



“What you do keeps them in the game!”

COACHING TEENAGERS

Module 1



Foreword

No longer a child, not yet an adult!

Teenagers are according to most teachers and coaches the most challenging demographic, and you, the rugby coach are a key participant in making their rugby experience enjoyable and gratifying. Not only do rugby coaches help teens have fun but they also play an important role in positive rugby, and life, development.

Good rugby coaches help individuals and teams win, but that is only part of their job. While they deservedly celebrate the winners, they also recognize the efforts of all teens who work hard to be good in our game. Rugby coaches help teens develop resilience, cope with disappointment, learn from mistakes, and make adjustments to strategies. These are all important aspects of developing initiative and core skills, which teens will use in all aspects of life.

New Zealand Rugby believes that coach education is vital in providing the best possible training for our players. By undertaking the Teenage Coaching Module you are demonstrating your commitment to coaching and to your players by seeking to further develop your skills and knowledge.

“What you do keeps them in the game!”

Peter Harold
NZ Rugby Education and Coaching Resource Manager



1. Introduction

THE CHALLENGE

Much of this module is based on teenage responses from research - such as Sport New Zealand's programmes - and a number of other experienced sources.

It is important to also recognise that the subjects in these few pages are all individuals and some generalisations will not apply - that is part of the challenge for the coach, tailoring your program to specific requirements.

WHY DO TEENS PLAY RUGBY?



WHY DO TEENS DROP OUT OF OUR GAME?

Physical size and weight difference.

The coach is overly strict and pushes players too much.

Lack of knowledge of rugby pathways and prospects outside of school.

Thought of injury.

Emphasis from mates on succeeding over participating for enjoyment and having fun.

Can't play with their mates because team selections and grades split them up.

Peer pressure.

Embarrassed about playing rugby in front of the opposite sex.

The sport becomes wearying.

Time conflict with other undertakings e.g. study, social or work commitments.

Over importance on winning by adults.

Don't get sufficient playing time.

Teen experiences or observing bias or discrimination.

Poor self-esteem.

Transport problems.

Cost to play - participation fees and gear can be expensive.

Little acknowledgement and support for their team as compared to top teams.

SO, HOW MIGHT COACHES ENCOURAGE TEENS TO STAY IN RUGBY?

Support the teenager to balance the demands on their time to allow time for rugby.

Inspire the teenager to participate and experience rugby opportunities.

Give the teenager a chance to contribute toward the rugby activities.

Promote enthusiasm by pointing out good role models while being one yourself.

Use examples of the highest level, such as strengthening a dream for a player to become an All Black or Black Fern.

Create a team culture than teens can embrace.

2. Growth and Development of Teens

THE LANDSCAPE IS CHANGING

Numerous mental and physical changes occur throughout adolescence, and this effectively brings about the biggest challenge when coaching teens, as they evolve as people and begin to think differently about the world.

In rugby, changes to their bone structure, as well as core strength and speed, mean that their style of play changes to suit.

So coaches need to consider not only the players' physical needs but also their social, emotional and cognitive needs.

By adapting plans and activities to suit the needs of players in terms of growth and development, the coach can help the players to progress through rugby in the way that best suits them.

Note: A young person's developmental age can differ by as much as two years from his or her chronological age. For example, a player who is 12 calendar years old could be anywhere from 10 to 14 in developmental age.

THE PHYSICAL DOMAIN

There are two elements included in the physical domain:

1. Growth and changes that occur in a person's body
2. Motor skills



It is important for the coach to understand and appreciate both of these elements as they each affect the player's physical performance.

THE PSYCHO-SOCIAL DOMAIN

This domain includes emotional, personality and social development. This is important for coaches to understand so they can plan and cater to players as individuals, for example, determine the kinds of competition a player is capable of dealing with.

THE COGNITIVE DOMAIN

This domain includes all the mental processes that are used to obtain knowledge and increase awareness of the environment. It involves the players' understanding of the tactics and strategies of the sport and their decision-making abilities.

