



Football Canada Mobile App

Implementation Guide for Administrators



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Mobile App Overview

The Football Canada Mobile app was designed to help provide coaches of all experience levels with a single digital resource to support youth football program delivery. The four core areas the mobile app can support are:

1. Coaching Training & Development
2. Practice Plan Design & Delivery
3. Resource Sharing
4. Team Communication & Management

By giving coaches a single resource that enables them to learn, plan, share and communicate more efficiently, it can decrease the administrative burden of being a volunteer coach while simultaneously improving the overall league experience for players and parents. The mobile app comes pre-loaded with a variety of resources created and/or reviewed by Football Canada to help ensure coaches have access to quality age-appropriate content when designing practice plans and sharing resources with their team. Pre-loaded content also helps the app serve as a great complementary tool to traditional coach certification pathways. It provides the ability to ensure new coaches feel personally supported throughout the entire season by offering weekly guidance through prescriptive practice plans and detailed drill descriptions designed around the current Canadian long-term athlete development model. This enables leagues to grow by relying more heavily on new coaches without becoming overwhelmed by additional coaching support demands due to knowledge gaps following a weekend training session or coaching clinic.

Mobile App Account Creation

Any coach, parent or athlete over the age of 12 can create an account for free and log into the mobile app. Free accounts allow an individual to explore and use the various app features in a limited capacity. Free account users only have access to a limited amount of content (drills, practice plans, etc.). When an individual creates a mobile app account, they must provide their first name, last name, email address, date of birth, and location. They also must agree to our terms of service and privacy policy that contains a liability disclaimer. These can be found at athlete-era.com. We are currently developing a coach verification system that allows administrators to view mobile app account registration information for coaches within their organization who are using the mobile app. Administrators can then verify that those coaches are part of their organization and meet the requirements that allow them to coach.

This process will be completed through the Athlete Era web portal. Once a coaches account has been verified by their administrator, they will be able to access all additional content and features. All per-coach billing is based upon the number of verified coaches using the mobile app within an administrators specific organization.

Key Features for Coaches

Drill & Practice Plan Libraries

Drill Library

The drill library gives coaches access to a variety of detailed pre-designed drills to use during their season. When browsing the drill library, coaches can filter drills by age appropriateness, game type (tackle VS flag), program (CFL Futures, First-down, etc.), category and focus. When coaches find a drill they like, they can save it to their favourites by tapping the favourite icon (star symbol in the top right corner of the drill). Each drill comes complete with a media item to show how the drill is run as well as text coaching points and variations to show coaches what skills can be developed in a progressive manner using that specific drill.

Practice/Session Plan Library

The practice plan library provides coaches with a combination of pre-designed practice plans and plan templates to use with their team. Each practice plan comes complete with the main practice sections, notes for each section (if applicable), time allocation, and drills for one or multiple player groups. Similar to the drill library, coaches can save a plan to their favourites when they find a specific plan or template they like.

Practice Plan Builder

More experienced coaches can use the practice plan builder to design their own unique practice plans. When building a plan, coaches can either start from scratch or modify one of the plan templates found within the practice plan library. Coaches can add pre-designed drills from the library directly to their plan which helps ensure everyone who they share the plan with

can access the full drill breakdowns. They can also structure the plan sections and player groups in a way that best meets their needs.

Teams & Team Member Roles

Creating a Team

When inside of the app, coaches/program coordinators must create a team/group to use the full functionality of the mobile app. All teams must be given a name, assigned an age group, and game or program type (tackle, flag, specific program, etc.) when they are created. Once a team is created, a unique 6 character team code is generated. Anyone can create an unlimited number of teams within their mobile app account.

Joining a Team

Anyone can join a team by downloading the app, creating an account, and entering the specific 6-character code for the team they would like to join. An app user can join an unlimited number of different teams under their account and have different roles with each specific team.

Coaches can share their team code with individuals they would like to join their team via email, text, or in person at a team meeting.

Team Member Roles

The person who creates a team is automatically assigned the role of team admin (typically an administrator, coach or program coordinator). As others join your team, they are automatically given the role of a team member. The team admin can then find the individuals from the list of members and change their role to coach. Team members can view scheduled events and access any content that the coach has added to that event. Coaches can schedule events and share content with their specific team. Team admins can promote team members to coaches, remove any person who has joined that team or delete the entire team.

