

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A TALENT SYSTEM: A STUDY OF THE SWEDISH U15 DISTRICT SOCCER TEAMS

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Aim

This study investigates talent development in the 24 soccer districts in Sweden. The main purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between participation in a district team at the age of 15 and elite soccer as adult.

Methods

The material that the study is based on is an analysis of register data from Sweden's 24 football district. The study included a follow-up of boys and girls born 1987-1991 (In total 1489 boys and 1411 girls) and data on number of licensed 15 year old players and senior elite teams in each district.

Results

The results showed that 64.5 % of the boys and 41 % of the girls played football as adults. A clear majority of them did not reach the elite level. Of the boys and girls active today, 6.7% of the boys and 7.3% of the girls belong to a squad in the two highest series. For the boys there was a statistical correlation between the number of them active in adulthood, how many who reached the two highest national series and the number of licensed 15-year-olds as well as the number of elite teams in a district. For girls, there is a statistical correlation between the number of them active in adulthood and the number of licensed 15-year-olds in the district. Regarding elite soccer there was a correlation between how many girls who reached the two highest national series and the number of licensed 15-year-olds as well as the number of elite teams in a district.

Conclusions

Choosing talented youth at the age of 15 has low predictive value for how many of them that become an elite football player in adulthood. The districts structural characteristics appear to be decisive for how many that were still active and reached the elite level in adulthood.

Biography: Tor Söderström is a professor in Education at Umea School of Sport Sciences. During the last years he has been working with projects concerning talent development in soccer and strategies for player development for children and youth.