



MICHIGAN STATE YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

MSYSA MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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MAY 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!

WALEED ALHIYAFI REPRESENTS MICHIGAN ON INTERNATIONAL STAGE



Michigan Olympic Development Program player Waleed Alhiyafi recently returned from an unforgettable experience in Spain with the 2009 Boys ODP National Team, where he competed against some of the top international competition in Europe. Representing Michigan as the only player selected from the state in his age group, Waleed embraced the opportunity to challenge himself at the highest level while proudly wearing the U.S. crest abroad. Reflecting on the experience, he shared that it was a "huge honor" and something that motivated him to give his best in every moment throughout the trip.

One of Waleed's favorite moments came during a thrilling match against Villarreal, when his team battled back from a 3-0 deficit to earn a 3-3 draw. Waleed scored two goals within a minute during the final five minutes of the match, calling it a moment that reflected his team's resilience and belief. Throughout the trip, he learned how important communication, chemistry, and attention to detail are when competing at an elite international level. Looking back on the experience, Waleed encouraged younger ODP players to stay consistent, compete at their highest level, and take every opportunity seriously, emphasizing that "every moment counts." MSYSA is incredibly proud of Waleed for representing Michigan on the international stage and continuing to inspire the next generation of players through his hard work and dedication.

MICHIGAN SOCCER MAGAZINE NOW LIVE

The 2026 edition of the [Michigan Soccer Magazine](#) is now officially live! The annual publication features club tryout information, tournaments, camps,

coaching education articles, league updates, and much more from across the Michigan soccer community. As the official publication of the MSYSA, the magazine reaches thousands of players, coaches, and families throughout the state each year and serves as a valuable resource heading into the upcoming seasonal year.

Readers are encouraged to explore the digital edition to stay informed on opportunities throughout Michigan soccer while learning more about clubs, events, and programs taking place statewide. Be sure to check out this year's edition and see everything happening across the Michigan soccer landscape!

U.S. SOCCER TECHNICAL LEADERSHIP COURSE

MSYSA is excited to highlight a new coaching education opportunity through U.S. Soccer that continues to support the growth and development of coaches at all levels. This course is designed to help coaches better understand how to create effective, player-centered environments by focusing on planning, delivering, and reflecting on training sessions and match experiences. As part of U.S. Soccer's broader coaching education pathway, the course emphasizes developing the individual player while also strengthening the overall team environment.

Through a blend of online learning, collaboration, and practical application, participants will gain valuable tools to enhance their coaching approach and positively impact their players. Coaches will explore key concepts such as session design, communication, and long-term player development, all within a supportive learning environment. Whether you're continuing your licensing pathway or looking to grow your knowledge of the game, this course offers a great opportunity to further your education and make a meaningful impact on the field. To learn more, [click here!](#)



STATE CUP & JUNIOR STATE CUP CHAMPIONSHIP MATCHES SET

The road to a championship is officially set as the 2026 Spring State Cup Finals and Junior State Cup Semifinals/Quarterfinals approach. After months of competition and exciting matchups across Michigan, teams from clubs such as Nationals, DCFC, MI Burn, Monroe United, Legends, Eastside, TKO, Midland Fusion, MI Rangers, Cap City, ACGR, and MI Jaguars have earned their place in the final stages of the tournament. From dramatic knockout matches to standout individual performances, this year's State Cup season has continued to showcase the depth and talent throughout Michigan youth soccer.

The next round of matches will take place May 30-31, when Spring State Cup champions will officially be crowned and Junior State Cup teams will battle for spots in their championship matches. With titles, trophies, and advancement opportunities on the line, the final weekends promise to deliver some of the most competitive and memorable soccer of the year. We're excited to see which teams rise to the occasion as the 2026 State Cup season reaches its thrilling conclusion in just a few short weeks.

PREODP REGISTRATION



Registration is still open for the 2026 PreODP Program, scheduled for June 20, 2026, at Independence Park in Canton, MI. This introductory ODP experience is designed exclusively for 2016 birth-year players (1/1/2016 - 12/31/2016) and provides a great opportunity for young athletes to begin their journey in the Olympic Development Program pathway. Players will participate in two required training sessions - 10-11:30 AM and 12:30 - 2 PM - led by experienced ODP coaching staff in a fun, development-focused environment.

The cost to participate is \$130, which includes a Nike drawstring satchel, Nike PreODP shirt, and an added benefit of 10% off registration for any 2016 player who signs up for the July ODP State Team tryouts. PreODP is a great way for players to gain exposure to the ODP training environment while building skills and confidence alongside peers from across the state. Be sure to register early and take advantage of this exciting opportunity. To register, [click here!](#)

ODP101 & GOALKEEPER ACADEMY NUMBERS EXCEED RECORD BREAKING 2026 SEASON

This spring has brought exciting momentum to MSYSA's supplemental training opportunities, with players from across the state continuing to take advantage of the ODP program pathway through ODP101 and Goalkeeper Academy (GKA). In particular, the growth of GKA has been a major highlight this season, showcasing the increasing interest in specialized goalkeeper development and the demand for high-quality training environments led by experienced ODP staff.

