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Coach Talk



John Lang - Sharks Head Coach

John Lang, after achieving the highest honours in the game as a player, and a coach in Brisbane, accepted a new challenge as coach of the Cronulla Sharks in 1994. He has moulded a young team into a formidable and highly competitive force in the worlds toughest Rugby League competition. John explains his philosophies to Don Oxenham.

Q1. Can you give us your ideas on today's coaching?

The single biggest factor is probably the amount of time I have, this allows me to assess what I am doing and then plan. As far as coaching today we are more specific, particularly in defence and there is more information available now to make judgements on. My style is to have basic patterns of play for various situations and then look at our opposition and put more emphasis on some areas of our game which would be more effective against that team. This of course changes from coach to coach, who have different opinions. Having the time and making the commitment to a constant search for improvement has had the biggest impact on my coaching. Don't kid yourself that your way is the best, it is a constant search to find better ways to do things.

Q2. What do you consider are your strengths in coaching?

You give to coaching basically what you give to anything you do. You have to have a sound knowledge and feel for the game along with management and people skills. You have to love what you are doing to be good at it. I love the game and I have never lost my love for it, and still have the zest to want to improve. I don't think there is a lot of brilliance in coaching. I believe the real genius in the game is possessed by the individual player. Coaching requires good organisation, and everybody involved has to knit together. For me personally I am able to graft away which I consider to be a strength but sometimes I can graft away so hard I tend to grind other people into the ground, I have to learn to temper this and to sometimes back off.

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Q3. Where do you see skills training in today's programme and do you concentrate on any special skills?

Skills training is an integral part. I segregate the physical and skills aspects of training although there is a fitness component in a lot of the skills training. A skills session should be specific. When drills came in years ago there was a tendency to get carried away and make them too complex but they must be specific and meaningful. At Cronulla we do a lot of 3 on 2 and similar work which are more game related. Individual skills technique correction is also done separately and I encourage players who need this type of work to be early at training and work on it. Skill related games are also a very effective way to improve skill levels as the players will always give 100% when it becomes competitive. The skill level of players is the next big mover in the game. We can't go much further in size and strength. For example in the future all halves and hookers will be able to effectively pass and kick equally as well on both sides. We have separate kicking and catching sessions for the appropriate players and all our goal kickers have one organised practice session each week. A player like Matt Rogers also does a lot of goal kicking practice on his own.

Q4. How important are game plans and patterns in your style of play?

My basic philosophy is that you have your own style of play which is dictated by individual abilities you are working with. A coach's role is to then work with the players that are available to develop a style of play based on the capabilities of those players. I try to come

Page 2

up with what I think is the best style of play with the players we have, and as far as a game plan is concerned I will look at some weaknesses in the opposition, say in defence, and work on that. You can't reinvent your game every week but you can place more emphasis on certain things that you do against certain teams. I like the players to have an awareness of things that the opposition do. We have a system in defence that we work to that can be adjusted depending on the opposition, once we know how they might play their game.

As for patterns of play, they must be matched to the standard of the player. The more experience and the better quality the player the less restrictive the coach has to be. The balance you try to make as a coach is to have a basic organisational structure which enables you to operate efficiently as a team, but not to curb individual flair. The coach who can get that balance is doing very well.

Q5. Could you give an opinion on "impulse play"?

The instinctive players are an integral part of the game and a very good player will take advantage of a half chance to do something constructive either for himself or another player.

Coaches now seem to work towards the right balance of play and the best coaches don't restrict their class players too much. You can't put a price on those players who can "react" and do something special that ultimately wins the game. And that is hard to coach against.

Q6. How do you ensure that players perform at their peak each week?

This is the holy grail of coaching. This is what we are all working for but you can never get there. All you can do is get as close as possible. I find the best way to have players perform in the higher range of their ability each week is to make sure you have top class professionals. Les Davidson and Danny Lee for example have an unbelievable level of performance consistency. From a coach's point of view you must make it enjoyable, training must be relevant. Know your players, know when to back off and when to have some fun. Try to do all the small things well, be professional yourself, show enthusiasm, and be well organised.

The biggest impact for me, was that I decided to be experimental with a lot of the things I did and this has been a strong part of my learning.

Q7. How important is the mental aspect of players performance?

It is very important, I believe that to a great degree that a player's mental outlook is innate. I have used a sports psychologist as a consultant and found that he gave some very practical advice but I feel the most important aspect by far is the players own drive to succeed.

Q8. Is there a particular style of player that best suits your play?

I have my ideal player for certain positions. I like plenty of speed on the wings and would forego size to have speed. In the halves I prefer the skilful half, who can feed off his forwards. Players like Paul Green, Alan Langer, Adrian Lamb and Andrew Johns have a beautiful balance of play, they can run the ball, support their forwards, or they can create. I would probably have a profile of my ideal player in each position but in reality you have to work with the players you have available to you.

Q9. The game requires physical fitness and skill. What balance do you need between these two attributes?

I could best outline that by giving a quick overview to our training programme at Cronulla. During the competitive season we have to compulsory weight sessions per week but a good percentage of our players do weights 4 times per week. Some people say it is far

too much but our players seem to thrive on it, indeed there are a number of them who would go and train somewhere else if we only had our gym open 2 days per week. With the players being fulltime it allows a lot of rest between sessions. We have one sprint session each week, skills sessions and team sessions. We are fortunate that most of our players live locally and we can split our sessions without greatly increasing travelling time. We have our gym sessions between 7 and 10am and rarely train before 3.00pm. Our basic weekly programme is compulsory gym Tuesday and

have unlimited money to spend, and to bring young players to the area becomes a relatively expensive exercise even without paying money to play. There are difficulties in providing accommodation and finding jobs, so in some cases the club may have to employ young players and these opportunities are limited. The club's biggest focus has been on local players with development and, junior representative squads. The older players, such as the under 19's, have a programme that mirrors the graded programme, which allows them to move into the senior teams more

It is important for any coach to have a love and knowledge of the game, as well as the right attitude towards his players.

