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## *Part 2 - youth team development*

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Case study:

- Is it important to place your youngsters into the appropriate youth teams according to their age
- Do youngsters grow faster when they train in the youth team or in the senior team
- What happens when you place a senior player into the youth team
- About countries where the reserve teams are actually part of the professional League structure like in Spain or in Germany do players grow faster when they train in those types of Reserve teams

I have reasons to believe that the football manager game engine uses actual playing time as a marker to determine a player's rate of growth in the game instead of using the number of matches played per season or the number of minutes played per season

I will do a separate test on this topic to investigate further because if this theory turns out to be true then it could be an important discovery that has huge implications on my FM research

Because of this theory I have used the editor to set the actual playing time of all Outfield players to **regular starter** and the actual playing time of goalkeepers to **First Choice goalkeeper**

So let's have a look at the results:

There is a clear difference in the rate of growth for both Outfield players and goalkeepers depending on which Squad they're placed into

**Players of all ages grow faster when they train and play in the senior Squad**

The Only Exception may be 15 year old goalkeepers who actually grew a little bit more when they were placed into the second team, not too sure what happened there but for the vast majority of cases senior team is better for player growth compared to the reserve team

### U23 team

Players of all ages and of all positions grow faster when they are placed in the senior team

Goalkeepers growth is faster around the age of 20 when they train in the U23 Squad. Again I'm not too sure what happened here but overall I think it's pretty clear that growth is faster when players are placed in the senior Squad as opposed to being placed in the U23 Squad

### U18 squad

Again growth slows down when players are placed into the u18 squad and that goes for players of all ages **including those under the age of 18.**

Conclusion:

Senior Squad is the clear and obvious winner. Players of all ages grow at the fastest rate when they train and play in the senior Squad. The other three squads including the second team are the U23 team and the u18 team all show more or less similar effects on player growth across all age groups and they are all weaker than the senior team in terms of boosting player growth.

With goalkeepers the difference in growth between the four squads is not too obvious during teenage years but from the age of 20 onwards growth in the senior team starts to really outperform the other three squads so I guess it's acceptable to place a goalkeeper in either the reserve squad or in one of the youth squads only while the goalkeeper is a teenager

With Outfield players and also with goalkeepers over the age of 20 do try to place them in the senior Squad as much as possible and maybe only place them in one of the lower squads if they are really struggling to get game time.

In the senior team one thing I do want to mention at this point is that for all these tests League reputation was set as 200 out of 200 for all four leagues including the test League the test League II the U23 league and the u18 league

In my previous test I showed you how League reputation is one of the factors in FM that affects player growth but in today's experiment League reputation was exactly the same for all four leagues which means League reputation could not have been the reason for the difference between the four different squads.

In an actual football manager save, the Reserve leagues and the youth leagues typically have a much lower reputation compared to the first division leagues meaning that the difference between the senior Squad and the other squads in terms of boosting player growth will be even more pronounced than uh what is presented in this test

Get your players to train and play in the senior team whenever you can when you play football manager

Training and playing matches in the senior Squad is the golden standard for player growth

- Growth slows down when players are placed in the reserve squad or in one of the youth squads this is true for players of all ages and all playing positions
- It doesn't seem to be a difference between the reserve Squad and the youth squads in terms of boosting player growth
- The pattern of growth is more or less similar for all Outfield players regardless of their playing position. The only position on the field where the pattern of growth is markedly different is the goalkeeper
- Actual playing time is a parameter in the game that has an impact on growth I didn't talk too much about it today but I will investigate this further

What happens to player growth when they train in the senior team but play the youth league matches. Actually it is a very common scenario in playing football manager where you have players in the senior team you don't get much exposure there due to competition so you give them some youth Team game time instead

Having your players in the senior team and giving them a senior game time is the gold standard for player growth in uh FM23 but playing youth team games isn't too bad for growth at least until the

age of 23. So if there's a player in your senior team who's struggling to get some game time there make sure that they're getting some match exposure somewhere.

