



PENGUIN INTERNATIONAL RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB

Rugby Football Union
Kent County RFU

COBRA Coaches Development Week – COBRA Rugby Club

‘Gandhi, Elephants and Virat Kohli’



Kuala Lumpur & Port Dickson - 6th – 14th July 2025

By Rob Drinkwater & Richie Williams

The Penguin Rugby Coaching Academy once again collaborated with long standing partner, the Combined Old Boys Rugby Association (COBRA) to deliver another successful week of coaching skills, clinics and player development sessions with local schools and the COBRA Club players and coaches throughout July.

Rob Drinkwater (Australia) and Richie Williams (UK) flew in to support the COBRA Club players and their coaches throughout the week, culminating with the annual coaches retreat to Port Dickson, Malaysia.

The Penguins relationship with COBRA spans over three decades and this was the sixth trip for Coach Rob, his first being with Penguins CEO Craig Brown back in 2006. For Coach Richie, this was his first visit to COBRA and Malaysia and one which has provided lifelong memories.



We have been partner clubs and forged strong relationships over the years and the chance to support and develop the COBRA Club coaches is always a pleasure. Through the offices of COBRA President Darryll Sinnappa and Penguin CEO Craig Brown, a series of coach development modules were developed and dates set.

Coach Richie arrived on Sat 5th Jul and was straight into work the following day with a COBRATS Training Session, observing around 100 players and several coaches.

Delivery encompassed a range of ages across the week from U8s – U17s and adult women plus coaches across these age groups, all culminating with the annual coaches retreat on the final weekend with over 45 coaches in attendance.

Day 1. Sun 6th July – COBRATS Training Session

With over 100 children in attendance, this first session was a really good opportunity to observe the behaviours and coaching philosophies of the junior coaches.

Day 2. Mon 7th July

a) AM Private Schools: SMK Bandur Utama Damansara (4)

The first school's session of the week hosted over 30 boys and 25 girls with high energy and enthusiasm. Both coaches were aided with additional help from three of the COBRA Academy players (Joshua, Ryan and Rishon) which supported some cultural and language differences.

The tempo was high with some experienced boys and a cohort of girls keen to learn. Both teachers and the

school's Principal expressed their gratitude following the session.

b) PM COBRA Coaches: U14-U17 year old players and coaches

The afternoon session began in the classroom at COBRA with a focus on rugby's core values and highlighting a questioning approach in order to generate thinking amongst the playing group. Whilst generally young players, their collective experience was highlighted as a strength for the group and coaches encouraged to draw on this in their practices.



Coaches and players were enthusiastic and enjoying the on-field element evident through their smiles and laughter. A focus on catch, pass and offload was promoted utilising a games approach.

Day 3. Tue 8th July

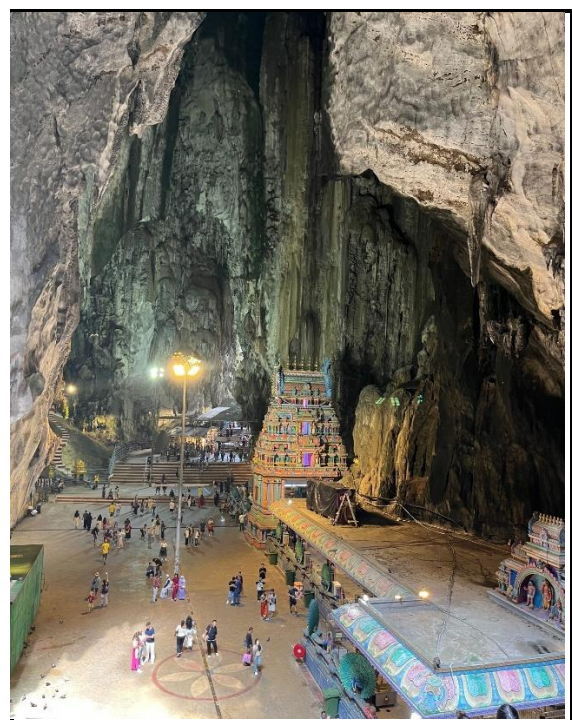
- a) Local Schools – postponed by schools due to exams
- b) COBRA Academy U14-U17 Coaches

The Tues afternoon/evening session was a replica of the evening before but for a different cohort of players and coaches. Attention was placed on rugby's core values and these elements which set us apart from many other sports.

Again, high-tempo engagement on-field provided for lots of fun, laughter and learning.



b) On return to COBRA in the early afternoon the coaches were provided with a cultural experience that is the Batu Caves. An inspiring sight including the Rocky themed music playing at the top of the 500 steps. Coach Rob, keen to show his athletic prowess, managed to run up all 267 steps...an excellent achievement.



