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Coach Talk

Mark Graham - Auckland Warriors Head Coach

Having proven to be more than worthy adversaries in the Test arena last year, New Zealand are still struggling with Rugby League where it counts most, at the grass roots level. Represented in the NRL by the Auckland Warriors alone, New Zealand is in effect a one-team country, not a one-team city like Melbourne, Brisbane or Canberra. Rugby Union still maintains a firm position on the pedestal of Kiwi culture and both playing numbers and resources for Rugby League have suffered in turn. Decisions made by the NRL to cut their Reserve Grade competition have relegated the

Zealand is via a 'trickle down effect', beginning with success at the top.

"Without Auckland in the NRL, Rugby League will be a mere speck over here compared to Rugby Union," Graham reaffirms.

"Having spent the majority of the past 20 years abroad, it has been a fairly big culture shock returning to New Zealand. Arriving from a place like Australia, where Rugby League is truly appreciated, to a country where a lot of schools simply refuse to play the game, takes a certain amount of getting used to.

"My philosophy has always been to enjoy whatever I choose to do and so far, the desire is still very much there."

next tier of competition below the Warriors to the local Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and local leagues. It is therefore, no wonder fears are held that if Auckland fail to fire for as few as two seasons, the sport in New Zealand may collapse and all but disappear.

Wearing the collective anguish and hope of a proud sporting nation on his shoulders is Mark Graham, a 29-Test veteran and the latest man to assume the head coaching role at Auckland. Respected in his playing days for his tough, gritty approach to the task at hand, Graham has brought with him expectations of increased performances and invariably, a better run of results. However, his goals do not lay solely with the seasonal fluctuations of the Warriors in the NRL; they also incorporate a wider perspective of the game's health in New Zealand and a desire to attain success and professionalism at all levels. Still, Graham says, the best path to rejuvenating Rugby League in New

"New Zealand is known for having some of the best privacy laws in the world, but when it comes to sport, there is a perception that kids should only play union. It is a bit absurd when children have the right to withhold their report cards from their parents, but they can't chose a certain code of football over another. If the Warriors set a professional winning example at the top, then hopefully we can change that type of attitude." he said.

Through implementing and recommending strategies with which to further the survival and expansion of Rugby League across the Tasman, Graham sees intangible benefits that will lead to Auckland becoming a powerhouse for years to come. Already the NZRL has mirrored examples set by soccer and union, whereby juniors are classified not only depending on age, but also weight. Graham believes this approach is imperative to the wellbeing

of Rugby League because at the moment New Zealand "produces a ton of powerful monster forwards, but very few quality halfbacks". He also applauds the establishment of a development program primarily focused on agility, ball skills and kicking as a means to compensate for the difference in muscle fibres that many Polynesian athletes have. But in all, Graham believes the major transitions that need to be made are not necessarily of the physical nature.

"The major difference in my approach, even since my last season with North Queensland in 1998, is that I tend to focus more acutely on the culture and psychology that pervades the players' lives," he explains.

"That aspect of Rugby League in New Zealand is huge, because I think previously players were not shown from an early age how to push through the pain and be strong mentally. The Warriors now use a fair degree of self-visualisation and other psychological techniques to help the players preview upcoming matches in a positive mindframe.

"At the start of the season I asked my players to identify a saying or quote that is relative to them personally and to write it down sign it and we put it on the wall. They had to jot down what their idea of a champion was and a few times throughout the year, we revisited their definition and assessed how they were progressing as an individual. Another device we used was to take strength, sprint and beep tests before the first game. When guys like Jason Death, who only scored average on the tests, started performing at a higher rate than the others, then I took players aside and said "Hey, how come you can run/lift/last better than him at training, but not in a game?"

Graham has also noted areas of improvement that exist right across the board in the NRL. Passing in particular, is an avenue which he believes could be greatly enhanced through a change of attitude and variation in drills. Graham says transferring the ball accurately and efficiently is still the major downfall of most sides, highlighting the performance of New South Wales in the first match of the 1999 State of Origin series where dummy half passing was a factor in their loss. He is a firm believer of playing on instinct and agrees with Parramatta coach Brian Smith's practice of teaching players to pass one-handed and fend with the other. While conventional football coaches would consider such a drill too risky, Graham insists that any facet of play can be reduced in risk if it is taught sufficiently.

Having served a seven-year apprenticeship as assistant coach at Manly, Norths and the Cowboys,

the former-back rower has remained up to speed with the advent of relatively new strategies like off-the-ball play and comprehensive video analysis. Graham says quite often the tries a side fails to score through inadequate use of these two procedures, are the ones that will ultimately cost them the game. However he does not consider tactics as the only by-product of his lengthy tenure under the guidance of coaches Sheens, Lowe, Louis and Fulton.

"Personally, I consider that apprenticeship to be my number one strength," Graham reveals.

"If I had spent that long at university, I may have been a brain surgeon by now. When I look back, I am so pleased that I didn't put my hand up to be a head coach straight away. I had a few areas - like my temperament - that needed to be handled better, and if I had gone straight to the top job, I do not think I would have realised that. The apprenticeship also gave me a golden opportunity to learn different things from other coaches, ideas that I probably would not have thought of by myself. For example, Tim Sheens used to have a candid camera to follow around a particular player for the whole game and then he could break down what areas of improvement to work with them on.

"My philosophy has always been to enjoy what ever I choose to do and so far, the desire is still very much there. I try to challenge and teach my players at training and hopefully they will carry the same attitude as I do. The scary thing these days is that some young players face the possibility of never working a day in their life until they turn 30. They can survive on scholarships until they turn full-time professional, then even if they retire before 30, there are still sponsorships and other things to carry them over. Life skills are being neglected and too much emphasis is being placed on looking after 'mates' no matter what they do. While that is admirable in many ways, I do not think it teaches them to use common sense all that often. Serving an apprenticeship as coach helped me avoid that and hopefully, I can pass on some wisdom to those in need."

His wisdom also goes out to those who constantly criticize referees. While admitting to pulling his hair out with frustration on more than one occasion, Graham believes, by and large, that the man with the whistle receives far more than his fair share of castigation. Not only has the abolition of a national Reserve Grade competition made development hard for New Zealand players, it also denies referees a stepping stone to the elite level, Graham opines. He stresses that there is no use complaining about errant

decisions unless referees are provided with increased assistance from administrators, touch judges and coaches alike.

He offers this advice to the referees ruling body to try and recruit recently retired players into their ranks.

"The speed of the game and the technicalities that have been applied over the last few years have provided a lot of indecision in both the mind of the player and the referee," Graham states.

"If a player makes a mistake, he usually gets another chance, but if a referee mucks up, he gets grilled for it. It is an extremely hard job and we coaches really need to help them out. The NRL should get all the coaches around a table and discuss any changes they want to implement, because let's face it, we are the guys who are going to do our utmost to exploit and milk everything out of whatever it is they come up with. If they consult us first, we could probably point out any possible faults before they blow up in their face or end up in the newspapers.

"As far as any implementations I would introduce myself, I think we should make common sense and fluency more important than being pedantic and precise. The interpretation of knock-ons vary from week to week, so maybe we shouldn't be so exact and perhaps allow the lineball decisions to pass by without a stoppage. People say that Rugby League needs scrums like the old days, because it emphasised competing for the ball, but they forget how much that involved the referee and all the scrum penalties that were awarded.

"The situation at the moment certainly is not ideal, but to me it is better than seeing an extra five penalties per game. If the NRL want to fine-tune the scrum, I would suggest allowing the attacking team an option of where on the advantage line they want to pack down. Then they can pack 10 metres, 20 metres or halfway across the field. I think you would see more moves and clean breaks because of the indecision created in the minds of the defence." Graham said.

Indecision however, is not a term that Graham wants associated with the future of Rugby League in New Zealand. Courage and conviction are more along the lines of his thinking and into the new millenium he hopes Rugby League will supersede rival codes in much the same manner that he envisions Auckland establishing themselves as Premiership contenders; by hurting the opposition from the first tackle of the match.

□ *Reprinted from the Madison Sport Coach Talk Yearbook*

Choosing a MENTOR

BY Peter Corcoran OAM - ARL Coaching & Refereeing Manager
Written by Robert Rachow

Mark Graham had one, Brian Smith was one and David Waite still idolises his. What are we talking about? The answer is of course, a coaching mentor. Just as important as it is for players to have access to a knowledgeable coach, it is absolutely vital that a coach maintain contact with a responsible and respectable role model. This person comes in the form of a mentor.

While most players, particularly at the junior level, have coaches bestowed upon them, a mentor is frequently chosen of the coach's own volition. Having helped hundreds of coaches settle upon a suitable mentor, ARL Coaching and Refereeing Manager Peter Corcoran OAM says the key is in finding someone with credibility that you can aspire to emulate. He also places a great value on the concept that both entities in the arrangement should emerge enlightened, not only the apprentice.

"It should be very much a two-way relationship," urges Corcoran.

