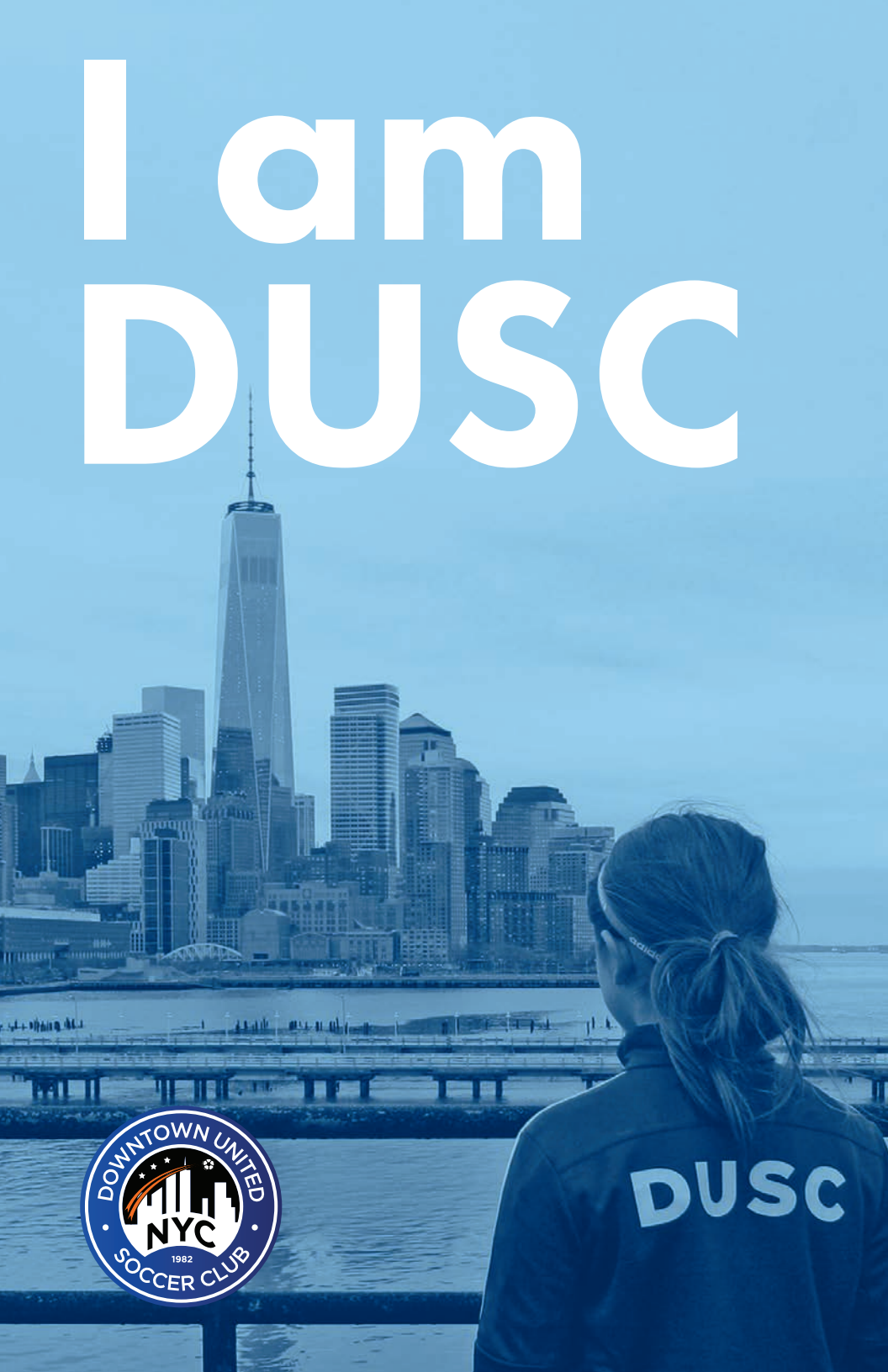
I am DUSC



Welcome to DUSC

Being a soccer player is not something that starts when you step onto the field. And it's much more than simply turning up to practice or to play a game. Being a soccer player is something that you are all the time.

