The Elite Soccer Mind: A Longitudinal Perspective

Michael Singleton, M.S.
Mass Youth Soccer Executive Director
National Staff Coach
MIT Men’s Soccer Coach
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What is an elite soccer mind? (attributes)
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-How does greatness occur?

-Can all people become elite?
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Is it Nature or Nurture?
- Mozart?
- Tiger?
- Austin Rivers?

...or both?
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How Important is the Mind?
- with respect to becoming elite
- with respect to maximizing potential

What Do Top Coaches Think?
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“We don’t have the appearance of a physically bruising type team but this is as mentally tough a group as I have ever had”... Rick Carlisle, Dallas Mavs Coach, NBA Champs

“We talked about mental toughness and mental toughness is not just through tough times, but also through good times... you have to be mentally tough enough to sustain your game plan for 60 minutes”... Claude Julien, Boston Bruins Coach, NHL Champs
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“Against Barcelona you are exposed many times because of great possession and we kept RESILIENT. Our players showed exceptional strength and togetherness.”
Arsene Wenger, Arsenal Manager, comments upon beating Barcelona

“Obstacles don’t have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don’t turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it.”  Michael Jordan

“Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do.”  John Wooden
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Regarding questions about greatness: “The chief constraint is mental, regardless of field, even in sports, where we might think the physical demands are the hardest.”

Geoff Colvin, Talent is Overrated
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10,000
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Deliberate Practice (Anders Ericsson)

- motivation to attend and work hard
- design takes pre-existing knowledge into consideration
- access to immediate feedback
- repeatedly perform same or similar tasks
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Deliberate Practice (Anders Ericsson)

Ericsson says this is “not inherently enjoyable”

Do you agree? Can it be?
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Deliberate Practice

- Technical
- Tactical
- Physical
- Mental
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Do you need to be a sport psychologist?

Do you need devoted mental time?
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Interwoven with current games. . . how tweak?

-passing and moving
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General Concepts

- self-evaluation
- anticipation (trends)
- spatial learning
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General Concepts

- cue recognition (what is next)
- crumbs (they have to be better than us)
- chunks
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Under 6
- motivation?
- pre-existing knowledge?
- immediate feedback?
- repetition?
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Under 6 - what do we know?

**Myelin is key**

- creative
- energetic
- egocentric
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Under 6 - practical application

- fuel creativity
- give spotlight
- problem solving
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**Under 8**

- motivation?
- pre-existing knowledge?
- immediate feedback?
- repetition?
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Under 8 – what do we know?

- more coordinated
- imagination
- relationships are key
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Under 8 - practical application

- if this, then that (anticipation)
- self-determination
- co-op practices with older teams
- believe in them
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Under 10

- motivation!
- pre-existing knowledge!
- immediate feedback!
- repetition!
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Under 10 – what do we know?

- growing competitiveness
- imagination/rules
- leaders emerge
- some see the light
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Under 10 - practical application

- beginning of cues
- repetition!
- small groups/big game
- 100% effort for 30 sec
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Under 12 – what do we know?

- beginning of identity formation
- leadership time
- abstract thinking
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Under 12- practical application

- all problem solving
- captain ownership
- 100% effort
- grading practices
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Under 12: practical application

- team goals
- shared individual goals
- measureables
- use of video
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Under 14 – what do we know?

- trying to show identity
- vulnerable to social pressures
- ownership is theirs
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Under 14 - practical application

- ask for input
- fuel competition
- zero sum games
- 1 goal games
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Under 14- practical application

- have the conversations
- “The Rage to Master” (Winner)
- self-determination
- off field is key to building mentality
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Under 16/19 – what do we know?

- have their own goals
- can be strong-minded
- balancing pressures and directions
- the time is NOW
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Under 16/19- practical application

- complete ownership
- individual plans
- much use of video
- older age group play
- watch pros
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Do curriculums include mental?

US Soccer?
US Youth Soccer?
Your club?
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General Warnings

- It has to be fun

- If not engaged change your ways or move aside
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Questions?

Thank you for your attention 😊

Mike Singleton

msingleton@mayouthsoccer.org