

History of the U.S. Soccer Development Academy

Following a comprehensive review of the boys' youth soccer landscape in the United States, the United States Soccer Federation launched the Development Academy in 2007 in order to create a more structured player development environment for elite players to develop to their highest potential. The review was based on extensive analysis of international soccer clubs, other sports training environments, education and other disciplines that require dedicated training and practice. From the onset, the program's mission has been to impact everyday club environments in order to develop world class players.

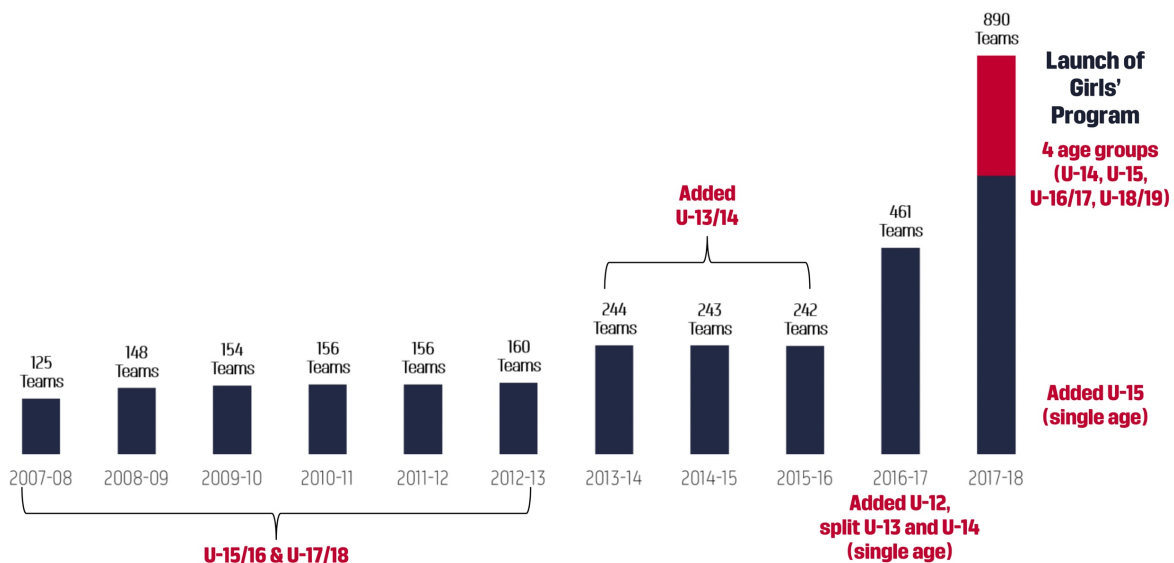
The Academy first launched with two combined age groups in the fall of 2007, U-15/16 and U-17/18. With 2,440 players and 244 coaches across eight conferences, representing 23 states and the District of Columbia, the Academy started with 62 unique clubs, that included teams and affiliates from MLS, USL and NASL.

Beginning with the 2007-2008 Academy season, the most prominent shift in an elite youth player's participation was optimizing the training/game/rest ratio. A critical part of the program's core philosophies, the Academy looked to shift the landscape so that players experienced more training, and fewer, more meaningful games.

From the 2007-2008 season to 2012-2013, the number of teams in the Academy increased from 125 to 160. The first significant jump in membership came in 2013-2014, when the Academy grew to include one new age group, U-13/14. The age group consisted of 88 teams and brought in 22 new, unique clubs, raising the total number of clubs to 100.

ACADEMY GROWTH (2007-2017)

■ Boys ■ Girls



The biggest increase in total teams and clubs came during the 2016-2017 season, when the Academy added U-12 as a single age group and split the U-13/U-14 division into single age, U-13 and U-14 age groups. The significance of the move meant that a player pathway was now established, allowing an elite player to move from U-12 to U-17/18. The 2017 season ended with 58 full pathway clubs (U-12 to U-17/18), 85 clubs at U-12 to U-14 and 135 clubs at U-12 only.

With the onset of the U.S. Soccer birth year [Player Development Initiative](#), where players are registered according to birth year, the Academy changed its naming convention to properly reflect birth years for the 2017-2018 season. U-15/16 was changed to U-16/17 (2002 and 2001), while U-17/18 was changed to U-18/19 (birth years 2000 and 1999). Upon restructuring the age groups, a U-15 single age was created to ensure there are no missing gaps to the player pathway.

