

# SOCCER EDU

## THE MENTAL SIDE OF THE GAME

As the game continues to develop and teams and coaches strive to produce better, more well-rounded players, the next trend will be the development of soccer intelligence. Most players play instinctively, almost unthinkingly acting on impulse and instinct in a split second reaction when a situation presents itself. This is a necessary and crucial part of the game. This is where moments of genius are born. However, there are other aspects of the game where players can take a more intelligent approach to the game in order to be more effective players and teams. Aspects of the mental side of the game include:

- Focus and concentration
- Anticipation / Reading the game
- Overall decision making
- Mental strength manifested in a competitive spirit and high work rate
- Problem Solving
- Game Awareness

### Focus and Concentration:

In this situation, players should always have their “head in the game” both directly and indirectly. An example of this would be for a defender to always be aware where the forward is that he is marking, regardless of where the ball is and even if the forward is not directly involved in the actual play. Players must be switched on, not only when directly involved with the ball, but also indirectly when not involved with the ball. They must be in tune with the game constantly.

### Anticipation:

The ability to read the game is critical as is the sense to “recognize early and quickly” which situations require which solutions. Again a defender may read that an opposing midfield player is going to pass to a forward by his body language and step in and win the ball before it reaches the forward.

### Problem Solving:

The game offers problems constantly, and with each pass, the game changes and presents a new set of problems. Players have to constantly recognize how situations change, and make adjustments and correct decisions in a split second. Good players make effective decisions. For example, good defenders don’t dive in to win the ball unless they are certain they can win it. They mark goal side in relation to the ball and always make adjustments. The more problems solved correctly, the more effective the players and their teams are.