

SOME KIDS JUST NEED A GOOD KICK



Discover the potential that all kids have

THE KEYS TO IMPROVEMENT

There's a lot more to Soccer than striking and receiving the ball

All kids are different. All kids have talent. All kids can practice. All kids can improve. All kids need is a ball. If we teach kids, we can develop their skill. If we learn about kids, we can discover their talent.



It takes five minutes to improve any Australian Soccer kid just by looking at the 10 key elements they need to reach their full potential. Kids don't lack talent. They lack footwork and vision, power and precision, movement and decision, belief and repetition, challenge and intuition. We can spend years teaching the same techniques and correcting the same simple mistakes or spend five minutes identifying the underlying cause. Then we can see how good these kids really are.



FOOTWORK

We all look at the same game but we see things differently.

When kids practice heading the ball, we look at their head so we can correct the heading technique. If you look at their feet, you'll see that they're glued to the ground. When kids practice striking the ball, we focus on their kicking foot and don't notice that the support foot stays still. Any kid can kick a ball. Freestyle kids learn how to pass the ball because they understand the secret of footwork and how to develop it.

A lot of kids stab awkwardly **at** the ball simply because they stand flat footed and wait for the ball. Freestyle kids kick smoothly **through** the ball because they get up on their toes and move to the ball. It only takes five minutes to teach kids the importance of footwork.

When kids move with a ball, look at their balance and coordination



VISION

Most kids have no idea what to look at when they kick a ball

When kids shoot at goal, the coaches call the shots from the sideline and focus on the kicking foot so that they can correct the shooting technique. There's nothing wrong with the kick. It's all in the eyes.

Freestyle kids keep their eyes firmly on the ball when they kick it



If you can think outside the goal square, and stand behind the net, you can see why so many shots go straight to the keeper, over the bar or wide of the post. Most kids take their eyes off the ball as they kick it. The key to shooting is technique. The key to scoring goals is vision. Freestyle kids understand what to look at and what to look for.

POWER

Most kids don't know their own strength

Soccer kids expect too much too soon. They try too hard to kick the ball too hard because they aim for targets that are too big. Boys try to prove how hard they can hit the ball over the bar. A wall teaches kids to control their power because the wall can return the ball a lot harder.



Freestyle kids know their own strength because they can constantly measure their power and accuracy. They learn to relax on the ball and develop timing first. The power increases naturally without any strain.

Freestyle kids learn how to finish because they know where to start. Power shooting practice begins in the 6 yard box with short, simple, slow, smooth, two touch shots on the ground and gradually builds up to powerful first time volleys from outside the penalty area.

PRECISION

If you aim big, you miss big. If you aim small, you miss small.

Goals are too big. You can fit 34 Soccer balls between two posts and 10 balls from the ground to the crossbar. That's a goalmouth capacity of 340 balls. Most kids aim for the whole goal. They use 100% power even inside the 6 yard box when they just need to place their shots.

The average shooting practice takes 15 minute each week which only gives players enough time to blast a few shots over the crossbar from outside the 18 yard box. Freestyle kids will practice shooting for two hours using at least 50 balls. They shoot from every angle and distance while varying their shots. These kids practice by aiming at small cones so they can monitor their accuracy and success rate.

Any kid can shoot. Freestyle kids want to learn how to score goals.



MOVEMENT

When other kids just keep stopping, Freestyle kids just keep going.

There are plenty of really good players who stop to look, stop to listen and stop to have their mistakes corrected. Freestyle players are too busy fine tuning their craft to take a break. They always practice with a ball at their feet and the ball lets them make as many mistakes as they like so they can learn from them and move on to the next level. The future of Australian Soccer is great because there's so much room for improvement and so many simple ways to improve every player.

Smart players never stand and wait. They always move to the ball.



When Freestyle kids strike the ball, they don't just move the kicking foot. They move their whole body to get balance and coordination.

