



# RUGBY LEAGUE COACHING MANUALS

- 2 Coach Talk**  
Chris Anderson - Sharks and Australian Coach
- 5 Time Management**  
With Chris Anderson - Sharks and Australian Coach
- 7 The Role of the Assistant Coach**  
With Peter Mullholland - Penrith Panthers Football Manager
- 10 Defence** By Glenn Bayliss, ARL Level 3 Coach
- 15 Career Coach: Poisoned challis or dream job?**  
By Rudi Meir - Southern Cross University, Lismore
- 19 Today's Referee**  
Peter Louis and Brian Grant
- 21 101 Coaching Tips** (Reprinted with permission of the Australian Sports Commission)  
By Les Bee, Wayne Goldsmith, Mike Keelan and Warwick Povey
- 24 Qualities Required by the Junior Player**  
With Chris Fullerton - Junior Kangaroos Coach
- 26 Coaching the Bye**  
By Ashley Bradnam
- 27 It's Not Just An 80 Minute Game**  
By Doug King - RCpN DipNg PGCertHealSc(SportMed) Sports Nurse
- 30 Applying Empowerment in Coaching: Some Considerations**  
By Robyn Jones - Bath University, UK
- 31 League Coach Forum**  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/leaguecoach>
- 33 Catch and Pass Drills**  
Digi League, John Dixon Brisbane Broncos

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# Coach Talk

Chris Anderson - Sharks and Australian Coach

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With the fresh challenge of taking over the reigns at Cronulla this year, Chris Anderson feels rejuvenated, despite his status as veteran coach of the NRL. The current Australian coach has recruited deftly; his former Storm collaborator Brett Kimmorley the most notable, and people out Sharkies' way are looking forward to what fruits September may bring. RLCM caught up with Anderson for this edition of Coach Talk.

**RLCM: How have the new rule changes and the limited interchange altered your philosophy toward attack?**

Anderson: It's changed a little bit. The game has become a little bit more expansive I suppose because you tend to throw the ball around a little bit more. The days of taking ten big forwards into a game are gone – you can't expect to just roll over the top of them (opposition) with a big pack and that has opened things up for the guys who have that attacking flair. Personally, I don't think the new rule about not taking the defence back the full ten metres is going to change things a great deal – it just means that you have to have more support for your runners. If you send them up just one off, then they'll be easy pickings, you need the options. It doesn't matter how far the ref is getting them back, when someone goes to the line, they need options, and that means players have to make the effort to get there and support.

**RLCM: You were credited with bringing the 'flat line' of attack into the game – to great success – at Melbourne. Are you playing any deeper now that you are at Cronulla?**

Anderson: No not at all. I think it's more important now than ever before to get right up on the advantage line. The fact is you have to be going at them (defence) before they start coming at you. My interchange bench has changed – I used to run on four big forwards and just keep rotating them, but these days I tend to just use them for resting players. I don't have two front rowers and two second rowers like I used to, I mostly go with one front rower, two second rowers and an outside back. The reserve front

rower is there to give your two starters a rest, while the back-rowers are used as alternates.

**RLCM: What do you make of the new play the ball rule?**

Anderson: I don't think they needed to change it. My worry is that when you get two good teams together it is going to blunt attacking football, so I don't agree with it. It won't affect the way we play. I think teams are getting in each other's faces a bit more but I reckon they've gone about it the wrong way. If they want to stop score 'blowouts' the NRL should try to even the teams up than try to start changing the rules.

**RLCM: The new decoy running crackdown has attracted plenty of controversy in 2002, what is your take on it?**

Anderson: The rule is a silly one. What they (the referees) should do is if anyone runs behind one of his own players with the ball then that's called a shepherd, but if the ball is passed behind a bloke then that is fair enough and the defence should have to adjust. The way the League has it at the moment people in the defence can take a dive and stop a try – run into a dummy runner and the try will go begging. I'd make a black and white rule that if you run behind one of your own team with the ball it is an infringement, but if you pass it it's okay. We don't practice decoy running much at our club anyway because we play so flat that most of the boys are up supporting each other. We do a couple of blocks out wide (in the backs) but not enough for players to be getting in the road. But the way it is now, you're open to a defensive player who wants to be lazy and run into a dummy runner. If coaches start coaching that, which they probably will, then the refs are really going to start having problems.

**RLCM: The top teams in the comp seem to be able to not only dictate the tempo of a match, but to also lift it at various time during a contest. How is this possible?**

Anderson: If you're going to be successful in this game, you have to learn, as a team, to be able to

control it (the game). It's more important to be controlling the tempo in certain parts of the field than in others. We attack a little bit more after a kick, when we've got them down their end. That's when we lift our tempo to keep the pressure on them down there. It's the little things, completing your sets, kicking well and limiting mistakes, but it also means trying to raise your levels in areas where the other team may not be expecting it. Things like keeping pressure on the opposition down their end. The better teams can control the ball – if you can control the ball you will control the game and therefore dictate the tempo. Flat attack is a tempo game, you just want to create a roll over effect so you can create some room to get their defence standing still. If you have the ball you've got everything you need to win. By controlling that and the field position you can make the opposition continually come up with second and third efforts. All teams in this comp are as fit as each other but energy is all about making teams work when they don't want to. If they're working hard coming out of their own end or turning and chasing kicks all the time it's going to effect their energy levels. In turn, that affects your attitude – you become less positive. When that happens, either through continually rucking the ball out from your own end, or defending your line for successive sets, that's when teams get beaten.

**RLCM: We seem to be seeing a lot more dummy half running this year, why is that?**

**Anderson:** Some coaches seem to be keen on it at the moment because I guess they see it as risk free – particularly coming out of their own end. The risk with that though is that it probably lends itself to negative football, which I'm not sure, is a healthy pattern to fall into. It might be safe but I don't think it's something I will adopt. Having said that there are some rules you have to adhere by when you are coming out your own end just to get to the stage where you can put in a decent kick. You have certain rules but I don't think it has to get to the stage of straight one-out running. Sometimes you can surprise them (opposition) by putting a spread on them down your own end.

**RLCM: I'd like to talk about defending a lead. We saw a classic case of a team unable to defend a lead this year when Melbourne came from 30-10 down to beat Parramatta – how do you coach a side to defend a lead?**

**Anderson:** The big thing with defending a lead is to continue doing the same things that helped you

get the lead in the first place. That is controlling the ball and controlling field position. You can't go negative but you don't have to take risks down your end of the field and you have to ensure that your kicking game remains intact. Basically you don't allow the other team to get a sniff down your end of the field – the danger zone. The opposition is always going to smell a change in attitude; so you can't afford to put the shutters up and get negative because they will sense it and cash in on it and the next thing you know the game is back on but the ascendancy and momentum is now with them and not you. You have to stay positive but take fewer risks – it's a fine balance but it is one a team must be able to find. Things can change so quickly these days that even a couple of tries buffer is not enough. You saw in that Parramatta-Melbourne game that when the Eels let the Storm back into the game it never looked like the Eels could score more points because they had just become so negative that they're confidence was shot and the mistakes became more regular. They (Parramatta) really had no idea how to defend a lead. They started to panic and play as if they needed more tries and their kicking game I thought was pretty ordinary. What they really needed was to play more controlled and composed and do the little things right to shut the Storm out of it. In the Grand Final last year Newcastle shut up shop with twenty minutes to go – that's when Johns started taking field goal shots. If Parramatta had of been a little more controlled in what they were doing they nearly could have got away with it. If you're taking pot shots at field goals twenty minutes out, you're sending signals that you've gone negative.

**RLCM: How do you form a culture of a club? Coming from Melbourne to the Sharks, have you found it more difficult to put your stamp on the way the club plays?**

**Anderson:** Yes, I have. One of the good things to have happened at Cronulla is that a lot of players have left and we have brought fresh players in – so that has brought with it a sense of freshness into the place. It's a good thing for us because the culture now is not so in-grown, like it used to be. Most of the boys here have been used to the way things have been done for the past eight years and all of a sudden it's changed so it's going to take time for everyone to feel settled. When I first came to Cronulla the players were used to doing things their way and I have found that a little bit hard to change. We're working on it but I wouldn't say we've changed it yet. There are some attitudinal things we need to change here. Bringing players from other clubs has

been a positive for us – some of them have come with good habits. I think the biggest problem here has been that they haven't won anything, and as a result they have tended to stand still. We probably need to get a bit more professional in a few areas. I have identified some areas that are not conducive to winning and that has come about by people just falling into old habits.

**RLCM: Cronulla has never won a Premiership – they've got to finals but haven't been able to take the next step. Why?**

**Anderson:** If you've been there and continually had the door closed on you it becomes something that, mentally, is tough to get through. Cronulla have had that – they get there (finals) most years, but they fall at the second or final hurdle most years. Last year I think they should have beaten Newcastle in the finals – the Knights were there for the taking but they just couldn't finish them. That becomes a bit of an issue mentally when they do that. We'll cross that bridge when we get to it – we're working on that now and we are believing in our ourselves, trying to build up momentum during the year so that when we get there we go in with a belief that we are genuine contenders, not just making up the numbers.

**RLCM: It seems a coach is becoming more and more like a sports psychiatrist?**

**Anderson:** It is starting to feel like that but it's just the way it is. Footy coaching is probably only 40% about coaching and 60% about creating an environment for people to do well. I think that's the important part. Footy is a pretty simple game. If it was just footy coaching, I probably would have been bored with it ten years ago – I do enjoy the challenge of finding out how to make things work. The game is simple but the *man management* is the thing that separates the people who are prepared to have a go from the people who aren't. That is the thing that I would say effects performances from almost anything else.

**RLCM: How does a coach pick himself up week after week?**

**Anderson:** Like any job you have moments where some things are harder than others. I enjoy the challenge, seeing players grow, watching frustrations being overcome and to get a group of players grow as a team and as individuals. You have to keep reinforcing the message. To get a group like this (Cronulla) and take them to another level is a fresh challenge.

**RLCM: We see the juniors today being coached to tackle higher in an effort to lock up the ball. Should we still be coaching the youngsters to tackle around the legs?**

**Anderson:** In our game a lock-up tackle is considered good technique. That has become the basic tackle. There is a fair bit of technique required to be able to lock the ball up effectively so I can understand junior coaches wanting their team to be able to practice that. You actually tend to go for a combination tackle – the first player locking the ball up and the second player going low. The days of just taking them low is not practiced anywhere near as much by us anymore but I think young players need to be able to understand that, because it lays the platform for the future and reinforces the basics. You shouldn't be as competitive with the kids – let them have fun.

**RLCM: How important is blind side play?**

**Anderson:** It's more important for me than it is for other clubs. Some clubs are using second rowers as locks but for mine that cuts down their options. I like to have a real lock forward so that we can use both side of the ruck and increase our options. The half and five-eighth work one side and your lock works the other and you have your bases covered. For me it is important you have three genuine ball players so you have more bases covered.

**RLCM: We continually hear coaches rattle off the cliché 'We need to do the little things right'. For you, what are the little things you look for?**

**Anderson:** It's more about doing things that are conducive to the team winning the game and not losing the game. You can fall into a trap of guys throwing passes that need to be absolutely perfect for them to come off – we try to cut down on those type of things, depending on where the game is. It's more for us about learning when to take your chances and when not to. When to push and when not to. Players know how to play but they don't always know as a group how to win. You need to teach them the things that will help them achieve it – things that will help. It's the basics really, play the balls, marking up, not being sloppy, not letting teams off the hook easily.



# Time Management

Chris Anderson - Sharks and Australian Coach

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Country crooner Kenny Rogers knows the keys to successful gambling. Inadvertently, he may also have stumbled on the keys to successful time management for rugby league coaching.

“You’ve gotta know when to hold ‘em, know when to fold ‘em, know when to walk away, and know when to run”.

Knowing what to do and when to do it frequently divides the master from the mob – in any field. Rugby League is no different. A good coach knows the game; a great coach knows how and when to

to give your players, and yourself, a break. Or as Kenny might sing: “Know when to walk away”.

“This isn’t like a normal job, you never just walk away from the office and leave it behind”, says Anderson.

“It’s pretty full on and I think it’s important to give myself and the boys a day a week to get away, or try to at least. You can’t be just all football. On my day off though, I generally go and play golf with the players and normally find myself working on them while doing so. You don’t start at nine and finish at

**“I work with my instincts, and the longer I spend in the game the better I become at honing them.”**

teach it. It’s one of the latest additions to the league world’s ‘buzz words’ vocabulary. They call it ‘time management’. It’s the art of understanding the how and the when. And just like punting, every coach has a different formula for success.

NRL coaching is a full time job, but that’s not to say time is of ample abundance. In the last edition (book 25) of RLCM, we took a look at the weekly routine of the Brisbane Broncos, from a player’s perspective; covering rehab after the weekend, to preparing for the coming match. In this edition, we concentrate on the weekly roster of the coach and his staff, and take a crack at unearthing a productive formula for success.

First tip? Well, according to Cronulla and Australian mentor Chris Anderson it’s imperative to know when

four in this job, you’re always thinking about it, but I enjoy that. Down time is important though, as is preparation”.

Training preparation entails more than ensuring the balls are pumped up and the water bottles are full. While the Broncos tend to adhere to a structured weekly roster, not all clubs believe it’s the way to go. For the Sharks coaching staff, preparing for the coming training week often incorporates spontaneous creativity sparked by the needs of the players.

