

**KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
FOR TALENT IDENTIFICATION
BY
CARL DOUGLAS,
ACADEMY MANAGER AT GLOUCESTER (ENGLAND)
ACADEMY.**

The key performance indicators that have been identified and utilised at the Gloucester Academy are there very much to aid us in identifying talent and it is an academy, rather than a club tool. With it, we are trying to develop a competency-based assessment that is useful for us and which can also be used by the players. The whole process, we hope, will aid each player's personal development in the game.

Our 'end game' is selection for the Gloucester club at Premiership level and this was always a major consideration as we developed the system. We started by trying to characterise a player and made lists by position. The lists are certainly not exhaustive and we can cut and paste, adapt or simply choose the parts we want for each individual. The bottom line, though, is that they are a tool that a player has that will aid his own development.

The first document that a player will get is a sheet of key performance indicators (Doc 1, page 4). This has general attributes that should be relevant to all positions under *Technical*, *Physical* and *Mental*; then we have *Other* after these three important categories because there are some attributes that simply do not fall conveniently into the main three headings. At the end there is a set of attributes that are very hard to define, but we all know how vital they are in players; these are the *Intangibles*.

After this set of indicators/attributes, showing what applies to all positions, each player gets a document that is specific to his playing position. This is the sheet that the player himself fills in and it is a self-assessment on a scale of 1 – 10. The column on *Importance to games* is to reflect how each aspect is relevant to him in the game on which he is carrying out the assessment. Once the sheet is completed, we look initially at any scores that are particularly high or low for future discussion and the player knows that he will not be compared to any other player; any comparison will be against one or some of his own previous assessment(s).

We hope that the system does not become impersonal and our day-to-day contact and regular meetings with each player is a real safety system. A potential limitation is that not all players are capable of articulating their skill and performance levels in the early stages. That itself is a challenge and we are aware that we have to work on this aspect of a player's development.

We have made a conscious move away from player diaries and other such recording systems. This system allows us to deal with it via the academy's own website on the internet, rendering pieces of paper/books/diaries redundant. The player can access his own record on the computer and we can monitor in the same way. A simple system of passwords ensures that only the right people can access the appropriate information and the system is immediate; there is no need to remember the dreaded diary and we have instant access to find out if the player has been keeping efficient records. At the end of the process there is a *Personal Profile Review* and this is very much in words rather than marks/grades.

Once a player goes into his personal file, the options for development are enormous. A video clip of the player is easily placed alongside his assessment sheet and he can see this whenever he chooses. That clip can be discussed by player and coach as they watch it together and there is always the option of making a DVD of various clips for each player.

On top of that, the internet allows quick and direct contact with coaches, dieticians, rehabilitation experts, strength and conditioning coaches and physiotherapists and we access all the data on all players on a daily basis to get an overview. If any action is required, we can act quickly so that a potential problem is dealt with as soon as possible. We hope that what we are offering gives the players a platform from which to operate in the Premiership.

At the academy we do not feel that we are making judgements on players; we are observing where each player stands at any given time. Our starting point is the belief that each player, simply because he has been accepted at the academy, has most of the necessary attributes to be effective. We recognise this but want to make him independent and to drive himself and his development. This is vital if he is to make it to (and in) the senior squad.

The well-equipped player will be able to express his own opinion while buying into somebody else's and we want to develop *knowledge, skill and understanding*. To achieve this, we pose questions rather than giving our own answers, as this method may well be the best to gain a lasting change in a player. Hopefully, this will be one (of many others) valuable tool in the player achieving a consistent level of performance.

How any system is used is very important and we favour the 'carrot' approach rather than the 'stick'. Players already know what they cannot do and when they feel that they are driving the process, improvement of relative weaknesses might become easier. We tend to have player discussions in early September then again after about four games at the end of the month. The next block might well be in December with a January evaluation of the December feedback.

The end result is that the player becomes more self-aware, more independent and more aware of what is needed at the next level up. The process is a useful tool for us as it helps us to measure each player's progress and development and from the information we can shape out and plan practical structures for each player within key areas.

Whatever else we do, there must be a merger of what the Director of Rugby wants and what the player can deliver. At the academy we have to be realistic in aligning what the 1st XV requires and what the player understands about what the requirements are. However, the intangible elements in individual players are vitally important, even though they cannot always be categorised or put into compartments.

Each player gets three documents that he keeps:

- Page 4: A general summary of player attributes. On this sheet there would also be a list of specific attributes for each position, two of which are shown on the next pages.
- Page 5: Prop.
- Pages 6/part of 7: Scrum half.

