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# Creating Space

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By Don Oxenham  
ARL Level 4 Coach

There are many play situations using various types of passes and running of lines that can be used to create space. Coaches are only limited by their own imagination in the use of these in a game. The success of any of these plays will depend on the coach's ability to coach them to the players and the amount of time and quality performance applied in a coaching session.

The principle role of a football carrier in attack is to progress the football up field until reaching a situation where this is no longer possible. Their responsibility is then endeavour to create a gap or space for support players to continue the go forward attack. In creating space the ball carrier must effectively ensure that any prospective defenders are drawn away from the support player who can run into the created space or gap. This space may only be small e.g. one metre wide or to a greater distance between two defending players.

In creating these situations players must first be proficient in all skill techniques necessary. Primarily the aim is to create a situation of having more attacking players than defenders e.g. two (2) attacking players against one (1) defender.

*A players ability to create space will depend on:*

- Individual skill level
- Vision
- Understanding of the situation
- Judgement
- Timing (running and passing)

*There are three basic abilities to look at:*

1. Draw and Pass
2. Run Angles
3. Unders and Overs

In creating space the ball carrier must effectively ensure that any prospective defenders are drawn away from the support player who can run into the created space or gap.

## **1. Draw and Pass**

Probably the most basic skill which can be used to create space, but it is the end product of a number of well co-ordinated movement patterns as well as judgement and timing. A well executed skill designed to create space for support players to run in to and mostly used in orthodox attacking play and one on one defence.

Effectiveness of this skill depends on players ability to —

- Skillfully execute all movements of the running and passing techniques
- To judge how and when to commit a defender
- Time a pass, and of support players position
- Assess actions of all positions directly involved
- Use vision
- Communicate

## 2. Run Angles

Changing the point of attack by changing the angle through the ball carrier and support player creates space effectively.

The success of this play requires —

- Refined ball handling and passing skill
- Judgement
- Timing - running and passing
- Running lines of both players
- Decision making of when to change angle
- Communication
- Vision

The illustrated drill is aimed at creating space back on the inside of the defender for the support player.

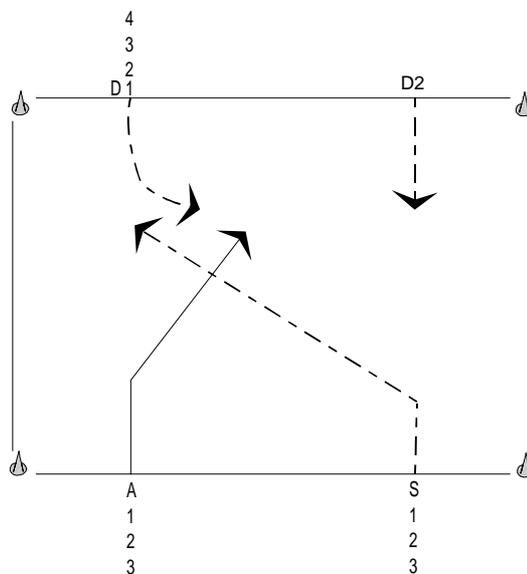
Attacking ball carrier (A) must create the space by running toward the defender (D1) then at the appropriate moment with good footwork change angle to defender (D2) making sure that both defenders are committed to tackle (A).

Support player (S) using judgement and timing runs forward then changes angle back inside (D1) to make use of created space.

### Angles

SETTING: Grid 10 x 15m, 4 markers, 8-16 players, one football for each “A” player.

MAKE CERTAIN THAT WHEN THE “S” PLAYER RECEIVES THE BALL FROM “A” HE IS OUT OF “RANGE” OF D1 AND HIS EARLY VISION.



- A runs out and cuts across the grid to draw D so that D cannot take S.
- S moves out on a straight line, angles back to cut in behind A1.
- S times his run to occur when A has drawn D and runs as close to A as possible without being tackled by D.

ROTATION: S to D1 A to D2 D1 to S D2 to A

### 3. Unders and Overs

In both plays the aim of the ball carrier is to create space for support player from a situation of having equal number of attacking and defending players.

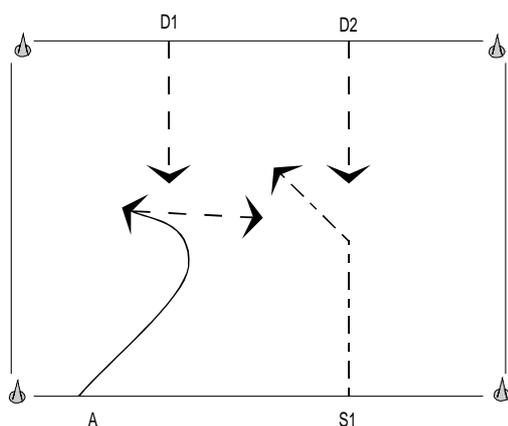
This might be best explained in the drills provided but the responsibility and success of the play will depend initially on the ball carrier whose best line of running is straight on to defender to commit that defender before suddenly changing the angle of run through good footwork and delivering a good pass to a support player who has timed the run to the correct position.

The success of these plays depends on both ball carrier and support player understanding their role and having the correct technique to create all of the movements.

The successful performance of these plays will depend on players having the advanced skills and ability to read and understand the action and reaction of all involved.

#### Unders Play

SETTING: Grid 10 x 10m, 4 markers, 8-16 players, 1 football for each A player.



- A leads out and moves inside D1
- A passes the ball under D1
- S leaves the straight line of run and D2, cutting into the gap between D1 and D2.

ROTATION: S (with ball) to A A to D1 D1 to D2 D2 to S

#### Coaching Points

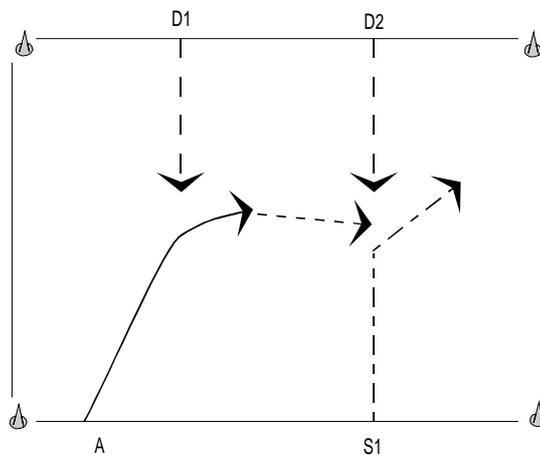
Through good passing and drawing technique attack (A) runs a line to commit defender (D1). With (D1) committed (A) takes the step away ensuring (D1) follows across. At the correct time support (S1) will change angle and run into space between (D1) and defender (D2) and receive a pass from (A). (S1) angles in behind (D1) to get behind the defence line and then immediately straightens his run.

- Essentials are
- Good techniques
  - Judgement
  - Timing
  - Vision
  - Reading play

### **Overs Play**

SETTING: Grid 10 x 10m, 4 markers, 8-16 players, 1 football for each A player.

## **Creating Space**



- A leads out and cuts across D1
- A passes over D1 and D2 to S1
- S leaves the straight line of run, and D2 moving outside of D2.

