

Identifying And Developing Talent In The Women's Game



Involvement in youth sports begins in broad base recreational programs that can eventually lead into an elite level. This process takes place over a period of many years and is very complex. As young players work their way through youth soccer levels, they are consistently exposed to an increasing measure of challenges and obstacles. Identifying talent (Club, State, Regional, or National) expresses an interest in the elite performer relative to her current level and daily playing/training environment. The best model to identify and develop talent in America (at any and every level) includes a continuous cycle of evaluation in training and competition

The continuous cycle of identifying and developing talent includes

Competition–Identification–Selection Evaluation–Selection–Re-Evaluation (in training and competition) etc...

- **Competition** - watch players play within their daily environment, be it Club or ODP Identification - identify the most talented players at that level
- **Selection** - invite players to participate at the next level – pools, camps, teams or tryouts
- **Evaluation** - evaluate players performance, in training and in competition. Critical to assess their technical, tactical, physical, and psychological dimensions, along with their work-ethic, discipline, and contributions or conflicts toward team chemistry.
- **Selection** - invite players to participate at the next level – pools, camps, or teams.
- **Re-Evaluation** - in training and competition/games, evaluate players on and off the field with her level of competitiveness being the ultimate test of her ability to be for your team.

Evaluating, identifying and developing talent in any selection process is a work in

progress. 'Talent' and 'performance' is dynamic (it's always evolving). If a player doesn't continue to grow, her teammates will compete more strongly for a position on the team, and opponents are always improving. Players are capable of and do respond to the demands of training and competition. These experiences provide the substance for them to adapt, learn, and improve performance, thus elevating their current level to the next level. It is important to remember that evaluating players in a number of different environments contributes to the valid assessment of their potential. Every evaluation and selection process should include the following two (2) environments:

1. Competition
2. Training

Competition

- to assess and develop current and potential level of play
- to assess and develop ability to adapt to different positions, styles, systems, and environmental factors
- to access and develop each player's 4 pillars of the game

Training

- to assess and develop work-ethic, discipline, commitment, and coach-ability
- to assess and develop technical, tactical, physical, and psychological dimensions (personality and mental skills)

The Process is Only as Good As Those Evaluating the Players:

Coaches and Scouts

The experience and expertise of the coaches used in any process to identify and select players has a substantial bearing on the outcome. Experience produces an educated eye, and expertise brings an aptitude to recognize talent and it's potential. Experience comes from watching players of the same gender playing at lower, current and higher levels. Expertise comes from having developed good players and teams at lower, current or higher levels (within the same gender, and from having participated in the 'selection' process at similar levels). The experience, expertise, objectivity, and quality of the coaches involved in the identification and selection process lends credibility, integrity, and reliability to the identification and development of players. Choose your coaches to be involved in the identification/selection process wisely!

The Process is Only as Good as the Level of Players in your Pool:

1. Are your Coaches and Scouts watching all the best players?
 - inner city talent?
 - remote or rural talent?
 - all clubs, districts and state teams?
2. Are your *Open Tryouts* inclusive?
 - dates publicized for all to see and know with a fair amount of prior notifications?
 - location accessible to inner city and rural players (and parents)?
 - cost reasonable or scholarships available (and publicized)?
3. Do you Recruit players to attend / participate?
 - the inner city?
 - rural or remote areas?
 - that haven't traditionally participated?
4. Does your 'Talent Identification and Development Process' allow for:
 - injured or sick players who missed tryouts?
 - "late bloomers?"
 - scholarship dependent players?

The Process is Only as Good as it's Infrastructure:

Administrators and Facilities

1. Does your team/club/organization/association look to 'reduce' the yearly costs to players?
2. Do you advertising tryouts?
3. Have you solicited additional sponsors to defray costs or scholarship players?
4. Do you offer AND advertise available scholarships to players (and parents)?
5. Is the quality of your tryout and training facilities up to standard?

6. Do team/club/organization/associations 'policies' stand in the way of what's best for player development?

Developing a Model:

(see [Talent Identification and Development Process Filter](#))

Every team/organization/association starts with a large base of players ("All Players,") invites a "Selected Talent Pool" of players to move up through their system to the "Team Player Pool," and eventually if they're good enough to perform at the next level, a player gets invited to be a member of "The team."

A significant part of the development of individual players and the development of the team is based upon the quality and competitive nature of the training and games within your system. Without these two components you are making an educated guess or assumption that players will rise to the next level. Put them in the same environment and train them and have them compete against one another and outside opponents for comparison sake. This will enable your process to be more objective.

Only you and your colleagues can assess the 'talent identification and development process' for your team/organization/association. The model must reflect a continuum; a process that is inclusive and based on the integrity of your system and staff involved.

The process of identifying potential talent is a skill and a science. Quality coaches, scouts and administrators are required in order to assure your team the best opportunity to identify, recruit, retain and develop players. What level of confidence do you have that you have the best players involved?

Review how this worked for US Women's Soccer at the links below:

[**Talent Identification and Development Filter Process - THE U19 National Team '02**](#)

[**Identifying and Developing Talent U19 Women's National Team - "The Road to the Youth World Championships '02"**](#)