

# The Coaching Process



## Planning

A good training programme begins with good planning. Coaches in the community game, often feel they have little or no time to plan properly. If the Plan – Do – Review process is followed consistently, the time spent planning the next session is greatly reduced in relation to the coach who makes the session up ‘on the go’.

The quality of content and delivery of the next session has a greater chance of fulfilling the requirements of both the coach and players if the planning process is followed. Players will quickly recognise a lack of preparation which is likely to undermine the player-coach relationship.

## “FAIL TO PLAN, PLAN TO FAIL”

It is important that the coach continually assesses the capabilities of the players. If the session is too challenging with limited success, or too easy with little challenge the players will lose motivation. The coach must be prepared to adapt the session to meet the needs of the players.

Your session plan should be completed in possible advance and copies given to supporting coaches and helpers, so everyone involved knows the objectives for the session and how they will be met. Each written session plan should have at least an outline of what you are trying to achieve with the players in that session.

Every session should be “APES”

1. **Active** – keep all the players involved and challenged at all times
2. **Purposeful** – ensure that there is a clear objective for each coaching session
3. **Enjoyable** – make the session varied and challenging for everyone
4. **Safe** – you are responsible for the safety of all the players in your care

The content of each session should be part of the goals for a longer programme e.g. what skills do you want the players to be competent in by the end of this season?

You should be working towards specific goals. Each session should follow on from the previous one and lead into the next (Plan – Do – Review). The type of work planned in a session should change depending on upcoming events/competitions; for example, you should plan to work on refining existing skills close to competition, and coaching new skills and tactics when you have more time.

The session should be divided up into different segments:

- Warm-up
- Recap on the previous session
- Small sided game
- Introduction of coaching points that help players to improve within the game
- Back into game, perhaps with new modification
- Progressions and further skill work
- Cool-down.

Coaches should ensure they:

- Identify where players have progressed.

- Challenge and motivate the players.
- Be flexible with each session plan: things can happen that will require you to make changes to your original plan or outcomes.
- Always evaluate the session at the end, with peers and even the players.

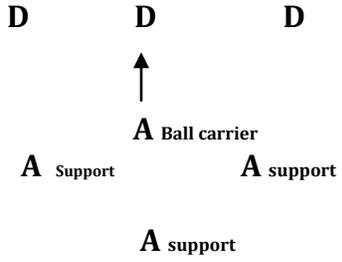
Table 2: Example of Session Planner

| <h1>Session Planner</h1>                                     |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Venue:</b>  | <b>Age group:</b><br><b>Number Attending:</b>          |
| <b>Date</b>  | <b>Start time:</b><br><b>Finish time:</b>              |
| <b>Equipment:</b>  |  |
| <b>Nearest Telephone:</b>                                    | <b>1<sup>st</sup> Aid bag:</b> YES (fully equipped)/NO |
| <b>H and S checklist completed:</b><br>YES/NO                | <b>Identified hazards and actions taken:</b>           |
| <b>Players learning from previous session:</b>               |  |
| <b>Coach's personal action points from previous session:</b> |  |
| <b>Goals for the session:</b>                                |  |
| <b>Introduction and warm-up</b>                              |  |
| <b>Main Content/Game</b>                                     | <b>Organisation/diagram</b>                            |

|                                    |                                       |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|                                    |                                       |
| <b>Ideas for Development area:</b> | <b>Diagram for activity</b>           |
| <b>End of session cool-down:</b>   |                                       |
| <b>Comments on session:</b>        | <b>Reflection on Coaching skills:</b> |

