

RUGBY COACH WEEKLY

Learn • Train • Develop • Enjoy

11 June, 2014

Issue 367

£4.99/\$6.99

YOUTH VERSUS EXPERIENCE

HOW TO LOAD THE DICE
IN YOUR FAVOUR WHEN
SELECTING A TEAM

LINEOUT REMEDIES

PLAY "PODS IN THE BOX" TO
GET YOUR SET PIECE ON TRACK

BUYING KIT ON A BUDGET

WHAT YOU NEED - AND HOW
TO SAVE MONEY GETTING IT

DEFENDING WHEN FATIGUED

LIFT THE TEMPO WITH
THIS PUNISHING SESSION

WHEN TO START YOUR PRE-SEASON TRAINING

< HENRY
SLADE
YOUNG
TALENT



PLAYER REVIEWS

SAVE TIME BY USING
OUR TEMPLATE!

True pros understand their roots



Rugby Coach Weekly
Issue 367



Rugby Coach Weekly is published by Green Star Media Ltd, Meadow View, Tannery Lane, Bramley, Guildford GU5 0AB, UK.

Telephone
+44 (0)1483 892894

Editor
Alan Pearey
alan.pearey@greenstarmedia.net

Head coach
Dan Cottrell
dan.cottrell@rugby-coach.com

Coaching experts
Dan Cottrell
Nick Bishop
Nigel Botherway

Illustrations
Steve Thorp, Artlife

Pictures
Action Images

Production
ATG Media Production

Designer
Jamie Leeson

Customer services
Duncan Heard
duncanh@greenstarmedia.net

Publishing Director
Kevin Barrow

Managing Director
Andrew Griffiths

(c) Green Star Media Ltd.
All rights reserved.

Click [here](#) to read the full disclaimer

Cover picture
Exeter's Henry Slade, the young English fly half being tipped for great things

Would you like to advertise in *Rugby Coach Weekly*? You can download our media pack by clicking [here](#)

To subscribe to *Rugby Coach Weekly*, call Duncan Heard on +44 (0)1483 892894 or [subscribe online here](#)

Touchline Tales

Take responsibility for yourself. That's what I tell any teams that I coach. It applies to their training, playing and, ultimately, general approach to all things in life.

Players who respond to this the most improve the most. Perhaps they're naturally predisposed to this behaviour already. Others need reminding. Which, of course, is slightly nonsensical because they should be taking responsibility for doing this themselves!

But remind them I do, and on a number of occasions I use the example of Alun Wyn Jones. The Ospreys, Wales and Lions lock is one of the best in the world in his position. If he makes a mistake in training, Sam Warburton wrote of him, then he'll get down and do 10 press-ups on the spot.

This tale resonates with my Swansea Schoolboys side in particular because Alun Wyn – leading Wales on their SA tour – was once one of their number.

And I was able to ask the man himself the other week whether the tale was true. As a surprise, our chairman organised for Alun Wyn to give out the awards at our presentation night.

He arrived to a standing ovation from the gathering of boys, friends and family. When I asked Alun Wyn if the



Model pro: Wales captain Alun Wyn Jones at the awards night for Dan's team

story was true he admitted it was, though by the end of the season he says it's more like one press-up than 10.

When he spoke to the boys, he told them not to stint on their studies – he himself has completed a law degree whilst playing international rugby.

He also told them that the support network of their family is something

“You need someone who listens and picks you up when things go wrong”

that you'll appreciate throughout your whole career. He understands how important it is to have someone to listen to you, to share your successes or pick you up when things go wrong.

Acknowledging his nearest and dearest, for all they've done for him in rugby, is a responsibility he takes very seriously. And he made it clear to the boys that they should do the same.



ASK DAN!

For help with coaching problems, email: askdan@rugbycoachweekly.com

OUR NEW one-to-one service has proved an instant hit, with many of you getting in touch with your specific coaching problems. Called *Ask Dan!*, the service is exclusive to subscribers and simply involves you emailing me about any coaching matter – and as often as you like. I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

I'll give you personalised advice, I'll send you resources to use and I'll ask our panel of coaching experts to provide additional ideas.

