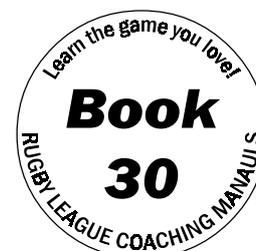


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Coach Talk

Chris Anderson - Australian and Cronulla Sharks Coach.

Written by Terry Prindable

The current Australian and Cronulla Sharks coach needs no introduction to Rugby League coaches and players. RLCM again had the opportunity to tune into the master coach's thoughts on the game and to see why he still gets excited, needs to feel the rhythm and tries to fix a leaky boat.

RLCM: Are there any changes to your flat attack style this year?

ANDERSON: Well, there are changes in the defence of the game so we have to change the way we do business a little. There are more players in the tackle now - multiple tacklers and therefore the play-the-ball is slower - two to three seconds slower. This means the defence has time to get back and get set. Before, they were just getting back to the 10 metre line as the ball was being played so the tendency was for not all of the defenders to get off their line. Now they are back and set and they're rushing at you all the time. It's very hard to spread the ball.

So we still play flat and try to build momentum through the forwards but we work a little bit differently. You just can't roll over the top, get a quick play the ball and create momentum any more. We may not play the advantage line but just inside it. Then the defence has to run their 10 metres all the time to get to us and they tire doing this every time. So, yes we do need to adapt and play differently in some areas to gain momentum.

As well as these little changes, you have change with new team members this year so you have to get into a routine and find a rhythm.

So at this stage with the different game, changes you have to make and new players, you are still searching for that continuity and rhythm and it doesn't kick in overnight.

RLCM: You mentioned the changes in the tackling before. Can you elaborate?

ANDERSON: Well, it's the interpretation of the rules and that seems to be what the coaches and referees want - slower play-the-balls. There is no dominant run any more. Everything is about the dominant

tackle. The player hits up to the line, meets the tackler and then two other blokes drive in and the player either hits the ground or is rolled backwards. It's very hard to get any sort of continuity or make any sort of ground through the play at all.

Then there's the flop. Sometimes, it's a very fine line between what is a flop and what is not. It's hard to get consistency through the referees. Players get frustrated by this so you're not seeing a lot of open football with the multiple tacklers and a lot of frustration with the interpretation of the flop. I just don't think they have got the mix right between attack and defence.

RLCM: So what 'Get Out' sets and drills can you use to come off your line?

ANDERSON: Well, the dummy half has a lot to do. With the defence rushing you like I said before, the dummy half hasn't time to pass the ball before they're up so you will see most sides have the dummy half scoot out to make ground and play it safe. We have a pattern and a structure and blokes working together to make as much ground as possible to get away from the danger area. The players know they don't go into the line early and try to put the ball back to another player. It's too risky.

RLCM: How do you keep that momentum going that emerges after a try is scored and what about if you are on the receiving end of that?

ANDERSON: That comes from the reaction to being on top of the game. The team has scored tries and gained confidence from that. They feel they own the game. The aim, then, is to play territory and get back down the other end as quickly as possible. You probe the weaknesses that have emerged in the other team in this particular game. However, in the new game, it's hard to keep the momentum going if the other side can slow the play-the-ball down with dominant tackles.

If you are on the receiving end of this momentum, it's like a leaky boat - you can't sort of stop the flow. But you have to muscle up, forget the mistakes or

you'll make more, get your head up and feel positive. You have to slow that momentum with good tackles and concentrate on being the next one to score.

As a coach, you have to rely on the team's preparation and the senior players to take ownership as well. I don't send messages out in that situation. If a mistake has been made, training during the week is the place to address that. If you see some players with their heads down, they are the ones who need more maintenance at training. It may be their first season at this level and they need help to build egos and to know what's required at the level.

In the meantime it's the senior players who need to step up both physically and mentally to get it going again on the field. That's why the coaching preparation and pre-season talks on this situation are done. Perhaps they need to be a bit conservative for a while, play a little more for yardage till that rhythm comes back. You can't play flamboyant football if you're not playing well. You've just got to close up shop a little. A try from dummy half is worth the same as a try going through four sets of hands so maybe you've just got to play a bit ugly for a while.

RLCM: You talked about looking after business at training and not while the game is on. How do you approach the next week's training after a loss?

ANDERSON: Well, Monday training I don't talk about it too much. It takes a while to get over it and the emotions of it all so I tend to wait for my emotions to settle and have a look at the game and just be clinical about it. On Wednesday then we can talk about it objectively. Even then, I seldom launch into what we should have done or what was bad. It takes as much effort to go down in a game as it does to win. With the emotions out of it, we can break down where we went wrong by going through the individual tape of the player's game and the team tape and talk about where we went wrong and how we're going to fix it.

I think it's important to stay positive. We've talked about going through the tough times and dealing with

it pre-season so that it's not a shock when it happens. You just get back into establishing that rhythm, getting over it, recovering and playing again. We did that last year, weathered the tough times and achieved a fair bit out of it.

RLCM: Chris, with the multi-layer coaching that clubs have now, can you delegate some of the load to others?

ANDERSON: Yes, we work out what drills we have to do for our style and our safety pre-season. During the season, I don't do many of the drills. I am then able to walk around the players and do some one-on-one stuff. Of course, we have an assistant coach and a specialist who takes things like kicking drills once a week. This also allows players to sit down in twos, say the centres, and look at what they did in the game and their stats on personal computers. An assistant coach or myself can go through it with them. We can highlight the positives and look at fixing anything that needs attention.

On the other hand, with the Australian side, I do most of it myself. You have the assistant coach who can give the players feedback but they don't need many drills at that level. The main thing is to get them together as a team and make sure that your ball players aren't competing for the ball. Even at this level, some players might be intimidated by other test team regulars and be over-called for the ball and this may not be the best for the team at that stage of the play. So it's important to work out that hierarchy and get the ball to the right player at the right time.

RLCM: You mentioned the importance of pre-season work with regards to attitudes about positive and negative things that are going to happen during the season. What are you actually saying to them?

ANDERSON: Well, pre-season is the planning stage of what you do for the year. The players are as fit as they're going to be by the end of February, so you're not looking for any more fitness. The only fitness

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you get then is match fitness. It's the same with your mental planning for the season. You need to know what you want to achieve that season. You can't be thinking about it once you start playing because all your thinking is about playing and getting your game right. So, pre-season we get a mental picture together of what we want to achieve this year, how we're going to go about it and what speed bumps we might meet on the way.

I have tried sports psychologists in the past but now I do it myself. I feel that is my job now. I know what we want to do as a team. I have the credibility with the players and it just needs a common sense approach to get this across. All the players are different and I feel it is the coach who should know his players and get through to them. The weakest link and the most competent senior player have to be treated differently and a common sense approach is what you need to handle this.

RLCM: How do you see mental toughness developed in individual players and teams?

ANDERSON: It begins in the pre-season work and carries through the season. You do it through physical toughness by putting pressure on players when they're training. Whether it's weights, running or ball work, it has to be done under number of sets or time or distance constraints so that the player is under pressure. It's no good just doing it for the sake of doing it. If they do everything under pressure, they get used to handling pressure and become mentally toughened in the process.

If you go out and train for something, it's generally what you become. If you drop the ball at training and you don't do anything about it, then there's a big chance of dropping the ball in the game. That's putting pressure on yourself. If they can handle the pressure gaining skills at training, then it's easier to handle the pressure in the game. It's a big part of the game now. Even if you are not playing well, you need to be mentally tough to lift yourself out of it. You need to stay tough for 80 minutes.

RLCM: Chris, players putting other players through the gap and players hitting the gap - this technique is one of the sweetest moments you see in the game. Some players seem to have the knack but can it be taught?

ANDERSON: As you say, some players do it

naturally better than others do but it can be taught. We work at it pretty hard by running angles and creating holes. The biggest thing though, is being patient. Some blokes run into holes and then throw their hands in the air when they don't get the ball but they've gone too early - they weren't patient. Of course, running to the hole is dependent on the ball player sucking in defenders so it's a combination of that skill and patience.

It's best to work on the skills slowly and then increase the speed to game situation.

It can be taught and yes, I agree that when it comes off in a game, it is sweet.

RLCM: How does the fitness of the players this year compare to last year?

ANDERSON: I don't think they are any stronger than last year. They're doing the same sort of training. We can't get any more weights into them. They do five or six sessions a week in the pre-season and just maintain that and keep their strength once they start playing.

RLCM: What about getting towards the semi-finals?

ANDERSON: That's part of managing your season. You have injuries and fatigue to deal with. Everyone's in the same boat. They're all carrying little niggles at that stage of the year. It's a long, tough, 26 game season and that's what you have to manage. You have to refresh and get excited by the semi-finals. You have to get excited about that next level of the competition. It's a mental thing - you need to be excited.

We've got two byes early in the year which may be a good thing. I think that the last thing you need towards the end of the year is a week off. It's too hard to get going again. At an early stage of the season we will be able to make the bye more of a social, team-building weekend.



Hey Coach!

Do you have a coaching philosophy?

Written by Gary Roberts

The Oxford Dictionary defines the word *philosophy* as:

'Seeking after wisdom or knowledge, esp. that which deals with ultimate reality or with the most general causes and principles of things and ideas and human perception and knowledge of them.'

Roget's Thesaurus says of *philosophy*:

Knowledge, laws, thought, wisdom, learning, theory, principles, metaphysics, science, ideology, ism, doctrine, system, lifestyles, values and tenets.

Coaches are often asked to explain their coaching philosophy.

Some go to great lengths and give an articulate answer. Others work their way through the question and stumble along looking for an answer.

The question is complex and many different answers are received and taking into account the various definitions, it is easy to understand why.

Maybe a simpler question would be, "Why do you want to be a coach?" or "What do you hope to achieve with your coaching?"

If you are going to be a coach and it does not matter at what level you are coaching, whether it is mini-mod, junior level, senior team, representative or the elite teams, you need a framework and parameters or a coaching philosophy to work to. This philosophy will make you challenge yourself and will set you apart from other coaches.

Before we go much further, jot down some issues, guidelines or key thoughts that you work to as a coach. If you are a junior coach, it might be, 'How important is winning?' or 'Equalising the opportunity to play'.

Think about it and do write something down.

Be aware that this is not your philosophy, as that will take time to develop. You have written some topics

that are your key thoughts and they give you some tools to work with. The thinking coach can now begin to implement procedures that require outcomes.

A philosophy will help you grow in the game and watch the players that have come in contact with you develop because you have a philosophy of how you want them to develop.

Greg Pierce, assistant coach at Cronulla Sharks with Chris Anderson, gave coaches an interesting insight into his philosophies in a talk at the recent 2003 High Performance Camp at Narrabeen.

He began with the statement, "We all have a philosophy on coaching. You may not think it but we all have thoughts on how the game should be played."

Pierce is correct in his assumption that we have thoughts on the way the game is played but these are not to be confused with the styles of play that a particular team uses.

Wayne Bennett, Broncos' coach, has a simple plan of the way he wants his teams to play. In 2003 he wants more running and passing to come back into the Broncos game - a trait that made them successful in the mid 90s.

Chris Anderson, Cronulla coach, has a style of play, developed while he was coaching at Halifax, that involves a flat attack. He has won premierships at Canterbury and Melbourne with game plans derived from this attacking system.

The Sydney Roosters play it completely differently from Brisbane and Cronulla. Coach Stuart's game plan in 2002 was based on effective defence in the opposition's half.

Daniel Anderson's NZ Warriors mode of play includes creating offloads from his big forwards - again different from the other coaches.

All the above are STYLES of play and are not to be confused with a coach's philosophy of the game.

Once a coaching philosophy on the game is developed, a thinking coach is born.

Along the way, a coach will have doubts and doubters will question him about his philosophy. Remember the fans wanted Wayne Bennett's head early in his career at the Broncos but he stuck with his principles.

Bennett acknowledges he has made adjustments to the way the Broncos play in attack and defence and has had to make hard decisions about playing personnel. It could be argued that those decisions are a part of Bennett's coaching philosophy of the game.

One of Bennett's major philosophies of coaching is to having players performing the fundamental skills correctly and to improve these skills in his players. It involves drills and small-sided games - a coaching philosophy since his days as a rookie coach. The drills and training games may have changed and his emphasis on skill development has evolved in different ways. However, his coaching philosophy of constantly improving the fundamentals has remained the same throughout his coaching career.

He said, "The things that haven't changed over the years are my values and philosophies in the way I believe football should be played."

Greg Pierce says, "Everyone's philosophies will be different but no one person's philosophies are going to be wrong. Your thoughts may be the total opposite of another coach but that does not mean that you are wrong or they are right."

He concludes, "That is why rugby league is a great game. It can be played in so many different ways."

Now move to page [95]. Hopefully, you have written down some thoughts that may start you on the way to developing your own coaching philosophy.

You are now a thinking coach with a philosophy on the game of rugby league.

Work within its boundaries. Maybe move sideways occasionally but don't move too far away from the things that you hold true - YOUR COACHING PHILOSOPHY.

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The 'Get Out' Sets

With Glenn Bayliss and Rick Stone

OK, your team needs ball possession and the opposition have just kicked it to you. However, you are back in the danger zone, on your own line and close to the side line.

What are your players going to do?

How are they going to manage the 'Get Out' sets?

They are going to need structured plays to handle the pressure, 'get out' and be in good field position to apply their own pressure by the end of the six.

Manly coach, Peter Sharp, talks of moving the ball from the corner post to the middle of the 50metre line.

"There is a lot of football to be played there," he says.

RLCM spoke with the QRL's Glenn Bayliss and Burleigh Bears' Rick Stone to get a successful coach's thoughts on 'Get Out' sets.

Glenn Bayliss begins by saying that you need to look at what each team is trying to accomplish.

The side kicking the ball is attempting to gain the advantage by putting the ball as far down field as possible. Ideally, they are aiming to trap the defending team in-goal. If not, they will try to keep the opposition pinned close to their line and force an error to regain possession.

