



AFL Coaching Newsletter - August 2008

August 7, 2008 – Kick Around Australia Day

All Australians are being encouraged to pick up a football and Kick Around Australia on Thursday, August 7 – the day that marks 150 years since the first recorded game of Australian Football was played. Kick Around Australia Day will provide an opportunity for all Australians to join in the celebrations and wear their football colours or bring a footy to work or school and have a kick.



Australian Football 150 Years Ambassador, Kevin Sheedy said the event would be another opportunity for all supporters to celebrate Australian Football. "I encourage all Australians – students, families and workers across the country - to get involved in the Kick Around Australia Day festivities by having a kick wherever they are on the day," Sheedy said. School students will be taking part in activities including, wearing their footy colours to school, competing in kicking and handballing competitions and completing football themed lessons.

To find out more about Kick Around Australia day, for images or for school programs, please contact Liz Muling 03 9643 1979 or visit www.150years.com.au.

Management of Concussion

One major responsibility of coaches is their duty of care towards their players and the players' safety. One critical area of the game where this duty is highlighted is when players receive a knock to the head and suffer a concussive injury (a disturbance of brain function). It is important that concussion is managed correctly and that players do not return to play or training until they are fully recovered.

Following a detailed research project into this area, the AFL Research Board and the AFL Medical Officers Association have produced a position statement and policy covering the management of concussion in Australian Football at all levels. A copy of the brochure and poster designed for community football clubs can be downloaded from [here](#). Copies of these will be distributed to all clubs in the near future.



As the finals approach and the stakes rise it is more important than ever that clubs, trainers and coaches are vigilant in this area. It is critical that the basic principles of return to play decisions are followed to ensure that a concussed player is fully recovered before being allowed to do so. In general, a player with suspected concussion must be withdrawn from playing or training until fully evaluated by a medical practitioner and cleared to play. The safest course of action is that players not be allowed to return to play in a game or training session on the day of injury.

Generally decisions in this area in community football will be made by the head trainer, unless the club has a medical doctor in attendance. Trainers should not be swayed by the opinions of players, coaching staff or

others suggesting a premature return to play. Conversely, coaches must not, in accordance with the AFL Coaches Code of Conduct, put undue pressure on trainers or players to make such decisions. ([View AFL Coaches Code of Conduct here](#)).

2008 International Cup heading down under

The third Australian Football International Cup will be staged in Warrnambool and Melbourne in August and September 2008.



The event will feature during the Australian Football 150 year celebrations. Matches will be played in Melbourne at Royal Park in Parkville from Wednesday August 27 with teams in Warrnambool from Sunday August 31 until Thursday September 4. Two rounds of matches will be played on Reid Oval, Mack Oval and Walter Oval.

The Grand Final will be played as a curtain raiser at the MCG in week 1 of the Toyota AFL finals series.

A key feature of this event is that all players must be citizens of their country (no expatriate Australians are eligible to play in the International Cup). Teams are comprised solely of amateurs who must be nationals of the country they represent.

Australian Football is played by over 30,000 participants in over 30 countries around the world. This August, over 16 countries will converge in Melbourne and Warrnambool for the third International Cup. They are: Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, India, Ireland, Japan, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Peace Team, Samoa, South Africa, Sweden and USA.

Never before has the Cup hosted this many countries, and the event takes on greater significance this year as Australia celebrates the 150th birthday of its Indigenous game.

Visit www.ic08.com.au for all the news on this year's International Cup.

Head Coach NT Thunder

An exciting coaching position is available in the Northern Territory AFL player development program. This full time appointment is based in Darwin and will work in partnership with the Northern Territory Institute of Sport and the NAB AFL Rising Stars talent program in ensuring the best possible pathway for talented Northern Territory athletes.

The successful applicant will oversee the development of the NTIS AFL Scholarship squad both in Darwin and Alice Springs, Coach the Northern Territory Thunder U16's and U18's at their respective National championships including any lead up games, Provide coaching assistance and support to the AFLNT's U15's Development Squad and U17's Academy programs and take a pivotal role in the continued education of AFL coaches in the Northern Territory.

Further information is available from the link below or by phoning, AFLNT Talent Manager, Jarrod Chipperfield on 08 8980 4810 or via email – jchipperfield@aflnt.com.au

Applications should be received by 15th August 2008.

