



BCSA soccer association

Everybody, from club coaches, to soccer academy owners, to provincial coaches, has a role to play, but everybody has to understand what those roles are. Otherwise, there will be chaos — Victor Montagliani



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BCSA's doctrine of development

■ Ian Kennett

When it comes to player development in British Columbia, there are as many opinions, values, methods, and recipes as there are coaches. And, that, according to BCSA directors and coaches, is a problem which makes player development in BC a source of misunderstanding, miscommunication, and occasional conflict.

To provide a smoother route for players in BC to progress through various levels, the BCSA designed the **Player Development**

ers are given a real look, and have a fair chance to make the provincial teams”.

Dispelling the myths of many

In the mixer is the IPL, giving an opportunity for players, coaches, and officials to work in a competitive evaluative environment. Findlay hopes that perhaps “the next provincial coach or CSA or FIFA carded official can be identified and supported through the Intra-Provincial league”.

The Player Development Pyramid is partly

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Pyramid – a continuum ranging from youth recreational soccer to **Provincial** teams to **National Youth** teams. As BCSA coach **Michael Findlay** explains, “This is probably the biggest question that’s asked all the time: Just what is the player development pyramid all about in BC, and ultimately within the country?”

Findlay explains that all begins with club mini-programs for u6–8 players, then on to club programs featured province-wide. The kids then hit the district development centres which supply talent to the **Intra-Provincial League (IPL)** and “the **Y-League** currently in existence”. Under 12–15 **Academy** programs supply provincial programming levels up to u18, and as Findlay defines, “players that are identified are developed and scouted through the national coaching staff and national training centre staff, to come into the national training programs, the national youth team program and the national senior team program. That is our duty and our mandate, to live within these elements of the pyramid”.

Mystery of the pyramid explained

The pyramid is designed as a fluid, two way structure, to recognize that players develop at different speeds and at different times. As such, players can move up and down depending on their individual progress and performance. Findlay admitted that, “in the past, when a player reaches a certain area, and has spilled out of the provincial programs, he or she has been told to go on their merry way. By allowing the players to flow between levels, he or she can stay in the game longer and continue to train in the BCSA program”.

According to Findlay ‘the pyramid’ is needed, “because the development of players is an ongoing process, and it needs a respected pyramid of development. We need everybody to understand their role in each of those areas”.

BCSA selects players from provincial training centres in **Vancouver, North Shore, Upper Island, Lower Island, Kelowna, and Prince George**, and Findlay explains the advantages of such, “unlike in the past where there were 150 players at one camp — we can now evaluate players from several of the centres at a final evaluation camp, and these play-

designed to facilitate communication, leadership, and control within a football community that houses a variety of ideas and levels of understanding about the real mandates of BC soccer. The BCSA’s **Derek Possee** explains, “the need to avoid propaganda. There are too many myths floating about in the soccer community. We need for everybody to know and understand what we are doing here, and avoid conflicts because of misunderstandings about the structure of this pyramid”.

Posse suggests, “A lot of people don’t seem to want structure because they want their own piece of the world, and at times, teams are all that matter,” and reassures that the “BCSA is part of the players’ journey, and we, that is coaches, have to always be willing to pass a player along to the next level”.

Posse points out that the BCSA supports the national program completely, even at the expense of provincial teams, and that’s not always the norm across Canada. “We all need to support the players on every level, and all coaches should be pleased to send *that* player, not *their* player, to the next level”.



Leadership and respect

Victor Montagliani, BCSA VP senior (currently a candidate for re-election to the post) goes further to suggest, “...a need for a disciplined approach to player development in BC. There is no room for freelancers! Everybody must follow this system if we in BC are going to be successful in developing players”.

The club or province debate frustrates

Montagliani. “That question should never, ever be asked because the structure and path are clear. In most jurisdictions in the world, players never get faced with that decision”.

