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1.

Coach Talk

With Craig Bellamy
Melbourne Storm Coach

With a 15-year stint at Canberra and five years at the Broncos, Craig Bellamy has already had a long career in Rugby League. Included in the 15 years at the Capital were 148 First Grade games, an appointment as President's Cup Coach and First Grade Assistant Coach. All of this came even before his time at the Broncos as Assistant Coach under Wayne Bennett.

As Craig puts it, "I had about an eight year apprenticeship in coaching and I am a bit of a believer in that things happen for a reason, and I probably needed that much time. I am pretty confident with what I am doing now and I know where I want to go and how I want to get there. I feel that the long apprenticeship has helped."

Now the apprentice has his First Grade Ticket with the Melbourne Storm.

RLCM asked Craig how his time with master coach Wayne Bennett has helped.

BELLAMY: Yes, I had a really good relationship with Wayne. The first six months he was always around and kept an eye on what I was doing. After that, I knew what my role was and he let me go and do it. If he had a problem with it, he would come and see me. If he didn't question me on it, I knew I was going okay. Similarly, the staff I have are there because I think they know what they are doing. They are doing a good job and basically I don't interfere too much. If I would like something done differently, certainly, but they've got a job to do and I don't want to be in their ear all the time.

I have always tried to treat people how I would like to be treated myself. Obviously, I am talking to them about what we are doing and whether we need to make a bit of a change. I don't have to know everything they are doing. I am very busy myself and you have to show some trust and we have a good relationship.

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RLCM: Obviously you've thought long and hard before you moved to the Storm. What were your ideas about what you were going to bring to the team?

BELLAMY: Well, I cleaned out the decks, brought my own people in and basically tried to make the place happier. I thought morale might be a little bit low so I went around a few things besides our training. I did a few social things early and just tried to make it a little bit better place to be around, a happier place and a better environment. From there we started bringing the footy side into it.

You can't demand respect; you've got to earn it. I think I have earned some of that but you would have to ask the players and the people there.

One advantage you have when you have played at that level is that you know what some of the players are going through every now and then and everyone has a tough time occasionally. I went through tough times as a player - injuries and so on, and you know what they are thinking sometimes so you can sympathise with what they are going through and I think that helps.

RLCM: How is league developing in that area and how is your connection with Norths in Brisbane working?

BELLAMY: To be quite honest, I probably haven't been here long enough to judge completely, as I have been really busy with the Storm. However, I think the governing body should probably be a little more proactive in helping down here with development. Julie Sunley from the Foundation does a great job but she is in enemy territory and it is tough going.

I think they need more development officers down here to go around the schools. You see, in our team, no one comes from Melbourne so when players finish playing they are off back to Queensland or New South Wales and it is hard to keep any continuity, a history like the other clubs.

If they could offer some of the older players a career path as development officers here when they finish, it would be great for them, the game, the grass roots level and for the Storm. It would help create some of that history, that culture that a club like the Broncos has.

That sort of thing gives the younger players a really strong message that these are the guys that started the club, that kept the flag flying, that won a Premiership in 1999.

With Norths, the way we would like it to work is that the players who don't make the top seventeen go back north to play at the weekend. We've had a few going the other way with our injury toll which was not ideal. Obviously, we would like our feeder team to be down in Melbourne, but again that's too expensive to be flying them to the First Division or to the State League so that's not practical.

What I would like to do in the future is have another Assistant Coach who could go up for three or four days every two weeks to just help out and make sure that our ideas of what we are doing in Melbourne are transferred up to Norths. The connection has been set up and has been reasonably successful but you would just like to see everything just a little more coordinated and aligned.

RLCM: You have been successful in toughing out some good wins in 2003. How do you develop that mindset, that toughness to grind out a win?

BELLAMY: You've got to tough them out at training. I think that is a big part of it. What you do at training is what you want to be doing in the game. I also think pre-season is a very important part of the preparation. Conditioning games are a big part of most clubs' pre-season training and it certainly is a viable part of our pre-season, but I think also the hard slog where you don't touch a footy all the time is a good way to add to the mettle and strength of players. Actually, just working hard together is a big part that brings the team together. Basically, the guys have to be out there playing for a job, and that sort of spirit can be built with training - by working hard together.

The first month of pre-season we do some grinding out sessions on hills. We do a fair bit of this longer type work whereas I know some clubs concentrate on short work and they don't train without a ball in their hands. The analogy I make is that in a conditioning game, if someone gets a ball and breaks away, not all the team will chase. Also, some players can take it easy or hide a little bit. However, when you are out

You want them to be able to enjoy their footy and not curb their natural attributes

in the forest and you've got to go up that hill, everyone has to go up, so everyone is doing the same sort of work. I think that is a big part of mental strength training as well as building team spirit.

Obviously, this is only for the first month of pre-season before you get into training for different player positions and game preparation but it is a good base for that next phase of training. I know it is an old fashioned way of doing things but I think it works. I have seen it work at Canberra and the Broncos and I feel it has been a successful part of our pre-season this year.

RLCM: In that next phase then, and working with young players, how many skill sessions do you have a week?

BELLAMY: We have two sessions where individual skills are emphasised and we have team training sessions where you've also got skills and drills. With the younger players, there are different skill levels but if they have reached this grade, they have most skills and they have talent. Certainly, if they have weaknesses in certain areas, we will work on that but I am not in their ear every training session. You can over-complicate things and the last thing I want to do is confuse them by putting too much in their heads. You want them to be able to enjoy their footy and not curb their natural attributes.

Take a kid like Billy Slater - we've got a couple of things we work on to get them right and then we will go on to the next couple. However, if I fill his head with too much and it gets too complicated for him, then we aren't going to see Billy Slater on the ball out there. We want him to enjoy his football.

RLCM: What style of attack and defence have you introduced? Do you keep it simple?

BELLAMY: Most of the time our attack is not unstructured but it is not as structured as we like to think our defence is. We've got a basic foundation with our attack but again it changes to fit in with who ever we are playing. My philosophy is to play to the strengths of the players I have.

We've got certain patterns of play and certain plays that we put on in certain areas of the field and at certain times of the game. We have some good players with good off-loading abilities and good catch and pass abilities but I have been instilling in them that there is a time and a place and time and space so that they don't get too adventurous.

Our defence is very structured. Dean Lance has been great with the guys with their individual tackle technique while I have concentrated on our defensive pattern. The system we have at the moment is half way between 'slide' and 'up and in'.

I didn't want to go completely from what they had last year which was 'slide' straight away. That was too big a change for our players so we have gone half way between the two and hopefully as we get better at what we are doing, we will go a little bit quicker with the 'up and in'.

Defence is an attitude and we are believers in that we like to get our head in the right spot and we like to get our feet in the right spot and we like to get our eyes on the target. However, every now and then a player is not going to get in the ideal position so you have to show the grit and attitude just to knock someone over. All the technique work is great but at some stages, you are not going to get the ideal situation. You need that grit and determination to knock someone over.



RLCM: How do you see your halves and dummy half fitting into your game plan?

BELLAMY: One of the problems we have had in 2003 is with our halves. Our first choice halves were Hill and Orford and I think up to this point they have played one game together because of injuries. Matty Geyer has been tremendous for us because he gets in there and has a dig and gets the job done. We have had our ups and downs and we are going to have more but if we can get our halves together, that will really help us later in the season.

The dummy half position has changed from what it was years ago. They were good defenders and good passers. Now you've got a real advantage if you've got a runner there too. There are some great dummy halves out there now who are not just passers of the footy.

They can run the ball and they can run with the ball in both hands. We are very happy with our young fellow, Cameron Smith. He is touching the ball more than anybody else is but he is a laid back character and nothing phases him so he doesn't seem to feel the pressure too much. His kicking game is a plus for us as well.

RLCM: Do you put much work into running productive lines or is that a natural gift that a player has to have?

BELLAMY: No, it is something that we do a lot of work on. It takes a lot of practice and repetition. You can't just say to your players, when that happens you do that or when this occurs you do this, and then go out and practise something else at training because they just won't do it. You have got to practise it and be repetitive about it. Even then it is hard to say that you've got to be here and run there because in games there are not the same consequences each time.

Besides trying to teach them the line to run, it's the line to run in this instance or that instance. Again, that is repetition and you don't really want your players thinking about that too much when they go out there. If you do it enough at training, it will happen automatically. That is muscle memory.

We do a lot of work on that. It is not only your line running, it is anything. If they go out there having to think about it too much, it isn't going to happen or happen properly but if we do enough of it at training, it becomes an automatic thing - muscle memory.

2.

Challenging The Champions

With Craig 'Barney' Miller
Assistant Coach - Newcastle Knights

Many fans, coaches and students of the game may wonder how a champion competitor like an Andrew Johns or a Darren Lockyer is handled away from the limelight of match day.

RLCM talked with Craig 'Barney' Miller, Assistant Coach of the Newcastle Knights, and asked him how they manage a champion like Andrew Johns.

Craig began with the obvious. "It is a challenge for us trying to come up with something to challenge him," he said.

However, he went on to say that Andrew didn't necessarily need extravagant tasks to be challenged with.

"We all know he is very competitive so activities need to be competitive and they need to be game related. You've got to take in those considerations and also understand his understanding of the game. It is difficult to come up with something to stimulate him all the time but we seem to be able to do it enough," he explained.

Miller went on to say that over the years the club had developed a good database of games and simulated drills. These were always changed by adding players, rules and space restrictions. This, with the aspect of fun, provided variety and helped heighten the competitive edge.



"All the coaching staff have a good rapport with Andrew and we communicate. He is very helpful and there are not many things that we do without first discussing it with him or getting his ideas on how we should do it," Craig said.

"He is, if you like, another coach within our football team."

Craig added that Johns did not stand up and lecture but that he was always talking to the younger players and inquiring after the progress of younger people coming through.

"He is very keen on our local competitions and the young players we are bringing through. He knows that's very important to his own success because on the football field he needs them just as much as they need him. I think also, that once a player gets to his level, he feels an obligation to assist.

"We draw on him to assist our young players with their kicking games and their skill based drills. He is very big on individual skills and doing extras, so you often find him at training well before training starts. He will be with a group of young players and he will be running through drills and helping them and giving advice. That is invaluable to us. The players then don't become over-awed with his presence. He is just a very good player we are fortunate to have around us."

Craig pointed out that Andrew was very aware of the players around him and their capabilities and he was always challenging them. That's why in the game situation he sometimes seemed to show frustration. However, he was not frustrated at their contribution or personal skill level but disappointed for them because he knew their capabilities.

The assistant coach also reminded us that Andrew

3.

Forwards, The Halfback's Heroes

With Craig 'Barney' Miller
Assistant Coach - Newcastle Knights

Craig 'Barney' Miller is a product of Young in country New South Wales. He played First Grade there and after a stint in Sydney, played most of his football in Taree and Newcastle. Knee reconstructions finally put an end to his playing career and he took up the opportunity to coach at West Newcastle where he remained for five years. Then after starting with the Knights Juniors, he has moved up the ranks to his present position of Assistant Coach to Michael Hagan.

Craig sees himself as perhaps following in the footsteps of coaches like Daniel Anderson and Peter Sharp in that he is showing that there is a coaching career path for those young people who may not have played at the very top level or even played at all.

"It is important that other young coaches know there is a pathway there even if you haven't played at the top end of the game. If you have the ability and you want to learn your trade and do the work as a coach - plan, surround yourself with good people and do a good apprenticeship and hopefully you will be rewarded for it.

"For me to be around people like Michael Hagan and Andrew Johns is, I feel, the best of apprenticeships in the game"

RLCM asked Craig then what he had picked up about coaching the 'engine room' of the game, beginning with the front rowers.

He sees them as always being of great importance to the team but more so in 2003. They needed to be athletic, have leg speed, strength, aerobic capacity and the ability to play more minutes of the game. The word 'space' was evident many times in the answer.

"Their ability to go forward, to put space between the defenders and your ball players is vital. Halves can't operate unless the space between the defenders and

the advantage line is at its maximum. With the way of defending now - the up and in, good line speed, aggressiveness - it is even more important that your go forward is at its best and the front rowers are expected to carry that burden more and more," he said.

Craig uses Matt Parsons as an example. He says that he is probably the last of the old style props but he has been able to weather the test of time and adapt to the style of football that is played now.

"If he is out, and we lack his go forward, effectively the space that Danny Buderus and Andrew Johns can operate in is diminished. So, his importance to our football team is as high as those two players. If he is missing, it puts more pressure on Josh Perry and our younger players to give us that space," he said.

"It's when the front rowers provide this space that they become the halfback's heroes," he added.

Miller was warmed up now and went on with his view of the good, attacking front rower. "Any off-loading in football these days is a plus because it takes away the advantage of the defending side having line speed and getting in your face," he said. "If you can get an off-load, it lets you play off the back a bit. It is also a lot harder for the defence. If you are only defending once, you can three-out him, work him over in the ruck and then set your defence and come again. Where as, if you've got to tackle then take care of the off-load, you are effectively doing the same work two and three times. This will take its toll.

"Of course," he warned, "as much as we encourage it, we also put a lot of responsibility on it. We restrict them in where they do it and when they do it and where we are in the game and where we are in the field. Sometimes they are damned if they do and

damned if they don't but if you can play off the back of an off-load and get second phase, you are well in front."

With the present style of defence of three-outing the ball carrier; Craig goes on to say that the skill of the quick play the ball is an asset.

"The quickness of the play the ball, knowing that there is going to be three in the tackles, becomes more and more important," he said. "If they can do it, the opportunities for the next play are extended. It's technique - knees, elbows and core strength. They have to be not only big men but they've got to be able to operate with three defenders trying to slow them down. It's obvious that they have to go forward as far as they can and play the ball as quickly as they can. "Sounds simple," he said," but it's very, very difficult."

defenders is increasing - we are defending more and more width so the defenders either side are getting pulled away from them. Therefore, their ability to defend their space without that assistance around them is more important. Their lateral defence is just as important as their forward defence.

"I think the important thing to know is to take the attacker's ground off them early, know their space and the ability of that little fellow coming at them, steady up and stay square," he added.

In training the modern front rower, Craig says that a lot of the programs are built around power based training. That way it gives them the ability to increase their speed, increase their leg speed and increase their drive, which are all very important at the defensive line.

"Their awareness of power is very, very important

It is not good enough just to be a big, fit prop.
You've got to be a big, fit, powerful prop,"

Craig points out that another modern attribute needed by the front rower is their use as acting halves. Their ability to be there, stand and pass and create width because of the attention they attract from the defensive line is very important. They actually attract that attention, promote the ball and the team plays football beyond it.

"It also adds time to their wear and tear in the game," he said. "They can actually be more beneficial to the game and create a lot of opportunities but aren't getting dragged down and three-outed all the time. He is not just that old style prop now. He has to have the ability to pass both sides and do a multitude of tasks."

RLCM asked Miller then what their defensive role was. His reply was that we are also expecting more of them from the defensive point of view.