In some circumstances, such as running with a strong wind they may not be too disappointed if the ball rolls dead. They can then set their defence in a controlled fashion for a restart on the 20 metre line. This may be a better option than having to contend with a Lockyer or Peachey type with room to move.

For the same reason they will avoid kicking to the centre of the field as their defence will not only have to cover the running fullback or winger but will be

split to cover both sides of the field. If the ball is kicked to the left or right side, their line can be condensed and a more vigorous defence can be inflicted on the opposition runners attempting to bring the ball out.(i.e. The attack side has limited options).

In short then, a good attacking team is going to be kicking to:

- a) the in-goal area
- b) the imaginary box bordered by the try line and 10m to 15m in from the side line
- c) the left or right side of the field.

The side receiving the ball has the task of 'getting out' of the danger zone.

Having evaded being tackled with the ball in the in-goal or gathered the ball safely near the side line, the 'Get Out' set begins. The primary aim is to gain positive field position before kicking or running the ball on the fifth tackle and then creating their own pressure.

Glenn states that the first play needs one of the fast men to take the ball infield in a 'hook line' or 'J-line', away from the side-line and away from the imaginary box area. Normally, the first hit up is the winger or fullback who should scoot from dummy half, running in-field away from the marker, before straightening up in an attempt to gain metres. This should allow time for some of the forwards to get back in support.

Glenn points out that if a forward is used for the first hit up, there may not be the desired effect as he may have just got back on side and if the opposition chase team is set, it could be a wasted play.

Second play hit ups are for forwards to get metres and players similar to the style of Shane Webcke and Martin Lang are needed. Again, their use depends on the effectiveness of the first play and subsequent field position.

These players should be aware of how they are going to be tackled. They should not be running upright or looking to offload the ball. They should be aiming to run at a player and then change their line so that they are running between players. They should also be preparing for a quick play the ball. If they run directly at a player, the tackler could hold them up allowing



the support tackler to come in with a dominant tackle and slow the play the ball down. By aiming at a player and at the last moment moving to get between the tackler and the support tackler should make the tackle less dominant.

The ball runner should endeavour to land on his elbows and knees to facilitate a quick play the ball.

The only time to spread the ball in this area is if the back-line is set and the opposition chase team has not marked up correctly. Space out wide may be inviting but this could be a high-risk tactic. Players need to be skilful and confident enough to move the ball two or three passes wide.

The next play could be aimed at a player who is not coming up in defence or at a smaller defender.

If the side is skilful enough, the third or fourth tackle could be run to the line with support and option runners to draw a player in and then pop a short pass. All option runners should have hands up ready to receive the ball which may be a behind ball or a face ball. The option runners have an important role in this passage of play.

If on the third or fourth tackle, the 40m line has been reached, the 40/20 kick could be an option. Even if the scrum feed is not achieved, at least the opposition will have the ball near the side line. However, good communication and chase is required. An isolated winger or fullback who receives the ball near the sideline could be bundled into touch.

If by the third or fourth tackle, the 50 metre line has been gained, the team can take advantage and set attacking options. The ball can be run on the fifth with a short kick in front of fullback or a bomb that falls short and creates pressure. The kicker also has the choice to place the ball down in either corner with a condensed chase line that protects the centre of the field and forces the receiver towards the touch line.

Even the weather can come into play. A team may just wish to take the ball from one side to the other with rolling rucks, quick play the balls and runners going the same way to get to a favourable position where the kicker can utilise the wind to assist him.

If maximum metres are not gained, the ball must be kicked as far as possible downfield to compensate for the poor set. It must be followed by good chasers who should aim at containing the ball carrier and unsettling the opposition on tackles one and two so the defensive line can form up.

Glenn concludes by adding that the state of the game will dictate whether risks have to be taken in the danger zone. However, he points out players must be empowered to assess what is in front of them and make

decisions 'backing' their individual and team skills.

Rick Stone concurs with this strategy while adding a few specific details.

He says that there are a couple of different ways to get out if it is a kick return. The wingers and fullback have to be skilled in this play. Also the two centres have to be involved and competent in bringing the ball out in those first couple of sets.

If the ball lands left side then the left winger and left centre have certain jobs in the first couple of plays. It applies to each particular set. Players should be drilled in the certain jobs they have to do.

Basically it is continuity and consistency that is required with these sets. It is a structured play. For example if a team is inside their own territory and have been under pressure because of tackling, a regimented structure needs to be in place to 'get out'. The players could be tired and not thinking clearly. This is when the structure cuts in.

On the other hand if every thing is going well and the scoreboard is looking good, the team is not under such pressure and the structure may not be needed as much.

Rick outlined some particular situations. He said every team should have three or four kick off sets to cover coming off their own line. These vary according to where the ball lands and the situation of the game.

One is a basic rapid set where players hit down one side to begin with. If behind, and quick points are needed, one play is taken up and then the ball is spread straight away.

Another is the rabbit set for when under pressure. The dummy-half runs consistently for three or four in a row.

All players should know the plays and the structure involved.

Once on the way to getting out, the strategy of the kick comes in to play. Again, Rick agrees with getting that centre field position for maximum kicking options. The kicker needs scope. If the set finishes 30 percent right or 30 percent left, he does not have the same options for a deep kick.

Rick adds that if the 'Get Out' has not gone according to plan and centre field has not been claimed, a short side kick may be necessary. This is put down the side just worked over, forcing the opposition centres and winger to drop back to cover.

Rick naturally agrees with kicking away from the Lockyer type fullback and concludes that kickers must aim to have the ball find space and bounce twice. This will test the opposition and their 'Get Out' skills.

Successful Attack

With Grant Bell

Written by Robert Rachow

I am fortunate to have gone through a number of coaching phases in relation to attacking football. If you recall back to the early 80's, attack really revolved around the success that Warren Ryan and Jack Gibson had, and it gave many coaches a strong foundation to build on.

In terms of finding creative ways to score tries, the late 70's through to the mid 80's was very much a time of going against the grain. Once the unlimited tackle rule was scrapped, coaches woke up and said 'Okay we have got to use the football we have got to be prepared to play a little bit'.

Then we came to the mid-to-late 80s where we hit this period where defence became more organised and as a result, attack became more structured. Some good things came out of that, but I still think there are a lot of negative tactics that have stemmed from that era which still pervade at all levels of the game today.

I believe there are certain sides that have real trouble getting over the line because of this notion that you need structure if you are going to score. People have a concept of a 'must-do' plan where you have got to go to A before B before C and that will give you a try. They think if they don't do it in that order and aren't organised, then they won't get there. That concerns me a little because I think that the way our players are developing and the way the game is progressing, it really lends itself now to a much more open approach to attack.

Our first principles of attack are to go forward, find a gap and retain the ball, although sometimes I feel there is too much emphasis on retaining the ball. I find that as soon as I tell my players I want them to hold it, that's when our play becomes really negative and our chances of winning go out the back window.

Take a situation at Newcastle a few years ago when Sam Stewart was under instructions not to pass the ball. Stewart was the captain of the team and his duty was to carry the football forward, but never to pass. In this day and age of video analysis, it was diabolical because opposition sides loved it. I can tell you the guys that go on to NRL level defensively say 'This player plays with his right arm, this player offloads with his left arm, this player doesn't offload, this player will push through, this fellow will ball play before the line'.

Now some of you might think it is a lot of information. But if players can't operate mentally at that level and be able to make decisions to nullify play, they don't last very long in first grade. So for the Knights to have Stewart in their side just made the job that much easier for the defence.

I'm not blaming anyone in particular here, just trying to exemplify that at that time there was this perception that offloading was too much of a risk; that teams needed 75 - 80% completion on the stats sheet to win. That notion really restricted a lot of what happened in attack.

At the same time along came Wayne Bennett at the Broncos. How much do you think Bennett emphasised ball retention? Not a lot.

He talked about the result. He said to his players 'I will back you to try things and I will back you to trust yourself and use your ability'. Consequently they played that way, won a lot of games and were very exciting to watch. Their attack was basically a result of not placing restrictions on their players.

I'll admit I have red sets and green sets, or what I call the yardage sets and football sets. It isn't like the traditional red zone and green zone when there is this imaginary line on the field where our players turn from boring footballers into brilliant footballers. How many times do you see a team play without any skills until they hit halfway, then all of a sudden the players have better hands, better eyes. It's a bit of a silly concept.

My red sets and green sets are based on the situation.

If my side have lost the ball behind, had a losing play or thrown a bad ball, then there is not much point in us trying to throw the ball around and create something out of nothing on the next play.

So you have to make the decision to say we will try



and build for something and go forward for a couple so we can gain some momentum and slick our minds back. Sometimes it will take all six tackles, so then you look for a restart and try and get a fresh start at the opposition down their end. Or perhaps you will only need to punch two forward before the team is in a good position to attack. It is all subjective. If the opportunity is there, we can play football five metres from our own sideline or tryline. I try and put the notion into my players that they have got a responsibility on the field to interpret what is going on. Obviously the more ball the opposition have, the better chance they have got of beating us, but it is more the quality of what we do with the ball that we have it that is going to determine the result.

Another important aspect is support. How do we get support? It all relates to player movement and what they do off the ball.

Most of us at training will practise how to catch the ball, how to pass the ball or how to run with the ball. We do lots and lots of stuff with players about the skills of what to do when the football is in their hands, but it seems we forget about teaching them to how to receive it in an optimum position. How long out of an 80 minute game will the half back have the ball physically in his hands? Between two and four minutes. What about wingers? It is more like 15 seconds for them.

We spend all our time teaching them what to do for something which they can do for a maximum of four minutes a game. It's the same with defence. How much time do our lock forwards spend actually tackling, getting on the ground or getting off the ground? No more than five minutes. So out of our weekly training sessions, we spend 95% of our time working on something that we do in total for say eight minutes of an 80 minute game of football. That's 95% of training for 10% of the actual game. What do our players do for the other 90% of the game?

They do all the little things we call 'off the ball play' which is really the most important part of the game. Most people skip it at training because it is very hard to teach.

If there is one player you can learn from about 'off the ball play', I'd say it was Terry Lamb. He was always in motion and if you watch video tapes of Lamb, it is very rare that he will get wider than perhaps five metres either side of a particular goal post. He lived in that area – his 'work space' you might call it. It was his duty on both attack and defence to patrol that area and constantly support his teammates.

As a coach doing ball work, you should be watching who is not moving, as opposed to who is moving.

Often we tend to get in and we coach way too close to our players.

How much are we really seeing about what our centre is doing when we get in among the ruck? Is he positioned? Is he coming back off the footy? Is he lining up saying 'Here is a space, I am going to go here'? How do we know when we are standing in a ruck obscured by other players? A lot of times we like to give ourselves a rap and like to think we are important by getting close to the players and seeing what effect we can have. But the session doesn't run better because we are there, moving with the play. So get yourselves away, stand back, let them run, stand off and say what is the centre doing? Why is the centre there? Then you are watching the real play.

Successful attack doesn't come from concentrating on ball retention and go forward alone. They are important, but often we make the things important when they are easier to coach. It is honestly very easy to coach someone to pass the ball or to receive the ball or to coach someone to run between markers.

Structured play coach's against player movement. Too much structure takes the notion away from your players that they should just go and play football. Drive past a park during winter and the kids are down there playing footy. How many rules are they playing by? They don't care about the rules, they just want to play. Coaches put rules in because they make us comfortable. We know we have always got that security blanket, but please don't make that your training session in attack.

When I am running attacking simulations I love to make them as competitive as possible. It keeps the players interested and it makes them push themselves to their limit. Sometimes I will say whoever wins gets to pick the penalty for whoever loses. They might say 'Because you lost, you have got 300 sit ups and 150 push ups', so all of a sudden it becomes a real contest. At the senior level I will put my right side against my left side and they play for beers. That challenge puts a different slant on training rather than the boring monotonous stuff.

The harder players try, the more innovative they become as well, which is a good way for them to think.



An Approach to Short Term Coaching

Written by Ray Unsworth - Director of Coach Education, The Rugby Football League, U.K.

Once coaches reach a certain level or standing in Rugby League then it is quite likely they may be invited to work with a side preparing to play within a representative framework.

I might suggest that the opportunity to prepare this side in no way resembles the work you do, at your club on a weekly, monthly or seasonal basis.

Preparation when working with a representative team can and does vary, for example you may have two or three 2-hour get togethers, a two-day camp or even meet today – play tomorrow.

Whatever the scenario, it is less than ideal. Even if you are afforded a number of sessions over a period of time, that can also create its own set of problems for the bigger the gap between sessions, then the harder it is to attain a rhythm.

Although coaches in my experience always want more time with their players – the reality when working in rep football is that you've not got it! Therefore management of the time you have got is crucial, and from the outset you must have:

● Clear Objectives

Coaching in this environment as previously mentioned is not like the work done at your clubs. The planning you do at club level is of a lesser significance because the reality is that you have got everyday to improve.

Improvement in performance at club level can be gradual; it can be over a season or any given period of time.

But as coach to a rep side, you need your sessions to have an immediate and:

● Dramatic effect on performance

And in order to achieve that, then you must be clear on the key techniques and tactics that you wish to employ, and I believe that the key to your success may well be in your ability to create an environment built on:

● Communication with your players and mutual trust

Every person involved in the team should know exactly what is happening, but more importantly be empowered and have a feeling of ownership for what is to become:

www.rlcm.com.au (RLCM)

● Their part in YOUR strategy

And why, simple, because:

● Players have to believe in what they are doing.

And you as coach should also believe in the team. For you can do anything to shape and prepare your side, but you can't take the next step and cross the whitewash with them. In other words it's back to **trust** again, you have got to rely on your players to deal with the job at hand.

So how is it possible as a coach, in a short space of time to create an effect?

And what is it when outlining your strategy that the players:

- **Need to know?**
- **Must know?** or indeed is
- **Nice to know?**

In short term situations I think it is fair to say 'nice to know' is a non starter.

The information for preparation you need to impart most certainly falls into the need and must know – must do categories.

For example the last representative side I prepared involved just two training sessions, my **clear objectives** where that the first session would need to be classroom based, affording me the opportunity to meet the players, discuss football and explore a simple model within a theory session, where as coach I get the opportunity to outline ideas and from the discussions and agreed outcomes formulate areas for our game preparation.

