

## **Organising Purposeful Games Based Gaelic Football Activities**

Coach: Eamonn Ryan

Players: Ballyboden St Enda's, Dublin

Eamonn Ryan is coach to the Cork Senior Ladies Gaelic Football team winners of six All-Ireland Senior titles over the past seven years. Eamonn Ryan has been involved in coaching teams from schools to colleges to the Cork minor and senior footballers, plus hurling and camogie teams. Eamonn Ryan has been involved in coaching for the past four decades and is considered a legend among Gaelic games coaches.

A former Primary School teacher, Eamonn also held the position of GAA Games Development Officer for University College Cork. Eamonn's work with the University was recognised when he was given a special achievement award, known as the Kieran Dowd Perpetual Award. Eamonn is a fully qualified coaching tutor. He is also involved in working as a Coach Education Tutor, for both the GAA and Camogie.

### **Why do I coach?**

I enjoy the coaching experience

Coaching is the next best thing to playing

Strong desire for involvement in sport

Am energised by contact with players

Challenged and excited by coaching

Enjoy the physical, psychological and social benefits of coaching

The sense of satisfaction after productive sessions allied to the sense of euphoria in the wake of the occasional victories outweigh the frustrations of unsatisfactory sessions and the inevitable disappointing defeats

Obviously an egotistical dimension to one's involvement. This has to be curbed and subjugated lest the coach's ego takes over

### **Whom am I coaching?**

Underage players

Players whose self confidence and self esteem may be fragile

Players grappling with the complexities of adolescence

Players with many other sporting options

Players with a multiplicity of non-sporting options

### **What am I coaching?**

Kicking skills to U. 16 players

### **How?**

The players will be at the centre of the process

Will adopt a games based approach to enhance enjoyment

Will endeavour to make session stimulating, challenging, exciting and hopefully beneficial for the players

To this end, I will concentrate on the central goal game interspersed with coaching interventions

The ultimate aim is for players to enjoy the session and they will want to return for more

1. Warm Up

Warm up to be comprised mainly of ball work, complemented by runs and stretches, with the coach making every effort to be innovative in using the ball as much as possible during this phase.

**N.B. The warm up has been completed in the warm up area within the dressing rooms**

2. Small Sided Game 7V7/9V9/11V11

Competition: Team A V Team B

Scoring System: Points Only

Rules: Ordinary football, **but** only one solo and one hop

Game restarts from the hands

- Coach observes and analyses the game
- Decided that in this session, kicking skills will be specifically addressed so that the players may be helped to become more proficient footballers
- Decides to use the central goal game as the vehicle for working on these kicking skills
- The game will be interspersed with interventions by the coach

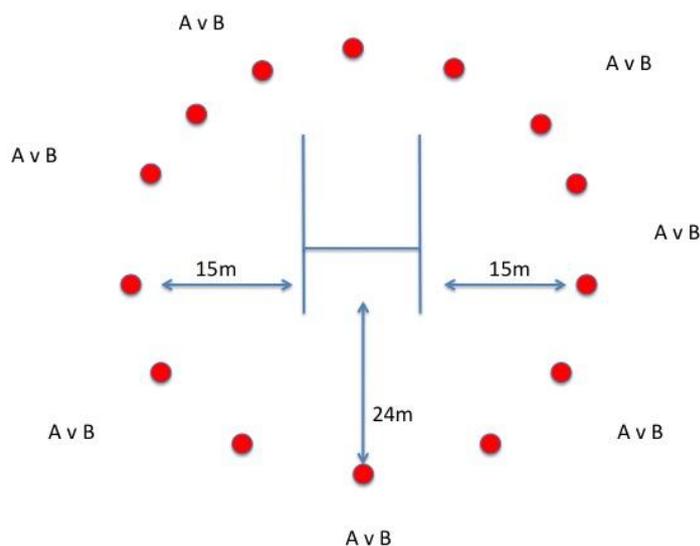
3. Central Goal Game

Competition: Team A V Team B, 7V7

Scoring System: Kicked Points Only from outside the circle

Rules: Ordinary football, **but** only score through kicking from outside the circle

