



MICHIGAN STATE YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

# MSYSA MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Find all information at [michiganyouthsoccer.org](http://michiganyouthsoccer.org)

## MARCH 2026

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!

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### ALYSSA HARROLD NEW DISTRICT COMMISSIONER & USYS NATIONAL COTY

On February 23, during a special meeting held via Zoom, Alyssa Harrold was elected as the new North District Commissioner for the Michigan State Youth Soccer Association (MSYSA). She steps into the role following Connie Campbell, who was recently elected MSYSA Recording Secretary. Alyssa has long been an active and passionate leader within Michigan's soccer community, and we are excited to see her take on this important position representing the North District. Her experience, dedication, and commitment to growing the game make her a wonderful addition to the MSYSA leadership team.

In addition to her new leadership role, Alyssa continues to be recognized for her outstanding impact as a coach. After being named MSYSA Girls Competitive Coach of the Year, she was also selected as both the US Youth Soccer Regional and National Girls Competitive Coach of the Year. When asked what the recognition means to her, coming from a small Northern Michigan club, Alyssa shared, *"This award belongs to the girls. It's recognition of how hard they work and their determination to compete with anyone, regardless of how small our town is."* We are incredibly proud of Alyssa and the work she continues to do for players across Michigan, and we will be cheering her on every step of the way in her coaching and leadership journey.

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### ODP NATIONAL PLAYER SELECTIONS

Michigan continues to be well represented on the national stage, as several players from the 2024-2025 US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program have been selected to their respective national teams. Congratulations to Waleed Alhiyafi (2009 Boys - DCFC Downriver), Haidar Alemara (2012 Boys -

MI Jaguars), Ellie Hickox (2010 Girls - PASS FC), Avery Gunn (2011 Girls - Midwest United FC), Vivian Christianson (2011 Girls - MI Hawks), and Emma Kulpa (2013 Girls - MI Jaguars) on earning this incredible achievement. Being selected to the ODP National Team is a testament to their dedication, talent, and commitment to developing at the highest level of youth soccer.



Later this month, these players will join fellow national team members from across the country for international and domestic training and competition opportunities. Waleed will travel with the 2009 Boys to Valencia, Spain, from April 21-30, while Haidar will represent the 2012 Boys in Orlando, Florida, from March 31-April 6. Emma will travel with the 2013 Girls to Orlando, Florida, from April 1-5, and Ellie will join the 2010 Girls in Lisbon, Portugal, from March 28-April 6. Avery and Vivian will also travel to Lisbon during the same dates with the 2011 Girls National Team. MSYSA is incredibly proud of these Michigan players for reaching this milestone and representing our state on the national and international stage as they continue to grow in their soccer journeys.



## DIRECTORS ACADEMY APPLICATIONS OPEN

Applications are now being accepted for the 2026 - 2027 MSYSA Directors Academy (DA). Both current participating clubs and potential new clubs are encouraged to apply for the upcoming season. The Directors Academy continues to play a pivotal role in supporting club leadership by providing education, collaboration, and resources that focus on long-term player and club development.

The application deadline is 12:00 Noon on March 31, so interested clubs should begin the process now. To learn more about the Directors Academy and submit an application, please visit [this link](#).

## MSYSA PARTNERS WITH PLAYA BOWLS

MSYSA is excited to announce a new partnership with Playa Bowls, bringing a fresh and nutritious option to players and families throughout the ODP season.

Playa Bowls is known for serving a variety of açai, pitaya, and coconut bowls along with smoothies and juices made with fresh, high-quality ingredients. These

superfruit bowls can provide balanced nutrition with fiber, healthy fats, and protein - key nutrients that help support active athletes and their energy needs.



