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2022 Annual General Meeting – Executive Director’s Report

Thank you for joining us tonight. Your time and support of adult soccer is greatly appreciated.

In review of our last year, I am grateful to say we made it through COVID. However, despite being through the worst of it, we find ourselves in the aftermath and continued interruption of the league.

As many are likely aware, numerous teams have not returned. As a result, we have a larger disparity between calibre and expectation of competitiveness. This makes alignment far more difficult when trying to maintain a reasonable number of rounds, not too many exhibition games, fair play, respect, safety, enjoyment, friendly rivalries, like calibre, like mind etc.

Another difficulty is the usage of the turf center. Especially in comparison to boarded. With youth’s focus on turf, along with new players to the league/city, many players join our turf league because it’s all they know. This results in most of our games being squeezed into the one center.

As a veteran player who didn’t grow up with the turf center, I see incredible value in the boarded game. As a league operator, and because SAS is a member of the Soccer Centre, we see the importance of maintaining (and hopefully growing) the boarded league. The turf games are late, whereas boarded games (presently) are not. The boarded game can also be incredibly fast paced and requires a more defined skill that isn’t necessarily needed on turf. Despite the smaller size, the number of players required for a game is higher due to that fast pace and shortness of shifts. Some argue it requires less skill, but I challenge that sentiment. You don’t have the space nor the time to move the ball around. Your decisions need to be made before you even receive the ball. You have the walls to work off, but also work against. The angles, the quick return from the back board, the sheer speed and constant close proximity of the ball make it an exciting game. It’s a game, I believe, many will love if given the opportunity.

The final difficulty we are facing is our shortage of competitiveness, or at least perceived competitiveness. We often see teams interested in moving down divisions but rarely up. We know we still have strong teams, and we have tried to encourage them to move up to the “Competitive” league by show casing games at earlier times, cash prize incentives, games played at both centers so players can experience both centers but aren’t required to be on two teams. The intention also, was to introduce players to the “other” center, which is usually the boarded center. The hope, I cycle back, is to engage players and grow the boarded league, reduce late games on turf etc.

I personally believe most of our players weren’t fans of the term *Competitive*. After conversations, many teams believed they should move up but didn’t want to be the first to take the jump. Essentially, the term Competitive is the same as Division 1, but it allows for us to more easily explain that teams can permit across in the Competitive league, for instance, but also play and be registered “down” in the Recreational leagues. We are trying to allow/encourage players to participate as much as they want and not limit them.

I have learned that not everyone is like me. Fair enough. I love soccer whether it’s boarded, turf, quarter, half, or full field, inside, outside, coed, women’s, etc. I love any format of the game. Just let me find a consistent babysitter so I can play. But, again, I have learned others just want boarded. Some just want turf. And some want both - but not on two teams and also not competitively.

We all want different things. And we do hear you. We hear you all. We will continue to navigate the different preferences and update the league to your feedback. Please fill out the surveys when requested. The result directly impacts the structure of the league.

Now, moving away from our difficulties, I want to also mention the board. Their dedication is astounding. The guidance and direction are remarkable. There isn’t a big enough word to express my gratitude. So, I offer a simple thank you.

As well, the staff. You are tremendous. Ifman is a great asset to both us and the SDSRAI as he continues to nurture our relationship. Crystal, our most recent addition, is a perfect fit and it's like she's been with us for years. You're already a valuable member of our team. And to Rebecca. Although she's no longer with us, she is missed.

Of course, thank you to the players. For sticking with us. And finally, to our fellow associations: the SDSRAI, SSC and SYS. Just like the board, staff, and players, we wouldn't be here without you. Thank you for continuing to work with us for the betterment of soccer as a whole.

And thank you again to everyone in attendance, and throughout our league. I look forward to hearing from you and seeing what the future will bring!

Be well and have a very Merry Christmas!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Bryk'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'D' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'k'.

Danielle Bryk
Executive Director
Saskatoon Adult Soccer Inc.