- Want players to experience success so task (kicking points) must be doable
- Circle for central goal game just on the edge of the players comfort zone
- Large % of points and wides in games come from this sector of the field
- Why only kicked points? 95% + of points in games are kicked



## Intervention

### A. Freeze the game

Positive feedback on players efforts in the game

Draw attention to wides and possible reasons from same

Invoke experiences of famous players whose skill broke down under pressure

### B. Fixing the skill

Refer to little girl kick – little boy kick

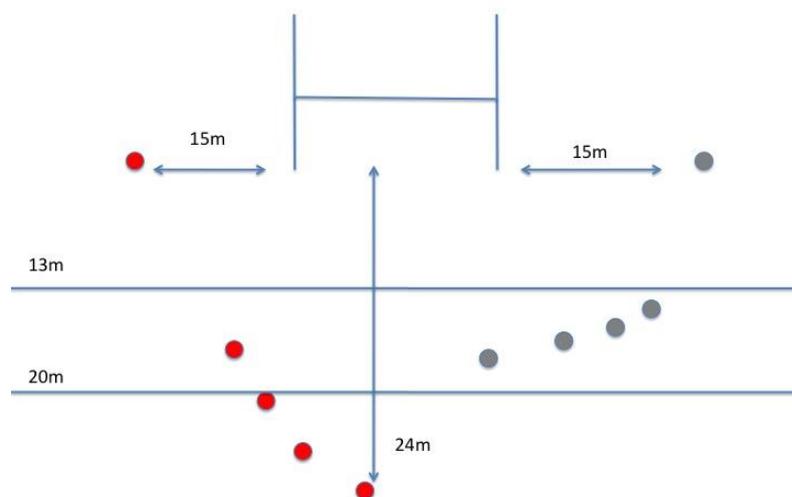
Demo right leg kick \* 3, e.g. Bernard Brogan, Diarmuid Connolly

Demo left leg kick \* 3, e.g. Daniel Goulding, Colm Cooper

- Players have to learn their own kick
- Each kicker has slightly different style but all are within certain parameters (head-hands-feet)

### C. Fun Game/Drill

- When shooting with Right leg, Players start at red cone on endline, solo out to the red cone area from where they shoot for points
- When shooting with Right leg, Players start at white cone on endline, solo out to the white cone area from where they shoot for points
- Players are also encouraged (over time) to solo also with their weaker leg
- All 14 players are shooting
- Right leg 1 minute practice, 90 second time trial with target score to be achieved
- Left leg 1 minute practice, 90 second time trial with target score to be achieved



#### 4. Central Goal Game

Competition: Team A V Team B, 7V7

Scoring System: Kicked Points Only from outside the circle

Rules: Ordinary football, but only score through kicking from outside the circle

- Same as game 1, but bonus point for score kicked with 'weaker' leg
- Rules as per Central Goal Game 1

#### Left legged players wear armbands to help coach to keep score

#### Intervention

##### A. Freeze the game

Positive feedback on players efforts in the game

Acknowledgement of effect to score with weak leg

Revise kicking technique

##### B. Contest – Team A V Team B

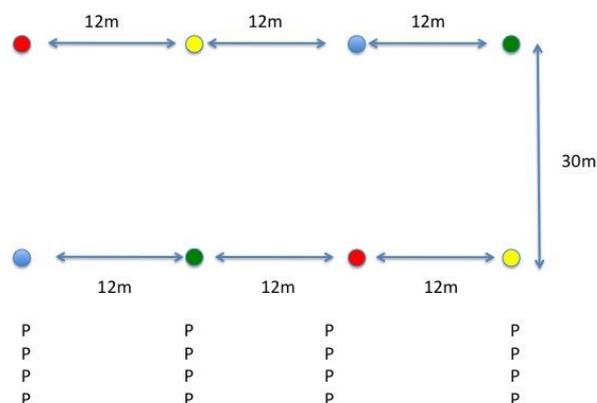
1 minute right leg, 1 minute left leg

##### C. Kicking Game/Drill

Drill 1 Player solo out to cone directly in front and kick back. If caught on the full by the next player in line, team gets a point

Drill 2 Players now solo and kick diagonally – B to Y, G to R, R to G and Y to B. Same scoring system

Drill 3 Double diagonal game. B solos to B, G solos to G, R solos to R and Y solos to Y. Game proceeds as per Drill 1 and 2.



