

10. GAME PLAN PRINCIPLES



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**Coaching Course
Record Book**

Game plan principles

Putting together a comprehensive match plan, or analysing the approach to the game by an opposition team, require identical skills.

One must have an organised approach to the two tasks. Two points need to be remembered:

1. Although it is important to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the opposition when devising your match plan, once that has been done you should concentrate on your plan to create a positive and confident approach by your players. If a team enters a match waiting for the opposition to take the initiative and then reacting, they will have little chance of success.
2. Analysing the opposition strengths and weaknesses and compiling a match plan is only the starting point. Unless the plan is clearly communicated to the players and rehearsed in detail at practice the team will have difficulty maintaining it under the pressure of match conditions.

If players have participated in the development of a match plan and understand the significance of their individual role they will be more committed to it.

A coach has a responsibility to ensure that no requirement of the match plan is beyond the skill level or understanding of any player. In its simplest form, the coach should be aware of the:

- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Opportunities, and
- Threats of both his own team and the opposition.

Match plans have three levels, as indicated by the chart.

A. Broad approach to how the game is played	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at pace • with skill • with aggression • with some risk • controlled possession • within the law 	a) Determined by head coach b) Relatively constant c) All must know and understand
B. Components of the game	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources of possession • Use of possession • Retention of possession • Attacking opposition possession 	a) Determined by head coach and coaching staff. b) The blend of components forming the match plan may change for each match. c) All must know and understand
C. Details of implementation	
	a) Determined by coaching staff and players. b) Will be relatively constant c) Only those concerned need to know

The match-to-match variable part of the plan is determined by the tactics that are considered to have the greatest chance of success against a particular opposition. The plan must be comprehensive in the sense that the strategies for getting the ball, advancing the ball and retaining the ball are all connected and consistent with one another.

Factors that should be taken into account when planning your own performance or analysing the opposition would include the following.

Sources of possession

Scrum

- size and strength
- speed of formation
- engagement policy
- body height and shape
- policy on own ball
- policy on opposition ball
- commitment of backrow to scrum

Lineouts

- standard structure for full lineout
- variations in format for full lineout
- use of blockers/sweepers
- policy for delivery of ball
- variations in format, e.g. 5-man, 3-man – when, where and how used
- throws and communication codes
- policy on opposition throws
 - a) Determined by head coach
 - b) Relatively constant
 - c) All must know and understand
- formation and roles of individuals
 - a) Determined by head coach and coaching staff.
 - b) The blend of components forming the match plan may change for each match.
 - c) All must know and understand
- policy for consolidation
 - a) Determined by coaching staff and players.
 - b) Will be relatively constant
 - c) Only those concerned need to know

Receiving kick offs and restarts

- formation and roles of individuals
- policy for consolidation

Chasing kick offs and restarts

- variations to be used
- formation and roles of individuals

Receiving opposition kicks

- positioning of back 3
- support roles of others

Opposition turnovers (for analysis)

- number, situations and causes

Statistical summary (for analysis)

- number of balls from each source
- % of relevant statistics
eg. own lineout throws won; own breakdown ball won; opposition breakdown ball.

Ball usage policy

Backs

- running/kicking policy from set play and phase play
- running lines
- handling skills
- set moves where and when to use

Forwards

- back row moves
- when and where forward runners are used
- linkages between backs and forwards

Special features

- kicking/chasing policy
- counter attack policy
- sequencing of plays
- changes in intensity
- penalty and tap kick policy

Statistical summary (for analysis)

- number of each type of usage

Ball retention skills and breakdown policy

- Contact policy of ball carrier.
- Contact policy of support players.
- Ruck and maul policy.

- Ball retention skills of individual players.
- Capacity of backrow to work wide/on ground/going back.
- The role of backs as support players.
- Statistical summary (for analysis)

Attacking the opposition possession

Patterns from scrum.

Patterns from lineout.

Pattern from ruck and maul.

Special situations:

- defence against rolling mauls and back row moves.
- defence near own line from set plays and iscrumbling under pressure.
- defence against driving mauls.

Tackling quality of individuals.

Policy for pressuring ball carrier and kickers.

Support for fullback under pressure.

Specific strengths and weaknesses. (for analysis)

Communication and practice schedule for match plan

Having established a match plan, the coach then must establish a plan for communicating the plan to the players (what, when and how) and a schedule of plan rehearsal (practice) for the period to the performance.

Coaches are strongly advised to write out and distribute all team policies and communication systems.

In addition, the match plan for each game should initially be written in detail. After following this practice for several weeks and acquiring the organisational framework, only variations and the most important features will need to be written out.

The final advice is that the simpler the plan is, the greater the chance that it will be understood and be implemented. A good match plan has no more than three or four major thrusts.