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Defence

By Glenn Bayliss - Level 3 ARL Coach

For a team to have a formidable defence, the defence must be “proactive” not “reactive”. That is, ensure that the team “controls” the opposition when they have possession of the football instead of reacting to what the opposition does in attack. Remember, the opposition will have the football for about 50% of the game. What they do with it in that time is up to the defence!

Principles Of Defence

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 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.
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

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 Of 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.
- b) **Balance**
Be able to react to the unexpected, moving quickly

Good defence depends on each player making correct decisions

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.

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with control. Without balance, a tackle loses its power.

- 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

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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 constantly review his team's defence performance, identify and correct any errors that occur.

Some common errors are:-

- The defensive line becomes too short.
- An individual player moving up and out of the line too fast.
- An individual player moving up too slow.
- A player being drawn across field leaving space inside.
- Tired or lazy players not drifting to cover space on the inside of a "sliding" defence.
- 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.
- Players marking space instead of players.

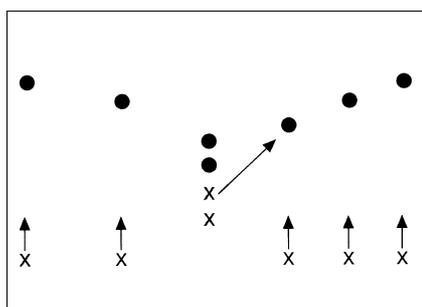
3. Marker Defence

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.

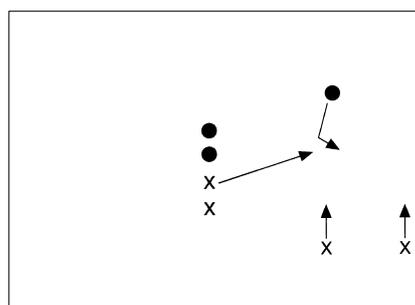
It is important to realise that all markers systems have their advantages and disadvantages. You, as coach, must adapt the system that best compliments your team.

No matter which system is used it is important that the following occur:

- Markers are on their feet before the tackled player.
- Communication between markers and between markers and "tight" forwards in defensive line.
- Markers do not anticipate the acting half pass and leave too early allowing exploitation of the area behind the ruck (ie. tight spot).
- One marker chases, one marker holds, waits, fills defensive line.



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.



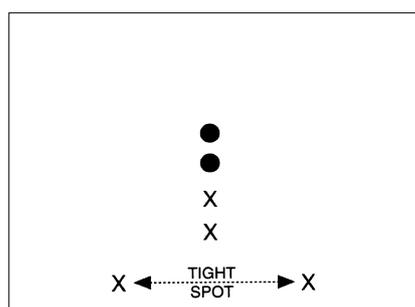
Above all, markers must maintain their CONCENTRATION.

4. Positional Play in the Line

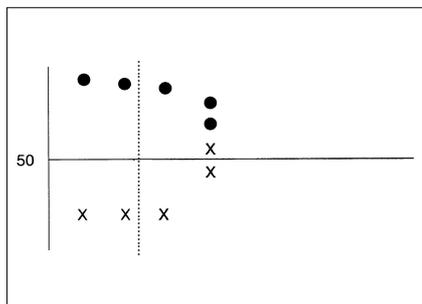
Your team should have a regimented defensive line with each player knowing his position as well as his defence assignment.

(a) Play the Ball

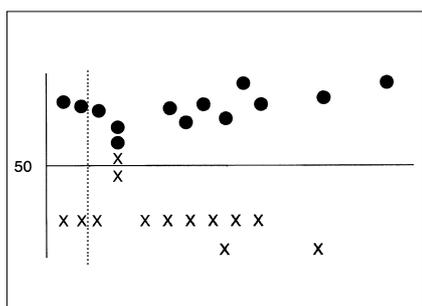
Once the marker defence is in place ensure that the two players on each side of the play the ball, commonly called "posts", understand their responsibility to guard the area behind the ruck (tight spot).



The next objective is to “equalise” the short side. 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.



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.



