

# GAME CHANGER



## Irish FA Futsal Strategy

2016 - 2020





## FOREWARD

The Irish FA are proud to present the first ever Association Futsal Strategy “Game Changer”. This strategy will meet the targets presented in the Irish FA Corporate Strategy “We’re not Brazil, We’re Northern Ireland” and the Youth Strategy “Let Them Play”. This document represents a determination to change the historical participation of indoor football played with rebound boards, wide goals and a bright bouncy yellow ball. “Game Changer” seeks to create a culture of Futsal across Northern Ireland and embed the game into all future Irish FA development plans.

The Irish FA would like to thank our colleagues in FIFA and UEFA for their support in the development of this strategy and their assistance in improving our knowledge of Futsal in recent years. The game of Futsal is extremely popular all over the world with 170 Federations participating in international competition. The Irish FA are confident that this strategy will pave the way for Northern Ireland to add to this number and be represented in FIFA and UEFA Futsal competitions in the future.

At Domestic and Grassroots level the Irish FA will deliver Futsal programmes across the educational sector in Primary Schools, Post Primary Schools, College and Universities. We will create festival participation opportunities and competitions for both males and females. A nationwide youth and senior club programme will also be established that will enhance the development opportunities during inclement weather and also create competitive opportunities for males and females that want to concentrate on Futsal. Coach and referee education structures will also be enhanced to provide those coaching and officiating the game to receive the best education possible to further develop their knowledge and grow the sport across Northern Ireland.

The Irish FA believe that Futsal should not be viewed as a magical cure for developing more technically competent players but it can support and play an important role in improving the technical, tactical and physical qualities of the future generation of players. Futsal can also increase participation opportunities for senior players to encourage lifelong involvement in sport and physical activity. Futsal can be a viable alternative to football for those that can no longer play competitively or for those that wish play recreationally.

The Irish FA are confident that Futsal will be welcomed and celebrated across Northern Ireland. We are certain that this strategy will truly be a “Game Changer” for the Association.



Patrick Nelson  
Irish FA Chief Executive



Jim Shaw  
Irish FA President



Michael Boyd  
Irish FA Director of  
Football Development

### OUR VISION



To create a culture of Futsal throughout Northern Ireland that transforms indoor football. Educating players, coaches, teachers, schools and clubs. Providing vehicles for player development, alternatives to the eleven a side game, performance prospects and opportunities for lifelong participation in physical activity.

# INTRODUCTION

Futsal is the only version of 5-a-side football that is supported by FIFA and UEFA with World and European Championships for clubs and national teams. The name combines the Spanish words for hall “sala” and football “futbol” into “Futsal”. The game is predominantly played on an indoor pitch with handball-sized goals and a size 4 ball for adults or a size 3 ball for children both with reduced bounce. It is played to

touchlines and all players are free to enter the penalty area and play the ball over head height.

The laws of Futsal also promote skilful and creative play above physical contact. Futsal players are constantly placed in situations where they must receive or play under pressure in confined spaces. The game therefore places considerable demand on technique, movement, tactical awareness,

quick decision making and fitness. As a result, the Irish FA believe that Futsal will play an instrumental role in developing our football talent and will also provide a viable positive option for those who believe they are not suited to football. As Futsal is predominantly played indoors it is also well suited to Northern Ireland’s mild yet inclement weather.

## STRATEGIC CONTEXT



### Corporate & Youth Strategy

- Qualify for a Major Tournament
- Foster a balanced, flourishing senior domestic game
- Create a healthy game at all levels
- Reach beyond the game
- Build a culture of lifelong participation in football



### Sport Matters

- Promote sport & physical recreation as a primary health improvement tool
- A world class start and lifelong involvement in sport and physical recreation for all people
- World class performances by teams and individuals
- A sustainable sporting and physical recreation culture that contributes to broader government objectives



