



Player Development Pathway

Play to Stay

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1 Introduction

The purpose of the Player Pathway is to provide framework to help maximise the potential of every Passage West footballer and hurler. The Pathway is player centric, coach driven and supported by administration and science. The Pathway defines development stages, and guides Managers, Coaches & Parents who play an active role in the development of players through each stage. Focus is on the development of players, technically, physically, psychologically and tactically. Awareness is brought to the physical development of players and takes advantage of developmental windows during the human growth lifecycle where players are more susceptible and responsive to particular types of training.

The Pathway will define *what* we should do and *why*. This will then be used to develop a ‘Coaching Pack’ that will be developed for each age grouping. (i.e. the *How*). The Pack will include everything a coach needs for that age group:

- Management Structure
- Age Specific Objectives
- Communication Protocols
- Required Coaching qualifications, courses etc.
- Where to source equipment
- Contact Numbers
- Recruitment considerations
- How to manage Parents
- Session Planner Template /Examples
- Essential Skills
- Fundamental Movements
- Links to Resources containing
 - Fun Activities
 - Conditioned Games
 - Drills



Note: It should be noted that these are guidelines and recommendations for coaches, managers, mentors and parents and may be used with a degree of flexibility.

Passage West is a small vibrant community. While the GAA club is one of the focal points of the community, the young people of Passage West are spoiled for choice when it comes to sporting and activity options. Hurling, Football, Soccer, Rowing, Karate, Taekwondo, Scouts, Tennis, Golf, Faroige etc. However this presents a number of challenges.

- Limited numbers available per age group
- Recruitment Competition from other sporting and activity options
- Retention Competition
- Limited training times each week (*Due to other sports*)

The player pathway for Passage has been design with the above challenges in mind.

2 Vision

“To provide players to the senior section of Passage West developed to their full potential“

3 Mission

“To provide excellent coaching that provides all kids the opportunity to be the best player they can be. To further cement the friendships and camaraderie already developing within the team. To be fair and give equal chances to all kids regardless of ability. To ensure that as many kids as possible are retained within the club. To further impart to each kid a sense of honour and integrity and most importantly a strong measure of self-worth.”

4 Goals

- Recruit as many as we can and hold for as long as we can
- Team and every age
- Provide a fun, safe environment where players can fulfil their potential
- New Players encouraged to play both codes
- Passage West Juvenile Teams are as competitive as possible
 - Goal to Compete at P2 at U15
- Players develop lifelong friendships
- Players play and stay with Passage West not just during their playing careers but throughout their lives
- Pasaiste Og to be a focal point of the youth community of passage

5 Juvenile Club Culture

“We will strive to create a culture where an individual players long term development takes preference over the teams short term success. “

“Players will be recognised for effort more than outcome”

6 Developing an Environment

The following are five core elements that Pasaiste Og need to put in place to create an environment where our young players can flourish.



Figure 1 Key Environmental Elements

6.1 Coaching Skill

In its simplest form, **Better Coaches = Better Players**. Coaches must be recruited, trained and provided with the tools necessary for them to be successful.

6.2 Player Pathway

Once coaches are trained and skilled up, how they should then apply those skills to the assigned teams will be defined in Coaching Pack specific to each age. The Coaching Packs in turn is informed by the Player Pathway defined here.

6.3 Recruitment

Passage West is highly sensitive to player numbers. Sufficient numbers are essential to the team environment. A recruitment programme that is executed each year needs to be developed which specifically targets U4 to U12. This will be a separate plan and out of scope for this document.

6.4 Parental Buy-In

Management of Parents is essential to the development of the player and their attachment and retention within the club. The coaching packs will include how parents on each age group should be managed.

7 Long Term Development Pathway

The Long Term Development Pathway development by Balyi et al (2005) has become the template across many sports for guiding coaches and administrators in developing the technical, tactical and physical competencies to better prepare players.

