

SMALL BLACKS U7 PLANNING



U7

Five and six-year-olds have limited coordination and body awareness. They are just learning the difficulties linked with manipulating bits and pieces let alone an uncooperative rugby ball.

At the under 7 level, the primary concern of the coach is to facilitate activities that encourage frequent ball contact and the development of basic motor skills. One-ball-per-player activities and various “modified games” are perfect.

BEGINNING RUGBY U6-U7

Special guidelines are needed for these players including special rules (coaches on the field, no tackling, scrum and lineout modifications if any), special playing fields (shorter fields, smaller posts, etc) and special equipment (size 2½ balls).

Some would say you are very brave if you coach in this area, but maybe we should turn this around and say that you will find this area very rewarding. Here are some points for this area that you will find helpful:

The game as played by five-year-olds requires a basic approach, one that stresses participation and meaningful play. Most kids this age will not execute very well and should be encouraged just to play and have fun. The coaches involved with this age group need to have minimum performance expectations and should focus not on outcome and results but on participation and enjoyment.

They have short attention spans; therefore they don’t deal well with the more intense instruction, ie the activities and training routines that adults want to use to teach rugby skills. The experience should be mostly an introduction or first exposure to the game. You should try not to make it more than that.

One key factor per training session is a good rule of thumb for skills coaching.

BEGINNING COACH TIPS

- Give players’ creative, positive nicknames - this will make them feel extra special. Use their nicknames often, especially when they accomplish something. Make plenty of references to All Blacks players’ names such as referring to a back as “the next Beauden Barrett”.
- Kids love to run with the ball so, during practice, put a ball in every kid’s hands and let them run. A ball-familiarisation drill is good for this. Give them all lots of opportunities to score tries (scoring tries is definitely FUN).

I have no practical concept of space or teamwork and I have very little tolerance for complicated rules or jargon.

My attention span is a not at a “competitive” stage. It increases with age - about one minute each year!

The puddle at halfway is usually too tempting to resist.

I don't know how to pace myself: I will go flat-out until I drop.

All I think about is me, me and me! But I will share the ball with teammates - sometimes!

I will gladly run after someone to try and recover the ball but rarely to support my teammate.

I will pass to teammates as a last resort and rarely side-on.

I can run with the ball in two hands but prefer one.

I can catch a ball when stationary but usually bring the ball into my body.

My heart rate peaks quickly and I can overheat rapidly. I need to get adequate water breaks.

I want everyone in the team to like me - even the coach!

I am always moving eg rocking, scratching, jiggling or fiddling.

I can kick a ball on the ground.

PLANNING AND ORGANISING A PRACTICE

“Failing to plan is planning to fail”

Planning

By maintaining a coach’s diary over the season, you can make notes on individual coaching sessions, record performance, highlight areas for further coaching, and note any injuries. The coach’s diary can be invaluable as a future reference for planning.

Once you have a structure, and have identified your objectives and content for your coaching session, you are then ready to complete the fine points of your session plan. Keep in mind that some of your objectives will be attainable in one coaching session, while others may take a number of sessions or even an entire season to attain.

Remember... you want to:

- Catch Them - kids need to be motivated and a simple game or activity will help.
- Coach Them - Select one key skill at a time. Introduce technique.
- Practice Them - you need to give ample opportunity for players to learn the skill.

Organisation

Before a rugby practice can start the coach needs to plan the session. Just turning up with a bag of balls isn’t good enough.

How Many Players Do You Have?

Depending on your grade and availability of children, this will vary.

The important things to remember is that you need enough equipment and enough room to carry out your practice.

What Equipment Do You Need?

There is a large array of rugby gear to use nowadays, but this can sometimes cloud what you are trying to achieve at your practice.

Essential Equipment List

- A Whistle - A whistle is always a good indicator for children to STOP or START an exercise, simulate game situations and a vital tool for keeping control of your practices. It can also be a good way to save your voice for getting the attention of the players.
- Balls - Make sure you have enough balls (absolute minimum is four balls). The more times a player has a ball in their hands during practices, the more opportunity there is for skill development. Make sure that the balls are the recommended size for your players.

