

24 September 2009

It has been a hectic four weeks since arriving in Tasmania.

My wife Deb and I are settled into our apartment – getting furniture helped considerably – and we are gradually feeling our way into the Tasmanian lifestyle.

I must tell you that we are overwhelmed and thankful for the welcome we have received from everyone we have met.

This first month was fortunate in that I was able to attend the Hobart and Launceston carnivals, allowing an opportunity to watch hundreds of players in various age groups.

I have done some work with the under 15 state players and seen both them and the under 14 state team in action. I have also been back to Launceston to work with a group of 11 and 12 year old males.

Looking ahead, it will be important to help as many coaches as possible to go forward on a path to higher qualifications. Better educated coaches produce better players and various coaching courses will be organized over the coming months in Tasmania.

My task is to gradually implement Football Federation Australia's (FFA) national curriculum for players and coaches. It is to the FFT and Tasmania Institute of Sport (TIS) that the FFA and Australia Institute of Sport (AIS) will look for their future players. To this end, FFT and the TIS will be working very closely together.

As part of the process, the FFT program for state team players will take on a greater emphasis in 2010, again with under 13, 14 and 15 male teams and under 13, 15 and 17 females. State team players will train twice a week minimum – not all in Hobart - and play entirely under the FFT banner in relevant competitions that will test them competitively. The TIS will run separate teams under a cooperative mandate.

Now that we are in the off-season I hope as many youngsters as possible will be playing “street football” in local parks on the beach or anywhere where a makeshift field can be set up. Street football is the best learning tool of all for kids.

In addition, youngsters should also unquestionably be playing Futsal, a brilliant way to improve technique and skills. It's no coincidence that Brazil and Spain are champions outside and inside, so if you haven't already, boys and girls teams should be enrolling in FFT's own Futsal programme, details of which are on the FFT website:

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www.footballfedtas.com.au.

And finally, let us all give our best wishes to the under 14 and 15 male state teams, who are in the final stages of preparations for the national championships in Coffs Harbour, October 3-10. The squads leave for the mainland next Thursday.