## 5. Central Goal Game

Competition: Team A V Team B, 7V7 (new teams)

Scoring System: Kicked Points Only from outside a now 'enlarged' circle

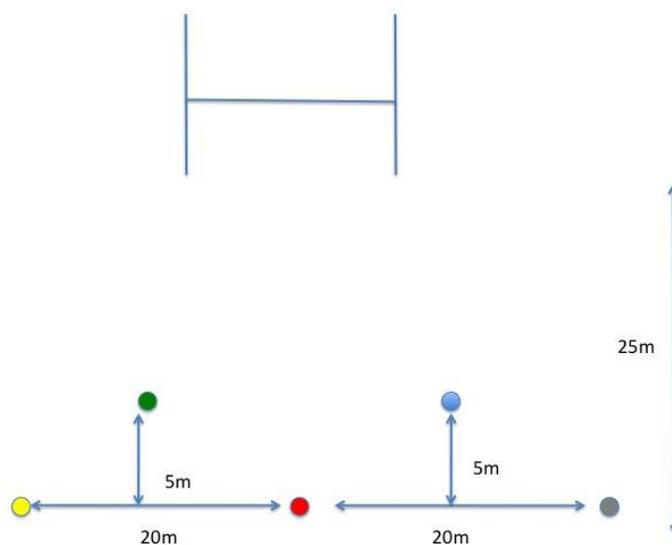
Rules: No hand passing allowed emphasising the primacy of kicking

- Trying to encourage long and more accurate foot passing
- Trying to encourage better decision making by players on and off the ball

Scoring Exam

Fun game with serious undertones. Players enjoy but take very seriously. Can be the basis for individual practice at home.

Scoring System:            Players take 10 shots, each point worth 10% - 7 points = 70%  
                                      Players take 20 shots, each point worth 5% - 15 points = 75%



10 points example

Solo from Y to G – Right foot kick for point * 2	=	2 kicks
Solo from W to B – Left foot kick for point * 2	=	2 kicks
Solo from R to B – Right foot kick for point * 2	=	2 kicks
Solo from R to G – Left foot kick for point * 2	=	2 kicks
Solo from G to R – Right foot kick for point * 1	=	1 kicks
Solo from B to R – Left foot kick for point * 1	=	1 kicks

20 points test – double the amount taken in above example

- Full marks seldom achieved even though test is without opposition
- Players subliminally begin to appreciate that kicking practice has to be factored in much more in their private work.

**Examples of how the games based approach (using the central goal game) might be used to work on other skills**

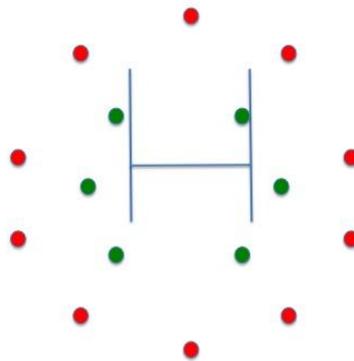
**Hand Pass/Fist Pass**

1. Coach conducts a thorough warm up with huge emphasis placed on using the ball as much as possible
2. Players play a normal Central Goal Game with first team to kick a specific number of points declared the winner
3. A new circle is now created – closer to goal. Points can be fisted over the bar from outside this circle

Competition: Team A V Team B, 7V7 (new teams)

Scoring System: Points can be kicked Only from outside the large circle  
Points can be fisted from outside the small circle

Rules: Ordinary Football  
First team to 7 points wins – but at least 2 of the points have to be fisted