"More and more we are asking them to defend greater areas of the football field. We are asking them to be laterally more dominant. Not only be able to go forward but also then be able to react to quicker people coming in through their space. This space between

these days. It is not good enough just to be a big, fit prop. You've got to be a big, fit, powerful prop," he said.

RLCM moved Craig on to the second rowers.

Here he said that, ideally, you are looking for the tall, fast, skilful, athletic footballer. He should have the ability to play not so much multiple positions as multiple roles in the team. He sees them as being another front rower if needed and just as effective. Then when field position was there, as another centre or five-eighth with the skill to off-load. He said that all the back rowers needed to be able to do that and do it at speed.

Ben Kennedy was put forward as a prime example. "He is playing a lot for us at the moment," was Craig's subtle understatement. "He can play all those roles - do all of them and worry the defensive line. He can turn defence into attack because he is so passionate. He brings to the football team what training doesn't give you. His worth to the team as a competitor is his aggression - his will to win is something that rubs off

on our football team. We live off his passion and his will and love of the game.”

As for training the back rowers, Craig said that the program was skill based and game specific. A lot of challenges were put to them. Challenges under game scenarios, challenges at game speed, challenges under pressure.

“You have the normal characteristics of power, strength, speed and fitness which is built into their program. However, wrapping that all up and asking them to do that under fatigue, at speed, under some sort of physical challenge is, I think, the way you condition your players to be at their best,” he said.

As for locks, Craig mused that perhaps they should even have a name change. He pointed out that they may still have a minor role that fits the name in that they locked the scrum but now they were multi-tasked.

“He is a back rower, come centre, come five-eighth rolled into one. He is able to attack, defend, have a running game, off-load and operate off both feet. He is a player who is integral to the side. Along with this he has to have the ability to play both sides of the park. His worth to the team is not confined to one little basket or one role.”

Craig summed it all up. “The game has got to the stage where you can’t be specific in your role and comfortable with one position to fulfil. The positions are important but it is what is required on a particular occasion that is more important. You have to be able to act upon whatever the football team needs at that particular moment.”

RLCM was impressed. Craig said at the beginning of the interview, “I always said if I was given another opportunity in the game, I would take it as far as I could and so I think the aspiration to go as far as I could was burning inside.”

And at the end of the interview, when talking of communication skills, he said, “I think you have to believe in what you talk. If you don’t believe in what you are saying as a coach, especially to these types of people, they catch you out pretty quickly. So, if you don’t know what you are talking about, don’t say it.”

RLCM can see him achieving the former statement and heeding the latter.

We had begun the discussion with the old adage, “If you can’t win it in the forwards, you can’t win the game.”

However, we liked the way ‘Barney’ put it when talking about the forwards creating space. He said that if they could do that, they were “The Halfback’s Heroes”.

Notes

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4.

An Approach to Developing Attacking Strategy

Written by Ray Unsworth
Director of Coach Education, The Rugby Football League

The compilation of this article stems from work done with our performance coaches, and reference should be made to former Warrington, St Helens and Great Britain player David Lyon, now a member of the Saints coaching staff for his contributions to that process.

In my previous article on defensive preparation I identified as our start point individual tackle technique.

And I would suggest that it's no different when formulating your approach to the game with **“ball in hand.”**

You can only begin your preparation at the beginning, by identifying the core attacking ingredients that players need to possess, which eventually will underpin your overhaul attacking strategies.

Core skills; such as passing, play the ball, kicking, footwork and lines and angles of run are obvious start points for consideration.

But within each of the identified areas, comes huge amounts of work on the technique that underpins every component in each of the recognised skills.

For example if I was to benchmark just one of the skills, passing, then how much work is there to be done in that area alone?



PASSING

The Grip – how to hold the ball

The Carry – one and two handed carries

The Pass – basic pass - short pass - long pass

- spin pass - pass from the floor

- standing pass - moving pass

- weighting the pass - timing the pass

- Selection of pass

The Catch – early – late – standing – moving

And undoubtedly players need to be proficient in every aspect of each component of the skill.

And it's the same with all other core activities, because the reality is:

Without mastering the simple skills, it is impossible to take performance to a higher level.

So, core skills work is the foundation of preparation.

Where to next?

POSITIONAL SPECIFIC WORK

What is it?

Quite simply it is the core skills and activities relative to the various playing positions.

Which need to be practised in isolation initially and then in combination with other players who carry out similar roles that interact during the game e.g.

Positional specific groupings

Front row – 8 & 10

Back row – 11– 12 & 13

Organisers – 7 – 6 & 9

Centres – 3 & 4

Back triangle – 1 – 2 & 5

Menus of activity relative to each playing position need to be created and implemented into your programme.

By way of example, a programme of practices for a full back may well include;

High ball, ground ball, and in goal retrievals, pocket and turn chase returns, ruck and wide play supports.

So, moving on;

Core skills, practised, analysed and refined. Allied to the various playing positions and progressed.

What's the next piece of the jigsaw?

SITUATIONAL COACHING

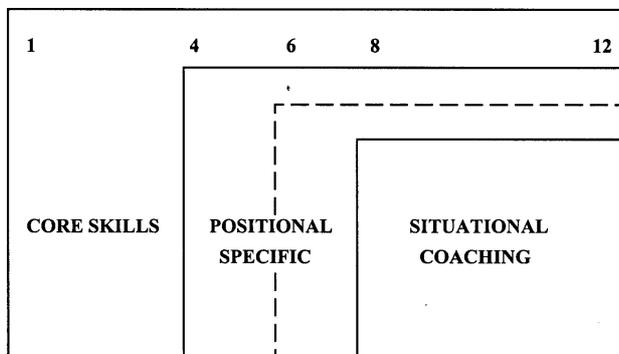
This is the placing of your players into specific game related situations, and allowing them to make decisions based on what is in front of them, what they see.

So therefore there are now three pieces to our game preparation matrix;

- (1) What skills do you need? – **core**
- (2) How do they relate to the position you play? – **specific**
- (3) During the game they manifest themselves in all situations – **situational coaching**

Putting it all together;

An example of a twelve week pre season programme would look something like this;



The chart highlights twelve weeks of preparatory work that includes a predominant block of core skills work during the first four weeks. Core never leaving the programme, there are always remedial and progressive practices that could be addressed during the warm up periods.

Positional specific is the second focus, this to continues beyond its allocated block to become an integral part of the programme.

And finally as you approach the season [weeks 8 – 12] the major emphasis becomes that of situation based coaching.

During the season a typical week may look something like this;

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
GAME	REVIEW individual	REST or extra core or position specific	PREVIEW information distribution	REST core or position	STRATEGY situational	STRATEGY situational
DAY	groups team	isolation OR group	position or situational work strategy based	isolation or group	opposed team run through	final game preparation

Having put into place the building blocks to support your attacking plans, what's now need is a coat hanger on which to hang it all, we need a;

STRATEGY

Strategies are simply guidelines that give structure to the plans you formulate.

They are usually based on principles of play that reflect and display aspects of your coaching philosophy.

Strategies should be reviewed and adjusted if necessary, to suit your current thinking as to how the game should be played. But any strategy should be mindful of, and cater for, the skills and abilities, strengths and weaknesses of your playing personnel.

How often you adjust or make changes to your strategy is entirely your call, it may be on a weekly basis or dependent on whom you play. But by and large the infrastructure [principles, stock plays and team vocabulary] will remain the same.

Considerations that could have an impact on your strategy on a regular basis would include such things as;

The opposition – their strength and weakness

Injuries and unavailability to your squad.

The formulation and rotation of your bench.

Match conditions – venue – officials



5.

Do Skill-Based Conditioning Games Simulate the Physiological Demands of Competition?

Written by Tim Gabbett

Rugby league matches are extremely intense, requiring players to compete at a high percentage of their maximum heart rate, while also producing significant increases in blood lactate ('lactic acid'). Conditioning coaches use many different activities to improve the physical fitness and performance of players, with the greatest training benefits occurring when the training stimulus simulates the movement patterns and physiological demands of the sport.

In recent times, conditioning coaches have used skill-based conditioning games to simulate match conditions. Skill-based conditioning games simulate the movement patterns of a match, while also providing a competitive training environment where players are required to make decisions under pressure and fatigue.

While skill-based conditioning games have been suggested to simulate the movement patterns of rugby league matches, it is unclear whether they simulate the physiological demands of competition. The purpose of this case study was to measure heart rate and blood lactate concentration during training and match conditions and determine if skill-based conditioning games adequately simulate the physiological demands of competition.

Why measure heart rate and blood lactate concentration?

The measurement of heart rate and blood lactate concentration provides an overall estimate of the physiological strain of training sessions and matches. Lactate is a waste product, produced by the body in response to sustained high-intensity exercise. High concentrations of blood lactate are associated with the 'burning' feeling in the legs during exercise and are thought to be responsible, at least in part, for the onset of fatigue. A player who has multiple involvements in a match is likely to produce high blood lactate concentrations. For example, a lock that makes the effort to move quickly off the defensive line for three tackles, makes a cover-defending tackle, and then chases from first marker, may experience dramatic increases in blood lactate concentration, which may not decrease during the course of the match. Conversely, a winger that makes a 90m sprint to the try-line may experience short-term increases in blood lactate concentration that are quickly removed due to the large periods of low intensity activity associated with this position.

METHODS

Training Sessions and Match

Training and match heart rates were recorded for four sub-elite players using recordable Polar Vantage NV heart rate monitors enclosed in protective strapping. The four playing positions selected were prop, hooker,



second-row, and centre. These positions were selected as they represented the four general positional playing groups within a team (i.e. props, hookers and halves, back-rowers, and outside backs). Once the raw data was collected, it was downloaded to a computer using Polar Advantage software.

Two mid-season training sessions lasting 70 minutes in duration were recorded. Skill-based conditioning games designed to develop scrambling defence and support play, decision-making, patience and ball-control, play-the-ball speed, and one-on-one and two-on-one defensive skills were implemented during the sessions. The four players were also monitored during one 70-minute match. If the player was replaced during the match, data for time not spent on the field was removed. Blood lactate concentration was measured from the earlobe at regular intervals during the training sessions and match using a Lactate Pro portable lactate analyser. Players were also required to estimate the intensity (0 = rest, 10 = maximal effort) of the training sessions and match at regular intervals.

RESULTS

A summary of the heart rate and blood lactate responses during training and match conditions are shown in Table 1. The average and peak heart rate, and blood lactate concentration were similar for the training sessions and match.

Table 1. Heart rate and blood lactate concentration during training (skill-based conditioning games) and match conditions.

	<u>Training</u>	<u>Match</u>
Average Heart Rate	155	152
Average Heart Rate (% HR max)	79	78
Peak Heart Rate	187	189
Blood Lactate Concentration	5.2	5.2

The perceived intensity of the training sessions and match is shown in Table 2. As expected, the perceived intensity of the match was higher than training sessions.

Table 2. Perceived intensity of the training sessions (skill-based conditioning games) and match.

	<u>Training</u>	<u>Match</u>
Perceived Intensity	Somewhat Hard	Hard-Very Hard

The average match heart rate and blood lactate concentration in the present study was lower than previously reported for junior elite and semi-professional rugby league players (Table 3). This finding most probably reflects the lower playing intensity at the sub-elite level.

Table 3. Match heart rate and blood lactate concentration for sub-elite, semi-professional, and junior elite rugby league players.

AVERAGE HEART RATE

Sub Elite	152
Semi Professional	166
Junior Elite	172

AVERAGE HEART RATE (% HR MAX)

Sub Elite	78
Semi Professional	84
Junior Elite	93

PEAK HEART RATE

Sub Elite	189
Semi Professional	Not Reported
Junior Elite	197

BLOOD LACTATE CONCENTRATION

Sub Elite	5.2
Semi Professional	7.2
Junior Elite	Not Measured

Source - Sub-Elite: present study, Semi-Professional: Coutts *et al* (2003), Junior Elite: Estell *et al* (1996).

DISCUSSION

The results of this case study demonstrate that skill-based conditioning games produce similar heart rate and blood lactate concentrations to those measured under match conditions. These findings demonstrate that skill-based conditioning games offer a specific method of conditioning for rugby league players.

While the present results demonstrate that skill-based conditioning games simulate the physiological demands of competition, these results do not suggest that all other training activities should be abandoned. Rather, skill-based conditioning games should be used



in combination with other activities (e.g. core skills training, traditional running training, strength and power training, etc) as a coaching ‘tool’ to enhance performance. The skill-based conditioning games employed in this study were implemented after players had undergone an appropriate degree of aerobic conditioning and core skills training. Indeed, it is likely that without an adequate skills and aerobic base, the players of the present study would not have had an adequate skill or aerobic fitness level to produce the recorded training and match intensity.

The intensity of the skill-based conditioning games was similar to the training intensity that would be expected for traditional conditioning activities (e.g. running activities without the ball). Indeed, the respective average heart rate and blood lactate concentration of 155 beats/min and 5.2 mMol could readily be achieved through the use of traditional interval training. The advantage that skill-based conditioning games have over traditional conditioning activities is that they provide an additional challenge to rugby league players that would not normally be present in non-skill related activities. While the skill-based conditioning games used during training in the present study offer a specific method of conditioning for rugby league players, it is likely that lower intensity, shorter duration games would underestimate the physiological demands of matches. Equally, higher intensity, longer duration games could overestimate match intensity and lead to overtraining.

The perceived intensity of the skill-based conditioning games was lower than the competitive match. This finding is not surprising given that the emotional stress (i.e. anxiety) associated with playing rugby league is higher than the emotional stress associated with training for rugby league. Skill-based conditioning games are therefore likely to be useful if coaches wish to mentally ‘unload’ players before an important match. However, skill-based conditioning games are likely to be of less benefit if coaches are requiring a mentally gruelling, traditional conditioning session.

While the present study provides important information on the physiological demands of rugby league training and competition, only four playing positions (i.e. prop, hooker, second-row, and centre) were investigated. In addition, only two training sessions and one match were investigated. A longitudinal investigation (e.g. one season) of training and match intensities in all playing positions would provide a greater understanding of the physiological requirements of competition and the training required to provide an appropriate training stimulus to enhance performance.

In summary, the results of this case study demonstrate that skill-based conditioning games produce similar heart rate and blood lactate concentrations to those measured under match conditions. These findings demonstrate that skill-based conditioning games offer a specific method of conditioning for rugby league players.

Notes

6.

Attitude Indicators

By Owen Dalkeith
Penrith Panthers Coaching Panel

Many times over the past year of football we have heard coaches after a loss saying their player didn't turn up or the attitude of their players contributed to the loss. Wayne Bennett has been quoted as saying he could see a loss coming in the first ten minutes of a game. How can he predict how his side is going to play so early? Attitude.

The attitude of your side can be the most important factor affecting the success of your football team. Many coaches spend hours and hours pouring through statistics, analysing skills and questioning tactics but the one major fault your team may have is, bringing the incorrect attitude to the game. But how do we recognise a shift or downturn in attitude?