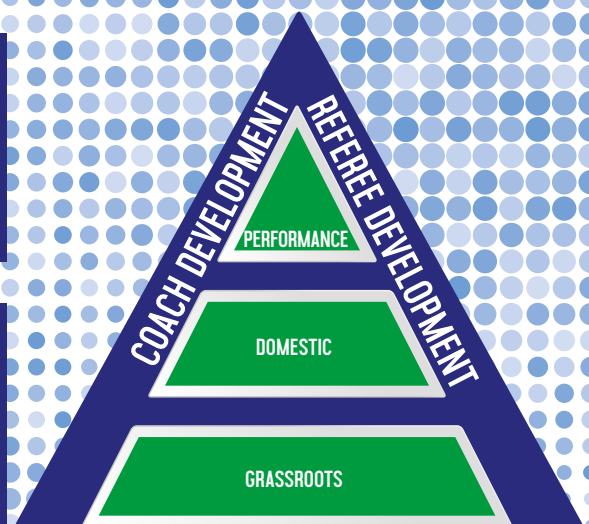
### Programme for Government

- Creating opportunities and tackling disadvantage
- Improving health and well-being
- Building a strong and shared community



### UEFA Charter Mark

- Grow participation, especially amongst girls
- Design, develop and deliver youth specific coach education
- Enhanced club and volunteer development
- Football thriving in schools



# GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT

## Objectives

- ❖ Engage Schools, Colleges, Universities, Councils and Community facility providers to adapt their halls to facilitate Futsal. Ensuring one futsal facility in every town and city in Northern Ireland by 2020.
- ❖ Over 2,000 school children, boys and girls, in Primary and Post Primary Schools participating in Irish FA Futsal festivals and competition every year.
- ❖ 2,000 registered Youth Futsal Players playing in Irish FA Futsal Development Centres by 2020 (25% of all players being female).
- ❖ 2,000 registered Youth Futsal Players playing in Irish FA Schools and College's Futsal Development Leagues by 2020 (25% of all players being female).

Futsal is a fun, enjoyable and exciting game. Futsal is a sport in its own right and does not have to compete with football, but can serve as a supportive tool. Futsal is widely considered to be valuable in the development of young players to assist them in becoming more technically proficient. Tactically, the game is directly transferable to football and Futsal provides players with numerous opportunities

to practice the principles of attacking and defending.

Irish FA Football Development staff will offer a variety of events and competitions that will provide school children with opportunities to be introduced to the game of Futsal. These participation opportunities will lead to the development of Post Primary School and College development leagues for both boys and girls.

Futsal will be introduced within all of Northern Ireland's Universities. Sports Unions will be engaged to establish male and female Futsal clubs and the Irish FA will facilitate an annual University competition. Further development of University Futsal will lead to the inclusion of Northern Ireland representation in BUCS Futsal competitions for both males and females.



## GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT



Futsal is a perfect alternative to football in the winter months when outdoor matches are regularly cancelled due to inclement weather. The Irish FA will introduce Futsal as a programme for grassroots club players during times of bad weather and/or as part of structured pre season. Players participating in Irish FA Games Development Centres will be provided with opportunities to increase their active season and use the time that would be sacrificed to poor weather.

The Irish FA will establish Under 18, Under 16, Under 14 and Under 12 boys regional leagues to increase contact time and create an environment that encourages positivity, creativity and technical competence. Female regional leagues will also be created at Under 17, Under 15, Under 13 and Under 11 as part of an enhanced preseason and provide an increase in competition opportunities.

Futsal will have a positive impact on recreational participation. Historically the Irish FA has not documented recreational participation in indoor football or been involved in the development of recreational players amongst indoor football. Futsal therefore offers the Irish FA a new development opportunity to provide structured recreational programmes across Northern Ireland and in the process achieve increased participation objectives set by UEFA as part of their Charter Mark. This is particularly important for the age range of 16 to 25 which has been identified as the highest drop out point.

Futsal can also increase participation opportunities for senior players to encourage lifelong involvement in sport and

physical activity. Futsal can be a viable alternative to football for those that can no longer play competitively or for those that wish to play recreationally.

