



2022 Blind Soccer Course

Final Report

Generously funded by: Ontario Trillium Foundation through the Ontario Parasport Collective

Hosted at CNIB Lake Joseph in the Muskoka's in MacTier, Ontario

Introduction

The idea for this event started in 2018 when Matt Greenwood was approached by the Ontario Parasport Collective to consider a project on developing more coaches for blind soccer. An application was developed in partnership with Ontario Blind Sports Association staff and was submitted and approved with the plan to host the course in March 2022. The small matter of a global pandemic forced it to be postponed until things were safe again and by October 2021, we felt confident that a course in 2022 was feasible and we finally delivered on our charter May 6th -8th, 2022.

Ontario Blind Sports Association and Soccability Canada would like to sincerely thank the Ontario Parasport Collective for their vision in facilitating this project. An initiative like this is unique, bringing together coaches, players and match officials to one location to learn and develop. Typically, this sort of 'coming together' would only happen at a tournament or festival so being able to come together in such a positive, holistic environment was an exceptionally fruitful experience for all of our participants.

Aside from the key learning objectives, all staff noticed a strong intangible component to this camp, a connection between all three parties that led to greater awareness, mutual respect and a desire to work together in the future. This was above and beyond the planned tangibles of education and knowledge sharing. We knew people would come away informed, maybe even excited about the sport of blind soccer, but this connection was at another level and fantastic to experience.

The event delivered some fantastic 'firsts' that will be a legacy for many years to come:

1. The first blind soccer residential course in Canada. While we estimate over 1700 people have experienced a blind soccer session, whether at their school, work or club, never before has a residential event been run.
2. The first braille soccer coaching manual in the world!
3. The first official blind soccer event to officially open the CNIB Lake Joe soccer field.



Learning Facilitators

Our initial conversations around learning facilitators focused on a UK lead for coaching and an Argentinian lead for match officials. As we started 2022, our UK lead had to sadly withdraw, however with the help of the International Blind Sports Association we were able to find an excellent replacement in Charly Simo. (Appendix 1)

Coaching Facilitator

Charly is the former head coach of the French National Blind Soccer team. He met with us on a webchat before committing to the event. He wanted to be clear on the course structure and organization. Charly had a strong focus on elite levels of football and brought many examples of high-level blind soccer. There were some concerns expressed by candidates that they needed his content to connect with grassroots delivery and that some or more of the information was a little too advanced for them. However, Charly paid close attention to safety and the needs of the athlete which was an important reference point throughout the weekend.

Match Official Facilitator

Mariano Travaglino of Argentina was our planned match official facilitator. As the head referee for the International Blind Sport Association (Football Committee) he was the ideal presenter and world class experience. He frustratingly missed the course due to a delay in his visa being issued.

Athletes

Athletes were picked up on the Friday morning from two specific locations central to the team bases. Pickering FC players were picked up from the Oriole Community Centre in Toronto and the North Mississauga SC players were picked up from Square One Shopping Centre, Mississauga. A 14-seater bus drove them all to the clinic location in Muskoka. This enabled players to connect on the way up and players commented that it was also helpful on the way back to really get to know the other players from the GTA. They got to build friendships with players of all ages beyond just the field and competition.

The athletes from North Mississauga had mostly been playing since February 2022 when an open house event had been held to start a program. The Pickering team had been together since early 2021 as we slowly came out of lockdown. There was a lot of enthusiasm and a diverse mix of gender and ethnicity with most athletes falling in the age range of 20-35.



Coaches

Invitation to the course was shared on social media two months prior to the event and garnered 18 applications. With the space limited to 15 delegates we had to move three people to a wait list for 2023. The applicants were selected based on geographic location and ability to influence the start of a program in their local community. In some cases this required more than one coach in order for them to support each other locally (as was the case for the City of London and York Region). Coaches from Mississauga, Pickering and Ottawa attended in order to boost their technical knowledge.



Match Officials

As the sport of blind soccer is heavily based around futsal rules, it made sense to approach Ontario Soccer for their recommendation on suitable officials to participate in this clinic. Four names were provided (2 male and 2 female) and three of those were able to officiate the next weekend at the Ontario Parasport Games. Futsal is a fast-paced game with close contact and lots of dribbling so these officials were familiar with the need to make quick calls and to communicate constantly with each other.