"This year, we're excited to see the growth of our Spring ODP101 and GKA training programs," said Julie Pearson, ODP Program Manager. "While ODP101 numbers were lower at some sites, GKA increased significantly. For the first time, we had more than 100 players registered for GKA. That growth provided a major boost overall, leading to higher spring training registration than last year." With sessions hosted throughout Michigan, both programs continue to provide athletes with valuable opportunities to sharpen their technical skills, grow tactically, and continue developing within the ODP system.

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!](#)

NATIONAL 1 LEAGUE



MSYSA is excited to announce the launch of the National 1 League, a new top-tier competition set to begin in the 2026-2027 season. As the Midwest District 5 operator - serving Michigan and Northern Indiana - MSYSA will play a key role in delivering this professionally managed, high-quality league experience. National 1 League (formerly referred to as "NewComp") brings together the USYS National League and the US Club Soccer National Premier League under one unified platform, creating an enhanced pathway for elite teams to compete at the highest level. Inaugural postseason play is scheduled for summer 2027, marking an exciting new chapter for youth soccer competition in our region.

Applications for Fall 2026 will be opening soon, and clubs are encouraged to prepare by highlighting their competitive history, including league performance, tournament results, and participation in events such as State Cup, Nationals, and National League competitions. MSYSA will use this information to evaluate teams for inclusion in this highly competitive platform. For questions or to express interest, clubs can connect with MSYSA staff to stay informed on updates. We look forward to the opportunities in the National 1 League will bring as we continue to elevate the standard of youth soccer in Michigan and beyond. To learn more, [click here!](#)

MSYSA SPRING 2026 REGISTRATION REMINDER & TRANSITION TO 26/27 SEASONAL YEAR

MSYSA continues to accept late player additions for the Spring 2026 season; however, late fees are now being assessed in accordance with the [MSYSA 25/26 Fee Structure](#). Clubs are also reminded that Spring 2026 registration payments are due by May 25, 2026. Any club that has not submitted at least one initial payment by that date will receive a \$100 late payment fee added to its balance. In preparation for the upcoming seasonal year transition, all MSYSA 25/26 events will officially close to late roster additions on July 15, 2026.

Looking ahead to the 2026/27 seasonal year, MSYSA registration events will open on August 1, 2026, with registration data due in GotSport by September 23, 2026, and registration payments due by October 15, 2026. Clubs are strongly encouraged to begin the [International Clearance Transfer \(ITC\)](#) process now for any players born outside the United States or who have previously played soccer internationally, as approval through FIFA and U.S. Soccer can take up to 30 days. Additionally, as clubs move through tryouts and team formation, please remember that the new [age group changes](#) will officially take effect beginning with the 26/27 seasonal year.



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 now open for the MSPSP Summer League, offering teams a flexible, club-friendly way to stay active during the offseason. Designed as an official “club friendly” format, the league allows teams to compete against local opponents while focusing on conditioning, development, sportsmanship, and preparation for the fall season—without the pressure of standings or division titles. Open to Elite, Premier, and Select players, the league runs from June 15 through July 31 and costs \$250 per team. Teams can take advantage of early bird savings of \$50 by enrolling before May 1, with final registration due by May 22. Please note that a \$200 withdrawal penalty will apply after the deadline. 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 programs 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!](#)

ODP VENDORS AT 2026 TRYOUTS

We're looking forward to an exciting time at the 2026 ODP Tryouts this July, and we're thrilled to welcome a great lineup of local food vendors to enhance the experience for players and families. Whether you're fueling up before a session or relaxing between sessions, there will be plenty of delicious options

available throughout the event. Bearclaw Coffee will be on site daily from 7:30 - 11:30 AM to help kickstart your mornings, while Playa Bowls will be serving açai bowls, smoothies, and more every day from 8 AM - 6 PM. In addition, Pryde Athletics will be back again this year with their popular "Recovery Lounge," available all day, every day, offering stretching sessions, recovery boots, and other services to help players stay fresh and perform at their best.

In addition, we'll have a rotating schedule of food trucks bringing even more variety each day. Stello's Burgers will be available on July 24 from 11:30 AM - 5:30 AM, followed by Slows BBQ on July 25 from 11 AM - 5 PM, and Tacos Hernandez on July 26 from 11:30 - 5:30 PM. With so many great options both on and off the field, be sure to stop by the vendors each day and enjoy everything the tryout experience has to offer!

ODP 2027 INTERNATIONAL TRIP

MSYSA is excited to begin planning for the 2027 Olympic Development Program International Trip, where players and families will travel through Southern Germany and parts of Italy for an unforgettable soccer and cultural experience.

