



PLAYERS' HANDBOOK

2024

2022

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The Club

To fuel the passion of the beautiful game.

Hailing from the heart of Montgomery County, Maryland, street footie Football Club burst onto the scene in the Spring of 2022 and has since been one of the fastest growing clubs in the area. The Club is very proud of its heritage and our unique brand of football: an embodiment of passion, unity, and enthusiasm.

At street footie, every home game is a spectacle where every pass, tackle, and goal resonates with our staff, players, fans, heritage, and soccer ethos.

Proud Heritage

- March 24, 2022 - street footie FC played its first seven versus seven match at the Maryland SoccerPlex
- May 15, 2022 - street footie FC played its first 11-a-side match in the Mason Dixon Soccer League
- September 11, 2022 - street footie FC played its inaugural semi-pro season in the Maryland Super Soccer League Division II
- June 9, 2023 - street footie FC joined United Premier Soccer League and played in the DMV North Division 1 Conference for the Fall 2023 season
- January 7, 2024 - street footie FC made its first appearance in the Morton Cup

Core Principles of Our Philosophy

street footie Football Club's playing philosophy strives to produce entertaining, attacking soccer, emphasizing possession, tactical awareness, and team unity.

Entertaining, Attacking Soccer

Our primary goal is to play football that not only wins matches but also wins the hearts of our supporters. Our offensive strategy emphasizes creativity, speed, and precision, aiming to outplay our opponents with flair and dynamism.

Possession with Purpose

Control of the ball is critical – the intent and decision-making behind each pass and movement define our unique playing style.

We strive for a possession-based game with the purpose of creating scoring opportunities and dictating the pace of the game.

Tactical Awareness

Understanding the flow of the game and the roles of each position within its current state is pivotal.

Our players train to be tactically astute, recognizing when to recover, when to press, when to hold back, and how to seamlessly transition between defense and attack.

Team Unity

Our team unity encompasses a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect, togetherness, and unwavering support for one another.

street footie FC thrives beyond individual contributions and excels in the bond between teammates. This trust allows us to take risks, spark creativity, and push the boundaries of what's possible. Within our squad, every player understands and embraces their role passionately, with each member contributing to the collective goal of victory.

Play Without Fear

Encouraging our players to express themselves without fear of making mistakes is essential to our philosophy. We believe in fostering an environment where players feel confident to take risks, showcase their skills, and make bold decisions on the field.

Our Formation

Guidelines to Our Tactical Framework

Four-Two-Three-One (4-2-3-1)

Primary Formation

The Four-Two-Three-One (4-2-3-1) formation is the tactical framework that underpins the street footie FC identity. Firmly established as our primary strategic approach across all levels of our club, this formation embodies the essence of balance, versatility, and offensive prowess.



Last Line

Goalkeeper (GK)

Back Line

Left Wing Back (LWB), Left Center Back (LCB), Right Center Back (RCB), Right Wing Back (RWB)

Central Midfield

Two Center Defensive Midfielders (CDM)

Attacking Midfield

Left Winger (LW), Center Attacking Midfielder (CAM), Right Winger (RW)

Forward

Striker (ST)

Our Four-Two-Three-One's core is underlined by a steadfast commitment to defensive solidity, anchored by a disciplined structure, with the creative freedom to produce in the final third.

The goalkeeper (GK) stands as the ultimate guardian of our goal. Supported by a cohesive back line comprised of the right wing back (RWB), right and left center backs (L/R CB), and the left wing back (LWB).

Transitioning into the midfield, the Four-Two-Three-One excels in controlling the tempo of the game and dictating play. Two robust central defensive midfielders (CDM) become a double-pivot to support and patrol the center of the pitch with authority. The defensive midfielders shield the defense from direct engagement

with the ball and prevent enemy advances with astute positioning. Additionally, the central defensive midfielders support both the attacking and defending phases of the game. The defensive midfielders must distribute and retain possession of the ball in order to build a proper attack with support and balance. The responsibilities of the role falls on both CDMs, who must communicate and share the workload as to not overtire and create gaps in the middle of the pitch.

Moving further up the field, the formation is poised with attacking potential through an unrestricted, creative, and dynamic engine in the form of a trio of playmakers. Positioned behind the lone striker, the right winger (RW), center attacking midfielder (CAM), and left winger (LW) operate as creative catalysts, orchestrating intricate passing sequences, breaking through the lines of the defense, and launching incisive attacks into enemy territory.

Attacking players are given freedom to temporarily drift from their position and tactical instructions to exploit a space or opportunity.

Finally, leading the frontline with predatory instincts and lethal finishing, the striker (ST) spearheads our offensive endeavors, capitalizing on the service provided by the supporting cast to breach the opposition's defenses and find the back of the net.

Goalkeeping

Commanding Presence, Shot Stopping, Distribution
and Communication

GK Responsibilities

When engaged in a defensive play, the goalkeeper's job is not over until the ball is in his or her hands, out of play, or cleared away.

Aerial Dominance

It is the goalkeeper's responsibility to be dominant in the air and come out for any crosses when necessary. Timing and quick decision-making are essential to be commanding in the air, as misjudging the ball's flight gives the opposition a shot on an empty net.

Shot Stopping

The goalkeeper's most immediate responsibility is defending the goal and stopping shots from passing the goal line.

To be a good shot-stopper, a goalie must have good positioning, reflexes, and agility, as well as the intuition to read the game, the opposing striker's body language, and the flight of the ball.

Distribution

Goalkeepers with the ability to play with the ball at their feet are becoming essential in the modern game.

Refers to a goalkeeper's ability to pass the ball over to the field players to start an attack or keep possession of the ball. A goalkeeper with excellent control of the ball and a diverse passing range opens new tactical options for the team.

Defending Set-Pieces

The goalkeeper, depending on the situation, must save shots at goal from direct free-kicks or penalties, and is required to show a presence in the box to close down and catch deliveries and crosses from corners and free-kicks.

Goalies are also responsible for organizing and positioning the defensive wall while defending free-kicks. The goalie must signal how many players are needed in setting up and directing the positioning of the wall.

Organization and Communication

The goalkeeper is the only position on the pitch that can see the entire field at all times.

The goalie needs to organize the entire team. As such, an effective goalkeeper is vocal with his or her instructions. Constant, quick, and informative communication with the defensive line is essential for keeping an organized defense and a solid midfield.

Goal Kicks

Short Goal Kicks

Find closest wing back, one of the two center backs, or a central midfielder dropping to start the play from the defensive line.

When taking short goal kicks, ensure that you play clean passes with proper weight on the ball.

The receiver must be able to trap the ball with ease in our defensive third. Losing the ball directly from a goal kick in the defensive third is assuredly an easy way to concede a goal. It is also important to note the opposition and how they are marking our players. If all of our targets are marked, take a long goal kick as there is now space left behind the opposition markers.

Long Goal Kicks

The purpose of a long goal kick is to get the ball up the field and start an attack from the middle or final third.

Long goal kicks may be employed if the tactical scenario requires it, for example, if we are against a high pressing team, have height advantage, or aerial superiority.

Quality long goal kicks diagonally cross over to the other half of the field, and find either winger. If the kick is hit too hard, it will simply become a throw in to the other team in their own half – hardly a dangerous situation. If it falls short, it will land in central spaces for our central midfielders to challenge for the aerial ball. In either situation, the outcome of losing possession of the ball from a long goal kick is preferred to losing it in our defensive third.

Free Kicks

Setting Up the Wall

The objective is to cover the most vulnerable areas of the goal, directing the wall to protect the side of the goal hardest to reach. Communication, precise positioning, and quick reactions are essential components, as the wall must dynamically adjust to the ball's movement, ensuring the goal remains shielded against incoming threats.

1. Assess the Situation

It is key that you quickly analyze and understand the situation, distance, and angle of the free-kick.

Organizing the wall for defending a free kick involves strategic positioning and communication with your defenders.

Questions you should ask yourself and quickly work out the answers the moment a free kick is called against us:

- Is this a direct or indirect free kick?
- Do I need a wall based on the distance? How many players must stand in it?
- Is it possible to take a shot on goal from this angle/distance? Or will this be a cross into the box?
- How many players are standing to take the free kick?
- Is the other team starting a play to play the ball quickly?
- Do I need to call a player to stand on the ball to stall and/or force the free kick to be taken "On the Whistle."

2. Request a Number of Players in the Wall

You must communicate to the players closest in a request for the number of defenders that you want in your wall. The closer a free kick is to goal, the more defenders you need in the wall, up to a maximum of five. If there is no direct threat from a shot on goal, you may not need a wall at all.

3. Cover the Goalpost

In safeguarding the goal during a free-kick, it is crucial to cover the goal's most vulnerable areas, particularly where the goalkeeper has limited reach. Effective communication, precise positioning, and quick adjustments are key. Here's a concise strategy:

Positioning

Stand at the near post meant to be protected by the wall.

Perspective

Use the post for a better view, leaning your head against it.

Communication

Instruct the player opposite you to shift the wall as required, ensuring optimal coverage.

Coverage

Make sure the entire post is shielded by the wall.

4. Organize, Align, and Adjust the Wall

- Ensure the wall covers any gaps and stands firm
- Communicate clearly to organize the wall effectively

5. Return to Your Position

Anticipate the direction of the free-kick and position yourself to cover the side not protected by the wall.

6. Be Ready to React

Be on your toes and be prepared to make a save. Keep an eye on the free-kick taker's movements and adjust your position accordingly. If the ball passes the wall, react swiftly to make the save.

Corner Kicks

During a corner kick, no matter the set piece instructions, it is imperative that:

- Always be on your toes and ready to catch the aerial ball or pounce on a loose ball
- You are not boxed in, have the ability to move about, and your arms are free
- Communicate to the defense about free players or runners inside the penalty box
- If you commit to coming out, you must engage with the attacker or you would be stuck in "no man's land," an area that you are not protecting the goal, or be able to block a shot
- If you are unsure that you are able to catch the ball, punching it out is preferred to spilling the ball
- Any contact on the goalkeeper is a foul, use this to your advantage

Penalties

Put the Kick Taker Off Psychologically

Engage in a psychological battle with the penalty kicker, aiming to introduce doubt and add pressure that can lead to a missed penalty or a save. Remember, the effectiveness of these tactics will depend on the situation and the individuals involved, so adapt your approach as needed.

Pick a Side and Dive

In a penalty kick, the taker has all the advantage. There is not enough time to react to a well-struck and powerful penalty kick. Unless you have prior knowledge about the tendencies of the kick taker, pick a side and dive to that side.

Defending

Get Behind the Ball, Squeeze Attackers to One Flank,
Protect the Middle

A solid defense forms the foundation of successful football.

Our defensive approach revolves around the idea that defending is not just about preventing goals; it is about dictating the pace of the game, disrupting opposition attacks, seizing control of the match, and using the transitions to launch efficient and successful attacks.

Our Defending Philosophy

street footie FC relies on a comprehensive and tactically advanced approach emphasizing unity, strategic positioning, and adaptability.

