

# 2015 SAP Progress Report and SAP Gala Day



**Date** Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2015

**From** State Technical Director

**Pages** 14

**Subject** 2015 SAP Progress Report and SAP Gala Day

## Overview

As the second Football NSW (FNSW) SAP Gala Day approaches in May I would like to take the opportunity to outline some development outcomes and discussion points from the March Gala Day at the Opening Ceremony of VSP as well as ongoing 2015 SAP assessments. Many of the points outlined are consistent with previous SAP Reports previously tabled to SAP programmes over the years. Importantly, many of the topics of discussion have seen significant improvements over the last four years of SAP but others remain a challenge and we will always strive to ensure better outcomes in the development of our young players.

Please note that positional numbers referred to during this report are for the 1:3:3 formation of 7 vs 7 football for U/9s and the 1:3:2:3 formation of 9 vs 9 football for U/10s and U/11s. These formations and the number systems associated flow into what the U/11s SAP will experience in the 1:4:3:3 formation of 11 vs 11 football in later years.

Many of the areas of interest highlighted in the SAP assessments are also issues in boys NPL U/12s to U/15s which in 2013 and 2014 have undergone a similar assessment process to 2012 – 2014 SAP. We have a collective obligation to ensure that the manner in which we educate our young players does not obstruct them in reaching their full potential.

The following items will be outlined in this memo:

1. SAP Gala Days and SAP Season Games
2. Standard of Play
3. Numbering System
4. Girls in SAP
5. Playing Out From the Back
6. Playing from the Back Three through Midfield
7. Playing from the Back Three and Midfield to the Strikers
8. Transition into Attack
9. Attacking Options to Score Goals
10. Restarts - Goal Kicks
11. Restarts - Free Kicks
12. Restarts – Corners
13. Restarts - Throw Ins
14. Formations
15. Problems in Width and Depth
16. Problems Progressing into NPL Youth
17. Warm Ups
18. Keeping the Ball in Play

19. Rotation of Players
20. Equitable Playing Time
21. Parent Behaviour
22. Coach Behaviour
23. Ongoing SAP Assessment

## 1. SAP Gala Days and SAP Season Games

It was clear from the many assessors analysing the SAP Gala Day that development priorities were high throughout the weekend and there was a great uniform approach to the coaching and managing of the teams present. The positives far outweighed any negative observations. It is, however, also clear that some programs have used the opportunity of SAP regular season games to fall back on bad habits simply because they know that FNSW can't (and should not need to) monitor every individual SAP game throughout the year. It is for this reason that an explanatory document will be soon distributed soon to every parent in SAP outlining protocols and what their expectations should be (see **Annexure 1 SAP Parent Letter** below). As a SAP licensee you need to be aware of its content and mindful that this information has been consistently provided to all participants over the many years of SAP.

## 2. Standard of Play

All analysis of the SAP Gala Day and ongoing observations confirm that the playing standards in SAP continue to rise in all aspects of individual, team and program development. Whilst there have been improvements with all teams, the most consistent observations was the equalisation of standards amongst the licensees. Clearly the majority are working hard to create the best possible development opportunities for these players. Those programs traditionally strong in coaching and player talent in SAP continue to excel but it is pleasing to see many more programs are reaching those levels. All players benefit from these higher standards and outcomes.

## 3. Numbering System

Although rare during March SAP Gala Day, there have certainly been examples of this not being implemented amongst SAP licensees. Sideline calls of 'play on the right' or 'you should be in the middle' are obvious signs to FNSW SAP assessors that this needs improvement. In most instances it is simply a lack of understanding of the number system as a basic tool for a coach with a good understanding of the system of play. In rare cases it has been a combination of a lack of understanding of both and that invariably results in a poor outcome for the players.

As a reminder to all, it is vital that players have a working knowledge of the numbering system and how it relates to the 1.3.3. and 1.3.2.3 formations (see diagrams in **15. Problems in Width and Depth** below). Children of this age respond almost immediately to the implementation of positions based on numbers when they are introduced to it. This is a fundamental requirement and those who have not promoted its importance need to be aware that every player progressing through association, club and representative football will need to have that knowledge in the future.

## 4. Girls in SAP

This was another pleasing observation consistent with all assessors – the number and standard of Girls in SAP continues to rise. Given the same opportunities in developing their skills as the boys, the opportunities for girls to excel in SAP should be an obvious one. We will continue to promote their inclusion and opportunities in SAP.

## 5. Playing out from the Back

This has certainly been an area of vast improvement over the four years of SAP and was clearly seen again during the Gala Day weekend. This aspect of development is close to having 100% uptake in coaches and programs having the intention to implement to the best of their abilities. Observing U/9s players in their first year of SAP on Field 1 consistently and competently executing this aspect of play was very encouraging. Goalkeepers taking their own goal kicks have resulted in quicker restarts and better options to maintain effective possession (see **10. Restarts - Goal Kicks** below).

