

FRQ Coaching Tour



May 10 to 26, 2011



Florent Rossigneux and Gareth Rees



Québec Province & Their Rugby

Intro:

This program was unique but hugely valuable. In the 16 days the coaches were able to witness all levels of play in the province. Given the time frame it was by no means an exhaustive analysis of rugby in the province. But, through the graces of the FRQ administrators and volunteers we were exposed to a wide range of rugby experiences. The stakeholders were all forthcoming with their experiences which gave us real insight. Equally, they were thirsty for feedback and knowledge from our experiences emanating from Europe and other regions of North America.



There is an element of isolation for the rugby stakeholders in Quebec. In many instances they were surprised and relieved to know that other regions (BC, Maritimes or Prairies) face the same challenges. There is some basic value in simply communicating this fact and there is obviously more benefit to implementing best practice from other areas of Canada. It must also be stated that the coaches experienced several instances of hospitality and pure commitment to the game that they have rarely seen in their years involved in Rugby.

Goals:

- To engage the FRQ membership with outside coaches in both French and English.
- Introduce to young players, clubs and coaches new ideas and techniques to discuss building a plan for growing the game.
- Analyze where best practice is in place and make recommendations based on the unique Environment for further growth of Rugby in Quebec.
- Provide observations and context for the challenges that exist, based on the extensive experience of Florent and Gareth through their work in the UK, France, Canada and other nations.

Overview:

After 16 days working across part of Quebec's Province there is no doubt that a solid culture of rugby exists and that the game has a place in the sporting fabric of the Belle Province. As in most of Canada, rugby exists and in places flourishes through various structures: Provincial representative teams, University, high school/school, club, primary school. Despite these opportunities and the potential population base, the number of emerging talents (Elite

Athletes) to feed towards the National Elite Athlete programs run by Rugby Canada is quite low.

Rugby models in place differ from one city to other. While there are examples that have much to teach the rest of the nation (see Sherbrooke-Appendix A), there are also areas with considerable challenges. As expected there exist different levels of success in the development of rugby players and programs. The short window given to practice and play the game due to environmental and weather conditions are currently major factors influencing the development and pathways of the game.

Technically, a wide spectrum of rugby abilities was observed across the different age groups, environments and genders. It is a general observation that the acquisition and reinforcement of the rugby core skills is where the bulk of coaching focus should be. Techno-tactical skills (decision making/game management)



can only be executed if the basics of the activity are fully controlled. The greatest opportunity for advancement of FRQ athletes will be based on mastery of rugby's core skills.

Recommendation:

- ***The LTRD model and breakdown for skill acquisition should be encouraged throughout all structures of Rugby in Quebec. (We worked from a fully translated version that I believe is now ready for distribution). Under resourced programs (some schools and clubs) would benefit from that model being broken down further and having games and drills attached for each stage of development.***
- ***Through the use of indoor facilities, create extra contact time that focuses almost entirely on core skills. Simply programs should be distributed to assist “traditional” coaches.(This effectively extends the season and allows more growth in the Techno-Tactical side of the game when outdoor play starts)***

The FRQ needs to examine a “unified ambition”: to feed the Quebec Federation Provincial Teams (first step to detection as elite national level athletes) This exists in places but needs to be supported and promoted to a greater extent in most areas. Once this is shared, athletes from different backgrounds of development emerging from the various structures in the province can be integrated, motivated and improved.



Recommendation:

- ***Market rugby using FRQ alumni stories (Canada’s greatest men’s sevens player, global importance of FRQ in growing the women’s game, 1932 historic, current and past stars of the international game, future Olympians etc) Young athletes need to hear about individuals from their own community who made it to the top of the game.***
- ***Connect the current opportunities available (Olympics, World Cups, National team touring) to the community game. Define more clearly the pathway to greater opportunities and communicate how the various FRQ programs are the way in.***

Core Skills Review

From our experiences, we have provided an evaluation of player’s core skill development in Quebec.

For reference, the spectrum we are using to mark the abilities is the following (as stated in the overview we are only considering the level of the core skills as the techno-tactical skills can’t develop without a full control of the core skills):



1. Below debutant/introduction to the game
2. Debutant
3. Able
4. Confirmed
5. Expert

- **Primary School:** across the system, it is an introduction to the game level (below debutant)
- **Colleges and High Schools:** skills level goes from debutant to able.
- **University:** skills level goes from debutant to able.
- **Clubs:** range from able to confirmed
- **Representative rugby:** from able to confirmed.