<http://afl.com.au/AFLHQ/AFLFocus/Careers/tabid/229/Default.aspx>

FACT OR FICTION

Man-on-man football is the only way to win a Premiership.

By Jon Ralph

There was a time when the rules of engagement in football warfare were clear, and mighty simple.

Both teams would line up with 17 players each in one-on-one contests across the ground, while each team's main ruckman, if he chose not to 'follow' the ball, might position himself in the hole in front of the opposition's leading full-forward. The team with superior talent generally won.

The advent of full-time coaching has allowed the senior coach and his specialists time to tinker and experiment, with more complicated strategies and systems (particularly when it comes to defence) now the norm.



Regardless of where one stood on the matter of whether defending was more important than attacking, most agreed on one concept: you couldn't win a premiership if you didn't play one-on-one footy.

Dropping a spare midfielder back all day or even daring to concede ground in the middle to shore up your defence was a recipe for disaster, according to some of the League's elite coaches.

But David Wheadon, one of football's most astute tactical thinkers, says all teams now use a zone defence, if not exclusively, then at various times, depending on the opposition and circumstances in a match.

Hawthorn might have raised eyebrows with a criss-crossing cluster of players forming a moving zone defence that spreads according to where the ball is, but the Hawks – who also emphasise blocking for runners or key ball users – aren't the only team with complicated defensive structures.

Wheadon, who teaches skill acquisition part-time at Geelong, recently released an updated version of *Drills and Skills in Modern Football*, viewed as a definitive guide to teaching all aspects of skills and strategies for Australian Football.

In the book, he argues that the one-one-one approach to defence is often less effective than the zone defence. "Basically the reason why the zone defence is so good, is you can guard the most dangerous players in dangerous positions," Wheadon says.

"We have copied zone defence from sports like basketball and soccer and American Football, and the basic premise is that if you are guarding an area the best way to negate individual talent is to send more people into any given area.

"If you stay with your man one-on-one as a defender, and he is better than you, he will keep beating you. But in soccer, they never allow their defenders to be isolated because the price is too high," he says.

Hawthorn relies on its zone defence to compensate for a back half that is generally considered undersized and lacking class. If the Hawks can slow down the flow of ball into their back half, they can still thrive. When they struggle in this area, they find themselves under enormous pressure.

As Wheadon says: "If you have a great defence and a great attack, you have the whole package. If you have a good attack and your defence is not great, then you need to do something different to stay in the game."

Wheadon says the best zone defender he's seen never realised what he was actually doing.

"In my time at Essendon I started looking at these things and the best zone defender was Gavin Wanganeen. He just went back with the flight and helped his teammates and soon others tried to copy him, but he just knew where the ball was going."

Wheadon says clubs have been emphasising defensive strategies for some time, and are only now starting to be better understood. "I went to the AIS and had a look at how teams defended in soccer, and got involved in the science of defence and researched teams with good defensive records, and it went from there."

Even Geelong, seen last year by the purists to be the ultimate one-on-one attacking team, used zone defence often. Matthew Egan and Tom Harley repeatedly left their men to zone into space and drop into holes, taking saving marks on the last line to help protect full-back Matthew Scarlett.

Hawthorn's method of defence is not new, but the fact it is using an extreme version of it has attracted some attention. Port Adelaide has often played with swarming midfielders blocking space through the midfield. And Adelaide's customary method of defence under Neil Craig has seen its wingmen and midfielders drop back into space, while the half-forwards pressure and trap the ball-carrier.

Few doubt Hawthorn has the capacity to win the premiership, and if it does, others will likely seek to copy its methods, as is often the case in football and sport generally.

Gaining a tactical edge is one of football's enduring appeals: any team standing still is going backwards, as the game continues to evolve at a frenetic speed.

This is an extract from an article titled "An Ever Changing Game" written by Jon Ralph and originally published in the July/August edition of the AFL members' magazine 4Quarters. 4Quarters is also available from selected newsagents. To buy copies or subscribe to 4Quarters magazine, please phone Ashlea Milner on (03) 9627 2600.



David Wheadon's book Drills & Skills for Australian Football is available from the AFL. Click [here](#) for an order form.



SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY SPORT & RECREATION
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Expressions of Interest

2008 SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL COACHING CONFERENCE

"Developing Winning Ways at all Levels"

The students from Swinburne University Sport and Recreation wish to advise that they are conducting an Australian Football coaching conference (endorsed by AFL Victoria) on Tuesday 7th October 2008.