This book will help prepare you on your journey as you develop, grow and hopefully become the best that you can be — both on and off the field. It's designed to help you make the most of your time here at DUSC. You'll learn some new tips, important character traits and skills, or maybe take a fresh look at some you already know. We're confident these will help you improve your game, on the field and everywhere else.

#WeAreDUSC

NEW YORK CITY FOOTBALL CLUB

YOUTH AFFILIATE



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What is Character?



No matter how much talent you have in soccer — or anything else in life — it will only take you so far. As you develop and grow as a player you're guaranteed to come up against challenges and setbacks that will need you to draw upon your character. It's always a hard lesson. Character is defined by how we respond to difficult situations and circumstances. It's what's inside you and what makes you *you*! The great news is that each of us has character already within us to help us deal with adversity. You just need to work and develop it as you do your muscles. The more you develop your character, the more ready you'll be to face challenges as they come.

The following examples should help to start identifying areas where you can begin to grow and work on your character. We have identified eleven core character traits, a great squad for any player.


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Preparation
Be ready, all the time.

Being a soccer player means you are always a soccer player. Simply turning up to the field to practice or play a match is not enough. If you want to maximize your potential, you should be preparing yourself — physically and mentally — all the time.

As a DUSC soccer player you will have a busy schedule with school, practices and games, so you need to be prepared. The more you prepare, the more you increase your chances of maximizing your full potential.

Everyone prepares in their own way. Here are some questions to ask yourself to get an honest evaluation of your preparation habits:

- Are you getting lots of sleep the night before a practice or game?
- Are you writing down what you learned at your last practice session?
- Do you have a healthy diet? Are you eating energy-rich foods before and after playing?
- Are you setting goals for yourself and focusing on areas of your game that you want to improve?
- Who is preparing your backpack — cleats, uniform, water, etc.? This should be you!
- Who empties your backpack after games and practices? Who cleans your shoes?
- Do you shake hands with your coaches when you arrive to practice? "Hello." At the end of practice? "Thank you."
- Do you watch professional games on TV? Do you study the movement of professional players on the field?
- How much time do you spend away from the field with the ball practicing your moves, juggling and footwork exercises? How many days a week and for how long?

Players who prepare are giving themselves the best possible chance for success. They arrive ready to give their best and prepared to get the most out of each session. No excuses. Be prepared.
— Gustavo Palomino, DUSC Technical Director



You can't control the score in soccer but you can control your effort. Make sure you're the hardest worker you know! Nobody should work harder than you and nobody should out-hustle you. Some players may be faster, stronger and have more skill but you can always outwork people. Be sure you always give 110%. Chase every ball, never give up.

Effort is infectious. If you work hard, your teammates will see this and before long they will be working hard as well. Working hard is a great habit to have.

Coaches can help you learn new skills and techniques but they cannot help you if you don't put in the effort.

Effort

Make sure you are the hardest worker you know.

It may surprise you but many players do not concentrate during practice. Ensure that you're not one of them. Do not simply go through the motions. In order to reach a high level of proficiency in soccer — or anything — you need to practice with focus. Experts refer to this as "deliberate practice."

Squeeze every last drop from each practice, treating each session the same way as you would a real game; this is the only way you'll be ready in a competitive match. Run, pass, shoot, trap, tackle like you would in a game. Sloppiness in practice becomes sloppiness in games. Set high standards for yourself. Even if your teammates are goofing around, stay focused and concentrate. Make each moment count.

Behind every kick of the ball there has to be a thought.
— Dennis Bergkamp, Arsenal, Ajax and Holland

Concentration

Practice with focus and deliberation.





You can always have energy, give great effort, and have a great attitude.
— Carli Lloyd, USWNT

Attitude

Choose to define your world in a positive way.

Your attitude is a choice you make every day. And it will determine how far you go, not only in soccer, but in life. You can either choose to have a negative attitude, and never take responsibility for your actions, or you can choose to have a positive attitude and see everything as an opportunity to learn and grow.

DUSC coaches look for players who are always looking to grow, get better, challenge themselves and constantly improve.

Being committed to something means that you stick with it no matter what. You stay with it even when you feel like quitting, when you are tired, when you are no longer in the mood. Commitment is about attending practice when it's cold, wet and windy and — in all honesty — it's the last thing you want to do. You stick with it until the end and the job is completed. Commitment doesn't have time for excuses. Create a mindset built upon commitment and you will be well on your way to realizing your full potential on and off the soccer field.

