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Grand Rapids Crew Juniors e-News

IN THIS ISSUE

[MLS launches Youth Development Initiative](#)

[GRCJ Announces Brand New Homefields](#)

[The Five pillars of Player Evaluation](#)

QUICK LINKS

[GRCJ Try-Out Info](#)

[Newsletter Archive](#)
[Our Premier Coaches](#)
[Academy Camps](#)
[More On GRCJ](#)

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MLS launches Youth

Issue: I

June/2007

Dear Soccer Fan,

You are receiving this first installment of the Grand Rapids Crew Juniors (GRCJ) e-News because we want to introduce you to the club that we are building and tell you about our relationship with Major League Soccer's (MLS) Columbus Crew. You will find that the GRCJ is new in name and style but has the experience of two established clubs from the West Michigan area.

GRASA and GVPSC decided to join forces establishing a club that can provide the best soccer experience for players and parents in the state of Michigan. Add to that the spirit of Lamar Hunt and the desire of the Columbus Crew to create the premier youth player development program in Major League Soccer and you ,quite possibly, have a perfect combination.

The combined assets and expertise of the three organizations will allow West Michigan soccer players to have a fun and affordable soccer experience of the highest quality at any skill level. Within the GRCJ structure, we will have our Premier and Select Teams compete at various levels from the MRL to GVSA while providing training programs through our Academy to all levels of soccer in West Michigan.

So, we invite you to take a look at this first installment of our e-News and read about the MLS Player Development Program, learn what coaches are looking for during try-outs, along with reading about our new home fields (MVP Fieldhouse). Under Quick Links look for our Try-Out Information and Premier Coaching Line Up and see how you can become part of "America's Hardest Working Team". Oh, and don't forget to visit us regularly at www.grcrewjuniors.com.

Grand Rapids Crew Juniors Announces Homefields at Brand New Facility, Partners with

Development Initiative



The article below was written in the
2006

Major League Soccer
Communications

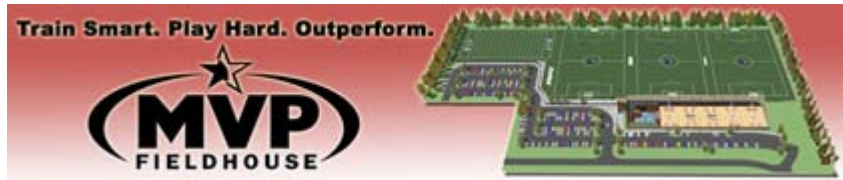
Major League Soccer charts new territory among major professional sports leagues in the United States by launching a youth development initiative that allows teams to acquire, outside the annual draft, top young players from their respective local areas. Ultimately this initiative will enhance the quality of young players entering the League and allow more of them to represent their hometown teams.

MLS is requiring each of its teams this season to establish a youth amateur program, separate from the pro club. These youth teams will give talented young players with professional aspirations an excellent opportunity to pursue their dreams, stay close to home and continue their education. Players registered for at least 24 months in the MLS youth program become eligible to sign a professional contract with the team without entering the MLS SuperDraft.

"The launch of youth development for MLS clubs is a major step forward for professional player development in the United States," said MLS Deputy Commissioner Ivan Gazidis. "MLS clubs will be able to invest resources in scouting and developing talented young players who will ultimately have the opportunity to graduate directly onto the first team roster. Those clubs which develop the best programs will reap rewards on their senior roster. This focus on youth development at the local level will provide tremendous additional opportunities for the best young American players and will better connect our clubs to their communities."

During the next few years, MLS clubs will create teams in up to six age groups. Players on these teams will wear the club's colors and train under the same coaching staff. Players on MLS youth teams may be able to compete with youth club teams at various times during

MVP Fieldhouse for Training and Games



Grand Rapids, Mich. - The Grand Rapids Crew Juniors (GRCJ) announced today that they have partnered with MVP Fieldhouse to provide a home field complex for their Premier and Select Division teams. The brand new, state of the art, all turf facility in Cascade Township (5435 28th Street Court SE in Grand Rapids) will be used for both training and games by the GRCJ. Each team in the club will also be able to enjoy on site speed and agility training provided by Parisi Speed School, known for their work with professional athletes throughout the country.

"We are very happy to finally be able to give our club a home where all teams can practice and play games side by side", said Josh Sheldon, General Manager of the GRCJ. "Besides the obvious advantage of having turf fields where games hardly will cancel and all our coaches being in one area to benefit all teams, we also can provide a true club environment that will be beneficial to all our soccer families."

The facility will give the coaching staff of the GRCJ the ability to work closer together to provide and implement a standardized training curriculum that will be developed in coordination with their Major League Soccer (MLS) affiliate the Columbus Crew.

MVP Fieldhouse will have three full size soccer fields and two smaller practice fields available when the complex is completed around August 1st. Additionally, there will be an indoor facility that will house five basketball and volleyball courts.

The article below was published in the NSCAA magazine Soccer Journal and written for coaches, but can be a valuable read for both coaches and players as we go into try-outs the next couple of weeks.

