

**ARPA – PERFORMANCE COACH PROGRAM 2017**  
**LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT TASK #9 – Greg Nelson**

**Analysis - as Coaches, are we doing enough ?**

**“Analysis: a detailed examination of anything complex to understand its nature or to determine its essential elements.”**

*“Coaches represent players, officials and supporters as the figurehead of the club. The coaches must be leaders. Continually analysing, studying, planning and assessing the game as it develops, while being aware of the capabilities of their team. Coaches must strive to bring out the best result possible for the group of players under their direction, and develop the team as both a group and as individuals.”*

*“The use of augmented feedback helps the players understand their own perceptions about the success of the outcome as a result of the information received through intrinsic feedback. This allows the players to have a continued successful performance if the outcome was good, or change their performance if it was not. It also allows the coach to differentiate between qualitative and quantitative feedback. Qualitative feedback is where the coaching staff tells the team on what they liked and did not like about a performance and how they can improve future performances, whereas quantitative feedback is based on the information gathered through performance analysis of the game and is presented through numerical scales. The positive effects from an outcome based feedback are generally observed during practice. The repetition of this feedback process allows the players to be guided to a correct response by being provided with enough information to encourage a change in their performance (O’Donoghue, 2006).”*

As rugby coaches, in general we analyse the matches we play with a fine-tooth comb. “Paralysis by analysis” is a term that I have heard used to criticise the practice. I agree, that we can sometimes get caught up in the statistical maelstrom. “Lies, damned lies and statistics” is a phrase describing the persuasive power of numbers, particularly the use of **statistics** to bolster weak arguments. Hopefully there aren’t too many coaches out there that rely on rubbery stats to justify their position to their players.

Lineouts won & lost, scrums won & lost, dominant carries, non-dominant carries, tackles made - dominant & non-dominant, tackles missed, passes made, kicks out of hand, involvements and so forth. All relevant to how the match will play out, in varying degrees.

Some coaches mine statistics that become cultural indicators within a group, like “L.O.Gs” (how long a player is lying on the ground post involvement) or “B.I.Gs” (how long before a player is back in the game post involvement).

Then the coach may look at statistics applicable to the style of game he wants to play e.g. offloads v dropped balls – a coach may be a little lenient on the dropped ball ratio if his team is sticking their offloads and making line breaks ; or kicks in general play v passes by your fly half – the coach may be happy to play the territory game and rely on his defence to create the pressure.

# ARPA – PERFORMANCE COACH PROGRAM 2017

## LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT TASK #9 – Greg Nelson

All the above stats, and many others, can be mined for a statistical comparison to ascertain the progress of the development of the group you are coaching, and on the surface of it, you may feel that by presenting these stats to your group or publishing them more widely, you have done your job as the coach in this area.

It could be argued that, given the amount of time you need to apply to the post-game day statistical task is quite substantial, (particularly if you are in a program without any electronic statistical help), you are already pushed for time to prepare your weekly training sessions and work on any deficiencies. And if you are not a full-time coach, this is a real issue. Work takes precedent - Sometimes to the detriment of your ambitions as a coach !

But are the stats the real reason that you are improving your group ? Is game day analysis the be all and end all ? Is it not your ability to convey your message, technical or otherwise, to each individual and then mould the often-disparate characters and cultures into a cohesive group with a common goal ? If this is true, then why don't we analyse ourselves as coaches more ?

We need to **analyse why we are coaching** to start with.

- **Why do you coach?**
- **What is your personal mission statement?**
- **What is your personal development plan?**
- **What are your strengths and weaknesses ?**
- **What is meant by being an effective/successful coach?**
- **How do you want to be remembered as a coach?**

**Analyse the needs of our players -**

- **What are their reasons for playing?**
- **What are their expectations for the season?**
- **What are the personal qualities they wish to see in a coach?**
- **What is their preferred coaching style?**
- **What are the cultural**

**In a recent study of more than 500 coaches, five distinct categories of coaching styles were identified.** There is, however, no one perfect style that leads to success. Most coaches possess certain characteristics of each coaching type but should be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of the various coaching styles. If coaches are able to identify some of their shortcomings, they are in a position to improve.

