

TOUCHLINE TALES DON'T BE SURPRISED WHEN THEY FAIL

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Issue 535
30 August, 2017

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Cover picture
Ben Smith scores for the All Blacks

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Touchline Tales

Don't be surprised when they fail

You should practise what you preach. And then reflect on what went well and what you could do differently next time. A few weeks ago, I ran a session with a group of under 14s which included about 20 minutes on backs plays. I've run a similar session several times, so I had a good idea of what might work and the pace I had to go at.

Here are my thoughts on the session. By the end of the session, I felt some progress had been made. I suppose you always want more success. However, I have been in the coaching game long enough to recognise that if you set up the players to fail, they will!

In other words, I put a lot of game-like pressures into the session which inevitably meant there was less chance to perfect the play. It was going to be messy and, hey presto, it was. I think my worry was that the players were becoming despondent. That's where you really earn your coaching corn.

Obviously setting up the initial environment requires some planning and thought. But, once it's going, you need to be able to encourage

Those who were mature enough were embracing the challenges. They became the organisers.

players that it's worthwhile. That's easy enough if you know them, they know you and you have an agreed path. This situation was different because this was only my second session with them and I'm not their regular coach.

Also, they are in a trial mode, where more than half the players will cut from the squad in about six weeks' time. Add to that the variability in skill and game understanding, and it was quite chaotic.

However, it did reveal plenty about certain players. Those who were mature enough were embracing the challenges. They became the organisers. I stepped back several times and let the exercises progress without my intervention. Because defenders and attackers were interchanging after each run through, sometimes there weren't the right numbers in the right starting positions.

I let them sort this out for themselves. It was almost painful at first. By the end, and with some encouragement to be more resilient, there were signs it was changing.

Because the players had not been exposed to this sort of training style before, they were nervous to put themselves forward. I expect if they had been playing touch rugby on the beach with their friends, they would have adjusted the pitch and rules to make it work better. So, why not in these circumstances? I was just providing the scenarios.

My main interventions were technical. I gave them some external cues on running lines. It was interesting that some of them didn't "get it" by the end and looked all at sea through most of the session.

I did wonder whether they will have improved by the time I see them next time. The answer was yes. Not all of them, but there were signs.

Phew!



Ask Dan

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LINK OF THE WEEK

THE PROBLEM WITH SMALL-SIDED GAMES

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Attacking the blindside

A shortside or blindside attack is a powerful play because it can isolate defenders while involving fewer passes. How does this work and how can you train for it?

By Dan Cottrell

The “blindside” is a jargon term. Wherever you have a ruck, maul or scrum, the field is split into two along it's length. The side with more space is the open side, and the side with less space, the blindside or short side.

Defences need more defenders for the open side and less for the blindside. If they get the balance of defenders wrong, the team in possession should attack the imbalance.

A blindside attack can be more potent because it involves fewer passes. This has three benefits.

1. Every pass means more risk.
2. Any pass that is backwards means the attack is further back from the gain line (the line across the field from where the ball first started).
3. Every pass slows down the attack, if only momentarily, because the ball is moving sideways and not forwards.

Also, think of it this way. In training, can your players execute successfully more 2 v 1s than 4 v 3s? Or even 3 v 2s than 5 v 3s? You know it's less than you want. In other words, fewer decisions means more chance of success.

That's why teams seek to “create a

blindside” to attack. The defensive team don't always leave players on the blindside because they are naturally drawn to protecting more open spaces. Also, slower players tend to be left behind on the blindside.

All this works if the attacking team can recycle the ball quickly, realign quickly, pass accurately and attack straight. Those four skills are sessions in themselves. But I think that you can put them altogether in one session so the players realise how interconnected they are. On **pages 4 and 5** I set out two game-based activities. The first is a pure scenario, the second is a game.

What's required from you is patience! The players won't perform the skills at the required accuracy straightaway.

However, the process of playing through these scenarios and games will highlight where they need to improve. They will aim to combine realignment, running straight and passing fast rather practising them in isolation. That's tough, yet a far more powerful learning process in the long run.

You will see that I've taken one skill away in these sessions. To create some flow, I've taken out “recycling”. In a training context, this is

AGES 14+

Scan for blindside attack

Attackers need to identify when a blindside is ripe to attack. They do that as they move into position. Test if they can call it and then execute it. **By Dan Cottrell**

CHALLENGE
Attackers should design to attack the blindside if the defence is not in position.

SET UP
Ruck pad, two coloured cones and a ball.

HOW TO DO IT
ACTORS

- > Put five attackers and three defenders at the end of the playing area about 15m from a pad.
- > Have the players run the position, with two defenders running to the pad and from a coloured cone if you indicate that. The other defender just runs to the ball. The attacker might based on the defensive picture and their attack when needed.
- > To initiate the attack, the attacker at the pad passes the ball. They can run and pass as well.
- > Use touch tackling. Adjust the number of defenders in appropriate.

DEVELOPMENT

- > Put the defenders in position already.
- > The attackers run to the pad and design to attack.
- > Using hand signals, adjust the width of the defensive group.
- > Identify more to grab tackling and allow others out of the tackle.

TECHNIQUE

- > Scan as you run.
- > Attack with straight running and fast passing.

Pass → Ground covered → Direction of run →

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more physical aspect. You should balance how much bone-on-bone training you do.

Plus, the motivation to drive into the ruck area in training isn't quite the same as match days. To keep your players fit and allow the sessions to move along, I would leave out in this aspect.

Rucking mindset exercises

Retain the ball after the tackle by ensuring your players:

- > Use good technique.
- > Use the right techniques for that situation.
- > Use it before the opposition.