"Coaches should choose a mentor who can bring out the best in them, but at the same time choose someone who might benefit from their ideas. That is not to say you should go in there and tell your mentor what's right and what's wrong. It should be a by-product of a harmonious and educational relationship."

"Conversely, if a mentor thinks they know it all, then they won't be of much use. Their role is to provide guidance and advice when stimulated - not simply give you all their ideas."

Corcoran emphasises that far too many coaches look at their mentor as an assessor rather than a source of inspiration. In all, he believes the three most important qualities a mentor should offer his student are those of an observer, a role model and an advisor. A mentor should act as a sounding board to throw ideas and discuss, rather than an uninvolved bystander who merely ticks and crosses a sheet.

"At the very start of your decision as to who will be your mentor you should ask 'What sort of person am I looking for?'" Corcoran says.

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"I would suggest it is somebody with the ability to lift your goals, evaluate you and provide positives brainstorms. They should help you achieve and be prepared to replicate what they teach, rather than just talking about it.

A coach who has successfully completed the mentoring process should expand their horizons, not narrow them.

"Most coaches know from when they were players that people who say they are going to do one thing and end up doing another are not worth worrying about. Even if you forgive them on the outside, subconsciously you will note the inconsistencies and gradually that will lead to a lack of credibility on their behalf. Once you doubt their credibility, you don't accept their ideas so easily and you begin to question any prior information they exposed to you."

To avoid a dilemma such as this, it is imperative therefore that a coach settles on a mentor who is suitable both in terms of football knowledge and character traits. Every coach has an area of expertise or a particular forte, but by mismatching this with conflicting views from a mentor, the benefits will be negated. This applies to personality, where an extravert mentor may cloud the communication skills of a quiet-thinking coach and a quiet-thinking mentor may stifle the motivational brilliance of an extraverted coach.

Even when the traits of the mentor and coach are in symbiosis, it is valuable that the mentor does not stunt

the development of the coach by providing all the answers to their problems. As growth is only possible through learning, the apprentice needs to make errors on their own and debate ideas in the “People are compelled to do things if they feel they have some form of ownership of it,” he explains.

“It is one of the mysteries of human nature. A person who asks a question and then solves it themselves will be far more comforted and believing of the answer than if someone else provided the solution to them.

“People display their possession over ideas in much the same way they value material goods. Whatever they work hard for, they value highly and fight hard to protect. Whatever comes their way easily or is given to them, tends to be taken for granted. If an idea is given to a coach they might take notice of it, but when a better idea comes along, they will discard it easier than an idea of their own.”

The outcome of the mentor-coach relationship should be an improvement on both sides of the agreement. Naturally for the learning coach such an improvement comes in the form of greater tactical understanding and familiarity with problem-solving procedures. Less obvious are the intrinsic benefits for the teaching mentor. If the coach has chosen wisely, the mentor should already be someone with an appreciation for imparting knowledge. But at the end of the relationship, they should also be appreciative of the opportunity to fulfil such a role and hold a certain amount of admiration for the coach that has studied under them.

Following the conclusion of the mentoring process, the onus falls upon the coach to make use of what great knowledge they have just gathered. The completion of studies does not signal an end to either the learning progress or the obligations of coaching. Indeed as Corcoran states, graduation is the first rung on the ladder, not the last.

“You can sit back and think to yourself that you’ve done well and can now coach Australia, but the job is not complete,” Corcoran warns.

“You may have a Level 3 coaching certificate sitting on your wall, but there is more to it than that. If you rest on your laurels that’s like being selected to play State of Origin and not turning up to play. With the title comes a certain amount of responsibility. A coach who has successfully completed the mentoring process should expand their horizons, not narrow them.

“Become a coaching director, become a development officer or even become a mentor yourself. You are nothing but greedy if you reach that level and do nothing with the knowledge you have gained. Put that knowledge back into the game and help educate the whole League further. It is all about being the best person you can be and using your capabilities to the fullest.”

In the end a coach’s job is, in a roundabout way, to make themselves redundant. By imparting all they know and bringing players up to a knowledgeable level, the coach is effectively contributing to their own obsolescence. However, until that day where all coaches are at the pinnacle of education and players are equipped with an innate understanding of the game, that will not be the case. Rugby League will continue to need coaches, coaches will continue to need mentors and mentors will continue to need Rugby League to make use of their talent. the game and help educate the whole League further. It is all about being the best person you can be and using your capabilities to the fullest.”

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NOTES

SPEED & AGILITY



By Frank Ponissi - Assistant Coach Northern Eagles
Written by Robert Rachow

Gaining, covering and defending ground have always been the focus points of Rugby League

The evolution of Rugby League throughout the latter part of the twentieth century was characterised by the rise and rise of the influence of mobility. No longer were props the Jurassic plodders of years gone by, while halves and backs found new ways to improve their already impressive footspeed. And so the trend continues into the next millennium. Gaining, covering and defending ground have always been the focus points of Rugby League. However in the game's present climate, those tasks are being completed with unprecedented speed and agility.

This has been reflected in the specialised manner in which quickness - both off the mark and over a sustained period - is being instilled into athletes at the elite level. We have seen many and varied programs for the dissection of strength and skill components, yet previously there was little variety available in the way of speed training. Repetitious sprints and endurance work were the flavour of a generation that has now passed its use-by-date. Now there are a vast array of drills and activities, that when fully utilised, can deliver both individualised and entertaining mobility training.

Working towards the three desired components of speed, agility and quickness, segmented exercises have been developed to cater for the differing positional roles. All workouts are calculated in relation to the work needs of that particular role within the team. For a forward, that usually mean short bursts of explosive power running. For a half, the activities will usually relate to maintaining nimble and agile feet and for the outside backs, exercises tend to pertain to maximal velocity sprints.

As follows is a session designed to heighten the relevant qualities desired of each position within a Rugby League team. This is not a definitive guide and many of the activities can transpose from one

training group to the next. But it does form an accurate guide to the areas in which coaches and conditioners should direct their focus for individualised programs.

(All sessions 7-10 minutes in length)

PROPS/BACKROWERS

• Footwork Ladders

A series of plastic strips arranged on the ground somewhat similar to a ladder. The purpose of the activity is to step between each 'rung' with both feet as quickly as possible until reaching the end. Variations on this activity include tippy-toeing sideways through each 'rung' or stepping left through one 'rung' and right through the next continually. Note, if a proper footwork ladder is not available, ropes or even sticks can be used.

• Medicine Ball Throws

With a variety of differently weighted medicine balls, form players into groups of two. The first player throws the ball in the air underarm with both arms, while the second starts in a three-point crouch and sprints after the ball when it first bounces, aiming to reach it before it stops rolling. Players are to alternate after each throw. Variations available include throwing the ball from a squat or from an overhead position.

• Sled Weights

By stacking weights on a sled attached to the player by a rope and belt, we can emphasise the high leg pump and inclined stance expected of forwards in the ruck area. Distances for the players to sprint with the weighted sled vary according to the mass involved. One example of a testing set would be 10 metres with an 80 kilogram sled, followed by 20m (60kg), then 30m (40kg) and finishing with 40m (20kg).

• **Retreats**

Lying face down in the opposite direction to the tryline, players must regain their feet, turn, run to the tryline and adjust left or right according to the coach's call. Players then sprint forward from their adjusted mark back past their original position and join the end of the line until it is their turn again. This hones the ability of the forwards to recover from making a tackle, returning to an onside position, shifting laterally and then advancing towards the attackers again.

• **Shuttle**

A basic back-and-forwards session involving a selection of different distances. Players run the nominated distance, turn and run back the same distance the specified number of repetitions. One example would be two sets of 5 x 60 metres, followed by two sets of 5 by 40 metres and then two sets of 5 x 2m. Players receive their rest period by walking back to the starting point of the next set from the finishing point of their last set. The recovery rate is based on a 2:1 ratio of time spent active: time recovering.

HOOKER/HALVES

• **Breakaway Belts**

In pairs, players wear a belt with a rope joining one another via a velcro strip. The idea is for the nominated prey to try and escape the predator by running away from them, tensing the belt once they establish a large enough gap and eventually breaking the velcro free. The predator aims to stay as close as possible to the prey and closely watch the evasive techniques used by their opposite. Players swap roles after a specified time. This activity can be turned into a competition by scoring a point each time the prey breaks free from the predator.

• **Footwork Ladders**

Similar in style to the footwork ladder activity used by the forwards, the halves also combine agility poles to their program. Using a footwork ladder to start with, the players tippy-toe through the 'rungs', then turn and zig-zag through a number of agility poles before completing another ladder to finish with.

• **Parachutes**

CENTRES/WINGERS

• **Flying 30s**

Simply a series of 30 metres jogs that gradually increase in intensity towards the finish line. The concepts being promoted are acceleration and rhythm.

• **Maximal Velocity Sprints**

Top speed sprints over 20, 40, 60, 80 and 100 metres. The number of repetitions of each distance is up to the discretion of the coach. Recovery time for the next sprint is used by walking back to the starting mark. Distances can be arranged in ascending, descending or wave patterns.

• **Swerves and Scoots**

As per the activities for hookers and halves.

