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# COACH *Talk*



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CHRIS ANDERSON - MELBOURNE STORM COACH

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*The efforts of Chris Anderson with the Melbourne Storm earned him Coach of the Year in 1998 and he has been suitably rewarded with his recent appointment as Australian Coach, a role he is sure to perform with distinction. His players performance is a reflection on the very professional attitude instilled in the club and Chris now passes on some of his ideas and methods during this interview. His approach to coaching is innovative and refreshing and gives another dimension which reflects in the performance of the Melbourne Storm.*

## **RLCM Have you a coaching philosophy?**

**CA.** The most positive influence on my coaching was my time in England, particularly in 1974. I was taken with the way they put their teams together, with their skill. I based a lot of my team set up similar to the English style with big front rowers, second rowers who are athletes and half backs who can provide good support for the outside backs and where each part of the team works for the other part. I learnt a lot from other coaches, watching other teams perform and the attitude you develop from other sports.

From American football for example, I learnt a lot from their organisation. They have a lot of money involved so they are well organised with numerous support staff.

They are similar to us in the way they do their training, and they are well disciplined. They develop a good feel within their clubs. Any new players bought into the club are teamed up with one of the experienced players which is similar to what Canterbury did when I was there, and we are implementing a similar scheme in Melbourne.

## **RLCM You seem to be developing a flat line of attack with Melbourne. Can you expand on this?**

**CA.** Yes we work on a flat attack, which is another evolution in my coaching. With the input of the 10 metre rule we try to create our space by earning it, not by getting back behind the advantage line. Our

front rowers and other forwards work to try and create space for our backs. The space to create is on the 10 metre line, forcing the defence to go backwards and creating one on one tackles as much as possible.

## **RLCM What do you consider are your strengths in coaching?**

**CA.** I have a good relationship with the players, and there is good discipline. We have a very professional organisation with good people around me. This was important for me to come to terms with because when I first started coaching I did it all myself. Now there is a staff team who have to get the right message to players so it is more like coaching a team to coach the team (players). It is important that players get the right message, not one message from myself and another different message from other staff. Now I am really enjoying the situation.

## **RLCM How much time do you allocate to skills work individually?**

**CA.** We do a great amount of skills work, particularly ball handling and ball handling under pressure. The difference in the game now to when I played was that there were a lot of naturally skilful players then, and the players coming through were footballers before they were athletes. Now this process has reversed with more athletes coming through than footballers and I don't think our Junior development is oriented enough toward basic individual skills as in, ability to pass left to right and right to left. The game is too oriented towards winning and the young players are not taught skills early enough. We need to

concentrate on teaching the basics at a young age. Once they have these, the fitness can be fixed up very quickly, but it is harder to fix up skill if it has not been taught early. There needs to be a firm direction with what we do with our kids. The modified games have been a great innovation for the game.

**RLCM Can you give an opinion on "impulse" play and its importance in the game?**

**CA.** It is of huge importance. Players need to be given the power to make decisions on the field. Our game in the last 10 years has probably taken a lot of this away from players with the game becoming very mechanical with set moves etc. Melbourne has a style

cannot let the opposition get at you, if you run the ball up one out they will tackle you heavy, so you must be going to them before they come to you.

**RLCM How important is the mental aspect of players to achieve performance?**

**CA** That is my job, mental aspect is everything. Through the range of 17 teams in the NRL competition there would not be a big variance in the fitness of the teams, apart from the top 5 or 6 teams who may have some edge in player personnel but on any given day it comes down to how mentally prepared the team is. I get a lot of enjoyment in creating the environment for my players to play their best football.

**We need to identify our elite players at a younger age, give them more skills work, and cut down on their physical work until they reach 18 years of age.**

of football, but within this, there is room for players to have their own interpretation on how it works. We create players working with and for each other so players will use others to try to create space for themselves and others to make breaks. Impulse play to me is vitally important for players to make decisions during a game, you will not beat good teams with set plays which probably only account for 20% of your tries. Some players have an ability to read play, coaches must be careful not to train this impulse out of players with set moves. The non-scripted play will create better football, scripted players will struggle to play at the next level.

**RLCM Off the ball play is important. What is your attitude to this and do you do much work on it?**

**CA** Our play relies a lot on off the ball play and is just as important as the player with the ball. The defences are that strong now that players off the ball, if they just hang back out of play, will leave themselves open to heavy tackles. We play right at the line and what we try to create is one on one tackles and to achieve this the players without the ball have to put pressure on the defence and if we do that the pressure is taken off the player with the ball. The game now is about speed and to create fast play the balls you have to control the ruck area, so to do this you

**RLCM How important are game plans and patterns in your style of play.**

**CA** You have to have a style of football so that everyone knows what is happening. For a team to work together they can't go on the field with any sort of confusion about what their role is in the game. Through our eight to nine sessions each week confidence is built among the players to back their performance and style of football. My job is to sell that to the players and that happens through success. Each player has to be confident to perform his role and that style of football will win games because under pressure they have to stick to it. This is something we at Melbourne are still learning because it is only our second year in the competition.

**RLCM Players are expected to perform at their peak each week, how do you ensure this performance?**

**CA** It is creating the environment, and to me, it is being honest with each player each week. About his involvement and the effort he is putting in and in turn, he being honest with me. You need an environment where everybody feels a part of it and all are treated equally. The game is tough and for players to come up physically and mentally is very hard. To assist this we give our players a lot of feedback each week about their performance.

**RLCM Your recruitment to form the club was obviously very successful. Is there any specific quality you look for in players that suit your style of play?**

**CA** I have always been an advocate for a 16 to 17 year old playing First Grade in the bush, they must be tough, want success and have natural ability. We want to get them into our environment and improve those natural qualities. A lot of other players come through other avenues that are good but don't have a lot of improvement left in them. The raw country player wants to learn, doesn't want to be a failure, and will work hard. There are a lot of good young players out there and you have to spread your net as wide as possible. Some talented kids get no coaching at junior level, they are put into teams, thrown the ball and expected to win the game. This creates a lot of kids who are good at one thing and other skill teaching is neglected, whereas they should be taught as much as possible.

**RLCM What do you know now in coaching that you didn't know and what have you changed in your style over the last ten years?**

**CA** The longer you stay in coaching the more you learn, the more confident you become and so it gets better. If what you are doing works you stay with it because if it doesn't work then you don't have a job. That is always at the back of my thoughts. Also you have to move with the times, you have to change. I have gone from Canterbury an inner city club to Melbourne a one team town. It is very different and you need different strategies to deal with players. I have found that working with 25 players has been a real plus, particularly with fitness where all 25 are equal.

I learn everyday, I like to read a lot and talk to other people. We have had a few training sessions with Carlton and the Western Bulldogs AFL clubs and have learnt certain things from them.

**RLCM Your thoughts on the play the ball and ruck area?**

**CA** The speed of the game now does not give the referee time to watch, the 10 metre, the play the ball, the defence moving up, when the ball leaves the ruck all at the same time. With the actual play the ball taking half a second it is tough on the referees to police the whole area of the ruck. This is an area that needs more control but is not the worst area of the game. Scrums are a blot on what we are showing the public. There probably needs to be some system where coaches have an input into the laws of the game and any changes

proposed. There needs to be a good structure for implementing rule changes, they just can not be brought in at the whim of one or two people.

**RLCM Do you have any advice for coaches wishing to coach at the highest level?**

**CA** I have certainly enjoyed my job and would recommend it to anybody, but, you have to get used to justifying yourself week-in-week out, all your weekends are taken. I love my life in the game, I have the best job in the world.

**RLCM How do you see Rugby League in the next five years?**

**CA** This is the best opportunity the game had to restructure at the bottom areas. The game is ruined in New South Wales country not just because of Rugby League but the economy has played a part in this. We have to change. An environment must be created to keep the kids in their local areas.

