

BACKS: A DIFFERENT APPROACH

DOUG MACDONALD

Notes:

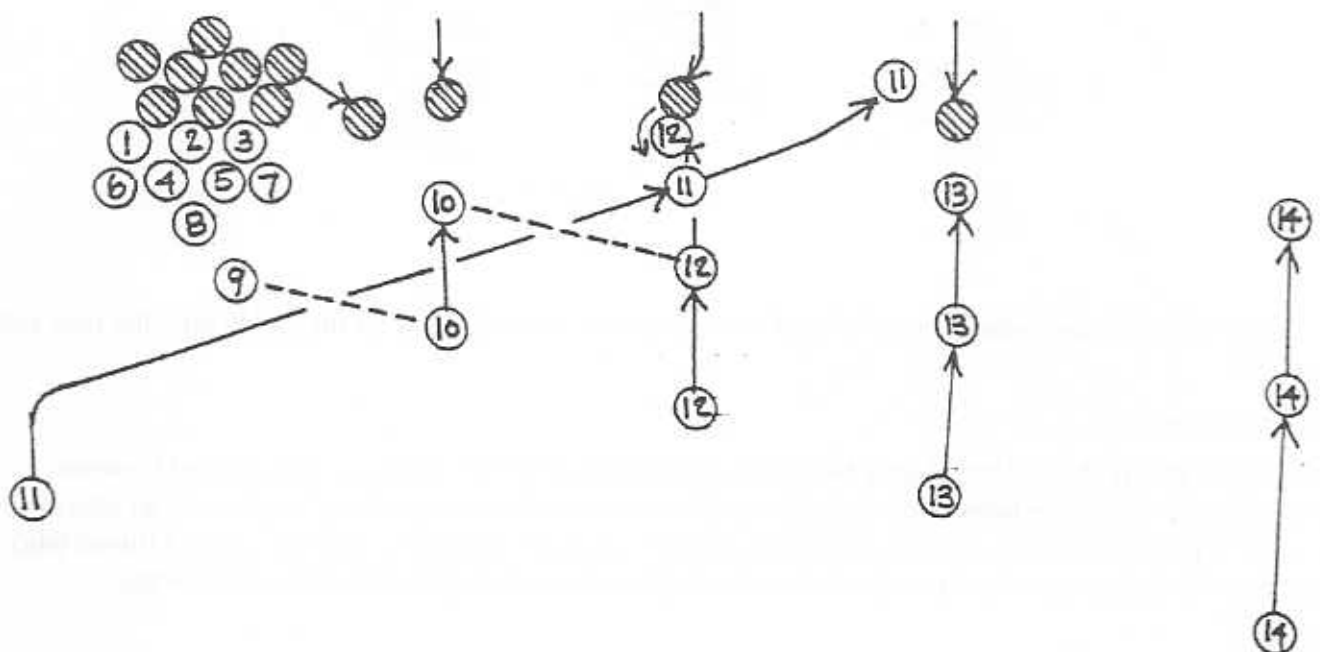
1. Handling/Subtleties
2. Creating space
3. Variety
4. Support
5. Anticipation
6. Flexibility
7. Vectors

At a rugby clinic Terry Burkett spoke for a short time inside about the various headings shown above... and the objective of what he was about to show us would;

- (1) ...get a player in behind the defence
- (2) ...with supporting players continuing the attack by using different running angles.

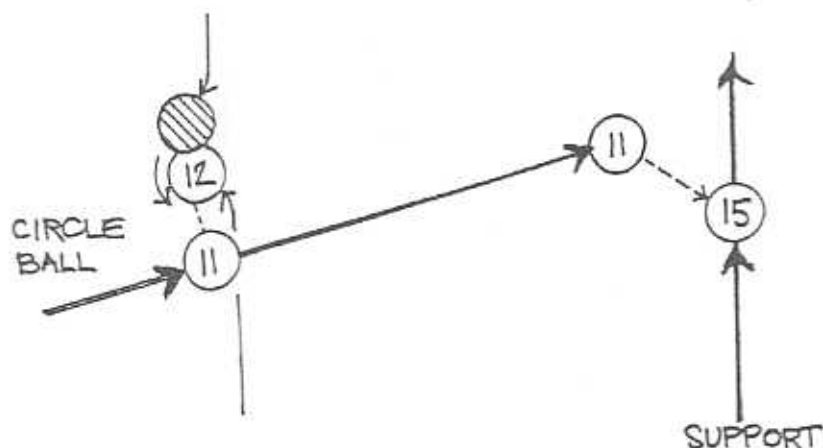
The system he advocated was "circle ball", a series of manoeuvres (he hesitated to call it a "move") where the defence was locked into a "head-on defence" (man on man) as opposed to "drift" ... and the line breaker was the blind winger sliding through on an acute angle as shown below. There are certain subtleties that need to be pointed out to contain the defence and stop it from drifting before the ball is transferred...but that will be dealt with later.

DIAGRAM 1: CIRCLE BALL OFF INSIDE CENTRE



Once the wing three quarter has penetrated on the angle ...another support player is required to complete the movement by receiving the ball running parallel to the side line...

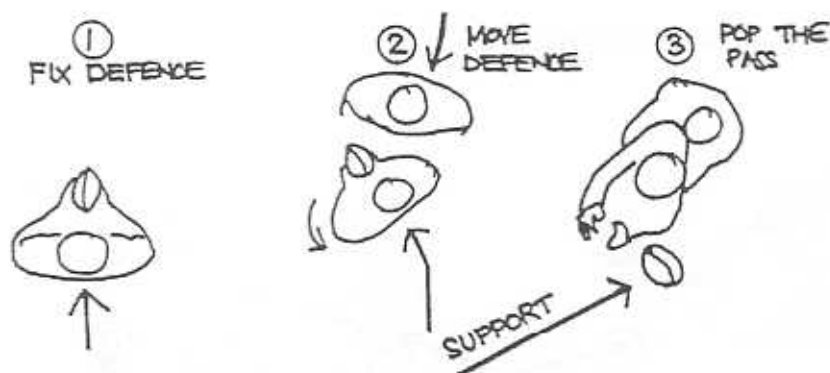
DIAGRAM 2: STRAIGHTENING THE ANGLE



HANDLING/SUBTLETIES

The corner stone of the "circle ball" strategy is the ball carrier. He must fix his opposite by running at him. The term used was... "keeping him on a string." Initially the 5/8 must run straight and not go to far otherwise he reduces the space (which is time) that the inside centre needs. The inside centre receives the ball running straight, lines up his man ...fixes him and just before contact turns his hips slightly inwards, swivelling towards the winger running an angle behind him...

DIAGRAM 3: TURNING HIPs PRIOR TO PASSING



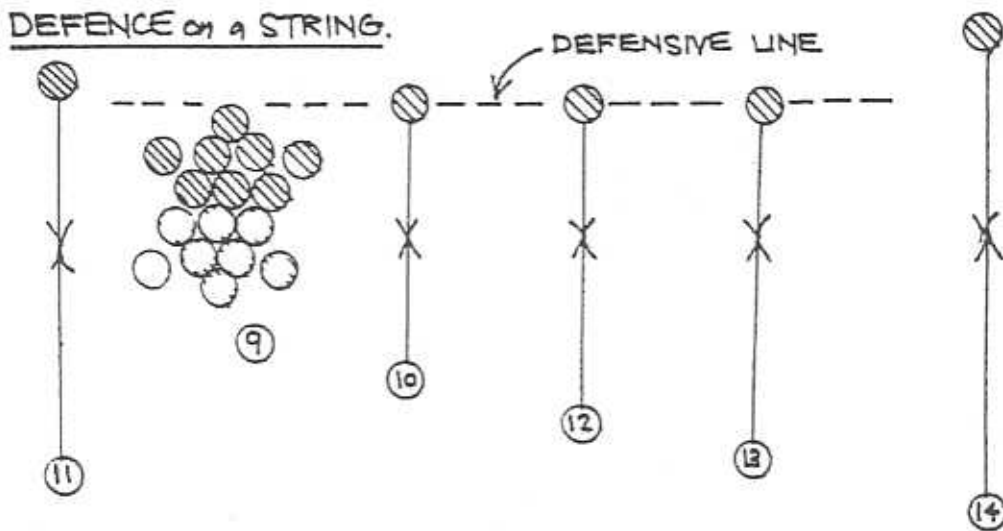
this will cause the defender to "turn in" and thus prevent him from sliding off the tackle onto the next ball receiver.

