

HELPING NAVIGATE THE PRE-SEASON ENVIRONMENT

A GUIDE FOR SCHOOL/CLUB COACHES



BALANCE IS BETTER



The principles of

BALANCE IS BETTER



Safe, fair and inclusive

All New Zealanders have the right to participate in sport in a safe, fair and inclusive environment.



Bold and courageous leadership

Bold and courageous leadership at national, regional and local levels is required to design and deliver quality youth sport participation and development opportunities.



Collective attitudinal change

Sport leaders, coaches, administrators, parents, and caregivers involved in youth sport must collectively lead attitudinal change.



Encourage variety

All young people should be supported to participate in a range of activities and play multiple sports.



Balance getting better with doing too much

Adults need to proactively monitor and manage the workload (intensity and volume) of motivated young people to mitigate the risks of overtraining and overloading.



Quality experiences, regardless of ability or motivations

All young people should receive a quality sport experience, irrespective of the level at which they are involved.



Working together

Aotearoa's sport sector must work collaboratively to encourage the widest possible change for the wellbeing and sport participation of young New Zealanders.



Skill development for all

All young people should be offered participation and skill development opportunities.



Talent ID occurs later

Talent identification should occur later in young people's development; reviewing the role and nature of national and regional representative selections and tournaments is an important step in ensuring elite sport attitudes and practices are introduced at developmentally appropriate times.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

- Look at each area of consideration to reflect on whether there are any areas that you aren't currently addressing and work out how to encompass them into the approach for your next pre-season.
- Look at the questions that are posed for each area and reflect on what your response would be. Think about ways you can ensure the stakeholders in your programme (athletes, schools/clubs, parents, other coaches) are on the same page e.g., understanding how you will run trials and selections.
- Check out the Balance is Better website (<https://balanceisbetter.org.nz/>) for articles and guides to help you. There is a specific section for Coaches as well as specific sections for the philosophies relevant to this topic of pre-season:
 - Safe, Fair, and Inclusive
 - Quality Experiences regardless of ability or motivations
 - Skill Development for all
 - Balance getting better with doing too much
- If you require any assistance with navigating this document or help in implementing your approach, please contact the Community Development team at Nuku Ora. Your Regional Sports Organisation may also have specific information on pre-season length and content on how to run trials/selections.

WHY A FOCUS ON THE PRE-SEASON ENVIRONMENT?

Pre-season is an important part of the coaching cycle. During this period athletes are being physically prepared for the season ahead which lowers the risk of injuries occurring. **According to ACC claims data 13 – 19 year olds have the largest number of injuries, particularly in April-May which is the start of the winter season for many sports.**

Navigating the various considerations and demands of athletes, school staff, sports committees, clubs, and parents when overseeing the pre-season programme for your athletes/team can be a very complex environment.

This guide aims to empower you as a coach with the confidence and tools to work through the situations that can arise. It also gets you to think about everyone that is looking to trial for your particular team or sport and how you can get them involved in a meaningful way that meets their needs and capabilities.

In keeping with Balance is Better (BiB) principles the key consideration should always be what is in the best interests of the participant, rather than the immediate needs of the sport or organisation.

WHAT IS REQUIRED FROM A PRE-SEASON?

“All sports require a pre-season training window of some description before competition starts and this should be factored into scheduling to help prevent injury. However, care should be taken to limit the impact of this period on player workload and to allow participants’ core season commitments in one sport to take priority over pre-season training in another sport should the participant so wish (participant choice rather than compulsion)”

Sport New Zealand Balance is Better National Sport Season Transition Guidelines – May 2020

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION?

SCHOOL/CLUB SPORT PHILOSOPHY/POLICIES



MANAGING FOMO
(Fear Of Missing Out)



TRIALS/ SELECTIONS



PRE-SEASON CONTENT AND LENGTH



PRE-SEASON TOURNAMENTS/LEAGUES

Wairarapa College Sports Foundation

2023 PRE-SEASON WINTER TOURNAMENT

BOYS HOCKEY FOOTBALL BASKETBALL
GIRLS HOCKEY FOOTBALL NETBALL BASKETBALL

ATHLETES MANAGING MULTIPLE SPORTS



SCHOOL/CLUB SPORT PHILOSOPHY/POLICIES



What do you need to consider?	Question to ask	Actions you could take
<p>Structures in place – pre-season tournaments etc</p>	<p>Does the school/club have a philosophy and policies that outline their approach to running their sport programme?</p> <p>What are the usual yearly requirements for this team? (Attend x pre-season tournament, play x traditional fixture, attend x tournament)</p> <p>What are the expectations for this team? (Win pre-season tournament as always have done so?)</p> <p>Are current structures etc suitable and appropriate for the athletes?</p> <p>Do they provide a quality experience for non-traditional athletes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athletes with impairments • Girls/Females • English as a second language 	<p>Meet with school/club to find out what their sport policies are and their expectations of you as a coach.</p>
<p>Further Information</p>	<p>https://balanceisbetter.org.nz/setting-coaches-up-for-success-a-guide-for-sport-leaders-administrators/</p>	