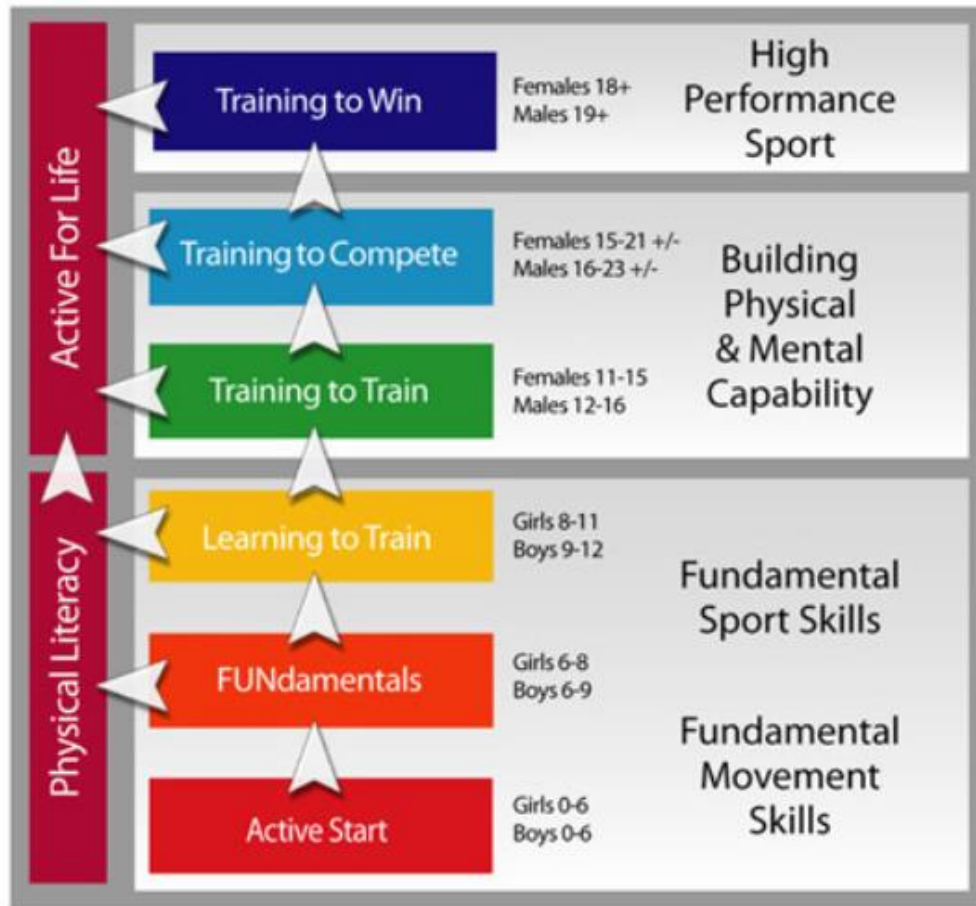


Figure 2 LTDP Stages

Stage	Meaning
Active Fun Start	Fun & part of daily life.
FUNdamental	Build overall Physical Literacy & Motor Skills.
Learning to Training	Learn FUNdamental Sports Skills.
Training to Train	Build ‘the engine’ and consolidate sport-specific skills
Training to Compete	fine-tune ‘the engine’, skills and performance.
Training to Win	maximise performance, skills and ‘engine’.
Retirement/Retainment	adjustment/retain players/athletes for coaching/administration.

Table 1 Long Terms Pathway Stages

For further reading on Long Term Athlete Development refer to [Balyi et al \(2010\)](#) or [HumanKinetics](#).

8 Key Development Windows

The key concept in the LTAD model is “windows of opportunity“. A window of opportunity is proposed to present at a particular stage in human development where the development of a specific capacity when training has an optimal effect. Thus it is important for us as coaches to understand when we can exploit the proposed opportunities for skill and fitness capacity development in the young Passage player.