CREATING SPACE

"Space" is that portion of the playing field unoccupied by a defender. It may be the channel between defenders, or a position behind the defenders and it is even that unoccupied territory beside an attacking player. "CIRCLE BALL" is a strategy in putting a player into space behind the defence using a runner who receives the ball in unoccupied space behind the ball carrier, entering the line at an acute angle.

However to achieve results the attack must work the opposition. Each member of the back line must run at his man, fix them on that line (keep them on a string) and shut down their drift defence mechanism.

DIAGRAM 4: DEFENCE ON A STRING

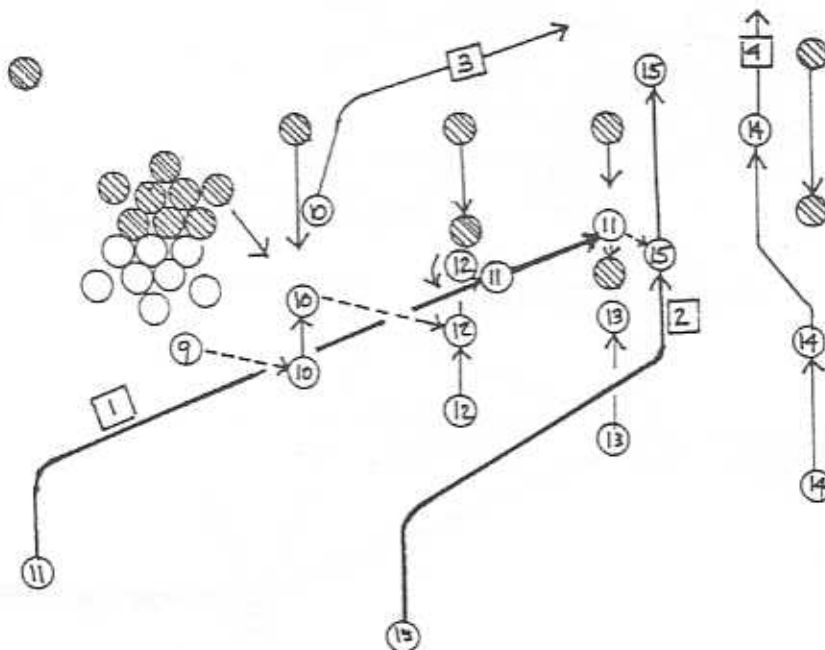


VARIETY

The initial pass in the "circle ball" routine will put the player behind the "defensive line" (refer to Diagram 4), but still susceptible to a tackle from the cover defence. Therefore it is vital that player receiving the ball off a "circle ball" move have support and it is important that the supporting player is running straight (parallel to the side line). By doing this the "attack" has put enormous pressure on the "defence". They will have;

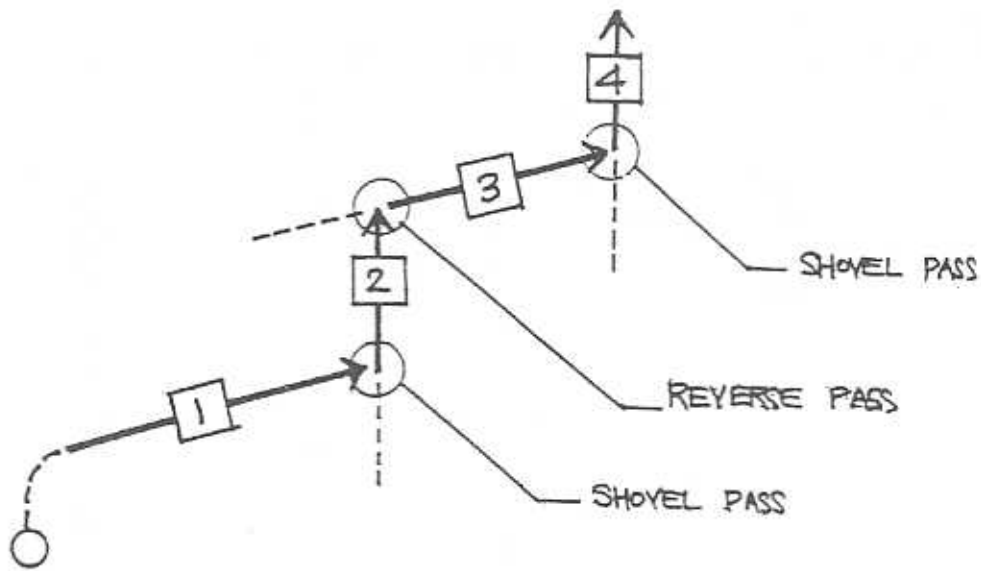
- (1) "Fixed" the defence and stopped the drift defence
- (2) Put a player through the line on an acute angle
- (3) Supporting player changes the line of attack.

DIAGRAM 5: ANGLES RUN ON "CIRCLE BALL"



The angles that need to be run are as shown in the above diagram and numbered 1, 2, 3, 4

DIAGRAM 6: ANGLES, DIAGRAMMATIC FORM AND TYPES OF PASSES

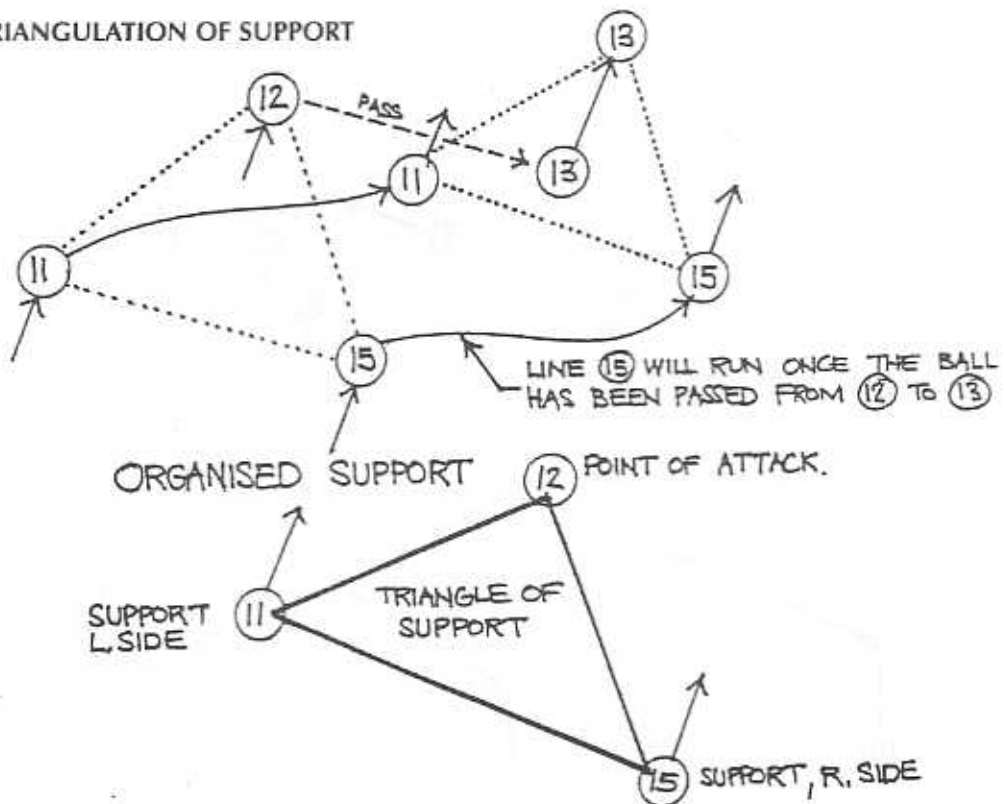


SUPPORT.

Backline attack is easily contained if the defence is organised, communicating and especially if the attack has no support.

One of our priorities if we are serious about adapting the "circle ball" strategy is the utilisation of the "blind" side wing, full back and on occasions the half back to provide the support. Everytime the backs have ball in hand the "2nd line of attack should be prepared". Ideally the support should be in triangular form thereby increasing the options of the ball carrier.

