





Late Beginners

Coaching Late Beginners

Due to the embryonic stage of Women's rugby in Ireland, participants often take up the game in their late teens and as adults. Safety and player welfare are at the forefront of IRFU strategies to ensure participants can play the game quickly and fully.

Efficient contact skills, individual (tackle, maul and continuity) and unit (scrum, lineout, restarts) skills are a high priority for coaches, together with developing the other technical, tactical and strategic skills. Rugby union is an invasion team sport with a unique property relating to the off-side law; inducting and teaching new players this aspect of the game cannot be over-estimated since athletes and players from single and other team sports will have had little or no experience of this unique aspect of rugby union. Managing the competence gap between late beginners and experienced players when training and playing in competition is critical for player welfare, enjoyment and retention. This competence gap may be smaller in Stage 3 as the players are younger (14-17 years), than those "late beginners" entering in Stage 5 (adults). This is mainly due to the rugby specific training age of players in each stage.

Being aware of player competences and confidence is critical to ensure players are trained and challenged appropriately with the correct intensity and rate of progression. This may require segregation of players from time to time to allow them to practice at an intensity to facilitate safe and enjoyable learning. This demands an insightful, vigilant, patient and innovative coaching approach.

The following points are highlighted to assist coaches of 'Late Beginners' to ensure they are introduced to rugby in a safe and enjoyable manner:

- **Awareness of players** – Acknowledge that there are Late Beginner players within the group thus ensuring the coach has designed the training session in order to control their introduction to rugby in a safe, enjoyable and challenging way.
- **Integration** – Knowing how and when to integrate these players into general team activities. Coaches may have to tailor their session to allow for more individual attention while also ensuring that the player still feels part of the team. Knowing how/when to introduce them to general team activities safely is key.
- **Fundamental skill variances** – 'Late Beginners' may have come from another sport but some may not have played any sport before, therefore, their fundamental sports skills may vary. Some players may have excellent agility, balance and co-ordination while others might have better ball handling skills. Some players may lack many of these fundamental sports skills and so training/playing must facilitate the development of these skills.
- **Progression** – Managing player expectations and needs with competence and readiness is the responsibility of the coach. There is no exact time frame for this, however, player welfare and safety is paramount. Progressing the player too quickly could facilitate injury, while progressing them too slowly might result in frustration, demotivation and ultimate departure from the game.
- **Confidence in contact** – This relates to both individual and in Unit play. Players should develop competence and confidence in all individual contact skills (attack and defence). In particular, if a player wishes to play in the forward unit, they must become comfortable, confident and competent with all positional skills required to play in 1st Phase set piece, Scrum and Line-out.
- **Exposure to Matches** – Match readiness can be a difficult decision for the coach. Competence, confidence, training performance, physical fitness, size and level of competition are some of the factors the coach must consider before allowing a player to play part or all of a match. Again, the



coach, in agreement with the player, should decide on what is in the player's best interest while also ensuring her safety.

- **Laws of the Game** – Rugby can be complicated when it comes to the Laws of the Game, especially for a player who has no previous knowledge of the game. A player is required to have appropriate knowledge and respect for the Laws of the Game. Without appropriate knowledge a player may put themselves, their team-mates and their opponents at risk. This could also lead to frustration for the player, their team, the opposition and the officials.
- **Game Understanding** – Coaches should remember that players joining the sport for the first time will have little or no game understanding and experience. Developing their understanding of 'what' has to be done, 'when', 'how' and 'why' it is done to be effective is also paramount. Most other invasion team sports are similar with respect to principles of play and therefore players can readily transfer these principles across other sports.

IRFU WOMEN'S LONG TERM PLAYER DEVELOPMENT MATRIX

Stage Label	FUNDamentals Children	Train to Play Young Teens	Train to Develop Teens
Essence of the Player	Focused on Fun & Enjoyment	Focused on Exploring	Focused on Development
Essence of the Coach	... Guides Teaches	... Encourages
Essence of the Game	... Fun	... Playing	... Developing
Game Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced numbers (mini-rugby) • Varying contact appropriate to competence • Development of game understanding • Players play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced numbers • Evident structure within games through familiarity with General Movement & Restart phases of play • Players participate in all positions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free-flowing 13-a-side • Respecting the significant contribution of 1st phase • Players explore various positions • Specific roles within 1st phase
Personal Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active • Desire fun • Freedom of Self-Expression • Require order • Energetic • Individual • Short attention span 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring • Inquisitive • Socially conscious • Exploring social skills • Gender awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interested • Eager • Involvement • Developing social skills & self-esteem • Self-awareness • Different rates & levels of maturity • Developing relationships • Emotional • Peer pressure (+/-)
Strategic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing understanding of basic General Movement Principles (Go Forward-Support) & Laws • Introduction of lateral support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing further understanding of General Movement Principles (Support-Continuity) • Develop further understanding of 1st Phase (Units) play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing the link between General Movement & 1st Phase while still developing General Movement (attack & defence – types of defence/ patterns)

Train to Perform

Young Adults

Focused on Improvement & Performance

... Facilitates

... Performance

- 15-a-side rugby
- Players choosing to play as forward or back
- Focus is primarily on performance in pursuit of achieving outcomes

- Competitive
- Developing self-identity
- Challenging
- Learning to focus
- Independence

