

2003

LEVEL III

TASK 12

ATTACK “WITHOUT THE
BALL”-
A LOOK AT DEFENCE

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ATTACK “WITHOUT THE BALL”- A LOOK AT DEFENCE

As in many sports, Rugby is a game where possession of the ball is generally 50%-50%, yet training time is usually 90% ball winning / attack and 10% tackling and defence systems.

The most common thoughts in the game are that players want to run with the ball, attack and have fun whilst playing in a successful, winning team.

It always struck me as being strange, that the teams that spent the most time trying to play with the ball, actually spent the most game-time without it, and conversely the best in defence actually had to tackle the least.

Nearly all success in Rugby is decided by what you do without the ball and how you attack the problem of getting it back. This is why I say there is no such thing as defence, but only attack with the ball and attack without the ball.

Too often we are reactive without the ball, waiting to see what happens and then trying to make the tackle. The idea of “attack without the ball” is to limit the time we spend without it by making the attacking team react to our defence.

The key components are:

1. ATTITUDE-AGGRESSION
2. TECHNIQUE
3. COMMUNICATION
4. PERCEPTION & CHANGE OF LINE
SPEED
5. THE ABILITY TO READ THE
OPPOSITIONS INTENTIONS
6. STRATEGY & SYSTEMS

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ATTITUDE: The first and most important part of attacking without the ball is attitude. We can have the greatest systems, communication etc. but without attitude and desire you will defend more and more. Fifteen players with attitude in defence are still more of a threat than fifteen with system but no desire to make the tackles.

There is only one ball on the field and it must be viewed as yours. The opposition only have temporary ownership of it when we make a mistake. I believe this to be one of the main points of attack without the ball. It's crucial that your team doesn't believe the opposition are entitled to have your ball.

AGGRESSION: We need to be tough, hard, aggressive and relentless. Taking the oppositions' confidence early in a game sets the tone of the match.

You can use aggression in many ways. People will generally link aggression with the tackle, but things like line-speed and communication can also be aggressive and almost as effective as the tackle itself. This has to do with perceptions given to the ball carriers, which we will talk about later.

COMMUNICATION: After attitude, communication is crucial to putting together an attacking defensive line. Communication should not be viewed as solely for your team's benefit. As mentioned above a noisy, aggressive talking and well-organized defensive

line will pressure an opposition without really having to do much else. We must always remember that the offensive side and particularly the play-makers must concentrate on the ball and organizing their ball runners. Talk should be loud and clear not only to nominate what part of your own defensive line you are, but who you are aimed up on.

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For example: second man off the ruck in defence saying I've got nine if he runs an inside ten. Communication and attacking talk is very important in making the attack react to us, not us reacting to them. The best defenders impose themselves on the ball carrier both physically and mentally.

TECHNIQUE: FIRST MAN IN-

Principles: take the opponents space and track the inside shoulder of the ball carrier.

- : light quick footwork with strong square hip base
- : chase his feet get close try to step on his footprints
- : low body height, feet spread, good power base.
- : target – hips
 - ball / rib cage
 - low bent over tackle
- : uncoil – like a spring let loose Hit, Stick, Squeeze
- : speed and aggression at contact – chase his feet

SECOND MAN IN –

Mostly from the inside of first man in.

Attack the body or legs where first man isn't attacking

Stop the man

Attack the ball and slow or stop ball presentation

PERCEPTION / CHANGE OF LINE SPEED: Attacking without the ball is based totally on dominating and making the ball carrier reactive. Just as the defender has to read the attacker, the offensive teams' perceptions can alter their attacking options. As mentioned earlier this can be done through communication, defensive patterns and also line speed.

To determine line speeds you must first identify what the offensive team is trying to create eg. A straight running five-eighth with a flat backline will generally do well against a defensive line that is slow and drifting.

Alternatively a quick moving aggressive man-on-man defence will force him to look for passing options, with his support players under pressure.

Points to look for: - Who is the main ball player eg. 10 or 12

- Who is the main hit up player
- Style – expansive, compressed, flat, deep
- Types of moves – cutouts, switches, loops, seventh man

A slick, quick passing team trying to confront the opposition defence and cut out to 15 for example, are looking to bring the defensive line to them, commit them and beat them with no time for defensive adjustment.

This can be countered by perception of line speed. If the ball player is no. 12 for example and he's trying to commit you before slipping his pass, he will react to his previous experiences of line speed.

All moves are practiced to be pulled to a certain timing and this is what we must disrupt.
EG. Start with normal line speed.

