

VIDEO ANALYSIS – OR PARALYSIS? BY KEITH RICHARDSON, TECHNICAL JOURNAL EDITOR

The video recording of the match is almost universally necessary nowadays and clubs, to put it politely, at the lower end of league status often have their own club version of Cecil B. de Mille on the touchline with a host of recent Christmas presents. Some clubs go as far as paying a company to carry out the work for them so that Coach can have his fix on Sunday afternoon. As if watching it once wasn't bad enough!

Getting the video is the relatively easy part of the equation. What, as rugby coaches all over the world ask, happens next? If the video has been trouble-free, the coach can take it off with him straight after the match and he can try to book viewing time on the TV/VCR if the rest of the family allow it. As most of them will probably equate rugby with parental (male) obsession and absence from the family womb, he may have problems in this area but he will get to a screen sometime.

What, though, does the coach want? Does he simply want to watch the game again now that his blood pressure is not squirting out of his ears or is there a more altruistic motive of trying to get some reliable information through statistics that might help him and the players?

Stats are simple. You shell out thousands of pounds, employ a technician and he can produce just about anything you require; you name it, he will be able to do it. Just about the only thing the technician will not be able to do is to turn a loss into a win, but fear not, technology may well be working on that one.

There will be very few clubs outside the Premiership who can afford a dedicated system and somebody to produce the stats for coaches and players. The normal club will be stretched to stay financially afloat with such technology and the results would hardly justify such a massive expenditure.

So what can the coach do? He can watch the video and jot down some glaring extremes of very good and very bad; he will be able to spot individual errors and unit lapses; the referee will no doubt be put under scrutiny and the coach will have his own second opinion of what happened. But how to get stats? That is a very complex pursuit and it takes hours if it is to be done properly.

There will be many individual ways of carrying out the stats search and the Journal would be very pleased to hear from coaches everywhere on what they do. One relatively

simple method that I have used does work, is relatively time friendly (it still takes hours) and gives you a weekly record on each player.

This is how it works. You use a dictaphone and record ticks or crosses against players or units as the tape plays. The tape may sound something like:-

- 12 ✓ Tackle.
- 2 x Poor throw.
- 7 ✓ Excellent pass from contact.
- 15 x Cowardice.
- LO x Missed call own line.
- 9 x Knock on at scrum.
- And on and on for a very long time.

You end up with a list of taped comments, listen to it and jot down the tick or cross and comment against each player and you end up with a list for each individual and some units in the side. A player, say the scrum half, might get a list that looks like this:-

- ✓ Excellent break 4 minutes.
- x Crooked feed – free kick.
- x Knock on.
- ✓ Pass from contact.
- ✓ Try.
- ✓ Tackle.
- ✓ Tackle+.
- x Missed tackle.
- ✓ Blind side choice.
- ✓ Pass from 8 – 9 – 15.
- ✓ Drop goal.

This is a very rough and ready method but it does, surprisingly, help players and coaches. You have to let each player have his list and he can do with it what he wishes. The coach, however, has a cost-efficient, weekly snapshot of his players and it is interesting that the same comments seem to appear against the same player(s) each week. That in itself is useful information if the coach wants to help players to improve. It is perfectly acceptable to tell any player that he was not very good at X, Y or Z. The coach's assessment is more easily accepted if the player has had a weekly report on his game and he is already aware of what he needs to work on.

We tend to use the 'bright eyed' method of player assessment and most coaches will be able to assess his players pretty accurately. This simple method, however, does add a little more depth to any such assessment and, crude as it may appear, it works. You soon see who is getting mainly ticks and who is earning crosses. Improvements can be seen immediately, as can deterioration in standards. Units can be checked out, kicking from

hand or floor can be compared each week, players can keep their report in a file and the coach will certainly want to have a copy for reference.

The part of the assessment that players like best is how well they tackled and it is well worth having a tackle list in the changing room so that the team can turn the tackle into a competition. You can have grades of tackle from 'tackle' to 'tackle+'. You can also have 'missed tackle'.

This is one simple system and it has worked for me. It would be interesting to hear of any other ways of doing the job, as many coaches really do not know what to do with the video once they have watched it.