



Fundamental hurling session with Paudie Butler

The following session was conducted by the national director of Hurling Paudie Butler in Cuala on Thursday the 25th of September 2008. The session was aimed at those players in the academy age bracket.

All the drills and exercises were done indoors on a simple 7 metre track, each track had 5 cones in it. The tracks were made up of different colour markers. The children lined up at the cones for some exercises, stand at your colour, or else worked in the rows between each line of cones, middle of the road.

X X X □ □ □ □ □ At your colour

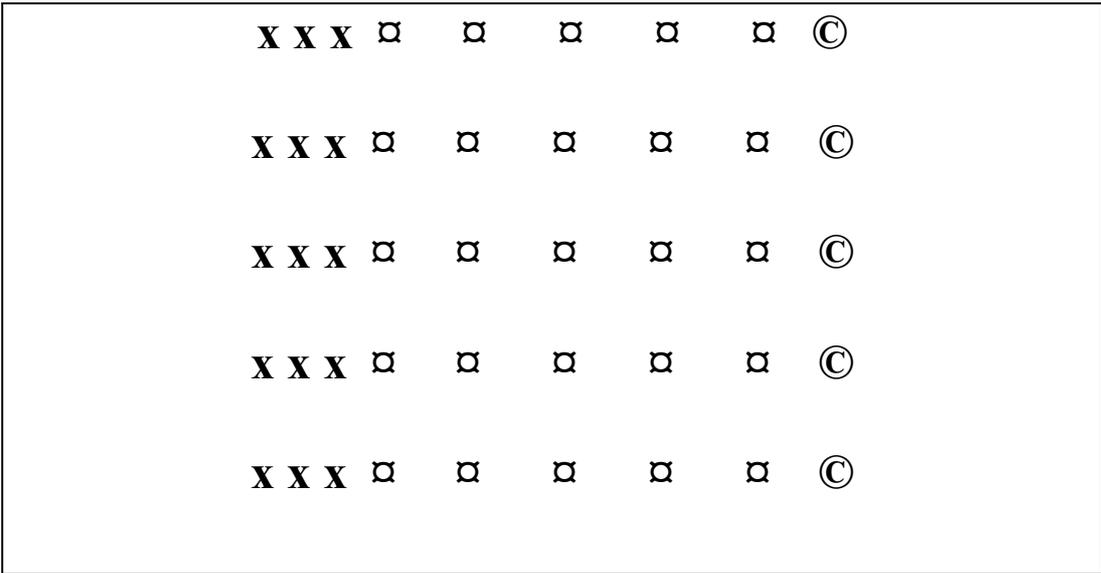
□ □ □ □ □

X X X

Middle of the road

□ □ □ □ □

X : children □ : cones © : coach

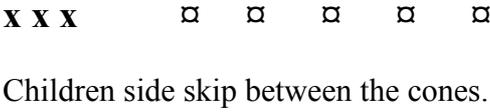


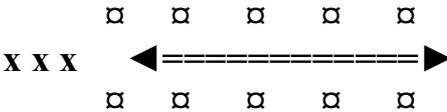
Each team of children had 3 players in it and a number of coaches working with each group. The children used light hollow plastic sticks for the exercises and held them at ½ length with their thumb pointed down the shaft and the toe of the hurley pointed away from the body. Older children can use normal hurles to do these exercises

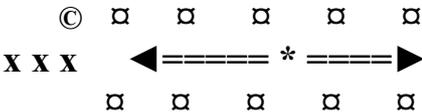
Before the session began each child was checked individually to ensure they were holding the stick with their stronger / dominant hand.