# SAMPLE - Session Planner

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Venue:</b> North Gate RFC  | <b>Age group:</b> U 17's  |
|   | <b>Number Attending:</b> 25   |
| <b>Date:</b> 11/9/11  | <b>Start time:</b> 7.00pm<br><b>Finish time:</b> 8.30pm   |
| <b>Equipment:</b><br>12 balls.<br>50 cones.   |   |
| <b>Nearest Telephone:</b><br>mobile phone in 1 <sup>st</sup> aid bag  | <b>1<sup>st</sup> Aid bag:</b><br>Yes and fully stocked   |
| <b>H and S checklist completed</b><br>YES   | <b>Identified hazards and actions taken</b><br>Scrum machine too close to working area – moved 20m away before start of session |
| <b>Learning from previous session:</b> The objective was to introduce the principles of attack and staying on feet, through and beyond the defensive line. The progressions did, I feel, illustrate this and the players responded favourably. Most players are beginning to latch onto the “less rules bring more creativity” concept of the coaching. The players worked with good pace and tempo.  |   |
| <b>Personal action points from previous session:</b> Although the plan was for me to run the activity while Chris observed, I think I could have briefed Chris better than I did and this would have include him more in the interventions. This session Chris and I will brief more effectively before the session and Chris will lead while I observe.  |   |
| <b>Goals for the session:</b><br>To introduce the players to the concept of ‘support play’ being more important than technique when attacking a defensive line.<br>Then Introduce the diamond support shape.  |   |
| <b>Introduction and warm-up</b> 10 Pass Game The objective is to complete 10 passes before a mistake is made or the pass is intercepted. 10 passes result in one point.<br><br>One rule: The ball carrier cannot be tackled.<br><br>Gather the teams into a grid then tell them they can run ‘anywhere’. (“Give the one rule and ask who wants the ball?” the competitive players will respond quicker). If the players initially stay in the grid, point out this is the result of them having been corralled and confined by barriers over their formative years. ‘Think outside the box’.<br><br>Intersperse the game with dynamic stretches.  |   |
| <b>Main Content/Game</b><br>Play a game of touch in three progressions:<br><br>1) At each touch the ball carrier places the ball and heels back through the legs.<br><br>Call the players round and ask how many tries have been created and scored. Expect very few, because the defence has re-aligned and the attack is always in front of the defenders.<br><br>2) At each touch the ball carrier turns and passes straight away to a player directly behind (encouraging close support).<br><br>Call the players round and ask how many tries have been created and scored. Expect more tries have been scored because the ball carrier is in amongst the defence and the ball is alive again quicker. The defence has less time to get back on side.<br><br>3) At each touch the ball carrier is allowed (and must) take a further 3 steps beyond the tackle before passing to support.<br><br>Call the players round and ask how many tries have been created and scored. They should be scoring almost every time now, as the ball is behind the tackle and the support should follow through the gaps. Do not allow the ball carrier to pass the ball to a player who is back and in front of the defence.<br><br>The support players must force their way behind the tackle before the defence can get back on-side. <b>“Support is Everything”</b> . | <b>Organisation/diagram</b><br><br>N/A  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>Allow more aggressive 'grab tackling' so the attack must work harder to get beyond the tackle.</p>  |   |
| <p><b>Ideas for Development area:</b></p> <p>The coach sets up a demonstration of the '<b>Diamond Support</b>' shape.</p> <p>Attack three passive defenders. Middle defender must follow the ball carrier and only move laterally.</p> <p>Progression: allow all defenders to move freely.</p> | <p><b>Diagram for activity</b></p>   |
| <p><b>End of session cool-down:</b></p> <p>Gentle jog in 3's and passing the ball.</p> <p>Don't worry about forward passes.</p> <p>Introduce gentle whole stretching during a brisk walk back to changing rooms</p>  |   |
| <p><b>Comments on session:</b></p> <p>The session tested the robotic tendency of the players. The tempo was kept high and all the players understood the concept quickly and only went back to like when fatigue became the overriding factor.</p>   | <p><b>Reflection on Coaching skills:</b></p> <p>The session ran well due to accurate demonstration and one key factor at a time. The players were left to improve without constant interruption and intervention was only used in order to move the progression onto the next.</p> <p>The introduction of the rolling maul was one progression too far at this stage and I should have stuck to my original plan.</p> |

# How to conduct a coaching session (DOING):

## Creating a safe environment:

**“The safety of all the players in a coach’s care is paramount”.**

By carrying out a few simple safety checks (risk assessment) BEFORE the start of the session, will allow for any problems/issues to be addressed and therefore the coaches and players will be able to perform their skills in a safe environment.

### Safety checks to include:

- Coach is aware of venue emergency action plan
- Changing rooms are free of hazards (anything that could cause harm to the players).
- Access to playing area clear and safe.
- Clear access for emergency vehicles.
- Working areas to be clear of glass, drink cans, stones, litter, dog faeces etc.
- Working area should not have any standing water on it.
- Post protectors must be on the posts if they are near the playing or training areas.
- Keep training/playing areas away from fencing, hedges or walls.
- All equipment to be checked for wear and tear.
- All equipment to be a safe distance from the working area.
- All balls to be kept in a nest or bag when not in use.
- Access to a phone with emergency numbers visible (having your own adequately charged mobile with the emergency numbers already in would be the best solution).
- Fully equipped medical bag that includes basic medical records of players and primary contact details (parents/partner etc).
- Players clothing to be checked for zips which must be done up.
- No player is to wear any jewellery during the session.
- Check studs for rough edges at both training and games.