- Cones - These are really handy in marking out an area, grids, relays and line formations. They clearly define the playing areas for your games and activities. Great for setting boundaries. The more the better!
- Hit Shields & Tackle Bags - Although handy for contact situations, these aren't a necessity for junior rugby practices. If you are going to use them make sure they are the appropriate size.
- Flags - Good for evasion skills, ie. side-step, swerve, etc.
- Bibs - Essential for modified games and team runs.
- Mouthguards - Needed in all contact situations and practices.

JUST BECAUSE YOU SAW THE ALL BLACKS PERFORMING AN ACTIVITY DOESN'T MAKE IT A GOOD ACTIVITY FOR JUNIOR PLAYERS!

Major Considerations

The Conditions - You need some ground to practise on and depending on your personal situation this may vary, but you can get away with a very small area e.g. 20m x 20m if needed. Half a field is a good rule of thumb.

Make sure you define your boundaries. You also need to consider the weather. Do you have a plan if it rains?

Check the safety of your training area. Make sure bikes, pot holes, scrum machines, glass or other obstructions/ hazards aren't near this area.

The Time - Most teams can only fit one practice in for the week; therefore time is crucial in the development of the players. Practices going over an hour may exceed the attention span of this age group.

My Teams Capabilities

- What are the capabilities of your team?
- Who has played before and who hasn't?
- How old are they?
- What skills do they have and which ones need development the most?

Too often we see coaches performing skills and activities that aren't appropriate to the level of the players capabilities.

Timing Additions

Practice should be a fast paced environment, where you can stop to explain or reinforce a skill, but generally keep things moving. Kid's attention spans increase as they get older - by one minute per year. At practice, keep kids busy doing something, not waiting in lines or standing around. Simple warm-up passing, catching and running in small groups is better than relay lines or running around the field. It's best if you work on 10-15 minute segments. Any longer and the group will lose interest.

Practice Plan Sample

Session No: 3 Date: 3rd May 2009

Primary Objective(s)

- (1) To improve ball-handling skills
- (2) To improve evasive skills
- (3) _____

Equipment: Balls and cones

Activity	Time	Coaching Points	Learning Outcomes
Warm-up			
1. Multi-action relay	10 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Eyes open- Chin off chest- Fingers spread- Ball in two hands	Improve ball skills and body position.
2. Shadow run Prepare players for more intense activities		<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ball in two hands- Run into space	To practise quick evasive movements
Individual Skills			
Passing Waves - groups of four Progressively move from simple to more complex activities depending on ability of players.	15 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Eyes up- Reach for the ball- Fingers spread	Improve players passing and receiving techniques.
Unit Skills And Team Development			
Play a game of Rippa Rugby or modified game	20 mins	Use every opportunity to coach and correct skill execution.	Understanding of playing in a team. Communicate with other players. Evade and run into space.
Cool-Down			
Passing Circles - facing inside and out	5 mins	Review and re-emphasise key coaching points from this session.	

The coaching and development of players' skills throughout the **WHOLE** practice is paramount.

Practice Plan Form

Session No: _____ Date: _____

Primary Objective(s)

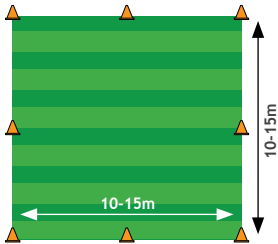
- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____

Equipment: _____

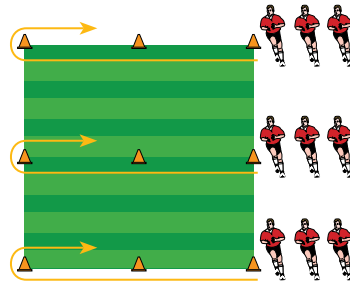
Activity	Time	Coaching Points	Learning Outcomes
Warm-up			
Individual Skills			
Unit Skills And Team Development			
Cool-Down			

Simple Practice Layouts

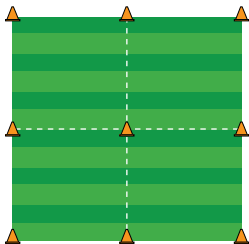
You don't have to use a large area or change every activity. This sequence of practice layouts may be helpful.



