

Games and Coaching Committee report 2020

Members: Liam Howlett, Mike Barnett, Conor Keenan, Sean O Hare

Organising a games and coaching development programme in a club the size of Cumann Pheadair Naofa is, without doubt, like unravelling a plate of spaghetti. There is not a one size fits all solution, trying to find one, in a club as diverse and ever evolving as Cumann Pheadair Naofa, is like trying to keep up with the latest vaccine for Coronavirus!!

When asked to stay in the position for the forthcoming year, no sooner had the dust settled than the Games and Coaching Development Committee had met face to face, like in the old days and plans were put in place. Two places were booked on a Long-Term Athletic Development (LTAD) workshop, held in the Olympia Sports Complex, Belfast. This was run by Ramey Adams, a strength and conditioning expert and former international track athlete. Ramey was the tutor who took Liam Howlett through his strength and conditioning qualifications and his knowledge and experience has helped in the development of the club's Athletic Development Programme. Conor Keenan and Mike Barnett split the weekend into a day each, with Liam attending both Saturday and Sunday sessions.

The club's vision and backing of plans to advance the "Club Athletic Development Plan" (CADP) into its 2nd year, is a major investment in the children who take to the field in club colours each year and a true investment in an "Injury Prevention" duty of care. This really is an investment in each Gael that commits to our club.

As with last year, "Coach the coaches" sessions were offered to all club coaches. These sessions consisted of a 2-hour course, covering all of the new games that had been introduced in the LTAD weekend. The games were all concerned with "Movement Quality". These games and exercises were a major addition to the programme from the first year and provided an excellent complement to the plyometrics, running mechanics, agility, sprinting, Energy System Development (ESD) and Olympic weight lifting exercises, covered in the programme.

January 5th saw the first of our sessions rolled out, this year the GCDC were providing a session planner and "Coach the Coaches" sessions and were then letting the coaches take full responsibility for the sessions. The GCDC made themselves available at every session and at any time over the 5 weeks to be contacted by any management team for reference of any drill or to give a demonstration at any session, if required.

The 5 week programme flew past and when it came to an end, all the young Gaels then took up their sessions with their own coaches hopefully in tip top athletic shape and ready to execute their skills in a more robust fashion.

Courses came thick and fast during this period, Child Protection (CP), First Aid and Foundation all on offer, at the end of year we had 100% of coaches registered for CP and Foundation courses, which Ulster GAA have stated as mandatory for those coaching within the GAA. All teams were encouraged to have two first aid coaches. Safe Hands were once again our chosen providers for first aid courses. Anyone who attends these courses can attest to what fantastic events they are. Safe Hands could probably apply for an art's grant due to the dress up and theatrical show on offer! To "Safe Hands" we thank you again.

In January, Liam attended the "Games and Coaching Development" Conference weekend in Croke Par. This is a coaching extravaganza at its absolute best, held in the unbelievable setting of Croke Park's very luxurious hospitality suites. This year Arsenal F.C. and the Belgian F.A. were the major keynote

coaching speakers. Both provided a Pandora's box of information, insight and knowledge from their professional background, but their enthusiasm was the major contribution. Arsenal "Head of Athletic Development" was none other than a County Clare native. This man lives in London in a suburb of 20,000 people. He showed the area and its sporting provision for the youth, which consisted of a small park. He then showed a small Irish area consisting of two clubs with a population of 900 people between both, demonstrating the lush fields and sporting arenas that these villages had strived to provide for their young Gaels. The point being that we are a fantastic organisation with so much to be proud of. Liam and Anne talked at length after the event and Anne being the consummate professional wants this day conveyed to all club coaches, so once again another resource that can hopefully be made available to all within the club.

The Games and Coaching Development Committee (GCDC) had met with all Chairpersons in numerous meetings and all were on board to try and improve our school/club links of which Anne McCormack had laid solid foundations, Brigid Carr now picking up this baton, a lot of detail into a plan had been discussed and sadly this has now fallen to one side with the emergence of Covid.

As aforementioned, Covid had taken hold of us as a nation and we were all floored by the severity of it. Games and coaching was hit hard with training cancelled and it was the "new norm" now to have webinars and podcasts all streamed live or recorded and sent directly to homes. With this new norm of online activities, including fitness and even dancing, the GCDC followed the trend. The "IT savvy" men of Conor Keenan and Mike Barnett led by Sean O Hare, our senior football team tactical genius and video whizz, set about making our own video. Built on the Club Athletic Development Plan (CADP) completed earlier in the year and adding a bit of load in the guise of household items such as water bottles, soup tins etc as well as utilising stairs and walls in the house, it was a programme easily done under lockdown conditions. Exercises using "Mini Resistance bands" were also demonstrated and these were then made them available to the Gaels of the club, a lovely gesture, backed by club Chairman Larry Byrne. The video entitled "Self-Isolation exercise video" was perfect for the storm faced at the time and captured the situation perfectly and did "exactly as it said on the tin".

Later in the year, coming out of lockdown, the GCDC having scanned the glut of fitness videos that were popping up in preparation for a return to play, noticed that no "Injury prevention"(IP) videos had surfaced. Having been to the forefront of promoting this, we set about another production under the IT guidance again of Sean O Hare and Conor, with Mike and Liam deciding what were the best exercises to gently guide our young Gaels back to sport safely within our 5 codes. With the programme agreed we went back to our Gaels, Katie Howlett, Sydney Barnett and Jake McNabb. It probably went without much notice, but these young Gaels were excellent role models and we would like to thank them for their fantastic efforts, the IP video was backed up with a "Metabolic Conditioning" session.

In a very difficult year, we do believe the effort and enthusiasm displayed by our Gaels has been a shining light in the dark days and an even brighter light has been our "Volunteer Coaches". Where in the world would you get men and women like GAA fanatics who live to coach, when the children of Ireland needed an end to their days of endless hours in the house, keeping safe as the dawn broke there were our volunteer coaches ready to lead, not only that but each section was in overdrive Zooming all the time preparing for the first light. To our club we thank you for giving us the opportunity and platform to express where we believe coaching should be directed and for the help and direction we can only thank all involved and hope to get the chance to lead for another year.

Le mise

Conor, Liam, Sean, Mike