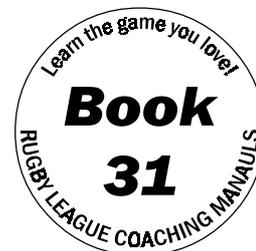


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1.

Coach Talk

With Graham Murray
North Queensland Cowboys

After a distinguished playing career with Parramatta and Souths, Graham Murray has gained his great experience and coaching reputation at a multitude of venues. Stints at Penrith, Illawarra, Super League clubs in Australia and England, and more recently the Sydney Roosters, have enhanced his standing as a team builder.

North Queensland knew what they were doing when they lured Murray to the tropics. He has his team hovering at the gate to the final eight.

When RLCM last talked to Graham at the Sydney Roosters, he stated that his philosophy was to enjoy himself wherever he lived and coached.

RLCM began then by asking him how he was enjoying the North.

MURRAY: I love the place. I'm from Sydney - well, the bush originally, so I think it's fantastic. To me it is a big country town. People are friendly and they love their football so it is perfect for me.

As for a younger player, I can't speak for him. However, I do know one thing. If you are serious about your footy, there is not one thing to ask for at the Cowboys. The facilities are there; it is well run and every second week we do a bit of travelling. When we are in Brisbane we go home, but when we are in Sydney, we stay over and encourage them all to go out and have a night out as a group. It's quieter and a bit slower there so a player going from North

Queensland to a Sydney club could have problems adjusting. But a Sydney player coming up here can just calm down and say it is going to be good for my footy.

RLCM: How is the development up there? Are young local players coming through?

MURRAY: That will take time, I think. I don't know what comes first, but we have to get some credibility on the football side of things. There are two Queensland sides. One of them kicked off in 1988; one of them came along in 1995. There are a lot of people who still think that the Broncos is the Queensland team and there are people my age who have got kids who want to be Broncos. But now, locally, our players are visiting schools and junior clubs. The kids know Matt Sing, Kevin Champion, Ty Williams, Glen Morrison and the others and they want to be Cowboys. We are doing a fair bit of work with our development and our trials and with time and credibility, I think we'll get 'I want to be a Cowboy'. We had trials this year in places like Cairns, Innisfail and Mackay, and when we went on the field it was 'Welcome Our North Queensland Cowboys' and it hasn't always been that way. Our relationship is terrific out there at the moment but we still want the kids to be able to come up and say 'I want to play alongside Paul Rauhihi or Glen Morrison'.

RLCM: Has your own preparation as a coach changed in the new environment?

MURRAY: Not really. It's the same as always. I think it goes back to my school teaching days. I like to be organised and I don't want to be surprised by anything, and I don't want to surprise the players with anything. My preparation is fairly similar from week to week in terms of games I've watched and players I've spoken to and all those sorts of things. I like to train at least once a day with the coaching staff just to



get ourselves away from watching videos or trying to work out why the opposition scored down the right hand side on the fourth tackle and so on. Also, I like to think that our coaching staff have some good ideas, and we do get on very well together.

I don't feel duty bound to come up with a game plan for every occasion and every player with what they are going to do and what's in front of them. I do like to be able to say that we are going to work within this framework and these are the sorts of things you can do. Defensively, I think it is a lot easier to coach because with the video systems that are out there now, you can see teams quickly and opposition individual players quickly and you know what they are going to do. Attack is the pressure point and most teams need to be drilled on how to control the ball properly.

RLCM: So, good coaching staff and some seasoned players make a difference?

MURRAY: They certainly do. Matt Sing and Kevin Champion are great like that because when they come to training, they are ready to train. A person like Kevin is good when I am not around. He is good in the gym, he is good at training, and when I am there he is on the ball. If I put a bit of a joke in now and again, Kevin picks up on it and has a giggle whereas some of the young players tend to think that may not be the done thing one hour out from a game.

Those seasoned players definitely provide the stiffening in tight situations as well - especially Kevin and Paul in the forwards when defending a lead late in a game and as I said before, my staff are great, starting with Assistant Coach, Neil Henry. As well as his many other duties, he can pick up on a player who may be a little bit down and alert me to the fact and advise me on whether he needs a rev up or a cuddle.

Peter Parr, our Football Manager, said to me, "I really look forward to Fridays because come Friday you just put it together and I am confident that we are going to win." What we have done in the first part of the week is go through our routine and then by Friday we are starting to give them a lot of good reasons why we are

going to win this football match. I feel confident every time we go around and I have been like that for many years, but no one else has actually ever said to me, "I feel good come Fridays." I think that's great because I am not putting the pressure on; I am just trying to put it together.

I've got to give Billy Johnstone a wrap too. The mental preparation, the toughness - he is very good at it. If you are injured, you don't train with the other group, you train with him. If you are suspended, you train with him in another group. So it might be very early in the morning or it might be midday, but it is with him. Even though you are suspended, you are still under the hammer because you know you've got two weeks with Billy. He's tough and you're thinking that you just want to get better or over this suspension as soon as you can.

RLCM: You talked about the seasoned players off the field. Do you like a lot of communication on the field? Do you want talkers?

MURRAY: Yes, I do. When I was playing half back, I was a good talker myself and years later some of those tough forwards said they liked that because they didn't have to think too much themselves. So when we go through our game plan and analyse the opposition, I don't expect all the players to remember it but I'd be disappointed if the players who touched the ball a lot were not on top of it. Today, your nine, your seven, your six and your one are very important. They make the crucial decisions and they should be talking to the others. I know I am a bit biased because I was a halfback but I know a good talker can get you around the park more easily.

RLCM: You mentioned the nine as being very important. What do you want in a dummy half?

MURRAY: I think we have done a bit of a cycle. Five or six years ago you put your fast ex-half back in there. But now he just doesn't need to be quick because I think you can get anyone in there and be quick. Nowadays you've got to have a little bit of guile about you and a bit more skill. I think the guy that has been there the whole time during his juniors

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knows that little bit more about the position - when to go and when to go against the grain, I call it, and when to dummy and shoot up the middle. We've toyed with a few dummy halves ourselves but Leigh McWilliams is doing a good job for us at the moment. He has a great awareness and confidence in playing dummy half. We train so that the other players are cued up and ready to go with him. They have to be close enough to capitalise on his dash.

It gives me great pleasure to know that the dummy half is coming back into his own. We are getting back to that guile and skill of the hooker and I reckon it is the way the game should be played.

RLCM: Some teams are kicking on the second and third tackle. How do you see this?

MURRAY: Well they do that expecting you to make errors and when you oblige them, the tactic works well. I'm still a bit of a believer in using our sets and making them work at tackling you. But you have got to read what is happening in the game. If the fourth one has been a quick play the ball and you're in good position to find some grass, then let's kick now but momentum comes into it as well. Sometimes it is better to back yourself with the ball in your hands. It looks pretty good to kick and score tries and get in behind them but I like to see teams back themselves.

RLCM: You see some teams kick deep into the opposition half and then give away a penalty. This must annoy coaches.

MURRAY: Yes. Whether you kick early or late, you can't be giving them a soft penalty to let them out of their end of the field. The theory is that there must be squeaky-clean discipline up that end. What I get annoyed

with are the penalties that result from indiscipline - the swinging arm, the pull up of the leg, or knocking the ball out of their hands - the really simple penalty like that. You have a good team on its own line, 10 metres out, 12 metres out, 15 metres out and then bang, penalty for a tackle. All those three or four tackles prior to that were just wasted and it was nothing to do with the ruck. It was a high shot and it had to be penalised. You query the player later and they realise they could have done it better, but that's what he has got to think of at the time. It is part of the learning process for him.

RLCM: You were talking about working through your sets before. How do you build the sets in your opposition's red zone that will result in points?

MURRAY: Some people think that you need to have six sets of hands to score a try and they say it was a great try when others would say it was a soft try. Well, the latter group is not seeing the work that was done to get there. Most times it is not the actual running over putting the ball down, it's all the build up and the momentum of the game before that. There is a chain of events - the terrific run a number of plays back, the half break, the quick play the ball, the two on one down the short side. It has taken a great deal of momentum to score that try. Sometimes you build that momentum and if need be you go for another set of six. So you keep the momentum going and then the pressure might give you what looks like that soft try but that soft try was brought about by the build up of momentum and pressure before that.

There had been a glint in Graham Murray's eye at the beginning of our talk, and now 45 minutes later, the glint was even brighter. RLCM had not only been informed but entertained with anecdotes and examples and now we too had that 'really looking forward to Friday' feeling.

Notes

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2.

The Assistant Coach.

With Tony Kemp - Auckland Warriors

With a CV that reads

- Junior football in representative Rugby Union and Rugby League, including the 1987 Junior Kiwis
- An outstanding, lengthy career in the NRL with the Newcastle Knights and a season with the Queensland Crushers
- A playing career in the English League
- Coaching Leeds Reserve Grade side to a championship title
- Coach and player with Wakefield Trinity
- A twenty-five Test Match career with the Kiwis beginning in 1989.
- Study resulting in a Diploma in Business Studies.
- Currently in his third season as Assistant Coach of the New Zealand Warriors,

You could expect an older, more weathered character than the one that appeared when RLCM talked with Tony Kemp. On the contrary, the man looked as though he could have stripped and played for the successful Warriors in their game against the Broncos that afternoon.

Add to the above CV the mounting of a successful Supreme Court case when he was 18 years old that allowed himself and subsequently many other New Zealand players to participate in the Winfield Cup, and you can see that this young man has been busy.

Naturally, with Rugby League embedded so much in his life, Tony Kemp has aspirations. "Yes, I have a

goal of coaching in NRL. I view it as a trade and I am currently serving an apprenticeship. The next step may come. You've just got to wait and see what opportunities may arise," he said.

In serving that apprenticeship, Tony acknowledges that he has been fortunate to have contact with some great mentors. He talks of Frank Endacott, Alan Bell, David Waite, Alan McMahon and others in New Zealand, Australia and England.

"I suppose you take a little bit from every one of them," he said of their influence. "I've worked with the likes of Frank Endacott who got on really well with the players and now Daniel Anderson who is a good player manager and a very good coach. I mix my own philosophy and methods with the best of everyone else's."

On his present position as assistant to Daniel Anderson, it is obvious that there is mutual respect and Tony appreciates the faith that Daniel shows in him.

"I think the name in itself is the main role and that is to assist the coach and what he is trying to achieve. I'm there for Daniel to bounce ideas off and to work through areas of the game that we think will be an advantage to the team. I'm also there as a sort of buffer between the coach and some players who perhaps don't feel comfortable talking directly to a coach," he said.

Tony added that his job also included looking at the training programmes with the coach, taking smaller type sessions and sometimes the whole session when Daniel felt that the players needed a relief from over-exposure to himself.

On match day, he listed the pre-game preparation as being important. It was his job to ensure everyone was switched on. Also, a word with individual players from the head coach might be needed. Post



match, Tony spends a great deal of time on the Warriors' analysis systems.

"It's one of the biggest tools in the game and it's a pretty big job for one person to take care of," he commented. "Daniel and I cover a lot of different areas looking for quality statistics, both positive and negative and then discuss and compare our ideas on what can be improved."

Tony feels a responsibility to the players in the full time professional era. He has evolved through it himself and now with the players involved Monday to Sunday with the club, there is much to be done. He points out that there is not just their playing jobs but marketing/sponsorship duties, their own physical well-being, strength, speed and endurance skills, and extra coaching and kicking skills and the like, to be monitored.

"One of the roles is to make sure that if your players spend a lot of time at your club, they enjoy the environment. We work pretty hard on making sure the environment is right," he said.

Tony comments that it is a player like Stacey Jones, in particular, who shows the younger players what being a professional footballer is all about. "It's not only the good advice he hands on or the kicking skills sessions that he can take, it's his attitude to his own game. These kids already hold him in awe and respect and then they see him putting in the extra hours on small things in his own game or heading off with a bag of balls to practise his own kicking skills," he said.

Tony agrees that it is Stacey's attitude, along with others like Jerry Seuseu, which has helped the Warriors overcome what others had perceived as a problem, that is, the loss of seasoned players from last year's team. He stated that with the right systems in place and good recruitment and junior development, the Warriors had young players ready to step up. These players did not feel intimidated because of the regular contact they had already had with players like Stacey and Jerry.

Tony described it as replacing old heads with young legs. "Then our remaining seasoned players and Daniel and I help those young legs become old heads," he added.

Another perceived problem for the New Zealand Warriors is the tyranny of distance. Tony refers to this as crossing 'the ditch' every second week. He points out that not only are there the hours of actual travel, but also the two-hour time difference. Players tend to wake up earlier on game day and this can be a problem later in the day.

"We try to make it a pretty relaxed atmosphere, remembering that these blokes are grown men not children. We monitor them but the hard work has been done back home so relaxation plays a big part in their game day preparation." He adds, "After all, if you're an NRL player and you're in New Zealand, you had better get used to the travel. It's part of the job."

Part of the job for the coaching staff, Tony states, is combining the correct blend of mental toughness, a winning culture and the natural flair of many of the players.

Mental toughness he sees as consistency. "If we can have our players consistently go out there and perform week in and week out in a tough competition and keep the balance there with their life outside of football, we are getting the focus and preparation right," he says.

Tony adds that he thinks the Warriors are building a culture under the new regime. "Over the last two years we've built a culture where they get used to winning which is what we want. You look at the likes of Brisbane, Newcastle and Canterbury - they consistently make the play-offs because they're used to winning. Going from a top eight finish to Premiers and Grand Finalists, shows we are getting that winning culture within the club."

"At the same time," Tony says, "you don't want to take away their natural flair. It's just a matter of containing it in some stages and picking the right time. Containing their flair, playing within your own boundaries, and timing is what we are after."

Later that day, observers could witness that successful blend against the Broncos. Hard, consistent play was capped off with a crowd-pleasing try with flair in the final minutes.

On the 2002 Grand Final, Tony concedes that there were lessons learnt and that the adage of 'losing one before you can win one' can have some truth. One thing he would hope for if in the same position would be to get to Sydney on the Sunday before the Grand Final.

"I don't think the players really saw the full benefit of the Grand Final in Australia. Although it was good to be in New Zealand and soak up the atmosphere back there, Grand Final day in Australia is something very special," he said.

One can sense a well-merited confidence in Tony's demeanour - confidence in his coach, his team and himself. With their winning culture in place, one can also sense that the Warriors could very soon be transporting that Grand Final trophy back across 'the ditch'.

3.

The Coach and Planning.

With Brian Canavan - Sydney Roosters

Well, how is the season progressing? Is your team performing at the desired level or are there problems? Are things going as you planned? Did you have a fully developed plan to start with?

It may be time to make a resolution about how you will plan a little more for next year's competition or attempt to improve in this season's performances.

Brian Canavan, Sydney Roosters' Football Manager, thinks this planning is very, very important. "It encapsulates all the knowledge and information you have in written form. The coach or coaching director at any level needs to get that planning structure right and then things will operate within that structure," he said.

Brian was speaking at the Annual High Performance Camp organised by the NSW Academy of Sport at Narrabeen.

