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Organising Purposeful Games Based Activities

Our Coaching Journey

'Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail. Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go'. – *TS Eliot*

Going where nobody has gone before !

'I don't want to lean on someone else's ideas ……. a manager must always apply his own psychology to a situation because he knows his players and their mindset and the circumstances which made them what they are' – Cody pg 226

How can we coach this?

The Answer

We **can't** coach this but more importantly players **can** learn to play like this once given opportunity.

Coaching and Gaelic Games

- Coaching, despite 35 years of research, has yet to be fully understood (Source: "An Integrative Definition of Coaching Effectiveness and Expertise" - International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching (Volume 4 - Number 3 - 2009)
- We can say that there is no one right way to coach
- But we can identify incorrect methods of coaching
- Some approaches, including the traditional approach to coaching do not give us the outcomes we desire (Light, 2006)

Traditional Coaching Approach

- Law of Isomorphism (Puren 1988)
- Presumed that coach has knowledge and athletes require it
- Suited to average player, talented wasted time, weaker players withdraw
- Emphasis on technique – frustration, when can we play a game ??
- We have produced players who do not understand the game they play
- Too much focus on HOW it is done rather than WHEN, WHERE or WHY

Traditional session

Total Performance – 3T's & 3P's

- **Technical Proficiency-** The ability to perform the underlying playing techniques accurately, consistently and at match tempo – *know how*
- **Tactical Prowess** - The ability to weigh up match situations and to take the best available option – *know what and when*
- **Team Play** - The ability to anticipate and synchronise movements during play or set-piece situations – *know who and where*

Total Performance – 3T's & 3P's

- **Physical Fitness** - The ability to perform the underlying playing and movement skills with maximum impact and with minimum energy expenditure

- **Psychological Focus** -The ability to concentrate on the here and now and to withstand distractions from within or without

- **Participant Feedback** - The ability to review performance & overcome the internal and external distractions which militate against the team achieving its full potential

How do we fit the 3 T's & 3 P's to this view of our games?

Attack

- Scoring (attacking aspect)
- Keeping Possession (defensive aspect)

Defence

- Defending the goal (defensive aspect)
- Turning over possession (attacking aspect)

This view of our games brings 3 major problems for players and coaches !

- 1) Problems related to space and time
- 2) Problems related to information
- 3) Problems related to organisation

Another Issue

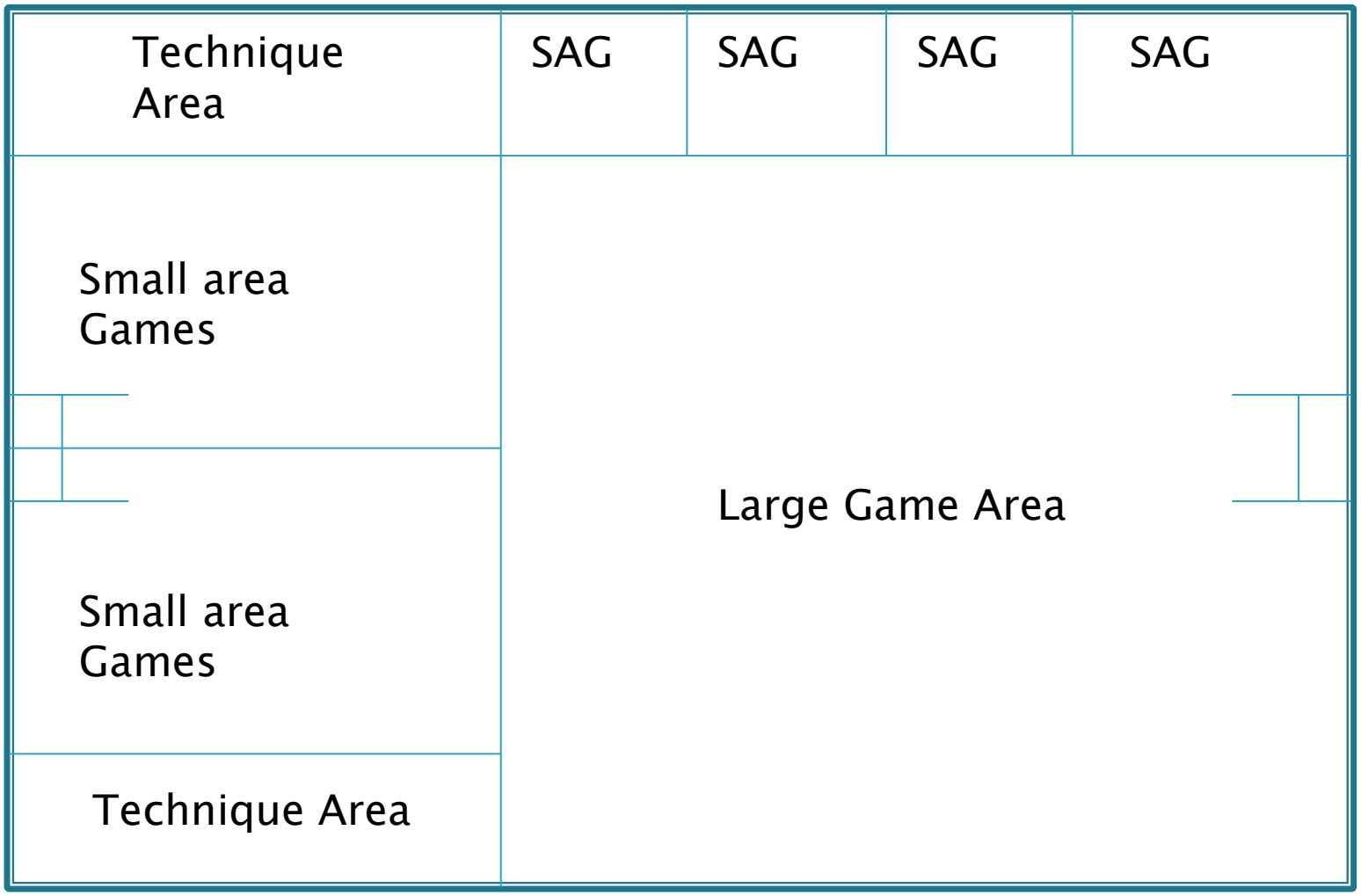
Game Analysis – Senior inter-county hurler 10 possessions @ 2 seconds each on average (Young 2003). This equals 20 seconds or less than 1% of the game. How do players learn how to play the other 99.5% of the game?

