



Your Soccer Emotions are a Choice

By Dan Abrahams

On the soccer pitch EVERY second counts...EVERY second matters!

This is an attitude, a way of playing I try to instill in all the players I work with. I want them to see soccer as a game that requires a relentless focus...a game that demands attention intensity non stop.

It doesn't matter if you're a defender and the ball is deep in the attacking half of the pitch. You have to stay switched on. And it doesn't matter if you're a striker with the opposition peppering your goal. You have to stay switched on. This is putting your football psychology as a top priority within your game.

Focus in soccer comes shaped as awareness, anticipation and decision making. The next play is all important and if your mind isn't set for the next one to two seconds you can be exposed. No matter how skillful you are, if you're unable to read the game, if your ability to play in the now is compromised you cannot fulfil your potential.

This is why it's so important to manage the emotions you experience on the pitch. Anger, frustration and despondency can be the silent killers that assassinate your soccer. By filling your mind with angry or frustrated thoughts you damage your ability to play 'what next' soccer. By allowing despondency to slow your brain's performance process you kill your ability to recognize patterns and make game winning decisions.

You must manage your emotions. And, in my opinion, this is your choice. Your soccer psychology is a choice!

Now let me be clear. I don't believe you can necessarily choose the emotions you experience in the moment. You can't choose the feelings that immediately hit you as the game unfolds. But I do believe you can manage the course of your emotions...and you can choose to do this quickly.

"I can't control my first emotional response...but I can manage my second, third, fourth and fifth response."

And this choice starts with a choice. Choose to be outstanding at managing your emotions before you set foot on the pitch. Decide that no matter what happens to you as you play you'll respond rather than react. You may feel an instant pang of frustration if you go a goal down but you'll respond positively – with great body language – and with the deportment of a champion.

"No matter what happens today I'm going to be outstanding with every response on the pitch. No matter what happens I refuse to give into anger, frustration or despondency"

Monday through Friday I want this philosophy to become your 'inner story'. I want it to be you...what you do, how you play soccer, how you act on the pitch.

Dealing with destructive emotions as you compete is a choice. Choose to manage them quickly. When you do you give yourself the opportunity to focus your attention every second of the game. It gives you the chance to play this game of seconds as quickly and as effectively as you possibly can.

When you make this choice you're managing your football psychology. You're becoming a tough soccer player...