ROTATION: S (with ball) to A A to D1 D1 to D2 D2 to S

### **Coaching Points**

Attacking player (A) runs a line to D1's right shoulder to commit (D1) then changes angle across and runs a line to commit defender (D2) and draws him away from support player (S1) thus creating space on the outside. (S1) runs straight and then changes angle away from (D2) at the appropriate time and receives a pass to take advantage of created space outside of (D2).

Development and refinement of all the evasive techniques and plays is achieved by quality coaching in drill and play situations. As players practise and become more skillful the components of judgement, timing, anticipation and reading play will be developed in conjunction with the physical movement pattern. It is only when all of these components are mastered that players will have the confidence to apply their skills during the game. □

*Drills reproduced from QRL Coaching Camp Skills Manual with the permission of the Queensland Rugby League*

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LEAGUE  
COACHING  
MAGAZINE**

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# *New Sports First Aid Course for Rugby League*

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## **Australian Rugby League First Aid Officer's National Accreditation Scheme.**

John O'Halloran ARL National Sports Medicine Co-Ordinator

The introduction of a Rugby League specific First Aid Course is another step forward in ensuring that Rugby League is a leader in Sports Safety. It joins the Safeplay Code (introduced in 1996) as a initiative that reflects the Australian Rugby League's commitment to continuously improving our sport. The three major objectives in introducing the Level 1 Rugby League First Aid Course are:

- To be specific, so that it caters directly for Rugby League
- To be accessible, so that the course can be conducted in all parts of urban and rural Australia.
- To be affordable so that volunteers who wish to participate may do so at the lowest possible cost.

It is most pleasing that training for Rugby League First Aid Officers is now in line with training of our Coaches and referees - a national scheme designed and implemented by our sport with national recognition and accreditation. The marrying of our training will create an environment where a closer affinity will exist between coaches, referees and First Aid personnel thus creating a very safe environment for our players.

The First Aid Officer's Course will give candidates an extremely sound grounding for further education in this very important area of our game. A number of resources have been developed to assist the trainee in achieving these competencies. Specific instructors have been set down for each component to ensure quality instruction and assessment procedures.

Prospective participants will be given instruction in the following areas:-

- The Rugby League First Aid Officer
- Safety in Rugby League
- Assessing the Injured / Ill Player
- Soft and Hard Tissue Injuries
- Bleeding and Infection Control
- Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation
- Head and Spinal Injuries

Rugby League Coaching Magazine

- Medical Conditions
- Fractures/Dislocations
- Introduction to Taping and Bandage

In total there are 10 areas of competency that will need to be shown by the prospective candidate.

On completion of the course, candidates will be required to complete the following

- Assessment Sheet
- Rugby League First Aid Officers Workbook - Level 1
- Individual Assessment - Case Studies
- The 10 components of Rugby League First Aid listed earlier.

Total face to face teaching - 12 hrs 30 min.

Total Course time - 25 hrs.

Participants will receive:-

- Level 1 Manual
- Level 1 Workbook
- Rugby League Case Studies
- Medical Advice Cards
- Rugby League Management "Think Book" and "Injury Report Book" - optional but advisable - \$5.00
- Individual Assessment Sheets

The Course is Nationally Accredited through VETEC. Successful applicants will be entered on the ARL database as an accredited First Aid Officer for Rugby League.

This scheme will hopefully encourage more people to become involved in this extremely important area and help implement the policy of the Australian Rugby League to have qualified First Aid personnel at every Rugby League venue throughout Australia where registered competitions are being played.

Further information about the scheme can be obtained from your State Coaching and Development Manager or John O'Halloran, National Co-Ordinator Phone (02) 6778 3650 Mobile 014 459 603.

# Coach Talk

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*David Waite's move into coaching is supported by a very credentialed playing career which culminated in his selection as a winger on the 1973-74 Kangaroo Tour of England and France which saw him play 6 Test matches. His success in taking St George to the Grand Final in 1996 has been described as one of the great coaching achievements of the year and subsequently resulted in him being awarded 'Coach of the Year'. He is extremely dedicated and regards junior development to be equally important as the elite level of Rugby League. A lot of his success has been due to his attention to detail in planning.*

## Coaching Appointments

Australian Schoolboys	1984-86
Canterbury Under 23's	1985-87
Newcastle Reserve Grade	1988-91
Newcastle First Grade	1991-94
St George First Grade	1996-

David's knowledge and advice will be useful to coaches at all levels.

## Don Oxenham



David Waite  
St George Head Coach

### Q1. What is your philosophy on coaching?

**A.** My job is to create an environment for individuals to achieve their full potential, for them to be a better player and a better person. In saying that, being the head coach of a National Rugby League club, I may vary to other coaches by the fact that I try to stretch my influence of the Head Coach right down to the 16 year olds, I try to encompass the whole range within the club. There are some coaches, who believe it is a stepping stone process in development to First Grade, I believe in the apprenticeship scheme. As we move on, over the next 4 to 5 years to include player drafts and all those sorts of things, clubs are going to need an overall philosophy for the development of the club. Now in saying that, it is not the players that I want to deal with so much as the people who touch the players, and I spend most of my time with the strength and conditioning coach and the coaches of those teams. It was a very successful plan in Newcastle. We had a philosophy of development and I see no reason for it not to be successful at St George. In my short period of time here it is bearing fruit already.

### Q2. What do you consider are your strengths in coaching?

**A.** I think my greatest strength is that I am honest to the players, there is no con in me, I think I am willing to try things that are a bit different. Initially I was classified as an over-technical coach because of my association with Warren Ryan. But Warren would laugh at some of the stuff I emphasise in 1998, [www.rlcm.com.au](http://www.rlcm.com.au)

compared to what I did in 1992 with Newcastle when they were Club Champions.

I think I am far more flexible now in what I do and how I do it. I think flexibility and honesty are important and I think I am both of those, I am prepared to take a gamble and that is important. My greatest strength above and beyond all that is my attention to detail in planning. I don't think I have done my job in any given week if something can come out from under a rock and "frighten" the footy team. This hasn't happened for quite some time, and the attention to detail in planning has prevented this. The players respect that, but in saying that, the planning is not all mine, it is a team effort, another great strength that is required. The old dictatorial or autocratic sort of person is a short term person, delegation and sense of ownership, is probably the greatest strength you can give a football club.

### Q3. Where does skill training fit into your programme?

**A.** Probably not enough space for it here. It fits in from the warm-up to the warm-down it fits in from the first session to the last session. It fits into any written material given to players, in video material and any statistical feedback. It is the all permeating, overriding factor in on field performance in a physical sense.

Years of experience tell me that there was an emphasis on getting drills manuals and running drills for the

sake of the drills. Unfortunately coaches didn't know what they were looking for, therefore there was no correction done, the drills looked fantastic and every one was running in the right direction - that is a real worry. Players think they have achieved success because they have performed the drill. The focus of the drill is not the drill itself, but the skill within the drill, which is supposed to be evaluated and corrected. This leads to your next step, or you have to go back to get the A-B-C's right, I see a lot of people who can not even pick up the football correctly let alone catch and pass it correctly.

**Q4. What type of skill work do you do?**

**A.** Our season is broken into, at the moment, individual skill which is on a cycle and continually revisited each session, we break into group skills, positional skills and team skills. In those four areas you cover all aspects of the game and it doesn't matter whether you are playing a group skill, where there are two people at the back of the field, or whether there is thirteen players behind the football, when you pick it up. Whether you are talking about ruck defence or slide defence, or one defender on the blind side defending with two markers which would be a group skill. We cover all those things and it is an ongoing cycle, every week and every session. If you are not doing something with your eyes, your hands and your feet every session in relation to skill you are neglecting the player.

