

*LAKER SOCCER: Multiple levels of competitive teams where the players enjoy themselves, work hard, and have a desire to improve. Players support each other relentlessly because they love their team and enjoy being around each other. Coaches hold players accountable, help them learn, challenge them, provide them opportunities to problem solve, and support them every step along the way. There's a mutual respect between players, coaches, administration, opposition, officials, and parents and we enjoy every opportunity we have because ultimately we know the lessons learned are more important than the result. Teams are selected, and although players have aspirations of being on certain teams, ultimately they play because they love playing and choose to grab a hold of the opportunity and own it. Everyone realizes that there will be ups and downs, but these are attacked head on with open minds and honest discussion. Players drive the culture of the program because they enjoy being a part of something bigger than a result or bigger than a mark on a stat sheet. Players support other programs, and other programs support us. Everyone feels a part of something...and man...does that feel good!*

## **SO...HOW DO WE GET THERE? Part II. THE SOCCER PART**

*First, review Part I – BE A GOOD PERSON – to have an impact on a team, you need that first, then we're ready for Part II.*

**GREAT LEADERS ARE RESPECTED – GREAT PLAYERS ARE EXCITING – GREAT PLAYERS THAT ARE GREAT LEADERS ARE INVALUABLE TO A TEAM AND A PROGRAM.** Coaches look for players who can help the team be successful on and off the field. Work ethic is an expectation, character plays a huge role, and so does your speed, strength, skill, and understanding of the game. When the best players are the hardest workers, teams have a chance to be special. When those players are also great leaders, people remember their names.

Once we understand the importance of being a good person and teammate, then we can focus on our aspirations of being competitive and being selected for higher level teams. Go beyond the leadership discussions and look at **DEDICATION, TRAINING HABITS, and COACHABILITY**. If you want to compete at a higher level, then you have to train at a higher level – which means effort to the point of exhaustion, focus on every touch, communicating constantly, and grabbing a hold of every opportunity to listen, learn, and get better. Spots on teams are earned, not given – and seniority is not a factor.

**WHAT DO YOU BRING TO THE TEAM?** If a coach asked you this question, could you answer? Be aware of your strengths and weaknesses, and more importantly, be willing to work on BOTH of them. Your goal as a player is to be so good in certain parts of the game that a coach needs you on their team – for example, be a hardworking defender with good tactical understanding and great individual defending skills that communicates well, has the speed and strength to catch and hold off attackers, and the composure, skill, and decision making ability to distribute the ball well. Lots that goes into that...which means lots of things to work on!

So, before you think about what you bring to a team, maybe you ask yourself this...**DO YOU LOVE THE GAME ENOUGH TO PUT IN THE WORK ON YOUR OWN?** Everyone has different goals and different priorities...you get to decide what is important to you. If you decide you want to work at it, then start with self-reflection. Think about your **SPEED OF PLAY**, which means your physical ability to keep up and compete with those around you, your technical skills, your ability to play quickly, and your mental speed and decision making. Our comfort with the ball and technical skills are the main factor in our speed of play, so it starts there. The good news is...**YOU CAN WORK ON & IMPROVE ALL OF THESE THINGS!** Spend time with a ball – basement, garage, gym, court, turf, or a safe spot in the house (with permission!). Soccer ball, futsal ball, tennis ball...they all work. You just have to find the time.

So, you want to be competitive? Set out to improve your speed of play. You want to make a difference? Work on your leadership. You want to have an impact? Bring a friend with you to the field, the gym, the tennis courts, or wherever else you're deciding to put the work in...even better, bring two friends. Put the work in together – motivate each other – hold each other accountable. Only attending team practices and games means you're improving at the same rate as everyone else – and if you're not leaving those practices mentally and physically exhausted, then you could have worked harder, and others are passing you up. Find time to work at things...find the want to work at things. Be at your best every time you are on the field...and **WHEN YOU LOVE IT ENOUGH TO PUT IN WORK ON YOUR OWN, THAT'S WHEN TRUE IMPROVEMENT OCCURS.**

**WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS & WHERE DO YOU WANT TO BE IN THE FALL?  
DOES YOUR WORK ETHIC MATCH THOSE EXPECTATIONS?**