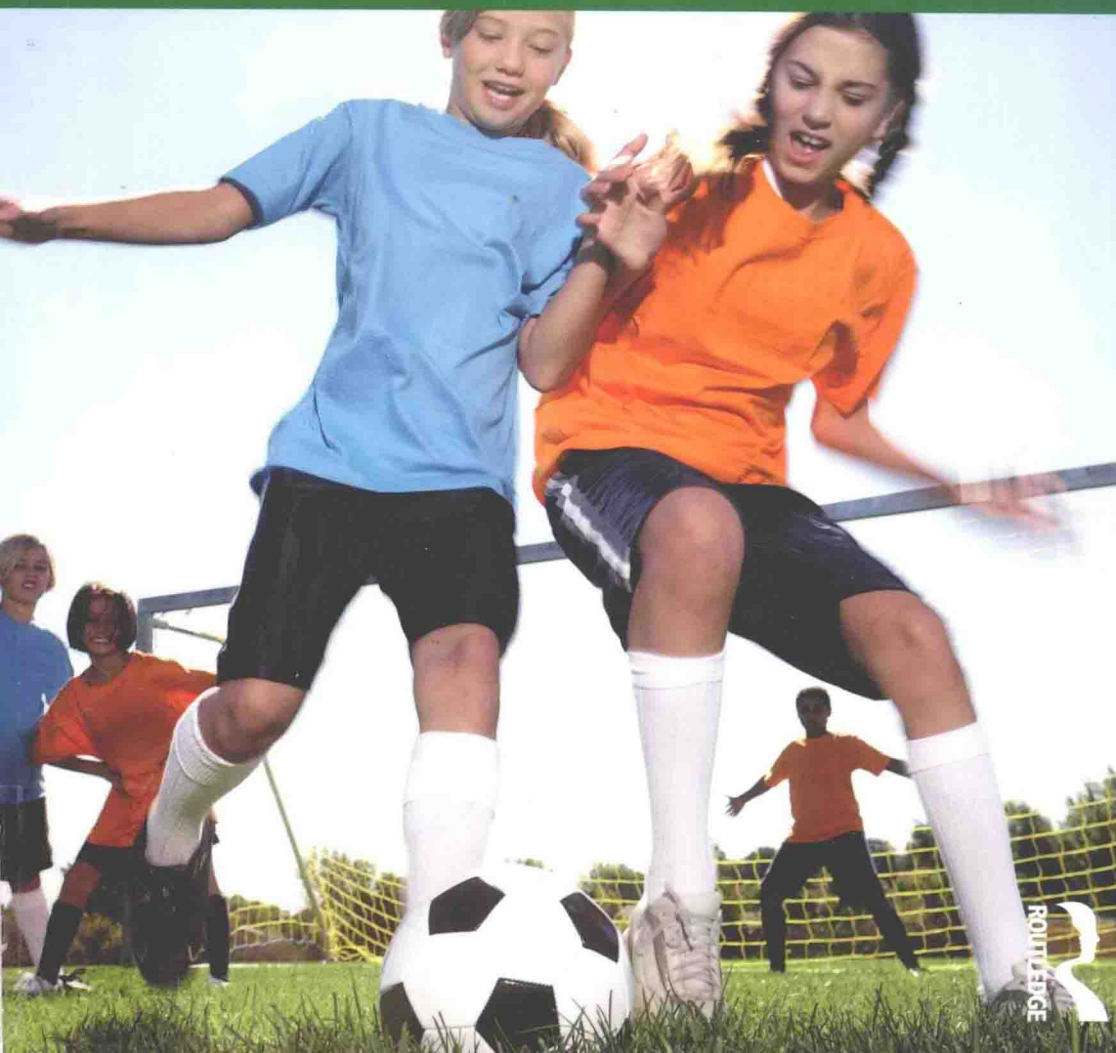


Routledge Studies in Physical Education and Youth Sport

Richard Light

Game Sense

Pedagogy for performance, participation and enjoyment

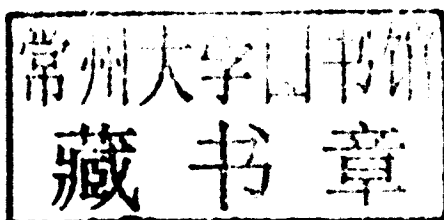


ROUTLEDGE

GAME SENSE

Pedagogy for performance,
participation and enjoyment

Richard Light



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GAME SENSE

Game Sense is an exciting and innovative approach to coaching and physical education that places the *game* at the heart of the session. It encourages the player to develop skills in a realistic context, to become more tactically aware, to make better decisions and to have more fun. *Game Sense* is a comprehensive, research-informed introduction to the Game Sense approach that defines and explores key concepts and essential pedagogical theory, and that offers an extensive series of practical examples and plans for using Game Sense in real teaching and coaching situations.