DIAGRAM 7: TRIANGULATION OF SUPPORT



ANTICIPATION

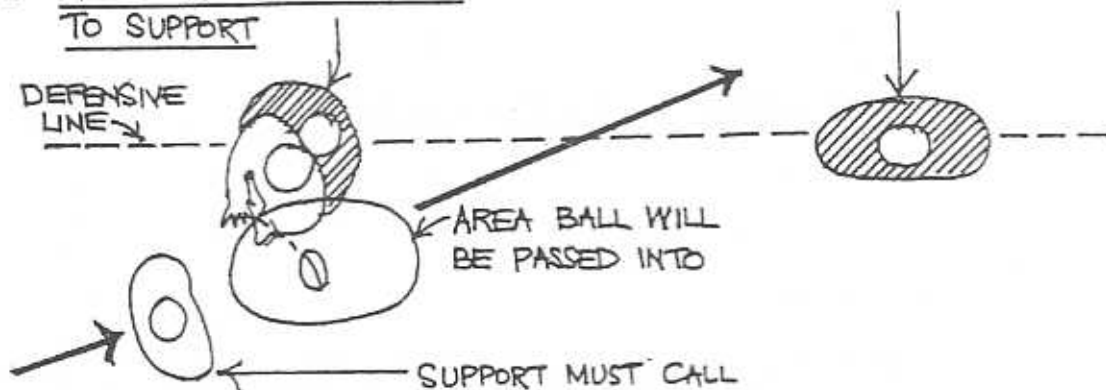
The major differences between "circle ball" and normal back line movement is;

- (1) Lack of eye contact
- (2) Lack of positional hands to pass to
- (3) The direction of the pass
- (4) The type of pass and execution.

All these factors help in the deception of the organised defence but the onus is put squarely on the shoulders of the support player to get the ball. Once the centre has committed the defence and started to swivel to pass he must get there and "occupy the space under ball." The pass needs to be "deep delayed" ...but most importantly, the support must anticipate the ball movement and get there.

DIAGRAM 8: ANTICIPATING THE AREA TO SUPPORT

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Note: Drills are given to increase players awareness of anticipation.

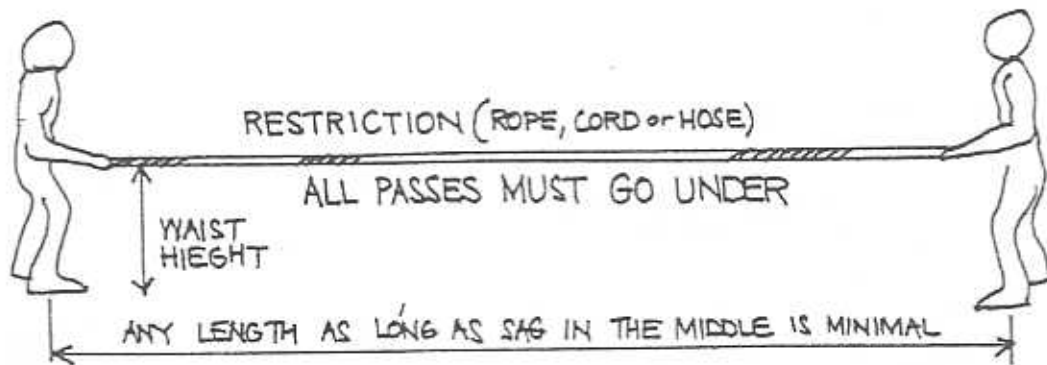
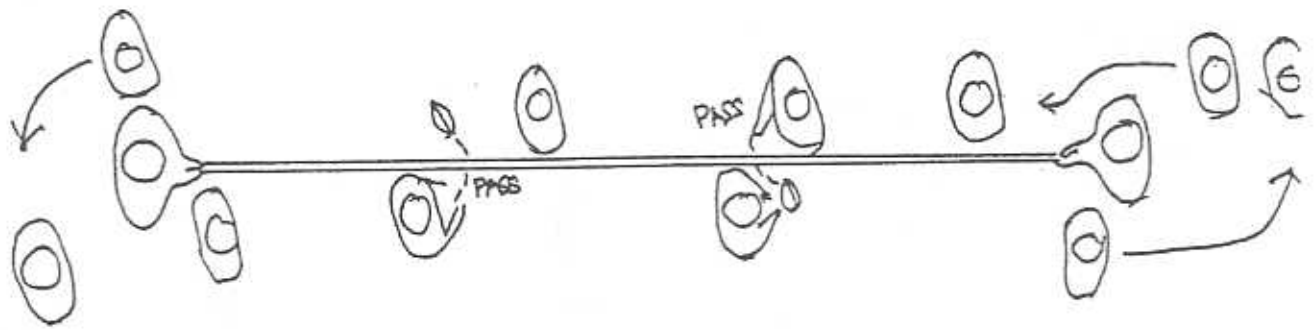
FLEXIBILITY

There is a need to stretch before training and competition, but whatever time span we may think is necessary to accomplish the task, it is not enough. All parts of the body require systematic stretching and to do this we need at least an hour.

However the one exercise that is crucial in the execution of the "circle ball" pass is the rotation of the hips. This was demonstrated initially using regular breathing ...then using the "3 second breath out method" and the result was amazing.

An exercise was demonstrated which was designed to improve passing skills and increase flexibility in the lower back.

EXERCISE 1: PASSING DRILL UNDER THE ROPE

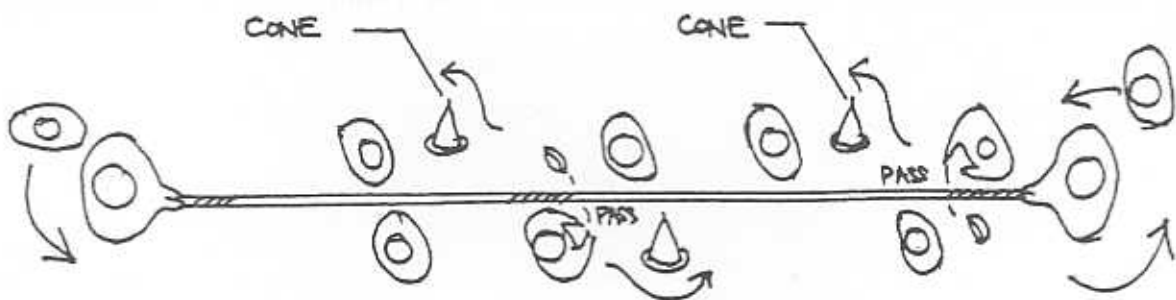


The exercise will;

- (1) INCREASE flexibility
- (2) INCREASE awareness of decision making ...the ball carrier does not have to pass ...especially if the receiver on the other side of the restriction has a ball ...or if he is in bad position.
- (3) INCREASE passing skills.
- (4) INCREASE reflexes.

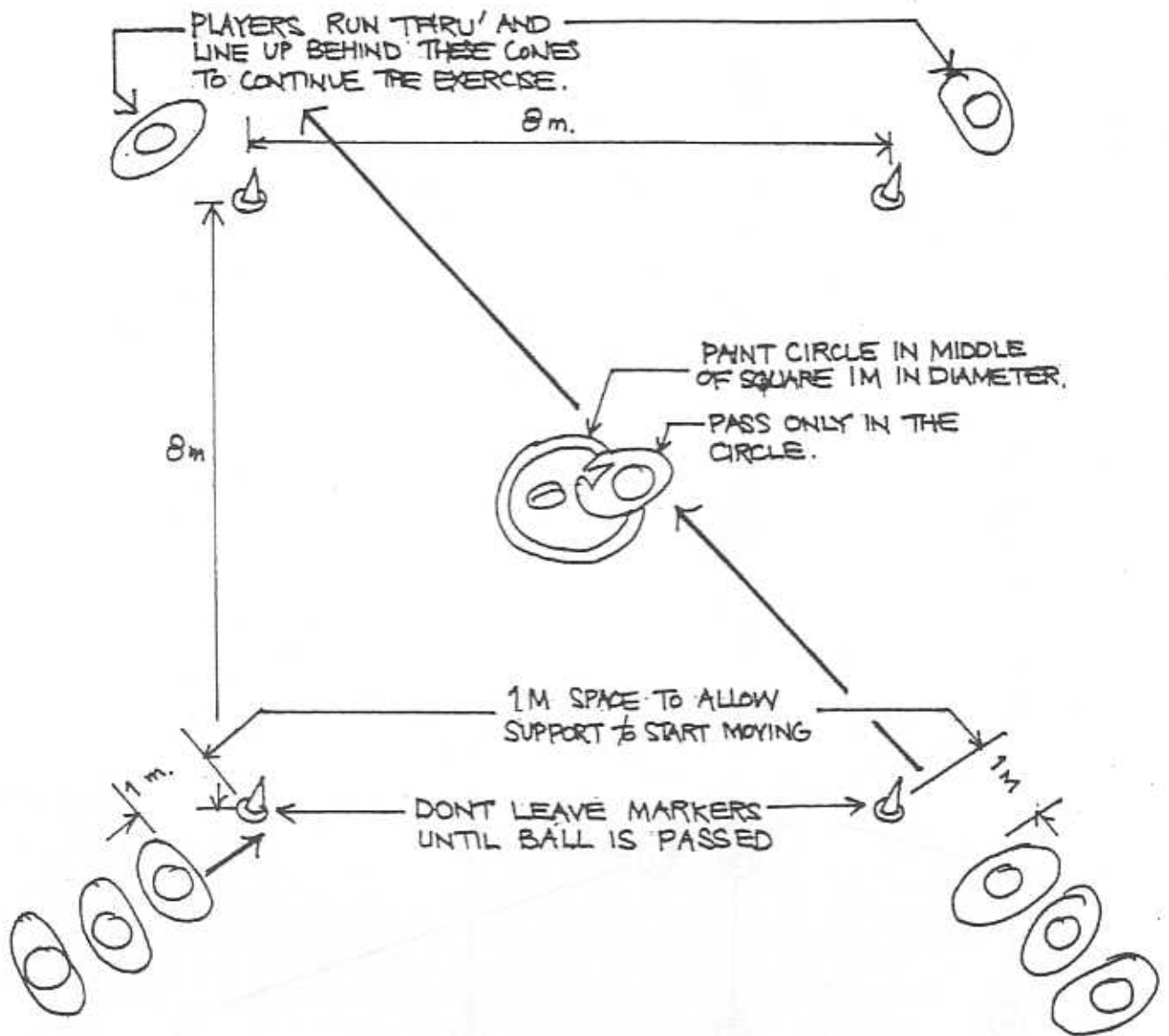
Once the exercise can be accomplished with one ball, introduce a second and then a third. The routine can be changed ...ball received, ball down ...next runner picks ups and passes.

