



**YOUR GOALS. OUR GAME.**



# **CANADA SOCCER WOMEN'S EXCEL PROGRAM: TECHNICAL OVERVIEW**





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**CONSISTENT WORLD CLASS  
PERFORMANCE ON THE HIGHEST  
STAGE IS RELIANT ON A  
DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM THAT  
EVERYBODY IN SOCCER BELIEVES  
IN AND CONTRIBUTES TO. ”**

—**JOHN HERDMAN,  
WOMEN'S EXCEL PROGRAM DIRECTOR AND  
WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM HEAD COACH**

## **WOMEN'S EXCEL PROGRAM**

As part of the Canada Soccer Pathway, the **Women's EXCEL Program** is designed to ensure more of Canada's exceptional young players find their way into the best competitive environments, so that our Women's National Team is provided with a steady stream of players meeting high standards to keep us competitive on the world stage.

**IN OTHER WORDS,  
THE PROGRAM AIMS  
TO DEVELOP MORE  
SINCLAIRS, MORE  
OFTEN. BY DESIGN AND  
NOT BY CHANCE.**

## It is extremely hard to predict which players will go on to represent Canada as part of the Women's National Team.

What is far more certain is that the pathway to international success must involve the meticulous and systematic development of our young athletes. Evidence derived from world-leading soccer nations has shown the importance of coordinated talent development systems in maximizing the potential of a country's most exceptional young players. Increased training hours, a focus on technical perfection, and a drive to develop the whole player across all four corners of development—technical/tactical, physical, mental, and social/emotional—are the key themes emanating from this research. They form the basis of Canada Soccer's Women's EXCEL Program.

As a starting point, it is pivotal that Canada work to recruit and train more talented, soccer-hungry young players during their key development years so that more of them find their way into the best competitive and training environments. This way, our Women's National Team will be provided with a steady stream of talent to ensure consistent podium performances internationally. This is a crucial first step in creating a systematic approach to developing the country's next generation of Women's National Team Players.

But only a comprehensive player development process—one that starts with a young athlete's love of the game and ends on the international stage—will lead to the steady development of world-class players and sustained success for Canadian soccer. This is the moment when everyone, at every level of the sport, must come together to achieve this aim.

The Women's EXCEL Program, part of the Canada Soccer Pathway, will help move us towards our long-term goal of becoming a leading soccer nation. A clear, consistent and coordinated player development program for high-level women's soccer in Canada, the Women's EXCEL Program provides specific direction for all coaches and administrators on what is needed for the development of great Canadian players. It will ensure steady improvement in the quality and performance of our top players, coaches and teams in the years to come, which will, in turn, lead to long-term success for Canada on the world soccer stage.

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**John Herdman,**  
**Women's EXCEL Program Director and**  
**Women's National Team Head Coach**





## **SUSTAINED SUCCESS ACROSS ALL PARTS OF THE GAME**

### **This is an unprecedented time for Women's soccer in Canada.**

With the celebration of Canada's Olympic Bronze Medal at London 2012 still reverberating, and excitement around the FIFA Women's World Cup Canada 2015™ steadily building, there is no better time to focus on developing the women's game in the areas that can bring about sustained success. By committing to the vision, goals and objectives outlined in this plan, we believe Canada's Women's

National Team will shine in 2015 and 2016, while leaving a lasting legacy that will produce long-term success.

The Women's EXCEL Program is a new approach being adopted by Canada Soccer to unite and strengthen the ways that we identify and develop our most promising young athletes from across Canada to help drive elite women's soccer forward.

### **IT HAS THREE PRIMARY GOALS:**

#### **GOAL 1**

To achieve consistent podium performances by our Women's National Team.

#### **GOAL 2**

To create an aligned talent structure and system that progresses more high quality players to the Women's National Team.

#### **GOAL 3**

To align community, regional and provincial/territorial talent development programs with the EXCEL talent pathway.



Enhancing the experience for our most talented players through the Women's EXCEL Program will inspire them to reach greater heights. At the same time, the Women's EXCEL Program will better prepare them for the demands and rigours of the modern game, which has changed dramatically in recent years. At its highest level, women's soccer is now built around high-intensity, possession-based play where exceptional players with winning qualities make the difference.

In addition, the Women's EXCEL Program will help attract and retain more talented players, which will both widen and strengthen the talent pool. Specifically, it will ensure Canada's Women's National Team has a steady stream of young players in all positions with the world-class skills needed to achieve consistent podium performances.

EXCEL also presents an opportunity to achieve much-needed alignment. This will mean more consistent and efficient organization, administration and delivery of talent development programs to the Canadian soccer community.

While the Women's EXCEL Program is still in its early stages, these three goals will guide a staged rollout of new products and services designed to improve the quality of the talent development experience for players and coaches.