Improve the coaching at the bottom areas, enhance the skills of players, and learn to play the game at a good level. We need to identify our elite players at a younger age, give them more skills work, and cut down on their physical work until they reach 18 years of age. We have a couple of Rugby Union players at Norths in Brisbane who have come from school and they have a higher skill level than the comparable Rugby League players. Their physical fitness is probably behind but that is something that can be developed in the next couple of years.

**RLCM What is the future of Rugby League in Melbourne?**

**CA** The sky's the limit. A decision has to be made soon on the home ground and whether we stay at Olympic Park or move to Docklands Stadium. We need to be competitive this season, but we are still in the embryonic stage of development and gathering support to ensure our viability. We have a five year plan so that we don't have a first year team and then have to buy again in two to three years. We are at the stage now where we can bring all our players through Norths in Brisbane which is exactly what we wanted to do so that we don't have to go into the market again. We now have the right program in place and some good players coming through.

Melbourne is interesting, we still have some work to do as there is not a lot of growth happening. Olympic Park is situated in a good sporting environment and the city loves sport. Our aim is to increase crowds over the next five years and increase the profile of the game in Melbourne.

# Skill Scene

## Picking up a Football

## Falling on the Loose Football

By Don Oxenham  
ARL Level 4 Coach

Expertise with the loose football is essential for success. In today's game many situations arise where there is loose ball lying on the ground due to various reasons. The direction of Rugby League suggests it is getting faster as players become fitter and more dedicated to defence which adds up to more spilled passes and more occasions when the football can be jolted out of the grasp of tackled players. In junior football spilled ball will occur as players learn and develop skills. The team that can get more than their share of the loose ball will benefit by having more possession.

Players developing these techniques will add to their range of skills. As with all techniques and skills these should be developed and refined in training sessions with practice drills.

### PICKING UP A FOOTBALL

#### Coaching Points and Correct Techniques

- Eyes on ball
- When approaching the ball decrease speed
- Run to one side of the ball with feet placement spread for balance
- Bend knees slightly
- Make sure body is leaning over the ball
- Use rear hand to form a scooping action under ball
- Front hand onto ball for steadying and to avoid a knock on.
- Lift ball up to body as player continues to run

To develop technique players should go through stages of practice from slow to gradual increase of running speed, so that the co-ordination of all movements are practised.

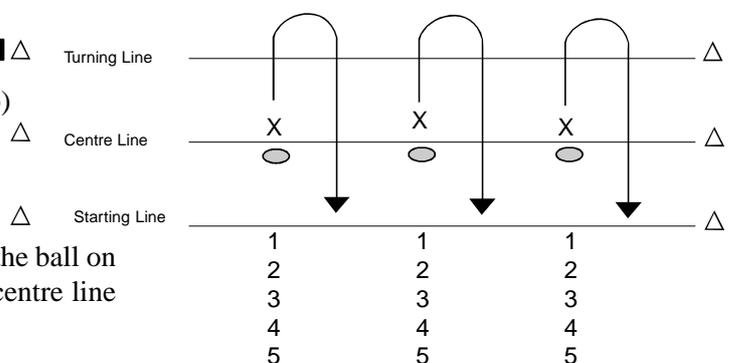
#### Practice Drill

##### 1. Picking up Stationery Football $\Delta$

Setting: Grid 10m x 10m (Vary with age group)  
6 Markers  $\Delta$   
Groups of players  
1 football per group  $\Delta$

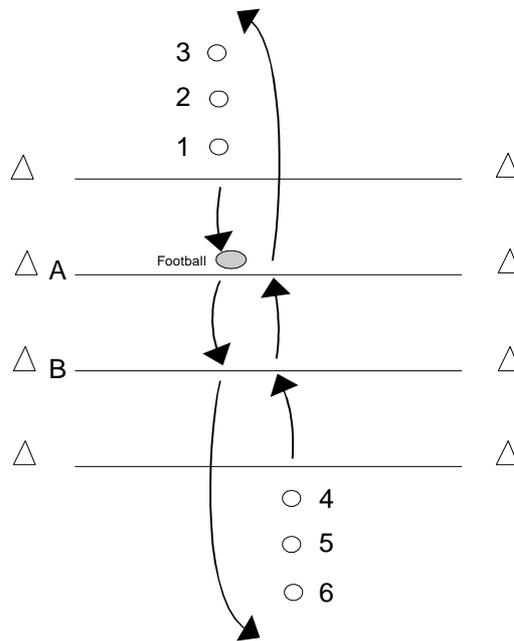
No. 1 runs to the ball, picks it up, runs on to touch the ball on the turning line, returns to replace the ball on the centre line then runs back to the start.

The coach must see that each player runs to the side of the ball to pick it up, scooping it with either right or left hand according to the drill. The player should slacken pace as he stoops to pick up the ball to be sure he does not fumble.



## Progression of No. 1

Setting: Grid approx. 10m x 10m  
8 Markers



Players are arranged in groups of 6 as shown.

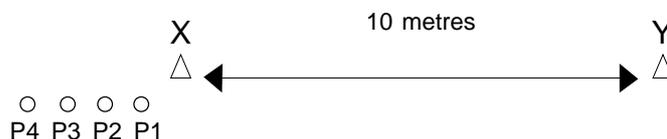
No.1. runs, picks up the ball at A and puts it down at B and then runs behind No.6.  
No 4 then picks up the ball at B, places it at A and so on.

Stress the importance of this skill in the game.

Correct major faults, with emphasis on practising the pick up on both sides of the body.

## 2. Picking up a Moving Football (1)

Setting: Open space  
2 markers  
10 metres apart  
Players in small groups



P1 runs forward picks up the football at position X then runs on to line Y.

At Y player turns and rolls ball toward X.

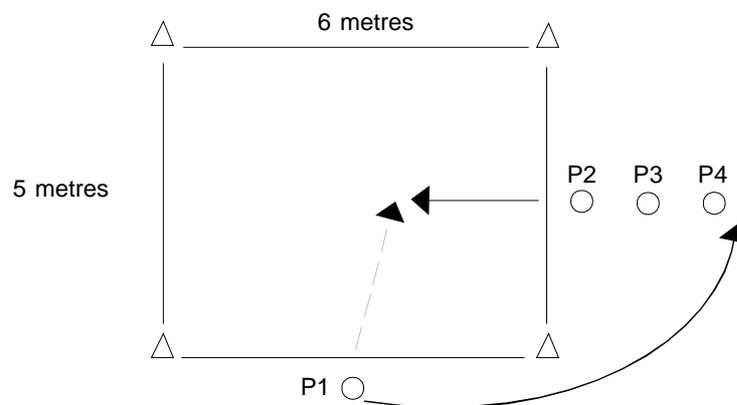
P2 gathers the football runs to Y and rolls football back to P3 to repeat the skill.

Progression:

- Wait for the ball to be rolled
- Run to meet the rolling ball

### 3. Picking up a Moving Football (2)

Setting      Grid 5m x 6m  
              Groups of 4 players  
              1 football per group



Player 1 holds the ball and stands at the centre of a sideline.  
Players 2,3 and 4 line up one behind the other, at the centre of an adjacent sideline.

Player 1- rolls the football into the centre of the grid and then runs behind player 4

Player 2- runs forward and picks up the rolling ball and moves to take player 1's position

Continue until all players are back in their original positions.

