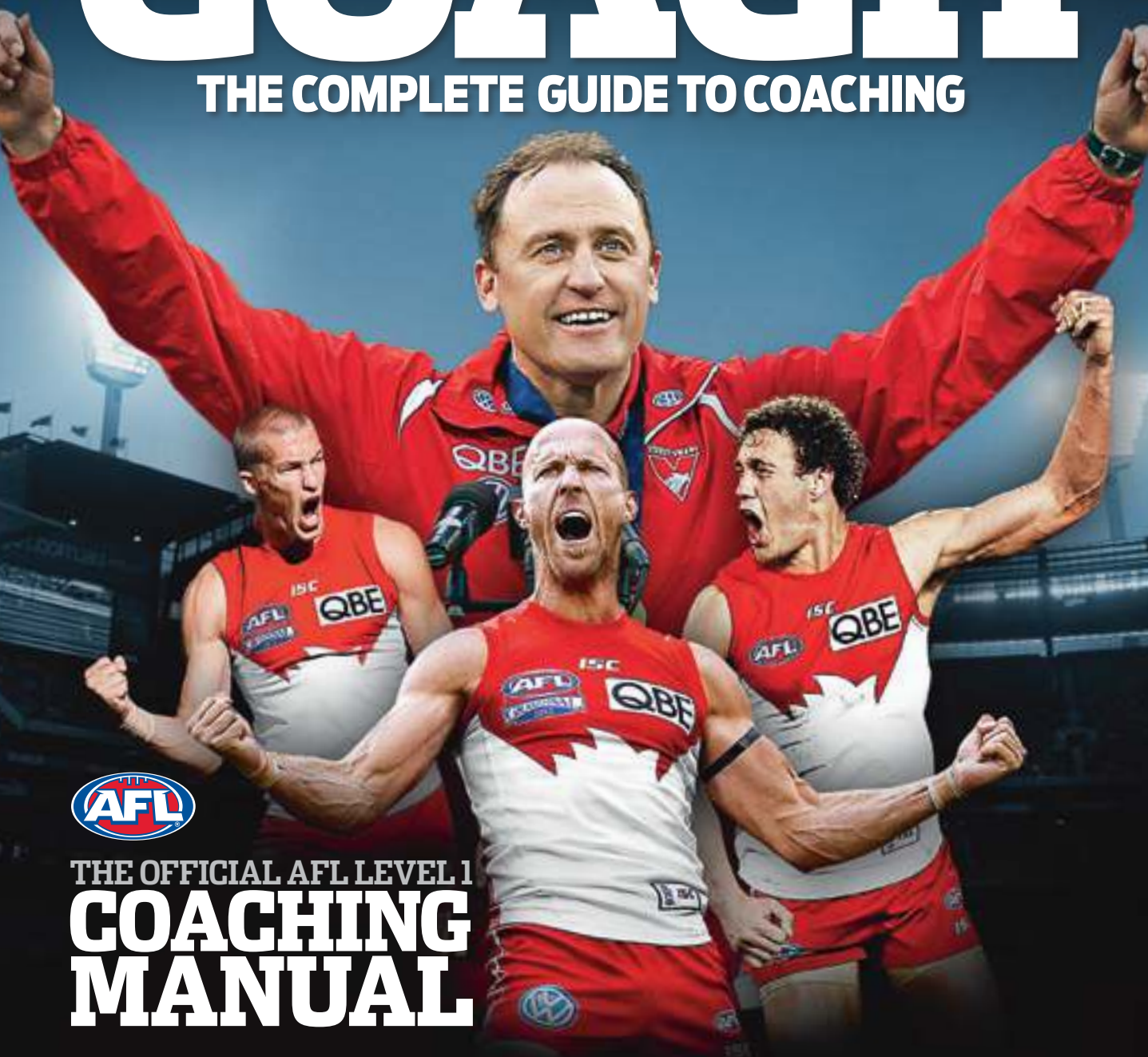


THE COACH

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO COACHING



THE OFFICIAL AFL LEVEL 1
**COACHING
MANUAL**

› Planning › Tactics › Skills › Drills › Fitness › Umpiring





THE COACH

THE OFFICIAL AFL LEVEL 1
COACHING MANUAL

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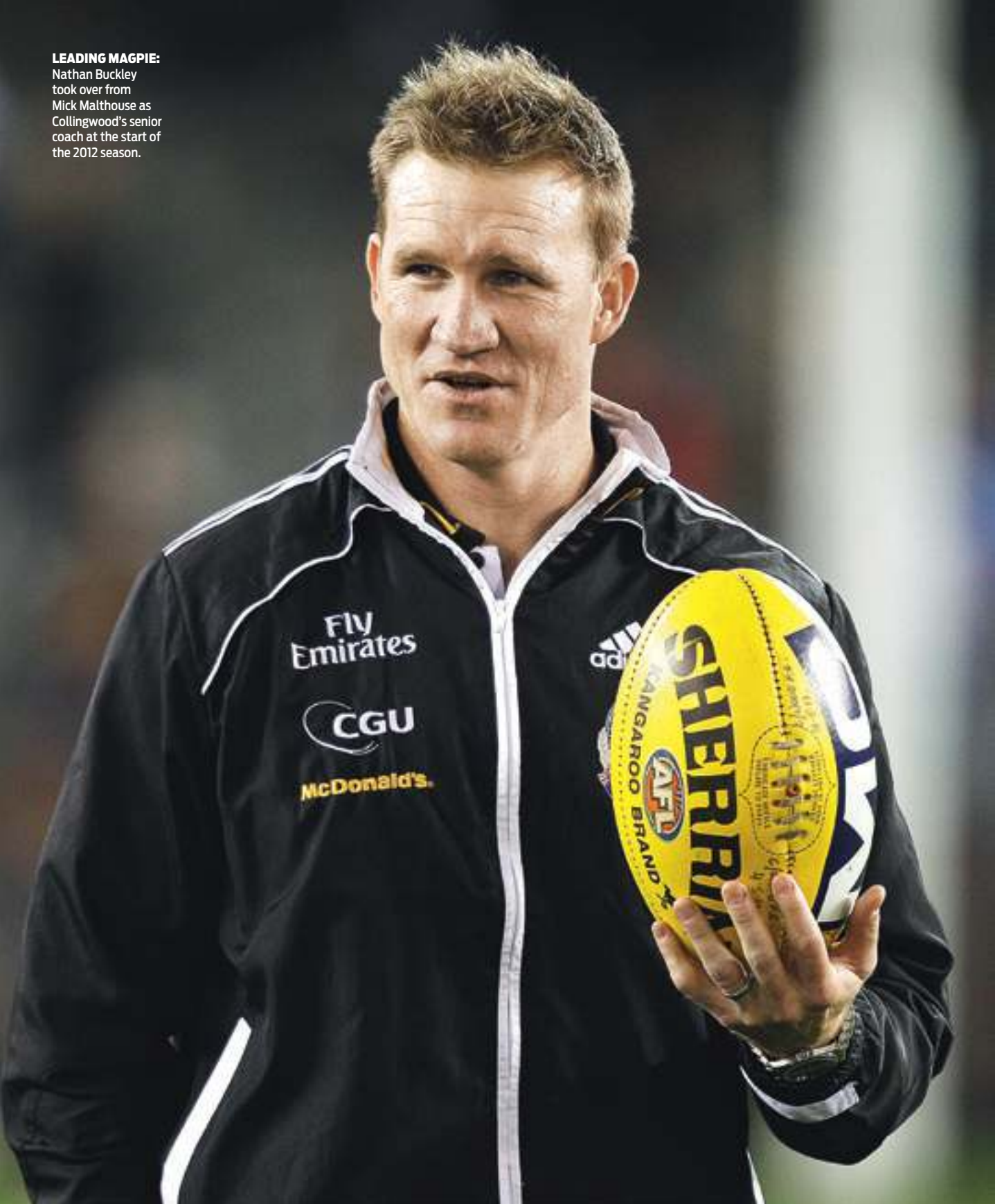
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Cover: John Longmire coached the Sydney Swans to victory in the
2012 Toyota AFL Grand Final.

LEADING MAGPIE:
Nathan Buckley
took over from
Mick Malthouse as
Collingwood's senior
coach at the start of
the 2012 season.



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Introduction

By DAVID PARKIN

Two of the most commonly asked questions of a person playing football at any level are, “Who is your coach?” and “What is your coach like?” If the second question elicits a positive response, there is a reasonable chance that the player concerned is enjoying their football. In all football levels, the degree of enjoyment/satisfaction is the major determinant of whether people continue their football careers.

The coach, more than an administrator, parent or player, can directly influence the quality of the football environment at whatever level the game is played.

The coach can influence dramatically not only a player’s football experience and development, but all the other elements in the player’s life as well.

For this reason, I’m committed to coach education and believe our coaching courses to be the most appropriate vehicle for setting, communicating and maintaining the relevant standards.

Many might argue that the committed coach will seek out the required knowledge anyway. The coach will talk to and watch other coaches, read texts, watch videos and attend workshops. There is little doubt that this type of self-directed learning is very valuable.

But what it lacks though are the unquestionable educative benefits of learning in a group setting where participants are encouraged to question, criticise and share experiences. The Level 1 Coaching Course provides such a forum. During the course you will be exposed to a core of football knowledge and ultimately be better equipped to coach.

This manual, produced by the AFL, offers further reinforcement of the principles to be outlined during the course. The aim of the *Level 1 Coaching Manual* is to improve the standard of coaching throughout Australia, and to provide coaches with a manual to refer to long after the course has finished.

Use the book well, refer to it during the year and enjoy the challenge of coaching.

David Parkin is an AFL High Performance Coach, an AFL Coaching Ambassador and President of the AFL Coaches Association.





Chapter 1

THE ROLE OF THE COACH

The coach of an Australian Football club holds a dynamic and vital position within that football club. Coaches represent players, officials and supporters as the figurehead of the club.

The coaches must be leaders. Continually analysing, studying, planning and assessing the game as it develops, while being aware of the capabilities of their team. Coaches must strive to bring out the best result possible for the group of players under their direction, and develop the team as both a group and as individuals.

The game's emphasis on running and possession football has developed to an extent that, at every level of football, players are aware of the need to be very fit, skilled and versatile. Players are expected to be able to adopt attacking and defensive roles regardless of the positions they play. It is the coach's responsibility to ensure the development of these attributes to a level equivalent to the age and ability of members of the team.

The increased importance of tactics to maintain possession and restrict the opposition has placed even greater emphasis on the coach's role in creating a successful team.

The coach must be able to communicate well with the team and create the correct environment for footballers to perform at their optimum level.

Off the field the coach is also responsible for developing a culture that highlights the values and ethical behaviour that the club would be proud to project. Coaches are significant role models in the lives of many players. Hence coaches need to be continually aware of their standard of behaviour and their adherence to the AFL Coaches' Code of Conduct.

ROLE OF THE COACH

- Understand the important role of the coach.
- Explore your personal coaching philosophy.
- Examine the different styles of coaching.
- Recognise some basic principles involved in coaching.
- Identify the personal qualities of successful coaches.
- Establish a code of behaviour for your coaching year.

LEADER: Respected coaches such as Gold Coast's Guy McKenna are continually analysing the game.

ROLE OF THE COACH

Coaches have many diverse roles which can vary in importance according to the age group of the team.

During the year the coach may be called upon to fill a variety of roles. These can include:

- 1. COMMUNICATOR** possessing the ability to provide clear instructions and feedback as well as the ability to listen to others.
- 2. LEADER** guiding decision making in terms of planning and organising training, match-day events and team morale.
- 3. MANAGER** assisting others by effectively controlling the affairs of the club to compliment the underlying philosophy/objectives of the club.
- 4. PHILOSOPHER** consistently demonstrating a set of shared values, beliefs and principles that provide direction and a purpose for the conduct of the coaching program.
- 5. PSYCHOLOGIST** dealing with various personalities and the mental aspects of maximising performance.
- 6. PUBLIC RELATIONS** representing the club by promoting goodwill.
- 7. SELECTOR** involved in the planning of the selection process and the choosing of the best or most suitable team to represent the club.
- 8. SPORTS TRAINER** possessing a basic knowledge of conducting safe practices, injury prevention and the rehabilitation of the injured player.
- 9. STUDENT** continually seeking to upgrade his knowledge of the game or the coaching process.
- 10. TEACHING** effectively imparting information to individuals and ensuring that football skills and team tactics are improved.

APPLICATION

- 1. What are your strengths and what are the areas that need improving in each of the above?
- 2. Consider how you might enhance each of the above areas for your development as a coach.
- 3. Identify coaches who are excellent in the roles identified and learn what they do well.

DEVELOPING A COACHING PHILOSOPHY

A coaching philosophy is a set of beliefs, principles and values that you hold that enables you to make decisions and guide your actions so that they are consistent and abide by the AFL coaching philosophy.

HOW DOES A PHILOSOPHY EVOLVE?

A coaching philosophy is developed from a background of wisdom and experiences that coaches have witnessed throughout their playing careers, through talking with other coaches and reading about the lives of admired coaches. It is also a reflection of beliefs, values and standards of behaviour that the coach has developed over time.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A COACHING PHILOSOPHY

A coaching philosophy is essential in providing guidelines in the following aspects of your coaching:

- a. determining your role in the club.
- b. determining your coaching style.
- c. underpinning your coaching principles.
- d. planning for all aspects of the football experience in the club.
- e. communication style including the resolution of conflicts.

The following topics and prompts might be considered as you are developing and writing your coaching philosophy:

COMMUNICATION STYLE

- What is your preferred communication style?
- Under what circumstances will communication style be adapted?

COACHING STYLE

- What is your preferred style of coaching?
- When might the alternative styles of coaching be used?

ROLE OF ASSISTANT COACHES

- What qualities are important in assistant coaches?
- What is the role of assistant coaches in the program?

THE ROLE OF FITNESS

- What areas of fitness should be included in the program, and why?
- What personal qualities are important in the fitness staff?

PLAYER DISCIPLINE

- Who is responsible for player discipline?
- What is the role of the AFL Players Code of Conduct?

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CLUB CULTURE

- What processes should be put into place to identify the culture of the club?
- What is the role of the coach in maintaining/developing the club culture?

SELECTION

- Who is responsible for team selection?
- What are the criteria for team selection?

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GAME-PLAN AND TEAM RULES

- Who is responsible for the development of a game-plan and team rules?
- What role does the coach play in the development of a game-plan and team rules?

PLAYER RESPONSIBILITY

- Clubs’ own code
- What processes can occur to educate players to take responsibility for their development?

RELATIONSHIP WITH UMPIRES

- What are your beliefs about the coach/umpire relationship?
- What actions can you take to promote the coach/umpire partnership?

START WITH YOURSELF

To begin to develop your coaching philosophy, answer the following questions:

- Why do you coach?
- What is your personal mission statement?
- What is your personal development plan?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses in terms of your adherence to the AFL Coaches’ Code of Conduct?
- What is meant by being an effective/successful coach?
- How do you want to be remembered as a coach?

CONSIDER THE NEEDS OF THE PLAYERS

- What are their reasons for playing?
- What are their expectations for the season?
- What are the personal qualities they wish to see in a coach?
- What is their preferred coaching style?
- What are their values and standards of behaviour?

CONSIDER THE CULTURE OF THE CLUB

- How is the club perceived within the competition?
- How does the club wish to be perceived within the competition?
- What values need to be maintained or developed?
- What is your role in maintaining or developing those perceptions and values?

AN EXAMPLE OF A COACHING PHILOSOPHY

INTRODUCTION

My coaching philosophy revolves around my firm belief that I am privileged to be able to help my players develop and grow as individuals – not only in Australian Football, but as people.

HOW I WISH TO BE REMEMBERED AS A COACH

I would like to be remembered as having a significant impact on the quality of life of these players.

MY ROLE: TEACHING AND TRAINING

I coach at this senior level to educate people to appreciate the game of Australian Football as being one of the most skilful games in the world. Since the game is based on players solving problems and making decisions all over the ground, my training is based on increasing the players’ understanding of the game by teaching team rules and a game-plan that will help simplify their decision-making. This requires a game sense/scenario style of training.

DEVELOPMENT OF A CLUB CULTURE

The club culture is developed by establishing our values and associated behaviours. The leadership group and the playing group monitor these behaviours. Regular constructive feedback is offered to ensure that the club maintains the club culture.

COMMUNICATION STYLE

I possess an assertive communication style. I am an effective active listener. I clearly state my expectations. I speak honestly and immediately to people. I check on their feelings and understandings. I need to show empathy, learn to receive feedback and offer constructive feedback, resolve conflicts and create an environment of which everybody wants to be a part. (A summary of a coaching philosophy of a senior coach in a local competition).

APPLICATION

Begin writing your coaching philosophy which reflects guidelines for your decision-making and actions.

COACHING STYLES

In a study of more than 500 coaches, five distinct categories of coaching styles were identified.

There is, however, no one perfect style that leads to success.

Most coaches possess certain characteristics of each coaching type but should be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of the various coaching styles.

If coaches are able to identify some of their shortcomings, they are in a position to improve.

AUTHORITARIAN COACH

Strong disciplinarian.
Well organised.
Good team spirit when winning.
Dissension when losing.
May be feared or disliked.

BUSINESS-LIKE COACH

Intelligent, logical approach.
Well planned and organised.
Up to date with new techniques.
Expects 100 per cent effort all the time.
May set goals too high for some team members.

NICE GUY COACH

Well liked.
Players sometimes take advantage of the coach’s co-operative nature.
Gets on well with the players of similar temperament.
Creates a supportive environment.

INTENSE COACH

Emphasises winning.
High anxiety often transmitted to players.

EASY-GOING COACH

Very casual.
Gives impression of not taking the game seriously.
May not be prepared to drive the team at training.
Well liked but may seem to be inadequate in some situations.

APPLICATION

1. Consider each of the coaching styles and their characteristics in the light of your personality and the age and ability of your team.
2. Consider when you would use that style and those characteristics.

FOOTBALLERS CAN BE DIVIDED INTO FOUR MAIN CATEGORIES ACCORDING TO THEIR SIZE AND AGE.

1. Pre-Club (AFL Auskick)
Up to 12 years
2. Junior Player 8-12 years
3. Youth Player 13-18 years
4. Senior Player

It is imperative that your coaching style and philosophy take into account the age and ability of your team.

COACHING PRINCIPLES

Fundamentals do apply to coaching, irrespective of the age group and level of competition.

The coaching principles that follow should form the foundation of your coaching style.

START WITH YOURSELF

Be organised

The good coach is well organised, is enthusiastic and establishes with his attitude the correct work ethic within the team. Training sessions and match-day arrangements are organised well in advance. The coach must be well presented, look the part and be in control at all times.

Be yourself

Don't be over concerned by other coaches or parents. Remember it's your team and you have the ultimate responsibility for their performance.

Use assistants

Surround yourself with competent people you can work with. Take time to appoint your assistant coach, team manager, runner and chairman of selectors. You must be comfortable with these appointments as you will often rely on their advice during the year.

Ensure each has a clear job description outlining their role and responsibility. Communicate with your assistants regularly and listen to their opinions and suggestions.

And plan:

1. SET GROUND RULES

Outline to your players your expectations on all aspects of training including:

- training days.
- dress required for training.
- start times.
- policy for late or non-arrival.

A policy should also be adopted on recommended behaviour off the field.

2. DEVELOP CLUB SPIRIT

Encourage togetherness both on and off the ground.

It is important to promote a family club, therefore attendance at club functions can be beneficial in team building.

Attempt to mix socially with all members of the football club.

On the ground, highlight 'team play' efforts rather than individual efforts. A team-lifting effort such as a goal scored from a good passage of play should be strongly emphasised.

3. RESPECT THE INDIVIDUAL

A coach working with a large group of footballers must understand that each player is unique in terms of temperament and personality and will exhibit varying behaviour.

Players must be treated as individuals. Ensure all players are recognised and treated equally.

4. JUNIOR CLUB INVOLVEMENT

The senior club coach must show a keen interest in junior teams and their training program. Junior club coaches should be consulted at the beginning of the year and at regular intervals during the season. Encourage similar coaching and training methods for all teams. The coach might look for opportunities to mentor younger or assistant coaches.

5. FUNDAMENTALS

The basic skills of football must be continually taught and practised. A coach must reinforce the basic possession and disposal skills. A team plan is of no value if players are unable to kick, mark, handball or perform other basic skills.

6. TEAM-PLAN

The coach must formulate a team-plan. This plan is comprised of:

Basics – that is, specific rules for forwards, backs, rucks and midfielders.

Tactics – these are the plays that vary from game to game depending on the weather, ground conditions, the opposition and the players at your disposal.

Team rules – that is, specific rules that all players will adhere to all over the ground, e.g. protect the ball carrier.

7. PLAYER RESPONSIBILITY

Encourage more experienced players to take on extra responsibilities at training and on match-day. Generate involvement and support for your role by seeking their opinion on opposition teams and your game-plan.

JUNIOR COACH CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

Be reasonable in your demands on players' time, energy and enthusiasm. Avoid 'over-playing' the talented players. Average players need and deserve equal time.

Remember that children participate for fun and enjoyment.

