

Player Evaluation Process

We aim to match players of equal playing ability by using a series of small sided games to evaluate the players' ability. Age groups under 10 will be evaluated in a 3v3 or 4v4 format. Age groups U11-14 are evaluated in both smaller format (3v3/4v4) and a larger format (7v7). The evaluation of all players in each age group is provided to the Club.

Players are evaluated by the Club's professional training staff, with assistance from Youth Trainers, and independent evaluators from outside the club.

You will likely ask the question, "what do the trainers look for when evaluating and selecting players?" The following intends to address this question.

Characteristics of U8 Player

Young players need to learn to dribble in a variety playing situations, such as dribbling forward unopposed (without pressure), changing speed and direction, dribbling past an opponent, shielding the ball, and dribbling away from pressure into space. A player must possess the ability to dribble, as this is the groundwork for other fundamental skills, such as receiving, passing and shooting. Players who are limited in the above, tend to have a limited range of passing and/or shooting and are unable to maintain possession of the ball. Often times this player may simply "kick or swipe" at the ball, use their toe, move with their head down and is unable to control or keep possession of the ball.

Characteristics of U9-U10 Player

Players continue to learn basic technique. Because their motor skills are becoming more refined, players are able to execute their techniques under pressure. The player must possess the ability to dribble (using different surfaces of both feet), perform turns, moves to beat an opponent, shield and run with the ball. These are examples that the player has control of the ball. Additionally, at this age group, players should be able to control a moving ball, settle a bouncing ball to the ground, pass using various surfaces of the foot (inside and outside) and do so with good weight and accuracy (not over or under hit) using both feet. All players love to shoot. Players with sound & basic technique, and who are able to shoot off the dribble and after turning lay a good foundation for future development. While tactics and positions are NOT considered important at this age group, we look at a player's ability to attack and defend 1v1 as this is the foundation for tactical development.

Characteristics of U11-U12 Player

Building on the basics of above, the player becomes more refined in basic technique and builds upon it. A player must possess the ability to maintain possession of the ball, use a variety of moves & turns, shield & spin, pass over long distances, loft a pass (air), make penetrating passes, and pass into runs of teammates. The player will also shoot off the dribble, from a turn, from distance, with their first touch & from various angles using both feet. The player must be able to settle a bouncing ball, and control a ball out the air using their thigh or foot surfaces.

Since we are dealing with young players who are still developing, tactics or positions remain less important than technical skill development. For this reason, the basic tactics

we observe are players' ability to defend an opponent (1v1), ability to attack an opponent (1v1) and support by players off the ball and in combination with each other.

Characteristics of U13-U14 Player

Rapid growth occurs at this age group. Physically precocious players often excel. However, when the "physical playing field" levels some years later, the player with strong technical skills and tactical awareness combined with strong physical attributes will be the one who succeeds.

For this reason, we not only look at the contribution the player makes physically to the game (acceleration/deceleration, changes in speed and direction, pace, strength, coordination, agility etc) but also the technical speed & ability the player makes; individual possession (receiving and control) and dribbling (moves, turns, feints) awareness of time, space and opponents, passing ranges (short & long) and techniques (loft, driven, chipped push passing), shooting off the dribble, turn, pass, from various angles, from the air (volley & head).

Tactical awareness begins as players cognitively develop. We look at the players' ability to support, combine, provide width and depth, as well maintain possession. Players are also expected to be able defend, use correct tackling techniques, pressure and channel, recover, chase and delay.