If having trouble, slow or quicken

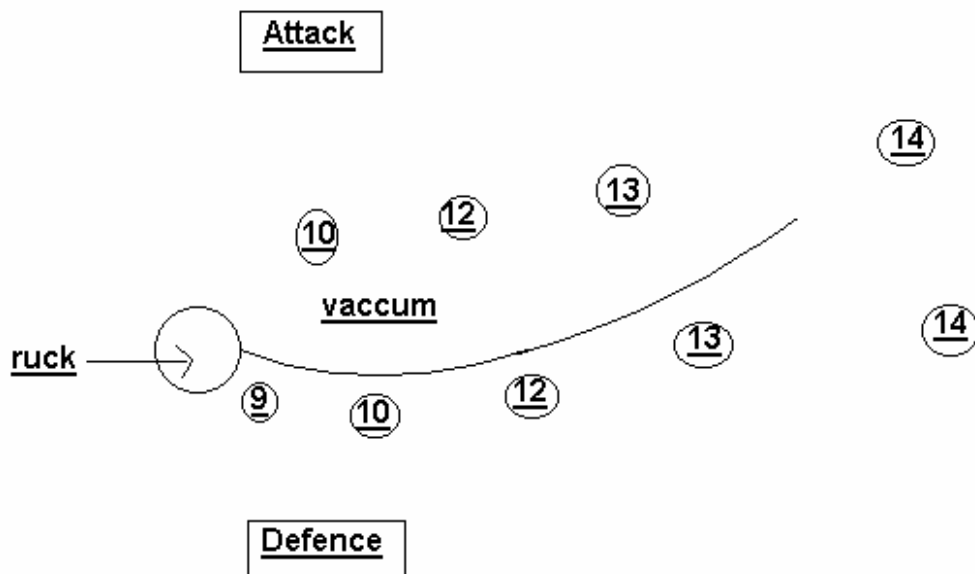
If you know the ball player wants to commit you before passing, rush the first few steps (big talk) then slow down.

The ball player will react early or miss-time his move generally as his perceptions are of a quick moving line.

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Line speed can also change between defending players if you want to create alleys or vacuums for attackers to be sucked in to.

EG. 1. if you want the attack to stay close in lead up with your outside backs and slower with each player inside of them.



Force attack inside through creating a vacuum effect. Line speed reduces from 14 to 10. The opposite, which is commonly known as drift defence encourages teams to go wider and be shut down with inside shoulder tackles

- must not be reactive to the attack all the time
- take the initiative – force their hand in attack
- alter line speed, create uncertainty, make them pull moves early and give you time to read runners.

- Be prepared to gamble and dominate when you haven't got the ball.

The Ability To Read Their Intentions

As mentioned in line speed, it's important to know what the opposition are trying to get you to do. Some teams, for instance may love an aggressive opposition defence as it stokes their own fires.

A team with a crash-running no. 13 may not appreciate:

EG. 1. In Line Speed forcing their 10 or 12 to run or pass around our defensive 13.

If a team like to pick and go you must counter this situation and force them to play a game that they are uncomfortable with.

It's this non-contact part of attack without the ball that is the most important in assessing what system or alterations must be employed.

It's only then that the physical part of defensive plans can be deployed.

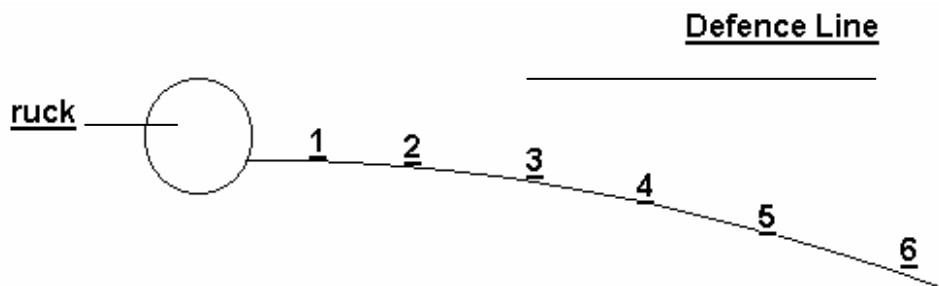
Points to look for:

- Rucking or Mauling team
- Use no. 8 off scrums
- Running Forwards
- Fast, slow, strong, big, small team.
- Passing or kicking team in their own ½
- Do they use short side
- What phases do they attack from mostly?

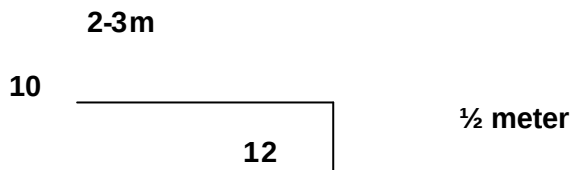
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STRATEGY AND SYSTEMS OF DEFENCE:

1. **DRIFT DEFENCE**- The most common form of defence used in modern rugby. It relies on the defender starting on the inside shoulder of his direct opponent. The defence should also be staggered backwards from the inside to the outside with each player able to see the one inside him about half a meter in front.

