



UNITED FÚTBOL MINISTRIES

"Walking with the KING, for the World, through the gospel of Jesus the Messiah"



THE most fundamental part of preparing a soccer player, both mentally and physically is the warm up. I am not about to bore you with the details and how this warm up should be run, the ages in which certain exercises should be used, and more importantly, the exercises to avoid because of damaging the knees, tendons, ligaments etc. What we do have to understand about the warm up is that it has a very specific purpose when preparing anyone for an athletic event.

IT'S PHYSICAL

The whole idea, physically, behind the warm up is that it has to accomplish a preparation for the systems of the body to compete. The respiration system must increase. The internal core temperature must rise, and the body must begin the cycle of regulating heat (getting sweaty). When done properly, the player will be sweaty, the heart rate and respiration rates increased. Of course, each target rate is age specific, so we must always use great caution in the warm-up in preparing our athletes for training, or matches.

IT'S MENTAL

What 90% of coaches we deal with do not realize, is that there *must be a mental aspect* to the warm up. Not only are you preparing the body, but also you must begin preparation for mental focus, and sharpness. Especially in soccer, since the game is first mental before it is physical (speed of play principles) each warm up must be able to stimulate the central nervous system, the global coordination of the energy, and body systems, and challenge the thought process bringing the player into concentration. Conditional exercises, and warm up routines (those that have certain rules to help each player think and move) are critical to the foundation of any player's development.

In my opinion, there is no more cerebral sport for a player than soccer. It is by far the most dominant "player's game" on the planet. That meaning the players really controls the outcome of a match by their own thought process. The NFL and MLB are mostly coach's games. Adjustments, managerial and coach's decisions and preparation are critical for the success of the team. "Game Plans" are often key to determining the success and outcome of a game. In soccer, it is just not so!

I teach all of my players that soccer is first mental, before it is physical. That meaning that decisions need to be made before the ball even comes to them. They must know where the ball must go before they are even involved in the pass. That takes mental strength, focus, and coordination. We teach our players a term called "Future passing" or "second pass thinking". That means that as the play develops they must know that even though they are not involved in the play, they must get themselves into an attacking or defending position for the future pass and scenario!

IT'S SCRIPTURAL

Have you ever tried to go and play with your kids, or play a pick up game of soccer, football, or baseball without warming up? When you were younger, no problem, but as you get older you suddenly realize that your body is just not ready to go full speed into one of these activities without preparing it. (In addition, some take a lot longer than others - lol)

Consider for a moment what would happen if we allowed a newly saved believer to head out into a ministry and just start having at it. They would hurt themselves (not to mention others.).

Let's consider the tail end of 1 Corinthians 9:27. While this scripture is used as an illustration about disciplining the spiritual man, let's take it literally for one moment. "...²⁷but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified" (NASB) In other words the body has been prepared so that in the time of initiating discipline there would not be mistakes or failures. The body is prepared for what it is going to be used.

In the soccer sense, we prepare the body in the warm up for the constant changing shapes of the game. This takes great center of gravity, body management, and control. The soccer player must coordinate both feet, while using different body parts at different times while staying completely balanced and relaxed. This takes coordination. Therefore, in the warm up we use coordination exercises with and without the ball. During a match the soccer player will run anywhere from five, to ten, to twenty yards full speed, then jog, walk, and sprint again all in a single minute. This takes preparation then for speed, directional, and deceleration type exercises.

ALL DONE IN THE WARM UP. I preach to all of my trainers, and coaches that fro a 90-minute practice your warm up should be at least thirty, to thirty-five minutes. I.E. IT TAKES TIME!

As Paul has countless times compared the spiritual race with those who run the earthly ones, we must in the same manner, look at how we prepare for the physical race. There must be first the warm up, then the skills session, then the application in scrimmage form of that session.

LET'S NOT FORGET THE MENTAL

As I have said, the warm up prepares not only the body, but the mind. This is found scripturally in the Hebrew words for observe and obey. Dr. Karl Coke in the book "A Proper Education" offers a fascinating and eye opening treatment on this particular topic of observing and obeying from Deuteronomy 12:28.

"The Torah says, observe (**שמר**) and hear (obey **שמע**) all these words that I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest that which is good and right in the sight of the LORD thy God." This is God's mandate for all mankind, not just the Jews preparing to enter Canaan under Joshua. This is the proper starting point, proper monitor and proper check point of all learning."¹

Obedience is first physical. The Hebrew word often used is **שמע** Shama which means to "**hear intelligently**" (H8085 Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionary). It is the root of the word "Shema" in which the Jews use as the foundation of independence. "Hear, (**שמע**) O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! ⁵"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." (Deuteronomy 6:4-5 NASB)

Obedience is often translated as "we're told what we need to do and we do it (or not - disobedience)." It's a simple exchange of written to action-oriented responses. In soccer, we tell our players "this is what your feet need to do" and we teach them how to do it. We tell them "this is how you overlap, this is how you volley, this is how you engage", we teach them to do it and they do it! **YET DOING IS ONLY HALF THE BATTLE!!!** Knowing when to do these things, the timing, scenario, and place to do these things is critical in order to being successful!

