

# AFL VIC COACH2COACH PODCAST:

## (2018 EPISODE 8 TRANSCRIPT)

**LA:** Hi everyone and welcome to Episode eight of AFL Victoria's podcast- Coach2Coach - talking all things AFL coaching for local junior clubs!

Your hosts are Education and Training Manager **Lauren Arnell**, State Coaching Manager **Steve Teakel** and Carlton Assistant Coach **Dale Amos**.

In this episode, we'll be taking a range of topics from coach development and the new National Coaching Accreditation system 'Coach AFL' to coaching curriculum, Hawthorn Premierships and the biomechanics for kicking.

Let's get into it...

Well Steve & Dale, we are going to flip things a little and start this Episode by introducing our guest straight away, **David Rath**. Dave's resume begins with Bachelor of Applied Science Human movement from the University of Ballarat and goes from 9 years at the AIS and 12 years at Hawthorn Football Club in High Performance and now at the AFL. Dave it's been a busy start to the year in your new role as National Coaching and Innovation and Education Manager at AFL House.

**DR:** Lauren it has, it's been really busy which is great as I would rather be really busy than sitting on your haunches I suppose. I came into a program which was 80% done in terms of the Coach AFL strategy piece which know doubt Steve will talk about and that was well and truly underway so I have come in on the back end of that and helped to launch that nationally. Also, been a number of things I have been involved in, so looking at the game and how that is going. I've been involved in a range of strategy pieces in at AFL House, so yeah, it's a big business in there and I'm finding my way through it.

**ST:** So Coach AFL is our new strategy for coach education, what are some of the key elements which are probably something different from the previous years of coach education?

**DR:** Steve it's obviously a big change and a period of big transformation for coaching education nationally, and that's one of the big things about it is a national strategy. So, it's about trying to get national consistency and uniformity across what's happening in Coach Education across the country. A big feature of it is its accessibility, so coach education has been done really well across the country but one of the big problems we've had is getting it in front of the coaches we need to. Previously we have run a lot of work shops which have been great but one of the downfalls of workshops is we haven't been able to get everyone through them so we come into an on-line platform which will have a lot broader reach and we will hit a lot more coaches with a starting point of coach education. That's one of the key features to it and give them relevant information so by actually knowing who they are and creating the coaching profile, we will be able to say that Steve Teakel's the coach of an U15 team and we will give him this information as opposed to Dale Amos who's coaching Carlton, he needs a totally different set of information. Two of the features of it is really relevant information and accessible and its targeted to coaching groups.

**ST:** It's been a fantastic start for it and it has been getting some positive feedback. Having that shorter period as an introduction, so doing an on-line module that is tailored to your coaching age group. So how about the design of it and maybe some future things that might be happening.



**DR:** Good question Steve. As a background to this we really do support coaches doing workshops and we think face to face coaching education is fundamental and we want coaches to be educated in the field also. I see it as being the on-line component being starting point for coach education and being engagement for a broader group of coaches. One of the features of this new scheme is this new reaccreditation point scheme. So, the coaches earn a number of points (10 points) during the year to reaccredit next year. They can do that by coaching itself, they can do that by attending workshops or they can do that by doing on-line content. So, we are really trying to incentivise getting coaches in front of coach educators and getting practical face-to-face coaching as well. That's part of it that's really important to understand.

**DA:** Given your extensive background in coaching with the AIS, Hawthorn and now working for the AFL we are really interested in the top 3 things for local coaches out there. Particularly in the community, 3 things that you think are critical to them to be able to perform their job at the highest level they possibly can so they can get the most impact with their players.

**DR:** I think no matter what level you coach at Dale it all starts with relationships. We hear this all the time, if you can't connect with a player or a group of players you can't change behaviour. That's fundamental to everything we do. At AFL clubs a lot of work is being done in that space about working out how coaches can become better communicators and better relaters to their team and I don't think it is any different at any level. You've got to be able to take a group of young players as a youth coach and to be able to talk to them on their level and get them to do what you want them to do. You've got to motivate players no matter what level they're at and relating and communicating would be number one. I think setting a vision is really important. So, if you're taking a group with you then you've got to know where you are going and setting a path and communicating that is the key feature of a coach's role in motivating a group. Actually, consolidating that group together and getting them to work as one if they can understand a common vision I think that is really important. I think maybe the third is a key understanding of the game. Having an understanding of the fundamentals of the game and how to coach that and plan for coaching the game itself. I think that is really important.

