

Level III

TASK 12

**TRAINING PRINCIPLES FOR
GENERAL PLAY ATTACK**

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Training Principles for General Play Attack

General phase play attack is becoming an important part of a team attacking options. How a coach communicates and trains his players will determine just how well they are able to perform on game day.

Why Is General Play so Important?

General Play attack has become so important due to three main reasons; firstly teams are looking at retaining possession for longer periods of time. Secondly defences have improved and are able to absorb this increase and lastly if we are unable to penetrate we need to be able to retain possession effectively and efficiently as possible.

Consider the amount of times general play occurs throughout a game, even the most structured team that is programmed with a number of sequences will eventually run out of options and need to have a few simple plays that they can revert to so that all players can call on the run to give some form of structure rather than all players just waiting for someone to make a decision.

There are numerous options that can be played the French like to use switches, the Wallabies in 2004 used a cut 1 double loop, the Waratahs prefer to use forward runners off the half back, whatever the variety it is becoming more and more imperative that attacking teams use an array of options to provide a positive outcome for the team.

How do we go about training and coaching a team general plays so that they can be effective on game day??

A first step a coach must do is clearly defining the types of plays that he is going to implement. Initially these should be quite simple using no more than 5 attacking players. They need to be able to cover interchangeability of playing roles. The plays need to be simple in their skill execution but able to penetrate defences by running good lines and having players in motion.

How to communicate/train the players?

Now that we have planned our general plays it is important to consider the way that we will communicate this to the team. Each individual player will be different in the way that they take in and interpret information, therefore as a coach it is important to cater for the various needs of all players. *How often do you hear the coach screaming at the same player for being out of position or not running a play?? Perhaps the coach hasn't considered what the best form of communication is for that player to learn.*

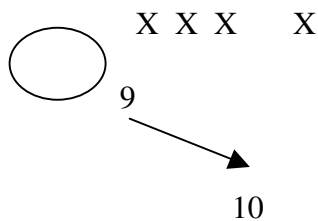
The various learning steps we can provide a player

- Drawing on a whiteboard
- Writing on a piece of paper so the player can take away and read
- Video showing an example
- Using small items with numbers to show the movement i.e.: drink cans with playing numbers
- Walking players through the play
- Testing the players with a quiz

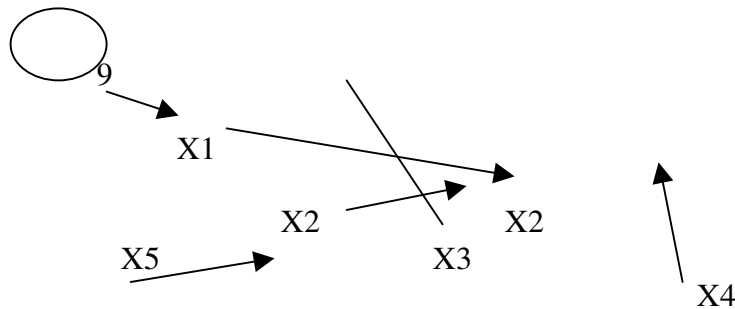
Where to attack?

When developing some simple plays consideration needs to be given to the level of competition and the time the coaching staff have with the players. A coach's philosophy in how they want to play the game will also influence the type of plays selected.

The first thing to be considered is the area/s that you would like to attack – so often even at the highest level we see one off runners off a half back running into the area where the most amount of defenders are located, in most instances either side of a ruck and maul. On most occasions there would be at times 3 players in the defensive line located between the ruck or maul and the opposing No 10 standing in a traditional position (seen below) so why attack there? By even transferring the ball one pass from the 1st receiver this is going to move the tackle area away from this potential congested area and allow the attacking team the opportunity to look at attacking 1 player rather than 3. In any attack you need variety and although in this instance I am suggesting we look to attack around the 12 there is merit to turn some balls back inside to keep the defence honest close to the ruck/maul.



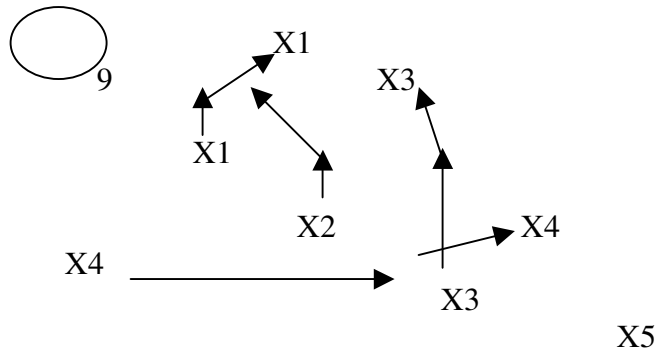
The most common play currently being used by a large amount of senior teams is a BLOCKER. In the example shown below – X1 passes to X2 behind X3 with player X4 on the outside looking to change his angle onto the ball and run at a hole or inside shoulder and player X5 who in some cases may be a blind winger or a player who has assisted at a previous breakdown, working into a position to involve himself again in the next passage of play.