# Rugby Union Coaching Health and Safety Checklist

|                                      |                    |                                  |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| <i>Venue:</i>                        | <i>Age Group:</i>  | <i>Number Attending:</i> (m) (F) |
| <i>Date:</i>                         | <i>Start time:</i> | <i>Finish time:</i>              |
| <i>Names of all coaches present:</i> |                    |                                  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Location of the venue's Health and Safety Policy: |  |
| Location of the nearest telephone:                |  |
| Location of the nearest First Aid Kit:            |  |
| Name of the Appointed First Aider:                |  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Please tick <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> to confirm that the following items have been checked.                                   | ✓ |
| All equipment is safe and appropriate for the age and activity of the players  |   |
| All equipment is handled, set up, dismantled and stored correctly  |   |
| The playing area and facilities have been checked for actual or potential hazards  |   |
| A register of players has been maintained  |   |
| Players' previous experience has been established  |   |
| Players' clothing, footwear, eyeglasses and jewellery have been checked as appropriate   |   |
| Please tick <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> to confirm that the following have been explained to the players and other participants. |   |
| Health and safety procedures   |   |
| The rules of the facility/venue/session  |   |
| Any potential hazards  |   |
| The emergency procedures   |   |

*I confirm that I have completed all the above and the coaching venue and players are able to safely participate in the planned coaching activity.*

|                    |  |       |  |
|--------------------|--|-------|--|
| Coach's Signature: |  | Date: |  |
|--------------------|--|-------|--|

# Creating a Positive, Learning Environment.

Creating a positive, learning environment is essential when coaching. Without a supportive, learner centred environment, players may participate but little learning will take place

## **Ideas to help create a positive learning environment:**

- Always have an outcome/objective for your session i.e. by the end of the session the players will be able to.....
- Enjoyment and development are the key motivating factors, not winning
- Use questions to check for understanding
- Players of all backgrounds are welcome and valued
- Sessions are planned to help develop/improve **all** players
- Reward effort as well as achievement.
- Challenge the players, yet make goals achievable (80% success)
- Sessions are enjoyable and the coach uses light and shade in delivery
- Every player feels that they can be part of team
- Children are not afraid to make mistakes and mistakes are looked at as learning opportunities. Develop the same approach with adults.
- Coaches provide positive feedback and prohibit ridicule of error.
- Encourage players to praise and encourage each other
- Mental and physical maturity is taken into consideration at all times
- Discipline is firm but fair
- Coaches do not show any frustrations
- All players get the same amount of game time during the season
- The coach is a role model for the players and exhibits the core values of the game

# The Coaching Process Skills (DOING)

## Providing Instruction and Explanation



## Observation and Analysis



## The Coaching Process Skills (Doing)



## Providing Demonstrations



## Providing Feedback

## The APES principles:

**A**CTIVE  
**P**URPOSEFUL  
**E**NJOYABLE  
**S**AFE  
**= SUCCESS**

### Active:

- Keep the players active
- Use small-sided games/activities that keep everyone involved
- Do not run activities with cues more than three to four players
- Coaches should keep their talking to a minimum – short and concise

## Purposeful:

- Have an outcome for the session
- Focus on one or two key factors at a time
- Make sure that the players understand the outcome for the session

## Enjoyment:

- Make sure you plan to make the session enjoyable and challenging
- Plan a variety of activities to achieve the same objective
- Deliver a session that you would enjoy taking part in yourself
- Praise effort as well as achievement
- To enjoy the experiences that rugby union can offer, it is crucial that everyone involved promotes respect for opponents, match officials, all coaches and spectators

## Safe:

- The safety of all participants in the coaching session are of paramount importance and most safe practice comes from thorough planning
- Don't continue a session if safety is being compromised
- Group younger players according to physical development when introducing contact
- Be consistent when dealing with poor behaviour
- Include warm up and cool down activities in every coaching session

## Reviewing your Session

On finishing the coaching session, ask yourself:

- What were my goals for the players in the session?
- What were my personal goals within the session?
- What went well?
- What did not go so well?
- If I were to do the session again, what would I do differently?
- What will be the goals for the players and myself for the next session?

When reviewing a session, do not be afraid of asking the players, fellow coaches, and other observers. Honest reflection helps plan for the next session.