The first section of the book helps the reader to understand how learning occurs and how this informs player-centred pedagogy, and explains the relationship between Game Sense and other approaches to Teaching Games for Understanding. The second section of the book demonstrates how the theory can be applied in practice, providing a detailed, step-by-step guide to using Game Sense in eleven sports, including soccer, basketball, field hockey and softball.

No other book explores the Game Sense approach in such depth, or combines both the theory and innovative practical techniques. *Game Sense* is invaluable reading for all students of physical education or sports coaching, any in-service physical education teacher or any sports coach working with children or young people.

Richard Light is Professorial Research Fellow in the School of Health Sciences, University of Ballarat, Australia. Richard was a foundation member of the Teaching Games for Understanding Task Force within AIESEP (International Association for Physical Education in Higher Education) and the convenor of the second international TGfU conference in Melbourne in 2003 and the 2006 Asia-Pacific Conference for Teaching Physical Education and Sport for Understanding in Sydney, Australia. He co-ordinated the pre-conference TGfU symposia at the 2006 AIESEP World Congress in Finland, the 2008 AIESEP Congress in Japan and the 2008 ISCPES conference at the University of Macau. Richard has edited volumes on TGfU and the Games Approach to sport coaching.

Routledge Studies in Physical Education and Youth Sport

Series Editor: David Kirk, University of Bedfordshire, UK

The *Routledge Studies in Physical Education and Youth Sport* series is a forum for the discussion of the latest and most important ideas and issues in physical education, sport, and active leisure for young people across school, club, and recreational settings. The series presents the work of the best well-established and emerging scholars from around the world, offering a truly international perspective on policy and practice. It aims to enhance our understanding of key challenges, to inform academic debate, and to have a high impact on both policy and practice, and is thus an essential resource for all serious students of physical education and youth sport.

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PREFACE

After six years of coaching rugby in Japan with three years at elite university level (Kansai A League) and three years coaching at high school level I returned to Australia in 1996 to undertake a PhD at the University of Queensland (UQ). Most of my teaching at UQ was in games teaching and soon after my arrival I was asked to attend a seminar conducted by Rod Thorpe. For the first thirty minutes at the seminar I was sceptical because what Rod was saying challenged a lifetime of experiences as a player and coach and the deeply embedded, unquestioned beliefs about good coaching and teaching arising from it. However, as the session unfolded to include participating in modified games, discussions with others at the seminar, reflection upon what we were doing in the games and Rod's calm, logical and smooth delivery, my resistance ebbed and I started to 'get it'.

I remember well what was going through my mind as I drove home after the seminar. I had been challenged, unsettled and stimulated to reflect critically and think deeply about how I had been coached and taught and how I had coached and taught up until that day. As I worked at UQ teaching TGfU, developing units of study and working through Rod's ideas about teaching and coaching, I was encouraged by my students' positive responses. My belief in this approach was later reinforced upon taking up an appointment at the University of Melbourne, where I initially taught pre-service, generalist, primary school teachers in a programme that emphasized physical education. Their responses as learners and their experiences of using this approach in schools made teaching a pleasure for me (see, for example, Light 2002; Light and Butler 2005). My attendance at the first International TGfU conference, convened by Dr Joy Butler in Plymouth, New Hampshire the next year (2001), and the enthusiasm that permeated that conference, boosted my passion for TGfU and my belief in it.

At this time Game Sense had been developed through collaboration between Rod Thorpe, local coaches and the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) and had attracted considerable attention in Australia. I initially used the term Game Sense for the approach I was taking but after attending the first international TGfU conference in Plymouth I saw the sense in using the same term, TGfU, across the globe to promote it. I did, however, tend to use Game Sense in relation to coaching to separate it from teaching in schools. Soon after the Plymouth conference I put my hand up to convene the second conference in Melbourne in 2003 and joined the TGfU Task Force formed at the 2002 AIESEP World Congress in La Coruña, Spain.

In 2003 I brought Rod Thorpe out to Melbourne as a keynote speaker and had many opportunities to talk with him informally. During discussions about TGfU he said to me that what was being developed was very good but perhaps it was not really TGfU as he had first proposed in the 1980s. This started me thinking about what I was doing and what the differences were, if any, between TGfU and Game Sense. Over the following few years I came to recognize that what I was doing was, in significant ways, different to the approach being promoted in the TGfU literature. The core ideas of learning through games and using questioning in a learner-centred, inquiry-based approach were the same but some of the details were different. I felt Game Sense was less structured and looser than TGfU. It seemed to be more like the original idea of TGfU proposed by Bunker and Thorpe, so I began using the term Game Sense. Also, as I developed a more sophisticated theoretical framework informed by constructivism, I found that there were some small, yet significant, tensions between this perspective on learning and some aspects of TGfU teaching as described in the literature.