MANAGING FOMO

(Fear Of Missing Out)

What do you need to consider?	Question to ask	Actions you could take
<p>School/club, athlete, parent expectations of when pre-season starts by way of a comparison with other schools/club (x school has already started, why haven't we?)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you confident in the approach you have taken? • How do those teams who start earlier or later go in the competition? • Which athletes are involved (are they the ones not playing another sport)? • Are other not involved but want to because of clashes with other sport? 	<p>Communicate how you wish to approach the upcoming year as regards to pre-season:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent communication • Player communication • School/Club communication <p>This could include guidance on what a good pre-season looks like.</p>
<p>Further information</p>	<p>https://balanceisbetter.org.nz/creating-a-positive-parent-culture-a-guide-for-schools-and-clubs/</p>	

TRIALS/ SELECTIONS

What do you need to consider?	Question to ask	Actions you could take
Trials/Selection Purpose	What is the purpose of selections?	Find out what the trials/ selection policy is - is it just a focus on the top teams? Does everyone have to trial?
Trial Structure	<p>How are trials/selections structured? (Type, testing, how many?)</p> <p>How will you include all interested athletes in process? Different skill levels, fitness levels, impairments, different gender?</p>	<p>Find out what the trials/ selection policy is.</p> <p>Think about how your selection process could be structured in a way that meets the needs of the participant, e.g., promotion of social teams where friends play together.</p> <p>Think about how to minimise waiting times and maximise engagement time to give athletes the best opportunity to show what they can do.</p> <p>How are teams put together to ensure that where possible there is development for all (number in teams, coaches or are provided upskill and resources).</p>

What do you need to consider?	Question to ask	Actions you could take
Trial Placement	<p>Do trials clash with other sports seasons/ school camps, and other events?</p> <p>Can you wait till other sports have finished and still fit in a suitable pre-season?</p> <p>When should trials start (if not competing in a pre-season) and how long is the season as a result?</p>	<p>Work with school/club to understand what processes are in place for setting up trial dates.</p> <p>Find out what are the current commitments of the athletes involved in your sport and choose dates that have no/little impact. Also consider impact following trials e.g., fitness testing athletes the day before a x tournament could negatively impact their performance.</p> <p>Ask for regional sports calendar to see when various activities are taking place.</p>
Trial Requirements	<p>What are your/school's/ club's expectations regarding trial attendance when there is a clash with an existing sports commitment?</p>	<p>Find out what the trials/ selection policy is. Do existing commitments take priority?</p> <p>Decide how you can best manage the situation - do you have other ways of trialling players at a later date?</p>
Pre-trial/ selection preparation	<p>What have you done prior to trials to help prepare participants?</p>	<p>Provide opportunity for social, fun, warm up games/ events in weeks leading up to trials so athletes can prepare mentally and physically.</p> <p>Advise athletes to undertake own preparation to get ready for trials, (give guidance on what that could entail).</p>

What do you need to consider?	Question to ask	Actions you could take
<p>Selection process/communications</p>	<p>How are athletes selected and decisions communicated?</p> <p>Is the selection policy in line with BiB principles?</p> <p>Is there transparency around selections for competitive teams especially?</p> <p>Is the policy distributed to players and parents beforehand?</p> <p>How are players informed if they do not make a team they were previously in (included in selection policy)?</p>	<p>Find out what the trials/selection policy is.</p>
<p>Further Information</p>	<p>https://balanceisbetter.org.nz/a-guide-to-running-good-trials-and-selection-processes/</p> <p>https://balanceisbetter.org.nz/webinar-replay-trials-and-selection-processes-in-youth-sport-what-does-good-look-like/</p> <p>https://balanceisbetter.org.nz/amplifying-the-voice-of-young-women-in-sport/</p>	

PRE-SEASON CONTENT AND LENGTH

What do you need to consider?	Question to ask	Actions you could take
<p>Age and stage of athlete/s (are they playing junior/senior sport? Are they playing socially or aiming for top team?)</p> <p>What safety requirements need to be met for an athlete to play sport safely e.g., a certain competence (rowing) or safety (contact in rugby)?</p> <p>What is your coaching knowledge around pre-season quality – periodisation, training load?</p> <p>Do you have a plan you can show the school/club to explain your approach to pre-season?</p>	<p>What does the pre-season consist of (testing – why and what, physical conditioning, intensity)? Is it just team bonding so no physical impact on other sports involvements?</p> <p>Who has oversight of what it contains at Junior A and Senior 1st XI Level? (Is there a difference?)</p> <p>Is the pre-season length safe?</p> <p>How are Y9/Y10 athletes included in senior programmes (can they cope?)</p> <p>Does coach know what athletes are already doing (i.e., some aren't starting from scratch so do they need fitness training)?</p> <p>Does pre-session clash with other sport - in and out of school?</p>	<p>Gain understanding of what a 'good' pre-season looks like for your sport relevant to age and stage of athlete/s.</p> <p>Attend coaching workshops on pre-season training.</p> <p>Create plan for pre-season to show science/reasoning for the length and content.</p>
<p>Further Information</p>	<p>https://www.accsportsmart.co.nz/sport-programme/</p>	

