Player Development Initiatives

A national, collective, plan to develop players to the best of their abilities.

Fall 2023 — Spring 2024

Birth Year	Soccer Age Group	Peer Grade**	Grade Range	Birth Year Min/Max Age Fall—Spring	Max. Roster	Play Format	Players To Start	Goalkeeper	Punting	Build-out line+	Offside	LCSA Field Dimensions	Away Field Dimensions	LCSA Goal Size	Away Goal Size	Playing Time	Ball Size	Practices per Game Played (Max)
2019	U5*	N/A	Pre	3—5	8	4 v 4	N/A	No	No	No	No	30 x 20	N/A	4 x 6		4 x 8	3	1-2
2018	U6	N/A	K/Pre	4—6	8	4 v 4	N/A	No	No	No	No	30 x 20	30 x 20	4 x 6	4 x 6	4 x 10	3	1-2
2017	U7	K	1st/K	5—7	8	4 v 4	N/A	No	No	No	No	30 x 20	30 x 20	4 x 6	4 x 6	4 x 10	3	1-2
2016	U8	1st	2nd/1st	6—8	8	4 v 4	N/A	No	No	No	No	35 x 25	35 x 25	4 x 6	4 x 6	4 x 10	3	1-2
2015	U9	2nd	3rd/2nd	7—9	12	7 v 7	5	Yes	No	Yes	Yes++	60 x 40	60 x 40	6.5 x 12	6.5 x 18.5	2 x 25	4	2
2014	U10	3rd	4th/3rd	8—10	12	7 v 7	5	Yes	No	Yes	Yes++	60 x 40	60 x 40	6.5 x 12	6.5 x 18.5	2 x 25	4	2
2013	U11	4th	5th/4th	9—11	16	9 v 9	6	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	75 x 50	80 x 50	7 x 21	6.5 x 18.5	2 x 30	4	2
2012	U12	5th	6th/5th	10—12	16	9 v 9	6	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	75 x 50	80 x 50	7 x 21	6.5 x 18.5	2 x 30	4	2
2011	U13	6th	7th/6th	11—13	18	11 v 11	7	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	FIFA	FIFA	8 x 24	8 x 24	2 x 35	5	3
2010	U14	7th	8th/7th	12—14	18	11 v 11	7	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	FIFA	FIFA	8 x 24	8 x 24	2 x 35	5	3
2009	U15	8th	9th/8th	13—15	22	11 v 11	7	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	FIFA	FIFA	8 x 24	8 x 24	2 x 40	5	3
2008	U16	9th	10th/9th	14—16	22	11 v 11	7	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	FIFA	FIFA	8 x 24	8 x 24	2 x 40	5	3
2007	U17	10th	11th/10th	15—17	22	11 v 11	7	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	FIFA	FIFA	8 x 24	8 x 24	2 x 45	5	3
2006	U18	11th	12th/11th	16—18	22	11 v 11	7	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	FIFA	FIFA	8 x 24	8 x 24	2 x 45	5	3
2005	U19	12th	G***/12th	17—19	22	11 v 11	7	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	FIFA	FIFA	8 x 24	8 x 24	2 x 45	5	3

* Age 4 by September for Fall. ** Grade attended by 2nd half of players in age group, particularly by U12.   *** Graduated or College Freshman

+ The build out line is used to promote playing the ball out of the back in an unpressured setting. ++ At this age, it is used as the offside line, rather than the half-line.

Birth year registration is part of U.S. Soccer's new player development initiatives. Unlike small sided standards, birth year registration applies to all age groups of players and not just players 12 and younger. Not only will this change align our players with the international standard, but it will allow us to be better informed to combat relative age effect when making teams for youth players.

Relative age effect refers to the selection bias towards players born earlier in the year. For example, players who are born on January 1 are 364 days older than someone born on December 31 of the same year. This gap may result in the player born in January being more physically mature (taller, faster, stronger, etc.) than the player born in December, especially at the younger ages. Given the variance of growth rates, it's important that skilled players don't fall by the wayside just because someone is bigger or faster. It may be the case that taller and stronger players have far less talent, and once the physical maturation levels out, these players may not fulfill their misleading potential.

U.S. Soccer recommends that a player's individual skills be prioritized ahead of their physical maturation and this is especially true for the ages before and during puberty. **Players retain the ability to "play up" based upon skill level at anytime, however, it is discouraged before reaching PHV, Peak Height Velocity (see back).** As players get older, rosters increase on bigger fields, and this approach builds on itself. This building block approach also allows them to better integrate into a team model where they develop partnerships with other players that make up the team at various levels. **This allows younger players in a given grade to "play down" with players of comparable skill level by birth year until such a time that players may again "play up" with their classmates as development matures.**