

# AFL VIC COACH2COACH PODCAST:

(2018 EPISODE 9 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 will be talking skill development, curriculum, coach communication methods and a whole range of topics with our special guest....

Well Steve and Dale we are going to again throw straight to our guest. In this episode we are fortunate enough to be speaking with **Lee Anton-Hem**. Lee has more than 25 years' experience as a physical education specialist, is a published author, an international speaker and now owns and runs her own health, physical education and wellbeing consultancy.

Lee thank you for joining us. You're actually a lecturer of mine at RMIT, can you explain to our listeners what we mean when we talk about fundamental motor skills.

**LAH:** Sure, thanks for having me Lauren. Okay, so fundamental motor skills or fundamental movement skills or whatever terminology you want to use are foundational skills. They are so important as they underpin the sport skills that we use in everyday life. So foundational skills are really important to build on for more sport specific activities. For example, in AFL your running all the time, your leaping, jumping so they are foundation skills. Then we take other skills like marking which involve catching and the leap joined together, you've got the punt kick, handballing, they are sports specific variations of the foundational skills. They are really, really important for students and children to learn in the early years of life.

**LA:** So for the most part we hope that those are learnt in some way before children get to primary school but there absolutely taught at primary school and secondary school. In this podcast we are talking to local AFL coaches certainly at Auskick, junior and youth level. If coaches are coaching children who they can see really don't have the fundamental movement patterns of running, or a punt, what can the local coach do and what sort of strategies might they be able to use when they can see absolute deficiency in skill.

**LAH:** It's really important for children to be able to get these skills basically by the time they are about 12. Because what the research tells us is once you get into the teenage years it's more difficult to go back and relearn a skill that you've learnt and is cemented in the brain as a network or a branch. If we can get those skills cemented earlier in life it is so much easier for the children to then be able to go on and make those skills sports specific. So importantly it is really fundamental that coaches are aware of what the skills are and more importantly what makes up the skill. When you know what makes up the skill then you are able to look at it and break it down. Then you can see exactly where one of the children are having difficulty in performing the skill. So, then you can take activities to address that part of the skill that's not being performed well.

**DA:** So in terms of the formulation that that movement pattern, how much is organised and how much is it just natural play in kids exploring and interacting in playground type activities at school?

**LAH:** Absolutely both are really important. We know that children learn by doing, so naturally children just want to play games and that's really important. But what we also have to realise is that



sometimes in a game situation unless it is setup so there is lots of opportunity to actually have a go at the skill. Sometimes you will have more children having a go and others missing out from the way the game is played. So, what we want to do is set up little modified activities that sort of reinforces the game style but actually gives the the opportunity to perform the skill and perform it well. Because what we want to do is make sure that the skill is learnt properly so that we don't have to then go back and reteach it.

**DA:** It's a really good point particularly around game sense type activities which is really big in Aussie rules now and a lot of coaches utilise them. You can have game sense activities where some of the kids might actually be involved in executing their skill, maybe one or two times in an eight or ten-minute drill. So how important is the ability to adjust that and change that and shift the parameters or the numbers or the space or the specificity to be able to get what you need out of the drill.

**LAH:** Absolutely you need to be able to modify to ensure that, let's say handball your working on that every participant will get at least 8 or 10 repetitions of that skill so that you can give the necessary feedback them to make the changes and perfect it.

**LA:** Can we talk about some of these modifications because it is one of my favourite topics, certainly in coaching. You see so many times in an actual game the ground is massive, there is a lot of kids and there is one footy. When we are designing activities at training and we would like more repetition of the skill even the simple things like adding extra footballs in to what might seem you can only have one.

**LAH:** Absolutely. I think with the undergraduate PE teachers that I teach, one of my cardinal rules is that I never have more than 4 a side. We have small sided games and everybody gets lots of repetition. So, one of the first things you can do is actually add in more equipment bit it's just making sure everybody gets a touch. Or everyone has to participate in 3 handballs before you can change sides or you can change possession of the ball.

**LA:** You can see there is some hesitation with coaches and teachers in this case because that becomes just so chaotic. Some people running those activities might say that's not what the game looks like or that's just too much equipment so I can't do that. It's important to challenge the chaos of our sport in particular in AFL as it is one of the most chaotic sports that exists.

**LAH:** Absolutely. AFL is what we classify in teacher education as an invasion style game. So that the principles or the concepts of possession, direction and scoring are then you have to learn all about the offensive and defensive principles that go along with all of that. So, it is a chaotic game it is really important for young students while they are trying to master the skills that we progressively and sequentially add in all those added demands. So, we want to give them a taste for the game but we also want to make sure there is enough opportunity for participating in the skill and repeating the skill and getting the proper feedback is given.