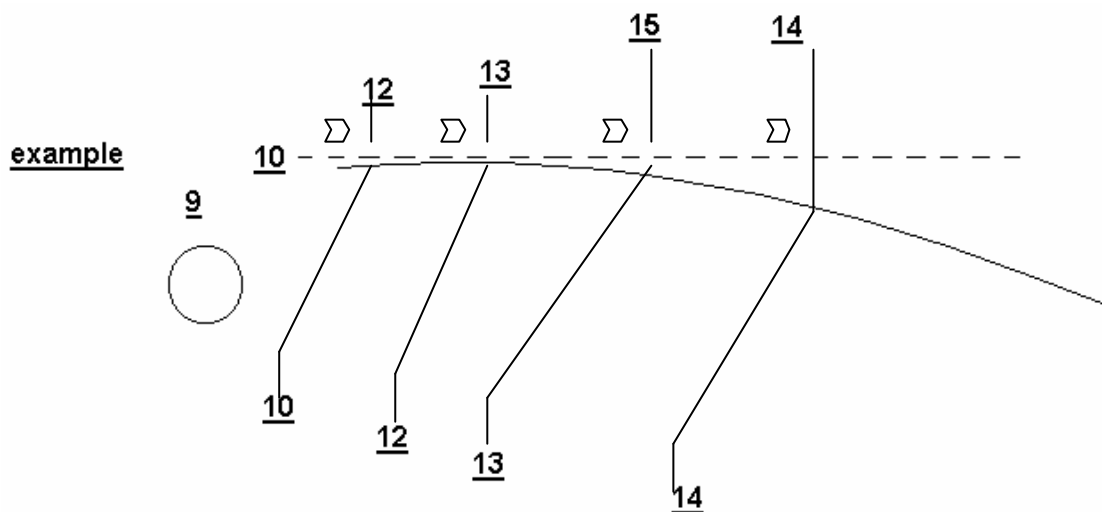


EG. If 5/8 marks 5/8 the 12 should be marked up on the inside of his opponent and half a meter back from his no. 10



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After the attacking 10 passes to 12 the defensive 10 can begin to track the attacking 12. He calls 12 as his and the defensive 12 moves to the attacking 13 and so on cutting down the extra man.



The advantages are being able to cover extra men in the backline and force the attack toward the sideline and out of space. If the stagger is kept and increased as it goes wider the spacing between the defenders can also be reduced relative to the angle of the attackers.

The negative side of drift defence is that you rely on inside help and communication is not always aggressive. Unders angles also cause problems to drifting players who get their body position to side on.

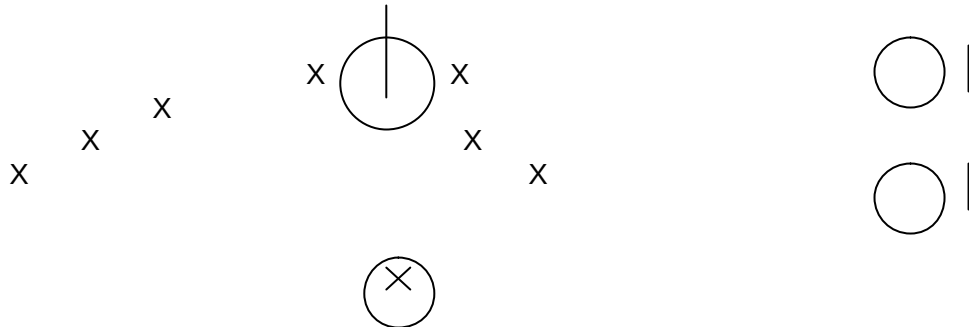
2 UP AND IN DEFENCE – Almost the opposite to drift defence in that defensive play starts outside his man and the defence is led up from outside-in. This defence can be hard for defenders to read as they are looking inside at the ball and the defensive player is coming from the blind eye. This tends to be more individual defence and is very susceptible to being beaten by one long pass around or over the furthest forward defender.

It needs a good cover set up behind it and is very intimidating if performed well. It works better off set play or phase play that is slow. Outside players must be extremely fit.

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2. **LAZY DEFENCE** – An addition to the previous two styles that stops the drive or pick and go play from the phase play.

A player drops in behind the tackle 2-3 meters back.



LAZY

He also calls the defensive line and communicates to 1st and 2nd defensive players what to do.

Rules: To tackle pick and go player

1st man in to assist 1 & 2 in tackle

To attack the ball in one-on-one tackles

To act as cover one pass on the inside of the ball

3 **ARROWHEAD DEFENCE** – A combination of drift and up-and-in defence that targets specific players as the danger. EG. You may aim you arrowhead at the attacking 12. this produces pressure on the play to either come back inside or cut no. 12 to outside men, who are then confronted by drift defence.

A very complex system that takes much practice.

Advantages : Can attack specific players and create vacuums and attacking alleys.

Makes teams react to your defence. It can easily be altered as the game unfolds.

Disadvantages: Takes great communication and combination and can be hard to maintain physically for the whole game.

SUMMARY:

There are no particular rights and wrongs in attack without the ball, just like all plans it can differ with different opponents. There are many more aspects that can be utilized, but at the end of the day it's the ability of the team without the ball to apply attitude and tactical intelligence that will ultimately decide how long they have to attack without the ball.

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