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## **ACHIEVING INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS**

**A key focus within the Women's EXCEL Program is a constant drive to achieve the highest international standards, a series of world-class player and team attributes that provide a framework to continually assess, monitor and track performance.**

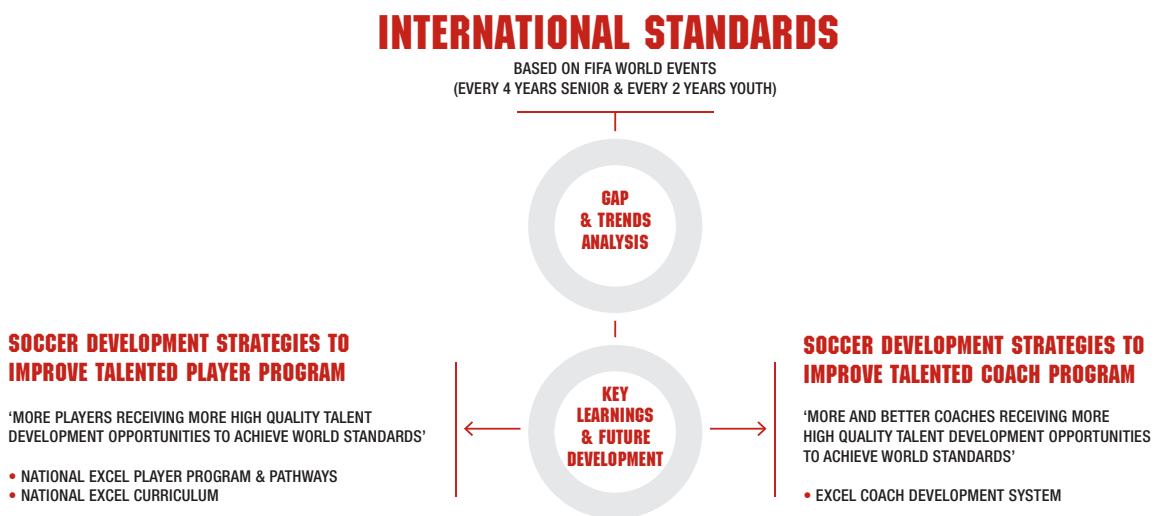
These standards—which we call “Gold Medal Standards” or GMS—provide all coaches with clear guidelines for developing talented players.

Because the game is constantly evolving, Canada Soccer's technical staff will continue to use pinnacle FIFA events to conduct research and gap analyses that compare Canadian players with the best in the world across all four corners of development: technical/tactical, physical, mental, and

social/emotional. They will also make regular study visits to other leading soccer nations to learn about modern trends in the game and new innovations in player development.

This research will help drive the ongoing creation and revision of development strategies, technical programs and the Canadian soccer curriculum

to improve the standards of domestic players and coaches and to reduce any gaps internationally. Each time Canada competes at a FIFA event, it will provide an opportunity to create new benchmarks, measured against the highest international standards, and to gather the knowledge to help exceptional Canadian players become truly competitive on the world stage.



## IMPEDIMENTS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF TALENTED PLAYERS

**Best practices derived from world-leading soccer nations, along with academic research, provide many insights into the vital process of talent development.**

It is very rare these days for a player to reach the highest levels of the beautiful game without exposure

to a well-designed player development program. This is because players are quicker, faster and stronger, more tactically aware, and more technically proficient. These changes are driven, in part, by the growing financial stakes: soccer is now a \$30-billion global industry: Clubs are now increasingly motivated—and more able—to invest in identifying and developing the world-class players who can bring sustained success. With greater understanding of the science behind player development, the more advanced nations



have created systems and structures to find, recruit and nurture young talent. These systems have become part of each country's soccer DNA, with their national philosophy interwoven through all levels of the game.

In countries with strong professional leagues, the talent identification and development process has intensified, with competing clubs continually looking for innovations to further enhance the performance of their teams. The soccer associations in these countries have invested in systems and structures to support the professional clubs in their ongoing quest for world-class talent. For example, the national governing bodies in the Netherlands (KNVB) and Germany (DFG) issue licenses to professional clubs who are able to meet stringent standards for player development. On top of this, Germany has created new second-tier programs to widen the country's talent base and created new structures to channel players into professional clubs.

In countries where professional clubs are limited in reach or resources, the national associations have implemented their own talent development programs. In Japan and Switzerland, for instance, the soccer associations have operated networks of national and regional training centres for over 10 years. These centres bring together the most talented players and provide them with a nationally coordinated development program.

While some of these development programs share common features, the most practical among them take into account each country's unique characteristics, including population, climate, affluence, attitudes to sport, overall sporting environment, and government involvement, as well as soccer history, tradition and culture. Therefore, it is crucial to accurately identify those aspects that are likely to be most effective in Canada, given our particular conditions.

