



QUALITIES OF A SOCCER PLAYER

Knowledge of the Game

Positional Play:

A player must have an understanding of the offensive and defensive functions of her position on the field of play.

Vision:

Before a player receives the ball she should be looking around to know what her options are so that when the player is in possession of the ball the player knows where to play the ball. An inexperienced player will think about her options to pass the ball only when the ball is at her feet. Quite often this is too late and could result in a loss of possession. In order to have good vision it is important to anticipate the play on the field. A player must anticipate when she will receive the ball and anticipate where her teammates will be in order to be able to distribute the ball well to other players.

Awareness:

At all times a player should know where he/she is on the field in relation to the position of the ball, fellow teammates and the opposition. Body position on the field is important in all aspects of the game defensively and offensively.

“Instinctive” Reaction:

An experienced player will know how to react immediately in any given situation when under pressure or when relieving pressure from a teammate. For example, on offense the player will know how and where to run to create passing or shooting opportunities for herself or for her teammates. Defensively, the player will know how far and how fast to retreat or how quickly she needs to challenge an opponent in order to avert danger. Thus, an experienced player will appear to act almost by “instinct” in a given situation on the field.

Adaptability:

One of the many beauties of the game is that all players have the opportunity to be the play-maker. Whenever they are in possession of the ball they have the ability to affect the nature of the game. For this reason the player in possession must be able to adapt quickly to any given situation. Players off the ball, both offensively and defensively, must adapt quickly to the constantly changing scenarios on the field. This is also important when it comes to transitioning quickly from offense to defense or visa versa. It is important that players recognize when possession of the ball changes to either offense or defense, and be ready and adapt appropriately to the situation.



Inventiveness:

There are many times in a game when a player has to use her own individual flair to create passing or shooting opportunities for herself or for other teammates. A player who has the ability to turn quickly, evade challenges easily, shoot when off balance and even perform her own “tricks” to create opportunities is an asset to the team.

Skill

Application of technique under pressure:

There are many facets of the game which will cause a breakdown of technique. A good player will be able to maintain technical efficiency while they are under pressure. An experienced player will show composure under pressure from:

- The movement of the ball.
- The movement of their body with the ball.
- Opposition.
- Fatigue
- Condition of field and weather.
- Importance of game.

Mental Ability

Confidence:

In the make-up of a good player, the mental aspect is just as important as the physical aspect. Not only must a player possess good skills, but also she must have the confidence to perform to her potential. Often we find players with brilliant skills and understanding of the game, but they lack the confidence to perform well under pressure.

Mental Toughness:

There are many things that happen in a game which may affect a player’s confidence and concentration. For example, the team is losing by more than one goal, the team is being totally dominated throughout the game, a referee is constantly calling fouls against the player, coaches’ critique, fellow teammates critique; An individual breakdown in technique and constantly losing individual “battles” can result in a loss of confidence and concentration. It is only a mentally tough player who will endeavor to perform to their utmost ability, despite those odds against them.



Fitness

Endurance:

Fitness is a very important component of the game. Not only must a player have the ability to play for the duration of the game, but also must be able to recover (her fitness) while working in the game. On average, each player on the field will run up to 5-7 miles in a game (90 mins.). It is important that as the player gets older they develop the stamina to last 90 minutes on the field because as the competition gets harder coaches are less likely to make substitutions.

Concentration lapses and skill levels tend to decline when a player is tired. The more soccer endurance the player has, the less chance the player has of making an error due to fatigue. (There is a difference between endurance (running) and soccer endurance. The kind of running a player does while playing soccer is different than running track. Playing soccer requires instant changes of speed and direction which requires that the player is more agile.)

Speed:

While speed of movement alone is most certainly an advantage to a soccer player, it is not vital. Speed of thought, however, is essential to success. Good perception and quick reaction can save much time. The following elements of speed combined are ideal:

- Perception Speed: the time that elapses between the occurrence of a situation in a game and its recognition by the player.
- Reaction Time: the time that elapses between the occurrence of the situation in a game and a player's initial physical reaction.
- Speed of Movement: how fast a player is able to move over a distance of 5 to 10 yards. (Although it is important that a player be able to move quickly over this distance, it is more important that they are just as quick with the ball at their feet over the same distance. Often there are players who are quick sprinters, but lack the same speed with the ball at their feet.)

Balance and Agility:

A good player must have both static balance to resist challenges and dynamic balance (agility) in order to have control over their body while moving with or without the ball.

Strength:

There are many direct and incidental challenges in the game of soccer both on the ground and in the air. A player must have the strength to withstand those challenges they will face from the opponents. The size of a player does not necessarily matter when it comes to winning challenges between opponents. It is the tenacity (fight) of a player that will win battles on the field.