CONES TO TEST PERIPHERAL VISION AND REFLEXES



EXERCISE 2: SYMPATHETIC PASSING

The drill is designed to show that there is sufficient time for a support player to get to a ball "popped" in the circle leaving when the ball is passed.

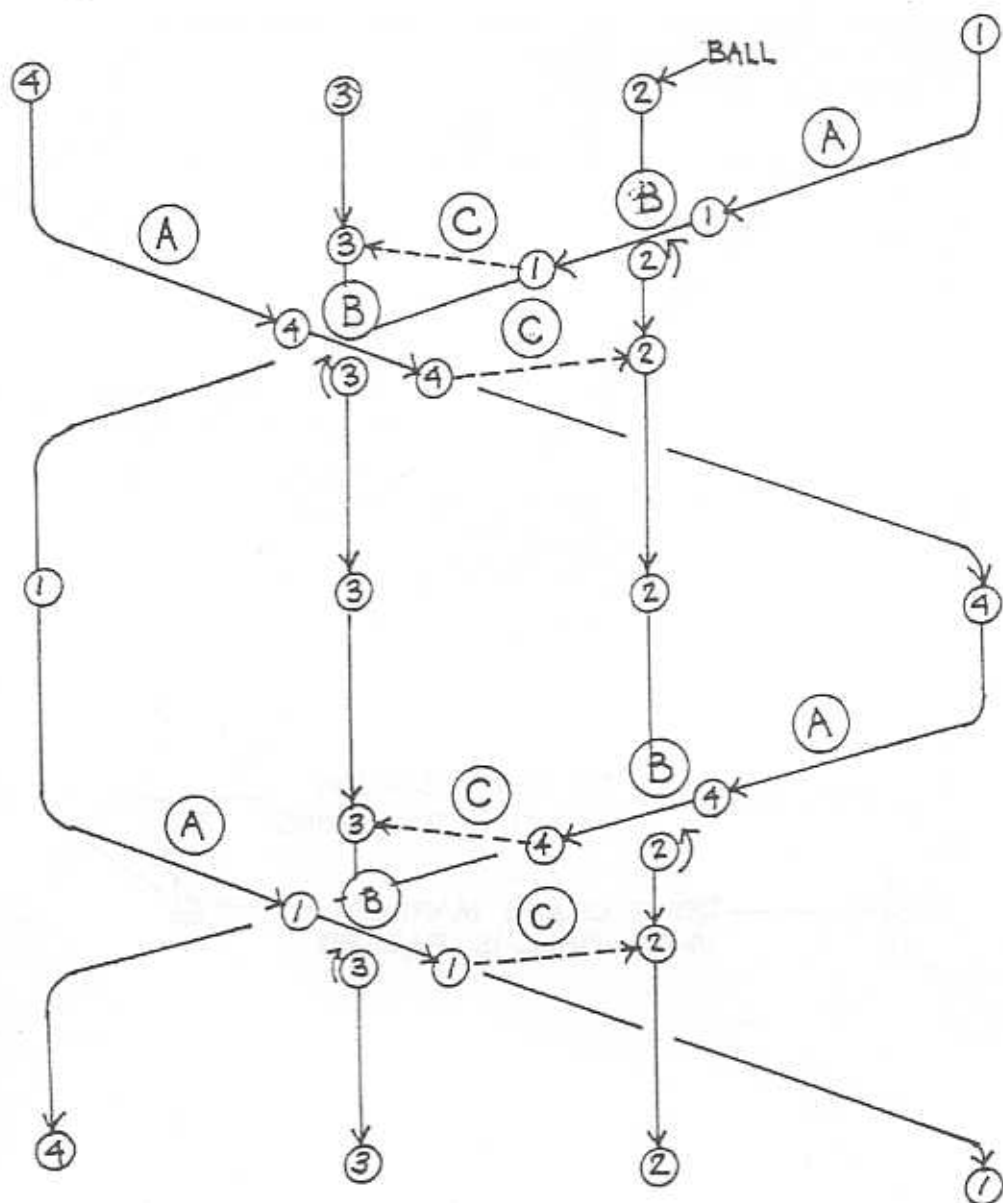


Points

- 1 Pass must be sympathetic to the receiver (support)
- 2 Support must time his run ...and
- 3 Occupy the space under the ball
- 4 Count the number of passes achieved in a minute (73 was the best our group managed)
- 5 DON'T leave the marker until the pass is given
- 6 ANTICIPATION
- 7 Height of ball (in pass) will depend on the receivers ground speed.

EXERCISE 3: CIRCLE BALL PASSING

This drill requires a minimum of 4 players. It is the "circle ball" strategy with the outside support (wingers) coming inside on an acute angle to receive a sympathetic pass in behind the ball carrier ...and then off loading to a straight runner.