The optimal approach for Canada is to combine best practices in talent development from a variety of countries that have demonstrated a high level of innovation. This will help ensure a competitive edge over the competition. If we were to simply try to replicate best practices from elsewhere without adding our own unique Canadian thinking, we would eventually end up falling further behind.

Canada's inherent weaknesses, such as its massive geography and limited professional club structure, will always be limiting factors when competing against the many soccer powerhouses with well-established talent development programs. This is why we must maximize our resources and put creative thinking at the heart of coach and player development.



## Canada Soccer's new Women's EXCEL Program will help achieve the following results:

### **RESULT #1**

#### **An Aligned System Built on a Common Vision**

The Women's EXCEL Program will introduce a national playing model, style and approach to elite player development with a new national curriculum based on the highest international standards (or Gold Medal Standards). It will also provide a clear pathway for the progression of players towards the Women's National Team, with clear, consistent entry and exit points across the country.

### **RESULT #2**

#### **Best Practice Standards and Benchmarks**

The Women's EXCEL Program uses a clear set of benchmarks to continually track and measure progress against Gold Medal Standards across all four corners of development. This means players and coaches are assessed on the performance measures that will lead to future success, rather than on match results. Canada Soccer's ongoing research will ensure these best practices and benchmarks are revised as the game evolves, and shared widely with its partners across the country.

### **RESULT #3**

#### **A National Team System with a Long-term View**

The Women's EXCEL Program ensures that the future of a player or coach does not hinge solely on their team's performance during one-off games. EXCEL takes the focus off obsessive team development tied to the Youth World Cup cycle and puts the individual player front and centre, treating Youth World Cups as important benchmarks for learning but not as events that can make or break a career.

### **RESULT #4**

#### **More Player Development Experts**

The Women's EXCEL Program will give players access to the best youth talent specialists in the country, while offering a clear and visible pathway for talented coaches to progress through the sport towards National Team opportunities.

### **RESULT #5**

#### **Greater Program Accessibility**

By aligning community, regional and provincial/territorial talent development programs with the The Women's EXCEL Program, Canada Soccer will create a more streamlined, efficient system. This will keep costs down and put more talented players—no matter their geographic location or background—in front of experts who can monitor their progress and steer them towards opportunities to further their development.





## **WOMEN'S EXCEL PROGRAM: 10 GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The Women's EXCEL Program will:

### **1) Take a Four-Corner Approach to Player Development**

The Women's EXCEL Program is built around a holistic approach that aims to develop the whole person and not just the player. At the core of the Women's EXCEL Program is the concept of a four-corner approach that touches on all aspects of a player's personal development—technical/tactical, physical, mental, and social/emotional. This means:

#### **TECHNICAL/TACTICAL**

1. We will develop Gold Medal Standard skill and technique in players at all positions.
2. We will develop players who can apply the appropriate technique on demand to achieve the desired outcome while under immense pressure in confined spaces on the pitch.
3. We will promote a national playing model with clearly defined roles for each position, unit of players and the whole team, across the four moments of the game (attacking organization, defensive transition, defensive organization and attacking transition).

#### **PHYSICAL:**

1. We will develop soccer-specific fitness, including injury prevention, which will form the base for top quality soccer players.
2. We will possess the physical qualities to play the game at a high tempo in all positions and throughout the duration of the 90+ minutes of the game.

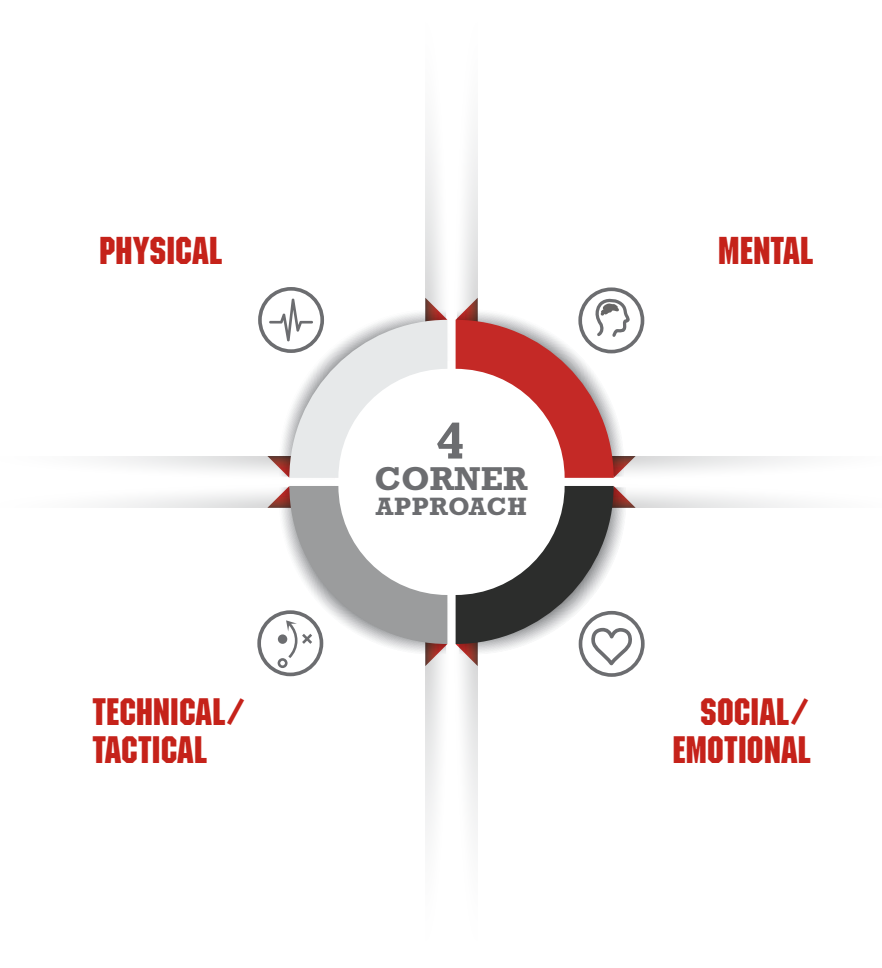
3. We will meet the soccer-specific aerobic demands in every position at the highest levels of the game.

