

# Somersall Rangers

Why We Want Players to Keep the Ball?



## **Keep the Ball**

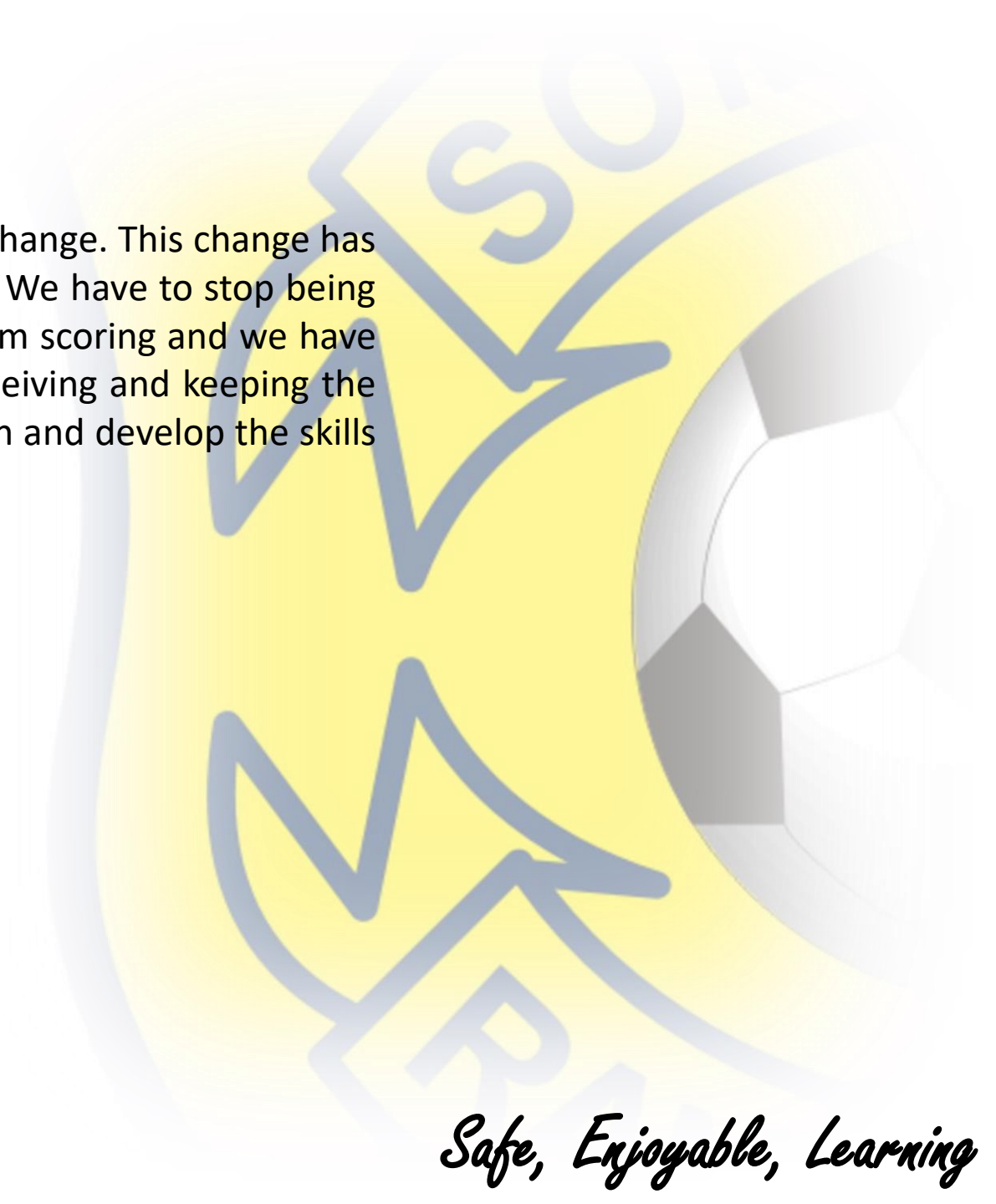
- One of the most common problems we see in grassroots football games is the tendency for players to simply kick the ball away whenever it comes to them without any real thought or intent.
- Two main reasons why this happens are the players lack of comfort with the ball and the instructions and the mindset of the adults that are involved in the game.
- Many players lack the technical ability to receive the ball under pressure and this is one cause of players kicking the ball away without thought. Players do not want to make a mistake and give the ball away so it's better to just get rid of it. Technical ability is something that needs to be addressed in practice sessions by our coaches. Coaches need to design activities which will replicate the pressure of receiving the ball in a game and give the player lots of repetitions of this type of scenario.
- The second main reason why players just kick the ball away is the message we as adults are sending young players. We have to create an environment where they are encouraged to try and receive the ball, get control of the ball and make a decision regardless of the outcome. Young players need us to support them and be positive for attempting the correct action even when there is not a favourable outcome.