How does games based training answer these issues?

- Game Sense, Play Practice, TGFU are all approaches to coaching and teaching that use games as a learning tool to:
  - **develop tactical and strategic thinking**
  - **develop game-paced skills**
  - **develops on-field independence**

Traditional coaching v Games Based Approach

Traditional Approach	Games based Approach
Warm Up	Warm Up
Skills Practice	Game followed by questioning
Repeated Drills	Play Analysis (tactical/ technical)
Small sided Games/ Game	Game followed by questioning Repeat Cycle
Cool Down	Cool Down


Technique Area
SAG
SAG
SAG
SAG
Small area Games
Small area Games
Technique Area
Large Game Area

The process

- Select a theme for the session
- Announce teams in changing room
- Play larger game for at least 12 mins and observe
- Analyse and Question (60 secs)
- Play Practice – observe (max 5 mins)
- Feedback
- Repeat Game
- Repeat Cycle

Shaping play

- Shaping play is about teaching through the game; it involves manipulating one or more of the variables that form the game.
- Rules
- Number of players
- Size of the playing area
- Differentiated Scoring
- Equipment

Games based approach to coaching Gaelic Games

7v 7
9v9
11v 11
13 v 13
15 v 15

These games should form the basis of your coaching session

Freeze it

Small sided games
Drills
Technique Work

Fix it

Focusing Play - Freeze it – Meaningful Questioning

Traditional G.A.A Coaching Language	Games Based training Approach
Spread out will ye	Where could you move to create space ?
Will ye mark up	Should you man mark or zonal mark ?
Will ye talk to each other	What can we do lads to make sure we all know what each other are doing ?
Keep him outside you	Where do you want to push him and why?
Come off his shoulder	How can we best support the player in possession?

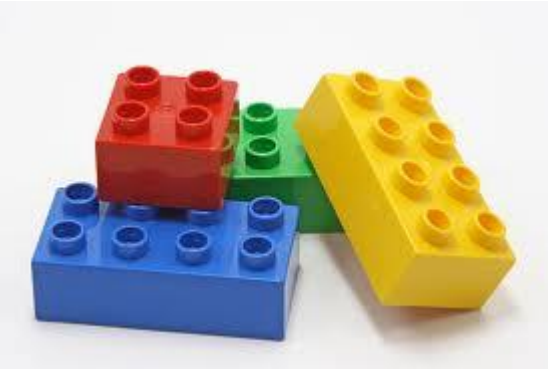
Approaches to Coaching

The benefits of a game-sense approach are:

- Allows for a player-centred problem solving approach
- Empowers players to think for themselves
- Creates effective long term learning since the players are learning/discovering things for themselves
- Games intrinsically motivate the players, creating an environment that is both challenging and enjoyable
- Games set physical and mental challenges that encourages the understanding of tactics
- Encourages players to use and develop perception and decision making

The foundation blocks of the games based approach

- **Understanding why youths play Gaelic Games**
- **Understanding the coaching climate that youths learn best in**
- **Understanding why youths will commit to keep playing Gaelic Games**



Why youths choose to play Gaelic Games

To have fun

To be with their friends

To improve skills

For the excitement of competition

To be part of a team

To win

Climates in which youths learn best

Significant others care about their development

When Coaches understand participation motivation

Where Enjoyment is prioritised

Task based environments

Satisfaction of basic human needs

Mastery Climates

- How do you define success to your players?
- Is it winning or losing or effort and improvement?
- How do you evaluate performance?
- Do you congratulate your athletes when they try hard and improve or when they win?
- How do you react when your team loses?

Coach-Athlete Relationships

- Determined by how coaches 'connect' with their athletes
- Central to this connection is mutual understanding
- Humanistic model of Coaching
- Characterised by the athlete being viewed as an individual rather than by achievement
- Coach is a facilitator and a resource for learning rather than somebody who transfers expert knowledge

Summary

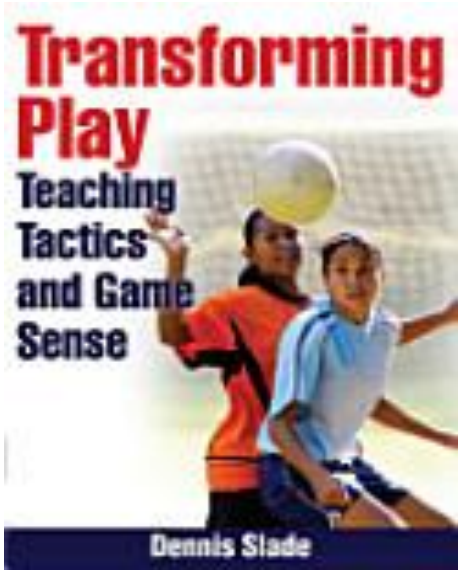
- Traditional approach to coaching youths may not be appropriate
- The games based approach presents greater opportunity for learning and understanding
- Coaches must have an understanding of why youths play and stay with Gaelic games
- This understanding shapes your coaching philosophy which should form the foundation for an appropriate games based approach to your coaching.

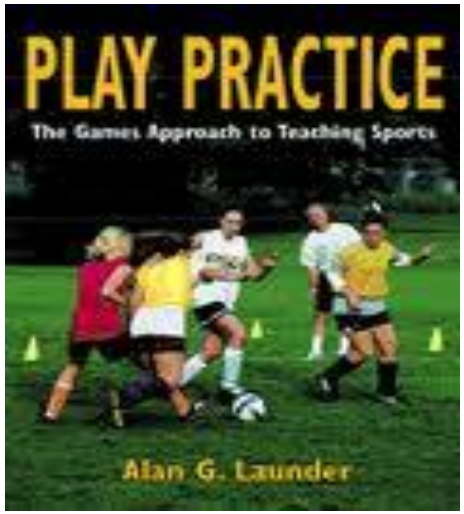
Game Sense – the lucky ones !

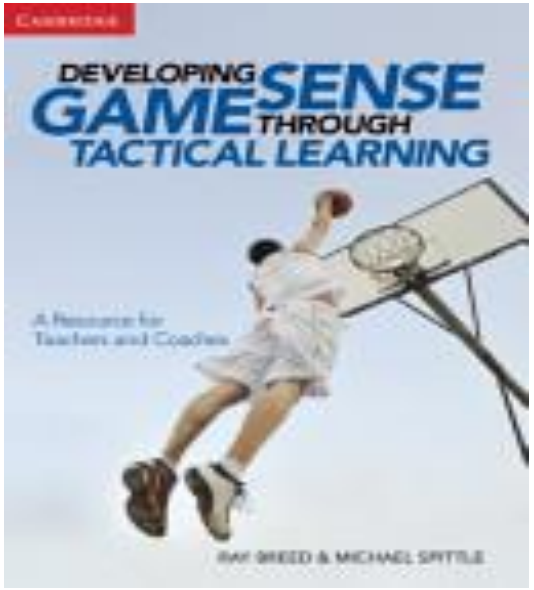
Take home message!

Every time you teach a child something, you deprive them the opportunity to discover it for themselves – Jean Piaget

Resources – available books







Go Raibh Maith Agaibh