Having coached at every

level from U6 up, I have a wealth of advice at my disposal. Plus, with more than 2,000 articles, drills and sessions in my archive, I'm sure I'll have a solution for your problem.

Some of the queries I answer will feature on our *Ask Dan!* page – see page 7 for a query about how to translate good lineout training into practice on match days.

Player reviews, a touch rugby session and stocking up on kit are other subjects we cover this week as we tailor our content to your needs in the off-season. Enjoy your coaching.



In this issue...

- 3 YOUTH v EXPERIENCE**
Swansea's relegation shows what can happen if you get the balance wrong
- 4 PLAYER REVIEWS**
Four quick steps to upskill your players – print out our review sheet!
- 6 DEFENSIVE DUTIES**
Work on realigning and defending when fatigued in this touch session
- 7 BUYING KIT ON A BUDGET**
What kit do you need and how do you get it? We have all the answers
- 8 QUERIES? ASK DAN!**
How to translate good lineout training into match-day performance
- 9 THE BIG DEBATE**
Should you award badges to grade player development? Read and vote

Gently does it: Sam Cane, here taking on Italy, was eased into Test rugby



How to blend youth and experience

Swansea's plight shows what can happen if you get the "development v winning" equation wrong. Sam Cane's All Blacks baptism provides lessons for all – even if you don't have a Richie McCaw!

One of the biggest talking points from last season's Welsh domestic campaign was Swansea's demotion from the Premiership. Traditionally one of the "big four" in Wales, Swansea now find themselves relegated due to their entirely positive commitment to the Ospreys' regional development programme.

The club had probably the youngest squad in their illustrious history representing them in 2013-14, and contributed five players to the Wales U20 squad at the current Junior World Cup.

Like Aberavon, Bridgend and Neath (the Ospreys' other "feeder" clubs), Swansea stuck to their remit as a "development pathway" for emerging talent and have suffered for it. It's no coincidence that the Ospreys' feeder clubs finished in the bottom four spots in the Premiership.

If this provides yet more evidence of the painful disconnection between the professional and grass-root layers of the game in Wales, it's also a warning about the danger of introducing too many young players too soon into a team.

In general, you can't sit two learner drivers alongside each other in a car and expect positive results! There needs to be a mentor-student relationship to guide

the young player through the rocky patches in the learning process.

When New Zealand introduced Sam Cane – fresh out of their U20 World Cup side – into the All Blacks set-up in June 2012, the coaches ensured that the dice were loaded in his favour. Here's how:

1 RICHIE McCAW AS MENTOR

With Cane being groomed to replace McCaw in the long term, it made sense for the 20-year-old Cane to be mentored by the great man himself.

Other 2011-class juniors (Beauden Barrett, Brodie Retallick and Julian Savea) were integrated at the same time, and attached to other senior All Blacks. Savea played outside Conrad Smith in two of the three Tests, for example.

DID YOU KNOW?
 George Ford became the youngest Englishman to make his pro debut when he played in an LV= Cup tie for Leicester in Nov 2009 – aged 16 years 237 days



2 IMMERSION IN THE CULTURE

Given time to absorb the culture of the All Blacks before he played a game, Cane was introduced progressively.

He didn't play in the first Test against Ireland, was introduced off the bench for the second half of the second Test, and played from the start of the third match.

3 THE EXPERIENCE SANDWICH

When Cane started his first match as an All Black, he was sandwiched between two experienced back-rowers in his unit of the team – with McCaw at 8 and Liam Messam at 6 representing over 125 caps worth between them.

4 USE THE "PREVAILING WIND"

When Cane started the third Test, all the factors were loaded in his favour:

- > **A.** The series was won (NZ led 2-0).
- > **B.** The match was played at Hamilton, Cane's home ground.
- > **C.** He was fully immersed in the culture of the jersey, mentored by (and playing alongside) one of the all-time greats.

With the support structure in place, Cane scored two tries, and made 16 tackles, two turnovers and a clean break!