Each player only has possession of the ball for 5% of a game. A skilful player will use Soccer skills to dominate 5% of the game with the ball. A talented player will use his natural skills to dominate the other 95% of the game without the ball. He constantly looks, listens and thinks so that he understands where to move and what to call.

DECISION

Kids need to think for themselves and make their own decisions

A good coach tells players **what** to do so they can follow orders. A better coach shows them **how** to do it so they can practice on their own. The best coach explains **why** they do it so players can think for themselves and decide **when** and **where** to make their own moves.

There are plenty of good players who train when they're told and wait to be told what to do. Freestyle players train when they're not told so they learn to make mistakes and discover the underlying cause. All Freestyle kids are able to develop confidence, intuition and resilience.

Ordinary kids wait to see what happens so they can react. Confident kids make it happen so they can force the opposition players to react.

Decisions depend on choice, commitment and calling the shots



BELIEF

*If the kids believe in the coach, and the coach believes in the kids,
the kids will believe in themselves.*

Ordinary kids will believe a coach who tells them that they lack talent. Freestyle kids are more self sufficient and learn to believe in themselves. The most effective way to motivate Freestyle kids is to tell them what they can't do and then sit back and watch them do it.

The most important subject any kid can learn about is themselves. They can do this by measuring their accuracy, power and juggling figures. Freestyle Soccer encourages kids to develop self awareness, self motivation, self control, self expression and self confidence.

Belief is the key to the future of Australian Soccer and it must come from the top. If we want to compete with top nations, the biggest organisations have to believe in the smallest kids and their talent. Soccer innovation is going to come from the next generation.



REPETITION

By the time they reach their teens, Australian Soccer kids are 1,000,000 steps behind the rest of the world.

Most kids have no idea how many ball touches they need before kickoff. The average player gets 10 kicks before each game. Freestyle kids know from experience that it takes at least 200 kicks to get a feel for the ball. Initial kicks will be too hard or too soft, too fast or too slow, too early or too late, too high or too low, too left or too right. After 200 touches, the mistakes disappear and kids are ready to play.

Ordinary training produces ordinary players. Extra training produces extraordinary players. Most players never get enough ball touches to develop their confidence or reach an intuitive level of skill. Freestyle kids get thousands of ball touches because they have a passion for the ball. Close repetition drills, like wall practice and juggling, give kids 200 ball touches in five minutes and develops both feet. In the leading Football nations of the world, kids get 1,000 ball touches every day.



CHALLENGE

The challenge is to practice what we can't do, not what we can do.

Any kid can follow a generic system and learn to look, think, stand, stretch, move, kick and play the same way as everyone else. Freestyle kids need more of a challenge. They search for the pathway less travelled so they can set their own short term achievable goals. These kids go as far as they can and from there they can see a lot further.

Modern Soccer is very straight forward. Kids run straight forward and pass the ball straight forward. They think 'ball and goal'. They chase the ball till they catch it and then they rush towards the goal till they lose it again. Freestyle kids get to use their intelligence and natural talent. They think 'space and possession'. They look for space so they can get into position to receive the ball and then they keep possession until an opening appears in the defence and they can score a goal.

If we want to be a Top 20 Football Nation, we need to try harder.



INTUITION

When we know what we're doing, we can do it without thinking.

Kicking is a simple motor skill like walking and running. We develop motor skills at three levels. At the cognitive level, we stop to think before we do anything. At the associative level, we become more confident. At the intuitive level, we do things without thinking. The secret to intuitive play is to practice until it becomes second nature.

Sharpshooter training gives one player hundreds of shots at goal



Most Soccer kids never get past the cognitive stage because they keep stopping and never get enough consistent touches of the ball. When 10 kids stand in line waiting to shoot, they're spending 10% of their time on skill development and 90% standing around and talking about everything else. Coaches don't play in the games. They don't need to feed the ball at training. Kids are old enough to feed themselves. If they run their own drills, they can discover the finer points of passing. To make the right decisions, kids need to read the speed of the feed.