

Assignment for Level 4 Coaching

Topic: Australian Rugby Pathways

Being a boutique sport in one of the most competitive markets in the world, Rugby Union has always been a generational sport with their achievements but with the increasing pressure from other sports poaching each others talent, I believe Australian Rugby is going backwards at an alarming rate and if we don't allow a successful pathway for our young talent, I believe we will struggle to compete against the world's best.

Haven't played/coached in the Shute Shield and Brisbane Club competition (only played) these competitions are pivotal to the success of Australian rugby for multiple reasons. Our talent being nurtured and developed, players continuing to press for rugby elitism (85% of current contracted players played in these two competitions) and of course the backbone of all sports our 3rd, 4th and 5th grade sides that simply love and support the game. In the early days of professional rugby, players were able to be plucked from club rugby and not be too far off the pace in Super Rugby but fast forward 20 years and the gap has astronomically increased as I witnessed that first hand when I was coaching in the NRC competition in 2016 with all Shute shield amateur players and the NRC wasn't close to the attributes required to play at Super rugby level.

In recent years the relationships between our clubs and our governing body the ARU have slowly deteriorated with continual criticism from clubs administrations believing the ARU have not helped with funding for grass roots and the development of the game but no clubs administrations are taking responsibility for where they currently sit and continual poor decisions they have made. Everything is about winning a premiership and not creating a successful HPU to continually grow their talent and the game of rugby.

When coaching in the Shute Shield and NRC competitions, I was able to see Australia's elite club competition and what I believe to be our most important competition we have, The NRC.

Shute Shield to me is a very good club competition but has different levels of success, with the stronger/richer clubs continuing to grow positively whilst clubs that struggle off the field with sponsorship/money will continue to deteriorate. Having seen first hand the administrations that have run our clubs, I understand why our clubs are crying poor because the poor decisions made by club Presidents and treasurers have been Unbelievable! The things that happen out West in the Penrith Emus, was not only disgraceful but also actually illegal! And this has happened for far too long. If our game wants to improve, firstly we need people running our clubs that know what they doing! I understand most roles are volunteer roles and require a huge amount of time but this is where I believe the ARU can help and govern. There should be a direct reporting

structure to the ARU and over a period of time, I believe the clubs can then become financially secure and have a strong administration to help develop the rugby program. The rugby program needs to also support the administration for example: If players need to be disciplined due to wrong actions, they miss games of rugby!!!

From a rugby-playing point of view, I believe the Shute Shield competition needs a training squad of 50 players or have NRC training squads (obviously this only applies to Sydney as all other NRC squads train with their Super Rugby Franchise). There are ample amount of players running around in Shute Shield that could possibly move to the next level and compete against contracted players in the NRC and I understand its been made more difficult because the Sydney NRC sides are privately owned and each year it is about getting the best contracted players you can. I was amazed when sitting in a meeting with The NSW coaching staff and the head coach did not care where his players played or what position?? If they were my players, I would want to see certain players playing in certain positions for the following years Super Rugby tournament and to see how they would play against the "best other players in Australia".

That last statement "Best other players in Australia" is what we should be turning the NRC into, with Super rugby teams allowing to extent their squads by contracting players from their local club competitions. This is where the money should go instead of club rugby handouts as the clubs have not used this money properly or would ever know how to unless instructed! With 60 contracts over the last 4year going to under 20 players, this to me has been a massive mistake. Over that 4year period, I couldn't see more than 70-75 contracts been awarded as we only have 175 contracted players (35 each squad). I believe the NRC competition could possibly turn into something similar to the AFL draft but you have rugby games included. We should use this competition to contract players and as a genuine pathway for players to be contracted. NSW should buy back the 3 NRC franchises, as I know Eastwood is moving the Rams out of Sydney Greater West and more towards Dural/Sydney North West and with ties with Manly. (We do not have a presence in Western Sydney and we need to fix this immediately. Having been associated with the Penrith Emus for a year, the debacle that has continued out there is a disgrace to our game. As stated earlier, a strong administration with reporting structures to the ARU and NSW rugby with strong fines imposed for non-appliance and the talent pool out West is enormous!) Eastwood will also use this NRC Franchise to strengthen their club and if this currently structure continues, I do not blame clubs for investing money to make themselves better.

I believe we can turn the NRC competition into something special and continue to add Pacific Island teams to the competition as this will allow funding from the IRB, increased television/crowds at games, sponsorship opportunities and of course better players to be selected for the Wallabies! I also love the direction of the ARU by starting an Under 19's NRC competition, which could be run similar to the main competition with player stats like the AFL draft. All Australian players should go into a draft system with the players Franchise having the final counter offer. NSW has been supplying players to all other Super rugby

franchises since the beginning of professionalism in 1996, if we want to become number one again there has to be a collective agreement to develop players and for players to have the option to move even at the expense of the developing franchise as “what goes around, comes around”.

Scheduling is to me the biggest issue rugby union has always faced. Club competitions, NRC, Super Rugby and The Wallaby domestic and European tours. The strain on our elite players and traveling is exhausting and no time is given for players to regenerate their bodies for longevity in the game. A lot of the scheduling revolves around the availability of grounds and television broadcast games and I understand it's a major issue each year and rugby union has had to adjust many times with other codes as their popularity gains and we continue to receive negativity due to our Wallaby performances.

I believe the NRC should run in conjunction with Super rugby so reserve players get much needed game time and club rugby starts later in the year and potential into the summer (which only competes against the A-league on pay television.) This will also allow clubs to benefit with Wallaby/Super Rugby players to come back and play club rugby and from that season there is a squad or squads selected to train over the summer with S & C coaches as well as skill coaches that teach the fundamentals agreed to by all coaches (The list we were shown at the AIS camp) I believe this is one of the biggest steps forward in the professional era!!

These are only my ideas that I have thought of during this course and what I have learnt about the development of player's bodies to teaching skill and learning how to develop a successful HPU and how incredibly important it is. WE need many things to change with Rugby union in Australia and I hope things change quickly with our club rugby administrators working correctly, our scheduling of competitions to allow better development of players through our competitions and of course a collective vision for the game from all stakeholders and one direct pathway we can all agree on and follow!