#### **MENTAL:**

1. We will produce self-confident players with a proactive, positive mindset.
2. We will present ourselves as passionate players and coaches who are determined, disciplined and resilient.
3. We will develop players who can excel under the highest pressure.
4. We will foster a culture that reinforces psychological development for everyone in the environment.

#### **SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL:**

1. We will encourage the development of leadership skills in every team member.
2. We will promote a culture where players and staff continually look for, and take advantage of, opportunities for individual and team growth.
3. We will behave as a united soccer family, where everyone helps one another to be the best they can be. This connection will form the basis of team performance.
4. We will develop well-rounded players with the skills to succeed in all aspects of their lives.



## 2) Be Built Around Gold Medal Standards

Gold Medal Standards (GMS) underpin the entire Women's EXCEL Program. They will ensure players are exposed to, and assessed against, the highest international standards throughout each stage of development. Team and Positional GMS provide a guiding framework to continually assess, monitor and track performance across the four corners of development. These GMS are comprised of two elements:

1. **Competencies**, which define the set of skills and behaviours of high performing soccer players; and
2. **Performance Measures**, which objectively assess players' performance through testing and analysis.

### 3) Help Develop a New Canadian Soccer DNA

There are teams capable of imposing themselves across multiple moments in a match (attacking organization, defensive transition, defensive organization and attacking transition), but we have yet to see one that can do so in all four moments in a consistent manner against any opposition and under any circumstances. The goal for the Canadian Women's National Team is to produce players with the technical and tactical DNA competencies in all four moments that culminate in consistent winning performances at pinnacle events.

This new Canadian soccer DNA can be broken into three strands—Power, Precision and Control—that span the four moments of the game. This will mean:

1. Canada will overPOWER opposition teams by nullifying their greatest threats to limit their ability to create final acts and force frequent turnovers in predetermined areas of the pitch through aggressive, ball-oriented zonal pressure. POWER will enhance the team's opportunity and ability to implement PRECISION and CONTROL.
2. Canada will take advantage of opposition turnovers with PRECISION using a minimum number of passes within the least amount of time to exploit a disorganized opponent. Effective PRECISION will culminate with a Canadian final act or retained possession in predetermined areas of the pitch.
3. Canada will exert CONTROL in a game when the opposition is in an organized defensive structure through ball possession and circulation that disorganizes and unbalances their defensive structure, with the intention of producing high-quality final acts.

### 4) Create an Aligned System and Structure

The Women's EXCEL Program aims to produce **More Sinclairs More Often—By Design and Not By Chance**. An aligned talent structure and system that connects national, provincial, regional and community talent development programs, will advance more top players, more often, to the Women's National Team. During every two-year cycle, our goal is to produce a minimum of three new Women's National Team players who meet Gold Medal Standards across the four corners of development.

### 5) Allow for Continuous Development

Programming around FIFA tournaments, as we have in the past, has often created development spikes, where players who are of age for a Youth World Cup experience two years of intense activity and then are often forgotten. These players can be left burnt out both physically and mentally at the end of the cycle, while the inactive age groups encounter development gaps at critical points in their soccer journey.

EXCEL will provide a system that delivers consistent contacts both regionally and nationally for players who meet Gold Medal Standards from the age of 13 until they exit the program after the U-20 World Cup. This will allow for continuous growth, support and monitoring of future Women's National Team players.

