KNOWING YOUR ROLE IN RUGBY
BY
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At the end of each season, the Leicester (England) Academy undertakes a review and appraises how both the players and the Academy itself have performed. It is important for the club to know exactly what it needs to do in order to enhance the programme whilst maintaining high levels of player development. As a direct result of this process and specifically reviewing the appraisal system of each player, it was apparent that not all of our players fully understood their roles within the team. In fact it could be said that every player had some misunderstanding of what the club expected from him when playing for Leicester. This clearly was a concern and needed to be rectified.

I'm sure as a coach, at some time on the training pitch or during a game whilst the pressure is on and the bullets are flying about, that you have been quick to tell your players, "Just do your job!" I know I have! So what could we do that would ensure that any player, new at the outset, becoming a member of Leicester's Academy would know and understand what was expected from him? In the end the answer was simple: each player will be provided with a 'Job Role.'

In putting the 'Job Roles' in place, I first of all reviewed the structure the RFU were asking of us as academies in terms of looking at the players' long-term development to ensure we were creating a document that provided a consistent message. Using the same categories for appraising our players, those categories being *Technical, Tactical, Mental and Physical,* we started to identify the specific attributes that would be needed for each position. These attributes, we know, will differ from position to position - after all, we know that props and scrum-halves, as an example, are not built the same! Therefore, under 'Physical', their individual attributes required to play the game will differ massively. I then got our senior players to provide their input by asking them to look at the Technical and Tactical categories specifically and write down those attributes they felt were important as a player. Ben Kay, Daryl Gibson, Neil Back and Martin Corry, to name just a few, all contributed to ensure each 'Job Role' was a true reflection of what is expected from a Leicester player. Each player was also asked what was needed both on and off the field regarding his mental attributes. The responses in this area reflected the importance for all players to demonstrate the same high level of toughness, although for some players there were individual requirements; kickers and hookers, for example, did differ from the rest. When it came to the Physical category our conditioning coaches had a large influence, although the players were still asked for their views.

The 'Job Roles' for each position do not cover every single aspect, however; they represent the main areas of responsibility and clarify not only what is expected from them but also identify those areas of development. These 'job specs' are constantly used by our

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coaches when assessing our academy players and are used as a vital tool when giving formal one-on-one feedback to our players, which we do at least three or four times a year to show the players where they are in terms of their individual development.

Clive Woodward showed the many parallels between the sporting and the business world and I am convinced the 'Job Roles' have added huge value to the way we assess, but it is of vital importance to maintain a balance between the sporting and business ideas. Just like a salesman starting a new job needs a job specification, so too does a player joining Leicester Tigers. This 'Job Role', we hope, will not only give our players the necessary clarification of their role, but will also help to identify each player's own personal development needs at the same time.

The 'Job Roles' for the positions of fly half, full back, hooker and tight head prop follow.

FLY HALF

Technical – 'I need to execute;'

- A range of tackles whilst tackling the right player (organisational) especially in preventing the offload.
- All-round skills at the breakdown.
- An excellent range of basic and advanced skills in running, passing and kicking.
- The ability to disguise (deception) my intentions with ball in hand.
- An 80% success rate (minimum) when goal/drop kicking.
- A range of outstanding kicking skills on restarts.
- The ability to make a break by using good footwork.
- Excellent 1 on 1 skills.

Tactical – 'I need to;'

- Have an excellent understanding/knowledge of my role in order to lead the team's game plan.
- Communicate to all players what tactics are to be employed during the game.
- Appreciate the opposition's defensive system so as to select the most appropriate moves and game plan.
- Be capable of working out the opposition's game plan and recognise their weaknesses.
- Be able to read the body language of the opposition players.

Mental – 'I need to have;'

- The determination of a winner.
- A high work ethic.
- A ruthless mentality.

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- An approach that every game has the same importance.
- The attitude that I will never stop learning.
- The ability of shutting out all distractions (concentration).
- A cool head and the ability to ignore provocation (discipline).
- The determination to be the best I can possibly be.
- The ability to switch off by having friends and interests outside rugby.

Physical – 'I need to;'

- Appreciate the importance of good injury management, nutrition and rest.
- Have good core strength, stability and upper body strength.
- Be extremely flexible.
- Have great acceleration and speed endurance.
- Have excellent agility.
- Possess strength and power.
- Have a high anaerobic capacity.