In my experience, and in such situations, its not what you say, it's the way that you say it, and my approach to this session was to outline and broker exactly how I wanted them to play, but in doing so:

- **empower the players,**
- **give them ownership,**
- **involve them in making significant decisions and**
- **give them genuine input into the creation of any game plan we chose to adopt (however simple that may be)**

And again, in my experience short term strategies

require simplicity.

Having done that, then my first objective had been met, the players had bought in and I was now more confident that our agreed principles, skills and tactics would be carried out

When we take the field of play we would look like a football team, [how important is that to a coach] and hopefully have more than a strong chance of producing a positive result.

Theory session over – situational field practice to go, the only opportunity we have to fasten in agreed plans.

It's now a matter of prioritising the areas, defensively, offensively and within our kicking strategy that need to be practised.

But overhaul its even more fundamental than that, it is really about adhering to certain principles and recognising that the modern game is all about applying pressure, and that this is achieved by adhering to what I call the five P's – six if you include the word **PRINCIPLES** because that's what they are.

- **POSSESSION** – you must control what you've got and turn it over only on your terms
- **POSITION** – is what you will achieve assuming you control the football or turn it over how and where you wanted.
- Effective use of possession and position will allow you the opportunity to apply **PRESSURE** – offensively or defensively.
- You now need **PATIENCE** because no one scores every time they get the football.
- A smart team will force the second best option – a back to back set - which means more **possession** – more than likely in a good **position** and an opportunity to apply more **pressure** which inevitably leads to **POINTS**.

Having said that, pressure is a two-edged blade as well as knowing how to apply it, you also need to know how to absorb and relieve it.

Moving on – having just explored a short term strategy, based on minimum preparation time for a one off fixture.

The next step in short term coaching is the opportunity

to prepare a touring side, obviously there will be more time to prepare – let's say 6 months of periodical get together culminating in a four week tour. In order to adequately prepare this team to perform to the best of their ability certain areas of preparation must to be implemented.

They fall possibly into five categories, the Physical Mental Skilful Tactical and player welfare issues. Which we can round up into the four distinct areas of:

- Tour management and logistics
- The coaching environment
- Sports science and
- Sports medicine.

And if you are fortunate and funding permits then the make up of your staff may include;

- Manager
- Head Coach
- Assistant Coaches (2)
- Doctor
- Physiotherapist
- Conditioner and
- Sports Psychologist

I might suggest that your role as Head Coach has now changed significantly, you will now need to manage and utilise the back up team, have a thorough knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of each member of staff and indeed an awareness of where some responsibilities are likely to cross over.

This team as well as the football team now become part of your everyday environment and you need to plan accordingly,

What is it that each member of your staff is responsible for?

- pre tour,
- on tour and
- post tour?

The lists of considerations are endless.

Planning now becomes the key and the devil is in the detail.

Listed below is an example of Head Coach roles and responsibilities, the list I might suggest is not exhaustive, but it is equally important that similar templates are produced for each member of staff.



PRE TOUR	ON TOUR	POST TOUR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Confirm appointment of relevant coaching staff ✓ Set up planning meeting: ✓ Agree training schedule ✓ Playing squad ✓ Philosophy ✓ Team vocabulary ✓ Roles and responsibilities ✓ Working practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Meet with all relevant personnel on a daily basis <p>Coaching Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Training schedules and requirements ✓ Remedial and progressive practices ✓ Tactics ✓ Selection ✓ Previews – reviews ✓ Player interviews: individual/unit/team <p>Sports Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Weights programme ✓ Designer games ✓ Training intensity ✓ Hydration/nutrition ✓ Mental skills programmes: individual collective <p>Sports Medicine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Updates ✓ Prehab, Rehab ✓ Fitness testing programmes ✓ Player welfare <p>Management and Logistics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Transportation ✓ Facilities, Equipment ✓ Finance ✓ Disciplinary issues ✓ Activities (free time) ✓ Obligations (to hosts) <p>Media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Interviews, Reports 	<p>Produce a comprehensive report that includes information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Players ✓ Staff ✓ Facilities ✓ Performance ✓ Recommendations <p>Feedback to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Players ✓ Clubs ✓ Coaches ✓ All members of staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Liaison with all other staff on a regular basis ✓ Identify suitable training venues ✓ Construct appropriate programmes ✓ Physical ✓ Mental/team building ✓ Bonding ✓ Codes of Conduct ✓ Tactical 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Identify appropriate opposition (warm up games) ✓ Prepare players' manual 		

Making the Transition

With Rick Stone

Written by Terry Prindable

Sure he is good at the game but how would he handle the big time?

This is the age-old question often asked about sports' people in any area from Basketball to Badminton.

In Rugby League, the question is asked about a player's potential to move from a high level to the ultimate - the NRL.

RLCM talked to Rick Stone Burleigh Bears Coach, former NRL player and now successful State League coach, to gauge his thoughts on MAKING THE TRANSITION.

Rick believes that the performance level between NRL and the State League, particularly in speed and intensity, is vastly different but that stand out players can make the step up. He estimates that this could apply to the top 15 per cent of State League players.

He points to Brent Webb, now with the New Zealand Warriors, as a prime example.

"In 2002, Webb was playing with Brisbane Wests. The Warriors saw things they liked and he is now in their full time system," he says.

However, for others to make the change, Rick believes the player, coach and club have work to do to overcome the hurdles which effect the levels of performance mentioned earlier.

He points out that one of the main disadvantages is that the State League is part time. Players have to fit in training around jobs and other commitments. If more players were exposed to the type of full time coaching and management of the NRL clubs, they would make the move from second tier competition to NRL.

Rick points out that his club, Burleigh Bears, like others, is making the extra effort to bridge the gap.

"Admittedly," he says, "we have to be more flexible because of the part time nature but our structures are getting closer to the NRL clubs. We expect our players to attend three training sessions and a weight session each week. We have extra staff now to aid the coaches and cover the workload. Assistant coaches in each grade take an active role in the sessions and allow time for coaches to have a one on one talk or viewing of a video segment with a particular player."

Rick sets the skills program for each coach but he may ask him to create a drill to solve a particular problem at his level. He will then oversee the situation and says he finds this refreshing for himself and good for club spirit. Aspiring players and coaches see him as not just someone who stays 'up there' with the State League side.

Rick also believes in handing responsibilities to his top players as part of giving them confidence to advance in the game.

"It's all about empowerment if they are going to mature to the next level," he says. "Our captain, senior players and up and comers are all given a chance to participate in and conduct team meetings. After all, once they get on the paddock, they have to do it all. The aspiring NRL player has to learn more about thinking for themselves rather than being directed what to do all the time."

Rick says that while the Burleigh Bears have their own identity and goals as a club, the association with the Canterbury Bulldogs should allow outstanding players to make the transition to the NRL.



Duty of Care, Responsibility and Liability

With Phil Jones - (NCAS Level 3)

Written by Ryan Ellem

Like all areas of society, sport has become increasingly prone to litigation, particularly public liability.

Phil Jones, an ARL High Performance (NCAS Level 3) coach and a practising coach of 25 years, said the evolution of society and law now puts a higher onus on Rugby League coaches, managers, assistants and trainers to thoroughly understand their roles and accountabilities within the game.

Addressing a session at a High Performance Coach Accreditation Course at Narrabeen this year, Jones delivered a stern warning of the current, and possible future, relationship between Rugby League and law.

“Public liability in this country has gone mad,” he

parlance might be interpreted by a court.

“In a half-time or pre-game talk, you might say to your players, ‘Make sure you stick it into them’, or ‘let’s get out there and hit them hard’. “What could a court interpret that to mean – should those involved not be from a Rugby League background?” It is possible that he may take terms “literally” and apply the law accordingly.

Expectations of club performance rightfully rest with the top coach. The highest qualified coach also takes on an added duty of care and responsibility. Jones said the Head Coach is responsible for the appropriate knowledge, training and supervision of everyone beneath him in the coaching staff. He posed

“The player’s safety is far more important than winning any game”

said. “But look out for an increase in litigation in sport in general – not just Rugby League”. Jones said the legal system’s expectations of Rugby League strongly correlates with the level of expertise of coaches.

“The more competent you are, the greater must be your attention to care and the more onerous your responsibility.

“(If accused of negligence) a court would require that you have set in place, the highest possible standards of performance and safeguards.

“The extent to which the law has made its presence felt within the game, would surprise many coaches. You might be coaching either kids or adults, and they might pack down in a scrum and the other team may push. “Your players might say, ‘We haven’t had any practice in packing scrums and pushing’. “Might you be held negligent if something happens? You certainly may.”

Jones warned something as simple as coaching

the scenario, of a National Rugby League or First Division strength and conditioning trainer taking the players through their sessions. “Yeah, I’m right”, the trainer might say, “I know exactly what to do”. So, he’s let to do the job. Some time down the track, you find out that the program has been injuring the players and/or he doesn’t have the necessary qualifications. If the Head coach hasn’t assessed his program beforehand and/or been down to a session to watch him with the team, he may be held accountable for not checking the conditioning trainer or his program out.”

Ground facilities are a topical point in sport litigation, and may have costly repercussions for coaches if overlooked.

“On every training and game day, you take your players into your dressing shed.

“But has anyone from your Club ever been in beforehand to have a good look around both yours and the other team’s dressing room? And, if there’s

Andrew Johns' Check List

MENTAL SKILLS

From QRL Coaching Camp, Gold Coast, Feb 2003

1. SACRIFICE / PRIORITISING

The player must get his priorities right and be prepared to sacrifice lower priorities for football; football must be number 1.

2. DEDICATION / COMMITMENT

The player must have a vision/dream and commit to the goals to get there.

3. PROFESSIONALISM

The player must approach his football with the highest level of professionalism, both on and off the field; attention to detail is paramount; constantly searching for the next 'edge' or the next break though is critical.

4. MENTAL TOUGHNESS

The player must develop the ability/confidence to produce the highest quality processes/skills under extreme pressure; this has to happen through the training process.

5. CONCENTRATION

The player must be able to narrow in and block out distractions under pressure in a game.

6. LIFE BALANCE

The player must establish a solid/consistent platform in their off field life before they will be able to reach their potential on the field, the two go hand in hand.

7. SWITCH ON / SWITCH OFF

The player must develop the capacity to switch on 100% for training/playing and not waste a single opportunity to be the best, and yet have ways to switch off/relax after training/playing in order to recover and get a mental break, it is a disadvantage to try to be switched on to football matters 24 hour a day, seven days a week.

8. TAKING THE EXTRA STEP

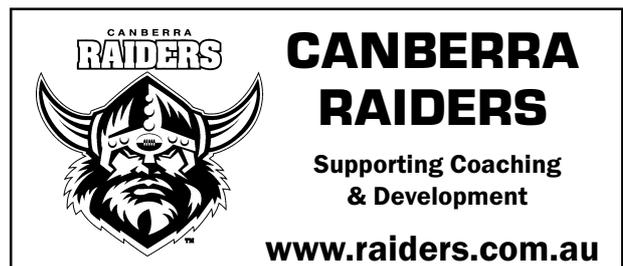
The player must always seize the opportunity to take the next step, always be first to training, last to leave, always look to do more than the people around you.

Responsibilities of the Team Manager

It is the responsibility of the team manager to represent the team on behalf of the club management and ensure all team members are kept up to date with the club requirements.

Some responsibilities of the team manager could include:

1. Ensure that all players are correctly registered prior to the first game.
2. Liaise closely with Club registrar to ensure the appropriate information has been supplied by each player.
3. Ensure the safe keeping of players registration cards and that they are on the officials table for the duration of each game.
4. Be responsible for correctly completing the sign on sheet at the officials table for each game and ensure that each player signs the sheet as required.
5. Remain at or near the table to ensure all particulars in relation to the game are correctly entered on the score sheet prior to when the referee signs same.
6. Be responsible for all club gear given to the team and ensure its prompt return at the end of the season.
7. Arrange for team jersey to be washed each week, and ensure their prompt return at the end of the season.
8. Ensure that all players are correctly attired for the game.
9. Ensure that all players and parents know when they are playing each week and the location of the ground.
10. Represent the team at Managers and other club meetings.
11. Ensure the club newsletter is distributed to all team members and ensure that the team parents are fully informed of what is happening in the club.
12. Encourage maximum participation by all players and see that no player is unfairly treated in relation to team selections.
13. Liaise with other committee members.
14. Check weekly scores and tables to ensure they are correct.
15. Have a sound understanding of the Rugby League Rules, Regulations, Laws of the Game and Safe Play Code.
16. Have a good working knowledge of the club constitution and club rules.
17. Be aware of the future directions of the club.
18. Ensure all team members respect and support the club, its rules and regulations.
19. Encourage parents to become involved in voluntary work within the club i.e. canteen, duty official, setting up field etc.
20. Encourage players to become involved in voluntary work within the club i.e. ball boy duties, running errands, picking up rubbish etc
21. Attend open committee meetings to inform the committee of how your team is going and to put forward positive ideas and suggestions.
22. Inform club executive of any players who have made representative football e.g. schoolboys etc
23. Provide newsworthy information for inclusion in the club newsletter.
24. Organise fund raising for your team i.e raffles etc and ensure all monies are handed to Treasurer for banking. Money should be returned to the team at the end of the season.



FINE TUNING THE PERFECT PLAYER WITH *INSTINCTIVE DRIVES*[™]

How often have we seen the best athletes fail at the most crucial moment?

How often has a champion team with all the talent in the world capitulated at the moment of apparent glory?

Jill Horder is a Performance Advisor and an Accredited licensee with Link – Up International. She was recently awarded the title of ‘most inspirational licensee’.

Her job is to identify how players can rise above the pressures by identifying their individual needs in order to get the best out of them.

The psychological program called *Instinctive Drives*[™] is the template for her program. It involves psychology but in principle its application is simple and logical.

