

4 Week Skills Program For The Amateur Rugby Coach



*Template for a whole
months skills coaching including
Ball work*

*Defensive structure &
Tackle Technique*





4 Week Skills Program

I would like to thank Harvey Howard (Western Suburbs Magpies Managing Director of Coach & Development) and John Sione Va'a (Western Suburbs Magpies Development Coach and Assessor) for sharing this 4 weeks skills program.

This 4 weeks skills program is designed to increase the development of each player not only within your club but at a broader prospectus within the whole district. We feel that programs like this will benefit not only the clubs but more importantly the individual players within the club. The level within the district competition is at a high and can only get better with positive results coming from programs such as this. We at West's Magpies want to bring forward more programs in helping district clubs to progress.

Skills and technique coaching is very important in that with the technique and skills of the game evolving every year as well as the rule of the game changing with it. It has become a necessity for coaches at club level help to develop their players to maintain the skills and technical abilities to stay competitive within the game of Rugby League.

Minis and Mods football is the lifeline of our game today and to maintain a high level of competition at this age. The game should be about fun and enjoyment. But in doing so we as coaches have to incorporate simple and effective coaching methods so that along the way the kids are learning, ore and more about this great of our and progress further with the interest of representing in the higher honours as they get older and move through the grades.

With our international grades from 13s through to our seniors the learning outcomes should be a lot more intense as the player's progress through the grades. Different techniques and skills sessions should be covered by all coaches from every club so that each player is afforded the chance of progressing through the grades and up skilling individually to a higher level as a player and as a coach.

We hope you find this 4 week skills and technical program useful and we wish you and your club the best for the season.

Mr. Harvey Howard
Mr. John Sione Va'a



4 Week Skills Program

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4 Week Skills Program

All skills and technical sessions should be done precisely, correctly and the education process has to be corrected so that all game skills and technique levels are met throughout the program.

Every player whether it's a beginner or an elite has been taught some level of skill by past coaches. What this program sets out to do is to apply more pressure to the player so that individually they are fully competent in applying each skill set correctly with precision on every play at hand. Becoming more dominant in how they (the player) are more confident in their own abilities and skills towards the game of rugby league at a higher level.

All skills sessions should be run at above game speed to minimize errors. Correct positioning and the application of the skills being taught should be enforced. It is very likely that each player has some flaws in parts of their game and sometimes the skill levels are incomplete in how they apply them.

Up skilling and improvement on skills should be taught all times through each session. All players should be competent and accurate in their application towards their skills and technique within the game of rugby league through positive and correct coaching.

Every player that comes to club football see what they see on the television and it excites them to get on the field and play like their hero's. This can be a good thing and a bad thing due to the physicality of the game. In running programs throughout your club as a coaching coordinator proper coaching and training techniques should be applied by all coaches that each child is being taught proper skills and techniques from MODS through to internationals (juniors to seniors).

It has been noticed that our international players coming through from 13s to 17s half are lacking some of the necessary skills and different techniques that sometimes hold them back from making that next step into representative football. If we all work together in reinforcing that these skills and techniques are taught throughout the club in all grades leading onto representative trials and selections then you as a coaching coordinator will feel that your position as a coordinator has been accomplished and that your club has been successful in progressing your players from club to another level and know where your next focus is at for the coming year.



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Ball work:

➤ **2 hand hold:**

- All players coming through the grades from Mods to international should know to use 2 hands every time they carry the ball in attack. This should be coached and implemented throughout every session as a warm up and definitely through skills and technique work through training session during the week.

➤ **Grip control**

- Grip control is important as part of your ball control sessions held through the week. Ball control is a vital part of the game and learning to control the ball with proper technique is vital. In holding the ball and practicing the technique on ball wrestle with both left and right hand grips, enables better control and confidence in securing the ball on impact. It is also useful when getting up to play the ball and controlling the ball throughout the whole movement. Although we always practice 2 hand carries it is always necessary to practice grip control in the case of impact and creating 2nd phase ball at the defensive line.