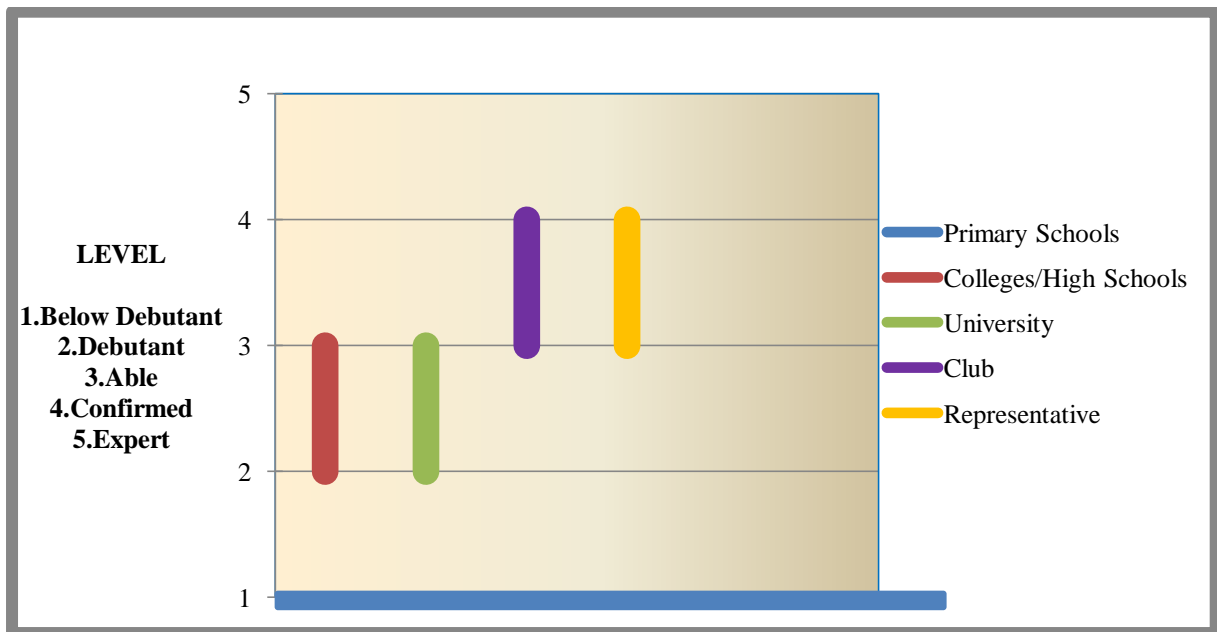


Figure 1: LEVEL OF CORE SKILLS/ENVIRONEMENT

Cognitive Review

The level of development cognitive of players through video/TV, new media, goal setting and simple technical information is also very low. Although through the growth of setanta and some exposure on TV5 there would appear to be more opportunities to watch and therefore discuss rugby, there is a still a dearth of exposure to well produced images. There is a legitimate argument



that materials in French are not getting into the hands or laptops of the membership. This has been a concern for many years but we believe can be solved fairly easily. The materials have all been produced either within RC, IRB or the FFR.

Recommendation:

- ***Appropriate materials in French (and English) be identified and packaged for access to the FRQ membership. Again, it would be most beneficial to have materials attached to the various levels of the LTRD model.***

Much of the feedback we received involved the positive influence on the francophone membership from discussing tactics and techniques with a Canadian source. (We were branded as Rugby Canada for the entire trip and we believe this was hugely beneficial for changing misconceptions towards that organisation.) There is no substitute for being on the ground and listening and teaching in French.



Recommendation:

- ***Continue with direct contact of Rugby Canada sponsored coaches capable of delivery in French who have knowledge of the programs and pathways.***

Francophone coaches have the same needs as the players. Support and discussion in French was very well received. Further opportunities to get together in and across both languages must be facilitated.



