

This fall Olympic Development Soccer returns to South Dakota. This is ODP, the program that identifies and develops high level youth soccer players within the state and region. The structure gives selected players a chance to train with other high level players and the top coaches in the area.

Any soccer player born in the years 1992 through 1997 is eligible for tryouts. These are held in different cities at different times over November and December across the state. Pierre hosts the first round on November 8 and 9. Rapid City follows on November 22. Players pay a one-time tryout fee of \$60 with other costs incurred after a player is selected. Those include training sessions and summer camp/training at a regional location.

Players selected form an age-group pool. This pool will participate in indoor trainings and tournaments, two spring training sessions and sub-regional outdoor events. Players from these pools will be selected to form a South Dakota ODP team to represent the state at the ODP camp in the summer where they are in contact with additional players and top coaches from across the region. It is an outstanding opportunity for talented, committed young players. There are expenses connected here but South Dakota State Soccer Association has negotiated reduced fees for our state.

If you and your child are interested in this program, you can register online at www.sdodp.com. The site includes additional information but if you need to ask some questions not answered on the website, contact either the boys' administrator, Noel Schroeder (605) 787-6852 or the girls' administrator, Troy Anderson (605) 390-3444.

Rapid City Soccer has been catching some unfavorable press lately. Here's a primer on the way soccer works in this town. Rapid City Youth Soccer League is the largest entity with nearly 2,000 kids ages 4-19 registered. Rushmore Soccer Club is a premier youth soccer club with teams at ages 10 through 19. Men's Soccer is a league of adult men's teams.

South Dakota School of Mines and Technology also has a league of club teams. All of these organizations are members of an umbrella organization called Soccer Rapid City and each organization's president is a member of this board. There are differences of opinion on issues such as field use but these have been resolved by the board in the past.

It is SRC that holds leases to fields, hires maintenance, hires field lining service, owns the goals and oversees the location of those goals. Soccer owns no fields but pays nearly all the maintenance on them, supplies goals and nets, and maintains all the equipment used.

As the sport has grown since it began here in the early 1970's, soccer has had to compete with established youth sports for space and now has virtually outgrown the fields it currently maintains. Soccer is facing the need for more fields and for the improvement of existing fields, such as the Polo field. Soccer Rapid City is the organization charged with such projects. The possibility of a complex where a contiguous group of fields could be developed makes sense for the future of soccer and of Rapid City unless you believe Rapid City has finished growing.