



What is the US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program?

<http://www.oysan.org/ODP/odpnews.htm>

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Season 2008/09

US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program Mission

The US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program (ODP) was established in 1977 as a nationwide process dedicated to the identification and training of players for state, regional and national teams.

The United States is divided into four ODP regions and Ohio North is part of Region II.

Region II is comprised of the 14 state associations in the Midwest, which stretches from Ohio to Iowa and from Minnesota to Missouri. Region II has a population base of over 70 million people and approximately 850,000 soccer players! Regional teams are selected for U-14, U-15, U-16, U-17 and U-18 boys and girls, and U-20 girls.



While the primary mission of the Olympic Development Program is the identification of United States National Team prospects, broad-based player development is considered integral to the broader, long-term mission of the Olympic Development Program at the state and regional levels.

The “Representative” Soccer Pyramid (see diagram on page 2)

US Soccer

The United States Soccer Federation (US Soccer) was founded in 1913 and is the national governing body of soccer in the United States. US Soccer is directly affiliated to FIFA, the world governing body for soccer. For more information on US Soccer, link to USSoccer.com.

US Youth Soccer

US Youth Soccer, founded in 1974, is the largest affiliate of US Soccer and is the largest youth sports organization in the world, with over 3.6 million registered players. For more information on US Youth Soccer, link to USYouthSoccer.org.

Ohio Youth Soccer Association North

Ohio Youth Soccer Association North (OYSAN or Ohio North) was founded in 1976 and is one of 55 state associations that comprise the membership of US Youth Soccer. For more information on OYSAN, link to OYSAN.org.

For the vast majority of players, the path to the US National Youth Team’s program begins by being selected to “represent” a home state association; in our case, Ohio North. This process starts in September for non high school players (November for high school players) and concludes in June when the final state teams are named.

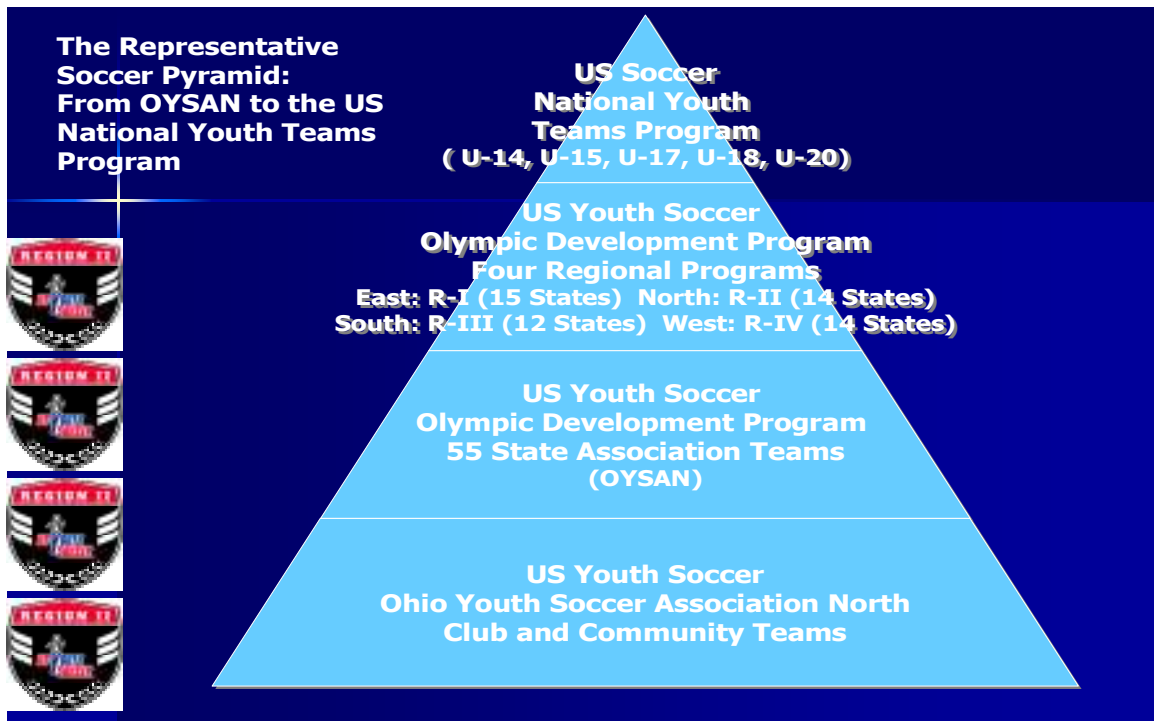




Once named to a state team, the selection process to represent Region II (North) takes place during the regional camps held each July in Illinois. This is the end-point of the state association ODP process.