“It’s about getting athletes performing with total confidence because their needs are being met, their fears eliminated and the game plan firmly in place for each player,” says Jill,

Basically what it does is identify the ‘missing link’ that so often exists between talent and consistent high performance from a player. It gives the coach proven strategies to consistently bring out the best in a player and an effective way of communicating.

If you think this is pie in the sky stuff, here’s a supporting argument!

Ricky Stuart engaged Jill to implement the *I.D.*[™] philosophy into his training program for the Sydney Roosters last year and they won the Premiership for the first time since 1975!!!

Stuart says he is reluctant to talk too much about the program and how much of an influence the *I.D.* had on the overall success of the team.

However, he acknowledges that the *I.D.* program was indeed a contributing factor in the overall jigsaw, which resulted in last year’s success.

So what are *Instinctive Drives*?

Instinctive Drives are based on the premise that everyone is born with a natural way of doing things.

“It’s our ‘modus operandum’ if you like. It’s like one’s fingerprint for life because it does not change over time,” says Jill.

“The *I.D.* of a player identifies what makes him tick and what you as a coach can do to meet his needs and honour his individuality.

“If you can achieve this, the spinoff is optimum performance, high energy, improved confidence and less potential for injury.”

Jill challenges coaches:

- Why is it that some players will buckle under pressure, while others thrive on it?
- Why is it that when you say one thing, some players are motivated to action and others are de-motivated by the very same words?
- Why is it that sometimes when you tell a player to do something a certain way, he’ll go off and do the opposite?
- Why is it that sometimes a player joins the team with so many credentials and you can’t for the life of you see what anyone ever saw in him?
- How can you get a player to be on time for training when no amount of punishment or talking seems to change him?
- Why does this guy always have to act the clown at training?
- Why do some players love training and others simply loathe the routines?

“How can you change these things?” Jill adds.

“The answers lie in a closer inspection of the human psyche of each individual through the *I.D. System*[™].”

The *I.D.* identifies these ‘observable’ behaviours. With this increased understanding, the lines of communication are thrown wide open. Jill says that

What type of person makes a good coach?

Reprinted from QRL Coaching & Development Publication (Vol 1, No 1)

Studies of the personality of American coaches from four sports revealed some interesting data. Among the personality traits in the group investigated, the following were noted with most frequency:-

1. Ambition - An outstanding need to be on top - drive.
2. Organisation - Orderly by nature; planning ahead - goal attainment and purpose.
3. An Extroverted Personality - Outgoing; warm, enjoy company - confidence
4. A fine sense of values - Well developed conscience - respect
5. Leadership - Score very well in this aspect
6. Persistence - Stick-to-it-ness was a cardinal feature
7. Acceptance of blame - When failure beset, they were prone to shoulder the responsibility and not pass it on to somebody else.

It must be realised that not every coach possessed top values of all these qualities, though each was observed to be endowed with the majority. Acquisition of the above characteristics is possible and self examination does not harm and may disclose one's "psychological blind spots". If these can be overcome - increasingly effective coaching will ensue.

SURVEY'S TWO FEATURES

The psychologists conducting this survey found two features in coaches which they considered to be detrimental in their sphere of work. The first was a tendency to avoid the emotional problems of their charges, e.g. to be disinterested in the worries, troubles, fears and apprehensions of their players. When one ponders upon the "strong man" character image painted above, it is perhaps understandable that such coaches might feel loath to act as "father-confessor". Such omission by a top coach is inconsequential if a kindly and sympathetic trainer or other staff member who had the 'ear of the coach', can assume this role. The trainers room becomes the psychologists couch as the players discuss their worries with the respected staff members/trainers

whilst having their injuries treated or ankles strapped.

However, the other facet lacking in these coaches is harmful. This was a tendency to be loath to use new techniques and to stay with the old routines when they were proven to have been superseded. As so many coaches in Australia are products of their own playing era, principally influenced by the men who coached in their early days, this can be especially injurious when a player becomes a coach.

Finally, one might mention some of the problems facing a player on assuming the responsibilities of a coach or a playing coach. As an industry and business, it is a particularly difficult change from employee to boss - far more so when you assume coaching duties of a team for which you were previously a player.

Your closest mates are the most difficult to control and as they are often the senior players, their example is followed implicitly by the younger players. The coach must be the boss, must command the respect and the confidence of his players. He may fraternise with his charges - it is expected of him - but he must never completely break down all the barriers between coach and player.

He must display consistency, exercise discipline and exhibit honesty with himself and the team. Only through such an image can ambition, decisiveness, drive and a fervent desire to win be transmitted to the whole team.



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and order a copy today!***

Wigan, the club that would buy the best, now develop the best.

Written by Gary Roberts

Wigan, Great Britain's elite Super League club, has a development programme that is the benchmark for Junior Rugby League in the United Kingdom.

Youth Development Manager Brian Foley and ex Wigan and New Zealand captain, Dean Bell, have been the driving force behind the system.

Wigan realised six years ago that their junior development was a false commodity and was not going to produce the smart footballers or the intelligent type of player that Wigan needed in the future to maintain their position as an elite club in the upper echelon of Super League.

Wigan is not the only Super League club that realised it needed to venture down the path of new development schemes. Other Super League clubs have similar programmes but Wigan believes they are the leaders.

Wigan acknowledged that they had to take ownership in developing their junior players. It is six years since Foley came to Wigan. Proudly, both he and Bell say, "We have a great development system in place."

Dean Bell, the NZ Warriors' inaugural captain, adds, "Rugby League is not a complicated game and like most things in life, the key is in developing a good 'work ethic'. Everyone in Super League knows who and where the good young players are but more importantly, it's what you do with them once they are in your system. It is up to us to show them how they can achieve their maximum potential on and off the field."

Brian Foley states, "Everybody in the game has gone this way. There are now standardised procedures throughout the game regarding junior development. At Wigan we pride ourselves in setting high standards and being the best."

Under Foley and Bell's planning and direction, the development programme has produced 15 players of the 24 who are in the 2003 top Wigan squad.

The two educators are happy with that result but have set a goal of one day, in the not too distant future, seeing the entire senior squad made up of players that have come through their development squads.

"Wigan's goal is to have every player in the team as a home-grown product. Our aim is to achieve one hundred per cent player input from our junior development programme and we are heading that way. It is not completed yet but in about three years' time it will be more developed as the cycle goes on.

"This year we have 15 players in the Wigan first grade squad that have come through the system. That is in a time span of five or six years. No other club in Super League would have as many as that and most of our protégés have gone on to representative honours as GB internationals."

Some of those players who are with the top squad have been guided by Foley and Bell since they first entered the scholarship system as wide-eyed 14 year olds, dreaming of one day maybe being a professional rugby league player.

Too much pressure on them at an early age can quite easily turn them away

Foley explains that for the development programme to reach the present standard, they firstly had to scrap all other schemes, settle on criteria and work towards achievable goals. One criterion was that no one under the age of 16 would be signed to the club on a fulltime basis.

Players from the age of 14 to 16 are recruited from the schools and junior clubs and the more promising boys are offered a scholarship. Wigan has approx. 100 schoolboy teams in their district.

The scholarship scheme consists of young players coming to the Wigan club once a week. The mentors realise that players will change along the way. Some boys will develop early and others later.

To develop the system, Wigan had to be involved with the amateur clubs and schools in the district and develop a relationship that involved honesty and trust on all sides.

Dean Bell states, “Wigan is strong in junior teams. That is our nursery. However, at first the schools and the clubs were a bit suspicious of what we were trying to achieve with their players. The teachers and coaches can now see the benefit of the coaching that the young players are getting from us.

As a club we realise that to make an even bigger and better impact on junior development we must play a part in raising coaching standards throughout the amateur game so we invite the coaches to training on Tuesday nights to work alongside us. We also hold coaching seminars. Brian and I hosted a seminar in December on ‘Core skills’. Mike Gregory has done one on ‘Modern Defensive Strategies’ and shortly Denis Betts is to do one on ‘Modern Attacking Strategies’. We have persevered and we believe that we are making good progress. More coaches are coming and although it is just in its infancy at present, it will gain momentum as we get further in to it.”

Brian Foley said of the introduction age group, “We think 14 years is the right age. We don’t take them any earlier because as coaches we are satisfied that from this point their lifestyles can be monitored and we can find out if they have the potential to go further. Too much pressure on them at an early age can quite easily turn them away. But, if they are serious about going further, then this is the age they start to take the game more seriously.”

Bell agrees, “We believe 14 is the right age. We treat the youngsters as if they were our own. If my son were involved in an organization, I would want to know that he would be looked after properly and that is the approach that we have. It is such an important stage of their lives regardless of their rugby league careers. It is where they can set a platform to go on in life. There are so many negative influences out there and you have to put them on the right path. It is hard to be one hundred per cent right but we can try to mould them and guide them the right way. It is very rewarding.”

The development staff believes that different parts of the long-term plan can be initiated at this time.

Bell says, “We have to keep up with modern strategies but we base all the training with our juniors around the core skills of the game which are catch, pass, tackle, decision making and the process of getting them right. We combine these with strength, speed and agility which are a part of the conditioning process for them.”

He continues, “A nutritionist is on hand to explain and educate them on the need for healthy eating. The

club physiotherapist and sports medicine staff work with them also.

“A major factor of the programme is school education. This is never neglected and Wigan personnel are in constant contact with their schools, checking on their educational progress while they are in the programme.

“At Wigan we have a student mentor. He is with us once a week at the training sessions and he will monitor for us their progress in schools and liaise with their teachers. An interesting fact is that we are actually finding that their education improves once they join us. This has not always been the case at Wigan. Previously, a young player might say, ‘I am going to make it as a professional player’ and he would forget about his education. Now, we get enormous satisfaction when we sit down with their parents and are told that we have given them a real focus for life in and outside of rugby league,” said Bell.

On reaching 16 years, a decision is made as to who will join the Wigan Junior Academy.

Brian Foley says, “They are stamped by the time they reach the Academy stage but if they are released, they still should go on. The very fact that they have been through the Wigan programme would make them a better player and a better person.”

The players that are accepted into the Academy can normally have three seasons with the Academy Under 18 team.

After their initial years with Bell and Foley, they then move further into the Wigan club system. Coaching the U18s is Shaun Wane, an ex player and former Under 21 GB captain. Then they move onto ex International Denis Betts who coaches the U21s. The ones that impress are then offered a professional contract with the first grade under Stuart Raper and Mike Gregory.

With Super League salary cap restrictions now in place and more clubs having to resort to developing their own home-grown players, the Wigan formula is under scrutiny.

The Wigan club is now well down the track of producing their own and the previous method of buying the best players will possibly cease and the supporters will be able to follow and support their own home-grown players.

All supporters of Wigan, one of the great rugby league clubs, will join with Brian Foley and Dean Bell in saying,

“Yes! Wigan have a great development system in place.”

TESTING...

How, Why, Who, Where, What and When (and how to make sense of it)

Written by Wayne Goldsmith

A renowned swimming coach was walking up and down the side of the pool working with a world record holder. A younger, relatively inexperienced coach, eager to learn asked, “How do you know how your swimmer is going?” “How do you know when she is ready to do her best?”

The senior coach replied, “I just know”.

Testing does not replace the skilled eye or instinctual feel of an experienced and talented coach. It aims to provide measurement and objectivity to some of the elements of performance that coaches “see” and “feel” and “know”.

This article discusses some of the current issues in the testing of high performance athletes and looks at the crucial aspects of the measurement and evaluation of elite sports performance.

The testing process: Not a one off event!

Testing is not a one off event – it is a **process** that begins and ends with a test.

The testing process sequence includes:

- Coach determines the need for testing and discusses the test protocols with a sports science / sports medicine professional.
- Testing is scheduled and logistics, equipment, personnel etc. are organized.
- Pre test athlete education session organized (if appropriate).
- Testing is conducted.
- Results and data collected, collated and managed.
- Results and data evaluated.
- Results and data discussed with coach and athlete.
- Coach considers results and data and makes training program decisions based on the information.
- The next test date is scheduled.
- Athlete is retested to determine progress.
- Process repeats!

Testing is a useful coaching tool but it is one part of the overall process of athlete preparation and development.

www.rlcm.com.au (RLCM)

Competition based testing

Of course, the best form of testing for high performance athletes in elite sporting programs is.....**competition**.

Competition provides the unique combination of factors that are only found on the pitch, on the track, on the court, in the pool or on the water during actual games and events.

However it is often difficult for the coach to be effective in competition based testing as he / she is focused on observing the athlete in competition conditions and perhaps even making strategic / tactical decisions based on those observations.

Therefore, it is essential that the coach identifies a reliable, experienced support team of professionals who can manage the details of competition based testing leaving the coach free to coach.

After the competition or perhaps even during rest periods, the support team can provide the coach and athlete with the detailed analysis of the performance and together work towards a strategy to improve competition results.

Success at Rugby League – Defined

The obvious measurement of success is winning!

However what is winning? It is said that the person who aims at NOTHING is sure to hit it! Therefore before designing a testing program, it is important to try and ascertain what Rugby League coaches are trying to “hit” – what are they trying to achieve?

Rugby League success could be described as:

“The ability to maintain excellence in skills at high speed, while fatigued and in pressure situations” – SKILLS PLUS SPEED AT FATIGUE AND UNDER PRESSURE.

Or winning often comes down to the players’ ability to perform basic skills effectively when they are tired and under pressure.

From this simple definition, it is possible to develop and effective testing program.

How to Test

The perfect test is one where the athlete is accurately evaluated in the precise conditions likely to be experienced in competition and the results of the test directly relate to competition performances.

This is invariably difficult to achieve as there are numerous factors experienced in competition which are near to impossible to replicate in a training or testing environment.

For example:

How do you measure a goal kicker's ability to kick a goal under game pressure when the only time they face game pressure is during a game?

How do you know if you players can execute attacking moves against opposition in pressure situations when the only time they get to experience these conditions is against an opposition in the pressure of a game?

Typically, testing protocols and methods are single discipline perspectives of one element of performance, e.g. tests based on physiology or biomechanics or psychology or nutrition or medical. The challenge for the coach is to effectively manage this narrow perspective to gain an overall understanding of the athlete's abilities and capacities at the time of testing.