## FALLING ON THE LOOSE FOOTBALL

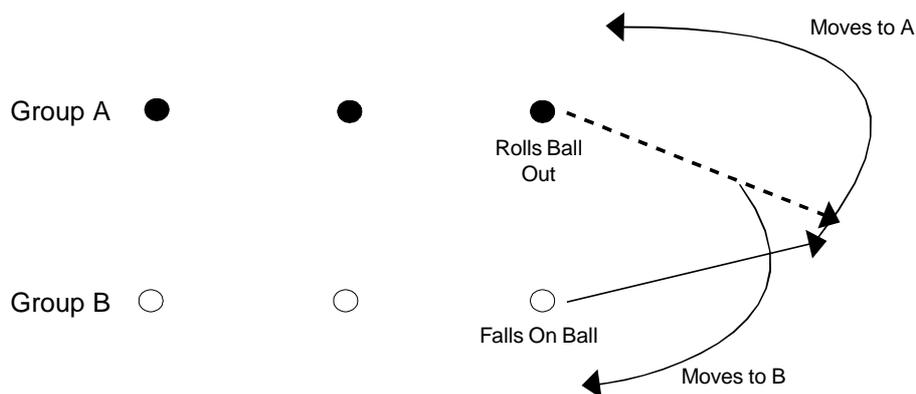
### Coaching Points and Correct Technique

- Eyes on ball
- Lean forward from waist
- Approach football slightly from the side
- Lower the leg closest to the ball so that calf, thigh then hip contact the ground
- Forearm bent at the elbow and held out from body and parallel to chest
- Extended forearm is placed over and beyond the football
- Arm, shoulder and chest wrap around the football
- Pull head and knees together, curling up

### Practice Drills

#### 4. Falling on the Loose Football

- (i) Four players to a group. Player 1 throws the ball out in front 4 - 6 metres. The player chases and falls on the ball. Once the ball is under control the player immediately regains his feet and passes to player 2 who does the same and the drill continues.
- (ii) 3 players line up in single file - group A, leading player has the ball - another 3 players line up in single file - group B to the right of group A. The player with ball from group A rolls the ball out in front and the leading player in group B runs out and falls on the ball. The player regains his feet and passes to the next player in group A. The original A player goes to the end of group B and the 'B' player to the end of group A.



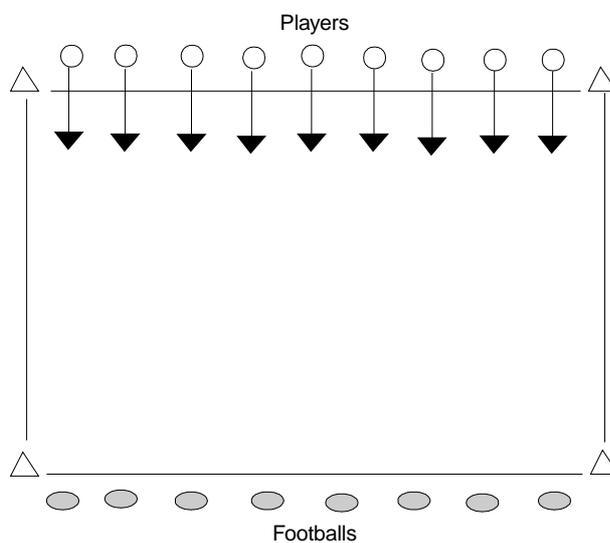
- (iii) Use two mini fields (i.e. 20m x 10m) with 6 players in each... 3 per team. The attackers attempt to score by dribbling the ball over the oppositions line. The only way they can lose possession is by their opponents falling cleanly on the ball as it is dribbled or passed along the ground. If this occurs, the possession then changes hands and the game proceeds.

Keep rotating the players so as to have many combinations.

Practice the importance of control on dribbling as well as the correct technique for falling on a loose ball.

## 5. Rugby League Flags

Setting: 9 Players  
Grid 20m x 15m  
One less football than number of players



- Players line up on one side of the grid
- Players lay on their stomachs with feet together and heads facing away from the footballs
- The players not getting a football are eliminated.
- The last player remaining is the winner

### Variation

- Place the ball two metres from the end line, the players have to pick up the ball and score a try over the end line.
- Players who knock on are also eliminated.

# COACHING

the

# MODERN GAME

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By Peter Sharpe  
Northern Eagles Head Coach  
Written by Ryan Ellem

At a recent coaching camp held in Sydney, Peter Sharp, former assistant coach to Malcolm Reilly at Newcastle, Brian Smith at Parramatta and current Manly coach gave his thoughts on coaching in today's modern game.

Sharp talked extensively about the importance of spending time on the skills component of coaching.

Sharp expressed the need to enforce core skills such as gripping and carrying the football, passing, support play, running lines and tackling techniques. He also elaborated on a coaching style which is becoming more popular in the modern coaching circles - Positional Specific Skillwork.

Positional Specific Skillwork is the coaching strategy which Parramatta coach Brian Smith focused on early in the 1997 season when they lost five consecutive matches.

The PSS program is coaching players as it pertains to their position on the field. PSS often exists at the First Grade or higher levels of Rugby League where it often replaces core skill training.

"Front-rowers are meant to go forward. Therefore, we need to get them hitting the ball at the advantage line at training and running good lines at the same time. We also practice taking the ball at different widths and distances, putting them in scenarios they would encounter in a game," Sharp said.

"Half backs and five-eighths should spend hours passing the ball at different distances and practising their kicking. Defensive systems at First Grade level are very organised and therefore a fair percentage of tries are scored by kicks. You just don't turn up on game day and suddenly expect to kick well.

"When returning a kick deep in your half, you want firstly for the fullback or winger to be able to catch. Secondly, you want a good dummy-half scoot from the winger, because in many cases, how well your set turns out depends upon your second tackle play. You have to get players out practising these skills they'll need as fullbacks and wingers in the game.

"At Parramatta we were big on coaching the individual. If the individual improves, the team obviously will."

The use of the video as a teaching aid is invaluable according to Sharp, for he believes it is much easier to

visually show a player what you want rather than telling them.

"When trying to understand why we didn't get any go forward in the game, all we had to do was show the forwards a video of the game and highlight, for instance, that they were hitting the ball behind the advantage line or they were running the wrong line and getting tackled by heavy defence.

"Using the video in a one-on-one coaching approach is vital. It's amazing how much you can teach in 10 minutes.

"As an aid to PSS, video use is important for viewing other teams. For instance, you might pick out a centre who is a poor defender and may design a play that targets him a couple of times in the one set."

Sharp highlighted the use of skill cards (cards explaining how to teach a certain skill, ie the close pass) in coaching.

Coaches place the cards on the ground during training and whenever they need to refer to them they walk over and have a quick glance.

The usefulness of skills cards in a club situation can be seen in uniformity of skills.

"You don't want your Under 17 coach telling his players to tackle one way whilst the Under 19 coach is teaching a different technique. It's confusing for players to have them disregard what has been embedded in their style and to adopt a new approach.

"If you get your juniors playing the way you want it's good for the club overall.

"When Newcastle won the competition in 1997, over half of the team came through the junior ranks of the Knights as a result of excellent junior programmes."

Coaching junior sides the core skills such as passing is vital, but it can be mundane and boring for the kids, so Sharp believes you should try and make it as challenging and fun filled as possible.

"You can set up games for them to play as well, anything that will strengthen their core skills.

"No matter what you do or how you coach your players, a fundamental key is repetition."

# tackling

# COMMUNICATION

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By Peter Corcoran OAM  
Written by Vanessa Arthur

“I’m happy.”

With these words a legendary Rugby League coach's half-time talk was over. He had told the side he was coaching at the time that he was content with their performance and did so concisely.

Another senior league coach once said, ‘I can’t wait until Tuesday,’ to sum up his views in the half-time break. He put ‘fire in the belly’ of every player on the team with these basic words and they turned their performance around to come out victorious.

Good communication is the essence of good coaching, according to Australian Rugby League Coaching Director Peter Corcoran. “It’s absolutely vital for coaches to communicate simply, yet effectively, to ensure messages are comprehended and then acted upon.” said Corcoran as he projected this view at a coaching seminar at the New South Wales Academy of Sport, recently.