The primary identification opportunity for the US Soccer National Youth Teams (NYT) takes place each fall at the US Youth Soccer ODP inter-regional events.

The goal of the NYT selection process is to monitor known talent and discover new players. The NYT selection process is therefore ongoing and players who are identified at any event in any location during the year can be steered towards a state or regional program or invited into a NYT training camp, as schedule and ability dictates.



Age Groups

International competition, and therefore ODP selection, is based on a January 1st to December 31st calendar year. The OYSAN state team selection process during season 2008/09 concludes in July '09 with the regional pool selections for season 2009/10. The regional camp age groups listed below in parentheses refer to the regional pools for seasonal year 2009/10.

ODP birth years for 2008-09 are as follows:

- 1997's (Attend July 2009 Regional Camp in the "rising" U-13 Developmental Program)
- 1996's (Attend July 2009 Regional Camp as "rising" U-14's)
- 1995's (Attend July 2009 Regional Camp as "rising" U-15's)
- 1994's (Attend July 2009 Regional Camp as "rising" U-16's)
- 1993's (Attend July 2009 Regional Camp as "rising" U-17's)
- 1992's (Attend July 2009 Regional Camp as "rising" U-18's)





ODP participation for U-20 girls (1991 and 1990 birth years) is by invitation only and based on previous national and regional achievement. U-20 girls can also be invited into regional camp upon the recommendation of a college coach, a US Soccer National Staff coach, or by the State Association Director of Coaching.

******State Level Programming: Fall Season******
(September / October)

District Training Philosophy

In Ohio North, ODP for non high school players is a year-round process starting at the district (local) level.

District coaches, many of whom serve as state team head or assistant coaches, conduct the fall training sessions with the goal of improving the individual and collective decision-making of players within an organized playing structure.

Technical development, once considered the primary responsibility of the individual players and their respective clubs, also assumes a higher training profile following the expansion of the fall training program to both weekend and weeknight sessions.

ODP Coaches' Certification

District head coaches hold at minimum of a United States Soccer Federation (US Soccer) "C" license and the vast majority of the OYSAN staff have earned more advanced certification. Ohio North can lay claim to the most qualified coaching staff of any state association in the United States, with over 50 "A" and "B" licensed coaches and a significant number of college and Region II ODP Staff coaches. In addition, over 25 OYSAN staff coaches have earned the US Soccer National Youth License.

Fall Training and Selection Program

Registration for the 2008/09 OYSAN Olympic Development Program opens at the end of July and the training and selection process for the 2009 state teams begins on Sunday, September 7.

For non high school players, the traditional fall ODP training sessions take place on Sunday mornings.

The six 2008 fall season dates are:

- Sunday, September 7
- Sunday, September 14
- Sunday, September 21
- Sunday, September 28
- Sunday, October 5
- Sunday, October 12

All Sunday sessions run from 9 am -11 am.



ODP also offers a midweek training session in all six districts from 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm. The rationale for this expansion can be found at the following link:

<http://www.oysan.org/ODPLandscape2007.pdf>

The ODP district sites and their respective midweek training dates are listed below.

Youngstown Area

Sundays: Austintown JSL: September 7, 14, 21 & 28.
Boardman SA: October 5 & 12.



Wednesdays: Austintown JSL: September 10, 17, 24.
Boardman SA: October 1, 8, & 15

Akron-Canton Area:

Sundays: The Copley Road Soccer Complex (Boys)
Huffman-Cunningham Fields in Medina (Girls)
Tuesdays: The Copley Road Soccer Complex: Sept 9, 16, 23, 30; Oct 7 and 14.

