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# THE NEED FOR COACH EDUCATION IN SOCCER-SPECIFIC FITNESS TRAINING

There have been many unique and exciting additions to the soccer landscape in Ontario in the past two years.

The Ontario Player Development League (OPDL) — a standards-based youth league beginning at the U13 age group and requiring all member clubs to meet and achieve standards for coaching, therapy, facilities and of course, fitness — had its inaugural season in 2014 and has now grown/doubled to two age groups for both boys and girls for the 2015 season.

Ontario League 1 — another a standards-based league but for elite young adult players in the “train to compete” and “train to win” stages of Long Term Player Development — also had its inaugural season in 2014 and has also grown to include a women’s division in 2015.

More recently, at the 2015 Ontario Soccer Association’s annual Soccer Development Conference, the OSA outlined some changes that will be made to the Provincial Coaching License course, including a new “National B Prep Course”, as well as a requirement for all Provincial “B” Licensed coaches to earn continuing education credits in order to maintain their licenses.

The establishment of standards-based leagues for elite youth and adult amateur players in Ontario is a huge step in the right direction for optimal player development and to strengthen our Canadian National Teams.

As a company working exclusively with soccer players, we at Soccer Fitness Inc. are primarily concerned with the fitness standards associated with these

new leagues, and how they can best be implemented in order to optimize players’ physical development. One certainty is that, as the numbers of teams and players in standards-based leagues grows, the clubs with teams in these leagues will require knowledgeable and experienced fitness coaches to provide the high quality fitness testing and training the players require. Making sure that fitness coaches are educated about safe, science/evidence-based methods of testing and training is of critical importance in ensuring soccer players receive the high standard of training mandated. While there presently exists a wide variety of continuing education courses aimed at fitness professionals, including a few considered to be “sport-specific training courses,” there is no course available to coaches or fitness professionals that teaches soccer-specific fitness training.

It was with these facts in mind that we at Soccer Fitness Inc. decided to create the Soccer Fitness Trainer’s Course, aimed at fitness professionals and/or soccer coaches looking to increase their knowledge and practical skills in the design and implementation of soccer-specific on-field fitness training. The first edition of our Course will be taking place in the fall of 2015, at Trio Sportsplex, located at 601 Cityview Blvd. in Vaughan. Our Trainer’s Course is a unique coach-education program that combines theoretical lectures in the sports sciences, with the practical and soccer-specific

BY RICHARD BUCCIARELLI

application of these sciences. Fitness professionals and/or soccer coaches who take the Soccer Fitness Trainer’s Course will learn how to plan and implement year-round soccer-specific fitness training programs for their teams.

Central to the Course is the teaching of Soccer Fitness’ 60-Minute Soccer-Specific On-Field Fitness Session. We have used and continue to use these comprehensive 1-hour sessions in all our On-Field Training programs, with teams ranging from U10-U18 rep./academy, the Ontario Provincial/Canadian National Teams, the Toronto FC Academy teams, and professional soccer clubs abroad.

The basic format and structure of the Soccer Fitness 60-Minute Soccer-Specific On-Field Fitness Session, which is described and taught in detail during the Course, is as follows:

0-15 minutes: Soccer-Specific Warm-Up

16-30 minutes: Soccer-Specific Coordination Training

31-45 minutes: Soccer-Specific Energy System Training

46-60 minutes: Soccer-Specific Strength Training

Other topics covered in the course include anatomy, physiology, biomechanics, and motor learning specific to the sport of soccer, as well as modules on fitness assessment, periodization of training, injury prevention and specific youth soccer training.

Fitness professionals with an interest in working with soccer players will come

away from the Course with a much better understanding of how to make all aspects of their training programs more specific to the sport of soccer. Soccer coaches who are working with players at any age or level of ability will come away from the Course with valuable knowledge and skills that will allow them to successfully plan and implement physical fitness exercises into their practices, and they will also learn how to integrate fitness work within their regular technical/tactical training sessions.

The Ontario Soccer Association's new standards for soccer-specific physical fitness testing and training are changes that will be extremely helpful to the long-term athletic development of our province's soccer players. Fitness professionals and soccer coaches working in high performance

environments and wishing to meet these standards will now require some specific training and education about how to plan and implement optimal physical fitness testing and training programs for their athletes and teams. It is our belief that the Soccer Fitness Trainer's Course will provide participants with essential knowledge and practical skills in the fields of exercise science and on-field coaching/training. Our Trainer's Course will provide coaches and fitness professionals with the tools they need to optimize the physical development and performance of the players they work with.



Richard Bucciarelli is the President of Soccer Fitness Inc., and the creator of the Soccer Fitness Trainer's Course, which is being held in October, 2015 in Vaughan, Ontario. For more information about Soccer Fitness Inc. and the Soccer Fitness Trainer's Course, visit [www.soccerfitness.ca](http://www.soccerfitness.ca)

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