Why to Test?

There are many reasons why a coach would want to test an athlete.

Once training and competition goals have been clearly established, a coach would test athletes:

1. To provide information and feedback on the progress of the training / preparation of the athlete – ARE WE ON TRACK TO ACHIEVE OUR GOALS?
2. To provide information on specific elements of the athlete's capacities and abilities – IS THE ATHLETE DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING?
3. To determine areas of weakness or limitation – ARE THERE PROBLEM AREAS OR ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE OVERCOME?

Who to Test?

Practically any athlete can be tested. Even young athletes can be tested for skill development and technical progress.

Young athletes can also be educated on how to develop the skills necessary to perform the testing protocols they are likely to experience as senior athletes.

For example, many tests require the ability to

accurately maintain a precise speed, power output, pace or time. These skills can be taught to relatively young athletes as part of their development process and to prepare them to complete senior testing protocols as they mature.

Where to Test?

Field or Laboratory – the toughest question in the testing puzzle. Both have advantages and disadvantages.

Field testing can be simple, easy, inexpensive and meaningful to the coach and athlete but can be difficult to control owing to environmental factors and a wide range of other complicating variables experienced in the training and competition setting.

Laboratory testing is often expensive, requires complex equipment and trained personnel to operate it and in many cases has the considerable challenge of making the test results meaningful and specific to the actual sports environment.

Tests for oxygen exchange dynamics (e.g. VO₂ max) have generally been performed in laboratories as the availability of precision equipment allows for more accurate testing. However, the limitation in laboratory testing is in the capacity to reproduce actual sports specific training and competition conditions.

For example, the measurement of VO₂ max on a treadmill, cycle ergometer or rowing machine in the lab is based on well established testing protocols. However, the lab cannot exactly reproduce the external environmental factors (run and bike – road conditions, weather, hills, wind resistance: rowing – water conditions, current, weather, wind, boat friction / water resistance) that athletes experience in training and playing.

In football, lab based VO₂ max tests are of questionable value as it is rare that any player runs at high speed (without the ball) in a single direction for sustained periods of time without the added complication of dealing with opposition players.

In the end, a combination of regular field based testing (because of the practical, easy and immediate nature of the testing) together with occasional laboratory testing (because of accuracy, reliability and quality) is a good option.

What to test?

Selecting what to test for is a complex issue for every coach. Universities and other professional organizations can provide the coach with a "lolly shop" of tests and toys all with the promise of quick

easy solutions to performance challenges.

One of the biggest problems for coaches is that many do not clearly identify what it is they want to test. As a result, when a sports science professional suggests what is possible, the coaches respond like the kid in “lolly shop” and want a little of everything.

Deciding what to test starts with a simple philosophical question for every coach:

“What do I believe are the key determinants of successful performance in my sport”.

For example, as a coach of marathon runners you decide that the key determinants for success in your sport are oxygen exchange dynamics and biomechanical efficiency at 80-90% of maximum speed. Once you have made this philosophical decision, finding the right tests to evaluate the athletes is relatively easy.

As a coach of a Rugby League team, your philosophy is that the best players are skillful at high speed. Again the choice of tests is a simple matter once you have decided what you want to look for.

Another advantage of establishing your own testing philosophy is that **“unless you stand for something, you will fall for anything”**. Sometimes coaches fall for promises of magic pills and quick fixes from sports science professionals looking for subjects for a study or research project.

When to test?

Effective testing can be done at any time during the training or competition program **DEPENDING** on what you are looking for. Tests of maximum capacity or peak abilities are generally best performed when the athlete is rested and unfatigued. Traditionally this has meant testing during or at the end of a rest or recovery microcycle.

However, if you as a coach have determined that you would like to assess the impact of physiological fatigue on skill and speed, then testing tired athletes is consistent with your overall program philosophy.

Summary – The Ten Golden Rules of Testing for Coaches.

1. Test for things that make sense. Testing VO₂ max in lawn bowlers is not logical.
2. Test because you believe it will make a difference. Just testing for testing sake or because the equipment is available is not the most effective use of training time.
3. Test with a performance focused goal. Test

elements of performance that you believe will make a direct impact on performance. Try not to get trapped in testing just to try and get a progressively better test result unless it is directly related to actual competition performance or the development of more effective training protocols.

4. Don't ask for a single test – ask for a series. If you make the commitment to be involved in a testing program, ask for more than one test. One off tests rarely tell the whole story.
5. If you are working with sports science / sports medicine professionals, demand that any test results are provided within 24 hours and that the professional allocates time to explain the results and their relevance to your program. This applies particularly if you have agreed to allow your athletes to be involved in a research project.
6. Think multi disciplinary. If the athletes are being tested through lactate analysis, also measure and observe technical changes to assess the impact of fatigue on technique and skills. If they are being evaluated using heart rate, note speed, technique and if possible assess psychological skills at the same time. Performance is multi disciplinary in nature – testing is generally single discipline in focus. Coaches need to see the wider picture.
7. Be visionary. If you as the coach see the need for a test to evaluate an element of performance which you believe is crucial to the success of the athlete, develop your own test! Ask a sports science / sports medicine professional to help you with the measurement side of things, but many great coaches use simple field tests that are meaningful to them but which may lack absolute scientific validity. Many scientific tests were originally ideas inspired by visionary coaches.
8. Keep records. Try to record all test results. Have assistant coaches, parents of athletes, injured players, reserve team players – anyone – trained to record (accurately) test results.
9. **MEASURE WHAT IS MEASURABLE – CONTROL WHAT IS CONTROLLABLE – WHAT CAN BE MEASURED AND CONTROLLED IS LIKELY TO BE MEANINGFUL.**
10. Take time to educate athletes about testing. In time, senior athletes can learn to do some or most testing protocols themselves. Athletes can learn to monitor their own heart rates, take their own times, count their strides, record their feelings.....and the better educated your athletes are to self manage / self

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<p>Book 15 KICKING DRILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Phil Gould • The Role of the Coach - Wayne Pearce • Teaching the Junior Player - John Dixon • Becoming a Better Bench Coach - Brian Smith • Assessing The Injured Player • Coaches Insight - Brian Kerle • Developing a Periodisation Plan - Ken Kennedy • Performance Monitors - Assessing the behaviour & attitudes of the Rugby League player (Part 2) - Steve Anderson 	<p>Book 16 DEFENCE & TACKLING DRILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Royce Simmons • The Football Manager - Max Ninnes • The Conditioner - Billy Johnstone • The Role of the Physio - Tony Ayoub • Coaches Insight - Andy Goodway • Aquatic Therapy - Brad Walker 	<p>Book 17 DRILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Mark Graham • Choosing a Mentor - Peter Corcoran • Captain and Coach - Mitch Luka • Understanding the Rules of Rugby League (Part 1) • Speed and Agility - Frank Ponissi • Performance Psychology in Rugby League - Vic Mellors • A Thinking Coach - Rod Patison
<p>Book 18 ATTACKING DRILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Mal Meninga • Training - Speed, Agility, Strength, Power - Ashley Jones • Create an ethos in your club - Greg Pierce • The Specific of Planning - Brian Canavan • Performance Monitors - Assessing the behaviour & attitudes of the Rugby League player (Part 3) - Steve Anderson • Coaches Insight - Rick Stone • Coaching Individual Positions • Defence - A Team Responsibility • Completion Rates 	<p>Book 19 SPEED & AGILITY DRILLS FOR MINI & MOD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Andrew Farrar • The Trainer - Scott Campbell • Two Codes Converging - Eddie Jones • Keeping Them Out - Sean Cassidy • Turning Your Kick Chase Around • Creating Quality Second Phase Football • Principles of Defence - Ken Kennedy • Understanding the Rules of Rugby League (Part 2) • What's in Your Sports Drink (Part 1) • Skills - Developing Speed & Agility 	<p>Book 20 TOUCH/TAG TRAINING GAMES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Tony Smith • Self Assessment - John Dixon • Ruck Defence - Glenn Bayliss • Benefits of Kick Play - Kurt Wrigley • Rugby League's Marathon Men - Rudi Meir • Increasing Training Intensity in Country Rugby League Players • Diet & Supplement: What is Factual, What is Fiction? - Doug King • Off Season Checks - Doug King • Whats in Your Sports Drink (Part 2)
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A Suggested Plan For a Rugby League Environment

Written by Steve Anderson

The purpose of this article is to present practical applications in planning and delivery approaches specific to professional rugby league environments.

The aim is to list and interpret various considerations in the application of the planning process, present structural influences to the 'mechanics' of planning and Define the systems and processes applicable to planning.

The learning outcomes should create an awareness to 'pitfalls' that may arise in the planning process. Effectively apply the principles of planning and competently implement, maintain, assess and amend the planning process.

SECTION ONE 'TOOLS'

Brief:-

There are many areas in planning that remain constant in approach and method as do the 'tools' related to planning applications. In this section 'tools' are presented and discussed to ensure your plans are subjected to a series of checks and measures necessary for effective planning. Various questions need to be asked particularly in the early stages of your planning to contrast the context of your plan against the coaching environment. These questions will be tabled in this section while Part B will deal with more specific issues and uses of planning 'tools'.

Tools:-

Purpose; Validation; Review; Failures; Stages; Safety Values.

Outcomes:-

1. Define the 'tools' necessary in planning.
2. Discuss the priority of validation and review.
3. Consider various areas of the planning process that may implicate the targets of the 'plan'.

PART ONE (1) 'TOOLS'

Purpose:-

To present various ideas and options in the formatting of coaching plans conveying the importance of key ideals such as:-

1. Necessity of planning.
2. Specifics of planning.
3. Components of planning.

a) Purpose in Planning

Determine the goals of the plan with consideration to:

- Experience (players)
- Contract Length
- Environment (facilities and such)

b) Validation

Each plan must be validated meaning each goal, aim etc. is measured as distinct from targets.

To be validated:

- Strategies
- Goals V's aims & Objectives
- Outcomes

c) Review

Every plan must be monitored by review periods. Review in this instances means to check all sections of the plan for deviation from the original principles.

Review:

- Section targets
- Monthly plans
- Weekly plans etc

d) Failure

Awareness to failure in planning will provide contingency in your approach. "Failure" may be determined by your own interpretation but awareness to 'failure' is a significant step in preparation.

Contingency applies to:

- Un-attainable goals
- Meeting section targets etc

Note: Flexibility in planning is the key

e) Stages

As distinct from periodization in planning 'stages' occur within the context of your plan. Catering and providing for the various stages will elevate any real

concerns to your overall planning purpose.

‘Stages’ in this instance refers to:

- Micro layers (eg: daily programmes)
- Macro layers (eg: weekly / monthly programmes)

f) Safety valves

While reviewing the formatting of your plan, safety valves become a natural progression to your planning. Safety valves (similar in form to contingency to failure) should apply to all sections of your planning. This means you may have an alternative(s) to your goals, aims and target levels. Safety valves may also apply to how you approach the various ‘periods’ of your planning.

Example:

- Year 1 goals may have various ‘attainable levels’.
- Coaching strategies may have several options.

Summary:

The tools presented in this section should in some form be utilized in the pre-planning stages of your approach. Discussed are relevant ‘tools’ of not only the planning process but also areas that will assist you to address specific changes that may occur in the coaching environment.

PART TWO – TOOLS

SPECIFICS

In this section ‘tools’ will be discussed in a more specific manner outlining a selection of components that may be utilized in the planning process. Although brief the titles suggest the application and use of ‘tools’ can be broad based or diverse dependent on the coaching environment and variables encountered.

Purpose:

The areas briefly outlined below contain the essence to formality in planning and it must be stressed that not all are going to apply to every environment. It is suggested however, that the basis for formalizing the ‘tools’ discussed in Part A would benefit from this approach.

To be discussed are:-

- Components of Planning
- Formatting
- Formalizing the approach (time frame)

a) Components of Planning:

Your approach must be to determine the broad based areas of your plan before breaking components down into more specific applications. An example of this includes key areas such as:-

- Orientation (Develop Personalities)
- Communication plan (Terminology)
- Familiarity (Facility & Scheduling)
- Core planning (Coach Specific)
- Strategy planning (Offence / Defence)
- Psychological profiling (Player targets)
- Analysis plan (evaluations, periods & such)
- Targets for plan.

These broad based areas provide the framework to the more specific areas of your planning.

b) Formatting

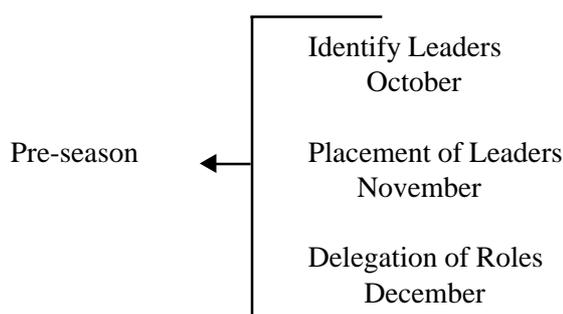
Each of the sections (8) above should in some form have a plan to work in with the overall context of the coaching plan. For example “Orientation” could be broken down into more specific components namely:-

- Identify leaders
- Place leaders in groups
- Delegation of roles
- Schedule ‘leader’ meetings etc

These specific areas of planning ensure that segments within the context of your framework have purpose and application. It should also provide a guide or pathway to how you will approach the coaching method of your environment.

c) Formalizing the approach

Each of the areas listed in ‘components of planning’ and ‘formatting’ require time frames to guide the implementation process. Using the ‘Orientation’ component in the preseason stage of planning as an example, they could be guided by:



Summary:-

These sections of your planning require a more focussed approach to your own specific coaching environment. Each of the 3 areas presented have their own broad based components but require a more detailed analysis to ensure the formalizing of the plan is relative to your own coaching needs. Time frames are necessary for the sections of this approach once the specifics are completed.

SECTION TWO (2) STRUCTURAL INFLUENCES IN PLANNING**Brief:-**

In this section planning will be presented where dependency and reliance can be seen in the efficiency of structure, personnel and processes that drive the plan's key areas. Approaching your planning with this intention will help to alleviate failure at the basic concepts of your plan. Consideration to these aspects will be covered with various key components referenced that will assist the design and maintenance of your plan.

