

# The Five Pillars

## *Using the Five Pillars in player evaluation*

*By Lawrence Fine*

In evaluating a soccer player, consider the five pillars of the game and see where the player ranks in each of the five categories. The five categories are:

- Mental
- Physical
- Technical
- Tactical
- Lifestyle

The first category is **Mental**, which some may refer to as "Psychological." This encompasses the player's includes whether the players place greater emphasis on team accomplishments instead of individual accomplishments, whether they can handle pressure and their character (trustworthiness, loyalty, dedication, self-discipline). Also included is how they interact with their teammates, coaches, referees (and referee decisions) and fans.

The second pillar is the **Physical aspect**. A player's size, speed, strength, coordination and conditioning are included in this category. In assessing speed, greater importance should be given to sprinting speed (10-40 yards) opposed to speed over a longer distance, such as a two-mile run. Other ways to determine this ranking would include a person's body fat percentage, jumping ability, etc.

The third pillar to look at is **Technical ability**. Does he or she strike and receive the ball properly? Do they run properly? A player's speed is factored into the Physical category, but running technique would be under Technical because a player's running technique could be corrected if it is improper, resulting in an upgrade of the Physical category rating). Also, do they play balls properly in a game situation? A number of players out can strike a ball beautifully without pressure but can't replicate the feat in a game situation.

**The Tactical pillar** consists of things like do the players know where to be places on the field and when to be there? How is their positioning and their decision-making on the field? Do they dribble too much or not shoot enough?

**The Lifestyle pillar** is one most frequently forgotten. Does the player eat properly? Does he or she get enough sleep? Party too much? Is he or she well mannered? Does he or she live in a clean environment? Is his or her

lifestyle the type you want associated with your team? These are the types of questions taken into consideration under the Lifestyle pillar.

Having just been involved with the evaluation of an entire team using these five pillars, I can honestly say that in doing this, you can really see what you need to work on with your team (if you are a coach) or with yourself (if you are a player). We gave each player a + if they were thought to be a positive in that pillar, a - if they were thought to be a negative in that pillar and a ? if we didn't know (we actually went with +? and ?- if we thought they were leaning one way or the other).

When you see a lot of minus signs in the Technical pillar, it is clear what the focus for upcoming training sessions should be. If there are plenty of plus signs on the tactical side, it means you are doing a good job there. The same is true with Mental and Physical. With Lifestyle category, if players grade poorly because they aren't eating well, bringing in a sports nutritionist may be the answer.

One of the best things you can do as a coach is to evaluate the players, then share the evaluations with them. Discuss the reasons they graded poorly in certain areas and explain why they achieved high marks in other areas. Once you explain the reasons for the grading (and it's extremely important that they be done honestly and objectively), help identify steps that can be taken to improve their grade in that category. This is where your role as a coach can have an impact that extends beyond simply teaching them soccer. Show them how character matters, how attitude matters, how lifestyle matters, how physical conditioning matters in a person's long-term success and happiness and you will be successful as a coach.

If you are a player, evaluate yourself objectively, then see what you need to work on to get all plus signs. (By the way, only one player on the college team I was evaluating received three plus signs; no one else had more than two. This was a high level group, so the results emphasize the importance of being objective and not giving positive marks freely).

Use these five pillars to make yourself better and to make your team better. In the long run, you will be successful.