



Effective's Train Like a Pro! Series

7 Secrets to SKYROCKET Your Individual Soccer Training Improvement TODAY!

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Introduction



"Amateurs call it genius. Masters call it practice."

- Thierry Henry (Arsenal Legend)

The best athletes in the world all say it. Doing extra practice was key to their success. There's no secret to becoming the best. You need to have passion, belief in yourself, the ability to constantly persist, and most of all; you need to have the will and attitude to train and work hard everyday. That's why to improve as effectively as possible, you need an individually tailored football training schedule.

I was 16 when I decided I wanted to become a professional soccer player, even though I was average. Naturally, I proceeded by looking for how I could improve the fastest. I searched all over the web for drills and made up some workouts. A few weeks later, I created my first plan which looked exactly like this:

Monday Schedule:

1. Running with ball (45 mins)
2. 3 - 4 juggles and First touch towards goal, sprint and shot outside box (2x 8 reps)
3. Dribble 6 cones, touch and shoot (2 x 8 reps)
4. 60 pushups and situps aswell as 30 back-ups during rests
5. End training with Free Kicks from various positions

Tuesday Schedule

Attend regular club training.

Wednesday Schedule

Morning: 40 minutes running with ball

Attend regular club training

Thursday Schedule

Attend regular club training.

Friday Schedule

Same as Monday.

Saturday Schedule

Attend regular club training

The ideas were there and it had a bit of structure, but unfortunately I didn't really see much solid improvement out of it. What resulted over the next six years was an obsession to find the most EFFECTIVE ways to train, get better and see real results which I documented on my personal blog [Chasing the Dream](#).

Like a scientist, I planned continuously, I researched, I asked, I studied, trialled and tested the most EFFECTIVE ways to become a better football (soccer) player, in the least amount of time. The results were phenomenal. My improvement meant I earned trials with professional teams all over Europe, trained with the Australian U20's at age 17 and competed with some the best talent there was. I was even offered a contract to play professionally at age 18. This all happened in less than two years. Think I'm lying? Read the full story [here](#).



For those of you who are not in a full-time football academy, don't come from a football-obsessed country and/or lack the coaches and depth around you to get better - you will find this guide very helpful. Even pros can learn from what you're about to read.

A training schedule and plan is the core foundation to becoming a better player. It's the tool which defines your week and holds you accountable towards the process of reaching your goals.

So get ready to take notes and catch all the golden nuggets I'm about to throw to you in this. Print this out and scribble on it if you want to. In this guide I'm going to show you what to do, how to do it and why it's important.

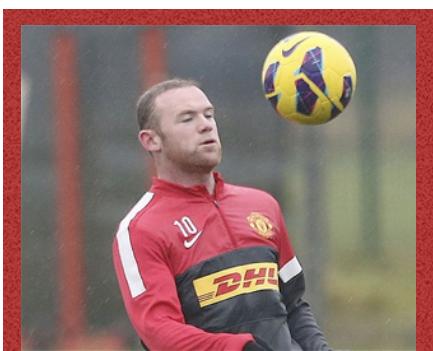
Here are the 7 secrets/steps to plan and create the perfect individual soccer training schedule.

- 1) Evaluate Yourself
- 2) Set your Goals
- 3) Select your Content
- 4) Phase Train
- 5) Put it Together
- 6) Be Disciplined!
- 7) Keep a Diary

Let's go!

Step 1) Evaluate Yourself

In your team trainings, you follow what the coach wants the team to do, but not what you need to train as an individual. This is why it's absolutely essential that if you want to be the best player you can possibly be, you do extra training and have an individual training schedule. Each player has their own unique set of skills, which is why it's extremely important to train on your own and with one or two motivated athletes like you, so you can improve your weaknesses and make your strengths second nature.



Did you know: Wayne Rooney and former Bayern Munich star Owen Hargreaves have been filmed doing extra training outside of their clubs and owe it to their success.

The first step towards creating a great schedule is evaluating yourself. That means knowing what you're good at, and what you're not good at. You probably have an idea of that already but, when you're developing as player the best thing you can do is seek criticism. That's right, asking people what they don't like about your game is the first key step towards a great improvement plan. This question alone separates the average from the best.