**Q5. How important is the mental aspect of players to achieve performance?**

**A.** Absolutely essential, no matter how far we think we have gone into the significance of mental preparation and mental toughness and all the things in relation to sport psychology, we have only scratched the surface. I have yet to see great performances, come out of anybody but a mentally focussed player/ team, because we know that one + one player doesn't necessarily equal two, the power of that is far greater than the two combined if they are mentally prepared. It is an area that I have fiddled around with for a long time, I think, a sports psychologists greatest influence is with the coach, they have the expertise, coaches are about trying to improve themselves. The best I have got out of it, is to go and educate myself in relation to sports psychology, therefore I understand sport psychology better, in dealing with whatever comes up, it might be preparation, it might be the game preparation, it might be visualisation, it doesn't matter, but if I am better prepared in that area then I think I am doing a better job. I am sure that teams that have psychological consultants, or sports psychologists with them, all believe they get benefit from them. The best I have seen is still, the one on one situation rather than

group sessions. I have never seen that last for a season or a length of time. Motivation is not an arousal thing it is a permanent change of behaviour, and permanent change of behaviour is not that easy.

**Q6 What is your opinion of game plans and patterns?**

**A.** Game plan is an interesting term, you could put ten on the table and to a coach say at Under 14 level it could just be a waste of time. Yet someone else might pick one up and say that's a good idea. I understand that the drama with them is, if it is on paper, you are pitching it to seventeen (17) people all who are going to take different things from it. So therein lies the complication. You might have the most technical absolutely sensational plan to blow a

I started coaching in schools, that led to all sorts of things.

particular team away. You understand it, you put it on paper, but do the players understand it.

I don't know if the words "patterns of football" were engrained at the highest level of football years ago as it is now. It certainly was back in 1981 when Newtown played in a Grand Final, and there has been a steady evolution from that point.

What Warren Ryan did to the game was to challenge everybody. Even though there are sets of 6 involved he would coach sets of 18. Everyone claps and cheers now when you get a line drop out, and they are all talking about the second set of 6. Well, Warren used to play in cycles of three sets of 6, get the ball back put in into the ingoal area, get the ball back put it into the ingoal area, get the ball back and then use a set play to score. That sort of thinking was the forerunner of the things that have been thrown at coaches to overcome, as the game steadily evolves. But the question of patterns, it has got to be pitched at a level in your team that everybody understands. I would suggest that within the overall plan there are individual plans, so that your key players, the ones that handle the ball might have additional information on their sheet compared to other players. If you think about that answer, you might come up with a more modern

approach. We don't train that way and our schedules for training aren't the same. Schedules are different for some players one might be 32 years old another player might be 17 years old, the younger player is in a different phase of his football than the older player even though they are both in the same team. Catering for individual differences is the way of the future.

**Q7. What do you think of impulse play and would it be a part of your game plans?**

**A.** It is probably the most influential factor in the majority of tries. I don't know that impulse has an enormous place in modern day defence. When with the football, the ability to see and react to what is in front of you, or what you can cause to happen, is the thing I think leads to the majority of tries. There are factors from breaks, half breaks, play the balls and at the advantage line where the smart player sees something, but if he is restricted because the coach says this has to be a go forward play, you could have gone forward 15 metres played the ball in one second, I would suggest, that player might become a bit cranky, because he knows that the team may not get that opportunity for another 20 minutes. You would like to think that all your players are working on becoming players who see more.

**Q8. Players are expected to perform at their peak each week, how do you ensure this performance?**

**A.** I think that is impossible. Therefore I don't expect them to play at 100% all the time and in every game. I expect them to be focused, I expect them to be working on improving the aspects of their (1) individual (2) group (3) team things, that they are responsible for and in doing that you get consistency. You don't expect players to be on the top of the mountain every week because if you expect that, you are going to be disappointed every week. You need to be able to lift to that point, when required. If you think your team can be at its peak every week and you can do that 24 weeks in a row without a break, you are very naive. I don't expect it, but I do expect to be somewhere well and truly above half way up the mountain. The object of course is to have as many players as possible as close to the top as you can and that way you have consistency. How you do that varies from coach to coach.

**Q9. What type of player do you look for - physical, mental or other qualities?**

**A.** You can't just grade players that have that body, head and eyes. I think when talking earlier about players with skill, vision, and basic athletic components, This is a football team and when I need to improve it then I look for a particular person to fill

a back row position or a multifunctional person for a back row, front row or a utility back, you can't just say this is the person you want. You fill the need based on requirements, if you had a front rower that was 98kg and 158cm and you need another front rower you probably would not go and buy another one the same. If you had a ball playing second rower, who was not the best defensive player in the game you might want to balance him up with someone else. But if you are just looking for players there is an athletic component, there is a coachability component, like agility, feet, hands, eyes and players who enjoy the physical contact.

It is very difficult finding out about their mental abilities. When you are talking to a players mother and father or the player himself you can put them through the sport psychology profiles which most people do as a prerequisite. That is what happens in looking for athletic champions for Olympic games etc.

I like working with a player over a period of time and watching and working through the highs and lows. You can't beat talking to a player and challenging him and he challenging you and going through that together to find out what the player is like mentally.

It is a difficult process in finding the right player for your club and as we move toward drafts, those that are delegated the job of identification will find the onus on their performance is going to be far greater.

**Q10. How much do you use videos in your team preparation?**

**A.** It is an integral part of coaching. There is an enormous variety of ways to use it, from audio visual aid in education showing a Michael O'Connor or a Graham Langlands side step, showing the player his own attempt at doing the same thing. Finding examples of group, team and individual skills for your own training sessions, to analysis of the opposition, for every player getting their own video every week, all those sorts of uses of it are there and basically more, these are just a couple of the uses what we would do regularly with videos.

It is an integral part of everything we do, it forms a terrific archive and a record for the development of the club. If I can show a Harold Matthew Coach examples of up and in defence, slide defence, a great one on one tackle and you can say that's the picture of what it looks like when it is done correctly, and that's the picture of what it is like when it is done incorrectly and this is what you look like. It saves millions of words.

**Q11. What information do you look for in your video analysis?**

**A.** There are a number of things for example, if I was looking at State of Origin Game 1, 1998 if I was looking at it from a pure individual skills perspective, I would be looking for something different, than if I was coaching Queensland in State of Origin 2 and say well this is how we went in game 1 and I may see something that was not in the strength and weakness analysis report pre game or something in a team sense, group or individual skill. For example *how is so and so's left shoulder?* or is he *susceptible to inside shoulders?* or whatever it might be.

In a game sense what you look for are basically strengths and weaknesses, you look for dominant players. Dominant players are ones you need to control the most. You look for overall common denominators.

Keep coaching,  
keep searching  
for knowledge.

**Q12. How do you see Rugby League evolving in the next five (5) years?**

**A.** I think we have an opportunity to get it right, whether we do, I really don't know. I think there is an opportunity to put it together from the very top, and put a process in place with very clear and natural pathway for everybody who aspires to play at the highest level, and natural pathways for everyone who wants to play the game for the right reasons, which is for the fun and enjoyment of the game itself. It is necessary to understand that not everyone is going to be a professional footballer and that more than half the fun of football is the sheer enjoyment of playing the game and the challenges the game presents to the individual, and the fun that groups can get out of it. These are the real reasons you play sport.

