



The “Age Effect” in Soccer

Supporting Youth Academy Programs

Dr. Tom Turner

Ohio Youth Soccer Association North

Director of Coaching and Player Development

US Soccer National Instructional Staff

US Youth Soccer National Instructional Staff

US Youth Soccer National Coaching Committee

US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program

The “Age Effect” in Action

Primary Sources: Game On, by Tom Farrey & Outliers, by Malcolm Gladwell

A player born in January (National Team / ODP) or August (all other levels) has a maturational advantage over anyone born later in the calendar / seasonal year; sometimes up to 12 months.



“Older” players tend to be bigger than “younger” players until puberty balances out the physical differences.

Girls typically stop growing between 13 & 15; boys between 14 & 17. Some boys grow through college.

“Older” players are more likely to be selected for “A” teams, and for Travel and Premier teams.

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Primary Sources: [Game On](#), by Tom Farrey & [Outliers](#), by Malcolm Gladwell

“Older” players get better training and receive more developmental opportunities than “younger” players.



Players not selected for Travel or Premier teams are, in effect, told they are not good at soccer.

They are relegated to recreational play, often with poor coaches, and they quit - in droves.

At every level, players at the front end of an age year (January / August) dominate initial selections simply because they are bigger.

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The cumulative effect of beneficial developmental opportunities becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy with regard to “older” players. The ability gap naturally widens over time.

Players born in the 1st 6 months of an age year are significantly more likely to be selected for anything.

This is true of the youth level and at the professional level.

Players born in the second half of an age year never catch up.



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In effect, we are eliminating much of the gene pool from developing their talents.

These selection decisions are being made about players as young as seven.

The real decisions should be delayed until after puberty.

What month was your child born?

The “Age Effect” in Action

USA National Team Rosters: 2009

	Jan-Jun	Jul-Dec
Full Men	31 (60%)	21 (40%)
Full Women	13 (52%)	12 (48%)
U-23 Men	26 (68%)	12 (32%)
U-23 Women	36 (46%)	43 (54%)
U-20 Men	28 (58%)	20 (42%)
U-20 Women	37 (63%)	22 (37%)
U-17 Men	25 (64%)	14 (36%)
U-15 Women	22 (71%)	9 (29%)
U-15 Men	35 (83%)	7 (27%)
Averages	63%	37%

The “Age Effect” in Action

USA Men’s National Team vs Mexico (Feb 2009)

Howard
(March)

Hejduk
(March)

Onyewu
(May)

Bocanegra
(May)

Pearce
(August)

Dempsey
(March)

Kljestan / Clark
(September / May)

Bradley
(July)

Beasley
(May)

Starters: 73%
Total: 69%

Donovan
(March)

Ching / Altidore
(May / November)

The “Age Effect” in Action

USA Women’s National Team vs Norway (Mar 2009)

Solo
(March)

Mitts / Boxx
(June / June)

Rampone
(June)

Fletcher
(November)

Buehler
(August)

O’Reilly / Waznuk
(January / March)

Hucles / Lloyd
(July / July)

Tarpley
(September)

White
(April)

Rapinoe / Di Martino
(July / November)

Rodriquez / Kai
(February / May)

Starters: 55%

Total: 56% 8

The “Age Effect” in Action

USA U-14 National Teams (2): Disney 2008

	Jan-Jun	Jul-Dec
1995 Boys (U-14)	27 (71%)	10 (29%)
1996 Boys (U-13)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
Averages	74% (28/38)	26% (10/38)



The “Age Effect” in Action

Region II Boy’s ODP Rosters: 2008

	Jan-Jun	Jul-Dec
1992 Boys (U-17)	11 (61%)	7 (39%)
1993 Boys (U-16)	11 (61%)	7 (39%)
1994 Boys (U-15)	14 (78%)	4 (22%)
1995 Boys (U-14)	16 (89%)	2 (11%)
Averages	73%	27%



The “Age Effect” in Action

Region II Girl’s ODP Rosters: 2008



	Jan-Jun	Jul-Dec
1992-A Girls (U-17)	11 (65%)	6 (35%)
1992-B Girls (U-17)	11 (65%)	6 (35%)
1993 Girls (U-16)	13 (76%)	4 (24%)
1994 Girls (U-15)	13 (76%)	4 (24%)
Averages	71%	29%