This summer, Playa Bowls will be on-site at ODP Tryouts in July, serving their popular açai bowls, smoothies, juices, and other protein-packed options for players and families to enjoy. We are also excited to welcome that at select ODP101 and GKA sessions, as well as PreODP. MSYSA looks forward to partnering with Playa Bowls to promote healthy nutrition for our athletes while

adding a fun and refreshing experience to ODP programming across the state.  
To read more, [click here!](#)

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## PREODP, ODP101 & GOALKEEPER ACADEMY INFO

Registration is now open for several exciting US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program opportunities across Michigan! Spring ODP101 & Goalkeeper Academy (GKA) sessions are available at 10 locations statewide, giving players additional chances to train, develop, and sharpen their skills with experienced ODP coaching staff. These programs are designed to provide a high-quality learning environment focused on player growth and preparation as the spring season approaches. Click [here](#) to learn more!

PreODP registration is also open for 2016 birth year players, offering younger athletes a great introduction to the ODP pathway. The program costs \$130 and includes a Nike drawstring satchel, Nike PreODP shirt, and 10% off registration for any 2016 player who signs up for the July ODP state team tryouts. Click [here](#) to learn more!

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## SPRING STATE CUP & JUNIOR STATE CUP GAMES KICKED OFF

The 2026 Spring State Cup and Junior State Cup competitions are officially underway, kicking off another exciting postseason across Michigan. Hosted at locations throughout the state, Spring State Cup preliminary matches are being held between March 7 and May 3, Quarterfinals and Semifinals scheduled for May 15-17, and the Finals set for May 29-31. This year's event features strong participation from 70 clubs and 364 teams, all competing for the opportunity to advance beyond the state level. Champions of the Elite Division will earn a direct berth to the US Youth Soccer National Championships in July, while Premier Division winners will move on to the USYS Presidents Cup Regionals in Indiana this June.



Junior State Cup has also kicked off and is shaping up to be a record-setting season, with 63 clubs and 409 teams participating - highlighting the continued growth and enthusiasm at the younger age groups. Preliminary matches will run from March 7 through May 3, with the Round of 16, Quarterfinals, and select Semifinals taking place May 15-17, additional Semifinals on May 29-31, and the Finals also concluding May 29-31. With competition already underway and excitement building across both events, be sure to keep up with standings, schedules, and more by visiting our website for the latest updates.

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## ODP TRYOUTS INFORMATION

Registration is now open for the 2026-27 season of the ODP Program in Michigan. The program is open to players born between 2010 and 2016, giving athletes across the state the opportunity to participate in one of the country's



premier player identification and development pathways. Early-bird registration opens March 1, with tiered pricing throughout the registration period.

Tryouts for the upcoming ODP cycle will take place July 24-26, 2026, at Independence Park, where players will participate in multiple evaluation sessions with experienced ODP coaches. Athletes are encouraged to attend all assigned sessions for their age group to allow staff the best opportunity to evaluate their performance and potential. Players who are unable to attend their scheduled sessions may request placement in an alternate tryout session, which is limited and offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

The ODP pathway provides players with high-level training and opportunities to be identified for state, regional, and national programs while continuing to play for their club teams. Participation in ODP does not prevent players from competing in other U.S. Soccer-affiliated programs, and families are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to further develop their skills and compete alongside some of Michigan's top players. To learn more, click [here!](#)

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## **DICK'S SPORTING GOODS DISCOUNT WEEKEND**

Get ready to gear up for the spring season with a special savings opportunity for our soccer community! The Michigan State Youth Soccer Association is partnering with Dick's Sporting Goods to offer 20% off your entire purchase during a limited-time discount weekend, valid April 10-13, 2026, at all Michigan store locations. This exclusive in-store offer makes it the perfect time for players and families to stock up on cleats, training gear, apparel, and all the essentials needed for a successful season ahead.

Be sure to take advantage of this one-time savings event and come prepared with the coupon when you shop. Some exclusions apply, and the discount is valid for in-store purchases only, so play your visit early and get everything you need! Be on the lookout closer to the discount weekend for the coupon!

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## **MSYSA HIRING PART-TIME LEAGUE ASSISTANT**

MSYSA is currently seeking applicants for a part-time League Assistant position at the State Office in Plymouth, MI. This in-office role will support the daily administrative operations of several MSYSA programs and leagues, including NewComp, Director's Academy, and MSPSP. Responsibilities include assisting with player and team registration, scheduling, game report verification, communication with clubs and teams, and helping with events, tournaments, and other state, regional, or national activities as needed. The position also includes assisting with website and social media updates and serving as a staff liaison to various committees.

