

Coaching HANDBOOK



“It’s not just **WHAT** you coach, it’s **HOW** you coach”



Table of **CONTENTS**

Welcome MESSAGE

The HOW

The WHAT

Warm UPS

Deliberate PRACTICE

Deliberate PLAY

Requirements ADMINISTRATION

Non-NEGOTIABLES

Player Development FRAMEWORK

Pathways

Female & Male PATHWAYS

Concussion MANAGEMENT

Websites & Links

Contact US

Welcome

MESSAGE

Welcome to the Cessnock Minor Rugby League Club!

A big thank for putting your hand up to coach!
We are so thankful you are here to help us make Junior Rugby League safe, fun and welcoming for everyone.

Our main goal is to ensure everyone feels included in Rugby League, and you play a crucial role in making our club friendly, respectful, and effective.

As a coach you will have a big impact on our players', not just as players but as people. Playing community Rugby League teaches crucial life lessons, and the way you lead the team can make a real positive difference if done correctly.

This information booklet has been designed to guide and help you create an environment where kids can feel safe, have fun and get better at playing the game they love.

Please remember to enjoy your coaching journey and don't be afraid to ask for help! We are here to support you, support our players!

Dan Ebert - Club President

The HOW

Teaching Style Shapes Success:

Ask yourself: what kind of coach would have more of a significant impact on a player, the stressed, critical figure always pointing out flaws, or the relaxed, positive coach who asks questions, listens to your response and fosters a fun and enjoyable environment?

All our coaches are trained and dedicated to nurturing well-rounded footballers through holistic development. Emphasising "the 4 C's" – confidence, competence, connection, and character. Research consistently proves that focusing on these 4 pillars is the most effective way to foster success both on and off the field.

It is important to understand: *'They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.'*

TIP – Create a learning environment, not a lecture:

Good coaches don't simply give away all the answers. They ask players questions to help them figure things out on their own. Instead of always telling them what to do, try guiding players to think and find solutions by asking questions. For instance, instead of saying, 'Mate, you should have just held the ball!' you might ask, 'It's okay, what do you think you could do next time?' This approach doesn't dent their confidence; it helps players learn and improve while enjoying the game.

This encourages players to think strategically and make decisions during the game. It's about trying things out and learning through understanding, not simply memorising what the coach says.

The **WHAT**

What to coach at training?

Knowing "what" to teach means thinking about who you're coaching—kids, teens, or adults, and what they need at their stage of development. For the little ones, you will focus purely on fun, basic skills like scoring tries, staying in play and understanding the game. As they grow, gradually advance and understand when to introduce more technical and tactical elements to their game. Remember, everyone's different, so tailor coaching to each player. It's not just about skills; it's about teamwork, being fair, and helping players in life, not just on the field. Teach respect, inclusivity, and teamwork building, not just good players, but good people who make a difference beyond the game.

What should training look like?

Stepping back and observing an effective rugby league training session likely will not reveal a perfectly polished scene, and that is by design. Rugby League is a dynamic, often messy game, and training should reflect the same. The focus is not solely on immaculate execution; it is about players learning to navigate and solve problems within the chaos. Every session is an opportunity for players to confront challenges, from perfecting passes to coordinating strategies, all while sporting smiles and sharing laughter.

Unlike the past, where training was often intense and serious, today's sessions embrace a more relaxed yet purposeful atmosphere. Problem solving is woven into every aspect, encouraging players to think on their feet and find solutions. This approach recognises that learning isn't just about flawless techniques but about adapting to the unpredictable and relishing the process. So, from an outsider's perspective, a training session might appear less about perfection and more about embracing the beautiful mess, where laughter, problem solving, and a collaborative spirit reign supreme.

Warm UPS

Make them fun!

Do's: Warm-ups are a must for everyone, and they can be way more fun than you think. Why not make them exciting by turning them into a game, maybe a quick relay race or a friendly competition. When players compete during warm-ups, they not only get their bodies ready but also boost team spirit. It's a win-win!

Don'ts: Avoid making warm-ups boring, like sending kids on laps. Instead, skip the monotonous routines and focus on activities that spark their interest. Competition is great, but make sure it's friendly and inclusive. Steer clear of overly serious or stressful activities; the goal is to energize and prepare, not to overwhelm. Remember, a bit of healthy competition can turn a routine warm-up into something players look forward to.

Physical literacy

Physical literacy holds immense significance, especially for the U6-U12 age group. Participating in activities such as crawling, jumping, stepping, and experimenting with diverse movements contributes not only to the development of proprioception but also nurtures confidence and competence. In recognising the importance of this developmental phase, the NRL has introduced specially designed mascot moves that specifically target these areas.

