



Sidcup RFC - Principles of play, coaching and selection

Chris Jones, Director of Rugby
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Introduction

These principles are in place to provide long term development rather than short term results. We want to nurture outstanding rugby players and outstanding young men and women with a passion for the game and an attachment to the club.

“Sidcup RFC players should be competent in a variety of positions. They should play confident, risk free, ball focused attacking rugby with an aggressive, accurate, disciplined defence, whilst displaying a developed range of core technical skills and rounded tactical understanding. They can adapt to different situations and solve problems. They believe that the team comes first, that we play the way we train and that we are always the best at the things that require no skill; discipline, work rate, physicality, focus and sacrifice.”

C Jones, August 2017

Sidcup RFC - Principles of play

- We play an exciting brand of rugby, keeping the ball in hand and off the floor.
- We use a player-centred approach trusting and empowering players to make decisions on the pitch.
- All players from 1 to 15 are "triple threat" players who can run, kick and pass.
- We search for space rather than for contact.

To achieve this our playing environment is;

Risk free "Total Rugby"-

We understand that we learn through both our successes and our mistakes and regret the things we did rather than the things we didn't. All players are expected to try things, be positive, take risks and have a "growth mindset".

All members of the team; players, coaches, managers, parents and supporters constantly reinforce this from the touchline and create opportunities to reward hard work and effort over success.

We play the game in the right spirit and with the right ambition - we won't need to worry about winning, it will just happen.

Sidcup RFC - Principles of coaching

Planning the session-

Every session should be planned with as much detail as is appropriate and should be shared in advance throughout the entire coaching team so that everyone has the opportunity to prepare and check for understanding.

Ball in play-

An ideal session will maximise playing time and minimise coach intervention.

* As an experiment perhaps task one of your coaches to time a session and stop the clock every time the players stop playing for a coach to intervene.

Using conditioned games-

When designing the activities within your session you should consider the nature of the activity and how transferable it will be when placed in a chaotic game environment. As a club, our preference is to use conditioned games and decision making activities wherever possible. We develop our skills in a chaotic unstructured environment similar to the one we face in festivals or fixtures.

* Consideration should be given to the relevance of "drills" and how they are placed within a session plan. Use of strategies such as whole/part/whole coaching may provide opportunities for specific, deliberate practice as well as conditioned games.

Arrival activity-

Players should be engaged from the moment they arrive rather than waiting for the whole group to turn up. Individual/small group skill activities should be set up ready to begin as soon as the first child arrives.

* These may be as simple as passing to hit a target such as a post, or two players throwing the ball high into the air to practice high ball catching.

Session objectives-

Every session should have a clear objective that is shared with and understood by all of the players. This will provide structure and purpose to that session's various activities. It will also provide a clear framework for the end of session review.

End of session review-

Every session should be completed with a group review checking for player understanding and asking for feedback.

Warm ups-

Warm ups should prepare the mind and body for the activity that follows. Whilst young players might not require the extensive mobility and flexibility work of a broken old veteran we should consider the following;

- Warm ups will eventually become an integral part of any players training session or fixture. By embedding them into a players mindset from an early age we begin the process of developing an "athlete lifestyle".
- Warm ups should be as specific as possible to the activities that will follow in the session.
- Warm ups are a great opportunity to develop functional movement patterns and basic strength work.
- Warm ups needn't be boring. Mobility, flexibility and core skills can all be developed through small sided games.
- Warm ups are an opportunity to provide mental focus and "kick start" the session.

Hands down questioning, hands up feedback-

When reviewing and checking for understanding select the player you wish to ask a question of rather than asking for someone to put their hand up. Consideration must of course be given to making sure that players low in confidence are not singled out or made to feel uncomfortable.

Likewise, if and when requesting more general feedback from players ask for hands to be raised so that all players have the chance to contribute rather than just the confident players who may be quick to answer. These strategies should help you manage the flow and amount of player input.

Working as a coaching team-

We are often very lucky to have a large team of coaches working within a particular age group. Consideration should be given to maximise their usage. Rather than “taking turns” to lead with the other coaches taking a back seat, you might be suited to a circuit-style session with different coaches leading different small group stations. Maybe during game play one coach could referee a game, whilst two other coaches could each coach a team. Perhaps different coaches may choose to specialise in certain areas of the game or maybe you could use a coach to develop players in a one to one environment should an activity highlight a particular deficiency.

Remedial work-

Every player should have the opportunity to improve, regardless of current ability. Equal time and focus should be spent on all players with a view to broadening the pyramid of ability.

* What do you have in place when a new player joins? What happens if one player is struggling in a game to perform a required skill? Can we use a coach for one to one or small group sessions to support specific development in specific players?

