Adaptive Excellence Framework (AEF–IPF)

- Introduction
- Why
- RPAT & TSAP
- Action Connectivity
- Degrees of Excellence
- Practical Use
- What it’s NOT

The Adaptive Excellence Framework & Identified Potential Framework (AEF–IPF)

The Adaptive Excellence Framework (AEF) has been developed to improve the accuracy and depth of talent identification within competitive youth football environments.

Its purpose is not to replace existing systems, but to strengthen them by:

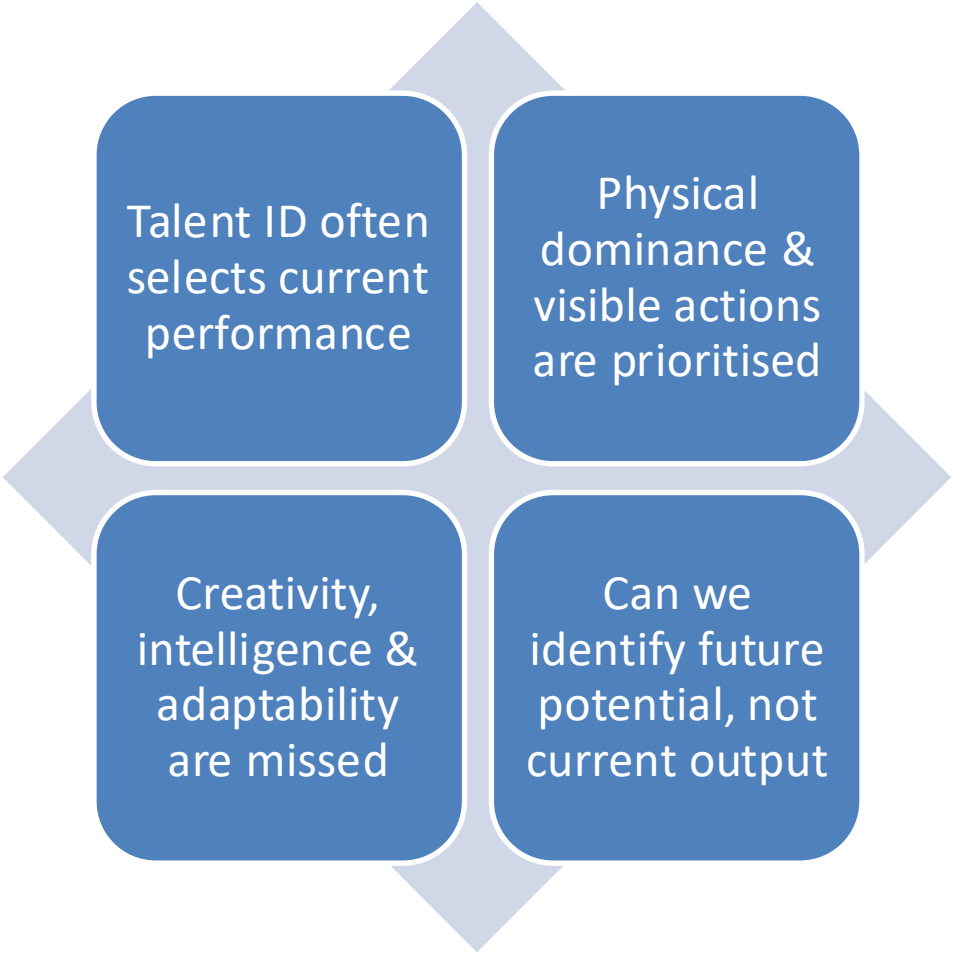
- Reducing physical dominance bias
- Improving observational clarity
- Protecting late developers
- Structuring behavioural interpretation
- Increasing probability of identifying future senior-level performers

Adaptive Excellence Framework (AEF–IPF)

IDENTIFYING FUTURE PLAYERS, NOT JUST CURRENT PERFORMERS

OBSERVING BEHAVIOUR TO PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Why This Framework Exists



RPAT – Practice Design

DOES THE TASK REPRESENT THE REAL GAME?

HIGH RPAT: PRESSURE, DECISIONS, TRANSITIONS

LOW RPAT: PREDICTABLE, UNOPPOSED

ENVIRONMENT DETERMINES BEHAVIOUR

ENVIRONMENTAL VALIDITY

Representative Learning Design (Davids, Araújo, Renshaw)

RPAT – Practice Design & Descriptors

(Representative Practice Assessment Tool)

