

CoachingEdge

Incorporating Coaching Update | VOLUME 25, No 1 March 2011

SCOTT LUCAS

The art of
centre
half-forward



**LOST TO
THE CRAFT**

One coaching
stint and
they're gone



**KEVIN
SHEEHAN**

A lifetime
in football

**Know
your
players**

Analysing
the keys to
premiership
coach Mick
Malthouse's
success



CoachingEdge

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COVER: Mick Malthouse is entering his 28th consecutive season as a senior coach.

RIGHT: Brisbane Lions star Jonathan Brown is one of the AFL's pre-eminent centre half-forwards.



Observations from a lifetime in football

▶ This edition of *Coaching Edge* has been a long time coming but, with floods and cyclones abounding across our country, having to wait for inspiration for one's coaching pales into insignificance. At any rate, I think you should enjoy the plethora of articles we have compiled.

You will be exposed to a range of thoughts on the game that should challenge your approach to coaching and hopefully give you ideas to enhance coaching at all levels.

So much creative thinking about our game is lost through people not documenting their ideas, so it is the aim of this publication to tap into the wisdom of people involved across all levels, such as AFL National Talent Manager Kevin Sheehan. Kevin has seen so many games that his observations ought to be recorded – so here they are!

Along a similar theme is an article on coaching cast-offs, which explores a host of AFL/VFL coaches who have had only one stint in the job. Don't we

understand one needs to learn about the complexities of the role? Doesn't it make sense most would be better for the experience and should be given more opportunities? Such a waste of resources.

Lachlan Buszard looks at the influence of AFL strategies on the development of the game at a local level, Scott Lucas outlines his approach to playing the challenging position of centre half-forward and Damian Carroll discusses the fundamentals of coaching at youth level. There is also an insight into the emerging area in sport science focused on the psychological and sociological aspects of injury.

From a Clean Hands Skill Test to Match-day Kicking Skills to regular features Media Watch, From the Ivory Tower and Beyond and From the Ice Rink to the Footy Field, you'll find something to interest you. Read, enjoy and implement the ideas into coaching at your club.

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Coaching Edge

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Media Watch

There are so many reports on coaching in the media that we often gloss over or ignore pertinent information. In this regular feature, **KEN DAVIS** makes an effort to recognise and learn from articles about the game's leading men.

“Know your players”

Michael Malthouse (Collingwood)
Article, What Makes Mick Tick, by Damian Barrett,
Herald Sun, June 18, 2009

According to Barrett, the keys to Malthouse's success as a coach are:

- 1 A knowledge of the past – Malthouse says you need to understand everyone has an origin and that is the beginning to understanding people.
- 2 An ability to make decisions and stay off the fence.
- 3 Be open to change – Malthouse claims that if you don't change or help to make change you are dead in the water.

Editor's note: I like the view that knowing the players' backgrounds is an important precursor to learning to effectively deal with and respond to them. In football clubs, with so many players to get to know, this is no easy task. However the effort to go through this process is often rewarded because your decisions concerning each player are more informed.

Clearly, coaches have to make decisions and often they have to be made quickly. The challenge is to gather as much information as possible, weigh up the choices and go with the option that makes the most sense at that time. Because coaches have to make so many decisions, it is only natural they will get some wrong but, as Malthouse implies here, they must not let the mistakes lead to indecision in the future.

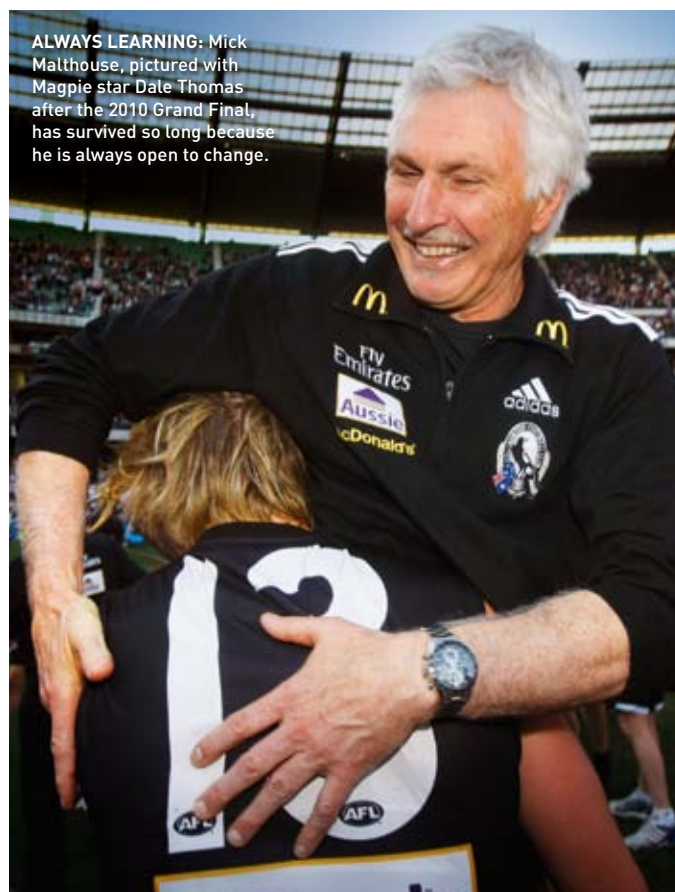
The last point is self-explanatory and supports the notion that no matter how much experience you have as a coach, it is wise to constantly search for ways to improve both yourself and the program.

“Mentors”

Malthouse refers to the term “coaching breeding” and highlights the impact two mentors, Allan Jeans and Tom Hafey, had on his development. He says they taught him there is no right or wrong way to coach. “You coach to who you are and take with you some things that are instrumental and cannot be compromised on.”

Editor's note: I appreciate the view that different coaching styles can achieve success. For instance, you can be successful with an authoritarian or a more democratic approach. While you bring your own personality to coaching, every coach should be trying to develop and become better each year.

ALWAYS LEARNING: Mick Malthouse, pictured with Magpie star Dale Thomas after the 2010 Grand Final, has survived so long because he is always open to change.



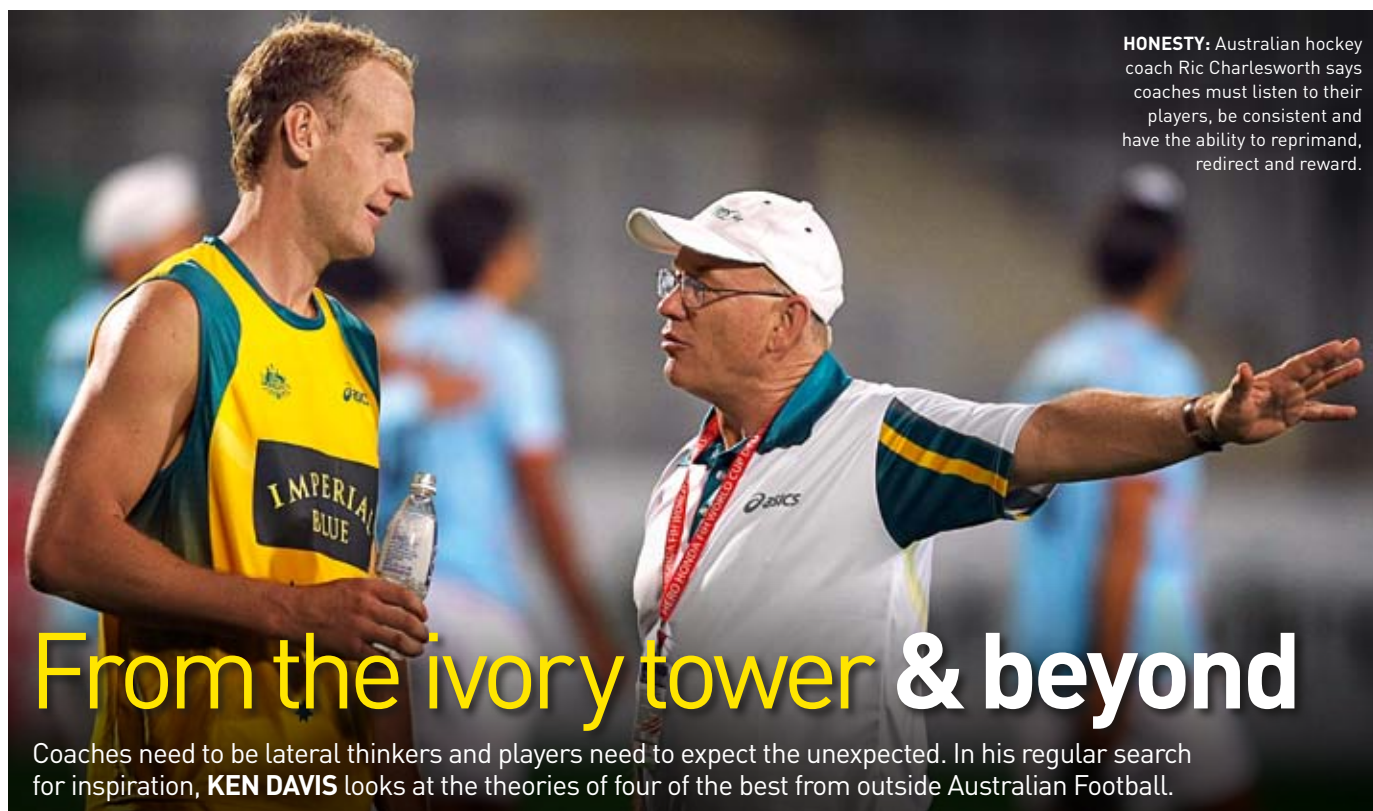
I believe mentors are a vital part of any coach's development. Behind every successful person, someone, somewhere, somehow took an interest in their growth and development and showed they cared about it. A mentor can assist coaches, formally or informally, to develop their knowledge and skills, be a role model and a resource, build confidence and sometimes challenge and question the coach's current practices – what David Parkin refers to as being a ‘critical friend’. Every coach should try to find a mentor who can fulfil that role and assist their development in these ways.

“Back to the past”

In a recent interview (*Herald Sun*, July 17, 2010), new Richmond coach Damien Hardwick outlines the reasons behind the trend of coaches resorting to a practice of the past, that of sitting on the boundary to perform their task on game-day.

“It gives immediate feedback to the players ... they crave instant feedback ... I can have a chat to tell them what they are doing well and what they can do to improve. It also develops the assistant coaches as well. The line coaches are in control of their own lines. I bark up and down questions all the time ... they make moves even though most get ratified by me.”

Editor's note: Certainly, this trend allows for more personal contact between coach and player, thus eliminating the need to converse on the phone. Also, since the coach is in public view, self-control is more necessary, so that probably is a good thing, albeit less theatrical! On the flip side is the lack of ability to see how the pattern of play is emerging. Provided specialist coaches can see these things happening and have access to the head coach, perhaps this problem becomes less of an issue. It will be interesting to see how far this trend goes in the next few years. **CE**



HONESTY: Australian hockey coach Ric Charlesworth says coaches must listen to their players, be consistent and have the ability to reprimand, redirect and reward.

From the ivory tower & beyond

Coaches need to be lateral thinkers and players need to expect the unexpected. In his regular search for inspiration, **KEN DAVIS** looks at the theories of four of the best from outside Australian Football.

Finding a winning formula

➤ In first semester last year, I was fortunate enough to be asked to lecture to students in Exercise and Sport Science at ACU in Melbourne. In the course, *Issues in Coaching*, students were asked to review biographies of coaches. I will be presenting some of their research in this and future editions of *Coaching Edge*.

Four coaches are mentioned in this edition, Ric Charlesworth (*The coach – Managing for success*); Kevin Keegan (*An intimate portrait of football's last romantic*); Bob Simpson; and Clive Woodward (*Sir Clive Woodward – Winning*). Special thanks to the following students who conducted the research on these eminent coaches: Ashleigh Ward, Ben Mentiplay, Amy Harry and James Houghton.

Enthusiasm is a vital ingredient of a coach

Bob Simpson, former Australian opening batsman, captain and coach of the Aussie team, **talked about the need for the coach to be the most enthusiastic member of a team**. During each training session, Simpson judged himself by asking himself two questions:

- 1 Was the training environment noisy and bubbly?
- 2 Are the players enjoying training?

If he found himself answering 'no' to either of the above, he would consider himself not to be doing his job and would promptly make changes to liven up the environment. **To be enthusiastic, you must have a love of the game and the role**. Simpson's longevity in the game is testament to his passion for cricket and the development of his players.

Changing one-dimensional thinking

According to world-renowned rugby coach Clive Woodward, **one of the toughest skills to teach any athlete is 'how to think'**. Woodward mentions he becomes increasingly frustrated when he hears players say they do something because 'that's the way it's always been done here'.

In a rather bizarre way of dealing with such limited thinking, Woodward once gathered all his players before they were due to run out on the ground, made them remove their shirts with their respective positions on their back and asked them to stand in line. He randomly assigned jerseys to each player in the line and asked them to play that role in the game. This decision was not initially accepted with wild enthusiasm by the players but apparently the team eventually sorted out their new roles and won handsomely. Such lateral thinking not only can confuse the opposition but can **teach the players to think outside the square and be open to innovation**.

Create a family environment

Soccer coach Kevin Keegan would make his players and staff feel part of the family. When Keegan went to Fulham, he hired Alan Smith as head of the Youth Academy. When he introduced Alan to the chairman of the club, the chairman challenged Kevin by asking: "Why are we paying so much money for the director of a youth team?" Keegan responded: "You told me to go and get the best, so I got the best." Smith said that when someone says that to you, you always respond. He also admitted it really did make him feel part of the family.

Flexibility

Ric Charlesworth believed that **each player needed to be more flexible so they could cope with a variety of ways of playing**. He would often change the structure of his team to promote this sense of having all-rounders in the squad and condition them to expect the unexpected. **He wanted players to be comfortable on the left and right, and to be able to defend and attack**.