Ask everybody who's watched you play about what you can improve on. Your coach, parents, other players or spectators. You don't have to accept everything that's said to you, but if you start hearing a pattern (for me it was that I needed a better first touch), or your own beliefs get confirmed by what others say; then great! You most certainly have a weakness, and that's something we can isolate and improve upon when it comes to training time.

If you need some ideas, you can break down a footballer into the following four areas:

1. **Technical** (Receiving the ball, running with the ball, control, instep drive, switching play, short passes, long passes, volley, half volley, headers, trapping, tackling, turning, crossing, dead balls, 1st touch, etc)
2. **Physical** (Aerobic endurance, anaerobic endurance, balance, functional strength, acceleration, sprint speed, running mechanics, build)
3. **Tactical** (playing your position, understanding formation and the role you play, timed runs, decision making, vision,)
4. **Mental** (Determination, confidence, will, drive, motivation, humbleness, understanding, team player)

Strengths	Weaknesses

So what are your strengths and weaknesses? Write them down in the chart above and we'll come back to how we can improve these later in the guide.

Step 2) Set your Goals



"Every single day I wake up and commit to myself to becoming a better player."

- Mia Hamm (Earned 275 Caps for USA)

The best players are always trying to improve their game, and to improve, you need to set goals. Setting goals in football and in life is extremely important. Without a goal or a specific purpose, it's difficult to plan and work to accomplish something. Goals come in all different shapes and sizes and no matter at what stage you are at in your career, goals are necessary because they give you a specific target to visualise and aim for. When setting them, you need to look at your:

Long-Term Goals: In 5 - 10 years time where do you aim to be? This is your ultimate career goal. (Example: Playing Professionally in a Top 5 European League)

Medium-Term Goals: In 1 - 3 years where do you aim to be? (Example: Get into a Division 1 Soccer College, into an academy/development team).

Short-Term Goals: In the next 12 months what do you want to achieve? (Example: Be the top scorer in the league, get the MVP award, make the starting 11)

Micro Goals: What specific skills do you need to improve to reach your short term goal? (Example: Improve finishing, Become a better 1-on-1 dribbler)

Day-by-Day Goals: - In the next training session what do you want to achieve? (complete 4/6 reps of a drill successfully, watch 'insert game here' and take notes of what makes 'insert players name here' a great player, watch 3 Effective Game Brain/Classroom videos)

To give you an example, at age 16 my goals looked something like this:

Nick's Goals

Long Term: Play for Chelsea FC.

Medium Term: Get Into a Premier League Academy.

Short Term: Become regarded as the best player in my team.

Micro Goals: Improve 1-on-1's, Be able to confidently shoot and cross with my left foot, have faster and better quality decision making and improve first touch.

Day-by-Day Goals: Train using Effective's Knock & Cross Drill and successfully complete 6/8 reps in a set, shoot 100 times with my left foot against a wall, watch and

Step 3) Select your Content

Now that you've locked down on your goals, and understand yourself more on who you are as a player, we can now start adding the content in your training schedule.

You can break down your training schedule and the types of training in it into the following:

Individual: Training you do on your own or with a small group of people. (Effective users can find exercises on the [Browse](#) page)

Team: Training you do with your club, school team or even a game with friends.

Strength: Training to work on building muscle and functional strength.

Tactical: Training to build intelligence and make smarter decisions on the field. (Effective users can use [Game Brain](#))

Mental: Training to improve confidence, gain inspiration and wisdom, increase motivation and perform under pressure. (Effective users can use the [Classroom](#))

Recovery / Rest: Resting the body to recover sore muscles and re-build physical and mental energy levels.

A professional training schedule (and your schedule) should have a combination of all of these types of training.

Individual Training

When you do individual training, you're focusing on improving your skills technically and physically. There are a couple of ways you can do this.

If you want to train basic technique, it's easy. You have to do the same motion over and over again until it becomes hard wired in your body. It's simple as that. For example, the best way to practice your weak foot is to find a wall and keep shooting and passing against it everyday for at least a couple of months.

However, there will come a time in your development when you've mastered technique (usually somewhere between age 13 - 18) and there's little room for growth. From that point on, you need to apply all your learnt technique and use it in real game situations to create space, make chances and score goals. You need to train in a way where you create situations with the pressure of limited time and space, something that is crucial at the top levels. The drills you do must have high intensity and speed.