### 6) Put Best with Best

In order for each Women's EXCEL Program training session or game to provide the best possible experience, players must have access to a learning environment of the highest quality. EXCEL will ensure that training facilities deliver complete talent development programs. Coaches, sport scientists, mental performance specialists, and performance analysts

will be recruited and receive ongoing training to ensure the players are working with the finest youth talent specialists in Canada.

Most importantly, the best players regionally and nationally will train and play with each other to ensure a challenging environment—across all four corners of development—on a regular basis. This “best with best” approach reduces any ceiling effect, ensuring that Canada’s most exceptional players are improving and performing without limitation.

## 7) Be Curriculum-Driven

A new National Curriculum will be based on international best practices and will provide Canada’s expansive soccer community with a single vision for developing talented players from the age of 13 through to the Women’s National Team.

A unique Canadian curriculum will also give us an edge over other nations through the four-corner development philosophy, which eclipses the traditional technical curricula. Players, coaches and support staff will benefit from evidence-based principles that will maximize the greatest number of hours and contacts, resulting in aligned, progressive and systematic development.

## 8) Put Players, Not Youth World Cups, Front and Centre

As we move away from a “Youth National Team” and a “winning Youth World Cups” mindset towards a player-based approach to development, we are now able to mitigate some of the obstacles that limited the quality of the youth players progressing into the Women’s National Team.

YOUTH NATIONAL TEAM SYSTEM	...	EXCEL PLAYER-BASED SYSTEM
Individual player development is sacrificed for the good of the team.	...	Progressing players meeting GMS criteria is the focus and objective of the program.
Players drop in and out of the system based on their age and pinnacle events.	...	Players tracking towards GMS will maintain continuous activity through the pathway.
Greater possibility of suffering the Relative Age effect, which led to gaps in development for players deemed too young.	...	Players will train and compete based on their GMS capability: “If they’re good enough, then they’re old enough”.
Players’ futures hinge on their performance in one-off games.	...	Players are assessed based on GMS criteria and their trajectory in meeting them.
Greater possibility of suffering the Relative Age effect, which led to gaps in development for players deemed too young.	...	Coaches’ performances are based on their ability to progress players meeting GMS and their teams’ ability to meet the performance measures of the Team GMS.



## 9) Take a Player-Centric Approach to Coaching

Women's EXCEL staff will coach with a leadership style that caters to the athletes' needs—one where players are given more control over their own progress as high-performance athletes. Players will be encouraged to become self-aware and self-sufficient and to take ownership of their soccer journey. They will make more informed decisions with an emphasis on individual growth and change.

Women's EXCEL coaches will use a range of tools and strategies to encourage advanced skill development across all positions and create a level of tactical understanding that will allow players to perform at the highest levels of the modern women's game.

## 10) Guarantee More High Quality Hours

Research suggests it takes at least 10 years (or 10,000 hours) of sustained, deliberate practice from a young age to become an outstanding adult soccer player. Studies of elite male youth players from English Premier League academies reveal that, by the time these players reach the age of 17, they have accumulated over 7,000 hours of practice in a combination of formal and informal training and play.

The Women's EXCEL Program will provide players with approximately 4,500 hours of high-quality practice and competition by the time they exit the program. And this is in addition to the hours they will accumulate in their university or professional environments once they have graduated from high school. The aligned structure and systematic approach to development will ensure that Canadian players close the gap in accumulated quality hours that currently exists in comparison to other leading soccer nations.



# THE FOUR-CORNER APPROACH TO PLAYER DEVELOPMENT: A DETAILED OVERVIEW



## 1. TECHNICAL/TACTICAL

### “MORE SINCLAIRS MORE OFTEN— BY DESIGN AND NOT BY CHANCE”

The technical/tactical focus of the Women's EXCEL Program will be the delivery of a nationally aligned curriculum that exposes players and coaches to technical and tactical development based on the highest international standards in the women's game. The curriculum will systematically deliver the content to produce Gold Medal Standard players in every position to the Canadian Women's National Team on a consistent basis.

To develop players capable of producing consistent winning performances at the highest levels of the game, the EXCEL Technical/Tactical curriculum will, for the first time in Canada, produce:

- A national playing model for girls' and women's soccer;
- Well defined 'DNA' strands for the Canadian player that provides the basis for technical/tactical development; and
- **Clearly identified Gold Medal Standards for both individual players and teams.**

A single national playing model will offer the best approach to the consistent development of players who will be able to understand and execute the technical requirements of the three DNA strands; Control, Precision and Power.

Women's EXCEL technical staff and coaches will also benefit from the nationally aligned approach. Coaches will be provided with the resources and professional development opportunities to become experts in youth talent development, capable of ensuring that each moment experienced by EXCEL players is of the highest possible quality.