Trading in the senior team and playing non-senior matches is totally fine and it should be encouraged if there's a player in your team who's struggling to get game time in the senior team

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### *Individual training in FM23 – Additional Focus*

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Does additional Focus really speed up the growth of certain attributes like it says it does

does it come at any costs such as slowing down the growth of other attributes

what age does the benefit of additional Focus stop happening

I tested 16 different types of additional Focus for outfield players and 10 different types of additional Focus for goalkeepers

I did not test injury rehab because injury rehab only becomes available when a player recovers from a long-term injury in a football manager and it's a bit difficult to set up a test where the players are coming back from a long-term injury

Also for goalkeepers I did not test the effects of additional focus training including free kick taking Corners penalty and long throw because uh let's be honest how often are you going to get your goalkeepers to take corners or long throws in your team.

The players in the test League were all assigned different additional focuses at the start of the Season at the end of the season I recorded the attributes of the players and I used an Excel table to compare the growth of player attributes in relation to the default attribute growth when no additional focuses was assigned I repeated the same experiments when the players were set as either 15 years old 24 years old and 28 years old at the start of the season so that I could compare the effects of additional focus training at different stages of a player's career

Here are the results:

- When all players were 15 years old

I can't go through all of these tables so this first table is when Outfield players were assigned free kick additional focus training which supposedly according to the in-game description has an impact on two player attributes: free kick taking and technique

All these numbers that you see in the table represent the amount of the growth shown by players in relation to the control scenario when no additional Focus was set to the players. The top row for

each of these tables is the average from all players in the squad and in the following seven rows the data is broken down into seven different player positions.

For example if you have a look at the free kick attribute for uh attacking midfielders it says 0.8 here which means when these attacking midfielders were put on free kick additional focus training for the whole season their free kick attributes grew by 0.8 more than they would have grown if the players didn't do any additional training.

In case that sounds confusing , the attacking midfielders didn't do any additional Focus training their free kick attributes grew on average from 10 to 10.1 but when the same attacking midfielders did free kick additional focus training their free kick attributes grew on average from 10 to 10.9 so there's a difference of 0.8 which came from the additional focus training.

Cells that contain positive values are shaded in green and the cells that contain negative values are shaded in red and the green and all these green and red shades get darker and darker as the values get either higher or lower

So if you have a look at the tables for free kick taking you can see there is a concentration of green coloured cells for the free kick attribute.

The highest amount of boost was recorded for Strikers and Wingers

The technique attribute also grew a little bit across all positions although the amount of growth for technique is not as high as the free kick attribute

The free kick attribute and the technique attribute did grow more than the control(control=players with no additional focus) which is what the free kick additional focus training is supposed to do.

I'm happy to make the conclusion at this point that the free kick additional focus training is working as intended in fm23

I've had a look through at all 16 different additional Focus training for outfield players and 10 different additional focus training for goalkeepers and I've found that most additional focuses in the game showed promising results that aligned well with the in-game description

There were some exceptions however here is the list of additional focus training where the at the player attributes didn't really change according to the stated aims of additional focus training

#### **Additional focus that grew by less than 0.2 for 15 years old**

- Quickness acceleration +0.1
- Strength strength +0.05, jumping reach -0.13
- Endurance stamina +0.14
- Shooting long shots +0.17

Goalkeepers:

- Sweeping – Rushing out Tendency +0
- Distribution (short) – Vision -0.1
- Agility and balance – Balance +0.1

**VALUES ARE RELATED TO TRAINING WITHOUT ANY FOCUS. NEGATIVE VALUES DOESN'T MEAN DECREASE, MEANS IS LOWER THAN WITH NO FOCUS TRAINING**

let's have a look at our strength training as an example

Strength training is supposed to boost two player attributes, strength and jumping reach.

If you have a look at this table here the strength attribute was boosted by a tiny bit for Strikers and Wingers but not really for the other positions which brings the average boost across all positions to 0.05 which I believe is very minimal. The jumping reach attribute went negative for most positions except for Strikers. Remember, a negative value here doesn't mean that the attribute went down it just means it grew by a lesser amount compared to the control scenario (players that had no additional focus)

The jumping reach attribute grew less by 0.13 when players were put on a strength additional focus training so for outfield players strength additional focus training seems to have very limited effect if any

**Goalkeepers**, the story is slightly different. When goalkeepers were assigned a strength additional Focus their strength grew less by 0.1 but the jumping reach attribute for goalkeepers grew more by 0.3 so for goalkeepers strength training seems to be mildly effective for boosting the jumping reach attribute but not for the strength attribute.

