



FOOTBALL FEDERATION
TASMANIA

FROM THE DESK OF THE TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

5 MARCH, 2010

Football Federation Australia's third annual national coaching conference was held Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday this week in Brisbane.

More than 350 coaches from across the country attended, including some from Tasmania. Apart from myself, there were Dean May and Michael Edwards, from the Tasmanian Institute of Sport; Neil Connell, Programme Coordinator at the Australian Sports Commission; Andrew Brown, senior Premier League Coach at Clarence United; Franco Previdi, Director of Coaching, Clarence United; Michael Roach, Head Coach, Nelson Eastern Suburbs F.C. and Michelle Castle, Youth Development Officer, Nelson Eastern Suburbs F.C.

It was great to see them all at the conference, learning first hand about the FFA's national curriculum. Han Berger, FFA's Technical Director, explained the building blocks of the curriculum, detailing what it means for the different age groups from grassroots to senior. Again he repeated and again I will echo his words: "No precious time at all should be lost from playing football at all training sessions."

So often he has said that time must not be wasted on unnecessary fitness work, but must be utilised to develop players through ball work, thus establishing the technical prowess that is required to compete at the highest levels.

Australian players, as he notes, are physically and competitively strong, but lack technique and tactical awareness, none of which will be improved by lapping a field.

Fitness and physical strength does not decide football matches at the top levels, he said, skilful players do. Kelly Cross, FFA National Coach Education Manager, did an excellent presentation on the 1-4-3-3 system, pointing out how it offers the best learning tools of the game for young players.

Alf Galustian, a world renowned teacher of skill acquisition, using both words and practical demonstrations, showed how players can enhance their creativity, technique and skill from game related practices. There are four areas players need to master, he said, first touch, running with the ball, striking the ball and 1 v 1. Master those, he said, and a player can go a long way in the game.

Raymond Verheijen, who has worked with clubs like Barcelona and Chelsea, and national teams like Korea, demonstrated how match fitness can be obtained, maintained and improved throughout the season using football games of varying numbers. He used youth players from the Brisbane Roar to ably prove his point.

The information and education available at the conference was immense, but rather than trying to relay all the information that was offered, I will provide a series of telling quotes and observations from some of the presenters.

"Football coaches are the best fitness coaches. Why use fitness coaches from outside football."
Raymond Verheijen.

"The difference between passing and kicking is thinking." Alf Galustian.

"Playing with better players you become better yourself." John van't Schip, Melbourne Heart coach and former player with Ajax in Holland.

"Those who want to learn will come up with the game. Those who don't will fall by the wayside."
Craig Foster, former Socceroo and now football analyst.

"Street football is a dynamic, active environment in which players have to make decisions all the time." Professor Mark Williams, University of Australia and John Moores University, Liverpool.

"As coaches it is our job to see the game, read the game and say: 'What can I do to improve the team.'" Pim Verbeek, Australian national team coach.

While not said at the conference, on the Socceroos team bus that some of us had the good fortune to be transported in, I found a leaflet tucked in the pocket of one of the seats about an organization that uses football to help children in poor countries.

On the back of the leaflet was this quote: "People who work together will win, whether it be against complex football defences or the problems of modern society." Vince Lombardi, 1913-1970.

Lombardi, who led the Green Bay Packers to title after title, is considered by many as the greatest U.S. National Football League coach ever.

That quote adds credence to a second presentation at the conference by Kelly Cross, when he eloquently and passionately detailed Australia's future vision for its coaches and players.

He enthused about how fantastic it is that Australia has its own vision, its own blueprint for success, its own world researched based footballing plan to suit the characteristics of the Aussie player.

If everyone gets behind this "One-Way" together, he said, and then the dreams of making Australia a world power in the world game can be more than a dream.