Training individually and finding exercises to do like this is not an easy task. You can view the curated playlists that are continually updated on the Effective [YouTube channel](#) so you can get some ideas of what to do. Effective users can jump to the [Browse](#) page.

Team Training

Football is a team sport. You can do all the individual-based training you want for years on end, but it will go to waste if you don't apply what you do into a team environment. Make sure you're playing in a team where you're constantly being challenged. Seek to play with players that are better than you are, as this is one of the best ways to learn. I found that I improved the quickest in my overall game when I first started training with professional teams as an amateur player. You can apply the same rule.

Remember that even playing with a group of friends can be considered as 'team training' because you can incorporate all your learnt individual skills if you take it seriously enough. Not to mention, if you perfectly execute a skill against friends you'll have the confidence to do it when it really counts in a competitive match situation.

Strength Training

Strength training and how much of it should be done can be a controversial subject when it comes to soccer, but there's no argument that being physically strong is very important. In some places, your physicality matters more than others.



For example in the US and England, players are more beefed up than in Italy or Spain.

Strength becomes more and more important as you play at the senior level when fighting off players, getting into shoulder barges and preventing injury.

Your training here shouldn't be focused on getting as big as possible like a bodybuilder. You should be building strength and doing movements that will actually make you a better player, prevent injury and come handy in a game situation. Your training program should consist of strength training once to twice a week, and even more in pre-season.

A sample full body strengthening workout you could do:

Full Body Strength Workout

Lower Body: Front Squats, Lunges, Hamstring Curls

Upper Body: Push-Ups, Pull-Ups, Hyperextensions

Core: Planks, Sit-Ups

(8-12 Reps x 3 Sets each @ 1-2 min rest between sets)

Note: Heavy weight lifting is advised against until after the age of 17-18 when the body has finished puberty

Tactical Training

They say that football is one half physical and one half intelligence. You can have all the skills, tricks and fitness in the world, but if you don't use it wisely through the decisions you make on the pitch, all that talent is wasted. On the other hand you can be technically or physically poor, but your intelligent enough to get by on great decision making.

As a player growing up, I didn't make the smartest decisions on the field. I was a pretty 'dumb' player. If you were watching me play, you could tell that sometimes I looked lost on the pitch because I wasn't sure where I was supposed to be on the field. I wasn't sure when I should go out of position or when I should defend or attack. I would ask myself, do I commit to the attacker or do I hold back? Do I go one on one or pass it back? Do I shoot or cross?

I know a lot of you reading this will ask yourself the same kinds of questions. These answers are not easy to come by. It takes work off the field and this is why the 'game brain' is the most difficult part to train and improve upon because football is a dynamic sport, every situation is unique and is changing all the time.

You might be thinking well.. what the hell do I do now? I searched and searched for the best way to train my game brain and improve my intelligence. Luckily, I have a few solutions for you so you don't have to go through the years of struggle that I did.

- Watch Live Matches**

If you're lucky enough to have a professional team in your area, get yourself a ticket and watch their matches. Getting up close and personal with the players allows you to see how players move and react on and off the ball, at all times of a match. Bring a notepad or take notes on your phone when you notice something. Better yet, go with someone you know that wants to learn or someone who has the experience to teach you a thing or two. Some of the best coaches say to watch the player in your position for the whole game and carefully analyse what they do.

- **Download Matches,**

In a time span of three years, I downloaded, watched and self-analysed over 400 full-length matches. Doing that regularly was one of the most crucial ways I became a more intelligent player. I still do this today.

Recently I found out that even premier league players are known to do the same! Everton and Belgian superstar Romelu Lukaku saves and watches EVERY SINGLE MINUTE of EVERY English Premier League match. He once said in an interview:

'It's true that I watch every single game in the league – 90 minutes. I take my time to study and to learn other strikers' movements and to learn about other defenders. I take my time,' he said.

'Really I want to be one of the best in this league so you can only learn from the best by watching the best.

'After training I go home and record every game. I have a satellite and I just watch the games.

This worked for him after scoring 17 goals in the 2013/2014 season and securing a big money transfer to Everton.