Cleveland East

Sundays: Parkview Fields in Mayfield Village.
Thursdays: Krueger Park in Mentor: Sept 11, 18, 25; Oct 2, 9, 16

Cleveland West

Sundays: Hamilton Rd Fields in Oberlin
Tuesdays: Hamilton Rd Fields in Oberlin: Sept 9, 16, 23, 30; Oct 7 & 14

Mansfield-Ashland-Wooster Area

Sundays: Ontario Fields in Ontario
Wednesdays: Ontario Fields in Ontario: Sept 10, 17, 24; Oct 1, 8, 15

Toledo Area

Sundays: Rivercrest Fields in Perrysburg
Mondays: Blue Creek Soccer Complex in Whitehouse: Sept 8, 15, 22, 29; Oct 6, 13

Make-up

The make-up dates for the fall season are Sunday, October 19 or Sunday, October 26. OYSAN will schedule one additional training date in each district should weather or any unforeseen circumstance cause a cancellation.

1996 (U-14) International Trip

OYSAN has established the practice of taking the “rising” U-14 age group on an international trip each March.

The 2009 trip for boys and girls born in 1996 is tentatively planned for March 20-29 and includes training sessions, games, attendance at professional matches, and sightseeing.

The selection and invitation process for the international teams (18 players each) will begin during the fall season, with the final squads named by December. The teams will hold at least five additional training sessions prior to departure.

Initial U-14/15 Boy’s and Girl’s State Pools

The initial 1996 (U-14) and 1995 (U-15) boy’s and girl’s state team pools are selected during the fall season. The U-14 and U-15 ages send two teams to regional camp, based on birth month: Jan-Jun (older) and Jul-Dec (younger).

Players assessed to be capable of competing for one of the 36 state team places will be invited to enroll for the winter program. Ideally, the state pools for the U-14’s and U-15’s will number approximately 60 players.



Players selected to advance to the next stage of the process will be posted on the OYSAN website.



Participation in the U-14 (1996) and U-15 (1995) age groups during the winter selection process is by invitation only. Extenuating circumstances aside, invitations are only offered to “discovery” players and to players who attended high school during the fall season.

Players who have participated in ODP during the previous year are expected to try-out in the fall.

On-line Player Evaluation

Each ODP participant who attends a minimum of three training sessions (Sunday or midweek) will receive an electronic evaluation via e-mail.

Cost

The registration fee for the six Sunday sessions or the six weeknight sessions is \$100. For players who wish to take advantage of the additional training opportunities and register for all 12 sessions, the cost is \$175. There is a \$25 late fee for registrations received after Friday, August 31st and the training fees are not prorated.

Registration

The on-line registration link is <https://ssl.hammerhead.net/ohionorthodp/odpregistration.asp>.

******State Level Programming: Winter Season******
(November through March)

New players in the Developmental (1997) and high school age groups can register at any time for the winter ODP sessions, held between November and March. The state team selection process begins in earnest during the winter months when players from all corners of the state compete for places.

In order to balance the travel time for all state pool players, training is conducted at Brad Friedel’s Premier Soccer Academies in Lorain; a facility which provide for both small-sided and expanded-number training activities that replicate the demands of the outdoor game. Goalkeeper-specific training is also held at Bowling Green State University and at the University of Akron



During the winter months, each age group is scheduled for five training / selection sessions, which may include scrimmages against club teams and other state association ODP teams.

In situations where an age group has large numbers, players may be divided into ability-based training groups at the end of the third session. Conversely, where pool numbers are

lower, the entire squad may be retained throughout the winter session.

The final state pools of approximately 24 players per team are named at the conclusion of the winter program in March.

Goalkeeper Training

In addition to training with their respective age groups, ODP goalkeepers can attend three additional GK specific training sessions over the winter months at no additional charge. Three sessions are scheduled in both the eastern (U-Akron) and western (BGSU) halves of the state.





On-line Player Evaluation

Each ODP participant who attends a minimum of three training sessions will receive an electronic evaluation via e-mail.

Final State Pool Roster

Approximately 24 players per 18-player team will be invited to continue into the spring season to compete for places on the final state team. The final state pool will be posted on the OYSAN website.

Cost

The registration fee for the winter indoor training sessions is \$150. Only players selected to the state pool will advance to the spring sessions and there is no open enrollment for the spring season alone. There is a \$25 late fee for registrations received after Friday, October 31st and the winter/spring training fees are not prorated.



Registration

The on-line registration link is <https://ssl.hammerhead.net/ohionorthodp/odpregration.asp>.