Our defensive framework is designed to create a robust and cohesive defensive unit capable of protecting the goal and efficiently transitioning into attacking phases.

By integrating the concepts of defending as a unit, employing hybrid-zonal marking, utilizing a dynamic low-to-high back-line, conserving energy, and prioritizing quick recovery and regrouping, street footie FC's approach aims to minimize opposition threats while preserving energy for effective attacks.

Decelerate Opposition Attacks

Our main objective in defense is to slow down opposition attacks, while channeling the opposition, and creating opportunities to force mistakes to regain possession. By applying pressure strategically, we aim to keep our opponents out of dangerous zones, limiting their ability to create scoring opportunities. We emphasize forcing the opposing team to play the ball backwards into their half, giving us enough time to reorganize ourselves defensively and prepare for our next transition.

Channeling & Trapping the Opposition

Our defensive system emphasizes channeling opponents to and trapping them in specific areas of the pitch, where we can apply intense pressure and win back the ball efficiently. By restricting the opponents' options and closing down passing

lanes and dangerous spaces, we aim to disrupt their rhythm and force them into either going negatively or making rushed decisions going forward.

Moreover, our defensive approach is not just about stopping and disrupting the opposition, but is also designed to conserve energy for our attacking endeavors. A strong defense provides the foundation and platform for fluid, dynamic attacking play. By remaining disciplined and compact without the ball, we ensure that we're ready both tactically and physically to transition quickly and efficiently to attack when possession of the ball is won.

Our defensive philosophy at street footie FC is rooted in proactive, intelligent play.

Our strategy is to control the game's tempo, frustrate our opponents, and create opportunities to capitalize on turnovers. Through a cohesive and disciplined defensive effort, we lay the groundwork for success on the pitch.

Individual Defending

Stop the Ball from Crossing the Goal Line

Whether blocking shots, intercepting crosses, or clearing the ball off the goal line, your focus should always be on keeping the ball out of your own net.

In its most primitive form, the primary objective of defending is to prevent the opposition from scoring.

Get Behind the Ball

Whenever possible, prioritize getting behind the ball to cut off passing lanes and limit the attacker's options. This not only makes it harder for the opponent to advance but also allows you to anticipate their next move more effectively.

Stay Ball-Side-Goal-Side

This fundamental principle emphasizes the importance of positioning yourself between the ball and the goal. By staying ball-side, you make it difficult for the attacker to get a clear shot on goal while also ensuring you're goal-side to track back if the attacker manages to get past you.

Cover Positions and Spaces

In addition to marking specific players, defenders must also be aware of covering spaces and vulnerable positions to ensure that all areas of the field are adequately protected. This means staying organized, communicating with teammates, and adjusting positioning as the game evolves.

Force the Attacker One Way

A key tactic in individual defending is to force the attacker onto their weaker foot or towards less dangerous areas of the field. Whether pushing them to the outside of the field in your half or towards their own goal in their half, limiting the attacker's options increases the chances of the team winning the ball back.

Push Attackers to the Touchline

By herding the opposition's attacker towards the strong-side touchline, you restrict their space and limit their ability to make dangerous crosses or passes into the box. This reduces their options and increases the likelihood of regaining possession.

Covering the First Teammate Pressing the Ball

Effective defending requires quality coordination, cooperation, and teamwork.

While one player presses the ball, others must be ready to cover passing lanes and provide support. This ensures that even if the initial press is beaten, there are other defenders ready to step in and win the ball back.

Proactive Defending

Instead of reacting to the attacker's moves, strive to anticipate their actions and intercept passes or tackles before they become threats.

Being proactive and foreseeing dangers while defending not only disrupts the opponent's rhythm but also gives your teammates opportunities and sets them up to easily transition and launch counterattacks.

Avoid Desperate Challenges

Stay on your feet while defending one-on-one's to avoid leaving vulnerable gaps in your line, giving away preventable scoring opportunities, and accumulating fouls.

One of the cardinal rules of defending is to avoid diving into challenges recklessly. If you find yourself in a position where you're forced to dive in, it likely means you've already made a mistake in positioning or anticipation. Patience is key; wait for the right moment to make your move.

Reacting to Opposition's Breakaway or Counter Attack

When an attacker successfully pushes the ball past you and initiates a footrace, swift action is imperative. If only the ball is beyond the player, the defending player must immediately cut off the attacking player's path to slow them down. This can be achieved by angling your run to intercept the attacker or applying pressure from the side to force them out wide.

Retreating when Outmaneuvered

In scenarios where the attacking player has maneuvered past our defender and gained significant distance, the defender's priority shifts to containing the threat and preventing a direct shot on goal.

In such cases, the defender should quickly retreat towards the goal line to narrow the angle and buy time for reinforcements to arrive. By maintaining a position between the attacker and the goal, the defender can force the attacker into making a more challenging shot or pass. Retreating and staying ball-side-goal-side gives the defense a better chance of regaining control of the situation.

Defending as a Unit

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

The phrase "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" encapsulates the concept that when individual elements come together to form a larger entity or

system, the resulting whole exhibits qualities, properties, or effects that surpass the mere sum of its components.

Our defensive foundation emphasizes individual marking and tackling talent, while incorporating collective responsibility. The overall defensive effort requires every player to contribute and repel opposition attacks to pave the way for success on the pitch.

Understanding the significance of defending as a cohesive unit is essential in reducing the workload for our players, minimizing vulnerable gaps, and hindering scoring opportunities for the opposition.

By working together and cooperate, we distribute the physical, positional, and technical responsibilities of defending. The shared distribution and allocation of tasks makes it easier for each member of the team to contribute effectively without being overwhelmed by the demands of the game.

It is crucial for every player to learn and understand their specific role within our defensive structure.

Whether the situation calls for marking an opponent, covering space, or providing support to teammates, each position plays a vital part in our collective defensive effort. By familiarizing ourselves with the different roles, we improve our ability to communicate and coordinate with one another on the field. Good communication strengthens our defensive capabilities as we rely on working as a unit to win possession of the ball.

Hybrid-Zonal Defending

This defensive strategy combines elements of zone defense and man-to-man defense.

Defenders are instructed to “pick up” and mark opposition players who enter their designated zone or space of the pitch. Rather than trailing, tracking, and man-marking individual opponents who constantly roam between zones, defenders must hand them on to adjacent teammates. Additionally, unlike in zone defense,

the defender does not stand still in his or her zone, but is given the freedom and flexibility to mark and challenge opposition players within the entire zone. This system emphasizes spatial awareness and communication, allowing for a flexible response to the opposition's movements and runs.

Constantly communicate to your teammates about dangers in their zone.

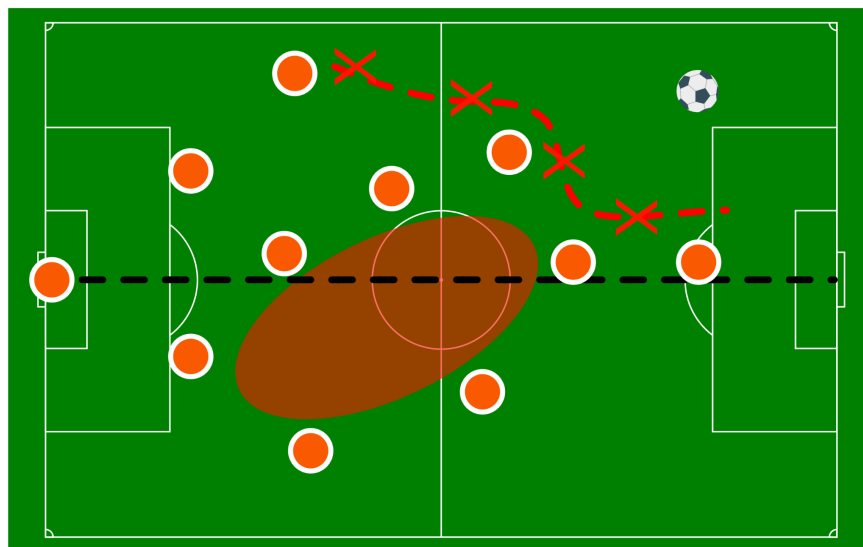
Players must independently read the game and understand when to contain, step, press, or engage an opposition player entering their zone.

There may be situations that there is more than one attacker in your defensive zone. It is imperative that you communicate with your teammates so that they will provide you with the needed support.

Blocking Penetration Through the Middle

We are at our weakest when the opponents are able to break through from the wing into the midfield in the gap left by our pressing trap.

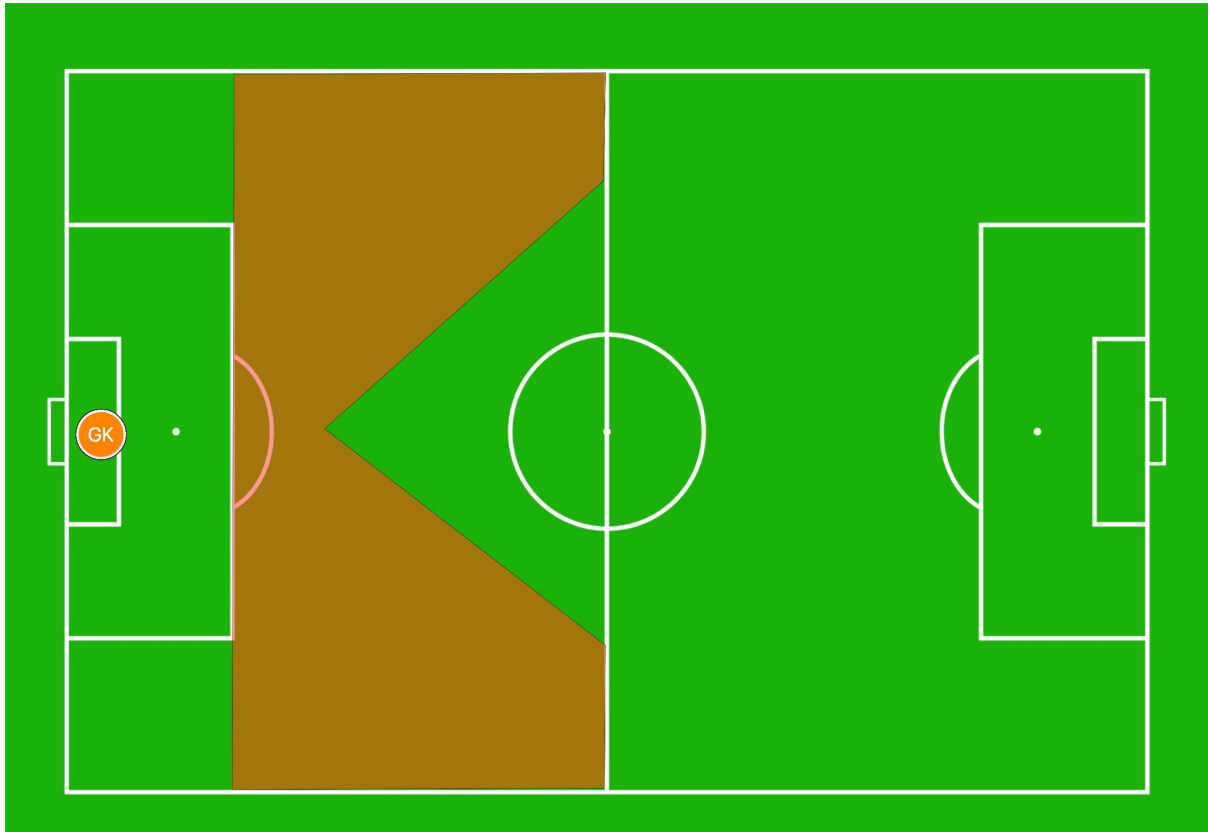
We "risk" dragging seven of our players into one vertical half of the field. If the opposing team break our press through the middle of the field, they are in space with only 2 or 3 defenders to beat. This situation is dangerous as it can lead to the collapse of our midfield over ninety minutes.



