



# RFU LONG TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT MODEL



## FOREWORD



I am really pleased and excited to endorse and support the RFU Long Term Athlete Development Game Development model. This is an important step forward in the development of the game of rugby and recognises that players are central to the model but not the only focus. We must recognise the necessary requirements needed to ensure future excellence so that players can play to their full potential.

As such, the model is aimed at everyone who is involved in the game, including players, coaches, referees, officials and volunteers at all levels of club, Constituent Body representative squads, RFU Academy Elite Player Development Centres, regional and national squads, the RFU Academy and the England team.

The RFU should be commended for the scheme. I encourage all to meet the challenge of change and implement the RFU LTAD model to meet local, regional and national needs, ensuring future national excellence.

**Andy Robinson OBE**  
England Rugby Head Coach

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## INTRODUCTION

- Rugby is a late specialisation sport, which requires a generalised approach to early training
- During this time, children are developmentally ready to acquire the fundamental movement skills that are the cornerstones of all athletic development.
- The introduction of the ABCs of athleticism (agility, balance, co-ordination, speed) during this period will lay the foundation of athletic excellence for later years.
- The Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) strategy is based on the required technical, tactical, mental and physiological requirements of sporting performance.



# STAGE 1

## SPORTING DEVELOPMENT IN THE EARLY YEARS - U7-U9

The FUNdamental stage has to be well structured and fun! The emphasis is on fundamental movement skills, *and* the ABCs of athleticism (Agility, Balance, Co-ordination, Speed), the ABCs of athletics (running, throwing and jumping) and the KGBs of movement (Kinaesthesia, Gliding, Buoyancy, Striking).

Participation in as many sports as possible is encouraged - if possible three or four times per week.

**Where:** Primary school PE, rugby clubs, multi-skill clubs.

**Who:** 6-8 years.

**Why:** To capture the magic.

**Physical:** General physical literacy - develop the ABCs of movement - Agility, Balance, Co-ordination and Speed. Athleticism in running, jumping and throwing.

**Technical:** Ball acquaintance passing, catching, evading.

**Tactical:** Fun games developing spatial awareness and working together as a team.

**Mental:** Introduction to the Laws of the Game, the rules of modified versions and the ethics of playing sport.

**Competition:** Playing and training to the appropriate rules.

**Involvement in sporting activity:** Five hours per week across different sporting activities (including PE or games at school).

### HANDLING ▶

#### Catching

High, low and one handed using different shaped balls from a variety of heights and speeds.

#### Passing

Using a variety of styles (one, two hands or overarm and underarm) types, lengths of pass in different directions.

#### Basic ball control

Individual ball skills, e.g. picking up, putting down, 'basketball' type ball manipulation, etc.

#### Co-ordination

Hand to eye co-ordination, e.g. catching tennis ball, etc.

### RUNNING ▶

#### Hopping

Left and right foot.

#### Leaping

Height and length.

#### Jumping

Height and length off both standing start and running.

#### Balance

On both feet.

#### Evasion skills

Swerve, sidestep, spin and change of pace.



#### KICKING ▶

##### Basic ball control

Individual ball skills with the feet, e.g. 'football kick ups', dribbling, etc.

#### CONTACT ▶

##### Basic body management skills

Including rolling and falling (contact with ground).

##### Personal conditioning

Including bending, stretching, twisting and turning (basic body movement), own body resistance and contact preparation.

Managing the ball in contact. Contact with other players, including bumping, grappling, pushing and pulling (judo type skills). Introduction to contact, including tackle progressions, ball presentation and basic ruck and maul coaching.

#### SET PIECES ▶

##### Introduction of scrums

Allow all players to experience the scrum.

##### Basic techniques

Body position, feet position, binding and put-in/strike.



# STAGE 2

## LEARNING TO TRAIN U10-U12

The emphasis is now on refinement and maintenance of the athlete's physical capacities, fundamental movement skills and the acquisition of rugby specific skills.

This is allied to the continuation of other sporting activities throughout the school year, and during summer and winter multi-sport camps.

Participation in sport twice per week is recommended at this stage.

**Where:** Primary school PE, rugby clubs, multi-skill clubs.

**Who:** Boys: 9-11 years, girls: 10-13 years.

**Why:** To continue the magic for all and capture the talent of some.

**Physical:** Developing physical literacy and rugby-related fitness, progressing to individual programmes for the more talented.