Words by:
Nick Bishop

Focus points: use a review sheet to identify the areas to improve in



In brackets means a player who can fill in

Simon is the best hooker because of his tackling. That's something for Shorty to aspire to and so work on

Simon needs to work on this area

We're weaker at throwing in, so must work on our lineouts

PLAYER REVIEW SHEET

POSITIONS	PLAYERS	BEST PLAYER	POINT OF DIFFERENCE	BETTER IF	WORK ON
PROP	Chad, Rich, Lawrence (Shorty)	Chad	Set piece	More mobile, more tackles	Prop conditioning, tackle conditioning
HOOKER	Simon, Shorty	Simon	Tackling	Throwing in	Lineouts, short options
LOCK	Alex, Richie L, Keiran, (Nathan)	Alex	Ball carrier	Tackles, hit more rucks	Tackle conditioning, ruck technique

4 quick steps to improve players

Player reviews can get forgotten as thoughts turn to a well-earned summer break. But they needn't take an age to do – use my **player review template** to look at the group as a whole and save time

This is the perfect time to be looking at your players' strengths and weaknesses ahead of next season.

Pro teams do this continuously, but it's something coaches like us can struggle to find the time for. So, having narrowed down the squad in my representative side, I sat down to do my review this week.

You should do likewise – but be careful. You'll find that when you sit down to get started you'll waste an hour making a spreadsheet that looks pretty before you even get to assessing your players!

To help make this important task quicker and easier, I'm sharing the template I use to review my own players. Use it with your players to start putting your plans in place for next season...

1 IDENTIFY YOUR BEST PLAYER IN EACH POSITION – PLAYERS AND BEST PLAYER

You have a limited time between the start of pre-season and your first game, and you probably don't have the time to work one-to-one with individual players. So you have to plan and train smart.

List all of the players you have for a

given position in the appropriate cell. For players who can fill in when you're short, put their name in brackets.

Choose your best player and write their name in the next column. By focusing on who your key players in each position are, you create a model for training.

2 MAKE YOUR BEST BETTER – POINT OF DIFFERENCE

It's likely your best player is noticeably better at one particular aspect of the game – this is the point of difference. It makes the best player the best and is the area the rest need to catch up in.

This area will be a fundamental part of the game that you'll work on regularly, so it shouldn't need special planning.

3 LOOK FOR THE BEST RETURNS ON TIME – BETTER IF

Identify the things that would make your best player better. Choose two key factors and write them in the appropriate cell.

These factors will be the ones that offer the best return on coaching time. It's not worth investing time in making props better at kicking, for example.

Focusing on the best player might seem like it's to the detriment of the rest. But if your best player stands to be better in a given area, so will the weaker players.

4 IDENTIFY SPECIFICALLY HOW TO IMPROVE – WORK ON

List specific things to work on that will help to make your players better in the two key areas identified in step three. You'll end up with a range of technical and tactical areas to cover.

You need to make a plan to cover these topics in your coaching. The more "work-ons" that are shared by groups of players, the easier your life will be.

On page 5 you'll see my time-saving ready-made template in all its glory. Just print it out and away you go!



Words by: Dan Cottrell

! WANT MORE TRAINING SESSIONS? THEY'RE JUST A CLICK AWAY...

For more activities, log onto rugbycoachweekly.com and search for the area you're interested in (such as "pass" or "tackling"). Then download. They're free to subscribers if you register using your subscription email address.

POSITION	PLAYERS	BEST PLAYER	POINT OF DIFFERENCE	BETTER IF	WORK ON
PROP					
HOOKER					
LOCK					
FLANKER					
8					
9					
10					
CENTRE					
WING					
15					

Point of difference - what the best player does better than the others. **Better if** - two key factors for the best player to improve on (e.g. fitness, handling, breakdown, defence, breaking the gain line)

Work on - how you're going to improve this group specifically based on "better if". For example, if the "better if" for props is "more mobile, more tackles", then the "work on" might be "defence conditioning"

Note don't look at the best player's "point of difference" and get others to try to emulate that. Rather, the rationale is to identify what the best player should improve on ("better if") and aim to get the group to improve in that area(s)

Defensive duties

The faster the defensive line is back in position, the faster it can go forward. So work on realigning and defending under pressure when fatigued. You can also run this drill with full-contact tackling

WHY USE IT

Realigning is hard work when the line is constantly moving backwards. This exercise replicates the movements of touch (or normal) rugby defence and assists in conditioning.

