

The SCAN Handbook

Athlete Improvement Methodology



Learning Manual

Grant R. Davis

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I. The SCAN Program



CHAPTER 1.



Forward - The Reason

SCAN was not created because I wanted to build another soccer program, another player evaluation system, or another coaching curriculum. It was created because over time I kept witnessing something that became impossible for me to ignore. I continually saw young athletes being defined by outcomes rather than development. Goals scored, wins and losses, playing time, physical size, speed, and current performance often became the primary measurements used to determine value. While those things certainly have importance, I slowly began realizing that many of the characteristics shaping long-term success were happening beneath the surface where very few people were looking.

As I continued coaching, I started noticing that athletes who demonstrated the greatest long-term growth were not always the athletes receiving the most attention in the present moment. Sometimes the athlete scoring goals was not the athlete experiencing the greatest development. Sometimes the player making mistakes was not the player struggling the most. Often the quiet player who continued asking for the ball after making a mistake was demonstrating tremendous courage. Sometimes the teammate encouraging others after a difficult game was showing leadership that never appeared on a stat sheet. Sometimes the athlete continuing to compete despite adversity was demonstrating resilience that mattered far more than the outcome of that particular game.

I also began witnessing how quickly labels can shape young athletes. Comments like, "He isn't aggressive enough," "She doesn't have soccer IQ," or "He just doesn't want it enough" were often spoken casually. Sometimes those observations contained small pieces of truth, but many times they became assumptions rather than understanding. Then assumptions slowly became labels, and labels eventually became identities. Children hear the words adults use. Then they begin believing those words. Over time they sometimes begin becoming what they repeatedly hear about themselves.

The more I coached, the more I realized that the scoreboard was telling only a small part of the story. Scoreboards capture moments, but they rarely capture development. They do not show confidence beginning to emerge. They do not show resilience after failure. They do not show leadership developing within a teammate. They do not show courage. They do not show growth. Many of the most important things happening within athletes occur in places where very few people are looking.

Then coaching became even more personal. Life has a way of changing perspective. It reminds us that every child stepping onto a field carries a story that most people cannot see. Some athletes are carrying fear. Some are carrying pressure. Some are carrying doubt. Some are carrying challenges outside of sports entirely. Some simply need someone to believe in them before they fully learn to believe in themselves.

I started realizing that coaches carry far more influence than they sometimes understand. Coaches do not simply influence performance. Coaches influence confidence. Coaches influence identity. Coaches influence belief. Coaches influence how athletes see themselves and what they think they are capable of becoming. That realization eventually became the foundation of SCAN.

SCAN stands for Support, Challenge, Awareness, and Next Step. Support means creating environments where athletes feel safe enough to learn, fail, and grow. Challenge means stretching athletes beyond comfort while maintaining belief in their abilities. Awareness means helping athletes understand themselves, their game, and the environments around them. Next Step means creating ownership and intentional action toward continued development.

SCAN exists because I believe sports should develop more than players. Sports should develop people. I want coaches to see beyond the scoreboard. I want parents to understand development beyond statistics. I want athletes to recognize that their value is not attached to one game, one mistake, or one moment. Most of all, I want young athletes to leave environments believing more in themselves than when they arrived.

Years from now, very few athletes will remember the score from a youth game. Many will not remember tournament standings or statistics. But they will remember confidence. They will remember encouragement. They will remember environments. They will remember who believed in them. That is why I created SCAN.

**"Development is Happening Beneath the Surface;
Coaching should learn to see it."**

-Grant R Davis



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CHAPTER 2.



My Story - Lessons From Coaching

If someone had told me years ago that coaching youth soccer would eventually become one of the most meaningful parts of my life, I probably would have laughed. I did not begin this journey with dreams of becoming a coach. I did not grow up thinking I would someday spend evenings standing beside fields carrying cones, studying player movement, or replaying games in my head long after they ended. Like many people, life first took me in a different direction.

I spent years working as a landman in the oil and gas industry. That work taught me lessons that I still carry with me today: patience, persistence, attention to detail, and learning how to see what other people sometimes miss. Running title was never simply about reading documents. It was about following a story backward through time. You quickly learned that what appeared on the surface was not always the complete truth. Ownership was not always what people assumed. Answers often existed beneath layers that required time and patience to uncover.

What I did not realize then was how much coaching would eventually resemble that process.

Athletes are very similar.

What we see on the surface is rarely the complete story. When I first stepped into coaching, I probably approached it like many coaches do. I focused heavily on outcomes. I noticed missed passes, turnovers, poor positioning, goals conceded, and mistakes. I believed I was seeing the game. Looking back now, I realize I was mostly seeing results. I had not yet learned to see patterns, and more importantly, I had not yet learned to truly see kids.

Over time I started noticing something that completely changed how I viewed coaching. Two players could make the exact same mistake for completely different reasons. One player might lose possession because they failed to recognize pressure. Another might lose possession because they were afraid of making a mistake. One athlete might stop communicating because they did not understand where to go. Another athlete might stop communicating because their confidence disappeared after a difficult moment earlier in the game.

The behaviors looked identical.

The causes were completely different.

That realization changed everything for me.

I started noticing things that many people overlook. I noticed body language. I noticed who continued asking for the ball after mistakes and who quietly disappeared for several minutes. I noticed who encouraged teammates and who blamed them. I noticed which players looked toward the sideline before making decisions and which players played with freedom. I noticed who seemed to be carrying confidence and who appeared to be slowly losing it.

And honestly, that bothered me.

Because I saw how quickly adults can unintentionally place limitations on children. I repeatedly heard comments like, "He isn't aggressive enough," "She doesn't have soccer IQ," "He just doesn't want it enough," or "That player isn't athletic." Sometimes those observations contained pieces of truth. But many times they became assumptions, and assumptions slowly became labels. Then labels eventually became identities.

Children hear those words.

Then they begin believing them.

Then they sometimes begin becoming them.

One of my greatest teachers throughout this journey has been my own son, Jhett. People naturally notice obvious things first. They see how hard he can strike a soccer ball. They see competitiveness. They see effort. They see moments.

But I started seeing something much deeper.

- I saw resilience.
- I saw courage.
- I saw persistence.

I saw a kid who continued moving forward despite opinions, expectations, and noise around him. I began realizing something powerful: people are often inspired by effort long before they are inspired by results. People recognize authenticity. They recognize perseverance. They recognize heart.

Then coaching became even more personal.

Life has a way of changing perspective. It reminds us that every child stepping onto a field carries a story that most people cannot see. Some athletes carry fear. Some carry pressure. Some carry uncertainty. Some carry struggles outside of sports entirely. Some simply need someone to believe in them before they can fully believe in themselves.

That realization changed the way I viewed every athlete I coached. I began believing that coaches have a responsibility to assume that every athlete deserves patience before judgment. One of the most impactful experiences in my coaching journey came through my U.S. Soccer D License education. I initially thought I would learn formations, systems, tactics, and exercises. And I did.

But I left learning something much larger. I learned that coaching is not simply about giving answers.

It is about creating environments. I learned about guided discovery. I learned that athletes grow when support and challenge exist together. I learned that development frequently hides beneath results. Most importantly, I learned that confidence changes everything.

Because I saw how quickly adults can unintentionally place limitations on children. Confident athletes communicate.

- **Confident athletes attempt difficult things.**
- **Confident athletes recover after mistakes.**
- **Confident athletes become leaders.**
- **Confident athletes become themselves.**

Over time all of these experiences slowly connected into one central belief: sports should not simply develop players. Sports should develop people.

That belief eventually became the foundation of SCAN.

Everything coaching has taught me ultimately comes back to one idea: competition matters, performance matters, and winning matters—but years from now very few athletes will remember the score from a youth soccer game.

They will remember how they felt.

They will remember who believed in them.

And they will remember the environments that helped them believe in themselves.

CHAPTER 3.



Objective vs. Subjective Coaching

One of the most powerful realities within coaching is that two coaches can stand side-by-side, watch the exact same game, observe the exact same player, and walk away with completely different conclusions. One coach may believe an athlete played exceptionally well while another may believe the same athlete struggled significantly. One coach may see intelligence while another sees hesitation. One coach may see effort while another sees inconsistency. The game itself did not change. The athlete did not change. Only the interpretation changed.

This reality creates one of the greatest challenges within youth development because coaching is not simply about what coaches see. Coaching is heavily influenced by how coaches interpret what they see. Every coach enters environments carrying experiences that shape perception. Previous playing experiences, previous coaching experiences, competitive philosophies, personal beliefs, preferences, successes, failures, and expectations all become invisible lenses through which coaches observe athletes. These lenses are not inherently negative. Experience often becomes extremely valuable because it allows coaches to notice patterns more quickly and recognize situations that less experienced coaches might overlook. However, problems begin when observations immediately become conclusions rather than questions.

Conclusions reached too quickly often become assumptions. Assumptions frequently become labels. Labels become repeated messages, and repeated messages eventually begin influencing how athletes see themselves. This process often happens slowly and unintentionally. Coaches rarely intend to create limitations for athletes. In many cases, coaches genuinely believe they are helping. Yet repeated language can carry enormous weight within youth environments.

Subjective coaching frequently occurs when opinions, feelings, interpretations, and personal impressions become the primary source of evaluation. Subjective observations often sound confident because they appear simple and direct. Coaches may hear statements such as "He doesn't compete," "She's naturally gifted," "He isn't aggressive," "That player has great instincts," or "She just wants it more." Statements like these are common throughout youth sports and sometimes they contain pieces of truth. The challenge is not that they are always wrong. The challenge is that they frequently stop at conclusions without exploring deeper causes.

Subjective observations typically attempt to answer the question: What do I believe happened? Objective coaching attempts to answer a different question: What actually happened? While those two questions may initially appear similar, they often create dramatically different outcomes.

Athlete performance rarely occurs inside simple environments. Performance is influenced by many variables interacting simultaneously. Confidence affects decisions. Fatigue affects movement. Pressure affects communication. Emotions influence execution.

Understanding influences positioning. Relationships influence confidence. Environmental stress influences behavior. Because so many variables continuously interact, quick conclusions often miss important information.

Consider a player who repeatedly stops checking toward the ball during a game. One coach may immediately conclude that the athlete lacks work rate. Another coach may believe the player lacks competitiveness. Another may assume poor attitude or low effort. However, slowing the observation process may reveal an entirely different story. The athlete may have stopped moving after multiple unsuccessful passes. Confidence may have disappeared after mistakes. Fatigue may have influenced movement patterns. Tactical uncertainty may have created hesitation. The athlete may have become overwhelmed by pressure or simply misunderstood positioning responsibilities.

The visible behavior remained exactly the same.

The causes were entirely different.

Without deeper observation, coaches risk treating symptoms rather than causes. A player struggling with confidence may receive additional conditioning work. A player struggling with awareness may receive more technical repetition. A player struggling with understanding may receive criticism rather than support. None of those interventions address the actual issue.

One of the most difficult realities within coaching is recognizing that human beings naturally seek shortcuts. The brain prefers fast answers because certainty feels comfortable. Particularly during emotional moments, competitive environments, or stressful situations, coaches naturally move toward immediate conclusions.

After games, conversations often become centered around memorable moments. Coaches remember missed goals, turnovers, penalties, mistakes, and emotional situations because dramatic moments naturally attract attention. Human memory is selective. It remembers events carrying emotional impact. However, memorable moments do not always represent complete performance.

An athlete may lose possession several times during a game while simultaneously demonstrating exceptional movement, leadership, awareness, and resilience throughout the match. Another athlete may score goals while demonstrating poor movement away from the ball, limited communication, or inconsistent decision-making. The most memorable moment is not always the most meaningful moment.

Objective coaching attempts to slow the evaluation process and create structure around observation. Instead of immediately asking Why did that happen? objective coaching begins by asking different questions. Coaches begin asking: What specifically happened? How frequently did it happen? Under what conditions did it occur? Did the behavior repeat? What patterns are emerging?

The questions themselves change the process.

Instead of saying "He lacks confidence," objective coaching asks: What behaviors suggest confidence changes? Instead of saying "She lacks leadership," objective coaching asks: What communication patterns repeatedly appear? Instead of saying "He has poor soccer intelligence," objective coaching asks: What information is the athlete recognizing and what information may be missing?

The language changes.

The process changes.

The outcomes change.

Objective coaching does not eliminate intuition, nor does it remove experience. Some of the most important observations coaches make will never appear within a spreadsheet or statistical report. Coaches notice body language, emotional responses, confidence shifts, leadership behaviors, energy levels, engagement, and relationships. These observations matter greatly because athletes are people before they are performers.

The goal is not replacing subjective insight. The goal is strengthening subjective insight with objective evidence. Strong coaching frequently follows a progression of observation, evidence collection, pattern recognition, interpretation, intervention, and eventually development planning. Unfortunately, many environments unintentionally reverse that process. Coaches begin with conclusions, then seek evidence supporting those conclusions. Over time this creates confirmation bias, where coaches repeatedly see only what they already believe.

SPI was designed to slow that process and encourage deeper observation. Better coaching frequently begins by delaying judgment. Raising coaching standards requires far more than tactical knowledge or understanding formations. It requires improving how coaches observe athletes. Great coaches do not simply see actions. Great coaches recognize patterns. Great coaches do not simply evaluate moments. Great coaches evaluate environments. Great coaches do not simply identify weaknesses. Great coaches identify opportunities.

Because athletes are rarely one moment.

They are rarely one mistake.

They are rarely one performance.

They are developing stories.

And the better coaches become at observing those stories, the better environments they create for growth.

OBJECTIVE COACHING



SUBJECTIVE COACHING

THE DIFFERENCE ISN'T WHAT YOU SEE, IT'S HOW YOU SEE IT.



FOCUSES ON EVIDENCE AND OBSERVATION



OBSERVES BEHAVIOR

Looks at what the athlete actually does in the game or training.



USES DATA AND PATTERNS

Collects information over time to find trends and repeated behaviors.



ASKS BETTER QUESTIONS

Seeks to understand the why behind the behavior.



SEPARATES FACTS FROM OPINIONS

Bases feedback on what is seen, not what is assumed.



DEVELOPS THE ATHLETE

Creates a plan that addresses real needs and supports long-term growth.



OUTCOME: Clarity, understanding, trust, and long-term player development.



FOCUS



INFORMATION



APPROACH



FEEDBACK



RESULT



FOCUSES ON OPINIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS



INTERPRETS BEHAVIOR

Looks at actions through personal beliefs and past experiences.



RELYS ON IMPRESSIONS

Forms conclusions from one moment or small sample.



MAKES ASSUMPTIONS

Fills in the gaps without asking questions.



CONFUSES OPINIONS WITH FACTS

Provides feedback based on feelings, not verified behavior.



LIMITS THE ATHLETE

Creates labels that can reduce confidence and limit potential.



OUTCOME: Misunderstandings, frustration, labels, and limited player growth.



BETTER OBSERVATION. BETTER QUESTIONS. **BETTER COACHING.** BETTER ATHLETES.

Objective vs Subjective Coaching in Youth Soccer PowerPoint



CHAPTER 4.



The Impact of US Soccer D License

Building Better Coaches to Build Better Players

The U.S. Soccer D License represents much more than a coaching certification. Many coaches initially enter the course expecting to learn formations, tactics, systems of play, and training activities. Those components certainly exist and are valuable, but the deeper impact often extends far beyond X's and O's. The D License challenges coaches to rethink how they observe, communicate, teach, and create learning environments for athletes. Rather than simply adding more information, the course often changes the way coaches view the game and the people playing it.