The Irish FA will work with local authorities to ensure that every leisure centre in Northern Ireland that has an indoor hall receives Futsal goals and Futsal balls. The Irish FA will work with these facilities to provide court markings. The Association will also work with independent facility providers, community groups and education facilities to develop suitable Futsal facilities to be used for training sessions, events and competitions.

The implementation and success of "Game Changer" will be represented in the changed landscape of indoor football

across Northern Ireland. The replacement of traditional 5-a-side goals, rebound walls and bouncy yellow footballs with Futsal equipment will represent a change in culture and the cementing of Futsal in Northern Ireland. In order to assist with this process the Irish FA will commit to providing Futsal goals for 50 facilities across Northern Ireland in 2016.



## DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT

### Objectives

- ❖ Establish Senior Male and Female Domestic competition by 2016.
- ❖ Establish 8 Domestic Futsal venues by 2016.
- ❖ Develop Male Under 18 and Female Under 17 Domestic competition by 2017
- ❖ 48 males clubs and 32 female clubs participating in Senior Domestic competition by 2020.
- ❖ 32 male clubs participating in Under 18 Domestic competition and 32 female clubs participating in Under 17 Domestic competition by 2020.

The Irish FA will create competitive opportunities for male and female clubs, both youth and senior, on a regional basis across Northern Ireland. Female clubs will endorse Futsal as part of their structured preseason and will therefore lengthen the participation opportunities for female players and subsequently enhance development experiences.

Male domestic competition will be established initially for Senior clubs and grow to include regional and national competition for Under 18s to Under 12s. The creation of domestic competition will provide positive participation opportunities for footballers to play during periods of bad weather and/or provide additional competition outside the football season. For others domestic Futsal will be an alternative to football for those wishing to concentrate and further their development solely in Futsal.

Domestic competition will initially take place outside the football season for both males and females to encourage

greater participation and the growth of Futsal across Northern Ireland. In time the Irish FA would like to conduct domestic competition in line with the European Futsal calendar. As a result the Futsal season will eventually run parallel to the football season and players will then choose to concentrate on either football or Futsal competition.

Initially the Irish FA will create development domestic leagues to encourage growth of the game. In 2017 the Irish FA will support the creation of the National Futsal League (NFL) which will be responsible for all domestic competition moving forward including fixtures, officiating and disciplinary matters. The Irish FA will support the work of the NFL and advise in an executive capacity.

The development of the domestic game will enhance the structures of football clubs across Northern Ireland. The Irish FA are committed to working with football clubs to be more inclusive and broaden their provision

to cater for female football, disability football and in time Futsal. This inclusive model will enable clubs to cater for a wider selection of participants and engage a greater section of the community.

The Irish FA will work with partners in UEFA to facilitate entry into the UEFA Futsal Cup for male national winners and the equivalent tournament for female national winners once this has been developed by UEFA.



# DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT

## Futsal Domestic Development



### CLUBS IN 2016

MALE 16

FEMALE 12

### CLUBS BY 2017

MALE 24

FEMALE 16

### CLUBS BY 2018

MALE 32

FEMALE 22

### CLUBS BY 2019

MALE 40

FEMALE 26

### CLUBS BY 2020

MALE 48

FEMALE 32

## Futsal Domestic League



### PARTICIPANTS IN 2016

MALE 160

FEMALE 120

### PARTICIPANTS BY 2017

MALE 240

FEMALE 160

### PARTICIPANTS BY 2018

MALE 320

FEMALE 220

### PARTICIPANTS BY 2019

MALE 400

FEMALE 260

### PARTICIPANTS BY 2020

MALE 480

FEMALE 320





# PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT

## Objectives

- ❖ Establish a Senior Men's International Squad in 2016 and be competing in friendly international fixtures by 2017.
- ❖ Senior Men's International Squad to be participating in EURO and World Cup Qualification by 2018.
- ❖ Establish an Under 18 Men's International Squad and a Women's Under 17 squad in 2017 and be competing in friendly international fixtures by 2018.
- ❖ Establish a Senior Women's International Squad in 2017 and be competing in friendly international fixtures by 2018.
- ❖ Provide International training camp and competition opportunities for development squads.
- ❖ Northern Ireland Male National Futsal Champions entered into UEFA Futsal Cup and Female National Futsal Champions entered into similar UEFA competition once established.
- ❖ Develop a National Futsal Training Centre and UEFA approved International venue by 2018.



## PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT

The Irish FA are focused on establishing male and female international Futsal squads that will initially provide a vehicle for talented participants within the domestic game to be identified and nurtured. Connections will be made with neighbouring Associations to establish friendly international fixtures in order to prepare appropriately to eventually participate in EURO and World Cup Qualification matches.

Performance development will also extend to male and female Youth International squads that will initially participate in friendly games in anticipation of UEFA and FIFA establishing greater Youth Futsal International competition in the future. These squads may also serve Olympic and Youth Olympic competition with Futsal currently being considered as a potential Olympic sport moving forward.

Working with partners within UEFA and established club contacts the Irish FA will create an International training camp

and competition programme for performance development squads. This programme will provide players with the opportunity to visit Futsal Professional Clubs and other Associations to gain valuable knowledge training with and playing against full time Futsal professionals.

The Irish FA will support the Northern Ireland Male National Futsal Champions in participating in the UEFA Futsal Cup. The Irish FA will also support the Female National Futsal Champions in entering a similar UEFA competition once it has been established. Continued promotion and increased exposure of successful club teams will serve to enhance the level of domestic competition and in turn raise the standards of players that can be selected for Northern Ireland Futsal squads in the future.

Northern Ireland will also establish Futsal International teams within Irish FA Disability programmes. Squads will represent Northern Ireland

in Deaf Futsal and Visual Impairment Futsal. These squads will be established in 2016 and will initially participate in training camps and friendly International fixtures with the aim to participate in International competition in 2017 and onwards.

As part of the Irish FA Corporate Strategy the Association will utilise investment from the Department for Communities to deliver a National Training Centre. It will become a training and preparation ground for Northern Ireland's national football teams, and a base for coaching and development work undertaken by the Irish FA. It is recommended that a National Futsal Centre be incorporated in these plans and include an international full size court with spectator facilities which will be able to host international matches as well as serve as a base for international training and coach education delivery.



## COACH DEVELOPMENT

### Objectives

- ❖ Over 1,000 Youth Football coaches and teachers to have completed the Irish FA Futsal Introductory Award by 2020.
- ❖ 400 coaches to have completed the Irish FA Futsal Level One Award by 2020.
- ❖ 25 coaches to have achieved the Futsal UEFA B Licence by 2020.
- ❖ Appoint male and female International coaching teams by 2016.
- ❖ Facilitate a FIFA Futsal Coaching Conference for local coaches by 2017.
- ❖ Establish a biennial National Futsal Coaching Conference beginning in 2018.
- ❖ Establish a Futsal Study Group Scheme for grassroots coaches by 2020.

Futsal is a game in its own right and therefore has its own techniques, skills and tactics that need to be mastered. In order for Futsal to grow in Northern Ireland the Irish FA recognise the importance of ensuring that there is an appropriate and structured Futsal Coach Education pathway in place which will support coaches in their ability to deliver effective Futsal sessions.

The Irish FA have created a Futsal Introductory Award which provides coaches with a basic theoretical understanding of the origins, rules and development benefits of the game along with practical examples of Futsal specific skilled practices and small sided games. These awards will be offered across all regional

centres and within sports specific Colleges and Universities on an annual basis.

An Irish FA Futsal Level One Award will be developed in 2016 to provide coaches that are involved in Futsal programmes with the necessary education to further enhance their knowledge of the game and the standard of sessions that they can deliver. The syllabus will focus on all aspects of the game such as technical requirements, tactical awareness, systems of play, set pieces, goalkeeping and conditioning. All coaches completing the Irish FA Futsal Level One Award will be required to complete a practical coaching assessment and competences relating to the laws of the game.