The Sydney-based coach spoke of the coach’s primary objectives and the role communication plays in achieving the desired result – is to shape behaviour.

In terms of the coach’s objectives, Corcoran outlines two:

- To establish credibility; and
- To improve performance.

He says there are two myths that must be dispelled about the former.

First, the ‘do as I say’ approach does not work any more: “A more sophisticated interaction with players is required today. Just simply saying, ‘do this, do that, do something else,’ doesn’t get the message across. It has to be specific and it has to show players the direction in which the coach wants them to go.”

Second, authority is not the answer in establishing credibility: “Rather than emphasising control, respect can be maintained by using more subdued behaviour.”

Corcoran says that as a coach, there are ‘ten commandments’\* to developing a good rapport with players, which will, in turn, have an impact upon their performance. The commandments are:\*

- (1) be credible;
- (2) be consistent;
- (3) be sensitive;
- (4) be empathetic;
- (5) do not be sarcastic;
- (6) have a sense of humour;
- (7) use positive non-verbal cues;
- (8) teach positive skills;
- (9) praise and criticise performance and character;
- (10) be a desirable model

It is imperative that coaches have the right balance of these traits and that they use them appropriately. For example, a coach can not always be sympathetic and there are bound to be times for criticism. The key is to know when to use which and to be subtle about it.

And Corcoran says coaches need to establish communication with individual players and determine the right buttons to push to reap desired results: “We coach people, not Rugby League. It’s a people business and it’s as important for us to know our players as it is for us to know the game itself.”

This leads to the process of communication in the game of Rugby League. Corcoran identifies four stages in formulating communication – knowledge, organisation, observation and feedback.

Of these, Corcoran rates the first, **knowledge**, as the backbone to good communication. Under this umbrella, he says knowledge of yourself, your players, and the game are the three underpinning components: “If your particular knowledge is deficient in any one of these three areas, then your ability to communicate is deficient. You’ve got to have them all in as large a

dose as possible.” And he says to facilitate this, coaches should constantly evaluate their knowledge, work on improving their weak points, get to know their players personally and develop a good relationship with them. He also says it is important to encourage players to have input into the running of the team.

The next two stages in coaching are to **organise** the team into situations where their behaviour can be **observed**. By watching the team, coaches then have the ability to fine tune their knowledge of the players and identify any problems in their game. Such observations can dictate the best methods for communicating with the individual.

**Feedback** is the final stage of the communication process. Corcoran says that having determined the behaviour patterns of the team members, from the initial steps, a coach has the ability to tailor messages that will impact upon the players: “So when coaching or organising or observing, the knowledge of those areas will allow you to more effectively evaluate the situation, make a decision on what the real problem is and, then, work out how to best get the message across.” Corcoran is a firm believer that the best, most effective messages are those which are short and concise.

So, if a coach sends a short and well-tailored message to a player, is success guaranteed?

Corcoran says no. There are a number of factors that impact on the comprehension and retention of a coach’s message.

The first challenge is the communication channels, between the coach and the player. If these are not overcome, problems will arise that may impede the player’s ability and desire to implement any suggestions. Corcoran is adamant coaches must build up their standing in the eyes of the players in the following areas:

### **Status:**

“If they think you can’t coach, then they won’t pay an ounce of notice to what you say. You must prove that your message is worth listening to.”

### **Authority:**

“You’ve got to show that you have authority to give a message and show that it’s based on the fact that you know them, you know yourself and what you are saying comes from your knowledge of the game and your insight into how they can go about improving and changing behaviour.”

### **Technical experience:**

“They have to become confident that you are competent and consistent in the way you communicate to them.”

### **Knowledge of the sport:**

“That will be obvious every time you open your mouth to others.”

### **Level of participation in the sport:**

“If you have been there and done that, then it will be more impressive and they will have confidence in your experience.”

Corcoran says the two other challenges to getting a message across are the physical environment and life experiences. For the physical environment, it is essential coaches send their messages in an environment as free of distractions as possible. It is difficult to send a message to players when their attention is focussed on outside influences – such as cars driving past, a howling wind and so on. In terms of life experiences, a coach must accept some athletes have varying levels of maturity, education and knowledge of the sport – all of these affect the message’s transmission.

With the ability to deliver a message, the all-important question is ‘what message should I, as a coach, send? Corcoran refers to this as the stages of learning. He says coaches should first, present players with information, or the “what”. Then, they need to be taught how to associate this information with the way they perceive they play the game, or the “how” stage. Finally, the information should become automatic. But the most important thing for coaches to understand is that an athlete should not be expected to go immediately from stage one to stage three – it is a gradual process.

The overall aim then, as a coach, is to present clear and succinct messages when communicating to team players. A coach should work on developing a good rapport with players to raise their credibility and this will give them a better chance at improving the team’s overall performance. So, with time, dedication and self-evaluation, Corcoran says becoming a good coach is feasible. And by pursuing good communication strategies, maybe one day, you, like the legendary coach, will have the opportunity to tell the side you coach you are ‘happy’ with their performance.

### *References*

\* *Focus - "Ten Commandments for Effective Communication" H. Anshell 1987*

# Recruitment

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**By Cyril Connell - Brisbane Broncos RLFC**  
**Written by Ashley Bradnam**

Sailor, Lockyer, Webcke, Thorn, Renouf.....the list goes on and on. Apart from being team-mates in arguably the greatest club side in world football, these players have something else in common. They are all proteges of a highly effective recruitment campaign which has seen the Brisbane Broncos preserve their status as a football superpower.

The man in charge of recruitment at the Broncos is Cyril Connell.

Connell has done pretty much everything the game can offer. As a 5/8th and half back he played 24 games for Queensland, 7 of them as Captain. He was selected

and determination are just as important. Wayne and I call it the 'X' factor, the unknown. Identifying ability is actually the easiest part. A good player's balance, the way he runs...It just stands out. But we've had a number of fellows with talent come through here, who have just never made it. They never had the other qualities.

*How do you know if a potential recruit has got the 'X' factor?*

You don't. You can only find out all you can about the boy and then make a judgement call. As an ex-headmaster, I find it good to talk to his principal. He'll

## Cyril Connell from the Brisbane Broncos tells us what he looks for....

for a Kangaroo Tour of England and France, playing 14 games, 3 as Captain. He was then chosen to represent his country in 3 Tests withdrawing from one because of injury. He spent 30 years behind the microphone as a radio and television commentator. In short, he knows the game well.

These days most people recognise Connell as one of the finest talent identifiers in the business. Ashley Bradnam caught up with him recently to find out how he operates.

*What is the Broncos philosophy on recruitment?*

I guess firstly we want to make sure the boys we recruit can play football. But just as importantly, we need to know the make up of the boy's character.

*At a recent coaching clinic, Wayne Bennett said "Anyone can find the guy who's 185cm, can step off both feet and can run the hundred in 10 seconds, but we look for the things the other clubs miss". What does he mean by that?*

It's pretty hard to put that into words. It's not just talent that makes a player. His discipline, dedication

and determination are just as important. Wayne and I call it the 'X' factor, the unknown. Identifying ability is actually the easiest part. A good player's balance, the way he runs...It just stands out. But we've had a number of fellows with talent come through here, who have just never made it. They never had the other qualities.

*Talk us through the recruitment process. How does it start?*

We have scouts around the place who will tell us about a boy. People also ring up who aren't scouts, sometimes a boy's parents will call. We take notice of all of those calls. It's then up to us to get out there and watch him play. When we watch a kid play we don't necessarily look for the star. In schoolboy football, the flashy player is not always the best player. We endeavour to recruit boys who we believe have the potential to play First grade, so I guess your looking for potential.