******State Level Programming: Spring Season******
(May through June)

The final state pools of approximately 24 players per team begin regional camp preparation after the final round of the OYSAN State Cup, which is contested over the weekend following the Memorial Day holiday.



During the spring season, any new additions to the state pools must receive an invitation from the age group head coach and the state Director of Coaching.

Five training sessions will be held on Tuesdays (Boys) and Thursdays (Girls) beginning in June, with the final state team of 18 players plus alternates named on Friday, June 19.

The list of possible ODP training dates for spring 2009 is listed below. Five team-specific dates will be posted in early April, based on the respective regional camp dates.

Boy's Schedule

- Tuesday, June 2nd
- Tuesday, June 9th
- Tuesday, June 16th
- Tuesday, June 23rd
- Tuesday, June 30th
- Tuesday, July 7th
- Tuesday, July 14th

Girl's Schedule

- Thursday, June 4th
- Thursday, June 11th
- Thursday, June 18th
- Thursday, June 25th
- Thursday, July 2nd
- Thursday, July 9th
- Thursday, July 16th



Final State Team Composition

The fundamental purpose of the Olympic Development Program is to filter talented soccer players from the state level to the regional and national teams programs. Therefore, the identification and selection process for the OYSAN state teams will remain open until the final state teams are named in June.



OYSAN always reserves the right to select the best players available to a state team. That being said, every effort will be made to assimilate regional or national caliber players identified in late May and early June directly into the regional programs.

Cost

There is no open enrollment for the spring season and players can only register by invitation. The training fee for the five spring training sessions is \$45 and this fee is not prorated.

******Regional Level Olympic Development Programming******
(July 2009 and Beyond)

The following table presents an overview of the 2008-09 Regional ODP process by age. The OYSAN state team selection process for 2008/09 filters players into the Region II ODP program for seasonal year 2009/10. For more information on the Region II Olympic Development Program link to <http://www.region2.com/odp.html>.

Birth Year & Program Highlights	2009/10 Age	Boys	Girls
1997	U-13	Regional Development Camp Maximum of 50 players	Regional Development Camp Maximum of 50 players
1996 *OYSAN Intern. Trip *US Soccer U-14 National Camp: Boys	U-14	Regional Camp 2 State Teams divided 1 st 6 Months (Jan-Jun) / 2 nd 6 Months (Jul-Dec) (36 players)	Regional Camp 2 State Teams divided 1 st 6 Months (Jan-Jun) / 2 nd 6 Months (Jul-Dec) (36 players)
1995 *Inter-Regional Event *Dom. & Intern. Travel *US Soccer U-15 National Camp: Girls	U-15	Regional Camp 2 State Teams divided 1 st 6 Months (Jan-Jun) / 2 nd 6 Months (Jul-Dec) (36 players)	Regional Camp 2 State Teams divided by 1 st 6 Months (Jan-Jun) / 2 nd 6 Months (Jul-Dec) (36 players)
1994 *Inter-Regional Event *Dom. & Intern. Travel	U-16	Regional Camp 1 State Team for Regional Camp (18 players)	Regional Camp 2 State Teams (A/B) for Regional Camp (36 players)
1993 *Inter-Regional Event *Dom. and Intern. Travel *ODP Nat. Championship	U-17	Regional Tournament 1 State Team for Regional Tournament (18 players)	Regional Tournament 1 State Team for Regional Tournament (18 players)
1992 *Inter-Regional Event *Dom. & Intern Travel *ODP Nat. Championship	U-18	Regional Tournament 1 State Team for Regional Tournament (18 players)	Regional Tournament 1 State Team for Regional Tournament (18 players)
1991 & 1990 *Inter-Regional Event	U-20	No ODP Programming	Regional Camp Invitation Only for Regional Camp

Regional Programming: Non-High School Players

1997 Birth Year: U-13's

Regional programming for the U-13 boys and girls is developmentally based, with no regional teams formed. A maximum of 50 U-13 players per gender are invited from each state association to attend the regional camps in July.

1996 Birth Year: U-14's

Up to 36 U-14 players per gender are invited to attend regional camp in Illinois and 25 boys are selected to attend the US Soccer U-14 National Camp in August, 2009.





The two state teams are divided along birth months (January – June and July – December) to reduce the “age effect” bias that favors players born in the first half of the year.