The ideal coach, in Charlesworth's eyes, is "knowledgeable about the sport and able to listen to players, as it's better to listen more and say less. **A coach needs to be consistent and they have to do three things: reprimand, redirect and reward. Most of all, they need to be honest**". **CE**

Coaching cast-offs – lost to the craft


By **KEN DAVIS**

Ron Alexander, Ben Allan,
Stan Alves, Graham Arthur,
Rod Austin, Darrel Baldock,
Neil Balme, Kevin Bartlett,
John Beckwith, John Birt,
Francis Bourke, Wayne Brittain,
Gary Buckenara, Barry Cable,
Jack E. Clarke, John Coleman,
Graham Cornes, Neale Daniher,
Norm Dare, Allan Davis,

Barry Davis, John Devine,
Carl Ditterich, Brian Dixon,
Damian Drum, Mick Erwin,
Graham Farmer, Bill Faul,
Paul Feltham, Danny Frawley,
Graeme Gellie, Jeff Gieschen,
Bob Hammond, Ian Hampshire,
Ken Hands, Dick D. Harris,
Royce Hart, Greg Hutchison,
Graeme John, Dennis Jones,

Peter Jones, Col Kinnear,
Phonse Kyne, Alan McDonald,
Donald McDonald, Noel McMahan,
Bill McMaster, Roger Merrett,
Allan Miller, Kevin Murray,
Gerard Neesham, John Nicholls,
Michael Nunan, Peter O'Donohue,
Rodney Olsson, Peter Pianto,
Ricky Quade, Bernie Quinlan,
Dick Reynolds, Ian Ridley,

Mark Riley, Peter Rohde,
Kevin Rose, Des Rowe,
Wayne Schimmelbusch,
Peter Schwab, Brett Scott,
Tony Shaw, Ken Sheldon,
Sergio Silvagni, Ross G. Smith,
Paul Sproule, Grant Thomas,
Ian Thorogood, John Todd,
Tim Watson, Murray Weideman,
Terry Wheeler.

 The above list outlines the coaches who have had one stint at coaching an AFL/VFL team and who have not been a head coach at that level again. Some of these such as John Coleman, Phonse Kyne and Dick Reynolds coached with the one club for a significant amount of time with great success. The vast majority, though, had only short stints before being replaced.

The AFL coaching merry-go-round spits out coaches at will because there is always a new crop of ex-players eager to try their hand at this complex task. Media people, hungry for a story, are always on the lookout for the next sacked coach. Supporters, too, perpetuate this turnover of coaches because they demand success and pin their hopes on the fact a change is as good as a holiday. Changing coaches breeds hope but often the foundation for failure is neglected in the search for premierships, as coach after coach is turned over.

The lifespan of a coach is often cut short because, realistically, only one team each year is successful. But does this make sense? In the above list, 71 per cent coached for three years or fewer, 47 percent for two years or fewer, and 26% lasted only a year.

One season? How absurd. It is possible that some of these coaches may have done untold damage to player confidence in a short time and had to be replaced.

But, realistically, if you have done your recruiting of a coach with due diligence, this is unlikely to occur. Others may have decided coaching was not for them but I speculate that would have been a minority. Given encouragement and an environment where growth is supported, a coach could develop and not be lost to the system.

NO SECOND CHANCE:

It is amazing astute coaches such as Neale Daniher have been lost to the craft after just one stint in the job.

Even if it proves to be the right time to replace a coach, does it make sense for another club to overlook a person with some years of experience just because his services were terminated at the original club? Consider the case of a high-powered businessman who is asked to resign from a company. It would be most unlikely that this astute mind would not be snapped up by another company which realises the skills and experience obtained over many years would be invaluable to their organisation. People in business 'move on' much more than they 'move out' of their role. Coaches, it seems, too often have moved out of coaching and that is a sad thing for the profession.

Cast your eye over the above list of coaches and speculate over what might have been had they been in a more supportive environment that understood that progress in any field takes time. From my knowledge of some of the above, I am sure they would have made better fists of coaching if they were given a second chance. In recent times, it has amazed me astute coaches such as Neale Daniher (now General Manager – Football Operations for the West Coast Eagles) and Terry Wheeler have not been given second chances at senior level. I would be confident that they would be better coaches if they were given an opportunity.

So the message here is to be careful about putting coaches on the scrap heap just because they don't achieve the ultimate success at their first club. Trust the notion that through experience and self reflection a coach can get better. Embrace the concept that lessons learned are the building blocks for the future. Be patient and don't waste the resource you have nurtured. One would imagine that as coaching has become more professional, a coaching pathway is followed by players at the end of their playing careers.

In this scenario coaches are developed over time and, given the head-coach role, only after an apprenticeship has been served. Most recent appointments, with the exceptions of Michael Voss at Brisbane and James Hird at Essendon, have pursued an assistant role before seeking the key coaching position. Whatever the case, please don't cast off people after one unsuccessful stint. **ce**

(Footnote: a week after this article was penned, it was interesting to hear acclaimed football analyst Dermott Brereton raise this same issue on SEN radio in Melbourne. Perhaps the penny is dropping or is it merely the musings of a couple of eccentrics? What do you think? Email me at kdxsports@bigpond.com)

***Special thanks to AFL Statistics & History Consultant Col Hutchinson for providing data for this paper.**



TWIN AIMS: Coaches, such as Hawthorn's Alastair Clarkson, have the dual responsibility of achieving team success on the field at the same time as developing young talent.



Coaching is a balancing act

To become a coach is, for some, reasonably easy. All you have to do is turn up to your son's junior football club, put your hand up for the under-10s and, 'hey presto', you are the coach! To become a good coach, however, is a little more complex. By **KEN DAVIS**

So often in sport, administrators and coaches in their search for enhanced performance are prone to emphasise a particular aspect of coaching, to the detriment of other parts of the program.

It is rare that extreme points of view produce the most effective outcomes. Coaching well requires consideration of many facets that need to be balanced in order to produce optimum results

while maintaining some degree of harmony. Such a balancing act is difficult to achieve and is in a constant state of adjustment as weightier current situations force modification of any initial equilibrium. Much like how a seesaw requires adjustment when a heavier person replaces a comparative lightweight, circumstances in coaching can vary and require modification. Confused yet?



MOTIVATIONAL:
When speaking to players, coaches such as Richmond's Damien Hardwick need to balance positive reinforcement with constructive criticism.

Hopefully this confusion can be alleviated when you consider the following aspects that need balancing by a coach:

1. The emphasis on team versus individual development

Clearly, as a coach you have a responsibility to develop each individual to realise his or her potential. However, that needs to be balanced with the primary aim of enhancing team performance.

There are clearly times when individual development is compromised by team needs. For example, you may ask a player to adopt a defensive role against a dangerous opposing player. In this situation there may be little opportunity for your player to execute their offensive skills. Many would say that team needs should always override individual needs and that may be true at the elite level. However, at other levels the issue of developing each player would mean such roles should not become permanent ones.

Also a coach may 'sacrifice' team performance in the short term by allowing a player who is clearly being beaten in a position to work through the situation and learn the role, rather than replacing him or her with another player. Such a move is about individual development and it may come at an initial cost to team success.

2. Skill Training v Fitness Training v Mental Training v Strategic Training

Whenever a coach plans a training session, typically they must decide on how much emphasis needs to be placed on each of the above. The following questions need to be asked to determine the focus for training for each week during the season.

Are we deficient in fundamental skills such as kicking or ball handling? Are we losing because we are not fit enough? Are we making mental errors such as poor concentration, or becoming too anxious under pressure? Finally, are we falling short on tactical issues such as our ability to structure correctly at stoppages?

Essentially, a coach is trying to understand what areas are causing problems and then devising training drills that practise these situations. Additionally, the coach should always be reinforcing the strengths of the team to maintain confidence in their performance. It is an incredible balancing act that the coach must achieve if they are going to address these issues as they arise. Training should vary from week to week as the needs alter.

3. Positive Reinforcement v Criticism as a Motivator

Historically, coaching Australian football is replete with examples of coaches berating players supposedly to improve their performances. The media feed off this scenario by giving it constant airplay. For example, a team is down at quarter-time and the cameras focus on the coach as speculation rises about the tirade the coach will deliver to the players. It's great theatre but does it portray a balanced view of how a coach should best motivate players?

Seldom do we see a coach quietly reinforcing a player for his good play. Of course they do but it isn't as dramatic to the media so we continually are fed this unbalanced view. As a result, we have a host of junior and senior community coaches adopting this 'volatile critical' approach to try to improve performance.

It would be interesting to explore the content of messages sent out to players at all levels of coaching. I have spoken to many coaches who believe they don't have time to send out messages that praise players for individual or team acts. I think all players like praise for special efforts – if it can't be done immediately, it certainly should be noted and reinforced at breaks in play.

If you want to change behaviour, you clearly have a choice. You can choose to positively reinforce every behaviour that is moving towards your desired goal or you can criticise or verbally abuse those who don't measure up to your standard. Both approaches can work but more emphasis on positive reinforcement has the potential to create a more harmonious atmosphere within the organisation. The downside of using criticism as a sole motivation to initiate change is that, in time, confidence can be eroded.

Does this mean a coach should only use positive reinforcement? I don't think that is the answer either. By all means seek to positively reinforce whenever it is warranted, but it is wise not to be seen as someone who only sees the good. If you balance your positives with critical comments – often we hear about the goal of four positives to one negative – then you are probably on the right track.

So coaching is not all that easy! It's tough to get the right balance and it is probably rarely achieved. However, the coach who is aware of the need to juggle the above issues is more likely to achieve the ultimate success. In future editions of *Coaching Edge*, this balancing act will be further explored. I bet you can't wait! **CE**

EMOTIONAL UPHEAVAL: Serious injuries, such as the broken leg suffered by young Kangaroo Jack Ziebell, have more than a physical impact on players. They also affect their mental state during rehabilitation.

The Psychosocial Reactions to Injury

The Experiences of Professional Australian Football League Players.
By **DR MANDY RUDDOCK-HUDSON**

‘It’s really disappointing; you just don’t understand what it’s like. It affects you, your family and friends?’

▶ Sports injuries can have considerable physical impact on athletes. The physical factors associated with sports injury and strategies to improve rehabilitation outcomes have been well researched and successful rehabilitation can accelerate the return of athletes to sport participation. Study of the psychosocial impact of sports injury and its influence on the rehabilitation process, however, is still in its infancy.

Further research in this area is important because these factors will certainly impact on an athlete’s mental state during rehabilitation. These factors are important to ensure that an athlete returns to competition in a state of psychological health, as well as physical well-being.

The Impact of Football Injuries

Australian Football is regarded as one of the highest-profile sports in Australia. Its unique combination of body contact, running, marking, tackling and constant physical competition for the ball at high speed also results in injuries.

The introduction of injury surveillance systems has provided accurate and reliable data regarding injury trends and has also assisted with rule changes, improvements in sports equipment, medical care and ground surfaces and assisted with coaching techniques. The AFL Injury Surveillance is considered a core element for monitoring the state of injuries in the AFL competition.

Although there has been substantial and informative data relating to injuries in the AFL, there is a lack of knowledge and reliable data that may be used to decrease injury prevalence and enhance recovery from injury. Until this study, no research had examined the psychosocial or psychological implications of injury with a sample of AFL footballers.

LaTrobe University researcher Dr Mandy Ruddock-Hudson, under the supervision of Dr Paul O’Halloran and Professor Greg Murphy, conducted three studies (two of which are presented here) investigating the psychosocial factors associated with injury.

‘90 per cent of the time, a player will play with a niggling injury. It’s very rare for a player to go into a game 100 per cent fit. Most of the time, the public have no idea that we are carrying an injury?’

Psychosocial Factors Associated with Injury

While a substantial amount of research has examined the role of psychosocial factors associated with the **occurrence** of athletic injury, less attention has been given to the psychosocial **consequences** of athletic injury. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of how athletes respond to injury and the rehabilitation process may potentially assist rehabilitation personnel when treating injured players at any level.

Psychosocial factors are acknowledged as significant issues in:

- 1 Injury prevention.
- 2 Injury rehabilitation.
- 3 Injury management.

There are two factors that should be considered during injury rehabilitation and injury management: (i) the emotional response to injury (ii) the behavioural response to injury.

The emotional response to injury includes:

- Mood disturbances.
- Self-efficacy (self-belief).
- Coping mechanisms.

The behavioural response to an injury includes:

- Adherence to rehabilitation.
- Social support networks.
- Perceptions of sports medical practitioners.
- Nature of the injury.

The Research

The focus of this research was to examine the psychosocial reactions to injury in professional Australian footballers. Results from two studies are presented:

- 1 A single examination of AFL players from one club
- 2 An examination of long-term injured players from three AFL clubs

	AFL clubs	Participants	Method	Aim
Study 1	1	43 players	1 x Questionnaire 1 x Interview	To gain preliminary information regarding the psychosocial reactions to previous injuries in a sample of professional Australian footballers.
Study 2	3	8 players	3 x Interviews 3 x Questionnaires	To understand the psychosocial reactions to long-term injury and the potential role of these psychosocial factors in the rehabilitation and recovery process.



HEALING PROCESS: North Melbourne's Ben Cunnington keeps active during his five weeks out with a hot spot in his foot last season. It is important to ensure players return to competition in a state of psychological health as well as physical well-being.

Study 1: Exploring the AFL injury experience:

Findings:

Four key findings were identified that accompanied the recall of past injury experiences reported by all senior-listed players of one AFL club.

These included:

- The negative implications and challenge of the injury
- The isolation and repetitive nature of the rehabilitation process
- Engaging and disengaging in club activities when injured
- Emotional and informational support from family, teammates and medical professionals

Implications of Study 1:

Study 1 indicated the emotional response to an injury involved negative emotions of anger, depression, frustration and anxiety. In addition, there were concerns about an unknown future. Nevertheless, some players with less-severe injuries did respond with a positive attitude and were typically optimistic about their injury. During rehabilitation, players reported feelings of isolation, boredom and being unmotivated; further behavioural responses were illustrated by engaging in alternate activities, for example, outside work or study, or distancing oneself from the football club environment. In addition, the use and disuse of social support

networks was a significant behavioural response. It was these emotional and behavioural responses to the injury reported by this sample of AFL players that impacted the rehabilitation and recovery outcome.

Study 2: Psychosocial reactions to long-term injury:

Findings:

Sixteen key findings accompanied the long-term injury experience. These findings were identified over three interviews and included:

Interview 1: In the period following the injury

Major themes to emerge:

- 1 Negative emotions.
- 2 Adopting a positive mindset to regain control.
- 3 Disengaging from the club.
- 4 Support from others.

"To be having your best season, then to have all that taken away from you, and you're not going to be playing again until next year, you're not going to be out there enjoying it with your mates and while you're winning and up the top of the ladder and all the accolades that go along with it, that was probably the most

disappointing part, and that disappointment obviously turns to anger because you are just missing out on a big opportunity that might not come around again."

"I'm lucky I'm not playing because I think I was playing and worrying about stuff outside footy. I'd be playing pretty bad footy I think. Like I haven't been training too bad but I could probably train harder, meaning that I suppose it gets on top of you and, yeah, it affects you in some ways. So I suppose in some ways I'm lucky I'm not playing because I wouldn't be playing too well. So if I can get on top of this other stuff, then I think I will be 1) a better person and 2) a better trainer and footballer."