One of the most significant impacts of the D License is the shift from teaching answers to facilitating learning. Many coaches naturally enter coaching believing their responsibility is to constantly provide information. The instinct is understandable. Coaches want to help players improve, so they stop activities, correct mistakes immediately, and tell players exactly what should happen. While direct instruction certainly has value, the D License introduces a different perspective. Instead of focusing solely on providing answers, coaches begin learning how to create environments where players discover solutions for themselves.

This creates an important developmental shift. Athletes who constantly receive answers often become dependent upon external instruction. They begin looking toward the sideline before making decisions or waiting for guidance before acting. Athletes who learn through guided discovery gradually become more independent. They begin recognizing information earlier, solving problems more confidently, and taking ownership of their own learning process. Over time, these athletes frequently become more adaptable because they are not simply memorizing solutions—they are learning how to find solutions.

The D License also changes how coaches understand the game itself. Many people initially view soccer as a collection of individual actions such as passing, dribbling, shooting, or defending. The course gradually introduces a broader perspective that views soccer as a constantly changing environment requiring continuous decision-making. Space changes. Pressure changes. Possession changes. Roles change. Responsibilities change. Every moment requires players to gather information and solve problems.

As coaches begin understanding these realities, training environments often begin changing as well. Sessions become less focused on isolated repetitions and more focused on creating realistic situations. Activities increasingly emphasize problem-solving, awareness, communication, decision-making, and adaptation rather than simply rehearsing technical actions without context. The focus shifts from perfect execution toward meaningful learning experiences.

Another powerful impact of the D License involves age-appropriate development. One of the most common challenges in youth sports occurs when adult expectations become disconnected from how children actually learn and develop. Coaches sometimes unintentionally expect young athletes to process information, regulate emotions, understand tactics, and perform skills at levels beyond their current developmental stage. The D License encourages coaches to understand the athlete before attempting to teach the game.

This creates important questions within coaching environments. Coaches begin asking what players are realistically capable of understanding at certain ages. They begin considering how much information should be delivered at one time and how training activities can match developmental needs. Instead of creating environments built around unrealistic expectations, coaches learn to build environments aligned with how children learn best. As a result, athletes often experience increased confidence because learning replaces perfection as the primary objective.

The D License also significantly improves observation skills. Many coaches initially believe observation simply means watching games and practices. Over time, coaches learn that effective observation requires greater intentionality. Observation becomes the process of identifying patterns, recognizing behaviors, understanding relationships, and noticing factors influencing performance. Coaches begin paying attention to movement patterns, communication habits, decision-making behaviors, learning tendencies, and environmental influences rather than focusing exclusively on outcomes.

This often changes the way coaches evaluate athletes. Instead of quickly identifying weaknesses, coaches begin identifying developmental opportunities. Rather than asking what is wrong with an athlete, coaches begin asking what information may be missing or what support may help the athlete improve. Observation becomes less reactive and more purposeful.

Communication also becomes an important area of development throughout the D License experience. Many coaches initially communicate through commands and constant instruction. Players hear words such as pass, shoot, press, move, and get back. While commands sometimes provide immediate direction, the D License encourages coaches to think more intentionally about communication. Language gradually shifts from directing players toward guiding players.

Questions become powerful tools for learning. Coaches begin asking players what they saw, what options existed, what changed, and what they might do differently next time. These conversations create environments where athletes actively participate in learning rather than simply receiving information. Over time, players often become more confident thinkers because they are involved in the process rather than being passive recipients of instruction. Perhaps the greatest long-term impact of the D License is that it raises coaching standards beyond simply winning games or organizing practices. Coaching begins moving beyond correcting mistakes and delivering information. The focus gradually expands toward creating environments, facilitating learning, improving observation, supporting growth, and developing

people through sport.

This shift often extends beyond soccer itself. Athletes frequently become more confident, more aware, more resilient, and more willing to solve problems independently. They become more comfortable learning through mistakes and more capable of adapting within changing environments.

The true impact of the U.S. Soccer D License is not simply teaching coaches how to run sessions or organize practices. Its greatest impact is teaching coaches how to create environments where athletes can grow. Better environments create better learning experiences. Better learning experiences create stronger development. And ultimately, better coaches create better people through sport.



USSF-ID: 1000-0000-0167-7773

D License: 23021200

Check to See if Coach is Licensed Below:

<https://learning.ussoccer.com/directory>



CHAPTER 5.

Foundations of SCAN

Building Better Environments for Athlete Development

SCAN was created from the belief that athlete development extends far beyond performance, statistics, and visible outcomes. Youth sports environments often place significant attention on goals scored, wins and losses, rankings, playing time, and current performance levels. While these measurements certainly provide information, they rarely capture the complete picture of growth. They often describe what happened, but they do not always explain why it happened or who the athlete is becoming through the process.

Throughout years of coaching and observing young athletes, one reality became increasingly clear: many of the characteristics most connected to long-term growth are often the same characteristics that receive the least attention. Confidence, resilience, communication, leadership, self-awareness, adaptability, emotional regulation, and ownership frequently influence future development just as much as technical skill or physical ability. However, these characteristics are often more difficult to measure and therefore easier to overlook.

SCAN was designed to create a framework that intentionally focuses on these developmental areas. Rather than viewing athlete growth as a series of isolated performances, SCAN views development as a process shaped by experiences, relationships, environments, and learning opportunities. The framework recognizes that athletes are not simply performers; they are individuals continuously learning about themselves and their capabilities.

Development rarely follows a straight line. Athletes experience periods of rapid improvement and periods where progress feels slower. Confidence increases and decreases. Motivation changes. Strengths evolve. New challenges appear. Growth often includes frustration, uncertainty, setbacks, and moments where progress is difficult to recognize. Because of this, development requires more than instruction alone. It requires environments intentionally designed to support growth.

SUPPORT

The first foundation within SCAN is Support. Support creates environments where athletes feel valued, respected, and safe enough to learn. Support does not mean removing expectations or protecting athletes from difficulty. Rather, support creates stability and trust. Athletes who feel supported are often more willing to communicate, take risks, ask questions, and continue participating after difficult moments. They become more comfortable attempting challenging actions because mistakes become viewed as part of learning rather than evidence of failure.

CHALLENGE

The second foundation is Challenge. Growth rarely occurs when athletes remain entirely comfortable. Development often requires experiences that stretch current abilities and encourage problem-solving, adaptation, and persistence. Appropriate challenge helps athletes discover strengths they may not realize they possess. Effective challenge exists in environments where athletes experience difficulty while maintaining belief that success remains possible. Too little challenge creates comfort without growth, while excessive challenge often creates frustration and discouragement.

AWARENESS

The third foundation is Awareness. Awareness involves helping athletes better understand themselves and the environments around them. Athletes who develop awareness begin recognizing patterns within their decisions, emotions, behaviors, and performances. They gradually become more capable of identifying strengths, recognizing growth opportunities, and understanding factors influencing performance. Awareness helps athletes move beyond simply reacting to experiences and begin learning from them intentionally.

NEXT STEP

The final foundation is Next Step. Development ultimately requires ownership. Coaches and parents provide guidance and support, but athletes eventually become responsible for participating in their own growth process. Rather than becoming overwhelmed by distant goals or future outcomes, athletes benefit from focusing on manageable actions that move them forward. Improvement frequently occurs through small, repeated behaviors performed consistently over time. The Next Step principle helps athletes identify practical actions that transform learning into progress.

Together these principles create the foundation of SCAN: Support, Challenge, Awareness, and Next Step. Support creates trust. Challenge creates growth opportunities. Awareness creates understanding. Next Step creates ownership and action. Individually each principle provides value, but together they create environments where athletes can develop not only as players, but as people.

The purpose of SCAN has never been simply creating stronger athletes. The purpose has always been creating stronger people through sport. Because long after scores and statistics are forgotten, confidence, resilience, leadership, and belief in oneself often remain.



CHAPTER 6.

SCAN Fundamentals

Understanding the Principles Behind Athlete Growth

Before athletes can fully develop technically, tactically, physically, or competitively, there must first be an understanding of the process that drives growth itself. SCAN Fundamentals was created to establish that understanding. Rather than functioning as a collection of drills, activities, or performance measurements, SCAN Fundamentals serves as the guiding philosophy behind how development should occur. It establishes the beliefs, principles, and thought processes that shape the environments athletes experience throughout their journey.

Many development systems naturally focus attention on outcomes. Coaches often ask questions centered around performance: Did we win? Did the athlete perform well? Did skills improve? Did the team achieve the desired result? While these questions provide useful information, they often describe the end result of a process rather than the process itself. SCAN Fundamentals shifts attention toward understanding the conditions and experiences that make growth possible.

Development rarely happens as a predictable or perfectly organized process. Athletes do not progress at identical speeds, and improvement rarely follows a straight path. Confidence changes over time. Motivation fluctuates. Skills improve rapidly in some areas while requiring patience in others. Growth frequently includes setbacks, frustration, uncertainty, and periods where progress becomes difficult to recognize. Many athletes experience moments where improvement appears invisible even while important developmental changes are occurring beneath the surface.

Understanding this reality changes the role of the coach. Coaching becomes less about controlling every action and more about creating environments where learning can naturally occur. Instead of viewing mistakes as problems that require immediate correction, mistakes become information that helps athletes better understand themselves and their environments. Instead of viewing setbacks as evidence of failure, setbacks become experiences capable of creating resilience and growth.

The SCAN philosophy recognizes that athletes are continuously learning from every environment they enter. Learning does not occur only during formal instruction or organized activities. Athletes learn from interactions with coaches. They learn from teammates. They learn from challenges, successes, mistakes, and responses to adversity. They learn from the language used around them and the expectations placed upon them. Every experience contributes to development in some way.

Because of this, environments become extremely important. Environments influence confidence. Environments influence decision-making. Environments influence communication, effort, leadership, and willingness to take risks. Two athletes possessing similar ability levels may experience very different developmental outcomes simply because the environments surrounding them create different experiences.

Athletes entering positive learning environments frequently become more willing to participate, communicate, and explore new solutions. They often become more comfortable attempting difficult actions because mistakes feel connected to learning rather than judgment. Athletes entering environments dominated by fear or excessive pressure may begin protecting themselves from failure rather than pursuing growth. They may become hesitant, quiet, or overly concerned with avoiding mistakes.

SCAN Fundamentals also recognizes that development extends beyond athletic performance itself. Technical ability, tactical understanding, and physical development remain important components of sport. However, many characteristics influencing long-term success exist outside traditional performance categories. Confidence influences whether athletes attempt difficult actions. Awareness influences decisions. Leadership affects teammates and environments. Resilience influences responses after failure. Ownership influences whether athletes become active participants within their own development.

These characteristics rarely function independently. They constantly interact with one another. A highly skilled athlete may struggle expressing technical ability if confidence decreases. An athlete demonstrating strong physical ability may experience challenges if awareness remains limited. A player with strong decision-making abilities may become hesitant if fear of failure begins influencing behavior.

Understanding these interactions creates a broader perspective of athlete development.

Athletes become viewed as complete individuals rather than collections of isolated skills or performances. Their experiences, emotions, relationships, strengths, and challenges all contribute to the developmental process.

Ultimately, SCAN Fundamentals establishes one of the most important beliefs within the entire framework: Athlete development begins by recognizing the individual behind the game. They arrive in environments carrying experiences that often remain invisible to those around them. They bring confidence, uncertainty, motivation, fear, excitement, and challenges into every interaction. Coaches who recognize this often create stronger developmental environments because they begin seeing athletes beyond immediate performance.



SCAN FUNDAMENTALS



UNDERSTANDING THE PRINCIPLES THAT
DRIVE MEANINGFUL ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT



SCAN is a simple but powerful framework built around four connected principles: **Support**, **Challenge**, **Awareness**, and **Next Step**. Together, these principles create environments where athletes can grow as players and as people.



SUPPORT

CREATE ENVIRONMENTS WHERE ATHLETES FEEL SAFE, VALUED, AND BELIEVED IN.

Support is more than encouragement. It is building trust, showing respect, and providing the stability athletes need to take risks and learn.

Athletes who feel supported are more likely to:

- Communicate openly
- Ask questions
- Take risks
- Recover from mistakes
- Stay engaged through challenges
- Believe in themselves



KEY IMPACT

Support creates trust.
Trust creates confidence.
Confidence creates expression.



CHALLENGE

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH BY STRETCHING ATHLETES BEYOND THEIR COMFORT ZONE.

Growth rarely happens in comfort. Appropriate challenge builds resilience, develops problem-solving, and helps athletes discover what they are capable of.

Effective challenge is:

- Purposeful and intentional
- Right level: not too easy, not too overwhelming
- Focused on development, not just results
- Safe enough to try, difficult enough to grow



KEY IMPACT

Challenge creates struggle.
Struggle creates growth.
Growth builds belief.



AWARENESS

HELP ATHLETES UNDERSTAND THEMSELVES, THEIR GAME, AND THE WORLD AROUND THEM.

Awareness turns experiences into understanding. When athletes recognize patterns, emotions, decisions, and habits, they gain the power to improve.

Athletes develop awareness by:

- Reflecting on actions and decisions
- Recognizing strengths and areas for growth
- Understanding how emotions influence performance
- Seeing the bigger picture
- Learning from every experience



KEY IMPACT

Awareness creates insight.
Insight creates understanding.
Understanding drives better decisions.



NEXT STEP

TURN UNDERSTANDING INTO ACTION. FOCUS ON WHAT CAN BE DONE TODAY TO GET BETTER TOMORROW.

Big goals can feel overwhelming. Next Step breaks growth into small, manageable actions that create real progress over time.

Athletes take ownership by:

- Identifying their next action
- Setting small, meaningful goals
- Building good habits
- Staying consistent
- Evaluating progress and adjusting



KEY IMPACT

Next Step creates ownership.
Ownership creates action.
Action creates progress.

THE PRINCIPLES WORK TOGETHER

You cannot remove one principle and expect the others to be fully effective.



Support without Challenge creates comfort without growth.

Challenge without Support creates pressure without trust.

Awareness without Next Step creates understanding without action.

Next Step without Awareness creates activity without learning.

WHY IT MATTERS



Athletes are people before they are performers.
They bring emotions, experiences, strengths, and challenges into every environment they enter.



Environments shape development more than we realize.
The right environment builds confidence, resilience, and a love for the game.



Growth is not always visible.
Many important changes happen beneath the surface before they show up in performance.



The goal is not just better players.
The goal is stronger, more confident, more resilient people who carry these lessons far beyond the game.



KEY TAKEAWAYS



Create safe, positive environments where athletes feel they belong.



Challenge athletes with purpose and help them embrace discomfort.



Help athletes reflect, learn, and understand themselves and their game.



Empower athletes to take ownership of their next step every day.



Celebrate progress, effort, and growth over outcomes and results.

SCAN IS MORE THAN A FRAMEWORK—IT IS A PHILOSOPHY.



SCAN

SUPPORT • CHALLENGE • AWARENESS • NEXT STEP

A COMPLETE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR COACHES, PLAYERS & PROGRAMS



S SUPPORT

Create an environment where athletes feel valued, trusted, and supported.

- Build relationships
- Encourage and empower
- Create psychological safety
- Focus on the person
- Develop confidence



C CHALLENGE

Provide purposeful challenges that push athletes to grow beyond their comfort zone.

- High expectations
- Age-appropriate challenge
- Promote effort and resilience
- Embrace mistakes
- Build mental toughness



A AWARENESS

Increase understanding of self, teammates, the game, and the environment.

