

# A Travel Players Guide In Their Search for Growth & Success



# Contents

<b>Page</b>	<b>Topic</b>
1.	Foreword
2.	Glossary Of Terms
3.	Developing Your Game – Setting Targets
4.	My Personal Goals For The Season
5.	Technical Development - Moves & Touch
6.	More Great Moves
7.	Developing Your Shot
8.	Ball Work Record Table
9.	Tactical Development – Understanding the Game
10.	Physical Development – Aerobic Fitness
11.	Aerobic Training Program
12.	Anaerobic Fitness & Exercises
13.	Plyometrics – Developing Power
14.	Anaerobic Training program
15.	Flexibility & Stretching Exercises
16.	More Stretching Exercises
17.	Testing Your Flexibility
18.	Psychological Training
19.	Using Imagery
20.	Imagery Exercises
21.	Pre-game Ritual
22.	Nutrition & Eating
23.	Parental Units – You Gotta Love ‘Em!

## **Foreword & Introduction**

Good coaches take great pride in creating the very best practice environments for players to flourish within. Coaches that make every effort to develop both a love for the game and a genuine desire for players to drive themselves to be the best they can be. We are cognizant of the fact that establishing wonderfully competitive training environments is just a part of the jigsaw.

Any player who wishes to reach their potential must establish a work ethic of their own. As I frequently explain to players, however good they become, whatever level they eventually play at will be determined more by their personal investment in the game than in the hours they spend with their trainer. This booklet is dedicated to the past, present, and future champions, whatever level they play at, who have dedicated vast amounts of time and personal energy to being the best they can be. Whether they have measured their time investment in the sweat they have shed, the weights they have lifted, the three miles runs completed in the snows of Winter or the endless hours spent becoming the master of the ball one thing is constant throughout; the admiration and respect these champions earn.

This “player handbook” is designed to help youth players develop and establish their own training regimes and hopefully light the flame of ambition within that will lead to the start of a long, hard and ultimately enormously rewarding journey. If the game and its trials bring as many smiles, character tests, friends and positive events into your life as it has to mine you will have been truly blessed.

Tim Bradbury

**Tim Bradbury**

# Glossary of Terms Used

Soccer has a language of it's own. Whether lifted from the playing fields of England, " quick son play it square and I will Buddy Holly it into the onion bag" (interpretation is - pass the ball side wards and I will volley it into the goal). The following explanation of both scientific and colloquial terms should help in understanding the information that follows.

- Aerobic Fitness** - That component of fitness that reflects a person's stamina.
- Anaerobic Fitness** - That component of fitness that affects an athlete's ability to perform short explosive sprints.
- Technical Work** - Exercises which examine the basic techniques (*dribbling, passing, heading, first touch etc*)
- First Touch** - Phrase used to describe the quality of a players controlling touch (*first touch as they receive a ball*)
- Moves** - Individual dribbling tricks used to beat defenders.
- Foundation Moves** - Moves involving as many surfaces of both feet as possible which can be done with quick feet in a small space that help develop a players mastery of the ball.
- Around The World** - Phrase used to describe a sequence of juggling that is specified as strong foot, weak foot, strong thigh, weak thigh and head (*should be performed without the ball hitting the ground*)
- Tactical Work** - Exercises that place emphasis upon developing a players understanding of the strategies and concepts of the game.
- Plyometrics** - Exercises designed to enhance muscle strength and speed.

## Developing Your Game

If you are going to get the most out of the time and effort you are going to invest, it is essential that you follow a well thought out training program. This booklet will provide exactly that.

All four pillars of the game will be addressed and training suggestions made. So that you can track your efforts and the results you obtain, record sheets are included for you to use.

Whatever the discipline you are looking to improve, it will help if you set difficult yet attainable goals for yourself. All goals should be measurable. To use an example from the aerobic fitness arena, if you can run three miles prior to any training in 28 minutes, a difficult yet attainable goal for you to achieve by the end of your training may be to do the three miles in 23 minutes. The vital thing in setting “goals” for yourself is to make them both realistic and difficult. Try to set yourself goals for all the pillars of the game, the technical, the tactical, the physical and the psychological. The more you think about this exercise and realize how difficult it is to set goals in some of these areas the more your understanding of the game will grow. Remember very few players get to become truly great at any sport with out having a true understanding of that sport.

Please use the page opposite and the titles provided to help you set your personal goals for the upcoming season. Write them in ink as soon as you have finished figuring them all out. Look back at the end of the season and examine how you did.