All obvious, and since each breakdown scenario can be very different, your players need to be mentally prepared to adjust quickly. That's why repetition drills don't advance your players as much as more dynamic situations.

Why not change your approach to build your players' skills in this area? A number of top coaches, like Eddie Jones, are talking about “principles” first. The technique then follows.

To win a ruck, the principle is that you win the space over the ball. That's not a new principle, yet if you put this to the players first, then will they seek out the techniques to make this happen.

In other words, they know what they are

aiming to do. When you work on the detail, they will understand why you are doing it.

They are plenty of ruck exercises out there, you just need to tie them together with these principles. **The activity on page 7** draws together the principles and then puts it into randomised situations. Players will be arriving from unusual angles and must adjust.

Crucially, players should arrive at the tackle situation having assessed what technique to use and when. If they don't look up, then they have much less chance of winning. Emphasise the need to “win” that little battle.

Rugby is like lots of little battles. The more you win these, the more you will create pressure and enjoy greater success. This gives you plenty of opportunity to praise players in training for small victories. Also you can encourage players to win the next battle if they've lost the last one. That creates easily achievable targets.

AGES 12+

Win the race over the ball

Clearing out a defender over the ball means winning the race for the space over the ball and if you lose, knowing how to win that space back. **By Dan Cottrell**

WHY USE IT
Work on quick reactions under pressure to make the right decision to win the space over the ball. The attacker sees whether a defender is going for the ball then decides how to deal with it.

SET UP

- > An attacker (white) and one ball per team
- > A three 5m box and one ball per team

HOW TO DO IT

> An attacker (white) and defender stand far from the circle next to a ball. On your call, the players get to their feet to “win the race” to the ball. The defender has three options (see picture 1):
a) Stand over the ball and protect it.
b) Go for the ball and pick it up.
c) Drive over the ball and clear the attacker.

The attacker has to decide how to deal with the defender. Ready, ready and who wins the race for the ball is crucial.

> Play 3x3 in the box. A leader (F7) passes to one of the attackers who runs at the defender (see picture 2). The attacker can pass but if he is tackled the other players race to win the space over the ball (see picture 3). Play full contact.

TECHNIQUE

- > Look for space and defender low on the ball. Kick him over.
- > Face to the ball. Win the space over and beyond it.
- > Squat. Go low to high to drive him back.

Pass → Ground covered → Direction of run →

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Scan for blindside attack

Attackers need to identify when a blindside is ripe to attack. They do that as they move into position. Test if they can call it and then execute it. **By Dan Cottrell**

CHALLENGE

Attackers should realign to attack the blindside if the defence is not in position.

SET UP

Ruck pad, two coloured cones and a ball.

HOW TO DO IT

Activity

- > Put five attackers and three defenders at the side of the playing area about 15m from a pad.
- > Have the players run into position, with two defenders running to the pad and then a coloured cone if you indicate that. The other defender just runs to the pad. The attackers realign based on the defensive picture and then attack when ready.
- > To initiate the attack, the attacker at the pad passes the ball. They can run and pass as well.
- > Use touch tackling. Adjust the number of defenders as appropriate.

Development

- > Put five defenders in position already.
- > The attackers run to the pad and realign to attack.
- > Using hand signals, adjust the width of the defending group.
- > Ideally move to grab tackling and allow offloads out of the tackle.

TECHNIQUE

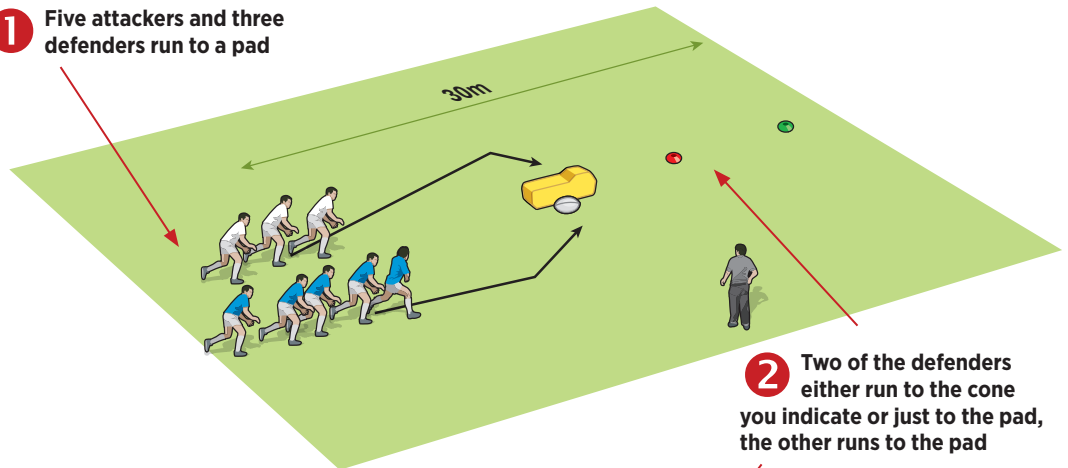
- > Scan as you run.
- > Attack with straight running and fast passing.

NOTE

In the activity, the defenders are racing to get back into position, either from the cones or from the pad. The attack has to read their relative positions before deciding which way to attack.