11-16 YEARS

PHYSICAL DOMAIN

- Concern about physical development.
- Displays rapid but uneven physical growth, leading at times to awkwardness, uncoordinated movement, tiredness, lack of confidence and poor posture and/or gait.
- Increase in female and male hormone levels.
- Increase in height, weight and musculature.
- Males develop deeper voices; characteristic patterns of facial/body hair become stronger.
- Females become wider at hips; breast development continues for several years.
- Needs to continue fitness activities, especially those that develop flexibility, circulo-respiratory efficiency and muscular strength and endurance.
- May reach physical maturity.
- Has capabilities to learn new motor skills, refine those previously learned and apply them with more efficiency.

- Capable of combining new and more complex skills into movement patterns and sequences.
- Able to use rhythm effectively in a variety of activities.
- Continues to need repetitive practices and revision in learning and refining skills.

PSYCHO-SOCIAL DOMAIN

- Needs to achieve identity.
- Increasingly concerned about acceptance by friends, social graces and good grooming.
- Peer group becomes increasingly important in fostering independence and interaction with members of the other sex.
- Early or late puberty can be very stressful.
- Continued development of independence, yet wants and needs adult help.
- Ready for in-depth, longer learning experiences.
- Often unclear about needs and values, but beginning to think about them.
- Has a continuing need for reinforcement and development of self-esteem, especially in relation to body perception and exercise.
- Increasingly capable of making informed decisions and accepting a leadership role, though often may choose not to do so.
- Requires opportunities to be creative and may need consistent encouragement.
- Shows tolerance of needs and abilities of others.



- Needs opportunities to develop confidence based on previously learned skills, to explore challenging new experiences and to be creative.

COGNITIVE DOMAIN

- Can concentrate and participate in activities for longer periods of time.
- Egocentrism, along with feelings of uniqueness and invincibility, often cloud judgment.
- Capable of formal operational thought, enabling them to understand and articulate general principles.

16 YEARS ONWARDS

PHYSICAL DOMAIN

- Continues to grow, though most have reached physical maturity.
- Shows improved posture and coordination in coping with physical changes.
- Needs to continue fitness activities, especially those that develop flexibility, circulo-respiratory efficiency, muscular strength and endurance.
- Can achieve advanced levels in complex skill and movement efficiency.
- Able to learn new skills in a short time.

PSYCHO-SOCIAL DOMAIN

- May begin to specialise in some skills and lose others.
- Has social needs and desires that are strong.
- Wants and needs own voice in planning.
- Wants adult leadership roles.
- Interested in co-educational activities.
- Has more consistent areas of interest.
- Developing a community consciousness.

- Team and group allegiance important.
- Developing into an independent person who is increasingly able to make choices, solve problems, and accept responsibility for own actions.
- Developing more stable and emotional responses.
- Making conscious decisions about physical activity and lifestyle.

COGNITIVE DOMAIN

- Thinking becomes more practical and adaptive to take into account logical reasoning.
- Changes are multi-directional and depend on education and understanding of the world.



Skills, Strategies, Tactics and Games

The following provide general recommendations on skills, strategies, tactics and games appropriate for each developmental phase. This information is designed to be used as a reference for when you are planning your coaching sessions. By incorporating this information into your coaching programme you will enhance the development of the player in both sport and life in general.

11-16 YEARS

SKILLS

- plan and teach more refined skills
- prepare activities that include more aerobic fitness
- plan learning activities related to understanding self and getting along with others
- concentrate on developing individual skills
- continue to teach warm-up and cool-down principles
- use questioning and self-awareness in the feedback process

STRATEGIES

- provide opportunity for leadership in a group setting
- encourage learning experiences involving boys and girls
- allow the players to take more responsibility for planning team/individual activities
- continue to reinforce players positively
- use multiple incentives to motivate players

