

3.2.2: The components of a coaching session

Warm-up

You must always start a coaching session with a warm-up as the purpose is to prepare the participants physically and mentally for the session.

The first part of any warm-up should focus on **raising the pulse rate** of the athletes. The second part should focus on **mobility and stretching**. These activities are aimed at increasing the range of movement at the joints will reduce the risk of injury. The final section might involve the undertaking of **drills or activities** designed to increase skill levels.

Skills and drills

This is a component of the session during which the participants will work through drill or skill practices selected by the coach to develop specific skills or techniques. These skills and techniques are likely to be the ones identified as being weaker following the review of their most recent performance. Some of these activities might focus on individual skills, while others might focus on team skills. These skills and drills might also be competitive, so that athletes are put under similar pressures to their sporting performance.

Conditioned / small-sided / competitive practices

This component of a training session is when the athletes will have to use the skills and techniques that are the focus of the aims and objectives of the session in more open or varied practices. These will put more pressure on them to make decisions and to react in situations that are closely related to the competitive situations they will find themselves in.

By taking part in conditioned, small-sided or competitive practices, the participants will improve their ability to perform their skills and techniques and make good decisions when they are under pressure.

For example, athletes might take part in a 2 v 1 practice where the defending player is not allowed to make physical contact with the attacking players.

Transitions and progressions

Transitions are the times in a coaching session when the coach moves the athletes from one activity to the next. This might involve them moving from one skill or drill to the next exercise on the session plan. Successful coaches ensure that their transitions are smooth, so that the participants are not left doing nothing while the coach organises the next activity.

Progressions also take place when a sports coach moves from one skill, drill or activity to another. However, in this case, the change should represent a progression in the skill or technique being coached. Progressions should move the participants onto a more difficult scenario involving the skill, drill or activity being undertaken. It is vital that progression does not take place before the athletes are ready to complete more difficult drills or activities.

Cool-down

This must always be the final component of a coaching session, as the purpose of the cool-down is to provide the body systems with a smooth transition from exercise back to a state of rest. A cool-down should include activities such as light jogging that will lower the pulse rate and therefore lower heart and breathing rates. This activity will also help with the removal of lactic acid and other waste products. Stretching and mobility exercises should also be completed to prevent or reduce muscle soreness or stiffness. Finally, athletes might also refuel with water, protein shakes or carbohydrates to replace fuel that they have used.