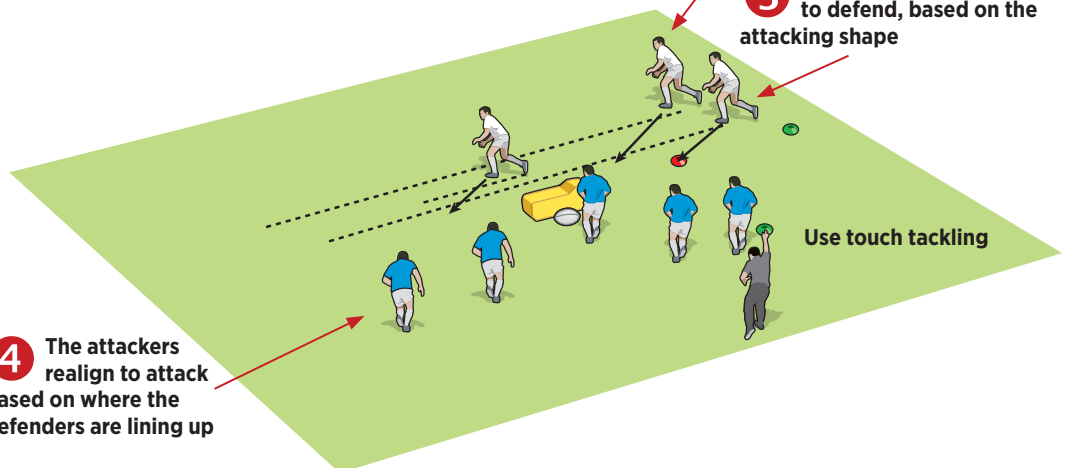
ACTIVITY

1 Five attackers and three defenders run to a pad



2 Two of the defenders either run to the cone you indicate or just to the pad, the other runs to the pad

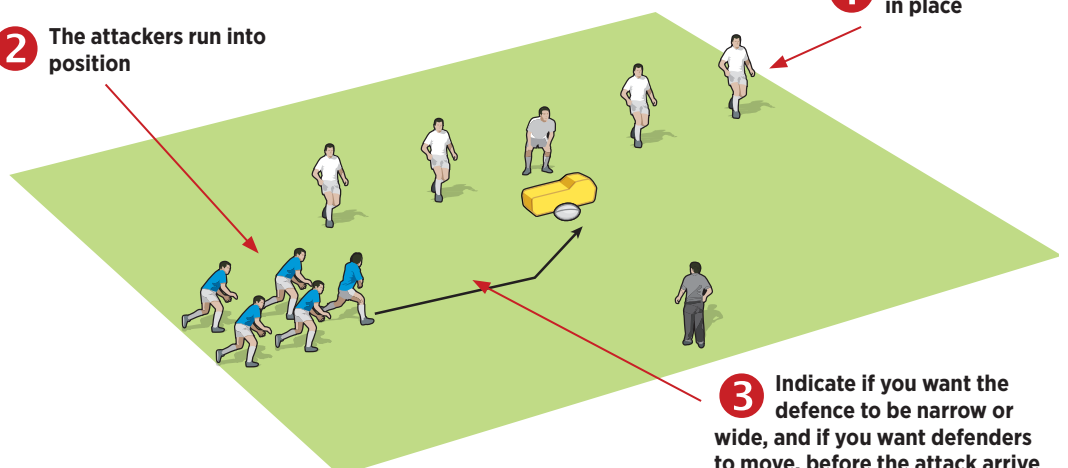
3 The defenders then turn to defend, based on the attacking shape



4 The attackers realign to attack based on where the defenders are lining up

DEVELOPMENT

2 The attackers run into position



3 Indicate if you want the defence to be narrow or wide, and if you want defenders to move, before the attack arrive

Pass> Ground covered - - - - - Direction of run —————>

Switch the play or attack the same way

Use this game and its variation to create opportunities for players to make decisions on when to attack open or go back to the blindside. **By Dan Cottrell**

CHALLENGE

Create opportunities to stretch the defence and then attack where they are weakest.

SET UP

A 60m wide pitch, split into three, with a 30m middle and then two 15m corridors on the ends.

HOW TO DO IT

GAME 1

> Play touch rugby. If a player is two hand touched, if they can't pass immediately, they go to ground. One attacker must go over the touched player. One defender can try to touch the ball for a turnover if an attacker hasn't gone over the ball.

> At the touch, if the touch is made in the middle corridor, the next pass from a player on the ground must be towards the same touchline as the direction of play.

> If the play reaches the corridors on the edge, then passes can be towards either touchline.

> If a pass is made against the grain in the middle, then it's a turnover.

GAME 2

> Same as above apart from play can switch in the middle corridor. If it does, the play must break the advantage or gain line, which is in line with the previous ruck.

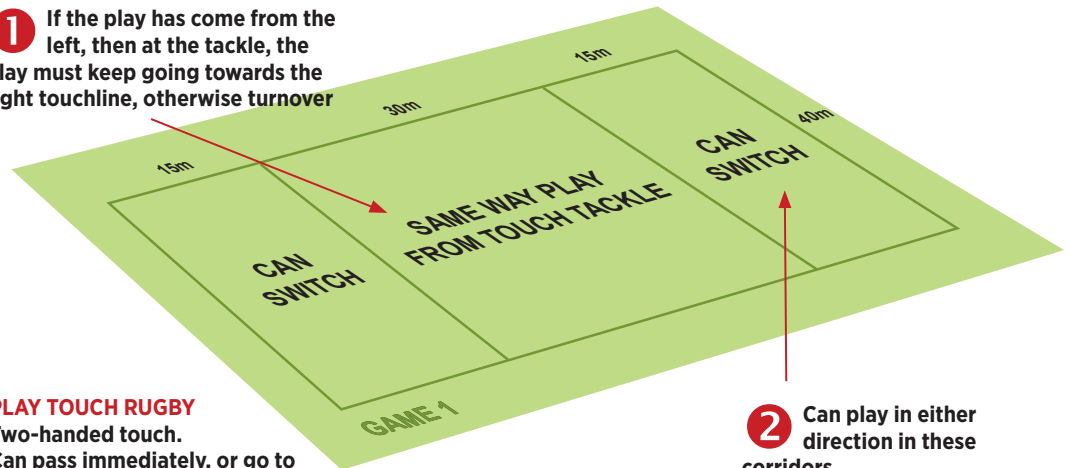
TECHNIQUE

> Run straight and then pass.

