

## EDITOR'S NOTES

### 5.2.08

Ian 'Spike' Milligan from Swaffham ([www.swaffhamrugby.com](http://www.swaffhamrugby.com)) sent in the following observations after reading last week's article by David Beck about the Alpha Male. He makes some interesting points about the differences between coaching girls and boys – and about how they seem to practise differently.

Do you have any observations or thoughts on the subject? Should there be a slightly different emphasis on coaching different sexes, or will a single method/approach suit all in the end?

There will never be 'proof' that one method is better than another, but experienced observation and experience counts for a lot in how to coach. So, if you have anything to add, please do send it to the Editor by email. The length of the piece is not important – but do try to add something to what could be an interesting topic of debate. (Email: [keithrichardson@therfu.com](mailto:keithrichardson@therfu.com))

Ian Milligan's piece is below:

"Having just read today's Technical Journal, I was initially running through how I can use this in my team in approaching a particular challenge I have. However, the article then got me thinking about the focus of the alpha male and how this works in our new girls' section. We set the section up at the start of this year and are mainly focusing on the Under 15 age group where we have built numbers up to around eighteen players now.

In the few training sessions I have taken, and in others I've observed, it is very clear that a totally different approach is needed to coach the girls effectively. For example, with the boys' squad you can very quickly set up a scenario and throw them into it. They will not have listened but will have a clear *thought* of what they just heard, so a series of stops and adjustments is needed to guide them into the areas I want to focus on - and even then the tendency to excel as an individual is still strong in them. An example might go along the following lines: we are going to run a quick session on using an overlap to allow a winger to score, we set up 4 v 5 practice then start. The first pass is good, but the runner tries to break the line and ignores the overlap as he thinks he can score.

Having tried the same approach with the girls' team, they want to check understanding, ask loads of questions (normally very loudly and at the same time) and ensure, as a group, that they understand what is required; then they go out and execute the move with coaching only needed on the technical aspects of the timing of the pass, running lines etc.

The girls also seem to work as a team and are supportive and positive with their

team-mates, both on and off the pitch. There is a huge range of skills within the squad, with total beginners playing alongside girls who are at CB, or higher, representative levels. These differences don't seem to show in their training or playing and they all work hard for each other. Comparing this to the boys again, there are times when, due to criticising or arguing during a match, the boys' team performance has been negatively affected. Admittedly this is not the norm and they do generally work well as a team, but some relationships within it have been tested at times.

The boys' team definitely has alpha males and, as I said, the article will help address this - but it was interesting just making the comparison with the girls' squad."

Does this ring any bells in your coaching experience? What did you think of David Beck's theories on the Alpha Male? All replies will be gratefully received.

Keith Richardson (Editor).