



Central Murray
Football Coaches Association

NEWSLETTER

Issue No.9 OCTOBER 2016



**CENTRAL MURRAY
COACHES ASSOCIATION**

**WELCOME TO THE OCTOBER 2016 EDITION OF THE
AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL
COACHES ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**

JAMIE MACRI

Welcome

Another season is over and for some there will have been celebrations and for others despite months and perhaps years of planning and recruiting there will be disappointment.

Preparing for 2017 will begin now for many clubs. Recruiting or weeding your team can be a difficult job but success can't be achieved without hard work from the coach and his committee.

Next year's salary cap may be a problem so the planning, recruiting and counting of the cash begins now. It is hoped the salary cap may keep some of your best and brightest at home. But, perhaps there is more than money that can make your club a destination club where players are welcomed and appreciated and more of the faces you see each week belong to the district and not to those who may be a great asset to your game but don't play an important part in your football community. As coach you have the ability to form the club you want. To guide your players to be responsible members of your club and provide positive mentors to your juniors can be your responsibility. The challenge to do this is before you.

Now the post mortems are done perhaps you may feel the time is right to end your association with your club. Perhaps your club might feel it's time for them to try a fresh approach.

If your club has faith in you, another year will bring new challenges for you and your squad. You will try new strategies and revise old ones. Work to ensure your senior members are fit and remain injury free for the coming season and identify the promising juniors who are ready for the challenges of higher level football.

No matter where your coaching future takes you, no matter at what level you coach, always look to upskill. Take advantage of the courses offered throughout each year. Try to spread your burden amongst support staff. Identify likely candidates to assist you and encourage them to attain even basic level coaching qualifications.

Coaches paid or otherwise contribute untold hours to their club and by default the local football

community. Those who volunteer their services are the heroes of junior football. You will set the standards for behavior and skills for those who will become the stars and backbones of senior teams in the years to come. Your role is invaluable. The coach and the players are usually the face of a club but at the end of the year volunteers need acknowledgment and congratulations. Find time to acknowledge their work. Without them there will not be a team for you to coach.

Congratulations to all of you who have done so much to support local football.

Thank you, to all individuals and clubs who made my job easier.

It's been great working with you.

All the best for next season.

Jamie Macri
AFL Football Development Manager
Central Murray Region

AFCA 2016 Coach of Year Winners

What a year 2016 has been for the coaching in this region. We have seen some really great stories come out of the season.

Wish all the teams participating in the Finals all the best and hope that all our coaches' time and effort is rewarded by taking home a Premiership.

AFL Central Murray Region has seen some great coaches be rewarded in 2016. Nathan Henry was awarded the senior coach of the year in the GRFL. Nathan kicked the winning goal in the grand



Final to see his senior team win. This was a great game of football to watch and a fantastic result for the Murrabit football club. Nathan has done a power of work from bring the team form a bottom 4 position in 2015 to a Premiership in 2016.

Sam Cooke was awarded the Youth Coach of the Year in the GRFL. Sam has done an outstanding job with the Marconi Under 17.5 team. Sam in 2015 won the Premiership and then backed it up with Finals in 2016. The future talent at Macorna is extremely good and the club has a big future ahead of them.

Girl's football is one of the biggest topics in the AFL world. It's great for our game and the people. In our region we seen our first Girls Team formed in season 2015. Woorinen Tigers, who travel to Bendigo



weekly to participate in the Youth Girls competition? Their coach in season 2016 Lui Gallo has done a power of work both on and off field to ensure all girls are ready to go. In 2016 the team will participate in their first Grand Final. An outstanding Effort for the Club and all involved. Lui's coaching and ability to get the best out of these girls has been outstanding. Players come from as north as Balranald to South of Kerang. Lui was named the Youth coach of the Year at the recent CMFNL Presentation Night. This is a great effort by Lui and the team.

Senior coach of the Year for CMFNL was Neil "Bricky" Bradley. Neil has had a great year with the raiders bring them back to the Finals in season 2016. In 2015 Koondrook Barham played off in a Grand Final but unfortunately missed out on a Grand Final position in season 2016. Neil's love and passion for the game is what everyone loves about his coaching. Neil is rated as one of the best coaches in the region.

