

Fourth Edition

Soccer

STEPS TO SUCCESS

- Passing
- Dribbling
- Shooting
- Defending
- Goalkeeping



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Joseph A. Luxbacher

FOURTH EDITION

Soccer

STEPS TO SUCCESS

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Joseph A. Luxbacher, PhD



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Contents

This book is dedicated to two very special people in my life—my late father, Francis Luxbacher, my first and finest coach, and my late mother, Mary Ann Luxbacher. My dad introduced me to the game, taught me its subtleties, and instilled in me a lifelong respect and passion for the sport. My mom was my strongest supporter in everything that I attempted, from playing sports to writing books, and gave me the confidence to follow my passions. Their presence will forever be with me.

Climbing the Steps to Soccer Success

The fact that you are reading this book suggests that you have a passion for the game of soccer—and you are definitely not alone. Soccer is far and away the most popular pastime on the planet. It is a game that evokes excitement and emotion unparalleled within the realm of competitive sport. More than 150 million registered athletes, including more than 10 million women, play the sport on an official basis. Millions more kick the ball around on an unofficial basis, on sandlots, in playgrounds, and on the back streets of small towns and large cities. Legions of rabid fans follow their favorite teams and players by attending games or viewing the action on television and through other media. For example, the 2010 FIFA World Cup, played in South Africa, was televised in every single country and territory on Earth, including Antarctica and the Arctic Circle, generating record-breaking viewing figures around the world. The in-home television coverage of the competition reached more than 3.2 billion people around the world, or nearly half of the households on Earth. These numbers reinforce the fact that soccer is deserving of its unofficial title of “The World Game.”

The immense popularity of soccer does not mean that it is an easy game to play successfully. In reality, soccer poses several physical and mental challenges for participants. With the exception of the goalkeeper, there are no specialists on the soccer field—and even the keeper must be adept in foot as well as hand skills. As in the sport of hockey, all soccer players must be able to defend as well as attack. They must control the ball using a variety of foot skills, and they do so under the pressures of restricted space, limited time, physical fatigue, and the determined challenge of opponents. Decision-making abilities are constantly tested as players respond to rapidly changing situations during play. Players face many challenges. Individual performance and ultimately team success depend on each player’s ability to meet these challenges. Such ability does not occur by chance—it must be developed. *Soccer: Steps to Success* is written with that goal in mind.

Whether you’re at the purely recreational or highly competitive level, you will improve your performance and enjoy the game more as you develop greater competency in the skills and strategies required for successful play. The fourth edition of *Soccer: Steps to Success* provides a progressive plan for developing soccer skills and gaining a more thorough understanding of the individual and group strategies underlying team play. Here is a sequence you should follow at each step in this book:

1. Read the explanation of the skill covered in the step, why the step is important, and how to execute the step.
2. Study the full-color photos, which show exactly how to position your body to execute the skill successfully.

3. Read the instructions for each drill. Practice the drill and record your score.
4. Have a qualified observer—a teacher, coach, teammate, or trained partner—evaluate your basic skill technique once you’ve completed each set of drills. The observer can use the success checks with each drill to evaluate your execution of the skill.
5. At the end of the step, review your performance and total your scores from the drills. Once you’ve achieved the indicated level of success with the step, move on to the next step.

This updated and expanded version is organized into 12 clearly defined steps that enable you to advance at your own pace. Each step provides an easy and logical transition to the next step. You cannot leap to the top of the staircase! You get to the top by climbing one step at a time. The first few steps provide a foundation of basic skills and concepts. As you progress through the book, you will learn how to use those skills to execute tactics and work with teammates. Numerous photos and illustrations further clarify the proper execution of soccer skills and tactics, including those used by the goalkeeper. Drills are sprinkled throughout each step so that you can practice and master fundamental skills and tactical concepts before engaging in more pressure-packed simulated game situations. At the completion of all 12 steps, you will be a more experienced and accomplished soccer player.

