

Football Federation Australia has taken advantage of the Australian Institute of Sport national football challenge in Canberra to reveal further innovations from its new national curriculum.

Determined to get everyone thinking on the same page, Technical Director Han Berger and a number of his colleagues have detailed how they expect player development coaches across Australia to chart players abilities.

Checklists detail the various qualities and abilities required for players in every position in the 1-4-3-3 playing system, the criteria becoming more crucial as the player gets older. The checklists begin at age 10-12 and go up in two-year increments to age 18.

There is a separate checklist that can be used to chart how well a team is playing 1-4-3-3 as a unit.

Players are marked good, sufficient or insufficient in the various categories. Some of the categories are not deemed as necessary depending on the age, but at the top age group, everything is checked.

The institute challenge was also used to introduce a new bonus points system for teams, one that will be copied at the various state national championships. It is an idea both brilliant in its simplicity and innovative in that it provides further incentive for coaches, teams and players. It received an enthusiastic response from everyone.

In the challenge, teams received the normal three points for a win and one for a draw. In addition, bonus points were available for teams that played the 1-4-3-3 system in the way FFA is promoting and expecting. There were also bonus points for coaches depending on the way they instructed players, made substitutions and even on their half-time talks and adjustments, all of which were listened to by FFA adjudicators, including Han Berger.

The points were picked up in each game through another checklist, marked as excellent, good or average.

Any team that did not play 1-4-3-3 was ineligible for bonus points. The bottom line is that at the end of the challenge - details of which were not finalized in time for this column - all the bonus points for each team will be added up and the one with the most will receive five bonus points, the second three points and the third one point. These points are added to the regular match points.

At the time of writing, Tasmania was in third spot in the bonus points system. Overall in games, Tasmania had lost two games and tied three as of lunchtime Thursday, including creditable ties with New South Wales and Western Australia, in both games giving up the tying goal in the last two minutes.

FFA staff have pointed out to myself and TIS coach Dean May how pleased they are with the way the Tasmania team has played the 1-4-3-3 system. Only New South Wales and South Australia were ahead in the bonus category.

During the Wednesday off day, FFA staff ran a coaching workshop on and off the field and repeated how determined they are to have teams and players developed the correct way, noting that they do not want young players wasting any time with fitness training when they should always be working with the ball.

As Han Berger pointed out, Australian players already train half the time of players in Europe and to further reduce that time by working without a ball is madness. Playing football is conditioning and conditioning is playing football, he reiterated.