Course Resources

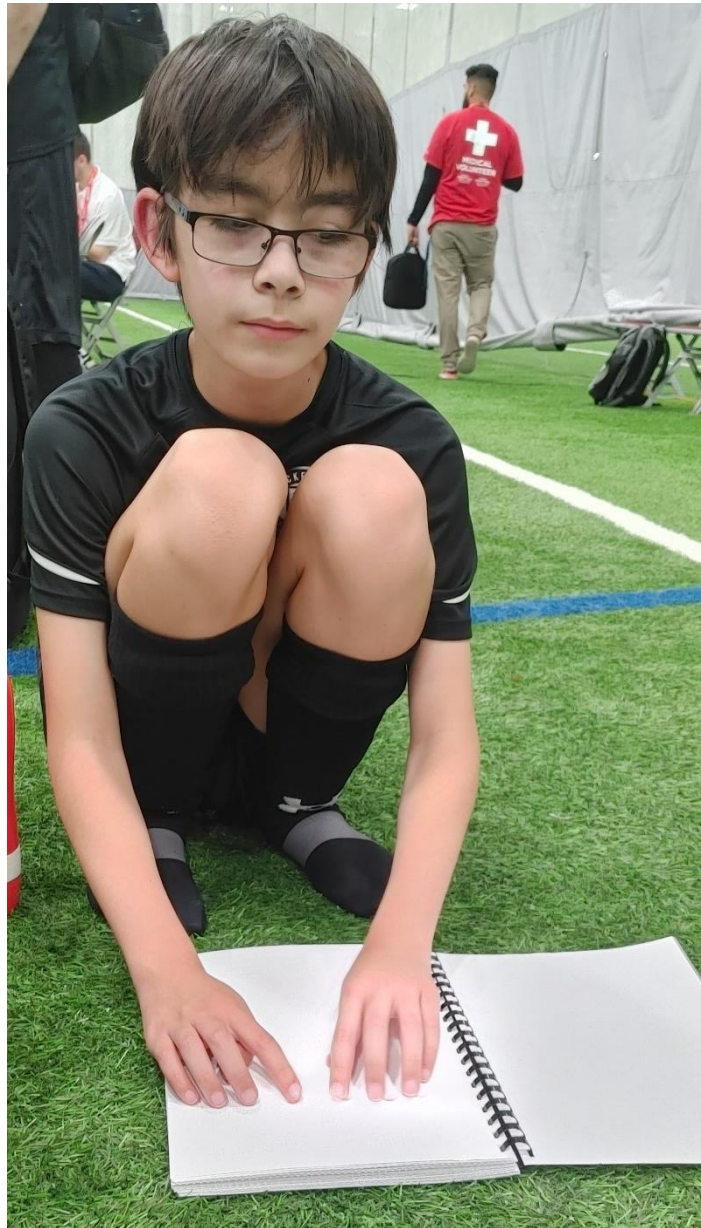
Course Manual

The work on a course manual began in late 2021 with a focus on capturing the key areas of blind soccer and specifically referencing the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) through the Coaches Association of Canada. Our focus was on a resource that new coaches could take away with them as a reference tool for the future, and a document in which to take notes for their own reminders. The final product came out well, however we had hoped for more engagement with NCCP staff along the way. Our expectation was for a course to be implemented that could be further refunded by CAC staff so that it would be recognised in the future under the NCCP program. Unfortunately, requests to CAC staff had gone unanswered and with pandemic delays our communication was not great. Therefore, we made the best of what we had and provided five pages of content on the NCCP program. This was alluded to during the opening presentation, and we will seek candidate feedback as part of our follow-up surveys.

Braille Manual

We were proud of the idea to produce the course manual in braille. The cost of brailleing a document was much more than we had anticipated but it was not required for every player and so we created four copies that were shared during the course and returned at the end. This was greatly appreciated by the athletes who read braille and they were amazed by the opportunity to read about

soccer in this format. Two comments were made by all athletes around the braille use on the field diagrams which was very insightful and will be adjusted for future course camps.