There are certain indicators that during a game should send out signals to the coach that something might be wrong. I call these attitude indicators. Many coaches will say they can tell if their team is ready to play after the first five minutes of the game. They have recognized and analysed these indicators early in the game.

Often these indicators won't show on your stats sheet and can sometimes frustrate coaches who solely look to their statistics as a reflection of the quality of their teams play.

The first indicator that is important but may not show on the stats sheet is the quality and quantity of the

communication between players. Player 'talk' early in a game can highlight enthusiasm and willingness to be involved in the play.

A team that does not communicate well will struggle both in attack and defence. All players should communicate, and an encouraging effort and tactical talk should come from the leaders in the side. A team that has little or no talk will not be motivated and can find it difficult to follow a game plan.

Another indicator that will highlight attitude is the kick chase. A vital part of today's game the kick chase requires fatigued players to run downfield with the knowledge that they may not be involved in the next play. But by being in the correct position and making the effort to be as far downfield as possible players put the side in a good position at the end of their set of six. Again this comes back to attitude and physical effort that does not receive a statistical reward but requires a player to have the attitude of getting the job done for the best of the team.

Play the ball speed and support play shows if players are willing to be involved in the play. Many writers previously in RLCM have written of the importance of the correct attitude in the ruck. Players who want to win work harder when tackled and try to win the ruck. Support play is difficult to assess so many of our best support players never get any statistical



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7.

Video Analysis Systems

A Time Saver for Penrith

With John Lang
Penrith Panthers Coach

RLCM talked to Penrith Coach, John Lang, on the importance he puts on game statistics, how they are utilised and the system he uses for gathering them.

John stated that statistics are indicators.

“We use them in the context of what you are expecting of the player, their role in the game and what you have observed.

“Stats may have a different emphasis for different players. You might have a forward who is not a great yards man but he is a line breaker. Others are good at getting those tough yards so it is a balance and everything has to be taken in its context.”

He added, “You may have two front rowers and one is not doing many tackles and the other is. The stats will pick this up and the video analysis can pin point the problem. An old coach of mine used to say that some players are masters at being there and not actually doing anything. They stay just inside the pass - never quite get there.

“Then you have a player like Luke Priddis who is the most penalised player in the game but he has also done the most tackles. If you are doing the most tackles, there is a good chance that you are going to be the most penalised. If you are the most penalised in the game and you hardly did any tackles, then I would be worried.

“Luke is in the action all the time and has played every game. Stats will show that he has conceded about eight penalties but he has done something like 800 tackles. That’s not a bad hit rate.”

The coach said that the players themselves utilise the video analysis system. He explained that the club has it accessible at four different points. He has one in his office, one is in an assistant coach’s office and

two are available to the players where they can look at their own game or an opposition player.

He often works in conjunction with a player.

“Earlier this year, one of my players was having a bit of a problem with his defence and he was really down about it. I asked him whom he rated as a good player in his position and we had a look at the fellow he nominated. We saw that this player who he saw as number one was making a few mistakes himself and suddenly my player was feeling a lot better about his game.

“We then looked at areas where we thought he could improve and what he was doing wrong and improved his technique and his confidence.

“When we didn’t have this system, it would have taken me days to track down footage of the other player and our man. You’d select a tape and then you would find he didn’t play that day and when you did get a tape, you would be fast forwarding and back tracking to find when he was involved, when he was on the field and so on.

“Now I can bring up a player and then another and go through it all in half an hour. With these systems, I can get his stats, his involvement in the game and a video clip of all his tackles on the one screen.

“What you’ve got is access to this tremendous amount of information and being able to select what you want. It is all there and you don’t try to look at everything every week but it is an unbelievable time saver. It is like having another couple of employees.”

And the final word from the astute coach.

“Mate, I was completely computer illiterate when I started using these systems. Now I quite fancy myself at this technical business.”

8.

Analysing Players' Birth Dates

Written by Ryan Ellem

The National Rugby League competition may be missing out on a raft of talented players because they are born in the latter months of the year.

Dramatic differences in player body development during their teenage growth period has some boys competing against those with the advantage of 12 months more physical maturity. Late born players are often out-muscled, behind in stamina and lagging in pace compared to those in their group born earlier.

Subsequently, they miss selection for specialist and elite level coaching, and possibly become disenchanted with the game. In the worst case scenario, they drop out.

Brian Johnson, head rugby league coach at the Australian Institute of Sport, has intensely studied the irregularity in the spread of birth dates for nearly a year, motivated by a comment made to him by AIS colleague Keith Lyons, who specialises in performance evaluation.

“He found in junior elite programs, the players who are selected tend to be born in the first part of the year,” Johnson said. “And as he looked into it further, he found it was right across all sports throughout the world.”

Johnson utilised his role as a player developer to examine the birth date issue at representative carnivals and training camps.

“At trials for New South Wales Under-16 country players seeking selection in the AIS–Australian Rugby League program, I asked CRL rep coaches to send the four best players from their Group. Of the 18 outside backs who were nominated, 11 were born in either January, February or March, and when I looked more closely, seven of them were actually born in January.

“Obviously this statistic came about from those players born in January being nearly 12 months more physically advanced than those born at the end of the year.

“There is definitely a lot of (physical) change in players in short amounts of time. I’ll get boys at training camps in October, then they’ll go back home and come back to us in December and January, and you can really notice their physical development. Giving away six to ten months (in age) to another player makes a huge difference – a teenager can grow inches in six months.”

Intrigued at the trend, Johnson sought the assistance of junior administrators at NRL clubs, and collated the birth dates of players on their 2003 Jersey Flegg (Under-19) and SG Ball (Under-17) rosters.

In some of the extreme examples, the Roosters SG Ball side had 11 players born between January to April, but only three between September and December.

Ten of Canterbury’s 18 players were born at the start of the year, and interestingly, no SG Ball members were born after October 24.

The Central Coast and Canberra had the highest number of players born in the last third of the year (five) but still had eight and seven players respectively born at the beginning of the year.

“Getting close to the end of their physical development, I didn’t think the ratio would be as bad in SG Ball and Jersey Flegg, but it was.

“Although the sample got smaller, Lyons’ comment seemed to hold true. Each year in junior rep sides, we’re likely to be tipping out 25 per cent of players who should be given the opportunity of specialist coaching.”

With a consolidated argument, Johnson tackled the pinnacle of rugby league, the NRL, to examine if the trend had infiltrated top grade selection in the 2001 season.

“It’s only common sense to assume that if the players are not interfered with in their development, that when they become adults there is an equal spread of birth dates – but there’s not. The ratio of NRL players in 2001 (of players born in the first half of the year to those in the second) was 2:1.”

The proposition struck Johnson; if players born late in the calendar year were falling by the wayside during their crucial development, the system might be being purged of talent before they are given adequate opportunities to showcase their potential.

“When you consider one of the often quoted reasons for not increasing the number of teams in the NRL competition is the lack of quality players available, it does appear that rugby league can’t afford to be letting these players slip through the cracks.”

Sydney Roosters football manager Brian Canavan said his club was made aware of the theory around six months ago, but hadn’t conducted an intensive study.

“We’ve got contact with schools and there is a great deal of variance in the physical development of players,” Canavan said.

“Probably one of the biggest worries in the issue is having players coming up against other players who are nearly 12 months more developed than them, and having a bad experience or getting hurt. It’s then we risk losing those players from the game.”

According to elite coaching staff, determining an approach to give players all available opportunities – irrespective of their birth date – is not fraught with dilemmas.

Johnson said he believes the Australian Football League was aware of the trend, and said they were

toying with the idea of breaking ages up into nine-month brackets.

“One possibility is bracketing players into six-month age groups rather than 12-month. If that happened, you would have, for instance, an Under-16, an Under-16 and-a-half, and an Under-17 rep side.

“We have strong levels of junior and schoolboy league, and maybe it’s a situation of approaching one of them to change their enrolment date so one started at July rather than January, so their season went during the financial year.

“It’s not that hard. It’s only a matter of making a decision, and after all, it’s really just an arbitrary date.”

Johnson said schools were perhaps the appropriate avenue for the change, citing their duty to provide opportunities for kids they ordinarily wouldn’t be afforded.

By splitting the club and school formats, it would allow players born in the first half of the year to shine at club level, while players born after June would have more impact at the school level.

John Dixon, coach of the Brisbane Broncos’ Under-19 fledgling side, the Colts, thought splitting the schoolboy date may be difficult as the academic year coincided with the calendar year, but agreed it was up to schools and junior clubs to address the problem. “I think the issue definitely warrants investigation,” Dixon said.

“It also needs to be remembered that there can still be some wonderful players born in December. But teenagers do grow so quickly.

“If you look at the current situation, we put players born on December 31 in a different age division to players born on January 1 – there might only be hours between them.

“It is quite dramatic.”



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9.

Top Territory for a Rugby League Program

With Michael Rawiri

The Northern Territory Institute of Sport wanted an experienced and dedicated Rugby League man to run their program. Their research brought up the name Michael Rawiri and they set out to recruit him.

Raised in New Zealand, Michael played Junior and Senior football in the Auckland competition until the age of twenty when he decided to further his career in Australia.

From 1980 to 1991 he played and coached in Goulburn, Cootamundra and the Riverina where he was involved in three premierships winning teams as well as representing New South Wales Country. 1993 to 1995 saw him have successful stints at Nambucca Heads winning another three premierships and finally coaching at Burleigh Heads in 1996.

In 1997 he was recruited back to New Zealand to be in charge of Coaching and Development based in Auckland and in 2001 was appointed Director of Coaching for the New Zealand Rugby League. It was from there that he was lured back to Australia to take up the offer to run the program at the NTIS.

The Rugby League program at the Institute is one of many different sports catered for with six sports having fulltime coaches. Michael says it is quite intensive, very professional and extremely rewarding working with other sports that are only too willing to share information.

“With Rugby League we identify the best talent in the Northern Territory and they relocate to Darwin where the program is run. The minimum age is 16 and we can take them up to 20. The majority come from Darwin but we also have recruits from Katherine, Alice Springs and Gove,” he said.

“Before they are finally accepted, they go through a thorough medical screening under the guidelines of the AIS screening program. Then they are subjected

to strengthening and conditioning, sports psychology, nutrition and general health issues over the scholarship period within the Institute.” Michael explained.

“Their adult education and career education pathways are addressed and they get their professional training as footballers from me as coach of the team. They are training four days a week, 10 months of the year and the team competes in the seven strong Darwin competition. We are allowed to field five over age players but at present the whole squad is under age.”

When asked about the technique and skills of his recruits, Michael admitted that he really had to take everything back to the basics.

“When I started to work with these athletes, I found out that they were very good individual players. They go out there and play the game with no real concept of structure, defence or attack patterns. They are just individual players who are talented. That has been my job to mould them from individuals into a team.”

He went on, “We took them right back to the basics which, at the end of the day, has allowed me to implement what I have been doing in the development areas of the game. Having to focus on those key issues of passing, catching, kicking, decision making, tackling technique and structure in attack and defence is a key to the development of any individual into a team environment.

“Also, it is also our job at the NTIS to ensure if these athletes are given an opportunity to trial or play down south then we ensure they are up to speed with the finer points of the game. Also what will be required of them from Coaches at different levels, so their transition time in a new environment is minimal. This improves the athletes’ chances of success at higher levels.

However, even with this training and insight gained from the program, Michael says that there are still two issues that they can't adequately prepare their young charges for.

"One is that when they relocate, they are away from their families and it's will take them time to adjust to a new environment. The other issue is that when they go South, the main thing they have to come to terms with is the speed of the game and I believe that it will take them at least six months to adjust to that speed. Once they can handle being away and pick up the pace then I think that more of these young players are going to succeed in the game."

Michael is very happy with his support team at the Institute (PES staff). This consists of a sports psychologist, a strength and conditioning trainer/coordinator, a physiotherapist and a nutritionist. He also has Brett Holmes as his assistant coach, a manager, video analyst and support people from the clubs.

Professional Enhancement Services work with the group at various times throughout the year and the sports psychologist is an Adult Career Education adviser as well.

"The players are counselled about what they can do outside the game and we look to put them into programs that will give them a career path outside the game. At the end of the day it's about players' opportunity. A percentage will go on with a career in the game but even those that don't have been exposed to further education and career opportunities. Also, they go back into their community as a product of the NTIS - a good role model and a worker for Rugby League."

"That's what I am talking about with regard to what these athletes get exposed to up in the Northern Territory. There is no other set up like it in Australia - it is the only one of its kind, and a huge bonus for Rugby League"

The coach was asked if there was any flow on effect from the Institute players to the standard of competition in club sides.

"The competition is very physical," he said. "It's power based rather than structured defence and attack. You must remember there are a few issues up there with regard to heat. It is very hot when they play and defence is really more about attack. We'll score 30 points, they'll score 28 but we will win the game is the philosophy. That's an attitude I've looked to change by working on the defence of our young players and I can see that starting to rub off a little bit onto the coaches that I am working with in the club system."

"We have more and more coaches getting involved in the education process and working through Modified Games and Club Coaching Awards but the isolation is a factor up there with regard to getting to coaching courses."

"Our program has been running for five years now and our players are just starting to drip-feed back into the clubs and hopefully coaches will pick up on the positive aspects of their game. I have more coaches contacting me about various issues so that is encouraging as well."

Michael speaks highly of the support of the ARL, NTRL and particularly of the Northern Territory Government.

"The ARL pay a subsidy to the NTIS to cover the program it runs. The government has put a lot of money into it and they have been very supportive."

He also has a positive outlook for the future of the program.

"The key issue is to get the message over to the clubs and the people who run the clubs to understand that what we are doing with the coaching and development side of it is a long term plan not a short term fix," he said.

"There is discussion from some about shortening the program from 10 months to a six week one and having our players spend two days at the Institute and two days at the clubs. This will not work if players are to achieve at higher levels."

"To me though, for this program to work, and for these athletes to get to the levels that are desirable, we need them full time in the program. This allows us to control the environment and implement a more professional culture amongst the players. I am definitely in favour of the program continuing in its present format."

As testament to that formula's success, we only need to look at the reaction of some knowledgeable visitors.

During the recent Under 18 Nationals, Michael showed representatives from the ARL, Broncos, Newcastle Knights and Sydney Roosters through the program. They were all clearly impressed and very positive in their comments.

The Northern Territory Institute of Sport is very happy with its recruitment process and Michael Rawiri is very happy with the progress of his recruits. And these recruits are very fortunate to have an enthusiastic and positive mentor who states when asked what he thinks of his job -

"I don't work., I do what I love full time so I don't consider it a job."

10.

Duties of the Club Trainer

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.

Trainer

The primary responsibility of the Club Trainer is to work in conjunction with the coach to ensure all players reach and maintain required fitness levels and ensure they have a safe, healthy and enjoyable training and playing environment.

The Club Trainer is required to have a sound knowledge of technical skills related to physical performance and should aim to achieve and maintain professional accreditation. The incumbent should have sound communication skills and should be a good organiser.