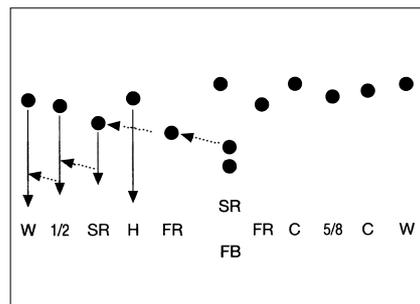
(b) Scrums

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

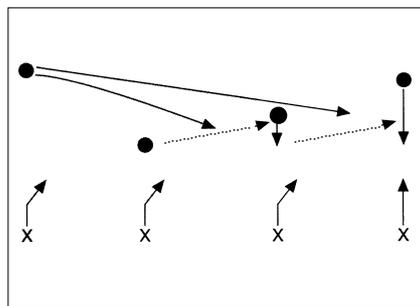
quicker players if your opponent’s attack back to where the scrum was packed.



(c) Drifting

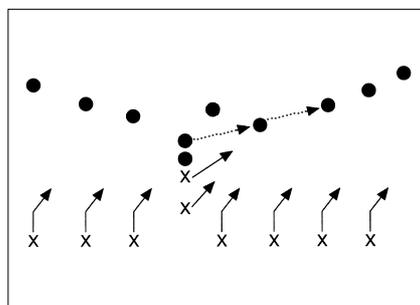
(i) Individual Drift

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.



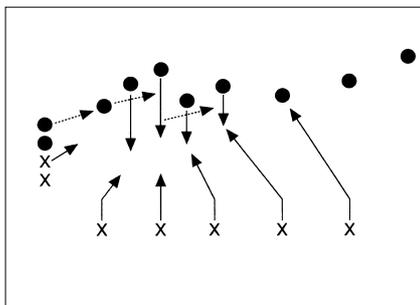
(ii) Shortside Drift

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.



(iii) Longside Drift

If the defence line is to be attacked on the fringe 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) 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.

Communication and Understanding

Successful defence depends on each player making correct decisions. This decision making process is enhanced by good coaching and communication so as the player can:

1. Identify the problem
2. Decide on the correct action to take
3. Have the skill to execute that action

To assist this process, communication is paramount and should occur when:

1. Equating numbers each side of the ruck
2. (between) Markers and “tight spot” players in the line
3. Identifying (nominating) the player you are going to tackle
4. Giving encouragement to fellow players especially when they become fatigued.

Conditioning, Commitment and Attitude

(a) Conditioning

Improved conditioning of your team leads to:-

- ~ increased work rate
- ~ faster player reactions
- ~ increased enjoyment
- ~ lower error rate
- ~ good self feeling

(b) Commitment

Players respond to both a challenge and encouragement. Statistics sheets can be useful motivational tools if used correctly. Remember, missed tackles have more affect on the game than the actual number of tackles.

Offer praise to players with high work rates as well as those that make quality tackles or the tackles that really count in desperate situations.

(c) Attitude

Players must have a positive attitude in defence with assignments to achieve. These are:-

- ~ moving forward and ~ attacking the opposition attack
- ~ by reaching the advantage line to
- ~ gain ground while in defence ~ so as to
- ~ exert pressure ~ and
- ~ force errors ~ to
- ~ win back possession ~ and
- ~ control the game.

Above all remember - “There is attack in defence”

ATTACK IN BOTH!!!

Club & Coach Development

By Don Oxenham
ARL Level 4 Coach

Traditionally Junior Rugby League Clubs assume their role to provide an outlet to young players to enjoy a sport in a fun, friendly, environment. However with the advancement of rugby league as a professional sport there are many players who now look to the game as a career in their sporting life.

These players together with those who still only want to be involved for the enjoyment now expect to be properly taught and coached during their junior playing days when the foundation for their future is laid.

The National Coaching Accreditation Scheme endeavours to educate people as coaches and prepare them adequately to perform their role. Players gain considerable enjoyment out of being able to perform their individual skills to the best of their ability.

Players therefore expect that their coach has the knowledge and expertise with the skills of the game and the ability to pass this information on to them. Coaches must accept this responsibility and be prepared to apply themselves to their task in junior coaching.

Coaches will also gain a considerable amount of satisfaction in knowing that they have contributed in some way to the development of a player particularly if that player achieves a high level of performance.

Junior player development

I would like to divert some attention to the junior club coaching situation. At the moment many clubs broadly consist of a number of teams with coaches working solely for the benefit of their individual team to perform and in some cases to win a premiership.

This structure must be questioned as to its value in the development of players and I would propose that clubs look toward a unified player development program.

There needs to be a greater emphasis on individual player development in the early mini-football, mod league years with coaches fulfilling a more responsible role to the individual.