## **Personal Goals For The season**

**Technical**

**Physical**

**Aerobic**

**Anaerobic**

**Flexibility**

**Strength**

**Tactical**

**Psychological**



## Technical Development

Whatever level you play at, whatever your current level of skill, you will find it easier to play the game and master new skills if you are the master of the ball. Being the master of the ball translates to mean the player who can make the ball do what they want, curl it around the wall, control it first time with your laces from a goalkeepers punt, perform two moves at game speed to avoid two heavy tackles. Spending endless hours with a ball at your feet develops this degree of skill and artistry.

The following exercises and activities will all help you in your ambition to become the master of the ball. Try and make all this work a labor of love, it is fine to have your favorite music playing in the background and there is something wonderful about being the only kid in the neighborhood with enough ambition to be out passing and striking against a wall as the snow flakes fall.

## Juggling

Work on all parts of the body, right laces, left laces, right thigh, left thigh, head. Work on how many times you can perform combinations of certain sequences, two good ones to try are left and right laces only and right laces, left laces, right thigh, left thigh (we will call this Around the world).

When you start breaking 500+ for each of the above, try juggling against a wall with no bounce or juggling back and forth with a friend. With a friend try passing off the ground using a maximum of four touches and a minimum of two, see how many passes you can make before the ball hits the ground.

# Moves

All the top players have their own individual moves that they use to beat opponents. From a drag back through a Stepover to a Maradona, all good moves typically involve a change of pace and direction and quick feet. In practicing the following moves it is essential that you perform them at a speed that is challenging. Work and practice at a speed that would beat a defender in a game. If you do them, too slowly your time and efforts will be wasted.

Foundation moves, moves that involve as many surfaces of both feet as possible and can be carried out with quick feet in a small space are a great way to improve your ball mastery. Try and practice the two foundation moves described below on a daily basis. After you have mastered these two moves challenge yourself to see how many sequences you can perform in a set period of time, for example 20 second bursts

## **Foundation move 1- Inside-Outside**

- *Place the non-kicking foot behind the ball with the toe pointing towards the middle of the ball.*
- *Using the inside of the strongest foot pass the ball across the front of the body.*
- *Move your body so that you can play the ball in the same direction as it is traveling with the outside of the weak foot.*
- *Quickly move your body so that the third touch which reverses the direction the ball is rolling in is played with the inside of the weakest foot.*
- *Move your body so that you can play the ball in the same direction as it is now traveling with the outside of the strong foot.*
- *Quickly move your body so that the sequence may begin again.*

## **Foundation move 2 - U-Shape**

- *Place the ball just in front of the toes of your strongest foot.*
- *Lift your strong foot and using the sole of this foot drag the ball back behind the standing leg.*
- *As the ball clears the heel of the standing leg use the inside of the strong foot to play the ball across and behind the standing leg.*
- *Before the ball stops rolling transfer your body weight so that the ball can be played with the laces of the weak foot in a forwards direction.*
- *Extend the weak leg and drag the ball with the soul of the weak foot back behind the standing leg thus beginning the original sequence.*

## **Move 1: The Cryuff Turn**

- *Place the non-kicking foot at the side of the ball, a comfortable distance away from the ball.*
- *Bring the kicking foot around to the front of the ball, thus creating an angle of 90 with the non-kicking foot.*
- *Using the inside of the kicking foot push the ball back in the opposite direction.*
- *It is important that the player then rotates around the non-kicking foot.*



## **Move 2: The Drag Back**

- *Place the non – kicking foot at the side of the ball, a comfortable distance away from the ball.*
- *The non – kicking leg should be slightly bent.*
- *The body should be slightly bent forward, over the ball.*
- *The ball should be rolled backwards, with the player opening his body keeping the ball in view at all times.*
- *The ball should be passed away using the kicking foot.*

## **Move 3: The Step Over**

- *Feet are placed at one side of the ball, the player always starts with happy feet, and the feet should always be moving.*
- *The dominant foot should be placed nearest the ball, and should be taken over the ball*
- *The body weight should be taken over to the same side as the dominant foot, thus throwing the defender in the opposite direction.*
- *The non-kicking foot at this point should be moved to the inside of the ball and using the outside of the foot should flick or push the ball in the opposite direction.*
- *It is important that the attacking player moves his body weight from side to side. As this movement sends the defending player off balance, enabling the attacking player to exploit the weak side of the defender.*



#### **Move 4: Inside cut**

- *Place the non – kicking foot directly by the side of the ball.*
- *The non – kicking foot should be slightly bent.*
- *The player should pivot in the non – kicking foot making contact with the ball using the inside of the foot, taking the ball in the opposite direction.*
- *The player should lower their center of gravity for balance.*
- *Upon completing the move, the player should accelerate away into space.*