Ensure that equipment and facilities meet safety standards and are appropriate to the age and ability of the players.

Develop team respect for the ability of opponents as well as the judgment of umpires.

Follow the advice of a qualified sports trainer when determining when an injured player is ready to resume training or competition.

Keep yourself informed and updated on sound coaching principles.

Create opportunities to teach sportsmanship as well as the skills of the game.

Ensure your players understand their responsibilities and the need to participate according to the rules.

Demonstrate appropriate behaviour in your conduct both on and off the ground.

8. COMMUNICATION

The well-prepared coach provides continual feedback to the team and individuals within the team.

All players need feedback. The coach must avoid the tendency to talk to the better players and ignore low achievers.

Good communication is the essence of successful coaching. The coach must be able to deliver a message and at the same time listen to players.

9. PLAYER DISCIPLINE

Problems will occur during the course of a football year. Whether it be a late arrival for a vital game or disregard for club property, it is advisable to be well prepared.

A set of guidelines must be established early in the season to deal with a player breaching the rules.

It is preferable to allow player input into the rules, making them 'the team's rules' rather than simply dictated by the coach.

If an infringement does occur, listen to the player's explanation, explain that team rules have been broken and take action immediately.

This procedure should be firmly implemented.

10. KNOW AND CARE FOR THE GAME

The serious coach will have a genuine love for the game of football. The successful coach will be a student of the game striving to learn from other coaches, relevant football texts and videos as well as coach education courses.

Experience teaches us how to improve. If approached openly and enthusiastically, coaching as a profession offers great fulfilment and personal satisfaction.

11. PLANNING

Planning is the key to successful coaching. A yearly plan is essential for coaches if they wish to optimise the development of their players. The coach must evaluate the team's current standing and plan the coaching year, and individual sessions, to achieve optimal benefit.

12. SAFETY

It is the responsibility of the coach to provide an environment that does not expose the footballer to potential injury.

To be effective in this area, the coach must be aware of appropriate warm-up activities, protective equipment, the importance of fluid replacement, adequate dietary intake, rest and recovery, as well as safe playing and training facilities.

13. GOAL SETTING

Goals may be set by the coach and players together for individuals and the team.

These must be realistic, flexible and achievable.

Team and individual goals should be assessed regularly.

HOW DO YOU WANT TO BE REMEMBERED AS A COACH?



Chapter 2

BASIC SKILLS

Australian Football is often described as one of the most skilful games in the world.

With over 843,000 participants across the country, the game continues to grow and attract spectator support. Spectacular high marks, precise kicking, running and tackling are all features of the game.

How does a young player advance from the uncertain beginner stage to the highly skilled efficient movement of the elite footballer?

The learning of basic skills enables the player to participate in the game. The game includes many components such as decision making, fitness, team plans and communication. However, the learning of basic skills underpins the enjoyment factor in the game.

Like all training, the process of learning skills is a long-term process. Skilled movements such as kicking, marking and handball only come about through correct teaching and practice.

The coach who understands the factors that affect learning is in a position to teach skills to all age groups.

BASIC SKILLS OF FOOTBALL

- Understand the process of skill learning in football.
- Know the basic concepts in teaching a skill.
- Be able to identify and rectify skill problems in footballers.

HELPING HAND:
AFL players, including Brisbane Lion Simon Black, enjoy passing on basic skills to juniors.

DEVELOPING SKILLS

Young players pass through various stages from first learning a skill to mastering it. The length of time this takes will depend on the individual player and the quality of coaching.

Factors to be considered include:

- The ability of the coach to teach or demonstrate the skill.
- The skills must flow from simple to complex.
- Some players will learn at a faster rate.

PHASES OF SKILL LEARNING

In general, footballers pass through three stages of skill learning:

1. Early Stage

Where large numbers of errors occur as the player attempts to perform the skill. The coach needs to provide demonstrations, verbal instructions and positive corrective feedback to encourage the player.

2. Intermediate Stage

Where the footballer has achieved a basic level of competence and can start to perform the skill at a faster rate and practise it in an appropriately structured competitive situation. The coach is required to have the player practise with opposition and in game like situations.

3. Advanced Stage

When the skill becomes automatic the player is able to perform the skill under pressure without consciously thinking about it. The coach extends the players by working on advanced skills and team plays and players are encouraged to evaluate their own performances.



NEAT SKILLS:
Australian Football requires players to execute their skills constantly under pressure, as Brisbane Lion James Polkinghorne shows here.

INDIVIDUAL SKILLS

Skill can be categorised as an individual skill or team skill.

Once the player has learnt the basic individual skills, they should be further developed into game-like situations at training. The player is then required to make decisions about what to do with the ball, when to do it and how to execute the skill under pressure. However, it is vital that the basic skills of the game are taught correctly. The effective coach must break the skill down into simple manageable segments before progressing to more advanced skills.

THE SKILLS OF AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL

Individual skills in Australian Football can be classified under three general headings:

DISPOSAL SKILLS

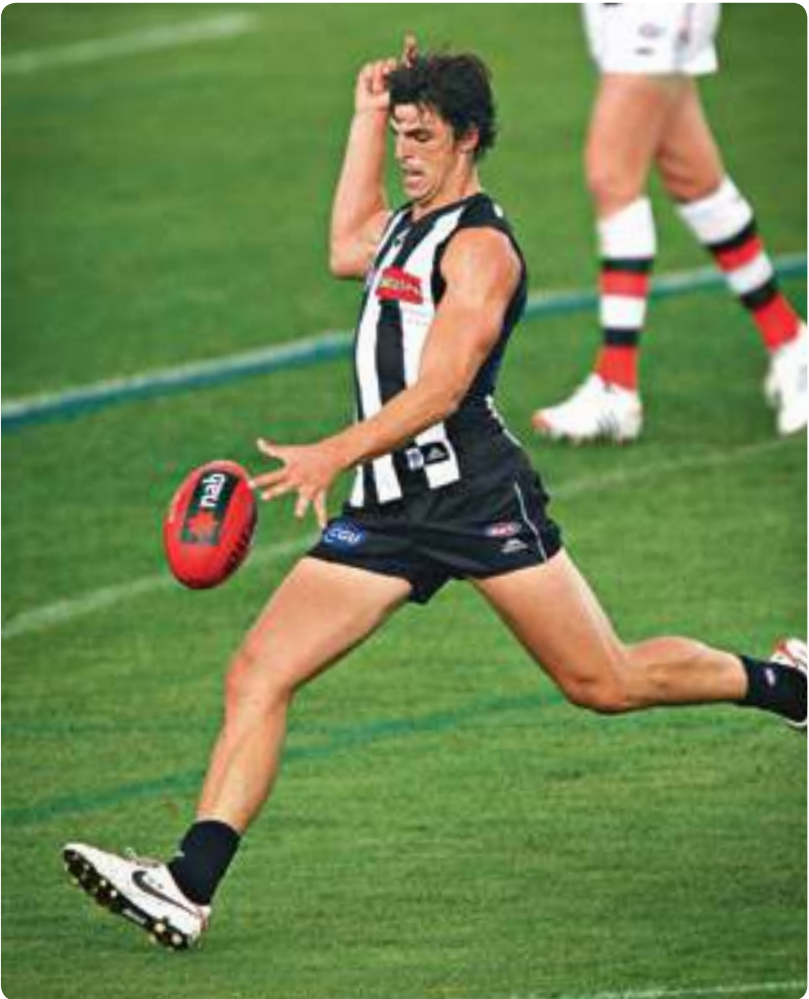
- Kicking
- Handball
- Ruck tap

POSSESSION SKILLS

- Marking
- Receiving Handball
- Bouncing
- Picking Up
- Evasion
 - Baulk
 - Side step
 - Spin

CONTACT SKILLS

- Tackling
- Bumping
- Shepherding
- Smothering
- Spoiling



RELAXED:
Collingwood's Scott Pendlebury has an excellent kicking style.

KICKING

Kicking is the most important skill in Australian Football. The basic skill should be taught at a young age and major faults rectified. The key to kicking well is to have a sound basic technique. While players’ kicking techniques may be different, and each player will develop their own natural kicking style, there are some critical actions that should be consistent for all players.

IMPACT: A firm foot striking. Strong, precise impact with the ball is critical to ensure the kick reaches its intended target.



STARTING POINT Impact

The best place to start when teaching kicking is at the point of ‘impact’. The term impact refers to the point when the player’s foot makes contact with the ball. If a coach has identified that a player’s kicking performance is ineffective due to the ball not spinning backwards, or having a poor flight pattern, then the first point of the kick to examine is the point of impact.

The coach should then work backwards to evaluate other possible causes of the error. With every kicking technique and every kicking situation in a match being different, a focus on grip, approach, leg swing and follow-through is not as critical as what happens at impact.

Players will learn to adapt these elements of kicking to the game situation they find themselves in. Some kicking situations in a match may mean the player does not have time to grip the ball normally, has to kick off one step, or has to produce a low flat kick that results in little follow-through. However, one thing that doesn’t change with kicking technique, regardless of the environment or pressure on the player, is impact.

A player’s ability to make strong, precise impact with the ball will ultimately decide if the kick reaches its intended target.



CHIPPING AWAY: St Kilda’s Sam Fisher demonstrates a precise impact when kicking around the corner.

CRITICAL LEARNING POINTS

To ensure impact is effective, there are three critical learning points to follow.



Control of the ball on to the foot

A player must be able to control the ball into the impact zone and on to their foot, striking the bottom third of the ball to make it spin backwards (drop punt).

Making the ball spin backwards is the first priority when learning to kick. Once the player gains confidence and an understanding of what it feels like to get the ball to spin backwards, they can move on to other aspects of the kick.

Ideally, the player guides the ball down with the guiding hand (as the kicking foot leaves the ground). It is released from around hip level, with the guiding arm and hand controlling the path and orientation of the ball.

The aim is to place the ball consistently in position. As this process begins, the non-guiding hand comes off the front of the ball and swings up and back in an arc.

Acceleration of the lower leg

To kick the ball with penetration and distance, a player must generate a high level of lower leg speed. Lower leg speed is generated through a number of elements, including taking a steadying and long last stride, trailing the kicking foot behind. The kicking foot is driven forward in an explosive action to make contact with the ball.

A large wind-up is not needed to create an accelerated lower leg action; however, a quick knee extension is required. The kicking action is a very natural movement, with the lower leg accelerating around the knee joint. The follow-through of a kick is not of great consequence to the effectiveness of the kick; it is a part of the kicking action that flows naturally from the actions prior to impact.

Firm foot

A firm foot refers to the player’s foot at impact. For efficient impact, the player’s foot and ankle must be fully extended and, when the foot makes contact with the ball, it presents the hardest and most stable platform to strike the ball. Contact with the foot should be around the top of the laces. Any further down the foot will involve a less stable platform and less efficient contact, and may also damage the foot if consistently repeated. This is similar to punching a heavy bag. You would not strike a punching bag with a weak or sloppy wrist as it would be ineffective. Kicking a football is very similar – you need to strike the ball with a firm foot.

CONTROL AND SPEED:

Geelong key forward Tom Hawkins controls the ball into the impact zone and generates power with “lower leg speed”.

KICKING

LOOK, FEEL AND SOUND

Look

The way a kick looks, feels and sounds to a player is important in learning, as it provides vital information related to the kicking action and possible improvements.

There are two aspects of what a good kick should look like

- The flight of the ball:
A quality kick will spin backwards and stay vertical, ensuring the ball’s flight path remains consistent. A backward-spinning ball won’t always ensure the ball goes straight but it will go further and its flight path will be predictable.
Often a player’s natural kicking action, where the leg is swung slightly around the body, will cause the ball to drift right to left for a right-footer and left to right for a left-footer. This is natural, and should not be changed as long as it is effective and players understand the way their kick will move in the air. However, players who have a straight leg swing may find it easier to consistently reproduce effective impact.
- What a good kicking action looks like:
Encourage players to visualise an effective kicking action and, at various stages in the learning process, ‘see’ the appropriate grip, approach, the height at which the ball is dropped and other elements.



IN CONTROL:
Brisbane Lions midfielder Andrew Raines guides the ball to his foot.

Feel

Feel is another important sensory factor relating to the kicking action. Players should be encouraged to feel the kicking action. For example, at the point of lower leg acceleration, players should feel the tension in the muscles around their thigh. At the point of impact, the ball should feel light on the foot. The foot should be firm and absorb little shock. The kick shouldn’t feel like you’ve had to kick it hard. Players should feel like they have ‘middled’ the ball. A firm foot will create a greater ‘sweet spot’ and players should remember what it feels like to middle the ball and make it spin backwards rapidly, and try to reproduce that feel every time they kick.

Sound

The sound at the point of impact should be a thud rather than a slapping sound. Players should be encouraged to listen for the sound on each kick and learn to associate the appropriate sound with good contact with the foot. This information can assist in evaluating the effectiveness of a kick and making modifications for the next kick.
How a kick looks, feels and sounds are inherent characteristics of the kicking action. These are important learning tools that allow a player to practise on their own, while providing immediate feedback about each kick.

Model kicks

Players can emulate good kicks such as Robert Murphy, Alan Didak, Daniel Rich, Trent Cotchin, James Kelly and Bryce Gibbs. While these players all have slightly different kicking techniques, the critical elements of kicking – controlling the ball on to the foot, lower leg acceleration and a firm foot at impact – are clearly displayed by all these players. Observing good players kicking is a great way to learn.

CLASSIC STYLE: Geelong’s James Kelly is an excellent kick for players to model themselves on.



TEACHING FOOTBALL SKILLS

TRAINING should be based on the notion that perfect practice makes perfect.

The coach is responsible for conducting practices that achieve the objectives for the practice session.

- In preparing a skill teaching episode within the training session, an effective coach should:
- Know how to introduce a skill,
 - Know the key points to emphasise,
 - Recognise skill errors, and
 - Know how to rectify skill faults.

1. How to introduce a skill

Players must understand the need to learn and practise skills. As a coach it is essential to highlight the importance of why a skill needs to be practised. Using video from match-day, or after consultation with the player, the coach can establish with a player the reasons why certain skills need to be practised.

2. Know the key points to emphasise

To create an effective learning situation, the coach must take into account the following points:

- a) Minimise the number of teaching points. Don't confuse the player with a long list of instructions – keep it simple.
- b) Likewise, when teaching an advanced skill, e.g. kicking for goal on the run, break the skill down into simple manageable stages.
- c) Ensure the skill is being performed correctly as practise makes permanent. During a training session, a coach should spend time observing and analysing various aspects of the session. Not only should the coach observe the general performance of the team, he must also analyse the specific performance of individual players within the group. The coach must also possess a good understanding of the skills of the game.
- d) Finally, communicate with the player using as many senses as possible. In teaching skills, a coach can communicate:
 - by showing/demonstrating or by asking the player to see their own movement.
 - by providing instructions or by asking the player to listen to the sounds associated with their movement.
 - by asking the player to feel the movement.

The SPIR method for teaching skills

S for SHOW (or Demonstrate)	Name the skill. Demonstrate the whole skill. Give your teaching points (no more than three points). Ask if there are any questions.
P for PRACTISE	Demonstrate the skill once again. Send the players out to practise immediately.
I for INSTRUCT (or Correct Errors)	Use only small groups. Stand back and observe each performer. Offer advice. Keep repeating the key points about the skill.
R for REWARD	Praise players for good efforts.

3. Recognising skill errors

- An important part of skill teaching is to determine whether correction is necessary.
- One procedure in identifying skill error is as follows?
- a) Watch the player carefully over a period of time.
 - b) Compare the player's performance with a model of correct performance.
 - c) Identify where there is a difference between the player's performance and the desired performance.
 - d) If possible, video the player to confirm these observations.
 - e) Identify under what conditions the problem occurs.
 - f) Measure the extent of the problem.
 - g) Determine whether the problem needs refining that is, is the problem restricting the player's development?
 - h) Determine whether the problems is only a reflection of the player's individual style.
 - i) If there are multiple causes of the problem, decide on what error to correct first.

Repetition with corrective feedback, praise for effort and encouragement enables learning to occur.

4. Rectifying skill faults

- There are broad techniques that coaches should use to remedy problems in the performance of a skill:
- a) Rebuild the skill.
When the performance deviates markedly from the desired model.
 - b) Renovate the skill.
When the performance only partially deviates from the desired model. Correct the component that is causing the error or the one component that is easiest to correct.

GAME SENSE AND DECISION-MAKING TRAINING

Training players to think

Game sense is an approach to coaching that uses games as the focus of the training session. By focusing on the game (not necessarily the full game), players are encouraged to:

- Become more tactically aware and be able to make better decisions during the game in pressure situations.
- Start thinking strategically about game concepts.
- Develop football skills such as kicking and handballing under pressure within a realistic and enjoyable context, rather than practising them in isolation.
- Develop a greater understanding of the game being played.

Game sense activities also aim to:

- Increase individual and team motivation to training – players love to play games!
- Physiologically prepare the body where conditioning is specific to the game.

This approach to coaching is ‘game centred’ rather than ‘technique centred’. While most traditional coaching sessions have focused on the practise of techniques, the game sense session focuses on the game.

In the past, technique has often been over-emphasised within training sessions. While technique is an important part of an overall skill, it is often taught in isolation, without requiring players to think and apply the techniques to the situations required in the game. By using game sense, players are challenged to think about what they are actually doing, and why. Players are taught to use the appropriate technique at the right time and place in the pressure situations of a game.

When designed well, mini-games appeal to the players’ ability to problem solve and process information and subsequently raise their levels of attention and desire to do well.

WHY USE GAME SENSE?

The fact that games are intrinsically motivating is probably the best reason why coaches should adopt game sense, but there are a number of other reasons for using this approach:

- Encourages a holistic approach to the teaching of games – players are taught to solve problems that arise in a game through tactical awareness and understanding; skills are developed in a more meaningful environment.
- Promotes enjoyment for participation – a fun environment increases motivation levels and encourages participation.
- Assists the beginner, who often has limited technical knowledge of a sport. For coaches of beginning players, it is more appropriate to set challenges for players through games rather than conduct technique-based sessions. This lessens the chance of developing players with inflexible techniques who are less able to cope with changes in the playing environment.
- Aids efficient group management – game sense is particularly useful as group management is often easier if the players are having fun and less time is being spent on drills; teaching space, equipment and time can be used more efficiently. It also lets the coach cater for all ability levels by encouraging players to concentrate on the game aspects, rather than on the textbook

execution of the technique which some may never master.

- Coach talk and intervention is kept to a minimum – the coach questions players to challenge them to find solutions. Rather than providing all the answers; cooperation between the coach and the players is increased due to the player involvement.

Providing tactical situations that are repetitive within small-sided games assists players to improve their decision-making ability through experience and learning from their good and poor decisions

THE COACH’S ROLE IN GAME SENSE Facilitation

The role the coach takes in game sense is somewhat different. The coach adopts a role as a facilitator and co-ordinator rather than a director and creates situations where players have to find solutions for themselves.

The coach guides rather than directs players in their understanding and playing of the game. The coach designs activities and games that progressively challenge players to develop an understanding of the strategies, skills and rules required to succeed in games.

The coach should construct games with specific objectives relative to the team and individuals, such as first-option handball.

If “first-option handball” was the theme of the training session or week, then a game would be devised with this in mind, such as a game of six-on-six handball football played on a field of 30m x 20m.

Long-term development

This change in role should not be interpreted as a lesser role for the coach. In fact, it requires greater planning of activities and organisation on the part of the coach. Although many coaches take on

coaching as a short-term proposition, perhaps for just one season, game sense is about the long-term development of players.

Providing an environment where players can develop the strategic side of their game, as well as becoming an independent thinker, is a long-term goal. Coaches at all levels can contribute to this side of a player’s development.