• **Parachute release**

Accentuating acceleration and resistance running, the parachute run is completed in much the same manner as for hookers/halves. However the backs are allowed to release the parachute halfway through their nominated distance and sprint the remainder unhindered.

• **100 metre sprints**

Traditional sprint conditioning consisting of 10 x 100 metres. Each 100 metre time must be below 16 seconds with 30 seconds rest between each run.

SKILLS BREAKDOWN

"Since 1908 the skills of Rugby League have remained fairly much the same to their present form. However, the methods and techniques we use to teach them have varied according to changes in the climate of the game and the direction given by rule applications. Importantly, the purpose of skills training should always focus on the skill being taught, not the drill. To recreate the best environment in which to conduct these training sessions, we find skill-based games under fatigue work best. The key is to simulating game conditions as close as you can." - Frank Ponissi, Northern Eagles Assistant Coach.

Even within the last half-decade, skills training has changed dramatically. Now skills are taught in unprecedented detail under a series of complex simulations. No longer are skills taught as a general component along with fitness and psychological factors - they are specialised and categorised to a point where the various skills becomes training components on their own. As is illustrated by the graphic below, skills can now be broken down to warm up skills, core skills and individual and team skills. When taught either in succession or independently from each other, these varying types of skill now have a focus all of their own.

WARM UP SKILLS

- Grip of the ball
- Carry of the ball
- Catching the ball
- General Passing
 - Standing
 - Running
 - Dummy Half
- Lines Unders/Overs
 - 2 on 1
 - 3 on 2
 - 4 on 3

CORE SKILLS

- Tackle Techniques
- Ground (with and without ball)
 - Attack
 - Defence
- Kicking (all players to know this skill)
- Lines (more advanced than warm up skills)
 - Unders/Overs
 - 2 On 1
 - 3 On 2

"The little things that are the big things in making a football team"

SPECIFIC INDIVIDUAL SKILLS

- Fullback/Wingers
- Centres/Backrowers
- Halves/Hooker
- Props

"A major part of the Northern Eagles coaching programme"

TEAM SKILLS

- Team Attack
- Team Defence
- Team Kicking

GAMES

A series of games that aim to challenge the players skills under pressure and fatigue.

After the trainer has put the players through their speed, agility and quickness session we then rely on games for team conditioning. All the above skills are made into game situations to test the players under fatigue and pressure.

NOTES

THE RULES OF RUGBY LEAGUE

Of the three components which constitute a coach's worth - knowledge of game trends, knowledge of player capabilities and familiarity with the rules - it is the latter two factors which account for 95 per cent of mistakes made. For the main these areas are intrinsically related, because without an adequate understanding of the laws, expectations of players can be either misconstrued or unfairly high. Wrongful knowledge disseminated from a coach to a team member only serves to delude the player and subsequently reduce their efficiency on the field. Therefore it is imperative that coaches grasp the very same concepts and rule interpretations that are required of a referee.

In this first chapter in the series of UNDERSTANDING THE RULES RUGBY LEAGUE Ken Hagarty (National Referees Accreditation Scheme) and Peter Corcoran OAM (explain the finer details of the laws required to successfully begin a match. While some procedures are deeply ingrained within the League community, others are not quite so clear and hence need to be clarified.

JURISDICTION OF THE REFEREE

The realm of a referee's control consists not only of that area bounded by the in-goal lines and touchlines, but of all territory located within the fence or natural boundaries. In the case of most park footballers this area will be signified by a rope, however the same concept applies. It is also applicable to suburban grounds bordered by landmarks such as a stream or hills.

Within this jurisdiction, a referee holds the power to eject anyone he deems to be guilty of unjustly altering or hindering the progression of the match. Most commonly this refers to club trainers who are found to consistently uphold the game or to photographers who impede the path of touch judges. However, it is a rule which can also be used to deal with threatening or unruly coaches. That is why it is recommended not only that a coach refrain from such behaviour, but that they position themselves outside the boundary to avoid any incidents or misunderstandings with the referee.

PLAYING FIELD

As different from the entire area of the referee's jurisdiction, the playing field is the place where the majority of rulings regarding the actions of players will be made. The boundaries of the playing field are represented by the touchline, the in-goal line and the touch-in-goal markings. Importantly though, the field **DOES NOT** include these markings. It is the area **WITHIN** that is of concern. Anywhere around this (including lines) is considered out of play.

FIELD OF PLAY

Technically, there exists a difference between the referee's understanding of the term 'Field of Play' to the aforementioned 'Playing Field'. The Field of Play is defined as the area bordered by the touchlines and trylines, but not including these lines. Effectively, it is the playing field minus the in-goal area. Anything on the tryline will be noted as in-goal.

The easiest way to separate between the adjudication of on-the-line calls in a game like Rugby League to a sport like tennis (where the line is 'in') is to imagine everything being pushed out from the centre of the ground. Therefore any items located on the lines marking the playing field are 'pushed' out of bounds and anything on the lines of the field of play are either 'pushed' out or in-goal. This applies to all other markings such as 10 metre and scrum lines. It also explains why the 20 metre restart kick is taken on top of the line and not before or after it.

DECIDING THE DEFENDING AND ATTACKING TEAM

Most people are aware that to begin a game of Rugby League, a coin toss needs to take place prior to the match commencing. The purpose of such an event is to determine who will receive the ball and which in-goal they choose to defend (usually based on weather or geographic characteristics). The person responsible for deciding these details is the captain credited with winning the toss. The loser of the toss has no choice on which end they will defend and must be the team to first kick off.

What most people fail to realise are the events leading up to the coin toss - namely where it should take place and which captain shall toss and which captain shall nominate heads or tails. In the majority of cases, the toss occurs in the centre of the field (in the referee's presence) as the two sides take the field. But commonly it can also be conducted with only the referee and captains present in an off-field location shortly before the commencement of play. The obligation to toss the coin sits squarely on the shoulders of the captain playing at 'home'. Subsequently it is the duty of the visiting captain to nominate a face while the coin is still in the air. On occasions where the match is being held at a neutral ground, the 'home' team shall be deemed as the side which first takes the field or the team of the captain who first approaches the referee beforehand.

THE KICK OFF

Succeeding the staging of the toss and the end of pre-game preparations, the next step in the procedure of starting the game is the kick off. Taken by the loser of the toss, the kick off usually represents the first time the ball enters play. However, there are certain obligations expected of either team if the ball is to be deemed 'in play'. Any infringement of these laws will subsequently result in a penalty being awarded to the non-offending side on the centre of the halfway line.

KICKING TEAM'S OBLIGATIONS

There are four main rules the kicking side must abide by to avoid the wrath of the referee. Firstly, the team must strike the ball in the REQUIRED manner. Most often this refers to striking the ball with the foot from a place-kick set-up. Where rules and conditions differentiate this ritual may not be entirely correct, but as long as the ball is put into play in the REQUIRED manner, then the game shall continue. Secondly, the ball must travel the REQUIRED distance in the direction of the opposition dead ball line. For international competition this distance is 10 metres, but this is not the case for all levels. In the extreme case where wind blows the ball backwards, the ball does not need to actually touch the ground. It is simply obligated to pass over the invisible vertical line protruding above the 40 metre mark (under international rules).

The third rule applying to the kicking team is that the ball must land inside the playing field. A ball landing on the touchline, dead ball line or touch-in-goal line will be considered out on the full. If the ball touches a member of the receiving side (on the full) who is positioned with a portion of their body outside the field, the ball will also be considered out on the full.

The same applies for a ball caught by a member of the receiving end who jumps from outside the field. And lastly, the final obligation the kicking team must abide by is that all other team members remain behind the kicker until after he strikes the ball.

RECEIVING TEAM'S OBLIGATIONS

Having won the toss, the receiving team fittingly has fewer responsibilities in terms of fairly putting the ball into play. Primarily the entire team must remain the REQUIRED distance (10 metres in international rules) from the point of kick off until the ball has been struck. The other obligation is that the team allows the ball to travel the REQUIRED distance before touching it. As per above, the ball does not need to bounce past this point and can be caught in mid-air.

POINTS OF INTEREST

As has become evident, the simplistic beginnings of a Rugby League match can often have less obvious intricacies and variations. Another two permeations worth noting revolve around the concept of the goal posts and the application of the advantage rule. In regard to the goal posts, they are not recognised as actual objects in the game, but rather as a physical means to represent a certain space of air. For example - a ball that bounces off the crossbar and out of bounds (on the full) from the kick off is considered simply out on the full. The second point of interest - regarding advantage - is that the restart of play is the only time when the advantage rule does not apply. Therefore a member of the receiving side who fields a knock on from the kicking team before the REQUIRED distance will receive a penalty and won't be allowed to play on.

NOTES

CAPTAIN *and* COACH ?

By Mitch Luka A.R.L Level III Coach.
Country Rugby League Development Officer.

I was recently asked by RLCM my thoughts on whether the position of Captain Coach is still relevant in the modern game in the bush. Being a former Captain Coach and now a non-playing coach, I have experienced both roles and offer the following comparisons.