# COACH DEVELOPMENT

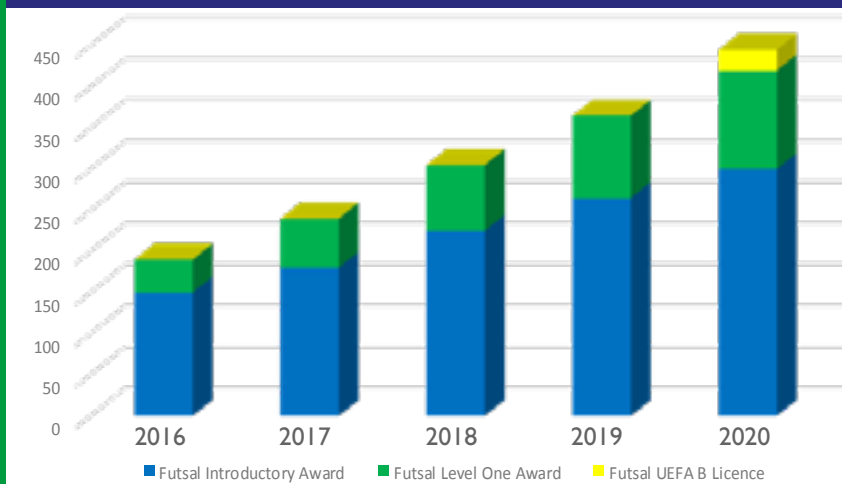
The Irish FA will enhance the Futsal expertise within the Association and suitably train tutors to possess the competencies and knowledge required to deliver the UEFA Futsal B Licence. The Irish FA will develop this Licence in collaboration with Futsal experts within UEFA and aim to deliver the first accredited course in Northern Ireland by 2020. Candidates will be selected from those working at the highest levels of the game within Northern Ireland.

In 2016 the Irish FA will appoint both Senior Male and Female International Coaching staff to service the talent identification and development of players involved in domestic programmes that graduate to the performance side of Futsal development.

It is envisaged that these staff will be appointed from within current Irish FA coaching staff but in the future as expertise grows externally this will be reviewed.



## Futsal Coach Education



The Irish FA will work with partners in FIFA to facilitate a Futsal Coach Education conference that will welcome Futsal experts from across Europe to provide presentations and practical sessions that will enhance the knowledge of Futsal coaches working within a variety of programmes across Northern Ireland. The coaches will be selected from attendance records within Irish FA Futsal Coach Education Courses and will serve to ignite the development of the game.

A biennial National Futsal Coaching Conference will encourage coaches from both Futsal and football backgrounds to participate in a world class coaching event to supplement their Futsal education or start them on the Futsal coaching pathway. The conference will invite Futsal experts from across Europe and Irish FA Futsal coaching staff to present both theoretically and practically. These conferences will provide opportunities to understand more about the game, provide training to enhance continuous professional development

and create a thirst for greater knowledge.

The Irish FA will facilitate a Futsal Study Group Scheme which will offer grassroots and performance Futsal coaches with opportunities to visit Futsal Professional Clubs and other Associations to gain valuable knowledge from full time Futsal professionals. This scheme will enable coaches to observe practical sessions and enhance their understanding of the development programmes within the club environments and Association strategies.

# REFEREE DEVELOPMENT

## Objectives

- ❖ Recruit 250 fully qualified Futsal referees by 2020.
- ❖ Develop a team of Futsal Referee Tutors to assist with referee development by 2016.
- ❖ Specialised development programmes establish for Futsal referees by 2017.
- ❖ Facilitate a FIFA Futsal Referee Conference for local referees by 2017.
- ❖ Have a referee officiating in UEFA and FIFA competitions by 2020.
- ❖ Coordinate specialised courses for Futsal referees.

This Irish FA have established a Futsal Referee Introductory Award that is designed to focus on knowledge of the FIFA Futsal Laws of the Game and the practical referee skills required to officiate a game of Futsal. This 10 hour course will include a theory and practical examination and will also educate participants on the Irish FA Futsal Referee pathway and development programme.

