



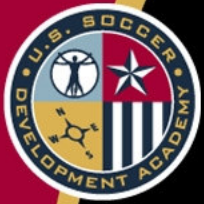
U.S. Soccer Development Academy Overview

Presenter: John Hackworth



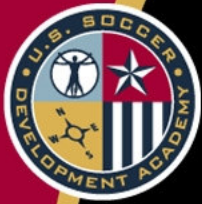
Academy Origins

- HOW DID WE GET HERE?
- Comprehensive Review of Player Development in the U.S. concluded:
 - Our players are entering the international arena behind their counter-parts around the world
 - The environment of the elite player is not good enough
 - Youth players are stretched too thin
 - Too many games (up to 100 per year)
 - Not enough good games/competition (12-16 “good” games per year)
 - Limited/low number of training sessions



Academy Origins (cont.)

- What we know about player development:
 - Everyday Training Environment is most critical and the current daily environment is not satisfying the elite players' needs
 - National Team Training is Good but too Narrow
 - There is no magic bullet – this is a long-term process
 - Training vs. Talent – we can use a scientific approach to improve players and training
 - It's a Numbers Game – Developing more elite players helps the level of all players
- Therefore, we focused our thinking on solutions that:
 - Could/would impact multiple thousands of players, not hundreds (i.e. – extend National Team programming)
 - Influence the everyday environment of the elite player



Greatest Impact

- We studied a number of areas to see what insights we could gain
 - Internally
 - U-17 Program in Bradenton and other National Team programming
 - Individual NT Coaches and Players
 - Clubs across the country
 - Externally outside of Soccer
 - Scientific research/Other areas of development (music, education)
 - Other Sports – Basketball, Hockey, Tennis, Golf
 - Soccer world outside of the United States
 - Other Countries – Clubs and Federations



Three Zones

- We then defined three areas/zones of development and the dynamics that are at play in each age grouping
 - Zone 1 – Base Level
 - Ages 6-12
 - Zone 2 – Growth Level
 - Ages 13-17
 - Zone 3 – Elite Level
 - Above the age of 17
- Initially, we have focused on solutions for Zone 2



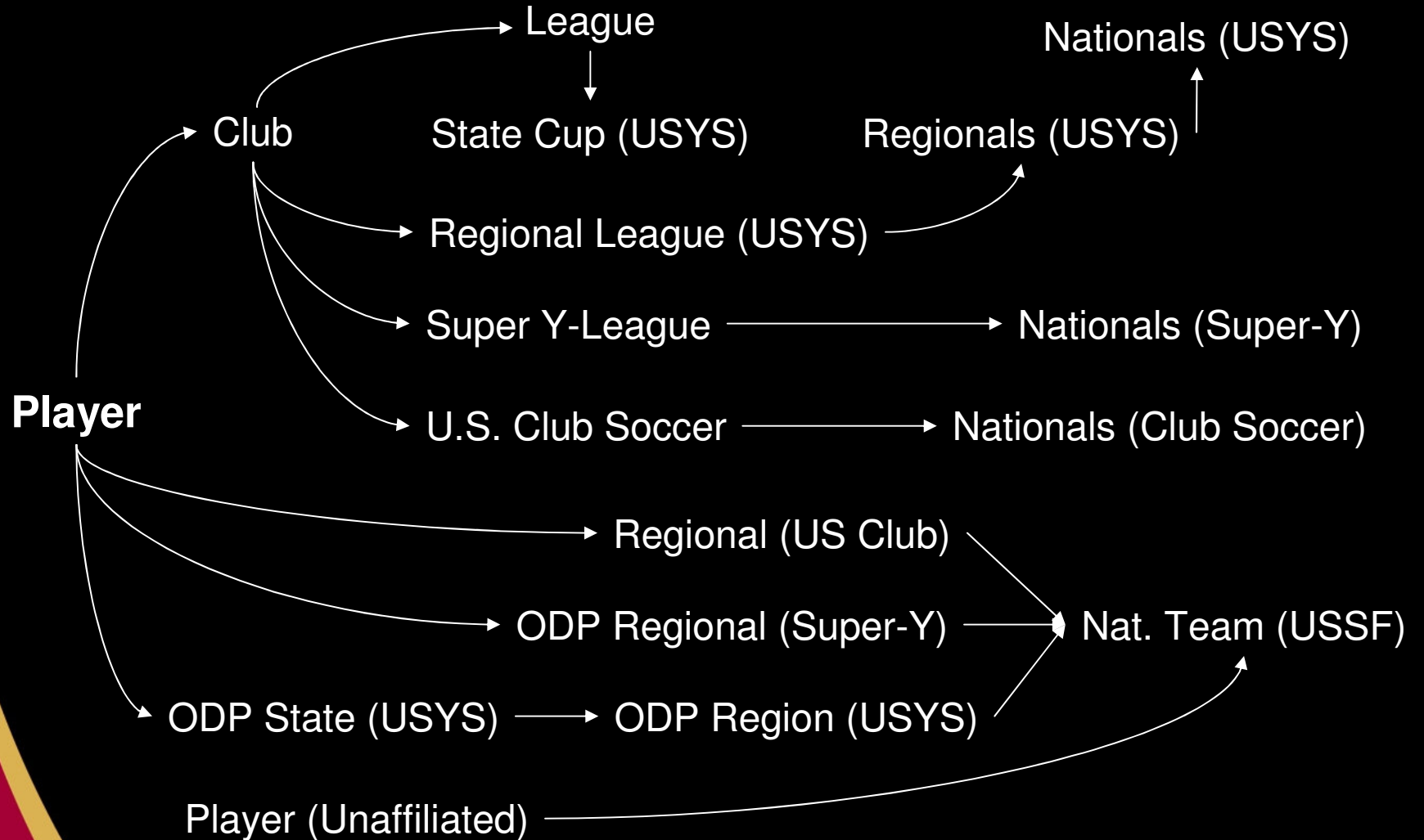
Development of a player through the years