> Look up and call when to switch the play.

GAME 1

1 If the play has come from the left, then at the tackle, the play must keep going towards the right touchline, otherwise turnover



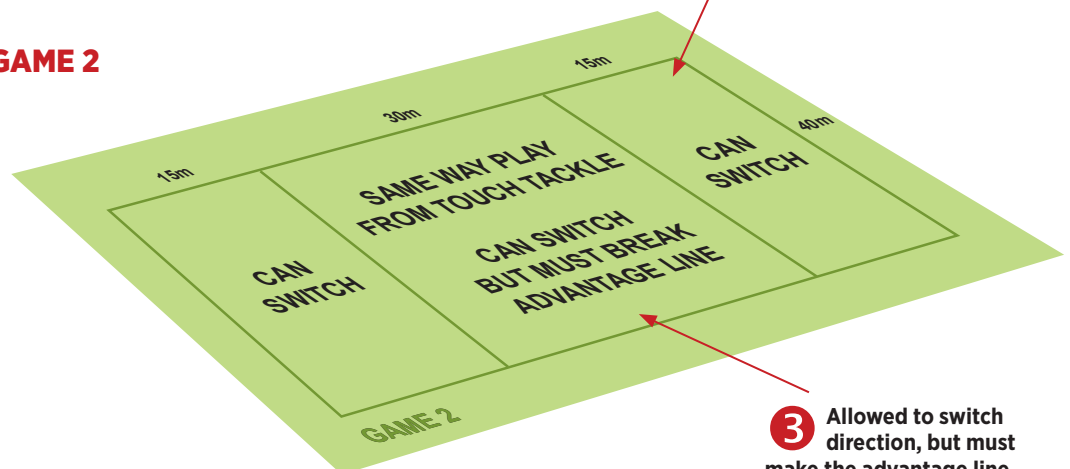
PLAY TOUCH RUGBY

Two-handed touch.

Can pass immediately, or go to ground and one attacker goes over tackled player.

Turnovers if a defender can touch the ball on the ground before an attacker goes over the ball

GAME 2



2 Can play in either direction in these corridors

3 Allowed to switch direction, but must make the advantage line. The advantage line (or gain line) is across the pitch from the tackle

CHALLENGING THE PLAYERS

TECHNICAL

- > Do you need to be deeper or flatter when you have quick ball?
- > When is it right to miss passes?

TACTICAL

- > Who calls the switch in play?
- > Can you kick to score?

CREATE 10 SECOND TACTICAL HUDDLES FOR DISCUSSION

- > Listen in, but don't add any of your thoughts
- > Praise good tactical ideas to give the players confidence

GAME CHANGERS

- > Take away the corridors
- > Restart the game with "set pieces", so forwards are bunched

Pass→ Ground covered - - - - - Direction of run →

Coaching for Jones

Here's how **Caleb Foster, level 3 coach**, planned and coached a session as part of a Mitsubishi Volunteer recognition sponsored day with Eddie Jones. Hear how he organised the session and what Eddie had to say

INTRODUCTION

All the coaches that had been selected for the day met up at The Lensbury Resort Hotel (England 7s base) the night before to understand each other's journeys and stories. In groups of three we were asked to formulate a 20 minute session for a mixed group of under 15s. Each session would be based around a particular principle of play and our specific session was on creating continuity in a creative way. Eddie Jones would be watching and feeding back. No pressure!

The two other coaches that formed our coaching team were Level 1 and Level 2 respectively and both from grassroots community coaching. This was a great mix of insight and experience on how the session would be delivered and the direction we would take it.

CREATING A CHALLENGE

Learning from my time working with Mike Umaga (former Samoan international and now director of rugby at Bishop Burton College), I'm a great advocate of challenging players to come up with their own solutions through effective games. I like to use "objects" in a game which is another way of saying using different shaped balls and sometimes using more than one in play.

With this approach in mind, our coaching team devised the following game.

- > The attack play is normal rugby with a rugby ball, backwards passing and scoring over a try line in front of them.
- > The defence team use an alternative "object" to stop the attack. If the defender with the defence ball touches the attacker in possession, it's a turnover. It should lead to a



"A fantastic opportunity to take part in and many thanks to everyone who supported to make this happen and identify the positive work that is happening at all levels of the game."

- quick transition between attack and defence.
- > To mix things up a bit, the defensive team are allowed to be anywhere they want, move in any direction and pass the defence object in any direction.
- > One of the coaches carried another couple of objects just in case, to speed up the play.

The game emphasises heads up attack and defence, speed of transition and maintaining constant ball movement from both teams. Each player is aiming to work out how to find the best position and space to make a difference to the game.

CHAOS AND PROGRESSION

Eddie Jones loves chaos. And this session was chaotic. The players had to be creative to win the game. Part of that comes from learning

what ways work best, and quickly. It's not what they are used to.

Once they look like they are "getting it", we planned to add in progressions. In our plan, we had three main potential progressions:

- > Allow interceptions
- > Split the try line into different scoring zones, so more points for scoring in the central area.
- > Two defence balls

EDDIE'S FEEDBACK

We knew Eddie loves chaos: "I'm liking it and I'm still trying to work out the game", he said. He then asked us what we were trying to achieve, and we said: "creating chaos and choices". One of his mantras is that skill is by-product of the principle of play.

