

Creating a Single-Source of Truth for Sport Science and Medical Data



About U.S Soccer

Founded in 1913, the U.S. Soccer Federation has been the official governing body of the sport in the United States for more than 100 years. During that time, the sport has grown tremendously at all levels. As U.S. Soccer looks towards the future, its mission is to make soccer the preeminent sport in the United States.



The Opportunity

When Rick Cost joined U.S. Soccer as director of high performance from Dutch club Feyenoord, one of his goals was to “standardize most concepts and elements we’re trying to apply in supporting our technical staff and players.” This included creating repeatable processes for collecting, managing, and utilizing player data, which was easier said than done, as there are 500 to 600 players spread across 13 National Teams. To support this effort, Cost decided to extend U.S. Soccer’s use of Smartabase athlete management system (AMS) from the five teams that already had it in place. The platform’s proven integration capabilities simplified this.

“When you have a system with easy access, you need fewer people to do more work. And that’s a big benefit, especially in sports where your budget is restricted.” - Rick Cost, Director of High Performance, U.S. Soccer

“Because Smartabase is so active in the market, they have a way to transfer the data for pretty much all the modalities we have inhouse,” Cost said. “There are APIs for almost every piece of data we use, which makes it super easy for us to do the things we want to do and is the basis of why we use Smartabase in general.”

The Challenge

U.S. Soccer has long seen the value in collecting real-time and historical sports science and medical data for its players. The sheer scale of the player pool it manages with a small performance and analytics staff was part of the challenge.

“To be able to collect every piece of data, use it in a way that we can do research with it, and pull it towards another environment for a more specific use, we needed to have a library,” said Cost.

“There are so many different data carriers. Let’s say we had an app for each one. Every single day, we’d need to open 10 of them in order to figure out where every single player is at or what he or she has done.”

The Solution

Whether it’s uniting medical and sports science data so coaches can monitor player performance and wellbeing or improving pre- and post-camp information sharing with clubs, U.S. Soccer is counting on Smartabase

Availability and Injury Monitoring

The availability dashboard shows each player’s training status and eligibility for matches, along with any restrictions they might have.

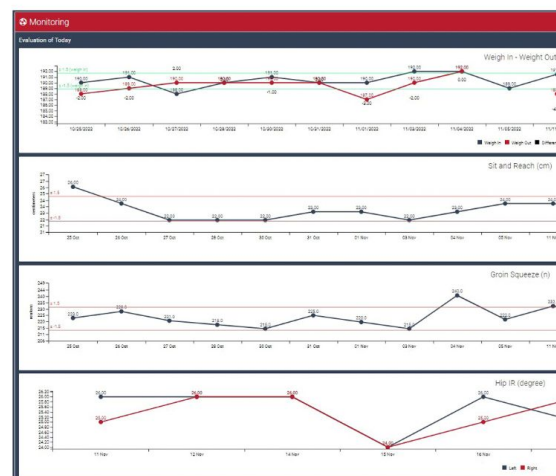
This report also has an injury monitoring component that shows the issue a player is dealing with and how it’s being treated, as well as any manual therapy non-injured athletes are receiving daily. Cost noted, “Smartabase holds everything we need on the medical side.”

Name	Status	Injury/Illness	Comments
[Player Name]	Full	Left Anterior Hand WTTX Thumb tendon injury	No reported issue
[Player Name]	Full		No reported issue
[Player Name]	Full		No reported issue
[Player Name]	Full		No reported issue
[Player Name]	Full	Medical Illness MIRU Other upper resp tract infection	Slight cough
[Player Name]	Full		No reported issue
[Player Name]	Full	right ankle contusion	Continue to
[Player Name]	Full		No reported issue
[Player Name]	Full		No reported issue
[Player Name]	Full		No reported issue

Physical Screening and Performance Testing

Like many high-performance sports organizations, U.S. Soccer performs physical screens with its players that can inform injury mitigation and training interventions.

“With the senior teams, we are using standard testing like the groin squeeze to figure out where a player is at the moment relative to their general daily status,” Cost said. “So if you’re either green or red, you’re good to go and ready to perform or not.”

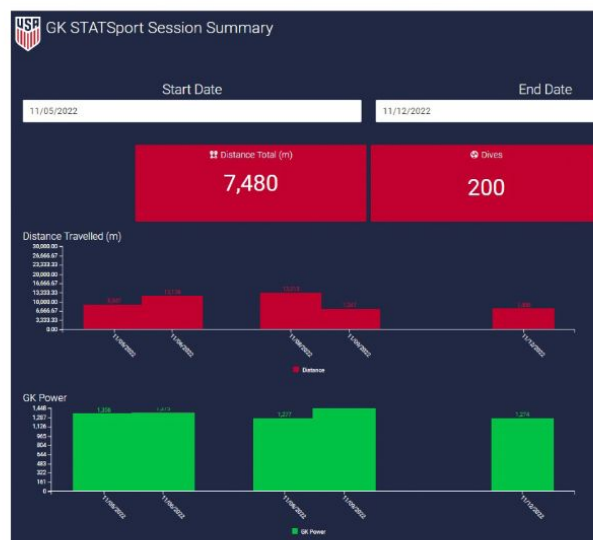


Daily Wellness

Players also complete a wellness survey every day to subjectively self-evaluate their physical and mental wellbeing. It includes ratings for soreness, sleep quality, hydration, mood, and any new injury or illness information. This allows staff to identify any issues that arise early.

Load Monitoring

Completing a full club season while also serving the National Team can be a lot to manage for any player. That’s why U.S. Soccer uses Smartabase to proactively monitor load. This begins before players even report for National Team duty. “We ask every player to upload their GPS data when they’re four weeks out from camp. Then during the sessions at our camps, we have the daily data we collect per session, plus games, and we have STATSports for GPS. All the data gets sent through an API to Smartabase,” said Cost. The combination of historical and current data enables staff to keep track of daily loads with greater context.



Post-Camp Physical Workload Report

Once a National Team camp ends, staff want to create continuity when they return to their clubs. To do so, they summarize everything that happened during each session and match in a post-camp physical workload report. This can include GPS data from practices and games, physical screening and performance testing information, and medical details about the player's status before and during camp, along with any treatment they received.

The Impact

Even an organization as consistently successful as U.S. Soccer has to maximize the productivity of a relatively small staff. That includes a sports scientist focused on the Extended National Teams, and heads of performance for both the USMNT and USWNT. As such, it's essential to find tools that reduce manual effort, consolidate information, and make it readily available.



“The main thing Smartabase does for us is being more time efficient.”

Gathering test results and match statistics from promising junior players across the country in the centralized Smartabase repository is also helping U.S. Soccer create more in-depth profiles and better development pathways. These take into account what a player's physical status suggests about the age level they should be competing at, track their maturation, and predict their potential in different positions. “Every piece of the puzzle will have a relative soccer age and a linear age,” said Cost. “That's why we do these tests and are trying to get all these pieces of information in the right place.”

Cost also imagines a future when an AI system might be able to do all the work needed for a research project. “But until then, **Smartabase makes our lives a bit easier** because everything is in the right location and we need less people to do the front work. So, we can start on the things that actually matter and change our sport at the baseline.”



Crystal Palace F.C. Case Study

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