

RugbyCoach junior



For coaches of players aged 8 to 13 years

Vol1 issue 21, 24 October 2007

Positive Thinking – A Powerful Core Skill

Confident players and teams are more successful and more enjoyable to coach. You, as a coach, have a huge part to play in building confidence and maintaining it throughout the season.

Be Positive Yourself

Young players are very quick to pick up on the mood of an adult and most children will adapt their behaviour accordingly. If you are positive and confident at all times around your players, they will follow your lead. You also need to be organised and confident in how you coach. Children will pick up straight away if your standards fall.

Create a Positive Environment

Create an environment at training where players are happy to try things and make mistakes without fear of retribution. Praise players for trying things even if they don't work out. Encourage players to self and peer-assess each other's performance. It is often easier hearing feedback from another player than from the coach.

Improve Self Belief

Confidence is infectious and self belief can spread from one player through a squad. Don't look for mistakes, look for players doing things well and praise them by name. Be specific in your praise, for instance "That was an excellent pass James", rather than just "Well done".

Respect not Arrogance

Remember being self assured is different to being arrogant. You need to make sure your players have respect for the opposition and the officials whether they win or lose.

"Believe in yourself! Have faith in your abilities! Without a humble but reasonable confidence in your own powers you cannot be successful or happy."

Norman Vincent Peale, author of
The Power of Positive Thinking (1898-1993)

However a bit of attitude is never a bad thing in a rugby player. You want players to question why they are doing what they are doing. 🏉

editor's letter

Sprinting is one of the key fundamental skills required to play rugby. However very few rugby players ever get taught how to sprint properly. This week I examine the basic sprinting techniques and how you can include them in your training.

Sprinting technique needs to be coached at the start of a session when your players are fresh. You also need to make sure the surface is firm and even, and the players have suitable footwear.

Focus on one aspect of the technique at a time so you are not overloading your players with information. Gradually introduce all the techniques over five or six sessions and then show your players how they all fit together. Work on each technique over a distance of about 20 metres for about eight repetitions.

A lot of the exercises are perfect for including in your warm-up which will ensure you are not wasting precious training time.

If you are serious about developing this aspect of your team one of the best things to do is contact your local athletics club. Ask one of their sprint coaches to come and do some sessions with your players. Links with an athletics club can prove invaluable to your club as your players develop.

Paul Tyler
Joint Editor

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul D. Tyler".

Fitness Tips: Leg Power

Here are four exercises to increase leg power to help with areas like scrummaging, jumping and tackling.

1 Jump squat

Players perform a squat (see Issue 11) and from the bottom point they push up explosively getting as much height off the ground as possible. On landing they regain their balance and repeat the exercise. Do three or four in a set and not more than three sets in a session.

2 Up, hit and drive

Players work in pairs. One holds a ruck shield while the other player works. The working player lies on the ground one metre from the bag. On "GO" they get up as fast as possible and drive the bag back for three or four steps. Reset and repeat three times before swapping over.

3 Resisted run

Players work in pairs with one player running and the other behind providing resistance. The player at the back holds the working player with a strong grip on the sides of the waistband. It should be hard for the player to run but not impossible. Run for three or four metres resisted and then let go after a 3-2-1 countdown.

4 Hopping

Players hop on one leg and try to get as much distance between each step as possible. Hop over a five metre distance and players should get three or four hops in. Don't do more than three repetitions in a session and make sure you work both legs equally. 🏉



The Essentials

Self Talk

Self talk is used by sports people to help them focus on the task they are about to perform. It can be used at all levels of the game and can have remarkable effects. Here are the four essentials:

- 1 Select short phrases or key cue words which can be easily remembered. "Head down follow through" for kicking or "Target, shoulder, drive" for tackling.
- 2 The phrases must be chosen by the players. Though you can guide them, it must be in their own words.
- 3 Phrases must always be positive. Avoid words such as "miss", "mistake" or "bad". So instead of "I'm not going to miss any tackles today" use "I'm going to make all my tackles today".

A-Z of Child Protection

"O" is for "Observant"

The best way to deal with child protection is to anticipate potential problems before they occur and prevent them. To do this you and your coaches will need to be observant around your players.

Before training or games thoroughly check the area for anything which might cause injury. Check your equipment; make sure nothing is damaged and could cause injury.

Keep an eye on your players; don't let them wander off on their own. If they need to go to the bathroom or changing rooms which is out of sight, only allow them to go off in pairs if you don't have enough adults around.

Look out for anyone at training who you don't recognise. Challenge them by asking who they are and what they are doing. Parents won't mind being asked; it shows them that you are vigilant.

Don't let anyone (other than your coaches) take photos or video footage of your players. Games should not be videoed unless both teams have agreed to it.

Look for any significant behaviour changes or for unusual and unexplained marks. Keep notes of these but never question the child concerned. There is usually a perfectly rational explanation but you need to be sure. 🏉

In the next issue: "P" is for "Players code of conduct"

- 4 Stop negative thoughts during games by using trigger words such as "Stop" or "Park it". As soon as a player feels a negative thought forming they use the trigger word to help put it out of their mind.

Self talk won't work for every player. Make sure you are positive with all your players as often as you can be. 🏉

"I have in my mind a picture of the ball going through the posts. The deep breathing, the shaking of the hands, are to rid the body of tension so that all is crystal clear and unperturbed in the mind, the picture in focus. I command myself, head down follow through."

Grant Fox, New Zealand All Black World Cup winning fly half

The Essentials of Sprinting

Paul Tyler explores the key factors for improving your players' sprinting.

Relax the Upper Body

If you watch all the top sprinters and you will notice how relaxed their upper bodies are, how their facial muscles and hands are almost floppy. This is because when a player tenses any of his upper body muscles his whole body tenses which will slow him down. Players should sprint with open hands and relaxed neck and shoulders.

Balls of the Feet

To get the full power out of the legs of the players, they need to sprint on the balls of their feet. Demonstrate this to the players by getting them to try running on the heels and on flat feet. Then have them run on the balls of the feet and feel the difference.

Use ankle flick exercises in your warm-ups to develop strength and power in the ankle and lower leg.

High Knees

The higher the knee lift the more power is generated when the foot returns to hit the ground. Work hard on high knee lift drills in your warm-up.

Arm Drive

Your legs move at the same speed as your arms. Get your players to jog on the spot with their arms by their sides. Then tell them to pump their arms as fast as possible and notice what happens to their legs. They will move much faster.

In order to sprint efficiently the elbow joint needs to be locked at 90° and the arms need to drive backwards explosively on each step.

Develop arm power with players sitting with outstretched legs. They drive their arms and try to get their backsides off the ground.

Hips Forward

When in full flight it is important to get the hips or pelvis are tilted forward (think of Michael Johnson running). This makes sure the gluteus muscles (your backsides and the largest in the body) are used properly when sprinting. It also helps the player stay balanced when sprinting as their feet stay underneath their body.

Balanced and relaxed



Note the hands are open to relax the upper body and the elbow is at 90°, the high knee lift on the front leg will provide the explosive power. The rear leg has just pushed off powerfully from the ball of the foot. The hips are tilted forward and the body is in an excellent balanced position.

Game Related Sprints

As well as technique you will need to work on game specific sprints. Sprinting with a ball is very important and players need to work on acceleration, changes of pace and changes of direction at speed. Also think about the different distances players sprint in a game and make some of your training position specific. 🏈

"If I ran the same way as the other guys I'd be back there with them!"

Michael Johnson, world class 200 and 400 metre runner and sometimes criticised for an unusual style.