TACTICS

- recommend well-structured competitive activities that focus on one thing at a time
- introduce tactics as skills become more proficient
- use previous games as a sample for explaining tactics
- let players suggest possible tactics through self-awareness and questioning

GAMES

- use a modified or scaled-down version of the activity in the early stages of this phase, the full game or activity toward the end of this phase
- allow players to try all positions

16 YEARS ONWARDS

SKILLS

- teach and refine all skills of the sport
- train both anaerobic and aerobic systems
- continue to warm-up and stretch thoroughly
- plan individual skill activities as well as team skill activities
- use questioning and self-awareness in the feedback process



STRATEGIES

- foster player individual as well as group participation
- continue to build the player's self-esteem
- allow players to plan programmes
- promote open communication
- apply leadership skills to problem solving and decision-making
- continue to use individual and group goal-setting
- use multiple incentives to motivate players

TACTICS

- teach and refine all the strategies and tactics of the sport
- encourage players to suggest possible tactics
- participate in demanding, high-level competition

GAMES

- play the full game or activity rather than a modified version
- emphasise specialisation of position or event

In conclusion, five coaching principles support all the growth and development considerations presented:

- **keep the fun in rugby**
- **design training and competition appropriate for young players**
- **develop a foundation of solid techniques**
- **keep competition in perspective**
- **guard against over-specialisation.**

3. Coaching Focus

No longer are they Small Blacks charging for gaps or swerving to avoid being 'tagged', but instead are beginning to learn the all-important contact aspect of the game, preparing themselves for higher levels where often learning to deal with contact can be the making or breaking of many a young hopeful.

Thanks to progression through the ranks, where kids play Rippa Rugby and engage in specialised Small Black programmes, by the time they become teenagers they have received a first-hand introduction to most of the fundamentals of the game.



THE FUNDAMENTAL CORE SKILLS HAVE BEEN TAUGHT, SO WHAT NOW?

Basics are the foundation of any good rugby player, but the trick with teenagers is that they need to be consistently engaged (and interested!), so skills activities and practice runs need to have a fair amount of variety to keep individuals progressing.

As a coach, you need to challenge your teenagers constantly, allow them to be creative and run free, as the result of this is that they will challenge you in return and create their own new ways to learn and practice their skills.

HINT: There is a need and to some extent an expectation to have boundaries - but then they need the ability to act freely inside these boundaries and grow!

Attention spans can break even after a minute or two, so make sure you constantly keep things fresh with variety and innovation.

If something isn't working or if your teenagers aren't reacting, don't be afraid to change, for such alterations made throughout a session or season can be the difference between capturing and losing your audience.

Don't forget these are teenagers you are coaching, these are not the All Blacks striving to beat France at Eden Park in the Rugby World Cup Final!

Any coach at any level wants to produce the finest players possible, but the reality with overseeing teenagers is that you - as their coach - can be disappointed if you feel the objective isn't being achieved, which in turn lessens your teenager's enthusiasm.

You the coach, need to have fun ... and show it!

Make sure this filters onto your teenagers, and where possible (even make it a golden rule) play some sort of game at the end of the session, it will always give them something to look forward to.

While any distractions might lead to any coach worth their salt saying “get your minds back to the rugby!” the reality is that a connection that might ordinarily make a teenagers mind wander could by the same token have huge advantages for a coach.

Get to know your charges where you can away from the game as well; this will give you that wonderful connection of respect where your players will listen to you - simply because you have initially returned the favour.

DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE PARENTS

As it is with the junior levels, the parents are the crucial first and last link to teenagers training.

While teenagers have far more independence (imagined or otherwise) than Small Blacks, they still rely on their parents.

Further to this is that the benefits of a good coaching regime will have positive flow on effects to a household - and vice versa - so keep on the same page as Mum and Dad where you can and it could mean your job is half done before they step onto the rugby field.