There have been observations of opposition strikers (#7, #9 and #11) not allowing the back three to take their first touch before entering the exclusion area. This has occasionally resulted in full backs #2 and #5 receiving the ball a few metres from the goal line which is not ideal. This, in turn, can limit the angles of support for the player on the ball and he/she often has difficulty in playing out effectively. Please make your attacking players aware of their roles here. This should never be seen as an attacking tool to press and harass players close to their own goals.

The principles of playing out from the back are, of course, much more complicated than simply a direct pass from a defender to a midfielder or striker. It entails the back three and the goalkeeper working as a cohesive unit in maintaining effective possession.

What needs to improve amongst our squads is the ability to pass effectively across the back three to switch the point of attack. Coaches need to have the courage to allow defensive players to play out. Clearing the ball aimlessly to prevent any risk of losing possession is no recipe for producing ball playing defenders or maintaining effective possession.

There has been some confusion over what is required of our players when a goal keeper receives the ball in open play.

An assessment topic for the FNSW SAP Match Assessment Form states:

***“GK plays the ball to back three from open play (as opposed to kicking long). YES / NO“***

What is being sought here is that players should always look to play in a way that encourages effective possession rather than random, long ball football based on gaining territory. There have been many positive examples of keepers kicking effectively to wide players in counter attack which is totally acceptable. This is also the case with an effective throw into a midfielder after the goalkeeper receives. Kicking long and high through the middle of the park should be the last option taken by a goalkeeper in these age groups.

Coaches have questioned how their attacking players should react when the opposition goalkeeper receives the ball. Some have encouraged their players to retreat some distance (i.e. 10 – 15 metres) to allow the goalkeeper to throw the ball to a back three player which is certainly in the spirit of what is being encouraged here.

This is a point in play, however, that has many variations. If a potential straight through ball travels to a goalkeeper there may be opportunity for the back three to take their regular starting positions to receive the ball. If a goalkeeper catches a cross from a wide area there is the likelihood that there are many opposition players in the attacking third and he/she may take the best option of quickly distributing the ball into a midfielder or wide striker to counter attack.

What we do not wish to see is a goalkeeper waiting for the opposition attacking players to retreat back before playing if there are quicker, more effective ways of maintain possession and attacking.

We should all be aware of these principles flowing into U/12s and U/13s football which still falls in the range of the Skill Acquisition Phase of development (refer to **National Curriculum**). Assessments in NPL state clearly that those players progressing from SAP are significantly more advanced and comfortable in this aspect of play for their age than older players who preceded the SAP program. It is, therefore, vital that we look forward when promoting playing out from the back for all of our players.

## 6. Playing from the Back Three through Midfield

The restarts from goal kicks are well documented throughout this memo. In some instances it was observed that the previous long kick from the goalkeeper was simply transferred to the full back some ten metres further forward.

This, of course, is not what we are looking for but has been partly caused by #8 and #10 (midfielders in 1.3.2.3) not understanding their roles here in support. There has been marked improvement in this area over the course of the year and much better subsequent interaction between the midfield two and the three strikers.

A common observation and a technical point to be raised here relates to our directness in general play and transition. As a full back attacks down the wing (which we encourage) the midfield two #8 and #10 often are both in advanced positions ahead of the ball causing problems in turning sideways or back to maintain possession, or defensively if possession is lost.

## 7. Playing from the Back Three and Midfield to the Strikers

In general this aspect of play has seen great improvements over the years and current observations are very positive. Assessors have frequently seen passing sequences starting from the goalkeeper and progressing through all the lines in effective possession to the attacking third and resulting in a shot on goal.

Passing sequences of ten or more contacts are now not uncommon and, of course, are only produced by good individual technique and correct support play to maintain possession.

Invariably this is seen with SAP Licencees that coach and instruct wide strikers #7 and #11 to be effective in maintaining width with correct body shape to receive and face forward. Those few who, through lack of understanding or poor technique in striking the ball, choose to stay narrow in ball possession struggle to keep the ball in build-up. Adequate width and good ball circulation has, in turn, brought the #9 into play in build up as opposing fullbacks are drawn out closer to the sidelines to mark.

The lack of quality passing to the feet of strikers was a major problem in our youth development in the past where central strikers in particular (and often coaches) believed their singular role was to make forward runs for through balls.

What is clear, however, is that this positive attacking play is seen more often in general ball possession, i.e.: against a set defensive shape from the opposition. In fast break transition where there should be more opportunities to create attacking opportunities and score goals there is generally less through poor and rushed options taken (see 8. **Transition into Attack**).