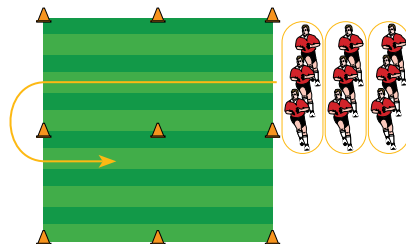
Large Square
(Use eight cones)
eg. Shadow Run



Relays
(Same number of cones
but players line up)
eg. Multi Action Relays



Small Squares
(Add centre cone)
eg. Ball Familiarisation



Channels/Waves
(Players in waves two or three)
eg. Passing Waves



Structure of Your Practices

A good way to structure your training is to think of **PEAS!**

An effective practice will include these elements:

Purposeful - make sure there is a goal.

Enjoyable - the practice should be fun and diverse.

Active - all children involved at all times.

Safe - correct technique is always taught and equipment used as intended.

Let the players know what you have planned for the session. This will help the players understand why they are performing the activities and they will feel more involved and committed to the practice.

A Warm-up will:

- Reduce the chance of injury.
- Prepare the mind and body for the activities that are to follow.
- Last about 10-15 minutes.
- Move from a low intensity to a high intensity.
- Focus on ball familiarisation and handling.

Take an appropriate activity from www.rugbytoolbox.co.nz.

What Individual Skills Will I Emphasise?

You should concentrate on the appropriate skills for your age group. *Go online to www.rugbytoolbox.co.nz.

SMALL BLACKS WARM UP

NZ Rugby has developed a warm up for Small Blacks rugby players and this new approach will gamify, randomise and make the activities fun.

The competition will bring up the intensity; kids will make decisions under pressure and want to warm up more!

Coaches will be able to pick from the 40+ activities and have their team warmed up in just 16 minutes. All of these NEW activities can be found on www.smallblacks.com.

	START YOUR ENGINES (ST)	ROCK N ROLL (RO)	FUN AND GAMES (FU)	READY TO RUMBLE (RE)
	Pick 3 from A	Pick 3 from A	Pick 1 from A	Pick 1 from A
	Pick 1 from B	Pick 1 from B	Pick 1 from B	Pick 1 from B
	Pick 2 from A	Pick 2 from A		
	Pick 1 from B	Pick 1 from B		
	Pick 2 from A	Pick 2 from A		
Duration	4 minutes	4 minutes	6 minutes	2 minutes

TIME	DRILL CODE	SESSION 1	SESSION 2	SESSION 3	SESSION 4
0min	STA	Butt Kicks	Jump and Land	High Knees	Butt Kicks
	STA	High Knees	Hop and Land	Fast Feet +	Jump and Land
	STA	Fast Feet +	Skip Jumps (High Ball)	Lunge Push	Fast Feet +
	STB	Knee Boxing	Alphabet Game	Red and Yellow	Turtles and Targets
	STA	Lunge Push	Butt Kicks	Hop and Land	Lunge Push
	STA	Jump and Land	High Knees	Skip Jumps (High Ball)	High Knees
	STB	Dog and Bone	Numbers Game	Red and Yellow	Turtles and Targets
	STA	Hop & Land	Fast Feet +	Butt Kicks	Hop and Land
4min	STA	Skip Jumps (High Ball)	Lunge Push	Jump and Land	Skip Jumps (High Ball)
	ROA	Log / Big	Mountain Climber	Army Army	Mountain Climber
	ROA	Rock n Roll	Crocodile Crawls	Bear Crawls	Crocodile Crawls
	ROA	Army Army	Skiers	Duck Walks	Skiers
	ROB	Grab It (on your feet)	Here-There-Where	SRP	Noughts and Crosses
	ROA	Bear Crawls	Log / Big	Log / Big	Army Army
	ROA	Duck Walks	Rock n Roll	Rock n Roll	Bear Crawls
	ROB	Here-There-Where	Locks-Props-Backs	Heads Shoulders Knees & Goes	SRP
8min	ROA	Monkey Run	Army Army	Monkey Run	Log / Big
	ROA	Mountain Climber	Bear Crawls	Mountain Climber	Rock n Roll
	FUA	Bench Ball	2 Ball Touch	Turbo Touch	Ups and Downs
14min	FUB	Kick to King	Vision T	Gotcha Name	Flinch
	REA	Cheek to Cheek	Knee Tackles	Cheek to Cheek	Knee Tackles
16min	REB	Shoulder Bumps	Back to Back	Prone Arm Wrestle	Quick Starts / Hands