4. Communication

GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATING WITH TEENS

It is common for coaches to feel as though they cannot understand teenagers and teens themselves often feel as if nobody understands them. Learning to communicate effectively produces openings for understanding, as well as options for positively influencing teens. As a means of promoting effective communication, the following guidelines are listed here:

Many things in rugby can be given analogies to give it more association for teenagers (run as straight as a train, glide like a bird, etc.); don't be afraid to use them as they will have a better idea of what you are talking about.

Try to start all interactions with your teenagers with understanding, even if you don't fully agree or even quite comprehend what they're talking about. Listen to what they have to say and make sure they know that you are listening.

Possibly the biggest factor overlooked with teenagers is that they will worship - as do Small Blacks - but the critical difference is while children might idolise usually inanimate creations (cartoon characters, dolls), teenagers begin to shift their attention to real people. This can be capitalised on, as almost every young rugby player in their teens will play in a manner which mimics their 'heroes', with clones of Dan Carter, Ma'a Nonu, Richie McCaw and Israel Dagg all throughout our teenage ranks.

Emotion is your enemy when you're attempting to talk to teens. Remind yourself that what they say and do is not necessarily a reflection on you. You may not enjoy the way they're behaving—or even how they're thinking—but keep your emotions out of it, even if their conduct impacts on you.

One of the most powerful ways to maintain a bond between an adult and a teenager is through confirmation of the teen's feelings. Confirmation involves sending a message that suggests that the teenager's feelings are both understandable and normal.

Don't be needy; stand on your own two feet. Don't "need" your teen's cooperation, endorsement, or obedience.

Your purpose is to help them think for themselves, which will help them feel like they have some control over their "world". Listen openly to what they say and ask them to think critically about each choice. What will work and what will be problematic about each decision? What would be the natural consequence of each choice—and how would they feel about dealing with that?

Ask inquisitive questions all the time, but not loaded questions. Ask for their ideas and be collaborative. Believe in them and show that you're not angry at them for failing. Show them that you have faith in their capabilities and they have the space and time to work things out on their own. That way you will begin to develop real confidence in them and they in you.

You may be quite surprised that peer pressure influences a teen's behaviour in positive and negative ways. It can motivate teens to strive for success and seek conformity, but it can also impair judgment and increase risky behaviours.

You don't need your players to prop you up. You can validate yourself and solve your own problems. So if your teen is acting up, that's their problem. Your problem is to decide how you will choose to behave toward them.

Don't ask loaded questions that puts them on the defensive like, "What's wrong with you? "Why can't you get to practice on time?" Try opening a conversation like, "Any ideas for how you might be able get here on time?" If they say they don't know, offer a few suggestions of your own and ask which one would work for them. Let them know that their problems are theirs to solve. Don't step into their "world." Remember, you are not there to provide all the answers but there to help them figure them out for themselves – and to let them deal with the natural consequences of their behaviour.



TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION



Teenagers use communication tools in the same way as most modern adults. They will continue to use 'their' ways such as texting, Facebook and video chat, but they also understand the need to use voice and email as they move into the next period of their lives.



By the way, most teens think land lines and email are lame!



Face-to-face communication is number one among teenagers and texting comes in an easy second. **So maybe text training and game times to reinforce what was said at the last session.**



Video chats are becoming more accepted by teens but the mobile phone—is still seen as the most popular social tool.



Teens use technology to share information through social networking, blogging, emailing, and texting. **You must utilise these tools to communicate to your players!**



Most teen's use social networking sites e.g. Facebook. **So why not set up a page JUST for your team? Players will be able to give you feedback on practices as well.**



More teens own a mobile phone than own a computer.



Girls and boys use media in a different way. Boys view more television and share videos online, while girls blog, email, or Instant Message.



Teenagers are skilful at simultaneously using media and technology, such as the Internet, email, and television.



Teenagers are able to accept change and adapt swiftly.



Teenagers believe they have a lot of stress in their "world" and always seek information about how to handle it.



Today's teens have never known life without computers.