It is more important to prevent the ball from getting into the red area than to win it with a press. Let the opponents recycle the ball through their defensive line and

shift to the other side when they move the ball by blocking the passing angles into the middle of the pitch.

Areas of Pressing Heatmap



The heat map of the areas of pressing and winning the ball should look like this if the tactics are executed properly. With the brighter regions being more likely to occur.

Dynamic Low Defensive Line

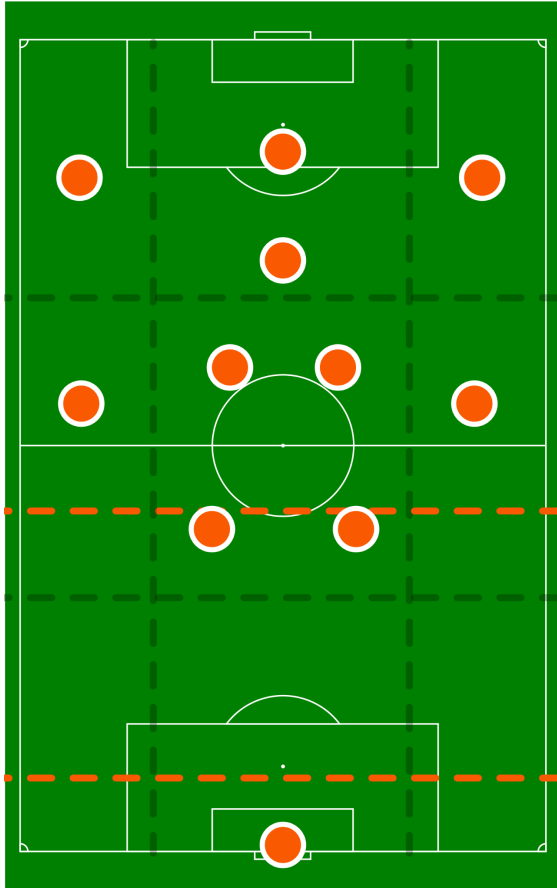
Our defense must have two crucial features to be successful: a dynamic low defensive line and no offside trap.

In a dynamic defensive line, the defenders' backline moves up and down depending on the ball's location. The back line should sit 40-50 yards away from the ball.

When the ball is in our possession the line moves up with the play, while providing a buffer and negative angles to keep retention of the ball. However, when

possession of the ball is lost and leaves the attacking third, the defensive line drops and the rest of the team gets goal-side behind the ball.

In possession, one of the center backs is free to move about and be involved in the play. The other center back must hold the line with the arc of the center circle, about 10 yards away from the halfway mark, providing support and is the first one to drop the defensive line during a counter. However, only one of the center-back is allowed to leave his or her own half during open play at a time. The closer the two center backs are to each other during the play, the quicker they are able to shift and become the active center back.



Example of a Dynamic Low Defensive Line with marked boundaries.

If we drop our defensive line as soon as possession is lost, the opposition has to run and work the ball a longer distance to our goal without creating a foot-race with our defenders with a ball over the top.

A dynamic low defensive line approach allows us to be protected in the quick counter and long balls, whilst still providing adequate support to our attacking players to build the play and score goals.

Advantages of a Low Defensive Line

- Protected in the counter-attack
- Center backs are always facing the ball and field
- The speed of players becomes less of a factor
- More protection from the long ball behind the defensive line
- Number superiority in our own defensive third

- Larger time windows to rest between transitions and high-intensity sprints to pressure the ball
- Gives our attacking players a chance to conserve energy for attacking plays
- The distance between the goalkeeper and backline is shorter – which reduces the number of one-on-one chances against us
- Our attacking players' defensive roles are reduced and are able to focus their energies on attacking
- Defending while directing and funneling the ball, instead of reacting to the opponent
- Long balls land in front of the back line rather than behind them which would create a foot race with the opposition striker
- More compact, less liable to get stretched
- Maximizes space on the pitch

Disadvantages of a Low Defensive Line

It is essential that we know our weaknesses as well as our strengths.

Due to the nature of a playing with a low defensive line:

- The ball is won in deep defensive areas, and now must be worked to the attacking third before we become effective
- The opponent is let in deeper into your own half
- Longer transition distance between defense and attack
- Requires patience and defensive cohesion against possession-based teams
- When attacking, the distance between defenders and forwards is larger
- Reduces the number of players in the offensive third

Solutions to Disadvantages

In order to attack with numbers, we must have a slow build-up play to give enough time for eight to nine (8-9) of our players to enter the opponent's half.

Due to our low defensive line, when winning possession of the ball, we will be positioned deeper down the field in our own half. The moments after transition of from attack to defense and vice versa are crucial.

Our play within the first five seconds after winning possession of the ball should be quick and urgent in order to break the opponent's press, before relaxing into the slower, methodic, build-up play.

High-pressing teams need to be handled in a certain way: The wingers and forwards must stretch the field to allow us to break the press through hold-up play and connecting with the midfield. Once the press is broken, we return to our usual, slower, and more methodical build-up play.

Attacking

Control the Tempo, Build-up the Play, Vary the Attack,
and Be Decisive in Front of Goal

Retaining Possession

When we maintain control of the ball, it forces the opposition to expend energy chasing us down, giving us the upper hand. Our strategy revolves around keeping the bulk of our possession in the midfield and final third, where we can apply pressure and exploit gaps in their formation to create scoring opportunities.

Retaining possession is a crucial aspect of dominating a football match.

Patience is key; we must resist the urge to rush towards the goal and instead focus on circulating the ball amongst teammates, probing for openings. In the final third especially, composure is paramount; knowing that we have the opposition on the defensive allows us to dictate the flow of play. Attackers hold the advantage here, as defenders are preoccupied with preventing a goal, leaving them vulnerable to mistakes.

Bear in mind that the opposition can only clear the ball so far, necessitating a disciplined backline to recycle attacks effectively. By adhering to these principles, we can maintain control of the game and create numerous scoring opportunities.

Keeping the ball and stringing passes together invites pressure, but creates a vulnerable space behind the opposition.

Keeping possession of the ball in the opposition's half when trying to overcome adversity.

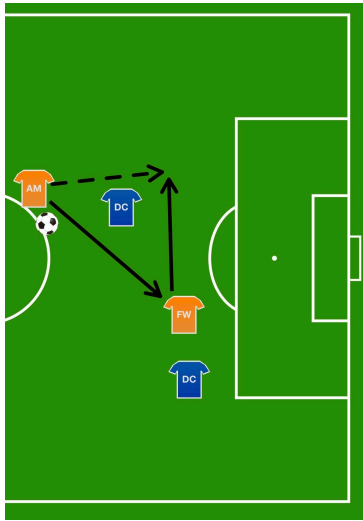
We must maintain our style even during adversity and rather than run to goal we must continue to shift the ball around the opposition's box until we get a goal.

And in the dying ambers of a match we will retain possession of the ball to keep a lead and tire an already worked opposition without neglecting gaps for scoring opportunities.

Pass and Move

Being able to retain possession of the ball and pass accurately under pressure is crucial as the game becomes physical. Playing under tight pressure is one of the

most challenging elements of the game. So, perfecting retaining possession will take a lot of practice, analysis of your play, and experience.



A simple example of passing and moving utilizing a one-two pass.

The fabric of the beautiful game.

Decision-making

Always look to your sides constantly to assess where the opponent defender is, the space that you have to maneuver, escape options, and if you are positioned well, perhaps pass the ball forward.

Identify the Pass Target

Identifying and targeting the player to whom the ball is to be passed will allow for more accurate positioning and delivery. The force and the direction can also be calculated with some precision to ensure the ball heads towards its chosen target.

Practice Proper Technique

Passing a soccer ball is a fundamental skill for any footballer to have. Above all, executing the proper technique improves the pass precision. Additionally, players must gauge where the ball should land and then adjust the weight of the pass accordingly. Yet, emphasis on using the correct technique is crucial to completing more passes. Therefore, we must analyze the player's actions before and after they pass the ball.

Timing and Weight of the Pass

Making sure the player is open, ready to receive the ball, and that the passing lane is clear are also ways to ensure smart play when passing the ball to keep possession. Being alert to opportunities while still in possession of the ball requires some concerted practice and effort.

Direction, technique, and timing are not enough. The pass must be the correct weight (or power) to allow the target player to control it comfortably. Playing a weak ball, if untimed correctly, can lead to a 'hospital-ball'¹ situation. However, it is necessary on occasion to make your target move towards the ball. Playing a stronger ball will be able to send the target to receive a through ball. Through

¹ Jargon for a loose ball that can result in a 50-50 challenge that puts both players at risk of getting injured or picking up a knock as they are both challenging for the same ball with no clear advantage to either side.

balls must be done at a different angle to allow the target to run onto the ball, or they would end up just be a difficult ball to trap.

Off-the-Ball Movement

For 88 minutes and 30 seconds out of the match, a player does not have possession of the ball and is considered off-the-ball. This means that for the vast majority of a regular game, a player is running to close down space on defense, and create space on offense.

It is crucial to keep passing lanes open, move into occupied spaces, create angles for the next pass and be an option while you are off the ball.

On average, in a 90-minute match, a central midfielder has possession of the ball at their feet for around 90 seconds².

Moving the Ball to Shift and Unbalance the Opposition

Moving the ball requires the opposition defenders to shift. Quickly changing the point of attack makes defenders tired and creates small gaps in the defensive line. In this way the defense can be broken down while keeping possession of the ball without the need to beat a defender one-on-one and risk losing the ball.

The ball must move quickly side-to-side while retaining possession – poking and prodding for an opening, gap, or vulnerable space in behind the defense.

Pick Out High-Percentage Passes

In open play, for the majority of the time, you should be seeking out passes that are “safe.” The team must position itself in such a way that there multiple unmarked outlets to play ball to without risking a loss of possession.

² Link D, Hoernig M. Individual ball possession in soccer. PLoS One. 2017 Jul 10;12(7):e0179953. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0179953. PMID: 28692649; PMCID: PMC5503225.

