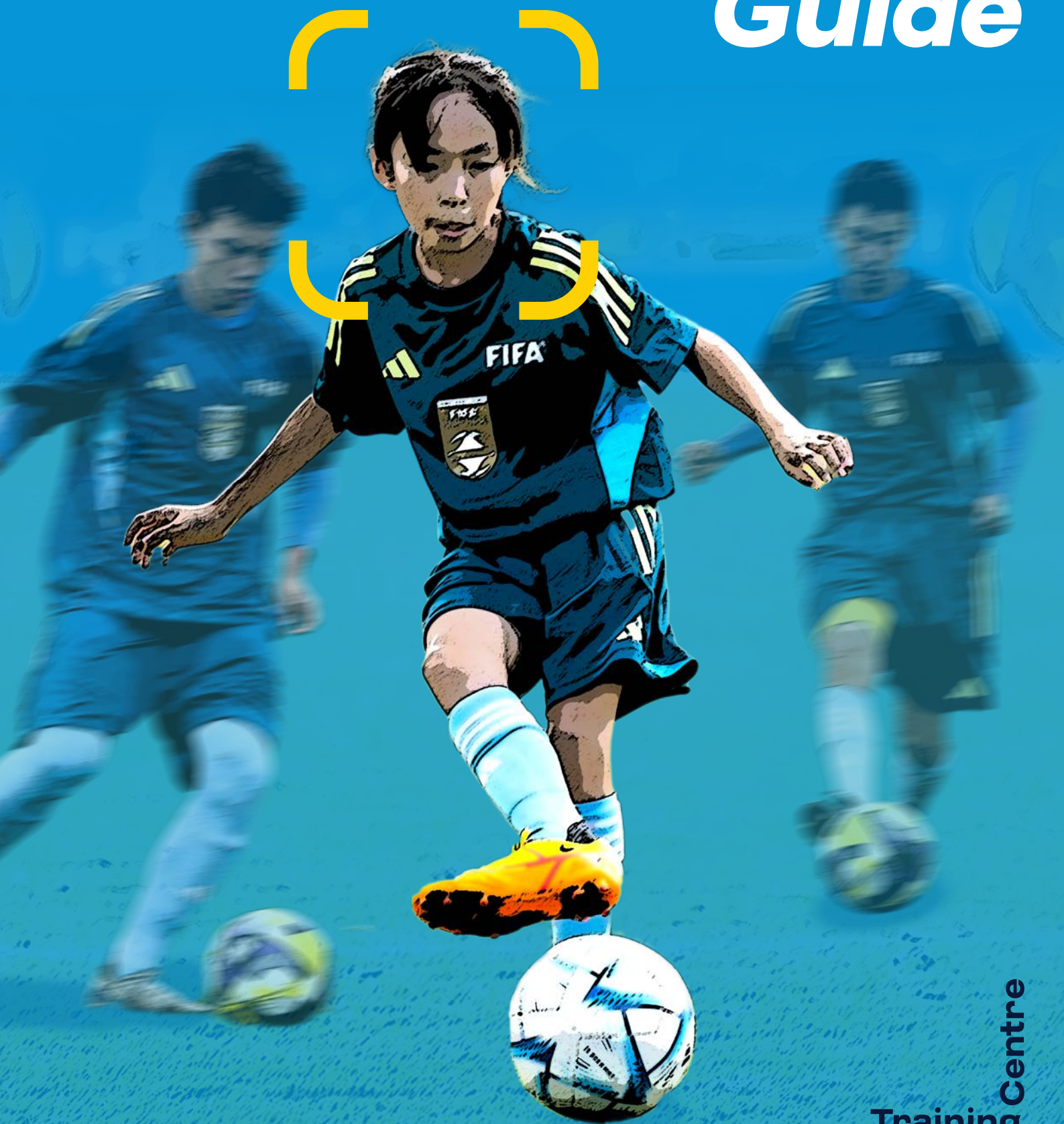


FIFA® Talent
Development
Scheme

Talent Identification Guide



Training Centre

Talent Identification Guide

Foreword

Arsene Wenger,
FIFA Chief of Global
Football Development



“Finding talented players forms the foundation in the development of young players. However, we noticed that in many countries’ talent identification needs improvement, as current approaches are often ineffective and not well adapted to the local context. Through the FIFA Talent Development Scheme, we are actively working to raise standards in this area by providing specialist support and education tailored to each country’s unique needs. The world train of youth development has started and is unstoppable, but we want everybody on board and there is still some work to do on that front. I count on you to contribute to that as well. You can count on us because we’ll give absolutely everything to make that dream come true.”



“Every young player deserves a fair chance to be seen. Through the FIFA Talent Development Scheme, we are committed to helping every member association build strong, structured pathways that elevate their talent ecosystems. This guide reflects that commitment – offering practical support to ensure that no talent is left behind. Identifying talents is only the beginning, but ensuring we get this first step right is essential to building systems where potential can truly flourish.”

Steven Martens
FIFA Technical Director



“Success in the development of players cannot be defined by a one-size-fits-all template. Each association, community, and nation has its own DNA – its own metric of success. With the FIFA Talent Development Scheme, we listen to what each member needs and tailor our support accordingly. This guide is built on that principle – to help you design a talent identification system where every child, no matter where they are born or what resources they have, can be seen and supported.”

Ulf Schott
FIFA Head of High Performance Programmes

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Welcome to the FIFA

Talent Identification Guide

The journey from playground to professional football is built on key moments of recognition, opportunity, and support. Yet across the world, too many promising players go unnoticed – not because they lack potential – but because the systems around them may not be well-equipped to identify talent effectively.

With the support of FIFA Talent Identification Specialists, this guide has been developed to help football clubs and other organisations build stronger, more consistent approaches to talent identification. Whether working at local, regional, or national level, this guide provides both policy makers and practitioners with a clear and adaptable framework to support the design, implementation, and evaluation of a dependable talent identification system – regardless of size, budget, or geography. By using this guide, we hope to empower a broader community of people involved in football with the tools and knowledge to contribute to a more effective and efficient talent identification system – to give every talent a chance.

At the heart of the guide are five logical steps: philosophy, profiles, identification, selection, and constants. Together, these components promote structured, evidence-informed, and sustainable talent identification practices that can evolve over time.

› Introducing the Talent Identification Dimensions Model

Talent identification is the process of recognising individuals with the potential to develop into successful professional or international football players in the future. This process must consider a range of factors, including physical, technical, tactical, psychological, and social qualities – all of which are underpinned and shaped by broader influences such as an organisation’s philosophy and goals, desired player profiles, growth and maturation, and the evolving demands of the game.



Given its complexity and the many considerations involved, a dependable talent identification system is crucial to the success of football clubs and other organisations within the sport. However, ensuring that the talent identification system is both effective and efficient is a major challenge, and there is much discussion within the football community about the various approaches to doing so.

The talent identification dimensions model can be used to guide a successful talent identification system. The model is a multi-dimensional framework that is intended to guide policy makers and practitioners in their thinking, to support them when designing, implementing, and evaluating a talent identification system they can rely on.

Published in 2021, FIFA's Ecosystem Analysis was one of the most comprehensive investigations into FIFA member associations ever conducted. As part of the FIFA Ecosystem Analysis, it was reported that many member associations and academy systems are not reaching their full potential when it comes to talent identification. For example, it was shown that only 51% of FIFA member associations outside of the top 50 had a talent identification strategy, while only 35% in the top 51-100 had a systematic approach for identifying talented players in place.

The aim of the talent identification dimensions model is to provide an overview of the requirements for effective talent identification, which is a fundamental requirement for the entire talent development system. Policy makers and practitioners can use this framework to help them strengthen talent identification infrastructure and encourage investment into these systems.

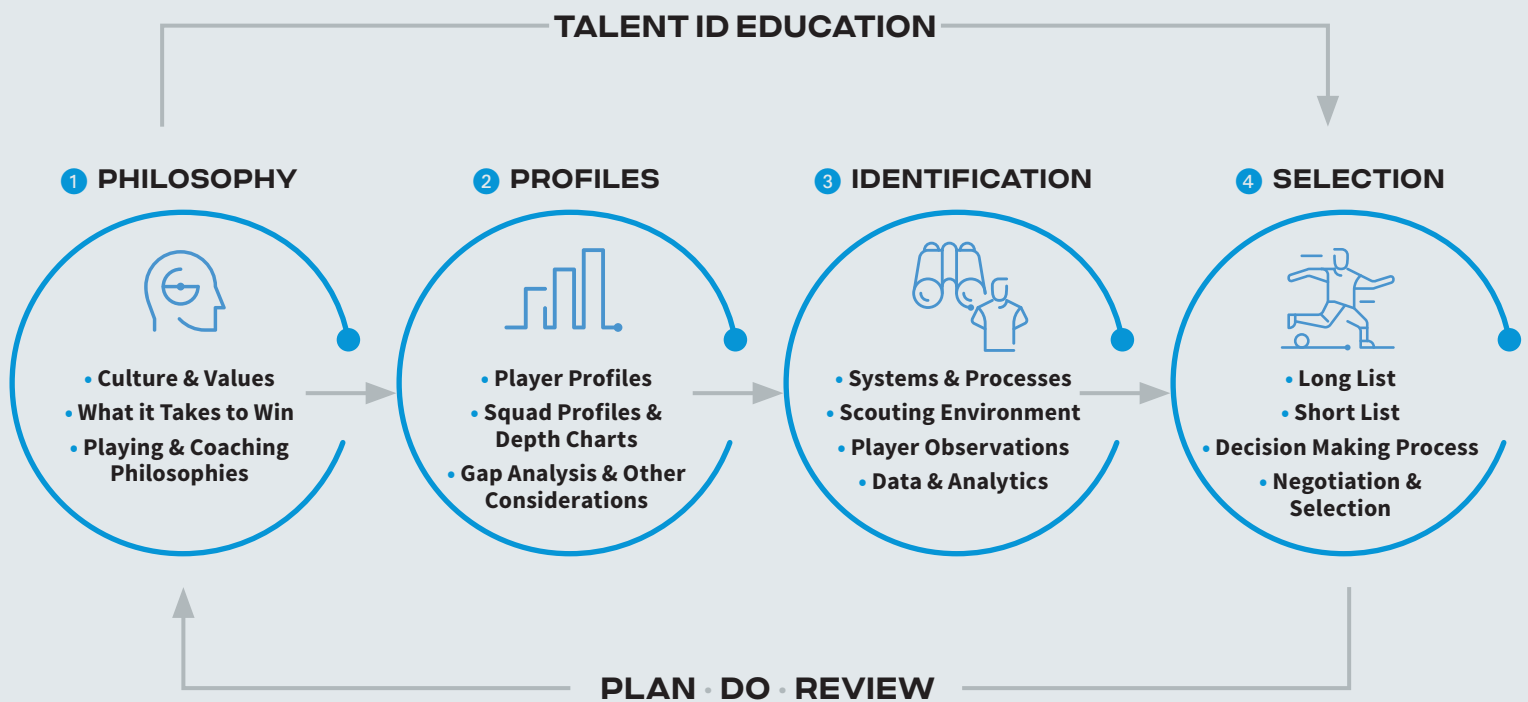
There are some key differences between bigger and smaller football organisations, such as the resources available to run the system as well as population and geographical constraints. However, the fundamental principles of talent identification, which are encapsulated within the dimensions model, do not change. Indeed, whatever the operating environment, dedicated, passionate staff who are committed to spotting the most promising talent are crucial to success, and football organisations need to ensure these staff are properly equipped to perform this key role.

This guide is built upon empirical evidence across all key components, drawing on insights from leading researchers and practitioners who share both their research findings and examples of good practice. Central to this work is the recognition that talent identification primarily involves children and young people. As such, policy makers and practitioners must adopt a child-centred approach that prioritises wellbeing, development, and ethical responsibility. Therefore, above all else, safeguarding and child protection must always take precedence before performance considerations, reinforcing a clear commitment to placing the child before the player. Further information on safeguarding and child protection can be found here: <https://inside.fifa.com/human-rights/fifa-guardians>

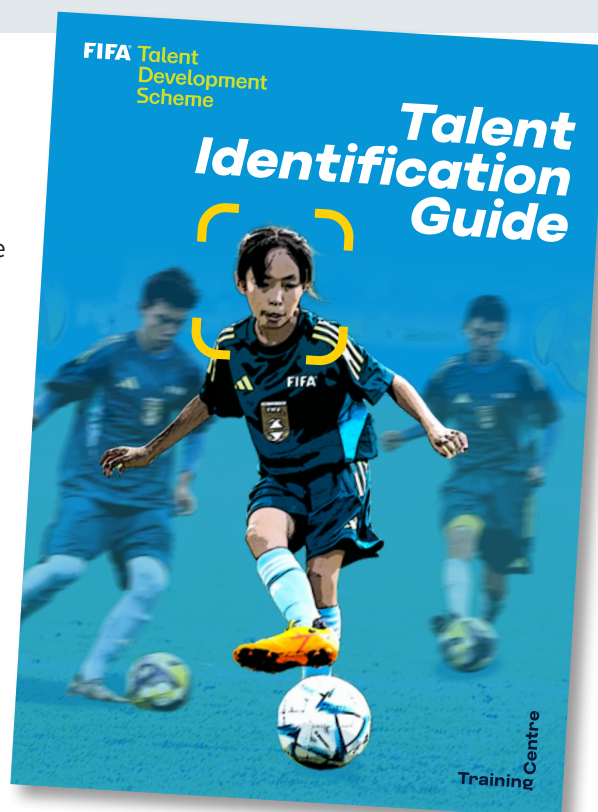
Talent Identification

— Dimensions Model explained

The talent identification dimensions model is a multi-dimensional tool comprising five interrelated dimensions, presented in a logical sequence to support effective and efficient talent identification.



Scan the QR-code to find the downloadable version of this guide



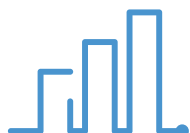


Dimension 1: *Philosophy*

forms the foundation of its talent identification system, aligning core beliefs, values, and playing style with the criteria used to identify and evaluate players. This ensures a unified approach to identifying talent that supports long-term strategic objectives.

Acknowledgements:

Masanaga Kageyama ([Japan FA](#)); Dave Adams ([Wales FA](#)); Marianne Miettinen ([Finland FA](#)); David Gordo ([Spain FA](#))

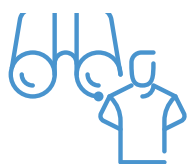


Dimension 2: *Profiles*

explores how player and squad profiling, aligned with an organisation's playing philosophy, forms a crucial foundation for effective talent identification. By defining key attributes and conducting gap analyses, organisations can make informed decisions to ensure effective talent identification processes.

Acknowledgements:

Dr. Paul Bradley; Trevor Morgan ([Australia FA](#)); FIFA Performance Insights and Analysis Team



Dimension 3: *Identification*

outlines the systems and processes required to recognise players with the potential to excel. It emphasises structured scouting, observation, and data use to support informed talent identification across all levels.

Acknowledgements:

Chris Loxston [Group Leader Football Performance Analysis and Insights](#); April Heinrichs [FIFA High Performance Specialist](#); Dr. Tom Bergkamp ([Netherlands FA](#)); Jan Verbeek ([Netherlands FA](#)); Prof. Sean Cumming; Prof. Oliver Honer; Cristian Aleza ([Honduras FA](#))

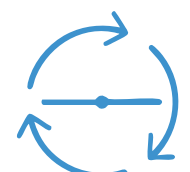


Dimension 4: *Selection*

focuses on the final phase of talent identification, where potential players are systematically evaluated, shortlisted, and formally chosen for teams. This process emphasises the importance of a structured, transparent process that supports effective decision-making and ensures alignment with the organisation's goals.

Acknowledgements:

Dr. Dennis Ludin; Prof. Adam Kelly; Dr. Liam Sweeney; Jelle Schelstraete ([Belgium FA](#)); Rasmus Hallander Porse ([Danish FA](#)); Patrick Bruggmann ([Swiss FA](#))



Dimension 5: *Constants*

highlights the continuous processes that support and sustain a strong talent identification system. It explores the importance of embedding structured review processes and continuous education to ensure the system remains effective, informed, and aligned with long-term talent identification goals.

Acknowledgements:

Andy Gould ([Scotland FA](#)); Tobias Suveges ([Werder Bremen](#)); Matthew Portas ([England FA](#)); Matti Lahitie ([Finland FA](#))



Dimension 1 Philosophy

Laban Scott Libby,
Talent ID Specialist

“A clearly defined footballing philosophy strengthens any Talent ID strategy by providing a shared framework and set of guiding principles for everyone involved. It shapes the development of player profiles and informs every aspect of player identification and selection.”

This guide offers a comprehensive breakdown of the philosophy dimension of the talent identification dimensions model, outlining key considerations for its implementation within a football organisation.



Talent identification has a critical role to play in establishing a successful football programme. It intertwines seamlessly and creates a foundational base to enable other areas, such as talent development and national teams, to excel. Despite the significance of talent identification, the global ecosystem analysis report published by FIFA in May 2021 revealed that a substantial number of football organisations lacked a dedicated talent identification strategy.

The talent identification dimensions model serves as an adaptable framework, designed specifically to help organisations to identify the best football talent. Each step within this guide provides a distinct purpose, coming together to enhance the effectiveness of the overall talent identification process. The first step, which entails linking a football organisation's talent identification strategy to an overall philosophy, is essential to ensuring alignment and coherence within a football organisation's ecosystem.

Why is this dimension important?

Philosophy refers to the core beliefs, values, and principles that guide an organisation's overall approach and decision-making process. In the football context, an organisation's philosophy describes its beliefs, culture and values (i.e., its identity), and more broadly, what the organisation is all about and what it stands for. It includes an understanding of what it takes to win (winning strategies, performance support, and planning), now and in the future (future game, future player).

An organisation's football philosophy significantly influences its talent identification strategy. Philosophy is the foundation on which strategies are built and executed. In fact, an organisation's football philosophy may shape the criteria used to evaluate players and the desired style of play. Ultimately, a football philosophy guides the identification of talent, which is aligned with strategic objectives and playing style, ensuring efficiency and alignment throughout the football organisation.

To successfully create or develop a football philosophy, adequate time needs to be spent engaging with all relevant internal and external stakeholders to ensure buy-in, understanding, and support. Having a football philosophy that is aligned with the wider objectives of a football organisation's ecosystem is essential to achieving a unified talent identification process.

How do you achieve success?

› Understand and incorporate culture and values

The focus of culture and values is on understanding and comprehending the context within a functioning football organisation to help shape a football philosophy. A holistic examination of culture and values provides a comprehensive picture of the football organisation's essence, thereby facilitating the development of a philosophy.





Key questions to ask yourself

- What is the football organisation all about and what does it stand for?
- What is the football organisation's community culture?
- What is its football culture?

Important factors to consider

- Outline and ensure alignment with the organisation's identity, community culture, and football culture
- Create a focus group and use stakeholder engagement to co-develop an understanding of the football organisation's culture and values

Good practice examples to learn from

The Welsh Way (see [page 14](#)): Within this good practice example you can find out more about how the core values of Wales have been integrated into their football philosophy, as well as how this philosophy has been used to create alignment in football across the country. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Talent identification in Finland (see [page 16](#)): Within this good practice example you can find an explanation on how Finland's culture and values, centred around equality, has influenced their talent identification philosophy and subsequent approach, to give every talent a chance. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

What have member associations done to capture their national and football identity within their football philosophy? The following two unique good practice examples help outline different approaches, as well as how this links to their talent identification and talent development processes.



Good practice example

The Welsh Way - Developing a national football philosophy

The Welsh Way philosophy was launched in 2016. Dave Adams, Chief Football Officer at the Football Association of Wales (FAW), explains the rationale behind the project, and how it has brought coaches, players, and administrators together across the Principality.

Wales made its FIFA World Cup™ debut in 1958, finishing fifth. There followed an agonising 58-year absence from major tournaments, but the Dragons are now back on the biggest stage, and determined to stay there. For a country of 3.1 million people, that means making sure that everyone is pulling in the same direction – which is what the “Welsh Way” is all about.

Good practice

- Drawing up a coherent national football philosophy can “unify” your approach to the game.
- Before you can establish this philosophy, it is important to define its core messages and principles, and ensure they can be applied at every level of the football pyramid.
- Provide a positive experience for your players by employing a consistent approach throughout the player pathway, and expressing that approach in simple language everyone can understand.

Unifying the game

In 2016, Wales's senior men's side returned to the top of the game at UEFA EURO 2016. They did so in exhilarating fashion, with their Gareth Bale-inspired side making it all the way to the semi-finals. On the back of that success, the FAW launched their "Welsh Way" philosophy, which aimed to unify the game across the country by setting a national coaching syllabus that would apply to coaches at all levels of football, from the senior national side to the grassroots.

Keeping it simple

To achieve this aim, it was vital to define some simple principles that would underpin the Welsh Way, and to express them in language that could be understood at every level of the national football system. This is particularly important for talent identification, as it can help coaches and scouts to have a common understanding in the characteristics that the FAW are looking for in young, talented players. When the FAW came to put their philosophy on paper, they aimed to formulate it in a way that was accessible to all its stakeholders, but was also sophisticated enough for it to serve as a player development tool for its senior international teams.



Consistent language and core values

Adams is in no doubt that the consistency of language and approach enshrined in the Welsh Way has helped to keep stakeholders at all levels of the game moving in the same direction. It has also made it easier for the FAW to embed its core values of family, respect, and excellence in every aspect of its talent identification and development infrastructure. If coaches and players continue to work to uphold these values, the Welsh have every chance of continuing to punch above their weight.



Good practice example

Talent identification in Finland

After many years in the doldrums, Finland's national teams have emerged as a real force in recent years. Marianne Miettinen, Finland FA's (SPL) Head of Performance, explains the Nordic nation's unique talent identification philosophy, and how FIFA is helping to implement it.

In 2006, Marianne became the first Finnish woman to earn a UEFA Pro Licence, before going on to coach her country's women's youth teams at U18, U19, and U20 level. Who better, then, to explain how the Finnish FA's approach to talent development reflects Finnish society, and how FIFA's Talent Development Scheme (TDS) is helping her colleagues to identify and develop future internationals across her homeland?

Good practice

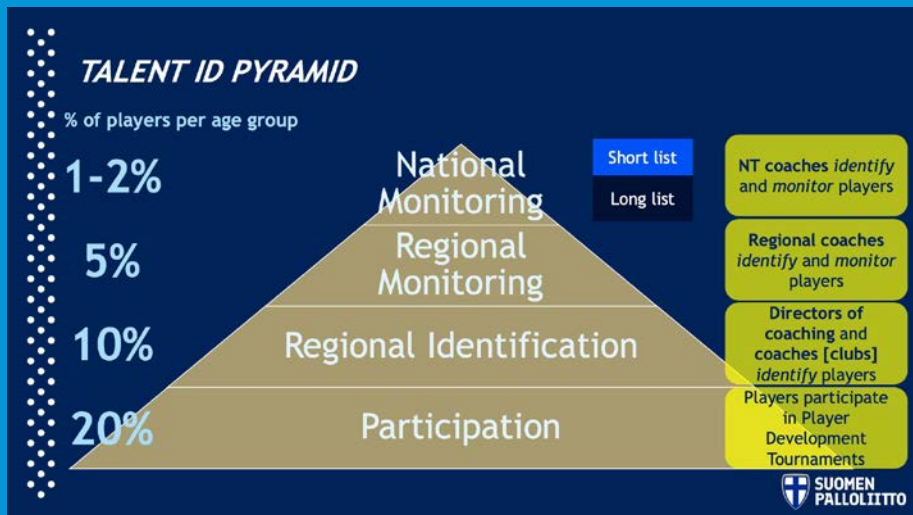
- Define your objectives and values first, then design a strategy that reflects them. This helps to ensure that all stakeholders are pulling in the same direction.
- Consider integrating talent coaches as assistant managers in your youth setup to strengthen the relationship between the talent coaches and players.
- Share data between the FA and clubs to ensure a joined-up approach to talent identification and talent development.
- Give your most promising players more contact time with coaches to help them make the step up to international football.

The Finnish approach to talent development

The Finnish FA's talent development strategy dates from 2020 (an updated version will be released soon) and is designed to reflect two fundamental principles of Finnish society. The first is that Finnish law guarantees the right of children under 16 to be educated in their local areas, which means the FA cannot relocate youngsters around the country for football training. The second is Finland's strong societal commitment to equality, a commitment that fits perfectly with FIFA's stated aim of giving every talent a chance.

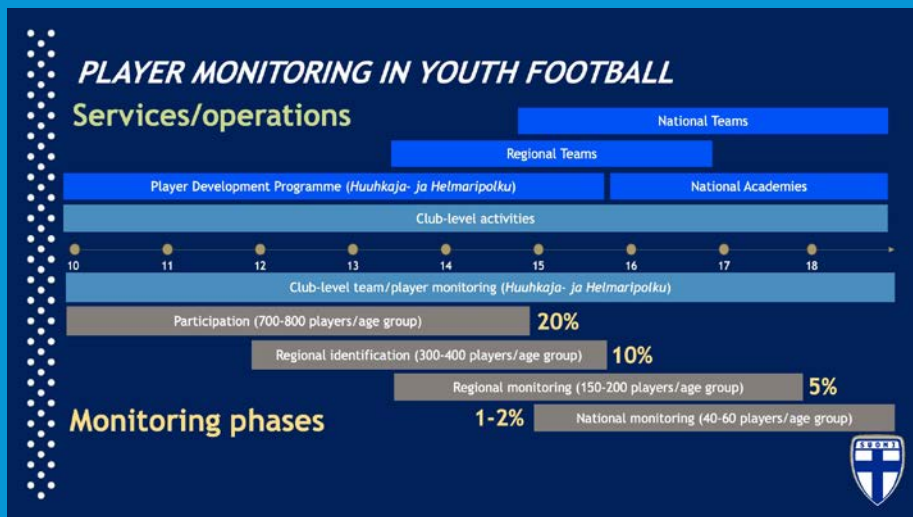
Finland’s talent identification pyramid

The TDS is supporting the Finnish FA in a number of areas, including its efforts to identify its most promising youngsters. As part of this effort, FIFA provides funding towards 30 Talent Coaches, who work with boys and girls in clubs across the country as well as serving as assistants to national team coaches. This means the TDS plays a role in linking the grassroots to national youth sides, as well as helping the Finnish FA to monitor as many players as possible and raising awareness of the demands of youth football within clubs.



The monitoring pathway and regional talent identification

There are approximately 160,000 registered youth players at Finnish clubs. The Finnish FA aims to take about 20% of that number into its well-defined development pyramid, with about one in ten of those youngsters progressing to the point where they can be considered for the national sides. As Miettinen explains, the standard of Finnish youth football is not as high as elite leagues in some other countries, and the Finnish FA is finding innovative ways to compensate, including providing opportunities to play futsal and mixed-gender football.



› Recognise what it takes to win

The focus of what it takes to win involves gaining insights into the football organisation's resources, objectives, and strategies to achieve success now and in the future. Understanding what it takes to win in a football organisation is integral to developing a philosophy because it shapes and aligns the overarching goals, values, and strategies.

Key questions to ask yourself

- What winning strategies, education, and training are in place?
- What performance support is in place?
- What are the likely scenarios across various timescales (the short and the long term)?
- How do the resources, objectives, and strategies to achieve success align with your national and football culture?
- How is the football organisation's approach research-informed?
- How do you benchmark each player?
- What do you want to achieve in the immediate, the short term, and the long term?

Important factors to consider

- Consider winning strategies as well as education and training for key partners
- Consider this from a multidisciplinary perspective (e.g., performance support) as well as ensuring that it is research-informed
- Plan across various timescales (e.g., the immediate, the short, and the long term)
- Consult at all levels of the game to ensure alignment and buy-in

Supporting templates and resources

SMART GOALS (see [page 19](#)): This resource includes a goal-setting framework that can help you increase the clarity, focus, and effectiveness of your football organisation's objectives. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

GOAL TREE (see [page 20](#)): This template allows you to break down the goals of your organisation into clear, tangible steps. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Good practice examples to learn from

The Norwegian FA's talent identification process (see [page 24](#)): In this interview, Norway's Head of Talent Identification, Thomas Brantsæter, explains why the Scandinavian country's identification process is not "too narrow or too early". Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

What goals have you set across various timescales, and how do you aim to achieve them? The following two supporting templates and resources may help increase clarity, focus, and the effectiveness of a football organisation's goals to help better recognise what it takes to win.

Supporting Resource

— SMART Goals

What is the tool

A tool to increase clarity, focus, and the effectiveness of a football organisation's goals to support the creation of a legacy.

Why use this tool

SMART, an acronym for **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic (or relevant), and **T**ime-bound, is a goal-setting guide ensuring that objectives are clear, carefully planned, and trackable. This well-defined and time-bound approach can improve the ability of organisation's to be able to reach their goals by providing clarity, focus, and motivation to take clear and decisive action towards meeting them.

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Realistic

Time-bound

When to use this tool

This tool can be used to support football organisation's at any point when they are setting goals. The SMART goals tool can also be a useful refresher at any stage of a process to ensure that the intended outcomes (goals) for the football organisation are on-track and achievable.

How to use this tool

When creating your SMART goals, you may want to consider the following criteria and answer the questions for each characteristic:

Specific: Who, what, when, why, where?

Measurable: How much/many? How does one know if a goal has been reached?

Achievable: Goals should be challenging, not impossible. Are the necessary resources and abilities available? Has it been accomplished by others?

Realistic: Have enough resources and time been provided to attain the goal?

Time-bound: By when should the goal be attained?

Supporting Resource

—●— Goal Tree

What is the tool

A tool to increase clarity, focus, and the effectiveness of a football organisation's goals to support the creation of a legacy.

Why use this tool

A goal without a plan is just a wish. With the complexity of planning for creating a legacy, it is often key to draw plans into a simplistic view which the goal tree can help to do. The goal tree is a tool that you will be able use to increase motivation and control towards obtainable outcomes. This will, in turn, increase engagement and accountability for the organisation.

When to use this tool

For any goal related conversations or to map out complex plans into buckets and actions. Any goal orientated conversation that needs thinking through. If the organisation is getting entangled in the detail of plans, the goal tree can help increase motivation and give sight of the bigger picture.

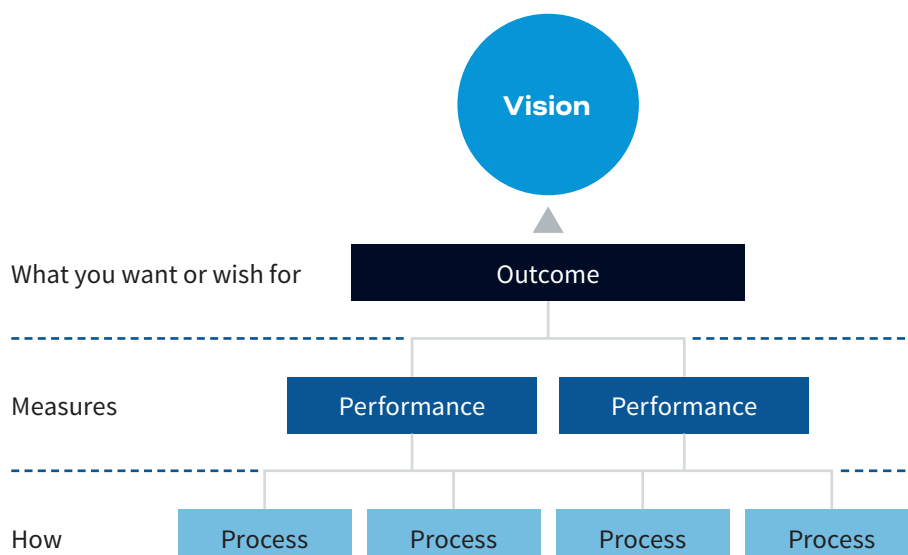
How to use this tool

01. Begin with creating a SMART outcome goal

02. Focus on vision goal (the why), ask questions to establish the why:
 - Why is this important to you?
 - What will achieving this goal give you?
 - How will it feel to achieve this goal and why?