Unit Skills and Team Development

At this level, play the appropriate non-contact game or a modified game. Use every opportunity to coach correct skill execution including scrums, lineouts, defence, continuity and attack.

The intensity and content of these will be determined by the age group you are coaching.

Please refer back to the Small Blacks Development Model.

What Do I Do For A Cool-Down?

Finish your practice with a low intensity activity.

It is also a good time to reinforce your practice objectives.

Modified Games

One of the best ways to learn how to play the game safely and effectively is to play modified forms of the game that reinforce the Principles of Play, e.g. Any game where players use evasive and ball handling skills to create space:

- Order Ball
- Corner Ball

It's best to begin with small side team games (e.g. up to eight players in each team) in a smaller playing area, as each player gets to be more active by being closer to the ball and being more actively involved than in a regular game on a full-size field.

The game should involve as much handling as possible as this will give all the players the opportunity to run and pass the ball.

The size of the playing field should be adjusted according to the number of players on each team.

Movement

Standing still at trainings helps no one. Take different positions when coaching. Don't stand in the same place. By moving around you will get a different perspective of the practice. If you find effective and ideal angles to view during activities you will be a better coach and your analysis will be more accurate. You can also motivate your kids while walking around. You can work wonders for every kid on your team if, during each practice session, you walk around to each player, address them by their first name, and say something positive to them with a smile.

COACHING RUGBY SKILLS

For players to perform well at any level of rugby they must acquire a number of skills. Skill learning begins with mastery of the basic skills and techniques and progresses to applying those skills in increasingly competitive situations.

It is one of the coach's primary responsibilities to provide each player with opportunities to learn and practise skills in a positive and constructive environment. Appropriate skill learning, especially at the junior level, can set the platform for future potential elite performance.

1. Choose the best position for the demonstration, ie. consider wind, sun, group size, sound effects, echo, etc. Have the children sit or kneel and have no distractions. Use simple language, not too many words and ask questions regularly to ensure clear understanding.
2. Show the whole skill, then break it down in parts (these are the KEY FACTORS), and then link the parts up to form the whole skill again.
3. Reinforce with a demonstration by creating an 'image of the skill' in the mind of the child. Don't demonstrate what not to do.
4. Select the appropriate practice form with the use of grids, circuits or line formations.
5. Provide feedback during practice, but be specific, constructive and immediate.

KEY FACTOR EXAMPLES

Making A Basic Pass

- Run straight.
- Hold the ball in two hands.
- Look at receiver.
- Swing the arms.
- Follow through.
- Pass at chest height in front of the receiver.

Receiving The Ball - Catching A Pass

- Chin up, eyes open.
- Move onto the ball in straight line.
- Extend the hands towards the ball.
- Watch the ball into the hands.

Before and After Practice

Comments sink in best immediately before or after practice. Use this critical time wisely. What you say at these times will usually be remembered, for example, suggest that each player could go home and come up with an activity of his or her own for a skill that was just taught. This reinforces what you have been doing. Kids love to be empowered and engaged in the learning process, so include them. Kids may be asked what they did at practice. Use after practice time to tell the kids and they might remember at dinner time.