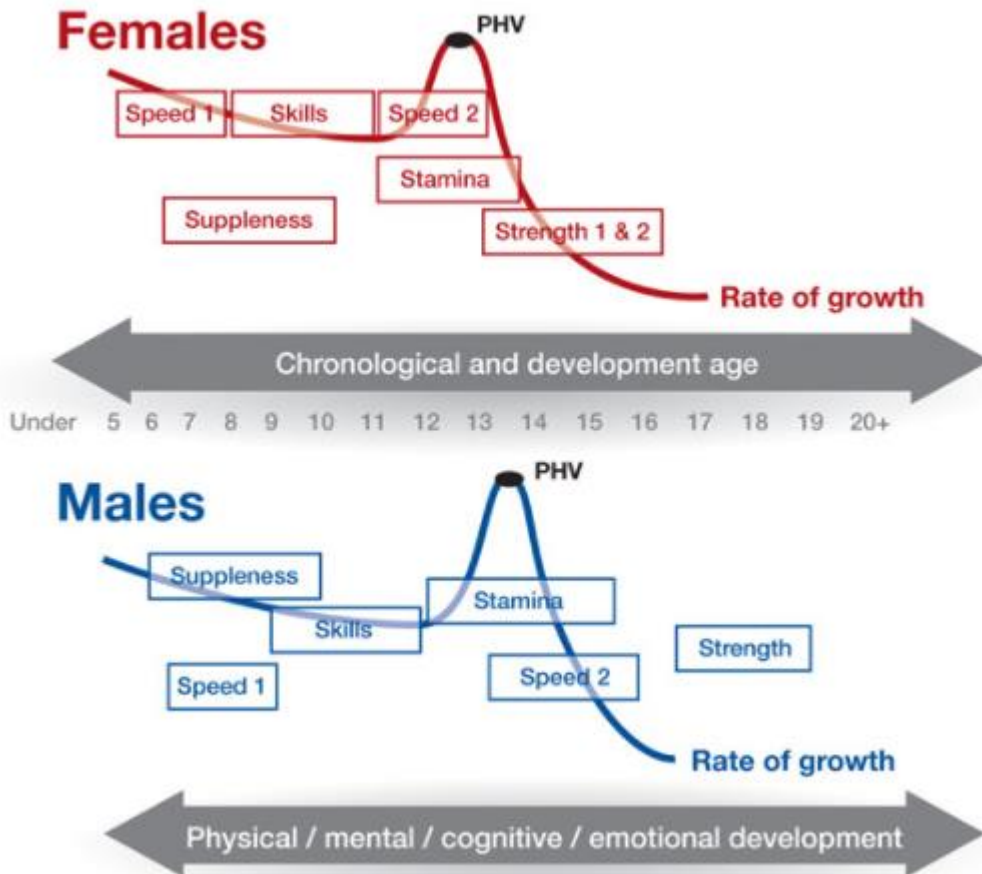


Figure 3 The growth Spurt (Peak Height Velocity)

Figure 3 illustrates ‘windows’ present during Stages 1 through to 4 of the Long Term Player Development Pathway. For example, if a coach is managing players who have not reached their growth spurt stage, then, according to the principles of the Long Term Player Development Pathway, these players have a great facility for learning new skills (Balyi et al, 2005, Zwick ,2008). Similarly during the growth spurt stage, players have a higher responsiveness to stamina and speed training.

The coaching packs developed for each age group will be designed to take advantage of these windows. Refer to Coaching Guidelines

9 Training Groups Combinations

Rebel Og provides go games on the age for each of U7 -> U11. Beyond that a full programme of matches are provided for the primary age groups are U13, 15 & 17. Given this structure and assuming that there are sufficient numbers at each age group teams should train as follows:

Age	Rationale
U5/6	Academy Level. Boys and girls can training together at this age. Focus is on Fun and recruitment. Large numbers will look well to new parents.
U7->U9	If sufficient numbers exist, U7, 8 & 9 should train as separate teams in separate sessions. This will allow coaches focus training sessions specifically on the needs of the group facilitating faster development of basic skills.
U10/11	Training together but play in their own leagues organised by Rebel Og. Skills should have reached a level where the younger team are competent and can compete. They will benefit from playing against the older players.
U12/13	Train together, play in their separate leagues.
U14/15	Train together, play in their own league.
U16/17	Train together, play in same league

Table 2 Training Groups Combinations



Note: If there are insufficient numbers at U7, 8 or 9 then it would make sense to join with another group.