Resting in Possession

When we retain the ball, we are in control of the game's direction, flow, and point of attack. After a period of heavy pressure, or pressing, the team can slow down the pace of the game, play negative passes, and move the ball to areas that does not risk dispossession. This may be done at any period of the game to regain energy, calm down the game, frustrate the opposition, or see a game out.

Possession Scenarios

When Leading

Control the Tempo

Slow down the pace of the game to maintain possession and frustrate the opposition.

Use the Full Width

Stretch the opposition by circulating the ball wide and utilizing the full width of the pitch.

Patient Build-up

Avoid risky passes and focus on maintaining possession through short, accurate passes.

Exploit Spaces

Look for gaps in the opposition's defense and exploit them with intelligent movement off the ball.

Keep the Ball Away from Danger Areas

Minimize turnovers in dangerous areas of the pitch, especially near your own goal.

Maintain Composure

Encourage players to stay calm and composed on the ball, even under pressure.

When Trailing

Press High

Apply pressure in the opposition's half to force turnovers and regain possession quickly.

Quick Transitions

Look to win the ball back aggressively and transition into attack as swiftly as possible.

Direct Play

When necessary, play more direct passes to bypass the opposition's midfield and create scoring opportunities.

Take Calculated Risks

While maintaining possession is important, be willing to take calculated risks in the final third to create goal-scoring chances.

Increase Intensity

Inject energy and urgency into your play to unsettle the opposition and create momentum.

Maintain Tactical Discipline

Stick to your team's style of play and tactical plan, but be flexible in making adjustments based on the match situation.

When Tied

Control the Midfield

Dominate possession in the midfield area to establish control over the game. This can be achieved through quick passing combinations and intelligent movement off the ball.

Be Patient yet Purposeful

While it is important to maintain possession, avoid becoming too passive. Continuously look for openings in the opposition's defense and be proactive in your passing movements.

Exploit Transitions

Capitalize on turnovers and quickly transition from defense to attack to catch the opposition off guard. Utilize the speed and skill of your players to launch swift counter-attacks when possession is regained.

Vary your Attacking Approach

Mix up your attacking play by switching the point of attack, using both short passes to maintain possession and long balls to bypass the opposition's defense. This unpredictability can create confusion and openings in the defense.

Stay Organized Defensively

Maintain a solid defensive shape even when in possession to prevent counter-attacks and maintain stability at the back. This ensures that you are not vulnerable to conceding goals while pushing for a breakthrough.

Be Mentally Resilient

Keep the team focused and composed, especially during tense moments in the game. Encourage players to stay calm under pressure and stick to the game plan, trusting in their abilities to secure a positive result.

In any match, a good overall team passing completion rate is 80% and above.

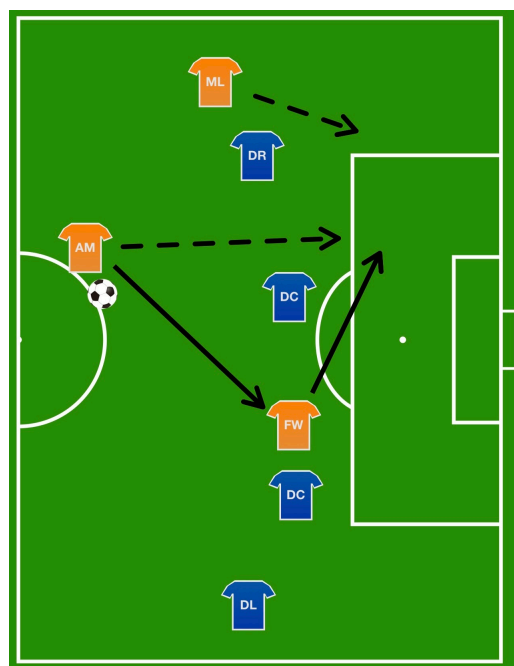
Creative Freedom

In the attacking third, as the rewards begin outweigh the risks, there are more allowances to showcase creativity and play risky low-percentage passes. These riskier passes may be necessary to play a final ball to send our striker on goal. However, in the defensive and middle thirds, *playing slow* and not moving the ball can result in conceding a goal on a silly dispossession and a quick counter attack.

Build-up Play

Playing from the Back

All areas of the field could and should be utilized to retain possession and start an attack. It is essential to recognize when playing from the back is dangerous, or ineffective as space exists in dangerous situations that we can exploit with a medium-length ball to begin an attack from the middle of final thirds.



Breaking Lines and Presses

When the opposition commits all their players forward, aiming to disrupt our play and quickly recover the ball in our defensive third; we must effectively counter the high-intensity press before we can return to our preferred style of rhythmic possession.

The key to overcoming this press lies in maintaining composure to ensure clean touches and executing quick, precise passes when needed to find a way out of the press.

An alternative way to break a defensive line, with more moving pieces and incorporating the winger.

Our strategy emphasizes playing out from the back, specifically utilizing our wingers. The wingers play a pivotal role in this approach; they must quickly identify the press, make a swift move towards the sidelines, and then advance upfield. This movement not only stretches the opposition's formation but also creates valuable space behind their press, offering an essential outlet for escaping their high press.

Upon successfully connecting with our winger, the next phase involves concerted team effort to progress the ball upfield. Our forwards are tasked with making continuous runs behind the opposition's defense. These runs serve a dual purpose: they can either directly lead to goal-scoring opportunities for the forwards themselves or draw defenders away, thereby opening spaces in the midfield. This movement enables our midfielders to advance into these spaces and join the attack, ensuring that we not only escape the press but also maintain possession in the opposition's territory, setting the stage for our attack.

Slow Build-up vs Playing Slow

A slow build up play is a play where it takes many passes to work the ball up the field in order to attack. Moving the ball between each team mate forcing the opposition to Playing slow, however, is when a player takes too many touches on the ball, slowing down the play and closing our space. Executing a slow build up play requires urgent decision making, quick movement of the ball, and support through good positioning. Support players need to dart and meet the ball in open spaces always providing a minimum of two options to help carry the ball up the field.

Attacking Width

Wide players should get as wide as possible touching the lines to maximize the space our central players have to operate in while attacking.

Play to Your Strengths

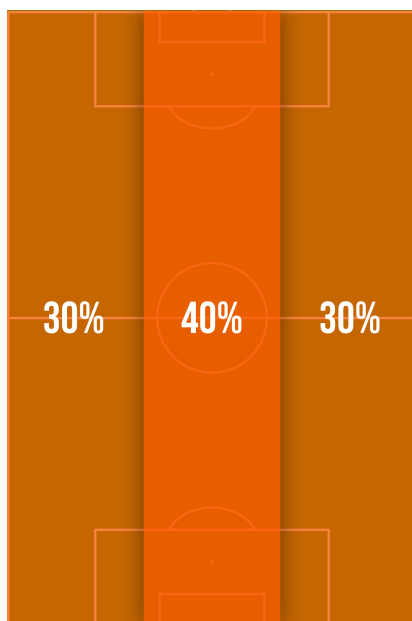
In a match situation, maximize your individual contribution by playing to and honing your strengths. Players should identify and develop their strengths, whether it is speed, agility, passing accuracy, shooting, defending, or the ability to read the game.

Exploit Opposition Weaknesses

As part of our strategy to optimize and maximize our effectiveness on the pitch, it is imperative to recognize basic patterns and tendencies in our opponents. This could be as simple as noticing if an opposing team struggles to defend against crosses or has difficulty maintaining possession under pressure, or if your mark has a strong left or right foot.

Variation and Balance in Attacks

We want to attack through the middle vertical third of the pitch more frequently as we want to dominate the midfield while providing variation to our attacks through the wings.



The field to the left is separated into three vertical thirds. The image depicts our desired areas to attack from and what percentage of the time we should possess the ball in each vertical third of the pitch.

Utilize Speed in the Flanks

In our organizational setup, the wingers are the outlet, as the wings have the most available space. As such, quick and pacy players should utilize their this space to be able to attack at the wing player's top sprint speed.

The tactical importance of playing pacy players on the flanks lies in maximizing the speed at which defenders need to turn and chase the space behind them, stretching the opposition's defensive line, and opening the spaces in central areas for attacking midfielders or strikers. Pacy wingers force defenders to make a difficult choice: either mark the winger tight and expose the middle spaces or drop deeper and keep the defensive line, giving the winger the entire space on the wing to operate in.

Exploit Height at the Far Post

Exploiting height at the far post revolves around utilizing players with superior aerial ability and height to gain an advantage during crosses, particularly from wide areas of the pitch. By staying at the far post, taller players have more time to react to the incoming ball and win the header. This strategy aims to maximize scoring opportunities by positioning taller players where they are most likely to out-jump their opponents and connect with the ball.

In Transition

Ebb and Flow – Compact when Defending, Expansive when Attacking

We defined the concept of Compact when Defending, Expansive when Attacking along with integrating our understanding the natural ebb and flow of the game to form our playing philosophy. Understanding the concepts of ebb and flow is crucial in guiding our tactical approach to optimize and maximize our efficiency and effectiveness on the field.

Compact in Defense

During this phase, our focus is on regrouping, maintaining our shape, and keeping discipline; waiting for the right moment to win possession and transition into attack.

When we find ourselves losing possession of the ball and retreating to our defensive shape, we enter a state of *ebb*. This marks the defensive phase of the game, where we prioritize solidity and compactness to deny the opposition space and opportunity. We consolidate our position towards our own goal, ensuring that we maintain a strong defensive shape and thwart any potential threats.

Expansive in Attack

We transition swiftly and seamlessly from defense to attack, spreading out, occupying maximal space across the pitch, and exploiting the weaknesses in the opposition's formation.

Conversely, when we win the ball back and begin our offensive movement, we enter a state of *flow*. This is the attacking phase of the game, characterized by rhythm, movement, and creativity. In this state of *flow*, our aim is to maintain our attacking momentum and keep the pressure on the opposition, probing for openings and creating scoring opportunities.

Balance in Transitions

Our goal is not to become reliant on counter-attacking, but rather to allow ourselves to build an organized and structured play from the outcome of the *ebb* phase.