**DA:** In regard to that, coaching the game and understanding the game again in regard to local coaches who want to do that. It is far easier working at an AFL system and you have access to people and you can communicate and talk to them and that allows you to be able to grow that knowledge. So, for local coaches who are looking to build that knowledge and understand the game better, have you got any strategies that maybe they can implement that allow them to be able to do that or things they can start to apply that allow them to grow that.

**DR:** That's a really good question Dale and it's an area I am happy to grow quite quickly within our Coach AFL curriculum. In terms of developing a framework for understanding the game based on the moments within the game. Coming from an AFL club you understand there is a lot of coaching done around these transition moments. Historically when we've coached the game we have talked about 'our ball', 'oppo ball', 'ball in dispute'. Now when we coach that way we think about the ball starting in defensive 50 then you go inside forward 50. It doesn't happen. These days in AFL footy its around 22% of the time that happen yet we still think conceptionally, our ball, moving the ball from defensive 50 to inside 50 - not the case. The game is about the transition, it's about turnovers. So, we can conceptualise the game in those moments as a coach and then you can coach those moments a lot better. So, if we had all the players on the one page in understanding what moment of the game are we in, how do we respond to that, where we are on the field, where the opposition is, what the opportunity is, then we can get somewhere and I think that's the framework we need to develop.

**DA:** That's a good point and it's a good reminder for all coaches and particularly junior level that it's an unbelievably complex game for kids. Not many games in the world where the ball is in dispute as much as our game and the decision making around that and what to do is really complex. It's nice for coaches to remind themselves and think sometimes that is the case. It is easy to get frustrated particularly kids aren't necessarily able to do what you would like them to do.

**DR:** Incredibly complex game, largest field, most participants, longest time, 360 degrees, chaotic game, oval ball, it's incredibly hard to coach.

**LA:** So Dave you talk about the moments in a game, we also need to talk about skill developments as well and you use the word curriculum. At junior and youth level and even Auskick, we need to teach the skills of the game. So, for coaches we might use the word curriculum and we sort of said for want of a better word what does that mean. How important is it for coaches at that level to identify how much time they actually have with their group, because there are just endless skills that we could list that are required in our game? How important is it to identify how many training sessions have you got and how much total time do you have with your team?

**DR:** Planning is critical I think. As any coach you need to be an organised coach and I probably missed one of those, probably the fourth one Dale. You need to be organised, it's fundamental. A designed plan for how your session, your week, your pre-season, your month is going to play out and is an important thing to do.

**LA:** It's difficult if you don't have a teaching or a coaching background and you might just be a parent who does a desk job during the day and you just turn up. It sounds easy than what it actually is.

**DR:** Your spot on, there is a lot of assumed knowledge when we talk about the game. That's probably one of the things when we talk about coaching AFL that we want to create some templates for coaches to be able to use to understand models and development and sequential learning and how we can fit game sense into this and how we balance game sense versus individual development. We also need to know how we balance all those different needs.

**ST:** Even the supporter at a local football club having a club coaching coordinator who can tie everything together, different age groups and really support the coach and I know that's one of the goals of Coach AFL as well.

**DR:** Absolutely Steve and that's one of the critical roles that we've identified and we have to get right. If we acknowledge that Coach AFL is going to hit a broad range of coaches from the top down approach but we also need to couple that with this grass roots networks of coaching educators and coaching excellence. Identify really good practise in this space and celebrate it and really spread that around.

**DA:** I know you have done a lot of travel and visited a lot of sports, really interested in your thoughts on AFL Coaching, how is it going and how they stack up against the rest of the world and maybe other sports that you feel will influence the way coaching moves forward.

