



SOCCKER LEARNING UNIVERSITY 2026

ATTENDEES' PACKET

EVENT OVERVIEW

Date: Saturday, January 31st, 2026

Time: 9:00am – 4:15pm EST

Location: Central Bank Center
430 W Vine St., Lexington, KY 40507

Arrival: Doors open at 8 am, and the first presentations will begin at 9 am. Check in at the registration table and receive your welcome bag. Vendors will also be set up and open at this time.

Parking: The easiest place to park is at the Rupp Arena Parking Lot located on High Street. There is paid street parking around downtown Lexington but is limited.

Presentations: We have allotted an hour and fifteen minutes for each presentation with a 15 minute break in between sessions. Please find a full presentation schedule below.

Internet: Wireless Internet is FREE (CBC Free) to all guests of Central Bank Center.

Lunch: There will be a lunch break from 11:45 am – 1:30 pm. There is a list of suggested restaurants in the packet below. Most places are within walking distance of the convention center, and all attendees are responsible for their own meals.



SOCCER LEARNING UNIVERSITY 2026

8TH ANNUAL SOCCER LEARNING UNIVERSITY

We are thrilled to have NINE featured presenters this year. With a variety of different titles, experiences and insights, each speaker brings bountiful information and strategies to improve and assist in youth soccer development. Listed below are our 2026 speakers and presentation titles as well as a short bio about them!

Paul Blodgett, Owner, Paul Blodgett Goalkeeper Training School; USYS ODP Director of Goalkeeping, New Jersey

“GK Development Within the Club & the GK Coaches Role”



Paul brings an impressive background with his passion for goalkeeping as a member of the UGKA's Board of Directors, the New Jersey Youth Soccer/ODP goalkeeper technical director, a member of NSCAA/United Soccer Coaches since 1995, along with a wealth of experience in coaching and playing. Paul is also the author of “Generational Goalkeeping: A Grassroots Roadmap for Ages U8 – World Class,” as his goal is to develop consistent and comprehensive goalkeeper culture to propel the position to the forefront.

Thuto Nhlekisana, Executive Director Skillability Soccer Training

“Maximizing Touch Repetitions Through Small Group Technical Training”



With over 20 years coaching experience from club, high school and semi-professional soccer, Thuto is the Founder and Executive Director of Skillability Soccer Training, Louisville and Lexington's premier private and Small Group Training Academy. Thuto is also the Director of Coaching & Club Operations at Javanon FC and is a USSF A License & Technical Leadership License coach.



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Amanda Nighbert, Registered Dietitian, Creator of the LEAN nutrition program
"Fueling Your Athlete"



Amanda is a registered dietitian whose goal is to teach clients simple yet effective lifestyle changes to see lasting results. She was a competitive gymnast growing up which led to her passion for health and nutrition. In addition to her signature online LEAN (Living Energized and Nourished) program, Amanda works 1-1 with young athletes looking to level up their abilities through proper nutrition and recovery.

Morgan O'Donnell, Manager of Account Management, WorldStrides Sports
"Travel to Enhance Your Teams Soccer Experience"



After graduating from Towson University studying Sports Management & Business, Morgan joined WorldStrides Sports where she's worked with several clubs, ODP states, high schools, colleges and universities to help plan international trips for their teams. As the key leader in the Sports Division at WorldStrides, Morgan provides educational travel and experiences to thousands of students a year including Kentucky's ODP Program since its first trip in 2018. She is responsible for crafting unforgettable trips for our ODP teams to allow them to not only experience soccer education but also cultural immersion around the world. In her free time, Morgan enjoys cheering on the Baltimore Ravens, traveling, and spending time with friends and family.



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Ashley Samson, Professor, University of Kentucky; Sport Psychology Consultant
"The Moment Before the Moment: Infusing Mindfulness into Soccer Training Programs"



Dr. Samson is a professor in the department of Kinesiology and Health Promotion, in the College of Education who focuses on athlete self-perceptions and also has an interest in mindfulness practices for athlete well-being and performance enhancement. She has taught courses in the areas of sport psychology and sport sociology, conducted research on athletes, and was also half-time in the CSUN Athletics department as their sport psychology consultant where she worked with individual athletes, teams, and coaches on the psychological aspects of peak performance.