MSYSA is looking for a motivated individual with strong organizational, communication, and administrative skills who is able to multitask in a fast-paced environment. A bachelor's degree or related experience is preferred,

along with familiarity with youth soccer and programs such as GotSport. This is a great opportunity to become involved in the Michigan soccer community while working with an organization that serves more than 90,000 players, 12,000 coaches, and 4,000 referees statewide. Interested candidates must submit a resume, cover letter, and wage requirements by April 3, 2026. Full details can be found in the job posting [here](#).

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## AD STORE

The Michigan State Youth Soccer Association, in partnership with Pearl Street Consulting, is proud to launch the 2026 edition of the Michigan Soccer Tryout Guide. This annual publication - officially recognized as the Michigan Soccer Magazine - will be distributed via email in late April to early May 2026 to more than 90,000 registered players, coaches, and families across the state. The guide serves as a comprehensive resource featuring club tryout information, coaching education articles, local tournaments, camps, and more.

Advertising in the Michigan Soccer Tryout Guide provides a valuable opportunity to connect with Michigan's statewide soccer community and promote your organization's upcoming programs and events. Clubs and partners are encouraged to reserve space early, as Ad Store pricing will increase by 10% on March 27, 2026. The Ad Store officially closes on April 3, 2026, and all advertisements and payments must be submitted by this deadline to be included in the publication. For complete details and ordering information, please [click here](#).

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## 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!

Please keep an eye out for more Spring Registration emails over the coming weeks.

If your club has players born outside of the US or who have played soccer outside of the US, now is the time to start the International Transfer Clearance (ITC) process if the player does not yet have ITC approval. It can take up to 30 days to get approval from FIFA/US Soccer, so early application is key for eligibility. See the [MSYSA ITC page](#) or reach out to [ITC@michiganyouthsoccer.org](mailto:ITC@michiganyouthsoccer.org) if you have questions.



## MSPSP

The MSPSP Spring Season is underway, and teams can stay up to date with the latest schedules and standings through the GotSport event page. Clubs are reminded that player additions must be completed using the official Late Player Addition form, and feedback on match officials can be submitted through the Referee Feedback form. These tools help ensure the season runs smoothly and that all teams have the most accurate and up-to-date information as the competition continues across the state.

Registration is also open for the MSPSP Summer League, which provides an opportunity for teams to stay active in a flexible, club-friendly environment during the offseason. The Summer League is designed as an official "club friendly" format, allowing teams to face local opponents while focusing on conditioning, development, sportsmanship, and preparation for the upcoming fall season. There are no division titles or standings implications, making this a great option for Premier, Classic, and Select-level teams looking for competitive but relaxed match play. Team registration is open now, with an early-bird discount available for teams that enroll by April 24, and a final registration deadline of May 8. Rosters must be submitted by June 2.

MSPSP continues to expand opportunities for clubs through partnerships with organizations such as SoccerParenting, which provides educational resources designed to empower parents, coaches, and club leaders to create a more positive youth soccer environment. MSYSA member clubs are invited to attend an upcoming webinar focused on best practices for parents engagement and building stronger club culture. In addition, through the MSPSP x Trace partnership, teams can receive a free AI camera to record matches, create highlights, and livestream games. This program allows players and families to access advanced video tools while helping clubs enhance development, exposure, and communication throughout the season. To learn more, visit the [website!](#)

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## ODP ON TOUR: PARIS, FRANCE

Michigan ODP is heading overseas! ODP Season 2024/25 players will depart for an international trip to France at the end of March, embarking on an exciting eight-day tour based in Paris. This once-in-a-lifetime experience will provide players with the opportunity to compete in international matches, train in a professional environment, and immerse themselves in the global game.



During the trip, players will face international competition and receive coaching from professional club staff, offering valuable exposure to different playing styles, training methods, and soccer cultures. This international tour represents an incredible developmental opportunity both on and off the field, reinforcing

ODP's mission to challenge players at the highest levels while creating unforgettable experiences that extend beyond the pitch.

