

Tryout Evaluation - Common Traits of Players who Do Not Make a Team

Trying out for Select/Travel teams can be a very stressful time - before, during and after. When tryouts are over we often get e-mails and calls asking for evaluations of the players so they can work on what they need to do to improve. With so many players trying out it is impossible to give individual evaluations. However, there are some areas of the game that are the MOST COMMON in separating players from one level to another. These may be helpful in evaluating yourself/child.

1) First touch on the ball. Do you control the ball or does the ball control you? This is easy to see and those who have the ball controlling them can never make the step to a high level. First touch may well be the first thing to look at.

2) Speed of play. This is more in relation to what we call "soccer speed". How fast can one execute a technical requirement of the game? Can a player (under pressure) take a pass and as quickly and efficiently as possible execute the next play?

3) Tactical decisions. Even if the player does things with effective speed, then the question becomes: is the player making the best decision possible and how fast does that player see the options.

4) Does the player make the game better? This can be due to overall ability, athleticism and a good "soccer brain". It can also be because that player does something extremely well that a coach may feel overrides the deficiencies. For example – the player is a great 1v1 player, but lacks defensive instincts or great passing. Maybe the player is a fantastic defender but lacks elsewhere. The essential question is does the player have a chance to make the team better as opposed to just holding his own (not a good standard to use in making a team).

5) What is the player doing the 90% plus of the time that they do not have the ball. Coaches observe players closely "off the ball" as that is what a player does for most of the game. Often players do not make the next level because they are reacting too late to what is going on around them – be it supporting positions on offense or getting into good defensive positions early

Needless to say, there are other things that can factor in – especially at the younger age groups where sizes of players are so varied. Coaches are always asking the question: "While this player may not be able to compete athletically now, can he be one of the best when he does catch up with the athletically advanced players?" We certainly try and select those players even if they do not seem to be as effective right now as some who do not make it.

At the end of the day our staff can safely say that anyone who is selected has deserved to be selected, but we also know there are some not selected who are also good players. For those, the greatest challenge is to now look at their game and really try and improve the above areas in particular. The higher the level the less time and space players will have to be effective. Work on speed of play, speed of execution and speed of thought.