1995 Birth Year: U-15's

At the U-15 age, two teams (36 boys and 36 girls) are selected to represent OYSAN at the regional camp in July, 2009; and 25 girls are selected to attend the US Soccer U-15 National Camp in August.

The two state teams are divided along birth months (January – June and July – December) to reduce the “age effect” bias that favors players born in the first half of the year.

Regional teams are named to compete at the national trials in November, 2009 and the U-15 regional teams begin to travel both internationally and domestically during the 2009/2010 seasonal year.

Regional Programming: High School Players



1994 Birth Year: U-16's

At the U-16 level, two girl's teams (36 players) are again selected to represent OYSAN at the regional camp in July, 2009. By this stage, the most talented and committed players are beginning to emerge and competition for state team places is often very intense. These state teams are selected by ability: A team / B team.

Only one boy's state team (18 players) is selected at the 1994 (U-16) age.

These regional teams will continue to compete at the fall inter-regional event (NYT trials) and also travel internationally and domestically during the 2009/2010 seasonal year.

1993 and 1992 Birth Years: U-17's and U-18's

At the U-17 ages, single state teams of 18 players compete in a 3-day regional tournament from which a regional pool is selected.

These regional teams will continue to compete at the fall inter-regional events (NYT trials) and also travel internationally and domestically during the 2009/2010 seasonal year.

ODP National Championships

Boys and girls in the U-17 (1993) and U-18 (1992) age groups will compete during the regional camp to represent Region II at the Adidas National ODP Championships, held in March 2009 at Pizza Hut Park in Dallas, TX.

1991 and 1990 Birth Years: U-20 Girls

Region II holds an invitation-only camp for U-18/19 girls. Invitees must have previous regional team or pool status; or be recommended by their state director of coaching, college coach, or US Soccer National Staff Coach.

The U-20 girls attend an inter-regional event in January 2010 to conclude their ODP experience.

Regional Pools

A regional pool of approximately 36 players is named at the end of regional camp in the U-14 through U-18 ages.



Players named to a regional pool in July 2009 are eligible to attend the inter-regional event and also the international and domestic events during the 2009/2010 seasonal year.

Hold-Over / Call-Back Camps

The 36 players named to the regional pools are invited to remain in Illinois (boys) or return to Illinois (girls) for an additional three day's training with their respective regional coaches.



OYSAN players named to the hold-over or call-back pools are transported to and/or from Illinois with the next OYSAN state team attending regional camp. There is no additional cost to OYSAN players selected to the hold-over or call back camps.

On-line Player Evaluation

Each ODP participant who attends the regional camp will receive an electronic evaluation via e-mail.

Cost

Regional camp fees vary by camp length, and include bus transportation to and from Illinois, all meals, lodging, coaching, and uniforms. The 2009 regional camp fees will be established in October, 2008. Based on summer 2008 costs, the estimate costs for summer 2009 are shown in the following table.

Age (Year)	Girl's Camp Cost	Girl's Camp Format	Boy's Camp Cost	Boy's Camp Format
U-13 (97's)	\$625	4-Day Camp	\$625	4-Day Camp
U-14 (96's)	\$625	4-Day Camp	\$775	5-Day Camp
Hold-over Fees (\$225)	N/A	N/A	Paid by OYSAN	3-Day Camp
U-15 (95's)	\$775	5-Day Camp	\$775	5-Day Camp
Hold-over Fees (\$225)	Paid by OYSAN	3-Day Camp	Paid by OYSAN	3-Day Camp
U-16 (94's)	\$775	5-Day Camp	\$775	5-Day Camp
Hold-over Fees (\$225)	Paid by OYSAN	3-Day Camp	Paid by OYSAN	3-Day Camp
U-17 (93's)	\$550	3-Day Tournament	\$550	3-Day Tournament
Hold-over Fees (\$225)	Paid by OYSAN	3-Day Event	Paid by OYSAN	3-Day Camp
U-18 (92's)	\$550	3-Day Tournament	\$550	3-Day Tournament
Hold-over Fees (\$225)	Paid by OYSAN	3-Day Camp	Paid by OYSAN	3-Day Camp
U-20 (91's/90's)	\$231	3-Day Camp	N/A	N/A

US Soccer Developmental Academy Restrictions

The US Soccer Developmental Academy (DA) program encompasses the U-16 and U-18 age groups and is for boys only. Rosters for the DA teams are named in August and finalized in April and, by Academy rules, the (minimum) 22 players listed are precluded from participation in outside club soccer, including the Olympic Development Program. Players who are not listed on the 22-man Academy roster, but who train with a DA team or participate on a limited game basis are eligible to participate in ODP at all levels.