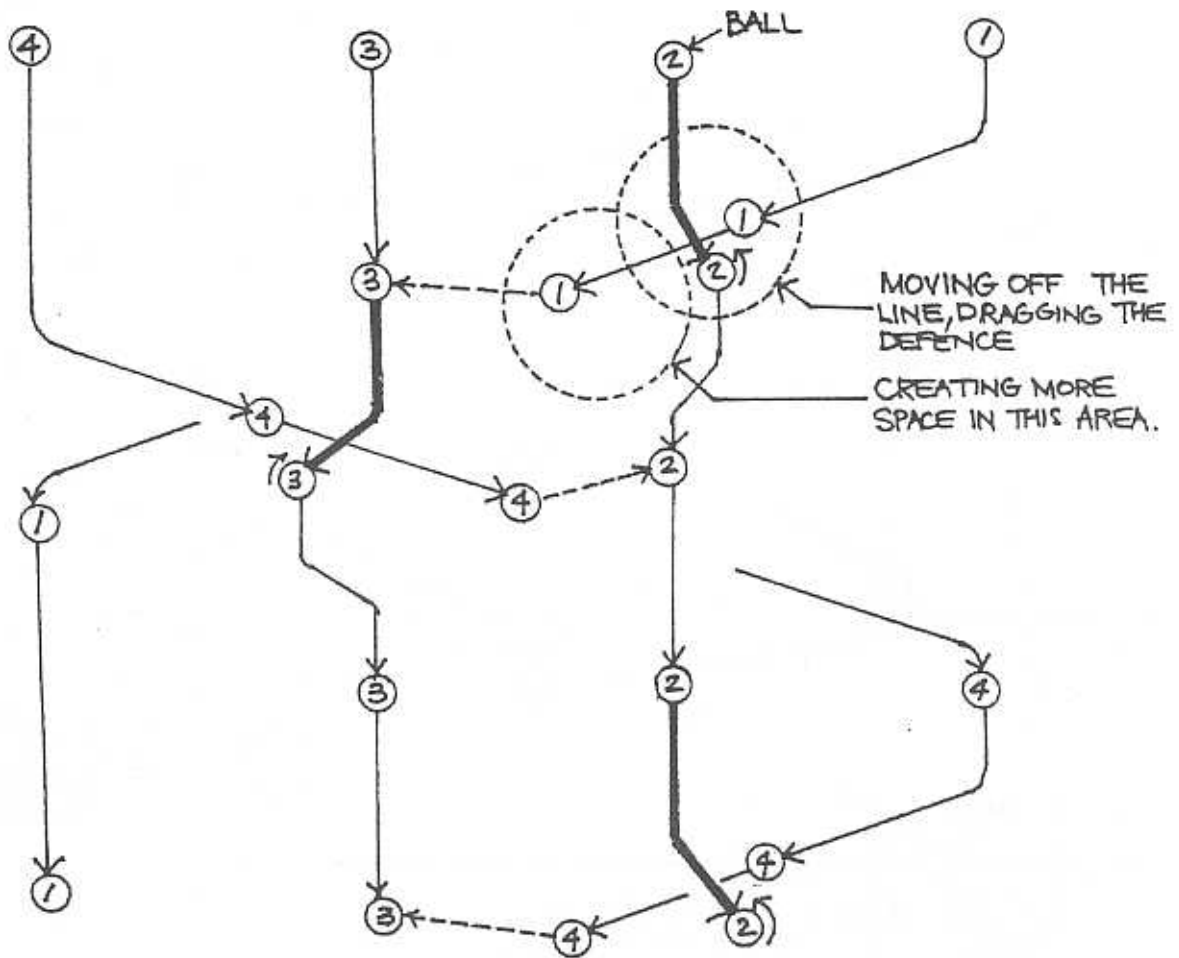
Points

- 1 ALL players run straight
- 2 OUTSIDE support runs straight, accelerates then runs inside on an acute angle ...**A**
- 3 SUPPORT must call
- 4 receives the ball from **2** and then gives a **B**
- 5 shovel pass to support **3** before he over runs him **C**.

EXERCISE 4: MOVING OFF THE LINE

This exercise is similar to the previous "circle ball drill" ...however the subtle rotating of the hips to turn the tackler in has been replaced by a definite movement off the line ...to create space in the channel between the 2 centres.

Note: in this exercise the movement "off the line" is to the outside.

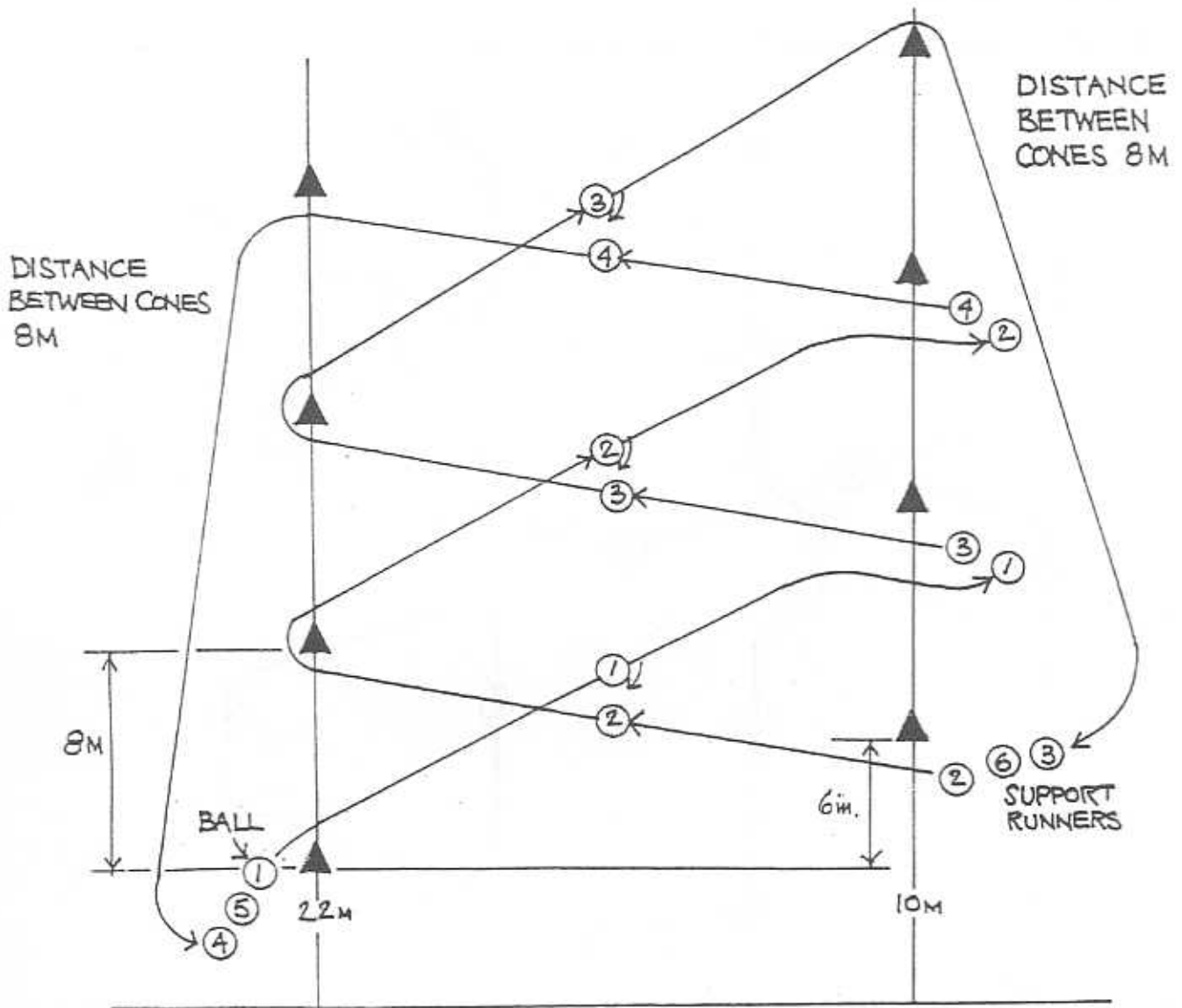


Points

- 1 Run straight to "fix" the defence
- 2 Ball carrier moves off the line at an angle
- 3 Outside support sees the manoeuvre and at the last moment changes direction to receive a pass coming inside ...he needs to be accelerating to make position.
- 4 Receives the pass from 2 and passes on to the straight runner 3
- 5 Ball carrier 3 completes the same move with 4 coming inside.

EXERCISE 5: POP-PASSING

This practice is to enable players to judge the ground speed of different support players who are running angles and being able to supply a pass to suit.



Notes: This drill can be conducted with a minimum of 6 players using 8 cones ...with one ball (as illustrated).

To increase the tempo put in a second ball and then a third ...set up 2 grids, time it and make it a race.