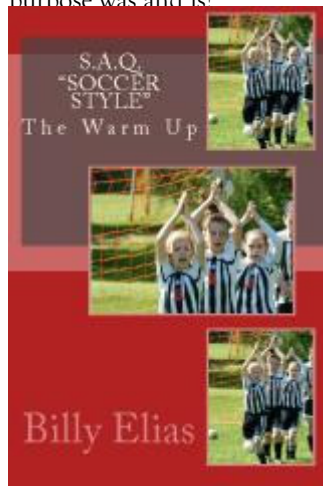
While this is a simple exchange of will and idea, it is not what God had intended. He never intended for us to be blindly obedient. He wanted us to be teachers, and as such, those who understand and **study** what he has asked us to do. The simple definition of the SHEMA (**שמע**) is that **we hear with intellect**. We use our minds as a tool, a weapon against anything that can rob, steal, or destroy us! This is why the Warm Up is so critical for anyone who is about to go into Spiritual Action!

As Dr. Coke points out Obedience without Observation is INCOMPLETE. Let us consider the Hebrew word for Observe for one moment **שמר** Shamar. "A primitive root; properly to hedge about (as with thorns), that is, guard; generally to protect, attend to, etc.:—beware, be circumspect, take heed (to self), keep (-er, self), mark, look narrowly, observe, preserve, regard, reserve, save (self), sure, (that lay) wait (for), watch (-man)" (H8104 Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionary).

In other words, it means to study. It is a stimulation of the mind that studies the whys and need's of the obedience. It's the very important "mental aspect" of the "spiritual game" that Paul often writes about. Being able to



do the mechanical things well, and with skill, and to be able to simply blindly follow a rule, regulation, will eventually lead to frustration. That study, that observation is the HEDGE of PROTECTION GOD PUTS AROUND US! In that study we learn to observe, and obey what He has laid out for us, with the understanding of why, and what the purpose was and is!



I have seen it so many times on the training ground when a player with great skill and potential, who can do anything physically you ask of them, can't function on a pitch because they DON'T THINK! They've prepared the body, but not the mind! Far too many coaches in youth soccer today are "Micro Managers" every second of the match they are directing, yelling, shouting (most of the times the wrong information). This creates a player afraid of making mistakes, and one who cannot think for themselves!

So many athletes in the game of soccer today are allowed to "get by" because they are faster, stronger, and more willful than many of the opponents they face. They can simply bully through others to accomplish the job. Inevitably, though, that player as they grow begins to struggle. As others begin to catch up, they find less result, and more frustration and anger. Then the phone call comes. "Coach, my son/daughter was outstanding. They could do no wrong, but suddenly they are struggling. They used to be the fastest, not anymore. They used to be the best, not anymore. CAN YOU HELP?"

Within minutes of my first evaluation, I point out that the child had never been developed to play the game properly. They were allowed to continue in bad mechanics, form, and lacking skill, because they were successful at early ages. The coach only wanted to win, and this player was the vehicle!

THE WARM UP

Today's church, the atmosphere of spirituality, and the state of being of those in the body have very much come into question. The elders of the church cannot recall a time when the church was in that state of disarray as it is today. Could it be that we have simply forgotten the Warm up? Could it be that we have become so involved in the "physical Mechanical being" that we have forgotten the mental. Could it be that we have put all of our efforts into creating the fastest, strongest, most willful product we can, without ever teaching the mental? Have we required the body of the Messiah to be Obedient, without ever teaching them to study with open ears, and *hear intelligently* the object lesson the LORD has given?

In my humble opinion, it is time that we reassess our warm up and begin to look at decision-making. Let's prepare not only the body, but also the mind to know when to use the skill, how to use the skill, and even more importantly, when to sit back and listen. Let's begin preparing the Central Nervous System of the church to see the game, feel the game, and lock into the flow of the Holy Spirit as the entire picture is revealed. Shalom!

¹ Karl D. Coke, Ph.D., *A Proper Education*: (Canada: Transcontinental Publishing, 2007), p. 51.

Pastor Billy Elias is the founder of both Lacey Home Fellowship and United Fútbol Ministries, an international soccer outreach. An ordained minister in Restoration Fellowship International, his ministry features teaching lessons for successful Christian living by emphasizing the Hebraic thought of both the Hebrew Scriptures and the Apostolic Writings. Billy and his wife Peggy and their five children reside in Lacey Township New Jersey.