"The planning must be done pre-pre-season," he said. "It is difficult to plan when you are in the middle of a season because you are too busy looking at next week's performance whether you are coming off a win or a loss."

In the planning stage then, Brian reminded his audience not to lose sight of the main reason the players are there and that is for enjoyment and improvement. This enjoyment or fun aspect may take different forms. It may be the camaraderie, the "character" players in the side or individual

experiences. Whatever the form, the coach should be mindful of, and plan for, enjoyment throughout the season.

As background to a planning philosophy, Brian talked about the main phases of athletic training being a pyramid of levels. The bottom level he called Multi-lateral Development. In the Rugby League context, this would mean the development of coordination, rhythm and agility, and applied to the age group up to 12. The next level was seen as Specialised Training. This saw the development of particular skills related to different positions on the field and applied to 14 to 16 year-olds approximately. The top level of the pyramid was labelled High Performance and involved the older and more elite performers.

Brian reminded coaches that their planning would differ according to the different levels that they would be working with.

So then to the planning: Using various analogies, Brian reminded his listeners that their players would come to them for a new season in an excited and enthusiastic frame of mind and ready to do their best, but ahead lay a rocky road for the coach.

Most players would go through an adaptation phase where they advanced and their performance improved. Then, however, came the stage of diminishing returns where many performances reached a plateau or even diminished, and it was here that the coach's planning would bear fruit. The training regime is still needed



but an effective plan allowed not only for active work but time also for rest and recovery. “The body improves while it rests,” he stated. “It loads up physiologically and mentally in anticipation of the next training session in which it will show an improvement.”

At this stage Brian equated properly planned rest and recovery sessions as important as his original point about enjoyment.

“Technically,” Brian said, “you need to be aware of the term Periodisation. This involves the division of the overall training programme into periods which accomplish goals.”

He went on to say that the goals should be not just general but specific. They needed to state clearly what you wanted to achieve - even at different stages on the path to the premierships rounds. They needed also

The Step Plan, Brian said, involved more radical change in volume and intensity in the first three weeks of each block and then a very important ‘drop down, recovery week’. The body has been challenged with significant increases in activity and the fourth week was for the mind to be challenged with different and lighter activities. This aligned with the ‘body at rest’ theory mentioned earlier.

Brian also stated that overseas research pointed to a greater improvement in strength and power under the Step Plan. This was probably due to the significant challenge to the body in each subsequent block.

The third method Brian labelled The Skill - Strength Plan. This basically involved enhancing skills before heavy work. That is, practice of the required skills with little fatigue before increasing time, distance and repetition loads. This plan he suggested as best fitting

“Plan it, allow for rest and recovery, and above all, remember why we’re there - for the enjoyment and improvement.”

to be measurable. To this end he talked of Micro and Macro Cycles. The former are the small blocks of activities which are recurrent and the latter, planned four-week blocks of training.

Taking pre-season as an example, Brian stated that this would involve two to three four-week blocks divided into pre-Christmas, post-Christmas and trials. He added, of course, that this was for the top level and coaches of country teams and younger groups who would not have this luxury, would need to adapt their blocks to the level of time available to them.

In organising these blocks, Brian referred to three different methods of planning. The first of these, he called The Wave Plan.

This involved alternating waves of volume and intensity. Volume referring to ‘how much and how many’ of an activity and intensity to ‘what level’. Over the four weeks, the change in both is meant to follow a gradual curve or wave with intensity, such as more body contact, increasing in the later blocks. Brian warned of over use of the volume aspect in particular.

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the country setting particularly keeping in mind the retention of players and the enjoyment aspect.

“After all,” he said, “you don’t want a young bloke driving an hour in his ute to get to training and then flogging him. You won’t see him next week.”

Finally, Brian admitted the job was a complex task. There were so many factors to be taken into account. These ranged from the level of skills already evident, the locality, the age of the participants, and in the case of some recruits moving from a country club to the top level, what he referred to as the ‘training age’ of the player.

“However,” he implored, “plan it, allow for rest and recovery, and above all, remember why we’re there - for the enjoyment and improvement.”

So there we are. With that resolution for careful preparation next season, you, like that cigar chewing leader of the old television show, ‘The A Team’, will be able to sit back and say, “I love it when a plan comes together.”

4.

Mental Toughness Without The Mental.

With Steve Anderson - Scottish Rugby Union

Chris Anderson sees it as a result of the work done pre-season and during the season. He talks of the pressure constantly being put on players in training, developing into their being able to handle pressure in a game.

Peter Sharp sees it as disciplined control. In the game situation he equates it to experience, patience, not panicking in tight situations.

Tony Kemp sees it as preparation and consistency. He talks of players being out on the field each week and performing consistently in a tough arena.

Steve Anderson sees it as 'all of the above'.

The 'it' in question is Mental Toughness.

RLCM talked to Steve, former Assistant Coach of Melbourne Storm and the Kangaroos, now, Performance Director with the Scottish Rugby Union, about his take on the subject.

He began by saying that it was a topic that was too broad to define. "It may mean different things to different people," he said. "To one player it might mean something different to another player beside him."

However, Steve got his definition down to one word, and that word, **preparation**, was a common thread in the conversations of the other gentleman mentioned above when asked about the subject.

In fact, Steve went on to say that he has dropped the

word 'mental' from his talks on the subject because it makes it too complicated when it is not that complicated at all.

"I think it is an acquired skill," he said. "It comes through years of playing. It comes to those who work very hard on their preparation and it's developed over years and years of playing the game at a very physical level."

Steve was asked then about how a young, 18 year-old player who has not had this experience, can be recruited with some certainty that he will develop as a mentally tough competitor.

His reply was that there needed to be some signs of durability, resilience and toughness and these could be picked up in a thorough background check.

Things like - how many games he has played last year, even the last five years. More importantly, how many games has he missed? Is he a good student? Does he get on well with others and has he got other areas of interest?

"So you have those key things of resilience, durability, consistency, discipline - they all go into the melting pot," Steve said. "These will develop for the committed player the longer they play the game."

For the more experienced player, Steve sees preparation again as very important with fitness also coming into the mix. He harkened back to the Melbourne Storm days when he says Chris Anderson developed a good mix of experienced, fit players.

"Melbourne's game was tough in the last 20 minutes. We had fit, experienced players in the group leading the team. We toughed out many games because it is the experience that comes from those arm wrestles, those tough games where it's 22 all and one minute to go. It's the experience, combined with the fitness side of it, that gets you through."



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Steve was then asked what the coach or assistant coach could do. Here he talked of discipline and used as an example, a simple thing like the player keeping a diary. “I mean, just because you’re filling out a diary, doesn’t mean you’re automatically going to succeed but I think it’s the disciplines within the Rugby League athlete that makes up the toughness aspect as well. You’re challenging yourself today to go through a routine and it’s those little bits and pieces - the disciplines that make up a player,” he said.

Steve adds that if the player can’t do small things like fill out a diary, set himself targets, or correct errors that his diary makes evident, there is no way he is going to follow one full season’s instruction or come through those tough game situations.

“He’s not going to do it because the preparation is not there.”

Steve concedes that some of the elite players probably won’t be filling out a diary because they are there. They have disciplines from years of hard preparation already. They have been through that system.

However, the young recruit doesn’t escape. Steve says, “If he’s not committed to doing the little things in his game, to me that equates to a fundamental error. If he can’t complete all his disciplines through his week, you’re talking fundamental error in his game.”

Again, referring to his Storm days, Steve talks of players like Steven Bell and Matt Geyer. “They were kids coming through. They’re the ones I honed in on and now they wouldn’t even need a diary because it’s been hammered in.”

Steve added, “It’s all about preparing the player for not only execution in a game sense but his ability to perform consistently under pressure. It all starts with the unopposed teaching of a skill then opposed practice and then the game situation. The more games you get under your belt, the better you’ll do it. The better you’ll be at doing it under pressure.”

So, younger players, for you it means not just shining at that Under 19 Carnival but having that consistent background - the resilience, durability and consistency, that will take you through the tough times later on. And the discipline - the discipline to do even the little things which are the foundation of your future in Rugby League.

For the senior player - well, again it’s ‘all of the above’ plus the discipline of performing consistently game after game.

So for all, it’s a little like the old adage about buying real estate - just replace ‘position’ with

Preparation, Preparation, Preparation.

5.

Football Parents, Support, Smiles and Sporting Success.

By Wayne Goldsmith

Parents love their children and want nothing but the best for them. Behaviours that others may see as “pushy”, sporting parents see as “lovingly supportive”. What a coach may interpret as “sticking their noses in”, sporting parents see only a genuine interest in their child’s development. This difference in perspective and the difficulty in being able to be objective where their kids are concerned often lead parents into a conflict situation with coaches, other parents, officials and eventually their own children.

I have done hundreds of talks to sporting parents around the world. Many times parents have approached me after a talk and said *“I hear what you say, but you don’t know my child. He is different”*. Whilst every child is indeed an individual, what all children have in common are parents who have high opinions of their child’s ability to do everything.

It starts early – **the first day home from the hospital.**

“Here is a picture of my baby. He is the most beautiful baby I have ever seen and I am not just saying that because he is mine”.

Then around two years of age:

“My child is much more advanced than the other children – talking and walking before other kids, and I am not just saying that because he is mine”.

Then at school.

“He is well advanced for his age. He can do things that most five year olds can’t. I’m not just saying that because he is my son”.

Then naturally at sport.

“He is the best full back in the district. He really is. I’m not just saying that because he is my son”.

The football parent is merely extending their natural feelings of love and support for their child into the sporting environment.

This article aims to help parents of young Rugby League players (and the coaches who have to manage those parents) deal with some of the critical issues in sport and parenting.

Footy Parents have **five** things in common:

- They love their children
- They want the best for their children
- They are incapable of being objective about their children
- They believe there is something special or unique about their children (that no one else can see)
- And.....They don’t believe people when they tell them every parent has the first four things in common

This is where coaches and parents run into problems.

Coaches see kids as athletic, confident, skilful etc based on their objective analysis of the child’s ability to perform tasks at training and in games. Parents on the other hand see a child who is wonderful, brilliant and gifted because they share the same genetics.

Times are not getting easier for coaches. Coaching is a tough job.

Ask any parent what the three most important things in their life are:

- THEIR KIDS
- THEIR TIME
- THEIR MONEY



Rugby league coaches coach **KIDS**, often at inconvenient **TIMES** and parents have to pay **MONEY** to be involved (i.e. boots, jerseys, training gear, travel to games, game entry, registrations etc etc). So it is little wonder that rugby league coaches and parents often end up in conflict situations.

However kids today are a little different owing to the nature of society where education and training are increasingly dependent of their entertainment qualities.

Kids today:

- They want it all
- They want it at a younger age
- They want it now
- They want it to be fun
- If they can't have it all, have it now and if it is not fun they don't want it.

And in that same environment, the coach is trying to develop the players' skills, physical abilities, game sense and core values like integrity, humility and honesty.

The question is often asked, why Rugby League (and all other sports) struggles to keep kids involved after their mid teens.

Sport is often seen as focusing on traditional values of dedication, the development of a strong work ethic, commitment, team work and instructing players how to deal with adversity and pressure.

These values are (unfortunately) often interpreted as being out of step with many of the "fast food" attitudes of today's kids.

The challenge for all coaches is to use sport to teach and enhance the traditional values which apply to all people in all walks of life, but.....encourage kids to take part in sport and "sell" sport in a way which appeals to their world – where *entertainment* is as important as *education*.

This is a dilemma for every coach: How to make training and preparation interesting, stimulating and entertaining yet remain true to their coaching philosophies and core beliefs about coaching young

players: that is, not compromising on coaching standards but still responding to the changing demands of today's teenage footballer.

It is here that coaches and parents should work together. The life lessons young players learn working together in a team environment can provide a positive experience and an advantage for them in their academic and business lives.

A young player who has worked together with team mates to achieve their goals learns a life lesson about team work and goal setting.

A young player who learns to execute skills in the pressure of a final learns a valuable life lesson about dealing with pressure and stress.

Rugby league is teaching valuable life lessons to kids and as such, parents should support coaches and clubs in reinforcing and supporting this learning experience.

By working with coaches as an integral part of the club and team structure and by supporting and endorsing the coach's words and actions at home, parents can play a vital role in the career and personal development of their children.

Education of parents is the key!

Rugby league clubs and coaches should schedule time to hold parent education sessions on a regular basis to inform and educate parents about the key elements and philosophies of their program. Success comes when:

THE VISION OF THE COACH and

THE COMMITMENT OF THE PLAYERS and

THE SUPPORT OF THE PARENTS all come together focused towards achieving a common goal.

Sporting Parents are keen to learn as much as they can to help their kids achieve their sporting goals.

These are the most common questions asked by sporting parents:

QUESTION 1:

How many times should a child train each week?

This is without doubt the most common question asked by sporting parents.

Answer.

There are several approaches to answering this question including:

As many as they can recover from – if two training sessions makes them tired and sore, then doing six will not help them.



As many as their goals determine – *the higher the goal – the higher the price.*

Players aiming to be the best and play First grade as senior players need to spend more time training than other players aiming for social level competition.

As many as they enjoy – the key to it all. Kids play sport because of three key reasons – they enjoy it – they love being with their friends and they love learning. If the kids are not enjoying their football, forget keeping them in the sport.

There is no magic number of sessions for players to complete each week that will guarantee success.

Key comment – It is an individual thing!

QUESTION 2:

When should a child specialise in a sport, event or position?

Answer:

There is no such thing as a ten year old champion winger or lock or hooker. The “child champion” is merely someone who for reasons of growth and development plays one position a little better than another. However this year’s winger could be next year’s fullback and in two years the same player might be a second rower.

The tendency is that when a child is bigger and stronger than the other players at the same age, parents and coaches sometimes place unreasonable expectations on them. All coaches have stories to tell about the 12 year old who scored 100 tries in a season, yet didn’t ever make it to top grade.

This year’s champ is often next year’s chump. As size and strength factors even up in the mid to late teens, often these early maturers are frustrated by the fact they can no longer dominate teams the way they did when they were younger.

In the long term, size and strength are not the key determinants of success. Look at players like Sterling, Lamb, Langer, Stuart, Toovey etc who have been outstanding successes at all levels of the game.

The key elements of success in the long term are:

- Skills
- Confidence
- A positive attitude
- The ability to deal with adversity and tough times

Key comment: LONG TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT is the key to success.

QUESTION 3:

Do young Rugby League players need a special diet?

Answer:

No. Not unless they have special needs or health issues which require dietary control, e.g. diabetes.

Providing they eat a balanced diet of carbohydrates, proteins and fats it is unlikely that a young, developing player needs a special diet. The important issue is to encourage young players to develop eating practices which become lifetime healthy lifestyle habits.

Importantly, kids should be educated on the key elements of a healthy, nutritious diet (i.e. low on salt, low on saturated fat, low on processed sugars) as early as possible.

Parents are often tempted to try short cuts like buying muscle building powders, high protein sports drinks and glucose tablets to help their child achieve their football goals. It must be said that none of these products are likely to make a difference to the child’s playing and taking them may even be counter productive.