How do we analyse ourselves you ask ? The first thing is look at your planning.

The value of the yearly plan is unarguably important in the context of your season, but how many of us continually review and refine our plan to suit current circumstances ? Or how many of us have changed the plan without analysing the potential knock on effects of that change, and discover all too late that, you have missed an important cog in your team's development ?

# ARPA – PERFORMANCE COACH PROGRAM 2017

## LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT TASK #9 – Greg Nelson

For example, you may have reduced the amount of time allocated to cardio vascular endurance in favour of time in the gym to grow your squad. A logical decision on the surface, in this day and age of power rugby. But players still need to have endurance because what we do in rugby is run. The shortcomings of our plan will become apparent once the competition phase begins and your team are found out in the latter stages of the contest.

Remember that each phase of your plan is important to the subsequent phases. The following is an example of a basic yearly plan with the main points to address.

### **1. Transition phase (October-November)**

*This eight to 10-week period follows the intense competitive season. The aim during this time should be to maintain physical conditioning and facilitate recovery. The following principles apply to the transition phase.*

*a. Maintain a general level of fitness around 50 per cent to 60 per cent of the competition phase.*

*b. Change the training venue and alter the type of training.*

*c. Analyse past performance and construct a yearly plan for the new season.*

*During this period, players should stay active to maintain endurance fitness and control body weight. Off-season recreational activities are useful.*

*This period is the most suitable time for overcoming weaknesses in body structure, conditioning and skill.*

*Weight training programs, speed work and skill development can be carried out.*

### **2. Preparation phase (December-March)**

*During this time, the footballer's general physical preparation and skills can be developed. The early phase is a period of high volume training, which must be increased at a gradual rate.*

*Volume continues to increase progressively until the middle of the preparation phase when intensity is gradually increased as volume decreases. During the later stages of this phase, increasing emphasis should be placed on skill and strategy practice.*

*The following principles apply:*

*a. Provide a high volume of training at 30 per cent to 40 per cent intensity.*

*b. Aim to develop endurance, strength and speed as the foundation of the season ahead.*

*c. Progressively increase the workload devoted to improving individual skills*

### **3. Competition phase (April-September)**

*During the competition phase, coaches should emphasise skill practice and the development of team plays, while working to maintain fitness levels which were developed in the preparation phase.*

*Principles to apply include:*

*a. Maintenance and improvement in level of conditioning.*

*b. Develop and practise team plays and tactics.*

*c. Post-match recovery.*

**ARPA – PERFORMANCE COACH PROGRAM 2017**  
**LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT TASK #9 – Greg Nelson**

*d. Reduction in the volume and intensity of training before the finals.*

Coaching efficiency is heavily dependent on how well the coach is organised and how effectively the training plan is structured. Without revisiting this plan to analyse and assess the progress of your players and your coaching methods and processes, it is just a piece of paper.

**1. Training Sessions**

*We need to analyse each of our sessions individually with either a video review or a general coaching review post each session. This enables us to observe where we are most effective and where we are least effective as coaches and work to improve our weaknesses.*

*Analyse the number and type of drills that you include in the session. Also, their effectiveness for your group.*

*Are the drills fit for purpose ? You may have been using a drill for years and it has served you reasonably well, but a change in the Game Management Guidelines may render that drill obsolete. Therefore, you have to design your own or adapt someone else's drill for purpose. Analysis will tell you where you must move to.*

*Analyse the learning context you put your session in. A logical and smooth progression from one area to another will increase the understanding and enjoyment of the players. A disjointed training session with confusing transitions will only decrease the effectiveness of the session.*

*Perhaps ask the group to do a quick "Hot Debrief" immediately post session, with the Leadership Group leading the discussion ? This will give you a more player centric feeling in the process and give you another view of the analysis for the session.*

**2. Gameday**

*The coach needs to analyse what needs to be said at each of the following points on Gameday. A week's worth of hard work can be undone by a confusing pre-match prep.*

