

Talent Development

Talented prospects gravitate toward soccer clubs for training, coaching expertise, competition, and career advancement. Thus, professional soccer clubs play an important and predominant role in talent development. Socio-cultural organizational structure and developmental training processes implemented in Europe differ substantially in main objective and resource allocation compared to those most commonly practiced by clubs in the United States (Morris et al., 2015; Relvas et al., 2010) (See Figure 1.3a-b). Despite Major League Soccer's recent adoption of a club academy structure like their European counterparts, the majority of the country's clubs remain non-profit, pay to play organizations with limited resources available to help optimize young footballers' development. For the pool of potential male and female prospects outside Major League Soccer or other professional academy systems significant parental and financial support, accessibility to professional coaches and highly competitive standard teams are likely paramount for further development (Allison & Barranco, 2021).

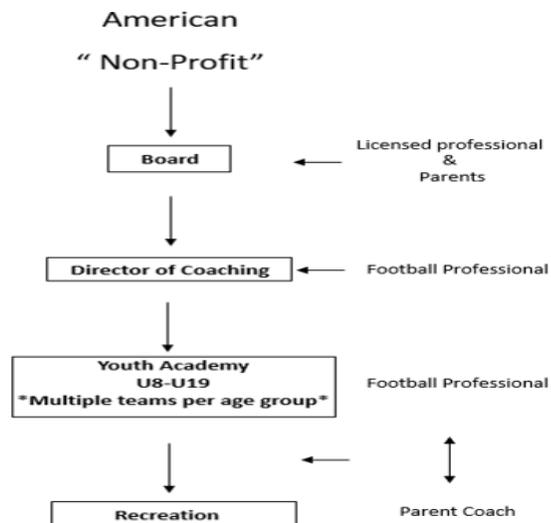


Figure 1.3b American soccer club youth developmental structure.

The value proposition of obtaining membership in a professional football club system relating to talent development stems from the aggregation of gifted players, experienced coaches, quality training and exposure to advanced level of competition. Football team coaches play an integral part in talent development for the following reasons: 1. Background football-skill expertise and tactical knowledge, 2. Comprehensive understanding of standard of league play or competition, 3. Construction, organization, and implementation of a quality training environment (including training aims, small-sided games), 4. Team selection during competition, and 5. Recommendation of individual players for advancement. Quality coaches aim to deliver team-based training sessions that mimic the technical, tactical, psycho-social, and physical demands associated with the level of football match competition (Hill-Haas et al., 2011). Coaches' tactical system of play, team-based training methodology and periodization have been shown to vary (Lacome M Fau - Simpson et al., 2018; Mendez-Villanueva, 2012). Soccer players' response to professional club coaches' team-based training warrants further exploration. Specifically, more

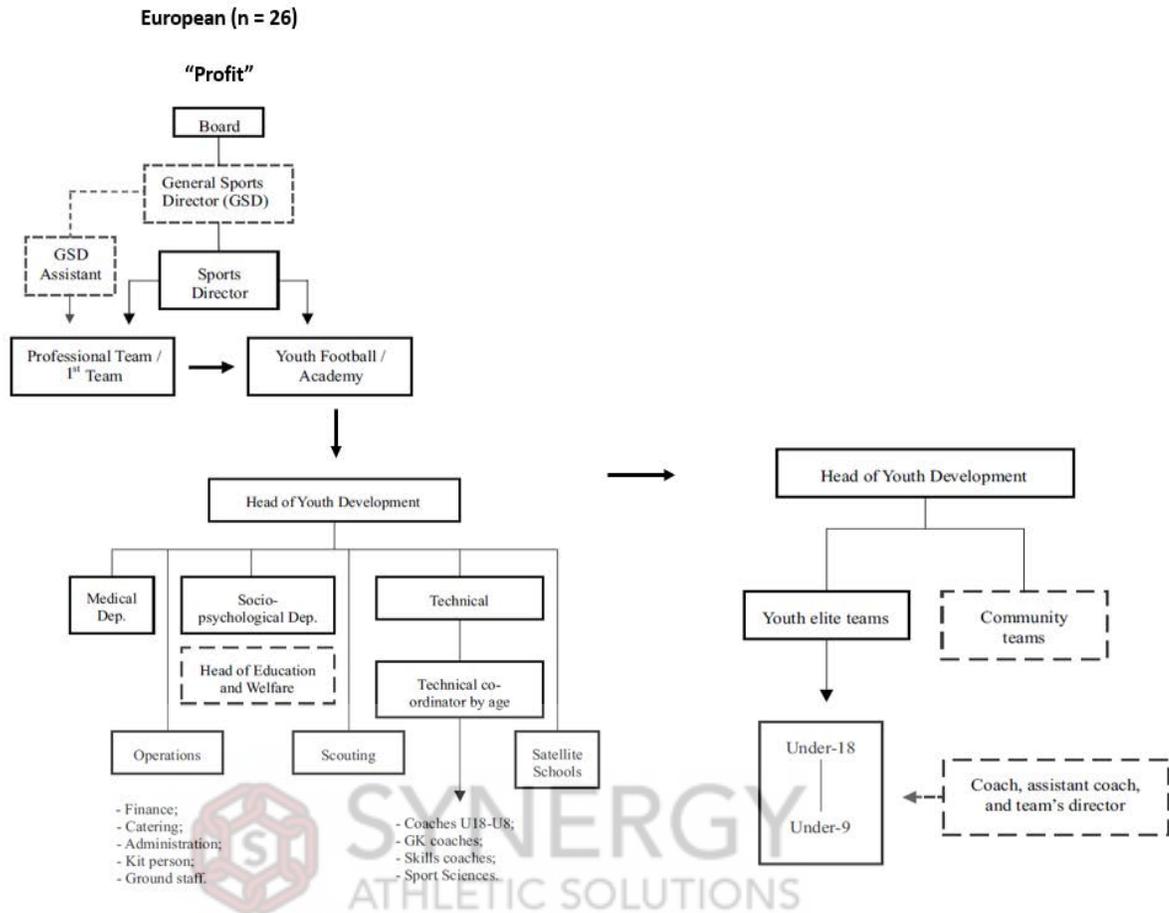


Figure 1.3a Representation of European (n = 26) football club youth developmental structure (Relvas et al., 2010) original version remodified.

research is needed to evaluate the roles coaches' training regimens, footballers' standard of play and response to training have on talent development.

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