

## CONTENTS

---

- 2  **Coach Talk**  
Interview with Phil Gould - Sydney City Roosters Head Coach
- 7  **The Role of the Coach**  
By Wayne Pearce, Wests Tigers Head Coach Written by Vanessa Arthur
- 10  **Teaching The Junior Player**  
By John Dixon, Brisbane Broncos Development Officer Written by Robert Rachow
- 12  **Becoming a Better Bench Coach**  
By Brian Smith, Parramatta Eels Head Coach Written by Robert Rachow
- 14 **Assessing The Injured Player**  
By Rob Hawthorn - Level 2 First Aid Officer
- 16 **Coaches Insight**  
Brian Kerle - Brisbane Bullets Basketball Coach Written by Ashley Bradnam
- 18 **Developing a Periodisation Plan**  
By Ken Kennedy - ARL Level 3 Coach
- 21  **Performance Monitors - Assessing the behaviour and attitudes of the Rugby League player - Part 2**  
By Steve Anderson - Assistant Coach Melbourne Storm
- 24 **Kicking Drills**





# Coach TALK

Phil Gould - Sydney City Roosters

*After playing with Canterbury and South Sydney Phil Gould retired in 1986 as a player to coach the South Sydney Reserve Grade.*

*In 1987, he went to Canterbury to coach under his former mentor Warren Ryan, and in 1988 aged 30 he stepped into the top job and won the Premiership, the youngest coach to do so.*

*He was named Coach of the Year in 1988 and was quickly stamped as a brilliant and thorough professional coach.*

*Gould moved to the Penrith Panthers in 1990 and cemented his reputation as one of the top coaches of the modern era when the Panthers played in consecutive Grand Finals, culminating with the 1991 Premiership.*

*New South Wales State of Origin coach from 1992 to 1994 saw Gould win the Series each year of his involvement.*

*During 1995 he linked with the Sydney City Roosters as Head Coach.*

**RLCM** What is your approach to coaching? Do you have a philosophy in coaching?

**P.G.** I guess I have always taken the approach right from the very start and, particularly at this level, that the players and staff in our club don't work for me, I work for them. I find the job of a first grade coach a huge responsibility in that there are a lot of people in the club depending upon the things you do and the attitude you take.

Players careers depend upon a lot of the work that the coach does and in this day and age their livelihood and the livelihood of their family depend upon that work. I try to meet or recognise that responsibility with the commitment it deserves and I find that I feel obligated to them to be giving everything they need to achieve whatever it is they want to do and achieve what we want too. It's a responsibility to the players and the staff that your job is very important to them and you're working for them, which is my attitude as a coach.

Rugby League Coaching Magazine

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

**P.G.** The key thing that I look at is that I'm very aware of my own weaknesses, as a coach and as a person. I try to work hard to make sure those weaknesses don't affect anyone else and don't affect me. I don't take myself too seriously and I can laugh at myself and in that way because I know that I'm not perfect I don't think that my team will ever be perfect and I can accept that.

We all work on those things, and are all very honest with ourselves about what it is we need to do to improve. All the things we need to avoid or weaknesses we may have that we don't want to affect the end result. I see that as a strength in myself because I am always conscious of it. I think to be a good first grade coach and whether you are going to be a teacher or a coach or in any of these types of positions of authority you've got to be a good listener and a good learner and be prepared to do both.

**RLCM** You have been very successful, is there something that has allowed you to be successful with the players, in terms of getting performance out them?

**P.G.** Some people can't win with them but you can't win without them. You got to have good players and the quality of the players will make the quality of the coach. I am not trying to down play my role or the coaches role because it is very important and we work hard, but certainly the quality of the people you are dealing with makes it so much easier. I've got a great passion for the game in that I have the capacity to watch a lot of football, not just watch it, I mean I really study it. I watch more of what's happening off the ball than I do what's doing with the ball. I hate to watch football on TV because I don't think you see the game, so I go out and watch a lot of football live, I go out every weekend, any spare time, I'm always going to a football game to watch it live because I think, you know, off the ball is a main part of the game and that's where you see the strengths and

Page 2

## All the successful teams are well drilled and have good patterns and good plays.

weaknesses and I've got a capacity for that. I've got a great thirst for it, I really study it with a great memory for it. I can remember things and pull things out that I have seen or looked at. I can look at things and probably ask why or how did that happen. Sometimes thoughts and things develop from that which you can take back to your players.

**RLCM** That's the key sometimes, to be able to take that back to your players.

**P.G.** Oh for sure, of course it is, the game is constantly changing. It's changing because there are so many good coaches around now, with playing experience and are very analytical. Players look at why they have success and failure and players today have become greater students of the game. When you have players that are that inquisitive about the game and not just there to play and be physical but also to look at why and how things happen. That makes you more aware, more alert, makes players anticipate greater, they're the real keys to successful players.

There is an expectation from players, maybe from yourself or your club or supporters to perform each week.

**RLCM** Have you got any ideas or how do you maximise that performance, I know you can't get everybody up 100%.

**P.G.** No we can't but we certainly try to be as good as we can on that week, we understand that there will be ebbs and flows in the course of a season, both individually and as a team. We treat each day the same in what we do, we really try to keep ourselves, in the short term, in the moment and virtually look after today. If you do that, each day runs into the next and each game runs into the next and each month runs into the next and then in the longer term each season runs into the next season. It's a real day in, day out honesty, review what you have done, work on what you can, look forward to the new events of the next day. Rather than just

looking at the end result all the time if you get too much tied up in the win/loss and what this game might mean or that game might mean you are not really concentrating on the job at hand. When players are on the field that's what you want them to do, you want them to concentrate on what they're doing right at this moment.

**RLCM** Do you have any particular pre-match procedure that you might follow on a week to week basis.

**P.G.** We try to keep it as similar as possible. If we travel away, we travel the day before the game and stay overnight. There are times even in Sydney where I will put them into camp the night before the game depending on the opposition, or how much preparation we have had during that week. How many days we have had to prepare, how we are injury wise, is our team stable, have we got new players coming into the team. A lot of things determine exactly what you can and can't do in a week's preparation.

I have in my own mind, I am very flexible, I can change things very quickly but basically there is a set routine to follow. It's difficult in the NRL now because you could play a Friday, Saturday, Sunday, night game, away game, overseas, North Queensland, Melbourne, Sydney. You may play Sunday one week, Friday the next week, then Saturday the next week so our preparation times are different. We put a lot of work into our pre-season so that our preparations are short cut during the season. Early in the week a lot of physical recovery and rehab work and review of the weekend's performance.

I'll do it through videos, a bit 50/50 whether I run that by the players, or myself looking at it is enough to do the drills and things I want to do and often we are on the same wave length. We know what we have done good or bad, and know that there are things that if they were a little bit rusty last week, even though we won you still have to go back, review and look to improve. Sometimes when you win you know that there are things that will hurt you this week if we repeat them, so we need to get out and drill those and get them into our minds. In the middle of the week I give them a spell while I get them ready for the last couple of days in preparation for the next team and we'll have a look at the opposition and what we are going to take into the game.

**RLCM** How much work do you do on maintaining the high skill level for a individual skill?

**P.G.** Everything we do is based around that. Probably eight or nine years ago, a lot of people went to America and looked at their systems and the one

thing I got out of their system was the idea of individual coaching and being specific about what certain individuals need. Our basic thought with our players both from a fitness level, physical level and a skill level is that we look at their work space, what type of work space they have. Obviously a front rower has a different work space to a winger who has a different work space to a full back who has a different work space to a half back or a centre. Our basic thought is to make them as strong, as fast and as skilful in their own work space as we possible can.

**RLCM** Can you just define that work space for us?

**P.G.** If you had a still camera on a front row forward for the course of the game, you would see that he has a completely different work space to a winger or a full back and looks at different things. The length and quantity of his runs, what's there to meet him at the end of each run, defensively what

and then maybe a mental relaxation session. We try to get as much of it as we can into the one workout because basically they're going to use it at the one time and we try to be as very specific on that as we can. Then within our team we have smaller teams, with all those smaller teams there are some bigger teams. Hopefully we can blend into the one team and so there is a lot of individual work.

**RLCM** How would you proportion the physical skills versus the mental skills in terms of performance? How much is physical and how much mental with the game?