It is important that the Club Trainer keeps up to date with the fitness and training techniques and it is necessary for the Club Trainer to have a sound relationship with Club Team Coaches.

Suggested Duties

1. Encourage players to abide by the Rules of the Club and the State or District Junior League.
2. Encourage players to respect and observe the Club's and the State, District or Junior League Codes of Conduct.
3. Control the warm up and cool down and stretching drills for all players.
4. Assist the coach to assess player injuries sustained during training and matches.
5. Report all injury concerns to coach and Club Sports Trainer Coordinator.
6. Regularly liaise with the Club's Sports Trainer Coordinator.
7. Keep up to date with modern methods and techniques.
8. Work in the treatment of and rehabilitation of injured players.
9. Provide reports to the coach on player development and attitude.
10. Ensure all players observe the rules in relation to head injuries.
11. Ensure that all team first aid equipment is available.
12. Ensure all team equipment is available: squeeze bottles, ice packs etc.
13. Ensure that all health requirements are being observed for the treatment of players and for the safety of all concerned.
14. Keep accurate records of player injuries and provide details to the clubs Sports Trainer Coordinator.
15. Hold appropriate qualifications as stipulated by the respective Junior League.
16. Have a good working knowledge of the Club Constitution and Rules.
17. Be aware of the future directions and plans of the Club.



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RUGBY LEAGUE COACHING MANUALS

<p>Book 14 MINI/MOD DRILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Craig Coleman • Skill Scene - Hit and Spin - Spin and Unload • Game Sense • Tackling Communication (Part 2) • Off - The - Ball Play - Phil Gould • Videotaping Junior Games • Physical Training during the competitive phase of the season • Performance Monitors - Assessing the behaviour & attitudes of the Rugby League player (Part 1) 	<p>Book 15 KICKING DRILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Phil Gould • The Role of the Coach - Wayne Pearce • Teaching the Junior Player - John Dixon • Becoming a Better Bench Coach - Brian Smith • Assessing The Injured Player • Coaches Insight - Brian Kerle • Developing a Periodisation Plan - Ken Kennedy • Performance Monitors - Assessing the behaviour & attitudes of the Rugby League player (Part 2) - Steve Anderson 	<p>Book 16 DEFENCE & TACKLING DRILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Royce Simmons • The Football Manager - Max Ninness • The Conditioner - Billy Johnstone • The Role of the Physio - Tony Ayoub • Coaches Insight - Andy Goodway • Aquatic Therapy - Brad Walker
<p>Book 17 DRILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Mark Graham • Choosing a Mentor - Peter Corcoran • Captain and Coach - Mitch Luka • Understanding the Rules of Rugby League (Part 1) • Speed and Agility - Frank Ponissi • Performance Psychology in Rugby League - Vic Mellors • A Thinking Coach - Rod Patison 	<p>Book 18 ATTACKING DRILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Mal Meninga • Training - Speed, Agility, Strength, Power - Ashley Jones • Create an ethos in your club - Greg Pierce • The Specific of Planning - Brian Canavan • Performance Monitors - Assessing the behaviour & attitudes of the Rugby League player (Part 3) - Steve Anderson • Coaches Insight - Rick Stone • Coaching Individual Positions • Defence - A Team Responsibility • Completion Rates 	<p>Book 19 SPEED & AGILITY DRILLS FOR MINI & MOD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Andrew Farrar • The Trainer - Scott Campbell • Two Codes Converging - Eddie Jones • Keeping Them Out - Sean Cassidy • Turning Your Kick Chase Around • Creating Quality Second Phase Football • Principles of Defence - Ken Kennedy • Understanding the Rules of Rugby League (Part 2) • What's in Your Sports Drink (Part 1) • Skills - Developing Speed & Agility
<p>Book 20 TOUCH/TAG TRAINING GAMES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Tony Smith • Self Assessment - John Dixon • Ruck Defence - Glenn Bayliss • Benefits of Kick Play - Kurt Wrigley • Rugby League's Marathon Men - Rudi Meir • Increasing Training Intensity in Country Rugby League Players • Diet & Supplement: What is Factual, What is Fiction? - Doug King • Off Season Checks - Doug King • Whats in Your Sports Drink (Part 2) 	<p>Book 21 PLAY THE BALL DRILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Graham Murray • The Need for Innovation & Creativity • Basic Principles in Defence & Attack • Finding The Edge • The Roosters Recruitment Drive • Session Guides • Rugby League's Battle for Great Britain • Injury Statistics 	<p>Book 22 TACKLING DRILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Michael Hagan • Conditioning Limited Interchange • Coaching The Mental Aspect • Fitness Testing • Preventing Hamstring Injury in Sports • Performance, Fatigue and Injuries in Rugby League • Physical Preparation. What's Your Priority • Reaction Time, The Key to Explosiveness
<p>Book 23 PASSING DRILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Daniel Anderson • Structural Influence on Man Management • Dissecting the Player Coach Dynamic • Anderson's Galvanising Formula • Is Dropping The Player The Answer • Empowerment as a Coaching Approach • Guidelines for Objectively Testing and Assessing Player Fitness • Combining Skills & Fitness 	<p>Book 24 OPPOSED PASSING DRILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Steve Folkes • Improve Players Without Stifling Creativity • Social Cohesion Relates to Task Cohesion • Situational Coaching • Lies, Damn Lies and Statistics • Development Squads • Fitness Testing: Are Results Useful? • Making Nutrition Part of the Training Program • League Coach Forum 	<p>Book 25 EVASION DRILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Matthew Elliot • Individual Coaching • UK Coaches Sourcing NRL Coaching Information • Coaching a Country Football Team • Today's Referee • Coaching With Computers • The Pre-Season, A Race Against Time! • Pre-Season Training, Some Other Considerations • League Coach Forum • Flying Kangaroos: The impact of jet lag on performance
<p>Book 26 CATCH & PASS DRILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Chris Anderson • Time Management • The Role of Assistant Coach • Defence • Career Coach: Poisoned challis or dream job? • Today's Referee • 101 Coaching Tips • Qualities Required by the Junior Player • It's Not Just and 80 Minute Game • Applying Empowerment in Coaching: <i>Some Considerations</i> • League Coach Forum 	<p>Book 27 BASIC TRAINING DRILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Peter Sharp • Club Continuity • Attitude Need in the Ruck • Developing For The Future • Train harder or Train Smarter • Various Defensive Formations • Women In Rugby League - <i>Some Medical Considerations</i> • Energy For Stop and Go Sports • League Coach Forum 	<p>Book 28 TRAINING DRILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Ricky Stuart • Absorbing Pressure • Strength, Training & Diet • The Halfback • Developing a Coaching Philosophy • A simple game being enveloped by science & technology • Comparison in Rugby League between Aust. & UK • Eating Before Exercise • Carbohydrate Loading • The Stretching Debate • League Coach Forum
<p>Book 29 OFFLOAD DRILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Rod Patison • Does a team develop a 'team instinct' or a 'team discipline'? • Decision Making Skills Can Be Learnt • Lets Talk Tackling • Should junior coaches indulge in the mindset of 'Teaching' or 'Winning'? • Preparing the Junior Player on Match Day • Hey Coach! Did you keep a Diary • The Triangle and Stages of the Game • The Physiology of Winning • David Waite Leads to UK Charge • Strength Training for Football • Injuries to the abdomen, what can happen beneath • Cramps and Stitch • Supplements in Sport - why are they so tempting? 	<p>Book 30 KICKING DRILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Chris Anderson • Do You Have a Coaching Philosophy? • The 'Get Out' Sets • Successful Attack • An Approach to Short Term Coaching • Making The Transition • Duty of Care, Responsibility and Liability • Andrew Johns' Mental Checklist • The Psychology of Winning • Responsibilities of the Team Manager • Fine Tuning The Player with Instinctive Drives • What Type of Person Makes aa Good Coach • Wigan Now Develop the Best • Testing... How, Why, Who Where and When • A Suggested Plan for a Rugby League Environment • League Coach Forum 	<p>Book 31 DRILLS The Dummy Half & Advantage Line Running</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coach Talk - Graham Murray • The Assistant Coach • The Coach & Planning • Mental Toughness Without The Mental • Football Parents, Support, Smiles and Sporting Success • The Ruck is the Centre of the Universe • Drawing The Line • An Approach to Defensive Preparation • Taking The Plunge - Becoming a Full Time Coach • Duties of the Coaching Co-Ordinator • Motivation at the Top Level • Laws of the Game • Players Questions - Coaches Answers • BMS - Sports Therapy for Rugby League • There's No Room For Liquid Amber in Sport • The Injured Player: Emergencies in the Game (Part 1)

11.

League Coach Forum.

Junior Coaching

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

QUESTION

I coach a team of under 11's.

The kids are great and attend training, enjoy playing and are a great bunch.

I realise I'm not perfect but I do my best by the team and try to develop all the kids regardless of ability.

I've recently had some differences of opinion with some parents (of the more skilfull players) who seem to believe I should concentrate more on the better players and less on the poorer players.

Has anyone out there come across this before and if so what is the solution?

I am a firm believer in giving all kids the same opportunity, and will not change this belief for anyone, but I fear it may push the better players parents to move their kids to a different team.

I have already lost two of my best players because of it.

Am I wrong in my beliefs?

Rob

ANSWER 1

When the issue of 3 and 5 point tries came up I posted my thoughts that the kids are there to learn how to play and have fun. As coaches we can do that without governing bodies telling us the kids MUST have a minimum of X number of passes etc. This means that ALL kids should be involved in all the drills and skills sessions and have an equal amount of game time, especially in the under 7 to 12 age groups.

I was at a coaching seminar held in Queensland two years ago, Wayne Bennett was one of the guest speakers. At that time I had a similar problem with

one family, their son was a good footballer for his age, he new it and his parents actively encouraged him. I was threatend that they would take their son elsewhere if he was not captain and did not play every game where HE wanted to play. This was obviously not a good situation. Well, at the end of the seminar I got a chance to ask Wayne Bennett what he would do and he simply said this, 'Leave the kid on the bench and let him and his parents see that the team can play without him'. This may not work in your case but you never know.

I would suggest that if the parents are that concerned with their sons playing career then they should go elsewhere. Let others put up with their rubbish.

Darren

ANSWER 2

I have found myself in a similar situation as yourself in regard to the skills and experience range of my team (under 12's). In that there are about six very advanced players with the majority of others needing a fair bit of work with a few absolute beginners.

We are both coaching teams that are still very much in the early stages of developing core skills and this does take up much of your training time.

You have the right emphasis in that you are trying to develop the team as a whole as even the more talented players need to have a good team game in order to give them the platform to show their skills off. The dilemma for you is how to ensure that your talented group are advancing whilst your less experienced kids are coming on.

A couple of things I have done to address this is to team up with a second adult in my case my manager, who will run drills for the more advanced group. Often these will have a strong competitive edge to them,

while I work through some basics with the other boys which gives me blocks of time at every training session to work with the new kids. This might only form 15-20 minutes per session, the rest of the time they train together (40 minutes). It is essential that this is someone you can trust and work with because as soon as the kids start receiving mixed messages the whole thing starts heading in a downwards spiral.

The other thing I do is to match the kids in drills such as 2 on 1 and 1 on 1 tackling based on their level of skill and strength so that the pace and execution of the drills matches the individuals levels thus avoiding frustration on both ends of the spectrum.

Whatever you choose to do, it sounds like you have the essential part of a successful team which is a cohesive happy bunch of kids, hopefully the parents will give you enough time, space and support to let the whole team meet their potential.

Eric

ANSWER 3

Stick to your guns mate. I don't know if this is the philosophy of your club, but you could also emphasise to all the parents that:

- the focus for kids is on enjoying their football and improving their game.
- all your players get equal playing time.
- that you are developing players to play rugby league at all levels of the game not just the elite (there is no guarantee that any player will go on to become future professional or international players and the percentage in any case tends to be very small).
- that the best players are those that work well as part of a team as well as being talented individuals.

The goal for all clubs, teams, coaches and administrators is that all teams should be pretty competitive, and on their day any team could win the game. I've never seen any good come from 50 point drubbings, the winning team doesn't learn anything and the losing team give up heart.

I've seen several teams fold because of this type of problem. It just leads to one 'super team' that beats all others teams. The result is that kids just give up or don't want to play for that team any more.

In the longer term if this logical path is followed through you end up with fewer and fewer teams. (this happened in the north of England with women and girls Rugby League a few years back, and they are only just starting to re-build from this)

In the bigger picture of life all kids will need to be able to cope with competing, winning and losing and it won't always go the way they want it to regardless of how good an individual they are.

Dave

ANSWER 4

The obligation as a coach is to gain improvement from every player. It is also one of the parents, who only want little Johnny to improve. Clearly the coach can only do so much on his own.

You will need to get some assistance or more time. My suggestion if possible is to request the less capable players to attend training 20 minutes earlier where you can then concentrate on the individual skills required.

Provide reading material or videos. They are all different, some prefer demonstrations and lectures and others would rather read it.

Judex

ANSWER 5

The problem you have is common amongst most coaches in almost all sports. The solution to this problem is relatively easy but requires a lot of time and effort on your part to execute.

Your basic problem is Relationship Management. The business world calls this CRM or Customer Relationship Management. Another facet of Rugby League is Public Relations (PR).

So how do you achieve a harmonious relationship with players and their parents?

The only effective way to achieve this is to bring them into the process. You do this by developing and encouraging communication.

With the team you design the structure of a coaching program for the year and then discuss this with them (1) to inform them and (2) to encourage feedback from the kids. For example you might discuss what days will be training days and what time etc, what you will do at training and why, what do they want to do at training and the list goes on. It's important to let them have choices about some things.

For example they may want more fun game activities. I've used these to reward effort by slotting this in at the end of training sessions.

You need to have rules and the kids must be a part of designing rules. For example if you miss training for no reason you can be benched. Letting them make the rules or approve rules means they are much more likely

to see them as fair and reasonable. They are much more likely to obey them as well.

Add non Rugby League activities that are exciting and fun to do. For example I used to take the kids rock climbing with a couple of instructors twice a year. I also used to hire the local school gym and set up confidence courses that were challenging and fun. These activities help build confidence, self esteem and break the often boring aspects of training.

What you are trying to achieve here is a bunch of kids who act, think and make decisions together, who have input into the decision making process and were they feel it is THEIR team not YOUR team.

You want players to come to training because they want to not because they have to.

The other half of the coin is developing relationships with the parents.

The first step is to draft a letter. This will include your coaching program for the year which includes goals and objectives for the season. Include a list of contact numbers and names of club officials, coaching staff and players. Include information about the grade and any rules that might apply to it, playing grounds and locations, team rules and anything that you think is helpful in informing parents.

I always emphasis to parents (as well as players) that each individual player has a duty and responsibility to the team. If players do not turn up to practice (or a game) this can wreck a training session (or game) because a key player is needed. This affects the whole team and the only acceptable excuses are injury, sickness and school responsibilities. The objective here is to assert your authority and make it clear that frivolous reasons for an absence will not be tolerated.

