

US SOCCER'S KEY QUALITIES OF A YOUTH NATIONAL TEAM PLAYER

GAME UNDERSTANDING & DECISION MAKING

READ SITUATIONS, ANTICIPATE & MAKE QUICK DECISIONS UNDER PRESSURE

- Observes and analyzes the position of teammates and opponents
- Identifies cues and intentions of teammates and opponents
- Recognizes space, time and risk/opportunity
- Processes information quickly, thinks ahead and acts fast (makes the best choice)
- Manages the pace of the game, recognizes when to accelerate or slow-down play
- Works smart, uses energy efficiently
- Understands position and role, based on style of play, team principles and strategy
- Adjusts position and moves into space quickly/ahead of time to provide support/cover, aligns actions with teammates
- Scans continuously
- Adapts body shape
- Versatility and flexibility to play multiple roles or positions in different systems
- Uses creativity to find new and different solutions



RESPONSIBILITY & INITIATIVE

RESPONSIBLE FOR OWN LEARNING, DEVELOPMENT & PERFORMANCE

- Demonstrates self-knowledge and applies to their role and responsibility within the team
- Takes ownership, sets goals, plans, monitors, (re)evaluates
- Takes initiative, is proactive (creative), sees opportunities to take action without being told
- Manages personal lifestyle and environment (rest, recovery, sleep, nutrition, injury prevention/care, mental health)
- Behaves like a role model under all circumstances
- Builds relationships, helps and supports teammates and staff
- Prepares for every game/session
- Reflects on and evaluates one's own performance (self-critical)
- Receives and applies feedback, asks questions (coachable)
- Communicates openly and often (coaches, teammates)
- Creates a personal development plan
- Holds self accountable (no excuses, delivers on agreements and promises)

GROWTH MINDSET & WINNING MENTALITY

CONTINUOUS DRIVE TO IMPROVE & COMPETE

MOTIVATION & DETERMINATION

- Shows joy, passion, enthusiasm
- Challenges self
- Pursues goals (desire)
- Never gives up
- Faces adversity & overcomes fear (brave)
- Pushes self to limits (body and mind)
- Believes in self (confidence)
- Contributes to team performance and result (deliberate)

COMMUNICATION

- Communicates with teammates on the field to solve game situations (gives and receives)
- Commuincates off the field to improve self and team (open and often)

EMOTIONAL STABILITY & CONTROL

- Overcomes setbacks
- Deals with pressure
- Stays composed
- Behaves maturely
- Is true to self

INTENSITY (FOCUS)

- Gives maximum effort (work ethic)
- Concentrates, stays on task (Focused & engaged)
- Commits to the process (sacrifice)

TECHNICAL EXECUTION

BALL MASTERY & SKILLS UNDER PRESSURE

- Comfortable/calm with ball under pressure
- Receiving and playing in tight spaces
- Receiving to play forward
- Ability to play 1 and 2 touch
- Precise passing that sets up the receiver (long, break lines, short, etc.)
- Dribbling/running with ball to create (body feints, change of speed and/or direction)
- Making quick combinations
- Creating chances and finishing (final pass/shot)
- Heading
- Dominating 1 v 1 (take-ons, challenges, regains, tackles)

PHYSICAL EXECUTION

MOVEMENT SKILLS & FITNESS

- Moves efficiently (agility, coordination, balance)
- Uses body in duels to control or disrupt the opponent and/or protect the ball
- Is explosive, makes quick movements (accelerates) and/or jumps higher (separating from opponent)
- Exudes strength, power and endurance
- Repeats high intensity actions (sprints)
- Has specialized physical qualities and stature for position

LEARNING ABILITY

CAPACITY TO ADAPT TO A HIGHER LEVEL

- Shows an ability to excel
- Adapts to new situations quickly
- Absorbs and applies new information quickly

POSITIONAL TRAITS

1-4-3-3 FORMATION

FORWARDS

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- Creating chances and scoring goals (foot or head)
- Receiving and holding the ball under pressure
- Making varied runs (movements and timing) to get behind opposition back line and create space for self and teammates
- Anticipating and moving into dangerous positions, untracking from opponent
 - Receiving and passing under pressure (short and long)
 - Showing advanced levels of focus, determination, and control
- Strength to hold off opponent, explosiveness to separate from opponent

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- Dominating 1v1, dribbling and running with the ball to take-on an opponent, creating chances and scoring
- Shooting and crossing (early, cut-back, etc.) off the dribble, coming inside or wide
- Making aggressive runs with and without the ball
- Reading and initiating pressing moments, closing space with speed and intensity
- Denying penetrations and assisting fullbacks in wide areas
 - Speed, change of direction and body feints
 - Ability to make repeated accelerations

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MIDFIELDERS

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- Dominating positionally & individually - controlling & protecting central area
- Positioning between lines (spatial awareness & body orientation) & quick decision making (360 degree scanning)
 - Receiving & turning in tight spaces (technically advanced)
 - Passing range--including final pass
- Recognizing when to play forward, switch play, & keep possession (ball security)
- Breaking down compact defenses and finishing the attack (insight and creativity)
 - Providing offensive/defensive balance
- Agility, endurance, quickness and use of body to protect the ball

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BACKS

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- Continuously adjusting body shape and position to provide support and cover (height and width)
- Dominating 1v1 duels to create or regain the ball
- Receiving, dribbling, and making quick combinations to create chances (crossing and shooting)
- Making overlap and underlap runs to create advantage
 - Speed, quickness, agility, and endurance

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- Leading defensive organization
- Dominating 1v1 situations (heading, tackling, and intercepting)
- Zonal marking, anticipation, and preventive actions (shifting, stepping, dropping, and covering movements)
 - Reading and breaking pressure (calm and decisive)
- Rang of passing (through, over, and around defensive block)
- Strength and power in duels (jumping), speed, and agility

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- Directing teammates, leading defensive organization (clear communication)
- Anticipating and intercepting crosses and balls behind the defensive line (starting position)
 - Stopping shots and dominating 1v1 situations (bravery)
 - Reading pressure and initiating build-up
 - Receiving and passing under pressure (short and long)
- Strength and power, agility and quick reactions to control the area and protect the goal (air and ground)