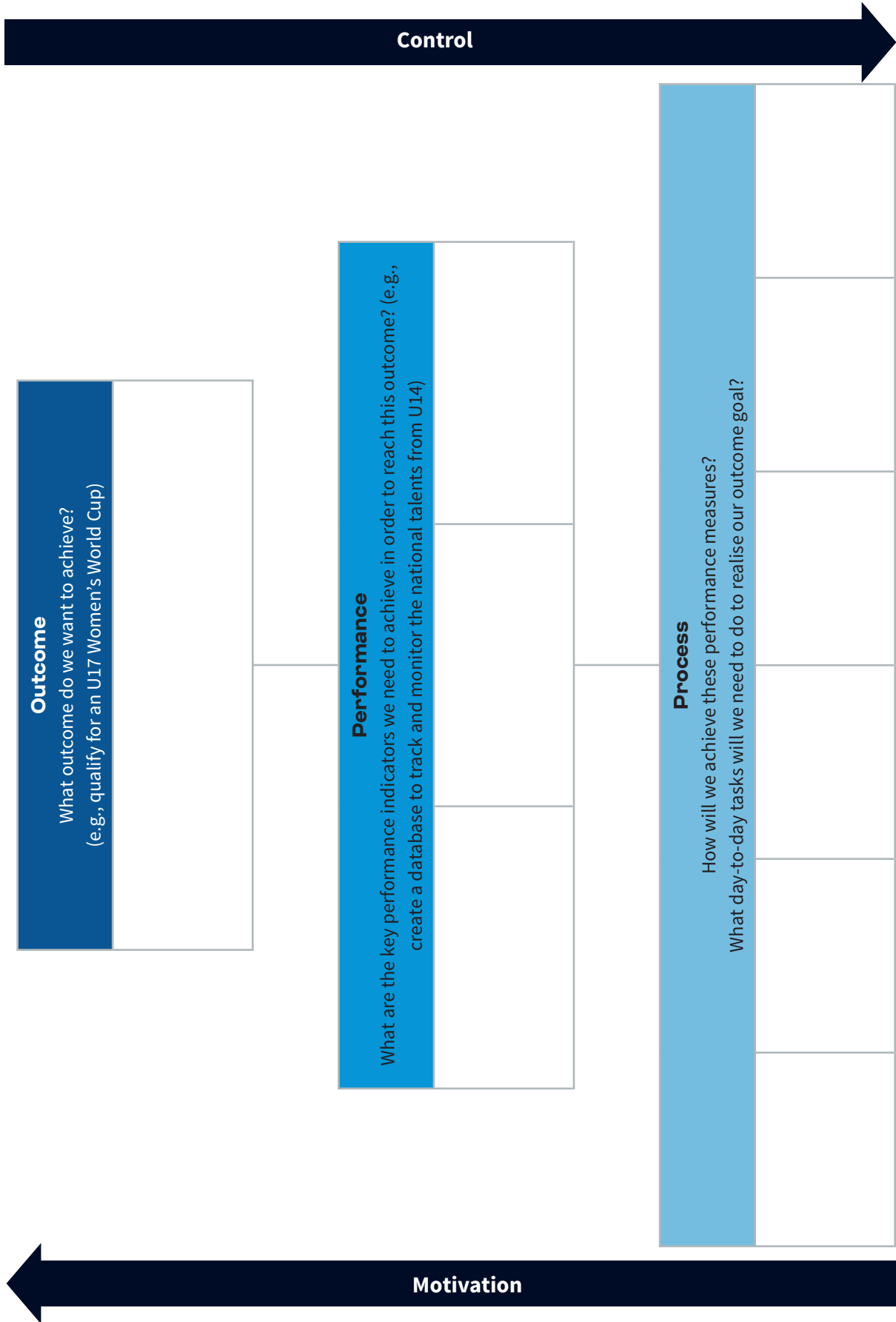
03. Explore the potential performance goals (measures):
 - What measures/key performance indicators can you put in place to know you are on track?
 - How else could you break down and measure your outcome goal?

04. Finally, dive into specific detail and create process goals, these are day-to-day tasks that can be completed to help achieve performance goals



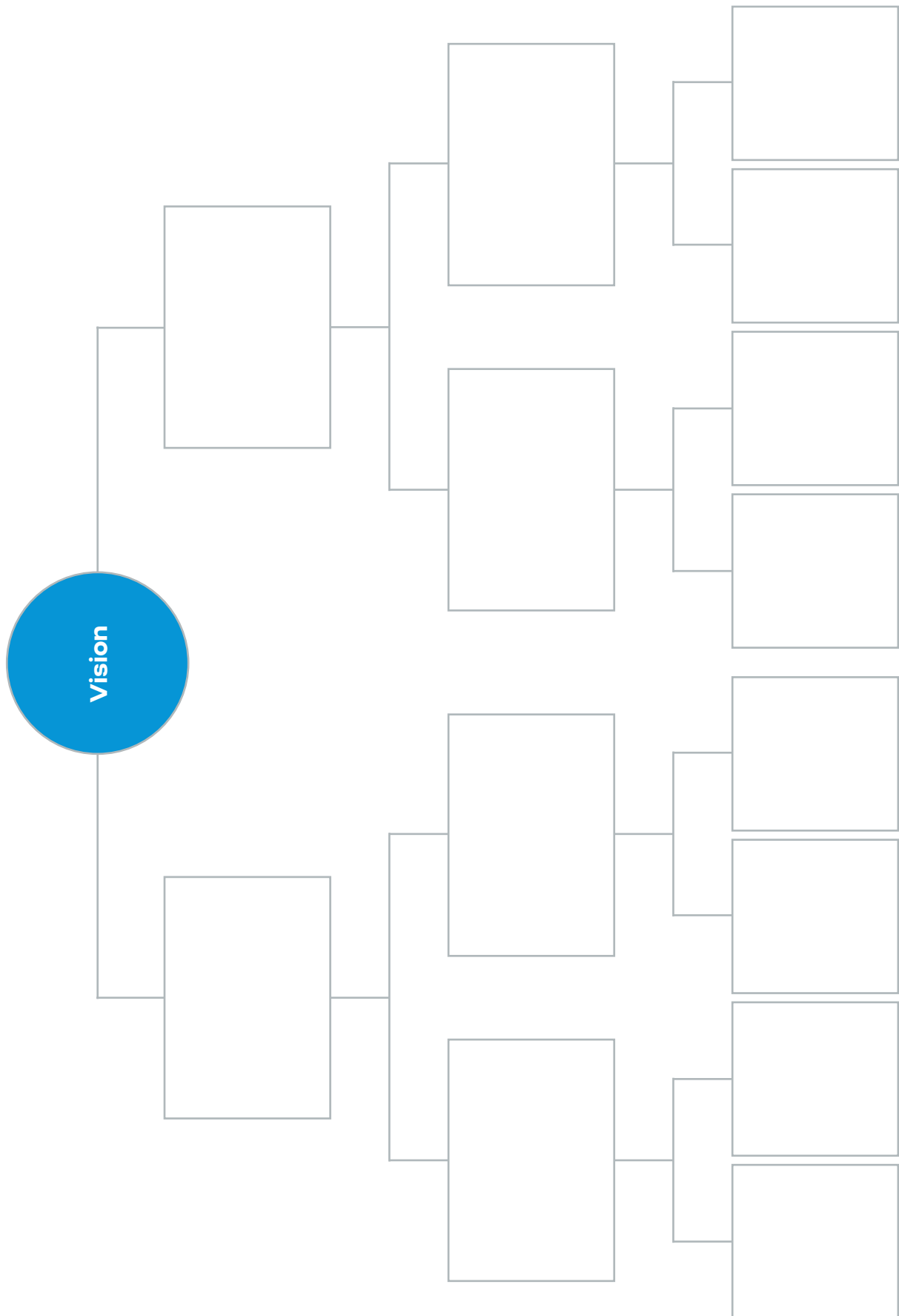
Supporting Resource

—●— Goal Tree Template



Supporting Resource

—●— Goal Tree Template







Good practice example

Thomas Brantsæter: Why the Norwegian FA's talent identification process is not “too narrow, too early”

Norway's approach to identifying talented young players is built on a “broad base” model that does not start selection “too narrow or too early”.

“Because we're a small country we need every talent that we have,” explains Thomas Brantsæter, Head of Talent Identification at the Norwegian Football Association. “So, we try to be as broad in the bottom of the selection pyramid as possible. We don't want to start the selection too narrow, too early.”

The Norwegian player development model starts for boys and girls at the ages of 10-12 years old. Local and professional clubs nominate players into “zonal” teams that link to certain areas of the country. 10% of players in these age groups are part of the model.

The importance of geography

“Regional thinking” is a key concept for the Norwegian FA, who adopt a hybrid approach to player development with elite clubs, professional academies and the national association all playing key roles.

“We always need to take into consideration our geography,” adds Brantsæter. “We are a big country in terms of size, but not so big in terms population, that's why we need this regional thinking. We have a hybrid model where we work together with the elite clubs, professional academies and grassroots clubs, to take care of elite player development in these 18 districts. The overall aim is to provide every player in Norway with the chance to receive quality training and coaching regardless of gender, where they are born and where they live.”

A layered approach to development

The broad approach to selection at the first layer of the Norwegian Player Development model is followed by a narrower selection process as the players get older.



“It’s quite broad in the beginning and then we have another layer the year after called the district teams and then when the boys turn 14, it’s the first year we have the national talent camp, where we gather around 40 to 50 of the most promising players at 14 years old. Then from there, we have national teams. “For the girls the model is different,” adds Brantsæter. “For talented girls aged 13-15 in each district we have what we call ‘Top Groups’. It means this group of players get extra training and support provision including physiotherapy and educational webinars. This is only for the girls as we recognise the need to be bespoke and take into account differences in growth and maturation. On the girls’ side we have a national team at U-14 and the boys one year later at U-15.”

Norwegian FA’s “Future Teams” programme

Alongside the Norwegian national youth teams are a series of ‘future’ teams which give opportunities for talented players who are currently at a physical advantage due to late maturation. These teams run at U-14, U-15 and U-16. “The future teams do not replace youth national teams instead it’s a parallel pathway,” explains Brantsæter. “We want to give the players the recognition and the arena they need to really test themselves against the best players in the country who have the same biological age as themselves.”

Monitoring how many players progress from the future teams into the older national teams and the senior team is one way the Norwegian FA measure the success of the programme. There is also acknowledgment of the need to monitor how many early maturing players progress as well.

“We also look at the early developers and ask: how many of those early developing players do we have in our youth national teams? Are we able to prepare for the time where these physical advantages they face are not as big anymore? It goes both ways: how many future team players do we have in the senior or older youth national teams? And, also, how are we converting our pool of early developing players, into this same progression.”

However, one of biggest markers of programme success is the education of coaches, parents, and players across the country, says Brantsæter. “One of the most important KPIs we have is the level of education and awareness of the coaches working with the players every day. “This is maybe the most important thing with the future teams as it creates awareness in the clubs, with the coaches and even for the players and parents themselves, that they understand what’s going on during the different phases of maturity.”

› Consider playing and coaching philosophies

The focus of playing and coaching philosophies lies on understanding the game from the football organisation's perspective to optimise the creation of a bespoke philosophy. A clear understanding of playing and coaching philosophies ensures a relevant and bespoke philosophy for a football organisation with a view to optimising the talent identification process.

Key questions to ask yourself

- How do you want to play?
- How do you want to coach?
- What does the future game look like (in the short and medium term to protect the long term)?
- What is the game going to look like, and how will this impact on the football organisation's talent identification processes?
- What does talent identification mean to the football organisation?

Important factors to consider

- Create a clear methodology for both playing and coaching philosophies
- Consider the future game and how it could impact player and organisational identity, in order to ensure that the long-term future is protected and the system is adaptable
- Emphasise how, ideally, the talent identification strategy should be closely linked to the organisation's playing philosophy and seek to identify players who have the potential to meet the performance criteria outlined in the organisation's playing philosophy and games programmes
- Encourage cultural conversations and the creation of appropriate working groups where required

Good practice examples to learn from

David Gordo on Spain's playing style (see [page 28](#)): In this interview, you can hear Spain's U17 national team coach explain the nation's unique playing style and how it's coached across all age groups. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

How do member associations design and implement a clear football philosophy, which is instilled by U15 youth national teams through to senior national teams? The following good practice example from Spain provides guidance on how this can be achieved, as well as how it links into their talent identification and development processes.





Good practice example

The Spanish model, philosophy and player development

David Gordo, the coach of Spain's boys' U15 national team, discusses the side's style of play and how he builds his team around the country's overarching football philosophy, before going on to explain how he adapts his team's model based on the opposition and the success of Spanish coaches.

Having coached at several clubs in Spain before working extensively in the country's youth set-up, David Gordo is in the perfect position to comment on Spain's football philosophy. For years he has worked to embed a possession-based attacking style in his youth national teams. Gordo provides captivating insight into how Spain reshaped their style of play across the national teams and how coaches work to adapt their approach based on the opposition.

Key points

- A style of play adopted by all the youth national teams and suited to the type of players that the country produces
- Excellent technical skills, decision-making, and football understanding
- The Spanish Football Association prioritises coach education to develop players

Spain's football identity

Gordo describes Spain's national teams as those that can dominate the ball, create multiple scoring opportunities, defend competently in the opposition's half, and recover quickly after losing the ball. This style of play is embedded in every youth category and cultivated by the Spanish FA, developing a clear understanding of the players roles at a young age.

Teaching game principles

Establishing a playing identity is the first step, but coaching the underlying principles takes time. Gordo feels that the biggest obstacle that national-team coaches face is a lack of contact time with the players. With games coming just three



days after the players arrive for training camp, national-team coaches must make the most of their time with the players. This means creating the perfect sessions to improve specific elements of their game. Gordo admits that video-analysis tools make it much easier for coaches to pass on their knowledge to players.

The skills needed to succeed

In order to excel, various skills are needed in different phases of the game. The attacking phase demands excellent technical skills. Controlling and passing the ball are essential to Spain's possession-based style. But most importantly, Gordo looks for intelligent players who can read the game and anticipate where they need to be to provide the best option for a team-mate. When transitioning from defence to attack, players must quickly recognise whether there is space to play forwards. When recovering the ball in deep-lying defensive positions, playing safe is the priority, but further up the pitch players should look to capitalise and get on the front foot quickly. Defensively, it is imperative to regain possession as swiftly as possible. The first three to five seconds are key, and the players closest to the ball must apply pressure to force a turnover.

Adapting to opponents

Spain have a clear possession-based style that requires shifting the ball quickly, lots of movement and quick defensive recoveries. However, Gordo admits that certain opponents can make this difficult. In his side's recent encounter with Mexico, they were unable to escape the opposition's press and therefore struggled to build out from the back. Adapting to their opponents is particularly challenging, as youth national teams tend to be hindered by a lack of information. They often go into games with little to no knowledge of the opposition's system and without any prior scouting information available to them.

Spanish coaches around the world

Despite the national team's established identity, the methodologies applied by Spanish clubs are more varied. Many of them opt for a different playing style, which means that the players must adapt to a new system when they join up with the national team. These different methodologies are symptomatic of a strong coaching pathway. Spanish coaches are in demand all over the world and working in a host of far-flung locations. The Spanish FA has invested money and built infrastructure to bolster its coaching academies to help the country produce better educators and thus better players.

Summary

- To successfully create or develop a talent identification philosophy, adequate time needs to be spent engaging with all relevant internal and external stakeholders to ensure buy-in, understanding, and support.
- Asking the key questions highlighted in each sub-dimension aids the development of a holistic, bespoke talent identification philosophy.
- Considering the various factors that relate to how you can achieve success within each sub-dimension ensures the rigorous development of a philosophy in the context of talent identification.
- Use the various guidance, supporting templates and resources, and good practice examples embedded within this guide to help shape your own football philosophy.



What does your talent identification philosophy look like and what could you achieve in the future? Use the following checklist to reflect upon what you already do as part of your talent identification philosophy, as well as consider what you could do moving forward. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

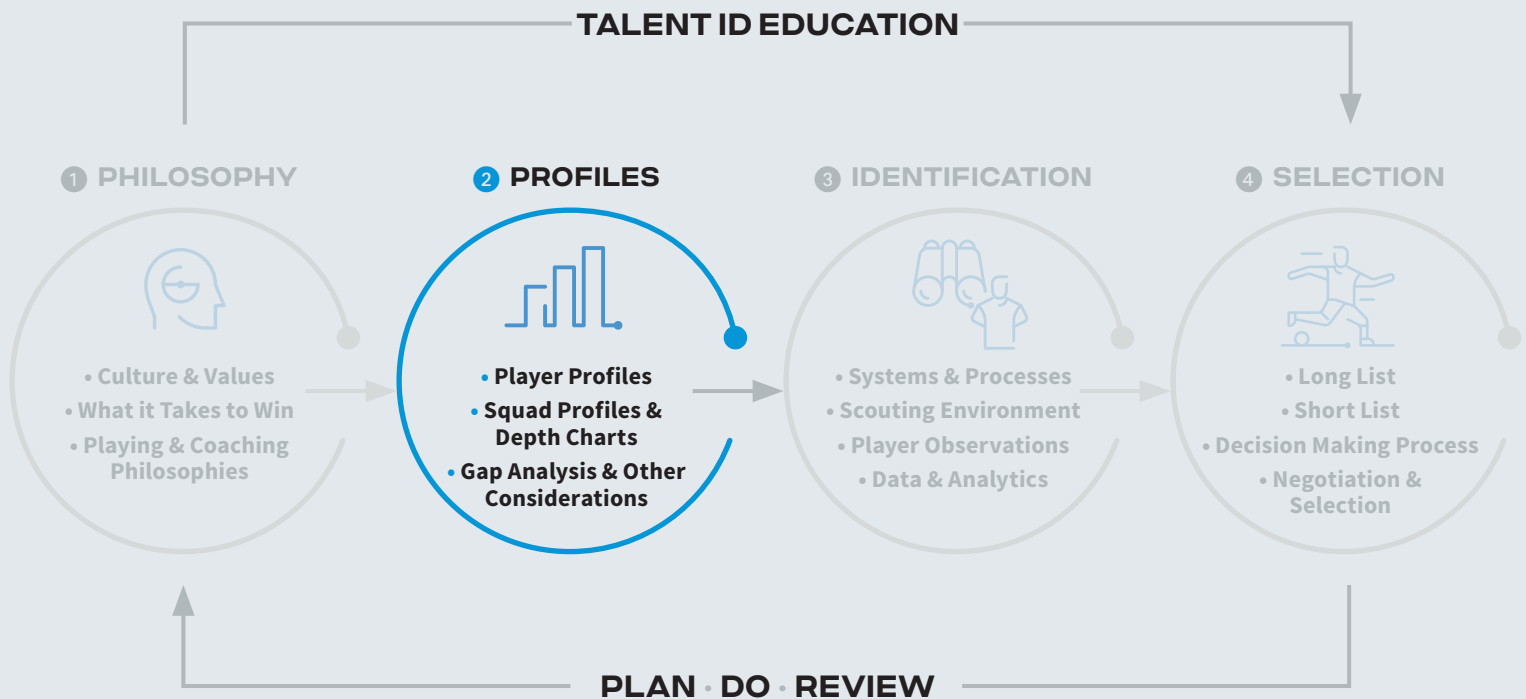
Dimension 2 Profiles

Mirelle van Rijbroek,
Talent ID Specialist

“The profiles are a vital element of the FIFA Talent ID Dimensions Model, acting as a football reference framework that defines both talent and potential. They offer clear guidance on what to observe, evaluate, and recruit—addressing immediate needs while anticipating the future of the game—by aligning player qualities, traits, and behaviours with the organisation’s playing philosophy and long-term vision.”

Mirelle
Van Rijbroek

This guide provides a detailed analysis of the profiles dimension in the talent identification model, highlighting essential factors for its implementation within a football organisation.



Talent identification is vital for building a successful football program. It forms a foundation that supports other areas, such as talent development and national teams, enabling them to excel. Relating to Dimension 1, an organisation, grounded in its football philosophy, should have a clear understanding of how it wants to play (i.e., playing philosophy). This second dimension outlines steps to develop player and squad profiles as well as depth charts of players in teams. It also details gap analysis and other considerations to facilitate the talent identification process for a football organisation.

Why is this dimension important?

Profiles involve determining what is required in a player and squad to perform at the highest level and achieve success for a football organisation. Profiles refer to the characteristics and attributes that define the type of players desired to execute the playing style of an organisation, based on their philosophy. It also includes profiling squads and creating depth charts to better understand current resources and its gaps.

Profiles play a pivotal role in the talent identification process as they provide a structured framework for understanding the needs of an organisation, enabling informed decisions in player identification and selection processes to shape squads for success. Once an organisation has a clear understanding of how it wants to play (i.e., playing philosophy), they can define player profiles, encompassing both subjective and objective technical, tactical, physical, psychological, and social attributes that are desired. Relatedly, profiling squads and creating depth charts enables the organisation to grade and rank current players, compare them to external competitors, and consequently consider their needs to ultimately facilitate the talent identification process.



To successfully create and develop profiles, sufficient time must be devoted to developing a comprehensive understanding and analysis of both current and potential players and squads. Having profiles that align with an organisation's football philosophy is essential for achieving a cohesive approach to talent identification that support long-term success.

How do you achieve success?

> Create and implement player profiles

The focus of player profiles is to establish a detailed understanding of the characteristics and attributes required for players of a football organisation to succeed at the highest level. The comprehensive understanding of desired players ensures alignment in the talent identification process and with the organisation's playing style and football philosophy.

Key questions to ask yourself

- Are player profiles age and maturation specific?
- Are player profiles position specific?
- Are player profiles gender specific?
- What is measured and how (e.g., key performance indicators)?

Important factors to consider

- Discuss how players with potential should be technically, tactically, physically, psychologically, and socially profiled via both objective and subjective measures to gauge their suitability
- Encourage stakeholder engagement, particularly with researchers and specialists, to ensure profiles are research/insight informed
- Ensure player profiles are co-created with all stakeholders to highlight key characteristics for each gender, age group, and position

Supporting templates and resources

Four corner template (see [page 38](#)): This template helps visualise a player's key attributes. These are broken down into four corners: technical, tactical, physical and psychosocial. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

In/Out of possession template (see [page 40](#)): Rather than categorising attributes according to the four-corner method above, this template categorises a player's criteria according to performance in and out of possession. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Good practice examples to learn from

Developing the player of the future (see [page 42](#)): Within this interview you can hear about insights from Arsène Wenger on key attributes a player must have to make it to the top of the game, which could help inform the creation of your player profiles. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

How Australia use player profiles to identify talent and educate coaches (see [page 44](#)): In this presentation, Football Australia's Technical Director of Men's Football and U20 Head Coach, Trevor Morgan, explains how his association's player profiles are shaping talent development. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Sofyan Amrabat – Player profile (see [page 46](#)): Within this article you will find an in-depth analysis and player profile of midfielder Sofyan Amrabat from the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, which may help influence the creation of your own midfielder player profile. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Salma Paralluelo – Raider of the final third (see [page 48](#)): Within this article you will find insights into winger Salma Paralluelo and her player profile from the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023, which may assist you in the development of your own player profile. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Setting physical benchmarks across positions (FIFA WWC 2024) (see [page 50](#)): Within this article you will find the benchmarking of physical demands across positions from the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023, which may support the creation of your own player profiles physical attributes. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Supporting Resource

—●— Player Profile

Four corner template example

Player profiles list the key criteria expected of players who play for your organisation. They are generally broken down into position-specific player profiles for each main role within your squad. Some criteria may be consistent across all positions. These are not exhaustive lists and players may not tick every box, but they highlight the main aspects that you wish to see from players in that position.

Criteria are often listed in order of importance or defending/attacking. The criteria should be determined by the outcomes of the philosophy processes, which highlight the most important aspects of play to help your organisation succeed on the pitch. Achieving an agreement around these profiles from all key stakeholders helps create alignment and understanding.

This four corner template shows the criteria separated according to the traditional four-corner model (Technical, Tactical, Physical and, Psychosocial), although this is just one possible option.

Winger Example

Example criteria are shown here for a winger in an imaginary organisation. They are not prescriptive and all criteria should be relevant and aligned to your organisation.

Technical

- Combination play in final third
- Attacking 1v1s – beat opponent
- Final actions – crossing and shooting
- Touch/control under pressure – play forwards
- Defensive 1v1s – steal the ball

Tactical

- Exploit attacking spaces
- Isolate defenders
- Dynamic transition play
- Lead defensive pressing & 1v1s
- Quick reactions to losing possession

Physical

- Acceleration
- Top pace/speed
- Agility and coordination
- Stamina – repeated sprints
- Robust in duels

Psychosocial

- Risk-taker
- Desire to score/create
- Positive, collective approach
- Resilience – keep trying
- Emotional control

Winger – position specific

General – all positions

Supporting Resource

—●— Player Profile

Use this four corner template to create your own player profile. Consider position-specific technical, tactical, physical, and psychosocial criteria relevant to your organisation to develop this.

Position: _____

Technical

Tactical

Physical

Psychosocial

Supporting Resource

—●— Player Profile

In/out of possession template example

Player profiles list the key criteria expected of players who play for your organisation. They are generally broken down into position-specific player profiles for each main role within your squad. Some criteria may be consistent across all positions. These are not exhaustive lists and players may not tick every box, but they highlight the main aspects that you wish to see from players in that position.

Criteria are often listed in order of importance or defending/attacking. The criteria should be determined by the outcomes of the 'Philosophy' processes, which highlight the most important aspects of play to help your organisation succeed on the pitch. Achieving an agreement around these profiles from all key stakeholders helps create alignment and understanding.

This in/out of possession template shows the criteria separated according to footballing actions when their team is either in possession of the ball or out of possession. Therefore, technical and tactical aspects can be grouped together. physical and psychosocial criteria relevant to all positions are also listed. This is just one example of a possible way to structure player profiles.

Winger Example

Example criteria are shown here for a winger in an imaginary organisation. They are not prescriptive and all criteria should be relevant to your organisation.

Team in possession

- Combination play in final third
- Attacking 1v1s – beat opponent
- Final actions – crossing and shooting
- Touch/control under pressure – play forwards
- Exploit space in final third
- Isolate defenders
- Dynamic transition play
- Risk-taking approach
- Desire to score/create

Team out of possession

- Defensive 1v1s – steal the ball
- Lead defensive pressing and 1v1s
- Quick reactions to losing possession
- Commitment to defending
- Recognises shapes and positioning

Physical

- Agility & Coordination
- Stamina – repeated sprints
- Robust in duels

Psychosocial

- Positive, collective approach
- Resilience – keep trying
- Emotional control

Supporting Resource

—●— Player Profile

Use this in/out of possession template to create your own player profile. Consider position-specific in possession and out of possession criteria alongside general physical and psychosocial criteria relevant to your organisation to develop this.

Position: _____

Team in possession

Team out of possession

Physical

Psychosocial



Good practice example

Developing the player of the future

One of the most important aspects of talent identification and development is to understand the profile of future players. As the game evolves, so too will the skills that players require to perform at the top level.

Arsène Wenger is better placed than most to talk about identifying and developing the players of the future. After working for many years as a coach at the highest level, he is now FIFA's Chief of Global Football Development. In this interview, he discusses the key attributes that, in his view, a player must have to make it to the top of the game. In a sport that never stands still, he also assesses how football will change in the coming years, with a focus on technique, and the room for basic aspects of the game – such as precise passing and deliberate dribbling – to be identified and subsequently developed further. There are many competencies top players have that allow them to excel in the modern game. However, as Wenger explains, there are several competencies that are especially crucial, which could help inform player profiles:

- Taking in information before receiving the ball.
- Analysing and evaluating this information.
- Using this information to think ahead and make quick decisions.
- Having the depth of vision to break opposition lines by looking beyond immediate team-mates.
- Remaining flexible when making a decision, should the situation change.
- Possessing the necessary technical and physical capabilities to accurately execute a decision (e.g., the ability to escape pressure and bypass opponents by running with the ball).
- The willingness to take calculated risks (e.g., attempting a line-breaking pass or going 1v1).
- An eagerness to reflect on the outcome of decisions and apply these learnings to future matches.

The core competencies that top-level players must have

Wenger begins by highlighting the close relationship that a player should have with the ball. “It must be their friend, they must be ready to receive it at all times”. A player should be quick and dynamic when it comes to making decisions and should know when to run with the ball and when to pass it. He also mentions that a player should be athletic and both tactically and technically proficient, including, ideally, being two-footed.

How the game will look in the future

In the last ten years, the main developments in the game have been physical. In the future, Wenger believes that there will be more of a focus on the technical and mental sides, especially in terms of coping with moments of stress and pressure in a game. Players will have quicker vision and, by better analysing what is going on around them, they will be better equipped to get out of tight situations.



The importance of technique

Technique is important because it is the expression of a player’s talent. Wenger explains that, in the same way as a writer with limited vocabulary cannot express what they are truly thinking, a footballer without good technique will not be able to pull off what they want to do, even if they can analyse situations well. He goes on to underscore that football is first and foremost a technical game. As it is not natural to play with your feet, your brain needs to be educated so that your feet have the capacity to do what the brain wants. Without this link, technique is limited.

Developing technique to an even higher level

Wenger expresses his belief that in football, a team should strive to have 11 players with perfect technique. He is confident that in the next ten years, the technical standard of the game will improve, particularly the ability to run with the ball and play a pinpoint pass. Citing Lionel Messi and Diego Maradona as examples, he contends that everyone should be capable of running with the ball and making accurate and incisive passes even while on the move. He sees these as areas for further development and will be important for talent identification.



Good practice example

How Australia use player profiles to identify talent and educate coaches

Football Australia's Trevor Morgan explains how his association defined what was required of an Australian international, and how this process is helping develop the next generation of players and coaches.

When a coach assesses a group of young players for a national youth side, what exactly are they looking for? This sounds like a simple question, but getting a group of coaches to agree on a youngster's potential is harder than one might think. Football Australia has tried to make it easier by creating seven player profiles designed to show players, scouts, and coaches exactly what is expected of future Australian internationals in the men's and women's game. In this good practice example, Trevor Morgan, the Technical Director of Men's Football and U20 Men's Head Coach, explains the process behind those profiles and how they are shaping Australia's approach to talent development.

Good practice

- The first step to creating a player profile is to define the skills, values, and behaviours you want to see in your players.
- Once you have drawn up your profiles, it is important to ensure that coaches and other stakeholders are aware of them and use them consistently to assess players' performances, wherever they are in the country.
- Raising awareness of your profiles should help make sure that coaches at club and national level are singing from the same hymn sheet, which will in turn help to develop more and better players that suit an association's style of play.

What is a player profile?

Since 2020, Football Australia has developed and refined seven player profiles designed to highlight the skills and behaviours they expect to see from Australian internationals in specific positions. As Morgan explains, the profiles themselves

grew out of the association’s “5 Ps” strategy of Pressure, Protection, Positioning, Possession, and Penetration, which serve as the guiding principles behind the national sides’ style of play (a sixth P, Presence, has since been added).

To embed that playing style quickly during short international training camps, Australia’s coaches worked together to define the qualities they wanted to see in each position on the pitch, and then use videos, shown in online presentation from Trevor Morgan, to demonstrate the skills and behaviours they expected from young players across different positions.

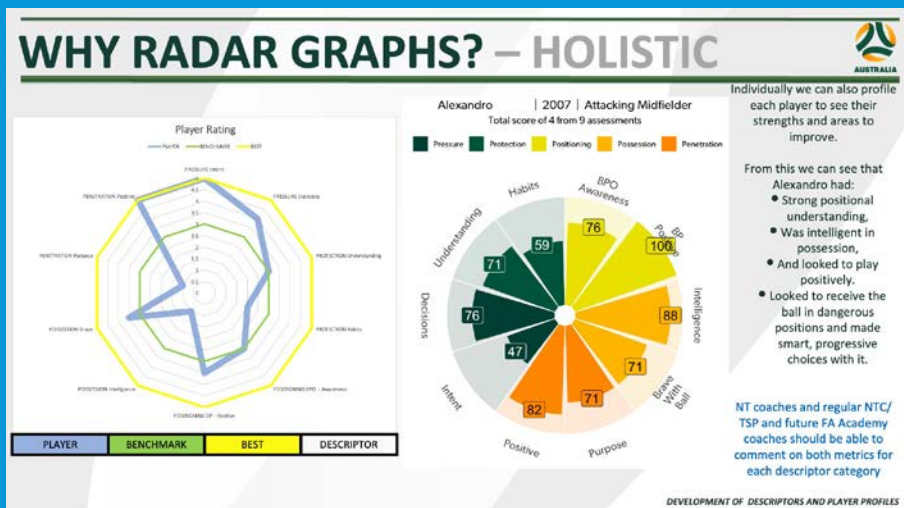
5Ps DESCRIPTORS

TEAM BELIEF	DESCRIPTION	
PRESSURE	INTENT Show aggressive intent & Communicates effectively	DECISIONS Understand cues and makes decisions in relation to others' actions
PROTECTION	UNDERSTANDING Understands how to protect our box/ back 3rd	HABITS Shows good defensive habits - delay, make opponent predictable, marking, block shots/ crosses
POSITIONING	BPO - AWARENESS Reads play well - Manages Transition/ Ability to TR - BPO quickly	BP - POSITIVE Positioned to attack - always wants affect the play/ be an option to go forward
POSSESSION	INTELLIGENCE Shows intelligence when making decisions with the ball in relation to flow/ control of game	BRAVE WITH THE BALL Is brave with choices without being wasteful/ casual
PENETRATION	PURPOSE See, play and execute options that penetrate the defence	POSITIVE Shows intent to score

DEVELOPMENT OF DESCRIPTORS AND PLAYER PROFILES

How can player profiles develop players and coaches?

Once these profiles have been created, it is important to consider how these profiles are used to develop both players and coaches. One of the main benefits of the profiles is that they give coaches at all levels a common framework for assessing players, which in turn informs the way they design and deliver training sessions. They are also invaluable as a benchmarking tool, because they allow coaches across the country to assess players on the same criteria and compare them against their peers. This is particularly important in Australia, where the size of the country makes it very difficult to organise national competitions at youth level.





Good practice example

Sofyan Amrabat: Play-breaker to playmaker

Considering the important role of different positional attributes that build player profiles during talent identification, we explore the talents of a midfield maestro who thrust his name into the limelight and significantly elevated his standing in the global game after turning in a series of eye-catching displays at the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™.

His laser-focused recovery runs, smash-and-grab raids of the ball and marauding bursts out of defence were amongst the highlights of a stellar tournament campaign that saw his nation record a remarkable fourth-place finish. We are referring to the engine in the Moroccan machine, Sofyan Amrabat.

From winning the ball to dictating the play, the Fiorentina man is a three-dimensional defensive midfielder in the moment for every moment of a match. Ever-ready to carry out his defensive duties, he constantly has an eye on attack and an instinctive urge to get forwards. Not content with merely averting danger, the Moroccan linchpin looks to turn defence into attack at every opportunity, driving forwards as he seeks vertical passing options that pick out team-mates occupying space between the lines or making runs in behind. The following video footage illustrates Amrabat's play-breaker to playmaker signature skill set in various scenarios.

Key insights

When defending in the final third, Amrabat is quick to perceive danger and seek to gain a tactical advantage. He protects central areas positioning himself in between or slightly behind opposition players, with a view to reducing the space available to them and in readiness to press. When the opposition probe in wide areas, he makes sure that he is ahead of play, which enables him to double up defensively and close off attacking avenues. Even quicker at eradicating attacking threats, Amrabat often takes opponents by surprise with the speed and bite of his challenges, the sheer force of which knocking them off balance as he presses to win the ball with an authority and personality assured by his own physicality.