Key Components:-

Man Management; 'Culture'; Self-Management; Communication Base; Needs Based Assessment; Delivery.

Outcomes:-

1. Discuss the considerations in design and maintenance of planning.
2. Define structure and infrastructure contrasting various roles and responsibilities.
3. Identify structural concerns with the 'key components' central to the views presented.

Purpose:-

To provide specific ideas on preparing the coaching plan considering the various influences in the planning process. Several areas of planning will also be presented in the context of:-

- The plan's nature and context of application.
- Questioning the elements of the plan and its efficiency.
- Observation and value of the key components.

Components:-**a) Man Management**

Every aspect of your plan must cater for the human factor and the characteristics of the individuals (players). Simple steps in your planning or preparation that will ensure your planning is flexible and adaptable toward the needs of the player. Include:-

- Your plan must reflect the group's capabilities.
- The plan must be about man-management at an individual level.
- There must be room within the context of each section of your plan to control environmental demands (facility).

Managing your plan means to the structures in place must be focussed to the needs of the players

and the group. Failure to recognise the need for specificity in your approach will ultimately affect the performance of the players.

b) 'Culture'

Culture in this respect represents the plan's intended focus for the players. Consideration to the existing 'culture' of the environment must be the 1st step in planning perception, expectation etc. For the introduction of any shift or change in attitude, perceptions, expectations etc., questioning what your plan's content represents will influence the direction or cultural basis of your planning.

Culture may appear in various forms and may be guided by measuring:-

- Professionalism
- Work Ethic
- Social / Community Responsibilities and standards.
- Training standards etc.

The nature of your coaching environment has to be examined closely before any ideals or principles can be applied. Considerations to the above areas are simple categories that will assist with the contrasting of the existing standards and the introduction or change of new ideals within the group.

c) Self-Management

As a priority of your planning the structure must have the ability to evolve but more importantly to 'self-manage'. This must be a target in terms of your coaching environment where culture, design and system content evolve as a direct result of your personnel. Your plan will only operate as well as your staff and their ability to adopt its principles. Key aspects of this approach include:-

- Dynamic approach to players and staff personal development.
- Deliberate approach to selection of key personnel – players and staff.
- 'Layered' levels in structure and application with defined roles and responsibilities.
- Adherence to the plan's goals.



Once these aspects are considered in the planning process and applied as a natural occurrence within the plan's context, coaching principles become a natural process of its concepts.

d) Communication Base

The nature of your plan will be significantly influenced if the communication levels are not clearly defined at the various levels of your structure.

'Communication Base' refers to the management of your coaching information from your planning phases to field implementation. This can be summarized by:-

- Define who delivers what in the context of your plan.
- Assess each player's communication skills.
- Consider the delivery of group and individual coaching.

Non-defined areas of planning may be represented in various ways but the single most important area of any coaching plan must be to clarify who and how the information is to be disseminated.

e) Needs Based Assessment

Structurally, your plan will only function to its full potential if you are aware of specific needs of your players and staff. This can only occur as a result of conducting a 'needs based assessment programme'. A complete profile on each player should be conducted not only to map his progress but also to amend structural deficiency that does not cater for his individual need. This does not mean the plan is totally configured toward each individual's need but more so the awareness that the plan must represent the group with the individual in mind. Specifics in coaching plans are a must. To be considered in this approach:-

- Players understanding of coaching plan.
- Background (education)
- Player's interpretation of his game (strengths, weaknesses etc).
- Personal development profiling etc. (includes staff)

These are a few considerations and it must be noted not to get too caught up in the individualising of the plan in its initial stages. Allow that to occur as a natural evolution of the concepts and principles.

f) Delivery (timing)

Effectiveness of your planning can be measured by the ability of staff and players to interpret programming stages and delivery points. Delivery in

this context refers to the 'timing points' for certain areas of the overall plan. Also, central to delivery is the terminology and speak. that has a direct link with the communication base. Key points when working toward delivery point's include:-

- Time frames must remain flexible.
- Progress within the plan's context will dictate delivery and timing.
- Targets, objectives etc., must be guided by time but assessing progress will again dictate progressing to various levels of the plan.

Summary:-

The points referenced in this section are areas that require an awareness in your planning when considering the design, structure and implementation of your coaching plan. A systematic approach to structure in planning highlights the priority areas in shaping the direction and progress within the context of the plan. Consideration to 'who and how' the plan is delivered further provides knowledge essential to continual developing the various levels of the plan. Additionally, staffing is a critical point in the facilitation process.

Finally, consideration to the various discussion points and providing relevant substance to these points will ensure your planning caters for all levels of performance within the structure while the infrastructure (staffing, roles, responsibilities etc) supports the various planning phases.

SECTION THREE (3) PROCESSES AND SYSTEMS

Brief:-

This section will help define your planning, providing a clear understanding to various components within the plan and its design. For discussion are areas of the plan which can be labelled as processes and those sections which represent the systems. These 'labels' will provide substance to your planning providing easily identified means of structuring approach and maintenance of the plan.

Processes

The following points should remain constant in most planning phases and represent principles in approach in providing an outline for the coaching plan. These areas include:-

Review programmes; Documentation; Evaluations; Scheduling and Corrective Actions.

Systems

Systems represent the specific detail to the coaching plan and offer content, direction and relevance to the processes of planning. These areas include:-

Performance Monitors; Strategies; Skills Plan; Positional Planning; Targets.

Outcomes:-

1. Provide detail to the planning approach.
2. Define and label 'process' purpose of your plan.
3. Identify the systems that drive the plan.

PART ONE (1) - PROCESSES**Purpose:-**

Provide the coach with an easily identifiable approach to the many levels of operation within the coaching plan. Processes will be presented more at the macro level of planning while the 'systems' will represent the micro levels of operation.

a) Review Programs

Planning review programs is an acknowledgement that the plan itself is never a 'final document'. Review in this context means to program points in the execution of the various stages where complete overhauling occurs. Consideration to these points are essential:-

- Timing
- Sections to be reviewed
- Personnel involved (players / coaches etc)
- Recording
- Changes

b) Documentation

Apart from the plan being a 'controlled document', all sections and systems of the plan should be managed by various types of forms to ensure consistency to approach and to formally acknowledge the implementation and maintenance of the plan. For eg; weekly reports are a form of documentation that assists in this areas. Other forms of documentation that will assist in this process includes:-

- Skills form that details player capabilities.
- Player profile forms – Diary records.
- Reporting forms on various aspects of the plan.
- Weekly; Monthly & Quarterly summary forms.
- Review forms etc.

Documenting on standardized forms assist with the 'mapping' of progress and the overall review phases.

c) Evaluations

Evaluating, as distinct from review, ensures the systems remain in context of the strategies and targets of the plan. Contrasting and breaking down all sections of the plan must be a priority of the planning stage of all systems. Evaluations of formatting these approaches must include:-

- Defining specific areas of the plan for periodic evaluation.
- Breaking down the evaluation components.
- Researching the appropriate measures.
- Deciding on relevance and purpose of the evaluation format.

d) Scheduling

All areas of the "system" must be maintained though relevant scheduling. As distinct from periodizing the planning components, scheduling refers to the more specific areas such as:-

- Daily programming.
- Micro cycles of coaching points.
- Events within the context of a specific system.

This area is the underlying layer to the overall time framing of the plan. Continual breakdown of the various time frames etc., will lead to the micro levels of scheduling.

e) Corrective Actions

To control the review process of the systems, deficient areas must be recorded, documented and relevant 'corrective actions' applied. Corrective actions are the 'controls' over error at the macro level through to the micro levels. Simplicity, regularity and purpose to this approach will ensure your planning is continually measured and assessed. Consideration to the formatting of this program includes:-

- Purpose
- Who was responsible for 'actioning'.
- Identify what needs to be done to rectify.
- Who will action corrective work.
- Close out date.

Summary:-

These 'processes' contained in your planning will ensure that the 'systems' are approached as a deliberate action of the plan. Initial planning and formatting of these areas must ensure that purpose and methods of the plan a kept central to the plan's focus. Do not get caught in too many process actions as the real focus of the plan lies within the system(s).

PART TWO (2) – SYSTEMS**Purpose**

Central to the planning considerations of any plan lays the various systems that work the overall content of the plan. This section will identify areas that are responsible for the plan to function as a coaching plan emphasizing their relationship with the processes or the macro levels of the plan.

a) Performance Monitors

The players are to be offered feedback on performance in games; training and various coach / player issues at various points in the year. How this programme works can be approached in various manners and is completely at the discretion of the coach. Planning the framework and the 'periods' are to be completed first and should cover broadly these areas:-

Framework

- Conditioning
- Training habits
- Game related issues
- Goals and targets

Periods

- Initial criteria set for the player
- Regularity of meetings
- Goals / targets periods

b) Strategies

Broad based programmes in both offence and defence need to be set down with associated measures to guide structure; implementation; assessment and maintenance. The importance of documenting your planning principles and strategic ideals must be a major component to the coaching plan. All areas of the strategies should be clearly defined and be representative of the squad's capabilities. This initial step will be to consolidate group thinking allowing individual abilities develop independently. Broadly there need only be a structure with specifics of the 'principles of play' evolving at a pace dictated by player competency. Timing and introduction of strategies remains the key.

c) Evaluations

Evaluating, as distinct from review, ensures the systems remain in context of the strategies and targets of the plan. Contrasting and breaking down all sections of the plan must be a priority of the planning stage of all systems. Evaluations of formatting these approaches must include:-

- Defining specific areas of the plan for periodic evaluation.

- Breaking down the evaluation components.
- Researching the appropriate measures.
- Deciding on relevance and purpose of the evaluation format.

d) Scheduling

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- Micro cycles of coaching points.
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- Who was responsible for 'actioning'.
- Identify what needs to be done to rectify.
- Who will action corrective work.
- Close out date.

Summary:-

These 'processes' contained in your planning will ensure that the 'systems' are approached as a deliberate action of the plan. Initial planning and formatting of these areas must ensure that purpose and methods of the plan a kept central to the plan's focus. Do not get caught in too many process actions as the real focus of the plan lies within the system(s).

- Recruitment criteria (Physical; experience etc).
- Assessment process (note corrective work).
- Program content (strengths & weaknesses covered).



League Coach FORUM

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/leaguecoach>

QUESTION: 1

Does anybody have any suggestions on defending what I term the attacking triangle?

This triangle is where the Play-The-Ball (PTB) is the apex of the triangle and the base is either player on both edges of the ruck.

An observation is that over 80% of the attacking ball goes through this triangle, so if a team can dominate this area of the field you should be able to better control the game.

ANSWER 1

Keep your pillar defenders tight ie guys each side of the play the ball, ensure they get up to the markers asap to close up the space, you can even try defending your 7 in the middle of the ruck for the first 4 plays. Play around with it a bit, see what your players prefer.

Grant

ANSWER 2.

The most succesful method I have seen and used to date is by nominating A, B, C defenders. The A defenders are closest to the ruck on either side, then the B's then the C's. Sydney Roosters adopted a D defender who came up very quickly to force the attackers back into the ruck.

We used to call the A defenders Tight Posts or Tight Spots as they had to stay tight in beside the ruck as this would plug the gap behind the marker.

It relies on good marker work and ABC's talking as they retreat to ensure they have the required defenders in position for the next play. If the attacking team gets a quick PTB then the ABC's still have to go forward first instead of shifting.

I hope this is what you are referring to and it is of some assistance.

Chris



QUESTION 2

Can anyone provide me with restart game plans from a kick off?

Setting out in detail which player carries the ball forward on each tackle and on what part of the field.

I currently use the field split in 3 channels from goal post to goal post. With left channel being lane, centre being channel and right being road.

Russell

ANSWER 1

This is a massive question!

A year or so ago we discussed positioning for players at the restart and I described placing the halves further forward than we might traditionally in order to get a couple of quick PTB's while the defending side were still organising.

In part Russell, the important part of this is what are you aiming to do in this first set of six? If your target's ball security, a kick and a good chase, then you're going to use a conservative first set and possibly just make a simple three hitups, look to go wider on the fourth and then kick/chase on the 5th.

If you're playing more aggressively, you might want to have your halves at the front of the kick receiving line up to then send a couple of big forwards on runs or even make a quick 5m-10m scoot, bringing the short side winger into play and then looking to exploit some space on the open side as the defence moves across.

Sorry to answer your question with one of my own, but if you'd tell us what you're aiming to do I'm sure we can bounce some ideas around on how to achieve it.

Also please mention the age group which you coach as that could effect the replies from the group.

Daryn



Stop those Injuries: Some ideas of pre-habilitation training

By Doug King Sports Nurse

The biggest killer to any team is the injury toll during the playing season, injuries incurred during this period are crucial to team performance and can reflect on the points ladder. This can be the make or break of the competition for the club and can also be disheartening for the team players as well. Wouldn't it be nice to have a team of players who never get injured and are able to turn up each week for training and playing without any niggles that can distract them from the game. Experience and research has identified that the most common injuries are within the lower extremities such as knees, ankles and hamstring/quadriceps injuries and these are often directly related to activities carried out prior to the injury occurring. Injuries in the game are not that easy to counteract, and if measures were put into place to do this then possibly the thrill of watching the game would be taken away, but changing the training aspect of the game preparation is an area we can review and hopefully meet the coaches desire to have a fully fit team with the necessary skills and attributes to win the competition.

Broken into basic groups, the training session can be seen to consist of several activities. These are:

1. Warm up activities designed to prepare the players body for the ensuing session,
2. Agility drills designed to provide a game related quick dexterity movement activity over a short distance,
3. Power activities designed to provide explosive power training,
4. Games designed to provide a skill base training situation directly transferred to the game scenario,
5. Tackle/pad drills designed to condition the players to the bumps and rigors of tackling and contact within the game,
6. Opposed games designed to simulate the opposition against the teams moves and strategies,
7. Kick / catch drills designed to provide the continuous learned behaviour necessary within the game,
8. Conditioning and energy based activities such as running and sprints, and
9. Cool down activities designed to return the players body to the non exercising state.

