

The logo features the word "MARCHING" in large, dark blue, sans-serif capital letters. Below it, the words "NEW ZEALAND" are written in white, sans-serif capital letters on a solid orange rectangular background. The entire logo is set against a light purple, trapezoidal shape that tapers from left to right.

MARCHING NEW ZEALAND

ADVANCED COACHES (3+ Years)

Coaching is a teaching or training process in which an individual gets support while learning to achieve a specific personal result or goal. The purpose of coaching is to help them move forward from their present ability.

So, you have been coaching now for 3 plus years and you want to move your Coaching to the next level so therefore it is imperative that you read every word of the Policies & Operations Manual (Technical) including every aspect of the Judging Criteria and the Judges Sheets so that you understand fully the criteria by "The Book".

Then you go to every training course available to you not only in the basics of marching but how to coach in general.

There are many resources available e.g. "Coach – Administration & Information Guide", "Coach – How to get Everything Learnt by Opening Day", "Coach – Practical Guide to your Training Sessions", "Coach – Practical Guide to Planning your Display" which give you great ideas about relaying information (coaching/teaching) and building a team (management).

For our sport the most important aspect of a "top" team is their ability to march totally "in sync" throughout every aspect of the drill. Training methods and time spent a training are what gains precision (uniformity) of the drills.

Top Team = Uniformity while Walking, Uniformity of Armswing, Uniformity of Footwork, Uniformity of Timing, Uniformity of Position (Dressing, Covering & Spacing).

The first aspect is to ensure that every marcher is hitting the ground on the loudest or strongest beat of the music with the heel of the foot.

The angle of the foot, when being placed on the ground, must also be uniform, i.e. exactly the same for each marcher. The angle and the timing of the placement of the foot is so important as it affects every other aspect i.e. a difference in foot placement will cause dressing faults, the foot into turns and mark times will not be uniform, armswing will not be uniform. It is so very important.

It is sometimes difficult to get a uniform look when you have different heights in the team especially e.g. with Under 13's who could have very short and very tall marchers, however uniformity of drills is a requirement and so you must work on obtaining this. Tall girls taking a 61cm pace may have more natural bend of the leg than short girls when taking the same length pace if they do not stand very tall. They may also appear to march slower as the longer the leg the less it takes to travel the length of the pace and so you need to have them march side by side and get them to "feel" the same speed and you watch to ensure they have the same bend of the leg. Only practice.. practice.. practice will help with uniformity.

It is important to understand how the body works i.e. biomechanics of the body. Many coaches force shoulders down but this only puts pressure on the muscles and tenses them and then a nice flowing armswing is hard to achieve. Shoulders should be relaxed but held still (they should not move forward and back nor up and down).

Exercises to achieve this can be made part of your basics sessions. Have the marcher put their left hand on the front of their right shoulder with a flat hand and swing the right arm watching that the left hand does not move.

They need to get the feel of this (i.e. the arm swing in relation to keeping the shoulder still) and then swap hands and then march with the same "feeling". They need time to understand what it feels like when the shoulder moves and when it is still i.e. they need to "feel" the difference to understand what is correct.

This applies to all drills – having time to feel the difference between correct and incorrect drill.

Uniformity of armswing height is very important. Marchers must have their hands at the same height from the ground of the team to have a uniform armswing height.

A rope between two poles is a useful tool and can be used by marchers when the coach is working on something else. They can reach the height of the rope front and rear and have another marcher check they are not pushing the rope higher, otherwise you can choose a height e.g. their belly button and then when the team is together raise the shorter marchers height and lower the taller marchers height so that uniformity of height throughout the team is achieved. It must be same height for all members at the front and the same height for all members at the back – these can be different.

Exercises for direction of armswing are also useful. Have two marchers face each other and swing their hands towards the elbow of the other marcher. Try and have marchers of a similar build work together. They give each other feedback and say whether their arms are swinging in a straight line. They need to stop and have the marcher hold their arm if it is swinging in or out and then move to the correct position and feel the difference. It will take time for armswing direction to improve, as it is not a natural action to swing the arms to the waist in a straight line.

Use exercises to improve drills. A set routine of all the basics can aid both the action and the uniformity within the team e.g. on the spot – head turns, then stand at ease and come back to attention, mark times, side paces. These can all be done on a pace ladder where the marchers can check their own foot position after each set.

E.g. a “T” drawn on the ground can to show whether they are moving off the post for their mark times.

Think of all the basic skills we use and incorporate them into a series of drills.

Each time you start you remind the marchers exactly what you want, always say what you require last so that the picture in the brain is one of the correct actions not the incorrect action.

E.g. Demonstrate a marcher kicking their feet out during a mark time, then show the correct action. Never show the action and then say but you are doing this (kicking out) as that is the last picture in the brain and will probably be then next action the marcher shows you.

Or just show the correct action all the time and use drills to improve it and in the end the correct action is what you will get, remember that it will take time.