Thursday. optional Monday and Friday, skills and games Monday night with the whole club, sprints, skills and sometimes team plays on Tuesday, skills and team plays on Thursday and team plays on Friday. I have found that once the season begins that with the teamwork and skills training and with the intensity of the games we don't have to do a lot of hard physical training. There is also a fitness component in gym work. We also do alternative training like boxing and swimming.

Q10. What place does the video have in your team analysis and preparation?

The video plays a very important part although I think it is more beneficial to the coach than the players. The video, together with the statistics, help complete the picture of what happened during a game and help formulate the plans for the future. I have cut back on the amount of time the players spend watching the video. But we normally watch edits of our last game and edits of our up and coming opposition. I do think the players get more benefit out of their time on the field practicing than in the video room.

Q11. Does Cronulla have a plan for talent identification and development?

I believe Cronulla's plan for our local Junior Development would be second to none. A lot of First Grade players have come through our Junior Development System. With the resources available, we have found it is a most effective method to concentrate on local development. Cronulla doesn't

successfully and be more capable of handling the transition. Before this it would take players a couple of years before they could handle the intensity of the training. Cronulla doesn't have an all encompassing plan for recruitment from outside, but rely on a network of contacts more than anything and this is an area we could improve.

Q12. Is there any person who has had a key influence on your coaching development?

I don't think I could name any one person, the key element in my development has been to keep looking for better ways to coach. When I first started I coached very much in the way I had been coached. As a player you tend to think that coaching is slightly over-rated, but now I generally get as much enjoyment from coaching as I did from playing. It is a different type of enjoyment. There are a number of coaches I played under who were all able to give me different ideas and methods which I have incorporated in my own coaching. The biggest impact for me, was that I decided to be experimental with a lot of the things I did and this has been a strong part of my learning. While you do this, I think you keep going forward as a coach and if you do this you can never be too old. I can liken getting a coaching certificate to getting a drivers licence. Somebody has assessed that it is safe to let you out on the road to drive, but that doesn't mean you are a good driver, which is similar to the coach. As a coach it should be ongoing and enjoyable for both yourself and your players.

Captaincy

Written by Ashley Bradnam

Legendary Rugby League Coach Jack Gibson once said of captaincy, 'the job gives the man authority - but his behaviour earns him respect.' The role of the captain is often overlooked by the coach, when searching for answers to a team's problems. Sure, most people know the job is important, but how many coaches consider whether they have the right person in the job to begin with?

If the captain isn't performing his role to the best of his ability, there's a good chance the team's on field performance may also suffer.

So, what type of person makes a good captain?

Mark Coyne captained St George from 1994, and is regarded as a shining example of a leader who is capable of getting the best out of his players. According to Coyne there's three major criteria needed for the job.

"Respect, communication, and a willingness to lead by example,"

Lets start with **respect**. Coyne uses the word liberally when discussing the topic of captaincy. "Firstly, the captain needs the respect of his players. If your players don't respect you, they won't respect your decisions, and that may mean they won't follow them... This leads to on-field confusion, which obviously is never desirable". But the captain must also have respect for his coach. The captain is the spokesman on behalf of the players, and a good relationship with the coach is critical, it lays the platform for open communication within the team unit. The same can be said where the referees are concerned."

Mark Coyne

This leads into the second point - **communication**.

Communication, is a two way process, it's not just talking, but listening as well.

"You have to listen to the people who matter, your coach, your players, and make decisions based on what you learn from them. Effective communication starts at training, preparing for the game, so that everybody understands the team's objectives when on the field. If we receive a penalty, and our hooker spies an opening for quick tap, I should have already spoken to him about whether he should go for it or not. If he waits to talk to me about it in the game, the opportunity will be lost".

"The third point is **leading by example**, a critical component in the captain's armoury. Every step a captain takes is sure to be watched, by someone. Leading by example is visible management, showing the team how to behave on and off the field. It's no good me cutting corners at training and then asking my players to dig deep in the match. I set the standard for the rest of the team as far as our attitude in the way we approach training and performance is concerned. Captaincy is a skill, and like any skill, it can be practised to achieve better performance. Whether you are a top swimmer, or gymnast, or singer, by practising the skills of your trade, you will become more advanced in executing them".

As a coach, consider the person who has the (c) next to his name in the program. Is he the right man for the job? Is he helping your team reach its full potential? And as coach, what can you do to make him more skilful at the art of captaincy. To quote JACK GIBSON again 'the best teacher is not the person who crams the most into his students, but who gets the most out of one.' □

Play The Ball

By Don Oxenham
ARL Level 4 Coach

The importance of the play the ball movement in the game must be appreciated. Most of the plays involved in the game commence with the play the ball and it is the responsibility of coaches to include practices during training sessions which allow players to develop this skill.

The play the ball movement requires considerable practice and coaching because of its importance in ensuring that plays following it can be effective.

The laws of the game governing the play the ball must be understood as they assist coaching the correct movement patterns and actions. Players first experiencing the play the ball through mini footy should be taught distinctive movements in a deliberate way to ensure there are minimum errors. As players progress through the age groups they can advance to playing the ball by the least number of movements to reduce the time involved in the skill and to be as efficient as possible. Any particular method should be practised as much as any other game skill.

Every player should aim to play the ball as evenly as possible to allow the acting half back every chance of passing effectively from the ground.

THE BASIC METHOD OF PLAYING THE BALL (Coaching Points)

- Player regains feet after being tackled
- Football held in both hands on ends, maintaining control with hands
- Football is placed or dropped on the ground, from a crouched position leaning slightly forward
- Football is controlled with foot placed on top
- The foot is then used to roll the ball back evenly to the acting half back

These points should be observed by the coach when teaching this method with evaluation and correction being done during practices to develop the technique.

Players who are more advanced and proficient should develop the technique of playing the ball with the least number of movements. This technique is required where it is necessary to have continuous pressured attack that needs to take advantage of slow forming defence.

