

## Second Interim Report Summary Year 2 Shaping the Game

- During its second year (2011/12 season) the Shaping the Game pilot project has focused on the mini rugby game played at under-10 and under-8 level in England.

### Under-10

#### Match Analysis

- At Under-10, 20 Pilot matches and 20 AGR matches were filmed at festivals. Critical behaviours were identified using the Dartfish tagging system. These included:
  - The number of tries, runs, tackles, and passes.
  - The number of, scrums, rucks and mauls were recorded for both games, while lines-outs only applied to AGR matches.
  - The duration of each breakdown (i.e. rucks and mauls) were also timed, and the amount of time the ball was in play was also compared.
  - As game duration varied across matches, all behaviours were standardised to a nominal 10 minute duration.
- The ball was in open play for 20% more time in the Under-10 Pilot game when compared to the AGR. Over half the time in the AGR game (53%) was spent preparing for and competing in scrums and lineouts, and competing for the ball that was being held within rucks and mauls.
- The introduction of the competition for the ball at the breakdown in the Pilot resulted in possession being recycled at a significantly faster speed than in the AGR.
  - The average time for one ruck in the AGR was 4.4 seconds and 2.5 seconds in the Pilot
  - A maul was nearly three times longer (11.9s) in the AGR compared to the Pilot (4.3s).
- The introduction of mini rucks and mini mauls resulted in a significant difference in the total amount of passes associated with these aspects of the game. At the breakdown, the players in the Pilot games completed:
  - 46% more passes from rucks and mauls
- In open play players in standing tackles completed 58% more passes when compared to the AGR. (A standing tackle occurs when the ball carrier is held on his feet by one or more opponents for 3 seconds or more). This suggests that in the pilot the players were attempting to maintain continuity in this area rather than the action resulting in a breakdown in play.
- In the passes between phases there was also a significant difference ( $t_{38} = -2.83, p < .007$ ) with an average of 1.6 passes between phases in the AGR and 2 in the pilot. At first glance this doesn't appear much of a difference; however if there are 30 phases of play in a 10-minute period this could lead to up to 15 more passes being completed between phases in the Pilot.
- The mean for all types of other skills such as the other types of passes (restart, ground, set piece, open play), all types of tackles (standing, to ground) and runs were higher in the Pilot than the AGR, but these differences were not significant.

- While set-pieces and the breakdown are important elements of the senior game, it is dubious as to whether this emphasis offers an ideal learning environment for generic skill development or matches what children actually enjoy about playing rugby (see survey results above).

### **Survey**

- Opinions about the game of Under-10 rugby were sought via a 6 item, multiple-choice survey to 139 players who were individually interviewed.
- The activities identified as being enjoyable by Under-10 players
  - tackling (27% Pilot, AGR 27%) running with the ball (27% Pilot, AGR 26%) are both associated with the ball being in open play.

## **Under-8**

### **Match Analysis**

- 20 pilot rules matches and 10 Age Grade Regulations (AGR) Under-8 matches were filmed at festivals. The behaviours for comparison during games were identified using the Dartfish tagging system, and included:
  - The number of tries, runs, passes (restart, before tag and after tag), and tags made.
  - For comparative analyses, the number of behaviours occurring in each game were standardised to a nominal, 10 minutes duration.
- As both Pilot and AGR Under-8 games were very similar there were little differences between both games in terms of the behaviours they elicited.
- The only significant difference being that the Pilot game had 14% more passes from restarts ( $t_{28} = -3.15, p < .004$ ) than the AGR game. However, the number of behaviours are divided between 7 players per team in the AGR game compared to 6 players per team for the Pilot.

### **Survey**

- Face-to-face interviews were used to administer a six item survey to 79 Under-8 players. The feedback suggests that players enjoy scoring tries (37%) and running with the ball (30%), and both game versions provide plenty of opportunities to apply these skills (Tries *mean*: 10 – AGR, 12 – Pilot; Runs *mean*: 44 – AGR, 45 – Pilot).
- Young players reported that having fun (35%) and playing with friends (20%) were the most important aspects of playing rugby.
- These elements are consistent with the deliberate play principles of the Developmental Model of Sport Participation (Côté et al., 2007) on which the Pilot laws are based.

### **Elite Coaches Interviews**

- In a qualitative study, nine expert rugby coaches were asked to provide their thoughts on what were essential early components for player development through mini rugby games. Replies pointed to playing modified small-sided rugby matches with unstructured and less specialised game play, and with an emphasis on fun and limited adult involvement. These recommendations are consistent with the aims of the Pilot laws and further support their adoption.