**DR:** Good question Dale. I think no doubt AFL coaching is being influenced by other sports internationally. If we look at our game it's obviously a domestic sport as it doesn't have the international influence that a lot of other codes have. So, if you look at soccer it's played in so many countries in the world, basketball the same, hockey and all these invasion sports that play in multiple cultures give a range of influences. So, by travelling and looking at those sports we gain a lot. No doubt Hawthorn we gained a lot through that process. We learnt a lot from soccer in the early days and

borrowed a lot of principles from that. There are sports and soccer is a big one obviously and I have spent a long time talking about that but they have different cultures that influence it really heavily. So, if you look at the South American culture, this celebration of the game this is very different to the German technocratic way of coaching. You might say the Italians are very conservative despite their flamboyant nature. There are different influences on this one game and we can borrow from all of those.

**ST:** So in terms of your time at Hawthorn Football Club in a very successful period what were some of the key things you believe you brought to coaching as well with Alistair Clarkson?

**DR:** I suppose we were reasonable innovative in how we thought about the game. A large part was due to Clarko's faith in being open to new ideas and challenging the paradox of how things were done. So, the press that we borrowed from soccer wouldn't have been possible, (Clarko's cluster) wouldn't have been developed if he had of been a coach who sat back and said that's not the way we are going to do it, we just do it the way it's being done. We were quite innovative in that space, we started filming in behind the goals cameras to try and understand where players were. We changed the way we coached dramatically around that we took real risks and we were not sure if they were going to pay off or not. There is a little bit about being innovative, being not so risk averse and being prepared to challenge things I think that were really significant in why we achieved what we did there.

**ST:** Your other strength is obviously the biomechanics of kicking. So, what are some of the key elements that you think is important if a coach is going out there teaching a young kid how to kick the ball.

**DR:** That has been a bit of a journey for me as my background is biomechanics as you acknowledged earlier. Biomechanics is a science based on this premise that when people think about biomechanics you think about the idea of an optimal technique and one way to do things. That was the way when I started at Hawthorn I thought and I quickly worked out it wasn't the case. People move how they want to move and we need to work with them rather than shape them into a square peg into a round hole. So, for example Buddy has a really different way of moving than Roughy does. Buddy tends to rotate around an axis through his head where he rotates horizontally around that. Where Roughy is really sway hipped from side to side and they use that movement in the way they kick. If you think about how they kick, Buddy kicks around the corner and drives it around that way where Roughy drops his hip out to one side and he drives it that way. So, getting them to kick the same way was never going to work, so it's really around trying to work with the player and I quickly found out there was some non-negotiables around kicking. That was largely around impact and ball release. If we get those 2 things right, then we can teach players to start to vary what they are trying to do and couple the decisions to the environment and that's the key lesson. If we talk about skill, people think skill equals technique but I don't think that is the case. I define skill equalling technique plus adaptability under pressure so you have got have all of those things relevant in a training environment. You have to challenge them to adapt to the pressures of the game and that will drive how it kicks. Kicking is not a movement pattern it's an adaption to the environment and I suppose that's my philosophy on kicking.

**DA:** The use of small-sided games as well at Hawthorn?

**DR:** Absolutely fundamental. We used small-sided games religiously in our training and not for the sake of doing small-sided games but to try and isolate a situation in the game. Decisions that needed to be had, a moment in the game or a key principle. So, you would use constraints, so you

might cone off a certain area of the ground so players had to go around that and learn how to defend one side and pull back on one side and push up on the other. So, you might put some cones in the middle so they couldn't go there. So, all these small-side games are really heavily focused on education as well as educating principles as well as developing players decision makers and skilful executors of the game.

**DA:** I think it is a really important point, particularly for local coaches that it's okay for training not to look beautiful or pure or clean. But that exploration and the mistakes and the learning and adapting to those environments is a critical part of players learning.

**DR:** It's key Dale, even in the AFL game we talk about team strategize around stoppages yet for every stoppage there is at least two turnovers in between. So, it should look messy because it is messy and training needs to be messy. I can't agree with that point too much.

**LA:** Well Dave thank you so much for joining us and sharing those insights, we could talk forever. Steve & Dale, we look forward to the next episode. Well that's a rap. Thanks to Carlton Football Club for their generous assistance in recording coach2coach, thank you for listening and we look forward to joining you for our next instalment of the coach2coach podcast series. For more information check out the AFL Victoria website or you can also join our twitter conversation via the **#AFLVicCCC**.