

**Long-Term Player Development**  
**PLAYERS WITH DISABILITIES**





## Long-Term Player Development PLAYERS WITH DISABILITIES

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	4
Introduction	5
Player-centered training, competition and recovery	6
Worldwide: Soccer for players with disabilities	7
Canadian soccer for players with disabilities	7
LTPD for Players with Disabilities	9
Why LTPD is needed	9
Soccer is soccer	9
LTPD Stages for Players with Disabilities	10
LTPD Stage Descriptions	13
Awareness	15
First Contact	16
Active Start	17
FUNdamentals	18
Learn to Train	20
LTPD High-Performance for Players with Disabilities	22
Train to Train	23
Train to Compete	25
Train to Win	27
Soccer for Life	29
The 10 Key Factors of LTPD for Players with Disabilities	31
Additional Considerations	35
Changes to the Soccer System	36
Growing Disability Soccer: Challenges and Recommendations	41
Roles and Responsibilities	42
Soccer Organizations	42
Disability Organizations	42
Government	43
Schools and Education	43
Health Agencies	43
Summary	45
To Learn More	46
References	48
Appendices	49
Appendix A: Disability Soccer Formats	49
Appendix B: Sample Field Layouts for Festival Programs	52
Acknowledgements	53





## FOREWORD

Soccer, as the largest participation sport in Canada, plays an important role in the provision of meaningful physical activity to Canadians. The Canadian Soccer Association endeavours to ensure that players of all ages and abilities reach their full potential in soccer, including players with disabilities. This is why we are pleased to introduce Long-Term Player Development (LTPD) for Players with Disabilities.

LTPD for Players with Disabilities is an important first step in promoting logical and systematic soccer programming in Canada for players with disabilities. Soccer organizations, in partnership with disability organizations, can work within this recognizable framework to develop appropriate programs at all levels of participation. Beginning with children in the Active Start and FUNdamentals stages, and leading all the way to the Train to Win and Soccer for Life stages, the LTPD guidelines provide broad guidance to ensure that training and competition meet the needs of the players, and that as many players as possible have the chance to enjoy soccer and excel in the sport.

At the grassroots and recreational levels, disability soccer programs can provide regular healthy activity to promote wellness, social integration and physical literacy. At the elite level, high performance programs can provide ambitious and talented disability players with opportunities for achievement in national and international competition.

The Canadian Soccer Association is cognizant that individuals pursue sport for different reasons. Some players with disabilities might play soccer with the aim of competing at the international level, while other players might simply be seeking to enjoy the sport for its social and health benefits. Disability soccer programs respect the variety of aims and ambitions of the players, recognizing that all Canadians who take an interest in soccer deserve the opportunity to enjoy the game.



Photo: SoccerAbility/Anelle Janak



Peter Montopoli  
General Secretary

Tony Fonseca  
Technical Director



## INTRODUCTION

Approximately 14% of Canadians have a sensory, intellectual or physical disability,<sup>1</sup> and some have more than one disability. These Canadians frequently face challenges in pursuing sport and physical activity, stemming largely from lack of access to suitable programming, facilities, coaching and support in general.

In several countries, soccer has already created an array of adapted game formats and competitions to accommodate different disabilities. Following their example, Canadian soccer has the opportunity to play a significant role in providing opportunities for persons with disabilities in Canada.

*Wellness to World Cup: LTPD for Players with Disabilities* provides an overview of disability soccer and presents a long-term development pathway for Canadians stretching from grassroots community soccer to international competition. At the grassroots level, the LTPD pathway is intended to help provincial and regional soccer organizations to increase overall access and participation in soccer while providing player development for persons with a variety of disabilities. At the high performance stages, LTPD is specifically intended to support systematic player development for Paralympic 7-a-side soccer in Canada so our players can consistently perform at the highest levels of international competition.

The LTPD pathway for persons with disabilities begins at the grassroots level where the most important objective is to provide ample opportunities for participation.

At the early LTPD stages, players with either congenital or acquired disabilities should be made aware of opportunities in soccer, with the primary aim of engaging them in physical activity for lifelong wellness, social integration and general well-being. As always, the primary means of engagement should simply be *fun*.

As players progress into the high-performance LTPD stages, the pathway provides them with additional options to participate in broader regional competition and become identified for national and international competition. Under the LTPD framework, the CSA oversees high-performance development (i.e. Train to Train, Train to Compete and Train to Win stages) for Paralympic 7-a-side players (i.e. players with cerebral palsy, brain injury or stroke). The CSA defers to the expertise of other disability sport organizations (DSOs) to manage high-performance training and competition for players with other disabilities (e.g. visual impairments, intellectual disabilities, deaf or hard of hearing, amputee, powerchair).

The aim of the CSA high-performance pathway is to develop Paralympic 7-a-side players to represent Canada at major events such as the Paralympics and international 7-a-side soccer tournaments. In the process, some Canadian 7-a-side players might train and play in environments such as competitive 11-a-side soccer leagues that provide a suitable level of training and competition outside of CSA national training camps.

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada. *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey 2006*.

## Player-centered Training, Competition and Recovery

Regardless of their long-term aims in the sport, players with disabilities are first and foremost players. Recognizing this fact, *LTPD for Players with Disabilities* follows the same basic principles first outlined in the CSA document *Wellness to World Cup*: it is a player-centered model for training, competition and recovery that respects the physical, mental and emotional development and maturation of the players themselves.

Much of the information presented in the previous LTPD guidelines for able-bodied players (*Wellness to World Cup Volume 1, Volume 2* and brochure) may be adapted for players with disabilities, provided that special allowances are made for the unique characteristics and needs of different disabilities. Where there is a significant lack of research on sport training and performance for particular disabilities, soccer organizations are simply encouraged to consult with disability experts to incorporate current best coaching practices for those disabilities. This flexible approach reflects the fact that coaching is both art and science, and that new information on sport for persons with disabilities is always emerging.

If you have not already read the CSA's *Wellness to World Cup* documents Volume 1 and Volume 2, you may want to read them and become familiarized with the CSA's LTPD model. Another important reference is the Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L) document *No Accidental Champions*, which outlines the general challenges and recommendations in Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) for athletes with disabilities.

*LTPD for Players with Disabilities* builds upon these documents and highlights some of the unique issues and factors that need to be considered by players, coaches, parents, administrators, and health professionals in the delivery of soccer programs specifically for persons with disabilities.



## Quick Facts on Canadian Soccer for Players with Disabilities

Different forms of soccer for persons with disabilities are governed by different sport organizations in Canada:

The CSA manages the National Para Soccer team program for 7-a-side Paralympic soccer.

The Canadian Deaf Sports Association runs the National Team program for deaf and hearing impaired players.

Special Olympics Canada and its provincial and territorial affiliates promote several game formats for players with intellectual disabilities.

Powerchair Football Canada promotes powerchair soccer in Canada for persons with disabilities who use electric wheelchairs.



## Soccer for Persons with Disabilities

There are 6 major types of modified soccer for persons with disabilities:

- Soccer 7-a-side is a Paralympic sport for players with cerebral palsy, brain injury or stroke.
- Soccer 5-a-side is a Paralympic sport for players with visual impairments.
- Special Olympics soccer is generally a 5-a-side format for players with intellectual disabilities. INAS-FID also offers 11-a-side opportunities for players with intellectual disabilities.
- Deaf soccer is played by deaf or hard of hearing players in the standard 11-a-side format.
- Powerchair soccer is a 4-a-side game (including goalkeeper) played in gymnasiums by persons with disabilities who use electric wheelchairs.
- Amputee soccer is a 7-a-side format played by persons with amputations or similar disabilities.



## Worldwide: Soccer for Players with Disabilities

Before exploring the requirements of a Canadian player development pathway for disability soccer, it is important to have some understanding of the scope of disability soccer around the world. Across the globe, the soccer landscape for players with disabilities is diverse. Internationally, there are essentially six major forms of soccer for players with disabilities:

- Paralympic 7-a-side CP soccer
- Paralympic 5-a-side soccer for players with visual impairments
- Deaf 11-a-side soccer
- Amputee 7-a-side soccer
- Special Olympics 5-a-side soccer
- Powerchair 4-a-side soccer

There are also other variants of disability soccer played in different countries, such as dwarf soccer and indoor wheelchair soccer using unpowered wheelchairs, but these game formats are not widely organized at a national or international level. A new 7-a-side format called unified football has been introduced in Europe involving mixed teams of players with and without intellectual disabilities, and it appears to be growing quickly in popularity.

## Canadian Soccer for Players with Disabilities

In Canada, soccer for persons with disabilities has been managed to date mostly by different disability sport organizations. Between the grassroots, provincial/territorial and national levels, program delivery is highly variable. Some types of disability soccer are widespread across Canada (e.g. Special Olympics soccer) while others are very localized (e.g. powerchair soccer). Some versions are delivered at the grassroots level, but not at the provincial and national level, and vice versa.

The CSA manages the Men's National Paralympic 7-a-side team, which competes in international events according to the rules of 7-a-side Paralympic soccer for players with cerebral palsy, head injury or stroke. The CSA has also partnered in the past with the Canadian Deaf Sports Association (CDSA) to deliver training camps for the CDSA's 11-a-side national men's team, but the overall program and team management remains under the umbrella of the CDSA.

Special Olympics provides soccer programs for persons with intellectual disabilities at the regional, provincial/territorial and national levels. The CSA has not traditionally been involved in these programs.

Powerchair soccer is managed by Powerchair Football Canada and played in limited geographical areas across Canada at present. There are a few local teams spread across British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Quebec. A Canadian team competed in the second FIPFA World Cup in France in November 2011. Powerchair Football Canada's long-range goal is to see powerchair soccer officially recognized as a national sport in Canada and introduced as an official sport at the Paralympics.

Amputee soccer is not widespread in Canada as yet. To date, the Canadian Amputee Sport Association (CASA) has not organized a soccer program, and local programs across Canada are ad hoc and intermittent.

The consistent picture of disability soccer in Canada at present: there is plenty of room for the development of disability soccer, and arguably much need for disability soccer programs that is currently unanswered.

### Quick Facts on 7-a-side Paralympic Soccer

Soccer 7-a-side is a Paralympic sport for athletes with cerebral palsy, brain injury or stroke.

Athletes with cerebral palsy in the CP5 to CP8 classifications are eligible to play.

Modified laws include a smaller field, no offside rule, goal frames that are shorter and narrower, and throw-ins may be made with one arm.

Soccer 7-a-side has been part of the Paralympics since the New York/Stoke Mandeville games in 1984.

The CSA has managed the 7-a-side Para Soccer National Team since 2006. Prior to that date, it was managed by the Canadian Cerebral Palsy Sports Association (CCPSA).

Canada finished 12th at the 2011 CP-ISRA Football 7-a-side World Championship in Drenthe, Netherlands. Canada posted two wins and four losses.





## LTPD FOR PLAYERS WITH DISABILITIES

To promote optimum health and quality of life, it is critical that all Canadians, with or without a disability, engage in physical activity. In light of documented declines in physical activity and increasing rates of obesity, depression, and related health issues both nationally and globally, LTPD supports the overall drive to promote the well-being of all Canadians through physical activity and sport. At the same time, LTPD also supports the efforts of our high-performance players to compete on the world stage.

Through LTPD, Canadians with disabilities might train to achieve excellence in disability soccer at the international level, or they might choose to pursue the many benefits that come with simply being active in regular recreational play. The purpose of LTPD is to support each player's aims by providing a suitable and recognizable pathway for them to engage in activity and pursue their goals using logical guidelines for training, competition, and recovery. In the process, LTPD ensures that players develop progressively through each stage in a holistic way, avoiding the pitfalls that can otherwise come with rushed or accelerated development.



