



# Club Coach Coordinator Newsletter

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## All change

### Dear Club Coach Coordinator

Welcome to issue 9.

This will be the last edition for me as editor as I hand over to John Lawn who has been promoted to Coach Development Manager. I offer my sincerest congratulations and best wishes.

My role has changed from Coaching Development Manager to Player Development Manager, as the Coaching Department becomes the Coach and Player Department.

This is a very positive move forward and puts the player and playing at the centre of development which, of course, is the way it should be.

Although the new role does not officially begin until March 1 it is something I have been involved with increasingly over the past year.

This edition includes one chapter in the heart warming and inspirational life of Matt Hampson.

The feedback from the range of CPD courses continues to be very positive and having delivered one myself recently, at Maidenhead RFC, I was very impressed with the commitment, enthusiasm and contributions from all the coaches. The Under 15 lads they supplied were also exceptionally switched on and

were a pleasure to work with on what was a very cold night.

This edition also expresses some observations from a recent Under 12 festival. The club had done an exceptional job in hosting the festival, and the number of willing and enthusiastic volunteers, on what was also a very cold day, was remarkable. Some of the play observed was excellent and it was great to see so many children involved – however the observations highlight some concerns.

The tedious mauls and tiresome lines-out were a feature of many of the games and lead to the final article on a research project commissioned by the coaching department, with the results to be published some time soon. I hope you find the articles stimulating and thought provoking and I thank you sincerely for your work and support during my tenure.

Gary Townsend  
Coach Development Manager



## *Coach Hampson gains reward for setting 'fantastic example'*

*(Independent on Sunday, October 2009 By Hugh Godwin)*



From acorns: Matt Hampson works with his Level 1 group at Loughborough University



The inspirational story of Matt Hampson, the prop confined to a wheelchair since he broke his neck in an England Under-21 training session in 2005, continues.

"Hambo" has just completed his RFU Level One coaching award at Loughborough University, within weeks of Alan Evans, a client of the RFU Injured Players Foundation who was paralysed while playing for Oswestry, gaining the award in the West Midlands after three years of trying.

Hampson has been coaching the 1st XV forwards at Oakham School in Leicestershire, when not writing magazine columns and raising thousands of pounds for charity.



The Level One award comprised four sessions totalling 24 hours and a written paper.

Brian Hesford, the course tutor, said: "The major challenge for Matt is communication skills but we found the other coaches were patient and made time so his voice was heard.

The work and effort he has put in is a fantastic example. Now he can go on and develop his coaching if he wants to."

We wish Matt every success in his coaching and the many other ventures in which he is involved. An example of resilience and fortitude for us all.





## *Time to sideline 'sideline behaviour'*

I recently attended a CB Under 12 Festival, with 13-a-side and 7 minutes each way. This was played in 4 groups of 5 with the pool winners and runners up playing in a play off to get the 4 semi finalists to play in the county "finals" day, later in the season.

This was a very well run event and it was on first sight it was great to see so many children involved, so many coaches giving of their time and so many supportive parents.

In total I watched 7 games and made some interesting observations.

It was interesting to note how many coaches and some parents make decisions for the players when they are playing. There were some exceptions to this, although even the more "empowering" coaches could not help to offer advice (but often in a positive & encouraging way)

Considering this is a game for the players, this was not evident in some of the teams I observed. I witnessed one team take up position from a scrum, 5 metres from their own line. Their put in, and the outside half clearly had something in mind, until the intervention of a parent behind the try line, yelling at the players to stand deeper and take "route 1". He was still yelling as the 10 moved back, glancing at him as he did so, wondering if deeper meant here or here. No wonder then, that he hesitated as he caught the ball (perhaps waiting for further instruction from the near apoplectic parent), got caught in possession and the opposition scored.

Bearing in mind these children are mainly 11 years of age, and should be a voyage of discovery, experimentation and learning, how relevant is it that a coach continually shout from the sideline instructing the players what to do? One even called a "ranghi" for goodness sake, which over ruled the players who had called a "2" - whatever that might be.

"Tackle" was a prevalent call from all the pitches. One could envisage the children (and it is important to remember that they are children), stopping and thanking the source of that advice for it. They had never thought to tackle, and the instruction from the sideline to do so had miraculously given them the confidence to execute the perfect munch.

