

October 5, 2020

ASTRA Approved for Regular Member Status

Based out of Saskatoon, ASTRA Soccer Academy has been an SSA Associate Member since 2012. In January 2020 they applied for a change in their conditions of membership to become a Regular Member. After lengthy consideration of the application and member feedback, and guided by the criteria for membership, the SSA Board unanimously approved ASTRA for Regular Membership status. All membership approvals are for a one-year probationary period.

After years of consultation with Membership, in 2018 the **SSA Board embraced and communicated a more open membership approval process**, reflecting the following guiding principles:

- **Alignment of Vision and Action:** Canada Soccer and SSA are working toward an aligned approach to soccer development. We encourage our membership to align vision and action. We support Canada Soccer's Club Licensing program which helps position Canada to begin the process of alignment to standards working from a common vision.
- **Remove Barriers to Participation:** We welcome new partners that will support growth of the game. The Board honours the role of existing members and support competition in the marketplace, welcoming new partners that will add value to the game through their approval as Members.
- **Participant Centered:** Our players, coaches, officials, and volunteers are at the heart of everything we do. We will focus on enhancing our listening capabilities so that we better understand participant's needs and emphasize continuous improvement through self-evaluation, supported by standards (Club Licensing) and data (Surveys, consultations, and other feedback opportunities).
- **Choices:** The SSA respects that all participants and organizations have choices in how they participate and achieve their goals in soccer. Players have a choice on where and how they experience soccer. Member Organizations are welcome to seek approval to amend/expand their current Conditions of Membership to allow their full participation in all forms of soccer and/or futsal.
- **Innovation:** We seek to find new and creative partners and approaches to developing the sport of soccer throughout the province. SSA was the first province in Canada to welcome academies and for-profit organizations as members. SSA welcomes Futsal, Walking Soccer, Beach Soccer, and other innovations that meet participant's needs and interests.

ASTRA was the first academy in membership and with this approval all academies have now been accepted as a Regular Members.

Two primary changes occurred with this approval. As a regular member, ASTRA is able to register players directly and they may now enter the U17 division of the Provincial Soccer League (PSL) (the highest level of youth participation in the province). Both of these are requirements for consideration under [National Youth Club License](#) (NYCL).



In 2020, ASTRA declared their interest to achieve NYCL status. Organizations achieving this license display characteristics and demonstrate behaviours aligned with the highest expectations of governance, administration, infrastructure, and technical support.

Beyond these changes, ASTRA's youth operations remain as previous, they continue to work in partnership with SSA and its members to provide training opportunities to youth players in Saskatoon.

With this application, ASTRA has fulfilled its commitment to bring Happy Feet into SSA membership. Happy Feet is a program for children 2 to 5-years old that provides physical literacy experiences, helping children develop foundational movement to assist in their long-term participation in soccer. ASTRA will operate Happy Feet, along with its other youth programs, within Saskatoon. With a Memorandum of Collaboration (MOC) from other Member Organizations in place, ASTRA may also work outside of Saskatoon with Member Organizations who wish to operate Happy Feet within their communities. Currently ASTRA offers Happy Feet in Regina with an MOC with Queen City United.

"We have high aspirations for our organization and Regular Membership will assist in bringing us closer to achieving our goal of obtaining National Youth Club License status. The opportunity to field teams in the U17 PSL adds a layer of high-level competition for our most senior players and we welcome the positive impact it will have on their development. ASTRA's primary focus remains the same, to help players of all abilities reach their full potential and we hope that we can continue to grow the game of soccer in Saskatchewan through the Happy Feet program. It should also be stated that we have no intention or desire to be a league operator and will continue to look for opportunities for competition with SYSI and SAS if available." Chris Zoller, ASTRA General Manager

"Congratulations ASTRA. SSA looks forward to your continued support to develop the game in our province. Happy Feet programming is a welcome addition within membership, and we wish you the very best in your pursuit of NYCL status from Canada Soccer." SSA President, Lisa Bagonluri

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