I have really enjoyed my role working with the AFCA program. I would like to thank AFL Central Murray, Jamie Macri and all the coaches for assisting me in 2016. I look forward to being back in 2017 bigger and better. Big thanks to the Federal Hotel for their sponsorship in 2016. Really appreciate the support.

David Alderuccio
AFCA President



2016 Australian Football Coaches Association

AFCA JUNIOR COACH FINALISTS



AFCA SENIOR COACH FINALISTS



The Communication Game!

Jim Hirst

AFL Central Murray AFCA

Many of you have heard the successful Swan Hill and Kerang Toyota slogan, '*The relationship is more important than the deal!*' For a coach to be successful, they need to establish a good relationship with their players and central to this relationship is communication! It is one of the most important components of coaching but it often gets neglected due to the task orientated nature of coaching. There's no formula that tells us how you should communicate with your players. However, the modes of communication that you decide to use are of vital importance, especially if you want to gain the trust and respect of your players.

In this brief article I would like to raise your awareness about the importance of communication in coaching and explore some techniques that you may wish to explore with your players.

I would firstly like to speak about communicating with your players at training sessions. I'm a big believer that one of the main purposes of coaching is to teach players to enhance their knowledge and understanding of our great game, usually in relation to your team's game plan. Teaching obviously requires an explanation and demonstration of the drill to be undertaken. Most coaches do this very well. Teaching also requires two way communications. What do I mean by two way communication? It's asking the players questions and requesting feedback from them during or after a training drill. Often, players can be like robots and carry out the drill the way you had wished them to do. That's great, but do they actually know why they are doing it? (I know that many coaches explain the purpose of a drill with their players before they do it, but have you ever thought to not do this until after a drill has been completed?) I believe that it is important to reflect on a training drill with the players, either during it or at its completion. Let the players respond to specific questions instead of telling them what went right or wrong. I would be asking them some of the following questions:

Why did we do that drill? What was its purpose? How does it relate to our game plan?

What aspects of the drill did we do well? What aspects of the drill can we improve on? Are there any other comments or ideas?

Engage the players in the discussion instead of lecturing them. When they answer the questions or give feedback, stipulate that we don't want repeat answers (No Repeats). This technique fosters deeper thinking and keeps players focused on the discussion at hand. If a player responds to a question with "*I don't know!*" inform them that they can have some thinking time and that you will come back to them in a minute or two for an answer. Also emphasise that there are no 'wrong' answers. By questioning the players it will help them to better understand the reasoning behind what you are trying to achieve with them. It will also give them more purpose the next time they do the drill. I believe that a coach should make player questioning a core component of their coaching because it helps to keep the players switched on and to stay in the moment. Players

don't need to be lectured! Questioning and the receiving of answers (two way communication) is a very important component of developing and strengthening the player and coach relationship.

There are obviously many times when a coach has to be instructional with their players. However, the art of questioning challenges players to think about what they are doing, it reinforces understanding and it strengthens the reasoning behind the team's game plan. It may even enhance a player's decision making process on game day!

As a sidelight, I remember one of my coaches in the 1990s saying to the players, *"If things get tough during a game, we need to stick to our game plan."* A very valid statement indeed! However, there was one problem with that statement. The coach knew what his game plan was but unfortunately he had not communicated it very clearly to us, the players. The message that I wish to convey from that quirky story is that you can't presume anything and that the questioning technique is an important component of the coaching communication game. If the coach had asked questions about the game plan he would have found out that the players didn't know it! By asking questions you help to convey meaning to the players.

Every coach has their own technique when it comes to giving before the game instructions to their players. Some like to go around and speak to players on an individual basis while others like to speak to them in small groups. Hopefully, you are only reinforcing instructions that you have spoken about with them during the week leading up to the game. Don't overload the players with too much information, because ultimately, all they want to do is get out on the field and enjoy themselves.

The pre-game team address is often a combination of instructional and motivational talk. The instructional component should be the reinforcement of strategies that have been previously discussed. It may also contain questioning that requires a response from the players.