TRADITIONAL V GAME SENSE TRAINING SESSION

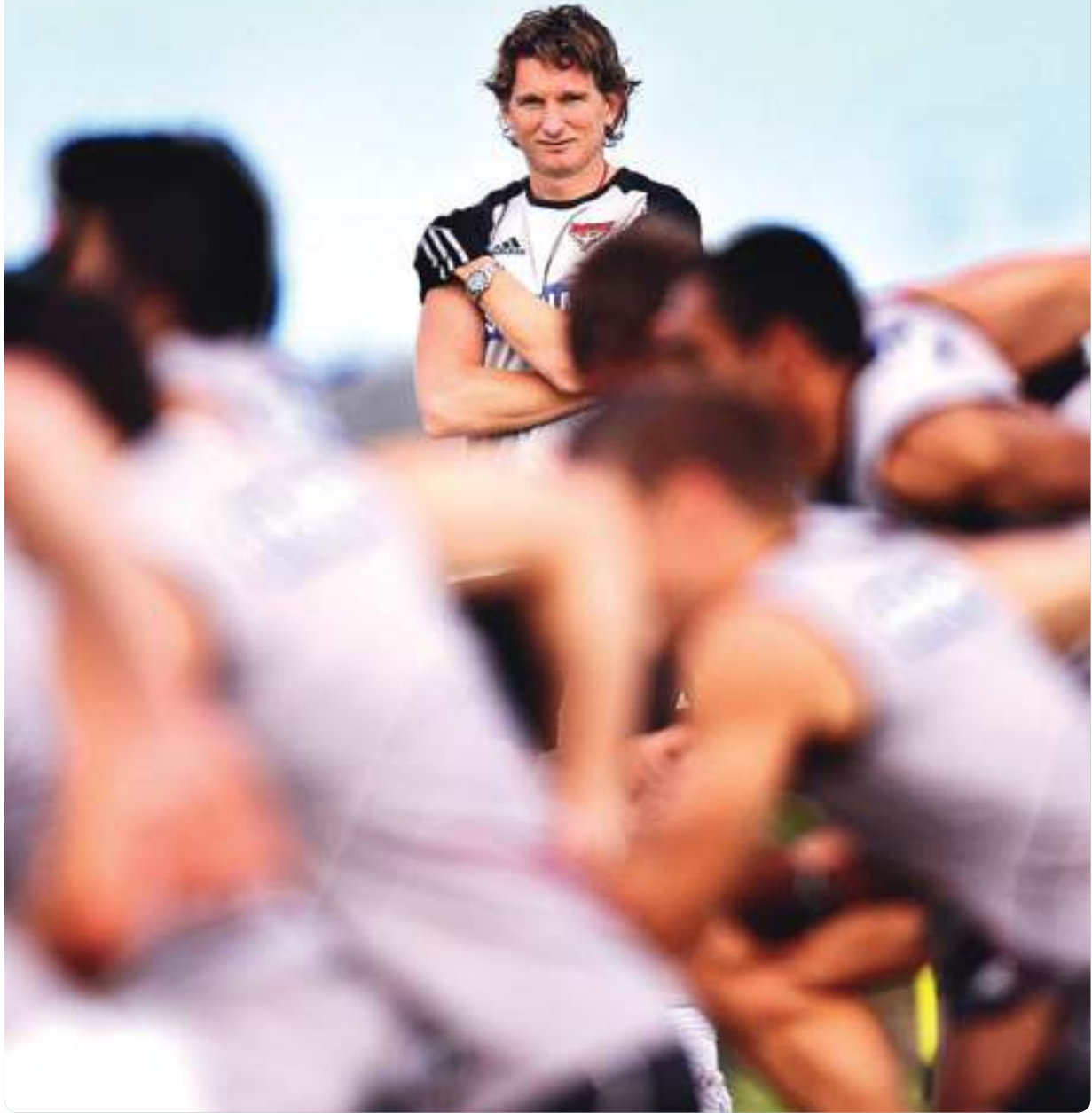
For many years, coaches have adopted a traditional approach to training, which would look something like this:

- 2-3 laps warm-up.
- Stretches.
- Technique drills such as lane handball and kicking.
- Skill drills.
- Game drills such as full-ground activities specific to the game-plan.
- Cool down, including stretches.



QUICK HANDS: A first-option handball drill, as demonstrated here by the Bulldogs’ Robert Murphy, gives players a specific objective at training.

IN CHARGE: Essendon coach James Hird oversees a warm-up routine at training. It is important to warm up before taking a game sense approach to training.



A game sense approach to a training session may look something like:

- Warm-up game.
- Questions, challenges and discussion about the game (particular theme).
- Return to game.
- Questions/challenges.
- Extension of the game.
- Further extension of the game, incorporating other team-plans and themes.

MODIFYING GAMES FOR A PURPOSE

With a game sense approach to coaching and teaching skills, the coach as facilitator plays a very important role in modifying games to emphasise or exaggerate a particular aspect or theme, for example:

- Number of players – 2-6 to maximise decisions (3 v 2, 2 v 2, etc).
- Number of possessions.
- Size of playing area.
- The main game rules, e.g. length of time a player can hold the ball once tagged (1 sec, 2 secs etc).
- Scoring areas.
- Equipment used (such as a soccer ball if playing a game of International Rules).
- Structure of scoring system.

Many effective training sessions are mixtures (a balance) of the two. When developing games for a particular purpose, as a coach you must have answers to some key questions before explaining the drill to your team. Some questions to think about when developing your game sense drills can include:

- What particular themes or tactics do I want to focus on in the game?
- What will be the main challenges to the players?

- What are the rules and who will umpire?
- What will the dimensions of the playing area be?
- How can I extend or modify the game to continually challenge the players?
- How can I construct bias if necessary to make individuals work harder than others?
- How can I include all players in the game?
- Will I carefully pre-select teams or will I run with several captains choosing teammates?

When discussing game sense, one very important aspect is that of questioning players on specific outcomes or focusing on specific aspects, which have been evident or not evident during the game.

It is important not to spend too long questioning the team as part of the success of a game sense approach is in fact the playing. Questions will generally relate to aspects of the game and are used to enable players to reflect and then visualise in a match-day situation.

The types of questions a coach might use include:

Essentially questions revolve around four things:

- Time (When ...?)
- Space (Where ...?)
- Risk (Which option; Why ...?)
- Execution (How ...?)

Examples could include

- “Who was the best player to handball to?”
- “What happens when you handball short?”
- “Where was the best place to run?”

- “How can you create more time for the receiver?”
- “How can you identify if a teammate is clear?”

Questions can be designed for individual or team learning.

**PLAYER EMPOWERMENT ...
PLAYERS AS GAME-DESIGNERS**

So far, information relating to game sense has been coaching-team facilitated and led. Once players are familiar with the concept of game sense and its relationship with aspects of the game, players can then be empowered to work in small groups or individually and presented a task of developing a game.

This can be an exciting, enjoyable and valuable process in reinforcing key concepts, tactics and themes and assists in the development of leadership within the group.

In this approach, the coach would explain the concept and construct some clear guidelines which players would use to develop a game. Guidelines might include:

- Your game must run for about 15-20 minutes.
- It must focus on a particular aspect of the team-plan (themes or guidelines).
- How will you explain the game?
- Will there be a scoring system?
- Who will umpire the game?
- How will teams be selected?
- What are some examples of player behaviour you might see, and how will you explain this to the group with strategies to improve this area?
- What equipment is required? Who will organise this?
- What will the playing dimensions be? Can this be extended?

COACHES, STEP BACK

It is necessary to stress that the players’ interest in processing information and problem solving at the same time will only be possible if the coach steps back from the practice and allows players the time to confront the challenges on their own and/or with teammates. Well-designed practices will ensure that the desired outcomes are achieved according to program guidelines.

During practice, coaches should concentrate on providing accurate feedback and prompting. If it is essential to accelerate the learning process beyond what is occurring during a particular mini-game, the coach should attempt to interact by

asking questions rather than offering a series of directions. By using this coaching approach, the coach can provide the player with a balance of interactions which contains a healthy mix of ‘do as you are told’ and self-discovery practices.

Teachable moments

One key identifying and acting on teachable moments – when a player or group is most likely to learn from a situation where learning is reinforced. This can include things like:

Instant replay – if you see something happening which is critical to the play/aim of the activity, you can call an immediate stop, reset the situation

(freeze the play like pausing your video) then have the players look at the set-up (structure) and ask them key questions about it. Restart the play from that point and look for players making a better response to the situation (individually or team).

TV analyst – set up a rotation game with three teams (e.g. three teams of four). Two teams play for a period while the third team observes and acts like TV analysts and participate in the questioning and feedback.

Video training – consider videoing some aspects of games training and reviewing/discussing them with the players later.

GAMES SUITABLE FOR THIS APPROACH

Following are two examples of ways to organise games which can be used to develop game sense.

KEEPINGS OFF

Themes: Clear communication, protect ball carrier at all times, follow your skill disposal.

Equipment: Football, different coloured tops for “chasers”

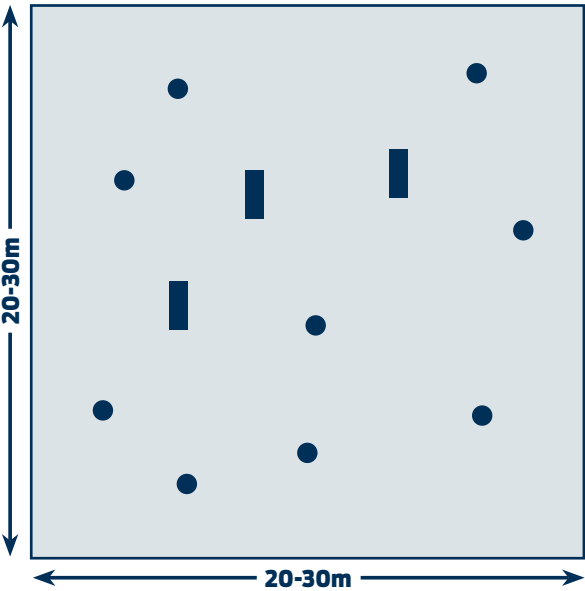
Key: Chasers (3 players)
Possessors (9 players)

Instructions/Rules:

- 1. Ball can be handballed only. Once an unforced disposal occurs, “chasers” team get possession of the ball from the point at which ball was released.
- 2. Compulsory rules are:
 - Must nominate who the player is handballing to (communication).
 - Must make a concerted effort to protect the receiver (teammate) by blocking and then tagging your receiving teammate after delivering ball (protecting ball carrier and following possession as in a game situation).
- 3. The aim of the game of “keepings off” is for the team in possession to maintain possession using quick hands and following team guidelines, each time “chasers” touch the ball or the ball hits the ground as an ineffective disposal then a point is awarded to “chasers”. Game lasts 1-2 minutes before three more chasers rotate.
- 4. Game can be played by any number but field must be adjusted particularly if introducing short kicking. Other extension ideas include playing seven players in possession and five chasers, and ultimately even numbers.



TALKING TACTICS: North Melbourne’s coaching staff and players go through an extensive review of a game using footage.



CORRIDOR FOOTBALL

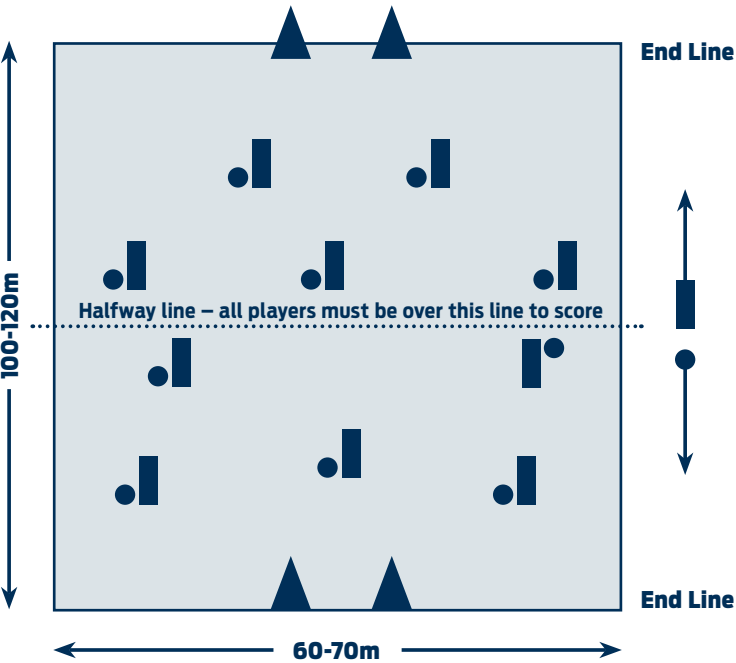
Themes: High skill disposal in pressure situations, hard attacking running and accountability.

Equipment: Cones as boundaries, football, two different sets of jumpers/T-shirts. (Full length of ground can be used. Cones or portable goals can be used for a shorter playing area).

Basic rules

- 1. Seven to eight players per team.
 - 2. Each half seven to eight minutes with a one-minute interval.
 - 3. Normal AFL rules with the following modifications:
 - a) Player last touching the ball prior to it crossing the boundary loses possession to the opposition who return it to play from behind the line with a kick or handball.
 - b) Goals may only be scored if all members of the attacking team are on the forward side of the centre line when the ball passes through the posts.
- Scoring as for normal AFL rules.

There are many other games in use, including touchball (tackling and non-tackling, indoor and outdoor), touch rugby (handball), forwards and backs, front and square grid ball, centre square clearance game, end ball, etc. Coaches are encouraged to develop various aspects of game skills.

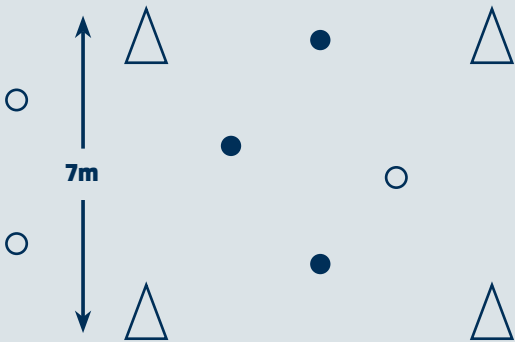


GAME SENSE INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

DEFENDER IN – WARM-UP (ACTIVITY)

Handball between the three players.

- Keep adding defenders one by one looking for:
- move to space from receiver.
 - defensive strategy.
 - assisting player with ball.

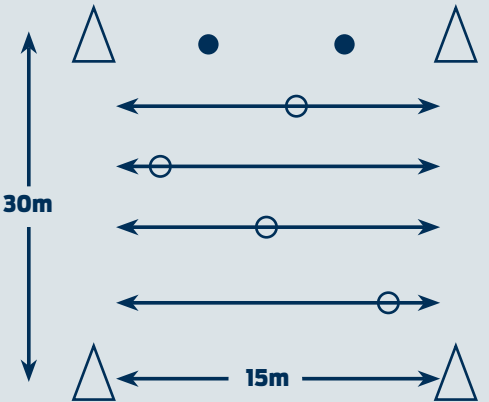


CROSS THE RIVER

Pairs aim to take ball from one riverbank to the other.

Four taggers need to be negotiated.

Taggers can only move in a line across the grid.

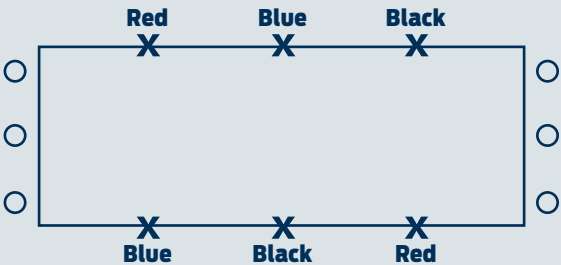


TRI DEFENCE

Threes work the ball from one end of the area to the other.

360 defence – Coach calls colour to create 3 v 2.

Add a kicking option.



FIXING ERRORS

Skill errors do occur.

Often skill errors occur in a game situation because of a decrease in the amount of time allowed to perform or the need to perform the skill in a smaller space. Individualised coaching can rectify many of these problems. Some common skill errors and suggested remedies follow. In all instances, it is preferable to break the skill down into its simplest form to ensure the skill can be performed at the basic level.

BREAKING CLEAR: Collingwood midfielder Luke Ball looks for options to get the ball to a teammate in a better position.



KICKING – Ball guidance

Problem: Using two hands to slam the ball on to the kicking foot.

Remedy: Using the one-handed technique – the ball is held in the palm and fingers of one hand underneath its bottom end. Other hand is placed behind back.

Problem: Using both hands to guide the ball on to the kicking foot.

Remedy:

1. Walk 2-3 steps, drop ball on to a mark on the ground.
2. Repeat, bringing kicking foot through.
3. Repeat with one finger of opposite hand on the side of the ball.
4. With one hand behind the back, use the one hand drop.
5. Hold the ball with two hands, walk through the kick, guide the ball down with one hand.

KICKING – Goalkicking

Problem: Inconsistency.

Remedy:

1. Focus on a target behind the goals.
2. Begin a short distance from the goals (about 5m) and increase as the kick improves.
3. At all times, player’s optimum power should be used. (Optimum power is the power at which player kicks comfortably).

MARKING – Overhead marking

Problem: Incorrect positioning of fingers and thumbs.

Remedy:

1. Mime mark (stress fingers spread and correct position of thumbs behind the ball).
2. Player grabs ball from coach’s hand held above player’s head.
3. Throw ball from hand to hand.
4. Throw in air and catch; bounce off a wall.
5. Increase frequency of catches and introduce opposition.
6. Run, jump and mark. Adjust your hands as the ball approaches.

HANDBALL

Problem: Repetition – Repeated handball can cause pain to the hands.

Remedy: Both hands can be used to minimise the pain of hitting the ball. Use the platform hand to help propel the ball. Develop movement with the platform hand before the ball is hit.

Problem: Throwing the ball in the air/dropping platform hand before hitting the ball.

Remedy:

1. Stabilise platform hand on table, fence or partner’s back.
2. ‘Fist into hand’. Player grabs punching fist with platform hand after punching the ball.

BOUNCING – Ball guidance

Problem: Ball not returning.

Remedy:

1. Show player what part of the ball must hit the ground.
2. Player holds hands over top end of the ball and bounces.
3. Bounce in stationary position – begin down on one knee to minimise distance. Progress to walking.
4. Introduce time trials and opposition.

TACKLING

Problem: Bad tackling can give away free kicks.

Remedy:

1. Begin with the opponent stationary and the tackler walking in.
2. Have the tackler jogging in.
3. Extend this further to both the tackler and the opponent moving.

Problem: Loose tackling relieves pressure on opponents.

Remedy:

1. Focus on your opponent’s hips rather than the ball to prepare to tackle.
2. Keep your head down relatively low and tucked into your own shoulder, thus avoiding being struck by an accidental elbow.
3. If at all possible, pin at least one of your opponent’s arms which makes it very difficult for him to dispose of the ball legally.

SMOTHERING

Problem: Ineffective smothering through incorrect technique.

Remedy:

1. The hands are brought from hip level, close together.
2. The arms and the hands are extended at about 45 degrees over the kicking boot.
3. The person smothering must keep his eyes on the ball at all times.

SPOILING

Problem: Infringing while attempting to spoil.

Remedy:

1. Practise spoiling without infringing on opponent.
2. Have players calling for ball from spoil.
3. Direct spoil to these players.

BUMP

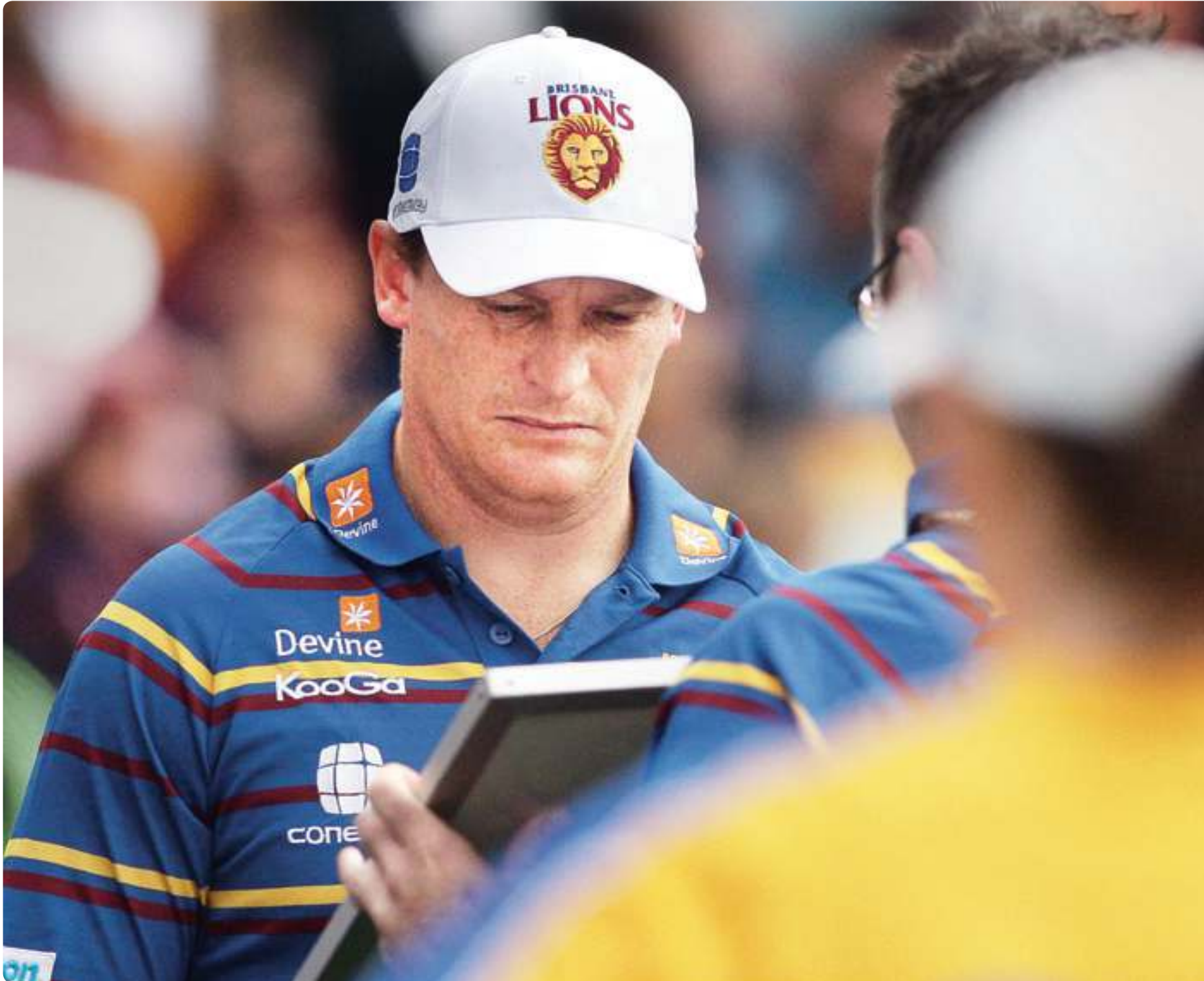
Problem: Bumping incorrectly giving away a free kick.