## 8. Transition into Attack

This is a topic which should be a major focus for coaches at all ages in youth football. This key aspect of creative attacking play is consistently recognised as poor by assessors in SAP and NPL. As ball possession opposition (BPO) converts to ball possession (BP) in key attacking areas there should be potential opportunities to use numerical advantages to create goal scoring opportunities. What is consistently observed, however, is the front three (#7, #9, #11) and often the midfielders (#8 or #10) making forward runs in an imaginary straight line towards the middle of the opposition goal. Through balls by defenders or midfielders at these transition moments, are heavily biased on long floated passes through the middle of the park to suit these runs.

We need to be clear that this approach to attacking play in youth development will not take our football or our players to a higher level. We also need to understand that this over direct approach to transition is, often, what our player's parents often desire and what they yell for the loudest from the sideline (see **21. Parent Behaviour** below). It is obvious that better parental education concerning these development issues will be vital in the future.

I would like to make it clear that this is not to suggest players should be discouraged to look to play through balls. On the contrary one of the key outcomes in producing better technical players is the greater ability to find the 'killer pass' that can unlock an organised defence. 'Striking the Ball' is one of the four core skills of the Skill Acquisition Phase. The patterns of play and supporting runs that have been observed do not encourage this to occur as it is far too predictable and, therefore, far too easy to defend. A positive by-product of back

four players being more comfortable in playing out through their goalkeeper (see **5. Playing out from the Back**) is that this direct, kick and chase football is becoming less and less effective. Surely this is another compelling reason for working on more creative solutions to attacking play.

## 9. Attacking Options to Score Goals

Again our focus here should be on effective possession to create goal scoring opportunities. The definition of an appropriate goal scoring opportunity also needs discussion as there are methods of scoring in these age groups which we are all aware have little to do with development.

An assessment topic for the FNSW SAP Match Assessment Form states:

***“Team does not shoot from excessive distances or look to lob keepers. YES / NO“***

What needs to be clearly stated here is the poor and incorrect options frequently taken by players in shooting from well beyond range. What can't be accepted is coach (or parental) encouragement of long, floated efforts on goal specifically designed to pressurise a young goal keeper without the ability to consistently catch balls from long distances. In FNSW these tactics evolve into U/12s and U/13s NPL competitions where, on full size goals, coaches and teams have obviously based strategy around working the ball into an area with the intent to chip 140cm goalkeepers. Match assessors in NPL consistently report players in positive attacking positions with passing or dribbling options, attempting a shot from outside the scoring range of an adult player. What we should remember here is the amount of learning and development opportunities lost in our obsession to get a shot away under any circumstance. In both SAP and NPL this also involves shooting from acute angles where a cross would be a better option.

This also partly relates to corners and free kicks (see **11/12. Restarts – Free Kicks – Corners** below). The reality in youth football in these age groups is that a ball kicked high underneath a young goalkeeper will rarely be caught under pressure. A scramble for possession will often follow the goalkeeper dropping the ball and goals will be scored.

We are all very aware that these goal scoring opportunities do not exist later when goalkeepers grow and can catch high floated balls. The question here is what type of footballers we are trying to create. Ones that can play directly and win games in the present or ones that can develop and win games in the future.

## 10. Restarts - Goal Kicks

It is a development priority of the National Curriculum and SAP that teams should play in a manner that promotes maintaining effective possession of the ball. With this as an aim it is vital that players should have as much time with the ball in play as possible. Breaks in play and subsequent restarts, therefore, should not be an opportunity to waste valuable development time as has often been the case in the past.

The rules and reasoning behind regarding goal kicks in SAP is now well understood. This has sped up the process of restarts and it is great to see all coaches supporting the concept and working with opposition coaches and referees to ensure a seamless approach. What previously may have been an aimless long ball into a physical contest now results in a defender with the ball at his/her feet, facing forward with passing angles available and decisions to make about how to keep the ball.

Goalkeepers who previously may not have been allowed, or did not have the confidence to take their own goal kicks are now more involved in the general play of their team. They can now be part of a defence looking to effectively play out from the back and have become more willing to take passes from retreating defenders to maintain possession. Traditionally many coaches would instruct defenders to kick the ball out over the sideline which we should not encourage and I will elaborate on later (see **18. Keeping the Ball in Play** below).

## 11. Restarts - Free Kicks

Before highlighting the significant improvements in this area in SAP over the years. I need to remind all coaches of how things can, and frequently have, gone wrong in the past regarding free kicks. Our national obsession with direct long ball football, by its very nature, has promoted physical contests and results in more free kicks than possession based football. If players, in turn, are encouraged to play that free kick long again we simply continue the cycle of promoting more physical contests, more free kicks and more time wasted.

The aimless direct free kicks in these age groups are ones that we have all seen. After the whistle has blown every player stops and walks forward. Many congregate about thirty metres in front of where the free kick has been called. The designated free kick specialist wanders over from his/her position (sometimes thirty metres away) sets the ball, takes six steps back and proceeds to kick it as far as he/she can in a direct line to the goal.