Key comment: Vitamins and minerals do not make champions.

QUESTION 4:

How do kids balance school and sport?

Answer:

School comes first. There is no getting away from this. No player plays for ever and at some time in their life, having the basics of a good education will be important.

However, success at Rugby League and success at school is possible. There are literally hundreds of first grade footballers who have also completed university studies.

High achieving players are usually high achieving students as they learn time management skills, dealing with stress, team building, communication skills and other important skills in their training and preparation for football.

Key comment: School and sport DO mix



QUESTION 5:**When should my kids start strength training?****Answer:**

It does not matter what age..... it depends on what they do and how they do it.

Body weight exercises and light exercise with perfect technique are ok at most ages. Where young players (and parents) get into trouble is when they start lifting heavy weights too early and with poor technique.

Weight training is a great way to get strong and help develop the power to play great rugby league in the senior grades. However, the introduction of weight training should be systematic and done progressively with the development of perfect lifting techniques being the most important part of the process.

Key comment: Technique before tonnes!

QUESTION 6:**What types of exercise are best for young (i.e. pre teen) athletes?****Answer:**

Ages 6-12 are the perfect time to learn techniques and skills – the foundations of sporting success in later years. In fact, it has been suggested that players who do not develop and master the basics of the game in those years may never achieve their full potential.

Young players should be encouraged to learn their **A – B – C’ S (Agility, Balance, Co-ordination and Speed)** during these important developmental years.

When a child attends school, they learn basic arithmetic, then progress to equations and eventually to calculus.

The basics of the game – running, passing, kicking and game sense should all be learnt, refined and mastered by the young player before moving on the more advanced playing techniques.

Key comment: Where young players are concerned, Patience is a true virtue.

**QUESTION 7:****How do I choose a good coach for my child?****Answers:**

Qualifications, experience and coaching record are all important when selecting a coach for the young player. Younger coaches who may lack coaching experience but who have an infectious enthusiasm for the game and a passion to succeed may also be a good option.

However, the key question for parents to ask is:

Can the coach provide a safe, ethical, positive, skills based, stimulating training environment?

The reality for most parents is that they will choose the coach who is best situated on their afternoon “drop off circuit”, ie mum drops Julie to swimming, Billy to piano and Johnny to football, then goes back to pick up Julie to take her to netball etc etc.

Key comment: Does your child like the coach AND do you have faith in the coach – enough to give them 100% support?

QUESTION 8:**What are the common characteristics of champion players?****Answer:**

- Confidence / self esteem / self belief
- The ability to deal with tough times and adversity
- A love of what they are doing – the passion for the game will carry them a long way.
- Strong core values: courage, discipline, humility, sincerity, honesty – these things make an impact on their playing career and their lives.
- A positive attitude

Key comment: Champion athletes are champion people first.

QUESTION 9:**What can I do to help my child achieve their goals in Rugby League?****Answer:**

Be patient with progress.

Be tolerant of mistakes and poor performances.

Be calm and dignified at sporting events.

Learn to accept wins or losses graciously.

Allow (the players) plenty of breathing space.

Offer praise with success.

6. The Ruck is the Centre of the Universe

By Owen Dalkeith

You hear many of today's NRL level coaches preaching that the ruck is the centre of the universe. To the novice coach the ruck may not seem as a focal point for the success of their football team. But a team that is constantly beaten on the ground will always be on the back foot.

Daniel Anderson has previously spoken in RLCM about the attitude a player needs when entering the ruck to ensure success. Players must see the ruck as a contest that must be won. They must enter the ruck looking to win. But how do we coach the player to win the ruck?

There are two ways a coach can help his team win the ruck- Technical and Tactical. Firstly lets look how a coach can give the player the physical skills to win the ruck.

TECHNICAL

Coaching the attacking player in a dominant position.

When attacking the sole job of the ball carrier is to hit the ground in a strong position preferably with the ball close to the chest and resting on his elbows and knees. The elbows and knees need to be wide enough so as to provide a good base of support and prevent him from being turned in the tackle. From this position the outside leg can be brought forward to a standing position in a single movement therefore speeding the

rate at which the ball is played. If the defender is attached to the legs of the attacker have them bring their upper torso and body back towards their ankles before playing the ball. If the defender is attached to the attackers upper torso then the attacker should tuck drag his legs up under his torso to help him regain his feet quickly. This is ideal situation, of the attacker on elbows and knees, is not always possible.

Coaching the attacking player who has been turtled

Sometimes the defender will win and the attacker will end up on their back. A quick recovery from this point is vital to ensure that the play the ball is quick enough to still put the defence under pressure.

Coach the 'turtled' player to bring the knee closest to the ball up to his chest, roll towards the ball and using the outside leg stand up in one motion and play the ball with the other leg. In all play the balls the minimum amount of movements will create a quicker play the ball.

A key point for recovery from a 'turtled' position is to coach your players to remain tight so that their arms and legs are not spread. If the tackled player fights the tackle rigorously and in doing so spreads out he provide the defender with more opportunity to pin him to the ground. Coach your players to stay tight and roll rather than fight.

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Coaching the defender to slow the speed of the play the ball.

There are many ways a defender can slow the play the ball and some of these techniques have been getting a large amount of press due to the success of the Sydney Roosters ‘gang tackling’ and ‘pile and peel’. Again the defender must enter the collision with the attacker with the attitude of winning and dominating the advantage line ie the defender must look to be the player moving forward at the point of contact so as to take advantage of the dominant tackle rule. The best possible result for a defending coach is to have 2 or more of his players in the tackle with the attacking player on his back at the point of contact with the ground. To ensure the attacking player is ‘turtled’ the defender must look to keep the movement in the tackle going and aim to get hold of the attackers far leg or far arm. By grabbing the attacking players far leg or arm and pulling them towards the defender the attacker loses their base of support provided by the attacker’s knees/elbows and can be easily turned.

A defender can more easily achieve this goal by turning the player whilst still standing. The defender making initial contact to halt the runner’s progress then attacking the edge (shoulders/arms) of the attacker to turn them in the air.

TACTICAL

Coaching the team to win the ruck in attack

Movement around the ruck and variation in ruck plays is the best way to win the ruck in attack. This is due to the fact that good movement and variation around the ruck will cause the defenders to make more tackles

off balance. When a defender is off balance the height of their target area is lower giving the ascendancy to the attacking player and allowing him to fall in a strong position. Good off the ball running also makes it more difficult for defending teams to commit more players to the tackle.

Secondly encouraging second phase use of the ball will provide your team with a chance to attack a defence that is retreating and not able to stack the attacking player with defenders.

Coaching the team to win the ruck in defence

A coach can prepare his team well to win the ruck in defence especially using the new dominant tackle rule to his advantage. Tactically using more players in the tackle will more often than not cause the tackled player to move backwards at the point of attack and therefore give the defenders longer to regain their feet. Also by placing more players in the tackle and slowly peeling (pile and peel/stack release) of one at a time ruck speed can be slowed.

Another tactic that is effectively used by the Sydney Roosters is to have two defenders dance with the attacker effectively keeping them off the ground and walking them back. Therefore the tackle is not completed and although the attacker is contained and the defending team can retreat the 10 metres. This is more effective when a larger defender is tackling a smaller player.

Finally with all the techniques and tactics used by coaches and players today the ruck contest in the end still goes back to which player has a more determined attitude when contesting the ruck. The player who enters the ruck with the correct attitude will win more rucks than they lose.

Notes

7.

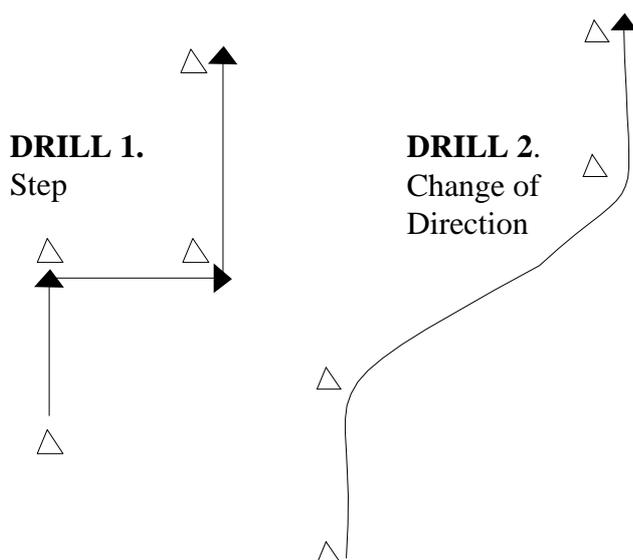
Drawing The Line.

By Chris Fullarton

On being approached to do an article on drills for running good lines and angles, I realised many of the drills I use are quite basic and have probably been seen and covered previously.

However, applying and correcting the drills in a modified game and into a match with the desired results, requires a lot of coaching.

Footwork



Work off both feet, both ways.

The emphasis is on running straight to a step or angle and then straightening again.

It is important that the ball carrier positions themselves in the gap and goes to the defence line square, in preparation for elbows and knees, if tackled. The support player does the same. Side on running gives the advantage to the defence to dominate the tackle.

Good footwork, balance, acceleration and agility are required to develop the side step, change of direction, change of pace, swerve and the in and away in these simple drills.

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The footwork drills, when applied, form the basis of unders, overs, crosses or drop offs. These plays have been well covered previously in RLCM and are the basis of any attack plan.

Passing

A pet hate of many coaches is seeing players throwing spiral bullet passes that are too hard to catch. It is the passer's responsibility to give the receiver every opportunity to catch the ball and promote ball security. The orthodox pass should be insisted upon. The spiral pass is an option and skill that is too often overplayed.

Coaches are probably aware of the coaching points in passing but I shall emphasise a few often overlooked.

We want the ball to travel through the air standing up. The ball should not spin or tumble.

Players often say that they can't pass that far without spiralling. Ensure the correct grip on the ball. Index fingers along the seams, thumbs on top. The ball must point to the ground on release. Flicking the wrists puts power into the pass. This pass, weighted properly, is a necessity when passing in tight condensed defence lines.

To promote this pass, straight running, footwork and shape of the attack line is needed. For modified games, narrow the grid to reduce the space available.



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Running Lines

Run to the gap - pass to the gap, an 'oldie but a goodie' still applies, but let's touch it up a bit.

It is no secret that good ball playing comes on the back of a good go forward and quick play the ball.

Good support play is needed also. By players supporting or pushing up either side of the ball carrier, it gives him options and keeps the defence honest.

The ball carrier and support players (decoys and optional receivers) run lines to open the gaps. Gaps may not be wide openings. They may merely be that a defensive player has been turned in or out. He hasn't stayed square so he can react effectively.

Most defensive lines now are up and react in or out, dependant on any number of attacking situations. Good footwork makes the defence react to a play, then changing the running line from outside to inside shoulder, or vice versa, to create a hole or off balance the defender.

Forward drives necessitate straight running on unders lines, usually working the markers and A and B defenders. Ruck plays also include support and options on the offside crosses switches etc.

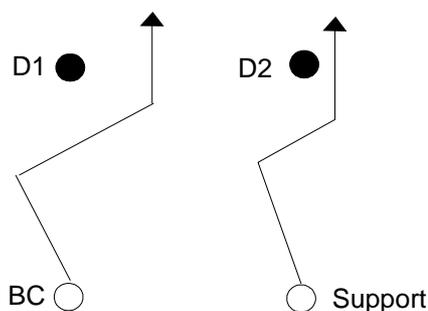
Remember the ball carrier must be square on (footwork) at the defensive line to have any chance of wining the play the ball and promote GO FORWARD.

Unders lines are a good option against the defensive line which slides outward.

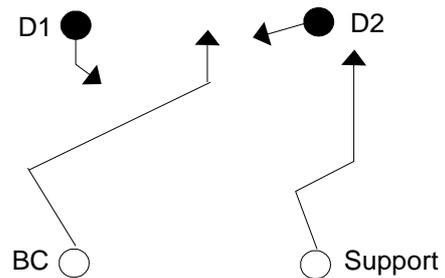
In the overs line the ball carrier runs at the inside shoulder to hold the defender before angling outward (drill 2.)

A few options that can arise include

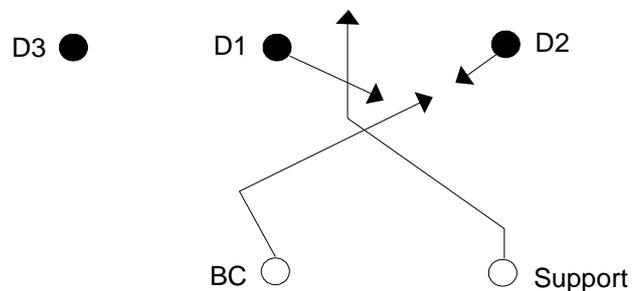
Drill 1. The ball carrier (BC) runs himself to the outside shoulder of D1 who has been wrong footed.



Drill 2. Overs to Support
D2 has jammed in



Drill 3. Cross to Support
D1 attracted to Ball Carrier, D3 has not closed off underneath



Overs lines can be effective on up and in defence.

A quick ball carrier on an overs line can make numbers on a compressed defence but his options support players, inside and out, must be running straight.

Modified games with both active attack and defence are the best scenario for learning and developing these skills and promoting game sense.

They don't need to be too fancy or full of rules away from the normal ones of Rugby League.

However, too often drills and games are not corrected.

They require a tremendous amount of analysis, teaching, correcting and questioning of players' decision making.

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8.

An Approach to Defensive Preparation

By Ray Unsworth

Director of Coach Education, The Rugby Football League

The great game of Rugby League flatters itself with its simplicity; there are really only two major situations that exist.

- **Either you have got possession of the football or you've not**

Having said that your ability to play and compete when not in possession of the football will undoubtedly have a huge bearing on the outcome of the result in any game.

And to reference the Bulls coach Brian Noble, defence is fast becoming

- **The ultimate team activity**

And I concur with his opinion that it;

- **Takes a far more athletic individual to play good defence than good offence**

Students of the game will tell you that most of the tackle misses in the major competitions are not by lack of effort or determination but rather through a deficiency of sound technique.

So where do we begin our defensive preparation?

- **Defence is a teams responsibility, tackling is an individuals responsibility**

Is a quote attributed to Frank Endicott [RLCM 18]

And reading between the lines what's actually being said is;

- **If you cant tackle then you're going to struggle to defend**

So I think it's pretty obvious where the start point to any defensive preparation begins; in that of "individual tackling technique"

But the outcome overhaul and your philosophy in the first instance should be to prepare a defence that;

- **Fulfil your goals and aspirations as a coach**

But more importantly in doing so;

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- **Takes into consideration the abilities of the team**

To create a defence;

- **Individually and collectively, that can adapt to each situation In every conceivable scenario,**

Whether player on player - in and around the ruck area - on the fringe or at the edge.

And if we are agreed that the core of any defence lies in each individual's ability to possess sound tackle techniques, then tackling can be broken into three distinct areas

- **Approach**
- **Contact and**
- **Finish**

Approach – good go forward movement, position the ball carrier, read the situation, and select the appropriate tackle

Contact – impact, shoulder into target area, grip and handle.