Remedy:

1. Lean towards the opponent pushing hard from the foot.
2. The arm is bent with the elbow tucked into the side.
3. Make contact with the shoulder and upper arm – preferably when an opponent is settled on one foot, i.e. so that he is easier to unbalance.
4. The bumping player should keep his feet on the ground at all times. Only bump when an opponent does not have the ball. If he does have the ball apply a tackle.

UNDER PRESSURE: Richmond’s Chris Newman is tackled by Brisbane Lion Todd Banfield.





Chapter 3

PLANNING

PHASES OF A YEARLY PLAN

In order to be successful in coaching, the coach must be well prepared and plan ahead. The importance of planning cannot be underestimated. A team's training schedule should be organised and planned to ensure goals are achieved. The planning process therefore should be an organised, methodical and scientific procedure that assists the players and coach to achieve predetermined standards.

To determine the success of the yearly plan, it is essential that a thorough evaluation is completed by the coach, assistant coaches and players. An evaluation at the end of each phase of the yearly plan enables the coach to modify the plan for the upcoming phase. At the end of the year, an evaluation will enable the coach to make modifications to the plan for the next year.

MASTER PLAN

- Understand the importance of adopting a yearly coaching plan.
- Recognise the various phases of the yearly plan and how they relate to the training program.
- Be able to plan and organise the training session and a set match-day procedure.

MAN WITH A PLAN:
Brisbane Lions coach
Michael Voss reviews
the team's strategy.

PHASES OF A YEARLY PLAN

A yearly training program has to be simple and flexible. All coaches should have a yearly plan dividing the training year into small phases.

Each of these phases will have specific training objectives. This enables the coach to work within manageable segments. It helps him ensure his team achieves the best possible performance at a set time.

The yearly plan is generally divided into three main phases of training:

- 1. Transition Phase (Off-Season)
- 2. Preparation Phase (Pre-Season)
- 3. Competition Phase (In-Season)

Football is seasonal, with a competition period of about six months, which normally follows a three or four-month preparation period. This leaves a transition period of two or three months.

1. Transition phase (October-November)

This eight to 10-week period follows the intense competitive season. The aim during this time should be to maintain physical conditioning and facilitate recovery. The following principles apply to the transition phase.

- a. Maintain a general level of fitness around 50 per cent to 60 per cent of the competition phase.
- b. Change the training venue and alter the type of training.
- c. Analyse past performance and construct a yearly plan for the new season.

During this period, players should stay active to maintain endurance fitness and control body weight. Off-season recreational activities are useful. This period is the most suitable time for overcoming weaknesses in body structure, conditioning and skill. Weight training programs, speed work and skill development can be carried out.

2. Preparation phase (December-March)

During this time, the footballer’s general physical preparation and skills can be developed. The early phase is a period of high volume training, which must be increased at a gradual rate. Volume continues to increase progressively until the middle of the preparation phase when intensity is gradually increased as volume decreases. During the later stages of this phase, increasing emphasis should be placed on skill and strategy practice. The following principles apply:

- d. Provide a high volume of training at 30 per cent to 40 per cent intensity.
- e. Aim to develop endurance, strength and speed as the foundation of the season ahead.
- f. Progressively increase the workload devoted to improving individual and team skills.

NOTE

All coaches should adopt an annual training program.

A planned and systematic approach to training is crucial to the on-field success of the team. Before the planning of any phase of a new season, a thorough evaluation of the previous season must be conducted. Individual player and team performance assessment should be carried out by the coach. This should include all aspects of team fitness, skills, match performances, nutrition, lifestyles and relationships between coaching staff and off-field personnel.

3. Competition phase (April-September)

During the competition phase, coaches should emphasise skill practice and the development of team plays, while working to maintain fitness levels which were developed in the preparation phase. The typical football week is characterised by Sunday being a free day, Monday training relatively light, with a high volume, high intensity workout on Tuesday, with reduced training leading up to the Saturday match-day. Principles to apply include:

- g. Maintenance and improvement in level of conditioning.
- h. Develop and practise team plays and tactics.
- i. Post-match recovery.
- j. Reduction in the volume and intensity of training before the finals.

Coaching efficiency is heavily dependent on how well the coach is organised and how effectively the training plan is structured.



SWEATING IT OUT: Much of the hard work to prepare for the rigours of the season are done in the gym, as the Dockers demonstrate here.

THE WEEKLY PLAN

Just as the football year can be divided into three main phases (Transition, Preparation and Competition), so too can these phases be further subdivided.

Training progresses in cycles of activity usually considered to be of a seven-day duration.

The format of these cycles will depend on the number of training sessions held each week.

In planning the typical competitive week, the coach should take into account both the volume and intensity of the training. The coach must allow for the physical nature of the game and the limitations of his players in coping with heavy training loads without adequate rest.

Overtraining is a problem and can lead to a sudden drop in performance. The coach must be able to evaluate all these factors in planning the weekly program.

The effective coach must monitor the players’ performances and tailor the volume and intensity of training to have the team at a peak before each match.

Most senior clubs organise two or three training sessions a week, with rest days between sessions. A complete rest day or a light training session becomes an important consideration during the normal rigours of a football season. This ‘hard-easy’ approach to the planning of a weekly training program is a sound principle to follow. It allows players to progressively adapt to greater levels of work without suffering undue fatigue.

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Sunday | ■ Recovery-rehabilitation or light run |
| Monday | ■ Cross training-swim, jog, light skills |
| Tuesday | ■ 90-100 minutes intensive and competitive |
| Wednesday | ■ Rest or specialist training |
| Thursday | ■ 60-75 minutes – skills and team plays |
| Friday | ■ Rest |
| Saturday | ■ Game |

BE AWARE

The following training variations should be kept in mind:

- Senior or older players require less intensity of training.
- Avoidance of injuries during training is an important consideration.
- Training is boosted mid-year and tapers off 2-3 weeks before the finals.

TRAINING SESSION

The training session is the basic building block of coaching.

At training, football skills are learned, conditioning and fitness levels are achieved and team confidence is developed.

In football, the training session, will contain various drills set between a warm-up at the beginning and a cool down at the end.

To decide on what drills are suitable for a particular session, the coach must first evaluate the team performance and then plan for optimal practice time.

Goals should be established before each segment of a training session. This will ensure individual and team deficiencies and strengths will be focused on.

Players should be educated to analyse their own performance and set personal goals for training so that they attend training with a purpose in mind.

When planning a training session, the following considerations should be noted:

1. Venue

Various venues can be used during the football year, particularly in the pre-season period. In addition to their home ground, coaches should seek alternative venues ranging from an athletics track or swimming pool, to a well-grassed hilly surface, indoor gymnasium or basketball court.

If carefully selected, these venues can greatly improve the general standard of training.

2. Equipment

The well-prepared coach will have a variety of equipment on hand at training.

This can include:

- Footballs, pump
- Cones, witches hats
- Whistle, stop watch
- Handball target
- Tackle bags, ruck bags
- Portable goal posts
- Training jumpers and an adequate supply of water for players during and after training

3. Outline of the training session

Many coaches now provide the players with an outline of the training session before training. Players can be informed on the overall aims of the session in addition to the approximate length and intensity of the practice.

4. Be specific

Training must be specific to the demands of the game. With running training, the distance covered, the intensity of the running and the number of repetitions must be appropriate to the match and the various playing positions.

It is essential that running work be supplemented with activities using footballs. This is particularly important during mid-season when the amount of daylight is limited.

The game demands that decision-making skills and implementation of the style of play and team-plan be part of the training program. The effective coach will incorporate these components with the idea of practise as you play and play as you practise, highlighting the importance of specificity within the training session.

5. Quality not quantity

In general terms, the emphasis should be on a quality non-stop training session rather than one of low volume and long duration.

TRAINING PLAN

The following training plan can be used to record details for each session:

TRAINING PLAN – IN SEASON

Date

Venue

Attendance

Conditions

Aim of session

SESSION OUTLINE (Brief description – include drills, diagrams and time schedule)

1. Warm-up

2. Skills/decision making/style of play/team plan section

3. Warm-down

REMINDERS

INJURED PLAYERS – REHABILITATION

Name	Injury	Program

SESSION EVALUATION

THE TRAINING SESSION – IN SEASON

The primary objective during the playing season is to maintain the level of match fitness of every player. In addition, it is important to develop individual and team skills through a good selection of drills.

FORMAT OF A TRAINING SESSION

1. WARM-UP

This consists of two parts:

- General warm-up involving running and ‘loosening up’ exercises.
- Specific warm-up to include dynamic stretching and flexibility exercises. Skill exercises should also be included – for example handball, marking and short kicking.

There are no time limits to the average length of the warm-up. An adequate warm-up must ensure the players’ muscles are prepared for action and the players themselves are ‘tuned in’ ready to perform to their optimum. Generally 10-15 minutes is adequate for this activity.

2. SKILLS SECTION

Following the warm-up the coach usually instructs the players on the individual skills or team strategies to be practised during the session.

Skill practice should occupy 40-50 minutes of the session. It has two general components:

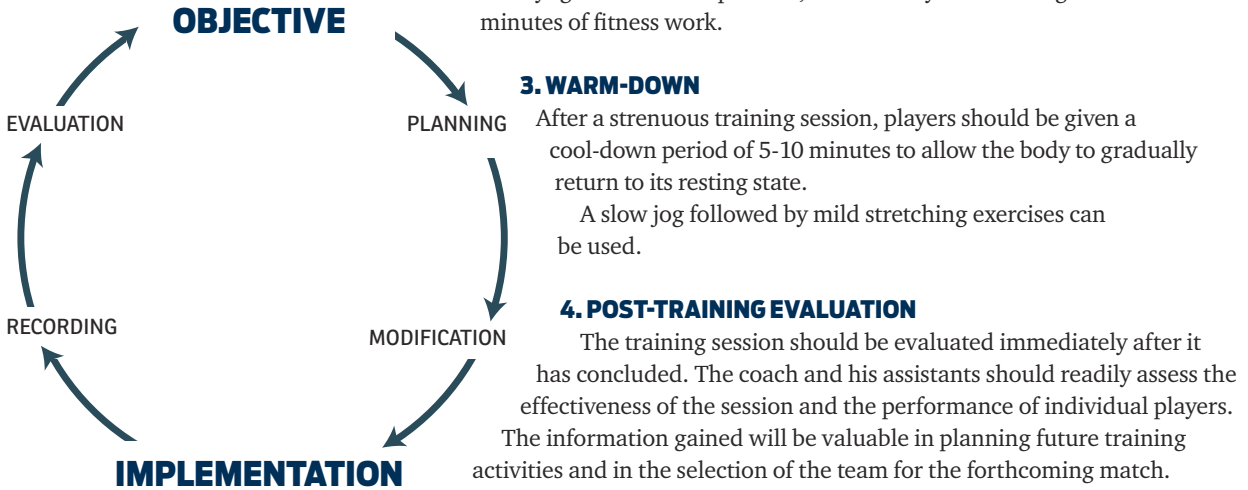
- revision of previously acquired skills or strategies and;
- introduction of a new skill or strategy.

Drills will be performed involving single players or groups of players working together.

Specific skills e.g. kicking, marking, handball, shepherding, tackling may be emphasised.

Training drills that emphasise team plays are also practised. These can include kick-off practice, specialised ruck work or forward plays.

Drills must be realistic and complement the game situation. Functional training is the key to success on match-day. A ‘game-centered’ component in the training session allows the players to practise decision-making and aids in the development of strategically thinking players. See Chapter Four for more details. Conditioning or fitness work may follow the skill activities. When the loss of daylight affects skill practice, a coach may end training with 10-15 minutes of fitness work.



MATCH-DAY

Match-day is an opportunity for the coaching staff and players to demonstrate their skills, their style of play and their team-plan.

The final two hours leading up to a match is a critical planning and management time for the coach. This time is important for team bonding, reinforcing the team-plan and giving individual players specific instructions.

It is the culmination of the previous week’s preparation.

PREPARATION: Match-day is when coaches such as North Melbourne’s Brad Scott must demonstrate their skills and their game-plan.



Pre-match meeting (about one hour before match)

In this meeting, the coach must reinforce team tactics decided earlier in the week and practised at training. Little new information should be given. This brief meeting should aim to:

- Eliminate all confusion and distraction.
- Calm anxious players.
- Unite all players in the sense of belonging to a team.
- Clearly spell out the team-plan for the game with reference to the ground condition and opposition team.

General warm-up and stretching (about 30min before)

Players should start preparing physically for the game with the pre-match warm-up. They should start their own personal preparation with individual stretching and ball handling. Following this, there is a general team warm-up of four to five minutes to be conducted by the fitness adviser.

During the warm-up period ,the build-up should be gradual. The coach must maintain a calm approach and use this time to individually talk to players, giving final instructions and reassuring them with positive words of encouragement.

At the end of the group warm-up, allow time for individual preparation. All players react differently before a match and therefore should be given the opportunity to have a few minutes to themselves.

Pre-match address (about 10min before)

Finally, just before going out on the ground, the coach should address the team as one.

The final instructions should provide a concise summary of the team plan with reference to the key areas of that plan.

Concentrate on gaining the early initiative and working hard against the opposition. Look no further than the first quarter. Given the stress of the pre-match situation, footballers can absorb a limited number of instructions, therefore the message should be brief.

On-ground warm-up (about 5min before)

Many coaches ignore the final few minutes before the start of a match.

However, the on ground warm-up provides a great opportunity for players to ‘acclimatise’ to the ground and prevailing weather conditions.

A short, sharp skills warm-up should be organised.

This can be followed by a general kicking session, especially important for forwards.

Team leaders can be given responsibilities in this situation with the captain giving a last-minute reminder to fellow team members.

The match

Full concentration is required during the course of the game. A well-organised coach will be prepared to meet all contingencies and deal with them in a quick and efficient manner.

In the coach’s box

Select the personnel you require to sit with you in the coach’s box to observe the game. Try to avoid interference or distraction from outside influences.

Use of assistants

An assistant coach or injured player can be used to note down key plays or instructions as they occur. These can be useful for the quarter-time address.

Team runner

Use the runner to relay messages and to positively reinforce passages of team play. The runner can also provide feedback from the players to the coach. Messages sent to players must be about improving their performance and must be measured.

Quarter-time/three quarter-time breaks

The quarter breaks should be used productively to allow players to rest and seek medical attention if required. Most teams initially break into positional groups for initial feedback and discussion. Feedback should be given to the team and individual players on the adherence to the style of play the team has adopted and/or the team-plan. If statistics are kept relating to these points, they should be provided. The coach can seek out individual players for special instruction. Speak briefly to the team, commenting on the general pattern of play with emphasis on your attacking and defensive play. Look toward the next quarter of the game, highlighting the type of team play required.

Half-time interval

The half-time interval allows players to rest and gives the coach and match committee time to assess the team’s performance, examine the statistical information and make adjustments to the team line-up. Provide similar feedback as at quarter-time.

The coach should spend time talking positively to individual players, suggesting ways they can improve.

If the team is playing below its ability, it should be told so. The coach can be critical of the team performance but should avoid individual criticism.

In the half-time address, the coach can review the first-half performance and suggest ways of improving the team effort in the next quarter.

Post-match

Immediately after the game, briefly sit the players down and provide general feedback on the team’s performance.

Players should be evaluated according to their adherence to the style of play and/or the team-plan. This enables the coach to be specific about the feedback and enables the players to focus on their team performance.

Be positive, outlining the good features of the game. You might ask the players ‘What did we do well?’ Followed by ‘What can we improve on?’

Listen carefully to the players’ responses. They will provide valuable information on the team’s performance.

The coach, in consultation with the match committee, is then able to plan training for the week ahead.

Injured players should be treated and given appropriate attention before leaving the ground.

MATCH-DAY PROCEDURE

All players have varying preparations on match-day. As a general rule, the following format is widely used:

12.30pm approx
Arrive at ground

1.00pm
Pre-match meeting

1.30pm
General warm-up and stretching

1.50pm
Pre-match address

1.55pm
On ground warm-up

2.00pm
Game starts



Chapter 4

THE TRAINING SESSION

The training session is the basic building block of coaching. In order to conduct a meaningful and successful training session the football coach should follow the four stages of planning outlined below:

1. SET THE OVERALL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Decide how this practice fits into the overall picture of training. Each training session should be organised and seen as part of a series.

2. SET SPECIFIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Decide which individual and team skills or energy systems will be developed in the session. Training must reflect the game situation and be designed to improve team strengths and eliminate weaknesses.

3. BUILD IN THE PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE TRAINING SESSIONS

Successful training will result if the coach is aware of the following principles of effective training.

4. DESIGN THE TRAINING SESSION

Be prepared. Make sure you know every element of what is to come before you begin.

WELL DRILLED

- Understand the principles of effective training.
- Assist in the design and organisation of a training session.
- Examine the various types of skill drills and provide details on their implementation.

EFFECTIVE TRAINING:
Sydney Swans players including Ryan O’Keefe work on their handball skills at training.

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE TRAINING

The coach needs to be aware of the general principles to ensure effective training.

Awareness makes it possible for coaches to formulate training programs and sessions that have a positive impact on both the team and the individual.

In becoming aware of the principles of effective training, coaches are able to design their training with appropriate consideration to the standard of the team.

1. Plan, yet be flexible

Time spent in organising the training session will make it easier for the players and the sequence of activities will flow. If a planned activity is not working or circumstances have changed (e.g. weather or reduced numbers), be prepared to adjust the activity to make it work.

2. Give clear, concise instructions

Be clear in your instructions. To stop an activity, use one clear word “stop” or a whistle. Before speaking, make sure all the group is in, and in front of you, so that you can see all the players. Keep instructions to a minimum by emphasising the main coaching points. Learning and motivation improves when the player knows what is expected.

3. Demonstrations improve the accuracy of instructions

When providing a demonstration, group the players in a single file, square, semi-circle or circle. Be conscious of the best viewing angles for the players to observe the demonstration. Repeat the demonstration a number of times before sending the players back to practise.

4. Give positive feedback

Observe your players during each of the activities, moving to individuals or groups that may need assistance. Emphasise and reward good performance and encourage the effort that is made to achieve the task.

5. Provide variety

Maintain interest by using various venues, warm-ups, drills, skill practices and modified games and guest coaches.



CALLING THE SHOTS:
GWS coach Kevin Sheedy has overseen his fair share of training sessions.

6. Encourage enjoyment

Training sessions should be fun, enjoyable and demanding. Players should look forward to coming to training through the content of the session as well as your passion and enthusiasm for the session.

7. Create progression

Learning improves if you plan for progressive skill development. Moving from simple to more complex skills facilitates this improvement.

8. Record progress

Certain training activities allow measurement that assesses progress. This assessment often enhances motivation to continually strive for skill improvement.

9. Allow for individual differences

Allow for different learning rates by being patient with the players who are progressing at a different rate than other players. Players will be at different stages of learning. Grouping players according to different skill levels or using more skilled players to assist less-skilled players facilitates the learning process.

10. Keep all players active

Maximise training time by keeping all players active and involved, being conscious of appropriate work-to-rest ratios. A skilful coach can judge when to stop an activity and move on to the next activity. Stop the activity when you are sure of what you are going to say and the next activity is set up.

11. Communicate

Make every effort to speak with and listen to as many players as possible on training nights. Communicate with players about their football as well their school/university life, their social life, work issues or family matters.

HOW TO INTRODUCE A NEW DRILL

Drills are the lifeblood of the training session and ultimately reflect in the team’s on-field performance.

A long list of drills and activities have been used over the years at all levels of football. It is not the intention of this section to specify some of these drills, but it is certainly worthwhile pointing out some of the fundamentals of training drills.

TYPES OF DRILLS

Drills can be categorised under three main headings:

1. INDIVIDUAL SKILL DRILLS

These involve the basic skills and incorporate practice in kicking, marking, handball, etc.

2. PARTS OF THE GAME DRILLS

Drills in this category refer to certain parts of the game and include centre bounce practice and centring the ball from the forward pocket.

3. WHOLE TEAM PATTERN DRILLS

These include activities that practise an overall system of play. For example, moving the ball down the centre corridor or from defence.

Often coaches waste valuable time and become frustrated at their lack of success when introducing a drill for the first time. A simple procedure to follow is set out below:

1. Have all the equipment ready.

It may seem self-explanatory but it is an important part of running a successful coaching session. Coaches must be able to move players quickly from one drill to the other. A new drill can quickly lose its appeal, regardless of its value, if the appropriate preparation doesn’t appear to have been made.