Interview 2: The estimated mid-point of the injury period

Major themes to emerge:

- 1 Rollercoaster of emotions.
- 2 The challenge of rehabilitation.
- 3 Motivation and encouragement from injured teammates.
- 4 The challenge of isolation.
- 5 Support from others.
- 6 Reconnecting with the club environment.
- 7 Renewed optimism.

"It's so repetitive [the rehabilitation] and stuff like, really not involved in football and, yeah, you're really not used to it I suppose. Like my training doesn't change, it's the same every week. I trained seven out of eight days and I think I just burnt out mentally, not struggling, I think I was just really... burnt out a little bit. I had three days off and then came back this week and started the process all over again."

"We sort of feed off each other a bit, like we try to train as much as we can with each partner because when we are by ourselves we tend to... I suppose when you're training with someone you enjoy it a little bit more than when you're not training with someone. So, the

fact that we are both injured, he [my training partner] actually made a good point; he doesn't know how he would of got through it all without someone else. So it's the same from my point of view, so it's good to have him."

Interview 3: In the week before returning to competition

- 1 Mixed emotions.
- 2 Pressure to perform to a high level of football.
- 3 Support from others.
- 4 A positive outcome from the injury experience.
- 5 Recovery outcome: Physical and mental readiness.

"I'm going to have a little bit of fun and just try and not worry about it so much, but then you have got the coaching staff who are looking at you and saying you have got to do this and got to do that, so you can never get too far away from the fact that this is your life and this is what you have got to be good at to be successful in this sort of career."

"Mentally I'm stronger because of the past and getting over this will hopefully leave me stronger again."

"I think just to sort of get a bit off my chest, like I feel pretty good now and, hopefully, from now on in, I'm not going to have any more injuries. I mean, just what I've gone through, there were times when I wasn't going well and it's good just to get it off your chest. I mean, you can talk to people like your parents and things, but to talk to someone who probably doesn't know a whole lot about you, is good to get it off. I mean, I wouldn't tell my parents everything because that gets them worried and that sort of thing. It's good to have a bit of a chat. I have really got a lot out of it."

Implications of Study 2:

Study 2 should be considered by coaching staff, fitness/rehabilitation advisors and medical professionals when developing rehabilitation programs to enhance and facilitate the recovery process from long-term injury.

Study 2 suggests that:

- Players benefited from the opportunity to "talk" about their injury experience.
- Staff need to inform the injured player that they will go through a "roller-coaster" of emotions at different points in time and players need to be reassured that these emotions are "normal".
- Coaches should remain actively involved and offer continual support and communication throughout the entire rehabilitation period.
- Rehabilitation programs and strategies need to be specific to each individual case.
- Rehabilitation/fitness advisors should incorporate a variety of rehabilitation activities in the program to keep the injured player motivated.
- Players may feel isolated.
- Although a player may have physically recovered from a long-term injury, the player may not be mentally ready to return to competition and therefore may require extra sessions with a sports psychologist or a health professional to assist in a successful return to competition.



SOCIAL SUPPORT:
It is crucial clubs have an accurate understanding of the fluctuating emotions players – such as Fremantle's Antoni Grover, who missed the first eight rounds last season with a knee injury – go through during a long rehabilitation.

COMMUNICATION:

Star Bulldog Shaun Higgins talks to the club's medical staff. Discussing the injury experience with a professional independent person can enhance the recovery process for players.



Ways to facilitate the rehabilitation and recovery from long-term injury:

Conclusions and practical implications from the research:

A number of implications can be drawn from the findings in this research and these can potentially be applied to coaching staff, sport practitioners, medical personnel and AFL players in order to facilitate rehabilitation and recovery from long-term injury.

Findings suggest that:

→ Emotional reactions to injury vary over time.

It is important that staff have an accurate understanding of the fluctuation in players' emotions in order to best meet player needs during rehabilitation. Furthermore, medical professionals, coaching staff, athletic trainers, fitness advisors and player welfare managers need to recognise and understand the implications of effective social support on injury recovery. Staff members need to identify and attempt to provide the right type of support to injured players, at the right time during the injury period.

Coaching staff are in an ideal position to offer emotional and informational support throughout the rehabilitation process, however, this appears to be underutilised. Findings in this research suggest players would like coaches to offer more social support during their injury period.

→ Interacting and communicating more frequently with injured players.

Players want regular communication with coaches during the rehabilitation period. Players suggested this need not be extensive in terms of time, as long as it was on a more regular basis.

→ Player education.

Educating athletes about the psychosocial process of injury may improve a players understanding of the process and prepare the player to deal with the emotional implications that accompany an injury.

Similarly, by educating family members and partners, who are the main support providers of injured players, this may potentially further enhance and facilitate the rehabilitation and recovery of injured athletes.

→ Task orientated exercises.

Another way to facilitate the rehabilitation and recovery from long-term injury is to incorporate a variety of different task-oriented exercises into the rehabilitation program so as to keep the injured player motivated. Results from the study and previous research by others have identified the challenge of the prolonged and repetitive nature of much rehabilitation. Providing variation in the content of rehabilitation programs is likely to enhance motivation and contribute to players' willingness to comply with their scheduled programs.

→ Professional assistance.

Although a player may have physically recovered from a long-term injury, the player may not be mentally ready to return to competition. Therefore, players may benefit from scheduled contact with a sports psychologist or similar health professional to assist in a successful return to competition.

→ Talk.

An important "finding" from the research and one which may assist in facilitating and enhancing the rehabilitation of an injured player, refers to the player's willingness to "talk" about their injury. Participants in this study made reference to the fact this research was the first opportunity many injured AFL players had to reflect on their experiences, emotions and challenges while rehabilitating from a long-term injury. Being able to communicate and express one's feelings during this time was reported by **all** players in this study to be beneficial. It was further reported that having an outsider (the researcher) to "talk" to, allowed the player to discuss a variety of factors openly, without potentially jeopardising or influencing their position on the team.

This was highly valued and suggests AFL teams might formally introduce services such as Employment Assistance Programs (EAPs) that allow organisational members to address personal concerns with an independent professional in a setting with no formal connection to the players' employing club.

According to the research team at LaTrobe University, no professional sporting clubs in Australia use such EAPs, although they have been widely used in manufacturing organisations in Australia and overseas. Discussing the injury experience with a professional independent person may be an important component of professional sporting clubs' services to facilitate injury rehabilitation and enhance the recovery process.

"Enhancing the rehabilitation process for professional Australian footballers may potentially assist players throughout the duration of their long-term injury and ensure a player is ready not only to return to competition in a recovered physical state but also return to competition in an optimal state of adequate mental health and social integration". CE

This article is an extract from Dr Ruddock-Hudson's PhD dissertation undertaken at LaTrobe University, supervised by Dr Paul O'Halloran and Professor Greg Murphy. Further information/inquiries can be directed to M.Ruddock@latrobe.edu.au

The changing role of the centre half-forward

In this position, the player needs to be a thinker as well as a strong physical presence. By **SCOTT LUCAS**



POWER AND PRECISION:
Brisbane Lions skipper
Jonathan Brown
epitomises everything
a centre half-forward
should be.

Position description

The role of the centre half-forward is continually evolving and changing as a result of the overall changes to the way the game of Australian Football is played.

The primary role is to be an option to receive the ball from teammates that have won the ball further afield. To maximise the chances of receiving the ball, the centre half-forward needs to understand the game-plan and the way the team moves the ball in order to be correctly positioned during play.

Other factors the centre half-forward must consider are:

- ➔ The foot the player with the ball kicks with.
- ➔ The penetration of the kicker.
- ➔ Whether the player is predominantly a kicker or likes to run, carry and handball.

(Examples of different styles are Western Bulldog Lindsay Gilbee and Essendon veteran Dustin Fletcher who predominantly kick the ball, and Gold Coast's Gary Ablett who will often run, carry and handball.)

The centre half-forward is the central point in the forward line structure due to most team set-ups revolving around the centre half-forward's starting point. With this in mind, the centre

half-forward is often required to direct fellow forwards into their required starting positions, depending on where the play is positioned and the nature of the play, e.g. stoppages, a free kick, a mark or open play.

Much of the player and the team's success is determined by the speed at which players adjust to, and implement, different structures.

The reason the centre half-forward predominantly controls the structures is due to the position's close proximity to all forwards. The fact the player is, in most cases, permanently positioned in the forward line is another reason for this control. Many of the smaller forwards rotate through the midfield and generally focus on midfield structures.

Key relationships

Communication with all teammates is essential to play the position of centre half-forward. The centre half-forward must be able to direct fellow forwards and be directed, so that the correct structure is implemented.

Communication with midfielders enables the midfielders to know the set-up they will be kicking into if a stoppage is won or if the ball is moving forward in general play.

Main responsibilities

Knowing the game-plan and what is required as the centre half-forward is crucial to successfully playing the position. Different teams define different roles for their respective centre half-forwards, which is dependent upon their game-plan and the personnel playing in their forward line.

Take a high handballing team which requires increased space through the midfield to play that particular style; as a result, the centre half-forward is likely to be positioned deeper in the forward line.

A team that has a higher ratio of kicks is more likely to require the centre half-forward to push up the ground to provide an option to the half-back flankers and midfielders.

Expectations of the centre half-forward

The centre half-forward must continually play forward of the ball which enables him to both provide an option to teammates in possession of the football further down the field or provide a strong contest to a pressured kick forward. The starting positions are

always based on the position of the football further afield.

For example, a stoppage on the half-back flank will require a different starting position when compared to a stoppage on the wing.

A centre half-forward needs to possess a high work rate and an ability to win the ball in different ways, such as a mark on the lead or in a contest, or a ground ball, or run to provide an option and receive a handball.

Characteristics of successful centre half-forwards

- Ability to give direction to teammates regarding forward structures.
- High work rate.
- Always providing an option to players further afield to kick to.
- Accurately assess opponent's strengths and weaknesses.
 - Does the centre half-back prefer to play further from or closer to goal? This also applies to fellow forwards and their opponents. Must generate positional match-ups that maximise scoring opportunities.
- Good mark – on the lead / one on one / in a pack.
- Read the game well.

COACHING THE POSITION

Key points to get across to the player

- The importance to the team that the centre half-forward position holds.
- A thorough understanding of the game-plan is essential.
- Must continually communicate with teammates.
- The more contests you make, the more football you will win.
- The position is continually evolving in what is required to play it successfully, be prepared to change your game in tune with your coach's requirements.

Specific training for the position

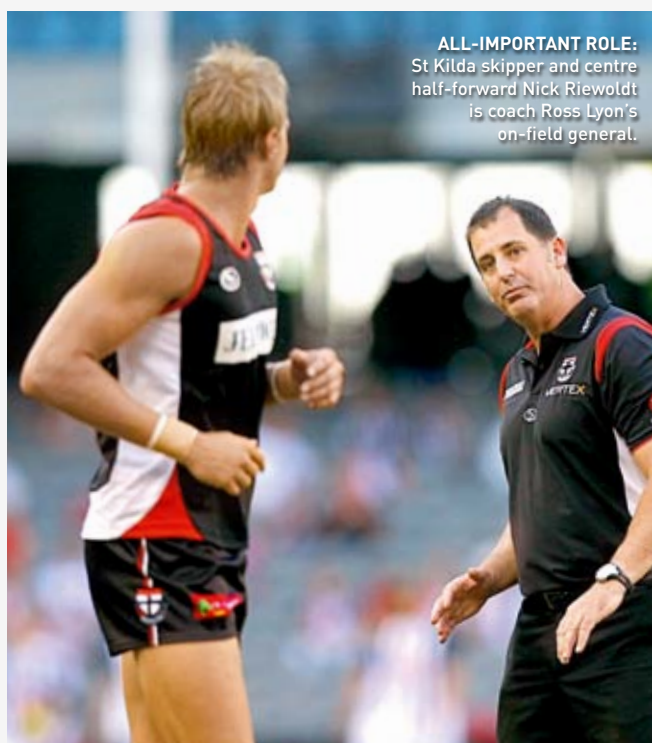
- Basic skill acquisition drills such as on-the-lead marking, one-on-one marking.
- Significant time needs to be spent developing an aerobic base as well as improving strength as many one-on-one contests occur between you and your direct opponent.
- Developing good on-ground structures and knowing where to position yourself in relation to the contest through detailed game-based training drills and video game analysis.
- Go to games and watch the best centre half-forwards, take something from each and incorporate it, where relevant, into your own game.
- Goalkicking (when the opportunity arises to kick a goal, do so knowing you have prepared with a set routine to kick the goal).

Scouting the opposition pre-match

- Know how your likely opponents like to play (don't lose focus of your strengths, but seek to exploit their weaknesses, e.g. poor one-on-one, not good at defending the lead, hates to play from the goalsquare).
- Know how the opposition set up (for example, if you are playing predominantly a "zoning team", the space is likely to be out the back and "back leads" are effective when teammates move the ball quickly through the corridor).
- As a forward, be aware of how the opposition move the ball from kick-ins and their defensive transition in general play. A significant part of a forward's role is to apply defensive pressure.

Key hints to excelling in the position

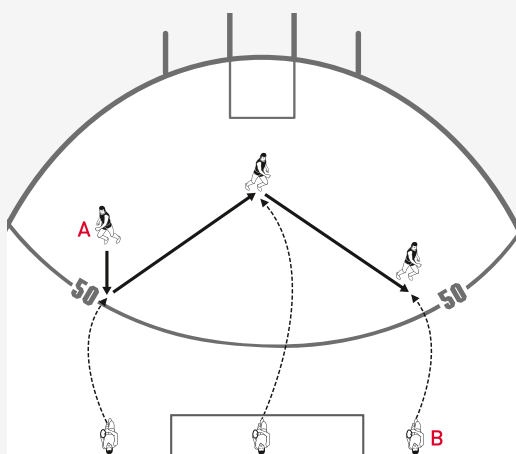
- Never assume there is nothing more to learn, continually seek improvement through developing your own game and learning more about new opponents. The game is changing, change with it or be left behind.
- A strong understanding of the game-plan.
- Knowing how your teammates play, i.e. kickers or handballers, long kicks or short kicks.
- Your teammates and coaches are a great resource to learn from.
- No matter what sport you play or what position you play within Australian Football, an inner belief and confidence in your ability to succeed is critical to personal, but more importantly, team success.



ALL-IMPORTANT ROLE:
St Kilda skipper and centre half-forward Nick Riewoldt is coach Ross Lyon's on-field general.

