**Whitecaps FC announce expanded partnership with Alberta Soccer Association**

**VANCOUVER, BC** – Vancouver Whitecaps FC of Major League Soccer (MLS), and the Alberta Soccer Association (Alberta Soccer) announced on Tuesday a new and expanded three-year player development partnership in the Whitecaps FC BMO Academy System that supports a local aligned pathway to benefit the game in Alberta. Programming in both Calgary and Edmonton will provide a direct link to Vancouver with the full-time Whitecaps FC Boys MLS Academy and the Girls Elite Regional Excel (REX) Super Centre program in partnership with BC Soccer.

As part of the partnership, Whitecaps FC will fund and operate high-performance youth soccer programming for players in the province of Alberta in collaboration with Alberta Soccer. This includes the continuation of the current full-time Boys MLS Prospects BMO Academy in Calgary and the addition of the same program to be launched in Edmonton for players aged 13 to 16-years-old. As well, Whitecaps FC will now also run full-time Girls Excel programs in Calgary and in Edmonton for players aged 13 to 16-years-old. The girls’ program in Alberta is an official Canada Soccer licensed Regional Excel (REX) centre in partnership with Alberta Soccer.

“We are excited and appreciative of the opportunity to continue, and expand, our player development partnership with the Alberta Soccer Association,” said Axel Schuster, Whitecaps FC chief executive officer & sporting director. “Alberta is a top talent region in the country, and Alberta Soccer, Alberta Soccer stakeholders, leagues and member clubs have been doing an amazing job of producing players for national team and professional opportunities. We hope that we can collaborate with all these groups, in addition to both Canadian Premier League teams in Cavalry FC and FC Edmonton to further enhance that pathway.”

“Alberta Soccer is very excited to partner with the Vancouver Whitecaps on the Whitecaps FC Boys Academy and Girls Regional Excel programs,” said Alberta Soccer president Shaun Hammond. “It is important to Alberta Soccer to continue to find ways to support our player pathway and the Whitecaps put together a proposal that will allow Alberta Soccer to re-allocate resources to grassroots development programs while knowing that a top class program is being run in our Province.”

Whitecaps FC coaches will deliver the program and support the soccer development pathway, curriculum, and operational framework. The program will be offered in two phases – October to December, and January to March – allowing players to train and play in league games with their member clubs.  The program includes weekly training and competition and access to high level Whitecaps FC club combines, events, and competitions. Player scouting and identification will be through high performance leagues of the association, along with recommendations by technical directors. Additional programming opportunities will include the ‘Caps to College program, a secondary development pathway to colleges and universities.

In partnership with Alberta Soccer stakeholders, member clubs, and players, Whitecaps FC will provide professional development, as well as academies, camps, and special events and initiatives.

More than 60 players from Alberta have come through the [Whitecaps FC MLS Academy and Girls Elite Super REX](https://www.whitecapsfc.com/academy) programs in Vancouver since 2011, including Canadian national team players such as Sam Adekugbe, product of Calgary, and Alphonso Davies, product of Edmonton.

Alberta Soccer is home to over 105,000 players and 120,000 members, making it the province’s largest individual sports association.

For further information about the Alberta Soccer Association, visit the official website, [albertasoccer.com](https://albertasoccer.com/), and for information on the Whitecaps FC BMO Academy System, visit [whitecapsfc.com/academy](http://whitecapsfc.com/academy).

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