*Once a player has been identified, what is the next step?*

If we find a boy who's playing well, the first step is to write to his parents and set up a time to talk. We don't sign them, nobody signs with the Broncos at schoolboy

age. We offer a scholarship with a view to perhaps joining the club once their schooling has finished. We like all our boys to complete their schooling before coming to the club. Most of the boys we put on scholarship are in Grade 11. We have a strong philosophy that when a boy is coming to the club we look at his all round development, because we know that not every kid is going to make it in football. Wayne likes to know that be it through an apprenticeship, university, traineeship or a job, that they'll have something to fall back on. This year we have seven players at university and five at TAFE, and a number of players have earned degrees while at the club. If a player spends two or three years with us, and his football hasn't reached the standard of First Grade, we're still thrilled if he's earned a degree, or finished an apprenticeship. He's got something.

### ***How does a player go from being on scholarship, to signing with the club?***

At the end of Grade 12 we select the boys who we feel have reached the required standard. A lot of them would

happen to the boy when he joins the club that makes the difference. Wayne is in charge of that. Things like their weights, diet, fitness and general training are always being monitored. It is also good in the way that it makes the transition from Under 19's to First Grade easier because the players already know the system and know the people.

### ***Have you ever made a mistake?***

Of course. We've had two or three of the most talented boys come here but are no longer with us because they had other things driving their focus away from football. As I said at the start, it's the X factor. You never know.

### ***How long do you give a player to prove he's First Grade potential?***

Wayne always gives them at least two years. By that time they should have had time to settle down and show us what they can do. If they don't make it as far as football is concerned at least they will leave the club a better player, and possibly with a degree or an apprenticeship under their belt.

## **We give every player, regardless of age the chance to make it.**

have played for Queensland schools, or at the QRL Country Carnivals. Wayne decides who we will offer contracts to, and then they come down here to play with our Under 19 team. Others might be put in a Brisbane club team. Wayne put Brad Thorn with Wests in the local comp, it did him the world of good. We also ensure the boys are looked after off the field. We like them to stay at least six months with one of the families who are prepared to look after the boys. They take care of their washing, food etc. It makes their parents happy and lets the player concentrate on their football. Then we make sure they get a job, or are enrolled at university or TAFE. Every player who signs with us can be sure he will either be studying or will have a job. Wayne is very strict on that.

### ***What exposure does the 18 year old recruit get to the top squad? Does he get to train alongside the Langers' and Walters'?***

Absolutely. All the pre-season training is done together. Alfie will be doing sprints with a kid straight out of the country. It's great for everyone. I guess the strength of our club is our teamwork. We give every player, regardless of age the chance to make it. Our conditioning staff work just as hard with the Under 19's as they do with the First Grade squad. It's what

### ***Is recruiting becoming more competitive between NRL clubs? Are you hearing about a player earlier, say at 14 rather than at 16?***

That's starting to become the case. A friend told me of a twelve year old who he said was the best he'd ever seen. It's not aggressive between the clubs because we're all friends, but obviously we want the best for our club. We've lost a couple of scholarship boys to other clubs for various reasons, that is their decision. Our biggest advantage is that we are a Queensland club, and most of the boys we recruit are Queenslanders. That's worth a lot. Another big difference is that we've got a bloke like Wayne Bennett on board.

### ***What about the skill level of younger players? Has it risen over the last ten years?***

Without doubt. I reckon the Queensland Rugby League deserves a big pat on the back for what they've done in the last ten years. The things I didn't learn as a player until I played for Australia, kids are learning today in primary school. Whoever is responsible is doing a great job taking the game into outback country Queensland and spreading the word. I guess it will only get better which is also great for Rugby League.

# COACHES HALF TIME TALK

---

By Kurt Wrigley  
ARL Level 2 Coach

Rugby League, unlike other sports, has only one official break where the team can be addressed collectively during the game – at halftime. The coach has to ensure that this small window of time is used effectively to either consolidate or try to change certain aspects of the game. It can be of vital importance to the success of the team that the coaches message is transferred clearly and concisely.

Over the years observation of coaches at different levels has resulted in the following phases being identified :

## 1. Preparation

- If a dressing room is not available, find somewhere in the shade away from the sideline
- Stand where there is nothing going on the background – crowd, sun, kids kicking footy
- If there is a dressing room, clear other teams and players
- Have ancillary things done first, eg drinks, injuries attended, wet towels, tape
- Clear the room of people not needed so there are few distractions – parents, trainers, gear people
- Ensure you have the attention of all players – make eye contact
- Squat down closer to eye level if they are sitting on the ground
- Make short notes during the game (no more than 5) which can be referred to later

## 2. Delivery

- Don't give too much information – players won't remember it
- Encourage players by emphasising both positives and negatives. Alternate your positive and negative comments, this is called the 'sandwich effect'.
- Avoid criticising an individual for poor play, have a short one on one talk before he returns to the field
- Don't let all players talk at once, after you've made your points ask for comments from the captain or key players
- Get acknowledgment from the players when you make your point – nodding of the head
- Use change of voice tone and hand movements to emphasis a point – avoid yelling and screaming
- Remain calm especially in pressure situations – if you don't appear in control your players won't

- Be specific with the words you use. The speech is obviously the focal point of the half time break so try to avoid words and phrases, which are emotional and very ambiguous. Some examples encountered over the years include:

“Come on guys, lets dig deep!”

“Come on, Have a go!”

“What's going on out there?”

“Start playing smart”

“Let's get into the game”

“Our tackling is terrible”

“Let's get out there and play well”

Coaches will have heard these and similar phrases before. These statements might sound encouraging, but give the team no real useful feedback. Messages that are more useful are words/phrases that **Call to Action**. Some examples are included at the end of the article.

Half-time instructions that highlight a negative result can be delivered in a more positive way. Not mentioning the action you wish to avoid focusses the players' attention on the positive. For example, everyone has heard a coach say, "Don't panic out there". Merely mentioning the word "Panic" can conjure thoughts of hysteria and lack of control. It would be better to say "Stay controlled and relax out there".

In other words tell what to do or what action you are looking for NOT what they shouldn't do.

As an exercise, think of a positive way of saying these negative instructions.

- No missed tackles
- Don't give them a sniff
- Don't be complacent
- Don't be lazy at marker
- Don't allow them to offload
- No bad passes

## 3. Summary

- Just before the players run out, the coach should reiterate the main points even more concisely
- Announce any changes for the 2<sup>nd</sup> half team – It is useful to read out all the positions to avoid confusion
- Speak to key players/captain individually on how they can improve the performance of the team
- Wish them good luck – remain positive and believe in the players.



# Key Areas of **TEAM PLAY**

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By Ken Kennedy  
ARL Level 3 Coach

Team Play, being a key part of our game, is an area often overlooked by coaches. Certain tactics and patterns for teams are developed which sometimes neglect the basics.

The main objectives of the attacking team are, direction and ball control, scoring tries and winning. Teams should be coached to take the ball forward at every opportunity. Keep in mind that, at times, it may be necessary to run across field to draw the defending team out of position to create space, so as to go forward.

The term going forward applies equally to players running the ball, the kicking game and defence. A team with a good tactical kicking game can advance it's field position very quickly. It is important for coaches to know and understand the laws of the game and how to use them to the team's advantage.

How often do teams defending inside their 20 metre area, regain the ball from a 20 metre free kick (tap) only to take a quick tap and run 3 or 4 rucks and have their tired forwards repulsed by the defence and only gain 10 or 15 metres, sometimes losing possession. By taking advantage of the law that allows the team with the free kick to kick the ball downfield and into touch, with the restart of play from a scrum, and a scrum feed to the kicking team. A well placed kick could gain 40 to 50 metres, well into the opposition half.

If the team in possession of the ball, kicks from inside it's 40 metre area and into the opposition's 20 metre area and finding touch, play will restart with a scrum and the feed going to the kicking team, again gaining easy yards.

