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**Coaching Manual**



## **PLAYER DEVELOPMENT**

**Player development is essential for the long-term improvement of the player. To that end, it is vital for coaches to ensure that:-**

- **Games and activities are age/skill level appropriate.**
- **Players experience playing different positions.**
- **There is one ball between two players for practice.  
[one ball each for the youngest players – i.e. Group 1 Primary]**
- **Activities are designed to maximize the number of touches on the ball by each player.**
- **Rules and field size are modified for players according to their age and abilities.**
- **Equipment is modified for players according to age and abilities.**
- **Activities are designed to promote decision-making.  
(Not just doing drills).**
- **There are NO long lines of players waiting in turn.**
- **Games are small-sided and for a purpose - not simply used to finish a session with all involved at the one time and in the one small area.**

## COMPONENTS OF COACHING GAELIC FOOTBALL

To ensure that player development is central to our coaching we should try to include work on as many of the following in each session:-

**TECHNICAL ABILITY**

**ATHLETICISM**

**SPEED OF THOUGHT**

**TEAMPLAY**

If we design our sessions to include each of these four elements the players will not only develop more quickly, they'll enjoy doing so.

Working on **TECHNIQUE** means seeking to improve each player's first touch on the ball. First touch is often only applied to receiving the ball, but if you think about it, first touch covers all techniques - a better kick pass, a better block, a better lift, a better catch, a better solo run etc. We must be prepared to help players to develop the correct techniques and never let bad habits linger. *Players must be coached to perform these at speed.*

**ATHLETICISM** is an umbrella term for physical fitness work. We may be able to develop this using the ball or we may have to set aside a specific part of a session to work on it [e.g. relay races, speed endurance work, circuits] – We can usually develop it on the pitch...but not to the exclusion of everything else.

**SPEED OF THOUGHT** is the part of any session that frightens many coaches. Some tend to steer clear of it and argue that it's something that a player either has or hasn't. Not at all!

All we have to do to develop speed of thought is to set appropriate conditions on a drill or a game during the session.

If we want a player to release the ball earlier and bring team-mates into the game – then put a two-touch condition on that player to help develop the correct instincts. [Do not just put a blanket condition on every player!]

But don't just do it in one session and never again. Repetition is the key - even for 10 minutes of every practice game.

Just think about ways you'd like a player to change - then work out a method to do so in practice - simply hoping for it after a chat will not work!

Better **TEAMPLAY** is the end product. If our coaching is good enough it will enable our footballers to appreciate the value of working together as a team. We must, therefore, use types of games that promote good teamplay [e.g. a line of markers across the middle of a pitch to help players develop defending and attacking instincts]

So...look at your next session - have you included work on these four elements? If not, try it now!

# Coaching Different Age Groups

Sometimes a coach can find it frustrating if he/she can't seem to get the message across and the players continue to do their own thing.

Very often this is because we don't make allowances for how their minds work at the various ages.

## What can coaches expect from different age groups?

### Under 5 Years

- Children of this age are self-centred and co-operation is largely absent
- Never try to play anything resembling a game of gaelic football with them
- They respond best to target games and races [throwing and running]

### 5 to 6 Years

- At this age many still think that the ball is their own 'toy', so they will try to run with the ball and score rather than pass.
- A good coach will use this fact and provide each with a ball [e.g. size 2 or 3] and let them copy techniques demonstrated by the coach. [e.g. bounce, body catch, turn, kick and chase]
- They will respond to partner work for very short spells, so passing and catching exercises should be possible but for a limited time. [still better to work as individuals]
- One of the better games is called 'Over The River'. [see section on Tips, Ideas, Drills and Games]
- These children will only watch the ball. They cannot and will not look for space to run into, so any encouragement to 'spread out' is absolutely pointless.
- When their team is not in possession they find it difficult to understand defending a goal. To them they are merely chasing a ball.
- Finally, in any game situation, most of them will tend to react too quickly to the flight of the ball.