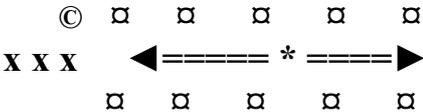
<p>Drill 1A : Wiggle the stick</p> <p>The purpose of this drill is to develop the children's wrist action. The hold the hurley ½ way down with the toe pointed away from the body. Their thumb is pointed down towards the bas of the hurl. The children run down and back the middle of the road wiggling the bas of the hurl up and down. Don't bend at the elbow, try to use wrist only.</p>	<p>Run up and back between the lines.</p>
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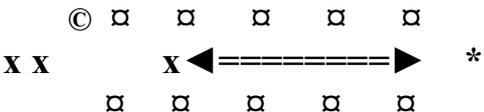
<p>Drill 1B : Wiggle the stick: zig - zag</p> <p>As in drill1A except this time the children weave in and out of the cones up and back.</p>	<p>Children zig zag between the cones.</p>
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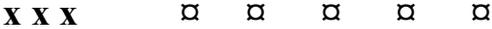
Drill 1C : Wiggle the stick: side to side	
<p>As in drill 1B except this time the children side skip in and out of the cones up and back.</p>	 <p>Children side skip between the cones.</p>

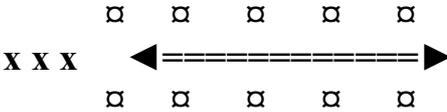
Drill 2 : Solo the bean bag	
<p>Each group is now given a bean bag. They will run between the lines again and keep the bag balanced on the stick. Emphasise the following key solo points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the <u>arm straight</u>. • Keep the <u>thumb pointed down the shaft</u>. • Try and have the <u>bean bag under your nose</u>. 	 <p>Run up and back between the lines with the bean bag balanced on the stick.</p>

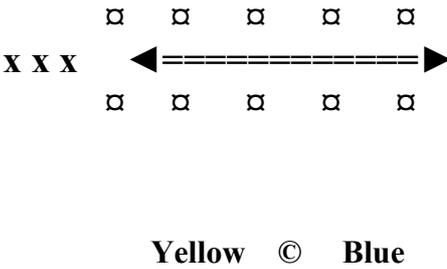
Drill 3 : Solo the bean bag and catch	
<p>As with drill 2 except this time the players toss the bean bag up in the air and try to catch it. The coach should position themselves at the start of the line and check for the following points.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The players should flick the bag up off the stick and <u>catch from their shoulder</u>. • Make sure they use <u>grippy or cupped fingers</u>. • Make sure you can see the <u>back of their hand</u>. • Remind them of the key points from drill 2. 	 <p>Run up and back between the lines with the bean bag balanced on the stick. Toss up and catch at the star.</p> <p>Return to the start and give it to the next player in the line.</p>

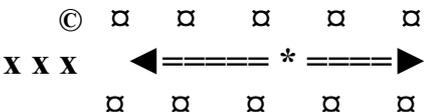
<p>Drill 3B : Solo the bean bag jump and catch</p>	
<p>Same drill as 3A but this time incorporate a jump into the catch. The players need to toss the bag higher into the air.</p> <p>Continue to remind them about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Arm straight</u> • <u>Thumb pointed down the hurl</u> • <u>Grippy fingers</u> 	 <p>Run up and back between the lines with the bean bag balanced on the stick. Toss up jump and catch at the star.</p> <p>Return to the start and give it to the next player in the line.</p>

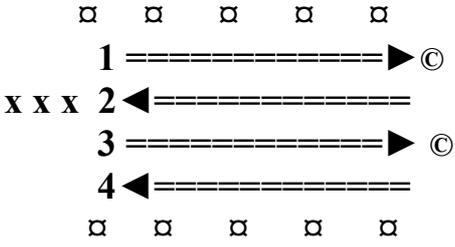
<p>Drill 4 : Solo the bean bag toss to your group</p>	
<p>←</p> <p>They will run between the lines again and keep the bag balanced on the stick this time they will flick the bag off the stick for the next person in the line to catch.</p> <p>The coach needs to still remind them of the basic catch and solo points.</p>	 <p>Run up and back between the lines with the bean bag balanced on the stick. As you near the group toss the bag for the next player to catch.</p> <p>* Look to see if the next person is ready.</p>

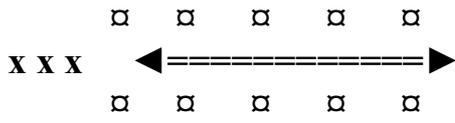
<p>Drill 5 : Solo and side skip</p>	
<p>As in drill 1C except this time the children side skip in and out of the cones up and back while soloing the bean bag on the hurley stick.</p> <p>Emphasise the following key solo points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the <u>arm straight</u>. • Keep the <u>thumb pointed down the shaft</u>. • Try and have the <u>bean bag under your nose</u>. 	 <p>Children side skip between the cones with the bean bag balanced on the hurley.</p>