As Dr Steve Mitchell suggested in his keynote speech at the 2005 TGfU conference in Hong Kong, the different versions of the same basic approach can be seen as different pathways up the same mountain. I agree with this analogy and am writing on one of those pathways. Although there is now a large literature on TGfU, there has been little specifically written on Game Sense. The terms are also often used interchangeably, with some confusion over any differences between them. My other motivation for writing this book is to emphasize the importance of establishing a dialectic between theories of learning and pedagogical practice. I came into academia comparatively late, with experience of teaching and coaching across a range of settings, but soon developed a strong interest in theories that could explain, enhance and make sense of learning. I have written on the theorization of learning in and through games and other movement but have developed my own deep understandings of it through being creative in trying it out in practice (see, for example, Light 2008a, 2009; Light and Wallian 2008). There is nothing more professionally satisfying for me than seeing theory working in practice and this is a prime goal of this book.

It is easy enough to talk of the importance of theory or of the mutually informing nature of practice and theory but it inevitably proves to be an

insurmountable challenge, with teachers and coaches wary of theory and academics unable to show its relevance to practitioners. In writing this book I have built on the resources provided by the ASC in the late 1990s, including the handbook by Nicole den Duyn (1997), the game activity cards and the video featuring Rod Thorpe by drawing on relevant research conducted over the past two decades, contemporary learning theory and my own experiences of teaching and coaching using Game Sense. This is an attempt to link theory and practice to empower practitioners by providing a deep understanding of learning and the features of Game Sense pedagogy that shape and enhance it. It is an approach I have taken in my recent writing that, I feel, is essential for the development and implementation of Games Sense and any similar approaches.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank my wife, Chiho, and my daughter, Amy, for putting up with my devotion to writing this book on something that has, at best, only fleeting relevance for them. I would also like to thank all the students in schools and universities, players in junior and senior teams, teachers and coaches around the world that I have taught using Game Sense. For me it has been an ongoing process of experimentation and reflective practice within which their actions and affective and articulated responses have been invaluable in developing and refining my approach. I also acknowledge the help of the colleagues with whom I have taught, talked about and conducted research on Game Sense, TGfU and other sports pedagogy. In particular, this includes colleagues in Australia, France, the UK and Japan, where, in each case, I have learnt through genuine dialogue and the sharing of ideas and experiences, and have drawn on ideas and ways of thinking that were both intellectually challenging and stimulating.

More specifically, I acknowledge the valuable assistance provided by Christina Curry, who acted as a practitioner sounding board, co-authored two sport-specific chapters in the book with me and organized some of the testimonials on the sport-specific chapters. I thank those teachers, academics, pre-service teachers and coaches who fieldtested the draft version of the book for me and provided such valuable and positive feedback. I also acknowledge the work of my daughter Amy in providing the digital line drawings for some of the activities in Part II despite her own demanding commitments to sport and study. Peter Robson at Carey Baptist Grammar was also very helpful in providing many of the photographs used in the book and getting permission to use them.

Finally, I would like to thank the positive and encouraging reviews by anonymous peers approached by the Routledge Studies in Physical Education and Youth Sport series editor Professor David Kirk, and the very helpful suggestions they made for improving the book.

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------|--|
| AFL | Australian Football League |
| AGQTP | Australian Government Quality Teacher Programme |
| AIESEP | Association Internationale des Ecoles Supérieures d'Education Physique |
| ANZ | Australia and New Zealand |
| ASC | Australian Sports Commission |
| CLT | complex learning theory |
| FIFA | Fédération Internationale de Football Association |
| FIT | Federation of International Touch |
| FMS | Fundamental Motor Skills |
| GCA | Games Concept Approach |
| GPAI | Game Performance Assessment Instrument |
| HPE | Health and Physical Education |
| IOC | International Olympic Committee |
| IRB | International Rugby Board |
| NBA | National Basketball Association |
| NESB | non-English-speaking background |
| NSW | New South Wales |
| PDHPE | Personal Development, Health and Physical Education |
| PE | physical education |
| PETE | Physical Education Teacher Education |
| QTF | Quality Teaching Framework |
| RFU | Rugby Football Union |
| SIG | Special Interest Group |
| TG | Tactical Games |
| TDLM | Tactical-Decision Learning Model |

| | |
|------|----------------------------------|
| TGfU | Teaching Games for Understanding |
| TSAP | Team Sport Assessment Procedure |
| UQ | University of Queensland |
| VSF | Victoria Soccer Federation |

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PART I