- Game awareness
- Self-awareness
- Decision making
- Observe and learn
- Understand the why



N NEXT STEP

Take intentional action toward improvement and continuous development.

- Set goals
- Create a plan
- Take action
- Reflect and adjust
- Keep growing



PLAYER CENTERED DEVELOPMENT



COACH DRIVEN STANDARDS



LONG TERM GROWTH



BUILDING BETTER PLAYERS AND BETTER PEOPLE

SEE MORE. UNDERSTAND DEEPER. DEVELOP COMPLETELY.

II. Developing the Complete Coach



SCAN

DEVELOPING THE

COMPLETE COACH

LEADER • TEACHER • MENTOR • ROLE MODEL • DEVELOPER

GROWING COACHES WHO GROW PEOPLE

THE COMPLETE COACH

A complete coach develops athletes on and off the field by leading with purpose, teaching with clarity, building relationships, and creating environments where athletes can grow into confident, resilient, and capable individuals.

THE SCAN FOUNDATION

Great coaching begins with the SCAN framework. These four principles guide every decision, interaction, and environment you create.



SUPPORT
Create trust and positive relationships.



CHALLENGE
Provide purposeful challenge and high expectations.



AWARENESS
Help athletes understand themselves and the game.



NEXT STEP
Take intentional action and commit to growth.





1. LEADER

Leads by example and sets the standard for culture, effort, attitude, and character.

- Inspires and motivates
- Builds a strong team culture
- Holds self and others accountable
- Leads with integrity



2. TEACHER

Teaches the game with clarity, intention, and understanding.

- Plans with purpose
- Communicates effectively
- Breaks down concepts simply
- Creates meaningful learning experiences



3. RELATIONSHIP BUILDER

Builds strong, genuine relationships with athletes and families.

- Knows your athletes
- Listens and communicates
- Shows care and respect
- Builds trust and connection



4. MENTOR

Invests in the person, not just the player. Helps athletes grow in character and life.

- Encourages personal growth
- Teaches life lessons
- Supports through challenges
- Helps athletes discover purpose



5. ROLE MODEL

Represents the values you want your athletes to live by.

- Models respect and self-control
- Stays positive under pressure
- Demonstrates humility
- Lives with purpose



6. DEVELOPER

Commits to continuous improvement in self and others.

- Seeks feedback
- Learns and adapts
- Develops future leaders
- Creates long-term growth

CORE COMPETENCIES OF A COMPLETE COACH



VISION

Has a clear purpose and long-term perspective.



COMMUNICATION

Communicates with clarity, respect, and confidence.



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Understands and manages emotions in self and others.



DECISION MAKING

Makes thoughtful, timely, and effective decisions.



RESILIENCE

Stays steady, adapts, and leads through adversity.



SELF AWARENESS

Knows strengths, weaknesses, and continues to grow.

WHAT ATHLETES NEED FROM COACHES

- Believe in them
- Challenge them
- Teach them
- Support them
- Hold them accountable
- Care about them as people

THE IMPACT OF A COMPLETE COACH

-  Athletes develop confidence and resilience.
-  Teams develop culture and unity.
-  Individuals develop character and purpose.
-  The game becomes a tool for life-long growth.

DAILY REMINDERS FOR THE COMPLETE COACH

- Lead with purpose.
- Teach with patience.
- Build relationships first.
- Create a positive environment.
- Challenge with belief.
- Help athletes become their best selves.

“A GREAT COACH IMPACTS THE GAME. A COMPLETE COACH CHANGES LIVES.”



Serve Others
Put the needs of your athletes and team first.



Stay Humble
Keep learning and grow every day.



Have Purpose
Know your why and coach with intention.



Leave a Legacy
Build something that lasts beyond you.



Honor the Game
Respect the game, others, and yourself.

CHAPTER 7.



Four Moments of the Game

Seeing Soccer as a Continuous Environment Rather Than Isolated Events

One of the most important shifts a coach can make is moving from seeing soccer as a collection of isolated actions to understanding it as a continuous, constantly changing environment. Many coaches initially view the game through individual moments such as passes, shots, tackles, mistakes, goals, or turnovers. While those actions certainly matter, they represent only small pieces of a much larger picture.

Soccer is not played as separate events. The game constantly moves from one situation to another. Space changes. Pressure changes. Roles change. Possession changes. Responsibilities change. Players continuously gather information, solve problems, communicate, and adapt to new situations. The ability to recognize these changing environments often becomes one of the biggest differences between simply watching the game and truly understanding it.

The Four Moments of the Game framework provides coaches and athletes with a way to organize and understand these constantly changing environments. Rather than focusing only on isolated actions, the Four Moments help coaches understand what players are experiencing, what decisions are being made, and what behaviors are repeatedly appearing during competition.

The four moments are:

Attacking Organization

Attacking Transition

Defensive Organization

Defensive Transition

These moments occur continuously throughout a match. They rarely happen independently and often change within seconds. A team may move from attacking organization into defensive transition immediately after losing possession, and seconds later move into defensive organization before quickly returning into attacking transition after regaining possession.

Understanding these moments helps athletes recognize that the game is fluid rather than static.

Attacking Organization occurs when a team has established possession and is attempting to create scoring opportunities. During this moment, players begin organizing movement and positioning to create space, support options, and numerical advantages. Athletes continuously ask themselves questions such as:

Where is space available?

How can I support the player with the ball?

Can I create width?

Can I create depth?

Can I move defenders?

Can I create passing options?

Attacking Organization

Attacking organization involves much more than the player possessing the ball. Every athlete on the field influences attacking success. Movement away from the ball often becomes equally important as movement on the ball. Supporting angles, timing of runs, communication, spacing, and decision-making all contribute to successful attacking play.

Many young athletes initially become drawn toward the ball because the ball naturally captures attention. Over time athletes must gradually learn that soccer frequently becomes a game of creating and manipulating space rather than simply chasing possession.

Attacking Transition

Attacking Transition begins immediately after winning possession. This moment often becomes one of the most dangerous periods within the game because opponents may still be disorganized following the change of possession. Athletes must quickly recognize whether opportunities exist to attack immediately or whether possession should be maintained.

Questions during attacking transition often include:

Can we attack quickly?

Where is space available?

Are numbers forward?

Should possession be secured?

How quickly can we organize?

Athletes who recognize transition moments early frequently create advantages because they identify opportunities before opponents fully recover defensively.

This moment often requires speed of thought more than speed of movement.

Many athletes run quickly. Fewer athletes recognize opportunities quickly.

Defensive Organization

Defensive Organization occurs when a team no longer possesses the ball and has established defensive structure. During this moment athletes attempt to reduce space, delay attacking opportunities, create compactness, and regain possession.

Defensive organization involves coordinated team behavior rather than isolated defending actions.

Players continuously process questions such as:

- Who applies pressure?
- Who provides support?
- How do we reduce space?
- Where is danger developing?
- How can we remain compact?

Many young players initially believe defending only applies to defenders. Over time athletes begin realizing that defending becomes a collective responsibility involving every player on the field.

- Forwards defend.
- Midfielders defend.
- Defenders defend.
- Goalkeepers defend.

Effective defensive organization frequently depends on communication, awareness, positioning, and teamwork rather than simply effort alone.

Defensive Transition

Defensive Transition begins immediately after losing possession. This moment frequently becomes one of the most important and overlooked periods of the game. Teams often become vulnerable because players are mentally and physically shifting from attacking responsibilities toward defensive responsibilities.

Athletes immediately begin asking:

- Can we win the ball back quickly?
- Can we delay the attack?
- Who applies pressure?
- Where is danger?
- How quickly can we recover?

The first few seconds following loss of possession often become critical. Teams reacting quickly frequently prevent dangerous attacks before they fully develop. The speed of reaction during defensive transition often determines whether teams regain control or become exposed. One of the most important lessons within the Four Moments framework is recognizing that athletes frequently experience different demands during each environment.

athletes frequently experience different demands during each environment.

Attacking organization may require creativity and patience.

Attacking transition may require quick recognition and decisive action.

Defensive organization may require discipline and communication.

Defensive transition may require urgency and awareness.

Understanding these differences helps coaches create more intentional training environments because training begins reflecting the realities of competition.

Instead of isolated technical exercises disconnected from the game, coaches can create activities that replicate the decisions, movements, and challenges athletes experience during matches.

This creates an important shift.

Training stops becoming about rehearsing movements.

Training becomes about understanding environments.

The Four Moments also connect naturally with the SPI framework because coaches can begin observing specific behaviors across each environment.

During Attacking Organization, coaches may observe:

- movement patterns
- technical execution
- awareness of space
- communication

During Attacking Transition:

- recognition speed
- decision-making
- urgency
- adaptability

During Defensive Organization:

- positioning
- leadership
- communication
- teamwork


During Defensive Transition:

- reaction time
- effort
- awareness
- resilience

Over time patterns begin emerging.

Those patterns provide coaches with information that supports development. Because ultimately the Four Moments of the Game are not simply tactical concepts. They are tools that help athletes and coaches better understand the game itself.

And the better athletes understand the environments around them, the better decisions they become capable of making within them.



THE 4 MOMENTS OF THE GAME

SEE IT. UNDERSTAND IT. MASTER IT.


The game is always changing. Success comes from recognizing the moment, responding with purpose, and executing together as a team.

THE GAME NEVER STOPS

- ✓ Recognize the moment
- ✓ React with purpose
- ✓ Execute together
- ✓ Create the advantage

1 ATTACKING ORGANIZATION

We have the ball and are building to create a scoring opportunity.



What it looks like:


- Possession and patience
- Create width, depth and support
- Move the ball and the players
- Unbalance the opponent
- Create and recognize opportunities

KEY FOCUS

- Awareness of space
- Movement off the ball
- Communication and timing
- Create advantages

2 ATTACKING TRANSITION

We just won the ball and can attack quickly.



What it looks like:


- Immediate support and forward runs
- Exploit space before the opponent recovers
- Play forward quickly when possible
- Secure possession if numbers aren't there
- Make fast, confident decisions

KEY FOCUS

- Speed of recognition
- Attack the space
- Decision making
- Create momentum

3 DEFENSIVE ORGANIZATION

We don't have the ball and are organized to defend.



What it looks like:


- Compact shape and balance
- Limit space and time
- Pressure the ball
- Protect the middle and the goal
- Force the opponent wide or backwards

KEY FOCUS

- Team shape
- Pressure and cover
- Communication and discipline
- Protect the goal

4 DEFENSIVE TRANSITION

We just lost the ball and must react immediately.



What it looks like:


- React fast and with urgency
- Delay or stop the attack
- Win the ball back quickly (counter-press)
- Get numbers behind the ball
- Recover shape as a team

KEY FOCUS

- Immediate reaction
- Win it or delay it
- Recover together
- Stop the danger


A CONTINUOUS CYCLE

The game flows from one moment to the next. Be ready for all four.



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graph LR; 1[1 ATTACKING ORGANIZATION] --> 2[2 ATTACKING TRANSITION]; 2 --> 3[3 DEFENSIVE ORGANIZATION]; 3 --> 4[4 DEFENSIVE TRANSITION]; 4 --> 1;
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MASTER THE MOMENTS. MASTER THE GAME.



GREAT PLAYERS UNDERSTAND THE GAME. GREAT TEAMS MASTER ALL FOUR MOMENTS.

CHAPTER 8.



The Importance of Video Evidence

Seeing What the Game Is Actually Showing Us

One of the greatest challenges within coaching is that the game happens quickly. Soccer is a continuous environment filled with movement, pressure, decisions, communication, and rapidly changing situations. Within only a few seconds, players process information, move into new spaces, react to pressure, solve problems, and transition into entirely different roles. At the same time, coaches attempt to observe positioning, effort, movement, communication, technical execution, and team behaviors. Because of the speed and complexity of the game, coaches naturally miss information.

This is not a weakness.

It is reality.

No coach sees everything. No coach captures every movement. No coach remembers every decision accurately. Human observation and memory naturally have limitations. Coaches often remember moments carrying emotional weight because emotions attract attention. Goals, mistakes, turnovers, missed opportunities, penalties, and major plays often become the moments that remain in memory long after games end. However, memorable moments do not always represent complete performance.

A player may lose possession several times during a match and those moments become highly visible because mistakes naturally stand out. Yet video review may later reveal that the same athlete consistently created passing angles, communicated effectively, recovered defensively, and supported teammates throughout the game. Another player may score goals and appear to have performed exceptionally well, while video review may reveal limited movement away from the ball, inconsistent positioning, or reduced involvement throughout large portions of the match.

The most memorable moment is not always the most meaningful moment. This reality becomes one of the primary reasons video evidence has become increasingly important within athlete development. Video provides coaches with an opportunity to slow down environments that naturally occur too quickly for complete observation. Instead of relying entirely upon memory, assumptions, emotions, or first impressions, coaches can revisit moments and observe what actually occurred.

Video creates something extremely valuable:

Evidence.

Instead of asking:

"What do I think happened?"

Coaches **can begin** asking:

"What actually happened?"

Although that difference initially appears small, it often changes the entire developmental process.

Within SCAN, video review was never intended to simply become a recording system. The purpose was never to prove coaches correct or identify mistakes for criticism. Video exists to reveal patterns that are difficult to consistently identify in real time. Over time I realized that watching film without structure often creates more opinions rather than more understanding. Coaches naturally begin noticing moments supporting what they already believe.

Because of that, the SCAN Video Review and Objective Observation System was developed.

The purpose of the system is simple:

Transform video into measurable evidence that improves development while reducing emotional bias.

Rather than watching entire games randomly and reacting emotionally to isolated moments, the SCAN process follows a structured progression:

Observe → Record → Identify Patterns → Interpret → Intervene → Measure Growth

Each step serves a purpose.

Observation comes first because development begins with seeing. Coaches simply watch and gather information without immediately creating conclusions.

Recording follows observation because memory can become selective. Specific behaviors, actions, and moments become documented rather than left to interpretation.

Pattern identification follows recording because one moment rarely defines an athlete. Repeated behaviors create stronger information than isolated events.

Interpretation occurs after patterns emerge. Coaches begin asking why behaviors repeatedly appear and what factors may be influencing performance.

Intervention then becomes intentional rather than emotional. Coaches create development plans based on evidence.

Growth, the final step, becomes measurable over time.

This sequence helps remove a common problem within youth sports environments:

Many coaches unintentionally reverse the process.

They conclude first.

Then search for evidence second.

SCAN attempts to reverse that pattern.

Observe first.

Interpret later.

Video review within SCAN also becomes organized around the Four Moments of the Game because the game continuously shifts between changing environments.

During **Attacking Organization**, coaches observe behaviors such as scanning before receiving, support movement, receiving angles, speed of play, and courage to attack available space.

Questions during review become:

Did the player create passing options?

Did they recognize overloads?

Did they identify opportunities to play forward?

During **Defensive Transition**, coaches observe immediate reactions following loss of possession, recovery effort, communication, pressing angles, and urgency.

Questions become:

How quickly did recovery occur?

Was pressure applied immediately?

Did the player delay dangerous attacks?

During **Defensive Organization**, observations include body shape, pressure on the ball, support positioning, communication, and runner tracking.

Questions include:

Was possession secured?

Did the player recognize opportunities quickly?

Was available space attacked immediately?

Organizing review by moments allows coaches to create structure around what can otherwise feel like chaos.

Video review also becomes increasingly powerful when connected directly to SPI. (Part III).

Within **MOVE**, coaches observe movement efficiency, coordination, balance recovery, and agility patterns.

Questions become:

Was movement controlled?

Was posture maintained during movement?

