



# The “Age Effect” in Soccer

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# The “Age Effect” in Action

Primary Sources: Game On, by Tom Farrey & Outliers, by Malcolm Gladwell

**A player born in January / August has a maturational advantage over anyone born later in the calendar / seasonal year; sometimes up to 12 months.**



**“Older” players tend to be bigger than “younger” players until puberty balances out the physical differences.**

**Girls typically stop growing between 13 & 15; boys between 14 & 17. Some boys grow through college.**

**“Older” players are more likely to be selected for Travel and Premier teams.**

# The “Age Effect” in Action

Primary Sources: [Game On](#), by Tom Farrey & [Outliers](#), by Malcolm Gladwell

**“Older” players get better training and receive more developmental opportunities than “younger” players.**



**Players not selected for Travel or Premier teams are, in effect, told they are not good at soccer.**

**They are relegated to recreational play, often with poor coaches, and they quit - in droves.**

**At every level, players at the front end of an age year (January / August) dominate initial selections simply because they are bigger.**

# The “Age Effect” in Action

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The cumulative effect of beneficial developmental opportunities becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy with regard to “older” players. The ability gap naturally widens over time.

Players born in the 1st 6 months of an age year are significantly more likely to be selected for anything.

This is true of the youth level and at the professional level.

Players born in the second half of an age year never catch up.



# The “Age Effect” in Action

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**In effect, we are eliminating much of the gene pool from developing their talents.**

**These selection decisions are being made about players as young as seven.**

**The real decisions should be delayed until after puberty.**

**What month was your child born?**

## The “Age Effect” in Action

'09 USA National Team Rosters	Jan-Jun	Jul-Dec
Full Men	31 (60%)	21 (40%)
Full Women	13 (52%)	12 (48%)
U-23 Men	26 (68%)	12 (32%)
U-23 Women	36 (46%)	43 (54%)
U-20 Men	28 (58%)	20 (42%)
U-20 Women	37 (63%)	22 (37%)
U-17 Men	25 (64%)	14 (36%)
U-15 Women	22 (71%)	9 (29%)
U-15 Men	35 (83%)	7 (27%)
Averages	63%	37%

## The “Age Effect” in Action

<b>'08 Region II Boys Disney Rosters</b>	<b>Jan-Jun</b>	<b>Jul-Dec</b>
<b>1992 Boys (U-17)</b>	11 (61%)	7 (39%)
<b>1993 Boys (U-16)</b>	11 (61%)	7 (39%)
<b>1994 Boys (U-15)</b>	14 (78%)	4 (22%)
<b>1995 Boys (U-14)</b>	16 (89%)	2 (11%)
<b>Averages</b>	73%	27%

## The “Age Effect” in Action

<b>'08 Region II Girls Coral Springs Rosters</b>	<b>Jan-Jun</b>	<b>Jul-Dec</b>
<b>1992-A Girls (U-17)</b>	11 (65%)	6 (35%)
<b>1992-B Girls (U-17)</b>	11 (65%)	6 (35%)
<b>1993 Girls (U-16)</b>	13 (76%)	4 (24%)
<b>1994 Girls (U-15)</b>	13 (76%)	4 (24%)
<b>Averages</b>	71%	29%

## The “Age Effect” in Action

<b>Girl’s Inter-Regional Rosters</b>	<b>Jan-Jun</b>	<b>Jul-Dec</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● All 4 Regions</li><li>● U-14 through U-17</li><li>● Over 10 Years</li></ul>		
<b>Averages</b>	67%	37%

## The “Age Effect” in Action

'08 OYSAN May State Cup Rosters	Aug-Jan	Feb-Jul
U-14 Boys	65 (54%)	55 (46%)
U-14 Girls	83 (55%)	69 (45%)
U-13 Boys	106 (60%)	71 (40%)
U-13 Girls	83 (56%)	66 (44%)
U-12 Boys	109 (58%)	79 (42%)
U-12 Girls	47 (51%)	46 (49%)
U-11 Boys	100 (61%)	65 (39%)
U-11 Girls	78 (58%)	57 (42%)
U-10 Boys	66 (61%)	42 (39%)
U-10 Girls	38 (55%)	31 (45%)
Boy's / Girl's Averages	59% / 55%	41% / 45%
Combined Averages	57%	43%