The most crucial aspect when a general play is called is that every player must understand and perform their role, if X3 runs with his hands down then how does he think he is going to stop the opposition defender from drifting in defence if that defender knows he is no position to catch the ball? By playing one simple play we can create 4 different options all with the opportunity to break the defensive line and giving the team the best chance to retain possession. The critical players in the above scenario are X3 who must run the correct line so that he appears to be receiving the ball and then it is up to X2 to make a decision on what option he will pursue.

- X1 to X2 behind X3 – X2 ball carrier into contact (support players X1, X5 & X4)
- As above this time X2 passes to player X4 on the outside, X4 changes his angle looking to attack an inside shoulder of the opposition defence or run at a hole (support X2, X5, X1)
- As above except X2 passes inside ball to X5 (support X1, X3, X4)
- Lastly X1 passes to X3 instead of X2

Another simple option SNOOKER can be played with 5 players outlined below once again it provides the players with a number of options:



- X1 plays a switch with X2
- X1 plays a dummy switch with X2, then straightens and passes to X3 who is attacking an inside shoulder looking to run a hole
- As above except this time X1 after playing a dummy switch passes behind X3 to X4 who has X5 outside
- Lastly X1 can dummy switch X2 and run himself

In both the Blocker and Snooker scenarios we are looking at attacking the line with players in motion. The critical player in Snooker will be X1, his skill level and vision will most likely determine the option he takes but as a minimum he should be capable to play option 1 or 2 with either a switch or dummy switch and pass to X3.

Once the call is made and players are in motion all players must expect to receive the ball. Our support lines should be clearly defined and communicated for each potential scenario.

How To Train and Coach General Play

Once we have developed our 3 or 4 simple we can now consider how are we going to train these so that come game day every player is confident to call and execute regardless of the position that they are in i.e.: 1st receiver, 2nd receiver, 3rd etc.

Step by Step Process

- Walk through v No defence - highlight key points and role of each position
 - i.e.: angle of run,
 - starting position depth/width
 - ball carrier options (the use of markers should be used initially to show players where they should start. As they understand and adapt to the plays these should be taken away so that the players are able to move into the correct positions naturally)
- Jog/Run through v No defence (markers to be used)
- Drill v No defence (see below Diagram 1) (markers to be used)
- As above drill without markers
- Semi Game situation – 5 man drill (see below Diagram 2 – without markers)

Once all players are confident that they understand and can perform each role on the run it is time to introduce defence.

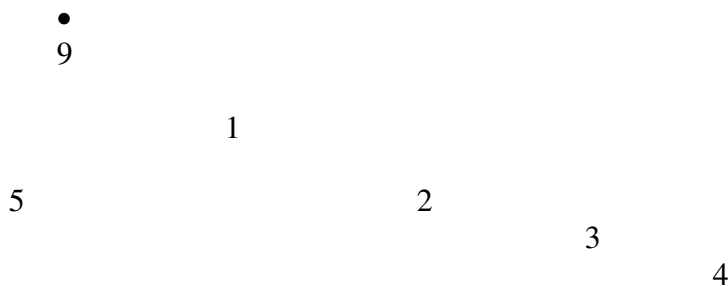
Upon the introduction of defence it is important to go back again to the first stage, commencing with walking and again reinforcing the angles that should be run, the support lines that should be run. Once again start with the use of markers to assist with the starting positions.

- Jog/run v Defence
- Drill v Defence (see below Diagram 1)
- Semi game situation – 5man drill (see below Diagram 2)

All the plays can then be integrated into all facets of training.

- Warm Up
- Contact sessions
- Defensive work
- Conditioning/lactate sessions when the players are fatigued
- Team runs

