

Wow! Where have England been these past 20 or 30 years?

Recent research from the England really tells you why the English, who invented the modern game, are now struggling when it comes to World Cup and European Play ([Click here for link](#)) .

They've suddenly realized that young players are not being exposed to the right environment as they were by happenstance 50 or more years ago when England was the recognized powerhouse of the game. It has taken them a long, long (lost) time to discover that.

In 1988, Bobby Howe, then the Director of Coaching of the Washington State Youth Soccer Association, later to be the DOC of the United States Soccer Federation, and I wrote a manual called "Coaching 6, 7 & 8 Year Olds." At that time, as differently than today, very few children were starting to play soccer earlier than those ages.

During the 60's and 70's I had developed a form of 3 vs. 3 soccer (in my Blackpool and Liverpool days) that was fun, but developmentally-appropriate for all ages and particularly so for the very young players. In the book, we called it Micro Soccer. We included as many of the elements as we could that would make the game appealing to a 6-year old player and left out those elements that would make it anything but appealing - such as offside, sharing one ball with 21 others, 8 foot high goals, fields over 100 yards long...well you get the picture. It wasn't revolutionary. Children had been playing a similar format developed by themselves when it was safe to go out on the fields and play on your own (whatever happened to those days?).

England it would seem, has suddenly discovered that Centres

of Excellence and Academies are not going to do it if the youngest players have not been nurtured and encouraged and enthused and developed and excited...sorry to go on...before they get anywhere near an Academy.

In the early 90's, the United States Youth Soccer Association released its official 3 vs. 3 and 4 vs. 4 Program. It is no coincidence that the progress of American soccer is such that in 20 short years it has almost caught up to the top soccer nations of the world and gone past plenty of others.

We've highlighted the Micro Soccer Game in the Practice Section for the youngest players.

If you haven't been to the link already, please take a peek. The good news for England - and it's the place I played and love - is that it is not too late. What England has failed to do in the past 20 years can be more than made up for in the next 20 - if they get their act together. The talent and the desire to play football are there. It's a part of their culture. It just needs the opportunity of being cultivated - organically.