### 7 to 8 Years

- At these ages children will still concentrate attention towards the ball but will increasingly react more slowly and accurately to the flight of the ball
- They will begin to look up when in possession and start choosing options [e.g. passing rather than shooting]
- They will have difficulty tackling opponents but will kick the ball away from them and attempt to block any shots
- They usually enjoy being asked questions and this should give a good coach plenty of opportunities to check for understanding
- Players will beg for a game at every opportunity, yet their technique is best improved through individual, paired and small group work. This is an ideal time to use the 'Whole-Part-Whole' approach to some sessions where the coach starts with a game, stops it after ten minutes, works on one technique for a short period then restarts the game to see how the players can apply their learning.

### 9 to 10 Years

- Children will now compete against each other and measure their own competencies. They tend to believe that effort should always bring success
- Adults must be careful to look for good points as this is the age where drop-outs occur if children are led to believe they are not good enough
- At this age players will now try to win the game not only by scoring but also by attempting to deny the opposition the opportunity to score
- They will also begin to understand the need to change the direction of a run or a pass to be more effective and they will begin to grasp the idea that a player may need support from behind and to the side as well as in front.
- Marking will be haphazard as this involves being able to scan the relative positions of ball, team-mates and opponents...often unrealistic at this age
- Coaches should continue to run small-sided games and condition them to solve problems
- At this age players must also get used to attacking the ball [i.e. running and not stopping] and breaking tackles]

## 11 to 12 Years

- **At these ages players will be conscious of becoming substitutes. Teams begin to play in leagues and championships and only 15 may start each game.**
- **During training, these players must always feel part of the session. Coaches must be ready to pay as much attention to them as to other established players and always work to improve their skills [e.g. one-to-one coaching may be needed].**
- **Coaches must be quick to address the problem of one or two players dominating play and preventing others from developing their skills during games.**
- **Many players at this age fail to recognise the need to attack the ball and prefer to wait for the ball. If this is allowed to persist, that player will find it increasingly difficult to change his/her instincts.**

## 13-16 Years

- **Players will measure the quality of training given in Gaelic Football sessions with that afforded by soccer and rugby.**
- **Players must be convinced of the need for lifestyle management that is not unrealistic and made aware of the effects of alcohol etc. on a sports person.**
- **Training must include more strength-related elements, though ballwork is still at the heart of coaching.**

## 17-Adult

- **Be careful to communicate with players re. too many demands on them [e.g. different sports, work, family] and be prepared to work out a schedule for different players with regard to training [e.g. how do you best serve a minor who plays for a college, club minors, county minors, and club seniors – who manages and monitors his training programme?]**

## Some Coaching Expressions

### **AEROBIC FITNESS**

Work done to increase the blood's capacity to carry oxygen, making more energy available for the muscles. People sometimes refer to it as cardiovascular training or VO<sub>2</sub>max work. Basically it means taking part in running activities over longer distances and times.

### **ANAEROBIC FITNESS**

Training that prepares players to perform at high intensity for bursts of 20 seconds +.

### **ATHLETICISM**

Physical Fitness

### **BOX FORMATION**

A formation of players used in attack to create more space. Only four players are kept in position rather than the usual six.



### **CARDIO-VASCULAR**

To do with the heart and lungs

### **CPM**

Catch, Pass, Mark...player instructions, particularly useful for a midfielder

### **DYNAMIC STRETCHING**

Moving parts of your body and gradually increasing reach, speed of movement, or both. Dynamic stretching consists of controlled leg and arm swings that take you (gently!) to the limits of your range of motion. In dynamic stretches, there are no bounces or "jerky" movements. An example of dynamic stretching would be slow, controlled leg swings, arm swings, or torso twists.

## **ENERGY FUEL MIX**

The traditional route to fitness has often begun with ensuring that players have a sound aerobic base [i.e. an efficient cardio-respiratory system]. Aerobic fitness is often associated with long runs and being able to sustain these for anything up to 25 minutes. Hence the reason for 'laps'.

The latest piece of research, borne out of the Rugby World Cup preparations suggests that aerobic fitness is best tackled through attention to a mix of aerobic and anaerobic exercises, both game-related.

Put in simpler terms, this means that training sessions with lots of work on speed endurance, speed, jogging, ball skills, decision-making and small-sided games will help improve aerobic fitness levels more effectively than the traditional method. Add to this, the fact that being forced to make decisions and play the ball while running will sharpen the neurological system at the same time.