Commitment

Never make excuses.



Every single day I woke up and committed myself to becoming a better player.
— Mia Hamm, USWNT

Soccer is a passionate game! That's one reason it's the most popular sport in the world. It's very easy for players to get carried away during a game and to act in a way they wouldn't act off the field. That's why it's important that we respect the game at all times. Here are a few tips on respect:

- Be a role model to your teammates and opponents. You never know if younger players are watching.
- Beat opponents by skill and not unfair methods — at all times.
- Play with a spirit of cooperation with opponents, coaches, referees and other officials.
- Always shake hands or high five the opposition and the referee at the end of the game.
- Regardless of the score say "well done!" and "great effort!"
- Thank your coaches and the referee for organizing the game.
- Treat others the way you would want to be treated. Be a nice person.
- Celebrate but do not overreact when you score a goal.
- Win and lose with class and dignity.



Players that aren't true leaders but try to be, always bash other players after a mistake. True leaders on the pitch already assume others will make mistakes.
— Johan Cruyff, Barcelona, Ajax and Holland

Respect

Be a role model.



Coaches love players who want to learn and who want to get better. Make sure you always show up to practice and games wanting to learn. Even the best soccer players in the world are always learning and looking for ways to improve every single day — and it may be why they are who they are!

Be a player who looks to your coach for constructive criticism and use the feedback to grow into a stronger player. Don't be a "know-it-all," or the sort of player who is embarrassed to ask for advice from your coach. The best players are always learning, fine tuning their skills and moving forward.

Coachability

Strive to learn and get better.



That's the beauty of sport. Sometimes you laugh, sometimes you cry.
— Pep Guardiola, Barcelona and Spain

Resilience

Meet adversity with mental toughness.

In soccer — and in life — you're going to come up against challenges and adversity. Things are not always going to work out the way you might have wanted. The best soccer players are those who can embrace adversity and bounce back. You will lose games. You will find some skills a challenge to learn. And at some point, you are likely to get an injury that keeps you from the game. Rather than getting upset, or feeling that the world is against you, instead have the mental toughness to stay strong and keep going. Don't give up. This is the toughness that matters.

To improve at anything in life, you need to make mistakes. Soccer is no different. Making mistakes means you're trying new things. It shows the coach that you are outside your comfort zone. You're going to mess up and make mistakes because the skills you are trying are new to you. If you're not making mistakes, then you are playing it too safe. It's an important part of learning and growing, and the more mistakes you make, the more your coach can help you learn and the quicker you'll improve.

At first, trying a new skill, or move, might feel awkward and strange — so did learning to walk when you were a baby, or learning how to ride a bike when you were younger. You make mistakes as you learn until the skill is natural to you.

Daring

Don't be afraid to make mistakes.



Winning is much more than the scoreline. Winning is about how you respond to the final result, whatever the score. It is a mindset the best players have.
— Matt Pilkington, DUSC Technical Director

Sportsmanship

Be a good winner and (once in a while) a good loser.

Sometimes you win and sometimes you lose. As a soccer player, you need to be able to handle both. It's a big part of the game and it's also a big part of life. It's more important how you respond to each situation.

Winning is great. Of course, you should enjoy it if your team wins, but always try to be humble. This means remembering that soccer is a team sport and, without the help of your teammates, winning would be impossible. And be the type of winner that is respectful of your opponents. Recognize that they tried hard and did their best. Shake hands and always say, "Good game!"

Losing isn't fun but it's part of life. How you respond to losing is what's important. If you have given your best and tried your hardest, then — whatever the final score — you're a winner. Remember losing is a stepping stone on the journey. If you can learn to take the positives out of losing, then you will only grow stronger!





No individual can win a game by himself.
— Pelé, Santos, Cosmos and Brazil

The best teams work together. Everyone needs to play their part. This means that teamwork is vital. Of course, there are times in soccer when a player might score an amazing individual goal, make a defense-splitting pass or pull off a breathtaking save; however, these moments of individual virtuosity are extremely rare. It is the moment-to-moment flow of a team working together that wins games. And teamwork is what makes soccer, and any other sport, such fun to play. Nothing compares to the thrill when your team puts a great play together.