9.1 Pasaiste Og Academy

The Pasaiste Og Academy is made up of U4 to U7s. U4/5/6's will train at the same time and within the same group. U7s should train at the same time but as a separate group. The purpose of this is that the U7 management structure will need to take responsibility for bleeding in a new u6 management structure before they move on. Management transition has been identified as one of the root causes for poor numbers at some age levels.

10 Coaching Guidelines

Coaching packs will be developed for each age group and will follow the principles and guidelines outlined in this section. The core skills and advanced skills specific to each age group will be defined in these packs.

10.1 Principles

All coaching sessions should follow these basic principles:

- Testing and Challenging: all players should be challenged to improve at their level
- The player is at the centre of the game and provide individualised development (player centred)
- Both sides developed equally in both hurling and football.
- Training drills, activities resembles the game (game based)
- All players involved, all the time – lots of touches, lots of decisions
 - Ball for each
- Should be an enjoyable, appropriate and holistic GAA experience
- Players encouraged to practice between training sessions. Provide tasks and challenges to be practiced at home
- Session difficulty level should be set to above the team average (i.e. 70% approx)

10.2 Guidelines for 4-6 Age Group

Note: Priority at this age must be Fun and recruitment. Recruitment refers to players, parents and coaches. Suppleness windows begin at U6.

U4 -> 6 DEVELOPMENT PILLARS

Player Characteristics

- Only Goes flat out
- Self Centred
- Little Concern for team activities
- Limited Sense of Time & Space
- Short Attention Span

Challenges for Coach

- Set FUN Activities, involving adults
- Variation
- Guide Children. Don't tell them
- Be a role model
- Awareness of LTAD Speed and Suppleness window at U6

Environment

- FUN Number 1 Priority
- Coach to Player Ratio 1:5
- Every Child has their own ball
- Trial and Error
- Variation in Equipment, Size and Colour.

Hurling Core Skills

- Correct Hurley Size
- Hand Positions on Hurley
- Ready Position
- Ground Strike - Left & Right
- Ball Control - Stopping Ball. Flick to Space. Bean Bag Solo. Bean bag flick

Football Core Skills

- Ground Kick (Both Feet)
- Bounce
- Low/Chest Catch
- Throwing/Passing
- Punt Kick (Both Feet)
- Pick Up (Intro)

Game

- Small sided games 2x2, 3x3, 4x4
- First Touch soft Sliotar
- Each Child has their own Hurley, Helmet, Water Bottle, Gum Shield
- Sliotar Per child at all sessions

Physical Fitness

- Running (Marching, Forwards, Backwards, Sideways Shuffle)
- Jumping Landing (1 leg, both legs/variety of directions)
- Agility (chasing games, evasion games, sidestep evasion, Balance)
- Coordination (Hand Eye - Hurley and Bean Bag, Eye Foot - Dribble)
- **Speed (At least 4 sprint > 40M per session - LTAD Speed Window at U6)**
- **Stretching start/end every session - LTAD Suppleness Window at U6)**

Psychological Focus

- Develop Listening Skills (Simon Says Game)

Team Play

- Zones (Use for positional sense, Stops Bunching)
- Small Sided games only (More touch time for all)

Tactical Development

- Target Games
- Decision Making

10.3 Guidelines for 7-9 Age Group

U7 -> 9 DEVELOPMENT PILLARS

Player Characteristics

- Only Goes flat out
- Needs Approval from Coach or Parents
- Likes to show off individual skills
- Small group session vital for skill improvement
- Imagine themselves as intercounty players to improve skills

Challenges for Coach

- Set FUN Activities, involving adults
- Variation. Coach open to trial and error
- Well organised planned sessions
- Guide Children. Don't tell them
- Be a role model
- Convey Enthusiasm
- Awareness of LTAD Speed and Suppleness window

