

**US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program
U-14 (1995) and U-15 (1996) Double Teams
Countering the Age Effect**

Context

In both the “rising” U-14 (1996) and U-15 (1995) age groups for boys and girls, OYSAN elects to send two state ODP teams to the Region II ODP camps held each July in Illinois.

These teams are divided by birth month to safeguard against the “age effect,” which consistently demonstrates selection advantages of around 70% to players born in the first half of the year. Until young players negotiate puberty and settle into their changing bodies, selecting only the best 18 players in the younger age groups has been found to systematically eliminate many of the younger, smaller, more skilled players with the potential to reach the higher levels. The double team approach serves to protect a larger pool of young players.

The Structure of Double Teams

While every other soccer competition in the United States is based on a September 1st to August 31st calendar, the ODP program is based on international competition standards and is structured around the calendar year of January 1st through December 31st.

The OYSAN double teams at U-14 and U-15 are divided along birth months (see table below), with an older team generally comprised of players born between January and June and the younger team generally comprised of players born between July and December.

	Older Team (1st Six)	Younger Team (2nd Six)
U-14's (1996 Birth Year)	Players born between January 1 st – June 30 th	Players born between July 1 st – December 31 st
U-15's (1995 Birth Year)	Players born between January 1 st – June 30 th	Players born between July 1 st – December 31 st

Players and parents should appreciate that the “Olympic” Development Program is, first and foremost a filter system to advance talented players, with a secondary purpose of broadening and expanding the qualities of the player base. While the ODP selection process strives to honor the spirit of the double team process, there is rarely an exact division of 36 players along age lines. The double team age group coaches are instructed to consider the best soccer players available and then balance the older and younger teams by age, as necessary. This typically requires some older players moving to the younger team. The best younger players are never advanced to the older team.