Do things in a game that you would like your teammates to do for you. Encourage them. Be the player that changes the atmosphere in the team. When someone makes a mistake, or when your team concedes a goal, help to lift the confidence of your fellow players. Being a team player will not only make your team better, it will help you to become a more impactful player too. If you're not going to be a team player, then who will?

Teamwork

Be the best teammate you can be.

Have Fun!

This is the most important part of the game. Enjoy your time playing soccer. Relax, smile, have fun! Sport is designed to be enjoyed. Yes, take it seriously and try your best, but don't make it so serious that soccer becomes a chore. Remember, playing soccer is something you get to do, rather than have to do.



A player can only achieve his maximum when he is enjoying himself.
— Johan Cruyff, Barcelona, Ajax and Holland

To give yourself the best chance of success in life, it's critical that you balance both your school work and soccer. If you are on a travel team, or hope to eventually be on one, that means playing soccer at least 3–4 days per week. You will need to focus even harder on making sure you're on top of your school work. Even the greatest soccer players in the world need an education; you can't play soccer forever. That's why ensuring that you're able to manage your school workload and soccer commitments are so important. DUSC coaches take education seriously. If you're not putting in the effort at school, it may be that your coach decides you need some time off from the club to catch up. Ensure you're balancing your books and soccer life.

To be clear, players who are interested in playing soccer in college should always base their choices and decisions on academics. If the college you feel best suits you also has a soccer program, that is a bonus. As you enter high school, DUSC will offer support to players in building their college pathway via seminars and forums. However, it is up to you to take responsibility for your own future. No excuses.

Don't be afraid of the college process if you don't understand it. Speak with your school career advisor and also your DUSC coach. If they can't help directly, we can introduce you to other DUSC coaches. The key here is to take action. Have a plan and don't simply bury your head in the sand. If you are a twelve- or thirteen-year-old player, then college may seem like a long way off to you. You can still be proactive and start to speak with other DUSC players and coaches to begin to get a feel for the sort of college that might be of interest to you and which matches your long-term goals.



Academics
School first

The path to college

Health + Nutrition

Before

3+ hours before

- Carbohydrates to fuel muscles: fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- Water.

30–60 minutes before

- Fruit, like bananas, clementines or apples.
- Water.

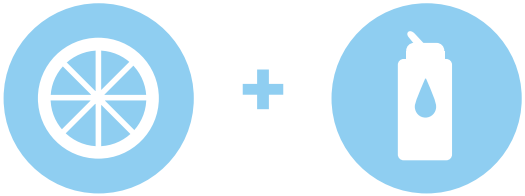
Ideas for 3+ hours before

Tuna or turkey sandwich with carrot sticks. Nut butter sandwich with grapes. Low-fat cream cheese on whole-wheat bagel. Hard boiled or scrambled eggs and whole wheat toast with melon slices.

During

Halftime or during practice

Fruit or vegetables, if needed.



Water.

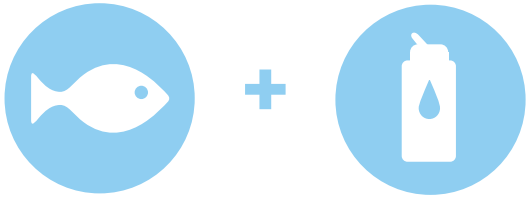
Ideas for halftime or during practice

Oranges, apple slices, melon, grapes, or sugar snap peas.

After

Recovery/cool-down

Healthy meal or snack, about an hour after play.



Water is enough to replenish sweat losses. Sports drinks are not needed.

Ideas for halftime or during practice

Fruit smoothie. Hummus and carrots or celery sticks. Yogurt and banana or granola. *Save the treats for a special occasion.* Instead, eat healthy foods that will replenish muscles and help you stay energized.

Tournament days or back-to-back play

Less than 1 hour before the next game?
Have a fruit or vegetable snack, like a banana, apple, or carrot sticks.

2 hours or more between games?
Have a healthy snack or meal that includes carbohydrates like fruit with nut butter, vegetables or whole grains.

Did You Know?

Heavy foods – like donuts, pizza, or French fries — will really slow you down. They take a long time to digest, using energy your muscles need. To get the energy you need to play your best, see the foods listed under "Before."

Goals

If you want to get better at something, including soccer, you need to first identify where you need to grow. Once you've done this, you need to track your progress. In some areas you may improve quickly, in others you might need to work longer. Remember everyone is different!