After winning the ball or when receiving it under pressure, Amrabat's footballing instinct is to seek transitional advantage. His burst of pace and deceptively agile technique allow him to turn defence into attack in the blink of an eye, as he evades the attentions of opponents and explodes into pockets of space in the middle third. Disregarding regressive, sideways football, his natural inclination – an attribute shared by a host of iconic deep-lying midfielders – is to get his head up and look long for more penetrative, vertical passing options to team-mates in areas between the lines or shaping to make a run in behind the opposition's defence.

From a tactical perspective, Amrabat's signature skill paves the way for attacking opportunities. His forward forays, often launched from inside his own defensive third, with such intent that they tend to catch opposition teams off guard, with a number of players ahead of the ball and the backline pushed up towards halfway. His in-behind passes seek to take advantage of compacted distance between himself and a high defensive line that is vulnerable to penetration. When this passing option is not available, he instead runs with the ball and delays his pass to draw opponents towards him, which serves to create space for his team-mates to exploit.



Summary

A defensive stalwart in one guise, a playmaker in another, Amrabat's dual-role profile offers a fine blend of destruction and creativity. Tactically agile and highly attuned to potential threats, he consistently positions himself in the right place at the right time and then calls on his imposing physical prowess to hustle the ball from opponents before embarking on determined forays towards opposition territory. The transitional force Amrabat brings to his team in the seamless shift from play-breaker to playmaker in one fluid motion is a joy to behold. Of particular note is his ability to initiate transitions from deep inside his own half as he capitalises on the opposition's high defensive line and exploits spaces left unguarded by opponents who have ventured beyond the ball. Amrabat exudes an air of serene calmness and irresistible individualism, all while maintaining collective intent. Whether progressing play through opposition lines by playing incisive vertical passes or delaying the pass to entice an opponent towards him, the talented ball-playing midfielder consistently strives to unlock defensive doors and create strategic advantages for his team.



Good practice example

Salma Paralluelo: Raider of the final third

It is important to consider different player profiles when creating more effective talent identification systems. Here, we use Salma Paralluelo, the Spanish sensation who won the tournament's Best Young Player Award in Spain's triumphant FIFA Women's World Cup 2023™ campaign, as an example of a versatile youngster who thrills fans and torments opponents with her dazzling runs, laser-guided crosses, and composed finishing.

Paralluelo enjoys nothing more than running at opponents, committing them where it hurts the most – at the business end of the pitch. She is already known for her bursts down the channel, getting in behind defences to whip in crosses for team-mates to attack, as well as for her ability to glide inside before driving into the penalty area.

Key insights

As play approaches the opposition's goal, Paralluelo springs into life on the wing, preparing herself to take on opponents whilst looking for opportunities to breach the defensive line. Her decisive and direct mindset is supported by her physical power and a raft of outstanding footballing attributes; an agile speedster with graceful technique who plays with tactical flexibility and ruthless efficiency.

The jet-heeled attacker is adept at stretching defences, forcing defenders to scramble back and cover the goal area as she looks to get in behind. She excels at moving the ball forward quickly and whipping in pacey crosses that invite team-mates to attack the ball. Her signature move, however, is most tantalising as she drives infield, leaving opponents trailing in her wake whilst offering up just enough of the ball to draw the next challenge, only to then glide past her opponent and slice through the defensive line with her dazzling feet and intricate technique.

Clinical in front of goal, Paralluelo brings a spark and cutting-edge individual brilliance to Spain's possession game. During the FIFA Women's World Cup™ in 2023, her awareness of space, rapid decision-making, and ability to dismantle defences with a confidence and composure belying her tender years all enabled her to shine on the women's game's greatest stage.



Summary

A real livewire on the flank, Paralluelo is never one to miss out on an opportunity to attack. With her blend of raw power, an agile mind and magical skills, she has an innate instinct to penetrate the final third and breach opposition defensive lines. Already a player for the big moments, her world-class individual skills add fearsome bite to Spain's possession-based philosophy. Unpredictable by nature, she is in her element when making darting runs down the channel or whipping the ball in early, with pace, across the goal area. A true crowd-pleaser and a nightmare for opposition defenders, Paralluelo is already making a name for herself with her ability to tease opponents down the flank before bending a cross in behind retreating defenders for her team-mates to attack, as well as for her propensity to glide infield and dance through the central space with balletic feet to create shots on goal.



Good practice example

Setting physical benchmarks across positions

This good practice example explores the interplay between the physical demands experienced by international female players and their playing positions during FIFA Women's World Cup 2023™ matches. For the first time in such an analysis of physical performance in women's international football, this article breaks positions down into highly specialised roles. Some reference is also made to how selected positions have evolved in relation to each other over the last three editions of the FIFA Women's World Cup. This provides important considerations for talent identification from a physical perspective, outlining the role of benchmarking individual attributes as well as understanding the evolution of football.

Key points

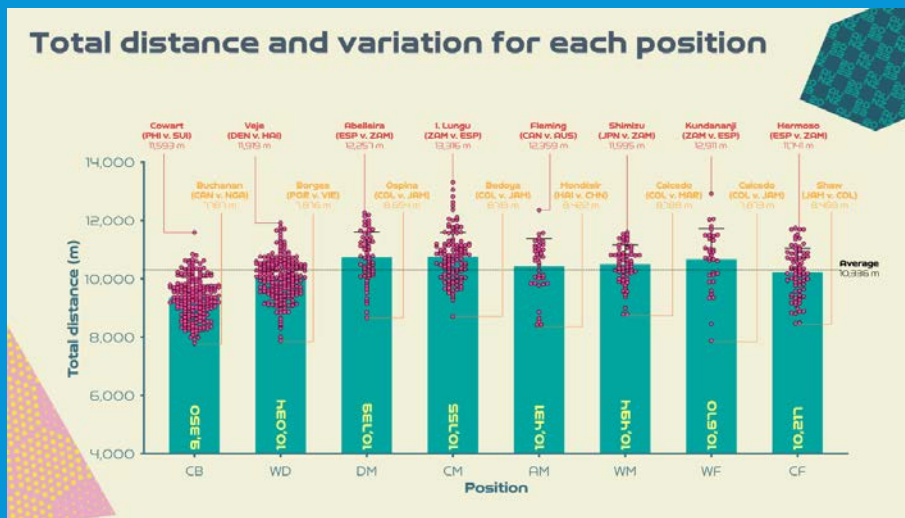
- Central and defensive midfielders amassed the most total distance and centre-backs covered the least ground at the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023™.
- A novel finding of this analysis was that centre-forwards now cover the most sprint distance of any position during match play.
- Sprinting trends across the last three FIFA Women's World Cup™ tournaments demonstrate that centre-forwards and centre-backs have evolved compared to other positions.

Benchmarking specialist positions

A common finding across studies exploring the match demands placed on elite female players is that their physicality is highly dependent upon their playing position. Some studies use broad categories to define positions such as defenders, midfielders and forwards, while others have assigned up to four or five different positional roles to female players. Recent findings have demonstrated that using specialised outfield roles to map the match demands of elite men's football resulted in highly distinguishable movement characteristics compared to broad categories.

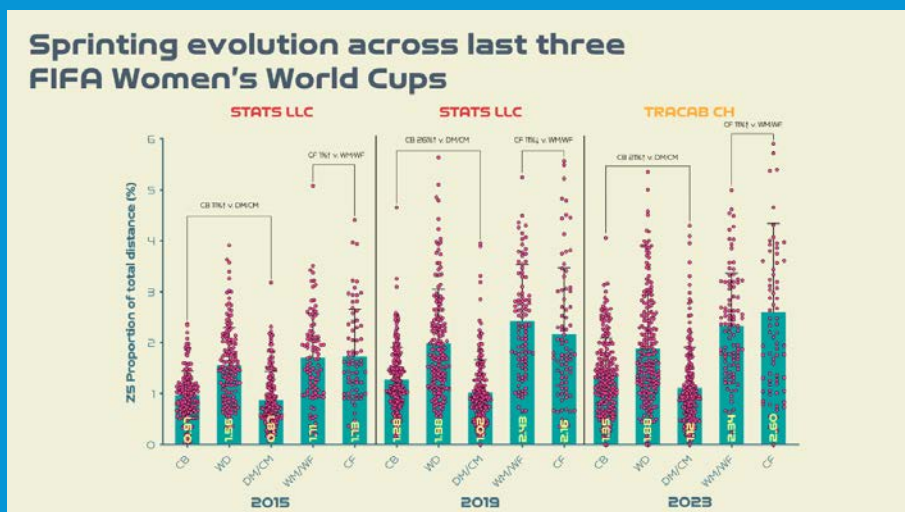
Central midfielders still cover the most ground overall

Basic physical benchmarking across positions enables practitioners to monitor whether modern tactics are modifying certain roles in the team. The figure below shows that central and defensive midfielders accumulated the most total distance – around 15% more than centre-backs, who covered the least ground overall – at the FIFA Women’s World Cup 2023™. Similar positional findings for total distance were found for both Canada 2015 and France 2019. Therefore, this trend is stable at the highest level of women’s international football. The minimum requirement for a modern female midfielder is around 8.7km, which is one of the highest such baselines across all positions.



Position-specific sprinting across three FIFA Women’s World Cup™ editions

The figure below plots position-specific sprinting across the last three editions of the FIFA Women’s World Cup. This is the largest sample of international female players ever analysed and includes more than 2000 player observations. Despite Zone 5 having been identical across the three competitions, the optical tracking systems differed. For instance, the STATS LLC system was used in 2015 and 2019, while TRACAB CH was employed in 2023. As it would be challenging to compare positions between tournaments from 2015, 2019 and 2023 editions due to the tracking technology differences, a within positional analysis of selected positions at the high and low end of the sprinting continuum was conducted.



› Develop squad profiles and depth charts

The focus of squad profiles and depth charts involves comprehensively assessing and documenting the current pool of players and squads within a football organisation by analysing their abilities and performance levels. Effective benchmarking and grading of an organisation's current squad and players ensures a clear understanding of how they measure up against set objectives, internal standards, and external competitors.

Key questions to ask yourself

- What does the football organisation currently have and how good is it?
- Does the football organisation have any grading, ranking, and benchmarking (i.e., internally and externally)?
- Do the squad profiles align with the playing philosophy?

Important factors to consider

- Develop squad profiles and depth charts, which can create a better understanding of what the football organisation currently has within their pathway (e.g., grading and ranking)
- Consider how it compares to other competitors (e.g., benchmarking)
- Emphasise how benchmarks should be age, maturation, and position-specific, whilst external expertise and research would be used where appropriate

Supporting templates and resources

Squad profiling process (see [page 53](#)): This resource may be used to help analyse your current squad through a series of questions to assess and understand the current pool of players available. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Depth chart – grid view (see [page 54](#)): The Grid View template is a variation of a depth chart that helps visualise a squad's distributions in a grid format. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Depth chart – field view (see [page 56](#)): The Field View template also visualises a squad's distribution but presents the information in the context of the pitch. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Good practice examples to learn from

Setting physical benchmarks across teams (FIFA WWC 2024) (see [page 58](#)): Within this article you will find the benchmarking of the team physical demands during the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023, which provides a relevant benchmarking example to consider when developing squad profiles and depth charts. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Supporting Resource

— Squad Profiling Process

Description

Squad profiling is a process of establishing what the preferred squad would look like for your organisation and then assessing your current squad(s) against that criteria. These are some examples of questions that can be discussed to help define the key factors, covering the squad composition, playing style, and quality. This list is not a complete one and there will be questions related to your organisation and context that will be relevant.

Linking these factors back to your philosophy will help connect your squad profile with your aims. Once you are clear on your preferred squad design and style, it will be crucial to assess the quality of your squad(s) before moving forward with talent identification. It is important be able to compare and rank players against each other within the squad(s) as well as externally against the best players from other teams or regions. Using consistent gradings can help this process, as well as having benchmark or reference players to compare them to.

Use the following types of questions to analyse the squad, then address any issues to try and improve the squad profile.

Squad design

- What is our preferred squad size/composition (e.g., 20 outfield senior + 3 GKs + 3 outfield youth)?
- Do we want a mixture of experience/youth in each position in the squad or lean more towards one?
- Do we want adaptable players who can play multiple positions, or specialists in their positions?
- Are there enough left/two-footed players in the squad?
- Is there space for players to move up and down between squads for experience/rotation?

Squad style

- Do the players currently in the squad match the desired playing philosophy/style?
- Are there key characteristics needed for certain positions (e.g., pace to play on counterattack, or high technical quality for possession-based style)? Do we lack those types of players currently?
- Do we want players in similar positions to have similar styles or differing styles (e.g., all full-backs to be attacking minded, or to have mixture of attacking and defensive minded to balance)?

Squad quality

Ranking – how do we rank our players within the squad? What defines our best players?

Benchmarking – how do we compare them to the best players in other teams? How do we compare them to players regionally/internationally/globally?

Supporting Resource

—●— Depth Chart Grid View

This grid version of a depth chart is intended to help an organisation visualise their squad distribution across all positions and teams. It allows them to clearly see gaps in their squads where there is either a lack of players or no players of high quality in that position. Players can be highlighted according to their quality (e.g., best/most interesting players) or other features such as being left-footed, having an expiring contract or playing outside the local region.

Position	Senior	U23	U19	U17	Gaps
GK	Player A (99) Player B (91)	Player B (04)		Player A (08)	
RB	Player A (00)				X
LB	Player A (96) Player A (03)	Player A (04)	Player A (06)		
CB-R	Player A (01)		Player A (05)	Player A (07)	
CB-L	Player A (92) Player A (02)				X
DM	Player A (99)	Player A (03)		Player A (07) Player A (08)	
CM	Player A (98)	Player A (04)	Player A (06)		
AM	Player A (97) Player A (99) Player A (03)			Player A (07)	
LW	Player A (98)	Player A (05)			
RW	Player A (01)	Player A (04)	Player A (06)		
ST	Player A (96) Player A (98)				X

Player Name (Year of Birth)

Top/Star Player

Expiring Contract

Supporting Resource

Depth Chart Field View

This pitch version of a depth chart is intended to help an organisation visualise their squad distribution with a clear link to their tactical approach and system of play. Displaying multiple squads or age groups within the same pitch view allows easy identification of areas with over/under-loading of players. Players can be highlighted according to their quality (e.g., best/most interesting players) as well as their age-groups or other key characteristics.



- Senior Player
- B-Team Player
- Youth Player
- Top/Star Player**

Supporting Resource

—●— Depth Chart Field View

Use this depth chart template to create your own. Consider your own positions, playing philosophy, and teams/age groups within your organisation to develop this. Other considerations could include top/star players (grading between them is key), different age groups (e.g., senior, U19, etc.), contract/status (e.g., expiring, loan, dual nationality), and dominant foot (e.g., left footed).





Good practice example

Setting physical benchmarks across teams

This article contextualises and benchmarks the team physical demands during the FIFA Women's World Cup Australia & New Zealand 2023™. The physical volume and intensity metrics for each nation during the tournament were explored. An examination of the match-to-match variation across teams also highlighted the consistency of the physical demands. This offers important considerations for talent identification from a physical perspective, outlining the role of benchmarking team attributes.

Key points

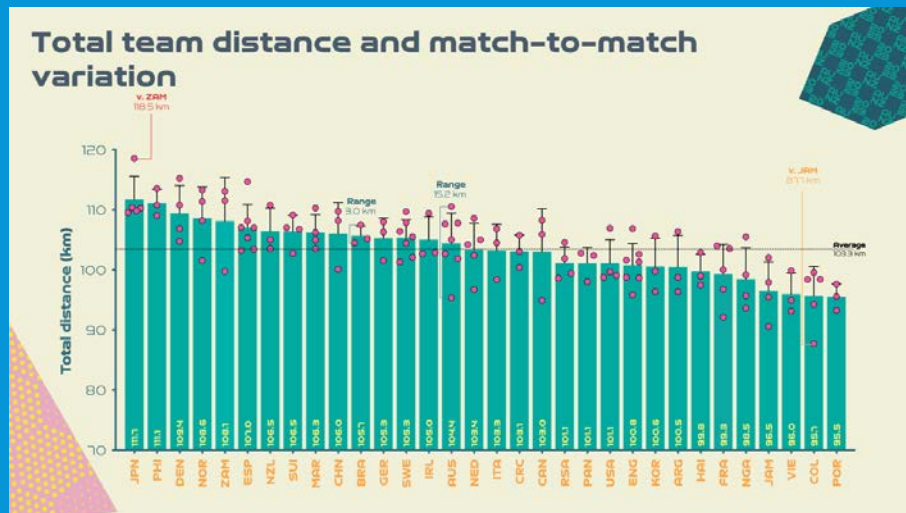
- Zambia, Spain, and Brazil led the way for high-intensity distances covered during the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023™, while Costa Rica, Switzerland, and Vietnam covered the lowest distances.
- Australia and Spain exhibited considerable match-to-match variation across the tournament for distance respectively covered in total and at high intensity.
- Denmark, Spain, and Zambia exhibited high volume and intensity characteristics during matches, while it was the opposite story for Jamaica, Colombia, and Vietnam.

Establishing team physical benchmarks

Quantifying the match demands experienced by teams is extremely complex, but a commonly employed approach is to report the amount of ground covered in total, in addition to the distances covered at higher intensities. Despite the limitations of such an approach, this information can still serve as an important point of reference for practitioners regarding the contemporary team demands of women's international football, helping inform future tournaments and talent identification processes.

On average, teams covered 103.3km in total per game during the FIFA Women's World Cup Australia & New Zealand 2023™, with 6.7km and 1.9km respectively covered at the higher intensities (>19.0 and >23.0km/h). Some fascinating team insights can be gleaned from the upper and lower ends of the physical performance

continuum. The figure below demonstrates that Japan, the Philippines, and Denmark covered the most ground during games, while Portugal, Colombia, and debutantes Vietnam amassed the lowest overall distances. Although more than 90% of teams' total distance covered comprised of low- to moderate-intensity activity (Zones 1-3), a major focal point should be on high-intensity activity (Zones 4-5). This is especially relevant given the link between intensity and game-changing moments.



Factors impacting physical outputs

Although physical fitness is closely related to the total and high-intensity distances covered by elite female players during matches, this relationship is extremely complex. The reader should be mindful that fitness is not the only factor that determines a team's physical outputs. Given the submaximal nature of football, players usually exert themselves based on the tactical scenarios that they encounter. Thus, the style of play employed by each side combines with other factors, including the scoreline/game state, a game's importance and the standard of the opposition, to influence physical outputs. For instance, Vietnam's low-intensity characteristics could be related to their limited ball possession. This resulted in them frequently sitting in a compact defensive low or mid-block for extended periods. This defensive style of play reduced their opportunities to regularly move into space to engage in high-intensity activities.

On the other hand, the high-intensity nature of champions Spain could be linked to their dominance on the ball. This led their players to regularly move into space to receive the ball in a bid to rapidly progress the ball up the pitch and into the final third. Due to their higher pitch position, physical intensity was also needed when they briefly lost possession. They would attempt to recover the ball via counter-pressing or, if unsuccessful, would defensively transition and recover. This physical-tactical interdependency is understandable, as the aim of any team's tactics is to ensure optimal organisation in order to make the most of their players' capabilities. Thus, these benchmarking trends could reflect some of the stylistic tendencies of each team. And therefore, it is important for the reader to understand that tactical variations and the quality of the opposition may require teams to up- or downregulate their physical exertions accordingly. Indeed, these tactical and physical team requirements will have important implication for talent identification when building future squads for tournaments and competitions.

› Conduct gap analysis and other considerations

The focus of gap analysis and other considerations lies in understanding the specific needs of the football organisation based upon current resources available. A detailed gap analysis allows for the identification of areas where the organisation may be lacking, thereby facilitating the talent identification process to address those gaps.

Key questions to ask yourself

- What does the football organisation need?
- What resources does the football organisation currently have?
- What are the football organisation's 'elite' player behaviours?

Important factors to consider

- Outline what they are missing and, therefore, what they require to identify/develop based on contextual factors such as age, gender, and playing, which can be based upon their squad profiles and depth charts
- Encourage the football organisation to use player profiles, squad profiles, and depth charts to help form the process to determine the resources required

Supporting templates and resources

SWOT analysis (see [page 61](#)): This template helps outline your organisation's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, outlining a broader picture of internal strengths and weaknesses. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).



Supporting Resource

—●— SWOT Analysis

What is the tool

SWOT is an acronym for **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats. It is a tool to identify and assess an organisation's internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as its external opportunities and threats, to support decision-making and strategy development.

Why use this tool

It is a useful tool for a deeper analysis of the most important internal and external factors affecting the talent development landscape of a football organisation. Keep in mind that strengths and weaknesses are factors analysed within the organisation and are factors that they control (internal), while opportunities and threats are factors that impact the organisation and are within its sphere of influence but outside their direct control (external).

When to use this tool

This tool can be used during the development of strategic plans to evaluate the organisation's current position and to formulate strategies that leverage strengths, mitigate weaknesses, capitalise on opportunities, and defend against threats. This tool can be applied to understand the internal and external factors that could impact success, which will guide the planning and resource allocation processes.

How to use this tool

To use the SWOT analysis tool, consider the following categories:

Strengths – things that the organisation does particularly well or that distinguish them from others

Weaknesses – things that the organisation could improve or that others are doing better

Opportunities – openings or areas outside the organisation that they might be able to exploit for positive change

Threats – areas that might negatively affect the organisation from the outside

By considering and analysing each of these categories, you can develop strategies that leverage strengths, address weaknesses, capitalise on opportunities, and mitigate threats, ensuring a comprehensive approach to strategic planning and decision-making.

Supporting Resource

—●— SWOT Analysis

Strengths

What do you do well?

What unique resources can you draw on?

What do others see as your strengths?

Weaknesses

What could you improve?

Where do you have fewer resources than others?

What are others likely to see as weaknesses?

Opportunities

What opportunities are open to you?

What trends could you take advantage of?

How can you turn your strengths into opportunities?

Threats

What threats could harm you?

What is your competition doing?

What threats do your weaknesses expose to you?

Supporting Resource

—•— SWOT Analysis


Strengths



Weaknesses



Opportunities



Threats



Summary

- To successfully create and develop profiles, sufficient time must be devoted to developing a comprehensive understanding and analysis of both current and desired players and squads
- Asking key questions highlighted in each subdimension will aid the development of comprehensive player profiles, squad profiles and depth charts, and enhance the understanding of gaps and needs
- Considering the various important factors involved in each subdimension will ensure that profiles enable informed decisions in player identification and selection processes
- Use the various good practice examples, tools, and additional resources embedded within this guide to develop your own profiles



What does your talent identification profile look like and what could you achieve in the future? Use the following checklist to reflect upon what you already do as part of your talent identification profile, as well as consider what you could do moving forward. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Supporting Resource

Reflection Checklist

Player profiles

Achieved Developing Not Achieved

Does a defined criteria for assessment of players exist in the organisation?

Are the assessment criteria age- and maturation-specific?

Are the assessment criteria gender-specific?

Are the assessment criteria position-specific?

Are gradings and judgement metrics used in the criteria?

What themes and key performance indicators are the profiles based upon? Are they aligned to the philosophy?

How adaptable are the profiles? How can they be used to aid decision-making and selections?

Squad profiles & depth charts

Does the organisation have a full range of youth teams across ages and genders?

Are squads maintained throughout 1-2-year cycles for competitions?

Do squad depth charts exist across all ages and genders?

Are succession plans used to prepare beyond current year/cycle?

Is benchmarking (internal/external) used to judge player quality?

What is the current youth teams set up across the organisation (age groups, genders)? Are considerations made for future squads? How clear are they on current player quality and areas of strength/weakness?

Gap analysis & other considerations

Achieved Developing Not Achieved

Does the organisation review their squads and selections for potential gaps?


Have any current or future gaps in the talent pipeline been identified?

Are all factors considered (e.g., position, age, gender, region, culture, etc.)?

What are the potential issues within the talent identification approach and the gaps identified (i.e., what/when/where)?

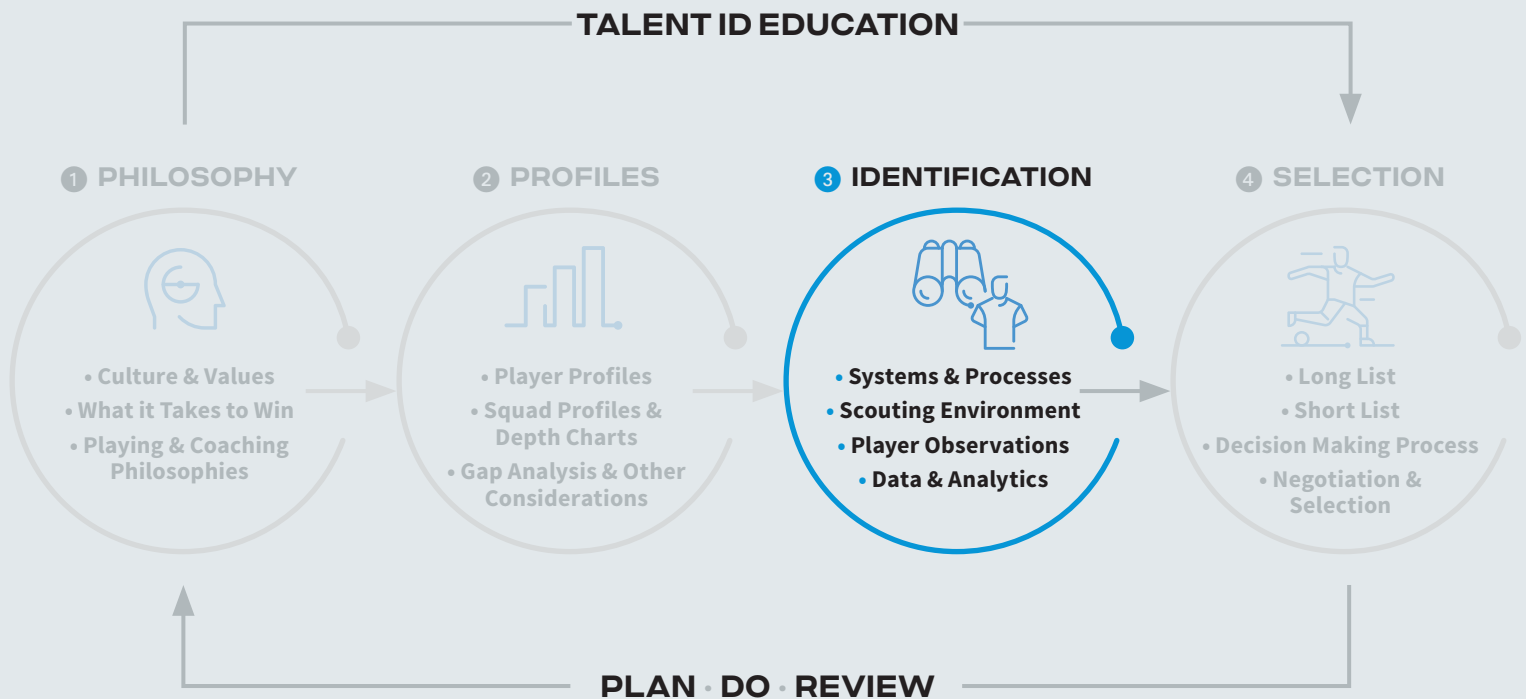
Dimension 3 Identification

Stephen Morrow,
Talent ID Specialist

A photograph of Stephen Morrow, a Talent ID Specialist, speaking at a conference. He is wearing a dark blue polo shirt with the Adidas logo on the left chest and the FIFA logo on the right chest. He is also wearing a blue lanyard with a badge that reads "FIFA TDS Lead Workshop Zurich, October 2014" and "Steve Morrow". He is holding a smartphone in his right hand and a folder in his left hand. The background is dark and out of focus.

“The first and foremost priority for any football organisation is to identify top talent. To achieve its full potential, the organisation must design and implement a comprehensive, robust Talent ID system.”

This guide provides an in-depth review of the identification dimension in the talent identification model, indicating important aspects for its implementation within a football organisation.

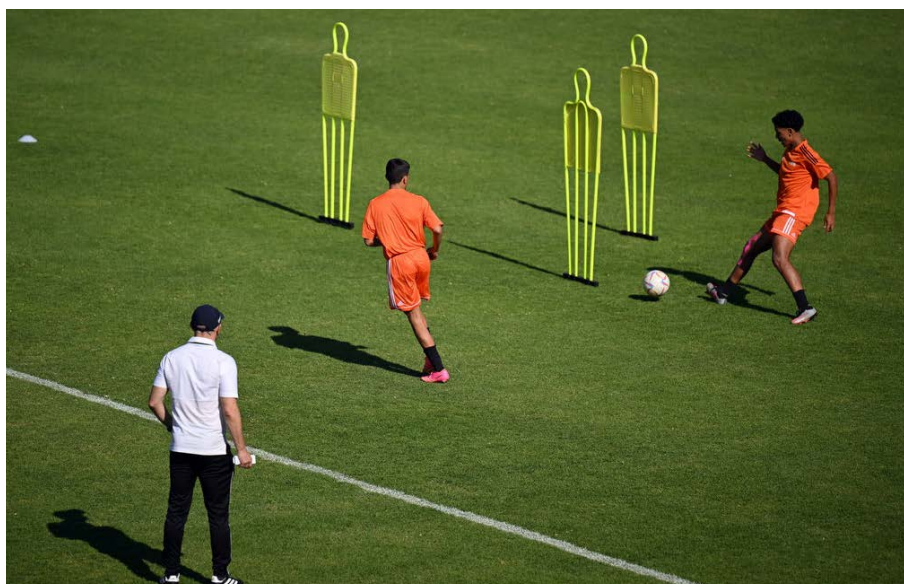


Talent identification is crucial for creating a successful football programme. It lays the foundational groundwork that supports key areas like talent development, ultimately empowering them to achieve excellence. Building off Dimension 1 and 2 in the talent identification guide, an organisation, informed by its philosophy and profiles, should have a clear understanding of how it wants to play (i.e., philosophy) and the playing qualities of desired players (i.e., profiles).

This third dimension highlights how to identify players with potential through well-structured systems and processes. It covers the use of comprehensive scouting environments, player observations, and data analytics to ensure effective and efficient identification of talent for the football organisation.

Why is this dimension important?

Identification involves determining the methods required to identify players with the potential to perform at the highest level for a football organisation. Identification refers to the comprehensive systems and processes needed to scout and evaluate players, regardless of their location or competition level.



The identification dimension provides a structured framework for discovering talent. This framework encompasses systems and processes, scouting environments, player observations (e.g., reporting, live observation, video scouting), and data analytics, enabling informed decisions in player identification to build successful squads. Following the creation of a bespoke philosophy and profiles, organisations can effectively structure their talent identification process, aligning with their overall strategy.

To establish a comprehensive identification process, football organisations must implement robust scouting systems with appropriate resources and technical expertise to identify players across all levels and relevant locations. Investing in data management systems, talent identification events, player observation tools, and a network of specialists ensures comprehensive coverage of all relevant regions, maximising the talent pool.

How do you achieve success?

› Implement talent identification systems and processes

The focus of implementing talent identification systems and processes is to determine a structured and effective method for scouting and reporting on players. A well-defined system ensures consistency, clarity, and efficiency in the talent identification process.

Key questions to ask yourself

- Who is responsible for designing the identification system and processes?
- What scouting and reporting process (e.g., templates, linked to philosophy) do you currently use?
- Does the organisation use a calendar or scheduling tool to effectively plan and coordinate talent identification activities and events?
- Does the organisation use a range of structured and practical approaches to identify potential talent?
- Do the scouts use common language and alignment?

Important factors to consider

- Ensure reporting process and education is aligned to the philosophy and profiles.
- Highlight how the scouting and reporting process can be conducted through a range of practical approaches, such as match observations, player recommendations, meetings, and conversations.
- Consider the ages in which you begin identifying potential talent. Remember, the younger you start to identify players, the further away you are from the end goal (i.e., adulthood) and the less likely you are to be accurate in your decision making.

Good practice examples to learn from

The FIFA Football Language (see [page 72](#)): Within this article you can better understand how FIFA analyse football through standardised language to break down each area in-detail in a way audiences world-wide can interpret. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).





Good practice example

The FIFA Football Language

There has been sizeable growth in the use of football data analytics within the professional game over the last decade. Performance data is becoming more widely available, meaning it is less about who has access and more about who can use it. This is particularly important for talent identification, as it helps to create alignment in objective data that can be used to identify potentially talented players.



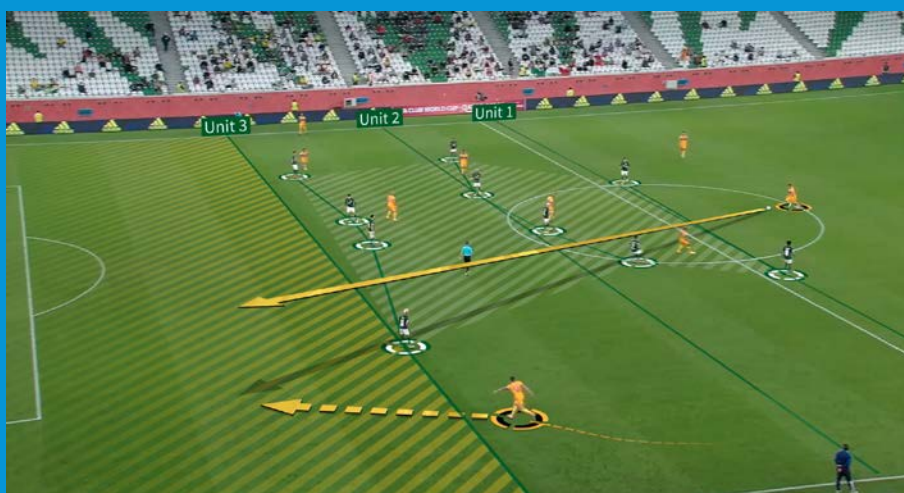
The appointment of Arsène Wenger as Chief of Global Football Development brought a new stimulus to increase the level of understanding of the game. Wenger's vision is:

“To improve football understanding and experience by creating new Enhanced Football Intelligence (EFI) through the combination of technical expert observation and football data analytics”.