#### **Move 5: Outside Cut**

- *Place the non – kicking foot a comfortable distance away from the ball and level with the ball.*
- *Using the outside of the foot flick the ball in the opposite direction.*
- *The player should then turn and spin in the opposite direction. The turn takes the player through 180 degrees.*

#### **Move 6: Reverse Cryuff**

- *The player starts the move from directly behind the ball; the player takes the non – kicking foot across his body and places it slightly in front of the ball.*
- *The ball is going to be played with the laces of the right foot, on the side of the ball furthest away from the player's original position.*
- *The ball is then pushed / flicked away in the opposite direction, the player has turned 180 degrees.*



### **Move 7: Cruyff's Big Brother**

- *As the ball is in front of the player, he hops next to the ball placing the non – kicking foot at the side of the ball and the sole of the kicking foot on top of the ball.*
- *The ball is then pulled back to behind the player and passed behind the non – kicking foot using the inside of the kicking foot, at an angle of 90 degrees to the original movement.*

### **Move 8: Romario (Stop and Push)**

- *The player dribbling/driving with the ball in a forward direction.*
- *The player stops the ball using the sole of the foot.*
- *Within the same movement as the player's foot moves off the ball, and using the laces, the player should move the ball in a forward direction.*
- *The move becomes a Stop and Push.*

### **Move 9: Sukar**

- *The player makes contact with the ball using the inside of the sole of the foot, rolling the ball from inside to outside.*
- *The player's upper body should also sway from inside to outside.*
- *On completing the roll of the foot, the player continues the forward movement of the ball using the same foot that started that move.*

### **Move 10: Maradona**

- *Place the non – kicking foot at the side of the ball.*
- *With the kicking foot place lightly on top of the ball.*
- *Rotated hips to a sideways position and drag the ball back and away from pressure.*
- *As the player drags the ball back, he uses his body to shield the ball from the on coming defender.*

## **Playing Against a Wall**

Once you have found a concrete wall with no windows close to where you intend to practice (I spent too much time as a kid trying to earn money to replace smashed windows due to a faulty ball and never a bad strike), the following are all great activities.

## **Push pass**

From about six feet away from the wall practice playing one touch passes with the inside of the strong foot and then the inside of the weak. Track how many passes you make in a row. You can do this exercise with one foot or both feet.

Variations:

1. Try constantly moving in and out for the wall so that you have to put different weight into your passes.
2. Try doing it with the outside of your foot.

## **Instep strike for touch development**

From about six feet away from the wall practice playing one touch passes with the instep of the strong foot and then the instep of the weak. Track how many passes you make in a row. You can do this exercise with one foot or both feet.

## **Instep strike for power and accuracy.**

Using chalk, draw four boxes on the wall. Each box should be just big enough to fit a size five ball in and should be drawn as though they are in the top and bottom corners of a full size goal. Take turns to strike for each box. Try to allow yourself only three preparation touches as the ball comes off the wall before you take your next shot.

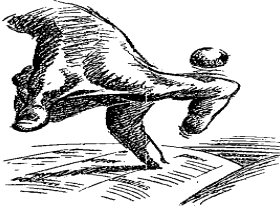
## **Off the ground wall work.**



Using different body parts such as head only, inside of your foot or combinations of body parts like thigh and instep, record how many times you can play against a wall without letting the ball bounce.



## Recording your Work



Use the table included on the next page to record how much ball work you complete in one week. Copy the sheet and keep one for each week of your training period.

## Ball Work Record Table

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Technique/Skill					
<b>Juggling work</b>					
Right laces					
Left laces					
Thighs					
Head					
Around the World					
<b>Wall work</b>					
<b>On the ground</b>					
Right foot					
Left foot					
Instep strike					
<b>Off the ground</b>					
Right foot					
Left foot					
Head					
<b>Sequence Work</b>					
Rt foot, Rt thigh					
Lt foot, Lt thigh					
Rt foot, Lt foot					

- *NB – if possible record how many successful technical attempts you make in a row. Alternatively record how long you spent working on the area given*

## Tactical Development

Obviously, the best way to develop your understanding of the tactics of the game is to be involved as many high level tactical based training sessions as you can. Your NOGA trainer will provide you with good tactical training sessions throughout the season. The following are good ways in which you can advance your own understanding of the game.