The conference is being organised to provide an opportunity for Australian Football coaches from all levels of the sport to gain access to current and future practices so that they can develop their coaching skills and provide quality programs for their players. It has been approved by AFL Victoria as an official updating activity for Coaching Re-Accreditation and is being aimed at coaches and other interested parties within the Australian Football industry, along with other individuals who may be required to coach football such as PE teachers.

Last year's very successful conference was held at the Lexus Centre and featured a line-up of guest speakers that included David Buttifant (Physical Preparation Manager) and Brad Scott (Assistant Coach) from the Collingwood Football Club, Lisa Sutherland (Sports Dietitian) from the Hawthorn Football Club, Pippa Grange (Manager – Psychology, People and Culture) from the AFL Player's Association, Rick Irwin (then Development Manager) from the Oakleigh Chargers and Mark Fine (Sports Radio Presenter) from SEN 1116 Radio.

Feedback from attending delegates was extremely positive and it is hoped that this year's event will achieve even greater heights.

Potential 2008 topics include Club Culture, Team Preparation, Motivation, Player Recruitment, Talent Identification, Player Retention and Game Plan Development, and targeted speakers include senior Australian Football coaches and officials.

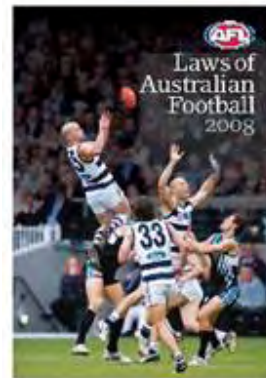
For further details or to register your interest in attending the conference, please contact Sheridan Nicol at Swinburne University on 9214 8854, 0414 880 532 or snicol@swin.edu.au.

Coaching and the laws of the game

Knowing the laws of the game and their correct application can have performance outcomes for players and teams. If coaches and by extension their players really know the rules, they are less likely to do things which result in scores to their opponents or missed opportunities to take advantage of various situations which occur during games (for example playing on outside the boundary). Scenarios to test your knowledge of specific situations will be included regularly to test your understanding of the Laws of the game.

This month's scenario is:

The full forward has taken the mark in the forward pocket, beside the behind post. He goes back over the boundary line to line up for the kick, the man on the mark is inside the boundary line.



The full forward decides to play on by moving in one direction to cross the boundary line and open up the angle. He has run off the mark and is still over the boundary line when the field umpire calls "play on".

What is the correct application of the Laws and therefore the next passage of play?

- A - boundary umpire signals a boundary throw in at the spot where the original mark took place.
- B - boundary umpire signals a boundary throw in at the spot closest to the player at that moment.
- C - play allowed to continue as the full-forward moves inside the Boundary Line.

The Answer is at the end of the newsletter. For a detailed video explanation of 2008 interpretations of the Laws click [here](#)

AFL Record – How to Play Series

Throughout 2008 the AFL Record is producing a regular How to Play section around the skills of the game. It showcases outstanding practitioners of the specific skills amongst current stars of the game. As well as demonstrating the skills in sequence and listing the key coaching points, each article contains an interview with the player concerned about how they learnt and practiced the skill to reach their current level.

Skills presented so far are kicking (Alan Didak), handball (Cameron Ling), high marking (Brett Burton), stoppages (Guy McKenna), ruckwork (Dean Cox), tackling (Jude Bolton), snapping for goal (Steve Johnson), marking on your chest (Jonathan Brown), spoiling (Graham Johncock), kicking for goal (Daniel Bradshaw) and picking up the ball (Luke Power).

Under law 16.5.1a a Player who is awarded a Free Kick or a Mark may bring the football into play from beyond the Boundary Line provided that the Player moves in one direction whilst in the act of Kicking, Handballing or moving to cross the Boundary Line. Therefore, despite the full forward being Out of Bounds when the umpire has called "play on" he is entitled to continue moving in that one direction to cross inside the Boundary line.

Further, law 16.5.1b states that if a Player taking his kick from outside the Boundary Line...(iii) does not bring the ball into play in accordance with 16.5.1a then the ball shall be deemed to be Out of Bounds and the boundary Umpire shall throw the ball back into play at the spot where the original Mark or Free Kick took place. This means that if the full forward had run off his line and the umpire had called "play on" and then he had changed direction for the second time whilst still outside the boundary line either the boundary or field umpire should call for a throw in.



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