



# Developing The Character of Champions

## Persistence

“ Quitters never win & Winners never quit ”

There are few qualities if any, in the equation of excellence that is more important than persisting amidst adversity. Persistence overshadows even talent as one of the most valued attributes a player can possess in shaping the quality of their performance.

What is persistence? Persistence is hanging in there when the odds are stacked against you. It's a test of faith.

Throughout history most of the greatest achievements have come only after multiple, if not countless failures. All winners have encountered crushing defeats before claiming ultimate victory. In the end they persisted, not allowing their defeats to keep them down or hold them back certain individuals are able to overcome insurmountable odds rather than yielding to them. They become role models for anyone who has the motivation and the need to achieve exceptional goals.

### **Historical Role Model: Thomas Edison**

There may be no better example of persistence than Thomas Edison. A prolific Inventor responsible for us having microphones & electric lamps. Credited with 1,033-patented inventions to his name he certainly had more than his fair share of victories.

But think of how many failures Edison had too, Literally thousands. To his great credit, though Edison didn't see them as such. When reminded that he had failed something like 25,000 times experimenting with the storage battery, Edison supposedly responded by saying. “No, I didn't fail. I just discovered 24,999 ways that the storage battery does not work. I am not discouraged, because every wrong attempt discarded is another step forward.”

What a marvelous outlook. So the next time you lose the ball when trying a new move, don't be discouraged, keep trying it again and again until you discover how to make it work.

## **SUCCESS IS ONE STEP BEYOND DEFEAT**

### **Three Feet from Gold!**

Back in the gold -rush days there was an uncle of R.U.Darby who went to dig for gold in the hope of becoming rich. He staked his claim and went to work with pick and shovel. After weeks of labor, he was rewarded by the discovery of the shining ore. He needed machinery to bring the ore to the surface. Quietly, he covered up the mine, retraced his footsteps to his home in Williamsburg, Maryland, and told his relatives and a few neighbors of the “ strike. ” They got together money for the needed machinery and had it shipped. The uncle and Darby went back to work the mine.

The first car of Ore was mined and shipped to a smelter. The returns proved they had one of the richest mines in Colorado! A few more cars of that ore would clear the debts. Then would come the big killing profits. Down went the drills! Up went the hopes of Darby and Uncle! Then something happened. The vein of Gold ore disappeared! They had come to the end of the rainbow, and the pot of gold was no longer there. They drilled on, desperately trying to pick up the vein again – all to no avail. Finally they decided to quit.

They sold the machinery to a junk man for a few hundred dollars, and took the train back home. The junk man called in a mining engineer to look at the mine and do a little calculating. The engineer advised that the project had failed because the owners were not familiar with “ fault lines ” His calculations showed that the vein would be found just three feet from where the Darby’s’ had stopped drilling! That is exactly where it was found!

The junk man took millions of dollars in ore from the mine because he knew enough to seek help before giving up.

If you get frustrated in any area of your life seek the advice of people who will help you think things through before you make your decision. Don’t be afraid to share your thoughts with your parents, teachers or coaches. They may just give you a nudge in a slightly differently direction that will lead you to strike gold too!

## **PLAYERS DEVELOP AT DIFFERENT LEVELS**

### **THE MIRICLE OF THE CHINESE BAMBOO TREE**

The Chinese bamboo tree is planted after the earth is prepared, and for the first four years, all of the growth is underground. The only thing visible above the ground is a little bulb and a small shoot coming out of it. Then in the fifth year, the bamboo tree grows up to eighty feet!

Sometimes you will be training very hard and be frustrated. that your are maybe not getting enough playing time, or don’t seems to see any rewards for all your efforts. You

must realize what it means to pay the price and prepare the ground, to plant the seeds, and to fertilize, cultivate, water and weed, even when you can't see the immediate results, have faith that ultimately you will reap the fruits in a harvest of future success. Faith is a strong root system that allows you to bend and grow with the winds of change without breaking.

Players develop, progress and grow at very different stages. We often see players dominate games at the younger ages groups because they are just early physical developers and therefore both bigger and stronger than the other kids. Yet just a few years later the little skillful kids who they were able to push off the ball have had their "Growth spurt" and now catch up and many times bypass the bypass them. If you are one of the big kids then make sure you are working hard to develop you skills. If you are a small player don't be discouraged, just make sure you have a big heart and play quickly. Pass it and Jump!!

### **Player Profile: Andy Marshall: Goalkeeper at Millwall F.C in England.**

Andy Marshall was a young goalkeeper I worked with in England. I remember when he was 13 years old we were at a tournament in Denmark. Andy was the back up keeper to the England National keeper who at the time was a foot taller than Andy. Concerned that he was so far Andy came to for advice. As we sat on a fence at the training field I explained to Andy that the past does not equal the future and that he had a tremendous attitude and work ethic in training and that if he hung in there that my thought was that he would eventually get his growth spurt and because of his attitude he would not only catch up but possibly over take the other keeper.

When we returned to England Andy trained harder than ever and sure enough his growth spurt came and he went on to represent England, play in the Premier League and played for Millwall in The FA Cup Final.

