

DRILL OR GAME?

A BRIEF GUIDE

An Excerpt from Gaelic Game Changer

BY
JACK TIERNEY
IN CONVERSATION WITH
DR.FERGUS CONNOLLY

DRILL OR GAME? **A BRIEF GUIDE**

An Excerpt from Gaelic Game Changer

BY
JACK TIERNEY
IN CONVERSATION WITH
DR. FERGUS CONNOLLY

© 2023 by Jack Tierney & Fergus Connolly

Jack Tierney
www.jacktierney.ie

Jack Tierney is a Sport Scientist and Technology Expert who has worked with teams at both club and inter-county level (Offaly Men & Women's Senior Football). He consults with teams from across the world in a wide range of sports on their use of technology to prepare their teams for performance at the highest level.

Fergus Connolly
www.fergusconnolly.com

Dr. Fergus Connolly is one of the foremost performance coaches in the world. He has worked for some of the world's leading professional sports teams, special forces units and Fortune 500 companies (San Francisco 49ers, Carolina Panthers, Liverpool FC, New York Knicks, Google, US Special Forces) and his philosophy laid the foundations for the unparalleled success of the 6-in-a-row Dublin Men's Football team.

www.gaelicgamechanger.ie

PROLOGUE

This short excerpt is taken from **Gaelic Game Changer: A Modern Approach to a Traditional Sport.**

It breaks down the difference between drills and games, aiding coaches in their sessions design by helping them select the appropriate activity for the outcome in mind.

1.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

KNOWING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TYPES OF DRILLS AND GAMES, WHEN TO USE THEM AND WHEN TO CHANGE THEM CAN AID EFFECTIVE SESSION DESIGN

In general, we want to use drills to introduce a concept, no matter if it's a specific move between 3-4 players or a different way of technically executing a shot/pass.

We do this because drills are relatively more controlled environments than games. However, it is important to transfer this concept to a game situation as soon as practically possible. Games are chaotic and unbound by the same constraints as drills, so decision-making demands are far greater for the players.

It is not essential that whatever is introduced in drills be perfected there before it is brought into a game situation. In many cases learning will be enhanced by providing players opportunities to execute in both environments concurrently.

At every level we want to expose our players to games as much and as often as possible. Traditionally, coaches prefer using drills for multiple reasons. They're a lot more limited in scope and so easier to manage. They're easy to set up and this gives the coach a feeling that they are in control.

By using games in training, we're developing the game intelligence that separates good or average players from truly great players. This is vitally important from youth/underage set-ups, right up to senior inter-county players.

There are many different classification systems that could be used to differentiate Drills and Games. This one is by no means definitive, but provides a structure from which you can devise your own.

Conditioning Drills

These drills are performed without the need for players to think, and are used for the sole purpose of physical conditioning.

Rudiment Drills

These drills develop basic movement skills.

Technical Drills

These drills focus on developing technical motor skills of the sport - passing, catching, kicking, striking, shooting. They are tightly controlled, use few players and require zero decision making.

Tactical Drills

These drills include a decision making component but differ from a game because they focus on an isolated moment from a game. A good example is practicing restarts (kickout, puckout, sideline or free). Tactical drills are “reset” to repeat the same scenario.

Tactical Games

Tactical games are created by tweaking the rules of competition games to emphasise a certain tactical aspect. This could be placing an extra player on one team to simulate playing with a numerical advantage (or disadvantage).

Small Sided Games

SSGs are less specific than tactical games. Practically any type of game can be used in a SSG format and they can look vastly different from competition games. They are used to create greater physical demands, and so the options are virtually endless.

Even other sports can be used in SSG format to take advantage of unique characteristics of those games. Touch rugby could be used to promote lateral movements like side-stepping. American Football can be used to teach leverage, or “set plays”.

HOW DO WE KNOW HOW LONG/OFTEN TO USE A CERTAIN DRILL OR GAME?

When introducing a new activity to training, whether drill or game, the following stages will be observed:

1. Physical intensity will be high as players are trying hard, but Quality of Execution will likely only be low-medium if the task is novel and appropriately challenging.
2. Due to the low/medium-Quality, the Quantity (or Volume) should be kept low so that fatigue doesn't become a factor in the execution Quality.
3. Over time as players learn, the Quality of Execution will improve. When it gets to a stage where the game or drill is being executed with high-Quality, the Quantity of reps (number or length of reps) can be increased so that now players are learning to execute in a fatigued state.

4. Repeated enough and players will learn to execute at a high-Quality & high-Quantity. Here we will finally see the physical intensity start to decline as the players can execute the drill or game with a high level of efficiency.

There will come a point when increasing Quantity further will no longer be practical or beneficial. At this stage either modify the drill or game to increase the challenge and return to Step 1 or change the activity completely.

2.

PRINCIPLES

THERE ARE NO HARD AND FAST RULES ABOUT WHEN AND HOW TO USE GAMES OR DRILLS. EACH MANAGEMENT TEAM MUST DECIDE WHAT IS BEST FOR THEIR TEAM IN A GIVEN SCENARIO

HOWEVER, THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES CAN SERVE AS A GUIDE TO ENSURE A HAPHAZARD APPROACH TO SESSION DESIGN ISN'T TAKEN

1. DRILLS ARE PRIMARILY USED FOR INSTRUCTION WHILE GAMES ARE USED FOR THE PLAYERS TO LEARN HOW TO EXECUTE

2. EARLY IN THE WEEK, DRILLS ARE THE WORK PERIODS WITH GAMES BEING USED AS REST PERIODS

A. New learning is emphasised

B. High-Cognitive involvement in drills as lots of instruction is happening

C. Games used for rest instead of passive periods so players learn how to rest in a game scenario

D. Drills also result in more reps/touches/ involvements per player than games do

3. LATER IN WEEK, GAMES ARE THE PRIMARY WORK PERIODS WHILE DRILLS MAY BE USED FOR REST IN SOME INSTANCES

A. Nothing new is introduced so execution becomes prioritised

B. Drills instead of passive rest to keep improving and perfecting technical execution

C. On the weekend during in-house games, rest will be passive as the whole focus is on the game

4. IN THE PRE-SEASON, SESSIONS ARE DRILL DOMINANT AS THERE ARE HIGH AMOUNTS OF LEARNING TAKING PLACE

5. DURING COMPETITION, GAMES BECOME DOMINANT IN SESSIONS AS EXECUTION IS EMPHASISED

6. IN A TRAINING SESSION, DRILL & GAME DURATION ALWAYS PROGRESSES FROM LONG -> SHORT IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN QUALITY AS FATIGUE INCREASES

7. AS THE SEASON PROGRESSES, DRILL & GAME DURATIONS WILL GET LONGER AS PLAYERS LEARN TO SUSTAIN HIGH EFFORTS FOR LONGER AND WORK MORE EFFICIENTLY

GAEELIC GAME CHANGER

A Modern Approach to a Traditional Sport

BY

JACK TIERNEY

IN CONVERSATION WITH

DR. FERGUS CONNOLLY

Pick up your copy by heading to
gaelicgamechanger.ie