As coaches we should never settle for this if we are serious about developing young players.

The alternative of quick, often short, passes to restart play is an obvious one and it has been very pleasing to see so many coaches embrace it. It actively encourages the team in possession to find positions to receive the ball and immediately makes the defending team react to recover their positions and mark their appropriate opponent. The nature of the game becomes more fluid and more players are making more decisions more often simply because a ball is now moving rather than stationary.

One only needs to look at the recent successes of the Socceroos at the Asian Cup to see what focus we should see with our young players. Consistent with the National Playing Style they were a proactive team looking to dominate and excel in effective possession of the ball. They were committed to maximising the amount of time that their team had with the ball to succeed. This clearly existed in getting the ball back in play quickly as often as possible. Whilst clearly our focus on youth develop will not exactly mirror the performance phase of our own National Teams it was pleasing to see them attempt to get the greatest benefit from every minute of game time which we should aim to emulate.

## **12. Restarts - Corners**

It is also pleasing to see so many coaches and teams working on short corners to maintain possession and work the ball closer for a shot or cross. As with free kicks, getting the ball back into play quickly and effectively should be a priority for us all even if that means playing the ball in directly. Coaches need to ensure that as little time as possible is wasted in these instances.

## **13. Restarts - Throw Ins**

The tendency in some games observed is for all throw ins to be thrown down the line as far as possible. The end result is usually a contested challenge with approximately half of the balls subsequently deflected or deliberately played over the line for another throw. Many children would throw forward to a player marked by two or more players rather than throw it sideways or backwards to an unmarked teammate.

What has been seen on too many occasions is consecutive throw ins played out over the sideline while the majority of players stood and watched. As with direct free kicks this approach is about winning territory on the pitch rather than maintaining possession of the ball and should not be encouraged. Players need guidance on how to achieve a better outcome through their coach and there were have been many positive examples in the SAP competitions and Gala Days.

## **14. Formations**

The following are National Curriculum formations for Skill Acquisition Phase and above.

- Under 9s playing 7v7 use the 1:3:3 formation.
- Under 10s and Under 11s playing 9v9 use the 1:3:2:3 formation.
- Under 12s and above playing 11v11 use the 1:4:3:3 formation

These formations are shown below with their accompanying number system. Although this is now rare, we would hope to no further examples of teams playing with a flat back four as well as a back three (or four) with a sweeper. Please note this practice is not aligned to the National Curriculum and will not deliver the development outcomes we collectively seek. Please ensure your players are given correct instruction here.

## **15. Problems in Width and Depth**

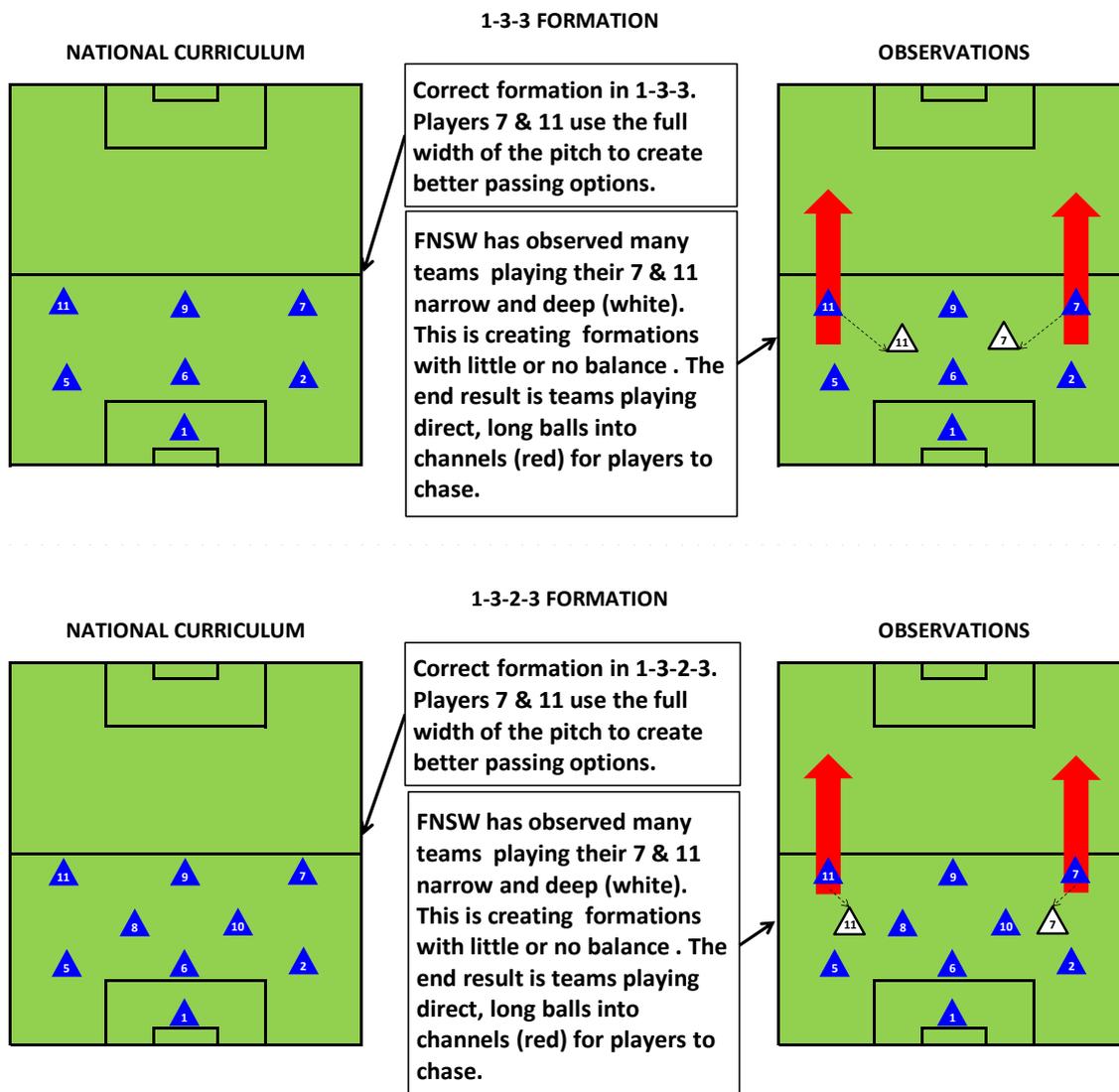
Some SAP teams playing with no width has been of particular concern following assessments of SAP Gala Day and SAP games thus far. There has been a tendency for wide players to 'collapse' deeper and narrower

than should be witnessed. This has sometimes occurred through a lack of understanding from a player but, in some instances, this is clearly coach instruction.

The topic of depth is related to the above. Players who should be holding wide striker or midfield positions 'secure' a backline by adding more defenders. The end result is that, when regaining possession, a team has little option than to kick a ball into these vacated areas and chase.

Please note the following diagrams relating to formation problems with width in SAP.

Formation numbering system is highlighted.



## 16. Problems Progressing into NPL Youth

As mentioned earlier the prescribed formations are created for a developing player to have a streamlined pathway through the various age groups. It is of no coincidence that problems witnessed through the Technical Department reporting of NPL1 and NPL 2 youth football are consistent with those seen in the younger age groups.

Examples include.

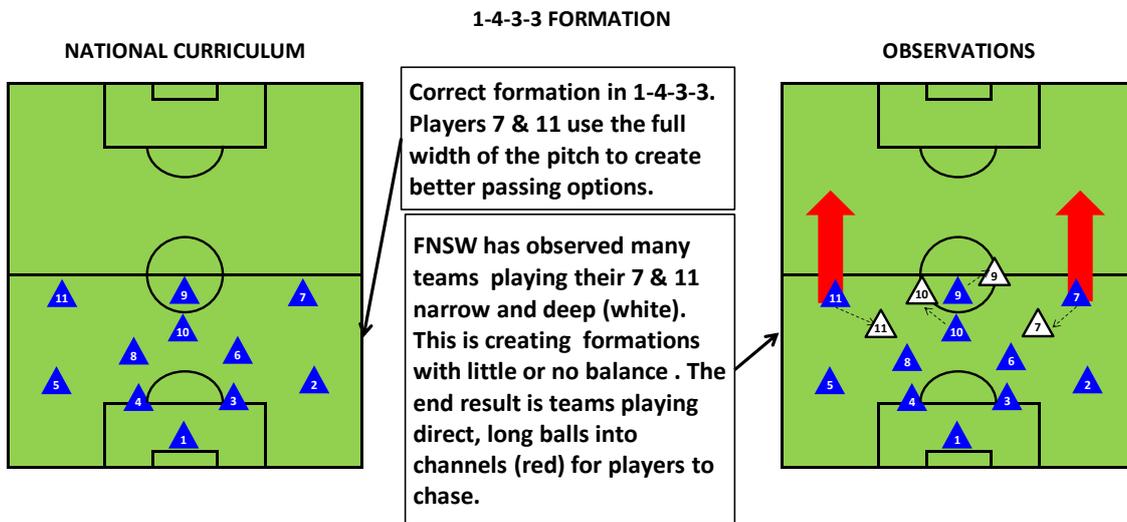
- Wide attackers (7) and (11) dropping deep and narrow as seen in 7v7 and 9vs9
- Attacking midfielder (10) then playing up to create a 1:4:4:2 formation
- Playing direct kick and chase football over or through the opposition backline

- Playing with a sweeper rather than a flat back four to counter the tactic above

What is certain is that if there is a stronger commitment to the proper formation in SAP football there will be less flow on issues in older age groups.

Please note the following diagrams relating to formation problems with width in NPL.

Formation numbering system is highlighted



## 17. Warm Ups

There was a wide range of warm ups witnessed over the weekend and we appreciate that there was not always large spaces available for teams. There were many very good examples of coaches engaging all players in football related warm ups but it is clear that the traditional models (no ball or all players with a one ball passing drill) are still seen as acceptable by many. Please look to ensure that there are better outcomes for your players here.

## 18. Keeping the Ball in Play

This last point relates to a technical matter usually involving fullbacks #2 and #5 which has seen marked improvement over the years and was seldom seen in the Gala Day weekend. Through balls in wide positions would traditionally end up deliberately kicked over the sideline rather than being played out. Please do not allow any player with time on the ball to do this. Encourage others players including your goalkeeper to create passing opportunities for your team to maintain possession.

## 19. Rotation of Players

All outfield players in SAP should be familiar with all positions in the 1:3:3 (U/9s) and 1:3:2:3 (U/10s and U/11s) formations shown previously. Coaches should ensure that this player rotation is consistent and explained to all players and parents in the program as early as possible.

This has not been implemented to the high standards that we have chosen to adopt. Whilst this is not always easy to monitor during game assessments, there has been frequent observations from parents and other coaches that players are not experiencing different positions as per National Curriculum recommendations. Whilst preferences and abilities for specific positions start to become clearer in these age groups, coaches are still being influenced by results and parental pressures to select their “strongest team” to the detriment of the learning environment that we are trying to create.

Related to this is the occasional observation in Gala Days or SAP Games of the bias towards the physically strongest and tallest players being disproportionately chosen as the back three defenders in the two formations. Again this is from an outdated assumption that the biggest players should be earmarked as defenders only.

Assessors have questioned coaches on a lack of understanding of a certain player in a certain position to which the reply has often been “That is because they have not played that position before”. This, of course, is

not the answer that we seek. Through good coaching and learning opportunities all outfield players should be aware of the roles and responsibilities of all positions in the chosen formation.

## **20. Equitable Playing Time**

Related to the last topic of rotation is equitable time on the park which again has not been implemented correctly. Players should have equal playing time within your structures. This would seem to be obvious but many coaches have fallen short in creating this equality. If our focus is truly on developing each and every player to the best of their ability then we need to ask ourselves why superior playing time is given to certain players over others in this Skill Acquisition Phase. The answers are simple and relate to our history of results focused coaching which limits development opportunities. We obviously need to move away from that focus. Every player has a right to be educated to reach their maximum potential.

## **21. Parent Behaviour**

It is clear that there is a better parental understanding of the style of play that the SAP coaches are trying to promote. This was clearly evident from the behaviour of parents on the sideline during the first Gala Day. As stated earlier we would like this to be consistently observed in all SAP games.

Parents have predominately allowed their children to play freely, to express themselves, to learn through success and failure and to enjoy themselves without unnecessary commentary.

Please note that our demand for SAP licencees and coaches to be vigilant against instructive or aggressive parents is not simply an exercise in social etiquette. Our young players having their development held back by poor parental (or coach) sideline behaviour is what should concern us all.

An example of this is the parental influence on the development aspect of youth football in our competitions both SAP and NPL that is consistently recognised as poor (see Transition into Attack above). At the moment of transition when BP is won, parents in SAP (less) and NPL (consistently) yell for the player in possession to play the ball forward, usually over or through the defensive line. This is not to find a correct attacking run by a striker. It is simply a ball into space that parents want to see which they “imagine” will end in a good outcome for their team. In most cases a 5 vs 4 or 4 vs 3 numerical advantage results in losing possession within 5 seconds. Parents need to be aware of the harm that this behaviour causes to their child’s development.

## **22. Coach Behaviour**

All SAP Licencees coaches are aware that FNSW encourages coaches at these age groups to remain calm and in control during a match. Expressing themselves in continuous commentary or visual frustration does little for the learning environment for the young player and there has been marked improvement here through the ongoing assessment process and further coach education.

What has been obvious during the Gala Day and SAP game weekends is that the nature of a ‘competition’ can change a coach’s focus. Those few coaches who frequently questioned referees and commented on every pass, tackle and decision during every game were obviously caught up with the ‘event’ rather than with their coaching roles. What is certain here is that the players do not benefit. I would assume that from their positive sideline behaviour at the Gala Day that most parents of SAP players are also in agreement.

## **23. Ongoing Assessment**

Many of you have already had training and game visits from FNSW SAP Assessor Paul Wade. There has been great outcomes and support for his visits and we are sure that all coaches and programs will benefit from his input. For those who have not provided your SAP Training night dates and times to William Tan [williamt@footballnsw.com.au](mailto:williamt@footballnsw.com.au) can you please do so as soon as possible.

## Summary

FNSW look forward to hosting the next Gala Day in May and the SAP season ahead for all Licencees.

Thank you for your continuing support in improving football outcomes for our young players. The programs are running well and FNSW will continue to monitor progress and provide feedback.

FNSW looks forward to further improvements in coaching and playing standards through all parties working together. A truly collaborative approach to development amongst all 31 licencees is what we should all be striving to achieve and it is pleasing to see so many coaches on board.

## ANNEXURE 1: SAP Parent Letter April 2015

To SAP Parents,

I hope you all enjoyed the March SAP Gala Day and the official opening of the great facilities at Valentine Sports Park. Analysis of those hundreds of games indicate that SAP playing standards continue to rise. Although it was predominately a weekend of significant positive outcomes FNSW will always strive to raise standards and reduce problems within the program.

FNSW raise the following concerns below which we would like all parents to be aware of. The background to this correspondence is the consistent messaging that all SAP Licencees have received from FNSW for the last three seasons of SAP since 2012. Please note that these messages have been communicated to raise coaching and development standards within the program and many Licencees have taken all information provided on board and continue to improve the quality of their programs from year to year.

Clearly others have chosen to resist or alter consistent requests from FNSW regarding important structural requirements for SAP. Given three years of consistent messages it is difficult to accept that coaches or programs simply are not aware.

For these reasons FNSW would like all parents to be fully aware of FNSW communications, especially those that FNSW consider are not being implemented well. SAP Licencees and parents have already been in contact with FNSW stating that they have had issues with or other Licencees during trial games and the SAP season just begun. Less issues were observed on SAP Gala Day but clearly FNSW was in close proximity. We aim to ensure all games throughout the season meet the highest standards of development.

Please read carefully the following topics that have been provided to SAP Licencees and parents for many years. They have not altered in context or importance. The topics are

- Team Structure
- Player Rotation
- Equitable Playing Time
- Match Day Structures
- Parental Behaviour

This information provided to SAP Technical Directors, Coaches Convenors and Parents is followed by a parent specific comment **in red**.

### **Team Structure:**

Please be reminded that there is no tiered structure within your two teams in the same age group. Teams should be well balanced and have a consistent training and match program within your structures. There should be no determination of names of teams that would indicate a bias or favouritism to either squad (i.e.: Team 1 and Team 2, or Team A and B). Simple colour coding (i.e.: Team Blue and Team White) would be an appropriate alternative.

Players should easily be interchangeable between squads on trainings or game days given unequal numbers through injuries or absentees.

**Parents: Under no circumstances should you accept your SAP Licence selecting, endorsing or encouraging the implementation of A and B teams.**

### **Player Rotation:**

All outfield players in SAP should be familiar with all positions in the 1:3:3 (U/9s) and 1:3:2:3 (U/10s and U/11s) formations. Coaches should ensure that this player rotation is consistent and explained to all players and parents in the program as early as possible.

This has not been implemented to the high standards that we have chosen to adopt. Whilst this is not always easy to monitor during game assessments, there has been frequent observations from parents and other coaches that players are not experiencing different positions as per National Curriculum recommendations.

Whilst preferences and abilities for specific positions start to become clearer in these age groups, coaches are still being influenced by results and parental pressures to select their “strongest team” to the detriment of the learning environment that we are trying to create.

Assessors have questioned coaches on a lack of understanding of a certain player in a certain position to which the reply has often been “That is because they have not played that position before”. This, of course, is not the answer that we seek. Through good coaching and learning opportunities all outfield players should be aware of the roles and responsibilities of all positions in the chosen formation.

**Parents: Under no circumstances should you accept your SAP Licence failing to rotate your son / daughter into a variety of positions throughout the season. Some leniency is given to players committed to being goalkeepers (not always a decision made at this young age). Please note that this player rotation is not required in every individual game (ie one player being moved into multiple positions in one game). Rather they should have equal opportunities in all positions over the course of the season.**

### **Equitable Playing Time:**

Related to the last topic of rotation is equitable time on the park which again has not been implemented correctly. Players should have equal playing time within your structures. This would seem to be obvious but many coaches have fallen short in creating this equality. If our focus is truly on developing each and every player to the best of their ability then we need to ask ourselves why superior playing time is given to certain players over others in this Skill Acquisition Phase. The answers are simple and relate to our history of results focused coaching which limits development opportunities. We obviously need to move away from that focus. Every player has a right to be educated to reach their maximum potential.

**Parents: Under no circumstances should you accept your SAP Licence minimising the playing time of your son / daughter for the benefit of another player. There are many simple procedures that a coach / manager can implement to ensure this equality is maintained. The exception to this can be a club / team disciplinary process to limit game time due to a breach of team rules or team values. This is unlikely to be seen often in SAP with such young children.**

### **Match Day Structures:**

The following are examples of reported practices in SAP over the last three seasons.

- Squads continuing to play A and B selected teams (refer to Team Structure above)
- Squads playing two entirely different teams in different halves of Game X and repeating the process in Game Y
- Squads promoting “stronger” players from Game X to double up in Game Y
- Squads with teams with limited numbers due to not having girls filling benches with boys from the previous match and rotating them through on parity with those playing only one game

Whilst we acknowledge that there should be a healthy flow within the two squads throughout the year for the benefit of all players, the “tactics” employed are clearly based on trying to engineer a result over development or to advantage a “strong” player to the detriment of playing time for others.

When teams have reduced players due to no girls in the side a maximum of 1 substitute will be used.

**Parents: Under no circumstances should you accept your SAP Licence allowing players to double up in games to limit the playing opportunities for others. Protocols have been given to all SAP licences in how to manage lower number of players if they are to occur.**

### **Parental Behaviour:**

Before raising these points it is important to recognise that significant improvements in parental behaviour have been recognised in SAP but we will always strive for higher standards and there is still work to do.

### **Sideline Behaviour:**

This topic will be raised separately to Sideline Coaching (see below). The basis for much of this behaviour relates to our traditionally strong emphasis on results and winning at too young an age. Parents still exhibit far too much aggression and tension on the sideline as they watch their children play.

FNSW continually encourages coaches at these age groups to remain calm and in control during a match. Expressing themselves in continuous commentary or visual frustration does little for the learning environment for the young player and there has been significant improvement here through the assessment process and further coach education.

In the same way we encourage all parents to show a demeanour that will enhance both the enjoyment and the development outcomes for their children. Being respectful of officials and opposition players is vital here. It is difficult for coaches to encourage the correct behaviour by the players whilst their parents are showing different priorities on the sideline.

When all of the coaches and parents of all teams are aligned towards the common goal of football development, then we will truly have an environment for all players to develop and take their game to a higher level.

### **Sideline Coaching:**

This relates closely to the previous topic and is still a major issue in all levels of youth development in FNSW. Put simply there should be no sideline coaching tolerated.

If we are serious about creating players who are able to make decisions out on the pitch then we need to be vigilant in creating an environment that does not continually impede this process.

What is generally clear is that all parents have, at one time or another, been advised by coaches, coaching directors or technical directors that sideline coaching is not acceptable. On the assumption that those talks have occurred and the fact that sideline coaching is still so prevalent there can only be two possible explanations.

1. That parents are not aware that what they are saying is sideline coaching.
2. That parents know what they are saying is wrong but choose to ignore directives given to them by their coaches.

In both cases education is the key for both for parents and coaches.

What needs to be clearly understood is that any instruction given by a parent from the sideline is coaching. In any five minute period of many games you will generally hear a selection of these instructions from parents and a myriad of others.

***“Get rid of it”, “Tackle”, “Spread out” “Get it wide”, “Kick it to Sam”, “Clear it”, “Get it long”, “Put it through”, “Press”, “Pressure”, “Get them”.***

All of these instructions undermine the coach and his/her ability to create a great learning environment. In addition many of these instructions fundamentally contradict development messages both given by the coach and the Technical Department of FNSW.

As an obvious example one of the development priorities of FNSW was that teams should play in a manner that promotes maintaining effective possession of the ball. With this in mind coaches are frequently put in the untenable position of asking players to “keep the ball” whilst parents are simultaneously asking them to “get rid of it”. This contradiction should be a clear one.

**Parents: As stated above you should expect the best from your SAP Licencee in terms of coaching and program delivery. They, in return, should naturally expect and ensure the best possible behaviour and respect is shown from parents at all of their trainings and games throughout the season.**

**Summary:**

Should you feel that these directives are not being implemented at your SAP Licence please notify Alex Tobin at [alex@footballnsw.com.au](mailto:alex@footballnsw.com.au) and Andrew Fathers at [andrewf@footballnsw.com.au](mailto:andrewf@footballnsw.com.au). FNSW are committed to providing the best possible platform for all players in SAP.

Thank you for your continuing support of development in SAP. The talent on show from the recent Gala Day comes from a great collective effort from all involved. FNSW will look to build upon lessons learnt from the previous years and provide continued support and ongoing education for all coaches, players, parents and administrators. We wish you all the best for the upcoming SAP season in 2015.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Tobin', with a horizontal line drawn across the middle of the signature.

Alex Tobin

FNSW STATE TECHNICAL DIRECTOR