A player development program within the club would see the club coaching structure geared toward the overall development of a player through a coaching syllabus with the aim of producing more complete and skilful players at the end of their junior playing career. This type of program commences in mini football with a progression and advancement of skill as players move through the grades. The program should be structured to provide a full educational experience with a definite purpose and not a fragmented one moving from year to year without a sound progression in the type of activities appropriate to the age group.

Players who perform better will develop more confidence, a higher self esteem and image which in turn enhances their learning, and development as a person. Adopting and implementing a player development program requires a number of considerations and obviously a lot of work.

Identifying a coaching syllabus

The first step in this program is to develop a teaching syllabus which means identifying what needs to be taught and coached for each age group from Under seven to Under 17 years.

If we look at Under seven in mini-football the emphasis will be on basic motor skill movement patterns of individual techniques. These techniques would be related to the mini-football game and include the major ones of passing, running in possession, play the ball, catching a ball and tackling. Coaching would be confined to the understanding of the basic playing of the game.

Teaching the basic techniques (skills) can be achieved through technique drills, practice drills and small sided games. These should be carried out in a sound and enjoyable environment to enhance learning, so that players develop a good feel for the game and the movements.

As players progress through mini-football they continue to practice technique movement patterns advancing their performance at a rate of which they are capable.

Players education should continue through mod-league again exposing players to the skills associated with this game, gradually adding practice pressure as the game rules dictate.

As players move through their junior grades with a good sound basic skill performance acquired in mini-football they can be subjected to more instruction and coaching pressure drills that develop and refine techniques, team skills and playing the game.

When individual skills progress to a very competent stage of development they then need to be incorporated into advanced and mental skills which include vision and anticipation. Both of these are necessary in educating players, so as to coach them in reading play and decision making.

Junior International Laws players would also be developing and training the physical aspects, necessary following an introduction in their early years and again progressing through to their older junior grades and their impending senior grades.

Coaching appointments

A key element to this type of program is the correct matching of coaches to the appropriate age group, meaning a coach is appointed to a particular age group because of his ability at that level and not for some other reason of being associated with good teams or players.

The club should screen coaches applications and match up coaches to teams based on a set of criteria which might include:-

- * a persons ability to manage children
- * an understanding of a child's ability and performance level
- * a knowledge of the game at that age
- * having a philosophy consistent with that of the game
- * knowledge of individual skills
- * knowledge of playing the game
- * understanding of children's maturity, growth and development

All of these points should be considered when matching a coach to a team, as well as the interpersonal skills a person may have.

The early years of a players involvement with the game requires mostly teaching which is another skill required for these coaches.

Club Coaching Directors

The appointment of these people requires a good deal of thought and consideration but it is important to have someone in this role to ensure the development program is put into place, run effectively and properly administered.

A Coaching Director's role should be clearly defined with an associated job description giving direction to the implementation of the player development plan.

Their main task is the supervision of all club coaches, supplying information, direction and ensuring coaches perform all of their duties in the best interests of the players and their development. It is preferable that they not be directly involved with team coaching allowing them the time to remain in constant contact with all their coaches.

A Coaching Director's role includes:

- * assisting club coaches to develop training session programs
- * ensuring training session programs are properly implemented
- * monitoring individual player development
- * educating coaches
- * assessing coaches reports on games etc
- * conducting coaches meetings/updates

The implementation of this type of program depends entirely on the decision of the club. This brief outline of the concept given here will hopefully encourage clubs to consider a junior player development program giving a structure with a positive outcome to their club coaching .

There are more details, too numerous to mention here, associated with such a program but all of the coaching information is available in some form through the many books, manuals, magazines, bulletins and articles.

The success of such a program requires the co-operation of all concerned to work together in the best interest of their club, their players and the game of Rugby League.

Implementation of the Junior Player Development Programme

By Don Oxenham

Having proposed the Junior Player Development Programme, as outlined in a previous edition “*Rugby League Coaching Magazine*”. (refer Book 2). A broad outline of a coaching syllabus was designed to be implemented at club level.

The outline to provides coaches with some guidelines within which to develop their own training programmes in the total education and development of players in their junior playing career.

The intention of that programme is to produce more skilful players with a wider range of skills, together with a better understanding of play as they move toward the senior grades.

The presentation of the Development Programme is the responsibility of coaches who, in turn must plan each training session into a yearly programme, with the aim of playing their role in the players development. The following suggestions are only a brief resume of the material available and coaches should source as much as possible to assist in their session programming.

