

Outline of talk by Brennan Cofield

at The Hiland Hall Graduation June 7, 2024

For the graduates: Tai, Camden, Matt, Marlo & Weslyn

This year, there has been sort of a thing about soccer. Many of the seniors would declare it to be their favorite sport, and I'll go as far as to say that they all tolerate it. I also enjoy soccer, and I began to think about these 5 kind of how Matthew did when he made a Hiland Hall School Indoor Soccer Team as part of a Self Directed Homework that culminated in a real team taking the court. Complete with jerseys, on which Tai screenprinted a logo, opting to honor Camden's Australian heritage with a stunning departure from our iconic Duckie logo to that of the Kangaroos.

Anyway, there are 5 key positions in soccer: winger, striker, midfielder, defender and goalie. And each senior of this year's class, kind of embodies the purpose of that position. They also all seem to enjoy that position most, or, at least in the eyes of a long time sports coach, are best suited for that position.

The role of a **striker** in soccer is primarily focused on scoring goals.

- **Technical Skills:** Strikers need to have solid technical skills, including ball control, dribbling, and shooting. These skills are crucial for finishing scoring opportunities and maintaining possession under pressure.
- **Physical Strength:** *the gym at town, moving tables and large items, getting banged around by yours truly in the soccer games. We do ask students to adjust their physicality with each other - but it is depending on age of your opponent, so Tai could go harder on me....*
- A good striker can significantly impact the outcome of a game by scoring crucial goals and creating opportunities for their team. Their ability to perform under pressure and their presence on the field can dictate the flow of the game and often determine the success of their team.

Tai - So, strikers create. Larry the Inchworm, various inside jokes, making box, they bring energy and competition to the field, but have to control it to do their best.

- I like your Making Box skills. I liked that shield that you made not that long ago
- You are great at soccer. Remember when you scored 2 goals in one game?
- But I also appreciate how even though we joke around a lot (A LOT) I do still feel that once in a blue moon I am abl to have a very civil conversation with you. You also are one of the main people who actually showed me how to play several sports.
- You seem like a dedicated soccer player who enjoys playing the game.

The role of a **winger** in soccer is multifaceted, involving both offensive and defensive responsibilities. Wingers are positioned on the left or right flanks of the field and are crucial for providing width to the team's attack. They stretch the field by holding space. Here are the key aspects of a winger's role:

- creating space for central players and facilitating attacking plays: Matthew brings everyone into his ideas, from cooking projects, to domino runs, to his joint personal writing, finger knitting.
- **Crossing:** Delivering accurate crosses into the box is a primary task. These crosses can lead to goal-scoring opportunities for strikers and other attacking players. Matthew's lobs crosses at teachers whenever there is a chance that stretching or outside time may be affected by a scheduling change, trying to ensure these coveted teams remain untouched for everyone.

- **Dribbling:** Wingers often take on defenders one-on-one, using their dribbling skills to advance the ball up the field and break down defenses. Dribbling through the defense, is a lot like making complex sentences, stringing together thoughts into bigger picture thinking, and even drawings lines all around pages until you get a beautiful map.
- **Creating Goal-Scoring Opportunities:** By exploiting open spaces and making penetrating runs, wingers create chances for themselves and their teammates. Elected as the democratic dictator, even Matthew's peers look to him to create chances for everyone, or settle disputes, or just provide wisdom. Although like a winger, he can sometimes get stuck wondering if he should press up the field, or drop back. IF I ask Matthew right now if he wants to graduate today - he may waffle, well, there are pluses and minuses to doing so, and they're all reasonable so.....JUST DECIDE MATTHEW!
- **Tactical Knowledge:** Understanding the game tactically is essential for wingers to position themselves effectively, make intelligent runs, and contribute to both attacking and defensive phases. Matthew understands systems - from his civil engineering maps, to business plans, and chock full travel itineraries, he sees the big picture and can see a way to navigate it.

Matthew

- I like how you are helping me and Everett do the finger knitting project. You always help people out when they need it, especially me and Everett
- Your maps are awesome and you're doing so good as Hemlock.
- I appreciate how super kind and helpful you are. When we're on the bus, you always me us all laugh!