From starts of play, teams are seen to kick the ball deep into the opposition area, chasing it downfield and defending. By kicking the ball dead, (not on the full) in the opposition's "in goal", play would restart with a goalkick dropout, giving the team kicking off, possession again. There are many kicking opportunities to be exploited. It is so important for a coach and his players to know the laws of the game, and to make sure that kickers are well skilled and drilled in the art of tactical kicking. There are many metres to be gained by a good kicking game, an easy method of going forward.

Rugby League is played in sets of six tackles where ball control is the key to attacking success. A team that continually turns over possession will have no opportunity to go forward. Successful coaches spend

a lot of time working on ball control skills at training, using drills and game like situations, making sure that the players fully understand the importance of ball control.

The next area of importance is support play, it is evident that support play or "off the ball plays" are a key factor in any teams attacking strategy. Without this, the "go forward" will break down, and the six tackles will be used up very quickly without gaining any ground. Second phase play as it is called, continually allows the team in possession, to put the defending team under pressure. The ability of the player to offload the ball under pressure, to draw a man and pass is an important part of second phase play.

The player supporting the ball carrier, needs to know when to call for the ball and how to time his run. Often a player with the ball, who is covered by the defence, pushes a pass because of a call from a support player who is not in a good position, causing a breakdown in the team's attack. Support players must be made aware of their role in second phase play. These are very important skills that need to be taken into account and should be addressed by the coach.

The next requirement is related to the defending team. A well drilled and disciplined defensive team will control an opposition in possession of the ball. This is done by putting the attacking team under constant pressure by limiting the time and space in which they have to work. So pressure becomes an important factor. The objective is to cut off the attack before they reach the advantage line. To achieve this every player must have a good understanding of the marker defence system which is being used. E.g. first man chase, second man hold, or split markers. Each player needs to understand his role in defence and in the teams defensive pattern. E.g. up and in or slide. Continued pressure will force the attacking team to make an error, giving the defending team the opportunity of regaining possession. Players need to be skilled in tackling techniques. A good defensive team will need to put the opposition players onto their backs making it harder to get a "quick play the ball" going.

This will allow the defence time to be set for the next ruck. A good practice for this is to play left defence against right defence, in a reduced field area.

Remember that to be successful, a team must be well drilled in all aspects of the game, in both attack and defence. As a coach, you need to continually analyse and review the teams performance.

# *Statistics and Game Analysis*

---

By Don Oxenham  
ARL Level 4 Coach

Game analysis and the collection of statistics has become more important to coaches particularly at levels in the game where it is applicable namely from the older junior age group and all grades above. Coaches employing some pattern of play or a game plan whether it be very simple or more structured need to monitor the effectiveness of these structures.

Decisions to be made by the coach will be

- (a) The information to be recorded.
- (b) How to record this information, and
- (c) How this information will be used.

Game statistics are obtained by personal observation, written recorded data onto sheets and where available video taping games.

The information to be recorded is a decision of the coach based on what they maybe looking for. This can range from a standard set of data for each game or particular data specific to an aspect of the game. In most cases defence can be more easily recorded as the team will be coached into a particular style or pattern of play. Each player in defence has a set role to perform and as this is predetermined it is easier to follow and record.

Attack is much harder to predict and record particularly where a team, either your own or the opposition, is playing to react to the game situations at the time. Some coaches have established set patterns to cover certain areas of attack. The movement analysis sheets as printed here could provide a method of recording, and charting player movement patterns and game involvement. Accurate recording of this information will allow a coach to track and understand the attack of his own team, to monitor their own pattern of the opposition. Understanding the opposition attack pattern could obviously allow defence to be adjusted to the pattern.

Effective use of the sheets

To effectively use these sheets, each position of the movement should be recorded using your own symbols to allow the data to be interpreted and be meaningful.

It is the coaches choice to record every set of six rucks or only selected ones to provide the necessary information to understand the plays.

Suggested actions that can be recorded

- Player running path
- Play the ball
- Dropped ball
- Kicks - general play, receptions etc.
- Changes of possession
- Scrums
- Players involved

Personnel used for recording need to completely understand the information and statistics required by the coach. Recorders should be standardised to ensure uniformity of the data, and with experience, will become more efficient. □

**TRY 10 20 30 40 50 40 30 20 10 TRY**

												Right												
												20m												
												20m												
											Left													

RUGBY  
LEAGUE  
COACHING  
MAGAZINE

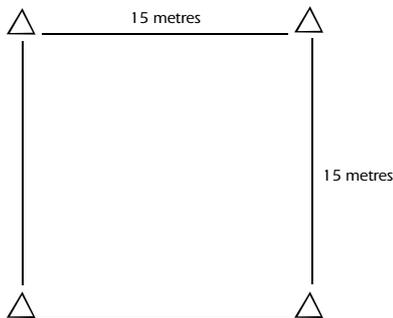
# Movement Analysis

**TRY 10 20 30 40 50 40 30 20 10 TRY**

												Right												
												20m												
												20m												
											Left													

## TEN PASSES

- SETTING:**
- Grid 15m x 15m
  - 2 Equal teams of players
  - 4 Markers • 1 Football



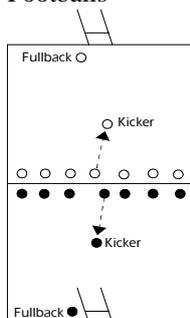
- One team is given the ball and attempts to complete a set of passes (up to 10, nominated by coach)
- Every set completed gains a point
- The opposing team attempts to intercept or knock the ball down, gaining possession when the ball hits the ground or is intercepted
- Player in possession can not move so his team mates must move around to support him and look for the pass
- Passes must be Rugby League style

### BENEFITS OF GAME:

- Passing • Decision Making
- Space Awareness • Communication

## SPEED ATTACK

- SETTING:**
- Area up to full size field
  - 2 Equal teams of players
  - 2 Footballs



N.B. The ball must not be kicked into touch.

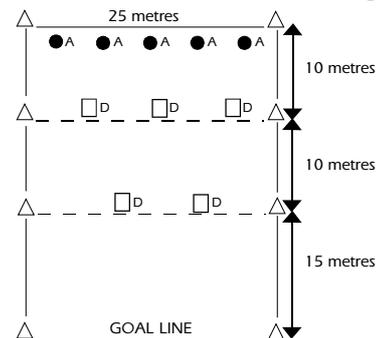
- Two opposing teams line up along halfway. Each team has a kicker and a fullback.
- On a given signal from the coach, the balls are tapped on the ground and passed to the teams kicker who kicks downfield, away from the fullback.
- When the fullback retrieves the ball, he must dive on the ball and wait until all of his team mates are onside before he plays the ball.
- The ball is then played and it must be touched by all players, before reaching halfway.
- The first team to place the ball on halfway scores a point
- Game can be played to a set time or a number of points.

### BENEFITS OF GAME:

- Passing • Communication • Fitness

## CHALLENGE

- SETTING:**
- Grid 25m x 35m
  - 10 players (2 teams of five)
  - 8 Markers • 1 Football • 5 Bump Pads



**AIM** - Five attacking players attempt to score a try against five defenders in two lines, 3 and 2 as per diagram.

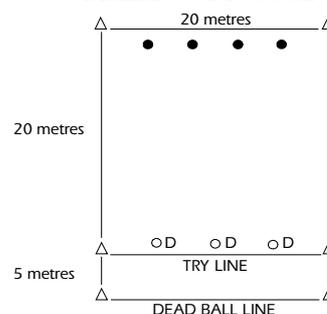
- Defenders can only move laterally on their line
- Attackers must use attacking flair and support to first of all get past 3 defenders and then continue to beat the next line of 2 defenders. First 3 defenders can turn and chase when attackers pass their line.
- A tackle is effected by a two handed touch on attackers
- Teams change and alternate attack and defence.
- Points are awarded for tries, and deducted for negative plays that don't advance the attack.