Photo: Special Olympics Quebec/Lakeshore Soccer Association

### Why LTPD is Needed

Some individuals may have been born with a congenital disability, while others may have acquired their disabilities later in life. Regardless of whether or not they have a disability, Canadians who take an interest in soccer deserve to have a pathway to help them develop as players and achieve their goals, whether they pursue excellence and high performance or simply aim to be active for life.

For many years, Canada has been recognized as one of the world leaders in Paralympic sport, Special Olympics, Deaflympics, and other sports for athletes with disabilities. However, there are concerns that systemic factors continue to limit access to sport and physical activity for persons with disabilities in our country. There are also concerns that Canada's pool of high-performance athletes is not being replenished as our current athletes age. By creating an LTPD pathway for players with disabilities, we can help to ensure the vitality of soccer for all Canadians, with and without disabilities, through consistent program offerings and a systematic process for player development.

### Soccer is Soccer

In coaching players with disabilities and delivering disability soccer programs, coaches and soccer organizations need to remember that *soccer is soccer*. It is easy for coaches and administrators to be fearful that they lack the knowledge to serve players with disabilities. The truth is that they more know than they realize, and disability soccer does not require them to be disability experts. Soccer for players with disabilities is still soccer, and the skills needed to coach disability soccer are just an extension of the same skills that coaches use already. In limited instances where specialized knowledge of a particular disability is required to serve the players, local disability experts can be engaged as partners in helping to deliver programs.

## LTPD STAGES FOR PLAYERS WITH DISABILITIES

### Nine Stages Instead of Seven

As they mature to adulthood, children and youth pass through a series of developmental stages that affect the development of their physical, mental, cognitive and emotional capacities they use to participate in physical activity and sport. This fact holds true for persons with and without disabilities. The rate and extent of development may vary between individuals, and it may also vary between different types of disability.

The basic LTPD pathway for Canadian soccer describes seven stages,<sup>2</sup> and a summary of these stages is presented below (Figure 1). The first three stages, plus the Active for Life stage, are intended for all individuals who participate in physical activity. These stages represent the process for acquiring basic physical literacy and then engaging in lifelong physical activity for health and enjoyment.

With the addition of the Train to Train, Train to Compete and Train to Win stages, the full seven stages represent a complete pathway for players who choose to pursue high performance and elite competition.

For players with disabilities, two more stages are added to encourage their participation in soccer and facilitate their entry into the LTPD pathway: Awareness and First Contact (Figure 2 next page).

Figure 1 shows the typical age ranges when individuals who are able-bodied pass through each stage. However, individuals with disabilities may pass through these stages at significantly different ages depending on when they first become active or acquire their disability.

They may also pass through the stages at vastly different rates depending on the nature of their disabilities. For example, some individuals with an intellectual disability might move from the Learn to Train stage directly to the Active for Life stage, or they might stay in the Learn to Train stage for many years. Players with acquired disabilities might pass through some stages more than once – first as a person without a disability and later as a person with a disability.

<sup>2</sup> For additional details, please refer to *Wellness to World Cup: Volume 1 (2007)*.

Figure 1: Seven Stages of LTPD Players with disabilities pass through the same stages as able-bodied players presented below, but chronological ages and rates of progress may differ depending on the type and degree of disability.

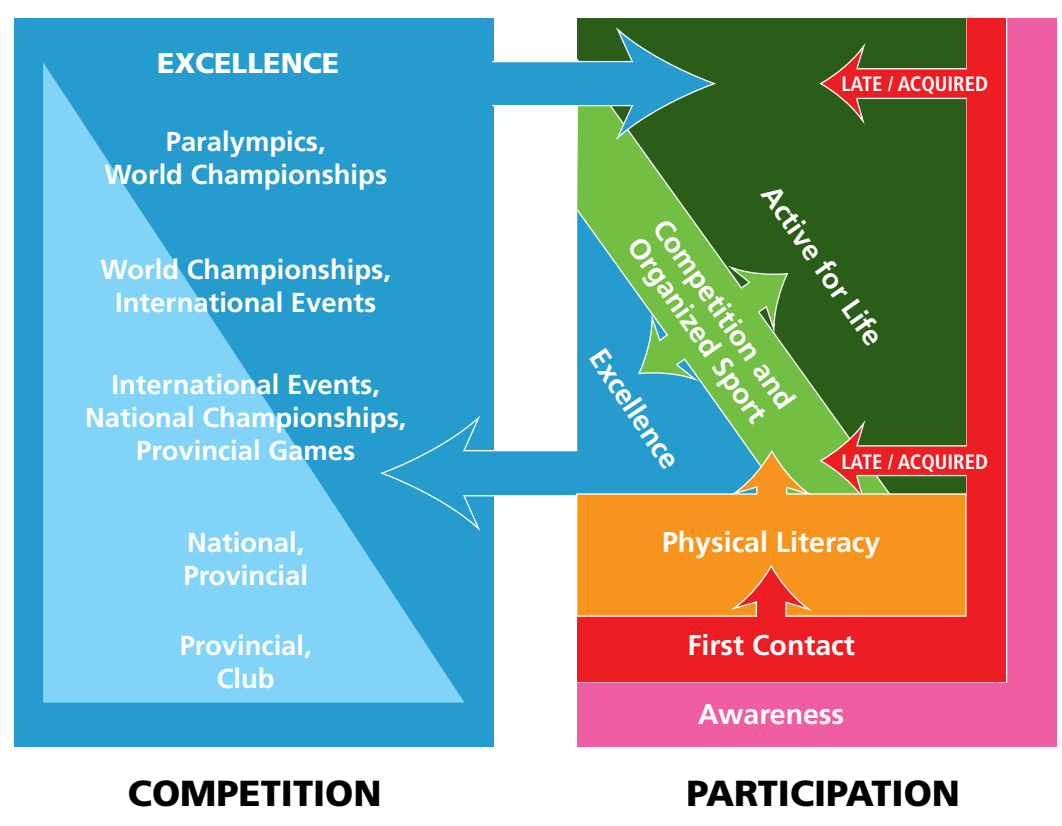
<b>Active Start</b>	Females and Males U4 - U6	Learn fundamental movement skills and link them together in play
<b>FUNDamentals</b>	Females U6 – U8 Males U6 – U9	Refine all fundamental movement skills and begin building fundamental sport skills, including soccer skills
<b>Learn to Train</b>	Females U8 – U11 Males U9 – U12	Develop and expand soccer skills
<b>Train to Train</b>	Females U11 – U15 Males U12 – U16	Build aerobic base, develop speed and strength, further refine and consolidate soccer-specific skills
<b>Train to Compete</b>	Females U15 – U19 Males U16 – U20	Optimize fitness preparation and position-specific skills as well as performance
<b>Train to Win</b>	Females U18+ Males U19+	Optimization of performance with the aim of achieving a podium finish
<b>Soccer for Life</b>	Females and males 13+	Lifelong participation in soccer for either amateur competition or physical activity. Players enter after the Learn to Train stage or after retirement from high-performance stages



## Two More Stages: Awareness and First Contact

As mentioned above, players with disabilities require two supplementary LTPD stages in addition to the seven stages described for able-bodied athletes in Figure 1. These stages are Awareness and First Contact. They are particularly important for individuals with an acquired disability who, prior to injury or illness, may have had no contact with, and no knowledge of, sport and physical activity for persons with a disability. These additional stages are shown in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2: The CS4L-NAC Model**  
 (Reproduced from *No Accidental Champions*, 2nd Edition, 2011)  
**Awareness and First Contact programs are used to inform and engage potential athletes at all ages since disabilities may be congenital or acquired.**



## Awareness stage

Opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in sport and physical activity are not always well known to the general public. The purpose of the Awareness stage is to inform the general public and prospective athletes with disabilities of the range of opportunities available. To this end, soccer organizations need to develop awareness plans to make their offerings and resources known.

In the case of individuals who acquire a disability, the period following acquisition of a disability is generally one of great change and transition. Some of their previous physical activities may no longer be open to them in the same form, and they may not be aware of the many sporting and physical activities that are available to persons with disabilities. Awareness plans can help to ease this transition. These plans can also foster awareness among parents and people who work with persons with disabilities, such as health care professionals and teachers.

## First Contact stage

The purpose of the First Contact stage is to ensure persons with disabilities have a positive first experience in disability soccer so they will be encouraged to continue playing. To ensure success during first contact, soccer organizations need to train coaches and develop orientation programs that provide an enjoyable first experience in soccer for prospective players with disabilities. The goal is to help new players to feel confident and comfortable in their surroundings, and welcome among coaches and other players.





## LTPD STAGE DESCRIPTIONS

The following pages provide details for each of the nine LTPD stages for players with disabilities. The intention is to provide as much detail as possible to guide soccer clubs and associations as they implement disability soccer programs. However, it must be understood that it takes time to develop programming based on player numbers, facilities, geography, coaching and officiating. Accordingly, the following stage descriptions present an idealized vision of programming targets for disability soccer in Canada, understanding that program design must always take into account the local realities.

Also note that the age ranges cited for each stage relate directly to the LTPD pathway for able-bodied players. These are provided for general comparison purposes only. Depending on the types of disabilities involved, these age ranges may or may not apply to a particular player. In these instances more than ever, training and competition must be adjusted to address the needs of the individual player, and coaches should not hesitate to seek additional guidance from disability experts.



### Flexibility in Formats

During the FUNdamentals, Learn to Train and Soccer for Life stages, coaches and program leaders should allow flexibility in game formats. This is especially important when starting a new disability soccer program. Clubs and associations should begin by allowing pan-disability formats that permit a range of disabilities to participate. This will help to encourage program development where there are limited numbers of players who may represent a variety of disabilities.

Coaches and leaders should also be prepared to adjust the game rules and format according to the disabilities involved, including flexibility in numbers of players for each team on the field and even unique rules for individual players within the context of the game. The main aims of programming at these stages are to promote participation and to guarantee success and enjoyment for each player.

### Elite Player Development

At the Train to Train, Train to Compete and Train to Win stages, disability soccer programs should deliver training that is challenging for the players while being respectful of the constraints of their disabilities. Game play and competition should be aligned according to single disabilities (e.g. Paralympic 7-a-side soccer for CP players) and follow recognized competition standards (e.g. standard rules and officiating for the particular disability soccer format being played).

Again, the CSA oversees high-performance development for Paralympic 7-a-side players through these stages and defers to other disability sport organizations (DSOs) to manage high-performance training and competition for players with other disabilities (e.g. visual impairments, intellectual disabilities, deaf or hard of hearing, amputee, powerchair).



### Mainstream and Disability Programs Working Together

As disability players develop through the LTPD pathway, some may choose to play in mainstream able-bodied programs and others may choose to play strictly in disability programs. For example, some cerebral palsy players may choose to play in mainstream soccer programs throughout the LTPD pathway, especially those with CP7 or CP8 classification. Typically, many players on Canada's national Para Soccer team will have played in regular club programs as children, and some may have continued to play in competitive able-bodied adult leagues even as they competed for Canada as Paralympic players. For this reason, the word "soccer" should be read as interchangeable with "disability soccer" in the following pages.







## AWARENESS

### Make disability soccer programs known to the public.

**Age:** players any age

Disabilities can be congenital or acquired later in life through injury or illness. In both instances, the parents of the child who has a congenital disability or acquires a disability, or the individual who acquires the disability later in life, may not be aware that there are soccer programs available for them. For this reason, soccer organizations need to develop awareness plans to make their disability soccer programs and resources known.

Awareness plans should definitely include communications to parents and individuals with disabilities through standard media and communication channels (web, print, radio, television, social media). In addition, awareness plans should include direct outreach and communication with local disability and disability sport associations, as well as people who work with persons with disabilities, such as health care professionals and teachers.

