



Sausage Rolls for Goalposts Children & the loss of imagination

“Imagination is the spark that ignites the fire of creativity”

The loss of imagination and creativity starts the first time a child kicks a ball, always using their toes. “Not that way, this way.”

If Ronaldinho had been corrected so young, he would not have scored that wonderful goal against Chelsea, two seasons ago in the Champions League, which won him the goal of the season award.

The ball came to him on the edge of the penalty box and with two defenders on top of him he did not have time to kick the ball in the conventional way with back-lift, but used his toes.

Petr Cech, the Chelsea keeper never moved, the ball was in the back of the net as he was expecting the expected.

That goal was about imagination and creativity and sadly few if any Englishman would have scored that as their imagination and creativity has been squeezed out of them like a nearly used tube of toothpaste. It lies discarded by the side of every sports pitch in this green and sometimes not so pleasant land.

But in their early years children are creative and full of imagination.

Take this funny observation by Richard Webb, a football coach from Essex.

“I listened to an interview the other day with (I can’t remember his name) a top sports scientist, who said the evidence now shows that coaching in sessions only improves the performance in the session itself. It does not transfer over into games very well, and the best way that kids will learn, is by themselves. It really is about providing the environment and letting them get on with it.

I went to a christening on Saturday and back to my brother’s house after for a bun fight. My four year old nephew and his mate played football non stop in the garden from about 12.30 up until it got dark.

At one point they set up two goals made from a pair of flip-flops at one end and two sausage rolls at the other end, about five yards apart.

They were lying on their sides taking alternate shots. When someone told them to get up, my nephew shouted “NO! We’re playing sit down football!”

It was great, but what struck me was the technique they picked up stretched out on their sides. They were getting a lot of power for 4 year olds and were very accurate. They just made it up by themselves.

It was a brilliant day and I learned something else about kids and football.”

The same coach observed the following.

“I did a session last week with some four, five and six year olds.

What became immediately obvious was that most of the four year olds had this ability to run with the ball. Ok so they ran off over the horizon and back with it, but I can tell you the ball was never more than a foot or two away from them. The older the kids I see for the first time, the less they seem to have this ability. I think in general, in this country we can sometimes be guilty of coaching this out of them.

We should be encouraging these abilities in their early formative years as much as possible. It's creativity at it's best and is less likely to be learnt as the kids get older."

So we must learn to let our kids go. Set up fun, stimulating games where they can explore and use their imagination. This is not just about football and sport in general it is about all aspects of our children's lives.

"All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up."
Pablo Picasso

Paul Cooper

<http://www.giveusbackourgame.co.uk>