Zach Salchli, Director of Coaching, SKY Soccer Club
"Designing Training Sessions that Promote Transfer of Learning in the 7v7 Environment"



Zach currently serves as Director of Coaching for SKY Soccer Club as well as the President of Mighty Kicks Franchising LLC., which provides an early introduction to soccer through preschools, daycares, and soccer organizations. He's also been a staff coach with Kentucky ODP for 7 years and serves as a Grassroots Coach Educator with KYSA. Zach has coached at the club, high school, and college levels in Kentucky and has a US Soccer B License and US Soccer Coach Educator License. Zach's primary area of focus is creating training environments that promote transfer of learning driven by context-based activity design.



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Kaycie Soderling, Ed.S., Principal of Perry Heights Middle School, Evansville, IN
"Applying Learning Sciences to Soccer Instruction"



Kaycie is a middle school principal and educational leader with over a decade of experience who currently serves as Principal of Perry Heights Middle School in the Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation, where her school has achieved state-leading academic growth across multiple content areas. As a spouse to a soccer coach with over 20 years of experience and mother of a Kentucky Youth soccer player, she's become deeply interested in how learning sciences and neuroeducation can transform the way coaches teach, how young athletes process feedback, and how training environments can better support motivation, memory, and skill transfer. Her focus is on how evidence-based learning principles can maximize player development during training and beyond the beautiful game.

Shaun Soderling, Assistant Coach, Thomas More College Soccer and Kentucky ODP
"The Algorithm Doesn't Recruit—Coaches Do: Using Social Media the Right Way"



Shaun is a college soccer coach, educator, and lifelong learner who believes the best teams are built through intentional teaching, shared experiences, and trust. Shaun spent 12 years coaching high school and has over 15 years of coaching experience across NCAA Divisions I–III and NAIA, serving as a head coach, assistant coach, and director of operations. Most recently, Shaun helped guide DePauw University to the 2024 NCAC Championship and an NCAA Tournament appearance, contributing in the areas of tactical preparation, player development, and recruiting. He previously led a full program rebuild at Brescia University, guiding the team to its first postseason appearance, and has also coached at University of Kansas, Alderson Broaddus University, and the University of Evansville, giving him a well-rounded perspective on both the on-field and behind-the-scenes demands of building successful programs. Shaun approaches coaching as teaching, views leadership as service, and is passionate about sharing stories and strategies that help coaches grow players, build sustainable cultures, and lead with clarity and purpose.



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Jeremy Toohey, Founder, Toohey Sports Performance



Jeremy Toohey is a soccer strength and speed performance coach and the founder of Toohey Sports Performance (TSP). He has coached professional soccer players through Global Performance in Barcelona, Spain, and continues to develop youth athletes in Kentucky. Specializing in strength and speed development, Toohey utilizes evidence-based methods to enhance performance, reduce injury risk, and prepare athletes for the demands of high-level competition.

EVENT SCHEDULE

TIME	CLASSROOM 8	CLASSROOM 7	CLASSROOM 6	BALLROOM
9:00am – 10:15 am	TBD	Shaun Soderling "The Algorithm Doesn't Recruit— Coaches Do: Using Social Media the Right Way"	Referee Room	Zach Salchli "Designing Training Sessions that Promote Transfer of Learning in the 7v7 Environment"
10:30 am – 11:45 am	Paul Blodgett "GK Development Within the Club & the GK Coaches Role"	Kaycie Soderling "Applying Learning Sciences to Soccer Instruction"	Referee Room	Thuto Nhlekisana "Maximizing Touch Repetitions Through Small Group Technical Training"
11:45 am – 1:30 pm	LUNCH BREAK			
1:30 pm – 2:45 pm	Morgan O'Donnell "Travel to Enhance Your Teams Soccer Experience"	Amanda Nighbert "Fueling Your Athlete"	Referee Room	Paul Blodgett "Teaching a GK Session"
3:00 pm – 4:15pm	Ashley Samson "The Moment Before the Moment: Infusing Mindfulness into Soccer Training Programs"	TBD	Referee Room	Jeremy Toohey "Strength & Speed Performance"



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VENDORS

Thank you to our 2026 Vendors!

Mighty Kicks – Introductory Soccer Programs for Children

Mighty Kick's high-energy programs are creative, age-appropriate and engaging. The proven Mighty Kicks Curriculum aligns with early childhood educational standards and provides a safe and fun environment for skill development, team play and healthy competition.