**P.G.** You read all these things, it's 80% mental and 20% physical, or it's 10% mental and 90% physical.

It's a 100% everything. You've got to use it all at the same time and without the mental, the physical isn't enough and without the physical the mental isn't enough. Basically where the game is going to be

## **The majority of things that make a Daley, an Allan Langer or a Brad Fidler what they are, hasn't been coached into them**

they have to play. We define the work space as the role of the individual position. Nowadays most players play probably left and right in defence and similarly in attack where back rowers divide their game up between them at the ruck, off the play the ball, and off first receiver and some even like to get a little wider, they sometimes play long side, short side. There are different ways that they can have themselves in the game. They may relate to dummy half, half back, five eight or work with centres down the short side. I mean if you look at each individual position and how their position relates to other positions on the field, we really try to define their work space and what they do so that our front rowers speed work and agility work is a lot different to what we give the centre or the winger. Their skill work is a lot different to what we give full back and half back. Their defensive work is a lot different to what we give, and what we try to do, is combine in each work out as much physical skill and mental training at the one time as we can, rather than trying to oscillate between a strength session and a skill session, and then a speed session

decided at this level, particularly the big games, is at the point where the pressure is great and the player still can execute or the player can still respond to the situation and the other player can't. If you look at the big plays that decide a game and roll the tape back 10 seconds and see where the winner and loser came from, these are the type of pressure situations we try to create in training. We try to create an imagery that when the big play comes and we never know it's coming we're going to be there to meet it and that is the thing, you never know when it's coming but everyone can tell you when it has happened. You have got to train them that way all the time, we do not divide our work into a strength work out, a speed work out, a skill work out or a mental work out. We try to combine as much as we can into the one type to try and execute defence and attack under stress and under physical fatigue and still find the right play. That's a key element of what we do. In answer to your question, what's the breakup, I don't think there is a break up. It is 100% of the lot, you have to train the lot together.

## **The thing about being well drilled and about having patterns is that it helps you stand up under pressure.**

**RLCM** We talked to Rick Charlesworth about a similar thing. He likes to stress his players, and then get them to perform and react to situations that might develop in the game.

**P.G.** We work a lot of game type situations. A lot of it is responsive work, out there and at the key play and the key moments it is going to get down to one on one, or two on two or three on three. There's going to be a pocket of activity and someone is going to come out of it better. We've got to make sure that we're there to meet it and that whether we are fatigued or under stress or under pressure that we can meet it the same way we would normally meet it. We are there ready to play.

**RLCM** If you're going through game related work at training you can condition them mentally and physically to react against a situation that might develop and they have to do that straight away. Do your players get freedom to do that?

**P.G.** They're invited to be as brilliant or as impulsive as they like, but you often hear this argument about structured play, patterns of play or set plays. All the successful teams are well drilled and have good patterns and good plays. At the end of their structure obviously the teams with the players that are great instinctively, have the edge, but to be able to get your good players in that type of condition is also an important factor. People underestimate how difficult that is and they also overestimate how many players can actually do it. I've always held the belief that particularly at the top level, a lot of the really good instinctive, impulsive and skilful players never get through to the level. They never graduate out of the lower grades or the juniors because of all the other elements in the game, they can't come to terms with.

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Those that make it, don't stay there for long because they can't come to terms with all those other things. Their stay in first grade will not be determined by their talent level or their instinctiveness, it will be determined by whether or not they can handle the rest of the game. You take for instance the Walker brothers who have come into the Broncos side, three very talented young boys, I mean great skills, look like they are very instinctive players. They can do most of the skills in the game. Whether or not they are successful in first grade, and I am not saying that they won't be, will depend on all the other things in the game. Their skills and talents got them there but it won't be enough to keep them there if they can't handle the rest of the football.

**RLCM** You would have some of those players in your side.

**P.G.** Everyone has. Thankfully the Walker boys are probably coming into the right club with the right coach and they will be successful because if they were in some other club with some other coach, maybe over time they wouldn't be given that type of knowledge to understand that that's not enough to survive. Obviously the more talented the player the better. It is like everything with coaching, we all train to be bigger and stronger but it helps if you've got big strong players and we all train to be fast but it helps if you have fast players and we all train to be more skilful but it helps if you've got skilful players. The majority of things that make a Daley, an Allan Langer or a Brad Fitler what they are, hasn't been coached into them, we coach the other things into them, so that on top of their talent they have the necessary capacity to perform under pressure or to perform the other things in the game that are more important.

Those players, in terms of elite athletes, don't really reach this mental level until all the motor skills or physical skills are right. They are getting better at it from an early age. Because the coaching is better and players are now becoming more students of the game they keep asking these questions why, they have also become better teachers or imparters of knowledge in the game. The greatest learning experience for a player is on the field with people that have been there before. A coach can go to a certain level with it but to be with people on the field is where the Broncos have set this up. You tend to see that success follows success because you are bringing young people to successful situations with successful people. With players who can perform under pressure and understand what needs to be done off the field in preparation for that and on the field how to handle it whether it's going good or



# THE ROLE of the COACH



By Wayne Pearce  
Head Coach Wests Tigers

Written by Vanessa Arthur

Someone once said that for every bad coaching session, it would take 100 more to rectify the problems that were incurred.

As brutal as this may seem, coaches of the modern game need to understand that their role is vital to the way their players perform on the football field. A coach should endeavour at every possible moment to instil in his players the characteristics he would want them to own. They may not simply be game-driven skills or attitudes, but instead virtues that he would like them to use in their everyday lives. Coaches need to realise that their position is multi-functional - they are the team's role model and they are the team's guidance officer, as well as serving as the team's chief instructor. A coach that can grasp this is well on the way to becoming a successful coach.

It's important to realise that being a coach is like steering a ship - you are responsible for setting the players in the right direction. The 1999 New South Wales State of Origin coach stressed there are a range of issues in coaching that coaches should become familiar with. Such issues include knowing when it is appropriate to use discipline, developing a sense of pride amongst the players and using the option of delegating tasks.

For coaches to delve into these areas of performance enhancement, they first must cover the basics. This imperative step should begin with the **establishment of a philosophy** or reason for coaching. There is no point in coaching a team for such shallow reasons as to reap financial rewards or competition glory. Instead, it is hoped a coach will engage in Rugby League coaching for the sheer love of the sport and his will to pass on knowledge to others. A coach should also want to see the players grow both as athletes and people.

A **responsibilities list** should be compiled so that coaches can map out their prime objectives and duties. Then list what he considers, his commitments, in order of priority and keep a close eye on his performance. A self-reflection diary or any other form of

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performance evaluation is essential to ensure the list is current and responsibilities are met. A coach should then look at avenues for **delegating** certain tasks, to ensure his ability to coach is not being hampered by a work overload and to ensure players are exposed to specialist knowledge. "Delegating is not a sign of weakness, but is a way of giving tasks to people who may be more skilled in an area, such as a kicking coach." This leads to the final step - **evaluating the effectiveness of the program**. Essentially, this refers to assessing the player's program, as opposed to looking at how the coach himself is performing. Players are always anxious to receive feedback on how they are progressing, so it is vital the coach provide this data for perusal.

Pearce is a strong believer in evaluating the standing of a player through the eyes of both the coach and his fellow team mates. This makes it possible for the coach to analyse how the player is advancing in his game, in terms of how he is coping with the workload and how he is relating to the other players. At Balmain, the coaching staff charted their players performance with a rating out of ten each week in the following areas:

- a) Intensity by which they approach their training; and
- b) Teamwork - their capacity to help and encourage their team mates.

With such a system, players can clearly see how their coach rates their work and how they compare against the rest of the team: "Whether its skills, conditioning programs or agility work, there was constant monitoring to assess any progress." Pinning the data up on a notice board for open viewing encourages team members to develop an urge to counter negative scores and consolidate positive results.

Players mark their team mate's efforts to give scope for comparison and to aid his personal program evaluation. Players are asked to honestly make note of how they are feeling prior to and following a training session. The data is then evaluated to

determine when players require a rest or additional work and how the program can be better structured in ensuing weeks.

Players become aware of how their game is progressing, Pearce advocates the opportunity for coaches to instil a spirit and sense of enjoyment into the team. This can be classified as **developmental areas**. The development of morale, enthusiasm and camaraderie can be linked to five key sub categories:

1) Need good people - "This is paramount to having a bonded club. Selfish and jealous players who do not encourage others make it difficult to establish a bond."

2) Equity in company -

"If you want your players to be more tightly knit, you have got to give them responsibility. Make the players part of the club, by giving them a duty to perform - at Balmain, we had seven on-field captains, all of whom had to report back on a weekly basis."

3) Sense of worth, value and achievement - "This is linked to the player's achievements and feedback from people he respects. It's important for coaches to realise that the smallest thing can make the world of difference to a player, but at the same time, a coach should not give out praise when it is not due. That's worthless encouragement which players can sense."

4) Can't fake enthusiasm - "It's either there or its not. Genuine enthusiasm exudes out of the pores of skin."

5) Variety is the spice - "At the elite level of football now, there is so much work that players have to get through. It's important that coaches give variety in their sessions. This is a real challenge, but the players will gain enjoyment from it."

With the right balance of the above aspects, the role of the coach is simplified. Obviously, a highly energetic and supportive team will be easier to coach than one that is constantly drowning their sorrows. Coaches should realise that morale-development does not happen overnight - it requires a concerted effort. Team-based activities both on and off the field will indeed help foster team spirit and coaches should

encourage this.

