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Ohio Youth Soccer Organizations (North & South) Announce Merger Talks

CLEVELAND, September 8, 2020 — The board of directors from Ohio Youth Soccer Association North (OYSAN) and Ohio South Youth Soccer Association (OSYSA) announce that negotiations are in progress for the potential merger of the two largest soccer organizations in Ohio. The new organization will be called the Ohio Soccer Association and will become one of the largest US Youth Soccer state associations.

According to OSYSA board president, John Ruffolo, “The OSYSA Board of Directors is excited that talks between the two organizations are gaining momentum in anticipation of the merger. There are many fluid issues facing both soccer organizations that can be better addressed by one body. These include but are not limited to how our clubs, leagues, and associations respond to COVID-19, other health related issues, and US Youth mandates regarding player safety. The integration of resources will also afford the organization greater flexibility to provide more robust soccer programs in the ever-changing youth soccer environment.”

Paul R. Emhoff, president of OYSAN, is also encouraged about the prospects of the merger. Emhoff commented, “We will be building a strong organization that will better meet the needs of the players, coaches, parents, and leagues. The OYSAN board of directors believes that a merger of the two organizations will strengthen our soccer programs and provide new opportunities for all players to participate in US Youth Soccer programs, including the Great Lakes Conference Regional League and the US Youth Soccer National League.”

Both Ruffolo and Emhoff believe that merging the two organizations will result in several benefits, including increased competition for competitive soccer clubs, expanded programming, and a more consolidated and efficient administration team. Under the new organization, there are also plans to allocate significant resources to assist recreational soccer programs throughout Ohio, including providing additional opportunities for coaching instruction, player training, and helping participating organizations meet the requirements of SafeSport. The boards of both OYSAN and OSYSA also recognize the need for both leagues and clubs to have a greater voice in the new state organization’s administration.

Dr. Peter Zopfi, Chairman of US Youth Soccer Association commented, “Congratulations to both Ohio Youth Soccer Organizations (North & South). This pending merger is a great example of collaboration by two fantastic teams dedicated to providing growth and opportunities to the youth of their communities and state. The unification into Ohio Soccer Association will address many of the challenges currently facing youth soccer including safety, cost, travel, competition, diversity, and inclusion.”

Several steps need to be completed before the merger is finalized. The current non-profit boards are reviewing the Code of Regulations for the new association. Once approved by both boards, each organization will present the proposed merger to its members for approval. Following endorsement by both organizations’ memberships, a petition of merger will be submitted to U.S. Soccer and the [US Youth Soccer Association](#) for their approval.

Both state associations anticipate a significant level of interest from leagues and clubs in Ohio centered on how the new organization will be different. To assist with this information, a series of video calls and FAQ sheets will be created in the coming weeks. Both state associations are committed to complete transparency and will be available to answer as many questions as possible ahead of the membership vote later this year.

For additional questions or information, please contact Gordon Henderson at henderson@osysa.com.