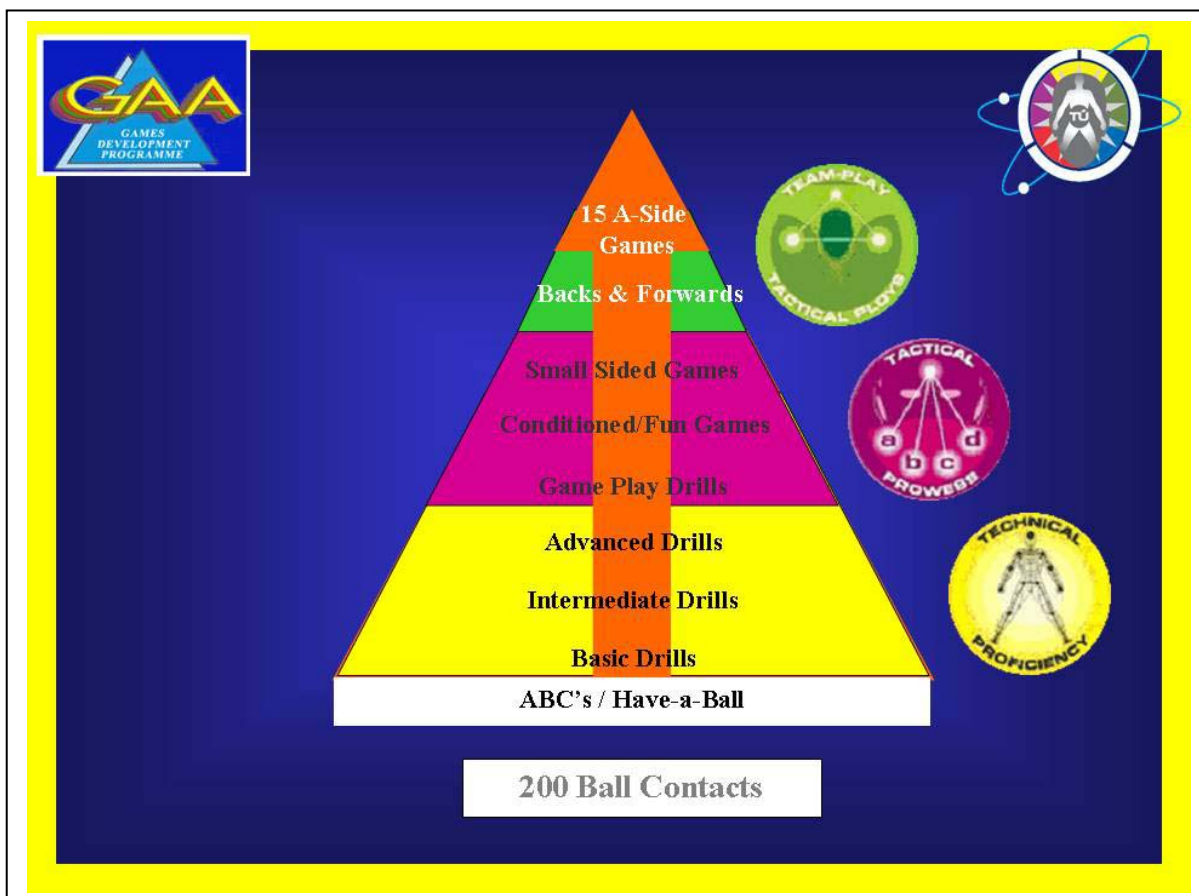


A Skill Development Model for Gaelic Games

Players will excel when they have developed the 3 T's (Technical Proficiency, Tactical Prowess and Team Play) and 3 P's (Physical Fitness, Psychological Focus and Performance Analysis) in an integrated and balanced manner that has regard for best Coaching Practice.

The Skill Development Model outlined here provides the ideal progression by which a player will develop the 3 T's and 3 P's. This progression is not random but is supported by scientific research and thus provides the coach with a map or blueprint on how to develop his or her players.