2. Rehearse selected players to go through the drill before the whole team is involved.

If certain players within the group have an understanding of the drill then they will quickly be able to explain to other players what needs to be done. Communication among players builds a sense of team.

3. Explain the aim of the drill.

By explaining the aim of the drill, players will be able to see for themselves the inherent value of performing every part of the drill with enthusiasm. It will also serve as a guide to the type of skills the coach believes the team needs to work on.

4. Selected players to walk through the drill.

Similar to point two, players can observe for themselves the drill being performed avoiding confusion, which can quickly ruin a drill.

5. Give the drill a name.

This saves the coach having to remind players of the drill each time it is to be used. If players are aware of the name of the drill, the team can immediately move on to it. A continuous training session is of enormous value. Naming it after a player who does the drill well is one way.

6. When the whole group is ready, begin by performing the drill slowly.

A new drill should be eased into so that players can gain confidence in the way it operates, and concentrate more on the skills they are trying to develop than the actual machinations of the training drill.

7. Gradually increase the tempo and degree of difficulty.

There are several ways to lift the pace:

- adding more footballs or,
- having fewer players at each marker.

It is important to add variety to drills so that players believe they are continuing to gain value out of it. By adding more footballs, you add to the pace at which the drill is performed, and players learn to quickly dispose of the ball.

Having fewer players at the marker means players have less time to be not participating in the drill, thus alleviating problems of boredom/cooling down. Players must concentrate at all times, which also replicates a match situation more closely.

As the players become more confident and drills are known, the players often do not need the markers or explanations before performing a drill.



ATTENTION TO DETAIL: Collingwood coach Nathan Buckley explains the aim of a drill to his players.

SKILL DRILLS

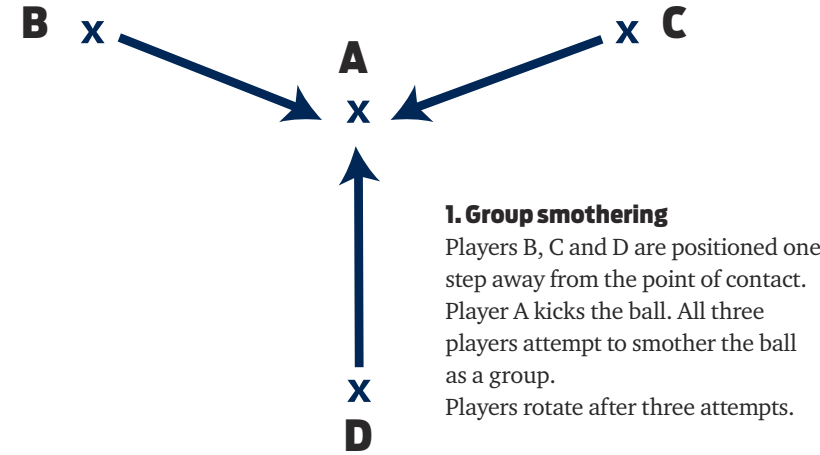
The selection of drills suitable for your team requires a great deal of thought and planning.

Drills should develop the running and possession skills so important in football today and at the same time prepare players for realistic match conditions.

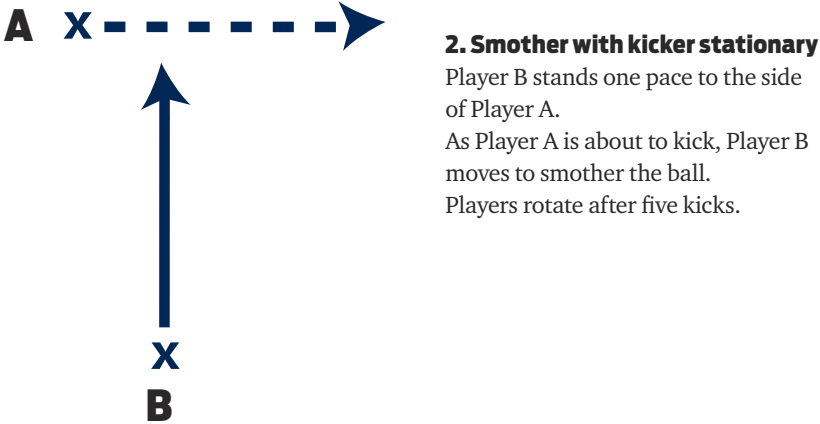
Skill drills should progress from simple to complex. When introducing a skill drill, begin with a basic drill, gradually building up the degree of difficulty. Repetition is the key to learning. As the players become familiar with the drill and your expectations, the skill drill will run efficiently with maximum involvement.

The following is an example of a drill that has been developed from its simplest form into a realistic skill activity.

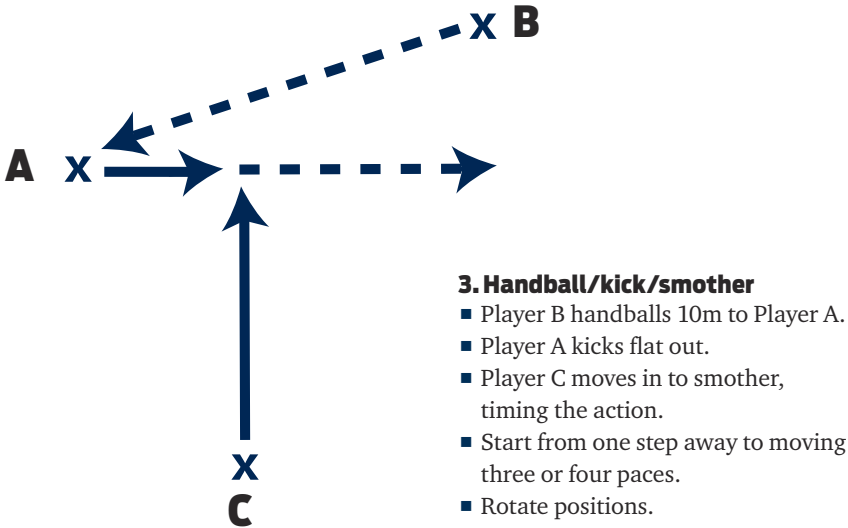
SMOTHERING DRILLS



1. Group smothering
Players B, C and D are positioned one step away from the point of contact. Player A kicks the ball. All three players attempt to smother the ball as a group. Players rotate after three attempts.

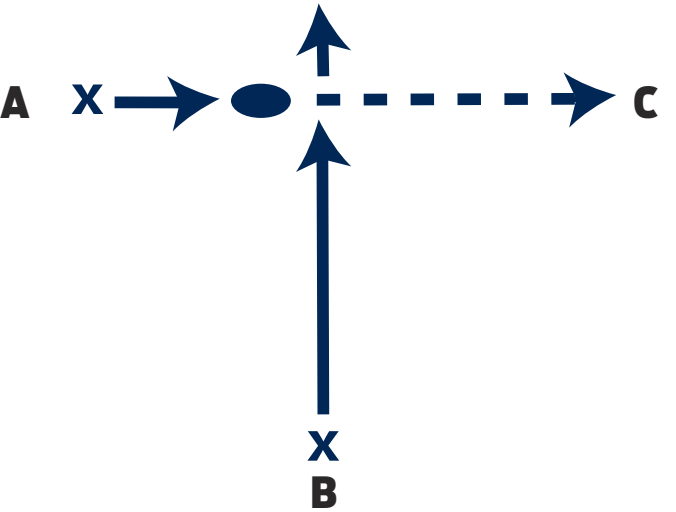


2. Smother with kicker stationary
Player B stands one pace to the side of Player A. As Player A is about to kick, Player B moves to smother the ball. Players rotate after five kicks.



3. Handball/kick/smother

- Player B handballs 10m to Player A.
- Player A kicks flat out.
- Player C moves in to smother, timing the action.
- Start from one step away to moving three or four paces.
- Rotate positions.



4. Smother with kicker moving
Player A runs to pick up the ball and kicks to Player C when level with the marker. Player B attempts to smother the kick. Players rotate after five attempts.

PLAN AHEAD

Planning is essential before a training session. Drills must be developed and built up from the simple to the complex. Of greater importance is that drills must be meaningful and highlight your game-plan. Weaknesses can be overcome and a team plan developed with the correct selection and execution of skill drills at training.



Chapter 5

TEAM PLAY AND TACTICS

Football has been undergoing rapid change. The laws of the game are continually being updated. In recent times, we have witnessed the introduction of the four-man interchange, the order-off rule, out of bounds on the full, the 50m penalty, deliberate rushed behinds and front on forceful contact when the head is down.

Players too, have become more versatile, with fitness and skill levels at an all-time high. Advances in the coaching area have seen an increased emphasis on tactics as coaches strive to gain an incisive edge over their opposition.

Before the start of a new season, a coach should analyse the previous season, setting down the team's strengths and areas for improvement. Potential recruits can then be approached to fill shortcomings in the team and develop the game-plan.

FIRM FOUNDATION

- Understand the various styles of play to assist the coach in developing a game-plan.
- Recognise the importance of the basics of football as a foundation of teamwork.
- Recognise various set-plays that can be used on the football field.

STICKING TOGETHER:
West Coast players huddle together as coach John Worsfold provides some instruction.

GAME-PLAN

Game-plan refers to a recognisable/predictable standard of play adopted by the coach that suits his/her football philosophy.

A game-plan is simply a plan for a match consisting of a few major parts. A good generic game-plan is based on a direct flowing game, focused on player movement and control of the ball in both offence and defence.

Generally, a coach will start with a game-plan that best suits the players at the coach’s disposal and maximises the team’s strengths.

Game-plans can include one or more of the following examples:

1. Long kicking to key forwards

A team with high marking, mobile forwards will maximise scoring opportunities by moving the ball quickly out of the centre, kicking long into the forward line.

2. Running, possession game

The coach of a small to medium-sized team will adopt a running game, with short passing and handball to maintain possession.

3. Defensive game

A team with a strongly disciplined team working together can move the ball forward into attack.



PLANNING:
Hawthorn coach Alastair Clarkson goes over his match-ups.

THE TEAM-PLAN

A team-plan is simply a game-plan for a match.

It consists of two parts:

BASICS

- Rules and principles that do not change.

TACTICS

- These can vary from week to week depending upon a variety of factors – for example, the opposition, ground size and condition, weather and players available for selection.
- Set-plays are part of a team’s tactics to win the football or maintain control of the football, usually around neutral situations.

BASICS

Every coach should have his own set of basic rules.

Listed below are a few examples of these team basics:

- Play in front.
- Under pressure kick long down the line.
- Get back off the mark quickly.
- Guard the mark.
- Punch from behind.
- Centre the ball from the forward pockets.

A coach should clearly outline a collection of basic rules to be followed by his team.

This is particularly important for coaches of junior and youth teams. Not only should these basics be clearly explained, they should also be reinforced both at training and on match-day.

Basics form the foundation of the team-plan.

TACTICS

The implementation of set-plays on the football ground generally revolves around ‘dead ball’ or ‘stoppage’ situations, e.g. out of bounds, centre bounce and after a behind has been scored.



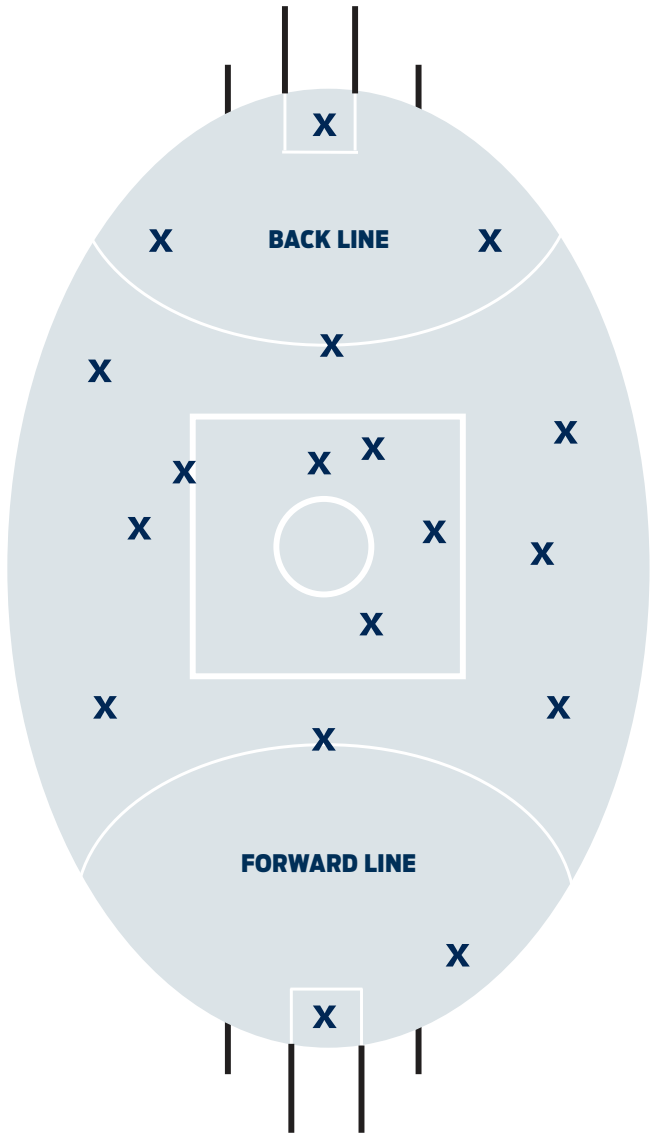
TALKING TACTICS:
Essendon coach James Hird ensures his players follow the team’s basic rules.

1. Team set-ups

Traditionally, football has been played with five lines of three players plus three players running on the ball.

The increased versatility of footballers today combined with the importance of the midfield area has led to a move away from the more established line-ups.

One such variation is the five-man forward line. This formation allows extra space for a key forward while relocating an extra player in the mid-field area or defence to support the defenders.



KNOW WHY!

Team-plans and tactics are a vital part of modern-day football. However, a well-prepared coach:

1. Ensures that all players understand and believe in what is required.
Every play is carefully explained and all possible variations fully discussed.
2. Understands that all plays must be practised and rehearsed carefully at training.
3. Avoids major tactical switches during a match that will only add confusion to the team.
4. Realises that junior players should be taught skills, with tactics becoming important as age increases and standard of competition improves.
5. Provides feedback, preferably based on statistical evidence, to the team and to individuals relating to adherence to the team-plan and the style of play.
A good coach leaves nothing to chance and takes time and effort to develop a team-plan and tactics to help players become a strong unit on the ground.
The coach communicates the plan to the players so they can implement them with confidence.
This enables the coach to move towards the main objective – to coach the best team in the competition.

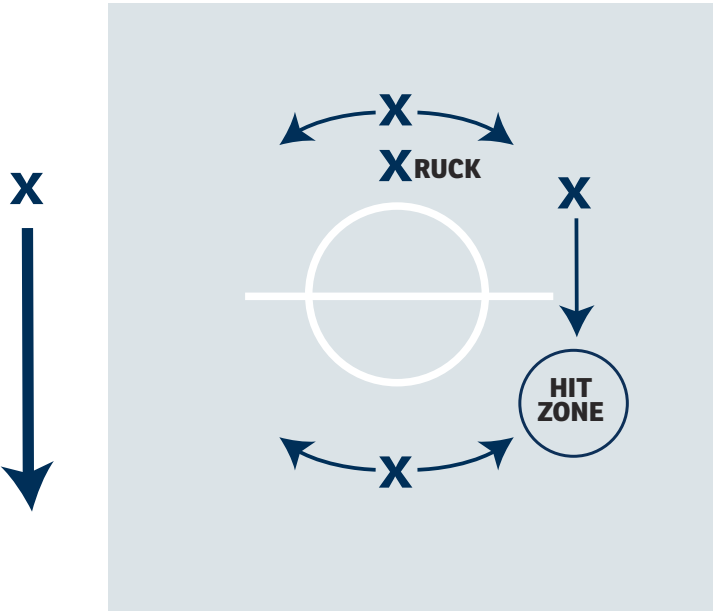
2. Centre bounce

Few can argue the importance of winning the ball at the centre bounce and taking it out of the centre square.

Quick movement of the ball from the centre assists the forwards by leaving them ‘one out’ against an opponent.

Examples of centre bounce formations are:

- a. ‘Best players in’
Given the importance of the bounce in the centre circle, the most aggressive ball players should be involved in the contest. This may mean leaving a skilful midfielder out of the square for the centre bounce.
- b. ‘Man up’
An alternative approach is to have your players ‘man up’ the opposition at the centre bounce. As illustrated, they should be instructed to stand between the opposition and the ball. This tactic is often used as a defensive measure when the opposition has scored two or three quick goals.
- c. ‘Set Up’
This can be a standard set up which covers the defensive area behind your own ruck and the offensive area behind the opposition ruck with a designated midfielder moving to your own ruckman’s preferred hit zone.



3. Kick-outs

Traditionally, the full-back delivered the ball long out of the danger zone, directing it towards a high-marking ruckman, with teammates flooding to the area in support.

Today, with the emphasis on possession football, kick-out strategies are employed in an effort to maintain possession or restrict the opposition when they have the ball.

Defence

With the opposition kicking out, two main forms of defence are possible.

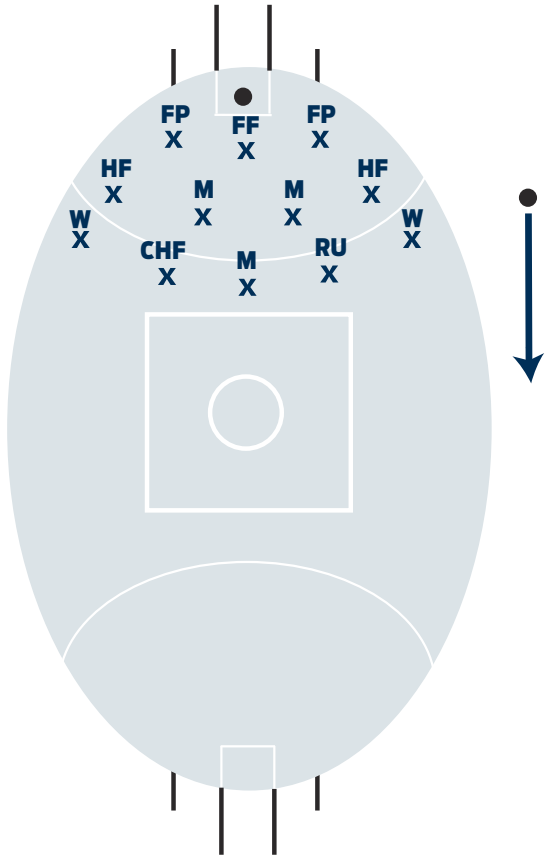
a. Man on man

In its simplest form, each player picks up an opponent and follows him closely to prevent a lead or an easy mark.

b. Zone defence

The zone defence, based on a tactic employed in basketball, involves zoning an area to restrict movement into an open space.

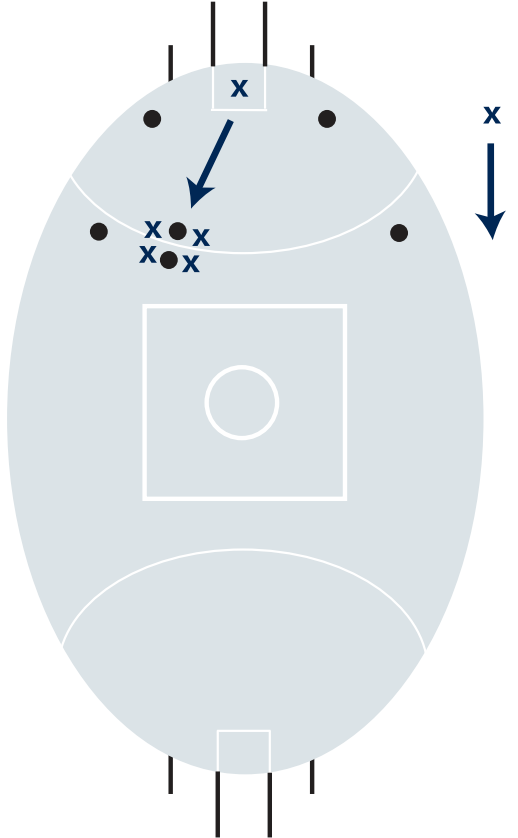
The 12-man defence as illustrated, shows players evenly distributed in ‘open spaces’ in an attempt to restrict opposition leading into these areas.



Offence

Kicking out from full-back becomes an important consideration simply because you are in possession of the ball.

- a. All players must have a role to play and be fully aware of their responsibility.
- b. The ground and weather conditions, along with the age and standard of the competition, will determine the tactics adopted.
- c. The player kicking off must be able to read the situation and select the best option.
- d. Ultimately, this will depend on the tactics of the opposition and whether they adopt a zone defence or play man on man.
- e. A simple kick-out strategy to combat a zone defence involves ‘flooding a zone’.
- f. Players are directed to one area to outnumber the opposition, thereby improving their chance of maintaining possession.
- g. All kick-out strategies may include a ‘play on’ option to gain more ground before kicking.
- h. Kick-out drills, whether offensive or defensive, require a great deal of practice and rehearsal.
- i. Pre-season period is the time to introduce and develop your team’s kick-out strategies.
- j. They can be further refined and expanded during normal in-season training.