Within **MASTER**, coaches observe technical consistency under pressure including passing quality, first touch, dribbling efficiency, and finishing actions.

Questions become:

Did technical execution remain consistent under pressure?

Within **THINK**, coaches observe scanning, decision speed, awareness, and space recognition.

Questions become:

What information was gathered before decisions occurred?

Within **LEAD**, coaches examine communication, body language, encouragement, and influence on teammates.

Questions become:

Did the athlete positively impact others around them?

Within **GROW**, coaches observe emotional responses after mistakes, persistence, coachability, and resilience.

Questions become:

How quickly did the athlete recover emotionally?

Video also changes coaching language itself.

Instead of subjective comments such as:

"Looks lazy."

Coaches begin saying:

"Recovery sprint occurred three seconds after possession loss."

Instead of:

"Not aggressive enough."

Coaches begin saying:

"Attempted two of seven available lvl opportunities."

Instead of:

"Bad decision."

Coaches may say:

"Missed supporting runner on weak side."

The conversation changes.

Labels become evidence.

Opinions become observations.

Assumptions become opportunities.

Video also creates tremendous learning opportunities for athletes themselves because athletes often experience games differently than coaches observe them. Players frequently remember emotional moments just like coaches do. An athlete may leave believing they played poorly because of one mistake, while video may reveal strong overall performance. Another athlete may leave feeling successful because of goals scored while overlooking repeated opportunities for growth.

Film review creates self-awareness because athletes begin seeing themselves objectively.

They begin recognizing:

movement habits,

communication patterns,

body language,

decision-making tendencies,

strengths,

and developmental opportunities.

Within SCAN, athletes are also encouraged to reflect through guided questions:

Support:

What did you do well?

Challenge:

What difficult action did you attempt?

Awareness:

What information did you recognize?

Next Step:

What happened after mistakes?

Reflection transforms film into ownership.

Parents can also become involved through simplified video summaries. Instead of emotional post-game discussions, parent communication becomes more developmental:

Strengths

Scanning improved

Support movement increased

Communication improved

Growth Area

Earlier transition reactions

Next Step

Complete three shoulder checks before receiving possession

This shifts conversations away from outcomes and toward growth.

Ultimately, video should never exist to prove someone wrong. Video exists to reveal patterns we cannot consistently see in real time. Because the purpose of coaching should never be proving opinions correct.

The purpose should always be helping athletes improve.

And improvement begins with seeing what the game is actually showing us.

CHAPTER 9.



Practice Planning Standard USSA

Creating Training Environments That Reflect the Game

One of the most common misunderstandings in coaching is believing that effective training simply means keeping players active, organized, and busy. While organization and activity certainly matter, high-quality practice planning extends far beyond filling time with drills or moving athletes from one exercise to another. Effective sessions are intentionally designed environments that create learning opportunities aligned with the realities of the game.

U.S. Soccer practice planning standards were developed around the understanding that players learn the game most effectively when training reflects the game itself. Rather than treating soccer as a collection of isolated technical actions, U.S. Soccer promotes an approach where athletes learn through realistic situations, decision-making opportunities, and environments requiring adaptation. The objective is not simply repetition for the sake of repetition. The objective is meaningful repetition occurring within context.

Traditional coaching environments often followed a highly instructional model. Coaches frequently organized lines, conducted isolated technical drills, and repeatedly stopped activities to correct errors. While these methods can create moments of technical repetition, they often reduce opportunities for players to think, solve problems, and make decisions independently. Athletes may perform movements correctly during controlled exercises yet struggle transferring those same skills into the unpredictable nature of competition.

U.S. Soccer standards emphasize a different approach. Rather than asking, "Can players perform the movement?" coaches are encouraged to ask, "Can players recognize when and why the movement is needed?" This shift creates an important distinction between practicing actions and learning the game.

Practice design begins with a clear objective.

Every session should answer an important question:

What are players learning today?

Objectives should extend beyond broad statements such as passing or defending. Strong objectives create intentional focus and identify the behaviors coaches want to influence.

Instead of saying improve passing, a session objective may become:

"Recognize opportunities to create support angles during possession."

or

"Improve transition reactions immediately after loss of possession."

Specific objectives create clarity for coaches and athletes.

Once objectives are established, training activities should progressively build understanding. U.S. Soccer frequently promotes a progression where players first experience a simplified version of the learning concept before gradually moving toward increasingly realistic game environments.

Sessions often follow a structure that moves through:

Arrival Activity

Players enter an environment immediately involving movement, touches, and engagement. Arrival activities should reduce inactivity and create an energetic start rather than waiting passively for practice to begin.

Game Form

Players experience realistic soccer situations early within training. Small-sided games frequently allow players to immediately encounter the problems the session intends to address.

Training Activity

Coaches create activities emphasizing the specific learning objective. These activities provide repeated opportunities for athletes to experience the behaviors being developed.

Game Application

Players return to realistic game environments where learning transfers into competition-like situations.

This progression allows athletes to experience the complete learning process rather than isolated technical repetition disconnected from the game.

Another major component of U.S. Soccer practice standards involves creating activities that contain the essential elements of soccer:

- **direction**
- **teammates**
- **opponents**
- **goals**
- **decisions**
- **transitions**
- **realistic pressure**

These elements are important because soccer is ultimately a decision-making game.

Players constantly process information and adapt based on changing environments. Training environments lacking these elements often reduce opportunities for meaningful learning.

The standards also place significant importance on guided discovery. Rather than constantly providing answers, coaches are encouraged to use questions that help athletes think and solve problems independently.

Questions may include:

"What did you notice?"

"What changed?"

"Where was space available?"

"Why did that option work?"

"What could happen differently next time?"

Guided questioning shifts players from passive listeners into active learners.

Over time, athletes begin developing greater ownership because they participate in understanding rather than simply receiving information.

Practice planning standards also emphasize the importance of observation. Coaching does not simply involve organizing activities and delivering instruction. Effective coaching requires observing player behaviors, identifying patterns, and making adjustments based upon what athletes actually need.

Coaches should continuously observe:

- **movement patterns**
- **decision-making behaviors**
- **communication**
- **technical execution**
- **responses to pressure**
- **transition behaviors**

Observation allows coaches to adjust environments rather than forcing athletes into predetermined expectations.

The standards also emphasize appropriate coach intervention. One of the most common challenges for developing coaches is the tendency to intervene too frequently. Coaches naturally want to help, and helping often becomes associated with constant instruction. However, excessive interruptions frequently reduce opportunities for players to learn through experience.

U.S. Soccer encourages coaches to become intentional about interventions by asking:

Does this moment require immediate correction?

Can learning continue naturally?

Would a question create more understanding than an answer?

Often the most effective coaches are not those speaking the most.
Often they are the coaches observing the most.

Strong practice planning also recognizes that athletes learn differently and develop at different rates. Sessions should create multiple opportunities for success while still providing appropriate challenge. Activities should allow stronger players to remain challenged while supporting athletes still developing confidence and understanding.

Ultimately, U.S. Soccer practice planning standards are not simply about creating organized sessions.

They are about creating environments.

- Environments where athletes think.
- Environments where athletes solve problems.
- Environments where athletes communicate.
- Environments where athletes make decisions.
- Environments where athletes learn.

Because great practices do not simply teach players what to do.

Great practices help players understand the game well enough to decide what to do for themselves.

SOCCER PRACTICE PLANNING STANDARDS
CREATE TRAINING ENVIRONMENTS THAT DEVELOP PLAYERS AND REFLECT THE GAME

CORE PRINCIPLES

- PLAYER CENTERED**: Focus on the player's development and long-term growth.
- GAME BASED**: Train in realistic situations that reflect the game.
- DEVELOPMENT FOCUSED**: Purposeful practice to build skills and understanding.
- GUIDED DISCOVERY**: Use questions to help players think, solve problems and learn.
- CHALLENGING & ENGAGING**: Balance challenge and repetition to maximize learning.
- OBSERVE & ADAPT**: Observe, provide feedback and adapt based on player needs.

THE PRACTICE STRUCTURE

- 1. ARRIVAL ACTIVITY** (10-15 MINUTES): Welcome players and engage them immediately. Activities involve movement and the ball.
- 2. GAME FORM** (15-20 MINUTES): Players play the game to discover solutions to problems within a game context.
- 3. TRAINING ACTIVITY** (20-25 MINUTES): Purposeful practice of the team or individual objective. Repetition with variation.
- 4. GAME APPLICATION** (20-25 MINUTES): Return to the game. Apply the learning in a competitive or competitive-like environment.
- 5. REFLECTION & WRAP UP** (5-10 MINUTES): Guide players to reflect on what they learned and how they will apply it.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF SOCCER IN TRAINING

Diagram of a soccer field with key elements: GOALS, DIRECTION, DECISIONS, TEAMMATES, OPPONENTS, REALISTIC PRESSURE, TRANSITIONS.

WHY IT MATTERS: When these elements are present, players must think, make decisions, adapt and solve problems just like they do in the game.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

- 1. DEFINE THE OBJECTIVE**: Be specific. What do players need to learn? What behavior or understanding are you trying to develop?
- 2. DESIGN THE ENVIRONMENT**: Create activities that include the essential elements of soccer and allow players to experience success and challenge.
- 3. OBSERVE & GATHER EVIDENCE**: Watch player behavior, decisions, movement and execution. Collect objective evidence.
- 4. PROVIDE FEEDBACK**: Use guided questions and simple, clear information. Focus on behaviors, not outcomes.
- 5. ADAPT & PROGRESS**: Adjust the challenge, complexity or conditions to help players grow.

COACHING BEHAVIORS THAT SUPPORT LEARNING

- BE ORGANIZED**: Have a clear plan and be prepared.
- COMMUNICATE WITH PURPOSE**: Be clear, concise and age appropriate.
- ASK GUIDED QUESTIONS**: Help players think and discover.
- ENCOURAGE & SUPPORT**: Build confidence and create a positive environment.
- GIVE PLAYERS TIME & SPACE**: Allow mistakes. Learning requires experience.
- PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE**: Develop players who can think and solve problems on their own.

SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES...

- Have a clear objective
- Look like the game
- Develop decisions, not robots
- Are player centered
- Build confident, creative, intelligent players
- Create a love for the game

GREAT PRACTICES DON'T JUST TEACH PLAYERS WHAT TO DO. THEY HELP PLAYERS UNDERSTAND THE GAME SO THEY CAN DECIDE WHAT TO DO.



CHAPTER 10.

Learning Modules

Building Better Coaches, Better Athletes, and Better Environments

Learning should never be viewed as a single event. Development is a continuous process that occurs over time through experience, observation, reflection, and application. Coaches frequently ask athletes to embrace growth mindsets, learn from mistakes, and pursue improvement, yet coaches themselves must operate under those same expectations. Strong environments are created when learning becomes a shared responsibility among coaches, athletes, and parents.

Learning Modules were created to provide a structured pathway that develops understanding beyond technical and tactical instruction alone. Rather than simply teaching what to do, these modules focus on helping participants understand why actions occur, how environments influence development, and what processes create meaningful growth. The purpose is not simply delivering information. The purpose is creating understanding that can be consistently applied.

Many development environments become heavily focused on isolated topics such as passing, shooting, defending, or winning games. While these subjects remain important, meaningful development often requires broader understanding. Athletes must learn how to think. Coaches must learn how to observe. Parents must learn how to support. Organizations must learn how to create environments that align everyone toward a common purpose.

The Learning Module system creates a framework that organizes development into progressive areas of learning. Each module builds upon previous understanding and connects directly with the broader goals of SCAN and SPI.

The Learning Modules, which differ between age groups (U6-U7, U8-U10, U11-U12, U13-U14), include:

Module 1: Foundations of Athlete Development

Understanding how athletes learn, develop, and respond to environments.

Module 2: Characteristics of Each Age Group

Learning how social, emotional, cognitive and physical characteristics develop per age group and how to deal with them.

Module 3: Technical Skills

Discusses which technical skills should be taught per age group.

Module 4: Understanding the Four Moments of the Game

Learning how attacking organization, attacking transition, defensive organization, and defensive transition shape decision-making and game understanding.

Module 5: Practice Planning Standards

Creating training environments that reflect the realities of competition and encourage meaningful learning.

Module 6: Guided Discovery and Coaching Communication

Developing questioning techniques and communication strategies that improve athlete ownership and independent thinking.

Module 7: Leadership and Team Culture

Building communication, influence, accountability, and positive team environments.

Module 8: Reflection, Growth, and Continuous Improvement

Teaching athletes and coaches how to evaluate progress, identify next steps, and maintain long-term growth habits.

Learning Modules create consistency across development environments because they establish a shared language and shared understanding. Coaches begin seeing similar patterns. Athletes begin understanding expectations. Parents begin supporting the process more effectively. Development becomes more intentional and less dependent upon assumptions.

The purpose of these modules is not simply transferring knowledge.

The purpose is creating application.

Knowledge **without** application **rarely** creates change.

Understanding **without** action **rarely** creates growth.

Because meaningful development occurs when learning moves beyond information and becomes behavior.



SOCCER LEARNING MODULES

BUILDING BETTER COACHES, BETTER ATHLETES, AND BETTER ENVIRONMENTS

OUR LEARNING PRINCIPLES



PLAYER CENTERED

Focus on growth, development and the whole player.



GAME FOCUSED

Train in realistic situations that reflect the game.



DEVELOPMENT DRIVEN

Every session is an opportunity to learn and improve.



INQUIRE & DISCOVER

Ask questions. Encourage thinking. Build understanding.



EVIDENCE BASED

Use observation, video and data to inform decisions.



REFLECT & IMPROVE

Reflect often and adjust to support continuous growth.

MODULE 1

1 FOUNDATIONS OF ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT




Understand how athletes learn, develop and respond to the environment.

FOCUS: Growth mindset, learning stages, long-term development.

MODULE 2

2 CHARACTERISTICS PER AGE GROUP




Understand physical, emotional, cognitive and social development stages across age groups.

FOCUS: Age appropriate expectations, behaviors, and player needs.

MODULE 3

3 TECHNICAL SKILLS




Develop technical proficiency through proper technique, repetition and game application.

FOCUS: Ball mastery, passing, receiving, dribbling, shooting.

MODULE 4

4 UNDERSTANDING THE FOUR MOMENTS OF THE GAME



Learn how the four moments shape decision-making and game understanding.

FOCUS: Attack org., attack trans., defense org., defense trans.

MODULE 5

5 PRACTICE PLANNING STANDARDS




Create training environments that reflect competition and encourage meaningful learning.

FOCUS: Structure, objectives, game context, progression, standards.

MODULE 6

6 GUIDED DISCOVERY & COACHING COMMUNICATION



Develop questioning techniques and communication strategies that improve athlete ownership and independent thinking.

FOCUS: Questions, listening, clarity, feedback, player involvement.

MODULE 7

7 PARENT EDUCATION & ATHLETE SUPPORT



Help parents support development, build confidence and create healthy environments.

FOCUS: Support, communication, partnership, encouragement.

MODULE 8

8 LEADERSHIP & TEAM CULTURE



Build communication, influence, accountability and positive team environments.

FOCUS: Communication, trust, leadership, standards, team first.

MODULE 9

9 REFLECTION, GROWTH & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT




Teach athletes and coaches how to evaluate progress, identify next steps and maintain long-term growth habits.

FOCUS: Reflection, adjustment, goals, habits, continuous growth.

MODULE 10

10 USE OF VIDEO & OBJECTIVE OBSERVATION



Use video and objective observation to identify patterns, support development and guide decisions.