The “Age Effect” in Action

Girl’s ODP Inter-Regional Rosters: 1994 - 2004



All Four Regions

Top 72 Players/Age Group

U-14 through U-17

Averages

Jan-Jun

67%

Jul-Dec

37%

The “Age Effect” in Action

OYSAN (NCS) Club State Cup Rosters: May 2008

	Aug-Jan	Feb-Jul
U-14 Boys	63 (53%)	57 (47%)
U-14 Girls	86 (57%)	66 (43%)
U-13 Boys	114 (64%)	63 (36%)
U-13 Girls	99 (66%)	50 (34%)
U-12 Boys	113 (60%)	75 (40%)
U-12 Girls	47 (51%)	46 (49%)
U-11 Boys	108 (65%)	57 (35%)
U-11 Girls	79 (59%)	56 (41%)
U-10 Boys	73 (68%)	35 (32%)
U-10 Girls	35 (51%)	34 (49%)
Boy's / Girl's Averages	62% / 57%	38% / 43%
Averages	59%	41%

The “Age Effect” in Action

OYSAN Community State Cup Rosters: October 2008

	Aug-Jan	Feb-Jul
U-14 Boys	107 (52%)	98 (48%)
U-14 Girls	40 (49%)	43 (51%)
U-13 Boys	74 (57%)	56 (43%)
U-13 Girls	94 (57%)	71 (43%)
U-12 Boys	115 (56%)	91 (44%)
U-12 Girls	89 (56%)	71 (44%)
U-11 Boys	77 (58%)	57 (42%)
U-11 Girls	41 (50%)	41 (50%)
U-10 Boys	47 (58%)	34 (42%)
U-10 Girls	36 (54%)	30 (46%)
Boy's / Girl's Averages	56% / 53%	44% / 47%
Averages	54.5%	45.5%

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Ohio South Club Rosters: Spring 2009

Club Selection Criteria: Future Soccer Potential

	Aug-Jan	Feb-Jul
U-9 through U-14 Boys	118	89
Boy's Averages	57%	43%
U-9 through U-14 Girls	115	131
Girl's Averages	48%	52%



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OYSAN Community Travel Rosters (Boys): 2009 CUTS!

	Older	Younger
U-9 A	80%	20%
U-9 B	44%	55%
U-10 A	70%	30%
U-10 B	44%	55%
U-11 A	75%	25%
U-11 B	29%	61%
U-12 A	64%	36%
U-12 B	36%	74%
U-13 A	53%	47%
U-13 B	40%	60%
U-14 A	40%	60%
U-14 B	9%	91%
A / B (Total) Averages	64% / 36% (49%)	44% / 56% (51%)

The “Age Effect” in Action

OYSAN Community Travel Rosters (Girls): 2009 CUTS!

	Older	Younger
U-9	60%	40%
U-10 A	80%	20%
U-10 B	50%	50%
U-10 C	30%%	70%
U-11 A	75%	25%
U-11 B	17%	83%
U-12 A	63%	37%
U-12 B	56%	44%
A / B+C (Total) Averages	69% / 31% (54%)	31% / 69% (46%)

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OYSAN Community Travel Rosters (Girls): 2009

NO CUTS!

	Older	Younger
U-10 A (Maroon)	54%	46%
U-10 B (White)	63%	37%
U-11 A (Maroon)	43%	57%
U-11 B (White)	64%	36%
U-11 C (Black)	25%	75%
U-12 A (Maroon)	50%	50%
U-12 B (White)	27%	77%
U-14 A (Maroon)	29%	71%
U-14 B (White)	58%	42%
Averages	46%	54%

The “Age Effect” in Action

OYSAN Community Travel Rosters (Boys): 2009

NO CUTS!

	Older	Younger
U-10 A (Maroon)	55%	45%
U-10 B (White)	27%	77%
U-11 A (Maroon)	40%	60%
U-11 B (White)	50%	50%
Averages	43%	57%