

How do we apply a development focus in our Year 7 competitive sports?

Following on from our discussion and paper on the challenges challenge of implementing a developmental outcome focus in the FUNdamental stage within competitive School sport we have undertaken a more practical view of what this might look like moving forward and assessed its value to the students, parents and staff.

The Department discussion focussed on how to implement the developmental focus in our competitive sport programme for our first form pupils.

Set a task of considering what in practice a program for our year 7 students being introduced to the games would look like on week by week basis.

What should be prioritised and how might that look in reality?

The suggestions we came up with looked at modifying game formats, encouraging triangular or tournament fixtures and having Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) as the measurement tool aside from goals/points or runs.



- **Hockey – First Form Hockey Plan**

Have Technical and Strategic themes in each two-week lesson block and points scores for group/individual for meeting the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) set for that two-week block in School matches.

Each match to have a *technical* and *strategic* focus for that fixture measured in points score. Playing quarters allows more feedback on success of KPI's for that period. Playing triangular fixtures or small tournaments allows development of these KPI's in variety of contexts on the same day.

Technical:

- *Propelling Ball over a distance:* Sweeping; Hitting; Backhand sweep, hit, bunt; Flick, lifted pass.
- *Individual skills with ball* - Stick on ball, pull backs; V drags; Roll Outs; Lifting & carrying.
- *Individual skills without ball* - Sticks down; Tackling forehand; footwork; channelling.

Strategic:

- Defend the goal; Double turnover; Transfer; Baseline; Out-letting, Leading, Circle Entry; Speed of restarts.

Rules:

- Shuffles replace PC's with 5 secs to score (players cannot take again until all squad been through – even let GKs do this with their feet!!) use whole squad so all given chance to develop their skills with the ball under pressure.
- **Rugby - 1st Form Rugby Plan**

Play more Triangular fixtures with outcomes based on Key Performance Indicators (KPI).

Fixtures help reinforce the themes of the week. Each Principle of Play (PoP) forms the basis of KPI's for rugby. Each PoP is run for 2 weeks and points awarded in games for executing key skills that are relevant to that PoP:

Themes/principles (PoP):

Go forward
Support
Continuity
Pressure
Gain possession

Skills to underpin themes/principles:

Tackling
Passing/Offloading
Evasion/Finding space
Kicking
Contact Zone



- **Cricket - First Form Cricket Plan**

With cricket harder to artificially manage technical focus without developing some bad habits i.e. hitting to specific areas only could be negative.

Can modify match formats and playing conditions to increase speed of action, involvement, engagement and create a more positive experience. Also manipulate rules to encourage development of good habits/behaviours in a competitive game context.

U12A:

- Hard ball
Retire at 25. A batsman may return once 9 wickets have fallen.
- Bowler finishes bowling when he has taken 3 wickets (can finish the over)
- 30 over games but 6 over 'stints' from one end. Bowler A, Bowler B, Bowler A so on for 6 overs, then change ends. 30 over game should take less time than a conventional 25 over game.
- Staff to ENSURE that every member of the team has done something whether it be bat, bowl or keep wicket.

- Must maintain a large gap from extra cover to mid-wicket (no fielders in this area) to encourage playing straight and rewarding this or having double run scoring zone etc to encourage shot making to that zone (like indoor cricket).
- Normal cricket laws apply other than the above (ECB recommendation on pitch length to be observed)

U12B & C: These games could be managed by one official if staffing an issue – also played on outfielders or Hockey AstroTurf surfaces if designated cricket spaces an issue. More games and more students playing in a game that is more inclusive.

- 8 a side – allows more space for run scoring and therefore develop running between wickets and more ground to cover for each fielder – more involvement/increased likelihood of developing skills under pressure.
- Tape ball – only bats required; remove need for expensive kit bags that need managing and slow games down.
- Short pitches – 14 yard max – more speed on the ball for batter to use. Bowlers learn to ‘bowl’ the ball not ‘putt’ the ball in their action – release point later and trajectory forwards not upwards.
- 24 over games made up of 4 lots of 6 overs in pairs. Everyone will bat (for 6 overs in pairs), must use 5 bowlers. Bowl each block of six overs from one end – or play whole game from one end to speed up play – ensure fielders move positions (rotate) so no one stuck at third man all game. Rotate wicketkeepers to develop experience through practice.
- Played on outfield potentially, no boundaries, ball won’t go that far anyway. Safety not an issue with tennis ball impact.
- Wides – free hits off tees to ensure positive outcome and to keep batter and fielders involved each ball. Brings run out into play more often to develop fielding skills under pressure.
- Scoring system to be decided but probably start on 200 with 5 run deduction for losing wickets. With only 6 fielders there will be no restrictions where they can field.

How does this match with our seven key factors in a developmental approach to learning through competitive sport fixtures?

- *Holistic approach/Individual child focus* – allows each student to have a developmental focus within the competitive context and can be measurable and comparable. More player will achieve in matches, whereas previously the opportunity for this very limited – who scored, who won (50% will not have succeeded and of the 50 % who succeed a number may not have got any better!). Recognition as to when someone is ready to move on, or take more ownership, is the challenge for the coach, but centred on individual need for that student.
- *Pupil Voice* – At year 7 should have scaled choice, **not all the choice**. Selection of options allows involvement in scoring decision making. Coach initiated conversations to help students take ownership of discussion, analysis, feedback through development focussed assessments. Creates open ended decisions without consequence where multiple ways of contributing points allow creativity and autonomy and help students to take charge of their own decisions. Playing fixtures in quarters and tournaments allows for more creativity and autonomy of students in changing competitive environments within the same fixture/set of fixtures.

- *Success measurement* – ‘Open not closed’. Developmental, not solely outcome focussed. Still winners and losers – but everyone can be successful and accumulate points etc. Success measurement is pupil focussed. Maybe engage parents as scorers!! Not ego-orientated/match outcome focussed – leads to more harmonious environment and increases relatedness for pupils. Coaches have a way of measuring and seeing progress of the individual player through the competitive context.
- *Engagement* – If autonomous and related then it will engage them. Student focussed and pupil voice increased – not ego-orientated and then makes it more enjoyable. If greater perception of success, then leads to greater engagement and self-efficacy.
Parental engagement with the why? Central to success and changing previous beliefs/behaviours/expectations on the touchline, in the car and car park! Can they be more involved directly in this process? Help frame the car conversation around performance improvement rather than score-line dissection.
Staff/Coaches -measurement of development of kids in their care/charge will be the validation of their coaching/teaching skills, not solely the outcomes of games. Relationships they build more individualised and pupil centred. Will need lots of support and CPD.
- *Behaviours: staff/coaches; pupils; parents* – brings coaching behaviours into line with stated aims and values. CPD allow development of coaching/parent behaviour. Reinforcement positively of the benefits of adopting developmental approach need to be central to the feedback to the coaches. Allow them validation from progress of their pupils/children, not simply outcomes or win ratio's!
- *Progress and development* – measurable and adapted for individuals or groups and can be progressed through the course of season to increase challenge or modify area for focus and improvement.
- *Place of competition* – central to creating challenge, pressure, and opportunity. However, the focus of competition is shifted to progress and development, not objective outcome measure alone. Pupil centred and competence centred in its outlook.

Based on this discussion and the ideas it generated we will be working towards building a fixture card for our year 7's in rugby, hockey and cricket with like-minded schools were possible, in the desire to match our behaviour as teachers/coaches to our stated aims and values.

If you see this as something you are keen to explore with us please do get in touch.

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With thanks to the St Albans School P.E. department for their reflections, contributions, and insight to help make this positive change in our behaviours to build a stronger participation culture.