It was also very interesting to watch some of the pre match and half time team talks. Whilst some were calm and encouraging, too many were the exact opposite. There were very few smiles, and the intensity on some of the coaches faces and in their rhetoric was something to behold.

"We must win this one - nothing else will do if you want to play in the quarter-final"  
"Kick down their end and then nail them"

Just two examples of the overheard advice from coaches, in addition to this, when a great try was scored against one team the coach, struggling not to burst yet another blood vessel, could not control himself any more - "boys that was rubbish, you need to push up and defend. Do you want to win this game or not?" They lost.

The SAQ warm ups on show would have had strength and conditioners from 5 years ago purring and the lunges and leg flicks were executed with varying degrees of boredom (it was great to see one team warming up for their play off with a game of end ball and happy smiling faces on the players and coaches)

What sort of messages are we sending out when coaches (yes coaches) high 5 when their team score, or jeer when a player misses a conversion (bearing in mind this was in front of one set of posts with coaches/parents/players watching), and again when a kick off goes dead? The recipients of these behaviours are 11 year old children.

Raising confidence, increasing self-esteem, encouraging decision making, promoting core values?  
You be the judge



The Foundation, Qualification and CPD courses continue to draw praise from coaches – here are just a few. They have been edited only to protect the identity of the sender.



*(Re: Continuity Course)  
Absolutely brilliant*

*This is controversial, but here is how I feel after this!!!!*

*Made me re-think yet again how we are coaching, both in terms of the content (in some cases we are coaching the wrong skills/incorrect techniques) and also the methodology (our warm-ups should be more dynamic and game based, we are doing too many drills not in a game scenario and finally the games which we do play are full on games, without breaking enough coaching of the core skills).*

*I think we should make attendance on these course compulsory for all club coaches – i.e. you cannot set/run sessions, be a lead coach for an age group or even a squad within the group unless you attend most/all of these courses.*

*Thanks again*



Dear CDO

I have just on Sunday completed my Level 1 Coaching Training.

I wanted to feedback to you that the quality of the training, the set-up and the whole experience was fantastic and very, very professional. The pace was spot on, the enthusiasm of the trainers contagious.

Having given training at work, and having taken a variety of courses through my career, I don't think I have ever come across a better balance of practice and theory.

My Coach Educator made me, and the rest of the group, deliver our own coaching sessions and develop in a way that few trainers do. His eye for detail and coaching style ensured that the group took the information on board, learned it and then applied it.

Well done to you and the RFU as organisers, and please pass on my thanks to all the Coach Educators



Dear Administrator

Just to let you know I have posted today all the CPD application forms from all of our coaches who attended yesterdays Maul & Ruck CPD module.

Included with the forms is a club cheque.

I have received a lot of positive feedback from many of our coaches today.

They all thoroughly enjoyed the module and gained a tremendous amount of knowledge and ideas which I am sure they will pass on to our various age group players.

To be able to host an event like this is a fantastic opportunity for our coaches (and players). I know we have another module scheduled for the end of the season, but I hope we can repeat similar events in future seasons.



Re: Kicking CPD  
Dear Course Leader

*Just thought that I would drop you a quick e-mail re Saturday, as the only "stranger" can I say that I was made very welcome especially by yourself and the club.*

*As for the course, I thought that it was excellent, as I said to you at the beginning if you can get the kicking game into an old Prop you have done well.*

*So pat yourself on the back because I think that I am going to use what I learnt and it certainly made me think about several issues that I have missed up to now.*

*Anyway thank you again*



Talent ID  
Dear Course Leader

Thank you very much for Tuesdays training I think on a personal level I have gained a great deal. I have a better understanding of talent ID which I am already using with the lads I Coach.

I was glad that some of the ideas I went with were confirmed and the day also gave me a better understanding and depth of knowledge of what to look for.

I am already looking at carrying out a player assessment of all my players to provide feedback and also to enable to tailor my training sessions.

Once again Thank you





Preparation for contact for the Under 9 season continues to be a contentious topic.

It is very important that children are allowed to enjoy and build on the learning to be had from Tag Rugby, and to this end the Under 8 season should be completed as a Tag season.



The rush to introduce contact before the end of the under 8 season in preparation for the Under 9 season puts unnecessary pressure on both coach and player.

