

## THE SYDNEY FC ACADEMY

Below are some excerpts from the foundation statements of the Sydney FC Academy

Vision:

### PURPOSE OF ACADEMY

To continuously provide players for Sydney FC's first teams and Australian National Teams.

### MISSION OF ACADEMY

To provide a holistic, player-centred environment in which talented footballers develop their love of the game, learn to play the Sydney FC way and grow into valued people

### KEY ELEMENTS OF ACADEMY

1. Clear football philosophy	Philosophy on 'Playing football' Philosophy on 'Learning how to play football'
2. Good people	The right players The right coaches Educated parents Standards of behaviour
3. Learning Environment	Enjoyable, challenging, safe Feedback Individual responsibility Growth mindset

## **1. CLEAR FOOTBALL PHILOSOPHY**

### PHILOSOPHY ON PLAYING FOOTBALL

#### OUR FOOTBALL VISION

We will play a recognizable brand of football characterised by the key words:

- pro-active
- dominant
- intelligent
- quick
- creative

### PHILOSOPHY ON LEARNING HOW TO PLAY FOOTBALL

<b>OUR BELIEFS</b>
Players learn best by playing football
Current methods do not produce enough world-class goalscorers, matchwinners or special players
Coaches usually make the learning of football more difficult; players are often confused or overloaded with huge amounts of verbal information and endless tasks and questions.
Too often at training, coaches talk too much and players stand still too much (or spend too much time in low-intensity, non-football activity)
We don't teach players; we can only create the conditions in which they can learn
The development of football skill is inseparable from the development of perceptual expertise

Our specific Sydney FC Academy Learning Program reflects our philosophy on playing football and learning how to play football.

We will take the unique opportunity provided by establishing an Academy from Ground Zero to question and challenge the prevailing wisdom and existing methods: from 'best practice' to 'next practice'.

## 2. GOOD PEOPLE

PHILOSOPHY ON TALENT IDENTIFICATION (the right players)

<b>OUR BELIEFS</b>
Talented young players are often missed; great talent is not necessarily the right talent and we will be clear on the critical competencies required for success.
The Relative Age Effect is a key factor in Talent ID; players often appear to be outstanding, but this may only be because of a physical or chronological advantage (which will disappear later)
What you see now is not necessarily what you will get; the secret is to assess <b>potential</b>
Exceptional talent does not justify a poor character or inappropriate behaviour; nor does an exceptional player justify a badly-behaved parent: only 'good people' fit in our learning environment

PHILOSOPHY ON COACH IDENTIFICATION (the right coaches)

Key questions:

- does the coach have the right communication skills and personal qualities to fit the criteria of our learning environment?
- does the coach display the pre-requisite qualities appropriate to the age group?
- does the coach have original ideas and/or knowledge of latest trends in Youth Development and Skill Acquisition?
- is the coach open-minded, and willing to be mentored in order to best deliver the Sydney FC Academy Team Model, and also to help evolve it?
- does the coach have a growth mindset, and seek feedback aimed at personal improvement?
- is the coach able to question and challenge others in the organisation with a view to improvement of the whole Academy?
- Is the coach able to function as member of a TEAM of coaches?

## 3. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Enjoyable, challenging, safe

These three key words will describe the environment that is provided at the Academy.

***'We will ALWAYS remember that you are a person: being a football player is just one small part of who you are'***

GROWTH MINDSET

Research suggests that players will tend to fall into two mindsets: FIXED or GROWTH

	FIXED MINDSET player	GROWTH MINDSET player
<b>Believe</b>	.. talent is something you are born with; you either have it or you don't	... talent is a process of learning and is not set in stone. The brain can change, by stimulating neural activity.
<b>Motivation</b>	...showing off (or hiding) your ability	...learning how to develop your ability
<b>Effort focus</b>	Expect things to come easily because you have talent	Feel anything is possible <b>IF</b> you can understand where to focus your effort
<b>Challenges</b>	Avoid challenges you struggle with because you don't like to look less talented	Embrace challenges as a chance to learn even if you can't achieve them <b>YET</b>
<b>Setbacks</b>	See setbacks as a confirmation that there are some things you will never be good at	See setbacks as part of the learning process and <b>NOT</b> as a way of defining ability
<b>Negative feedback</b>	Ignore useful negative feedback and keep the focus on what you are good at	Learn from criticism and use it to understand how to improve
<b>Ownership</b>	If things don't work out, it's not your fault!	Understand you need to drive things yourself
<b>As a result</b>	..can plateau early and under-achieve	....maximise potential

The GROWTH MINDSET is clearly the preferred option.

Sydney FC Academy coaches will promote this mindset in our players by praising effort, not 'talent'. They will emphasize that abilities can be transformed through application. Our coaches will help players to see challenges as learning opportunities instead of threats, and to interpret failure as a learning opportunity.

This approach is particularly relevant when developing players who have established a reputation as the so-called 'best' players in their age-group. We must make it clear that they have been selected for demonstrating 'POTENTIAL' and that with the assistance of Academy staff it is their responsibility to strive in order to realise that potential. Rather than thinking 'I am good at football', they should be thinking 'I am on the right track to become a good player. I must keep trying my best and aim for constant improvement'

