

How to Become a Better Soccer Player

*SPOILER ALERT – I am going to give 4 sure fire ways to become a better soccer player by the end of this article!!

I am often asked by players for advice on how to improve, or what they need to work on the most. Parents ask the same question on behalf on their kids, “what should they be working on when they go out the back garden on their own with a ball?” So here is my response; 4 things to work on to become a better soccer player!

1. Work on your juggling, try and beat your best score, use more and more parts of your body to keep the ball up, challenge your friends or siblings, use different types of balls, a mini-ball, a tennis ball, a deflated ball. If you can improve at juggling then you are improving your comfort on the ball. All great soccer players are supremely comfortable on the ball.
2. On the field of play, when your team has possession, always be looking for the ball. Work to get open, show for your teammate, and call for the ball. Don't be easy for the other defenders to mark you. When you lose the ball, work hard to win it back, or to get back into the right defensive position. It is a game of mistakes, there are an unbelievable amount of moments of transition in a game, so don't drop your head if you lose the ball, just win it back again! In a nutshell, work as hard as you can for every minute you are on the field.
3. As I mentioned last month, try to watch as much soccer as you can. Not just on the telly, but also live games. We are now in the high school and college seasons so there are many amazing opportunities to see quality soccer right here in this area. Don't just watch the game, *observe* players who play in your position, watch how strikers make runs in the box to get in front of defenders, watch how goalies patrol their box, even when the ball is down the other end. There are **SO** many ways to learn when you attend a high quality game.
4. Lastly, and arguably most importantly, do everything you can to improve your weaker foot! If I had only one piece of advice to give any footballer, it would be that. A player who is confident using both feet to pass, control the ball, tackle, or shoot is literally twice as good as a player with similar ability who is only confident with their dominant leg. It can be a very frustrating process trying to gain this confidence, and you may never reach a point where both feet are equal, but just to have a little more confidence with your weaker foot is a wonderful addition to any soccer player's game. Warning! Just like juggling, this one will take lots of hours in the back garden with many moments of frustration!

Overall and above all else, enjoy the games you play and the practices with your coaches and teammates. We can never get better at something we don't enjoy doing. Don't put pressure on yourself, always train and play with a smile on your face. This is such a wonderful sport and we are all so lucky to be able to play and to be a part of a team.

Good luck this season!

Seamus.