Players who anticipate being offered an Academy roster spot during the **following** year should carefully weight their participation in ODP as Academy players cannot be named to regional hold-over pools or to regional teams.



Registration

The on-line registration link for invited players is
<https://ssl.hammerhead.net/ohionorthodp/odpregistration.asp>.

ODP Scholarships

The purpose of the Olympic Development Program is to filter talented players to the regional and national teams' programs. Where necessary, OYSAN will provide financial assistance to players capable of advancing beyond the state level.

Applications for scholarship will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Families must demonstrate financial need and players must be deemed capable of competing on the regional or national level. Scholarships are not available to U-12 Developmental Players.

ODP Payment Plan

Where requested, families may arrange for regional camp fees to be paid over an extended period. Please contact Bernie Telmanik (Bernie@oysan.org) in the OYSAN office for more information.

Why should talented players compete for places on US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program teams?

1. The US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program has been in existence for over 30 years and has established a track record for quality and commitment in elevating the best players to the national teams programs. On the women's side in particular, ODP is the most widely recognized pipeline to the national teams. For example, the vast majority of the current USA National Team squad were members of a state ODP team at one point in their careers.
2. With over 30 years of experience, US Youth Soccer is the most organized youth soccer organization in the world. This experience means top quality programming, top quality administration, and top quality professional coaches working closely with national team coaches to make the US Youth Soccer Olympic Development Program the best vehicle American soccer has to offer for player advancement.
3. Bringing players together for national trials is not inexpensive in a country as vast as the United States. At the regional level, the cost for regional camp is considerably less than most large college camps and, given the level of players and coaches, infinitely higher in quality. At the national level, the cost for inter-regional play (generally airfare) is heavily subsidized by each region, making the final hurdle prior to national team selection a relatively inexpensive outlay.



Why should OYSAN players attempt the ODP process if it is obvious that they are not national team caliber?

Two Reasons: Training and College Exposure.

1. The OYSAN Olympic Development Staff is not under pressure to win games and therefore better positioned to teach the "international" game. Too often at the club level, where winning





is deemed important to imply success or maintain a cash flow, direct play becomes a coaching mantra. Because the ODP process is geared towards finding or developing future national team players, training the international style is vital. This approach includes teaching players to understand how to control and change the games' rhythms: by opening or constricting space; by dribbling or circulating the ball at speed; and by combining in small groups. This style of play brings inherent risks that often result in loss of possession and loss of goals, but players who aspire to higher levels must understand and apply this knowledge or pay the price of eventual exclusion.

ODP teams do not play "kick ball" and they do not "bunker and counter" to manufacture results. If players are to learn and advance, they must appreciate how to play in control and under pressure and the ODP process is one of the very few vehicles willing and able to create this environment for young players.

2. The second main benefit of ODP participation is exposure to college coaches. The regional camps are amongst the most important dates on the recruiting calendar and the identification process begins as early as the freshman year for the major schools who now receive verbal commitments from sophomores! Typically around 100 college coaches, including all the major schools in the Midwest, attend the region II camps in July to ID players. Recent OYSAN matriculations include:

Girls

Blades, Jackie: Northwestern
Cinalli, Amanda: Notre Dame
Kotynski, Kristy: Indiana
Lynn, Kristen: Toledo
Maxwell, Paige: Ohio State
Moran, Emily: Iowa
Morant, Taylor: Ohio State
Othen, Shana: Toledo
Rosen, Courtney: Notre Dame
Rostedt, Jessica: Virginia
Simon, Marissa: Ohio State

Boys

Blades, Mark; Northwestern
Dagilis, Matt: Akron
DiFranco, Marco: Cleveland State
Green, Michael: New Mexico
Lunka, Ben: Elon
Moreira, Pablo; Akron
Nanchoff, Michael: Akron
Speas, Ben: Akron
Tsipis, Nick: Duke
Walker, Kenny: Louisville
Zemanski, Ben: Akron

3. Many smaller schools (the so-called Mid-majors) also attend regional camp looking for second and third-tier state team players because they cannot attract or afford the elite performers who often commit to a university in their sophomore year of high school!
4. Given the sheer volume of players in the United States, having "ODP" on a resume is almost as vital as having a solid SAT or ACT score! Simply, the ODP acts as a national filter system and "ODP state team" players have established a status and credibility that college coaches recognize and appreciate as being superior for the more competitive states: Ohio North and Ohio South routinely combine to place approximately 20% of all regional pool players in both boy's and girl's programs.