Finish – on top of the ball carrier, work the floor, regaining your feet first, alive and ready for the next phase of play.

I read recently in one of the trade magazines, it may well have been this publication a quote;

“The ruck is the centre of the universe in “

The inference being I assume that if you win the floor then you'll win the game. And in my menu of approach, contact and finish I have indicated just that.

But within the macro cycle that is approach contact and finish, there is a micro cycle that consists of; [Reference Bayliss article RLCM 4]

- **Balance**
- **Good footwork and**
- **Timing**

For the reality is, the floor is not won on the floor, but during the last 15/ 20 centimetres prior to contact.

Good balance is essential to counteract the various lines and angles of run and the late movements from one shoulder to the other adopted by the ball carrier.

And should you ally that to the use of **good footwork**, which in itself is an essential component of the approach and contact phases of the tackle [shorter steps and correct positioning of your feet upon impact] and if you are to get the desired result, then it is all about timing.

Timing will help you generate and maximise power into the collision during the contact and finish phases of the tackle.

Allying sound technique with the ability to put your opponent at a disadvantage and subsequently “win the floor” is a major theme that should run throughout your defensive preparation, because the reality is;

· **Winning the floor is effective tackling**

I don't propose to go into detail on all aspects of considerations for defensive preparations [it's an article, not a book!] however suffice to say your considerations as coach are many fold.

Listed below are a series of rhetorical questions, which should lead to the identification of considerations and areas of work when formulating your defensive strategy.

- How do you line up defensively?
- Who goes where and why?
- How do we go forward – How do we retreat?
- What is the width of your line relative to the different areas of the field?
- How do you defend when you have got the opposition in their 20?
- How different is that to defending your own 20?
- How do you defend the middle 60% of the field?
- What marker system do you employ?
- Is it just the one system, or are there changes as you move through the field of play?
- Do you use adjustable defenders, in and out

of the line, some of the time, all of the time or a bit of both? Or alternatively do you adopt a pendulum system using a combination of the wings and the full back to negate through the line options?

- What defensive pattern movements do you operate? Up and in, up and out , a bit of both, up and hold, man on man, shortened line or are your players capable of playing combinations to cater for what's in front of them?
- How much work is done on communication, nomination and having the ability to equate numbers?
- How do we defend scrums?
- How do we defend restarts of play?
- What about kick defence?
- Do we practice closing gaps for grubbers, behind the line work for chip kicks, escorting duties and protection for bombs?
- What's the strategy for negating 40/20s
- How do we stop the opposition when they are on the front foot?
- Do we ever practice scrambling?
- And what about the psychology of it all, how do you create intimidation and smart aggression?

The list is not exhaustive; it's just my attempt to outline some of the many considerations you have as a coach when preparing your defensive strategies.

Based on this approach to defensive preparation would our defensive cycle from tackle to tackle look something like this?

- Go forward
- Communicate **Approach**
- Nominate
- Impact
- Technique **Contact**
- Floor work
- Unload the tackle
- Read and react – go where needed **Finish**
- Recovery
- Go forward - again



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9. Taking the Plunge - Becoming A Full Time Coach.

By Wayne Goldsmith

“The best way to develop a healthy dislike for football is to try and make a living from coaching it” (US Football Coach)

The desire to coach full time is for many coaches a dream. Coaches live for their sport. They talk about it. They think about it constantly. They dream about winning premierships. To be able to coach full time - that is the Coaching “Holy Grail”.

Coaches who are trying to manage a full time career outside sport, balance family commitments, take care of their personal health and wellbeing AND coach to the best of their ability often lament:

“If only I had the time.....”

“If only I didn’t have to work to pay the bills and could just coach, then I could do a great job”.

“If this (coaching) was all I had to do, the team would be invincible”.

For many part time coaches (and I use the term respectfully because “part time” coaching usually means full time commitment), the opportunity to coach full time is something that seemingly would solve all coaching problems. To make a living pursuing the passion – to be able to concentrate on developing the perfect program rather than having to earn a living in an office or factory – many believe, is the ultimate in coaching.

But is full time coaching the “Holy Grail” that it appears to be?

With an increased coaching commitment comes increased expectations, increased pressures, and increased demands. The standards of coaching and athlete service expected of a professional coach may be significantly higher than those expected of a part time coach. The politics that are part of every sport

may be more difficult in professional sports as the stakes are higher and financial issues are involved.

“We have come to the realisation that the only way to get the results we are after is to provide our coaches with an environment to do nothing but coach. If our coaches spend too much time on other (non-coaching) activities we believe (and experience over 40 years supports) that it impacts negatively on their ability to coach effectively”. **Forbes Carlile**, Head of the Carlile Swimming Organisation, Coach of Shane Gould and legendary Australian Coaching identity (Interviewed 29/1/00).

Few coaches are fortunate to be able to coach without the added burden and responsibility for other (non coaching) duties. Even the most high profile coaches spend a great deal of time in public relations, media commitments, board meetings, administration, sponsor commitments etc.

Many full time coaches at state level double as coaching co-ordinators, development officers and coach educators and spend more time on administration than player development – more time with paperwork than periodisation – more time on the telephone than on technique.

Some coaches, in sports like swimming, martial arts, tennis, and gymnastics work with junior level athletes and school programs during the day, run the training venue as a business, clean, double as receptionist and telephonist, maintenance supervisor, gardener, lifeguard and **then** coach early in the morning and late at night.



There are however, two ideal full time coaching situations:

1. To have the financial independence and security from “non coaching income” to allow you to coach the way you want, ie without compromise and without significant diversions.
2. Be sufficiently paid at your coaching job and have the support staff to allow you to coach without compromises to other (non-coaching) duties (administration, education, public relations).

In reality, these coaching positions rarely, if ever, exist.

The challenge is often the balance between the opportunity to produce great athletes with the opportunity to make money. In a perfect world, they would be the same thing. Unfortunately they often represent a direct conflict.

Players need the total commitment and dedication of their coach to achieve an optimum result. Yet, if the coach gives 100% to his players and the coaching position pays well less than the minimum wage, the coach is forced to seek alternate avenues for income. As a result, the coach can no longer give the players 100% and team performances will reflect this. Without premiership victories it is unlikely the coach’s career will progress to higher paying positions. *It is a vicious circle.*

If you have a desire to coach full time and make a living from coaching here are a few suggestions –

1. Plan the move to full time coaching three to five years in advance. In this way you can methodically and systematically work towards full time coaching with a degree of financial security. Walking out of a well paid full time job and hoping to fall into a successful coaching position that is just as well paid may be folly. You can get lucky, but chances are you will have to make your own luck.
2. Keep accurate records of the time and resources you allocate to the generation of coaching income. It may cost more than you realise to generate a reasonable income from full time coaching.
3. Understand exactly what expenses you can expect to pay as a professional coach. Some organisations who have given you free venue access or lent equipment in the past, may not be as generous when they realise you are no longer coaching for the sheer enjoyment. Additional insurance cover, an office, equipment, telephone, travel costs, training venue hire etc: factor these costs into your fee structure.

4. If you have been a part time coach, you have more than likely been in the habit of doing a lot of extra things for nothing. A few extra sessions here and there, paying for your own travel to watch games and so on. As a professional – **DO NOT CONTINUE THIS PRACTICE**. The ethic of amateurism in sport does not exist in this century. Sports historians tell us it perhaps never existed. If players are demanding your time and expertise – charge them appropriately. Players will spend money on equipment, special foods, the latest boots, the best of everything and then, if you allow it, accept your expertise free of charge.

This change in mind set may be difficult for some coaches to embrace and yet their economic survival will depend on being able to effectively value their time and charge accordingly. The toughest people to convince that they should pay you coaching fees are those who you have not charged in the past. Be prepared for some heartbreak in this regard. It is likely that some of your athletes may chose to look for “part time” coaching rather than pay for your professional expertise.

5. Learn to ask the question “How much is my time worth”. All professionals in any field of endeavour must know how to value their time.

6. Prioritise. Put first things first. As a professional coach, learn to ask three questions when allocating time and resources:

- Will this benefit my players?
- Will I make or lose money from this activity?
- Is this activity likely to benefit my players or make me money in the future?

Also, Learn to Say “**No**”. Your coaching skills and communication abilities often make you in demand as a public speaker, presenter, educator, public relations representative and so on. Whilst these are all excellent endeavours and might **possibly** return good things to you in the future, they often take you away from your key focus – Achieving performance results and making money.

7. Spend some time with full time professional coaches in several sports and talk to them about the practicalities of full time coaching.

8. If you are working with players who are likely to be earning substantial sums of money from their sporting careers, seek legal opinion and consider entering into a contract arrangement with them. Standard percentage fees for professional sports management companies can run as high as 25%. If your players are earning five figure sums, and your

expertise is in part responsible for their success, why should you be accepting \$20.00 per week coaching fees?

9. As with all plans, have a backup plan. If the move to full time permanent coaching does not work out, do you have the skills and qualifications to return to your usual or another occupation?

10. If you are lucky enough to obtain a coaching position with a guaranteed income (salary) have a legal specialist in contracts look over your contract **before** you sign it. The contract should detail the conditions of employment. Some questions to ask:

- Does the contract cover coaching insurance, professional indemnity, public liability, sickness and accident insurance, life cover, health cover?
- When and how is the contract reviewed and renewed?
- What are your **specific** coaching duties and obligations?
- How is your performance to be assessed and measured?
- Who do you report to? An Executive Director? A Board?
- What are responsibilities for assistant coaches, junior staff, “non coaching” duties?
- When and how do you get paid?
- Is Superannuation included? Who is the Superannuation with? Can you increase your superannuation contribution?
- Do you have an expense account? If you are travelling, how are your expenses paid? Do you pay your own expenses and then claim later (not recommended)? Does the organisation pay for everything in advance?

These issues should be clearly and precisely written in your contract and should be reviewed by your legal representative **before you sign it.**

11. Consult a qualified accountant and solicitor prior to taking the plunge into full time coaching to get advice on financial and legal matters. Specifically seek accurate and current information on:

- Taxation
- Insurance requirements
- Keeping adequate financial records (including cash expenses, bank statements, debtors and creditors)
- Maintaining adequate records has become even more important with the introduction of the G.S.T. in July 2000.

- The pros and cons of starting your own company (tax advantages / record keeping, set up costs etc)
- Keeping records of motor vehicle use
- Banking
- Superannuation

12. If coaching a senior team, where their current success is your income, develop a “feeder” or junior development program to ensure the ongoing success of your coaching program. You may only be one player retirement or one injury away from unemployment!

13. Develop a support network of trusted personal and professional colleagues. This may include coaches in other sports, business leaders, professionals in sports science / sports medicine or other leaders. There will be many times when you will need the support of people you respect, who you can trust and who will be honest with you when you need honesty.

14. Allow time for the big three – **YOUR HEALTH – YOUR FAMILY – YOUR FRIENDS.** Without doubt the most consistent problems coaches face is from giving more time and greater commitment to other people than to themselves, their own family and their own friends. The key to long term professional coaching success is **BALANCE.** Just as you schedule training sessions for your players, schedule time for your family, your friends and yourself every week. This can be a challenge, but like anything worthwhile in life – worth the effort.

Full time coaching can be, with the right planning, an exciting coaching opportunity. It presents an opportunity to explore the limits of your coaching ability without the compromises that are demanded of part time coaching.

Will society shape the way that professional coaching develops or will the innovative coaches of the future change the way the profession of coaching develops by their actions today? It is up to you.



10.

Duties of the Coaching Co-Ordinator.

Extracted from the ARL Foundation 'Rugby League Club Administration' CD

Note: This information is provided as a guide. Some of the duties may not apply to every club. The list of suggested duties should be adjusted to suit individual club requirements.

Coaching Co-ordinator

The responsibilities of the Club Coaching Coordinator include encouraging coaches within the Club to recognise their value and importance in regard to the development of players and other team officials.

The Coaching Coordinator assists with the appointment of coaches to teams and with the on-going training of all Club coaches. The incumbent should have a sound background in coaching and hold a formal coaching accreditation.

Although helpful in some areas, it is not necessary for the Club Coaching Coordinator to have played the game. However the Club Coaching Coordinator should be a good communicator, have leadership skills and be well organised.

Suggested Duties

1. Ensure coaches hold appropriate qualifications as required by State or District.
2. Provide appropriate information to the Club Secretary to ensure records of Club coaches and coaching qualifications are maintained.
3. Develop an understanding of the role of Sports Science in coaching.
4. Ensure the enjoyment of activities for both coaches and players.
5. Arrange appropriate training, training locations, days and times.
6. Foster Club spirit amongst all players and encourage them to participate in a sporting manner.
7. Set high but realistic goals for the players so that they are always working towards achieving something.
8. Enhance feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem within players and coaches through the enjoyment of Rugby League.
9. Ensure that the players and coaches perceive that they are in control of their own performance.
10. Encourage maximum participation in all areas.
11. Liaise with other committee members regularly.
12. Have a sound understanding of the State, District or Junior League Rules and Regulations.
13. Have a good working knowledge of the Club Constitution and Rules.
14. Be aware of the future directions and plans of the Club.
15. Ensure the Club's and State, District or Junior League Codes of Conduct are respected and supported by all coaches, players and team support officials.
16. Keep the committee informed of all relevant matters.
17. Develop a close liaison with the District Coaching Coordinator and work together on the development of coaches within the District or Junior League.
18. Encourage Club coaches to undergo formal training to achieve and retain the necessary updates for on-going accreditation.

11.

Motivation At The Top Level.

With Pat O'Keefe

When one speaks to Pat O'Keefe on the subject of motivation, it is easy to see that not only is he knowledgeable about the subject but widely read and very, very keen about it as well. And the proof is in the product.

O'Keefe has coached individuals like kayaker Grant Davies to a controversial Gold/Silver medal at the Seoul Olympics and Australian Champion Iron Woman, the recently retired Karla Gilbert, to her many triumphs in the surf. He has now been appointed as full-time Coaching Director at the strong Northcliffe Surf Club on the Gold Coast.

The man can certainly get the best out of his competitors so RLCM sought his opinion. His thoughts apply to all sports people who wish to achieve at the highest level.

Pat, like other top coaches, believes motivation results from very basic concepts. "I think motivation comes from a good preparation," he said. "Your motivation and your confidence come from the fact that you know what you have done before you get to the event - that your preparation has been done properly. It is more important than any other skill."

He went on to say that other skills had to be learnt but that they then had to be applied in vigorous practice and preparation. He stated that if you wanted to run fast, you had to practise running fast. You couldn't just go for a long jog every day. The same applied to a swimmer or a footballer.

He said that the hard preparation then came through in the field of battle when the early arousal period had waned and the pain barrier was looming.

"You have to have visited there a lot of times in training so that your body will know it has been there before. It is used to going there," he advocated. "You have to have visited there. If you haven't visited there, you won't go there."

