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Youth Soccer Insight: Why Coaches Should Go To Soccer Workshops and Conventions

For someone like me who has been out of coaching in the college ranks for over five years and with two young children it becomes easy to find excuses for not attending the annual conventions or workshops offered by our soccer associations. This weekend I had the chance to attend the US Youth Soccer Workshop in Boston. Reading through the clinicians and seminar summaries, I was excited to get energized entering the spring season.

While the event was well attended, in order to get more of our volunteer coaches out to these educational and thought provoking sessions we may need to consider how we promote these events in our towns and clubs.



Dr. Dina Gentile

Highlights and Reflections

The start to the workshop began with a chance encounter. Upon entering the lobby of the hotel to get to the Convention Center Jurgen Klinsmann (US Men's National Team Coach) is managing a small crowd of fans. He was gracious with his time and did accommodate all photo requests. As we travelled down the halls to the exhibit area, I was amazed with all of the Massachusetts Youth Soccer staffers who were assisting the attendees in such a professional manner. Although most were busy helping the groups check in, the folks I knew stopped for a quick smile or wave as they went on their way to assist the next person.

My next encounter was with one of the greatest soccer minds of all time, **Joe Cummings** (CEO and Executive Director of the NSCAA). It has been several years since Joe and I have been in the same space and I was taken a back a bit when I saw him. For those that know Joe he evokes so many emotions in people because he creates opportunities and he leads with professionalism and grace. I was blessed to have worked for him as the Coordinator of Volunteers for the **Boston Breakers** (WUSA) and assisted in the WPS inaugural year. I have always believed that Joe was a bridge to all that was soccer. He understands the needs of the youth game, the men's game, the college game, the pro game, and most important to me the growth and promotion of the women's game. He "gets it" and he shares that with all who work with and for him.

At the end of the workshop, a friend formally introduced me to Louise Waxler (former NSCAA President). She is a gift to soccer and is a true pioneer for the women's game. In hearing her speak many times before she makes you believe you can do whatever you set your mind to do. In just 5 or 6 minutes, I felt her passion and spirit.

Throughout the day I had the chance to just "catch up" with my friends of soccer including coaches, officials, DOCs, and former teammates. You take a little bit from all of the people who you ever played with, coached, coached against, shared a field with, worked for, or just talked with. We become the best of all of the people we ever shared a soccer moment with. I like to think I am better because of all of the great people I know in this game. They have kept me motivated as they have pushed me to never lose sight of what is important – the players.



In the end, because of this workshop, I am eager to get out on the field for the upcoming season. I have felt the inspiration again; I felt the power of these *people connections*. These soccer people have made me realize that we go to these gatherings not only because of what we can learn, but to be reminded of what we already experienced through the variety of relationships and soccer stories that we share with one another.

More people should attend these workshops. You smile and laugh at the stories that may be decades old, but feel like they happened just yesterday. After all these workshops and conventions give us a chance to talk soccer all day long – is there anything better?

TIPS: Promotion of Workshops or Licensure Courses for Youth Soccer Organizations

- Post the dates of events on website (the earlier the better)
- Announce details of the event when sending newsletters or information on player registration
- Promote the speaker/clinician list along with session topics to create interest in your club (indicate which sessions could be most valuable for your coaches)
- Encourage attendance at events by providing discounts or reimbursement for attendees
- Provide expectations for attendees (remind them to bring paper/pen to write down session details and coaching points so they get the most out of the sessions)
- After the events be sure to share highlights of the speakers or special moments (pass on what you gained and learned)
- Post photos of club attendees on your website showcasing their participation in these regional or national events

The Intangibles:

Workshops and annual conventions can also signify so much more than all of the professional development opportunities we encounter. These gatherings of soccer people becomes more like a reunion where you get the chance to reconnect with so many who have made an impact in your life, you get opportunities to thank mentors who have inspired you to continue to carry that soccer torch, and you meet new people who you know so much about but now you finally get the chance to tell them how much their contributions have changed not only soccer but you.

Related Article: [Learning Valuable Lessons in Soccer from Other Sports](#) and [Dr. Dina Gentile's Column](#)

SoccerNation News is proud to welcome **Dr. Dina Gentile** as our newest contributing writer. Dr. Gentile is a Professor of Sport Management at Endicott College. A volunteer youth coach herself, Dr. Gentile understands from both practical and theoretical experience what happens on the soccer field.



Ambassador for **Korrio**.

Gentile has also coached the Endicott College Soccer Team for 11 years. Gentile is the owner/director of Precision Soccer, LLC, which operates camps, clinics, and coach education training throughout the year. She is a former All-American and Academic All-American at Adelphi University. Gentile has been inducted into the Adelphi University and Endicott College Halls of Fame. She is the Pre Kindergarten and Kindergarten Coordinator for Beverly Youth Soccer Association. This season she is the proud coach of her daughters 1st Grade team in the Wilmington Youth Soccer Association. Gentile is also a Soccer