There has always been conjecture about the importance of the coach's pre- game motivational speech. How important is it? What impact does it have? How long does that impact last? It will obviously impact differently on different players. My view is that it can do more good than harm! Most importantly, it is how you communicate or convey your message. It could be the inspirational style of speech made famous by Ted Whitten, the classic quotes used by Alan Jeans, the reference to an individual who has conquered adversity, etc. Whatever the style, don't be afraid to refer back to it at your quarter, half or three quarter time briefings. Ultimately, you will know what works best with your team of players!

During the game communication is obviously of great importance. This is often done via the runner so it's important that this person can communicate a message with the intent that the coach wants. Positive reinforcement and constructive criticism needs to be delivered at the appropriate times during a game via the runner. Players need to respect the runner as realistically they are the coach in disguise!

Players also need to receive coach feedback, both individually and as collective, at the three designated breaks in the game. I would briefly like to reflect on a technique that I consistently

used in my twenty plus years of coaching. When my players came in for a quarter, half or three quarter time break briefing I would greet them with a positive comment, no matter how bad the situation may have been. Why would you do that? By starting with a positive, it gained their immediate attention. After speaking about the positive I would then go on to concentrate on the things that needed improvement. The players would then leave the huddle with the 'improvement message' at the forefront of their minds. Interestingly enough, a respected coaching colleague of mine always commenced with a negative comment and then concluded with a positive comment. You will have to decide what works best for you! Just make sure that your briefing contains some strategy for the team as this is what will hopefully have a positive impact on the scoreboard for you!

Communication is much more than just conveying instructions or messages to the players at training or on game day. It's about challenging them to think creatively and to reflect on their performance. Often players wait for a coach to give them feedback after a game. (Yes, it is the responsibility of a coach to give their players feedback, both on a whole team basis and on an individual basis.) But as they say in life, you answer to yourself first! Coaches need to reinforce with their players the need to self-reflect on their performance, especially after games. And self-reflection means asking oneself questions like those examples listed below:

- What did I do well?
- What could I have done better?
- How will I attempt to improve in these areas?
- Did I play as an individual or did I follow team rules?
- How accountable was I?

Players must be encouraged to reflect on these questions sooner, rather than later. The dedicated footballer will naturally do this by themselves while others will need to be reminded to self-reflect.

As a coach, you may even encourage players to reflect with other team members. In all grades of country football it is now common to see the backs, midfielders and forwards come together at the quarter, half time and three quarter breaks to reflect upon what is happening at that stage in the game. The coach and players obviously find this to be of value. However, I'm not so sure that this practice is ever carried out after a game. In the football world we often hear about four quarter performances, yet we may only be reflecting on three quarters. Is that contradictory?

In our modern world, coaches have the capacity to communicate and provide feedback to their players during the week via social media devices. That's a great way of communicating to them but please be mindful that all players will not have the same literacy skill levels. Hence, your message may not always have the same impact as the spoken word that can convey various tones and emotions. Your voice is vital tool in the communication game. Don't be afraid to raise or lower it and make sure that you put expression into the important messages you wish to emphasise.

In closing, I would encourage you to think about how you communicate with your players. As coaches, we must not only reflect on the moves we make during a game, the instructions that we

give, the drills we do at training, etc. We must also self-evaluate the all-important communication techniques that we are using with our players.

We have all heard the saying, *familiarity breeds contempt!* Hence, we are usually mindful of putting variety into our coaching sessions. However, as coaches, we must also be prepared to vary and enhance our communication techniques to get the best out of our players. It's all a part of the communication game!

Hawthorn FC Robert McCartney visit

Brenten Hogan
Academy Coach
AFL Central Murray Region

Rob McCartney recently addressed the Central Murray Academy players and club coaches. McCartney is an Assistant Coach at The Hawthorn Football Club and is also the Head of the Development Program so his knowledge and experience was very much valued within the groups.



McCartney first met with the Central Murray Academy players where he discussed the value of playing football. He spoke about striving to be the best player and stressed the importance of commitment in this quest. His three focus areas were Preparation, Lifestyle and Thinking.

McCartney explained how Preparation was important in improving themselves. 'The quality of training is important – it doesn't have to be perfect but it must be challenging.' He discussed how 'touch' with a football was important in preparation before asking the young players how often they have a football in their hands.