4. Interventions
  - a. Demonstrations of hand and fist passing techniques
  - b. Hand and fist passing drills
  - c. Scoring drill using fisted points
5. Game  
Game resumes but this time the outside circle is enlarged to make scoring off the foot more problematic, thus, hopefully, leading to more concentrated efforts by players to play colleagues in to fist points

## **The Block**

1. Coach conducts a thorough warm up with huge emphasis placed on using the ball as much as possible
2. Players play a game. Small sided – 11V11/9V9. One hop, one solo, with kicked points only
3. Play the central goal game as above, kicked points only. First to score 7/9 points declared the winner
4. Interventions
  - a. Draw attention of players to the low level of blocks/attempted blocks
  - b. Demonstration of the block (coach/player). Player kicks gently for a point while the coach effects a block. Importance of Head, Hands, Feet stressed.
  - c. Coach and mentors take groups, kick gently for scores while players attempt to block in a controlled environment. Coach and mentors praise and encourage players efforts.
5. Game

Game resumes but this time the punching circle is dispensed with. Points can only be kicked. A bonus point is not awarded for effecting a block.

6. Intervention II

a. Revision of Demonstration

b. Coaching working with pairs of players in a controlled environment. Coach has to be vigilant as a 'bad' experience can cause a player to be fearful of injury and lead to a reluctance to learn and use the skill. Though this exercise can be tedious at times, it does help player to gradually shed their inhibitions and worries re: this skill.



P7 P5 P3 P1 C  
P8 P6 P4 P2

Players in line with Coach (C), each with a football. Pairs are 1.5m apart.

Coach takes ball from P1, throws to P2 who then attempts to kick a point while P1 attempts to block the kick. As this exercise is designed to boost confidence and skill levels of blocker, no swerving, dummies or evasion is allowed.

Coach takes the ball from each player successively (P3, P5 etc) and throws to next player (P4, P6 etc) to kick with attempted block.

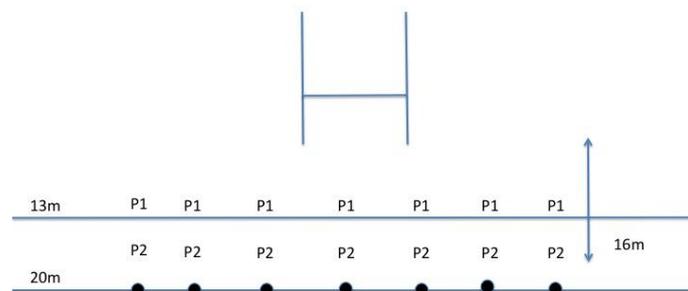
After each player has had an attempt, the roles are reversed.

- c. Players working in pairs in a controlled drill designed to simultaneously allay players' misgivings about the block and help them to experience success.

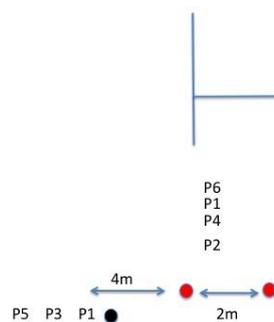
P1 is on 13m line, P2 is on 16m 'line' and the ball is on the 20m line. Players need to be 4-5m apart to avoid collisions.

On the whistle, all 12 players run, pick the football and attempt to kick a point with the right foot. All players attempt to block, no swerving, dummies or evasion allowed.

Players then reverse roles and continue. As proficiency increases, introduce kicking with the left foot.



- d. Players in groups of 6 – game is loaded in favour of the blockers



Player 1 solos and at the gate, attempts to five a point. Meanwhile, Player 2 must advance and position himself to effect a block.

Player 3 then kicks while P4 attempts a block, likewise P5 and P6.

Roles are then reversed with kickers becoming blockers.

Coach and mentors monitor groups carefully to eliminate messing and danger of injury.

7. Game resumes.

Coach offers a lot of encouragement and positivity as some players – initially at least, may not be too enamoured with working on this skill.

Coach may stop the game occasionally to compliment players on attempting to block or on actually effecting a block

**Note that the Fun Do Football resource manual contains very helpful information on teaching points, correction of common errors, drills and small sided games.**