I think it is still terribly fragmented with overall approach because we don't know what the blueprint for the future is. We don't know the role of schools, we don't know the role of country Rugby League. It really is a game that requires an enormous amount of time in putting a structure across the country. In terms of developing players I would rather see kids

experiment with other sports, and do all the lovely peripheral vision things and spatial concept games and gain a far broader experience in sport and then come to our game as better players, because they experience a broader spectrum of sports. All codes in trying to attract kids at a certain age and hold them for long periods of their life I think are wrong. When I grew up and played only cricket and footy, now you can do many things. I would rather them do all that and then come into the game.

**Q13. Who have been the key influences in your coaching development?**

**A.** No doubt Warren Ryan is the most influential person. I was fortunate when I walked into a High School he was the Physical Education teacher there. Over a period of six years you start to get to know the sport a little differently, and your teachers a little differently, as you grow up some become major influences in your life. Because I was a sporty sort of person and he was a Commonwealth Games athlete you tend to admire those people that achieve, therefore you listen to them. Warren also played football for St George and I remember going to watch him play. Along with my father, they were the most influential people on me. In a coaching sense Dad never said yes or no to me coaching. Dad would fill up the old boiler suit, hang it off the clothes line and drag it around the yard for me to tackle. But Warren Ryan was the person who ended up being a mentor, he gave me incredibly sound advice not only as a young player, he was the person who rang up and said, after I had left Sydney, "come back and coach". The year after I retired from playing he offered me a coaching position with Newtown Reserve Grade but I said I was too young. In my opinion I wasn't capable of doing the job he asked me to do, so I chose not to coach. I started coaching in schools, that led to all sorts of things. Because Warren is a dominant influence in coaching and his stable have been so strong, people that played under him and have gone on to coaching and are still coaching at a high level and successfully, you can sometimes be branded a clone, and that hangs over your head and it did with me for quite some time.

In some ways it was justified, but when I took over the First Grade side at Newcastle, I worked incredibly hard to break the shackles of that. Anyone who saw Newcastle beat Wests in 1992 and saw the two styles of the two teams, would of had to walk away saying David Waite does not coach Warren Ryan football, and that was part of the maturing process.

**Q14. What are your coaching ambitions? Do you see yourself at St George for a lengthy period?**

**A.** I don't finish at St George until October 2000, I am like everyone else I aspire to achieve at a different level. I don't back away from the fact that I would enjoy coaching at State of Origin level and would dearly love to have the National coaching job one day. You play First Grade Rugby League to better yourself and I would like to think as a coach if I can better myself and if someone thinks I am good enough that I would be given the chance.

If you are not continually challenging yourself, generally players or other coaches do that for you, then you are going to stagnate, and if you stagnate you won't see out your contract. The focus and the emphasis is on whether your side is winning or losing. This is the most important thing to coaches. It is all well and good to say "he is a lovely bloke and definitely you are a better player" but if you finish in August and they are playing in the main event, in sport if this happens happens for two to three years in a row you are not a successful coach. At the highest level if the environment is right, winning is the key.

That is the way it is, all those decisions you make as to who you bring into the environment is a very interesting equation and a very interesting mix. However there is no correct mix, no matter what you think, because every coach is his own personality and the group of people you have every year is unique. Even if we had have gone on from 1996 with the same players that played the 1996 Grand Final and headed for the 1997 campaign it would have been different again, because they were one year older, they had been through another losing experience. So each year is unique for the coach to come up and do the same things is just pointless. You have to continually challenge yourself, your players and staff.

**Q15. What do you see as a prime denominator that you believe a coach at any level must have?**

**A.** Honesty. You can't survive by playing games with people. The most important thing you can get is the coaches respect. Respect is the thing that will maintain the team. The team really is the most important thing not the coach. Whoever the nominal head in charge is, he needs to be very straight.

I have not seen anything in my experience in football to sway me from that view. Also, be flexible enough to listen, learn and work with people. Help them achieve what they want to, and that requires honesty.

**Q16. Have you any advice to give to coaches who wish to reach the highest level?**

**A.** Never stop coaching. To get out of it is to fall a fraction behind. I had a trip to South Australia, I suppose in some ways it was forced on me, when I was out of work. The ARL sent me over there and I did what I call some trailblazing in development.

To go to South Australia from a personal point of view, was terrific for the soul. I went to Port Augusta, Whyalla and those sorts of places to show kids "this is how you catch a football." I came back and said every First Grade coach should go to South Australia for three (3) months. That had a major influence in my thinking and my philosophy, there is always hype and pressure surrounding First Grade football, when the reality is completely the opposite. As long as you get the basis right and be fairly straight with people you have got a very healthy environment, that was good for me. Over there you start to think is Rugby League really the game for me. This was really hurting, it was too heavy for me. I learnt a lot about football and learnt a lot about myself in that situation. Forced to be out of work and then within 12 months playing the last game in September shows how quickly this game can turn around on you.

Keep coaching, keep searching for knowledge. You don't keep doing the same thing. You are continually searching for magazines, networking, conferences. Find people who have done something and talk to them. The person I most wanted to meet was Rick Charlesworth (Australian Womens Hockey Team Coach), because he had 26 women together every day for 6 months and walked out of the Olympic Stadium with a Gold Medal, there is a person who has the information, sure it was a different gender and all those sorts of things, but there was a huge prize to get, there were 26 people who were full-time hockey players, and they got the prize.

I spent some time talking to him at a coaching conference, as far as my personal development, this was the most beneficial time I had spent.



# Attack Play

By Neil Wharton

The game of Rugby League is made up of two major components. These being *attack* and *defence*. Both components are of equal importance, however, the team with the most points wins the contest.

The history of Rugby League indicates that throughout the years one component can dominate the other. During the 80's we saw the defensive area monopolise our game where NSW League Grand Final scores at times were single figures. Conversely we now have the flowing attacking styles brought to us in the early 90's.

Whatever the future holds for Rugby League the game's style of play will be directed by its future coaches. *Arguably* the greatest part of the game, the one thing which keeps the fans coming back, is "*seeing the ball sing*" (moved around the field).

*Attack*, whether it be through the use of pure skill, structured play, freakish Houdini acts, or a combination of these is what undoubtedly brings the crowds to their feet.

To be successful in Rugby League you must first gain possession and then have the ability to attack from that given position.

**"When you attack you control the ball".**

## ATTACK:

**Principles of:**

- Possession
- Depth
- Thrust
- Support

**Aims:**

- To score points
- To move the defensive line around
- Create opportunities
- Capitalise on opportunities
- Control possession

## THREE KEY FACTORS FOR EFFECTIVE ATTACK:

- Individual skills
  - player on player ability
- Small group skills
  - 2-3 players working together
- Team skills
  - small group practices

### **Other factors include:**

- Communication - development of verbal talk and signals
- Commitment - making the effort to be in position
- Condition (physical) - to be able to maintain concentration and effort.
- Competitiveness - wanting to compete
- Leadership - making decisions that create positive actions and results.

## ACTION PLAN

Start by being simple and doing the basics technically correct. Players ability will govern what can be done, play to your players strengths. Work on weaker areas.