Now if we know that additional Focus training can be effective for the most part at boosting specific player attributes the next question is should you be turning it on all the time for all players in your squad? Well not really!

If you have a look at these tables you can tell that there are just as many cells coloured in red as there are cells coloured in green which means that while additional Focus will cause certain attributes to grow more than the default some other attributes will grow less than the default so do consider that before you assign additional focus training to one of your players

In terms of injury risk there's no reason to believe that additional focused training raises the risk of injury in the game. When you assign additional Focus to one of your players the overall risk of injury stays the same.

- When all players were 24 years old

I've had a look through all these tables and it appears that additional focus is still quite effective for 24 year old players. Most additional focus training boosted the attributes that they were supposed to boost according to the in-game description although again there were a handful of exceptions.

This is the list of additional focus training that showed questionable efficacy for 24 year old players

- Strength – strength +0.18 , jumping reach +0.04
- Shooting – Long shots +0

Goalkeepers

- Sweeping – rushing out tendency +0
- Quickness – acceleration -0.2
- Strength – strength +0.1 , jumping reach -0.2 , Aerial reach -0.1

- When the players were 28 years old

Straight away you can see that the number of green coloured cells and red coloured cells uh there are a lot less here compared to the previous two pages that I showed you

I think the additional focus training is definitely still working here for 28 year old players it's just that players who are 28 years old don't have much room for growth anymore so the magnitude of the change is very weak both in the positive and in the negative direction.

If you have a look at the table here for agility and balance you can see that the agility attribute went up by pretty good amounts for players aged 28.

	Agility and Balance			Agi Bal																																				
	CA	Prof	Amb	Cor	Cro	Dr	Fin	Fir	Fre	Hea	Lon	LTh	Mar	Pas	Pen	Tck	Tec	Agg	Ant	Bra	Cmp	Cnt	Dec	Det	Fla	Ldr	OtB	Pos	Tea	Vis	Wor	Acc	Agi	Bal	Jum	Nat	Pac	Sta		
Outfield		0.19	0	0	0	0	0	-0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-0.01	0.01	-0	0	0	0	0	-0	0	0.01	-0	0.01	0	-0.03	0.04	0.45	0.07	0	0.02	0	0	0	0
ST		0.6	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	-0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.4	0	0	0	0.2	0	0	0
AML/R		-0.05	0	0	0	0	0	-0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-0.05	0.15	-0.1	0	-0	-0	-0	0	0	0	0	0	-0.05	-0.05	0.4	0.1	0	-0.3	0	0	0	0	
AMC		0.4	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	-0	0	0	0	-0.1	0	0	0	0.1	0	-0	0	0.1	0	0	0.1	0	0.1	0.5	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	
MC		0.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	-0	0	0	0	-0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.7	0.2	0	0	0	0	0	
DM		0.7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.2	0	0	0.1	0	-0.2	0	0.1	0	0	-0	0	0	0	0	0	-0.1	0	0.5	0.1	0	0.3	0	0	0	0	
DL/R		-0.45	0	0	0	-0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.05	-0.1	0	-0.05	0.05	0.4	0.05	0	-0.1	0	0	0	
DC		0.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-0.1	0	0	0.1	0.4	0.05	0	0.1	0	0	0	

It's not a lot but hey if it's free I'll take it so I guess you can make a case for assigning your players to do agility and balance training after the age of 28 and yeah you get free agility points for your players every two years

At the age of 28 growth of Outfield players have more or less come to a halt but the goalkeepers still have some growth potential left in them so additional focus training can be quite effective for goalkeepers even into their late 20s

- The majority of additional focuses in FM 23 are working as intended according to my tests. There were a handful of additional focuses that showed questionable efficacy but for the most part additional focus training in fm23 is working as intended
- The younger the player in the game the more impact additional Focus will have on their attributes. By the age of 28 additional Focus isn't really effective anymore for outfield players, at least the only exception to this is the agility and balance training which was shown to be effective for outfield players are age to 28.  
For goalkeepers additional focus training is effective even at the age of 28 which is due to the goalkeepers being able to grow for a longer time frame in football manager games compared to Outfield players

- While selective boosting of player attributes is possible in fm23 using additional focus it may come at the cost of suppressing the growth of some other types of attributes so do use additional focus with caution