

Coaching Notes: Get more out of your training

The purpose of the coaching session I ran was to promote some thought and hopefully fruitful discussion. I've tried to expand on the ideas presented at the session in the article below. I hope this is useful – happy training.

GENERAL

Training structure:

In any sport it pays to have a structure to your training. Not only to make sure you cover what you want to, but to maximise the players learning and development. Players tend to be more comfortable responsive and focused if they are familiar with the training routine. It also helps if individuals have specific goals and expectations of a training session.

A sample 2 hour training session (in any sport) could be broken down as follows:

- ◆ *Introduction: (20mins)*
Includes any administration, briefing of session, and warm-up (individual and/or team) + general throw and catch.
- ◆ *Skills: (30mins)*
Development of basic skills through drills through repetition.
- ◆ *Strategy/tactics (50mins)*
Drills and/or restricted play to emphasize or develop a particular structure or facet of play.
- ◆ *Scrimmage (20 min)*
Finish with a scrimmage if time – this may be free play or restricted to emphasize factors stressed earlier in the session.

Note: The balance of the session will often change throughout the season.

e.g. Early season you would probably place more emphasis on skills and fitness, while later in the season, when building up to a major event, you would want to place more emphasis on strategy and team tactics.

TRAINING – WHY BOTHER?

Play to train or train to play?

The first and most important question you need to ask yourself is:

WHY do you want to train?

If the answer is to get together with some friends and enjoy playing a game you love – then fine – don't worry about the rest of this – the planning, the goals etc. *Just get out and play!*

If on the other hand you have specific goals you wish to achieve; be they fitness, team unity, or a specific structure ...– write them down, get the team involved – develop some common goals then set about a plan of achieving them.

DRILLS – WHAT'S THE POINT?

Why drill

At the most basic level drills are great to develop basic skills. (e.g. throwing, catching, cutting, pivoting ...)

Beyond that drills can be devised to practice any element of the game you wish to work on.

Boring or interesting – it's your choice!

Drills don't have to be boring – why do the same old thing week-in week-out? Having said that don't get too complicated or change just for sake of it.

If you believe a drill has direct benefit to the game stick with it if not develop something new.

Be prepared when you introduce a new drill it will take longer to set up. It may be less successful initially until the players get use to it or understand it's purpose – however if you've planned it out and have a distinct goal in mind – stick with it.

What's the point – get more out of your drills!

Drills for the sake of drills will do little to develop your game. Doing a drill just because you've seen someone else do it is not likely to address specific weaknesses of your team or the achievement of your goals. Any drill should have direct or indirect application to some facet of the game.

As I said at a basic level drills can be just about working on fundamental skills – but even at this level it doesn't mean the drills need to be boring or unrelated to the way we play.

Some simple things to consider are:

How often do you throw to a static receiver – so why practice that way.

How often do you receive a disc from someone and throw it back to where it came from?

Do you throw differently when you have a marker on you than when you are just throwing with a partner? If so is it any wonder you don't throw as well in a game as in practice?

Do you spend a lot of time standing in line waiting for a turn? If so try smaller groups or add a second disc, or passive defence?

Finally as players improve they require a challenge to remain focused and develop their skills. Do the drills you do provide for this – are they challenging mentally?, physically?, technically? If not, why not?

Invent a new drill or adapt something you've seen in another sport that you think is worth while – but make sure you can justify it's relevance.

FAKING/CUTTING – THE DYEING ARTS!

Been hand blocked lately? I have!

There are a couple of main reasons for getting hand blocked (other than the skill of the marker) – being lazy and forgetting to fake (my weakness) or not making your fakes convincing enough and poor cuts.

I tend to get lazy when I haven't been marked tightly for awhile! If someone is marking you tightly, rather than worrying about whether or not they are fouling you – stand tall command your disc width space and pivot. Once you get the defence moving with your pivot, your fakes will be all the more effective. Watch people that fake well see why their fakes are more convincing than yours.

The second reason I mentioned is cutting. One of the major draw backs of the 'new' style offences which involve vertical cuts, (i.e. towards/away from the disc) as opposed to lateral cuts, is that often they tend to be directly behind the marker and hence harder to throw too. If possible when cutting try to see where the marker is (i.e. the force) and move to the open side if possible to make the throwers task easier – or even wider on the break force side so the angles start to favour the thrower again.

PASSING LANES.

What are they? and why are they so important?

Why do experienced players seem to have to run less on defence? Why are they able to predict the play so well and get those all-important interceptions? Why can some people poach better than others!

It's all down to passing lanes! In general the passing lanes are either side of the marker – of course the range of these lanes will vary depending upon the thrower – which you can also predict to help you read the play.

When zones come into play the passing lanes equate to the gaps in the zone.

On defence if you can shut down the passing lanes you restrict the throwers options and slow down the offence.

On offence you need to be aware of the importance of clearing these lanes if you are not receiving the disc. Not only do you need to clear the lane but you need to be aware of where your defender is and commit them to clearing and/or call poach to make yourself available.

TACTICS!

What's the best way to play?

One that works well for you and your team. i.e. where everyone feels comfortable and understands their role.

What's right and what's wrong?

As far as I'm concerned there is no right and wrong just teams that play particular systems better than others – because of personnel, understanding/experience, application/training, opposition...

We are in a very young sport, which is evolving quickly. It was only 5-6 years ago when predominantly the only offensive patterns you would see were essentially based on stack play. The Europeans have revolutionised this and now there are numerous variations – who knows what will be next.

Think outside the square and play your part in developing this great sport of Ultimate!

Have fun!

Yours in flight,

Gazza.