Speak with your coach and ask them about areas where you should improve. Use this log below to track your progress. Look to identify between 3–4 areas to work on each month of the season.



Month	Area to improve	Progress
September		
October		
November		
December		
January		

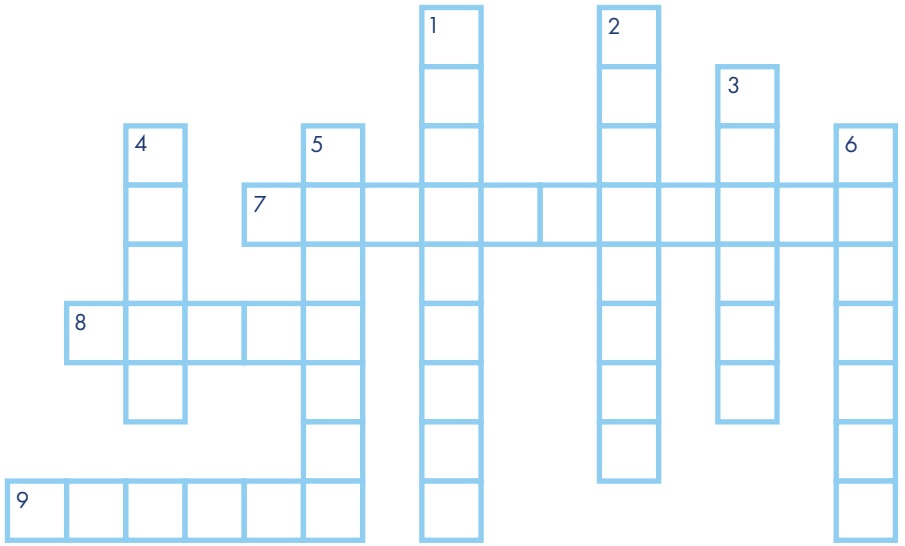
Month	Area to improve	Progress
February		
March		
April		
May		
June		

Word Search

Academics
Attitude
Class
Concentration
DUSC
Effort
Focus
Goal setting
Humility
Learning
Mental toughness
Mistakes
Preparation
Respect
Responsibility
Sleep
Smile
Teamwork
Fitness
Passion

L N R P M M E G S T M A S R D
V O D H G J U N L F P T S E K
O I X S P A X I E O C G E S T
I T Y R R N K T E C E N N P P
P A E E M O R T P U F I H O T
J R D S X I O E E S I N G N M
Y T U P E T W S F A T R U S I
T N T E E A M L F C N A O I S
I E I C L R A A O A E E T B T
L C T T I A E O R D S L L I A
I N T I M P T G T E S P A L K
M O A R S E S D V M S M T I E
U C W I C R E J O I A C N T S
H C S U D P M B A C L E E Y V
E P N O I S S A P S C E M O W