## 2. PHYSICAL:

**“ENABLING CANADIAN FEMALE SOCCER PLAYERS TO ACHIEVE INTERNATIONAL PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND EXCEL IN THE MODERN GAME.”**

The physical corner strives to develop players who are able to succeed along a progressive continuum to reach the highest international standards. The purposeful overlapping and coordination of physical services, combined with the implementation of an age-appropriate, long-term physical development plan, will anchor Canada's next generation of international female soccer players.

Compliance with this system and the progressive physical programming will have a direct impact on the success of a player's technical performance. A focus on injury prevention, which anticipates potential risk factors in our athletes, will ensure long-term health, sustained performance and tournament success. All of this will be carried out with knowledge gleaned from international trends and best practices, and tailored development of the physical characteristics required for position specific success.

This will be achieved through an integrated team of:

- **Strength and conditioning specialists**
- **Sports therapy/medicine and allied health disciplines**
- **Performance nutritionists**
- **Exercise physiologists**





### 3. MENTAL:

#### **“PROGRESSING THE MENTAL RESILIENCE OF CANADIAN PLAYERS.”**

Mental resilience—a player’s ability to adapt to stress and adversity, and to rise above obstacles to achieve success—will be the deciding factor in Canada’s ability to reach its potential as a leading soccer nation.

The mental corner will strive to:

- **Achieve consistent podium performances through a world-class mental development program;**
- **Facilitate the growth of Canadian female soccer players along a progressive program to strengthen their athletic mindset towards high performance;**
- **Have every player within the system developing her mental performance skills;**
- **Enhance the ability of individual players and teams to overcome unexpected occurrences during games;**

- **Introduce strategies for managing the stress and pressure of international tournaments;**
- **Engage players, on field and in meetings, to promote individual responsibility and problem solving;**
- **Create the individual and team resilience necessary to handle the challenges of high performance; and**
- **Establish a clear knowledge among players and teams of the impact that a positive mindset can have on performance.**

This will be achieved through the structured delivery of initiatives with clear outcome expectations, built around a mental training curriculum that ensures progressive development. The presence of mental performance consultants at major tournaments, individual mental performance plans, and a detailed review process will help players overcome any challenge, on or off the pitch.







#### 4. SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL:

**“CREATING A HIGH-PERFORMANCE ENVIRONMENT THAT PROMOTES CONNECTION, VISION AND PODIUM BEHAVIOURS WHILE EMPOWERING PLAYERS.”**

The social/emotional corner promotes player accountability and autonomy for problem solving on and off the field. It encourages players to conduct themselves as role models for other young Canadians, and encourages players, coaches and staff to continually look for opportunities to grow—and to support one another. This means implementing systems to help individual players and teams handle the stress of tournaments, and understand how to balance a high-performance lifestyle while managing external pressures.

Successful social/emotional development will be achieved through:

- Leadership group development to empower players and bridge the gap between players and staff;
- Strategic planning around communication systems and language that promotes individual and team growth;
- Tournament experience within the development system for all players and staff;
- High-performance policies and procedures; and
- Clarity around the challenges posed by tournaments and the resources available to players to help them effectively manage their emotions.



## OVERVIEW OF THE WOMEN'S EXCEL PROGRAM

As part of the Canada Soccer Pathway, the Women's EXCEL Program is built around international best practices to move past the challenges our system has faced in the past.

It provides a clear and continuous road map for our country's most promising players from the moment

they enter through a Regional EXCEL Centre, progress into the National EXCEL system, are targeted for EXCEleration activity, and then called into the Women's National Team program. By the time they exit the EXCEL Program, these players will have benefited from: a standardized curriculum built around the four corners of development, with an increased number of high-quality practice and competition hours as well as tournament experience—all inspired by one common vision that will ensure Canada can achieve sustained success on the world stage.





## WOMEN'S REGIONAL EXCEL CENTRES

Licensed by Canada Soccer and delivered through our Provincial and Territorial member associations and partners, Women's Regional EXCEL Centres provide our most talented female players with a year-round, comprehensive program based on the standardized national curriculum. Because Canada is such a large, diverse country, a flexible delivery model is built into the system. This ensures that EXCEL principles are delivered in a way that suits a province's structure to best meet the needs of individual players.

Along with the national curriculum, these licensed centres are provided with standardized training and support along with ongoing quality assurance and

development. This ensures that both players and staff are well equipped to move towards National EXCEL and eventually the Women's National Team—and to bring the new Canadian soccer DNA to life.

Players enter Regional EXCEL at U-13. This full-time program, which puts “best with best”, will take them right through to post-secondary (U-18), meaning their development will be systematic, gradual and progressive. The number of hours that can be accumulated in a Regional EXCEL Centre across a five-year period is on par with leading European counterparts and allows fundamental aspects of our Gold Medal Standards to be developed across the four corners.