SET-UP

One ball and a 40m wide by 20m long box, split in half with cones every 5m down the middle.

HOW TO DO IT

Put seven or more attackers at one end, split between the two boxes. Put three defenders 5m inside the box, around the middle.

On "play", half the attackers attack into the box in front of them (the ball starts at the middle line). The defenders slide across to make a touch (or full) tackle.

On the tackle, the ball carrier runs to the next red cone on the middle line and passes after your countdown into the other box.

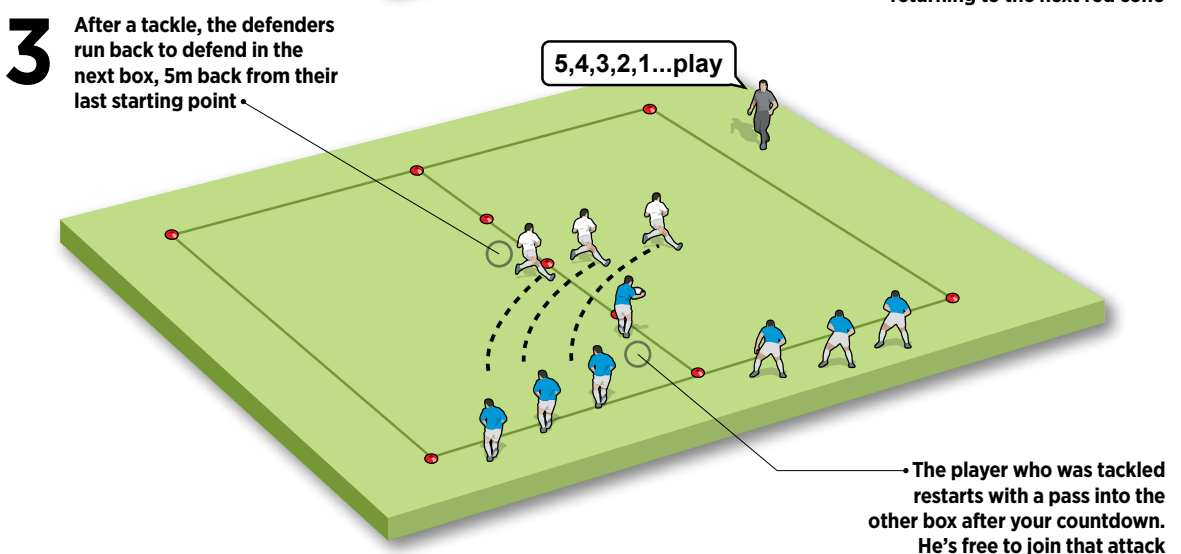
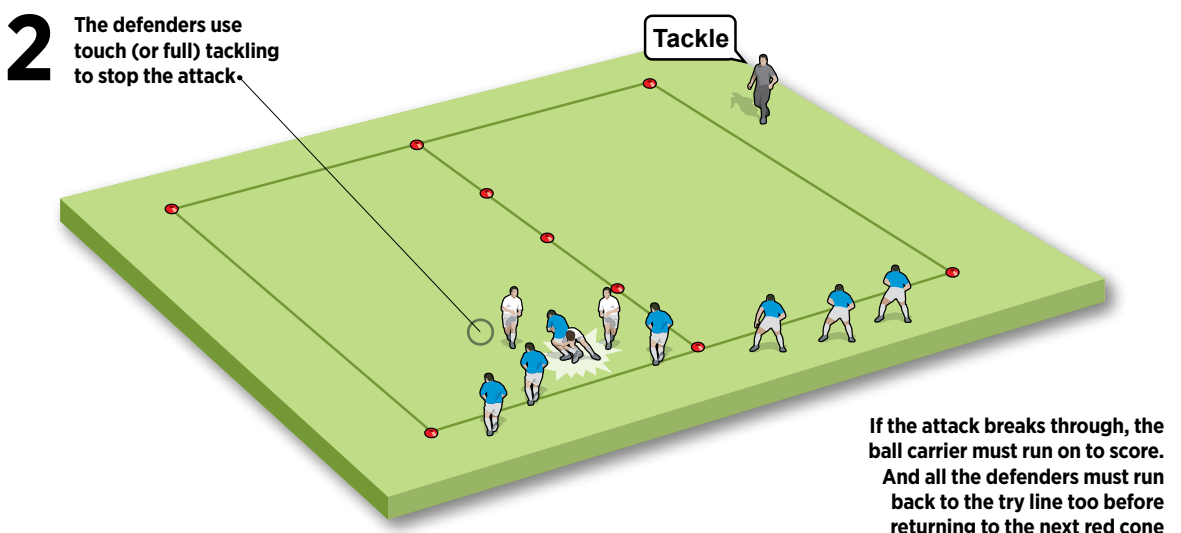
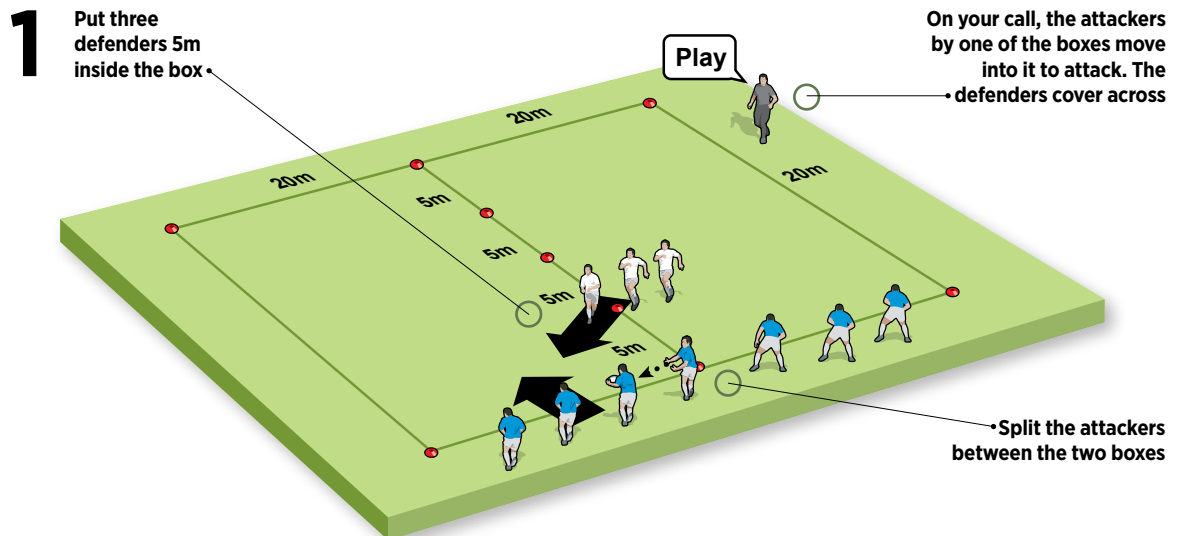
In the meantime, the defenders recover and line up 5m back from the ball carrier's passing point.

If the attack beats the defence, the ball carrier and defenders must run right to the try line – the carrier to score the try and the defence to further tire them. They then return to the next cone. Continue for four attacks.

TECHNIQUE

- Communicate who's covering who
- Come up together in a line
- If you're set (in line) before the pass, come up quickly

Activity by: Dan Cottrell



Pass→ Ground covered - - - - - Direction of run →

Bulk purchase: place one big order to get discounts – and save your best balls for home matches



Buying kit on a budget

It's one of your biggest tactical decisions – stocking up on your team's training equipment without breaking the bank. Follow our simple tips to get the right kit and increase your spending power

Rather than leaf through a catalogue or website to decide what training equipment you'd like, the best starting point is to make your coaching plans for pre-season, in-season and match days, then work out what items of kit you actually need to achieve your aims.

