



# COACHES' CORNER

## CREATIVE COACHING: TEACHING COACHES TO BE CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE

By **Wayne Goldsmith**

**W**rite down your own list of the top 10 skills of quality coaching. What does it look like? Something like this?

1. Communication skills
2. Passion
3. Empathy with athletes
4. The ability to engage with athletes and inspire athletes to fully engage with the program
5. Enthusiasm
6. Technical knowledge
7. An understanding of the relevant principles of sports science and sports medicine
8. Energy
9. Curiosity (which inspires a passion for learning)
10. A commitment to continuous improvement and accelerated learning.

You could add hundreds of skills to this list: experience, drive, initiative, the will to win, attention to detail, commitment, vision, determination, a strong work ethic etc. There are as many desirable coaching skills as there are coaches.

But, in this century, there is one coaching skill to rule them all – creativity. The question is: Can you teach coaches to be creative? The simple answer is “Yes we can. We can teach coaches to be creative.”

It is not easy. It is much easier to teach what's known, what's been published, what's been researched, or what's been done before than it is to teach coaches how to create something new.

But, now, more than ever, creativity is a critical coaching skill and the ability to accelerate learning faster than your opposition has never been more important.

In the pre-internet days, coaches came up with new ideas, created new plays, created new training techniques and gained a winning advantage over their opposition. Now, any winning advantage lasts about two minutes. You come up with a new idea, you nurture it, you grow it, you kick it around with your coaching colleagues seeking feedback and after a lot of thinking you decide to take a risk by introducing it to your athletes at training and two minutes later the dad of

one of the athletes has taken a video of your revolutionary new idea on his Blackberry, uploaded it to YouTube and players all over the world have free and immediate access to your best and most brilliant thinking.

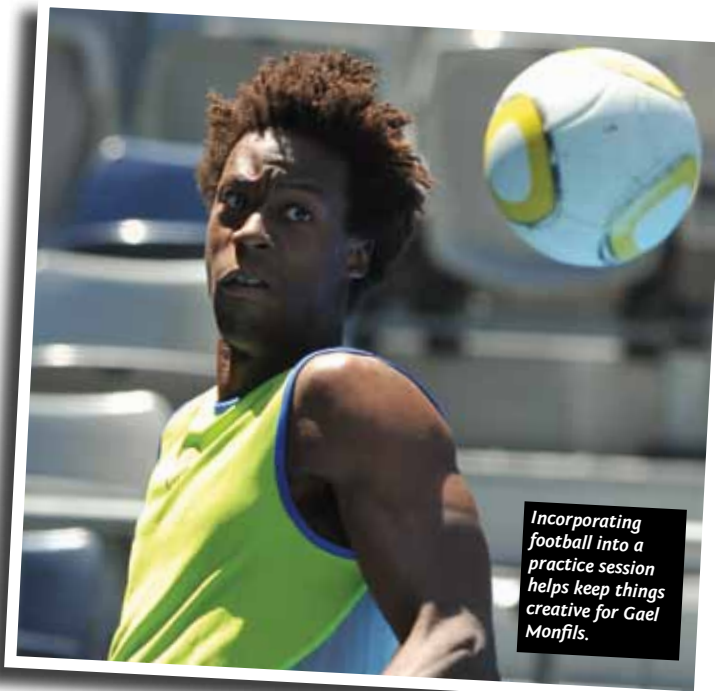
That's the world we live in and the half-life of ideas is only going to get shorter as mobile technologies and social media tools become more efficient, more powerful, more accessible and cheaper.

So, the challenge for coaches seeking to gain a winning advantage is to become more creative: to create new ideas, new directions and new paths to help athletes to enhance their performance.

Winning coaching in this century means learning faster, creating faster and applying ideas faster: faster than your opposition and faster than at any time in the history of sport.

### FIVE GOLDEN RULES OF CREATIVE COACHING

1. The idea must be new to your sport – it can't just be a copy of something someone else is doing or has done. But it can be an idea you have from another sport or another field of endeavour.
2. It must work – it must improve performance.
3. It must be able to be communicated and understood by athletes who can then use the idea to accelerate their rate of their performance enhancement.
4. It must itself be flexible and also subject to change, adaptation and evolution: there is no place for static thinking in sport.
5. It must not be limited by the restrictions or boundaries of past thinking i.e. to be



truly creative the idea must not have limits imposed on it based on what has worked or not worked in the past.

The opportunity for the creative coach to be successful has never been greater. In the past, the opportunity to be a successful coach may have been limited to the coach's access to quality information, the latest coaching resources or coach education programs.