➤ **Confidence in passing from:**

➤ **Right hand**

- Passing Right to Left at speed and in one motion (Either 6, O clock or a spiral)

➤ **Left hand**

- Passing Left to Right at speed and in one motion (Either 6, O clock or a spiral)

➤ **Off the ground**

- All players should be taught this from mini's through to internationals and should be taught the proper positioning and passing motions throughout the whole movement. It has been the case that even our senior players are not confident in how to position their footing and how to complete the pass in a correct manner.



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- **Catch and pass (one motion)**
 - Catching and passing in one motion has become an art form which is being taught throughout the representative training infrastructure and its importance is that it gives your attacking line that few extra seconds to play with the ball. It also minimizes the reaction time for the opposition defence.

- **Run – catch – pass (Left / Right) at speed**
 - Run – catch – pass is a movement of separate entities where even this technique has its flaws because of incorrect foot positioning and all the preparation procedures leading up to each individual technique.
 - RUN, meaning running through and preparing to catch the ball. Having both hands up in preparation and also giving a target for the person passing the ball.
 - CATCH, meaning hand positioning and vision on the passer and the ball delivery throughout the whole movement from when the ball leaves the distributor's hands to when you CATCH it. Making sure that your preparatory procedures are correct so that you receive the ball correctly.
 - PASS, meaning that your preparatory positioning and hand eye co-ordination is correct in preparing to PASS the ball using good form

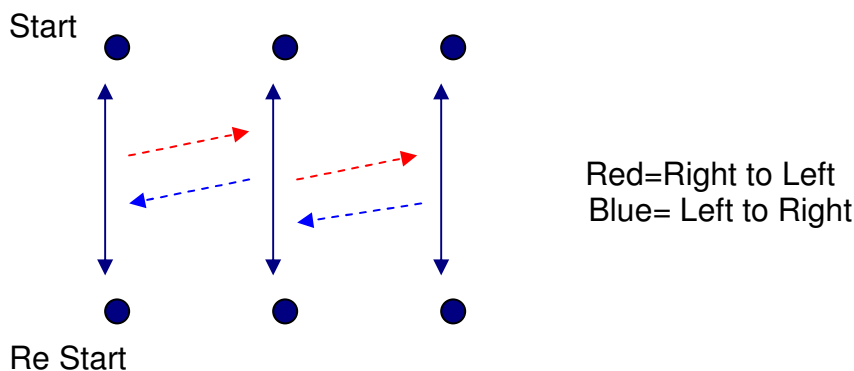
- **6 o'clock & spiral**
 - 6 O'clock pass is what it is. If you look at a normal clock face and go back to your 2 hand carry it will show you that in carrying the ball in 2 hands that it prepares you for a 6 O'clock pass with the ball held up facing the 12 and an anti or normal clockwise rotation the ball goes to the bottom and then facing the 6 on this position we set to release the ball. With the rotation of the ball and the release at 6 O'clock facing the intended receiver the momentum will carry through on the whole movement.
 - Spiral pass is a faster and more direct passing movement that uses a technique on what I call handling the ball point to point which is taught to rugby union players. This gives direction and speed of pass on when the ball moves in a spiral motion to the intended receiver.



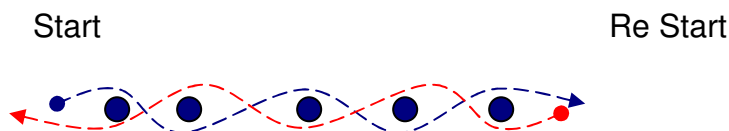
4 Week Skills Program

During your coaching regime it is always good practice to keep things simple and straight to the point. Below is a simple format on how to place your cones and how to use them for various drills during a training session.

Passing Drills (Left to Right and Right to Left):



Running through 2 hand carry and one hand grip carry (Left and Right hand):



2 Hand Carry:

Through the in and out run route get your players going through holding the ball in front of them with 2 hands and the urgency of keeping the ball in front of them.

One Hand Grip Carry:

Through the in and out run route get your players to go through holding the ball one their Left Hand in front of them and on the return switch hands to your right and do the same coming back.

