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## 'Well-intentioned coaching is not always better than no coaching'

### Dear Club Coach Coordinator

Welcome to issue 8.

Having completed the Coaching Children's Rugby CPD, my attention was drawn to the headline statement above. This quote is from Rod Thorpe of Loughborough College, a renowned champion of "Coaching Through Games" and Experiential Learning.

This statement has particular resonance at this moment in time, due to a couple of e-mails received recently and some discussions with coaches around the country.

Here is an edited example of one of the e-mails from a recently qualified Level 1 Coach.

*"Hi I thoroughly enjoyed the (Level 1) course and left with a smile on my face after each session Very well presented throughout...although I'm left wondering if everyone buys into it?"*

*I have endeavoured to take up the following points with the club*

- children first - winning second

- inclusion at training and equal game time

- coaching improvement especially for new boys coming down the club.

*I have been told by the U11 Head Coach and Chairman of the mini-section that the Level 1 is a waste of time and not relevant.*

### The conclusion...

- *The thought of losing not only threatens the self-esteem of the kids, it also threatens their parents self-esteem and life values*

- *Most coaches and parents will do anything to protect their self-esteem and make sure their kids win games*

- *The RFU is not getting its message across and the old way of coaching, training and playing continues"*

Every effort is being made to promote the messages of inclusion and participation through courses, resources and newsletters. However it is clear from the example above, and from various feed-back that this is not affecting change in some clubs and/or with some coaches.

Among the studies conducted to ascertain why children drop out of sport:

*"...the reason for dropping out tend to be that children had other interests, the coach was too tough/mean, it was no longer fun, or the children did not get enough chance to participate.*

*Interestingly, **children seldom say that their desire 'to win' is a reason for participating'***

*(Gould & Petchlichoff, 1988).*



The following is taken from research undertaken with young children who were asked what they would like in a coaching environment. Here is a list of the most popular answers.

Children (5-11 years)

- Fun, fun, fun
- More time to play
- Being with friends
- More games, more competitions, less talking
- More variety
- Don't shout!
- Use more "cool stuff"

Children (12-15 years)

- Fun, but greater emphasis on learning
- More 'hands on' coaching, demonstrations
- Would like more democracy, involvement in the coaching sessions
- More 'female friendly'



many games lost which were successful.



*"The problem is that children's participation in sport is determined by adults who have designed competitions that reflect adult expectations and are derived by adult structures. Adults believe they know what is best for children.....whilst these can enable children to have a wonderful experience....for many it can be totally unsuccessful and dreadful"*

*"The win at all costs attitude (perpetrated by some adults) can significantly affect the way children perceive success.. it reinforces their perception that if they do not win they are not successful...many children drop out of sport due to stress and their perception that they cannot be accepted" (Kidman)*



How many games of rugby (or other sports) have you played? How many have you won? How many lost? If you're like me you won't remember.

The reason is simple. I enjoyed playing and I most enjoyed playing well. I enjoyed being part of a team, and playing sport with my mates. I enjoyed the anticipation of the game, the triumphs and the disappointments – which were a part of the whole package.

How many of those games did I play to win? I can give you an exact answer to that. Every one of them.

It did not require a coach or ranting parent on the side of the pitch. It is a given. And despite the disappointment of a loss, there are



I leave the final statement to Lynn Kidman (from her book Athlete Centred Coaching), but ask that you examine yours and others coaching. How will the "success" of the Under 14s winning the League or the County Cup translate to 1<sup>st</sup> XV performance or Senior Membership in 10 years time? That is a true test of good children's coaching – not the here and now but the tomorrow.

*"Success and winning are different. For success, striving to win is more important than actually winning. The child can execute the best performance of their life and still lose. This child can feel positive because ..... success is equal to good performance"*



The Irish Rugby Football Union are all too aware of the problems that a "win at all costs" attitude has on the game. As part of their Long Term Player Development Strategy Festivals and tournaments for Under 7 to Under 12s are not permitted to have an overall winner. There will be no play offs.

In addition to this Leagues will not be allowed in the same age group. The focus is participation, involvement and enjoyment for young children Amen to that.

Gary Townsend Editor



## Isn't playing to win what sport is really all about? (Belfast Telegraph)

By Michael Bashford  
Tuesday, 22 September 2009

In the majority of sports we play it is the winning that is the prime objective.

Ingrained in us at a young age, those of us who are brought up playing sports will play it to win.

So it's interesting to note that the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU) has implemented a ban on children's mini-rugby tournaments that end with one team winning over another from the beginning of this season.

The move, which has baffled some parents and coaches across the country, follows a worldwide consultation by the powers that be into the development of rugby in Ireland, north and south.

David Boyd, domestic games manager with Ulster Rugby, said the emphasis is about involving all children and "we should, at that key age between six and 12, be introducing the fundamentals of the game, with the emphasis very much on the fun".