The tough question, then, as a coach is, 'If I am going to create a team environment that is fun, full of enthusiasm and one that supports open communication, how do I maintain it and ensure the players do not abuse it?' **Discipline** is the answer, that enables both the establishment, and continuation of, a morale-filled team of players.

Behavioural boundaries must be set and the coach must stand firm by his decisions - but not become

dictatorial. A coach who can liaise with his players in a friendly, yet firm manner that will reap the most respect: "Really, you have to be informative, consultative and set guidelines, but at the same time, players must be able to have a say." This encompasses the concept of **team dynamics**.

**'If I am going to create a team environment that is fun, full of enthusiasm and one that supports open communication, how do I maintain it and ensure the players do not abuse it?'**

Balmain installed a penalty system where players who infringe are sent to a disciplinary panel, comprised of select club members. With the players handing down discipline, not only is the equity aspect bolstered, but the team also knows where it stands.

An important point a coach should note is **being up front**. It is easy for a coach to blame the selectors for a particular decision, but frankness will pay off in the long run. Following this is the need for **hardline and tolerant tactics**. A coach should be seen to be setting guidelines for behaviour and ensure the players follow these. They must remember, though, that to gain full respect from players, a touch of tolerance and humility is essential.

There are two other disciplinary areas - namely (a) **general and specific** and (b) **developing a culture**. The first is a contrast between the two means of handling a situation that requires the use of discipline. A coach can choose to be general when challenging the actions of players and perhaps address the team about the issue, or instead specifically approach each player. The second refers to building up the identity of a club so it can be identified from another: "It is about developing a philosophy, having a model you want to try to achieve and being consistent in your



# TEACHING...

## the junior player



By John Dixon  
Junior Development Officer  
Brisbane Broncos

Written by Robert Rachow

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*John Dixon has been employed as Development Manager of the Brisbane Broncos since January 1996, during which time he has also had the role of coaching one of the junior teams at the club.*

*From 1973 - 77 John played A-grade for All Whites in the Toowoomba competition and then for Brothers in Rockhampton. A highlight was earning selection in the Toowoomba representative team against the touring Great Britain side in 1975.*

*It has been as a coach, focusing on skill development, that John has made his most significant contribution. First at schoolboy level, then at senior level and now as a junior coach with the Broncos.*

*John was a member of the QRL coaching panels from 1982 - 95 and was a staff coach at the annual QRL camps conducted during that time. He has maintained his involvement in this area as a lecturer.*

To say junior coaching has many rewards would be a vast understatement.

However beyond the premierships, the triumphs and the good times, there is yet another dividend to be gleaned from taking control of a young and enthusiastic team - watching a child reach the fullest extent of their potential.

Every prosperous business man or sports manager can tell you results are only achieved through long-term sustainability, not short-term glory. That transpires to Rugby League, where successfully guiding a junior team is, in most cases, ninety per cent concerned with teaching for the future and only 10 per cent about actually coaching for the present. Young players are learning every single second they spend training and playing, so to coach a skill that remains undeveloped is of no benefit to both the individual and the team. Players must first be supplied with a basis of knowledge and experience about the game before they can progress to being 'coachable' subjects rather than 'teachable'.

Brisbane Broncos development officer John Dixon works with some of the most promising rugby league talent in Australia, coaching the Broncos Colts for the past four years. He identifies one of the most important facets of junior coaching as always keeping one eye planted firmly on the future.

"I think it takes a long time for a young man, or young player, to be introduced to a skill and then be able to

convert that into a game situation," offers Dixon.

"You can not be a good tradesman unless you have got the right tools, so as a junior coach the core aim should be teaching kids fundamental skills. It is impossible to make someone a better player overnight, but you can identify a scope or an area to work on so the child will be better off down the track." As coaches we often fail to be patient enough - we don't persist long enough with our teaching of the skill and yet we expect player to implement them in game situations. You can't blame a player for not executing correctly if he has not mastered the basics in the first place."

A vast array of skills are needed to fulfil the role of teacher as opposed to just coach. While coaching involves a great wealth of intuition and experience to alter game patterns, teaching combines a host of skills that will assist members of the team to absorb vital information. Firstly a teacher requires planning and organisational skills to prepare a template for the upcoming season and to pinpoint any obstacles that need overcoming. Next a teacher needs time management skills and motivation skills to use all available time efficiently and with the greatest impact. And lastly, but also importantly, there is a necessity for support and discipline skills, so that the team can maintain focus on the job at hand. Overall these skills must combine, especially for players at the developing stage, to treat every player as an individual

and at the same time meet the demands of the collective whole. When a player is making errors frequently, it is not simply a matter of skimming onto the next task and hoping things will right themselves - the player must be re-taught the aspects of the game with which they are struggling. Methods of evaluating the team's performance also need to be customised, replacing heavy-handed statistics with innovative barometers that measure the application of any new skills being taught. For example, if players are learning how to step off their left foot or hit the advantage line in training, then focus on how well they have accomplished that task in the game, rather than how many tackles they have missed or how many balls they have dropped.

## **coaches most likely to become successful are the ones that get their message across and communicate well with their players**

"Coaches need to be careful that they are not becoming too advanced for their players," says Dixon.

"It's tempting to be smug and get technical on certain aspects, but what coaches should be doing is teaching skills that are appropriate for the age and maturity of their players. Break any new skills down into no less than five easy-to-remember components and from there you can sequentially develop the skill to a reasonable level. "Technique does not become skill without practice, practice, practice. And then it is only truly a skill when it is performed in a game situation while under pressure."

Like most other coaches associated with elite players, Dixon lists communication as an area of vast importance and one that is very often underestimated. Communicating effectively is not simply a matter of giving instructions and expecting them to be acted upon. While talking is a one way process, communicating is a mutual interaction that must be conveyed with enthusiasm on both parties. Dixon is a firm proponent that the coach must teach themselves throughout the week also, learning the characteristics of players that are not clearly evident. Arriving at training well before the beginning of a session to chat with players and being on hand to help them through rough patches are examples of techniques that do not require much effort and time, but yield great rewards in terms of understanding.

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"It is essential you are able to communicate and get your message across clearly," reveals Dixon.

"One aspect of coaching that is neglected is having the ability to communicate not only on the field, but off it as well. I think that talking to my players through the week is crucial - it's where you establish the empathy and tolerance that you will need on game day. "And your communication should always come in a positive form. If you need to pull someone into line, then do it behind closed doors and if you need to praise them, then do it publicly in the right conditions. If there is only one certainty in coaching, it's that coaches most likely to become successful are the ones that get their message across and communicate well

with their players."

Dixon, a former school teacher by profession, believes many of the same principles he used in the classroom can be successfully applied to 'teaching' a football team. He insists that without complete concentration from players, any possible advantages of training are lost or diluted and render the practice possibly more harmful than beneficial. Asserting a channel of concentration begins with ensuring the children remain quiet while the coach is speaking and vice-versa, thereby giving full attention to one particular subject. A coach must also face all his players, a feat that is not usually achievable in a dressing room or when the team is standing in a circle. Moveable objects and possible distractions, such as footballs, must be removed or kept still until they are of value to the lesson.

Above all, the experience of 'teaching' a junior Rugby League team should be one that is rewarding to all persons involved and one that bids well for the future. The coach and players may not attain a premiership, but they can both be satisfied that down the track the skills learnt throughout the season can be built upon and developed, as the players capacity for learning increases. For the coach, it also provides further experience combining the necessary characteristics for senior tutelage - patience, enthusiasm, communication, concentration and an appreciation for the fundamentals of the game. □

# Becoming a Better BENCH COACH

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**By Brian Smith - Parramatta Eels Head Coach**

Written by Robert Rachow

Arguably the greatest challenge for a Rugby League coach is the successful transition from training instructor to game-day director. While natural instinct and intuition play an important role in completing the step triumphantly, in-depth knowledge and a wealth of experience are over-riding factors.

Clearly some coaches do display an almost uncanny ability to 'read' a game, but for the main it is a predetermined system which allows them to make sound tactical decisions while under the massive pressure of a game-day situation. Without this background, months or even years of planning and preparation may be wasted because of a single error at a crucial stage in the game.

NRL squad and First Division team train together in mock games that incorporate the majority of elements expected in a real match. These drills provide the players, and the coach, with a template to follow or modify depending on the relevant situation. A template allows the coach to focus on other factors such as individual match-ups and specific patterns of play, while giving the team a mental checklist to grade their progress as well.

"Reacting and adjusting to differing circumstances like injuries, sin-bins and weather conditions doesn't just come naturally," Smith reveals.

"Practising these situations at training allows you to

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**"Communication is the most important facet of coaching on the day of a game"**

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Brian Smith, coach of the Parramatta Eels and veteran of almost 300 first grade matches, believes game-day or 'bench' coaching can, on many occasions, make or break a team's chances of victory.

"A lot of good work can be sadly and badly brought undone by poor decisions from the bench," says Smith.