The 2017-2018 season represents the biggest landmark since the launching of the Academy in 2007, with the start of the Girls' Development Academy. The Girls' Program is set to kick off with four age groups (U-14, U-15, U-16/17, U-18/19), 69 unique clubs and 276 total teams.

Current Initiatives

Next Steps in the Girls' Development Academy



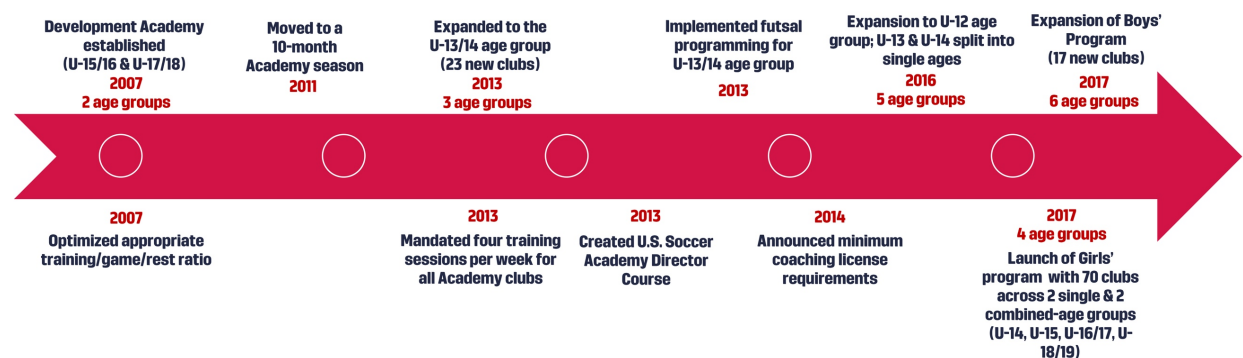
The [announcement](#) of the Girls' Development Academy program first came in February of 2016. After the application process for clubs began the following May, the Academy [welcomed](#) its first 25 clubs on June 30, 2016. Ten days later, the second round of 28 additional acceptances was officially [unveiled](#). Twenty-two additional clubs were [officially accepted](#) into the Academy on August 28, [followed](#) by four clubs on Oct. 11 and [two final additions](#) in May of 2017.

In February of 2017, the Development Academy [appointed](#) Miriam Hickey to lead the program as the Director of the Girls' Development Academy. In the months that followed, the Academy began to [build](#) the first ever team of Girls' Technical Advisors. After former U.S. WNT midfielder Jen Lalor was [added](#) to the team of Technical Advisors, the final three pieces were announced in August.

The first showcase event for the Girls' Development Academy is set to kick off in December of 2017, in conjunction with a major Women's Youth National Team event.

Academy Evolution (2007-2017)

U.S. Soccer Development Academy program initiatives:



Over the years, the Academy has continued to push forward in its mission to develop world class players. After the training/game/rest ratio was established when the Academy started in 2007, the next major mandate came in 2011, when the Academy changed from an 8-month season to a 10-month season, with the calendar spanning from September to June, with a short winter break period.

In 2013, the Development Academy brought a training mandate of four sessions per week for all Academy clubs, ensuring maximum player development focus. In collaboration with U.S. Soccer's Coaching Education department, 2013 was also the year that the U.S. Soccer Academy Director Course was created. The course, which began its fourth rendition in August 2017, provides a unique opportunity for Academy club directors to improve the day-to-day environment of the club. The course empowers candidates to acquire or further develop the knowledge, skills, attitude and traits necessary to work as an Academy Director to lead the elite youth clubs in the United States. During the year-long commitment, candidates learn to evaluate development plans, develop policies, establish club philosophy and vision, improve

everyday club environments and create pathways for talented players to accelerate their development.

In 2014, U.S. Soccer announced that effective as of the start of the 2016-17 season, all Academy technical coaches (including head, assistant, goalkeeper, etc.) must hold a minimum of a U.S. Soccer “B” license. All Academy Directors must meet the U.S. Soccer “A” license requirement and eventually will hold the Academy Director license. This coaching education initiative has continued to ensure that the best players are coached by the best coaches with formal education and alignment with U.S. Soccer player development philosophy.