

# SOCCER INNOVATION CENTRE



*Collect information, connect coaches, correct mistakes.*

## TIME TO LEARN

*Nobody has the time to learn about our junior Soccer players.*

The interesting thing about junior sport is that it's designed to cater for adults. It focuses on what coaches coach and what trainers train. Nobody checks what kids are actually learning. We know what we teach so we assume that kids are learning the same. If we asked kids to write down what they learned last season we'd be surprised. If we teach kids everything we know about the game, and they still can't play, we naturally conclude they must lack the talent to reach the top.

This is the decade of great innovation where new ideas are emerging in every other field. When hundreds of intelligent coaches work with thousands of talented kids, they develop original ideas and innovative moves. Coaches and players need a central point of contact that is willing to listen to ideas and look at moves. They need an Innovation Centre where they can share problems and solutions. No matter how untalented a kid may be, at least one coach can improve that one kid.



## INNOVATION CENTRE

***New ideas don't need to be correct. They just need to provoke thought and stimulate intelligence so they can be challenged.***

An Innovation Centre comprises of small specialist teams that can focus on one specific project at a time. It's not a teaching or coaching centre. It's a learning centre, an information centre, a research and development centre and an ideas centre. The aim is to study player behaviour without worrying about team selection or match results.

There are plenty of coaches who can teach the same system to every kid. We just need a small number willing to learn about individuals. Some kids present a real challenge to coaches. We're never going to achieve our full potential just by coaching the elite kids who are easy to coach. We need the challenge of discovering ability in 'untalented' players so we can create a wider national talent base to choose from.



## VISITING TEAM

*A visiting team connects the headquarters with grassroots coaching.*

Team coaches teach techniques and tactics so that teams can win games. They don't have time to learn about individual players or recognise their specific talent. Soccer experts teach theory but they never follow up to see how it's put into practice on the training ovals. Who visits training sessions to see what players are actually learning?

All across Australia, there are hundreds of teams training on the ovals. An initial scan from the car park will show that some teams are very animated and noisy getting everything they can out of the session and other teams are very quiet and static just waiting to see what happens. We can easily see and hear when teams are happy and productive.

A visiting team is the first step in learning about the skills and talents, strengths and weaknesses, fears and limits of Australian kids so we can develop a coaching system to suit the needs of Australian players.



## SPECIALIST TEAM

An Innovation Centre can establish individual coaching teams to study individual Soccer players, how they move, where they move, what they call, how they warm up before a game, how they react to pressure and what they aim for and look at when they strike the ball.

Every kid is different. We can teach them all to be the same so that they all look, think, stretch, move, kick and play the same way but then we're missing out on so much original talent and creativity. A specialist team can improve any Soccer kid in 5 minutes and, in the process, can measure how footwork and vision affect ball control.

By using close repetition drills, specialist teams can discover how kids move, how smart they are, how quickly they read the play, how well they move into support positions and how easily they maintain their individual style without compromising their skill. Our reading of players is very limited when we stand on the sideline and follow the bouncing ball. Only when we become involved in training drills can we sense the communication and movement. A team specialist learns more about a kid in 5 minutes than a team coach can learn in 2 hours.



## TRAINING TEAM

*There's a key to every kid, a drill for every skill, an underlying cause for every mistake and a solution to every problem.*

An Innovation Centre has the resources to research and develop close repetition drills that can provide more ball touches for every kid. Any training team can analyse the effects of specific drills on performance. There should be a reason for everything that kids do at training. Every session should be based on last week's performance, this week's team and next week's opponents. When four teams are all hopping over a dead ball or kneeling down for heading practice, they're just copying each other without knowing why they're doing it. It's too archaic to give every player the same drill when they're all at different levels.

Training drills should aim for results that are immediate, achievable, permanent and measurable. Coaches and players should be able to maintain an online record of where each kid is up to and what they need to work on next. Every kid should have a designated target to aim for. It doesn't take time to learn about individual players. It takes 5 minutes to get every kid to juggle a ball and write their numbers down on a card. It takes 5 minutes for a whole squad to race once around the field and record their times on a sheet. It takes 5 minutes for kids to write down what they learned last season. We can improve any kid as soon as we discover what each kid needs to improve.



## IDEAS

***Skill is ineffective without footwork and vision. When kids head the ball, look at their feet. When they kick the ball, look at their eyes.***

There are so many different ways to improve Soccer players and every intelligent coach has their own tactics based on their own experiences with players. When a coach or a player has innovative ideas, they need to know that someone is willing to look, listen, ask questions and think. Every coach has useful ideas that can be shared.

An Innovation Centre is the conduit for all technical and tactical ideas and suggestions where selected specialists can analyse all information on players and training drills. An idea may not be practical but it may stimulate other ideas. All coaches and kids need to know that there is one reliable point of contact for providing and receiving information. If we want to become a Top 20 Football nation by 2020, we need to share better ways, smarter ways and faster ways to improve players.



## PLAYER INFORMATION

***We can't identify talent by teaching kids to be the same. We need a learning program that knows what to look at and what to look for.***

Most coaches know so much about the game and so little about their players. An Innovation Centre can establish an information database to learn everything they can about Soccer kids and their talent. We know all their about Soccer skills. The real challenge is to discover the natural skills that all kids have. We know how to identify fitness and skill. We need to discover intelligence, motivation, character, talent, responsibility, personality, creativity, passion and drive.