Chapter 6

FITNESS FOR FOOTBALL

The fitness demands of Australian Football have changed dramatically over the past 10 to 15 years as the nature of the game has changed. The intensity of the game, with its emphasis on running, play on at all costs and the free interchange of players, has necessitated that greater consideration be given to the physical conditioning of players.

Footballers today may cover more than 15km a game, performing many short high intensity sprint efforts over distances of between 5m to 30m. Apart from running, the player must also perform various physical activities such as kicking, marking, handballing, tackling, bumping and jumping.

These actions and the running nature of the game demand players develop a number of important fitness attributes.

The following section will assist the coach in planning and implementing a complete fitness program for the team.

WEIGHTY ISSUES: Weights play a vital part in footballers' fitness routines, as Fremantle's Zac Clarke shows.

COMPONENTS OF FITNESS

Success in physical conditioning will largely depend on how the basic components of fitness can be fitted into the training program and finding the most effective way of improving each component.

- To participate in football a player must reach an adequate level in each of the following components of fitness:
- Speed
 - Repeated Sprint Ability
 - Agility
 - Endurance
 - Flexibility
 - Strength

However, fitness is specific to each game and a coach must determine:

- a) whether the players meet the general demands of the game; and
- b) the specific demands of the playing position.

The specific demands of the various playing positions require that one or more of these fitness components needs to be developed for successful performance.

For example, a midfielder is required to cover a greater distance in a game than a set-position player and consequently needs to develop a greater capacity for endurance in his preparation.

The development of any fitness program should ideally be individually structured and designed to correct a player’s deficiency in any one of the fitness components. However, in practice, coaches usually have to contend with mass training involving large numbers of players. The task of catering to individual needs becomes a difficult one. Various tests can be used to help determine player levels of fitness in each of the components of fitness. These are discussed later in this section.

There are five guiding principles that a coach should follow in developing a fitness program. These ‘training pinciples’ are:

1. Progressive overload

For gains to occur in any component of fitness, the player must be subjected to gradually increasing training loads. As the player’s body adapts, progressive overload can be applied by monitoring the following variables:

- a) Frequency of training – number of training sessions per week.
- b) Duration of a training session – the length of time given to each session (volume).
- c) Intensity of training – the effort put into the session.

2. Specificity

All fitness training must be specific to the demands of the game. With running training, the intensity, the distance covered and the number of repetitions must be specific to the playing requirements. The demands of the various playing positions should also be considered.

3. Regularity

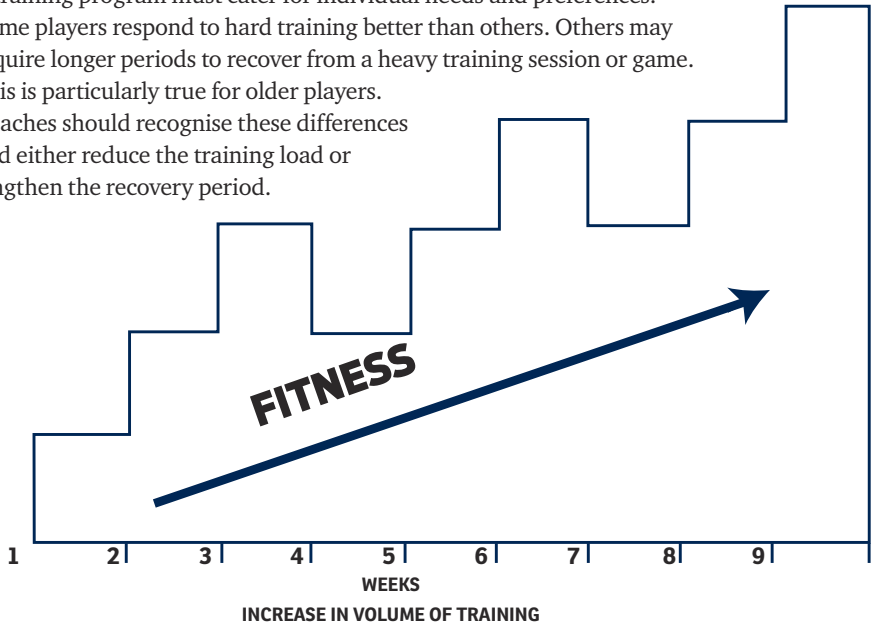
Match fitness cannot be achieved overnight. Each component of fitness must be developed by the regular scheduling of training sessions.

4. Variation

Variety can help maintain a player’s interest in training. By varying the training venue or by applying different training methods, a coach can ensure his players are enthusiastic and willing to improve.

5. Individual differences

A training program must cater for individual needs and preferences. Some players respond to hard training better than others. Others may require longer periods to recover from a heavy training session or game. This is particularly true for older players. Coaches should recognise these differences and either reduce the training load or lengthen the recovery period.



BUILD ON BASICS

Today’s football places a number of physical demands on the players.

Players require a basic level of fitness composed of endurance, speed, agility, flexibility and strength. The player must build on this basic level to develop a fitness level specific to football.

PLANNING THE TRAINING PROGRAM

1. TRANSITION PERIOD (October-November)

Players should be discouraged from taking a complete break from all physical activity. They should keep active, participating in activities which are low intensity and moderate volume with fitness levels around 50-60 per cent of maximum during this period.

2. PREPARATION PERIOD (December-March)

A solid functional fitness base should be established with the emphasis on endurance and strength. High volume, low intensity. After a base has been established speed and power activities should gradually be incorporated with endurance activities decreasing. Skill activities should be the focus of the training.

3. COMPETITION PERIOD (April-September)

Training during this period should be appropriate to football. Activities should be selected to maintain pre-season fitness and develop individual and team skills.

1. Endurance

This fitness component is commonly referred to as stamina and in football it is the ability to run or keep on the move for the duration of the game.

2. Speed

Speed refers to how fast the player can move in a straight line. This characteristic is important for gaining and retaining possession, through leading, running at a loose ball or breaking clear of an opponent. It is also important in chasing down an opponent in possession or forcing a disposal under pressure.

3. Repeated Sprint Ability

Repeating hard sprints in succession is also a feature of the modern game.

4. Agility

Agility is closely related to speed and refers to the ability to change direction quickly. Players need to be able to twist and turn, get up from the ground, accelerate away from an opponent or match an opponent’s change of direction.

5. Flexibility

This component refers to the range of movement at various joints within the body. Improved flexibility will assist speed and agility and prevent injury to muscles, tendons and ligaments.

6. Strength

Strength is the capacity to exert force maximally. It is demonstrated in football when a player makes a tackle, breaks a tackle, jumps for a mark or crashes through a pack. To withstand the physical demands of football, all components of fitness must be developed into the footballer’s fitness program. The following section outlines the development of these components of fitness in more detail.

ENDURANCE

The basic fitness requirement of football is an ability to run and keep on the move for the duration of the game.

This is primarily dependent upon the efficiency of a player’s heart and respiratory systems.

Endurance is a prerequisite for all playing positions and should therefore, during early pre-season preparation, constitute a major element of the fitness program.

The development of endurance is best achieved through a progressive application of the following activities. A period of eight weeks has been selected as an example of a pre-season program.

WEEK	ACTIVITY
1	Continuous running
2-3	Fartlek running
4-5	Longer, slower interval running
6-8	Shorter, faster interval running

Continuous running

Running over relatively long distances at a steady pace.
Initially, three training runs a week can be scheduled, with players running up to 8km a session.

Fartlek running

Varied bursts of faster running throughout a session of continuous running.
e.g. Sample fartlek session
Distance – 8km
A series of varied bursts of speed from 10 to 200m interspersed with periods of jogging and walking

Longer, slower interval running

A series of repeated running efforts at a specific speed and over a specified distance is alternated with periods of recovery. Interval training is usually worked on a work to rest ratio of 1:1 or 1:2. A work to rest ratio of 1:2 indicates the recovery period is twice the work period. A 10-second sprint would therefore have a 20-second recovery period.

- A typical longer, slower interval running session would be:
- warm-up jog 1-2km with stretching exercises.
 - 5 x 100m in 16-18sec with 60sec recovery.
 - Jog 400m.
 - 4 x 200m in 36sec – walk/jog recovery of 120sec.
 - Jog 400m.
 - 3 x 300m in 60sec – walk/jog recovery of 180sec.
 - Jog 1km to warm down with stretching exercise.

Shorter, faster interval running

As the season approaches and the players’ endurance level improves, the workload needs to be more specific.
A shorter and faster running schedule is introduced. The intensity of effort can be increased while the distance of the run is reduced.

- A typical session would be:
- warm-up 1-2km with stretching exercise.
 - 5 x 100m in 16sec with slow jog recovery (50m) and walk recovery (50m).
 - 5 x 75m in 10-13sec with walk-jog recovery of 40sec.
 - Jog 400m.
 - 5 x 50m in 7-9sec with walk-jog recovery of 30sec.

Shorter, faster interval training leads into the preparation stage of the pre-season.

Testing for endurance

- 20m shuttle run.
- 3km time trial.

SPEED

In football, speed refers to how fast the player can move in a straight line.

A player must be able to continually chase opponents, lead for the ball and accelerate away from the opposition at a fast speed for four quarters.

The development of speed is best achieved by the following activities:

Technique training

The principles of basic speed technique include:

- run on toes.
- high knee lift.
- slight lean forward.
- use arms to drive forward.
- take longer strides.
- run in a straight line.

Acceleration sprints

A 150m run through may be split into three sections:

- the first 50m to gradually build up speed.
- the middle 50m to maximum speed.
- the final 50m to gradual deceleration.

Reaction drills

This type of speed training involves the player reacting as quickly as possible to a call from the coach and to accelerate from a standing position, running on the spot or while striding out in a run through.

Testing for speed

- 10/20/40m sprint.



PURE PACE:
Leroy Jetta is one of the fastest players in the AFL.

AGILITY

In football, agility is the ability to change direction quickly.

An agile player is able to get up off the ground, recover and balance or baulk or get around an opponent in a confined space.

FLEXIBILITY

Flexibility refers to the range of the movement possible at various joints.

The more supple or flexible the joint, then the greater the range over which the muscles surrounding that joint can operate and thus work more efficiently.

Agility

A coach can develop a simple agility run involving short sprints and sharp turns around a set of markers.

Degree of difficulty

The degree of difficulty can be varied according to the age and ability level of the team.

Flexibility

Flexibility exercises will:

- 1) Maximise the muscle range of motion.
- 2) Prevent injuries to muscles, tendons and ligaments.
- 3) Improve speed and agility.

Flexibility is best developed through STATIC STRETCHING.

Other sports' specific methods include:

- P.N.F.
- Ballistic – moving or dynamic stretching.
Stretching must be strictly supervised and should be preceded by large muscle group warm-up activities, e.g. jogging or easy striding.

Testing for flexibility:

- Sit and reach.



BALANCED: St Kilda midfielder Lenny Hayes gives Collingwood's Dane Swan the slip.

STRENGTH – POWER

In football, strength is important to the player, particularly in the muscles of his legs, shoulders, hands and abdomen.

Strength is the ability to exert maximum muscle tension (force) for a short period of time. Strength is important in football but power, of which strength is an ingredient, is even more essential.

Power is best witnessed in a game when a player leaps for a mark, crashes through a pack, breaks a tackle or takes off quickly from different starting positions. Power is simply a combination of speed and strength.

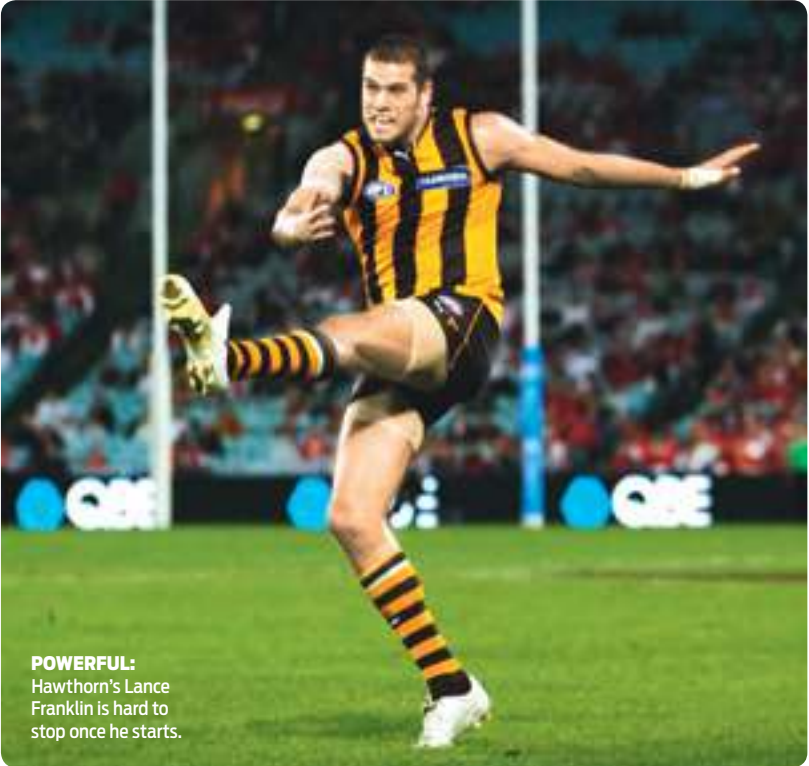
Strength building

Basic strength building methods include:

- Body weight exercises – players use their body weight for resistance, e.g. press-ups, squats.
- Partner exercises – players use a partner for resistance by either adopting various wrestling holds and working in opposition to a partner or by having the partner as a dead weight.
- Free weights – dumbbells and barbells are used to perform a variety of resistance exercises.
- Fixed apparatus – e.g. Universal, Nautilus stations.
- Circuit training – a series of exercises performed in quick succession.

Testing for power

- Vertical jump.
- Standing long jump.



POWERFUL: Hawthorn's Lance Franklin is hard to stop once he starts.



Chapter 7

NUTRITION

A coach has the ability to strongly influence a player's eating habits and therefore impact development both on and off the football field. As such, it is important that as a coach you have an understanding of how nutrition can influence performance, recovery, injury risk and development and ways of incorporating good nutrition systems into your club.

Provision of a training and game-day environment that supports nutrition systems via provision of drink coolers, fridges, eskies, body weight scales etc., will help your players to implement strategies consistently throughout their football journey. Ensuring your support staff are aware of the main nutrition principles associated with football performance and the ability to identify when specific players may need more specialised advice is key.

CRITICAL: Carlton captain Chris Judd takes in liquids during a break in play.

NUTRITION

A player’s performance can be enhanced by implementing common sports nutrition strategies that have been individualised to meet their needs.

- These strategies aid in:
- Optimising training session performance and recovery
 - Maximising game-day performance and recovery
 - Developing an appropriate body composition
 - Maintaining hydration
 - Maintaining health and minimising the risk of certain injuries

Building a Quality Foundation

Two major nutrients form the basis of an Australian Football player’s eating plan, carbohydrate and protein. Consuming these nutrients in foods at regular intervals throughout the day, and at specific times around training sessions and games, is key to providing optimal energy, strength gains, recovery and repair.

Fuelling Up Before Training and Games with Carbohydrate

Eating carbohydrate foods in the hours before exercise will help improve performance by increasing the muscles’ glycogen (energy) stores. Carbohydrate is the body’s main fuel for high intensity exercise.

Exercise intensity has to decrease, and fatigue occurs when carbohydrate stores in the body run low.

Most player’s main meals should be based on carbohydrate foods. This is of particular importance in the meal consumed the evening before a big training day or game day (fuelling energy stores in the muscle and liver), and the meals consumed within hours of training or a game (topping up energy stores and keeping blood sugar levels steady). Options such as pasta with a tomato based sauce, a sandwich and fruit, or a liquid option such as a smoothie, are all good choices.

Experimenting with food and fluid options in the hours before training sessions is the best way to identify what will work best for a player in games. Encourage your players to do this and caution them never to experiment with new foods or ideas on game day. Training is the best time to work out what works and what doesn’t.

Types of Carbohydrate Foods

Carbohydrate containing foods are no longer referred to as “complex” and “simple”. The lists below provide a more meaningful way of classifying carbohydrate options.

The Glycaemic Index (GI) of foods is a ranking of how quickly carbohydrate foods raise blood glucose levels (BGL) in the body after consuming. “High GI” foods are rapidly digested and absorbed by the body and raise BGLs quickly. These may be of use if players are required to recover from strenuous training sessions within hours of each other. Low GI foods, on the other hand, are much more slowly digested and absorbed, and therefore result in more gradual rise in blood glucose levels. You can refer to the official Glycemic Index website for more information if required www.glycemicindex.com.

Quality Protein

Protein in foods and fluids is used to build, strengthen and repair a player’s muscle tissue, along with aiding general growth and wellbeing. Quality protein foods (those that contain key amino acids) are required for these functions and include: lean meats, poultry, fish, seafood, dairy foods (milk, cheese, yoghurt) and eggs.

It is not necessary for players to consume massive amounts of quality protein to achieve benefits. The regularity of the protein intake however is the key to maximising strength, repair and growth improvements. Consuming –20g of quality protein in foods at each main meal will help ensure a good base for these processes to occur.

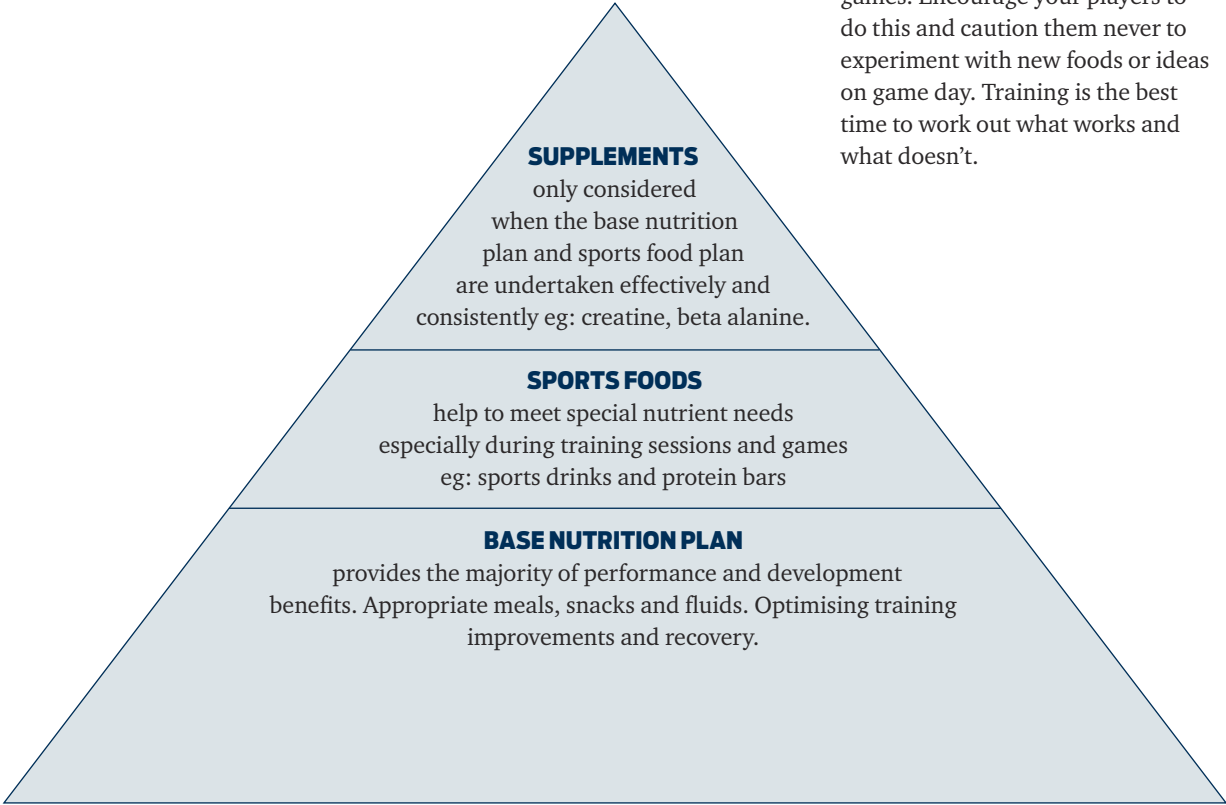
Examples of food quantities containing 20g of protein:

- 500ml milk
- 2 x 200g flavoured yoghurt
- 80g lean beef
- 100g chicken breast
- 1 small can tuna

Choosing snacks between meals that contain quality protein will also aid in ensuring the body has access to this important nutrient throughout the day (see snack section below).

Post Exercise Recovery Nutrition Strategies

Nutrition recovery strategies are often referred to as the ‘3 Rs’: Replace, Repair and Rehydrate. After finishing a training session or game, players should consume carbohydrate (to replace used energy) and protein (for muscle repair and growth). Rehydration (fluid + sodium) is also an important part of the recovery process (see Hydration section below).



CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES	USE FOR ATHLETES
Nutrient-dense carbohydrate	Foods and fluids that are rich sources of other nutrients including protein, vitamins, minerals, fibre and antioxidants in addition to carbohydrate	Breads and cereals, grains (e.g. pasta, rice), fruit, starchy vegetables e.g. potato, corn), legumes and low-fat dairy products	Everyday food that should form the base of an athlete’s diet. Helps to meet other nutrient targets.
Nutrient poor carbohydrate	Foods and fluids that contain carbohydrate but minimal or no other nutrients	Soft drink, energy drinks, lollies, carbohydrate gels, sports drink and cordial.	Shouldn’t be a major part of the everyday diet but may provide a compact carbohydrate source around training.
High-fat carbohydrate	Foods that contain carbohydrate but are high in fat	Pastries, cakes, chips (hot and crisps) and chocolate	‘Sometimes’ foods best not consumed around training sessions

Examples of Appropriate Recovery Snacks (Carbohydrate + Protein containing foods) include:

- 300ml low fat milk
- 2 x 200g tubs of low fat flavoured yoghurt
- 300ml Milkshake or Smoothie
- Sandwich with 2 slices lean meat, chicken, low fat cheese and/or fish (eg: tinned salmon)

Coaches can improve a player’s adherence to recovery strategies by either assisting the club in organising recovery food options for players, or by provision of eskies or fridges in the dressing room areas where players can store their own recovery items to consume after training. Players should be encouraged to consume their recovery snack before doing other forms of recovery, or during other recovery procedures.

In addition to the recovery snack (consumed within 15 minutes of finishing a skills session, fitness session, weights session or game), a recovery meal should be consumed within the next two hours. Carbohydrate, protein and some antioxidants (fruit and vegetables) should be included in this meal. Examples of recovery meals include: stir fry chicken/beef and vegetables with rice or noodles, lean beef lasagne with salad or steak/chicken or fish with mashed potato and vegetables.

Snacks

Snacks between main meals are an important part of a footballer’s eating plan. Players should be encouraged to choose items that contain some carbohydrate, quality protein and have a low-moderate fat content.

Examples include:

- Low fat flavoured or fruit yoghurt
- Creamed rice
- Low fat custard and tinned fruit
- Low fat flavoured milk
- Sushi rolls
- Low fat cracker biscuits + cheese slices
- Fruit smoothie or milkshake
- Breakfast cereal and low fat milk
- Sandwiches with lean meat, ham, chicken, turkey, tuna etc.
- Tuna and crackers snack kit

Hydration

Maintaining hydration during training sessions and games is necessary to ensure performance is maintained. Dehydration will cause a decrease in performance before any risk to health occurs. Loss of body water and electrolytes can impair many functions in the body including cardiovascular processes and heat regulation systems. A reduction in physical endurance capacity, strength and power, skill execution and various cognitive processes (decision-making, concentration etc.) are all risks of dehydration in training and games.

Fluid Choices and Monitoring Hydration

Coaches should always ensure players have access to fluid during training sessions and during games. Scheduling regular drink breaks during training will help to ensure players are able to meet their hydration requirements. Whilst avoiding significant dehydration, players should never be encouraged to consume fluid in excess of their needs.

Sports drinks are a useful choice if the training session is of a high intensity and duration exceeds an hour. Sports drinks provide carbohydrate for fuelling working muscles and help replace the electrolytes and fluid lost in sweat. For shorter, lower intensity sessions water can usually provide adequate hydration.

Players need to pay attention to their hydration strategies throughout each day and evening, not just at training and games. Failure to do so often results in players starting a training session or game dehydrated (i.e. with performance factors reduced from the start). Simple strategies such as carrying a drink bottle throughout the day, and consuming fluids with each meal and snack can help to ensure players arrive at training and games hydrated and ready to perform. Water is the best choice of fluid for most players at this time.

Players should be encouraged to become familiar with their own hydration needs, as each individual’s sweat rate and fluid requirements will differ. Pre and post body weights (measured on body weight scales) around main training sessions and games is a simple, yet effective tool in enabling a player to assess the mismatch between their sweat losses and fluid intake. Incorporating this system into your team’s preparation and recovery routine will provide the tool necessary for players to be proactive with their own hydration routine.

When calculating rehydration needs players should consume 1½ times the fluid lost (i.e: 1.5 x (pre body weight - post body weight)). This fluid should be consumed slowly over the next few hours (especially if a large volume is required).

Supplements

Supplements are not intended to make up for shortfalls in a player’s diet. To maximise the beneficial effects of supplements an appropriate, individualised nutrition plan must be followed. Specific supplements and sports food may help individual players in specific circumstances, however professional advice from an Accredited Sports Dietitian or Sports Physician is necessary to determine the use. A coach can help ensure players are not consuming products unnecessarily, or risking inadvertent doping outcomes by encouraging them to seek appropriate advice from accredited practitioners at all times.

Additional Information and Fact Sheets:

The Australian Institute of Sport Nutrition website
www.ausport.gov.au/ais/nutrition
Sports Dietitians Australia website
www.sportsdietitians.com.au

Sample Meal Plan

Each player’s meal plan will vary depending on their body composition goals, current training program and metabolism. The following sample plan is a guide that incorporates the major AFL sports nutrition principles. It is based on providing nutrition for a full training schedule.

Breakfast: (Carbohydrate + Protein)

- 2 cups breakfast cereal and 1 cup low fat milk
- 1 piece fruit or 1 cup canned fruit
- 2 slices toast or 2 slices fruit loaf, or 1 English muffin or crumpet spread with honey or jam or fruit spread
- Fluid

During Training: (Carbohydrate + Fluid)

- Sports drink or water

Post Training: (Carbohydrate + Protein + Fluid)

- Flavoured milk drink
- Fluid

Lunch: (Carbohydrate + Protein)

- 2 rolls or 4 slices bread, or 1 large wrap with: chicken, ham, beef, turkey, tuna, salmon, egg and/or low fat cheese and chutney, pickles, avocado and salad
- OR
- 2 cups pasta/rice with lean meat/chicken/fish with salad/vegetables
- 1 piece fruit
- Fluid

Pre Weights Nutrition: (Carbohydrate + Protein)

- Slice of bread with lean ham/chicken/tuna
- Fluid

During Weights (Carbohydrate + Fluid)

- Sports drink or water

Post Weights Snack: (Carbohydrate + Protein)

- Low fat flavoured yoghurt
- Fluid

Dinner: (Carbohydrate + Protein)

- 200g lean beef, pork, lamb, chicken or 250g fish
- 1 cup cooked rice or 2 cups pasta or 2-3 potatoes (this carbohydrate can be omitted if the following day is a rest day or a light training day)
- 2 cups vegetables or salad
- Low fat dessert, e.g: low fat ice cream, low fat custard, low fat rice pudding, low fat yoghurt and/or fruit
- Fluid

Snack: (Carbohydrate + Protein)

- Cup of low fat flavoured milk



Chapter 8

PREVENTION & MANAGEMENT OF INJURIES

The role of the football coach covers a vast range of responsibilities. One of the most important roles of the coach is to provide an environment that does not predispose the player to any unnecessary injury.

An effective coach must be concerned with the prevention, immediate care and rehabilitation of injuries.

Coaches must be aware of warm-up routines, and methods used to prepare the body for competition. They should also ensure that all players have the appropriate gear, such as mouthguards, available to avoid injury.

Players must be taught the correct way to perform the body contact skills of the game, and how to protect themselves from serious injury.

Any player who is injured during a game must have their injury dealt with immediately and in a professional manner. It is important that experts make a diagnosis, and if there is any doubt about the seriousness of a player's injury, then he should be kept off the ground.

A coach must ensure a player has the correct rehabilitation from injury before returning. It is important that communication occurs between player, coach and a medical expert before a decision is made regarding a player's return.

TRAINERS

Trainers are a key element of safety and player welfare in football clubs. In accordance with AFL policy, and in the interests of meeting community expectations for the provision of first aid and trainers services, all matches and training sessions involving senior players should be attended by a qualified trainer (someone with a Level 1 Trainer accreditation or higher). Clubs should always have an appropriately and adequately stocked first aid kit and appropriate emergency transport equipment on hand and someone qualified to use them.

- Prevent injuries to your players.
- Implement immediate care for any injuries your players might suffer.
- Be supportive of your players during rehabilitation.

TOTAL CARE: Clubs must ensure they have trained staff on hand to manage injuries.

INJURY PREVENTION

One of the most frustrating aspects of football for the player is being injured.

The problem is that with good training and good coaching, injuries still occur.

The golden rule for all injuries is ‘prevention is better than cure’.

BE PREPARED

(a) Warm-up, stretching and cool-downs

Warm-up

Warm-up is a vital part of any competition or strenuous exercise session. It results in improved flexibility as well as preparing the mind, the heart, the muscles and the joints for participation, thus reducing the likelihood of injury. The warm-up should involve 5-10 minutes of general activity before the stretching session. A good indication of a sound warm-up is a light sweat.

Stretching

Stretching is another vital factor in the prevention of injury. Without stretching, muscles lose their flexibility and may fail to respond when being used, and injury could be the result:

Stretching rules

1. Warm-up before stretching.
2. Stretch before and after exercise.
3. Stretch alternative muscle groups.
4. Stretch gently and slowly.
5. Never bounce or stretch rapidly.
6. Stretch to the point of tension or discomfort, never pain.
Hold for at least 15-20sec.
7. Do not hold your breath when stretching; breathing should be slow and easy.

Cool-downs

Cool-downs are also important, because they prevent pooling of the blood in the limbs, which could lead to fainting or dizziness, and improves the recovery of the heart, muscles and other tissues after exercise.

An effective cool-down consists of a gradual reduction in activity levels for 5-10 minutes followed by a comprehensive stretching program.

(b) Fitness

Injuries can occur at any time during a game or training session. However, studies have shown that they are more common when a player is fatigued. This means that an adequate level of fitness is of the utmost importance in preventing injuries.

RULE MODIFICATIONS

Modification of rules have been highly effective in preventing injuries.

Changes to normal playing rules have been introduced for beginners in football programs to promote skill development, increase participation rates and to provide a safer playing environment.

Some of these modifications include:

- Smaller playing field.
- Fewer players.
- No tackling.
- The use of smaller footballs.
- No ruck, ruck-rover or rover, thus easing the congestion in general play.
- No kicking the ball off the ground.
- When the ball is kicked out of bounds, a kick is awarded to the nearest opponent.

The authors overwhelmingly supported modification in football, stating ‘the decrease in injuries conclusively demonstrates the value of rule modifications as an injury control measure in Australian Football’.

For a full breakdown and explanation of the AFL Junior Rules and the Next Generation Match Program for players aged 5-18 years, visit afl.com.au for the policy and videos online.

(c) Obey the rules

Many of the rules of sport are specifically designed to create a safe playing environment. All players should be encouraged to learn and observe both the written and unwritten rules of the game. Players should be continuously reminded of the importance of good sportsmanship and fair play.

(d) Playing areas and facilities

Padding of goalposts, maintenance and condition of the playing surface and an adequate distance between the boundary line and fences and spectators are important injury-reducing measures that should be made at club level.

(e) Protective Devices

Unlike many other contact sports, football has evolved as a game played with a minimum of protective equipment.

Mouthguards

A mouthguard, however, is essential for all players for both training and games.

- Mouthguards have a definite role in preventing injuries to the teeth and face and for this reason they are strongly recommended at all levels of football.
- Dentally fitted laminated mouthguards offer the best protection. ‘Boil and bite’ type mouthguards are not recommended for any level of play as they can dislodge during play and block the airway.
- There is no definitive scientific evidence that mouthguards prevent concussion or other brain injuries in Australian Football.

Helmets

- There is no definitive scientific evidence that helmets prevent concussion or other brain injuries in Australian football.
- There is some evidence that younger players who wear a helmet may change their playing style, and receive more head impacts as a result. Accordingly, helmets are not recommended for the prevention of concussion.
- Helmets may have a role in the protection of players on return to play following specific injuries (e.g. face or skull fractures).

HEPATITIS B

Hepatitis B can be spread by contact with infected blood, saliva and perspiration.

Preventing the transmission of this disease is the responsibility of all players, coaches and officials.

Observing the following measures will greatly reduce the risk of transmitting Hepatitis B.

- Immediately report and treat all cuts and abrasions.
- Maintain a strict level of personal hygiene.
- Ensure the change rooms, showers and toilets are clean.
- Encourage players and officials to be vaccinated against Hepatitis B.
- Discourage the sharing of towels and drink containers.
- Treat all blood-contaminated clothing, towels, etc as potentially dangerous and discard immediately.

(f) Environmental conditions
Fluid replacement

Players who are unfit or overweight are more susceptible to heat illness. Coaches should be familiar with the symptoms of heat stress such as cramps, headaches, dizziness and uncharacteristic lack of co-ordination.

Regular intake of fluid reduces the risk of heat illness and enables better maintenance of physical and mental performance. Fluid replacement is very important and coaches should be aware of the following points.

- Thirst is a poor indicator of fluid replacement.
- Therefore drink before you are thirsty.
- Plain water is the best fluid replacement.

The following quantities of water are advisable:

- 45 minutes before event: one or two glasses of water.
- During event: one glass of water every 15 minutes.
- After event: water should be consumed regularly to replace fluid loss (amounts will depend on the weather conditions).

Cold weather

Cold weather can have life-threatening consequences. However, it commonly causes injuries by cooling warm muscles.

Long breaks will cause the body to cool-down, thus players should be encouraged to wear adequate warm clothing such as tracksuits. Coaches should plan training sessions to avoid long breaks. Another warm-up period may need to be considered if long rest periods cannot be avoided.

UNDERSTAND
INJURY PREVENTION

The coach must share in the responsibilities associated with the protection and management of football injuries. This role is to ensure continued liaison between the training staff and the coach regarding the care and welfare of the players.

Coaches and players must take responsibility and be up to date with the latest methods of injury prevention. Access to appropriately qualified health professionals is important, including qualified sports trainers, sports physiotherapists and sports physicians.

Injuries will occur.

However, the effective coach will take measures to ensure these are kept to a minimum and players are fully recovered before resuming full competition.

(g) Manage existing injuries properly

Returning to play too early after injury can make the player susceptible to further injury. The coach should ensure that the risk of recurrence of injury is reduced. Protective strapping and the concentration on muscle stretching and a strengthening exercise routine before play will assist in preventing a recurrence of the injury.

(h) Illness

- Illness and participation.

During times of illness, the player's body is particularly vulnerable, with the risk of damage to tissues or organs being very high. Thus, when ill or feverish, the player should not participate.

(i) Balanced competitions

It is important to keep the competitions balanced in order to reduce injuries.

Consideration should be given to age, size, sex, strength and skill of the players when organising competitions.

(j) Common sense

Common sense tells us that it is far better to prevent injuries than it is to treat them.



IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE:
Trainers help Jack Grimes from the ground after the Melbourne co-captain was injured during a game in 2012.

THE MANAGEMENT OF CONCUSSION
IN AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL

- In the best practice management of concussion in sport, the critical element remains the welfare of the player, both in the short and long-term.
- Concussion refers to a disturbance in brain function that results from trauma to the brain. The changes are temporary and the majority of players recover completely if managed correctly.
- Complications can occur if the player is returned to play before they have recovered from their concussion. This is why any player with suspected concussion must be withdrawn from playing or training immediately. Furthermore, no player with concussion should be returned to play in the same game.
- Management of head injury is difficult for non-medical personnel. In the early stages of injury it is often not clear whether you are dealing with a concussion or there is a more severe underlying structural head injury.
- Therefore, ALL players with concussion or suspected of concussion need an urgent medical assessment.
- In the days or weeks following concussion, a player should not be allowed to return to play or train until they have had a formal medical clearance.
- The key components of management of concussion include:
 - a) Suspecting the diagnosis in any player with symptoms such as confusion or headache after a knock to the head;
 - b) Referring the player for medical evaluation; and
 - c) Ensuring the player has received medical clearance before allowing them to return to a graded training program.



IN GOOD HANDS: Richmond's medical staff ensure Tiger forward Jack Riewoldt is properly assessed after being concussed.

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

An outline of the overall management approach is summarised below.

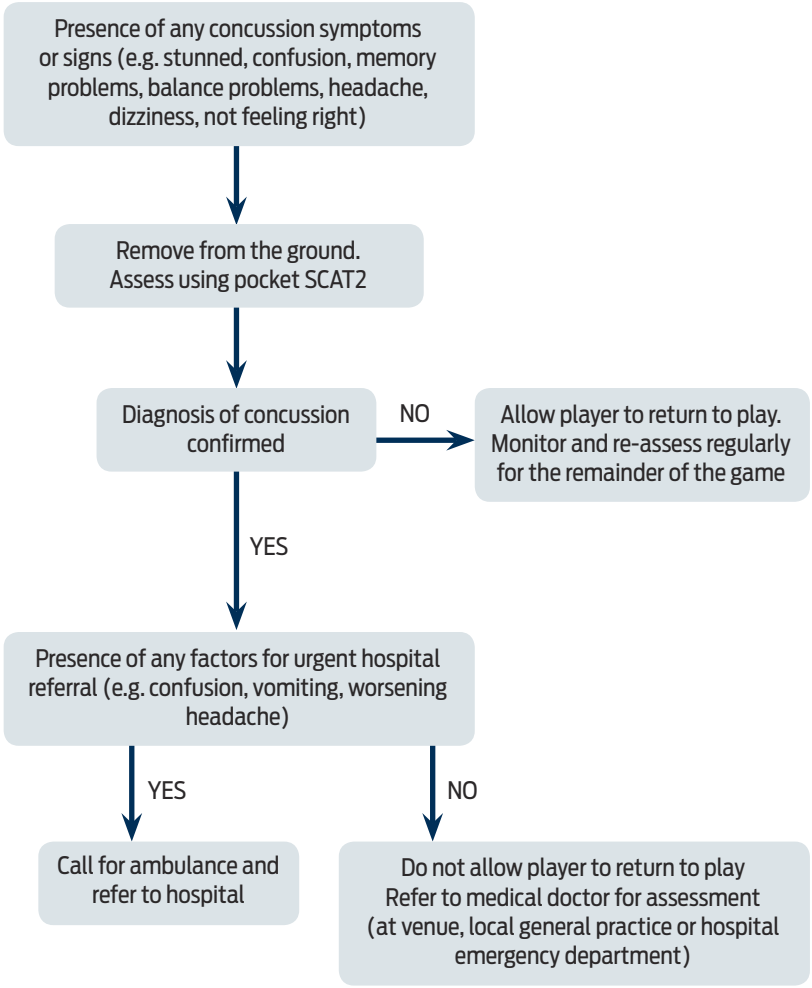


Figure 1. Summary of the management of concussion in Australian Football.

***Note:** for any player with loss of consciousness, basic first aid principles should be used (i.e. Airways, Breathing, CPR ...). Care must also be taken with the player's neck, which may have also been injured in the collision. An ambulance should be called, and these players transported to hospital immediately for further assessment and management.

POCKET SCAT 2

Concussion should be suspected in the presence of any one or more of the following: symptoms (such as headache), or physical signs (such as unsteadiness), or impaired brain function (e.g. confusion) or abnormal behaviour.

1. SYMPTOMS

Presence of any of the following signs and symptoms may suggest a concussion.

- Loss of consciousness
- Seizure or convulsion
- Amnesia
- Headache
- “Pressure in head”
- Neck pain
- Nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness
- Blurred vision
- Balance problems
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling slowed down
- Feeling like “in a fog”
- “Don’t feel right”
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty remembering
- Fatigue or low energy
- Confusion
- Drowsiness
- More emotional
- Irritability
- Sadness
- Nervous or anxious

2. MEMORY FUNCTION

Failure to answer all questions correctly may suggest a concussion.

- “What venue are we at today?”
- “Which half is it now?”
- “Who scored last in this game?”
- “What team did you play last week/game?”
- “Did your team win the last game?”

3. BALANCE TESTING

Instructions for tandem stance

“Now stand heel-to-toe with your **non-dominant** foot in back. Your weight should be evenly distributed across both feet. You should try to maintain stability for 20 seconds with your hands on your hips and your eyes closed. I will be counting the number of times you move out of this position. If you stumble out of this position, open your eyes, return to the start position and continue balancing. I will start timing when you are set and have closed your eyes.”

Observe the athlete for 20 seconds. If they make more than five errors (such as lift their hands off their hips; open their eyes; lift their forefoot or heel; step, stumble or fall; or remain out of the start position for more than five seconds) then this may suggest a concussion.

Any player with a suspected concussion should be **IMMEDIATELY REMOVED FROM PLAY**, urgently assessed medically, should not be left alone and should not drive a motor vehicle.

CONCUSSION

For further up-to-date and comprehensive information about concussion management, go to the AFL Community Club website at www.aflcommunityclub.com.au/index.php?id=66



COURAGEOUS ACT: Daniel Hannebery defied the risk of serious injury when he stood in front of this pack to mark during the 2012 Grand Final.

FIRST AID FOR INJURIES

In managing an injury, the main aim is to do no further damage.

When an injury occurs, there are many decisions to be made. The most important of these for the coach is whether the player should continue to play or not. Coaches should always err on the side of caution as resuming play may cause further damage to an injury.

