

Preparing a Young Player for a Try Out to a Professional Club

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“Train Like A Pro”

Becoming a professional soccer player is not an easy task. Most importantly a player needs talent, secondly desire, and finally, mental toughness.

During my 18 years of coaching I have come across a number of success stories and many disasters. In coordinating trials to Europe for my own son, I can share some of my own personal experiences and knowledge.

A common issue is a parent wanting their child to ‘make it’ more than the player wants it themselves. This puts undue pressure on the player to succeed at all costs. In many of these cases the players will quit out of frustration or rebel, especially in their teenage years. The sad thing is many of these young players had the talent to make it. I have seen a number of very talented young players returning home from abroad due to homesickness or not being able to stick it out during difficult periods. The players have to want it themselves and be self motivated.

There is no secret to success aside from hard work, dedication and commitment to training.

The following is a list of guidelines and tips for Pro Club trials:

Talented Players age 7-12

Trials at this age are not necessary. What is important is preparation and efficient use of time. Ensure that players this age are in a fun training environment that allows them to use their individual creativity and develop a love for the game. Players this age should be in a “no-scores” and “no-pressure to win” game environment.

Games should be small-sided so players get many touches on the ball. This improves technique, quick decision making and confidence. Avoid too much traveling as time and money is wasted in transit to games and training which are too far away. Utilize this time towards additional training close to home.

Put school as a priority. There is no guarantee a player will become pro. If they are serious about going all the way then they need to learn how to balance school, training, and chores at home. The discipline off the field will help them tremendously on the field.

Talented Players Age 13-14

At this age players should go and experience some training at a pro club abroad and measure their talent against the top youth there. Investigate if a career in professional soccer is what they want. This experience will tell them if they are ready and educate them on what they need to improve to play at a high Pro youth level.

I would recommend a player go to a country where they have family as that would reduce costs and give parents a peace of mind knowing their child is with family. The costs for roughly two weeks abroad (if the player is not staying with family) averages \$2500- \$3,000. This would include flight, accommodation, food, and transportation.

Getting the opportunity to train at a Pro Club can be difficult. A player and parent will have to do their homework. Academy, Provincial or National coaches may have some good contacts. However, a player may have some luck by sending a letter and a quality DVD showing clips of their training and games to academy directors of Pro clubs.

An efficient and cost effective way to send information these days is via email. You can post the clips on YOUTUBE and send an email with an attachment of the letter and a link of the clip on YOUTUBE.



Talented players Age 15-17

At this age my belief is players should be one of the best in Canada before pursuing permanent opportunities abroad. Even that may not be enough, therefore it is necessary to do whatever it takes to become better than what is expected abroad. For example, this may mean more technical training, doing high performance training, incorporating good nutritional habits, applying sports psychology, studying the games of successful players, etc. Becoming a student of the game and reaching peak performance is a necessity.

The reality is that if a player is **as good** as what they have in a Pro club they will not sign the player. The player has to be **better** than what they have.

Strive to make your provincial and National program. Also, try to make it in an MLS Pro Youth system locally. If you request a trial at a pro youth club the first

thing they will ask is the player involved in their National Program. Also, they will request references and game clips.

Pro Clubs get contacts from thousands of player's every day requesting trials so if the player's resume is not up to par they will not consider them. However, if a player is not in the National or Provincial Program it is not the end of the World.

Some players do sneak through the cracks. In these cases a reputable scout or FIFA agent can make a recommendation on behalf of the player. Some players have been fortunate to be spotted at local International Summer Camps; for example, Jonathan DeGuzman was spotted by a coach from Feyernoord running a camp in Toronto. If the coach sees the potential in a player he would be a good reference for getting into their club for training or a future trial.

Avoid babysitting camps. You will have to do your research by talking to people and getting feedback of their experience at a particular camp. A player identified at a camp in Canada does not guarantee success abroad. Avoid unscrupulous people charging exorbitant amounts of money to arrange a trial on false hopes and promises. Once again, do your home work and get references.

Lastly, if a player catches the eye of a club there is a good chance the player will get a call back and the club will incur all costs.



