



*SALISBURY ROVERS FC*  
*CHILD-LED*  
*FOOTBALL*

*November 2019*

# *Rovers' model*

The thinking behind our child-led football model connects as follows:



# Children's rights



- The [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) establishes specific rights for children which can guide our practice including:
  - The right to be heard
  - The right to play. It distinguishes between unstructured and structured play.
- Other countries have introduced these rights in to sporting practice, e.g. [Norway](#).
- We must seek out and act upon children's views.

# *Self-determination theory of learning*

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- Putting kids first and empowering them will also encourage their intrinsic motivation. Engaging in activities for inherent enjoyment and pleasure is vital for happiness, retention and development in sport.
- Intrinsically motivated individuals aren't motivated by status but by an internal quest to get better at activities. Self-determination theory links this to meeting three basic psychological needs: autonomy (personal freedom), relatedness (relationships and community) and competence (a feeling of success). It is explained very simply in this very short video [here](#).
- Intrinsic motivation is found in children who engage in lots of free play, not looking for a coach to make them better but wanting to explore and make themselves better. There is a great little video story [here](#) about two rugby playing brothers and intrinsically motivated play.





# *Importance of play*

- Play fulfils an essential evolutionary role. It is the way children learn and practice the skills they need to grow and develop.
- Leading evolutionary psychologist, Peter Gray, defines it like this:

*"One of the crucial defining characteristics of play is that it's directed by the children or players themselves. It's self-directed. Adult-directed games like sports, or activities in school where a teacher is telling children what to do, is not play by my definition."*

- Peter Gray's [Ted Talk](#) is well worth a watch.
- Like the Children's Convention, there is a distinction between adult-structured activities and true free play.
- At Rovers, we aim to offer both but we value highly the creative and essential power of free play in children's lives. We want kids to want to play!

# *Skill acquisition (1)*

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- In terms of 'coached' play, we may use game design based on skill acquisition theory. This is the science that underpins movement learning and execution. Often, adults might think we 'give' kids skills by:
  - ❑ Using isolated activities. This short [video](#) explains the difference between isolated and constraints based learning.
  - ❑ Explicit instruction – like these comedic examples [here](#) and [here](#)
- One form of skill acquisition theory is **ecological dynamics**. This underpins the constraints led approach (see club guide [here](#)). Put very simply, the way a person perceives, will determine how a person acts.
- The idea of placing constraints is to provide opportunities (affordances) to perceive and act. The constraints on our perception and our actions are broken into three:
  - ❑ Individual - e.g. height, confidence, experience, psychological.
  - ❑ Environmental – e.g. weather, size of pitch, time of day.
  - ❑ Task - e.g. number of players, goals, size of balls.
- The combination of individual, task and environmental constraints produce **emergent behaviours**. This means that by manipulating the constraints, we can provide opportunities to act in a certain way.

# *Skill acquisition (2)*

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- This approach gives many opportunities to practice decision-making skills. It also taps into how players learn. This approach puts the player and their environment at the centre of the players learning.
- CLA suggests that individuals learn implicitly and produce actions through their own perception and experience. They have to solve the problem in the game themselves. The great thing about this approach is you can get kids to help you set these constraints and change and adapt them. It can be led by them.
- Also, because we are working with a game, the approach is representative of the playing environment and this can allow kids to transfer the skills they have learnt to the 'real game'.
- There are very short examples of perception and action in the sporting context [here](#) and [here](#). See also Rod Thorpe's short discussion on perception and decision-making [here](#) and the Teaching games for Understanding site [here](#). See also Bruce Lee talking about his [approach](#).
- There is also an interesting short video discussions on technique [here](#) and [here](#) describing the emergence of varied techniques in response to what is effective for the individual in the game.



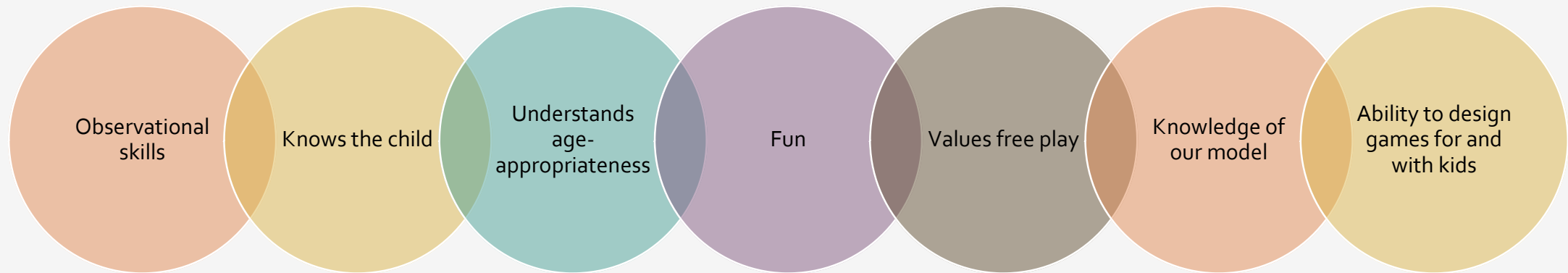
# *Environment creation*

- This describes the duties of all involved in our club, including kids and parents, to create the best environment in which children are prioritised and can develop.
- Ensuring our coach-facilitators understand our model is critical to this.
- We owe it to kids to be the best we can be.



# *What does a coach-facilitator do?*

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# *What can sessions look like?*

Below are some examples:

- Tag games
- 1v1s, 2v2s, 3v3s
- 'Big' football matches
- Underloads/overloads
- Street football games
- Tournaments
- Scenario games
- Player cards (created by players too)
- Child-led games – ask them and draw up a 'database' of favourites
- Different environmental settings, hard court, indoors etc, change shape of pitch, goals, number of goals, balls
- Psych-social challenges
- CLA as children develop
- Free play essential
- Use questions not direction – engage in dialogue
- If you intervene, you better be adding value!
- KNOW your kids! Ask them what they like and what they don't. Seek their views.



# *Resources*

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Key useful resources include:

- Cooper – Learning through play
- Wright – Outplay
- Wright – 50 SSG
- Player cards
- Recent football matches for scenarios
- Twitter @skillacq, @DrSkillAcq, @markstkhlm, @stu\_arm @\_gameplaylearn\_ and more on our [website](#)
- [TGfU](#)
- [Opposite Direction](#)