### BENEFITS OF GAME:

- Develop competition amongst players
- Communication • Support Play
- Develop Attack and Defence • Decision Making

## LANES KICKING

- SETTING:**
- Grid 25m x 20m
  - 2 teams of players (4 attackers v 3 defenders)
  - 6 Markers • 1 Football



**AIM** - To score tries through kicks

- Attackers have 2 play the balls to score a try.
- Each play the ball must contain a kick (grubber, chip).
- Players can run from acting half back position or have one pass (Maximum).
- Defenders must return to try line after first tackle to commence second play.
- Competition by awarding a point for each success i.e. score a try to attackers, effect a tackle by defenders.

### VARIATION

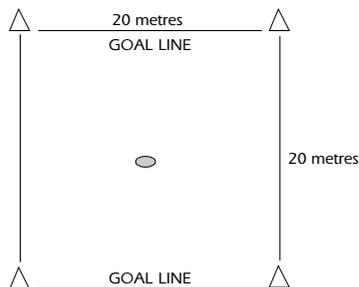
- Able to kick on either 1st or 2nd tackle i.e. run on the first, kick on the second (options)

### BENEFITS OF GAME:

- Develop competition amongst players • Communication
- Kicking Skills • Decision Making

## SPEED TOUCH

- SETTING:**
- Grid 20m x 20m (approx. depending on players)
  - 2 Equal teams of players
  - 4 Markers • 1 Football



**AIM** - Team is to score against other team without being touched (one touch per team before hand-over)

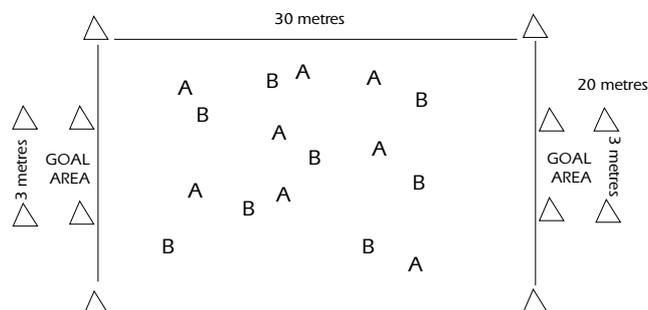
- Teams line up on their own goal line to start game
- Ball is placed in middle of grid
- Teams run out and one picks up ball
- Touch can either be a two handed touch, or full tackle
- When the touch is made the ball is placed on the ground and both teams retire to their own goal line and then return to pick up the ball and continue game (hand-over) with a play the ball.
- The team that was attacking now goes on defence.
- Incorrect play the ball incurs a penalty which is a hand-over.
- Other penalties are also a hand-over

### BENEFITS OF GAME:

- Defence • Passing Skills • Communication
- Decision Making • Fitness

## LEAGUE SOCCER

- SETTING:**
- Grid 20m x 30m
  - 2 Equal teams of players
  - 12 Markers • 1 Football



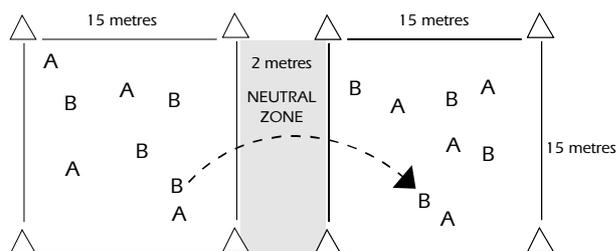
- The game is based on rules of soccer, using a Rugby League football
- Football not to be kicked above shoulder height
- No hands to touch ball (play the ball not the player)
- Goals scored into goal area (3 metres wide)
- Game can be played for a time limit, or nominated number of goals

### BENEFITS OF GAME:

- Ball Control on ground & dribbling
- Fitness • Communication
- Team Work - co-operation between players

## KICK FAST BREAK

- SETTING:**
- Grid 32m x 15m
  - 2 Equal teams of players (A & B)
  - 8 Markers • 1 Football (more can be used)



**AIM** - Players to kick football across the neutral zone to a team mate on the other side.

- Teams of players are divided and placed, half of each team is placed on either side of the neutral zone.
- One point is awarded for every successful kick caught.
- Opposition players attempt to knock down or intercept the football before it is caught.

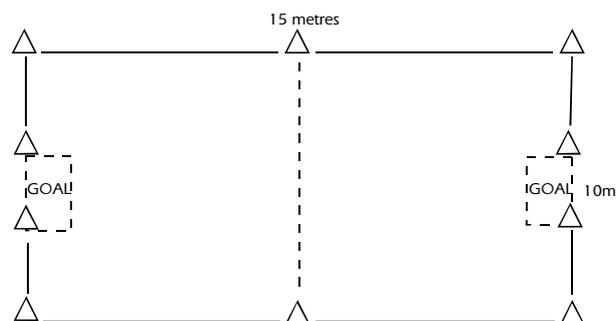
**VARIATION:** Kick with non preferred foot  
Catch with one arm

### BENEFITS OF GAME:

- Kicking technique • Catching
- Communication • Positioning

## LEAGUE HAND BALL

- SETTING:**
- Grid 15m x 10m (goal area 3 metres wide)
  - 2 Equal teams of players
  - 10 Markers • 1 Football



**AIM** - To pass the football between the opponents goal for a point

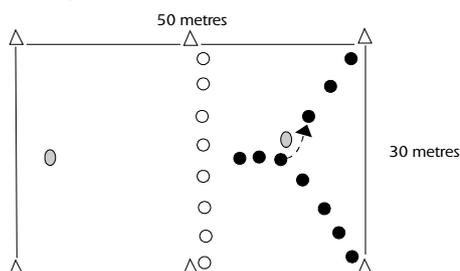
- Game commences with a kick-off
- Each team is allowed a goal keeper to guard the goal area, but no other players are allowed in this area
- Players may run with the football and pass in any direction
- Opposition players attempt to intercept a pass or knock the ball to the ground to force a change over
- After each point is scored the game recommences with a place kick by the non scoring team

### BENEFITS OF GAME:

- Passing • Communication
- Decision Making • Space Awareness

## TWO BALL LEAGUE

- SETTING:**
- Area 50m x 30m
  - 2 teams of equal numbers
  - 6 Markers • 2 Footballs



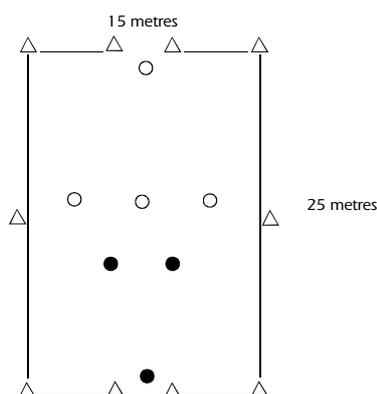
- Rules are identical to the Laws of Rugby League except: No tackling, no kicking, no scrums, two footballs used.
- The major difference in this game is that two footballs are used but only one at a time.
- The game commences as normal with one football while the other ball is placed at one end as displayed.
- The game continues until the coach blows the whistle.
- On this signal, the ball that has been used becomes 'dead' and it must be automatically dropped to the ground.
- The other ball becomes the 'live' ball and the first team to gain possession play on immediately toward their original line.
- There is no pause or stoppage! Teams have to react quickly
- The coach continues to blow his whistle at various times to change footballs.