**Q.** What is the defence attempting to do?

**A.** Shut down your attack!

**Q.** How will they do this?

- A.**
- a) Defence needs to be well organised.
  - b) Readjust well
  - c) Move up quickly, reduce the attacking teams time and space with the ball

**Q.** How do we counter act this defence?

**A. \* Quick effective play the balls**

- catch an unprepared defensive line
- markers not set
- advantage line easy to achieve
- don't fight the marker

**\* An alert dummy half**

- control speed of play the ball
- aware of first receivers position
- where ball should go!!
- best position to go forward again - run from dummy half.
- quick passing opens doors out wider

**\* First receiver**

- pass or run, not run and then pass when in trouble
- must be able to read play/alert to a call
- direction of play - how do you read play? Finding space - show counting of numbers.
- quick inside passing opens doors out wider
- put players through gaps on edge of ruck

**\* Outside receivers**

- pass or run - communication (can't always set plans)

- unders and overs / change of angles are not moves, should happen naturally
- draw a player. Don't pass without taking someone out of the line as the extra defence will follow the ball
- Note: The longer you hold the ball the more defence you are going to attract.

**\* Depth**

- gives you time and space
- must attack the ball at pace

**\* Width**

- get the ball outside their defence or player

**\* Use of extra man (decoys/moves)**

- not necessary / but adds variety /can help
- not too complicated

- must have purpose
- can you defend it?

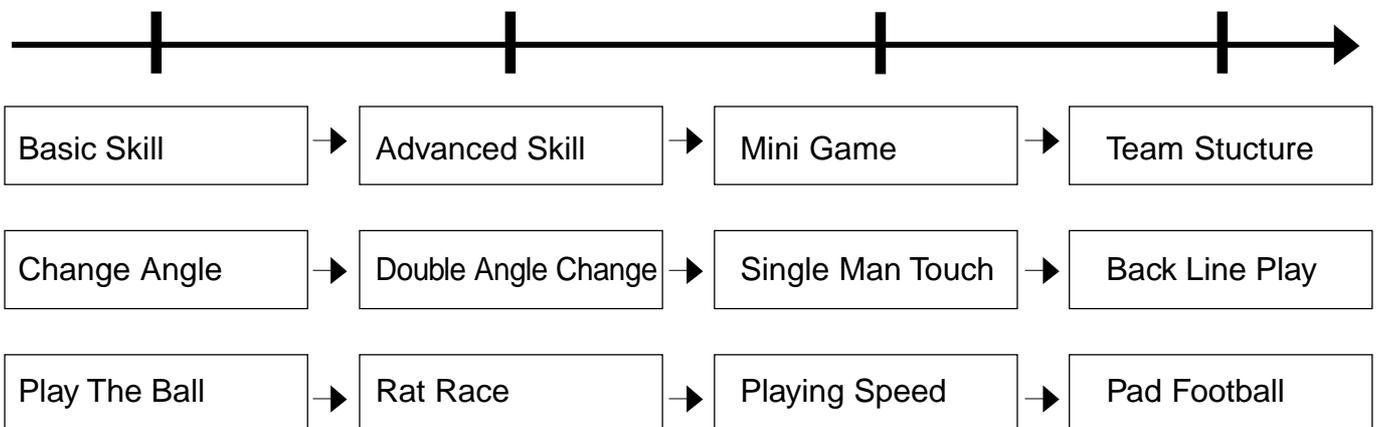
**\* Support play**

- vital
- work off the ball. Your job is not done once you have passed the ball. The difference between a good player and a great player
- run up the middle / shortest distance between A and B / straight line

Each of the above points are a SKILL in themselves and should be practised and rehearsed separately. All players should be exposed to drills incorporating these components of attacking play. It is these simple drills taken onto the playing field that create a majority of a teams attacking opportunities.

## TRAINING FORMAT

- Follow a structured line of continuum
- Start with the simple
- Increase the degree of difficulty
- Mini games
- Structured team work



## DISCUSSION POINTS

- Where should the ball be directed?
- Set moves
- Attack in relation to field position
- Percentage football
- Kicking game
- Mental skills
- Control of the ball / Time in possession

## EVALUATION OF ATTACK:

- Video replays
- Statistic sheet
- Result of game
- Players perspective
- Self evaluation (coach/player)

# Talent Identification

By Mick Aldous  
ARL Level 3 Coach - NSWRL Development Officer

Any talent identification in sport for juniors must be split into groups characteristics which may be assessed in some form. Providing a set of criteria, which after multi-use, stands the test of time in defining elite players will be a positive step towards narrowing the recruitment pathway.

Rugby League performance is dependant upon separate factors:-

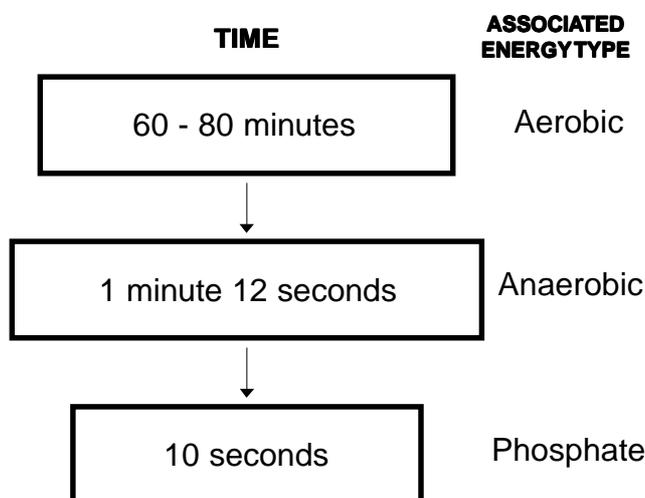
1. physiological
2. psychological
3. motor movement
4. physical characteristics
5. playing experience

Each of these factors need to be assessed in reference to a standard set of criteria which may be used extensively in selecting talented players.

## 1. Physiological Factors

Rugby League is a game of 60-80 minutes duration and as such has a large aerobic component. Within this aerobic endurance phase, the game is broken into sets of 6 defensive (tackles) or attacking plays, which take approximately 1 minutes 12 seconds to complete. Each of the six defensive or attacking plays represents an effort-recovery (10 sec phosphate) phase, which suggests a high anaerobic component.

### Structure of the Game



Testing criteria for each energy type will distinguish elite and novice players. The ideal age for testing is 15 years. Example: Testing Protocols

- i) aerobic
- ii) anaerobic
- iii) phosphate

In terms of dividing the importance of each physiological factor there is currently a strong thrust towards the following ratio:-

aerobic      60%  
anaerobic    40%

The ideal Rugby League player requires speed with stamina

To a lesser degree, evidence of strength, power and muscular endurance can be an important indicator of player talent. These latter fitness parameters are considered less significant than cardiac parameters because of acquisitional possibilities contingent with physical maturation.

Example: Testing Protocols

- i) power
- ii) endurance
- iii) strength (general)

## 2. Psychological

Rugby League is a team game in which individuals interact and socialise within the framework of the game. Elite players display an overwhelming ability to work alone, yet, combine with others in achieving common goals.

Unity comes from:

- a) self discipline
- b) trust
- c) understanding
- d) caring
- e) freedom of expression
- f) acceptance
- g) commonality

These factors are best measured in a subjective manner,

by experts. Such recommendations are made by previous coaches, officials and/or schoolteachers, the accuracy of which is often contingent to the personal gain of those asked to comment.