### Watch the Game

Try to watch as many different high level teams as you can. Local College games played by top University teams as well as professional games played either in the MLS or WUSA Leagues will provide you with a good learning environment. Rather than just watching the games for fun try to view games from one of the different aspects provided below:

1. A coach of one of the teams - evaluate your system of play and how your players are doing within it. Consider your half time team talk and based upon facts e.g. *their left-winger keeps shredding your right back*, any changes you might make. Explain your reasoning to the adult who took you to the game.
2. One of the players who is playing in your favorite position – carefully analyze how this player plays the game. Consider how often they touch the ball, the runs they make off of the ball, the amount of verbal instruction they give, times they give the ball away, tackles they make etc. Try at the end of the game to compare how they played the position to the way in which you do.
3. Using the Internet – many of the top professional teams from around the world has subscription TV available for all their home games. If you have a suitable computer, high-speed Internet access and MOST IMPORTANTLY mom and dads permission then researching one of the following teams may be a good idea. Manchester United, Arsenal, Celtic, Real Madrid, Barcelona, Ajax or Juventus.

## **Become A student of the Game**

1. Read about the game - in addition to the Soccer books listed in the recommended reading list provided in this booklet seek out additional good coaching books. Your own Travel, Select or ODP coach may have great suggestions about quality books, which they have read.
2. Become a coach – offer to volunteer in coaching the young intramural and travel players within your club. Your understanding of the game and it's techniques will grow incredibly if you can teach these techniques to younger players. [It is very difficult to teach a skill to another player if you do not fully understand the technique yourself.]
3. Attend Coaching Clinics and seminars – your local league and Club will probably have coaching clinics and seminars set up throughout the year. Even if you get one great idea from each clinic that you attend it will be worth going.
4. Make up Games – try to organize make up games with other players from your town and play 3v3, 4v4, 5v6 etc whatever number show up get to play.

## **Physical Development**

To play high-level soccer you must be supremely fit. No other game will have the aerobic and anaerobic demands of soccer. To suitably prepare yourself and maintain your soccer fitness you must work on the following three areas:

### **Aerobic Fitness**

Your aerobic fitness level is most closely related to your endurance. Are you fit enough to make a full field run in the last minute of a game that is in extra time and your team are tied 1-1? There are many different fitness tests that are commonly used to measure aerobic capacity. The two most common ones are the Cooper run and the Beep test. You will find targets for both these test provided at the end of the aerobic fitness

schedule provided. You should do your best to maintain a good aerobic base throughout the year and pay particular attention to enhancing your aerobic fitness level before your season starting (*this makes Jan–Feb and July–August key times for working on your aerobic fitness level*)

*Soccer is the total sport. Soccer players are a combination of sprinters and marathon runners; they must perform with short bursts of power and speed, but also have the ability to keep going for ninety minutes or more.*

## Aerobic Fitness Training Program

Week 1	Day 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Activity	35 min jog	Rest	35 min jog/ sprint intervals	Rest	45 min jog	Rest	45 min jog/sprint intervals
Week 2	Day 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Activity	45 min jog	Rest	45 min jog/sprint intervals	Rest	60 min jog	Rest	60 min jog/sprint intervals
Week 3	Day 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Activity	3 mile timed run	Rest	60 min jog/sprint intervals	Rest	10 full field sprints (60 sec rest) & 5 half field (30 sec rest)	Rest	60 min jog/sprint intervals
Week 4	Day 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Activity	3 mile timed run	Rest	60 min jog/sprint intervals	Rest	10 full field sprints (45 sec rest) & 5 half field (20 sec rest)	Rest	60 min jog/sprint intervals
Week 5	Day 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Activity	3 mile timed run	Rest	80 min jog/sprint intervals	Rest	10 full field sprints (30 sec rest) & 5 half field (15 sec rest)	Rest	80 min jog/sprint intervals
Week 6	Day 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Activity	3 mile timed run	Rest	45 min run	Rest	10 full field sprints (30 sec rest) & 5 half field (15 sec rest)	Rest	90 min jog/sprint intervals

*NB Be sure to warm up and stretch for at least 30 minutes before beginning any of the above work.*

**Cooper Test Results (12 min timed run): The following are targets for the test for players aged 11-16 presented in meters.**

Category	Age 11	Age 12	Age 13	Age 14	Age 15	Age 16
<b>Excellent</b>	2800	2850	2900	2950	3000	3150
<b>Very Good</b>	2600	2650	2700	2750	2800	2850
<b>Good</b>	2200	2250	2300	2350	2400	2450
<b>Satisfactory</b>	1800	1850	1900	1950	2000	2050

**Girls should subtract 200m in each category.**

# Anaerobic Fitness

Your anaerobic fitness level is most closely related to the speed at which you cover short distances. At the end of a long game when it comes to a 6 yard sprint between you and the opposing stopper who gets there first? Coaches work on this area of fitness by having players perform many short sprints. As your anaerobic fitness level increases you, should find it easier and feel sharper in completing your 10<sup>th</sup> twenty feet sprint. The fitness program provided for improving your anaerobic fitness focuses upon working on “good” soccer distances as frequently as possible. As this area of your fitness affects your sharpness throughout the season it is a good idea to spend some time working on anaerobic fitness throughout your season.