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I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, ARE THOSE LEGAL SHOES.

jeopardize a player's NCAA eligibility.

Teams with existing youth programs that meet the established criteria may begin registering players to their Home Grown Player List this season. Therefore, the first "graduates" of these programs could move directly onto MLS rosters as early as 2008. Through 2010, teams will be permitted to sign up to two players from its Home Grown Player List per year.

The MLS youth programs will meet a number of standards, including:

The program will be based in the team's "Home Territory" approved by the MLS Board of Governors.

Each team will be allowed one team of up to 18 players in each of the following age groups on its Home Grown Player List:

Under-25
U20
U18
U16
U15
U14

Clubs will hire at least one coach for each age group. Players on these teams will be registered on the team's Home-Grown Player List. A minimum number of training and game days per year has been set for each age group.

All players must reside in a team's "Home Territory" for at least one year prior to being added to the team's Home Grown Player List. Players must be added to an MLS team's Home Grown Player List prior to entering a four-year college, but can maintain their Home Grown Player status during college if registered before entering that institution. Similarly, members of the U17, U20, and U23 U.S. National Teams cannot be added to an MLS team's Home Grown Player List, but a player already on a Home Grown Player List can maintain that status if selected for a U.S. National team at a later date.

Major League Soccer has already established player development programs unique among U.S. professional team sports with its Reserve Division, which recently completed its second season, and Generation adidas, which provides scholarships for select players. This new initiative complements those existing programs and

The Five Pillars

Using the Five Pillars in player evaluation

By Lawrence Fine

In evaluating a soccer player, consider the five pillars of the game and see where the player ranks in each of the five categories. The five categories are:

- Mental
- Physical
- Technical
- Tactical
- Lifestyle

The first category is Mental, which some may refer to as "Psychological." This encompasses the player's includes whether the players place greater emphasis on team accomplishments instead of individual accomplishments, whether they can handle pressure and their character (trustworthiness, loyalty, dedication, self-discipline). Also included is how they interact with their teammates, coaches, referees (and referee decisions) and fans.

The second pillar is the Physical aspect. A player's size, speed, strength, coordination and conditioning are included in this category. In assessing speed, greater importance should be given to sprinting speed (10-40 yards) opposed to speed over a longer distance, such as a two-mile run. Other ways to determine this ranking would include a person's body fat percentage, jumping ability, etc. The third pillar to look at is Technical ability. Does he or she strike and receive the ball properly? Do they run properly? A player's speed is factored into the Physical category, but running technique would be under Technical because a player's running technique could be corrected if it is improper, resulting in an upgrade of the Physical category rating). Also, do they play balls properly in a game situation? A number of players out can strike a ball beautifully without pressure but can't replicate the feat in a game situation.

The Tactical pillar consists of things like do the players know where to be places on the field and when to be there? How is their positioning and their decision-making on the field? Do they dribble too much or not shoot enough?

The Lifestyle pillar is one most frequently forgotten. Does the player eat properly? Does he or she get enough sleep? Party too much? Is he or she well mannered? Does he or she live in a clean environment? Is his or her lifestyle the type you want associated with your team? These are the types of questions taken into consideration under the Lifestyle pillar.

Having just been involved with the evaluation of an entire team using

reemphasizes Major League Soccer's ongoing commitment to player development and lasting connections to its teams' communities.

these five pillars, I can honestly say that in doing this, you can really see what you need to work on with your team (if you are a coach) or with yourself (if you are a player). We gave each player a + if they were thought to be a positive in that pillar, a - if they were thought to be a negative in that pillar and a ? if we didn't know (we actually went with +? and ?- if we thought they were leaning one way or the other).

When you see a lot of minus signs in the Technical pillar, it is clear what the focus for upcoming training sessions should be. If there are plenty of plus signs on the tactical side, it means you are doing a good job there. The same is true with Mental and Physical. With Lifestyle category, if players grade poorly because they aren't eating well, bringing in a sports nutritionist may be the answer.

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One of the best things you can do as a coach is to evaluate the players, then share the evaluations with them. Discuss the reasons they graded poorly in certain areas and explain why they achieved high marks in other areas. Once you explain the reasons for the grading (and it's extremely important that they be done honestly and objectively), help identify steps that can be taken to improve their grade in that category. This is where your role as a coach can have an impact that extends beyond simply teaching them soccer. Show them how character matters, how attitude matters, how lifestyle matters, how physical conditioning matters in a person's long-term success and happiness and you will be successful as a coach.

If you are a player, evaluate yourself objectively, then see what you need to work on to get all plus signs. (By the way, only one player on the college team I was evaluating received three plus signs; no one else had more than two. This was a high level group, so the results emphasize the importance of being objective and not giving positive marks freely).

Use these five pillars to make yourself better and to make your team better. In the long run, you will be successful.

Thank you for your interest and look for future installments of the Grand Rapids Crew Juniors e-News. If you need more information right away go to:

www.grcrewjuniors.com

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Your Friends At Grand Rapids Crew Juniors

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