"While the coach's input may not be as high as in other sports, it is an integral part of any successful Rugby League team. Due to the physical contact and the stress on players, there are far more variables for you to consider than in training, but at the same time the level of intervention is limited." The most satisfying days you will ever experience as a coach are when your gameplan goes exactly as it should. However, those days are few and far between and it is imperative that you have the ability to cope with any possible problems you might encounter."

Smith is a firm advocate of training in conditions that simulate match situations. At Parramatta, both the

react positively when they happen in a game. And when they do happen it allows you to gauge your approach and either adjust it or reinforce it before the next game. It is a continuous learning cycle. In the past I have followed games by a set routine, but now I prefer to be a lot less rigid. You need to establish a feel for the game and consider all your options when any variables arise.

Of course with the advent of unlimited interchange, the number of variables has risen dramatically. Individual replacements may not be as critical as before, but the frequency and impact with which bench players rotate has certainly soared. The lateral thinking required to effectively and efficiently substitute players is only developed through a thorough understanding of the team's direction and personal capabilities. At the precise moment of interchange the coaching staff must assess the amount of stress on the respective players, the amount of energy expended, time

needed for recovery, a suitable warm-up exercise and possible treatment for any injuries. All this without even considering tactical changes or specific instructions for the various players!

Deciding which players man the bench is almost as difficult as choosing the correct time to interchange them. Versatility, temperament and fitness levels all play a role in selecting those not in the starting thirteen. An injury to just one player may mean the entire team needs to be reshuffled or another player will figure in a significantly larger capacity than they have previously. Other issues to consider include the player's level of nervousness, ability to control their nerves, and impact value."

Rugby League is truly a 17-man game and just because a player is on the bench, it doesn't mean he is worse than anybody who is starting," Smith offers.

"In most cases it means he has attributes that are best suited to entering the game later on. Last year Jason Smith was used off the bench and he was arguably the game's best player at the time. It raised a few eyebrows, but it worked and shows that the 13 players that finish a close game are often more significant than the 13 that started it. "When I interchange my players I try to take them off before they make a mistake as opposed to after they do. It is difficult to pre-empt the action, but by watching the player away from the ball and reading his body language, your chances of making the right decision are increased."

Smith, unlike the majority of coaches in the NRL, has switched from coaching in the stands to coaching on the bench. A number of factors encouraged him to return to ground level - most of all the personal

interaction and eye contact that was not possible from afar. He believes the relationship between coach and player is far more trusting and understanding when they are seated together in the same environment, without the need for an intermediary. Smith also recognises the benefits of monitoring his team from an elevated position - namely distancing himself from any emotion and giving himself a better view of opposition weaknesses. However the coach of three grand final sides says no matter which position you choose, there is always an overriding need for clear and concise communication.

"Communication is the most important facet of coaching on the day of a game," reveals Smith.

"Use short, sharp instructions that emphasise the changes you are trying to implement. Simplify or repeat your message if needed, because if you lack clarity people are going to get sidetracked from what it is you want to achieve. You may have to access all sorts of information, including statistics, injury reports or player comments and you need to do it in the shortest time possible."

A real game is a whirling, often chaotic ebb and flow of action with no 'instant replays', so the coach must note, interpret, react and preferably pre-empt continuous sequences of action while remaining focused and composed. Effective bench coaching is important because it can have an impact, both positive and negative, far beyond the extent of a single game. The challenge for the coach is to use every match as a learning experience and convert it into a tutorial for players at every opportunity that emerges. □

## NOTES

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# On Field

## Injury Assessment

By Rob Hawthorn  
Level 2 First Aid Officer  
QRL Divisional Panel Member

The Rugby League First Aid Trainer or coach must approach an injured player, in a logical and systematic manner using calm reasoning. This type of approach allows for a focus on the incident and reduces the risk of further aggravating the injury. Most injuries that occur on the football field do not result in a life threatening situation but if such a situation were to arise prompt care is essential. In some situations time is a critical factor and is vital that assistance to the player be based on knowledge of how to perform First Aid effectively. It must be said that the role of the First Aid Trainer is to make a preliminary assessment and NOT to diagnose any injury as this is the area of qualified medical personnel.

In general terms, the First Aid Trainer is concerned about the incident in which the injury took place but more specifically, the management, not treatment, of the injured. In looking after the incident and its consequences, as well as the injured player, the following aspects should be considered:

***When approaching an injured player, a First Aid Trainer must be prepared for all eventualities from the most minor to the most severe.***

- the specific injury, eg a swollen ankle
- the reaction of the body, such as pain and shock
- the player's total reaction including both emotional and attitudinal response to the injury
- the associated concerns of the immediate environment, including safety on the field and the reaction of other players and spectators

As the above aspects are so broad, this is evidence enough to reinforce the necessity of a plan or system

that the First Aid Trainer should follow.

As a doctor may not be present to make a diagnosis of any injury it is the responsibility of a sports First Aid Trainer to assess the situation. A full diagnosis can be made later when proper personnel and facilities are available.

When approaching an injured player, a First Aid Trainer must be prepared for all eventualities from the most minor to the most severe. A First Aid Trainers first concern is the safety of the player, followed by a need to perform any emergency action required. Moving the player would only be undertaken when it is considered completely safe.

The most severe case would be the unconscious player who is not breathing and has no pulse but has a suspected neck/spinal injury. In this case the rule "ABC" is followed.

### **Airway Breathing Circulation**

If any one of these is ABSENT, appropriate action must be taken.

If there is no apparent airway, attempts must be made to establish one.

If there is no breathing and there is a pulse, mouth to mouth resuscitation must be done.

If there is no breathing and no pulse, then CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) must be performed.

Once it is established that the ABC is functioning the First Aid Trainer may progress to determining if other first aid is urgent because of haemorrhage. If so, steps must be taken to deal with this. The primary goal of first aid – to save lives – has been met.

First Aid Trainer's must determine the injury, its extent and severity. Caution must be observed in identifying all injuries and not just the most apparent one(s). Examination and evaluation must be completed for each individual injury, and injuries managed in the correct order.

Examination is begun by observation. The level of mental state and consciousness of the player is determined. The position of the player's head, neck, trunk and limbs are noted. Other signs of injury include variation from normal size, position, shape and colour as compared with the other or opposite limb/side. Also observed should be the player's pupils and facial expression.

The acronym TOTAPS should be remembered when assessing an injury.

**Talk**  
**Observe**  
**Touch**  
**Active movement**  
**Passive movement**  
**Skill test**

When the visual inspection is complete, the First Aid Trainer then talks to the player to establish facts about the injury. Other questions are asked to learn the exact cause and mechanism of injury, the exact anatomical site of the injury, whether a deformity is or was present, the nature of the pain (sharp, dull, aching or throbbing), abnormal sounds associated with the injury such as a 'snap or pop' and comparison to previous similar injury if any.

The First Aid Trainer may progress to the next stage, which is palpation or examination by touch. Using the fingers, the injured part is carefully and gently felt and any abnormal lump, depressions, swelling, heat, points of tenderness or reaction noted. The skin,

soft tissues and bones are palpated, taking note of any points of localised tenderness. Palpation should begin away from the injured site and gradually work towards the site.

The ability of the player to move the injured part (i.e. active movement) is then investigated. Active use of a muscle, joint, extremity or part is of value in determining the extent of an injury. Functional tests are especially effective in the assessment of muscle and joint injuries. **Active movement** is performed by the player only to the point of pain and no further. The First Aid Trainer should observe and listen.

**Passive movement** is the next step in the examination. When the player does not complain of pain on active movement, the First Aid Trainer should take the part through its normal range of movement to identify areas of pain and painful movements and to detect any instability. This form of examination is of value in determining the pathology or anatomical structures involved during trauma.

**A skill test** is the next step. If none of the above procedures has resulted in pain, then the player should stand and be asked to perform skills required to play, beginning with the least demanding and ending with the most demanding.

If at any stage an injury is detected first aid should commence immediately. When the examination is complete and the extent of the injury is determined, the First Aid Trainer is then in a position to take appropriate action based upon the evaluation. Transport of the player is considered and the First Aid Trainer may opt to call an ambulance. A doctor may be called in to discuss the injury and/or for relay of the information gleaned from the examination. Appropriate referral to a doctor is essential. The First Aid Trainer may also be responsible for preventing the player from returning to participation because of injury. It is very important to be thorough in the examination. **Do not rush.** Never distort the picture by minimising or exaggerating the extent of an injury. Regardless of the severity, stay calm and confident, be concerned with comforting and reassuring the player. Have confidence in your ability and qualifications to assess and manage each injury in a correct manner. □

# Coaches Insight

*Brian Kerle* Brisbane Bullets Basketball Coach

Written by Ashley Bradnam

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*Brian Kerle is one of Australia's most respected authorities on basketball. As a player, he represented his country at Olympic level, and repeated this feat as a coach. His coaching exploits have seen him twice lead the Brisbane Bullets to Grand Final success in the competitive NBL competition, and has also brought personal rewards with Coach of the Year honours in 1984 and 1990.*

*With a winning percentage of 64% as a coach, RLCM spoke to Brian to gain an insight into his coaching philosophy.*

**RLCM** What does the role of 'coach' mean to you?

**B.K.** There are a couple of different answers to that. Some coaches teach the game's fundamentals as well as the finer aspects of the game. They have learnt the trade of their sport and their style of coaching reflects that. There is also the player's coach, the coach who is a 'people person' who has good communication

It is probably created from their insecurities for their job; they want to give the impression they have a great knowledge of the game, and I'm not saying they don't. I just believe players should be given the freedom to express themselves during the game, and not be weighed down by instructions from the coach.

