CDA news

GOING u17 places Keegan Ayre, Marinko Maris, Graham Smith, Adam Lang, Runinder Birring, Cam McKinnon, Alex Marrello, Milos Jeftic, and Karl Bardossi

Findlay wants club foundation

Ian Kennett

BCSA coach **Michael Findlay** and **Canada u17** head coach **Stephen Hart** recently held a development camp at **Burnaby Sports Complex West**, to evaluate u16/17 boys as part of the buildup toward **2005 CONCACAF** qualifying for the **FIFA Youth World Cup**.

The best way to develop young players — is not through BC Soccer. It is through a well organized club system

— Michael Findlay, BCSA coach

The squad came together for just the second time since last year's Germany camp. A trip to Turkey late 2003 was cancelled due to concerns over terrorism.

This recent camp was one of many to be held at **National Training Centres** across Canada in a bid to find the strongest possible talent for 2005. In addition, BCSA coaches are evaluating players for the **Provincial u17** team which will compete at the **Nationals** in July, 2004.

The road to manhood

According to Findlay, the selection process is long and comprehensive. "We begin with scouting at the club level. Coaches will contact us —, or we hear of players, and we go and watch them play. We then invite those we like to provincial evaluation camps, and finally we invite the best players to a March camp to select for Nationals in July. Then from the nationals, Stephen Hart and his staff select the players to evaluate for the Canadian squad".

WORLD FOOTBALL PAGES

***School of hard knocks**: Findlay wants to see less bumps on the road to national glory for promising players like Burnaby's Milos Jeftic*

The majority of National selects will come from both provincial and national training centres. Findlay points out, "Some people may not realize it, but we have scouts and evaluation centres in several regions of the province now from the Island to the interior to northern BC. We want to give every possible player a chance to be seen, but you do not have to live in Vancouver to have that chance".

Youth players currently training and playing with professional clubs in Europe are also in the scout's sights.

"We have to realize that some players will never come to a national training centre", explained Findlay, "but without a doubt there are players [in Europe] receiving top coaching and their game is really developing. We have to include them in our thinking for sure."

Club, coach or country?

"**Sean Fleming** [**CSA**] recently gave a presentation, — on the subject of the absolute need for a well developed club system in Canada as a prerequisite for successful player development", explained Findlay. "He is absolutely correct with this view. In our view, the best way to develop young players in BC or in Canada for that matter is not through BC Soccer. It is through a well organized club system within each provincial association".

Findlay suggests that clubs could be better organized, each with a "paid, professional head coach who develops the training philosophy and trains the various team coaches".

He also believes that clubs should adhere in part to CSA "direction and philosophy" in regards to player development and names a few he deems successful: **Miller** in **Abbotsford**, **Dalrymple** at **Surrey Utd**, **Afshar** of **West Van.**, **Kindel** in **Kerrisdale** and **Mobilio** at **Coquitlam City**.

"All of these guys are excellent coaches", Findlay asserts. "Their clubs are developing levels of success that other teams cannot match. [Head coaches] with the real expertise and experience will set the standard for the players and coaches alike. Club head coaches are definitely the way we ought to be going."

Findlay believes there are not enough clubs subscribing to the plan, for philosophical or political reasons, and too many coaches put their own interests ahead of the kids. "At the end of the day, it has to be about the player. Has he or she made it to the next level? If so, how? If not, why? Coaches need to understand that it is not about making a name for themselves, but rather it is about making a name for the players. We have to try to get onto the same page if we want the best for our players."

The not so super, Super Y–League

The **Super Y–League**, home to **Whitecaps Youth** among others, remains in conflict with the BCSA over issues of player eligibility, for provincial and national teams. BC Soccer sees provincial training and the Y–League as mutually exclusive endeavours. Despite recognizing that some provincial/national players come from other clubs, primarily in Europe, Findlay maintains that, "while certainly the Y–League affords another opportunity for youth to develop their game, we believe that there are several good reasons [why] Y–League players cannot play at the provincial level at the same time. First, coincidental schedules make it very hard on the players in terms of travel, hours at the park, and risk of injury. Second, quite frankly, we believe that the level of competition that we provide through high level games is superior to that of the Y–League. We tell players and their families that they have to choose Y–League or Provincial, but not both".

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— Michael Findlay

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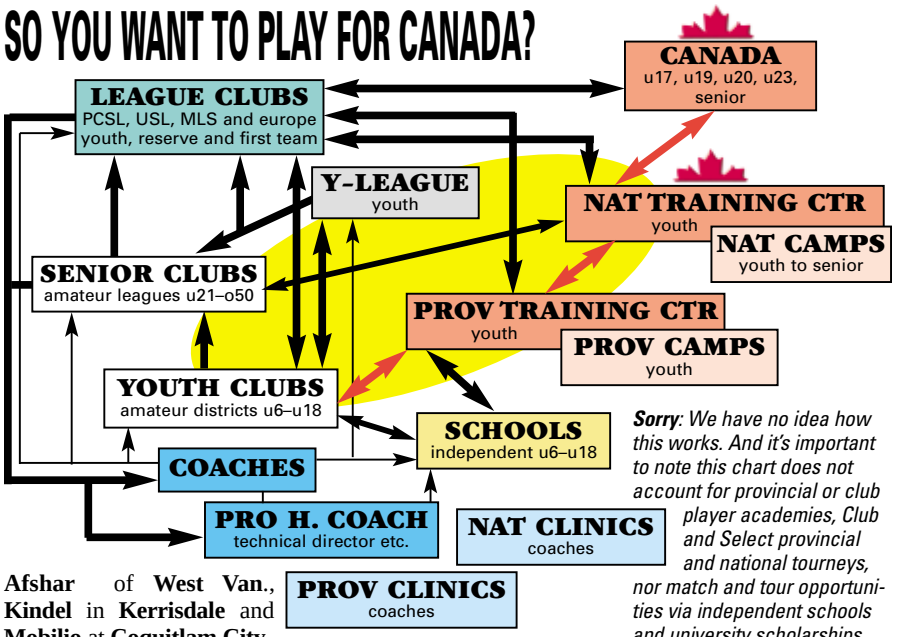

***Sorry**: We have no idea how this works. And it's important to note this chart does not account for provincial or club player academies, Club and Select provincial and national tourneys, nor match and tour opportunities via independent schools and university scholarships*

Talk to Us

"We are always open to dialogue. — We may not always agree, but at least we can talk. Ideas are always welcome", invites Findlay, suggesting youth coaches put himself, **Mark Parker** and **Derek Possee** to the test.

It's so very important that clubs, coaches and associations share the philosophical optimism that every player is a potential 'national', and all should be afforded equal opportunity to climb the steps on their own merits. The best interests of the player must be at the forefront, and by standardizing the process, we can assure such..

Can the passionate and dedicated soccer folk of BC find common ground? Findlay would like to think so, and we thank him for a candid examination of what may get us there. ●

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