

# INDEPENDENT COMMISSION OVERVIEW

---

---

January 18, 2018

**KATHY CARTER**

---

# Our Challenge

The United States of America possesses all that is needed to be one of the world's most successful soccer nations. Yet, our nation has yet to fulfill its soccer potential.

The United States Soccer Federation (US Soccer) must catch up to the rest of the world in the development of soccer and its players. In most countries, soccer isn't just a sport, it is a passion, a national identity and a way of life. To support and grow the game, develop top players, and ultimately win regional and global competitions, our national soccer infrastructure must change and we must raise our game. As a rapidly growing soccer nation, we are past the time for rhetoric, and in need of real and quantifiable change to take our rightful place on the world soccer stage.

Poor results at the 1972 Olympic Summer Games and 1988 Olympic Winter Games prompted the US Olympic Committee to fix its institutional problems. Similarly, after the 2004 Olympic Summer Games when our men's basketball team failed to win gold for the first time since NBA players were eligible to play, USA Basketball undertook a deliberate process to change course. I believe US Soccer is at a similar crossroads. Three recent international US Soccer on-field failures have revealed US Soccer's systemic issues and have crystallized the magnitude of the challenges we must address:

- ❖ Our failure to qualify for the 2018 Men's FIFA World Cup (after qualifying for seven consecutive FIFA World Cup tournaments),
- ❖ Our women's team's quarter-final elimination from the 2016 Olympic Games tournament (after three consecutive Olympic gold medals), and
- ❖ Our men's failure to qualify for the 2012 and 2016 Olympic games (marking the first time since 1968 that the US missed consecutive Olympic soccer qualifications).

Only by learning from where we have been unsuccessful and changing how the Federation operates and develops soccer and its players, can US Soccer finally achieve greatness.

---

# Mission

Based on the overwhelming feedback from the front lines of soccer in the US, and my 30 years as a player at the youth and amateur level, fan and executive in the game, I am proposing that US Soccer establish an independent commission to determine what factors impede our country from developing world-class players more consistently and teams that succeed in international competitions.

As I hear from aspiring young athletes and hopeful parents, frustrated soccer fans and tireless volunteers, coaches and sports leaders - all who have dedicated their lives to growing the game across the country - they believe that the resources and energy put into player development has been misdirected and yielded too little to be satisfied. They are absolutely right. We are past the point where mediocrity can be tolerated. It is time we lift the hood, examine our own shortcomings, and find a national path forward.

**“An independent commission ensures that all of US Soccer’s members are involved and there is the necessary level of transparency and inclusiveness to build consensus around short and long-term changes that drive our sport forward.”**

The collective mission of the Commission will be to deeply evaluate soccer in the United States and every aspect of player development to make recommendations for changes that need to be made at every level of the soccer pyramid.

Through the creation of an independent commission comprised of athletes, sports experts, innovators, business leaders, coaches and grassroots soccer advocates, we can take a comprehensive and unbiased look at US Soccer’s challenges and opportunities. It allows for an evaluation with much needed independence from soccer interests, personalities and politics, and an opportunity to include town-hall meetings throughout the country to give stakeholders and fans an opportunity to participate. Ultimately, the commission will conclude with a final report that can validate the solutions and reforms that are needed to reach America’s soccer potential.

---

# About the Commission

There is a raging and valuable debate throughout the country, with some blaming a system based on pay-to-play, while others speak of inadequate coaching and facilities; still others point to the confusing youth landscape, or the need for US players to play in Europe. The fact is that we can't consistently compete at the highest levels, while other countries have established excellence in soccer as a national and cultural priority. While the Commission must leverage learnings from other sports and cultures from around the world, the Commission's focus will be to find our voice, our style, our vision, and our strategic path. It is time we tap into our home-grown experts so that our youth system is setup to develop world-class players for years and years to come.

With this in mind, I will ask the Commission to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of American soccer and deliver specific recommendations focused on three broad areas:

- ❖ **SUCCEEDING** on the field at every level;
- ❖ **EMPOWERING** our membership in their efforts to grow the number of kids playing the game; and
- ❖ **IMPROVING** quality of refereeing and coaching.

The Commission will be modeled on other successful "blue ribbon commissions," in particular, two that have been undertaken on behalf of the United States Olympic Committee, the 1975 President's Commission on Olympic Sports in response to poor results at the 1972 Summer Games and the 1988 Olympic Overview Commission in response to poor results at the 1988 Winter Games. The Commission will also incorporate best practices from USA Basketball's restructuring after the 2004 Summer Games. Together, the output of this work led to a series of necessary reforms that, since adopted by the USOC and USA Basketball, has led to Team USA's recent unprecedented success at the Olympic Games.

The Commission will be comprised of independent members, and led by an individual that has wide ranging pertinent experience, passion for the game, and global

---

relationships. I am pleased to announce that global sports leader and LA 2028 Chairman Casey Wasserman has agreed to chair the Commission. Casey recently led the successful effort to host the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Los Angeles. For clarity, the US Soccer Board or administration will not sit on the board of the Commission, as I firmly believe that it needs autonomy and to remain unencumbered by the day-to-day workings of the Federation.

The Commission will be asked to produce a conclusive and openly published report containing their recommendations by the end of 2018.

## **How We Will Track Progress**

Our future must focus on the generations of players for years to come, putting our players ahead of tedious administration. In order to do this, we must scrutinize our performance as a Federation, including all of our programs and philosophies. The Commission will do just that.

With an independent review ensuring transparency and inclusion, I believe we can best create the blueprint for the long-term success of the sport in the US. We have a unique opportunity to showcase our progress on home soil at the LA 2028 Olympic Games; and with proper leadership, the 2026 FIFA World Cup and 2027 Women's World Cup. Great players can come from anywhere. We need to make sure we find them, develop them, and support them throughout their careers.