Some items will be essential, whatever your budget. For bigger expenditure, it's worth approaching an existing sponsor – or finding a new one. Otherwise, consider ways your players could raise funds. Urge them to run a half-marathon, enter a triathlon or do a sponsored bike ride and you'll get them fit at the same time.

BEG OR BORROW

The most expensive single item you can purchase – unless you need floodlights – is a **scrum machine**. Not many clubs are lucky enough to get 16 forwards, including six front-rows of equal ability, to training for live scrummaging, but a machine that can cost up to £10,000 is a luxury that most clubs can't afford.

So look for a second-hand one, maybe an ex-demo cheaper model. Or approach a bigger club and politely ask if you can book a session on their machine.

Just about the cheapest item you can

snap up is **cones**. Buy lots – but think about colour combinations, especially if they're for minis, where different-coloured cones can be placed on both touchlines, either side of the halfway line, to indicate the offside line at restarts.

QUICK-DRYING BIBS

The other thing you should buy lots of is **balls**. Save money, though, by saving your match balls for home games and buy as many cheaper training balls as possible. Buy at least one foot/electric pump, too.

If you want skilful players, think of Ajax, the famous Dutch football club, who give their players a ball each at training.

Another essential item is training **bibs**. The best are reversible mesh ones, which dry quicker and need washing less often.

Kicking **tees** are cheap, but most goalkickers bring their own, and are less likely to lose them if they own them!

Tackle bags next, and there's never been a wider range of choice, from basic shields costing around £40 to sausage bags at more than £100.

Ideally, you'd buy a minimum of six shields for rucking and defensive drills, plus a couple of sausages for rucking and tackling practice. Most suppliers offer

discounts for bulk purchases, so clubs with lots of age-group teams should place one big order instead of going it alone.

TYRES ARE FREE

Speed and agility **ladders**, **hurdles** and **marker poles** are all useful, if your budget stretches that far, as are **harnesses**.

But use your initiative to save money. For example, something versatile you can get free is old **car tyres**, which you can use for strength training, jacking practices and for your 9 to pass out of – or into.

* *Nigel Botherway coaches at London Irish and St Mary's University, Twickenham.*



Words by:
Nigel Botherway

WHAT YOU SHOULD BUY IF YOU HAVE £100



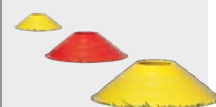
SIX TRAINING BALLS – £55

Use to develop skills – you can't have too many!



TEN TRAINING BIBS – £30

The days of playing in skins are long gone



50 COLOURED CONES – £15

Walk backwards to lay them out in a straight line

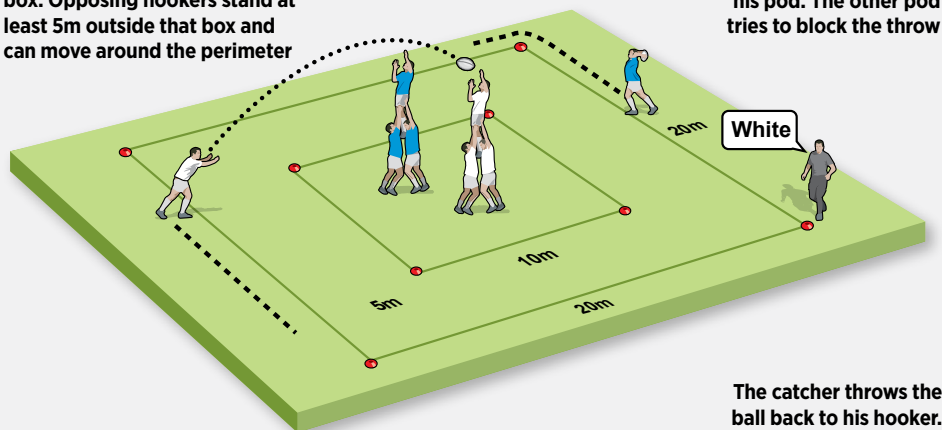


ASK DAN!

