

Level 2 Coaching **Certificate in Shinty**



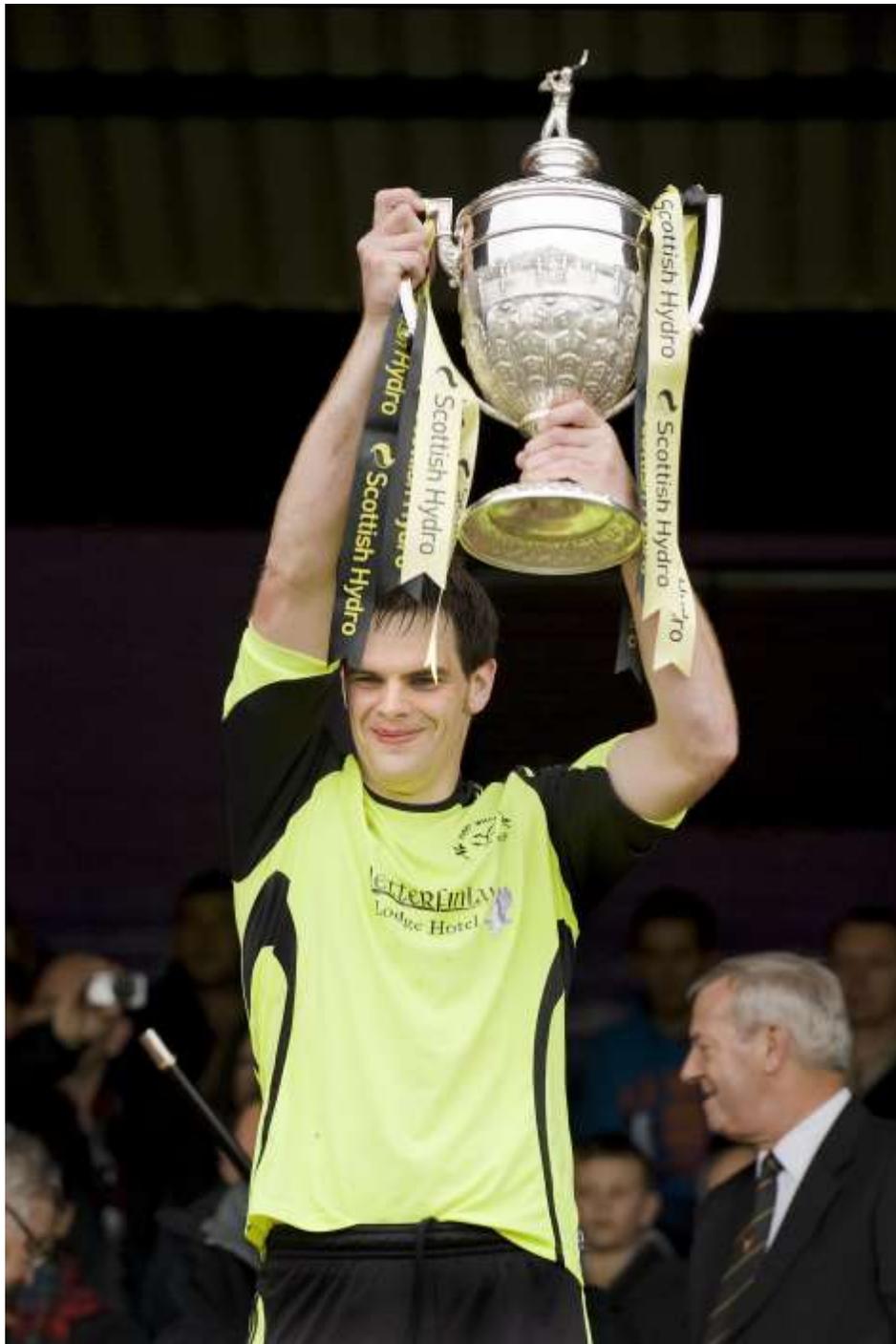
Candidate Manual

Section 3

Course: Coaching

Resource





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Winning Captain with the 2010 Camanachd Cup***

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In order to facilitate the development and transition of a coach through the education process Section 3 includes some of the information given in the Level 1 resources. In Level 2 the depth of understanding and implementation should increase.



Julie MacKintosh of sportscoachUK presents CA C&PDM Graham Cormack with the UKCC Level 1 accreditation certificate

3.1: Generic Coaching Skills

3.1.1 The Role of the Level 2 Coach

Foundation/Level 1 Focus: Roles undertaken by an Assistant Coach

Level 2 Focus: Roles that take priority for a Head Coach

The lead Level 2 coach of a shinty club holds a most important position within that club. They must be the person who plans, organises and decides the direction, route and speed of the squad and is responsible for safety. Communicating these decisions is important if you want players to 'go with you'. In short the coach is a '**Driver**'

In the Foundation and Level 1 courses a number of different roles were identified and discussed. An experienced level 2 coach will have developed their knowledge and skills within the various roles and will have identified the more relevant ones that need to be focused on:

- 1) **Planner** - Game Plan: It is the coach's responsibility to ensure the development of these attributes and structure to a level equivalent to the age and ability of members of the team. The increased importance of set piece play and tactics to maintain possession and restrict the opposition has placed even greater emphasis on the coach's role in creating a successful team.
- 2) **Organiser**: The level of organisation increases with responsibility and has to have a longer term outlook.
- 3) **Communicator**: The coach must be able to communicate well with his team and create the correct environment for players to perform at their optimum level.
- 4) **Psychologist**: As a squad develop it's skills, tactics and game plan the ability to understand the individual players and how to motivate them becomes crucial
- 5) **Mentor**: You want the players to become involved in coaching themselves and their teammates to develop 'game sense'

Additional advice and support can be obtained from the Coaching & Performance Development Manager at the Camanachd Association through the Club Coaching Initiative

3.1.2 Communication

Overview

As set out in the Foundation/Level1 shinty courses coaches need effective communication skills. You need to be able to give and receive information. You'll need to do this not just with players (and their parents for younger players), other coaches, officials, club staff, teachers and many others. To develop this further in Level 2 effective communication requires an open, trusting and honest relationship between all parties.

There is a lot of material published on the 'art of communication'. Coaches have to gather and disseminate a large amount of visual and verbal information in a practice session and/or game. The ability to get your message over to a player quickly and effectively is vital.