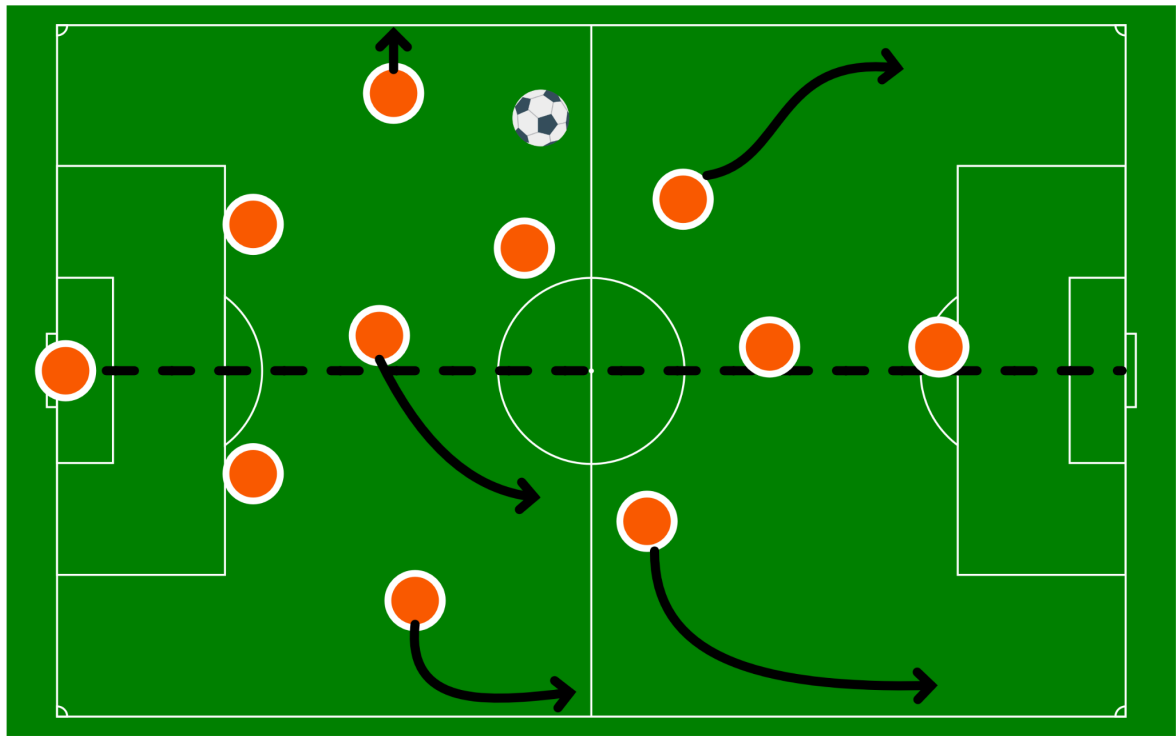
It is important to recognize that the balance between *ebb* and *flow* is constantly shifting throughout the game. Once we shift the scales in our favor and have most of our players up the field, we can fully embrace the *flow state* of the game and express our creativity, vision, and flair in pursuit of our shared goal.

Maximizing Our Effectiveness

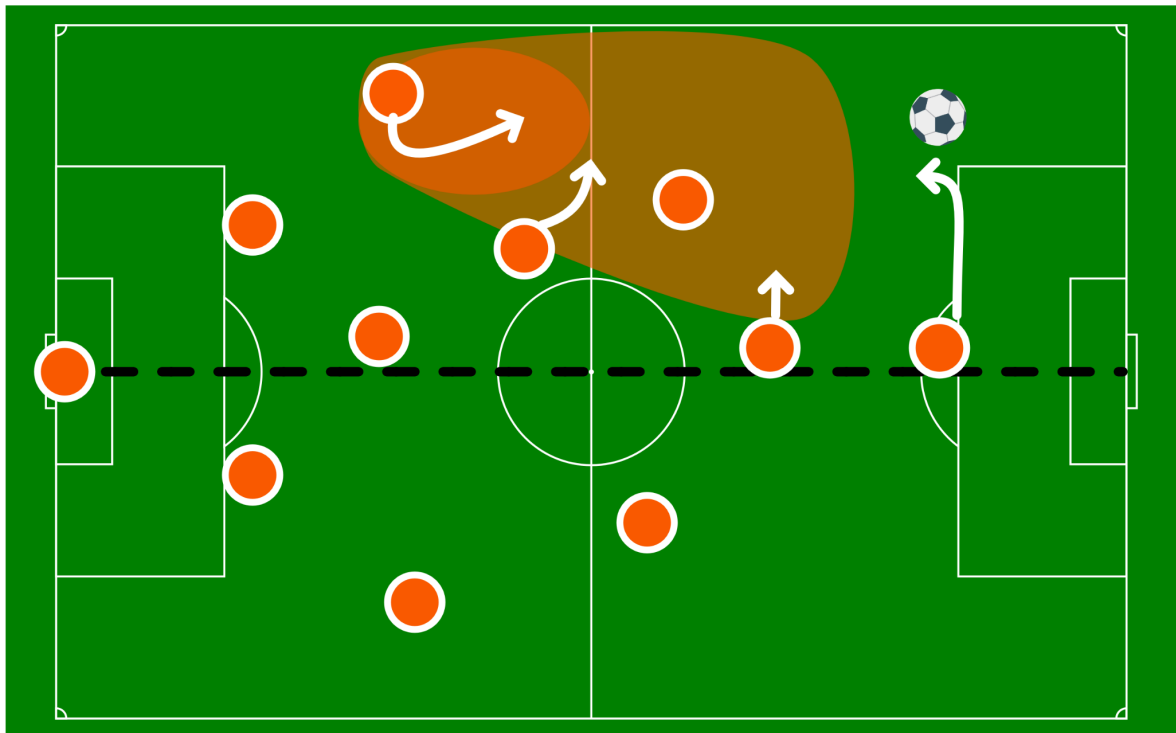
By understanding and embracing the natural *ebb and flow* of the game, we maximize our effectiveness and achieve success on the pitch.

Our objective is to stay in the *flow state* for as long as possible, control the game, move the ball, create chances, and maintain the momentum of our attacks by keeping the opposition on the back foot. When we inevitably lose possession of the ball and are in the *ebb state*, it is vital that we quickly and seamlessly transition in order to minimize the amount of time we spend in the *ebb state*.

Winning Possession of the Ball Example



Losing Possession of the Ball Example



In the image above, the opposition has the ball on our left side and in their half.

- Our **striker** must push as high up the field as possible while remaining on-side before applying pressure toward the nearest end line.
- The **attacking midfielder** does not press until the ball is in his area of play, he is meant to cut off the switch of play through the middle of the field.
- The **winger on the side of the ball (strong side)** is the 1st player to trigger the press; he engages the person on the ball when the rest of the trap is set.
- The **closest center midfielder** provides cover for the pressing winger and picks up any midfielders checking to the ball on his side of the field.
- The **closest wingback (left/right back)** presses the ball only after the cover has been beaten or the ball is in his zone of play. The closest wingback presses with the intention of pushing the opposition play out and away from the middle of the field.

Wingbacks should contain until the center defensive midfielder recovers and comes back behind the ball to help the defense and become the first point of contact.

Positional Responsibilities

A well-defined breakdown of each playing position's attacking and defending duties on the pitch.

Goalkeeper

The GK's main job is to protect the goal by saving shots and dominating the penalty box in the air.

- Prevent goals
- Protect the near post
- Aerial Dominance
- Shot Stopping
- Distribution
- Defending Set-Pieces
- Organization and Communication
- Parry away from the middle of the goal

The goalkeeper is the only position that can see the entire field at all times. As such, the goalkeeper needs to constantly communicate tactical instructions to his or her teammates.

Center-backs

Each center-back is responsible for his or her "half" of the field split at the center of the goal.

Center-backs sit at the heart of the defense. Their main priority is defending the goal. However, center-backs need to adapt to different instructions to deal with different team setups and scenarios. Despite common practices to play bigger players in the center-back role, center-backs can be of any size.

CB Defending

- Control the defensive line
- Clear the ball when in danger
- Challenge aerial balls in the box
- Block shots
- Mark opposition strikers
- Stay on your feet inside the box as to not give away penalties
- No-nonsense-defending when under pressure

CB Attacking

- Control the defensive line
- Support the attack by providing negative passing options
- Recycle the play and switch point of attack
- Occasionally allowed to make a run forward, only if there is proper cover
- Retain possession through a range of passes

Wide Backs

To be successful, wide backs need to be physical, quick, explosive and have the vision to know when to push up to support the attack.

WB Defending

- Mark the opposition winger
- Pinch in to central areas when on weak side
- Drop to mark opposition winger
- Defend the goal
- Clear the ball as necessary

WB Attacking

- Provide width
- Provide support to the winger
- Deliver crosses and provide service into the box
- Make forward and overlapping runs

Central Midfielders

Dictate tempo, distribute, break opposition build-up, and link the defensive, midfield, and attacking thirds; Control the middle of the park.

CM Defending

- Drop behind the ball

- Win challenges in the middle of the pitch
- Duel for aerial and ground balls
- Close down passing lanes
- Channel attackers to one side
- Protect the defenders
- Support defending in defensive and middle thirds of the pitch
- Clear the ball as necessary

CM Attacking

- Support and link the play in all areas of the pitch
- Create scoring opportunities
- Rotate, pivot, and swap positions with other central midfielders
- Retain possession and change the point of attack
- Take occasional shot at goal
- Pass and switch the play away from pressure to continue building our attack
- Patience in going forward

Attacking Midfielders

Exploit spaces, create chances, break their defensive line, deliver final product, and close passing lanes.

AM Defending

- Halve the field and occupy the half-space between the vertical center of the field and the vertical location of the ball to prevent switching sides through the middle of the pitch
- Contain the play to one vertical half of the field
 - It is more important to prevent the opposition to break into our middle than win the ball with a tackle
- Occasionally support our wingers', central midfielders' and strikers' presses

AM Attacking

- Roam in the holes, half-spaces, and channels of the final third
- Support the play in all midfield and attacking third areas
- Create goalscoring opportunities

- Break opposition defensive line
- Attempt shots on goal
- Link midfield and the forward players
- Retain possession through a wide range of passes

Wingers

Stretch the field, exploit wide spaces, provide width, service and final product.

L/R W Defending

- Channel opposition to the touchline
- Mark opposition wing players when necessary
- Pinch when ball is on opposite side
- Drop behind the ball
- When beaten, drop through the middle of the pitch before going wide again

L/R W Attacking

- Create goal scoring opportunities
- Provide width
- Stretch the field
- Pin opposition defenders
- Retain possession through your wide back or central midfielders
- Provide service into the box
- Take occasional attempt at goal

Strikers

Create incisive runs, test the opposition's defensive organization, conserve energy for attacking, take shots, and finish chances.

ST Defending

- Halve the field staying between the center-backs
- Apply occasional pressure towards the direction of the ball
 - It is more important to prevent the opposition to recycle their play through their center backs
- Position his or herself to be an outlet when we win possession of the ball
- Rest, conserve energy, and be patient for our next attacking play
- Stay in line with the last defender or the half line, whichever is deeper

ST Attacking

- Take chances by attempting shots on target
- Score goals
- Stay composed in front of goal
- Keep the opposition defense busy
- Stretch the field
- Play on the shoulder of the last defender
- Make decisive runs
- Pin and engage opposition center backs
- Drop the ball to the attacking midfielder or central midfielders
- Occasionally, send a through ball to the wingers, if it's on
- Be patient when not involved in the play

Set-Pieces

Corners, Free Kicks, Throw-ins, Penalty Kicks, Kick Offs

A set piece is any stoppage in play that allows the team to set up a pre-prepared tactic.³

Since every squad has its own physical and technical characteristics, set piece plays and tactics are to be designed by the squad's coach as needed.

³ Set pieces include free kicks, corner kicks, penalty kicks, throw-ins, and kick-offs.

Physicality and Fitness

Fitness is an essential component of any soccer player's overall performance.

