

First, we'll take a look at forwards. Forwards appear to stop improving around the age of 24, at which their performance plateaus for a few years. After that, forwards are still capable, but their performance follows a steady decline. By the age of around 36, though, forwards experience a stark decline, at which point in their early years they are likely no longer playable at the highest level. Interestingly, forwards have a few early years during which the rate of their improvement is positive and actually increasing, meaning they are improving and do not slow down until around 18. Midfielders, as we will see, do not share this trait. This means forwards between the ages of 17 and 19 should be undergoing major improvements, and clubs should probably monitor prospects at that age very closely.

Next, we'll delve into the midfielders. They reach their peak age around the same time as forwards: about 24. However, unlike forwards, midfielders do not have a prolonged plateau after their peak. Although they remain playable in the years following 24, they start to decline rather than remain at the same ability. There is also less of a noticeable drop-off towards the end of their career, meaning it can be harder to actually determine when a midfielder can no longer play at the highest level. It seems to be around 36, but the data is a little sparse at that age, so it is not for certain.

Finally, defenders. Defenders seem to peak at or around 25, but have a lot more longevity than midfielders or attackers. Although they show lots of improvement during the early stages of their career, it staves off, but the performance remains. This is likely because the physicality required to play in the defense was mostly built up during the teens and early 20s, but it is tough to improve physicality after those years. Defenders can play well into their 30s, even late 30s, but by then the data gets skewed by the handful of near-40-year-olds still playing. 37 seems to be

the age at which the decrease in performance change stops, so that could be where defenders hit their low point and do not come back up.