In the Level 1 course the two distinct types of communication Verbal and Non Verbal were identified

Verbal communication

Helpful hints to remember in your verbal communication are:

Tone – use the right tone; try to suppress inappropriate emotions

Words – keep it simple; don't use more words than necessary

Non verbal – be aware of the other person's body language and if it seems to be negative, try to change it by use of words, tone and posture.

Clarity – ensure you speak clearly and don't mumble. Check that the person at the back of the group can hear you – try not to get yourself into a situation where you have to shout.

Speed – speak at an even pace, neither too quickly not too slowly.

Emphasis – don't speak in a monotonous voice. Emphasise the vital words, relating to the points you want to put across.

Jargon – avoid it where possible. It assumes a level of knowledge in your listener, which may not be present.

Non-verbal communication

Important elements of non-verbal communication are:

Appearance and dress

Facial expression - A nod, a wink, a smile, and a contorted expression – all betray emotion

Posture and body language

Clapping
Listening
Gesture

Use of a whistle

Touch (with due care and attention of course) – a pat on the back or an arm around the shoulder

Written message - Use of a flip chart, blackboard or PowerPoint

Video /film / photographs

An area that is often the greatest challenge is finding effective questions that can be used to check for understanding and encourage self reflection

Can you explain what to do and not to do when trying to affect a block?

Can you tell me three important things to remember when competing at a Throw-up?

Can I check I have understood you correctly?

Did you mean that?

So what will you do when you practice that again?

What are the key points to remember at corners?

Where is your attention when you are going to take a Free Hit?

What did you notice as the cross came over?

Where was your weight as you made that block?

What could you do to stop this happening?

To be able to use questioning as an effective coaching skill requires practice. You need to plan how you will phrase the first questioning advance and then really listen to the responses you receive. One of the most powerful reasons for reducing telling and increasing questioning is that it helps players to take responsibility, solve problems and make decisions by themselves.

The ability to communicate with under-represented groups is vital if shinty is to continue to attract everyone in the community to participate.

Gender – Nationality/Language – Religion – Disability – Young offenders

This will be discussed on the course with ongoing support from the Coaching & Performance Development Manager

3.1.3 Coaching Styles

Overview

As set out at Level 1 the best coaches are facilitators, not disciplinarians. They aim to develop individual players and squads and they search for a balance, which includes ambition and vision.

In the Level 2 course we will explore further the range of coaching styles and strategies that you can employ in your coaching. Most coaches possess certain characteristics of each coaching style but need to be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of the variations. If a coach is able to identify some of his/her shortcomings he/she is in a position to improve and aim to be:

'Effective and respected'

- 1) Very organised and has planned ahead
- 2) Communicates well
- 3) Continually seeks coaching knowledge from a variety of sources
- 4) Understands and appreciates the strengths and weaknesses of individual players
- 5) Has learned from previous experiences of coaching and playing the sport
- 6) Is concerned about winning but focuses more on the performance of the players

Coach-centred approach		Player-centred approach	
Requires authority from the coach		Invites creativity from the players	
Tell	Sell	Ask	Delegate
Coach makes the decision and tells the players what to do	Coach makes the decision and persuades the players that it is the right thing to do	Coach outlines the situation and asks questions/invites suggestions, based on which the decision is then made	Coach sets the scene and lets the players decide how to proceed

The important thing is that as coach you should develop a range of styles, beyond your preferred or comfortable one, to meet the inevitable range of situation, which will arise in helping your players to learn techniques and skills.

Consider past experiences and pull out a number of contrasting coaching situations that you have found yourself in terms of the environment, the group size, ability level and session outcomes. Think about how you have adapted your coaching to suit the changing situations.

It is highly likely that you adopted a different coaching approach on each occasion. Due to the fact that no two individuals are the same, it is inevitable that each session produced different challenges and considerations.

You may have found that one group you had been coaching had a natural talent for shinty and were enthusiastic and keen so in this situation you were able to play a primary role of teacher and educator, whereas another group you have worked with may not have had the desire or motivation to learn new skills so you found yourself spending more time as an entertainer, motivator or even disciplinarian.

On other occasions you may have found yourself coaching in a very strict manner if you were dealing with a group of young children or absolute beginners, or you may have found yourself adopting a more open, relaxed style when working with a group of talented players.

You will almost certainly have used many different coaching styles during your career to date. It is very unlikely that you will only use one coaching style during your coaching sessions. It is much more likely that you will have used a number of coaching styles in a short space of time depending on the coaching situation and environment. The best coaches will move seamlessly from one coaching style to the next in order to ensure that all players maintain enjoyment and motivation throughout the session.

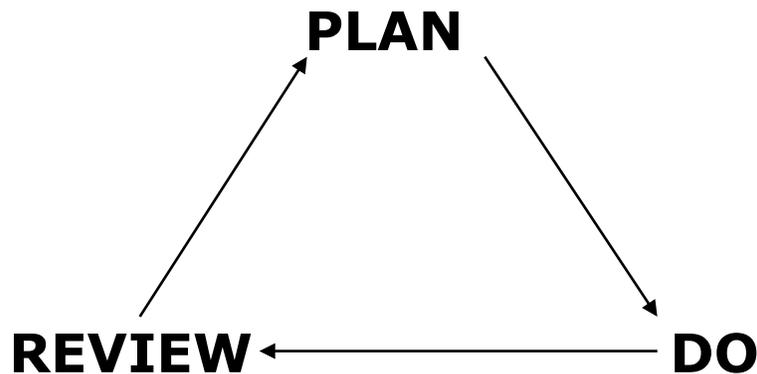
Being aware of how, why, when and where you can adapt your coaching practice is immensely important. During the next coaching session that you deliver, think about the different coaching styles you use and why you are using them.



3.1.4 Effective Coaching/Evaluation

Overview

In the Foundation/Level 1 courses we looked at coaching principles – ‘How 2 Coach’ - planning and delivering sessions – ‘What 2 Coach’ - developing shinty skills. The Plan – Do – Review structure was introduced and discussed



At Level 2 we have to build on past experiences of using the above and focus the elements that assist overall Effective Coaching & Evaluation.