“The problem here”, he states with some assurance, “is that because there is no respect for the game, and everybody is out for their own 50 cents, there is no respect for the structure, and then you come into choices”.

Leadership at all levels (amateur, pro, national) is the key, Montagliani believes, to overcoming such hurdles, and though he acknowledges that a player can certainly play where he/she chooses, the road to provincial and national success is clear, “...follow the path as outlined in the pyramid”.

“There is some agreement to this in the soccer community”, Montagliani continues, “but there is also a lot coffee shop talk and an attitude that, if it’s going to hurt my team on Saturday morning, then, no, I am not going let my player move up to the next level. And that has to stop! If we do not stop this attitude, then I do not ever want to hear people ask: Why are we ranked 90th in the world?”

The healing starts at home

Montagliani is adamant that the solution to developing players in BC and in Canada lies within our own borders, and he is not interested in hearing about how things are done in every other country in the world. “The soccer ball does not speak English, or Dutch, or Italian”. Montagliani believes we can look elsewhere for ideas but we need to “find our own solutions”, and that the current trend to look south for ‘the answer’ is misguided. “We don’t understand that the socioeconomic model in the US is very different from ours, and so is our culture”.

He explains, “Costa Rica, in 1990, scrapped its entire model and set out on a 10 year plan, and they are now in the top three in CONCACAF. The USA did the same thing”.

Montagliani attributes the US success in part to **Carlos Quiros**, coach of **Real Madrid**, and writer of *Project 2010*, in which he describes “creating harmony within the soccer community as the first step to successfully developing the game and the players”. Harmony, Montagliani explains, is “allowing for intellectual differences, and different ideas, and everybody mostly on the same page, and thinking in the same way”.

“The role of the FA and the path of development must be accepted by everybody to create harmony, and all the other ideas will find their place,” he believes.

The BCSA believes that the player development model used in BC should be a template for other provinces, and that such must be a nationally accepted strategy. Furthermore, the

BCSA feel that the CSA must demonstrate leadership in this area, and Victor Montagliani, both player and administrator, is passionate when he says, “the CSA must put their kahunas on the table and say ‘this is how it’s done, this is our common ground”.

And, according to the BCSA top brass and coaches, until everybody believes in a single model for all player development, Canada will continue to struggle lag behind the rest of the football-playing world. ●



The 2nd Annual Tournament of Champions was held *Victoria Day* long weekend at **South Surrey Athletic Park**, and by all accounts was a marked success for the BCSA and the **u12–17** elite-level youth football players participating.

The tournament, this year sponsored by **Diadora**, is a showcase of regional talent and pitted BC players against teams from **Alberta, Washington and Oregon** states, and **BC Intra Provincial League** teams. On special display for over 25 university and college coaches were the select u16/17 players.

All participating boys and girls teams were forged into 12 age/gender groups and competed in a round-robin format, with the first place group declared Champions.

BC teams fared well, winning seven of the 12 groups (Boys u12, u16, u17 and Girls u13, u14, u16 and u17) and placing second in two others (Girls u12 and u15).

The u17 Boys rocked through its group dispatching Alberta 3–0 and destroying both Washington and Oregon 5–0.

Also unbeaten, the u17 Girls found Washington and Oregon squads easy targets, winning both matches 3–0. Their stiffest competition was actually from local lasses — **North Shore** — who held BC’s reps to a 0–0 draw.

As embarrassing as the u17 Boys scorelines were, the u16 Boys took it to extremes, absolutely thumping both Alberta and Oregon squads 8–0, while Washington saved face with a 3–3 draw.

The u16 Girls had a tougher time winning its group over Alberta. Both the Albertans and Washington held the BC girls to ties (2–2 and 3–3 respectively), while Oregon fell 2–0 to grant BC the title.

Of the 40 games played by BCSA teams the provincial selects won 22, tied seven and lost 11, and they did it emphatically at most, hitting the onion bag 110 times, while conceding only 47 goals. ●