For help with your coaching problems, email askdan@rugbycoachweekly.com

PODS IN THE BOX

Put two three-man pods in a 10m box. Opposing hookers stand at least 5m outside that box and can move around the perimeter



Call out a colour and that hooker throws to his pod. The other pod tries to block the throw

The catcher throws the ball back to his hooker. Repeat with random calls

Q “We’re struggling to win lineouts in games despite looking good in training. How should we adapt our training to rectify this?”

A DAN SAYS: “Lots of lineout training is done in a ‘closed environment’. That is, without the pressure of the opposition. You should look to introduce this pressure in every session where you’re working on the lineout.

Also, it sounds like you need to increase your options. You can’t survive with only one jumping pod, so invest time in creating another pod of players. Furthermore, you should work with at least two players who can throw in the ball.

Here’s a session that I’ve adapted from games used by ex-France forwards coach Didier Retiere.

PODS IN THE BOX

Put two pods of three players in a 10m square. Each pod has a jumper and two lifters. Two hookers, one for each pod, circle the box, at least 5m from the edge.

Call out a colour – that hooker throws to his pod. The other pod reacts to block the throw. If the ball is caught, the pod throws it back to his hooker. Repeat, randomly calling a pod name.

DEVELOPMENT

- > 1. Have one pod as the defensive pod. Both hookers work with the other pod. Call the name of the hooker to see if he can hit the attack pod.
- > 2. Add two more pods into the area, one to attack and one to defend.

WHAT TO CALL OUT

■ **Jumpers:** “Don’t bounce to jump, give your lifters a solid target to lift”

- **Lifters:** “Get square. Don’t lift on the run. Bring the jumper down safely”
- **Throwers:** “Set for the throw and follow through to target”

PROBLEM SOLVING

- > 1. **Lifters not getting into position.** The jumper needs to give a clear signal he wants to jump. He needs to communicate whether he steps into his jump, or bends and jumps on the spot.
- > 2. **Lifters getting too far from the jumper.** They should be touching chests at the full extent of the jump and this can only happen with quick footwork to get the feet square.

PUTTING IT INTO A GAME SITUATION

Work up and down a 30m stretch of touchline, with five cones spaced out along it. Two pods and two hookers compete against each other. One pod plays up the pitch, the other down it.

Kick the ball to the touchline and shout whose throw it is. They run to the lineout and the ball is thrown in as soon as possible. Develop with calls and throws to the front, middle and back.

QUESTIONS TO CHALLENGE PLAYERS

- What types of throw are you going to use?
- Does the jumper need to catch every ball or can he afford to tap down?
- What’s the jumper going to say to his lifters to bring him down?
- How will the jumper initiate the jump without giving it away to the opposition?

Q “I want to start pre-season training early for my team, but with youngsters is there a danger of starting too soon?”

A The only real danger is to your spare time! I’d always encourage coaches to make the most of the spare time they get between seasons – it’s a great time of the year to catch up with family and friends, and to do the things you can’t during the season when weekends are filled with rugby duties.

Players will already be active throughout the summer. My players get together themselves and arrange unofficial matches down at the park, so I know they’re keeping their rugby activities going.

To start pre-season training early seems unnecessary to me. Players will very quickly

“If each player does an off-season training plan, you’ll have a head start next season without sacrificing your time”

get back up to typical levels of match fitness within a couple of weeks, so you won’t be gaining that much by starting them earlier.

What you might want to do is get them to follow an off-season training plan that contains various activities, drills and skills.

If each player practises these over the summer months, you’ll have a head start when it comes to the new season, yet you won’t have sacrificed any of your own time. And time is surely a very precious thing for any rugby coach.

Answered by Jeremy Banner, a coach from Paris, France



Should you award badges to grade player development?

Badges in swimming or belts in martial arts are ways of reflecting individual achievement. But our sport doesn't encourage players to track their own progress. Is youth rugby missing a trick?