"My ultimate concern is that those highly competitive tournaments do not involve all of the children who are playing mini-rugby, and they only afford an opportunity to the very best as they are perceived to be," he continued.

"I would suggest that the losers in those do not see the fun."

Mr Boyd has a point. Not all children are graced with wonderful skills in whatever sport interests them. As such they are less likely to get picked for a specific team game and thus any enjoyment they could have is deprived to them.

However, the other side of the coin is if we don't have the best of our youngsters playing together and striving to win, what chance do we as a sporting nation have in achieving the best we possibly can? How can our youngsters aim to win when they reach adulthood if it isn't ingrained in them at a young age?

These are obviously questions which have been asked by IRFU officials.

And of course, we have been coaching our kids to win for generations. The result? A rugby-loving nation that has achieved a lot domestically but not much internationally.

Perhaps this new approach can release the shackles that prohibit us from achieving the best that we can be and produce a rugby team that not only strives to win but does so with a smile on their face and less pressure on their shoulders.



## Brian Ashton to develop coaches in England

Thursday September 24, 2009  
Issued by Dave Barton

BRIAN ASHTON is linking up with the RFU's Community Coaching Department to develop coaches in England.

The former national coach has committed to working with the department and supporting the delivery of their coach development programmes and enhancing new coaching resources.

The agreement will see Brian helping to create the national teachers' rugby development programme to be launched in 2010. He will also use his expertise to advance the RFU's community rugby coaches and develop the way the game is introduced and developed for players aged seven to 35

Brian will travel throughout England supporting the coach development programmes of the RFU's eight regional Coach Development Officers. He will also work with the department to create a new coaching resource enhancing coaches' understanding of ways to make players and teams clearer decision-makers in attacking play.

Head of RFU Coach Development Gary Henderson said: "The RFU has a key objective of becoming world leaders in coaching development. Over the next five years we intend building a series of programmes and resources to enhance coaches' understanding of the game and their coaching skills. Brian's unique expertise and knowledge will enable us to be at the forefront of coaching."

Brian Ashton added: "I am delighted to be working with the RFU's Coaching Development Department to help deliver and develop in a number of areas of coaching. Their determination to enhance coaching in decision making and game understanding appeals to my sense of innovation and creativity and will, hopefully, offer something different to those who still operate in a coach-centred drills based fashion with their players."





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.



Hi

*Just though I'd drop you an email with some feedback about the tag rugby course.*

*Being fairly novice to rugby I wasn't to sure what to expect. It turned out to be an excellent course delivered by 2 really knowledgeable coaches.*

*The booklet and DVD were really good as well. I've been doing a lot of training recently and I wish all the providers spent as long on their handout material as the RFU have!. I'll certainly be booking the rugby ready course shortly.*



Dear Matt,

Just a quick note to say thanks to the training team for a fantastic couple of days on the Level I course.

The delivery, passion and content were highly infectious and inspiring. Nick Moberly was my team leader and really engaged our group with humour and drive. A pleasure to meet such great trainers.

I will be raving about the course to my colleagues at Wasps.



Dear Dave,

*Just a short note of appreciation to say thank you for the effort you put into the coaching course this weekend. I thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience and as a professional educator myself I was extremely impressed by your approach and skill in managing the group and in passing on the information. It was fantastic.*

*As we discussed I am now going forward into coaching enthused and keen to help others to excel and to enjoy the sport. If I am ever able to do it half as well as you then I'll know that I've achieved my aim.*

*Thanks once again for everything; I hope to meet you again in the future either as one of your trainees or maybe at a match (but not as a player)!*

*I would just like to pass on my thoughts from the recent Level 1 course. I'm a newly qualified PE teacher and thought that the delivery from both the course tutor and coach educators who supported him was top class,*



Dear Administrator

I just wanted to say a big thank you to you and the delivery team.

The Course was tremendous and very well put across in an appropriate way. They really balanced the content and activities well and we never felt "put down or talked down to" like some courses.

It was helped by being a great subject of course, one we all love, but, all the same, tremendous, well done to all!



*I would just like to pass on my thoughts from the recent Level 1 course. I'm a newly qualified PE teacher and thought that the delivery from both the course tutor and coach educators who supported him was top class, having been on many level ones the level 1 rugby was by far the best!!*

*I would also like to commend the RFU on their game sense approach and the lengths taken to sell it to us as aspiring coaches. I feel that they (deliverers) really keyed into the idea and as a result, my group in particular really welcomed and took on the idea of a game sense approach to coaching rugby.*

*Also from a PE teachers approach I think that there is nowhere near the game time and whole-part-whole teaching in both sports coaching and teaching and to see the RFU really pushing for a game sense approach and highlighting weaknesses in a game and then being able to break them down with drills is fantastic!!*

*If you could inform the team that worked on the course that is was very insightful and improved my own rugby game I would appreciate it.*



Dear Administrator

Many thanks for getting me onto the recent Rugby Ready course held at Devizes RFC. It was a very good introduction to coaching. I was impressed with the chap who took the course (I don't know his name) and found the emphasis on player safety particularly helpful.