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- How many times have we heard parents and coaches tell players to “**GET RID OF IT**” players are being conditioned by the adults that they should kick the ball away. This is especially true whenever the ball is in the teams own half.
- Many adults are under the misconception that if the player kicks the ball away down the field that the danger is gone. As long as the ball is away from the goal it’s a good thing.
- That can be the case if your team regains possession of the ball, but as soon as the other team gets the ball no matter where they get it there is a threat and there is the opportunity for the other team to score. In addition, your team has now given up possession of the ball and has no chance to score.
- You will find that as you play teams of a higher standard they will capitalise on you giving them the ball back no matter where you give it back to them on the pitch.

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- So, the mindset and narrative for our younger players has to change. This change has to start with the attitude of the adults involved in the game. We have to stop being so risk adverse for the sake of possibly delaying the other team scoring and we have to install the confidence for our young players to practice receiving and keeping the ball in pressure situations as this is the only way they will learn and develop the skills they need.



## **Why is it a Problem?**

- Aimlessly kicking the ball away is a problem for a couple of reasons. The first reason is that many times without any thought or intention on where or who they are kicking the ball to the ball ends up going back to the opposition.
- The first goal of playing football is to establish possession of the ball as an individual and then as a team. When a player kicks the ball away when it comes to them they have immediately given up possession of the ball and there is higher probability that the ball will go to the opposing team.
- We would estimate that the ball ends up with the opposition in more than 50% of times that the ball is kicked away.
- The second problem is that of an individual player development perspective.
- If we want players to improve and become good players then they must be able to master the ball or become proficient with it. This starts with receiving the ball and then deciding to perform a football action with it, dribble it, pass it, keep it or shoot it. When the player kicks the ball away every time they are only ever improving at one action, which is kicking it away, this is not an action we want to encourage if there is no thought or intention involved.

## **Why is it a Problem?**

- In order for the player to develop and improve as a player we must encourage them to do something meaningful with the ball every time it comes to them regardless of the pressure they are under or the outcome.
- We would argue the only exceptions to this rule would be if the player is trying to clear the ball off their own goal line to prevent a goal or if they are taking the opportunity to kick the ball first time in order to score a goal.
- We want to develop players that actively think about what they are doing with the ball in every moment of the game. We want to encourage and teach players at a young age football actions and we want them to have opportunities in the game to try all of them.

## **Solutions**

- Improve players ability to receive the ball. Design lots of Rondo and possession activities where receiving and keeping the ball under pressure are practiced.
- Improve players comfort on the ball and mastery of what they can do with it. Play lots of 1v1 activities where keeping the ball is emphasised.
- Start teaching young players when to choose which football action.
  - When should they dribble?
  - When should they pass?
  - When should they hide/shield the ball?
  - When should they shoot?
- Have all adults involved in your games, stop telling players to kick the ball away. Work with your parents to educate them why we don't want players to boot the ball away.
- Have all adults encouraged the players to receive the ball and perform a football action with the ball. Positive reinforcement for trying regardless of the outcome of the action.