## **5 Points to be a Star**

### **1. Focus on your goal**

Unstoppable people keep their eyes on the target at all times. Sir Isaac Newton was asked how he discovered the law of gravity and he replied, "By thinking about it all of the time." What are your goals? Write them down, create a plan to achieve them and take action every day towards reaching them.

## **2. Believe in Yourself**

### **Break your belief barriers.**

Do you know the story of the four-minute mile? For thousands of years, people held the belief that it was impossible for a human being to run the mile in less than four minutes. But in 1954, Roger Bannister broke this imposing belief barrier. He got himself to achieve the impossible not merely by physical practice but by constantly rehearsing the event in his mind. Many people don't realize, though, that the greatest aspect of his breakthrough was what it did for others. It seemed no one would ever be able to break a four-minute mile, yet within one year of Roger's breaking the barrier, 37 other runners also broke it. His experience provided them with references strong enough to create a certainty that they, too, could "do the impossible" and the year after that, 300 other runners did the same thing!

When you experience a barrier that you are struggling to get over, there is more than likely someone else who has overcome what you are experiencing find out about them and learn how they did it. Let it give you confidence that you are not alone and you too can break through your barriers.

## **3. Accept failures as learning experiences**

Our greatest glory is not ever failing, but in rising every time we fail. – Confucius

Mistakes and failures are inevitable and even essential; they are evidence of action- that you are doing something. The more mistakes you make the greater your chance of succeeding. The arrow that hit the bull's eye is the result of hundreds of misses. The shot that hits the back of the net is a result of hundreds of misses. One thing is for sure you will miss 100% of the shots you never take – Don't be afraid of making mistakes and learn from them.

## **4. Be patient & keep things in perspective**

We live in a society that demands and has grown accustomed to instant gratification. Most players lack the patience necessary to achieve their goals. Unfortunately there are no fast- food outlets serving up your dreams! Achieving your dreams takes time every moment you are training; you can take comfort in realizing you are moving closer and closer towards reaching your potential.

### **Your challenges are other people dreams!**

The next time that you are feeling really down about being injured or not playing well. Think about those kids who can't even play because they have been paralyzed or born without their sight. Be thankful for your troubles and realize how fortunate you are to be able to play in the first place.

## 5. Never Quit.

I'd like to share a poem my mom sent me just after my Dad had died. She wrote "Dear Tony, when nothing was going right and I was down in the dumps, I would just go and read it and think I'm not going to be beaten" and she wasn't.

### **DON'T QUIT**

When things go wrong  
As they sometimes will,  
When the road you're trudging  
Seems all uphill,

Success is failure turned inside out-  
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,  
And you never can tell how close you are,  
It may be near when it seems so afar,  
So stick to the fight  
When you're hardest hit....

It's when things seem worst  
That you must not quit!

If you don't give up, you simply cannot and will not fail.

### **TRAINING FOR PERSISTENCE**

**In Training:** Learning new skills and strategies aren't easy and take time. Stay positive believe in yourself and train as if you hope to play. Visualize your perfect performance, think about the best you have every felt playing soccer and train towards that feeling. You will experience times when you don't feel you are getting better. At these times take a moment to reflect just how far you have come.

**In Games:** If things are not going as well as you wish then keep focused on what's happening now rather than drowning yourself in misery about the mistakes you have made or worrying about the score. Keeping talking positively to yourself.

**Soccer in General:** Most great players at sometime in their career have thought of quitting either because of being cut from a team, not being selected for a team, being injured or getting pressure from parents or coaches. Remember there are few things that last forever. Hang in their weather the storm and when the clouds pass the sun will shine for you again.

### **At Home**

- Read Positive books for 15 minutes before you go to bed and 15 minutes when you get up in the morning.
- Watch Motivational movies like Rudy, Rocky & Miracle with stories of overcoming struggles and persistence

### **At School**

Stay on the job until you succeed no matter how much time it takes. Make a commitment; follow through no matter how unpleasant quitting is not an option. Don't give in, don't compromise and settle for anything less than you can be, the enemy of the best is the good. Like the student who is content to make the honor role, instead of putting in that added effort that might result in high honors. You must be willing to take that next step, rather than merely be content doing what's expected of you.

### **Summary**

The route to personal excellence is full of ups and downs, progressions, great leaps forward, backslides and plateaus. But as long as the overall direction is up, you will ascend the mountain and there will be many mountains for you to climb both in soccer and in life.

It's persistence that makes you great. It's persistence that allows you to reach your dreams. It's persistence that enables you to perform at your fullest potential.

If there is any one skill that I've seen in champions – players who have really achieved greatness – it's an unbelievable level of persistence. They'll change their approach as necessary, but they won't abandon their ultimate vision. and desire - To be a player. If you learn only one lesson from soccer, let it be this one **PERSISTENCE REWARDS**. Take the words of Winston Churchill

**“ Never.... Never... Never quit ”**

Good luck and if you are having trouble then please don't hesitate to contact me for advice [tony@starfinderfoundation.org](mailto:tony@starfinderfoundation.org).