The decision made every new football season by a Country Rugby League Club to appoint its Coach not only impacts on the club but also can have ramifications for the whole town or district that supports that club. It is vitally important that they get it right or the whole season can be a disaster both morally and financially. The choice of playing or non playing coach is really in my opinion hinged on a

- i) Enthusiasm for the game that will ignite both players & supporters.
- ii) Additional player strength through playing networks.
- iii) Discipline both on & off the field.
- iv) Better players relations through leading by example.
- v) Game decisions can be made on the spot.
- vi) Improved financial status for the club by filling 2 positions;
i.e coach & player.

The other major factor the country club considers in its coaching appointment, is that generally the captain coach is an import and generally has had NRL or top

The only risk the club takes when a player coach is appointed is in the chance of injury and subsequent loss of match time.

number of factors. These variables will overwhelmingly determine the path a club will take in its coaching appointment from year to year. They include but are not limited to:

- i) The number & quality of senior players.
- ii) The support network at the club.
- iii) The role of development of the junior players in the club.
- iv) The financial position of the club.

None of the above factors can be considered without the influence of the others. It makes the task easier if the above factors are all analysed positively, but it still leads back to the role that the club perceives that the Club coach will undertake.

You would expect the role of Captain Coach to provide to the club:

Rugby League Coaching Magazine

grade experience. It is expected that he will bring to the club new training and coaching methods that quickly spread throughout the bush, & which in turn, lifts the standard of the competition overall.

The only risk the club takes when a player coach is appointed is in the chance of injury and subsequent loss of match time.

The newly appointed coach, being either playing or non-playing will need to earn respect from his players by.

- i) The knowledge he brings to the club about the game.
- ii) His experience and previous success.
- iii) His honesty and integrity.
- iv) His ability to communicate his coaching philosophy.

It was stated in an interview by Eels head coach Brian Smith, that Rugby League has become a 17-man game due to the unlimited interchange. This has then extended the direct influence a coach can have on the game even after kick off. Bench coaching has now become a major tactical play. Non playing coaches now have the option of interchanging players in different game situations. The coach can give direct instructions to the player to carry out or pass on to his captain.

The non-playing coach now has a panoramic view of the game. He can see what is happening off the ball. The playing coach is severely disadvantaged in this area. He, due to his role, does not have the opportunity to respond as the game unfolds. He also can then be overburdened by this interchange factor and lose his own concentration, hence his own playing performance suffers as a result..

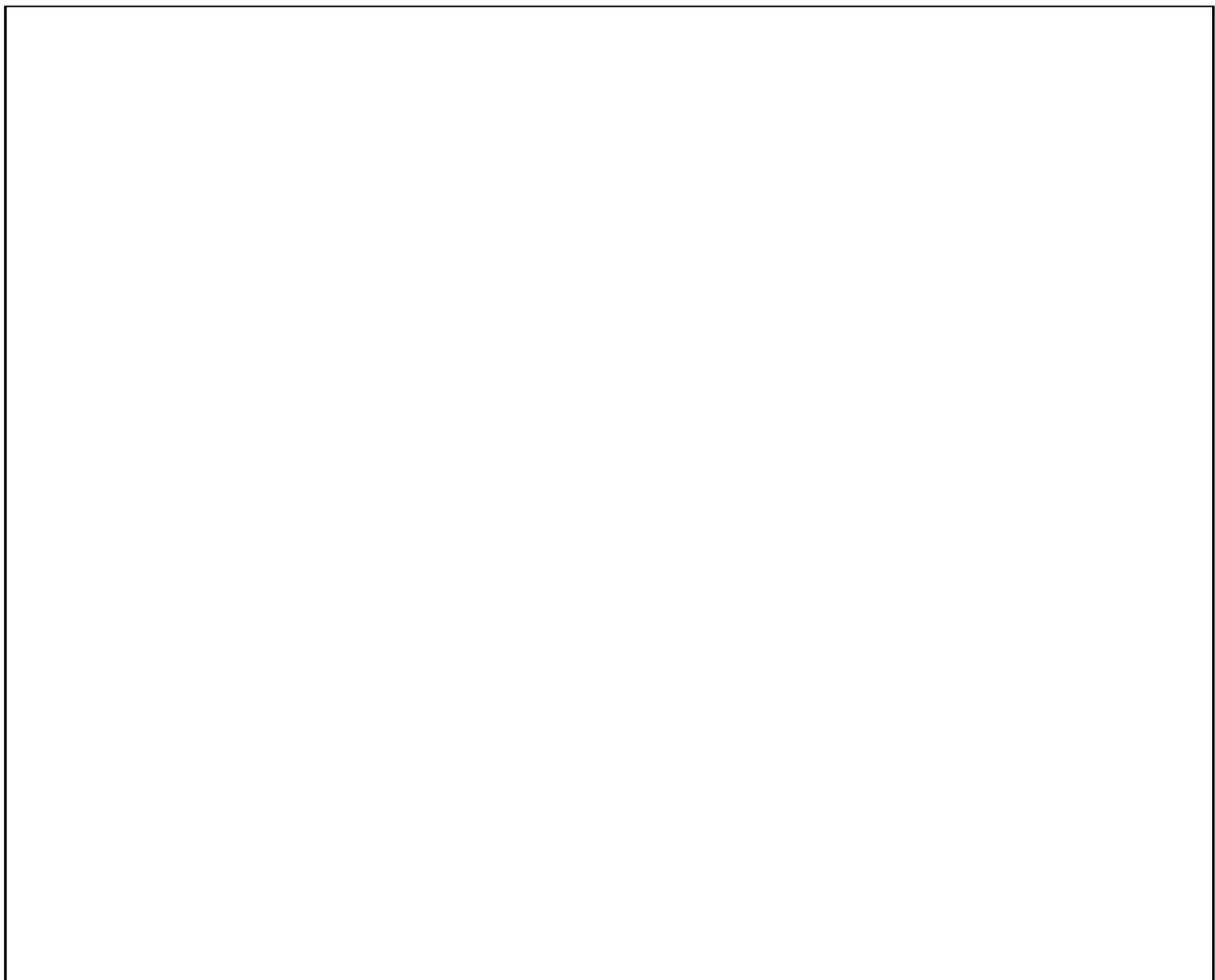
In country areas, the non playing coach is usually an ex player or recently retired player, who wants to stay involved in the game. He needs to possess all the

leadership skills necessary to enthuse the players under his control, with the vigor to last all season, even when things do not go to plan.

The strong relationship between the non-playing coach and the team captain is paramount as he is the coaches right hand man. The captain will be the on field coach, and has to trust the coach with his decision and plays.

It is evident in country coaching appointments, that the majority of country Rugby League clubs still value highly the role that the Captain Coach plays in the country competition. All other factors considered, financially, most clubs would prefer a playing coach to obtain maximum value for money, in times when the costs of putting a team on the paddock is paramount.

The experience that an ex N.R.L. or top grade player can provide to his new club through the player/coach role is invaluable both to that club and the competition generally.



IPSWICH JETS

Big improvers over the next five years _____ Bill Gardner Head Coach

By Robert Rachow

If Ipswich coach Bill Gardner had a singular philosophy in life it would be this: All good things come to he with weights.

The former Brisbane Broncos lower grade coach, now in his second season at the helm of the Jets, has impressed that notion upon his players over a very rigorous offseason. After taking over from Paul Srama at First Provincial Oval last year, he noted physical strength as a major deficiency in the make-up of his squad. Always a firm believer in the advantages of weights training, Gardner rectified that during a pre-season routine that saw the Jets visit Ipswich Grammar gym no less than three times per week.

"I have always maintained that the strongest teams survive the best," Gardner enthuses.

"That can be applied over the course of a single game or throughout the season. Strong teams always have a little extra energy at the end of a game and they tend to get injured less." Strength really was a downfall of Ipswich in years gone past, whereas teams like Burleigh, Redcliffe and Norths always boasted hard, capable players. We were in a position that even if we could compete with them on a skill level, they could still out-muscle us and out-last us. "I find physical strength tends to lead to mental strength as well and in a competition like the Queensland Cup, that can be the edge on the day."

Gardner has stockpiled a wealth of coaching experience over a 23-year period since retiring from playing. Having worn the famed black-and-white of Souths in his on-field career as a winger/fullback, it was natural that Gardner progressed to coach the Magpies in his football after-life. With a tentative Wayne Bennett also in his debut season as coach of Souths A-grade, Gardner took the reigns of the club's third-string side. When Bennett switched to rivals Brothers, Gardner followed and the birth of a long-term partnership took place.

In 1985 Gardner returned to Souths, with the Magpies downing Wynnum in the grand final to raise the premiership trophy. Then followed two seasons of leading various representative teams, mainly Second Division outfits.

Gardner's big break came in 1988 when he and Bennett joined forces once more to take the Brisbane Broncos into their first season of national competition. In all, Gardner spent six years with the Broncos before moving on to England, where he coached Sheffield. The inclusion of a second Brisbane-based team in the ARL saw Gardner return to Australia to take up a spot with the South Queensland Crushers, but that fell through and instead he linked with legendary coach Bob Bax at Brisbane Norths.