An effective training programme begins with good planning based on good evaluation. Many coaches hate to plan yet planning for the season as well as each training session is one of the most important aspects of effective coaching. Without planning coaches can spend too much time organising on the go and dreading what to do during the training session.

Coaches normally will meet with their players for a limited amount of time therefore as a coach you can optimise the impact of your sessions through thoughtful planning based on evaluation.

The Planning Process

Decide on the objectives and content for the session

The Coaches Log Book provided will assist with the process although some coaches have developed their own methods. The most important element is that sessions and evaluation are recorded.

There are three basic ingredients of an effective coaching session:

1) Skill development

Includes activities that develop the player's technique and skill performance

2) Physical preparation

Includes activities that prepare the player physically for the demands of the sport e.g. training the energy systems, flexibility and nutrition

3) Mental preparation

Includes developing the player's mental abilities by using such things such as game tactics, strategies, concentration and motivation
It also involves the attitudes and values that the players develop towards themselves and others.

Evaluation

When a session or game is finished the coach should complete an evaluation to give direction to the improvement necessary in future sessions/games

The headings can be:

Aims and Objectives Did you and the players achieve the objectives for the session/game?

Players Performance Improvements?

Health & Safety Issues?

Organisation Were the practices appropriate?
Did they work? Why?

Content Was the content appropriate
Did they work?

Coaching Reflect critically on your coaching

Performance Communication standard?
Did you analyse and adapt?
'How 2 Coach' skills
'What 2 Coach'

Action Planning What next? Aims - Goals

The information provided during the course and assessments will assist coaches in becoming comfortable with evaluating.

Apply the principles of an effective coaching session

When planning your coaching session consider the following principle of an effective coaching session. Detailed in the Level 1 resources

Provide plenty of activity

Make maximum use of time, facilities and equipment

Vary the activities

Instruction and demonstration

Choose appropriate practices

Ensure appropriate progressions

Use safe and non-threatening practices

Allow for individual differences

Involve players in planning

Be organised but flexible in planning

Evaluate the coaching session

Feedback from players

Coach's Log Book

Feedback from peers

Setting goals within training and performance is a useful tool in measuring progress. It provides an opportunity for rewards (if you succeed in meeting that goal) or for reviewing your training methods (if you don't meet your goal).

The CA recommends that goals be SMARTER. This means:

S - goals must be **Specific** for both process and outcome

M - training targets should be **Measurable**

A - goals should be **Adjustable**

R - goals must be **Realistic**

T - training targets should be **Time based**

E - goals should be challenging and **Exciting**

R - goals should be **Recorded**

3.1.5 Risk Assessment

Overview

Everything a coach does on the shinty training field must be safe, especially when working with younger players. If as a coach you are unsure about anything, your first reaction must be to ask yourself “is this safe?” and if there is any doubt, you should stop the practice and seek advice.

Responsibility for the player’s safety starts even before the coach starts the session, so coaches need to be aware of ways in which to organise the players and session, and how to manage and control the group as a whole.

A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what, in your opinion, could potentially cause harm to a player, or players, within your coaching session. You will then be able to accurately judge whether you have taken enough precautions to avoid such harm, or whether there are further actions that you could take.

The aim of a risk assessment is to make sure that no-one gets hurt, injured or becomes ill whilst in your care. Accidents and ill health can ruin lives, and unfortunately, in an age where litigation has become prevalent, accidents perceived to be preventable can also have an enormous impact on a coach and their future. As a coach you have a legal and moral obligation to assess the risks within your coaching environment, and you should always check any for risks before the start of each session, even if you have conducted a coaching session at the venue previously.

Definitions

HAZARD	Anything that could cause harm e.g. camans, balls, other participants, ground conditions, weather conditions.
RISK	The chance, high or low, that someone will be harmed by the hazard

Five Steps to Assessing Risk

The Health and Safety Executive have identified five steps that will help you to complete an effective risk assessment of your coaching environment. They are:

STEP 1	Look for the hazards
STEP 2	Decide who might be at harmed and how
STEP 3	Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or whether more should be done
STEP 4	Record your findings
STEP 5	Review your assessment and revise it if necessary

The key to completing a sound risk assessment is to keep it simple – do not overcomplicate things. In most coaching scenarios the hazards are few and simple. Checking them is common sense, but necessary.

The table below contains some advice and guidance on completing the five steps:

STEP 1	<p>Look for the hazards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When completing the risk assessment, visit the venue where you will be delivering your coaching sessions • Familiarise yourself with the environment and look carefully for anything that could reasonably be expected to cause harm • Ignore the trivial hazards and focus on the significant ones that could result in serious injury or harm to any of your players • Ask other people who have used the venue for their opinions as they may have previous experience that could help you in the future • You could even ask to view the accident reports for the venue if you wanted to see the types of accidents that have occurred in the past
STEP 2	<p>Decide who might be harmed and how:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young players may be particularly at risk – make sure you know who you will be coaching • Do you have any players in your groups with special needs? E.g. mobility problems • Members of the public and other participants eg, squads/groups may be around whilst you are coaching. If there is a chance that they could be hurt by your activities you need to highlight it in your risk assessment

STEP 3	<p>Evaluate the risks and make decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how likely it is that each hazard could cause harm and decide whether you need to do more to reduce the risk. Remember there will always be some risks you cannot completely remove • For each significant hazard decide whether the risk is high, medium or low • Ask yourself whether you have done everything in your power to remove the risk • Decide whether you have followed any good practice guidelines in place • Draw up an 'action list' to highlight any further action you need to take in order to reduce the risks • Can you eliminate the hazard completely? If not, how can you control the risk to reduce the possible harm?
STEP 4	<p>Record your findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the 'Risk Assessment Form' to record your findings and actions regarding potential risks and hazards • Share your findings with a contact at the venue if you have concerns about the safety of the environment • Make sure you can demonstrate that a proper check was made, who might be affected, any significant hazards and the precautions you have taken to reduce any possible risk • Keep the written record for the future as it will help next time you coach at the same venue, or, if an accident does occur the written record will help you show any precautions you took • Use the record to remind you of any hazards you have identified
STEP 5	<p>Review your assessment and revise if necessary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continually refer back to your written assessment to ensure that no new hazards have appeared, or any existing hazards have worsened • Only amend your written assessment if hazards change significantly • Review your initial assessment to ensure that the precautions you are taking are still working effectively

Recording a Risk Assessment

Most indoor venues will already have completed their own risk assessments. In such cases you should ask for a copy of the assessment, familiarise yourself with the identified hazards and risks, and then review the hazards and risks to ensure that you are confident you, and other staff, have taken all necessary precautions.