Says Anderson “We don’t just sit down on Monday and plan out the whole week because I believe by doing that you can fall into a trap of doing things that may be right for you but not necessarily for the players. We have a meeting every Monday, talk

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about the previous game, injuries, things like that, and then get a feel for where the players are for the rest of the week. We then adjust our week according to that; as a result, each week tends to be a little different. Our trainer has his set weeks where he wants to train them hard – but through the season we tend to do it depending on what game is coming up that week. We tend to train harder for some games than we do for others. I work with my instincts, and the longer I spend in the game the better I become at honing them.

One instinct Anderson has trusted with stunning success focuses on his support staff. He believes that once you find the bloke you want for the job; leave him to do it without interference. It promotes a trust players pick up on and can help foster a successful club spirit.

“I trust Aaron Salisbury our trainer to do his job – I don’t try to do it for him. It’s the same with our medical staff, I trust them as well. It’s crazy for me to try to do their jobs. It’s important therefore that you have staff around you that you can trust; I put trust in my players so I need to do it for my staff as well. Having said that, it’s important that you are all

carrying the same message through them that you want to get through to the players – they have to be loyal to what I’m about as head coach”.

Anderson does not believe he is a methodically organised person. He’s not one for timetables and clipboards, and his coaching style reflects that.

“For me, it’s important I spend a lot of time around the players. Firstly, I enjoy it and secondly it’s how I work best. I form the organisational stuff with my staff, but the week-to-week grind comes mostly out of my instincts of what the players are feeling. I feed of their wants. I can only know what they want though by being around them”. It’s one of the great things about coaching – there is no set formula. What worked for Jack Gibson may not suit Wayne Bennett, and what John Lang finds productive may go horribly wrong for Michael Hagan. You need to find your own style to get the most out of the time you put in. The only way you’ll do that is through trial and error. Be free to make mistakes but be good enough not to make them twice. Chris Anderson’s been around a long time; he knows what works for him.

## NOTES

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# The Role of the Assistant Coach

With Peter Mulholland - Panthers Football Manager

Written by Steve Hunt

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As the game of Rugby League changes pace like a Darren Lockyer line break, the Panthers football manager tries to take a basic approach to assisting coach John Lang with Penrith.

As a former longtime assistant coach under the likes of Royce Simmons, Warren Ryan and Peter Louis, Mulholland is one who is qualified to give sound advice on the support positions of today's head coach.

In this article, he focusses directly on the role of assistant coach and the role he must play to support the head coach and play his role creating a successful coaching environment.

Organisational skills, reading the 'psychology' of players and offering alternative opinions and ideas to assist the head coach are the most important components of the assistant, according to Mulholland.

"I don't think there is a generic role as such because different coaches have different ideas. But as a general rule I think assistant coaches are there to give another opinion to the coach – not to be contradictory but certainly to give other ideas. Obviously there is a lot of organisation done by the assistant coach, like the structure of sessions etc, but I believe he's there to give another opinion and to offer a different perspective.

"There are a number of tasks for the assistant coach. When I was with Royce (Simmons) my role was to analyse opposition videotapes two matches in advance. I'd put down the points I thought were the strengths and weaknesses of the opposition and Royce would look at another tape on their game so we'd have a bank of information on that team.

"Another task was working in the skills of the change section – my particular role was looking at defence. But it's a multitude of tasks. Coaching is becoming more specialised everywhere. The way they do things in today's game is to meet with the coaching

staff week by week, examine programs and then analyse their success."

Mulholland says time management, instilling self-confidence and maintaining their high level of confidence week in and week is a key to the assistant's position.

"The most important part is to sit down with a player and make sure he's dwelling on the positives of his games and that he's worrying about his performance and not the outcome of the performance," he says.

"If a player is going through a slump you have to work closely with them and make sure they get out of it. We are very much one-on-one with the players – that's the head coach's role and as assistant coach you support him.

"You keep looking at the positives and keep the players informed. They can't be worried about what the newspapers are saying and what the fans are saying. At the end of the day it all comes down to what the head coach thinks."

Mulholland said individual discussions with players were a regular feature of the professional, modern game.

"It is done regularly. It's usually more general but what you look for in those situations is the leadership within the team, that they stay positive because their positivity rubs off on the younger blokes.

"It's also important to be patient and to go over things again and again so that it becomes second nature. Some people hate that idea but if you look at those



teams that grind you into the ground, that's what they do at training.

"There's nothing fancy in the Broncos game. It's go forward, go forward and then get the ball wide. I learnt this from Warren Ryan – do it over and over. Patience is a mental toughness, and this is a reflection of the coach. Ryan was like that and I think John Lang's got that quality. Player discipline is a part of all that.

Mulholland says the professionalism of the sport since 1999 has lifted a notch again. It has sped up the game, made fitter athletes and from a coaching perspective called for a more definitive and specific coaching staff. The game, he says, is now so frenetic it's frightening.

So what of the future?

"The game is going to become so much more of a war of attrition. The impact of the 10-metre rule is going to be important. Ten metres now are probably now seven or eight. With fitter, stronger and healthier athletes it really is going to be more of a war of attrition. Speed off the line is so important. If this continues perhaps we are going to go back to the lower scoring game," he says.

"The interchange has made a lot of difference in the last few years. It has kept older players in the game, which can be beneficial because you've retained a lot of older role models.

"I think the big mover is psychology. I don't know if it's being used enough. The players have to believe in it and I think this is a part of the game we can exploit further. To keep 13 players up all the time is a tough task. In Perth (for the Western Reds) we had a woman looking after this aspect and she knew nothing about rugby league, but what she did with the players was fantastic.

"With the game changing I also think the little things are important – the basic skills, the speed of the play the ball, speed off the line. These are things that can let you down at any stage. The obvious things are

important – the game is still about catch and pass and running and they're the things you've got to work on all the time. How do you beat your man now? What are your options? In defence, you do it conversely – how do you shut down this situation? You've got to go over and over it. I also believe putting players into various situations at training is a very practical way of teaching them and preparing them for the game.

And how do you turn around performances on a weekly basis during the regular NRL season?

"It's not easy to answer. It's the synergies of up to 17 players you've got to keep together. I remember back to when we beat the Roosters last year on the back of four or five losses. If the boys are down you are in trouble.

"That's the beauty of Newcastle. Andrew Johns is such a dominant player that he rarely has a bad game. In other clubs so many other top players could be a bit down and this becomes a problem. St George is struggling a bit at the moment because Trent Barrett's not as dominant as he normally is. Wayne Bennett's quote is 'the better the players, the better I coach' and it's so true. You've just got to work through the tough times."

Mulholland says time management is one of the important attributes of an assistant coach.

"I like the saying 'if you want something done ask a busy man'. An assistant's priority is to get as much of a review of last week's team performance done as quickly as possible so you can move onto the next game. In that review you assess team performance, individual performance and assess any remedial work that needs to be done.

"It's a very important role and as soon as possible you get into next week's game. Monday and Tuesday are the biggest days of the week. It should all be out of the way by lunchtime Tuesday.

"The biggest thing in coaching is the time factor, the time you have available with the players. Good

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# Defence

By Glenn Bayliss - ARL Level 3 Coach

This article is an update from RLCM Book 4

## PRINCIPLES OF DEFENCE

Quite often in games, the winning team is determined not by what they do with the ball, but what they get done without it. The ability to attack in defence. It's more than tackling the dill with the pill, proper and effective defensive lines will not only blunt out creative attacking opportunities thrown at them by the opposition – they will also lay the platform for success down the other end of the field when their turn comes for possession. In this edition of RLCM we update an article seen in RLCM Book 4 of this series.

The basis of defence can be narrowed to four main principles.

### 1. Exert Pressure

Limit the time, space and therefore the options of the attacking team.

### 2. Gain Ground

A quick moving defensive organised line that exerts pressure can often stop the attacking team from gaining the “advantage line”. The loss of ground while in attack can have a demoralising effect on the defence. To achieve this aim players must be conditioned to retreat the required 10 metres and be set for the next PTB.

### 3. Win Possession

The old adage “you can't score without the football” sums up the third principle. Strong effective tackling coupled with applied pressure will achieve a higher turnover rate of possession. If your team can limit the time the opposition spends with the football it will go along way towards boosting your chances of winning.

### 4. Physically Dominate the Opposition

If you are coaching teams “international rules” this principle comes into being. Rugby League is a game of strong physical contact. Quite often a defence that is “physical”, i.e. powerful driving tackles that stop attackers “in their tracks”, can have a marked impact

on a game. If opponents are concerned by the fact they are to be solidly tackled a further mental “pressure” can be placed on their game leading to increased mistakes/ hesitancy, turnover of the football. It must be stressed that your “physical” defence doesn't “cross the line” and become illegal play. This can lead to unwanted penalties and put the football back in your opponent's hands more often.

## ORGANISATION FOR YOUR DEFENCE

### 1. Individual Tackling Skill

For a defence to be effective each player in your team must be competent in tackling skill. As a coach it is important to concentrate on the player's:

#### a) Technique

Develop front-on and side-on techniques that put opponents to the ground quickly (and on their back) or ties up the football. When a team consistently dominates in the tackle by ensuring the player is ‘turtled’ [turned on his back] with his upper body facing his own goal posts, this dominance will increase the time that the attacking opposition has to bring the ball back into play, thus allowing more time for the defence line to be set.

Players must also understand the principle of ‘peeling’, which is the player who ties up the upper body holds the player down until the player around the leg releases. The upper body defender comes up with the tackled player and assumes the role of first marker.

#### b) Balance

Be able to react to the unexpected, moving quickly with control. Without balance, a tackle loses its



power. Players should retain a upright stance for as long as possible as once they commit themselves to a tackle and bend they do not have the ability to react.

### c) Footwork

Shorter quicker steps in approach to tackle. Correct positioning of feet when tackle is made. A stance that allows you to move and quickly follow.

### d) Shoulder Contact

Contact zone must be hit with the “top” of the shoulder not your arm.

### e) Head Position

Head to correct side and kept close to the tackled players body. Look at contact zone to keep your neck and back ‘locked’. A bent neck will lead to ineffective tackles and possible injury.

### f) Timing

Contact with shoulder sequenced after front foot placement, supported by back leg drive. Power in tackle will come from the legs. You must know when to make your move.

## 2. The Defensive Line

Your defensive line has to be a well drilled and cohesive unit. A coach has to instantly review his team’s defence performance, identify and correct any errors that occur.

Some common errors are:-

- (a) The defensive line becomes too short.
- (b) An individual player moving up and out of the line too fast.
- (c) An individual player moving up too slow.
- (d) A player being drawn across field leaving space
- (e) Tired or lazy players not drifting to cover space on the inside of a “sliding” defence.
- (f) Shortside (blindside) players “over reading” the play and covering across to the longside (open) of the field too early thus leaving you vulnerable to “switch back” to the shortside.
- (g) Players marking space instead of players.

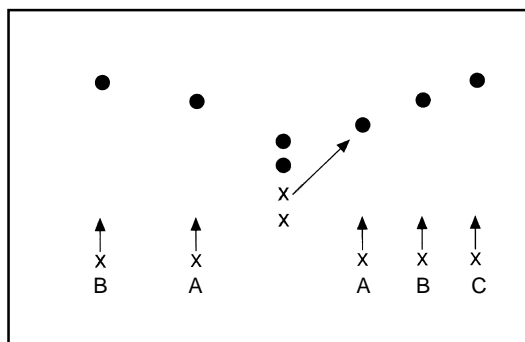
## 3. Marker Defence

Each coach will adopt his own style of marker defence, be it one marker, two markers, first marker chase, second marker chase, split markers etc.

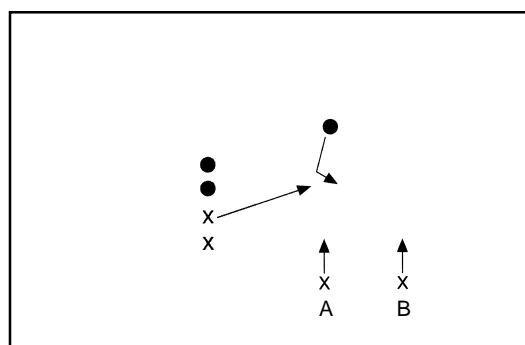
It is important to realise that all markers systems have their advantages and disadvantages. You, as

coach, must adapt the system that best compliments your team. No matter which system is used it is important that the following occur:

- (a) Markers are on their feet before the tackled player. ie. Peeling correctly.
- (b) Communication between markers and “tight” forwards in defensive line.
- (c) Markers do not anticipate the acting half pass and leave too early allowing exploitation of the area behind the ruck (ie. tight spot).
- (d) One marker chases, one marker holds, waits, fills defensive line.
- (e) Markers make sure the stand square as not to give away a penalty.



In today’s game against a well coached team, the marker will find it difficult to tackle first receivers hitting up on a flat pass 10 metres wide of the ruck. Despite this, his role to chase is still important. The marker must rush the receivers inside shoulder pushing his run line wider and possibly causing him to run an angle away from the ruck. This will “set him up” for your defence and help prevent a player cutting back into the tight spot area.



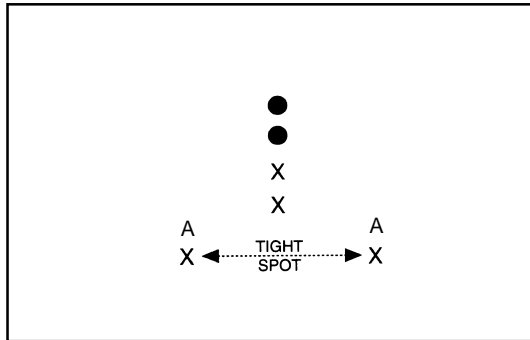
Above all, markers must maintain their CONCENTRATION.