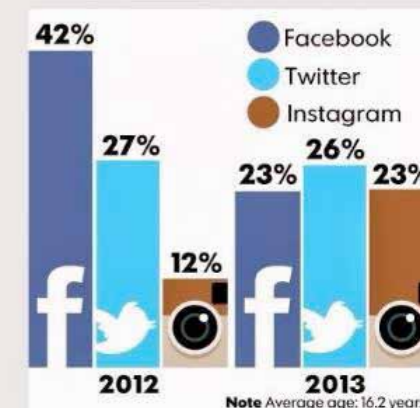
Texting has replaced talking among teens. Many teens say that texting is so important that if it was no longer available their social life would end. **Text practice and game times; allow them to text if they are going to be late; but also set up some structures around this.**



Most teenagers know more about technology than some adults, so while advanced rugby aspects and techniques might not have a place on the training field yet, the technology even older teams use can have relevance to the teenage generation. **So use technology to help, even if it is the most rudimentary tool like a TV and Video!** It adds another little aspect to your coaching cache, and ensures that you have another angle where you can connect with your pubescent charges and can show them aspects about rugby that they will appreciate if they can see the modern day connection.

'Most important' social network for teens

Popularity of top three choices today vs. a year ago:



Source Piper Jaffray's Taking Stock With Teens report, Sept. 2013

ANNE R. CAREY AND PAUL TRAP, USA TODAY

5. PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

Research shows that young people highly value the intrinsic rewards gained from participating in sport and recreation. The rewards that young participants gain from learning a new skill, or simply being involved in activities with their friends, often mean more than extrinsic rewards such as winning trophies or awards.

The following principles should be applied by coaches, parents, instructors, teachers and administrators involved in leading, supporting or managing rugby for teenagers.



PRINCIPLE	FOCUSED ON	IN PRACTICE
<p>1 CREATE A SAFE SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>Teenagers must feel physically and socially safe when they participate in sport and recreation. The provider has responsibility to provide a duty of care and protect teenagers from physical, social and emotional harm.</p>	<p>Quality experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There must be plans and procedures in place to ensure that potential risks are minimised, removed or managed effectively to protect participants from harm. • Suitable facilities should be available and accessible for teenagers' sport and recreation • Check that facilities and grounds are in good order and safe to use • Avoid repetitive drills as these are likely to cause injury and boredom • Ensure that teenagers treat each other with respect and fairness • Ensure the availability of safe and appropriate equipment, including protective gear where necessary • Positively encourage the development of correct technique, and appropriate physical and technical skills.
<p>2 TREAT TEENAGERS WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT</p> <p>Teenagers expect to be treated sensitively and respectfully during their sport and recreation experiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant-centred approach • Values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible, teenagers should be given a chance to contribute ideas, especially about decisions that affect them • Create an environment where all participants are equal and accepted • Recognise and value the social and cultural perspectives that young participants bring with them • Show an interest in the teenager's life and be sensitive to the stresses, demands and challenges of adolescence • Don't mock or demean participants and avoid stereotyping.

PRINCIPLE	FOCUSED ON	IN PRACTICE
<p>3 MODEL GOOD BEHAVIOUR AND VALUES</p> <p>Teenagers have the opportunity to learn and develop positive values and attitudes associated with sport and recreation through their participation experiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role modelling/ values • Learning and development • Leadership development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set and model expectations of behaviour for teens, parents, coaches, supporters and officials • Encourage parents to positively participate in and contribute to their teenager's sport and recreation • Always act with integrity • Understand that teenagers value fairness and have expectations of adults in terms of behaviour and support • Consider the concepts of winning and success from the perspective of teenagers, rather than imposing adult views • Remember that teenager's sport and recreation is about their interests and aspirations, not those of their parents or coaches.
<p>4 BE CONSISTENT</p> <p>Coordination between providers means there will be consistency of delivery in terms of rules applied, modifications and competition groupings, and smooth transitions between providers such schools and clubs, all of which are beneficial to teenagers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality experiences • Cooperation between providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop connections with other providers to ensure consistent approaches to sport and recreation delivery • Consider the role of regular communication, using shared resources, joint policy development and shared facility use as ways to develop closer links