#### Some suggested communications tactics, tools and channels for promoting awareness:

- Contact rehabilitation centres and children's treatment centres to identify potential players and build awareness of disability soccer programs.
- Contact the Canadian Paralympic Committee (CPC) to see if it is possible to utilize the CPC database of disability athletes to market soccer to disability athletes in your area.
- Contact the CPC to request a *Changing Minds, Changing Lives* (CMCL) presentation for your soccer club or association. CMCL is a free educational program for key influencers in the lives of persons with disabilities to promote opportunities in sport.
- Partner with other sports where the athletes use skills and physical capacities similar to soccer.
- Encourage athletes from other para-sports to join soccer programs. Especially in the early stages of LTPD, this will help to make soccer programs viable for player numbers.



- Post information pages and advertisements on club and association websites.
- Place advertisements in community newspapers, magazines and recreation program guides.
- Create web links from club and association websites to the Canadian Paralympic Committee web portal.
- Promote disability soccer programs through disability and disability sport association websites and social media.
- Make club presentations and host participation activities at community Paralympic festivals.
- Seek *pro bono* television advertising and news stories on community cable channels.
- Create networks with local sport associations, disability organizations, community groups, medical professionals and rehabilitation centres.

## FIRST CONTACT

### Create a positive first experience.

**Age:** players any age

The first time that a person with a disability ventures to play soccer with others, they may feel shy or slightly intimidated by the new environment. It is very important to make them feel welcome and to encourage them. If they are not made to feel welcome, or if they feel inadequate due to the nature of their disability, they may leave with a negative feeling that keeps them from pursuing soccer.

Accordingly, organizations need to train coaches and develop programs that provide a positive orientation for prospective players with disabilities. The goal is to help them to feel confident and comfortable in their surroundings, and welcome among peers and coaches.

In this process, organizations need to create orientation programs that serve two main streams of disability players: those who are likely to integrate within able-bodied soccer programs, and those who are not likely to integrate within able-bodied programs.

#### Some suggestions for building an effective First Contact program:

- Identify lead coaches and staff to run the First Contact program.
- Train coaches and staff in basic awareness and understanding of different disabilities.
- Educate coaches and staff in small-sided game formats that accommodate a variety of disabilities, whether in a disability-only soccer orientation program, or in a combined program that features both players with disabilities and players without disabilities.
- Provide guidance to coaches and staff on how to modify game formats if necessary to accommodate unforeseen circumstances or disabilities.
- Develop a basic First Contact disability soccer equipment list for quick deployment and set up at community sport and parasport festivals (e.g. portable mini goals).



- Ensure club registration and contact information is available at all First Contact events.
- Offer First Contact programs free of charge to the public.
- Partner with other sports where the athletes use skills and physical capacities similar to soccer.
- Emphasize the soccer aspect of the experience rather than disability. Be as empowering as possible, so potential players know that they too can develop the competencies to play and enjoy the game.
- Encourage athletes from other para-sports to join soccer programs. Especially in the early stages of LTPD, this will help to make soccer programs viable for player numbers.



## ACTIVE START

### First kicks with a soccer ball.

**Age:** females and males U4-U6

**Where:** home, daycare, soccer clubs, disability sport associations, para-sport festivals.

**Who:** parents, caregivers, early childhood educators, grassroots coaches, disability sport leaders.

#### Development Goals

- Physical – Encourage basic soccer play to develop fundamental movement skills such as running, jumping, twisting, kicking, throwing and catching.
- Technical – Encourage individual play where children run with the ball, dribble, kick and shoot.
- Tactical – No tactical needs at this stage.
- Mental – Fun, fascination and passion for play.

#### Recommendations

- During the Active Start stage, there should be no formal competition.
- At the beginning of this stage, adults and children should play together informally in small numbers or one-on-one.
- There are no formal teams, and play should be included into a routine of daily physical activity that includes a variety of other sports and activities for health and development of fundamental movement skills.



#### Game Format

- There should be no formal games during the Active Start stage. In an informal play environment, adult and child play 1 v 1.
- Adults play in order to model the skills and general game play for the child.
- While the adult should challenge the child player, the adult should also allow the child to score goals and “beat” the adult so the child gets the idea of the game and feels encouraged to continue.
- Create small goals using soft objects to mark goals.
- Always aim to create a fun, balanced playing experience in terms of skills and ranges of ability and disability.

## FUNDAMENTALS

### Fun with the ball.

**Age:** females U6-U8, males U6-U9

**Where:** home, schools, soccer clubs, disability sport associations, parasport festivals.

**Who:** parents, physical education teachers, club coaches, disability sport coaches.

#### Development Goals

- Physical – Encourage basic soccer play to develop fundamental movement skills such as running, jumping, twisting, kicking, throwing and catching. Develop the ABCs of movement: agility, balance, coordination and speed.
- Technical – Introduce movement exercises and games that develop a feel for the ball, including ball control in passing, receiving, dribbling, and shooting.
- Tactical – Introduce players to the most elementary aspects of passing and support and decision-making in small-sided games, but otherwise no formal tactics. Children learn team play through the simple act of playing the game.
- Mental – Promote individual decision making to develop game intelligence. Continue to emphasize fun and pure enjoyment of the game.



#### Recommendations

- During the FUNdamentals stage of soccer, there should be no formal competition. Players should gather for one hour once or twice per week in a “festival” style program rotating through a variety of skills stations and small-sided games. (See Appendix B: Sample Field Layouts for Festival Programs.)
- Sessions should alternate equally between skills and small-sided game stations. Groups of players rotate through the different stations during the hour, and the groups change each session (i.e. there are no fixed “teams” for the season).
- Depending on the number of players and coaches available, one head coach might run the warm-up for the entire group of players, assisted by other coaches and parents, before the players separate into small groups for rotation through the skills and games stations.
- Coaches should referee the games, being mindful of the range of disabilities that may be involved and any special rules that have been determined for particular players and disabilities.
- If there are large numbers of players in a program, consider organizing the groups and sessions according to severity and type of disability, as well as developmental age (physical, mental, emotional).
- Consider running occasional one-day mini tournaments. Tournaments may involve pan-disability teams or disability-specific teams.
- Mini tournaments should remain fun and developmental. There should be no playoffs or championship final, no team eliminations, and all teams should play an equal number of games.
- Depending on the nature of their disability, some children may also play in able-bodied soccer programs.
- Players should play a variety of sports and physical activities throughout the year for health and development of fundamental movement skills.



## FUNDAMENTALS (Continued)

### Fun with the ball.

#### Game Format

- Small-sided games should be played in the context of a festival format during each session, where skills stations alternate with one or two small-sided game stations.
- Allow flexibility in the game format and adjust it according to the number of players involved and the nature of their disabilities.
- Game formats should not exceed 5-a-side to ensure all players get regular ball touches.
- Consider uneven numbers of players per team if it helps to balance the game and engage more participants.
- All players should have fair playing time regardless of their level of ability or disability. The game is a tool for developing all of the players.
- Goalkeepers can be introduced towards the end of the FUNDamentals stage. Use small stationary goal frames or cones to mark goals 3-4 metres in width.
- If one or both teams in a game do not have players willing to play goal, or if their disability is not suitable for goal (e.g. visually impaired), allow that team(s) to play with a smaller goal and no goalkeeper.
- Be prepared to adapt training and games to the facilities available (e.g. indoor, outdoor, artificial turf, natural grass, gymnasium).
- Always aim to create a fun, balanced playing experience in terms of skills and ranges of ability and disability.
- Be prepared to allow more than one type of disability within a game (pan-disability game). Simply adjust the rules according to the players and disabilities involved. For example, exclusive playing "zones" can be marked with cones for players with particular disabilities (e.g. wheelchair player) so they have the opportunity to play the ball with more time and space.



## LEARN TO TRAIN

### The golden age of skills learning.

**Age:** females U8-U11, males U9-U12

**Where:** soccer clubs, schools, district/regional development centres, disability sport associations.

**Who:** club coaches, physical education teachers, district/regional coaches, disability sport coaches.

#### Development Goals

- **Physical** – Focus on developing speed, agility and flexibility. This is an especially sensitive period for developing these traits, but the timing may be affected by the type of disability.
- **Technical** – Focus on skills training. This is an especially sensitive period for developing skills, but the timing may be affected by the type of disability. Expand the repertoire of soccer skills, emphasizing individual ball control and ball feel. Continue to develop passing, receiving, dribbling, and shooting.
- **Tactical** – Develop game awareness and encourage individual decision making. Teach simple passing combinations, basic marking and moving into space.
- **Mental** – Encourage individual decision making to develop game intelligence. Continue to emphasize fun and pure enjoyment of the game to maintain engagement.

#### Recommendations

- During the Learn to Train stage, disability soccer programs may choose between offering a "festival" style program similar to the FUNDamentals stage, a traditional league program where teams are selected, or some combination of these two. (See Appendix B: Sample Field Layouts for Festival Programs.)
- If following a festival format with skills stations and mini game stations, players should gather 2 to 3 times per week for approximately one hour each time.
- If following a program with league competition with games between established teams, teams should have 2 to 3 weekly training sessions for each game.
- If there are large numbers of players in a program, consider organizing the teams and sessions according to severity and type of disability, as well as developmental age (physical, mental, emotional).



- Coaches should referee the games, being mindful of the range of disabilities that may be involved and any special rules that have been determined for particular players and disabilities.
- Depending on the nature of their disability, some children may choose to play in an integrated environment with able-bodied players or in a disability environment. The key is to create playing opportunities that serve the players and best utilize the available program resources.
- Consider running the occasional one-day mini-tournament every one or two months. These mini-tournaments may involve pan-disability teams or disability-specific teams depending on the number of players and teams in the region.



## LEARN TO TRAIN (Continued)

### The golden age of skills learning.

#### Recommendations (cont.)

- Mini tournaments should remain fun and developmental. These events could have a final with a winner and loser, or they could ignore standings altogether. There should simply be no team eliminations, and all teams should play an equal number of games.
- All players should have playing time during games regardless of their level of ability or disability, and playing time should be fair if not equal.
- Players should continue to play a variety of sports and physical activities throughout the year for health and development of fundamental movement skills.

#### Game Format

- Allow flexibility in the game format.
- If running a disability-only program, start with 5-a-side depending on the players involved and the nature of their disabilities.
- Progress to 7-a-side at the end of the Learn to Train stage if the range of abilities allows for all players to continue to have regular ball touches.
- In general, choice of format should consider the number of players in the program and the range of abilities.
- Consider uneven numbers of players per team if it helps to balance the game and engage more participants.
- Goalkeepers should be used in the Learn to Train stage. Use small stationary goal frames or cones to mark goals 3-4 metres in width.
- In small disability soccer programs with limited registrations, if one or both teams in a game do not have players willing to play goal, or if their disability is not suitable for goal (e.g. visually impaired), allow that team(s) to play with a smaller goal and no goalkeeper.
- As with the FUNdamentals stage, continue to create a fun, balanced playing experience in terms of skills and ranges of ability and disability.



Photo: Jim Grove

- Be prepared to allow more than one type of disability within a game (pan-disability game). Simply adjust the rules according to the players and disabilities involved. For example, exclusive playing “zones” can be marked with cones for players with particular disabilities (e.g. wheelchair player) so they have the opportunity to play the ball with more time and space.
- If you don't have enough players available for a training session or game, don't hesitate to play an adapted game format (e.g. 4-a-side instead of 5-a-side) so you can continue to play and to engage all of the players.

## LTPD HIGH-PERFORMANCE FOR PLAYERS WITH DISABILITIES



At the Train to Train, Train to Compete and Train to Win stages, the CSA provides guidance exclusively for high-performance development of Paralympic 7-a-side players (i.e. players with cerebral palsy, brain injury or stroke).

The CSA defers to other disability sport organizations (DSOs) to provide high-performance training and competition for players with other disabilities (e.g. visual impairments, intellectual disabilities, deaf or hard of hearing, amputee, powerchair).



## TRAIN TO TRAIN

### Identify the Elite Player.

**Age:** females U11-U15, males U12-U16

**Where:** soccer clubs, select programs (regional, provincial).

**Who:** club coaches, district/regional/provincial/national coaches.

During the Train to Train stage, the demands of skill training as well as training loads should increase, thus provoking improvement in mental toughness, concentration and diligence. Awareness of tactics within the game becomes increasingly important.