Scheduling Activities

Creating A New Activity

Coaches or Team Admins can create variety of activities to build out their team schedule within the app. When creating an activity, you can choose if that activity is a practice, game or other.

Once you have selected the type of activity, you can enter all important information for that specific activity and attach content from your coaches content libraries. Team members can respond whether or not they will be attending activities allowing coaches to automatically track attendance for upcoming and past events.

Activity Notifications

Scheduling an activity sends a push notification to the mobile device of all team members, allowing them to quickly view all important information regarding the upcoming activity that has been scheduled. Team members will receive notifications to remind them of upcoming events and to respond whether or not they will be attending an activity.

Viewing Upcoming and Past Activities

As new activities are created, they will be listed in the schedule screen on activity cards. Each activity card shows the type of activity, activity name, date, time, location, and any practice plans that have been assigned to that activity. As activities are completed, they are moved into the past activities section. This allows coaches to check back on practice plans that were used earlier in the season.

Content Sharing

Plan Sharing

When coaches create a new practice activity on their teams schedule, they can assign a practice plan directly to the event. This allows everyone on the team to view the full practice plan through the mobile app. Practice plans can be taken directly from the pre-made practice plan library or from the coaches custom plans they have designed in the app. The ability to efficiently communicate what will take place during practice in a high-level of detail can be used by a head coach to:

1. Provide additional support to assistant coaches who may be less experienced.
2. Allow more parents to help out during practice by doing none coaching-specific activities (setting up equipment for drills, organizing players, monitoring water breaks, etc.).
3. Reduce drill explanation time during practice by having players review what they will be doing that day prior to practice either at home or in the locker room. This can allow players to spend more time developing skills and less time standing around at practice.

Drill Sharing

Coaches can share a specific drill with a single player or group of players by sharing drills from the library within a chat using the in-app messaging tools.

In-app Messaging

The team communication tools allow coaches, parents or players (ages 13 and older) on a specific team to directly communicate with one another through sending text messages within the app. All mobile app users have the ability to block other individuals users on their team from sending them in-app messages. This helps ensure anyone on a team can prevent others from communicating with them directly if they are not using the messaging for appropriate purposes. The following are the three ways teams can communicate within the mobile app:

Direct Messaging

Anyone on a team can communicate directly with another individual team member by sending them a message within the mobile app.

Group Messaging

Anyone on a team can communicate with multiple other team members through starting a group chat.

Announcements

Coaches or Team Admins can send a general team-wide message by posting a team announcement.

Value for Administrators

The Football Canada Mobile App was designed to support youth league/program administrators in these four key areas:

1. Recruitment of new coaches who have no previous experience playing that sport
2. Enhanced on-going support & development for current coaches
3. Program delivery standardization
4. League quality assurance & reporting

Recruitment of new coaches who have no previous experience playing that sport

Learning how to coach a sport without ever having played that sport is not an easy task. This is why leagues commonly rely on individuals with previous experience playing that sport to become volunteer coaches. However, not all leagues have access to enough knowledgeable coaches to fill all available coaching roles. For leagues experiencing coaching shortages, the mobile app can be used as a tool to decrease the barrier of entry for new coaches without sacrificing programming quality. This can enable leagues to run more teams and prevent the need to evaluate and cut players or cap player registration numbers (permitting appropriate access to facilities). The pre-designed resource libraries help fill in gaps from entry-level coach training courses to ensure new coaches are supported throughout the entire season. This will also help them feel more confident in their abilities when delivering on-field instruction without investing significant time into practice preparation. All of this results in increasing the likelihood that parents will return to coach the following year.

Enhanced support & development for current coaches

For experienced and knowledgeable coaches, the app can service as a helpful tool for running their team and continuous development of their coaching knowledge.

Program Delivery Standardization

Implementing the mobile app can help ensure every coach in your league plans for practice and communicates with their teams effectively. This, in combination with coach-specific resources designed by Football Canada, can help your league deliver programming equality across a large number of coaches and players. This can help ensure your league maximizes skill development and enjoyment for every player regardless of what team they are placed on.