As you grow older, you should begin a weight-training program that will help you improve your strength and power. Coupled with expert advice on running style, an increase in strength and power will help make you quicker. At the ages of 9-14, focus your efforts upon working on the sprint training and plyometrics exercises provided in the table that follows.

## Exercises To Use

### Sprinting

#### 1. Steepling-striding exercise

Place some markers in a straight line on the ground about a meter apart for a total of 10 meters. From a standing start, run the length of the markers, taking one stride between each marker, as fast as possible. With practice, move the markers closer together to encourage faster and shorter strides. Repeat 10 times.

#### 2. Standing start

From a standing start, accelerate as quickly as possible over 20 meters. Repeat 10 times. Try starting your sprint from a kneeling position, sitting position, lying down position and jumping up and down.

#### 3. Running Start

As before, but you should already be moving before you explode into a full sprint. Try starting from just outside the 18-yard box and then exploding from the edge of the 18 to the 6-yard line. Repeat the same exercise but this time run backwards to the edge of the 18 so that you have to spin and sprint to the 6-yard line. Perform each sprint 10 times.

#### **4. Ball Work Sprints**

Work with a teammate; take it in turns to do 10 sets each. One player stands on the edge of the field with a ball in their hands. The other player stands on the edge of the six-yard line sprints to the player with the ball who serves it to their head. They perform one header spin and sprint to the starting position. After 10 sprints, the two players change position. Vary both the distances (e.g. 18-yard line and halfway line) and the skill performed e.g. instep volley). In addition, do the sprints where instead of spinning you run backwards to the starting position before sprinting again.

## **Plyometrics**

This is the most effective and enjoyable way of improving your power. You should only do two Plyometrics sessions per week and should be aware that your muscles will be sore after your work. Make sure that you follow the Plyometric exercises given and wear appropriate running shoes with some kind of shock absorbing sole and heel.

#### **1. Split squats**

Start in a split squat position. Drive into the air reversing the position of the legs before landing, so that if the left leg was in the front, on landing, the right is in the front. Jump back to the start position and repeat 8 times.

#### **2. Plyometric jump running**

Use a slow speed running action landing on alternate feet but try to gain as much height as you can during the airborne phase of each stride.

#### **3. Plyometric bounding**

Make a series of forward jumps, landing and taking off from both feet, jumping as far and as high as you can. Do your best to minimize time on the ground. As you become more confident, try to place obstacles like cones in your way.

#### 4. Lateral jumps

Stand next to a bench or small obstacle and jump sideways with both feet as high over the obstacle as you can. Jump back to the start position. Repeat 10 times.

#### 5. Explosive power jumps

Take a short run onto a box about 30 cm (12 inches) high, landing with one foot on the box, then jump off powerfully with the same leg trying to head an imaginary ball. Concentrate on getting as high as you can. Repeat 8 times for each leg.

#### 6. Ricochets

Mark a small diamond shape box on the ground. Move both feet from one corner of the box to another in random fashion. Focus upon rapid leg and foot movement rather than height or horizontal distance.

<b>Anaerobic Fitness Training Program</b>							
<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Day 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
Activity	Sprinting Exercise 1-2-3	Rest	Plyometrics Exercise 1-2-3	Rest	Sprinting Exercise 3-4	Rest	Plyometrics Exercise 4-5-6
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Day 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
Activity	Sprinting Exercise 1-2-3	Rest	Plyometrics Exercise 1-2-3	Rest	Sprinting Exercise 3-4	Rest	Plyometrics Exercise 4-5-6
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Day 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
Activity	Sprinting Exercise 2-3-4	Rest	Plyometrics Exercise 4-5-6	Rest	Sprinting Exercise 1-2-3	Rest	Plyometrics Exercise 1-2-3
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Day 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
Activity	Sprinting Exercise 1-2-3-4	Rest	Plyometrics Exercise 1-2-3	Rest	Sprinting Exercise 3-4	Rest	Plyometrics Exercise 5-6
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Day 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
Activity	Sprinting Exercise 1-2-3	Rest	Plyometrics Exercise 1-2-3	Rest	Sprinting Exercise 3-4	Rest	Plyometrics Exercise 4-5-6
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Day 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
Activity	Sprinting Exercise 2-3-4	Rest	Plyometrics Exercise 4-5-6	Rest	Sprinting Exercise 1-2-3	Rest	Plyometrics Exercise 1-2-3
<b>NB Be sure to warm up and stretch for at least 30 minutes before beginning any of the above work.</b>							

