

# Choosing Player Positions

During your initial 2-3 practices for 10u and above, your most important job (other than [Creating A Successful Culture](#)) is to inventory your players' skill sets so that you can start building your [formation](#) early. Since you know [The Importance of Scrimmages](#), you'll need to be able to educate your players on your [system](#) early.

For 8u and below (4v4) you may notice certain player characteristics, but at that age you will just be doing a simple rotation through each position since there isn't enough depth in the formation to make a material difference.

So for 10u and above (7v7) you will likely (but not always) have the following:

- Centerback – Mainstay of your defense. In the center with a back-3 defensive line
- Fullback – Outer defensive line member. Sometimes called a wingback
- Center midfielder – Covers middle of field all the way back on defense and all the way up when attacking. Variations on this position are attacking mid (responsible for supporting forward on attack) and holding mid (covers space between defense and other mids supporting the defense)—these are typically used when having 4 midfielders
- Forward – Tends to play up toward last defender toward the middle of the field
- Wings (mid or forward) – Left and right forward positions. Often play back from forward to provide width and sideline passing option

In order to evaluate a player's fit for a position, we need to look at the vital, important, and less important qualities. Since no player tends to have all qualities, you need to fit

for the vital skills and work down from there.

## **Centerback**

Skillset:

- Vital – Soccer awareness and aggressiveness
- Important – Speed and kicking ability
- Less important – Technical skills, creativity, physical conditioning

Your centerback needs to be able to master the concept of delay and must have the tenacity to take a forward on and win almost every tackle. While it is nice if they are fast and can play closer against a forward, ultimately they can compensate for lower speed by anticipation and giving a forward more space. A strong kick helps with clearances and goal kicks.

## **Fullback**

Skillset:

- Vital – Aggressiveness
- Important – Speed
- Less important – Soccer awareness, technical skills, kicking ability, physical conditioning

Your fullback will act as the primary defender against passes to the opposing wing. As long as they are willing to step up and challenge the wing such that it creates a delay long enough for your centerback to retreat to a secondary position that is sufficient. You will hopefully have one fullback that can develop into a backup centerback. Fullbacks are more able to start the attack if they win the ball since they can dribble up with the support of the centerback behind them. Therefore some creativity is helpful though not necessary.

## **Center Midfielder**

Skillset:

- Vital – Soccer awareness, technical skills, aggressiveness, creativity
- Important – Physical conditioning, speed
- Less important – Kicking ability

This should generally be your highest impact players. They need the highest overall skill set. As they will be involved in the action most of the game, they need to be the ones that can win the back ball and create opportunities for themselves and forwards. Though they often run the most, they can (and should be) transitioned to a secondary role (or often centerback) for a quarter and rested another quarter, so they only need the physical conditioning to be able to handle the position for 2 quarters max.

## **Forward**

Skillset:

- Vital – Kicking (finishing) ability, speed
- Important – Soccer awareness, creativity, technical skills, aggressiveness
- Less important – Physical conditioning

The forward is also generally a dominant player, though doesn't necessarily need to be as well rounded. If you have other players that can deliver passes behind the opposing defense (through balls) then often a very fast player with adequate technical skills and a great finishing shot can be extremely productive for you. If you have a forward that can also create their own opportunities by winning the ball back and beating opponents on the dribble that is of course a huge additional advantage.

## **Wings**

Skillset: No specific requirements

Do not read my skillset recommendations to believe that wings

are unimportant or that they can't be a difference maker in a game. It simply means that these positions should be filled with remaining players, then used in a way that matches their abilities. For example, you may have a player that is fast but very uncoordinated that can play as a secondary forward and be instructed/trained to deliver good crosses to the forward who can finish. Or in the worst case you have a player on the less developed end without any strong abilities. They can't do a lot of harm and can draw defenders away from the forward. As they develop they can gradually produce more without a huge burden of pressure. Your goal is to develop them by midseason into players that can occasionally be moved into other positions.

Admittedly these are very broad brush assessments and there is infinite variety among players, but hopefully this gives you a strong foundation to consider how to leverage your players' individual abilities.