### CP Athlete Classifications

There are 4 classes of cerebral palsy athlete that participate in Paralympic 7-a-side soccer. For more information on classification, please visit the Canadian Cerebral Palsy Sports Association website ([www.ccpa.ca](http://www.ccpa.ca)).

#### Class 5 (CP5)

- Spastic diplegic or minimal quadriplegic.
- Ambulatory – does not use wheelchair for any sporting events.

#### Class 6 (CP6)

- Moderate or minimal athetoid or spastic quadriplegic.
- May have balance and control problems, but is ambulatory.

#### Class 7 (CP7)

- Ambulatory hemiplegic.
- Good functional ability.

#### Class 8 (CP8)

- Minimal disability group.
- May be monoplegic or minimal diplegic.
- May have minimal loss of function and coordination.

### Development Goals

- **Physical** – Disciplined warm-up and cool-down, aerobic and anaerobic endurance, strength, core strength and stability, balance, nutrition, prevention and care of injuries, proper rest and recovery. Personalized programs needed to respect the growth spurt. Training of all capacities may be affected by disability, so coaches and trainers must make appropriate adjustments.
- **Technical** – Introduce advanced skills techniques and position-specific skills. Skills should be applied in increasingly demanding games and game-like training situations. Coaches and trainers should adjust training goals in view of disability.
- **Tactical** – Develop increased team awareness and team play. Develop understanding of positions and team unit tasks (defensive, midfield, or forward unit) through small-sided games and competitive matches. Decision-making should be developed in increasingly demanding games and game-like training situations.
- **Mental** – Introduce pre-competition routines, mental preparation, goal setting, and coping with winning and losing.



### Recommendations

- Identify talented players in the CP5 to CP8 classifications from able-bodied mainstream soccer programs, or during tournaments and matches between club-based disability teams.
- Begin to incorporate identified CP players into training camps with the national Para Soccer team.
- Some identified CP players will continue to play regularly with able-bodied soccer teams in competitive 11-a-side leagues. Depending on the age of the player, this could range from U12 youth soccer to senior men's programs and university teams.
- Provide options for competition (i.e. local 7-a-side or 11-a-side team) and training (i.e. district and provincial development centres).
- In regions where there are too few players to form a 7-a-side league, players should be encouraged to play with competitive able-bodied 11-a-side teams wherever possible.
- Emphasize training for performance and training in quality environments.
- Introduce classification process and eligibility requirements.
- Acknowledge the differences between the classifications in Paralympic 7-a-side soccer and clarify the playing roles of each classification.
- Begin position specialization based on classification. For example, players with CP5 classification are goalkeepers in the national Para Soccer team program.
- Club-based Paralympic 7-a-side teams may compete in regional and provincial championships.
- In densely populated regions with significant numbers of disability players, disability-specific leagues may become feasible.
- As players progress through this stage, they move towards year-round play that includes appropriate rest and recovery periods.
- There should be an appropriate ratio of training, competition and rest during each part of the year (periodized planning is critical).
- For every game played, players should have 5 to 12 training sessions of 60 to 75 minutes each, including cross-training.

- Players should now focus on soccer as their primary sport, but one or two complimentary sports are recommended to support athletic capacities suitable for soccer (e.g. cross country, track and field).

### Game Format

- In regions where there are sufficient numbers of CP players, game play and competition should include Paralympic 7-a-side soccer and follow recognized competition standards (e.g. standard Paralympic rules and top level officiating).
- Qualified referees from able-bodied programs should be given an orientation in the adapted rules of Paralympic 7-a-side soccer so they can officiate competitive matches.
- In regions where there are too few players to form 7-a-side leagues, elite Paralympic players are encouraged to play with able-bodied 11-a-side teams at an appropriate competitive level, so they are being regularly challenged in their development.
- Players who do not wish to pursue elite competition can choose to enter the Soccer for Life stage of the LTPD player pathway. They should be encouraged to continue to play in pan-disability programs and able-bodied leagues, and/or begin coaching and officiating.





## TRAIN TO COMPETE

### Develop the international player.

**Age:** females U15-U19, males U16-U20

**Where:** club teams, select programs (national).

**Who:** club coaches, national team coaches.

At the Train to Compete stage, players who are now proficient at performing basic and soccer-specific skills are working to gain more game maturity as they learn to perform these skills under a variety of competitive conditions. Fulfillment of each player's potential depends on their own efforts, the support of teammates, and the unselfish guidance of the coach. They must be exposed to quality playing and training environments which extend their mental, physical, tactical and technical capabilities to their limit. Players must have a sound understanding of soccer principles and concepts, and they should show emotional stability when confronted with pressure situations.



### Development Goals

- **Physical** – Disciplined warm-up and cool-down, aerobic and anaerobic endurance, strength, core strength and stability, balance, nutrition, prevention and care of injuries, proper rest and recovery. Training of all capacities may be affected by disability, so coaches and trainers must make appropriate adjustments.
- **Technical** – Refine core skills and position-specific skills. Continue to develop advanced skills. Coaches and trainers should adjust training goals in view of disability.
- **Tactical** – Refine decision-making in consistently demanding games and game-like training situations. Refine tactical awareness of formations, functional roles and match strategies. Apply game analysis to enhance player tactical understanding.
- **Mental** – Refine pre-competition routines, mental preparation, goal setting, and coping with winning and losing. Increase player concentration, discipline and personal responsibility in all aspects of training and competition. Develop mental toughness and the will to win.

### Recommendations

- Continue to identify talented players in the CP5 to CP8 classifications from able-bodied mainstream soccer programs, or during tournaments and matches between club-based disability teams.
- Incorporate identified CP players into training camps with the national Para Soccer team.
- Provide year-round options for competition and training. CP players may play with a local 7-a-side team if one exists, or they may play with able-bodied 11-a-side teams if there are no local 7-a-side teams, or they may play both.
- CP players who play with able-bodied soccer teams in competitive 11-a-side leagues should play at the highest level possible based on their age and disability. Depending on the age of the player, this could range from U16 youth select teams to men's first division and university teams.

- In regions where there are too few players to form a 7-a-side league, players should be encouraged to play with competitive able-bodied 11-a-side teams wherever possible.
- It is highly unlikely that players with CP5 and CP6 classifications will be suited to train and compete in elite 11-a-side soccer, so they must find the highest level of training and competition that their disability will allow.
- Host national Para Soccer team development camps twice each year for players who are new to the national program.
- Emphasize training for performance and training in quality environments.
- Acknowledge the differences between the classifications in Paralympic 7-a-side soccer and clarify the playing roles of each classification.
- Players specialize in positions based on classification. For example, players with CP5 classification are goalkeepers in the national Para Soccer team program.
- Club-based Paralympic 7-a-side teams may compete in regional and provincial championships.
- Players should be involved in year-round play that includes appropriate rest and recovery periods.
- There should be an appropriate ratio of training, competition and rest during each part of the year (periodized planning is critical).
- For every game played, players should have 5 to 12 training sessions of 75 to 90 minutes each, including cross-training.
- Players should play regularly in highly competitive league games and international matches.
- Players should now focus on soccer as their primary sport, but one or two complimentary sports are recommended to support athletic capacities suitable for soccer (e.g. cross country, track and field). Players now focus on soccer as their primary sport, and any other physical activities are purely for part-time and off-season recreation.

### Game Format

- In regions where there are sufficient numbers of CP players, game play and competition should include Paralympic 7-a-side soccer and follow recognized competition standards (e.g. standard Paralympic rules and top level officiating).
- Qualified referees from able-bodied programs should be given an orientation in the adapted rules of Paralympic 7-a-side soccer so they can officiate competitive matches.
- In regions where there are too few players to form 7-a-side leagues, elite Paralympic players are encouraged to play with able-bodied 11-a-side teams at an appropriate competitive level, so they are being regularly challenged in their development.
- Players who no longer wish to continue in elite competition can choose to enter the Soccer for Life stage of the LTPD player pathway. They should be encouraged to continue to play in pan-disability programs and able-bodied leagues, and/or begin coaching and officiating.





## TRAIN TO WIN

### Build the World Championship Player.

**Age:** females U18+, males U19+

**Where:** club teams, club disability teams, select programs (national team).

**Who:** provincial and national team coaches.

At the Train to Win stage, the majority of the player's physical, technical, tactical and psychological qualities are now fully established, and the focus of training shifts to optimization of performance. Players may still require additional tactical experience in high-pressure games to develop consistency. The focus is on the maximization of all capacities.

### National Para Soccer Team Selection

To be eligible for the CSA's national Para Soccer 7-a-side team, players must have mild cerebral palsy, brain injury or stroke with classification in the CP5 to CP8 range.

Historically, Canada's elite Para Soccer players have been identified and developed through a variety of channels. Some players have been identified as adults in university teams, others have been identified in community youth soccer programs, and some have been identified through provincial CP sports associations.

National Para Soccer team players train together intermittently each year at national team camps. Most of their training and development occurs in mainstream community soccer programs at either the youth level or the senior level.

### Development Goals

- **Physical** – Players follow individualized fitness programs for maximization of all capacities. Training and competition plans use periodization, and work and recovery must be monitored. Training of all capacities may be affected by disability, so coaches and trainers must make appropriate adjustments.
- **Technical** – Refine all core skills and position-specific skills. Skills are practiced and refined under pressure in games and game-like training.
- **Tactical** – Continue to refine decision-making in consistently demanding games and game-like training situations. Refine tactical awareness of formations, functional roles and match strategies. Apply game analysis to enhance player tactical understanding. Adapt playing strategies to suit changing demands.
- **Mental** – Refine pre-competition routines, mental preparation, goal setting, and coping with winning and losing. Maximize player concentration, discipline and personal responsibility in all aspects of training and competition. Maximize mental toughness and the will to win.



### Recommendations

- At the Train to Win stage, competition and training must provide the maximum challenges and demands on players. Training prepares players for international competition, and the goal of competition is to achieve podium performances.
- Quality training programs and competition are essential for maximizing all player skills and physical capacities.
- Provide year-round options for competition and training. CP players may play with a local 7-a-side team if one exists, or they may play with able-bodied 11-a-side teams if there are no local 7-a-side teams, or they may play both.
- CP players who play with able-bodied soccer teams in competitive 11-a-side leagues should play at the highest level possible appropriate to their development. Depending on the age of the player, this could range from U16 youth select teams to men's first division and university teams.
- In regions where there are too few players to form a 7-a-side league, players should be encouraged to play with competitive able-bodied 11-a-side teams wherever possible.
- It is highly unlikely that players with CP5 and CP6 classifications will be suited to train and compete in elite 11-a-side soccer, so they must find the highest level of training and competition that their disability will allow.
- Players should be involved in year-round play that includes appropriate rest and recovery periods.
- There should be an appropriate ratio of training, competition and rest during each part of the year (periodized planning is critical).
- For every game played, players should have 5 to 12 training sessions of 75 to 90 minutes each, including cross-training.
- Players should play regularly in highly competitive league games and international matches.
- Players focus on soccer as their primary sport, and any other physical activities are purely for part-time and off-season recreation.

### Game Format

- In regions where there are sufficient numbers of CP players, game play and competition should include Paralympic 7-a-side soccer and follow recognized competition standards (e.g. standard Paralympic rules and top level officiating).
- Qualified referees from able-bodied programs should be given an orientation in the adapted rules of Paralympic 7-a-side soccer so they can officiate competitive matches.
- In regions where there are too few players to form 7-a-side leagues, elite Paralympic players are encouraged to play with able-bodied 11-a-side teams at an appropriate competitive level, so they are being regularly challenged in their development.
- Players who no longer wish to continue in elite competition can choose to enter the Soccer for Life stage of the LTPD player pathway. They should be encouraged to continue to play in pan-disability programs and able-bodied leagues, and/or begin coaching and officiating.