# Flexibility

This is an area that most youth players seem to completely ignore. Due to the innate flexibility that comes with youth, most young players neglect this vital fitness component. An increased range of flexibility will help you avoid injury and make it easier for you to master new and more challenging techniques. Try to imagine a player lacking flexibility even attempting a bicycle kick.

The great thing about improving your flexibility is that many of the exercises can be done while you watch television, read a book or listen to your favorite CD in your bedroom. Do your best to follow the stretching regime given on a daily basis. You should also do your best to ensure that your body is warm before beginning the stretching exercises. Ideally, try to go for a 10-minute jog before you begin.

## Stretching Exercises

### Stretch One

Move head up and down holding each position for 8-10 seconds. Move head from side to side holding each position for 8-10 seconds. Do not roll the neck as this can damage your vertebrae.

### Stretch Two

Roll arms around in a 'windmill type' action. Firstly rotate right arm forward 10 times, then switch to left arm. This can be undertaken using both arms at the same time. Following on, change to rotating arms backwards using the same sequence.

### Stretch Three

Stretch right arm across chest keeping straight. Hold in position with left hand for 8-10 seconds. Repeat using the left arm.

### Stretch Four

Lift right arm up and place behind the head. Bend at elbow and press arm down using other arm trying to stretch fingers towards the lower back. Hold for 8-10 seconds then repeat using alternate arm.

### **Stretch Five**

Stand with legs shoulder width apart. Keeping arms locked straight above head, slowly lower upper body. The stretch ends when the upper body is parallel to the ground. This stretches the back and sides of the body and begins to stretch the hamstrings.

### **Stretch Six**

Lie on your back. Firstly, lift one leg bending at the knee, keeping leg tucked into body. In a slow movement, begin to roll leg over other leg, until the bent knee is touching the floor on other side. Hold for 8-10 seconds, and repeat using alternate leg. (Keep shoulders on the floor.)

### **Stretch Seven**

Otherwise known as 'social stretching'. In pairs, using each other to help maintain balance, players stretch their quads and hamstrings by lifting one leg up behind body. It is important to bend the supporting leg slightly at the knee and keep legs together. Hold stretch for 8-10 seconds, and repeat using alternate leg. Whilst stretching, the players can discuss their roles within the game.

### **Stretch Eight**

Remaining in pairs, sit across from each other, with the soles of their feet touching. Link arms and alternately pull one another towards each other. This stretches the hamstrings and should be held for approx. 8-10 seconds. If necessary, the players can bend at the knee slightly to prevent injury. This can be repeated 3-4 times each to gain suppleness.

### **Stretch Nine**

Standing up, place one leg in front of the other. Bend the back leg and straighten the front leg. Lower arms down the front leg until hands reach ankle. Hold the position, stretching hamstrings for 8-10 seconds. Alternate between legs and repeat 3 times each.

### **Stretch Ten**

Sit on floor bending legs. Keeping feet together, lower knees by applying a little pressure from arms close to floor. Hold for 8-

10 seconds. Repeat 3 times, aiming to get closer to the floor each time.

### **Stretch Eleven**

Simply sit on the ground, and lift leg up. Flex ankle up and down and side to side without rotating. Repeat with other ankle.

## **Testing Flexibility**

So you can measure how affective your stretching routine is and how you are improving, complete the following two flexibility tests approximately every six weeks. Record your results in the table provided

### **Modified sit and reach test**

This test measure hamstring and lower back flexibility.

You will need a 1-meter tape or rule and a box.

Sit on the floor with your buttocks, shoulders and head in contact with a wall. Place your legs flat on the ground in front of you and place your feet with their soles against the side of the box in front of you. Place your hands together with both sets of fingers extending equally. Place the rule with the zero end at the near side of the box closest to you. Now with your head and back against the wall reach as far forward as you can. Make sure the zero end of the rule touches the edge of your fingers. This has now set the zero point for the test.

Now lean slowly forward allowing your back and head to come away from the wall. Make sure that the rule or tape measure does not move. Repeat the stretch three times on the third attempt stretch as far as you can and record how far up the tape measure your fingers reach. This is your score.