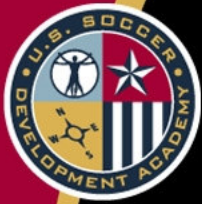
- Base Level (Ages 6-12) "The ball is your best friend"
 - Dynamics
 - Introduction to the game; huge participation numbers from age 6 to 10
 - Limited knowledge base from most coaches
 - Players who develop physically at an early age are typically the "stars"
 - Current environment places too much emphasis on winning v. developing a passion for the game and the fundamentals of the game
 - Assessment Summary
 - Need more free play, less structure – futsal, playground, etc.
 - Encourage passion and experimentation
 - Encourage technical training and the most basic building blocks of the game (1 v. 1, 2.v 1, 2 v. 2, etc.) vs. positional training
- Growth Level (Ages 13-17) "The developmental years"
 - Dynamics
 - Players start to take the game more seriously; participation numbers drop off
 - Still an emphasis on those who stand out physically
 - Over-emphasis on winning in this age group
 - For many, the end objective is college
 - Assessment Summary
 - Need to eliminate clutter in the environment – elite players are stretched too thin
 - Clubs drive this age group due to everyday interaction
 - Meaningful training is important
- Elite Level (Above the age of 17) "The lost years"
 - Dynamics
 - Players now "ending" their careers/numbers drop off even further
 - The most talented players are professionals (very small numbers)
 - Others go to college
 - Players are still not fully formed – physically and technically
 - Assessment Summary
 - Key time period to refine and advance skills for the elite level player
 - # of opportunities for elite players drops substantially
 - There is a gap between pro environment and college option



The Problem – Player and Coaches View

Looking at the typical elite players' world – we understand why they feel stretched too thin.





The New Model for Elite Players

- New model focuses on training and simplifies the life of the elite player
- Direct connection to National Team coaches/scouts



Players not in the Academy system will continue in the current model of Club and ODP with USYS, Super Y-League or U.S. Club Soccer



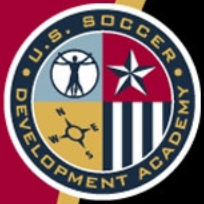
Academy Philosophy

- U.S. Soccer has established the following parameters regarding the philosophy of developing players for ages outside of those 14-17 years old:
 - The Academy program and Academy approach to player development begins at the younger ages (6-10, and 10-14) according to the principles outlined in the Best Practices - this approach and philosophy continues during the “competition” phase of the academy program (U-16 and U-18).
 - Academy clubs need to establish age appropriate developmental environments for the younger aged players in their club (6-10, 10-14).
 - Academy clubs have a responsibility to establish relationships with surrounding clubs at the grass roots level to ensure that the proper environment is created for the maximum number of players at the 6-10 and 10-14 year ages.