**ST:** In terms of our small sided games there is a few key elements if your trying to design a game that might be effective in maybe teaching a skill or having skill development. What would be some of those key elements?

**LAH:** Requested clarification on the question.

**ST:** In terms of small sided games can you give us some examples of you might start off with a small game but building it up and changing the elements of the game as the children's skill development improves.

**LAH:** Absolutely. If we are taking the example of handball again you might start off with 2 by 4 sides, there in a smaller area and the aim of the game is just keepings off. We might say 5 handballs so the team that has possession has 4 handballs then it is turned over to the other team to have a go. The team that are playing defence are playing passive defence, so they may start with their hands behind their back so that's just pressure without actually interception of the ball. If the ball is intercepted then the team that has got possession don't get that practise of doing the handball. Then you progress it up either by changing the defensive principles of they defend with one hand and then two hands or you change the skills. So, you can take it from being the handball then to a punt kick. So, you can use the same sort of skill and then build up numbers versus sides.

**DA:** One thing I'm sure that a lot of coach's struggle with is around feedback and how much feedback to give. Particularly about skill acquisition because you want to be encouraging and your athlete to be improving but you don't want to overload them with information. You also don't want them struggling to be able grasp all the concepts you have given them. So, any advice around feedback and how to deliver and how much to deliver.

**LAH:** Absolutely. The younger the child, say around 4-6 I always say one piece of information at a time is enough. I always start with a positive, find something that the child is doing really well and then give that piece of feedback but next time I saw you with your eyes on the ball really well but next time make sure your taking your arm back into the correct position before you do your handball. It can be as simple as that. As the participant's get a bit older I always say no more than 3, because even as adults once you get to 3 it's really hard to remember to get back to the first one. So, building it up slowly from there.

**DA:** So also around the development of teenagers and the fact that people will develop at different stages. The importance of participation and encouragement and having them continually being involved in that. Maybe just speak a little around that.

**LAH:** Absolutely. That's really important because what we know is that as progress from being infants up until, from boys it can be as late as 21 and girls as late as 20, we don't stop growing and developing. Although we all go through the same stages of development, the chronological age for everyone is different. As juniors I always say we are not ever playing with an even playing field and so what we have to do is make sure we keep encouraging participants to be their best. Also, to have fun because as we know that is what keeps them coming back but not to make decisions and comparisons about themselves. Some of the research says that children as young as 8 will already make a decision about if they are any good at an activity which is really sad when we know that physiologically and cognitively they don't mature until around 20-21. So, it's very important especially I think around those early years of teen where boys actually start to go through puberty and it is a huge difference in size & strength as that has an impact on performance. So, I think it is really important to be aware of the growth and development of young players and allowing them to just participate and enjoy without too much pressure of having to compare themselves.

**DA:** Great point, I think it is critical for parents but particularly the role that coaches play within that and understanding that the best for all your kids/students/athletes will all look a little bit different and try to find what that looks like for them and encourage them based on where they are and not comparing them to the other players.

**LAH:** Absolutely I always say to my students that you should only try to achieve your very best and keep challenging yourself because until you finish growing and developing you never really going to know what you are capable of achieving. Even after that, it's about the effort that you want to put

in. So, I think another important issue too is that also we have to be aware is the brain is changing so much. So, for the child that is 5-10 is building all those branches in the brain based on movement. So, we know the neuroscience now is quite extraordinary what movement actually does for the brain. So, the branches are being built with all the skills that they are doing but then in puberty it actually prunes itself and it rewires again from the back to the front. The last part is that pre-frontal cortex which is actually really important for decision making. A lot of times for boys that's not rewiring or finishing rewiring until 20/21. So, some of the decision making in game settings changes a lot for them.

**ST:** So the language coaches use when they are talking to their players, would you suggest a more positive approach to coaching especially in these formative years where we have different players at different development levels.

**LAH:** Absolutely Steve. Positivity is the key and encouraging them to keep persisting. I think the world that we have today we want kids to be physically active so we want to keep them engaged in any sport. But particularly with sports competing now, we want to have as broader base as we can so we can select for them to be at an elite level and the only way to do that is to make sure that they have an enjoyable time. What we know about when students talk about what makes it enjoyable they've had fun. They have felt like they have been challenged but their able to still be themselves and have a go.

**LA:** Lee thank you so much for joining us and sharing your incredible knowledge and ideas. Steve and Dale, we look forward to the next episode.

Well that's a wrap. Thanks to Carlton Football Club for their generous assistance in recording Coach2coach. Thank you for listening and we look forward to 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**.