Coaching is an art which requires an understanding on how to achieve results. Past experience has shown that some coaching has not achieved the correct results. The use of drills, practices and games has become widespread but the questions to be asked in relation to their use are:-

- (a) Are they being properly used as a coaching method or do they become an activity with no effective benefit for the players
- (b) Are they appropriate to the age group and the result the coach wishes to achieve.
- (c) Are they being correctly presented and performed by the players.

Coaches must understand the purpose of the drills and games being used and they must coach the players during the performance of them. Before the drills will become effective and efficient players must first be familiar with their function. As they become proficient

the coach can then perform their role of correcting individual errors in technique and gradually increase the expectation from the players performance.

It is the intention now to expand on the Junior Player Development Programme by presenting appropriate drills for teaching various skills at different ages and level of ability.

Drills are a teaching method providing an environment for players in which to learn in. The success of any drill or practice will depend on the ability of the coach to perform their role of identifying errors of performance, then to successfully advise the player, provide the correct information and supervise the performance.

‘Appropriate methods of teaching will be described during subsequent editions of the Coaching Magazine.’ The first part of the junior coaching syllabus, **handling**, will be presented here with subsequent issues dealing with other skills.

**As a coach you
must be wanting
to improve
yourself all the
time**

Developing Handling Skills

(2) PIN DRILLS

SETTING: Channel 5-8m, 4-8 players per group, 2 balls per group.



Coaches pass a football to P1 and P4
as they move forward.

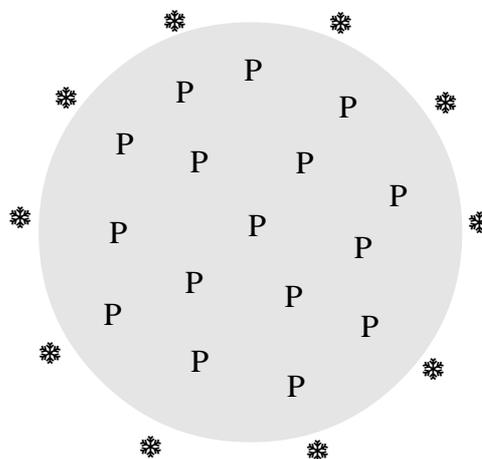
P's return the ball to Coach at other end and move to the end
of the line.

Coach then passes to P2 and P5.

PROGRESSION: As players improve, introduce difficult passes
from coach e.g. low pass, high pass, ball passed at toes, ball rolled
along ground.

(3) SPACE & PLAYER AWARENESS (Handling Activity)

SETTING: Circle, to 7.5 m diameter, 10 markers, 1 football for each player.



All players inside the circle.

Players moving around at random are to avoid colliding with one another by using their ability to see 'off' the ball.

The ball can be thrown high, bounced or dribbled along the ground with the feet.

Players move about the circle at pace with eyes fixed firmly on the ball.

(4) Free running in a grid approx. 10m X 10m passing a football to any player in the grid.

(5) Add some pressure by players free running in a grid, of appropriate size, and counting the number of passes that can be made in thirty seconds.

Developing Handling Skills

Sub Skill - Picking up a football

Game Stage - Mini-footy / Mod-league

Development of this skill can be achieved by practising the technique in Pin Drills and Relays as outlined previously with the emphasis on correct technique particularly

- Hand and leg positions
- Co-ordination of hand, eyes, body-to-ball
- Approach action
- Hand scoop action

Sub Skill Falling on a Football

Game Stage Mini-footy / Mod-league

Technique points:

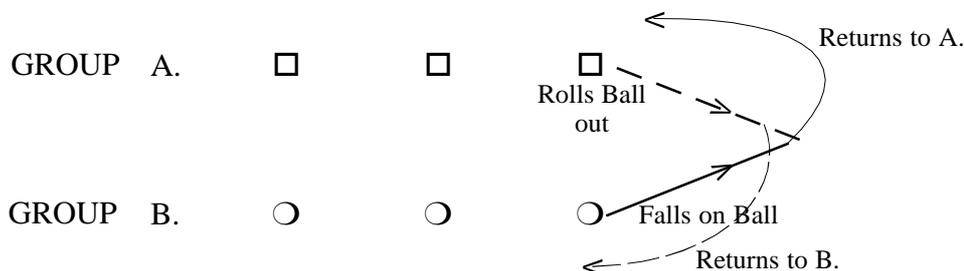
- lean forward from waist
- approach ball (slightly) from side
- extend forearm furthest from ball
- forearm closest to the ball, bent at elbow and held parallel to chest
- lower leg closest to ball to ground, so that-
- calf, thigh then hip contact ground
- extended forearm is placed beyond ball
- arm, shoulder and chest wrap around ball
- pull head and knees together, curling up.

