WHAT IS SCANNING?

SCANNING = Taking your eyes off the ball and looking around the pitch to access information.

LOCATE = Scanning is done to locate teammates, opponents, and space, so the players can have a full "picture" of what is around them.

PANORAMIC POSITIONING = To scan in the most effective way, players also open up their body shape to see as much of the playing area as possible.

CREATING HABITS = Looking around all the time is an essential skill and habit.

Without this essential skill (scanning), it is highly unlikely that a player will consistently make good decisions. It will lead to poor positioning and inefficient game actions.

Scanning is so fundamental to overall performance, yet is too often overlooked.

We are often guilty of assuming players are looking around all the time, but do they really do it often enough or well enough?

With this book, the aim is to improve and develop this key aspect of the game.
WHAT IS SOCCER EYEQ?

What is the Soccer eyeQ Training Methodology?
It is a football coaching methodology with an extra emphasis on developing the habit of constantly scanning the playing area.

- Sessions = Strong focus on **developing scanning** (looking around).
- Not necessarily "awareness specific" - The **practices still include all other football aspects** e.g. Combinations, movements, etc.
- The **technical, tactical, and physical components are all still present** in all of the practices.
- **Scanning is added as an extra layer** as normal sessions don’t address it well enough (meaning players don’t develop the habit).

What is the Soccer eyeQ Philosophy?

- **Players make better decisions** when they know what is going on around them.
- Soccer eyeQ game awareness model helps **players add scanning to their game, so they have a full view of the pitch** (ball, teammates, opponents, and space).
- This **enables the players to develop this key aspect of football** and provides a greater opportunity to be the very best they can be.
- Looking around more = **Better decisions!**
- Players will be **faster and more effective** in training and in matches.
Why use visual cues e.g. Gloves in training sessions?

Holding up colours forces the players to scan the playing area and to then identify the correct colour, which helps to create an essential habit.

- Players normally only focus on the ball in training. Having coloured cones/gloves to look for forces the players to scan away from the ball during the practices.

- The cones/gloves aren't important, just that the players are scanning! Calling out the correct colour a player is holding up simply confirms that the player did look and knew where that player was.

- Players holding up colours for others to spot are often on the move, so players have to constantly look to be aware of where they are.

- This takes a lot of scanning and a lot of awareness - the players learn the habit of continually doing this when they are off-the-ball.

- Even in drill type exercises (less player movements), it still forces players to have a quick look and reinforces the habit of scanning as part of their receiving skills.

- The coloured signals also force the signalling players to concentrate and understand the flow of play, so they hold up the visual cue at the correct time.
SOCCER EYEQ PRACTICES: Options for Available Visual Cues

1. GLOVES - Players wear 2 gloves of different colours and hold one of them up as a visual cue (method used most with Soccer eyeQ practices)

2. WRISTBANDS
   Alternative to using gloves with the players wearing 2 different colour wristbands

3. CONES
   The players carry 2 cones of different colours and raise one as a visual cue

4. BIBS
   Alternative to using cones with players carrying 2 different colour bibs

5. HANDS
   Players hold up one hand or two hands - The players shout out "One" or "Two" to spot the visual cue
**Example: Pep Guardiola's "Juego de Posición" 4v4 (+3) Game**

**Practice Description**
- In a 10 x 15 yard area, we have 2 teams of 4 players (blue and red) + 3 yellow jokers who play with the team in possession.
- All 4 blue players are positioned on the long sides (2 on each side) and all the red players start inside the area. There is 1 yellow joker at each end and 1 joker inside.
- The practice starts with the Coach and the blue team try to maintain possession with help from the 3 yellow jokers.
- The red team work together (pressing) to close off the angles and try to win the ball.
- If the reds are able to win the ball, the teams switch roles.
- The blues all move inside and work together to try and win the ball back immediately (counter-press).
- The reds move to the outsides and try to maintain possession with help from the 3 jokers.

