Coaching styles

Coaching is not just about telling or passing on knowledge in an autocratic manner. Good coaching is about creating an environment in which people learn.

Good coaching brings about a permanent change in behaviour and in the context of the rugby player, the coach seeks to maximise the learning processes by adopting and mastering a spectrum of delivery style.

There are four main coaching styles that form a continuum from being autocratic to democratic. The autocratic style could be broken into two types - telling and selling and the democratic style into sharing and delegating or **Tell – Sell – Ask - Delegate.** The skilled coach will use a variety of coaching styles depending on the coaching situation.

This may be further described as a coaching toolbox and the coach selects the most appropriate tool for a specific purpose. For example, if the purpose for a tradesman is to change the fuse in a 3amp plug, it would be appropriate to use a screwdriver and not a hammer. However, if the purpose was to knock in a nail, the screwdriver would not be the appropriate tool to select from the box.
Autocratic coaching is often the easier choice of style for the coach, as it simply transfers information. The limitation of autocratic coaching is the limitations of the coach’s knowledge.

Democratic coaching provides a more permanent learning environment for both the player and the coach. If the coach fails to utilise the knowledge or imagination of the whole group, little in the way of new ideas will surface. To benefit from a democratic approach, it is vital that the coach can facilitate and summarise all contributions and maintain an authority in order to guide and develop the players.

When working as a coaching team with other coaches, it is important to be aware of the coaching delivery of your colleague. For example, if your colleague makes an intervention and uses a questioning approach, the intervention should focus on one key point then back into action. If however you wish to make your own intervention, first consult with your partner to make sure you do not override their key point. Then maybe used a direct delivery tool such as a closed question or a tell method. Another period of questioning may slow the tempo of the session to the detriment of the player learning and activity levels.

It is also important to plan the roles each coach will play in a shared session:

- What are the required outcomes?
- How will we reach those outcomes?
- What is the focus for coach A and coach B?
- From where will coach A observe and from where will coach B observe?

These points may determine the appropriate delivery styles during the session and formulate the need to vary the delivery in order to challenge and stimulate the players.

**Remember:**

The skilled coach may use a variety the coaching styles depending on the coaching situation and the coach should be capable of adapting, by selecting the appropriate (coaching) tool for the job at that particular time.