Progressive: * kneeling on one leg * jogging

FALLING ON THE LOOSE BALL

(i) Four players to a group. Player 1 throws the ball out in front 4-6 metres. The player chases the ball and falls on it. Once the ball is under control he immediately regains his feet and pass to player 2 who does the same and the drill continues.

(ii) 3 players line up in single file - group A, leading player has the ball - another 3 players line up in single file - group B to the right of group A. The player with ball from group A rolls the ball out in front of himself and the leading player in group B runs out and falls on the ball. The player regains his feet and passes to the next player in group A. The original A players goes to the end of group B.



(iii) Use two mini fields (i.e. 20m X 10m) with 6 players in each 3 per team. The attackers attempt to score by dribbling the ball over the oppositions line. The only way they can lose possession is by their opponents falling cleanly on the ball as it is dribbled or passed along the ground. If this occurs, the possession then changes hands and the game proceeds.

Keep rotating the players so as to have many combinations.

Practice emphasises control on dribbling as well as correct technique, when falling on a loose ball, and the importance of this skill.

Developing Handling Skills

Sub Skill - Catching a Football

Game Stage - Mini-footy /Mod-league /Juniors

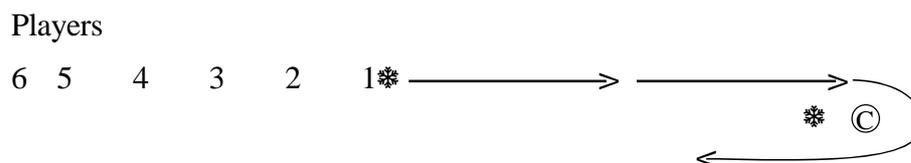
Use of simple drills to practice this skill with emphasis on correct technique. The earlier players are exposed to these techniques the better it will be for their development.

Key Points of Technique:

- eyes on ball
- body position
- legs spread
- arms cradled

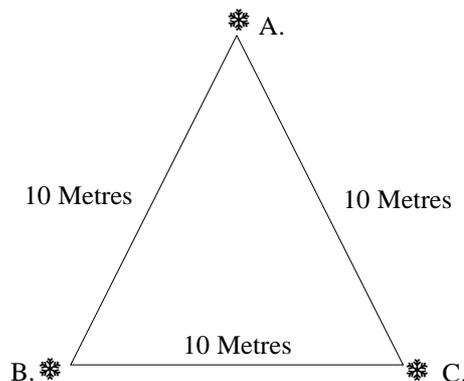
(1) CATCHING A HIGH BALL

Coach throws the ball to player 1 who catches it on his chest initially with feet on the ground and then by jumping high. Players then run around the coach passing ball back as they go.



(2) PRESSURE TRIANGLE

Use 4 players, have 2 at station A



- A, B and C are triangularly positioned 10 metres apart.
- A throws ball high to B who attempts to catch it cleanly. A meantime runs towards B and harasses that player as the ball is caught. A remains in B's position.
- B then throws the ball high to C and runs to harass that player, and stays in C's position.
- C after catching the ball runs to position A and continues the drill.

To achieve the development of this skill the drills can be progressed with the ball being thrown higher as the players become more proficient. More pressure can be applied by harassing players moving up quicker on the catcher.

Developing Handling Skills

Sub Skill - Scoring a Try

Game Stage - Mini-footy/Mod-league/Juniors

The ball is cradled high on the chest with one arm. The other arm is outstretched and the forearm is used, along with the upper chest and ball, to “plane” the body along the ground.

Technique Points:

- (a) lean forward, with upper body low
- (b) adopt a low, sliding action
- (c) slide in on outstretched forearm, chest and ball
- (d) keep head up
- (e) ball security
- (f) falling safely
- (g) slide

Progressive Practice:

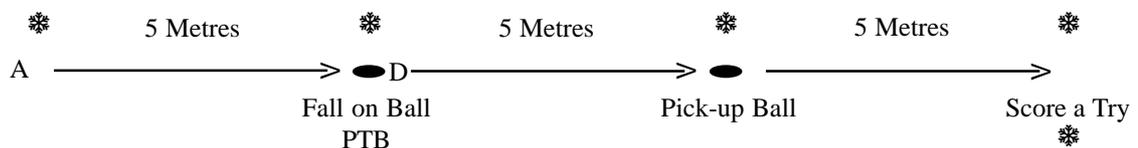
- * kneeling
- * crouched, push forward
- * jogging