PLAYING THE BALL WITH THE LEAST NUMBER OF MOVEMENTS (Method and Coaching Points)

Assume the tackled player prefers to play the ball with the left foot.

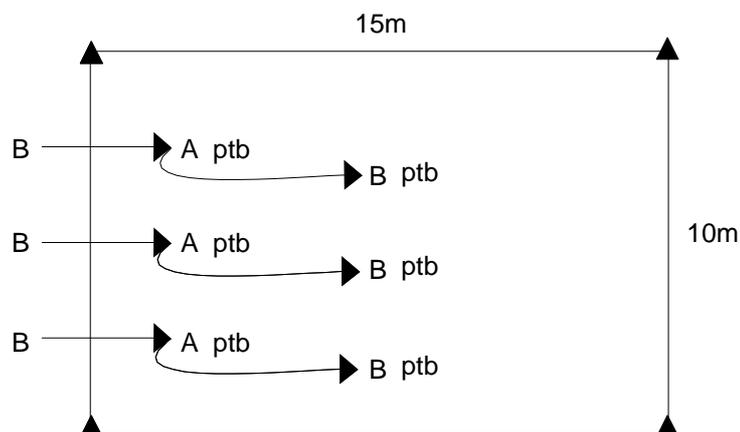
- The tackled player rolls onto his left hip
- Bends the left leg and brings it up under his body
- Holds the football in his left arm
- Turns to a half sitting position, placing the right hand on the ground
- Rolling up onto his left knee, while at the same time swinging the right foot forward to be placed slightly in front of the left knee (kneeling position)
- Step up using the right leg
- Head forward for balance
- Place or roll the football on the ground in front of the left foot and push the football back with the foot to the acting half back.

N.B. Young players should be encouraged to use both hands when placing the football on the ground.

Technique Drills

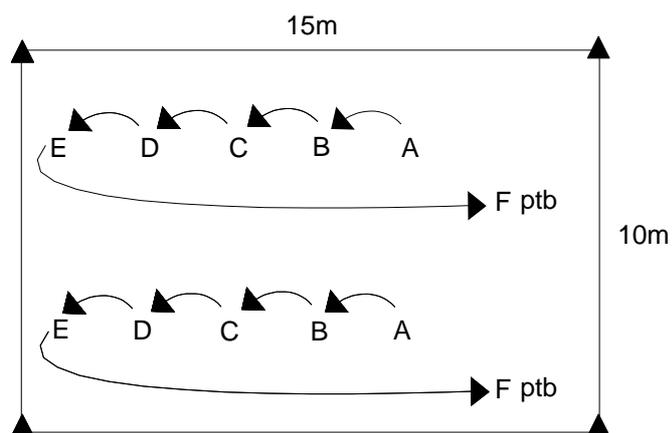
(Mini - Mod)

(1) Players In Pairs



Player "A" goes to ground
Plays ball to B
"B" moves in front of A
B goes to ground, plays the ball to A
Players continue in 15 metre grid then return.

(2) Relays



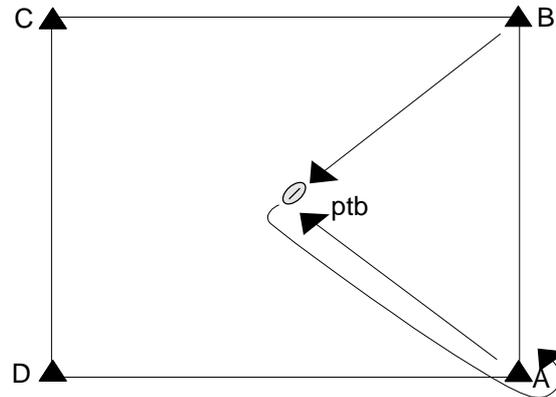
Players in line A to F
"A" plays to "B", "B" goes to ground
"B" plays to "C", "C" goes to ground
Continue until "F" has ball and moves
to front of line to continue practice

Junior Players

(Practices)

(3) Dummy Passing

Setting: Players in grid 5m x 5m

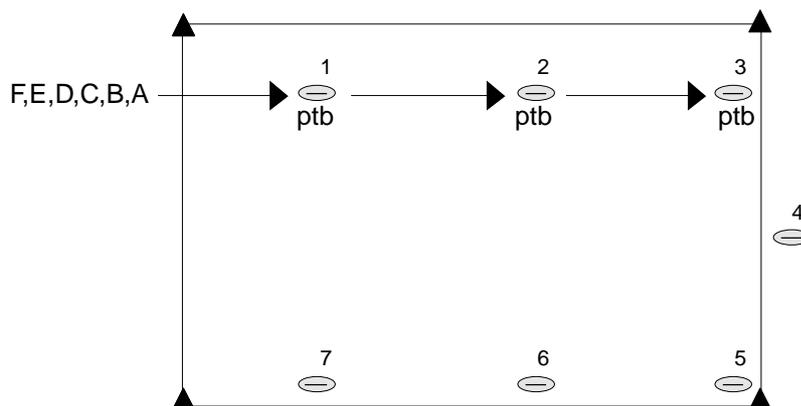


- "A" runs to football in centre of grid
- Gathers ball from ground, and plays
- to "B" who has moved into dummy half
- "B" dummies then places ball on ground
- "B" returns to his mark then moves forward and plays ball with "C" taking dummy half role, continue round grid

(4) Round The Grid

Setting: Players in line A to F (7 footballs)

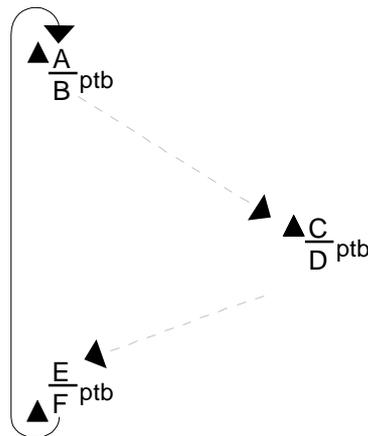
Grid: 15m X 15m



Player "A" moves to ball on ground and falls on ball. Regains feet and plays ball back with left foot. Moves to ball 2 and plays ball with right foot. Continues to next ball etc, rotating use of L and R foot. Player "B" starts as "A" plays ball 1 back.

