

# **GSM International Coaching Education Articles for Developing Your Players**

## **THE USE OF MENTAL IMAGERY IN SOCCER FOR PLAYER TO PERFORM BETTER**

### **THE MENTAL IMAGERY SESSIONS FOR YOUR PLAYERS**

When creating, developing and undertaking visualization sessions with your players, it is important to respect several major points to fully benefit from this type of time set apart for your on-field sessions:

1. Use consistent, short, intense sessions and build up them up slowly
2. Use a quiet room where you will not be disturbed
3. Be relaxed but alert
4. Set realistic, attainable goals
5. Picture should be done in a real environment as is more practical, e.g. penalty kicks in a game
6. Perform the skill from the beginning to end and at average speed
7. Always imagine the action is successful & avoid rehearsing errors
8. Try to feel the movement using all your senses - physical sensation, sight, smell.

Players must imagine themselves in action on the soccer field. They can see the scenes, the color of the shirts, the sound of the boot on the ball, feel the ground under their feet, hear the noise of the crowd and recognize the voice of their coach. Everything must be done correctly, nothing negative can be allowed to affect them, and everything is vividly realistic. Once players have mastered the basic habits of imagery, they can start working on specific problems such as technique - shooting, heading, passing, ball control, defending 1 vs. 1.

It may be useful to have a written copy of a visualization practice using a stimulus-response procedure. This involves the stimulus from the situation (defender, pitch, etc.) and the response of the player undertaking the action. For example, an indirect free-kick position.

### **Providing Different Types of Stimuli**

I see our player touching the free-kick, and the ball lay off in front of me. I hear the defense shouting close him down and see their defender moving towards me at pace, perhaps too quickly. I see the goalkeeper positioned slightly to the right of his goal.

### **Response to Actual Stimuli**

I fake to shoot and pull the ball back onto my other foot. I adjust my body and make room for the shot.

### **Stimulus**

I see and feel the defender go past me and then see a slight gap at the left post. I hear my teammates shouting "shoot." I see the goalkeeper, seemingly off-balance after my dummy.

## **Response**

I see and strike the ball, feeling my head over it, my non-kicking leg next to it and my shooting leg following cleanly through. I feel my body slightly overbalance as I watch the ball whistle into the bottom left corner of the net.

Analyzing your session can be useful as well. Could you see and feel yourself perform the skills, was it clear and at normal speed? Were you relaxed but alert and was the picture clear? Taking notes can as well be useful for highlighting any weaknesses in your imagery session to work on and gradually improve them.

## **CONCLUSION**

Overall, imagery can be useful in helping improve soccer performance. The better players see themselves and their performance, the greater the chance of success. Various aspects of the game such as confidence, stress management, technique and game preparation can all be improved using proper visualization methods. Remember, what you see is nearly always what you get.