(1) FALL ON BALL - PLAY THE BALL - PICK UP A BALL - SCORE A TRY

SETTING: A channel approximately 15 X 5 m, 5 markers, 2 footballs

Players run through and perform each of the following:

- (a) **Fall** on stationary ball
- (b) From the ground position, **Play the ball**
- (c) **Pick up** stationary ball
- (d) **Score a try**



Coaches are encouraged to construct their own drills to suit their own needs. Search out current resources to help in this preparation. As a coach you must be wanting to improve yourself all the time - be prepared to improve - what you have used in the past may have been successful but that doesn't mean it cannot be improved on or that it was necessarily correct.

NOTES

Motivation and Performance

PART ONE

By Vic Mellors - Sports Fitness & Motivational Psychologist

Since age fifteen, when I read my first Rugby League magazine, I have witnessed time and time again, the huge wastage of money by Rugby League clubs in buying players to build and mould premierships teams. Through my own experience as a lower grade player in Brisbane during the seventies, I saw players languishing in the lower grades who could have played good football and saved their club a lot of expense. Unfortunately, the potential of these players was never identified or maximised and a common characteristic was that the big name imports got paid but often never performed.

The aim of these articles which will be serialised over the next four editions, is to give a clear message to coaches at all levels that personality and individual differences have an important and fundamental role in achieving maximum performance in their Rugby League players.

This article will deal with those characteristics that in my opinion contribute to the success or failure of a Rugby League team. The second part will deal with how the biological foundations of personality contribute to the motivation and performance of each player.

The final two parts will deal with the application of certain cognitive — behavioural principles to help coaches develop a winning culture in their Rugby League teams.

In the modern game, the changes in the rules and the physical demands of the game mean that a player has to adopt a philosophy that is not only based on technical skills and physical ability but also one of extreme psychological resilience. The rule changes have made the game faster, more physically demanding and more susceptible to pressure and making mistakes. In semi-finals, it's not just fitness and skill, but mostly, the psychological ability for a team to absorb pressure.

Consequently the psychological characteristics and philosophy of the modern game player should be based on personal autonomy. Shown in *Figure 1* over page are the three factors that contribute to the performance of the Rugby League team i.e. the technical, physical and psychological. These parameters are clearly defined but they must work in unison for a team to be successful during the season.

The first stage of this paper is to discuss the characteristics of both a successful and unsuccessful

team and to explain the notion of “autonomous behaviour”. The idea of this approach is to stipulate that Rugby League is not an “emotional” game but an “intellectual” one. I hear football commentators and coaches say the Rugby League is all about emotion. As a former fitness trainer with a number of football clubs, I have seen first hand the disastrous consequences that can occur from a rugby league team that has been too emotional and “psyched up” before a game.

Emotion when used at the right time of a football match can be turned into “positive drive” or motivation. It should be used to intensify such things as hard tackles or strong running at a time that psychologically demoralises the opposition. Emotion at the wrong time of a football match can make a Rugby League side scattered intellectually and thus riddled with mistakes. It can place the opposition team in a very advantageous position early in the match by allowing a big lead to be consolidated and thus damaging the self confidence of the side.

KEY PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS FOR SUCCESS IN RUGBY LEAGUE PERFORMANCE

There are three things that contribute to a successful Rugby League team: Persistence, Concentration and Discipline. Persistence is a psychological trait that can develop from physical fitness and endurance. Concentration and Discipline develop from persistence.

These three psychological factors can arise through a new form of psychological therapy called Autonomy Training. Autonomous behaviour is “The ability to regulate one’s behaviour independent of other people and objects under tough circumstances”. In Rugby League terms: “doing your job” along with your team mates in a football game.

This is a cognitive-behavioural approach designed to teach players to take control of their environment and to remain focused on the task at hand. The idea is to control emotions and be intellectual and avoid wasting unnecessary energy. An emotional team will become scattered in the first ten minutes and miss tackles and fumble balls. The idea is to teach Rugby League players to be ‘calm, deadly and focused and to control emotion.’

What leads to motivation and success is winning. Whilst winning is not the focus in junior coaching, it is at the senior level. Success through winning, breeds motivation and confidence in a rugby league player. Losing is detrimental to both the team and the player’s motivation and confidence. Success through winning on the playing field breeds optimism. Optimism contributes to how the team will do under pressure and how much they feel in control of the opposition. Losing contributes to learned helplessness in a football team i.e. a belief that they can never win and take control of their opposition. Listed are the traits of a successful team.