Fitness Standards

Your physical capacity can mean the difference in whether you are benched, cut or scouted and picked to play at this level. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the physical demands of the sport. It is important to remember that fitness combines the following components: strength, cardiovascular endurance, balance, flexibility, explosiveness, and power to name a few.

Warming Up

Priming your body for exercise by warming up is an indispensable component of athletic preparation, whether for training sessions, practices or competitive matches.

A well-designed warm-up regimen not only enhances performance but also significantly reduces the risk of injuries, thus ensuring athletes can maintain their training and competition schedules effectively. Over a third of injuries seen by sports medicine clinics are easily preventable through proper warm up and stretching regimens. Most patients seen by clinics were suffering skeletal muscle injuries, underscoring the preventable nature of many sports-related injuries through proper warm-up routines.

Benefits of a Good Warm-up

- **Injury Prevention:** A structured warm-up routine primes muscles, tendons, and ligaments, reducing the likelihood of strains and tears during physical exertion.
- **Increased Flexibility:** Dynamic stretching during warm-ups improves flexibility, allowing athletes to achieve optimal range of motion in their movements.
- **Enhanced Performance:** By gradually increasing heart rate and blood flow to muscles, warm-ups prepare the body for the demands of intense physical activity, leading to improved performance outcomes.
- **Improved Focus and Confidence:** Engaging in a systematic warm-up ritual not only prepares the body but also mentally primes athletes for the challenges ahead, fostering confidence and focus.
- **Activation of Cardiovascular and Respiratory Systems:** Incremental cardiovascular activity during warm-ups prepares the heart and lungs for

the demands of rigorous exercise, optimizing oxygen uptake and delivery to working muscles.

Structuring a Good Warm-up

Phase 1 – Low-Intensity Aerobic Exercise

The initial phase of the warm-up aims to gradually elevate heart rate and body temperature. This can be achieved through low-impact aerobic activities such as a light jog or brisk walk. Professional teams often start with a gentle jog around the field, covering approximately 1 mile or 4 laps. Alternatively, athletes can perform shuttle runs over shorter distances, totaling 68 meters, for 5 to 10 minutes.

Phase 2 – Dynamic Stretching

Incorporating dynamic stretches in this phase allows for functional movements that promote joint mobility and muscle elasticity. Unlike static stretches, dynamic stretches involve fluid and compound movements that prepare the body for activity without overstretching cold muscles.

Dynamic Stretches to Try

- **Lunges with a torso twist** – Take a step forward with one leg and lower your body until both knees are bent at a 90° angle. Twist your torso from the opposite side of the forward leg to to the other side. Push off the front foot and bring the back foot forward into the next lunge. Repeat while alternating legs.
- **Hamstring stretch** – Walk forward and stop after every step with one leg ahead of the other. Lift your foot while keeping your heel on the ground and point your toes upward
- **Quadricep pull** – Walk forward and after every step lift your knee to your chest
- **High knees** – While jogging, lift your knees up towards your abs. Try to maintain a fast pace while switching legs.
- **Butt kicks** – While jogging, kick your heels up towards your glutes. Maintain a quick pace while alternating legs.
- **Open-the-gate** – Lift your knee in the air. Rotate your leg to open your body until you feel a stretch while still facing forward. Repeat on the opposite leg while taking steps forward.
- **Close-the-gate** – Open your body, and lift your knee in the air. While in the air, move your leg inwards until its forward facing position. Your torso should face forward at all times. Alternate on the opposite leg while taking steps forward.
- **Back kicks** – While standing on one leg, move the opposite leg backwards. Move your hips and torso forward to balance your stretched leg. You should

feel the stretch in the standing leg's hamstring. It is important to not overextend or lock your knee on the standing leg.

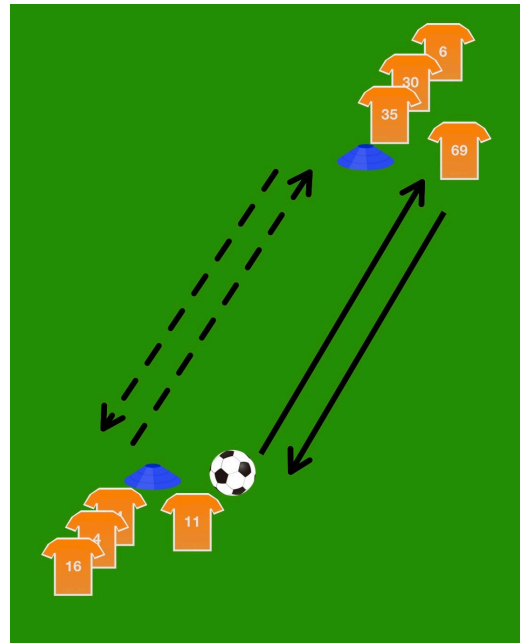
- **Carioca** - Cross your right leg over your left leg, moving it across your body. Next, bring your left leg from behind and step next to your right foot. Switch sides by leading with the left foot. Twist your torso as you take steps. This counts as one repetition. Keep the movements fluid and controlled as you alternate between crossing over and stepping behind.

Phase 3 - Soccer-Specific Movements

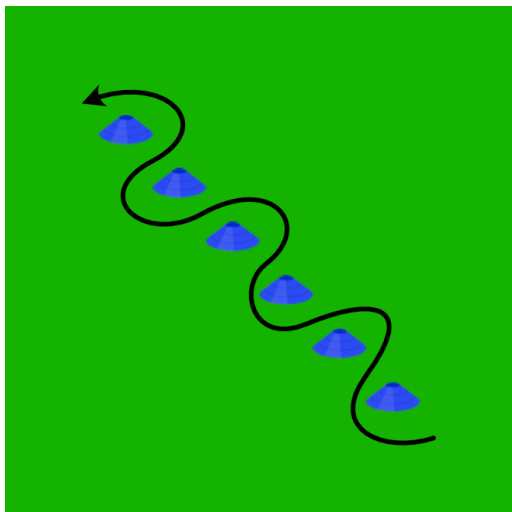
This final phase of the warm-up focuses on replicating movements specific to the sport in question. For soccer players, these drills involve movements that simulate trapping and touching the ball, dribbling, passing, making directional changes and cuts, and must activate all the muscles groups involved in meeting the demands that are characteristic to the game.

Soccer-Specific Warm-up Drills to Try

- **Juggling the ball** (both feet, knees, shoulders, head)
- **Quick feet cone drills without the ball**
- **Cone slalom drills with the ball**
- **Line pass & move**
- **Left/right side volleys**
- **Lace volleys**
- **Headers**



An example of line pass & move drill.



A simple slalom cone drill set up

It is important to note not to shoot to goal or perform intensive or snap motions before going through a proper warm up. Quick changes of pace, force and direction can result in injuries when your muscles are stiff and cold.

Cardio and Endurance

Being match fit is having a combination of aerobic endurance, anaerobic explosiveness, ability to recovery from high intensity running quickly, and change of direction – just to name a few.

Being a good soccer player who plays at a high level requires the endurance to be running approximately 6 miles (10 km) per game in different combinations of jogging, sprinting, jumping, tackling, heading, and hundreds of changes in direction and pace.

The numerous benefits that cardio and aerobic exercise provide are undisputed, and you must put substantial work into your cardio to reap all benefits on and off the pitch. To play at any competitive level, be it amateur, youth, college, or professional, aerobic fitness is the minimum requirement to be effective over ninety minutes of soccer.

Benefits of Cardio

- Regulates weight and body fat percentage
- Optimizes the efficiency of the body's metabolism
- Increases lung capacity and oxygen absorption (VO₂ Max)
- Increases blood flow and improves circulation
- Shortens recovery time from intense sessions
- Improves focus and concentration

What is VO₂ Max?

VO₂ Max stands for the maximal volume of oxygen your body can absorb. Essentially, it is a measurement of how fit a person is by measuring and indicating the efficiency of their aerobic system.

Improving Aerobic Endurance

The best way to improve aerobic endurance and increase your aerobic threshold⁴ is to be at a state of elevated heart rate for an extended period of time.

Simulating One Half of Soccer and Timed Jogging Sessions

In order to simulate the minimum required intensity of a full half of soccer, go on a 45-minute jog. Instead of setting a distance goal, we want time to be our goal. The purpose of this exercise is to improve your cardio base and increase your distance (and pace) in a forty-five minute period.

In order to get match fit, you should be jogging for three to four times a week (depending on your current fitness levels and time needed for recovery) in tandem with team and personal training.

Biking, Swimming, Hiking & Other Low-impact Activities

Swimming, cycling, and hiking are versatile cardio workouts that engage multiple muscle groups. Whether on a stationary bike or biking outdoors, cycling offers a heart-pumping workout that can be adjusted for intensity, making it suitable for endurance or high-intensity interval training (HIIT). Cardio exercises can significantly contribute to overall health by improving heart health, increasing lung capacity, and aiding in weight management.

Fitness Tests

Objective fitness tests provide quantifiable data, allowing coaches and players to track progress accurately over time. These tests help in setting realistic goals and measuring improvements in overall fitness levels.

Beep Test

[Download Beep Test Audio](#)

Also known as the Multi-Stage Fitness Test, the Beep Test is a twenty-meter (20m or 21.9 yds) cardiovascular endurance assessment that measures your VO₂ Max.

Required Equipment

- 2 cones per running lane
- Audio equipment (speakers/headphones) to play the beep test audio

⁴ The aerobic threshold is [the point in which the anaerobic energy system begins to dominate the body's energy production.](#)

How to Run the Beep Test

The runner must run from one cone to the other before the beep, wait for the start beep, and run back to his or her own starting cone. The runner must continue until he or she cannot make it to the cone in time for the beep.

Some programs and rulesets allow 2 or 3 misses or strikes until the runner is disqualified.

Calculate VO_2 From Your Results

$$VO_2 \text{ max} = (\max(\text{speed}) \times 6.55 - 35.8)^5$$

Your maximum speed in km/h can be found in the Beep Test Distances & Pace Table on the next page in the 4th column.

1. Take your maximum speed and multiply it by 6.55
2. Subtract 35.8
3. The result is your VO_2 max in mL/(kg·min)

⁵ According to a paper by Flouris, et al (2005), VO_2 max can be calculated using this formula.