It is recommended that people with no previous refereeing qualification attend the 'Basic Futsal Referees Course' and if existing 11-a-side football referees wish to receive training in officiating in Futsal; they should attend a 'Conversion Course'. The conversion course for existing 11-a-side referees is aimed to be completed in one session lasting three hours including the examination at the end.

The Irish FA will establish specialised development programmes for Futsal referees by 2017. The emphasis for all Futsal referee development will be practical skills. The game of Futsal is fast paced, skilful and free flowing and the Irish FA want to work with a group of referees that believe in these facets of the game. Once the structured beginners course is completed a number of practical skills sessions will be held bi-monthly, ensuring our referees have the technical and practical knowledge to develop themselves and the overall game.



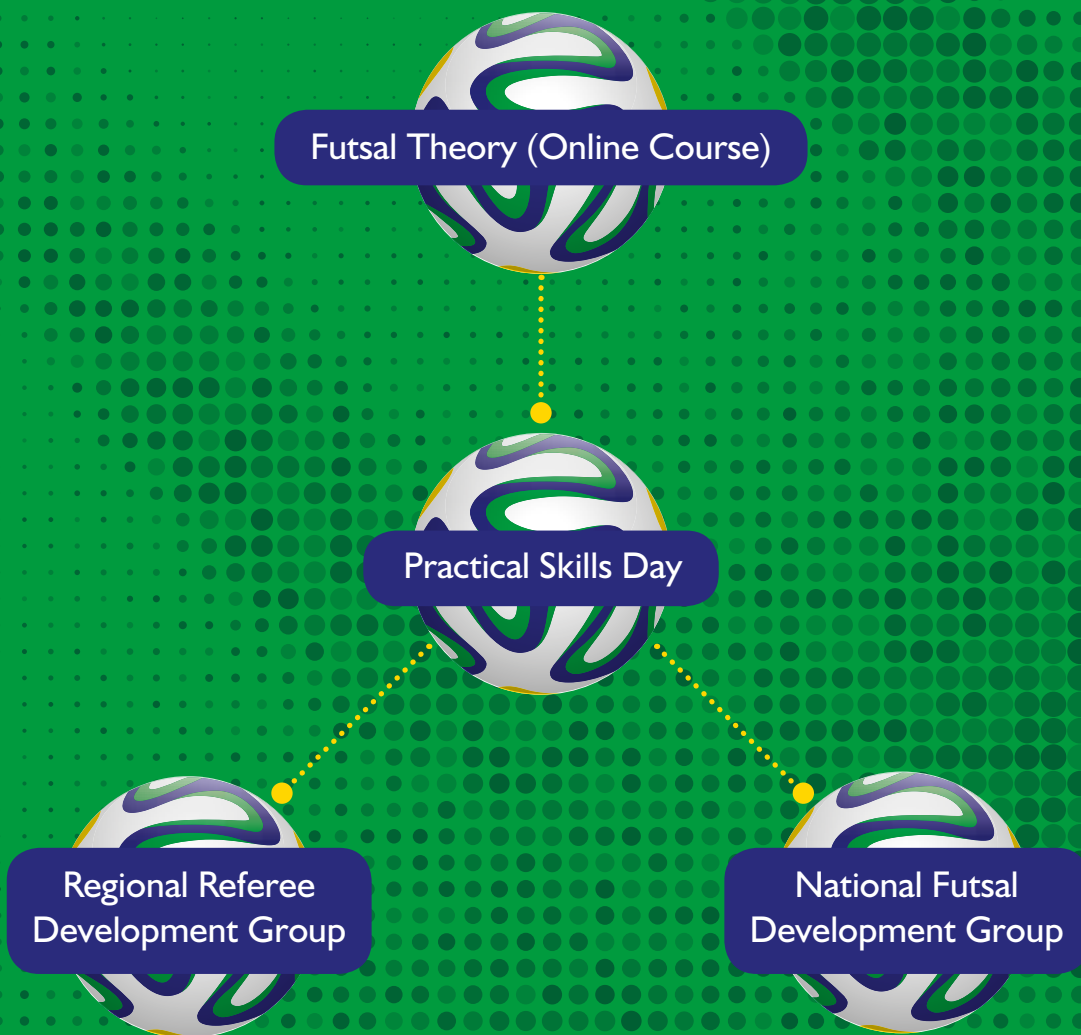
## REFEREE DEVELOPMENT

The Irish FA will work with partners in FIFA to facilitate a Futsal Referee Education conference. This event will welcome Futsal referees from across Europe to provide presentations and practical demonstrations that will enhance the knowledge of Futsal referees working within a variety of programmes across Northern Ireland. The referees will be selected from a development

pool that will be heavily involved in officiating a number of Irish FA Futsal programmes across Northern Ireland.

The success of Futsal referee development in Northern Ireland will be represented by having at least one referee officiating in UEFA and FIFA competitions by 2020.