Skill Analysis

One of the most important roles of the coach is skill analysis - the ability to look at a player, evaluate what is seen, and know what to do next. Skill analysis can be divided into three parts:

1. Observing the player performing a skill.
2. Analysing the effectiveness of the performance.
3. Detecting and correcting errors to improve the player's future performance.

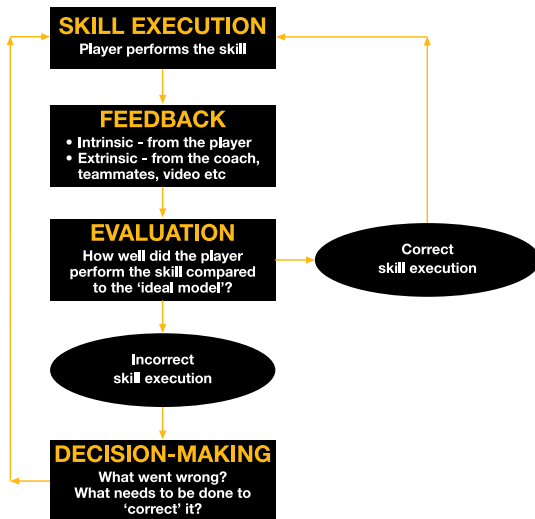
The focus at this level is on observing how the player actually performs the skill (skill observation).

In order to effectively analyse a player's performance the coach needs to plan what to observe and how to observe it.

Feedback

The skill/feedback loop demonstrates how feedback is processed when learning a skill. The model shown below is a simplified version of how each player uses feedback to assess whether or not they have responded correctly and, if not, how they should respond correctly.





KEY FACTORS

Key factors are the important individual actions within a skill performance that influence the final outcome. Key factors should always be stated in terms of specific body movements and they must be observable by the coach.

The coach is just like a teacher. A teacher critiques their students, a coach critiques their players.

To critique a player's skills you break the skill into key factors and the same applies to your coaching techniques.

- Walk kids through one skill (key factors).
- Demonstrate skills correctly. Are you competent enough? Should you use a player to demonstrate good technique? Remember that children are likely to copy other children so make sure it is done correctly as children will copy mistakes too.
- Use terms and keep them consistent eg Hands up... make a W.
- Don't break up the skill too much. You may lose them.
- Put them through an activity so you can critique your players. Again, walk your players through.
- Progress this activity to a stage where there is some form of opposition if appropriate. This can be a game situation.
- Repeat key messages and skill activity to make them clear and understood. Practise, practise, practise!
- Don't get tuned out by the children. This will happen if you are constantly critiquing them. They will change channels. Combine critiquing with your satisfaction in what they are doing (critique with success).

SMALL BLACKS DEVELOPMENT MODEL

The Small Blacks Development Model has been developed to ensure that there is a consistency of play, coaching and player welfare at all levels throughout the country, and is a great way of getting kids involved in a team sport.

School Year Age Grade	Y1 U6	Y2 U7	Comments
Numbers on Field	7		Numbers are maximum. If a team doesn't have enough players to start a game, it should then be played with equal numbers.
Field Size	¼	½	¼ field = 40m x 27.5m maximum. ½ field = goal to 10m (across the field).
Try	5pts		If score blow-outs are occurring (ie 35+ at halftime), both coaches MUST meet and come to an agreement as to how they can generate a more even contest. Try = 5 pts.
Conversion	-		None
Ball Size	2 ½		
Tackle	Rip		
Subs	¼ ½ ¾		All players must play a minimum of half a game (this is to include at least two full quarters). Rolling substitutions are not permitted. Substitutions may be made at half time or approximately half way through each half when the referee will allow and signal a Substitution Break. This applies to representative games.
Kick-off	Free pass		
Penalty	Free Pass		
Kicking	No		
Length of Game	2 x 20		These are maximums
Scrum	None		None
Lineout	None		None