PRINCIPLE	FOCUSED ON	IN PRACTICE
<p>5 BECOME FAMILIAR WITH DEVELOPMENTAL AGES AND STAGES</p> <p>Developmental age and stage, and the concept of readiness, play an important part in determining when a teenager progress in sport and recreation.</p> <p>Readiness will depend on a teenager's social, emotional and cognitive development, as well as their physical development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant-centred • Player development pathways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage teenagers to be as physically active as possible • Emphasise the development and mastery of skills - both individual and team - and help participants develop positive attitudes and values associated with 'good' sport • Become familiar with your sport's player development pathway and the learning required at each stage of development • Assess the physical, technical and cognitive capability of your participants, and use that assessment as the basis for your participant development plan.
<p>6 ENSURE THERE IS FULL PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION</p> <p>Every teenager has the right and should be encouraged to participate in sport and recreation, regardless of their individual ability, socio-economic situation, ethnicity, gender or any other factor.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity • Fun and enjoyment • Leadership development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodate individual differences and abilities by offering a broad range of activities and competition structures • Give teenagers a chance to contribute to planning and decision making in their activities • Foster participant-centred protocols.

PRINCIPLE	FOCUSED ON	IN PRACTICE
<p>7 MODIFY OR ADAPT ACTIVITIES TO SUIT THE ABILITY OF PARTICIPANTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning • Fun and enjoyment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modify the activity to match the developmental stages and skills of the participants. • Modified versions of sports should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - resemble the sport from which they are derived - be safe to play and yet still challenging for participants - provide players with skills that are a relevant base for progressing to the parent sport - reduce excessive physical demand placed on teenagers from adult equipment and field sizes - emphasise fun, participation and skill development over competition - reduce the likelihood of domination by physically stronger or early maturing players.
<p>8 PREPARE TEENAGERS TO COMPETE SUCCESSFULLY</p> <p>Teenagers cannot compete effectively when they do not have the required skills. Programmes that emphasise skill development and success through effort provide more fun and enjoyment, and increase the likelihood of retaining teenagers in sport over time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant-centred • Fun and enjoyment • Winning vs. success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on developing a wide range of basic sports skills that lead to increased mastery, self-confidence and competence • Praise effort, hard-work, improvement and fair play • Do not label teens as good or bad at their sport - they will flourish if they are praised for their effort • Implement the New Zealand Coach Approach philosophy through coaching and development programmes. The NZ Coach Approach emphasises the philosophy of participants as learners, and coaches as facilitators of participant learning and development.

Adapted from Sport NZ's GOOD PRACTICE PRINCIPLES - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SPORT AND RECREATION 2013

6. YOUR TEAM ENVIRONMENT - CONCLUSION

You are faced with many challenges in coaching rugby and working with teenagers can highlight many of these. Working with this group can be frustrating, problematic, horrifying and time consuming. But it can also be rewarding, inspiring, enhancing and pleasurable.

A key to 'keeping your teens involved in our game' is 'keeping YOU in the game'. Believe it or not, you are the most important person in teenage rugby. You need to make sure the team environment is inclusive, enjoyable and challenging as there are many 'outside' issues, out of your control, that impact on the success of your season with this team.

- Are you well informed on the make-up of your team?
- Do you need to change your style of coaching with this team?
- How are you going to communicate with these players?
- How are you going to communicate with their care-givers?
- What 'rules' are you going to introduce?
- What goals are you going to have for the season?
- What goals are your team going to have for the season?
- Is your team environment going to be one others will want to emulate?
- Are you going to enjoy yourself?

RANDOM RUGBY

Random Rugby is a teenage initiative that involves a facebook page - www.facebook.com/randomrugby, a teen website - www.randomrugby.co.nz and a TV show called Random Rugby TV. These have been setup to connect, inspire and entertain teenagers.