Some points to consider when a player is ready for a trial:

Go to a country where your family roots are from. If a player is under the age of 18 and has no connection to the country where the trial is held, it will be very difficult to stay in that country. Having family in the country where the trial is going to be will provide a good support system if the trial is successful. As mentioned some players do get homesick. Having family around can ease the pain.

Don't pay any fee to someone offering to arrange a trial.

Some clubs may cover your housing while on trial which means the player covers their own flight. If a trial is successful expenses will be reimbursed. If a club does not know the player well and is not willing to take on any expenses the player will be responsible for cost of full trip. Flight, hotel, food, and transportation may amount to \$2,500 to \$3,000 approximately. Again, if the trial is successful all expenses will be returned.

The best case scenario is that the club is impressed with the players resume, player clips, or reference from scout or FIFA agent and they pay all expenses for trial.

Lastly, I always suggest players have back up plans. As I mentioned earlier, education is important. Elite players should be preparing for their SAT's and exposing themselves to US scholarship opportunities. There are different ways to achieving one's goals.

There is nothing wrong with having a degree at age 22, playing in the MLS for a few years and then heading to a top club in Europe. Also, between University semesters players can go on Trials, such during the summer break in July. This way education is not affected.

In summary, find out every detail about the trial. Also try to avoid having the player travel alone, and if this is unavoidable, make sure you know the person picking them up at the airport destination. I hope the information I have provided will be helpful and save you some of the headaches many players have experienced in the past. I wish you all the best of luck in pursuing your dreams of becoming a professional soccer athlete!

Yours in Soccer,

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Technical Director



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About the Author:



CLAYTON ROSARIO Technical Director

Clayton has been coaching soccer at the youth level ever since he came to Canada in 1981 from London, England. He is known for the many successes his teams have achieved: Nine league championships U8 to U14, winner of over 70 tournaments including the Robbie International and USA Cup. He took the Mississauga U17 OYSL for a 4 game exhibition tour in the north of France winning 3 and losing 1, as well as taking different teams to other European countries. Clayton is an expert in creating youth development programs and has been involved in a number of leading OYSL clubs. His focus is on developing the total player, incorporating technical training, ball control, creativity, high performance training, nutrition, and psychology.

- Specializes in technical development of youth level soccer athletes.
- Instrumental in sending many talented young players to Europe.
- Has traveled all over US, UK, Italy, and France for team tours
- Visited training centers of Manchester United and formation centers of Lille and OGC Nice France.
- Specializes in Dutch, French, and Brazilian training methods
- Co-producer of the DVD- **“Building the Complete Soccer Athlete: Train Like a Pro”** (go to www.soccerathletics.com)

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Reference Material:

Some important notes if a club is interested in signing a youth player: (Notes obtained from FIFA.COM)

You have the option not to use a FIFA Agent if:

1. The parents, siblings or spouse of the player may represent him in the Negotiation or renegotiation of an employment contract.
2. A legally authorised practising lawyer in compliance with the rules in Force in his country of domicile may represent a player or a club in the Negotiation of a transfer or employment contract.
3. The activity of such exempt individuals does not fall under the Jurisdiction of FIFA.

Protection of minors:

1. International transfers of players are only permitted if the player is over the age of 18.
2. The following three exceptions to this rule apply:
 - a) The player's parents move to the country in which the new club is located for reasons not linked to football;
 - b) The transfer takes place within the territory of the European Union (EU) or European Economic Area (EEA) and the player is aged between 16 and 18. In this case, the new club must fulfil the following minimum obligations:
 - i) It shall provide the player with an adequate football education and/or training in line with the highest national standards.
 - ii) It shall guarantee the player an academic and/or school and/or vocational education and/or training, in addition to his football education and/or training, which will allow the player to pursue a career other than football should he cease playing professional football.
 - iii) It shall make all necessary arrangements to ensure that the player is looked after in the best possible way (optimum living standards with a host family or in club accommodation, appointment of a mentor at the club, etc.).
 - iv) It shall, on registration of such a player, provide the relevant association with proof that it is complying with the aforementioned obligations.