To avoid data discrepancy issues and help create alignment on performance data, FIFA created a unified language and an aligned performance data set. This language was designed not only to support analysis at FIFA, but to be implemented as an educational tool for the world of football in order to better understand how the game can be viewed and broken down.

The FIFA Football Language is the blueprint for how FIFA wants to analyse football moving forward. It has been developed over the last two years through collaborations with multiple high-level technical experts, performance analysts, and data scientists to break each area of the game down into fine detail while maintaining football context. The basis of the language is the individual player and the actions they perform with the ball, but also their actions in relation to the ball when they are out of possession.

The FIFA Football Language captures the behaviours of the team and the individual while they are in possession, but also off the ball, analysing areas such as “Offering to receive” and “Defensive pressure”. Each action, where relevant, is considered in terms of the impact it has on opposition team shape, providing another layer of context to player actions. In essence, the language considers player actions while they are on the pitch and not just when they are in possession.



With the creation of the FIFA Football Language and the assembling of the technical analysis team, FIFA now has the capacity to progress with deeper and more insightful analysis, having developed a blueprint and framework for observing and analysing the game moving forward. The detail and depth provided by the FIFA Football Language allows for very specific questions to be asked. The mission is to improve football understanding and ascertain why certain events are important within the game.

The FIFA analysis team uses the FIFA Training Centre as a platform to provide insights, combining data, video and technical interpretation to help build and grow technical, tactical, and physical understanding within the footballing world. With so many specialists contributing to the creation of intelligence, the key is to find the right balance between data insights and technical interpretation, making sure there is always a clear football context. From a talent identification perspective, it will be important to use objective data to help inform decision making when identifying and selecting players. Having a common language will also help ensure that scouts and recruiters are aligned when identifying potentially talented players.

› Consider the scouting environment

The focus of considering the scouting environment is to establish a comprehensive and inclusive approach to identifying potential players. By understanding and optimising where and how scouting occurs, the organisation ensures that no talent goes unnoticed, and the recruitment process is efficient, effective, and capable of tapping into a diverse range of talent sources.

Key questions to ask yourself

- Where does the organisation identify their players (e.g., clubs, regional best with best sessions, schools)?
- How does the organisation assess its football-playing population and the coverage of the playing environment (e.g., competition structures)?
- Do you consider players based outside your borders/overseas?

Important factors to consider

- Create a broad platform where players are identified from. For example, school football events, club games, competitions and tournaments, and player recommendations.
- Consider collaborations with schools as well as other external stakeholders (e.g., grassroots programmes) to support a greater environment.
- Consider the impact of birthplace effects, recognising how certain locations may influence player development and opportunities.
- Identify talent hotspots, regions that consistently produce a high volume of skilled players and leverage these areas for talent identification.

Supporting templates and resources

Activity planning table (see [page 75](#)): This template refines intended talent identification activities, increasing alignment and accountability during strategic planning. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Good practice examples to learn from

Australia seek stars of tomorrow as Talent Development Scheme is unveiled (see [page 78](#)): Within this article you will find various examples of how Football Australia has enhanced and broadened their talent identification to different regions of the country, giving every talent a chance to be identified. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Talent identification in Thailand (see [page 80](#)): In this presentation, FA Thailand's Assistant Technical Director, Kuntapol Bomz Lertlamsakulkarn, explains how FIFA's Talent Development Scheme has helped find Thailand's next generation of "War Elephants". Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Supporting Resource

—●— Activity Planning Table

What is the tool

A tool to refine the planned Talent ID activities to increase alignment and accountability during strategic planning.

Why use this tool

Long-term objectives and project plans need to be translated and integrated into a form that becomes the tangible support for all operational activities. This form is usually the yearly action plan that defines what will take place during the following 12-month period.

Regardless of how the period is defined, the principle of this tool remains the same, which is to set out and understand in advance which activities need to be carried out. Further, this tool will enable good coordination and efficient tracking of all Talent ID activities allowing for potential adjustments and evaluation of effectiveness. This should include clear deadlines, accountable individuals, and result indicators.

When to use this tool

This tool can be used whenever there is a need to organise, execute, monitor, and evaluate activities (e.g., scouting) in a structured and efficient manner. This tool can be applied to understand each activity and ensure that all aspects are coordinated effectively.

How to use this tool

There are many different ways that you can create an activity plan. One such way is an activity planning table, which is a simple table to document the key characteristics of the different activities that your football organisation will carry out. See below an example of how to complete this.

Objective	Activities	Deadline	Budget	Person(s) Responsible	Result Indicator
Identify talented players aged between 12 and 16 years	Organise a Talent ID event in the main regional town	XX.XX.20XX (year 2)		John Smith, in cooperation with regional stakeholders	80 boys and girls participated in the event and 15 potential talents were identified
	Attend the school football competition to identify talented players aged between 12 and 16 years	XX.XX.20XX (year 3)		Jane Bloggs, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education	10,000 boys and girls competed in the school football competition and 100 potential talents were identified





Good practice example

Australia seek stars of tomorrow as Talent Development Scheme is unveiled

Devised in consultation with FIFA's Technical Department, Football Australia recently launched Australian football's Talent Development Scheme (TDS) with comprehensive and broad-ranging talent identification and development at its core.

Australia's bespoke project has been constructed with a number of specific relevant areas in mind, including not only the nation's wide-spread populace, but also finding a suitable balance between its male and female player populations. The TDS has already been successfully piloted and will now be fully implemented over the coming years.

"Football Australia's TDS Talent Identification Project is an innovative initiative to identify emerging talents across the landscape of Australia for boys and girls", April Heinrichs said as part of her role as FIFA High Performance Specialist. "This project will create a national conversation on what national-calibre players look like across youth age-groups. Football Australia's approach is the first of its kind – a holistic and inclusive process, tracking top talents while engaging more coaches in the process".

"Football Australia's TDS project links directly to identifying boys and girls for youth national teams. In fact, on the evening of the launch, there was a young female selected for the upcoming U17 camp as a replacement player, who received her chance due to an injury. It transpired that she was one of the youngest players who had been invited to a TDS match and she will now attend her first national team camp", Heinrichs continued.

A focus on identification efforts in rural areas is particularly relevant in Australia where a significant portion of the population are spread over a vast geographical area, and often removed from the major hubs that are the state capital cities. “Historically, players identified for our national youth teams have resided in major metropolitan areas, where they have been part of A-League club set-ups or in Member Federation programmes”, said Football Australia Chief Football Officer Ernie Merrick.

“This approach to talent identification has often meant that players based regionally, or who aren’t part of an existing elite pathway, have little opportunity to get on the radar of national teams’ technical staff. To ensure our youth and senior national teams achieve success both within Asia and globally, it is vitally important we are identifying and developing the best players from all corners of Australia and that no one is left behind”, added Merrick.

Data driven talent identification is one of the tools implemented by Football Australia. The Talent ID Webform will allow accredited and approved coaches to submit technical assessments on players at club matches, plus state and national talent identification matches. Underpinning Football Australia’s TDS is the scheduling of frequent TDS matches in every state and territory.

“The approach taken by Football Australia in incorporating FIFA’s technical expertise to develop their TDS strategy showcases our joint commitment to foster the growth and development of the next generation of Australian football talent, ensuring we give every aspiring talent the chance to be identified and supported”, added Steven Martens, FIFA Director of Football Global Development.



FIFA’s Head of High Performance Ulf Schott concurred. “It’s fantastic to see how Football Australia, in close collaboration with FIFA, has developed an innovative plan to identify and nurture talents even more effectively. This approach will undoubtedly contribute to strengthening and enriching the future development of football at the international level”, he concluded.



Good practice example

Talent identification in Thailand

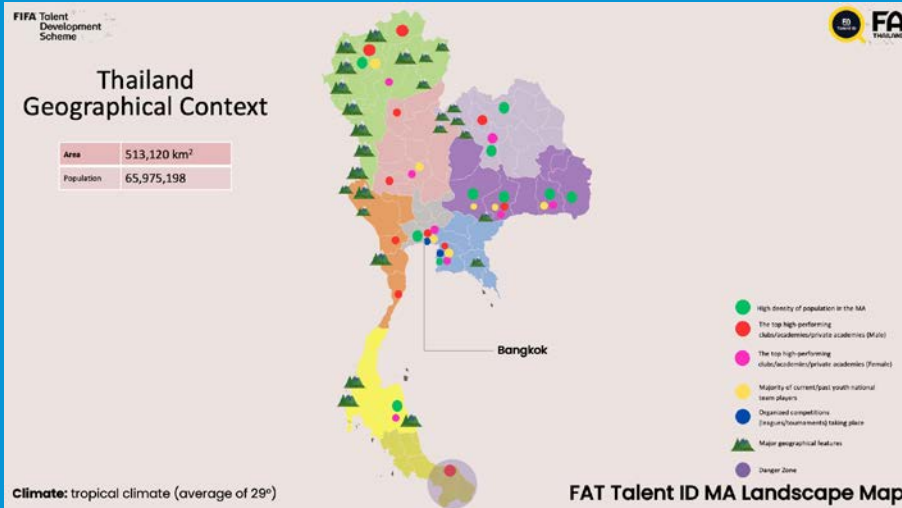
In this good practice example, FA Thailand Assistant Technical Director & TDS Manager Kuntapol Bomz Lertlamsakulkarn explains how support from FIFA's Talent Development Scheme (TDS) has helped the Football Association of Thailand find its next generation of "War Elephants" – and got them dreaming of qualification for the 2026 FIFA U-17 World Cup™.

With a population of 66 million, Thailand has the potential to become a major footballing force. However, limited resources and logistical problems have traditionally made it difficult for its national association to locate the country's best players. FIFA's TDS programme has helped FA Thailand tackle these issues by establishing a more systematic approach to talent development, improving its relationships with key stakeholders, and boosting awareness of youth football.

Good practice

- A national talent identification (TID) system has to cover the entire country. Investing in a strong regional scouting network allows you to cover more territory and find more talent.
- Using the latest technology effectively will give your scouts and selectors the information they need to make better decisions and pick better squads.
- Take every opportunity you can to strengthen ties with the schools, clubs and academies at the bottom of your domestic football pyramid. The stronger the base, the more players will progress to the very top.

Talent Identification in Thailand Following an extensive analysis in the early part of this decade, talent development and identification were highlighted as major weaknesses of Thailand's football ecosystem. Scouting resources were heavily concentrated in and around Bangkok, and the FA was struggling to monitor players in other parts of the country. To tackle these problems, FA Thailand invested funding from the FIFA TDS to deliver a major upgrade to its talent development infrastructure, complete with a regional scouting network and specialist software for analysing performance.

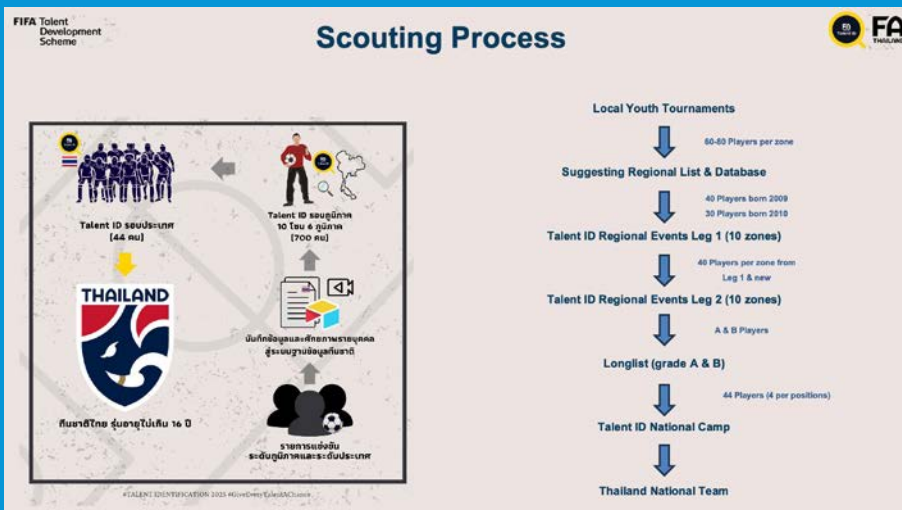


Analysing data to unearth talent

This new technology has revolutionised the way the Thai football association monitors its players. It can now combine the data from its new systems with scouting reports and video of individual players to create a “playlist”. The playlist allows its coaches to build up a detailed picture of each player’s strengths and weaknesses, and to grade them from “immediate starter” to “not showing enough potential.” This grading informs decisions about selection for training camps, including a series of events held between February and April 2025.

Regional and national TID events

The 2025 national talent identification process, which also benefited from TDS funding, was open to girls in all age groups and to boys of U-15 and U-16 age groups. The process for boys consisted of two one-day visits to ten regions, meaning a total of 20 TID days. Each day, approximately 30 U-15 and 30 U-16 players from the given region were brought in and evaluated in an 11 v. 11 setting. The girls were concentrated in seven sports schools. As a result, their identification process consisted of a two-day visit to each of these seven schools (14 TID days in total). At the end of the process, the 44 boys and 44 girls with the highest potential were then brought into a 3-day national camp.



› Conduct player observations

The focus of conducting player observations is to systematically assess and document the abilities and potential of players. Detailed and structured observations ensure that the talent identification process is thorough, standardised, and efficient.



Key questions to ask yourself

- Do you have player reports? If so, what level of detail do they include?
- Do the player observations/scouting reports consider the relative age of each individual?
- Do the player observations/scouting reports consider the maturation status of each individual?
- What is the structure for organising player observation (e.g., how do you consider the experience/expertise of scouts in player observations or reports)?

Important factors to consider

- Emphasise how player observations are crucial for identifying those with potential talent.
- Highlight how the design of the player report that scouts and other possible stakeholders use when observing players is critical to align with philosophy and profiles as well as creating consistency.
- Ensure that potential is being considered alongside performance when observing players.

Supporting templates and resources

Creating player observation tools (see page 84): In this resource readers can learn about the process and key principles adhered to when creating player observation templates. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Long player observation tool (see page 86): This template can be used to create a thorough long-form report on a player in the identification process. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Short player observation tool (see page 89): This template can be used to provide a more concise overview of a player in the identification process. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Performance and potential matrix (see page 91): With its two key dimension of performance and potential, this matrix helps you identify players that strike the balance of immediate impact and long-term value. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Good practice examples to learn from

How scouts assess players (see page 92): Within this research brief interview, you can hear about the insights from Dr. Tom Bergkamp and his research on how scouts in Netherlands observe and identify players. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Jan Verbeek on the relative age effect (RAE) (see page 94): In this science explained session, Jan Verbeek discusses the unfair advantages relative age effect presents for players and how this can be addressed. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Sean Cumming on maturation in youth football (see page 96): In this science explained session, Prof. Sean Cumming describes maturation in football and its potential effects on performance and identification. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Oliver Höner on talent predictors (see page 98): In this science explained session Prof. Oliver Höner discusses predicting potential in different facets of the game, using technical and speed-related skills tests. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Supporting Resource

—●— Creating Player Observation Tools

Description

Player observation tools are essential for scouts and Talent ID staff to systematically evaluate players during games or events. These tools help ensure that evaluations are objective, consistent, and aligned with the philosophy and profiles of the football organisation. Whether evaluating a single player in detail or multiple players more broadly, a well-constructed observation tool allows for clearer insights and informed decision-making.

The process outlined below highlights key principles for creating player observation tools, which are important for improving Talent ID and helping organisations discover and nurture potential. By following these five steps, player observation tools can be tailored to both immediate and future scouting needs within the football organisation, facilitating more effective and efficient Talent ID.

Five Steps to Creating Player Observation Tools

1. Determine the Purpose and Context

Before designing the observation tool, clearly define the purpose of the evaluation. Is the scout observing one player in-depth or evaluating multiple players? The observation format should vary based on the context, and you may want both long and short versions of the report to adapt to different situations. For example:

- **Single player observation:** requires more detailed reporting, with a focus on detailed analysis of the player's technical, tactical, physical, and psychosocial attributes in various match situations. This type of observation often includes examples of specific actions in the game, providing a narrative of the player's decision-making, technique, and overall contribution to the match
- **Multiple player observation or Talent ID event:** requires a broader but systematic evaluation, potentially with shorter, more concise reports

2. Align Content with Organisational Objectives

Ensure that the content of the observation tool reflects what the organisation values in players. This allows for the tool(s) to gather relevant data connected to the organisation's player development goals (i.e., philosophy and profiles). The tool should capture:

- **Biographical information:** player name, age, position, strong foot, height, and personality
- **Event context:** game or event level, location, and opposition
- **Key qualities:** specific football qualities that the organisation prioritises, such as technical skill, tactical understanding, physicality, and mental attributes

3. Incorporate a Player Rating Scale

The tool should include a rating system to quantify observations. Using a standardised rating system helps compare players consistently and objectively. This can take many forms:

- **Colour-coded system:** different colors represent performance levels
- **Numerical scale:** create a range from 1-4 or 1-10 to score attributes like technique, game understanding, athleticism, and competitiveness
- **Additional scales:** these could cover aspects such as game quality or maturation, especially for youth players (e.g., early vs. late maturing)

4. Ensure Consistent Language

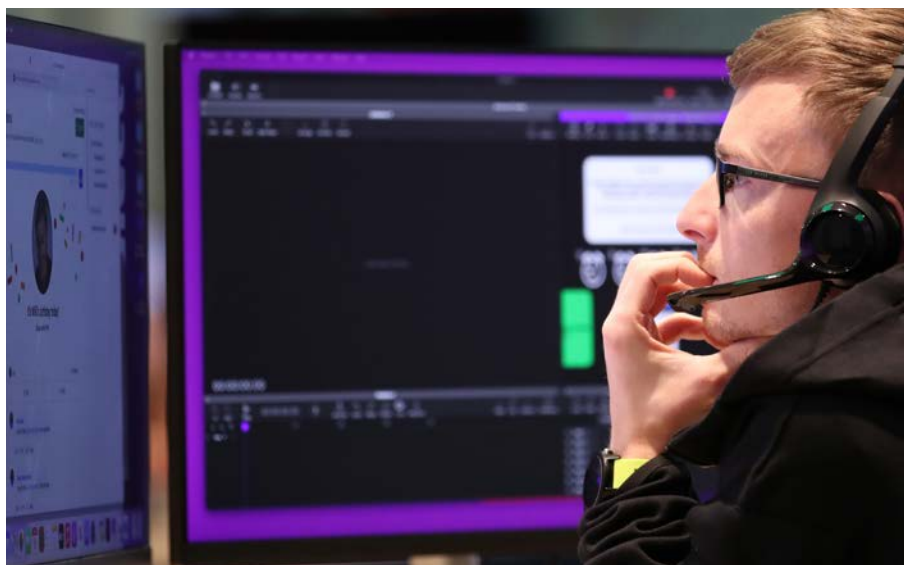
Language in the observation tool should be clear and standardised across the organisation. Everyone involved in the evaluation process should use the same terms to avoid ambiguity. For instance:

- **Define key terms:** ensuring uniformity in how evaluations are described and interpreted specific to the organisation

5. Include a Recommendation Section

Since Talent ID is a continuous process, the observation tool should include a recommendation section. This forward-looking component ensures the observation contributes to long-term talent tracking. The scout should provide suggestions for future actions, such as:

- **Recommendations:** recommend continued monitoring of the player
- **Future potential:** note the player's potential for future development
- **Invitations:** identify whether the player should be invited to future events or teams



Supporting Resource

—●— Long Player Observation Tool

This long version of a player observation report is intended to help an organisation report on a player in the identification process. By working through the different areas of this report and collecting the relevant information, an organisation will have an in-depth comprehensive understanding of the player.

Players can be assessed using the player rating scale which highlights where the observer believes the player currently lies in the specific area (e.g., game understanding and decision making). It is important to recognise that this is just an example, and football organisations should consider how they can create their own based upon their philosophy and profiles.



Player information

Name of player	
Nationality	
Club	
Date of birth	
Birth quarter	

Report written by:

Report submitted on:

Report details

Match details

Home club		Half time score		Away club	
Home team		Full time score		Away team	
Home formation			Away formation		
Date game	Kickoff time	Competition level	Venue	National event	Viewing

Match summary

Game/event type	Game/event quality	Minutes played	Shirt number

General information

Comment game	
Comment player	

Player details

Leading foot	Primary position	Secondary position	Observable maturation

Ratings

Overall rating	Potential rating	Recommendation

General comments

--

Player rating scale

1 – Below level

2 – Potential, can be developed

3 – Core player

4 – Exceptional player

Key qualities

Player rating scale
1 – Developing
2 – Average
3 – Strength
4 – Exceptional

Tactical understanding	
------------------------	--

Comment game understanding and decision making

Technical skills	
------------------	--

Comment technical execution

Physical attributes	
---------------------	--

Comment physical potential

Psychological factors	
-----------------------	--

Comment growth mindset and learning ability

Attacking	
-----------	--

Comment 4 key moments (attacking/defending/transition)

Transition attack - defense	
-----------------------------	--

Defending	
-----------	--

Transition defense - attack	
-----------------------------	--

Supporting Resource

— Short Player Observation Tool

This short version of a player observation tool is intended to help an organisation report on a player in the identification process. By working through the different areas of this report and collecting the relevant information, an organisation will have an overview of players observed.

Importantly, organisations can adapt key qualities tracked and recorded to reflect it's own philosophy and profiles. These can be co-created amongst scouts to support with alignment and support.



Player information		Match information	
Date		Game	
First name		Date	
Last name		Type of game	
Date of birth		Game quality	
Club		Team organisation	
Team		Style of play/strategy	
Competition level			
Primary position			
Secondary position			
Dominant foot			
Observation of maturation			
Player number		Minutes played	

General information on player (e.g., technical, tactical, physical, psychosocial)

--

Match summary

Attribute	Rating	Notes	Attribute	Rating	Notes
Learning ability and self regulation			Personality and winning mindset		
Game insight			Exceptionality		
Mastery and control of body and ball			Physical potential		

Ratings

Overall rating	Potential rating	Recommendation

General comment

--

Player rating scale

1 – Below level

2 – Potential, can be developed

3 – Core player

4 – Exceptional player

Supporting Resource

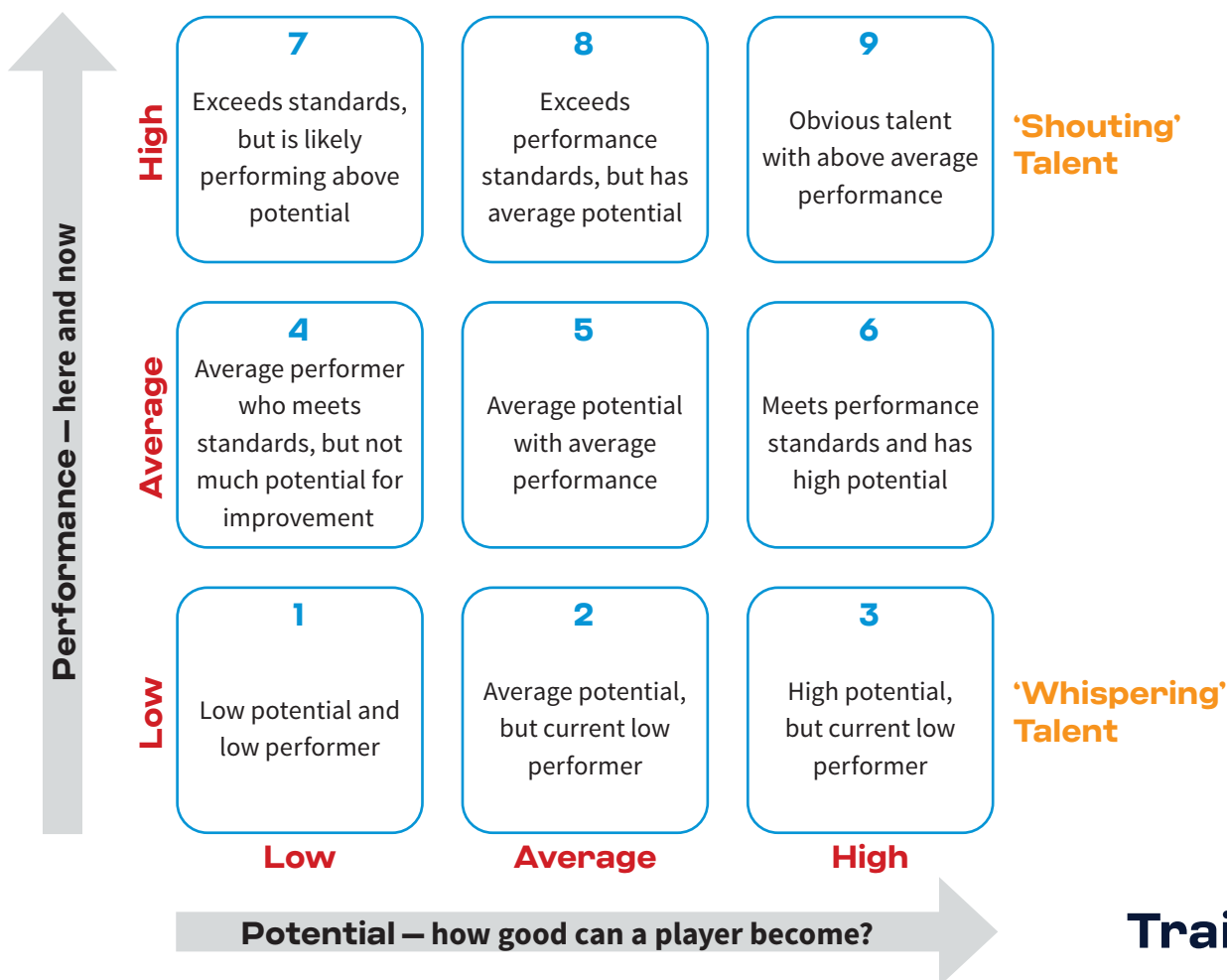
— Performance and Potential Matrix

What is the difference between performance and potential?

This **performance and potential matrix** for Talent ID evaluates players along two key dimensions: (1) current performance, and (2) future potential. By analysing where players fit within specific quadrants of the matrix, organisations can optimise talent investments and tailor development strategies, ensuring that resources are directed toward individuals who offer both immediate contributions and long-term value.

Performance assesses a player’s present abilities, including technical skills, tactical understanding, physical attributes, and psychosocial factors. A player’s current performance is crucial in determining their immediate value to the organisation and overall impact on the team’s success.

Potential on the other hand, measures long-term growth and projects future performance by evaluating factors such as attitude, work ethic, adaptability, capacity to learn, and physical development trajectory. Although this can be difficult to measure, by understanding a player’s potential, organisations can estimate how they might develop into top-level talent or valuable long-term assets, whilst also guiding strategic decisions around their training and development.





Good practice example

How scouts assess players

Dr. Tom Bergkamp of the Royal Netherlands Football Association (KNVB) examines how scouts assess the potential of young footballers, and asks how we might be able to make their judgements more consistent.




Scouts are a fixture of the football landscape, and play a key role in talent identification. However, very little is known about how they actually assess young players. In this Research Brief, Dr. Tom Bergkamp presents the results of a survey of 125 scouts to discover how they go about spotting stars of the future. Their responses were illuminating, and highlighted some fundamental questions for future researchers and practitioners to address.

Key take-aways

- Many scouts (including some working with teams at U12 level or below) believe you cannot judge a player's potential until they are in their mid-to-late teens. This raises questions as to whether they are being asked to scout players too early in their development.
- They also frequently struggle to define concepts like "technical ability" beyond a general categorisation, which suggests we should be looking to develop more explicit assessment criteria.
- Scouts often use a mixture of structured selection criteria and a holistic assessment based on their gut feeling or football instinct.
- Scouts should be wary of focusing too much on the physical attributes of young players, as this can lead to selection biases.

Introduction, aims, and methodology

The main job of a football scout is to predict players' future performance, but there is almost no scientific research about how they assess young talent in practice. Indeed, as previous studies have shown, many scouts actually struggle to articulate what they are looking for in a young player. In this study, Dr. Bergkamp surveyed 125 scouts based in the Netherlands to find out more about their approaches, and specifically to see whether they relied more on structured criteria or their professional instinct.

RESULTS

Section 2. Account for **which attributes?**

- Wide range of performance attributes ($n = 59$)
- **Technical attributes** named as most important, followed by **tactical and physical/physiological**.
- General, non-specific attributes (e.g. "technique")

Attribute	k	1st
Technical skills or technique with the ball*	82 (50%)	34 (74%)
Ball control	25 (13%)	6 (13%)
(Skills related to) transitioning*	11 (7%)	1 (>2%)
(Skills related to) defending*	9 (6%)	1 (>2%)
Pass intention or accuracy	9 (6%)	1 (>2%)
First touch	6 (4%)	0 (0%)
(Skills and abilities related to) attacking*	5 (3%)	1 (>2%)
Shooting or shot technique	5 (3%)	0 (0%)
Two legged	3 (2%)	1 (>2%)
Dribbling	2 (1%)	0 (0%)
Applying pressure	1 (<1%)	0 (0%)
Stocking	1 (<1%)	0 (0%)
Building up offensively	1 (<1%)	0 (0%)
Disrupting the offensive build up	1 (<1%)	1 (>2%)
Preventing goal scoring opportunities	1 (<1%)	0 (0%)
Scoring goals	1 (<1%)	0 (0%)
Performance category total	163 (28%)	46 (37%)

Tom Bergkamp | tom.bergkamp@knvb.nl

Results

The results of the survey revealed a number of striking trends. Firstly, Dr. Bergkamp noted that many of the scouts surveyed were asked to scout players below the minimum age at which they themselves felt it was sensible to assess a youngster's potential. Moreover, while most scouts had a set of criteria for judging performance, the definitions of those criteria were often less than clear, and their final assessments often mixed those criteria with the scout's subjective impression of the player concerned.

Discussion

These results give rise to some fundamental questions. For instance, given that a lot of the scouts surveyed said they could not make any reliable judgements of a young player's prospects until they were 14 or 15 years old, are we asking scouts to assess players too early? There are also question marks as to the reliability of commonly-used assessment methodology, with "gut feeling" playing a significant role. This approach can give rise to cognitive biases, and ultimately to selection biases, too. Minimising that risk may require more detailed, structured assessment techniques.

Practical applications and conclusion

Talent identification needs to be reliable and based on valid criteria, so scouts may need to think about whether they are in a position to judge players at a given age. The research also suggests they should be wary of placing too much emphasis on physical attributes, and do all they can ensure that their assessment criteria are as clear and as structured as possible. With that aim in mind, there is an urgent need for more research on improving the reliability and validity of scouting assessments.





DISCUSSION

1. Ideal age of predicting performance ≠ scouting practice
 - Predicting performance vs. best player available (Ford et al. 2020)
 - Still predicting performance?

Tom Bergkamp | tom.bergkamp@knvb.nl



Good practice example

Jan Verbeek on the relative age effect

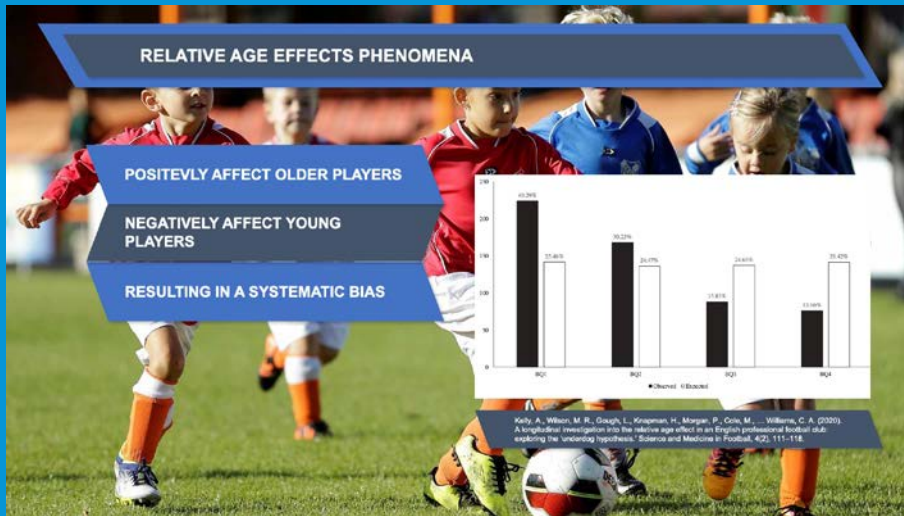
Jan Verbeek of the Royal Dutch Football Association (KNVB) explains how relative age effects can give older players within age groups an unfair advantage, and what coaches can do to redress the balance.

Jan has conducted extensive research on relative age effects and how to mitigate them. In this overview, he defines what we mean by relative age effects and explains how these effects arise. He then shows the impact they can have on youth football and discusses what coaches can do to help players of all ages showcase their talent on equal terms.

Introducing relative age effects and the mechanisms behind them

Young footballers are traditionally grouped together according to the year they were born. This is supposed to ensure fair competition, but it doesn't always work out that way. For instance, the oldest children in a given age bracket can be up to two years older than some of their team-mates, giving them major advantages over their younger peers. These advantages are known as "relative age effects".

Before we can counteract relative age effects, we need to understand the mechanisms and constraints associated with them. They can benefit older players in many different ways, from increased physical strength to greater self-confidence, more playing time and better access to facilities. They can also snowball over a player's career, and have major repercussions for youth football as a whole.



How relative age effects affect youth football, and compensating for them

Relative age effects can make older players seem more talented than younger team-mates. This can lead to a lack of opportunities for younger players, as coaches tend to pick older players for representative teams. Some players react by dropping out of organised football altogether, while others work even harder to overcome the relative age effect.