The trip itinerary currently includes visits to iconic destinations such as Munich, Verona, Innsbruck, and the Lake Garda region, along with opportunities to tour the famous Allianz Arena, explore Neuschwanstein Castle, experience the Alps, and attend a professional match featuring clubs from Italy's top leagues. Players will also participate in training sessions and international friendly matches throughout the trip, creating a unique blend of development, competition, and sightseeing.

This once-in-a-lifetime experience is expected to include eight nights abroad, multiple international matches, sightseeing excursions, and cultural activities throughout Germany and Italy. Families interested in learning more or joining the trip are encouraged to contact the MSYSA State Office for additional information and upcoming details regarding registration and availability!



Soccer Parenting Blog: How Top Youth Sports Clubs are Improving Player Experience through Parent Feedback

A recent blog from the Soccer Parenting highlights the importance of listening to players' and parents feedback in order to create a more positive youth soccer experience. The article emphasizes that understanding how players truly feel about their environment - whether they feel supported, motivated, and valued - can help clubs and coaches build healthier team cultures and stronger communication with families. Rather than focusing only on results and performance, the discussion encourages organizations to prioritize the overall experience and long-term development of young athletes.



The article also reinforces how meaningful communication between clubs, coaches, and parents can positively impact player happiness and retention in the sport. When families feel informed and included, players are more likely to enjoy their soccer journey and remain engaged over time. By encouraging open dialogue and gathering feedback from all sides of the game, clubs can continue creating environments where players are inspired to learn, compete, and grow both on and off the field. To read more, [click here!](#)



Soccer Parenting Blog: Should My Son Tryout for a New Club - Advice from our Youth Coach Advisory Group

A recent article from Soccer Parenting explores what families should consider when deciding whether to try out for a new soccer club. The piece encourages parents and players to look beyond league names and rankings, focusing instead on the overall environment, coaching philosophy, communication, player development opportunities, and team culture. The article emphasizes that finding the "right fit" is often more important than simply chasing the highest level or biggest name.

The article also reminds families that tryout season can be stressful, but it should ultimately be approached as an opportunity for growth and exploration. Open communication between parents and players is key when evaluating whether a new environment will support both the athlete's development and enjoyment of the game. By prioritizing long-term growth, health culture, and positive experiences, families can make more informed decisions that help players continue to thrive both on and off the field. To read more, [click here!](#)

USYS News Articles: Creating "The 99'ers": USYS alum helping tell iconic team's story

A recent feature from USYS highlights the incredible journey of former youth soccer player Jessi Sheldon, who is now helping bring the story of the iconic 1999 U.S. Women's National Team to the screen through the upcoming Netflix film *The 99'ers*. Sheldon, a former standout youth and Division 1 player, co-founded Game Changing Films and now works behind the scenes, helping recreate the legendary team's unforgettable World Cup run. Her responsibilities include training actors, coordinating soccer choreography, and ensuring the film authentically captures the energy and emotion of the historic tournament.



The article also reflects on the lasting impact the 1999 Women's World Cup team had on an entire generation of players. Sheldon recalled watching the tournament as a teenager at Region 3 ODP camp and how inspiring it was to see women's soccer take center stage on the world stage. Now, decades later, she has the opportunity to help tell that same story for future generations. Her path from youth soccer player to film producer is a powerful reminder of how

the game can open doors far beyond the field while continuing to inspire people through teamwork, passion, and storytelling. To read more, [click here!](#)



USYS News Articles: Two-time champion Karlin Wurlitzer shares her story

A recent article from USYS highlights the inspiring story of two-time National Presidents Cup champion Karlin Wurlitzer and her full-circle journey through the game. Ten years after winning a National Presidents Cup title as a player with Leahi Soccer Club in Hawaii, Wurlitzer returned to the national stage as a coach - leading the next generation of Leahi players to a championship of their own. Reflecting on both experiences, Wurlitzer emphasized how meaningful the atmosphere, camaraderie, and memories created through US Youth Soccer events can be for young athletes.

The article also sheds light on the unique challenges players and teams from Hawaii face, including the extensive travel and limited opportunities to compete against outside competition throughout the year. Despite those obstacles, Wurlitzer credits the dedication of players, coaches, and families for helping Hawaii teams continue to thrive on the national stage. Beyond coaching, Wurlitzer is currently pursuing a master's degree in Cell and Molecular Biology with hopes of attending medical school, while continuing to stay deeply connected to the sport that shaped her journey. Her story serves as a powerful reminder of the lifelong impact youth soccer can have both on and off the field. 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

"The secret is to believe in your dreams; in your potential that you can be like your star, keep searching, keep believing, and don't lose faith in yourself."

-Neymar

KEEP IN TOUCH

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