



What It Takes To Be an ODP Player



The Olympic Development are for the serious soccer player for whom soccer is the preeminent participation sport, has hopes of playing soccer in college, making the US Olympic Team or U.S. National Team, wants to be a soccer professional, is committed to the process, maintains his/her soccer skills and fitness on a daily basis, believes in team building, can handle changes, has good coping skills, takes directions well. Can adapt to different styles of play and does not use excuses to avoid participation at any level.

There are many ways to achieve your ultimate goal and it is entirely possible to make it to the highest level without going through all or indeed any of the preceding levels of participation. However, the current system is the one most recognized throughout the United States as the best way to identify top quality players who can perform in any environment and still cope with the everyday demands.

An ODP player is one who can adapt to his/her surroundings and is willing to participate without complaint with players of same, greater or lesser skills. Players change physically and emotionally. Players who may be physically mature at an early age may be surpassed as others mature.

Every year, the program starts from the beginning. From event to event players change at the state regional and national levels. Any player can be eliminated and replaced during the process. Although we are looking for the best players on the team, we do not select only players from exclusively winning (successful) teams and programs. Just because a player is from a top club does not qualify him/her for ODP nor does playing for an average team disqualify a player from participating in these elite programs.

We understand that it helps to be playing in the club environment do not necessarily perform to their potential outside of their "comfort zone" and cannot adapt to the ODP process wherein they have to perform in unknown surrounding with unfamiliar players, coaches and style of play. We want players who can reproduce their club performance in the State ODP program so that we can be assured they have at least a chance of participating in the regional pool/teams and hopefully programs beyond.

Players across the nation wonder what it takes to become an ODP player at the state, regional or national level. Some players possess technical dribbling skills, others have a great range of passing, and others have blazing speed. But does having one of those gifts attract the coach's attention? Maybe, but being able to do *two or three things* better *consistently* than your teammates really grabs the coach's attention.

Players can also attract attention by being well rounded in their thinking skills and multi-positional in their game-playing skills. The most important attribute that all high-level ODP players have is the ability to control the ball and be comfortable with it in possession. In other words, coaches watch how players handle the ball and what they can do with it with and without pressure.



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When choosing state, regional and national, coaches look for a blend of types of players who all work hard to win the ball. They need players who have the talent to recognize and take advantage of opportunities to “finish” or score goals or to set up goal scoring. Coaches look for a perfect mix of “workers” and “players,” the constant and flashy.

Each coach has his or her own idea of that proper blend, but the following 10 components are always considered when selecting players for ODP teams.

- 1. Touch on the ball:** Control of the ball while in possession, with both feet. Player’s obviously have to be comfortable while in possession of the ball.
- 2. Balance:** Being in control of the body and able to change direction while controlling the ball.
- 3. Technical speed:** The speed with which a player can *effectively* use their skills in controlling and playing the ball.
- 4. “Coach-ability”:** The ability to listen, understand instructions and carry them out. This is also the ability to develop good habits.
- 5. Work rate:** The willingness to push oneself to the limit. Playing both ends of the field, both offense and defense.
- 6. Awareness:** The ability to recognize opportunity in front, behind and to the side, whether it is a shot, a pass, or a dribbling chance to advance. Reading the “shape of the match”, one’s “game sense.”
- 7. Reaction to failure:** Coaches want players who are very able to continue to play hard after a bad break or mistake. No dropping the head and disappearing mentally.
- 8. Leadership qualities:** The ability to *communicate*, not just talk, to others, to demand the ball, to take charge in intense situations.
- 9. Physical speed:** Being fast, being effective enough without being exploited by opponents.
- 10. Size and strength:** The ability to physically compete against bigger opponents.

Many components are important to making an ODP player. Different positions call for different abilities. During each ODP camp, whether it is the state, regional, or national, the player learns new ideas about soccer. They have the chance to compare themselves to others of the same high caliber and the opportunity to learn from talented and caring coaches.