

Michael Winograd – United States Adult Soccer Association Position Paper

Board of Directors
United States Adult Soccer Association

Dear Members of the Board:

I am pleased to have the opportunity to submit this position paper addressing the critical role US Adult Soccer must continue to play in the US Soccer landscape. Its motto, “Soccer – your game for life,” reflects US Adult Soccer’s importance throughout the continuum of the US Soccer community. Its leagues provide high quality competition for aspiring professionals and other amateurs looking to prolong their competitive careers, as well as the opportunity for generations of soccer players and fans to continue to play and stay connected to the game they grew up with and love long after the realities of work and grown up life have set in.

US Adult Soccer bridges communities and even cultures, allowing teams and leagues to compete across the American amateur landscape, integrating and enriching the very fabric of soccer in this country. That is true from its leagues, to its Soccer Fest, to its Amateur Cup. At the same time, the US Open Cup, a quintessential hallmark of this project, gives US Adult Soccer teams an opportunity to be an active part of the larger soccer pyramid in this country and to test their steel against teams they may even be supporting on any other given weekend. That feeling of inclusiveness serves to cultivate and increase interest and personal investment in the game from amateur to the professional leagues.

Most critically, giving adults the opportunity to continue to play and compete in the game they love helps maintain a robust soccer environment throughout the lives of members of the US Soccer community. That not only allows adults to continue to reap the direct on and off field mental, physical and social benefits the game of soccer provides, but it helps increase the number of qualified, soccer-literate coaches, fans and parents; inspires and builds love and investment in the game from the youth to the professional levels; and ensures that soccer knowledge and passion is passed on to the next generation of American soccer players.

Given its important role, US Adult Soccer will play a central role in my administration. As I have said repeatedly, I will implement a governance structure that is inclusive, merit-based and transparent. Critical US Soccer decisions will reflect meaningful input from all parts of the US Soccer landscape that they affect. Consistent input from US Adult Soccer will be imperative.

As President of US Soccer, I will focus on several key areas relating to US Adult Soccer. First, I will make a concerted, collaborative effort to help further integrate and unify amateur teams and leagues with US Adult Soccer and, by extension, US Soccer. Currently, too many teams and leagues from under-represented communities are not included in the existing US Adult Soccer amateur structures. In order to integrate them with US Adult Soccer, I will work with US Adult Soccer to make recruitment broader and more inclusive, as well as to create incentives — for example, from administrative benefits, to field access, to even potentially an amateur promotion/relegation structure in order to give teams and leagues concrete reasons to want to affiliate. I will ensure US Soccer works with US Adult Soccer to accomplish this. Once we do, we will be a stronger Federation and a stronger soccer community.

Second, I will eliminate the (nominal) registration fees currently paid by US Adult Soccer teams to the Federation. There was a time when US Soccer needed that revenue in order to support the National Team programs. It no longer does. And the value teams receive for those registration

fees is questionable at best. It is perplexing that the fees for adult teams are higher than the fees for youth teams, but, in any event, I will eliminate both registration fees.

Third, US Adult Soccer players must feel that they are connected to US Soccer. As a small, but incremental, step, I will ensure that all US Adult Soccer teams receive US Soccer patches to wear on their game jerseys. This symbol of affiliation with US Soccer will reinforce a sense that adult players and teams are members of something larger than themselves, remain part of the same US Soccer community in which they participated as youth, and are keys to furthering the mission of US Soccer. Adult players in this country must feel like they are part of and supported by the Federation.

Fourth, I will work collaboratively to increase the exposure of and access to the US Open Cup, where amateur players are given the opportunity to compete against the professional teams they watch every week. The Open Cup is the oldest cup competition in CONCACAF involving professional teams and gives players at every level of US Adult Soccer the sense that they are part of and have a vested interest in the US Soccer hierarchy. The recent opening of the qualification process to more US Adult Soccer teams was a step in the right direction, but I will work to gain a higher media profile for the tournament, both on USSF social media platforms and on sports media outlets generally, and I will work on opening up the qualification process as broadly as possible. In the same respect, I will seek to help increase other potential scouting exposure for the younger, aspiring amateurs.

Fifth, as part of an overriding US Soccer project, I will work collaboratively with all affected constituents to improve our paths for attracting, training and retaining referees and ensure that experts responsible for administering and training referees adhere to basic minimum US Soccer standards. I will likewise work collaboratively to define a clear path for elite referees. That path must be integrated with US Adult Soccer. For a number of reasons, we will also implement a zero tolerance policy in connection with inappropriate conduct towards referees.

Finally, I will promptly work to simplify and ease the burden of registering foreign born US Citizens with clubs in the US. Notwithstanding FIFA regulations, placing an additional burden on US citizens who were born abroad, whether to American military service personnel or simply prior to becoming part of the melting pot that defines our country, is offensive. I will work with all relevant parties to resolve this nuisance.

One of the biggest misconceptions about American soccer is its lack of history. Across the country, US Adult Soccer boasts some of the oldest teams and leagues in American sports. The US Open Cup is one of the five oldest cup competitions in world football. These attributes should be highlighted, supported, and used as a foundation upon which to further build the soccer community in the United States. As President, I am wholly committed to supporting US Adult Soccer and helping it further its critical mission in the US Soccer landscape.

Sincerely,



Michael Winograd

Candidate for President of the United States Soccer Federation