Sidcup RFC - Principles of selection

Everyone plays-

Providing that players are competent and confident in a given environment then they are all to be given the opportunity to contribute and develop in festivals. This is prioritised over winning.

Consider LTAD & late maturation

The best u8s don't necessarily make the best u18s.

We need to keep all players engaged so that we retain a substantial squad as we go through the age groups. We will require more players, with a varied range of shapes and sizes, especially as other age related commitments such as academic studies, the 15 a side game, jobs, and school rugby become a pressure.

At some point the hormones are going to kick in and "little Billy" is going to become "massive Billy" overnight. Let's make sure Billy felt part of the team when he was little and doesn't leave and come back to haunt us when he is massive!

Many lads who go all the way through the club and play 1st XV rugby were not the "superstars" of their age group!

Selecting an "A Team"-

Whilst we do not allow for "A" and "B" squads to be formed there may, as part of supporting the development of players social skills, be value in nominating occasional tournaments (maybe 2 or 3 a season) for an "A Team" selection policy to help players develop humility and overcome disappointment as well as to provide targets and challenges for everyone. If this happens it needs to be clearly signposted to parents when and why this is happening and man-management of the players is absolutely essential.

Positional development and specification-

Again our focus is on the future. Players should be given the opportunity to play in a variety of positions (three different positions per fixture is an achievable goal). We will start to consider individual positional specification at Academy level (u16+) and onwards.

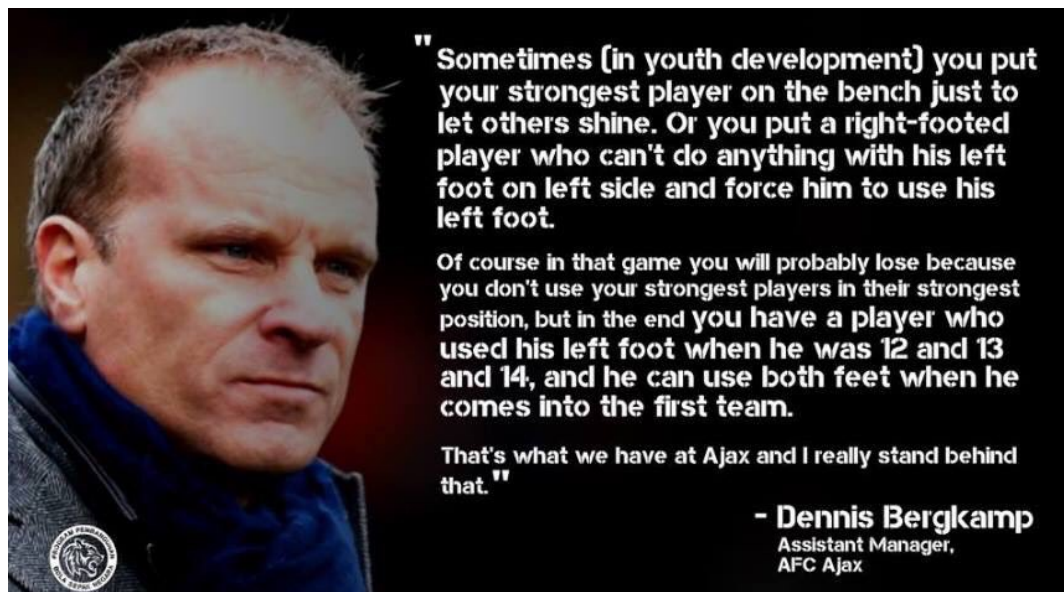
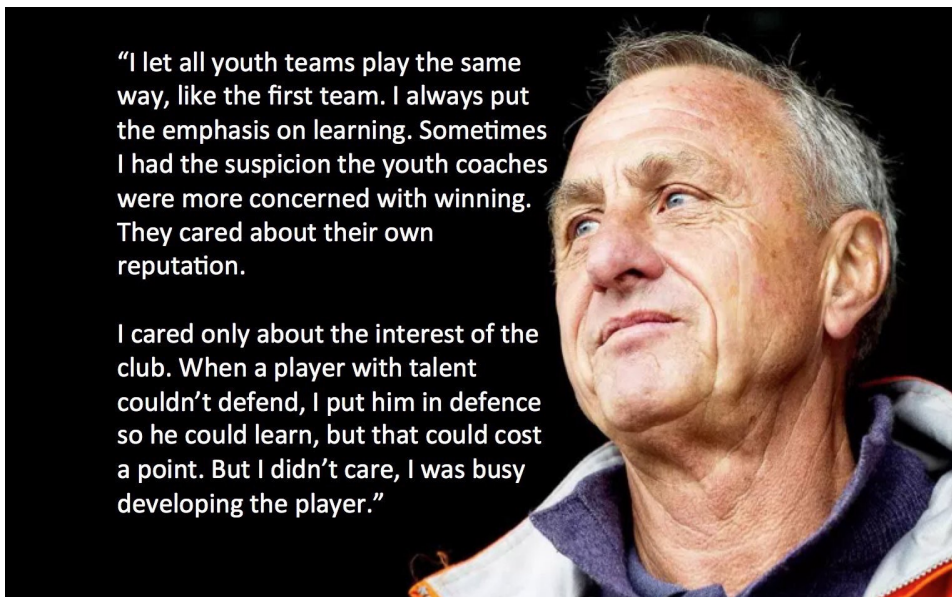
A fly half who has also spent time at scrum half will understand his role significantly better. If the same fly half also spends some time in the front row he'll understand better why he needs to make touch when clearing his lines from a scrum!