**Pre-match meeting.**

*This brief meeting should for example:*

*Eliminate any confusion and distraction.*

*Calm anxious players.*

*Unite all players in the sense of belonging to a team.*

*Clearly spell out the team-plan for the game with reference to the ground condition and opposition team.*

**General warm-up**

*The coach must maintain a calm approach and use this time to individually talk to players, giving final instructions and reassuring them with positive words of encouragement.*

**Pre-match address**

*Finally, just before going out on the ground, the coach should address the team as one.*

# ARPA – PERFORMANCE COACH PROGRAM 2017

## LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT TASK #9 – Greg Nelson

*The final instructions should provide a concise summary of the team plan with reference to the key areas of that plan. Concentrate on gaining the early initiative and working hard against the opposition. Look no further than the first quarter. Given the stress of the pre-match situation, footballers can only absorb a limited number of instructions, therefore the message should be brief.*

### **The Match**

*Be well-organised. A list of key trends to personally analyse i.e. gain line, attack shapes etc. will help with feedback to the players.*

### **In the coach's box/bench**

*An assistant coach or injured player can be used to note down key plays or instructions as they occur. Analysis of key factors can be useful for the half time address.*

### **Team runner**

*Use the runner to relay messages and to positively reinforce passages of team play. The runner can also provide feedback from the players to the coach. Messages sent to players must be about improving their performance and must be measured.*

### **Half Time Break Analysis**

*In the half-time address, utilizing the above feedback and analysis, the coach can review the first-half performance and suggest ways of improving the team effort in the second half.*

### **Post-match Analysis**

*Immediately after the game, briefly sit the players down and provide general feedback on the team's performance. A quick analysis can be shared according to the team's adherence to the game plan.*

*You might ask the players for feedback and their own analysis on what happened during the game.*

*'What did we do well?' Followed by 'What can we improve on?'*

*Listen carefully to the players' responses. Their analysis will provide valuable information on the team's performance. The coach is then able to plan training for the week ahead.*

### **Video Analysis**

*The wheel then turns to the video and statistical analysis where we start our planning and preparation again.*

As can be seen by the above representation, analysis is a key element of an effective coach's job.

My initial question of "Analysis – As coaches are we doing enough ?" is answered easily on the surface by saying emphatically no !

Analysis of the playing of the game of rugby is obviously one of the key tools in a coach's armoury, but the analysis of one's self is arguably more important. Without that analysis of ourselves how is one supposed to improve ?

Often, unfortunately we find ourselves surrounded by people that aren't, perhaps as honest with us as we would like. We've all heard the line from the Chairman or the Director of Rugby "The Coach has the Board's unequivocal backing." And 2 weeks later the coach is given his marching orders !

# ARPA – PERFORMANCE COACH PROGRAM 2017

## LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT TASK #9 – Greg Nelson

This serves to emphasise my point that we must take a long and regular look inwards to improve our coaching. We must take ourselves out of our comfort zone and analyse the why's and wherefores of our coaching.

Videoring our coaching sessions, but from a coach's viewpoint, is a great way to see ourselves in action. It is often uncomfortable initially to watch ourselves, (particularly if there are some things that you didn't realise you did !) but over time you get used to the raw honesty that this medium presents.

Another tool in a coach's feedback network is the use of a coach mentor. A mentor can give you a range of tools that you can use.

His/her analysis (there's that word again) of your coaching sessions is the obvious benefit but they can offer you tips and opinions on all aspects of your coaching, including what happens away from coaching. I personally have used a couple of persons in this type of role and it has benefitted me greatly in many areas, including my work life !

### **CONCLUSION**

A study by Zukhanye Magwa of the Stellenbosch University in South Africa, 2015 found that

*“the majority of coaches involved in high level coaching in South Africa valued performance analysis and used it consistently to inform their coaching. Furthermore, the highest level of coaches who participated in this study, namely the provincial coaches, had most access to PA, used it more often and indicated that PA guided them consistently in their coaching.”*

If we as coaches value performance analysis to ascertain the level of skill & execution of our players, then why not turn the camera around and focus it on ourselves to analyse and assess our own performance ?