

THE SECRETS OF SCORING GOALS



*Footwork and vision, power and precision, movement and decision,
belief and repetition, challenge and intuition.*

MISSING IN ACTION

The first step in learning how to score goals is discovering how to miss and understanding why.

Some kids struggle to strike the ball because they don't know how to move their feet. Some kids struggle to strike the target because they don't know what to look at when they kick the ball. Some kids look up at the keeper as they kick and put the ball straight into their arms.

Some kids manage to blast the ball over the crossbar from inside the 6 yard box because they try too hard to kick the ball too hard and they aim for the whole goal instead of picking one small part. Some kids don't know where to move or how to lose their marker and they pass the ball when they should shoot or they shoot when they should pass.

Some kids are scared to shoot in case they miss and get criticised by the coach or ridiculed by their mates. Some strikers panic in front of an open goal because they haven't had enough shooting practice or they hesitate and take an extra touch instead of taking a chance.



FREESTYLE SECRETS

If we all knew how to score goals, there wouldn't be any secrets.

In a game determined by the number of goals, most kids don't know how to shoot because most coaches don't know how to score goals. Shooting is a simple motor skill just like walking and running. Kids learn to walk by walking. They learn to shoot by shooting. 15 minutes every week isn't enough time to develop marksmanship skills. Kids need 2 hour shooting sessions with at least 100 balls to practice with. There are 10 simple ways to evaluate the scoring ability of players.



FOOTWORK

Coaching depends on what we look at. When kids kick a ball, look at their eyes. When kids head the ball, look at their feet.

Most Australian Soccer kids are flat footed, stiff legged and one footed because they spend so much time standing around and waiting. At shooting practice, the average Soccer kid who stands dead still in a line and waits to kick a dead ball to the coach, gets one touch of the ball every two minutes and forgets their last shot. We spend so much time on their Soccer skills and so little time on their natural skills.

Effective scoring ability depends on a moving kid striking a moving ball. Players need close repetition drills so that their shooting skills become intuitive. They need to practice with both feet. Flat footed kids lead with the kicking foot and stab **at** the ball awkwardly. If they move onto the ball, and lead with their standing foot, they can strike **through** the ball smoothly and put more energy into the kick. Kids should practice heading the ball inside the box and then gradually extend their range as they become more comfortable and confident.



VISION

The key to shooting is technique. The key to scoring is vision.

Most Soccer kids have no idea what to look at when they shoot. Some look at the goal and some look at the ball. Some kids look at the goal before they shoot and some only look after they shoot. Most coaches never discover this because they don't know what to look at either.

We see what we're trained to see. Team coaches teach techniques so they look at the kick when players shoot. They never look at the eyes. When kids miss a shot, coaches correct their technique. Imagine the effect on kids if we correct the technique when there's nothing wrong.

There are two ways to look up at the target. Kids can raise their eyes or lift their heads. A lot of kids put the ball over the crossbar because they lift their heads when they kick. Freestyle kids know how to shoot accurately because they learn how to miss. They know the importance of vision and understand why so many shots go straight to the keeper.



'Back to goal' drills teach kids to turn and check the target first.

POWER

Freestyle kids learn how to finish because they know where to start

It's human nature that kids want to kick the ball as hard as they can while Dad is shouting 'Big Kick. Big Kick.' The bigger the target, the harder they try. As soon as they get to the oval, kids like to put a ball on the ground 30 metres from goal and blast it over the crossbar. They try to get power first and can't find rhythm and timing in their shots.



The average Soccer team spends 15 minutes each week at shooting practice so they only have enough time to work on their power shots. Freestyle kids will spend up to two hours at shooting practice so they build up gradually to their peak output. Power shooting practice begins in the 6 yard box. Kids start with slow, short, simple, two touch shots on the ground to develop their timing, balance and eye/foot coordination. Slowly they increase range, speed, power and intensity until they can drive the ball from outside the 18 yard box.

PRECISION

Kids who aim big miss big. Kids who aim small only miss small.