Recommendation:

- *Create a dynamic in the Province : organise for the coaches of the Province an opportunity to interact and work together during 2 days conferences led by Senior Francophone Coaches (i.e Pierre Villepreux, Jean Jacques Sarthou). The objective would be to develop their coaching across language. But perhaps more importantly to create an interactive environment between all participants to work together to develop elite athletes to feed the Canadian National Teams. The December/January window may be appropriate here.*



Proposed Programs:

- Put in place 2 Indoor Training camps (Quebec City/Montreal) over weekend during the off season in Feb. or March for already recognised Elite athlete U18 U20 Senior (Provincial level). Camps led by FR/GR involving selection of coaches from Provincial, Club, University, College teams in order to help to implement skills but also to assume the monitoring and following alongside the players after the camp is finished
- 2/3 weeks coaching tour in May by FR/GR (Game promotion/coaching reinforcement of core skills, discussion of Techno-Tactical skills). Marketing and information release in January to all actors of the game so efficient planning can be done ahead by FR/GR

- Reinforce organisation ID Camp during May tour , participation from Rugby Canada by sending National Team coach or Elite Coach to work along side Provincial Coaches and FR/GR
- Creation by FR of monthly e-document in French/English to be integrated in e-news letters send by FRQ to all its members including, a editorial column, skills technical tips(using different media), reports and following on the different world competition supported by the differents e-media.

NB: It is assumed that the FRQ will continue its work in the following areas:

- Administration of the game and competitions
- Sport Etudes follow up
- Primary School, awareness and initiation campaign during the off season
- Referee development



Conclusion

There exists a landscape in Quebec that contains many very successful elements as well as areas with huge, untapped potential. From what we witnessed, the key focus to producing successful elite rugby athletes and competent participants should be on the acquisition of core skills. The guidelines to be found in the LTRD provide an appropriate framework. We also observed how improvements to the administration, the culture and the growth of the game, could be made by implementing simple coaching programs. The hallmarks of this work must be a celebration of the Quebec and Canadian rugby traditions, the definition of pathways to rugby opportunities outside of Quebec's provincial borders and the onsite delivery of the game in both national languages.

Appendix A :

Sherbrooke Case Study

We would be remiss if we didn't report on our thoroughly encouraging experience in Sherbrooke, PQ.

We observed a unique model in Sherbrooke that may be informative to other regions of Quebec and Canada.

In a town of 150,000 inhabitants there is only one club - Abenakis. It appeared to us, that politically this was the key force driving the game in this region. Admittedly there is a strong group of young leaders fuelling this program. The take away for us was the pyramid nature that saw one club administration with a larger base of participants that included the regions school teams. Decision making on rugby's growth in the area was strategic. We witnessed a refereeing membership that was also young and because they were all from the same club were exceedingly strong at recognising the greater goal of a positive experience for the athletes. They were very in touch with what the athletes were trying to do, their manner was open, and they looked organised and professional. In this way they played a huge role in promoting the option to join their club. Add to this the overwhelming involvement in coaching at school level by both male and female members of the club. The club was leading the delivery of the game in this region. It appeared that the energy of club members was almost entirely devoted to growing the game. The politics of competition models and senior results appeared to take a back seat to truly promoting the culture and traditions of the game.



We witnessed an exceptional rugby experience at the RSEQ sevens championship. There was a torrential downpour for virtually the whole tournament. To our knowledge all fixtures were completed by all the girls and boys teams, the respect shown all officials was exemplary and the hunger to learn about sevens techniques and tactics was strong. This

doesn't happen without real leadership by volunteers. The effect was clear on the school administrators and parents we met and rugby was reflected very well in their eyes.



Appendix C:

Feedback and Articles

De : mark gallagher [mailto:mjdgallagher@hotmail.com] Envoyé : 26 mai 2011 11:00

À : Martin Cormier; pfoucault@rugbyquebec.qc.ca; gbrown@rugbycanada.ca

Objet : Thanks - Montreal Irish RFC

Graham/Pascal/Martin

On behalf of the Montreal Irish RFC, I just wanted to thank you all for arranging the recent visit by Gareth and Flo. This was a tremendous initiative and I've never seen so many people at practice, so eager to learn. From rookies to seasoned players - all were committed to putting the effort in on the night and listening to what was being said. I personally found it really interesting that we focused on getting the basics right and this is something we focus on in our off-season.

Last night I helped with our Juniors and they had also been visited by Gareth through their school and they were excitedly telling me all about it and what they had learned, etc and it obviously had a huge impact there too.

So again, I just wanted to say congratulations on a very successful program. I hope this is the first of many more to come.

The Irish are certainly willing to participate in any similar ventures that are upcoming.