You need to be hard headed about this and a little bloody minded as well. I had a good player whose parents were separated. The father is my best mate. The mother wanted to take him skiing on game day. I re-emphasized the responsibility to the team and she then tried to put the responsibility on her son by saying its his decision. He wanted to do both but didn't want to upset me or his mother. He was between a rock and a hard place. I firmly but politely told her that game day was always the priority and if she wanted to go skiing then arrange to do it on a non game day or else I would drop her son from the team if she couldn't guarantee to make him available. It was a take it or leave it option.

I won. Simple psychology, I did to her what she had done to her son. Choice was one day of skiing or lose

a season of football. Even though we were friends she knew I meant it. The point here is that you must retain control once you've set terms and conditions by which players participate. Other parents and players expect you to administer things fairly and objectively for the benefit of all even though you risk loosing a player and upsetting parents. If you're not prepared to enforce the rules and conditions everyone agrees to then there's not much point in having any. It also sends a message that you're prepared to enforce rules for the benefit of all. Parents will think twice when they know you mean what you say.

The way you go about communicating with parents can minimise if not prevent the above happening. The biggest ally you have are the players themselves. Get the kids on your side and half the battle is won.

To enhance this I regularly talk to parents. I call them every 2 weeks and discuss little Johnny's progress and how I think he's going. The most important part of this is getting parents to reveal to you what they want and how they think things are going. The opportunity here is to provide reasoning behind your decisions and methods. Another aspect of this is to get parents to reveal what the kids think. If they're happy then great you know you're on track and if not this can give you clues on things that might need changing.

The objective here is to progressively acquire their confidence and support. As you obtain this parents become a good information resource and feedback mechanism to evaluated your own efforts. It takes time to do this but over time you can turn parents from adversaries into friends/supporters.

When it comes to the team I often remind those involved that "No individual is more important than the team".

When it comes to kids in this age group who are much better than others I do not distinguish between them when it comes to training. For the next few years this age group progresses at varying rates collectively and individually. When it comes to individualised training its about position not ability. If you provide advanced training to better players you widen the gap and worsen the problem. You also risk demotivating less able players if you give others special attention. They may see themselves as less worthy, not as good etc.

Another important aspect to consider is that this age group needs to start learning how to operate as a team. Good players who are shown favoritism often fall behind in this aspect. Prima donnas can make life difficult for everyone and good players (and parents

12.

Laws of the Game.

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

Advantage Play

Q1. Red knocks on. Blue attempts to regather the knock on. Another offside Blue player picks up the ball

- A1. a Penalty to Red for offside Blue player.
b Scrum, loose head and put into Blue.

Q2. Red knocks on. Blue picks up the ball and is tackled into touch.

- A2. a Scrum, loose head and put into Blue.
b Scrum, loose head and put into Red.

Q3. Red knocks on in the Blue in-goal area. Blue regathers and is tackled over the dead ball line.

- A3. a Handover to Blue 10 metres out from Blue's goal line.
b 20 metre optional restart by Blue.

Q4. Red knocks on on fifth and last 5 metres out from the Blue goal line. Red grubber kicks the ball over the Blue dead ball line.

- A4. a Handover to Blue 10 metres out from Blue's goal line.
b 20 metre optional restart by Blue.

Q5. Red knocks on 5 metres out from the Blue goal line. Blue picks up the ball in the Blue in-goal and kicks the ball which enters touch on the full.

- A5. a Goal line drop out by Blue.
b Scrum 10 metres out from the Blue goal line. Loose head and put into Blue.

Q6. Red knocks on and the ball is regathered by Blue who passes to another onside player who is then tackled into touch.

- A6. a Scrum, loose head and put into Blue.
b Scrum, loose head and put into Red.

In-Goal Decisions

Q7. Blue grubber kicks a ball into the Red in-goal. The Red fullback knocks on. Another Red player also in-goal but in front of the Red fullback picks up the ball.

- A7. a Goal line drop out by Red.
b Penalty against Blue.

Q8. Red puts up a 'bomb' which is caught on the full by Blue with one foot in the field of play and one foot on the goal line.

- A8. a Play on.
b 20 metre optional restart by Blue.

Q9. Blue passes a ball in his own in-goal to another on-side Blue player. The ball accidentally hits a Red player and the ball rolls over the dead ball line.

- A9. a Goal line drop out by Blue.
b 20 metre optional restart by Blue.

Q10. Red attempts a drop goal which is successful. Blue standing in-goal attempts to catch the ball on the full, he juggles it but regains possession.

- A10. a Play on
b 20 metre optional restart by Blue.

13.

The Injured Player: Emergencies in the Game.

(Part 2)

By Doug King RCpN DipNg PGDipSportMed(Otago)

Continued from RLCM Book 31

The Knee

Despite the obvious, the knee is the most commonly injured body part within collision sports. This injury occurs primarily in the tackle and the most common structure injured is the Medial Collateral Ligament (MCL) of the knee. Like the ankle and shoulder there are a variety of injuries that can occur and careful assessment can help eliminate these. The player is usually seen lying on the ground in some form of pain or distress and will be either bent over holding onto their leg or showing signs of distress.

On-the-field Assessment. As identified, the player who injures their knee usually does so in the tackle situation. The typical scenario is where the player has one leg planted and the body weight on it in the form of running. When the player is tackled the foot usually stays in the direction it has been placed in and the body twists in the opposite direction of the force being applied to the body and the pivot point is usually at the point of the knee. This force can occur on the upper body or directly on the knee in the tackle seeing the force directly applied at the knee joint and pushing the leg inwards causing the MCL to become injured with the severity ranging from a strain through to a complete rupture.

Other injuries that can occur at the knee are ruptured Anterior and/or Posterior Cruciate Ligaments (can occur spontaneously with no player even near them as they are running), Supracondylar fracture of the femur, Patella Dislocation, ruptured Patella Tendon, Fractured Patella, Distal Femoral Epiphysis and Proximal Tibial Epiphysis (these usually occur in skeletally immature players). These will be discussed within this section.

When first arriving onto the field of play to assess the player lying on the ground, there may be some obvious deformity and there may be some form of pain. This pain can be diffuse in nature meaning it cannot be specifically pin pointed as to an actual point of origin. It should be noted that this often does not occur and if the knee cap (Patella) has been dislocated in the tackle, it often does spontaneously reduce itself back into its correct anatomical position.

The deformity of the knee is usually immediately present if either a knee dislocation is not reduced or there is a fracture. This deformity may be relatively subtle and can be missed if the assessor has not seen these before especially if the assessor presumes that the deformity is due to immediate swelling. Movement of the knee may elicit crepitus (bone grinding on bone) especially if the knee is being realigned. The functional assessment (the A and P of TOTAPS) is usually poor and the range of motion severely limited. If there is a dislocation still present these are usually medial in position and the major vessel areas around the knee are at risk of becoming impaired with this form of injury. Note for any loss of function below the knee and any report of pins and needles or tingling sensation as this may indicate a neurological involvement and require immediate removal and advanced medical care.

In the case of the anterior and/or posterior cruciate ligaments the player may be running and then “trip” and be unable to fully use their leg. These injuries can also occur in the tackle and they typically initially present as no or minimal swelling, no or minimal pain and a report of a popping sensation in their knee. There is an increased laxity in the affected knee compared to the uninjured knee and bruising will become evident over a period of time due to bleeding that can occur when the cruciate ligament was injured.

In the Distal Femoral (lower end of the upper leg) Epiphysis and Proximal Tibial (upper end of the lower leg) Epiphysis injuries, they must be considered in the skeletally immature player. These are where the growth plates situated on the end of the Femur and the Tibia become separated or actually suffer a fracture. These are Medical Emergencies and should be always sent to a hospital for assessment and referral to an orthopaedic specialist as these can have long term effects on the players bone growth and skeletal development. If the player presents with smallish puncture wounds in the area surrounding the knee suspect that there is a fracture and treat as such.

In the case of the MCL injury, the player will identify pain on the medial aspect of their knee and have severe pain especially when they try to walk or turn the lower part of the leg. These injuries occur when the player is tackled directly on the knee from the lateral side and the knee is forced sideways and the knee joint opens up towards the medial side of the leg and stretches the ligament.

Transportation from the field. Transporting a player with a knee injury off the field can range from a simple two person carry through to a stretcher carry depending upon the nature of the injury, the players discomfort and the place of the injured player on the field. Unless you are trained and qualified to do so, and only if there is a circulation compromise do not align any suspected fracture of the knee under any circumstances.

If the player is carried off the field use the most appropriate and comfortable form for the player. In most cases where a MCL is suspected a two person carry is usually sufficient as most players do not want to be carried off in a stretcher. In the case of a suspected or actual fracture, splint the player appropriately ensuring that the circulation is not impeded and the player is comfortable as possible with the splinting on.

When deciding to transport the player off the field irrespective of the nature of the injury do not let the officials influence any decision as to when the player is moved or how they are to be moved. The game can wait a few minutes or it may be able to be moved to another field enabling the team medical people to carry out the appropriate assessment and preparation for the transporting of the player.

Sideline Treatment. As with all injuries, the application of ice to the injured area is useful in alleviating the immediate level of pain, slowing down the onset of swelling to the area and psychologically supporting the player. If the player has a splint on

check this as well to ensure that it is comfortable for the player, does not impede the blood and neurological circulation. Do not just leave the player at the sideline or in the dressing room alone as players can attempt to get up to see the game or try to return to playing. If they are thirsty allow them to suck on some ice but don't let them have a drink bottle of water as they may need further treatment.

Reassessment of the knee on the sideline is essential to reconfirm the provisional assessment of the injury and to enable a more methodical second assessment to be conducted. It is recommended that all the knee injuries are further assessed at an advanced medical care facility where they can have x-rays done and be assessed by the appropriate medical personnel.

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 will depend upon the injury type, severity and treatment protocol and their compliance to rehabilitation. Clearance from an appropriate Sports Medicine Practitioner should be sought prior to return to training and playing.

Players returning to the game usually like to have their knee strapped following a knee injury and there are several ways in doing this.

The Ankle

Often referred to as the bread and butter of the sports medic, the ankle injury can be a simple 'rolled' ankle through to a fracture and severely debilitating. These injuries are often not witnessed and can occur at both training, playing or simply walking down the road. Once an ankle has been injured the player may suffer ongoing successive ankle injuries especially if they have not rehabilitated appropriately.

The typical scenario is where the player is tackled, or tackling another player and they go down in the tackle and do not get up. Typically they are grasping at the ankle joint and in some form of pain ranging from discomfort to severe pain.

On-the-field Assessment. The player, as previously identified, is usually lying on the ground, but some cases may see the player get up and hobble or hop to the sideline. On approaching the player get them to lie or sit down and do the initial assessment of their injury. Check for functionality and pain of the ankle joint and surrounding area. Again with the ankle injury the pain is usually diffuse and unable to be pin pointed exactly to the actual area of injury.

Typically the ankle is injured on the lateral (outside) side and it usually involves one, or a combination, of three ligaments. These ligaments are located around the ankle joint near the malleolus or ankle point as it is commonly referred to. If the ankle injury is located on the medial side (inside) it usually involves one ligament and there may also be a fracture included in this injury.

If a fracture is suspected there may be some deformity in the structure of the ankle that is observable. There will be a feeling of severe pain felt by the player and they are unable to move the foot in any form. Typically though the player is immediately removed from the field of play for a further assessment, but if they have a suspected fracture it is beneficial to splint the foot and ankle joint before removing them from the field of play.

Again don't let the match officials influence the decision making process in the immediate care of the player and allow yourself time to make the right decisions.

Transportation from the field.

The transportation from the field method will depend upon the severity of the ankle injury. Some players may hop off the field before you get to them, yet some will require a buddy support to aid them off the field with either one or two people and some may require a stretcher. This decision will need to be decided upon deciding the type and severity of the injury of the ankle.

Sideline treatment. RICE is the cornerstone of all ankle injury care. This again will aid the player psychologically, assist in limiting the amount of swelling and aid in the rehabilitation of the player with the ankle injury.

If there is a suspicion of an actual fracture the player should be forwarded on to further medical care to enable a fuller assessment. This idealistically, should happen immediately but, if it is not a fracture, it practically does not happen until further down the line when either the game is finished, the player takes themselves or some other injury occurs and they go with the other injured player, but irrespective of when they go the player still needs to be assessed.



If the player's ankle is splinted then check the splinting to see if it is secure, not impeding the circulation and is appropriately positioned. It is best not to remove the splint once it is on until they are at a further medical assessment facility and they can do the required assessment.

Other Considerations. The player with an ankle injury will usually be unable to participate for around six weeks especially if they have had a soft tissue injury such as strained ligaments. These players need to be supported in attending physiotherapy and completing their rehabilitation fully before recommencing training and idealistically have full medical clearance to participate in full games.

Concussion

This is one area of concern as people are often more concerned with a player with exposed blood than they are with a player who has suffered a concussion. Unfortunately concussion is the silent epidemic of injuries as they are not visible for all to see, do not show the sufferer the full extent of their injury and can very quickly kill if the player has the unfortunate exposure to these repeatedly.

Any player suffering a head injury should be immediately sidelined until fully medically assessed by a trained and appropriate Sports Medicine Practitioner and/or Neurologist. Most sporting bodies have a mandatory stand down period for head injuries ranging from 3 weeks for a grade 1 concussion to a season stand-down for successive or Grade 3 concussions. This is good but can lead to confusion as any player with a grade 1 concussion can be assumed to be clear to play after 3 weeks without being assessed. All head injuries need to be assessed both at the time of the concussion and before recommencing training and playing irrespective of whether they are free of symptoms or have sat out the required time stipulated.

A head injury is any blow to the head that alters the player's sense of being ranging from the traditional "bell ringer" through to a full blown unconscious episode. They can have immediate or delayed effects on the player and are individual in nature meaning that no two concussions are the same in effect, severity or prognosis.

On-the-Field Assessment. If you arrive to the injured player and they are unconscious immediately suspect a high neck injury and treat as such. Unless your trained to deal with these call for the emergency services and do not let anyone, including the player if

they become conscious, move or reposition the player at all. This injury requires a stiff neck collar to be applied and the player to be stretchered off the field in an appropriate stretcher. This should only be undertaken by fully trained and qualified personnel in all situations and once the collar is placed on it should not be removed until full clearance is made by qualified medical personnel.

For the conscious player lying on the field who is suspected of concussion do not let them return to play until they have undergone a full assessment by TOTAPS. Some players will pass all aspects of the assessment until it comes time to perform the skill and they then show signs of disorientation or confusion as to their playing position or time frame. Simple questions you can ask are the approximate time of the day, game they are playing in, place or venue, score and what they had for breakfast that morning. There are lots of other questions to ask depending upon what reference you are using but it pays to know what to ask and go with what is familiar to the team medic. If you suspect any concussion at all remove the player from the game and do not let them recommence playing again until they are cleared medically.