Any player involved in a Regional EXCEL Centre is essentially a National EXCEL prospect and will be monitored and assessed accordingly. At the younger ages (U-13 and U-14), the talent base is much wider, as a player's true potential requires this “best with best” environment to mature.



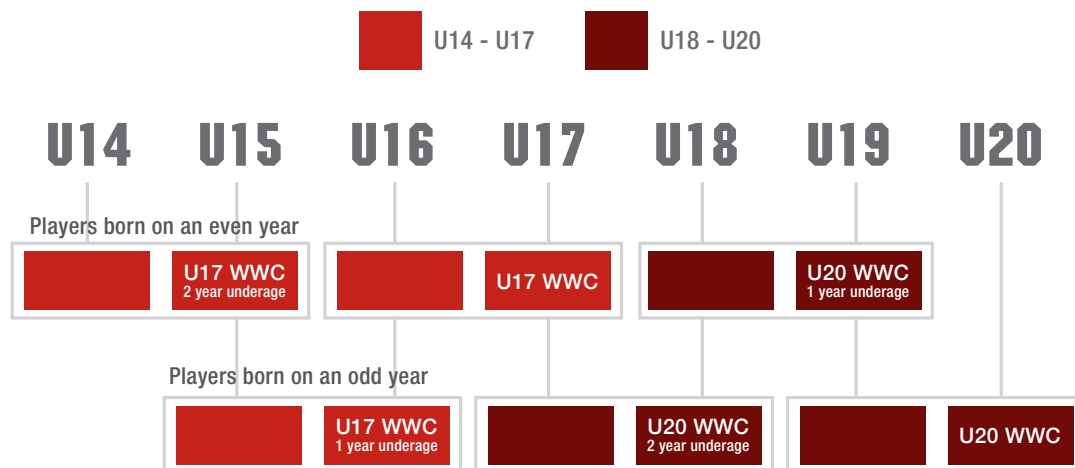
## WOMEN'S NATIONAL EXCEL PROGRAM

PRESENTED BY **Bell**

Players within a Regional EXCEL Centre who meet the highest standards will move into the Women's National EXCEL program, presented by Bell.

Designed around two phases—U-14 to U-17 and U-18 to U-20—this continuous, six-year program is intended to maintain a “conveyer belt” of Gold Medal Standard players towards the Women's National Team.

While Youth World Cups are no longer the primary objective of the program, they are nevertheless important opportunities for benchmarking and learning, which is why the two National EXCEL phases are structured with these milestones in mind.



Age may not be the driving factor within this system but it does provide natural entry and exit points, although players will always progress through the system based on their ability to meet Gold Medal Standards. Truly exceptional players may even skip a phase if they demonstrate their competency across the four corners, and have been targeted for accelerated development.

Along the way, top players may be targeted for EXCEleration activity to help refine their skills with supplemental training prior to being called to the Women's National Team.

**EXCEleration** is a program to supplement, accelerate, support, monitor, and track the individual growth of identified players towards and beyond current Women's National Team Gold Medal Standards. It will include:

- **Individual Performance Plans to guide Positional growth and maturity;**
- **EXCEleration Camp opportunities, periodized on a calendar basis to complement current National EXCEL and Women's National Team activities; and**
- **EXCEleration Pit-Stop opportunities, where EXCEleration players who find themselves in a phase of inactivity can be invited into Women's National Team Activity or U-18 to U-20 EXCEL activity for additional training, assessment and monitoring opportunities.**

The EXCEleration program will be continually reviewed based on an analysis of Gold Medal Standards and performance of Canadian teams at U-17 and U-20 World Cups (if applicable). Recognizing that these events are biennial, the EXCEleration staff will work closely with the National EXCEL and Women's National Team environments to assure proper tracking that provides opportunities to players who meet the standards.







## UNIVERSITY & OTHER ENVIRONMENTS

Canadian players reach a critical decision point when they must decide where to go after graduating from high school and exiting the Regional EXCEL system. At this stage, National EXCEL players must also recognize that they will be substituting the approximately 650 annual hours of specific Gold Medal Standard development they received within the Regional EXCEL system for whatever their new environment offers. These choices may include:

- **Attending university and training/competing for the university program;**
- **Playing professional soccer in North America or Europe and pursuing an education later; or**

- **Choosing the best possible environment for Gold Medal Standard development and continuing their education through remote studies or as a part-time student.**

Regardless of the path chosen, an EXCEL player who aspires to play for the Women's National Team must ensure she can immerse herself in an environment that provides the necessary hours of "best with best" training and competition.

For National EXCEL players who decide on the traditional path of university soccer, Canada Soccer has a document to help guide them towards the better environments for Gold Medal Standard development. National EXCEL players who are tracking towards the Women's National Team will be encouraged to attend a Gold Medal School, where they will continue to benefit from the national curriculum.