The form provided in the candidate pack is a template 'Risk Assessment Form' that you can use to record any risk assessment you make. You should complete a 'Risk Assessment Form' for each venue where you deliver coaching sessions.

Check

Having arrived at the ground early, coaches should carry out the following safety checks:

Is the pitch safe? Is there any glass, debris, animal waste, potholes etc?

Is all the equipment needed safe and in good repair? (i.e. Goalposts, Corner poles etc.)

Do you have access to a telephone and know the relevant emergency numbers?

Do you have a suitably stocked First Aid kit and clean, fresh drinking water?

When the players arrive, the following checks should be undertaken:

Are the players appropriately dressed for the conditions?

Are they mentally prepared to start practicing?

Are any of them carrying injuries that should prevent them from training?

Control

As a coach you must be in control of your group at all times. You must know how many players you have so that you know immediately if any are missing.

3.1.6 Motivation



Overview

Everyone in sport has goals to aim for. These may be beating a personal best, winning medals, breaking records, or simply the act of getting out and training on a frosty morning. However small or large the target, there is always something to be motivated towards.

Most players are self-motivated to a degree, but it is, of course, also up to the coach to set clear, achievable and realistic goals. Regular goal-setting sessions have proven to be invaluable when it comes to boosting motivation, but while the goals themselves are frequently talked about, the underlying motives behind why a player strives towards a goal have received less attention.

Players need to know what they have to do to reach the target. This means that there must be some measurement system so that they know when they have achieved the goal they have set.

The key to success in goal setting is to focus the player's attention upon appropriate goals; that is goals that are based upon previous experience. Traditionally goals are classed as either:

Short term: Will I do an additional personal session this week?
How many shots on target out of 10 in this practice?

Long term: I want to be top scorer this season
I want to be selected for the National Squad

The modern thinking on goal setting classifies goals as being focussed on: **Process – Performance - Outcome**

Process: a process goal is concerned with technique, strategy, psychology.

- a) I am going to focus on technique when taking 'Shies'
- b) When the ball is coming in the air I will focus on the ball and getting my body in line
- c) I will follow the ball into the D

Performance: These are set in relation to the players own individual performance which they have control over, rather than the result of the competition.

- a) Make 80% of passes to a teammate.
- b) Make sure my opponent does not score.

Outcome: Generally concerned with the end result of the competition, and have considerably more external factors influencing that result. It is vital that players are realistic when setting outcome goals as they may actually demotivate players if they are not achievable.

- a) Win our first 5 games
- b) Be selected for the National Squad
- c) Win the league

General: More immediate goals for the player should be focussed on the process, while short term goals can be a mix of process and performance. Long term goals tend to be more outcome focussed but can easily be related to performance also.

As with Effective Coaching goals should be S.M.A.R.T.E.R

- When setting goals with players, coaches should involve them in the process, discuss with them how they are going to achieve the goal and develop an action plan together

- Coaches should help each player to find personal importance in the goal, so they can find their own individual reasons for wanting to follow the goal
- Coaches should be creative and make the goals fun – encourage players to think of different and new ways to strive for their goals, making the whole process interesting and removing the focus from just the outcome
- Coaches should also be prepared to help their players adapt when a goal becomes unattainable.

This could involve:

- discussing alternative goals and planning different ways to achieve goals, so that if one becomes unattainable there are others that can be worked on
- focusing on goals that can be achieved, not those that cannot
- providing support for athletes to physically and psychologically disengage from unattainable goals.

Sporting goals can also turn out to be life goals, and the bottom line is that all players are different. Helping them understand their choices and keeping them personally involved every step of the way is far more likely to breed long-term success.



3.1.7 Performance

There are three steps to improving performance:

1. Know where you are now – Analysis of players and game plans
2. Know where you want to get to – Goal setting
3. How are you going to get there – Planning

The forms provided in the Candidate pack will assist with part 1.

The information on Goal setting will assist with part 2

The information in effective coaching/evaluation and Long Term Player Development will assist with part 3 along with the Game Sense information below

At a practical level the main outcome has to be improved practice sessions.

TYPES OF PRACTICE

Drills can be categorised under four main headings:

1. Individual Skill Drills:

These involve the basic skills and incorporate practice in hitting controlling ect

2. Restart Drills:

Drills in this category refer to certain parts of the game and include Corners, Free hits etc

3. Unit Skills:

Drills in this category refer to units of the squad working on position specific skills. Defence – Midfield – Attack

4. Whole Team Pattern Drills:

These include activities, which practise an overall system of play. For example, moving the ball down the wings to stretch defences

WHAT IS 'GAME SENSE'?

Game sense is an approach to coaching and which uses games as a learning tool to:

- Increase the motivation of players, and
- Develop tactical and strategic thinking as well as skill development.

This approach to coaching and teaching is 'game-centered' rather than 'technique centered'. Traditionally, technique has been the focus of training sessions - often taught in isolation, without requiring players to think and bearing little resemblance to the skill required in the game. We have all seen players practising technique.

For example: repeatedly hitting the ball off forehand and backhand
While the technique itself is an important part of the overall skill, there is limited value in technique practice that doesn't take into account the other factors involved in executing the skill.

For example: making a decision on which pass to give, or deceiving the defender using evasion skills.

The game centred approach focuses on the coach or teacher designing practices that progressively challenge and motivate players to develop an understanding of the strategies, skills and rules required to succeed in games.

It makes the game the focus of the practice session (rather than the technique), and challenges the players to think about what they are actually doing and why.

The players must first establish an understanding of what the game is about. The technique follows when the need for it is established.

For example: the pass would be taught when the player had established through game experience when best to use the pass to put the receiver in space.

WHAT ROLE DOES THE COACH/TEACHER TAKE IN THE GAME CENTRED APPROACH?

An important aspect of the game centred approach is the role that the coach takes in relation to the players. Traditionally, training sessions have been 'coach dominated', with players being told where to stand, how to defend a situation etc.