Pat went on to say that something the great runner Herb Elliott said was very pertinent to all sports. "If you are running behind someone, as soon as the 'little bloke' taps you on the shoulder, that is the time you have to move. You have to go then. You can't let him get on top of you for one second," he quoted.

"It's the same with all sport," he said. "When you hurt, you have to step up another level then, not give way to the tap on the shoulder."

OK, RLCM agreed, but that is very hard to do.

"Winners aren't normal," Pat said. "Normal people can't win. You can't be normal."

He explained that this was where self-discipline came in, stating that it was the athlete's self-discipline, not his discipline that made the difference. Things like not eating that junk food or not sleeping in that one morning. "There is an old saying," he said. "Winners can get up when others can't."

To back up his point, Pat talked of Grant and Karla. He stated that both their careers were built totally around discipline in that they always did their homework whether it was exercise or diet. He also stated that it was not just the things that he relied on them to do, it was what he called the 'as well as' things.

He explained this term by saying that it was things like Grant doing 500 chin-ups every night before bed or Karla going to Pilates when her back was sore. These were 'as well as' their set training schedule. He explained that some other athletes would let such things become 'instead of' and this is where problems started.

The self-discipline was even extended into the sponsorship area for an elite athlete like Karla. "She would never let those things come before her training even though that glamour side of it is very attractive.

She wouldn't let them talk her into going South the day before a promotion. She would catch an early flight on the day, and we would train on the beach at Bilinga before she went," he said. "They wanted her job to be looking after them but she knew her job was the other one. There would be no sponsors if there were no results."

He went on, "That takes self-discipline. The distractions can be a trap for young players."

"So," RLCM asked, "what is the coach's job in all of this?"

The reply, "Hard work. I think you can achieve anything in sport if you work really hard at it. You've got to work at it smart, but you've got to work hard and give attention to detail like techniques, drills and that thorough preparation."

Pat obviously knows his football as well. "It's being able to spend time with them," he said. "Obviously, that is why Wayne Bennett has been so successful. Every one of those players knows that they can go to him with any problem. Have you ever heard any of his players 'cook' him as a person? Forget the coach thing. As a person, they have always found him approachable. That's what counts."

The coach was fervent about this aspect and went on. "It is a bond, isn't it?" he said. "A coach, in a way, is a bit of a cuddle. It is me and him, not just me. I think you have to get to that stage where they know they can rely on you and they know that they can talk to you. Nine times out of ten they are telling you - you are not telling them, anyway. They are telling you what they did wrong."

Apart from the obvious training schedules, the coach was there to help set goals. "I think you've got to set several little goals that they can achieve along the way - achievable goals. You've got your ultimate goal but you need small goals as well," he said.

Also, particularly in his field, training could become boring so it was the coach's job to monitor that. He said that there are things that have to be done, but now and again, a little tweaking was necessary to change their mind-set slightly, to add variety and to refresh.

So how was Pat going to adapt his skills from that small, elite group he had in the past, to the large group at Northcliffe?

He didn't see it as a problem. Having played team sports himself, he said that he knew what the team effort meant. "Northcliffe is already a great surf club with a great culture," he said. "We just have to take that a bit further. I have the more experienced athletes stepping up a level or two and the younger ones are seeing this and aspiring to that level also. The work ethic is being lifted. I'm convincing them that the hardest part about training is getting there. Once you get there and do things, you feel good about yourself."

So there is a small part of Pat O'Keefe's thoughts on motivation. Not a lot about the mental aspect or the coach constantly telling his charge what to do but a great deal about self-discipline, going the extra mile and preparation. Where have we heard that word before?

And his final word on preparation to underscore his thoughts

"Remember," he said, "the bigger the base, the higher the peak!"

Notes

12.

Laws of the Game.

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

Penalty Kicks / Free Kicks

Q1. Red is awarded a penalty and elect to kick for touch. The ball crosses the touch in-goal line.

- A1. a 20 metre optional restart by Blue.
b 20 metre drop out by Blue.

Q2. Red is awarded a penalty and elect to kick for goal. The attempt is unsuccessful and the ball is caught on the full by Blue in the Blue in-goal.

- A2. a Play on.
b 20 metre drop out by Blue.

Q3. Red is awarded a penalty 3 metres out from the Blue goal line. Red decide to take a tap but take the ball back to the Blue 20 metre line. Where must the Blue defence stay.

- A3. a 10 metres from the 20 metre line.
b On the goal line.

Q4. Blue take the free kick and punt kick the ball directly. The ball is caught by Red on the full in the Red in-goal.

- A4. a 20 metre optional restart by Red.
b Play on.

Q5. Red is awarded a penalty and elect to kick for goal. The attempt is unsuccessful. The Blue fullback catches the ball and then puts a foot on the dead ball line.

- A.5 a Goal line drop out by Blue.
b 20 metre optional restart by Blue.

Tackle Count

Q6. Red knocks on. Blue regathers the ball runs and passes to another inside Blue player who is tackled by Red.

- A6. a Play the ball by Blue, tackle 1.
b Play the ball by Blue, zero tackle.

Q7. On fifth and last, Blue is held up in the Red in-goal.

- A7. a Handover to Red 10 metres out from the goal line zero tackle.
b Scrum 10 metres out from the goal line. Loose head and put into Blue.

Q8. Red kicks the ball on tackle 5 which is charged down by Blue. Red regathers and is tackled.

- A8. a Play the ball by Red, tackle 1.
b Hand over to Blue, zero tackle.



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14.

Players Questions - Coaches Answers

The Wigan Junior Academy

QUESTION 1.

What are the key skills that a hooker should have?

Coach replies: The hooker requires many skills in modern day Rugby League. In attack the ability to pass from dummy half is essential and should be practiced often. In addition good decision making skills and communication skills need to be developed in order to play the position well. In defence sound tackling technique is equally important, as most of the hookers defensive duties will be around the ruck area. Finally, it should never be forgotten that the hooker should also have the ability to win the ball in the scrum, this to is a skill that needs practicing.

QUESTION 2.

How can I practice passing from dummy half?

Coach replies: You can practice your dummy half pass on your own by passing from the group to a target on a wall or with a partner on the move. Whichever way you decide to pass always work on both hands with an emphasis on your none dominant side.

QUESTION 3.

How do the markers tell each other which side of the play the ball they will move to?

Coach replies: It largely depends on the marking system being used. At the top level most teams play step left and right. With this system the front marker points in the direction he is stepping and the second marker steps the other way. Both then tying in with the defender either side of the ruck.

QUESTION 4.

What is the best way to deal with the high ball?

Coach replies: The first thing you need to do is get into position early. Keep your eyes on the ball at all times. Call for the ball to allow your team to know

you are catching it. Next you need to reach up for the ball and as you catch it bring it in towards your body. Once under control turn your shoulders to protect yourself from the oncoming opposition.

QUESTION 5.

I'm constantly being penalised for holding players down too long- are there any tips you can give to avoid this?

Coach replies: From what you are describing it sounds to me like you are trying to control the speed of the play the ball to allow your teams line to get set. The best way to do this is by being dominant in the tackle. This is the only way you will not get penalised. It is therefore important to develop your tackling technique.

QUESTION 6.

Are there any drills that I can practice outside of usual group training?

Coach replies: There are many skills can and should be practiced away from your usual club training. For example all the games top kickers practice for hours away from club sessions, and not just goalkicking, bombs and grubbers are worked at as well.

QUESTION 7.

What makes a good second row?

Coach replies: A second row in the modern game needs many qualities. Good speed, strength, power and endurance. Good footwork, sound tackling technique, excellent passing and handling skills and good decision making ability. Add to this the need to be mentally strong and you would have a great second row.

QUESTION 8.

If you've got the ball with one defender to beat and one man in support, what's the best way of breaking the line? Which side of the defender should you run at etc.?

Coach replies: I would suggest you try one of the following: In a 2 v 1 situation like this you should remember the following. Run towards the defender at pace, attract the defender and swerve (arc) your run taking him away from your support. Pass just before the defender - not too soon, not too late. Give a quality pass and stay alive to support the ball carrier.

QUESTION 9.

What's the best meal before a match?

Coach replies: I would suggest you try one of the following: - Brown rice or noodles with a low fat sauce
- Pasta with a tomato based low fat sauce
- Pancakes with jam, honey or syrup
- Jacket potato with beans and low fat cheese

QUESTION 10.

How can I improve my pace?

Coach replies: In order to improve or maintain your pace, you'll need to look at a number of training methods. Your running technique will need working at, along with power training and SAQ training. SAQ stands for speed agility quickness training which takes in things like explosive movements like jumping and resistance work. However you will need to work closely with your coach or conditioner and integrate speed work with other aspects of your training programme.

QUESTION 11.

I play prop and I have speed and power. Should I run into gaps or run at defenders?

Coach replies: You've just described two of the main roles of the modern prop. Both moves are correct - it all depends entirely on your situation. If you are defending deep inside your own half, your team will want you to make ground to take the pressure off. Running at defenders is a good way of doing that. You can play the ball to safety if you get tackled, or you can keep on running and look to offload if you break the tackles. If you are in a good attacking situation, try and hit the gaps between the defences. Again, if you are tackled, you can either play the ball or look to offload to a nearby team-mate.

If you've got power and speed, you're half way there already!

QUESTION 12.

I've noticed when I'm marker at a play the ball, I keep missing the runners who catch the dummy-half's pass. Can you give me any tips on how to stop them?

Coach replies: This is quite an important job for the marker. Often the first receiver from the dummy-half is the player who makes the breaks which can often lead to tries. So it is the job of the marker to try to tackle or at least hold up the player on the charge.

Two markers are allowed to stand inside the 10m offside line, but they cannot interfere with the play the ball until the ball is out. As soon as the ball is in the hands of the dummy-half, step out of the line. Watch where the runner is going and try to block them before they gain ground. Even if you cannot bring them down for a tackle, you should be able to delay their run enough to get the rest of your team ready for defence after running back 10m.

QUESTION 13.

How does the offside rule work?

Coach replies: There are several ways of being deemed offside. For example, offside at a kick. All players in front of the kicker (attacking side) are deemed to be offside. They are played onside if the kicker, having kicked the ball, runs in front of them thus playing them onside. Or, if the player who retrieves the ball (defending side) runs 10m in any direction.

QUESTION 14.

What is the advantage line?

Coach replies: The advantage line is an imaginary line from where the ball is played - stretching horizontally across the field. The attacking side try to progress beyond the line, using it as a marker to measure how far they have progressed with each attack. There is no penalty for not making it beyond the advantage line, but failing to do so means you are going backwards!



15.

League Coach Forum.

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

QUESTION 1

From: G. Sandford

In the pre-season we were lucky enough to attract a very talented half back who had played most of his senior football in 1st Div.

This kid is leaps and bounds ahead of the skill level of our Under 19's 2nd Division team. The problem I am having is - all but one of my forwards are complaining about being snapped and refusing to run off this player.

The one player not complaining has the ability to hit a gap and is making big yardage. My observation is that my forwards are waiting for the ball and then trying to bust the line. My half is holding up the ball waiting for the forward to hit the gap, hence, too late, snap! He has never played with forwards who can't hit a gap. We have done many drills trying to explain the principle of unders and overs with no success. I have studied DigiLeague and tried lots of three on two drills etc... I am looking for any suggestions on how to teach my forwards how to hit the gap.

ANSWER 1

From: M.Ryan

Hitting a gap is not a difficult concept, so I would be questioning the courage of the forwards in question. In their defence though, no one wants to run off the 1/2 all the time and some can be just as effective by being a yardage man and just hitting the advantage-line off the dummy half.

ANSWER 2

From: D. Reeds

Another possible reason for the forwards being stationary is a lack of fitness. The effort in making a good dummy run compared to a ball receiving run has to be close to 90% to really sell the defence that you're getting the ball.

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The stats sheet might say that your guys are totaling 40+ tackles or hitups but if you don't record dummy runs as well you're missing a lot of effort which some of these guys might be putting in.

The difference between "lazy" taking the ball from a stand or just conserving energy isn't much and you'd know your guys best.

Perhaps something to try is to work them in groups during a game. Two pairs of forwards, on alternate sets of six - one pair work from acting half while the opposite pair work off the half. It'll give each guy a little recovery time, shares the work load and will show up who's just having a lazy afternoon.

If you have a few assistants around who can accurately record every hitup, tackle, dummy run, run off the half, then you might build a good picture of who is being lazy and when and who just needed a rest.

QUESTION 2

From: Lyn

One of our under 13's is concerned with his lack of explosive speed. He was very quick as a youngster but now that he is 5' 7" and 70 kg at 12 (it's not that big for a 12 year old, I know), he has slowed down over the first two metres or so and is having difficulties getting off the mark. He is not over weight and his muscle mass on his thighs and calves would do most 17 year olds proud. Is there anyone out there who could suggest some exercises he could do over the off season to build up his speed and power off the mark as it has been playing on his mind for sometime?

I have some understanding of fast twitching and slow twitching muscles. I am assuming that because he was quick as a younger player (Under 8's and 9's) that he probably has fast twitching muscles that need to be retrained. I may be right off the mark here and would be interested in hearing from anyone with any guidance.

ANSWER 1

From: Kerry

CAUTION - CAUTION - CAUTION

The problem here is that a large percentage of junior coaches have little or no knowledge of physiological, anatomical and growth and development issues associated with the 10 - 16 age group.

In this age range young athletes go through a huge and rapid growth phase. Growth spurts start at the extremities and progress towards the abdomen. Feet and hands are the first to take off followed by the long bones of the limbs in linear order. During this phase young athletes can experience considerable changes in physical function and capability.

Co-ordination, strength and speed all suffer as a result of rapid growth. This is NORMAL.

Strength, speed and co-ordination suffer because the speed at which the long bones grow outstrips the growth of connective tissue and muscle. Skeletal growth finishes around age 16. However, bone density and strength do not finish until about 20 in some cases.

Muscle and connective tissue lag behind bone growth which puts added pressure on muscles. A loss or deteriorating flexibility is also a side effect of this growth.

Bones grow from the ends which is where the majority of connective tissue and tendons attach. This bone growth area is more like cartilage than bone and is vulnerable to overuse and excessive force such as anaerobic (strength) training.

Because this age group has immature skeletons, damage can be done to tendon connection points when inappropriate training techniques are employed. Damage can be temporary and rectified with rest or in a worst case scenario damage can be (semi) permanent which could prematurely end a promising young player's career.

A common condition among this age group is one called "Osgood-Schlatter's Disease". This is a condition where the bony protrusion below the knee (called the tibial tuberosity) becomes inflamed. The patella tendon inserts here and through overuse can tug away at the bone causing inflammation. New bone grows back causing a bony lump. It mainly affects boys aged 10 to 16 years.

Follow this link for more information.

<http://www.sportsinjuryclinic.net/cybertherapist/front/knee/osgood.ht>

In Lyn's case her young protégé exhibits all the signs of a growth spurt. The option she has chosen and the advice she received are probably the worst that could be given. It's debatable if sled training will have any beneficial result. However, the risk of injury increases substantially. Her best option is to look at improving technique and educate her player. He will grow through this phase and eventually recover most, if not all of his previous abilities.

