Rugby League is said to be a late specialisation sport. What does this mean?

Sports need different skills. Young people who want to play Rugby League need to develop basic Fundamental skills like agility, balance and coordination, as well as good movement skills, like running. Then, they need to learn the sport-specific skills and learn how to play in a team and work with others. Finally, they need to develop the skills for their position in the game. This process takes time and is a series of building blocks. Thus, developing proficiency in Rugby League will happen in the middle to late teens.

How can I help my coaching practice?

The RFL model identifies the ‘windows of opportunity’ at different ages and stages – what to do when. LTAD can be seen as a plan or road map for the development of young people in sport. So, it is the most valuable coaching tool because it gives clear guidance to every coach on every sport. Most sports have taken the concept of LTAD and interpreted it for their own sport – this leaflet provides the key principles.

As a parent, what are the key factors for you to consider in guiding your child and ensuring they participate in Rugby League?

ltad and rugby league

Preparation and training too little. LTAD can help inform change on the ratio of training and competition for this age group, so you should plan the league structure with these in mind. For example, it is important that young players have the right mix of training and competition. At this age, some players will be moving through puberty and so players will have differing rates of growth. This will need to be taken into account by the coach.

QUESTIONS

Is LTAD important in Rugby League?

Rugby League

The first principle of LTAD is that of windows of trainability (or opportunity). This means that players learn skills at appropriate ages and stages. This, in turn, will ensure that players develop their abilities in line with their own rate of growth and maturation. Skills and competencies learned at one stage become the foundation for the next stage. This, in turn, will ensure that players develop their abilities in line with their own rate of growth and maturation. Skills and competencies learned at one stage become the foundation for the next stage.

There are three key principles of LTAD.

The second principle is that of optimal planning of training (PREPARATION), competition (PERFORMANCE) and recovery (REST). The third principle of LTAD is that of appropriate training to competition ratios for the age and stage of the player. Rugby League specific tips for young players often contains too much and trains too little. LTAD can help inform change on the ratio of training and competition for this age group, so you should plan the league structure with these in mind. For example, it is important that young players have the right mix of training and competition. At this age, some players will be moving through puberty and so players will have differing rates of growth. This will need to be taken into account by the coach.

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As a parent, what are the key factors for you to consider in guiding your child and ensuring they participate in Rugby League?

It is important that every child is given the best opportunity to develop their talent to whatever level that is. As a parent, you should look for quality coaching that takes into account the needs, age and stage of your child. The community club or development programme should follow the principles of LTAD, be well planned, and have the right balance of training, rest and recovery, and appropriate competition. If all these factors are in place, you should be happy that your child make progress and enjoy their sport.

ltad and rugby league
Coaches:

- Levels 1–2*

Funamentals
Chronological age
Girls 6–9
Boys 7–9

Important for:
- FUNdamental Movement Skills.
- Focus on developing:
  - agility, balance and coordination
  - running, jumping and throwing
  - catching, kicking and striking
  - kinaesthetic awareness and striking
  - running, jumping and throwing
  - speed and power training
  - other sports and games.

Volume/intensity of training:
- High volume
- Low intensity

Number of rugby sessions per week:
- 2

Competition venues:
- Club/School

Type of competition:
- Mini Rugby raffles and festivals

Ratio of competition and training:
- No formal competition


d* Coaching levels 1–4 are planned to be introduced as part of the UKCC (UK Coaching Certificate). The above is a desired guideline as to the coaching level to fit in with the UKCC.

Learning to Train
Chronological age
Girls 9–11
Boys 10–11

Important for:
- FUNdamental Sports Skills and Core Rugby League Skills.
- Focus on improving:
  - technical (motor) skills
  - decision-making ability
  - sport-specific skill development, including game sense/tactical appreciation
  - speed and power training
  - core skills aligned to the playing position.

Volume/intensity of training:
- According to growth
- High/medium volume, or lower volume with increasing intensity

Number of rugby sessions per week:
- 3–4

Competition venues:
- Club/School

Type of competition:
- U10s and U11s play modified 11-a-side
- U12s play 10-a-side international rules, festivals and fixtures.

Ratio of competition and training:
- 50:50

Coaches:
- Levels 2–3

Training to Train
Chronological age
Girls 11–14
Boys 12–14

Important for:
- Building the Engine and Introducing Position-specific Skills.
- Focus on:
  - speed and power training
  - sport-specific skill development, including game sense/tactical appreciation
  - decision-making ability
  - core skills aligned to the playing position.

Volume/intensity of training:
- High volume
- Increasing intensity

Number of rugby sessions per week:
- 4–5

Competition venues:
- Regional/representative programmes
- School service areas

Type of competition:
- League and cup fixtures.

Ratio of competition and training:
- 50:50

Coaches:
- Levels 2–3 (Level 1 can assist)*

Training to Compete
Chronological age
Girls 15–16
Boys 16–16

Important for:
- Optimising the Engine and Position-specific Skills.
- Focus on:
  - technical and tactical preparation under competition conditions.

Volume/intensity of training:
- High intensity

Number of rugby sessions per week:
- 6–7

Competition venues:
- Great Britain
- England
- Club

Type of competition:
- League and cup fixtures.

Ratio of competition and training:
- 50:50

Coaches:
- Levels 2–4*

Training to Win
Chronological age
Girls 16–21
Boys 17–21

Important for:
- Maximising the Engine, Specialisation and Performance.
- Focus on:
  - specialisation and performance enhancement to take advantage of the foundation built over previous years.

Volume/intensity of training:
- Personal choice

Number of rugby sessions per week:
- 5–6

Competition venues:
- League
- Club

Type of competition:
- Regional/national representative programmes

Ratio of competition and training:
- 75:25

Coaches:
- Levels 1–4*

Retainment
Individual choice

All players should have the opportunity to maximise their ability, enjoyment and satisfaction from a lifetime of involvement in rugby league. Of particular significance are the childhood years, which set the foundation course.

Graeme Thompson, RFL Performance Director

I played a number of sports as a youngster and enjoyed participating in them all. They helped me to have all-round strong movement skills, which assisted me in achieving my potential in my specialist sport of rugby league.

Danny McGuire, GB International Player

The Long-term Athlete Development Model presents a curriculum of opportunity and activity for the player. In relation to coaches, it provides clear guidance and structure to facilitate the development of players to their full potential at whatever level of playing they may be.

Ray Unsworth, Coach Education Director