League Quality Assurance & Reporting

Implementing a single digital solution to replace a variety of other methods currently used by coaches to prepare for practice and communicate with their team can make your life easier as an administrator. By promoting a tool to your coaches that was designed by your sports national governing body to help them meet national standards, league administrators can ensure their league and programs are following best-practice guidelines. When asked to provide data to various other stakeholders to demonstrate compliance with the guidelines, league administrators can simply generate a report without having to figure out how they can efficiently collect the necessary information from all of the teams in their league.

League-wide App Setup

The most effective way to initially setup and implement the Football Canada Mobile App will vary slightly depending on league size, program structure, and your coaches. The following are two possible approaches you could take when setting up the mobile app within your league.

Administrator Team Setup

For leagues or clubs with a small number of teams/groups (less than 25), administrators can setup each individual team within the mobile app. It takes approximately 20 seconds to create each team. Once a team is created, you can then share each specific team code with that teams head coach so they can join and then invite the remaining assistant coaches and players. You could also send each individual team code directly to that entire teams coaching staff and players if you do not want the head coach to be responsible for sharing the team code.

Coach Team Setup

For leagues with a large number of teams, you can task each individual head coach with creating their team in the app and then sharing their team code with the league administrator by inviting them the same way they would invite another coach or player. The league administrator can then keep a list of team codes for each individual team so they can join specific teams through the mobile app as needed. Keep in mind that in order to create a team, the coach must know their team name, age group and game type (flag, tackle, etc.). Coaches can also have their team staff and parents join their team during an in-person team meeting at the beginning of the season. They can do this by instructing all parents to download the app, register, and then tap “Join Team” and enter the team code provided by the head coach.

Value of Admins Joining a Team

Being a member of each individual team allows league administrators to communicate with coaches or parents at a team-specific level through the mobile app. It can also be used as a tool for administrators to evaluate coaching performance by allowing them to view each coaches practice plans as they are created and shared with their team through the mobile app. Administrator may choose to do this for every team, or only select teams based on their support needs.

Implementation Strategies

The following are strategies we have seen various league administrators utilize in order to maximize mobile app adoption amongst their coaches and teams.

Email

Sending an initial league-wide awareness email about the mobile app is critical to successful implementation. Many parents will not be used to seeing their coach check their mobile device frequently during a practice or game. It is important to let parents know that if they see this, it is because their coach is likely referring to their practice plan and drill breakdowns on their mobile device. If this is not communicated clearly, some parents may raise concerns about their coach frequently looking at their phone during practice.

If you send regular league-wide weekly update emails, adding information to these emails about the mobile app can be a helpful way to drive continuous increase in usage throughout the season.

In-person Coaches Meeting

We highly recommend giving a brief in-person presentation on the mobile app as part of your regular scheduled pre-season coaches meeting. You will see large increases in adoption when the app is presented in-person as a core tool coaches are expected to use when coaching within your league. Some large leagues (>50 teams) choose to breakup coaches into two groups for the presentation, new coaches (0-2 years experience) and veteran coaches. This will allow you to focus the presentation on how the different app features can specifically support new or experienced without overwhelming new coaches with more advanced ways to utilize the app. For an example presentation structure, please refer to the coaches presentation outline in the appendix.

Incentives and Rewards

Some administrators choose to offer incentives for app adoption. For example, all coaches that create a team in the app and send their team code to the league administrator can be entered into a raffle win a gift card. You can also offer incentives for things such as best custom practice plan or any other feature you would like to ensure coaches use.

Additional Support

For additional support resources regarding app implementation and usage, visit footballcanadamobile.com/support.

Appendix: Example Coaches Presentation Outline

Prior to the in-person meeting beginning

Objective: Ensure all coaches have downloaded the app and created their account so they can log in.

Approximate Time: 5 minutes

Option 1

- Send all coaches an email that contains the app name and links to the app store listing for both iOS and Android devices or to the app website to ensure all coaches know where to find and download the app.
- In the email, ask coaches to complete the following steps:
 1. Download the app.
 2. Open the app and create their account.
 3. Log into the app using the information from the account they just created.
 4. Invite them to explore the various app features (optional).