It is important to consider some ideas for balancing relative age effects, such as age-order shirt numbering, age quotas and raising awareness. Also, the research that needs to be done to eliminate relative age effects and create a genuinely level playing field for young players, such as long-term field studies following young players as they climb the pyramid.





Good practice example

Sean Cumming on maturation in youth football

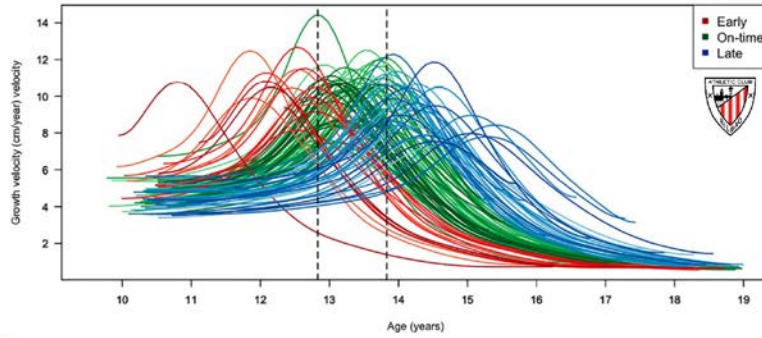
We all know children develop at different rates, but how does that variation affect developing footballers? Here, Professor Sean Cumming describes what happens to children's bodies as they mature into young adults, and examines the role coaches can play in keeping youngsters healthy and helping them realise their potential.

As anyone who has ever seen a photograph of an U15 squad will tell you, no two children develop at the same rate. The temporary physical discrepancy between “early” and “late” developers can have major repercussions for young players, with late developers frequently overlooked in favour of bigger, stronger (but not necessarily better) early-developing team-mates.

Growth in childhood and adolescence

The first step towards understanding the way young athletes mature is to study growth in childhood and adolescence. While growth is generally steady and predictable in both boys and girls during childhood, puberty sees major growth spurts in height and weight, accompanied by significant physiological changes that can leave young athletes more vulnerable to injuries. With that in mind, it is very important for coaches to be aware of the “adolescent growth spurt” and modify training accordingly.

Timing of the growth spurt in academy football



6 Monasterio, Gill et al., (2021) Eur J Sports Sci, 1-11

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Sports Kongres, København, 2023

The adolescent growth spurt

Given the importance of the pubertal growth spurt, it is worth exploring it in more depth. These challenges are compounded by the fact that children go through puberty at different ages, meaning that two players playing in the same age group can demonstrate marked differences in size, athleticism, and physiology. These variations can have enormous repercussions for both talent identification and development.

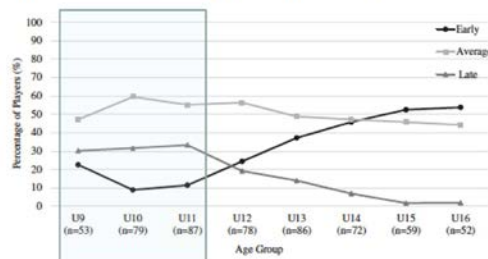
Maturity timing and selection biases

Particularly in boys, individual differences in the timing of maturation can often give rise to selection biases. From the onset of puberty, early developers tend to be bigger, stronger, faster, and more powerful than late developers of the same age, making them more likely to be selected for age-group teams. Indeed, studies suggest that perhaps 60-80% of all U16-U17 academy players are early developers, prompting concerns that many players are retained in the academy system because they are physically superior to their peers, not because they are better footballers.

Selection biases in boy's academy football



Figure 2. Maturity status for the total sample by competitive age-group using the z-score classification of 1 to -1 to define average (n= 566).



10 Hill, Scott, Malina, McGee, Cumming (2020). J Sports Sci., 38(11-12), 1359-67.

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Concerns for youth development and how to address them

Professor Cumming suggests how academies can counteract maturation biases and mitigate the risk of losing a great talent who happens to be a late developer. As Sir Alex Ferguson was well aware, keeping late developers in the system and giving them time to flourish can bring enormous rewards. By contrast, writing off a late developer can prove costly, as Arsenal found out after they released a young striker by the name of Harry Kane.



Good practice example

Oliver Höner on talent predictors

Objective data to back up what scouts and coaches observe on the training pitch can be elusive, especially when they are working with young players. In this overview, Professor Oliver Höner of the University of Tübingen examines whether a youngster's motor skills are a strong predictor that they are on the road to professional football.

In recent years, football has become an increasingly data-driven sport. Everyone from journalists to managers now has a wealth of information at their fingertips. Nevertheless, finding hard evidence that talent scouts can use to corroborate their gut feeling is notoriously difficult, especially when they are attempting to gauge the potential of a promising youngster. In this overview, Professor Höner examines how reliable the German Football Association's motor-based testing programme has been as an indicator of talent and potential in young players.

Defining talent and the DFB's talent development programme

This overview focuses on two core questions: which characteristics of talented youth players can help to predict their future performance, and which characteristics should we promote to support players on their way to the top? Before you can answer those questions, you have to define talent, and Höner begins by setting out his working definition. Since the testing he describes here was conducted with players training at "base camps" run by the German Football Association (DFB) or in the youth academies of German professional clubs, he also explains how the DFB's talent development pyramid operates and how that affected the research sample.

The challenges of making predictions

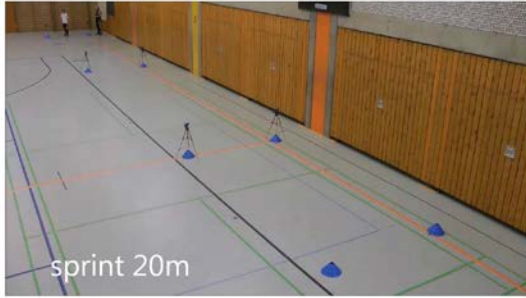


The next part of this overview outlines the major challenges inherent in trying to measure talent. First, it is difficult to identify traits that are sufficiently correlated with future performance in football; this challenge is compounded by the fact that those characteristics are sometimes impossible to measure directly. Then you have to allow for the fact that footballers are human beings who develop differently over time. Finally, applying scientific probability statements to individual players in practice is problematic, precisely because they are individual human beings. All this underlines just how difficult it is for scientists and youth coaches to predict the future performance of young players.

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EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FOR MOTOR PREDICTORS
Study design

Motor Performance Diagnostics

(Löttermann et al., 2003; Höner et al., 2015)

Empirical evidence of motor-skill predictors

Having outlined the limits of scientific measurements in this area, Professor Höner outlines the empirical evidence from motor-skills studies designed to measure “speed” abilities and technical football skills. As he explains, the research shows that future Bundesliga players consistently scored higher in these motor tests than the average for their age group, even as early as the U12s. Moreover, when comparing tests conducted with the ball (i.e., dribbling) and without the ball (i.e., agility), those conducted with a ball tended to be more reliable predictors of future success. This highlights the relevance of football-specific skills.

Other perspectives on motor-diagnostic research in football


To finish, Professor Höner gives a brief survey of other studies that have sought to investigate the significance of motor-based indicators for talent identification and development in various ways. The studies mentioned include a longitudinal study on youth players, work focused specifically on motor diagnostic tests in female footballers, and research into the impact of the relative age effect and biological maturity. There is also an example of a multi-dimensional study that combined objective motor tests with subjective assessments by coaches. There is an urgent need for more studies in all these areas.

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CONCLUSION

- Technical and speed-related skills demonstrate prognostic validity in relation to different future performance levels (for youth players that have already been selected for development programs).
- Nevertheless, talent development is a very complex process and reliable talent prediction remains a utopia for individual cases.
- Information about the strengths and weaknesses of talented youngsters can provide a meaningful (e.g., prognostically relevant) addition to coaches' subjective judgements, and thus be useful for players' development.
- Call for more studies with female samples, longitudinal designs, multidimensional diagnostics (including subjective ratings, biological age, environmental factors)



(Höner et al., 2023; Williams et al., 2020)

› Implement data management

The focus of implementing data management is to establish a strong system for tracking, storing, and analysing player information. Effective data management facilitates informed decision-making and ensures that talent identification processes are objective, data-driven, and aligned with the organisation's objectives.

Key questions to ask yourself

- What qualitative and quantitative data do you track? How do you track it?
- What information storage do you use?
- Do you have any talent pool tracking?
- What tools do you use for visualisation and accessibility of talent identification?

Important factors to consider

- Consider the type of objective data that is used to identify and track players.
- Recognise the implementation of a data/performance analysis and/or insights department is essential to support data management.
- Reflect on the collection and analysis of data through either, or both, internal and external data sources.
- Emphasise the importance of information management and producing insights from various sources, including scouting reports, player biographies, and mapping exercises, to assess factors such as quality, style, regions, positions, and genders alongside statistical data.

Supporting templates and resources

Qualitative and quantitative data collection methods (see [page 102](#)): With this resource you can discover the main benefits of qualitative and quantitative data belonging to players in the identification process. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Storage and visualisation of player data (see [page 104](#)): This template outlines the importance of storing and visualising player data and provides a list of the types of information you should gather. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Good practice examples to learn from

How Honduras' talent development system works (see [page 106](#)): This presentation explores how Honduras' use of observational data is helping coaches classify large numbers of players in a nationally aligned approach. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).



Supporting Resource

—● Qualitative and quantitative data collection methods

In the player examination process, two essential data collection methods must always be employed: (1) qualitative, and (2) quantitative. Each method offers unique insights, and together they provide a comprehensive evaluation of a player's performance and potential. Combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods offers a comprehensive view of a player's capabilities, allowing scouts to make informed decisions. While qualitative analysis gives context and depth to the numbers, quantitative analysis provides the objectivity and precision needed for data-driven decision-making.

It is important to note, appropriate safeguarding and data protection policies should always be in place when using these data collection approaches. Below are examples of what the processes for each type of data collection could entail.

Qualitative Analysis

Descriptive observation

This method focuses on **describing the game and the player's actions through careful observation**. It involves analysing the player's decision-making processes, considering them as the foundation of their performance.

Contextual evaluation

Qualitative analysis goes beyond mere observation by **examining the decisions and actions** within the specific structure of the game. This includes understanding the player's tactical choices, positioning, and interactions with teammates and opponents.

Subjective insight

While it's inherently more subjective, **qualitative analysis captures the nuances of a player's behaviour**, providing a richer understanding of their game understanding, decision making, creativity, and adaptability.

Observation and interpretation of behaviours

This involves closely **watching a player's football actions and behaviour during gameplay to gain insights** into their decision-making processes, and overall tactical understanding. The evaluator interprets how the player reads the game, their anticipation, positioning, and adaptability to different game situations, and the football action and execution.

Decision-making as a starting point

This focuses on **how a player processes information and makes decisions under pressure**. Qualitative analysis seeks to understand the player's mental and cognitive attributes, technical execution of football actions such as their ability to make quick, accurate decisions, their leadership qualities, and their response to high-stress scenarios.



Quantitative Analysis

Statistical description

Quantitative analysis relies on **numbers and statistics to describe the game objectively**. This includes data such as pass completion rates, goals scored, distance covered, and other measurable aspects of performance.

Objective measurement

By focusing solely on quantifiable data, quantitative analysis **removes subjectivity from the evaluation process**, offering a clear, fact-based assessment of the player's effectiveness and consistency.

Benchmarking

This method allows for **direct comparisons with established standards**, making it easier to measure a player's performance against peers or expected benchmarks.

Measurable behaviors (supporting data)

This method involves collecting and **analysing data on specific, quantifiable aspects of a player's performance**. Metrics might include pass completion rates, tackle success rates, distance covered during a match, or goals scored per game. These measurable behaviours help in objectively assessing the player's abilities.

Trends (frequency) and assessment (value)

Quantitative analysis tracks the frequency of certain behaviours (e.g., shot attempts, successful dribbles, or defensive actions) and assesses their overall impact on the game. This helps in **identifying patterns in a player's performance over time**, allowing scouts to project future performance.

Describing the player using numbers and statistics

In this method, a player's performance is encapsulated in numerical data and statistics. These might include advanced metrics like Expected Goals (xG), Expected Assists (xA), or Player Efficiency Ratings. The **quantitative approach provides a data-driven perspective** on a player's contribution to the team.

Supporting Resource

—●— Storage and visualisation of player data

Description

Storing player data is crucial to allow organisations to efficiently track and evaluate players involved in the identification process. By collecting detailed information — such as a player’s biographical data, position, dominant foot, and observable maturation — clubs can create comprehensive player dashboards and visualisations. These dashboards offer quick, data-driven insights into a player, including their performance metrics, scouting reports, overall and potential ratings, and key qualities.

Visualising this information enables scouts, coaches, and analysts to make informed decisions about player recruitment, development pathways, and tailored training strategies. Moreover, storing historical data, such as club pathways and scout evaluations, helps track a player’s progress over time and assess long-term potential, ensuring better talent management and identification processes.

Storage of Player Data

To create effective player visualisations, consider the importance of storing relevant information that aligns with the organisation’s football philosophy and player profiles. The more comprehensive the data collected over multiple time points, the richer and more detailed the player visualisations will be. Below are some potential information and data points an organisation should look to collect to help create their own visualisations of player data. Please note, appropriate safeguarding and data protection policies should always be in place when using these approaches.

- **Photo of player:**
- **Name of the player:**
- **Home-town/city:**
- **Date of birth:**
- **Birth quarter:**
- **Current club/team:**
- **Position:**
- **Dominant foot:**
- **Number of reports on player:**
- **Overall rating (average):**
- **Potential rating:**
- **Overview ratings per key qualities (e.g., passing, shooting, defending):**
- **Time-line overview of reports and ratings:**
- **Pathway of player (previous clubs):**
- **Minutes played/games played:**
- **Current season statistics (e.g., goals, assists):**
- **Time-line overview of previous season statistics (e.g., matches played, goals scored, matches started):**

Visualisation of Player Data

The effective visualisation of player data transforms information on a player into actionable insights, enhancing strategic decision-making in identification and selection processes. Once an organisation has built a comprehensive database of player information, it can leverage this data to create tailored visualisations. These visualisations can vary significantly depending on the organisation’s philosophy and player profiles, reflecting its unique focus and needs.

To maximise the value of these visualisations, it’s crucial to highlight information that is most relevant and useful to the organisation. By aligning visualisations with organisation’s philosophy and player profiles, teams can gain deeper insights and make more informed decisions. Below is an example of how player visualisations can look like.

Training Centre

Samuel Amoako

- Centre Forward (9)
- 1 August 2001 (23)
- Kumasi, Ghana
- 185cm (6ft 1in)
- Right Footed
- 30 June 2026



LONDON UNITED FC

ENGLISH SUPER LEAGUE



GHANIAN

Overall rating: *Core player*

LONDON UNITED FC vs. BRISTOL FC
 English Super League
 Wednesday 23 October 2024 20:00
 Started as Second Striker (9)
 76 minutes played

Potential rating: *Exceptional player*



Match summary:

Learning ability and self regulation		3
Game insight		3
Mastery and control of body and ball		4
Personality and winning mindset		3
Exceptionality		3
Physical potential		2 FIFA



Good practice example

How Honduras' talent development system works

In this good practice example with former Portugal striker and FIFA High Performance Specialist Nuno Gomes, FIFA Talent Development Scheme Coordinator Cristian Aleza and FIFA Talent Coach Carlo Cataldo explain the talent development and identification system they have been implementing since August 2023.

Developing elite footballers is not straightforward. In the modern game, talent development is a formal process based on observed data and hours of training to enhance a player's technical, tactical, physical, and psychosocial skills. In this presentation, Cristian Aleza and Carlo Cataldo explain the work of the FIFA Talent Development Scheme (TDS) in Honduras, which is fundamentally changing the country's approach to identifying and nurturing talent.

Good practice

Maintaining close contact with local leagues and professional clubs is critical to a national talent development system. This allows coaches to monitor youth players when they are training elsewhere, and drives up standards.

The use of observational data and an established methodology gives coaches an easy way to classify hundreds of players based on their performance. Flexible, varied training sessions help develop well-rounded players who can adapt to changing conditions within a game. Designing this kind of session also requires creativity from coaches.

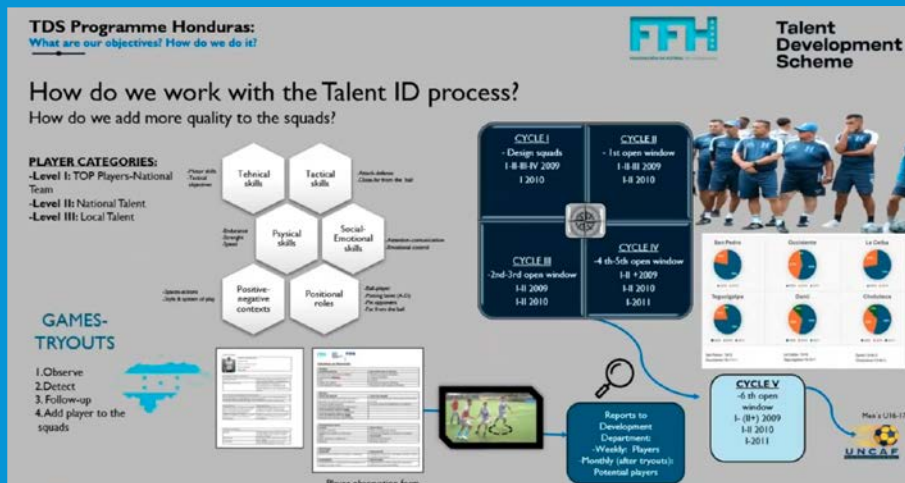
Developing players and coaches

The FIFA TDS in Honduras has two principal objectives: (1) to develop players to represent their national sides, and (2) to create a better future for football in the country. To that end, Honduras have established six development centres across the country where players train three times a week. Sessions are planned around 2–3-month micro-cycles that increase in complexity throughout the season. Players are assessed at the end of each cycle and selected for youth national teams based on performance. To encourage players to show initiative and adapt to new situations in-game, coaches use a “three Vs” approach that adds variety, variation, and variability to training sessions.



The talent identification process

Talent identification and tracking are key to player development. To monitor the hundreds of youth players in Honduras, they have created a talent identification system that categorises players according to ability. Each player is assessed on everything from their tactical understanding to their home life. They are evaluated at key milestones such as cycle changes, the start of the league season, and major games. Players are then placed into national, regional, and local talent categories. At the end of each cycle, they may be reclassified based on their progress. The coaches and scouts meet routinely to discuss player progress and improve their talent identification methodology.



Summary

- To ensure a productive talent identification process, sufficient time must be devoted to understanding and aligning identification efforts to the organisation's philosophy and profiles.
- Asking key questions highlighted in each area will aid the development of comprehensive systems and processes, scouting environments, player observations, and data and analytics.
- Considering the various important factors involved in each area will ensure that identification efforts are efficient, streamlining the selection process.
- Use the various good practice examples, tools, and additional resources embedded within this guide to ensure a more effective and efficient identification process.



How effective and efficient are your identification systems and processes? Use the following checklist to reflect upon what you already do to identify potentially talented players, as well as consider what you could do moving forward. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Player observations

Achieved Developing Not Achieved

Does specific player scouting report templates exist?

Is there a grading system in use, with general clarity on its definitions?

Do the player observations/scouting reports consider the relative age of each individual?

Do the player observations/scouting reports consider the maturation status of each individual?

Do grades consider both performance and potential of players?

Are players observed multiple times before recommendations are given?

How have reports been designed and used? How are they aligned to the profiles and philosophy? Do the reports positively contribute to the flow of information and decision making on selection?

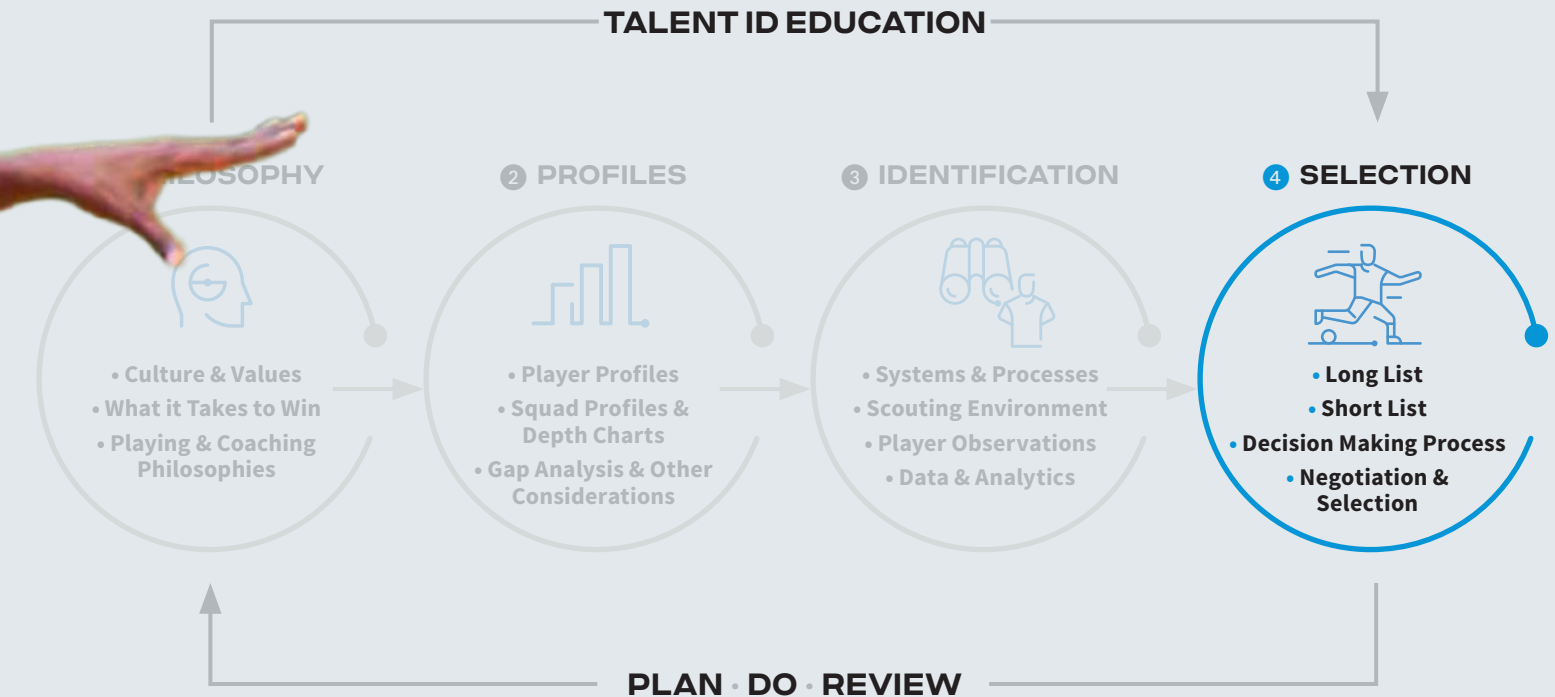
What is the structure for organising player observation (e.g., how do you consider the experience/expertise of scouts in player observations or reports)?

Dimension 4 Selection

Jamal Barass,
Talent ID Team Member

“In the Talent ID process, effective selection is crucial—it distinguishes short-term performance from long-term potential, ensuring investment in players whose abilities align with the enduring demands and vision of the game.”

This guide delivers a detailed exploration of the selection dimension in the talent identification model, focusing on crucial factors for its implementation within a football organisation.



Talent identification is essential for building a successful football programme. It establishes the foundation that underpins critical areas such as talent development, enabling them to reach their full potential and achieve excellence. Extending from Dimensions 1, 2, and 3, an organisation, shaped by its philosophy, profiles, and identification, should have a clear understanding of its culture and values, a defined set of key player qualities, and a structured framework for discovering talent.

This fourth dimension outlines the procedures involved in the selection of players for teams. It addresses the creation and implementation of a long list, a short list, and the decision-making process to support player selection. This dimension also discusses the aspects of negotiation and selection as part of the final stages of talent identification.

Why is this dimension important?

Selection is the critical phase where identified players are chosen for teams within a football organisation. This phase not only involves the final stages of player evaluation, but also includes the crucial steps of negotiation and formal selection of players into teams.

The selection dimension outlines step-by-step processes, including aspects of selecting players for teams within a football organisation. This involves creating long and short lists, establishing a decision-making process, and defining negotiation and selection procedures. It builds on the previous identification process, where potential players are identified in line with player and squad profiles as well as the organisation's philosophy.

To establish an effective selection process, football organisations must first create extended lists of players meeting basic playing requirements, followed by refined lists developed through detailed evaluations. A comprehensive decision-making process should also be put in place, clearly outlining the key stakeholders involved and their roles. Additionally, defining selection procedures, including any relevant negotiation processes and strategies, is essential for supporting a more effective and efficient selection process.



How do you achieve success?

> **Create long lists**

The focus of creating long lists is to ensure a structured and thoughtful approach to building an extended pool of potential players. By asking critical questions and considering essential factors, organisations can develop comprehensive lists that reflect their fundamental playing requirements and align with their unique context.

Key questions to ask yourself

- How do you currently create a long list for your pool of talent and who is responsible for leading this?
- Do the identified players on your extended list meet your desired playing qualities?
- Do you have balance of different positions (e.g., multiple individuals per position) in your long list?
- Do key stakeholders involved in the identification and selection processes have access to the long list?

Important factors to consider

- Consider your football organisation's playing philosophy to develop an extended list of players who align with these criteria.
- Remember that the number and depth of lists is dependent on the football organisation's context.
- Consider how many players per age category, when the long list is drawn up, and how is it reviewed.

Supporting templates and resources

Long list (see [page 118](#)): This template helps categorise and organise a comprehensive pool of potential players. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Good practice examples to learn from

Getting agreement between scouts (see [page 124](#)): Within this research brief interview, Dr. Dennis Lüdin explains the difficulty in getting agreement between scouts on player potential, as well as possible solutions to make selection criteria more reliable. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).



Supporting Resource

—●— Long list

This long list template is designed to help football organisations build a comprehensive and well-structured pool of potential players. By providing a clear framework, it enables organisations to organise candidates effectively, evaluate the number of options available for each position, and tailor their approach to their unique context.



The example below illustrates how a long list template can categorise and organise a potential pool of players. Keep in mind that this long list template example is flexible and can be adapted to suit the specific needs and circumstances of your organisation, ensuring it aligns with your strategic goals and selection processes.

FORWARDS					MIDFIELDERS			
	Name	Position	Year of Birth	Club	Name	Position	Year of Birth	Club
Tier 1	Albert Donovan	Center Forward	1999	Red Badgers FC	Cleo Benton	Center Midfielder (Box to Box)	1995	Lions FC
	Declan Tripodi	Wide Forward (Right)	2001	City FC	Jack Collins	Center Midfielder (Attacking)	1999	Giants FC
	Arsalan Farran	Wide Forward (Right)	2004	Spartans FC	Tyrell Chambers	Center Midfielder (Attacking)	1997	Thunder FC
	Jean Travers	Wide Forward (Right)	2003	Blue Stars FC	Deven Doodnath	Center Midfielder (Holding)	2000	Town FC
	Ollie Travers	Wide Forward (Left)	2006	Vikings FC	Phillip Beirne	Center Midfielder (Box to Box)	2007	City FC
	O'Shea Robertson	Wide Forward (Right)	2006	United FC	Reid Penn	Center Midfielder (Box to Box)	2003	Blue Stars FC
	Travis Barker	Center Forward	1999	Vikings FC	Isiah Johnston	Center Midfielder (Box to Box)	1994	Blue Stars FC
	Cole Babcock	Wide Forward (Left)	2000	Alliance FC	Armani MacFarland	Center Midfielder (Attacking)	1996	Red Badgers FC
	Conn Naumov	Wide Forward (Left)	1995	Storm FC	Berry Augustin	Center Midfielder (Attacking)	1999	Dragons FC
	Ely Shimizu	Center Forward	2008	Giants FC	Vatslav Arriola	Center Midfielder (Holding)	1999	Force FC
	Kenrick Lincoln	Wide Forward (Left)	2005	Town FC				
Tier 2	Name	Position	Year of Birth	Club	Name	Position	Year of Birth	Club
	Trenton Pereira	Wide Forward (Left)	1994	Robins FC	Vern Courtois	Center Midfielder (Attacking)	2008	Wolves FC
	Alexander Domingos	Wide Forward (Right)	2002	Tide FC	Devin Veselin	Center Midfielder (Attacking)	1999	Forest FC
	Victor Sanders	Wide Forward (Left)	1996	Waves FC	Darion Fabron	Center Midfielder (Attacking)	2007	Tide FC
	Vincent Gabriel	Wide Forward (Left)	2004	Hammers FC	Edgar Curran	Center Midfielder (Holding)	1994	Saints FC
	Zayn Sandoval	Center Forward	2003	Gunners FC	Dexter White	Center Midfielder (Holding)	2004	Hammers FC
	Ashton Libby	Center Forward	2007	United FC	Lockie Davison	Center Midfielder (Box to Box)	2006	Bees FC
	Prateek Kumar	Wide Forward (Left)	2001	Flames FC	Shingo Weeks	Center Midfielder (Attacking)	2009	Badgers FC
	Peter Druvas	Wide Forward (Right)	1997	Thunder FC	Ivan Richardson	Center Midfielder (Holding)	2003	Giants FC
Samuel Ettiene	Center Forward	1997	Thunder FC	Toby Mizuno	Center Midfielder (Holding)	2001	Flames FC	
Tier 3	Name	Position	Year of Birth	Club	Name	Position	Year of Birth	Club
	Keegan Buckholtz	Center Forward	1998	Lightning FC	Roy Patterson	Center Midfielder (Holding)	1998	Rangers FC
	Baxter Warner	Center Forward	2000	Storm FC	Sean Mateo	Center Midfielder (Box to Box)	2007	Spartans FC
	Val Aleshire	Wide Forward (Right)	2004	Alliance FC	Lon Nishiyama	Center Midfielder (Box to Box)	2003	Tigers FC
	Seong-Hun Henderson	Wide Forward (Right)	1995	Badgers FC	Flann Messer	Center Midfielder (Box to Box)	2004	Lightning FC
	Fabrice David	Wide Forward (Left)	2003	Bees FC	Renato Santos	Center Midfielder (Box to Box)	1997	Thunders FC
	Adam Pauwels	Wide Forward (Left)	2007	Dragons FC	Phillipe Marcel	Center Midfielder (Attacking)	2005	Blue Stars FC
	Johann Kelly	Wide Forward (Left)	2002	Force FC	Antoly Wild	Center Midfielder (Attacking)	2006	Bees FC
	Aaron McClellan	Center Forward	1998	Waves FC	Colton Glass	Center Midfielder (Holding)	2000	Wanderers FC
	Gallo Marinovic	Wide Forward (Right)	1999	Wolves FC	Lorenzo Banchero	Center Midfielder (Holding)	2002	Wolves FC
	Robertto Insigne	Wide Forward (Left)	1999	Forest FC	Horace Soldati	Center Midfielder (Attacking)	1998	Earthquakes FC
	Marius Cassano	Wide Forward (Left)	2001	Fighters FC	Milomir Landon	Center Midfielder (Box to Box)	1996	Rovers FC
					Basile Donovan	Center Midfielder (Box to Box)	2009	Royals FC
				Ian Hargrave	Center Midfielder (Holding)	1994	United FC	
				Novak Herrmann	Center Midfielder (Box to Box)	2006	United FC	
Total players = 31					Total players = 33			

DEFENDERS					GOALKEEPERS			
	Name	Position	Year of Birth	Club	Name	Position	Year of Birth	Club
Tier 1	Nick Castillo	Center Back (Right)	2007	Fighters FC	Jamison Fear	Goalkeeper	2002	Knights FC
	Jordan Fosse	Center Back (Left)	1999	Wolves FC	Pierino Tittensor	Goalkeeper	2002	Ravens FC
	Callum Franklin	Center Back (Left)	2003	Flames FC	Sydney Luongo	Goalkeeper	1999	City FC
	Edward Irving	Fullback (Right)	2004	Badgers FC	Wolfe Sorrentino	Goalkeeper	1994	Gunners FC
	Reilly Pellegrini	Fullback (Right)	1997	Devils FC				
	Pelayo Sheppard	Center Back (Right)	2005	Royals FC				
	Boban Marjanovic	Fullback (Left)	2006	Royals FC				
	Nicolas Cirilo	Center Back (Right)	2000	Tigers FC				
Tier 2	Name	Position	Year of Birth	Club	Name	Position	Year of Birth	Club
	Kody Porter	Fullback (Left)	2002	Bees FC	David Shriver	Goalkeeper	1996	Hammers FC
	James Leonard	Fullback (Left)	1998	Forest FC	Lawrie Nieves	Goalkeeper	2006	Forest FC
	Pascal Green	Fullback (Right)	1995	City FC	Di Steffano Shriver	Goalkeeper	2008	Alliance FC
	Jalen Johnson	Center Back (Left)	2008	Royals FC	Jovan Pound	Goalkeeper	2003	United FC
	Ariel Moreau	Center Back (Left)	1996	Hammers FC	Kelcey Rayne	Goalkeeper	2001	Crew FC
	Sholto Kotu	Center Back (Left)	2001	Flames FC	Sange Patenaude	Goalkeeper	1999	Flame FC
	Valentino Tadic	Fullback (Left)	1994	Flames FC				
	Uwe Lemoine	Fullback (Right)	2009	Villans FC				
	Casey Phillips	Center Back (Right)	2009	Storm FC				
	Zaccaria Morley	Center Back (Right)	1998	Lightning FC				
	Paden Kyrgios	Center Back (Left)	1994	Badgers FC				
Tier 3	Name	Position	Year of Birth	Club	Name	Position	Year of Birth	Club
	Drew Welch	Fullback (Right)	1997	Tide FC	Alphonse Bellandi	Goalkeeper	2005	Giants FC
	Rapheal Rousseau	Fullback (Right)	2005	Wanderers FC	Newton Acker	Goalkeeper	2009	Tigers FC
	Dani Blackburn	Fullback (Left)	2002	Thunder FC	Huey Andreas	Goalkeeper	1998	Tide FC
	Gustave Peters	Center Back (Left)	1995	Allance FC				
	Edwin Ter Stegan	Center Back (Right)	2001	Storm FC				
	Bradley Heath	Center Back (Right)	1996	Alliance FC				
	Arlen O'Berne	Fullback (Right)	2006	Blue Stars FC				
	Larrie Truman	Fullback (Right)	1999	Fighters FC				
Shota Seward	Center Back (Right)	2001	Force FC					
Total players = 28					Total players = 13			

FORWARDS					MIDFIELDERS			
Tier 1	Name	Position	Year of Birth	Club	Name	Position	Year of Birth	Club
Tier 2	Name	Position	Year of Birth	Club	Name	Position	Year of Birth	Club
Tier 3	Name	Position	Year of Birth	Club	Name	Position	Year of Birth	Club
Total players =					Total players =			

DEFENDERS					GOALKEEPERS			
	Name	Position	Year of Birth	Club	Name	Position	Year of Birth	Club
Tier 1								
Tier 2								
Tier 3								
Total players =					Total players =			





Good practice example

Getting agreement between scouts

Football academies depend on scouts when selecting young players, but as Dr. Dennis Lüdin explains, getting them to agree on a player's potential can be a challenging task.