- Developing a deeper understanding of Units & Mini-Units together with General Movement (play before-in & behind the defence/attack)
- Introduce appreciation of the Principles of Pressure & Game appreciation

Train to Compete

Adults

Focused on Specialising

... Shares

... Competitive

- 15-a-side rugby
- Player is now position-specific
- Focus is now on achieving outcomes, i.e., the Principle of Pressure - with respect to attack & defence

- Focused
- Organised
- Balancing personal-social-vocation-investment of time
- Settled
- Stress
- Prioritise their time & lifestyle

- Developing an appreciation of the Principles of Pressure & Game appreciation
- Introduce team profile

Train to Win

Elite

Focused on Being the Best

... Empowers

... Winning

- Focus is now on adaptation & effectiveness
- Supported by detailed preparation and opposition analysis

- Committed
- Ambitious
- Organised
- Self-regulating

- Developing and Adapting Strategies aligned to team profile and profile of opponents

Retention

Any Age

Focused on making a positive Difference

... Works with

- Experienced
- Passionate
- Organised
- Willing to contribute time & effort to others
- May have other commitments/interests
- A person may enter this stage at any age

Coach

- Apply coaching qualification
- Demonstrate good organisational, planning & communications skills
- Reliable, enthusiasm for coaching, provide fun and enjoyment for player
- Improve player performance
- Want to keep fit

Stage Label	FUNdamentals Children	Train to Play Young Teens	Train to Develop Teens
Tactical Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing basic decision making around the ball (pass or run) • Go Forward & Support skills • Principle of Usefulness - 'where am I?' what am I doing?' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing basic collective decision making skills • Support (channel) & Continuity skills • Principle of Usefulness - 'how can I be useful?' 'Are you on the ball or on the space?' 2 Groups – Life of the Ball Group and Early Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of decision making skills (attack & defence) • Principle of Usefulness - 'what must I do to be effective?'
Technical Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning basic techniques of relevant individual skills (Catching, passing, evasion) • General Movement Principles (Go Forward-Support) • Develop confidence in contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning basic techniques of relevant mini-unit skills • General Movement Principles (Support-continuity) • Further develop confidence in contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused on performing correct key factors in skills • Confidence in contact developed through regular & appropriate repetition • Individual & specialist skills (exploring playing positions)
Physical Fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Physical Literacy*. ABC's, RJT, KGB's & CK's • Window of Trainability for Speed 1 (6-8), Suppleness (6-10) & Skill (8-11) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued Development of Physical Literacy • Window of Trainability for Speed 2 (11-13) Stamina (During PHV**) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid growth & significant differences in physical maturity • Window of Trainability for Strength 1&2 (immediately Post PHV and at the onset of Menarche) • Education on positive eating habits • Education on injury prevention
Mental Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote freedom of self-expression • Confidence • Mutual support & fair play • Enjoyment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote focus, structure • Co-operation • Team work & group identity • Self-esteem • Positive self-image 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote & nurture self-esteem & self-confidence • Positive interaction & engagement within collective experiences • Self-control

Train to Perform

Young Adults

- Developing understanding of key functional roles – 1st phase play (Possession & Go Forward) & General Movement (4 Groups - Life, Early, Late and Axis Group)
- Developing techniques under pressure (time/space/repetition)
- Individual & specialist skills (exploring playing positions)

- Introduction to ability specific strength speed and conditioning methods
- Education on nutritional strategies pre-, during and post training and around menstrual function and training

- Promote individual self-confidence
- Self-worth
- Individual & collective achievement through goal-setting

Train to Compete

Adults

- Developing problem-solving capacities within functional roles (attack & defence; General Movement & 1st Phase)

- Focus on developing techniques for Specialist skills (playing position chosen)

- Gradual and appropriate progression of strength speed and conditioning training dependent on ability.
- Consistent reinforcement of proper technique
- Appropriate periodised season plan & competition model

- Ability to manage her pre & post-match preparing & recovery
- Regularly sets & attains goals in sport & life
- Determination

Train to Win

Elite

- Developing ability to adapt & improvise

- Excellent understanding & competence with regard to techniques (individual & specialist)

- Use of advanced speed, strength and condition methods where appropriate to optimise performance at the highest level

- Ability to develop competition strategies & cope with pressure
- Self-regulating and self-confident
- Mental Skills Training

Retention

Any Age

Administrator/ Manager

- Dedication to job and sport
- Knowledge of the game.
- Display planning, leadership, communication, management and organisational skills
- Computer literate
- Can follow rules, efficient and reliable.

Referee

- Attend referee course
- Implementation of laws of the game
- Maintain physical fitness
- Fairness in character, good analysis and observatory skill
- Good communication skills
- Trustworthy, efficient and reliable

Other roles

- Childrens' officer
- Club/School Liaison
- Committee member

Mental Development

- Positive mental health
- Confidence
- Sense of belonging
- Sense of duty

ABC's: Agility Balance Co-Ordination & Speed. **RJT:** Run Jump Throw. **KGB's:** Kinaesthesia Gliding Buoyance Striking with object. **CK's:** Catching Kicking Striking with body

* Fundamental Movement Skills + Fundamental Sports Skills = Physical Literacy

**Average Peak Height Velocity in Females around 12 years of age