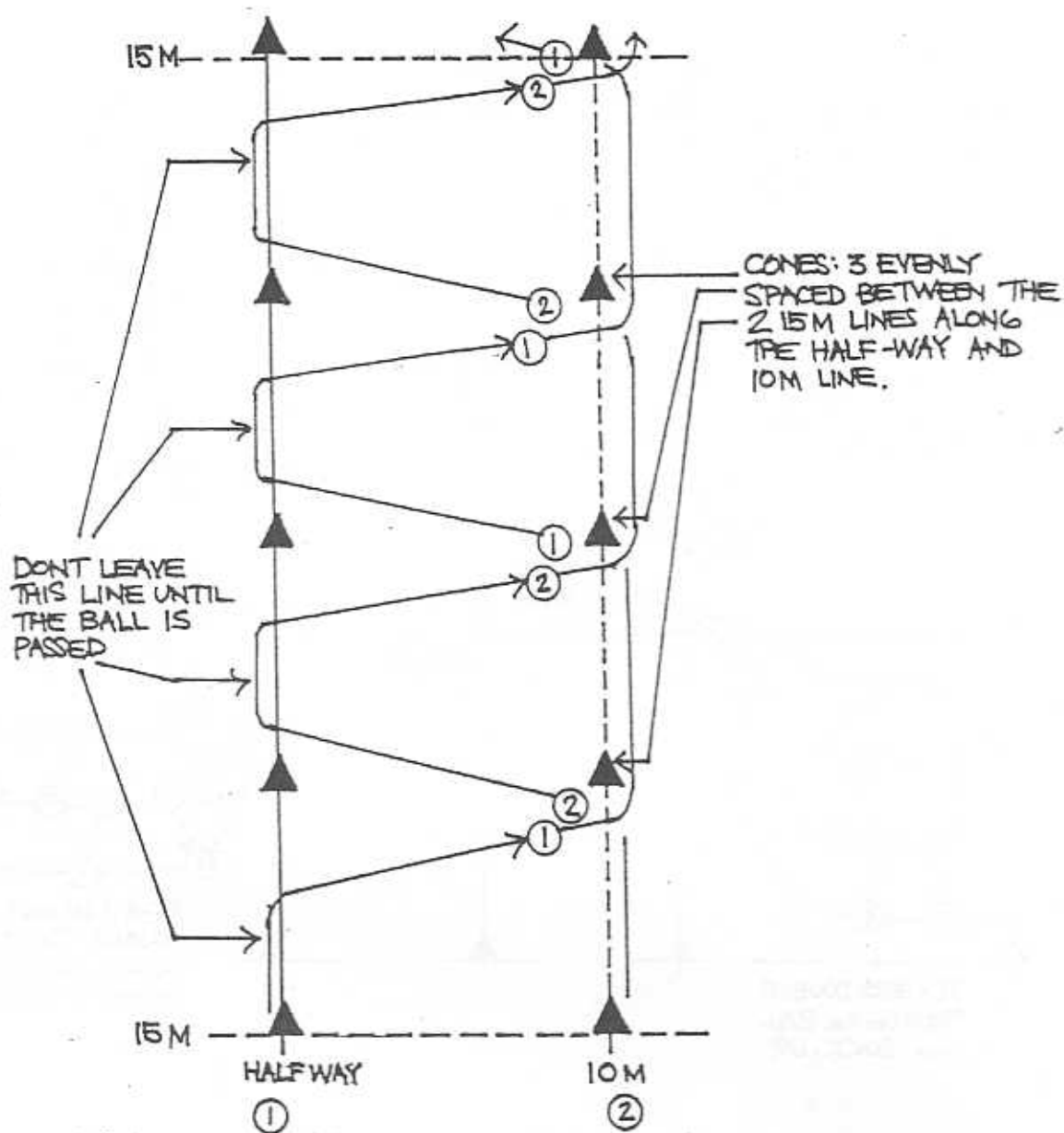
For larger groups just increase the number of cones.

Points

- 1 Increase awareness of timing ...anticipation
- 2 Increase passing, handling skills and reflexes
- 3 Increase awareness of running lines
- 4 Increase flexibility

EXERCISE 6: SUPPORT RUNNING ON "C" BALL

This exercise is a game simulation of the blind wing coming in off his line to pick up a pass in behind the centre. The support must judge his run and only leave his line when the ball is popped.

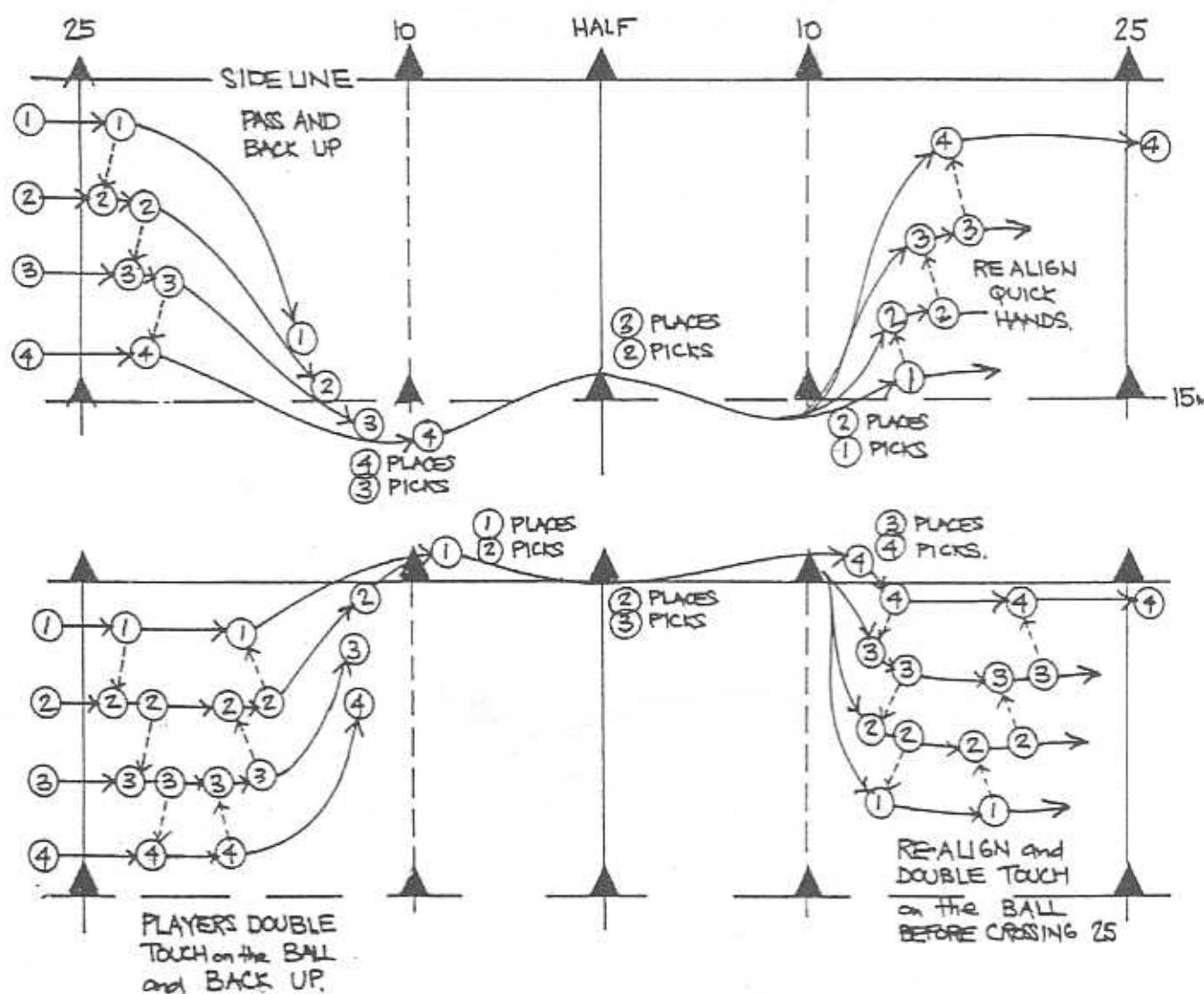


Points

- 1 Pass is DEED DELAYED to allow the support time to occupy the space under the ball
- 2 SUPPORT must anticipate when the pass is on
- 3 SUPPORT must accelerate toward the ball and call
- 4 TIMING

