

Darren Burgess

fast4football.com catches up with Australian Qantas Socceroos conditioning coach and sports science co-ordinator Darren Burgess. Darren is a very experienced conditioner and without doubt one of the best in the business, we are glad to have him on as our first guest coach for our Q & A section, the willingness to help where ever he can is much appreciated by us and we are sure appreciated by you the reader.

Q) What was your first impression of working with elite soccer/football players after working In the AFL with Port Adelaide?

The professionalism of the players was really quite similar. I guess the biggest difference is the training regime. The AFL players are in the gym 3-4 times per week whereas the Socceroos are lucky find time to go to the gym once a week.

Q) Your work with the Socceroos and your previous role in the AFL has you looking after some of the best athletes in the world, who would you rate as your top 3 players as far as speed or 'football speed' as we like to call it?

I would say that, in no particular order, Brett Emerton, Harry Kewell and Shaun Burgoyne (Port Adelaide AFL player). Brett has incredible top speed, as well as the ability to repeat that speed throughout a whole game. Harry has an incredible burst of speed, particularly with the ball at his feet, and Shaun Burgoyne is the most explosive athlete I've ever dealt with.

Q) When in the camp environment what is your major focus for the time you are there?

My major focus is keeping the players fresh. Most of the time they have traveled extremely long distances to be in camp so I don't get too much time to work on team fitness.

Q) For the trainers and coaches out there developing the future stars that you may work with one day, what advice would you give them to focus on, or to put it in another way, what fundamentals would you like them to have developed before they get to you?

Their skill level should obviously be at a certain level, this can't be underestimated. Physically, a player's football speed is paramount to success at both national and international level. A developing player must, in conjunction with appropriate skill training, develop sound speed technique and a strong base 'core' in order to prevent injuries.

Q) You have had the opportunity to work with some of the world's best coaches and also have the opportunity to observe some of the world's best coaches/trainers in action. Who has influenced you and who would be some of the best you have seen?

As far as pure coaches, Pim Verbeek, Graham Arnold and Mark Williams all have an incredible ability to get the best out of players. As far as football trainers, Valter di Salvo (Real Madrid) and Danielle Tognaccini (AC Milan) are both unbelievably professional and thorough in the preparation and development of their athletes. Within Australia, Jason Weber (formerly of the Wallabies and now Fremantle AFL) and Hayden Knowles (Parramatta Eels NRL and former NSL club Parramatta Power, and somebody who I trust with my players) are the best fitness coaches, particularly with respect to developing explosive power.

Q) As far as fitness is concerned who is the best player you have worked with and what makes him stand out above the rest?

As far as attention to detail, I can't split Tim Cahill, Harry Kewell and Mark Schwarzer. All 3 of them have an incredible work ethic and spend an unbelievable amount of time on their fitness. Athletically, Brett Emerton is the best all round athlete. He has amazing football speed, and can repeat this throughout an entire game, regardless of the conditions.

Q) You are doing plenty of study and analyses as far as match demands on players in professional football, are there any interesting facts you could share with us on current players or recent games we would be familiar with?

Probably the most interesting fact comes from the two recent games the Socceroos have played in Qatar over the past year. In the game in 2008, Brett Emerton sprinted an incredible 1.8km (and scored 2 goals) when the temperature was

over 35 degrees. In the game this year Jason Culina played in defence and still ran over 13km in temperatures over 37 degrees!

Q) What is the most difficult aspect of your job?

Keeping track of the players when they are based all over the world

Q) What is the most satisfying part of your job?

Working with some incredibly professional athletes and seeing young athletes I work with achieve their goals

Q) What would be your proudest moment in your working career?

I think that will be next year when I go to the World Cup with the Soccerroos!

Q) Out of the fast4football philosophy <http://www.fast4football.com/Philosophy.html> what would be the component you would spend the most of your training time on?

Skills at Speed! This is the most crucial aspect of football once you reach a certain level of performance. I get a great kick out of designing drills that combine skills and speed so that players can work on complete football

Thank you for your time Darren, fast4football.com looks forward to catching up again soon, well done with the Soccerroos qualifying for the world cup and good luck for the upcoming year leading into South Africa 2010

Thanks, and congratulations on such a fantastic website. I'll be sure to visit regularly to make sure I keep up to

date with all the great exercises and drills you have.