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coaching tips & tricks from  
the best in the game...

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## the waratah way...

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## **Coaching:**

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Season  
Planning

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## Coaching: Season Planning

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### Synopsis

Season planning is imperative for any rugby coach. Season plans assist to identify the team/clubs season, long-term and short-term goals. This paper assists with identifying **how** to develop a season plan, the **kpi's** of a season plan and the ways to extend the season plan to cover the **long and short-term** goals of the team/club.

Season planning is an important part of modern day coaching. It is imperative for a coach – no matter what level they are coaching – to identify their season goals, taking into account the physical, technical and tactical elements they wish to develop. On top of this, Club Coaches will need a season plan that takes into account all the teams within the club, the competition they are playing in and the expected outcomes from the season.

The question most often asked by coaches is: *Where do I get the time to plan?* For most coaches, time will be spent during the season thinking about the next training session, what tactics to use against an opponent and evaluating training sessions and games; most of the time, it will be in the middle of night in a cold sweat!!

A *season plan* (or periodisation plan) ensures the coach identifies and teaches key skills and strategies to their players. It also becomes a good resource for evaluating past seasons and developing an improved plan for the next. For the Waratahs, the season plan runs from November through to the end of the Super 14, with development and maintenance work scheduled for the period of June to October.

In order to develop a season plan the coach will need to complete the following steps:

### Step One:

Identify the *Pre-Competition, Competition, Transition and Active Rest* periods within the year.

### Step Two:

Establish the coaching goals for the *physical, technical and tactical* aspects of the game.

### Step Three:

Identify the ratio for the coaching goals over the season plan (i.e. within the pre-competition phase, 70-80% of time should be spent on physical preparation while the other 20-30% should be spent on the technical preparation).

*(Example – NSW RU Periodisation plan template)*

At this stage the coach now has a template that can be used to plan his *monthly overviews* (macro) and *weekly sessions* (micro). This will alleviate the common coaching trick of arriving with no idea of what to do and, therefore, putting the team through a rigorous fitness session!

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So how is this done, you ask! The simplest way is to follow the preceding steps:

### Step One:

Grab a calendar and identify the following:

- The first training session
- When your local council will allow you onto the oval (for your first session)
- The first trial game
- The first round of the competition
- Each round and your opponent
- Any Bye rounds / holiday weekends / etc
- When the final series begins and ends
- The end of season trip and Presentation Night

When you've completed this, you can then draw a line between the first training session and final trial match and mark this area as **Pre-Competition**; next you can draw a line at the midway part of the competition as **Competition 1**; at the last game of the season as **Competition 2**; at the Grand Final as **Competition 3**; at the end of the Presentation Night (etc) as **Transition**; then the period between this and next season's Pre-Competition becomes the **Active Rest** period.

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
AR	Pre-Competition			Comp 1		Comp 2		C3	Trans	Active Rest	

### Step Two:

What will be your coaching goals for the season? It is important to have a clear idea of what you want your players to achieve by the end of the season and the way and means of them getting to this point. Your coaching goals should identify specific **physical, technical and tactical** aspects of the game.

**Physical** aspects relate directly to the 'Strength and Conditioning' (S&C) of the players. Endurance, speed, and strength can be delivered to players in a variety of ways – coaches don't always have to use 400m runs (etc) to develop these aspects in their players! Remember, rugby is a 'ball in hand' – 'on you feet' sport and, as such, players should be doing a lot of their physical conditioning whilst working on these aspects of the game.

Technical aspects of rugby focus on the development of a player's "core skills". These skills may be viewed as:

- Catch and Pass
- Balance and stability (includes footspeed)
- Tracking
- Tackle
- Post-tackle skills
- Unit core skills

It is important for the coach to have an idea of what they want their players to be able to do. For example, at an U15 level the coach may want the players to be able to catch and pass, both left to right and right to left, with minor defensive pressure, whereas at Premier Rugby the coach will expect the players to be able to catch and pass, both ways, with defensive pressure.

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**Tactical** aspects are unit and team orientated. For this reason, players must have a sound physical and technical base for any positive development to be achieved. Forward set piece work and back starter plays must be planned prior to the season and implemented and developed throughout the season. This is also true for team attack and defence strategies.

Therefore, having a fair idea of the standard of play within the competition and the ability to program for your players to achieve these standards will have a positive effect on what you, as a coach, can achieve with your team. This is also important if you are lucky enough to coach one of the higher skilled teams, for it will give you a gauge of how far you can realistically develop your players within the season.

Physical	Technical	Tactical
* Develop key physical components for individual, unit and team performance. Areas of focus will be: 'Agility, Balance, Footspeed, & Stability' / 'Strength Training' (inc. "core strength") / 'Cross-Training' options / 'Endurance & Speed'.	* Development of core skills for individual, unit and team performance will focus on: <b>TRM</b> > Tracking / Tackle / 'The Gate' / Post-Tackle options; <b>Attack</b> > Catch and Pass / Running Lines / Positional kicking; <b>Defence</b> > Block, Passive, Dominant tackles; <b>Unit Skills</b> > Scrum (Building blocks to fully contested); > <b>Lineout</b> (Pods / Throw / Timing)	* Development of tactical elements of play will focus on: <b>Attack</b> > Channels & field segments / Starter plays / Alignments; <b>Defence</b> > 'Tracking, Hustle, Jam' options / '1,2,3' ruck defence options / 'Hover' & 'Sting' awareness; <b>Scrum</b> > Backrow moves / wheels (NSW); <b>Lineouts</b> > Full / 5-man / 3-man / defensive; <b>Restarts</b> > Traditional / Pods / Split-locks / Match-up; <b>Free-Kick/Penalty</b> > Strike1,2,3

### Step Three:

Being able to identify the training load associated with physical, technical and tactical aspects of rugby is the final component of the season plan.

As the **physical** aspect of rugby focuses on developing the S&C of your players, at times, a coach may spend a disproportionate amount of time on this part of the game; this occurs because the coach is normally unprepared and uses sprints and fitness as a means of masking poor planning.

In the pre-competition phase the coach should be spending between 60-80% of the available time on S&C training, whereas this percentage will decrease through the competition phases so that by the third there will be no physical (S&C) needed.

As rugby is a game that revolves a rugby ball, it is imperative that coaches utilize drills and activities that involve a rugby ball. This is quite easy when looking at the technical and tactical aspects of rugby, but it is also worthy when dealing with the physical aspects.

As the **technical** aspects of rugby will revolve around core skill work and will increase from the pre-competition phase of between 10-40%, to the competition 2 phase of about 60% and then decrease to about 20-30% within the competition 3 phase.

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In the pre-season, 'balance and stability', 'catch and pass' and 'tracking' activities will take up the most of the allocated time, whilst as the team develops their competence further technical aspects can be introduced. By the end of the season, the coach should be satisfied that the technical aspects that we're identified at the beginning of the season have been achieved.

The *tactical* aspects of rugby, as noted previously, revolve around unit and team skills. Within the pre-season, the coach must complete initial scrum, lineout and back starter play work. The time allocated to this area will range from between 10-20%, depending on the level of team being coached. Subsequently, as the season progresses, so will the percentage of time allocated to the tactical aspects of the team.

So the difficult part has now been completed! It is now time for the coach to look at what needs to be achieved in the monthly and weekly segments. As the old adage goes, "you've got to build into the season" and with this in mind, the dynamic part of coaching begins – so don't forget the scribbled on beer coasters and good luck with the season!