#### 4. Positional Play in the Line

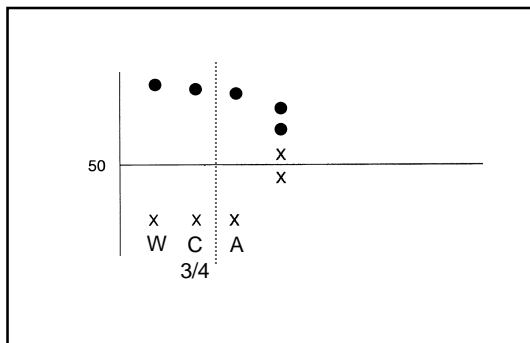
Your team should have a regimented defensive line with each player knowing his position as well as his defence assignment.

##### (a) Play the Ball

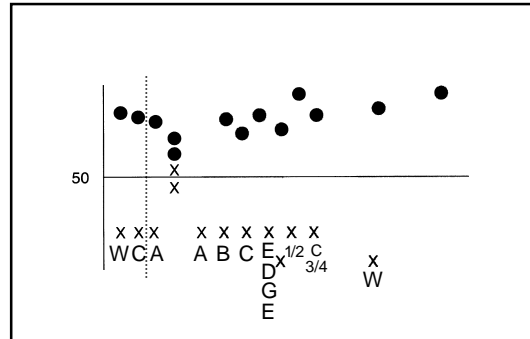
Once the marker defence is in place ensure that the two players on each side of the play the ball, commonly called “posts” or ‘A’ defenders, understand their responsibility to guard the area behind the ruck (tight spot).



The next objective is to “equalise” the short side with a ‘A’ defender, a centre and a winger. This is important as it is a lot easier to defend the long side with less numbers than it is the shortside. Three attackers on two defenders on the short side often spells trouble for the defence.



Finally ‘organise’ the longside with the defensive system you are operating, be it ‘up and in’ [umbrella] or “up and out” (sliding). Always remember that the defence can control the speed of the play-the-ball. Use this control to your advantage.

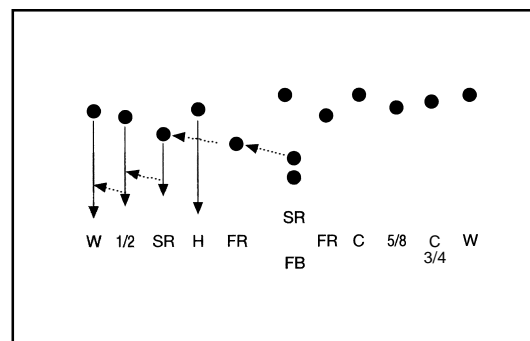


##### (b) Scrums

From scrums the backs, in the team not feeding, will generally stand up “flat” slightly outside their opposition man (be able to see opponent and football), mark up and nominate.

The “defending” scrum, i.e. the team without the feed, should endeavour to win the football with a “six man” push. The best result is a win against the feed or at worst an untidy football for the opposition halfback increasing the chance of an error or breakdown in planned play.

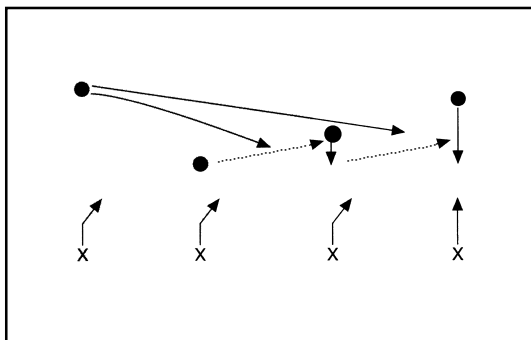
If the football is lost, ensure your forwards have a good “break pattern” covering the area both sides of the scrum. When the players join the defensive line at the next play-the-ball; two players (normally the half and shortside second rower) cover the two spots inside the winger. This pushes the slower forwards to the middle of the line so that they are not vulnerable to quicker players if your opponent’s attack back to where the scrum was packed.



### (c) Drifting

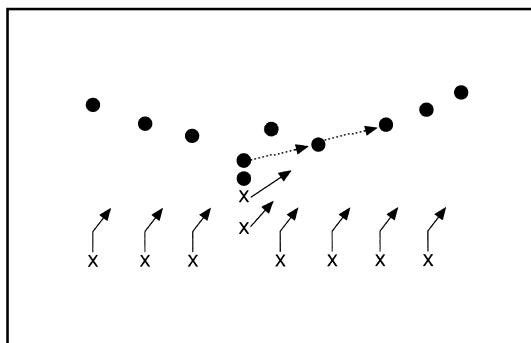
#### \* Individual Drift

Once the football has passed through the opponent that you are “marked up” on your job is not finished. You must drift with your defensive line and cover the space between your man and the man on his outside. At all times be aware of the inside pass, the players that drift to quickly are easily wrong footed by a attacking player entering the line and changing direction.



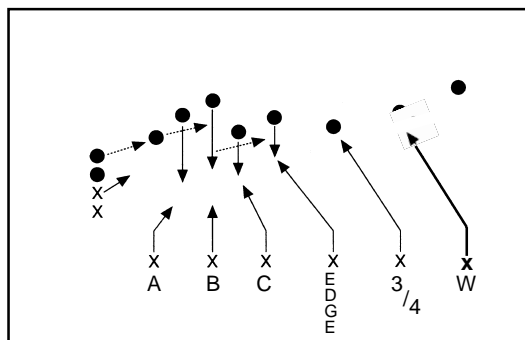
#### \* Shortside Drift

When it becomes apparent that play will not be “switched back down the “shortside” the shortside defence drifts in behind the ruck area to cover any gaps left by the chasing marker.



#### \* Longside Drift

If the defence line is to be attacked on the ‘Edge’ of the ruck, outside defenders drift back in to put more players around the football, thus reducing the pass options and applying more defence pressure on the attack.



### 5. Speed of the Line

The speed of the defensive line can be improved through physical conditioning and commitment.

The benefits are:-

#### (a) Time

Reduce the amount of time the opposition has to think or execute play.

#### (b) Space

By Limiting the ‘space’ the opponents have to work in, you exert a pressure that can throw out the oppositions ‘timing’

#### (c) Options

Cover the ball carrier, but just as importantly cover his support players. These three factors can cause the ball carrier to execute a play not originally intended. It could lead to a player receiving a pass while under defensive pressure. This all leads to prospects of an increased error rate.

#### (d) Containment

A speedy defensive line is capable of containing play to the ruck area or a particular area of the field (near the sideline). By containing the attack you reduce the “field” the opposition has to work in so there is less chance of a break in your own line if your defence is well organised.

#### (e) Possession

An organised defensive line that constantly pressures the attack will force them to “chip” or “grubber” kick. This allows the defensive team a chance to regain possession.





# Career Coach: Poisoned chalice or dream job?

By Rudi Meir

MA, CSCS – Senior Lecturer, School of Exercise Science and Sport Management, Southern Cross University

*Rudi spent 8 years as the strength and conditioning coach with the Gold Coast Seagulls competing in the Australian national rugby league competition. Since 1996 he has been invited to work as a visiting specialist skills and conditioning coach with English Super League teams Wigan, Leeds, Salford and Huddersfield, and professional rugby union teams in Ireland, Japan, South Africa and England, including English RFU international representative teams*

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I guess when looking from the outside the casual observer of today's professional sport coaches could be forgiven for thinking they have a "cushy" job – the dream job. Idealised by many, media personality, mentor and handsomely paid to do a job that doesn't conform to the typical nine to five of mere mortals. Yet, the real cost of being a professional coach reads more like the pages of TV soap opera. The constant pressure to produce results...in no other occupation is the success or failure of the coach's ability so publicly and visibly displayed, week in and week out. It's black and white, no grey areas. The team wins or it loses. If it loses often enough you lose your job. In some rugby league clubs losing just a handful of games to teams that the Board think you should beat is enough to see you get your marching orders. And in others, getting a team to the Grand Final isn't even enough.

Most irksome of all, professional sport coaches are subjected to the criticism of a wide range of "armchair" experts. They are everywhere. In the media. In the grandstand. In the Boardroom. And even in the dressing room – the player who has never coached a team of any description in their life can be the most critical and poisonous of all. You don't hear patients openly criticising their doctor about his diagnosis, yet when it comes to professional sport it seems everyone's an expert. A survey conducted by an American brewer back in 1985 (the Miller Lite Report on American attitudes toward sport) reported that 51% of the sports fan surveyed considered that they could do a better job of coaching than the incumbent. Is it any wonder that Warren Ryan when once asked by an aspiring coach "I'm going into coaching, what should I do?" simply answered "Rent!"

The price many coaches pay for selecting such a career is often ill health, stress, pressure on relationships with family, friends, players and

management, and the constant sense of chronic insecurity that comes with a job where everyone thinks they can do it better than the guy currently in charge...even though typically they've never coached a team of any sort before. Ex-Leeds United legend and ex-coach of English soccer club West Bromwich Albion, Johnny Giles, once said "the only certainty for managers is the sack". The list of "casualties" in the past few years linked to the stress of coaching includes Liverpool FC's Gerard Houllier (heart surgery), ex Chicago Bears coach Mike Ditka (heart attack), current Kangaroo's coach Chris Anderson (heart attack resulting in by-pass surgery), ex-English Super League coach John Harvey (hospitalisation with irregular heartbeat linked to stress) and ex-Wallabies coach Greg Smith (brain tumour)...the list goes on.

Interestingly getting the sack doesn't necessarily mean the death-knell for a coach's career. Unlike most other professions where being sacked as the "manager" because of the organisation's poor performance could mean the end of a promising career, the professional coach is often appointed to another team in the same competition before the ink has dried on their "termination" agreement. In rugby league the total number of full-time professional positions is essentially limited to those in the NRL and English Super League. As a result gaining entry into this exclusive occupation is not easy. This is reinforced by the lack of new blood entering the coaching ranks in recent history. It's not unusual to see the same names appear at a number of different clubs. The same trend is true of other areas of coaching, in particular being a strength and conditioning coach. A number of people in this role move from one club to another every two to three years – one has to ask "why?". If there is no new blood entering the sport then it follows that there may be few new ideas and perspective's coming into

the game at the top level. Simply adopting the attitude that the only people good enough to work at this level are the one's that are already there is extremely myopic and likely to lead to the same approaches and therefore possibly mistakes being repeated. Coaching is a constantly evolving process and innovation in this area has tended to come from those coaches who have been prepared to look outside their own sport and bring back new ideas and share them openly with others. Jack Gibson was such a coach and his legacy remains and has played an important part in the development of a number of the game's very best coaches.

### **What does it take to be a professional coach?**

How does a coach like Brisbane's Wayne Bennett survive as a professional coach in an industry where longevity is a word usually used to describe the tenure of club Board members rather than coaches. More than 350 games and 15 uninterrupted years at the helm of the Broncos, a 67% win record, five

Brothers before heading to Canberra and a season in 1987 as assistant coach to Don Furner. This perhaps provides some insight into what might be an essential part of a coach's path to the top flight. Being prepared to coach at a much lower level and progressively working their way through the various grades or levels of competition as a form of apprenticeship may have its merits compared with going in at the top level with little if any real hands-on coaching experience. In all professions outside sport, managers work their way to the top over time, they don't typically start at the top. This would seem logical. This raises the question about not only what kind of "education" a professional coach should go through but also the perennial question about whether a coach has to have also played at the highest level as a badge of credibility.

The scenario where a manager (coach) with little if any real experience is handed a job on a six figure salary to get the best out of a multi-million dollar investment (the team) would simply not happen in

## **When things don't go to plan pressure starts to mount**

premierships, Queensland State of Origin and Australian coach plus twice voted Coach of the Year by his peers. Contrast this with the sacking or departure by mutual agreement of four NRL coaches at the end of the 2001 season or the departure of seven head coaches during the 1997 English Super League season...that was 50% of all senior coaches in that competition!

Wayne Bennett is not unique as a coach although he is one of a relatively small but exclusive group. Tim Sheens (10 years with the Canberra Raiders), Sir Alex Ferguson (in his 16<sup>th</sup> year with Manchester United), David Parkin (10 interrupted years with Carlton), Tom Landry (28 years with the Dallas Cowboys) are all coaches who have enjoyed great success and longevity in their respective sports while at the one club. Wayne's career as a coach started back in 1976 with Ipswich, followed by appointments with Brisbane Souths and Brisbane

any other are of commerce, yet it is a common feature of many professional sports. This illustrates the emotive and irrational nature of the professional sport industry. It's not uncommon to see Board members the world over who have been highly successful in business take all their business acumen, knowledge and common sense and place them in the bin by the door as they walk into the Boardroom and make strategically critical decisions about key appointments within the organisation.

It's worth noting that in the NFL coaches are not usually ex players. Tom Landry, one of the NFL's longest serving head coaches never played in the NFL - the scenario where an ex "star" player retires to join the ranks of professional coaches simply would not happen in the NFL. The classic routes to a head coach position in the NFL are via the college and university system and/or then as an assistant coach for 10 years. Given that there's only 32 NFL



Table 1: The professional coach's "job list".