## **FIRST TOUCH**

Being able to perform the technical skill without fumbling, dropping, missing or miscuing the ball when not under pressure from another player [e.g. catch, kick, lift]

## **FOUR 'Ds'**

Learn the four Ds in tackling.....DELAY [the player], DENY [him space], DISPOSSESS [him of the ball] and DEVELOP [the next move]. To do the first two, think FEET! They'll take you where you want to go.

## **GLYCOGEN**

The fuel that the body needs for intense exercise. It can provide energy quicker than any other can.

## **HARD FOOT**

Pointing the toes down towards the ground when striking the ball creates a hard foot and increases power in the kick.

## **HEAD DOWN**

Head down rather than head up when kicking, will give a player better balance and the ball will be less likely to veer off target.

## **HEAD HANDS FEET METHOD**

The way to spot and correct faults in techniques by looking at the problem in terms of head position, arm/hand movement and leg/foot movement and position. [e.g. head up when striking the ball is a common fault, throwing the player off-balance]

## **IDENTIFYING BIB**

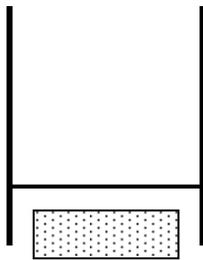
The bib worn to identify a player who has had a condition put on his/her play [e.g. must break a tackle, must give first time pass]. Teammates know what to expect and opponents have to work it out.

**INCREASED KICKING POWER** The power comes from the amount of backlift in the kicking leg and the whipping action as it comes through.

## **INTENSITY**

The depth and quality of the training, rather than the volume of it.

## **KEEPER HEIGHT**



The area of the goal between 1/2 metre from the ground and 1 metre from the bar. This is where shots make it easier for goalkeepers as this is the area within which they are most comfortable. Remember the saying 'Better low, than for show!'

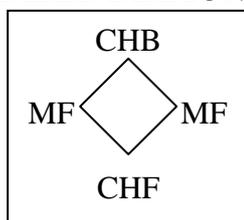
## **LEADING THE TACKLE**

A player should start most tackles with a long stride to get in position, rather than a lean from the waist or a long reach. The stride allows for better balance and stability.

## **LENGTHENING STRIDE**

The last stride into a lift [ball pick-up] should be a long one. This allows the player to have steadier base and lets the player sweep through the lift to move off quickly.

## **MIDFIELD DIAMOND**



The group of players made up of the Centre Half Back, Midfielders and Centre Half Forward

## **MOBILITY**

Part of the warm-up where players move joints [e.g ankles, knees, hips]

**MULTIMARKERS**

Small, flexible markers that are stored on a spine. They may be used in practice games as they are safer than domes or cones.

**MUSCLE MEMORY**

Repeated rehearsal of a technique will help the muscles to memorise the feeling and over time it will become instinctive

**MUSCULAR ENDURANCE**

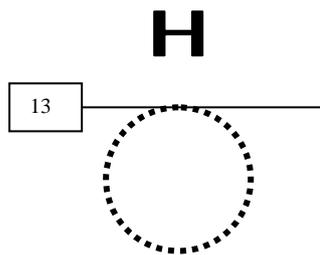
Training muscles to maintain their work rate over longer periods of time

**NEAR HAND TACKLE**

A tackle where a player tries to dispossess an opponent by moving alongside and knocking the ball away with the hand nearest to the ball carrier.

**OFF THE LACES**

A kick that is played off the laced part of the boot and is often the most accurate

**PLUGHOLE**

An imaginary circle, approximately 30m in diameter, set in front of the opposition goal. No attacker should ever block this area by standing in it. Players may move into and out of it or through it.

**PULSE RAISING**

Part of the warm-up that increases the blood flow to the muscles [e.g. jogging, turning etc]

**RECEIVING A PASS**

Players should be coached to receive a pass on the move; preferably while moving forward to meet the ball.

**REST & WATCH**

An invaluable exercise where players are given the opportunity to watch others take part and where they can listen to the coach identifying positives and negatives in the play. When their turn comes they should be more aware of the dos and don'ts and play should be better all round

**ROLLING**

An evasion technique where the player in possession spins to avoid the opponent, shielding the ball on the turn.

