

Conditioned Games

For all sports players, there is nearly always the motivation to, “get on and play a real game.” The real value of training and preparation for playing the real game, isn’t always appreciated, and the coach is often under pressure from the participants, to move on to matchplay. The coach will need to be resistant to this, as moving on too early will result in players reverting to previous incorrect techniques and showing limited progress. This is where The Conditioned Game can usefully be employed; it combines an element of training but satisfies the need to be playing a real match situation.

The use of conditioned games is extremely useful for coaches and players, as specific skills and techniques (usually those which have most recently been learned and practiced), must be performed in a competitive scenario, as close as possible to the reality of matchplay.

A conditioned game is one where the players actively play a match but are constrained to use the skills which the coach has specified as compulsory. In this way, it becomes possible to test how well certain skills can be consistently, successfully applied during an actual game, when pressure to play well and win is increased, and where often players will attempt to cover up perceived weaknesses.

During learning and training sessions, it is common practice to apply artificial conditions to activities. For example:

Skill training session: semi-lob pointing.

Training set-up/scenario: the jack is placed 8 metres from playing ring.

A line is marked across the piste at 4 metres from playing position. (piece of wood, spray chalk, indent into ground etc)

Players practise pointing deliveries which the coach specifies must land over this line and at least 4 metres from playing circle attempting to reach the jack.

Conditioned Game – Semi Lob Pointing

A proper competitive game is set up with normal scoring per end, but conditioned as follows

1. Pointing only. No shooting allowed. Nudging the jack or opponent’s boule is OK.
2. All pointing deliveries must land at least halfway to the jack. Players mark this with a horizontal line across the playing lane.
3. Alternatively, players may be allowed to shoot, but when pointing, all deliveries must find a landing spot at least half the playing distance.

An effective coach will need to develop a variety of such conditioned games which may be effectively used to ensure other skills are practiced in the matchplay situation eg high-lob pointing, shooting, bending boules around obstacle.

Examples for the absolute beginner:

All deliveries must be played palm down.

Leading foot must be on playing arm side.

Count to 5 before entering playing circle, and from behind the circle.