(5) Play The Ball Relay

Setting: Group of 6 players, 1 football per group



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- "A" plays to "B"
- "B" passes to "C"
- "C" plays to "D"
- "D" passes to "E"
- "E" plays to "F"
- "F" moves forward to take "A's" position
- "A" drops back to "B's"
- "B" crosses to "C's"
- "C" drops back to "D" etc.

Junior & Senior Player (Practices)

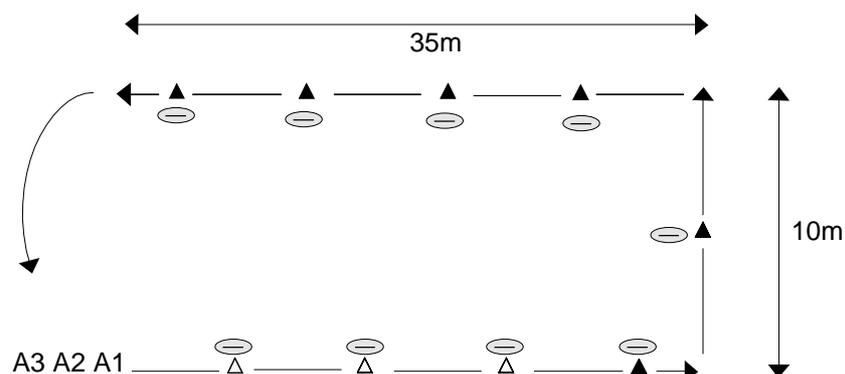
(6) Continuous Play the Ball

Setting: 10 x 35m Rectangle, 9 footballs

Ball at each mark i.e. (9)

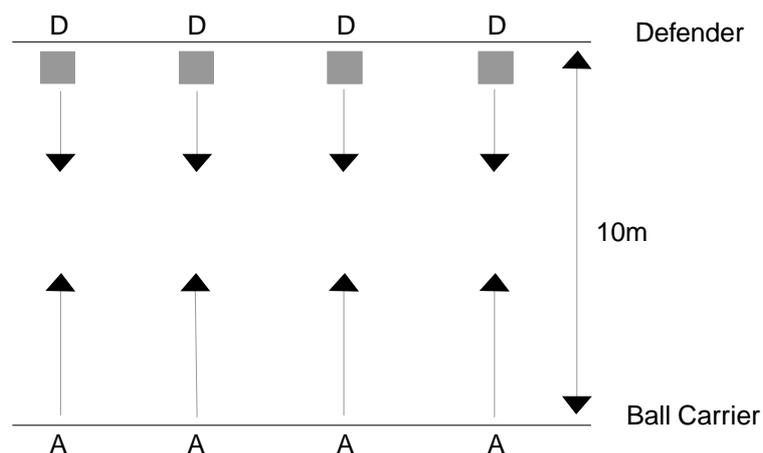
- A1 plays the football after diving on and securing possession.
- A1 then repeats the process with each ball.
- A2 begins after A1 completes the movements of the second ball.
- Likewise for A3 and so on.

Variation: Alternate the use of Right and Left foot.



(7) Release From Tackle Play The Ball

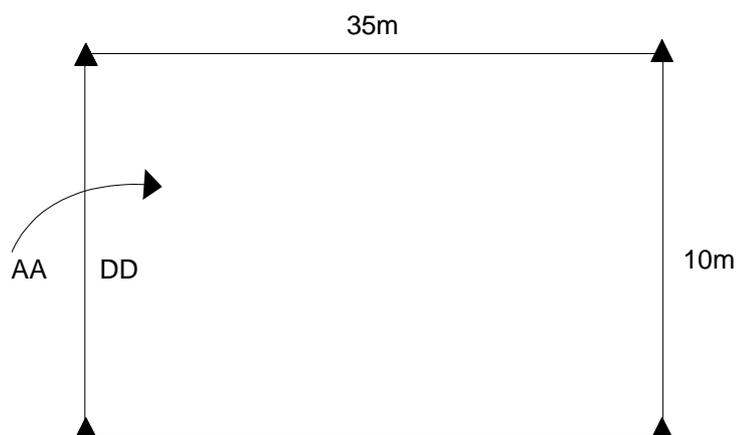
- Ball carriers meet defenders in the centre of the grid.
- Defenders (bump pads optional) hold ball carriers to ground for maximum of three seconds.
- Ball carriers fight to regain their feet (i.e. minimum movements) and play the ball correctly.
- Defence and ball carriers return to start.
- Repeat six times and change roles.



(8) 2 on 2 Play The Ball

Setting: Play the Ball with Double Marker in grid 10m x 15m
(2 attackers, 2 defenders)

- Dummy half runs, defenders tackle, turtle player. (put attackers on their back)
- Player gets to feet and plays the ball in the least movements.
- Ball changes to defenders after attackers have advanced the 15 metres of the grid.



Drills and practices reproduced with the permission of the Queensland Rugby League

**Easy
to
Train**

Strength Exercises

By Alex Corvo
Level 2
Strength & Conditioning

This article is a continuation from "Easy To Train Strength Exercises" which appeared in the September edition. The first four training exercises discussed were Split Squats, Step Ups, One-Legged Calf Raises and Push Ups.

(5) Chin Ups

MUSCLES WORKED

- Pectoralis major (chest), lat.dorsi (upper back), teres major (shoulder blade), posterior deltoid (rear shoulder) and biceps (arms).

METHOD OF EXECUTION

- bar held in an underhand grip (palms facing body) with hands shoulder width apart
- lifting commences with arm in a straight position, body directly under bar
- continue pulling body upward until chin clears the bar
- inhale during ascent and exhale during descent
- ensure that legs are kept in line with torso as much as possible and are not swung forward to assist in raising body upwards

SAFETY

- wrist straps may be used for athletes having difficulty gripping the bar because of poor forearm strength, or if the forearms are fatiguing before the upper back muscles.

