

State & Region Level Identification & Competition Process for Elite Players

The US Youth Soccer ODP Philosophy

To identify players of the highest caliber on a continuing and consistent basis, which will lead to increased success for the U.S. National Teams in the international arena.

Purpose

The US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program was formed in 1977 to identify a pool of players in each age group from which a National Team will be selected for international competition; to provide high-level training to benefit and enhance the development of players at all levels; and, through the use of carefully selected and licensed coaches, develop a mechanism for the exchange of ideas and curriculum to improve all levels of coaching.

State Select Team

To develop each player in the program to their full potential to enhance the enjoyment of playing the game

To increase the skill level of the players to raise the level of play in their local environment

To develop all players to achieve their highest possible level

To identify players of the highest caliber on a consistent basis to lead to increased success for the US National teams in the international arenaⁱ

US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program

WORK HARD – PLAY SMART

Player evaluation criteria – ability to execute the Principles of Play at speed while under pressure.

Player Evaluation - Roles of Play

Identification – Selection Criteria

Recognize when to be 1st or 2nd or 3rd attacker or defender...ability to execute those roles.

"Winners display competitiveness and composure at the right moment."

Arsène Wenger

- ✓ Technique – quality of first touch, comfort level on the ball, can you play inside a phone booth?
- ✓ Fitness – natural physical talents, current physical fitness level
- ✓ Tactics – 80% of tactical movement/decisions occur off-the-ball...what are you doing at those moments in the match? Quality of decisions made when on the ball.

- ✓ Psychology – composure, determination, mental toughness, awareness, ability to stay focused for a full match

Player Evaluation

TECHNICAL SKILLS

- Technical speed
- Consistent skills
- Range of skills
- Quality of skills

"Being optimistic, not arrogant – I believe I will win. To be afraid of losing removes the willingness to win."

Vanderlei Luxemburgo

ATHLETIC ABILITY

- Speed ... especially acceleration
- Vertical Jump
- Power ... explosiveness
- Agility ... balance
- Endurance ... stamina
- Range of Motion ... flexibility

TACTICS

- Positioning (off-the-ball movement) will show to the greatest extent what a player sees in the game
- 1 vs. 1 decisions (defense & offense)
- Can play more than one position (versatility)
- Understands more than one formation & system of play
- Anticipation or reaction player (**Reads The Game**)

MENTAL

- Can handle adversity
- Can control emotions ... thinking tactically
- Strength of character
- Positive impact on teammates
- Fair Play
- Competitor – will to win
- Willingness to PREPARE to win!
- Creative

- Adaptable
- Versatile
- Composure
- Enjoys the game – spirit of the game – FUN

"If you want to have a winning attitude, you have to win every match – even in training."

Ottmar Hitzfeld

Scouting or evaluation questions to ask:

- Are they playing up?
- In what division are they playing?
- What is the strength of their team and what level of success has it achieved?
- What is the quality of coaching and training they are receiving?

State ODP Team Selection

What are the challenges?

- Increase the participation of club coaches to recommend quality players to the program
- Reach out to rural areas, inner-city areas and small clubs more effectively
- Reduce the subjectivity in the identification process
- Improve communication between state coaches
- Have all of the state coaches attend training
- Getting state coaches to remain open minded during the selection process
- Increasing the level of competition

Once a player is in the state pool coaches should ask themselves these questions to further evaluate the players:

- Are they comfortable outside their club environment?
- Can they adjust to a different system?
- How do they react when they are asked to play a different position?
- What are their playing tendencies when playing alongside equal or better players?
- Are they committed and willing to make the sacrifice?
- Can they handle the level of competition?

- Can they perform well under the pressure of:
 - Matches versus other state select teams?
 - A championship match?
 - The observation of college coaches, national scouts and regional staff?
 - Coming off the bench?ⁱⁱ

What are the Benefits of Participating in US Youth Soccer ODP?

1. Development as a player. The opportunity to train and play with the best players in one's age group.
2. Quality instruction from nationally licensed coaches.
3. Quality competition. Games against other state association ODP teams.
4. Exposure to regional and national team coaches.
5. The opportunity to represent one's state, region or country in competition.
6. Exposure to college coaches.

ⁱ US Youth Soccer by-laws

ⁱⁱ Cal South – Steve Sampson