Observe for feelings of wanting to vomit or any bleeding or yellowish fluid coming from either the nose, mouth or ears as this indicates a severe injury and needs to be treated as a high neck injury.

Do not let match or team officials/management influence the medical decision making process with these players. It is best to take your time and make a complete assessment and be over cautious with concussions than to make a rush decision and risk a players life.

Transportation from the field. These players can usually be walked from the field of play unless you suspect a high neck injury. Walk with these players close to their side as they may be unsteady on their

feet. Some players appear well in the assessment until they arise and then they can become unsteady on their feet and require assistance to come off the field of play.

Sideline Treatment. Reassess the player again on the sideline and if you suspect concussion do not leave the player alone at all under any circumstances. If they have family or friends with them at the game, get them to sit with the player. One tip for doing this is to have a list of possible symptoms that they may present with such as feelings of tiredness, nausea, vomiting or sluggishness that can indicate a concussion available to give to the players support person so that they can also observe them.

Have the player transported with the support person to an appropriate Sports Medicine Practitioner or emergency medical facility to be fully assessed the same day that they are injured. Unless you have access to a Sports Medicine Practitioner at the sideline of the game do not clear the player to return to the field of play under any circumstances.

Other Considerations. All concussions should be medically assessed irrespective of the players protests that they are alright, and a signed written medical clearance produced before allowing the player to return to train and play. Concussions can kill and Rugby League in New Zealand recently has seen a player die from this.

The use of a mouthguard can assist in decreasing the severity of concussions, and teaching the appropriate tackling techniques can assist in decreasing the severity and frequency of concussions. The use of headgear is not recommended for decreasing head injuries or concussions as they are useful for decreasing the cuts and grazes to the head but do not decrease the impact of the blow as a mouthguard would do.

Notes

14.

Everything You Wanted To Know About Supplementation In Rugby League

Written by Robert Wilesmith (B.S.Sc.) A.C.P.E.,
Level 3 ARL Rugby League Coach, Level 2 Sports Trainer (SMA)

In an ideal world, everyone would be able to eat a “well balanced diet” that would eliminate supplements. We would carefully plan out each meal so that we would have just the right amount of each micronutrient. But we don’t live in an ideal world. Most of us eat on the run, skip meals, and often choose processed convenience foods that are nutrient-poor. Although the National Cancer Institute recommends that people eat five to eight servings of fruits and vegetables daily, less than 10% of the world’s population actually does so. Sadly, on any given day, 80-90% of the population is deficient in one or more vitamins and minerals. I am a great believer in healthy eating and in fact am a careful eater myself. I eat only fresh food and never touch junk food. Unlike many people, I avoid cola’s with phosphate, which can literally wash minerals out of the body. I rarely drink alcohol, which can deplete the body of B vitamins. I don’t smoke, which can decrease natural levels of vitamin C. Yet, I know that as careful as I am, I cannot possibly get all of the vitamins, minerals, and nutrients that I need from food alone. Even though I try to eat fresh, organic produce, I am aware that modern farming practices have depleted the soil of nutrients, which in turn, can strip fruits and vegetables of their valuable vitamins and minerals. The storage and shipping of food can also zap it of it’s nutrients. I take supplements to ensure that I am getting all the micronutrients that I need to maintain optimal health, and I advise others to do the same.

Ø What form of supplement is the most effective for Rugby League?

Supplements come in many different forms, from tablets to capsules to liquids to powders that can be mixed in water or juice to fortified food bars to creams and gels. Choose the form that is easiest for you to use. For example, if you hate to swallow pills, try a liquid extract or powder if it is available. In some cases

however, I do recommend one particular form of a supplement. For example, I recommend the sublingual form of vitamin B12 and (a tablet that dissolves under the tongue) because it is better absorbed by the body. In other cases, I recommend the particular formation for a supplement because it is greater on the stomach.

Ø When is the best time to take supplements?

As a rule, most supplements are taken two or three times daily, with meals, unless otherwise specified. In some cases, I would recommend that you take a supplement on an empty stomach, an hour or two after eating. For convenience, I advise people to organize the supplements in the morning and to carry what they need with them for the rest of the day in a plastic bag or a pill case in their training bag. Supplements that promote sleep or relaxation should be taken only at night before bedtime because they can promote drowsiness.

Ø There are hundreds of supplements listed; how do I know which ones are for me?

It is not my intention for anyone to take all of the supplements listed below, and certainly not all at once. However, although some supplements can and should be taken daily, many supplements are to be used for specific problems, or under specific conditions. For example, there are several wonderful supplements that can help reduce the symptoms of cold and flu, and give your immune system an added boost when you are sick. Once the symptoms disappear however, you no longer need to take them. If you are someone with high blood lipid levels, which put you at risk of heart disease or if you are battling the aches and pains of arthritis, you may choose from several supplements that may help relieve your problems.

Ø With so many new supplements on the market, how do I pick a brand that is effective and safe?

The same rules apply to buying supplements that apply to buying any over-the-counter medication; select products offered by the reputable manufacturers that take special steps to ensure safety and effectiveness. You can purchase your supplements in natural food stores, pharmacies, supermarkets, mail order, Internet or network marketing companies. Look for products that come in tamper proof packages, preferably with both an inside and outside safety seal. Each package should be clearly marked with an expiration date. To maintain the maximum effectiveness of your supplements and to retard spoilage, store them in a cool, dark place out of direct sunlight. Some products may need to be refrigerated and will say so on the label. Finally, the brands of supplements that I am talking about here in this paper are A.S.D.A. approved. The best supplement brands I have come across through my career at the elite level & also what has worked for my Personal Training clients are E.A.S. & G.N.C. supplements, both American brands & both are available in most reputable outlets throughout the world.

Ø The “FACTS” of the Ten (10) top Supplements to take for High Performance in Rugby League

1. CIWUJA – SIBERIAN GINSENG

Ciwuja attracted the attention of medical researchers who had heard anecdotal reports of its use by mountain climbers to improve performances at high altitudes, where there are low levels of oxygen. Recent studies performed in the U.S.A. and China show that Ciwuja can indeed improve workout performance, which is why sports supplements containing ciwuja are fast becoming a favourite among fitness mavens. Ciwuja products are also marketed as herbal energizers for anyone who needs energy boost. In different studies, researchers at the Academy of Preventive Medicine in Beijing and the Dept. of Physiology at the University of North Texas Health Science Centre discovered that ciwuja could alter normal metabolism during exercise so that more fat and less carbohydrate are burned. This function is beneficial because the shift from carbohydrate to fat burning delays the build-up of lactic acid in the muscles, which can promote fatigue and muscle pain. If you take ciwuja, you can work out longer and harder before feeling tired. The other benefit of course is that you will burn more fat. Even better, ciwuja does not contain steroids or

stimulants such as caffeine, and it is safe even at high doses. Ciwuja is often found in supplements that contain other performance-enhancing compounds including *Siberian Ginseng*, *Licorice* and *Bee Pollen*.

Possible Benefits – Enhances Athletic Performance, Increases Stamina.

The Right Amount – Take two 400mg capsules daily.

2. CREATINE MONOHYDRATE

Creatine Monohydrate is the “Superhot” sports supplement that is fast becoming a favourite of all athletes. Creatine is an amino acid that occurs naturally in our bodies and is concentrated in skeletal muscles. It is essential for the production of adenosine triphosphate (ATP), the cellular fuel that runs the body. Creatine is also found in foods such as meat and fish. We consume about 1 gram of creatine daily from our food alone, but for active people, that’s not enough. About 95% of the creatine in humans is in the skeletal muscles; the rest is in the heart, brain & testes. Vigorous exercise depletes the muscles of their natural supply of creatine. Creatine supplements help to reenergize tired muscle cells, allowing you to work out harder for a longer time. Several studies, including one recently reported in the *International Journal of Sports Nutrition*, have shown that athletes who take creatine supplements and exercise regularly lose more fat and develop better muscle tone than athletes who only work out and do not take creatine supplements. Creatine is not necessarily a tool for weight loss, however in fact when you gain muscle, you may actually put on a few pounds because muscle weighs more than fat, but you look slimmer and sleeker. Another study performed at the Cooper Clinic and Texas Woman’s University showed that it can lower elevated levels of total cholesterol and triglycerides, fat-like substances found in the blood. High levels of triglycerides increase the risk of heart disease and stroke. At an older age, creatine may prove to be useful in helping older people maintain their muscles and their strength, as we all know, after we hit the age of 35, we may lose an average of 2-4 pounds of muscle a decade and the loss may be accelerated later in life.

Possible Benefits – Helps to enhance the benefits from your workout. Builds lean body mass, burns fat. May protect against heart disease by reducing blood lipid levels.

The Right Amount – Creatine Monohydrate is the form used in supplements because it is most easily absorbed by the body. Creatine is available as a powder, which can be mixed in water or juice, or as chewable wafers. Take 5000mg (1 tablespoon of powder) in juice or water daily.

3. L-GLUTIMINE

L-Glutamine is synthesized from three other amino acids; arginine, ornithine and proline. What is fascinating about L-Glutamine is that it is one of a handful of substances that can naturally boost the level of human growth hormone, which is essential for normal growth and development. Because of its reputation as a protein-sparing agent, L-Glutamine has attracted the attention of fitness buffs who want to lose fat but maintain muscle. People who work out vigorously are at risk of overtaxing their bodies and of losing lean tissue along with the fat. Any supplement that can promote muscle growth will be a hit among the muscle-flexing set, and in fact L-Glutamine is a common ingredient in many sports supplements, including meal replacement powders.

Possible Benefits – Enhances muscle size in healthy people who work out and can promote muscle recuperation after workouts.

The Right Amount – Take up to 500mg capsules or powder either half an hour before meals or after workouts.

4. GUARANA

Grown in the wild Amazon region of Brazil and Uruguay, the fruit of the guarana plant is one of the most popular herbs in the Southern Hemisphere. In fact, in South America guarana is synonymous with energy. Guarana contains caffeine, a natural stimulant also found in coffee, tea and cola drinks. Each 500mg capsule of guarana contains about 15mg of caffeine, compared with 80 – 120mg in a cup of coffee. However, guarana contains other compounds that slow down the assimilation of caffeine by the body, producing a more sustained energizing effect that can last for up to six hours. Because of its reputation as an energy enhancer, guarana is growing in popularity among athletes looking to improve their stamina and endurance. Guarana is reputed to help rid of lactic acid, which can pool in muscle tissue and cause post workout aches and pains. According to anecdotal reports, guarana also helps athletes recover their strength more quickly.

Possible Benefits – Restores energy and improves athletic performance.

The right amount – Take up to three 500mg capsules daily. I do not recommend using guarana on a regular basis. Use only when you really need a lift!

5. H.M.B. (BETA-HYDROXY BETA-METHYLBUTYRATE)

HMB is a metabolite, or by-product of the normal breakdown in the body of the amino acid leucine, which is found in plants. HMB can enhance the effects of vigorous exercise by building muscle and reducing body fat. In one study conducted at Iowa State University, 40 men received either HMB supplements (3grams per day) or a placebo. All of the men underwent 4 weeks of weight training performed 3 days a week. At the end of the 4 weeks, the group taking the HMB showed a greater increase in muscle, lost more fat and were stronger than those not taking HMB. Because of studies like these, HMB is now being promoted as a safe alternative to anabolic steroids, which build muscle but often at a terrible cost, which can cause serious side effects. If you take HMB for its intended use for vigorous workouts such as Rugby League, there is good evidence that you will see and feel some impressive results.

Possible Benefits–Builds Muscle, decreases fat.

The Right Amount–Take 3 grams daily in either capsule or powder form with food.

6. L-CARNITINE

This supplement promises to make you stronger, sleeker and healthier. L-Carnitine is a vitamin-like nutrient that is found in the heart, brain and skeletal muscles. Its primary job is to transport fatty acids across the cell wall to the mitochondria, the powerhouse of the cell, providing heart and skeletal cells with energy. It also enables the heart to use its limited oxygen supply more efficiently. In fact, several studies have shown that heart patients who take L-Carnitine supplements can exercise longer and harder without experiencing chest pain. Recently, L-Carnitine has been promoted as a sports supplement that can increase physical stamina and promote weight loss, also it can dramatically improve aerobic ability and athletic performance.

Possible Benefits – Helps improve oxygen utilization in athletes, as well as enhances athletic performance and strength.

The Right Amount – Take up to three 250mg – 500mg capsules daily, half an hour before eating or 2 hours after eating.



7. PYRUVATE

Lose weight and burn fat without lifting a finger?. It may sound too good to be true, but studies suggest that pyruvate may actually reduce body fat and increase muscle tone *without* exercise. Even better, this new sports supplement can also help you lose weight. In one study conducted at the University of Pittsburgh USA, obese were given a low-fat diet and then given either pyruvate supplements or a placebo. After 3 weeks, the women taking pyruvate had lost 37% more weight and nearly 50% more fat than the women taking the placebo. It can lower blood cholesterol levels and blood pressure, thereby reducing the risk of heart disease. Pyruvate is naturally found in the body as a by-product of normal metabolism. It is critical for energy use because it triggers the release of ATP, the fuel produced by the cells that provide energy for the entire body. In another study, athletes who used pyruvate tired less easily and were able to increase their performance by an impressive 20%. If you use pyruvate you are in good company. Many well-known athletes and fitness mavens swear by pyruvate, including the NFL Green Bay Packers Team as well as USA's Shannon Miller – Gold Medallist at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games.

Possible Benefits – Burns fat, promotes weight loss, increases energy and stamina as well as improves cardiovascular health.

The Right Amount – As a sport supplement, take six to eight 500mg tablets daily before exercise or a meal. For weight loss, take at least 4000mg per day.

8. WHEY PROTEIN POWDER

Can taking the right protein supplement enhance and extend your life? There's compelling evidence that it can. Protein is essential for normal growth, cell repair and the production of hormones, immune cells and muscle. Whey protein concentrate can raise blood levels of glutathione, the body's primary antioxidant, which is found in every cell. Glutathione not only protects us against free radical attack but is instrumental in a well functioning immune system. Athletes place such high demands on their bodies that they need additional protein to help maintain existing muscle and build new muscle. So, Whey protein powder is the solution to all the athletes needs when building the healthy body.

Possible Benefits – Raises blood levels of glutathione, improves immune function and may extend life.

The Right Amount – Dissolve 2 heaped tablespoons in a cup of water, juice or skim milk daily after a workout.

9. ZINC MAGNESIUM (ZMA's)

Zinc Magnesium is a hard-working mineral that we take for granted. It is involved in nearly every essential bodily function, from the beating of the heart to the creation of bone and the regulation of blood sugar. It is so important that it is called the "Gatekeeper of cellular activity" signifying its critical role in cellular processes. Zinc Magnesium helps burn fat and produce energy, which is critical for both men & women. If you are feeling tired and are getting flabby, it could be a sign of magnesium deficiency. A study conducted at the USDA's Grand Forks Human Nutrition Research Centre found that postmenopausal women and athletes with low magnesium levels had less energy and did not burn fat efficiently, making physical exertion more difficult. This can lead to a vicious circle.