**Technical:** Developing the core skills in passing, catching, running, evading, tackling and kicking.

**Tactical:** Rugby specific games to introduce 'Go Forward, Support, Continuity, Pressure'.

**Mental:** Develop an understanding of the Laws of the Game and the ethics of playing sport.

**Competition:** Playing and training to the appropriate rules.

**Involvement in sporting activity:** 3.5 rugby specific hours plus other PE or games activities in and out of school.

### HANDLING ▶

#### Catching

High, low and one handed using different shaped balls from a variety of heights and speeds. Work on two hand catching skills.

#### Passing

Using a variety of styles (one, two hands or overarm and underarm) types, lengths of pass in different directions. Develop game type passes, e.g. lateral, pass off the ground, pop, switch, miss and loop.

#### Basic ball control

Individual ball skills, e.g. picking up, putting down, 'basketball' type ball manipulation, etc.

#### Co-ordination

Hand to eye co-ordination, e.g. catching tennis ball, etc.

### RUNNING ▶

#### Evasive skills

##### 1) Swerve

Both directions, ability to get past a defender.

##### 2) Sidestep

Off left and right foot - weight transfer, ability to get past a defender.

##### 3) Speed

Change of speed using leg strength and technique.

#### Hopping

Left and right foot.

#### Leaping

Height and length.

#### Jumping

Height and length off both standing start and running.

## FUNDAMENTAL RUGBY SKILLS

### KICKING ▶

#### Basic ball control

Individual ball skills with the feet, e.g. 'football kick ups', dribbling, etc.

#### Game skills

Punt kick, grubber kick, drop kick and place kick off both feet.



### CONTACT ▶

#### Basic body management skills

Including rolling, falling (contact with ground) and bumping (contact with other players).

#### Personal conditioning

Including bending, stretching, twisting and turning (basic body movement), own body resistance and contact preparation.

#### Managing the ball in contact

Allow the players to experience methods of playing the ball in contact, e.g. bump and pass, offload, playing the ball from the ground.

#### Contact with other players

Including bumping, grappling, pushing and pulling (judo type skills).

#### Improving contact skills

Including tackle progressions and basic ruck and maul coaching.

### SET PIECES ▶

#### Introduction of lineout

Simple throwing (overhead throw), jumping, catching and blocking skills.

#### Development of the scrummage

- Body position.
- Feet position.
- Binding.
- Hooping the ball.
- Additional positional techniques - 2nd row.



# STAGE 3

## TRAINING TO TRAIN U13-U15

Young athletes are introduced to the basic technical and tactical skills along with ancillary capacities including warm up and cool down, stretching, hydration and nutrition, recovery and regeneration, mental preparation, taper and peak, integrated pre-competition routines and post-competition recovery.

The major focus of training is on learning the basics as opposed to competing.

**Where:** Middle and upper secondary school, gifted and talented programmes at rugby clubs and representative player squads.

**Who:** Boys: 12-14 years, girls: 10-13 years.

**Why:** Player development and talent identification.

**Physical:** Strength and conditioning, core stability, running agility exercises. Personalised programme.

**Technical:** Continuing development of core skills and position-specific skills.

**Tactical:** Develop an understanding of the principles of play and introduce a 'game sense' approach.

**Mental:** Introduction to mental preparation.

**Goal setting:** Coping with winning and losing.

**Team preparation:** Two training sessions per week.

**Competition:** One match per week

**Hours per week:** TALENTED - 10 rugby specific;

COMMUNITY - 3-5 hours quality coaching and playing.

**Planning:** Two periods of training with two periods of competition.

### HANDLING ▶

#### Catching

A variety of passes of different heights and weights over varying distances. High ball from restarts and kicks in open play.

Picking up stationary/moving ball from the ground. Pick up and pass. Falling on the ball/baseball slide.

#### Passing

Develop game related type passes with increasing pressure using 2 v 1, 3 v 2, etc.

Develop ability to make the unusual pass - overhead pass, over the shoulder, circle ball.

Scrum half put in/passes - dive, pivot, reverse. Develop other player specific passes.





## BUILDING THE POTENTIAL RUGBY SPECIFIC CORE SKILLS

### RUNNING ▶

#### Evasive running

Develop evasive skills - sidestep, swerve, change of pace, spin turn.

#### Running style

Basic mechanics:

- Arm movement
- Leg movement
- Ladder work - forward/lateral/backward movement
- Hurdle work.

