

# Coach the Coaches!



**Strategies and advice for first time Teachers and Coaches to survive and thrive in Mini and Junior Rugby!**

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# Key considerations.....

## COACH THE COACHES INITIATIVE

### KEY COACHING POINTS WHEN DEALING WITH YOUNG PLAYERS:

In order to become a successful coach not only do you need a sound practical knowledge of the sport but also key skills in the way in which it is delivered.

These are:

Organisational skills

Communication skills

Observational skills

Evaluation skills

The document is intended to give coaches with little or no experience of dealing with young players the necessary skills to introduce rugby to them, after all it is no good having all the coaching ideas in the world if you cannot introduce them in a fun and enjoyable way.



# Key considerations.....

The first area to look at is — ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS.

Each session must be planned, for this to occur you need as a coach to find out the :

Groups abilities and needs.

i.e. is this the first time they have been introduced to the game, have they been playing for a couple of year's etc. As a general rule plan your session to meet the needs of the player with the least experience, you can always set more challenging tasks for those with more experience. This is called mixed ability teaching / coaching and is something that improves with experience.

## Time available.

*i.e.* do you just have one school lesson / week or is it at the junior section of a club where time is a little more flexible. Remember always allow time for the collection of equipment and setting up of equipment etc.

Remember don't over do it young players do not need 2 hour training sessions!



# Key considerations.....

## **Available resources and equipment.**

Check what resources you have beforehand i.e number of balls, cones, pads, etc. If resources allow try and have different sized balls to suit / match skill levels.

## **Facilities available.**

i.e. do you have the pitch to yourself, do you have a pitch!!! Do all the players have boots etc. Where possible use a place away from other groups using the same location so they do not form a distraction.

## **The purpose / aim of the session.**

Always plan your session with an aim, whether it is a continuation of the last session or things that need improving after the weekend game etc. If it is the first session you should use this to analyse the groups overall playing ability.

## **Select relevant drills.**

Ensure that the drills and the session are challenging enough to keep them interested but not so difficult that they cannot achieve success.

Once the session is planned you should now look to PREPARE the session to do this you need to:



# Key considerations.....

## **Arrive early.**

Check out the working area, set out cones, check equipment etc

Ensure equipment is safe.

Always have a contingency plan.

i.e. in case of bad weather, a change in numbers or that the drills are too easy / difficult.

During the RUNNING of the session itself there are several key points that will make your life easier:

## **Your communication skills.**

See later in handout



# Key considerations.....

## **Organisation of the equipment.**

This often causes more problems than the session itself, where possible try and get as much set up before the session has started and don't be afraid to get the players to help with the collection or moving of equipment.

Always ensure that the unused equipment is well away from the playing area.

## **Organisation of people / groups.**

The first thing that should be done at the start of every session is to count the number of participants. A lot of the drills use specific numbers or require a certain amount of groups, by counting the players initially you should then automatically be working out how best to split the groups.



# Key considerations.....

Often the actual process of getting into groups / teams is very disruptive and there are some strategies that can make a coaches life easier when doing this:

Never ask the players to get into groups of whatever number and then start explaining the drill. They will be more intent on trying to get with their friends than listen to you. A way around this could go something like this.....

“ When I say I am going to ask you to get into groups of a certain number, once you have done that can you line up on the try line, one behind the other with a ball at the front. Everyone understand? Ok off you go, groups of six” ..... The key phrase here is “when I say.....!” (see next page!)

When organising teams never pick two captains and ask them to pick sides. The reason for this is that very often the best players get picked first and the players who lack confidence are always left at the end, and this reinforces a lack of confidence in their own ability. What you want to achieve are two sides of equal strength without letting the players know who you feel are the strong ones. In order to do this the best way is to ask them to get with a partner, number themselves 1 and 2 then ask the number 1's for one side and the number 2's the other.



# Key considerations.....

The key phrase when organising players is “When I say ..... off you go”. The reason for this is that it is important that you control your group and they don’t begin a task until you have directed them to do so, as opposed to them dictating to you when to start. For example, “when I say, I want you in groups of three with one ball stood behind the try line in single file, does everyone understand.....? Off you go”.

After the session is finished, it is very important that you spend time ASSESSING the session while it is still fresh in your mind and try to look for ways to improve for the next session.

Once this has been done, again with it still fresh in your mind, you need to PLAN your next session looking to extend and develop skills taught in the previous session.





# Key considerations.....

In order to be an effective coach, not only do you need good organisational skills, but you also require good COMMUNICATION SKILLS. This consists of several key areas: -

Verbal Communication — the coaches ability to give clear verbal instructions is extremely important and there are four key points in this area:

Speed of delivery — don't talk too fast, it is a nervous trait when faced with a large group to talk quickly and so lead to confusion with instruction. Conversely don't talk too slowly or you may lose the attention of your players.

i) Volume of voice — the volume of your voice is a very useful weapon when coaching at any level. Try not to go in shouting and screaming, because when you do need to get the group's attention or discipline them, they won't react. It is far better to keep your voice at a reasonable level so that all players can hear and you retain your loud instructions when they are necessary. It is often useful to actually lower your voice in order that the players have to concentrate and be silent to hear the instructions. (Also lowering your height works well, crouch down and get the players to crouch down with you)

Remember very often as a coach it is you that needs to generate the enthusiasm within the group and you can only do this if you display this enthusiasm in your voice and your body language.



# Key considerations.....

Clarity of voice — again, a nervous trait is for people to put their hands over their mouths while speaking. Always make sure your voice is clear and try to avoid “nervous language” e.g. Saying “**ok**” or “**errm**” after each sentence.