Option 2

- If you have a projector and powerpoint slides for your presentation, create an introduction slide that states the app name and directs coaches to download the app from the App Store or Google Play, create their account and log in.
- Have coaches do this after they have arrived and are waiting for the presentation to begin.

General presentation structure during the meeting:

Introduce App Purpose

Objective: Clearly communicate that the app is intended to make coaches lives easier while simultaneously improving overall player development.

Approximate Time: 15 minutes

Introduce the app as a digital support tool to enhance the coach and player experience in the league as it supports the League's:

1. Goals
2. Values

3. Outcomes
4. Long Term Athlete Development
5. Curriculum

Introduce App Features

Objective: Familiarize coaches with where they can find each feature in the app and why that feature would be useful

Approximate Time: 15 minutes

Introduce and briefly explain each of the apps core features:

1. Drill and Practice Plan Libraries - coaches can access a variety of pre-made drills and practice plans within the mobile app by tapping the coach button on the bottom of the app.
2. Practice Plan Builder - If coaches do not want to use the practice plans available in the library, they can design custom plans for their team by changing the plan structure and adding different drills from the library.
3. Teams & Team Roles - Sharing your team code with others allows them to join your team by downloading the app and entering your unique team code. This is what allows coaches to schedule activities, share plans and communicate with everyone on their team through the app.
4. Scheduling & Sharing - Coaches can create activities. Scheduling an activity sends everyone on the team a push notification to inform them about all important information for that specific activity. Coaches can also attach a practice plan to the activity to share it with the team.
5. In-app Team Communication - Once a team staff member or parent has joined a team, coaches can communicate with them directly within the app via direct messages, group messages or team announcements.

The goal here **should not** be to walk coaches through the step-by-step process of how to use each core feature, but rather to show coaches where that feature is found once inside the app and how they can use it to help them prepare for practice and run their team during the season. Each app feature has been designed to be very simple to use to help reduce the mobile app usage learning curve.

Learning Activities Following the Presentation

Objective: These activities can be done to further familiarize coaches with using the various app features. You can choose to complete these activities during your in-person session depending on how much time you have for your session, available space and what features you believe will be most used by your coaches. They are also great for those wanting to use the mobile app

Finding drills to improve a specific skill

1. Have coaches get into partners and choose a common skill.

2. Have the coaches use the drill library to find a drill that could be used to develop that specific skill by using the category and focus filters.
3. Navigate to the coaching points section of the drills to find breakdowns of how you could coach a specific skill.
4. Have one partner be the player and have the coach give them cues to teach the skill
 - What were the key points of emphasis?
 - Was there anything missed?
 - Could something be enhanced
5. Teach the skill again and briefly debrief the second teaching of the skill
6. Choose a different skill and reverse roles of coach and player - Repeat
7. Bring the whole group back together to share some of the challenges and successes that they had.

Drill Delivery Using Coaching Points and Variations

1. Have coaches get into groups of four or five and choose a common drill. (Ensure you supply the necessary equipment for each group)
 1. Assign roles:
 1. Coach
 1. Explain, demonstrate, and deliver the drill
 2. Coaching individual skill within the drill
 2. Player (2 or 3)
 1. Perform the drill as instructed
 3. Observer/Helper
 1. Help the coach set up the drill
 2. Observe how the coach delivers the drill
 1. Language used
 2. Points of emphasis

3. Overall delivery of drill
2. Coach and helper set up the drill
3. Coach explains and demonstrates the drill
4. Players perform the drill with the coach cueing the players on points of emphasis and skill requirements
5. Have coach explain:
 - How did the drill go? Likes/Dislikes?
6. Players give feedback on the drill
7. Observer give feedback on the drill
8. Coach reflects on how things could be improved? Also how could the drill be modified to make it easier or harder?
9. Change roles and select a new drill - Repeat
10. After everyone has filled the role of coach bring the group back together and discuss some of the challenges and successes that they had.

Reviewing Practice Plans

1. Have coaches in groups of two or three open a practice plan
2. Give an overview to the entire group of the layout and process of the practice plan.
3. Have coaches discuss how they could adapt the practice plan to:
 - Shorten It
 - Extend It
 - Replace drills with other drills from the drill library that would accomplish similar outcomes.
4. Repeat with other practice plans