FOCUS: Evidence, patterns, feedback, player growth, decision making.

OUR GOAL



Create learning environments that help players understand the game and develop for life.

DEVELOP BETTER PLAYERS



- Think better
- Decide better
- Perform better
- Become better people

DEVELOP BETTER COACHES



- Observe better
- Teach better
- Connect better
- Lead better

BUILD BETTER ENVIRONMENTS



- Positive culture
- Clear standards
- Strong relationships
- Shared purpose

STRONGER TODAY. BETTER TOMORROW.



Learning is the journey. Growth is the goal.



LEARN. APPLY. REFLECT. IMPROVE. TOGETHER, WE DEVELOP FOR THE GAME AND FOR LIFE.



CHAPTER 11.

Parent Education



How to Watch Soccer: Seeing Development Beyond the Ball

One of the greatest challenges in youth soccer is that many parents genuinely want to support their child but simply have never been taught how to watch the game. Soccer moves quickly, and unlike sports where action frequently pauses, the game continuously flows. For parents new to soccer, the ball naturally becomes the center of attention. Wherever the ball goes, attention follows. This is completely normal. Most people initially watch soccer by following the ball.

The challenge is that soccer often tells its most important stories away from the ball. Many of the moments that influence development never appear on a scoreboard and may never result in goals, assists, or obvious highlights. Yet those moments frequently reveal whether athletes are improving.

Parents often leave games discussing questions such as:

"Did my child score?"

"Did they touch the ball enough?"

"Did they make mistakes?"

"Did they play well?"

While these questions are understandable, they frequently provide only a small picture of development.

Learning to watch soccer differently can completely change how parents understand growth. Instead of only watching the player with the ball, parents can begin watching behaviors that occur before, during, and after involvement.

Watch movement.

Watch communication.

Watch effort after mistakes.

Watch reactions.

Watch decision-making.

Watch confidence.

Watch what happens when your child does not have possession.

Many of the most important actions occur during these moments.

Parents can begin observing simple questions during games:

Movement:

Is my child creating space or moving to support teammates?

Awareness:

Are they looking around before receiving possession?

Communication:

Are they encouraging teammates or providing information?

Effort:

How do they react after losing possession?

Confidence:

Do they continue asking for the ball after mistakes?

Resilience:

How quickly do they recover after difficult moments?

These questions often reveal much more about development than goals or statistics alone.

Parents should also understand that mistakes are normal and expected within learning environments. Young athletes are solving problems in real time while processing pressure, movement, teammates, opponents, and emotions simultaneously. Mistakes frequently represent learning occurring rather than evidence of failure.

Sometimes a missed pass represents courage.

Sometimes losing possession represents creativity.

Sometimes a mistake represents an athlete attempting something difficult.

If children begin fearing mistakes, they often stop taking risks.

They stop experimenting.

They stop playing freely.

Over time they may begin protecting themselves from failure rather than pursuing growth.

One of the most valuable roles parents can play is becoming observers of development rather than evaluators of outcomes.

However, parents also play another critical role that is often overlooked:
reinforcing what the coach is teaching.

Young athletes receive information from multiple environments every day. They hear coaches during practice. They hear teammates during games. They hear parents before games, after games, and during car rides home. When these messages align, learning accelerates. When messages compete with each other, confusion often follows.

A coach may spend an entire week teaching athletes to play out of pressure, switch the field, create support angles, or continue taking risks after mistakes. If athletes then hear different messages from the sideline such as:

"Just kick it!"

"Shoot it every time!"

"Stop passing!"

"Get rid of it!"

they can become conflicted.

Children naturally want to satisfy the adults around them. If coaching messages and parent messages differ, athletes often become unsure which direction to follow. Over time this uncertainty may create hesitation, fear, and reduced confidence.

Parents do not need to become soccer experts to reinforce learning. They simply need to support the process. One of the easiest ways to reinforce coaching is by paying attention to themes being emphasized during practice.

Ask questions such as:

"What are you working on this week?"

"What did coach teach today?"

"What is your team trying to improve?"

"What is your next step?"

Simple conversations create opportunities for reinforcement.

If a coach spent the week emphasizing scanning before receiving possession, parents might reinforce learning by saying:

"I noticed you looked around before receiving today."

If coaches emphasized communication:

"I heard you encouraging teammates today."

If the focus involved recovering after losing possession:

"I noticed you sprinted back after losing the ball."

Notice the difference.

The conversation shifts away from:

"Why didn't you score?"

toward:

"I noticed you working on something."

Children frequently become motivated when effort and learning receive attention. Parents should also avoid unintentionally coaching from the sideline. While intentions are often positive, constant instructions can create information overload. During games athletes are already processing opponents, teammates, space, movement, pressure, and decisions. Additional sideline directions often create confusion rather than clarity.

Instead of becoming a second coach, parents can become a source of confidence. Sometimes the most valuable sideline coaching sounds like:

"Keep going."

"Great effort."

"Keep communicating."

"I love your confidence."

"Keep trying difficult things."

Those messages support development while allowing athletes to continue solving problems independently.

Children frequently remember post-game car rides long after they forget the score.

Instead of asking:

"Did you score?"

"Did you win?"

"Why didn't you shoot?"

Consider asking:

"What did you notice today?"

"What did you do well?"

"What was difficult?"

"What did you learn?"

"What are you proud of?"

"What is your next step?"

These questions shift conversations away from pressure and toward reflection. The goal of watching soccer is not simply understanding the game better. **The goal is understanding your child better.**

Because years from now they may forget the score of a youth soccer game. But they will remember whether they felt supported while learning it.



HOW TO WATCH SOCCER

SEEING DEVELOPMENT BEYOND THE BALL

The goal is not the score. The goal is development.



WHY IT MATTERS

- Most people watch the ball. Soccer's most important moments happen away from the ball.
- Development is revealed in the decisions, effort, and behaviors that don't always show up on the scoreboard.
- Learning to watch differently helps you understand and support your child's growth.

WHAT TO WATCH

- Movement** – Are they creating space or supporting teammates?
- Awareness** – Are they looking around before receiving possession?
- Communication** – Are they encouraging teammates or providing information?
- Effort** – How do they react after losing possession?
- Confidence** – Do they continue asking for the ball after mistakes?
- Resilience** – How quickly do they recover after difficult moments?

KEY MOMENTS TO WATCH

- ✓ Before the ball arrives
- ✓ During their involvement
- ✓ After they release the ball
- ✓ When their team has possession
- ✓ When their team does not have possession
- ✓ Transitions (attacking & defending)
- ✓ Small actions that show big understanding

The best development happens in the in-between moments. That's where the game is really played.

COMMON QUESTIONS VS. BETTER QUESTIONS

<h4>QUESTIONS THAT FOCUS ON OUTCOMES</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Did you score? ✗ Did you win? ✗ Why didn't you shoot? ✗ Did you play well? 	➔	<h4>QUESTIONS THAT FOCUS ON GROWTH</h4> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What did you notice today? ✓ What did you do well? ✓ What was difficult? ✓ What did you learn? ✓ What are you proud of? ✓ What is your next step?
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Children remember the conversations after the game longer than they remember the score.

MISTAKES ARE PART OF LEARNING

- A missed pass can be courage.
- Losing possession can be creativity.
- A mistake can be an attempt at something difficult.

If children fear mistakes, they stop taking risks. They stop experimenting. They stop growing.

REINFORCE WHAT THE COACH IS TEACHING

- Ask your child what they are working on.**
What are you working on this week?
What did coach teach today?
What is your team trying to improve?"
- Reinforce the themes.**
Notice when you see effort and behaviors that match what the coach is teaching. Celebrate the process, not just the score.
- Avoid sideline coaching.**
Too much instruction creates confusion. Encourage. Support. Let them play.

SAMPLE REINFORCEMENTS

- ✓ I noticed you looked around before receiving the ball.
- ✓ Great job communicating today!
- ✓ I love how you kept trying.
- ✓ Nice effort getting back after losing it.
- ✓ You showed a lot of courage today!
- ✓ Keep going, I'm proud of your effort.

WHAT TO SAY FROM THE SIDELINE

SAY THIS

- ✓ Keep going!
- ✓ Great effort!
- ✓ Communicate!
- ✓ Play with confidence!
- ✓ Keep trying!

AVOID THIS

- ✗ Just kick it!
- ✗ Shoot it!
- ✗ Get rid of it!
- ✗ Why'd you do that?
- ✗ Stop passing!

Be their biggest supporter, not their second coach.

REMEMBER

- You're not just watching a game. You're watching your child grow.
- Focus on the process. The results will come over time.
- Your words affect confidence, courage, and a love for the game.
- Support their development, not just their performance.
- They may forget the score, but they'll never forget how you supported them.

III. SCAN Performance Index (SPI)



SCAN

DEVELOPING THE

COMPLETE COACH

LEADER • TEACHER • MENTOR • ROLE MODEL • DEVELOPER

GROWING COACHES WHO GROW PEOPLE

THE COMPLETE COACH

A complete coach develops athletes on and off the field by leading with purpose, teaching with clarity, building relationships, and creating environments where athletes can grow into confident, resilient, and capable individuals.

THE SCAN FOUNDATION

Great coaching begins with the SCAN framework. These four principles guide every decision, interaction, and environment you create.



SUPPORT

Create trust and positive relationships.



CHALLENGE

Provide purposeful challenge and high expectations.



AWARENESS

Help athletes understand themselves and the game.



NEXT STEP

Take intentional action and commit to growth.



COACH



1. LEADER

Leads by example and sets the standard for culture, effort, attitude, and character.

- Inspires and motivates
- Builds a strong team culture
- Holds self and others accountable
- Leads with integrity



2. TEACHER

Teaches the game with clarity, intention, and understanding.

- Plans with purpose
- Communicates effectively
- Breaks down concepts simply
- Creates meaningful learning experiences



3. RELATIONSHIP BUILDER

Builds strong, genuine relationships with athletes and families.

- Knows your athletes
- Listens and communicates
- Shows care and respect
- Builds trust and connection



4. MENTOR

Invests in the person, not just the player. Helps athletes grow in character and life.

- Encourages personal growth
- Teaches life lessons
- Supports through challenges
- Helps athletes discover purpose



5. ROLE MODEL

Represents the values you want your athletes to live by.

- Models respect and self-control
- Stays positive under pressure
- Demonstrates humility
- Lives with purpose



6. DEVELOPER

Commits to continuous improvement in self and others.

- Seeks feedback
- Learns and adapts
- Develops future leaders
- Creates long-term growth

CORE COMPETENCIES OF A COMPLETE COACH



VISION

Has a clear purpose and long-term perspective.



COMMUNICATION

Communicates with clarity, respect, and confidence.



EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Understands and manages emotions in self and others.



DECISION MAKING

Makes thoughtful, timely, and effective decisions.



RESILIENCE

Stays steady, adapts, and leads through adversity.



SELF AWARENESS

Knows strengths, weaknesses, and continues to grow.

WHAT ATHLETES NEED FROM COACHES	THE IMPACT OF A COMPLETE COACH	DAILY REMINDERS FOR THE COMPLETE COACH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Believe in them <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Challenge them <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teach them <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Support them <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hold them accountable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Care about them as people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Athletes develop confidence and resilience.  Teams develop culture and unity.  Individuals develop character and purpose.  The game becomes a tool for life-long growth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lead with purpose. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teach with patience. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Build relationships first. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Create a positive environment. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Challenge with belief. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Help athletes become their best selves.

“A GREAT COACH IMPACTS THE GAME. A COMPLETE COACH CHANGES LIVES.”



Serve Others
Put the needs of your athletes and team first.



Stay Humble
Keep learning and grow every day.



Have Purpose
Know your why and coach with intention.



Leave a Legacy
Build something that lasts beyond you.



Honor the Game
Respect the game, others, and yourself.



CHAPTER 12.

Why SPI Exists

Measuring the Athlete Beyond the Scoreboard

The SCAN Performance Index (SPI) was created from a simple observation: too many athletes are evaluated primarily by outcomes while too few are evaluated by the behaviors that create those outcomes. In many youth sports environments, evaluations naturally become centered around visible statistics and immediate results. Coaches, parents, and organizations frequently place attention on goals scored, assists recorded, playing time earned, wins and losses, rankings, speed, physical size, and current performance levels. While these measurements certainly provide useful information, they often reveal only a small portion of the athlete's story.

The scoreboard can tell us what happened, but it rarely explains why it happened. A player may score three goals and appear to have had an exceptional performance, yet beneath those goals may exist limited communication, inconsistent effort, poor movement patterns, or weak decision-making away from the ball. At the same time, another player may finish a game without a goal or assist and be viewed as having a quiet performance, while video review may reveal intelligent movement, strong transition reactions, leadership behaviors, and repeated actions that created opportunities for teammates. One athlete receives attention because outcomes were visible, while another athlete's impact may go unnoticed because many of their contributions occurred in ways that statistics cannot capture.

This creates one of the major challenges within athlete development. Outcomes are easy to see. Behaviors require observation. Because outcomes are visible, they naturally attract attention. Parents celebrate goals. Coaches remember mistakes. Teams remember wins and losses. Athletes compare themselves through statistics and playing time. Over time, development environments can unintentionally begin focusing on what is easiest to measure rather than what may be most important to develop.

As this pattern continues, athletes can gradually become more focused on protecting performance than pursuing growth. They may stop attempting difficult actions because mistakes become highly visible. They may avoid taking risks because failure receives immediate attention. Creativity may begin decreasing because athletes become more concerned with avoiding negative outcomes than expanding their abilities. Confidence may become attached entirely to performance results rather than the learning process itself. Over time, development can become narrowed by short-term thinking.

SPI was created to challenge that approach.

The purpose of SPI was never to create another player ranking system or reduce athletes to a collection of scores. It was never designed to label children, compare athletes

unfairly, or suggest that development can be fully explained through numbers alone. Instead, SPI was designed to create a framework that helps coaches see more completely, evaluate more objectively, and develop athletes more intentionally.

SPI exists because development deserves structure.

SPI exists because coaching standards matter.

SPI exists because observations should move beyond assumptions.

SPI exists because athletes deserve environments where growth is measured through more than statistics alone.

One of the foundational goals behind SPI is raising coaching standards. Coaches are frequently expected to improve athletes, identify strengths and weaknesses, provide feedback, communicate effectively, and create meaningful development plans. Yet many evaluations still rely heavily on subjective opinions. Comments such as "Looks lazy," "Needs more confidence," "Has low soccer IQ," or "Doesn't compete enough" are often heard throughout youth sports environments. While these statements may reflect genuine observations, they frequently create labels rather than understanding.

SPI attempts to move coaching conversations away from assumptions and toward evidence. Instead of saying "Looks lazy," coaches can begin asking "How quickly did recovery occur after possession loss?" Instead of saying "Low soccer IQ," coaches can ask "What information was gathered before decisions were made?" Instead of saying "Lacks confidence," coaches may ask "How frequently did the athlete continue asking for the ball after mistakes?" The difference may appear small, but it fundamentally changes the coaching process. Labels often stop growth because they describe athletes as fixed. Evidence creates opportunities because it identifies behaviors that can improve. The goal shifts from judging players to understanding players.

SPI also exists because athlete development is multidimensional. Performance is rarely influenced by a single characteristic. Technical skill alone does not create complete athletes. Physical ability alone does not guarantee success. Confidence alone cannot overcome every challenge. Development occurs through interaction. Movement influences technical execution. Technical ability influences confidence. Awareness influences decisions. Leadership influences environments. Mindset influences persistence. Each area continuously affects the others.