You can explore these moves in detail by [clicking here](#)

Deliberate PRACTICE

Opens and Closed Practice (Drills)

Closed Practice:

Think of Closed Practice as a low-pressure activity that hones in on specific movements and skills. For example, you might break down a skill like catching and passing, having players practice in a controlled environment with minimal pressure. This focused approach allows players to master the fundamentals of the skill itself.

Open Practice:

As you progress, Open Practice introduces more pressure, creating scenarios that mirror actual gameplay. Activities like Draw and Pass or a game of Scramble, where players engage in a 2-on-1 play while manoeuvring around cones, fall into the Open Practice category. These practice drills provide a dynamic, game-like setting where players can compete under varying levels of pressure, contributing to a more well-rounded and adaptable skill set.

Don't over-do it

Balancing practice and play is fundamental across all age groups and skill levels. For the U6-U12 age group, it's recommended to limit practice drills to a maximum of 25% of the session, with 75% dedicated to Deliberate Play. As players progress to the U13 and older age groups, the balance can shift, allowing for a maximum of 50% practice drills. However, it's crucial to understand that, even at the elite level, a significant chunk of the session involves deliberate play. This emphasises the importance of incorporating game-like situations, strategic challenges, and dynamic scenarios, ensuring that players, regardless of their level, develop both specific skills and the ability to adapt to the unpredictability of actual match conditions. Striking this balance fosters a comprehensive and enjoyable training experience for players at every stage of their development.

Deliberate PLAY

Let the game be the teacher

Deliberate play is a coaching approach that emphasises learning through the game itself, allowing players to develop skills in a natural and contextual setting. Unlike strict drills, deliberate play integrates the dynamics of real gameplay, incorporating decision making, adaptability, and strategic thinking. This method recognises that the best teacher for the game is the game itself.

Example: Enhancing Team Dynamics through Deliberate Play:

Let's say you're creating a session where you want players to focus on running in pairs to keep the opposition guessing.

- *Stage 1: Closed Practice Drill:* Start with a drill where players run together and practice passing in sync.
- *Stage 2: Open Practice Drill:* Progress to an open drill, introducing defenders to challenge players during the draw and pass.
- *Stage 3: Deliberate Practice: Two-handed Touch Rugby League:* Transition to a game that resembles Rugby League. After a few plays, freeze the game and present a challenge: "If you take a carry and don't have a partner running beside you as a support runner, your team loses the ball."

What Does This Achieve?

Introducing a specific challenge focuses on a key skill or principle. Players must problem solve, in this case, running in pairs to retain possession. The competitive nature of players naturally drives them to find solutions, and if someone struggles, the team collectively coaches themselves toward the correct approach. This deliberate practice not only refines skills but also instils a sense of teamwork and strategic thinking within the players.

Requirements

ADMINISTRATION

Register as a Coach

Before leading any team training sessions, coaches are required to register online as a coach via www.playrugbyleague.com.au. Failure to register online will result in lack of insurance coverage, potentially rendering individuals liable for any untoward incidents during sessions.

Current Coaching Accreditation

All coaches must possess a valid age-specific coaching accreditation before undertaking coaching duties for their respective teams. If you have not acquired one yet, a temporary age specific accreditation can be obtained by completing your teams age specific eLearning module at www.playrugbyleague.com/learn. Following this, attendance at the in-person course is necessary to finalise the accreditation process. Contact the club Coaching Co-Ordinator for more information regarding this process.

Current WWCC

All coaches and volunteers are required to hold a current Working With Children Check (WWCC) via Service NSW.

www.service.nsw.gov.au/services/working-with-children

Child Safety - Patrons of the Game

Our club is committed to promoting a safe environment for all children and young people. Patrons of the game are Coaches, First Responders, Match Officials and Club Volunteers. It is compulsory for all patrons of the game to complete the online course via www.playrugbyleague.com/learn.

Non-NEGOTIABLES

Welcome to CMRL Club, where safety, sportsmanship, and the sheer joy of play take precedence. Please understand that this is not the NRL – this level of football is run by dedicated volunteers, often still finding their footing and learning the ropes. The focus here is not solely on wins or losses; it's about nurturing young players, helping them build **confidence, competence, character** and **connection**.

Our players, coaches, and referees are all mums, dads, sons and daughters. Mistakes are going to happen and are a useful and inherent part of the learning journey. As a parent you now represent the CMRL. Showing respect and upholding integrity are paramount to the club's reputation.