Next he discussed Lifestyle and how everyday habits make you the player. He emphasised that football needs to be treated equally to friends, family and schooling. "Players who have a healthy diet, sleep, recovery and time management skills have the best chance of success." He asked all players to think about their habits and consider what improvements they could make in the future.

The last discussion point was Thinking. McCartney believes self-belief is a massive advantage for young players. He put this into perspective by saying, "Your thoughts lead to the way you feel which is presented in your actions and concludes with your performance'. With good self-belief and good thoughts, performance will reach a high level.

McCartney used Steph Curry from the NBA as an example of improving from a fringe player to one of the greatest players on the planet through a combination of hard work and talent which then lead to success.

The session was very valuable to the young players and a lot of great information was given to the players going forward.

The night session with club coaches was held at the Lake Boga Football Club and was a great experience for those in attendance. McCartney talked about his origins and how he came to be an assistant coach at Hawthorn. He explained the sacrifices he made and the decisions – good and bad - he made along the way.

His key speech was 'Planning for Success' at every football club from the AFL to the Country. He three main points to discuss and they were Leadership, Club Trademark and Culture and the Capacity to Teach.

The Leadership component was based on developing leaders within the club and to see what type of leader they become. Opportunities should be provided for them whilst making sure they are on the same path as the club. He explained why Luke Hodge was the best in the business. McCartney spoke about investing time into these leaders and coaches and presidents should take the opportunity to meet with other clubs to see what works and what doesn't.

The Coach and Player Trademark are important. Clubs should decide 1) What they stand for (thinking), 2) What they do (actions) and 3) What they stand for (character). Developing a good culture within your club is paramount. The Trademarks must be discussed with players. Recruiting the right players for your club is important for your club culture. These may not necessarily be the best performing player but best for your club. Make sure goals are achievable. If players know they can reach the goal they will strive for their best to get there.

The last discussion point was the Capacity to Teach. McCartney spoke about the importance of teaching, a key component in taking a team forward. It's important to develop a standard of play the players understand. Filming games and training then reviewing each match or session assists players to see how they should perform. Utilising the leadership group to instruct players will ease the pressure on the coach. The greater the ability to teach and the more time invested in the players, the greater chance of success.

We thank Robert for coming to the area to spend time with our young players, the coaches and administrators. It was a valuable experience.

A Coaching Journey – Jarrod Skinner

The 2015 season wound up and after two seasons at the helm of country football club Nyah Nyah West United (NNWU), I was exhausted. I could foresee 2016 was going to be an even busier year with a wedding planned for March and work commitments not slowing down I knew I would need to scale back my coaching commitments.

I was fortunate to have an opportunity to step down as senior coach with the insurance that the club was headed in the right direction, I had spoken with the club regarding my plans for 2016 throughout season 2015 and this allowed the club to find a coach that could continue to build on the foundations myself and the 2012/13 coach Ash Thompson had been building.

Although I couldn't step back from coaching all together as I really wanted to continue developing myself as a better coach. I was going to continue to play for NNWU but also wanted to stay involved in player development and when an opportunity arose to work with AFL Central Murray as a junior development coach I was excited by the challenge. As it would be, coaching young talent from the country who all have this drive to be the next Scott Pendlebury or Nathan Fyfe wouldn't be quite as difficult as coaching 30 grown men with careers, families, mortgages and social lives to attend too.

Along with the Central Murray Academies that I would be involved in, the Bendigo Pioneers approached me in regards to assisting with the pre-season training of the local talent that were involved in their Under 18 TAC Cup program. Twice a week throughout the pre-season a group of aspiring young talent from within the Central Murray region pushed each other around the Swan Hill rec reserve aiming to be in peak condition before selection games. Selection in the Pioneers side provides players with the best opportunity to get drafted by an AFL. One player in particular from our regional group has had a great year at TAC Cup level and has a very good opportunity of being selected on an AFL list in 2017 which is very rewarding for all of his family and friends and all those involved in his football development.

Football clubs in the Central Murray region know how hard it is to get a player from their club to make it at the AFL level. This is why being involved in talent pathways is so rewarding and why we give up many hours of our week assisting in the development of these young football prodigy's. Not all of them will make it, in fact if one player from any given age group was to make it to the AFL then that would be a fantastic result for the region.