PRE-SEASON TOURNAMENTS/LEAGUES

What do you need to consider?	Question to ask	Actions you could take
<p>What are the league/ tournament opportunities available?</p>	<p>Why are you looking to enter?</p> <p>Is this something the school/club traditionally always enters? (What are consequences if school/club doesn't enter?)</p> <p>What if the schools/club traditionally doesn't enter. Why? Is it still appropriate?</p> <p>What does this do to the length of the season? Could this lead to burnout/ peaking too early in the season?</p> <p>Does this mean pre-season starts earlier to be ready for pre-season league/tournament?</p>	<p>Decide on importance/ relevance of these activities in relation to length of the season.</p> <p>Communicate approach to pre-season tournaments to stakeholders (coaches, athletes, parents)</p>

ATHLETES MANAGING MULTIPLE SPORTS

What do you need to consider?	Question to ask	Actions you could take
<p>Athlete's current commitments</p>	<p>What is their other sport/ activities/ commitments?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hours per week training/competing/ doing • Important dates/ windows to be aware of (e.g., key competitions/events/ tournaments) 	<p>Find out if school/club already has this information and collate spreadsheet/calendar.</p> <p>See ACC 'Sports and Training schedule planner' in further information section for an example of how to do this.</p>
<p>Are they completing multiple pre-seasons?</p> <p>Are they currently involved in another sports season?</p> <p>Balance is Better aims to promote the opportunity for participants to experience a range of sports for as long as possible. A key factor in allowing this is avoiding clashes between winter and summer sports whenever possible.</p>	<p>What is the athlete's week looking like (trials, pre-season games, fitness testing, S & C)?</p> <p>Am I getting the athlete to undertake the same/ similar fitness testing – do I need to?</p> <p>Are the trainings/trials going to clash or cause issues e.g., lifting weights on a Friday and impact on player taking part in competition on a Saturday?</p> <p>How will the workload be managed?</p>	<p>Initiate joined up conversations with all the adult stakeholders (parents, coaches, trainers, etc) who are supporting an adolescent athlete that has a high training and competition load.</p> <p>Monitor the situation – put the athlete at the centre of the decision making.</p> <p>Have a conversation with the other coaches to establish strategies to support the said athlete's wellbeing. This could include tactics such as rest and rotation protocols, as well as decreasing expectations on attendance at training, or the intensity that an athlete trains.</p>

What do you need to consider?	Question to ask	Actions you could take
	<p>How can you manage competing requirements:</p> <p>e.g. Rugby wants players to bulk up vs Rowers needed them to be leaner.</p> <p>Does the school/club make its own policy available to parents and participants (that mirrors BiB) which gives guidance to coaches and players re: how many hours they should be in physical activity each week?</p>	<p>Connect every one-to-two months to ensure all coaches have a collective idea on how various training and competition schedules will impact an individual athlete.</p>
Further Information	<p>https://balanceisbetter.org.nz/balance-getting-better-with-doing-too-much/</p> <p>https://balanceisbetter.org.nz/how-do-i-support-an-athlete-with-a-variety-of-coaches/</p> <p>https://balanceisbetter.org.nz/a-practical-guide-for-monitoring-athlete-training-and-competition-load/</p> <p>https://www.acc.co.nz/assets/Newsroom-documents/your-fitness-time-sport-and-training-schedule.pdf</p>	

APPENDIX

Balance is Better National Sport Season Transition Guidelines

<https://sportnz.org.nz/covid-19-response/advice-guidance-and-resources/sport-season-transition-guidelines-2020/>

Sport NZ sport season transition guidelines 2021

<https://sportnz.org.nz/covid-19-response/advice-guidance-and-resources/sport-season-transition-guidelines/>

Sport NZ Secondary Age Review 2019

<https://sportnz.org.nz/resources/secondary-age-review-2019/>

The logo features the text 'Nuku Ora' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The letter 'O' in 'Ora' is replaced by a circular graphic consisting of several concentric white lines of varying thickness, creating a sense of motion or a target. Below the main text, the tagline 'An active Wellington region' is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. The entire logo and tagline are centered on a teal background that is decorated with a pattern of white, hand-drawn, concentric circles and arcs of varying radii, some of which are incomplete, giving the impression of a stylized maze or a series of paths.

An active Wellington region