He said that the difference between the best and the very best is reaction time. In an average game at international level, the ball is in play for 35 minutes. In that time, the ball is turned over 31 times. The transition from defence to attack (or vice versa) and the players reactions must be quick.

It's about speed of thought. He noticed that the defence stood still on a turnover. That's why he's keen that players don't become too fixated on finding shape. They must react quicker and play to the opportunities as they present themselves.

A final thought of his was that we needed to be authentic in the way we coach and aim to watch all the detail in a player. I take that to mean you coach your way, believe in your way and your actions reflect what you say.



Eddie Jones (right) suggests ideas to Caleb about the game. He enjoyed the chaos within the session

Win the race over the ball

Clearing out a defender over the ball means winning the race for the space over the ball and if you lose, knowing how to win that space back. **By Dan Cottrell**

WHY USE IT

Work on quick reactions under pressure to make the right decision to win the space over the ball. The attacker sees whether a defender is going for the ball then decides how to deal with it.

SET UP

> A 5m circle and one ball per pair to start with.

> A 10m x 5m box and one ball per seven

HOW TO DO IT

> An attacker (light shirt) and defender (dark) lie face down in the circle next to a ball. On your call, the players get to their feet to "win the race" to the ball. The defender has three options (see picture 1):

a) Stand over the ball and protect it.
b) Go for the ball and pick it up.
c) Drive over the ball and clear the attacker out.

The attacker has to decide how to deal with the defender. Body height and who wins the race for the ball is crucial.

> Play 3v3 in the box. A feeder (F) passes to one of the attackers who runs at his defender (see picture 2). The attacker can pass but if he is tackled, the other players race to win the space over the ball (see picture 3). Play full contact.

TECHNIQUE

> Lost the space and defender low on the ball? Try to get under him.
> First to the ball: Win the space over and beyond it.
> Equal: Go low to high to drive him back

1 Lie an attacker (white), and a defender (blue) next to each other in a small circle with a ball between them, then shout "GO"

2 Defender goes past the ball

5 The attacker has to win the ball depending on the defender's intentions

4 Defender goes for the ball

3 Defender stays over the ball

6 Put three defenders at one end of the box

8 The feeder passes to one of the attackers (who can pass if he wants)

7 Put three numbered attackers at one end of the box

9 The defender in front of the ball carrier makes a tackle

10 The other attackers and defenders aim to win the race for the space over the ball

Pass>

Ground covered - - - - -

Direction of run —————>

Sassy sessions – dynamic and fun

If you're enjoying your own session it's pretty likely the players will be as well. Here's how to make it happen for you... **By Dan Cottrell**



Play games from the start of training, don't make it a reward for "good skills"

SIMPLE FOCUS FOR THE SESSION

Don't try to cover too much. Focus on "processes" and not "outcomes". The process is the method of achieving an outcome. For example, "We want to improve our handling today, so we are going to focus on how we follow through our hands to the receiver". If the outcomes aren't brilliant, at least you know you have covered the process.

Now, you will be happy that you've succeeded for that session.

PLAY GAMES

Don't make a game a reward for "working hard at the skills", make it an integral part of the session. Start with a game, end with a game,

and try to use different games to improve skills and tactics.

Players love playing games, and the competition is fun. You can feed off that energy.

Speak less, watch more. Let the players discover the game for themselves. Say less. The more you speak, the less they do.

Watch what they are doing and enjoy their successes. When you do speak, talk with energy, praise where necessary and challenge them for ways to improve.

DON'T FRET THE MISTAKES

Ideally we learn through making 60% mistakes to 40% success. Enough of a balance to encourage us, yet still make us think about

improving. If the players are making mistakes, see that as a positive. If they are making too many mistakes, adjust, adapt or stop.

ENGAGE WITH THE PLAYERS ON THE RIGHT LEVEL

- > Respect the players and they will respect you.
- > No-one loves a smarty-pants. Don't be sarcastic.
- > Praise good play. Really praise good effort.
- > Laugh at the ridiculous. Share the humour, don't be the joker. In that way, the players will see you as someone who's there to help them.

How to divide up into groups quickly

The line

- > Line up the players and then go along the line giving them a number 1,2,3 or 4 (or whatever number of teams you have).
- > Ask the players to get into groups of four and give themselves a number each, 1,2,3 or 4. This is often a good way to split up friendship groups.
- > If there are more in some groups, they simply play with an overload – lucky them. You don't want players standing on the side lines.
- > After a couple of games, if some teams are much better, then swap players around.

The friendship group break up

- > Ask the players get into groups of four (if you need four teams for example). You can make this players that play in similar position.
- > Have the players decide on a letter each from A to D.
- > Shout out each letter and ask for a hand to be put up so you can check each group has allocated their letters.
- > Then ask As to go one part of the field, Bs to another and so on. You are splitting up potential friendship groups because players initially go with their mates.

The bibs handout

- > As the players arrive at training, give them a coloured bib.
- > If you have an equal number of bibs of various colours to start with, you pass them out as the players gather, hopefully making some decisions on who to mix into what team.
- > Then run training as normal, splitting into those groups when required.



TOP TIPS

- > Enjoy your sessions by keeping your focus simple and letting the players enjoy what they want to do.
- > Remember that players' mistakes are an important part of their learning process.
- > Respect the players and what they want to achieve. In return, they will respect you and value you.