Crossword



Across

7 You're going to need this if you want to realize your full potential.

8 It's important to get plenty of this before practices and games.

9 This is the one thing *you* can control.

Down

1 Asking lots of these will help if you want to improve.

2 The best players learn from their _____.

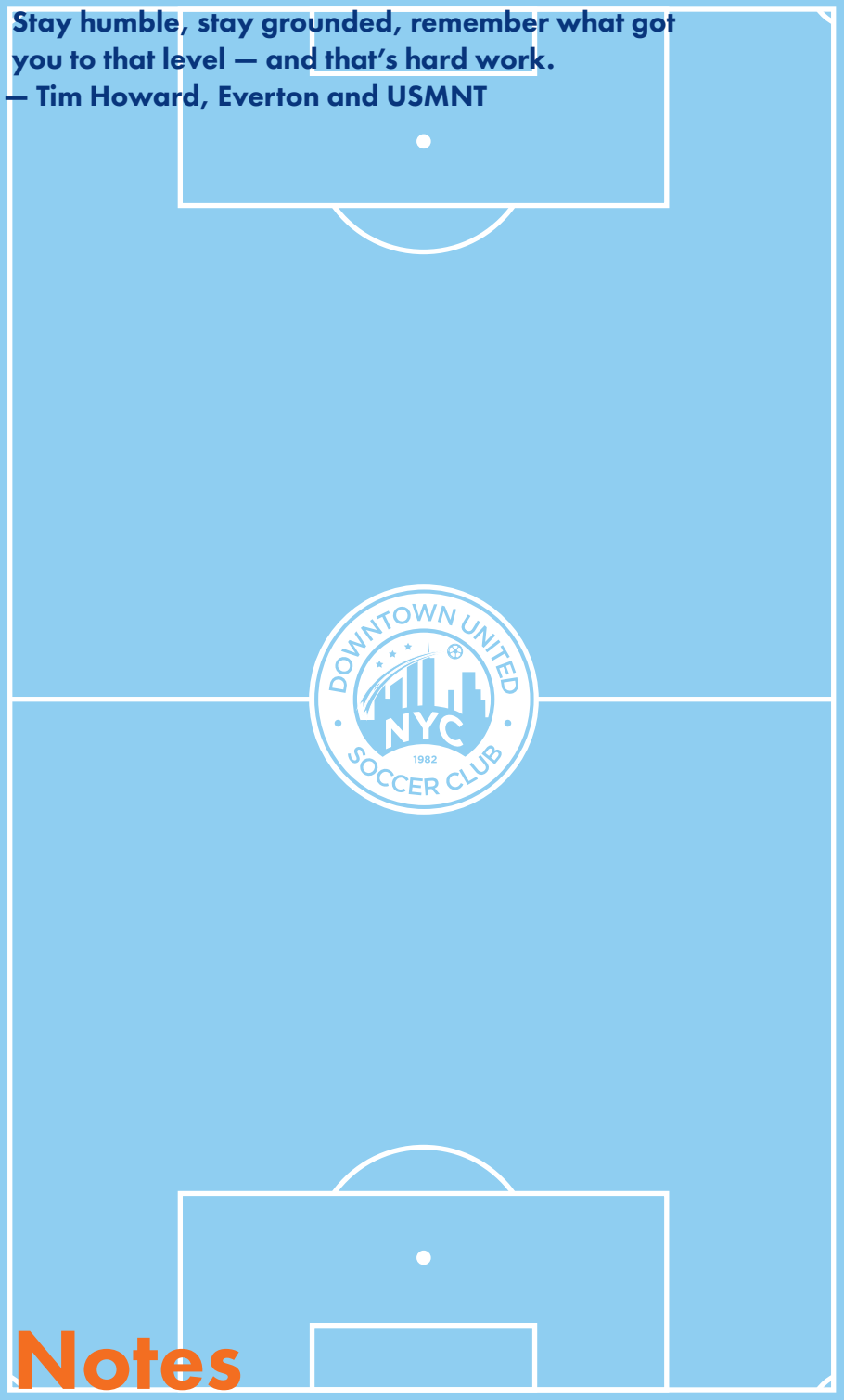
3 No matter the score, if you've given your best then you are one of these.