Please note: 1 yard equals 0.9144 meter. In this book most measurements are approximate. If I write to place a player 10 yards from the goal, then 10 meters will also be about right.

Acknowledgments

The writing and publishing of a book truly require a team effort. In that regard, I am deeply indebted to a number of people for their help and support with the latest edition of *Soccer: Steps to Success*. Although it is not possible to mention everyone by name, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the staff at Human Kinetics, particularly Tom Heine and Amy Stahl, for their assistance in the development and completion of the book; to my coaching colleagues at the University of Pittsburgh and Shoot to Score Soccer Academy for their willingness to share thoughts and ideas; and last, but certainly not least, to my lovely wife, Gail, and children, Eliza and Travis, for their constant love and support.

The Sport of Soccer

Without question, soccer is the most popular team game in the world, played and watched by millions of people each year. In a global society divided by physical and ideological barriers, soccer's popularity is not limited by age or sex or by political, religious, cultural, or ethnic boundaries. Known internationally as football, soccer is the major sport of nearly every country in Asia, Africa, Europe, and South America. The game provides a common language among people of diverse backgrounds and heritages.

Soccer is popular for many reasons. First and foremost is the fact that soccer players come in all shapes and sizes, so virtually everyone is a potential player. Pelé, considered by most to be the greatest soccer player ever, is only average in height and weight. A more recent example is Lionel Messi, star forward for Barcelona and Argentina, who stands at 5 feet 7 inches (170 cm) tall and weighs approximately 70 kilograms (155 lb). Although physical attributes such as speed, strength, and stamina are essential for high-level performance, so too are a player's technical ability, tactical knowledge, ability to anticipate, savvy, and overall game sense. And although team success ultimately depends on the coordinated efforts of teammates, each player is afforded the opportunity to express his individuality within the team structure. Soccer offers something for everyone. The fact that it is considered a player's game as opposed to a game dominated by coaches is probably the overriding reason for its universal appeal.

The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) is the governing body of world soccer. Founded in 1904, FIFA is arguably the most prestigious sport organization in the world with more than 200 member nations. In 1913 the United States Soccer Football Association (USSFA) was founded and approved as a member of FIFA. The name was later changed to the United States Soccer Federation (USSF). The various professional and amateur associations in the United States are organized under the auspices of the USSF. In 1974 the United States Youth Soccer Association (USYSA) was established as an affiliate of the USSF to administer and promote the sport for players under 19 years of age.

A soccer game, generally referred to as a match, is played between two teams of 11 players each; one of the players on each team is designated as the goalkeeper. Each team defends a goal and can score by kicking or heading the ball through the opponent's goal. The goalkeeper's primary job is to protect the team's goal, although she also plays an important role in initiating team attack. The goalkeeper is the only player allowed to control the ball with the hands and can do so only within the penalty area, which is 44 yards wide and 18 yards out from the end line of the field. Field ("out") players may not use their hands or arms to control the ball. Instead, they must use their feet, legs, bodies, or heads. Each goal counts as 1 point, and the team that scores more goals wins the match.

Soccer is played on a field area, commonly called a pitch, that is both longer and wider than an American football field. A regulation game consists of two 45-minute periods with a 15-minute halftime intermission. A coin toss generally determines which team kicks off to start the game. Once play begins, the action is virtually

continuous. The clock stops only after a goal is scored, on a penalty kick, or at the discretion of the referee. There are no official time-outs, and substitutions are limited. Field players often cover more than 6 miles (9.7 km) during a regulation match, much of that distance at sprinting pace. It is not surprising that soccer players are among the most highly conditioned of all athletes.

