

# Player Development Initiatives

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



**ONE NATION.  
ONE TEAM.**

The starting point for our new player development initiative is to create small sided standards and institute a birth year registration process. The rationale for the changes is simple. We want to develop players with more: individual skill, intelligence, creativity and confidence.

Fewer players on the field means more touches on the ball and more involvement in the game, which helps develop more individual skill. Players who are more skilled may become more confident and comfortable when in possession of the ball. The ratio of players to field size is designed to assist players with making the right kind of decisions and improving their awareness.

Overall, the standards provide for an age appropriate environment where players can achieve these objectives.

In addition to small sided standards, birth year registration is also 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.

Below is a chart of what level your player will be given the Birth Year Registration for **Fall and Spring for the year 2016-17**:

Age Group	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12	U13	U14	U15	U16	U17	U18	U19
Fall/Spring														
<b>2016-17</b>	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998



## How does this evidence influence a development plan?