**SOURCE:** Pep Guardiola's Manchester City training session at Etihad Campus Training Ground, Manchester - from the book "Pep Guardiola - 85 Passing, Rondos, Possession Games & Technical Circuits Direct from Pep's Training Sessions," by Terzis Athanasios
Adding the Soccer eyeQ Method

What have we added? (2 Progressions)
- Visual cues are flashed when specific players receive. Players receiving from specific players must spot and call out the colour of the visual cue before receiving.

Why have we added it?
- Force scanning as the ball is travelling to the trigger player (or as he’s taking his controlling touch) to locate the player who will be flashing the visual cue.
- Force scanning as the ball is travelling to you, so you can spot and call out the colour of the visual cue before taking a first touch.

How does it improve game awareness?
- Players have to look away from the ball to know the positioning of key players around the playing area.
- Players adopt better body positioning, particularly when receiving from a neutral end player, as it makes it easier to scan forward and see the opposite end player.
- Players cannot solely focus on the ball during the practice, as they must spot the visual cues at the correct time. They must still focus on their opponents too so must learn to divide their attention well.

What benefit will the players get?
- They develop the habit of scanning away from the ball at key moments.
- Learn to divide their attention.
- Take in quick snapshots of the positioning of teammates and opponents throughout.
- After training this, the players are far more confident and competent in matches.
Geir Jordet PhD (read the full interview on previous pages) is the leading expert on scanning. He studied and recorded a large group of players, analysing how many times they scan before receiving a pass.

Steven Gerrard and Frank Lampard were deemed to be "outstanding" at scanning with 0.61 and 0.62 scans per second respectively.

However, Xavi was "off the scale" with an incredible 0.83 scans per second.

For more detailed information on Geir’s studies into scanning, see pages 78-80.

Xavi is constantly scanning, and this is what he said on the subject:
"Think quickly, look for spaces. That's what I do: look for spaces. All day. I'm always looking. All day, all day."

The diagram above shows an example of Xavi scanning during a La Liga game. Before receiving the ball and creating an opportunity, he performs 5 scans of the area around him within 15 seconds.

This enables Xavi to exploit potential spaces to receive and see the best passing option available to create a chance.

**SOURCE:** Keepitonthedeck. "Xavi - Scanning Surroundings Examples." YouTube, uploaded by Keepitonthedeck, 6 Nov 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMez1ZpJxDQ
SECTION 1

The Soccer eyeQ Methodology
“Taking the right decision in the right moment. That is the most difficult thing in football.”

Pep Guardiola
LEVEL 1 - OBSERVATION: Scanning of the Playing Area
**KEY ASPECTS OF SCANNING (LEVEL 1)**

**SCANNING** = Take eyes off the ball and look around the playing area to access information

**LEVEL 1** = This lowest level of awareness is only about accessing information

**LOCATE** = Locate the ball, teammates, opponents, and space

**CREATING HABITS** = Force the players to look around all the time to improve an essential skill

**PANORAMIC POSITIONING** = Open up (body shape) to see as much as possible
SCANNING STUDY 1:
Comparing How Often Premier League Players Look Around Before Receiving Against their Forward Pass Completion Statistics (Geir Jordet, PhD)

High VEB Frequency Players
77% Forward Pass Success

Low VEB Frequency Players
39% Forward Pass Success

VEB = Visual Exploratory Behaviour
(Looking Around/Scanning)

Studies have revealed that, even at the top level of the game, there is a considerable difference in how often players look around and it has a significant impact on their performance. Have a look at the pass completion rate statistics above and think about which players you would like in your team. I think most coaches would prefer to have the players that complete twice as many passes (High VEB Frequency Players).

This data is taken from Geir Jordet’s research into visual exploratory behaviour (VEB) amongst players in the English Premier League. This study investigated how often the players looked around before receiving the ball. The findings revealed that those players with high VEB frequency completed 77% of their forward passes, whereas those with low VEB only completed 39%.

This study only looked at how often players looked away from the ball at other areas of the pitch but did not examine what they looked at or their understanding of what they saw. So, this research investigated what we are talking about as level 1 awareness – scanning.

