

Wheelchair Rugby League

Full Coaching Programme — Community to Elite · 2026 RFL Standards

This programme is built on research from the RFL Wheelchair Super League 2026 (8 teams), the England Wheelchair Rugby League programme (**World Cup winners 2008 & 2021, Wheelchair Ashes winners 2025**), and the RFL's 2026 Women's and Junior Wheelchair International Pathway.

What is Wheelchair Rugby League?

The Game	Same basic rules as 13-a-side rugby league — 6 tackles, tap restarts, tries, goals — but all players use manual wheelchairs on an indoor or outdoor court.
Who Can Play	Anyone with a lower limb physical impairment — spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, limb difference, Multiple Sclerosis, acquired brain injury and many more conditions.
Chair Setup	Players use specialist wheelchairs with anti-tip wheels and side guards. Chair setup — axle position, seat height, cushion type — is critical for performance and safety.
Growth	The RFL Wheelchair Super League expanded to 8 teams in 2026. England are World Cup winners and 2025 Wheelchair Ashes winners.

Player Classification — What Every Coach Must Know

Classification	Functional Ability	Typical Conditions	Points Value
PD1	Significant impairment — limited trunk control, reduced arm and hand function	High-level spinal cord injury (C5–C6), severe cerebral palsy	1 point
PD2	Moderate impairment — some trunk control, good arm and hand function	Lower-level spinal cord injury (C7–T1), limb difference, moderate CP	2 points
Max per team	Maximum 8 classification points on the pitch at any one time	Ensures fair competition	8 pts max

75-Minute Session Plan

Time	Activity	Purpose	Coach Note
0–10 mins	Chair warm-up — forward sprint, reverse, figure-of-8, 90-degree turns	Activate chair control, warm shoulders	Check all players are comfortable
10–20 mins	Ball handling — catch, pass left and right, dummy pass	Hand-eye coordination, passing mechanics	Every player touches ball every rep
20–30 mins	Chair contact drill — bumping chairs in controlled pairs	Build contact confidence, legal technique	Safety-check chair before contact
30–45 mins	Skill game — 4v2 passing grid in wheelchairs	Decision-making, support, passing under pressure	Keep encouragement high
45–60 mins	Patterns of play — set piece from dummy half	Game application, positional understanding	Short demo then extended practice


60–70 mins	Small-sided game — 5v5 or 6v6	Full game experience, apply all skills	Let them play — coach from the side
70–75 mins	Cool down, stretch arms/shoulders/wrists + team huddle	Recovery, reflection	Find a positive for every player

● Attacker
 ■ Defender
 ▲ Cone
 → Run
 □ Pass

Top Drills — Wheelchair Rugby League — With Pitch Diagrams

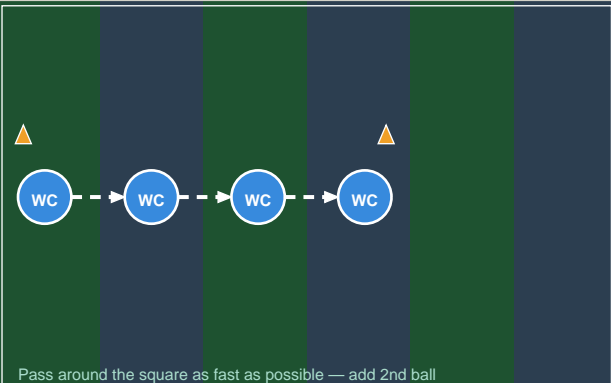
1 Figure-of-8 Sprint

All levels

2 cones 5m apart	Maximum speed	Beat your own time
 <p style="font-size: small; margin-top: 5px;">Figure-of-8 at maximum speed — beat your own time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li style="margin-bottom: 10px;">● SKILL FOCUS Chair control, acceleration, deceleration, turning <li style="margin-bottom: 10px;">● GAME TRANSFER Chair mastery — players must control the chair automatically to focus on the game ● COACHING CUE "Push hard — drive through the turns!" 	

2 Fast Hands Passing Square

All levels

4 cones 8m apart	Maximum speed	Add second ball
 <p style="font-size: small; margin-top: 5px;">Pass around the square as fast as possible — add 2nd ball</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li style="margin-bottom: 10px;">● SKILL FOCUS Passing accuracy and speed from a seated position <li style="margin-bottom: 10px;">● GAME TRANSFER Ball movement in attack — the faster the pass, the harder to defend ● COACHING CUE "Quick hands — keep the ball moving!" 	

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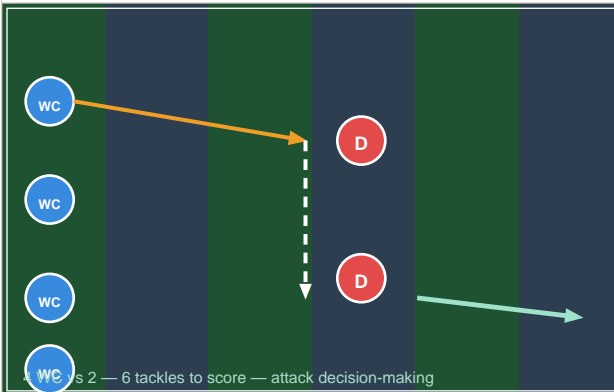
4v2 Attack Grid

All levels

4 attackers

2 defenders

6 tackles to score



● SKILL FOCUS

Attack decision-making, support running, defensive positioning

● GAME TRANSFER

Exploiting overlap — the core attacking skill of wheelchair rugby league

● COACHING CUE

"Draw the defender — then release!"

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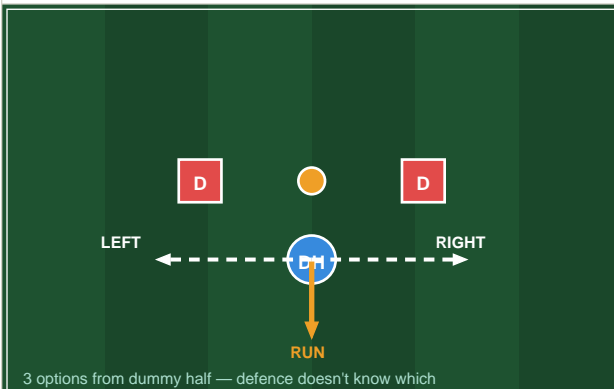
Dummy Half Decision

All levels

Dummy half at ruck

3 options

Under 2 seconds



● SKILL FOCUS

Quick decision-making from dummy half — run, pass left, pass right

● GAME TRANSFER

Dummy half options determine attacking shape in every single set

● COACHING CUE

"See the gap — commit fast!"

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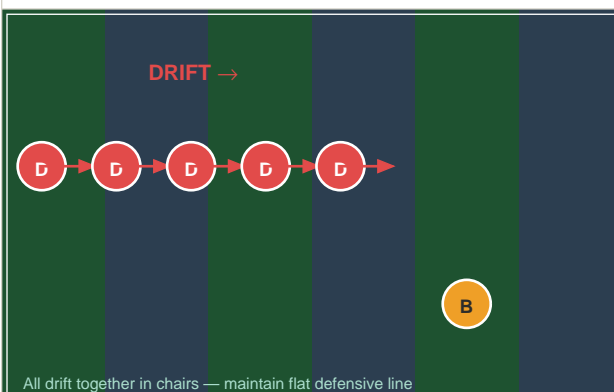
Defensive Drift in Chairs

Intermediate+

5 defenders

Flat line

Drift together



● SKILL FOCUS

Defensive structure, communication, flat line in wheelchairs

● GAME TRANSFER

Organised drift defence — essential for any competitive wheelchair team

● COACHING CUE

"Up together — call the runner!"

Chair Setup Guide — What Every Coach Must Check

Chair Component	What to Check	Why It Matters
Rear axle position	Axle under or slightly forward of player's shoulder	Affects tipping balance, turning speed and pushing efficiency

Seat height	Footrests flat, thighs parallel, slight forward tilt	Stability in contact, power through the push stroke
Anti-tip wheels	2–3cm clearance from floor	Prevent chair tipping backwards in contact
Side guards	Securely fitted, covering the wheels	Protects players from wheel contact injuries
Tyre pressure	Check before every session — firm but not rock hard	Low pressure reduces speed and control significantly
Lap strap	Securely fastened — player should not slide forward	Essential for contact safety and ball handling stability

Getting Started — UK Wheelchair Rugby League Contacts

Organisation	Contact	What They Provide
RFL Wheelchair	rugby-league.com/get-involved/play/wheelchair	National league structure, club registration, coaching
BWRLA	barla.org.uk	British Amateur Wheelchair Rugby League support
RFL Coaching	Alex.Bentham@rfl.co.uk	Coaching courses and development resources
CoachEdge Rugby	coachedgerugby.com	Free session plans and coaching programmes