Coaches need to help young players understand the changes they are going through and focus on educating and up-skilling their players in this age group. Strength training should not be part of this age group's sport education unless under the supervision of a suitably qualified trainer experienced in adolescent training issues.

ANSWER 2

From: Lyn the person who asked the initial question.

It seems to me that my best approach is to work on the psychological side of the player as well as addressing his immediate needs regarding over training. I am not actually coaching the team. I am their manager but I do have some influence over the individual needs of each player as I have been involved since the beginning of their rugby league careers.

I will discuss with our coach with regards to the over training of some of the individuals within our team (as this child is not the only one involved in multiple sports) and try and work on a modified plan for them.

I think if we approach this as you have suggested, using exercise recovery principles, then this would be a good start. I also agree that he is overtraining but unfortunately to suggest this to the player and ask him to cut one to two training sessions out would be virtually useless. I have tried this approach and he thinks that he would be seen by his peers as 'copping out'. I think the psychological effect this would cause would be somehow worse.

A possible solution could be to reduce the sessions by one to start with. Perhaps two Union and one League training sessions one week and vice versa the next, if that is agreeable to the coaches.

Firstly, I would have to convince the player that this is the way to go. For that, I will work on the psychology but it will be easier said than done.

Thanks again for your input, Kerry. I guess we will see how we go from here. It would be a shame to see him and the other few in his situation burn out.

B.M.S. (Bio Muscle Stimulation)

Sports Therapy For Rugby League

By Robert Wilesmith (B.S.Sc.), ARL Level III Coach - Ph:(040) 004-4377
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Welcome to the new age of Sports Rehabilitation in Rugby League. The latest technology in Muscle Stimulation is finally here and is available to all Football Clubs, Physiotherapists, Therapists & the general public. **B.M.S. (Bio Muscle Stimulation) Therapy** is a relatively new method of training and rehabilitation that uses a strong stimulus for treating the whole body with mechanical vibration so that the entire organism & especially the neuromuscular and skeletal systems are positively affected. B.M.S. imitates intensive muscle work & exceeds natural muscle training in a shorter time than conventional treatments. It is based on the transmission of mechanical vibrations with certain amplitudes and frequencies on the neuromuscular system. The effect takes place in principle on strained or lengthened musculature. The vibration produced by the devices is converted into a longitudinal vibration of the musculature. The muscular-skeletal system constitutes one complex biological machine essential to human locomotion. To be able to carry out and to realize the many demands placed on it, this system changes structure continuously, & metabolism, answers by forcefully modifying the shape. In English, it "REALLY WORKS", but lets prove it!

A BRIEF HISTORY & SPORTS TRAINING WITH B.M.S.

During 1978-79, in Minsk, Dr. Vladimir Nazarov, the Russian Scientist & Professor, (a leading sports scientist, specialist in bio-mechanics & member of the Soviet gymnastics team) developed a machine for use on Cosmonauts who were experiencing muscle wasting after long periods in space. Since then the machinery has been applied to medicine, professional sports, cosmetics, physiotherapy, body building & now Rugby League, Union, AFL, Basketball & ALL sports. **Vibration-Training** can be used in addition

to the regular power-training, or as a safe alternative to power-training; on the other hand, it can be used as a warming-up, to prepare for power-training or in combination with technique training and/or speed-training. Vibration-training allows the muscles to work very hard without overloading the ligaments, tendons, joints and vertebra. This is not only to the benefit of top athletes, but also for young athletes, who are not able to take on strength training because of growing problems.

The B.M.S. has a positive effect on:

1. Increasing muscle strength and explosive strength
2. Re-education of muscle action, increase of muscular and general endurance
3. Facilitation of muscle contraction in dysfunctional or unused muscle
4. Increase in speed of muscle contraction, local blood supply and provision of massage
5. Relief of pain - Neurotransmitters - As a result of stimulation of the CNS through the mechanoreceptors & lowering concentrations of serotonin & calcium chloride.
6. Reduction of muscle spasm, promotion of relaxation and recuperation.
7. Increase in range of movement (R.O.M.)
8. Reduction of swelling, reduction of musculoskeletal abnormalities.
9. Acute increase in strength and improvement in metabolic efficiency.
10. Nerves- improving the collaboration between Central & Peripheral Nervous Systems

17.

There's No Room For Liquid Amber In Sport

By Gary Slater - Sports Dietician

While an array of factors may contribute to fatigue during exercise, fluid losses, principally from sweating, equivalent to even 2% of body mass can reduce performance(1). In addition, the negative effects on performance increase as the level of dehydration increases. As a result, strategies to minimise dehydration are critical if athletes are to perform at their best.

In this edition of *The Coaches Edge*, Gary Slater, sports dietitian and an Australian Institute of Sport PhD scholar investigates a number of methods currently available to monitor hydration status; including changes in body weight, urinary (colour, specific gravity and osmolality) and blood analysis (osmolality)(2). (A summary of the most valuable tools available to coaches and athletes for monitoring hydration status are presented in [Table 1](#).)

Measurement Tools

Body Mass

A simple measurement of body weight before and after exercise is an excellent tool for monitoring change in hydration status during exercise; where every kilogram of weight loss indicates a one litre fluid deficit. Encouraging regular intake of fluids while exercising to offset sweat losses will limit dehydration, and thus reduce the “weight loss” seen during exercise. However, measuring body weight before and after exercise offers little information on the hydration status of an athlete at the start of a training session or game. Hot weather, a short recovery period between sessions, or poor drinking habits can mean an athlete arrives at training or a game already dehydrated. Practical tools that can measure hydration status throughout a day or between training days are valuable to both coach and athlete.

Variation in body weight from one day to the next largely reflects changes in hydration status. Body

weight measured first thing in the morning, after urination and before breakfast or exercise, is a useful indicator of hydration. When well hydrated body weight is relatively stable, varying by less than 0.5 kg per day. A reduction in weight beyond 0.5 kg from one day to the next likely reflects a reduction in body fluid levels(3).

Some athletes may be sensitive about being weighed. They need to be reassured that their data will be kept confidential and the purpose for regular weigh-ins is to monitor hydration not body fat levels. Body weight is best measured wearing no, or minimal, clothing so always ensure athletes’ privacy by weighing in a suitable room. A quick trip to the toilet to empty the bladder before being weighed is also required.

Hydration Indicators in Blood

The measurement of serum (blood) osmolality, the number of particles dissolved in the blood, is a sensitive measure because it rises and falls with hydration status. However, blood sampling and analysis can be time consuming, costly and involves trained staff. What’s more, blood draws sometime hurt and so aren’t very popular with athletes. As such, an assessment of hydration status via blood is usually restricted to research studies.

Hydration Indicators in Urine

As dehydration develops, urine shows changes in colour, specific gravity (measure of the density of urine compared to water) and osmolality(4). Urinary colour darkens while both specific gravity and osmolality increase as the kidneys work to conserve further fluid losses. With the exception of osmolality, equipment costs for urinary analysis are minimal and the techniques required are easily mastered by medical and/or coaching staff (see [Table 1](#)). However, if urinary parameters are chosen, it’s important to remember that fluid and sodium intake in the 1-2 hours

of recovery after significant dehydration can cause misleading urinary test results. For example, drinking large amounts of fluid without replacing the sodium/electrolytes lost in sweat causes the kidneys to excrete large amounts of dilute urine in an effort to keep blood electrolytes within their normal range(5,6). The practical outcome is that the athlete sees that they are losing large amounts of clear urine with a low specific gravity and osmolality (usually a sign of good hydration), when in fact they are still substantially dehydrated. It can take several hours and the full replacement of sodium before urine results catch up with the total picture. As a result it is best to wait for several hours and a couple of “toilet visits” into recovery, or use the second void of the day after rising before drawing too many conclusions(7).

The Tool of Choice

While serum and/or urine osmolality measurements are considered the method of choice when precision and accuracy are important(8), in the field, the best test is more likely dictated by factors such as location and resources, both financial and manpower. Tools that don't demand expensive or cumbersome equipment, and require little technical expertise are ideal. Such tools can be particularly valuable during tournaments and tours, especially in warm environments when body fluid reserves are likely to be challenged. Combined with measurements of body weight, an assessment of urinary colour or specific gravity offers a non-invasive, low cost and effective method of assessing hydration status that athletes can monitor themselves.

When to Monitor Hydration Status

At the very least, these tools should be used whenever significant changes in training loads or environmental conditions occur, for example when travelling to compete in warmer environments. During these times, the athlete should aim to measure weight changes during some typical training sessions including both skills and conditioning sessions or game simulations. The results will assist in determining individual fluid intake goals during exercise and in recovery. When preparing for an important competition, especially those in hot conditions, a more precise assessment of hydration status via the calculation of urinary osmolality or specific gravity may be justifiable. In these circumstances collection of a urine sample upon waking or soon thereafter, on the day before competition, allows dehydrated athletes enough time to implement effective fluid and sodium recovery strategies to fully restore body fluid reserves.

Recovering from Dehydration

While prevention is the key, some degree of dehydration may be unavoidable during exercise! While effective rehydration strategies after such sessions are critical, focusing on fluid intake throughout each day is equally important. Aim to develop good drinking habits that are flexible depending on daily activities. Look after specific fluid losses during exercise based on the information you gain from weight monitoring exercises. Remember that rehydration also means replacing the electrolytes lost in sweat, with the use of sodium-containing drinks like sports drinks, sodium-rich foods (bread, breakfast cereal, savoury snacks) and salt added to meals. The advice of a sports dietitian can help to organise a specific recovery plan when sweat losses are large and the recovery time is short. A common strategy in all rehydration plans is to make sure that a supply of cool and well-liked beverages are on hand. In addition to supplying a small amount of sodium, chilled sports drinks have the advantage of tasting good, thus encouraging greater fluid intake, faster rates of rehydration and restoration of muscle energy reserves.

Practical Tips For Coaches

- Encourage athletes to self-monitor their hydration status, especially when training/competing in warmer weather or when training loads increase.
- Encourage athletes to drink plenty of fluids like sports drinks throughout a training week. Frequent drink breaks are essential during exercise if dehydration is to be minimised.
- A simple assessment of body weight upon waking each day, or soon thereafter, in conjunction with urine colour, is a practical way to monitor hydration status.

This article has been reviewed by Sports Dietitians Australia (www.sportsdietitians.com).



www.rlcm.com.au

Table 1. Evaluating indicators of hydration status

Parameter	Body Mass	Serum Osmolality	Urinary Colour	Urinary Specific Gravity	Urinary Osmolality
Advantages	Non-invasive, inexpensive, immediate feedback, can be self-monitored	Influenced to a lesser degree by acute food/fluid intake than urinary parameters	Non-invasive, inexpensive, immediate feedback, can be self-monitored	Non-invasive, immediate feedback, can be self-monitored	Non-invasive
Disadvantages	One-off assessment provides no information on true hydration status. Acutely, also influenced by intestinal contents. Longitudinally, influenced by changes in body composition	Invasive, expensive	Influenced by factors unrelated to hydration status e.g. diet, medication, illness(2); influenced by acute fluid/food intake and can give a false reading of good hydration status if large amounts of fluid are consumed quickly by the dehydrated athlete without any attempt to replace electrolyte (sodium) losses.	Influenced by urinary solutes unrelated to hydration status e.g. glucose, protein, urea(Z); influenced by acute fluid/food intake (see previous column)	Influenced by acute fluid/food intake, expensive (see previous column)
Well Hydrated	= 1% change between consecutive days	280-290 mOSM.L ⁻¹	High volume, light coloured	= 1.02	< 500 mOSM.kg ⁻¹
Dehydrated	> 1% change between consecutive days	> 290 mOSM.L ⁻¹	Low volume, dark colour	= 1.03	= 900 mOSM.kg ⁻¹
Cost per sample*	NIL	\$5.50 - \$24.50	NIL	\$2.20 - \$9.70	\$3.70 - \$24.50
Equipment	Professional quality digital scales	Osmometer	Reference chart like the Gatorade Good Hydration Chart	Urinalysis strips and equipment	Osmometer

* Costs vary markedly. The minimum cost accounts for general consumables and assumes ready access to analysis equipment. Higher costs relate to those charged through commercial pathology laboratories. Osmometers retail for ~ \$16,000 (AUD).

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18.

The Injured Player: Emergencies in the Game. (Part 1)

By Doug King RCpN DipNg PGDipSportMed(Otago)

The case where a player is injured on the field is the coaches, players and supporters nightmare. This occurs as an unplanned and unwanted event that nobody wishes to happen to them, or their team-mates.

Considered the basics in sports medicine it is often necessary to go over these topics to reinforce these basics and review our current practices before and when we have to deal with these emergencies. Preparation for the events and the emergencies and assessment of the injured player is vital to ensuring that nothing is left to chance and the player can return to the game in the shortest time possible by enhancing their recovery chances if and when the injury occurs.

Preparation. Planning for an emergency should be undertaken both prior to the season starting, and before the actual game takes place. Everyone with the team has a role and within that role is a responsibility to each other, the team, their team-mates and to the game over all. Such planning needs to encompass all the “what ifs” that can occur and how to react to them.

Injuries within the game can range from a minor sore finger through to life threatening situations and should be planned for irrespective of the possibility. Someone within the team management should ideally have formal training to deal with the possibility of the severe injury and they should assume that role if and when an injury occurs.

Before the season/tour: One of the simplest but most often overlooked components of a disaster plan is the list of emergency phone numbers. For those within New Zealand they may remember that when the television series 911 was viewed many people dialled this number in an emergency and initially were met

with an unconnected phone call. Sometime minutes are vital and these simple mistakes can delay the immediate treatment necessary. This problem has now been addressed and people can still get directed to emergency services if the dial 911 instead of 111. Other countries will need to check their own emergency numbers, as they may well be different to these.

Other areas often overlooked are the emergency plan flow sheet. In doing this the team management should sit down and cover the “what ifs” and identify a simple but effective flowchart of actions to be taken. Not every exact emergency or injury needs to be covered as all of these can be catered for if and when the emergency occurs. Within this flowchart should be identified what medical equipment can be carried with the team and who is responsible for it. Remember to cater for all emergencies within the qualifications and training that the team management have and also identify who is responsible for carrying the equipment and maintaining it.

If the team is travelling overseas, remember to ascertain where the team is travelling to, who is readily available to obtain the local knowledge and what emergency facilities are available near where the team is training or playing.

Before the game: This can be broken up into three distinct areas that may need to be reviewed. These are Personnel, Equipment and Communications.

· Personnel. The person on the Management team who has the sports medicine training should ideally form the core of the medical care. They should have the appropriate training, be up to date with this training

and current in their qualifications. This can range from the team doctor for National, Representative, local or professional teams through to the team medic / trainer who has undergone formal training within this area. These people are invaluable when and if an emergency does occur.