Just because you taught them something does not mean they have learnt or mastered it, some may never master the drill to perfection but with time and your patience as a Coach they will get it near as possible and that is all you can as, of them.

Set up stations for all the marching basics in the technical phase e.g. 180 degree 4 pace wheels with a 1 pace radius, 4 pace wheels with a 2 pace radius, side paces, mark times (a bottle for height and/or a template for height and angle and a "T" drawn on the ground to ensure they stay on the spot). You could have 4 marchers at each station with one always watching and then swooping over. Explain what is required and let the marchers take ownership of their learning. Saves heaps of training time and the marchers are developing their thinking brains at the same time. Brain washing is a term that springs to mind i.e. as each marcher is watching the others, they are developing in their own mind what is correct and when they go to do it themselves, they often get it right fairly quickly.

Throughout the drills decide on the angle of the foot that you require e.g. the mark time in the raised position. Some marchers may not be able to point their toes as much as others (could even be a result of the thickness/softness of the leather of the boots so you have to decide on an angle and then ensure every marcher has that same angle. A template is good for this.

For regulated paces the most important pace is the first one. The heel must come straight up the leg to the height you want and then drop down to the ground, toe first, with the body weight on the front foot. If you do not get the first regulated pace correct it is very hard to get the following ones right. So, in slow motion do – "up drop, up drop, up drop". The heel comes up the leg then the foot drops to the ground toe first, then next heel then comes

directly to rest beside the stationary leg and then drops to the ground.

At each training session start the drill in slow motion to get the correct action then speed up so that it becomes a smooth action (as per the detail in the book). As the season progresses you may not need to always start in slow motion, but it is a drill just like e.g. Netballers practice all the ways to pass the ball in their training and they incorporate these into drills.

If you incorporate all your basics into interesting sets of drills and spend a few minutes at each training session doing the drills with the intention of improving your marchers gradually throughout the season, then you can make training so much more fun and your team will improve.

In a group you need to teach slow march and regulated paces and it is easy to do this in a line, shoulder to shoulder, any marcher not uniform shows up when they are close together. Get the marchers to look at their feet and ensure they are the same as the person next to them – action and timing.

In slow march e.g. they need to pass the stationary foot at exactly the same time throughout the team. The angle of the foot at the beginning of the pace, the middle of the pace and the end of the pace needs to be the same and the heel should slowly and evenly drop to the ground by the end of the pace with body weight above it.

The marchers looking down can see this and can correct themselves to a certain degree. The Coach finishes it off by checking from the rear that the angle of the foot at the beginning of the pace is the same for every marcher, and that the direction and speed of the foot is the same. From the side the Coach checks that the body is moving forward above the foot in a smooth action.

This will improve the dressing of the team at the same time because if everyone takes the same length pace and the foot moves forward at the same time and at the same speed and the body stays with the feet then dressing will be perfect. Yay!!

One of the most difficult aspects of marching is taking the correct length pace into and out of turns and halts, as well the timing of the pace must be uniform so that adds to the difficulty for your marchers.

Draw a ladder with one at right angles to it e.g. 5 or 6 lines forward with a cross and then 5 lines to the left or right. Have one marcher march five and complete a left turn. Another marcher marches beside them and keeps going. The marcher doing the turn will feel if they get ready to stop i.e the body slows down in relation to the marcher beside them causing the marcher to execute a variety of faults e.g. take a short, perhaps slow, last pace. You could have another marcher coming from the right for the turning, marching to link up to thus checking timing of the pivot and the step out pace.

The ladder will show if they have taken short or long paces into and out of the turn. Marchers could do this in fours with one watching to give the feedback. They swop over each time. The one watching is once again building a picture in their brain in of what is correct an often gets it right first time. The coach watching will see if the marchers are taking the correct length pace throughout, that the timing of the marcher is correct. i.e. not slowing down or speeding up into a turn, whether their posture remains in the same position above the stationary foot throughout and if the pivot is executed to exactly the correct angle (90 degrees). So much can be clearly seen at this drill station. When you add arms then so much more can be seen. This could be just one of the stations you set up at a training. You do not need to have the same stations at each training session, have a variety and just work throughout the season to improve each

marchers basics skills week by week and thus improving your team as a whole on a weekly basis.

“Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off you goal”

Conclusion:

As a Coach you need to be thoroughly organized by being prepared to arrive at training earlier to set out your stations or to mark out a movement you want to concentrate on for that training. You need to know clearly what you intend the marchers to learn at the session and have a timetable prepared e.g. time on basics time on a certain movement, time on display and you need to stick to your timetable (as lesson plan). If you do not fully achieve the learning you want, then you work on it at the next training. You may have to modify your expectations to that of the ability of your marchers and you will only find this out as you work through the first few training sessions.