Environment

- FUN Number 1 Priority
- Coach to Player Ratio 1:8
- Every Child has their own ball
- Be sensitive to every players development needs
- Actual Game results are secondary

Hurling Core Skills (LTAD Window)

- Striking (Ground, Air Strike both sides from Midway U8 onwards)
- Frontal Ground Block. Intro to Shoulder Clash.
- Handling (Grip, Ready, Lock, Swing, Catch, Mid, Low, High)
- Roll Pitch, Jab Pick
- Tackling (Air Frontal Block - U9)

Football Core Skills (LTAD Window)

- Kicking - Punt Kick on run (Both Feet)
- Handling - Hand Pass off both sides , Catch Body, Low, High
- Movement – Use four steps, One handed bounce, Solo both sides, both legs
- Tackle - Near hand tackle

Game

- Small sided games 3x3, 4x4, 6x6, 7x7, MAX
- Player fouled takes free
- Players sample all positions
- Sliotar Per child at all sessions
- Every player has their own ball at home
- Play against a wall, with a friend, with group of friends

Physical Fitness

- **Running (Speed developed through fun games, races – 4 sprint > 40Mtrs) (LTAD Speed Window)**
- Jumping Landing (1 leg, both legs/variety of directions)
- Agility (chasing games, evasion games, sidestep evasion, Balance)
- Coordination (Hand Eye - Hurley and Bean Bag, Eye Foot - Dribble)
- **Stretching start/end every session - (LTAD Suppleness Window)**

Psychological Focus

- Ask player to imagine themselves as role models to improve skills
- Use trigger words to develop concentration

Team Play

- Zones (Use for positional sense understanding)
- Small Sided games only (More touch time for all)
- Basic Communication (Call for the Ball)

Tactical - Decision Making

- Devise games that require players to look up
- Encourage to move into space

10.4 Guidelines for 10-11 Age Group

U10 -> 11 DEVELOPMENT PILLARS

Player Characteristics

- Have short attention span
- Enjoy team games
- Compete with greater intensity
- Can be self-conscious in learning new skills

Challenges for Coach

- Simple Tips
- Cheer & Praise
- Organised and planned coaching sessions
- Check if players have their own ball at home
- Recognise that player development comes before winning
- Awareness of LTAD Skills window

Environment

- FUN Number 1 Priority
- Coach to Player Ratio 1:8
- Every Child has their own ball
- Players enjoy practice. Coach sets fun tasks between sessions
- Players enjoy experience rather than result

Hurling Core Skills (LATD Window)

- Striking (Air Strike both sides, Rise and Strike, Rise and strike without catching)
- Tackling (Air Frontal Block , Hook, Shoulder clash)
- Handling (Hand Pass left/right. Overhead catch - protected)
- Roll Pick, Jab Pick while moving

Football Core Skills

- Hook Kick (Both Sides) Shoot for point, goals
- Punt kick (incl. outside boot), distance pass.
- Handling (Hand pass both sides, Reach catch, high catch)
- Movement – (Solo and bounce)
- Tackling (Shadowing, block down and shoulder)

Game

- Small sided games, 5x5, 7x7, 9x9, 11x11 MAX
- Size 4 sliotar / smart touch football
- Allow players explore all positions
- Has their own ball at home

Tactical – Decision Making

- When in possession challenge the players to scan options – Pass, Travel or shoot.
- Off the ball – Who to mark.
- How to be an option.
- Coach to question players during session and in games on decision making.
- Coach to place conditions on training games to challenge decision making. E.g. No solo left and right side striking

Psychological Focus

- Reenforce the link between practice and improvement

Team Play

- Support Play
- Support your team mates in attack and defence
- Coach to praise off the ball support runs
- Session games based to improve team play
- Training games have variety of focus
- E.g. Scoring, Defending, keeping possession.