Catch and go

A great counter attack scenario which works both attack and defence. Easy to work with just the backs as a unit. **By Dan Cottrell**

WHY

Long kicks are very much a part of any team's attacking strategy, so your wingers and full back need to know their positioning. Your midfield players also need to understand how to support the counter attack.

SET UP

Players: 6 counter attackers v 4 defenders.
 Area: One half of a normal pitch.
 Equipment: One ball. Cones to mark out a ruck or scrum just inside the halfway line.

GAME NOTES

- Play normal rugby rules. Restart the game after any infringement or if a ruck forms.
- Make sure the wingers and full back start in their likely starting positions when defending a ruck or scrum.
- Move the starting point around.
- Kick the ball into a variety of places, high and low.
- The counter attacking group can kick.

SCORE

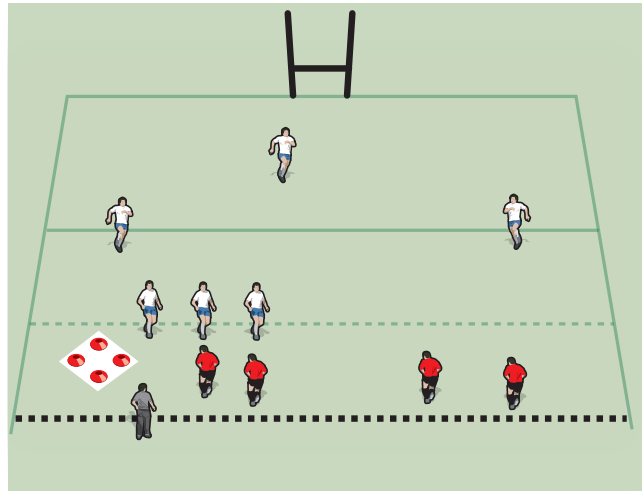
- 3 points for a try scored over the halfway line.
- 2 points for a legal kick into touch over the halfway line.
- 1 point for a legal kick into touch over the 10m line.

WHAT TO CALL OUT

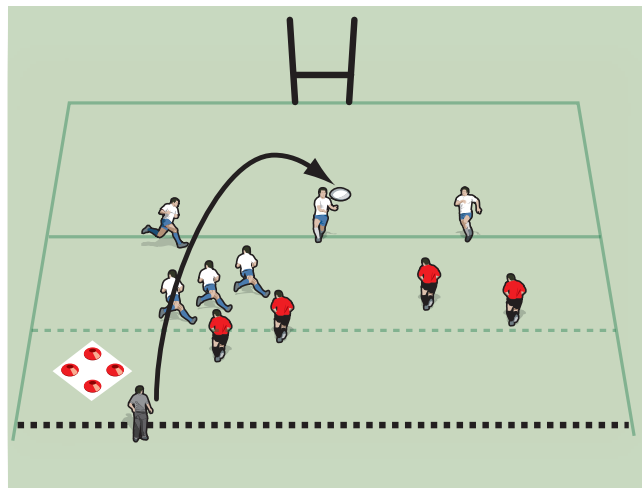
- "Run to space"
- Call early for the ball"

COACHING NOTES

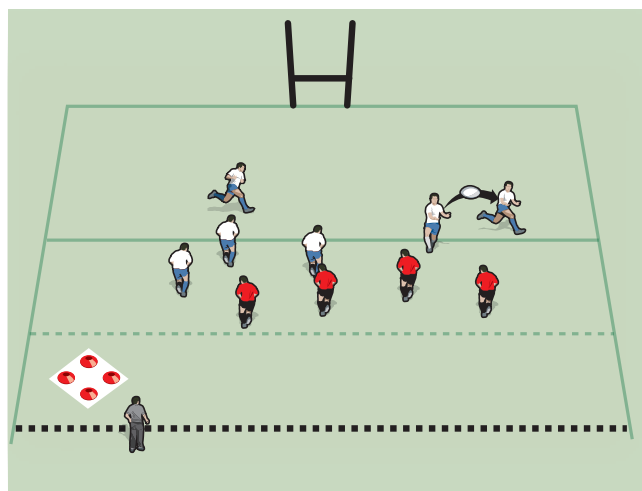
- This is part of your counter attacking strategy and tactics. Work on different scenarios to challenge your players to come up the solutions.
- Think about your team's kicking options when counter attacking.



1 Set up a "ruck" area, with players arranged as in the picture.



2 Kick the ball into the backfield. Play normal rugby rules until there is an infringement or ruck.



3 The attack score by crossing the halfway line in possession, without running through the "ruck".



The Tomb

Add in a new element to a classic game to create different problems for the players to solve. **By Colin Ireland**



THE RULES

This game has a similar set up and challenges to “Nevada Smith”. However, it has the addition of a small square (the “tomb”) marked in the centre of the playing area (the “swamp”).

Set up two teams facing each other at opposite sides of the playing area (the “swamp”). One team is the “bandits”, the other team comprises “Nevada Smiths”.

Give the “treasure” (a ball) to the first Nevada Smith, who must try and get out of the swamp from the side or far end without being caught (tag or touch tackled) by the bandits. However, this time each Nevada Smith has to touch one foot inside the tomb before escaping from the swamp.

SET UP

Area: 8m long x 5m wide.

Equipment: 1 ball, bibs (if available), tag belts (if used).

Players: 8 – two teams of 4.