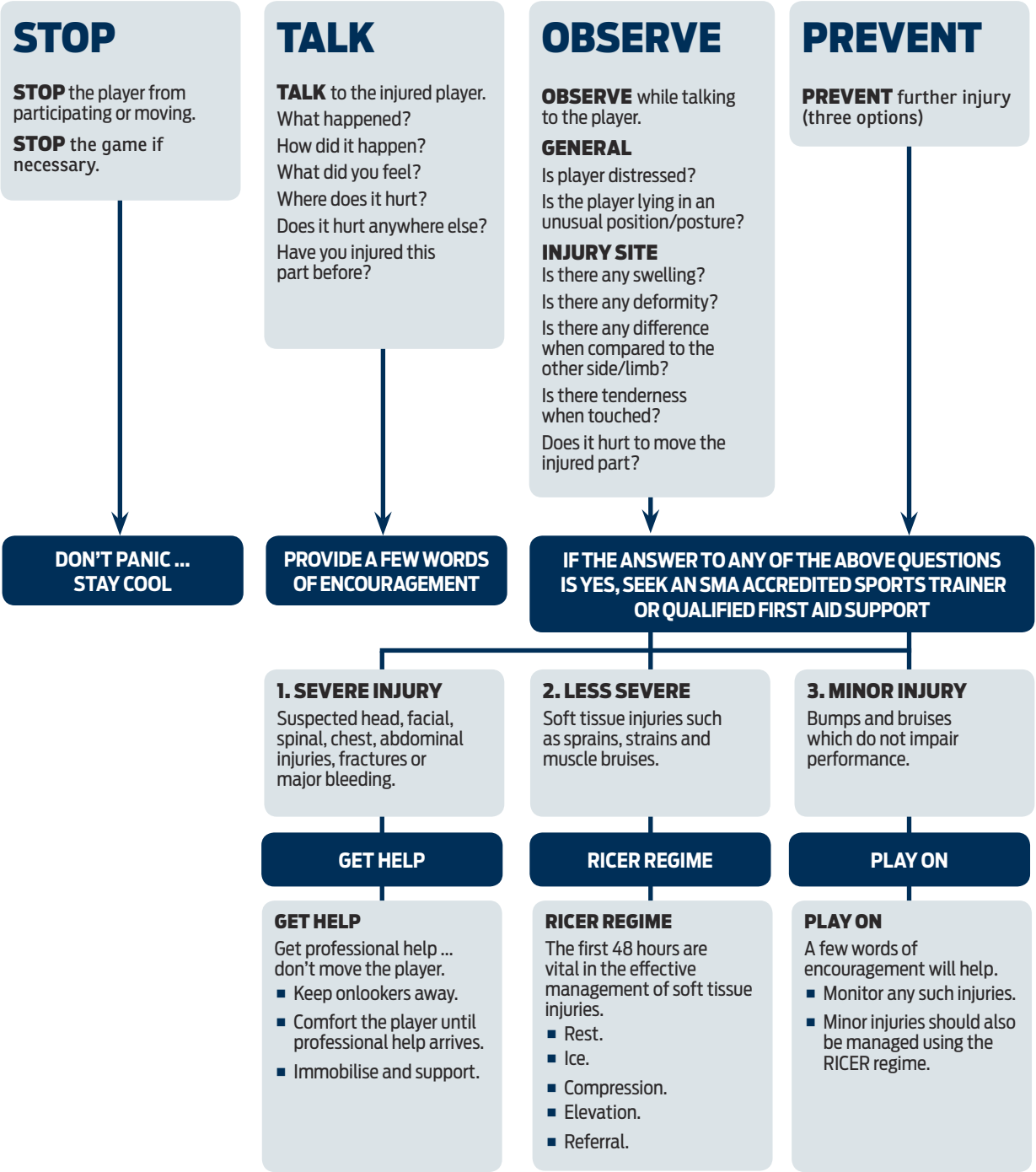
UNCONSCIOUS PLAYER

If the player is unconscious, it is a life-threatening situation and the DRSABCD of first aid should be used by an accredited sports trainer.

D	DANGER Check for danger to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ You.■ Others.■ The injured player.
R	RESPONSE Is the player conscious? <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Can you hear me?■ Open your eyes.■ What is your name?
S	SEND FOR HELP Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.
A	AIRWAY Make sure the airway is: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Clear of objects.■ Open.
B	BREATHING <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Check if the player is breathing by observing chest movements and/or air passing in or out of the mouth.■ If not, give two initial breaths and begin CPR.
C	CPR <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ CPR involves giving 30 compressions at a rate of around 100 per minute followed by two breaths.■ Continue CPR until the patient recovers or professional help arrives.■ Stop any bleeding by placing firm pressure over the injury site.
D	DEFIBRILLATION <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Attach a defibrillator (if available).■ Follow voice prompts.

CONSCIOUS PLAYER

WITH ALL INJURIES, IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE A SET PROCEDURE TO FOLLOW. The following S.T.O.P. procedure allows the coach to assess the severity of the injury and determine whether the player should continue or not:



SOFT TISSUE INJURY MANAGEMENT

A large majority of injuries in football are soft tissue injuries.

The first 48 hours are vital in the effective management of any soft tissue injury. Injuries managed effectively during this period will reduce the time spent on the sidelines.

The immediate management should follow the RICER regime. This regime should be used for all ligament sprains, muscle strains and muscle bruises (corks, etc) in fact in any bumps or bruises that occur in football.

AVOID HARM

Remember, with injuries of this kind, you should avoid the **HARM** factors

- H Heat

■ increases bleeding.
- A Alcohol

■ increases swelling.
- R Running

■ or exercising too soon can make the injury worse.
- M Massage

■ in the first 48-72 hours increases swelling and bleeding.

RICER with no HARM

HOW	WHY
<div>RREST Place the player in a comfortable position, preferably lying down. The injured part should be immobilised and supported.</div>	Activity will promote bleeding by increasing blood flow.
<div>IICE The conventional methods are:<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Crushed ice in a wet towelplastic bag.■ Immersion in icy water.■ Commercial cold packs■ wrapped in wet towel.■ Cold water from the tap is better than nothing.Apply for 20 minutes every two hours for the first 48 hours.</div> <div>CAUTION<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Do not apply ice directly to skin as ice burns can occur.■ Do not apply ice to people who are sensitive to cold or who have circulatory problems.■ Children have a lower tolerance to ice.</div>	Ice Reduces: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Swelling.■ Pain.■ Muscle spasm.■ Secondary damage to the injured area.
<div>CCOMPRESSION<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Apply a firm wide elastic bandage over a large area covering the injured part, as well as above and below the injured part.</div>	Compression: Reduces bleeding and swelling. Provides support for the injured part.
<div>EELEVATION Raise injured area above the level of the heart at all possible times.</div>	Elevation: Reduces bleeding and swelling.
<div>RREFERRAL Refer to a suitable qualified professional such as a doctor or physiotherapist for diagnosis and ongoing care.</div>	Early referral for a definitive diagnosis to ascertain the exact nature of the injury and to gain expert advice on the rehabilitation program required.

MAINTAINING INJURY RECORDS

Coaches should ensure all facts concerning an injury are properly recorded. The form used on this page from the AFCA Coaches' Diary has been designed in conjunction with Dr Terry Nolan from the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne and can be used to detail all aspects of injuries to your players.

INJURY REPORT SHEET

MATCH OR TRAINING: DATE:

ID NUMBER (Give each form a unique identifying number):

Ground condition at time of injury: Very Hard Firm Soft

Weather condition at time of injury : Fine Light Rain Heavy Rain

ACTIVITY OF PLAYER JUST Before INJURY EVENT
(e.g. going up for a mark, diving tackle)

WHAT WENT WRONG THAT LED TO THE INJURY?
(e.g. slipped on muddy ground while turning)

WHAT ACTUALLY CAUSED THE INJURY?
(e.g. pushed in back, fell on to outstretched arm)

NATURE OF INJURY
(e.g. sprain, fracture, bruise)

BODY PART AFFECTED
(e.g. right knee)

WAS ANY PROTECTIVE GEAR BEING WORN?
(e.g. strapping to knee, ankle, mouthguard)

WAS THE INJURY
New injury:
Re-injury:
Date of previous injury:

REFERRED TO:
TREATMENT RECEIVED (describe)

FURTHER COMMENTS

Name of person filling out form:

Title: Signature:



Chapter 9

UMPIRING

Umpiring Australian Football is a challenging and exciting sporting activity which can, and does, provide a great deal of self satisfaction and enjoyment.

Good umpiring enhances the game as a spectacle and contributes to the enjoyment of players, officials and spectators. Poor umpiring detracts from the game and invariably results in dissatisfaction and frustration for players, officials and spectators. It is in the best interests of the game and the participants for us all to promote and enhance the image of umpiring as an attractive sporting career. In this way, it will be possible to attract good people to umpiring and encourage them to stay.

The coach has an important role in this regard. A coach is the most influential role model for the players and the coach's behaviour towards umpires will be reflected in the players' behaviour.

WITHIN THE LAW

The successful coaches of the future will be those who educate players to develop their individual and team skills in accordance with the laws.

The coach is the role model for team members on match-day. The coach sets the example through words and actions.

It is important that coaches and umpires develop a responsible and professional approach for the benefit of the game.

KEY TO THE GAME:
It is important for coaches and players to understand the important roles umpires have in the game.

YOU AND THE UMPIRES

Complete the following assessment that will provide a guide as to your behaviour towards umpires

1. KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAWS	Yes	No
Do you read the law book?
Do you encourage your players to read the law book?
Are you familiar with the ‘spirit of the laws’?
Do you discuss the ‘spirit of the laws’ with your players?
Do you invite umpires to training to assist in developing a better understanding of the laws?
Do you raise your concerns with the umpires’ adviser?
Do you actively teach and encourage players to play within the laws?
2. AT THE MATCH		
Are umpires made welcome by your club?
Do you seek input as to how your club looks after umpires?
Does your club appoint someone to look after umpires?
Does your club provide escorts for the umpires leaving the ground at half-time and after the match?
Do you welcome the umpires when they visit your rooms before the match?

Your answers to these questions will give you an indication of how you behave toward umpires.

As a coach, you are an influential role model and your players will more often than not emulate your behaviour.
You may wish to consider your responses to these questions in light of the AFL Coaches’ Code of Conduct. Do your responses align with the major thrust of the Coaches’ Code?
You may wish to make changes to your attitude towards umpires and make changes to your behaviour.

3. DURING THE MATCH	Yes	No
Do you shout at the umpires?
Do you shout comments about decisions in earshot of your players or the umpires?
Do you refer to the umpires when you address your players?
Do you refer to the umpires so as they can hear during your address to the players?
Do you permit your players to dispute decisions or back-chat umpires?
4. AFTER THE MATCH		
Does your club look after the umpires after the match?
Do you discuss the match with the umpires?
Do you tend to ignore the umpires after the match?
Do you encourage your players to talk to the umpires socially?

LAWS OF AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL

- The objectives of the laws:
- a) to ensure the game is played in a fair manner and a spirit of true sportsmanship;
 - b) to where possible in a contact sport, prevent injuries to players participating in the match

In an effort to achieve consistency and accuracy in decision making, there is an emphasis on understanding the ‘spirit of the laws’ (i.e. the philosophies underlying the laws) and officiating according to the spirit of the laws.



SPIRIT OF THE LAWS

For coaching purposes, five main areas (spirit of the laws) have been identified.

Contest for the ball – General play

- “The player who is making the ball their sole objective will be protected against any form of illegal contact” such as:
- Contact to the head
 - Contact below the knees
 - Held when not in possession of the ball
 - Push in the back
 - Kicking in a manner likely to cause injury
 - Or any conduct which is deemed unreasonable or unnecessary in the circumstances.

Marking contest

- “The player whose sole objective is to contest a mark shall be permitted to do so.”
- Illegal contact includes players who push, bump, block, hold, interfere with the arms or make high contact
 - Where there is incidental contact in a marking contest when the ball is the sole objective (eyes on the ball), play on will result.
 - When a player leaps early, the attempt must be realistic (i.e. they must be able to touch the ball).

Ruck contest

- “The player whose sole objective is to contest the ruck shall be permitted to do so.”
- Illegal contact includes players who push, bump, block, hold or make high contact
 - Where there is incidental contact in a ruck contest when the ball is the sole objective (eyes on the ball), play on will result.

Tackling – Holding the ball

“For a holding the ball free kick to be awarded, the tackle must be legal.”

Diving on the ball

- “The ball shall be kept in motion.”
- Where a player elects to dive on the ball or elects to drag the ball underneath their body and is correctly tackled, the player is to be penalised for holding the ball if they fail to knock the ball clear or correctly dispose of it.



Umpiring is Everyone's Business is about encouraging and expecting all participants in the game (coaches, players, officials and spectators) to create a supportive and encouraging environment for all participants at the football including umpires.

No Prior Opportunity — Reasonable Opportunity

- “The player who has possession of the ball and is tackled correctly by an opponent, shall be given a reasonable opportunity to make a genuine attempt kick or handball the ball”.
- If the tackle pins the ball and a genuine attempt is made to dispose of the ball, a field bounce will result.
 - If a correct tackle or bump causes the player with the ball to lose possession, play on will result.

Prior Opportunity — Must legally dispose immediately

- “Where a player has had possession of the ball and has had a prior opportunity to dispose and is then correctly tackled by an opponent they must immediately and successfully kick or handball the ball.”
- If a correct tackle pins the ball or causes the player with the ball to lose possession, a free kick will result.
 - If a bump or knock to the arm causes the player with the ball to lose possession, play on will result.

50m penalties

- “After a mark or free kick has been awarded, a 50-metre penalty will be awarded against the opposing team which unduly delays the play or abuses an umpire.”
- An undue delay of the play includes:
- Cribbing the mark.
 - Not returning the ball directly to a player after they have been awarded a mark or free kick.
 - Unduly holding up an opponent after that player has marked the ball.
 - A player not involved in a marking contest holds a player who has marked the ball or has been awarded a free kick.
 - Remaining in or entering the protected area

Umpiring is Everyone's Business

THE AFL COACHES’ CODE OF CONDUCT

Australian Football coaches (and officials who appoint them) are becoming increasingly aware that, as members of the wider community and the sports industry, they have legal and ethical obligations to present themselves in public in accordance with acceptable standards of behaviour.

Recognition of this fact by the AFL and affiliated bodies is shown in many ways, including the requirement for coaches to be accredited and a focus on safety, legal and behavioural information in coaches’ courses and seminars.

It is important to maintain standards among Australian Football coaches for the integrity of the sport and the general good of coaches. The AFL Coaches’ Code of Conduct is an outline of acceptable behaviours. The code is not intended to be lengthy, or detailed and does not remove the requirement for coaches to exercise judgment. However, it does stand as a model for leagues, clubs and schools to expect that basic standards of behaviour are maintained. By accepting the Code, coaches are signifying commitment to supporting minimum standards of good coaching and the concepts of responsibility, competence and propriety within coaching.

The AFL Coaches’ Code of Conduct has been in existence and included in coaching manuals for many years. Study of the Code is an integral part of AFL coach accreditation courses and coaches are required to sign their agreement to comply with the Code as part of the accreditation process. Increasingly, clubs and leagues are reinforcing codes of behaviour for coaches and other participants at local level as part of a drive to improve the quality of club environments. There is an expectation that all Australian Football coaches are aware of their responsibilities under the AFL Coaches’ Code of Conduct and act accordingly.

ANDREW DEMETRIOU – AFL Chief Executive Officer

THE AFL COACHES’ CODE OF CONDUCT

I of
..... Postcode.....

hereby commit, to the best of my ability, to uphold the AFL Coaches’ Code of Conduct.

I understand that as an integral component of my accreditation, I must maintain a standard of behaviour and conduct in the best interests of the game and the players/staff in my care.

In representing myself in an honest manner, and without bringing the coaching profession or the Game into disrepute, I will endeavour to uphold the following to the best of my ability.

- 1. I will respect the rights, dignity and worth of all individuals within the context of my involvement in Australian Football, by refraining from any discriminatory practices including, but not limited to, discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender, ethnic background, special ability/disability or sexual orientation, preference or identity.

- 2. I will abide by and teach the AFL Laws of the Game and the Rules of my Club and League/Association.
- 3. I will be reasonable in the demands I make on the time commitments of the players in my care, having due consideration for their health and wellbeing.
- 4. I will be supportive at all times and I will refrain from any form of personal or physical abuse or unnecessary physical contact with the players in my care.
- 5. I will have due consideration for varying maturity and ability levels of my players when designing practice schedules, practice activities and involvement in competition.
- 6. Where I am responsible for players in the 5-18-year-old age group, I will strive to ensure that all players gain equal playing time. I will avoid overplaying the talented players, aiming to maximise participation, learning and enjoyment for all players regardless of ability.
- 7. I will stress and monitor safety always.
- 8. In recognising the significance of injury and sickness, I will seek and follow the physician’s advice concerning the return of injured or ill players to training.
- 9. I will endeavour to keep informed regarding sound principles of coaching and skill development, and of factors relating to the welfare of my players.
- 10. I will at all times display and teach appropriate sporting behaviour, ensuring that players understand and practise fair play.
- 11. I will display and foster respect for umpires, opponents, coaches, administrators, other officials, parents and spectators.
- 12. I will ensure that players are involved in a positive environment where skill-learning and development are priorities and not overshadowed by a desire to win.
- 13. I reject the use of performance-enhancing substances in sport and will abide by the guidelines set forth in the AFL Anti Doping and Illicit Drugs policies.

I AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING TERMS:

- 1. I agree to abide by the AFL Coaches’ Code of Conduct.
- 2. I acknowledge that the AFL, or a body affiliated with the AFL, may take disciplinary action against me if I breach the code of conduct. I understand that the AFL, or a body affiliated with the AFL, is required to implement a complaints-handling procedure in accordance with the principles of natural justice, in the event of an allegation against me.
- 3. I acknowledge that disciplinary action against me may include de-registration from the AFL National Coaching Accreditation Scheme.

Note: This “Coaches’ Code of Conduct” is to be signed and conformed to as part of the accreditation requirements of the AFL. Coaches should be aware that, in addition to this Code, they may be obliged to sign a further Code of Conduct/Ethics with their Club and/or League.

SIGNATURE:.....
DATE:

WITNESS SIGNATURE:.....
DATE:

(To be signed by club president, AFL Auskick District Manager or school principal – whichever applies)

FURTHER
READING

CHAPTER 1 – ROLE OF THE COACH

AFL Coaches' Code of Conduct, AFL, Melbourne.
Ball, S. A Season of Achievement, AFL, Melbourne, 2010.

CHAPTER 2 – BASIC SKILLS OF FOOTBALL

McLeod, A., Jaques, T. Australian Football: Steps to Success, Human Kinetics 2006.
AFL Junior Coaching Manual, AFL, Melbourne 2013.
AFL Skills Guide (DVD), AFL, Melbourne 2013.
AFL Kicking Guides (DVD) AFL, Melbourne 2013.

CHAPTER 3 – PLANNING

Woodman, L., Pyke, F. Periodisation of Australian Football Training, Sports Coach 14 (2) p32-39 1991.
Pyke, F. (Editor) Coaching Excellence, Human Kinetics 2012.
AFCA Coaches Diary, AFL Victoria Development, Melbourne.
Game Day Coaching, (DVD), AFL, Melbourne 2013.

CHAPTER 4 – THE TRAINING SESSION

Wheadon, D. Drills and Skills in Australian Football, AFL, Melbourne 2010.
AFL Junior Coaching Manual, AFL, Melbourne 2013.
G.A.P.S. Australian Football – Interactive Games, Activites, Practices and Skills, Tacklesport Australia, 2012
Style of Play, (DVD), AFL, Melbourne 2012
Team Rules, (DVD), AFL, Melbourne 2012

CHAPTER 5 – TEAM PLAY AND TACTICS

Mitchell, B. & O’Sullivan, D. How to Play Your Position, Pan Macmillan Australia Pty Ltd, Sydney 1998.
Russell, D. How to play Australian Football, GSP Books, Melbourne 2005.

CHAPTER 6 – FITNESS FOR FOOTBALL

Parkin, D., Smith, R., Schokman P. Premiership Football, Hargreen Publishing Company, Melbourne 1987.

CHAPTER 7 – NUTRITION

Garden, L. Footy Food, Intoprint, Melbourne 1993.
Burke, L. The Complete Guide to Food for Sports Performance, Allen and Unwin 1992.

CHAPTER 8 – PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF INJURIES

Safety Guidelines for Children in Sport and Recreation, Sports Medicine Australia, Canberra 2008.
Preventing Australian Football Injuries: Facts and Safety Tips for Australian Football, Smartplay Victoria, Melbourne 2008.
The Management of Concussion in Australian Football, AFL, Melbourne, 2013

CHAPTER 9 – UMPIRING

Laws of Australian Football, AFL, Melbourne 2013.
Laws of the Game Interpretations 2013 (DVD), AFL, Melbourne 2013.

GENERAL

AFL Youth Coaching Manual, AFL, Melbourne 2013.

WEBSITE

There is information about all aspects of coaching in the ‘Coaching’ section, on the AFL community website *aflcommunityclub.com.au*

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Australian Government

Australian Sports Commission