You can find matches to playback by saving them on a DVR. But if you don't have access to one of those, you can go to football highlight forums such as [Match Highlight](#) that usually have all the games from most major leagues, or searching on [torrent sites](#).

Then download a video player that plays lots of different file formats. (I recommend Media Player Classic or VLC) and have a setting so you can easily pause, rewind and fast forward. Take notes or film short clips of a specific action so you can play it back later (we do this a lot on our [vine page](#))

I recommend you watch 1-2 professional games a week.

- **Film Yourself**

There's some things you just won't understand about yourself unless you look from the outside in. When you see yourself on the pitch with 21 players around you, you look at yourself from a completely different angle. Now you can see in detail the way you move off the ball, the way you act, what it looks like when you have the ball, if you're making the right decisions and if you're losing the ball, you can see why that's happening.

Pro Tip: Make your tactical training complete with Effective's [Game Brain](#) page.

Recovery & Rest

When you hear people talk about how to be successful, you might hear them say something along the lines of "to be successful, you have to work hard all the time, sacrifice your sleep and not eat much". Or when you hear sayings like "no days off"... you might just get the impression that pros don't rest at all.

When it comes to athletes, those sayings could be further from the truth. It's not always so intensive as you might think it to be. In fact during the season, some pro teams with a busy schedule (two or three games a week) have two rest days and only do light training during the other days of the week. These guys need to be fully fresh and ready for each game they play.

Working hard is extremely important and my point here is simply to not underestimate the importance of rest. Rest is extremely important. It allows your muscles to repair themselves, recover, prevent injury and mental burnout.

Did you know:

Ghanian Midfielder Michael Essien is famously known for sleeping 14 hours a day on average.

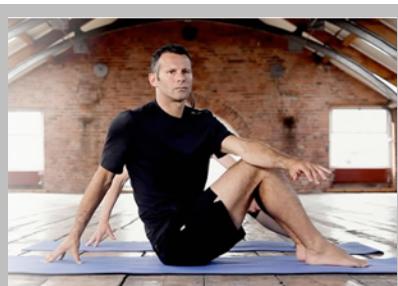
On your days off, you may want to just lay in bed and watch movies all day. If that's the best way for you to relax than do it. However, there are some things you can do to speed up the recovery process. You may want to go for a light swim, use a sauna, long stretching, do yoga, etc. These are all great methods for removing lactic acid from the muscles and making sure you feel fresh when you go back for your next session.

Pro Tip: Having an 5 - 10 minute ice bath after intense exercise is known to speed the process of muscle recovery. Cold water under the shower works as well.

Mental Training

Performing under pressure when your family, friends and supporters are expecting the best from you, or from die-hard fans who paid money to see you play, is not an often talked about skill. There are a lot of people who choke under this kind of pressure, it's just that top-level players make it look easy.

Sports psychology is an area that's growing in popularity for athletes, however it's still an incredibly under looked area. The mental area is definitely something upcoming players can work upon and use as an advantage over their opponents that don't. Remember 'training' is not always to do with moving your body. You can 'train' your mind to do what you want it to do.



Did you know:

Ryan Giggs says that his secret to his longevity (playing for Manchester United at 40) was through practicing yoga and ballet.

There are a growing number of mental training programs out there in the form of MP3's, books and online courses. You can learn to meditate with the help of sites such as [Calm](#). Taking classes like Yoga and Tai-Chi are not only more physically demanding than you think, but will help you alleviate stress and block out pain through controlled breathing. You might read this and think that there's no way you can see yourself doing any of these things, but to become great you sometimes need to innovate and be unconventional in the way you approach your game. If no one else is doing it, then that's an opportunity for you!

Confidence is a huge part of your mental game. When you get yelled at by your teammates, coaches and hear groans on the sidelines when something doesn't go your way, you may just feel like hiding. No one likes to lose possession, miss a chance or get beaten by an attacker,

yet it happens to all of us. The key difference is in the way you react. Do you brush it off your shoulder and move on, or do you let a mistake affect you for the whole game? You have to be resilient.

Getting nervous is another restricting factor. That was a big problem in my game, but techniques such as visualisation, self talk and deep breathing can help you overcome this. Effective users can access a great PDF on training mental skills in the [Classroom](#) area. Just check under the 'Resources' tab.