Diagram 1



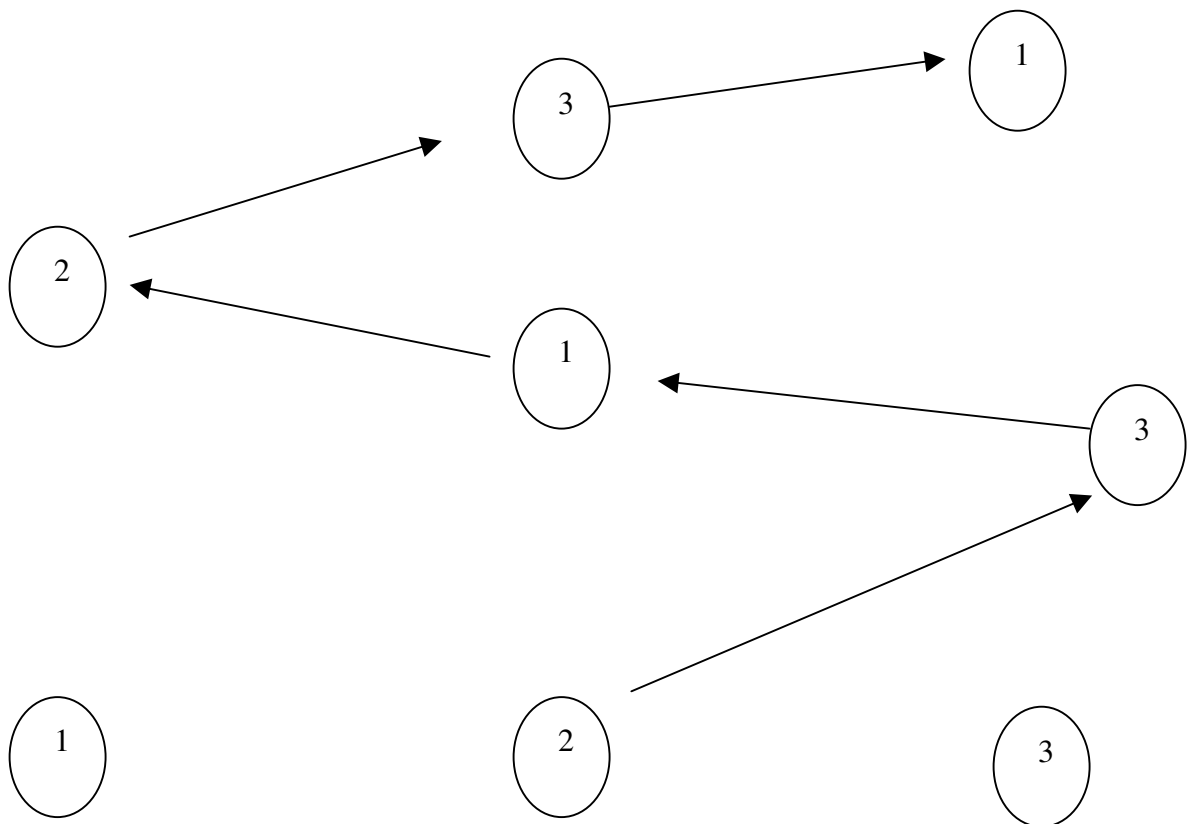
- Player 9 stays at half back at all times
- 5 players are arranged to form a mini backline, they are all given numbers with markers on the ground determining the starting positions
- The coach states a rule in this scenario the player in the number 3 position will call either BLOCKER or SNOOKER (the 2 example shown previously) this is to encourage calls being made from the outside where those players 2 or 3 passes wider are in a position to see where the space is.
- The Coach calls a number to be first receiver eg: if the coach called 3, the player standing at 3 would move to where player 1 is and player 1 and 2 would move out leaving player 2 in the 3 position and therefore having to call the play. If the coach first called 1 then the number 3 player would simply make the call.

The drill can be increased in speed so that the reaction times of players becomes less and less from the time the coach calls the number and the halfback passes the ball. This should be a continuous drill so that players become fatigued and have to think and react under some pressure. The coach also has the ability to ensure that all players can perform by calling that players starting number i.e.: a tight forward might go and stand at position 4 because he is on the end and he sees this as position he doesn't have to think but by calling his number he has to go to first receiver and react to what ever call is made.

Once competent add in defence and vary the numbers so that players begin to call the appropriate play eg: if the defence outnumber the attack, the attackers would be better suited to perhaps calling a Snooker with the preferred option of X1 playing a dummy switch and passing to play X3. Conversely if the attackers outnumber the defence the attacking team may be better served by either playing hands or going at the line with a BLOCKER or a SNOOKER playing one of the wider options.

Diagram 2

- Split into 3 groups of 5 with a mixture of forwards and backs in each group
- The ball starts with group 2 – who attack going right, receiving a pass from the halfback who acts as half back for every group. The tackle is called and players must react to support at the breakdown
- The ball is then passed to Group 3 who attacks going the same direction.
- Group 1 moves into the original position of Group 2 and attack coming back to the left then Group 2 moves into the original position of Group 1. This pattern can continue down the field – players must consistently think and react to where the next attacking position will be and calls must be made on the run.
- Once component introduce defense against all groups.



The key to training general plays is starting slowly, being very clear and precise with your communication to the players and working through a gradual process commencing with walking and finishing with game simulation. The plays need to become natural for all players to both execute and call.