The emphasis with the game centred approach is on the players making decisions within the game, rather than the coach/teacher telling the players where to run and who to throw to. The coach/teacher becomes more of a facilitator, creating situations where players have to find solutions for themselves (i.e. problem solving). Many physical educators have been using this approach for some years with great success. Independent thinking and self-reliance in the player are desired outcomes. The approach also assists in developing skills in areas such as communication, leadership and teamwork.

WHY USE A GAME CENTRED APPROACH?

People (especially children) love to play games. How many times have coaches heard the cry 'when can we play a game?' The game centred approach promotes maximum participation - a key to children remaining involved in sport.

But there are many other reasons for using a game centred approach. These include:

- Promoting long-term learning (if players discover things for themselves, then they are more likely to learn from the experience and retain the information longer).
- it is more appropriate to set challenges for players through games rather than conduct technique based sessions (which may be based on 'unsound' interventions due to lack of technical knowledge)
- Management is often easier if the players are having fun
- it promotes affiliation (i.e. feeling part of a team or group)
- it encourages the player's understanding of the need for rules (i.e. rules are there to make the game better, not to prevent us from doing things).

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A TECHNIQUE AND A SKILL

A 'technique' is a movement performed in isolation at practice. A 'skill' is the performance of the technique in a game. A simple equation to help describe this is

$$\text{'Technique + Game pressure = Skill}$$

('Game context' refers to elements such as pressure, decision-making, timing, use of space and risk). One of the major problems with just teaching a technique is that player's end up practicing a movement that bears little in relation to what actually happens in a game.

For example: hours have often been spent instructing players in the correct (but stationary) technique for passing and receiving the ball in the game of shinty. In reality, the pass and controlling of the ball that occurs in the game bears little resemblance to what has been practiced. In the game, players are on the move, trying to outwit their opponent to get to the ball, and looking for the next passing option.

One of the key messages in the game centred approach is that we can teach players skills that they actually use in a 'real' game. Using 'minor' games that involve aspects such as opponents and time limits will help players to develop skills that are realistic to the game.

MODIFICATION FOR EXAGGERATION

For many years in Scotland, sporting equipment and competition rules have been modified to cater for the needs of our young players. In the game centred approach, the coach modifies the game to exaggerate or emphasise particular tactical aspects.

For example:

- The dimensions of the playing area
- Number of passes allowed
- Number of players in attack and defence
- scoring system - including penalty or bonus points for particular plays
- time allowed
- specific roles for players (eg. support players)
- adding or deleting game rules

Listed below are some examples of the tactical aspects that can be emphasised.

Tactical aspects Questions to pose (Coach)

Deception: How can you make your opponent go to their left?

Risk: Is the long pass worth the risk in this situation?

Time: How can you give yourself time to recover from the last tackle?

Stage of the game: You are a goal down in the closing stages of the game. How will you attack the next play?

Space: Where are the best spaces to run to receive the ball?

How will this limiting/impact on where your team-mates go?

Decision making: Should you hit towards the goal, or try to pass wide into space?

Anticipation: What is the most likely response from your opponent in this situation?

Defensive patterns; Do you think you should use a zone defence, or double-team the key scorer?

Regaining possession: How can you regain possession after a turnover?

Minimising angles: How can you reduce the angle for the attacker moving towards the goal of attack line?

Keeping possession: Should you evade your opponent or pass the ball?

DEVELOPING GAMES

The key is adapting to emphasise tactical aspects, and using a coaching style that challenges players to find the answers for themselves.

Key questions:

- What are the tactics and skills you are trying to develop within this game?
- What modifications/exaggerations can you make to emphasise the above?
- What will be the main challenge or problem for the players to solve?
- What are the boundaries and safety rules?
- How do you score or gain points in this game?
- How do the players move? How does the ball move?
- How will the game start and re-start after scoring?
- What are some key questions you need to ask the players?
- What progressions can you make to increase the complexity? Can you give the players some choices in these progressions?
- Are you catering for all the individuals?
- Will the game encourage maximum participation and communication between the players?
- How will you place the game within the training session?

Points to consider:

- Let the game be played uninterrupted as long as possible. This gives the players the chance to settle into the game, and gives you the opportunity to observe the players.
 - During breaks to rotate players may be the best time to speak to the group. Re-stating the original question/challenge in a different way might be necessary if the players haven't achieved the desired outcomes. Make sure you check the players have understood the outcome you want them to try and achieve.
 - If the game is working well, it may be time to take the next step and add an additional challenge to the game. If it isn't working well, be prepared to modify or simplify it.
 - Don't be concerned if some players are responding as though 'tactically aware' and others aren't. Consider individual readiness. You may want to devise different challenges for different players to cater for this.
- . Remember that by asking a question, you are not necessarily seeking a verbal response from the players. At times you may pose a question which you want answered by the player's actions in the game. Make it clear to the players what sort of response you are seeking.

SUMMARY

The game centred approach to coaching and teaching uses games to develop tactical and strategic thinking as well as skill development. It makes the game the focus of the practice session (rather than the technique) and challenges the players to think about what they are actually doing and why.



3.1.8: Strategy and Tactics

Principles and definitions

The following strategic and tactical principles relate to games at club level and provide an outline for decision making for players. Each player, team, game situation, and game conditions are different so there are several options to every situation during a game. There is no such thing as "text book" strategy or tactics!

The decision making process can be broken down into two parts:

1. Strategy - overall game approach e.g. Attack/defensive.
2. Tactics – Individual and Unit options that support the game strategy. The players must understand their roles.

Strategy

Coaches play an important role in determining game strategy as it can be agreed before the game starts. However strategy can, and sometimes should, change during a game.

It must be remembered that an important factor in strategy is the core skills of the players. No strategy can be effective if the players cannot perform the skill required. Play the way the team can succeed!

Defensive game strategy

A defensive strategy can be described as marking closely and playing a deep formation so that you reduce the space and time available to opponents.

Play defensively to avoid falling behind – consider lead as a bonus.

Allows the team to become acclimatised to conditions and assess opponents

Continue defensive play to protect a lead.