Any form of abuse towards opponents, ground staff, referees or officials is completely unacceptable. Our core values revolve around creating an atmosphere that everyone can enjoy.

Upon registration, adherence to the National Code of Conduct is mandatory. Violating these principles could have repercussions for you, your child, their team, and our club. Please ensure compliance with the National Code of Conduct at all times.

[The National - Code of Conduct](#)

The NRL Positive Environment Program

The NRL Code of Conduct provides all participants – players, parents, coaches, referees, spectators and officials with some simple rules that assist in delivering a safe and positive environment to everyone involved in the game.

Within that safe environment, every Rugby League participant has the best chance to enjoy the game. By accepting the standards of behaviour in the Code, we provide opportunities for young boys & girls to grow on the field, we build good players, good citizens and good communities in which Rugby League is a social asset. It is strongly recommended that everyone connected with Rugby League adopts these rules as an essential part of the way they contribute to our great game.

According to the general principles of the code, participants are encouraged and expected to:

- show positive acts of sportsmanship,
- demonstrate the greatest levels of respect
- lead by positive example
- celebrate the “good news” stories
- accept that the integrity of the sport is of paramount importance.

Player Development FRAMEWORK



Tackle Ready Program - Tag Rugby League (Ages U5-U7)

Under 5 & 6:

U5's & U6's participate in a Tag Rugby League competition, focusing on a non-tackle format. During U5 & U6 training sessions, emphasis is purely on making friends, having fun, and gaining a basic understanding of the game.

Why?

A gradual learning environment is proven to be superior for the development of young players. Introducing contact too early at this age can be detrimental to a high percentage of players confidence. The phased approach gives everyone a chance to understand the game and build confidence without the immediate concern of contact, allowing for a more supportive and positive introduction to the sport.

Under 7:

Players continue within a Tag competition on game day but concurrently introduced to safe tackling techniques during training. Tackling training is conducted by an accredited Tackle Specialist from the NRL's Game Development Team, working alongside the team's coach. After every U7 team and player in the league completes six sessions of Tackle Ready training, they begin to transition into a Tackle Rugby League competition, having acquired essential skills in a controlled and supportive environment.

Why?

The phased approach ensures all players securely acquire essential tackling skills before entering full contact play. This leads to increased retention and a significant rise in participation. Beyond fostering confidence, the program creates an equitable playing field for development. Development is prioritised regardless of physical or mental maturity, ensuring a fair and inclusive introduction to the sport.

Player Development FRAMEWORK



Development Competitions: No Premierships Until U13

Purpose: Development Competitions are designed for ages U5–U12 to prioritise skill development, learning, and a positive sporting experience without the undue pressure of winning premierships.

Holistic Skill Development:

Kids are in the early stages of learning. Development Competitions help them grow into well-rounded athletes for a successful future.

Emphasising Learning, Not Just Winning:

Prioritising learning and improvement. Lets kids focus on honing skills, understanding the game, and nurturing a love for sports.

Inclusive and Positive Experience:

Welcoming all skill levels. Ensures no one feels left out, fostering a positive attitude towards sports.

Positive Social Interactions:

Creates a space for positive connections. Playing for fun encourages friendship, teamwork, and good sportsmanship.

Reduced Performance Stress:

Takes the pressure off always winning. Allows kids to enjoy the game, explore their abilities, and build a healthy relationship with competition.

Long-Term Athletic Development:

Focusing on growth for the future. Develops a strong foundation of skills, fitness, and mental toughness.

Exploring the Game:

Introduces various aspects of the sport. Encourages trying different roles, playing styles, and strategies.

Pathways

Aspiring the Rugby League Journey

Ages U5–U12: Sampling Phase

Kids explore different positions without pressure to win the championship. No scoreboard or finals; focus is on fun, giving it a go and team growth. Emphasis is on every players' development, not just the advanced players.

Turning 13: Entering Divisions

Teams move into different divisions based on experience and growth. Online ladders available; teams compete for top spots.

RISE Program (Ages U13–U15)

For aspiring young players. Helps develop technical, physical, and emotional skills. This program is owned by the NRL and rolled out by NSWRL.

Age U15 and Up: Representative Sides

NRL clubs and their Feeder Clubs will now recruit for Representative players. Top talent competes in U17, U19 or NSW Cup representative competitions. Open trials will be held locally toward the year's end via the Newcastle Knights Pathways.

Fair Opportunities – Cessnock Rugby League Seniors

Cessnock Rugby League Seniors do not show any favouritism in regards to representative selection. If your player aspires to go higher through the pathways as a Rugby League player, irrespective of their team or division, they will all have the same opportunity to join the RISE program and/or try out for representative squads.