Because of this reality, SPI evaluates athletes through five interconnected pillars: **MOVE, MASTER, THINK, LEAD, and GROW**. Together these pillars create a broader understanding of performance and development. Rather than evaluating isolated moments, coaches begin recognizing patterns occurring across multiple areas of growth. Athletes are no longer viewed simply as technical players, physical players, or confident players. They begin becoming viewed as complete individuals with strengths, challenges, and opportunities existing across multiple dimensions.

SPI also exists because development should be measurable over time. Too often athletes hear feedback such as "Keep working hard," "Keep improving," or "Do better next week" without understanding what progress actually looks like. While these messages may come from positive intentions, they frequently lack direction. Athletes need clarity. They need opportunities to understand where they currently are, where growth opportunities exist, and what specific actions can move them forward.

SPI creates those pathways. It helps athletes recognize strengths, identify developmental opportunities, and establish meaningful next steps. Progress becomes visible. Growth becomes intentional. Improvement becomes something athletes can understand rather than something they simply hope occurs.

Perhaps most importantly, SPI exists because every athlete deserves to be seen completely.

Some athletes lead quietly. Some communicate through actions rather than words. Some demonstrate exceptional awareness before physical development catches up. Some show resilience that statistics never reveal. Some create value that never appears on scoreboards.

SPI was built to recognize those athletes.

Because while scoreboards capture moments, development captures potential.

And potential deserves more than a statistic.

CHAPTER 13.



Introduction to SPI

Seeing the Complete Athlete

The SCAN Performance Index (SPI) was designed to create a more complete understanding of athlete development by providing structure around observation, evaluation, and long-term growth. While many development systems focus heavily on immediate performance and visible outcomes, SPI shifts attention toward understanding the underlying behaviors and characteristics influencing those outcomes. Rather than viewing athletes through isolated moments or single performances, SPI creates a framework that helps coaches, parents, and athletes recognize the broader developmental picture unfolding over time.

Athlete development is rarely as simple as it initially appears. Performance is influenced by many interacting factors occurring simultaneously. Technical ability, movement patterns, confidence, awareness, leadership, communication, decision-making, resilience, and mindset continuously affect one another. A player's performance on a given day often reflects far more than technical skill alone. Confidence may influence willingness to take risks. Awareness may influence the quality of decisions being made. Communication may affect team organization and relationships. Emotional responses may influence performance consistency. Because these factors constantly interact, development becomes more complex than evaluating isolated strengths or weaknesses.

Athletes also develop differently and at different rates. Some athletes demonstrate advanced technical ability early while others develop stronger physical characteristics first. Some players show strong awareness before their physical abilities fully mature. Others may naturally emerge as leaders long before performance statistics begin reflecting their value. Physical growth, emotional maturity, confidence levels, learning environments, and experiences all contribute to developmental differences. For this reason, comparing athletes solely through immediate performance often creates an incomplete understanding of who they are becoming.

SPI recognizes these developmental realities by organizing athlete observation into five interconnected pillars that collectively create a more complete view of growth and performance. The first pillar, **MOVE**, focuses on Athletic Movement Efficiency and examines how athletes move, balance, coordinate, accelerate, and control their bodies within game environments. The second pillar, **MASTER**, focuses on Technical Skill Efficiency and evaluates how athletes execute technical actions under varying conditions and levels of pressure. The third pillar, **THINK**, examines awareness and decision-making by observing how athletes gather information, process environments, recognize patterns, and solve problems. The fourth pillar, **LEAD**, focuses on leadership and influence by examining communication, accountability, interactions with teammates, and overall influence on team

environments. The final pillar, **GROW**, evaluates confidence, resilience, ownership, coachability, and an athlete's response to adversity and challenges.

These pillars were intentionally designed to function together rather than independently. Movement can influence technical execution. Technical ability can influence confidence. Confidence can affect communication and decision-making. Leadership can influence team environments and relationships. Awareness can impact nearly every action occurring on the field. Development rarely occurs in isolated categories because growth within one area frequently influences growth within another.

SPI also establishes a structured process that supports stronger coaching observations and more intentional development planning. Rather than relying heavily on assumptions or first impressions, the system encourages coaches to gather information systematically by observing behaviors, identifying patterns, interpreting those patterns, creating interventions, and measuring progress over time. This process promotes consistency and allows developmental decisions to become more intentional.

At its core, SPI recognizes that athletes are not simply collections of technical skills or performance statistics. They are individuals carrying unique experiences, strengths, challenges, emotions, and developmental paths. Understanding athletes more completely creates opportunities for coaches to provide more meaningful support, more individualized development plans, and stronger environments for growth.

Ultimately, SPI serves as a framework for helping coaches, athletes, and parents understand that development extends beyond individual performances and isolated moments. It creates a system designed to support long-term growth by focusing attention on the characteristics and behaviors that shape complete athletes and stronger people.



SPI

SCAN PERFORMANCE INDEX

MEASURING COMPLETE ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT

SPI looks beyond results. It measures the daily behaviors that drive long-term growth in five key performance pillars.

THE 5 PILLARS OF SPI

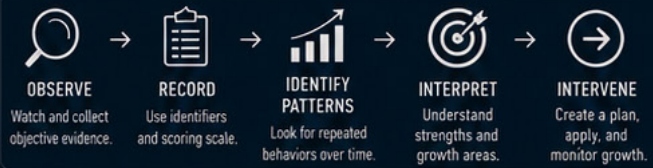
Each pillar represents a critical area of athlete development. Athletes are scored on key identifiers within each pillar using a 1-6 scale.



SPI SCORING SCALE (1-6)

1 RARELY OBSERVED Behavior is almost never seen.	2 INCONSISTENT Behavior appears occasionally but not reliably.	3 DEVELOPING Behavior shows signs of growth and improvement.	4 CONSISTENT Behavior is intentional and regularly.	5 ADVANCED High-level performance for age.	6 ELITE Elite behavior that goes consistently above expectations.
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HOW SPI WORKS



MOVE

Athletic Movement Efficiency

Measures how efficiently athletes use their bodies in all movement situations.

KEY IDENTIFIERS

- Balance & Stability**: Maintains body control during all actions.
- Change of Direction**: Changes direction quickly and effectively.
- Acceleration**: Explodes into motion with efficiency.
- Agility**: Moves efficiently in multiple directions.
- Movement Confidence**: Attacks space, commits, and competes physically.

WHAT IT MEASURES
Body control, athleticism, movement quality, and confidence in motion.

MASTER

Technical Skill Efficiency

Measures execution, consistency, and adaptability of technical skills under all conditions.

KEY IDENTIFIERS

- First Touch Quality**: Receives the ball into space with control.
- Passing Quality**: Accuracy, pace, timing, and decision alignment.
- Dribbling Skill**: Beats opponents with control and purpose.
- Finishing**: Scores with technique, placement, and composure.
- Technical Adaptation**: Adjusts skills under pressure, fatigue, and variable contexts.

WHAT IT MEASURES
Technical execution, consistency, and skill performance in real-game conditions.

THINK

Awareness & Decision Index

Measures how well athletes process information and make decisions in game situations.

KEY IDENTIFIERS

- Environmental Scanning**: Gathers information before receiving or acting.
- Awareness**: Understands space, players, and game context.
- Decision Quality**: Chooses the best option for the situation.
- Processing Speed**: Sees, decides, and acts quickly and efficiently.

WHAT IT MEASURES
Game intelligence, scanning, decision-making, and ability to solve problems.

LEAD

Leadership & Influence Index

Measures how athletes influence, communicate, and uplift their team.

KEY IDENTIFIERS

- Communication**: Provides information, encouragement, and organization.
- Accountability**: Owns actions, mistakes, and responsibilities.
- Positive Influence**: Encourages teammates and improves environment.
- Ownership**: Takes initiative and leads by example every day.

WHAT IT MEASURES
Leadership behaviors, communication, accountability, and positive impact on others.

GROW

Confidence & Development Index

Measures mindset, resilience, emotional regulation, and commitment to growth.

KEY IDENTIFIERS

- Response to Mistakes**: Recovers quickly and stays engaged after setbacks.
- Confidence Behaviors**: Asks for the ball, takes risks, and stays involved.
- Emotional Regulation**: Manages emotions and handles pressure.
- Ownership of Growth**: Sets goals, seeks feedback, and works to improve.

WHAT IT MEASURES
Confidence, resilience, mindset, and commitment to personal development.

SCORING STRUCTURE

Each identifier is scored 1-6. Pillar scores are totaled and combined to create the SPI.

MOVE	6 IDENTIFIERS	MAX 30
MASTER	5 IDENTIFIERS	MAX 24
THINK	4 IDENTIFIERS	MAX 24
LEAD	4 IDENTIFIERS	MAX 24
GROW	4 IDENTIFIERS	MAX 24
TOTAL SPI		MAX 132

PERFORMANCE CLASSIFICATION

Total SPI Score

115 - 132	ELITE DEVELOPMENT PROFILE	Elite behaviors across all pillars. Strong overall development with minor gaps.
100 - 114	ADVANCED PROFILE	Strong overall development with minor gaps.
85 - 99	STRONG DEVELOPMENT	Solid foundation with consistent growth.
70 - 84	DEVELOPING	Building foundation. Focus on improvement and consistency.
BELOW 70	TARGETED GROWTH PLAN	Significant gaps. Requires focused development plan and support.

VISUALIZE PERFORMANCE

Radar charts help identify strengths, gaps, and development priorities.

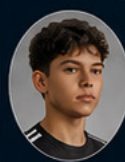


PATTERN RECOGNITION IS KEY

Look for repeated behaviors over time, not isolated moments.

<p>POSITIVE PATTERNS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently scans before receiving Communicates early and often Recovers quickly after mistakes Attacks space with intention Takes ownership of improvement <p>Indicates healthy development and strong habits.</p>	<p>NEGATIVE PATTERNS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turns into pressure repeatedly Stops communicating in @ games Avoids language after mistakes Avoids risk and difficult actions Blames others or makes excuses <p>Indicates areas needing support and targeted intervention.</p>
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EXAMPLE ATHLETE SPI PROFILE



ATHLETE: ALEX R.
AGE GROUP: U14
POSITION: MIDFIELDER
DATE: MAY 28, 2024
EVALUATED BY: SCAN CERTIFIED COACH

PILLAR	SCORE	MAX	PERCENTILE
MOVE	22	30	73%
MASTER	20	30	67%
THINK	17	24	71%
LEAD	18	24	75%
GROW	14	24	58%
TOTAL	91	132	68%



STRENGTHS

- Strong movement and athleticism
- Great communicator and leader
- High awareness in game situations

GROWTH FOCUS

- Increase confidence in high-pressure moments
- Improve first touch under pressure
- Build consistency in finishing

HOW TO USE SPI

- Evaluate regularly (monthly/quarterly)
- Use objective evidence
- Track trends over time
- Share results with athletes
- Create individualized development plans
- Celebrate growth and progress

CORE PRINCIPLE

"SPI is not about labeling athletes. It is about understanding them, supporting their development, and helping them become the best version of themselves."



CHAPTER 14.

Five Pillars of SPI



Building the Complete Athlete

The SCAN Performance Index (SPI) was designed around a foundational belief: complete athletes are not developed through one characteristic alone. Performance does not emerge solely from technical ability, physical talent, confidence, leadership, or decision-making. Rather, performance develops through the interaction of multiple characteristics that continuously influence one another inside changing environments. Every action an athlete takes on the field is connected to numerous underlying processes. Movement influences execution. Execution influences confidence. Confidence influences decision-making. Awareness influences positioning. Leadership influences team environments. Because development is multidimensional, understanding athletes requires a multidimensional approach.

The five SPI pillars were created to provide structure around those dimensions. These pillars are not intended to label athletes or place them into fixed categories. Instead, they serve as developmental lenses allowing coaches, athletes, and parents to understand where strengths exist, where opportunities for growth may emerge, and how development evolves over time.

MOVE — Athletic Movement Efficiency

Movement becomes one of the first characteristics people naturally recognize in athletes. Coaches frequently notice speed, quickness, agility, explosiveness, and coordination immediately. Athletes who move efficiently often appear naturally athletic, while athletes with less developed movement patterns may appear slower or less coordinated. However, movement extends far beyond simple speed.

MOVE evaluates how effectively athletes control and organize their bodies during changing situations. Sports environments require athletes to constantly accelerate, decelerate, balance, rotate, change direction, recover position, and adapt movement patterns in response to evolving circumstances. Rarely does an athlete move in a straight line without interruption. Instead, movement continuously changes according to the demands of the environment. Efficient movement creates numerous performance advantages. Athletes who move efficiently often conserve energy, recover more quickly, arrive earlier into space, maintain greater balance, and execute technical actions more effectively. Movement quality frequently influences nearly every action that follows.

MOVE observations include:

Balance and body control

Coordination

Acceleration mechanics
Deceleration mechanics
Change of direction efficiency
Agility and reaction ability
Posture and movement posture
Recovery movement
Spatial movement patterns
Athletic body awareness

For example, two athletes may possess similar speed over a straight sprint distance. However, one athlete may lose balance during direction changes while another maintains control and transitions efficiently into new movements. Although both athletes may appear equally fast in isolated testing, their effectiveness within game environments may become dramatically different.

Strong **MOVE** behaviors often include athletes who:

- move with balance and control
- recover efficiently
- demonstrate coordinated movement patterns
- adjust movement naturally under pressure
- maintain posture during technical execution
- arrive into positions efficiently

Athletes requiring development may demonstrate:

- loss of balance
- delayed recovery movements
- inefficient changes of direction
- poor body control
- unnecessary movement patterns
- reduced coordination under pressure

Movement frequently becomes the platform supporting everything else. Because athletes cannot consistently execute what their bodies cannot consistently support.

MASTER — Technical Skill Efficiency

Technical skill often becomes one of the earliest focal points within athlete development. Passing, receiving, dribbling, shooting, finishing, and ball control naturally draw attention because they represent visible actions occurring throughout competition. However, technical ability becomes much more complicated once athletes move beyond controlled environments.

During isolated activities:

- Cones remain stationary.
- Time remains available.

Pressure remains predictable.
Decisions remain simple.
The environment remains comfortable.

Then competition begins.
Suddenly defenders close space.
Pressure increases.
Time disappears.
Fatigue develops.
Stress rises.
Situations change.
Technical execution often changes with them.

MASTER was created to evaluate whether athletes can maintain technical quality when environments become realistic and demanding.

The purpose of **MASTER** is not asking:

"Can the athlete perform a skill?"

The purpose becomes:

"Can the athlete consistently execute skill while solving problems?"

Technical breakdowns are not always caused by poor technique itself. Sometimes execution changes because of:

- pressure
- confidence
- fatigue
- awareness limitations
- movement inefficiencies
- emotional responses
- environmental complexity

MASTER observations include:

- Passing quality
- Receiving quality
- First touch effectiveness
- Ball control
- Dribbling efficiency
- Finishing technique
- Technical adaptation
- Execution under pressure
- Skill consistency
- Decision-linked execution

One of the strongest indicators inside **MASTER** involves first touch.
First touch frequently determines what happens next.

A quality first touch may create:

- time
- space
- confidence
- attacking opportunities
- passing options

A poor first touch can immediately create pressure and eliminate options.

MASTER also evaluates adaptation because highly technical athletes do not simply repeat movements mechanically.

- They adjust.
- They recognize context.
- They modify solutions.
- They identify when simple execution creates stronger outcomes.

True technical mastery begins when skill survives pressure.

THINK — Awareness and Decision Index

Many athletes appear fast because they move quickly. Others appear fast because they think quickly.