**RLCM** How do you encourage enjoyment?

***You don't want players standing around waiting for the ball to come to them, they have to put themselves in a position to get the ball. Players need to be creative.***

skills and can create improved teamwork by realising that the team is composed of a group of individuals. Both styles have merit. My philosophy is simple. At any level, junior, senior or professional, a coach must ensure that there is enjoyment. If the player doesn't enjoy playing, or the coach doesn't enjoy coaching, then neither should play or coach.

**RLCM** Do you think some coaches are guilty of overcoaching?

**B.K.** Absolutely. They overload players with too many instructions which leads to on-field confusion.

**B.K.** Through variation, trying different things to keep the players fresh. Effective communication is a vital tool for any coach. In basketball there are hundreds of different drills we can use, that all reflect a game situation.

**RLCM** What is your communication style with the Bullets?

**B.K.** I am different to a lot of coaches in that I'm not an outward communicator. Instead of talking to the team as a group, I prefer to pull each player aside and talk one-on-one. When I recruit a player and at

the start of each season, I meet with each player to tell them what I expect from them in the coming year, and I review that with them as the season progresses.

**RLCM** What makes a successful team?

**B.K.** Any successful basketball team I have been involved with has been a harmonious team. You're looking for the player who will play for the person standing next to him, not for himself. It all starts with the recruitment process. It's important you recruit players who will fit into a solid team environment. I have made mistakes before where I have recruited an extremely talented player who actually disrupts the team because he's selfish. You can't achieve success through selfishness, so I choose not to let the little things get under my skin.

**RLCM** You have been coaching for a long time. Have you changed your style over the period?

## ***If you're coaching for the glory you're in it for the wrong reason.***

**B.K.** I have learnt a lot so, I guess my coaching has changed because of that. I am also a lot more tolerant now than I was when I started. I certainly have fewer sleepless nights.

**RLCM** Why is that?

**B.K.** It comes back to the enjoyment aspect once more. I want to enjoy coaching so I choose not to let the little things get under my skin. Although when I was less tolerant I did enjoy a fair bit of success. Discipline has always been a major factor for me. I ask for it from my players because that's how I was when I played.

**RLCM** Some coaches believe that success is often bred from a fear of failure. Do you agree?

**B.K.** Everyone is scared of failing, but failure itself is a difficult thing to explain. A lot of people believe you've failed because you haven't won the championship, I don't see it that way. If you foster a young player and make him better, or help someone make a rep team, or help your team achieve its potential, then you haven't failed.

**RLCM** What keeps you in the coaching game?

**B.K.** I'm a competitor and I enjoy winning. I like the atmosphere of it all, the thrill of the game but I

enjoy the game more than the training. There is always a challenge when you are a coach. I also enjoy working with young players, helping them learn the game at the higher level. There is so much to be achieved for those willing to put in the hard work, and I enjoy passing that onto my players.

**RLCM** Professionalism has increased in sport over the past ten years. Have you noticed the difference?

**B.K.** Some era's are different. Players still love the sport, there's no question about that. Some players probably love the money more, and they put the dollars before the sport. Those players are in the minority and they've got it the wrong way round. It keeps coming back to the hard work philosophy. If you make the sacrifices, the rewards will follow, but you don't get the rewards first, which is what some players expect.

**RLCM** What advice would you give to rookie coaches?

**B.K.** First of all you need to ask yourself why are you coaching. If you're coaching for the glory you're in it for the wrong reason. I have never been in it for the ego. The coach is one small part of the organisation so he has to be involved for the right reasons.

**RLCM** What are the right reasons?

**B.K.** Because he wants to learn, wants to be successful, and wants to be a part of the team. He has to be able to conduct himself respectably on and off the field, because the team's image starts with him. And of course, he has to be able to enjoy himself while going about his business.

**RLCM** Off-the-ball play is an important part of Rugby League coaching. Is that something you implement in basketball?

**B.K.** Yes. It all gets back to the players accepting responsibility for thinking about the game. You don't want players standing around waiting for the ball to come to them, they have to put themselves in a position to get the ball, and be creative. The team needs to work together to create opportunities for individuals.

# Developing a Periodisation Plan

By Ken Kennedy  
ARL Level 3 Coach

A key element of effective coaching, is a good plan. Planning is a skill that should be developed, at any level. One of your objectives as a coach is to develop and prepare your team and players for competition. Having a plan will give direction in achieving this and developing the players' technical and physical skills.

When developing your plan, you need to follow some basic principles:

- The period of your plan.....1,2 or 3 years
- The age group and the ability level you are coaching
- All relevant dates of pre-season and competition
- All relevant training principles e.g. mental, physical, skills, training leads and recovery time

Having established the length of your plan (for a Rugby League coach, a two to three year plan would be ideal), you can now develop an annual plan, taking a full year, which is called a PERIODISATION PLAN. See diagram 2. A periodisation plan divides the year into a number of training periods that will vary in purpose and intensity. There are three main periods in a periodisation plan.

1. The preparation period
2. The competitive period
3. The transition period

These periods are divided into phases:

1. Preparation into
  - (a) the general phase
  - (b) the specific phase
2. Competitive into
  - (a) pre competition
  - (b) competition

Transition into two or three phases. This will depend on the coach's requirements.

- (a) A period of complete rest of two to three weeks. This enables players to recover from any niggling injuries.

(b) The active rest phase where players are encouraged to participate in some sporting activities like swimming, cycling, surfing etc. Any activity that is fun and relaxing but still some on going physical work

(c) Individual preparation where the player resumes his own training programmes, focusing on his aerobic endurance , strength and hypertrophy training, in preparation for the start of club training. Players should return to club training fresh and injury free to start the new season.

The simplest way to structure your training plan is to divide the major training phases into units of four weeks, which are called MACROCYCLES. Each macrocycle is made up of MICROCYCLES, a period of five to seven days. In each macro there is a weekly increase in volume and intensity to your training load with the progression peaking in week 3 and a lighter load in week 4. The structure of each macro will depend on the objective and goal of each period of your training and competition demands.

See diagram 1.

## Setting up a Periodisation Chart

Firstly you need to take into account all the relevant dates including the pre season and competition and the time between the start of the next season. Using the chart in diagram 2 for Rugby League, a training year runs from late September to the following September. This will differ for teams depending on the competition and the position the team finishes. In the chart (as an example) I have used, a transition period, preparation period and competitive period. These periods have then been further divided into 5 phases:

- 1) Recovery phase
- 2) General phase
- 3) Specific phase
- 4) Pre competition
- 5) Competition

### References

- (1) Australian Coaching Council
- (2) Better Coaching Manual, Planning The Training Program, By Lawrence R. Woodman and Jess Jarver
- (3) ASC Resource Manual Bompá T. 1987

You must remember that during the preparation period, the volume of work will increase BUT during the competition phase, the volume will decrease and the intensity will increase. Therefore you have an increase in the overall “workload”. Your periodisation plan must take into account all areas of training, remembering that there should be at least 3 fitness testing sessions included in your yearly plan. These will allow you to assess the value of your programme and enable you to make the necessary adjustments where required. You can make your periodisation plan as in depth as complex as you like but my advice is to keep it simple and constantly monitor the players’ progress under game conditions and at training sessions.

## A Macro Overview for a Full Year

**Macro 1:** Recovery period - 2 to 3 weeks of complete rest. Start of active rest period - September/October.

**Macro 2:** Active rest/individual player training. Focus on building an aerobic base, also resistance training to develop strength and hypertrophy - October/November.

**Macro 3:** Individual player training focus - as macro 2 - November/December.

**Macro 4:** Professional players will have started club training, where most park players will still be working on individual programmes as in Macro 2 - December/January.

**Macro 5:** Beginning of club training. Players still required to maintain their aerobic endurance development resistance training with private sessions and club session that focus on aerobic endurance development and skill development - January/February.

**Macro 6:** Training becomes more specific with week 1 to 3 being focused on anaerobic endurance skill and agility. Week 4 will see an increased amount of specific skill work, speed and power development - February/March.

