MIDLETON GAA YOUTH PLAYER COACHING PLAN

As players enter their teenage year's lots of changes are taking place in their lives physically and mentally. Puberty, growth (sometimes rapid) and situational (secondary school) exams and sport becomes more competitive and challenging i.e. school teams, development squads, regional and county level, A B C teams. It is into this context that the club coach must now plan for. As the players change so too must their coach. The physical and mental demands of the game will change and increase and in order to prepare for the changes the coach must adopt new strategies and skills. This is essential if the players are to be nurtured protected (in some cases from themselves i.e. overtraining with multiple teams/ age groups) and developed.

Coach education is critically important and youth coaches should endeavour to complete award 1 level coaching in keeping with best practice. Attending coaching workshop is an essential way of developing learning and enhancing your knowledge of the game and making training sessions fun interesting and age appropriate. If training is boring it is the coach's fault.

The training session that was appropriate for an 11 year old will not be sufficient for a 13/14 year old. The club player pathway underpins player welfare and gives the coach an outline view on skills abilities and goals to achieve as the players progress from child to youth level. Combined with coach education (already mentioned) player pathway and excellent access via our club coaching corner to coaching resources the club is providing a solid platform for coaches to develop nurture and maximise the potential of each player.

Midleton GAA have elected to adopt the OTú coaching model. The OTú Interactive Coaching Model was developed by Pat Daly, GAA Head of Games Development and Research. The 'O' as in oxygen and 'Tú' Irish for 'you' provides the framework for organising balanced training programmes that enable players to deliver on their true potential.

The model is structured around the integration of what is called the 3T's and the 3P's:

The 3 T's: Technical Proficiency, Tactical Awareness, Team Play.

The 3 P's: Physical Fitness, Playing Facts, Psychological Focus.

http://learning.gaa.ie/sites/default/files/Coach/Files/A1_Youth%20Manual_28%20pages%20LR.pdf

TECHNICAL PROFICIENCY is the ability to perform the underlying techniques of the game accurately, consistently and at match tempo.

Gaelic games are among the most technically demanding games in the world, developing the techniques of Gaelic games requires practice, all players are required to master the technical skills of the game, must become bilaterally proficient, develop excellent hand eye coordination and hand foot coordination.

Technical proficiency will be dictated by a game situation player finds themselves in e.g. striking on the run, striking while being tackled from the front (blocking) from the back hooking). Striking from the left / striking from the right, strong hand / weak hand. Roll picking in a tackle situation / jab picking while on the run, being able to perform all the skill so the game and being able to adapt to the particular situation that is required at any given time i.e. shortening the grip, kicking off the weak foot.

The coach should ensure that training sessions are pitched at an appropriate level - high enough to challenge a players technical ability, but not so high that the player does not have a realistic chance of success. ... '*Setting them up to fail'.*

Activities to Develop Technical Proficiency

The most important element in developing Technical Proficiency is that players have the ability to perform the technique in game like situations. While drills provide an organised structure for gradually developing technique, fun games and modified games are essential in tandem with drills.

TACTICAL PROWESS is the ability to weigh up match situations and decide on what option to take and when to take it, for example to shoot for a score, carry the ball, pass it on or play it into space when in attack or place the opposition under maximum pressure when defending. To 'go' or to 'stay' in a defensive situation.

Tactics are a set of plans designed to maximise your strengths or target an opponent's weaknesses to gain an advantage in a match situation. Developing Tactical Prowess is about enabling your players to make good tactical decisions on the field of play.

A lot of emphasis is placed on developing the technical abilities of players, especially at younger ages. As the players develop and are exposed to more competitive situations, the coach should focus on the development of decision making and problem solving skills, developing the players Tactical Prowess.

The best way of developing players' decision making skills is to expose them to game situations in training.

Activities to Develop Tactical Prowess

Tactical prowess involves using a set of tactical skills that can be developed with good coaching. To develop tactical prowess, players need to have the ability to read the play or situation, develop the knowledge needed to make the correct tactical decision and apply their decision making skills to the match situation.

Players using the skills of concentration, attention and perception learn how to 'read' the game in a match situation. . 'Who am I marking?' If not why not? Take quick free or slow the game down? Once a player knows what clues to look out for, it is possible to develop their attention and concentration skills.

In order to develop Tactical Prowess, it is critical that the players have the ability to perform with Technical Proficiency. This will ensure that in any given match situation, the player will have the ability to perform any technique correctly. In analyzing any match situation there are two key questions to be asked: Did the player choose the correct technique to perform? Did the player perform the technique correctly?

Game Play Routines: involve placing players in a situation where they are forced to make decisions, the choice of which skill to perform, and how to perform the skill in order to complete the drill. For instance, the players' pattern of movement may or may not be limited e.g. no soloing, limited number of passes, shoot for score after certain amount of time/passes, extra forward/back. Therefore, the player must adapt to the situation by being aware of the options, chose the correct option, and be technically proficient enough and physically fit enough to execute the option and recover in time for the next situation.

Game Play Routines train players to adapt their technical proficiency to pressure situations and improving tactical awareness which are vital elements in ensuring a player is competent in a match situation.

TEAM PLAY is the player learning about his role within a team environment. The ability to anticipate movements and synchronise who should go where during play or set-piece situations, e.g. in order to score or convert possession into scores when in attack or minimise the amount of clean possession and time and space available to opponents when defending.

Developing Team Play involves team plans, anticipation, creating space in attack, denying space in defence, combination/support play and communication.

Activities to Develop Team Play

Team Play is an extension of Tactical Prowess, with the two sets of skills intertwined. Where as to develop Tactical Prowess, the players develop their ability to read a game and decide on which action to take. Team Play is the ability to anticipate the actions of the other players on the field, and mould these actions into a game plan. Team Play is developed using Game like situations, incorporating modified games, small-sided games, *modified scoring games,* and Full Games.