## SOCCER FOR LIFE

### Soccer for health and grassroots growth.

**Age:** 13 and older

**Where:** soccer clubs, schools, recreational leagues, disability sport associations.

**Who:** club coaches, physical education teachers, disability sport programmers.

#### Development Goals

- Physical – Maintain agility, coordination, flexibility and strength. Develop and maintain aerobic fitness.
- Technical – Maintain existing skills and make modest demands for further skill development according to the interest level and previous playing experience of participants.
- Tactical – Continue to develop game awareness and encourage individual decision making to foster a rich enjoyment of the game. Teach simple passing combinations, basic marking and moving into space.
- Mental – Encourage individual decision making to develop game intelligence. Continue to emphasize fun and pure enjoyment of the game to maintain engagement.



#### Recommendations

- At the Soccer for Life stage, players may choose to play in either a recreation stream or a competitive stream.
- Recreation stream players may meet for 60 to 90 minutes once or twice per week to warm-up and then play small-sided games. Where desired, based on the previous playing experience of the players, skills training might be offered through a program format where players rotate through skills stations to practice shooting, passing and dribbling prior to playing a small-sided game.
- Competitive stream players may play in competitive able-bodied 11-a-side teams or 7-a-side leagues.
- There could be a range of programs offered at this stage, depending on the nature of player disabilities and the training aims of the players. Some programs might continue to emphasize skill development, while other programs might simply offer playing opportunities for experienced players.
- Clubs should offer programs that respond to the interests and aims of the players.
- If there are large numbers of players in a disability soccer program, consider organizing teams and recreational leagues according to severity and type of disability.
- In smaller disability soccer programs, players with different levels and disabilities may be mixed into pan-disability teams and games.
- Teams can be changed week-to-week to create a fresh experience, with coaches or programmers managing a balance of talent and ability on each team.
- Coaches or programmers should referee the games, being mindful of the range of disabilities that may be involved and any special rules that have been determined for particular players and disabilities.
- In programs and regions with large numbers of players, consider running occasional mini tournaments once or twice per year. These mini tournaments may involve pan-disability teams or disability-specific teams.
- Players should continue to play a variety of sports and physical activities throughout the year to maintain health and a wide variety of movement skills.
- Depending on the nature of their disabilities, some players may also play in able-bodied soccer programs.

#### Game Format

- Allow flexibility in the game format.
- Play up to 11 v 11 if the players' range of skills and abilities can accommodate large format play, but stay with smaller formats if it does not.
- The key is to maintain enjoyment and fun.
- In most recreational play, goalkeepers should be entirely optional and goal sizes can be adjusted according to whether or not goalkeepers are being used.
- If necessary, create separate rules for each player and type of disability on the field to ensure individual success.
- Don't be afraid to allow more than one type of disability within a game (pan-disability). Simply adjust the rules according to the players and disabilities involved.
- If you don't have enough players available for a training session or game, don't hesitate to play an adapted game format (e.g. 4 v 4 instead of 7 v 7) so you can continue to play and to engage all of the players.



#### Other Goals at Soccer for Life

- Disability players should be encouraged to give back to the soccer community in general, and the disability soccer community in particular, as game officials, program administrators, coaches, mentors, fundraisers, volunteers, and outreach personnel for Awareness and First Contact initiatives.
- Based on their previous playing experience, they can provide a wealth of information, expertise and guidance within soccer programs.





## THE 10 KEY FACTORS OF LTPD FOR PLAYERS WITH DISABILITIES



Photo: Special Olympics Quebec/Lakeshore Soccer Association

The LTPD model presented in *Wellness to World Cup* is based on current research in sport and exercise science together with observed best practices in soccer training and coaching. The 10 Key Factors stem from this body of research and best practices.

However, as we apply the key factors to players with disabilities, we recognize that there are extra considerations that we need to take into account. We also understand that there is less science and research describing athletes with disabilities than able-bodied athletes, so there are many things *we do not know*.

In this light, *LTPD for Players with Disabilities* should be seen as a first step towards helping players, coaches, parents, officials, and administrators towards understanding some of the principal challenges for players with disabilities as they discover the game.

At the same time, we must remain mindful that continued research is needed. In the absence of precise answers to some questions of sport science that may arise in relation to training and competition, coaches and other persons involved in the delivery of disability soccer programs must be prepared to consult with disability experts in managing the training and development of players with disabilities.

Note: The key factors behind LTPD for able-bodied players can be found in the CSA document *Wellness to World Cup: Volume 1* (2007).

### 1. Physical Literacy

Regardless of abilities or disabilities, all individuals need to acquire fundamental movement and sport skills (otherwise known as physical literacy) to support their long-term participation in sport and physical activity. Ideally, these fundamental skills are acquired prior to puberty since the growth spurt has an impact on skill acquisition. However, due to a variety of factors or circumstances, some persons with disabilities may not acquire the fundamentals and physical literacy prior to puberty. In addition, depending on the nature of their disability, some children may not follow the traditional sequence of skills and their motor patterns may never mirror the typical mature pattern.<sup>3</sup>

Everyone involved in providing soccer and physical activity programs for players with disabilities needs to remain aware of these facts as they design competition and training. Even though some players with disabilities may be adults, it is critical that they be given the opportunity to learn the fundamentals of as many movement and sport skills as their disability may allow, so they will be able to participate in a wide range of sports and physical activities.

### 2. Specialization

Soccer is a late specialization sport (see *Wellness to World Cup* for discussion of late and early specialization sports). Accordingly, children with congenital or early-acquired physical, intellectual or sensory disabilities should be exposed to the full range of fundamental movement skills and fundamental sport skills before specializing in soccer. Similarly, adults with an acquired disability should master their new fundamental movement skills before specializing in the game.

<sup>3</sup> Fundamental Movement Skills: Active Start and FUNdamental Stages – For Children with Physical Disabilities. Ottawa: Physical Health and Education Canada, 2009.

### 3. Age

Some congenital disabilities are known to influence childhood and adolescent development and the timing of puberty; however, much more research is needed to understand fully their effect on development. For example, children with spina bifida are known to experience puberty earlier than their peers, and individuals with intellectual disability tend to enter puberty early but complete the process later.

Because of these variations in the timing of puberty (and therefore the adolescent growth spurt), there will likely be variations in the ages at which sensitive periods of trainability occur. Mental and emotional age can also vary significantly (see below).

Although the timing of puberty may vary, each adolescent's developmental sequence usually does not. The consistent theme is that coaches need to look beyond the chronological age of their athletes and consider developmental age and maturation.



Photo: Soccerability/Janelle Janis

### 4. Sensitive Periods (Trainability)

Stamina, strength, speed, skill and suppleness (flexibility) are all trainable at any time in the life of an athlete, but there are particular times or sensitive periods during growth and maturation when training will be easier and produce better results. There is no compelling evidence to suggest that the sensitive periods are different in athletes with a disability, although some specific types of disability are known to have an impact on the age of onset of adolescence, and the onset of adolescence impacts the sensitive periods.

The sensitive periods indicated for speed and suppleness follow chronological age, since all available research has been based on chronological age. However, stamina and strength are most responsive to training during or after the adolescent growth spurt, hence it is important to track and monitor each athlete's passage through adolescence. Skill is most responsive to training up to the onset of the growth spurt.

In the absence of information or athlete monitoring assessment to the contrary, it is suggested that the ages of optimum trainability, as shown in *Canadian Sport for Life*, be adapted and adjusted based on the observed age of puberty for children with a congenital disability. Whether there are sensitive periods of trainability during post-injury rehabilitation needs to be investigated for individuals with an acquired disability.



## THE 10 KEY FACTORS OF LTPD FOR PLAYERS WITH DISABILITIES (Continued)

### 5. Physical, Mental, Cognitive, and Emotional Development

Sports such as soccer can play an important role in helping individuals with a physical, intellectual or sensory disability to develop a positive self-image and self-confidence. For this reason, soccer programs should consider the mental, cognitive, and emotional development of players with disabilities in addition to their physical development.

Consideration of mental, social, and emotional development is particularly important when working with players with intellectual disability. The developmental characteristics and implications for coaches need to be interpreted in light of each player's mental and developmental age, rather than chronological age.

### 6. Periodization

There is currently no research to suggest that athletes with disabilities require substantially different periodization plans from athletes who are able-bodied. However, due to the broad range of disabilities and their varying impacts on different athletic capacities, coaches may assume that periodization plans may have to be adjusted according to the players and their disabilities.

In the absence of specific research, coaches and soccer players with disabilities may begin by following the general recommendations on periodization in *Canadian Sport for Life* and *Wellness to World Cup*, provided that each player's response to training is carefully monitored. For example, since some disabilities may reduce functional muscle mass and aerobic capacity, fatigue in players with disabilities should be carefully managed, and rest and recovery periods should be adjusted accordingly.

### 7. Calendar Planning for Competition

Within the able-bodied Canadian sport system, under-training and over-competition are common, and *Wellness to World Cup* provides suggested ratios of training to competition hours at each LTPD stage to address this problem.

Research in this area for athletes with disabilities is sparse. In the absence of a large body of research, coaches and athletes must use experience and experimentation. There is no evidence to suggest that athletes with disabilities require different ratios from able-bodied athletes. However, the physical, mental and emotional attributes of persons with different disabilities can vary greatly, so coaches must monitor the effects of training and competition closely and remain prepared to adjust schedules and volumes in consultation with disability experts.

### 8. System Alignment and Integration

Canada's soccer system fulfills multiple roles in developing players and promoting lifelong physical activity. This typically includes development of coaching, competition, officials, facilities, and talent identification and development.

LTPD calls for aligning the various components of the soccer system together with disability sport groups to support players with all degrees of ability and disability in their pursuit of training and playing opportunities. This may include additional support for training partners, ancillary services, specialized equipment, and daily living support, which may in turn create need for additional funding and sport science research initiatives.

By defining the stages of player development, LTPD suggests how different organizations and stakeholders within the Canadian soccer system can optimize their contributions for the benefit of players with disabilities. Organizations and partners may include Community, Provincial/Territorial and National Sport and Disability Sport organizations, governments, schools, recreation, health care and rehabilitation organizations.

### 9. Excellence Takes Time

Research has suggested that a minimum of 10 years of practice (sometimes stated as 10,000 hours) is needed for expert performers in any field to reach elite levels (Ericsson et al. 2007). Evidence from the world of sport suggests that elite athletes require at least 12 years of practice to reach levels of excellence (U.S. Olympic Committee, 2002). Based on the performance records of some athletes with disabilities, it appears that these general figures apply equally well to athletes with certain types of physical and sensory disabilities.

However, more research is required to see if these figures apply consistently for all types of disabilities. For example, the time required to achieve elite performances may vary according to the nature and extent of some disabilities. In the specific case of individuals who acquire a disability, their pre-disability sporting experience also plays a factor. The essential lesson is the same: there are no shortcuts to achieving excellence, and it takes a significant investment of time in quality training and competition over several years to develop elite athletes.

### 10. Continuous Improvement (Kaizen)

Sport for athletes with disabilities has developed rapidly in recent decades. As new research, equipment, and techniques appear worldwide, stakeholders within the Canadian soccer system must remain alert to take advantage of new information. Evaluating new research and innovations, selecting those which will be used, and then integrating them into programs and services must be an active, ongoing process tied to the concept of continuous improvement.





## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Depending on the nature and severity of disabilities, coaches may see many similarities between players with disabilities and able-bodied players. However, there will likely be some differences that affect the LTPD process for players with disabilities:

- Players with disabilities may have been born with a disability (congenital) or they may have acquired a disability later in life. Depending on the origin, each player's course and timeline of learning and development may be significantly altered. Coaches can consult with disability experts and physiotherapists to adapt training programs for individual players, and they can also ask the players to explore what they are able to do by trying different movements.
- Children with a congenital disability may not have the same opportunity to learn basic movement skills because they do not always have the same opportunities or resources for vigorous, physical play during their early years (the Active Start stage). This is sometimes due to long periods of hospitalization or the lack of suitable physical education programs, and it may also be due to parents and caregivers not receiving sufficient information to help them identify suitable sport and activity programs. Coaches may also occasionally encounter overly risk-averse attitudes among some parents and health professionals.
- Children with a sensory-impairment disability (e.g. blindness, deafness) may find it difficult to learn basic movement skills as they cannot fully access the instructions and information when presented through traditional coaching and teaching approaches. These players may require different approaches to teaching basic skills. For example, some of these players may benefit from a kinesthetic approach where the coach physically assists the player to make the correct body movement to execute a particular soccer skill.



- Some players with disabilities require adapted equipment or modified facilities to minimize barriers to their participation in soccer and to develop their playing potential.
- Players with disabilities may require a soccer environment with additional staff and personnel not found in able-bodied soccer, such as personal care support, interpreters, and classifiers. For example, players with visual impairments may need sighted partners for training and competition, and some variants of disability soccer may require officials who are qualified to determine each player's classification or division of competition to ensure fairness (e.g. Special Olympics). If soccer organizations do not identify and develop these support personnel, it will have a long-term negative impact on the development of soccer for players with disabilities and the development of the players themselves. These personnel can also provide helpful insights into how to adapt soccer programs for players with disabilities.

## CHANGES TO THE SOCCER SYSTEM

LTPD for Players with Disabilities is not just about developing players — it is about developing the soccer *system* in which Canadians with disabilities become players and grow in the sport. With the proper coaching, services, administration, and soccer programming in place, players with disabilities will experience optimal long-term development and performance, and possibly retention in the game as coaches, mentors, officials and administrators.

For players with disabilities, this means that sport and recreation organizations need to answer the needs of players with disabilities at each stage of development through strategic planning and consistent delivery. Within the Canadian sport system, ten pillars of support<sup>4</sup> have been identified to ensure athletes with disabilities reach their optimal level of development:

1. Coaching
2. Competition
3. Funding
4. Equipment
5. Facilities
6. Training & Competition Partners
7. Sport Science
8. Officials Support
9. Players Support
10. Talent Development



<sup>4</sup> No Accidental Champions. 2nd Edition. Vancouver: Canadian Sport Centre Pacific, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> See *Coaching Athletes with a Disability*, published by the Coaching Association of Canada, [www.coach.ca](http://www.coach.ca).

### Coaching

Soccer coaches who are unfamiliar with disabilities may lack confidence in their ability to work with players with disabilities. At the same time, players with disabilities deserve access to knowledgeable coaches and teachers. Accordingly, coaching courses and resources need to be developed for disability soccer at all stages of LTPD. Ideally, these courses and resources should address a broad range of intellectual, sensory and physical disabilities. The ultimate goal is to provide coaches with confidence in their abilities, and players with quality coaching.

Soccer organizations and staff do not need to fear that they have to develop these coaching courses and resources alone. It is appropriate and recommended that soccer groups consult with disability sport organizations (DSOs) and disability advocacy groups to develop appropriate coach training programs and resources together. Disability sport and advocacy groups possess immense expertise that can be put to immediate use in developing all aspects of soccer programming.

Coaches who work with players in the Active Start, FUNdamentals, Learn to Train and Soccer for Life stages should be trained in sensitization tips and techniques<sup>5</sup> for introducing persons with disabilities to sports and physical activity. This includes projecting a positive attitude towards players with disabilities and applying good instruction and interaction skills. Coaches need to create a positive learning environment, be aware of different learning styles, and be prepared to adapt the game rules, formats and equipment to suit the players involved.

At the Train to Train, Train to Compete, and Train to Win stages, coaches of players with disabilities need to be specialists in training high performance players. They require advanced knowledge of adapted training activities for skill and physiological development, as well as knowledge of disability soccer rules for specific disability formats (e.g. player classification for cerebral palsy players in the CSA's Paralympic 7-a-side soccer pathway). Much of this knowledge for training high performance players with disabilities will be supplied by experts at DSOs, as well as sport scientists and healthcare professionals.



## CHANGES TO THE SOCCER SYSTEM (Continued)

### Competition

Competition for players with disabilities should be based on the long-term needs of the players rather than on traditional game and event formats and the needs of organizers. Games and competitions also require personnel such as qualified officials, classifiers, guides for athletes who are blind or visually impaired, and sign language interpreters. Through appropriate competition formats and ancillary personnel, the goal is to ensure that competition is ethical, fair, and serves the needs of all players.

Refer to the LTPD Stage Descriptions for players with disabilities for suggestions on appropriate competition formats.



### Funding

The development of disability soccer in Canada will benefit greatly from strategic funding at each stage of LTPD. As funding is a perennial challenge in most of Canadian sport, initiatives in disability soccer will have to be equally strategic in both spending and finding funding.

Funding sources may include soccer organizations, disability sport organizations, and provincial and territorial sport agencies. These groups may even choose to work cooperatively to fund disability soccer initiatives. Funding might also be found through private foundations and charitable groups, depending on the nature of the disability soccer program and the players or community being served.

The Awareness and First Contact stages can use funding to provide consistent communications outreach and trained personnel for events such as community para-sport festivals. The Active Start, FUNdamentals and Learn to Train stages will likely benefit most from funding coach training to develop coaching expertise in grassroots disability soccer programs. The Train to Train stage will similarly benefit from funding coach training to continue to build the pyramid of coaching expertise up to the Train to Compete stage. At Train to Compete and Train to Win, the most important funding considerations will probably relate to supporting elite players through tournament travel costs, training camp costs, and athlete carding (e.g. Athlete Assistance Program). It is assumed that professional coaches and team support staff would be paid at these stages.

### Equipment

Players in some variants of disability soccer require very specialized and expensive equipment. The best example is powerchair soccer, where the power wheelchairs themselves are costly and may require special adaptation in addition to expert maintenance.

### Facilities

Facilities need to be appropriate to the type of disability soccer being played, as well as accessible to players with disabilities. For example, 5-a-side soccer for players with visual impairments requires a small field that is surrounded by boards to contain the ball in the field of play, similar to the boards in a hockey ice rink.

### Training and Competition Partners

Some forms of disability soccer require additional support in the form of able-bodied partners and personnel who assist in training and competition. For example, 5-a-side soccer for players with visual impairments permits sighted goalkeepers and sighted guides who stand outside the field of play and provide directions to their team players.

Organizations that offer disability soccer programs need to make the recruitment and training of able-bodied competition and training partners an integral part of their program. At the same time, coaches need to optimize the relationship needed between players with disabilities and their able-bodied guides, training partners and competition partners.



### Sport Science

Sport science can contribute much to the understanding of training and development for players with disabilities. Leaders in disability soccer need to stay current with ongoing research into the physical, cognitive, mental and emotional aspects of training athletes with disabilities and incorporate that knowledge into training and competition. New discoveries in sport science can teach us more about how players with disabilities should train, their competition requirements, how they can have greater access to soccer, and techniques for enhanced performance.

At the Active Start, FUNdamentals and Learn to Train stages, sport science can supply insights into the timing, conditions and training methods required for optimal acquisition of skills relative to particular disabilities (especially the learning of FUNdamental movement skills).

At the Train to Train and Train to Compete stages, sport science can contribute to optimization of soccer training and performance techniques specifically for high performance disability players. Coaches and trainers can refine training loads based on periodic evaluations of the physiological status of players, and they can develop sport psychology programs according to developmental age and cognitive ability or disability.

At the Train to Win stage, players with disabilities need state-of-the-art physiological, biomechanical, and psychological testing and training. Coaches need to understand and utilize existing sport science, and leaders in disability soccer need to stay current with new research in training methods and sport performance to give players with disabilities a competitive advantage at the international level.



## CHANGES TO THE SOCCER SYSTEM (Continued)

### Officials Support

Officials need to be trained in the different disability game formats and rules at all LTPD stages. In disability programs at the FUNdamentals, Learn to Train and Soccer for Life stages, it may be sufficient to provide a brief orientation in rules and officiating to coaches and programmers who then officiate the games. Orientation packages and seminars could be developed for each variant of disability soccer (e.g. cerebral palsy, deaf, visually impaired, amputee, Special Olympics, powerchair).

At the Train to Train, Train to Compete and Train to Win stages, players with disabilities need expert support and direction from qualified officials, including referees and classifiers. Classifiers should possess a similar level of training and expertise so players can confidently arrive at competitions without concern that their classification could be challenged. Referees should be experienced and knowledgeable in the rules of disability-specific formats of disability soccer. At the Train to Train and Train to Compete stages, it may be sufficient to provide

a brief orientation to experienced referees of able-bodied soccer in the rules of each disability-specific game format. At the Train to Win stage, referees should already have significant experience officiating disability soccer at the Train to Train and Train to Compete stages.

To ensure a reliable supply of qualified referees and classifiers, soccer organizations need to create plans for training and developing officials in each type of disability soccer. At the grassroots level, this will help to provide an enjoyable and safe playing experience for disability players who are getting started in soccer. For players who pursue the high performance pathway, it will help them to develop a clear and precise understanding of the laws of the game, so they will be better prepared for competition at the provincial, national and international level.

### Players Support

Players at all stages of disability soccer require access to professionals who can provide services in the area of sport medicine, nutrition, injury prevention and rehabilitation. Counseling services can also be important, particularly in situations where players have an acquired disability, and also for late-career players who need assistance and guidance in educational, personal, and career decisions.

For young players with disabilities, early identification of functional abilities and adaptive techniques can lead to a more enjoyable soccer experience. For older players who pursue high performance training and competition at the Train to Compete and Train to Win stages, sport science and funding become especially important. (See Funding and Sport Science, above.)

### Talent Development

In Canada, the pool of high performance Paralympic 7-a-side players is small, so we cannot afford to waste their potential. An effective system for talent identification and development is therefore essential to developing new generations of players for the national Para Soccer team. In the LTPD pathway, talent is developed through high performance training and competition at the Train to Train, Train to Compete and Train to Win stages.

Coaches and soccer programmers must remember that not all players will aim for high performance or competitive achievement. For most players, their personal aims may be simply to enjoy playing soccer, interact socially, or maintain good health. However, for those players who wish to pursue competitive achievement, a logical system of talent development is needed to help them realize their potential in the high performance pathway.

Talent identification and development should begin during the Train to Train stage. For example, one approach could involve provincial and national team coaches scouting talent at disability soccer festivals at the start of the Train to Train stage. From here, talented players can be selected to participate in provincial 7-a-side and national Para Soccer team training programs.

The process of talent identification to talent selection should follow these steps:

1. Identify talented players.
2. Direct identified players to appropriate high-performance training opportunities.
3. Provide high-performance training to identified players.
4. Monitor progress and development of each identified player.
5. Select from identified players to create provincial and national teams.

While it is important to identify talented disability players, the process should not entirely eliminate players from further development opportunities and consideration. Some players may reveal their talent at much later ages depending on their rate of development and number of years in soccer and sport in general. Consequently, scouting opportunities and coach referral channels should be maintained throughout the Train to Train, Train to Compete and Train to Win stages.





## GROWING DISABILITY SOCCER: CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussions at the CSA Para Soccer Summit held in Toronto in March 2012 under the sponsorship of the Canadian Paralympic Committee helped to identify challenges and gaps for developing disability soccer in Canada. Following from the principal challenges listed below, several key recommendations were offered.

### Challenges

- There has been no framework for disability soccer in Canada such as LTPD, so it has been difficult for organizations to start disability soccer programs.
- There is little or no public awareness of soccer for players with disabilities.
- There are no consistently organized provincial and club disability soccer programs serving children with a range of other disabilities at the Active Start, FUNdamentals, and Learn to Train stages.
- Current soccer coaching courses do not address players with disabilities, and there is little or no awareness among soccer coaches regarding disability soccer and how to coach players with disabilities.
- Potential cost barriers for players with disabilities could arise based on facility, coaching and support requirements in disability soccer.

