PROPOSAL – APDL Age Dispensation

Over the past year, there have been several attempts to apply for individual dispensations to play up or down on various occasions. We also received a few that were related but not limited to the APDL framework. To make an informed and evidence-based decision, the Technical Department intends to test a specific procedure that will enable age dispensations when certain parameters are met.

Rationale:

The intention behind playing down is to give younger players, who may lack maturity, a chance to gain experience in a lower age group where they might find it difficult to compete independently. Alberta Soccer recognizes the significance of growth and development while ensuring that players compete at an appropriate level, which ultimately creates a more conducive environment for them to reach their full potential.

A robust system with checks and balances would enable late bloomers to access Alberta's player development league and broaden opportunities for the player pool in the province. After thoroughly examining various strategies from Canada and abroad, the following proposal aims to address the relative age effect. Nonetheless, this proposal is not meant to serve as a definitive solution but rather as an experiment aligned with ASA's framework for supporting late bloomers.

Example:

We currently have an application that meets the criteria and could effectively indicate whether age dispensations in the APDL are reasonable and feasible. This proposed procedure would enable the child to participate and collect data regarding age dispensation at the highest level.

Suppose a player experiences significant maturation during the season they are authorized to play down. In that case, the club's technical leaders should inform Alberta Soccer and, if deemed appropriate by mutual agreement, request the player's return to their original age group.

In cases of perceived misuse, Alberta Soccer may, at its discretion, request a follow-up assessment to substantiate the initial player movement further or retract the prior approval.

Three Step approach:

Player Evaluation Form:

The primary tool for players, clubs, and the system will be the player evaluation form. This form assists Technical Directors and Club Head Coaches in making decisions about whether players can advance to an older age group or move down to a younger one, and it will be valid for just one season. Players must prove their capability to succeed when playing up or provide a legitimate reason to play down in order to gain approval for a different age group. Players, parents, and club representatives must all sign the form and may face disciplinary actions if they misuse this opportunity.

Letter of Support:

Alberta Soccer will issue a signed letter to assist the club, player, and parent in obtaining the verified measurements. Only licensed MDs or Physicians can authorize this verification. They may provide the necessary information on their letterhead**,** along with a signed document. The measurements confirmed by the MDs or Physicians will be entered into the WHO Growth Chart Plotter App to determine eligibility for playing down or up.

The suggested threshold for playing down will be discussed in the technical committee meeting on April 23rd. The starting point for the discussion will be a plot below the 3rd percentile.

Photographic support:

Alberta Soccer needs individual headshots, standing profiles, and team photos. Players will be arranged by chronological age, placing the youngest on the left and the oldest on the right. Use cones between players to distinguish birth quartiles.

The current care will fulfill all criteria and would be a good opportunity to test this case. The player intends to join St. Albert Impact, which does not fill all their possible roster spots. No roster spots would be removed from other athletes in this test case. The local TD and the ASA office would work closely on this case to define if this procedure works and could provide opportunities to players who haven't had the chance under the current circumstances.

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