GENERAL ATTRIBUTES

Technical

Handling
Body shape at contact
Ball retention
Ball presentation
Quality of tackling
Defensive awareness
Decision-making
Communication

Physical

Speed/Mobility
Strength
Agility/Evasion
Acceleration
Flexibility
Power

Mental

Mental toughness
Determination
Composure/Emotional/Distracton control

Other

Discipline to team plan
Self discipline
Knowledge of the laws
Personal impact on game
Scanning skills

INTANGIBLES

Is coachable
Positive influence on team-mates
A nose for the ball
Makes big plays
Makes team-mates better
Anticipates
Adjusts to situations
Rises to the occasion
Has a killer instinct

PROP player attributes	Importance to games	Self Assessment	10 - Imp	Score (10-SA) x imp
Handling				
Body shape at contact				
Ball presentation				
Quality of tackling				
Defensive awareness				
Decision-making				
Communication				
Physical				
Speed/mobility				
Strength				
Agility/evasion				
Acceleration				
Flexibility				
Power				
Mental				
Mental toughness				
Determination				
Composure/emotional/distraction control				
Other				
Discipline to team plan				
Self discipline				
Knowledge of Laws				
Personal impact on game				
Prop				
Scrum formation and engagement				
Body shape and height of scrum				
Problem solving at scrum				
LO support and sweeping on own throw				
LO pressure opposition ball				
Ruck/maul body height/angle. Ball retention				
Drive and impact at breakdown				
Mobility in attack and defence				
Kick off support (for and against)				
Work rate at breakdown				
Effectiveness at tackling				
Effectiveness defending				
Intangibles				
Is coachable				
Physical influence on teammates				
A nose for the ball				
Makes big plays				
Makes teammates better				
Anticipates				
Adjusts to situations				
Rises to the occasion				
Has a killer instinct				

SCRUM HALF PLAYER ATTRIBUTES	Importance to game	Self assessment	10 - imp	Score (10-SA) x imp
Technical				
Handling				
Body shape at contact				
Ball presentation				
Quality of tackling				
Defensive awareness				
Decision-making				
Communication				
Physical				
Speed/mobility				
Strength				
Agility/evasion				
Acceleration				
Flexibility				
Power				
Mental				
Mental toughness				
Determination				
Composure/emotional/distraction control				
Other				
Discipline to team plan				
Self discipline				
Knowledge of the Laws				
Personal impact on game				
Scrum half				
Service from scrum				
Service from lineout				
Service from general play				
Ability to control game				
Kicking				
Kicking quality – clearing kicks				
Kicking quality – kicks for territory				
Kicking quality – kicks for pressure				
Handling of pressure/composure				
Putting pressure on opposition 9				
Blindside work in attack and defence				
Communication with forwards and backs				
Organisational skills				
Decision-making				
Running from broken play				
Leadership				
Scanning skills				
Intangibles				
Is coachable				
Positive influence on teammates				
A nose for the ball				
Makes big plays				
Makes teammates better				
Anticipates				

Adjusts to situations				
Rises to the occasion				
Has a killer instinct				

Once the player has the documents, he is asked to fill in his ratings from 1-10 on

- **Importance to games.** This requires the player to look at his whole game, not just his position-specific skills.
- **Self assessment.** He decides where he stands in September in his personal development.
- **10 minus Imp column.** This figure is 10 minus the score he gave in the *Importance to games* category.
- **Score.** The score is worked out in the final column using the simple equation of $(10 \text{ minus Self Assessment}) \times \text{Importance to games score}$.

A prop's scores could look like this in the first section: (A part is chosen only as an example of what the full sheet would look like.)

PROP player attributes	Importance to games	Self Assessment	10 - Imp	Score (10-SA) x imp
Handling	8	4	2	48
Body shape at contact	9	6	1	36
Ball presentation	8	6	2	32
Quality of tackling	8	7	2	24
Defensive awareness	6	5	4	30
Decision making	5	4	5	30
Communication	8	4	2	48

The document would be looked at with a coach/tutor, who would highlight any high scores.

PROP player attributes	Importance to games	Self Assessment	10 - Imp	Score (10-SA) x imp
Handling	8	4	2	48
Body shape at contact	9	6	1	36
Ball presentation	8	6	2	32
Quality of tackling	8	7	2	24
Defensive awareness	6	5	4	30
Decision making	5	4	5	30
Communication	8	4	2	48

Various issues are now important and the two immediate ones are the player's self assessment score and his final score. The self assessment may be inaccurate, but experience

has shown that players are uncannily accurate when judging themselves on what they can and cannot do. The final score that has been highlighted is the target for discussion after that and these scores are never compared player to player. They are for that player alone throughout his season's progress.

Once a score has been highlighted, the follow-up is discussion, extra video back-up and more specific skill work to make further progress. The low scores are not regarded as failure as the player might have been aiming too high in the initial stages of his assessment. Even the high score is not necessarily all good; it is an issue, a discussion point.

The sheets are kept by each player and form an important part of his goal-setting review. In the process we find that the players become more aware of where they are in the academy and in their own personal development.