## WOMEN'S NATIONAL TEAM

The ultimate honour for any female soccer player is to represent her country at the senior level and to compete on the world stage against soccer's greatest players. Only players who achieve Gold Medal Standards across all four corners of development will be selected for the Women's National Team, with opportunities to qualify for the FIFA Women's World Cup and Olympic Games. Players will be expected to progress through the EXCEL system, and only the best will be called to the Women's National Team.

Once selected, players are exposed to comprehensive, four-corner programming with the goal of helping every player reach and maintain her maximum potential. Each Olympic and FIFA World Cup™ competition has its own cycle and players are carefully developed throughout this period to enable the team to peak at each pinnacle event.

A Women's National Team player will often balance a professional playing career with her international commitments. In recent years, the team has played an average of 15 matches per year, including tournaments in Europe and other parts of the world.

be encouraged to attend a Gold Medal School, where they will continue to benefit from the national curriculum.



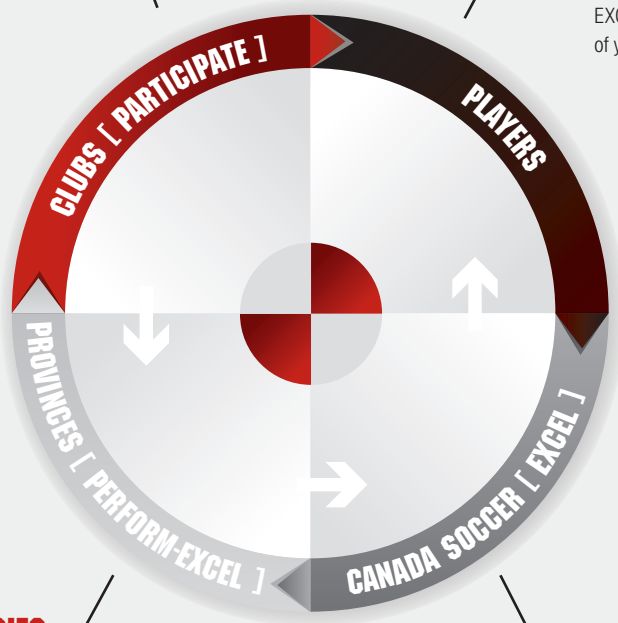
# HOW WE ALL CONTRIBUTE

## CLUBS

- Development of talented players in the local environment;
- Support for Talent Identification methods; and
- Pool of talented coaches and players for the Women's EXCEL Program.

## PLAYERS

- Commitment to personal excellence and establishing clear goals to reach the Women's National Team; and
- Engagement with the Regional EXCEL systems, making EXCEL part of your life.



## PROVINCES/TERRITORIES

- Implementation and delivery of the National Curriculum through Regional EXCEL Centres;
- Regional leadership in the identification and development of talented players;
- Creation of entry and exit mechanisms to and from the Regional EXCEL Centres;
- Clear and transparent player and coaching pathways; and
- Quality program delivery for our most talented players.

## CANADA SOCCER

- National Direction—curriculum and training programs to facilitate consistent EXCEL delivery;
- Coach development and training programs to produce EXCEL experts;
- Ongoing research around international best practices to remain at the cutting edge; and
- EXCEL license development, monitoring and assessment.

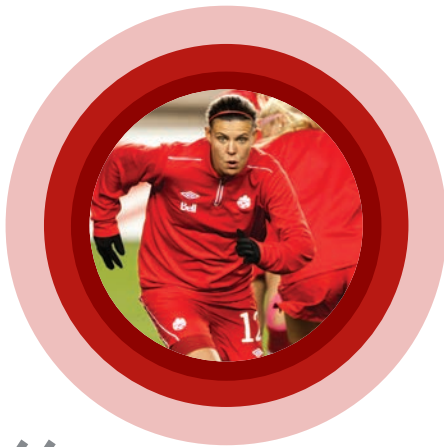
## CONCLUSION

Developing world-class players is at the heart of achieving Canada's goal of becoming a leading soccer nation. This can only be realized with a structured, long-term approach. The Women's EXCEL Program meets the needs of our most talented soccer players by providing the appropriate pathway, systems and opportunities to help

them reach their potential.

Developing a consistent stream of young players who are capable of "EXCEL"ing on the world stage cannot be achieved overnight. This is an ambitious, long-term project that requires a dedicated effort from everyone involved. Canada Soccer is committed to developing a

systematic and coordinated talent development approach with the goal of producing more world-class players, more often. The information presented in this document clearly maps out the process for the development of Canada's future soccer stars.



“

**THE FEELING YOU GET FROM PULLING ON  
THAT RED JERSEY AND HEARING YOUR NATIONAL  
ANTHEM PLAYED IS LIKE NO OTHER**”

— CHRISTINE SINCLAIR





YOUR GOALS. OUR GAME.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CANADA  
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