

A Message from the Coaching Co-ordinator

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 footy 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.

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 six to Under 16 years.

If we look at under sixes in mini-footy the emphasis will be on basic motor skill movement patterns of individual techniques. These techniques would be related to the mini-footy 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.

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 Coaching Co-ordinator 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.

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-footy, mod league years with coaches fulfilling a more responsible role to the individual

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

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Player's 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.

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 person's 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 player's involvement with the game requires mostly teaching which is another skill required for these coaches.

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 coach's 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 cooperation of all concerned to work together in the best interest of their club, their players and the game of Rugby League.

Yours in Sport

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