The organization of the 10 field players is generally referred to as a system of play, or formation. Formations can vary from one team to another and even from one game to the next, depending on the strengths and weaknesses of the individual players, the roles and responsibilities assigned to each player, and the personal philosophy of the coach. Most modern systems deploy three or four defenders; three, four, or five midfielders; and one, two, or three forwards. Field players are not restricted in their movement, although each has specific responsibilities within the system of play employed by the team. (See step 12, Understanding Player Formations, Roles, and Responsibilities, for more information on team organization.)

The strategies of team play have undergone modifications during the evolution of the sport. The goalkeeper is generally considered the one true specialist on the soccer team, the final barrier between the team's goal and an opponent's score. The keeper is the only player allowed to use the hands to control the ball. In the not-so-distant past, the field players fulfilled more specialized roles than they do today. Forwards were expected to stay up front and score goals. Defenders were expected to "stay home" and do whatever was necessary to keep the ball out of their goal. They rarely ventured forward into the attack. But over the past couple of decades, all that has changed, for the better, I might add. The modern game places greater emphasis on the complete soccer player, the individual who can defend as well as attack. With the exception of the goalkeeper, the days of the soccer specialist are history.

THE SOCCER FIELD

The official field of play must be 100 to 130 yards long and 50 to 100 yards wide. The length must always exceed the width. For international matches, the length must be 110 to 120 yards and the width 70 to 80 yards. Distinctive lines no more than 5 inches (12.7 cm) wide mark the *field area*. As shown in figure 1, the end boundaries of the field are called the *goal lines* and the side boundaries are called the *touchlines*. The *half-way line* divides the playing area into two equal halves, and the *center spot* marks the center of the field. A *center circle* with a radius of 10 yards surrounds the center spot.

A *goal* is positioned at each end of the field on the center of the goal line. The dimensions of each goal are 8 feet (2.4 m) high and 24 feet (7.3 m) wide. The *goal area* is a rectangular box drawn along each goal line. The goal area is formed by two lines drawn at right angles to the goal line, 6 yards from each goalpost. These lines extend 6 yards onto the field of play and are joined by a line drawn parallel to the goal line.

The *penalty area* is a rectangular box drawn along each goal line formed by two lines drawn at right angles to the goal line 18 yards from each goalpost. The lines extend 18 yards onto the field of play and are joined by a line drawn parallel with the goal line. The goal area is enclosed within the penalty area. Located within the penalty area is the *penalty spot*. The penalty spot is marked 12 yards front and center of the midpoint of the goal line. Penalty kicks are taken from the penalty spot. The penalty arc, with a radius of 10 yards from the penalty spot, is drawn outside the penalty area. A corner area, with a radius of 1 yard, is marked at each corner of the field. Corner kicks are taken from within the corner area.