Mission

- To provide the proper developmental environment for as many players as possible through U.S. Soccer Development Academy clubs.
- To give every player the opportunity to reach their potential (College, Professional, National Team).
- To ensure that every decision in the Academy Program has the players' development as its priority.



Principles

- The process of learning & teaching is directly related to the relationship & integrity of the match-practices-match cycle.



Principles

- Streamlining the player's soccer experience will benefit their development
- The Academy Program's player development philosophy applies to all ages & levels within the Academy clubs



The Environment

- A player's daily soccer environment is critical for developing sound skill & good soccer habits
- The quality of the player's soccer experience is more important than the quantity
- The Academy program focuses on individual development within a team environment



Competition

- Matches should be competitive and of a high standard to ensure that the game holds players accountable for their decisions and execution
- Matches should provide a competitive environment for players and coaches to focus on performance



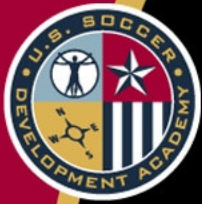
American Soccer Culture

- Steps to improving the soccer culture in the U.S.
 - Academy clubs should assign talented and knowledgeable coaches who have an understanding of age appropriate approaches to teaching and learning soccer to their younger age groups
 - Academy clubs should initiate mixed age group playing opportunities that may be adult supervised, but are player organized – and open to all players in the club



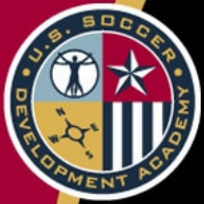
American Soccer Culture

- All ages and levels within the Academy club should have a consistent diet of futsal during the “off-season”
- All ages and levels within the Academy club should have opportunities to play some form of “soccer tennis”
- Academy clubs should aspire to develop facilities that provide a professional environment for teams (locker rooms, club house, etc)



Training to Game Ratio

- Academy Technical Requirements:
 - Three Mandatory Training sessions per week
 - One Game per week
 - One Mandatory Rest Day per week
- For Showcase/Travel Partner weekends:
 - No more than one game per day
 - No more than two days of consecutive games



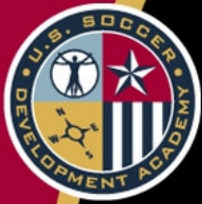
Mixed Age Groups

- Each Academy Club is required to field an Academy Team in the U17/U18 Age Group and the U15/U16 Age Group
 - Best players from ages 14-18 are expected to participate in the program
 - Focuses on player development first, team development second



Age Cut-Off

- January 1 Cut-off date
 - U-18 Age Cut-off is January 1, 1989
 - U-16 Age Cut-off is January 1, 1991
- Reasons for change:
 - Align with FIFA/National Team standards for birth year
 - Align with Europe for birth year
 - More eligible players



Roster Basics

- **Academy Roster**

- Due 3 weeks before first game
- Minimum of 18 players
- 30% Start Requirement
- No outside participation
- Add Deadline is April 1
- Each player will be issued an Academy Player Pass
- College Players Allowed

- **Developmental Roster**

- Due 10 days before player's first eligible game
- Maximum of 10 players
- No more than 6 starts per player
- No more than 6 Developmental Players per Game Roster
- Cannot participate in Finals Week
- Add Deadline is June 1
- Can only come from Club's non-Academy Teams
- College Players Allowed



Minimum Start Requirements

- Coaches should only roster players that are expected to play
- Each player on the initial Academy roster is expected to start 30% of their team's games (from the moment the roster spot is created)
- Any player dropped from the initial roster, must be replaced by a player to fulfill that slot's minimum start requirement



How is it going so far?

- Exceeding our expectations, but.....
- Lots of “extras” for the DA Clubs:
 - Scouting players
 - Team evaluations
 - Video Analysis
 - Personal interaction between National Team coaches and Club
- Where do we go from here?
- Q & A