Three seasons later and Gardner moved to Ipswich as coaching director, before eventually taking over as head coach. The Jets have never appeared in the finals since the Queensland Cup began in 1996, but they have been ear-marked as big improvers over the next five years. Gardner is not keen to assume too much responsibility at this short stage of the season, but says the team's chances have been maximized by a enthusiastic and focused approach to the task at hand.

"It is all a guessing game until halfway through the year," Gardner states.

"What might look like good players to some people don't necessarily make the grade in the eyes of others.

"What I do know is that we will be better prepared and I am a big believer that preparation is vital to winning games. I want to see improvement right across the board, not only strength, but also with our aerobic capacity, our skills, our discipline, our teamwork and our dedication. "As far as our aims go, my simple goal is that the team is as successful as it can be. If we make the finals that will be great and provided we use our strength, anything could happen."

MOUTHGUARDS

Why a Mouthguard is essential

Why a Mouthguard is essential in contact sport does not require too much imagination because once a permanent tooth is knocked out, it is gone forever - unlike sharks we do not grow a new set of teeth!

There are many types of Mouthguards, many colours and combinations. Some Mouthguards are very expensive and some are "very cheap do it yourself versions in hot water". Much research has been done developing Mouthguards for various sports and I cannot cover all contingencies, however, generally for a Mouthguard to be successful, the following requirements must be met.

- (a) It must fit accurately.
- (b) Clear Mouthguards are softer and absorb more energy than coloured ones unless the coloured material has a soft insert or air inclusions.
- (c) The maxillary Mouthguard (upper) must articulate with the mandible (lower jaw) so even distribution of load is achieved.
- (d) After use, wash Mouthguard in cold water - never hot - as hot water will distort the Mouthguard. Return it to the plaster model so it keeps its shape and also does not get misplaced.
- (e) Wear it in your mouth, not your pocket. If it rubs or is uncomfortable, it can be adjusted very quickly and inexpensively.

It is very important for your own safety to remember that Mouthguards can only be fitted by a registered Dental Prosthetist or Dentist.

Byron E. Bindley

Registered Dental Technician

Registered Dental Prosthetist

Hon. Secretary, Aust. Dental Prosthetist Assoc.

Neil Wharton - Redcliffe Dolphins Head Coach

MOULDING A COHESIVE UNIT

By Robert Rachow

Taking over a team that lost last year's Queensland Cup by just two points has not phased new Redcliffe coach Neil Wharton. Instead he has set a simple goal - to ensure all his players can contribute to the success of the team.

When Alex Corvo vacated the role as head Dolphins' coach in late 1999, rumours abounded that high profile ex-league players Trevor Gillmeister and Terry Matterson were in the running for the spot. But Wharton beat all comers to the position, with his experience in Brisbane A Grade and junior representative sides weighing heavily in his favour.

Since being handed the reigns at Dolphin Oval, Wharton has had to deal with the loss of his entire three-quarter line throughout the off season and an influx of talented front-rowers. He has worked hard to mould the team into a cohesive unit and offset the strengths and weaknesses of the individual players. And he has attempted to dispel any fears of predicability creeping into the Redcliffe outfit. Above all however, Wharton has emphasised to his players the importance of being involved and providing a positive contribution to the outcome of the game.

"In the past Redcliffe have relied too heavily on too few players," Wharton says.

"That has been there undoing, because eventually opposition teams learnt who the go-to men were and they shut them down." Take Tony Gould for instance. He is a fantastic play-maker and kicker, but he has so much pressure on his shoulders. Other sides began to target Tony and Redcliffe were left with very few other

options for direction." So now I am making sure all our players can have an input into what we do with the ball. The halves will need to direct play a lot more, while the backs and forwards will have to work hard and get involved at the right time."

One of the players Wharton expects to shoulder more of the play-making burden is 21-year old half Michael Roberts. Despite winning the Courier-Mail award for Queensland Cup Player of the Year last season, he was somewhat overshadowed by the talents of replacement Sam Obst. Obst stood in for Roberts while he was out injured at the latter part of 1999 and impressed many good judges, including Queensland legend Arthur Beetson. But with Obst now playing First Division with Sydney Roosters, Roberts can enter the new season without feeling second guessed.

Out wide, the club have had to fill a quartet of vacancies left by the departures of Trent Clayton (also Sydney Roosters), Ben Roedder (work), Mixie Lui (Newcastle) and Rick Hewinson (retired). In to the fray are tenacious speedster Trent Leis, elusive fullback-cum-centre Adam Mogg, well-travelled Ata Isarabhakdi and former North Sydney centre Josh Moore.

Meanwhile, up front Redcliffe have added a trio of giants, with Adam Starr, Rob Campbell and Grant Young all pushing the 110 kg mark. Starr has NRL experience with Balmain, Campbell featured with Illawarra, Wests and Gold Coast, while Young played for South Queensland, Auckland and London.

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RUGBY LEAGUE COACHING MAGAZINE

PERFORMANCE PSYCHOLOGYin Rugby League

By Vic Mellors - Sports Fitness and Motivational Psychologist

Listed below are the roles of the Coach, Fitness – Trainer and Team-Psychologist.

Technical	Physiological	Psychological
COACH	FITNESS TRAINER	TEAM PSYCHOLOGIST
Develop Strategies for Winning	Develop CV + Anaerobic Fitness, Strength, Agility + Speed	Assist Coach to Develop a “Winning Culture and Speed. Attitude, within the Team.
PLAYER SPECIFIC		OVERALL TEAM LEVEL
Technical Skills: Passing, Tackling, Defence + Support Play.		Develop: Persistence, Physiological + Psychological. Concentration: Technical + Psychological. Discipline - Psychological
OPPOSITION SPECIFIC		INDIVIDUAL TEAM - LEVEL
Match Plan for Opposition. Rehearsed Moves against Opposition. Defensive Strategies against Opposition. Attacking Styles of Opposition. Individual Opposition Strategies.		1. Personality Traits, 2. Stress Internal & External. 3. Perceptions Optimism vs. Pessimism 4. Lifestyle Smoking, Drinking, Diet, Relaxation and Sleep.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR PLAYERS

OVERALL TEAM – LEVEL:

The Coach requires the combination of Technical, Physiological and Psychological aspects to develop PERSISTENCE, CONCENTRATION AND DISCIPLINE.

INDIVIDUAL TEAM – LEVEL:

The Coach in conjunction with his Team – Psychologist needs to develop at the individual level, COURAGE, COMMITMENT AND CONTROL. This can be achieved by teaching individual players
Autonomy Training.

However, before Autonomy Training can be applied by the Coach and Team- Psychologist, they need to understand the players. Therefore, the four factors listed above need to be addressed: PERSONALITY x STRESS x PERCEPTIONS x LIFESTYLE = RUGBY LEAGUE PERFORMANCE.

By addressing these four factors, the Coach can quickly learn to understand his players and know how they will prepare themselves before and what predisposition or attitude they take into, the football game. At this stage, the role of the team-psychologist is very important because there are a number of approaches he can undertake to provide important personal information to the Coach. For example, personality testing can provide information about how likely a player will handle the stress of important games and how they prepare themselves before the game. It can also contribute to the understanding of the players motivation, and how the player handles coaching and takes advice. Such a psychological approach can then help the Coach to identify barriers to performance at both the overall and individual team level.

PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS TO RUGBY LEAGUE PERFORMANCE

There are two levels at which psychological barriers will effect Rugby League Performance. The first is at the individual level, the second at the overall team level.

The most important at the individual level is the player's personality. If the player is too emotional or highly aroused before a football game, it can contribute to both physiological and mental fatigue. In addition, if a player has a high degree of trait impulsivity, this also can contribute to players taking unnecessary risks. Impulsivity is where a player takes a risk without thinking of the consequences it will have on the team.

An example of this is where a player throws an unproductive pass when he should have tucked the ball, took the tackle and played it quickly.

Through psychometric testing, the team-psychologist can discover such psychological traits in Rugby League players and then construct strategies to help the player impulse – control. In recent times, the term “impulse- play” has become the fashionable term for players taking risks during matches. However, this is not really the correct term. It should be called “venturesome play” where you take a risk but you're fully aware of the consequences, if it fails. A mild to moderate degree of impulsivity in a Rugby League player would be okay but too much could be destructive to both his own and team performance.

In conclusion, the player's personality will also contribute to the other three factors mentioned above, i.e. stress, perceptions and lifestyle. This equation in everyday language terms means that these four factors; personality, stress, perceptions and lifestyle contribute to Rugby League performance. The multiplication signs mean that they can interact and affect each other. For example, if a Rugby League player has the personality that makes or predisposes him to react inappropriately with stress, it could effect the way he thinks and feels about himself and it could lead him to undertake such problematic behaviours as excessive drinking, smoking, nightclubbing or antisocial behaviour. This could then affect his performance on the playing field.