### KICKING ▶

#### Game related kicking

- Punt ( defence)
- Punt (attack) - 'wipers'/'bomb'
- Grubber
- Chip
- Kicking from scrum half
- Starts and restarts
- Free kick
- Place kick/drop kick

### CONTACT ▶

#### Body management

Reinforce contact techniques with the ground and with the opposition.

Develop judo/wrestling type techniques.

#### Managing the ball in contact

Develop ability to play the ball in/out of the contact area.

#### Managing the ball in the tackle

Passing off the ground. Placing the ball after the tackle.

### SET PIECES ▶

#### Lineout

##### 1) Jumping

Reinforcement of technique. Development of explosive movement, with increased weight training knowledge.

##### 2) Supporting

Introduction of safe supporting techniques in lineout (coaching only).

##### 3) Throwing

Reinforcement of technique. Practise to vary height, speed and distance of delivery.

#### Scrum

Reinforcement of balance and equilibrium in scrum.

Development and understanding of body and feet positions and binding.

Bind and body position of 6, 7 and 8.



# STAGE 4

## TRAINING TO COMPETE U16-U19

Athletes who are now proficient at performing both basic and rugby specific skills learn to perform these skills under a variety of competitive conditions during training.

The emphasis is now on individual preparation which addresses each athlete's individual strengths and weaknesses.

**Where:** Secondary school PE and games programmes, age grade representative sides.

**Who:** Boys: 15-18 years, girls: 14-17 years.

**Why:** Player retention, development and specialisation.

**Physical:** Player and position-specific fitness and conditioning programmes.

**Technical:** Refinement of core skills and position-specific skills.

**Tactical:** Decision-making tactical awareness, game appreciation, team game analysis.

**Mental:** Advanced mental training and preparation, refined goal setting.

**Team preparation:** ELITE - two or more training sessions per week; COMMUNITY - one or two training sessions.

**Competition:** One match per week.

**Hours per week:** ELITE - 20.5 rugby specific; COMMUNITY - 4-6 hours quality coaching and playing.

**Planning:** Two periods of training with two periods of competition.

### HANDLING ▶

#### Refine catching skills

Develop receiving skills to take pass in front, behind, below and above.

#### Refine passing skills

Improve length, accuracy of pass, and passing at pace.

#### Positional skills

**11, 14 and 15** - Passing and receiving at pace, switch, passing length.

**10, 12 and 13** - Passing speed, accuracy and length, switch, loop, Passing and receiving under pressure. Flat and pulled back passes.

**9** - Speed, accuracy, length from the floor, out of hand, dive, pivot pass. Pop, switch passes.

### RUNNING ▶

#### Refine rugby specific running skills

Develop evasive skills, e.g. sidestep, swerve, change of pace, spin turn.

#### Running style

Basic mechanics:

- Arm movement
- Leg movement
- Ladder work -forward/lateral/backward movement
- Hurdle work.

#### Positional running skills

**11, 14 and 15** - Evasion, pace and timing into line, running lines, angle.

**9, 10, 12 and 13** - Evasion in confined spaces, defensive line breaking, running lines, angle.

**1 - 8** - Evasion in confined spaces, timing into line, movement to and from tackle, ruck, maul, support running lines, angle.

## OPTIMISING THE POTENTIAL RUGBY POSITIONAL AND UNIT SKILLS

### KICKING ▶

#### Game related kicking

General skills for all players as in Stage 3.

#### Specialist positional kicking

Should be developed from Stage 3.

**Punt** - For length, to recover, to stop/come back on landing, to continue rolling; trajectories.

**Drop kick** - For goal: length, accuracy, under pressure; for restarts: height/hang time, position (corners), length.

#### Goal kicking

### CONTACT ▶

#### Body management - cross-training.

Reinforce contact techniques with the ground and the opposition.

Develop judo/wrestling type techniques.

#### Managing the ball in contact, managing the ball in the tackle and body management during/after the tackle

Develop from Stage 3.

#### Improve tackle/contact techniques

Offensive and defensive tackles. Develop skills to create turnover opportunities. Using momentum, control and awareness in the tackle.

#### Ruck/maul

Develop from Stage 3. Improve body position. Develop skills associated with:

- Dynamic ruck/mauls, static ruck/mauls
- Defending ruck/mauls, e.g. slowing possession, stopping a drive, etc.

