

Learning About Freestyle Soccer Kids



There's a key to every kid and a drill for every skill

WE'VE GOT A LOT TO LEARN

The more we learn, the more we discover how little we know.

Australian Soccer is a teaching organisation. We teach kids how to kick a ball. Most kids stab **at** the ball instead of striking **through** the ball. If we learned why, we could teach kids how to pass the ball. We teach kids to shoot. 50% of all Australian Soccer kids look at the goal when they shoot and 50% look at the ball. If we understood why, we could teach kids how to score goals. We need a learning organisation.

We always teach kids but we never learn. We teach perfect striking technique to kids who don't know what to look at or how to move their feet. Australian Soccer players spend years repeating the same simple mistakes and coaches spend years correcting the same simple techniques because nobody can spare five minutes to discover and eliminate the underlying cause. If we think kids lack skill, we've got a lot to teach. If we think kids lack talent, we've got a lot to learn.



Close shooting drills quickly show what kids look at when they kick

WHY LEARN?

Australia should be in the Top 20 Football nations of the world.

Australian Soccer is based on two myths; that our coaching system is perfect and the vast majority of kids lack the talent to reach the top. Skill comes from the coach and talent comes from the players. If we teach kids, we can develop their skill. If we learn about them, we can develop their talent. Coaches who believe that kids have talent, will look for ways to develop it. Coaches who believe that kids lack talent will teach every kid to look, think, move, stretch, kick, train and play the same way. We can't improve kids until we improve our coaching.

We teach every player the same drills because we have no idea what each kid needs to practice. The aim of Freestyle Soccer is to identify the specific needs of every player and then create appropriate learning drills that can be measured. It's too easy to teach the same every day. The real challenge is to learn something new every day and move on.



Close repetition drills can improve any Soccer kid in 5 minutes

WHAT CAN WE LEARN

In the 10 years it takes us to teach the average Soccer kid, no coach will spend 15 minutes with that player to learn anything about them.

Soccer coaches know so much about the game and so little about the players. We're trying to improve all kids without knowing what each kid needs to improve. We're teaching kids everything we know about Soccer and they still can't play so we need to look at everything we don't know. The first thing we can learn is that all kids are different.

We expect kids to learn a system but we never learn about their skills, talents, strengths, weaknesses, fears or needs. We don't know how fast kids run or how far they can kick. We don't know how accurate kids are. At grading, we select kids with skill and fitness so we can teach them skill and fitness. We need to identify the kids with talent, character, intelligence and motivation. We can spend 10 years making every kid the same or we can spend 15 minutes making a difference.



Control Centre encourages kids to move and call without the ball

HOW CAN WE LEARN?

Sport should be a challenge. Coaching should be a challenge.

We all have eyes, ears, mouths and minds. We just need to open them. We need to look, listen, ask and learn. If we look, we learn that kids don't know how to move their feet or what to look at when they kick a ball. If we listen, we learn that kids don't know what to call. If we ask, we learn that kids don't know how many ball touches they need and if we measure ability we learn what each kid needs to improve.

All players make mistakes. As with all hyperactive kids, it's easier for the adults to control their behaviour and correct their mistakes than to observe their behaviour and identify the underlying cause. It's easier for coaches to correct what kids do wrong than to understand why.

There are plenty of coaches willing to tell kids what to do. We need to discover coaches who are willing to learn about kids, listen to new ideas, question old ideas, believe in talent, measure skills and fitness levels and video training performance to identify individual talent.



Target Cones help kids to develop their footwork and vision

WHO CAN LEARN?

Ordinary kids train when we tell them. Freestyle kids train when we don't tell them. We need to discover the Freestyle Soccer kids.

A team coach teaches techniques and tactics so that teams can win games. He doesn't have time to learn about players. At training, he looks at technique so he can correct the mistakes and in games he follows the bouncing ball so he can monitor possession and control.

Australian Soccer needs to discover individual coaches who can produce results that are immediate, measurable and permanent. A personal skills trainer can learn about individual players without being distracted by the needs of a team or match results. Every club should have a technical advisor who can research the effects of training drills and a personal skills trainer who can develop specific learning drills.

Kids achieve because they don't know what they can't do so they're willing to listen and learn. Adults give up too easily because they already know what they can't do. One of the most effective ways that freestyle kids can increase their motivation is to keep track of their own performance and record their improvement in a training diary.



Freestyle kids have the confidence to create their own moves

WHERE CAN WE LEARN?

The quality of coaching is not measured by what we teach players but by what they learn. These are not always the same.

Our Soccer experts visit the leading football nations of the world to learn about Australian Soccer kids. The answers are right in front of us. If we visit Australian Soccer ovals we can learn what kids need. The freestyle kids in Barcelona and Milan are 1 million kicks ahead of Australian kids. Millions of kids spend hundreds of hours getting thousands of ball touches juggling, kicking and dribbling on beaches, streets and parks without any supervision or correction from adults. Australian Soccer kids need intensive ballwork so they can catch up.

In Australia, we can find plenty of freestyle kids who surf, ride bikes and skate. These kids compete and take responsibility for their own development without any coaching. Freestyle Soccer kids train every day with a ball. While other teenagers lack confidence, the freestyle kids excel at school because they develop self awareness, self control, self expression, self assurance, self respect and self sufficiency.



Freestyle Soccer kids learn to improve skills wherever they can

WILL WE EVER LEARN?

Go as far as you can and from there you can see a lot further.

There are thousands of talented Soccer kids waiting to be discovered so they can achieve their full potential. Will we give these kids the freedom to think for themselves and create their own moves or will we tell them what to think and where to stand? There are thousands of struggling Soccer kids who need all the help they can get to overcome their weaknesses. Will we accept the challenge and look for different ways to improve these kids or will we be lazy and leave the difficult players to enthusiastic parents who have no experience in coaching?

The problem with a perfect system is that we believe it's perfect and we stop looking for ways to improve. We can teach every kid to be the same or learn why they are different. Freestyle players are already learning different ways, better ways, smarter ways and faster ways to improve all Soccer kids not just the selected few. If we can develop talented individuals to suit the needs of a teaching system, we should be able to develop a learning system to suit the needs of Soccer kids.



Any kid can learn about themselves and discover their own talent