Day 4. Wed 9th July

- a) Local School: SK Sungai Kertis School

A group of 25 U10-U12 boys became one of the highlights of the week. Their energy and enthusiasm was paramount for a school which has only started rugby in the past seven years. Coaches focused on catch, pass and evasion with offload also broached and culminating in a small-sided, low contact game at the end. Coach Richie was the star of the session scoring the winning try for his team and nailing the match winning conversion from a difficult angle.

- b) COBRA U10-U12 Coaches

The afternoon/evening session was with the younger cohort of COBRA players and their coaches. Some had been engaged in our sessions during the week but still provided strong contributions

around core values once again and using a questioning approach in coaching.



Day 5. Thur 10th July

Respite Day – Elephant Sanctuary & Selangor Women's 7's

A day of respite on the fifth day enabled the coaches to visit an elephant sanctuary outside of Kuala Lumpur. A welcomed period of reset prior to a coaching session with the COBRA Venom & Selangor Women's 7s Team in the afternoon/evening.

A truly talented group of women who were challenged with passing under pressure, decision making and identifying space.



Day 6. Fri 12 July - Coaches Development Retreat

An initiative which has been held since pre-COVID, the 2025 COBRA Coaches Retreat hosted over 45 coaches and

managers at a great resort in the beachside town of Port Dickson.

Following introductions of the coaches and program for the weekend, the Penguin Coaches revisited rugby's core values and team/club culture with examples of how and possibly how not to achieve a positive climate coming from within the group.

Some fun games led by the COBRA Coaches provided a sound platform for the entire group to get to know each other better and acknowledge everyone's experiences.

Day 7. Sat 13 July - Coaches Development Retreat

Saturday promised to be a full day of coaching delivery and both Penguin and COBRA Coaches were not left disappointed. The morning session took coaches through examples of best practice in coaching session design. This set the platform for the coaches own delivery in groups that afternoon following task allocation and preparation time on groups.



The second session split the group in two and stepped coaches through a scrum clinic with Rob and then a kicking clinic with Richie; with each group having the opportunity to experience both sessions back to back.



After lunch the coaches delivered a coaching practical in small teams from their task allocation earlier in the day. The group delivery provided an opportunity to feedback to the COBRA Coaches on their coaching practice using the World Rugby Coach Development REVIEW Model, highlighting positives and areas for improvement across the group.

It was both the scrum/kicking sessions and this practical coaching element during this day which received the strongest reviews from the weekend.



Day 8. Sun 14th July - Coaches Development Retreat & Selangor Rugby Men's Grand Final

Following the traditional rugby dinner and Kangaroo Court held on Saturday night, the Penguin Coaches turned their attention to capturing the 'big takeaways' from the weekend which the COBRA Coaches would seek to take forward into their practices and operations for the coming season.



Some of the broader themes of celebrating players small achievements, keeping drills simple with less words / more action, being conscious of time management and creating empowerment through children providing their own feedback were all elements which resonated strongly across the 45 plus coaches and management in attendance. An objective of the Penguin Coaches which also shone through was a focus and attention towards making every session fun!

Prior to both Rob and Richie's departure, the Penguin Coaches were fortunate to be in attendance for the Selangor Rugby Men's Grand Final between the KL Tigers and COBRA. In a hard-fought match, COBRA could not overcome their slow start and ultimately fell short of their chase, falling short by 28-23.



The relationship between Penguin Rugby and COBRA is healthy and strong and local coaches continue to grow and develop through this close association. Both Rob and Richie were made to feel part of the COBRA Family and hope that the input and interactions will leave a lasting legacy for some time.

Saddened to leave but hopeful of a speedy return, the Penguin Coaches alongside the COBRA Family have made and strengthened the bonds between the two organisations.

Whilst there are too many people to thank, Rob and Richie wish to give special thanks to COBRA President Darryll, sister Marcelle, both their sons, and to Syd who chaperoned the Penguins all week. For your efforts, kindness, hospitality and support we are indebted; thank you and Terima Kasih.

Quote 1

Sean Pereira "It was a refreshing weekend of learning, exploring new skills and different approaches to delivering training sessions. We also gained valuable insights on how to make training sessions more inclusive whilst kick starting ball-in-hand activities more effectively and efficiently." [experience from Coaches Retreat]



Quote 2

Azrul Hanis @Bong "During the 2-hour session with Rob and Richie, I saw that all the students were very excited. The induction set at the beginning of the session attracted the students' interest to continue to the next phase. The emphasis on communication during play, making accurate and quick decisions helped the Sungai Kertas students in improving the quality of their play. We are very honoured by their presence at our school and this is a history- our school to be able to collaborate with Coaches from abroad. We would very much welcome Penguins to our school again." [experience from Teacher/Coach of SM Sungai Kertas]