The role of a **midfielder** in soccer is highly dynamic and multifaceted, involving both offensive and defensive responsibilities.

- **Controlling the Tempo:** They are responsible for controlling the game's tempo, dictating the pace of play, and maintaining possession. Camden brings a measured pace to the group. It's clear he is enjoying himself with friends, but Camden does not ever take it too far. He stays in bounds, and in control.
- **Versatility:** Midfielders must be versatile, capable of contributing to both defensive and offensive plays, and often covering a lot of ground during a match. Camden works well with all ages, even given his laid back demeanor, he can gently guide youngsters on group projects, or provide ideas and balance to MS group work.
- **Passing and Distribution:** Midfielders need to have excellent passing abilities to maintain possession and create scoring opportunities. This includes short passes, long passes, through balls, and crosses. Camden is well liked by everyone in the group.
- **Covering for Defenders:** When defenders are out of position, midfielders can drop back to provide cover and prevent the opposition from creating scoring opportunities.

Camden - midfielders work with everyone

- You're insane at soccer, and I think you are funny and nice. You seem actually interested in what I do. You were great to do a study with together and thanks for working with me.
- I find you are very easy to work and hang out with and you are also a person who taught me a lot about sports. Plus, you always have a mirror of you.

The role of a **defender** in soccer is primarily focused on preventing the opposing team from scoring and supporting the overall defensive strategy of the team. On most teams, defenders are veterans. They remain with their teams the longest, have the longest careers and play with the most variety of teammates. They become legends for their clubs or countries.

- **Pressuring and Positioning:** Defenders apply pressure on attackers and position themselves to force the attacker into less dangerous areas or towards supporting defenders. Proper positioning is essential to cut off passing lanes and limit the attacker's options.
- **Clearing the Ball:** When under pressure, defenders often clear the ball away from the goal area to reduce immediate threats. This can involve long, unaimed kicks to move the ball as far from the goal as possible.

Marlo

- I think you are great with art (to a stupid degree, in a good way). You are fun to hang out with even though I don't know you very well. I also had a lot of fun during the camping trip doing karaoke.
- You are very good at drawing. I like to see how your art style has changed over the years.
- I appreciate all the beautiful art you make and how seeing your art fills me with joyfulness!

Marlo mentioned how we much today - except "I don't have dots". I told her - grab a sharpie, that has never stopped you before - just look at her shoes, or customized sweatshirts, or sewing projects. Marlo creates like a midfielder, but hanging back on defense taking in the whole game is more her style, gentle swatting away through sarcasm and a smile her peers.

The role of the **goalie**, or goalkeeper, in soccer is crucial and multifaceted, involving a range of responsibilities and skills that are unique to this position. This position requires a unique set of skills, including agility, strength, anticipation, and leadership, making it one of the most specialized and critical roles on the field.

- **Distribution:** Goalkeepers are responsible for distributing the ball to their teammates through throws, goal kicks, and sometimes free kicks. Effective distribution can initiate counter-attacks and maintain possession.
- **Communication and Leadership:** Goalkeepers must communicate effectively with their teammates, providing instructions and maintaining defensive organization. They often act as leaders on the field.
- **Agility and Reflexes:** Quick reflexes and agility are crucial for making saves, reacting to shots, and moving swiftly in any direction.
- **Strength and Endurance:** Physical strength and endurance are necessary to withstand the demands of the position, including jumping, diving, and maintaining concentration throughout the match.
- **Anticipation and Decision-Making:** Goalkeepers must anticipate the actions of opposing players and make quick decisions on whether to catch, punch, or parry the ball.
- **Specialized Training:** Due to the unique demands of the position, goalkeepers typically train separately from outfield players, focusing on specific skills like shot-stopping, distribution, and aerial ability.

Weslyn - goalies lead the team, supporting from behind to move forward. She protects younger goalies, and even covers for me when I get carried away and take off down the field.

- I feel like you are always the responsible one but still joke around and stuff. You help keep everybody in check when it gets a little crazy.
- I appreciate the way you laugh! And how you are always such a good sportsman during the big games!

So, even though I am firmly Team Messi, I will do this one thing for you, Tai, and all the seniors, as we celebrate you today, on scoring what is just one of your many goals in life.