

Westport Soccer Association

U11-15 Travel – Enhanced Offering



+



+



Agenda



1. Overview & Context (10m)

- Many players leave travel after U10 for premier club teams.
- Perception is that a premier club will be a better pathway to high school play.



2. Education (15m)

- Leagues and clubs: understanding the CT soccer landscape



3. Description of WSA's Enhanced Offering (15m)

- New approach to U11+ age groups for Fall 2024:
 - Partnership with **Staples High School** varsity coaches
 - Deeper collaboration with MKSE



4. Panel Q&A (20m)



Agenda



1. Overview and Context

- Many players leave travel after U10 for premier teams.
- Perception that a premier club will be a better pathway to high school play.



2. Education

- Leagues and clubs: understanding the CT soccer landscape

3. Description of WSA's Enhanced Offering

- New approach to U11+ age groups for Fall 2024:
 - Partnership with **Staples High School** varsity coaches
 - Deeper collaboration with MKSE

4. Panel Q&A



Why are we here tonight?

- To **share knowledge** about the CT youth soccer landscape as tryouts approach for travel and club.
- To announce our **enhanced offering** for U11-U15 travel teams

Goals for tonight's discussion:

- To ensure **parents feel informed** about pathways to achieve their player's goals.
- To educate parents about the **new WSA offerings** which provide a **viable option to stick with WSA at U11+.**



Why are we launching an enhanced offering?

- To strengthen Westport travel soccer by **increasing connectivity with Staples soccer**
- To address parent feedback with respect to (i) lack of competitiveness of older age groups and (ii) desire of recent age groups moving from U10 to U11 for a **more compelling WSA alternative to club**

*“I want to make sure that those that **chose to stay in Westport to play will have a competitive team with skilled, engaged teammates.**”*

- U13 Boys Blue Parent

Travel Soccer



Early 2000s



Now



Premier Club Soccer



Early 2000s: simpler times

Now: more options, more complexity



**Fairfield County
United**



Next???

How do you decide your child's path?



+

+

Criteria	Considerations
Positioning for High School	• Seek exposure to high school coaches
Competitiveness	• Talent level of the team and competition is important (tournaments and regular season schedule)
Training Curriculum / Coaching	• Seek high quality coaching / instruction
Travel Distance	• Practices and games (divisional and tournaments)
Postponing Sports Specificity	• Clubs require more practices and higher winter commitment • Ability to continue Lacrosse, Dance, Baseball/Softball, Basketball
Cost	• Club solutions can be 2-3x the cost of travel
Community	• Town only vs. mix of regional players

Agenda



1. Context & Context

- Many players leave travel after U10 for premier teams.
- Perception that premier will be a better pathway to high school play.

2. Education

- Leagues and clubs: understanding the CT soccer landscape



3. Description of WSA's Enhanced Offering

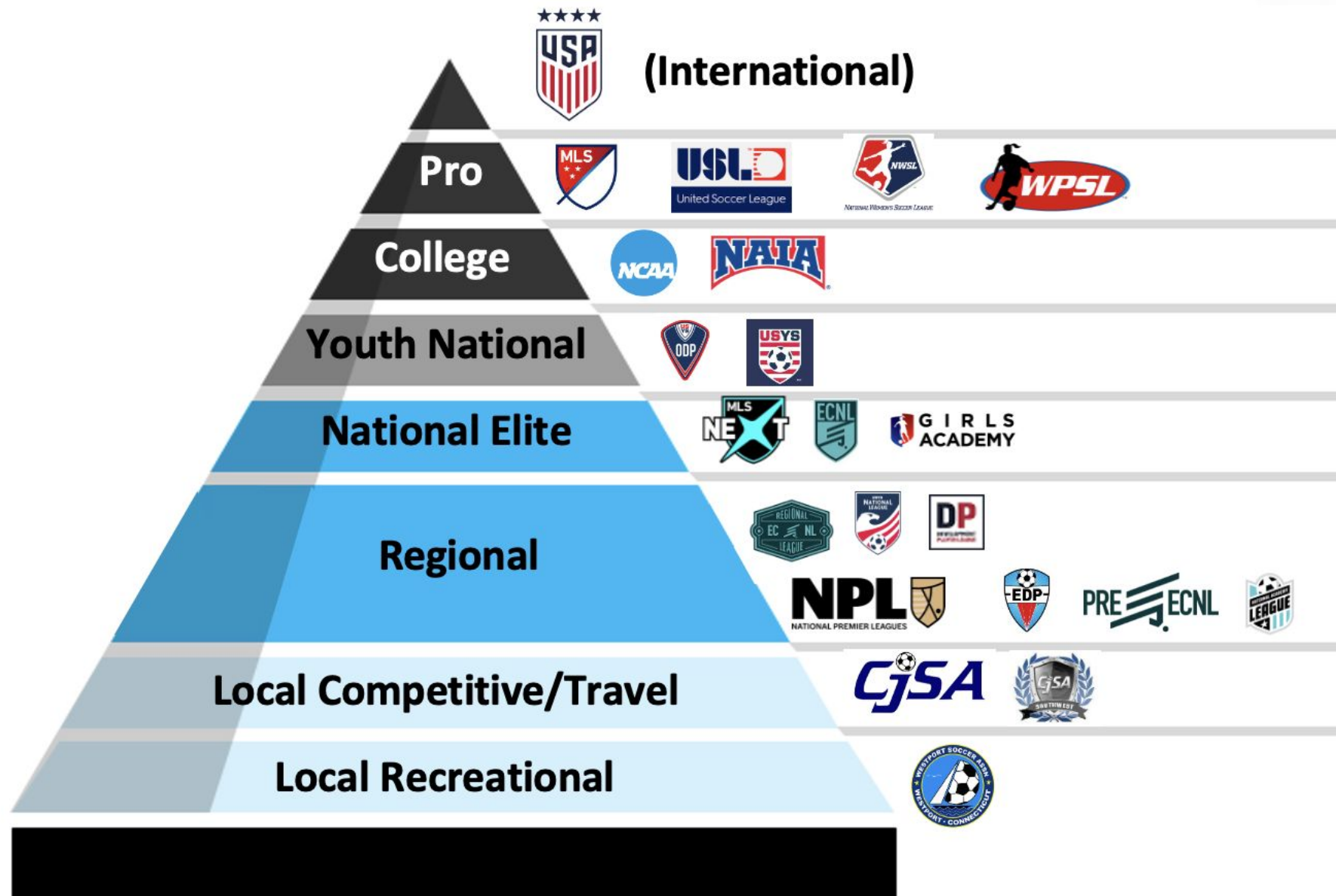
- New approach to U11+ age groups for Fall 2024