Beep Test Distances & Pace Table

Level	Laps	Cumulative laps	Speed (km/h)	Speed (mph)	Laptime (s)	Level time (s)	Level distance (m)	Cumulative distance (m)	Cumulative time (mm:ss)
1	7	7	8.5	5.3	8.47	59.3	140	140 m (150 yd)	00:59
2	8	15	9.0	5.6	8.00	64.0	160	300 m (330 yd)	02:03
3	8	23	9.5	5.9	7.58	60.6	160	460 m (500 yd)	03:04
4	8	31	10.0	6.2	7.20	57.6	160	620 m (680 yd)	04:02
5	9	40	10.5	6.5	6.86	61.7	180	800 m (870 yd)	05:03
6	9	49	11.0	6.8	6.55	58.9	180	980 m (1,070 yd)	06:02
7	10	59	11.5	7.1	6.26	62.6	200	1,180 m (1,290 yd)	07:05
8	10	69	12.0	7.5	6.00	60.0	200	1,380 m (1,510 yd)	08:05
9	10	79	12.5	7.8	5.76	57.6	200	1,580 m (0.98 mi)	09:02
10	11	90	13.0	8.1	5.54	60.9	220	1,800 m (1.1 mi)	10:03
11	11	101	13.5	8.4	5.33	58.7	220	2,020 m (1.26 mi)	11:02
12	12	113	14.0	8.7	5.14	61.7	240	2,260 m (1.40 mi)	12:04
13	12	125	14.5	9.0	4.97	59.6	240	2,500 m (1.6 mi)	13:03
14	13	138	15.0	9.3	4.80	62.4	260	2,760 m (1.71 mi)	14:06
15	13	151	15.5	9.6	4.65	60.4	260	3,020 m (1.88 mi)	15:06
16	13	164	16.0	9.9	4.50	58.5	260	3,280 m (2.04 mi)	16:05
17	14	178	16.5	10.3	4.36	61.1	280	3,560 m (2.21 mi)	17:06
18	14	192	17.0	10.6	4.24	59.3	280	3,840 m (2.39 mi)	18:05
19	15	207	17.5	10.9	4.11	61.7	300	4,140 m (2.57 mi)	19:07
20	15	222	18.0	11.2	4.00	60.0	300	4,440 m (2.76 mi)	20:07
21	15	237	18.5	11.5	3.89	58.4	300	4,740 m (2.95 mi)	21:05

Cooper Test

The Cooper Test, also known as the Cooper 12-minute run, is a fitness test that measures a person's aerobic endurance capacity. Dr. Kenneth H. Cooper, an exercise physiologist for the United States Air Force, introduced the test in the 1960s.

The Cooper test was widely utilized to assess the fitness levels of football referees at both amateur and professional tiers, including those affiliated with the FA (English Football Association).

Another prominent example where the Cooper Test has been employed in soccer is the Brazilian national soccer team. The Brazilian Soccer Confederation (*Confederação Brasileira de Futebol*) is known to utilize a variety of standardized fitness tests, including the Cooper Test, to evaluate the fitness and performance of its players. The national teams of other countries have also used it in the past as part of their fitness evaluations.

Test Procedure

The Cooper Test is relatively straightforward to perform:

1. After a proper warm-up, a participant is required to run or walk as far as possible within 12 minutes.
2. The distance covered in those 12 minutes is then used to calculate the participant's aerobic fitness level (VO_2 Max).

The Cooper Test estimates a person's VO_2 max, representing the maximum volume of oxygen a person can use during intense exercise. While it does not measure VO_2 max directly (which would typically require lab equipment), the Cooper Test offers a close approximation.

Calculating Aerobic Fitness

The Cooper Test is a straightforward method to estimate VO_2 max based on the distance covered in 12 minutes. The distance covered can be converted into an estimated VO_2 max using the following formula:

$$VO_2Max = 35.75 \times d - 11.29$$

Where d is the distance achieved in miles.

Nutrition and Recovery

After intense soccer sessions, your body needs to replenish the energy it has expended and repair muscle tissues.

Nutrition

Nutrition is vital to any and all soccer players' performance. For most physically active players, a generally well-balanced diet is satisfactory. However, those who wish to elevate their game to the next level are encouraged to seek an optimal nutrition plan. With an optimal nutrition plan, players should eat the right food following a proper schedule to achieve the best performance.

Here are the basic macronutrients that you should focus on:

Carbohydrates: Replenish your glycogen stores by consuming complex carbohydrates like whole grains, pasta, and fruits. These foods provide the energy you need for recovery.

Protein: Protein is essential for muscle repair and growth. Lean sources of protein like fish, chicken, beans, and tofu should be included in your post-session meals.

Healthy Fats: Incorporate sources of healthy fats like nuts, avocados, and olive oil into your diet to aid in reducing inflammation.

Vitamins and Minerals: Make sure you get a variety of vitamins and minerals from vegetables, fruits, and leafy greens to support your overall health and recovery.

Healthy Food Guidelines

Grocery items you should add to your cart.

Proteins

- Chicken breasts or thighs
- Lean ground turkey
- Salmon or other fatty fish
- Eggs
- Greek yogurt (low-fat or non-fat)

Carbohydrates

- Brown rice
- Quinoa
- Whole wheat pasta or rice noodles
- Whole grain bread or wraps

Greens, Fruits, and Vegetables

- Bananas, berries, oranges
- Spinach or kale
- Broccoli, brussels sprouts
- Asparagus
- Artichokes
- Bell peppers (variety of colors)
- Carrots
- Avocados

Healthy Fats

- Nuts (almonds, walnuts, cashews)
- Seeds (chia seeds, flaxseeds, pumpkin seeds)
- Nut butter (peanut butter, almond butter)
- Olive oil or avocado oil
- Coconut milk (unsweetened)

Dairy and Meat Alternatives

- Plant-based dairy (soy, oat or almond milk)
- Tofu
- Legumes (beans, peas, lentils)

Snacks and Extras

- Plain rice cakes
- Popcorn (plain)
- Trail mix (nuts, seeds, dried fruits)
- Whole grain crackers
- Low-sugar granola
- Nori (seaweed)

Hydration and Beverages

- Water
- Electrolyte drinks or powders
- Coconut water
- Tea (green or herbal tea)
- Coffee (black, or with low-fat or non-dairy milk or creamer)

Herbs, Spices & Sauces

- Salt and Pepper
- All herbs/spices
- Cooking spray (to reduce oil use)
- Tomato sauce (low-sodium)

Hydration and Water Intake

To recover effectively, drink enough water before, during, and after your soccer or training session.

During an intense soccer session, you lose a significant amount of fluids through sweat. These fluids need to be replenished constantly as dehydration can lead to muscle cramps, decreased performance, and an increased risk of injury.

Drinking the Proper Amount of Water

The proper water intake amount depends on your body size and weight.

You should be drinking
½ - 1 fluid oz of water per lbs
- OR -
40-60 mL per Kg
of your body weight per day.

The benefits of drinking water and staying hydrated are numerous and felt immediately. Negative affects to crucial physical metrics such as endurance, strength, power, speed, agility, and reaction time can be measured in athletes with just two-percent (2%) dehydration.

Optimal Oxygen Delivery and Circulation

Not drinking enough water can lead to dehydration which restricts the airways to conserve water. When dehydrated, the maximum oxygen intake decreases, and it will be harder and harder to perform. Additionally, blood consists of more than ninety-percent (90%) water. Keeping hydrated will allow for better blood flow and oxygen delivery throughout all bodily systems and an optimal VO_2 Max.

Regulates Vitals

Staying hydrated helps regulate body temperature by giving the body the liquids it needs to sweat. Athletes may lose ten-percent (10%) or more water of body weight during a session. Additionally, drinking lots of water before, during, and after exercising can help in lowering blood pressure and increasing metabolism.

Improved Muscle Function

Drinking enough water will also ensure that the muscles are performing at their best. Muscles are made up of about eighty-percent (80%) water. Staying properly hydrated also helps flush out lactic acids that accumulate in the muscles from high-intensity workouts and cause sore muscles.

Injury Prevention

Water is essential in lubricating joints, tissues, and muscles as they work hard during exercise to keep you moving. Keeping yourself well-hydrated keeps your body in optimal shape and minimizes strains and cramps.

Recovery

On the field, we often push ourselves beyond our limits. The key to recovery is to remember that it is not just about how quickly you get back into action but also about how long it takes for your body to recover from having a long and healthy career.

Cooling Down

After an intense soccer session, engaging in a proper cool-down routine is essential.

For a proper cool down, it is important to gradually bring your heart rate down to your resting rate, while preparing your body for recovery.

1. Very light jogging for a few minutes
2. Walking for another couple of minutes
3. Dynamic stretches
4. Static stretches

Stretching can help improve flexibility, reduce muscle stiffness, and prevent injury. Focus on dynamic stretches first, followed by static stretches targeting major muscle groups.

Hold each stretch for fifteen to twenty seconds (15-20 seconds), and repeat three to four (3-4) sets.

Foam Rolling

Foam rolling is a myofascial release exercise that helps alleviate muscle soreness and improve flexibility. A foam roller can target specific muscle groups, rolling slowly back and forth over tight or sore areas to help release knots and improve blood circulation.

Rest (RICE)

Take the time you need to recover.

Set aside time for resting when your body is tired, sore, or needs to recover. The intensity of your session will determine how long you need to rest, and how often you exercise will also affect your recovery time. It is essential to listen to your body so you don't overexert or injure yourself.

Ice (RICE)

Apply ice to sore muscles within 48 hours of exercising to reduce pain and inflammation.

Ice can be applied in 15-20 minute increments to reduce swelling and inflammation. You can use a bag of ice, a cold pack, or a frozen water bottle (wrapped in a towel). Place it on the sore area.

Use ice within 48 hours after a strenuous workout to reduce inflammation. It is important to note that after 48 hours, icing becomes detrimental to the recovery process as it constricts blood flow to the injured area.

Compression (RICE)

Wrap muscles with an elastic wrap to support and help improve muscle blood flow.

There are many benefits to using a compression wrap after intense soccer sessions. Compression wraps help support and stabilize muscles and reduce pain, swelling, and fatigue. They also help improve blood flow to the muscles, which can help relieve pain and speed up recovery time.

For best results when using a compression wrap:

- Apply it immediately after an intense soccer session or bedtime.
- Make sure to apply it gently so that you don't cause pain in your injured area while wrapping it around your body part (such as calf injury).
- **If you notice any discomfort while wearing the wrap, remove it immediately!**

Elevation (RICE)

Prop up your leg(s) on pillows during rest time to help lessen swelling and ease muscle soreness.

Elevate your leg(s). During rest time, prop your legs on pillows to help lessen swelling and ease muscle soreness.

Compression bandages, stockings, and sleeves during recovery can also reduce swelling and are available at most pharmacies and online retailers.

Recovery Walks/Runs

After a tough soccer session, walking or running at a slow pace for 15 minutes is essential.

Recovery walks or runs will help your body recover and avoid injuries. street footie coaching staff recommend you keep the intensity low and focus on getting your heart rate back down gradually.

Recovery walks and runs can also be done when sore to encourage blood flow to the muscles and speed up recovery.

Ice Baths

Ice baths are a great way to reduce inflammation and swelling, especially if you have played a high-intensity game. Depending on how cold your ice bath is, these can also help with recovery by increasing blood flow.

- The ideal ice bath temperature is 10-15° C (50-59° F).

- You should only stay in the bath for up to 20 minutes.
- After that time, remove yourself from the ice water and allow your body to warm up naturally.
- Never leave anyone alone in an ice bath – especially children!
- When removing yourself from the tub, wrap yourself in towels and dry off completely before putting clothes back on to prevent hypothermia.
- If possible, alternate between hot baths followed by cold ones for optimal results.