The following are extracts from an article by Jim White of the Sunday Telegraph which graphically describes behaviour witnessed at his visit to a football festival. However, before settling into a rugby "smug zone", similar examples to those highlighted below have been witnessed and reported all too often at rugby matches involving young children. You may have even seen it yourself.

The Football Association should be congratulated on their move to take positive steps to address many of the issues raised here. The RFU have also recently formed a working party to re-establish the Core Values of the Game and are also producing a supporting film.

Parent's, Player's and Coach's codes of conduct can be found on the web-site ([www.rfu.com](http://www.rfu.com)) and in many of the coaching resources at Foundation and Qualification level. They are there to assist you and your club in introducing and upholding the values and ethos of the game. Children especially, but not exclusively, should not be subjected to, or witness, overzealous and abusive behaviour and language. Referees should be protected from offensive comment and conduct parents and coaches who cannot adhere to these rules should be asked to leave – permanently if necessary.



## Grass-roots abuse is irreparably damaging the fabric of football

By Jim White

Published: 7:30AM BST 04 Sep 2009

*Even in its close season, football never sleeps. On the one warm weekend of the summer I attended a junior football tournament, keen to take in the game and what is fondly called its grass roots.*

*From a distance, it was an inspiring, carnival sight: lots of pitches, lots of children tearing around, a tented village humming with activity. Closer inspection, however, revealed a less savoury sense of purpose. It was here that rather than being nurtured, football's grass roots were being strangled before they had barely emerged*

*Standing pitchside during a semi-final in an under-11 knockout tournament, it was impossible not to notice the edge, the tension, the flintiness in the air, a sense of menace familiar to anyone who was at Upton Park last week.*

*There was swearing, there were threats, there was verbal intimidation. None of it came from the players. It was all from the touchline, where the parents were gathered, flooding the pitch with the full-beam intensity of their focus.*

*Every cliché you could imagine of the junior game was played out: shouty coaches, overexcited parents, the young referee subjected to an endless tirade of ignorant complaint from those who would not know Law three if it bit them on the behind.*





*After it was over, after one of the coaches had been steered away from confrontation by less inflamed heads, after the fingers had stopped jabbing and the swear volume had been turned down to the merely deafening, I saw a father taking his son to one side.*

*This was not an important game, futures did not hang on it, it was just a bit of leisure time relaxation. But the father laid into his boy with a venom that made the stomach churn just to observe it.*



*Spitting fury inches from the boy's increasingly teary face, he fumed on about commitment and effort and his child's apparent lack of it. His tirade culminated in him pushing the lad in the chest and telling him that this was it, he was not going to bother bringing him to play football if that was how he played. Just like the verbals that preceded it, as a threat it seemed entirely counter-productive: if anything the boy looked relieved. In his mind, no more football would mean an end to such humiliation.*

*The evidence is that such ugly parental bullying takes place as often in pricey southern suburbs as it does in northern inner cities.*

*The result is always the same. The victim – who will have been subject to pressure over breakfast before the match, in the car on the way there, in a lengthy, pointless post mortem – will associate football not with fun but with grief, pain and shouting. He will not blame his father, he will blame the game. So, the moment he can choose, he will give it up*



*The fall-off in junior football after the age of 11 is enormous. Thousands hang up their boots just as the game turns interesting. Sure, some of them do so in order to pursue other interests – largely screen-based. But a significant proportion give up because their own father has made it intolerable. For football this is a serious issue, ultimately far more damaging than diving or debt. These might not be future professionals being abused, but they are the potential consumers of the game's future.*

*The old Jesuit doctrine about 'getting the child early and you have the man for life' acts just as certainly in reverse: put them off at 11 and they will show no interest at 31*



*A short film featuring Ray Winstone commenting on an incident very similar to the one I observed is released this week to coincide with junior football's big kick-off.*

*A powerful mini-drama, it is available to view on the FA's website. It deserves wider circulation: summing up the issue in 60 seconds, it should be compulsory viewing for every parent (yes, mothers can be as bad) who plans to support their child playing sport this weekend.*

*"Ain't it time we gave it a rest?" concludes Winstone, of the endless abuse he suggests as many as half our young footballers suffer.*

*If only his words were heeded. It wouldn't necessarily win us the World Cup. But it would make this country a much more civilised place*





**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**

### CPD Courses – Booking

As pointed out in Issue 7 of the CCC Newsletter there are now a range of foundation and Continuous Personal Development Courses available for coaches.