4 You can set these or shoot in them; but don't swing on them.

5 It is important to _____ your teammates, opponents, the game and the officials.

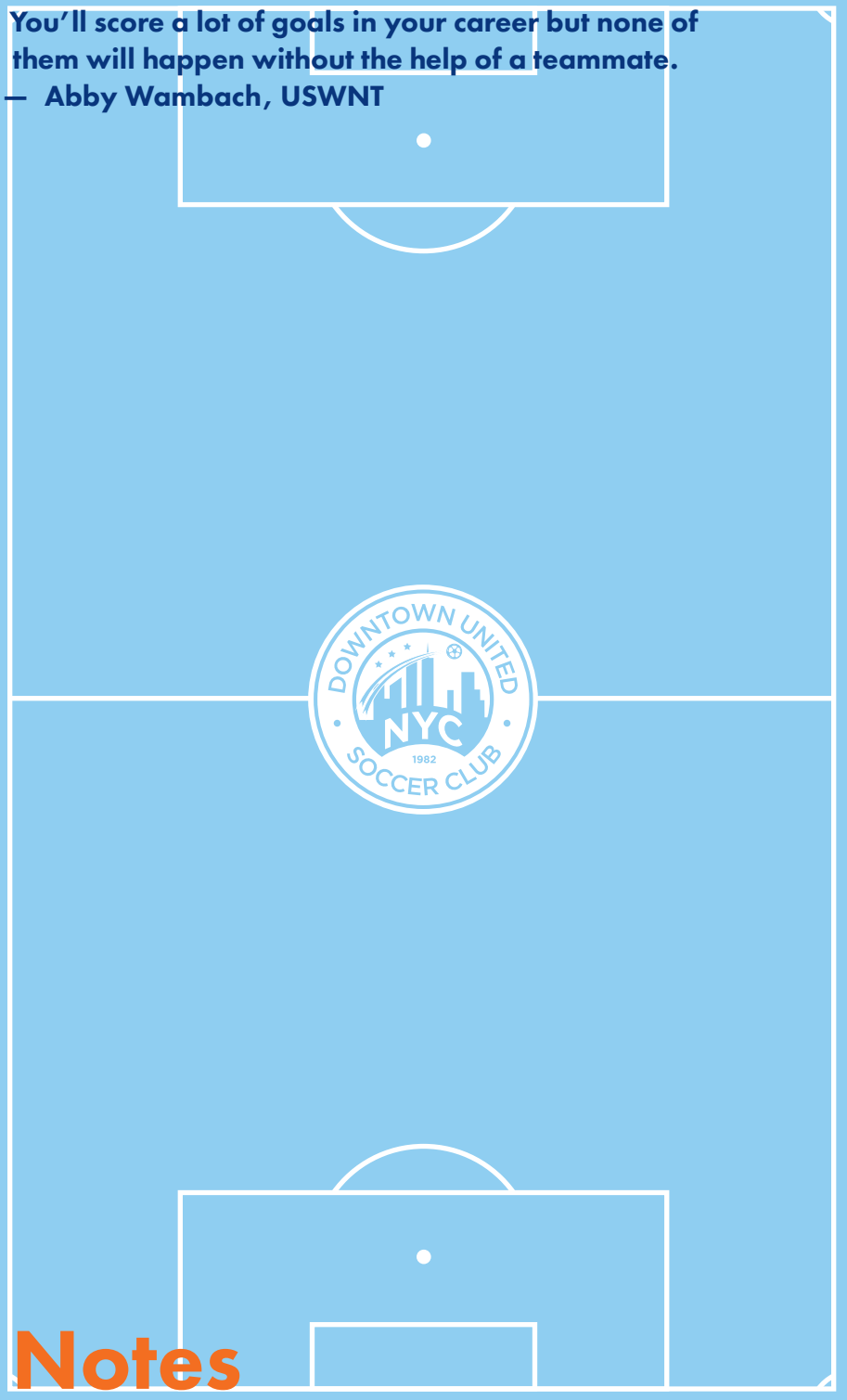
6 Having a _____ diet is vital for a soccer player.

Stay humble, stay grounded, remember what got you to that level — and that's hard work.
— Tim Howard, Everton and USMNT



Notes

You'll score a lot of goals in your career but none of them will happen without the help of a teammate.
— Abby Wambach, USWNT



Notes

I pass and I move, I help you, I look for you, I stop, I raise my head, I look and — above all — I open up the pitch. The one who has the ball is the master of the game.
— Xavi Hernandez, Barcelona and Spain

Notes

I can continue to profess my creed: take the ball, give it to a teammate, teammate scores. It's called an assist, and it's my way of spreading happiness.
— Andrea Pirlo, NYCFC, Juventus, Milan and Italy

Notes

Every season is a new challenge to me and I always set out to improve in terms of games, goals, assists.

— Cristiano Ronaldo, Real Madrid, Manchester United and Portugal

Notes

The day you think there are no improvements to be made is a sad one for any player.

— Lionel Messi, Barcelona and Argentina

Notes

I will forgive if the players cannot get it right, but not if they do not try hard.
— Pep Guardiola, Barcelona and Spain,

Notes

Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do.
— Pelé, Santos, Cosmos and Brazil

Notes

I'm attracted to soccer's capacity for beauty.
When well played, the game is a dance with a ball.
— Eduardo Galeano, Uruguayan author

Notes

Downtown United Soccer Club, Inc. is organized as a 501c(3) not for profit entity to educate, train and inspire youth soccer players of all ages and abilities in a positive, respectful, supportive environment. To foster a community that reflects the diversity of New York City in which children can develop a life-long love for the beautiful game and realize their full potential as both players and people.

This book belongs to:



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