

4 STRATEGIES THAT HELP BUILD A SUCCESSFUL SOCCER SEASON

By Cody Carter

EXOS founder Mark Verstegen has spent more than two decades working with world-class soccer players, including the German national team that won the World Cup in 2014. Verstegen, author of the book "Every Day is Game Day," says elite soccer players apply that same game-day approach to their daily preparation. "It all starts with a quality game plan," Verstegen said. "When you look at champions and their style of play, the players know their profile. Tune yourself to enter play with a game plan with the Xs and Os. If you make sure you're taking care of how you fuel, how you move, and the way you recover after each match, that will provide the foundation to win every day."

Good teams get better with every match over the course of a season or long tournament because they're efficient and effective with steps they take with the technical and tactical side of the game as well as these four areas:

1. START WITH A QUALITY GAME PLAN

At EXOS we believe every day is game day — or match day in the case of soccer. The goal should be to win everything that you control. You can't control weather conditions and crowd noise, but you can control most everything else, including your mindset, nutrition, and how you train. If you're not approaching each of those areas with a game-day mindset, you're giving up a competitive advantage.

2. BE SOCCER STRONG

It's one thing to win the ball at every opportunity, but do you have the stamina to do something with it? Your training should include a balanced approach of power, strength and speed work without the ball. The SKLZ soccer-specific program, Soccer Strong with Alex Morgan, is an effective and efficient way for young players to supplement their ball skills with training that will help them win balls with great position and have the energy to do something with it.

3. FUEL TO PERFORM

The fuel you put in your body before, during, and after a game goes a long way toward determining your success. And yet many players give it little consideration other than perhaps getting a quick drink during the game. Carry a water bottle wherever you go throughout your daily routine and plan where your food will come from before practice and in between matches in a tournament.

4. TAKING CARE OF YOUR BODY

At the 90th minute of a match your body isn't at 100 percent of its potential unless you didn't see much playing time. In order to bring your body back to full strength, make sure you're implementing recovery strategies such as getting appropriate sleep, which is especially critical for adolescents. Taking care of your muscles also will aid in your body's healing from the rigors of a long match. Many of the teams we work with travel everywhere with a Massage Bar or Barrel Roller.

