

## **Building What Comes Next: Leveraging Global Soccer's Momentum for Grassroots Growth.**

I hope you have been able to enjoy this summer of soccer. The FIFA Club World Cup, Gold Cup, UEFA Women's Euros just to name a few. This is one of the many great periods of soccer to come. The next few years may be the greatest exposure to the sport any of us will ever witness.

As the FIFA Club World Cup concludes and the world shifts its attention toward the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup, we find ourselves in a pivotal moment for soccer in America. The anticipation, visibility, and excitement surrounding these tournaments are already reshaping the way the sport is viewed and valued in our communities.

These events are more than celebrations of elite soccer. They are rare opportunities to transform the foundation of the game at every level, from local clubs to national programs. If we act with intention, unity, and humility, the impact of this moment can last far beyond the final whistle.

### **Let's Turn Inspiration into Access**

Global tournaments have the power to inspire. A packed stadium or a televised goal can be the spark that gets a child to pick up a ball for the first time. But that spark must be met with real opportunity, accessible and inclusive programming that allows every child to experience the game in a meaningful way.

From small towns to major cities, we need to make sure there are entry points for players of all backgrounds, skill levels, and aspirations. That means investing in grassroots infrastructure, coaching education, and local outreach now, not later. It means using this World Cup cycle to build systems that welcome more families, support more volunteers, and retain more young players for the long term.

### **Let's have a Shared Purpose**

If there's one lesson to take from the excitement around the Club World Cup and the growing anticipation of 2026, it's that no single organization, league, or leader can carry this moment alone.

Real progress will require collaboration across clubs, state associations, and national organizations. Turf wars and organizational silos cannot define how we respond. We need shared calendars, aligned initiatives, co-hosted events, and public-private partnerships that make it clear: This is not about who gets credit, this is about who gets to play.

Whether you're running a local club, serving on a state board, coaching a grassroots team, or leading at the national level, the responsibility is the same. We work together in service of the game and the children who play it.

### **Let's Create a Lasting Legacy**

While much of the spotlight is on the 2026 Men's World Cup, it's critical we recognize this moment as the beginning, not the end. The 2031 FIFA Women's World Cup provides a follow-up opportunity to build with equity, visibility, and sustainability in mind.

We must ensure that the momentum doesn't fade but instead expands. Planning for 2031 and beyond starts now, and it must be rooted in the same values: collaboration, access, inclusion, and a deep love for the game.

### **Let's use our Influence Well**

This moment calls on everyone involved in soccer, whether at the grassroots, state, or national level, to take stock of their influence. Not to protect it, but to use it for good.

We all carry some level of influence. Some have titles. Some have platforms. Some have years of experience and trusted relationships. The power of these assets lies not in what they say about us, but in how we use them to build something bigger than ourselves.

Let us set aside egos, embrace cooperation, and lead with humility. Let's be bold in our vision, generous in our partnerships, and grounded in the knowledge that the health of the soccer ecosystem depends not on who stands at the front but on how many children we can bring along for the journey.

### **Let's believe that we will win!**

From local clubs to national federations, this is our collective moment to reshape the future of soccer in America. If we meet it with courage, unity, and purpose, we won't just be hosting a World Cup, we'll be laying the groundwork for a stronger, more inclusive, and more joyful game for generations to come.

Reach out to your neighbors and let's grow together!

**About the Author**

Neil McNab is a lifelong servant of the game with experience as a professional player, coach, and soccer executive. He currently supports the sport at multiple levels, including local club development, national strategic planning, and governance. Neil believes the future of soccer in the United States depends not on titles or positions, but on our shared willingness to collaborate, invest in young players, and do what is right for the game. Off the field, he is a devoted husband and proud father of three children, all of whom share his love for sports, making the game not just a profession, but a family passion