



PLAYER PERFORMANCE PATHWAY

Player Development Centre

An Introduction



Welcome to the Millwall Player Performance Pathway, a dynamic and purpose-driven initiative designed to harness and develop the abundant football talent that South London is celebrated for. As the proud professional club of Lewisham and Southwark, we recognise our responsibility to foster the growth of young players from our communities and provide them with the optimal foundation for success in the beautiful game.

South London has a rich history of producing exceptionally talented footballers, many of whom have gone on to achieve professional success at the highest echelons of the sport. Understanding the potential within our local youth, Millwall has embarked on a journey to ensure that talent is not only identified but nurtured from a young age. Our goal is to offer the children of our communities the best chance of progressing and realising their dreams within the world of football.

Hence, the Millwall Player Performance Pathway was conceived – a specialised program meticulously crafted to guide young players towards their full potential. This pathway serves as a crucial channel for us to identify and support budding talents, paving the way for them to join our main academy and potentially make strides in the professional footballing arena.

At Millwall, we are not just passionate about football; we are deeply committed to the holistic development of every child entrusted to our care. Our dedicated coaching staff is not only equipped to hone their footballing skills but is equally passionate about instilling essential life skills and values. Through our program, we aim to shape not just great footballers but outstanding individuals who are resilient, disciplined, and respectful.

Recognising that not every player may reach the highest echelons of the game, we remain steadfast in our commitment to providing an environment where every participant receives top-tier coaching synonymous with Millwall academy standards.

Within the pathway, young talents will not only benefit from unparalleled coaching but will also find themselves in an optimal position to catch the attention of our coaches and Millwall scouts actively involved in our sessions.

At Millwall, we understand the significance of early development, and we are excited about the journey that awaits your child on the Millwall Player Performance Pathway. Together, let us embark on a mission to unearth and nurture the next generation of footballing talents from South London, while also helping them grow both as footballers and individuals.

**Tim Sells, Football Development Manager
Millwall Community Trust**



“Millwall FC Academy is committed to developing young footballers and providing them with a pathway into professional football. Teams run from ages U8s through to U23s within a safe and professional environment which allows young footballers to flourish.

“The Millwall Community Trust’s Player Performance pathway centres aims to help identify and nurture local talented players. It has been specifically designed to help players improve and progress, whilst providing a clear pathway for any player who excels to the Academy level”.

**Scott Fitzgerald (Academy
Manager at Millwall)**

The Journey Begins



Welcome to the Millwall Player Performance Pathway – a revolutionary approach to identifying and nurturing football talent that paves the way for an enriched experience for both players and young individuals.

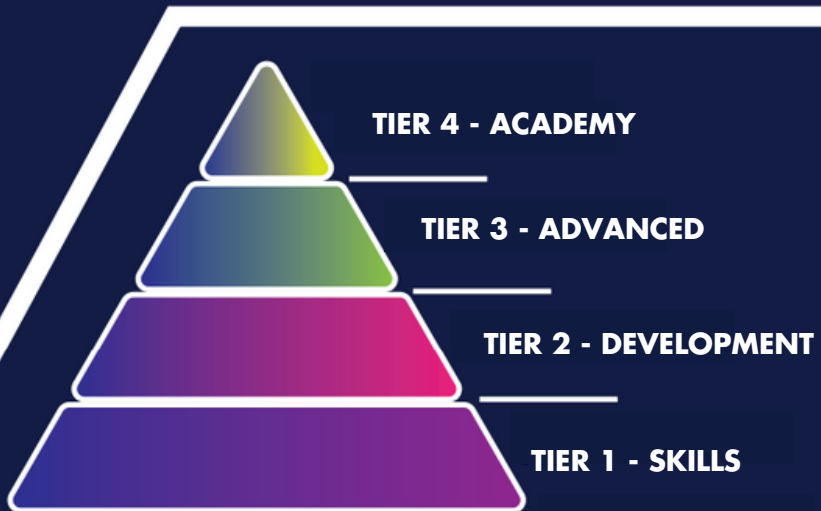
In our pursuit of excellence, we've crafted a unique pathway tailored to accommodate varying abilities, ensuring that each child's journey is marked by appropriate challenges and optimal development. Understanding that every player matures differently, we've implemented a tiered system to categorise participants based on their current skill levels, fostering an environment where they can thrive and progress at their own pace.

As parents, we share the universal desire to see our children excel, and while it may be tempting to aim for the top tier immediately, our approach is grounded in the belief that true progress comes from a developmentally appropriate setting. Like schools, pushing a child into a level they may not be ready for can lead to unnecessary struggles and hinder their enjoyment of the experience.

Hence, our tiered system is designed to ensure that every player on the Millwall Player Performance Pathway finds themselves at a level that best suits their needs.



What does it look like?



Tier 1 – Skills: Fundamental skills and techniques

Tier 2 – Development: Progressive skill enhancement

Tier 3 – Advanced: Advanced skill application and game understanding

Tier 4 – Main Academy: Elite level training and preparation for professional football

Players will naturally progress between tiers as they demonstrate readiness and meet the requisite skill levels. Monitoring is a key aspect of our program, and every term, you will receive valuable feedback in the form of an Individual Development Plan (IDP) as part of your child's membership. Additionally, our dedicated coaches will conduct brief 10-minute catch-ups to explain the IDP, highlight areas of improvement, and provide guidance on how to achieve these developmental milestones.