**Macro 7:** This is the beginning of the competition season. As in macro 6, the first two weeks of training will place a greater work load on anaerobic endurance system, skill work, speed, team work and power development. Players are still required to keep individual resistance programme going - March/April.

**Macro 8:** Sees the maintenance of the aerobic and anaerobic energy systems. Resistance training should consist of strength maintenance and power development with an increase of skill and team work - April/May.

**Macro 9:** Mid competition period will see maintenance programme put into place in the areas of power, strength, speed and agility work continued, emphasising on skill and teamwork. Individuals should continue their resistance programmes under supervision of coaching staff - May/June.

**Macro 10:** With continued maintenance training being carried out, training is now focused on skills and team work, with constant review of games - June/July.

**Macro 11 & Macro 12:** The business end of the season. You need to be playing your best football of the year now, to be competitive in the final series. You should see a peak in players’ individual fitness levels. Training now revolves around skill, ballwork and maximum fitness. This peaking process will see a reduced volume of training, while maintaining a high level of intensity - July/August/ September.

### Remember

**....Failing to Plan....is Planning to Fail**

### EXAMPLE OF TWO MACROCYCLES

The volume increases steadily each week with the fourth week being the recovery week

**Diagram I. Macro 5 Macro 6**

Load	W 17	W 18	W 19	W 20	W 21	W 22	W 23	W24
High								
Med								
Low								

**Diagram2. EXAMPLE OF PERIODISATION CHART**

<b>Dec</b>	<b>Jan</b>	<b>Feb</b>	<b>Mar</b>	<b>Apr</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>Jun</b>	<b>Jul</b>	<b>Aug</b>	<b>Sep</b>	<b>Oct</b>	<b>Nov</b>
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<b>Preparatory Period</b>	<b>Competitive Period</b>							<b>Transition</b>			
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<b>General</b>	<b>Specific</b>	<b>Pre-Comp</b>	<b>Competition</b>						<b>Recovery - General</b>		
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<b>Macro 3</b>	<b>Macro 4</b>	<b>Macro 5</b>	<b>Macro 6</b>	<b>Macro 7</b>	<b>Macro 8</b>	<b>Macro 9</b>	<b>Macro 10</b>	<b>Macro 11</b>	<b>Macro 12</b>	<b>Macro 1</b>	<b>Macro 2</b>
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10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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# PERFORMANCE MONITORS

## Assessing Behaviour and Attitudes of the Rugby League Player

PART 2



By Steve Anderson  
Assistant Coach  
Melbourne Storm

### PART 2: INDIVIDUAL DYNAMICS

#### INTRODUCTION

*In the first part of this series, I explained the benefits of monitoring and evaluating the physical demands of the game and how the player reacts to the various disciplines. Throughout this part I will stress the benefits to the evaluation process by examining the individual within a team environment. It is vitally necessary to understand how best to fit the characteristics of the individual into the dynamics of the group - simply how do you get the best out of the player?*

Levels of communication between coach - player and between the players is the key to this process. Areas which need to be monitored come under seven (7) major headings which give not only an immediate measure of the individuals performances (both on and off the field), but includes the information collated over several years, and provides invaluable insights to the player and his career in professional sport.

These areas for brief discussion include measures on:

1. Group work (compatibility)
2. Information / Interpretation  
(i.e. Ability to follow game plan)
3. Identifying the player's standing in the group
4. Ability to organise
5. Awareness to skill development
6. Concentration levels
7. Timing and execution.

As can be seen there is a broad range of both practical and theoretical components and it is the ability to measure, interpret and convert necessary information to the player, which is the key.

#### METHODOLOGY

Conducting these 'in-house' programmes requires patience and planning where benefits are beneficial to both the player and the team. Without discussing the psychological and behavioural techniques used to gather the information, both observation and player discussions have been utilized at various stages of the season. (i.e. Pre-Mid and Post season assessments). Individual files are established which are accessible to the player, containing documents evaluations and results outlining areas of deficiencies and programmed remedial work. It is important the player is fully aware of these programmes and how to interpret the findings. It is at the players' discretion whether to continue such programmes.

#### GROUP WORK (COMPATIBILITY)

Measuring how the player works within the group has benefits for the coach. Rugby League is a team sport and so the preparation of the players should involve working for each other. So how do we measure?

I've used the term 'compatibility' primarily to type the players to where they are best suited - The training environment provides the ideal situation to gauge the players and their habits. Simple questions should be considered while the player is observed that tests the players understanding, suitability, execution, responses and reaction to the tasks. Interpretation by the player needs to be closely observed - It is the ability of the player to work within the group, 'converting' the relevant information to effective performance which is to be noted and recorded.

#### INFORMATION / INTERPRETATION

How important is this area and how often do we overlook or assume the player understands your instructions. Coaches often assume that information is absorbed and channeled toward correct decision-

making . Decision-making under pressure is a skill, which requires patience and commitment from coaches in teaching the players. Situations which simulate game play are the key for successful practice in this area. All areas in training can be used as a 'back drop' to improve skills in decision - making processes - once again it is the outcomes of the players actions that need to be monitored where a simple for and against record of successful/unsuccessful outcomes could be recorded.

## **PLAYER STANDING**

All players need to develop within the confines of the group. This is a natural ability in all individuals and should be understood as an important tool in the players' make-up. The significance of this can not be overstated considering the nature of the game and the usefulness of independence by individuals within the group to make decisions, lead and to be decisive under pressure.

In all groups, layers or stratification exist where there are pecking orders and hierarchies. Sometimes for the good of the team. It is when an individual is being held back because of group pressures which ultimately affect both training and game performances that need to be isolated. I have found this same area in team sports where coaching staff tend to avoid letting the situation run their natural course. Observing this area without intervention can cause irreparable damage to the individual and team. These types of situations occur regularly in team sports particularly when young players are introduced to the group. Constant follow-up should be encouraged, dependent on the individuals background etc, allowing for the individual's characteristics to grow within the group. These observations can often identify the leaders within the team, which should be noted in your observations.

## **ABILITY TO ORGANISE**

Observing players in skill practice is an ideal situation to evaluate the players' ability to not only interpret instructions but to organise his actions. These actions can be monitored in various situations to gain clear parameters and boundaries of the players capabilities. For example - working alone where self-planning within the practice is required or where situations with time boundaries are used to determine what is effective and efficient within an activity. These simple observations will not only help to skill the player but also build necessary ability to organise efficient thought when under pressure, when in competitive sporting environments. Measures and recordings should note the players' ability/inability to align correct actions and decisions with clear steps when completing assigned tasks.

## **AWARENESS TO SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

Professional Rugby League players must be educated on their attitude toward skill development. From my experience most players will only do what they consider necessary in their training day. (Careful and thorough planning will remove many of these problems).

Professional coaches role is to encourage that all players continue to develop awareness to skills. The first step with all players at any level is to gauge their work ethic to the most mundane skill practices, and whether or not the players attitude reflects a high level of application to the execution of the task. This is conducted with an understanding that attitude is affected by many variables which will ultimately affect the performance. Tasks should be set at varying levels which allow monitoring not only of performance and execution, but reaction with the aim of teaching the player emotional control in all areas of training. The players reaction and general attitude to assigned work and how it is completed should be noted.

## **CONCENTRATION LEVELS**

Closely linked to attitude is the players' ability to think clearly and make the move correct in tough situations. The players' ability to concentrate when fatigued requires continual practice and patience by both coach and player. Once again, field oriented practice offers suitable environments for observation where the player is subjected to varying levels of physical demand, and intervals are arranged consisting of various drill practices that closely resemble specific occurrences in the game. Defense oriented activities are suitable for testing concentration due primarily to the demand of the activity and the thinking process needed needed for the work - both as an individual to complete a tackle and as a member of a unit within a defensive strategy. Measuring effectiveness through repetition and practices present logical starting points in assessing the players' ability to concentrate.

## **TIMING AND EXECUTION**

Monitoring all areas of preparation in a physical sense should be seen as common practice in the game, none more so than timing and execution. Both areas can be used as testing components or combined to represent one area. If the nature of the game is considered, particular emphasis should be placed on monitoring how the player times and executes activities. For this reason alone this area should be isolated for continued observation and recording. Players at all levels will develop in the various skill components of the games as a matter of course, but

application and execution require continual evaluation where programmes must encourage and test the player. Measures should be competency based where assessed criteria are both progressively staged applicable to the demands of the skill relative to its game application. It should be noted that the measure of skill becomes secondary in these instances where results become the primary gauge for effectiveness.

## CONCLUSION

Any form of measure provides an insight into how a process is applicable or effective but developing a complete understanding of the task at hand requires planning and progressive evaluation. When discussing these processes in Rugby League player development, obvious personality variables become a consideration particularly in the areas of Performance Monitors.

Although this section related more to the practical applications of the game the underlying focus is the recording and monitoring of reactions and behavior of the player in establishing a history to better understand the development of the individual. Measuring skill deficiency as an example of trying to improve the players efficiency, combine these measures with an understanding of his personality characteristics and immediately you are able to manipulate the activity to not only test motor skills but how the individual approaches various psychological barriers, presented in the activity (e.g. Decision - Making).

