

# Some Kids want to Play Soccer Really Badly



*How good you are depends on how bad you want it.*

## Preparation

Before they even start to play Soccer, there are kids who have the hunger and passion to play with a ball every day on their own or with their mates. Some of these kids get a thousand touches of the ball every day.

Kids who can juggle get 100 touches a minute, take 100 steps and make 100 decisions. They synchronise their physical, mental and technical skills. They're 1 million steps ahead of players who wait to be told when to train.

On match day, these are the kids who get 200 touches of the ball before they get to the oval so they're already ready to start playing as soon as the whistle blows.





## Inspiration

***Kids play Soccer because they want to develop skill.***

Soccer is primarily a game of skill. Kids take up the game because they're inspired by the most skilful players. The clue is the name on the back of their shirts.

These kids want to be Ronaldo, Messi, Rooney, Vardy or Cahill. They don't want to be told they lack the talent to reach the top. They don't want to hear what we can't do for them. They want to know what we can do. If we can't see talent in kids, we need to look more closely.



## Motivation

Ball control is as simple as riding a bike. We can't learn to do it standing still. We need the constant momentum to maintain balance, coordination, timing and rhythm. We need to combine natural skills with our technical skills. Soccer is all about a kid and a ball. Freestyle Soccer is all about a moving kid and a moving ball.

There are plenty of talented kids who hesitate, spectate and stagnate because they wait to be told what to do. Freestyle kids have the character to drive, strive, thrive and come alive. They never wait to see what happens. These are kids who look for ways to make it happen.





## Calculation

The most important subject that any Soccer kid can learn about is themselves. When they understand their strengths, weaknesses, skills, talents, fears, needs and limits, they soon discover what they need to improve.

Freestyle kids always measure their performance and improvement so they can always tell you what their best juggling figures are and what they need to aim for next.

Some kids spend years playing Soccer and never learn how good they really are because we can't tell them. Every kid is different and offers something different.



## Communication

All kids have different levels of intelligence. The most effective way to stimulate their intelligence is to ask kids questions about the game so they have to think for themselves instead of waiting to be told what to think.

Kids need to be encouraged to ask their coach simple questions. Some coaches are very sensitive. They think that their coaching is being questioned. Communication should be two way. If a national coaching organisation can use a communications system to teach Soccer kids, they can use the same network to learn about every kid.





## Information

When we ask kids why they go to school, the stock answer is 'to learn'. The real reason that kids go to school, and go to Soccer training, is to learn to think for themselves. We need to provide every player with the information they want to make their own decisions. We can't play the game for them or they will never develop.



## Anticipation

Ordinary kids wait to see what happens so they can react. Freestyle kids make it happen so other kids react. The average Soccer kid has the ball for 5% of each game. We spend so much time teaching kids to strike and receive the ball that we never have any time left to learn what they do for the other 95% of the game.

Skilful kids can dominate the game with the ball. Talented kids can dominate the game without the ball. They know where to move and what to call. They know how to disrupt an opposition by making dummy runs. Freestyle kids always think two steps ahead in a game.





## Coordination

Players are very good at striking and receiving the ball. Some teams consist of eleven talented individuals who never actually coordinate or cooperate with each other.

The central attacking midfielder has possession of the ball and is desperately looking for a run and listening for a call. Three forwards stand still with their markers and wait to see where he passes before they make a run.

To achieve success, we need ball players who look and listen to work with support players who call and run.



## Integration

There's a lot more to Soccer than kicking a ball. Skill is the most basic level of our Soccer development. What we do with our skill depends on our talent. What we do with our talent depends on our character. What we do with our character depends on our confidence. What we do with our confidence depends on our creativity.

We need to integrate natural skills with Soccer skills so kids control the ball on the move. We need to integrate a learning program with a coaching system so we can discover what each individual needs to improve.





## Determination

There are Soccer kids who chase a Soccer ball even though they know that it's going out of play. Every time they do that, they send a message to the opposing team.

All kids have external qualities that can be coached, such as fitness and skill and internal qualities that can't be coached, such as intelligence, talent and motivation.

All kids have talent but don't all make the best use of it. At grading, we pick the kids who show fitness and skill so that we can teach them fitness and skill. We don't know how to grade character, talent or responsibility. Too late, we learn that the skilful player is too selfish to pass the ball and the fit player is too lazy to run for it.



## Expectation

It's amazing what kids can achieve when they believe. They keep going because they don't know what they can't do. Adults give up too easily because they know what they can't do. We should never impose our own limitations on future generations.

The key to the future of Australian Soccer is belief in the next generation. If we believe that kids lack talent to reach the top, we stop looking for talent and we search for mistakes to correct. We teach every kid to look, think, stretch, move, kick and play the same way. If we believe that kids have talent, we look for that talent and discover their hidden strengths. We can improve any Soccer kid in 5 minutes because we believe that we can.





## Desperation

All Soccer players look the same when we first see them. As soon as we introduce pressure, we discover their real character. There are ordinary kids who always look for the easy way out and there are competitive kids who always look for the challenge to test their limits.

In a game, when a team is two goals down, players need to know who they can depend on to get out of trouble. There are thousands of talented Soccer kids in Australia who train when they're told to train and do what they're told to do. We need to discover the kids who train when they're not told to train and have the talent to think for themselves. The will must be stronger than the skill.



## Perspiration

In a game of skill, coaches tell kids not to static stretch but they don't know why and they don't know how many ball touches kids need before they're ready to play a game. We learn to think what we're told to think.

The reason that kids avoid static stretching is that it can adversely affects the top 5% of their performance. This may be relevant if kids finish a game red faced with shirts soaking wet from perspiration. It rarely happens.

We can't teach kids to come off a game with a red face and a soaking wet shirt. That depends on the character of the player and that's the key to Australian Soccer.





## Innovation

We all have eyes, ears, mouths and minds. We just need to open them. If we look, we can see how talented Soccer kids really are. If we listen, we can understand all the new ideas that evolve from intelligent coaches and players. If we ask questions, we can discover what kids believe in and what they need to help them. If we think, we can discover how innovative we can all be.

There are so many simple ways to improve Australian Soccer. Do we really believe that Australia should be ranked somewhere between 50 and 100 in the world?



## Destination

There's no reason why Australia can't be a Top 20 Football nation. We have the intelligence, the talent, the environment and resources. All we lack is confidence in our own players. Australian Soccer has a fear of failure.

No Australian sport should accept a world ranking from 50 to 100 without somebody jumping up and down and saying something or doing something about it.

Australia is like any new, young player. We're standing around waiting for something to happen when all we need is to believe in our own talent and make it happen.