The success of individual psychology and personality profiles is debatable as a source of talent identification. Motivation for actions change significantly as young athletes progress from early teens to adulthood.

### 3. Sensory - Motor

It is surprising how little information is available on these characteristics of elite junior players. The successful adult player who has not demonstrated an early ability in his football endeavour is obviously rare. Certainly, besides the influences of heredity, the second most important factor in player direction and development appears to be early life experiences (Cunningham, 1970). The measure of those characteristics which are important for ultimate success in sport such as Rugby League can only be measured in a subjective manner compared against a set of criteria. Each evaluation can be marked on a 'skill' ladder. (Appendix 1)

Performance of game skills within a competitive context differ from performance of skills in the absence of opposition. So it must be stressed that the fundamental differences between expert and novice players can be highlighted by viewing skilled performance in the context of pressure and non-pressure based situations.

The skill ladder (Appendix 1) is used as an indicator of ability level.

### 4. Physical Characteristics

It is common practice in Rugby League for those identifying talent to concentrate on body size and not body type. The reason behind this thinking is based on pressure for immediate success. Most recruitment programmes focus on instant results through victories at junior representative level and not the more far sighted objective of predicting and securing playing talent for future success.

Talented juniors, identified on body size alone, may find difficulty fitting within the structure of the elite adult game, where, body type becomes a far more significant predictor of performance.

The following is used in Rugby League Talent Identification.

1. Somatotype (body type)
2. Parents as Predictors

Over the years a measurement of body type delivers information on ideal conformation for Rugby League playing positions. The following table explains:

POSITION	BODY TYPE
Prop	<i>Endo / Mesomorph</i>
Centre / Second Row / Lock	<i>Ecto / Mesomorph</i>
Hooker / Half Back / 5/8th	<i>Smaller Mesomorph</i>
Wing / Fullback	<i>Ecto / Mesomorph</i>

• Endomorph (Obese) • Mesomorph (Muscular) • Ectomorph (Tall)

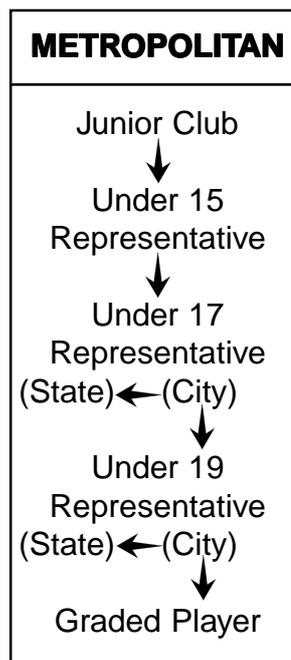
The use of parents as an indicator of height and weight has long been used as a predictor of future success in Rugby League. In terms of talent identification, it is essential to consider the genetic growth opportunities confronting the younger player.

Example: Mothers (height/weight)  
Fathers (height/weight)

### 5. Playing Experience

Talent is strongly linked to levels of playing experience. A youngster with advanced game skills has acquired those attributes through game drill practices and match situations. Ability levels are generally related closely to the amount of time spent playing the game. Gradual progressions through standards of competition act as a valuable means of identifying talent.

Example: Talent Flow Chart





# Skill Ladder

**RLCM**  
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**COACHING MAGAZINE**

APPENDIX 1

**NAME**.....

**MONTH/YEAR**.....

**PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES**.....

(Tall 10, Short 1, Lean 10, Stumpy 1)

**FITNESS** (Anaerobic) ..... 50 .....(Aerobic)

**SPEED** (Metres) .....100

**GAME SKILLS** (Open ended) 10 .....1 (Closed)

## CATCHING

1. Standing catch right
2. Standing catch left
3. Standing catch front
4. Standing catch high ball
5. Standing catch low ball
6. Slow speed running catch - right, left, front
7. High speed running catch - right, left, front
8. Running, slow speed low ball
9. Running, slow speed high ball
10. Running, high speed high ball
11. Running, high speed low ball
12. Running low ball to both sides
13. High ball leaping
14. Running, ball transferred on the finger tips

## PASSING

1. Catch / pass left (standing)
2. Catch / pass right (standing)
3. 1/2 pace left
4. 1/2 pace right
5. Full pace left
6. Full pace right
7. Hit / offload
8. Step / offload
9. Broken field position
10. Draw & Pass
11. Draw & Pass (pressure)
12. Long balls
13. Short balls

## EVASION

1. Speed
2. Step, both sides
3. Swerve
4. Bump off
5. Hit & spin
6. Change of pace
7. Dummy Pass
8. Off Ball Positioning
9. Stand in Tackle
10. Angles

## KICKING

1. Long accurate
2. Bomb
3. Grubber
4. Chip
5. Screw Punt
6. Floater
7. Centre Kick

## TACKLING

1. High speed front/side on
2. Positioning opponents
3. Ball & all
4. Aggressive/as a form of attack
5. Behind
6. Slide positioning
7. Assists
8. Body Turning

**AGILITY:** (Able to change direction quickly) 10..... 1 (No change in direction)

**COACHABILITY:** (Easily coached) 10..... 1 (Uncoachable)

### Norms For Fitness Test Results For Under 15

APPENDIX 2

Result	SIT & REACH	BROAD JUMP	CHIN UPS	SIT UPS	PUSH UPS	BEEP TEST	VERTICAL JUMP	10m	40m	BODY FAT	AGILITY
<b>OUTSTANDING</b>	18	2.45	17	60	70	14.0	60	1.66	5.20	19.2	14.00
<b>ABOVE AVERAGE</b>	14	2.30	14	53	58	12.4	55	1.90	5.45	29.3	14.38
<b>AVERAGE</b>	10	2.13	10	45	46	10.7	50	2.12	5.62	40.3	14.66
<b>BELOW AVERAGE</b>	4	1.99	7	38	38	9.0	44	2.30	5.95	45.6	14.91
<b>POOR</b>	-2	1.54	5	32	30	7.3	35	2.40	6.10	48.3	15.10

### Norms For Fitness Test Results For Under 16

Result	SIT & REACH	BROAD JUMP	CHIN UPS	SIT UPS	PUSH UPS	BEEP TEST	VERTICAL JUMP	10m	40m	BODY FAT	AGILITY
<b>OUTSTANDING</b>	19	2.50	18	65	70	14.0	63.1	1.64	5.16	18.3	13.98
<b>ABOVE AVERAGE</b>	15	2.32	15	54	60	12.5	58.3	1.90	5.40	25.6	14.26
<b>AVERAGE</b>	10	2.15	10	47	49	11.0	51.7	2.10	5.60	35.1	14.54
<b>BELOW AVERAGE</b>	5	2.00	8	40	40	9.5	45.7	2.30	5.90	39.3	14.81
<b>POOR</b>	1	1.90	6	35	35	8.0	37.1	2.40	6.01	45.2	15.09

