



WHAT IT TAKES TO BE THE BEST!

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The ultimate goal of any young player is to play for his/her national team and represent their country. But, what gets us there? What are the national team programs looking for in players and what do I need to do to be noticed? Yes, obviously I must be technically gifted and understand the game tactically, but where does this ability stem from? How do I get from the U6 player to the player on the U16 National Team or Regional ODP Team for example? Well, the amount and quality of training/competition that is done from the days of the U6 player to the older ages is what are the keys to a good player.

To be the best soccer player and achieve a lot of success in the game you need a couple different elements. **First** and foremost, you need to have the proper **ATTITUDE**. You must really ask yourself, do I really want this? What are the goals of the player? If getting to the national team levels are the goal, then there is a particular attitude that is required. Players that truly love the game and have lofty goals are the players that do not need the motivation to work hard. Typically those players are constantly searching for situations where they can put themselves into the fire. Challenging themselves daily and having the inner power and desire to play just for the pure love of the game. It is that internal motivation that you truly want to be the best player that you can be because you absolutely love it! A strong attitude for the game will also lead you down the path of doing whatever it takes to succeed on the field and doing your job well.

Second, you must have a strong **COMMITMENT** to succeed. This means that you must dedicate yourself to daily training at the highest level you can find. The Tuesday, Thursday training and game on Saturday approach will NOT get you to the higher levels of the game by any stretch. It must be a daily commitment on your part to put yourself in a situation where you are receiving quality training and competitive matches. Most times as the young player though this is not just a commitment of the individual but to the parents and family as well. It might take Mom or Dad driving you several hours to and from training and matches on a regular basis to give you the best opportunity to grow as a player. If this is the case, then so be it if you truly want to be the best. If you really want something bad enough you will need to fight and battle for it, it just won't happen because you want it to happen.

Third, you must **SACRIFICE** certain things. You will need to eat, live and breathe the game in order to be the best. This might mean being away from family/friends due to traveling with a team for training/matches or not being able to do certain things in general due to your commitment to your goals as a player. This is often the most difficult element to all of this because it really tests your commitment level and attitude. Am I willing to sacrifice not going to the school dance on Friday due to a tournament this weekend? Am I committed enough to my development to sacrifice going to the dance because I really love playing the game that much? These are the questions that you will need to ask yourself all the time in order to become the player that you desire to be.

The combination of all three of these elements is what typically creates a national team level player. Along with these three elements, the game today also places several demands on players. Whether it is at the international or recreational levels, the game today is all about SPEED! How quickly can you solve problems on the playing field and adapt or adjust to the situation. The game not only demands physical speed but technical speed as well. How quickly can you get the ball under control, make a decision and do something positive with it? This is the technical speed that is needed as well as the physical speed which is how fast can you get from point A to point B.



Can you be lacking in one area of the game and still play at a high level? Yes, you certainly can and an excellent example of that is Frankie Heyduk. To watch Frankie in a technical training session you might think, this guy lacks the polish of his teammates with the ball at his feet, but, at the World Cup in 2002 we could not afford to NOT have him on the field because of the other elements that he brought to the game. He is so committed to doing his job and is willing to sacrifice himself for the better of the team. His pure speed, athleticism and work ethic was something that makes up for his lack of pure technical ability. And because of that he was one of our better performers last summer. So, you don't necessarily need the pure technical skills, but you will need to make up for it somehow.

Do you feel that you possess these different qualities and are getting overlooked at the club or ODP levels? If this is the case, take it upon yourself and find out what else you need to do to get you where you want to be. Ask your club coaches, ODP coaches or the staff at ONE on ONE Soccer for help in getting noticed. If you have what it takes the ODP and national team programs will find you! Just do your part and play in situations that you keep asking yourself, what do I need to do to survive at this level?