LEVELS OF DIFFICULTY

- athlete bends legs with a spotter holding both ankles. The athlete can extend legs towards spotter to assist in performing the chin up
- once the athlete can perform a number of repetitions comfortably using the previous method, the next progression involves the spotter holding just the ankle, with the other leg kept in a straight position
- the next progression involves the spotter placing both hands around waist and only providing assistance through the "sticking" phases of the movement

- athletes requiring a load greater than their body weight may hold a dumbbell between the ankles while crossing their feet.

VARIATIONS

- narrow grip
- backward grip
- backward lean during the pull up action will place more lifting stress on the muscles of the lower pec (chest).

(6) DIPS

MUSCLES WORKED

- triceps, pec major (chest), anterior deltoid (front shoulder), serratus magnus (rib cage), biceps.

METHOD OF EXECUTION

- hands shoulder width apart, fingers pointing down
- begin with arms in a fully extended position
- descend in a controlled and smooth manner
- inhale during descent and exhale on ascent
- during ascent push upwards to straighten arms
- to maximise use of triceps keep torso upright throughout movement

IMPORTANT POINTS

- ensure a full range of motion by having forearms contact the upper arms in the bottom position
- don't lock elbows out at top of movement to place the triceps under constant contraction

SAFETY

- don't bounce out of bottom position. This will lead to an increased risk of injury to the elbow joint.

VARIATION

- keeping elbows out to side during the lifting and lowering phases will increase the load on the pec major (chest) muscle.

(7) CRUNCHES

MUSCLES WORKED

- upper abdominals (stomach).

METHOD OF EXECUTION

- it is necessary to eliminate the input of the hip flexors to maximise abdominal involvement by keeping the hamstrings under contraction throughout the movement
- athlete lies on floor, back on ground, legs bent at 90 degrees, feet flat on floor pushing down on ground
- chin on chest, arms to side, eyes focused on wall
- movement commenced by moving torso upwards and hands towards thighs
- exhale during ascent, inhale on descent keeping back rounded and chin on chest

IMPORTANT POINTS

- no quick, jerky movements. Movements should be smooth and steady.

LEVELS OF DIFFICULTY

- there are 6 levels of progression: 1) hand to side; 2) arms folded; 3) fingertips on forehead; 4) hands behind head (don't lock fingers); 5) hands touching opposite shoulder (behind head); 6) arms fully extended backwards and behind body.

VARIATIONS

- bringing elbow to opposite leg leads to a greater involvement of the side abdominal muscle
- pausing for a second during different parts of the movement will increase the level of difficulty

(8) REVERSE SIT UPS

MUSCLES WORKED

- lower abdominals (stomach).

METHOD OF EXECUTION

- athlete lying on back, feet in air with knees bent slightly
- arms at right angles to body, back of hands touching ground
- movement is commenced by lifting hips off ground in an upward movement
- lifting is initiated by contracting the lower abdominal muscles and not by swinging the legs.

Angle at knee remains the same throughout movement

- movement performed in a smooth controlled manner with no jerking movements

IMPORTANT POINTS

- knees remain in a fixed position throughout movement
- lower abdominal muscles are contracted prior to hips being lifted off ground

VARIATIONS

- feet positioned outside line of shoulders, both to one side, will increase the contribution of the outside abdominal
- a light dumbbell held between the ankles with legs crossed will increase the level of difficulty of the exercise

The number of sets and repetitions for these exercises will be determined by the age, maturity and training experience of the athlete and by the particular training effect the athlete requires.

The 8 exercises described will assist the athlete in developing a solid foundation of strength, which is important if the athlete in the future aspires to move on to a more advanced strength training program, using free weights and machines.



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Recovery

By Judy Bauer

B Sc, Grad Dip Nutr & Diet, MHith Sc, MDAA

After training or a game, your glycogen stores and body fluids will be depleted. Its best to start topping them up immediately. Start eating and drinking carbohydrate within 15 minutes of exercising and you'll refuel your glycogen stores efficiently. Muscle glycogen is generally replaced at about 5% per hour so it can take many hours to replace all the glycogen used during a game or heavy training

You've just sat down in the sheds after a hard game. Whats the first thing you should do?

"The Food Advantage" - A guide to food and nutrition for optimal sporting performance was written by experienced sports nutritionists and accredited practicing dieticians Judy Bauer, Trudy Williams and Deborah Richards. Topics covered include:

- Calculating your individual carbohydrate requirements
- How much fat and protein do you need
- Bulking up
- Losing excess body fat
- Pre-event meals and recovery
- Alcohol

An essential guide for all levels of athletes interested in achieving maximal performance.

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session. There is a window of opportunity in the first two hours after exercising as carbohydrate can be converted to glycogen faster than normal during this time. So it is essential that you start your refuelling as soon as possible after your exercise session. If you wait until you get home and cook a meal then you may miss out on replenishing your glycogen stores to their maximum.

To work out your immediate carbohydrate needs, you require about 1 gram of carbohydrate per kilogram body weight. So if you weigh 75kg, you need 75 grams of carbohydrate. The best carbohydrate sources for immediate recovery to boost blood sugar levels quickly can be carried in your training bag. Carbohydrate rich liquids fit the bill perfectly as they top up carbohydrate and fluid in one hit. Each of the following items contain about 50 grams of carbohydrate:

- 700ml sports drink
- 700ml cordial
- 300ml Lucozade
- 8 tablespoons Sustagen sport mixed with water
- 420ml juice
- 1 can Exceed Sports Nutritional Supplement

If your appetite feels fine then follow through with some high carbohydrate foods such as bread, pasta, rice, vegetables (potato, corn, sweet potato) and fruit. Providing you eat enough carbohydrate foods you will top up your glycogen stores within 24 hours and be ready for your next training session or game.

