

SCIENCE

USWNT preps for World Cup by going deep – into their own minds

Lauren Chiangpradit | Thursday, May 9, 2019



United States forward Christen Press (23) dribbles through Brazil traffic during the She Believes Cup match between the USA and Brazil on March 5, 2019 at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, FL (Photo by Andrew Bershaw/Icon Sportswire via Getty Images)

The U.S women's national soccer team recently entered into a new partnership with the meditation app **Headspace**. The partnership extends to U.S soccer and the MLS, closely mimicking a **previous partnership** the company had with the NBA.

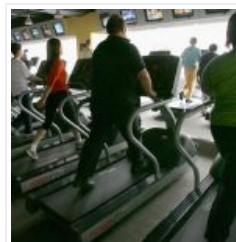
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The defending World Cup champion U.S. women's national team is adding another high tech tool to prepare for this summer's event – meditation.

Headspace is an application that uses ancient history and modern science to create an authentic meditation experience. Their mindfulness meditation, if done consistently, can positively impact mental health and physical health while reducing stress and increasing focus.

A 2017 study by the **Journal of Cognitive Enhancement** found that after just 10 days of Headspace meditation there was a 14 percent increase in focus. The team will use Headspace for the five months leading up to the 2019 Women's World Cup in France beginning in June.

Headspace has been **used by** athletes including:

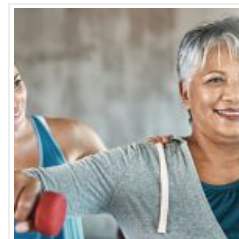
- The NBA Cleveland Cavaliers' Kevin Love
- The NFL's Tennessee Titans linebacker Derrick Morgan
- NFL's New York Jets quarterback Sam Darnold
- Olympic runner Colleen Quigley
- University of California, Los Angeles
- USA Swimming

The unique aspect about Headspace's partnership with the U.S women's national team is the company customized meditation programs for each player. The women were given a survey that pinpointed their personal stresses and experiences in order to maximize the results of the application.

This year, the team is focusing on its mental training as much as physical training.

"Less time is often spent looking at the neck up, and, as we all know, the neck-up is where the magic happens. That's where the decisions are made, the emotions are felt, those crucial moments are decided," said James Bunce, **U.S. Soccer's high performance director**.

Bunce thinks more teams will adopt the idea of mental conditioning in order to enhance performance. He said he believes this is the next big push in sports for both the athletes



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believes this is the next big push in sports for both the athletes and sports psychologists.

Lauren Chiangpradit is a junior sports journalism major at Arizona State University

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