<b><u>Key Responsibility</u></b>	<b>First team assembly, development, preparation, selection and performance</b>
<b><u>Primary Tasks</u></b>	<b>Design, implementation and supervision of all first team training/ preparation, club coaching philosophy/policy, appointment and supervision of support staff, player discipline, team well-being, linkage with management and Board, team budget management, identifying and negotiating with existing and future players, resource acquisition and allocation, liaising with officials and referees</b>
<b><u>Secondary Tasks</u></b>	<b>Sponsorship and media relations, coordinating the scouting programme, attendance at meetings, preparing reports for the Board, self education</b>
<b><u>Tertiary Tasks</u></b>	<b>Dealing with various correspondence, attending coaching camps and junior development days, presenting at coach education forums, supporting and attending community fundraisers forums, supporting and attending community fundraisers</b>

franchises, and the fact that as with most other professional football codes the incumbent coaches tend to get recycled within the competition, there's not much opportunity for these assistant coaches to take that last step to a head coaching position.

This certainly doesn't mean that this is the best method of developing coaches for a professional career but it would seem reasonable to suggest that, as with all careers, some form of training is appropriate and may actually make for a better coach when they finally get their chance. Yet, given the limited opportunity that exists across the board one couldn't blame a player for jumping at the opportunity to coach if it's offered to him, even though it may actually result in the premature end to what might have been a much longer career had he been better prepared.

So what kind of preparation should aspiring professional coaches have? Is gaining a Level 3 Coaching certificate enough? Perhaps being a great player and tactician on the field is the essential criteria? Should they have some kind of management experience working outside the sport? Would being tertiary trained be the best approach? Who knows...an examination of the current crop of top coaches suggests that they fall into two categories that could be simply termed either "academic" or "football" coaches. Academic coaches are those with

some form of educational qualifications or career training gained outside rugby league that they have taken with them to their coaching. Such coaches include Wayne Bennett, Matthew Elliott, Brian Smith and Steve Folkes. Football coaches are those that have had extended playing careers and then took this experience along with the different coaching styles that they were exposed to, into their own coaching careers. Such coaches include John Lang, Craig Coleman, Chris Anderson and Terry Lamb. One could easily argue that both types of coach can, and have been, successful. However, it's worth noting that those who fall into the category of the game's most respected and successful during the past 10-15 years tend to be those that could be described as "academic" coaches eg Warren Ryan and Wayne Bennett.

The responsibilities and tasks of the professional coach are complex (see Table 1). As a result, leadership and management skills are essential as is an ability to critically analyse, research and solve problems. They must also have a strong knowledge of all facets of tactical play while working within the strengths and weaknesses of the team and applying and implementing the associated strategies. This must all be delivered via highly developed communication skills. The simple fact is that few people can actually do all these things effectively –



# Today's Referee

## Looking at modern day discrepancies

Peter Louis and Brian Grant

with Ashley Bradnam

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In RLCM 25 we spoke with referee's boss Peter Louis and Brian Grant to discuss the changing role of the whistle blowers over the last five years. In this edition, we catch up with the pair to thrash out some of the grey areas involved in the game in 2002 and scrutinize the performances of the elite referees in the NRL.

**RLCM: The issue of decoy runners has created plenty of debate this year. Some coaches claim we now have a situation where defending players are being rewarded for either misreading an attacking raid, or worse, taking a dive, and preventing a try. Do you believe it is a problem?**

**Peter Louis:** It's a matter of adjudicating on whether

line and the defender misreads the play, the try will be awarded. Coaches need to know there is a difference. The other aspect of this issue is that some clubs, Chris Anderson's for one, execute very flat attack all the time. With the defending team coming up quickly it gets the two teams close together and that makes it difficult to make the call sometimes.

**When is a one on one tackle deemed to be null and void?**

**Brian Grant:** If there are two players in the tackle and one falls off – that is deemed to be two in the tackle. But if an attacking player steps or brushes past a defender and then loses the ball in a one on one situation that is deemed okay. The ref will make

## I would not encourage the use of the video ref for incidents like stripping the ball decisions in general play

the defender has made a wrong decision or whether he has taken a dive. This issue, like so many others in the game, simply gets back to the referee making the right call. I don't have too much of a problem with the decoy issue to be honest, although I am aware it has come under fire from some coaches this year. The fact is, players are able to run decoys and we don't have a problem with that – it's only when the decoy changes the line of his run and takes out a defender that it becomes an infringement, so coaches should be warning their players against that. If, as some coaches claim, the defending player changes his line and actually runs into the decoy, then it is up to the referee to be aware of that. But most of the cases we've seen this year simply get back to the rule that if the decoy changes his line and takes out a defender, the penalty will be awarded to the defending team, but if the decoy doesn't alter his

the call. The ref needs to be sure there was two players committed to the tackle – if there was, it doesn't matter if someone falls off or not. Basically, the ref makes the call on the commitment of the defender, and we haven't had too many problems. But to clear it up, you can't have a situation where an attacking player busts through a defender's tackle and then has the ball stripped by someone else.

**Some coaches have been critical on the use of the video referees this season. Some say they are being overused while some say we should use them more than we do. Do you think the balance is where it should be?**

**Brian and Peter:** I think it is. At the end of the day we all want to make sure that the decision made is the correct one. If that means that it takes an extra minute or two then that's just the way it has to be –

then I think that is time well spent. Having said that I would not encourage the use of the video ref for incidents like stripping the ball decisions in general play – I believe they should be used solely for try scoring situations. That would blow the stoppages right out. It can be hard to find the right balance – it wasn't so long ago that we used the video ref to determine forward passes but that came under fire because some of the TV angles would distort the incident. So you can't rely entirely on the video ref all of the time and as I said, at the moment I think the balance is pretty good. You can't please everyone but I do feel that it should be saved only for tries. I know that Chris Anderson has been critical of the length of time some halves have taken this year – but I think that on each occasion we have gone to the video ref it has been warranted and as I said, we have to make sure that the bottom line is we get it right. The ref's aren't lacking confidence take it from me – they are just making sure that everything is being done to eliminate mistakes.

**This year we have seen some captains sent to the sin bin for dissent. What is expected from captains when talking to referees?**

**Brian and Peter:** It depends on the context of the game. If a captain is continually questioning every decision the ref makes from the kick off and the two of them start a running battle, then it can become a problem. All the refs want from the captain is respect – now we aren't saying the captain doesn't have a right to question a decision - but we just want the element of respect to stay there while he does it. When Gorden Tallis was sent off for the Broncos while playing against Newcastle he overstepped the mark by continually wanting to top off what Paul Simpkins had to say. Tallis had his say and then Paul said his piece but then Tallis said some things he shouldn't have and wouldn't stop. In those situations the respect is not there and the right thing to do is to send the player to the bin for ten minutes to cool off.

**Bill Harrigan is regarded by most as the number one referee in the game but he doesn't always officiate the weekend's best game. Why doesn't the top man referee the top games?**

**Brian and Peter:** We have two top games each weekend, which are the Friday night game and the Sunday Channel Nine game. We don't throw just anyone into those games. What we try to do though

is to give our top three or four refs the chance to gain experience under different situations and in different matches. As far as Bill Harrigan is concerned I don't think we can expect Bill to ref every Friday night game because I feel it's important to firstly give some other guys a go in those matches and also that Bill should get out and officiate some of the other games. What we are trying to do is give guys like Paul Simpkins and Sean Hampstead a little bit more exposure – it helps keeps the guys on their toes and creates some healthy competition which I have a solid stable of eight referees in the NRL and then more in the lower grades who are itching to get an opportunity. What we have to do is to let them get, as much experience as we can so that they can one day take the next step up – be it from the first division to the NRL or from the NRL to the top games in the competition.

**More and more players seem to be getting placed on report each week – yet players are saying the game is as clean as it has ever been. Are the refs being too cautious?**

**Brian and Peter:** The referee has to make hundreds of decisions every game and without going into specifics you could say that there are eight to ten incidents in any match where a player could be placed on report for a suspect tackle. Having said that, head high tackles are nowhere near as prevalent in the game today compared to years gone by but what has developed is refs are being cautious because they don't want to come under public scrutiny if they slip up. Call it keeping your backside safe if you like but that's what's going on. The refs don't want to cop a flogging in the media so they'll put the bloke on report and let a decision be made on its legality later. I don't think you can blame the ref for that – it is the papers who make an issue out of it if it goes the other way and at the end of the day the ref doesn't charge the player, the judicial process does.



# 101 Coaching Tips

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By Les Bee, Wayne Goldsmith, Mike Keelan and Warwick Povey

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*It takes 20 years to become an overnight success. Successful coaches have a combination of experience, skill, education and practice, developed ways and means of getting the best out of themselves and their athletes.*

*Here are 101 Coaching tips to help you achieve your coaching goals.*

1. Plan
2. Develop communication skills and never stop trying to improve them.
3. Learn to effectively utilise the Internet and email.
4. Never stop learning. Learning is life
5. Be open minded. Never say never.
6. What you may lack in knowledge, make up for with enthusiasm, desire and passion
7. Be a role model for your athletes
8. Accept constructive criticism as a positive. Learn from mistakes, take steps to improve from the experience and move on.
9. Allocate time every day for personal health and fitness.
10. Keep a detailed diary and record work actually done by athletes not just what was planned to be done.
11. Embrace effective change.
12. Use sport science wisely. The art of coaching drives the science of performance.
13. Seek out information - don't wait for the "secret to success" to fall into your lap.
14. Coach with your heart but don't forget the basics. Secure adequate training facilities, keep good records, observe O.H. and S. principles, maintain a commitment to safety and equity. Having the 'nuts and bolts' organised allows you to focus on what you do best - working with athletes.
15. Believe in your athletes - they believe in you.
16. Steal ideas from other sports (and improve on them)
17. Strive to make yourself redundant - develop independent athletes
18. Listen with your eyes and watch with your ears.
19. Attitude + application + ability = achievement
20. Coach the person not the athlete. Coach the person not the performance.
21. Develop a network and support structure. Be a resource manager.
22. Best, better, brilliant - there's always room for improvement
23. What you believe will happen will happen. What the mind can conceive it will achieve.
24. Persistence pays - never give up
25. Learn basic business skills. Understand the basics of insurance. Be familiar with legal liability. Understand the basics of taxation and the GST. Make coaching your business.
26. Give an ounce of information and a ton of practice
27. Communicate - clearly, concisely, calmly, constructively, consistently and cleverly.
28. Seek out a critical friend - they are your greatest asset.
29. Help develop your sport not just your current athletes.
30. Mix with successful people - success breeds success
31. Delegate, delegate, delegate - give athletes, assistants, parents and officials responsibility for aspects of your (their) program.
32. Enthusiasm, encouragement, energy = excellence
33. Look for things to improve in yourself.
34. Have fun - life is short.

35. It's easy to coach athletes when they are performing well. Do you have the ability to help athletes (and yourself) deal with the tough times.
36. Focus on the long term even when trying to achieve in the short term.
37. Contribute to the development of other coaches. You may learn from teaching and students are often the best teachers of all.
38. Listen to your athletes.
39. Develop peripheral vision - in your mind.
40. Present information at coaching courses and workshops. Be willing to share.
41. Treat athletes like customers - coaching is the ultimate in client service.
42. Read journals from alternative industries and seek out principles that you can apply to sporting situations
43. Be flexible in your methods.
44. Embrace the principle, 'For the love of it, not the money in it!'
45. Athletes develop confidence through competence. Nothing develops confidence like a thorough preparation.
46. Constantly challenge yourself and your athletes
47. Create a safe, stimulating, interesting training environment where athletes enjoy coming to train.
48. In preparing athletes: leave nothing to chance, nothing untested, don't rely on luck, make your own!
49. Subscribe to Sports Coach!!!
50. Do your homework. Know the strengths and weaknesses of your athletes, yourself, your opposition. Know the standards - what are the world records, national records, state records, regional records, club records - what are your goals?
51. Look to help athletes achieve their best - no matter what that level is. Not all athletes want to be the world champion.
52. Be innovative. Be creative. Dare to be different.
53. Try not to overcoach. You don't need to talk all the time.
54. Never lose confidence in yourself. You can do it!
55. Encourage your athlete to have ownership of the program.
56. Maintain good appearance - look like a professional.
57. Technology is your ally not your enemy. Use it wisely.
58. When the going gets tough, the tough get going. Mental toughness is still a key component of competition.
59. Adopt the D.R.A.M.A. approach, 'Do, Record, Analyse, Modify, Act.'
60. Confront problems calmly by talking directly with the athlete - don't rely on rumour, relayed messages or other second hand methods of communication. If a message CAN BE misinterpreted it ALREADY HAS BEEN.
61. Empathise don't sympathise.
62. Keep the reasons you coach at the forefront of your mind and your goals close to your heart.
63. Desire - keep the dream alive - every day. Motivation is a lifestyle not a one-off event.
64. What makes a great coach? - Great athletes!
65. Be firm and fair.
66. Build your program around the five Es: EQUITY - ENJOYMENT - EXCELLENCE - EMPATHY and EMPOWERMENT.
67. Share a joke - not sarcasm - just a funny joke when appropriate.
68. Field questions and throw back answers. Challenge athletes to discover the answers for themselves and to learn lessons.
69. Observe, ponder, respond - be an observer of human behaviour.
70. Share experiences willingly.
71. Establish open and effective communication with all stakeholders - parents, athletes, administrators, officials and important others.
72. When in doubt, pause and check it out. Don't be afraid to say 'I don't know.'
73. Employ actions that minimise risk. The primary responsibility of all coaches is the SAFETY of their athletes.
74. Encourage your athlete recovering from injury by involving them in the program in some capacity. Everyone is needed and everyone belongs.