Make marching training fun while improving the skills of your marchers at every session so that they want to continue in our sport. Keep training time to a minimal so that families want their children to stay in the sport and at the same time allows older marchers with families to continue to participate in the sport. To do this you must train effectively using sound techniques that gradually improve the skills of your marchers and the team as a whole.

You must know, thoroughly what is required and be able to verbalise this to your marchers. You do not need to be able to demonstrate it yourself in quick time, but you should be able to demonstrate in slow time, if you can't, then get one of your marchers to do so as the picture presented is the one the brain uses to tell the limbs/muscles/tendons what to do. I have seen Coaches demonstrate, e.g. mark time with the action being totally incorrect and then they expect the marchers to do it correctly – won't happen.

Most people are visual learners and therefore need a clear demonstration, in a simple form, of what is required – following along behind someone else is not a method of learning.

Attend every course that you possible can that teaches you how to coach (teach) as that is what you are .. a teacher. Learn how to treat your members so that they respect you as a Coach so that you get the most out of every marcher at each training. A positive approach is the way to get the best out of people in general and many have difficulty with being positive in their own lives as they have not had positive role models along the road and so they need to learn how to be a positive coach and for many that is not easy.

Marching New Zealand Foundation Coach Award (Level One) and Marching New Zealand Community Coach Award (Level Two) accreditations teach these skills so make sure you complete these Awards for your own development.

Just a Reminder for even the Experienced Coach:

At the start of training get the team together and explain exactly what you want to happen for that training.

Start with a task and explain exactly what you want them to do and why each component is important e.g. mark time drill .. remind them of what are the important parts of the drill (lift the heel, lift the knee, lower the heel and straighten the knee at the same time) i.e. teach the drill, even young kids are 'teachable' if you give them the correct information and they can therefore become excellent marchers.

Practice the drill and provide whole group feedback i.e. reminder of the teaching points and then give individual feedback if necessary e.g. that looks great and now we need to remember to straighten our knee at the end of each beat of mark time. You could ask the marchers how it "feels" when you straighten your knee as the heel hits the ground. Your marchers will have different ways of learning and you need to provide for these and again the Foundation Coach Award and the Community Coach Award explain different teaching and learning styles that exist and can cause you to be unable to "reach" some of your marchers. Constantly tell the marchers what you want them to do by reinforcing the correct parts of the drill.

Even if you are an experienced Coach the way you teach a new technique to a young or new marcher is critical. It must be presented in such a way that creates intrigue and excitement within the marcher, but does not overexpose them to too much information at once. There is a fine line between teaching what is appropriate and that can be retained versus what amounts to too much information about a task and its progressions i.e. the basic footwork

of mark time versus marching into mark time, the arm drop, their posture, the footwork of mark time, then stepping out, arm swing out, handgrip timing etc.. Phew!

Children can become completely overwhelmed when given too much information or taught a complex technical skill in one training session or in a short period of time and can give up listening and therefore learning believing they are 'no good' or it is 'too hard' for them. They might stay in the team but may not develop their skills any further causing you utter frustration. You must break down a skill to its simplest form and then teach from that foundation. Teach the components of the drill then add component after component so they are concentrating on the new component already having learnt the basic one.

E.g. Mark time action first, then halt hesitate and mark time action, then have standing still hesitate and step out, then mark time action hesitate and step out, then put the whole lot together.

Turns - teach the halt and then have them standing still and step out to the left thus introducing the hesitation, the pivot and the step out. Then put the whole lot together, they will quickly learn the pause in the middle of the turn rather than halting and pivoting and stepping out all in one rolling action.

Be systematic and progressive with your teaching approach and work on instilling a lifelong adherence to a particular skill by teaching it in its most basic form first and then developing a progression to further develop the marcher over time i.e. have patience. Encourage the marchers to ask questions if they do not understand what you want from them. As a teacher I would always ask the pupils to repeat back to me the instructions I had given them.

Our culture is based on a gratification system – we strive to see results now even if the act of trying to create results in the short-term proves to be contradictory to the science of motor development and is blatantly less beneficial than a holistic and long-term approach. Remember – just because I told them doesn't mean they have learnt to do it. Have patience and give your marchers "time" to learn the drills "correctly" from the start of each new season. Develop the skills over time.

Finally Emotional Considerations:

If your marchers are tired, they will not be able to learn. So be understanding if they tell you they are tired or feeling unwell. Be thankful they have come to the training and be understanding of their needs for that day.

If your marchers are bored or too excited, they will not gain ability in a new skill e.g. display movements, to an optimal level. This is where your ability as a Coach becomes important as does your capacity for designing well-planned training sessions.

When your session is designed with the physical skill and emotional temperament of the marchers in mind, it will have a 'just right' feel to it.

Young marchers who lack motivation and skill e.g. will not respond to being put on display in front of their fellow marchers, nor will they be able to perform a skill that is presented too quickly or involves too many progressions.

You want each of your marchers to walk away from your training session perfectly comfortable and happy with what they have learned.

A Happy Team = A Happy Coach = A Successful Training

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