Gauging the players' reactions and responses offers the coach the ability to further advance the players potential to the demands of the modern game. Understanding group dynamics of the sport is a necessity, but applying team-oriented coaching principles at this level is not always the key. Individual dynamics within the confines of the group suggests additional information, which can only help the progress of the player.

*Part 3 of this series to feature in the next edition completes, Assessing the Behavior of the player where performance monitors emphasis the significance of attitude as being crucial to the individuals ability to perform consistently over prolonged periods.*

# RUGBY LEAGUE COACHING MAGAZINE

www.rlcm.com.au



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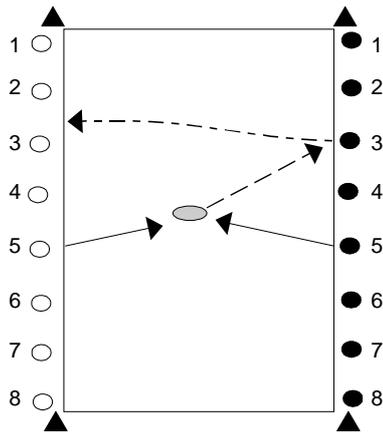
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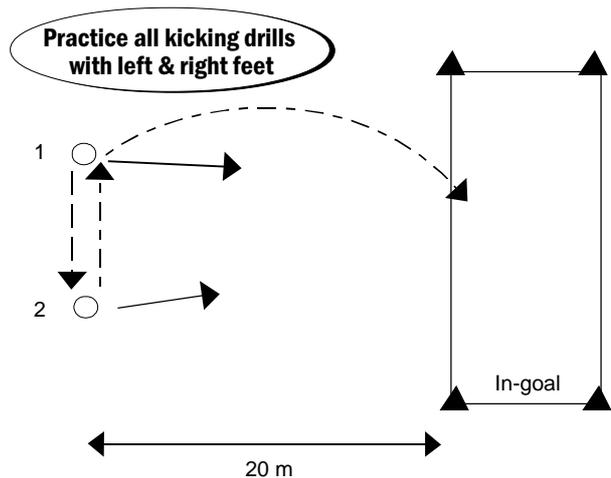
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# GRUBBER BUSTER



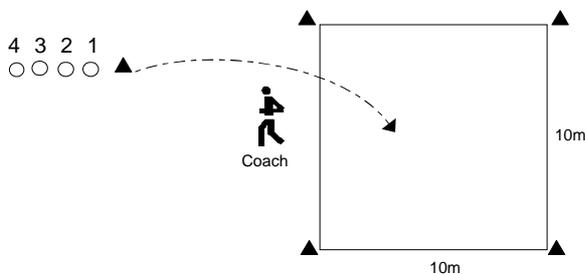
Divide players into 2 teams giving each player a number. The coach calls out a number and the player from each team with that number runs forward and tries to gain possession of the football in order to return to his team. The successful player recovers the ball from the centre and passes it to any player in his team. That player then must immediately attempt to grubber kick the ball through the other team. The player unsuccessful of gaining possession can pressure the kicker while his team must attempt to catch the ball by remaining standing on the line. The drill continues until all numbers have been called.

# KICK AND CHASE



**Aim** To successfully put a kick into the in-goal area, beat a defender to the football and ground the ball to score a try. Players 1 and 2 pass the ball back and forth. On the coaches command the ball carrier kicks (any nominated kick) to the try line and attempts to score a try by forcing the ball "in goal". The player without the ball becomes the defender and attempts to tag the other player of "kill" the ball.

# TARGET



**Aim** To kick the football and have it land in the grid. Each player has a football

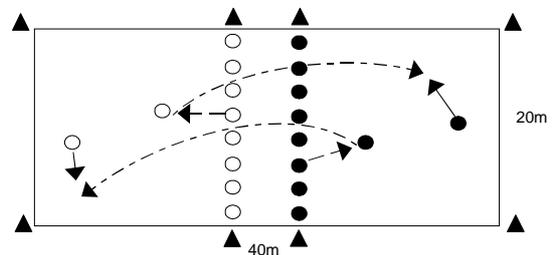
**Grubber Kicks**  
Players must grubber kick the ball for it to land in the square, 10 metres from the kicking marker.

**Punt Kick**  
The grid is taken further away - to 20 metres from the kicking marker. Players punt kick the ball and on the first bounce the ball must bounce in the square.

**Drop / Chip Kick**  
As above for the punt kick, however the player / coach is placed between the kicker and the grid. The ball must gain elevation, clearing the coach / player to land in the square on the full.

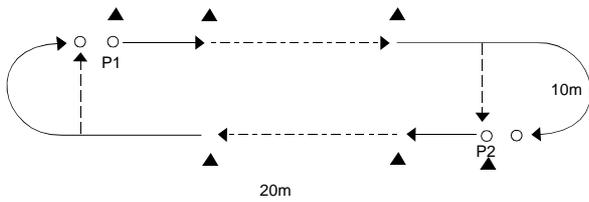
Gear Required: Footballs, Witches Hats  
Rugby League Coaching Magazine

# J'OH'S ATTACK



Divide players into two teams. Two teams line up as indicated and oppose each other along the halfway zone. Each team has a kicker and a fullback and one football. On the coach's command the balls are tapped on the ground and passed to the team's kicker. The kicker then kicks the football down field away from the opposing fullback ensuring it lands in the opposition's half. When the ball has landed, all team members run to their line. The fullback must retrieve the ball by diving on it and then waiting until all of his team are onside before he gets to his feet and joins his team on the line. The ball is then passed to all players in a backline movement. The first team to place the ball in the halfway zone wins. The ball must not be kicked dead, all players except the fullback and kicker start on the line between the hats as indicated. The ball must not be passed forward or knocked on.

# GRUBBER OR CHIP THROUGH



**Aim** Players are to complete a successful kick for themselves, regathering and then passing to support.

P1 runs, grubber kicks through the four witches hats (positioned above), regathers and passes to P2 who repeats back to P3 who continues the drill.

For variation the kick could be chip kick, a defender can be introduced or the kick could be for a partner.



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# KICK AND CHASE

P1 plays the ball to P2 who passes the ball from dummy half to P3. P3 then kicks the ball down field aiming to have the ball land in, or near a marked grid.

P4 gives chase and tries to regather the ball.

P5 receives the ball and moves to the P6 position.

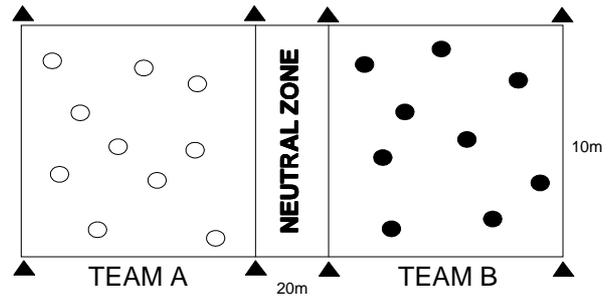
P6 who already has a second ball in hand runs to the play the ball and becomes P1 once P3 has kicked the ball and continues the drill, this ensures the drill continues without pauses.

Players rotate positions as the drill continues.

As a variation defenders can be added to put pressure on P3 as he kicks downfield.

Drill can be developed to imitate game play by including extra (P4) chase team and fullback (P5) runs a return.

# KICK TENNIS



Each team is scattered through their own half as shown in the above diagram.

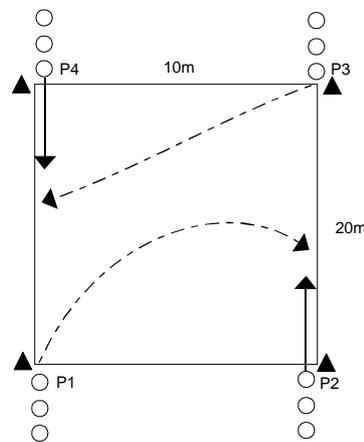
The ball is kicked by Team A into Team B's half. Their aim is to kick the ball making it land in Team B's half or force an error by a Team B player. If they succeed, a point is scored by Team A. If the ball is caught, no points are awarded. The ball must clear the neutral zone - otherwise possession is forfeited.

The ball is then kicked by Team B and the game continues in 'tennis' fashion. The first team to reach a predetermined score wins.

When the ball is kicked, it must cross the neutral zone at shoulder height or above.

Variations could be, adding two or more footballs. Instead of a scoring system, players making errors are eliminated from the game, the team that loses all its players first loses the game. The player catching the football must pass it to another player who then kicks the football.

