

Coaches Feedback

From: *Chip Huber*

I've had the chance to be part of the Pepsi Showdown for several years and in several different ways...and it is truly a pinnacle in terms of soccer experiences in the nation today...

*As a coach of a smaller private high school team for several years, it allowed us to play against great competition we couldn't schedule otherwise...it allowed us to play teams from other parts of the Chicagoland area and it was always great preparation for state tournament games later in the year...it even gave us the chance as a program to get recognition when we upset some bigger schools...and we were able to as players and coaches make new and strengthen old friendships in the soccer community...playing in these matches provided some remarkable soccer experiences for our fans and school at Wheaton Academy...

*The Pepsi Showdown also provided incredible gifts to a long term development project we were involved in as a soccer program in sub-Saharan Africa...hundreds and hundreds of soccer balls, shoes, uniforms, and pieces of equipment were collected from other players and teams at the tournament...we took all those items to Zambia on soccer trips over several years in Zambia and they were given to children as part of HIV/AIDS, education, clean water, and health care programs and activities in some of the poorest communities in the world...the gifts of the soccer community in Chicago have changed the lives of a generation of kids that love the game on the other side of the world through our Zambia Project partnership with the Pepsi Showdown...

*And finally, now as a college soccer coach, the tournament provides an incredible place to come and recruit future players...we recently had a couple players we saw at this year's tourney for the first time come make official visits to Cornerstone University, and it is a great place to evaluate talent and help give athletes the chance to participate, get an education, and gain scholarship resources at the collegiate level...

The Pepsi Showdown is a premier soccer event that positively impact the lives of players and soccer programs in the US and across the world...and very few soccer events bring that to the table...

Chip Huber

Dean of Student Engagement/Spiritual Formation
Varsity Men's Soccer Assistant Coach
Cornerstone University
1001 E. Beltline Ave. NE/Grand Rapids MI 49525

From: Jason Rollins

I have always had an interest in being a part of the Pepsi Showdown and was very excited for my program East Aurora when we were invited this past year.

In our first year being a part of this tournament, I have found that the communication, organization and attention to detail was excellent! If you were to ask my players some of their most memorable moments this past season, the Pepsi Showdown and the experiences we had being a part of the tournament both on and off the field would be on that list.

But, most importantly to me, I am always looking for my program and players to get more exposure and recognition in the Chicagoland area. There are certain schools that tend to get more exposure just because of their reputation and often times college and club coaches overlook other schools that have the potential to produce quality student-athlete's who can be highly successful at the collegiate/club level.

In the 7 years I have been coaching at my school, this year me and my players had more interaction with college and club coaches than all of my years combined. I believe that the Pepsi Showdown played a role in that exposure process and that is a big reason why I want to continue with this tournament...it's about what it can offer to my players as I look for the best way to prepare them during the season (by offering a high level of competition in the teams we play) and prepare them for the future (exposure to college and club coaches).

Jason Rollins

From: Brad Abel

The Hersey girls soccer team has participated in the Pepsi Showdown tournament for the last 4 years and it has been nothing short of excellence. There are several things about the tournament that make it such a success, but a few things stick out in particular. The first is that the tournament is all about the players both on and off the field. The tournament does an amazing job of providing player exposure to college coaches. Players can blog throughout the tournament about the games in which they compete in, sign up with recruiting websites (captainU.com), and are given an opportunity to showcase their skills to various college coaches during the two week tournament. In addition, the Pepsi College Showcase in November also provides another venue for players in the tournament to get college exposure. Not only does it give players the chance to get recruited, but it also provides an "all soccer atmosphere." During the tournament, the radio station B96, has a booth on site, while several other soccer stores set up tents while the games are being played. The Pepsi is more about wins and losses, but really providing players with an amazing soccer experience. And this is truly seen when teams and programs can attend a Chicago Fire home game, in which players and terms are honored, followed by the final game of the Pepsi Showdown.

The other thing that the Pepsi does is that it allows programs to play each other that don't or wouldn't normally do so. This is something that has benefited the Hersey soccer program tremendously. Over the last four tournaments, we have gotten the opportunity to play teams such as Main South, New Trier, Glenbrook South, Huntley, St. Charles North, and Lyons. Not only are these teams we wouldn't normally play, but it has allowed us to schedule these teams regularly as part of our non-conference schedule. It really is neat to see city schools play traditional powerhouses or watch teams from the south suburbs play teams from the northwest suburbs. In addition, the Pepsi has always had a playoff feeling with a single elimination bracket, while still allowing teams to choose their competitors after they have been eliminated.

The Pepsi Showdown represents what is good about high school soccer. It allows players a forum to showcase their talent, while providing them an opportunity to play teams throughout the state. We continue to look forward each year participating in the Pepsi Showdown.

Sincerely,

Brad Abel
Hersey High School
Social Science Teacher
Head Girls Soccer Coach

From: JJ Crawford

The Pepsi Showdown has been an amazing experience for my Maine south girl's soccer team. It has allowed us the opportunity to play teams in Chicago and the surrounding suburbs that are regular season schedule won't permit. It also gives high school players an opportunity to be seen by college coaches. A super tournament like the Pepsi usually only exists at the club level. The Pepsi showdown acts as a college showcase tournament. This allows players an opportunity to be seen by many college coaches in one setting at one time. The Pepsi showdown has been a great addition to our season.

