



U.S. Soccer Development Academy Program: 2009-10 Overview

Overview

Following a comprehensive review of elite player development in the United States and around the world, U.S. Soccer created the Development Academy in the fall of 2007 to expand the reach of National Team programming to key soccer markets across the country. The Academy places elite male youth players in improved everyday environments to allow them to reach their full potential. In 2009-10, seventy-nine clubs will employ a training model based on the U-17 National Team Residency program. Each club fields two teams in the nine-month Academy league at the U-15/16 and U-17/18 age brackets. By restricting Academy teams and players to only compete in the Academy league and mandating 3 training sessions per week, these players are exposed to a more meaningful training and competitive environment. National Team coaches work directly with the clubs to refine their training programs and identify talented players for inclusion in Youth National Teams. U.S. Soccer also utilizes the Academy platform to identify and develop young referees for advancement into the Professional and International referee community.

Structure

- Objective:** The Development Academy's primary focus is player development. Academy players are provided with the best opportunity to achieve their potential as elite soccer players.
- Standards:** Academy teams are required to train at least three days per week and rest one day per week during the Academy season. Academy teams will play approx. 30 games per year.
- Member Clubs:** 77 of the top youth soccer clubs will participate in the program in 2009-10
- Selection:** All current clubs applied for membership. Any club is welcome to apply, but admission is very selective.
- Teams:** Academy clubs must field 1 team in each of the 2 Academy mixed-age groups: U-15/16 and U-17/18.
- Age Groups:** U-15/16: Players born on or after 1/1/1993
U-17/18: Players born on or after 1/1/1991
Players can always 'play up'.
- Rosters:** Each team must have a minimum roster of 18 players. All players register directly with U.S. Soccer.
- Format:** In 2009-10, the Academy league contains 10 geographically based divisions. Each team play home and away matches against the other teams in their division, plus games against non-division opponents from across the country during the 9-month season. The top 32 teams in each age group advance to the Playoffs, where they compete for one of eight spots in the Academy Finals Week at the Home Depot Center in Carson, Calif.
- Cost:** No fees for club to participate in program, aside from \$5 per player and \$25 per coach registration fee (2008-09 figures). Clubs are responsible for all travel and administrative costs.

To maintain a focus on training, Academy teams will not play in any other leagues, tournaments, State Cup competitions, ODP or All-Star events without written permission from Academy staff. Players can only participate on their designated Academy team, with only 2 exceptions: high school soccer and national team duty.

Player Development Advantages

- **More Training**
 - 3 mandatory training sessions per week
- **Fewer Total Games**
 - Approx. 30 game season
 - No outside participation
 - 25% Minimum Start Requirement
- **More Meaningful Games**
 - Top competition
 - FIFA Rules
- **Top Instruction**
 - Players receive integrated oversight from youth club coaches and U.S. Soccer coaches in their local environment.
- **Connection to U.S. Soccer Resources**
 - Regular Evaluations by Nat. Team Staff
 - U.S. Soccer assigned Referees
 - SPARQ Testing and Training
 - Gatorade Hydration Testing
 - ProZone Analysis

Player Identification Advantages

- Exposure to the U.S. Soccer National Team Scouting Network (NTSN)
- The NTSN covered over 60% of all Academy games in the 2008-09 season
- Showcases are premier scouting venues:
 - 200-300 college coaches, 25 Pro Scouts, National Team Staff
- Online player profile for all Academy players
- Showcase games footage can be purchased
- Over 200 players from Academy clubs were called into a YNT camp/trip since fall 2007.

Academy Scholarship Program

- Academy players can apply for need based, partial scholarships to cover Academy travel
- Applications for 2009-10 are due by Aug. 31
- Over 140 scholarships awarded in 2008-09
- Only full-time Academy players are eligible
- Funded by U.S. Soccer, the U.S. Soccer Foundation and NIKE