



YOUTH COACHING MANUAL



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YOUTH COACHING MANUAL

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Keeping them playing

By Chris Connolly, coach of Fremantle Football Club.

Welcome to the AFL Youth Coaching Manual, which I hope you will find an invaluable resource as you embark on the considerable adventure of coaching footballers of secondary school age.

This is a very important time in the lives of young people and for their involvement in sport and physical activity. It is a time in which we want to maintain their active involvement in our great game and, as a coach, you will play a critical role in their development and enjoyment of the game. Indeed, recent AFL research has shown that there is no more critical factor for young people in deciding whether they will continue to play or to drop out of football than the way in which coaches approach their role.

Coaching can be very satisfying and those of us coaching at senior AFL level can appreciate that as much as anyone. Watching a young player competently showing their skills under pressure before big crowds of supporters is a real thrill. We also know that the foundations of their development through their junior years that led to them becoming AFL players was the work of others. That was achieved by coaches, teachers and parents like you who first introduced them to the game and nurtured them along the way.

Coaching players of secondary school age can be very challenging and at the same time very rewarding. Coaches, as teachers, role models and leaders, can exert a big influence, not only over young players' football experiences and development, but also, in many other elements of their lives. Through coaching you will build life enduring relationships with young footballers as you assist to develop their values and behaviours that they will carry through life.

As a former secondary school physical education teacher and coach of the Eastern Ranges in the TAC Cup (under 18) competition, I have a real understanding of young people and their sporting aspirations. The new Level 1 Youth Course and this supporting manual will greatly assist youth team coaches in effectively fulfilling their roles.

As well as the usual core information about skills and tactics, this manual comprehensively explores the extremely important social and interpersonal skills required of effective coaches, particularly important with this age group, and other issues associated with youth welfare in the football environment.

We must do everything we can to make the experience of playing Australian Football as enjoyable and fulfilling as possible for this age group so that we provide the best possible environment to encourage them to continue to participate. This is equally important whether they may be the future AFL star or the local league battler continuing to participate to ensure they and their friends have a team to play for. All form part of the lifeblood and future of our game. This manual will help you develop the capacity to fulfil that important coaching outcome.

As a coach who has progressed through the various stages of the coaching pathway and someone who regularly presents in the coach education program in Western Australia, I strongly recommend that all youth coaches undertake at least an AFL Level 1 Youth Accreditation Course. AFL Coach Accreditation is now mandatory in most leagues and associations around Australia.

Good luck with your coaching



Chris Connolly
Senior Coach
Fremantle Football Club



Using this Manual

By Lawrie Woodman, AFL National Coaching Development Manager.

This AFL Youth Coaching Manual provides a specific framework for coaching youth footballers. Youth is defined as secondary school aged (13-17) players.

This is a critical period in the lives of young people and is a time where they are faced with regular decisions about how to spend their time, including their continued participation in sport and physical activity. From detailed research we know that the quality of coaching they receive is a critical factor in deciding whether they will continue to participate or drop out.

As part of a review of the National Coaching Accreditation Scheme (NCAS), the AFL has developed a new Level 1 Youth Coaching course, aimed specifically at coaches of youth teams. The content and structure of the course is based on the developmental needs of players in these age groups.

The AFL has brought together acknowledged experts from its coaching and development staff, the general sporting community and specific youth-focussed agencies to produce this manual. The manual has been developed specifically to support the AFL Level 1 Youth Course which has been introduced throughout Australia in 2004. More than that, it is a comprehensive reference about youth sport issues which will be valuable to coaches at all levels.

It is AFL policy that coaches of teams in affiliated clubs and leagues hold current accreditation to ensure that they have had a basic level of training to prepare them for this important role. Those who are coaching youth teams now have the opportunity to participate in a course which is oriented around the youth target group and focussed very specifically on the tasks youth coaches will be expected to carry out in their crucial role.

As well as the appropriate football-specific content for youth players, the manual has sections dealing with the characteristics and motivations of youth footballers, effective coaching methods and communication skills for youth coaches and youth welfare issues which may be related to the football environment.

The manual will be distributed as a specific resource for the Level 1 Youth Coaching Courses. It provides further reinforcement for the important principles which are presented during the courses and coaches will find it an excellent on-going reference as they go about the task of coaching young players.

I encourage all Australian Football coaches to visit the "Coaches' Box" (in 'About the AFL') on the AFL website afl.com.au to keep up to date with latest information about coaching football in general and youth coaching in particular. The site contains a wealth of information about coaching and new material is added regularly.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Lawrie Woodman', is positioned below the text. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Lawrie Woodman
National Coaching Development Manager,
AFL Game Development

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