



## Overview

Project 22 is a proposed Football NSW initiative aimed at laying down the foundations required to give elite youth footballers the highest chance possible to succeed at the elite level as adult footballers. Project 22 aims to develop the next generation of Socceroos and Matildas who will compete at the FIFA World Cup in 2022. Project 22 is centred on FNSW being able to exceed world best practice in providing an elite competition and training environment for our future National Team Players.

When examining *world's best practice*, that being youth academies in developed footballing nations, we are far short of the mark. Even research into the area of expertise clearly identifies that there needs to be at least 10,000 hours of deliberate practice to become an expert performer.

It is generally agreed in the football community that our elite players are not currently developed in an environment in which we can compete against other countries throughout the world.

The FFA has launched the National Curriculum which highlights a number of gaps in the development of our players. All of these gaps relate to technical development. From creativity to the tactic of playing out from the back, all require a huge amount of technical development. Not for one or two players but for the whole team. Time is the most important ingredient for technical development. One cannot expect to strike the ball a few times in training and expect that during the game you will be successful. Learning requires a permanent change in behaviour. Repetition is critical to observe this permanent change. Time is the investment and the environment must extend and challenge players to excel.

FNSW must make some real changes to our current structure in youth development in order to give our best players the best opportunity to reach the same levels of competency as our counterparts elsewhere the world. It is agreed that our players lack the technical skill and game awareness needed to be successful in international football. The answer is very simple; FNSW must create an environment that at the very least replicates what other countries do in the delivery of successful youth programs. From our experience and observation all over the world, it is clear that technical proficiency and game awareness result in a long term athlete development plan implemented and monitored by the federation and or club. Players train at least 4 times per week for over ten years in the youth phase. In addition, the competition is structured to reinforce the skills and tactical components that are learnt through repetition on the training field. The strengths of our competitors are numerous. They have the numbers, opportunities and most importantly the money. Our strength will have to be our consolidative investment. We have to

direct our investment to the best of the best. This requires careful identification and nurturing of the best players in the best environment. We must continue to learn and implement the principles behind the world's best youth programs. The final step is to exceed them. We must anticipate footballing trends and beat them to the punch. In short, our weakness must become our strength.

In order to deliver a quality youth development program **four (4) principles** of youth development must be considered. These are:

- 1. The best players: The starting point is critical to the end product**
- 2. The best coaches: Football educators not football coaches**
- 3. The best facilities: The learning class room**
- 4. The best curriculums: Benchmark. Sound education practices**

The two essential training factors that must be considered are:

- 1. Training Time (Deliberate practice and deliberate play) structure & unstructured**
- 2. Competition (Reinforce learning outcomes in a competitive environment)  
Competition must complement training in development age groups**

Both the principles and the essential factors must have a sound philosophy in order to be successful. The FNSW model is based on football education. Sound teaching principles that are taught in a progressive method by football educators. Constant review and refinement of programs, teachers and methods ensure that we meet the demands of the evolution of modern football.

We cannot control the size of our population, Football is now the number one sport in Australia. Nor can we control the professional clubs, leagues and money generated into the sport. What we can control is; effective identification, training time, quality of coaching, development program structure, curriculum and cost.

With that being said, it is the opinion of the HPU that we must aim to be world leaders in the implementation of development initiatives with limited resources. We must be creative in our approach and must maximise our talent pool. The best interest of player development must be at the heart of the football community. Creating an environment that will positively affect performance is an issue that eludes the best clubs in the world. However Federations and Clubs that have succeeded share a number of common elements. These include identifying the best players, providing an environment that focuses on technical development above competition

standing, creating a balance in athlete development/ flexibility in the type of athletes identified and most importantly employing qualified football educators above the typical club coach.

## Structure

- All regions would train 4 times per week and compete against each other on the weekend, 40 weeks of the year
- There would be an internal competition which would see each elite region playing a weekly game against each other from March to September. This would be complimented by friendly games against Metropolitan, Premier and Super youth teams as well as the state team preparation for both boys (U13 and U14) and girls (U13 and U15 years).
- There are six regions for boys and one region for girls
- There are up to two (2) goal keepers selected for each team. Goal keepers train at a central venue 2 sessions per week with a specialist goal keeper coach and with their own region team 2 sessions per week.
- There are 42 players in each age group across the entire Sydney Metropolitan program. There are 14 girls in each age group in the one central venue. The total amount of players in the Metro program is 294.
- Partnership with key sporting venues throughout NSW would be important to ensure that the players have great training facilities and competition venues. It would be necessary to foster relationships with Associations and Clubs to ensure that we can combine the best of what they can offer to the program to compliment their development. This includes facilities, friendly games, guest sessions, combined training sessions, sharing of ideas and detailed curriculum notes.

The age categories for the **BOYS** include the following composite age groups for 2009 / 2010;

- U10 (Born 2000 & 2001) x 14 players
- U12 (Born 1998 & 1999) x 14 players
- U14 (Born 1996 & 1997) x 14 players

(Seven (7) of the best players in each age group in each region will be selected)

There will be a central region for girls that will include the age groups for 2009 / 2010;

- U13 (Born 1997) x 14 players
- U14 (Born 1996) x 14 players
- U15 (Born 1995) x 14 players

## **Cost**

The structure of the proposed initiative would be **FREE** to all selected players

## **Selection Process**

- Players will be observed by an number of experienced elite youth coaches in the trial process and ranked in order for selection
- Players can be expected to be participating in small sided games
- Variation of skill drills, exercises and game related practices
- Observation and of gross motor movement patterns
- 11 vs. 11 games in tournament setting (State Titles)
- Metropolitan and Premier/Super Youth league competitions
- State teams
- Scholarships are offered for a 12 month period
- Review and re-selection will be conducted annually
- Trial process will be overseen by the National Technical Director
- Players and family may be required to participate in meetings with FNSW coaching staff to discuss suitability to the program
- There will be an Open Trial for non identified players for Boys U9 to U12 on the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> of September at VSP with the Girls trialling on the following weekend 26<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> of September at VSP.
- The first week of training will be called confirmation week. This will allow successful players from the open trials, state titles and identified players the chance to secure their positions in the squad. Confirmation week commences the 19 October 2009 and concludes on the 22 October 2009 in each Project 22 centre.

## Regions

It is critical that we separate the elite talent pool into small organized regions. This would provide the training environment specific to the geographical region and would make player development an easier and more accessible option to most players and families.

For girls who reside in region locations and find difficulty attending the central venue, will be allowed to train at the closest boys centre, therefore allowing flexibility and accessibility.

The regions for the boys would include:

- Sydney West (Blacktown, Granville, Nepean)
- Sydney East (Canterbury, Eastern Suburbs, St George)
- Sydney South (Bankstown, Macarthur, Southern Districts)
- Sydney North (Gladesville-Hornsby, Manly-Warringah)
- Sydney Far North (Central Coast, Ku-ring-gai)
- Sydney Far South (Illawarra, Sutherland)

## **Curriculum**

- The FFA Technical Director Mr. Han Berger will oversee the program to ensure that it is meeting the highest standards of cutting edge elite development
- An annual periodised plan will be implemented in consultation with the FFA
- TAP (Talented Athlete Program) camps will be a critical part of Project 22. These are camps conducted in school time in conjunction with the Departments of Education and Department of Sport and Recreation. The time spent at these camps is deemed school time with tutors and teachers facilitating school work in their down time. It is anticipated that each player will attend two (2) camps per year if this works within their own school commitments.
- Every player will be enrolled into a Futsal competition in the off season. Project 22 players will form their own squads and will be entered into the appropriate level of Futsal competitions
- Players will be encouraged to play additional sports and through the periodised plan, allowance will be made to those athletes playing other summer sports
- The FFA has endorsed Project 22 and is committed to providing resources such as specialized skill acquisition trainers to work intensely with each player throughout the year
- Coaches will implement the National Curriculum in an environment that will positively affect performance.
- Each region will be staffed by FNSW

## **Country Development**

- All country regions (Riverina / Western / Southern) will administer a center of excellence in which all state team players will train 1 night per week.
- This includes boys aged 13-15 and girls aged 13-17 years.
- At these centre's of excellences each country region will select an U10 and U12 Project 22 squad that will train 1 night per week 40 weeks of the year.
- In addition to the weekly training commitment, FNSW will provide intensive weekends in which all Project 22 center's will attend and compete.
- Each country region will also provide intensive weekends in which players can accumulate the necessary training hours required to ensure they improve in the same manner as their Sydney counterparts.

## Competition Structure

The competition process would be as follows:

- **Identification and Selection:** Players would be identified and selected through FNSW tournaments, competitions and through our development pathway program. Open trials would be conducted during the month of September for players not participating in FNSW State Titles. Players who miss out will then be able to trial for Metropolitan, Premier and Super Youth League teams at the end of October.
- **Technical Development Phase:** Once squads are selected this phase will include training 4 sessions per week from the end of October to December with high focus on technical outcomes. Game days will run on weekends and allow for group play outcomes to be achieved in small sided and modified games. Each region will play each other in 6v6 small sided games with the age groups being split i.e. U9 vs. U9 and U10 vs. U10. This will be in an organised SSG Competition conducted on a home and away basis using each regions venue to host games.
- **Off season:** The off season would be the month of January.
- **Pre Competition Phase:** The four weeks in February would be the pre competition phase and would include 4 sessions per week along with organized trial games against Metropolitan, Premier and Super Youth League Teams
- **Competition Phase:** From March until September the teams will continue training 4 sessions per week play in organized competition against the other Regional Squads. Where possible games would be arranged with Metropolitan, Super, and Premier League Teams.
- U9/10 – 20 minute thirds. 9v9
- U11/12 – 30 minute halves. 11v11
- U13/14 – 35 minute halves. 11v11

## Benefits

The many benefits of the Elite Regional Competition and training program include:

- Access to year round elite training and competition for free
- Minimal effect on clubs (i.e. 42 players per age group out of the competition structure)
- Access to the best possible training environment through quality of players, coaches, facilities and program.
- Access to highest level of competition every weekend that compliments the training environment
- Access to professional FNSW coaches on a regular basis
- Training within a periodised program integrated with a specific Long Term Athlete Development Program.
- Game specific skill development for players
- Integrated mental, cognitive and emotional development.
- Professional development opportunity for coaches in working with elite athletes on a full time basis.
- Development pathway for coaches. Providing the opportunity to develop and foster elite coaches
- Improved State Selection Process through daily contact with the best players in the best environment
- Unification of quality training environment with a challenging competitive format

## Considerations

1. Support for all Associations in setting up development programs aimed at players aged 9 and 10 to underpin their Metropolitan Representative U11 and U12 teams. Support in setting up a shadow U11 and U12s program in each association to cater for second tier players. This is particularly important for Associations that have large numbers and the differences between the top 16 players and the next are minimal. (widen the net)
2. An audited Development Partnership Program for all elite clubs competing in FNSW competitions in the age categories 11-14 years. This will help equip association and clubs with the delivery of effective youth programs. Consider caps to the fees charged to youth players. Mandate minimal requirements that Associations and clubs must meet to provide the best possible environment to foster elite development. There must be a cost benefit balance. An increase in fees must result in an increase in services such as training, coaching, equipment, resources etc.
3. All players in this system will participate in state titles in their own age group. This will allow the players to integrate with Metropolitan, Premier and Super youth league players. It will also allow FNSW to assess, identify and select new players each year. In addition the players will be exposed to other coaches who will help in their development. Re-selection is conducted annually to ensure that we maintain the highest standards.
4. State teams will be selected from this system and will compete at National Titles in April, July and October. In the preparation for Nationals FNSW will select 21 players to make up the first state team and the other 21 players will be the shadow state team. Both teams will train 2 nights per week as the state team / shadow team at a designated venue and 2 nights per week in their normal regional squad. This allows 2 nights per week for the 13 / 14 boys to compete in their own age group. From 2010 onwards no NSWIS players will participate in boys National tournaments. These positions will be available for players who have not yet been identified by the national selectors. This only affects the U15 boys which are not included in Project 22.