JJ Crawford
Head varsity Girls Soccer
Maine South High school

From: Seong Ha

Glenbrook South High School and its girls' soccer program has enjoyed incredible competition for the teams that have participated in the annual Pepsi Showdown showcase of teams across Illinois. The tournament provides a "measuring stick" of your team versus that of others in the area, year-after-year. Joe Trost and his staff has done a fantastic job organizing, marketing, and more importantly looking out for the student-

athletes. Through the culmination of many tournament games, the "playoff" atmosphere provides a great set up for the state tournament. We as coaches are very appreciative of the promotion of high school athletics, let alone girls' high school soccer. We are just fortunate that the Pepsi Showdown gives this opportunity for all to enjoy.

Seong Ha
Glenbrook South High School
Business Education Teacher
Head Varsity Girls Soccer Coach
Assistant Varsity Boys Soccer Coach

From: Elliot Hurtig

What makes the Pepsi Showdown one of the most unique tournaments in the state of Illinois is that it brings together such a diverse number of schools. Most schools feel the need to schedule games against the same teams year in and year out who are in the same area, but the Pepsi allows us to play teams we would never regularly schedule. Also, on the Saturday when all the teams play at Lyons, there is a great opportunity to watch some of the best teams and players in the state play in a festive and friendly environment.

From: Kevin Fitzgerald

The Pepsi Showdown, in my opinion, offers one of the best experiences for our student-athletes. Our kids get the opportunity to travel to different schools and play against teams they otherwise would not. Over the years, our teams have been able to play top-level competition from all over the state. This ensures that our schedule is year in and year out is very competitive. With the tournament format, the team also gets a chance to experience the closest thing possible to the state tournament, and it greatly helps in preparation for the end of the season. The Pepsi Showdown is truly a tournament that we always hope to be a part of.

The two Saturdays, where all the tournament teams converge on the Lyons Complex, is incredible. Soccer is played on three fields from dawn till dusk, and it's an outstanding atmosphere. Teams come from all over the state and there have been teams that have come across the country to compete in the event. Players from all the schools gain exposure to college coaches and the Pepsi Showdown is in the Illinois soccer spotlight for two weeks.

Besides the great level of competition, outstanding games, and an equally great atmosphere, there is so much done for the kids. College profile books, giveaways, and a chance to play at Toyota Park all create a real sense of meaning to the athletes and I

know all players, coaches, athletes, and spectators appreciate all the work Joe Trost and his staff have done over the years.

Bar none, this is the best soccer event of the season.

Sincerely,
Kevin Fitzgerald
Plainfield Central
Varsity Boys' Soccer Coach

From: Anthony Coppell

The Pepsi Showcase High School Girls tournament is exactly what high school soccer needs. Over the past decade high school soccer is losing athletes to play year round club soccer. The main draw for these girls is being scouted by colleges. With tournaments such as the Pepsi Showcase available to high school and their athletes, coaches are able to keep more student athletes involved in high school soccer. After being in the tournament over the past two seasons, I have had three student athletes attain college scholarships through being noticed while playing in the Pepsi Showcase. This is a tremendous addition to this high school soccer community in the Chicago land area!

Anthony Coppell

From: Andy Bitter

The Pepsi Showdown Soccer Tourney is tremendous way to promote soccer in your community, high school, and your program, in 2010 we fortunate enough to make it to the semis and host the game. The community was talking up the game the whole week, we had at least 800 people in the stands to see us play that game! In 2011 we had advanced to the finals of the tourney played at Toyota Park, at the game we had football, volleyball, and student fans at that game cheering us on to victory. Our principal called me that night and was so proud of the team and the fans to see how much fun and school spirit was going on in the stands.

My players look forward to playing in the showdown for the competition and to prepare them for the state tournament. There is no better way for a coach to get his team ready for state than to play in this tournament. You play the best competition in the Chicago area, and face some of the best coaches in the state of Illinois. As long as I am the coach at Libertyville, we will be in this tourney.

Thanks Andy Bitta

From: Paul Wright

The Pepsi Showdown has become an integral part of my season. Unlike other tournaments that involve the same teams every year participating against each other; the Pepsi Showdown's large pool of teams allows us to participate against a wide variety of teams. Uniquely to Pepsi, the teams are not from one geographic area which allows my players to see different teams on a yearly basis. The tournament has expanded the horizons of my players as we have traveled to a variety of Chicago Public schools and seen the limited resources they have for varsity athletics, compared to the far wide open spaces of Crystal Lake. The atmosphere and learning experiences obtained in the Pepsi Showdown go beyond an 80 minute soccer game and the OPRF Soccer Program is thankful to be part of it.

Paul Wright Boys Head Soccer Coach OPRF

From: *Jeff Brooke*

The Pepsi Showdown has provided our small school an opportunity to play in one of the best tournaments that exists. Joe Trost puts together a well organized, talented, and professional tournament that promotes player experience and development. The tournament constantly impacts the local and global community. This January I will take balls, jerseys, nets and practice gear to 4 different Orphanages in Puerto Prince, Haiti because of the Pepsi Showdown. The tournament promotes this service project and teams throughout the tournament provide equipment to be taken to the less fortunate. This will change the lives and hope for hundreds of children and young adults in the Haitian community.

In addition, our players love playing in the Pepsi. It is a high profile event that we talk about constantly with our team. Our players have received numerous opportunities to play at the college level because the Pepsi draws so many coaches. We are thrilled to be a part of it and are thankful for the invitation each year.

Jeff Brooke
Wheaton Academy
Bible Teacher | Director of Leadership and Service | Varsity Soccer Coach