Tops Soccer – The Outreach Program for Soccer

US Youth Soccer TOPSoccer is a recreational sports program for children and adults with intellectual, emotional, or physical disabilities offered only through local US Youth Soccer-affiliated soccer clubs. TOPSoccer provides people with diverse abilities an opportunity to play soccer in a structured environment that is safe, fun, supportive, and inclusive.

Soccer Village – Authentic & Replica Soccer Apparel & Fan Gear

Soccer Village carries a wide selection of authentic and replica soccer jerseys, t-shirts, shorts, and more for men, women, and kids from top soccer teams from around the world. Whether you're a fan yourself or looking for gift ideas for a fan you know, our selection includes novelty items that are sure to please.

GotSport – The Ultimate Sports Management System

The ultimate sports management platform offering powerful solutions for every level of sports. GotSport has tools for players and teams all the way up to governing bodies and professional leagues.

Dick's Sporting Goods – Sports Retail

Dick's Sporting Goods mission is to create confidence and excitement by inspiring, supporting and personally equipping all athletes to achieve their dreams. Their belief that "sports change lives," focuses on serving athletes, fostering community impact, and providing a leading multichannel experience.

BAND – Team Communication & Organization App

The BAND app mission focuses on improving team communication and organization, ensuring coaches, athletes, and parents stay connected, informed, and safe. It aims to simplify youth sports management by offering a secure platform for schedules, messages, and RSVPs.



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Publix – Official Supermarket of KYSA

Publix's mission is to be the premier quality food retailer in the world. The company is dedicated to satisfying customer needs, providing superior value and service, being intolerant of waste, ensuring associate dignity and security, and acting as responsible community citizens.

Southland Dairy Farmers – Multi-State Alliance of Dairy Farmers

The Southland Dairy Farmers' mission is to develop and direct effective promotion, education, and research programs to increase demand for dairy products, educate the public on the nutritional value of milk, and advance the image of dairy producers. They aim to educate consumers about the health benefits of dairy through programs like the Mobile Dairy Classroom.

PRIME – Hydration & Energy Sports Drinks

PRIME was developed to fill the void where great taste meets function. With bold, thirst-quenching flavors to help you refresh, replenish, and refuel, PRIME is the perfect boost for any endeavor.

etrainu – Sports Industry Learning Management System

etrainu enables organizations to create, deliver and manage training, featuring automated certifications, compliance tracking, and a user-friendly interface for volunteers and employees. Trusted by over 1,300 organizations, including US Youth Soccer, it helps streamline education in sectors such as hospitality, disability services, retail, and more.



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LOCAL FOOD & BEVERAGE

COFFEE

Nate's Coffee
125 Cheapside | 8am – 2pm

Starbucks
110 W Main Street | 6am – 5:30 pm

Old School Coffee
380 S Mill St | 8am – 5pm

RESTAURANTS

Italx
160 W Main St | 11am – 10pm \$\$\$

Nic & Norman's
135 W Main St | 11:30am – 10pm \$\$

Pies & Pints
401 W Main St | 11am – 10pm \$\$

Carson's
362 E Main St | 10am – 11pm \$\$\$

Ethereal Public House
102 W Vine St | 11am – 12am \$\$

Lockbox
167 W Main St | 9am – 11pm \$\$\$

Bourbon on Rye \$\$
115 W Main St | 4pm – 2:30am

Dudley's on Short
259 W Short St | 11am – 11pm \$\$\$\$

Corto Lima
101 W Short St | 11:30am – 10pm \$\$\$

Agave & Rye
123 N Broadway | 11am – 12am

Goodfellas Pizza
110 N Mill St | 11am – 3am \$

Tony's of Lexington
401 W Main St | 5pm – 10pm \$\$\$\$

ENTERTAINMENT

McCarthy's Irish Bar
117 S Upper St | 11am – 2:30am

Harvey's Bar
200 W Main St | 3pm – 12:30am

Bluegrass Tavern
115 Cheapside | 5pm – 2:30am

Henry Clay's Public House
112 N Upper St | 4:30pm – 2am

Molly Brooke's Irish Bar
109 N Limestone | 3pm – 2:30am



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KENTUCKY YOUTH SOCCER STAFF / KEY CONTACTS

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