At the overall team level, the barriers to performance at the individual level can manifest into lack of team cohesion, impulsivity throughout the team, a lack of tough-mindedness and low team spirit. This is when failure becomes easier than success and what develops within the team is the Failure Mechanism. Shown below are its characteristics that I have observed in teams who begin a losing sequence.

Frustration:

FEELINGS OF HOPELESSNESS, NOT STAYING COOL AND CALM IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS DURING A FOOTBALL GAME.

Aggressiveness:

BASED ON (MISDIRECTED EMOTIONALITY AND PHYSICAL ENERGY.

Insecurity:

WHEN A PLAYER OR A TEAM LOSES CONFIDENCE IN THEIR SKILLS AND ABILITY.

LEARNED HELPLESSNESS:

WHEN A PLAYER OR A TEAM STARTS TO BELIEVE THAT THEY CAN NEVER WIN. DEFEAT IS EXPECTED AND IT SHOWS IN EITHER THEIR VERBAL OR NON -VERBAL BEHAVIOUR.

UNCERTAINTY:

WHEN PLAYERS START TO LOSE FAITH IN BOTH THEMSELVES AND THEIR TEAMMATES AND BECOME DOUBTFULL OR UNSURE ABOUT CONTAINING AND DEFEATING THEIR OPPOSITION.

RESENTMENT:

WHEN A TEAM OF PLAYERS LACK PHYSICAL, TECHNICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL COMMITMENT TO PUT THE EFFORT INTO THEIR TRAINING AND ULTIMATELY INTO A FOOTBALL GAME.

EMOTION:

OVER - REACTING TO DIFFICULT AND FRUSTRATING PERIODS DURING A FOOTBALL GAME INSTEAD OF STAYING CALM, FOCUSSED AND TASK ORIENTED OR INTELLECTUAL ABOUT THE GAME.

What these traits develop, is a self-fulfilling prophecy (cycles of self -defeating thoughts, feelings, emotions and behaviours) that affect Rugby League players at training and during a game. Such statements as “I missed that tackle, I’m stupid”, “We can never win at that ground”, “I never play well there”. When players start to believe these statements, it makes failure certain. The failure mechanism creates a self-image of unworthiness, incompetence, inferiority and a belief that you have no right to succeed and enjoy the spoils of “Victory”. When the Failure Mechanism spreads throughout the team, what is needed are tools that can psychologically improve performance and initiate the Success Mechanism.

TOOLS THAT CAN PSYCHOLOGICALLY IMPROVE RUGBY LEAGUE PERFORMANCE

There are three basic areas of information about his players that a Rugby League coach needs to know, before he sets goals for the team.

These are:

- How do I build connection and a relationship among the members of the team and also achieve a deeper level of understanding of what is important to each team member.

- What is each team member’s attitude towards winning.
- Where does each team member see their critical roles in the team and what their team-mates expect of them.

This initial approach at the individual level allows the coach to develop team spirit and a Success Mechanism to reach the season’s goals. In other words, team – building exercises are required not only at the technical and physiological level but also at the psychological level. From the team – building exercises at the individual level, the team can then move on to Autonomy Training and thus develop the necessary individual team member traits of COURAGE, COMMITMENT, CONTROL and the overall team traits of PERSISTENCE, CONCENTRATION and DISCIPLINE. Shown below are the characteristics of a Rugby League Team that has acquired the Success Mechanism.

SENSE OF DIRECTION

THE TEAM AND EACH PLAYER HAS GOALS.

UNDERSTANDING

THE TEAM AND EACH PLAYER KNOWS EACH OTHERS PLAYING - STYLE AND GAME.

COURAGE

THE TEAM HAS THE STRENGTH TO CONFRONT THE PROBLEMS THE OPPOSITION CREATE AND PERSIST AT THEM.

CHARITY:

TO PLAY LIKE A CHAMPION TEAM NOT A TEAM OF CHAMPIONS.

ESTEEM:

EACH PLAYER IN THE TEAM LIKES HIMSELF AND NEVER PUNISHES HIS PERSON IF OR WHEN HE MAKES A MISTAKE DURING THE GAME.

SELF CONFIDENCE

TO HAVE FAITH IN YOUR OWN AND THE TEAM’S PLAYING ABILITY.

SELF ACCEPTANCE

TO ACCEPT THAT IF A FOOTBALL GAME IS NOT GOING ACCORDING TO PLAN THAT THE TEAM CAN STILL WIN.

During the off-season and pre-season of the year, the Rugby League coach psychologically should be developing his players for the pinnacle of their competition, i.e. the premiership. Therefore, there are stages of the year that he has to maintain the quality of team-spirit to achieve the Success Mechanism and win the competition. Shown below are these stages.

PREMIERSHIP (Pinnacle) CELEBRATING LETTING GO
An appreciation for
the contribution of
the team and team
members

CLAIMING (The team experiences solidarity and a single – minded purpose about what needs to be accomplished to win the competition.

TEAM-BUILDING (Acquiring the psychological traits at the individual and overall team level before and during the season.

TEAM- ANALYSIS (The team and coach have a sense of what can be accomplished during the season and it is present and alive in the team.

TEAM- INITIATION (There is a potential for team members to build a connection and relationship and to work together to accomplish the teams goals.

The above model can assist coaches on how to apply a step by step approach to maintaining team spirit throughout the season. It also can keep the coach informed by his own personal observation, if the team is losing “its way psychologically”, through the course of the season.

NOTES

Rod Patison

A Thinking Coach

Rod Patison was an Illawarra Junior and Senior who represented NSW and Australian schoolboys in 1972-73. He has coached Junior and Senior sides for a continuous 25 years and regards the four Queensland Championship victories with Palm Beach Currumbin S.H.S. as highlights. Particularly rewarding has been being a part of the development of gifted athletes like current star Ben Ikin.

Brian Smith recently said “Coaching schoolboys was as rewarding as anything he had ever done.” Do you agree?

Sure! The schoolboy is raw, vibrant and hungry to learn ... they usually come with an “I can do this” mentality a wonderful start!

Schools are also a community and offer the schoolboy coach an opportunity to develop attitudes to Rugby League which will equip them well to handle the challenges of general school and future life. Rugby League can be an excellent teacher.

Where do you see your strength as a coach at this level?

I believe I share a philosophy with the kids that Rugby League is “a game and an opportunity” ... not yet a business or a pressure.

I respect that they are athletes who will need to make many, many decisions in a game - and so tailor coaching sessions with a heavy “game situation theme” - to hopefully empower them.

Junior players will make errors but I’m sure the task at this level is to expand their game and discover what they can do. I am constantly encouraged by what they achieve and what we learn.

Your school has produced eight Australian and eighteen Queensland Reps in the last decade. Why has the school been so successful?

The biggest reason has been our attitude “the game owes us nothing - we love to play”. It was in place well before we were winning games.

Some of our biggest successes have only ever represented P.B.C. Our boys are very well coached at all levels.

We have always enjoyed excellent direction and support from the Sports Master and Principal.

You are classed as a coach of thinking football teams - is this fair comment?

In reality, Rugby League is a team game requiring constant thought. On and off the ball, before any skill or physical effort - decisions must be made. My coaching is directed to helping players become better decision makers. Game-sense drills are the key to players taking better options. They develop a better understanding of the game, gain confidence and become more instinctive. Despite the approach I’ve coached “dumb” plenty of times!

How far do you take your boys with skill work?

I believe in multi skilled kids - when the “game takes over” our success will depend on our collective ability to play a variety of roles and situations. It also provides for easy positional changes as physical development takes its particular path.

Skill development is accelerated by “game related drills”. Those situations in attack and defence which challenge us most, are the most logical starting place.

Youngsters appear more receptive to “basic skill modification” when they realise they are being ineffective in a particular game-related drill.

Do you put your boys in a full on tackle situation at training?

Yes, but we do use protective equipment and sometimes the beach for safety. Contact presents skill

with its greatest challenge - we are obligated to coach it. If schoolboys don't have the skills and attitude for contact, they're in the wrong sport. The difficult coaching question is "how much can they handle"?

How do you coach second phase play?

A tough area for coaches - it is an area I want to pursue and get better at.

My current ideas are that the drill must have second phase as its goal and be based upon good delivery skills and support lines. There is a real place for the instinctive "Rod Silva" type player. People like Brian Fletcher save lots of play the balls and ignite challenges that defences find difficult to prepare for. His success must heighten a team's expectation and so frequency.

How important are "off the ball" skills?

Paramount. They are our "preparation" and largely about "positioning". Positioning will control the quality of our ball play, line-running, support and defence. The better we position ... the greater our potential to pressure the opposition.

Off-the-ball skills can't be all text-book coached. It is the "instinctive" positioning of players like Peachey, Lockyer, Smith etc which excite and often provide the difference. This quality is often rewarded by being given "a roving commission".

It is important to sell the instinct schoolboy on the idea that knowing more about what the team does will provide more "key-in" opportunities for their instincts.

Off the ball skills are all about "reading the game" - positioning for best options.

How do you feel about game strategies and plans?

