

September 25, 2013

SAAC Statement on OPDL Decision

On September 21, 2013, at the Ontario Soccer Association Board of Directors meetings in Cambridge, a proposal was put forward to allow ORNCA (OSA Recognized Non-Club Academy) organizations to be eligible for OPDL licenses.

The OPDL license would allow these organizations to field U13 teams in the new league beginning in 2014. **Unfortunately the Board of Directors decided that, regardless of whether or not these organizations meet all the standards for participation, they would not be eligible to participate.**

This comes as extremely disappointing news to those of us at SAAC that hoped the recent initiatives brought out by the OSA would be player-focused and that the Board of Directors of the OSA would be acting in the best interest of the game.

In 2011, the OSA's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which was created to provide direction to the OSA in the areas of elite player development, voted unanimously to endorse the inclusion of OSA recognized Academies in the OPDL. The Board of Directors chose to ignore this direction and as a result have set the wheels in motion for yet another opportunity to move the game forward to become weakened by political intervention.

It would be difficult to convince a neutral observer that the banning of private academies from the OPDL stream serves any purpose except to protect organizations that do not believe they could compete in an open marketplace for elite soccer services. A high performance competition structure without the inclusion of SAAC groups with the experience and proven results in running a high performance organization simply does not make sense. No other organizations in the province have endured the technical and organizational audits that SAAC has over the last few years including being held accountable to uphold the highest standards in the game- this includes "professional" clubs within the province.

Looking forward, the good news for SAAC Academies is that since our organizations were already providing OPDL-level standards at **ALL** age groups in the past, they will continue to do so moving forward. Contrary to many club applications whose pledge to provide standards-based programming was contingent on an OPDL license, SAAC Academies will continue to provide high level programming and a pathway to regional, provincial and national team programs at all ages as we have always done. Our organizations will continue to work together, investing in player and coaching development to constantly raise the bar as high performance organizations.

SAAC Academies have proven on the field that they can sustain these high level programs and provide a professional environment that produces results:

- Over 30 Nationally licensed coaches (**UEFA, USSF, CSA**) across our membership
- Over 40 players sent to **NCAA Division I** programs in the past 5 years
- Over 70 players sent to **Canadian University** and other post-secondary institutions in the past 5 years
- Over 20 players sent on **International pro trials** in the past 5 years

- Over 10 players placed on **National youth and senior teams**

- Over 10 players signed to **Pro clubs**, including 2 players taken in the 1st round of the 2013 MLS Draft by Toronto FC

SAAC and its members will continue to press forward with our mission of developing world class soccer players in Canada on a continual & systematic basis. The recent decisions made by the OSA Board of Directors will not change this, nor will they prevent us from continuing to lobby for the improvement of this great game in our country.

Check out www.saac.ca or follow us on twitter (@**AcademySoccerCa**) over the next few months as we unveil our plans for 2014.