<b>ROUNDERS POSTS</b>	Tall posts [1.5m] with weighted rubber bases.
<b>SMALL-SIDED GAMES</b>	Games played between teams of 3-9. These are very useful when working to develop individuals.
<b>SPEED ENDURANCE</b>	The ability to maintain a high work rate for longer periods during a game.
<b>SPEED OF THOUGHT</b>	Excellent anticipation, thinking and reaction skills
<b>SPOT &amp; FIX</b>	Proper coaching, where faults are not only identified but corrected
<b>STAMINA</b>	See 'Aerobic Fitness'
<b>STANDING FOOT</b>	The non-kicking foot. Ideally it should be lined up with the target
<b>STATIC STRETCHING</b>	A static stretch is one where you assume a position and hold it, be this with the aid of apparatus, another part of your body or simply through using the strength of your muscles.
<b>STEP UP</b>	An instruction to all players on a team that loses possession. Those who find themselves goal side of the ball and not involved directly in tackling the ball carrier should immediately step up to the nearest opponent. This call is designed to force players to move into the correct defending position even before the ball player has had the chance to make his/her decision about the pass. When the player looks up, 'all bases should be covered'.

<b>STRAIGHT LINE DRILLS</b>	Exercises that are set up in such a way that players only get to make straight line runs, often towards another group. No angled runs or changes of direction involved.
<b>SUPPORT DRILL</b>	Any exercise where players must move to support team-mates.
<b>SWITCH THE PLAY</b>	Changing the point of attack with a diagonal pass.
<b>TACKLE BAGS</b>	Hand-held bags from Rugby; may be used to let players practise breaking tackles rather than making them
<b>TEAMPLAY</b>	Cooperative work by all players
<b>TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE</b>	The ability to catch, kick, fist, block etc with ease.
<b>TIMING A SUPPORT RUN</b>	Working to ensure that supporting runs are not made too early. Few are made late - most are too early.
<b>TWENTY-MINUTE WINDOW</b>	The best time, immediately after a training session or a match, to fuel up with food or drink that is high in carbohydrates. It is in this period that the system is most efficient at turning carbohydrates into the fuel needed for muscles [i.e. glycogen]
<b>WORK: REST RATIOS</b>	The very important ratio that allows for rest and recovery. [e.g. sprint exercises require work: rest ratio of 1:4.... A five second sprint followed by a twenty-second rest. Aerobic exercises may only demand a work: rest ratio of 1:1 or 1:2]

## 'Spot & Fix' Coaching

During the season we'll get lots of opportunities to help players develop.

One of the best ways is to SPOT faults in a player's technique and FIX these before bad habits get time to set in and become instinctive.

Here are some common faults to look for and a few suggestions about how we can cure them.

TECHNIQUE	COMMON FAULTS	POSSIBLE CAUSES	SUGGESTED CORRECTIONS
<b>KICK</b>	<b>Football is kicked high into the air instead of over a distance.</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Player has his/her 'toe up' when kicking; i.e. using a 'soft foot'</li> <li>2. Player is leaning back as he/she kicks the ball.</li> <li>3. Player is holding the ball too far from his/her body [long arms]</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coach the player the 'toe down' / 'hard foot' method of kicking</li> <li>2. Coach how to watch the ball all the way down to the point where it strikes his/her foot [better balance]</li> <li>3. Coach how to carry the ball closer and let it drop rather than throw it out</li> </ol>
	<b>Poorly directed kick – skews off target</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Player is kicking with the outside edge of his/her boot</li> <li>2. Player's standing foot is planted away from the target</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coach how to kick 'off the laces' and follow the kicking foot through towards the target [e.g. teammate or posts]</li> <li>2. Coach how to plant the standing foot [non-kicking foot] directly at the target [e.g. a team-mate, the goals]</li> </ol>

TECHNIQUE	COMMON FAULTS	POSSIBLE CAUSES	SUGGESTED CORRECTIONS
<b>CATCH</b>	<b>Player makes ground to catch the ball but always seems to reach and miss</b>	<p>1. Arms too wide and ball drops through</p> <p>2. Poor timing – player leans forward to catch with long arms</p>	<p>1. Coach the player how to ‘make the basket’ for the body catch.</p> <p>2. Coach how to take an extra step towards the flight of the ball – stops player having to lean forward for the catch</p>
	<b>Player tends to pat the ball down rather than attempt an overhead catch</b>	Player is keen to take the ‘sting’ out of a ball in flight.	Coach how to make the ‘W’ shape with fingers of two hands and practise with a lobbed ball first. Always make sure the football size is appropriate [i.e. not a size 5 for an 8 year-old player].

