

## **Reducing the Reliance on Sighted Guides in Blind Soccer**

Pickering Football Club (Pickering FC), an organization aimed at providing opportunities for athletes from diverse backgrounds to participate and excel in soccer[5]. One such group of athletes is the Pickering FC Blind Soccer community. As a community of passionate players and staff, they meet weekly to improve the player's skill level in order to compete at the highest level.

A mix of primary and secondary research was utilized to fully establish the foundational knowledge about this community. Secondary sources such as the Ontario Blind Soccer Association and Pickering FC websites, were insightful in learning that Blind Soccer is a 5v5 adaptation of conventional soccer for people with visual impairment [1][2]. Through an interview and email chain with Matt Greenwood, the executive director of Pickering FC, it was established that a trait that proved relevant to this opportunity was their shared determination to contribute to the growth of the sport [4]. Coaches and staff are motivated as they watch their players defy expectations, whereas players are in pursuit of goals to compete at national tournaments. The background research about Blind Soccer and stakeholders provided key insights to analyze the needs of the community.

In conventional soccer practices, reference points are established using cones to act as obstacles in dribbling. While this is effective in conventional soccer, Blind Soccer players who cannot use visual markers are unable to use these cones [3]. Current solutions include placing a speaker on a chair or having a person stand at the reference point and speak directly to the players. However, solutions like these can be improved. The first solution can pose a risk to both the device and the players, while the latter solution relies on many sighted guides. Consequently, a replacement can improve the lived experience of this community by prioritizing safety, portability, durability, and reduce the reliance on sighted guides.

### References:

[1] Ontario Blind Sports Association, Blind Soccer, <https://blindsports.on.ca/sports/5-side-soccer/> (accessed Feb. 1, 2025).

[2] Pickering Football Club, "All Abilities Programs," <https://www.pickeringfc.ca/aaprograms> (accessed Feb. 15, 2025).

[3] Anon, *Student Engineers Interested in Blind Soccer*, Feb. 13, 2025

[4] Anon, "Call with Contact 1," Feb. 6, 2025

[5] Pickering Football Club, The Club, <https://www.pickeringfc.ca/theclub>