

Physical/Athleticism

Speed- This is pure speed. How fast they can get from one place to another (with or without the ball)

Quickness- This is the ability to accelerate quickly (change of speed with or without the ball)

Strength- This is overall strength physically (on and off the ball)

Agility- This is the ability to move side to side and the ability to keep their balance while doing so (on and off the ball)

Technical

Dribbling- This is the ability to possess the ball on the dribble (looking for the player who is able to dribble well under pressure (in control, inside and outside of the feet) and also able to dribble properly when they have space (speed dribble-use your laces and push ball in front of you to attack the open space but still under control)

Passing- This is the ability to pass the ball accurately with both feet on the ground (and as they get older in the air) The ability to pass to feet when a player is checking at them and the ability to pass to space in front of a player who is making a run. Passing should be with the inside of the foot or the laces (NO TOE BALLS. This is a very bad habit and very hard to break)

Heading- This is the ability to head the ball both defensively (when you head defensively the ball should go high and away from the goal) and offensively (when you head the ball on offense the ball should go to the ground and to your feet as quickly as possible) **in the women's game today this is the number one area female players struggle in...fear is the main factor and it is something to encourage your players (both boys and girls) to develop***With younger age groups start this process with them tossing the ball to their own head. Eyes open, mouth shut, using their forehead and looking at the ball.

Receiving- This is the ability to trap the ball properly (with the inside of their foot (or chest or thigh etc) and to keep the ball in front of them going in the direction they want to attack) When trapping and passing the heel should be pointed slightly down and the toe slightly up, the trapping and passing technique is exactly the same (try not to teach players to stop the ball with the bottom of there foot, they should always try and keep the ball moving in a direction away from immediate pressure).

1v1 Attacking- This is the ability to beat players on the dribble while attacking (the ability to use moves (stop and go, scissors, lean and go, the v, etc) the ability to change speed, the overall ability to take people on (confidence, courage, taking risks, execution, etc.)

Shooting- This is the ability to strike the ball properly (with their laces with both feet. Proper shooting form =ankle locked, none kicking foot placed next to the ball pointed at target, knee over the ball, chest over the ball). You are looking to develop power and accuracy. **in order for players to generate more power they must take their approach touch to the side they wish to shoot with (i.e. lefty's need to touch

to the left) many players lose power because their approach touch is to the wrong side or too far straight ahead**

Tackling- This is the ability to win the ball in a 50/50 match up (the ball is equally placed between two opponents) **the majority of tackling and winning the ball comes from wanting it and not fearing the outcome** Tackling can also be if the ball is not a 50/50 ball. This is the ability to choose the right moment to tackle the ball from an opponent (i.e. while defending I encourage players to be patient and to not dive in(diving in is when a player runs up to a player to defend and just takes a swing at the ball...generally good attackers will beat this type of player with one quick movement or one quick change of speed) after a defender first delays the attack(or puts pressure on the ball) by getting close to the player with the ball they must now choose when to tackle..a good place to tackle is when the offensive player takes a poor touch or if the attacker is within shooting range

Shielding-This is the ability to protect the ball from the opponents by using proper shielding technique(sideways on, low center of gravity, ball on the foot furthest from opponent)

1v1 Defending-This is the ability to defend properly when an opponent is coming at you with the ball (review what I said about tackling) A good 1v1 defender first delays the attack by getting close to the player with the ball (pressure on the ball) and then decides at what time to try and win the ball (the ideal winning of the ball is tackling while also keeping possession not just kicking the ball away...but depending on the situation in the game and location on the field these decisions change...soccer is always about decisions dependent on where you are within the game..so it is a little tricky to explain)

Psychological

Coach-ability- This is the ability to listen, learn, and work in practice and at games (the ability to take advice and to apply it at practice and games)

Concentration- This is the ability to focus throughout the entire practice and while in or out of the game

Aggressiveness- This is the ability to be fearless going for the ball while also being in control of your body and actions

Work Rate- This is each players overall work ethic throughout practice and games (running hard, trying hard, not giving up, not getting frustrated, ability to practice as hard as they play in the games)

Practice Approach/Attitude- The way each player approaches practice (positive attitude, work rate, trying in each activity both technical and games) Positive interaction with their teammates, including everyone, being partners with different people, etc.

Communication- The ability to encourage and give proper direction to teammates during the game (i.e. after they pass a ball the ability to tell their teammate turn, man on, take your space, etc)

Attendance-self explanatory

Soccer Savvy- The ability to understand the game and to make the best decision given the circumstances they are in (for example in a 1v1 situation the player should be looking to beat the defender but in a 2v1 situation the player may be looking to pass and move, etc)

Tactical

Defensive Cover- This is the ability to get themselves in the proper defensive cover position (the easiest way to think about this is the first defender-is the person closest to the ball and they should be delaying the attack and putting pressure on the ball and the 2nd defender(generally 2nd closest person to the ball) and their role is to be a support or a cover for the first defender –they need to be close enough to help if the first defender gets beat but not so close that one pass by the attacker beats both the first and second defender. Look at Drawing below...(X=attacker B=ball G=goal we are defending D=Defenders)

Xb

D1

D2

G

Reading of the Game-The ability to understand what the game is offering you at different times and based on different locations/situations within the game (the reading of the game comes with a lot of exposure to soccer...i.e. playing, watching it on TV, practice, etc.)