#### Positional contact skills

Although all players are required to do most things, certain positions are required to a little more, e.g. 9 and 15 cover tackling; 10, 12 and 13 front tackle and staying on feet in tackle; 6, 7 and 8 creating turnovers and side tackles; 1 - 5 ball winning ability on ground and close quarter contact skills with/without ball.

### SET PIECES ▶

#### Scrummage

Reinforce core elements of scrummage from Stage 3, e.g. body position, foot position, timing, etc.

Develop individual scrummage skills in application and resistance of pressure. Breathing and timing.

Dealing with specific opponents - taller, shorter, stronger, weaker, etc.

Specific positional work roles and interaction with other unit members.

Dealing with dynamics of scrummage - forwards, backwards, sideways, up and down, work on body management and foot movement.



#### Lineout

Refine skills in Stage 3:

#### Throw:

Accuracy, consistency, length, speed. Types of throw - lob, flat, disguise. Position to 2, 4 and 6 and tail. Timing.

**Jump:** Footwork on the ground, speed and balance. Take off - forward, straight up, going back. Both sides (left, right hand). Work in the air - rotational movement. Ball control and play. Concentration. Ground work - stance, body position. Own ball and competition.

**Supporting the jump:** Footwork. Role as front support, role as rear support. Different types of jump. Different styles of 'lift'. Play after catch - bringing jumper to ground, blocking options, driving options.

**Sweeping play:** passing play, securing, driving. Clearing loose ball.

Positional roles in the lineout.



# STAGE 5

## TRAINING TO WIN

18+

All of the athlete's physical, technical, tactical, mental, and ancillary capacities are now fully established. The focus of training has shifted to the **optimisation of performance**.

Athletes are trained to peak for major competitions.

**Where:** FE/HE establishments, representative squads, regional & national academies, national age grade & senior representative sides.

**Who:** Men: 18+ years, women: 17+ years.

**Why:** High performance.

**Physical:** Individual fitness programmes for maintenance and improvement.

**Technical:** Refined core skills - individual positional skill development programme.

**Tactical:** High degree of decision making, leadership and game analysis skills. Able to adjust tactics and game plan to suit demands of individual matches.

**Mental:** Self-motivation and discipline. Mentally strong. Understanding of group dynamics.

**Team preparation:** ELITE - three team training sessions; COMMUNITY - one or two training sessions.

**Competition:** One match per week.

**Hours per week:** ELITE - 22.5 rugby specific;

COMMUNITY - 6-8 hours quality coaching and playing.

**Planning:** Multiple periods of training and competition - age group dependant.

### HANDLING ▶

#### Catching

Catch the ball cleanly from left and right even when delivered at an awkward height.

Catch the ball cleanly from left and right even when moving near to top speed

Secures the high/rolling ball under pressure in both attack and defence.

#### Passing

Produce accurate and appropriate passes off right and left hand (pop, soft, spin, switch).

Produce accurate and appropriate passes off left and right hand even when moving close to top speed.

### RUNNING ▶

Appropriate positioning to receive the ball with width and depth.

Adopt running lines which fixes opponents and creates space for others.

Run evasively, threatening the opposition with pace and turning skill - swerve sidestep and spin turn.

### KICKING ▶

Achieve optimal distance with kick - finding touch when necessary.

Kick in attack so that possession is regained or there is a net gain in territory.

Kick with left and right foot.

Where and when appropriate start and restart the game so that the team gains a tactical advantage.

## MAXIMISING THE POTENTIAL

### CONTACT ▶

#### Tackling

Make an appropriate tackle - offensive/defensive/side/rear/front.

Tackle aggressively, stopping the forward movement of an opponent.

Resume involvement immediately by regaining feet as quickly as possible.

Retain possession in the tackle making appropriate decisions in order to make the ball available to team mates.

Adopt a suitable position to fulfil a defensive role in conjunction with other team members.

### SET PIECES ▶

#### Scrum

Adopt a body position which enables a clean strike and channel - 2

Adopt a position which enables scrummaging at a preferred height - 1 & 3

Provide a stable and square scrummage - ALL

Adopt a body position which transmits maximum power to pressure opposition - ALL

Control the ball at the base of the scrum to enable best use of the next phase - 8

### RUCK/MAUL ▶

Able to retain the ball in contact by making appropriate decisions in order to make the ball available to team mates.

Make appropriate decisions when a team mate or the opposition have possession - joining or staying out.

Adopt a low body position with a dynamic forward movement - aiming to stay on feet.

Support a ball carrier.

Secures or regains the ball.