## STRUCTURE



# QUOTES



THE TECHNIQUE OF PLAYING FUTSAL IS DIFFERENT TO THE 11-A-SIDE VERSION; THERE ARE SPECTACULAR THINGS YOU CAN ATTEMPT THAT YOU WOULD NOT DARE TRYING IN FOOTBALL. IT ADDS MORE FUN TO THE DISCIPLINE.

**ZINEDINE ZIDANE**

FOR ME, FUTSAL IS ONE OF MY PASSIONS. I ALWAYS LOVED TO PLAY. FUTSAL HELPS A LOT BECAUSE YOU NEED TO THINK QUICKLY, IT'S A MORE DYNAMIC GAME ... AND TODAY, IN EUROPE, THERE'S NOT MUCH SPACE SO YOU NEED TO THINK QUICKER AND FUTSAL HAS HELPED ME A LOT WITH THAT.

**NEYMAR JR**



AS A LITTLE BOY IN ARGENTINA, I PLAYED FUTSAL ON THE STREETS AND FOR MY CLUB. IT WAS TREMENDOUS FUN, AND IT REALLY HELPED ME BECOME WHO I AM TODAY.

**LIONEL MESSI**

FUTSAL CONFRONTS THE PLAYER WITH CONSTANT DECISION-MAKING. WHEN YOU RECEIVE THE BALL, YOU ARE FACED WITH DOZENS OF OPTIONS. YOUR BRAIN ACTS LIKE A COMPUTER. IT REALISES IT IT HAS BEEN FACED WITH THIS SITUATION BEFORE AND TRIES TO COME UP WITH THE RIGHT ANSWER-THE RIGHT PASS OR RIGHT SHOT. IN FUTSAL, YOU ARE FACED WITH MANY OF THESE SITUATIONS, AND THAT IS WHY YOU IMPROVE SO MUCH WHEN YOU PLAY.

**ARSENE WENGER**



FUTSAL REQUIRES YOU TO THINK AND PLAY FAST. IT MAKES EVERYTHING EASIER WHEN YOU LATER SWITCH TO FOOTBALL.

**PELE**



IN FUTSAL, YOU SEE WHETHER A PLAYER IS REALLY TALENTED. IN FOOTBALL YOU DON'T NECESSARILY IDENTIFY TALENT AS EASILY BECAUSE IT'S SO MUCH MORE PHYSICAL. BUT WITH FUTSAL, YOU NOTICE THE SMALL DETAILS IN QUALITY, CLASS AND TACTICAL UNDERSTANDING.

**XAVI**



DURING MY CHILDHOOD IN PORTUGAL, ALL WE PLAYED WAS FUTSAL, THE SMALL PLAYING AREA HELPED ME IMPROVE MY CLOSE CONTROL, AND WHENEVER I PLAYED FUTSAL I FELT FREE. IF IT WASN'T FOR FUTSAL, I WOULDN'T BE THE PLAYER I AM TODAY.

**CHRISTIANO RONALDO**



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