Any successful talent development programme relies on the expertise and judgement of accomplished scouts. But what happens if your scouts can't agree on the potential of youth players? In this overview, Dr. Dennis Lüdin of the Swiss Federal Institute of Sport examines whether scouts agree with each other when assessing youngsters, and explores how academies can make their selection criteria more reliable.

Key take-aways

- If your scouts do not agree on the potential of a young player, it is very difficult to make a reliable decision on their future prospects.
- Unfortunately, getting that agreement is extremely difficult, because football is unpredictable and performance is multi-faceted.
- This in turn prompts many scouts to base their judgements on a subjective overall impression rather than objective data.
- Relying on multiple independent assessments, produced according to an agreed set of criteria, might make for more reliable selection decisions.

Introduction and aims

Most professionals agree that identifying talent is a complex business, and that performance at youth level is not a reliable indicator of success in the senior game. However, previous studies suggested that there was no such agreement between scouts on what they were looking for in a talented youngster. This study re-examined that conclusion, and looked to generate insights into how scouts approach the task of assessing young players.

Methodology and results

The study asked over eighty scouts registered with the Swiss Football Association to rank twenty-four U12 players by their suitability for a talent development programme, and to explain their judgements. The results highlighted a striking lack of consistency in both rankings and approaches. Most glaringly, there was almost no agreement between the scouts on which players showed the most promise, and the majority of the group admitted to assessing players on the basis of their overall impression, rather than objective criteria.

Paper being presented

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Disagreement between talent scouts: Implications for improved talent assessment in youth football

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ABSTRACT
Reliable talent identification and selection (TID) processes are prerequisites to accurately select young athletes with the most potential for talent development programmes. Knowledge about the agreement between scouts who play a key role in the initial TID in football is lacking. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to evaluate the agreement within four groups of a total of $n = 83$ talent scouts during rank assessment of under-11 male youth football players ($n = 24$, age = 11.0 ± 0.3 years) and to describe scouts' underlying approach to assess talent. Krippendorff's α estimates indicated disagreement of scouts' rankings within all groups of scouts ($\alpha_0 = 0.09$, $\alpha_1 = 0.03$, $\alpha_2 = 0.05$, $\alpha_3 = 0.02$). Scouts reported relying mainly on their overall impression when forming their final prediction about a player. Reportings of a consistent, structured approach were less prevalent. Taken together, results indicated that different approaches to TID may be associated with disagreement on selection decisions. In order to overcome disagreement in TID, football organisations are encouraged to establish a more structured process. Future research on the elaboration and benefit of ranking guidelines incorporating decomposed and independently evaluated sub-predictors is recommended to improve the reliability of TID.

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talent identification; talent selection; youth soccer; decision-making

Research project:

- Swiss Football Association
- Swiss Federal Institute of Sport Magglingen
- German Sport University Cologne

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Swiss Federal Institute of Sport Magglingen SFISM

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Discussion

Dr. Lüdin suggests two possible explanations for the lack of agreement between scouts. The first is that football is a highly unpredictable game that is subject to a host of factors beyond a player's control. For example, if a player's team is struggling to gain possession, it is very difficult for that player to demonstrate ability on the ball. The second potential reason is that ranking 12 players at once involves analysing a huge quantity of information, which encourages scouts to use an overall assessment rather than scoring dozens of individual skills.

Results
Scouts' Approach to assess Talent

2) Gain insight into scouts' approach to assess talent!

To what extent did scouts rely on a structured vs. intuitive-holistic approach to assess talent?

Online Questionnaire (Bergkamp et al., 2021)

■ always ■ often ■ sometimes ■ rarely ■ never

1) Before observing a player, I already know which attributes I will evaluate.

always	often	sometimes	rarely	never
46%	34%	7%	11%	3%

2) When observing a player, I evaluate each attribute I find important separately.

always	often	sometimes	rarely	never
28%	47%	12%	12%	

3) After observing a player, I sum my scores on the independently evaluated attributes to form my final prediction.

always	often	sometimes	rarely	never
18%	42%	19%	16%	5%

4) After observing a player, I use my overall impression of the player's attributes to form my final prediction.

always	often	sometimes	rarely	never
45%	47%	7%	1%	

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Applications and implications

To round off his overview, Dr. Lüdin considers what these findings mean for the future of talent development programmes. As he points out, inconsistent approach to talent selection risks promoting an inefficient system that wastes money. To encourage more reliable decision-making, he suggests that clubs and associations should consider adopting agreed selection policies that have been approved by all relevant stakeholders. He also recommends reducing the burden on scouts by taking multiple independent assessments into account, and asking individual experts to focus on specific attributes rather than giving their overall impressions.

› Create short lists

The focus of creating short lists is to refine the pool of potential players on the long lists, by conducting a collaborative and thorough evaluation process. By leveraging the insights of a multidisciplinary team and aligning with the organisation's specific context and needs, short lists ensure a sharper focus on the most promising talent. This step is essential for streamlining decision-making and preparing for targeted player selection.

Key questions to ask yourself

- How do you currently create a short list for your pool of talent and who is responsible for leading this?
- Do key stakeholders involved in the identification and selection processes have access to the short list?
- Do you have a multidisciplinary team to audit and further evaluate players from the long list to create a short list?

Important factors to consider

- Work collaboratively with a multidisciplinary team to create a short list of players to select from based on the long list.
- Remember, similarly to the long list, the number and depth of talent on the short list is dependent on the football organisation's context.
- Consider, similarly to the long list, how many players per age category and positions when the short list is drawn up, as well as how it is reviewed.
- Reflect upon the possible biases when selecting players on short lists, such as the influence of relative age and maturation, and implement strategies to mitigate against these affects.

Supporting templates and resources

Short list (see [page 127](#)): This template helps refine a pool of potential players identified in a long list (like the one linked above) through a collaborative and thorough evaluation process. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Good practice examples to learn from

A longitudinal investigation into the relative age effect in an English professional club (see [page 130](#)): In this research brief, Dr. Adam Kelly presents a study exploring the effects that nuanced age differences can have on the younger players within a youth team. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Biological maturation selection biases across playing positions in youth football (see [page 132](#)): Within this research brief interview, Dr. Liam Sweeney explains biological maturation selection biases across playing positions and discusses potential solutions to minimise its effect in youth football to maximise selection processes. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Supporting Resource

—●— Short list

This short list template is intended to help an organisation refine the pool of potential players on the long list, by conducting a collaborative and thorough evaluation process. It allows them to clearly organise and rank potential players on their long list to ensure a sharper focus on the most promising talent. Players can be rated using the rating scale or other additional rating systems relevant to an organisation to help streamline decision-making processes and prepare for targeted player selections.



This example of a short-list template incorporates a rating scale to help assess players for an organisation. The rating scale can be customised to suit the specific needs of any football organisation, making this just one possible approach to structuring player ratings for a short-list. Additional rating scale factors and tailored rating systems are encouraged to provide deeper insights, enabling targeted and informed player selections. This short list should also be structured based upon the playing positions and playing philosophy of the football organisation.

Position	First Name	Last Name	Date of Birth	Age	Nationality	Club	Preferred Foot	Rating
01 Goalkeeper								
1	Belinda	Flinstone	03.11.1998	25	USA	Crew FC	Right	Exceptional
2	Celine	Fraser	07.16.1995	28	USA	Bulls FC	Right	Core
3	Jennifer	Millan	06.01.2000	23	USA	Magic FC	Right	Core
4								
5								
02 Full Back (Right)								
1	Joni	Mitchel	07.28.1997	26	CAN	United FC	Right	Core
2	Susan	Carlton	05.11.1994	29	USA	Portland Thorns FC	Right	Core
3	Mackenzie	Daley	02.23.1996	27	USA	Celtic FC	Right	Injury
4								
5								
03 Full Back (Left)								
1	Fran	Fritz	07.05.1998	25	USA	Warriors FC	Right	Core
2	Trinity	Smith	11.28.2000	23	USA	Pride FC	Right	Core
3	Abby	Girma	02.11.2001	22	USA	Celtic FC	Left	Core
4	Ashley	Smith	02.25.1999	24	USA	Thorns FC	Left	Inconsistent
5								
04 Center Back (Right)								
1	Victoria	Smith	03.28.1997	26	USA	City Spirit FC	Left	Exceptional
2	Abigail	Kirk	02.07.1999	24	CAN	Dynamo FC	Right	Core
3	Sarah	Pratt	07.01.1999	24	USA	Dynamo FC	Right	Core
4	Emily	Bolan	12.17.2002	21	USA	Fire FC	Right	Inconsistent
5								
05 Center Back (Left)								
1	Kennedy	Darwin	09.19.1998	25	USA	Red Stars FC	Left	Exceptional
2	Emma	McMillan	07.28.1992	31	USA	Fire FC	Left	Core
3	Angelica	Smith	09.03.1999	24	NED	Bulls FC	Right	Core
4								
5								
06 Central Midfielder (Holding)								
1	Pratt	Ryder	02.25.1999	24	USA	Fusion FC	Right	Core
2	Louise	Fitzgerald	09.17.1999	24	USA	Magic FC	Left	Core
3	Natasha	Ballagio	07.27.2002	21	NED	Warriors FC	Right	Core
4								
5								
08 Central Midfielder (Box to Box)								
1	Maggie	McLee	07.03.1992	31	USA	Pirates FC	Right	Core
2	Judith	Evans	09.17.2005	18	USA	Suns FC	Right	Injury
3	Andrea	Cortez	11.16.1989	34	IRE	Suns FC	Right	Core
4	Lillian	Venable	09.05.2001	22	USA	Panthers FC	Right	Core
5	Joyce	O'Brien	11.01.2006	17	USA	Colts FC	Right	Inconsistent
10 Central Midfielder (Attacking)								
1	Anna	Ash	03.26.1998	25	USA	Thunder FC	Right	Exceptional
2	Theda	Knight	12.14.1994	29	USA	Tornado FC	Right	Core
3	Magret	Abrinski	03.11.1998	25	CAN	Earthquakes FC		Core
4	Cynthia	White	03.26.2006	17	MEX	Storm FC	Right	Core
5	Martha	Beregon	03.21.2006	17	USA	Storm FC	Right	Inconsistent
07 Wide Forward (Right)								
1	Alice	Grover	08.03.1994	29	USA	Tigers FC	Right	Core
2	Ethel	Albright	04.29.1998	25	USA	Waves FC	Right	Core
3	Sabrina	Johanson	08.17.2003	20	HAITIE	Colts FC	Right	Injury
4	Sophie	Shultz	12.07.2000	23	GER	United FC	Right	Inconsistent
5								
11 Wide Forward (Left)								
1	Eva	Hanks	10.18.1997	26	USA	Thorns FC	Right	Core
2	Joy	Custer	03.24.1997	26	USA	City Current FC	Left	Core
3	Karen	Richardson	06.14.2002	21	USA	Wildcats FC	Left	Injury
4	Anna	Gonzalez	07.25.2004	19	USA	Wildcats FC	Left	Injury
5	Maryann	Stuart	07.20.2006	17	USA	Thunder FC	Right	Inconsistent
09 Center Forward								
1	Patricia	Sommerhall	05.25.1995	28	USA	Spirit FC	Right	Core
2	Lindsay	Davila	02.04.1995	28	SCO	City Current FC	Right	Core
3	April	Reese	07.05.2000	23	USA	Red Stars FC	Left	Core
4	Elise	Jung	10.30.2000	23	USA	Browns FC	Right	Injury
5	Peggy	Castle	02.18.2004	19	USA	Tigers FC	Right	Core

Rating	Exceptional	Core	Inconsistent	Injury
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Position	First Name	Last Name	Date of Birth	Age	Nationality	Club	Preferred Foot	Rating
01 Goalkeeper								
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
02 Full Back (Right)								
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
03 Full Back (Left)								
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
04 Center Back (Right)								
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
05 Center Back (Left)								
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
06 Central Midfielder (Holding)								
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
08 Central Midfielder (Box to Box)								
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
10 Central Midfielder (Attacking)								
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
07 Wide Forward (Right)								
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
11 Wide Forward (Left)								
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
09 Center Forward								
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								

Rating

Exceptional

Core

Inconsistent

Injury



Good practice example

A longitudinal investigation into the relative age effect in an English professional club

Dr. Adam Kelly, co-author of the paper 'A longitudinal investigation into the relative age effect in an English professional club', presents the research project and its implications.

The nuanced age differences within the traditional age brackets we use to structure our youth systems can disadvantage younger players within a team. The relative age effect (RAE) is the term used to describe the difficulties younger players within a given age bracket may face.


There is already an established body of research drawing attention to the RAE. There is also a growing number of studies highlighting the benefits a young player can reap from playing competitively with older players, bringing an alternative angle to the RAE discussion. Adam's paper is situated right at the heart of this debate, providing insightful research on the RAE and the potential benefits of playing competitively with older players.

Key take-aways

- Once a young player has been identified and brought to an academy, there can be positive reverse effects that come with being the youngest player within an age group.
- However, far fewer players feel the benefits of positive reverse effects than the number of players who find themselves at a disadvantage due to conventional RAEs in talent identification.
- Those working in the game should consider the RAE when thinking about how they identify talented youth players.

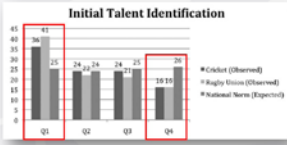
Relative age effects and the underdog hypothesis

Although younger players within an age bracket are disproportionately underrepresented in talent pathways for both male and female youth football, there is a growing awareness of the reverse effects this imbalance brings. Research shows that younger players who manage to get into an academy are significantly more likely to receive professional contracts than their older team-mates, and are more likely to transition from a youth football pathway to the senior professional game. These findings strengthen what is known as the “underdog hypothesis”. There is a three-fold explanation for this phenomenon, as Adam reveals in his brief.




WHAT IS THE ‘UNDERDOG HYPOTHESIS’?

- Gibbs and colleagues (2012) put forward the ‘underdog hypothesis’.
- Smith and Weir (2020) suggested potential explanations for the underdog hypothesis as three-fold:
 1. Relatively younger athletes may possess superior performance skills.
 2. Relatively younger athletes may develop superior psychological skills.
 3. Perceived advantages of being relatively older may be detrimental to the athlete's overall well-being.
- This may explain some of the reversal effects of relative age between youth and senior levels in football.



Initial Talent Identification



Conversion of Talent

The longitudinal investigation

The investigation has a dual purpose: to test RAEs over twelve seasons, and to examine the birth quartiles (BQs) of academy graduates awarded professional contracts at an English professional football club over eleven seasons. It is a longitudinal study in the sense that its timeframe spans over a decade. Some of the results are striking. For example, once a player is in an English academy, they are five times more likely to receive a professional contract if they are in the youngest BQ than if they are in the oldest BQ. It is important to remember though, that this is based upon a single academy, and that only few players benefit from these effects.

RESULTS

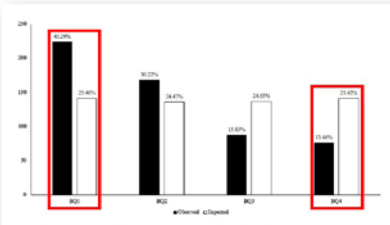


Figure 1 The total number of academy players based on BQ distributions. Percentage of total is also represented above each BQ. Expected distributions calculated from UNS (2015).

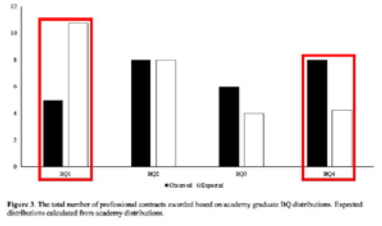


Figure 3 The total number of professional contracts awarded based on academy graduate BQ distributions. Expected distributions calculated from academy distributions.

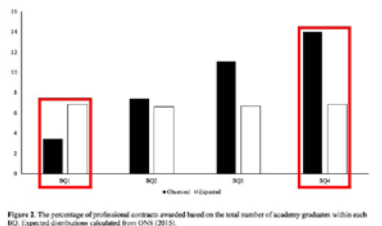


Figure 2 The percentage of professional contracts awarded based on the total number of academy graduates within each BQ. Expected distributions calculated from UNS (2015).



Good practice example

Biological maturation selection biases across playing positions in youth football

In this research overview, Dr. Liam Sweeney of Maynooth University, Ireland, presents a fascinating study exploring how biological maturation selection biases can vary according to playing position in youth football.

An increasing number of studies reveal the influence biological maturation biases have on how coaches, clubs, and associations identify the players they want to develop. Do these biases affect the selection of players from all playing positions, or are some roles more impacted than others? The research study that Dr. Sweeney presents here attempts to answer this question with the help of a sample of male youth players competing at national and international levels for the Football Association of Ireland (FAI).

Key take-aways

- In the sample of national and international male youth players, the influence of biological maturation selection biases differed between positions.
- Although some positions did not exhibit selection biases in favour of early biological maturation, late-maturing players were still significantly under-represented across the total sample.
- Club and coach education is necessary to raise awareness of the developmental impact biological maturation has on young football players.

An overview of biological maturation in football

Children of the same chronological age can vary in their biological maturity by up to six years. This means that where one twelve year-old child might have the biological age of a 15-year-old, another team-mate of the same chronological age might have the biological age of a 9-year-old. When it comes to football, children who mature earlier than their age-matched peers enjoy physical, functional, and

physiological advantages, such as being taller and heavier, having increased muscular strength and power, and having greater aerobic capacity compared to their later maturing team-mates. As a consequence, early-maturers are over-represented at many football academies from the age of 11-12 years onwards – when puberty generally starts.

Table 2. Relative maturation status and birth quartile breakdown for the Irish boys' youth player pathway, described by chronological age cohort and the total sample. Presented are the total number of players and the percentage of the population in parenthesis.

	Irish talent squad			Total sample	
	IRE13	IRE15	IRE16		
Relative maturation status	Early	58 (46.4%)	13 (72.2%)	10 (62.5%)	81 (51%)
	On time	51 (40.8%)	5 (27.8%)	6 (37.5%)	62 (39%)
	Late	16 (12.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	16 (10%)
	Total	125 (100%)	18 (100%)	16 (100%)	159 (100%)
Birth quartile	Q1	41 (32.8%)	8 (44.4%)	6 (37.5%)	55 (34.6%)
	Q2	36 (28.8%)	6 (33.3%)	4 (25%)	46 (28.9%)
	Q3	31 (24.8%)	1 (5.6%)	4 (25%)	36 (22.6%)
	Q4	17 (13.6%)	3 (16.7%)	2 (12.5%)	22 (13.8%)
	Total	125 (100%)	18 (100%)	16 (100%)	159 (100%)

Sweeney, L., Cumming, S. P., MacNamara, Á., and Horan, D. (2022). A tale of two selection biases: The independent effects of relative age and biological maturity on player selection in the Football Association of Ireland's national talent pathway. *Int. J. Sports Sci. Coach.*, 174795412211261. doi: 10.1177/17479541221126152

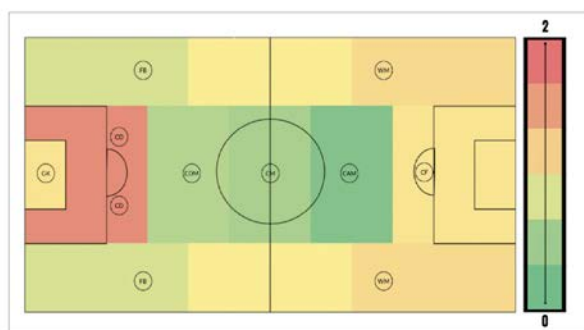


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Position-specific differences in biological maturation

Is there a bias towards selecting early developers across all playing positions, or does it vary? In a sample of U13 to U16 national and international male youth players, biological maturation selection biases were largest in those positions most often involved in goal-scoring situations (goalkeepers, centre-backs, centre-forwards, and wide-attacking midfielders). Although there were no selection biases in favour of early maturing players among central attacking midfielders and holding midfielders, late-maturing players were still significantly under-represented across the entire sample.

This under-representation of late developers across the sample as a whole serves to underscore the importance of this issue, and the need to raise awareness of it in talent identification. Dr. Sweeney suggests recommendations for how to address the prevalence of selection biases in youth academies, emphasising the importance of educating clubs and coaches about selection biases and the need for youth players to be routinely monitored so they can be provided with tailored, individual support.



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› Implement a decision-making process

The purpose of implementing a decision-making process is to establish a clear and collaborative framework for evaluating and finalising key recruitment decisions. By defining roles, responsibilities, and structures, such as a formal decision-making board, organisations ensure that input from relevant stakeholders is effectively integrated, and final approvals are streamlined and accountable.

Key questions to ask yourself

- Who inputs into the decision-making process?
- How often are player review meetings held for selections?
- Who has final sign off on selection decisions?
- What are you selecting for (i.e., purpose of the team)?

Important factors to consider

- Outline who is involved and responsible for the decision-making process.
- Create formal meetings with an agreed decision-making board/group.
- Consider multi-department collaboration to inform the decision-making process.

Supporting templates and resources

RACI matrix (see [page 135](#)): Within this document, readers can find a template they can use in their working environment, along with an explanation of how to use it. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Decision-making process (see [page 138](#)): This resource provides a logical framework outlining steps and guiding principles to support the player decision-making process. You can download the template [here](#).

Good practice examples to learn from

“Future teams” and Talent ID in Belgium (see [page 142](#)): Within this video presentation, Belgian FA Sport Scientist Arne Jaspers explains how Belgium uses future teams to keep late-developers in their talent pool as they mature, and also discusses the use of technology to better inform decision-making processes for scouts and key stakeholders in talent identification. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

How Denmark is addressing the relative growth effect (see [page 144](#)): Within this video presentation, Danish FA’s Rasmus Hallander Porse explains how Denmark is countering relative growth effects using future teams where late developers, who are at different stages of their development, are given selection opportunities. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

The Swiss FA’s Footuro and Footura development programmes (see [page 146](#)): Within this video presentation, Swiss FA Director of Talent Development Patrick Bruggmann discusses the Footuro and Footura talent development programme aimed to select and prioritise the development of individual players over short-term results and success. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Supporting Resource

RACI Matrix

Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed (RACI)

What is the tool

A tool to create alignment and clarify roles for effective collaborative teaming.

Why use this tool

RACI is a responsibility assignment chart that helps you to decide who is responsible, accountable, consulted, and informed for the various activities or processes within a procedure. RACI creates alignment in complex procedures with multiple stakeholders and increases the accountability of all those involved. If you want to make sure that communication and messages get through to the right people and effectively maximise the number of people involved in the decision-making process, this is the right tool for you to use.

When to use this tool

- When planning or creating procedures with football organisations as part of the selection process
- As a sub team (e.g., key decision makers in selection process) to create alignment and maximise clarity
- At the end of complex meetings

How to use this tool

When it comes to deciding the roles and responsibilities within your team and who will do what, the following four steps will help you support the process through the creation of a RACI matrix:

01. Define the key actions and tasks involved in delivering the procedure
02. Create a RACI chart and prepare the list of colleagues that will be involved
03. As a team, decide who will be **R**esponsible, **A**ccountable, **C**onsulted, and **I**nformed
04. Discuss, receive feedback, and agree with those involved

R

Who is Responsible?

The person who is assigned to do the work

A

Who is Accountable?

The person who makes the final decision and has ultimate ownership

C

Who is Consulted?

The person or people who must be consulted before any decision or action is taken

I

Who is Informed?

The person or people who must be informed after any decision or action has been taken

Supporting Resource

RACI Matrix

	John	Jane	Mary	Mohammad	Elizabeth	Carlos
Task 1	R		C			A
Task 2	R		A		C	
Task 3	R	R	R	A	R	I
Task 4		A	C	R		
Task 5	A	C				R
Task 6		I	C	C	A	R

How to complete this tool

- Only one person can be accountable
- Clearly define the activity that needs to be done
- All roles and responsibilities should be written down and communicated
- Use the grid as a framework

Supporting Resource

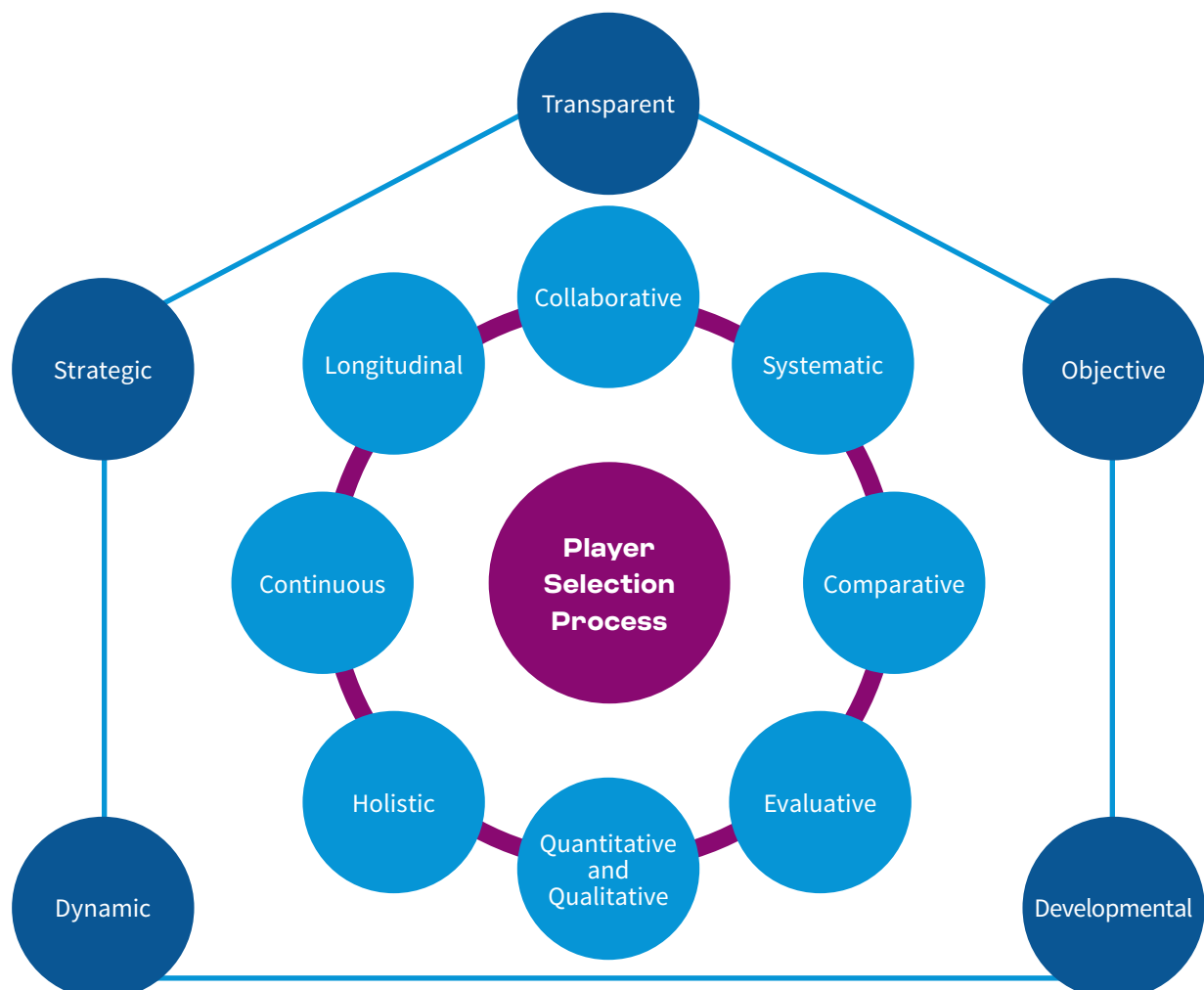
Player Selection Decision Making Process

Description

The decision-making process of selecting players is a critical responsibility within a football organisation, requiring a systematic, longitudinal, and collaborative approach. This decision-making process involves the combined efforts of internal stakeholders such as sporting directors, Talent ID directors, managers, scouts, and coaches, each playing a pivotal role in evaluating potential players.

The process includes identifying, examining, and comparing multiple options to ensure the best fit for the team, which can often prove challenging. Additionally, conflicts may arise due to differing perspectives, making effective communication, collaboration, and alignment among internal stakeholders essential to reaching a final decision that supports the organisation's goals.

To support this player selection decision-making process, the framework below provides eight steps (inner circle) and five guiding principles (outer structure) to consider for ensuring effective and efficient outcomes. It is important to note that this list is not exhaustive, and other key steps or principles may also be relevant depending on the specific context and needs of the football organisation.



Use the following steps and information to support your player selection decision-making process, and establish a clear and collaborative framework for evaluating and finalising key recruitment decisions

Collaborative

1. Collaborative

- Gather input from multiple roles (e.g., sporting directors, Talent ID managers, directors, managers, scouts, and coaches) to ensure a shared decision-making process
- Encourage open communication and alignment across all stakeholders

Systematic

2. Systematic

- Create a structured, step-by-step approach to identifying, evaluating, and selecting players
- Ensure consistency, transparency, and fairness throughout the process

Comparative

3. Comparative

- Compare players based on key metrics, benchmarks, and positional needs
- Make informed decisions when selecting between multiple options

Evaluative

4. Evaluative

- Combine detailed player assessments from reports, ratings, and observations
- Ensure evaluations cover technical, tactical, physical, and psychosocial criteria

Quantitative and Qualitative

5. Quantitative and Qualitative

- Include quantitative statistical data such as physical metrics, performance stats, and tracking data
- Incorporate qualitative subjective observations from game footage, reports, and player behaviour analysis
- Ensure both quantitative and qualitative data are used to provide a holistic assessment of players

Holistic

6. Holistic

- Focus on the player's overall profile, including technical, tactical, physical, and psychosocial aspects
- Avoid isolated assessments and consider the player within the context of the game

Continuous

7. Continuous

- Understand that the process involves ongoing monitoring, tracking, and re-evaluating of players over time
- Incorporate continuous and multiple assessment time-points to identify development trajectories

Longitudinal

8. Longitudinal

- Involve long-term tracking of players across seasons and competitions
- Identify growth, progress, and consistency in performance over time

Consider the following five guiding principles in each step to support the player selection decision-making process, ensuring a consistent and structured approach

1. Transparent

- Ensure openness in the selection process, with clear communication to all stakeholders

2. Objective

- Drive decisions using measurable data and unbiased observations to minimise personal bias

3. Developmental

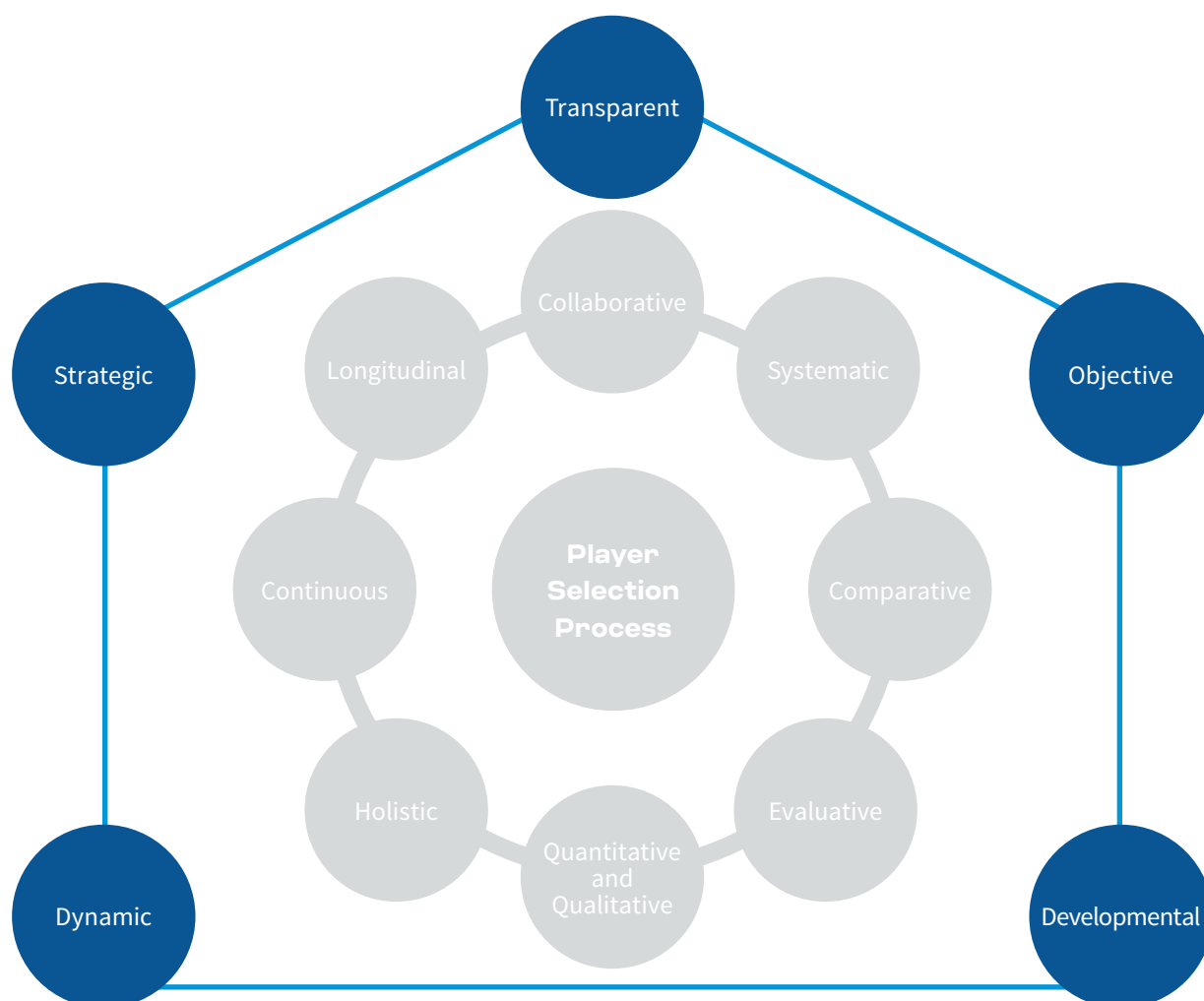
- Focus on a player's potential for future growth, not just their current performance

4. Dynamic

- Recognise that player selection is adaptable based on evolving performances and new information

5. Strategic

- Align player selection with the team's overall playing style, goals, and tactical needs







Good practice example

“Future teams” and Talent ID in Belgium

Over the last decade or so, Belgium have established themselves as one of Europe’s most dangerous and exciting senior sides. The Red Devils’ innovative approach to talent development has played a big part in that success, and they are still looking for ways to stay ahead of the pack.

