



**Lymm RFC**

# **Junior Player Development Pathway**

**U12-U15s**



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**The expansive style of fast-paced rugby that Lymm is committed to, requires players from 1 through 15 having a high-degree of ball-handling skills and mobility; the ability to beat players 1v1; good tackle technique and quick decision-making skills.**

## Player Development

The development of a seamless pipeline of players from U5s to the first team is key to the future of Lymm Rugby Club.

The key stages are:

- **Minis** (U5-11): introducing kids to rugby and retaining good numbers.
- **Juniors** (U12-15): developing core skills and keeping as many involved as possible.
- **Academy** (U16-Colts): honing those skills for senior rugby.

The approach to player development in the minis section will be dealt with in a separate plan.

In this plan, we are addressing the Junior element (U12-U15) through:

### - Individual Feedback and Development

Player-centred, tailored plans, with reviews and personal targets.

### - Core Competences

Expected core skill progression and milestones for core rugby skills at each age-grade.

### - Skills Clinics

Positional sessions with first team players.

### - Social and Personal Skills

Developing rounded individuals with a range of social skills.

The pathway has been developed with help from Adam Fletcher (Director of Rugby) and Andy Davies (First Team Head Coach); David Simpson (Chairman); Will Hind (M&J Chairman); Pete Millachip (2nd XV Manager); as well as input from a number of past and present junior and colts coaches. We encourage all coaches to read and share it, and provide feedback as it is implemented.

## Individual Feedback and Development

The transition to high school at U12s presents new opportunities and challenges both academically and in sport. It also presents an opportunity to attract players who haven't played rugby before. Making sure that each player's strengths and weaknesses; likes and dislikes; are heard and understood will help to create the right coaching environment that keeps players involved in rugby and the club.

Each team should dedicate time during the summer and pre-season to speak with each player individually. Coaches should have a ten minute chat around the following questions:

- *What do you enjoy most about rugby?*
- *What do you think your strengths are?*
- *What do you want to get better at?*
- *What do you want the coaches to do more of?*
- *What do you want the coaches to do less of?*
- *How do you rate your passing/catching/kicking/tackling?*
- *What's your super-strength?*

The answers should be shared with parents and all coaches to ensure that coaching addresses these needs throughout the season.

Each player's core skills development should be noted and revisited half-way through the season and at the end of each season. Maybe get the players to think and talk about their strengths and super-strengths, like gaming cards:

The image shows a green player card for Billy Beechwood. At the top left is the Lymm RFC logo, and at the top right is a rugby ball icon. In the center is a black silhouette of a person's head and shoulders. Below the photo is the name "Billy Beechwood". Underneath the name is a table of skill ratings:

Pass	92	88	Tackle
Catch	85	71	Kick
Fun	95	90	Fitness

Below the table, it says "Super Strength: Side-stepping". The card is set against a green background with a large, stylized 'X' shape.

## Core Competences

Acknowledging that kids develop at different rates, depending on body shape, confidence, aptitude and attitude, we've developed a set of core skills progressions that each age-grade should strive towards as a minimum. Many players will already exceed these targets, but individual coaching should ensure the whole squad is on track to attain these core skills.

These targets have been agreed with the first team coaches in the hope that all players coming into the Academy already have a high level of core skills, irrespective of position.

**The expansive style of fast-paced rugby that Lymm is committed to, requires players from 1 through 15 having a high-degree of ball-handling skills and mobility; the ability to beat players 1v1; good tackle technique and quick decision making skills.**

Positional flexibility is to be encouraged, as per the RFU Age-Grade Codes of Practice: *"U13 is the start of a gradual increase in position-specific focus but children should also continue experiencing different positions. As children change size as they get older, be open minded about the positions they can play. There should be no positional focus up to U13."*

We want to play a brand of rugby that is exciting to be a part of and one that makes people want to watch. Every player is expected to be able to handle the ball and every player should be an option in phase play. **We are looking to develop players who are:**

### **- Exciting in Attack**

We want players who combine technical ball-handling skills and tactical decision making to create attacking opportunities. These players show the coordination to run, kick, pass effectively at speed.

### **- Strong in Defence**

We encourage players to tackle well and make effective decisions in defence to disrupt the opposition. These players show the bravery to be enthusiastic tacklers, to get off the floor quickly and to contest possession.

### **- Athletic and Agile (in body and mind)**

Junior rugby is an inclusive sport for all shapes and sizes and we believe that all our players can make a contribution to the style of rugby we want to play. The physicality of rugby requires all-round fitness to repeatedly perform high-intensity efforts and recover quickly.

### **- Great Teammates**

We help players to have the confidence to self-organise, take responsibility, and build relationships in order to perform effectively as part of a team. Our players should have a positive attitude to learning new things and should support their teammates on and off the field of play.

At each age-grade there are key skills which we would like to see honed by all players:

## Attack

<b>U12</b>	<b>Carry</b>	Run straight at pace, ball in 2 hands
<b>U13</b>	<b>Carry</b>	Carry ball into contact securely; maul basics
<b>U14</b>	<b>Carry</b>	Sidestep, break tackle and accelerate into space
<b>U15</b>	<b>Carry</b>	Carry into maul, understand maul tactics

<b>U12</b>	<b>Pass</b>	Understands 'go forward' and when to pass, how to support
<b>U13</b>	<b>Pass</b>	Can draw defender and make short passes accurately at pace
<b>U14</b>	<b>Pass</b>	Pass competently out of both left and right hands, short and medium
<b>U15</b>	<b>Pass</b>	Pass accurately at pace with offloads, pops and longer spin passes