THINK evaluates how athletes gather information, process environments, recognize patterns, anticipate situations, and make decisions.

Sports environments constantly change:

- Space changes.
- Pressure changes.
- Positioning changes.
- Numbers change.
- Time changes.
- Opportunities change.

Every second athletes collect and process information. Many people refer broadly to this as soccer IQ, but that phrase often creates confusion because it sounds fixed.

- Awareness is not fixed.
- Decision-making is not fixed.
- Recognition is not fixed.

These behaviors are trainable.

THINK observations include:

- Environmental scanning
- Awareness
- Anticipation
- Recognition of pressure
- Recognition of space
- Processing speed
- Pattern recognition
- Adaptability
- Problem-solving

Decision quality

Scanning becomes one of the most important indicators within **THINK**.

Athletes constantly need information:

- Where are teammates?
- Where are defenders?
- Where is space?
- Where is pressure?
- What opportunities exist?

Athletes gathering information early frequently make better decisions because processing occurs before action becomes necessary. For example, two athletes receive identical passes.

One immediately turns and attacks available space.

The other turns directly into pressure.

The difference may not be technical.

The difference may be information.

Strong **THINK** behaviors often include athletes who scan consistently identify:

- pressure early
- recognize opportunities
- anticipate situations
- process information efficiently
- make purposeful decisions

Athletes requiring development may demonstrate:

- reactive decisions
- uncertainty
- delayed reactions
- repeated poor spacing
- turning into pressure
- inconsistent awareness

Games frequently reward athletes who understand environments sooner.

Because the athletes appearing one step ahead are often simply seeing the game earlier.

LEAD — Leadership and Influence Index

Leadership frequently becomes misunderstood within sports environments.

People often imagine leaders as:

- the loud player,
- the captain,
- the best athlete,
- the player giving speeches.

However, leadership is not volume.

Leadership is not personality.

Leadership is not popularity.

Leadership is influence.

Every athlete influences environments whether they realize it or not. Some athletes influence through communication. Some influence through effort. Some influence through emotional stability. Some influence through consistency. Some influence through encouragement.

LEAD evaluates how athletes affect teammates, culture, and collective performance.

LEAD observations include:

Communication quality

Accountability

Ownership

Encouragement

Emotional influence

Responsibility

Teammate support

Leadership initiative

Consistency

Cultural impact

Leadership often appears quietly.

Leadership may appear when:

a teammate encourages another player after mistakes

an athlete accepts responsibility

a player organizes teammates defensively

an athlete maintains positivity during adversity

a teammate provides support without recognition

Strong **LEAD** behaviors often include athletes who:

communicate effectively

encourage teammates

create trust

demonstrate accountability

organize others

strengthen environments

Athletes requiring development may demonstrate:

blame behaviors

- negative communication
- disengagement
- emotional inconsistency
- avoidance of responsibility

Leadership is rarely about standing in front of people.

Leadership is often about improving the people beside you.

GROW — Confidence and Development Index

Beneath movement, technical execution, decision-making, and leadership exists a characteristic quietly influencing nearly every aspect of performance:

Confidence.

Confidence affects:

- communication
- decision-making
- leadership
- risk-taking
- resilience
- movement
- effort
- persistence

Most importantly, confidence often influences whether athletes fully become themselves.

GROW evaluates how athletes respond throughout the developmental process itself.

Many people speak about confidence as though athletes either possess it or do not.

However confidence constantly changes.

Confidence grows.

Confidence decreases.

Confidence fluctuates.

Confidence responds to experiences.

GROW observations include:

- Confidence behaviors
- Resilience
- Emotional regulation
- Ownership
- Persistence
- Adaptability
- Coachability
- Responses after mistakes
- Growth mindset
- Overcoming adversity

One of the strongest indicators inside **GROW** involves responses following mistakes.

Some athletes:

- continue asking for the ball,
- continue communicating,
- continue competing,
- continue taking risks.

Others may:

- withdraw,
- become quiet,
- avoid involvement,
- reduce effort.

These responses do not automatically indicate weakness.
They provide information.

Strong **GROW** behaviors often include athletes who:

- recover quickly from mistakes
- remain engaged during challenges
- continue attempting difficult actions
- demonstrate ownership
- maintain effort and attitude
- continue learning

Athletes requiring development may demonstrate:

- hesitation after mistakes
- emotional withdrawal
- reduced engagement
- avoidance of difficult situations
- dependence upon reassurance

Confidence is not simply believing success will occur.

Confidence is believing growth will continue even when success remains uncertain.

And often the athletes who grow the most are not the athletes avoiding failure—
they are the athletes learning how to continue through it.

SPI

SCAN PERFORMANCE INDEX

THE 5 PILLARS OF SPI

A HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM FOR COMPLETE ATHLETES

MEASURE WHAT MATTERS. DEVELOP WHAT LASTS.



PILLAR 1

MOVE

ATHLETIC MOVEMENT EFFICIENCY



Develop strength, speed, agility, balance and movement confidence.

FOCUS AREAS

- Balance & Stability
- Change of Direction
- Acceleration
- Agility & Coordination
- Movement Confidence

STRONG BODY. STRONG FOUNDATION.

PILLAR 2

MASTER

TECHNICAL SKILL EFFICIENCY



Refine technical skills and perform with consistency under all conditions.

FOCUS AREAS

- First Touch Quality
- Passing Quality
- Dribbling
- Finishing
- Technical Adaptation

SKILLED PLAYER. RELIABLE UNDER PRESSURE.

PILLAR 3

THINK

AWARENESS & DECISION INDEX



Improve game intelligence, scanning, decision-making and problem solving.

FOCUS AREAS

- Environmental Scanning
- Game Awareness
- Decision Quality
- Processing Speed
- Adaptability

SMART PLAYER. BETTER DECISIONS.

PILLAR 4

LEAD

LEADERSHIP & INFLUENCE INDEX



Communicate, encourage and lead by example. Take ownership and influence others.

FOCUS AREAS

- Communication Quality
- Accountability
- Positive Influence
- Ownership
- Team Impact

STRONG LEADER. POSITIVE INFLUENCE.

PILLAR 5

GROW

CONFIDENCE & DEVELOPMENT INDEX



Build confidence, resilience, mindset and a commitment to growth.

FOCUS AREAS

- Response to Mistakes
- Confidence Behaviors
- Emotional Regulation
- Ownership of Growth
- Resilience

GROWING PERSON. BUILT FOR LIFE.



THE SPI PURPOSE

SPI measures observable behaviors across five key areas that contribute to long-term athlete development. It guides coaching, supports growth, and builds complete athletes.



SEE THE WHOLE ATHLETE



UNDERSTAND WHAT MATTERS



DEVELOP WITH PURPOSE



BECOME COMPLETE

SEE. CONNECT. ACT. NEXT.

CHAPTER 15.

SPI Patterns



Looking Beyond Isolated Moments

One of the most common challenges within athlete development is the tendency to draw conclusions from isolated moments. Coaches, parents, and athletes naturally remember highly visible events because memorable moments attract attention. A goal scored late in a game may remain in memory long after the match ends. A mistake leading to a goal may become difficult to forget. A missed opportunity, a turnover, or a difficult moment can sometimes shape an entire perception of performance.

The challenge is that isolated moments rarely tell the complete story.

Development does not occur through single events. Development occurs through repeated behaviors that emerge over time. One mistake does not define confidence. One successful pass does not define technical ability. One great game does not automatically establish consistency, and one difficult performance does not determine long-term potential. This is where understanding SPI patterns becomes essential.

SPI was designed not only to identify characteristics within individual pillars but also to recognize repeated trends occurring across multiple observations. Patterns provide coaches with a more reliable picture because repeated behaviors often reveal information that isolated moments cannot. Instead of asking, "What happened during this game?" SPI shifts attention toward asking, "What behaviors repeatedly appear?"

Repeated behaviors create stronger information because they reduce the influence of emotions, assumptions, and short-term outcomes. Athletes naturally experience highs and lows. Confidence changes. Fatigue changes. Physical energy changes. Competitive environments change. Emotions change. Because athletes constantly experience these changing factors, individual performances may fluctuate considerably. Patterns help identify what consistently remains beneath those fluctuations.

For example, an athlete may appear technically inconsistent during one game. Looking only at that single performance might create the assumption that technical limitations exist. However, repeated observations over several practices and matches may reveal that technical execution remains strong in most situations but declines specifically under increased pressure. The issue may not actually be technical ability itself. The pattern may suggest challenges related to confidence, environmental stress, or decision-making speed.

Another athlete may consistently create quality movement and support options throughout games while receiving little attention because goals and assists remain limited.

Over time, repeated observations may reveal that the athlete repeatedly arrives in advantageous spaces, creates opportunities for teammates, and demonstrates strong awareness. The visible outcomes may vary from game to game, but the underlying behaviors remain consistent.

Patterns frequently reveal relationships between developmental areas as well. Some athletes may demonstrate strong movement efficiency while showing delayed decision-making patterns. Others may display advanced awareness but hesitate during pressure situations. Some athletes may possess strong technical qualities but demonstrate reduced engagement following mistakes. Another athlete may show strong leadership behaviors while struggling with confidence in individual performance situations.

Recognizing these relationships creates a more complete understanding of development because performance characteristics rarely operate independently. Behaviors often influence one another. Improvement within one area may create positive changes within another area. Likewise, challenges in one area may influence performance elsewhere.

Understanding patterns also changes the coaching process itself.

Without pattern recognition, coaches may react emotionally to individual moments. A mistake may lead to immediate conclusions. A successful play may create assumptions regarding overall ability. Coaching decisions can unintentionally become based on short-term observations rather than developmental trends.

Pattern recognition creates patience.

It encourages coaches to observe longer.

It encourages coaches to ask better questions.

It encourages coaches to search for evidence before conclusions.

Instead of asking:

"What happened?"

Coaches begin asking:

"How often is this happening?"

"When does this happen?"

"What conditions exist when it happens?"

"What behaviors consistently appear before it?"

"What may be influencing the pattern?"

These questions create stronger developmental conversations.

Patterns also create opportunities for individualized development planning. Once repeated behaviors become visible, interventions can become more intentional. Coaches can identify targeted growth areas, create specific learning environments, and establish

measurable objectives designed around the athlete's actual needs rather than assumptions.

Athletes benefit from pattern recognition as well because they begin seeing development as a process rather than a series of isolated successes and failures. Instead of becoming overly influenced by one difficult game or one strong performance, athletes begin understanding that growth occurs through consistency, repetition, and long-term behaviors.

Perhaps most importantly, pattern recognition protects athletes from labels.

Labels often emerge from isolated moments:

"Low confidence."

"Poor decision-maker."

"Not aggressive enough."

"Lacks leadership."

Patterns often tell a different story.

Patterns create context.

Patterns create understanding.

Patterns create opportunities.

Because development is rarely determined by a single moment. **Development is revealed through what repeatedly appears over time.**

SPI PATTERNS

LOOKING BEYOND ISOLATED MOMENTS

Development is not defined by a single play, a single game, or a single outcome. SPI Patterns focus on the repeated behaviors that reveal who an athlete is becoming over time. Patterns create clarity. Clarity creates better decisions.

WHY PATTERNS MATTER

- REDUCES NOISE**
Filters out highs, lows, and emotional reactions to individual moments.
- UNCOVERS THE REAL STORY**
Repeated behaviors reveal what is truly driving performance.
- CONNECTS THE PILLARS**
Patterns show how movement, skill, awareness, leadership, and mindset influence each other.
- GUIDES DEVELOPMENT**
Clear patterns lead to targeted interventions and measurable growth.
- BUILDS CONFIDENCE**
Athletes see progress over time, not just outcomes.

THE PATTERN CYCLE

- OBSERVE**
Watch behaviors across practices and games.
- RECORD**
Document what you see using SPI pillars.
- IDENTIFY**
Look for repeated behaviors and key indicators.
- INTERPRET**
Understand what the pattern is telling you.
- ACT & MONITOR**
Apply the right interventions and track changes.

EXAMPLES OF SPI PATTERNS

- MOVE**
 - Consistently gets into good positions.
 - Poor recovery after possession loss.
 - Strong acceleration but loses balance in stops.
- MASTER**
 - Clean first touch in space.
 - Technical errors increase under pressure.
 - Dribbles with confidence but final pass lacks quality.
- THINK**
 - Scans early and often.
 - Decision-making slows when pressured.
 - Good awareness defensively but late in attack.
- LEAD**
 - Encourages teammates consistently.
 - Disappears after mistakes.
 - Takes ownership and holds self accountable.
- GROW**
 - Bounces back quickly from setbacks.
 - Avoids risk after mistakes.
 - Shows growth mindset and asks for feedback.

WHAT PATTERNS ARE NOT

- NOT ONE GAME**
A single performance does not define development.
- NOT JUST OUTCOMES**
Goals, assists, and results are not the full picture.
- NOT PERMANENT**
Patterns can change with growth, support, and time.
- NOT LABELS**
Patterns describe behaviors, not athletes.
- NOT COMPARISONS**
Every athlete has a unique developmental journey.

SEE. CONNECT. ACT. NEXT.

SCAN PERFORMANCE

PATTERNS REVEAL POTENTIAL. INTENTION CREATES RESULTS.

CHAPTER 16.



Four Moments of the Game + SPI

Understanding Performance Within Real Game Environments

The SCAN Performance Index (SPI) was designed to evaluate athletes beyond isolated statistics and visible outcomes. However, athlete development does not occur inside isolated actions. Athletes do not perform technical skills, movement patterns, leadership behaviors, or decisions independently from the game itself. Development occurs within changing environments where space, pressure, positioning, and responsibilities continuously shift. Because of this, SPI becomes significantly more powerful when viewed through the lens of the Four Moments of the Game.

The Four Moments framework creates structure around the constantly changing environments athletes experience throughout competition. Rather than evaluating performance as one continuous event, the game can be viewed through four interconnected moments: Attacking Organization, Attacking Transition, Defensive Organization, and Defensive Transition. While these moments are separated for teaching and observation purposes, they rarely occur independently during actual competition. The game flows continuously, and athletes constantly move between responsibilities, decisions, and environments.

Integrating SPI with the Four Moments allows coaches to evaluate not only what athletes do, but when, why, and how behaviors emerge within realistic situations. It moves observation away from isolated actions and toward contextual understanding.

During **Attacking Organization**, a team has established possession and attempts to create opportunities through movement, support, spacing, and collective actions. This environment places significant demands on awareness, technical execution, movement quality, and communication. Within SPI, coaches may observe **MOVE** through an athlete's ability to create support angles and move efficiently into space. **MASTER** may appear through technical execution under pressure and first-touch quality. **THINK** may emerge through scanning, recognizing overloads, and identifying attacking opportunities. **LEAD** may reveal itself through communication and organization, while **GROW** may appear through confidence to receive possession and willingness to attempt difficult actions.

Questions coaches may ask include:

"Is the athlete creating supporting movement?"

"Do technical actions create advantages?"

"Is the athlete scanning before receiving?"

"Does communication help teammates?"

"Does confidence remain visible under pressure?"

Labels often emerge from isolated moments:

"Low confidence."

"Poor decision-maker."

"Not aggressive enough."

"Lacks leadership."

Patterns often tell a different story.

Patterns create context.

Patterns create understanding.

Patterns create opportunities.