Step 4) Phase Train

To create a good training schedule, you have to adapt your training based on the time of season.

Seasons run for different lengths depending on where you live. When I played in Australia I had a 5 month season with a two month pre-season, however in Europe I have a 9 month season with a 1.5 month pre season. So everyone's different and there's different training for different periods. I categorise my schedule into four parts:

Early Pre-Season - This is the training you're doing before the pre-season with your team begins. Goal: Make sure that from Day 1 of your team pre-season you're the fittest and most ready in your team.

Pre-Season - This is the training you're doing with your team in order to prepare yourself for the season.

Goal: Make a great first impression, increase your match fitness and refine and tune your game and style of play.

In-Season - All your preparation leads to this. Competitive games and tournaments.

Goal: Be a standout player. Reach your short-term goal. Score x goals, get most valuable player, etc.

Off-Season - The season has ended. After reflection, this is dedicated time to improve.

Goal: Maintain a good base of fitness and improve on your weak points.



"There is always space for improvement, no matter how long you've been in the business."

- Oscar De la Hoya (former 10x Boxing World Champion)

Early Pre-Season

Your work should begin even before your pre-season begins. If you want to make the best impression to your teammates and coaches, you have to show that you're the most determined out there. The Early Pre-Season should begin 1-3 weeks before the pre-season with your team begins, depending on how much break you've had.

You want to build a very good foundation of fitness, conditioning and strength, so your training should consist primarily of the following:

- Interval Running
- Agility Exercises
- Speed Exercises
- Plyometric & Strength Training
- Regular Soccer Drills at 2-3 min non-stop repetitions.

Effective users can find drills to add to their program under Browse -> Fitness

Pre-Season

Now you have a great base of fitness. You're fitter than the others in your team and while your teammates are collapsing due to your coaches intense workouts, you're coping well. You'll now be playing in a bunch of friendly matches. They might just be friendlies, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't be giving your everything. You want to make sure you're a standout performer, and one of the ways you'll standout is through having excellent fitness. Coaches will love you for this and your players will thank you for going the extra mile. You'll feel the difference when chances come to you.

In-Season

All your hard work and preparation leads to this. The first competitive match of the season arrives and you're buzzing to go. Hopefully you've secured yourself a starting 11 spot, you're being a standout performer and on hot form. You feel fresh and ready.

Your fitness is something you've built up, and is now something you want to maintain. Your focus is performing your absolute best, every match and training.

This requires proper rest and recovery between matches and being smart with your training regime, so you're getting the most out of it.

You also have more mental challenges to deal with here. You may get upset if you don't play as well as you could have, or maybe you have things affecting you off the field. But ask any successful person you know and they will tell you that failing is just a normal part of life. You also have to block out things affecting you off the field, so you can put in a good performance.

Off-Season

The season has ended! You've won a trophy or two. You reached the goals you wanted to achieve, and if you didn't, you reflected and asked yourself why.

At the start of the off-season, reflect on your goals and your training schedule. What worked well and what didn't? You want to make improvements so that next season is better. Your off-season may be non-existent. Perhaps you'll be playing futsal, six-a-side, or with another team. In whatever case, you still want to make sure you're performing your best and improving.

Depending on where you live, your off season could be 1 month, or it could be 6! But remember, everyday is a chance to improve.

Step 5) Put it Together

Next step is scheduling. The art of making a plan around the other commitments in your life so you can solely focus on bettering yourself each day and make football an everyday part of your life.

The Art of Time Management

Managing your time is a sacred life skill and one of the most important skills to achieve success. People who have football on top of a busy school and/or work schedule know how stressful things can get. Time is life's most important asset, so it's extremely important to manage it as effectively as possible.

One of the things I hate hearing is when people say that they “don’t have enough time”. Unless you’re married, have kids and have a full-time job, or have to look after someone with a serious medical problem, then you’re just being plain lazy!

Let me make you realise something about the time you actually have. Read this next part very carefully. There are 168 hours in a week. Let me highlight that.

168 hours!