<p>Drill 6 : Solo the bean bag running sideways.</p>	
<p>The players will run between the lines again and keep the bag balanced on the stick. This time they will be running sideways. Emphasise the following key points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key solo points • Eyes on the ball • Don't cross your feet over one another. • Tell players to try and click their ankles together. 	 <p>Run up and back sideways between the lines with the bean bag balanced on the stick.</p>

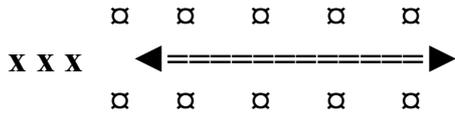
<p>Drill 6B : Eyes on the coach</p>	
<p>This is the exact same drill as the previous one except the coach stands at the bottom of the line with 2 different coloured items e.g. cones, flags, bibs, hurls. The coach raises and lowers the items and the players shout out the colour that they can see raised.</p> <p>This drill gets the players to look up when they have the ball.</p>	 <p>Yellow © Blue</p>

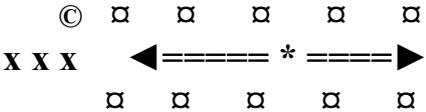
<p>Drill 7 : Bean bag solo and bounce</p>	
<p>The players are again soloing the bean bag up and down between the cones. This time the players flick the bag up off the stick into the air and try to catch it back on the base of the hurl.</p>	 <p>Flick the bag at the star. Return to the start and give it to the next player in the line.</p>

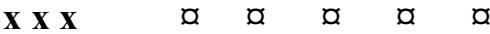
<p>Drill 8: Toss to the coach: bean bag</p>	
<p>This drill combines different movement patterns and different hurling skills. The players run out and back to their coach at the far end of their cones twice. The sequence is outlined below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Solo out to the coach and flick them the bean bag. 2. Reverse backwards to your group. 3. Run back to your coach who throws underarm to the player. The child tries to jump and catch the bean bag. 4. The child solos back to the group. 	 <p>Make sure the coach throws the bag nice and high and underarm to allow the players a chance to catch the bean bag and jump as well. Keep facing the coach.</p>

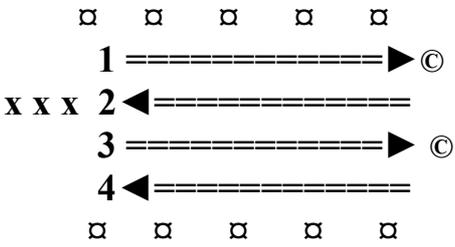
<p>Drill 9 : Solo the bean bag when hopping.</p>	
<p>The players hop between the lines and keep the bag balanced on the stick. This time they will hop out on 1 leg and hop back on the opposite. Emphasise the following key points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key solo points • Eyes on the ball 	 <p>Change legs on the way back to develop ability on both sides.</p>

The following drills are done with a bean ball as opposed to a bean bag. These are light plastic ball filled with rice, sand.... They are more challenging than the bean bags but not as tough as the sliotar to control. When they hit the ground they won't bounce very high or roll very far.

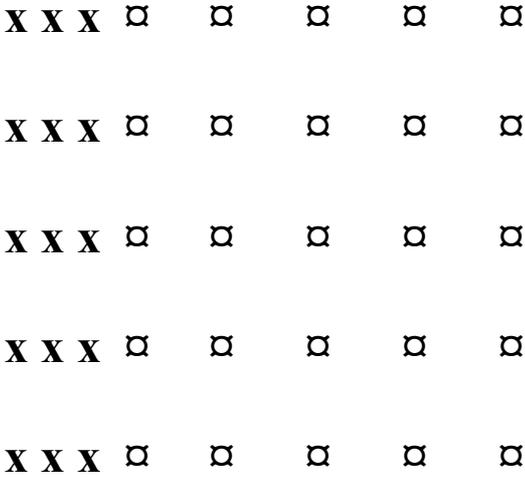
<p>Drill 10 : Solo the bean ball</p>	
<p>Each group is now given a bean ball. They will run between the lines again and keep the ball balanced on the stick. Emphasise the following key solo points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the <u>arm straight</u>. • Keep the <u>thumb pointed down the shaft</u>. • Try and have the <u>bean ball under your nose</u>. 	 <p>Run up and back between the lines with the bean ball balanced on the stick.</p>