75. Be aware of and carry out your legal responsibilities.
76. Efficient coaches take responsibility for their own effectiveness.
77. Self reflection is your constant companion: be your own best critic but strive to be objective rather than self destructive.
78. Recognise the contribution of others - players, parents, officials, assistants, facility maintenance staff - everyone enjoys being appreciated.
79. Recognise, publicise and reward. Praise in public - criticise in private.
80. Lead front the front and support from the rear.
81. The coach is the creator of positive experiences.
82. Proper prior planning prevents pitifully poor performance.
83. Praise and positive reinforcement are tools for the coach.
84. Think about what you say before you say it. Then watch for reactions to your words before saying anything else.
85. Body language replaces many words: it's not what you say but how you say it.
86. A nod is as good as a wink.
87. Coaching is a two way process: The athlete feels but can't see - the coach sees but can't feel.
88. Get to know something personal about your athletes. They are people who have chosen to play sport: not just sportspeople.
89. Holistically challenge your athlete - mental skills can be developed just like physical skills.
90. Athletes listen when the coach listens to them.
91. Know when to say NO.
92. Demonstrate, explain, demonstrate again, practice and give constructive feedback.
93. Concentrate on the performance not the outcome.
94. Process goals (how to achieve) should predominate over outcome goals (what to achieve).
95. Facilitate motivation by allowing athletes to fulfil their goals in some way at every session.
96. Coach your athletes to distinguish between attainable and unobtainable but to never stop dreaming of what's possible.
97. Buy a video and refine your filming and reviewing skills.
98. Sports officials give your athletes the best opportunity to achieve the best result - work alongside them
99. To coach well you'll need to know the CURRENT interpretation of your sports rules and regulations.
100. Coaches have a great opportunity to easily expand their social circle - you'll never be lonely.
101. Last year's programs produce last year's results. Resist the temptation to coach by routine or habit.

**Add Your Own!**

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# Qualities Required by the Junior Player

Chris Fullerton - Junior Kangaroos Coach

with Ashley Bradnam

Who are the stars of the future and where will they come from? Flicking back through decade-old team lists of junior rep sides reveals a discrepancy between the numbers of boys who excel as youngsters, and those who stand out as men. One person well credentialed to have a word on the topic of junior development into senior ranks is Chris Fullerton, the current Junior Kangaroos coach and coaching and development officer for Melbourne Storm feeder club North's Brisbane. Fullerton has been involved with coaching kids on the periphery of senior football for well over a decade – he knows what's required to take the extra leap into the 'big time' and he understands that it takes more than an adroit left foot step to make it into the NRL.

in the world but unless he is prepared to pay the price and conform to the standards and structure set out by our coaching department, his future is not going to be with us. The first two questions most coaches will ask when they are looking at a possible recruit are, what is his attitude like? And, is he coachable? By coachable they mean will he listen and is he prepared to learn”?

“With the senior game becoming faster and more tougher each year, the tackling technique required to compete at this level differs from what most kids learn as they are growing up. The proper technique to tackle (i.e.: what kids are taught as juniors) is not an effective way to stop attacking runners in the

## *Attitude... Toughness... Defence...*

**According to Fullerton, attitude is the number one criteria coaches look for when recruiting a player to their club. It even surpasses talent.**

“I started coaching Colts (Under 19's) back at Ipswich in '93 and '94, and since then I've worked as a Development Officer and moved over to the Colts at Logan City and the Queensland and Australian Under 19's as well”, says Fullerton. “It's hard to pin-point just one area that you need to possess as a young player coming through but if I had to nominate one, I would say it's in the attitude.

The personal attitude of the player is the major contributor to whether or not he will have a lasting future in the code at elite level, yet it's also a difficult topic to define in a sentence or a paragraph”.

“Gifted does not mean good. Not always anyway”, says Fullerton. “A player can have all of the talent

NRL. We now need to know that the young kids coming through will be able to learn to tackle a little higher to wrap up the ball and stop attackers – and the only way they can learn that is to be open to learning. That comes down to attitude. If they want to learn, they'll become better players and progress. If they aren't prepared to learn and listen, they will fall away and not make it”.







# Coaching The Bye

Written by Ashley Bradnam

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It sounds good. A week off in the middle of the season – a chance to give the players time to unwind, catch up with family and friends and return the following week fresher and keener than before the season even began. Sounds great.

How come it rarely works?

Take the NRL. It wasn't until round seven in 2002 before a team returning from the bye came away with a win on their first game back. (For the record, it was Wests Tigers who grafted out a 34-16 win over the Northern Eagles). Before them, the Eagles, Eels, Dragons and Panthers all failed to profitably negotiate the week's vacation.

So what did the Tigers do differently? Well, nothing it seems – that is, nothing that hasn't been tried before. As their coach Terry Lamb admitted to RLCM, it wasn't until just before the bye that he decided on the course of action he'd take for the lay-off.

"I sat down with Langa's (Paul Langmack) and a couple of the others the week before and we decided that the players were getting a bit stale", says Lamb.

"Taking that into consideration we decided to give them the entire week off, completely free from footy and the club. They got the Monday through to Friday off and then I took them on the Saturday for a short session. Then they had the Sunday off and we got back into it on Monday. Our session on the Saturday lasted an hour and fifteen – we worked them pretty hard with the ball and some tackling and a bit of fitness. They were pretty much bugged by the end of the session but it was over so quickly that they still felt fresh. On their week off we instructed them to do at least two weights sessions and two runs – I have my doubts if everyone did this though. When they got back on the Monday we gave it to them on the first day back and then also hit them hard on the Tuesday, mostly with the ball and then we got back into their normal routine after that".

Although Lamb's tactics obviously proved successful, he says he is not married to that for future byes.

"Up until the bye we hadn't had a week off from football for four months so I feel like we really needed it, but I would be reluctant to say that's how we will approach every bye we have. We actually have another one coming up in three weeks so obviously the boys won't be as stale as they were for the last one – it's trial and error I guess".

Rugby League Coaching Manuals

From a purely physical point of view it is not advisable to simply give players a week off with no fitness work. Cronulla's trainer Aaron Salisbury says devising a plan for the rest often depends on what stage of the season it comes in.

"Most of the teams who have byes in the early part of the year haven't developed their match fitness yet – so I would think those clubs would tend to give their players a solid physical workout in an effort to stay on top of it", says Salisbury.

"What we have done in the past is give the players a lighter week with the addition of some cross training leading up to the weekend and then give them all the weekend off. The week leading up to the bye is a great chance for a recovery week – for players to get over niggling injuries and take care of themselves. I think it's important for the fitness levels to stay high though. From a purely fitness point of view I would say Wests Tigers' method of giving the team the week off is not the way to go; but having said that it worked because they won on their return. It is up to the coach to gauge the feeling among his players and if he believes a total break is for the best – then it just might be the way to go. I also think that most players these days can be trusted to do their extras. You can't survive it in first grade without it".

Salisbury says if you do decide to give the team a week to themselves, it is important they do some form of exercise.

"If nothing else, the players should keep up their weights – you can lose plenty of strength quickly and it takes a long time to get it back. The weights should continue and at least two forms of cross training; be it a run or a bike ride. I would then give the players the weekend off and then get them back into it on the Monday, aiming to get back into your regular pattern as soon as possible for the game that weekend. Here at Cronulla our first day back after a game is a recovery day and then we spend the next one on a game's day – so if we were coming back from a bye we obviously wouldn't need the recovery so we would get straight into the games (three on two touch etc). To me, it's important the players get back into their regular rhythm as soon as possible after a break".

The fact is, there is no ideal formula for how to coach the team through a bye. It, like everything else in rugby league, changes constantly. The key is to stay alert to the mood and needs of your team and act accordingly.

# Its Not Just An 80 Minute Game.

Doug King - RCpN DipNg PGCertHealSc(SportMed) Sports Nurse

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How often have you seen a team start off the season with a hiss and a roar and then mid season they are plagued with injuries, poor performances and pathetic results that just does not seem to get better with any input from the team management? What is the secret to the success of the teams with no stars, no super players but yet they are consistently all turning up to play and winning games as the season goes on?

Well the preparation for these teams actually begins the moment the training and the game stops and the players allowing their body to recover fully from the event, refueling with carbohydrates and minerals and rehydrating with fluids. The principle is that the next training session or game event should maximize the players potential performance from the previous session and they need to be fully recovered and recharged to enable this to occur. These steps, when undertaken, will enable the body to be able to perform at its best for the next event and none of these are that hard to do and can easily be put into place for all levels of Rugby League participation. Some teams are reportedly even stopping their players from leaving the changing rooms until they have regained their pre match weight with food and fluid but what is the right way to do it?

The main areas that can be adjusted in speeding up recovery from exercise are:

- a. Post Training/Game Recovery, and
- b. Self time Recovery.

## **POST TRAINING/GAME RECOVERY.**

Simple steps taken within the training sessions will overflow into the game and personal areas of the players lives in their match preparation. If the players recover quickly from the training sessions they are more capable of being ready for the game when the whistle blows. Some simple techniques for both the training sessions and post match recovery are:

### 1. Don't lie down.

When the training is finished or you have just experienced an extremely heavy session in training don't give into the urge to just lie down and recover from this. Instead stand up and walk around or do a slow jog the width of the playing field and then a fast walk back. This slow to low intensity exercise aids in the removal of waste products from the muscles and the renewing of the blood, nutrient and oxygen supply to the muscles. It has a benefit in that with the removal of these products and the resupplying of the muscle, the effects of stiffness that can usually be felt the next day is reduced dramatically.

### 2. Stretch after exercise not before.

The acronym **SAW** sums this up efficiently - **Stretching After Warm-up**. Both before the training session and after the training session, go for a light run across the width of the field, or around the field to ensure that the muscles are nicely warmed before you do the stretching exercises. If you begin stretching before the muscles and tendons are warmed up you risk damaging these tissues. Although it seems silly to warm-up for a "cool down", lets face it once the training session has finished the coach usually has the players standing around for a while so a short light run after training just brings the body back into the working zone so that the risk of injury is reduced. Again proper techniques cannot be over emphasized with stretching and this also aids in reducing the effects of stiffness the following day, especially if the coach has put the players through a heavy session.

### 3. Fuel up fast.

Refueling after training isn't a case of going home and sitting down to a big feed of pie and chips. The refueling should be done initially at the training field and with high Glycaemic Index Carbohydrates (white bread etc.) The longer the time between exercise cessation and refueling, the greater the risk

of not fully replenishing the carbohydrates utilized and the longer the period before full recovery can occur. The recommend time period is to consume a certain amount of carbohydrates within a two hour time period following the stopping of the activity. For a player who weights 70kgs this works out to be between 50 - 150 grams of carbohydrate (food examples are 50 gms carbohydrate = 200 grams of pasta , 80 gms of raisins, 700 ml of a sports drink [ e.g. Gatorade or PowerAde]). A suggested routine for this is to eat 200 gms of pasta (mind that sauce) and have a drink of a sports drink then have a shower. Once they have had the shower and are getting changed, again have a feed of pasta or a salad roll (white bread or bun is best (high GI level), lettuce, ham or similar, tomato and carrot but no margarine or batter in it) and some more sports drink.

#### 4. Fill up the water tank.

Irrespective of what activity you do you always sweat. This is a by product of metabolic reactions within the body and its consequential heating up reaction. Sweat aids in cooling the body down and removing some of the waste products but it also involves water loss. Refilling up the water tank is important to enable the body to function properly but just plain water is not enough. Here is where the idea of regaining pre game weight is important. For every litre of fluid lost in sweat is equal to 1 kg of weight loss. If the body loses this fluid it also loses its ability to function properly. Two percent of fluid loss can impair the biological functions of the body and place the person at risk of a life threatening event occurring (that's 1.4 kgs in a 70 kg player). Greater than 2% fluid loss can be fatal so maintaining fluid levels is important to both optimal performance and life maintenance. But water alone is not enough. By just drinking water alone you allow the water to run straight through and then out as urine. The water is best to have a carbohydrate and sodium content such as it does in sports drinks, but making up a cordial drink with a few pinches of salt in it can assist in replacing the sodium lost. Sodium is important as it assists the body in absorbing the water in faster and keeps the body's thirst response going. Also don't give cold water as this slows down the absorption rate as the body has to warm it up first so that it can be absorbed and used.

#### 5. Electrolyte Replacement.

The most common electrolyte lost in sports activity is sodium. As described above using this in the Rugby League Coaching Manuals

replacement drinks aids in the reabsorption of the fluids, but other electrolytes lost are potassium and magnesium. The easy way to replace these is in the consumption of fresh fruits and leafy green vegetables or the good old sports drink. An alternative to salt on the diet when the players are at home is to use Kelp extract. This has the sodium and potassium and chloride within it as well as other trace elements such as iodine and magnesium. This is also a good alternative to salt for those worried about the medical conditions such as arteriosclerosis or hardening of the arteries that can occur from too much sodium intake. Another consideration is that the muscles also require sodium to make them move but many people don't realize that they also require potassium and calcium as well and this is often overlooked. Consider asking the next player who has cramp what their calcium or dairy product intake is like and how much salt they have and the answer is high salt and low dairy food intake - hence the cramps too much sodium, not enough calcium or potassium. A simple way to get placer to replace their electrolytes is to eat fresh fruit and vegetables, preferably not boiled into mush and all the goodness tipped down the sink.