THE SUCCESSFUL TEAM IN RUGBY LEAGUE

S - ense of direction:

The team and each player has goals.

U - nderstanding:

The team and each player knows each others playing style

C - ourage:

The team has the strength to confront problems and persist.

C - harity:

To be a champion team not a team of champions.

E - steem:

Each player in the team likes himself and never punishes his person when things go wrong.

S - elf Confidence:

To have faith in your own and the team’s playing ability.

S - elf Acceptance:

To accept that if a football game is not going your way that you and the team can still succeed.

THE FAILURE MECHANISM FOR AN UNSUCCESSFUL RUGBY LEAGUE TEAM

F - rustration:

Not staying cool and calm in difficult situations during a game.

A - ggressiveness:

(Misdirected) emotionality and physical energy.

I - nsecurity:

When a player or a team loses confidence in their skills and ability.

L - earned Helplessness:

When a player or a team starts to believe Whethat they can never win. Defeat is expected.

U - ncertainty:

When players start to lose faith in both themselves and their team mates and become doubtful or unsure about containing and beating their opposition.

R - esentment:

When a team or its players lack physical, technical and psychological commitment to put the hard work into both their training and ultimately into a football game.

E - motion:

Over-reacting to difficult and frustrating periods during a football game instead of staying calm, deadly and focused. In other words, staying intellectual.

These traits result in:-

Learned helplessness (feelings of hopelessness/lack of control and predictability during football games).

Self-fulfilling prophecy, cycles of self defeating thoughts, feelings, emotions and behaviours which cause us to fail e.g. “I missed that tackle, I’m not good enough”, “I can never improve my game or play well”, “We’ll never win”, “We have never won at Suncorp Stadium”. You start to believe these statements. Self-fulfilling prophecy makes failure certain. It creates a self image of unworthiness, incompetence, inferiority and a belief that you have no right to succeed, or enjoy the better things in life.

Using The Field

By Don Oxenham ARL Level 4 Coach

Field sizes vary, depending on the age groups. As we are aware the development of the modified games included changes to field dimensions to suit the age of players and their capabilities. How many coaches take into account the field size in their broad coaching considerations.

What effect does the field size have? e.g. in junior football skill techniques are taught and practised to ensure good sound co-ordination of movements for good performance, is this put into perspective with the field size to play the game?

It is at this stage that players should also be learning the use of these techniques in space. The involvement of skill drills with limited space to work in has been a positive gain. Coaches should encourage their players to play in the set grid sizes as this will teach them to perform in a defined area.

This can be related to playing the game when space is confined and defined so that instead of players running around in circles looking for space to run into, they should be encouraged and taught to create space for their support players in attack or confine space for the opposition in defence.

When considering the size of the field and how to use it is useful to look at a number of issues.

(a) The Action of Rugby League

Understanding the action of the game will give an appreciation of a complete concept of making use of the field and put into perspective the need to coach the game with the space available.

The action of Rugby League can be likened to two armies with an imaginary line (the advantage line) drawn between them. One side of the line is on-side and one side of the line is off-side which effectively means when a team is in possession they must play behind the ball at all times. With this action the primary aim of the game is to score tries.

The challenge of the game is to score tries through attack and prevent tries through defence. This simple action of rugby league allows a freedom of coaching available to all coaches of the game.

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(b) The field is 69m wide - how do you use it?

In using the width of the field in attack the first principle of attack 'go forward' should be adhered to, and kept in mind.

The narrowness of the field can be seen when a team lines out to cover all possible spaces, but it is more evident in attack when you see players running across field and ultimately finish near the sideline and out of space in which to work.

Educating players to make use of the field area has a component of mental training which for young players can be as simple as making them aware of

the area and space in which they work. The successful use of the width of the field requires repetition of playing the game with available space in mind.

An individual player who has the ball in attack has many options available to progress the ball forward.

Players need to be conscious of the need to 'go forward' and to be able to create space for their support.

When attacking a team has to:-

- (1) at times move across field to out pace a line of defence
- (2) straighten the movement and go forward
- (3) reverse play by use of well practised movements *eg* scissors movements

All of these situations can be used to make full use of the width of the field but they must be practised until team work is developed to such a degree of efficiency that players know each others actions and movements instinctively.