Delegate Package

Each coach, team official and player received a clip board and pen, role specific t-shirt and concussion handouts. The coaches also received an audible ball each to take back to their club/community in order to start a program. These items arrived at different times during the course and were not with the candidates for the Friday arrival. This would be something we would want to change for the future so on arrival each delegate receives their complete package.

Location

The CNIB property at Lake Joseph is a beautiful 12.5-acre site on the north-west shore of the lake. The location offers a wide range of outdoor activities for campers including swimming, kayak, basketball, shuffleboard and soccer. For indoor programming there is a large recreation room as well as a main meeting room.



Specific to the needs of our course;

Main meeting room – provided ample space for players, coaches and match officials to meet with space to spread out. No desks are in this room so delegates used their clip board on their laps. It had a small projector screen which would need to be larger for future courses. A sound system was made available but not used.

Cafeteria – nutritious meals were provided on each day (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) with additional coffee and fruit snacks available in between meals. The kitchen staff were very helpful and addressed our needs quickly and professionally.

Soccer field – the jewel in the crown. This course was the first official event in the turf, and it didn't disappoint. Measuring 20m x 40m, the 3rd generation turf has rubber pellets ingrained in the playing surface and a bright yellow warning line around the edge of the turf is also mixed with pellets and ground coconut shell. This gives the surface a different texture and sound, so participants know when they are at the field's edge.

Recreation room – this was made available to us but not used during this course. Essentially this space has a large TV, board games, musical equipment and indoor games.

Technical

The technical content focused on orientation of the players both on and off the field, passing (short and long), dribbling, shooting and tackling. Specific attention was given to the use of the word 'voy' in terms

of when, how and why it should be used. The delegates were set tasks to deliver a specific topic to the players and then have 30 minutes of planning they were given the chance to deliver their topic. Charly provided feedback on each session and the group, including players discussed their thoughts on it.

Finally on the Sunday morning (final day), the group were able to experience a game which included the traditional walkout ceremony before the match, rules at a very basic level and a penalty shoot out to conclude.



Feedback

As part of the course, we had allotted time on the Saturday evening to discuss the delegates' experiences and thoughts on the future of the sport and most importantly, what can THEY do with this newfound knowledge. In no particular order the following observations were made by each group;

Coach and Referees

- U18's to be approach at W. Ross MacDonald School and Thames Valley School District
- 1 year to start something would be realistic after reopening of schools
- Exposure to youth is key
- Mo and Andrew to lead London Whitecaps program – potential exposure to Vancouver operation. Andrew commented on being realistic and starting with a 'Minimal Viable Product'
- Curriculum for the club-based program needed to support coaches
- Separate content for match officials would have helped on course and moving forward
- Simple rule guidelines -shin guards, footwear
- Simple equipment set-up – balls, eye shades, space
- CNIB offers camps all summer and could be open to a 4-day youth camp
- Consider asking for plexiglass donations for boards, following pandemic use.

Athletes

- A big push of learning happened over the course of the weekend.

- Learning continued on the trip home
- Feedback received indicates positive interactions between senior and junior players who attended the clinic away from the clinic itself
- Mentorship opportunities have arisen because of bringing this group together in a formal training environment
- Athletes were privy to the same information the coaches were receiving in terms of the technical aspects of coaching and got hours on the best blind soccer pitch in the country. This was a valuable aspect of the intermingling of the athlete and coach groups throughout the clinic
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Athlete Quotes:

- Fatlum E.: *“This clinic is helping to create opportunities to practice in my hometown consistently every month, every month, every month so I can get better for the next competition”*
- Ramya A.: *“Throughout the clinic, you were noticeably communicating (with your team) and you guys were getting into forms and positions, and it was like, getting solid...you can tell that the structure (on the field) is building.”*

Future Plans

Short Term:

1. Club programs are planned for London Whitecaps and Cambridge Youth Soccer Club to be established in the Fall, 2022. These will hopefully be teams competing at the 2023 Ontario parasport Games in Durham Region.
2. York Region District School Board (YRDSB) Programs will expand from just offering goalball to introducing soccer in September 2022.
3. Soccability Canada and OBSA will investigate the chance to create a women’s national program in the next 6 months and in time for the Central American Championship.