FULL BACK

Technical – 'I need to execute;'

- A range of tackles whilst tackling the right player (organisational), especially in preventing the offload.
- The ability to work with my wingers in defence (pendulum).
- A range of basic skills in running, tackling, passing and kicking.
- The ability to take the high ball under pressure.
- The pass from the base of the breakdown (scrum half).
- Excellent timing and running lines when joining the line.
- All-round contact skills especially when out wide and isolated.
- Excellent 1 on 1 skills.

Tactical – 'I need to;'

- Have an excellent understanding/knowledge of my role in the team's game plan.
- Communicate to my fly half what I am seeing and suggest solutions/tactics.
- Be able to slot in at wing.
- Be capable of playing at first receiver and execute all the phase plays.
- Be able to read the opposition's fly half to defend kicks (ball must not bounce).
- The ability to create a range of counter-attacking options.
- Be an excellent communicator, especially with my wingers.

Mental – 'I need to have;'

- The determination of a winner.
- A high work ethic (this may be at times more relevant off the ball).

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- A ruthless mentality.
- An approach that every game has the same importance.
- The attitude that I will never stop learning.
- The ability to shut out all distractions (concentration).
- A cool head and the ability to ignore provocation (discipline).
- The determination to be the best I can possibly be.
- The ability to switch off by having friends and interests outside rugby.

Physical – 'I need to;'

- Appreciate the importance of good injury management, nutrition and rest.
- Have good core strength, stability and upper body strength.
- Be extremely flexible.
- Have great acceleration and speed endurance.
- Have excellent agility.
- Possess great strength and power with muscular endurance.
- Have a high ability to repeat my top-end speed.

HOOKER

Technical – 'I need to execute;'

- Excellent leadership in setting the scrum and know which scrums to call, when and why both on our own and the opposition's scrum.
- A 90% and above success in throwing into the lineout.
- Excellent technique in a range of tackles.
- Excellent technique in identifying and clearing out at the breakdown.
- Excellent mauling technique.
- The skill of staying on my feet in contact.
- Outstanding skills over the ball to frustrate opponents.
- Excellent ball carrying and presentation/selection skills.

Tactical – 'I need to;'

- Be an excellent decision maker in all areas of the game.
- Have an excellent appreciation of our team's tactics.
- Run excellent support lines.
- Have good awareness and anticipation.
- Understand my role as a defender from scrums and lineouts.
- Be able to recognise which lineout calls work and why and call them in the heat of the battle.
- Be an excellent communicator.

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- A ruthless mentality.
- An approach that every game has the same importance.
- The attitude that I will never stop learning.
- The ability of shutting out all distractions (concentration).
- The determination to be the best I can possibly be.
- A cool head and ignore provocation (discipline).
- The ability to switch off by having friends and interests outside rugby.

Physical – 'I need to;'

- Appreciate the importance of good injury management, nutrition and rest.
- Have good core strength, stability and upper body strength.
- Have excellent neck/shoulder strength.
- Be extremely flexible.
- Have the ability of repeating my top-end speed in short periods.
- Have excellent agility.
- Possess great strength and power with muscular endurance.
- Have a high anaerobic capacity.

TIGHT HEAD PROP

Technical – 'I need to execute;'

- The ability to provide the right shoulder in the scrum depending on what is called.
- The ability to anchor the scrum.
- An aggressive approach in the scrum on the opposition's ball.
- Excellent technique when lifting for all lineout calls and their options.
- Excellent technique in a range of tackles.
- Excellent technique in identifying and clearing out at the breakdown.
- Excellent mauling technique.
- The skill of staying on my feet in contact.
- Excellent ball presentation/selection skills.

Tactical – 'I need to;'

- Have an excellent appreciation of our team's tactics.
- Run excellent support lines.
- Have good awareness of when to attend rucks and mauls.
- Be an excellent communicator.
- Understand my role in the defensive system.

Mental – 'I need to have;'

- The determination of a winner.
- A high work ethic.
- A ruthless mentality.

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- An approach that every game has the same importance.
- The attitude that I will never stop learning.
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