### Norms For Fitness Test Results For Under 17

Result	SIT & REACH	BROAD JUMP	CHIN UPS	SIT UPS	PUSH UPS	BEEP TEST	VERTICAL JUMP	10m	40m	BODY FAT	AGILITY
<b>OUTSTANDING</b>	21	2.55	20	70	75	14.0	66.7	1.60	5.10	17.1	13.92
<b>ABOVE AVERAGE</b>	16	2.35	16	65	60	12.9	60.0	1.85	5.30	22.6	14.11
<b>AVERAGE</b>	11	2.20	12	60	55	11.5	52.5	2.00	5.50	30.5	14.50
<b>BELOW AVERAGE</b>	6	2.05	8	50	48	10.0	48.1	2.10	50.75	33.4	14.72
<b>POOR</b>	0	2.00	6	40	42	8.5	40.5	2.20	5.95	39.8	15.01

## Australian Rugby League Talented Player Standards

Result	Fitness	Agility	40m Speed	Bench Press % Body Wt	Vertical Jump	Running Pass	Evasion	One-on-One Tackle	Optimism %	Attitude to Training & Discipline	Game Reading
<b>OUTSTANDING</b>	14.0	13.5	5.10	110%	66.7	9-10	9-10	9-10	85-100	9-10	9-10
<b>ABOVE AVERAGE</b>	12.9	14.1	5.30	100%	60.0	7-8	7-8	7-8	70-84	7-8	7-8
<b>AVERAGE</b>	11.5	14.5	5.50	85%	52.5	5-6	5-6	5-6	55-69	5-6	5-6
<b>BELOW AVERAGE</b>	10.0	14.75	5.75	80%	48.1	3-4	3-4	3-4	35-54	3-4	3-4
<b>POOR</b>	8.5	15.00	6.00	>80%	40.5	1-2	1-2	1-2	0-34	1-2	1-2

A score 1-10 is representative of a players ability relative to the top quality State of Origin player.

E.g. The standard for each skill component is relative to the benchmark performance of that skill. To score 10 for evasion would place a player on the equivalent reading to Andrew Johns or Brad Fittler.

### Definitions

<b>Agility</b>	defined agility run per ARL Testing Protocols
<b>% Body Wt. Press</b>	maximum lying barbell lift for one repetition
<b>Running Pass</b>	ability to pass to both sides off either foot under defensive pressure
<b>Evasion</b>	ability to carry ball in two hands and beat consecutive defenders
<b>Optimism</b>	% level as given by Peak Potential Optimism test
<b>Attitude</b>	Assessment of general attitude and enthusiasm for training and discipline
<b>Fitness Level</b>	according to shuttle run test as per ARL Testing Protocols

□

**Talent  
Identification**

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# Personality, Arousal, Motivation and Rugby League Performance

PART THREE

By Vic Mellors - Sports Fitness and Motivational Psychologist

**Part 1** 'Motivation & Performance' Book 4

**Part 2** 'So how do we achieve a successful mechanism in a Rugby League team?' Book 6

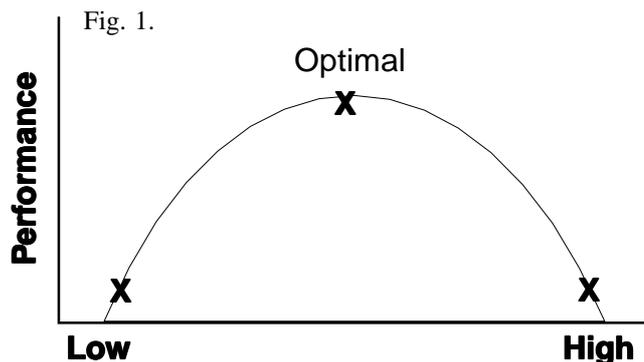
**Personality** is an important factor in determining Rugby League performance because it is directly related to both **Central Nervous System (CNS)** and **Autonomic Nervous System (ANS)** arousal which then contributes to motivation and subsequently Rugby League performance. These nervous systems have been explained previously and how they relate to Extraversion, Neuroticism and Psychoticism.

## What is Motivation?

Motivation is a psychological term that has been used traditionally, to describe and explain individual differences in the intensity and direction of behaviour. It is the psychological state that results from a combination of individual needs and desires with the demands that results from a combination of individual needs and desires with the demands of the situation. In brief it's the effort or energy one puts into their sport physically and psychologically on match or play day.

Before you can be motivated you have to be physiologically aroused. Simply stated, **arousal** can be described as the level of awareness, alertness, attention or even emotional excitement of an individual, and it varies on a continuum from low to high. Therefore, at low levels of arousal, we are drowsy (our performance both mental and physical is very poor). As we increase our level of arousal our performance improves. However, at the other extreme players, who are too highly aroused, tense and over excited, resulted in poor performance.

Between these two extremes of high and low we reach an optimal level of arousal and at this point produce the best performance. This is called the inverted U function of motivation through CNS and ANS arousal for sport performance (see figure 1).



## CNS and ANS AROUSAL

As mentioned in part two of this series, the CNS and ANS play an important role in arousal before a football game. Normally the CNS and ANS enjoy independence from each other but when there is an extreme state of emotional arousal (eg intense rage, or profound sadness, or extreme fear and anxiety), the normal separation of functioning between the CNS and ANS arousal breaks down.

In effect, the dimensions of Extraversion/Introversion (CNS) arousal - Neuroticism/Stability (ANS) arousal lose their physiological independence as the individual becomes too stressed or goes beyond optimal arousal levels. Subsequently, this can affect a players confidence, concentration and subsequent physical performance.

For example, some Rugby League players with certain types of personality structure that are "worked up" emotionally by their coaches could have deleterious effects on both their motivation and performance. This is especially the case in neurotic introverts and extraverts. Once the ANS and CNS arousal become entwined it effects the Rugby League players rationality/thought processes and physical performance. Too much adrenaline can make the muscles sluggish. Different personality structures need different prematch strategies and coaching tactics to optimise performance.

## So How Does Personality Differences Contribute to Arousal, Motivation and Performance?

So far, motivation has been described and explained and how the independent nervous systems (the CNS and ANS) of each player can be affected by being too excited or “psyched up” before a football match. In addition, I have mentioned how CNS and ANS arousal either low, high or optimal, effect Rugby League performance.

The contribution of individual differences in personality to Rugby League performance is best explained in terms of the arousal strength of the CNS and ANS that underlies the four types of personality structure. Shown below are both the Central Nervous System and Autonomic Nervous System arousal for the four basic types of personality structure.

<u>Personality Type</u>	<u>CNS Arousal</u>	<u>ANS Arousal</u>
Stable Introvert	High	Low
Stable Extravert	Low	Low
Neurotic Introvert	High	High
Neurotic Extravert	Low	High

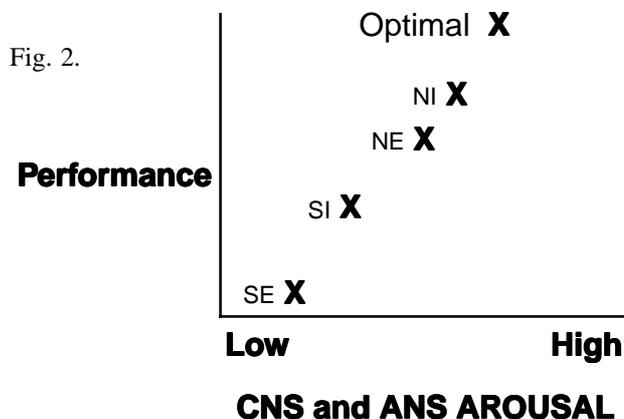
To give an example, the **Stable Introvert** has high CNS arousal but low ANS arousal. This means that before a game, he would not need to be, to emotionally “worked up” otherwise you would put him over the optimal level of arousal. This type of personality structure is very task oriented and would adapt very quickly to the conditions of the match. In contrast, the Neurotic Introvert is both high on CNS and ANS arousal and if emotionally “worked up” too much before a football game will retreat psychologically into his head and “switch off” from the task at hand.

