



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.

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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.

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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.



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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

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

Region II Boy’s ODP Rosters: 2008

	Jan-Jun	Jul-Dec
1992 Boys (U-17)	11 (61%)	7 (39%)
1993 Boys (U-16)	11 (61%)	7 (39%)
1994 Boys (U-15)	14 (78%)	4 (22%)
1995 Boys (U-14)	16 (89%)	2 (11%)
Averages	73%	27%



The “Age Effect” in Action

Region II Girl’s ODP Rosters: 2008



	Jan-Jun	Jul-Dec
1992-A Girls (U-17)	11 (65%)	6 (35%)
1992-B Girls (U-17)	11 (65%)	6 (35%)
1993 Girls (U-16)	13 (76%)	4 (24%)
1994 Girls (U-15)	13 (76%)	4 (24%)
Averages	71%	29%

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Girl’s ODP Rosters: 1994 - 2004



All 4 Regions U-14 through U-17	Jan-Jun	Jul-Dec
Averages	67%	37%

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OYSAN State Cup Rosters: May 2008

	Sep-Feb	Mar-Aug
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%
Averages	57%	43%

The “Age Effect” in Action

OYSAN Community Travel Rosters (Girls): 2009

	Older	Younger
U-10 A (Maroon)	31 (85%)	21 (15%)
U-10 B (White)	13 (63%)	12 (37%)
U-11 A (Maroon)	26 (79%)	12 (21%)
U-11 B (White)	36 (71%)	43 (29%)
U-11 C (Black)	28 (67%)	20 (33%)
U-12 A (Maroon)	37 (75%)	22 (25%)
U-12 B (White)	25 (82%)	14 (18%)
U-14 A (Maroon)	22 (86%)	9 (14%)
U-14 B (White)	35 (42%)	7 (58%)
Averages	72%	28%

The “Age Effect” in Action

OYSAN Community Travel Roster: Girl’s U-10 (2009)



Maroon (A)	White (B)
Aug 98 (2)	Oct 98 (3)
Oct 98 (2)	Jan 99 (2)
Dec 98 (2)	July 99 (3)
Jan 99	
Feb 99 (2)	
Apr 99	
May 99	
June 99 (2)	
11/13 = 85%	5/8 = 63%

The “Age Effect” in Action

OYSAN Community Travel Roster: U-11 Girls (2009)

Maroon (A)	White (B)	Black (C)
Aug 97	Aug 97 (2)	Oct 97
Sep 97	Sep 97	Jan 98
Oct 97	Oct 97 (4)	Apr 98 (2)
Nov 97	Dec 97	May 98
Dec 97 (2)	Mar 98 (2)	Jun 98 (3)
Feb 98	Jun 98 (2)	Jul 98 (3)
Mar 98	Jul 98	Aug 98
Apr 98 (2)	Aug 98	
May 98		
Jun 98		
Jul 98 (2)		
12/14 = 79%	10/14 = 71%	8/12 = 67%

The “Age Effect” in Action

OYSAN Community Travel Roster: Girl’s U-12 (2009)



Maroon (A)	White (B)
Oct 96	Sep 96
Nov 96	Nov 96
Dec 96	Mar 97 (3)
Jan 97 (2)	Apr 97
May 97 (2)	May 97 (2)
Jun 97 (2)	Jul 97 (2)
Jul 97 (2)	Jan 98
Aug 97	
9/12 = 75%	9/11 = 86%

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OYSAN Community Travel Roster: Girl’s U-14 (2009)



Maroon (A)	White (B)
Oct 94	Aug 94 (2)
Nov 94	Nov 94
Jan 95	Apr 95
Feb 95	May 95
Mar 95 (2)	Jun 95
Apr 95 (2)	Jul 95
May 95 (2)	Aug 95
Jun 95 (3)	Nov 95
Aug 95	Dec 95
	Feb 96
	Sep 96
13/14 = 86%	5/12 = 42%

The “Age Effect” in Action

OYSAN Community Travel Roster: Boy’s U-10 (2009)

Maroon (A)	White (B)
Aug 98 (2)	Oct 98
Sep 98	Nov 98
Oct 98	Mar 99
Dec 98 (2)	Apr 99
Feb 99 (2)	Jun 99
Apr 99 (2)	Jul 99
Jul 99	Nov 99
	May 00
	Jun 00 (3)
8/11 = 73%	9/11 = 82%



The “Age Effect” in Action

OYSAN Community Travel Roster: Boy’s U-11 (2009)

Maroon (A)	White (B)
Aug 97	Aug 97 (2)
Oct 97 (2)	Dec 97 (2)
Jan 98	Feb 98
Apr 98	Mar 98 (2)
May 98	Apr 98 (2)
Jun 98	Jul 98
Jul 98 (3)	Nov 98
	Dec 98
6/10 = 60%	7/12 = 58%



National Youth Games Program

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



National Youth Games Program

U-6

Recommended Playing Format: 3v3

Recommended 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

Recommended 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!

Biggest Kids Refereed!

Balanced Teams!

Game Organization Took Care of the Weaker Kids!

Games Had To Be Competitive!

“Next Goal Wins!”

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



“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?