Some coaches will say players acquire this skill naturally and pick it up playing the game. But if that’s the case, why was there such a difference amongst the EPL players in the study? These players have accumulated a vast amount of training and playing experience and are performing at the highest level. Maybe players can develop it “naturally,” but will they develop it sufficiently?

Geir’s findings clearly show not all players develop this ability to the same degree and that the best performers do it more than the rest – the players that scanned the most completed almost twice as many forward passes as those who scanned the least.

Geir Jordet, PhD: Key Factors of Decision Making and Highest Performing Players


Geir Jordet, PhD breaks down the key factors of decision-making in football into three segments:

- **Visual Perception** – the ability to take in and interpret information
- **Visual Exploratory Behaviour (VEB)** – the ability to actively search and scan for information
- **Anticipation** – the ability to see what is about to happen

Geir is the world expert on scanning and recorded 250 players to analyse their actions before receiving. Players with **over 0.5 scans per second are considered “high scanners.”**

**Frank Lampard** had the highest VEB in the Premier League during the period of Geir Jordet’s research.

Increased Visual Exploratory Behaviour (VEB) results in more information. This allows the player to improve their ability to process this information effectively.

Things change within seconds in football and information that was relevant before can quickly become very different. Therefore, those players who constantly update their information and their "picture" can act before others, and gain a big advantage.

Taking about Lampard, Tony Carr (Director of Youth Development West Ham United Academy) said “In his first game for West Ham, his dad (Frank Lampard Sr) would sit in the stands and shout at his son all the time. He’d say the same thing every time: ‘Pictures! Pictures!’ He just wanted Frank to have a picture in his head before he got the ball. That was all. ‘Pictures!’”

Lampard sat up. “That’s true, he was yelling at me and I did what he said.”

This showed Geir Jordet that Frank Lampard had indeed not been "born" with a high scanning frequency - he was constantly encouraged to ‘take pictures’ from a very young age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Scans per second</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xavi</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerrard</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabregas</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messi</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iniesta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pirlo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibrahimovic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lampard</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SCANNING STUDY 2:
Comparing Scan Frequency in Games vs Specific Training Practices (Geir Jordet, PhD)

This study was with players at FC Groningen (top league in the Netherlands - Eredivisie). It looked at scanning frequency in matches compared with practices in training. The researchers found that all the practice formats used in training which were analysed produced much less scanning than in competitive matches (based on scans per second).

This clearly shows that some of the practices we use to train our players do not develop all of the essential habits they need to perform at the top level in the game.

However, this is not to say they are bad practices, or they shouldn't be used. It simply raises our awareness of the limitations of these different practice formats and maybe challenges us to think how we can adapt them to raise scanning frequency to the level required in a match.

N = 6 Top Dutch league players (1418 registrations) (De Vries, Frencken, Hujigen, & Jordet, in review in scientific journal)
"Think quickly, look for spaces. That's what I do: look for spaces. All day. I'm always looking. All day, all day."

Xavi
LEVEL 2 - REALIZATION: Reading the Game Situation
REALIZATION (LEVEL 2):
Reading the Game Situation

What is REALIZATION?
Level 1 and Observation in the game awareness model is about scanning to locate the ball, teammates, and opponents. **Level 2 and Realization is about the players understanding the current game situation** through the significance of where the ball, teammates, and opponents are in the playing area.

At this second level of game awareness, **players now put meaning to what they see.** They recognise patterns and understand what their teammates or opponents are doing from a tactical perspective and achieve a picture of what is going on.

The diagram above shows the highlighted player using the information gathered from scanning to read the game situation and get a picture of potential options.

As the player receives, he knows he has space to turn and move forward - he can also see 3 potential passing options with 3 teammates available in space.
INCORRECT AND CORRECT READING THE GAME SITUATION (ATTACK)

Let’s consider the positioning of the defensive midfielder (DM) in these two diagrams.

In diagram 1, we can see the player’s body shape is oriented in such a way that only really allows him to play the ball back towards the centre back.

In diagram 2, the DM is positioned in a way that allows him a much wider view of the pitch (see highlighted area). He sees he has space to turn and can then play the ball forward and through the opposition’s midfield line, which is the most effective play in this situation.
SCANNING
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