- **Equipment.** This is purely up to the individual who is responsible for the team's medical care. What some people would use at the side line of a game, and in the changing rooms would not be appropriate for others, especially if they are not qualified to use it, nor have they been trained to use it. Remember to practise with the equipment you have to identify any shortfalls you may have, and to identify any limitations you may encounter. For the team medic a basic first aid kit may be enough and they often do and will customize it for their own specific needs.

- **Communications.** In today's environment with the ever developing technology, there is no reason for someone on the sideline not having a mobile phone, or access to one. But this is not all there is to communications. Other communication includes providing the emergency services with information on the player regarding their name, address, allergies and your immediate care. Within the Australian Rugby League, the First Aid Officers have a carbon copied pad with simple details that they can fill in and give the top copy to the emergency services, while keeping a copy for their own records. I have used a "minute" form which basically has the players name, address, next of kin contact details and known allergies on it that I can tear out of a small folder and give to the emergency services. This is extremely useful if the player is unable to verbally communicate with anyone.

Essentially remember the 6 P's of planning - Prior Planning and Preparation Prevents Poor Performance and be prepared to encounter anything within the game and training situation. Pray it never happens but react appropriately when, and if, it does.

Remember the first you know of an emergency is when the player stays down or you get a shout that they are injured and you have officials, coaching staff, players, spectators, distraught partners/parents and a scrambling confusion that you may encounter while you try to perform your job efficiently.

Player Assessment. As a sport medic the basics of ABC and other pneumonic's are drummed into us ad-infinitum and for good reason. Undertaking a systematic approach to the injury enables us to assess the type of injury, the mechanism of the injury and the appropriate course of action to assist in stopping further injury and getting the player back onto the field again.

There is nothing more disheartening than watching a member of the team run to the injured player and you hear "Oh my God... Look at that!" It can have a detrimental effect on the injured player, the crowd at the game and the other team-mates. It is easy to be distracted by the fact that the player has a gross deformity of a fractured limb and be concerned with that but the injury that may have caused the fracture may also have caused airway or other life threatening injuries. It is important to always take the assessment in a concise and methodical manner.

If you get out to the field and they are not talking or yelling then check for the Airway and their Breathing. Often before you get to the injured player you can hear that their airway is clear and that they are breathing just by the noise they are making. Go through your pneumonic **DRABC** (Danger, Response, Airway, Breathing, Circulation).

Initially assess if there is any other Danger to the injured player. I have encountered the game still going on when I was with a player and had to protect them with my own body before the referee stopped the game and allowed the rest of the assessment to carry on.

Response enables you to know whether they are conscious or not. If they are unconscious check for their ABC's but remember to treat them as a possible high neck injury and treat as such. If they are responding then also assess their airway, breathing and circulation. This can take seconds to do when you are trained but can prove vital in the long run if there are other complications to consider.

Years ago instead of the ABC's in first aid training it use to be Start the Breathing, Stop the Bleeding, Cover the wound, Immobilize the fracture and Treat for shock. This is still a good basis for progressing through the initial injury assessment.

Next pneumonic is **STOP** (Safety, Talk, Observe Protect). Safety for you is paramount. If you're injured then you can't treat the player. Then there is player safety. Ensure that the game is being played away from the injured player or get the Referee to stop the game altogether. Talk to the player to get the response and while doing this Observe the players body in a head to toe motion ascertaining the injury location and type. Remember to also Protect the player and their injury from becoming worse. Another form of protection is to make sure you, as the person assessing the injury has at least one hand with a glove on to protect against cross contamination from blood or body products. This aspect of protection is often overlooked at all levels of the game.

TOTAPS is the last pneumonic to utilise when assessing an injured player. Talk, Observe, Touch, Active, Passive and Skill are important areas to cover, as they can unmask any injury not immediately obvious.

Talking to the player and Observing is a common theme throughout all of the assessment phases. Remember that beyond the injury is a human being and their welfare is paramount in the whole process.

Touching the injured site can often reveal immediately what is wrong. Palpation of the injured site can further assist the assessment of the injury and add up to deciding what your immediate care will be. Whilst Touching also check for pulses beyond the injured area, especially if you suspect a fracture, as any lack of a pulse identifies a need to get the player to further emergency services.

Involved within the assessment is the need to carry out Active Movement. This is where you get the player to move the injured part to see to what extent the injury is. If they cannot move the injured area then Passive movement may be required. Remember there is a body at the end of the injury and they will soon let you know if it hurts so don't just yank at it.

If by this stage your assessment is one of inconclusive then getting the player to perform a Skill on the injured part can finalize your assessment. This can mean just getting the player to stand on their foot or to move their arm to check their shoulder. Remember to err on the side of caution when doing this and always follow up after the game if they can continue.

In one scenario I know of the player was alright throughout the TOTAP and denied any problems, but when stood up they were completely disorientated heading towards the opposition line, and unable to complete any Skill. This identified that the player was obviously concussed and showed how useful the assessment by TOTAPS is.

Of final note in the assessment of the injured player is to remember that the needs of the player should take precedence to the needs of the game. Amid the chaos of the emergency you will find that the needs of everyone else will come to the fore and they will endeavour to either get the player back onto the field (its always the most important player when it does occur) or to remove the player from the field so that they can get on with the game. The primary concern in every injury is that the proper care for the player occurs irrespective of others needs or demands.

It should be noted that the following areas discussed will be focusing on just the stated injury areas but it

should never be forgotten that multiple injuries could occur in real life situations. At no time should the basics of Sports Medicine care be forgotten and the initial ABC's take precedence over these injuries.

The Shoulder.

Seen as probably the second most common injury to occur within a sports medicine setting, the shoulder occurs commonly within the contact sports setting. Often not actually witnessed except after the injury occurred when the player rises from the tackle and is either carrying the arm at their side or cradling their arm in a crouching position, the shoulder does pose a problem for the team trainer/medic as there can be a variety of possible outcomes.

On-the-field Assessment. The player as previously stated, is usually seen on the ground in some form of pain. The only other time is when they arise to continue on with play and they are observed running back to their line with their arm hanging down at the side or they are shaking the arm to get rid of the effects of the tackle. If they are observed doing this there is an increased likelihood that they have only subluxed their arm (a dislocated shoulder that has spontaneously returned back into its position). This could also indicate that they have given the nerves a shake up and some numbness or loss of feeling has occurred.

Initially the player who has a shoulder injury is usually lying or crouching on the field. In this situation a dislocated shoulder is the most common injury to the shoulder for players between the ages of 15 to 30 years old. Younger players generally do not dislocate their shoulders but may have a fractured upper arm (proximal humerus) or collar bone (clavicle) in a shoulder injury.

Usually complaining of pain in their shoulder, the medic should also ask about neck pain or any other dysfunction in the other arm as well. This helps to eliminate the possibility of other compounding injuries that may refer the pain to the shoulder. The player may also complain about pain in the back of their shoulder or down their arm.

Assess the player's ability to move their arm (and often they refuse to do it especially if it is dislocated) as well as neurological function. This is easily checked when you lightly scratch your fingers over their forearm, or upper arm if it is exposed, and look for signs of any loss of sensation or if they complain of pins and needles in their arms or fingers. This may occur if they have hit their brachial plexus (a bunch of nerves in the area between their shoulder and their neck, or if they have hurt their deltoid muscle which

overlays some of the nerves running down the arm. Often these symptoms last a few seconds to a few minutes, but it is important to note if they have any of these signs. One particular sign to note for is the player reporting a “dead arm” which is indicative of nerve involvement.

Another key factor is to determine whether they incurred the injury in the tackle (as for defenders) of stretching out their arm and landing on it (as for the attacking side ‘hitting up’ the ball). This assessment is often useful to aid in the medical support people’s diagnosis.

When with the player and you carry out the initial examination, if they don’t have limited access to the shoulder (e.g. wearing padding etc.) then look if you can, or feel for a deformity of the shoulder joint. This can be either a fullness of the shoulder area towards the front and a ‘dip’ (termed a sulcus) at the rear of the shoulder. These are easy to feel once you have seen and felt a few players with a dislocated shoulder but be careful not to push too much in this area as the player will be sensitive to any form of pushing or prodding.

Other signs to observe are shortness of breath with marked pain over the medial aspect (closest to the bodies midline) of the collar bone (clavicle), Crepitus (grinding of bones together but don’t try to get this sign as it can cause great distress to the player) but this is unusual in a dislocation but a good positive sign for a fracture, and the gross function of the players arm – can they move it, turn it or raise it above their head. A patchy loss of sensation down the players arm may occur especially if there is some nerve involvement and it can be in any area.

Open wounds of the shoulder are very unlikely, but if one is there then treat the injury as a complicated fracture and call for emergency services to assist the player to further medical treatment.

Next comes the decision as to what is actually wrong with the player. These range in variety but the person assessing the player must be aware that this could a. Glenohumeral dislocation (dislocated shoulder usually towards the front).

- b. Acromioclavicular separation (sprung AC joint).
- c. Fracture of the clavicle (broken collar bone).
- d. Fracture of the proximal humerus (broken upper arm).
- e. Fracture dislocation of the proximal humerus.
- f. Brachial Plexus lesion (Stinger or Burner), or
- g. Acute Posterior Glenohumeral dislocation (dislocated shoulder to the rear – rare but potentially dangerous).

Based on the initial assessment it is usually easy to primarily assess what is wrong. This can be any of the above injuries and the fractured clavicle is usually very easily seen. In the case of the dislocated shoulder, pain on the tip of the shoulder with or without any deformity can indicate a dislocation and the brachial plexus injury usually does not occur with any deformity, just a burning sensation (hence the name Burner) down the arm or at the point of injury and patchy weakness of the shoulder associated with severe pain is often reported. In the case of a subluxation the shoulder will have reduced itself spontaneously and the player may just report the ‘dead-arm’ and pins and needles.

Transportation from the field. Typically the player can often walk off the field and they will either support their injured arm or you can place their arm in a modified sling by pulling their jersey up to cradle their arm as they leave the field. If you are going to place their arm in a modified sling do not push the arm but support it into the position to pull up the jersey.

Sideline Treatment. It is important to re-examine the injury area and carry out a few baseline observations. Check for sensation by getting the player to tell you whether they can feel you touching the hand or arm and get them to move their fingers to assess for movement. If you cannot feel a pulse or they do not report any sensation of touch immediately get them to further medical support as you may have a medical emergency on your hands.

In the case of the dislocated shoulder – do not attempt to reduce the shoulder unless you are specifically trained to do so. If the player wants to lie down have them lie on their uninjured side and support their arm. Placing Ice packs over the shoulder will do no harm and often aids in reassuring the player, but have them sent onto further medical assistance so that they can have their shoulder reduced and fully assessed.

If you are unsure of the injury or suspect a fracture again transport the player on to further medical care so a full assessment can be made and the appropriate treatment carried out. Again an Ice pack on the injured area will keep the player comfortable and reassure them.

If there is a broken collar bone, then ice on the injured area can assist in player comfort and place the injured side arm in a sling to further assist the player in attaining some form of comfort. Again check for neurological involvement by checking for their sensation and check for a pulse as well. These injuries do need further medical assessment and will require being transported to a medical care facility for treatment.

The most critical case, which fortunately is relatively rare, is the posterior dislocation of the shoulder. These injuries usually occur when a significant force is applied on the medial end of the collar bone. Initially the player complains of pain and some breathing difficulties. These injuries should be immediately sent to a medical care facility but sideline you can lie the player down, face up (if possible) with rolled towels or a largest mass between their shoulder blades as these injuries can involve the trachea, oesophagus or large cardiovascular vessels in the immediate vicinity of the neck and chest area.

Other Considerations. It is often necessary to advise the player not to return to play and that they may be out for a while from the game pending fuller medical examination. This can range from 6 weeks to about 3 months depending on the age of the player, medical care, player progression through rehabilitation and medical and physio clearance.

The Elbow

Within Rugby League the most common way that the player injures their elbow is when they reach out to tackle a player and the player 'busts' through the tackle flicking the opposition players arm backwards often pushing the elbow past its normal range of motion. Another way in which some players injure their elbow is when the fall towards the ground and put their arm out to stop the fall and again bend their elbow past the normal range of motion. Not often seen but when they do occur they should be treated appropriately and there are several considerations that must be remembered when assessing the player with an elbow injury.

On-the-field Assessment. Whenever the player suffers an elbow injury the first indication will be pain at the site of the injury. In the case of any fracture such as the head of the radius or the olecranon (the pointy bit that forms the elbow at the back of the arm) there will be pain and swelling.

It is important to identify the actual mechanism of injury as a direct blow to the olecranon usually results in a fracture there whereas other indirect trauma will result in other types of injuries to this area (falling with an outstretched hand). Pain, numbness, pins and needles (tingling) and/or a lack of power in the arm are the usual complaints at the time of the injury to the elbow. This may be due to neurological involvement or direct trauma to the area.

On initial examination there is usually a deformity of the elbow and this is in the shape of the elbow area.

Compare the injured elbow with the other one to check for the normal shape of the players elbow as this can quickly identify any injury to this area. Pain can be elicited when the player attempts to rotate their forearm and sometimes crepitus can be felt especially in the event of a fracture.

The gross function of the elbow is usually impaired in the event of any injury to the elbow and this can be just by spasm alone. There may be an acute triceps muscle tear in these injuries especially if the olecranon is fractured in a severe direct blow to this area.

Again check for pulse and nerve sensation and if there is not any of this the player must be sent immediately to further medical care. If this does not happen immediately, keep checking this and you may have to apply traction to the forearm to return the pulse and nervous circulation. Only do this if you are trained to do so as any wrong traction may incur further injuries.

Transportation from the field. Supporting the arm and walking the player off can easily undertake transporting the player. If there is suspicion of a fracture then splinting of the arm should be undertaken before moving the player off the field.

Sideline Treatment. Initial pain and discomfort is common with these injuries but the player may develop a 'purple football' on the area over the elbow. This is a purple-bluish swollen area and is indicative of a fracture. If the player develops this and still reports good function within the elbow they should not be returned to play until medically cleared to do so.

Gross deformity may be encountered when reassessed on the sideline and this usually represents a dislocation of the elbow structure(s). Neurological and Cardiovascular assessment should continue and if there is loss of sensation or no pulse is felt then gradual traction and a little flexion of the elbow needs to be commenced until the pulse and sensation returns. Remember to check for papillary refilling by pressing the fingernails of the injured arm and watching for refilling. This is more indicative of cardiovascular impingement than a pulse and if the refilling of the pinched fingertip is slow this player needs to be immediately sent for further medical evaluation.

Again Ice on the injured area can assist the player feel comfortable and to reassure the player before they are sent to further medical care.

Other considerations. It is often necessary to advise the player not to return to play and that they may be out for a while from the game pending fuller medical examination. This can range from 6 weeks to about 3 months depending on the age of the player, medical care, player progression through rehabilitation and medical and physio clearance.



17.

Drills.

Practices for the Dummy Half Advantage Line Running

South Australian Rugby League

The main roles of the dummy half or acting half are to either pass or run the football.

The dummy half pass should be a well executed pass off the ground as this is the quickest way to get the ball to the intended receiver. At times if the dummy half feels the defending markers are pressuring the receiver too much, he may wish to stand, take a step or two and commit the markers to him before passing.

