



We are concerned that the beautiful game is in decline. Football for children is now very different from earlier generations when the only adult involvement was a call from your mum that your tea was ready. Football is no longer beautiful for our kids anymore: it's ugly. In a world where children can no longer play outside without supervision, parents and coaches have taken over. And the competitive drive adults bring to the game means youngsters no longer have time to fall in love with football, to play for fun and thus truly to develop their skills. Today's children learn from the grown-ups. Without the freedom of the streets, their early experiences of football are organised, supervised and coached. They have no real say in what happens, and they don't have time to develop and learn.

The problem areas are:

- \* No longer the children's game - it is controlled by adults
- \* The same children on the bench or omitted every game
- \* Coaches and parents screaming from the touchlines
- \* Winning before fun and development
- \* Not enough free play where children can solve their own problems
- \* Children are not encouraged to express themselves
- \* Children no longer learn about the spirit of the game for themselves

"For a young boy, playing football should be one of the most wonderful experiences of their lives, but sadly/regrettably many young players don't find it an enjoyable or pleasurable activity because too many adults (parents/coaches) are getting in the way by over coaching, shouting, screaming and raving, and having a win at all costs philosophy. Unless we adults (who have the power) get our act together on behalf of our young players, we will not have any football at all because young boys simply won't want to play - and who could blame them!"

I wish you well with your outstanding campaign

Tony Whelan - (Assistant Academy Manager U9-U16s Manchester United FC)

"Football should always be about enjoyment above all else, especially for youngsters, because if you don't enjoy it you won't continue to play and to progress. There is definitely a time and a place for football to get serious, but when kids are involved, it's all about making sure it's fun - and that's why I support Give Us Back Our Game."

Moritz Voltz - Fulham & Germany U21s

"More touches of the ball, more involvement in the game."

Sir Alex Ferguson (on why the younger players at Man Utd's Academy play 4v4)

"A touch is a touch, even a bad one."

Bert-Jan Heijmans - dutchUK football school (Originator of 'Let The Children Play' school project and the Magic Rectangle)

"Kids football is all about the individual loving the game: dribbling and shooting, playing games and scoring goals, experimenting and copying. It is very simple and lots of fun.

Adult football is all about the team and results. It is physical, tactical, complicated and very serious."

Tom Statham - Manchester United Academy

"I fully support the 'Give us back our game' campaign. It is about letting children be children and having fun. We have started to play 4v4 games at the under 9s age group in the Academy, and not only has it improved their skills and insight but the children love it. During a break between games one of the teams said 'We want to swap positions'. We say, 'You decide for yourselves, it is your game'. They love having the responsibility to make their own decisions both on and off the

pitch. It makes them better all round footballers and develops their communication and social skills." David Godley - Watford FC Academy

"Attitude is defined as a person's behaviour, which indicates his/her thoughts, feelings, or opinions. In youth sports, you can tell kids attitudes by watching their behaviour during training or a match. If they see a match as a game, with an opportunity to learn skills, compete, increase confidence, and have fun, they're able to go with the flow, have fun and relax.

Overall they show a sense of humour and a sense of good sportsmanship. And they're able to learn from their mistakes. However if they see the game as a pressure-filled event with winning as the only acceptable outcome, most of their energies will be spent trying not to make mistakes. If they make mistakes (which is inevitable in youth sports) they'll use lots of energy making excuses, blaming others and complaining about the referee's etc;

Darell J. Burnett - Clinical & Sports Psychologist

"A lot of great players in the world will often say they don't know how they produced a piece of game changing magic - "It just happened", said with a shrug of the shoulders.

What has actually happened is that they have often merely instinctively carried out an act from the archives of tricks and instincts built up over the years of playing football with no boundaries in their formative years."

Oscar Egbogu - (Grew up playing street football in Africa and now plays 5-a-side in London)

"I have managed a primary school team and I have to say that Premiership managers don't know the meaning of the word pressure. You don't get Wayne Rooney's Mum shouting at the manager for not putting her child on. And it's not often you get three premiership stars forgetting their boots so they have to play in their school shoes. Kid's football should be fun. It doesn't matter who wins. In other words 'my kid's team didn't win that often...'

John O'Farrell - Writer & Broadcaster