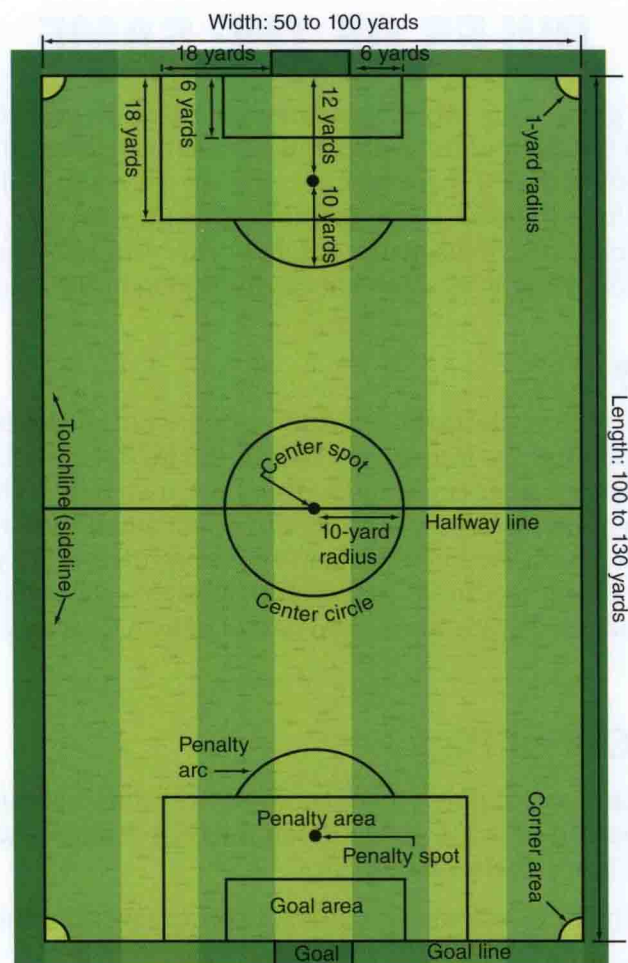


Figure 1 The soccer field.

EQUIPMENT

The soccer ball is spherical and made of leather or other approved materials. The regulation-size adult soccer ball is designated internationally as the size #5 ball. The official FIFA #5 ball is 27 to 28 inches (69 to 71 cm) in circumference and weighs between 14 and 16 ounces (397 to 454 g). Smaller balls (size #4 and size #3) are sometimes used for youth games. The required uniform for field players consists of a jersey or shirt, shorts, and socks that match those of their teammates and contrast with those of their opponents. Shin guards are worn underneath the socks. The goalkeeper often wears a long-sleeve jersey and shorts with padding at the elbows and hips. The colors should distinguish the goalkeeper from the field players and the referee. All players must wear some type of soccer shoes during play. Players are not permitted to wear any article of clothing that the referee determines to be a potential danger to another player (e.g., watches, chains, or other forms of jewelry).

RULES OF THE GAME

Soccer is a simple game with only 17 fundamental rules. The official FIFA *Laws of the Game* are standard throughout the world and pertain to all international competition. Minor modifications of the FIFA laws are permissible for youth and school-sponsored programs in the United States. These modifications may involve the field size, size and weight of the ball, size of the goals, number of substitutes allowed, and duration of the game. The following is an abbreviated discussion of the rules governing play.

Start of Play

The match begins with a placekick from the center spot of the field. Every player on the kicking team must be in her own half of the field. Opponents must position themselves outside the center circle and within their own half of the field. The ball is considered in play when it travels into the opponent's half of the field the distance of its own circumference. The initial kicker is not permitted to play the ball a second time until another player touches it. A similar placekick restarts the game after a goal has been scored and also begins the second half of play. A goal may be scored directly from the kickoff.

Ball In and Out of Play

The ball is considered out of play when it completely crosses a touchline or goal line (whether on the ground or in the air) or when the referee stops the game. The ball is in play at all other times, including during

- rebounds from a goalpost, crossbar, or corner flag onto the field of play;
- rebounds off the referee or linesmen when they are in the field of play; and
- intervals while a decision is pending on a supposed infringement of the laws (e.g., the "play-on" situation).

When the referee is unsure of who last touched a ball that traveled out of the field area, or when a temporary stoppage occurs during the run of play (because of a severe injury to a player, for example), play is restarted with a *drop ball* at the spot where the ball was last in play. The referee drops the ball between two opposing players, who cannot kick the ball until it contacts the ground.

When the ball travels out of play over a sideline, either on the ground or in the air, it is returned into play by a *throw-in* from the spot where it left the playing field. A player from the team opposite that of the player who last touched the ball takes the throw-in. The thrower must hold the ball with both hands and deliver it from behind and over the head. The player must face the field of play with each foot touching the sideline or the ground outside the sideline at the moment the ball is released. The ball is considered in play immediately after it crosses the touchline onto the field of play. The thrower may not touch the ball a second time until it has been touched by another player. A throw-in is awarded to the opposing team if the ball is improperly released onto the field of play. A goal cannot be scored directly from a throw-in.