SCORING

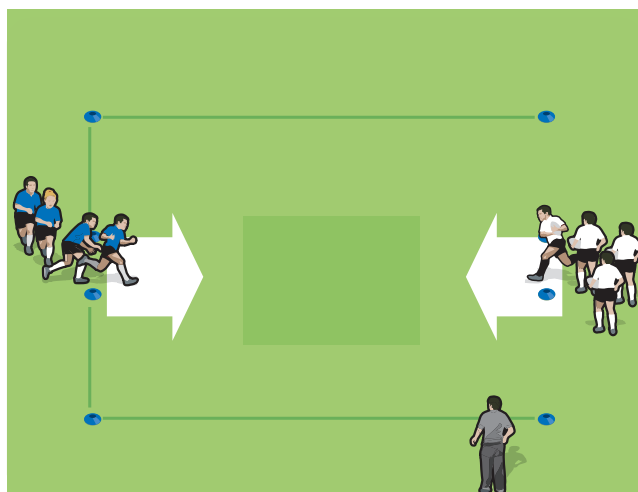
- 1 point for each Nevada Smith who escapes from the side of the swamp with the treasure.
- 2 points for each Nevada Smith who escapes from the end of the swamp with the treasure.
- 1 point to the bandits for each Nevada Smith captured.

WHAT TO CALL OUT

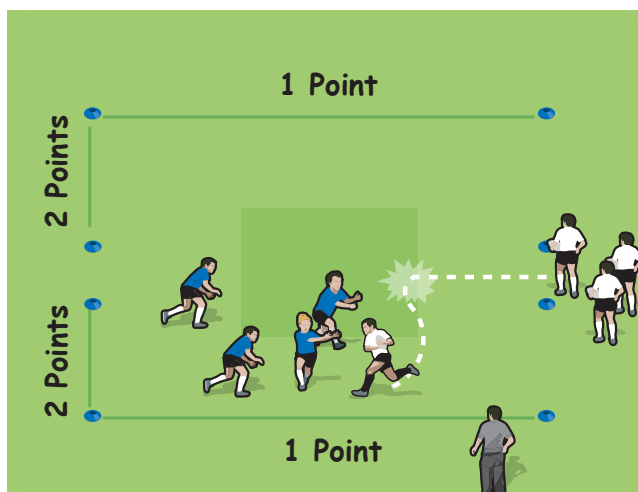
- “Look for space and move into it”
- “Take short steps when changing direction”
- “Keep your head up to see what’s going on”
- “Use fast feet”

COACHING TIPS

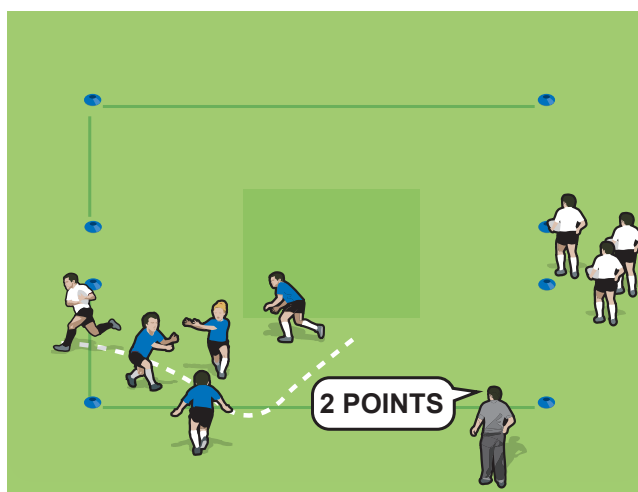
Change the two teams over after everyone in the first team has been Nevada Smith.



1 Nevada Smith and the bandits face each across the swamp.



2 Nevada Smith must put one foot in the tomb before escaping with the treasure.



3 Nevada Smith can escape by running out the side or far end of the swamp.



Bursting free

A chaotic start which will make attackers have to think, look up and then make quick decisions on how to win a 4 v 2. **By Paul Tyler**

WHAT YOU TELL YOUR PLAYERS THE SESSION IS ABOUT:

- 1 Improving reaction times.
- 2 Improving decision making.
- 3 Dealing with defenders.

WHAT YOU TELL YOUR PLAYERS TO DO:

- 1 Move around in any direction passing the ball.
- 2 On the signal burst through the markers and attack the try line.
- 3 Use passes and evasive running to beat the defenders.

WHAT TO SHOUT

- “Move in any direction”
- “Keep the ball moving”
- “React quickly to the signal to attack”
- “Accelerate into the practice area”
- “Draw the defender to you and pass to a free team mate”
- “Support the ball from depth”

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Players that react too quickly to the signal to attack. Set the players out facing you. You then shout out “RIGHT, LEFT, FORWARD, or BACK”. The players have to react to your calls and move in that direction.
- Players that pass the ball too early and don't draw a defender. Go back to a 2 v 1 situation, where the ball carrier has to draw the defender towards them before timing their pass to a team mate. Once they become competent get back to the “bursting free” practice.

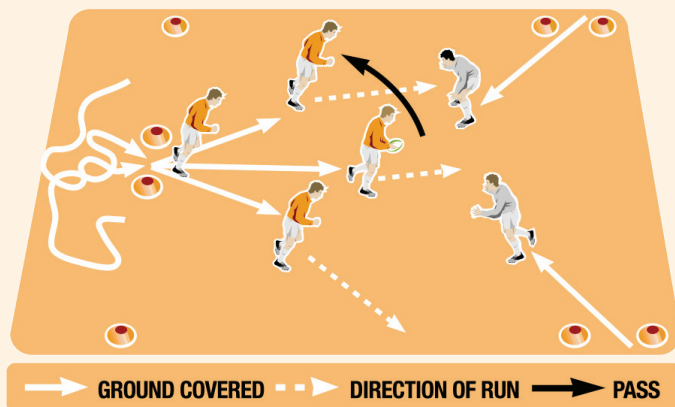
WHAT TO THINK ABOUT

What signals to use with the players – a whistle would normally require the players to stop? Try using a call or putting your hands on a ball as the signal. How do the players ensure they get behind the ball carrier when bursting free? What are the best running lines for the ball carrier to take to ensure he draws at least one defender? What part does communication play in the success of each attempted attack? How can the support players act as decoys?