At Millwall, we understand that your child's journey is unique, and our Player Performance Pathway is designed to celebrate that individuality. We look forward to joining you and your child on this exciting adventure, unlocking their potential and shaping their future in the world of football.

Tier 1 - Skills



At the foundational tier of our football coaching program, we prioritise the development of fundamental skills and techniques in young children. Our dedicated coaches understand the critical role these basics play in shaping a player's future success on the field.

We believe in laying a solid groundwork for young players by honing essential skills such as dribbling, passing, and ball control. Through carefully designed drills and exercises, we create a nurturing environment that allows children to grasp these fundamentals with enthusiasm and joy.

Our coaching approach emphasises a blend of fun and structured learning, ensuring that children not only build their technical abilities but also foster a love for the game. Small-group sessions and engaging activities help them grasp the intricacies of football while enjoying the process of skill acquisition.

By instilling proper techniques from an early age, we set the stage for future success in more advanced aspects of the game. Our coaches work closely with each child, providing personalised guidance to enhance their abilities and boost their confidence on the pitch.

At this initial tier, our focus is not just on creating skilled young players but on nurturing a passion for football. We strive to make the learning journey enjoyable, fostering a positive attitude towards the sport that will stay with these young players as they progress through their football careers.



Tier 2 - Development



As players advance to the second tier of our football coaching program, the emphasis shifts to Progressive Skill Enhancement. In this stage, our coaching team is dedicated to refining and expanding upon the foundational skills acquired in the first tier.

We understand that growth is a continuous process, and at this stage, we strategically introduce progressive drills and exercises that challenge players to elevate their skills. Our coaches closely monitor each player's development, providing constructive feedback and tailored guidance to ensure constant improvement.

The Development tier is designed to build upon the fundamentals, emphasising more complex techniques such as tactical awareness, positional play, and advanced ball control. Through a combination of structured training sessions and simulated game scenarios, players gain a deeper understanding of the strategic elements of football.

We foster a supportive environment that encourages players to explore their strengths, work on their weaknesses, and push their boundaries. Our coaching philosophy centres around creating well-rounded players who not only excel in individual skills but also contribute effectively to team dynamics.

At this stage, we aim to instil a sense of discipline and commitment to continuous improvement. Players are encouraged to set personal goals, and our coaching staff provides the necessary tools and guidance to help them achieve and exceed these aspirations.



Tier 3 - Advanced



As players progress to the third tier of our football coaching program, they enter the Advanced stage, where the focus is on Advanced Skill Application and Game Understanding. This tier is tailored to refine and showcase the players' acquired skills in real-game scenarios while deepening their understanding of strategic elements.

In the Advanced tier, our coaching team places a strong emphasis on translating learned skills into practical situations on the field. Through specialised training drills and simulated match scenarios, players develop the ability to apply advanced techniques seamlessly during fast-paced and dynamic game situations.

We delve into the intricacies of game strategy, positional play, and decision-making, preparing players for the complexities of high-level competition. Our coaches work closely with each individual, providing targeted feedback to enhance their understanding of the game and refine their skill application.

This tier not only hones technical abilities but also nurtures leadership qualities, teamwork, and adaptability. Players are encouraged to take on strategic roles within the team, fostering a sense of responsibility and enhancing their overall game intelligence.

The Advanced tier is designed to challenge players to excel under pressure, making split-second decisions and executing advanced skills with precision. Through a combination of tactical training sessions and competitive matches, players gain a deeper appreciation for the strategic nuances that define elite-level football.

At this stage, our coaching philosophy is centred on empowering players to think critically on the field, read the game effectively, and contribute to the team's success. The Advanced Skill Application and Game Understanding tier serves as a crucial stepping stone for players aspiring to compete at the highest levels of the sport and move into our next tier, which is the main academy.



Tier 4 - Academy



At the pinnacle of our football coaching program stands the prestigious Millwall Academy. The Academy is a source of immense pride for all connected with The Lions, providing a comprehensive platform for the holistic development of young players both on and off the pitch.

Situated at the Well Hall training ground, Millwall Football Club's Academy is a beacon of excellence, offering a superb educational experience for aspiring footballers. The set-up is dedicated to ensuring that young talents can maximise their potential through a combination of top-tier training and academic support.

Within the Academy, Millwall's Under 18s team competes in the Professional Development League (Category 2) and the FA Youth Cup, while the U16s actively participate in competitive fixtures. The younger age groups, from Under 9s to 15s, engage in a well-rounded training program and face off against both Category 1 and 2 clubs in their games.

Lions Academy teams are guided by a possession-based approach, emphasising sound attacking core technical skills complemented by strong decision-making and timely support play. Coaches adopt a player-centred approach, creating a fun, technically-focused, and pressure-free learning environment that adheres to high professional standards and disciplines.

Millwall Football Club actively upholds a set of core values when delivering football opportunities, encapsulated in the acronym:

ASPIRE: Attitude, Selfless, Positive, Integrity, Respect, and Excellence.

This commitment underscores the club's dedication to fostering a positive and ethical sporting environment, where moral rules, principles, values, and norms are integral to the player's journey at the Millwall Academy.

It is important to reiterate that joining the pathway does not guarantee players all making it to the Millwall Academy. Only players who reach the very highest standards will be recommended for trials to join the main academy.