CENTRE HALF-FORWARD DRILLS

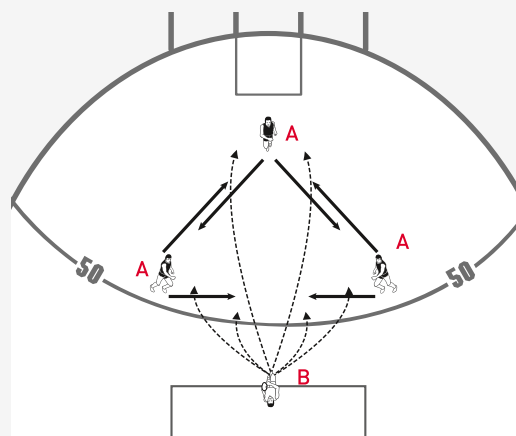
REQUIREMENTS: 3 kickers, 3 footballs



A Starting position of forward player

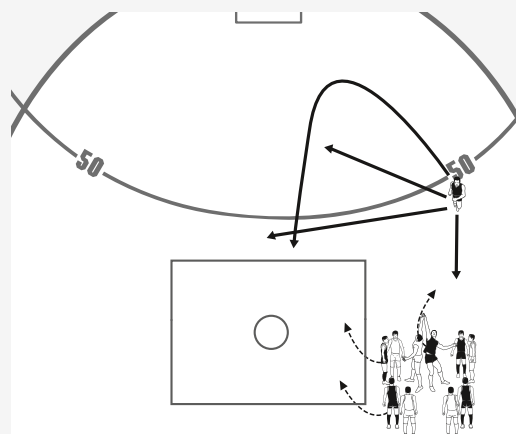
B Represents the starting positions of the kickers

REQUIREMENTS: 1 kicker, 1 football, leading players/defenders



A Represents the starting position of the leading player

B Represents the kicker



— Represents the different leading patterns a forward can use

--- The directions the ball can leave the stoppage



Attacking players



Defenders

DRILL 1

THE LEADS PRACTISED ARE:

1 A straight-up lead at the kicker.

2 A back/lateral lead toward the goalsquare

3 A 45 degree lateral lead up toward the kicker.

→ The purpose of the drill is to practice a variety of different leads that will be required throughout the course of a game.

→ The leading player begins with the straight-up lead then works across the field, completing three leads in total.

→ The purpose of having three kickers is that the workrate of the leading player is challenged therefore better simulating a game by continuously working through the drill.

→ Both the kickers and the leading players can adjust their starting positions to add variety to the drill and simulate match conditions when the same lead is rarely replicated twice. Each lead will vary slightly.

DRILL 2

→ The arrows show where the forward is leading to and where the kicker needs to place his kick.

→ The leads practised are the basic leads a forward will use throughout a game. These are:

1 A straight-up lead

2 A 45 degree lateral lead

3 A 90 degree lateral lead

4 A 45 degree back/lateral lead

→ The leading player should complete 3-4 of the different leads then have a short rest before resuming the drill. This will allow the intensity of the leads to remain high, which will best simulate match conditions.

TO DEVELOP THE DRILL, A DEFENDER CAN BE PLACED AGAINST THE FORWARD TO:

→ Increase the level of intensity the forward works at to shake his opponent.

→ Improve the defenders tracking of a forward through the different leading patterns.

DRILL 3

→ The aim of the drill is for the forward to correctly position himself between 40-60 degrees from the stoppage (depending on the location of the stoppage, the role of the other forwards, and team game-plan).

→ Where the forward leads in order to provide an option to the kicker will depend on the direction that the ball leaves the stoppage.

→ If the ball leaves the stoppage out the back, the forward will have space to lead up at the kicker, however, when the ball comes out the front of the stoppage, the best lead for a forward is lateral or back into the forward 50.

→ A coach guiding the forwards on their positioning in this drill is important, as is a midfield coach controlling the stoppage work from the midfield players.

Scott Lucas is a Player Development Regional Manager at the AFL Players' Association.

Developing your coaching career: Strategies for success

By **DR ANDREW DAWSON**

Careers in Coaching

X Having a career in coaching is a challenge, especially in sports such as Australian Football where the work comes in many forms. You could be a full-time professional coach employed by an AFL club. You could be employed part-time by a national or state sporting organisation such as AFL Victoria. You could be employed casually by an amateur club to work several hours a week. You could also be employed by a professional sporting club (full-time, part-time or casual) to provide specialist services such as skills or strength training. You could also be working purely as a volunteer coach or any combination of the above.

It is clear from the research on careers in non-sport occupations that individuals make successful transitions when they have developed themselves personally. Until recently, careers in sport were only talked about in terms of athlete welfare, especially the transition into retirement. It's only recently that researchers have started to focus on the careers of coaches. The first key finding is that career transition for coaches appears to be a more complex process than for athletes and they need to be aware of the implications for themselves and those close to them before embarking on a career change. The second key finding is that personal development is at the core of successful career transition and development.

So what does this mean for the Australian Football coach? Before making a major career change, you need to be aware it will have implications in many aspects of your life. For example, your finances, your time for work and leisure and your relationships, while your identity and self esteem will all be affected by a major career transition.

In order to enhance your career as a coach, you need to look at your own personal development as focusing just on your technical development as a coach will not be enough to ensure a successful transition.

Career transition and development is an individualised process that requires an investment of your own time, energy and resources. There are, however, several key principles you should consider when contemplating a career change or developing yourself to enhance your career as a coach.

Career transition and development principles:

- Career transition requires significant personal development and investment – be prepared to do a lot of hard work on yourself.
- Career transition requires personal, organisational and familial adjustment – be prepared to change the way you think and behave.
- Career development happens in cycles and it can take time to settle on a career path you are happy with – be prepared to be patient and ready to move when the opportunity arises.
- Career development is often determined by circumstances beyond your control – be prepared to deal with both expected and unexpected circumstances.

If you are serious about making a career change, consider the following guidelines. Career transition and development guidelines:

- 1 **Listen to yourself** – that niggling feeling that something is not right or you want to make some changes in your working life is often the first sign that you want to explore possibilities in your career. It's called intuition – listen to it and act on it.
- 2 **Examine yourself** – the old saying "Take a long, hard look at yourself" is worth doing every now and then. Work out what you want to have in your career. Take time to determine what is important for you now and in the future and balance this with what you need (now and in the future).
- 3 **Look before you leap!** Seek advice before you commit to a significant change in your career – speak to everyone who will be affected (especially your family). Seek career insights from your peers, colleagues and superiors where appropriate. Also speak to people who have been successful in making a similar transition to the one you are planning.
- 4 **Be strategic in your career planning** – if you want to make the transition to coaching at a higher level or start a coaching business, include all aspects of this change process and each step along the way, not just the end result. **So "BE PREPARED" and "DO THE RESEARCH!!"**
- 5 **Career transition takes time and effort** – if a coaching career is what you want, be prepared for it to take time and hard work.
- 6 **Creating opportunities for your career** – opportunities for career advancement come from a number of obvious sources such as team success, but there are a number of other things you can do to advance your career. For example, diversify the services you offer to other sports that need your expertise.
- 7 **Seek career mentoring/coaching** – career coaching and mentoring helps facilitate the personal, professional and career development process and is useful when navigating uncharted territory such as setting up your own coaching business. **CE**

There is a coach career profiling and planning activity for you to do, followed by transcript of a career coaching session Dr Dawson conducted recently in another article on the AFL Community Club website aflcommunityclub.com.au.

Dr Andrew Dawson is a Level 4 track and field coach and consults with individuals and sport organisations on coach career development. He is a lecturer and researcher at Deakin University in the School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences, teaching sport coaching and sport psychology. His research focuses on managing coach career development and sport workforce development. If you have any questions about your career development, he can be contacted at andrew.dawson@deakin.edu.au or phone (03) 92517309 (BH) or 0410552954 (mob).

GOING FULL CIRCLE: Two-time Geelong premiership coach Mark Thompson has made the transition from assistant coach to senior coach and back again.



WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE:

From a player and assistant coach with Geelong to his numerous roles with the AFL, Kevin Sheehan has closely observed the evolving nature of coaching.



Shifting into another gear

Interview with
Kevin Sheehan.
By **KEN DAVIS**

Kevin 'Shifter' Sheehan was the 755th player to wear the famous blue and white hoops of the Geelong Cats. He played 102 games over nine seasons and had a stellar season in 1976 under Rod Olsson (and an outstanding fitness adviser with initials KD!) where he kicked 42 goals as a midfielder/small forward. He worked as an assistant coach at Geelong before shifting to the greener pastures of the AFL where he has had a number of roles. Currently he is the AFL National Talent Manager. During his time in football, he has worked at close quarters with many of the doyens of the AFL. **His views on coaching and the changes that have occurred in football over the past 35 years are enlightening.**

KD – How has coaching evolved from the time you were a player in the 1970s to now?

KS – The massive change is that we've gone from basically a well-paid part-time sport which VFL was in the mid-'70s to the present day where the game is fully professional. In my time, everyone had other jobs and was available to train as hard as the coach would demand. This might vary from two to three to four nights per week. Although we were semi-professional, we did work very hard. It's only been fully professional for 15 years and it is advancing at a rapid rate.

There has been a huge growth in the utilisation of sport science over that period. With the use of modern technology, we are now seeing a brilliant sport played at a very high level of intensity. Looking at what's happening around the world, I think we are even leaders in the way we manage and coach our players.

In every sense, from the physical and mental conditioning side of it, to the skill development and to the personal development, we strive to make our players not just great players but they come out of the system very good people.

Hopefully, they emerge as well-rounded individuals who are then well placed to cope with the next set of challenges in their life. It's been great to see the way it has evolved.

KD – And how would you contrast today's coaches to those in your playing time?

KS – The contemporary coach now is a manager, a person who is quite capable of managing a small organisation. Putting football aside, current coaches could run a staff of 100 people, a small business. They have to be that skilful. But it's more than that, because it is a very high-profile business, so they have to be able to communicate the direction of that business to all of the stakeholders, including the supporters, and the media – which may be unforgiving at times.

More than a football coach that knows the game and sells the game-plan, they have to be able to sell the business. At the highest level, the best of the coaches do that extremely well. I look at Brad Scott and Damien Hardwick in their first years. They are a product of the modern system, have been assistant coaches for a number of years, been through the AFL Level 2 and Level 3 accreditations, and sought best practice knowledge from around the world. They are media savvy, observing the way they come across in selling their developing lists and I think they've done extremely well. They communicate well to their young players.

The traditional coach just had to know the game. He had to teach the game to his players and get them fit and make them tough. But in those days, we had 19th and 20th men that were backups. It was virtually a game of last man standing back in the '70s and the

early '80s. It's a different game now with all of the rotations, with sports science in behind that as they attempt to play the game at a very fast pace over the whole 120 minutes.

KD – In that time – looking at the quality of player going into coaching – have you observed any particular type that has been more successful? Can you differentiate between the outstanding player, middle-of-the-range player and ordinary player?

KS – I think the tough, hard, mean defenders seem most suited to the role. I described a couple in Brad Scott and Damien Hardwick. They fit the mould of the Tommy Hafey and Mick Malthouse types. They really have had to strive very hard to be players; the game may not have come naturally to them, so they had to use every bit of their knowhow and team orientation and their toughness to achieve success as a player. They were all fairly successful players, but weren't the most naturally gifted stars. They seem to be the ones who progress to be successful. There are some who break that mould obviously, with Leigh Matthews being the classic example. Kevin Sheedy is in that mould of back pocket player types, as is David Parkin.

KD – That's interesting – your first coach at Geelong probably would've been one of the most gifted players of all time. How do you reflect now on Graham 'Polly' Farmer as a coach, in terms of his strengths and weaknesses?

KS – Polly may well have been ahead of his time, because he demanded total commitment and excellence in an era when the players were amateur. He couldn't understand why they wouldn't train twice a day, why they weren't getting on to the training track half an hour before others, and working later than others. He couldn't understand why people went out and socialised and drank alcohol – he never drank at all, nor smoked. So he then struggled to communicate with the group overall. There were certainly some of the players who absolutely loved him as a coach – I was one of them – he certainly got through to me. Many others, I suppose he said, 'if they're not here, bugger them'. He had to maximise the players that were under his control but he failed to manage that issue. That's why he wasn't successful. He wasn't a modern-day manager, but he certainly had a wonderful knowledge of the game and a wonderful work ethic. The people who followed those particular leads ended up successful players, like the Nankervis brothers and David Clarke. He struggled to manage that TOTAL group though, and needed to work harder on the last 10 or the middle 10 to ensure they achieved their optimum performance levels.

KD – Part of the reason why some of these gifted people may have trouble is they don't understand what it is like to fail at skills. Do you think he was a bit like that, too?

KS – No doubt. He did not seem to understand there were individual differences in people's commitment, skill level. They all couldn't be as single-minded or as gifted as he was. He was still the best performer on the track when he was in his 40s as coach.



KD – Then you went to Rod Olsson, who probably was a contrast in almost all ways to Polly, with the exception of the commitment to training.

KS – Yes, he probably fits the Kevin Sheedy mould. He was a hard-working player, but what he brought to the football club in that era, was organisation. He was starting to head towards the modern era, where everything was well set out, thought through. There was far more communication back to every player in the group. He and the fitness adviser pioneered game analysis strategies and devised a system where each statistician was assigned to watching one player and his immediate opponent. Also, stoppage work and pattern of play were analysed. Rod was very passionate and brought a lot of the John Kennedy Hawthorn hard work and commando training program to Geelong. With this style, he engineered some success by getting the club back into the finals through his period.

KD – Did you enjoy doing the weights out in the bush?

KS – I didn't mind it actually. I do remember the heat of three-hour sessions, not sure if we were allowed to drink for the three hours. It was probably seen as a sign of weakness.

KD – Then followed Bill Goggin and Tom Hafey?

KS – Billy Goggin was very good in the strategies of the game, a wonderful competitor and a very sharp football person. He taught players a lot about positioning, e.g. centre bounces and stoppages – and was way ahead of his time there. He gave a lot of individual coaching and was highly motivational with some of his addresses. He could really give you an absolute tongue lashing. I then had a lot to do with Bill

NEW-AGE COACH:
North Melbourne's Brad Scott is a product of the modern system – media savvy and able to effectively sell his club and its game-plan to his supporters.

‘THE CONTEMPORARY COACH NOW IS A MANAGER, A PERSON WHO IS QUITE CAPABLE OF MANAGING A SMALL ORGANISATION’

when he coached State of Origin teams and he was a star at that, because he picked players well. He was terrific at identifying talent. In a period when those state games were big games, he managed the very best players very well.

