

SOCCER CONFIDENCE



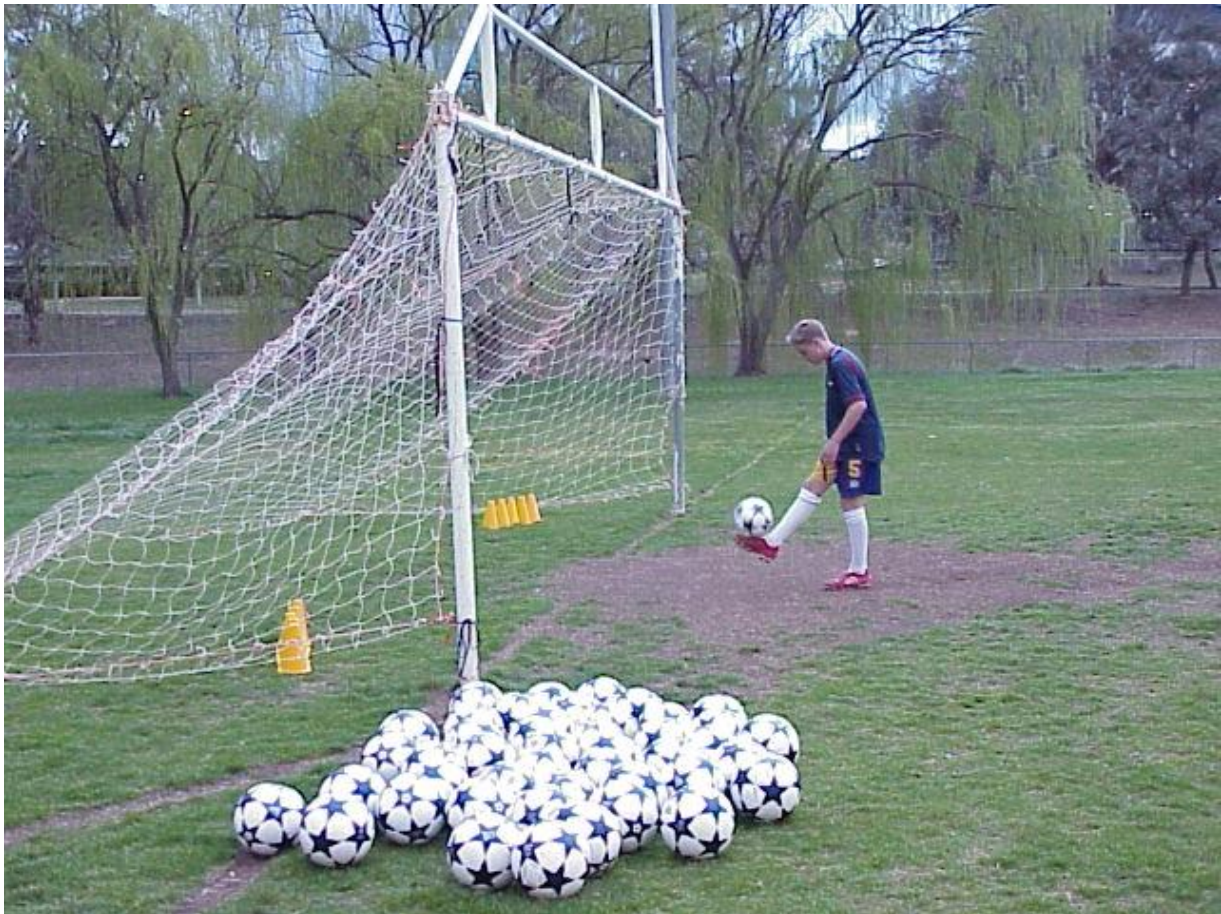
Any kid can find their feet if they know what to look for

INTRODUCTION

Confidence is the most important goal for Australian Soccer Youth

All kids have the intelligence to think for themselves and the talent to create their own moves. When any player reaches the stage where they start to develop their own ideas, and ask questions, the response from their coaches affects their confidence as a kid and their future as a player. Kids need to know that their coaches believe in their ability.

All kids are different. It's convenient to develop players to suit one system so that they all look, think, train, move, kick, stretch and play the same way but there will always be kids who see different moves and create different ideas. We can tell these kids that they're wrong just because they're different or we can encourage them to think and improvise. Coaches have the power to inspire or destroy confidence.



When I was a kid, I always thought I was wrong. But I was wrong.

JUGGLING CIRCLE

All kids have talent. They just need the confidence to activate it.

There are thousands of skilful Soccer kids in Australia who don't know how good they really are because nobody can tell them.

Any group of elite Soccer kids should be able to juggle a ball in a circle while they keep a count of the passes they make before they drop the ball. They can even make it easier by letting the ball bounce.

These are talented, intelligent, athletic kids who can't put 10 passes together without dropping the ball. There's nothing wrong with their Soccer skills but they don't know how to use their natural skills. For some reason, they stand dead still and remain dead quiet. Australian Soccer kids don't lack talent. They just lack the confidence to use it.

Too many kids are scared to move or talk. If we stop kids every time they do anything wrong, their easiest option is to stop doing anything.



5 MINUTES

If we can't see talent in a kid, it doesn't mean that they lack talent.

We can improve any Soccer kid in 5 minutes just by learning about them and activating the natural skills that all kids have. Or we can show them how to move their feet so that they strike **through** the ball smoothly instead of stabbing **at** it. Or we can show them what to aim for and what to look at when they kick a ball so they can score goals. Or we can make sure all kids get 200 ball touches before each game.

All kids have talent. There are so many ways to identify and improve their natural talent if we know what to look at and what to look for.