Alternating Hot and Cold

Switching between hot and cold baths can help relieve muscle tension.

The heat loosens tension and relaxes your muscles, while the cold helps reduce inflammation.

- Use a hot pack for 20 minutes, then a cold/ice pack for an additional 20 minutes. You can use an electric heating pad or soak warm water heated up in a kettle or pot of boiling water.
- If you have access to a hot tub, bathe in it for 30 minutes, then take a plunge into cold water—or vice versa!

Ensure you don't do this too much: limit yourself to one weekly session.

Mentality and Sports Psychology

Improve your mental endurance, self-awareness, sleep patterns, recovery time, stress management, concentration, and focus.

Habitual meditation, visualization of the upcoming game, a ritual that feels right for you, and pregame music will improve your performance and focus in any game or training session. These techniques have been scientifically proven to improve endurance, self-awareness, sleep patterns, recovery, stress management, concentration, and focus.

Practice Mindful Meditation

An excellent technique to shift the focus inward and onto soccer is meditation.

Meditation has been scientifically proven to improve endurance, sense of self-awareness of the body, improved sleeping patterns, recovery, and stress management. All of these benefits are key to performing at your best, but it is important to note that meditation must be done habitually in order to see any long-term benefits.

Visualize Your Role

After any and all distractions are out of the way, it is time to shift your focus to the upcoming match or practice through visualization.

Visualization, also known as mental imagery or mental rehearsal, involves creating vivid mental images of specific actions, scenarios, or outcomes related to his or her performance on the soccer field.

When practicing mental imagery techniques, try to imagine and visualize how:

- The ball feels in your feet
- To trap a ball from the air
- To take a good first touch into space
- Pass and shoot
- You are supposed to be positioned in your role
- The space between you and your teammates looks like

And anything you've been working on, including any tactical instructions the coach gave you in preparation for the match.

If you are a goalkeeper, you should imagine your positioning in the goal, the weight and texture of the ball in your hand, and how it feels to stretch your body to dive and make a great save.

Develop a Ritual

Some soccer players believe rituals like putting on their left sock before their right or touching the grass when stepping on the field will give them that extra boost on the field.

Whether or not you are superstitious, one thing is certain: humans are habitual creatures. A ritual before a game can be used as a psychological grounding technique to shift the focus to the now and may help manage any anxious feelings or nerves before a game.

Grounding techniques offer significant benefits for soccer players: enhancing focus, reducing pre-game anxiety, and improving performance under pressure.

Grounding techniques combined with mindfulness meditation and focused breathing, help players manage emotions and stay composed during stressful moments. By increasing body and physical awareness, grounding techniques can aid in the early detection of fatigue and injury, contributing to a player's better overall physical management and recovery. Additionally, these exercises build mental resilience, which is essential for overcoming setbacks and maintaining a positive outlook. Integrating these techniques into your training and pre-game routines can give you a competitive edge and sharpen your focus for the demands of the upcoming game or session.

Listen to Music

Earbuds are sometimes just as important as the right soccer boots or goalie gloves – and they're not just for show.

Music has been proven to help prepare athletes and to get them pumped up for the upcoming competition. Additionally, listening to music activates parts of the brain associated with increased concentration and memory retention.

Maximizing Your Development

Success in soccer is never solely a product of natural talent but must be earned through tenacity.

How to Be Trainable

One of the most underrated yet crucial qualities for any young soccer player to develop is “trainability.”

Listen Actively

Active listening isn't just about hearing what your coach or teammates say; it is about understanding and internalizing the message. Show your coach that you are engaged and eager to learn; Maintain eye contact, nod to acknowledge points you understand, and ask questions for clarification.

Be Open-Minded

Adaptability makes you a more versatile and valuable player for any squad.

Soccer is constantly evolving, and tactics that worked yesterday may not be effective tomorrow. Stay open to trying new techniques, embracing different formations, or even playing in a position you're not accustomed to.

Practice Consistently

The cliché “practice makes perfect,” is famous with good reason.

Consistency in practice is vital to mastering skills. Dedicate specific times during the week for targeted practice sessions, focusing on your strengths and areas for improvement. The more you practice, the more naturally your skills will come to you during games.

Take Constructive Criticism Well

Criticism can be hard to hear, but it is often the fastest route to improvement.

Listen and try to understand the point being made. Reflect on it and work on incorporating that feedback into your game. Learning to receive and apply constructive criticism is a valuable life skill beyond soccer.

Be Self-Motivated

Motivation should not always come from external sources like teammates, coaches, or parents.

Show initiative by identifying areas for improvement and working on them independently. Your dedication to your craft, even when no one is watching, sets a good example and can motivate your teammates as well.

Be Punctual

Punctuality shows that you value and respect the team's time and sets a positive example for your teammates. Being consistently late can disrupt training sessions and may result in lost opportunities for you and your team.

Maintain a Positive Attitude

A positive mindset can influence not just your performance but also the overall team morale. Encourage your teammates, celebrate their successes, and offer constructive solutions when facing challenges. This creates a supportive team environment where everyone is more likely to excel.

Set Achievable Goals

Goal-setting is a powerful tool that adds direction and structure to your personal development.

Whether you want to score more goals, improve your defensive skills, or master a new technique, setting achievable goals gives you something concrete to work

toward. Share these with your coach; they can offer valuable insights and tailor training sessions to help you meet your objectives.

Stay Humble

No matter how skilled you become, there will always be something new to learn.

A humble attitude keeps you open to those learning opportunities and ensures you don't become complacent. This hunger for knowledge and improvement is a hallmark of a trainable player.

Foster Open Communication Channels

If you're struggling with a particular skill or tactical instruction, do not keep it to yourself. Speak up.

Good, open, and transparent communication with your coach or teammates can give you tips, advice, or additional training exercises to overcome those obstacles.

Balancing Student-Athlete Life

With effective time management techniques, organization, and self-care, you can succeed in both soccer and academics.

Balancing student-athlete life as a soccer player can be challenging, but is manageable and leveraged to be successful in the classroom and on the pitch.

Here are some tips to help you find the right balance between all of your obligations:

- **Create a Schedule:** Plan your days and weeks. Include class times, practice sessions, study sessions, meal times, and personal downtime. A structured schedule helps you allocate time effectively to all aspects of your life.

- **Prioritize:** Determine your priorities, whether academics, soccer, or personal well-being. Prioritization will guide your decision-making when you have conflicting commitments.
- **Use a Digital Calendar:** Keep track of assignments, exams, practice schedules, and games using a planner or digital calendar. Set reminders for important dates to avoid last-minute stress.
- **Time Blocking:** Allocate specific time blocks for studying, training, and leisure activities. This prevents overlap and ensures you allocate sufficient time to each area.
- **Communicate:** Keep open communication with your coaches, teachers, professors, mentors, and teammates. If you have an important exam or assignment, let your coach know as soon as possible so they can adjust your training schedule if needed.
- **Maximize Study Efficiency:** Make the most of your study time by minimizing distractions. Find a quiet and focused place to study, turn off notifications, and use the Pomodoro Technique⁶ (25 minutes of hard, concentrated work followed by a 5-minute break) to stay productive.
- **Utilize Dead Time:** Use small pockets of time between classes or practices for quick review sessions or reading. These moments can add up and help you stay on top of your studies.
- **Stay Organized:** Keep your study materials, soccer gear, and personal items organized. Staying organized reduces stress and saves time searching for things.
- **Set Goals:** Set immediate, short-term, and long-term goals for both academics and soccer. Having clear goals helps you stay motivated and focused on your goals.
- **Practice Self-Care:** Prioritize your physical and mental well-being. Sleep well, eat balanced meals, stay hydrated, and engage in relaxation activities like meditation, yoga, or reading.
- **Delegate When Possible:** If you have roommates or teammates, consider sharing household chores or study materials to lighten the load.
- **Know When to Say No:** While being involved is essential, be selective about additional commitments that might strain your schedule.
- **Seek Help:** If you find yourself struggling, don't hesitate to reach out for support. Your professors, academic advisors, coaches, and teammates can provide guidance and understanding.
- **Maintain Flexibility:** Despite careful planning, unexpected events can occur. Being adaptable and flexible will help you handle changes more effectively.

⁶ For more information on the Pomodoro technique: [Wikipedia](#)

- **Celebrate Achievements:** Acknowledge your successes, whether related to academics, soccer, or personal growth. Rewarding yourself boosts motivation and positivity.

Remember, finding the right balance between your priorities might take some time and adjustments.

Be patient and refine your approach as needed to ensure a successful experience as a student and an athlete.

Captainship and the Armband

Lead, Inspire, Represent, and Unite

A captain is a title awarded to a player whom the whole team trusts to lead on and off the field.

The Role of the Captain

The captain wears an armband to signify his or her role and is the only player who is permitted to talk to the referee outside of those directly involved in incidents on the pitch.

Leadership and Communication

The captain is the team's natural leader, setting an example through their dedication, work ethic, and sportsmanship.

The captain motivates their teammates and provides guidance during challenging moments. Captains are also responsible for relaying the coach's instructions, ensuring everyone is on the same page, and resolving conflicts on the field. Captains police their team's conduct: ensuring fair play and upholding the values of sportsmanship and respect.

Inspiration and Motivation

Captains inspire their team with their performance and attitude. She or he lead by example, pushing themselves and their teammates to give their best effort. When the going gets tough, the captain is there to motivate the team, boost morale, and keep spirits high. They provide encouragement, especially in challenging situations. Additionally, the captain promotes unity and team cohesion – fostering a sense of togetherness that can make a difference in tight matches.

Referee Interaction

The captain is often the designated player to communicate with the referee, discuss concerns or seek clarification on decisions, choose heads or tails for the coin toss, and select sides.

Positively Represent the Team

On and off the field, the captain represents the team to the media, fans, and opponents. They often participate in coin tosses and post-match ceremonies.

Vice-Captain

The vice captain's role is to help the captain fulfill all of their roles, and become the captain should the captain be off the field or otherwise unavailable. At street footie, we appoint a captain and vice-captain per squad.

Handing Off the Armband

The need to change the captain may arise due to a tactical substitution, a sending off, an injury, or for other strategic motivations.

The coach decides on the substitution and selects another player to take the captain's armband. There may already be a vice-captain appointed who naturally assumes the role. If not, the coach may indicate the newly chosen captain during the substitution.

Before exiting the bounds of the field, the outgoing captain must physically hand the armband to the incoming captain and help them put on the armband. This act is both practical and symbolic, marking the transfer of leadership duties.

Bibliography

Insight of libraries.

Resources

Everything else you need to know.

Health and Fitness Disclaimer

Before starting any exercise or nutrition regimen, consult a qualified healthcare professional or doctor, especially if you have any pre-existing medical conditions, injuries, or concerns about your health.

Report Abuse

Our coaches and technical staff are certified by United States Soccer Federation, the official governing body of soccer in the United States.

street footie Football Club strictly condemns any form of abuse and only employs SafeSport-trained staff.

To report any incidents of abuse, please call **833-5US-SAFE (587-7233)**.

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