The progression is as follows:

1. ABC's / Have-a-Ball Fundamentals Programme

- Aim: To Develop Fundamental Movement Skills (Locomotor, manipulative and stability skills including the ABCs and RJTs of athleticism - Agility, Balance, Coordination and Running, Jumping, Throwing) and Basic Motor Skills (Catching, Passing, Kicking and Striking)
- Format: A series of exercises with and without the ball
- Rationale:

Basic movement skills are the foundation of all physical activity and are essential both to an individual's development of effective motor skills and to the application of these skills in a wide variety of physical activities. These skills also play a vital role in player's interpersonal, cognitive, and emotional development. These skills should be developed in the early years of physical development to form the basis for all further movement and motor development.

2. Basic Drills

- Aim: Technical Proficiency (T1)
- Format:
The Ball does the work, the player is stationary or performing at a walk/jog pace.
- Rationale:
There are three phases to learning a new skill and these are:
 1. Cognitive phase -Identification and development of the component parts of the skill
 2. Associative phase - Linking the component parts into a smooth action
 3. Autonomous phase - Developing the learned skill so that it becomes automatic

The Cognitive phase is vital to the development of good technique. It refers to recognising how to do a skill by watching it performed or demonstrated and by those first attempts at performing the skill where it is important to pay attention to each part of the skill. The rate of development during this phase therefore is directly related to the quality with which the skill is taught. Using as many methods of teaching the skill as possible (Verbal, Demonstration, Video, Diagrams etc) and ensuring that the visual demonstration is of a very high standard is of utmost importance to the development of Technical Proficiency.

Once the component parts of the skill have been clearly identified by the player further practice helps assemble them, component by component, into the overall skill – the Associative phase. Players use feedback from themselves (i.e. how the skill feels and if the outcome is successful) and from the coach (identifying where the player is making an error and providing positive corrective) to shape and polish the components into a smooth action. Rehearsal of the skill must be done regularly and correctly.

Finally, with further practice the skill may become autonomous, i.e. the player can perform the skill without consciously focusing on either the whole skill or how it is made up of its component parts.

These three phases hold significant importance in the context of the Skill Development Model. In order to develop a skill at the optimum rate the coach should ensure that the player reaches the autonomous phase of development in the context of a Basic Drill, i.e. while the player is stationary or performing at a walk/jog pace. Only then should the player be exposed to Intermediate Drills which, as will be seen, introduce movement.

Simply, the basis for this somewhat formulaic progression is that it allows the player to focus on one thing at a time. If a player must contend with further demands on his or her attention, e.g. in order to run or turn while practicing a new skill, then he or she cannot be fully focussed on developing the technique to an autonomous level. Once the player has developed the technique to an autonomous level then he can afford to focus on other movements or performing the skill on the move, e.g. in an Intermediate Drill.

3. Intermediate Drills

- Aim: Technical Proficiency (T1)
- Format:
The Ball and the players do the work, i.e. movement is introduced.
- Rationale:
Once the autonomous phase has been achieved the skill may be practiced on the move. Even in intermediate drills movement is the only other factor that the player must attend to. The player must learn to perform the skill while moving before learning to perform the skill at match tempo or under pressure of reduced space, i.e. in an Advanced Drill

4. Advanced Drills

- Aim: Technical Proficiency (T1), Physical Fitness (P1), Psychological Focus (P2)
- Format:
Pressure is increased by speeding the drill up progressively towards match tempo, and by reducing the space and time the players have to perform the skill. Reaction

responses, multiple techniques or physical contact may be introduced but the drill should remain a defined pattern of activity.

- Rationale:
Once Proficiency has been achieved at Intermediate Drill level players may be challenged to perform the skill in situations that resemble the conditions of a match. In order to achieve this, speed the drill up progressively towards match tempo and introduce other skills into the same drill.