We can improve the confidence of any Australian Soccer kid in 5 minutes just by telling them to make as many mistakes as they like. Actually, that's a bit of an exaggeration. It only takes one minute to tell them to make mistakes and at least another 4 minutes to observe how quickly they relax and how much they can improve.



NO WORRIES

Correcting kids every time they get it wrong isn't the same as showing them how to get it right.

Kids make mistakes because they worry about making mistakes. In a correctional system, we help kids by constantly telling them what's wrong with them. Kids are fast learners. When they miss their shots at training, the coach shouts at them and their mates laugh at them so they soon learn to pass the ball in the penalty box instead of shooting.

The most effective way to develop their confidence is to tell kids to make as many mistakes as they like so that they stop worrying. As soon as they stop worrying, they will stop making mistakes. Most coaches lack the confidence to try it because they want to play it safe.

We can't teach confidence. If we really want to help kids and develop their confidence we need to discover what each kid needs to improve.



PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

In the 10 years it takes to coach the average Soccer kid, nobody will spend 15 minutes with that kid to tell them how good they really are.

Competition is great for kids. Most kids aren't scared of competing or losing. The only kid they have to beat is themselves. Any kid, who can sprint 100 metres in 20 seconds, can get it down to 19 seconds. If they can jog for 10 minutes, they can jog for 11 minutes. Confidence is based on facts, not compliments. Kid need to know how good they really are and what they need to practice and improve. If they can juggle a ball 5 times, they won't be satisfied until they can reach 10.

When Soccer kids can set their own short term goals, and achieve them, they become inspired to aim for the next level. Every kid is different. They evolve at different speeds and develop different strengths and weaknesses, skills and talents, fears and needs. We can teach them all to be the same or we can learn to make a difference.



FEARS

There are thousands of talented kids who lack confidence and thousands of confident kids who lack talent. That's our challenge.

We all have fears. Some of us are scared of looking at any ideas that are new or different. Some coaches try not to lose games instead of trying to win games. Some kids pass the ball when they could shoot.

There are only four obstacles that can stop kids, coaches or Australian Soccer from achieving their full potential and they all come from within us. Ignorance, laziness, selfishness and fear are all different fears. Ignorance is a fear of knowledge. Laziness is a fear of work. Selfishness is a fear of others doing well and we're all scared of fear. Fear is a weakness and nobody wants to be thought of as weak. The most effective way to overcome any fear is to face it and tackle it.



HEADING

Fear of heading a Soccer ball is the most legitimate fear in Soccer.

A lot of kids are scared of heading the ball in case it hurts. Girls are just scared of heading the ball but boys are scared of admitting that they're scared of heading the ball. There's no point in telling kids that heading doesn't hurt because they're quite right. Heading can hurt.

Naturally, heading hurts when a ball is kicked high in the air and a little kid lets the ball head them instead of them heading the ball. The first step is to demonstrate how the ball hurts and explain why. The next step is to develop simple close repetition drills so kids can get used to heading before they increase their range and speed. Heading in Pairs is the most effective way to develop heading confidence.



SHOOTING

Fear of shooting is the most common fear in Australian Soccer.

Kids don't know how to shoot because coaches don't know how to score goals. Fear of shooting in Soccer is the fear of the unknown. Coaches overcome the fear by limiting practice to 15 minutes a week.

Talented strikers can't score goals because they lack practice. Most kids can't shoot because they lack confidence. Goals are too big. We can fit 34 balls between the two posts and 10 balls from the ground to the crossbar. Kids get confused by too much choice and aim for 340 targets instead of just picking one. We can improve the confidence of any striker in 5 minutes just by teaching them to aim small and miss small. Fear of shooting is a natural fear that can be overcome by the establishment of shooting galleries at every club and specialist marksmen who can coach strikers in the finer points of scoring goals.



JUGGLING

Kids are scared to juggle when they don't know how good they are.

Any kid can learn to juggle a ball if they take it one step at a time. Most kids try to do too much too soon and expect too much. If they can juggle the ball once back into their hands, they can do it twice.

Juggling is so important to Soccer kids because it's their first taste of freedom where they can actually improve their skills without an adult telling them what to do and correcting them for getting it wrong.

Juggling means that kids can make their own decisions and improve their own skills. Juggling can't be faked. It can only be developed through time and effort. Any kid who can juggle a ball shows that they have the motivation to train without being told to train.



POWER RANGE

Most boys try too hard to kick the ball too hard to satisfy Dad.

The most common request from little kids is how to kick the ball harder. They want to develop power. They will find power when they stop looking for it. The key to power is to relax and develop timing.

Power is strength under control. Force is strength out of control. Force is the default option if kids lack confidence. It explains why teenagers foul skilful opponents and so many players blast the ball over the bar.

Any kid can use target cones to measure their power range and then gradually increase it. They can use the same system to measure the distance of their throws. The most important subject any kid can learn about is themselves. Once they know their limits, they can extend them. Kids increase confidence every time they achieve a new target.



SAY SOMETHING DO SOMETHING

Coaches control confidence. They can inspire or discourage kids.

There's no reason why Australia can't reach the Top 20 Football Nations of the World. We just need the confidence to believe in an Australian system. There's no reason why any Australian Soccer kid can't improve in 5 minutes. We just need to believe in their talent.

There are skilful Soccer kids with perfect heading technique who struggle to head the ball because their feet are glued to the ground. There are talented Soccer kids with perfect striking technique who struggle to kick because they take their eyes off the ball. We keep correcting the same techniques until these kids lose their confidence.

There are so many ways to improve kids. We can identify their fears and needs, stimulate their intelligence, motivate their hunger, discover their talent, challenge their limits, measure their improvement, inspire their confidence, overcome their weaknesses and encourage their creativity. If there was the slightest chance that we could improve any kid in 5 minutes, why would anyone say nothing and do nothing?