#### 6. Injury recovery helpers.

The prompt attention to injuries is essential. The use of therapies such as massage, alternating hot and cold pools for stiffness and some soreness can be utilized as well as medicines to reduce the inflammation such as Non Steriodal Anti Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDS) or alternatives such as homeopathic remedies (Arnica etc.) but don't just help yourself to these. See an appropriately trained health professional for these medications and adhere to the instructions. Too often people just take what they want to and either overdose with them or underdose and not achieve the required treatment goals. Also add the RICE regime to the injury helper process. Icing the tired and sore joints or body parts



after exercise aids in reducing the inflammation just as much as popping a pill and it has relatively no side effects that can cause other problems as well. Also adhere to the alcohol free adage within the no HARM (Heat, Alcohol, Rubbing Massage) routine and this will assist in the recovery of any injuries that have occurred but have not yet amounted to anything limiting. Remember these small injuries can accumulate and end in a big injury that will limit the players capability to train or play.

#### 7. Sleep Well.

Rest is the first stage in RICE. Resting does not just mean no activity it also includes a good nights sleep as well. A good nights sleep will enable the body to recharge and enable the player to be mentally and physically prepared for the next training session or the game. Establishing a routine for adequate recovery is essential for the player wanting to go all the way and perform the best and lets the body know that at certain times it will rest and will be able to recover.

#### **SELF TIME RECOVERY**

Unless players and teams are in the professional arena then the players time away from the training field is either tied up with work or school and other commitments such as family and social life. These activities can encroach upon the recovery time necessary for optimal recovery. These all need to be balanced off against one another and the players need to decide what gets the most attention and what gets the least. Its a difficult decision to weigh up especially if relationships, family, education, employment and the dreaded social life all matter the same and then add in Rugby League and Representative commitments.

Encouraging the players to spend a few early nights by resting and sleeping can add to the recovery effects when not training. Too many people continue on with strength training well into the playing season and wonder why they get stale as they are training two nights a week with the team, in the gym every other day, at work or school and meeting those commitments and then playing a game in the weekend and then socializing that night - hmm! That few nights where they do no training and allow themselves to rest are necessary to allow all the microinjuries that have occurred a chance to catch up and repair and the body to refuel and recover while the player sleeps.

#### **OTHER RECOVERY ACTIVITIES.**

These simple steps can be implemented easily within the training and playing routine with some smart lateral thinking and commitment by the management team. If the training is to be hard out or intense, shorten the duration of the session and only increase the intensity by 5%. Too much intensity over too long a period accumulates to the overtraining syndrome and not allowing the players to fully recover can also accumulate as well. Plan the training routine with a "soft" week in which the players training is not high in intensity or duration. Periodization of the training cycle will encourage rest and recovery while still maintaining some team cohesion and contact.

Other activities already highlighted are to weigh the players before the game and when they re-enter the changing room, reweigh them again and note the difference. Remember 1 kg of weight loss = 1 liter of fluid lost so for every kilo lost the players should be consuming food and fluid to restore this. This takes a fair amount of commitment, dedication and discipline to enable all the team players to adhere to it, but the benefits far outweigh the time required to remain in the changing rooms. And it's not just the players, look at the trainers and the Coach as well - especially if they are doing a lot of running.

Add in a bit of Protein to the food as well. It only takes about 6 gms of protein to enable recovery of the muscles from exercise and this is easily achieved with dairy foods such as yoghurts and nutritional shakes (e.g. banana, egg whites and milk with a bit of cinnamon thrown in for added flavour).

Check with a sports nutritionist for more nutritional recovery ideas or visit the Gatorade Website ([www.gssiweb.com](http://www.gssiweb.com)) which has some ideas that you can use. Remember that the recovery period directly after a training or game is a window of opportunity to enable full, effective and efficient recovery for the players. Miss this and the recovery period lengthens and the effects may well tell in the middle of the season.

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# Applying Empowerment in Coaching: *Some Considerations*

An excerpt from *Developing Decision Makers: An empowerment approach to coaching*: [www.ipcltd.com](http://www.ipcltd.com)

By Robyn Jones - Bath University UK

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My introduction to the empowerment philosophy came from a search to improve the decision making of football players during games. The ability to make appropriate decisions is an acknowledged characteristic of capable performers (Rink, French & Tjeerdsma, 1996). Having coached football professionally in the United Kingdom and the United States, I felt this aspect of players' performances always could, and should, be worked upon and improved. Indeed, decision-making ability is considered particularly important within a free-flowing dynamic sport such as football, in which the coach has limited influence once the game begins.

The coach's limited influence is also evident in rugby, hockey and netball, where players must be able to think on their feet and make appropriate decisions based on the needs of the situation they face. Generally, therefore, I wanted players to take greater responsibility for their own performances, particularly in changing strategies and tactics mid-game as the circumstance demanded. Rather than abandoning the agreed game plan, their decisions would amend it with reference to the corresponding strengths and weaknesses of the opposition. I wanted to develop in players an ability to assess the performance of themselves and their team during a game and make conscious decisions to improve this performance through considered tactical adjustments. To develop such decision-making abilities, they needed to become active learners, as when athletes and players seek their own solutions, learning is enhanced (Butler, 1997). In this respect, an empowerment philosophy seemed to answer my needs.

However, in 'buying in' to athlete empowerment as a concept I soon became aware of a trap that bedevils coach education—that is, the trap of prescribing action. I was tempted to believe that my adoption of an empowerment approach, or any other approach for that matter, was the only action that was needed to solve all my coaching woes. Elsewhere I have criticised such a simplistic view of coaching and related coach education programmes by arguing that, despite claims of its uniqueness as an occupation that combines many roles, to date coaching has been presented as a series of 'easy to follow' steps and strategies based on unconnected scientific lines (Jones, in press). According to this approach coaching is simple and unproblematic, and coaches

are mere technicians who transfer unquestioned, prescribed knowledge.

This portrayal of a coach as one who only dominates and prescribes (Usher, 1998) is unacceptably one-dimensional. In reality, much of a coach's work is linked to a wide range of significant others (athletes, managers, parents, colleagues etc.) in a particular social situation (Jones & Armour, under review). Consequently, even though one might largely accept the merits of empowerment, the unquestioned adoption of such an approach, without considering factors that influence the sporting and athletes' world, places it in danger of becoming just another tool in a 'kit bag of quick fixes' (Whitmore, 1996, p. 27). It must be recognised that the coach is much more than someone who applies a particular method (Squires, 1999), given that it has become increasingly acknowledged that sports performance is not an exact science (Lyle, 1986).

The application of any coaching strategy, therefore, requires deliberation, reflection, imagination and flexibility. Indeed, coaching is fundamentally about making many differing connections, not only to and between subjects and methods, but also to and between other people and life in general (Armour & Fernandez-Balboa, 2000). It is a process that deserves and requires consideration of the particular situation and often imaginative solutions. Hence, to avoid unthinking and unquestioning reactions from 'cardboard coaches' by encouraging a 'one-fit-all model', we need to consider the how, where and when of implementing a philosophy such as empowerment.

To consider such implementation in depth, the coach must examine the unique social and environmental features of the local situation, before acting accordingly. In other words, if the end goal is to empower athletes, the coach should exercise care and sensitivity in working towards that goal with varying groups, taking account of the particular context or circumstance. For example, a coach trying to implement an empowerment philosophy with younger children will encounter different barriers from a coach who is dealing with elite athletes. No doubt the philosophy can and should be implemented with both groups, but the speed, method and means of implementation must vary with the circumstance if the strategy is to be successfully adopted.

# League Coach FORUM

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

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In each edition of RLCM we reproduce some of the questions and answers which featured during the month the League Coach website. Feel free to use our forum link to barter thoughts on coaching and training drills and philosophies. Thanks to all those who contributed during the month.

## **QUESTION: from Mark**

**I would like to find out more about the subject of field positioning and sequencing plays. What areas of the field should I be most focussed on?**

## **ANSWERS:**

### **1. From Bob**

G'day Mark. It is not only from scrums and tap kicks we look for specific field positions - we look for them in various zones.

A) The Red Zone (your own quarter). Often you look for a centre field position, to give your kicker some options. If you get trapped against a sideline, then you limit where your kicker can kick ... centre field your kicker has both sides open, and this causes both wingers to drop back in defence, which may allow for a running option. This may sound common sense - but remember, common sense is not always common practice. Sometimes it needs to be drilled into the team's thought pattern.

B) Orange/Yellow Zones (between the quarters) ... your style in this zone basically depends on the strengths of your own team and the opposition. You can play a 70 position here (about 3/4's of the way across the field - 70%) to try to open up one side of the field for your backs. If you think that you are stronger down the guts ... then you will again work for a 50 (centre position) ... and keep trying to hit them on the fringes or just behind the ruck.

C) Green Zone (oppositions quarter) ... Two very distinct schools of thought here ... both require depth and width. First work to a 50 which opens up a back

line each side, with second rowers and the fullback padding out the back line. The second school of thought is to work to the 70 and open the field for your back line... generally you will have second rowers flat running decoys back into the ruck, while your centres are deep and running straight. Hope this helps.

### **2. From Lance**

Bob's given a really good run-thru' of how to set some pattern to your game. Perhaps I can offer some of my own patterns for you to consider. I am implementing a game plan at the moment which works towards a three ruck drive, with the ball either being taken on a straight drive thru' the fringes of the third ruck for a 10m+ gain if we are close to the try line, or with an open side back line move if we are 15m+ away from the line. My outside backs have speed, and the design of this game plan is to create some holes for them to run through. We have set rules, which must be adhered to, in certain parts of the field. Our general rules for zone play is as follows: A. from within our own red zone, we will usually kick. B. From our yellow zone, we'll soak up three tackles designed to take us across the field, setting up an open side where previously it'd been a blindside. For e.g. if we're at the 30% when we take possession the aim of the three ruck drives will be to get laterally across to the 70%. Why? To create space. Any time a defender is left with time to consider his position he will defend better positionally than if he has to shift and realign his position. Just one final thought - think laterally. Things don't always go as planned. When sequencing plays it is also important to develop a plan B. Your players need to be as aware of plan B as they are of plan A, but don't rush them, one thing at a time and teach the new structure one phase at a time....Oh, and good luck ...

## **QUESTION: From Mark**

**My team is just progressing from U/11's to U/12's, - but at the U/11 side version of Rugby League (Mod Rugby) we used the blind side attacks with devastating effect. Could anyone tell me if there is any moves I can implement to continue using blind side play now the boys are playing the proper form of the game?**

## **ANSWERS:**

### **1. From Daryn**

The big attribute of a successful attack is space, creating it and using it. I think most coaches would agree that if you can isolate your best attacker against one defender you'd back him to score. The tricky thing is to create an opportunity for this to happen. The older the boys get, the more they will be learning about the game and the less defensive mistakes they will make. I'd be disappointed, in senior grades, if no one picked up extra players being stacked on the blindside - players tend to be smarter than that in senior level. This is where there might be a difference in junior and senior age games.

### **2. From Ken**

The use of blindside in senior level is extremely difficult. Tim Sheens I recall was one of the prime movers to move the scrum in 20 metres during 1996 to encourage more blindside plays - but I have never seen any great evidence of it being successful. Although the theory sounded great at the time (and I whole heartedly applauded it)... as I looked at it more in practice, it has I believe, failed to achieve its goals. Give it a go, for sure but for mine, good luck trying to find a way through.

### **3. From David**

Most people believe the best time to hit the blind side is from a scrum - but having said that only rarely is it successful. The reason is the defence at a scrum is always structured. It's always going to be extremely difficult to find a hole in such a narrow corridor. I think that blind side attack is under utilised, however, only from the ruck (play the ball) situation. St George and Parramatta use it to good advantage, although St George probably is too predictable down the short side. But in a ruck situation you will often have non-specific defenders trying to get a rest on the short side ... attacks down that side can either deny them the rest or attack them when they are not ready to defend. Could be worth a crack.

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## **4. From Neville**

As coaches we're becoming more technically minded and more aware of opportunities- still, the blindside is one of the last areas to get properly exploited. Sure there's the risk of getting forced into touch, so players have to be aware of this, but it's also a largely undefended area, when you compare to going open and having the defence slide you wide. Scrums are a bit trickier but it might be possible to have two versions of a blindside move, where you spend 40 mins showing the defence a blindside move, setting them up for it to become an open side move in the second half on the same call. Get the defending half-lock breaking blind to cover it only to see the ball go open where the fringes are now being under defended. If the wide defenders move back inside, then a quick, long pass and you're in, and if the defenders don't come inside then crash up the middle... A thought, that's all!

## **FINAL THOUGHT. From Bob Wood**

I must admit I like the idea of this forum for discussing Rugby League. Generally the other coach's that you talk to, you may end up coaching against ... and you don't want to be discussing Game Plans or Plays that are going to be used against you. I had that experience from coaching a Development Squad ... the players took the plays back to their club coaches ... suddenly I found my plays popping up everywhere ... often even with the same names! What is needed is for plenty of coach's to get involved ... and not having to be worried about being shot down in flames ... so as long as everyone treats it like a brainstorming session and we agree that there are no right or wrong answers.. Just opinions ... and we all have those.

Bravo Bob, the crew here at RLCM could not have put it any better ourselves. Thoughts and opinions, that's what the League Coach forum is all about. If you have a question, or a barnstorming idea you are just dying to air, then don't be shy - hop on the keyboard and tap the brains of other coaches. It's free, and it's waiting for you to use it.

Remember the website address, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/leaguecoach>

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# **RLCM Drills**

## *Catch & Pass*

RLCM would like to thank Dave Ellis, Digi League and John Dixon, Brisbane Broncos for their assistance in compiling these drills.