## Groin flexibility test

This test measures the flexibility of your groins.

You will need a 1-meter tape or rule and a box.

Sit on the floor with your knees apart and the soles of your feet together. Place your hands on your feet and slowly bring your feet towards the groin, keeping your knees as close to the floor as possible. The score is the measured distance from groin to heels.

Flexibility Record Table					
	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5
Test					
Modified sit & reach					
Groin flexibility					
Targets					
	Poor	Average	Excellent		
Modified sit & reach	0 through 15 cm - 6 inch	15cm – 6inch through to 35 cm 14 inch	45 cm –18 inches and beyond		
Groin flexibility	25 cm – 10inches through to 20cm – 8 inches	15 cm – 6 inches through to 10cm – 4 inches	5 cm – 2 inches and less		

## Psychological Training

This is the area that most youth players fail to think about and consequently train. Contrary to the novice's thoughts it is possible to train this dimension of your game. There are both fiercely competitive things you can do and some "mental" activities that you can do which will help.

### Physical Activities

1. One v One duels – play a series of 1v1 games, to small goals, to big goals, to cones or just for possession. Record all the games that you play and how many you win. Always

try to play against bigger, stronger and quicker players. For example, if you are a thirteen-year-old girl play against a 13 year old boy; if you are a 12-year-old boy play against a 13 year old boy. Do not limit the age of the age or the ability of the players that you will compete against. Search out the best competition in your area and make them the challenge. Play them until you win. In all these games, concentrate your efforts on displaying a champion's character. Never quit, never give less than 100%, trying to make the challenge a test of your character and will.

## 2. Small Sided Games

Try to organize little 3v2 or 4v3 games. Always play on the team who has the least players. *(Even better, play against older more athletic players)*

## Imagery

With imagery, players use their imagination to visualize set parts of the game (such as passing, running off the ball or making your first tackle)

The very best players in the world give themselves a mental edge over their opponents. As you graduate through your soccer career and play for high school coaches and hopefully college coaches you will find that imagery is a tool that your coaches will use all the time.

Get into the habit of using imagery now. Just like you, practice juggling, moves and striking practice-using imagery on your own.

There are two ways of approaching imagery:

1. **External imagery:** This is when you think about the game and if you were watching a video of yourself as you are playing.
2. **Internal imagery:** This is when you think about and visualize the game through your own eyes as though you are actually playing the game.

Try to use the following exercises to help you in learning to use imagery. Try and practice two or three times a day for about ten minutes at a time.

### **Exercise 1**

1. Sit in a quiet room where you will not be disturbed.
2. Place a soccer ball in front of you.
3. Sit in a comfortable position and relax.
4. Look hard at the ball and concentrate on all its features.
5. Close your eyes and try to reproduce a clear image of the ball in your mind.
6. Look at the ball in your head and focus on the same features as you noticed with your eyes open.

### **Exercise 2**

1. Find a quiet space where you will not be disturbed.
2. Sit in a comfortable position and relax.
3. Close your eyes and focus on your breathing – deeply in through your nose and out through your mouth.
4. Imagine a stadium in which you are standing.
5. Focus on what you can see looking straight ahead and to either side.
6. Remember the scene and then open your eyes.
7. Repeat the process this time notice the smells within the stadium.

You are now ready to try to picture yourself performing set skills against opponents in games. Begin with individual and simple skills such as a push pass and then move on to visualizing skills that are more difficult and even sequences.

Try to structure your pre game warm up so that you have time to use your imagery skills to help you prepare mentally for the game.

## **Pre Game Ritual**

Do everything you can to help yourself be physically and mentally ready for all the games in which you play. The sooner

you develop a good and effective pre game ritual the more effective your game performance will be. The following schedule of events would be a good pre game ritual to follow:

<b>DAY &amp; TIME</b>	<b>EVENT</b>
<b><i>Evening before Game</i></b>	Clean and polish cleats – pack your game bag.
<b><i>Game Day – 4 to 5 hours before game time</i></b>	Pre match meal – good suggestions would be: grilled fish or chicken, baked or boiled potatoes, boiled or steamed vegetables, pasta dish with non fatty sauce, baked beans on toast, fresh fruit, a carbohydrate drink.
<b><i>Game Day - traveling to the game</i></b>	Listen to your favorite music that most helps you get psyched up for the game.
<b><i>Arrival at Game location - 1 hour before game</i></b>	Whatever your own team allow for their warm up routine try and arrive 1 hour before kick off. Spend 15 minutes getting your kit on and going through some imagery exercises.
<b><i>45 minutes before kick off</i></b>	Begin your pre game warm up.
<b><i>Post Game -</i></b>	
<b><i>15 minutes after game</i></b>	Go through a series of stretches and some light jogging – this will help the removal of lactic acid from your muscles.
<b><i>1-2 hours after the game</i></b>	Have a post match meal. It is a good idea to have a meal that includes, bread, pasta and rice. If you do not feel like eating try to drink carbohydrate drinks.