A player who is selected at prop due to their size and shape may completely change their body shape as they go through puberty and they may be left with an inappropriate body shape for the front row and no relevant skills or experiences to play elsewhere. Too often these players are lost to the game and miss out on senior rugby.

In conclusion

If we focus on all of the above then we don't need to worry about winning, that will happen whether we like it or not.

Focus on the processes and principles that develop outstanding players and the score will look after itself.



Findings from the RFU Age Grade Review of 6,000+ Mini & Junior Players

Why do kids play rugby?

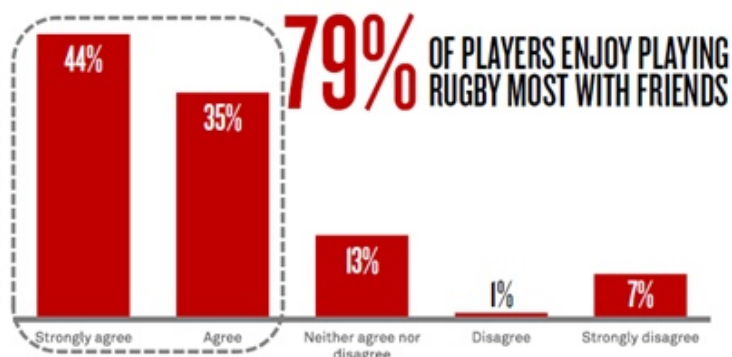
TOP 6 MOST IMPORTANT		
1 st	Being part of a team	44%
2 nd	Enjoyment of the game	39%
3 rd	Having fun	35%
4 th	Playing with friends	25%
5 th	Competitiveness	19%
6 th	Physicality	17%

TOP 6 LEAST IMPORTANT		
1 st	Post match food	76%
2 nd	Scoring tries	31%
3 rd	Winning	30%
4 th	Being good at it	21%
5 th	My parents coming to support me	19%
6 th	Good exercise	18%



SPOTLIGHT: IMPACT OF PLAYING WITH FRIENDS

Playing with friends was a significant driver of game enjoyment, with nearly 80% of players stating they enjoyed playing most when with friends!

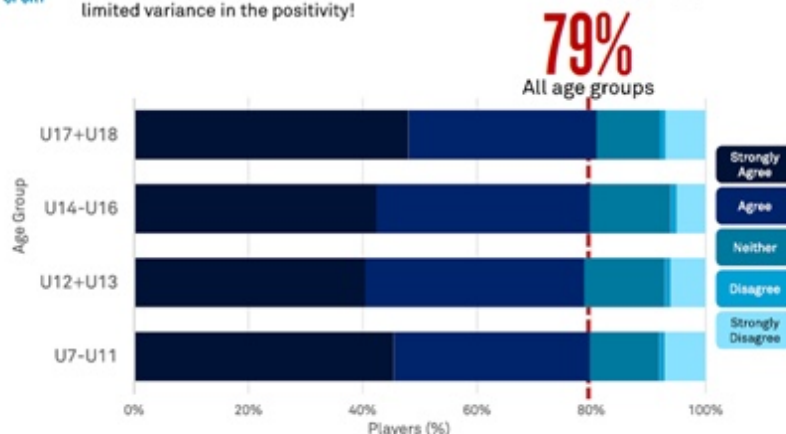


Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statement - I enjoy playing rugby most when I am playing with friends. N = 6,437.

SPOTLIGHT: IMPACT OF PLAYING WITH FRIENDS



The importance of playing with friends was felt across all the age-groups, with limited variance in the positivity!



Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statement - I enjoy playing rugby most when I am playing with friends. N = 6,437.