Above are some diagrams showing different training regimes and how easy is it to set up a grid for different ball skills to be put through. These set ups above can be performed in trainings from MODS through to senior internationals and depending on the urgency of proper technique through your training session



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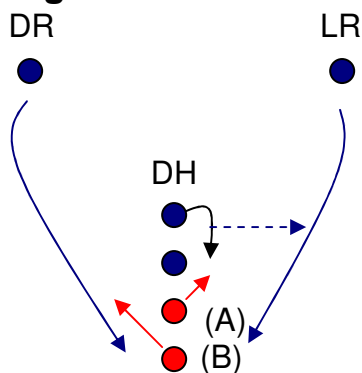
Attacking Line Work:

- **Downs line (under the Ruck area)**
 - Down lines is another form of running an Unders line but actually hitting the line at speed coming back under the ruck area which is taught to bring the defensive line to react by coming back in. This is usually performed by your forwards but is encouraged by all to perform this drill at your training sessions as sometimes backs are called into perform this run line to help out the forwards. It is suggested that this training regime be more suitable for your international players from 13s to 18s.
 - ***Minis and MODS should be practicing straight lines and concentrating on run – catch – collision with the focus of securing the ball on catching it and security on collision.***
- **Angles**
 - Running angles should be taught from 9s through to international 18s. It should be very important that all players should know how to run angles from an early age so that when they progress through the grades their individual knowledge on coming through the line has been increased in different options on coming into the defensive lines hitting it from all angles.
 - ***Minis and MODS should be practicing straight lines and concentrating on run – catch – collision with the focus of securing the ball on catching it and security on collision.***
- **Timing**
 - Timing can be incorporated through your line running drills and can be taught from Minis through to your 18s international squads. The importance of timing comes with the urgency on hitting the ball at the precise time of hitting your run line and practicing. So that you are catching the ball in front of you
- **Hitting holes not the man (finding the middle)**
 - Hitting the holes is a skill taught from MODS through to 18s international. This is a key factor in breaking the line. A lot of players are playing the man and not finding the middle or space in between the 2 defenders. This part of a player's game should be a key learning skill which should be taught constantly so that each player has the skill of playing up on a player and then finding the middle so as to wrong foot the defender and getting through the middle.

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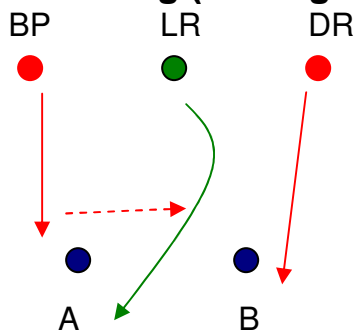
Below are some diagrams to show how to run through some of the run lines from the previous page. These diagrams have been simplified so that they can be run at club level.

Hitting a Down line on both sides at the ruck area.



With your LR coming down at the same time as your DR this puts your A & B defenders in 2 minds forcing them to split. With your DH coming out as well forcing your (A) defender to make a play on your DH.

Hole Running (Finding the middle)



LR will need to hit out to come back in to the A defender who has had to make a play for the BP. The DR hits directly towards the B defender so that the B defender is put in 2 minds and then reacts to late to make a play at the LR

BP = Ball Player
 LR = Line Runner
 DR = Decoy Runner
 DH = Dummy Half

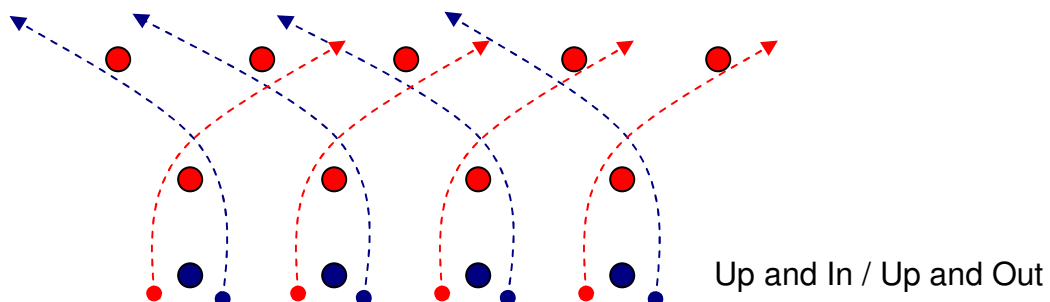


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Defensive structures:

