



U . S . S O C C E R F E D E R A T I O N

TALENT ID PHILOSOPHY

The U.S. Soccer Talent Identification Philosophy is supported by scientific research and built on our mission, values, and beliefs:

WE BELIEVE:

Talent is developed in the “right” environment

Talent identification starts with the clubs, for which they need quality, diverse and expansive scouting networks

Identification and examination must happen in the context of the game, taking into consideration the conditions, level and demands

Players develop at different rates and their performance trajectory is non-linear

Talent identification is a long-term examination and monitoring process, where current performance and future potential are influenced by environment, age and maturation

When looking for an ideal talent, the key or exceptional qualities of a player are different for every club and/or federation because it should be connected to their identity (core values, style of play/principals, culture)

Scouts need to use a common structure for examining players and speak the same language

Players develop at different rates and their performance trajectory is non-linear

In a gender-neutral talent identification framework with a gender-specific scouting strategy

In building relationships with all communities



KEY QUALITIES OF A PLAYER

GAME UNDERSTANDING & DECISION - MAKING

Read situations, anticipate & make quick decisions under pressure

- Observes and analyzes the position of teammates and opponents
- Identifies cues and intentions of teammates and opponents
- Recognizes space, time and risk opportunity
- Processes information quickly, thinks ahead and acts fast (makes the best choice)
- Manages the pace of the game, recognizes when to accelerate or slow-down play
- Understands position and role, based on style of play, team principles and strategy
- Adjusts position and moves into space quickly/ahead of time to provide support/cover, aligns actions with teammates
- Scans continuously
- Adapts body shape
- Shows versatility and flexibility to play multiple roles or positions in different systems
- Uses creativity to find new and different solutions

TECHNICAL EXECUTION

Ball mastery & skills under pressure

- Moving easily with the ball, staying calm under pressure
- Receiving and playing in tight spaces (use of both feet)
- Receiving to play forward
- Playing 1 and 2 touch
- Precise passing that sets up the receiver (range of passing: long, break lines, short, etc.)
- Dribbling and running with the ball to break lines and accelerate attack (use of body feints, change of speed and/or direction)
- Making quick combinations
- Creating chances and finishing (final pass/shot)
- Heading
- Dominating 1 v 1 (take-ons, challenges, regains, tackles)

RESPONSIBILITY & INITIATIVE (SELF - REGULATION)

Responsible for one's own learning, development & performance

- Demonstrates self-knowledge and applies to their role and responsibility within the team
- Takes ownership, sets goals, plans, monitors, (re)evaluates
- Takes initiative, is proactive (creative), sees opportunities to take action without being told
- Manages personal lifestyle and environment (rest, recovery, sleep, nutrition, injury prevention/care, mental health)
- Behaves like a role model under all circumstances
- Builds relationships, helps and supports teammates and staff
- Prepares for every game/session
- Reflects on and evaluates one's own performance (self-critical)
- Receives feedback, asks questions (coachable)
- Communicates openly and often with teammates and coaches (verbal and non-verbal)
- Creates a personal development plan
- Holds self accountable (no excuses, delivers on agreements and promises)

PHYSICAL EXECUTION

Movement skills & fitness

- Moves efficiently (agility, coordination, balance)
- Uses body in duels to protect the ball, control or disrupt the opponent
- Makes quick, explosive movements to separate from opponent (accelerating, decelerating, turning and recovering, jumping)
- Repeats high intensity actions (sprints)
- Exudes strength, power and endurance
- Has specialized physical attributes and stature for positional role

GROWTH MINDSET & WINNING MENTALITY

Continuous drive to improve & compete

INTENSITY (FOCUS)

- Gives maximum effort (work ethic)
- Concentrates, stays on task (focused and engaged)
- Commits to the process (sacrifice)

COMMUNICATION

- Communicates with teammates on the field to solve game situations (gives and receives)
- Communicates off the field to improve self and team (open and often)

MOTIVATION & DETERMINATION

- Shows joy, passion and enthusiasm (fun and freedom)
- Challenges self (development)
- Pursues goals (desire)
- Never gives up (relentless)
- Faces adversity and overcomes fear (brave)
- Pushes self to limits (body and mind)
- Believes in self (confidence)
- Contributes to team performance and result (deliberate)

EMOTIONAL STABILITY & CONTROL

- Overcomes setbacks
- Deals with pressure
- Stays composed
- Behaves maturely
- Is true to self

LEARNING ABILITY

Capacity to adapt to a higher level

- Shows an ability to excel
- Adapts to new situations quickly
- Absorbs and applies new information quickly

*Observed over an extended time, includes games and training sessions



POSITION PROFILES - TRAITS

GOALKEEPER (1)

TRAITS:

- Directing teammates, leading defensive organization (clear communication)
- Anticipating and intercepting crosses and balls behind defensive line (starting position)
- Stopping shots and dominating 1v1 situations (bravery)
- Reading pressure and initiating build-up
- Receiving and passing under pressure (short and long)

PHYSICAL:

- Strength and power, agility and quick reactions to control the area and protect the goal (air and ground)

FULL BACKS (2,3)

TRAITS:

- Continuously adjusting body shape and position to provide support and cover (height and width)
- Dominating 1v1 duels to create or regain the ball
- Supporting forward with intent
- Receiving, dribbling and making quick combinations to create chances (crossing and shooting)
- Making overlap and underlap runs to create advantage

PHYSICAL:

- Speed, quickness, agility and endurance

CENTER BACKS (4,5)

TRAITS:

- Leading defensive organization
- Dominating 1v1 situations (heading, tackling and intercepting)
- Zonal marking, anticipation and preventive actions (shifting, stepping, dropping, and covering movements)
- Reading and breaking pressure (calm and decisive)
- Range of passing (through, over and around defensive block)

PHYSICAL:

- Strength and power in duels (jumping), speed and agility

MIDFIELDERS (6,8,10)

TRAITS:

- Dominating positionally and individually, controlling and protecting central area
- Positioning between lines (spatial awareness and body orientation) and quick decision making (360° scanning)
- Technically advanced-receiving and turning in tight spaces, passing range including final pass
- Recognizing when to play forward, switch play and keep possession (ball security)
- Breaking down compact defenses and finishing the attack (insight and creativity)
- Providing offensive/defensive balance

PHYSICAL:

- Agility, endurance, quickness and use of body to protect ball

WIDE FORWARDS/WINGERS (7,11)

TRAITS:

- Dominating 1v1, dribbling and running with the ball to take-on opponent, creating chances and scoring
- Shooting and crossing (early, cut-back, etc.) off the dribble, coming inside or wide
- Making aggressive runs with and without the ball
- Reading and initiating pressing moments, closing space with speed and intensity
- Denying penetrations and assisting fullback in wide areas

PHYSICAL:

- Speed, change of direction and body feints
- Ability to make repeated accelerations

CENTER FORWARD (9)

TRAITS:

- Creating chances and scoring goals (foot or head)
- Receiving and holding the ball under pressure
- Making varied runs (movements and timing) to get behind opposition back line and create space for self and teammates
- Anticipating and moving into dangerous positions, untracking from opponent
- Receiving and passing under pressure (short and long)
- Showing advanced levels of focus, determination and control

PHYSICAL:

- Strength to hold off opponent, explosiveness to separate from opponent