PHYSICAL FITNESS is the ability to perform the basic techniques, engage in physical contests and responds to the signs, sounds and signals experienced during the game with the least possible expenditure of energy.

Gaelic games is a multi sprint, stamina, multi directional, activity involving physical contests such as tussling, tackling, shouldering, accelerating, decelerating. Speed, Strength, Stamina (endurance), Suppleness (flexibility), agility. Coaches must bear in mind that variations exist between the requirements for Hurling and Gaelic football, and between players playing in the different positions on the field. Both Hurling and Gaelic football are games that require players to perform repeated short quick movements, moving in multiple directions and from a variety of starting positions, with varying amounts of recovery. Where possible training should be relevant to the position and the fitness level of the player.

For further information see Midleton GAA Club Player Pathway and the Club Youth Physical Development Programme both available on Coaching corner of website.

PLAYING FACTS refers to the ability to identify playing strengths and areas where improvement is required, and to accept why changes in training, tactics, team line out etc may be required.

It is difficult to notice and remember all the key events occurring within a training session or match that's where playing facts ('stats') come in. Playing facts are an increasingly important tool to aid performance at all levels. The process of identifying the Playing Facts involves the coach identifying key factors within the game or training session and recorded, this can be done manually using paper and a pen or using a computer based analysis. The Playing Facts are a very useful tool in the armoury of the Coach, allowing for an independent analysis of the performance within a game or training session. Playing Facts can be used to protect players from the world of opinion, help players stay in reality, give the right type of attention, help set realistic goals, increase motivation and depersonalise issues.

The first step is to prioritise the specific actions and outcomes you want to identify e.g. puck outs won / puck outs lost / hooks / blocks. The Coach should limit the information being recorded solely to information that will be of will be of benefit.

By analysing all of the outcomes it is possible to pinpoint areas that require adjustment within the team. This type of analysis enables the coach to create an objective statistical analysis to use when giving feedback, whether that be during the game or in subsequent coaching sessions or team meetings.

 Be careful with how the data is presented, in isolation, these can give a distorted impression of performance. Video footage is usually presented via television, although presentations on a computer enable much more flexibility when presenting information to players. Computer software (e.g. Power Point) can be used to enhance the visual information that players are shown, by highlighting key situations in the game and using these for feedback purposes.

Keep the amount of information presented to a minimum as large amounts of statistics can often be confusing for players and coaches.

Giving Feedback: Keep It Short and Simple. Be specific. Be positive. Be aware of your tone it's not only what you say but how you say it. The coach should endeavour to give all players equal amounts of feedback.   Avoid giving redundant feedback like, "You Missed!" .... he knows that he missed. When giving corrective feedback use the sandwich method: Sandwich the corrective feedback between two pieces of positive feedback.

PSYCHOLOGICAL FOCUS is the ability to maintain focus on the here and now and switch concentration as the need arises.

It is often referred to by a variety of other names e.g. bottle, heart, hunger, killer instinct, mental toughness, single mindedness, will power and will-to-win.

Given the differing personality types involved and the range of thoughts and emotions, which players experience and at various stages of their development, fluctuations in focus are inevitable. Sports psychology is concerned with enabling your mind to be more efficient and productive, and ultimately increasing the level of your performance.

Competitive stress   While competitive pressure can help to arouse players, it can also be overwhelming with the result that player can sometimes, choke, freeze or even lose the head. The fears, doubts, worries, anger, insecurities or nerves which trigger such responses are most likely to impact when players lack belief in their own ability. Loss of focus can be triggered or fuelled by either internal disruptions (self-conscious, perceived superiority of opponents) external distractions (referee decision, vocal opponents or supporters) or both. Don't dwell on mistakes robs you of your concentration.

Players who are competent, confident and who are committed will be best able to retain focus and maintain their composure and competitiveness. The more they undertake a balanced training programme based on the 3 T's and 3 P's the more successful they will be in this regard.

A player requires many different skills to perform to his potential during a game situation. Not only does he need to be able to perform the underlying techniques of the game, but he needs to be able to employ them effectively at match tempo (Technical Proficiency). He also needs to be able to weigh up match situations and decide on the best option to take and when to take it (Tactical Prowess), and be able to anticipate the movements of his team-mates and synchronise with them during set play and general play (Team Play). These skills should be developed in an integrated manner along with Physical Fitness, Psychological Focus and a knowledge and acceptance of the Playing Facts, in a balanced manner best suited to the requirements of the specific game.

Fun Games help to develop the characteristics of Tactical Prowess and Team Play and as such, should form a large portion of any coaching session.

Small Sided Games adapted rules to focus on specific skills. Smaller numbers are used to ensure plenty of ball contact for all involved and maximise player's concentration.

Modified Games / Conditioned Games are practices that focus on different aspects of Team Play through games. They are often undertaken in a defined space. Many variations may be used, depending on the objective of the game, e.g. 2 v 1, 2 v 2, 3 v 2, 3 v 3. Limited the amount of time/passes allowed in each play. No hand passing encourages hooking blocking improves striking techniques. Kicking off weak leg only, improves tackling technique and forces the player to use the weak side of the body.

Modified Scoring Systems and **Modified Playing Rules** e.g. score for striking off left hand / score for hook / score for block / score for kicking off weak foot can be used to focus on particular techniques or aspects of decision making.

Full-sided games ultimately players train to play full-sided games. Once the earlier progressions have been achieved, it is vital that players prepare for full-sided games by playing full-sided 15-a-side games with players in appropriate positions.