

The Rugby League  
Coach Education Programme

# The Think Coaching E-Link



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### Introduction

This issue we focus on identifying the characteristics that make a good coach a great coach. In doing so we look at examples from other sports as well as from within Rugby League.

### Coach Development

Congratulations go to the ten coaches who attended this years Coach Development Camp at Springhill. The standard of this years coaches was outstanding, and it is expected that many of these will figure prominently on the Coaching Pathway in years to come.

#### Coach Development Camp 2006

- |                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Barry McDermott | Phil Jones   |
| James Massara   | Dan Steel    |
| Lee Spencer     | Colin Baker  |
| Jo Dunworth     | Chris Hood   |
| Chris Wright    | Dave Johnson |



# The “MAGIC” Ingredients of the Successful Coach

By Haydn Walker

Have you ever stopped to wonder just what it takes to become a recognised successful coach?

Have you ever wondered just what it is that separates the average coach from the great coach?

The answer, in my opinion is very simple; those coaches at the top of their profession all display a certain amount of MAGIC.

Not magic in the Paul Daniels sense of the word, I very much doubt that Brian Noble can pull a rabbit from the proverbial hat.

But MAGIC in the sense of displaying the following five characteristics:

- M – Motivation
- A – Assertiveness
- G – Goal Achievement
- I – Inventiveness
- C – Communication

These characteristics are not the only traits needed. It also goes without saying that a highly developed technical and tactical understanding of the game needs to be in place for If that was not the case then I am sure there would be many more coaches moving with ease from sport to sport.

However the reality is that coaches do tend to specialize in their own chosen sport and as such develop their technical and tactical knowledge and understanding over time.

So let's look a little more closely at these five “MAGIC Characteristics”

## **Motivation**

Without doubt the single most important characteristic displayed by the top coaches across all sports is the fact they are all highly motivated people. Indeed it would be fair to put it in even stronger terms in that they are “driven people”. They display high levels of intrinsic motivation in what can at times be a lonely and unforgiving profession.

They display remarkable resilience and are able to maintain their motivation despite inevitable setbacks and disappointments.

A good example of this would be John Kear. John is a very experienced and successful coach who has bounced back several times in his career. He has shown on more than one occasion how highly motivated he is. Indeed his remarkable achievement in keeping Wakefield in Super League bears testimony to this.

Another example of this is Wayne Bennett, who has been at the Brisbane Broncos since their inception. Wayne has never lost his motivation and has in effect and over time built three or four distinct teams during his tenure at the Broncos.

### **Assertiveness**

The great coaches are all highly confident, self assured and assertive characters.

That's not to say they don't listen, the best amongst them welcome challenge. However once they decide on a certain course of action they usually follow it.

They are never afraid to back themselves, sometimes in the face of overwhelming odds. An example of this for those old enough to remember would be Sir Alf Ramsey in 1965 who said "England would win the World Cup in 1966". That assertiveness and confidence rubbed off on all those around him and resulted in great belief in the players who ultimately delivered the World Cup.

Rugby League is not short of successful assertive characters. Karl Harrison is a fine example and he is now developing himself into one of the games top coaches. Historically two of the games greatest coaches have been highly assertive individuals. Jack Gibson and Warren Ryan both plied their trade at the highest level for a long period of time.

### **Goal Achievement**

Most coaches and players are familiar with goal setting. The great coaches do not just set goals – they focus on achieving them.

There is a subtle difference between a goal and goal achievement strategy. Goal setting almost invites the thought that they may not be attained. Goal achievement is a much more positive approach that implies doing whatever is necessary to accomplish and arrive at the outcome.

A good example of this is Sir Clive Woodward and his focus with the England Rugby Union team in winning the World Cup. Every aspect of preparation focused solely on achievement of the ultimate goal.

### **Inventiveness**

Great coaches think outside the box, try new ideas and seek to be challenged.

They strive to take their sport to the next level and are very creative in their thought process.

Chris Anderson is a classic example of this in his development of "Flat Attack" when he was coach at Melbourne Storm. He was prepared to look at the game from an entirely different perspective and devise a new strategy for playing the game.

Another example would again be Sir Alf Ramsey and the England World Cup winning side of 1966. "The Wingless Wonders" played a new 4-4-2 formation that was considered revolutionary at the time.

### **Communication**

All coaches that are successful for any length of time must be effective communicators.

Great communication skills are multi-faceted. It is not just a question of a coach being able to tell players what to do. They need to be able to facilitate players learning by the quality of their questioning.

Effective listening skills are also very important as are the messages coaches exude through their body language.

Brian Noble springs to mind as a very effective communicator within Rugby League.

His success in turning things around at Wigan being fitting testimony, even under intense pressure Brian remained calm and in control, with his demeanour and manner radiating confidence.

### **Summary**

None of the characteristics talked about in this article simply happen. All can and do need to be worked upon. For any coach to succeed and achieve greatness in the long term these MAGIC characteristics are crucial. That does not mean other characteristics are not important or should be ignored.

It is also worth remembering one last point a quote often used in and around our offices by Ray Unsworth the Rugby League Director of Coach Education.

“Good coaches coach sport. Great coaches coach people”.

Coaching is a people business and all Coaches need to strive to add their own MAGIC to this.

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The Rugby League Coaching Magazine website has a wide variety of products that are useful for coaches. They can be contact via this link <http://www.rlcm.com.au/home.htm>

Drop us a line at [haydn.walker@rfl.uk.com](mailto:haydn.walker@rfl.uk.com)

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