

RUGBY LEAGUE / Q & A

with Leigh Woodbridge :: <http://www.raiders.com.au>



1. Tell us a little about yourself and background.

Grew up out on a property in central New South Wales, was highly involved in sport from a young age and had a go at pretty much everything, from squash to rugby league, track and field and swimming. Through out high school started to focus more on rugby league and represented my school, it wasn't till after school that I started to represent at a higher level, I played in the Canberra Raiders Jersey Flegg Side (under 20's), represented the Canberra region in the NSW country cup under 21's for 2 years running. After I completed university, which I graduated in 2003 with a degree in Applied Science- Coaching Science, from the University of Canberra, I turned more to the coaching side of Rugby League rather than playing. During my time at University as part of my degree I was involved in coaching local junior teams under 14's (2003) and under 15's (2004), while also being involved with the Canberra Raiders Junior rep teams as the strength and conditioning coach- under 16's (2004) and under 18's (2005/2006). This was all on top of my full time job as a personal trainer which I completed my qualifications in 2004 along with other courses including my level 1 and 2 strength and conditioning coach with the ASCA (Australian Strength and Conditioning Association) and my Level 1 and 2 Rugby League Coaching Certificates. At present I work full time with the Canberra Raiders as the development officer, for which I am responsible for finding and developing young players through the ranks to hopefully get them to first grade (NRL in Australia).

2. How long have you been involved in Rugby, either playing or coaching?

First of all just to clarify it is Rugby League, NOT Rugby Union, not to be rude but there is a large difference. I started playing League way back in under 6's for my local town of Boorowa, and continued playing till under 21's. I have been involved in coaching now for approximately 5 years and hope to keep this going for a while longer but it is a volatile industry. I have been in my full time position with the Canberra Raiders for 5 months now and really want to focus in making my specialty as a strength and conditioning coach rather than a tactical and skills coach.

3. What was it that attracted you to rugby?

I guess cause I have played for so long you get to know the game very well, and as a player I always knew what has to be done to win or succeed, it was just that I couldn't always do it, so I like to try and pass this knowledge onto the younger players and watch them become successful. The physical nature of the game and the battle with an opposition player would always get me excited, looking at it as a personal battle, when everyone in your team thought like this and you all put it together you would be successful.



4. Is there any particular training philosophy that you prescribe to?

Quality NOT Quantity is the most important thing for me. I expect that when my athletes come to training they are not only physically but mentally prepared to achieve something out of the session. Intensity is also important, too often in commercial gyms you see people standing around and doing more talking than training. For me when training time is for training only, you can socialize sometime else. One other point that is also important for me is planning, both yourself and your athletes need to know, session by session and week to week what is going on and where there training is heading so that they can come prepared and ready to improve. Failure to plan is planning to fail.

5. What does a typical workout consist of for your athletes?

Currently with the under 18's team that I am the s&c coach for, we train 3 times per week, most of these kids are either still at high school or have started out in the work force. A session will consist of a 15 minute Prehab program which involves simple non fatiguing exercises that are aimed at some of the major injury areas in League ie Ankles, knees, and Shoulder. Exercises may include some proprioception work, static stretching, theroband work and static or dynamic balance work. Then players will commence their gym session, which last for only 40 minutes, again quality NOT quantity. Workout consist of 3 fullbody session a week, due to the large numbers training at once it is hard to individualize programs, at the moment have 22 players in the gym, during preseason had upwards of 40, so it does get quite hectic. Exercises that are used are basic but effective as at this stage of development for the players the focus is on increasing size, stability and balance across muscle groups. Once the gym session is completed, players are out on the field for skill work with the coach, while I am responsible for looking after the injured players and rehabilitating them

to get them on the field asap. Once the coach has finished his skill component I will then have any where from 15-25 minutes of high intensity conditioning, which may include simple running and sprint work to game related fitness drill. This is then followed with a cool down and 15 minutes of static stretching. Training sessions on average last for approx 2-2.5 hrs, this may seem a long time but it is the only way to get through everything without taking away from the players normal life too much.

6. What is your biggest challenge as a coach?

Too continually come up with new ideas for both the gym, and field sessions which will keep the players stimulated and get results. You need to find a balance between repetition to overload the body, but yet provide new training stimulus to prevent boredom and mental fatigue. To be able to associate with the players as a mate and a coach and too find a balance between the two so that you are able to gain and maintain their respect so that when get them to do something they respond and understand why they are doing it.

7. What do you enjoy the most about what you do?

Being successful and watching the players you have coached putting all those hard hours of work into practice and it paying off for them. I like to set challenges for my athletes in training and watching them push them selves to the next level and achieve something that they previously couldn't gives me satisfaction and the desire to continually come up with something new that the opposition may not be doing which will give my athletes the edge.

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