YES TO ACHIEVEMENT BADGES



Stacey James

From Longford, Leinster

"Achievement badges can lead to players growing in confidence. If they have a constant reminder of achieving a certain level, then it will give them encouragement"

Any tangible measure of progress for a child should be encouraged. Kids strive to go to the next level and this is the best way of giving them something to work towards.

Achievement badges also add an element of competition to players within the squad. If one player has achieved a badge for passing, surely his team-mates will want to emulate that.

We forget that while we're marking and recording the development of players in notes made at training and at matches, players don't have any such barometer. We may know where they are on the ladder, but any way in which we can reinforce that in their own minds must be a good thing.

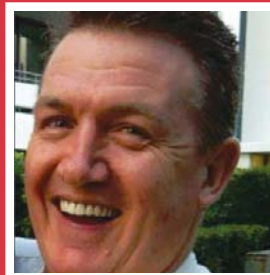
And of course, achievement badges can also lead to players

growing in confidence. If they have a reminder of achieving a certain level then it will give them the encouragement not only to build but to look on that achievement and have the confidence to 'play it out'.

In other words, if a player has a badge or certificate that says he's a great tackler, then in a match situation he will go into situations where he needs to make a tackle with more belief – because he knows he's able to do it. If he hadn't been assured of that skill, he might be more tentative and miss the tackle.

I think it can be about much more than key rugby skills too. We could be talking here about awarding certificates for helping to set up a training drill, or for acting as a mentor to players new to the club.

NO TO ACHIEVEMENT BADGES



David Turner

From Chiswick, West London

"The awarding of badges is subjective. As coach, it's under your control who gets what, yet players may think that they've achieved a level and not been recognised for it"

For me, offering achievement markers is a surefire way of spelling out to your squad what the hierarchy is in terms of player skill. They might know this anyway but having something that highlights the disparity in skill can act as a real disincentive for players.

The awarding of badges is purely subjective. As coach, it's under your control who gets what, yet players may think that they've achieved a level and not been recognised for it.

This can create resentment not only towards you but towards other players who have been awarded the badges. What you need as a squad is complete unity – as soon as there's any friction, performances will suffer.

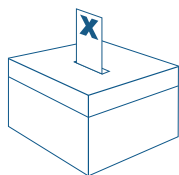
There will also be the task of managing each of the 'awards'.

I've known coaches who have awarded badges for up to 15 different skills and attributes, from great catching to being an excellent captain. It becomes a minefield of who has what.

And once you've started, it's very difficult to suddenly call a halt to proceedings, because you'll effectively be telling players that this idea they've been told to work towards and invest in isn't actually of any interest to you anymore.

In swimming or martial arts, there's the physical displaying of the badge or the belt. In rugby the players rarely have a set training shirt on which to display something like this. Certificates may be an alternative route, but in my experience these will just end up in a drawer at home gathering dust.

HAVE YOUR SAY



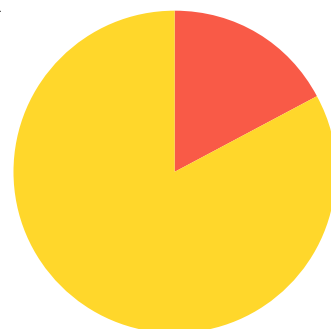
SHOULD YOU AWARD BADGES TO GRADE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT?

Vote at www.facebook.com/RugbyCoachWeekly

HOW YOU VOTED

Here's the result of a poll we ran in a previous issue of *Rugby Coach Weekly*:
Should you pair players who don't get on?

83% said yes
17% said no



NEW LAUNCH FOR 2014

112 of the best drills from *Rugby Coach Weekly* – in print for the first time!

ORDER YOUR COPY OF MASTER COACH VOLUME 2 FOR:

- 112 activities to give you endless variety – you'll always have a Plan B ready to go
- *Rugby Coach Weekly's* drills in a high-quality printed manual for you to keep in your kitbag
- A spiral-bound, durable manual, perfect for taking to coaching in any conditions
- Sessions split into sections so you can always find the one you need and avoid wasting time
- A host of new ideas that ensure you'll never lack inspiration