Kids need to coordinate their whole body if they want to activate their natural talent. They need to integrate their natural skills with their Soccer skills so they control the ball while moving. Too many kids learn perfect technique while standing flat footed so that they lack the balance, coordination and intensity to control the ball on the run.



## MISTAKES

***When we tell one kid to make more mistakes, do we honestly believe that they will? You'll never know if you won't give it a go.***

All kids make mistakes. The biggest mistake is stopping kids every time they make a mistake and correcting their technique. We see what we're trained to see. Coaches are trained to look at technique and look for mistakes. They assume all mistakes are caused by poor technique.

Most of the time, players are only doing what we tell them. They're striking the ball exactly as we showed them but we never told them how to move their feet or what to look at. If we can observe their mistakes, we can discover the underlying cause. An Innovation Centre can overcome any technical mistakes by collecting the information, connecting the underlying cause and correcting the fault. There's a reason for everything that happens. Coaches need the reassurance that they can eliminate any mistakes once they discover the real reason.



## TROUBLESHOOTING TEAM

*If we lower the bar any further, nobody will be able to score goals.*

An Innovation Centre needs a specialist team to study all the elements of shooting and scoring. In a game determined by goals, our theory and practice are minimal. Strikers never get enough time to develop footwork, vision, balance, coordination, timing or power. They start with 25 metres blasts over the crossbar and get worse with each shot.

A troubleshooting team can discover what to aim for, what to look at when kids kick, how to overcome their fear of failure, how to balance power with precision and why so many shots go straight to the keeper. They can develop sufficient knowledge to visit every junior club and conduct shooting drills so that every kid can understand the skills. An innovation team can make shooting drills competitive and fun. They can also research the need for Top Gun academies across Australia.



## CHALLENGE TEAM

*Show me a kid who lacks talent and I'll show you what you missed*

An Innovation Centre can arrange for challenge teams to visit junior clubs and run skills competitions to identify the intuitive players who put in extra practice. These small teams can inspire confidence and motivate kids to go home and practice with a ball. Too many Soccer kids only train when they have to and they stand around waiting for orders. A challenge team can create individuals who want to train.

If we train kids, they can practice for 100 hours each year. If we show kids how to train themselves, they can practice for 600 hours a year. Every Soccer kid provides a challenge. Ask them questions. Measure their fitness and skill levels. Identify their strengths and weaknesses, skills and talents, fears and needs. Give them their own personal training program. Give them the responsibility to run their own drills.



## ANY KID CAN DO IT

*We can teach the same every day or learn something new every day*

Soccer kids don't know how good they really are and don't realise how much they can improve on their own. We all have this mindset that kids won't kick a ball around unless they're supervised by adults.

Kids can develop their own jogging, sprinting and exercise program and keep a record of their times and distance in a training diary. They can run their own shooting drills so they understand how to feed the ball. They can juggle on their own and measure their performance and improvement. They can discover their own strengths and weaknesses.

Any kid can get down to the oval early and watch how coaches and players prepare for a game. They can study senior players who play in their position and ask them for advice. Kids are naturally curious and inventive and haven't reached the age of disillusion yet. Every kid is an Innovation Centre. They constantly develop and swap new tricks.



## INTENSITY

***We can't teach talent, intelligence, character, confidence, intensity or innovation but we can see them if we open our eyes.***

There's a bunch of kids playing a small game. They're running and kicking and shouting and chasing and tackling and tricking each other and laughing and trying things and making plenty of mistakes with plenty of intensity. Then the coach arrives and makes them stand still and keep quiet while he explains the correct way to play the game.

When one kid does something different and unpredictable in a game, is it a mistake or is it an innovative move? What do we do about it?



## LEARNING PROGRAM

*Teaching and learning aren't mutually exclusive. We learn about kids as we teach them. The more we learn, the more we can coach.*

There are two main roles in a learning program. One is to observe player behaviour so we can discover original talent. The other is to analyse repetitive mistakes so we can identify their underlying cause. An Innovation Centre provides a third role. It enables coaches and players to challenge, research and develop new and different ideas.

When one coach can improve one kid in 5 minutes, there may be other coaches and other kids who can benefit. How do they find out?



## TRUST

***All kids have the intelligence to think for themselves and the talent to create their own moves. All coaches need to do is trust them.***

The most difficult challenge for any coach is to trust junior players to play their own game. It's virtually impossible for any adult to watch kids make mistakes without stopping them and correcting them.

That's human nature. The most common way we help kids is by telling them what's wrong with them. How else can they ever learn?

There isn't one master key that fits every Soccer kid. We can teach them all to be the same but every kid is different. When we learn about kids, we discover that there's a different key to every kid. That's the key to their talent, intelligence, creativity and trust. Soccer kids can't achieve their full potential if we keep doing it for them.



## INNOVATIVE COACHES

*Some kids are too scared to make any mistakes. Why?*

Elite coaches can teach perfect techniques and tactics. Innovative coaches can inspire kids to look, listen, call, run, think, understand, make decisions, improvise their moves and believe in themselves. The technology is there to connect elite coaches with innovative coaches.

When energetic kids don't move and they don't talk there's a reason. The vast majority of kids have the talent and intelligence to reach the top but something stops them from trying harder to achieve their full potential. Plenty of kids have simple problems and plenty of coaches have the simple solutions. The technology is there to connect them.

Every coach is different. Some coaches are expert at techniques and tactics and others can understand what makes kids tick. We need coaches who can teach kids and coaches who can learn about them.

