

8/31/20

To: Nevada Youth Soccer Association Membership

As summer comes to a close and thoughts turn to fall activities, we want to give you an update regarding where we currently are with regard to an eventual return to youth soccer games, leagues, tournaments and other activities. We know that the past several months have been difficult and trying for everyone, including uncertainty about school, school-related activities, church services, youth sports and several other extra-curricular activities that have been impacted by the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you are well aware, the widespread business and governmental closures that took place in March of this year also affected all sports activities - youth, adult, amateur, professional, outdoor and indoor. Since that time, beginning in May, we have been operating under the Return to Play protocols that were adopted by the NYSA Board in early May. These protocols were also reviewed and approved by the State and were shared with other units of government in Nevada. Currently, we are in Phase II of those protocols. When Phase IV is eventually reached, soccer competition and training will have effectively returned to pre-COVID levels.

We receive questions daily regarding why these protocols were developed, and why we have yet to return to open and unrestricted play. This is a question that deserves a thorough answer directly from NYSA.

First and foremost, given that we are still in the midst of the pandemic and that the threat of exposure is still very real, there are rules and directives that have been issued by the State, the Local Empowerment Advisory Panel, County government and City government that we (and our membership) must abide by. This is the same for us as it is for bars, restaurants, hotels, churches, casinos, and every other business or organization in the State. Operating outside of these rules and directives is simply not permitted, and we respect the fact that these are in place to protect the public during these challenging and dangerous times. There have been questions as to why other youth sports or private businesses are acting in a conflicting manner to NYSA and the answer is, they are also subject to these directives. NYSA is only responsible for our compliance and how we abide by the protocols specific to youth soccer.

Among the current rules in force at this time from one or more of the governmental bodies is that scrimmages, games, and/or tournaments are not permitted activities (see the directive at [LEAP](#) or [nvhealthresponse.nv.gov](#)). As a consequence, our current Return to Play protocols do not allow for these activities. Another rule that is prescribed, is that the maximum number of people allowed on a field at any time is 50 persons. As above, our current protocols do not permit the presence of more than 50 people on a field. These are a few examples of rules that were prescribed to us, and that we must comply with. While these rules do limit what we are allowed to do, we have been very fortunate that the State and local governments have worked with us thus far to help move things along more rapidly than may have otherwise been the case. We appreciate being able to continue the dialogue with these organizations to ensure the safe and timely return to some sort of normal.

As the fall season approaches (or what might have been a normal fall season in pre-pandemic times), another issue that has arisen is that of travel by Nevada teams to non-Nevada events. This presents two issues that are challenging. First, as of now, teams have not been allowed to practice in full squad or scrimmage situations with any contact, it raises the concern that the players are not yet physically prepared for full tournament or game with elite competition. The risk of serious and long-term injury is

certainly increased, and levels of performance may not be to the standards you would expect for your team. Second, the notion of teams traveling to sports events that involve mass gatherings of groups from multiple states, and then returning to the fields in Nevada, presents itself as a risk to both the travelers and those who they may come into contact with upon return. This is still something that the CDC still views as a high-risk activity.

In June NYSA has taken the position that traveling at this time is an activity that it does not recommend, endorse, approve or authorize. This position has been communicated very clearly to the clubs, leagues and teams and has not been altered since its establishment. At the same time, we are also aware that there are some members who may choose (or have chosen) to not abide by NYSA's position regarding travel, or even those rules pertaining to permitted training activities. Those who choose to ignore these rules – which are also the governmental rules – assume risks including the loss of insurance coverage during non-permitted activities. Beyond this, in the eyes of both NYSA and governmental entities, risks of exposure are being taken that are not responsible at this time.

Based upon a group call this past week, the larger clubs and leagues in Nevada have agreed to forego any travel for the next several weeks. This will be reevaluated in mid to late September, and the agreed-upon moratorium on travel should help to alleviate travel-related issues in the near-term.

Certain teams and clubs have been brought before the NYSA Discipline Committee or the NYSA Board for violations of various pandemic-related rules. In a very limited number of cases, coaches who were conducting prohibited activities have been sanctioned. Other cases are currently pending. One thing that should be made very clear with respect to disciplinary cases is that the NYSA Board will not, and has not, supported the sanctioning of any players or youth participants for the breaches of pandemic-related rules. We fully understand that the final decision to participate in prohibited activities was made by coaches and club leadership, and not by the players.

We want to emphasize that the governmental rules and directives that are in place at this time are meant to protect our players and families, and we respect those rules. Consequently, we will continue to enforce these rules as long as they may exist. Our primary obligation – and we take this very seriously – is the welfare and safety of those who are a part of our programs. Up until this point, compliance to guidelines has prevented extensive positive cases within our membership. We will only be able to continue to progress on this path with your ongoing support and unity.

So where are we now, and where do we hope to be in the coming weeks? As noted herein, we are currently in Phase II of the Return to Play protocols. We fully realize that the current phase does limit what coaches and teams may do when training, and that the players in particular are looking forward to more content in their training and a return to regular games. We are working on this with state municipalities and have been for the past several weeks. It should be added that, contrary to some opinions, our players are allowed to practice and train on a regular basis. Training has been allowed since June 15th, and NYSA has worked very hard to help ensure that fields have been available to allow for training and practices during a time of year when fields are normally closed for seasonal maintenance. We deeply appreciate the cooperation of Clark County and the cities of Las Vegas and Henderson for working with us to help make field space available. While training is allowed (as long as it follows pandemic-related protocols), scrimmages and games are still not allowed.

Our hope and efforts are geared toward trying to get approval to move toward scrimmages and games, which would allow our leagues – Nevada South Youth Soccer League, Silver State Soccer League, Alliance

Youth Soccer League, Northern Nevada Youth Soccer League and Great Basin Youth Soccer League – to conduct league play by sometime this fall. We believe that this is achievable, though dates are uncertain at this time. In order to move to full games, we will be taking some transitional steps that would increase training content, and better prepare the teams for a return to normal competition. This is a step that we hope to take in the next few weeks, if not sooner. These plans are subject to approval from governmental entities, though I know that they share the objective of getting youth sports back to normal.

Please recognize that the new normal may not resemble the old normal, at least in the next several months. Limits on spectators, sideline protocols and other measures are likely going to be a part of our world for the foreseeable future.

Finally, a return to normal game competition would also mean that current concerns and restrictions regarding travel would also be set aside. Please bear in mind, however, that the case numbers and, therefore, the rules are subject to change on a weekly basis and we cannot control or predict those elements. We will continue to work tirelessly on the quickest and safest path to getting things back to normal.

We will be updating this message as changes to rules and protocols may warrant, and we appreciate everyone's understanding and support as we move forward.

President, Guy Hobbs and Nevada Youth Soccer Association