Now, all you need is access to a laptop and an Internet connection and all that has limited you in the past is readily available. Knowledge is not the limiting factor in coaching: it's creativity. It's being more creative than your opposition and it's your capacity to take what's known and, by being creative, going into the unknown.

Creativity as a core coaching skill has never been more important: take a risk, be innovative and change your sport with creative coaching.

*Read the full version of this blog at [sportscoachingbrain.com/creative-coaching-teaching-coaches-to-be-creative-and-innovative](http://sportscoachingbrain.com/creative-coaching-teaching-coaches-to-be-creative-and-innovative) or sign up for regular email posts from Wayne Goldsmith at [sportscoachingbrain.com](http://sportscoachingbrain.com).*

# MLC TENNIS HOT SHOTS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

“My seven-year-old lost his way this year. He was unwell and admitted to hospital for a time. He lost some of his motor skills and his confidence.

His behaviour became very difficult due to frustration. He lost his enthusiasm for ball sports. Everyone who knew him felt sad for a little fellow who was regarded as being a happy boy with a real spark for life; who rollicked through his days at 100 miles per hour. Through the support of his Hot Shots coach and the suitability of the program for development of ball skills, he has regained his “mojo” and is focusing again. He recently enjoyed participating in the Red Ball Challenge. He (and his nine-year-old sister) became so enthused about tennis that they would get up at 6am, have their beds made, set the breakfast table and pack their school bags on tennis days. The best thing for him about the Red Ball Challenge was being part of a team and helping each other and going out and having fun together. I wonder if this is what Pat Rafter is after for the next generation of kids that wants to play for Australia ... being able to bottle that enthusiasm for the team; playing well individually but also being able to celebrate a team mate's success as well.”

– Appreciative parents from Jason Lindeman's coaching business



Jason Lindeman's tennis students in their special Red Ball Challenge team outfits.

The feedback from all the parents whose children were involved with the Red Ball Challenge was extremely positive:

- “My three kids have improved out of sight with Hot Shots and all enjoyed it immensely. It has taken their enthusiasm to another level.”
- “My six-year-old woke me at six this morning to go for a hit – which I promised yesterday I would do today.”

The eight kids we had in the Challenge can all rally well over 100 shots in a row, with a highest rally score of 432.

Jason Lindeman, High Performance Coach and MLC Tennis Hot Shots deliverer. Along with brother Bryce, Lindeman runs MLC Tennis Hot Shots at Camberwell Junction, Banyule and St Johns Tennis Centre in Heidelberg.

## KELMATT TENNIS COURT SCREENS AND POST PADDING

VTA APPROVED



- Reduce loss of valuable en-tout-cas
- Better ball sighting
- Better playing conditions
- Safety post padding

**KELMATT ARE PROUD SUPPLIERS  
TO THE AUSTRALIAN OPEN.**



**KELMATT AUSTRALIA PTY LTD**

36 Jellico Drive Scoresby 3179

Ph: (03) 9763 8522 Fax: (03) 9763 1090

kelmatt@kelmatt.com.au Mob: 0412 328 858

www.kelmatt.com.au

ENQUIRIES THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA WELCOME

## Serious about your tennis?

Train at a leading Australian Tennis Academy

LifETIME's High Performance Academy has a track record of producing some of Australia's leading tennis players.

A training system designed to your game style



Learn the techniques used by Pat Rafter

Lifetime's Tennis Academy provides world class training. Full time academy/school programs/ squads/privates.

LifETIME's Tennis Program uses the most advanced techniques in coaching, fitness, sports psychology and medicine.

Our program treats you as an individual and each day you do specific drills designed for your game style – not someone else's.

The High Performance Tennis Program includes:

- Individualised on-court training program
- Individualised player profiling
- Home stay accommodation
- Fitness testing with leading sport medicine experts
- Tournament travel and management
- Private/State School or Distance Education

Players programs are supervised by Gary Stickler (Australian Tennis Coach of the Year 2005/2006) and Graeme Brimblecombe (former AIS men's coach and Qld State Coach). Gary and Graeme have worked with a number of Australian stars inc. Pat Rafter, Scott Draper, Paul Handley, Nick Lindahl, John Millman, Joel Lindner, Jason Kubler, Sam Stosur, Ashling Summer and 30 other state and national titleholders incl. 2010 Australian 12's champion Naiktha Bains.



Visit us at [www.lifetimetennis.com.au](http://www.lifetimetennis.com.au)  
Or Phone 07 3261 7777 or 07 3716 0077