



IDENTIFYING TALENTED PLAYERS

Talent is often defined as one who possesses certain skill, ability or expertise all of which is repeatable. Furthermore this talent is not reliant on physical size or strength. This is even more relevant in the case of the 13 to 17 year old players we look to engage in the West Perth Development Programs. Talent in football can come in a number of forms and any combination of attributes can make a promising player. At West Perth as a simple rule we follow the following five principles as a starting point.

Kicking Efficiency	Decision Making	Inside/Outside Play	Defensive Qualities	Pace versus Endurance
<p>The player must be able to consistently hit targets both by hand and foot.</p> <p>Kick left and right and execute a variety of kicks.</p>	<p>Under pressure, the player must consistently use the best option under time and physical constraints.</p>	<p>Is the player strong in the contest, can they win the ball in tight contested areas?</p> <p>Or is the player better used on the outside because they have pace and good skills?</p> <p>Combination of both?</p>	<p>Competitiveness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - does the player have a never give up mentality? - does the player aggressively attack the football and their opponent? - does the player have the ability to apply pressure through tackling and running. 	<p>Is the player's speed an asset to their game or is their endurance an asset or do they have an elite combination of both?</p>

3 PHASES OF AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL

When we have the ball	When they have the ball	When the ball is in dispute
<p>What does the player do when their team is in possession?</p> <p>Do they have the ability to read the play or find space?</p> <p>Do they have an understanding of good running patterns?</p> <p>Do they talk to their team mates?</p>	<p>What does the player do when the opposition has possession of the ball?</p> <p>Do they immediately man up on an opponent?</p> <p>Do they understand of defensive running (pushing back)?</p> <p>Do they benefit the team through pressure acts, tackling and constructive talking?</p>	<p>What does the player do when the ball is in dispute?</p> <p>Do they demonstrate competitiveness through pressure acts, finding space, blocking, constructive talking, running patterns and reading the play (offensively and defensively)?</p>

Ultimately the areas above, in collaboration with overall 'Footy Smarts', will determine if an individual is a talented, developing footballer.

- Reading the play:
 - *offensively; knowing **where** and **when** to move when your team is in possession or about to take possession.*
 - *defensively; covering the player in the most dangerous position or moving to where the ball is most likely to go that will most hurt your team.*
- Finding space: *identifying and moving to a part of the ground to command the football in a dangerous position.*
- Running patterns: *zone set up at stoppages, drawing opponents to create space behind you, ensuring you're not cutting off your teammates space/lead, being able to create space when it looks like there is none*
- Goal sense: *knowing what your capabilities are in shooting for goal. Having a brilliant understanding of your positioning within the forward 50. Can be an x-factor.*
- Vision: *exceptional decision making under pressure. A player with vision has an elite understanding of how the game is unfolding in real time. They can often pick out the correct option in a pressure situation.*
- Evasive skills: *navigating the traffic around a contested football and being able to avoid the tackler. Appear almost impossible to lay hands on.*
- Clean hands: *one grab player who has the ability to take the ball cleanly and quickly execute precision handballs. Someone who rarely fumbles the ball.*
- Athletic ability: *any individual or combination or attributes pertaining to their athleticism. Speed, height, lateral movement, strength, endurance, vertical leap, etc.*
- Genetics: *consider parent's height and sporting background, the age their siblings physically developed, their opportunity to demonstrate and develop their skill*



To simplify it can be useful to identify two key areas;

- Can they **GET** the ball?
- Can they **USE** the ball?



Proficiency in both areas is ideal however a player with an impressive competence in one of the two areas should also be given the opportunity. For example, if a player only gets the ball eight times in a game but his **USE** of the ball is particularly effective and damaging in the context of the game, then there is something to work with.

It is a common shortfall in football talent identification where a "recruiter" can become blinded by what a player **CAN'T** do, rather than appreciating and encouraging what the players **CAN** do well. It is important to remember talent ID is not an exact science this is what prompts such studies around nurture v nature.