

The Complete Soccer Athlete

By Clayton Rosario

During the 16 years that I've been coaching youth soccer, I've had the fortune to see many great players develop and I've observed the qualities that are necessary to excel at this sport. Many young soccer players are happy just to show up and play simply for the love of the game, which is fantastic. However, this article is for those athletes who dream of taking their game to the next level; for the player who wants to become the complete soccer athlete.

My primary focus in coaching soccer at the youth level has always been "Technique, technique, technique." A strong player needs to be technically skilled with both feet, and be able to apply those skills appropriately on the field. Good ball control and the ability to read the play are essential. To be a well rounded player, you also need to be fit, athletic, fast, and mentally focused.

Technique is something that can be coached, and something that I've become very proficient at coaching over the years. Fitness and physical conditioning are other aspects that a coach or trainer can develop in their players by implementing regimented athletic conditioning programs. But there are other important qualities that must be developed in order to become the best soccer player you can be. Some of these qualities a coach has less influence over.

Qualities such as maturity, independence, mental toughness, creativity, and what I call that certain "X-Factor" (or WOW Factor) can be encouraged and modeled by a good coach, but these are characteristics that a player will need to develop on their own. Incidentally, this is the sort of personal development that will not only make you more successful at soccer, but also more successful at life in general.

WOW Factor

A player should view their sport not only as competition but also as entertainment, and should therefore learn to be creative and add another dimension to their game. Put yourself in the position of a fan or a spectator. Would you pay to watch a boring game? I don't think so. The game is about entertainment. People want to see a quality game with great athletes, plenty of creativity, and exciting goals! When a talented player can enter the field of play and change the chemistry of the game in such a way that makes the crowd go crazy, that's what I call the X-Factor. This player is unique, creative, skillful, and passionate about the sport. These are the qualities that make us remember a player, and this is part of what makes a "star" stand out from the rest.

Here are some of my recommendations for those who want to take it to the next level, and who dream of being a pro:

- Be a student of the game. Take a personal interest in learning everything you can.
- Eat right, stay fit, train smart, and adopt a positive attitude.
- Be unique and creative. Develop your own personal style and make a difference on the field!
- Become a master of technique. Try to be the best in your position.

- Being talented is great, but you must also be a team player! A superstar is of no use if they can't work **with** the team.
- To be a pro, you have to eat, sleep and breathe soccer!

Remember to have a strong work ethic when you train, and perform your drills with intensity. Don't worry about mistakes. Even the pros make mistakes.

I encourage you to check out my new DVD, "Building the Complete Soccer Athlete: Train Like a Pro", which covers strength and conditioning programs, speed and agility training, nutrition, psychology, and several important technical drills with the ball. Go to www.SoccerAthletics.com for more information.

I wish you lots of success!

Coach Clayton Rosario

About the Author:



CLAYTON ROSARIO
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Clayton has been coaching soccer at the youth level ever since he came to Canada in 1981 from London, England. He is known for the many successes his teams have achieved: Nine league championships U8 to U14, winner of over 70 tournaments including the Robbie International and USA Cup. He took the Mississauga U17 OYSL for a 4 game exhibition tour in the north of France winning 3 and losing 1, as well as taking different teams to other European countries. Clayton is an expert in creating youth development programs and has been involved in a number of leading OYSL clubs. His focus is on developing the total player, incorporating technical training, ball control, creativity, high performance training, nutrition, and psychology.

- Specializes in technical development of youth level soccer athletes.
- Instrumental in sending many talented young players to Europe.
- Has traveled all over US, UK, Italy, and France for team tours
- Visited training centers of Manchester United and formation centers of Lille and OGC Nice France.
- Specializes in Dutch, French, and Brazilian training methods
- Co-producer of the DVD "**Building the Complete Soccer Athlete: Train Like a Pro**" ... check it out at www.soccerathletics.com

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