



## Aspects of a front-runner

*Extracted from a related article by Lauren Gregg and Tim Nash*

"The role of a forward first of all is to put the ball in the back of the net," says Tiffeny Milbrett. "I believe it takes a special something to be a forwards. There is something you can't teach.

"When you are a forward, you have a knack for scoring goals and you feel good when you score goals. Honestly, when we don't score, we don't feel good. We get upset. That's a natural part of being a striker."

The front-runner must possess certain technical qualities. Of course, they must be able to put the ball in the net. They must be able to finish with both feet and all the surfaces of both feet. They have to be able to turn the ball quickly and efficiently. And they have to have an excellent first touch, which allows them to receive the ball so as to leave as many options open as possible.

Perhaps more than any other position, the front-runner has to be strong psychologically.

"The beauty of our team is all our front-runners want to score," says Shannon MacMillan. "When we get the ball, we're looking to go to goal. I remember one time when we played Japan. One of their front-runners got in on us, and she was like, 'I don't know if I want to go it alone.'

"That's not us. We want to score. You definitely have to take a defender on every time you can. You might lose it, but you're wearing that player down. The more you take on, the more you put your stamp on the game. Let that defender know, 'Hey, I'm coming after you!' It makes your job a bit easier in the long run."

Front-runners not only have to have the ability to go one-on-one, they have to have the willingness to do so. They are risk-takers by nature, who want the ball every time down the field. The physical qualities needed are speed, upper- and lower-body strength, explosive acceleration and change of pace, change of direction, and anaerobic and

aerobic conditioning.

Front-runners also have to be students of the game. They need to understand the nuances of the game, knowing when to shoot and when to pass. One thing that makes Brandi Chastain such an incredible player and so much fun to watch is her sense of the smallest moments in the game. She appreciates the sophistication with which the game can be played.

"My grandfather used to pay me a dollar if I scored a goal," Brandi says. "If I got an assist, I got \$1.50. He thought helping someone else score a goal was important. I started thinking it was really fun setting up a goal. Then, I moved into thinking, 'What if I make my defender run away so someone can run into that space?'

"As a forward, that was big for me. That was really fun. Sometimes I make a run and someone will follow me, and I just laugh because I fooled them into thinking I'm going to get the ball. And I was setting her up the whole time. I think that's something that is really underrated."

"Scoring goals is awesome, but it's the little stuff that makes the goals happen. It isn't always about the ball and who has the ball. It's about what's happening away from the ball each time."

### **Tactical Aspects of Front-Runners**

1. When to take on; when to pass
2. What type of run to make
3. When to come to the ball; when to go away from the ball
4. When to face up with the defender; when to play back
5. Back to goal decisions
6. When to pressure the ball on defense; when to force the ball