Remember, the field is only 69m wide which is narrow when players run across field and no one straightens the movement.

The Pathway to Success

In Rugby League, as in all aspects of life, it is important to set yourself goals if you are looking to reach the top level. Whether sporting or personal, goals are simply something that you personally set yourself and then work to achieve. Some examples of Personal Goals would be:

WHAT DO I WANT TO BECOME?

WHERE DO I WANT TO BE?

WHAT DO I WANT TO DO?

As a young sportsman you should set goals for all different things in life:

- For your school work;
- For your job or career; and
- For your football career.

* **Remember** — The people most likely to achieve what they want have set themselves goals.

There are three (3) types of goals worth considering if you are looking to achieve your potential as a rugby league player.

1. LONG TERM GOALS

These can often be dreams that you have, so don't be afraid to aim high.

Example 1 Don't settle for playing 1st Grade with your club if you think you are capable of representing Australia.

Example 2 Don't settle for Australian Representation, why not aim to be Captain of the team.

* **But remember** — The bigger the Goal, the more effort will be required to fulfil it.

Long Term Goals can be a long way into the future, say 2-5 or 5-10 years.

2. INTERMEDIATE TERM GOALS

These are what we call the "Testing Goals", to make sure you are on track to reaching your ultimate Long Term Goal.

There are goals which you would want to achieve in say 1 to 5 years time.

Example At 15 years of age your LTG may be to represent Australia in the year 2003. Two Intermediate Goals might be

1. To make U16 Representative side in 1998.
2. To be selected for your state side 1999 .

3. SHORT TERM GOALS

These revolve around your immediate plans, what am I going to achieve this year, this month, this week, today. Short Term Goals provide us with the nuts and bolts of our achievement pathway and therefore should cover all areas of your preparation for rugby league.

Short Term Goals should be set for all physical aspects of the game, fitness, speed, strength and agility. They should incorporate skill improvement, as well as outside influences such as diet and mental preparation.

Some examples of Short Term Goals for a 15 year old player would be:

- Example*
- 1 This year to improve upper body strength.
 - 2 This month to improve 40 metre sprint time.
 - 3 This week to improve consistency of left side pass.
 - 4 To think of something daily that will improve my game.

REACHING YOUR GOALS

All young players will run into "obstacles" whilst trying to achieve goals which have been set. In Rugby League, things such as injury and illness or loss of form at selection time are examples of obstacles which you may run into.

When you do hit an "obstacle" (and you will), it's a matter of not giving up, but re-assessing the situation, setting bench marks, that will get you back on track to achieving what you wanted to in the first place.

All the great Rugby League players of the past had to overcome hurdles to reach their Long Term Goals, and you have got to be prepared to do the same.

There are only two (2) options in life:

- 1) Things you can control
- 2) Things you can't control

Concentrate on controlling what you can control, and under no circumstances forget what you can achieve.

GOAL SETTING SUMMARY

- Goals help you to achieve what you want.
- Don't be afraid to aim high.
- Write your goals down and don't be afraid to share your ambitions with others.
- Think of your goals daily
- The best time to think of your goals is just before commencing something to do with your goal each day.
- Test your goals
 - Are you improving in areas you wish to improve?
 - Are you really achieving your Short Term Goals?
- Review your goals
 - When you achieve your goals or run into obstacles, re-think and set yourself some new ones.

MY GOALS

Write down some personal goals, that you wish to achieve:

1. Long Term Goal:

_____ (Remember, these are for about 2 - 10 years into the future)
(Aim High if you want!)

Date you want to reach goal by: _____

** PURPOSE: Why do you want to achieve this goal? _____

2. Intermediate Goals:

_____ (Make this something within the next 2 years)

Date you want to reach goal by: _____

_____ (Make this something within the next 2 years)

Date you want to reach goal by: _____

3. Short Term Goals:

_____ (Make this something with this year)

Date you want to reach goal by: _____

_____ (Make this something within this year)

Date you want to reach goal by: _____

_____ (Make this something within this year)

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RLCM

3 Andrews Street,
Southport, QLD, AUST. 4215
Phone: (07) 5591 1430
Fax: (07) 5591 6623
Website: www.rlcm.com.au
Email: rlcm@rlcm.com.au

Publisher

Gary Roberts

Circulation Manager

Keith Hookway

Contributors

Glenn Bayliss
Don Oxenham
Vic Mellors

Production

Reagan Roberts

Photographer

Ian Thompson

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