### LINEOUT ▶

Throws in straight with timing and speed, which enables the jumper to win the ball - 2

Compress and close space - ALL

Support the jumper providing a solid platform from which the ball can be won - 1 & 3

Act as sweeper when attempting to get over the gain line - ALL

Time a jump to outmanoeuvre an opponent in order to win the ball - JUMPER

Deliver the ball at the appropriate height and speed to the scrum half - JUMPER

Time a jump to spoil or win the ball from the opposition - JUMPER

Drives through spaces in the lineout - ALL



# STAGE 6

## RECRUIT, RETAIN, RETRAIN, THROUGHOUT LIFE



Throughout all the stages of the rugby LTAD model the recruitment, retention and retraining of players, coaches, referees and administrators is key to the continuous development of the game.

Initiatives should be employed to maximise the recruitment and retention within the game at all levels. For some, early identification of individuals by the NGB can mean retention of talented people within the game.



**Where:** Wherever the game is played.

**Who:** Men, women and children of all ages and abilities.

**Why:** For the continuous development of the game at all levels.

**Physical:** Active.

**Technical:** Coaching, refereeing and administration skills.

**Tactical:** The ability to work within a team.

**Mental:** Self-motivation.

**Team preparation:** Once a week / once a month.

**Competition:** Making the club the best it can be.

**Hours per week:** Indefinable.

**Planning:** Essential.

## WEBSITE & RESOURCE GUIDE

### GENERAL READING ▶

**Coaching for Long Term Athlete Development**

- Ian Stafford

**Preparing for a Life in Sport** (pamphlet)

- sportscoach UK

### WEBSITES - GENERAL ▶

**www.rfu.com** - England Rugby related topics, including coaching courses, resources and an interactive coaches/coaching forum

**www.irb.org** - international rugby related topics

**www.communityrugbyshop.com** - order RFU coaching resources from this website - available June 2005

### COACHING WEBSITES ▶

**www.gameplanner.co.uk** - rugby coaching tools, game plans, coaching sessions

**www.sportplan.net**

- rugby coaching drills; animations; drill tips

**www.coachingrugby.com**

- rugby coaching tips; skills; drills

**www.rugbyworkshops.com**

- player and coach advice line

### COACHING AND TRAINING FOR COACHES AND TEACHERS ▶

for details go to **www.rfu.com**

• RFU Mini Tag Award - suitable for club coaches working with U7s and U8s and primary school teachers

• RFU Coaching Awards Level 1 and 2 - new awards

• RFU Level 1 Coaching resource - ETAD (pages 43 - 70)

• RFU Coaching Awards Levels 3 to 5

### OTHER WEBSITES ▶

**www.sportscoachuk.org**

• Fundamentals of Movement workshop (MS2) - Agility, Balance, Co-ordination, Speed

• Multi-skills clubs practice workshop (MS3)

**www.saqinternational.com**

• P Award - Preliminary Award in training 'Speed Agility and Quickness'

• M Award - Preliminary Award in training 'Fundamental Movement'

• SEN Award - Preliminary Award in developing skills of children with movement difficulties

• SAQ workshop available through the RFU - contact your local RDO

**www.1st4sport.com**

• Sports education and training resources

### BOOKS ▶

• **101 Rugby Training Drills (2002)** - Ray Unsworth and Damian McGrath

• **Think Rugby (2004)** - Jim Greenwood

• **Total Rugby (2003)** - Jim Greenwood

• **Rugby for Real (2004)** - Chris Sheryn

• **Complete Conditioning for Rugby (2004)**

- Dan Luger and Paul Cook

• **SAQ Rugby (2001)** - Alan Pearson

• **SAQ Juniors (2004)** - Alan Pearson

• **SAQ Youth (2004)** - Alan Pearson

### CD-ROM AND DVD RESOURCES ▶

• **Warm Up, The Tackle, The Serum** - RFU

• **Rugby Union Fundamentals**

- RFU - available soon

• **Core Rugby Skills and Drills for 5-11 Year Olds**

- RFU - available soon

• **Rugby - Understanding the Moving Game**

- Lynne Evans

• **Rugby Skills and Drills** - Rapid Media

• **Pass, Catch, Kick Tackle**

- Barry Honan and David Cohen

• **Understanding the Game** - The Winning Edge



Rugby Football  
Development Limited

Tel: 0870 405 2000

Fax: 0870 405 2009

[www.community-rugby.com](http://www.community-rugby.com)