I'll be very generous with numbers here, but lets say you have school and homework or a full-time job which takes up an average of 40 hours a week. You sleep an average of 8 hours per night and you sleep in a few hours more on the weekends (10 hours on Saturday and Sunday). You spend 10 hours a week on the essential stuff like showering, eating, commuting and sitting on the toilet. On top of that, you spend 15 hours a week playing video games, texting, facebooking, instagramming, watching movies, hanging with friends, etc. Oh, and just for fun let's just add on that you also work a part-time job at your local cafe which takes up a further 20 hours a week.

Even after all of this, you still have **23 hours per week** left to do **whatever you want!** This is time you can dedicate solely on your craft. On getting really good at something.



And if you don't have a part-time job and take video games and social networks out of your life, well you actually have **58 hours per week of free time**.

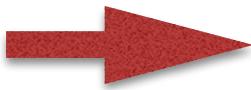
Playing FIFA will kill your football career if you play too much of it, but if you're disciplined and have the willingness to transfer your time towards something that will add to your life, then you're going to see real improvement.

So you have to ask yourself, how much time am I going to dedicate to soccer? 5 hours a week? 10? 15? 20? How can you make time everyday to train?

Did you know: Juan Mata studied for two masters degrees whilst playing for Chelsea.

Then you put it all in a schedule. Here's a sample of mine:

Goal:	Make an excellent first impression and build back good foundation of strength.						
Week 3 (Pre Season) 4th - 10th August	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Session 1	Team Training	Individual Training	Match vs HBOK	Strength Training	Recovery	Individual Training	Match vs Pumerstein
Structure		Full Sharpness Workout - Warm-Up 5min light jog Sharp shuffle 3 rounds x 4 sets T-Sprint 3 rounds x 4 sets Directional Control 5 x 4 Space Exploit 5 x 4		Dumbbell press 10 x 3 - 50kg, single arm Dumb rows 24kg 10 x 3, one arm raises 7kg 10 x 3, dumbbell Bicep curls 20 x 3, crossing balance lunge 10 x 3, bosu ball pushup w/ exercise ball 6 x 3, 6 x 3 pull-ups, 6 x 3 slow tricep dips & core 15 x 3		Improvement Workout - Warm up 5min (2min light jog, dynamic stretching) 5 min Service boxes juggle (3 touch max) Fast Touch & Pass (inside, outside foot) 20 x 3 One touch from air and finish 10 x 3	
Session 2	Mental Training	Strength Training		Team Training	Rest	Strength Training	Tactical Training
Structure		Incline Dumbell 8 x 3 Lying back rows 8 x 3 Military press 8 x 3 Bent over rows 8 x 3 Bosu Ball Pushup w/ exercise ball 6 x 3 Kettlebell Swings 10 x 3 TRX - Pull Ups 10 x 3 Single Arm Power Pull 10 x 3 1 - 1:30 planks x 3 situps 30 x 3			Incline bench (8x4) Tring dips (8x4) Military press (8x4) Bentover row (8x4) x Medicine ball push up (8 x 3) Kettlebell swing (8 x 3) Pole both ways (12 x 3) Shoulder pole (6 x 3) Full extension situp w/ twist (10 x 3)		Video Analysis 90min Arsenal vs Everton
Extras/Notes	Felt tired today and consequently had a lazy session, don't think I slept enough, didn't feel fresh. Make sure to take a nap before training to feel fresh.	Put extra emphasis on stretching and removing lactic acid.	Put extra emphasis on stretching and removing lactic acid.				Played well, confidence high. Made alot of good runs on the right side and got 4-5 good crosses in the whole match, but players not there to finish.
Review			Prepared well, I felt fresh. Suffered a bit from indecision, just need to be confident before receiving that ball is what it comes down to. Regular match play and I will get over it.				



[Click Here to Download a Empty Schedule](#)

Step 6) Be Disciplined!

Football academies and high level teams are not very friendly in terms of being flexible with time, so if you're not in one, you have the freedom to decide when and where you want to train. It's cool to have that freedom, however what you do in your time requires discipline. Discipline is absolutely vital to your success on and off the field. Once you create yourself a training schedule, you have to commit to it! No matter if you feel tired, lazy or it's raining or cold outside, you have to make the personal choice that you will do it. and abide by it. What I did to make sure I trained 20 hours a week by myself was start by making a promise to myself. I would give myself an invisible handshake that I would complete my schedule, or literally write down:

AGREEMENT WITH MYSELF

“If I don't do 20 hours of training by 11:59pm Sunday, I will ban myself from playing FIFA and watching TV for one week”

Signed Nick

or

AGREEMENT WITH MYSELF

"For every hour of training I miss this week, I must do triple the following week."