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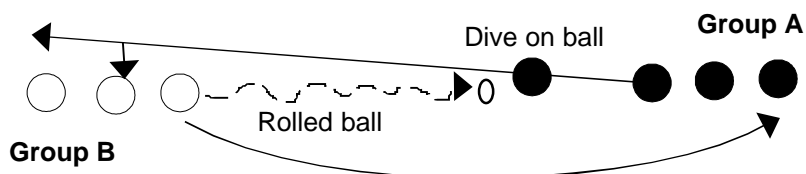
- |                       |                          |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Dive on Ball Relay | 9. 3 Player Pass Combo   |
| 2. Hand & Vision 1    | 10. 3 Player Pass Combo  |
| 3. Hand & Vision 2    | 11. Speed Diamond        |
| 4. Union Jack         | 12. Arresting The Slide  |
| 5. Middle Man         | 13. "Who Switches"       |
| 6. Onside Passing     | 14. 2 on 1               |
| 7. Line Passing       | 15. Breaking the Defence |
| 8. Rapids             | 16. Pick The Gap         |

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# Dive On Ball Relay



## Setting

3 Players Minimum, 10m X 10m Grid, 1 Football

- Divide players into two equal groups with players in single file and facing each other
- P2 starts the drill by rolling the ball out towards P1
- P1 then runs out and dives on the ball in an attempt to cleanly field the ball, he must urgently return to his feet proceed forward before passing the ball to the next player in Group B (P3)
- The drill continues with each player joining the other group after each play

## Points

- Players should dive 'over' the ball placing their bodies between oncoming defenders and the ball



# Cabramatta

## *Rugby League Club*

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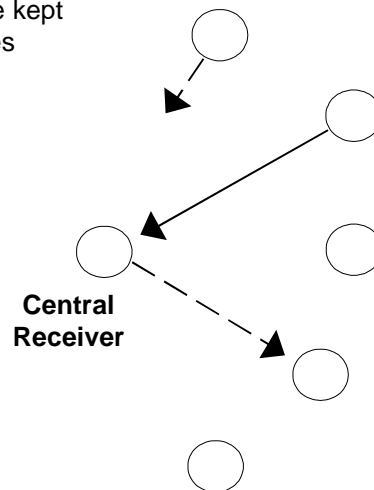
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# Hand & Vision 1

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Footballs must be kept moving at all times



## Setting

5 Players Minimum, Approx 5m X 5m Grid, 2 Footballs

- Five players are positioned in a circular arc, two have footballs
- One player is positioned in the centre of the arc
- One of the players with the football passes to the centre man who must immediately pass to any one of the other players
- As soon as the centre player passes the ball the player in possession of the second football must pass the ball to him
- The drill continues with the centre player catching and passing as quickly as his skills will allow

## Points

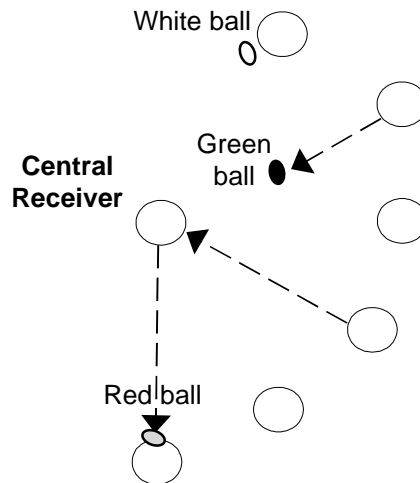
- Players in the arc must time passes perfectly
- The arc may contain up to eight players
- The central player may call the name of the receiving player before passing
- Coach should correct passing technique

## Communication

- Players in the arc call the central receiver by name before passing the ball

# Hand & Vision 2

This drill is similar to Hand & Vision 1



## Setting

5 Players Minimum, Approx 5m X 5m Grid,

3 Different Coloured balls ( balls do not have to be footballs)

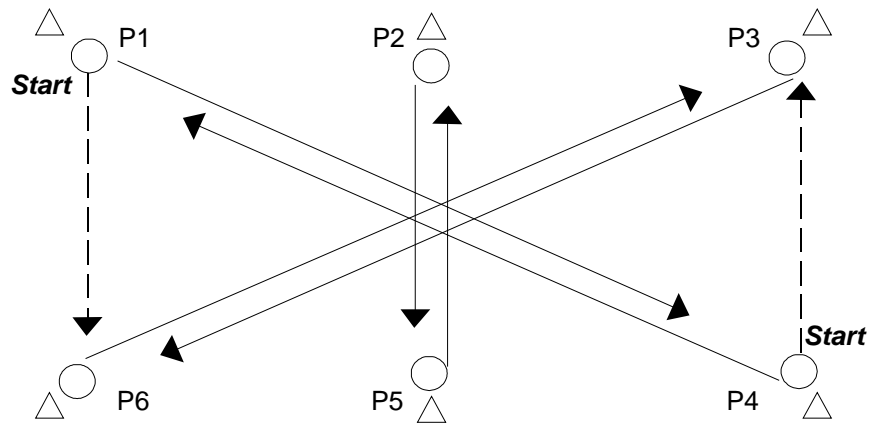
- Five players are positioned in a circular arc, three have the coloured ball (e.g. Red White and Green)
- One player is positioned in the centre of the arc
- The centre player begins the drill by calling RED on which the red ball is passed to him
- He then passes the ball to one of the other players without a ball and at the same time calls GREEN, on which the green ball is passed to him
- and so on for the white ball
- The drill now continues with the sequence of colours remaining red, green, white

## Points

- Coach may take control of which coloured ball is passed by calling each pass
- Players must concentrate of the colour of ball they may be in possession of

# Union Jack

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## Setting

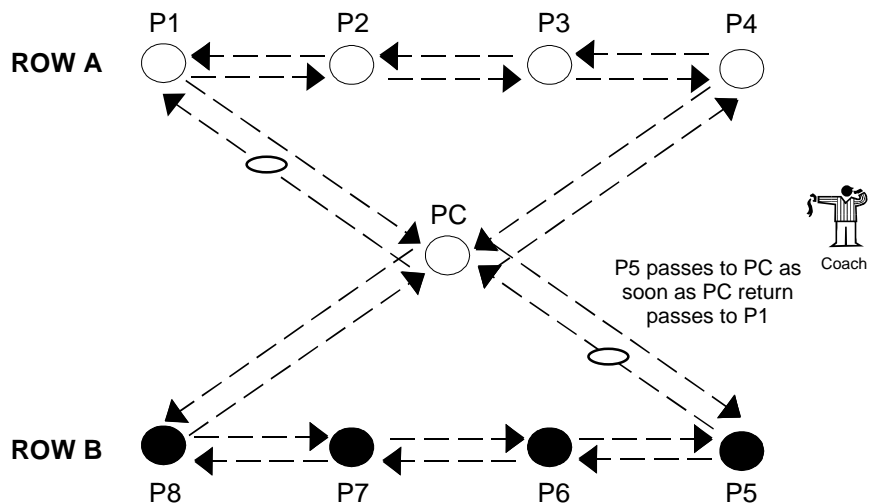
6 Players per group, 10m X 5m Grid, 6 Markers, 2 Footballs per group

- Players position themselves on the markers set around the rectangle grid
- Two players at opposite corners are given footballs (P1 and P4)
- On the start signal players pass the balls in an anti-clockwise direction around the grid
- After each player passes the ball he must run to another marker position and get ready to receive a pass
- P1, P2, P4 and P5 run the diagonal and P3 and P6 run across the grid as shown above

## Points

- Use only one football until players become familiar with the drill

# Middle Man



## Setting

9 Players, 10m X 10m Grid, 5 Markers, 2 Footballs

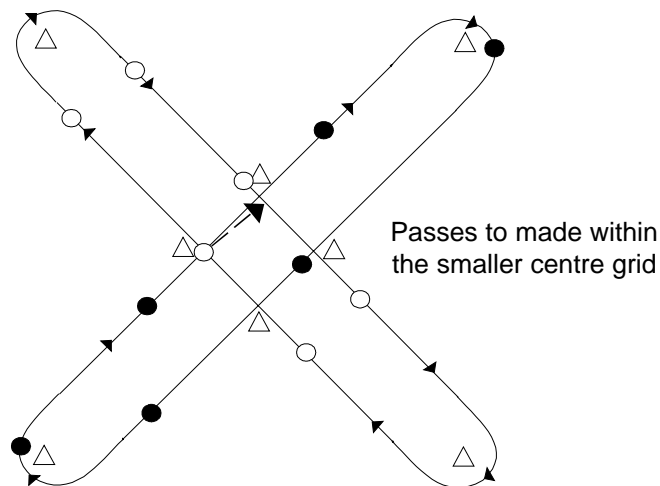
- P1 in Row A starts the drill by passing to PC who immediately passes the ball back to him
- P1 then passes to P2 who passes the ball to P3 who passes to P4
- P4 then passes to PC who passes straight back
- P4 then passes back down the row to P3 who passes to P2 and then onto P1 etc
- Row B joins the drill immediately after PC has passed the ball back to P1
- P5 calls out PC's name to begin the involvement, he must turn and receive a pass from P5
- PC returns the pass to P5 who then passes to P6 and so on down the row as described above

## Points

- Timing of the pass to PC is crucial
- Coach should study players passing and catching technique
- Rotate Player in centre regularly

# Onside Passing

Diagram  
Stage 2



## Setting

6 Players minimum, 10m X 10m Grid minimum, 8 Markers, 2 Footballs

- In the centre of the 10m grid mark out a smaller 2-3m grid

## Stage 1

- Start with two groups at opposite corners of the 10m grid
- The first player in one of the groups runs towards the other group, as he reaches the second marker of the smaller grid, he passes laterally (not forward) to the player approaching from the opposite group who has timed his run to receive the pass
- The player now in possession passes to the second player of the first group and the drill continues

## Stage 2

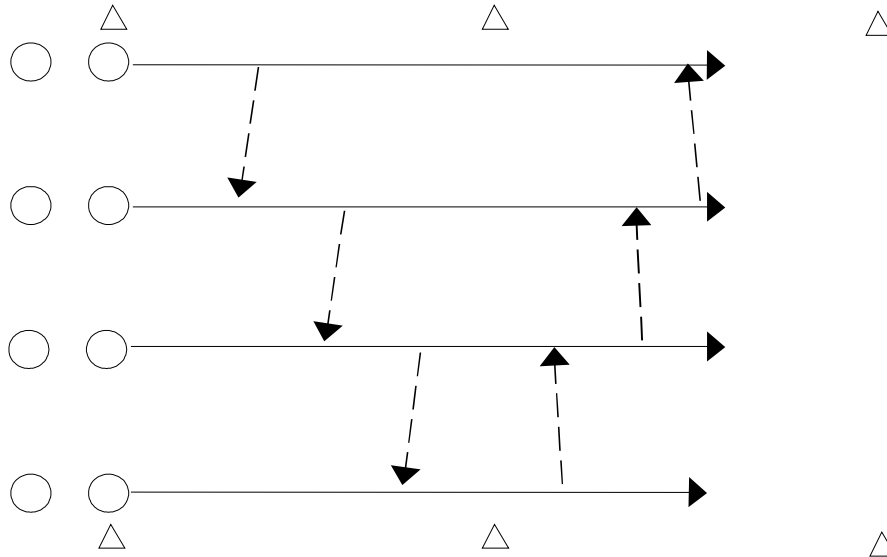
- Divide players into 4 groups and position a group on each corner
- The drill works as above but there is now 'traffic' to avoid as four players converge on the smaller grid

## Points

- Change running lines so passes are made in the opposite direction
- Keep score by counting the number of passes in a set time or until a ball is dropped

# Line Passing

## Stage 1



## Setting

Groups of 4, 20m X 15m Channel, 8 Markers, 1 Football per group

- Divid players into groups of 4 and have them line up at one end of channel

## Stage 1

- Each team runs to the end of the channel passing back and forth along the way
- When the first group reaches the end of the channel the next group sets off
- Once all groups have run through, they repeat the exercise moving back down the channel in the opposite direction

## Stage 2

- The groups now do not wait at the ends of the channel, they continuously move back and forth passing along the line while negotiating 'traffic'
- Players on the ends of the groups should swap with the middle players at the end of each run

## Stage 3

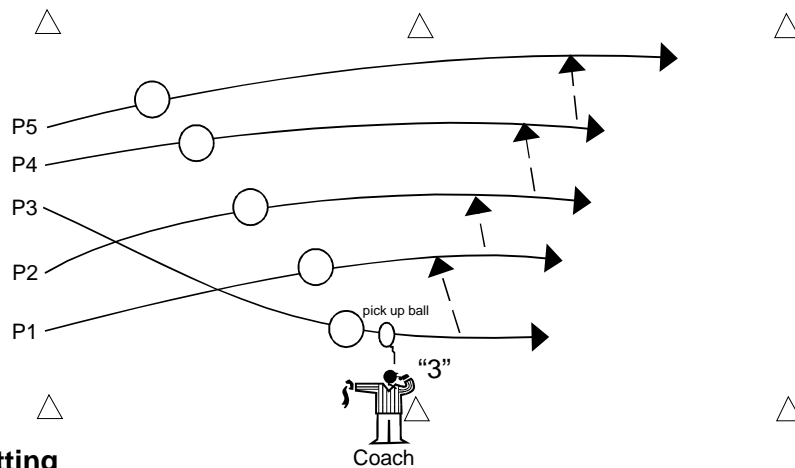
- Groups are positioned at each end of the channel and in relay fashion, using one football perform the exercise at 3/4 pace

## Stage 4

- Same as stage 3 but now run at full pace
- Players may either pop the ball at the end of the channel or place it on the ground for a running pick-up by the next group



