP, or those interested in joining, the league welcomes over 90+ clubs from Michigan, Northern Ohio, and Ontario, representing more than 750 teams and 12,000 players each year.

Teams needing early documents for tournaments can request [Early Passcards](#) after completing the necessary registration steps. Clubs can also request free MSPSP or GLPL patches, now produced using the same material found in English Premier League jersey applications. Additionally, [MSPSP's continued partnership with Trace](#) provides every participating team access to a FREE Trace AI camera (a \$495 value), offering automatic match recording, livestreaming, AI-edited highlights, and individual player portfolios - ideal for both family memories and college recruitment. Families can subscribe individually for platform access and highlight downloads.

We're looking forward to another competitive and rewarding MSPSP season! For questions, contact Tyler Zbik at tzbik@michiganyouthsoccer.org, and visit MSPSP.org for full details and registration links.

2025 MSYSA AWARD RECIPIENTS

MSYSA is proud to announce that the 2026 MSYSA Awards Ceremony & Dinner will be held on Friday, February 13, 2026, at The Henry Hotel (300 Town Center Dr., Dearborn, MI 48126). This annual celebration recognizes individuals from across Michigan who have made outstanding contributions to youth soccer through their dedication, leadership, and passion for the game. The evening will bring together players, coaches, referees, administrators, and volunteers to honor those who make a lasting impact on the soccer community.

This year's honorees represent the best of Michigan soccer, and we congratulate them for their exceptional service and commitment. The 2026 MSYSA Award Winners include: Administrator of the Year - Kay Palmer; Boys Competitive Coach of the Year - Spencer Sandow; Girls Competitive Coach of the Year - Alyssa Harrold; Boys Recreational Coach of the Year - Mark Kimmel; Girls Recreational Coach of the Year - Andy Rusnak; Hall of Fame Recipient - Rob Ruta; TOPSoccer Coach of the Year - Ryan Pauls; TOPSoccer Buddy of the Year - Gabrielle Zimmerman; Young Female Referee of the Year - Mya Pickerel; Young Male Referee of the Year - Lucas Wallace; Volunteer of the Year - Mark Klein. Congratulations to all our award recipients for going above and beyond in growing the game and inspiring the next generation of players across Michigan!

2025 MSYSA COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

MSYSA is proud to recognize the 2025 MSYSA College Scholarship recipients, honoring outstanding student-athletes who have demonstrated excellence both on and off the field. These scholarships celebrate academic achievement, community involvement, and a commitment to giving back to the game of soccer. Congratulations to our College Scholarship recipients: Harper Barnhart, Grace Lesinski, Jana Mohr, Madeleine Paulson, Brendon Burkett, and Benjamin Cleland. Each of these individuals represents the values of dedication, leadership, and passion that define Michigan youth soccer.

We are also honored to recognize recipients of MSYSA's special scholarships. The Adalin Farnum ODP Scholarship, which celebrates kindness, character, and positive impact, has been awarded to Bryce Nadig and Conamora Ndana. The Yvonne Curtis Scholarship, honoring a lifelong advocate for youth soccer and community service, has been awarded to Cambrie Bencik. Congratulations to all of our scholarship recipients - your hard work, character, and commitment to the game inspire our entire MSYSA community.

Soccer Parenting Blog: Playing Soccer is a Smart Choice

Playing soccer is more than just a sport - it's a powerful vehicle for building healthy bodies, strong minds, and resilient kids. According to the Soccer Parenting blog, soccer offers a wide range of benefits: it supports cardiovascular fitness, strengthens muscles and bones, improves flexibility, and helps maintain a healthy weight - all while giving kids an outlet to burn energy and stay active. On top of physical perks, soccer helps players grow mentally,



boosting confidence, enhancing attention and memory, and fostering self-esteem through teamwork, improvement, and personal growth.