Physical Fitness

- Evasion. Encourage use of side step & feint in possession.
- Body weight (only) resistance exercise through FUN Games

10.5 Guidelines for 12-13 Age Group

U12 -> 13 DEVELOPMENT PILLARS

Player Characteristics

- Begins to see relationship between effort and outcome
- Potential changes in maturation rates due to the change in school environment
- Become very self-conscious in front of group
- Lack of confidence can become barrier to development

Challenges for Coach

- Get to know players individually
- Organise Planned coaching sessions
- Games based coaching.
- Set individual skill challenges to do away from the field.
- Awareness of LTAD windows for Stamina and Speed
- Develop Goalkeeper skills

Environment

- FUN Number 1 Priority
- Coach to Player Ratio 1:10
- At least 1 ball between 2 players.
- Players must enjoy practice.
- Player development takes priority over results

Hurling Core Skills (LTAD Window)

- Striking (Air Strike both sides with movement, under pressure)
- Tackling (Air Frontal Block , Hook, Shoulder clash, Recover possession)
- Handling (Hand Pass left/right off hand, off hurley)
- Catch low, chest, high – hand protected
- Ball Control (Solo, Ground flick to space)
- Roll Pick, Jab Pick while moving, under pressure.

Football Core Skills (LTAD Window)

- Kicking (Emphasis on accuracy, Kick on the move, Kick for distance)
- Free Taking (Hands & Ground)
- Handling (Low, Chest, High under pressure)
- Movement – Dummy Kick/solo, feint and sidestep. Attack ball. Chip lift
- Tackling – Shadowing player in possession both on / off the ball

Game

- Small sided games 5x5, 7x7, 9x9, 11x11 MAX
- Size 4 sliotar
- Continue to allow player explore all positions
- All players experience game time in matches
- Limit plays of the ball in coaching sessions to mirror match day rules.

Tactical – Decision Making

- Play conditioned games to create pressure on players decision making
- Activities focus on building skills to gain & maintain possession of the ball under pressure
- Learning to work in team environment, individual decisions now has more impact on team outcome.

Psychological Focus

- Make players aware of how activities are used to improve specific skills.
- Look for feedback from player to question this

Team Play

- Encourage and support team mates vocally
- Work on teams ability to create space when in possession
- Work on teams ability to deny space when not in possession

Physical Fitness

- Evasion. Encourage use of side step& feint in possession.
- Body weight (only) resistance exercise through FUN Games.
- **Introduce endurance training. During session and between sessions. (LTAD Stamina Window)**
- **Speed endurance drills (LTAD Speed Window)**
- **Recovery Training**

10.6 Guidelines for 14-15 Age Group

U14 -> 15 DEVELOPMENT PILLARS

Player Characteristics

- Popularity influences self-esteem
- Tend to be self-critical, rely on the coach for positive reinforcement
- Huge difference in physical development between players
- Players do not make connection between physical development and loss of form

Challenges for Coach

- Large gaps between biological and chronological age
- Take advantage of LTAD windows for Stamina and Speed
- Allow Players make own decisions
- Accepts that mistakes are large part of learning
- Set example by showing respect to officials & Opponents at all times
- Use simple language
- Awareness of LTAD Stamina and Speed window

Environment

- Coach to player ratio 1:10
- At least 1 sliotar every 2 players
- Enjoyment and fun still key consideration
- Match results are secondary to development

Hurling Core Skills (LTAD Window)

- Striking – Short/long from Hand on run (40-50M), Under pressure.
- Handling – Hand Pass – Both Hands & Off the Hurley (6-8M Moving) Catching – Low, Chest, High (Pressure of an opponent) Batting/Doubling –High Ball Solo and Strike off Hurley
- Tackle – Blocking/Hooking (Under pressure of an opponent), Flick off the hurley

Football Core Skills (LTAD Window)

- Kicking (Increase emphasis on accuracy, movement distance)
- Free taking (ground & hand)
- Handling (Low/High/body catch under pressure)
- Movement – Dummy Kick/solo, feint and sidestep. Attack ball. Chip lift.
- Tackle (Shadowing player in possession and off the ball. Near hand tackle)