Long Term:

1. Expansion of the Lake Joseph camp to a Youth Course and Adult Course enabling for more age-appropriate structure and a differentiation in coach leaders and player levels.
2. Work with NCCP to upgrade this model to a certification course by 2024.
3. Develop the course structure to become more efficient, make use of homegrown expertise in Canada for future course instruction. A recommended course structure:

Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
Classroom: History and Culture	Classroom:	Field 6: March Out
Classroom: Laws of the Game 1	Field 3:	Field 7: Game
Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
Field 1: Orientation	Field 4:	Presentations

Field 2:	Field 5:	Departure
Dinner	Dinner	
Classroom: Laws of the Game 2	Classroom:	

4. Develop a men's program to work alongside the female development opportunity before us.

Challenges

1. Players were rushed off the field at the end of the Sunday due to a miscommunication with the bus pick-up time. Instead of enabling us to complete our debrief and present certificates the players had to take a bus at 12:30pm instead of 2pm resulting in a rushed lunch time.
2. Set up of the boards along the side of the field took about an hour for 2 people to complete. Future recommendation would be to always make sure a team of 4 people are available for set up.
3. Instruction of the technical sessions was not always delivered in a manner that Canadian coaches would be used to. There was not too much 'sugar coating' to begin with and this upset some of the delegates.
4. The absence of our match official learning facilitator meant that the match officials had limited support. We tried to make a connection via webinar with Mariano but without success. There were questions specific to fouls and penalties that needed his expertise and couldn't be answered in real time.

Successes

1. Players, coaches, and referees all jumped into this course with total commitment. This enabled open and honest discussion about how blind and visually impaired players should be coached, how the game flows and how to best move forward with the development of blind soccer.
2. The focus on safety around the players was paramount and everyone came away with a greater awareness of the need for good, clear communication with both teammates and opponents.
3. The CNIB Lake Joe facility was the perfect location. Providing a remote venue away from most distractions meant that delegates could focus on the sport. It also offered for a social venue each evening when CNIB staff prepared a log fire and smores at the lake side. As well, players found value in traveling together as it provided them with a sense of community away from the clinic itself.
4. Collaborating with CNIB Lake Joe staff on the registration of each delegate made for food preparation and room set up a lot smoother. This was all ready prior to the arrival of our staff.



Budget and Actuals

REVENUES	BUDGET	COMMENTS
<i>Insert all revenue sources:</i>	Amount (\$)	
Course Fee	\$3,000.00	20 candidates @ \$150pp (16 coaches, 4 match officials)
Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) / Ontario Paralympic Committee (OPC)	\$26,075.00	
Total Revenues	\$29,075.00	
EXPENSES	BUDGET	EXPENSE CATEGORY
<i>Insert all project expenses:</i>	Amount (\$)	Expense Category (i.e. Administration, Travel, Food & Beverage, Communications/marketing, Facility Rental, Research, Salary & Benefits, Honorarium, VIK)
Facility Rental/Catering	\$7,670.00	Accommodation (@\$232/pp), Soccer field, Event Room and Cafeteria Catering includes: Breakfast, coffee, snacks, lunch & dinner for 3 days
Coach LF	\$1,718.00	Travel, Accommodation and Meals
Referee LF	\$2,563.00	Travel, Accommodation and Meals
Honorarium	\$500.00	Speaker Fee @ \$500 x 1 LFs
Administration	\$884.00	Equipment transfer & installation
Travel expenses and meals	\$1,311.00	
Equipment	\$2,330.00	AERTEX ENTERPRISES - \$875.30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 25 Official Blind Soccer Ball – IBSA Approved Goalfix - \$1,454.77 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10 Eyeshades - 10 Halos
Uniforms	\$2,210.00	Artik clothing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 30 Soccer Athlete Jerseys - 30 Soccer Coaches Jerseys - 30 Soccer Refs Jerseys - 7 Hoodies
Course supplies	\$568.00	Stationery (staples)
Course material and printing	\$1530.00	Coaching binders -Binder resource (design, printing of 40 copies -10 with braille) -Medallion Print Solutions Inc.
Marketing and Promotion	\$800.00	Social media, videographer (Cort Bremner - capture start to finish for course content and social media).
Staff Support	\$6,480.00	Project Coordinator / Project Support (Part time) 18 weeks x 12 hours x \$30/hour
Reporting and Evaluation	\$750.00	
Total Expenses	\$29,314	