Our game plan is very simple. We seek to share the effort and ask questions of the opposition all over the park. If something "leaks" - hopefully we'll read it and return.

Our opposition is largely unknown - so we focus heavily on ourselves - that in itself is a job "I never complete!"

Do you look outside the game for other ideas?

Constantly - there are so many avenues there - particularly in Australia. But in reality most learning usually comes as a result of the situation - drill or game just completed.

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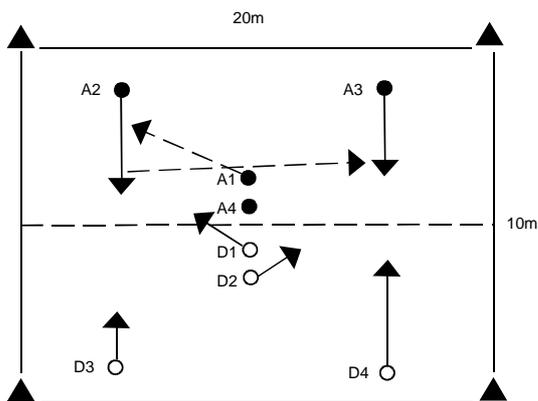
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MARKER DEFENCE FOUR ON FOUR

Setting: - Channel 10 x 20m, 8 players,
4 players are defenders, 4 are attackers.

- Play the ball as in previous drills
- Introduce D4
- 'A' players can use all options in attack.
- Tight spot defenders must move forward to the advantage line and nominate in defence.

EMPHASISE: Communication, nomination, one marker holds and one chases, chase must be over the advantage line.

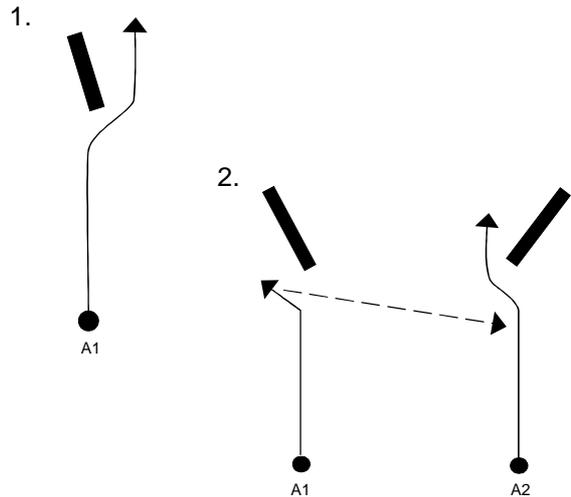


AGILITY POLES

- Coach stands 5m in front of players holding pole.
- As players run towards the pole the coach leans it either to the left or right.
- Player then swerves to the opposite side of pole and runs around coach.

PROGRESSION

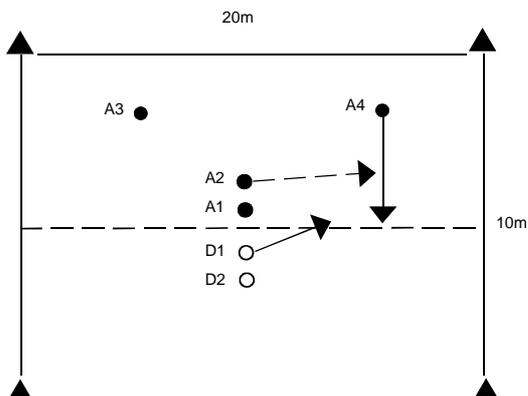
- Add a second pole wide of the first
- P1 runs to the side the pole is leant
- P1 then passes a flat pass to P2 who must swerve to the left or right of his opposite pole.



MARKER DEFENCE FOUR ON TWO

Setting: - Channel 10 x 20m, 6 players,
2 players are defenders, 4 are attackers.

- Play the ball occurs in centre track
- The ball is returned to the centre after each ruck.
- The marker must chase to the receiver while the other holds to protect the middle.
- Rotate roles
- Attackers can vary their width and the dummy half can also run to challenge the middle



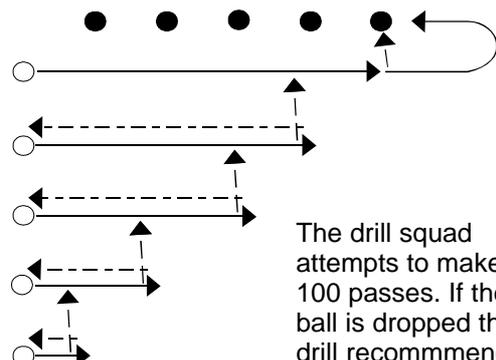
ARROWHEAD

Setting: - Two equal lines of players aligned at right angles

- Team 1 commences the drill, running straight.
- Team one commences passing the ball at speed along their line.
- After releasing the ball each player runs backwards to their starting position.
- Player 1E off loads to player A in team 2.
- Team 2 then speed passes, following the same procedure as Team 1.

Note

- Player 1E holds the position of 2A waiting for the next run, likewise player @e holds the original position of 1A.



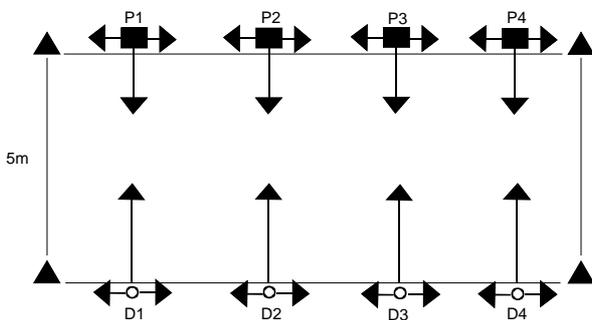
The drill squad attempts to make 100 passes. If the ball is dropped the drill recommences.

SMOTHER DRILL

Setting: - Players working in pairs one carrying a hit pad, 5m apart.

- Object is to cover the ball, i.e. pin bump pad to the ATTACKER.
- Players in pairs, opposite each other and 5 metres distant. Walking Pace.
- Object is for tackler to cover the ball and or pin the arms of the ball carrier.
- Defender slightly off-centre of the attacker.
- The front section of the tackler's shoulder makes contact with the attacker's chest region, shoulders and arms attempting to cover the ball and or pin the arms of the ball carrier.

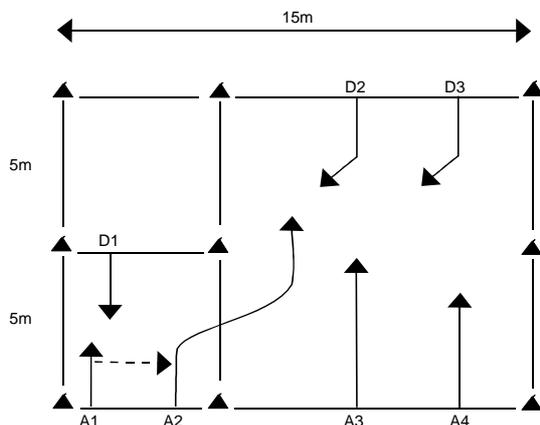
Variation - Increase pace/and or approved distance.
- Remove pad and add the ball to attack



DEFEND TWO ON THREE

Setting: - Players in a 15 x 10 metre grid
- Three defenders and four attackers

- A1 and A2 must start within the 5m channel
- D1 will start 5m from A1 and also within the 5m channel, while D2 and D3 will start 10m away
- A1 must pass to A2 before A2 is allowed to leave the 5m channel
- D1 can move as quickly as he wants, however D2 and D3 can only move once D1 has moved
- the object is to stop the A's from scoring

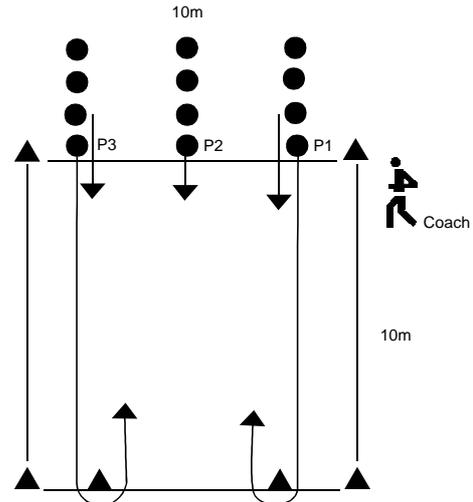


3 ON 2 (A)

Setting: - Grid 10 x 10m,
2 players are defenders, 3 are attackers.

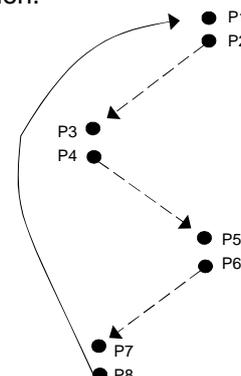
- Players line up behind cones in three columns.
- On coaches command two nominated players **sprint** our around opposite cones and then become defenders.
- Next two players fill in the attacking line.
- The attacking line then attempts to beat the defenders with a 3 on 2 situation.