Stretching to Prevent Injury

Part 2

By Brad Walker, Associate Diploma of Health Science

INTRODUCTION In the previous article (Ref RLCM No.10 Nov 1998) the role of stretching in injury prevention, the importance and benefits of stretching and the dangers of poor flexibility were considered. In this article the different types of stretching and the rules for safe stretching will be discussed. Stretching is slightly more technical than swinging your leg over a park bench. There are rules and methods which will maximise the benefits while minimising the risk of injury. Below we will be looking at the different types of stretching, the particular benefits, risks and uses, plus a description of how each type is performed. Coaches should properly supervise all stretching sessions to ensure they are effective.

There are four types of stretching.

- 1. Static Stretching**
- 2. Partner / Object Stretching**
- 3. PNF Stretching**
- 4. Dynamic Stretching**

Each type of stretching has particular benefits for different sports and different individuals. I recommend that you start with static stretching and partner / object stretching. For improved flexibility incorporate PNF stretching into your program and only attempt dynamic stretching under the supervision of a professional sports coach.

1. Static Stretching

- very safe and affective
- limited threat of injury
- good for overall flexibility
- good for beginners and sedentary individuals

Static stretching is performed by placing the body into a position whereby the muscle (or group of muscles) to be stretched are relaxed. Then slowly and cautiously the body is moved to increase the tension of the muscle (or group of muscles) to be stretched. At this point the position is held or maintained to allow the muscles and tendons to lengthen. No outside external force is applied to the body, only forces generated by the opposing muscles.

2. Partner / Object Stretching

- helps to attain a greater range of movement
- slightly increased risk of injury
- beneficial for a deeper, more extensive stretch
- good for use on specific problem areas
- imperative for enhanced athletic performance
- very beneficial as part of a cool-down

This form of stretching is very similar to static stretching, however, another person or object is used to help further stretch the muscles. Due to the greater force applied to the muscles, this form of stretching is slightly more hazardous. Therefore it is very important that any object used is both solid and immovable. When using a partner it is imperative that no jerky or bouncing force is applied to the stretched muscle. So, choose your partner carefully, they must be responsible for your safety while stretching.

3. PNF Stretching

(Proprioceptive Neuromuscular Facilitation)

- more advanced form of stretching
- highly effective
- for specific muscle groups
- good for rehabilitation
- promotes both flexibility and muscular strength
- increased risk of injury
- needs a conditioning phase before maximum effort is used

The area to be stretched is positioned so that the muscle is under tension. The athlete then contracts the stretched muscle group for 5-6 seconds while a partner applies sufficient resistance to inhibit movement. The effort of contraction should be relevant to the level of conditioning. The contracted muscle group is then allowed 30 seconds to recover and the process is repeated 2-4 times.

4. Dynamic Stretching

- only used by professional, well trained highly conditioned athletes

- only for specific sports
- high risk of injury
(use under the supervision of a professional sports coach)
- more for conditioning than flexibility
- should only be used after a high level of flexibility has been established

A controlled, soft bounce or swinging motion is used to force a particular body part past its usual range of movement. The force of the bounce or swing is gradually increased but should never become radical or uncontrolled.

The Rules

As with most activities there are rules and guidelines to ensure that they are safe. Stretching is no exception. Stretching can be extremely dangerous and harmful if done incorrectly. It is vitally important that the following rules be adhered to, both for safety and for maximising the potential benefits of stretching.

The purpose of the rules is twofold. Firstly, to ensure that your stretching is safe and injury free, and secondly to ensure that you gain the greatest possible benefits from your stretching.

The six rules are:

1. Warm-Up Prior to Stretching
2. Stretch Before and After Exercise
3. Stretch all Major Muscles and their Opposing Muscle Groups
4. Stretch Gently and Slowly (avoid bouncing unless supervised by a professional sports coach)
5. Stretch Only to the Point of Tension
6. Breathe Slowly and Easily

1. Warm-up Prior to Stretching

Warming up prior to stretching does a number of beneficial things, but primarily its purpose is to prepare the body and mind for more strenuous activity. One of the ways it achieves this is by helping to increase the body's core temperature while also increasing the body's muscle temperature. By increasing muscle temperature we are helping to make the muscles loose, supple and pliable. This is essential to ensure the maximum benefit is gained from your stretching.

The correct warm-up, also has the effect of increasing both your heart rate and your respiratory rate. This increases blood flow which in turn increases the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to the working muscles. All this helps to prepare the muscles and tendons for stretching.

A correct warm-up should consist of a light physical activity. Both the intensity and duration of the warm-

The purpose of stretching before exercise, is to help prevent injury.

up (or how hard and how long), should be governed by the fitness level of the participating athlete, although a correct warm-up for most people should take about ten minutes and result in a light sweat.

2. Stretch Before and After Exercise

The question often arises, "should I stretch before or after exercise?" This is not an either situation, both are essential. It is no good stretching after exercise and counting that as your pre-exercise stretch for next time. Stretching after exercise has a totally different purpose to stretching before exercise. The two are not the same.

The purpose of stretching before exercise, is to help prevent injury. Stretching does this by lengthening the muscles and tendons, which in turn increases your range of movement. This ensures that you are able to move freely without restriction or injury occurring.

Stretching after exercise has a very different role. Its purpose is primarily to aid in the repair and recovery of the muscles and tendons. By lengthening the muscles and tendons, stretching helps to prevent tight muscles and delayed muscle soreness which usually accompanies strenuous exercise.

After exercise your stretching should be done as part of a cool-down. The cool-down will vary depending on the duration and intensity of exercise undertaken, but will usually consist of five to ten minutes of very light physical activity and be followed by five to ten minutes of general stretching

An effective cool-down involving light physical activity and stretching will help to: rid waste products from the muscles; prevent blood pooling; and promote the delivery of oxygen and nutrients to the muscles. All this assists in returning the body to a pre-exercise level, thus aiding the recovery process.

3. Stretch All Major Muscles and their Opposing Muscle Groups

When stretching, it is vitally important that you pay attention to all the major muscle groups in the body. Just because your particular sport may place a lot of emphasis on the legs, for example, it does not mean that you can neglect the muscles of your upper body in your stretching routine.