Within any training session there is always the risk of an injury occurring especially in the contact type drills and in any opposed activity where there is a requirement for a quick reaction type movement that the body may not be prepared for. Of the injuries that do occur, the most common types of injuries are the strains and sprains of the soft tissues in the lower extremities. These are the typical strained muscle "pulled hamstring" etc, and the sprained ankle or twisted knee that can occur when the players are running. Of all the training activities, the conditioning and energy based activities are the activities that can incur the highest amount of injuries. These can be from a variety of reasons such as poor preparation, poor conditioning, inappropriate training or overtraining.

So what is the answer for these type of injuries – no running? Well I don't think the game would handle that and unconditioned players out on the field are more likely to be severely injured so there has to be a running component to any training session. Add in the fact that fatigue of the player leads to an increased risk of an injury occurring especially as the research has shown the largest amount of injuries occur in the second half of the game so there has to be some form of conditioning programme for the players but how to do this while reducing the risk of injuring them in the process is the question.

For the conditioning and energy based trainings, a well thought out preseason programme needs to be implemented incorporating a gradual increase in the running speed and distance over a sensible period of time. This, combined with a strengthening programme, needs to be aimed at mimicking the mechanics of the motion of running for both the legs and the upper body. This may include weight training but it should not be designed to increase strength as this increases the muscle size but has the effect of slowing the speed and shortening the stride of the player which is not what is sought in speed training.

As well a training session that is more skill based with

a conditioning component has been identified as having a low injury rate and when utilised more often this has the same eventual effect as a straight running session but also has the benefit of reinforcing the skill based activity which will become more automatic from repeated exposure.

Other non-field training activities that can be undertaken to assist in reducing the risk of injury are activities that the players can do at home or in their own time. These activities are specifically targeted to commonly injured areas of the body and can assist in reducing both the possibility of injuring the area as well as the severity of the injury.

As identified above, the common injuries are within the legs, ankles and knees so the following activities can be done with a gradual increase in weight and resistance. It is important not to over do these activities initially and it is best to start with a light weight and high repetitions.

Knee pain in the front (Anterior Knee Pain) can often involve the patello-femoral joint and may include tracking problems with the patella or the tendon attached to the patella. To avoid this injury it is important to have strong quadriceps muscles particularly the muscle just on the inside of the knee just above the knee joint (Vastus Medialis Oblique) as this muscle helps pull the kneecap (patella) inwards keeping it aligned and tracking smoothly over the right area within the knee joint. To assist this the leg press exercise on the leg press machine in the gymnasium is useful.

To use this exercise start with your knees at 90 degrees and press a light weight, if you are not use to doing this exercise, with both legs. Do a series of three sets of 10 presses (reps) twice a week for about four weeks before progressing onto a higher weight. After another four weeks increase the workout to three sets of six reps for a further four weeks with as heavy a weight as possible. Ensure that you have a spotter with you to assist you should you tire with any weight.

Anyone with the risk of an Anterior or Posterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL/PCL) sprain/strain or rupture

may need to look at including the traditional squat as well as the leg curl exercise to their training routine. Again with the squat start out light, especially if you are not use to doing the exercise and do a series of three sets of 10 reps twice a week for about four weeks before progressing onto a higher weight. After another four weeks increase the workout to three sets of six reps for a further four weeks with as heavy a weight as possible. Ensure that you have a spotter with you to assist you at all times should you tire with any weight.

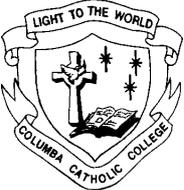
Another good exercise for the ACL/PCL is to practise a soft landing by bending their knees and allowing their body to become aware of where they are in time and space (proprioception exercises). This can be done by jumping off a height of about 450 mm (18 inches) and landing on both feet with knees bent in as soft a landing as possible. The aim here is to land with the minimal amount of noise and the player needs to be jumping in as many different directions as possible to enable a changing environment to stimulate the proprioception receptors of the knee.

For the ankle injuries pre-habilitation training for this area involves the incorporation of a step and a resistance band such as TheraBand which is usually available from a friendly physiotherapist or mum's panty hose if you cannot find one. To do these exercises stand on a step with the TheraBand around one ankle. With your partner adding some pull on the TheraBand raise yourself up onto your toes whilst resisting the pull of the band. The aim of this is to keep the ankle aligned while moving up onto the toes. Use the pull from both the outside of the ankle and on the inside of the ankle to fully work the stabilizer muscles and the calf muscles.

Next lie down and extend you foot over the end of the step and place the TheraBand over the top of the foot as close to the toes as practical. Holding the foot straight up and down pull away from the TheraBand resistance and push the toes outwards. Reverse the position of the TheraBand and pull in towards the midline of the body to assist in strengthening the muscles of the ankle. To progress through these exercises use various increase in grades of the TheraBand or double the amount of panty hose around the ankle/foot area.

All activities aimed at reducing the risk of injury area good and careful planning is included in this. Use of a well thought out year planner with the appropriate rest periods will also assist in the reduction of the risk of injury and the prevention of the overtraining syndrome. Remember an ounce of prevention is worth a ton of rehabilitation.

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LAWS OF THE GAME Q & A

Starts and Restarts of Play

By Richard Johnson - QRL Referee's Coaching & Development Manager

- Q1. From the kick off by Red the ball travels 30 metres forward lands in the field of play and crosses the touch line.**
- A1. a Scrum loose head and put in to Red.
b Scrum loose head and put in to Blue.
- Q2. From the kick off the ball lands in the field of play and rolls into the Blue corner post.**
- A2. a Goal line drop out by Blue
b 20 metre optional restart by Blue
- Q3. From the kick off by Red, Blue attempts to catch the ball on the full while standing on the touch line. Blue knocks on.**
- A3. a Scrum loose head and put in to Red.
b Penalty to Blue at the centre of the halfway line.
- Q4. Blue restarts with an optional 20 metre restart. Blue punt kicks the ball directly down field and the ball bounces into touch.**
- A4. a Scrum loose head and put in to Blue.
b Scrum loose head and put in to Red.
- Q5. At the start of play by Red the ball hits the goal post on the full and goes over the dead ball line on the full.**
- A.5 a Goal line drop out Blue.
b Penalty to Blue at the centre of the halfway line.
- Q6. Red restarts with an optional 20 metre restart and run 5 metres. An offside blue player tackles the Red ball carrier.**
- A6. a Penalty to Red on the 30 metre line.
b Penalty to red at the centre of the 20 metre line.
- Q7. Red restarts with a goal line drop out. The ball goes into touch on the full.**
- A7. a Penalty to Blue in front of the goal posts, the kick can be taken back from the 10 metre line.
b Penalty to Blue which must be taken on the 10 metre line.
- Q8. Red restarts play with a 20 metre drop out. The ball travels down field and rolls over the Blue dead ball line.**
- A8. a Goal line drop out by Blue
b 20 metre optional restart by Blue.

* Answers bottom of next page



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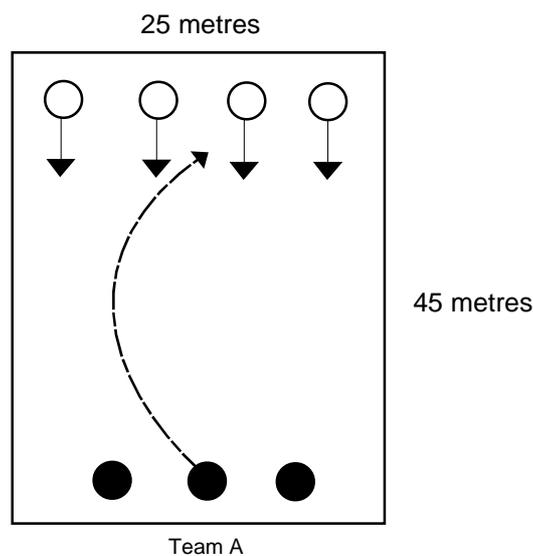
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Kick & Chase



SET UP:

Minimum 7 players, 1 football

THE DRILL:

- Team A kicks the ball to Team B
- Team B receives the ball and then attempts to beat the chasing defenders
- Team A chase the kick and then defender attempting a two handed grab on the attacking players
- If the play is stopped swap players between attackers and defenders

VARIATIONS:

- Bring the sideline boundary in
- Allow the kicking side to chip or grubber kick

COACHING POINTS:

Encourage the kicking side to chase quickly as in a game and move up, talking in a straight line of defence. The receiving side should have a clear call and the other players should move up quickly into position to support him.

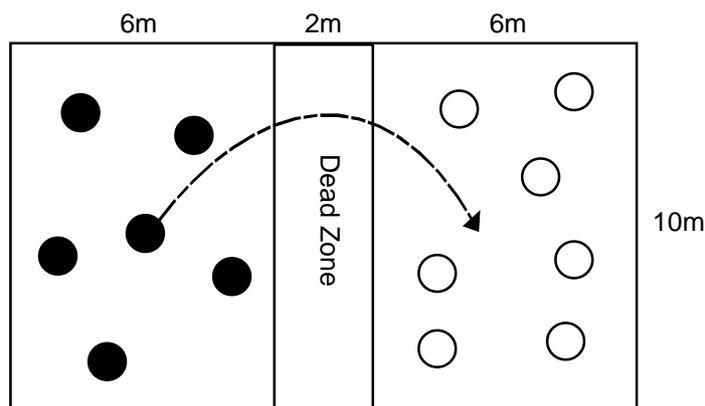
BENEFITS:

Kicking, communication between players, support play, defence and attack



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Kick Tennis



SET UP:

Equal number of players, 1 football

THE DRILL:

- Divide players into two equal teams
- Ball is kicked back and forth between the two teams
- Neither team may enter the dead area
- Players to use short, stab, chip or high kicks across the dead area
- Receivers must attempt to catch the ball on the full
- The ball MUST:-
 - Not land in the 'dead area' (Kicker removed)
 - Not land in kickers area (Kicker removed)
 - Land inside receivers area (Closest receiver removed)
 - Land outside area without being touched (Kicker removed)
 - Dropped ball (Receiver removed)

VARIATIONS:

- Put a 4 second count on receiving and kicking
- Increase area
- Widen 'dead' area

COACHING POINTS:

Create an environment of pressure, reaction, hand eye co-ordination, timing and anticipation of the kick.

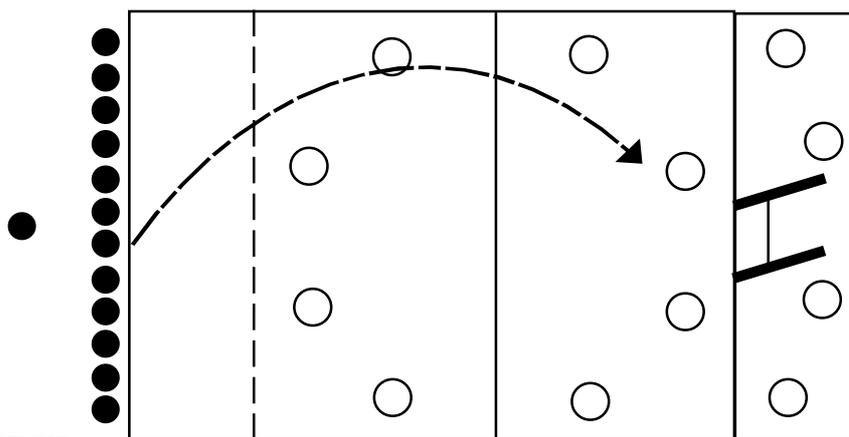
BENEFITS:

Kicking skills, communication



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Kick Off



SET UP:

Two teams, 1 football

THE DRILL:

- Divide players into two equal teams
- Each team has a turn of kicking off and attempting to force an error by the opposition
- Award points for the level of play
 - Kicking the ball dead (10 points)
 - Finding a touch line (10 points)
 - Regaining the ball from the kick off (10 points)
 - Chaser keep the opposition in their own 10 metre zone (10 points)
 - Kicking off and the ball touched the ground (5 points)
 - Chasers keep the opposition in their own 20 metre zone (5 point)

VARIATIONS:

- Increase or decrease the number of players
- Allow attack to play using two handed grabs by defenders

COACHING POINTS:

Chasers to communicate with kicker to know what kick is on, receivers to be in set positions, ready to receive or move into support play.