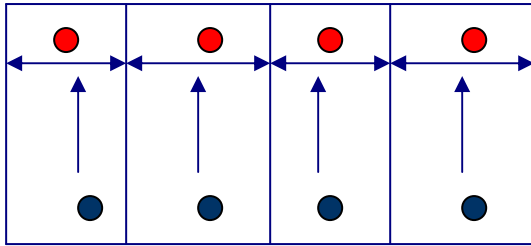
- **Up and slide (In or Out)**
 - This can be practiced with cones and creates the urgency that your defensive line will come up and slide left or right with the way the attack is coming up at your line.
- **Man on man**
 - With the same format with your cones this can be coached but with the rearrangement of the front cones to a straighter line and with the same intensity and urgency.

Diagrams Below:



Above is a diagram on how to structure an up and slide drill using the cones in this grid showing the players coming off the line and sliding up left or right with urgency. The key points to this drill are as listed below.

- Speed off the line (first 3 steps being crucial).
- Keeping their hands up in front of them in preparation for the tackle
- Coming up together, hard and fast as a solid line
- Communication throughout the whole movement



Above shows a grid where the player plays the man in front of him and in this grid you can have the attacking player move either left or right only say about 2 to 3 steps and the defender has to defend up on the attacking player and defends to what he see's in front of him within his box grid.



4 Week Skills Program

Tackle tech:

➤ Hit and stick

- Hitting and Sticking is a common form of tackling now and is used across the levels of international rugby league from club football to NRL and International representative football. This technique can not be shown by a diagram but will be shown by pointers below:
 - Make the collision (Initial tackle)
 - Wrap the ball up with a close and firm hold of the ball carrying arm.
 - With your other arm grab your opponent other side of his body and pull him close to you
 - Make sure your head is locked in close with the attacker's neck and head area. Staying close at all times.
 - What they mean by sticking to a player is by bringing the players close to you and making sure that you have the control throughout the whole movement.

➤ Dominant wrestle

- This is also used at club and higher levels so as to create a dominant takedown of the attacker. A lot of professional clubs employ wrestling coaches to get the best technique in securing a dominant takedown with minimum effort.

➤ Takedown pin (3 second hold)

- If you ever see or watch an NRL game and wonder why does the tackler always look at the ref when he has completed a tackle, well that is called pinning and is coached well into the higher levels of the game. This movement acknowledges the referee and also gives you a good look at your defensive line. But more importantly acknowledges the referee to see when he has called a tackle has been completed. This is called pinning and I feel that this important and should be taught from 15s to senior levels all the time. The 3 second rule is generally the maximum time you have to lay on a player in a tackle but when pinning this also allows you to maximize your time on the tackled player until the referee calls release or motions to you to get off.



4 Week Skills Program

Coaching Minis & Mods Football

Coaching mini football should be about fun as with all levels of rugby league. But the importance of fun with minis and Mods rugby league has to be educational as well. By teaching the kids the fundamentals of rugby league like tackling, passing and catching the football should be encouraged through their minis and Mods years of rugby league.

Catching the football:

Some coaches tend to drill correct passing procedures but I really think that catching the football in any position is educational to how the kids catch the football. I would also incorporate a tennis ball into your training sessions and play little games like footy baseball where a kid kicks the ball and runs to the bases to get home while the fielding team can only move the ball by passing it through the hands and catching the ball on the bases.

Tackling Practice:

Tackling practice should be done in a safe manner and should always be supervised by adults in the case of injuries. Tackling practice can also be made as a fun session but the importance of teaching safe habits in this role is important in minimizing injuries. The use of tackling bags should be used along with shoulder pads. Correct technique training should be used throughout and especially with the MODS players coming through they should know the proper techniques in tackling for safety reasons minimizing injuries.