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## **Soccer Parenting Blog: A History of Soccer in America: Dr. Joe Machnik**



A recent blog from the Soccer Parenting Association recaps a thoughtful webinar conversation with Dr. Joe Machnik, who reflected on his lifelong journey in the sport and the growth of soccer in the United States. From his early playing days in New York City's ethnic leagues to earning a college scholarship and eventually contributing at the highest levels of the game, Dr. Machnik's story mirrors the broader development of soccer across the country. His experiences, shared alongside insights from his book *From the Sandlots to the World Cup*, highlight how grassroots passion and community support helped build the sport long before it became widely popular.

The conversation also explored the evolution of key areas of the game, including goalkeeper development, officiating, and coaching mentorship. Dr. Machnik discussed how specialized goalkeeper training expanded nationwide through programs like the camps he founded and how professionalizing refereeing helped improve the sport's structure and credibility. Ultimately, his message emphasizes that the success of soccer in America has been shaped by mentors, educators, and volunteers who believed in the game and invested in future generations. To read more, [click here!](#)

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## **Soccer Parenting Blog: Navigating Age Group Changes - Advice from our Youth Coach Advisory Group**

A recent article from the Soccer Parenting Association explores how families can successfully navigate upcoming youth soccer age-group changes. The piece features advice from members of the organization's Youth Coach Advisory Group, who emphasize that decisions about team placement should always prioritize a player's long-term development, confidence, and enjoyment of the game. For many players, moving into the correct age group - often aligned with school grade - can provide important developmental benefits, including stronger peer connections, increased leadership opportunities, and a more comfortable learning environment.

The article also reassures parents that being placed with players of a similar age is not a step backward. In many cases, it allows athletes more time to develop physically, mentally, and technically while giving them a better chance to grow into meaningful roles on their teams. Experts note that while some players may continue to compete with older groups, those situations are typically exceptions. Overall, the goal of age-group alignment is to create a

healthier and more sustainable pathway that supports both player development and long-term enjoyment of the sport. To read more, [click here!](#)

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## **USYS News Articles: From Player to Sports Scientist: Karlie Young's Journey**



A recent feature from US Youth Soccer highlights the inspiring journey of former youth standout Karlie Young and how she is now impacting the next generation of athletes through sports science. Young enjoyed a highly successful youth career with Tennessee SC, winning multiple State Cups, regional titles, and back-to-back National Championships. She continued her playing career at Duke University, making 74 appearances for the Blue Devils before ultimately shifting her focus away from playing and toward performance science after injuries and academic curiosity led her to explore the field more deeply.

Today, Young works in sports science, using data and performance analytics to help athletes reach their full potential. Her experiences as a youth and college player have given her unique insights into athlete development, recovery, and performance optimization. Young credits the supportive environments she experienced throughout her soccer journey - including her youth club, coaches, and mentors - for helping her develop both on and off the field. Her story serves as a powerful reminder that the lessons learned through youth soccer can lead to impactful careers that continue to shape the future of the game. To read more, [click here!](#)

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## **USYS News Articles: From National League to NCAA Success: Donovan Phillip's Journey**

**US YOUTH  
SOCCER**

A recent feature from US Youth Soccer highlights the impressive journey of NCAA standout Donovan Phillip and the role youth soccer played in his development.

Phillip, who played in the USYS National League and competed at the National Championships with BVB Pittsburgh (now Pittsburgh Independence), has grown into one of the top collegiate players in the country while starring for NC State. His path to success began in Saint Lucia, where he played multiple positions across the field before eventually developing into a powerful attacking forward.

Phillips credits the experiences and opportunities he gained through youth soccer for helping shape his career and preparing him for the demands of college competition. His story is a strong example of how dedication, versatility, and a passion for the game can open doors to higher levels of play. From his early days learning the game to becoming one of the nation's top collegiate players, Phillip's journey reflects the impact youth soccer pathways can have in helping players pursue their goals both on and off the field. To read more, [click here!](#)

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## 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.

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## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"You have to fight to reach your dream. You have to sacrifice and work hard for it."

-Lionel Messi

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## KEEP IN TOUCH

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