Regards, Mark Gallagher (President)

Gareth Rees Visits Ste-Anne

Canadian fly-half and Racing Club de Paris Flanker, Florent Rossigneux, put men through their paces.

Francois Ratier and Jon Lavery turned over the reins of the Ste-Annes men's training to two Rugby Canada visiting coaches. Gareth Rees, the highest point scorer in Canadian rugby history (don't ask him how many, he won't know) and Florent Rossigneux a product of the Racing Club de paris who has also flanked for the London Wasps and Bedford RFC.

It was an upbeat training session, filled with new drills and at the end the Ste-Annes coaches expressed their satisfaction with the visit. "It's not every day you get two coaches of this calibre," Francois Ratier told the Ste-Annes Rugby news.

"We saw some new things out there," said Lavery. "And the players, especially the younger ones were in a bit of awe."

Players both girls and guys, old and young, turned out for the after training meal and it was a boisterous night with both Rees and Rossigneux holding court on their experiences in Canadian, French and top level rugby in general. But Rees in particular had a few memories that touch on Ste-Annes history. When the younger faces in the crowd heard he had played with Stu Creagh, they wanted to run over to the former props house to wake him up and bring him over.

A small presentation of t-shirts was made and both visitors received a copy of Sweep, the world's only rugby love novel. It was a great night at the Ste-Annes clubhouse especially for a Tuesday and we can only hope that clinics like the one this evening will become more frequent.

Rugby Duo teaching rugby basics in both languages in Quebec

An initiative to teach Quebec children basic rugby skills has begun in the province, using Canadian rugby legend Gareth Rees and former French and English rugby pro Florent Rossigneux.

Rees and Rossigneux were teammates at pro side the London Wasps in the 1998/99 season and later became business partners at high end clothier Eden Park. Now they are on a three week tour of Quebec schools, preaching the gospel of rugby in both English and French.

Friday May 13th sees the duo in Sherbrooke teaching at high schools all day long. Over the weekend they will stay in the Sherbrooke area, attending clinics on Saturday and a sevens tournament and clinic on Sunday.

After that they are scheduled for nine different sessions, building the culture of the sport in Quebec - and providing new players with basic skills that will help them progress to the next level.

For Rees the chance to coach in Quebec completes a personal milestone for the player who is Canada's all time points scorer.

"For me this completes my record of having coached the game in every province in Canada," said Rees from Montreal earlier in the week.

Rees, who is fluently bilingual, says while the schedule is aggressive, the plan is simple.

"The goals are simply to engage young players and work with the coaches to leave behind a plan for growing the game," he explains. "We will leave the coaches with best practice for introducing the game as well as some of the latest drills and techniques from both Florent and my recent coaching at the highest level."

Here is a schedule for the remaining clinics to be conducted by Rossignaux and Rees.

Sat. May 14 - Sherbrooke Clinics - through the day

Sun May 15 Sherbrooke 7s tournament and clinic

Monday May 16th - Montreal - Ste. Annes School

Tue May 17th - Montreal - Ste. Annes School

Wed May 18th - Montreal - Coaching Clinic - Olympic Stadium

Thur May 19 - Montreal Irish Training Session

Fri May 20 - Lasalle 7s tournament and coaching clinic

Sat May 21 GMAA All Star Event

Sun May 22 - Training Session with Montreal clubs

Mon May 23rd - Quebec City Coaching Sessions

Tues May 24 Quebec City Coaching Sessions



Appendix “C”

Schedule for FRQ Coach (FR and GR) Visit						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	Flo Arrival Welcome by FRQ	Coaching sessions in Montreal	Depart for Sherbrooke 6pm club training	Sherbrooke highschool clinics	Sherbrooke/Beaconsfield Club Matches Feminin , 1st and 2nd teams	Sherbrooke 7s tournament and clinic
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
return to Montreal	St Annes SM 6pm Francois to confirm	FRQ Office Coaching Stakeholders Meeting - Olympic Stadium 7pm	LCC Coaches lecture and high school session Montreal Irish training session 6pm	Meet with FRQ	GMAA all star event - coaching clinic	Training Session with Montréal Clubs. Depart for Quebec City
23	24	25	26			
Quebec Provincial Girls coaching session All Day Laval Univ	Coaching session with Quebec City CRC	depart for Montreal dinner and debrief with FRQ	depart for home			