4. Game Play Drills

- Aim: Technical Proficiency (T1), Tactical Prowess (T2), Physical Fitness (P1), Psychological Focus (P2)
- Format:
Game Play Drills differ from advanced drills in one key aspect. Whereas Advanced Drills require players to perform skills within a defined pattern, e.g. in a straight line between 2 cones or from one marker to another, Game Play Drills require players to perform skills while in situations that simulate those they may be exposed to in a game. Game Play Drills are sometimes referred to as Match Running Drills or Informal Drills. Essentially, as players are not limited to moving in a specific manner between set points, they must make decisions about where to move and when and how to perform the skills required. An excellent example of a simple Game Play Drill is requiring an attacker to take on a defender in a channel with the objective of reaching the other end with the ball.
- Rationale:
From the perspective of increasing the challenge to a player's abilities there is a vast difference between Advanced Drills and Game Play Drills. Game Play Drills train improvements in adapting technical proficiency to pressure situations and improvements in tactical awareness which are vital elements in ensuring a player is competent in a match situation. Game Play Drills are the essential link between the development of technical proficiency and being prepared to play in full game situations.

5. Conditioned/ Fun Games

- Aim: Technical Proficiency (T1), Tactical Prowess (T2) and Team Play (T3), Physical Fitness (P1), Psychological Focus (P2)
- Format:
Conditioned Games and Fun Games are practices that focus on different aspects of technical, tactical or team play through games. They are often undertaken in a

defined space, e.g. a grid. Many variations may be used, depending on the objective of the game, e.g. 2 v 1, 2 v 2, 3 v 2, 3 v 3. Conditioned Games can be used to develop the ability to retain possession (passing sequences), to create or reduce space (3 v 2 etc) or to develop contact or reaction skills. Modified Scoring Systems (e.g. target scores or time limits) and Modified Playing Rules (e.g. no solo, one bounce, fist pass only) can be used to focus on particular techniques or aspects of decision making.)

- Rationale:
An extension of Game Play Drills, Conditioned Games apply the skills learned to team situations. Players must make decisions on where and when to move to combine as an effective unit as in a real 'game' situation. Such games encourage awareness of time and space but also help develop specific characteristics of Team Play, e.g. support play and communication. By not limiting players to particular positions the coach allows each player to develop greater decision making skills and tactical appreciation for different aspects of play.

6. Small-Sided Games

- Aim: Tactical Prowess (T2) and Team Play (T3), Physical Fitness (P1), Psychological Focus (P2)
- Format:
Small Sided Games are an extension of fun games and grid games but are basically smaller versions of full games. Smaller numbers are used to ensure plenty of ball contact for all involved. Positions may be used but it is advisable to allow individual players to play in as many different positions as possible over time.
- Rationale:
Tactical Prowess and Team Play are further developed but with more specific relevance to full-sided games as the movement and open play mimic aspects of full hurling and football.

7. Backs and Forwards

- Aim: Tactical Prowess (T2), Team Play (T3), Physical Fitness (P1), Psychological Focus (P2)
- Format:
Players hold positions similar or the same as those necessary in full-sided games. The ball is played into these positions regularly and frequently (and from positions out the field where the ball would usually come from) in order that the players can develop their position specific awareness and skill.
- Rationale:

Positioning players in positions allows them to prepare specifically for situations that may occur in a full-sided game. However by playing the ball more frequently into these positions much more quality practice can be achieved than may occur in a match situation.

6. Full-Sided Games

- Aim: Tactical Prowess (T2), Team Play (T3), Physical Fitness (P1), Psychological Focus (P2)
- Format:
15-a-side games with players in appropriate positions
- Rationale:
Ultimately players train to play full-sided games. Once the earlier progressions have been achieved it is vital that players prepare for full-sided games by playing full-sided games

Notes:

The progressions outlined are relevant to players of all ages. In order to maximise the effectiveness of training sessions a combination of drills and games should be used. For example, if players can only perform at the Basic level of Drills it does not mean that they should not be allowed to play any type of game. Introduce fun or grid games to develop aspects of fitness or tactical prowess. The overriding principal is that players are set achievable but challenging tasks in order that they remain interested, excited and motivated to play.