ODP is not for everyone, but is an excellent opportunity to train under top quality coaches, train with and against some of the best players in the country, and to experience the exciting and rewarding challenges of representative soccer.





OYSAN Roll of Honor 2007/08

OYSAN Boys Selected to Region II ODP Teams (17)

1992's

Kenny Cunningham (Brecksville, Internationals), Sam Galloway (Copley, Ohio Select),
Shane Williams (Bay Village, Ohio Premier)

1993's

Brendon Cash (Westlake, PSA) David Murrow (Parma, Cleveland FC)

1994's

Connor Gilmour (Niles, NASL), Tom Granot (Beachwood, PSA), Colin Groneman (Chagrin Falls,
Cobras), Nick Parianos (Copley, Internationals), Andrew Souders (Amherst, Ohio Premier), Mario
Suarez (Strongsville, Cleveland FC), Bryan Wolanski (Strongsville, Cleveland FC)

1995's

Romain Gall (Lorain, PSA), John Cherson (Erie, PA; Everest), Nick Ciraldo
(Peninsula, Internationals), Nate Fahey (Bay Village, Bay Village SC),
Corey Roth (Beachwood, Beachwood SC)

OYSAN Girls Selected to Region II ODP Teams (21)

1991's

Kate Allen (Whitehouse, GTFC), Megan Blake (Westlake, Cleveland Utd.), Rebecca Dreher
(Westlake, Ohio Premier), Alyssa Meier (Strongsville, Whitecaps), Katherine Schmidt (Sylvania,
Internationals), Rebecca Candler (Medina, Internationals)

1992's

Kelsey Smigel (N. Royalton, Cleveland FC), Kori Chapic (Russel, Cobras), Maria Deliberato
(Independence, Internationals)

1993's

Kristen Westphal (Brecksville, Internationals), Sarah Molina (Rocky River, Ohio Premier), Megan
Giesen (Strongsville, Cleveland FC), Allison Sender (Strongsville, Internationals)

1994's

Courtney Kobashigawa (Mansfield, Ohio Premier-S), Ashley Meier (Strongsville, Whitecaps),
Sasha Haverchak (Akron, Internationals), Allison Stucky (Brecksville, Internationals, 1995), Holly
Ohradzansky (Avon, Ohio Premier), Sandra Yu (Strongsville, Cleveland FC), Reagan Robishaw
(Perry, Internationals), Kaitlin Wensinger (Stow, Everest SC)



The Olympic Development Selection Process Dr. Tom Turner

Many parents often ask what it takes for their child to become an Olympic Development Program (ODP), or State Team player. Is it the best 18 players who are selected, regardless of position, or is it the best team of players? What qualities separate those selected from those who are not? This article will help answer some of these questions.

Player Evaluation

Team selection always begins with an assessment of individual players. There are four criteria that form the basis for most evaluation schemes. These four criteria, made popular by the Dutch over the past decade, or so, are collapsed into the acronym "TIPS," which stands for

Technique
Insight
Personality
Speed

The most critical quality for all soccer players is technique. This would include the player's overall range of techniques and the speed and ease with which they secure and use the ball. A player's balance and agility are closely related to technical range and at each successive level of play technique under pressure becomes the most obvious starting point for distinguishing between players.



Tactical insight is the second element in the equation. The talent evaluation of this area looks at how players solve small-group tactical problems and the degree to which they play in a structured team organization. At the younger ages, tactical insight is less important than technique and speed. However, as players mature into their mid and late-teens, they are often chosen for representative teams based on their superior qualities in a position, or because of their adaptability to other roles within the team.