These courses have been designed to fit the requirements of the coaches to whom they are being delivered. In the past events have been organised for all coaches, e.g. a line-out session by a well known coach working at the elite level. Whilst these have their place and can be of great value, often much of the content is not relevant to many of the coaches in attendance.

The range of courses can be found on [www.rfu.com](http://www.rfu.com). An active CCC has the potential to organise a course at their own club. The requirement is that 12 coaches minimum should be in attendance.

Once the course has been agreed by the CDO all attendees should complete and submit the application forms and payment should be sent to the Approved Centre Administrator. This will ensure that enough resources are ordered for the evening. Each course will require 4 – 6 weeks minimum notice for it to be organised to the highest standards.

This is a shift away from the “turn up” on the night process which you may have experienced in the past. This is to ensure:

- Enough resources are available for everyone
- That there are adequate numbers to run the course
- Quality deliverer: coach ratios
- Adequate room to deliver the course

Your CDO will be able to advise; contact details are on page 9.



### This is Rugby - Core Values

Rugby is a game for all shapes and sizes. As a result, a complete cross section of the community is involved in rugby union in England, with over 2.5 million players, 1,900 rugby clubs, 3,100 schools, 37,000 referees, 57,000 coaches and 40,000 volunteers involved.

All share common purpose and core values.

You may have heard or seen the announcement from the Core Values Task Group which identified the features which make our sport unique;

- **Teamwork** – essential to our sport.
- **Respect** – the basis of our sport
- **Enjoyment** – the reason we play and support rugby union
- **Discipline** – strong discipline underpins our sport
- **Sportsmanship** – the foundation upon which rugby union is built

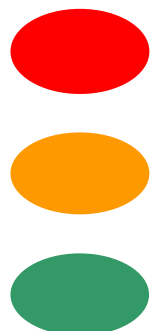
Bearing in mind this month’s editorial and articles the launch of this programme is very appropriate. Expect to see these values appearing on many newly developed resources and as a theme running throughout qualification and CPD courses.

### 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)



Gary Henderson	<b>Head of Coach Development</b> Tel: 0208 831 6711
Will Feebery	<b>National Coaching Development Manager</b> CDO & Workforce Development Manager willfeebery@rfu.com
Des Diamond	<b>National Coaching Development Manager</b> Level 4, Coach Licensing & Coach Mentoring desdiamond@rfu.com
Gary Townsend	<b>National Coaching Development Manager</b> Qualifications, CCC, CPD & Player Development garytownsend@rfu.com
<b>Regional Coach Development Officers</b>	
Jon Bates	<b>London South</b> (Kent, Surrey & Sussex) Tel:07764 336709 (m) Email: <a href="mailto:jonbates@rfu.com">jonbates@rfu.com</a>
Ian Bletcher	<b>West Midlands</b> (North Midlands, Staffordshire & Warwickshire) Tel: 07764 699642 (m) Email: <a href="mailto:ianbletcher@rfu.com">ianbletcher@rfu.com</a>
Alan Hubbleday	<b>South West</b> (Cornwall, Devon, Gloucestershire & Somerset) Tel: 07764 960374 (m) Email: <a href="mailto:alanhubbleday@rfu.com">alanhubbleday@rfu.com</a>
John Lawn	<b>Yorkshire &amp; North East</b> (Northumberland, Durham & Yorkshire) Tel: 07738 029109 (m) Email: <a href="mailto:johnlawn@rfu.com">johnlawn@rfu.com</a>
Nick Scott	<b>East Midlands</b> (Notts, Lincs. & Derbyshire, East Midlands & Leicestershire) Tel: 07738 029112 (m) Email: <a href="mailto:nickscott@rfu.com">nickscott@rfu.com</a>
Gavin Williams	<b>Southern Region</b> (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Dorset & Wilts & Oxfordshire) 07764 960391 (m) Email: <a href="mailto:gavinwilliams@rfu.com">gavinwilliams@rfu.com</a>
Ian Thompson	<b>North West</b> (Lancashire, Cumbria & Cheshire) Tel: 07738 029110 (m) Email: <a href="mailto:ianthompson@rfu.com">ianthompson@rfu.com</a>
Tony Robinson	<b>London North</b> (Eastern Counties, Hertfordshire, Essex & Middlesex) Tel: 07894 783339 (m) Email: <a href="mailto:tonyrobinson@rfu.com">tonyrobinson@rfu.com</a>

Rugby Football Union

Rugby Offices  
Rugby Road Twickenham  
TW1 1DZ



Phone:  
Judy Weavers  
0208 8316509



E-Mail:  
[judyweavers@rfu.com](mailto:judyweavers@rfu.com)



[www.rfu.com/coach](http://www.rfu.com/coach)