

**START RUGBY COACHING –
A COACHING RESOURCE FROM THE RFU.
BY
DAN COTTRELL.**

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www.beterrugbycoaching.com*

This is one resource that the new rugby coach won't want to part with! Can you remember your first ever session as a coach? Did you get a knot in the stomach or a dry mouth as you referred to a bundle of notes because you didn't know whether you had covered everything? And one thing is almost certain; you would not have done a course - well not at that stage.

Most coaches will have experienced that feeling of fear at some stage, but imagine you have not played rugby for a few years and you are asked to coach a group of youngsters *this* weekend. What are you going to do?

Perhaps you will do what I did - read up on anything you can, speak to as many people as possible and then hope you are prepared for the day. In the end I covered too much, didn't keep to the key points and, though the kids learned something, I could have been so much better prepared. When I now think back to my own experiences of starting to coach, it makes me realise that there was a real dearth of clear instruction and advice for the complete novice. That's why I think the new RFU Start Rugby Coaching pack, aimed at coaches who are moving towards Level 1, will go down so well.

The box of forty six double-sided laminated cards covers all the coach needs to get him/herself ready to take a session – whether it be on, for instance, tackling, handling or the scrum. In terms of convenience and coverage, the pack is ideal for the starter coach. This could easily be an interested dad who has to give his first session to his son's/daughter's team or for the ex-player who has just stepped into the breach to look after the senior side. It is so convenient because the cards can fit into the pocket or even the sock of the coach. The lamination offers protection from the usual rigours of kit bags, the rain and heavy handling from lots of use.

Gary Henderson, the RFU coach development manager who compiled this guide, has covered all the basics. It is the starting point that should satisfy the needs of every coach who is looking at any coaching area for the first time. The activities are aimed at younger players, but can easily be adapted for older ones as well.

The pack is divided into five areas.

The **grey** colour-coded section covers the key Laws of the Game, especially things like ruck and maul, lineouts, scrums and offside. It also includes a handy guide to the Continuum stages, invaluable at the start of the new season as you move up to the next age grade. Also in the grey section are an excellent couple of cards on *how* to coach. As a senior coach, it was a timely reminder of good practice. Finally, there are the usual, but essential, safety notes.

Warm up games and small sided games are set out in the **red** section. This area is as important as technique in introducing players to making the right decisions under pressure in a fun environment. Talk to the coaches at the top of the game and they will emphasise that this is just as relevant for the pro game as it is for beginners.

In the **dark red** part of the pack there are handling and passing activities. Included are drills on the main types of passing with simple illustrations and instructions, developments and, crucially, the coaching points. The more experienced and confident coach can easily adapt these drills to suit his own needs.

Moving onto the more difficult stage of continuity in contact– in other words, taking contact, making tackles and coaching rucks and mauls - this is covered by the **dark green** coded cards. The drills are easy to implement and there is more detail on what you should be looking for in terms of the players' techniques.

The often neglected, but just as essential, core skills of running and evasion are examined in the **light green** section. Lots of these drills are fun diversions from the nitty-gritty contact and are ideally interposed in every practice.

So what was the reaction of a novice coach to this new resource? “When can I have it back?” was his desperate plea when I asked to borrow it to write this piece. He was starting his second year of coaching and was with the Under 9s, just moving into contact for the first time. I had lent him the pack to see how it worked for the less experienced coach.

The feedback was as follows: first, his practices were more focused, started with a game the kids enjoyed and there was a clear outcome; second, the cards were put back in the box in a muddled fashion, but it didn't matter, because they were robust and colour coded, so it wasn't difficult for him to use them again. Be fair, most coaches are not the greatest filers.

“I need them to remind myself on areas I couldn't quite remember, give me reassurance on parts of the game I was not sure on and guidance in my weakest areas,” he said. “It gave me lots of starting points, something which can be a bit of a challenge when you are wearing all the different hats involved in looking after a team of young players. The size, simplicity and clear instruction made it easy to ‘pick and go’ when seeking a suitable practice. I recognise the importance of moving up the levels on courses, but to get me going, this was more than enough.”

So for this coach there were no more knots in the stomach or scrabbling around for his notes. This pack offered him the chance to get down to what he really wants to do – start coaching rugby.

If you want to find out more or want to apply for the resource, the details of the approved centres are on the following page. Just get in touch with the one nearest you.

RFU COACHING DEPARTMENT- REGIONAL APPROVED CENTRES

From August 1st 2006

Approved Centre	Counties	Key Contact	Administrat or Name	ADDRESS	Tel & Fax	E mail
North	Durham, Northumberland, Yorkshire, Cumbria, Cheshire, Lancashire	Ian Thompson ianthompson@rfu.com 07738 029110 Joe Murphy joemurphy@rfu.com 07738 029109	Carnegie Sports Awards Team	Leeds Metropolitan University, Carnegie Annexe, Headingley Campus, Leeds, LS6 3QS	Tel: 0113 283 7437/ 7438 Fax: 0113 283 3204	sportsawards@leedsmet.ac.uk
Midlands	North Midlands Staffordshire Warwickshire, Notts/Lincs/Derby East Midlands & Leicestershire,	Nick Scott nickscott@rfu.com 07738 029112 Ian Bletcher ianbletcher@rfu.com 07764 699642	Helen Bridgeman	RFU – Midlands East Coaching Administrator Rugby House, Wellingborough School, Irthlingborough Road Wellingborough, NN8 2BX	01933 222218	northmidsdevelopment@fsmail.net
South East	Kent, Surrey, Essex, Sussex Middlesex. Hertfordshire, Eastern Counties	Jon Bates jonbates@rfu.com 07764 336709 Tony Robinson tonyrobinson@rfu.com mobile no TBC	Hannah Bailey	RFU Coaching Administrator Dorothy Stringer Sports College Loader Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 6PZ	01273 852208	Londonsouthcoaching@therfu.com
South West	Gloucestershire, Somerset, Devon, Cornwall, Dorset & Wilts. Hampshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire	Gary Townsend garytownsend@rfu.com 07738 029111 Nevil Jeffery nevilleffery@rfu.com 07764 336 705	Helen Gould	RFU South West Region Coaching Administrator Hartpury College, Hartpury, Gloucestershire.	01452 702119	Helen.gould@hartpury.ac.uk
Twickenham	Army, Royal Navy & Royal Air Force	Gary Henderson garyhenderson@rfu.com 07740 565067	Kerry Duval	Rugby Football Development Limited, Rugby House, Rugby Road, Twickenham TW1 1DS	0208 831 7499	Kerryduval@rfu.com