Combination Play- The ability to combine with teammates to beat defenders or to get in better situations (i.e. if in a 2v1 or 2v2 situation looking to do a give and go. Looking for defenders (at older levels) making overlapping runs and getting in on attack, etc)

Vision/Creativity- Vision is the ability to see the whole game from wherever they are on the field (I like to say to players “you should be taking pictures as you are playing...you should know where your teammates and your opponents are at all times and you should make the best decision based on what your vision is offering you) Creativity- the ability to take chances and try new things within the game (I love creativity and if you can combine this with productivity your player will be all set)

Movement off the Ball- This is the ability to create space and time for their teammates when they do not have the ball at their feet (on attack players should be looking to create width and depth going

forward...this is in order to spread the defenders out and to create space for our attack) While defending this principle is reversed each player should be looking to funnel in to eliminate the space for the opposing team. Look at the drawing below... (D=defender on our team OM=our outside mids F=our forward)

While we are on attack

F(creates height by stretching the field long and should always check or show to the ball side i.e. if our right mid has the ball our forward should be as high as possible (not offside) and should run towards the right side to be an option up the field)

OM(should be touching the side line creating width)

OM(same)

CM(should create support to either side and to forward)

D (with either 2 or 3 or 4 defenders the wide defenders can create width and the middle is support (not quite as wide as mids) and the main objective with 2 or 3 or 4 is to shrink the length of the field so on attack that is why the defenders move up to create less space for the opposing team to attack if they were to win the ball)

While Defending (I will use the 2-3-1 model but all the same principles apply even with more numbers on the field or different lineups)

F (generally can be the first defender if we lose the ball in our offensive third..they should be giving immediate chase and trying to put pressure on the ball)

OM/CM/OM and D's (these players funnel in (basically you will hear me say back and in which means they should pinch centrally and back towards our goal (literally looks like a funnel) you always want to clog the middle of the field while defending)

Example (this example could be used with the ball at any spot on the field)

RM*(*=ball RM on other team)

OM (On your team. first defender giving pressure) OM (3rd defender -slides back and in to give good balance to our shape and to eliminate passing lanes..the idea of balance will come later but this concept is that the third defender doesn't need to be too worried about the actual player out wide because if someone passed that ball all the way across our player should be able to slide over and put pressure on the ball and then the other wide mid on our team would slide across to give balance and the Center mid would still be giving cover and support)

CM (2nd defender-slides over to help cover and is behind the ball and their first defender)

Improvisation- The ability to have creativity on the ball within the game and at practice. The ability to manipulate the ball to do what they want (using moves, trying new things, taking chances, juggling, etc.)

Speed of Play- The ability to make the right decision in a timely manner, the ability to recover quickly and to get in good defensive position if we lose ball and then same if we win the ball, the ability to get in a good attacking position. This is also the ability to do everything at the pace the game demands

Things to think about....

Think of soccer in thirds (**offensive third**-from the opponents goal to the about 20 yards out, **middle third**-from the 20 of the opponent to 20 yards away from our goal, **defensive third**-from our defensive 20 yard line to the goal we our defending)

Offensive Third-this is where players should be taking the most chances when they have the ball, this is the area to be the most creative and to shoot often. Encourage players to try things on offense, take chances, wanting to put the ball in the net in this area. This is the area of the field that the majority of teams lose the ball because of lack of confidence.

Middle Third- this is where, when on attack, you want to keep possession and generally you would like to win the ball back, in this third, if you are defending. When on attack you want to make good choices, get in good shape(wide and high), and create the most space possible. But players still want to look to build into the offensive third. In the middle third you can still look to take chances but you begin to way

safe decisions (keeping the ball) versus risky decisions (possibility of losing possession). When defending in the middle third you want to get immediate pressure on the ball, you want to funnel in to eliminate space for opponents.

Defensive Third-this is where when you have the ball you want to make the safest, best decision, and players should take few risks in the defensive third. Players defending near their own goal should look to get the ball wide and away from their net. As the players develop and grow the ability to keep possession after winning the ball off an opponent is the goal within the defensive third.

I know there is a lot of information here and if you have any further questions please don't hesitate to ask. I also wanted to give you some reference as to how to explain certain dynamics of the game to your players. Some of you may know all of this but for some of you I thought this would be helpful to you and your team. I would be happy to elaborate on any or all of the categories as needed so please email me if you have any more questions, Emily-Snyder@ameritech.net.