A ball last touched by a member of the attacking team that passes over the goal line, excluding the portion of the line between the goalposts and under the crossbar, is returned to play by a *goal kick* awarded to the defending team. The goal kick is spotted within the half of the goal area nearer to where the ball crossed the goal line.

The ball is considered in play once it has traveled outside the penalty area. The kicker cannot play the ball a second time until a teammate or an opponent touches it. A goal kick cannot be played directly to the goalkeeper within the penalty area. All opposing players must position themselves outside the penalty area when a goal kick is taken. A goal cannot be scored directly off a goal kick.

A ball last touched by a member of the defending team that passes over the goal line, excluding the portion of the line between the goalposts and under the crossbar, is returned to play by a *corner kick* awarded to the attacking team. The corner kick is taken from within the quarter circle of the corner nearer the spot where the ball left the playing area. Defending players must position themselves at least 10 yards from the ball until it is played. The kicker is not permitted to play the ball a second time until another player touches it. A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick.

Scoring

A goal is scored when the whole ball passes completely over the goal line, between the goalposts, and under the crossbar, provided it has not been intentionally thrown, carried, or propelled by the arm or hand of a player of the attacking team. Each goal counts as 1 point. The team scoring more goals wins the game. The game is termed a *draw* if both teams score an equal number of goals during regulation time.

RULE VIOLATIONS AND SANCTIONS

An appointed *referee* officiates at each game and has ultimate authority on the field. The referee enforces the rules and decides on any disputed point. The referee is assisted by two *assistant referees*, who take positions along opposite touchlines. Assistant referees indicate when the ball is out of play (subject to the decision of the referee) and determine which team is entitled to the throw-in, goal kick, or corner kick. Assistant referees also assist the referee in determining when offside violations have occurred, and they alert the referee when a substitute wishes to enter the game.

Players need to be aware of the rule violations and penalties that may be called. A penalty at the wrong time can be devastating for a team, resulting in loss of momentum, a turnover, or even a goal for the other team. Learn the following rule violations and penalties, and work to avoid them during play.

Offside

All players should be familiar with the offside law. A player is in an *offside position* if she is nearer the opponent's goal line than the ball is at the *moment the ball is played* unless

- the player is in her own half of the field, or
- the player is not nearer to the opponent's goal line than at least two opponents.

Just because a player is in an offside position does not mean that he must be whistled offside by the referee. A player is declared offside and penalized for being in an offside position only if, at the moment the ball touches or is played by a teammate, the referee judges the player to be interfering with play or with an opponent or gaining an advantage by being in an offside position. A player is not offside merely

because he is in an offside position or receives the ball directly from a goal kick, corner kick, or throw-in.

The punishment for infringement of the offside law is an indirect free kick awarded to the opposing team at the spot where the offside occurred. The referee shall judge offside at the instant the ball is played and not at the moment the player receives the ball (see figure 2). For example, a player who is in an onside position at the moment the ball is played does not become offside if she moves forward into an offside position to receive the pass while the ball is in flight.

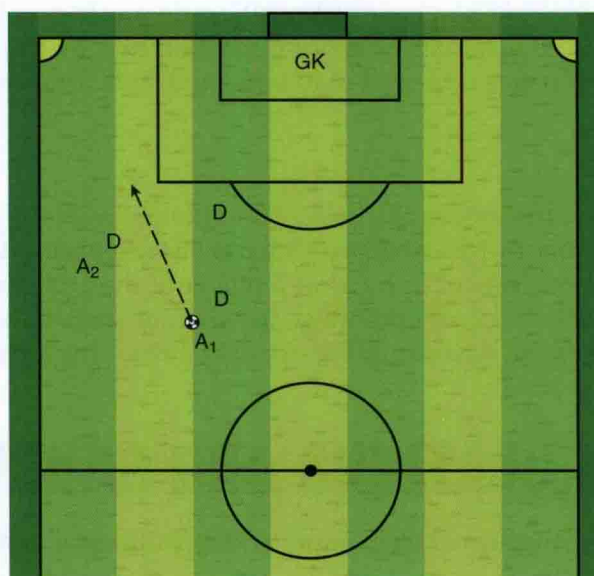


Figure 2 Player is not offside.