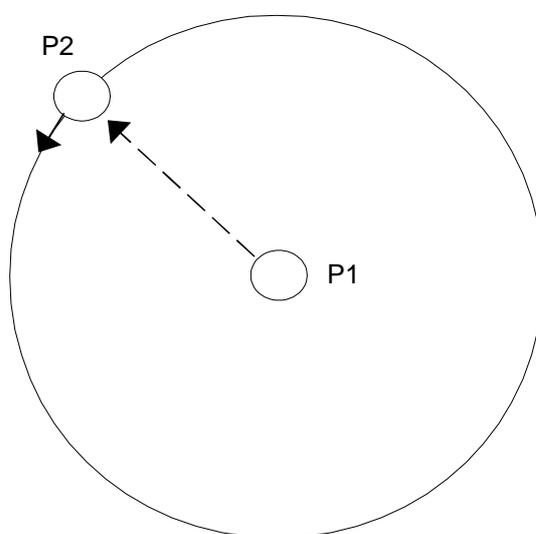
Dummy half running follows two basic lines. Arc running and straight line running. Running the arc is a relatively low risk play and best performed by the faster players in the team and should be used when the markers are set. Straight line running should be used after a quick play the ball when the defending markers are not correctly in position. The dummy half should pick up the ball and run straight ahead, take the easy yards and then assess the next option.

The advantage line is the imaginary line running across the field between the ball and the marker. This line indicates if the attack is moving forward, if the next tackled performed is beyond the line it is closer to the try line so the advantage is to the attacking team.

Key factors which determine good advantage line running are timing of the play the ball, the dummy half pass plus the width, speed and line of the ball receiver. Receivers need to have an understanding of the power and speed of the dummy half pass so they can time their run to be receiving the ball at close to maximum pace.



Dummy Half Pass From Ground 1.



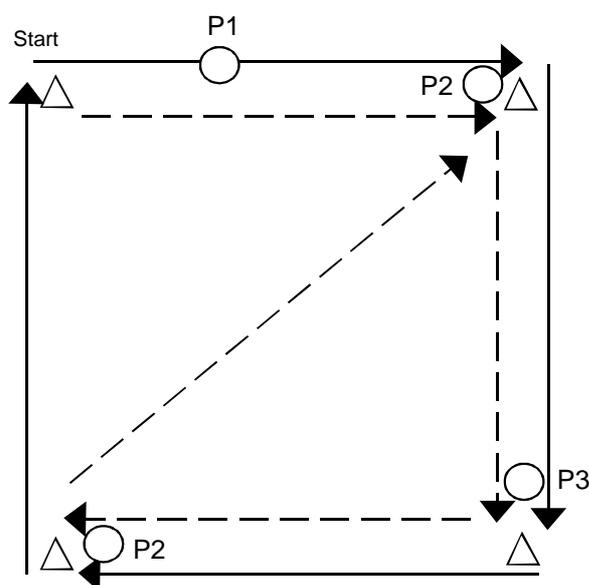
- P2 runs in a circle around P1.
- P1 has the football placed on ground and at his discretion passes to P2.
- P2 return passes to P1 who places the football on the ground and gets ready to pass again.
- Set a time e.g. 1 minute or a set number of passes that must be completed before players swap roles
- Ensure players practice both left and right sides.
- Emphasise the importance of passing directly from the ground and not standing to pass.

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Dummy Half Pass From Ground 2.



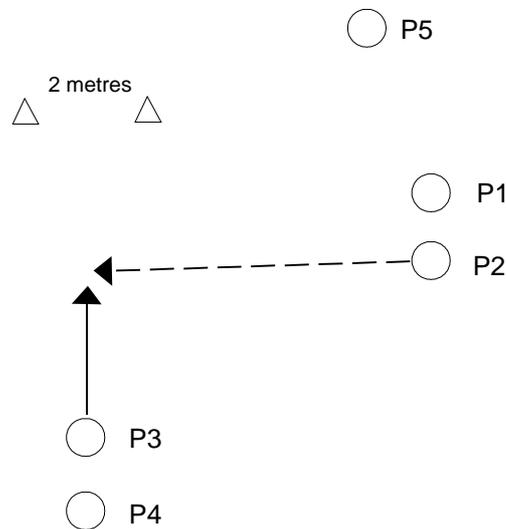
Set up is a 5 metre x 5 metre grid, 1 football.

- Drills starts with football placed on the ground.
- P1 passes off the ground to P2 who catches it and places it directly on the ground in front of him.
- P1 runs to the ball and passes off the ground to P3.
- P3 catches the ball and places it on the ground.
- P1 runs across to the ball and this time passes to P4.
- P4 catches the ball and places it on the ground.
- P1 runs across to the ball and this time passes diagonally across the grid to P2
- P1 runs across and returns to his starting position.
- P2 now has the football and he repeats the process around the grid.



Advantage Line Running.

Timing - Drill 1.



- P1 plays the ball to P2 (dummy half).
- P2 passes to a position in front of two cones and not directly to another player.
- It is P3's job to time his run to receive the pass and burst through the cones.
- All players rotate with the exception of P2 who remains as dummy half.
- Variation can include the distance of the pass and the starting position of the receiver. Adding defenders with hit pads instead of cones.
- Practice both left and right sides.



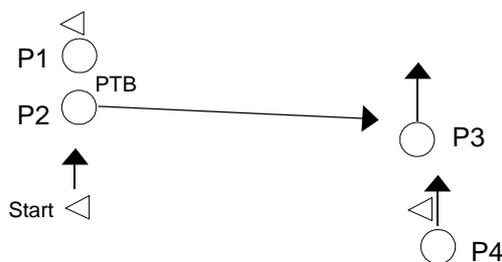
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Advantage Line Running. Timing - Drill 2.

◁ PTB

◁ PTB



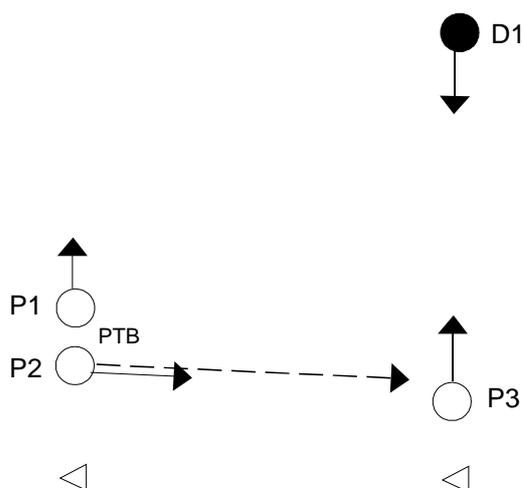
- P1 runs to the first cone, dives to the ground, regains his feet and then plays the ball to P2
- P2 passes directly across for P3 to receive the pass on the advantage line.
- P3 then runs to the next cone, goes to ground and then plays the ball to P4.
- P4 passes across for P2 (if players have been instructed to swap roles) or P1 (if players instructed to keep same positions).
- Drills continues down the grid.



Advantage Line Running.

Timing - Drill 3.

● D2



- P1 plays the ball to P2 (dummy half).
- P2 passes on the advantage line to P3.
- D1 rushes forward to make contact with P3.
- P3 plays the ball to P2 who has moved across and passes back to P1.
- D1 must move back 10 metres
- D2 moves up in defence and makes contact with P1.
- P1 plays the ball to P2 who has once again moved across to dummy half and the drill continues.

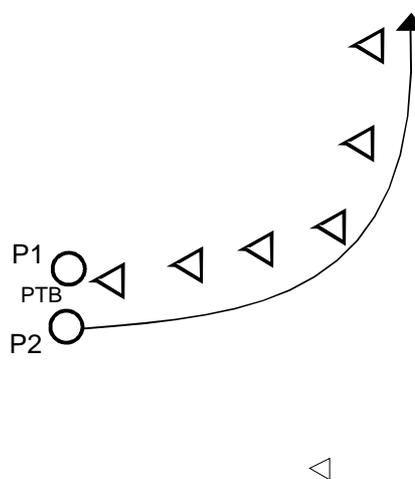


Dummy Half Arc Running.

Drill 1.

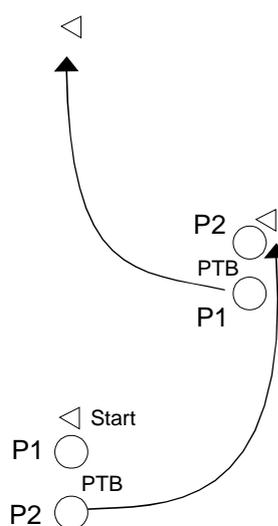
Set up markers to indicate the running arc to be run by the dummy half.

- P1 plays the ball (PTB) to P2.
- P2 runs the arc.



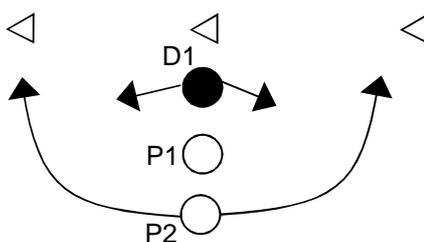
Drill 2.

- P1 plays the ball to P2.
- P2 runs the arc to the next where he drops to the ground and then regains his feet and plays the ball.
- P1 now moves into dummy half where he picks up the ball and runs the arc to the next marker and the drill continues.





Drill 3.

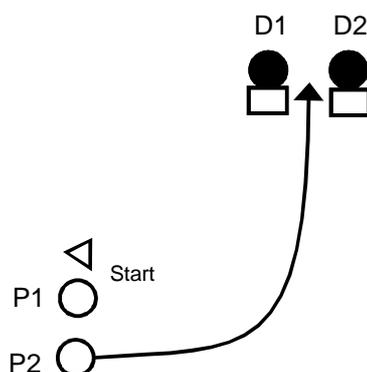


Ruck is set up with 2 Attackers and 1 Defender as marker.

2 cones/markers are positioned 5-8 metres either side of the ruck as shown.

- P1 play the ball to P2
- Coaches call left or right
- P2 must attempt to run the arc and beat the defending marker (D1) and reach the selected cone.
- D1 attempts a two handed grab on P2

Drill 4.

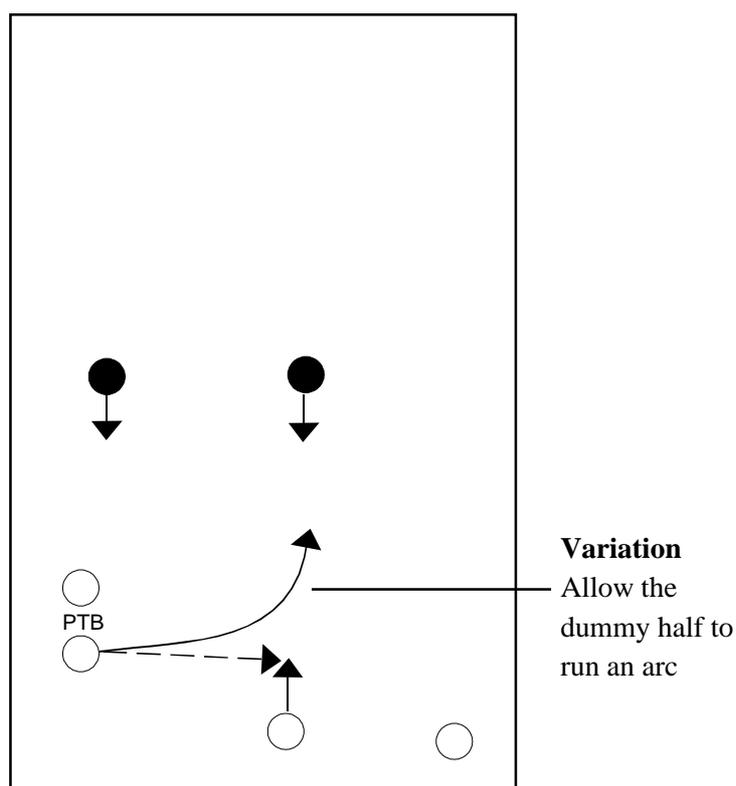


Dummy half must run the arc aiming at defenders with hit pads.

- P1 plays the ball to P2.
- P2 runs the arc to the opposition players (D1 - D2) holding hit pads.
- P2 must attempt to bust through between the defenders, drop to the ground and quickly regain his feet and play the ball.



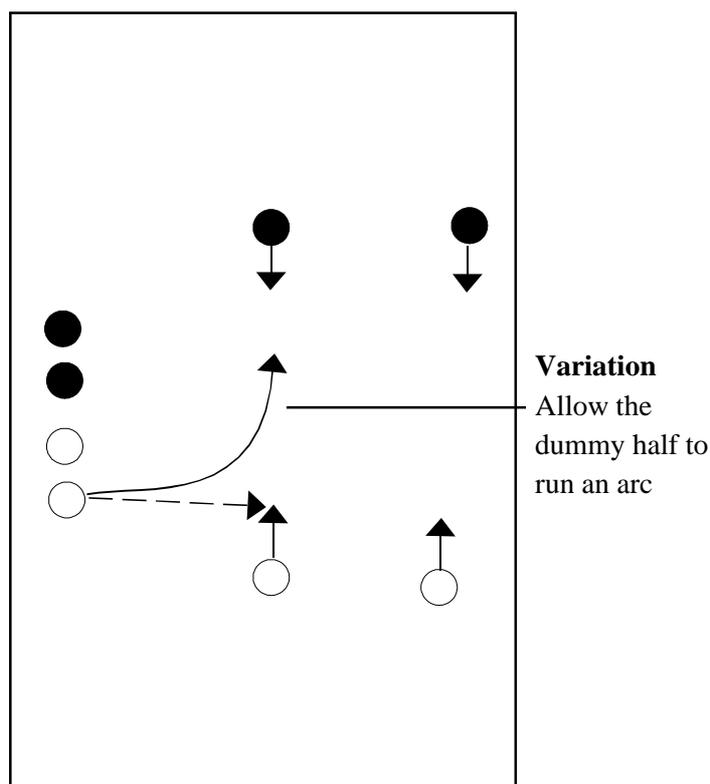
Advantage Line Touch.



- Set up is four attackers and 2 defenders
- The aim is for the attacking team to try and score at the other end of the grid.
- The attacking team only has 4 plays.
- After each play the ball only one pass is allowed.
- The ball must be passed off the ground.
- Defence must retreat 10 metres after each touch
- Allow a variation of one extra pass to the inside if the defence is 'rushing' one defender at the attackers.
- Another variation is to give the dummy half the option of running an arc.
- After 4 touches swap players positions.



Advantage Line Force Back.



- Set up is two equal teams, four attackers and 4 defenders
- The aim is for the attacking team to force the defending back to their own line
- The attacking team only has 4 plays.
- After each play the ball only one pass is allowed.
- The ball must be passed off the ground.
- Variation may include the dummy half allowed to run an arc.
- Defence must retreat 10 metres after each touch
- If the attack knocks on or passes forward the other team gets the ball from that spot.
- If the defending team is off side the attacking team gets another set of 4.

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