# NUTRITION & EATING

With all the effort and time that you are investing in fulfilling your potential it may be considered “crazy” to deliberately hinder your own progress.

For your body to reach it's full potential as you follow the training regimes included within this manual **YOU must** participate in an appropriate diet.

Obviously the best athletes in the world enjoy an occasional Cheese Burger and Fries or a serving of Fried Chicken with a milk shake. You should feel at ease enjoying these fast food type treats on set occasions but must do everything possible to **not let such foods dominate your diet.**

Rather than going on a series of highly restrictive diets try and establish a routine where you have a diet, which is dominated by Healthy foods as opposed to junk foods. The following can be considered as “good” foods that should form a high percentage of your diet

- Bread (wheat, bran, enriched white)
- Chicken (baked, boiled or steamed)
- Cereals (High in fiber, no sugar or honey coatings added)
- Eggs (whites or one yolk for every three whites)
- Fish (boiled or baked)
- Meat (limit amounts of lean cuts)
- Milk (1% or skimmed)
- Milk Products (Fat free or low-fat cottage cheese)
- Pasta
- Baked or Mashed potatoes
- Rice (enriched white or brown)
- Salad (low or fat –free dressings)
- Vegetables
- Water (6-8 glasses per day)

## PARENTAL UNITS

If you have been playing travel soccer for a while you have grown used to mom and dad watching your games. Sometimes they are great spectators and supporters of the team and your efforts and sometimes they are not. Rather than suffer through the embarrassment of having mom or dad yelling the wrong things at the wrong time to you or getting involved with an argument with your coach or the ref, it is a good idea to keep them busy in a productive way.

A great use of their time, one that will keep them out of trouble, avoid them trying to be the loudest parent coach in the USA and ultimately will help you develop a great understanding of your game is to employ them as your personal statistician. Using the table provided below as a template for each game you play, have them record, in the various categories provided, the number of times you do certain things.

Save the record they produce for each game and discuss their findings with your coach. If done in an accurate and truthful manner these sheets will be a valuable tool in helping you work on your areas of strength and weakness.

## GAME STATISTICS

GAME STATISTICS		
Date & Time		
Weather Conditions		
Category	Record	Total
Number of Passes received		
Number of passes attempted		
Number of effective passes attempted (Collected by a teammate)		
Number of shots on goal		
Number of shots that forced a save		
Number of tackles attempted		
Number of tackles where the ball was won		
Number of attempts to beat a player on the dribble		
Successful attempts at beating a player on the dribble		
Number of Runs without the ball		
Number of Runs with the ball		
Number of Goals scored		
Number of Yellow cards received		
Number of Red Cards received		

***“ The vision of a Champion is the player training alone, shirt drenched with sweat, at the point of near exhaustion when no one else is watching”***

*Anson Dorrance*

## **Recommended Reading List**

The following list of books will give you an insight into the thinking and personal characteristics of some truly great athletes and the coaches who guided them to their success.

Standing Fast: Battles of a Champion.

By Michelle Akers, et al. (JTC Sports, Inc.) 1997.

It's Not About the Bike: My Journey Back To Life.

By Lance Armstrong and Sally Jenkins.  
(Berkley Pub. Group.) 2001.

Beckham: My World. By David Beckham, and Dean Freeman.  
(Hodder and Stoughton.) 2002.

The Vision of A Champion: Advice and Inspiration From the World's Most Successful Women's Soccer Coach.

By Anson Dorrance, et al. (Ann Arbor Press Inc.) 2002.

Go For Goal: A Champions Guide To Winning In Soccer and Life.

By Mia Hamm, and Aaron Heifetz. (Quill.) 2000.

Jennifer Capriati: By Mikki Morrisette.

(Sports Illustrated For Kids.) 1991.

The Winner Within: A Life Plan For Team Players.

By Pat Riley. (Berkley Pub. Group.) 1994.

Tiger: A Biography Of Tiger Woods.

By John Stregge.  
(Broadway Books.) 1998.

For The Love Of The Game: My Story.

By Michael Jordan,  
Edited By Mark Vancil. (Crown Pub.) 1998