But the value of soccer goes beyond fitness and brainpower. It cultivates essential life skills: teamwork, respect, commitment, discipline, and resilience. Players learn to win with grace and lose with dignity, to support teammates, and to navigate challenges both on and off the field. The social bonds, sense of belonging, and shared experiences create a supportive community that encourages kids not just to play the game - but to grow into well-rounded individuals. For parents and coaches looking to give children more than just a sport, soccer remains a smart, meaningful choice. To read more, [click here!](#)



Soccer Parenting Blog: Our Clubs and Coaches Can and Must Do Better

The article delivers a powerful call-to-action for everyone involved in youth soccer - coaches, club leaders, and parents alike - to hold themselves to higher standards. It shared painful stories of players being sidelined, bullied, or ignored: children who travel long distances only to see minimal playing time, athletes left off teams without communication, and kids publicly chastised by coaches when they make mistakes. The author is clear: this isn't okay. Youth soccer should be about development, belonging, respect, and growth - not neglect, unfair treatment, or emotional harm.

That's why the article urges clubs and coaches to adopt transparent policies around playing time standards, respectful coach-player interactions, and clear complaint procedures. It emphasizes the need for clubs to establish a culture where every player feels valued, heard, and supported - and where parents who raise legitimate concerns are taken seriously, not dismissed. It's a reminder that soccer isn't just about winning games - it's about creating a safe, encouraging environment that nourishes confidence, growth, and love for the game. As the article puts it: "*We can do better. We must do better.*" To read more, [click here!](#)

USYS Coaching Articles: Parallel Play

The concept of parallel play reminds us that young players - especially in age groups like U6 and U8 - often learn best when they play side-by-side rather than in structured, team-oriented drills. According to the article, children at these ages aren't yet ready for cooperative or competitive play; instead, they explore, run, dribble, and experiment independently while simply being around other kids. This developmental stage is natural and beneficial: by allowing players to "play next to each other" without pressure, coaches give them space to develop coordination, confidence, and a comfort level with being in a group environment.



For clubs and coaches, understanding parallel play means trusting the developmental process and designing sessions that reflect where players are -

not where we wish they were. Activities should prioritize individual control, fun, and loose structure over formal tactics or high-pressure competition. This approach helps nurture not only technical skills but also positive early experiences, enjoyment of the game, and a love for soccer that can last a lifetime. As we build our youth programs around these principles, we ensure every child has the opportunity to grow at their own pace and enjoy the game while building the foundation for future team play. To read more, [click here!](#)



USYS Coaching Articles: Parents Who Are Getting It Right

The article highlights how positive and involved parenting can make a huge difference in a young player's soccer experience. Parents who "get it right" focus on encouragement over pressure, support rather than instruction, and respect for coaches, teammates, and referees - creating a healthy environment where kids can enjoy the game, grow in confidence, and develop life skills.

At MSYSA, we believe strongly in these ideals. When parents trust coaches, respect the process, and support players with encouragement and patience, it helps build a positive soccer culture across clubs and teams. We encourage all parents and guardians to embrace this mindset: prioritize enjoyment, growth, and sportsmanship. Together, we can help our players not just become better athletes - but more confident, resilient, and grounded individuals. To read more, [click here!](#)

MSYSA PARTICIPANT SAFETY

All MSYSA members must adhere to the [MSYSA Athlete and Participant Safety Program](#). If you become aware of any alleged violations by an MSYSA participant, you can use this [reporting form](#). Additionally, any allegation of child abuse, sexual misconduct, or retaliation must be reported to the U.S. Center for SafeSport [here](#) or by phone at (833) 587-7233 within 24 hours. Allegations of child abuse must also be reported to law enforcement.



All respective Adult Members, including Adult Athletes (18+), are required to take the SafeSport training each year and receive a background check clearance. The process for Adult Athletes is different than what is required for Adult Team Officials. Instructions for both groups can be found on the [Risk Management Resources](#) page of our website.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Play for the name on the front of the shirt, and they'll remember the name on the back."

KEEP IN TOUCH

For the latest updates on MSYSA, follow us on social media!

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