# KICK FOR SUPPORT



**Repetition makes practice perfect**

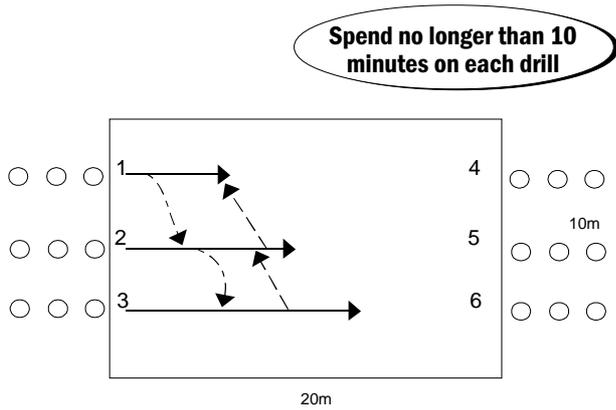
**Aim** Kicking for the support player who cleanly regathers the football.

P1 chip kicks for P2 who regathers on the full and runs through to offload to P3. P3 then grubber kicks for P4 who cleanly regathers the football from the ground and then runs through to offload to P1 who continues the drill.

Once P1 has chip kicked he moves to the end of the line in the P2 position, once P3 has kicked he moves to the end of the line in the P4 position.

As a variation another football can be added to speed the drill up.

# CHANNEL KICK



**Aim** Players either kick, catch or recover the football and then pass to support while on the run.

A grid is set up as in the above diagram.

Player 1 runs then grubber kicks to player 2.

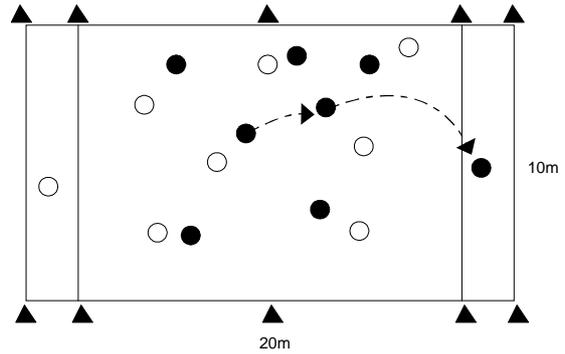
Player 2 then chip kicks to player 3.

Player 3 runs then passes to player 2.

Player 2 runs then passes to player 1.

Player 4, 5 and 6 repeat drill. Perform this drill until all players have had an opportunity to grubber, chip and pass.

# KICK NETBALL



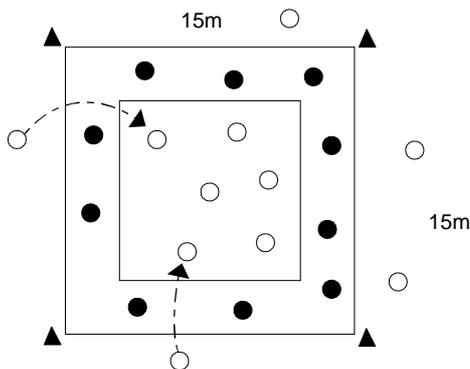
**Aim** For team mates to get the football to the player standing in the in-goal area by kicking the football.

Players are divided into two teams.

Each team kicks the ball between its own members. The ball can be kicked in any direction. The object of the game is to kick the ball to the player who is standing in the oppositions in-goal. Only one player is allowed in the in-goal. If the ball is dropped, the other team gains possession.

Players in possession of the ball must keep their back foot on the ground. Once the ball has been passed he is free to run anywhere in the field. (The game commences at one baseline. There are no set number of kicks needed, play continues if the ball is intercepted.)

# GRID ISLAND



**Aim** Team A players to kick and pass the football to each other without it being intercepted or them being distracted by Team B players.

Divide players into 2 teams.

Two grids are set up as shown (1 small grid inside a large grid).

Team A passes/kicks while Team B are defenders attempting to intercept ball or distract Team A players.

Team A players are divided in to 2 groups, one on the outside of the large grid and one on the inside of small grid.

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GRID ISLAND con't

The outside Team A players start with 4 footballs, on coache command the players attempt to kick or pass to their team mates in the inside grid. These players must catch the football on the full and must not go outside the small grid. They must then return the ball to the players on the outside of the grid.

Team A players are allowed to run around with the football but must hold the ball for any longer than five seconds. They may also pass the ball to another member of the team who is in a better position.

Team B players are to run around and attempt to intercept or distract team A players.

Once a ball has been dropped it is taken out of play and the drill continues with the remaining balls.

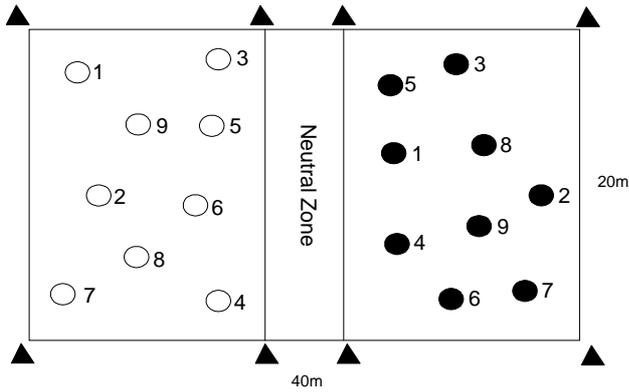
Vary the size of the grid to suit your teams age & ability.

KICKING DRILLS

IMPORTANT

All Drills should be practiced using both left and right feet

# NUMBER CATCH



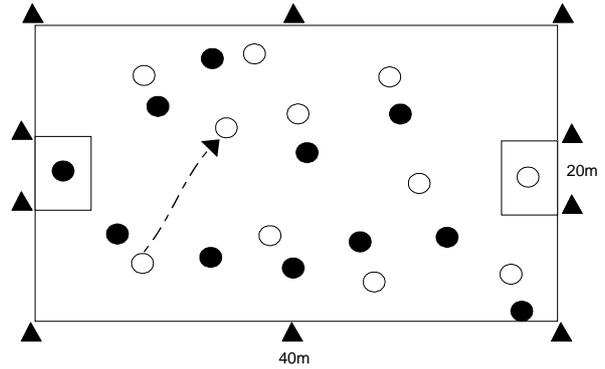
**Aim** For the attacking team to successfully kick across the neutral zone and for the defender to catch the football on the full.

Divide players into two teams. Each player is given a number.

Teams are scattered throughout their own half, as indicated above. The player in possession of the football calls out any number then immediately kicks it over the neutral zone and into the opposition's half. The player with the nominated number must catch the ball. No other player can attempt to catch the ball. Teams must vary their number calls each time they kick.

As a variation another football can be added.

# DRIBBLE BALL



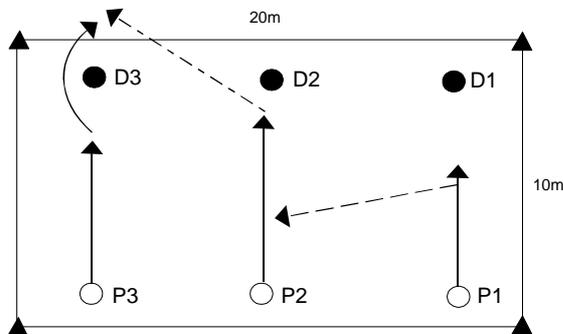
**Aim** To kick the football through the opposition's goal.

Players are divided into 2 teams.

Rules are similar to Soccer but a Rugby League football is used instead. The football is dribbled but players cannot touch the ball with their hands or arms with the exception of the two goal keepers.

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FORUM	
CURRENT ISSUE	
COACH TALK	
GALLERY	

# FIND THE GAP



**Aim** To attack the defensive line, grubbering a kick through and the chaser regathers the football behind the line.

Grid is set up as shown in diagram above with players on a three on three situation.

P1 runs out, draws D1 and passes the ball to P2.

P2 runs towards D2 drawing him and then grubber kicking or chip kicking through the gap for P3.

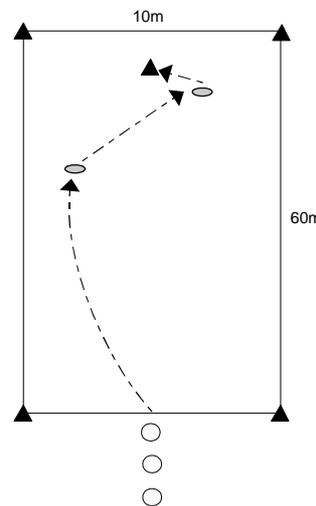
P3 chases and regathers ball

Players must alternate playing positions each time. Drill should be performed from both right and left sides.

Vary the kick between P1, P2 and P3.

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# KICK GOLF



Use your imagination to design a fun kick golf course using any variation of kicks and distances

Players must try to hit the cone placed down field in the least amount of kicks.

The first kick is a punt kick downfield. The second kick is a grubber kick from where the ball has stopped towards the cone. The third kick should be in close enough range for a short stab kick or dribble kick for the ball to hit the cone.

Players keep kicking until they have hit the cone.

Players may need to add another grubber if kicks have gone off target.