Belgium is a relatively small country, and its remarkable performances in recent times have been predicated on a highly effective system for developing and nurturing talent. In good practice example, Belgian FA sports scientist Arne Jaspers explains how his association keeps late-developers in the talent pool as they mature, and how it is embracing new technology to help it find the next generation of stars.

Good practice

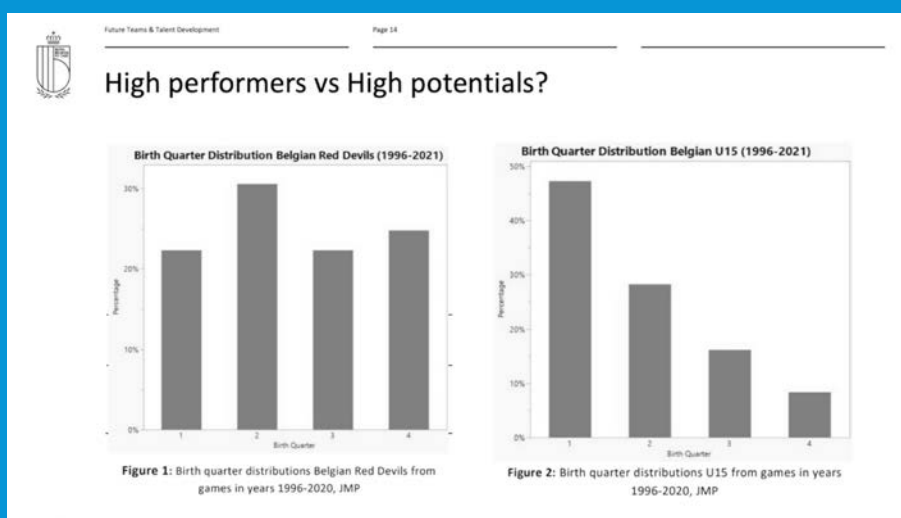
- Developing a systematic approach to talent development will give you a better chance of spotting a star.
- Keep late-developers in your youth system for as long as you can, and give them every chance to prove themselves. This is especially important for small countries with limited player numbers.
- Embracing new technology can help your scouts do their jobs more effectively – but never underestimate the value of an experienced coach.

Current performance vs. future potential

One of the biggest challenges for any talent development system is comparing youngsters who are maturing at wildly different rates. As Jaspers explains, these differences in biological maturity can have an enormous impact on youth systems and pose a major challenge for talent identification. These differences contribute in turn to the relative age effect, which tends to favour “early-developers” and can lead to talented players being overlooked. Belgium’s “Futures teams” are designed to keep those “later-developers” in the system until they can demonstrate their true potential.

The Future Teams programme

Belgium's pioneering Futures squads are designed to help bring late-developers to the very top of the game, by creating opportunities for them to play more competitive football. With alumni of the calibre of Thibaut Courtois and Dries Mertens, the system has fulfilled that brief admirably in recent years. Jaspers highlights how the programme works, including how Futures squads are selected and the way the association combines expert coaching with scientific analysis to pick out potential internationals.



The future of talent identification and development

Jaspers turns his attention to the future of the RBFA's youth programmes. The association currently holds a Chair at the University of Ghent, and is working closely with the institution to stay a step ahead of the competition. One of the key insights from their research is that being selected for youth national teams is not a reliable predictor of success at senior level. This underlines that even the best scouts struggle to take all the relevant factors into account at once, which is why the RBFA is investing in artificial intelligence and video analysis to help them.

Future Teams & Talent Development Page 20

Definition of a Future Team player (U15F, U16F & U17F)

- = late developer DUE to later born and/or later maturation who
- is from a physically (speed, power) point of view not ready to perform in national team U15, U16 or U17 but has the same LEVEL OF talent
- has the biological age of a player at least 1 age group year younger
 - U15F = U14 or U13 player
 - U16F = U15 or U14 player
 - U17F = U16 or U15 player



Good practice example

How Denmark is addressing the relative growth effect

Teenagers who go through puberty later than their peers often find themselves at a disadvantage in youth academies. In this good practice example, the Danish FA's Rasmus Hallander Porse explains how his association is giving them a chance to shine – and to become an integral part of the national youth setup.

The relative growth effect arises because teenagers mature physically at different rates. In team sports, this discrepancy tends to lead to players who go through puberty early getting more opportunities than so-called “late developers”, which in turn makes it difficult for the latter group to break into the professional ranks. The Danish FA (DBU) has been grappling with this problem for the last ten years, and in this good practice example, Rasmus Hallander Porse explains what the association is doing to make sure every player has the opportunity to demonstrate their talent.

Good practice

- When assessing a young player’s potential, it is vital to look beyond temporary developmental differences and judge on talent, not size.
- Set a clear definition of “late developer”. If you are setting up a Futures Team, the selection criteria for it should be based on both scientific measurements and observations from the training pitch.
- Incentivise clubs to invest in late-developers within their youth academies – they will reap the rewards later.

Introducing the Relative Growth Effect Project

Most people working in talent development have the same mission – to provide the best possible development opportunities for players. To do that, you need to look beyond the temporary developmental disadvantages experienced by late developers, and keep them in your youth system long enough for them to show what they can do. The DBU is conscious that this is especially important for a small country like Denmark, and it has developed a three-pronged approach to tackle the problem, working simultaneously at grassroots level, with domestic clubs, and within its youth national teams.

Future Teams

The highest-profile manifestation of the DBU's approach is its Futures national teams programme. These squads are specifically designed to give late developers the chance to play international youth football, and effectively provide an alternative development path that can take these players all the way to the senior national side. In March 2024, for example, Denmark's men's senior team took to the field against the Faroe Islands with a starting 11 featuring four Futures graduates. As Rasmus Porse explains here, the selection criteria for the Futures Teams combine scientific measurement with first-hand observation to identify the country's most promising talents.

WHY WORK WITH LATE DEVELOPERS?

1. Players
 - Avoid discrimination – give every player same opportunities
 - (Prevent injuries)
2. The Danish FA
 - Amount of players
 - Results - We can not afford to lose any talented player
3. Clubs
 - Economic value for the Danish clubs
 - Late physical development – later top performance

Panathlon Declaration on Ethics in Youth Sport (Gent, 24/09/04)



NONE OF US ARE EQUAL UNTIL ALL OF US ARE EQUAL.



Habitants 5.800.000
Players 360.000



MARKET VALUE OVER TIME
Source: Transfermarkt.com (2020)

DANSK BOBSPIL-UNION

How the DBU works with clubs

The relative growth effect is not confined to national teams – early developers get the lion's share of game time at their clubs, too. To level the playing field, the DBU has changed the structure of its youth tournaments to create a development pathway for late developers. It also allows them to play in the age group that matches their physical development rather than their biological age. Finally, the association rewards clubs when they produce players for youth national teams and for Futures sides, giving them an incentive to get late developers off the bench and onto the pitch.

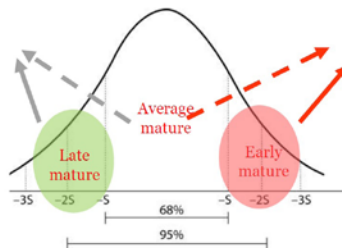
CONSEQUENCES RELATIVE GROWTH EFFECT U15

- Regular Talentcenters: Most "talented" players. Early developers – temporary better performers. Good matching for early developers – rarely for late developers.
- Future-Talentcenters: Talented late mature players. Late developers – temporary struggling with performance in own age-group. Good matching against biological AND chronological peers.
- Experiences: Different games. Different weak and strong sides in the groups.

Group 07: 30 players U15 Future Talentcenter East
Avg. Height: 159,9 cm
Avg. Weight: 44,2 kg

Current difference
Height = 20 cm
Weight = 20 kg

Group 07: 30 Players U15 Reg. Talentcenter East
Avg. Height: 176,9 cm
Avg. Weight: 64,1 kg



DANSK BOBSPIL-UNION



Good practice example

The Swiss FA's Footuro and Footura development programmes

“The Swiss Way” was first conceived by the Swiss Football Association’s then-Technical Director Hansruedi Hasler ahead of EURO 2008. It has proved highly successful but, as Patrick Bruggmann explains in this good practice example, the Association is determined to develop it even further.

Switzerland’s pioneering approach to talent development has seen the small alpine nation emerge as a perennial giant-killer at major international tournaments. In this presentation, Swiss FA Director of Talent Development Patrick Bruggmann outlines how their Footuro and Footura Talent Development Programmes (for the men’s and women’s teams, respectively) are run, and shows how they are helping to consolidate Switzerland’s place at football’s top table.

Good practice

- Acknowledging talent development as a long-term process that requires sustained commitment from associations, clubs, and players.
- Fostering strong relationships with clubs, who have a particularly important role to play in supporting talent development programmes.
- Particularly for a small nation, prioritising the development of individual players with the potential to play international football over building successful club and junior international teams.
- Assembling a team of experts who can provide tailored support in a range of different fields can help to accelerate players’ development.

Footuro/Footura and The Swiss Way

The Swiss Football Association's Footuro and Footura programmes are a key part of the overarching talent development plan known as The Swiss Way. They were originally set up ahead of EURO 2008 with the short-term aim of delivering immediate results in that tournament, and the long-term objective of creating a system that would allow Switzerland to punch consistently above its weight. Patrick Bruggmann explains the history of the two programmes, what they are designed to do and how they have evolved over the last two decades.



How the programmes work

Patrick also explains the day-to-day operations of the Footuro and Footura schemes. There is a heavy emphasis on developing individual players rather than teams, and convincing clubs to prioritise talent development over results is a major challenge for the programme staff. They also have to work out how to retain "late developers" in the system and how to adapt the men's Footuro template to female players, but the fact around a third of the current men's national team squad graduated from Footuro suggests their approach is bearing fruit.



› Outline negotiation and selection procedures

The focus of outlining negotiation and selection procedures is to create a transparent, strategic, and collaborative framework for finalising player selections. By defining clear processes, identifying key stakeholders, and incorporating checks and reviews, organisations ensure that both the negotiation strategy and selection decisions align with strategic goals while continuously refining and improving the process to maximise approaches.

Key questions to ask yourself

- What is your negotiation process and strategy?
- What is your selection procedure?
- Who is responsible for checking and challenging selection decisions?
- Who are the key stakeholders (internal and external) in the selection procedures?

Important factors to consider

- Consider your strategic approach when selecting players and consider the players personal circumstances.
- Note how the external stakeholders (e.g., parents, agents) could play an important role.
- Record, analyse, and review transparent discussions with designated persons during the selection decisions to improve procedures.

Supporting templates and resources

Stakeholder mapping tool (see [page 149](#)): This document consists of a template that can help you identify, evaluate, and prioritise stakeholders that influence or have an interest in a football organisation's player selection process. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Player negotiation process (see [page 155](#)): This resource offers a step-by-step approach for a structured and effective player negotiation process within a competitive professional football club. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Supporting Resource

—●— Stakeholder Mapping

What is the tool

A tool to identify, evaluate, and prioritise stakeholders who can influence or have an interest in the football organisations player selection process.

Why use this tool

A stakeholder is anybody who can affect or is affected by an organisation, a strategy, procedures, or a process. They can be internal or external, senior or junior, groups or an individual. Stakeholder mapping tools are used to identify, evaluate, and prioritise those who can influence or have an interest in a project, programme, or process.

Stakeholder mapping supports: (a) conscious awareness and reflection on all those that are needed to create what is trying to be achieved (e.g., player selection and recruitment into a football organisation), (b) introspective into current relationships with these stakeholders (e.g., parents, agents, coaches), and (c) a structured set of plans on what is needed to progress with these stakeholders (e.g., negotiation with player and parents).

When to use this tool

- Co-created with key stakeholders in the football organisation's selection process to understand, support, and engage with their stakeholder map and influences
- Revisited along the selection process, ensuring pro-active thinking and action to pull people in and out as needed for negotiation and selection procedures

How to use this tool

There are three useful stages of stakeholder mapping:

- 01 Identify the key stakeholders and the current relationships with them
- 02 Categorise the stakeholders by considering their level of influence and level of support towards the selection process
- 03 Consider how to approach, manage, and improve the relationships with these different categories of stakeholders

In some cases, all three of the above stages will be useful. However, in others it may only be useful to carry out one or two of the three stages – it is dependent on the unique situation and complexity within your football organisation. Below are the three stages, together with alternate methods of visualisation – choose whatever suits your scenario, ways of working, and goals best.

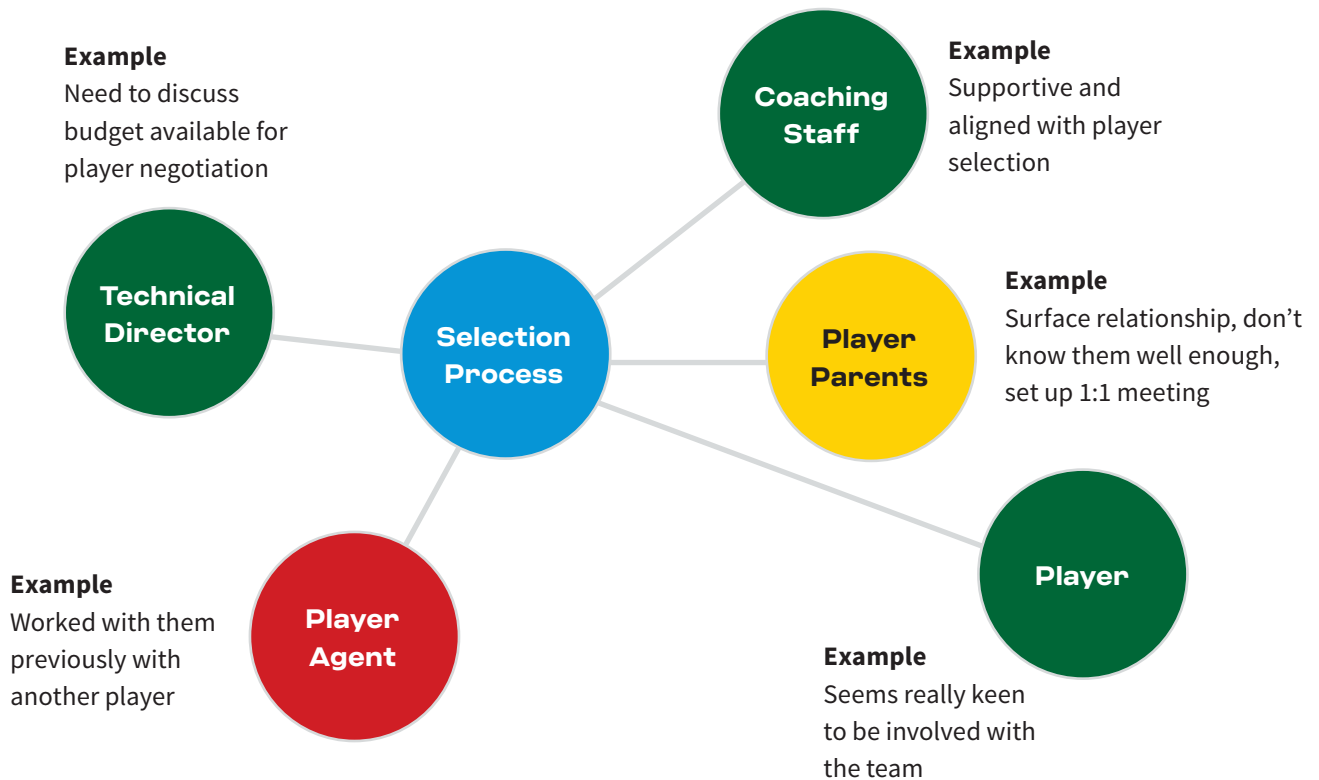
Supporting Resource

Stakeholder Mapping

Stage 1: Identification mapping

Note, this map can be presented in many ways, either as a table or drawn out. Identify and consider the current relationships with stakeholders across the following categories:

- 01 Frequency of contact, either currently or as needed for negotiation and selection procedures
- 02 Quality of relationship (indicated by red, yellow, or green)
- 03 Key words/actions that relate to each stakeholder (indicated by noted words)

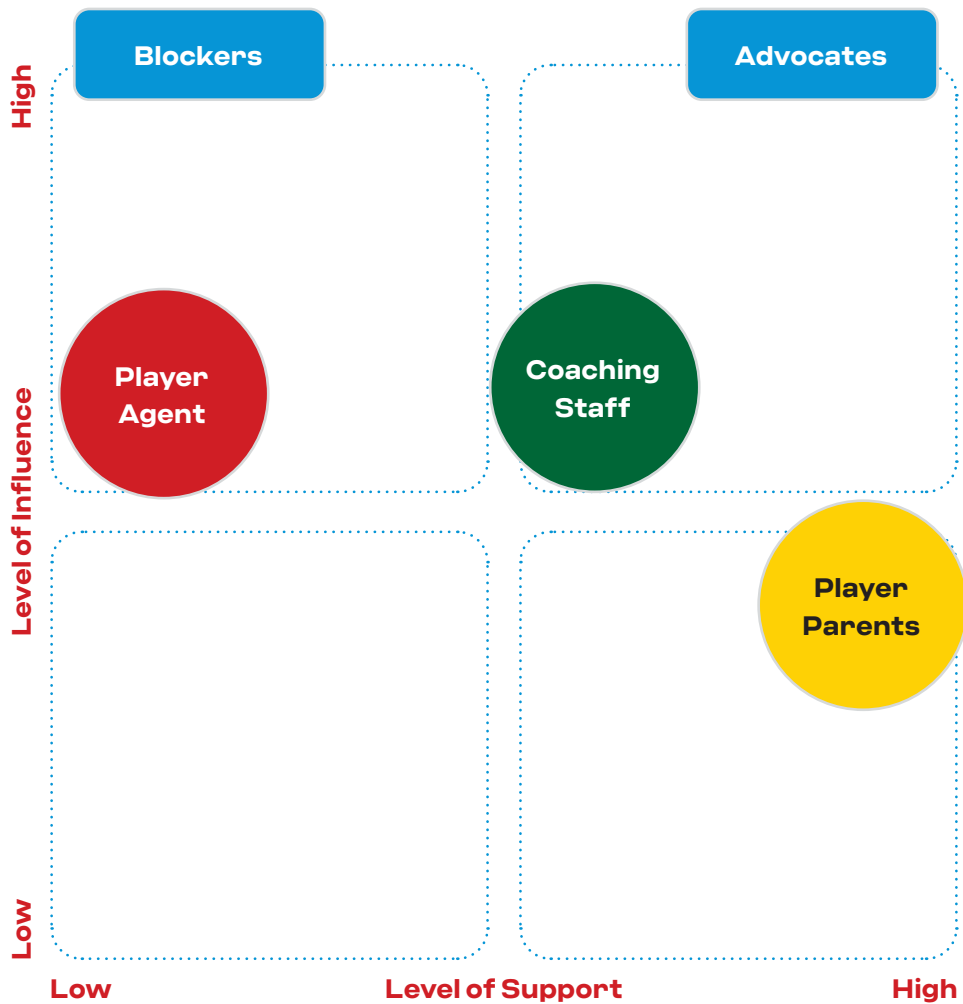


Supporting Resource

Stakeholder Mapping

Stage 2: Categorising stakeholders

Using the outputs from stage one, map the stakeholders across two variables. The influence that each stakeholder has and the level of support/interest the stakeholder has. The resulting matrix helps to identify who can have the greatest impact on the success of the negotiation and selection processes.

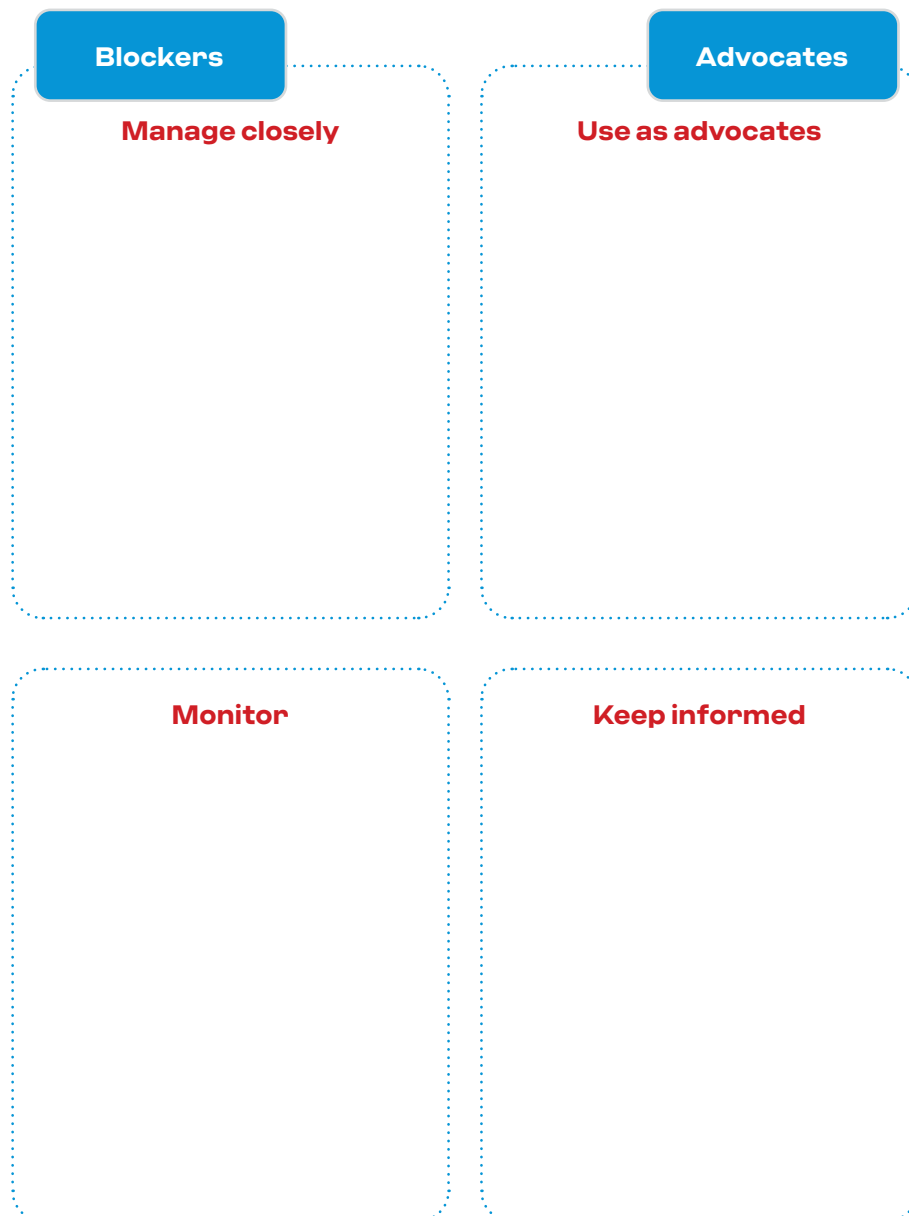


Supporting Resource

Stakeholder Mapping

Stage 3: Management strategies

The final stage is to create clear and actionable plans moving forward for the groups of stakeholders, prioritising those identified as being able to have the greatest impact on successful negotiation and selection processes.



Supporting Resource

— Stakeholder Mapping

Optional stage: Most important stakeholders

For your most important stakeholders, it is recommended that you undertake an additional exercise to dive deeper into the relationships with these individuals on the basis of:

- Their expectations with regard to the selection process
- What they have to offer, whether tangible (e.g., salary, medical assessments) or intangible (e.g., communication, support)

This could be completed as part of your initial discussions with these key stakeholders. Since they are important to the success of the selection process, it is crucial that you communicate with these stakeholders as early as possible and build strong and lasting relationships.

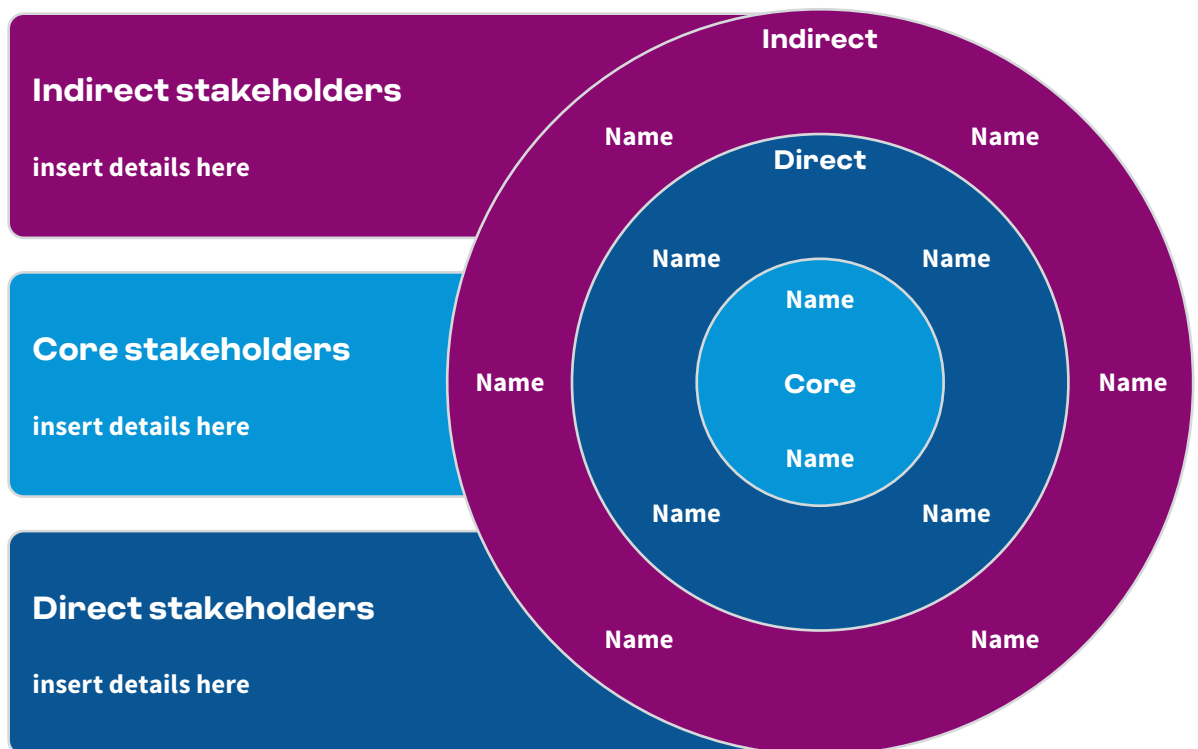
Stakeholder (Importance categorisation: 3 = high, 2 = medium, 1 = low)	Stakeholder's role	Stakeholder's expectations of football organisation	Stakeholder's challenges	Stakeholder's resources
Player Agent 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiation between organisation and player on terms for recruitment • Communication of terms and offers between player and organisation • Financial compensation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal of fair offers and terms for player selection and recruitment • Clarity of player role within team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of financial incentive • Clarity of role for the player within team • Direct contact with other football organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network of football clubs and organisations • Knowledge of player market and contract terms
Player Parents 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Player support (emotional and logistical) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure player's well-being and future success • Secure playing time and opportunities for development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing player's well-being with career ambitions • Communication gaps between family and club • Travel and logistical issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional and moral support • Financial backing (for expenses, if applicable)
Coaching Staff 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and developing players • Game strategy and tactical direction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success of the team • Development of players to their full potential • Smooth functioning of team dynamics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing diverse player personalities and expectations • Pressure to perform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching expertise and knowledge • Relationships with other coaching staff and players • Experience in player development

Supporting Resource

Stakeholder Mapping

Alternative visualisation: Project map of stakeholders involved in player selection and negotiation

There are many ways to visualise a stakeholder map. This 'onion' diagram helps to visualise the relationships of stakeholders with respect to their influence on the process or procedures.



Supporting Resource

—●— Player Negotiation Process

Establishing a well-defined player negotiation process is vital for ensuring that your football organisation operates strategically, transparently, and in alignment with its overarching goals. Importantly, player negotiation processes are unique to the context of the organisation and its specific competitive landscape. For instance, the negotiation framework for a football club competing in a professional league will differ significantly from that of a national football association, where invitations may be sent to eligible players to compete in international competitions. Tailoring the process to reflect your own football organisation's context ensures that negotiations are both relevant and effective.

To support you with creating a player negotiation process framework, below is an example of a step-by-step approach for a player negotiation process in the context of a competitive professional football club. It is important to tailor these steps to ensure they are relevant to your football organisation's specific context and competitive environment, allowing for a flexible yet structured approach to achieving successful outcomes in the player negotiation process.

Consider the following key tips to support your player negotiation process and ensure an effective and beneficial outcome.

Key tips for effective negotiation

- Use a data-driven approach: Use analytics to justify the player's valuation
- Build trust: Maintain open communication with the agent and player
- Be flexible: Identify non-financial perks (e.g., playing time guarantees) to close the deal
- Leverage networks: Use connections within the football world to gain insights or facilitate discussions



Use the following steps and information to support your player negotiation process and create a structured and collaborative framework for assessing and finalising important agreements.

Supporting Resource

Player Negotiation Process



Step 01 Preparation Phase

- Gather data on the player's skills, potential, and recent performances
- Understand the player's current contract situation (e.g., length, salary, clauses)
- Analyse market conditions (e.g., are there competitors? What is the player's market demand?)
- Determine your club's budget and priorities for the position



Step 02 Initial Contact

- Establish contact with the player's agent to express interest
- Inform the agent about the potential role for the player in the team
- Inquire about the player's willingness to transfer and general financial expectations



Step 03 Internal Alignment

- Present a scouting report to key decision-makers
- Discuss the potential value the player brings to the team
- Align on a maximum transfer fee, salary range, and negotiation limits



Step 04 Formal Offer

- Present a written offer to the player's agent, including salary, bonuses, contract length, and performance incentives
- Include clauses that align with club policies (e.g., release clauses, loyalty bonuses)
- Negotiate adjustments based on feedback from the agent



Step 05 Negotiation

- Engage in back-and-forth discussions to find common ground
- Address key sticking points, such as salary, bonuses, and player role assurances
- Use benchmarks from similar deals to justify your position



Step 06 Agreement

- Finalise terms and ensure both parties understand the agreement
- Draft and sign the official contract
- Complete necessary legal formalities, such as work permits or governing body endorsements



Step 07 Closing and Announcement

- Conduct a medical examination and finalise the transfer paperwork
- Submit the transfer details to the league or federation for approval
- Announce the signing through official club channels, highlighting the player's qualities and the club's ambition

Summary

- To ensure an effective selection process, football organisations must align their selection efforts with their identification approaches, profiles, and philosophy.
- Asking key questions throughout the selection process, such as those related to long lists, short lists, decision-making, and negotiations, helps build comprehensive and effective systems for player selection.
- Considering important factors, such as team balance, the involvement of relevant stakeholders, and establishing clear roles and responsibilities, ensures a streamlined and collaborative selection process.
- Leverage good practice examples, tools, and resources provided within this guide to refine and continually improve the selection process for ongoing success.



What does your selection system and processes look like and what could you achieve in the future? Use the following checklist to reflect upon what you already do as part of your selection system and processes, as well as consider what you could do moving forward. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Supporting Resource

Reflection Checklist

Long lists

Achieved Developing Not Achieved

Do long lists for player selection exist?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are there specific criteria for the inclusion/selection of players?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are the long lists accessible to all people involved in selection?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is positional depth and balance considered when creating long lists?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Who decides which players are included in long lists? How do they decide this and what information is considered?

How many players are included in long lists? Does the long list outline player consideration, such as age, gender, event/competition, and club?

How are players tracked when deselected?

Is there a database in place to monitor and track these players?

Short lists

Achieved Developing Not Achieved

Do short lists for player selection exist?