TECHNIQUE	COMMON FAULTS	POSSIBLE CAUSES	SUGGESTED CORRECTIONS
<b>LIFT</b>	<b>Player slows up and appears awkward or unsure when approaching the ball</b>	Player shortens stride in an attempt to get feet in the right position for the lift.	Coach player how to make the last stride into the ball a long one. This will help maintain speed and give a solid base from which to drive off.
	<b>Player gets in position but misses the first attempt at the lift.</b>	Hands are too far apart or by the side of the ball.	Coach how to reach in front of the ball and make a scoop with hands tight together and fingers spread.

TECHNIQUE	COMMON FAULTS	POSSIBLE CAUSES	SUGGESTED CORRECTIONS
<b>SOLO RUN</b>	<b>Player drops ball to foot but kicks it ahead rather than back to hand</b>	<p>1. Player is using a 'hard foot' to kick the ball – toe down method</p> <p>2. Player is holding the ball too far from his/her body</p>	<p>1. Coach the player how to kick with a 'soft foot' – toe pointed up.</p> <p>2. Coach the player to hold the ball closer to body [a bent elbow helps]</p>
	<b>Player seems to skip or hop when toe-tapping on the move.</b>	<p>1. Check to see if the player is throwing the ball into the air and waiting for it to drop to his/her foot.</p> <p>2. Player may be trying to return the ball from foot to hand by bending the knee and hopping to help his/her kicking foot reach the ball.</p>	<p>1. Coach how to let the ball roll off the fingers to the foot. Controlling it will then be easier.</p> <p>2. Coach how to keep the kicking leg straight as it strikes the ball [locked knee-no bend].</p>

TECHNIQUE	COMMON FAULTS	POSSIBLE CAUSES	SUGGESTED CORRECTIONS
<b>FIST</b>	<b>Player seems to get little or no distance or accuracy when attempting the fist pass or fisted score</b>	<p>1. Check the football size and weight – is it simply too big and heavy?</p> <p>2. Player may be striking the ball off his/her fingers or knuckles.</p> <p>3. Player may be swinging his/her arm in a 'roundhouse' fashion.</p> <p>4. Player may be throwing the ball into the air before striking it.</p>	<p>1. Use Size 2 for U6, Size 3 for U8 and Size 4 for U10 players.</p> <p>2. Coach how to fist using the fleshy part of the fist at the base of the thumb and near the wrist.</p> <p>3. Coach how to swing arm close to side of body and through the ball.</p> <p>4. Coach how to fist the ball off the other hand while it rests there.</p>

# The Cornerstones of Good Coaching

It is vital that all Rossa coaches [from Primary to Senior] work to develop technical skills to a point where:

1. Players are comfortable on both left and right sides
2. Players can perform the skills at pace
3. Players can perform the skills when under pressure

Allowing players to work at a slow pace in drills will lead to them perform at that same slow pace in a game. They will stop to wait for a kindly bounce of the ball; they will slow down or turn back when faced by an opponent; they will try to kick pass through an opponent; they will shy away from physical contact and develop all of the wrong instincts.

**Run your drills to force players to  
ATTACK THE BALL.**

**They must learn to take the risk and  
move to meet the ball, no matter what way  
it comes to them.**

**Always demand a good 'First Touch' on the ball**

**Make your drills competitive – pair players  
together and let them race to collect a ball  
kicked by the coach.**

**Get them used to BREAKING TACKLES,  
rather than stopping when faced by an opponent  
and being easily blocked.**

*The best players at any level attack the  
ball and break tackles. Good coaches  
must take every opportunity to make our  
own players the best they can be!!*