



## **IVEL BARBARIANS – COACHING NEWSLETTER – WINTER 2010/11**

I hope that you have all enjoyed the beginning to the 2010/11 season, particularly the newer coaches to the club. I mentioned in the last newsletter the importance of growing our own players through the mini & junior section and this has been particularly evident in the Senior Club where there are nine players who have come through the mini & junior set up regularly featuring for the 1<sup>st</sup> XV. Also we are having some real success in the representative area where several players have been selected to represent Somerset. The hard work and effort you and your predecessors have put in on Sundays is really making a difference.

One area of concern this season has been expectation management – no so much that of the young players but that of their parents! Those of you with large player squads will no doubt try your best to ensure that every player gets game time but I appreciate that this can often be difficult and having to explain your team selections to disappointed parents is never easy. I would again point to the New Zealand model for mini/junior rugby where it is mandatory for every player to play at least half a game. Whilst adopting this policy might mean you lose some games that you could have won if you had kept your first choice team on the pitch, the opportunity for the lesser players is invaluable – we cannot expect these players to develop into good players if they are only on the pitch for 5 minutes in a game. Some of these players may not be destined for representative honours but might be the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> team players of the future – the game at community rugby level needs them more than ever.

Another concern has been a couple of instances where teams have played mixed age group fixtures. Please note that it is club policy to only play fixtures in the same age group – U7s with U7s, U12s with U12s on so on. Also only the RFU can grant a dispensation to teams to play with mixed age groups, not the coach. Please be aware that whilst your parents might be keen to play these mixed fixtures (rather than not have a game), as soon as little Johnny is injured by a bigger, older player, it will be YOU as the coach that they will be looking to blame with the potential of YOU facing legal action and not the club. Julie Hinds makes our policy clear to all the other clubs when she arranges our fixtures – if you turn up and find this not to be the case please try and find a solution (if they only have 10 players and you have 14, play 12 a side for example rather than let them supplement their team with older or younger players) but if this is not possible PLEASE do not be tempted to play the game

with a mixed age group despite the pressure you may come under from the opposition coaches and the parents of both sets of players.

I am conscious that we have not had any coaches meetings so far this season. I did say that we should be working as a team, sharing ideas and supporting each other and holding such meetings with no set agenda would be the forum to do this. However so far there does not appear to be the appetite to hold any meetings – if this changes, let me know!

I have recently attended and delivered some CPD courses in Dorset & Wilts (please note that take up of CPD courses in Somerset is particularly poor so much so that there are no CPD courses planned!). I would thoroughly recommend the Youth courses “Maul & Ruck” and “Continuity in Attack” – both courses will challenge traditional methods of coaching these elements of the game and encourage coaches to examine their own methods and processes. Similarly the soon to be released “Scrum Factory” CPD will be invaluable for coaches in giving them the ability to coach the scrummage. Hopefully you will have received my recent email with the CPD Course descriptor - I am keen to run at least one of these courses at the club this season. Remember when coach licensing is introduced attendance on three CPD courses in a three year period will be mandatory to remain licensed.

Ian Smith



### **LEARNING THE BALANCE BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT AND WINNING**

Rugby is a hard, physical, enjoyable team game that is unique in its ethos – a game for all shapes and sizes and all abilities. Rugby players also like to win – fact. However when we are developing young players how do we strike the balance between development and winning? Do we play the same players every week with the focus on the “win” or do we develop the whole squad and lose games along the way? I would suggest that as a coach, if your outlook for the team is “win” your coaching style will be

autocratic and you will be a “tell” coach. A lot of us have come up through a system where the coach was all powerful but today’s young players are different. They have different beliefs, expectations and requirements. Some players learn well from a blackboard, while others learn better when walked through a play or technique and some learn simply by playing the game – trial and error. As modern coaches we need to understand and adjust our coaching so that we reach ALL of our players.

If we want our young players to develop week on week, season on season, we must not be a slave to results. Empowering your players to go out and play heads up rugby and have the opportunity to make decisions on the field, rather than slavishly follow your game plan, will ensure they develop into thinking players. Players need this challenge – they need to challenge you as the coach and you need to challenge them. When things don’t go to plan you need the players to be able to self-reflect and respond to your questioning “what went well?”, “what didn’t go so well and why?”. If you have been coaching your players well, and giving them the opportunity to make decisions, both good and bad, they should be able to identify the key factors in their performance, or certainly with some gentle prodding.

If we concentrate on the “win” we will not develop the lesser players – fact. There is a close relationship between the amount of skills a player possesses, the amount of decisions he or she is able to make, and the mental state of the player. If you accept that a player will not take an option that he or she is not confident to execute, then the number of decisions he or she is capable of making will be bounded by his or her array of skills. My point? Develop ALL of your players irrespective of ability – give the lesser players the opportunity to make those decisions – sometimes it will go wrong but at least he or she will have had the opportunity and will learn from it. If players are scared to make errors they will lose confidence either subconsciously or consciously and worry, with the result will be players that will simply not make decisions. Young players need the opportunity to experiment with their decisions and encouraged to be creative – to do this they need to play and for more than 5 minutes in a game.

Key points to remember:

- An autocratic style of coaching helps only in the short term
  - You need to experiment with different styles of coaching to help your own development
  - Players make decisions on the pitch, not you
  - Challenge players to answer the questions you ask of them and the ones they ask of themselves and each other
  - Turn players questions back on themselves and then help them draw out the answers
  - Players need to be in environments in training where they can learn to play what is in front of them and make decisions and have the opportunity to do so in a game
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### BUILDING A MOVE/PLAY

A move or play starts from an idea. This idea may come from the coach or the players. How do we know if it is going to work? Trial and error.....

If it works, we can use the move/play as it is; we can build options onto it. If it does not work, you look at what parts of the move or play are not functioning, correct them or discard the idea. Putting this into a youth team context, you might have to look at your players – do they have the ability to make the move/play work? Can we coach them to make it work? Will we have to move players out of their traditional roles to make it work? Will we waste too much time on making it work to the detriment of the rest of the game?

When we design a new move/play, we should work through a process of testing and implementation:

- **INITIAL IDEA** (e.g. back row move) – we then **TRIAL IT** on the training ground.
- **IT WORKS!** We put it into our game plan and develop it further. How does it fit into our game plan? How can we adapt the idea to give us other options?
- **IT DOESN'T WORK!** Can we rectify the problems? If so, we work on the problems and re-**TRIAL IT**. If we don't have the time to rectify the problems we can scrap the idea.

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### Award and Non-Award Courses in Somerset

The following courses are coming up in the next few months within Somerset. Please be aware that we are able to run "Rugby Ready" and CPD courses at lvel but need the numbers to run them!

#### Rugby Ready (Cost £18.50)

2 Feb 6.30pm at Wiveliscombe RFC

4 May 6.30pm at Taunton RFC

8 June 6.30pm at Weston-Super-Mare RFC

#### RFU Level 1 (Cost £105)

16 March - Induction Evening, 20 & 27 March – Practical Days - APPLY BY 16 FEB

15 June – Induction Evening, 18 & 19 June – Practical Days – APPLY BY 15 MAY

Congratulations to DJ Hinson, Ryan Willetts, Dave Wyatt, Jake Cory, Fraser Crawford, Chris Beechey, Ryan Jameson – All selected for Somerset U16's

