

# Grooming Samba Soccer Stars

**On the colourful and bustling streets of Paris wandered a disheartened man. Heartsick with worry he walked the narrow cobblestone paving, praying for inspiration. He found it. He found it in an unlikely place. He found it on the cover of a music CD.**

Back in New Zealand in the old St Pauls basketball gym that same man, Michael Groom can be seen. Complete with ponytail, Brazil football shirt, R10 shoes and green pants he still dances and sways with a football at his feet and the rich samba beat blaring in the background.

Michael Groom grew up playing football, he used to spend hours with a small soccer ball improving his skills and practicing. This led to him trialling at clubs such as Manchester United and representing his country. Playing 22 times for New Zealand and scoring 5 goals. Groom says "Football is the game that moves me; it has always been a wonderful means of escape for me." It comes as a surprise that his discovery of Samba Style Soccer was a complete coincidence, but not surprisingly Groom related easily with the style of play as it was the same as when he trained with a smaller ball during his childhood.

From the first discovery of samba music in France and its relevance to football Groom has become infatuated with samba and futsal.

Futsal which literally means 'indoor football' is a variation of football, or soccer as we call it, which Groom came across after discovering samba and researching into the Brazilian style of play and development of players.

Groom has now set up his own Alegria Samba Style Soccer School which involves him coaching Futsal twice a week in Hamilton and every fortnight in Auckland. Whilst still managing to coach the St Pauls Collegiate School First XI.

Groom brings the Samba and Ginga (Rhythm) to all the Futsal trainings he takes. With songs and music he has written himself with the help of Mr. Davies and the St Pauls Collegiate School band he teaches boys of all ages to 'joga bonito' or play beautiful.

It is his firm belief that by playing Futsal to the samba music players will have more fun playing football and want to be with the ball all the time. Groom wants to bring alegria to his players, bringing out their inner joy and happiness that should be associated with

football.

"The music makes it more fun and it's the fun that makes them want to do it more." If Groom can get his players playing with passion and joy that he himself has then those players will want to learn, want to become better and want to develop a relationship with the ball.

Futsal is how Groom installs the passion and skills in his players. The confined space and smaller sized ball means futsal is a game that requires an immense amount of skill and rhythm. This forces players to work on their individual technique which in turn makes for a better team as we can see in the St Pauls Collegiate School First XI finishing 12<sup>th</sup> in New Zealand last year.

It is not just Groom's connection to samba but his passion and flamboyant personality coupled with great charisma which makes him such a successful coach. When asked what makes a successful coach Groom replied, "Two things; passion and empowerment!" That is a motto that Groom truly coaches by.

His passion is second to none, he is always watching, studying or involving football in his daily life in some way. The passion Groom has for football has meant he has developed a vast knowledge on the game. His knowledge allows him to empower his players. He knows how to play and how to teach, being a teacher by trade. His players are truly fortunate to have a coach that can impart his knowledge to them with such ease and clarity. It is no wonder that Groom has coached some of New Zealand's finest young players.

Players like Chris Wood or Michael Built. Chris recently played for West Bromwich Albion in the English Premier League and Michael Built representing New Zealand U17's. Although Michael Groom is very modest and humble in his part of the development of these players, both having

had him coach them for a number of years.

It is players like them that inspire Groom to keep playing and coaching. His modest approach to his part in their development comes about as "In all my coaching, over the years, I actually think confidence is the x-factor and you can't teach confidence," says Groom, "I can only give them the context in which they can develop".

**"If you dream it and believe it, it comes true."**

And develop, his players certainly have, now with players playing football at top American universities and English professional teams. It is without any doubt that the context; futsal and samba style soccer that Michael Groom has provided coupled with his music CD, and passion has allowed the players he coaches to achieve their wildest dreams, because, "If you dream it and believe it, it comes true."



Above: Michael Groom playing Futsal in his famed green and yellow pants.