Dimension	What It Means	What To Look For	Low RPAT Example	High RPAT Example
Perception–Action Coupling	The link between what a player sees and how they act	Scanning, reacting to pressure, adjusting decisions in real time	Pre-planned passing drill	Receiving under pressure in a game
Decision Making	The requirement to make real, game-like decisions	Forward vs safe decisions, adapting to opponents	Repetitive technical drill	Small-sided game with constraints
Pressure (Time & Space)	The level of opposition pressure applied	Limited time, reduced space, defensive pressure	No defenders / passive pressure	Active defenders closing space
Game Information	Availability of real game cues (teammates, opponents, space)	Players reading movement, positioning, transitions	Static setup	Dynamic, changing environment
Action Variability	Range of possible actions available	Multiple solutions, creativity, adaptability	One correct outcome	Multiple possible decisions
Transition Moments	Presence of attacking ↔ defending transitions	Reaction speed, counter-pressing, recovery	Stop-start drill	Continuous play with turnovers
Interpersonal Interaction	Interaction between teammates and opponents	Communication, spacing, relationships	Individual drill	3v3, 4v4, positional play
Intent / Game Objective	Clarity of purpose aligned to the game	Scoring, progressing play, defending	Abstract task	Clear goal (score, break lines)

Representative vs Non-Representative

Representative vs Non-Representative
Representative (High RPAT):
•Small-sided games
•Directional play
•Game-based tasks
Non-Representative (Low RPAT):
•Unopposed drills
•Pattern play
•Isolated technique

Key Principle

Representative tasks reproduce the problems of the real game — non-representative tasks rehearse solutions without the problem."

Representative vs Non-Representative

Task Type	RPAT Level	What It Tells You
4v4 / 5v5 / Game	High	True behaviour
Conditioned Games	Medium–High	Adaptability
Unopposed Drills	Low	Technique only
Pattern Play	Very Low	Memory, not decision

Key Principle

Representative tasks reproduce the problems of the real game — non-representative tasks rehearse solutions without the problem."

Representative vs Non-Representative

Task	Format	Why It's Representative (High RPAT)	What It Reveals (Observation Focus)
4v4 (Compressed Space)	Small grid, tight area	High pressure, constant decisions, frequent transitions	Action connectivity, scanning, intelligent failure, involvement (BR)
5v5 / 6v6 Directional	Small goals or end zones	Adds direction, realistic spacing, decision-making in progression	Forward intent, support play, transition reactions
7v7 / 8v8 Game	Medium pitch, positional structure	More game-like roles, spacing and team interaction	Game understanding, positioning, influence
9v9 Match Play	Full-width, structured game	Closest to real match demands	Tactical awareness, leadership, game influence
Conditioned Games	Constraints (2-touch, scoring zones)	Manipulates behaviour while maintaining realism	Adaptability, speed of decision-making, creativity
Transition Games (e.g. 4v2 → 4v4)	Overload to even numbers	Replicates game transition moments	Reaction speed, pressing, recovery runs
Positional Games (e.g. 4v4+3)	Neutrals + directional play	Encourages spacing, angles, support play	Off-ball movement, connectivity, scanning

🧠 **Key Principle**

Representative tasks reproduce the problems of the real game — non-representative tasks rehearse solutions without the problem."

RPAT – Practice Design

(Representative Practice Assessment Tool)

Score	Level	Descriptor	Practice Characteristics
1	Very Low	Non-representative	No pressure, no decisions, isolated, predictable
2	Low	Limited representation	Some movement, limited opposition, low decision demand
3	Moderate	Partially representative	Some pressure, decisions present, occasional transitions
4	High	Fully representative	High pressure, real decisions, transitions, interaction

TSAP – Game Contribution

Team Sport Assessment Procedure

Dimension	Indicator (TSAP)	What It Means	What To Look For	Low-Level Behaviour	High-Level Behaviour
Involvement	**BR (Ball Received)**	Ability to get into the game	Movement to receive, positioning, availability	Static, hides from play	Constantly available, finds space
Execution	**SA (Successful Action)**	Ability to complete actions	Passing, dribbling, retaining possession	Safe, predictable actions	Executes under pressure, progressive
Risk / Intent	**UA (Unsuccessful Action)**	Loss of possession or failure	Attempts forward play, difficulty of action	Avoids risk, low UA	Attempts high-value actions (even if unsuccessful)
Regains	**CB (Conquered Ball)**	Ability to win possession	Tackles, interceptions, pressing	Reactive, slow to defend	Anticipates, proactive regains
Support Play	TSAP+	Movement after action	Repositioning, angles, combinations	Pass and stop	Pass → move → support again
Off-Ball Behaviour	TSAP+	Positioning without possession	Spacing, timing, awareness	Ball-watching	Creates space, reads game early
Transition Reaction	TSAP+	Response to change of possession	Pressing, recovery, counter-attacks	Delayed reaction	Immediate response, anticipates
Action Connectivity	TSAP+	Linking actions together	1st → 2nd → 3rd actions	Isolated actions	Continuous involvement
Cognitive Behaviour	TSAP+	Thinking before action	Scanning, anticipation, perception	Reacts late	Scans early, anticipates play
Game Influence	TSAP+	Impact on team performance	Organising, linking play, tempo	Passive participant	Shapes the game, influences others

Player Comparison – Interpreting Behaviour

High SA = High Potential
(Not always. Context matters.)