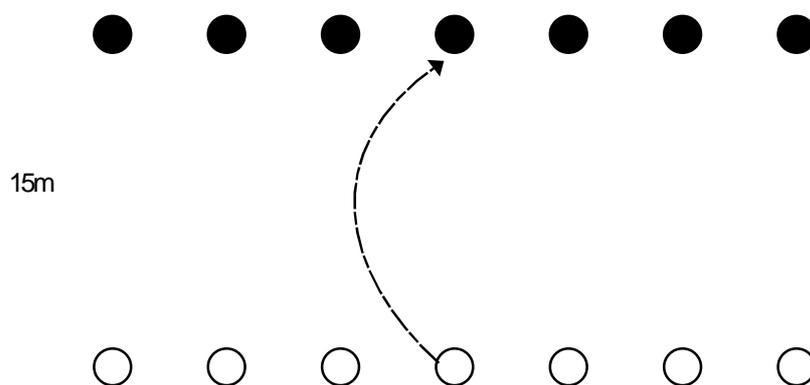
BENEFITS:

Catching, communication, kick - chase and return, kicking



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Kick Practice



SET UP:

Players in pairs, minimum 2 players, 1 football per pair

THE DRILL:

- Players stand opposite each other - 15 metres apart
- Kicking the back and forth
- Players to perform grubber kicks, chip kicks and drop kicks
- Players to perform each kick with both left and right feet

VARIATIONS:

- Put a 4 second count on receiver and kicking the ball
- Increase distance between pair
- Create a game situation where players chose different kicks and try to force and error by the receiver

COACHING POINTS:

Kicks to be controlled, encourage left and right foot kicks

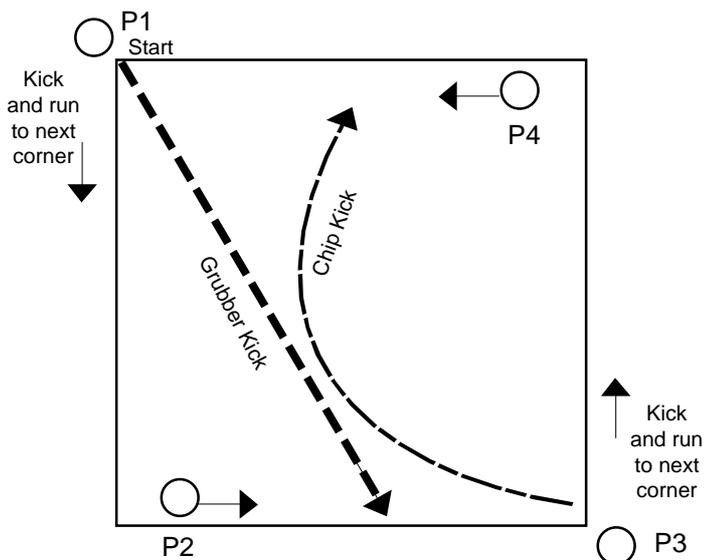
BENEFITS:

Kicking and catching skills



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Team Kicking



SET UP:

5 Players per group, 1 football

THE DRILL:

- Drill starts with P1 grubber kicking across the grid for P2
- P2 regathers on the run and hands off to P3
- P3 chip kicks across the grid for P4
- P4 catches the ball on the full and runs through to the corner of the grid
- P4 becomes P1 and recommences the drill by grubbering across the grid
- *(After kicking P1 moves to P2 and P3 moves to P4)*

VARIATIONS:

- Use left and right feet
- Change direction

COACHING POINTS:

Kicks to be controlled and allowing for the receiver to run onto the ball. Receiver to time his regather and not overrun the ball

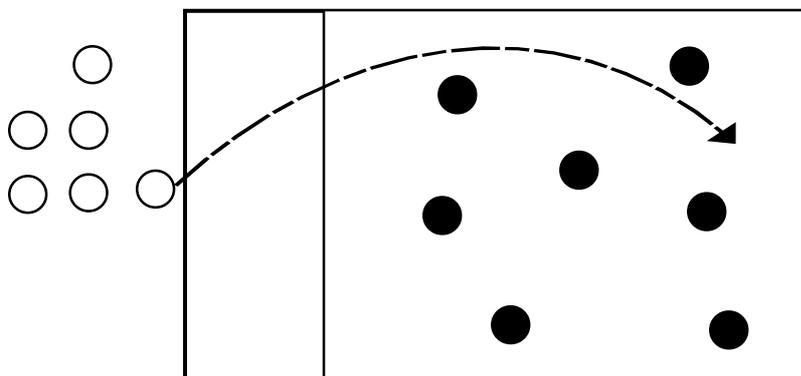
BENEFITS:

Kicking and catching skills, communication



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Minefield



SET UP:

1 football, make grid size to suit player numbers

THE DRILL:

- Defending players scatter themselves throughout the grid
- P1 attempts to kick the football into the grid and have it land, 1st bounce in open space
- 1 point is awarded for each successful kick
- The kicking team loses a life when:-
 - the ball is kicked out of bounds on the full
 - the ball is caught by the defending team on the full
- When 3 lives are lost, roles are reversed

VARIATIONS:

- Use left and right feet
- Penalise defending team for dropped ball

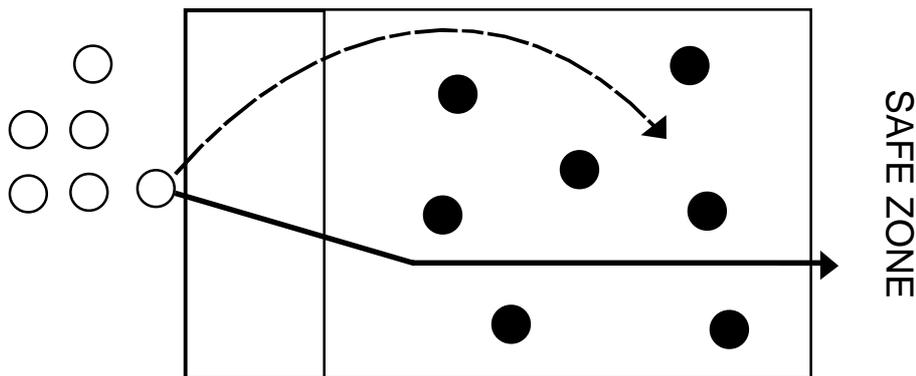
BENEFITS:

Kicking and catching skills, decision making



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Safe Zone



SET UP:

1 football, make grid size to suit player numbers

THE DRILL:

- Defending players scatter themselves throughout the grid
- P1 attempts to kick the football into open space and then run the length of the grid to the safe zone without being touched
- Defenders must regather and attempt to tag P1 with the ball
- Defenders may pass or kick the ball amongst each other and they may run with it in hand
- P1 is out if the ball is caught on the full or is tagged with the football
- Award 1 point for every player who reaches the safe zone, after 3 outs players swap roles

VARIATIONS:

- Use left and right feet
- Penalise defending team for dropped ball or bad passes

COACHING POINTS:

Defenders to communicate, kickers to use evasive skills to reach the safe zone

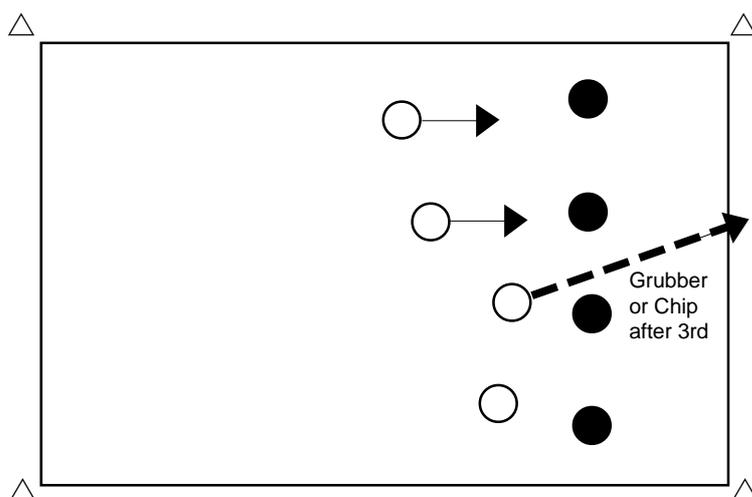
BENEFITS:

Kicking and catching skills, communication, decision making, evasion



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Three Tag Kick



SET UP:

1 football, 2 even teams

THE DRILL:

Touch game with modified rules and attack 'last play' options

- Divide players into 2 equal teams
- Attacking team has 3 plays only to score before change over
- Attacking team has the option to kick on any play
- A kick and regather in the field restarts the tackle count for the attacking team
- Points awarded for each try with more points awarded for tries that results from a kick or involved with a kick
- Award 1 point for putting in a kick and then tagging defenders in the in-goal

COACHING POINTS:

Penalise with a change over any off-side players or incorrect play the balls.
Players to communicate in both attack and defence.

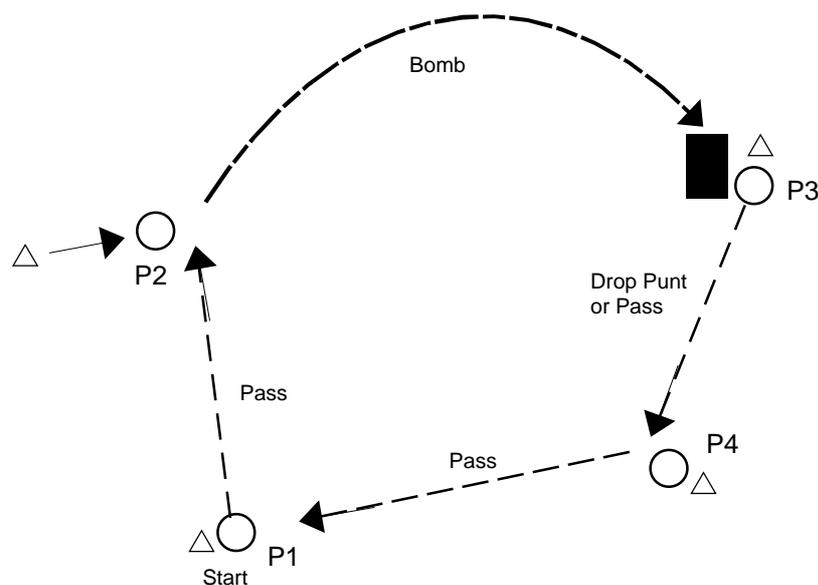
BENEFITS:

Last play options, decision making



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Bomb & Catch Extension



SET UP:

2 footballs, 1 tackle bag, 4 players per group

THE DRILL:

- P1 has 2 balls at his feet and starts the drills by making a dummy half pass to P2 (this pass should be out in front to make P2 run onto the ball)
- P2 then kicks a high ball ('bomb') attempting to land the ball on the tackle bag near P3 (he does not aim at P3 but at the bag)
- P3 catches the ball and immediately passes or drop punts to P4 who then passes to P1 and the drill continues

VARIATION

- Add second football into drill, after P2 has kicked ball and returned to marker, P1 passes second ball
- Add third football

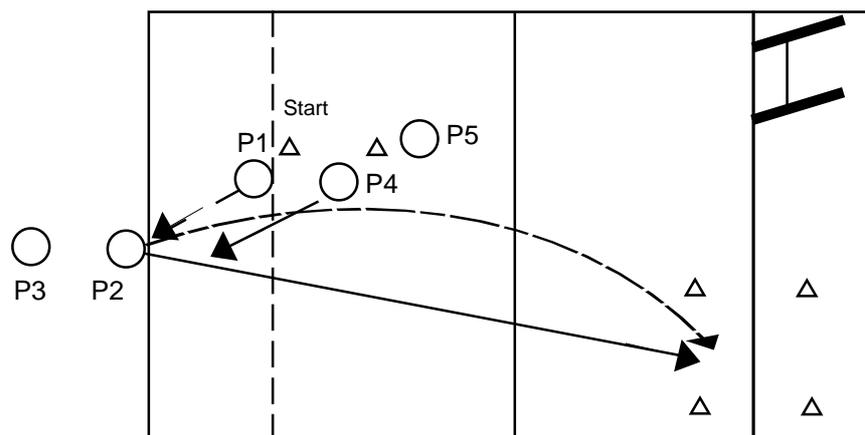
BENEFITS:

Kicking, catching, passing



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'Downtown' Kick



SET UP:

4 footballs, 5 players

THE DRILL:

- Set up cones to mark out a box about 10 metres square in the corner 5 metres in front of the try and 5 metres behind it
- Set up a Play the ball situation with P1 acting as dummy half
- P2 and P3 are the receivers and take turns in practising their downtown kicks
- The kicker must chase the ball as would on a 5th play
- The kick is aimed at the 10 metre square
- P4 and P5 are used to retrieve the ball from the returning kick and take turns on putting pressure on P2

VARIATION

- Use more players to put pressure on the kicker
- Adjust the position of the corner box or play the ball
- Have the kick stand on the left or right side of the play the ball

COACHING POINTS

- Proficiency can take time, allow players to make mistakes and encourage them to keep practising

BENEFITS:

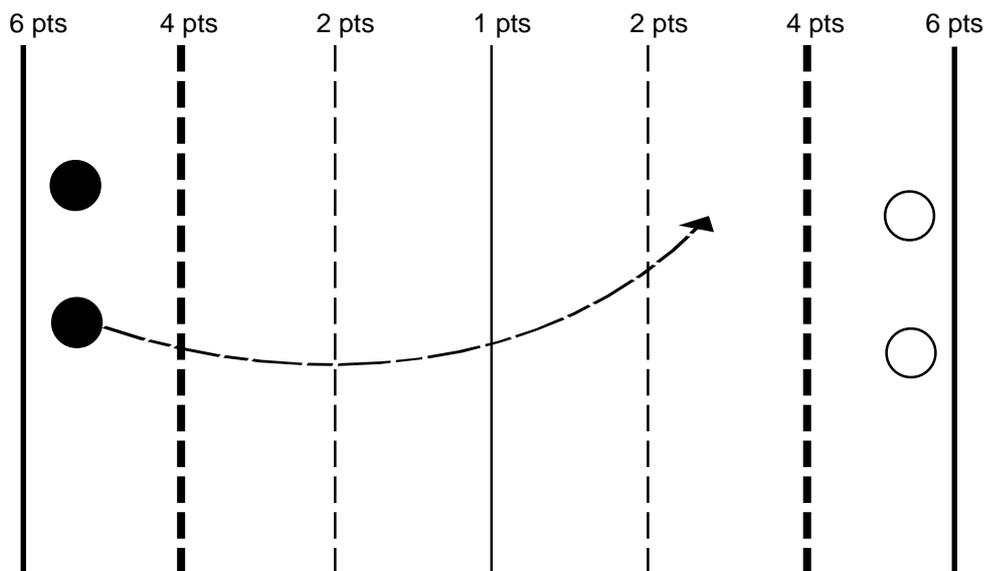
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Punt for Points



SET UP:

1 football

THE DRILL:

- A distance and accuracy kicking competition
- Players pair up with each player either punt, drop or torpedo kicking down a 15m channel. The length should be determined by the age and skill level of the players
- Each player has a set number of kicks (eg. 5) from each end of the grid
- Points awarded on the quality of kick - length and accuracy, no points are awarded if the ball lands outside the grid

COACHING POINTS

- Depending on the type kick the following should be addresses: ball grip, ball drop, leg action, strike and trajectory.

Squad Selection & Competition Analysis

Date:..... Vs

Names

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Tactics

Competition Analysis

Result:

Things to improve

Changes for next training session

Coaching Effectiveness

Session No.....
Self Reflection Diary

Date:..... Venue..... Team

Session Description (including aims)

FOCUS AREA: Teaching Managing Communicating

Things to improve

Things to implement next session

Follow up evaluation after next session

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