

Futsal is Taking Off

By Marko Barisic

The game is played with fewer players, within a smaller space, with smaller goals and less time. Instead of playing outdoors, they play indoors and instead of specifying who plays in what position, everyone both defends and attacks.

In essence the game is a smaller version of soccer called futsal. The game is more intense than soccer because the size of the playing area is so much smaller.

The origin of Futsal can be traced back to Montevideo, Uruguay, in 1930 when Juan Carlos Ceriani devised a five-a-side version of soccer for youth competition to be played in YMCAs. The word Futsal comes from the Spanish word for soccer - 'fut' and the Spanish word for indoor - 'sal'.

In the last half century, Futsal has gained a reputation as a great developer of football skill and has been made famous by Brazil and many argue that Futsal is a key factor of their flamboyant style of play. Even Pele, arguably the greatest soccer player to ever play the game, along with the majority of Brazilian soccer players have credited futsal with developing their skills.

Over the last quarter century futsal has become one of the most popular sports around the world, with more than 25 million people participating worldwide.

Closer to home Futsal has recently become affiliated under the Football Federation Victoria (FFV). As such progress is made in the way the game is being managed and the future looks promising.

This season, at West Footscray, there is an open age mixed competition (men/women) which started on Sunday 30th February and goes through to 29th May, currently fields eight teams in the league, with games taking place on Monday evenings. At the same venue there is also a Thursday night men's league starting shortly in Footscray.

Players of all ages, many of whom are current or former outdoor soccer players take part. The game has also proven to be popular with people who want to play socially with friends.

'It's fun and enjoyable'. Said Eric Huynh.

Futsal is very similar to indoor soccer, although there are some differences. It is played on a basketball-sized court, with no boards or nets keeping the ball in play, instead the boundary line is used to indicate the perimeter of the play. The ball is

specifically designed to have a low-bounce which demands that players use their skill to control the ball, instead of the ball's bounce, when the ball goes out of play, it must be kicked back in to restart play. In regular indoor soccer, there are boards or nets that keep the ball in bounds.

It differs from outdoor soccer in many ways including playing with five people instead of 11, with two 20-minute halves instead of two 40-minute halves, and instead of having an 8-by-24-foot goals, futsal has smaller goals that are about 3 feet high and 4 feet wide.

'It's Faster and harder than outdoor and there is more skill required.' Paul Vidic

Said. 'Also training 3 nights per week is not required.'

"Due to work commitments I don't have enough time to train and play for a soccer club" Said Theo Simaris "and the game is a great alternative, as it helps improve my overall sharpness and technique".

At an average standard of play it's a game of speed, finesse and running into space.

While most people play socially, futsal also offers other players other reasons to play. As George Moraitis states 'It's fast, it's competitive, and as a game it brings out the best in a player. Soccer players who are talented can adapt to futsal easily.'