# National Youth Games Program

U-6: 3v3 / U-8: 4v4



# National Youth Games Program

## U-6

**Recommended Playing Format: 3v3**

**Maximum Roster: 6**

**Average Playing Time: 50% (3/6)**

**U-6 Game Time: 32 Minutes (4x8 Minutes)**

**Average On-Field Participation Time: 16 Minutes**

**Active Participation Time (Ave):**

**2.6 Minutes**

**(16 Minutes / 6 Players)**

**(Assuming No Stoppages In Play And Equitable Contacts)**

# **National Youth Games Program**

## **U-8**

**Recommended Playing Format: 4v4**

**Maximum Roster: 8**

**Average Playing Time: 50% (4/8)**

**U-8 Game Time: 40 Minutes (4x10 Minutes)**

**Average On-Field Participation Time: 20 Minutes**

**Active Participation Time (Ave):**

**2.5 Minutes**

**(20 Minutes / 8 Players)**

**(Assuming No Stoppages In Play And Equitable Contacts)**

# Adults In The Equation

“For some reason, adults – some who can’t even kick a ball – think it’s perfectly okay to scream at children while they’re playing soccer. How normal would it seem if a mother gave a six-year-old some crayons and a coloring book and started screaming? “Use the red crayon! Stay in the lines! Don’t use yellow!”

You think that child would develop a passion for drawing? Most important, parents must realize that playing sports is a way for children to express themselves.”

**Claudio Reyna,  
Former US World Cup Captain**



# **When We Were Young..**

**Flexible Playing Numbers!**

**Flexible Playing Rules!**

**Game Duration Measured in Hours!**

**Game-Based, not Drill-Based**

**Oldest Kids in Control!**

**Balanced Teams!**

**Game Organization Took Care of the Weaker Kids!**

**Games Had To Be Competitive!**

**“Next Goal Wins!”**

**Biggest Kids Refereed!**

**NO PARENTS!**

# **The Youth Academy Model**

## **U-6 / U-8**

**“Play Day” Format: U-6 (~3v3) and U-8 (~4v4)**

**Average Playing Time = 100%**

**Average On-Field Participation Time: 60 Minutes**

**Active Participation Time (Ave):**

**7.5 Minutes (U-8)**

**10 Minutes (U-6)**

**(Minutes / Players)**

**(Assuming No Stoppages In Play And Equitable Contacts)**

# Basic Play Day Logistics

Pre-line or pre-cone fields to accommodate every player

- 32-40 U-8's per large field (4v4 / 4v5 / 5v5)
- 48+ U-6's (8 games @ 3v3 + adults)

Prepare Scrimmage Vests

Randomly Divide Players Upon Arrival

Start Games ASAP!

Rotate Players Within Games

Rotate Players Between Games

Rotate Game Formats

Create Scoring Systems

Incorporate Skill Practices



# **Ohio North Youth Academy Programs**

**Akron Metro**

**Avon**

**Avon Lake**

**Bay Village**

**Brad Friedel's PSA**

**Brecksville**

**Nordonia Hills**

**North Ridgeville**

**Perrysburg**

**Westlake**

# US Soccer: Best Practices for Coaching Soccer in the United States

[http://images.usoccer.com/Documents/cms/ussf/Best\\_Practices.pdf](http://images.usoccer.com/Documents/cms/ussf/Best_Practices.pdf)



**“The first duty to children is to make them happy. If you have not made them so, you have wronged them. No other good they may get can make up for that.”**

**Charles Buxton, Author.**



**Thank You for Your Attention!**



**Questions, Comments, Criticisms, or Witticisms?**