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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Seattle Sounders FC Teams Up with Washington Youth Soccer's Olympic Development Program**

*FEDERAL WAY, WASHINGTON* (Wednesday, July 30) – The new Seattle Sounders FC and Washington Youth Soccer have teamed up once again; this time to strengthen the development process for players participating in the Olympic Development Program (ODP). Working together, this partnership will provide the perfect opportunity for the state to enhance the skill level of some of its most elite players while evaluating every aspect of the ODP program including its infrastructure, processes, and the role it plays in the ever-changing soccer landscape.

“I couldn’t be more excited for the future of our program,” stated Dave Schumacher, Washington Youth Soccer’s Director of Coaching. “The players in Washington State will really benefit from the new Seattle Sounders FC becoming an integral part of ODP. Many Major League Soccer (MLS) players also participated in the ODP during their youth years, including Chris Henderson, the Sounders FC Technical Director.”

Schumacher will work together with Darren Sawatzky, Seattle Sounders FC/Washington Youth Soccer’s Director of Youth Development, to select the State ODP Coaching staff. This staff will be comprised of the top club directors of coaching, collegiate coaches, and club coaches from around Washington State. The main goals of the State ODP Coaching staff will be to identify and invite players into the state ODP pools while developing training programs that allow these players to compete at the highest levels.

“Our hope is that that youth players participating in ODP will develop and become players at the national and professional levels,” stated Sawatzky. “It will be an exciting day when several of the players that come up through this program step foot on the field wearing the Seattle Sounders FC uniform.”

Players are identified and invited to train with the State ODP Coaching staff through a variety of methods. Players can be selected according to recommendations from club coaches, excellence in league play, previous participation in state pools, and through open tryouts. Once selected for the state pool, players will begin monthly training in September at the Starfire Sports Complex in Tukwila, the new training center for the Seattle Sounders FC. Upon making the state teams in December, these players will be invited to participate in several events in 2009 including the Regional ODP

Championships, the Nike Friendship Cup in Oregon, the Colorado Showcase in May, and other friendly games throughout the year.

“Washington Youth Soccer’s Olympic Development Program has always been regarded as one of the best in the country, stated Washington Youth Soccer’s Executive Director/COO Todd McGann. “From day one we have recognized that two things are critical to our association; one, that constant evaluation of programs is necessary to ensure we best meet the needs of our members and two, that developing partnerships with companies that hold the similar values will ultimately benefit our members and programs.

“Never before has a state youth soccer association joined forces with a professional team to use all of their combined resources to strengthen the training and development of players from the youngest of ages up through the highest level of play, stated Washington Youth Soccer’s Executive Director/COO Todd McGann. “The Sounders FC is a progressive organization that shares our belief in building a strong foundation; starting with the Olympic Development Program. This partnership is the perfect example of the efforts being made at the youth level to develop elite players in an environment that supports their success now and in the future.”

Implemented in 1977, the US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program (ODP) identifies and develops outstanding youth soccer players at the state level. Once identified by the state coaching staff, these players participate at regional-level camps where they have an opportunity to be trained by the Regional ODP staff. The best players from the fourteen western-most states are then invited to join the Region IV ODP teams where they become candidates for the US Youth Soccer National Teams. In 2009, players with the birth years 1996, 1995, 1994, 1993, and 1992 are eligible to be selected for state ODP teams.

For additional information about Washington Youth Soccer and the Olympic Development Program, please visit [wsysa.com](http://wsysa.com)

### **About Washington Youth Soccer**

Washington Youth Soccer is the largest youth soccer organization in Washington. Washington Youth Soccer is the state's affiliate for US Youth Soccer, which is the largest sports organization in the United States and the most populous member of the United States Soccer Federation, the governing body for soccer in the United States. The Washington Youth Soccer is the sixth largest membership in the nation; our organization represents over 126,000 players (ages 4-19) and their families, 15,000 coaches on 11,000 teams and 6,500 referees in the state of Washington. Washington Youth Soccer’s mission is to foster the physical, mental and emotional growth and development of the State of Washington's youth through the sport of soccer at all levels of age and competition.

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