4. Panel Q&A

Trying to Understand the Youth Soccer Landscape



Big Picture: League Overview



Zoom in: Local Leagues



Local Premier Leagues + Where Clubs Fit



Agenda



1. Context

- Many players leave travel after U10 for premier teams.
- Perception that premier will be a better pathway to high school play.

2. Education

- Leagues and clubs: understanding the CT soccer landscape

3. Description of WSA's Enhanced Offering

- New approach to U11+ age groups for Fall 2024:
 - Partnership with **Staples High School** varsity coaches
 - Deeper collaboration with MKS



4. Panel Q&A

WSA Enhanced Offering



1 Staples Soccer Skills Training

- **Alignment and connectivity between SHS and WSA programs**
- **Weekly *optional* training session on Mondays run by Barry (GSocc HC), Russ (BSocc HC) and staff,**
- Available to all U11+ players rostered on a WSA travel team
- Focused on skills development and talent identification



Skills Training



2 Enhanced WSA BLUE

- **Potential to flex up into a premier league (EDP) schedule based on the level of the team**
- Potential for additional tournaments
- Increased exposure to HS coaches
- Team continuity.
- Kelvin Mutambo and Jake Zuniga intended to coach U11BB and U11GB, respectively

3 WSA / Staples Soccer Alliance

- Comprised of WSA board members, Mickey Kydes and Staples High School Varsity coaches (i.e., Russ and Barry)
- Objective: to monitor and enhance connectivity in real time during the Fall and Spring seasons
- Assess this pilot year; plan medium- to long-range opportunities for ongoing Staples High School-WSA partnership.

Why now?



- ***SHS Coaching:***

- Staples High School head coaches are **excited to see upcoming WSA talent**; can offer insights into high school pathways / premier clubs.

- ***MKS:***

- Uniquely positioned to support Westport players given the **strength and reputation of MKS**.

- ***Talent Level***

- Our U9 and U10 programs are consistently deep; **we want players to see a future for themselves at WSA**.

- ***Increased Parent Interest***

- Over the past two years, Westport parents have expressed interest for a **stepped up/more competitive option** to club



Earlier Spring Tryout Dates for Fall 2024 U11+ Teams

- *Spring Tryout Dates (for Fall 2024)*

- **UPDATED: Wed 4/24 and Fri 4/26**
- WSA will share this info via email this week

- **Why?**

- Our new tryout dates are being scheduled on or around the **same time frame as club** tryouts.
- The goal of syncing up with club tryouts is to help parents and their players to be able to **make informed decisions in real time**.

- **Note:**

- MKS coaches may hold a couple of roster spots on each team to allow for **flexibility where needed** at the end of the spring season.

Anticipated Costs

- Participation in the **enhanced program will have additional costs** on top of WSA's current travel tuition.
- Fees are still being finalized, and will depend **on a player's participation**.
 - *Staples Soccer Skills Training* only (open to all U11+)
 - **±\$200 per season**
 - *Enhanced WSA Blue* only (premier league + add'l tournaments)
 - **±\$450 per year**
 - Both options

Agenda



1. Context

- Many players leave travel after U10 for premier teams.
- Perception that premier will be a better pathway to high school play.

2. Education

- Leagues and clubs: understanding the CT soccer landscape

3. Description of WSA's Enhanced Offering

- New approach to U11+ age groups for Fall 2024

4. Panel Q&A



Panelists

● **Jim Wolf**

- WSA Board President
- Staples and Beachside alum; ODP and D-I
- Father of U10 and U9 travel and K rec player

● **Eric Eisen**

- WSA Board Member
- U12 daughter played 2 years of travel on blue and 2 years now at CFC Pre-ECNL, U9 son playing WSA travel
- Danbury HS grad and player

● **Jennie Orloff**

- WSA Board Member; Frmr Academy Director: Alexandria Soccer Association
- Parent of U10G travel player
- Avon HS alum, D-I walk-on

● **Barry Beattie**

- Staples Girls Soccer Head Coach; CFC coach
- 2x state champion and 4x FCIAC champion
- 2022 CT and New England Large Schools Coach of the Year

● **Russell Oost-Lievense**

- Staples Boys Soccer Head Coach; CFC Coach
- Hartwick College D-I player and Captain
- Staples Soccer and South Central (original academy) alum

● **Mickey Kydes**

- Norwalk HS grad; former D-I (2x All American) and professional player
- Founder and Technical Director of Beachside Soccer Club, Technical Director Westport Soccer Association

● **Chris Laughton**

- Norwalk HS grad; former D-I (UConn, Sacred Heart), D-I Grad Asst.
- Norwalk HS Head Coach for 16 years; former Beachside coach; former town coaching director
- Father of an 11 and 9 y.o. playing InterCT FC and navigating complexity of club requirements

Other questions?

Thank you!



+



+