Soccer goals are just too big. We can fit 34 Soccer balls between two posts and 10 balls from the ground to the crossbar. That's 340 places for kids to score. Most kids aim for the whole goal instead of picking one small part of it. The rest kick the ball straight at the goalkeeper.



Professional marksmen don't aim for the target. They learn to aim for the bullseye which is the smallest part of the target. Freestyle kids practice hitting small cones placed inside the posts. These targets are on the ground and well away from the keeper so they condition the players to take aim at the empty corners of the net before they shoot.

It only takes 5 minutes to improve shooting accuracy. By setting up small targets inside the posts at training, it's easy to discover whether strikers aim small or aim big when they shoot. Most shooting sessions are so short that kids only have time to blast a few balls over the bar. Freestyle kids constantly practice with difficult high balls from every angle and distance until their skill becomes second nature. All across Australia, thousands of Freestyle kids develop accuracy on their own.

MOVEMENT

No kid will receive a perfect ball in Soccer. They have to move for it.

Some strikers have a talent for losing their marker and finding space to receive the ball. They develop an intuitive awareness of position. Every kid can improve their positioning by moving forward or back, left or right, up or down or by rotating clockwise or anticlockwise.

In dead ball moves, some kids stand dead still and dead quiet because they're dead scared of making mistakes. On corners, too many kids stand with their markers in the 6 yard box waiting for the 50-50 ball. A Freestyle player will draw opponents out of their comfort zone and create options for his team mates. Freestyle kids never wait to see what happens. They keep moving until they make something happen. In a spontaneous game, the biggest problem with choreographing free kicks is that opponents never stand where they're supposed to stand.



DECISION

The best time to shoot is when the goalkeeper doesn't expect it.

Any kid can trap, pass, head, dribble, screen the ball and shoot. The most difficult skill in Soccer is deciding when to choose which one. Soccer skills become a lot more effective when kids have the freedom to use their natural skills. They can look for the options, listen to the calls, evaluate the risks, move into position, make a decision, commit themselves to the move and call the shots.

We can teach any kid to kick a ball but we can't teach intelligence, talent, personality or character. Eventually we need to give Soccer kids the freedom to think for themselves and create their own moves. It's nice to have a coach who knows what to do but it's a lot better to develop kids who have confidence to make their own decisions. The coach doesn't play in the game so he doesn't need to run the warmup drills. Competitive kids need practice to read the speed of the feed.



The Wall Pass gives kids the chance to run their own ball drills.

BELIEF

When the kids believe in the coach, and the coach believes in the kids, the kids will have the confidence to believe in themselves.

Every time kids make a mistake, adults stop and correct them. That's human nature. That's how we help kids by constantly reminding them what's wrong with them. It's virtually impossible for adults to watch kids make mistakes without stopping them and correcting them.

Every time a Soccer kid makes a mistake, the coach stops the mistake and corrects the technique. They don't correct the mistake. Some kids spend years repeating the same simple mistakes and coaches spend years correcting the same simple techniques because they can't find the time to observe the mistakes and discover their underlying cause.

How far kids can go depends on them and nobody else. How well we coach Soccer kids depends on whether or not we believe in their talent. Show me an untalented Soccer kid and I'll show you how much faster they can improve when we pretend that they're talented.



Anyone can kick at a ball. Freestyle kids make it do what they want.

REPETITION

Anyone can shoot. Soccer kids want to learn how to score goals.

If we can establish specialist academies for goalkeepers, we should be able to provide a similar training environment for motivated goal scorers. Goal scoring is a specialist talent. Strikers are specialist kids who only spend a few minutes each week on their specialised talent. There are talented strikers who panic in front of an open goal because the situation feels unfamiliar. The Top Gun strikers need high level coaching so they understand what to do, how to do it and why.

When shooting practice involves every player in the team, each kid gets one shot at goal every two minutes. When strikers can practice shooting on their own, they get more touches and more confidence. When specialist marksmen run sharpshooting training for individuals, kids begin to enter the zone where scoring ability becomes intuitive.