The third quality is personality, and it is here that the players within a squad must be balanced to allow a team to be built from the complementary sum of its parts. Personality players are usually the first to catch a coach's eye and generally form the starting point for the team building process. In evaluating a group of players, it is readily apparent that they come with an assortment of qualities. Some have exceptional dribbling skills, while others have explosive speed; some have excellent passing range, while others dominate in the air; some are resolute defenders, while others impress by their ability to read the game and lead others; some very ordinary players are coachable and work hard and impress by their selflessness, while some very talented players are lazy and frustrate through their unwillingness to work for themselves or the team; some players simply score goals, while others create chances for others through their set-up play; some gifted younger players are worthy of investing time and opportunity, even if they are physically overmatched; some players are so physically dominant that they are hard to ignore, even when their skills are a little rough around the edges. In contrast, some players are so volatile and high risk, or so one-dimensional in their qualities, that their selection poses a very difficult decision; in these situations, only the exceptionally talented players are moved along within the system, but it is not uncommon for these very talented players to be excluded from international teams because their personality or playing qualities do not match the vision of the coach, or the "esprit de corps" (spirit and work ethic) within the existing squad.



Finally, the quality that often separates the good player from the exceptional player is speed. As a “relatively” genetic asset, physical speed from “A” to “B” is always part of an overall assessment. At the top levels, there are no slow players, although there are some international class players who are not considered “fast.” Speed can also include the time players take to assess match situations and take appropriate action (tactical speed) and the speed with which players control and use the ball (technical speed).

Team Selection

Choosing representative teams is, in large part, a question of balance and adaptability and it is not always the best eighteen attacking players who are chosen to fill the roster spots. Coaches must always endeavor to blend ball-winners with “skill” players in order to create a balanced team that can defend, and create scoring chances from both the center and the flanks.



Adaptability is also a key determinant in player selection. When a professional or national team coach needs a player to fill a role on the left side of midfield, for example, the top left-sided prospects are invited into the squad to compete for that specific role. With established professional and international teams, new players are usually selected for their ability to fill existing roles within an existing system. Ironically, the arrival of new players can also challenge the coach to consider ways in which the established playing formation and system can be changed to accommodate the qualities of the new players.

In contrast, when a representative team is selected at the youth level, identifying the best players is often the starting point for team selection and it is here that the versatility of players becomes more critical for the final analysis. At the club level, the best all-round players are usually found in central positions. At the ODP level, this glut of central players poses a dilemma for the selecting coaches. Assuming there is a rank-ordering of these central players, if the second tier players cannot play in flank positions, they are likely to be passed over in favor of naturally left-sided players and other natural wide players, even though these players may not possess the same overall range of qualities. A team cannot consist of eleven central midfield players.

Another critical factor at the youth level is “potential.” Because everyone matures at vastly differing rates during puberty, cohorts may be as much as a foot and 40 pounds apart in height and weight. At the younger ages in particular, care must be taken to prioritize from the “TIPS” analysis. A 13-year-old with wonderful skills will likely be selected over a physically mature peer who has an immediate impact but limited technical upside. Conversely, the 16-year-old ball wizard who cannot out-run, out-think, or out-play the physically stronger opponent is unlikely to be given the benefit of the doubt at that stage. Such is the difficulty in youth team selection.





Summary

All team selections, in some way, reflect the bias of the head coach, except perhaps the choice of first-tier players who are always the easiest to select. It is with the middle and bottom tier selections that coaches earn their salt, and where personal bias in terms of style of play and overall team balance enter into the final decisions. In this forum, bias is not necessarily regarded as detrimental, but simply a fact of life. Coaches with experience make selections based on potential at the next level and potential over time, with the physical dimension often the last variable considered in the equation. Selecting the second and third tier players reflect educated guesses that one player has more of the tangible and intangible qualities to succeed than another. Without this perspective, the fine line in selecting one player over another can be lost on most observers. Sometimes the coach is wrong; more often than not, their experience bears out the selection.

Philosophically, in Ohio North, ODP is viewed as a selection process and not a club system. With five observation opportunities during the winter months, the process is long enough to ensure credibility in the selections, while not being overly intrusive to the day-to-day functioning of our clubs. With 25-30 players observed by up to three coaches in each age-group pool, the possibility that a player will be overlooked is unlikely and the likelihood that the final decisions will be made on the basis of talent, potential and team balance are significantly enhanced.