Tommy was one of the most successful coaches through that period of the '70s – at three clubs. He was a great role model and was getting everything out of himself even when he was in his 50s and then in his 60s. He set a wonderful example in the way he looked after himself, he ate well and exercised consistently and he expected his players to follow his example as a leader. He too was a great orator. His game-plans were fairly basic through that period but at least you knew exactly what was expected of you. I learnt a lot in being an assistant to him, the way in which he was able to inspire people to perform right up to the best of their potential.

KD – With regard to identifying talent, what are the keys you look for?

KS – When they're 15 or 16, we look for those who have clean hands, who don't fumble. That separates them. In the flurry of a game, there are a lot of people trying to get the ball, but we are looking for the ones who are just so steady in the middle of it all with great decisions, clean hands, poise, who find time and space pretty easily. The special ones choose the right option and give it off accurately with hand and foot.

Then we go to the issue of athleticism. What size is the player? Where can he then fit in? Is he going to be a key defender, key forward or midfielder? Has he got the pace to be an outside player, wingman and so on?

All that is done before you actually meet the person. We try to ascertain the make-up of that person: have they got the head to actually make the grade, the mental toughness, the overall smarts? Can they live in a professional environment?

The beauty of our game is you can be as big as Aaron Sandilands or as small as Brent Harvey and be

a wonderful player. Smaller ones have fewer spots on the ground, but they'll play. The very big ones, the ruckman, there are only a few spots for them, too. Most of them are about the 188 cm mark and we want a fair degree of athleticism. Above all they have to be great decision-makers.

KD – Of the players you've seen, who has surprised you the most, making the grade?

KS – I remember seeing Nick Riewoldt, at 16, try out for our AIS group. He was on our list of 40. But we couldn't quite see star potential at that particular time. He was a skinny kid, around 185 cm. He was very light and very much an 'outside' forward pocket player when representing Queensland at under-16 level. There were some signs there though of this guy who had terrific hands. But gee, we just couldn't picture him at that stage being good enough to make our elite 30. By the next year, the kid had grown four or five cm. He was too old for our AIS program, but we just noticed the growth and improvement in that year. Even then, we just couldn't have said that he'd arguably be in the best three or four in the game.

The following year, at 18, he was a star, the best player in the national championships. He had grown to 193 cm and was an outstanding contested mark, a brilliant athlete. All this occurred in a two-year period. A lot was to do with his growth in height and he started to fill out. He just grew in confidence in that 18th year. The lesson is that players develop at so many different rates.

By contrast, Brendan Goddard was a star at 16, probably the best 16-year-old that I have seen. His kicking was superb. That skill separated him from the rest. He had great decision-making ability and wonderful depth perception that allowed him to pinpoint targets from 50 metres through traffic. Then he continued on in his 17th year and went No. 1 in the draft. People were doubting him in his first couple of years – but they just needed to be patient as he was just a young boy. Like Riewoldt, his body was quite light and thin, so it took a while for it to come together. He's a gun player now.

KD – How about the ones that haven't made it?

KS – We don't quite know how they're going to adapt when they go to the full-time environment these days. Some will blossom, some will struggle with criticism, or not achieving the level they thought they might. We can't replicate the pace of the AFL, we try to in our national 18s, it's the highest level available, but still it's nothing like AFL, with that rate of speed, public scrutiny, media etc.

KD – If you look at the expectation on players, particularly those drafted to clubs in the lower half of the ladder that are getting high draft picks and think that these boys are going to turn the club around. Often these players are thrown to the wolves, if you like, in the NAB Cup to see what they're made of. Is that the right way to introduce these kids?

KS – The clubs try to immediately rein in the expectations which the supporters/media might have. Public expectation is very hard on them.

‘WHEN THEY’RE 15 OR 16, WE LOOK FOR THOSE WHO HAVE CLEAN HANDS, WHO DON’T FUMBLE. THAT SEPARATES THEM’



STANDOUT YOUNGSTER: St Kilda star Brendon Goddard was rated by Sheehan as "probably the best 16-year-old that I have ever seen".

I think Jack Watts is a classic example of that. Possibly Melbourne added to the hype because they wanted to tell the story of their young list. It was a massive expectation. He was a 17-year-old still doing year 12 at Brighton Grammar, training only a couple nights a week. He was just given a taste of the level in 2009. Melbourne has managed him well, slowly giving him more opportunities. But the drums were beating! Last year, he played the last 15 games in a row and was starting to shine, accumulating 27 possessions in tough conditions in one match. He had some terrific games for a tall forward, the hardest position to play. But people just expect him to dominate the game. That is unrealistic.

KD – What are some of the best examples of coaching you have seen?

KS – Some are at the junior level. Ray Jordon, who had worked with Ron Barassi for many years, was a great skills coach. I had my involvement with him through the under-17 Victorian team; I was a selector and an assistant to him. Most observed the motivator that was Ray Jordon, the one who would shout and yell from the coach's box. That was the impression that everyone had, the one who screamed at his young charges, but he was a great skills coach with the individual kids. He was excellent working on kicking technique, positioning at stoppages, etc. His work with the very good young players was outstanding.

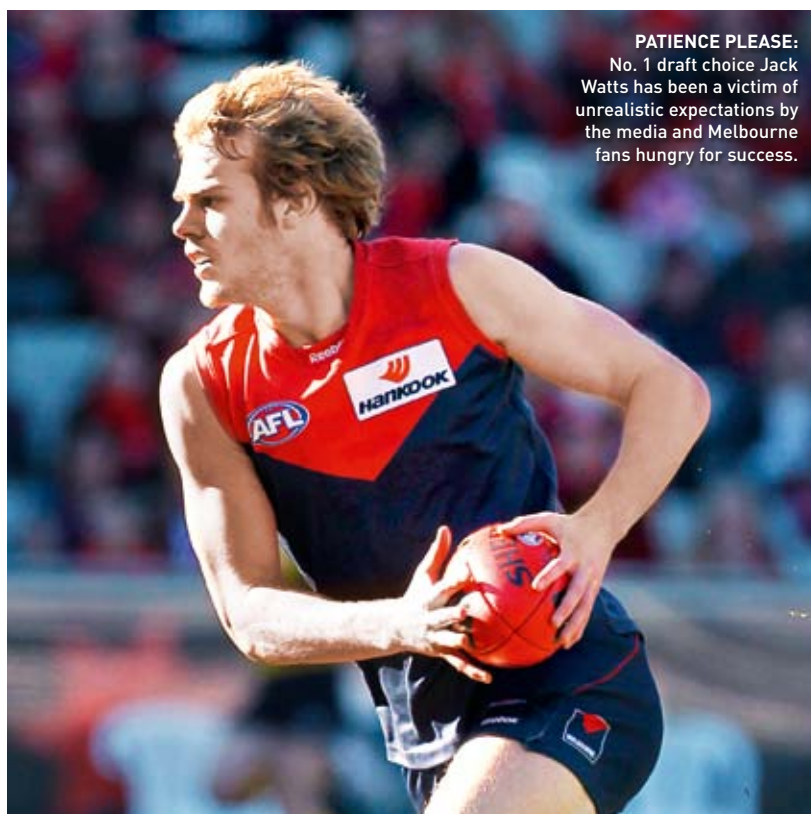
Alan McConnell is another who looked after our best 30 young players for a five-year period as coach of the AIS/AFL Academy. He developed many of the principles that underpin the game-plans of many of the under-18 teams around Australia. He worked for 'Bomber' Thompson for six or seven years as an assistant coach. He came right out of the professional era into helping us set up something that is now having an impact on 640 players a year through the AFL state academy programs. Alan set down many of the coaching principles, that we are teaching our best 17 and 18-year-olds.

KD – Can you elaborate on that?

KS – It is more than just about the coaching within the game. There are about 50 or 60 different areas covered by the curriculum, the core areas being: physical preparation, skill development, nutrition, recovery, personal development, athlete and career education, understanding AFL policies and expectations and even the way you should live your life.

KD – What are some of the less-desirable examples of coaching?

KS – From the past era, it was the physical intimidation, a bit of a last-man-standing affair. You would see coaches who would say, if the opposition is one short, we are one better off. It was a different game in that era, one in which they didn't have the video scrutiny. By utilising this approach, good players could be eliminated from a game with a sly whack. Often you would see ruckmen going up with the left



PATIENCE PLEASE:
No. 1 draft choice Jack Watts has been a victim of unrealistic expectations by the media and Melbourne fans hungry for success.

hand trying to direct the ball to the rover, while the right arm was going over the bridge of the nose. That would either eliminate or severely restrict the opposing ruckman's impact on the game. That was just part of what was a very different game back then. Thank goodness it is all cleaned up because we want everyone to want to play this game. When mums and dads are choosing what sport their kids will play, we want them to say Australian Football is a safe game. Protecting the head of the player with their head over the ball is an important principle of the modern game.

KD – Think of a jigsaw puzzle and put the qualities of all the coaches you've seen into that jigsaw to make the complete coach.

KS – Allan Jeans might be the best orator. It is amazing when he was addressing a side. Some of his addresses to the Victorian State of Origin teams were legendary. He did have a great mentor over in the corner in Graham Richmond, who was also a great orator. They probably link back to the Norm Smith style of coaching. He had an ability to actually use his voice by varying his tone to capture your attention. He would sell some fairly easy-to-understand messages and could get players to fever pitch.

The **craftiness** of Sheedy, who would do anything to win. As an example, we had a late change in the State of Origin team and he wanted to sneak Shane Heard on to the plane, because he was a tagger. He wanted to play him on Craig Bradley. So he used a false name on the plane to complete the charade. He was forever checking the rules to what might be allowed to actually achieve the outcome of winning the game. Will we get in trouble if we do it? How much trouble? So I suppose the voice of Jeans, the craftiness and shrewdness and calculating ability of a Sheedy.

‘WHEN MUMS AND DADS ARE CHOOSING WHAT SPORT THEIR KIDS PLAY, WE WANT THEM TO SAY AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL IS A SAFE GAME’



MASTER ORATOR: St Kilda and Hawthorn premiership coach Allan Jeans could lift his players to fever pitch with his inspirational addresses.

‘WE CONTINUALLY WANT TO IMPROVE OUR PROGRAMS AND GO TO THE NEXT LEVEL, PUSH THE BOUNDARIES’

I would want Goggin as a selector, he was very **astute** and he would pick the ones that were ready to go. You would want David Parkin for his **overall planning ability** to help, whether it be developing a list or just getting your procedures right in the way in which you run your organisation. He was one of the best man managers I’ve seen. His background in education obviously helped there.

Working with young people, I’d throw Alan McConnell in there. His ability to **communicate with the younger players** was outstanding – again he came from a teaching background. You can’t just tell people things, they need to see them.

Jason McCartney, straight out of the modern game, does some outstanding work with our youth, not just the elite football youth. He has been telling his own story, not just his football story, his Bali story, one of great adversity, where he managed to recover, set himself goals to come back, to get married and eventually back to play. And it was all based on what footy had taught him, about **setting some targets** and working hard to achieve them, ignoring all the negatives; being a **positive thinker**.

A combination of those people, with all of those elements, would give you a pretty good football coach of the modern era.

KD – Who had the best tactical ability?

KS – Kevin Sheedy at his best. He revolutionised the game. He started a lot more of the tactics of the ‘80s and early ‘90s. He never accepted that plan A was the only way to go, he had plan B and plan C.

KD – Can you contrast the differences in coaching at the national under-18 level and AFL level.

KS – The difference is enormous. At the 18s level, we are actually working with young men who in their football year might have already had at least two or

three other coaches – school coach, state league coach, elite AIS. Then you’ve got your state coach, Vic metro etc. They may be getting four different messages. Playing five matches at the high under-18 level, in front of AFL club staff, you have to be able to work your way through all of the different things you have learnt over time. We are seeing the raw material there, not someone who has been refined into an AFL player over a period of months, 30 hours a week, with set game-plans. Just raw talent evolved with some simple game-plans around them. The clubs then have the chance to say we can do something with that raw material.

The coach of the under-18s has to be a person who takes the pressure off the young men, making sure the young players are happy and relaxed as they can be in those circumstances. The rest will take care of itself. They need to play to simple game-plans and be team orientated. If they are successful as a team, more of them will get through to the next level. The most successful coach in the modern era would be David Dickson, who had the ability to make everyone feel relaxed. He didn’t have complex game-plans and allowed players to enjoy the ride.

KD – Let’s talk about specialisation at that age – 16, 17. From a psychological viewpoint, I like them being balanced and not having everything centred on that one sport. What is your view?

KS – I strongly agree that we want young players to be involved in more than one sport. They need an outlet in sport, another group of friends, so there are many benefits. It shouldn’t be until around the final six months of their draft year where they have to make sure they don’t get injured doing something else. They obviously must make the choice when they want to go professional. I would be playing other sports right through to give balance and cross training. A lot of footballers have been basketballers, who generally have to make great decisions, sum up the space, with a ball in their hand. Look at some of the soccer goals kicked by our best forwards and you see some of the elements learnt from international rules. Gary Ablett senior could do some amazing things with the oval ball through his cross training with soccer, I think Tony Modra was a bit the same. There is plenty of room for balance, provided you manage your workload.

KD – Imagine that you have been selected to coach Sandhurst (major league community club in the Bendigo League). What would you do immediately?

KS – The first thing I would do is find out what their current situation was, what they have done in the past year or so. Have they got access to the players two/three nights a week? How often have they trained? What sort of staff have we got around us? Do we have someone that can help their conditioning? Research the background of the group immediately.

In the process of being appointed, I would talk to the committee and find out exactly what they expect. Is it a team that can win a premiership next year, or is it a developing young side? If it was realistic, I would map out a program around that specific situation. If they

believe that at the community level they'll be able to train three nights a week and win a premiership, you try and map out a plan that can achieve that. It's not that difficult to be organised. I would develop the goals with the group, appropriate to the level of skill we've got. I would ensure we would adapt what happens at AFL level and find a volunteer who would be prepared to record vision of the games. Coverage of the game would enable me to spend some time, even if it is a precious 10 minutes with each player, to provide good feedback on the way they play the game.

I would ensure at that level that it is a fun experience. We are in sport for more than just winning. We are in it to help shape our lives and look after ourselves physically.

KD – Discuss the process for developing coaches from players who have recently left the game.

KS – Each year we want at least three assistant coach mentors in our elite AIS/AFL Academy program to ensure that the best 30 young footballers in Australia are getting exposed to the latest thinking coming out of the game. We think we can learn an enormous amount from them and at the same time give them some on-the-job coaching experience. They can apply some of the principles they want to potentially use as senior coaches down the track and we get the benefit of that. We have had quite a number of people involved in the program. The first to progress to a senior coach has been Michael Voss. His playing record was exceptional. He was a terrific media performer as soon as he retired and was able to refine some of his coaching work with these academies while undertaking his AFL Level 3 coach accreditation. He is an absolute fanatic. He loves the detail and all the work needed to come up with the best program. Feedback from our players has been great. He was destined to coach.