Rapid Fire teaches kids to make quick decisions on the run

CHALLENGE

*Ordinary players practice the skills they know they can do.
Freestyle players practice the skills they know they can't do.*

Soccer is the game of choice. We can take the hard way out or the easy way out. We can wait to be told what to do or make our own decisions. We can be driven or drive ourselves. We can choose the easy pathway or the pathway less travelled. There are kids who only train when they're told to train because they want to play on the weekend and there are Freestyle kids who train when they're not told to train because they have the motivation to push themselves as hard as they can. Coaches can teach skill but they can't teach natural talent.

Any kid can learn to kick a ball. Freestyle kids learn to volley the ball, lob the ball, chip the ball, drive the ball, swerve the ball, stab the ball, and cross the ball from any angle or distance so nothing will surprise them in a game. Freestyle kids constantly challenge themselves at shooting practice by practising with difficult bouncing, spinning balls.



Confidence is the most important goal any kid can aim for

INTUITION

Any craftsman who masters a skill will begin to improvise.

Ordinary Soccer kids never get past the cognitive stage where they constantly stop and think before they do anything and try to second guess what the coach wants them to do in case they get it wrong..

Freestyle kids have reached the level where they have the freedom to make mistakes and the confidence to miss their shots in a game.

These kids already push themselves harder than any coach can and they know their limits. Freestyle kids have learned how to miss and they understand why so they never get stressed by pressure.

The ultimate skill of any striker or defender is the ability to relax under pressure in the penalty area. This only comes when kids are in total control of their own natural ability and confidence. Freestyle kids don't need to be programmed to follow a script. They enjoy the challenge of reacting spontaneously in any competitive situation.



The Rainbow gives kids the confidence to shoot instinctively.

SHARPSHOOTING

Sharpshooting is a two hour session for one striker using 100 balls

If we're serious about competing with the leading Football nations of the world and achieving a high level of performance, we need to think outside the goal square and get serious about winning games and scoring goals. We need to research and develop shooting capability.

No striker will ever achieve their full potential by practising the basic wall pass down the centre of the pitch. Players need close repetition drills so they can get hundreds of shots on target from every angle and range moving to the goal and across the goal. In a game, the striker needs to know that he has covered every possible shot at training. Too many talented strikers panic in front of an open goal because they haven't reached the intuitive stage. Intensive sharpshooter training ensures that scoring becomes second nature for every striker.



The Horseshoe teaches strikers to receive the ball from any angle

CROSS TRAINING

One touch of the ball might just be enough to win the game

Cross training is an essential part of shooting practice and involves coordinating natural skills with technical skills. Goalscoring ability loses its effectiveness if players can't get the ball into the box. Cross training provides the pressure that kids need in shooting sessions. Shooting practice needs to be integrated with crossing practice so that kids learn to communicate and coordinate their attacks on the move.

Players need to learn how to distribute the diagonal through ball that wingers can run onto and strike first time to maximise the velocity. Wingers need to practice crossing a ball at speed and putting it low to the near post or floating it high to the far post for strikers to run onto. Strikers need to practice losing their markers, moving into space and calling where they want the ball. The crosses should be varied so that strikers learn to read the speed of the feed and can adjust accordingly.



Kids need the freedom to practice their own attack drills.

FINISHING SCHOOLS

We can keep teaching the same or learn how to make a difference.

Every Soccer club should provide a **Skills Park**, like a Skate Park, where kids can practice skills on their own without any direction or correction from well meaning adults. Soccer kids need to think for themselves and create their own moves if they are going to achieve their full potential. We can't keep playing the game for them.

Every Soccer club should provide a **Shooting Gallery** in one isolated corner of the training oval where kids can get together before a game and practice their passing and shooting skills. Soccer Kids need at least 200 touches of the ball before they're ready to play each game.

Every major region should provide a **Top Gun Academy** for the most prolific goal scorers in the district. Goal scorers are specialists like goal keepers and they could all benefit from one combined academy.



Each generation needs an environment where they can exercise their minds and bodies without the old generation correcting them.