SPRINT TRAINING

resistance running

By Lester Eiser B.Arts, B.Econ, B.Ed. St, Grad Dip Ed Admin

Level 2 Rugby League Sports Medicine Strength and Conditioning
Level 1 in Athletics, Indoor Cricket, Swimming, Volleyball, Basketball

This is a continuation of 'Sprint Training - assisted running'

This is a technique whereby weight is added to the players body in order to increase explosive movements such as sprinting. The various forms of adding weight to the body have been

- weighted body suits
- weight vests
- harnesses
- parachutes
- uphill sprinting
- grandstand stairs
- sand runs
- weighted sled

It is not intended to discuss each of these but a select few, mainly those which could be easy for any Rugby League club to equip themselves.

Harnesses

Two players of similar build and speed are linked by a rope and harness. One player is sprinting while the player behind provides resistance.

This method is best in the early part of the programme but is not suitable in later training phases because the resistance will not be constant nor can it be measured in order to increase the (progressive) load.

Speed level should be about 90% of maximum.

The player in front must show good sprinting style.

- 5 - 10 degrees forward lean.
- Thighs driving upwards.
- back leg straight
- correct arm movement (swinging up in front of nose)

A sudden release of the rope by the second player will allow the resistance to stop and for the player to accelerate quickly.

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- Try it with a ball
- Try it over a zig - zag course
- Try it with hands and moving the ball from hand to hand.

Parachutes

Parachutes of various sizes can still create some degree of resistance. However, too many parachutes are needed for different resistances. It is best to look at alternative methods.

Up Hill Running

Choose an incline to allow good starting and sprinting style.

Starts/acceleration - about 5 - 8 degrees slope

Speed endurance - about 1 - 3 degrees slope.

Grandstand Runs

Try to find stairs with the slope of the above figures. Make sure the selected area is checked for safety.

Sand Running

It certainly trains the body to deal with unexceptional stability changes. However, it is not an activity to be done too close to games. Remember sand is not a surface we play on, it can be very detrimental to the legs particularly if a player is not conditioned to it.

Gradually adapt to it.

Weighted Sleds or Tyres

The player is connected by a harness which is made out of seat belts to a metal sled about 10 - 15 metres behind.

Tyres are also great but don't use the oval for this drill, the grass can be ripped off the oval surface. (one club actually gave me an area to be ripped up by the tyres. By the end of the season, we had managed to level the ground.)

I have used distances from 10 to 50 metres and in some cases have run the players to exhaustion (80 - 100metres). I have also used zig - zag courses in order for the players to be constantly slowed down and then have to accelerate again.

Three man relays with the same sled is very effective for speed endurance work.

When to use sport loading:-

1. Late in the week - Thursday/Friday as part of the speed night to freshen up the player for the game at the weekend.
2. February - April in the power phase of the training cycle.

THE PROGRAMME USING SLEDS - HARNESSSES - HILL SPRINTING

Week	Repetitions	Pulling Dist.	Rest	Progressive Loading
1	3 - 6 (2 sets/week)	10 - 15m	1 - 2mins	3 man relays at 75% rate (No weight on sled or 1 tyre)
2	3 - 5 (2 sets/week)	20 - 25m	1 - 2mins	Closer to maximum speed
3	6 - 8 (2 sets/week)	25 - 30m	Full Recovery	Maximum Speed
4	7 - 9 (2 sets/week)	30 - 40m	Full recovery	Maximum speed (Zig - Zag Courses)
5	7 - 9 (3 sets/week)	40 - 50m	Full recovery	Maximum Speed (Zig - Zag Courses)
6-9	7 - 10 (3 sets/week)	50 - 70m	Full recovery	Maximum Speed (Zig - Zag Courses)
10	7 - 10 (3 sets/week)	to exhaustion	Full recovery	Maximum Speed (Speed Endurance)

NOTES

PLAYER FEEDBACK

By Ken Kennedy
ARL Level 3 Coach

In order for a footballer to improve in their sport they require constant feedback, which is information relating to the performance in a game situation or training. As a coach this should become a major part of your job. A common problem that will be encountered is how to give back this information and how to record the required information.

Firstly the best way to obtain the information is with the use of statistics. There are many methods of collecting these statistics, you will need to decide what information is required and is relevant. You can design a Statistics Sheet that suits your needs or adopt one of the many that are around. (See RLCM March 1998) Having established a statistics sheet that suits your needs, the next question is who will fill them out each week, bearing in mind you need the correct information to be able to give accurate feedback. It is a good practice to include a statistician on your coaching staff where possible to ensure the same pattern of information weekly, rather than asking anyone to do your statistics.

I use three sheets to collect my information:

1. A BALL CONTROL SHEET (Fig. 1) which allows me to record how many sets of six tackles are completed and on which tackle possession was lost, yards gained, monitoring of the kicking game, bad passes, dropped balls and when penalties were given away or received.
2. A TACKLE COUNT SHEET (Fig. 2) used to record tackles effected and missed, hit ups, back ups and errors in defence and attack.

Once the coach has all the required information, he must communicate it back to his players. Some coaches will hold team talks or call individual players aside to discuss their game. I find the introduction of a players Log Book (fig. 3) to be invaluable. This is an insight into how the players feels about his performance on a scale from 1 poor to 10 excellent, comments are also included if desired. You may find that the player will give you valuable information that you would not normally obtain from him.

All of this information is taken by the coach and analysed, together with information taken from statistic sheets of the game. The coach fills out the player/team performance sheet detailing the players, attack/defence, ball control, and details of completed sets of six tackles. This allows the coach to make overall comments and recommendations or arrange a meeting with the player to discuss their game. Comments can be of the players rating of himself and his team. I find this to be very effective method of providing my players with effective feedback. Players have shown a real interest in my thoughts and recommendations of their performances.

Statistics Sheet

..... V Date:

	Player	Tackles	Total	Missed Tackles	Total	Hit Ups	Total	Back Ups	Total	ERRORS	
										Attack	Defence
1											
2											
3											
4											
5											
6											
7											
8											
9											
10											
11											
12											
13											
14											
15											
16											
17											
18											
19											
20											

How do we Develop Autonomous Behaviour once we understand our Personalities?