Use of specialist terminology — this is very important in sports such as rugby where there are clearly defined terms. It is no good asking a player to do ‘thingy’ when you mean ‘a switch pass’. Try to get to know the basic specialist terms. It will become important when coaching the players.

Non-verbal Communication — this plays an important part in your communication with the players.

Every individual exhibits certain mannerisms when placed “centre stage.” Try to use those that will bring the right reaction from the group. Maintain eye contact “scanning” the whole group and use your body language and hand signals to control the group. For example, two hands raised high above the head, palms facing to the front, can assist with stopping and gaining the group’s attention.

Players will often pick up a lack of confidence in the coach by their body language, i.e. Not looking them in the eye and poor posture. Be confident and let them know you are in charge.



# Key considerations.....

In rugby, there are many “official” non-verbal communication skills used by referees and we will look at these later in DECISION MAKING THROUGH OFFICIATING.

Use of the whistle – make sure you have a good one! (Acme Thunderer 60.5!!)

Don't over use it and when you do - short and sharp to gain their attention

Starting the session.

At the start of each session the coach should introduce themselves to the group, if necessary, and explain the content of the session and the purpose for the content.

Communicating with individuals.

Once the session has started the coach should have the confidence to communicate with specific individuals without stopping the whole group. This requires the coach to be mobile and to constantly move around the working players, too often coaches' set up the drill and then stand back to admire it!



# Key considerations.....

## Stopping the whole group.

Often a test of a coach's control over a group is their ability to stop a group and gain their attention. When working in a noisy environment it may mean that the players need to be brought around to listen to instructions. A good strategy is to ask them to stop, come in and then start counting down from five. After one or two goes at this as soon as you say "five" you will have players running from all directions at top speed to get to you!!!

## Frequency of communication.

Most new coaches tend to be rather erratic in the amount they speak to their group, some talk too much, losing the interest of the players and some talk too little, not giving them enough information. As a rough guide:



# Key considerations.....

Welcome the group

Explain what you are going to do

Give your initial instructions (get the group active as soon as possible)

If you are giving a demonstration:

Name the skill or activity

Demonstrate it two or three times

Describe the main features

Ask for any questions

Set up the group working on the activity

Observe the group working

Give feedback

Again a point to make life easier, when delivering instructions always ask the players to put down any equipment, e.g. balls, so that they have your full concentration, as opposed to messing about with a ball.



# Key considerations.....

## Positioning

Again this is another very important coaching skill that can influence the effectiveness of the session. Always position yourself as a coach in a way that the players are not watching any activity behind your back. Always make sure their backs are to any possible distractions. Also make sure that you can see the whole group when speaking to them, don't leave anyone stood behind you or out of eyesight. Also be aware of other distractions such as bright **sunlight**.

When the group is active the coach should not spend more than a few seconds concentrating on a particular area. Try to get round the whole group on a frequent basis, looking out for individuals who may not have understood the initial instructions or may need some assistance with the instructions or session.



# Key considerations.....

**As mentioned earlier, an important part of being a rugby coach is DECISION MAKING THROUGH OFFICIATING.**

A complete knowledge of the rules is not necessary to coach at this level. However, the basic rules and refereeing hand-signals must be understood. At this level the players are looking for:

Consistency

Impartiality

**Good communication skills**

Confidence

Awareness of the 'spirit' of the game

Awareness of the safety of players

Decisiveness



# Key considerations.....

**As long as the coach strives to achieve their best in all of these areas then this will certainly assist with the running of the session.**

In conclusion, there are a lot of coaching techniques that can be used that can make a session run more effectively. Hopefully this document will have served to highlight some of these and coupled with the correct coaching drills, should serve to raise the quality of the session delivered resulting in improved levels of skill in the players coached.





# Coaching the Coaches.

1. Coaching Mini's – the basics.
2. Coaching Juniors - staying ahead and passing them on.
3. Selection decisions!
4. Involving parents.
5. Skills and drills.
6. Post match / training.
7. Tours
8. Winning and losing
9. Resources to help
10. Technical support.



# Coaching Mini's the basics.

- **Pre training organsiation – kit / cones / facilities / bibs / belts / balls (plenty.... Right size with grip!)**
- **Make everyone feel part of the ‘team’**
- **Session planning with co-coaches. Plan ‘fun’ and as many touches of the ball as possible!**
- **Begining the session.**
- **Controlling the session. 5,4,3,2,1 – get on their level**
- **”When I say..... Off you go”**
- **Positioning.**
- **Voice / tone / intonation / ENTHUSIASM!**
- **Whole / Part / Whole**
- **Session ‘flow’**
- **Finishing the session – recap.**
- **Involvment of parents “homework”**
- **Post session – enjoy the changing room and club house environments – try not to rush off**



# Coaching Juniors.

- **Challenging!**
- **Transition from Tag to contact – potential drop off.**
- **Develop safe technique – get this right in the better weather!**
- **Establish Values that give you a reference point – they fall out more and can push the boundaries. Teach and expect respect.**
- **Use 'off field' learning as well as on if you can.**
- **Stay ahead of their knowledge.**
- **Make the sessions short, sharp and with intensity. You must be well organised.**
- **Balance between variety and repetition.**
- **Make it fun but make sure they know where the line is. Respect and Teamwork are key values here.**
- **Prepare to pass them on, make a plan to link with the Seniors.**
- **Enjoy the club house atmosphere.**
- **Go on tour – take the parents and keep them involved.**

