

What do Penn Legacy evaluators look for at tryouts?

I have said many times that tryouts are a stressful time for everyone; the club, our coaches, our parents, and of course, our players. It is my hope that what you read below will help in some small way as we make our way through the process.

Before I even get into what we tell our evaluators to look for during tryouts, I would first like to stress the following:

I encourage every player to give their best effort every time they step foot on a soccer pitch. Practice, games, tryouts, it doesn't matter. Tryouts shouldn't be a time when you try to play better than you ever have before, it ought to be a time where you show everyone what you bring every time you tie up your boots. You will make mistakes, but how do you react to those mistakes? Do you let it get you down or do you turn around and try to win the ball back? What if your teammate makes a mistake? Do you throw your hands up or go back and try to cover for them? At the end of the day we are looking for players who are skillful, who are hard workers, who make good decisions with and without the ball, who are good teammates even when playing with complete strangers at tryouts, who never give up, and who generally display an all-round positive attitude. For sure there will be players who are physically ahead of others, there will be players who are lightning quick, and others who have fantastic footskills, but every single player can be a hard worker and display a positive attitude. So I absolutely encourage you to get outside and practice your footskills, work on your weaker foot, your first touch, your reaction speed. Do this whenever and wherever you can. But also develop your good habits in team practices and games. Don't save yourself for tryouts hoping to catch lightning in a bottle, be the best player you can possibly be every at single opportunity!

Of course, at the end of the day, we have to select teams based on where everyone may be at that given time. So we do ask our evaluators to keep in mind the following themes:

- Technique – this includes comfort on the ball, ability to use both feet, ability to perform skills under pressure, ability to hold onto the ball in tight spaces, ability to hit accurate passes.
- Awareness – understanding different game situations, both as an individual and as part of a unit and a team. Obviously this becomes more important as the players get a little older.
- Physical – don't misinterpret this as evaluators looking for the biggest, strongest kids. In truth, the best youth programs are looking to find the players who have the skills and ability on the ball, and who are able to execute the best at that level. So strength and speed absolutely become part of the equation.

- Attitude – see my opening comments. A player’s overall attitude is a key ingredient as to what type of player they are. It is quite easy to spot this when you watch any game, training session, or tryout.
- Decision-making – when is it time to dribble? To pass? To shoot? Sometimes this gets skewed at tryouts because one’s natural inclination is to try to dribble past 5 players before hitting a rocket into the top corner to make the evaluators notice. Instead, know that they are looking for what players are consistently making the best decisions on the pitch.
- Passion – who is playing with great determination? Who is willing to be strong in the tackle and chase back when it looks like all is lost? Who is playing like they really love the game?

To finish, I can’t stress how important it is to **be yourself** at tryouts; just try to have a good, solid night each night. Don’t worry about things out of your control like what team you’re put on in the small sided part, or how your 7v7 team lost heavily in one of their games. So try to embrace the tryout experience, show us where you are as a player in this moment in time, try your best and then let’s see how it all shakes out.

Lastly, remember this club takes great pride in all our teams, black, white, and silver. Our goal is to provide a top notch environment for all our players and for all our teams. Keep that in mind once tryouts are completed.

I truly wish you all the best,

Seamus.