

U.S. Soccer Development Academy Overview – 2009-10



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.

The 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.
Teams:	79 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.
Age Groups:	Academy clubs field 1 team in each of the 2 Academy mixed-age groups: U-15/16 and U-17/18. The age cutoff is based on a January 1 birthday. Players can always 'play up'.
Rosters:	Each team has a min. roster of 18 players. All players registered directly with U.S. Soccer.
Format:	In 2008-09, the Academy league contains 9 geographically based divisions. Each team will play home and away matches against the other teams in their division as well as non-division games against teams from across the country during the 10-month season. The winner of each division advances to the Playoffs, where they will 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 \$2 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 teams. Additionally, players will only be allowed to 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**
 - 30 game season
 - No outside participation
 - 25% Minimum Start Requirement
- **More Meaningful Games**
 - Top competition
 - FIFA Rules – game is the teacher
- **Top Instruction**
 - Players receive integrated oversight from youth club coaches and U.S. Soccer coaches, and training in their home environment.
- **Connection to U.S. Soccer Resources**
 - NT Coach Evaluation
 - SPARQ Testing and Training
 - Gatorade Hydration Testing
 - ProZone Analysis

Player Identification Advantages

- Exposure to U.S. Soccer National Team Scouting Network (NTSN) – over 60 of the top coaches in the country (college, pro, former players, current and former National team coaches)
- The NTSN covered over 60% of all Academy games in the 2008-09 season
- Showcases are premier scouting venues:
 - 200-300 college coaches,
 - Entire National Team staff
 - 25 Foreign Pro scouts
- Online player profile for all Academy players, including game stats, ProZone stats, SPARQ rating, academic information and more
- Video of Showcase games are available for purchase