Nathan Buckley is similar but he has taken the more traditional route of being an assistant coach at AFL level after being with us for a couple of years and going through his accreditation courses. He will be ready to take over at the end of this year. Both were wonderful players – very gifted. I would be very surprised if both won't be successful at the highest level, given their great all-round managerial potential as well as coaching knowledge.

KD – In our time, there has been an emergence of sport science. How do you see younger coaches embracing sport science?

KS – They have all played in the sport science era. Buckley and Voss have seen the clubs go from one sport scientist per club to around three. GPS monitors are on every player in the field rather than on six. Live game feedback goes virtually straight back to the sport scientist who says, 'OK, put Tiger Woods back on and he should be on for five minutes not seven'. The times on the field are adjusted based on the capability of the individual. Interchange rotations have gone up because of this specific assessment of players' endurance capacity. These coaches embrace all of that.

KD – Do you see developing coaches searching for new knowledge, going outside the sport?

KS – Yes, virtually every club at the end of the year now is heading away with their assistant coaches to find contacts within the NFL. It is arguably the most professional in terms of the dollars spent on athletes, coaches and support staff. Most clubs have developed fairly good contacts within the American sport system. Also, they head to the English Premier League or other major European clubs. Their thirst for knowledge is enormous. Often such trips just reinforce that we are on the right track, and in some areas we may be ahead of the rest.

KD – Given the job of appointing a coach, what sort of questions do you ask them to get the best result?

KS – Well, presuming we are interviewing a person who is very well qualified in the game, one we think knows the game at the required level. In my case, it will be to appoint a coach to coach in the AFL Academy. I've been doing that for 14 years and we have had only four coaches in the AIS/AFL Academy: Kevin Morris, Terry Wheeler, Alan McConnell and Jason McCartney, with Michael O'Loughlin having just replaced Jason. They wouldn't make the final list of people we would interview unless they had wonderful backgrounds in the game. They are not just coaching the best 30 kids in the country but overseeing the AFL Academy programs run Australia-wide for our elite under-18 and under-16 players. So it's a given that they have great knowledge of the game. I would be assessing their overall values – what do they stand for? Do their values line up with ours? Are they accountable, progressive, respectful? We continually want to improve our programs and go to the next level, push the boundaries. Overall they must be respectful, of the organisation, the clubs, all of the other stakeholders, players coming in and their parents.

KD – Do you think we turn over coaches too quickly at AFL level?

KS – I think so. We have a draft system, which means we do spread the talent, which means there is going to be a rebuilding phase for a third of the clubs every year. It will rotate around and the premiership window won't be open for everyone. You have to be patient. Things like injury rates can ebb and flow and you can have a rotten run. The boards of clubs at times will give into the pressure of media and supporters who want instant results, rather than listening to the emerging story of the development of their list. You need to be pretty resilient as a coach and be able to sell your message to survive the periods when the media come after you. I think people deserve five years. If you've chosen them well, you should be backing them in for that period. Taking 18-year-olds who won't be anywhere near their peak until they're 23, you want to see whether the coach can impart their knowledge over an extended period. If you're pushing people out after two or three years, you've made a bad selection. You are the one that failed, as a committee or a manager choosing those people. **ce**

Coaching and developing young players

By **DAMIAN CARROLL**

(Box Hill Hawks senior coach and former TAC Cup coach – Gippsland Power)



REWARDING EXPERIENCE:
Former Gippsland Power coach Damian Carroll's philosophy on coaching is based on developing youngsters for the future, not just for the present.

➤ Coaching at youth level is an extremely rewarding experience, but it comes with the challenge of dealing with young athletes who are coming to terms with changes in their life.

It can be a difficult and demanding period for the players as they juggle a number of areas. These crucial player development years require delicate management skills to look at improving the 'all-round athlete'. I believe that when developing young players, we need to look at 'effective coaching' rather than basing our success on 'results coaching'. This means that we need to have a mentality of coaching young players for the future rather than just coaching for the present.

A successful youth coach needs to have the following characteristics:

- ➔ Organised
- ➔ Prepared
- ➔ Positive, enthusiastic and encouraging
- ➔ Empathy for the player (remember how tough the game really is)

Kicking

The most important skill development area to focus on with young players is their kicking. The ages of 6-15 are the most important years for developing an effective kicking technique. It has been found that it takes about 10,000 hours of practice to become 'elite' at a skill execution, so it is important that youth coaches expose players to lots of skill practice. This can be in a variety of forms, but most importantly, we need to teach players to consistently kick and be able to adjust to different scenarios within a football match.

Decision-making is vital and I would encourage coaches to place players in situations which require them to react quickly and effectively so that improvement translates into match conditions (game-sense training). The majority of young players today will practise very little kicking outside a scheduled training session, so it is very important to construct training with this core skill in mind.

Coaches need to look at the ratio of footballs to players to ensure participation is at its maximum. Cricket players bring their bat

DEVELOPMENT: Jed Lamb was one of four Gippsland Power youngsters who were drafted last season. Lamb was taken by the Sydney Swans at selection No. 21.



to each training session, yet a number of young footballers don't even own a football. Encourage players to invest in a football and get them to bring it along to training so that maximum participation can be obtained. When all players are active, there will be a greater learning effect and there will also be less chance for disruptive behaviour within the group.

Game Sense

Game-sense training, incorporating kicking and all the skills required for AFL football, is important for developing the young player. When we are towards the end of our playing careers, our bodies can often let us down in terms of keeping up with the pace of the game and standard, however, at this later stage of our development, we often have the skills to be able to read the play and play 'smart football', through drawing on our past experiences.

Game-sense training will allow coaches to bring athletes along more quickly in the areas of anticipation and match-play of AFL football. This type of training does not have to involve physical contesting (thus reducing the chance injury or risking further injury), but players will soon learn through their own experience (Implicit Learning) where they should run and what they need to do both defensively and in attack.

Player Evaluation

A youth coach needs to be able to quickly evaluate a young player's set of skills and address any technical flaws in their game. It is also vital for young players to be given the opportunity to continue to work on their strengths, because those are the traits that made them a good player in the first place – encourage your players to become elite in these areas. Use AFL players as role models for young athletes in terms of strengths and areas to improve. It will help them to have an example to associate with, and also serve as a guide for future reference.

Communication

An important characteristic of a good coach is the ability to communicate well to ensure that players understand what is required of them. Young athletes respond best to positive messages and body language, and it is important to give them feedback that gives them confidence to go forward with their football.

This generation of players want constructive feedback on how they can improve so it is important the coach is honest with the information provided to the player.

At meetings, ask the players questions. This will have the benefit of encouraging discussion within the group and you will also gain an understanding of what a player already knows (i.e. related to their own performance or what they would do if they were in the same situation in a match). Over time, this questioning technique will also ensure players remain attentive during meetings, as they know they may be asked a question at any time.

It is also important to consider the way you present your feedback to players as they all have different learning styles. To ensure your message is getting through, it is a good idea to use follow-up questions with the players. A great activity after a match is to get players to rate their own game. From my experience, players are mostly accurate in their observations and it gives you a great starting point to work with in evaluating their game. It is important they take ownership of the performance and how they can go on to improve from here.

Feedback can be given in a number of different ways. I have found the use of video is a great resource for discussing scenarios so, if possible, try to utilise this tool in your coaching. Ensure you give your players confidence to go forward and, if behavioural change is required, that you have a remedy for the behaviour.

Success

I believe it is important for young players to have a feeling of success when looking back on the season program. They need to feel they have improved and benefited from the work they have put in and that they have taken steps towards becoming a better player. It can be difficult to find success in a game with one ball and 36 players on the field, so we need to look closely at each individual player and what influence they have brought to the team.

A positive coach is one who makes each player feel important and successful. As a coach, I get great excitement out of seeing young players develop and improve. Careful management and planning will help result in an effective season for both player and coach. **CE**

Damian Carroll is Box Hill Hawks senior coach and Hawthorn Development Coach.

This article was written as part of the requirements of the AFL High Performance Coaching Course.



HECTIC SCHEDULE: Balancing the demands of TAC Cup and representative football with the requirements of schooling, family and social life for young players, such as the Eastern Ranges' Kieran Harper, is a challenging task for coaches.

Walking a Tightrope

Former Eastern Ranges under-18 assistant coach **Andy Hayman** looks at the TAC Cup under-18s program.

Elite Talent Pathways in all sports walk a tightrope and the demands and challenges faced under each program need to be carefully monitored and managed. A TAC Cup club is no exception. TAC Cup under-18 players need to balance school (VCE studies), work (usually first jobs or apprenticeships), school football (private schools), Vic Metro football, club football, logging hours to obtain a learner's permit and gaining their licence, family and social life and then we ask them to commit to a two-three day-a-week program modelled on the professional AFL environments. They indeed are walking a tightrope and the TAC clubs are mainly responsible for ensuring they have the balance required to enable them to come out the other side a better person and, for a lucky few, as an AFL footballer.

As part of the coaching panel at the Eastern Ranges TAC under-18s, it is interesting to sit back and consider what this program offers players and the outcomes we strive to achieve each season, given the resources, time and external influences mentioned above, at play. The TAC program is set up, run and carried out by a large team of mostly

volunteer people and the following is a snapshot of a typical year for a TAC club and player, and particularly the Eastern Ranges.

Players are invited to join our pre-season training groups, starting in November after having already been part of the TAC program the previous season as a bottom-age under-17 player or as a graduating player from the under-16s development squad. But other young men are invited having been viewed by the talent identification staff that numbers about five for our region.

These passionate people have over a number of years developed an eye for talented players. They watch each team in every league in the region up to three times a year and players are put on a watch list for future review. Games are held in the September school holidays for the players who have been identified and, following these trial games, all players are advised of their areas to work on into the next season or of their invitation to the TAC under-18s summer program.

Summer training for the 70-odd players is held three nights a week for two hours' duration. In this period, the football department (one coach and

three assistants) is gaining an idea of each player's skill level and establishing basic team rules.

Meanwhile, the high-performance staff (one plus three-four assistants) are putting the players through a detailed training regime which has been prepared following hours of consultation with all parties, including coaches, doctors, physios, dieticians and exercise physiologists. This training plan will incorporate the running, weights, core and football phases and the formula must be right so all facets are covered adequately.

Some players are advised they have not made the training squad for the season and a select group of about 35 are put on the jumper listing. Another 10-15 will continue to train in the hope that, with continued coaching and development, they too will be elevated to a listed-player status. Games follow three-four practice matches and each club will have the best team available playing in the first three games.

The TAC under-18 competition is best defined as a development competition which provides the stage for the best under-18 boys in the state to show AFL recruiters and clubs what attributes they have. To this end, the under-18 carnival is held each season and a select few are invited and selected to play for, in our case, the Vic Metro under-18s team. This squad is selected and training starts after four weeks or so of the season and, on average, about seven young men will attend this training once a week. At the same time, any private school boys have now basically gone back to that environment and only train with the TAC club on a Tuesday.

The programming schedule during this time of Metro trials and games is to allow the maximum exposure of the high-end talent, so the TAC competition will have scheduled breaks. These breaks allow the other players to return to their home clubs while the recruiters get a chance to view identified players under pressure-type environments at Metro level.

This is a recent innovation in the TAC Cup and is a win for all parties. The TAC clubs now will introduce more players to the TAC cup experience and blood new talent, hoping to unearth another previously unknown gem.

LIFE-CHANGING:

Coach Darren Bewick headed the Eastern Ranges' program which was designed to develop and showcase young players in their quest to be drafted.



Following the completion of the Vic Metro games and during school holidays, the full complement of players will be available for selection, and usually as the season moves towards finals, they again are all available to ensure full exposure during the pressure and high intensity of a final.

It should be noted, certain players who play for a TAC club, are selected to play for Vic Metro, play for their home club or are a private school attendee, could have up to four coaches during a 10-week period during the season. While all coaches are of a high level befitting the roles, there can be up to four different game styles, plans, set-ups and roles the players must cope with.

The club needs to also be aware of and communicate with the players regarding their schooling requirements (i.e. exams),

A TYPICAL TAC CUP WEEK

A typical in-season week for TAC under-18 players, coaches, high-performance staff and high-end management staff will consist of the following:

MONDAY

- **4.30pm** Participating players from previous game meet at swimming pools to start rehabilitation.
- **5 to 6.30pm** Game review from the weekend with typically 1-12 selected players. Injured players from the TAC or those playing local or school football will attend to be screened by the physio, training staff or masseur.
- Coaches meetings are held usually for 30-45 minutes.

TUESDAY

- **5 to 7pm** Video review with full playing squad followed by training. Core stability is included and soup for all at the end where a training squad of 26 is announced for the Thursday night's training.

THURSDAY

- **5 to 7pm** Light training followed by team meeting, vision on opposition and pasta.

SATURDAY (GAME 2.00PM)

- Arrive 12.30pm
- Game
- Aftermatch
- Leave 5.30-6pm

sporting events outside of the TAC (school sport or other sporting commitments such as basketball, cricket) and the players' family environments and assist where needed with counselling or just as someone to talk to about issues in their busy lives.

Whatever happens though, all the TAC clubs will continue to develop and showcase players at a fantastic rate and all the Eastern Ranges people mentioned will still turn up for the next session, the next game review, the next parents' get-together, a social event to raise funds or, together with the players, an educational session on drugs, TAC importance, racial vilification etc with the same passionate love of the game and the underlying hope we can assist the young men under our umbrella to hopefully achieve their ultimate goal of AFL recruitment. For others, it may be to reach VFL standard or return to their home clubs better players and people for the experience of TAC Cup football. **CE**

Andy Hayman was Eastern Ranges TAC Under-18 Assistant Coach – Midfield.

This article was written as part of the requirements of the AFL High Performance Coaching Course.

EFFECTIVE: Geelong star Paul Chapman is deadly around goals with his accurate set-shot kicking.



Individual and small-group kicking activities for match-day

By simulating match pressure in drills, coaches can prepare players to kick the ball quickly and accurately in games. By **AFL Development Department**

▶ Australian Football players will be faced with match-day situations that will require them to implement a wide variety of kicks during a match. Therefore, once the critical elements of the kicking technique have been developed, players should start practising the many different kicks they will need to use. Practising these kicks in a progression of situations from easy to more difficult will ensure a player maintains the critical elements. The following are some common kicking scenarios that require a player to adapt.