During **Attacking Transition**, possession has just been regained and opportunities frequently appear because the opposing team may still be disorganized. This moment often demands rapid recognition, urgency, awareness, and quick decision-making. Within **MOVE**, coaches may examine reaction speed and acceleration into attacking spaces. **MASTER** may reveal technical execution while moving at speed. **THINK** becomes highly visible through recognition of available space and decision quality. **LEAD** may emerge through communication and organization, while **GROW** may reveal confidence to attack opportunities immediately rather than hesitating.

Questions during attacking transition may include:

"How quickly did the athlete recognize available space?"

"Did movement create immediate support?"

"Did technical execution remain effective at speed?"

"Did the athlete communicate?"

"Did the athlete attack opportunities confidently?"

During **Defensive Organization**, athletes no longer possess the ball and must collectively protect space, reduce opportunities, and regain possession. This moment often places heavy demands on awareness, discipline, movement efficiency, and communication. **MOVE** may appear through recovery positioning and body control. **MASTER** may involve technical execution during defensive actions such as tackling or intercepting. **THINK** becomes visible through anticipation and recognition of danger. **LEAD** frequently appears through communication and organization. **GROW** may reveal resilience and continued engagement throughout difficult moments.

Questions coaches may include:

"Is the athlete positioned effectively?"

"Does movement remain controlled?"

"Is danger recognized early?"

"Does communication help teammates?"

"Does the athlete remain engaged defensively?"

During **Defensive Transition**, possession has just been lost and athletes immediately

shift from attacking responsibilities toward defensive responsibilities. This moment frequently becomes one of the most important and overlooked phases of the game because reactions during these few seconds often determine what happens next.

Within SPI, **MOVE** may reveal urgency and recovery movement. **MASTER** may involve technical execution during immediate defensive actions. **THINK** becomes highly visible through processing speed and recognition of danger. **LEAD** may appear through communication and collective organization. **GROW** often becomes especially important because emotional responses frequently emerge after mistakes or turnovers.

Questions coaches may ask include:

"How quickly did recovery begin?"

"Was danger recognized immediately?"

"Did communication occur?"

"Did the athlete recover emotionally after losing possession?"

"Did effort remain consistent?"

When SPI and the Four Moments work together, observations become more meaningful because behaviors are evaluated within realistic contexts rather than disconnected situations. A technical skill no longer becomes simply a completed pass or missed pass. Instead, coaches can understand whether execution occurred under pressure, during transition, or while solving problems within specific environments.

Likewise, confidence no longer becomes a vague characteristic. Coaches may discover that an athlete demonstrates confidence during attacking organization but becomes hesitant during transition moments. Awareness may appear strong defensively while requiring development during possession. Leadership may emerge most strongly during adversity rather than comfortable situations.

Patterns begin revealing themselves.

Connections begin appearing.

Development becomes clearer.

Ultimately, SPI and the Four Moments of the Game create a more complete understanding of athlete development because athletes are not performing skills in isolation.

They are solving problems within changing environments.

And **understanding the environment often explains the behavior.**



SPI + THE FOUR MOMENTS OF THE GAME

EVALUATING ATHLETES IN REAL GAME ENVIRONMENTS

SPI becomes more powerful when viewed through the Four Moments of the Game. Athletes are constantly moving between roles, decisions, and environments. Observation within each moment reveals how the five pillars show up in context.

HOW TO OBSERVE WITH SPI

- WATCH**
Observe behaviors within the moment.
- IDENTIFY**
Identify which pillar(s) are most visible.
- INTERPRET**
Interpret the behavior within the context.
- CONNECT**
Connect patterns across moments and pillars.
- SUPPORT**
Provide targeted feedback and development.



THE FIVE PILLARS OF SPI

- MOVE** Athletic Movement Efficiency
How athletes move, create space, recover, and control their bodies.
- MASTER** Technical Skill Efficiency
How athletes execute skills with quality and consistency.
- THINK** Awareness & Decision Index
How athletes scan, process, recognize, and make decisions.
- LEAD** Leadership & Influence Index
How athletes communicate, organize, and influence teammates.
- GROW** Confidence & Development Index
How athletes respond, adapt, and continue to grow.

EXAMPLE: ONE BEHAVIOR, FOUR CONTEXTS

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | ATTACKING ORGANIZATION
Creates space and shows for the ball in support. |
| 2 | ATTACKING TRANSITION
Recognizes space early and makes a quick run in behind. |
| 3 | DEFENSIVE ORGANIZATION
Maintains shape and communicates to protect space. |
| 4 | DEFENSIVE TRANSITION
Immediately presses or recovers to stop the counter. |

WHY CONTEXT MATTERS

- Same behavior, different moment, different meaning.
- Context reveals the WHY behind the behavior.
- Better context = better feedback = better development.

SCAN BE COMPLETE. DEVELOP ON PURPOSE.

THE GAME IS ALWAYS CHANGING. SPI HELPS US SEE WHAT MATTERS MOST IN EACH MOMENT.

OBERVE. DEVELOP. SUCCEED.



CHAPTER 17.

SPI Archetypes

Understanding the Athlete Behind the Performance

"Athletes are more than scores. Scores help us understand performance, but identity helps us understand development."

One of the most important goals of the SCAN Performance Index is ensuring athletes are not reduced to numbers. While scores provide valuable information, numbers alone rarely tell the full story of a player. Two athletes may have identical SPI scores and possess completely different strengths, personalities, and developmental needs.

This is where archetypes become valuable.

Archetypes help translate objective data into meaningful athlete identities. They allow coaches, parents, and athletes to understand how a player impacts the game and who they are becoming within the development process. Archetypes are not designed to create labels or limitations. Instead, they create understanding, provide direction, and help identify next steps for growth.

Athletes evolve continuously. Confidence changes. Skills improve. Awareness increases. Leadership develops. As players grow, archetypes can change as well. The following profiles represent common athlete identities within the SCAN framework and are designed to describe strengths, developmental patterns, and opportunities for growth.

Elite Competitor

The Elite Competitor is the complete athlete. This player combines confidence, courage, awareness, and relentless effort into a balanced profile that positively influences nearly every aspect of performance. The Elite Competitor often appears calm during pressure, embraces difficult moments, and consistently demonstrates strong technical ability alongside leadership behaviors. These players rarely allow emotions to control their actions and frequently become examples for teammates.

The growth challenge for Elite Competitors is not performance itself but continuing to pursue improvement. Because these athletes often experience success, there can be a tendency to become comfortable. Continued growth requires new challenges, increased leadership opportunities, and situations that force adaptation and learning.

Complete Playmaker

The Complete Playmaker is a balanced player who impacts the game in multiple ways. Rather than relying heavily on one particular strength, these athletes contribute through awareness, technical consistency, communication, and decision-making. They often make

teammates around them better and naturally support team organization.

Complete Playmakers frequently become highly valuable because they consistently provide stability and reliability. Their next stage of growth often involves becoming more assertive and recognizing moments when they need to step forward and influence games more aggressively.

Game Changer

The Game Changer is the athlete who can shift momentum with confidence, creativity, and bravery. These players often possess the ability to create moments that immediately affect games. Whether through skill, attacking actions, or decisive plays, they naturally bring energy and excitement into competition.

Game Changers often thrive when freedom and creativity are encouraged. However, they sometimes rely heavily on big moments rather than consistent performance. Development for these athletes frequently focuses on improving decision-making and maintaining impact over the course of an entire game rather than isolated moments.

Alpha Attacker

The Alpha Attacker approaches games aggressively and confidently. These athletes naturally believe they can influence attacking moments and frequently seek opportunities to take defenders on directly. They often demonstrate courage, self-belief, and a willingness to take responsibility during difficult moments.

Because Alpha Attackers love direct action, they occasionally become focused only on attacking opportunities immediately in front of them. Continued development often involves increasing awareness, improving timing, and recognizing supporting options around them.

Field General

The Field General sees the game differently from many players. These athletes organize teammates, recognize patterns, and help create structure within teams. They often communicate consistently and naturally influence positioning and movement around them.

Field Generals often appear mature beyond their age because of their understanding of situations. Their challenge sometimes becomes overthinking or becoming overly cautious. Growth frequently requires encouraging creativity and reminding these athletes that leadership also includes taking risks.

Tactical Brain

The Tactical Brain solves problems through intelligence and awareness. These athletes often recognize space, identify pressure, and understand game situations quickly. They consistently place themselves in effective positions and often seem to arrive in the right place at the right time.

While Tactical Brains often possess excellent understanding, they occasionally hesitate because they process multiple options simultaneously. Development usually focuses on increasing decisiveness and trusting instincts during competition.

Iron Engine

The Iron Engine brings relentless energy and effort into every environment. These athletes rarely stop competing and often become known for work rate, endurance, and persistence. Coaches frequently trust these players because they consistently give maximum effort regardless of circumstances.

The challenge for Iron Engines is recognizing that effort alone does not always create solutions. Development often focuses on slowing down mentally, increasing awareness, and helping these athletes work smarter in addition to working harder.

Grinder

The Grinder embraces difficult moments. These athletes battle through challenges, maintain effort, and continue competing even when circumstances become uncomfortable. They often become emotionally resilient competitors who refuse to stop working.

Grinders often develop tremendous mental strength. However, they can occasionally rely so heavily on determination that technical details become overlooked. Their development frequently includes refining technical consistency while maintaining their natural resilience.

Workhorse

The Workhorse is dependable and team-centered. These athletes often do difficult jobs that go unnoticed by others. They recover defensively, support teammates, communicate consistently, and bring reliable effort every day.

Because Workhorses naturally place team needs first, they sometimes underestimate their own abilities. Continued development often focuses on encouraging confidence and helping these athletes become more expressive in possession and attacking moments.

Confidence Builder

The Confidence Builder is an athlete who demonstrates positive qualities and developmental potential but continues building belief in personal ability. These players frequently show effort, coachability, and a willingness to learn but may hesitate during pressure situations.

Confidence Builders often grow significantly when environments provide support, small successes, and positive experiences. Development for these athletes emphasizes repetition, encouragement, and gradually increasing challenges that strengthen belief through experience rather than words alone.

Emerging Competitor

The Emerging Competitor possesses a strong foundation and demonstrates many positive characteristics but is still developing consistency. These athletes frequently show flashes of ability and potential while continuing to learn how to apply strengths consistently.

Growth for Emerging Competitors often centers around ownership, communication, and developing confidence in their decision-making. These athletes frequently experience major progress as experience and repetition increase.

Development Needed


Development Needed does not describe a limitation. It simply identifies an athlete who is still building consistency across multiple areas of performance. These players often possess strengths that remain hidden beneath confidence gaps, technical inconsistencies, or limited experience.

The purpose of this profile is not judgment. It is direction.

Development for these athletes focuses heavily on support environments, clear next steps, achievable goals, and repeated opportunities to experience growth.

Because every athlete starts somewhere.

And every athlete continues becoming something.

























SCAN ATHLETE ARCHETYPES

IDENTITY. STRENGTH. GROWTH. IMPACT.

Archetypes help us understand the athlete behind the performance. They are not labels—they are a roadmap for development. Every athlete has a starting point. Every athlete has a next step.

S SELF-BELIEF
C COURAGE
A AWARENESS
N NEVER QUIT

COMPLETE ATHLETES	ATTACKING ARCHETYPES	TACTICAL INTELLIGENCE ARCHETYPES
 ELITE COMPETITOR A complete, high-level player who combines confidence, bravery, awareness, and relentless drive.	 ALPHA ATTACKER A fearless, front-footed player who backs themselves to take over attacking moments.	 FIELD GENERAL A smart player who reads the game and helps organize others.
 COMPLETE PLAYMAKER A well-rounded player who positively impacts the game in every phase.	 DYNAMIC CREATOR An inventive player who uses courage and awareness to unlock defenses.	 TEMPO DICTATOR A composed player who controls rhythm and influences the speed of play.
 GAME CHANGER A bold, skilled competitor who can shift momentum with strong all-around qualities.	 VISIONARY ATTACKER An aggressive forward-thinking player who spots openings and attacks them quickly.	 TACTICAL BRAIN A highly aware player who solves problems with intelligence and positioning.
RESILIENCE & WORK RATE ARCHETYPES	MENTAL TOUGHNESS ARCHETYPES	DEVELOPING ARCHETYPES
 IRON ENGINE A relentless worker who keeps going and brings nonstop effort.	 UNSHAKEABLE COMPETITOR A mentally tough player who stays strong and delivers under pressure.	 CONFIDENCE BUILDER A developing player who shows useful qualities but is still growing in belief.
 GRINDER A tough, determined player who battles through every challenge.	 COMPOSURE LEADER A player who sets the tone through calm decision-making and control.	 EMERGING COMPETITOR A balanced developing player with a solid base to build from.
 WORKHORSE A dependable, high-effort player who covers ground and does the dirty work.	 PRESSURE SPECIALIST A player who stays sharp and effective in high-stress moments.	 DEVELOPMENT NEEDED A player still building consistency across the key SCAN traits.

 IDENTIFY  DEVELOP  EMPOWER  INSPIRE

MEASURING MORE. DEVELOPING WHOLE ATHLETES.



CHAPTER 18.

Closing Statements

A Closing Reflection

"Development is not a destination. Development is a lifelong process of becoming."

As you reach the final pages of this book, it is important to remember that the purpose of athlete development has never been to create perfect players. Perfection does not exist in sports. No athlete performs perfectly, no coach teaches perfectly, and no parent supports perfectly. Every person involved in the process is learning, adapting, growing, and evolving. Development is not a straight path with predictable outcomes. Instead, it is a journey filled with moments of success, frustration, confidence, uncertainty, challenge, and growth. Throughout this book, one theme has remained constant: athlete development extends far beyond goals scored, rankings, statistics, and immediate outcomes. While those measurements can provide useful information, they rarely tell the complete story. The scoreboard may reveal who won, but it does not always reveal who grew. Statistics may describe what happened, but they often fail to explain the behaviors, lessons, and experiences that created those outcomes.

The process of development is often happening quietly beneath the surface. Confidence is developing when athletes choose to continue after making mistakes. Leadership is developing when players encourage teammates during difficult moments. Awareness is developing when athletes begin recognizing situations before they happen. Resilience is developing when disappointment becomes motivation instead of discouragement. Growth frequently occurs in places that receive little attention because some of the most important developmental moments never appear in statistics.

Athletes will experience difficult periods along the way. There will be practices that feel frustrating. There will be games where performance falls short of expectations. Confidence may fluctuate. Mistakes will happen repeatedly. There may even be moments where progress feels invisible. Athletes often become discouraged during these moments because improvement is not always immediately visible.

However, growth rarely follows a straight line. Development often looks messy before it looks successful. Temporary struggle is not always a sign of failure; sometimes it is evidence that learning is taking place. Athletes who continue through difficult periods often discover that challenges become opportunities for growth. What once felt impossible eventually becomes familiar. What once felt uncomfortable eventually becomes confidence.

Years from now, many athletes will not remember every score, every tournament result, or every statistic from their youth years. Over time, many of those details disappear.

What often remains are the experiences and relationships that shaped them along the journey. Athletes frequently remember the coach who believed in them, the teammate who supported them, the challenge they overcame, and the confidence they gained through difficult moments. Sports provide opportunities that extend beyond competition. They create environments where individuals learn how to lead, communicate, persevere, adapt, and continue improving. The lessons developed through sports often become lessons that influence school, relationships, careers, and life itself.

The purpose of development has never simply been to create better athletes. The larger purpose is creating stronger individuals who possess confidence, resilience, leadership, and the ability to continue learning throughout life.

Because the final score is rarely the end of the story.

Growth continues.

Learning continues.

The journey continues.

Thank you for reading this book and please reach out to me for any clarification at:

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