WHAT YOU GET YOUR PLAYERS TO DO:

Mark out an area 10 metres wide and 15 metres long. Organise the players into four attackers and two defenders. The defenders start at each corner of the try line and only move when the signal to attack is given.

The attackers move about in any direction behind the line passing the ball between them until you signal the attack. On this signal they burst through the markers and into the practice area, where they have to beat the defenders using passes and evasion skills.



DEVELOPMENT

- 1 Change the starting position of the defenders.
- 2 Add two more defenders and two more attackers, making it a 6 v 4 situation.
- 3 Vary the type of exercises the attackers perform before your signal to attack.
- 4 Have a scrum half pass the ball to the first player to burst through the markers.
- 5 Ask for two of the attackers to do a press up before bursting through, this will help create depth and pace.

PUT IT INTO A GAME

Play a six to eight a side game on a 20 metre wide by 40 metre long pitch. Name the teams “A” and “B”, and ask them to move around their own half, passing a ball. On your signal one of the teams attacks and one defends. As the game progresses, and again on your signal, the team defending becomes the attacking team, picking up their ball to attack. Both teams have to react to your signal then use their attacking and defending skills in a game.

WHERE DOES IT FIT: Individual skills: Reacting
Team skills: Decision making

DnA – depth & angles

A simple set up, with lots of outcomes, this passing and running lines exercise creates realistic decisions for your players. There are plenty of possible solutions, so give the players a chance to discover them. **By Dan Cottrell**

WHAT YOU TELL YOUR PLAYERS THE SESSION IS ABOUT:

- 1 Faster decision making for all players.
- 2 Using pace/depth/angles to exploit weaknesses in the defence.

WHAT YOU TELL YOUR PLAYERS TO DO:

- 1 Scan the defence for points of weakness and move the ball there.
- 2 Accelerate onto the ball to create forward movement.
- 3 Create space by use of angles and depth to confuse the defence and open gaps for the ball carrier.

WHAT TO SHOUT

- “Eyes up look for space.”
- “Accelerate and attack with pace.”
- “Change angles of running lines.”
- “Move the defenders out of position.”
- “Time your run so that you catch the ball while at full pace.”

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Players that do not change their angle of run. Solution – have the player that is receiving the pass running at different placed coloured cones that you have positioned.
- Players that regularly make the wrong decision. Solution – go back to two v one situations where the player is assisted by the coach through questioning their decisions, right and wrong.

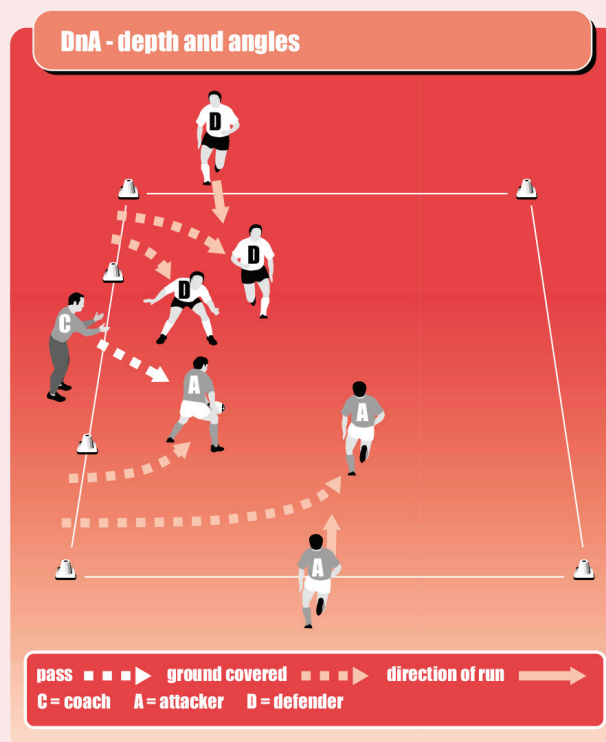
WHAT TO THINK ABOUT

How do the players move defenders to create space? What impact does the attacking player have by changing his lines of running (angle)? How does the third attacker having depth affect the outcome? What problems does the third defender create for the attacking group?

WHERE DOES IT FIT: Individual skills: Passing/movement/angles **Team skills:** Breaking down defences with good decision making

WHAT YOU GET YOUR PLAYERS TO DO:

Main Practice: The practice is set up with two attackers and two defenders moving into the grid as soon as you signal. You then pass the ball to the two attacking players; this is the cue for the third attacker to move forward and the third defender to get involved. The three attackers have now to beat the three defenders using passing and running skills; the third attacker starting with depth can change his angles to exploit space and any weakness in the defensive alignment.



DEVELOPMENT

- 1 Add more attackers and defenders.
- 2 Allow kicking (chips/grubbers).

PUT IT INTO A GAME

Mark out the shape of a scrum/ruck/maul with markers and have two sets of players line up facing one another; one as an attacking line and the other as the defensive line. Both attacking wingers and full back create the attacking depth with three/four midfield players moving the defensive line to create space. Two loose forwards can be added to the attacking group and the defending group positioned at the breakdown. No pre-planned moves; only reacting to the defence and support players. Players will naturally start to plan, however give them a countdown to get organised for the next attack so they have little or no time to plan anything.