STATIC FIELD KICKING

A 'static kick', which is a closed skill, is defined as a kick without physical pressure, such as a set shot, kick out or kick after a mark or free kick. All the critical elements of kicking apply.

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY

KICKING OBJECTIVE

To kick the ball with accuracy.

KICKING ACTIVITY

The player uses a wheelie bin or similar target and, from a comfortable distance, kicks the ball at the target.

- 1 Players should take at least five steps before kicking the ball.
- 2 Players to move further away from the target after hitting the target.

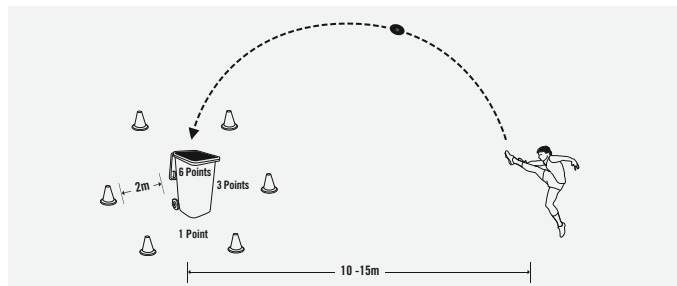
VOLUME OF KICKS – HIGH

COACHING EMPHASIS

Players must ensure they are implementing the critical elements of kicking and each kick has an effective ball flight.

Key questions players should ask themselves to reinforce learning outcomes –

- Is there a specific number of steps before kicking that is comfortable?
- What does a good kick look like?
- What does a good kick feel like?
- How can you make the ball spin faster or slower? How does this affect the flight?



DRILL EXTENSIONS

To make the drill more challenging the following options can be incorporated –

- Reduce the size of the target.
- Walk in quicker before kicking.
- Kick on the non-preferred foot.

PAIRS OR SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

KICKING OBJECTIVE

To kick without pressure to a moving target.

KICKING ACTIVITY

- 1 In a group of three, set up in a rectangle with one free corner.
- 2 The player with the ball sets up to kick at the corner that does not have a player. The player from the opposite corner runs to the free corner to receive the ball from the kicker. The kick should be timed so the player can run on to the ball. Once the receiver has the ball, the player walks backwards as if going back from a person on the mark and kicks the ball to the corner of the rectangle they came from.
- 3 The player on the opposite side of the rectangle then leads to the free corner to receive the ball.

VOLUME OF KICKS – High

COACHING EMPHASIS

Players must get back off the mark and create forward momentum before kicking the ball. The kicks should be timed so the receiving player can mark the ball at the vacant corner of the rectangle.

Key questions players should ask themselves to reinforce learning outcomes –

- What does a good kick look like?
- What does a good kick feel like?
- What happened when players started to get tired?

DRILL EXTENSIONS

To make the drill more challenging the following options can be incorporated –

- Players start further apart and enlarge the rectangle.
- Players kick on non-preferred foot.

DYNAMIC FIELD KICKING

(running at pace and kicking in a straight line)

Dynamic kicking (open skill) occurs when a player is kicking with external pressure, such as in general play or on the run. When performing this kick, the player needs to consider the speed at

which the skill has to be executed, the importance of straightening towards the target, which may be moving, and keeping balanced throughout the kick. When running at high speed, the player may also need to guide the ball down further away from the body, so their momentum does not cause the ball to drop too close to their body. De-acceleration or taking a steadying step is often needed to allow the body to perform the kick effectively.

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY

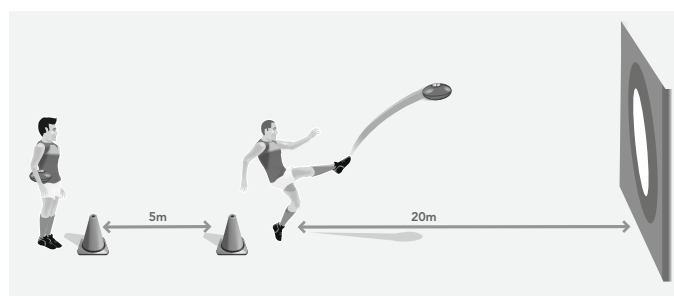
KICKING OBJECTIVE

To kick the ball on the run with accuracy.

KICKING ACTIVITY

The player finds a suitable wall or fence and marks a large circle about three metres in diameter, centred at chest height.

- 1 The player starts around 20 metres away from the wall.
- 2 The player carries the football five metres and kicks it at the circle.
- 3 Every time the player hits the circle, they move back another five metres.



VOLUME OF KICKS – High

COACHING EMPHASIS

- Players run and carry the football at least five metres.
- Players should experiment between low, hard kicks and kicks that have some air.
- Players must continue to concentrate on the critical learning points of kicking.

Key questions players should ask themselves to reinforce learning outcomes –

- Which kick worked best – low, hard or the weighted kick?
- Did a straight or slightly curved run-up suit you?
- What did the ball feel like on your foot when the kick was good?
- Which foot did you land on after you performed the kick well?

DRILL EXTENSIONS

To make the drill more challenging, the following options can be incorporated –

- Different starting points, for example back to the wall or lying on the ground.
- Run 15 metres, taking a bounce before kicking.
- Weave around some cones before kicking, forcing the player to straighten towards the target.



PENETRATION:

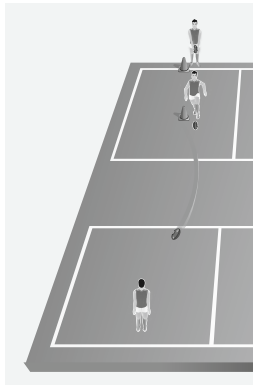
Daniel Rich's powerful left-foot kicking is a feature of his play in the midfield for the Brisbane Lions.

PAIRS OR SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY**KICKING OBJECTIVE**

To kick the ball on the run over a long distance

KICKING ACTIVITY –

- Set up two 10-metre boxes about 40 metres apart or a comfortable distance within the player's capabilities.
- One player in each box.
- On a whistle, one player runs and picks up a football that has been placed on the ground in the middle of the box, five metres in front of the player.
- After picking up the ball, the player has five metres to run before having to kick over the required distance to a teammate who can't leave their own box to mark the ball.
- The teammate marks the ball and repeats the process.
- This activity can be completed as a competition between pairs with the winner being the pair whose ball is marked first. The winning pair receives one point. The first team to 10 points wins overall.



VOLUME OF KICKS – High

COACHING EMPHASIS

- Players balance before kicking.
- Players kick the ball low and hard, while ensuring it reaches the teammate on the full.

Key questions players should ask themselves to reinforce learning outcomes –

- Did a straight or slightly curved run-up suit you?
- What did the ball feel like on your foot when the kick was good?
- Which foot did you land on when the kick was performed well?



TECHNIQUE: Victoria's Phoebe McWilliams is well balanced before kicking at the Women's National Championships in Western Australia.

DRILL EXTENSIONS

To make the drill more challenging, the following option can be incorporated –

- A chasing player to place more pressure on the kicker.

PENETRATING KICK

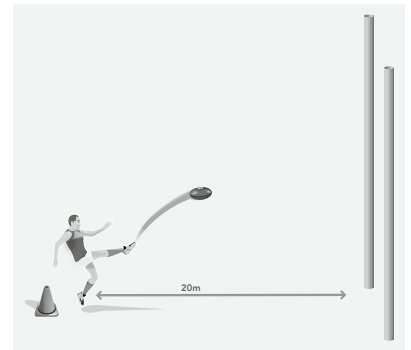
A penetrating kick is defined as a kick where the ball travels over a long distance with little 'hang time' in the air. A player who can kick with penetration is extremely valuable to a team. These players have an extremely efficient kicking technique and are able to generate excellent foot speed when kicking.

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY**KICKING OBJECTIVE**

To kick the ball low and hard and over considerable distance

KICKING ACTIVITY

- Line up four portable goalposts about 60cm apart.
- The player kicks from a distance appropriate to their ability – for a senior footballer this may be around 30 metres.
- The aim is to knock over one of the goal posts.
- A tall ruck bag or another tall object which can be knocked down can also be used.



VOLUME OF KICKS – High

COACHING EMPHASIS

- Players need to generate a high level of lower leg speed to produce a flatter ball flight.
 - Players may have to lean slightly more forward than usual to keep the ball low.
- Key questions players should ask themselves to reinforce learning outcomes –**
- How far forward do you have to lean to produce a relatively low ball flight while still gaining distance?
 - When the kick was performed well, did it spin backwards quicker or slower than usual?

DRILL EXTENSIONS

To make the drill more challenging, the following options can be incorporated –

- Have a competition with another player, operating from either side of the target to see which player can knock over the target first.

PAIRS OR SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY**KICKING OBJECTIVE**

To kick the ball low and hard without much 'hang time'

KICKING ACTIVITY

- In a pair, players are positioned either side of a rope which is tied between two posts or trees at head height.
- Each player kicks the ball flat and hard. The ball must pass under the rope and be marked by their partner.
- After a successful mark, both players step back one pace.



- The further back players can get, the more penetrating the kick has been. Players should work at getting back further than their teammates or beating their previous best efforts.

VOLUME OF KICKS – High

COACHING EMPHASIS

- It is important that low, flat, hard kicks can be marked. The most common error is the ball landing short of the mark.
- Players should explore a lower ball release and lean further forward with their upper body.

Key questions players should ask themselves to reinforce learning outcomes –

- Did you change the angle of the ball at impact with your foot?
- How far forward did you feel you had to lean?
- Did the ball spin backwards quickly or more slowly than usual?

DRILL EXTENSIONS

To make the drill more challenging, the following option can be incorporated –

- Raise the rope: If a higher attachment point can be found for the rope, then the players can kick the ball over a greater distance.

WEIGHTED KICK

The weighted kick is used to give the ball more 'hang time' to make it drop where a teammate is either already positioned or preferably can run on to it. The weighted kick is more about 'touch' than power. The player receiving the ball should be able to run to the position where the ball will drop and mark it without losing momentum. Players aim for a position on the ground to land the ball, which is sometimes referred to as kicking to grass.

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY

KICKING OBJECTIVE

To weight the kick to provide a teammate with the best opportunity to receive the ball.

KICKING ACTIVITY

- The player kicks the football into the air at different heights on successive kicks and marks the football.

VOLUME OF KICKS – High

COACHING EMPHASIS

- Players continue to implement the critical elements of kicking, and explore and adapt their technique to weighting the kick for different heights.
- Players are aiming to weight the kick to enable it to be caught without moving. Some may find this difficult and should visualise where their teammate will be when the ball arrives.

Key questions players should ask themselves to reinforce learning outcomes –

- How did the higher kick look compared to a kick that reached a lower height?
- How did the higher kick feel compared to a lower kick?
- Were there any differences in the sound of the ball hitting the foot when kicking different heights?
- What changes to the angle of the ball at impact were made to create a higher ball flight?
- What part of the ball is the most effective for impact?

DRILL EXTENSIONS

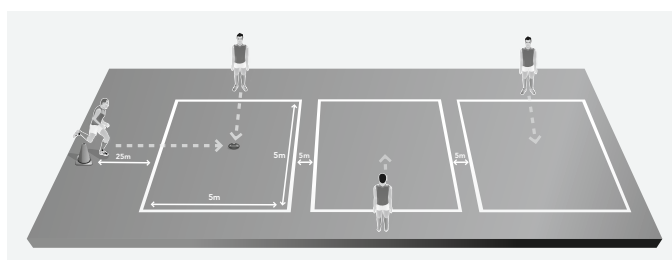
To make the drill more challenging, the following options can be incorporated –

- Kick the ball at a certain height and see how many times the player can clap or spin around before marking it.
- Kick the ball at different heights while on the move.
- Kick the ball different heights, moving to mark the ball in different locations.
- Kick the ball using the non-preferred foot.
- Use a wheelie bin. Standing a comfortable distance away, aim to land the ball in the bin.

PAIRS OR SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

KICKING OBJECTIVE

To weight the kick in order to provide a teammate with the best opportunity to receive the ball.



KICKING ACTIVITY

- In groups of four. The kicker stands at a cone facing three grids each measuring 5 x 5 metres. The grids are located directly in line with each other at distances of 25, 35 and 45 metres from the kicker.
- Each of the three other players starts 10 metres to the side of their respective grid. When the kicker is ready, one of the players leads towards their grid and marks the weighted kick. This is repeated for the other two players. Each kicker has five attempts. **CE**

This article is part of the AFL's *Ultimate Kicking Guide*.



CONSTRUCTIVE:

Sydney Swan Rhyce Shaw is adept at turning defence into attack with his run and well-weighted kicking to position.

Lloyd clean-hands test

Following the inclusion of the Buckley Kicking Test in the AFL Draft Combine, AIS/AFL Academy mentor Matthew Lloyd developed a clean hands test which was introduced into the 2010 Combine.

Setting Up The Test

- The test should be conducted on a grass oval and in boots.
- The receive line for the take is 2m across the front.
- The release line is a further 3m in front of the receive line.
- The turn cone in between handballs is 3m back from the receive line.
- The caller/feeder, who feeds and calls which target each handball must go to is 8m from the receive line for rolled balls and 10m for kicked balls.
- The distances should be measured from the release line.
- 6m handball is measured at 45 degrees from corner to cone.
- 8m handball is measured from corner to cone (in line with 6m cone).
- 10m handball is measured from corner to cone (in line with 6m and 8m cones).
- The player must release the ball and execute the handball by the release line, which is 3m from the receive line.
- The target players will be on the cones at 6m, 8m and 10m from the receive line.
- The scorer should stand at around five metres behind the feeder/caller to best assess each take and handball.

Running the Test

- 1 The test comprises of six takes and six handballs.
- 2 Each player receives the ball and handballs to the respective targets at the call of the feeder, six times to complete the test.
- 3 Every distance must be covered in the test.
- 4 The caller/feeder feeds the ball in, with the first three rolled (below knees) and the final three kicked. The aim of the receiving player is taking the ball cleanly at the receive line in all six trials.
- 5 The six calls will comprise of Short Left or Right (six metres) Middle left or Right (eight metres) and Long Left or Right (10m).
- 6 Each take and handball is called randomly by the feeder/caller as the ball is released from the feeder/caller.
- 7 The player must concentrate on the call, take it cleanly and release the ball in the release zone to the appropriate target with the appropriate hand.
- 8 Once the handball is executed, the player will jog back to the initial starting cone, five metres back from the receive line.
- 9 There is little need for rest and each test should take around 60 seconds. **CE**

SILKY SKILLS:

Gippsland Power youngster Dyson Heppell, who was drafted by Essendon, had an efficiency rating of 93 per cent in the 2010 Draft Combine clean-hands test.