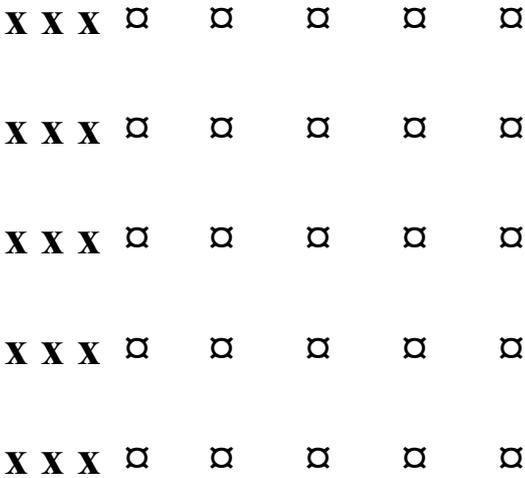
<p>Drill 11 : Solo the bean ball and catch</p>	
<p>As with drill 12 except this time the players toss the bean ball up in the air and try to catch it. The coach should position themselves at the start of the line and check for the following points.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The players should flick the ball up off the stick and <u>catch from their shoulder.</u> • The players should be encouraged to <u>perform an aggressive motion when catching.</u> • The players should try and <u>perform the catch with a down ward motion.</u> • Make sure they use <u>grippy or cupped fingers.</u> • Make sure you can see the <u>back of their hand.</u> 	<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p>Run up and back between the lines with the bean ball balanced on the stick. Toss up and catch at the star.</p> <p>Return to the start and give it to the next player in the line.</p> <p>By encouraging the players to use the downward force the coach is helping the children to increase their speed.</p>

<p>Drill 11B : Solo, side skip and catch</p>	
<p>Similar to the previous drill except this time the players side skip between the cones. The ball is balanced on the stick and they try to perform 1 downward catch on the way out and 1 on the way back.</p>	<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p>Children side skip between the cones with the bean ball balanced on the hurley. Catch on the way out and way back.</p>

<p>Drill 12: Toss to the coach: bean ball</p>	
<p>This drill combines different movement patterns and different hurling skills. The players run out and back to their coach at the far end of their cones twice. The sequence is outlined below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Solo out to the coach and flick them the bean ball. 2. Reverse backwards to your group. 3. Run back to your coach who throws underarm to the player. The child tries to jump and catch the bean ball. 4. The child solos back to the group. 	<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p>Make sure the coach throws the ball nice and high and underarm to allow the players a chance to catch the bean ball and jump as well. Keep facing the coach.</p>

Switch back to the bean bags

Drill 13: Swallows game	
<p>This is a soloing game. The players have a bean bag on their stick. The object of the game is to touch all the cones in the grid that are the same colour as your start cone. The children only go on the whistle and mustn't go off on their own. The following rules apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No crashing into each other• Wait till you hear the whistle.• Stop and return to base on the whistle.• Set the players a target to reach and let them get close to it, this creates greater motivation for the next turn	

Drill 13B: Swallows game	
<p>As for the previous game except this time the players must perform a downward catch at each of their colours.</p>	

• **Key Coaching Insights**

Relaxed arm

When soloing keep your arm relaxed. This keeps the stick nice and low and also facilitates proper running movement.

Downward catch

Using bean bags to practice catching allows the players the opportunity to perform the 200+ catches necessary to perfect the skill. The downward catch encourages the players to be more aggressive when going for a ball and speeds them up as they approach the ball.

Increasing difficulty

As players master a particular drill the coaches should seek to adapt and make it more challenging. When they attempt the new task they will probably initially struggle the coach needs to continually remind them of the basic key points of the skill.