Signed Nick

So if I missed two hours of training, I'd add on an additional six the next week. Hence, there was a couple of times I grudged out 40 hours.

Making promises to yourself like this is not the easiest task, but having a discipline system in your life will change how much you achieve.

Including Holidays and Must-Do's in your Schedule

One of the things I actually hated growing up was going on holiday. Since me and my parents were on a work exchange in Europe from Australia, they loved to travel, so the question I had to ask myself every summer is how I could combine my training and family time? Furthermore, when you have a busy week of exams or you got a lot of commitments, can make excuses? Here are a few pieces of advice:

- ***Do it first thing in the morning***

This can be tough to follow if you're not a morning person. Personally, I like to sleep in and go to sleep late if I have the choice. This is even harder to do when you're 'on holiday'. But do not dread going on holiday's just because you want to maintain your training schedule. You can bring it with you. Before you eat breakfast or your day starts, do your training. You will feel good for the rest of the day, knowing that you improved yourself and you can take in the sights and the joys of being with your family and friends.

- ***Work on Different Goals & Skills***

During holidays, you may not have the access to the same facilities and equipment you're used to having at home. This means you have to adapt your training. When you go on holiday, set different goals for yourself. You may want to work more on the mental and tactical side of your game or perhaps you could touch up your fitness by focusing more on conditioning, speed drills and interval running.

Step 7) Keep a Diary

Keeping track of where you've been and how far you've come is crucial for improving the quickest and most effective way. For the first four years of Chasing the Dream, I sat down and wrote in my journal every single week. I owe doing this to improving so quickly. This is still something I do in my own time.

Be Scientific

After training sessions and matches, I'll jot down notes on my phone on what I did good/bad and how I feel. After a few weeks, you start seeing a pattern of your (then-current) strengths, weaknesses and certain feelings. Because your short-term goals are always

changing, you'll start seeing certain aspects of your game being a problem and then slowly fading away until they actually become strengths. Here's an example of my short-term goal diary:

Short Term Goal: Improve 1-on-1's

Diary

12/8 – I'm going inside more as a winger and making those cross field runs. I find I do get more touches on the ball that way.

17/8 – Go inside, but remember not to crowd other peoples space.

1/9 – I feel my confidence with 1-on1's improving. I'm trying to make more actions and it's working.

15/9 – If I compare myself now to a few months ago, I definitely have improved my 1-on-1 technique.

22/9 – I'm faster on the ball. I'm beating more players. I'm definitely taking more players on in training and in games. My 1-on-1's have improved. Goal Achieved!

As you can see, one of my goals in the past was to improve my 1-on-1's. Regular note taking of how you are doing in regards to these goals will help you keep track of where you've come.

Pro Tip: iPhone and Mac users can use the [Day One](#) app to keep track of their thoughts. Or if you want to spare a few dollars, just use the notes function.

The Weekly Review

The short-term goal diary can be part of one complete diary entry. If you choose to do what I did and sit down and review every week, you can structure your diary writing so it has two parts:

This Week

- Training: How did training go? Was it effective? Did you feel improvement?
- Game Performance: How did your performance in game go? Did you score/assist? What was good/bad?
- Short Term Goals Review: Take notes of your short-term goals.
- Life: What's up with your personal life? How's school/work going? How do you feel about yourself? What are you excited about right now? What are you worried about?
- Other: Did you watch any games this week? What caught your eye? Any final thoughts?

Next Week

- What you will do in training next week? What do you want to get out of it?

By the time Sunday evening comes around, I sit down and look at all the notes I've taken during the week and reflect on how the week went. Then I write down in full how I feel and try to be as honest with myself as possible, so I can look back weeks or months later and know exactly how I was at the time.

With a journal you can clarify your thoughts and feelings, know yourself better, reduce stress and solve problems more effectively.

So we've made it to the end of this guide. I hope you've taken away a lot of info that you can start implementing immediately into your life. Good luck and let me know how it goes!

- Nick Humphries



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