SCORING THE TEST

- 1 A target player stands on each cone at 6m, 8m and 10m.
- 2 Each take and handball will be judged on the following criteria:

FIVE POINTS – EXCELLENT

- Clean take, quick execution with perfect spin and target not moving, receiving ball at chest height.

FOUR POINTS – VERY GOOD

- Clean take, quick execution and good spin with target moving slightly to receive.

THREE POINTS – GOOD

- Clean take, satisfactory execution with target able to take the ball after moving.

TWO POINTS – MARGINAL

- Fumble but recovers to reach target with good technique.

ONE POINT – POOR

- Fumbles and gets ball to target with poor technique.

0 POINTS – FAIL

- Fumbles and misses target completely.

SKILLS – LLOYD CLEAN HANDS TEST

2010 DRAFT COMBINE CLEAN HANDS TEST – TOP 10

Position	Name	Score	Efficiency %
1	Josh Caddy (Northern Knights)	28/30	93
2	Dyson Heppell (Gippsland Power)	28/30	93
3	Mitch Wallis (Calder Cannons)	27/30	90
4	Josh Farmer (Sandringham Dragons)	27/30	90
5	Jarryd Lyons (Sandringham Dragons)	27/30	90
6	Tom Hickey (Morningside)	27/30	90
7	Jai Sheehan (Geelong Falcons)	27/30	90
= 8	Ben Reid (Bendigo Pioneers)	26/30	87
= 8	Alex Fasolo (East Fremantle)	26/30	87
= 8	Jamie Cripps (East Fremantle)	26/30	87
= 8	Joel Wilkinson (Broadbeach)	26/30	87



MODERN TACTICS:
Local and junior teams
are mimicking the
AFL's high number of
interchange rotations.

Are AFL trends 'killing' the local game?

GWS Giants academy manager and recent AFL High Performance Coaching Course graduate **Lachlan Buszard** gives us his observational opinion on the AFL game and its effect on local football.

As local football clubs strive to become more professional, their attention is often turned towards the trends in today's elite AFL football.

Headhunting recently retired players and coaches into community clubs in an effort to improve the club's intellectual property is one method often used in the pursuit of continuous improvement. Others include starting pre-season training earlier each year and creating strategic partnerships with gyms, schools and universities.

However do these initiatives really improve performance, or are they merely a façade put forward to justify "professionalism" at all levels?

On any given weekend, you will see the implementation of the 15 or 18-man zone on local footy fields around the country.

From under-14 level to open-age football, players are being encouraged to "play the way the professionals do" in the modern game. The standard 3,4,5 kick-out defensive zone has been expanded into a full-ground press and it is being rolled out as we speak at a training session or local ground near you.

While running a 15 or 18-man zone does not guarantee success, it is another example of the way in which the local football environment is changing and becoming more progressive.

However do these changes mean the days of one-on-one contested football are dying out of the game, and if so, is this a good thing? How young is too young to be imploring these tactics?

Another recent change to the game, and a contentious one at the moment, is the number of interchange rotations used by sides.

No longer is the bench seen as a "punishment" tool as it once was – the bench is now very much part of modern match-day tactics.

AFL clubs today are rotating around 120 to 140 times a game and, as the technology has improved, the strength and conditioning coaches are tracking each athlete's fatigue and intensity levels. While most local clubs do not have the resources to replicate this, I was astonished to witness an under-14s game where the on-ballers were changing every five-six minutes.

Surely at that age we just want the players to play football and have fun, not worry about trying to get on and off the ground (which just seemed to create a high level of confusion working out who was playing where).

While rotating players through positions is an important part of the "enjoyment" factor for many players and it can be important for individual player development needs, the frequency of rotations required to maximise development and performance is not the same as at the elite level. **CE**

Lachlan Buszard is GWS Giants Academy Manager. Follow the Giants Academy on twitter @lachiebuzz

This article was written as part of the requirements of the AFL High Performance Coaching Course.

From the Ice Rink to the footy field

In this continuing story of a Canadian's view of Australian Football, writer **Chris Donahoe** introduces his parents to the game by taking them to its Mecca – the MCG – on a cold winter's day.

My parents arrived in Melbourne with bags in their arms and under their eyes. Luckily for me, the bags in the arms were full of things I'd been missing from home. Luckily for everyone else, they were also full of presents. When I asked what they'd packed for themselves, my stepmother smiled and explained they wanted to save room in case they "found some things they liked" (by the time they left they'd found a whole suitcase of things they liked). Dad arrived wearing the Cats jumper we sent him and made sure he brought jumpers from our small, local university gridiron team back home to repay the favour. Needless to say, he was looking forward to the big game.

A few restful days later, the rain was coming down on the tents at the Vic Markets when I had a realisation what we were doing was about as "Aussie" as it gets. My stepmother was raving about the knee-high Ugg boots she'd just bought while my father was trying on a pair of Blundstones. My girlfriend and I were trying to decide where we could get a good pie before the game and whether we

should walk through Fed Square on the way there. Only a few cork hats and didgeridoos playing in the background could have added to the effect.

The crowds were massing on the bridges and footpaths leading to the MCG as we arrived. Wrapped in our footy scarves, we joined the mob with the stadium looming over us like a monolith. The grey skies were doing nothing to dampen our spirits and the excitement of the crowd left a permanent smile on all of our faces. We circled outside looking for our gate, the bronze statues of footy and cricket greats guiding us along. But it wasn't until we emerged from the inner tunnels of the stadium that it truly dawned on us. Suddenly, the local university gridiron field back home felt like a lawn bowling green. The stands seemed like sheer cliffs around some secret valley, except it wasn't so secret as the nearly 80,000 Hawks and Cats supporters filed in.

I was expecting a good game, but what we got was one of the most closely contested matches of the season. It was never clear who would limp away with the win, even as we screamed for the siren while 'Buddy' Franklin stood primed to take a mark inside the 50 in the final seconds. The hits were spine-tingling, the kicks were spectacular and the speed never let up. I queried my folks numerous times during and after the game about their thoughts and feelings. These are just some of the things I noticed about what they said in the heat of the moment and while watching on TV with a cold VB in their hands.

I still don't think my father really grasped the size of the field. He would say, "C'mon! I coulda made that kick!" when a player missed a kick on the run from 40 metres out, but then he would turn around and say, "Geez, I wish I'd brought my binoculars," when the play shifted to the other end of the field. I had to remind him that the 50-metre mark was further than midfield on a Gridiron field and that they weren't taking place-kicks. To this he just shook his head in amazement.

Surprisingly, the rules they found confusing were not the ones that baffled me when I started watching. They didn't say anything about the holding the ball rule, forcing me to explain that it was a rule they should be confused about. My father was much more concerned with how the umpires knew when the kicks travelled the minimum distance required to be a mark or if the players had run too far with the ball without bouncing. He was amazed they simply eyed the distances and made the call on the fly.

COURAGE AND SKILL:
Geelong's Cameron Ling
fires off a handball
before Hawthorn's Cyril
Rioli can pounce.



There was also some confusion about when the umpires called play-on. There seemed to be many instances where the players made a clear but quickly-checked motion to continue play after a mark, but were still allowed to take their free kick when they decided otherwise. They asked me how the umpires knew how to make the call and when.

My answer to these and many other similar questions was simply that the umpires have to make the best calls they can in the interest of keeping the flow of the game as fair and exciting as possible.

It's safe to say we all had trouble following the umpires' calls throughout the game. At one point, my stepmother asked, "who keeps blowing that whistle?" and I realised that at home a whistle is usually saved for a penalty or to stop the game. I had to explain that the umpires use the whistle for many aspects of the game and not just to stop play. I told her that it was often used to signal to the players that something had happened, like a mark, a penalty or a direction to a specific player. Sometimes the big screen at the stadium made the decisions clearer, but we often felt left in the dark as our team mysteriously lost or gained possession. Weeks later, as we watched another game on our hotel TV, the field microphone and video replay made it much easier to both follow the game and appreciate the subtleties of the rules. Interestingly, it made it easier to be both amazed at how well the umpires perform, but also to criticise their calls without the emotion of the live play.

What struck my folks most intensely was the athleticism of the players. My father was amazed that they play four, 20-minute quarters with stop-time. It is apparent this is a full quarter longer than Gridiron when the panting players jog back on the field for the final quarter. It wasn't until mid-way through the game they realised each team has only four reserve players (and that that includes any on-field injuries!). My stepmother asked how they can play the whole game with such short rests and I could only shrug my shoulders and smile.

We talked about how soccer was the only sport you could compare it to, but that it was a ridiculous comparison because soccer players don't use their full bodies (and spend a lot of their time rolling around on the ground). For a full 80 minutes, footy players all run, jump, pass, kick and hit hard. Dad said with a grin, "What else can you compare it to?" I told him that the beauty of footy is that you can't compare it to anything else. It isn't bogged down with rules that limit the basic flow of the game. There are no off-sides, time-limits, on-the-fly player rotations, restrictions on player positions or movement or special penalty allowances. There is no stop-start, over-analysis or strategic coating. There are 36 players on the field at the same time. They are constantly making split-second decisions with the constant 360 degree pressure of getting their heads taken off. The essence of the game is in its simplicity and the lack of overbearing rules.

Later, I told my father that I often got the

ATHLETICISM: Hawk Luke Hodge soars over Cat Darren Milburn. The uniqueness of football brings out the emotion and personality of its players.



impression these comments were seen as criticisms by dedicated fans when, truly, they were quite the opposite. These are the things that make footy unique, these are the reasons I love footy. The sheer skill, courage and awareness of the players shines through, not how well they can follow a set play practised a thousand times. It's a game of high emotion and personality, unlike any I've ever seen. The chaos and unpredictability, the ebb and flow of the game make it a completely different experience every time I watch, every quarter I watch! Isn't this why we watch sport?

My father laughed for a minute then said, "Well, I don't know why Australians watch sport, but that's sure as hell why I do." **CE**

‘WHAT ELSE CAN YOU COMPARE IT TO?’ I TOLD HIM THAT THE BEAUTY OF FOOTY IS THAT YOU CAN'T COMPARE IT TO ANYTHING ELSE.’

2011 AFL coaching resources

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The AFL has produced a number of quality coaching resources to complement our extensive coach education program and to assist coaches in their work. To purchase any resources, please log on to our new online shop: afl.com.au/developmentresources

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Coaching manuals online

AFL coaching manuals are still available for download in PDF format free of charge. To download the PDFs go to the link:

<http://aflcommunityclub.com.au/index.php?id=370>

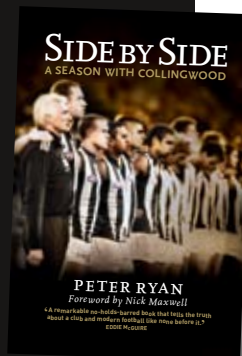
Side By Side: A Season with Collingwood

PETER RYAN

Journalist Peter Ryan spent the 2009 season within the inner sanctum of the Collingwood Football Club and witnessed firsthand the reality behind the headlines. Ryan takes readers on a wild ride as Collingwood chases its first premiership since 1990, revealing both the human side and inner workings of Australia's most famous sporting club. This book also provides rare insights into the coaching methods of Mick Malthouse and his team of assistants, revealing their basic values and systems.

RRP: \$49.95 (GST incl.)

<https://www.slatterymedia.com/store/viewBook/side-by-side---paperback-edition->



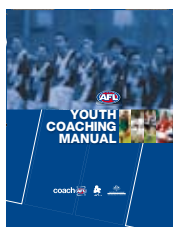
The Coach: The Official AFL Level 1 Coaching Manual



The Coach sets out standards and guidelines that give clear answers to how coaches should conduct their teams and themselves. This is the standard text for AFL Level 1 Senior coaching course.

RRP: \$13.75 (GST incl.)

AFL Youth Coaching Manual



This is a must-have resource for any coach of footballers in the 13-17 age group. The manual provides teaching information for the main skills and tactics of the game and advises coaches on important social and interpersonal skills.

RRP: \$27.50 (GST incl.)

AFL Junior Coaching Manual



The *AFL Junior Coaching Manual* is for coaches, coordinators, participants and parents in the NAB AFL Auskick Program. It is an essential text for all coaches working with children of primary-school age.

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AFL Auskick Interactive Coaching CD ROM



This is an ideal teaching tool for coaches, teachers and parents of primary school children. It provides a range of activities and skill games for younger children.

RRP: \$5.50 (GST incl.)

Skills of Australian Football



Every week over the football season we marvel at how today's AFL stars have become so proficient in the execution of their skills. This book analyses the skills of the game as the stars show and explain how it's done.

RRP: \$22 (GST incl.)

A Season of Achievement



All footballers start their journey in community clubs. Steven Ball has written about part of that journey, through his experiences coaching Moonee Valley under-12s over a season and provides valuable lessons.

RRP: \$15 (GST incl.)

AFL Coaches' Code of Conduct



This outlines the accepted behaviour of coaches in regard to safety, legal and behavioural aspects of football. By accepting this code, coaches are displaying a commitment to support minimum standards of good coaching. **FREE**

Game Day Coaching [DVD]



West Coast Eagles General Manager of Football Operations and former Melbourne coach Neale Daniher presents the key areas of effective game-day coaching, including game-plan, weekly preparation, pre-game, coaching box protocols, the breaks and post-game.

RRP: \$10 (GST incl.)

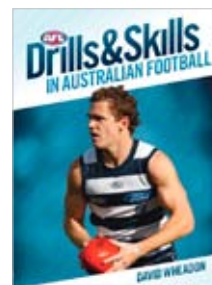
Style of Play [DVD]



Former Richmond and Perth premiership player and long-time West Coast Eagles assistant coach Robert Wiley presents a comprehensive video analysis of style of play in modern football, including forward entries, stoppages, defensive strategies, kick-ins and zones, switches and style of play.

RRP: \$15 (GST incl.)

Drills & Skills



In *Drills & Skills in Australian Football*, David Wheadon, who has more than two decades' experience as an assistant coach at AFL clubs, presents a comprehensive selection of drills and practices that relate to the key aspects of the modern game. The

book contains 176 specific drills, which range from simple to complex practices that will challenge elite players, and which are categorised into different areas of the game.

RRP: \$30 (GST incl.)

Laws of Australian Football [DVD]



The Laws of Australian Football allow for the game to be played in a safe and fun environment. In keeping with the ever-changing nature of the game, this DVD outlines some of the latest rule interpretations. This resource is used to coach umpires and educate AFL clubs.

RRP: \$5.50 (GST incl.)

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