EXERCISE 7: REALIGNMENT DRILLS

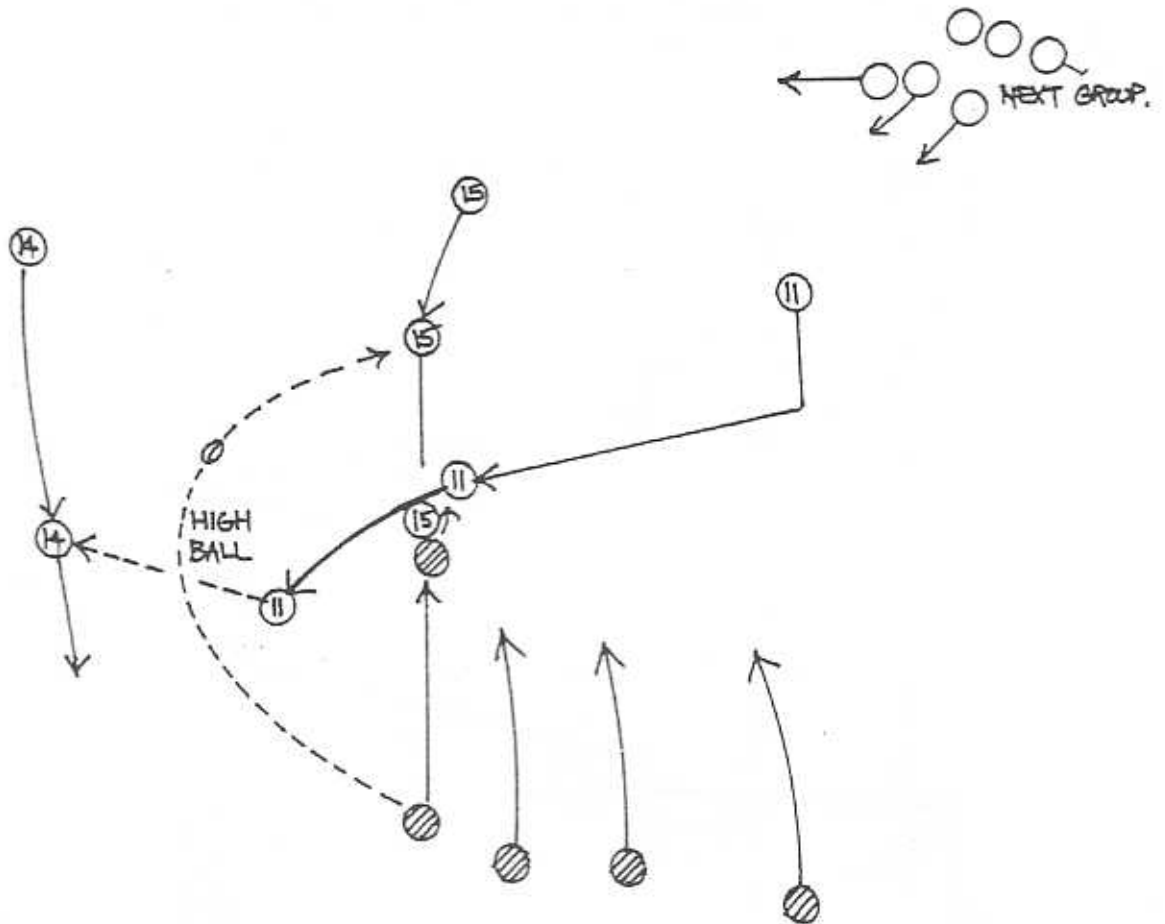
These are variations to the "D" series drills ...this particular drill being D2, the "SNAKE"



Points

- 1 Must be done at PACE
- 2 RUN STRAIGHT ...3 passes then the "snake" movement
- 3 INCREASE to 6 passes before the "snake"
- 4 INCREASE to 6 passes on re-alignment
- 5 ADD pressure by timing

EXERCISE 8: COUNTER ATTACK DRILL — HIGH BALL TO FULL BACK

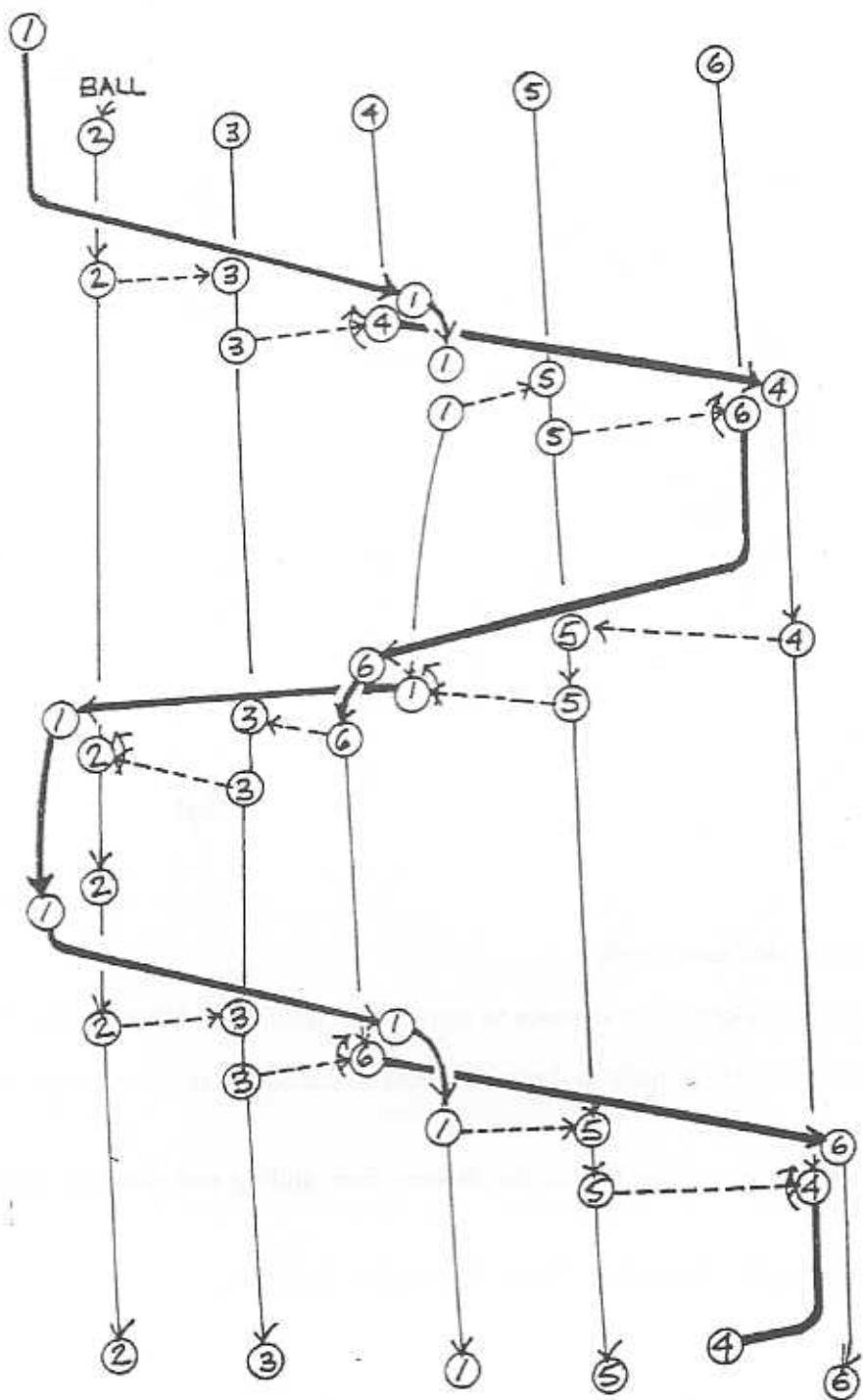


Points

- 1 FULLBACK must catch confidently
- 2 HE them must run straight at the defence to stop it from going into "DRIFT" mode
- 3 WINGER 11 runs straight initially and moves across to support ...receives the pass running behind the full back
- 4 IF possible he should straighten to stop the defence from sliding and passes to the open wing who is in support
- 5 USE an accurate high kicker with 1 chaser. Then put in 2 chasers