Game

- Players beginning to become accustomed to specific position but must still be challenged to playing a variety of positions.
- All players experience game time in matches
- Aim to provide at least 16 games in a season for your team.
- Size 5 sliotar

Tactical – Decision Making

- Understand the specific responsibilities of the various position through playing experience and minimal direction from coach.
- Small sided games 5v5 7v7 are crucial in players developing decision making

Physical Fitness (LTAD Window)

- Flexibility - through static stretching and dynamic mobility activities
- Speed - multidirectional, between 5M-25M with complete recovery in between. Built into warm up. (LTAD Speed Window)
- Strength - Improve core strength through own body weight exercise – E.g. Planks, Jumps Lunges, Burpees.
- **LTAD Stamina Window - Endurance training. During session and between sessions.**
- **LTAD Speed Window - Speed endurance drills**
- **Recovery Training**

Team Play

- Appreciate the space of a full size GAA pitch i.e. Use of width & depth.
- Attack - Implement principles of attack – possession & support play
- Maintain Possession - Moving the ball as a team.
- Defending - Implement principles of defend – Delay, Deny, Dispossess, Deliver

Psychological Focus

- Strive to make players fully recognise the improvements made through individual practice

10.7 Guidelines for 16-18 Age Group

U16 -> 18 DEVELOPMENT PILLARS

Player Characteristics

- Strong connection with admired adult (role models)
- Ability to mix socially with all teammates & adults
- Commitment to individual practice away from coaching session/matches.
- Personally responsible for hydration /Nutrition
- Manage rest and recovery e.g. Foam Rolling
- Manage time effectively between school & sport

Challenges for Coach

- Well organised planned session
- Allow players to make their own decisions on the pitch
- Accept that mistakes are a big part of player learning & development
- Set example by showing respect to match officials & opponents at all times
- Use simple language

Environment

- Coach to player ratio 1:10
- At least 1 sliotar for every 2 players
- Have awareness of games schedule for others teams your players may be representing.
- Enjoyment & Fun for players still a key consideration when planning sessions.

Hurling Core Skills

- Striking – Short/long from Hand on run (40-50M), Over Shoulder, Under pressure.
- Handling – Hand Pass – Both Hands & Off the Hurley (6-8M Moving) Catching – Low, Chest, High (Pressure of an opponent) Batting/Doubling –High Ball Solo and Strike off Hurley
- Tackle – Blocking/Hooking (Under pressure of an opponent), Flick off the hurley

Football Core Skills

- Handling (Low/High/body catch under pressure)
- Movement – Dummy Kick/solo, feint and sidestep. Attack ball full pace.
- Tackle (Shadowing player in possession and off the ball. Near hand tackle)

Game

- Players beginning to become accustom to specific position but must still be challenged to playing a variety of positions.
- Aim to provide at least 16 games in a season for your team.
- Size 5 sliotar

Tactical – Decision Making

- Decision Making Using questioning, vary your coaching style to improve players decision making
- Guided Discovery “show me when its best to solo ball or pass it long”
- Trial & Error “try to decide to support in front of the player or behind the player”
- Observation & feedback “let’s watch this and then...”

Physical Fitness (LTAD Window)

- Flexibility - through static stretching and dynamic mobility activities
- Speed - multidirectional, between 5M-25M with complete recovery in between. Built into warm up. (LTAD Speed Window)
- Strength - Improve core strength through own body weight exercise – E.g. Planks, Jumps Lunges, Burpees.
- **LTAD Stamina Window - Endurance training. During session and between sessions.**
- **LTAD Speed Window - Speed endurance drills Recovery Training**

Team Play

- Players are challenged to adapt to a number of team playing styles throughout the season.
- Use questions to help players problem solve “in game” when playing against opposition with a particular playing style.
- Reflect on these scenarios in the training sessions that follow using conditioned games.

Psychological Focus

- Strive to make players fully recognise the improvements made through individual practise

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