<b>U12</b>	<b>Catch</b>	Catch passes of various heights
<b>U13</b>	<b>Catch</b>	Catch while running at pace
<b>U14</b>	<b>Catch</b>	Catch kicks and return tactics
<b>U15</b>	<b>Catch</b>	Catch without looking down, keeping eyes on defenders and space

<b>U12</b>	<b>Kick</b>	Kicking basics and styles
<b>U13</b>	<b>Kick</b>	Punts; Drop kicks; fly-hacks
<b>U14</b>	<b>Kick</b>	Conversions; Grubber kicks
<b>U15</b>	<b>Kick</b>	Kicking strategies; drop goals

## Defend and Contest Possession

<b>U12</b>	<b>Tackle/Contest</b>	Safe tackle basics; presenting the ball; rucking basics
<b>U13</b>	<b>Tackle/Contest</b>	Front and side tackling
<b>U14</b>	<b>Tackle/Contest</b>	Confident tackling from all sides
<b>U15</b>	<b>Tackle/Contest</b>	Competence and confidence in all breakdown scenarios

Some players will achieve all these skills from an early age while others will need to be developed. Targets are to be worked towards throughout the year in hope that all players can get close to or achieve each level of competence.

## **Lymm Skill Clinics**

The idea behind the skill clinics is to strengthen the link between First Team players and coaches, the academy and the coaches and emerging talent from U14s, 15s and 16s.

### **Positional Clinics**

There will be designated sessions (eg one hour each month), focussed on particular skills. Each age-group from U14 upwards would provide a few players depending on the focus - for example:

- **scrum-halves and fly-halves**
- **kicking and full-backs**
- **front row**
- **second row, flankers and 8s**
- **wingers and centres**

Each session would involve a couple of players/coaches from firsts/seconds sharing tips and techniques with younger players from the same position.

There would be follow-up sessions for each position every six months.

Each clinic would also include age-grade coaches from each of 14/15/16, both for safeguarding and to share the knowledge wider.

### **Coach the Coaches & Video Analysis**

We will organise ad hoc sessions for coaches throughout the season, focussing on different aspects of the game. This will enable First Team coaches and experienced coaches from other age-groups to pass on knowledge and share best practice ideas.

We will be put on special sessions where mini and junior coaches will be invited to join a video analysis evening where the First Team coaches review the previous week's game. Lymm Director of Rugby Adam Fletcher will be available for a Q&A after the session for M&J coaches.

## Coaching Technical Skills and Set Plays

Coaches should progressively coach team competences such as:

- **Scrum**
- **Lineout**
- **Set Plays**

These sessions should ensure that all players understand their role whether they are active in the scrum or lineout, with a focus on the role and position of all players.

There are a number of coaching resources and support available that will be focussed on these elements of the game such as:

### **- Coach the Coaches Sessions**

There will be ad hoc sessions involving senior coaches sharing experiences and ideas for coaching set-piece moves.

### **- RFU Courses**

The RFU runs a range of specialist courses which will be flagged and promoted such as: *Principles of Scrummaging* and *Principles of Lineout*.

### **- Online Resources**

#### **Kids First**

[www.englandrugby.com/participation/coaching/kids-first/skills-series](http://www.englandrugby.com/participation/coaching/kids-first/skills-series)

Kids First Skills Series is a library of Game Zones and Skill Zones aimed at specific age groups, with the intention of developing children's skills and confidence.

#### **Keep Your Boots On**

<https://keepyourbootson.co.uk>

[www.youtube.com/@KeepYourBootsOn/videos](https://www.youtube.com/@KeepYourBootsOn/videos)

More than 800 short videos from Activate warmups to gamezone and skillzone ideas at all age-grades. Also includes RFU videos on refereeing; mental health and safeguarding.

Check out the Lymm RFC website for more coaching resources including the M&J Coaching Handbook.

<https://www.lymmrugby.co.uk/minis-juniors-colts/mj-coaching-information/>



## Social and Personal Skills

In addition to core rugby skills, every player at Lymm should be encouraged to embrace the following social skills that underpin a healthy, enjoyable lifestyle.

Coaching should always reinforce rugby's core values of **Teamwork, Respect, Enjoyment, Discipline and Sportsmanship**.

Other broader traits and abilities that Lymm rugby players should seek to develop are:

<b>Enthusiasm</b>	Displays a willingness to learn new skills
<b>Communication</b>	Able to discuss game with coaches and teammates
<b>Fitness</b>	Maintains good level of fitness for an active lifestyle
<b>Nutrition</b>	Understands the role of a healthy diet
<b>Learning</b>	Adopts a learning mindset with openness and curiosity
<b>Resilience</b>	Shows mental and physical toughness in face of adversity
<b>Variety</b>	Exposed to multiple sports and hobbies
<b>Creativity</b>	Willing to try new things without fear of failure
<b>Friendship</b>	Builds supportive friendships with teammates
<b>Community</b>	Volunteers to help with wider club and community
<b>Fun, Fun, Fun</b>	Plays rugby with a smile on their face

Coaches have an important role to play in addressing these themes throughout the year through individual and team conversations; at training and in games.

## Summary of RFU Age-Grade Progression Laws

<b>U9</b>	Contact begins
<b>U10</b>	3-player scrum - Uncontested Ruck and Maul 1 support player each team
<b>U11</b>	3-player scrum - Strike no push Ruck and Maul 2 support players each team Kicking (no fly hack)
<b>U12</b>	5-player scrum - Strike no push Ruck and Maul (unlimited) Fend off below armpits
<b>U13</b>	5-player scrum - Strike and push Kicking including fly hack
<b>U14</b>	8-player scrum - Number 8 pick and run Kick at goal Uncontested lineout
<b>U15</b>	Uncontested lineout with lift
<b>U16</b>	Contested lineout with lift