

Erik Lyslo  
Goal Lines staff writer

Head: Q & A with two of Oregon's best

Sometimes as a writer, you are assigned stories that just really don't belong on paper. I imagine you can relate this to just about any job. In other words, it's something you don't want to do. That wasn't the case with this story though.

This is a question and answer session I thought needed to be done. This is a story about two soccer players who have represented the state of Oregon at a very high level. They are good character people, they are excellent students in the classroom, and they are very good soccer players. They both have great parents who have veered them in the right direction.

Tracy Hasson and Marisa Abegg are the players, but dedication and passion have made them household names among the Oregon ODP Community. Their coaches have nothing but good things to say about them and their teammates have nothing but respect for them. I had the chance to ask both some questions about life, ODP, soccer and great advice they have been given. If you're a younger player reading this story, I recommend you listen to what these two have to say.

Both Tracy and Marisa are on the Region IV U17 Regional Soccer team. Basically, both of these players are considered one of the top 25 players on the west coast in their age group. They are also considered the two top players in the state of Oregon at the U17 level. Let the Q & A begin.

**Q.** Now that you've been through the ODP program for four years, been very successful, and understand soccer at a very high level, would you recommend the ODP program to younger players? Why?

**Tracy:** I would recommend ODP to players who want to make it to the highest level they can. It is a great experience that gives the dedicated hard working soccer players an avenue to be seen and improve their game.

**Marisa:** I would definitely recommend the ODP program to younger players. It is a tremendous experience and provides yet another window for those looking to play soccer in college. It also gives you a taste of how high the level of soccer can truly be when outside of Oregon.

**Q.** You've played against some of the best players within your age group at a national level. How tough is the competition and what does it take to survive or get there?

**Tracy:** The competition is fierce. All of the players are just as fast, just as quick, and just as skilled. What sets players apart is how fast they move the ball and how hard they work off the ball. Game speed is the most important factor at the higher levels.

**Marisa:** If you have ever gone to an out-of-state tournament or showcase, you will get the chance to see some of the best soccer players around the country. To be able to *play* against them provides a whole new outlook on soccer and its horizons. In order to be able to play with them at such a high level, it takes all that you've got—you have to make sure you're in shape, your touch is at its best, and overall you are sharp as can be.

**Q.** For the younger player's sake, what would you say is the most important thing to remember on the soccer field? What makes you the great player you are because of this?

**Tracy:** You have to remember to have fun while you are giving it your all. I am successful because I love this game and even when I am losing or playing bad, I think of how much I enjoy being out on the field.

**Marisa:** The most important thing to remember on the soccer field is that you should be playing because you love to play! Try not to get caught up in what's around you but focus on the game. This is not to say that you are going to be enjoying yourself when you make a mistake, but don't dwell on it—just forget about it and keep playing! I still have not perfected this skill but I am continually improving it and so far it has helped my game endlessly.

**Q.** What was the best constructive criticism or advice you ever received from a coach?

**Tracy:** To know what I want to do with the ball before I get it, and to work harder than anyone else on the field. These two pieces of advice is what has put me at the level I am today.

**Marisa:** I wish I could pinpoint "*the best piece of advice given to me*", but that would be almost impossible! There have been so many coaches along the way that have been a huge impact on my soccer career and myself. However, I know that many of those coaches gave the same advice over and over, but until this past couple of years, I never could put it into actions... "During the game you need to focus on **ONLY** the present. Forget about mistakes until after the game because it's not going to help you improve to dwell on them—it will only frustrate you more and take you out of your game." That goes back to my take on having fun. The less you frustrate yourself during games, the more you will have fun and in turn, the better you will play.

**Q.** Being that both of you pretty much play all year, I imagine you stay in pretty good soccer shape. Is there anything else you do to stay in shape or keep your skills up?

**Tracy:** When I am not practicing or playing I will do anything to keep my touch fresh, and fitness level high so I don't fall off. I'll do things such as go for runs, do speed & agility sessions, or just go mess around with a ball at a local field.

**Marisa:** I usually have club practices 2-3 times per week and other than that, I go out and run 5-6 times a week, and train individually 3-5 times per week. When I say go out and

run, I mean that I have a set program (sprints, long distance, and core strength) that I complete every week, which gets progressively harder as the year develops. When I individually train, I will normally focus on one or two aspects of the game (shooting, dribbling, trapping, passing, and so on) for a good hour at least. During that hour, I have to be able to actually perform the tasks that I want and improve on whatever I feel are my weaknesses at the time, and so I have to be focused the ENTIRE time.

**Q.** Do you ever get tired of playing? Do you ever say to yourself, ‘I need a day off?’

**Tracy:** I never get tired of playing the game, however, sometimes I will say that I need a “day off” because I am physically tired, but never because I am mentally tired.

**Marisa:** I am not going to lie and say that I NEVER get tired of playing soccer, because everyone does. However, I can honestly say that even when I get tired of soccer, I still love it! I know when I need to take time off because of injury or fatigue, and I also know that taking a day or two or even a week is not going to kill me—It is much better than continuing and either hurting myself or becoming completely burned out.

**Q.** Talk about your favorite part of the game. Is it scoring a goal, or setting somebody up with a perfect ball? Explain.

**Tracy:** For me, scoring goals is great but I enjoy controlling the game the most. Getting the ball and moving it from side to side, connecting with forwards, creating chances, or just killing a game off.

**Marisa:** My favorite part of the game is just playing. I love being able to forget about everything for that 90 minutes on the field and just play. If I had to narrow it down even further, I would have to say that the best part of a game within playing, is setting up that perfect service that someone scores off. Even playing the first ball in a sequence of actions that leads to a goal is exciting though because you can say to yourself, “Hey, that all started with me!”

**Q.** What are your future goals as far as soccer goes? College, professional, coaching, etc.?

**Tracy:** Right now I am only thinking about college soccer, and playing at that level. Once there I will be able to accurately judge whether or not I can make it to the professional level. I want to go as far as possible, and only time will tell how far that is. And after my playing days are over, coaching will be the next path to take.

**Marisa:** As I continue to love soccer more and more, I keep setting goals that are higher and higher. I would love to play Division 1 college soccer (the highest level of collegiate sports), and someday to play on the National Team. I also know that I definitely want to coach at a high level, but I am not positive about where or when that will be.

**Q.** Talk about your overall experience in ODP. Is this something you would do again if you could? Has ODP given you an opportunity a lot of players don't have?

**Tracy:** The ODP program is what made me the player I am today. My skills and abilities were not only seen but also grew through ODP. I got to play with great players from all over the country. I also got to travel throughout the U.S.A. as well as internationally. My four years were definitely memorable ones, and I would do again if I had the chance.

**Marisa:** ODP has been an AWESOME experience! If I had the chance to do it again, I definitely would. It has given me the opportunity to play at the highest level of soccer within the United States and against some of the best players of the country. It also has given me even more opportunities to be seen by College and National staff coaches, which I cannot say I would have had on just my regular club team. Last but definitely not least, I have made so many new friends along the way and friendships that will last a lifetime. I have learned more about myself and my abilities in soccer than I ever would have without it and I hope that the ODP program continues to grow and attract more and more kids from Oregon!