Are there specific criteria for the inclusion/selection of players?

Are the short lists accessible to all people involved in selection?

Is positional depth and balance considered when creating short lists?

Who decides which players are included in short lists? How do they decide this and what information is considered?

How many players are included in short lists? Does the short list outline comprehensive player information and considerations, such as player ratings, preferred foot, and rankings?

How are players tracked when deselected?

Is there a database in place to monitor and track these players?

Negotiation & selection

Achieved Developing Not Achieved

Are Talent ID staff involved in key selection decisions and negotiations?

Are internal and external stakeholders considered when making selections?

Who makes the key selection decisions and leads negotiations?


Are there any issues in the process preventing selections? If so, what are they (e.g., external relationships, release of players, travel distances, financial/social barriers)?

Who are the key external stakeholders in the selection and negotiation procedures (e.g., parents, agents)? How are they considered as part of these processes?

Dimension 5

Constants

Richard Allen,
High Performance Specialist and
Talent ID Technical Lead

A photograph of Richard Allen, a middle-aged man with a grey beard and balding head, wearing a dark blue polo shirt with Adidas and FIFA logos. He is speaking into a headset microphone and gesturing with his hands. The background is a blue wall with the word 'FIFA' visible in large white letters.

“The FIFA Talent ID Dimensions Model offers a structured framework for identifying talented players. It is continuously reinforced by two key operational pillars: the ongoing Plan-Do-Review cycle and a tiered system of Talent ID education.”

This guide provides an overview of the constants dimension within the talent identification model, encompassing two ongoing aspects of the 'plan-do-review' process and 'talent identification education' – both of which are important for long-term success and sustainability within a football organisation.



Talent identification is essential for building a successful football programme, serving as the foundation for key areas such as talent development. Extending from Dimensions 1, 2, 3, and 4, shaped by its philosophy, profiles, identification, and selection, respectively, an organisation should have a clear, comprehensive, and structured talent identification system in place.

This fifth and final dimension highlights the two 'constants' (i.e., talent identification operations that are occurring continuously over a period of time), including the plan-do-review process and talent identification education. These are continual processes that underpin the entire talent identification system, ensuring its effective and efficient implementation. The plan-do-review process establishes a structured approach for assessing, refining, and enhancing talent identification processes. Talent identification education ensures key stakeholders of a football organisation are regularly upskilled and equipped with the latest knowledge, in order to foster a culture of informed decision-making, continuous improvement, and long-term success.

Why is this dimension important?

For a football organisation to build and maintain a reliable talent identification system, the plan-do-review process and talent identification education are crucial. They play a critical role in the continuous growth and development of staff, stakeholders, and the organisational structures involved.

A plan-do-review process allows football organisations to allocate suitable time to plan, execute, and review any specific talent identification activity leading to constant improvements. Reviewing the processes and learning from good practice or mistakes during the different phases (i.e., plan and do) is a vital part of both development and learning, ultimately enhancing talent identification processes and the overall system in the long-term.

In order to improve knowledge, expertise, and performance, talent identification education should be made available to all those involved in the pathway. This includes all stakeholders that make selection decisions (e.g., technical directors, senior management) or are a part of the identification process (e.g., scouts, youth team coaches). Education courses should develop learners understanding and application of the principles and practices of modern talent identification within long term player development. The overarching talent identification system should set out standards for the education and development of talent identification staff at all levels, and guide the licensing of scouting and talent identification staff that are aligned to the organisation's goals.



How do you achieve success?

› Implement a 'plan-do-review' process

The focus of a 'plan-do-review' process is to create a structured and continuous cycle for strategic improvement. By ensuring all stakeholders are involved in planning, delivering, and reviewing, organisations can enhance efficiency and support long-term success. Allocating time and resources across all three phases fosters consistency, adaptability, and more efficient decision-making processes.

Key questions to ask yourself

- How do you currently plan?
- What is the most effective and efficient way of carrying out the plan?
- Is everyone who is involved in the delivery of talent identification taking part in the planning and reviewing process?
- Do you have a formal review process, which involves reflection, feedback, and feedforward?

Important factors to consider

- In order to have an effective strategy and consistently develop talent identification processes, it is important to have a regular planning and reviewing processes in place (e.g., weekly, monthly, quarterly, bi-annually, annually).
- Note how time and resources are often allocated towards 'doing', and reflect on how time and resources could be placed more equitably on all three of the plan, do, and review processes.
- By regularly scheduling time for reflection and feedback, football organisations can support continuous learning, refine scouting accuracy, and create a more effective system to improve talent identification.

Supporting templates and resources

The plan-do-review process (see [page 168](#)): This template supports effective decision-making, accountability, and continuous improvement in talent identification practices. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

The review process in talent identification (see [page 171](#)): This resource provides a thorough overview of how to review an organisation's talent identification system and processes. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Good practice examples to learn from

Scotland's Andy Gould: Understanding the context of your strategy in order to prioritise time and resource (see [page 178](#)): Within this article, you can learn more about how you can plan and implement effective strategies within your football organisation. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Supporting Resource

Plan-Do-Review Process

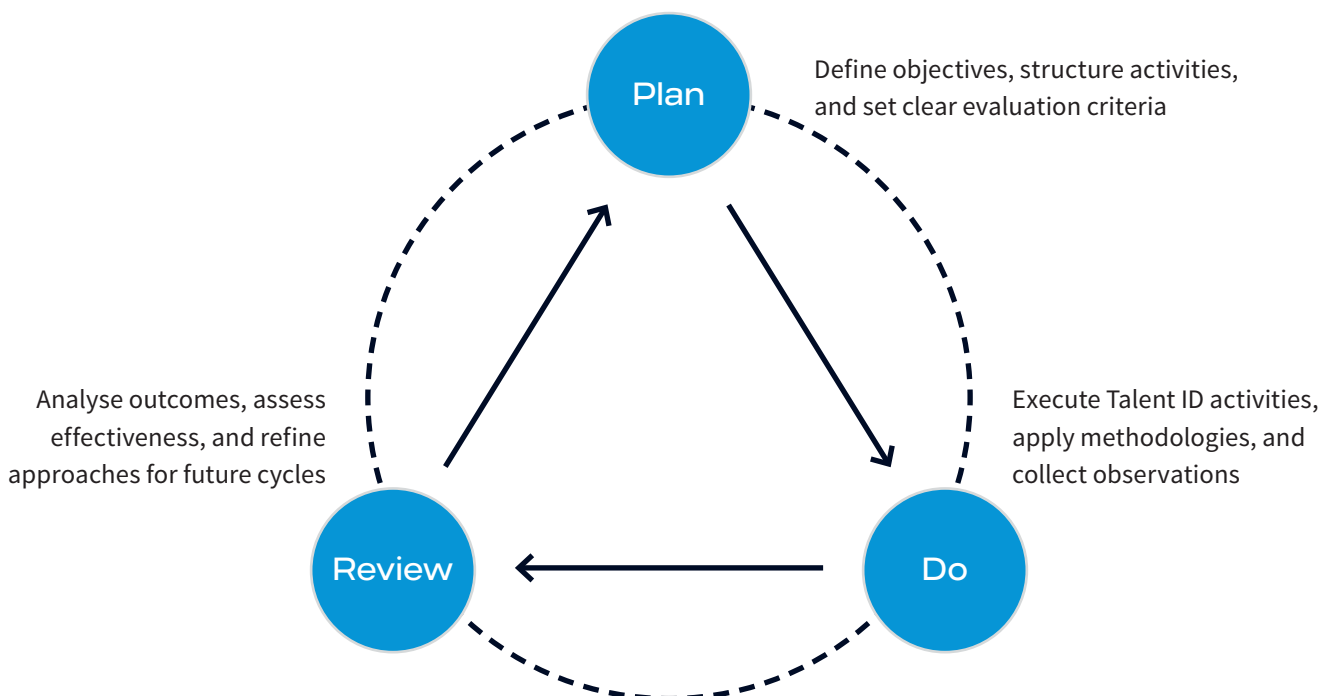
Description

The plan-do-review process is a structured approach for Talent ID, designed to support effective decision-making, accountability, and continuous improvement. By emphasising evaluation, learning, and refinement, this approach ensures that each stage contributes to a more consistent and evidence-based system. Implementing a clear plan, delivery, and review helps organisations create a structured methodology that enhances the quality and reliability of their talent identification processes.

By embedding plan-do-review into Talent ID systems, organisations can make informed, data-driven decisions, systematically learn from each cycle, and adapt their approach to meet the evolving demands of the game. This approach is essential for long-term success and sustainability, ensuring that lessons from each iteration contribute to a more structured and optimised Talent ID process. It helps create consistency, reduce bias, encourage learning, enhance decision-making, and drive continuous improvement.

By integrating this process into Talent ID systems, football organisations can refine their scouting strategies and methodologies, develop stronger and more sustainable player pathways, and ultimately elevate the overall quality of talent within their football ecosystem. The plan-do-review approach fosters a culture of ongoing learning and adaptation, ensuring that Talent ID processes remain efficient, transparent, and forward-thinking.

Below is a visual representation of the plan-do-review process in Talent ID. The cycle emphasises continuous learning and refinement, ensuring each phase builds upon the last for optimal Talent ID processes.



Supporting Resource

—●— Plan-Do-Review Process

Below is a step-by-step breakdown on how an organisation can apply the plan-do-review process for Talent ID.

Phase	Description	Key questions	Example applications in Talent ID
Plan	<p>Set clear objectives, methodologies, and evaluation criteria for scouting and Talent ID activities.</p> <p>Define Talent ID objectives based on game demands, player qualities, and developmental needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the key objectives for the Talent ID activity? • What methodologies will be used? • What are the criteria for success? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting specific age groups, positional needs, and profiles. • Allocating scouting resources and scheduling observation periods. • Setting clear scouting objectives for an age group or position. • Establishing a structured Talent ID event with criteria aligned to future player needs.
Do	<p>Execute the Talent ID activities and implement planned methods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are stakeholders and those involved consistently applying the set methodology? • Is relevant data collected and structured correctly? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organising scouting assignments. • Observing and evaluating players in real match situations. • Using a standardised reporting system. • Applying structured reporting and data collection to track player development.
Review	<p>Analyse observations, assess success and shortcomings, and refine strategies for the next iteration.</p> <p>Analyse outcomes, refine criteria, and adjust scouting processes for continuous improvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What insights emerged from the Talent ID activity? • Were biases minimised? • What were the mistakes? • What improvements can be made for the next Talent ID cycle? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying missed talents or scouting inefficiencies. • Refining Talent ID selection criteria. • Adjusting scouting strategies based on learnings. • Identifying missed talents or scouting gaps (e.g., late developers). • Comparing scout assessments to ensure consistency. • Adjusting scouting methodologies based on learnings from past cycles.

Supporting Resource

—●— Plan-Do-Review Process

Below is a plan-do-review template that you can use to assess your organisation's application to Talent ID across the three phases, considering the description of the activity, key questions to reflect on, and examples of how this is being realised in practice.

Phase	Description	Key questions	Example applications in Talent ID
Plan			
Do			
Review			

Supporting Resource

—●— The Review Process

Reflection, Feedback, and Feedforward

The review process is essential in ensuring continuous learning, refining scouting accuracy, and improving Talent ID processes over time. Without a structured reflection and feedback mechanism, associations risk repeating mistakes, missing key players, or failing to adapt to evolving player development trends.

By regularly scheduling time for review, analysing errors without blame, and utilising key data points, football organisations can support continuous learning, refine scouting accuracy, and create a more effective and objective system to improve Talent ID.

The review process in Talent ID is not just about assessing what happened—it's about understanding why and using those insights to improve future scouting and decision-making processes. Reflection and feedback are integral to this process because they enable organisations to analyse past decisions, recognise patterns, and implement necessary adjustments for continuous improvement.

Why is it Important to Review the Talent ID Process?

- **Ensures Continuous Learning** – Helps scouts, coaches, and decision-makers refine their evaluation methods.
- **Improves Efficiency and Accuracy** – Identifies what worked well and what didn't, reducing inefficiencies.
- **Minimises Bias and Subjectivity** – Encourages structured reflection to make evidence-based decisions.
- **Adapts to New Trends in Player Development** – Ensures the Talent ID process remains modern and aligned with the evolving game.
- **Enhances Accountability** – Encourages a culture of learning and shared responsibility in scouting and recruitment.

1. Reflecting on Experiences

- Encourage scouts and decision-makers to reflect on their past Talent ID experiences.
- Use structured reflection models to analyse personal observations.
- Discuss what worked well and where challenges arose.

2. Embedding Feedback into the Process

- Gather feedback from multiple perspectives (e.g., scouts, coaches, analysts, players).
- Ensure feedback is specific, constructive, and focused on process improvement.
- Track recurring feedback themes and adjust the Talent ID strategy accordingly.

3. Implementing Feedforward Strategies

- Use lessons learned to refine future scouting and selection approaches.
- Establish best practices for decision-making based on previous reflections.
- Schedule regular review meetings to ensure continuous adaptation and learning.

Below is an overview of each of these three stages.

Supporting Resource

—•— The Review Process

1. Reflecting on Experiences

How Reflection Ties into the Review Process

- **Identifying Biases** – Were there patterns in player selection based on unconscious biases?
- **Evaluating Missed Talent** – Were there talented players overlooked due to rigid criteria or flawed evaluation?
- **Comparing Expectations vs. Reality** – Did selected players perform as expected or were there surprises?
- **Assessing Process Effectiveness** – Did the Talent ID approach align with the playing philosophy and development goals?

How to Integrate Reflection into the Review Process

- **Case Study Reflection** – Reviewing past Talent ID successes and failures to identify what worked and what didn't.
- **Personal Reflection Sessions** – Encouraging scouts and coaches to journal their thoughts after scouting assignments.

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle in the Context of Talent ID

Gibbs' Reflective Cycle is a structured model that supports continuous learning and improvement through self-reflection and evaluation. In the context of Talent ID, this model helps scouts, coaches, and decision-makers analyse their scouting and selection processes to refine future talent assessment strategies.

Why Use Gibbs' Reflective Cycle in Talent ID?

- Encourages Structured Reflection – Helps MA's analyse what worked and what didn't.
- Identifies Biases and Inconsistencies – Ensures better decision-making in future player selections.
- Supports Continuous Learning – Enables improvement in scouting and player evaluation strategies.
- Enhances Alignment across Talent ID teams – Ensures all stakeholders work within a clear framework.

Supporting Resource

The Review Process

How Gibbs' Reflective Cycle Works in Talent ID

This cycle consists of six stages, each guiding scouts and analysts through a structured review and learning process:



Description – What happened in the Talent ID process?

- Outline the Talent ID event (e.g., scouting tournament, academy trials, youth player assessments).
- Describe who was involved (i.e., scouts, coaches, analysts).
- Document key actions taken, such as player observations, video analysis, and data collection.

Example: A football club conducted an U18 scouting event, where 50 players were evaluated. A group of six scouts was responsible for player assessments using predefined scouting criteria.

Feelings – How did the evaluators and stakeholders perceive the process?

- What were the thoughts and emotions of the Talent ID team?
- Were there challenges in the process (e.g., pressure to select players, disagreement between scouts)?
- Did the coaches feel confident in the scouting recommendations?

Example: Some scouts felt confident in their selections, while others expressed concern about missing late-developing players. Coaches questioned whether positional needs were prioritised in the selections.

Supporting Resource

—●— The Review Process

Evaluation – What was good and bad about the process?

- What went well (e.g., clear selection criteria, structured evaluation reports, use of data)?
- What were the challenges (e.g., inconsistent player assessments, bias in selections, lack of game footage)?
- Did the scouting process align with the club's playing philosophy?

Example:

Good – The event was well-organised, and each scout followed a structured assessment process.

Bad – Scouts were not aligned on key attributes, leading to discrepancies in player ratings.

Bad – The evaluation of tactical intelligence/game understanding was inconsistent across reports.

Analysis – Why did things happen the way they did?

- Identify causes of successes and mistakes in the Talent ID process.
- Were scouts properly trained on selection criteria?
- Was there sufficient time for player assessments?
- Did bias play a role in decision-making?

Example: The lack of alignment in player evaluation stemmed from scouts having different interpretations of the club's Talent ID criteria. Some emphasised physical attributes, while others focused more on tactical awareness.

Conclusion – What should have been done differently?

- What changes should be made in future Talent ID events?
- How can scouting alignment be improved?
- Should data and video analysis play a greater role in decision-making?

Example: To improve consistency, the club decides that all scouts must attend a pre-event calibration meeting to ensure uniform evaluation standards.

Action Plan – How will improvements be implemented next time?

- Implement new review mechanisms (e.g., post-event debriefs, standardised player rating systems).
- Enhance scout training on the organisation's Talent ID model.
- Utilise data tracking and video analysis to supplement live scouting.

Example:

For the next Talent ID event, the organisation will:

- Provide scouts with pre-event training on evaluation criteria.
- Introduce multi-scout reviews for each player to minimise bias.
- Use tracking data and match footage to complement subjective scouting reports.

Supporting Resource

—•— The Review Process

2. Embedding Feedback into the Process

Why Feedback is Essential when Reviewing Talent ID

Feedback provides multiple perspectives on the Talent ID process. While reflection is often internal, feedback is about gathering external input from different stakeholders to gain a broader understanding of what's working and what needs improvement.

How Feedback Ties into the Review Process

- Scouting Team Feedback – Were the scouting criteria and processes clear and effective?
- Coach and Technical Staff Feedback – Did the identified players fit into the playing philosophy and team needs?
- Player Performance Feedback – Did the selected players meet expectations in competitive environments?
- Data and Analytics Feedback – What did the performance metrics reveal about the Talent ID accuracy?

How to Integrate Feedback into the Review Process

- Structured Review Meetings – Include scouts, coaches, analysts, and technical staff to review past selections.
- 360-Degree Feedback – Gather input from different levels, including scouts, development coaches, and performance analysts.
- Feedback Forms and Reports – Standardise templates for scouts and coaches to assess whether scouting reports matched real-world performance outcomes.



Supporting Resource

— The Review Process

3. Implementing Feedforward Strategies

Why Implementing Feedforward Strategies is Important for Talent ID

By embedding structured reflection and feedback mechanisms into the review process, football organisations can ensure an evolving, data-driven, and highly effective Talent ID framework that remains adaptable to changing player development landscapes.

How Reflection and Feedback Together Improve Talent ID

- Reflection helps individuals analyse their personal decision-making processes and learn from experience.
- Feedback incorporates external perspectives to validate or challenge those reflections.
- Together, they create a complete review cycle that leads to data-backed adjustments and smarter decision-making.

Step	Reflection (Internal)	Feedback (External)	Outcome
Evaluate Past Selections	What did I personally observe about our process?	What do coaches, analysts, and performance data reveal?	Identify inconsistencies and missed talent.
Identify Strengths and Weaknesses	What worked well in my scouting approach?	What patterns did others observe in our selections?	Adjust evaluation methods.
Implement Changes	What will I change in my own scouting approach?	What will the scouting department change as a whole?	Improve Talent ID processes.

Organising the Review Process: Good Practices

- Schedule Regular Reflection and Feedback Sessions – Set quarterly or annual Talent ID review meetings.
- Use Data and Subjective Insights – Balance performance analytics with scout feedback.
- Encourage Open Dialogue – Foster a no-blame culture where mistakes are seen as learning opportunities.
- Integrate Technology – Use scouting databases and tracking systems to store feedback and reflections over time.
- Assign Review Leaders – Ensure someone is responsible for collecting feedback, organising discussions, and implementing improvements.





Good practice example

Scotland's Andy Gould: Understanding the context of your strategy in order to prioritise time and resource

What defines a good strategy and how can it be sustained? Scotland FA's Chief Footballing Officer Andy Gould shares how technical leaders can devise and lead effective strategies in their organisations.

Learning

- How a better understanding of organisational context can help effective prioritisation of budget and resource.
- The leadership and management skills required to lead an effective strategy.
- The importance of taking time to reflect, reposition, and reprioritise.

Pillars and strategy

Technical directors must develop a strong understanding of the context of their organisation and strategy in order to prioritise time and resource, says Andy Gould, Chief Football Officer for the Scottish Football Association. "As a technical director you have to understand the context of your strategy and the resources and people that you have within your organisation to deliver it", he explains. "It is important to ask yourself: do you have enough resource? Do you require additional resources? Do you need to move some of that resource to different areas? I think the technical director role needs to make sure there is a balance across all of the key issues and areas". Indeed, all these are relevant for effective and efficient planning and delivery of talent identification.

Taking time to reflect, reposition, and reprioritise

Technical directors must find time to reflect on the progress of their strategy in order to reprioritise and reposition if appropriate, says Gould. “The job requires you to be involved in so many different aspects. Sometimes you can find yourself very much involved in the ‘doing’ and it can sometimes be difficult to take a step back. But if you’re involved in ‘doing’ all the time, then it’s hard for you to reflect. So, it’s so important to find time to reflect and then possibly reprioritise and reposition some of the work. This is particularly relevant for those in charge of talent identification, as planning and delivery are often prioritised over the reviewing aspects.

“Also, your focus areas may change based on the priority of the association. For example, if national teams is a very important area and there’s a requirement to improve in that area, then there’s a focus there that needs to be dialled up. Likewise, if we identify that we need to improve in another pillar then more focus will be put there. So, I always think there’s a number of different reasons and rationale as to where you, as the technical director, must get involved. But I think you just have to constantly check yourself and the strategy to see where you’re going”.



Summary

- Take time to reflect on your strategy in order to reposition and reprioritise effectively.
- Ensure your strategy aligns with the goals and context of your organisation and football in your country.
- Leading an effective strategy requires agility, resilience, and good people.

Reflection

- How simple is your strategy to summarise and communicate?
- How often do you review the progress or your strategy?
- Are there any areas of your strategy that you need to reprioritise or reposition?

› Implement talent identification education

The focus of talent identification education is to equip staff and stakeholders within the organisation with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively carry out talent identification activities. By providing formal training and tailored education programmes, organisations can ensure a consistent and informed approach to talent identification, which is aligned to their philosophy, profiles, identification, and selection goals.

Key questions to ask yourself

- How do you upskill your staff who are involved in the talent identification process?
- Are there any formal talent identification qualifications available (internal or external) for relevant members of staff?
- Are there specific talent identification education programmes for the different areas of talent identification (e.g., identification systems and processes, scouting environments, player observations, data and analytics)?
- Are you using and embedding scientific evidence related or relevant to talent identification to help inform your education?

Important factors to consider

- Think about how this aligns to the overarching education framework or process to upskill staff/stakeholders within the football organisation.
- Suggest how talent identification education could be embedded into other education courses within the football organisation (e.g., coaching development workshops/sessions).
- Consider talent identification as a standalone education course/provision to upskill stakeholders within the football organisation.
- Invest in technical staff with a high level of expertise who can lead and be responsible for talent identification education and coach development within the football organisation (e.g., course delivery, mentoring opportunities).

Good practice examples to learn from

The role of the talent identification manager (see [page 181](#)): Within this interview you can learn about the role of the talent identification manager, from the perspectives of working in a professional football club and in a national football association setting. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Finland and England: Contrasting approaches to educating coaches about talent identification (see [page 182](#)): No country or region is the same. This presentation, given by coach education and talent identification experts, reveals the differing approaches to talent identification education adopted by the English and Finnish football associations. Full online article available on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).



Good practice example

The role of the talent identification manager

The role of the talent identification manager is to identify and recommend young players to the academy director who they believe will be the best fit for the club.

In an interview with Jan Verbeek, Researcher at the Royal Dutch Football Association, and Tobias Süveges, Talent Identification Manager at Werder Bremen, we can learn about the role of the talent identification manager, from the perspectives of working in a national football association setting and in a professional football club.

It is imperative a club tries to recruit players who can easily adapt to the football organisation's training environment and have the potential to develop and evolve as players through the pathway, which has been laid out by the organisation's director and the coaching team. The long-term vision for a young player who has been recruited by the talent identification manager is for them to develop through the talent development system so they can eventually take their place in the first team.

One of the key attributes of the talent identification manager is to have a strong connection with the academy director, so they can get a deep understanding of the club philosophy and an awareness of the overall vision of the football organisation, so the right type of players are identified. Once the criteria has been laid out and the required skill set is identified for a player by the organisation's director, the talent identification manager and their team will begin their search for the player who is the best fit for this role.

The talent identification manager will look at every aspect of a potential player from their technical ability, physical capacity, and growth potential right through to their personality type and their cultural and family background.



Good practice example

Finland and England: Contrasting approaches to educating coaches about talent identification

FIFA has 211 national member associations. Developing the next generation of talent is a key objective for every single one of them – but that doesn't mean they all have to do it the same way.

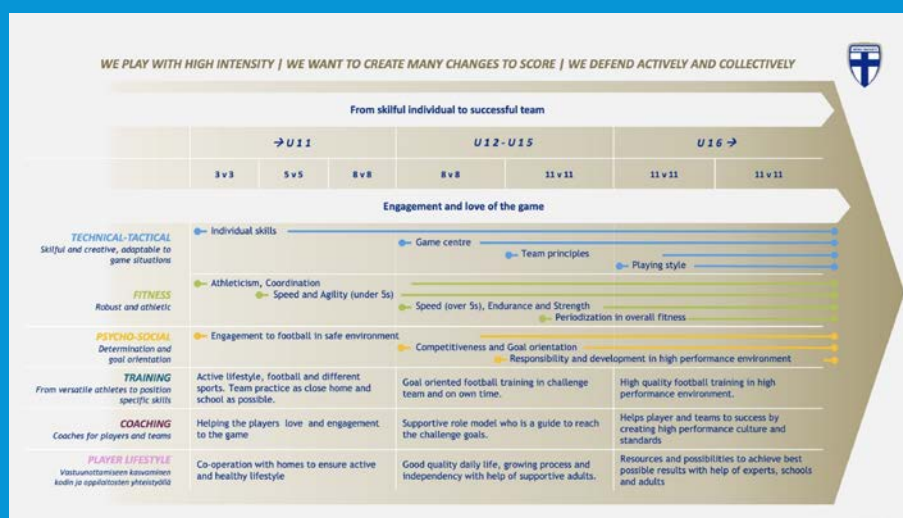
To underline that fact, Matti Lähitie, Head of Coach Education at the Finnish Football Association, and Matthew Portas, Talent Identification Manager at The Football Association, discuss their countries' contrasting approaches to educating coaches about talent identification, and how they reflect specific local circumstances.

Good practice

- How you educate coaches and practitioners about talent identification should reflect your organisation's footballing identity, as well as the way your local clubs play.
- Talent identification training can be integrated into a wider coach education programme or run in parallel to it. Which approach is most effective will depend on your organisation's specific circumstances.
- A strong community of practitioners can maintain professional networks and accelerate learning in talent identification.

Talent identification education in Finland: the integrated approach

Talent identification education in Finland is based on a long-term strategy, and is integrated into a coach education pathway that reflects the distinctive playing style of the country's national sides. Initially, coaches work on how to recognise and develop talented players, and learn to operate with an awareness of factors that can mask that talent, such as bias and the relative age effect. As they move along the pathway, the focus shifts towards how to scout and recruit players to fit a specific profile and playing style.



England's parallel track

In contrast, the English FA runs a parallel framework for talent identification alongside its coaching qualifications. The standalone talent identification qualifications are role-specific, and cater for everyone from scouts to heads of department and elite coaches. The courses also reflect the investment The FA has made in the women's game, where it is common for individual staff members to carry out other duties alongside talent identification. With thousands of learners enrolling every year, The FA's training in this area is helping to foster a strong community of talent identification specialists.

FA TID Education in Numbers Season 23/24

More women & W&G learners
More opportunities in D&I space
More learning for the pro game
Top Talent focused Development

900+ professional game learners; 150+ learning days delivered:

ITID (ONLINE)
Enrolled : 15761
Completed: 11285

NCTID (L2)
33 Courses
66 Days
815 Learners
28 M&B Pro clubs
3 W&G game courses
2 D&I Courses

APTID (L3)
2 Courses
60 Learners
44 Clubs
24 Days
12 Modules
3 Online sessions

LTID (L4)
1 Course
31 Learners
27 Clubs
21 Days
20 Tutor group meets
5 Modules
9 Blocks

L&D

CD

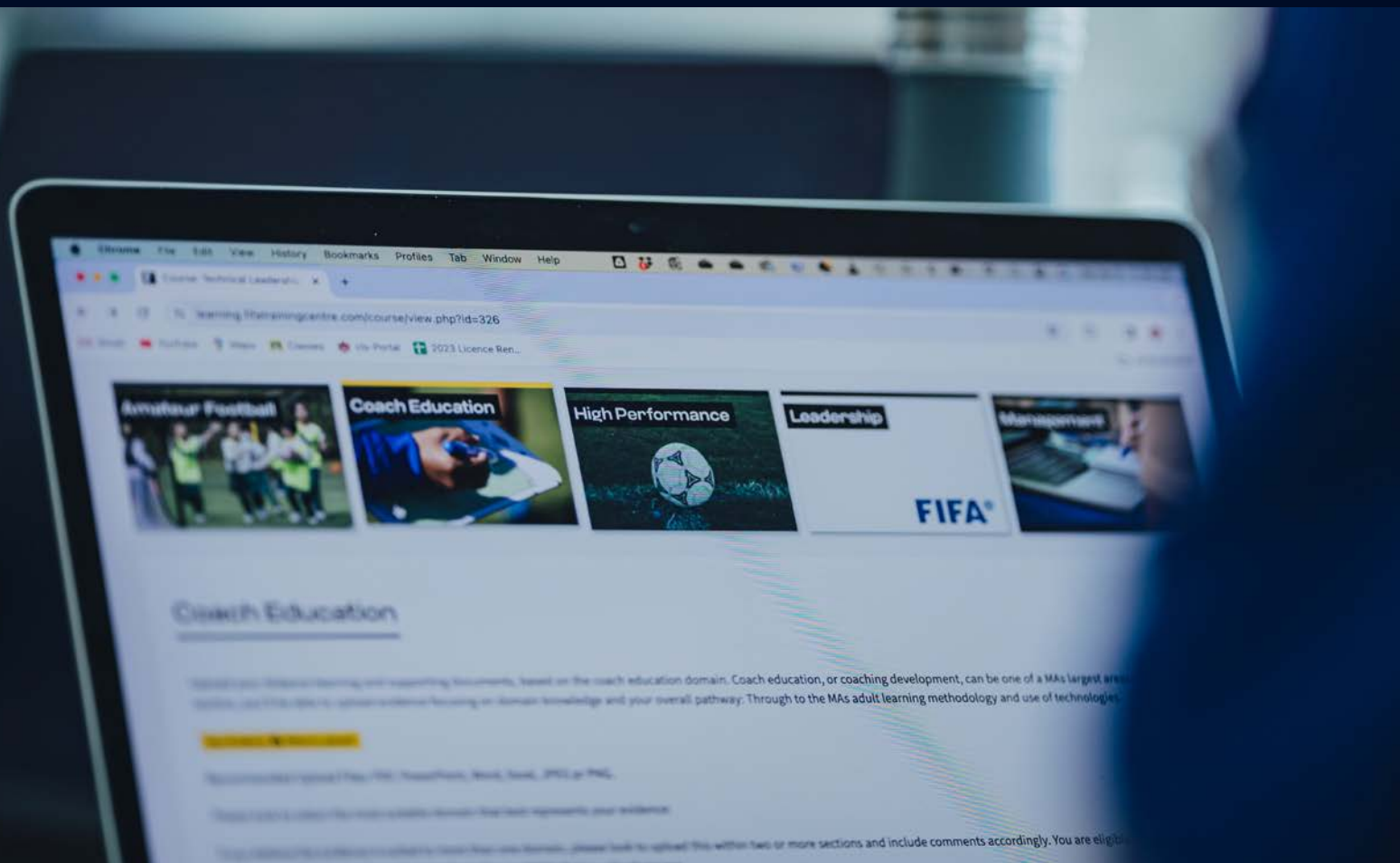
Nat. Teams

Opps

Cross Department CPD/Courses:
 FA Mentee Programme CPD & TID L2 (20 people)
 PL ECAS D&I Dev. Programme x1 (20 learners)
 UEFA Pro License x 1 modules (26 learners)
 Technical Directors Course (16 Learners)
 Women's ETC & PGA conferences x2 (x150 people)
 Leadership Skills Development Programme (x11)

Summary

- To ensure an effective ‘plan-do-review’ process, football organisations must equally invest time into each phase, building a comprehensive process.
- Emphasising the review process to assess outcomes, and encouraging open and constructive discussion to learn from mistakes, will help enhance the refinement and development of current approaches.
- Delivering continuous talent identification education through existing education provisions or stand-alone courses will ensure an informed and effective approach to talent identification.
- Leverage good practice examples, tools, and resources provided within this guide to implement and improve the constants (i.e., ‘plan-do-review’ process and ‘talent identification education’) for long-term success.



What does your plan-do-review process and talent identification education provision look like? Use the following checklist to reflect upon what you already do as part of the ‘constants’ in talent identification, as well as consider what you could do moving forward. You can download the template on the FIFA Training Centre [here](#).

Supporting Resource

Reflection Checklist

Plan-do-review	Achieved	Developing	Not Achieved
Is there a clear plan for Talent ID processes?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are Talent ID plans effectively implemented?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do periodic reviews of Talent ID processes take place?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are mistakes documented and reflected on to enhance future planning and implementation processes?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Does everyone involved in the implementation phase of Talent ID also participate in the planning and reviewing processes?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are key performance indicators used to support the review process?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is time equally distributed among planning, doing, and reviewing processes?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What is the approach when planning Talent ID processes?			
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Who is involved in Talent ID process reviews? How often are they held? What topics do they cover? What types of information (e.g., key performance indicators) are used?			
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What is the current process to learn lessons from any mistakes or issues to enhance future planning and implementation processes for Talent ID activities?			
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