Part 4

Vic Mellors - (Sports Fitness and Motivational Psychologist).

In the previous three articles, I have discussed in Part (1) (March '98) what are the traits that are associated with either a successful or unsuccessful Rugby League team, Part (2) (May '98) how to achieve a success mechanism in a Rugby League team and Part (3) (July '98) why is it important to consider personality and arousal to understand motivation and Rugby League performance.

In Part (1), I identified the team traits that I believed were important for a successful football team. In Part (2) I described a lifestyle equation that I believed was important for every Rugby League player to adopt, so that he could understand himself better and feel in control to perform well.

I also explained in Part (2) how a Rugby League player's personality could be scientifically measured and how certain personality structures are different through the biological systems of the body, namely the Central Nervous System, Autonomic Nervous System and the Hormonal System. In Part (3), I explained the relationship between personality structure, arousal and motivation.

In this section, I am going to define autonomous behaviour in Rugby League terms as well as demonstrate how its principles could be applied to a player. The idea of autonomous behaviour is to remain calm, toughminded and focused. The major principle of autonomous behaviour, is for a player to never counsel his fears or worries before a game. He must remain unemotional and picture positive images of himself doing well.

Autonomous Behaviour

(How to make a Grand Final).

Definition: The ability to regulate one's behaviour independent of other people and objects under tough circumstances.

In Rugby League terms:

"Doing Your Job" along with your team mates in a football game.

How do I achieve autonomous behaviour in a Rugby Rugby League Coaching Magazine

League match. I play as a "team man" and I "do my job". I ask myself eight questions.

- (1). Things happen to me in a football match that affect my performance.
- (2). How do I overcome them?
By developing concentration, persistence and discipline during a football game.
- (3). What can I do to develop these things?

Answer:

- (a) I can think with a positive attitude!
- (b) I can use positive "self talk"!
- (c) I can behave and act positively!

(a) Positive Attitude:

I believe we can win against our opposition because throughout the pre-season we have trained hard. We can beat all of the sides in the competition if we believe we have the best side in the competition! We can believe that we have the ability, the fitness and the mental toughness to beat teams with big names and reputations! We can overcome any team and beat them. If we develop this attitude now, we can make the semi's and the Grand Final.

(b) Positive Self Talk:

I will "do my job" to help the team win! I will talk positively to my team mates and encourage them! Good tackle mate! We can win! I can tackle and run hard. I can do my best for the forty minutes of each half and then I can have a rest.

(c) Positive Behaviour:

When I tackle, I will concentrate on hitting hard, low and through the opposition player. When I run, I will run hard and straight and when I break a tackle, I will pass with two hands to my support player. Every chance I get I will support the ball carrier when he makes a break. In each half I will think positive, talk to my teammates, and hit the opposition hard in attack and defence. By adopting this behaviour I can take

control of the opposition and improve my own performance which will contribute to the team winning, making the semi-finals and eventually the Grand Final.

(3). What are the things I have to think about before a game so that I can play well and help my team mates?

Answer:

I will play well, the team will play well and we will win. I will think that in my position I am the best player in the competition. I will get over the top of my opposition player along with the rest of the team through persistence, discipline and concentration. I will run and tackle hard for eighty minutes. I believe in my teammates and we are the best side in the competition and deserve to win our games.

(4). What happens when things do not run smoothly in a football game?

Answer:

I expect before a game that things will run smoothly. In a match I will remain positive and that we will win. I stay calm and talk positively to myself and my teammates. I remember persistence, concentration and discipline will win the game. I tackle with intensity, I pass the ball when I can and I back up every chance I get. I don't take unnecessary risks and become impulsive.

(5). What are the personal things I have to remember in a football game so that we win.

Answer:

- (a) That we are a better side than the team we are playing when we play positively.
- (b) That WINNING is an attitude and that if myself and the team have this attitude before a game, then I will play well and so will the team.
- (c) I will do my job

(6). What should be my aim before and during a game?

Answer:

- (a) To be mentally prepared before I go into the dressing room.
- (b) To get on top of the opposition in attack and defence for the full eighty minutes.
- (c) To support my team mates.
- (d) To never give in.
- (e) To run hard in attack and tackle hard in defence.

(f) To believe that we are going to win.

(7). What is my role with the team?

Answer: TO DO MY JOB

(8). What does the previous 7 answers contribute to?

Answer:

- (a) autonomous behaviour (to overcome problems in a game, no matter how tough the opposition are or how far behind we are on the scoreboard) and win.
- (b) to develop a winning attitude by expecting to win before I go out on the field.
- (c) to believe in ourselves and our team mates.
- (d) to never give in (persistence).
- (e) to maintain concentration when attacking and defending by listening and talking to my team mates.
- (f) to be disciplined in attack, defence and back up for the full 80 minutes.

Its not a matter of GOOD LUCK that wins games: its a matter of the team making their own luck through being persistent, being able to concentrate and being disciplined. It's a matter of how the team develops autonomy.

Summary

In summary, the aim of these articles has been to explain what characteristics contribute to both a successful and unsuccessful Rugby League team. It has also addressed the biological foundations of personality and how they contribute to individual differences in performance and motivation. I see the future role of psychologists at the senior level in Rugby League providing advice and support to the coach and helping him to maintain the teams focus on the premiership.

One of these methods has been demonstrated above in the form of autonomous behaviour i.e. the players having the ability to regulate their behaviour independent of other's and objects under tough circumstances. In Rugby League terms this means "Doing Your Job".

In conclusion, there are many other aspects of a football team's performance that could have been discussed but the aim of this article has been to give coaches a broad but detailed account of the importance of some psychological factors underlying a team's performance.

RUGBY
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The publishers wish to thank the Queensland Rugby League and the New South Wales Rugby League for their editorial contributions and assistance in compiling this publication.

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ISSN 13281526

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