The Right Amount – Take 250-500mg tablets daily before bedtime. For each 250mg of ZMA's, take 500mg of calcium (As below).

10. HYDROXYAPATITE – (CALCIUM)

Hydroxyapatite is a new form of an old favourite supplement - Calcium. Along with other minerals, calcium is required for the development and maintenance of strong bones. If you don't get enough calcium, you run the risk of developing osteoporosis, a common disease characterised by the thinning of bone, which leaves it vulnerable to fracture. Low-fat dairy products such as yoghurt, and to a lesser extent green leafy vegetables such as broccoli, are great food sources for calcium. But to get the daily requirements of calcium, you would need to eat at least 20 servings (10 cups) of broccoli and green vegetables. Calcium supplements are the obvious solution, but not all calcium supplements are well absorbed by the body. Of all the calcium supplements, hydroxyapatite, made from ground-up bovine bone, is the best absorbed. Hydroxyapatite contains calcium that is identical to the calcium found in our bone, along with other minerals that are essential for stronger bones, including magnesium, fluoride, sodium and potassium. Supplements are not the only way to preserve bone. Weight-bearing exercise can help build bone and reduce bone loss. In addition, avoid carbonated beverages that contain phosphorus, which in high amounts can wash away calcium from the body.

Possible Benefits – Helps maintain strong bones in Rugby League and prevents osteoporosis.

The Right Amount – Several supplements containing Hydroxyapatite are on the market. Be sure to use one that provides 1000mg daily of calcium. Also eat a carton of yoghurt and your green vegetables daily for full effect.

15.

Carbohydrate:

Passport To Your Personal Best

Written by Teri Bauer - Sports Dietitian
www.coachesedge.com.au

Although many factors go towards achieving your personal best, fuelling up with the right diet, in particular, consuming enough carbohydrate is a must. This *The Coaches Edge* article “Carbohydrate: Passport to your Personal Best” is written by sports dietitian Teri Bauer who has worked extensively for the Sports Science Institute of Sports Africa consulting to national sports teams and now lives in Australia.

Carbohydrate...Still the One

One of the most consistent findings in sports nutrition research is the importance of carbohydrate in enhancing the energy, recovery, performance and health of your athlete.

Carbohydrate: The key to energy and recovery.

Carbohydrate is found as glucose (or sugar) in the blood and as glycogen in the liver and muscle. Body carbohydrate stores are limited and it is possible to significantly deplete these in 1-2 hours of strenuous exercise. Depletion of glycogen in active muscle is associated with fatigue and decreased performance (1,2). Low blood glucose levels (hypoglycaemia) impairs mental functions and can make the athlete feel tired, faint or shaky. Eating carbohydrate within 30 minutes of finishing exercise (approximately 1.5 g/kg in the first 2 hrs) has been shown to increase the rate of glycogen recovery. This is most important if another exercise session or competition follows in less than 8 hours (3).

Carbohydrate: The power to perform Eating enough carbohydrate before, during and after exercise helps to maintain energy levels, delay fatigue during exercise and support a more rapid recovery. Loading the muscle with carbohydrate will typically postpone fatigue and extend exercise endurance and improve performance over a set distance or workload (4). Ingestion of carbohydrate during exercise by using a

scientifically formulated sports drink (eg. Gatorade) has been shown to improve performance by up to 12%, double that of water alone (5).

Carbohydrate: The fuel to fight infection.

Upper respiratory tract infections like colds and flu appear to be more common in people who are training heavily. Consumption of adequate carbohydrate particularly during exercise helps to keep immunity-suppressing hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol in check (6).

Do most athletes get enough carbohydrate?

Numerous dietary surveys report that most of your athletes fail to consume enough carbohydrate for their daily needs (7). There may be a number of reasons for this:

The Carbohydrate Crash?

Previous unwavering respect for carbohydrate has taken a dive recently. Publication of popular low-carbohydrate, high-protein diet books, which raise concerns about carbohydrates and a variety of health issues, particularly weight gain and obesity, are probably responsible for the confusion. Unfortunately, these books contain information which is incomplete and scientifically flawed. The recommendations for carbohydrate are contrary to public health guidelines and are far below optimum for active individuals.

No doubt, controversial comments about carbohydrate make for bigger book sales! The promise that these diets promote weight loss in the short term is also attractive, but athletes and coaches need to ask: At what cost? Low carb, high-protein diets are basically a means to cut energy (kilojoules or calories). It is no surprise that if you eat less, you lose weight. Although not all of your athletes need to lose weight, the pressure to look and feel ‘lean and mean’ is a popular obsession even at the expense of health and performance.

Incredibly, dangerous eating to obtain sub-healthy body fat is a risk some athletes take to look good, often failing to realise the performance cost until too late.

Diets with adequate carbohydrate are effective for weight loss AND peak performance. The essential principle is to ensure that the amount of carbohydrate consumed is right for that person and their activity level. Low-carbohydrate, high-protein diets may have become popular because some of your athletes thought they could eat as much carbohydrate as they liked, even when training was tapered or stopped due to injury. Carbohydrate is not fattening, but eat too much and you will gain weight. The carbohydrate crash is really a big misunderstanding and athletes and coaches are definitely on the losing end!

When the mind is willing but the practise is weak.

Despite best intentions, the athletes who fail to meet their carbohydrate needs include those with (Z):

- high energy requirements (from heavy training or a growth spurt)
- a need to restrict their intake of food to lose or ‘make a weight’
- a hectic lifestyle or lack of food preparation skills
- limited access to a varied diet (e.g. living in residences at a university)
- a high-fibre intake which increases the feeling of fullness.

These athletes benefit from an individualised meal plan designed by a sports dietitian which describes what they need to eat at each meal and snack, and how they can prepare for competition. Tailored advice on sports drinks, liquid meals, carbohydrate gels, bars and powders can be especially helpful to athletes with very high energy needs, particularly during prolonged events (Table 1). Shopping trips and cooking classes are essential for the ‘gastronomically challenged’!

How much carbohydrate do your athletes need?

Use the following table and the example below to help you calculate your athletes daily carbohydrate needs for training, recovery or competition.

Table 1. Guidelines for carbohydrate intake

Situation	How much carbohydrate? g of carbohydrate/kg ideal body weight/day
Training diet	
1-3 hours of low - moderate intensity exercise (e.g. most team sports)	5-7g/kg /d
"Load" glycogen before a prolonged event of 90-120 minutes (e.g. before a marathon)	7-10g/kg /d
Prolonged (6-8 hrs), high-intensity exercise. (e.g. Tour De France)	10-12+g/kg /d
Recovery	
Enhance recovery when the next session < 8 hours away (e.g. tennis tournament)	1g/kg immediately after exercise, repeated after 2 hrs or until next meal
Pre-event meal	
Event 1 hr or longer (e.g. rugby match)	1-4g/kg eaten 1-4 hrs pre-exercise
Competition strategies	
Carbohydrate needs <i>during</i> prolonged exercise, in the heat (e.g. triathlon)	30-60g/hr in an appropriate fluid or food from (e.g. sports drink/gel)

Adapted from: Clinical Sports Nutrition (3)

Example

A professional, male 87kg rugby league player (back) training 1-2 hrs a day, 5-6 days a week would require approximately 7g carbohydrate per kg body weight per day or about 609g carbohydrate per day (87kg x 7g/kg).

The daily carbohydrate consumption for this player when in training would look something like this:

Core carbohydrates	Carbohydrate per serving (g)	No of servings	Total carbohydrate (g)
Bread 1 slice	15	10	150
Breakfast cereal 1 cup	30	3	90
Fruit – 2 medium sized fruits	50	2	100
Fruit Juice 250 ml	30	2	60
Milk 300 ml	15	2	30
Potato 1 medium	15	6	90
OR	45	2	90
Rice (1 cup cooked)	30	4	120
OR	30	4	120
Pasta (1 cup cooked)	30	4	120
Mixed vegetables (1/2 cup)	5-15	5	25-75
Snacks	50	2	100
Sports bar (1-1.5) OR	25	2	50
1 tub Yoghurt OR	36	2	72
Sports Drink (Gatorade) 600ml	36	2	72
Total			615 - 700

Further information on the carbohydrate values of foods can be obtained from...www.ais.org.au/nutrition/factcarbo.htm

The Performance G Spot

The Glycaemic Index (GI) ranks foods according to their blood-glucose-raising ability. Carbohydrate foods with a higher GI (above 70) raise blood glucose more than those with lower GI values (below 55). The website www.glycemicindex.com details the health applications of the GI and has extensive GI ratings for a wide range of foods. In sports nutrition, low GI meals prior to endurance exercise were initially thought to delay fatigue and improve performance. Most recent research has not been able to replicate these results and it seems unlikely that a low GI pre-event meal offers a specific benefit, especially when carbohydrate is consumed during the event (as sports drinks, carbohydrate gels or foods) (8).

High GI diets have been observed to enhance the rate of glycogen replacement after exercise, which may be important when the time between events or training sessions is less than 8 hours (3).

Summary

- Adequate carbohydrate intake is crucial for maintaining optimal energy levels, performance and recovery.
- Athletes:
 - trying to lose weight
 - with hectic lifestyles or poor food preparation skills
 - with high energy needs from training or rapid growth are at risk of consuming inadequate carbohydrate.

Practical Tips for Coaches

- Get athletes to calculate their carbohydrate needs using [Table 1](#).
- Consider carb counters for your athletes so they can assess their own carb intake.
- Organise shopping and cooking classes for the “gastronomically challenged”.
- Individualised meal plans by a sports dietitian are essential for disorganised athletes.

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



www.rlcm.com.au

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16. Drills

RLCM has been including drills in each edition since Book 12. These drills have now been compiled into three books which are available to coaches in printed, electronic and CD formats.

Drills Book (1) is a passport size book which fits into the back pocket and can be easily referred to while on the training field.

Drills Book (2) is the same size of the existing RLCM books and contains a selection of 64 training drills and games.

Drills Book (3) is only available as an electronic book and contains a selection of drills from RLCM Books 20 to 24.

The comprehensive collection of all drills is available on CD. The benefits of the CD are, it can be saved onto numerous computers, multiple copies of the drills can be printed and distributed to other coaches and the drills can be easily saved for future coaches of the club to refer to for many years.

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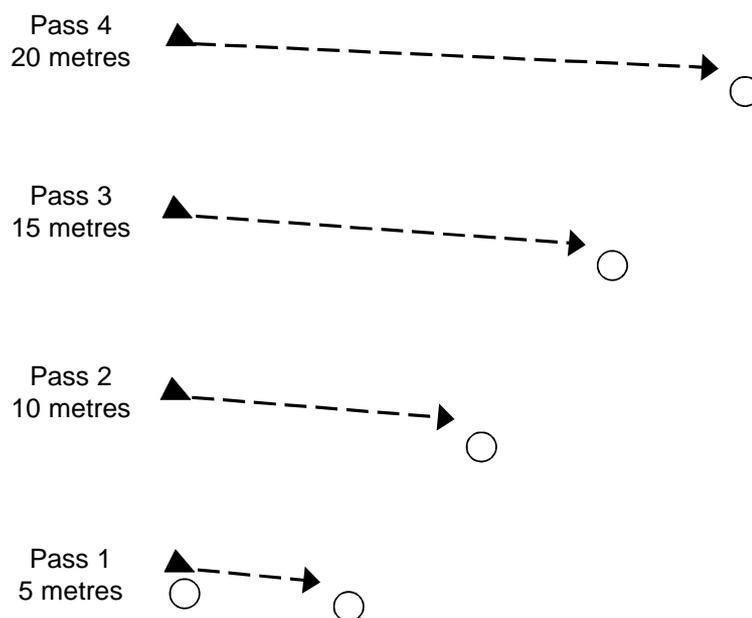
Offering 233 Training Drills this CD is GREAT VALUE and a necessity for coaches at all levels of the game

\$55

Collection of Drills from RLCM Books 12 - 30



Dummy Half Passing



Drill

- P1 becomes the acting dummy half and runs to the first football
- The first pass to a support player is 5 metres away
- He then runs to the next football and passes to another support player who 10 metres away
- The third pass is 15 metres and so on
- All players to attempt passes left to right and right to left

Variation

- 6 o'clock pass
- Spiral pass



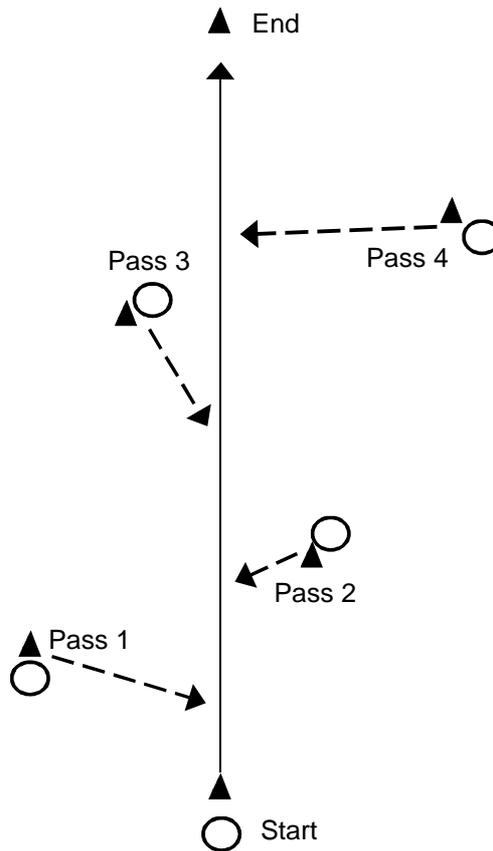
Dummy Half Passing & Basic Catch

Drill

- A series of play the balls (PTB) are set up at various distances and spacing
- The receiver is to run a straight line receiving a pass off the ground from each dummy half
- The dummy half pass will vary in distance giving the receiver - short balls, long balls deep balls and shallow balls
- Receiver drops ball, places ball or goes to ground after each pass

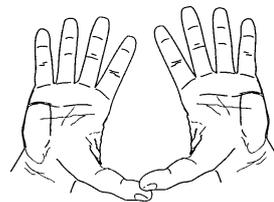
Variations

- Use a different type of ball at each PTB (e.g. tennis, soccer, golf etc)
- Allow dummy half passes to roam and pass from different locations