### Recommendations

- A national framework for disability soccer in Canada should be provided to all provincial soccer associations and districts to facilitate the growth and development of disability soccer programs.
- Provinces, districts and clubs should work together with disability sport organizations to create disability soccer programs that serve children with a range of disabilities at the Active Start, FUNdamentals, and Learn to Train stages.
- Soccer organizations should approach disability groups and disability sport organizations to discuss ongoing partnerships and sharing of expertise to deliver soccer for players with disabilities, including recruitment initiatives.
- An introductory NCCP coaching course or module for working with players with disabilities should be developed for soccer. For example, Special Olympics has an NCCP coaching course for coaching persons with an intellectual disability.
- Clubs should be recognized and rewarded for providing disability soccer programs.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

To develop disability soccer programming in Canada that provides consistent quality and accessibility, stakeholders in soccer, sport, education, government and advocacy for persons with disabilities should coordinate their knowledge, energy and resources. The following are suggestions for how stakeholders can work together.

### Soccer Organizations

When it comes to the question of how to deliver a disability soccer program, the biggest questions are who will do it and how. Many soccer organizations may be reluctant to offer disability soccer programs and coaches may feel afraid to coach players with disabilities because they do not know enough about disabilities and disability athletes.

The basic solution is simpler than they might realize: soccer organizations and staff should provide soccer facilities and soccer expertise for players with disabilities, and they should invite disability organizations and experts to provide guidance on how to work with disability athletes.

### Canadian Soccer Association

Through the LTPD guidelines, the CSA provides general direction to provincial and territorial soccer organizations on designing disability programs for players with disabilities at the Active Start, FUNdamentals and Learn to Train stages.

In terms of direct programming, the CSA oversees the national Para Soccer team program for Paralympic 7-a-side soccer at the Train to Train, Train to Compete and Train to Win stages.

The CSA is prepared to assist other disability sport organizations (DSOs) with soccer expertise if these DSOs wish to develop soccer programs for their memberships at the Train to Train, Train to Compete and Train to Win stages (e.g. deaf sports, blind sports, Special Olympics).





## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES (Continued)

### Provincial and Territorial Soccer Associations

Provincial and Territorial soccer associations are encouraged to adopt LTPD for players with disabilities and help interested member clubs and districts to develop grassroots programs for players with a range of disabilities at the Active Start, FUNdamentals and Learn to Train stages. Provincial and Territorial associations are encouraged to develop Paralympic 7-a-side soccer programming for the Train to Train stage through Provincial and Territorial representative disability teams.

### Soccer Clubs and District Soccer Associations

Soccer clubs and/or districts are encouraged to create grassroots soccer programs for players with a range of disabilities at the Active Start, FUNdamentals and Learn to Train stages. At the Train to Train stage, clubs and districts should assist their provincial, territorial or national association (CSA) in identifying talented CP players. Clubs and districts may help identified players to find suitable training and competition opportunities in mainstream able-bodied 11-a-side soccer in their community so they are challenged at an appropriate level.



### Disability Organizations

Disability advocacy groups and disability sport organizations are encouraged to share their disabilities knowledge and expertise with soccer organizations at all levels of LTPD. As the recognized experts in disabilities advocacy and sport performance, they have the ability to advance the disabilities knowledge base of coaches, officials and administrators within soccer programs. Players with disabilities will ultimately benefit from this blend of shared expertise. To help facilitate this process, disability groups and soccer organizations are encouraged to build partnerships at all stages of LTPD.

### Government

LTPD for players with disabilities supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which stipulates governments will promote sport and recreational activity for persons with disabilities.<sup>6</sup> Specifically in Ontario, LTPD also helps soccer organizations to answer the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) 2005, which requires all organizations with one or more employees (e.g. soccer clubs) to provide suitable programming access for persons with disabilities by 2025. Other Canadian provinces and territories could seek to emulate AODA in the future.

At the Canadian federal policy level, Sport Canada has been encouraging national sport organizations (NSOs) to serve Canadians of all abilities for 25 years. Sport Canada's long-standing support for integration of athletes with disabilities within NSO programming has been based on the belief that high-performance sport programs should be sport-oriented rather than disability-oriented.

<sup>6</sup> UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 30).

### Schools and Education

With the movement towards community integration of persons with disabilities, children with disabilities are no longer centralized in special schools. While this process creates occasional challenges for teaching physical literacy and physical education in the integrated setting, it also provides opportunities for players with a disability to engage in school settings with their able-bodied peers and draw benefits from shared skills learning. Accordingly, schools should offer inclusive physical education and sport programming for students with a wide range of abilities.

From a program development perspective, schools and teachers can provide insights to soccer organizations about effective inclusion practices across soccer and sport in general. From a player recruitment perspective, schools and teachers may also be able to refer students to community soccer programs if they sense that particular students with disabilities show interest in soccer or may benefit from sport outside of the school environment.

### Health Agencies

In their working relationships with patients and clients, healthcare professionals play an important role in promoting general awareness of opportunities in sport for persons with disabilities. In addition, healthcare professionals are also an important source for direct referrals to sport programs. This may include referrals for persons with congenital disabilities or persons with acquired disabilities (e.g. injury). The world of sport for athletes with disabilities has many stories of able-bodied athletes who made successful transitions to disability sport after acquiring a disability, and these types of anecdotes are becoming more common.





## SUMMARY

Soccer has an important role to play in providing meaningful physical activity to Canadians with disabilities. At the grassroots and recreational levels, disability soccer programs can provide regular healthy activity to promote wellness, social integration and physical literacy. At the elite level, high-performance programs can provide ambitious and talented disability players with opportunities for achievement in national and international competition.

At present, there is plenty of room for the development of soccer for players with disabilities in Canada. In the past, grassroots disability soccer programs have tended to appear and disappear sporadically, and there has been very little coordinated effort to promote soccer for players with different types of disabilities. *LTPD for Players with Disabilities* is intended to help remedy this situation.

*LTPD for Players with Disabilities* does not provide all of the answers, nor is it intended to. Instead, this LTPD document should be seen as an important first step in promoting logical and systematic soccer programming in Canada for players with disabilities. Using these LTPD guidelines as an overview, soccer organizations at the provincial, territorial, district and community levels can work within a recognizable framework to develop appropriate programs at all levels of participation. Beginning with children in the Active Start and FUNDamentals stages, and leading all the way to the Train to Win and Soccer for Life stages, the LTPD guidelines are intended to provide broad guidance to ensure that training and competition meets the needs of the players, and that as many players as possible have the chance to enjoy soccer and excel in the sport.

As soccer programs are developed for players with disabilities, soccer organizations are encouraged to work closely with disability advocacy groups and disability sport organizations. Disability organizations can provide valuable insights and expert advice on best practices in program design and training for athletes with disabilities. At the same time, soccer organizations across the country are also encouraged to share their experiences and successes in disability soccer programming with other provinces, territories and district associations to promote best practices.

Finally, as programs are developed, it should always be remembered that individuals pursue sport for different reasons. Some players with disabilities might play soccer with the aim of achieving excellence at the international level, while other players might simply be seeking to enjoy the sport for fun, social connection, and healthy recreational activity. Disability soccer programs must respect the variety of aims and ambitions of the players, recognizing that all Canadians who take an interest in soccer deserve the opportunity to enjoy the game.



## TO LEARN MORE

There are many sport organizations that develop and deliver sport and physical activity programming for persons with disabilities in Canada. A few of these organizations are listed below, and we encourage you to learn more by visiting them online.

**Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability**  
[www.ala.ca](http://www.ala.ca)

The Active Living Alliance for Canadians with a Disability (ALACD) promotes, supports and enables Canadians with disabilities to lead active, healthy lives. ALACD provides nationally coordinated leadership, support, encouragement, promotion and information that facilitates healthy, active living opportunities for Canadians of all abilities across all settings and environments.

**Canadian Amputee Sports Association**  
[www.canadianamputeesports.ca](http://www.canadianamputeesports.ca)

The Canadian Amputee Sports Association (CASA) offers information and support to amputee and les autres athletes and potential athletes on a wide range of athletic and recreational activities, including hockey, golf, powerlifting and lawn bowling. CASA also provides competitive and technical support for athletes in conjunction with existing provincial and national sports associations.

**Canadian Association of Athletes with an Intellectual Disability**  
[www.canadianathleteswithintellectualdisability.org](http://www.canadianathleteswithintellectualdisability.org)

CAAID is responsible for facilitating international competitive opportunities for athletes with an intellectual disability in open competition. A member of the International Federation of Sport for Persons with an Intellectual Disability (INAS-FID) since 1992, CAAID provides the gateway for athlete eligibility and licensing leading to Paralympic and International Paralympic Committee sanctioned competitive events.

**Canadian Blind Sports Association**  
[www.canadianblindsports.ca](http://www.canadianblindsports.ca)  
[www.sportsaveuglescanada.ca](http://www.sportsaveuglescanada.ca)

Canadian Blind Sports Association (CBSA) is a national network of 9 provincial member organizations that provide sport and recreation programming for Canadians who are blind or visually impaired. CBSA organizes Canada's National Goalball competitions, Paralympic Goalball Teams, coaching education, referee training and classification programs.

**Canadian Cerebral Palsy Sports Association**  
[www.ccpssa.ca](http://www.ccpssa.ca)

The Canadian Cerebral Palsy Sports Association (CCPSA) is an athlete-focused national organization administering and governing sport opportunities targeted to athletes with CP and related disabilities.







## TO LEARN MORE (Continued)

**Canadian Deaf Sports Association**  
[www.assc-cdsa.com](http://www.assc-cdsa.com)

The Canadian Deaf Sports Association (CDSA) is a pan-Canadian non-profit organization aiming to support the development of the practice of sports within the Deaf community in order to ensure a quality Canadian representation at the Deaflympics, Panamerican Games for the Deaf and various World Deaf Championships.

**Canadian Paralympic Committee**  
[www.paralympic.ca](http://www.paralympic.ca)

The Canadian Paralympic Committee (CPC) is responsible for leading the development of a sustainable Paralympic sport system in Canada to enable athletes to reach the podium at the Paralympic Games.

**Canadian Soccer Association**  
[www.canadasoccer.com](http://www.canadasoccer.com)

The Canadian Soccer Association (Canada Soccer) is the official governing body for soccer in Canada. In partnership with its members, Canada Soccer promotes the growth and development of soccer in Canada, from grassroots to high performance, and on a national scale.

**Powerchair Football Canada**  
[www.powerchairfootballcanada.com](http://www.powerchairfootballcanada.com)

Powerchair Football Canada is a member of FIPFA (Federation of International Powerchair Football Associations), an international federation which works to develop power soccer worldwide. Powerchair Football Canada also works both nationally and internationally in the development of power soccer.

**Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association**  
[www.cwsa.ca](http://www.cwsa.ca)

The Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association (CWSA) is a national sport organization representing wheelchair athletes. The CWSA mission is to promote excellence and develop opportunities for Canadians in wheelchair sport.

**Coaching Association of Canada**  
[www.coach.ca](http://www.coach.ca)

The Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) is a not-for-profit amateur sport organization with the mandate to lead ethically sound coaching and sport leader training, delivery, and promotion.

**Special Olympics Canada**  
[www.specialolympics.ca](http://www.specialolympics.ca)

Special Olympics Canada is a national not-for-profit grassroots organization that provides sport training and competition opportunities for more than 32,000 Canadians with an intellectual disability.

**Sport Canada**  
[www.pch.gc.ca/sportcanada](http://www.pch.gc.ca/sportcanada)

Sport Canada is the federal government agency that works to help Canadians participate and excel in sport by enhancing the capacity and coordination of the Canadian sport system, encouraging participation in sport, and enabling Canadians with talents and dedication to achieve excellence in international sport.