In relation to a **Stable Extravert**, they sometimes need more of a reminder to start focusing on the game about half an hour before kick off. They have both low CNS and ANS which means they can be quite under aroused before the game. They can be likened to the player who maybe talking about what he did on a Friday night or some other irrelevant topic before a game. However, these type of players have tremendous coping skills and can apply themselves quickly to the game situation.

In relation to the **Neurotic Extravert**, he is the player who is most vulnerable to losing his temper or being sent off early in a football match. They have low CNS arousal but due to their high ANS arousal, it quickly places them into a “fight or flight” state during a football match. These players are usually found to be the ones that are restless, prickly and fidgety before a

game. You usually even abuse one of their own team mates before going out to play.

Shown below, is how each personality structure in relation to their CNS and ANS arousal, would relate to the inverted U function before a Rugby League match.



<u>Personality Type</u>	<u>CNS Arousal</u>	<u>ANS Arousal</u>	<u>Abbrev</u>
Stable Introvert	High	Low	SI
Stable Extravert	Low	Low	SE
Neurotic Introvert	High	High	NI
Neurotic Extravert	Low	High	NE

The next question would be, “Where does the third dimension of personality Psychoticism - (Super-Ego Strength) fit in?” The third dimension of personality Psychoticism would also have an effect especially if high (P factor) coincides with the neurotic introverts and extraverts. This dimension, if moderately possessed by the Rugby League player assists them to overcome any anxiety during the match and it also keeps them toughminded and persistent enough to do their job on the football field.

### Stress

What interacts with personality is the internal and external stressors that a Rugby League player encounters leading up to the match. For example, a senior player maybe worried about playing an away game because the last time he played there the team was thrashed (internal). He could also be having personal problems with his wife and children. Externally, he may have been sacked from his job or owes debts.

A junior player may have problems with his home life or have a single parent. His parents maybe too poor to buy him football gear. All of these stressors will interact with the personality of the player and will contribute to his existing arousal level leading up to the weekend match. It is therefore important that the

Rugby League coach from whatever coaching level, is aware of how day to day stress effect his players.

## Perceptions

“What disturbs people’s minds is not events but their judgements on events.”

*Epictetus, FIRST CENTURY A.D.*

This definition means that in the lead up to a Rugby League match, the way you think and feel emotionally about the game will determine how you behave or play in the game. To achieve the goal of winning the game, a player must learn to develop coping strategies that reduce the internal tension and anxiety that accumulates during the week before the game. Once again this can be determined by the player’s personality and its interaction with stress, perceptions and lifestyle.

Some players will be constantly preoccupied with worry and will feel that they may not cope unless they have a few drinks. Others may develop self defeating beliefs that they won’t be able to cope with their opposing player. These beliefs all correlate with players with high trait Neuroticism. Therefore the coach has to know each of his players from a personality point of view and help them develop thoughts and feelings that align with them coping with pressure and doing their job on the football field.

## Lifestyle

This is a very important factor especially in senior players because certain personality types adopt different lifestyles. Some personalities eat, drink and smoke more than other personalities. It’s important that at the commencement of the season that Rugby League players develop a structured healthy lifestyle. The coaches job is to make sure the players adhere to this lifestyle.

You can develop a coping mechanism to structure your life by (1) the way you live (2) the way you think and evaluate yourself. The Hazell 5 Point Plan says the important things in lifestyle are (1) Structure (2)

Preparation (3) Exercise (4) Relaxation (5) Assertion.

- (1) Structure - plan your life (weekly timetable)
- (2) Preparation - gives control and predictability and lowers stress levels eg have plenty of sleep, have training and football gear packed and organised
- (3) Relaxation - dehypnotise ourselves from stress by mental relaxation, lie on the beach read a book, play a relaxation tape, go to the movies
- (4) Exercise - physiologically reduces stress (sugar levels, blood pressure), maintains anxiety levels
- (5) Assertion - expressing our point of view assertively means emotions and ideas are expressed in a non-threatening way and do not become bottled up and cause stress.

In summary, this section has been directed at describing and explaining motivation and how personality with its underlying biological systems (CNS and ANS arousal) effect the way we perform. The old concept from bygone days of “psyching up” players is ancient and most importantly, can be detrimental to Rugby League performance. I have demonstrated this through describing the four types of personality structure and how each could be aroused before a football game. I have also discussed the other three components of the equation that contributes to successful Rugby League performance.

In future editions, I will discuss the following question, ”How do we modify autonomous behaviour once we understand our personalities?”

## NOTES

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# Head Injuries in Rugby League

For further information of  
Sports Medicine Australia  
Safer Sport Programs  
Phone: Mike Knowles  
(07) 3870 4195.



There is still a tendency to treat head injuries lightly. Perhaps this is because injuries within the skull are not directly visible. There is no visible bleeding or swelling. But when a head injury is sustained, tearing or internal bleeding can cause pressure on the brain. This swelling can cause brain damage, which if severe, may cause death. We've illustrated 3 types of head injury on the diagram to show what can happen.

Extradural bleeding, Subdural bleeding, Small haemorrhages can all result in serious life threatening situations, therefore, it is vitally important to learn to recognise the warning signs which indicate head injury.

## 1. What are the Warning Signs?

Headache, dizziness, disorientation, loss of memory, confusion, uncoordination, irritability, drowsiness, vomiting.

## 2. Treatment

Unconscious Player - Apply ABC procedure (Airway, Breathing, Circulation). Maintain adequate airway - be aware of possible spinal injury.

Conscious Player - A player with a concussive head injury must not be allowed to continue the game. For the rest of the day they should:

- Be in the charge of a responsible person
- Rest quietly
- Not consume any alcohol
- Not exercise or exert in any way
- Use no pain killers except those advised by a doctor

## 3. Injury Report Form

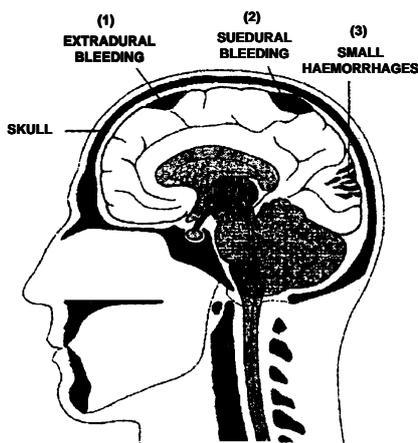
This form should be filled out in every case of head injury with one copy being given to the player, one copy given to the club and the last copy to be sent to Sports Medicine Australia.

## 4. Who Should be Seen by a Doctor?

Anyone who has sustained a head injury and:

- Vomits
- Complains of severe headaches or dizziness
- Becomes restless, drowsy or unconscious
- Has a convulsive fit

Allowing or encouraging a player to resume physical activity immediately following a head injury may be unwise. The "Second Impact Syndrome" remains a contentious issue but it is hard to discount it logically. All head injuries should be treated seriously until a clearance is received from a doctor. □



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