Free Kicks

The two classifications of free kicks are direct and indirect. A goal can be scored directly by the kicker from a *direct free kick*. To score from an *indirect free kick*, a player other than the kicker (who can be a member of either team) must play or touch the ball before it passes over the goal line. Defending players must position themselves at least 10 yards from the ball for both direct and indirect free kicks. The only instance in which defending players can get in position closer than 10 yards to the ball is when the attacking team has been awarded an indirect free kick spotted within 10 yards of the defending team's goal. In that situation defending players can stand on their goal line between the goalposts to attempt to prevent the ball from entering the goal.

When a player takes a free kick from within his penalty area, all opposing players must remain outside the area and be at least 10 yards from the ball. The ball must be stationary when the kick is taken and is considered in play once it has traveled the distance of its circumference and beyond the penalty area. The goalkeeper may not receive the ball into his hands and then kick it into play. If the ball is not kicked directly into play beyond the penalty area, the kick must be retaken. If the kicker touches the ball a second time before another player touches it, then the opposing team is awarded an indirect free kick.

Fouls and Misconduct

Fouls are either *direct* or *indirect*. A player who intentionally commits any of the following offenses will be penalized by the award of a direct free kick to the opposing team at the spot where the foul occurred:

- Spitting at an opponent
- Kicking or attempting to kick an opponent
- Tripping an opponent
- Jumping at an opponent
- Charging an opponent in a violent or dangerous manner
- Charging an opponent from behind unless the opponent is obstructing the player from the ball
- Striking or attempting to strike an opponent
- Holding an opponent
- Pushing an opponent
- Carrying, striking, or propelling the ball with a hand or arm (this violation does not apply to the goalkeeper within her penalty area)

When a player on the defending team intentionally commits an offense of a direct free kick within his own penalty area, he is penalized by the award of a *penalty kick* to the opposing team. Indirect free kicks result from the following rule infractions:

- Playing in a manner the referee considers dangerous to the offending player or another player, referred to as “dangerous play”
- Charging an opponent with the shoulder when the ball is not within playing distance of the players involved (charging with the shoulder is legal when attempting to play the ball)
- Intentionally impeding the progress of an opponent when not attempting to play the ball, commonly referred to as “obstruction”
- Intentionally preventing the goalkeeper from releasing the ball
- Violating the offside rule
- Charging the goalkeeper except when she has possession of the ball or has moved outside of the goal area

An indirect free kick is awarded to the attacking team if the goalkeeper engages in any of the following:

- Violating the six-second rule, in which the goalkeeper, while in possession of the ball, fails to release it into play within six seconds
- Indulging in tactics that the referee rules are designed to waste time, delay the game, and give an unfair advantage to the goalkeeper’s own team
- Violating the goalkeeper back-pass rule (see the next section)

Goalkeeper Back-Pass Rule

The *Laws of the Game* state that the goalkeeper is not permitted to receive the ball in her hands after it has been deliberately kicked to her by a teammate. The kick must be a deliberate pass for this rule to take effect; a deflection, for example, is not penalized. Violation of the back-pass rule results in the award of an indirect free kick to the opposing team at the spot of the infraction.

Players may use the head, chest, or knees to intentionally pass the ball to their goalkeeper. However, if a player deliberately attempts to circumvent the rule (such as by using the feet to flip the ball in the air to head it to the goalkeeper), then the player will be guilty of unsporting conduct and will be officially cautioned. In that situation the opposing team is awarded an indirect free kick from the place where the foul was committed.