Develop confidence

To develop a player's talent we must also develop their confidence. A positive approach to the skills, the player and the session allows for this.

Without numbers boys cannot learn.

Recent research has clearly shown the need for and the value of giving boys number targets to achieve in order to learn a skill. There is no clear link for girls at present but boys definitely need the challenge of achieving a target in order to learn. As a coach this can be achieved in a number of ways:

- “Who can get over 10 picks in 30 seconds?”
- “ You must get 8 handpasses in a row”
- “ Which group can be the first to get 10 catches without dropping the ball?”

Setting number targets for boys creates competition, helps motivate them, allows the coach the chance to praise them and the opportunity to give each child some individual attention.

Specific feedback

When you are coaching children and trying to either correct mistakes or encourage effort the coach must give specific feedback related to the activity. Too often coaches are heard to repeat the same lines of phrase over and over again, good, well done, excellent. After a while players will cotton to this and become immune to it. It is far better to give clear specific instructions such as : Same hand same foot, Eyes on the ball, Point your toe to the ground, Follow through with your swing.

Making improvement

In order for players to improve they need

- Attention
- Praise
- Competition

The coach

As a coach you have a huge responsibility as to the tone of a session. All coaches should adopt an enthusiastic and positive manner. To a degree you become an actor, the positive persona that you show will be passed on to the players. As a famous coach once said “If you’re not fired with enthusiasm you will be fired with enthusiasm”

Positivity

Too often coaches focus on the errors and the mistakes a team make during a drill or a game. Counting the mistakes only serves to reinforce them in the player’s minds. You would be far better off by emphasising the positive aspects of a performance.

Fairness

All children have a great need to be treated equally. They must see that they are being given a fair chance and thus have equal value to their peers.

Teamwork

The importance of teamwork and co-operation cannot be over emphasised in any team sport. The players must see teamwork in action and feel part of the group. Great team spirit and cohesion allow the group to be more than the sum of their parts.

The great challenge

Children’s desire to win V’s Coach’s desire for skill improvement.

This is one of the great challenges in coaching youth sports. The participants all want to be first and to win the races. The coach recognises that this is important but more important is that the children need to learn the skills correctly. The greater need is for the young players to learn the skill properly especially at the young age. The challenge for all coaches is how these 2 competing aspects can be accommodated.

Start off on the correct hand

Not a single player in the top 1000 tennis players in the world plays with their non dominant hand. Yet too many children are introduced to hurling and are allowed to put their non dominant hand on the top of the stick. It is crucial that the children start off in the correct manner.

They must have their dominant hand at the top of the handle.

They must keep the toe of the stick pointed away from their body.

The golden distance: 7 yards.

7 yards is considered to be the perfect distance for children when learning a new skill. It allows the children develop their skill, it allows them to get a turn and it also allows for rest and competition. Not only this but most adult runs in a game involve sprints of about this distance too.

Getting people involved.

Most adults are reluctant to get involved with their children's team for fear of being presented with a difficult and demanding job. The best way to entice people into joining in is to give them a simple job initially. Most people are happy to give a hand when they know that they will be able to manage the job asked of them.

Demonstration is king.

Only 7% of effective learning takes place through words. In order for real learning to take place coaches need to address the more important areas of

- Actions
- Body language
- Look
- Tone
- Clear demonstration
- Exaggerated movements

Forget failure

Children will not learn a new skill when they are worried about making a mistake or getting something wrong. Distract the children from the worry of failure and this in turn allows them to be successful.

Somebody must be in charge

In order for the players to develop, improve and reach their potential there must be somebody in command of the training and coaching. Whether this is a group or an individual directing the learning doesn't really matter as long as the following points are in place.

- There is a clear central plan.
- The plan is known to all in charge and agreed on.
- There is control of the group.
- The planning takes into account the progress and evolution of the group.
- The plan will allow for the children to be challenged and stretched in order to learn and improve.
- The person in charge should arrange for the stations and equipment to be set out prior to the players arrival. This ensures less wasted time.
- Keep the groups as small as possible. In this session they were 3 per group and a ball or bean bag per group.