EMPHASISE: Communication (attack and defence), drawing the man, no silly passes, start slow



ROUND ROBIN PLAY THE BALL

- P1 who is positioned on the ground, rises to his feet and plays the ball to P2 who is directly behind him (acting half back).
- P2 passes left to P3 who falls to the ground and raises to his feet to play the ball to P4.
- P4 passes right to P5 who falls to the ground and then raises to his feet to play the ball to P6
- P6 passes left to P7 who falls to the ground and then raises to his feet to play the ball to P8.
- P8 runs to the position held by P1 initially.
- Each player, having completed his role moves to the position taken up by the next player in the drill.
- The drill is performed until P1 is back in his original position.

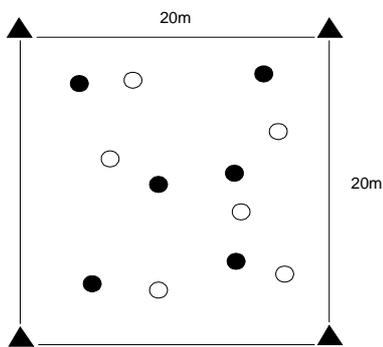


KICK AND PASS

Setting: - Grid 20m x 20m
 - 2 equal teams of players
 - 1 football

- One team is given the ball and attempts to keep possession for up to 10 passes or kicks.
- Every set completed gains a point
- The opposing team attempts to intercept or knock the ball down, gaining possession when it interrupts the other teams set.
- Player in possession may move around grid looking for best option.

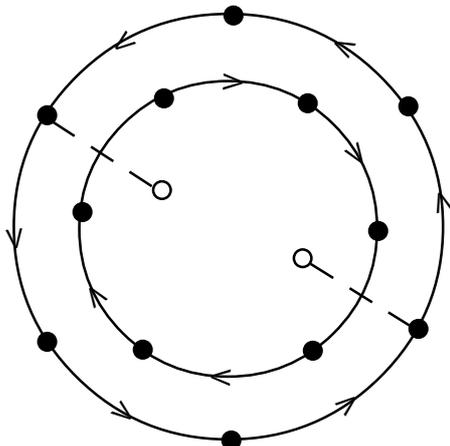
Emphasise: One handed pass, fending and passing, passing under pressure, grubber kicks, chip kicks.



ROTATION

Setting: - Players form two circles
 - Two players stand inside circles

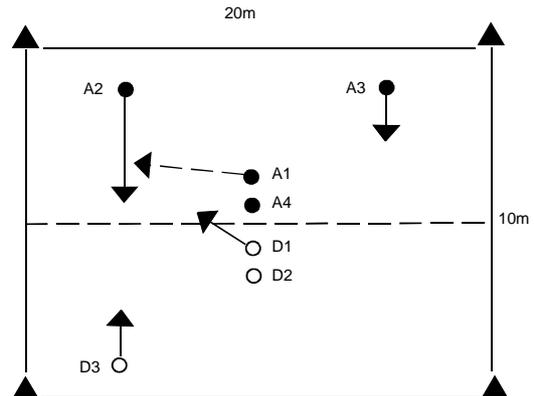
- Players in the inside circle run one way whilst players in the outside circle run in the opposite direction.
- Two players in the middle make a pass:
 - To the players in the outside circle
 - Alternately to the inside and outside circle
 - To players in the outside circle with players in the inside circle attempting to knock down the passes



MARKER DEFENCE FOUR ON THREE

Setting: - Channel 10 x 20m, 7 players,
 3 players are defenders, 4 are attackers.

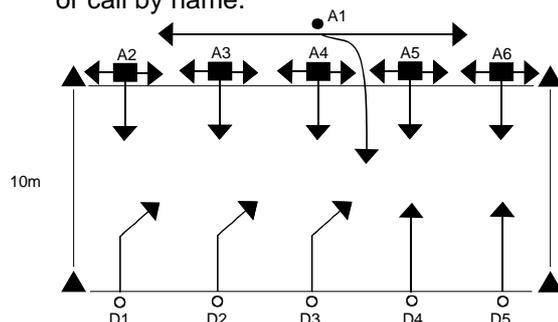
- Play the ball as in four on two
- Include D3, no wraps or reverse passes for attack but players can use inside balls and dummy half runs to challenge the holding marker
- Forces D2 and D3 to adjust to A2 and A3 while D1 controls the the middle.



NOMINATION & NUMBERING

Setting: - Six attackers and five defenders, five of the attackers will hold hit pads whilst the sixth has a football.
 - Players spread out opposite each other in two lines about 10 metres apart.

- Coach stands behind the defensive line where they cannot see him.
- He directs the sideways movement of all the attacking players except A1, with the ball, either left or right by pointing.
- A1 moves at random behind the attacking line.
- When the coach puts his hand straight up in the air A1 must run forward through the gap in front of him, with the rest of the attacking line moving forward.
- Defence must adjust to nominate and eliminate all players closest to the ball, thus leaving one attacker on the edge free.
- Defence must nominate, ball carrier, runner, etc or call by name.

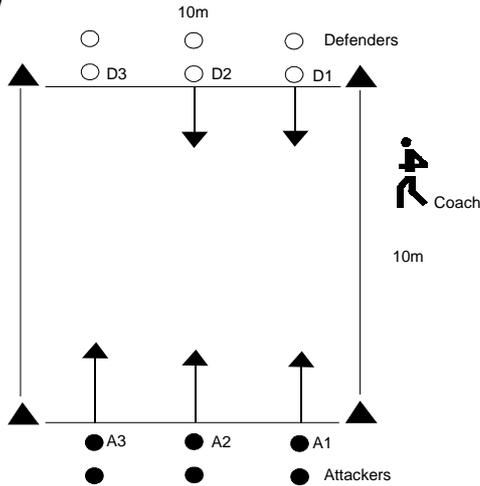


3 ON 2 (B)

Setting: - Grid 10 x 10m,
2 players are defenders, 3 are attackers.

- Players line up behind cones in columns of three as attackers and defenders at opposite ends of the grid
- As attacking players move, coach commands one defender to stay out (nominate by name or number)
- The attacking line then attempts to beat the defenders with a 3 on 2 situation.

EMPHASISE: Communication (attack and defence), decision making, drawing the man, no silly passes, start slow

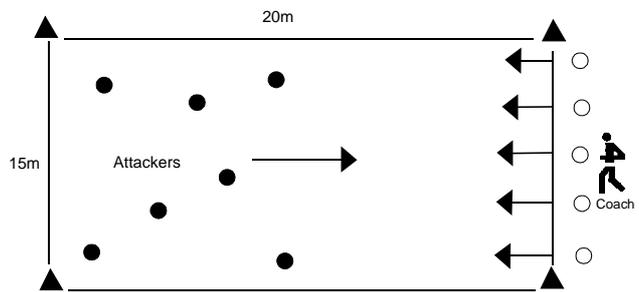


FACE-UP DEFENCE

Setting: - Corridor 20 x 15m, 4 markers, 12 players, 1 football

- 5 defenders are placed on the base line.
- 7 attacking players are grouped at the opposite end of the grid.
- The coach kicks the football to the A players.
- On A players gathering the ball the defenders move forward to prevent A scoring.

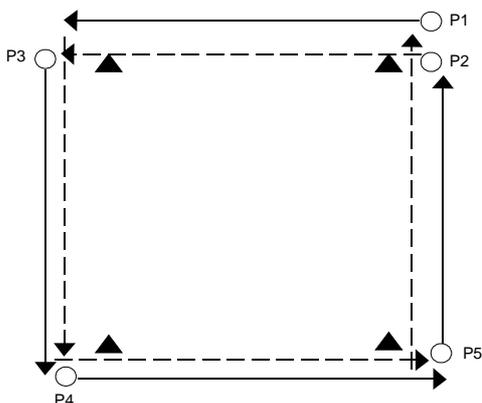
Progression: - A & D start with coaches call
- D move down the grid in formation A follows approx. 10m behind
- On coaches call, D turns and defends against A who attempts to score.



SQUARE DRILL

Setting: - Grid 7m x 7m

- P1 plays the ball to P2 who passes to P3
- P3 drops to the ground, regains his feet quickly and plays the ball to P1 who has taken his position behind P3, having run in a straight line to become acting half back.
- P1 then passes the ball to P4 who repeats the activity of P3, who now assumes the role of acting half back.
- This procedure is repeated for a period of time.
- The drill may be used competitively by allocating one point for each play the ball performed correctly. Three or four grids may be used competitively for further enjoyment.



ROLL/PLAY THE BALL DRILL

Setting - Players form two teams 15m apart opposite each other.

On coaches command

- P1 from the Blue Team rolls the ball along the ground towards a member of the Gold Team.
- Player B who falls on the ball securely, plays the ball correctly to Player A. Each of the other members of the Gold Team form a backline; the ball is passed from player A to C, D, E, then F.
- Player F, upon reaching the marker, rolls the ball towards any member of the Blue Team.
- Once retrieved, the ball is played correctly with another member of the team moving into acting halfback.
- All other players position themselves in a backline formation and continue the drill along the same lines as the Gold Team.