The reason I have enjoyed the junior coaching this year though is because of the opportunity you get to assist these players to get the most out of themselves. As I said, they won't all be AFL footballers, but for them to become good senior footballers for their local club can be just as rewarding. This year I was able to play alongside and against many of the juniors I had coached throughout the year. I remember one game vividly where my opponent was a 17-year-old playing on a half forward flank and I was telling him when to lead and where to position himself. The young blokes always have me covered for leg speed so I often get caught out making their day easier and mine much harder by giving advice throughout the game, but to be able to be a part of their success is very satisfying.

I have found passion for coaching and in particular junior player development. I don't know yet whether I am any good at it but I take every opportunity available to better myself as a coach which is very important for young players and their parents to understand, as a volunteer I am educating myself at every opportunity and that knowledge I receive is then passed onto the region's best young talent. This year I am undertaking my level two coaching accreditation which requires assessment from the AFL, I have also attended an AFL Talent Identification Program and a Multicultural Development Session ran by Richmond Football Club. I attend the AFL National Coaching Conference which is ran annually and is a great opportunity to hear and work with the best coaches in the country. Recently I, along with many players and coaches in the Central

Murray region went along to listen to Rob McCarthy of the Hawthorn Football Club speak about what is required of young talent to make it to the elite level.

These workshops ran by the AFL Regional Development Managers like Jamie Macri are a great opportunity for any coach or aspiring young player to develop their football knowledge and get up-to-date with modern coaching techniques and strategies. I encourage any coach out there that enjoys the role he plays in developing young footballers to seek out opportunities to learn more about coaching, because the more coaches we have that are committed to providing the best football education to local children, the more likely we are to one day seeing them running around on our TV screens.

To round out the 2016 season I am off to Gippsland to coach alongside Mark Lloyd of Kerang at the V-Line Cup Country Championships. We will be in charge of 44 young stars who will be endeavouring to impress as part of the Bendigo Pioneers Under 15 squad, a team made up of players from the Sunraysia, Central Murray, Goulbourn Murray and Central Victoria regions. Then as the year comes to a close we will be inviting the next group of talented footballers to prepare themselves for a big pre-season as our junior academies kick off again ahead of the 2017 season.

All that any person hopes for after giving up their time to coach, mentor and teach these footballers in these academies and pathway programs is that they walk away as young men who represent their families, football clubs and communities to the best of their ability. Who knows which of them will be an AFL superstar? The important thing is that one day when you pass these guys in the street or at the footy, that they stop to say hello and ask how you are – for respect is everything in this game.



Brett Henderson

Head Coach – Bendigo Pioneers

The end of the 2016 season gives players, coaches, administrators and parents the opportunity to reflect upon another football season and hopefully continue to build upon weaknesses and strengths to make improvements for the following season. After being involved in the TAC Cup as a coach for two seasons I have



made some observations that may help anyone closely involved with clubs.

Parents - The question I always put to parents in the Bendigo Pioneers program is - are you an enabler or a hindrance for your child?

Unless you are an enabler your child will never reach their potential. In fact there is a very good chance that up to 30% of your child's development will be hindered by an interfering parent.



Children will either be embarrassed by poor parent behaviour or blame coaches and others for poor form or lack of opportunities. At the Pioneers it is no secret that not only is we selecting future players but parent behaviour is also considered. Help your child by being supportive and helping them makes the whole experience enjoyable and free of pressure. Over the years I have seen a number of very talented young players fall away due to the pressure that parents place upon their child.

As **coaches** none of us get everything right all of the time. Look for ways to improve your craft. Look for new resources to add interest into your training schedules and game plan. Above everything else spend time on your players and build great relationships with them. This is more important than any team meeting, game result or technical coaching. Relationships allow you to work more closely with your players making the culture and fabric of the club that people want to be involved in.



When recruiting players or adding to TAC Cup lists, there are six non negotiables that all clubs and coaches could consider. This also fits with the selection of a coach no matter what the level is. The below are a list constructed by former Western Bulldog and current Melbourne Development coach Brendan McCartney.

1. Is the player a good listener (learner)
2. Lives a consistent life
3. Has a strong work ethic
4. Is Competitive
5. Has a high degree of self-awareness
6. Can deal with stress and anxiety