A recent experiment has been undertaken by Trojans RFC Under 9s which eased the transition from Tag to Tackle, with no contact being undertaken by the players prior to the commencement of the Under 9 season.



The process and feedback from this will be available from June with the release of a Tag to Tackle DVD.



However the feedback so far has been very positive, with wingers scoring 25 % of tries and a more continuous game a consequence.

Details of this resource will be sent to CCCs as soon as it is available



**THE OFFICIAL LINE**

"Continuum Regulation 6.1.2 defines the Age Grade for a player as their age at Midnight on the 31st August at the beginning of each season. Thus a child who is Under 8 at midnight on 31st August 2008 is a Mini-Tag Under 8 player until the 1st September 2009.

That child is therefore bound by the Regulations and Rules of Play for Mini-Tag which under Rule 10 No Contact and Rule 11 Prohibited Play a) No Tackling.

Coaches and Club Officials should be aware that RFU insurance cover is based upon their compliance with RFU Regulations of which the Continuum forms an integral part.



The RFU sees the four month summer closed season as an opportunity for young children to grow and enjoy other physical opportunities before returning on 1st September with fresh enthusiasm for the game of Rugby Union.

This is especially relevant to those children achieving their 8th birthday later in RFU year who can thus be physically smaller than their peers especially those born prior to Christmas and experience has shown can be permanently put off the game of Rugby by having to make contact with a child who has enjoyed an early physical development.

Coaches and Club Officials are reminded of Continuum Regulation 16 .5 b) all matches should be used as an extension of the coaching session with the emphasis being on the quality of performance rather than the result.

Amen to that!



The coaching department recently commissioned some research from Exeter University to examine the way the game is played and to make recommendations for future development

The research report has now been finalised and the full report will be on-line in the Spring.

The evidence so far;

Under 17s, 4 games observed all 15-a-side and 35 minutes each way

The half backs had 71 touches per game, with the remainder of the team getting 98 touches between them. Every position (apart from 9 and 10) makes more tackle attempts than they have the ball in hand and the average number of tries per game was 2

The average number of passes leading to a try (or breakdown) was 2

Under 12 festival, 5 games, 7 minutes each way

66% of contact situations (ruck/maul) occurred off either no pass (pick up and go), or after one pass, and only 16% of plays involved more than 2 passes. Although 19 tries were scored across the five games; none were scored directly off more than 2 passes. On average there were 5 scrums, 5 line-outs, 4 mauls and 13 rucks a game (in 14 minutes!)

Tag Rugby, Under 11, 4m each way, 8-a-side

Average of 6 passes made before a try (the highest was 15)

Tag Rugby, Under 11, 6m each way, 7-a-side

124 times when the ball was in hand (an average of 9 per person: Range 3-19).



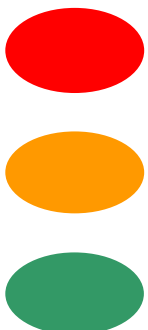
Armed with this and at the same Under 12 festival outlined on page 3 I carried out my own visual and totally unscientific research. My findings were as follows over 7 games

There was too little space which caused a good deal of contact and lots of prolonged mauls which resulted in ruck, scrum, or turn over. I did not witness one off load in the tackle. Three of the 7 games were 0 – 0.

Lines-out were a lottery and I did not see any jumping or movement in the line-out.

The better teams did pass – but my (rough) estimate was that generally 5 of the players in those teams made 80% of the plays, with on average 3 players in those teams being involved in less than 10% of the game (outside of scrum). In weaker teams 2-3 players would have 80-90% of their teams play.

In two games where I made a point of watching the wingers, 2 did not touch the ball once. The same two wingers (on 2 different teams in two different games) contributed, between them, 1 tackle. They had no involvement in rucks or mauls. Their teams won by 4 or more tries in those games. One team in one game had the ball 6 times – shared by two players over the 14 minutes





So, what are the implications of this?

When reading the 'evidence' above the question is what this suggests about the emphasis for an individual in playing rugby between U12 and U17 level?

Are 5 touches a game enough opportunity to learn decision-making and ball handling skills in a 'real', competitive environment? That is assuming that a player actually gets 5 touches (the figures were averages). In one of the U17 games one of the wingers did not see the ball at all – in 70 minutes, and I have witnessed two players only receiving one involvement between them at Under 12 in 14 minutes of rugby.