# Rapids



## Setting

2-5 players per group, 20m X 20m grid, 6 markers, 1 Football

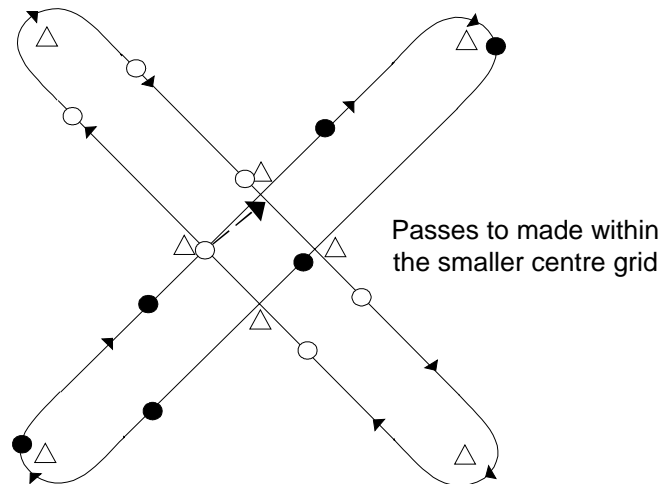
- The diagram above is set with 5 players per group
- the 5 players from group one are positioned in any formation on the start line
- Each player is given a number
- The coach places the football on the ground in front of the group (placement should change with each exercise or the ball could be rolled on the ground)
- The coach calls a number to begin the drill
- The numbered player must retrieve the ball
- The remaining players must move to one side and into support positions
- The player retrieving the ball should call 'My Ball' and then pick the ball up on the run before starting a passing movement where all players must get a touch of the football
- Run all groups to the end of the grid and repeat the drill coming back in the opposite direction

## Points

- For variation have players lying on their stomachs and facing away from the football, call left or right to indicate the direction

# Onside Passing

Diagram  
Stage 2



## Setting

6 Players minimum, 10m X 10m Grid minimum, 8 Markers, 2 Footballs

- In the centre of the 10m grid mark out a smaller 2-3m grid

## Stage 1

- Start with two groups at opposite corners of the 10m grid
- The first player in one of the groups runs towards the other group, as he reaches the second marker of the smaller grid, he passes laterally (not forward) to the player approaching from the opposite group who has timed his run to receive the pass
- The player now in possession passes to the second player of the first group and the drill continues

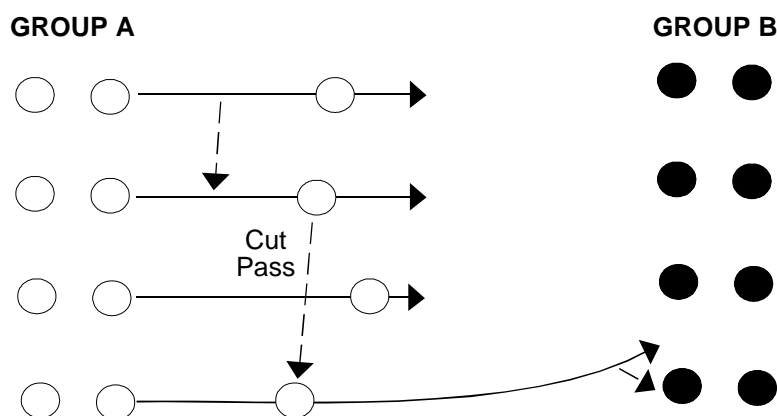
## Stage 2

- Divide players into 4 groups and position a group on each corner
- The drill works as above but there is now 'traffic' to avoid as four players converge on the smaller grid

## Points

- Change running lines so passes are made in the opposite direction
- Keep score by counting the number of passes in a set time or until a ball is dropped

# 4 Players Pass Combo



## Setting

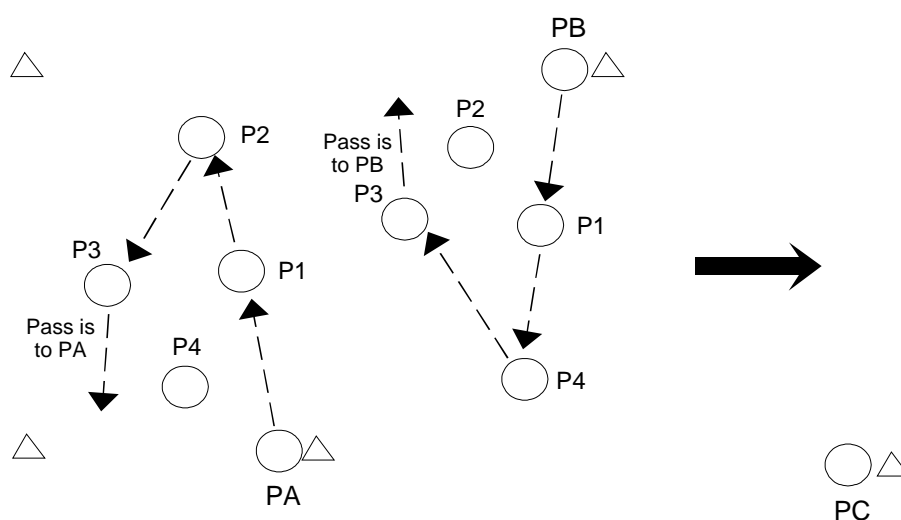
Groups of 4-5, 30m X 15m Grid, 4 Markers, 1 Football

- This is a common 4 player catching and passing drill
- Organise players into groups of 4 and position them at opposite ends of a 20m grid, the grid should only be 15m wide and lesser for younger players
- P1 leads off down the grid and passes to P2
- P2 holds the ball long enough for P3 to burst through on a straight run as if he is going to take a short pass
- P2 then throws a cut pass behind the back of P3 who has become a dummy runner to P4 who receives the ball while running at top pace and maintains speed to the end of the grid
- P4 then pops a pass to the end player of Group B and the drill continues

## Points

- Drill is designed to be performed at full pace
- Variations can be adapted to include switches, double cuts, dummy passes, loop passes etc however pace and intensity should be maintained at all times

# Speed Diamond



## Setting

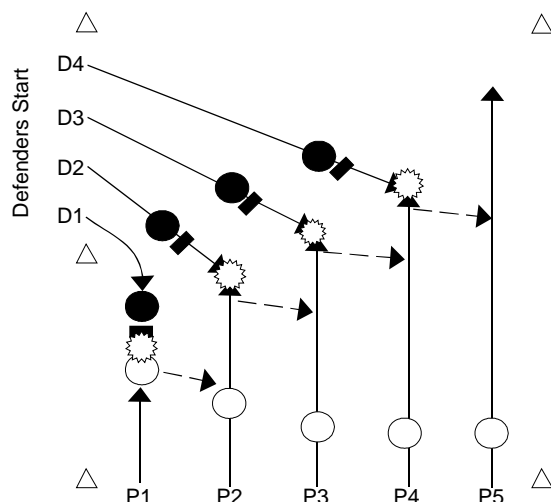
8 Players (4 at each starting point and 4 in transfer group) , Approx 40m X 15m Channel, 8 Markers, 4 Footballs

- Position 4 players PA, PB, PC, PD on the side of the channel, these players are distributors and each has a football (the above diagram only shows 3)
- The transfers group is positioned as a group of 4 and their positioning is critical
- The transfer group moves down the channel
- PA passes to P1 who makes a quick lateral pass to P2
- P2 makes an inside pass to P3 who passes the ball back to PA (the diagram shows the pass from P3 going to no one however as the players are moving forward P3 will be almost opposite PA)
- The drill continues from the opposite side with PB passing the ball to P1

## Points

- A high level of ball skills is required to perform this drill correctly

# Arresting The Slide



## Setting

5 attackers and 4 defenders with pads, Approx 15m X 15m,  
4 hit pads, 5 markers, 1 football

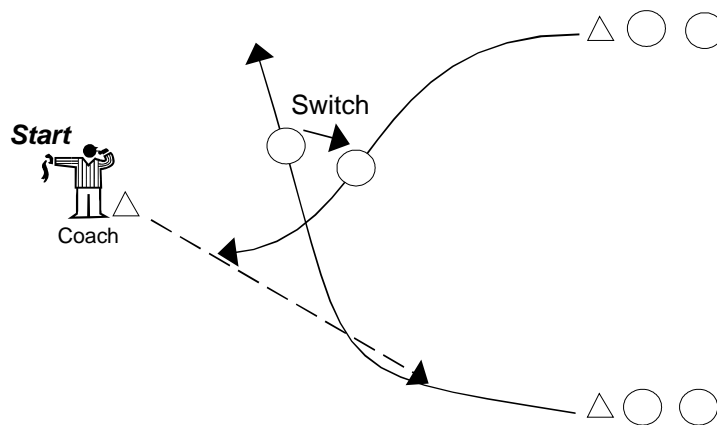
- A draw and pass drill designed to teach players to fix a defender before passing the ball
- Position attackers and defenders with hit pads on the marked grid as shown
- The attacker nearest to the defender starts the drill with the football
- On the start signal the attackers move down the grid and the attacker in possession runs towards the inside shoulder of the first defender, when close he passes the ball and then proceeds to 'take out' the defender
- The new attacker now in possession does the same movement with the next defender and the drill continues down the line
- The aim of the drill is for each defender to be effectively fixed and properly hindered for him not be in a position to get near the attacker who has the overlap

## Points

- Rotate players are each exercise between defender and attacker and also in an anti clockwise rotation

# “Who Switches”

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## Setting

3 Players Minimum, 10m Triangle, 3-4 Markers, 1-2 Footballs

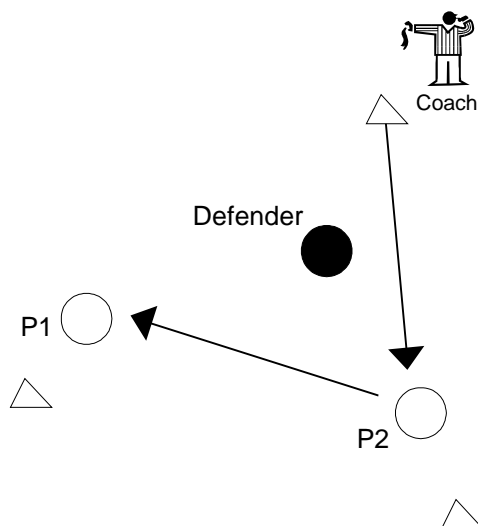
- A switch pass drill with a difference
- Players form pairs and position themselves on markers which are set 10 metres apart
- The coach is positioned on a marker in front of the players and should have 1 or 2 footballs
- On the coach's command the first pair move forward
- The coach passes the ball to either player
- When the receiver catches the ball both players must react and work a switch
- The coach can be used as a stationary defender
- The ball is returned to the coach after the switch has been performed

## Points

- Position another marker 10 metres behind the coach, players must accelerate and perform 1 standard pass before the marker
- Allow players to perform dummy switches
- Coach can hold the pass or pass the ball early to any of the players running lines

# 2 on 1

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## Setting

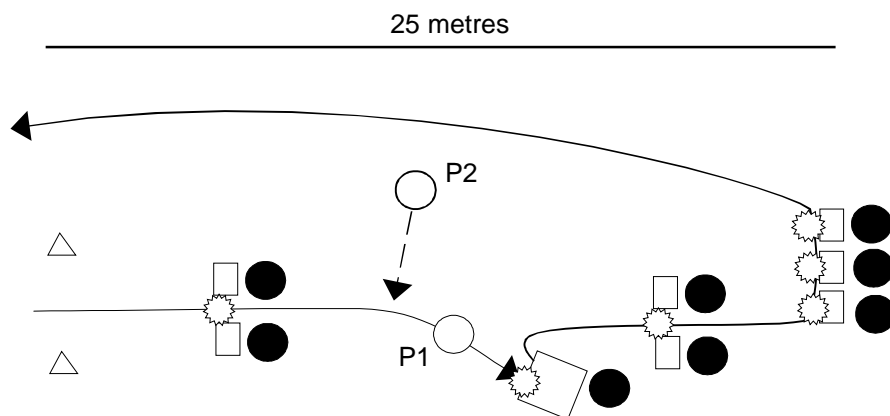
3-4 Players Minimum, 10m Triangle, 3 Markers, 1 Football

- Set markers out approx 10 metres apart in a triangle pattern
- Drill is designed to be performed at full pace
- The coach positions himself on one of the markers
- The players form two groups and are positioned on the remaining two markers
- One player is nominated as the marker
- P1 and P2 move off in the direction of the coach, the coach immediately passes the ball to one of the players
- The defender must attempt to shut down the attack by performing a two handed tag on the player in possession of the football
- Off-side passes are permitted, as players are encouraged to move and find space

## Points

- Add another defender to make it a 2 v 2 situation, a larger area will be required

# Breaking The Defence



## Setting

10 Players Minimum, Approx 15m X 25m Channel,  
7 Hit Pads, 1 Tackle Bag, 2 Markers, 1-3 Football

- Set up equipment as shown in diagram
- P1 runs out from the start position and into a contact situation with the first two pad holders
- After busting through he then receives a pass from P2 and moves towards the tackle bag
- Using well balanced technique he hits and spins away from the bag and then with the ball held close to the chest the player proceeds to bust through the next two pads
- The player then aims and with a lesser degree of contact hits the pads off centre and rolls out
- P1 returns to the start area popping a pass to P2 who regains possession the commence the next exercise

## Points

- Coach should emphasise the importance of ball carry whilst in traffic and ball security in the tackle area
- Players should receive pass from both left and right sides



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