Cautions and Ejections

It is at the referee's discretion to reprimand a player who continually commits flagrant violations of the laws. The referee issues a *yellow card* to officially caution a player. A yellow card violation conveys a warning to the player that he will be ejected from the game if similar violations continue. The referee issues a *red card* to signal that a player has been ejected from the game. A player can be shown the red card and sent off the field if, in the opinion of the referee, the player

- is guilty of violent conduct,
- is guilty of serious foul play,
- spits at an opponent or any other person,
- uses foul or abusive language,
- receives a second caution in the same match,
- denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball (this does not apply to the goalkeeper within her own penalty area), or
- denies an obvious goal-scoring opportunity to an opponent moving toward the player's goal by an offense punishable by a free kick or penalty kick.

The player who receives a red card cannot return to the game and may not be replaced by a substitute.

Penalty Kick

The most severe sanction for a direct foul, other than ejection from the game, is the penalty kick. A penalty kick results when a player commits a direct foul offense within his team's penalty area. (*Note:* A penalty kick can be awarded irrespective of the position of the ball.) The kick is taken from the penalty spot 12 yards front and center of the goal. All players except the kicker and the goalkeeper must position themselves outside the penalty area at least 10 yards from the penalty spot. The goalkeeper must stand between the goalposts with feet touching the goal line. The keeper is permitted to move sideways along the line before the kick but may not move forward off the line until the ball has been played. The player taking a penalty kick must kick the ball

forward and cannot touch it a second time until it has been played by another player (the second player can be the goalkeeper). The ball is in play once it has traveled the distance of its circumference. A goal can be scored directly from a penalty kick. Time should be extended at halftime or the end of regulation time to allow a penalty kick to be taken.

WARM-UP AND COOL-DOWN

Before every practice session or game, you should perform a warm-up to prepare yourself both physically and mentally for the more strenuous training to follow. *Warm-up* activities elevate muscle temperature, stimulate increased blood flow to the muscles, and stretch the major muscle groups. A thorough warm-up improves muscular contraction and reflex time, increases muscle suppleness, prevents next-day soreness, and reduces the likelihood of muscle and joint injuries.

The intensity and duration of the warm-up can vary from one situation to another and from one person to the next. Environmental conditions, such as ambient temperature and humidity, should be taken into account. For example, you probably will not have to warm up as long or as hard on a hot, humid afternoon in June as you would on a cold, blustery day in November. As a general rule, you should warm up for 15 to 20 minutes at sufficient intensity to break a sweat. Sweating indicates an elevation in muscle temperature.

Before stretching, begin your warm-up by increasing the blood flow to the muscles. Any form of aerobic activity that involves the large muscle groups will suffice, although from a practical standpoint it is to your advantage to use soccer-specific movements and activities whenever possible. Skill-related drills that involve dribbling maneuvers combined with sudden changes of speed and direction, or passing the ball among teammates who are moving throughout the field area, are a great means of getting the blood moving. For example, many of the dribbling drills described in step 1 are appropriate as soccer-specific warm-up activities.

Once your muscles are sufficiently warmed, perform a series of stretching exercises that target all the major muscle groups used in soccer. Don't bounce or jerk! Slowly extend the muscle or group of muscles to its greatest possible length without discomfort. A slow, steady extension of the muscle inhibits the firing of the stretch reflex, the body's built-in safeguard against overstretching. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds, relax, and then move gently into a deeper stretch for another 30 seconds. Stretch each muscle group twice, focusing on the hamstrings, quadriceps, back, groin, calves and Achilles tendons, and neck.

At the end of every practice and game, take a few minutes to allow your heart rate and body functions to gradually return to their normal resting state. The *cool-down* can include light aerobic exercise, such as a slow jog with or without the ball, combined with stretching exercises that target the most-used muscle groups. Stretching after a hard training session may actually be more beneficial than prepractice stretching in preventing next-day soreness.


Key to Diagrams

GK Goalkeeper

D Defender


A Attacker

X Player

 Soccer ball

 Dribble

 Run

 Pass