It was obvious from the Under 12 festival that players had already been given set positions and I suspect that the percentage share of the game for the half backs was similar to that outlined in the U17 evidence.



If we wish to develop players who make decisions under pressure then it is incumbent upon us, when they are younger, to give opportunity for them to play in key positions. We wonder why players, even at International level, are unable to complete a 2 v 1, or even a 3 v 1 in a game, but have not provided them with the opportunity during their development to have more opportunity to experience and practice within a competitive game.

The early recommendations from the research should come as no surprise

Fewer players, less structure and a decreased emphasis on contact in the formative years will:

- Increase Involvement = fun / participation, aerobic exercise / health benefits for all
- Provide more opportunities to make decisions in game settings = development of decision-making skills, more ball handling at younger ages,
- Encourage more in-depth grounding in the evasion and ball handling aspects of the game.
- Afford greater opportunity to play (smaller teams = more teams = more places)
- Develop more key from less structured; less rule-driven forms of the game.

Ask a child the following question

You have a choice of games:

Game 1

An evasion ball-game

The most you will touch the ball is 1 touch per 10 minutes and some of you may not touch it at all. The average number of passes before the flow of the game is stopped is 2.

Game 2

An evasion ball-game

The most you will touch the ball is 1 touch per 1.3 minutes the least you will touch the ball is every 4 minutes.

The average number of passes before the flow of the game is stopped is 5.

Which one do you want to play?

If we make a small change to Game 2 (reduce the number), you are likely to touch the ball and be involved more often. Which one do you want to play now?

There is a good deal more research and consideration required, but in this increasing era of distractions, choices and alternatives for children, rugby should strive to keep ahead of the times.





**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CLUB COACH COORDINATORS VISIT [www.rfu.com/coach](http://www.rfu.com/coach)**  
Follow the links to the dedicated CCC page

**INCLUDING DETAILS OF HOW TO REGISTER COACHES ON RUGBY FIRST**



### ***LEVEL 3 Hartpury College July 8 - 11 2010 & July 2011***

The Level 3 course demands very high standards of applicants. In the past, coaches, through no fault of their own, have seen the Level 3 course as a natural progression from the Level 2. This is something which takes many years, and even then it may be that the coach is not suited to the Level 3 qualification. However by attending CPD and by continuing to develop and challenge themselves the coach continues to contribute positively to the development of the players with whom they are working.

Unlike the Level 1 and 2 qualifications, which are designed to assist the coach to reach the required standard of coaching, the Level 3 is a real test of the ability of a coach and as a manager of playing programmes and personnel. Although there are development opportunities on the course, it is very much an endorsement that the coach is working at Level 3, rather than a means solely to get them there. It is important therefore that prior to applying the coach uses the information below to assess his/her competence and confidence in all areas.

On successful completion of the Level 3 all coaches should be able to:

- Analyse participants' current and potential performance needs and aspirations,
- Plan a coaching programme according to agreed goals
- Manage a safe and effective coaching environment
- Deliver a coaching programme using a range of coaching styles and interventions to meet participants' needs
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of coaching programmes to modify future plans and meet participants' needs
- Manage and develop personal coaching practice
- Coach techniques & tactical concepts of rugby union
- Demonstrate an understanding of the units & sub-units and their contribution to team play and the principles of rugby union
- Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of attack and defence

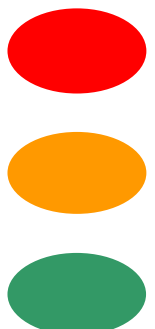
**Closing date for applications FRIDAY 9 APRIL 2010 – Application Details on [www.rfu.com/coach](http://www.rfu.com/coach)**

#### **Active Club Coaching Coordinator**

An active CCC is defined as a person, who fulfils the following responsibilities and is registered on Rugby First:

1. Promotes coach education and development within the club, and:
2. Is proactive in identifying coach development needs and liaise with other CCCs & the Coach Development Officer to organise CPD & Foundation courses at the club or club cluster in line with course protocols
3. Attends at least one meeting per year at CB, Regional or club cluster level
4. Updates and maintains an accurate record of the club's coaches and roles on RugbyFirst

**Further details can be found on the web-site [www.rfu.com/coach](http://www.rfu.com/coach)**



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