



5 Steps to Becoming a Self-Made Player

“One thing is certain: The American kids need hundreds and even thousands more hours to play. That is a really crucial thing. If it’s through their club team, if it’s through themselves, whatever it is. The difference between the top 10 in the world and where we are right now is the technical capabilities and the higher pace. In a high-pace, high-speed environment, to keep calm on the ball, to sharpen your minds so you know what to do with the ball before you get the ball. That’s the difference right now.”

- *SI* interview with new U.S. Men’s National Team Coach Jurgen Klinsmann

1. When practicing always engage in purposeful/deep practice at the edge of your capabilities:

- Purposeful/Deep practice can increase the speed of skill acquisition ten times faster than practice that simply incorporates static drill work.
 - Be efficient in your training. Don’t waste time mindlessly shooting on goal, dribbling through cones, juggling with your dominant foot, hitting the ball as hard as you can off of the kick wall, etc.. Suggestions for purposeful practice follow below.
 - All of the latest research in the field of neuroscience shows that making mistakes while engaged in purposeful/deep practice and fixing those mistakes ultimately leads to accelerated technical development.
 - Deep practice requires hard work (hundreds of hours/year) and perseverance. Develop a growth mindset (see article) so that you can push through mental and physical barriers.

2. Play/Play/Play:

- 1v1 anywhere (basement, driveway, backyard, after practice, etc.) with anybody (siblings, parents, friends, etc.). If you don’t have proper goals improvise.
- Be a leader and organize 2v2 and 3v3 backyard games with friends.
- PYSA skill sessions, PYSA winter training, PYSA summer backyard soccer nights.
- Don’t be afraid to fail in practice or more informal situations. Work on your improvisational skills. Try all your moves and tricks. If you don’t get comfortable on the ball in these settings you will never try them in a game when it counts.

3. Find a wall:

- This could be the kick wall at Click, a basement wall, garage door, gym wall, etc.
- Work on mastering dynamic passing/receiving technique with both feet.
- Work on shaping and texturing balls with inside/outside both feet by hitting specific targets.
- Work on half volley and full volley first touch with both feet and your head.
- Work on receiving bouncing balls and balls out of the air with all body parts.

4. Ball Mastery - Coerver Fast Footwork and 1v1 Moves:

- You don't need to build an arsenal of 1v1 moves, you simply need to master two of them.
 - Fake-Take, Inside-Outside, Scissors, Rake-Take, Hip Swivel, etc.
 - Use DVDs from the Petoskey Public Library and Youtube clips to generate a bag of tricks. Imitate the best players in the world, (Messi, Ronaldo, Wambach, Marta, etc.)
- Fast footwork can be worked on in very limited space.
 - Foundations, Step-ups, Push-Pulls, ¼ Turns, Inside/Outside, Cut/Touch, Step-Overs, Pull-Back Crossovers, Rakes, Roll-Overs, etc..
- These must be done progressive manner and ultimately at top maximum speed. If you never make a mistake you are not engaging in purposeful practice at the edge of your capabilities.

5. Juggling Challenges and I-Soccer National Standards Testing:

- Use www.isoccer.org
 - Create a profile and test your skills in your backyard. Input your data and track your progress.
- Stretch your ability by doing juggling challenges
 - 14-surface juggling (How quickly can you get all the surfaces in terms of time? How many touches does it take? The fewer the better.)
 - Foot = 4 surfaces (Inside, Outside, Top, Heel) x 2 feet
 - Both thighs
 - Both shoulder
 - Head
 - Timed juggling – How many touches in a minute? (dominant and non-dominant)
 - Partner ladder juggling
 - Partner 1 = 1 touch, Partner 2 = 2 touches, Partner 1 = 3 touches (etc.)
 - Soccer Tennis
 - Partner 1-touch and 2-touch distance juggling.

“I don't believe skill was, or ever will be, the result of coaches. It is a result of a love affair between the child and the ball” – Manfred Schellscheidt U.S. u14 Youth National Team

