

Kent RFU Mini/ Midi Rugby

Skills Development Days 2011-2012

As part of the RFU planning process, the Kent RFU mini/midi committee have been reviewing the Structured Season and in particular the four SDDs.

As part of the review we have taken into account the views of Kent RFU professional staff, members of the committee and representations from clubs around the county.

SDDs have always seemed to be one of the most controversial aspects of the structured season. The reasons for this are many, but the complaints we have received include:

- 1) Kent is a large county so children have to travel quite long distances
- 2) There is a huge difference in the size of clubs – this often can result in a significant mismatch between host and visitor
- 3) There is a difference in quality of coaching provision between clubs – even with the introduction of themed days and training plans for the session some clubs seemingly find it difficult to host an SDD which is effective for all participants.
- 4) Space at some clubs makes it difficult for the club to accommodate minis and junior fixtures
- 5) If parents aren't prepared to travel to SDDs with their children the squad is split up and training time is lost.
- 6) Some clubs (or perhaps more specifically certain teams) appear not to be able to differentiate SDDs and fixtures and insist on a match being played.

Over the last two seasons we have tried to respond to many of these issues by:

- 1) clustering clubs to limit the amount of travel
- 2) having SOA clubs host to benefit from their organisational infrastructure
- 3) producing plans, available in advance to coaches, parents and players, so that all know in advance what the session is about and what they can get out of it.

Notwithstanding we continue to find that SDDs are just not working in the way it was hoped.

It is therefore proposed to alter the whole premise of the SDD and shift the focus of the day from the player experience to that of the coach.

You will all doubtless recognise that the quality of coaching provision for our young players is of paramount importance, not only if we are to ensure that children are coached safely and that their physical and psychological development is uppermost in the coach's planning, but also to ensure that children have fun playing rugby and choose to stay in the sport beyond the age at which their parents cease to choose their activities!

Following the County's Seal of Approval initiative, more and more coaches are obtaining formal RFU qualifications. But, as we all know, that is only the first step in becoming a good coach. On-going development is important, particularly as a coach's skills need to evolve in line with game rule changes from one age group to the next and the challenges of working with older players.

We therefore propose to trial a series of "Advancing Coaches" experiences, led by KRFU professional staff, tailored to address coaching techniques and issues for the three core stages, Tag, Mini and Midi rugby. The fourth session will address transition from midi to youth rugby.

These sessions will be **FREE** to all registered club coaches. Clubs will be required to demonstrate that they are supporting this initiative by encouraging their mini/midi coaches to attend. The sessions are *complementary* to, rather than instead of, the RFU Start Rugby and Level 1 courses.

The suggested programme is:

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| 16.10.2011 | Tag Coaches Session Coaches from U6, U7 and U8 | One or two sessions in East Kent London & Metropolitan West Kent |
| 27.11.2011 | Mini rugby Coaches Session Coaches from U9 and U10 | One or two sessions in East Kent London & Metropolitan West Kent |
| 15.01.2012 | Midi rugby Coaches Session Coaches from U11 and U12 | One or two sessions in East Kent London & Metropolitan West Kent |
| 26.02.2012 | Preparation for Youth Rugby Coaches from U12 | One session for lead coaches |

The suggested content is:

- Welcome and immediate involvement – addressing soft skills and child welfare good practice
- Organisational skills & communication
- Game related practice with a chance for “hands on” for all
- Coaching delivery – pre/during/post game or training session
- Refeing – key issues to address and dealing with disciplinary issues should they arise
- Feedback, examples of good practice and session evaluation

We estimate each session will have 15-20 attendees, so there will be ample opportunity for small group activities and addressing individual needs.
Further details will be released before the end of this season.

The four CDDs – or Coach Development Dates - will remain **NON-FIXTURE** dates; clubs are reminded that players may play a maximum of 17 fixtures in a season.

It will be the club’s decision as to how to organise themselves whilst particular coaches are away at the “CDD” session. It is hoped that clubs will be creative in their approach – perhaps a club’s senior coach(es) might be encouraged to take a session or a coach of an older minis group could “drop down”, etc. Similarly, sessions could serve as an opportunity to run the RFU Proficiency Awards. Alternatively, the age group could be “rested” should clashes occur with Youth Fixtures.

The benefits of this initiative are perceived to be:

- 1) No need to move large numbers of players around the County
- 2) Direct support and development of grassroots coaches by professional coaches
- 3) All players benefit from receiving enhanced coaching skills
- 4) Clubs have greater organisational discretion managing non-fixture sessions and keep squads together.

During this trial initiative we will take feedback from coaches attending the sessions in order to determine whether to extend the initiative into the 2012-13 season.

If clubs wish to make any observations regarding the above initiative please do not hesitate to do so either directly or via your district representative.