



PRESIDENT'S REPORT.

We are now nearing the end of the indoor season so I thought this would be a good time to let you know what has been going on in Valley United. But before I start I'd just like to mention a game that I coached recently. Our U18 Boys were playing Suburban in a game between the only previously undefeated teams in that league. We trailed Suburban 1-0, 2-1, 3-2 and 4-3 before finally tying the game at 4-4. As we came off the field we felt that we could have won the game and I'm sure that Suburban felt the same way. However as I started to get over the disappointment of dropping 2 points I looked at the bigger picture. Much is written about the value of team sports in teaching kids life lessons and I think that the truth of that was on display during that game. Despite the game being fiercely contested it was played in an excellent spirit and the behaviour of both teams was exemplary, as was the behaviour of both sets of fans. It is experiences like this which reassure us that all the time and energy we invest is indeed worthwhile.

As we reach the end of the regular season in the NSSL Indoor League, all our teams have been competitive with our AA U13, U15 and U18 teams having a combined record of W27, L22 and T10 with a goal difference of +7. Our U15A Girls are W8, L2 and T1 with a goal difference of +38. The Senior teams are 10-14-2 with a goal difference of +8. I'm pleased that we have been able to field a full slate of AA teams and we will be fielding AAA U15 and U17 Boys teams in the summer.

A couple of months ago we sent out a survey asking everybody for their opinion about our performance during the summer season. We used exactly the same survey we sent out in 2022 so it would be easy to identify areas where people thought we did better, or worse. It was a bit disappointing to get only 55 responses this year compared to 160 last year. It's difficult to know the significance of this. Perhaps everybody is happy with how things are going at VU - or perhaps everybody is just tired of being asked to answer surveys!



With the small number of responses it was difficult to detect significant changes but 93% of respondents reported being either fairly or very satisfied with their experience in the summer. There were really only 2 questions where there appeared to be a change from last year. 9/55 reported feeling that they had not received value for money. As a percentage that was double the number in 2022 which is disappointing. However it may be that the terrible weather and numerous cancellations we suffered last summer had a lot to do with people's dissatisfaction. However almost all our costs are fixed - staff pay, Nova Scotia Soccer League (NSSL) fees, Soccer Nova Scotia (SNS) fees, Valley District Soccer Association (VDSA) fees, turf rental, uniforms and equipment, referees etc. so our ability to adjust to adverse weather is quite limited.

On the bright side there was a big improvement in perception of our organization. Only 2/55 respondents were not satisfied with our organization. As a percentage that is 3.6%, down from 10.1% in 2022.

Looking at people's comments, there were a number of issues which came up repeatedly and I'll try to deal with them here.

1. Lack of 1 on 1 feedback from coaches to players. Several people brought this up. We recognize the importance of feedback to young players and will continue to urge all coaches to provide this, both during and at the end of season.
2. Honoraria for coaches. Several people suggested that some financial reward to coaches, and managers, might encourage more people to volunteer. In fact we already have a system in place which does this.
3. SPOND. Quite a few people commented favourably about this app which we began using this year and it may explain why we rated higher on communication in 2023.



Looking ahead, as we talk about how we can expand and improve the programs we offer we become more and more aware of the limitations imposed by having only one indoor field. To give you an idea of the numbers involved, there are 44 'prime time' hours available every week at the CURC, that is Monday to Friday 5-9 PM and Saturday-Sunday 9AM-9PM. Of these, 15 hours are shared by the 37 Senior Recreational teams. Valley United's performance teams have 22 hours and there are 7 hours allocated to community youth. Of these 7 hours of community time, 5 are taken up by the U5, U7, U9 and U11 program run by Findlay on Sunday afternoons and Monday evenings. This leaves just 2 hours per week for community youth players aged U13 and up which explains why there is currently no indoor program for community players.

Even the 22 hours we currently get for our performance teams allows only the Skills Centre teams to train twice a week. If all our teams trained twice a week, as they should, we would need 33 hours. When we start running U15 and U17 AAA Girls teams we would need another 4 hours and if we were to start a U8 Skills Centre program we would need another 2 hours, taking us up to 39 hours for the performance teams alone and that still doesn't allow any time for individual coaching for goalkeepers and strikers.

This is one of the major strategic challenges with which we are grappling at the moment. With our current climate the indoor season will always be longer than the outdoor season but our present facilities do not reflect this reality. We would like to give our performance teams all the resources they need to succeed but we would also very much like to be able to offer a good indoor program for the hundreds of community players who do not have anywhere to play at the moment. Fortunately, this isn't a problem that a few million dollars won't solve!

I'll be in touch again in the lead up to the summer season.

Troy Lenihan.
President, VUSC.



