

Week 11-Think, Play, Win: Sports Psych Tips for IL ODP Players

Growth Mindset & Winning Mentality *Motivation and Determination*



At the Youth National Team level, ability is a given-mindset is often the separator. One of the most important qualities U.S. Soccer looks for is a **Growth Mindset combined with a Winning Mentality**: a relentless commitment to improvement while fully embracing the competitive demands of the game. **Motivation and determination sit at the core of this quality.**

Motivation & Determination: Desire That Never Switches Off

At the Youth National Team level, **ability gets you noticed-motivation and determination keep you there.** This key quality reflects a player’s continuous drive to improve and compete, even when conditions are hard, pressure is high, or progress feels slow.

Motivation and determination aren’t about hype or emotion alone. They’re about **daily choices, repeated over time.**

What Motivation & Determination Look Like?

<p>‘Passion & Enthusiasm’</p> <p>YNT players love the work. Their energy shows in how they train, how they communicate, and how they compete. Passion fuels consistency not just performances.</p>	<p>‘Challenging Yourself’</p> <p>These players seek discomfort. They ask for feedback, play up when possible, and welcome harder roles because growth lives just beyond comfort.</p>	<p>‘Relentless Desire to Achieve’</p> <p>Goals aren’t wishes, they are commitments. Motivation shows up in extra reps, focused recovery, and attention to detail when no one is watching!</p>	<p>‘Never Giving Up’</p> <p>Setbacks are part of the journey. Determined players respond to mistakes, losses, or deselection with renewed effort not excuses.</p>
<p>‘Brave & Fearless’</p> <p>They are not afraid to make mistakes. Courage shows up in taking risks, demanding the ball, and trusting their preparation under pressure.</p>	<p>‘Pushing Limits’ (Body & Mind)</p> <p>Motivation isn’t just physical. These players stretch concentration, emotional control, and resilience staying engaged even when tired, frustrated, or challenged.</p>	<p>‘Belief in Self’ (Confidence)</p> <p>Confidence comes from preparation and persistence. They trust their ability because they’ve earned it through work and learning.</p>	<p>‘Team-1st Mentality’ (Selfless Giver)</p> <p>True winners elevate others. Motivated players run for teammates, share credit, accept roles, and put collective success above individual praise.</p>

What Motivation & Determination Look Like In Action?

Motivation and Determination are not one-time traits; they are habits of intent.

- Desire fuels effort
- Courage fuels growth
- Self-belief fuels performance
- Selflessness fuels winning

This is what it means to pursue excellence- every session, every rep, every moment.

Motivation & Determination Practical, On-Field Tips for This Week

These are simple, actionable behaviors players and parents can apply immediately in training and games to build Motivation and Determination.

For Younger Players (U9–U12) *Build desire, courage, and love for the game.*

1) Show Your Passion

- Celebrate effort-yours and your teammates'.
- Energy is contagious.

2) Be Brave

- Try something new once per game (a turn, a shot, a dribble).
- Mistakes mean you're learning!

3) Never Quit on a Play

- Lose the ball? Chase it back.
- Fall down? Get up fast. Coaches notice who keeps going.

4) Push Yourself a Little More

- One extra sprint.
- One extra try.
- One more moment of focus when tired.

This week's challenge:

Can you be brave once, help a teammate once, and try your hardest every shift?

For Older Players (U13–U19) *Turn motivation into standards.*

1) Compete With Yourself

- Set a personal target each session:
 - First defender after loss
 - Demanding the ball
 - Leading communication

- Measure effort, not praise.

2) Lean Into Pressure

- Pressure = opportunity.
- When mistakes happen, respond with action, not frustration.

3) Train the Mind, Not Just the Body

- Stay locked in when tired.
- Control body language.
- Bring intensity even when things aren't going your way.

4) Be a Giver

- Cover a teammate.
- Encourage someone struggling.
- Accept roles for the good of the group.

This week's challenge:

Be the player who raises standards when the game gets hard.

For Parents *Fuel motivation don't drain it.*

1) Praise Courage and Effort

- Instead of results, notice:
 - "I loved how you kept trying."
 - "You stayed brave under pressure."

2) Normalize Mistakes

- Mistakes mean growth.
- Avoid post-game analysis in the car.
- Let emotions settle before reflecting.

3) Reinforce Team Values

- Ask:
 - "How did you help your teammates today?"
 - "When did you push through something hard?"

This week's challenge:

Be the calm, consistent support that allows your child to stay brave and motivated.

In summary, *Motivation and Determination are built one choice at a time.*

Younger players → Try, smile, keep going

Older players → Compete, respond, lead

Parents → Support courage, effort, and growth

Apply these this week, and the mentality will follow the performance.

How the Best Use FOCUS (Intensity) to Raise Their Game

Lionel Messi (Quiet Desire, Relentless Commitment)

What stands out:

Messi's motivation has never been about noise or hype. It's rooted in a **deep internal desire to improve**, compete, and help the team win year after year.

How he uses Motivation & Determination:

- **Challenges himself:** Even after winning everything, Messi keeps refining details movement, timing, decision-making.
- **Never gives up:** In games where he's tightly marked or frustrated, he stays patient, trusting that his moment will come.
- **Belief in self:** He continues to demand the ball in big moments, showing confidence earned through preparation.
- **Team-first mindset:** His best performances often include selfless runs, passes, and sacrifices for teammates.

Takeaway for players: *True motivation doesn't fade with success it deepens.*

Sam Kerr (Passion, Courage & Competitive Fire)

What stands out:

Sam Kerr plays with visible **passion and determination**. Her energy, bravery, and refusal to quit lift everyone around her.

How she uses Motivation & Determination:

- **Fearless mentality:** Kerr is not afraid to miss chances she keeps attacking space and shooting because belief fuels bravery.
- **Relentless pursuit:** She presses defenders, chases lost causes, and competes until the final whistle.
- **Pushes limits:** Her work rate off the ball shows commitment beyond scoring goals.
- **Giver mentality:** Her leadership is rooted in effort setting standards through action, not words.

Takeaway for players: *Confidence grows when you keep showing up especially after failure.*

The Shared Pattern

Different styles. Same mentality. Both players show:

- Passion for the game
- Relentless desire to improve
- Courage to risk mistakes

- Confidence built on work
 - Selflessness in service of the team
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Final Message to Youth Players

Motivation and Determination aren't traits you're born with; **they're choices you make daily.** Train with purpose. Play with courage. Compete for others. That's how the best keep raising their game.

Want More? If you're interested in **pep360's individual, small-group, or team mental-skills support**, click the link below to complete an **Interest Form**.

Let's Think. Let's Play. Let's Win together.

 **Learn More about Train Your Brain:** <https://linktr.ee/pep360>