EXERCISE 9: CIRCLE BALL DRILL

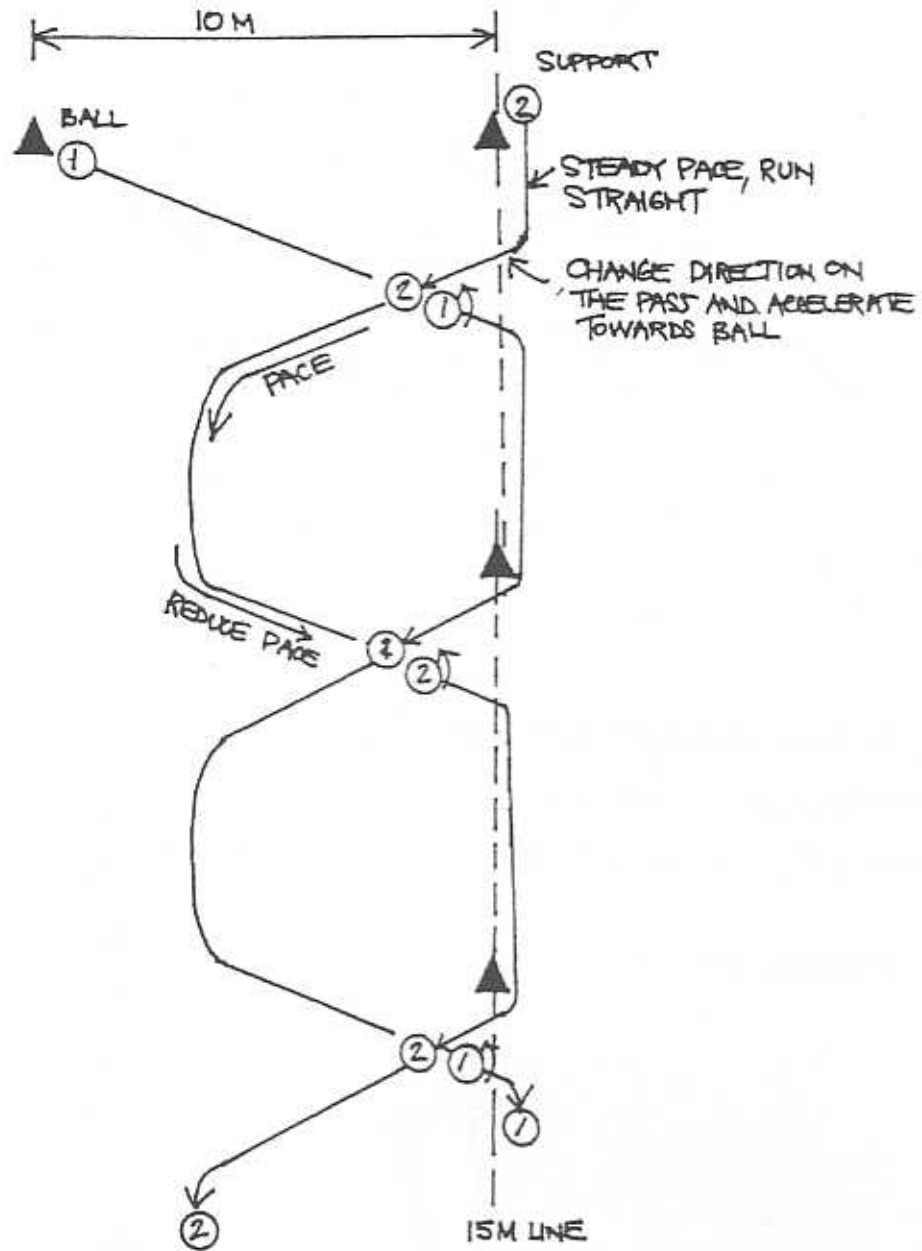
A continuous passing drill with a group of 6 where the system is 2 lateral passes then a circle ball, another 2 lateral passes followed by circle ball ...etc.



Points

- 1 Player trailing ...2nd line of attack
- 2 "Think" 2 and 3 passes
- 3 REMEMBER lateral alignment ...player 2, 3, 5, always run straight

EXERCISE 10: CHANGING PACE ON REVERSE PASS

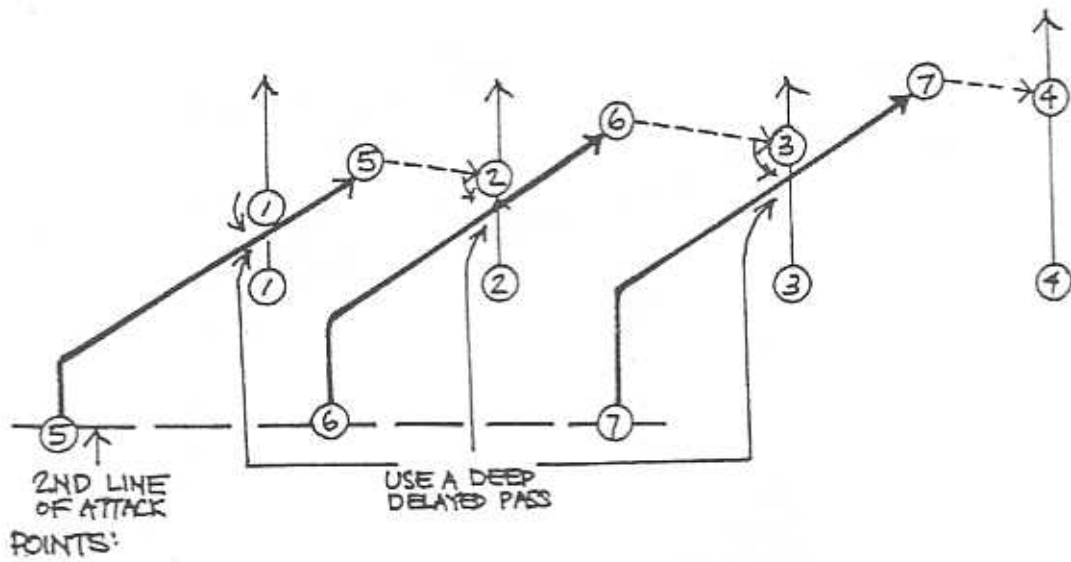


Points

- 1 Support does not leave his line (15m line) until the ball is passed
- 2 Steady pass, steady pace
- 3 Vary pace
- 4 Receiver of the reverse pass is moving faster

EXERCISE 11: ANGLE RUNNING DRILL

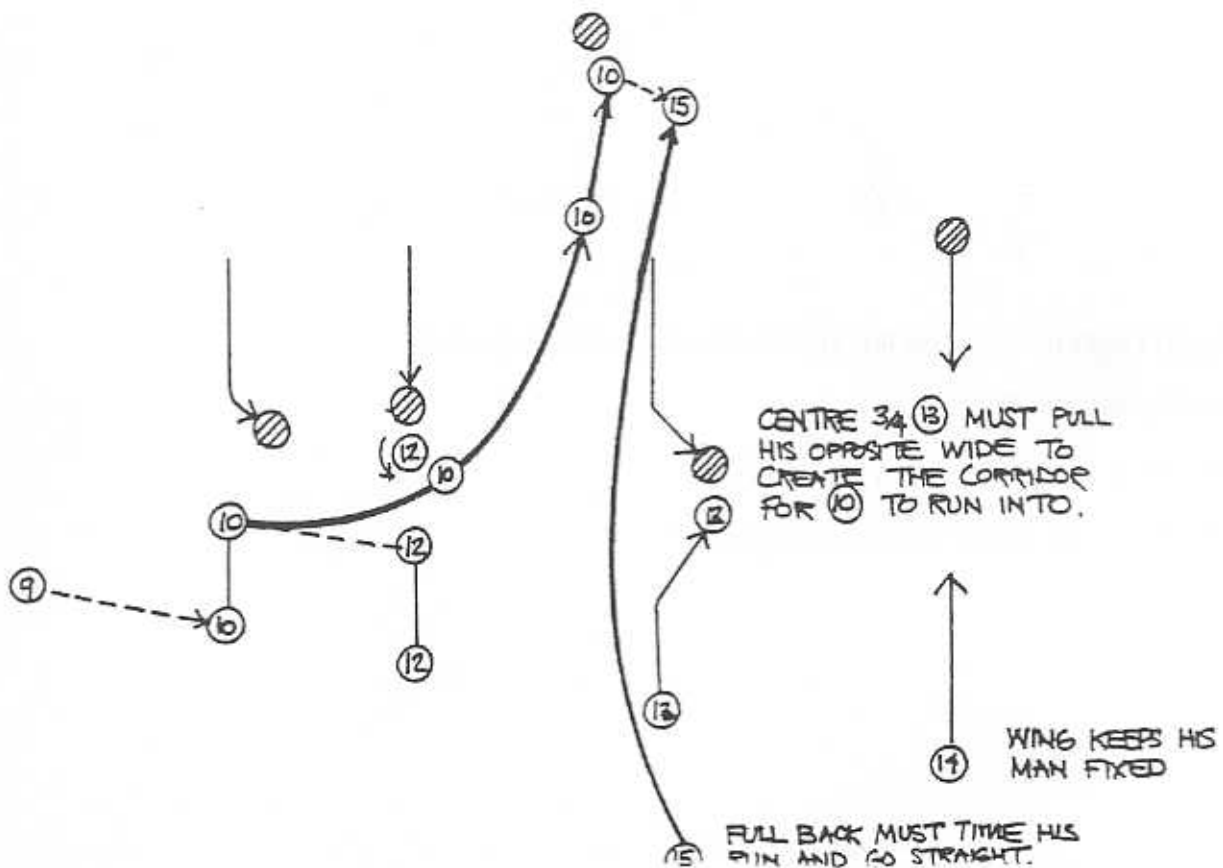
This drill is to demonstrate the use of the second line of attack.



Points

- 1 Attacking angles ...a straight runner after the angle run
- 2 "Deep delayed" pass on the C-Ball
- 3 Support must call ...and ANTICIPATE

EXERCISE 12: TEAM RUN ...THE LOOP



EXERCISE 13: TEAM MOVE — CENTRE ASIDE ATTACKING USING KICK

This play is from a scrum centre field going into the opposites.