### BENEFITS OF GAME:

- Reforming positions • Reaction • Defence
- Communication • Attack - Support play

## GOALIE

- SETTING:**
- Grid 25m x 15m
  - Uneven teams e.g. (3 on 2) or (4 on 3)
  - 10 Markers • 1 Football



- Each team nominates a goal keeper before play starts.
- Defending team goal keeper drops back to protect goal.
- Attacking team passes football amongst themselves, passes can be along ground or Rugby League style and in any direction.
- Goals are scored by attackers passing or grubber kicking football past goalkeeper and through goals.
- Change over occurs by dropped ball or two handed touch.

**N.B.** - Defenders take turns as goal keeper

### BENEFITS OF GAME:

- Passing • Communication • Adjustment • Kicking

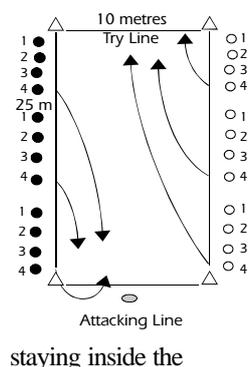
## SCRAMBLE

- SETTING:**
- Grid 25m x 15m • 2 teams of equal numbers
  - 4 Markers • 1 Football

- Players from each team are given a number from 1 to 4.
- Team A - attackers, The coach calls out a number e.g. 4, those players with the number do the following:

### Attackers (Team A)

- All must run to the attacking line and touch the ground with one hand. One of these players picks up the ball. They then run down the corridor attempting to score a try over the line, by staying inside the corridor.



### Defenders (Team B)

- All must run to the try line, touch the ground and run up the corridor preventing Team A scoring a try by two hand tagging or tackling a player in possession.

### Note

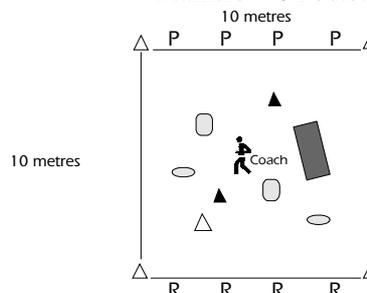
- Team A players may pass the ball between themselves but it must not be passed forward.
- Players from each side do not have to wait for all players in their team to get to the line to run. They may go at any time. As soon as players get tagged they return to their position and another number is called.
- 1 point is awarded for a try • Roles are reversed

### BENEFITS OF GAME:

- Communication • Passing • Defence • Attack

## BATTLESHIPS

- SETTING:**
- Grid 10m x 10m
  - 2 Equal teams (Passes and Receivers)
  - 4 Markers • 8 Footballs



- Place objects inside grid e.g. tackle bag, hit shield, witches hat, marker, football etc.
- Passers line up outside grid, they each complete 4 passes to the right side and four passes to the left.
- 4 players at back of grid (receivers) to act as ball retrievers who pick up ball with two hands, then carry it back and place at passers feet, then return to retrieve the next ball.
- Passers attempt to hit objects, large objects (tackle bags) are removed from grid after being hit 3 times, medium objects (hit shields) removed after 2 hits and smaller objects removed after being hit once.
- Team eliminating most objects wins game.

### VARIATION:

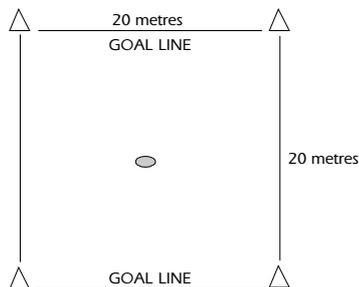
- Time limit on passes
- Vary the number of passes

### BENEFITS OF GAME:

- Passing • Communication • Adjustment • Kicking

## SPEED TOUCH

- SETTING:**
- Grid 20m x 20m (approx. depending on players)
  - 2 Equal teams of players
  - 4 Markers • 1 Football



**AIM** - Team is to score against other team without being touched (one touch per team before hand-over)

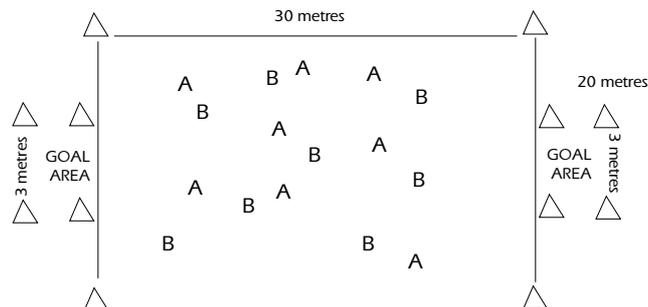
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- Ball is placed in middle of grid
- Teams run out and one picks up ball
- Touch can either be a two handed touch, or full tackle
- When the touch is made the ball is placed on the ground and both teams retire to their own goal line and then return to pick up the ball and continue game (hand-over) with a play the ball.
- The team that was attacking now goes on defence.
- Incorrect play the ball incurs a penalty which is a hand-over.
- Other penalties are also a hand-over

### BENEFITS OF GAME:

- Defence • Passing Skills • Communication
- Decision Making • Fitness

## LEAGUE SOCCER

- SETTING:**
- Grid 20m x 30m
  - 2 Equal teams of players
  - 12 Markers • 1 Football



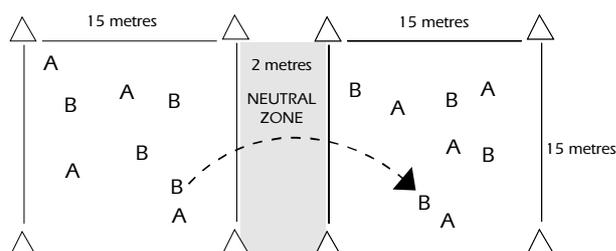
- The game is based on rules of soccer, using a Rugby League football
- Football not to be kicked above shoulder height
- No hands to touch ball (play the ball not the player)
- Goals scored into goal area (3 metres wide)
- Game can be played for a time limit, or nominated number of goals

### BENEFITS OF GAME:

- Ball Control on ground & dribbling
- Fitness • Communication
- Team Work - co-operation between players

## KICK FAST BREAK

- SETTING:**
- Grid 32m x 15m
  - 2 Equal teams of players (A & B)
  - 8 Markers • 1 Football (more can be used)



**AIM** - Players to kick football across the neutral zone to a team mate on the other side.

- Teams of players are divided and placed, half of each team is placed on either side of the neutral zone.
- One point is awarded for every successful kick caught.
- Opposition players attempt to knock down or intercept the football before it is caught.

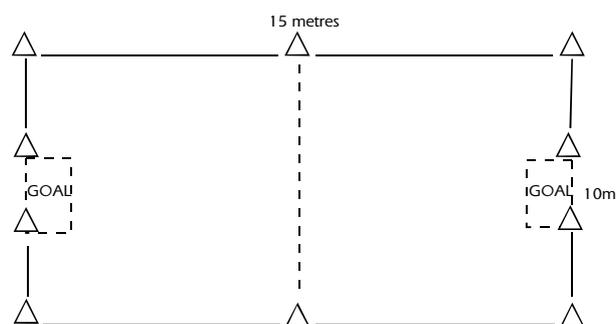
**VARIATION:** Kick with non preferred foot  
Catch with one arm

### BENEFITS OF GAME:

- Kicking technique • Catching
- Communication • Positioning

## LEAGUE HAND BALL

- SETTING:**
- Grid 15m x 10m (goal area 3 metres wide)
  - 2 Equal teams of players
  - 10 Markers • 1 Football



**AIM** - To pass the football between the opponents goal for a point

- Game commences with a kick-off
- Each team is allowed a goal keeper to guard the goal area, but no other players are allowed in this area
- Players may run with the football and pass in any direction
- Opposition players attempt to intercept a pass or knock the ball to the ground to force a change over
- After each point is scored the game recommences with a place kick by the non scoring team

### BENEFITS OF GAME:

- Passing • Communication
- Decision Making • Space Awareness

RUGBY  
LEAGUE  
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MAGAZINE

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