Take risks only if you have to and be prepared to win late in the game

Offensive game strategy

An offensive strategy can be described as aggressive and applies pressure to the opposition. Increased chances to score early and take control of the game. Pursue the lead but accept that you risk falling behind instead. Continue to play offensively – unless you have built a substantial lead.

Balanced game strategy

A balanced strategy can be described as an expectation that your team will be more accurate and maintain possession better than your opponent and opportunities should occur. During the game you can adjust from defence to attack or vice versa.

Attack v defensive will be determined by the opposition.

Do not favour defence or offense – its all about the score board!

Considerations:

1. Skill level of own players/opposition
2. Formation: Create miss-match in attack – Marking in Defence
3. The weather and/or ground conditions.
4. Size of the pitch
5. Playing home or away
6. Competition: League or Cup
7. Fitness levels own players/opposition
8. You want to soak up some pressure and hit on the break with pace.
9. Force your opponent to play to technically weaker teammates by marking their danger men

Tactics

As mentioned earlier, tactics should support the game strategy.

Key decision factors;

- 1 Which areas of the pitch are we attacking
- 2 Type of delivery of pass
- 3 What are the out balls for each position when under pressure
- 4 Man to Man or Position marking
- 5 What is the score?
- 6 How long is left
- 7 Are the condition changing
- 8 Individual player decision making
- 9 Standard of substitutes available



Section 3.2 Sports Sciences

3.2.1 Fitness

As set out in detail in the Level 1 resources:

Success in physical conditioning will largely depend on how the basic components of fitness can be fitted into the training program and finding the most effective way of improving each component.

To participate in Shinty a player must reach an adequate level in each of the following components of fitness:

- **Endurance**
- **Speed**
- **Agility**
- **Flexibility**
- **Strength**

1. Endurance

This fitness component is commonly referred to as stamina and it is the ability to run or keep on the move for the duration of the game.

2. Speed

Speed has long been identified as a major fitness requirement in shinty and is becoming more so now those games are played on better surfaces in better weather. This characteristic is important for gaining and retaining possession, through running at a loose ball or breaking clear of an opponent.

3. Agility

Agility is closely related to speed and refers to the ability to change direction quickly. Players need to be able to twist and turn and accelerate away from an opponent.

4. Flexibility

This component refers to the range of movement at various joints within the body. Improved flexibility will assist speed and agility and prevent injury to muscles, tendons and ligaments.

5. Strength

Strength is the capacity to exert force maximally. It is demonstrated in shinty when a player breaks a tackle or holds opponents off the ball.

The specific demands of the various playing positions require that one or more of these fitness components needs to be developed for successful performance. For example, a centerline player is required to cover a greater distance in a game than a fullback and consequently needs to develop a greater capacity for endurance in his preparation.

To withstand the physical demands of Shinty, all components of fitness must be developed into the player's fitness programme.

The CA has developed a Speed Agility Quickness (SAQ) Foundation course for Shinty which it is hoped will improve the player's ability to play the game.

Once fitness programmes are established the Level 2 Coach will need to know if the players are improving and if the programmes need to be adjusted. To do this requires some evidence and the best way of acquiring the information is through Fitness Testing.

Fitness Testing: *WHY FITNESS TEST?*

Performance in any sporting event is the result of a multitude of factors, which include the amount of training performed, the body's adaptation to the training, motivation level, nutritional status and weather conditions to name a few. As you can see, physiological parameters only account for a portion of any performance, and so the role of any exercise physiologist is also similarly limited. Through fitness testing, the factors involving physiological processes, over which there is some control, can be measured and ultimately improved upon.

Competition is the ultimate test of performance capability, and is therefore the best indication of training success. However, when trying to maximise performance, it is important to determine the player's ability in individual aspects of performance. Fitness testing attempts to measure individual components of performance, with the ultimate aim of studying and maximising the player's ability in each component.

BENEFITS OF FITNESS TESTING - Identify Weaknesses and Strengths

Of the many benefits of fitness testing, the major use is to establish the strengths and weaknesses of the player. This is done by comparing test results to other players in the same training group. Previous test results of large groups are often published as normative tables.

By comparing results to successful players in your shinty, you can see the areas which need improvement, and the training programme can be modified accordingly. This way valuable training time can be used more efficiently. However, beware that some players perform well in their sport despite their physical or physiological attributes, and it may not be advantageous to be like them.

Monitor Progress

The initial testing session can give the player an idea of where their fitness levels are at the start of a programme, so that future testing can be compared to this and any changes can be noted. A baseline is especially important if you are about to embark on a new training phase. Subsequent tests should be planned for the end and start of each new phase.

By repeating tests at regular intervals, you can get an idea of the effectiveness of the training programme. The time-frame between tests can depend on the availability of time or costs involved, or the phase of training the player is in. Depending of these factors, the period between tests may range from four weeks to six months. It usually takes a minimum of 4-6 weeks to see a demonstrable change in any aspect of fitness.

Provide Incentives

The incentive to improve can often be provided by the 'goal' of a certain test score. By knowing that they will be tested again at a later date, the athlete can aim to improve in that area.

SELECTING FITNESS TESTS

There is often a standard set of tests that are performed for the fitness testing of any sport. Remember that the test that best determines your capability in any component of fitness is not always the most appropriate tests to perform; there are many other factors to consider.

Identifying Components of Performance

The first step in designing a fitness testing regime is to identify the components of fitness that you wish to investigate. These may depend on the phase of training or the phase of the season in which the testing is being done. Each sport requires certain attributes and relies on certain factors more than others for successful performance. For example, you would not necessarily want to test a marathon runner on sprinting speed.

Standardised Protocols

The test protocols need to be standardised so that comparisons can be made between your test scores performed at different times and comparisons between players tested at different places. Players and coaches should be aware of the need to control factors which can affect the results obtained. Such things that need to be controlled are: the warm up, order of tests, recovery periods, environmental conditions, and fluid and nutritional status. If comparing test results to normative tables, the test must be conducted exactly the same as it was when the original test group was tested, for the comparison to be valid.

Relevance

You need to select sport specific tests. If you believe that the tests are relevant to the sport you play, you will be more inclined to put a maximal effort into the testing. If not, you can be wasting valuable time on tests that are not relevant to your particular sport, and the results will be meaningless.

