

FREESTYLE TRAINING DIARY



Freestyle Soccer kids train every day without being told to train and they keep a record of their progress.

CONFIDENCE

The most important goal for any kid or teenager is their confidence.

All kids have talent. There are thousands of talented Soccer kids in Australia who have no idea how talented they are because nobody can tell them. Nobody measures specific performance or improvement.

The key to improving kids is to discover what each kid needs to improve. Freestyle kids train on their own and with their mates. They don't have adults telling them what they're doing right or doing wrong. They have to find out for themselves. Freestyle kids take responsibility for their own development. They make plenty of mistakes and keep going until they discover the underlying cause. They have the freedom to develop initiative, self awareness and resilience. They turn every problem into a challenge so that it's no longer a problem. These kids keep a record of their training drills.



TRAINING PROGRAM

Freestyle kids get out of Soccer what they put into it

All kids are different. There's a different key to every kid and a different drill for every skill. Freestyle kids practice with a ball every day so they can learn to identify their skills and talents, strengths and weaknesses, fears and needs. Their knowledge becomes their power.

When Soccer players become serious about reaching the top, they begin to take more responsibility for their own development. Kids don't need a coach to develop flexibility, agility, strength, endurance or speed. They can plan their own fitness training program. They don't need a coach to develop close ball skills. They can devise close repetition drills to practice on their own or with a group of mates. They need a training diary to keep a record of their performance and improvement. They can practice whenever and wherever they want. They can get 1000 kicks in 10 minutes kicking a ball against a wall.



JUGGLING FIGURES

***Perfect technique doesn't make perfect. Practice makes perfect.
That means close repetition drills with hundreds of ball touches.***

All kids can practice. All kids need is a ball. When they juggle a ball, kids can take 100 steps, make 100 decisions and get 100 ball touches in one minute. Speed jugglers can get 130 ball touches in one minute. Juggling improves balance, coordination, rhythm, timing and reflexes.

Nobody knows the effect that close repetition drills have on ability. Anyone can juggle a ball 30 times and keep a record of their numbers. The last 10 numbers will be a lot higher than the first 10 numbers. Kids need 200 ball touches to reach the intuitive level where they're ready to play. The average kid gets 10 ball touches before each game.

The secret to juggling is as simple as walking and running. Kids need to alternate their feet every touch of the ball. They can practice with both feet, weak foot only, thighs only, head only and while walking.



CARD AND PEN

Freestyle kids don't wait to be told what they can't do. They're ready to discover what they can do and show they can do it better.

All kids can improve. Some kids go through a whole season without knowing if they're getting better or worse. They never get accurate feedback. Freestyle kids use a card and pen to keep a record of their juggling skills. Kids need to know how good they are and how much they're improving. Achievement motivates them to aim even harder.

The card and pen system is foolproof. Kids juggle the ball 10 times to warm up and write the 10 numbers across the top of the card. They pick the lowest number and focus on beating it. They know they can beat it because it's the lowest number. When they beat it, they draw a circle around it and write the new number down in the next spot. They repeat the process until they reach a number that they can't beat. This drill takes about 15 minutes and is a simple way for kids to reach 100.



KNOW LIMITS

Kids go as far as they can and from there they can see a lot further.

Some sports have an assistant coach, a nutritionist, talent scout, skills coach, statistician and a defence coach. Soccer has one team coach trying to do the lot. They don't have time to learn about individuals.

The problem with a perfect system is that it doesn't leave much room for improvement. That's as good as it gets. Freestyle kids don't have a perfect system. They just keep trying to improve with all their mates.

The most important subject that any kid can learn about is themselves. Every kid has an optimum range for passing, shooting, heading and throwing. Once they know their limits, they can practice and extend those limits. If kids understand their accuracy range is 30 metres, they won't risk possession when a team mate shouts for a 45 metre pass.



FITNESS LEVELS

Freestyle kids know how they're going and where they're going.

Most kids are happy to do just enough to please the coach and stay in the team. They train because they have to. Freestyle kids train because they want to. Freestyle kids are never satisfied with doing enough. They always want to do more than enough. These are the kids who push themselves harder than they get pushed. In a game, Freestyle kids never look for a rest. They look for options. These are the kids who run more in each game so that they feel fitter for the next game. How many kids have a red face and a wet shirt at the final whistle?

Most junior Soccer clubs have no idea who their Freestyle kids are. They don't know which kids juggle at home every day, practice speed work or go out for endurance runs. Coaches teach techniques and tactics so that teams can win games. They can't teach talent, intelligence, character or intuition. They have to search for it. Every club should conduct an annual skills competition to identify these kids. It's easy to pick skill and fitness but the skilful player might be too selfish to pass the ball and the fit player might be too lazy to run for it. We need to find ways to discover and develop internal qualities.

No matter what level kids achieve, they can always do a lot better. Freestyle kids are happy to challenge themselves or compete with their mates. They don't need to be protected from the fear of losing.



CONTROL

Kids don't know how accurate they really are because they've never aimed for small targets at training or in competitive games.

Whether they are surfers, skaters, bike riders or Soccer players, Freestyle kids take control of their own development without any direction, correction or protection from well intentioned adults. These are kids who have the drive, determination and motivation to swap tricks and skills with their mates because they want to reach the top.

All kids have different levels of intelligence, character, motivation and talent. They can't achieve their full potential until we give them freedom to think for themselves, make their own decisions, develop their own moves, create their own mistakes, identify the underlying causes, solve the problems and move on to the next level. Kids need to be challenged so they can develop responsibility, self awareness and resilience or they will stand around waiting to be told what to do.

A 5 year old who can hit a small cone 10 metres away, becomes a 10 year old who can hit a small target 20 metres away and a 15 year old who can hit one small corner of the net with power 30 metres away.

