

Coach and referee development: the korfbal community way

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Summary

We recognise there are many approaches to coach and referee development and this paper focuses on a community approach. We believe that in Australia we need a process more attuned to the korfbal community where coaches and referees are required. We have found that developing coaches and referees in their korfbal community enables a greater sense of ownership of the development by the community and a greater recognition of the value of coaches and referees. In addition, it maximises the expertise and experience available locally and enables a richer community approach to development. This requires a change from the general process of coach and referee development, especially for countries less developed in korfbal, and more recognition of the value of local development from IKF and the more advanced countries.

Towards a process of development

We hold the view that the purpose of korfbal development is to make the korfbal experience better for everyone. This means not just one group but all groups in a community. It suggests that coach and referee development must be attuned closely to the community and that the general process for this development may need to change.

The general process of coach and referee development in most sports is

- expert to client teaching
- in an ideal physical environment for the course
- in a specific concentrated timeframe
- largely external to the client's working community

Positives for this format are

- experts there with course and audience well controlled and focused
- time minimised and assessment decisions quickly finalised
- appealing for some clients and some administrators who want a quick development with easy validation
- is often claimed to be more cost effective

Problems for this format, especially in countries where expertise is limited or participants not easily gathered together, are

- inflexibility as it limits the expertise or clients that can be brought together at one time
- distance from the community's activity (geographically and culturally and with often little understanding or recognition of real community needs)
- time too restricted and expectations often unrealistic especially related to readiness of applicants to perform at a designated level
- expertise may be unavailable later for further professional development
- ownership not related to community (can lead to alienation including lack of respect and responsibility for course graduate's ongoing professional development. Likewise graduates can feel they are above the general community and should only be expected to be involved where their externally gained expertise is considered relevant such as with elite level playing)
- community relevant expertise not recognised or explored
- arguable that it is more cost effective

What the problems suggest is there is a need for more

- intimate and broader involvement of the playing communities when developing coaches and referees

- flexible formats for courses to enable more realistic and appropriate outcomes

but still aiming to meet the range of competencies for korfball coaching and refereeing expected by local, national and international authorities.

The Australian korfball community way

With many countries we share the challenges of distance and isolation and the subsequent effort in getting people together for their initial and on-going development.

We believe we need to develop our coaches and referees to serve all members of the community not just a limited group. For this reason, we need to develop our coaches and referees in our broad korfball communities and in so doing seek to maximise the use of local expertise.

To date we are doing this by emphasising the coordination of all technical development that includes coaches and referees in order to maximise the use of our community resources.

We have **Technical Coordinators** in an administrative capacity for the development of both coaches and referees.

Their role is to

- coordinate the development of courses
- set up participants on courses and arrange their assessment
- ensure on-going development of coaches, referees and others to meet national technical and administrative criteria for all sports required by *Sport Australia*
- actively engage the korfball community to take some responsibility for these developments.

There is a National Technical Coordinator (NTC) and then State Technical Coordinators (STC) for when a state or region has developed sufficiently to undertake the process.

Course Development

We need to ensure all our coach, referee and other courses meet the standards expected of all sports courses in Australia, so the process is

- check expectations developed by the national government (*Sport Australia*) for all sports at different levels for coaches, referees and administrators.
- develop korfball course outlines to meet these which also includes requirements for on-going professional development (e.g. *Korfball Australia Coach Accreditation Framework*).
- develop specific course content where these will suggest means of involving local expertise (e.g. *Korfball Referee Level 1 Course; Club Based Manual*)

The courses process for an individual participant:

1. individuals or groups at local level can express needs
2. an appropriate course can be decided upon in consultation with state (STC) or national technical coordinator (NTC)
3. support gathered (e.g. a mentor, a group of senior skilled coaches or referees, a local korfball community club/group)
4. is registered and obtains course manuals/workbooks
5. develops a support plan guided by the manual, and commences on course requirements
6. regular progress expected to STC or NTC and record kept
7. on completion of progressive assessment, an Assessment Panel is set up to make final assessment of the participants to ensure they met national standards expressed in the course (e.g. Panel includes mentor and other expertise that have observed the participant)

8. certification after paying fee (low fees since volunteer support and often paid by participant's club).

The process is used for other courses such as *Administration Level 1* and the *Korfball Youth Leadership Award* (KYLA) and the latter can involve educational institutions in the community.