Female **PATHWAY**



Under 13	Under 14	Under 15	Under 16	Under 17	Under 18	Under 18	Under 19	SENIORS
CESSNOCK MINOR RUGBY LEAGUE						CRLFC		
RISE DEVELOPMENT				LISA FIAOLA CUP	LISA FIAOLA CUP	TARSHA GALE CUP	HARVEY NORMAN CUP	NRLW

Male **PATHWAY**



Under 13	Under 14	Under 15	Under 16	Under 17	Under 18	Under 19	SENIORS	
CESSNOCK MINOR RUGBY LEAGUE					CRLFC			
KNIGHTS ACADEMY		ANDREW JOHNS CUP	HAROLD MATTHEWS CUP	Laurie Daley Cup	SG Ball Cup	Jersey Flegg Cup	NSW Cup	NRL
RISE DEVELOPMENT								

Concussion

MANAGEMENT

Immediate Action:

Remove player from play if they show any signs of concussion after contact (e.g., dizziness, confusion). Do not allow them to continue participating if they have had a suspected concussion.

Assessment:

Have an NRL accredited Sports Trainer evaluate the player in a quiet area away from the field. If a Concussion is suspected, the Sports Trainer will then complete an Injury Report via MySideline Manager.

You can find more information > www.hjrl.com.au/concussion

Medical Help:

The player will receive a link to view and download/print the Medical Clearance - HIA Form after the injury is logged via MySideline Manager. The player will need to contact their medical professional for evaluation and guidance. The medical professional will need to complete the NRL Community Head Injury/Concussion Medical Clearance form

Return Protocol:

The player will then need to follow the Return to Sport (RTS) Strategy and the Return to Learn (RTL) Strategy protocols.

Remember, a player who has suffered a concussion or potential concussion or exhibits the symptoms of concussion should not return to play in the same game (or on the same day), even if they appear to have recovered. Concussion is an evolving condition which may develop over minutes to hours (and sometimes days).

Websites

Stay connected with the pulse of Cessnock Minor Rugby League! Get the latest updates, club news, and essential registration information. www.cmrl.net.au

Play Rugby League

The one-stop shop for all you need to know about community Rugby League! Access the game's rules, development framework, as well as a wealth of educational resources covering first aid, coaching techniques, League Safe practices, and a heap of invaluable information www.playrugbyleague.com



Play Rugby League: The official website of the National Rugby League for Participation

Find your nearest Rugby League Club or Program and get involved as a player, referee or volunteer today!

playrugbyleague.com

MYLEAGUE App

The NRL MyLeague App is back and sharper than ever for another season of Rugby League. Players, Coaches and team supporters can keep track of their teams draw and progress with our new fixtures and ladder display, it's never been easier!

www.playrugbyleague.com/myleague/



MyLeague App - The official App of Grassroots Rugby League.

Find your teams fixtures, ladders and results or build custom training sessions from our library of coaching videos.

playrugbyleague.com

Contact US

We value your enquiry, whether you have questions, specific queries, or need detailed information.

Depending on the topic, enquiry or concern, in the first instance please contact your Team Manager or Coach.

If you have a concern you believe the Coach cannot resolve, please contact your age Co-ordinator.

If your concern is of a more serious allegation, please contact the Complaints Officer who will direct to the Club's relevant area.

President - Dan Ebert

Senior Vice President - Graham Bailey

Secretary - Kristi Case

Ass. Secretary - Kim Fullbrook

Treasurer - Damian Bultitude

Ass. Treasurer - Kim Fullbrook

Registrar - Kristi Case

Ass. Registrar - Belinda Blain

Mini Co-Ordinator - Naomi Stevens

Mod/Int Co-Ordinator - Belinda Blain

Female Co-Ordinators - Deb Swift / Cat Boorer / Fiona Callaghan

Coach Co-Ordinator - Matt Ambrum

FAO Co-Ordinator - Ed Harriden

Welfare, Development, Complaints Officers - Dan Ebert / Bridgette Burgess

Complaints Officer - Graham Bailey

Gear Steward - Chris Sharpe

Pathway Development - Jamie Perrin

Merchandise - Nicole Newsome & Kate Sharpe

Canteen Co-ordinators - Jess Fairlie, Cat Boorer, Fiona Callaghan

Social Media Officer - Michelle Schreiber

Grants - Damian Bultitude

3,2,1 - Fiona Wallace

Email

Secretary: secretary@cmrl.net.au

Website

www.cmrl.net.au

Address

197 Mt View Park, Mount View Road, Cessnock NSW 2325, Australia

Notes:

