



COACH DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

FRIDAY OCTOBER 24 & SATURDAY OCTOBER 25



WHAT MAKES A GREAT COACH? FIND OUT AT THE LETHBRIDGE GAME CHANGERS COACH DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

2 days of **hands-on** learning, real conversations, & **game-changing ideas** for every coach, from **community** to **high-performance**.

Brought to you by:



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THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

Lethbridge Game Changers Coach Development Conference is a collaboration between Lethbridge Sport Council and Pronghorns Athletics. We share a simple yet profound vision: to uplift community sport, empower individuals, and create a safe and sustainable sport culture. We believe in collaboration to drive positive change.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

In its third year, the Lethbridge Game Changers Coach Development Conference welcomes anyone with an interest in coaching. Whether you're an experienced coach, sport leader, volunteer, athlete looking to transition into coaching, or simply curious to learn more about local coaching initiatives, this event is for you.

WHAT MAKES IT UNIQUE

- **Practical Focus:** Workshops on running fun, effective practices, coaching kids as individuals—even in big groups—and building supportive team culture through real-life scenarios, not just theory.
- **Interactive Learning:** Every coach gets the chance to “show, not just tell” by leading short, practical sessions and giving helpful feedback to peers.
- **Real Conversations:** Sessions prepare you for the real challenges: how to have positive, honest chats with parents, help your athletes problem-solve, and work well alongside other coaches and volunteers.
- **Speed-Coaching:** Rapid-fire idea swaps help you tackle tough topics like communication, solving on-field problems, and making teamwork easier, all in a face-to-face, relatable way.

WHAT MAKES A GREAT COACH?

The theme of this year's conference is “What Makes a Great Coach?” Greatness in coaching isn't defined only by values or knowledge—it's shaped by the visible, teachable behaviours that set effective coaches apart.

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

TEAM HUDDLE

Your Game Changers experience starts before you even walk through the doors. On Wednesday leading up to the conference, join our live Zoom “onboarding huddle” with presenters and fellow coaches. Think of it as your team talk before the big game—helping you step into the event energized, connected, and prepared to get the most out of every session.

COACHES CARROUSEL *with Graeme Moffat*

A coaches carousel in a huddle format is a dynamic, interactive event where groups of coaches rotate through short, focused huddles to stimulate thinking, share insights on speaker topics for the weekend, and foster meaningful connections. Each huddle acts as a mini-brainstorm or discussion, enabling all participants to actively engage, learn, and build networks with peers.

CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS *with Scott Rathwell & Rusty Earnshaw*

Every coach faces sensitive or difficult conversations, whether with players, parents, staff, or administrators. This workshop provides practical frameworks for having constructive, honest, and respectful discussions that maintain trust and focus on solutions. Coaches will develop tools to navigate conflict, deliver tough feedback, and strengthen relationships through candor and care. Coaches will take away a toolkit for addressing difficult issues confidently, and language for effective challenging conversations.

COACHING CRAFT *with Rusty Earnshaw*

This session explores the core skills that separate good coaches from great ones. Participants will examine the art of observation, feedback, questioning, and creating learning-rich environments. Coaches will leave with tools to refine their presence, communication, and adaptability so their “coaching craft” becomes a powerful influence on athlete growth. Coaches will take away practical tools to enhance coaching influence and learning environments, and an action plan for refining coach craft in everyday practice.

SESSION PLAN DESIGN *with Danny Newcombe*

This workshop explores how coaches can design impactful and purposeful training sessions by aligning clarity of intention with the practice environment created for athletes. Danny Newcombe will guide coaches through the principles of session design where every decision and action flows from the clear intention of the practice. Participants will reflect on the why behind each element of their plan and how intentional design directly shapes player learning and performance.

“BALL-OUT-OF-PLAY” COACHING

with Rusty + Graeme + Dave

Match day requires a unique set of skills distinct from everyday training. This session equips coaches with strategies to prepare effectively, manage emotions, observe key moments, and deliver timely interventions. Coaches will learn how to support athletes’ decision-making while staying composed under pressure and optimizing the collective environment.



SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

SAFER COACHING PRACTICES *with Stephen West*

Dr. Stephen West will explore how evidence-based training load management and injury epidemiology can inform safer coaching practices. This session will highlight current research on injury patterns in youth athletes, discuss practical strategies for reducing injury risk without compromising performance, and challenge coaches to rethink how they design training to balance development, safety, and enjoyment. Coaches will leave with actionable insights they can apply to their teams, contributing to long-term athlete health and success.

PRACTICE DESIGN *with Larry Steinke and Rusty Earnshaw*

Great practice design blends science with creativity. In this workshop, coaches will learn how to structure sessions that align with developmental goals, reflect the demands of the game, and maximize player engagement. Emphasis will be placed on designing practices that develop decision-making, encourage adaptability, and harness competitive intensity.

TECHNICAL BREAKOUT Q&A

facilitated by Varsity Coaches, Graeme, Kenny, Shawn

The session is developed to foster knowledge sharing, problem-solving, and open dialogue among university-level coaches, aimed at refining techniques for athlete assessment, training session structure, and handling diverse team needs. Coaches are encouraged to share personal experiences, innovative strategies, and to pose questions for group consensus, building trust and advancing program excellence.

TALENT IDENTIFICATION *with Scott Rathwell*

Spotting potential and nurturing it is a cornerstone of long-term success. This workshop explores how to recognize talent beyond physical attributes, including mindset, decision-making, and resilience. Coaches will learn how to balance present performance with future potential, avoid common biases, and create environments that allow emerging talent to shine.

MENTAL METRICS LAB *with Josh Hoetmer and Dr. Sharleen Hoar*

Mental Metrics Lab is a sport-focused psychological assessment and training service that delivers data-driven insights to help teams and organizations unlock the mental side of elite performance. We provide a personalized starting point for developing athletes' mental game and overall teamwork — ensuring that both players and coaches have the right tools to succeed. In this workshop, we'll discuss the importance of seeing what's really driving behaviour, making decisions with less guesswork, and how data can help shape the environment.

MATCH DAY COACHING SKILLS *with Rusty Earnshaw*

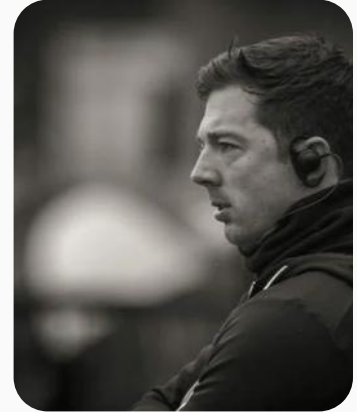
Match day requires a unique set of skills distinct from everyday training. This session equips coaches with strategies to prepare effectively, manage emotions, observe key moments, and deliver timely interventions. Coaches will learn how to support athletes' decision-making while staying composed under pressure and optimizing the collective environment. Coaches will takeaway strategies for keeping composure and optimizing team performance during matches and a checklist for effective match day coaching.



SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Danny Newcombe, Senior Lecturer, Coach Developer & Skill Acquisition Specialist. Oxford Brookes University, UK

Danny Newcombe is a leading voice in modern coach development, particularly known for his emphasis on constraints-led coaching, the ecological dynamics approach, and bridging coaching theory with practical application. As the programme lead for the BSc in Sport, Coaching & PE, he brings both academic and hands-on perspectives to coaching education. He also contributes to elite-level sport as an assistant coach for the Welsh National Hockey team and head coach for the Southgate Men's National Hockey League team. His expertise in creating representative teaching environments, adjusting constraints to shape learning, and emphasizing adaptive decision-making has made him a sought-after speaker and innovator in coach education



Rusty Earnshaw, Director, The Magic Academy; Former England Sevens Coach

Russell "Rusty" Earnshaw is a former professional rugby player and coach, now serving as the director of The Magic Academy, an organization dedicated to coaching and leadership development across sports and business. As a player, Earnshaw won the European Cup with Bath Rugby and represented England in sevens rugby, including at the 1998 Commonwealth Games and the IRB World Series tournaments from 1999 to 2003. Transitioning to coaching, he served as the assistant coach for the England Sevens team from 2006 to 2013, leading them to multiple titles, including back-to-back World Series wins in 2011 and 2012, and a silver medal at the 2013 Rugby World Cup Sevens. His coaching philosophy centers on creating positive, inclusive environments where athletes are encouraged to take ownership of their development. He emphasizes the importance of coach behavior, creativity, and adaptability in fostering high-performing teams.



Dave Waknuk, Head Coach, Women's Basketball – University of Lethbridge

Dave Waknuk has been at the helm of the Pronghorns Women's Basketball team since the 2018–19 season, leading them to multiple Canada West Final Four appearances and playoff berths. A former ACAC Coach of the Year, he previously guided the Grande Prairie Regional College Wolves to their first league championship in over two decades. Beyond the university level, Dave has contributed to Alberta's high-performance basketball programs, including coaching the U17 Team Alberta to a silver medal at the 2019 National Championship.



SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Graeme Moffat, Head Coach, University of Lethbridge Women's Rugby

Graeme Moffat is a performance-driven leader and award-winning coach with over two decades of experience shaping teams, athletes, and coaching cultures across Canada and the UK. Currently serving as Head Coach and High-Performance Coaching Manager at the University of Lethbridge, Graeme is known for architecting inclusive environments where belonging and development are at the core of every session.

Graeme has guided student-athletes, elite programs, and coach communities—earning accolades such as 2024 Canada West Coach of the Year and 2015 Rugby Canada Coach of the Year honours. His leadership as Executive Director and Director of Rugby for the Alberta Rugby Football Union resulted in organizational growth, province-wide coach development, and nationally recognized programming.



Joshua Hoetmer, Certified Mental Performance Consultant and Counselling Therapist

With over a decade of experience, Joshua has honed his skills working with organizations such as Hockey Canada, Saskatoon Blades, and Vauxhall Academy of Baseball. His portfolio includes experiences with Movember's Breaking the Ice mental health program for hockey players, parents, coaches and the 2021-22 Women's NCAA Basketball Big South Champions, Longwood Lancers.

Joshua's expertise extends beyond working with teams to include individual athletes from competitive youth levels to the NHL and MLB. He has also taught sports and exercise psychology courses at Lethbridge Polytechnic. HMPC Ltd offers services both in person and virtually, catering to a diverse range of clients.



Dr. Sharleen Hoar, PhD, Certified Mental Performance Consultant, High Performance Sport Scientist

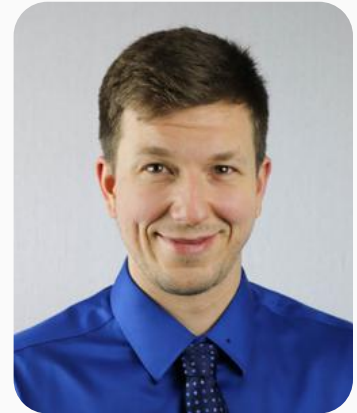
Dr. Sharleen Hoar is a Certified Mental Performance Consultant and High Performance Sport Scientist with over 25 years of experience helping athletes, coaches, and leaders thrive under pressure. She equips performers and teams with science-backed mental skills training to enhance focus, resilience, and recovery when it matters most. Dr. Hoar has served in leadership roles with Canadian Olympic and Paralympic programs, and has supported athletes and coaches at Olympic Games, World Championships, and international high performance sport environments.



SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

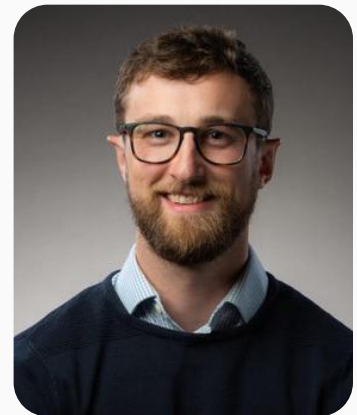
Dr. Scott Rathwell, Assistant Professor of Sport Psychology — UofL; Assistant Coach (Research & Development), Women's Rugby

Dr. Scott Rathwell holds a PhD in Sport Psychology from the University of Ottawa (2017), an MA in Kinesiology from McGill University, and a BA in Psychology from Concordia University. He is currently an Associate (Assistant) Professor at the University of Lethbridge in the Department of Kinesiology & Physical Education. His research program focuses on the psychosocial development of athletes across the lifespan, including university athletes, master's athletes, and those returning from concussion, as well as the role that coaching plays in fostering long-term engagement and personal growth. Dr. Rathwell also collaborates with national sports organizations (e.g., Coaching Association of Canada, Major League Baseball's Los Angeles Angels) on coaching strategies and assessment tools. In his coaching role, he contributes to the University of Lethbridge Women's Rugby team as an Assistant Coach focused on Research & Development.



Stephen West

Dr. Stephen West is an assistant professor at the University of Calgary in the Faculty of Kinesiology and a member of the Sport Injury Prevention Research Centre. Originally from Ireland, his doctoral research at the University of Bath focused on injury epidemiology and training load management in professional rugby players, while his postdoctoral and subsequent work has been focused on injury prevention in youth sport. His current research focuses on injury prevention in adolescent collision and contact sports, with a focus on rugby.



Larry Steinke, Head Coach, Track & Field – University of Lethbridge

Larry Steinke is a distinguished figure in Canadian track and field, serving as the head coach of the University of Lethbridge Pronghorns and the Chinook Track and Field Club. He was also a professor at the University of Lethbridge, teaching exercise physiology, giving him a great insight into athlete periodization. With over 45 years of experience, he is one of only a handful of nationally certified Level 5 coaches across all sports in Canada. Under his leadership, Pronghorn athletes have secured more than 55 U SPORTS Championship medals, 100 Canada West Championship medals, and set six Canada West and U SPORTS records. He has been part of the Canadian National Team Program for over 25 years, coaching at six Olympic Games and nine World Championships. Steinke's coaching philosophy emphasizes long-term athlete development, focusing on both performance and character. His approach has produced athletes who excel on the world stage and contribute positively to their communities.



CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23ND

TBA - Pre-Conference Zoom huddle

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 24TH

4:30 pm - 5:00 pm - Arrival and Check-In

5:00 pm - 7:45 pm - Opening Remarks, Keynote presentation, First session

8:00 pm - Pronghorn Men's Basketball Game

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25TH

8:30 pm - 9:00 am - Arrival and Check-In

9:00 am - 1:00 pm - Sessions

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm - Lunch

2:00 pm - 5:00 pm - Sessions

Conference registration includes admission to both Friday and Saturday Men's and Women's Pronghorn Basketball Games - Saturday game times 5:00 pm (women's) + 7:00 pm (men's).

Coaching in Action: Live Game Experience

The Game Changers Coaching Conference isn't just about talking coaching—it's about seeing it in action. Across both Friday and Saturday, participants can step into the stands for University of Lethbridge Pronghorns basketball games.

On Friday night, Head Coach Dave Waknuk has volunteered to be mic'd up for the very first time, giving participants a rare inside look at how a coach communicates, makes decisions, and leads in the heat of competition. Presenters will break down his performance in real time, analyzing key aspects of the language and behaviours that drive team performance.

This one-of-a-kind experience bridges the gap between classroom learning and live sport, showing exactly how coaching theory translates into practice. You'll leave with sharper insights, practical takeaways, and an appreciation for what makes a great coach in the moments that matter most.



WHY COACHES CAN'T MISS THIS

- **Instant Impact:** Jump right in—lead, experiment, and share in mini “speed-coaching” rounds and real-play scenarios that fast-track real skills, not just “tips”.
- **Make It Yours:** Design practice sessions on the fly, swap secrets, and “coach the coaches” with peers who know the ropes—every voice counts, and every question sparks fresh thinking.
- **Ready for Anything:** From match-day drama to “tough talk” moments, you’ll leave armed with simple tools, fresh confidence, and the coaching spark that makes a difference—on the field and in life.
- **Unforgettable Experience:** This isn’t sit-and-listen; every session is wired for fun, movement, and memorable takeaways you’ll want to bring back to your club the very next day.



HIGHLIGHTS TO FIRE YOU UP

- Fast-paced “speed dating” sessions on today’s biggest coaching questions—how to solve problems as a team, build trust, and turn every player into a leader.
- Goldfish bowls, show-me drills, and high-five moments: try out new ideas and see them work, live and unscripted.
- Prize draws, group challenges, personal shout-outs, and a community vibe that keeps everyone energized from start to finish.

HOW TO REGISTER

The cost to register is \$80 for individual participants, and \$70 per participant if you register as a group from one organization.

1. Go to <https://bit.ly/LethGC2025> to register online to attend the conference.
2. You will be able to register a single attendee, or up to 8 attendees as a group using this form.
3. Online payment via credit card will be accepted via the form, if you require offline payment, such as by cheque or e-transfer, reach out to shawn@lethbridgesportcouncil.ca to make arrangements and to get an alternate payment code.



We encourage you to tell your friends and colleagues about the conference. Every additional attendee means more shared knowledge and better sport for all.

WHAT IS GAME CHANGERS?

Lethbridge Game Changers is an initiative with a vision to uplift community sport, empower individuals, and create a safe and sustainable sport culture. If you would like to learn more about other Lethbridge Game Changers initiatives visit the Lethbridge Sport Council website at www.lethbridgesportcouncil.ca

DO YOU WANT TO BE A COACH?

If you haven't taken those first steps to become a sport coach, but are interested in learning more, BE A COACH is a great first place to start. BE A COACH includes a series of videos from local coaches who share how they got started - and how you can too.

Sport needs people like you. Coaches don't have to be elite athletes or seasoned experts — they just need to care about helping kids grow, learn, and have fun. Whether you're a parent, former athlete, or someone who simply wants to give back, there's a place for you in community sport.

The Lethbridge Sport Council is also offering supports to organizations looking to recruit new coaches. If you would like to learn more about the 'Be a Coach' Campaign, visit www.beacoach.ca

* *The Be A Coach campaign is a collaboration between Lethbridge Sport Council, FSQ Sport and Coalbanks Creative*

TESTIMONIALS FROM 2024

As a newer coach I really enjoyed learning about the importance of intention in my interactions, feedback and noticing as a coach. As well it was beneficial having the opportunity to connect with other coaches from different areas, age groups and sports.

-ATTENDEE, 2024 CONFERENCE



This Conference is the only conference of its kind that brings everyone together to learn about concepts important to us all. Whether you're a parent, athlete, coach, or administrator, there are tips, tricks, and concepts guaranteed to help you serve your community better. The information shared peer to peer is bar none. This is my second year attending, and I'm already looking forward to the third.

-ATTENDEE, 2024 CONFERENCE



Fantastic conference with great connections presented. I drive from Calgary every year for this conference. The quality presenters and the engagement with the group are great.

-ATTENDEE, 2024 CONFERENCE



I attended the conference as someone who has coached as a community volunteer, but mostly from the perspective of a parent of athletes in multiple sports. I feel like there was a lot of really good information for coaches, and I feel it helped me as a parent understand all of the complexities of coaching. It definitely helped me to appreciate coaches and their roles more. I think that my biggest take-home is that we have kids in sport to teach them to love sport, to participate, to be active, to have fun; not necessarily to be a superstar athlete. Everything we do should be working toward fostering a love of sport in every kid out there! As parents and coaches alike!

-ATTENDEE, 2024 CONFERENCE

Bring your coaching stories,
questions, and energy—Game
Changers is where local coaches
come to get recharged, inspired,
and ready to make the coming
season their best yet.



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bit.ly/lethbridge-game-changers