Community expertise is targeted

To maximise this and encourage local involvement and responsibility we use

- mentors – for a group or individual to support progress through a course
- higher level coaches and referees to support those doing courses at lower levels (built into their higher-level courses is a Sport Australia unit on this form of helping – *Facilitating and Assessing*)
- korfball community involvement (e.g. a club or group to support individuals)
- some course integration (e.g. youth coach and referee courses at Level 0 integrated into *Korfball Youth Leadership Award* which in addition can be integrated into school courses)
- non- korfball specific expertise (e.g. allied health professionals who play korfball like nurses, physiotherapists, psychologists, teachers and others with sport coaching experiences such as from basketball)

To prevent failure and ensure success we can have flexible timing and format during progress through the course where necessary.

In this way support for development is more bottom up than top down.

The result of this process is that it leads to

- the community feeling involved and responsible (e.g. in clubs they say what developments they want - e.g. higher-level coach or referees for certain levels of competition - then have a say in developing by encouraging coaches/referees to take on development).
- the coaches and referees having a stronger bond and feeling of responsibility towards their korfball community (a consequence is they recognise they have a broader role including helping train others and administration)
- courses that are more flexible to change (e.g. when and how long to meet individual or community needs)
- greater involvement of higher-level coaches and referees in developing junior levels
- greater gender equality - see Tables 1 and 2 examples of change
- greater involvement for more isolated or less developed communities with local input alongside distance education (electronic availability of courses and exchange of ideas and processes)

Some challenges using this process

- getting the available community expert support to be involved (e.g. often they are not available because doing so much other korfball support activities)
- some resistance to change especially innovation in the process of education
- group success not easily recognised or accepted generally since process varies for each individual
- it can take longer for getting a specific number trained than having a one-off course
- getting the community to recognise the worth of the individual community-based approach
- getting an appropriate Technical Coordinator to deal with these challenges

What the international community supporting developments needs to do

- reconsider “expert to non expert mindset” for development
- question the notion that greater technical expertise should be focused primarily on elite players and their activities (e.g. relate their courses to each country's own development and enable parts of courses to be undertaken in participant's own country's korfball community)
- focus more on the community needs for technical development rather than on the elite
- consider coaching and refereeing administration together – often coaches need to be referees and vice versa (can become more specialised later or partially as needs change)

Conclusion

All korfball countries have different situations and challenges when it comes to developing their coaches and referees. We suggest that a community focused approach will suit many countries especially where there is a desire for community ownership of the process and a focus on meeting the requirements of the general korfball community for coaches and referees.

Table 1 Gender equity development in Australian Korfball

Official Coaches and Referees in Australia: Female/Male, May 2019			
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Coaches	10/11	2/9	0/2
Coaches in training	5/3	3/3	1/1
Referees	6/14	0/3	1/1
Referees in Training	10/3	0/2	0/0

The table shows that established coaches and referees, particularly at higher levels, are still dominated by males. However this is showing signs of becoming more equitable when you look at the current ratios in training.

The change in ratios we put down to greater community awareness amongst women that they can do traditional men's roles, our community training process and greater awareness in the community for equity and related behavioural expectations.

Table 2 Governance: Executive Committees

female / male

Korfball Australia	Korfball South Australia	Korfball New South Wales
4/3	5/4	3/3

This table indicates we have a good balance between the genders in administration that plays a part in the acceptance of our community process of technical development.

Some statistic on the development of the community approach in Australia.

- In 2014 no one with any korfball coaching or refereeing official qualifications equivalent to requirements of the *National Coaching and National Officiating Accreditation Schemes* of the Australian government (*Sport Australia*)
- In 2014 about 6 coaches and 6 referees with some experience through IKF short courses.
- 2014-16 setting up of courses meeting *Sport Australia* requirements
- In 2015 experienced coaches and referees gain qualifications including recognition of prior learning at levels 1 and 2.
- Since 2015, 34 coaches and 25 referees have gained certification through our community scheme covering all levels. About 20% of these came through as a result of involvement in youth courses in the *Korfball Youth Leader Award (KYLA)*
- We have approximately 30 coaches and referees in training at all levels in SA and NSW
- Approximately a quarter of those in training are taking leave from this at the moment for various reasons.

For further information and support contact NatonalTechnicalCoordinator@korfball.org.au