Reliability

A test is considered reliable if the results are consistent and reproducible over time. You should be able to obtain the same or similar result on two separate trials. This is important as you are often looking for small changes in scores. Some of the errors in recording of tests results can come about from poor following of the test protocols, equipment error, and variability in environmental conditions and/or surfaces. Reliability can be improved by greater control of these variables, and by using competent and well trained testers, though there is still some variability expected. All the equipment used should be standard and regularly calibrated to the manufacturer's standards. If more than one test is being conducted at a time, the ordering of tests can affect results for each test, as can the training and fatigue of the athlete between test sessions. If the test requires pacing or practice, the more experienced athletes will do better at maximising their score, and the score will be more reliable.

Validity

Validity is whether the tests actually measure what they set out to. Tests can be reliable but not valid. The validity of a test is usually better if the test is specific to the sport being tested: i.e., the tests should resemble the sport being tested, so that similar actions and therefore the specific muscle groups and muscle fibre types actually used in the sport are being used.

Interpretable Results

If you don't know what the numbers in the results mean, the tests are fairly useless. The results must have meaning so that they can be applied to modify a training programme. If you want to compare the results to that of other groups you must have access to normative data ('norms'). These norms should be based on a large homogeneous population, be up to date, and preferably be of local origin.

Facilities and Other Testing Demands

The time, costs, equipment and personnel required can be the most important considerations when selecting a test, and often determines what tests are actually conducted. This is especially important if you intend to test large groups.

CONDUCTING TESTS - Test Sequence

Testing order can affect performance in some tests. Blood pressure and resting heart rate should always be tested first. Some tests should be scheduled early in the session as they should not be preceded by a warm up (e.g. some flexibility tests). If there are several muscular strength and endurance tests in one session, you must allow plenty of time for recovery between tests. Exhausting tests, such as a VO₂max test, should be scheduled for a separate session, or at least at the end of a session. Other tests based on a heart rate response (e.g. many sub maximal endurance tests) may be affected by previous tests and by the mental state of the athlete, and should be scheduled accordingly.

Scheduling

Testing should be done at the beginning of phases of training, and then at regular intervals. For school groups it may be appropriate to schedule testing at the beginning and ends of school semesters.

Safety

Safety checks should be done prior to any testing session, such as checking proper working of equipment, and adequate supply of mats. During the sessions, give adequate warm-up when necessary. Pre test screening (e.g. medical questionnaire) should be undertaken. Any person older than 35 years of age, particularly anyone overweight or with a history of high blood pressure and heart disease should consult a physician before undertaking any vigorous testing. Fitness testing should not be avoided, as for this population; it can be useful as a screening device and to help devise a programme to suit special needs.

Scoring Sheets

Well designed scoring sheets make recording scores more efficient and avoid errors. They should include space for personal details, age, date and time, weather or laboratory conditions, recorder's name, and a record of all trials for each test. Other optional space to include are training phase and fitness level of the athletes, and room for subsequent tests.

Test Assistants

All test assistants should be adequately trained prior to testing, to ensure correct administration of the tests, and reduce error between testers.

Session Organisation

Good organisation will ensure the testing session runs smoothly. If testing a large group, you may want to set up testing stations with a different tester at each station, or with one tester following the same group around the stations.

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS - Relative Importance

The first step in the interpretation of test results requires you to determine how important each of the components that were tested is to the overall performance in the sport. For example, while a poor result in a body fat test for a shinty player may be of concern, it is not as vital as a poor result in an endurance test. The relative importance of each fitness component normally requires a good understanding of the physiology involved, and so is best done by a qualified exercise physiologist.

Comparison to Norms

If the results are being compared to norms, you must consider if the norms used the same protocol, and the subject population and age group are similar.

Significance

Are the changes seen from test to test significant? There is normal variation in results from test to test due to factors such as biological variation, tester error, equipment calibrations, conditions, etc., so you must decide if the differences recorded are significant to affect performance, and are greater than can be expected from general sources of error.

Presentation

Following correct and thorough testing, the presentation of results to the player or coach can be the most important step if any recommendations are implemented. A good way of illustrating the results is with a chart or plot, where initial and subsequent tests can be overlaid or compared side to side so that changes over time can be easily determined.

The CA has developed simple Fitness Tests with the National U-21 and Senior Squads. To aid comparability around the country Athletics tracks are utilised. At Club/School level the tests would be comparable if the same surface was used for each set of Tests.

Fitness tests:

All testing will need to be undertaken in settled dry conditions. A recorder will be required for each test plus marker or timer/s

1) Standing long Jump:

- a. Two feet together(2 attempts)
- b. Right Foot (1 attempt)
- c. Left Foot (1 attempt)

Considerations: Flat dry surface – measuring tape or long jump mat – fixed starting point/marker – minimum one landing marker

National records;

Two Feet – 2.66m Keith MacRae

Right foot – 2.36m Fraser Heath

Left foot – 2.24m Fraser Heath & Gary Innes



2) **40 metre sprint:**

Two attempts in the same direction – best attempt recorded

Considerations: Both attempts in same direction - Rest between attempts – Minimum two timers

National record: 5.00 sec Roddy MacDonald



3) **USMC Shuttle:**

a. 12 x 25m timed

b. 3 minute rest

c. 12 x 25m timed

d. Both times & variation recorded

Considerations: Flat dry surface – Timer to each player

National Records:

Run 1 – 58.81 Owen Ferguson

Run 2 – 1.00.53 Donald Irvine

Variation – 0.12 Donald Irvine



4) **Cooper Test:**

12 minute run – Total distance recorded

VO2 max calculated

Considerations: Area marked out in 5 metre spaces –
marker with maximum three runners

National record:

VO2 max: 61.00 - Distance: 3275m. Callum Cruden



When the results are obtained they must be recorded and used to plot individual progress – standards for squad – standards for positions. The results can be used for goal setting and motivation as in previous sections. Injured players can also use the results to gauge rehabilitation levels.

As coaches develop their understanding of fitness and their ability to use it productively they can begin to focus on combinations of the components of fitness.

The first step is to consider

POWER: Can be described as “the ability to exert maximum muscular force in an explosive burst of movement”. Power is a combination of strength and speed. An example of power in shinty is movement from a standing start. Jumping and bounding exercises will assist in developing this and the standing long jump tests are a good measure.

