



## HOW TO PLAY

# SNAPPING FOR GOAL

Steve Johnson is a magician in front of the sticks. **Howard Kotton** finds out why.

Steve Johnson's sublime skills in front of goal are no accident. They are the result of hard work from the first time he picked up a football as a youngster in the Victorian town of Wangaratta.

Many have marvelled at the star Cat's ability to kick the miraculous goal and he continues to work on this talent, even after 100 games.

"It's something I've practised all my life, since I've kicked the footy when I was five years old," Johnson said. "When you go down to the park or the local footy ground with a group of mates, you don't go out to the front of the goals, you always go to the boundary line and try to kick the miracle goal. At quarter-time, half-time and three-quarter time of matches, you go out and have a few snaps at goal and try to kick a banana."

At training, Johnson tries to simulate match conditions when practising snap shots at goal, so that it comes naturally in a game.

"We do it under a lot of pressure, so when it comes to a game situation you can perform under pressure," he said. "When you're doing the warm-up, we're basically running around the boundary and what I try to do is have a footy in my hands when we're getting near the goals. If I get a spare 30 seconds when I'm not stretching, I like to have a few shots just for practice."

Johnson is an expert at the banana and the dribbling kick on the run from an acute angle, much like his hero as a youngster, Collingwood legend Peter Daicos.

### PART 7 OF A SERIES – SNAP KICK FOR GOAL

Snap and banana kicks are generally used when shooting for goal from a tight angle. They curve in the shape of a banana, either clockwise or anti-clockwise. The banana kick is also known as a "checkside" kick.

"I used to love watching him (Daicos) do dribble kicks and all sorts of snap kicks. That's why I loved him as a player," Johnson said. "Instead of pretending you're going to kick a drop punt and then kicking a snap, I find it's better to position yourself to kick the snap, so you're not under as much pressure."

"If I can get in the right position and take a couple of steps, I get square with the goals, put the ball in the right position in my hands, then drop the ball and make contact with the ball on the point and have a good follow-through."

"If you kick a dribble (goal) from the left-hand pocket, you want to kick a banana with your right foot. If you can get the ball dribbling end over end, you want to get the ball bouncing the first time a metre or two in front of you, so it starts in the right direction."

"A lot of the time people have the problem of trying to kick it about five metres in front of them. By that stage it loses the right sort of spin on the ball and it can dribble anywhere." ■



## 1 GETTING BALANCED

Johnson is preparing to shoot from a tight angle near the boundary line and is using a snap kick. He is side on to the goals and the ball is held across the body, with the right hand forward and the other end of the ball pointing towards the target. He is looking at his focus point behind the centre of the goals.

## 2 GAINING MOMENTUM

Johnson has started to open up the target and gain momentum for the kick. He guides the ball down with his right hand so it will fall at an angle across his foot. His non-guiding arm is moving up and backwards off the ball for balance.

## 3 WINDING UP

Johnson is in the classic wind-up position for all kicks, with a long last stride on to his support leg. He has his back extended, hip rotated back and extended and leg flexed behind. He is watching the point of contact on the ball throughout.

## 4 MAKING CONTACT

He kicks well in front of his body and in a higher position than for a drop punt. He has contacted the right end of the ball (away from the goals), producing a spin on the ball so that it curves through the air towards the centre of the goals.

## 5 FOLLOW THROUGH

The follow through continues in a straight line through the kick as the ball travels to the goals. This is the one instance when the follow through does not go directly towards the target. If it is a set kick, there will be time for only about two steps before the kick because the umpire will call play on as soon as he steps off the line.

● Technical advice in this series courtesy of the AFL Development Department.