Low UA = Smart Player
(Not necessarily. May be risk averse.)

High BR = Dominant
(May reflect system design.)

Highlight Moment = Advanced
(Sequence stability matters more.)

Player Comparison – Interpreting Behaviour

Player A – High Success

- High SA, low UA
- Safe decisions
- Plays sideways / avoids risk
- Looks consistent

- Insight:
- Success at low level
- (E / E+)

Player B – Intelligent Failure

- Higher UA
- Forward intent
- Plays under pressure
- Attempts line-breaking

Insight:

Failure at high level

(A behaviours emerging)

Failure at the right level > Success at the wrong level

Degrees of Excellence

E – Emerging

E+ – Established

A – Advanced

A+ – Advanced+

We identify behaviour level, not just performance

Degrees of Excellence

Degree	Descriptor	Brief Explanation	Behaviour Profile
E	Emerging	Early-stage behaviours, inconsistent execution	Reactive, limited involvement, actions often isolated
E+	Emerging+	Developing consistency, beginning to show understanding	More involved, occasional connection between actions, still inconsistent under pressure
A	Advanced	Consistent, effective behaviours that influence the game	Connects actions, makes good decisions under pressure, impacts play regularly
A+	Advanced+	High-level behaviours that shape and control the game	Anticipates, adapts, leads play, consistently operates at a higher level

Degrees of Excellence

Degree	Coach Language
E	“Learning the game”
E+	“Starting to apply”
A	“Influencing the game”
A+	“Controlling the game”

Degrees of Excellence

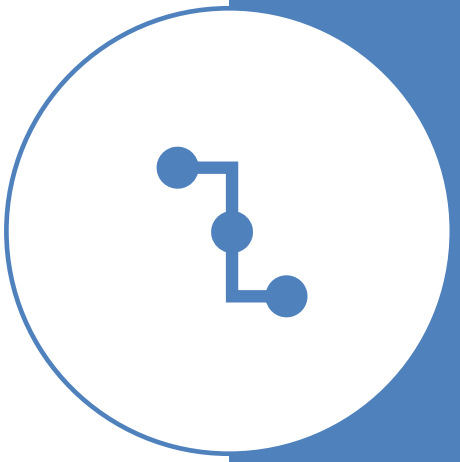
Degree	Talent ID Insight
E	Needs development time
E+	Shows promise, still forming
A	Strong current and future potential
A+	High-level potential (future elite / national level indicator)

Action Connectivity

Action Connectivity (TSAP+ Extension)

Definition

Action Connectivity refers to a player's ability to link their first action to an effective second action (and beyond), maintaining continuous involvement and influence in the game.



Core Concept

Most players:

- perform **one action**
- then **disconnect**
- High-level players:
- perform an action
- then **reposition, support, or re-engage immediately**

Action Connectivity

⚙️ The 3 Layers of Connectivity

1 First Action

👉 What the player does initially

Examples:

- **Receive**
- **Pass**
- **Dribble**
- **Tackle**

2 Second Action

👉 What the player does **immediately after**

Examples:

- **Move to support**
- **Create a new angle**
- **Press after losing the ball**
- **Run beyond / overlap**

3 Connection Quality

👉 The **relationship between the two actions**

Action Connectivity

Level	First Action	Second Action	Connection Quality	Meaning
Low (E)	Performs action	No follow-up	Disconnected	One-off involvement
Developing (E+)	Performs action	Delayed reaction	Weak connection	Late support or recovery
Advanced (A)	Performs action	Immediate support action	Strong connection	Sustains involvement
Elite (A+)	Performs action	Anticipates next action before first is complete	Proactive connection	Controls flow of play

Intelligent Failure

- Unsuccessful action at a high level
- Forward intent under pressure
- Indicates advanced perception & decision-making
- Key indicator of potential

What might this look like ?

How It All Connects

- 🧠 **Core Flow RPAT → TSAP+ → Action Connectivity → Degrees of Excellence**

- 🔷
- **RPAT**
→ *Design the right environment*
- **TSAP+**
→ *Observe player contribution & behaviour*
- **Action Connectivity**
→ *Assess how actions link together*
- **Degrees of Excellence**
→ *Identify the level of the player*
-

- 💥 “We’re not selecting the best performers — we’re identifying the highest level behaviours within the right environment.”

Conclusion

What This Framework Is NOT

- It is **not replacing coaching experience or intuition**
- It is **not a rigid scoring system**
- It is **not about removing judgement**

What This Framework IS or Could be

- A **shared language** for observing players
- A way to **make implicit knowledge explicit**
- A tool to **support better decision-making in Talent ID**
- A system to help us **identify more future players, not just current performers**

AEF-IPF

“ If we can improve how we observe, we improve who we identify… and ultimately, who we develop.”