## REFERENCES

Bhambhani, Y., & Higgs, C. Training Athletes with a Physical Disability. Vancouver: Canadian Sport Centre Pacific, 2011.

Canadian Sport for Life. Vancouver: Canadian Sport Centre Pacific, 2005.

Coaching Athletes with a Disability. Ottawa: Coaching Association of Canada, 2005.

Ericsson, K., Prietula, M., & Cokely, E. The Making of an Expert. Harvard Business Review, 2007.

Final Report: Para Soccer LTPD Summit. Ottawa: Canadian Soccer Association, June 2012.

Fundamental Movement Skills: Active Start and FUNdamental Stages – For Children with Physical Disabilities. Ottawa: Physical Health and Education Canada, 2009.

Gibbons, T., Hill, R., McConnell, A., Forster, T., & Moore, J. The Path to Excellence: A comprehensive view of development of U.S. Olympians who competed from 1984-1998. United States Olympic Committee, 2002.

Long-Term Athlete Development for Athletes with an Intellectual Disability. Toronto: Special Olympics Canada, 2007.

National Consortium on Physical Education and Recreation for Individuals with Disabilities. [www.ncpad.org](http://www.ncpad.org)

No Accidental Champions. 2nd Edition. Vancouver: Canadian Sport Centre Pacific, 2011.

Participation and Activity Limitation Survey 2006: Tables. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2007.

Viru, A. Adaptation in Sports Training. Boca Raton: CRC Press, 1995.

Wellness to World Cup: Long-Term Player Development. Volume 1. Ottawa: Canadian Soccer Association, 2007.

Wellness to World Cup: Long-Term Player Development. Volume 2. Ottawa: Canadian Soccer Association, 2011.





## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Disability Soccer Formats

There are 6 major types of modified soccer for persons with disabilities:

#### Paralympic 7-a-side Soccer

Soccer 7-a-side is a Paralympic sport for players with mild cerebral palsy, brain injury or stroke. Players must be classified in the C5 to C8 range. At least one C5 or C6 player must be on the field at all times, and no more than two C8 players are permitted on the field at the same time.

Field length: 70m - 75m

Field Width: 50m - 55m

Goal size: 2m high by 5m wide

Game duration: Two 30-minute halves with 15-minute half-time break

#### Adapted rules and equipment:

- No offside.
- Throw-ins may be done with one hand, and the ball may also be rolled into play.

For a complete set of rules, please visit the website of the Cerebral Palsy International Sports and Recreation Association (CPISRA) which governs 7-a-side soccer:

[www.cpisra.org.za](http://www.cpisra.org.za)

#### Paralympic 5-a-side Soccer

Soccer 5-a-side is a Paralympic sport for players with visual impairments. Players must be classified in the B1 to B3 range of visual impairment. The field is divided into thirds, and sighted guides are permitted to assist the players in each third. The goalkeeper assists in the defensive third, the coach assists in the midfield third, and an additional guide stands behind the opponent's goal in the attacking third.

Two competition classes exist: games for B1 class players, and games for B2/B3 class players. In B1 games, goalkeepers and guides may be classified B2, B3 or sighted. In B2/B3 games, teams can have B2 and B3 field players, but at least two B2 players must be on the field at all times.

Field length: 38m - 42m

Field width: 18m - 22m

Goal size: 2m high by 3m wide

Game duration: Two 25-minute halves with 10-minute half-time break

#### Adapted rules and equipment:

- The ball has a noisemaking device to help players track it by sound (generally a bell).
- The touchlines are lined with boards to keep the ball in play.
- With the exception of goalkeepers, players wear eye-patches and blindfolds to ensure equal advantage.
- Field of play must have a safety zone of at least 3 metres on all four sides of the field that is free of obstacles.
- Goalkeepers are not permitted to participate actively in the play outside of their goal area (physically or verbally).

For a complete set of rules, please visit the website of the International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA) which governs 5-a-side soccer:

[www.ibsa.es/eng](http://www.ibsa.es/eng)

#### Special Olympics Soccer

In events organized by Special Olympics Canada, players with intellectual disabilities play 5-a-side soccer.

Field length: 45m - 60m

Field width: 26m - 40m

Goal size: 2m high by 5m wide

Game duration: Two 25-minute halves with 10-minute half-time break

#### Adapted rules and equipment:

- No offside.
- Teams meet in tournament play, where they first play a classification match/round to determine divisions.

For a complete set of rules, please visit the Canada Special Olympics website:

[www.specialolympics.ca](http://www.specialolympics.ca)

#### Deaf Soccer

Deaf soccer is played by deaf or hard of hearing players in the standard 11-a-side format in accordance with the FIFA Laws of the Game. Players must have a hearing loss of at least 55 dB in their best ear to compete in major events such as the Canada Deaf Games, the Panamerican Games for the Deaf and the Deaflympics.

Field length: per FIFA laws

Field width: per FIFA laws

Goal size: per FIFA laws

Game duration: per FIFA laws

#### Adapted rules and equipment:

- Players with hearing aids must remove them before playing.
- Referees use flags to signal stoppages in play to players.

For more information, please visit the Canadian Deaf Sports Association (CDSA) website:

[www.assc-cdsa.com](http://www.assc-cdsa.com)





## APPENDICES (Continued)

### Powerchair Soccer

Powerchair soccer is a 4-a-side format played in a gymnasium on a regulation basketball court by persons with disabilities who use electric wheelchairs. The power wheelchairs are equipped with footguards that protect the feet of the players while providing a surface with which to strike the ball.

Field length: 25m - 30m

Field width: 14m - 18m

Goal size: 6m wide (using pylons or cones securely taped to the floor)

Game duration: Two 20-minute halves with 10-minute half-time break

#### Adapted rules and equipment:

- No offside.
- No throw-ins. When the ball passes out of touch, play is restarted with a kick-in.
- The goal area measures 8m wide and 5m deep, and only two defending players are permitted inside the goal area (i.e. goalkeeper and one defender).
- Powerchairs must have four or more wheels. Three and four-wheeled scooters or similar equipment are not permitted.

For a complete set of rules, please visit the Federation Internationale de Powerchair Football Association (FIPFA) website:

[fipfa.org](http://fipfa.org)

### Amputee Soccer

Amputee soccer is a 7-a-side format played by persons with amputations or similar disabilities. Field players must have a leg amputation above the ankle and use crutches, while goalkeepers are single-arm amputees. Games are generally played on grass or an artificial all-weather surface, but it is also permissible to play indoors.

Field length: 55m - 70m

Field width: 30m - 60m

Goal size: 2.2m high by 5m wide

Game duration: Two 25-minute halves with 10-minute half-time break

#### Adapted rules and equipment:

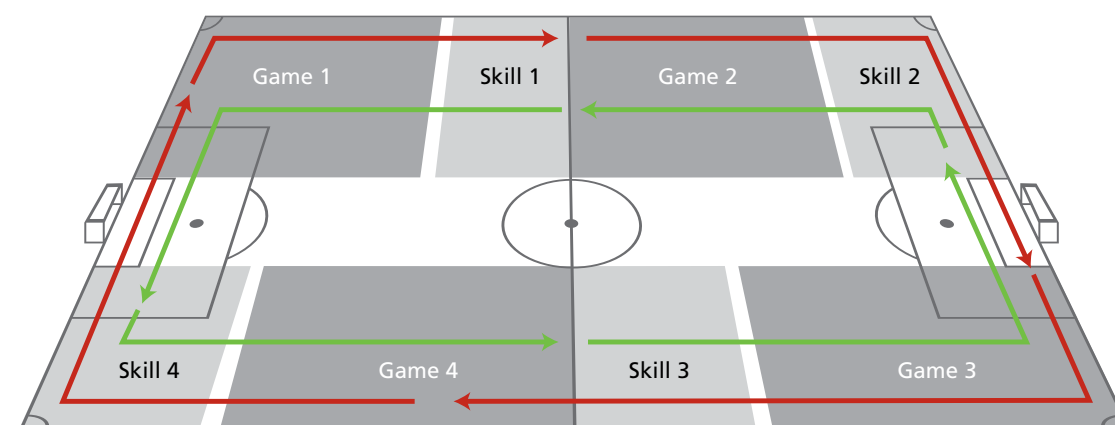
- No offside.
- No throw-ins. When the ball passes out of touch, play is restarted with a kick-in.



For a complete set of rules, please visit the World Amputee Football Federation (WAFF) website:

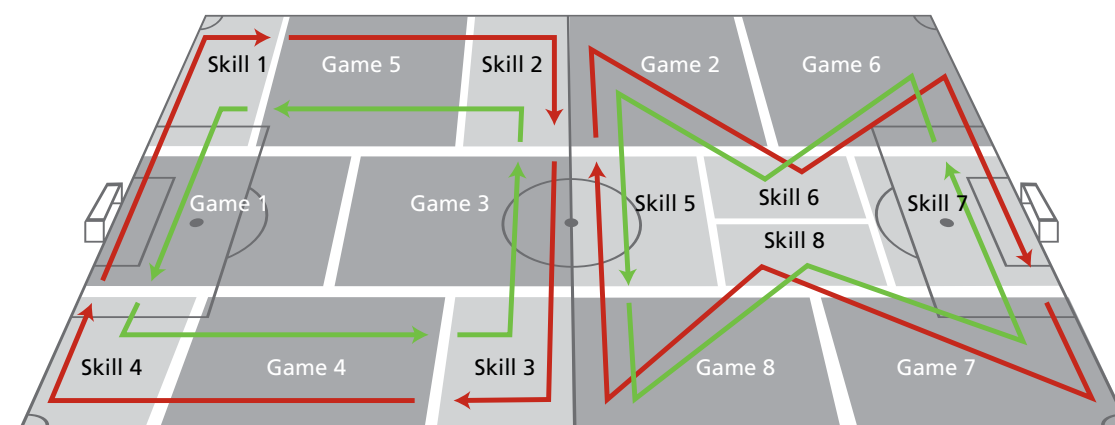
[www.worldamputeefootball.com](http://www.worldamputeefootball.com)

### Appendix B: Sample Field Layouts for Festival Programs

At the FUNdamentals and Learn to Train stages, festival program formats may be used to promote skill development together with small-sided game play. Depending on the total number of players, program leaders divide them into smaller groups of 4-6 players and rotate the groups through skills and games stations on the field. Half of the groups can rotate clockwise through the skills and games stations, while the other half of the groups rotate counter-clockwise as shown in the field diagrams below. This encourages regular mixing of players and fresh game encounters.



 Rotation Green Teams  
 Rotation Colour Teams



Boys

Girls



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Canadian Soccer Association extends gratitude to the many individuals who contributed to the development of this document.

### LTPD Manager for CSA

Sylvie Beliveau

### Editor

Jim Grove

### Contributors

Colin Higgs, Ph.D., Memorial University of Newfoundland

Drew Ferguson, Head Coach, Canadian National Para Soccer Team

Jeff Davis, National Football Development Manager (Disability), England FA

Rebeccah Bornemann, Special Advisor, Sport Development, Sport Canada

Marie Dannhaeuser, Executive Director, Canadian Cerebral Palsy Sports Association

Matthew Greenwood, Manager of Club Development, Ontario Soccer Association

John Clubb, South Coach, Alberta Soccer Association

Rob Needham, Executive Director, Sport, Canadian Paralympic Committee

Catherine Ireland, Program Coordinator, Wheelchair Basketball Canada

Sharon Bollenbach, Vice President, Sport, Special Olympics

### Design

McAllister Marketing

[www.mcallistermarketing.com](http://www.mcallistermarketing.com)

All photos by CanadaSoccer unless otherwise noted

Published by Canadian Soccer Association.



Wellness to World Cup | Long-Term Player Development | Players with Disabilities



Canadian Soccer Association