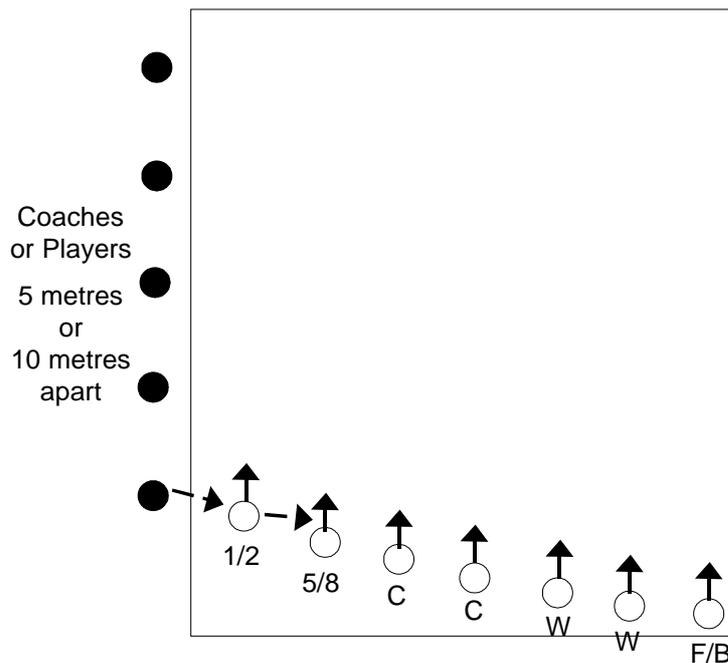
Skills

- Receiver - Eyes on ball, arms extended (not fully), hands ready to catch (see diagram), rotation of upper body at hips (facing the ball), outside foot, calling for football
- Dummy Half - Passing from ground (not standing), at eye height, in front of receiver





Backline Passing Drill



Drill

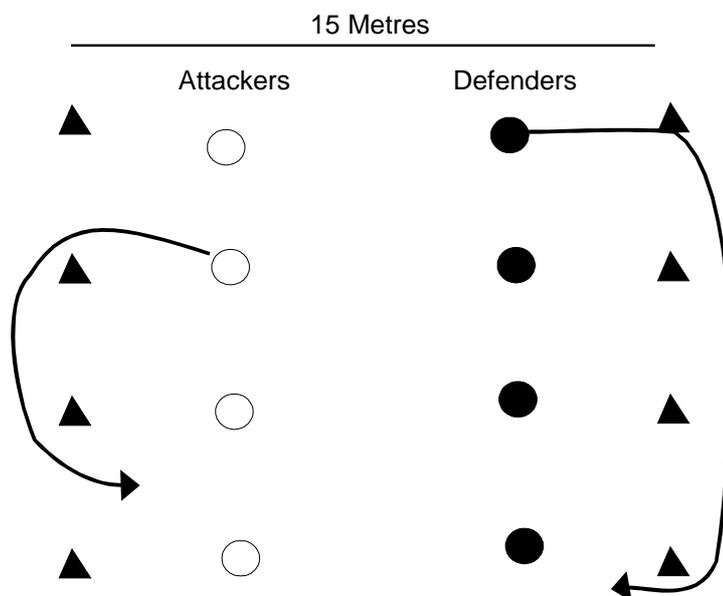
- Backline forms with blindside winger and fullback joining in.
- As they run down the field they receive a pass from a coach or player every 10 metres
- Each ball is passed along the line
- Once they have received all the footballs and passed down the line, the players move back down the field receiving passes from the opposite direction

Variations

- Coaches stand 5 metres apart so the players are receiving the ball much quicker.



Adjusting in Defence



Drill

- Divide players into 2 equal teams - Attackers and Defenders
- The game is played for a set period of time or if the attackers make an error the ball is changed over.
- Defenders are to make a two handed touch
- After each touch the attackers must retreat to their markers with the ball carrier running around two markers before play can resume
- The defenders must also retreat with the end defender running to the opposite end before they can advance in defence

Variations

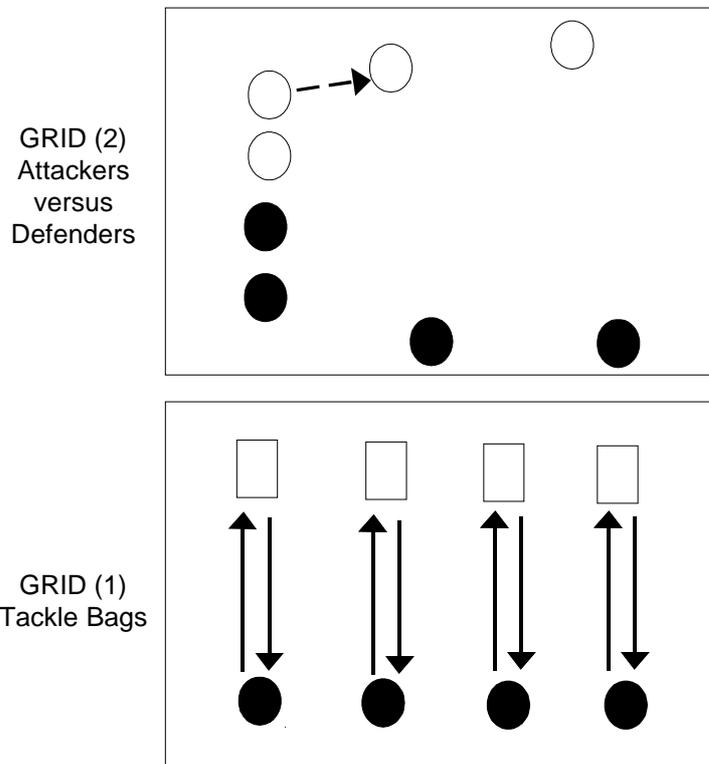
- Number of attackers and defenders

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Fatigue Defence



Drill

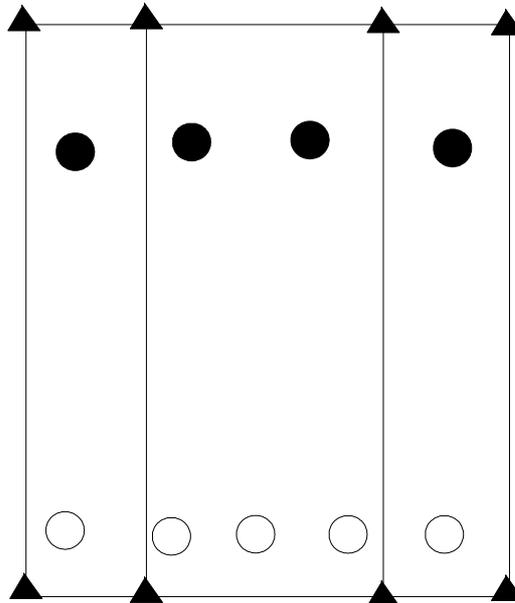
- Divide players into 3 teams
- Two grids are set up, 1 grid is set up with tackling bags the other is an attackers versus defenders zone
- Defenders perform a set number of tackles on bags and then proceed into the next grid to defend against actual attackers
- The teams rotate between tackle bags, defending and attacking

Variations

- Number of tackles made
- Number of attackers or defenders
- Number of plays attackers have to score
- Two handed grab or tackle



Defence Corridors



Drill

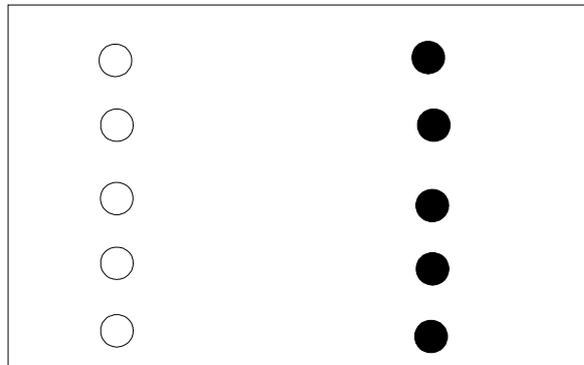
- Divide players into Attackers and Defenders
- Attackers start the drill by moving down the grid and attempting to score at the opposite end
- Attackers can roam wherever they like around the grid
- Defenders are restricted to their corridor which is marked, they may advance forward but must remain in their corridor only

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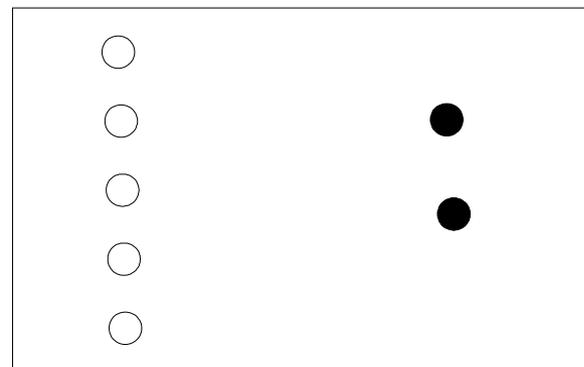


Five and Two

Play 1
5 V 5



Play 4
5 V 2



Drill

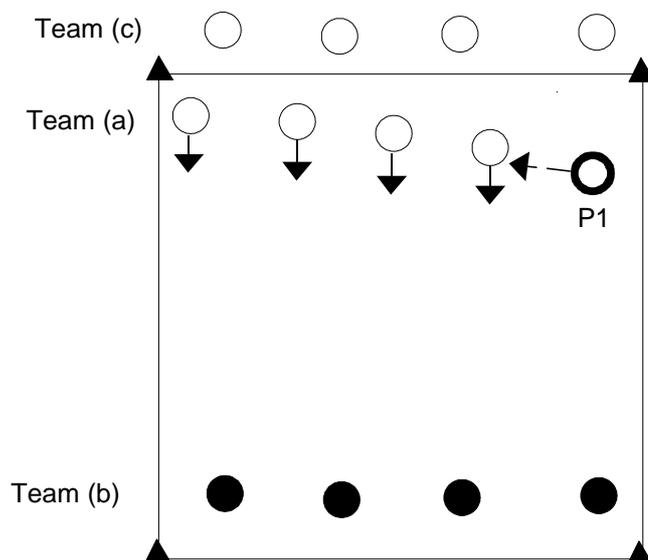
- Players are split into 2 equal team of 5.
- The drills start with 5 Attackers versus 5 Defenders
- The Attackers have 5 plays to attempt to score
- After 5 plays or a try is scored the ball is returned to the 5 attacking players for a restart, the defensive team is reduced to 4 players
- The attacking team only has 4 plays to attempt to score now
- The drill continues with 3 Defenders and 3 Plays down to 2 Defenders and 2 Plays to score.
- The maximum amount of tries available is 4
- After 4 sets the teams swap roles

Variations

- Number of attackers
e.g. 6 versus 2 / 7 versus 2



Decision Making Drill

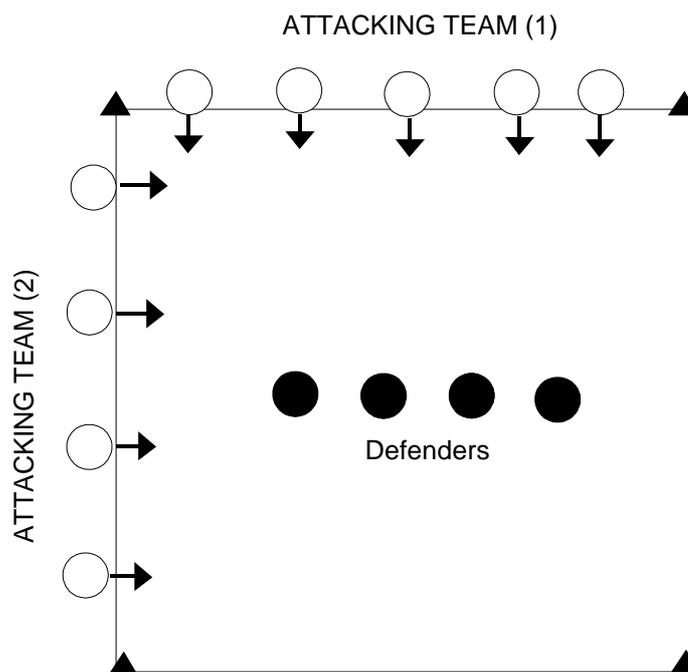


Drill

- Identify 1 Player (P1) as an Attacking player and divide the remaining players into 3 equal teams Team (a), Team (b) and Team (c)
- Set up grid as shown in above diagram, this is a continuous drill with P1 remaining in play at all times
- P1 starts the drill by passing to a player in Team (a)
- P1 then joins Team (a) and they attack Team (b) who become defenders
- The attacking team must attempt to score at the opposite end
- The play is completed when a two handed touch, tackle, mistake or try is made
- The next play starts immediately
- P1 joins Team (b) who now becomes the attacking team
- Team (b) attacks Team (c) who now become the defenders
- At the completion of the play P1 joins Team (c) and they become the attacking team and Team (a) now defends
- P1 remains in all plays, by joining each attacking team he creates a 5 v 4



Scrambling in Defence

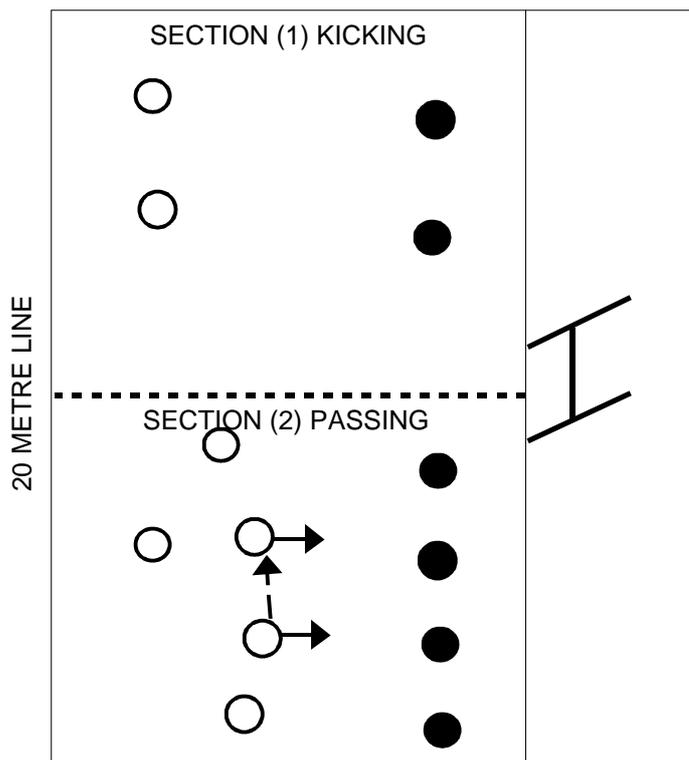


Drill

- Divide players into three teams - two attacking teams and one defensive team
- Line up teams as shown in diagram above
- Attacking Team (1) starts the drill by attempting to score at the opposite end of the grid
- After scoring or making an error Attacking Team (2) proceed to attempt to score at their opposite end
- The Defensive team must scramble to defend against the two teams who are attacking from different directions



Twenty Metre Attack (Kick & Pass)



Drill

- Players are split into attackers and defenders, the field is divided into 2 sections
- In section (1) a try can be scored only by the way of a kick
- In section (2) a try can be scored only by the way of passing
- The ball can move between the two sections
- Allocate points depending on the emphasis of importance by the coach e.g. kick try - 2 points, pass try - 6 points

Variations

- Allocate players to a section
- Set a time limit to score (e.g. 5 mins), or, a set number of plays.



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