Some principles of training detailed in the Level 1 resources that have to be continually considered:

Overload

Specificity

Regularity

Variation

Individual Differences

We can add to this:

Reversibility: "If you do not use it you will lose it" improvements made can be lost without maintenance work

Adaptation: Training is a form of stress to the body and over a period of time the body adapts. This adaptation is a gradual process and the coach should therefore not rush the process or an injury may occur. Time for recovery/rest is a major component.

3.2.2 Nutrition/Hydration

Fuelling, Refuelling and Recovery

Always encourage your players to:

- **Fuel up** before training or matches by taking a meal (2-3 hours beforehand) or if this isn't possible, a snack (1 hour beforehand) before they arrive at training or a match.
- **Refuel** during match breaks
- **Recover** after training or matches (within 1/2- 3/4 hour of finishing).

Make sure they understand that this is an essential part of their match preparation and training routine, and that not eating and drinking properly will seriously affect their performance, strength and stamina, increase their risk of injury and affect their growth and development.

Fuelling up

Proper nutrition can help delay or minimise fatigue, helping an athlete to perform better for longer, leading to improved results for both the individual and the team.

Ensure you have a balanced diet including foods from the **5 main groups**:

Carbohydrates (cereals, breads, potatoes, pasta, rice)

Fruit & vegetables

Proteins (poultry, fish, meat, pulses, eggs, nuts)

Milk and dairy products

Fats and oils

Suggestions for pre exercise meals and snacks

- Baked beans or spaghetti on toast
- Lentil, split pea, Scotch broth type soups with bread/rolls
- Sandwiches, rolls, wraps, pita breads with ham, chicken, tuna
- Bagels with cream cheese, cheese or peanut butter
- Baked potato with baked beans, cheese or tuna
- Pasta in a vegetable/tomato sauce (with tuna/chicken/ham) — avoid creamy or cheese sauces
- Large bowl of cereal or porridge made with milk.

For “eating on the run” choose 2-4 of the following snacks (depending on appetite)

- Carton of milk or milkshake
- 300ml smoothie or a carton of fresh fruit juice
- cereal bar
- large banana or a large bunch of grapes
- 1-2 pots of yoghurt or custard or rice pudding
- 2 slice sandwich e.g. jam/banana/chicken/ham
- packet of nuts and raisins
- small packet of breakfast cereal (one you can eat dry)
- 2-3 fig rolls or garibaldi biscuits
- 2-3 pancakes or, 1 scone.
- 1 slice of malt loaf, or 1 slice of gingerbread/plain cake,
- Bagel with peanut butter.

Refuelling during matches or tournaments

Stomachs need to become used to having food during exercise. The younger they start doing this the better. It is much harder to start getting used to this as they get older and have been playing for several years.

Advise them to start with just a small amount and then gradually increase the quantity until they feel they have plenty of energy throughout the match. They should not over eat. Too much is just as bad as nothing at all!

Get them to try out a few of these different snacks - one may suit them much better than the others.

- ½ - 1 banana
- ½ - 1 cereal bar
- Handful of raisins
- 2-4 Jaffa cakes
- 2-4 fig rolls
- 2-4 garibaldi biscuits
- Small handful of grapes
- ½ - 1 caramel log
- 4-5 jelly babies or jelly beans

Refuelling during training

Water is the main form of hydration/re-hydration and the easiest to arrange. Players should be encouraged to have their own water bottles to minimise any cross contamination.

Sports drinks such as Lucozade Sport, Gaterade, Powerade, homemade varieties all have carbohydrate in them. These drinks can be used during training and matches as they not only help to re-hydrate but they also replace glycogen in the muscle stores preventing exhaustion.

Recovery after exercise

This is as essential as eating before exercise. Glycogen stores will be totally depleted and unless refilled at this stage will contribute to muscle soreness and pain, muscle spasm, muscle tears and ligament damage during the next training session. It is also the major cause of fatigue in athletes. Encourage all the players to take 300- 500mls milkshake (or milk, or smoothie) within 1/2 hour of finishing training, or a match.

If they have more than an hour to travel home, then they should also, bring 1-2 of the following snacks to eat with them, on the way home, to continue the replacement of muscle glycogen stores.

- Tub of rice pudding
- Scone or 2-3 pancakes with jam
- Fresh fruit or dried fruit e.g. raisins (chocolate raisins)
- Bread, bagel or rolls with jam, honey or marmalade
- Muffin (chocolate or fruit), gingerbread, malt loaf, banana bread
- Cereal bars
- Packet of fruit and nuts, Tropical mix, etc.

Make sure the players understand that this post exercise snack is part of their training routine.

They also need something to eat once they get home (whether or not they have eaten on the journey home).

Suitable choices are:

- Beans or spaghetti on toast
- Bowl of soup and bread
- Filled rolls, sandwiches or wraps
- Bagels with banana, cream cheese, peanut butter
- Bowl of pasta (including macaroni cheese, spaghetti bolognese)

- Fish cakes with toast
- Baked potatoes with beans, tuna or cheese
- Large bowl of breakfast cereal or porridge
- Toast and bananas.

Fluid

Aim to prevent dehydration!!

Encourage them to drink:

300-500mls Water/*Sports drink during the 2 hours before training, or game starts.

- 150-200mls of this should be taken in the last 45mins
- Take several large gulps of Water/*Sports drink every 10-20 mins during training. This should be more frequent in the first half of training to prevent dehydration.
- Avoid waiting until they are thirsty before drink break!!
- 300-500mls Water/*Sports drink during half time, or match breaks
- 300-500mls Water/*Sports drink within one and a half, to two hours of finishing.

They must keep drinking (water, fruit juice, milk, diluting juice), until their urine is clear.

*Use sports drink diluted 50:50 with water.

Homemade Sports Drink

150mls sugary diluting juice - 850ml water - Pinch of salt

Dehydration

Children are far more susceptible to becoming dehydrated than adults. If they start to show any of the signs of dehydration:-

- Unusually lacking in energy or fatiguing early during exercise PLUS
- Complaining of being too hot
- Skin looks flushed and feels clammy
- Nausea
- Headache
- Dizzy or light headed
- Disorientated or short of breath

They should stop exercising immediately and give them 150 - 200mls Water/Sports drink every 10-15 minutes until the symptoms subside.