Passing Practice:

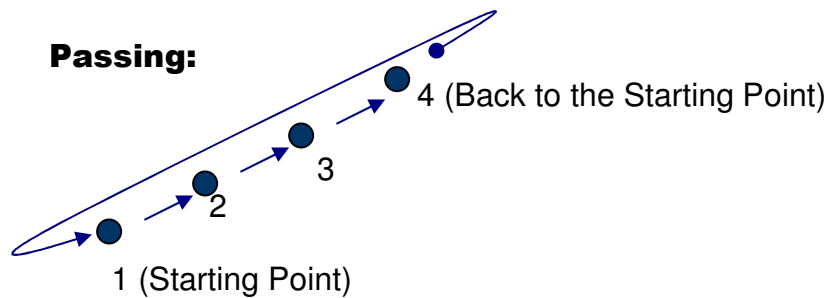
Through minis this should be practiced constantly and with the MODS this technique should be practiced and corrected so that their move to the international arena is positive in their knowledge in the correct procedures in passing whether it is 6 O Clock or a spiral. The whole technique whether it be minis or MODS football should eventually be taught properly and correctly with the player's transition from minis to MODS and MODS to International. You can also use the 3 cones on the line and space them apart so that the pass can reach the next player easily and spread them wider when you think that the distance that they are passing at has become reachable and therefore you can increase the width of the pass. MODS football should be taught running lines as well like X / XX / XY and be corrected through each session. So that when they make the switch to international football then these basic lines become second nature to all players coming through to the international levels without being retrained with skills and techniques that should have been put through during their MODS football training.



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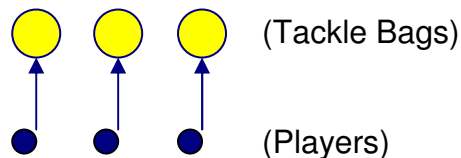
Training Diagrams below from MINIS to MODS:

Passing:



In this drill you have 4 players lined up diagonally and the passing motion is in correct form in passing back to the next player from 1 to 4. When the number 4 receives the ball he runs back and restarts the passing motion. This grid can be run left and right.

Tackle Bags



Tackling practice with the use of tackling bags is a much safer way of teaching MINIS and MODS to tackle especially for the players that haven't played the game before. All the proper techniques can be taught with patience in completing a safe and correct tackling procedure.

Correct technique that should be covered in tackling:

- Eye contact on the attacking player
- Hands up in preparation for the tackle
- Wrap your arm around the attacking players legs and squeeze
- Make sure your head is on the outside leg but close to the attackers bum for the cushioning of the fall
- When falling make sure that you fall to the side of the player
- Also make sure that you fall safely by coming down with the tackled player and that you have a firm hold of his legs and that your head is positioned outside of the attacker's legs!!!

4 Week Skills Program

Minis (6 – 8s)

Week 1(Ball Skills):

- ☞ Catching, Passing, Ball Control

Week 2 (Ruck Area):

- ☞ Dummy Half Passing (All Players to practice pass from dummy half)
- ☞ Receiving and pass off the first receiver

Week 3 (Run – Catch – Pass)

- ☞ Running onto the pass and catching it
- ☞ Timing on receiving the ball
- ☞ Being able to pass the ball on the run

Week 4 (Tackling and Line work)

- ☞ Proper tackle technique
- ☞ Positioning of the head
- ☞ Falling and rolling technique

Modified Game (MODS) 9 – 12s

Week 1 (Balls Skills)

- ☞ Catching, Passing, Ball Control

Week 2 (Ruck Area)

- ☞ Dummy Half service off the ground
- ☞ Receivers (Left and Right) service to runners
- ☞ Better options on running or delivering the pass from Dummy Half.

Week 3 (Run – Catch – Pass)

- ☞ Catch & Pass (Right and Left hand)
- ☞ Run - Catch – Pass @ speed

Week 4 (Tackling Technique)

- ☞ Tackling Technique work
- ☞ Ground Work
- ☞ Proper technique throughout
- ☞ Safety throughout the technique

Internationals (13 – seniors)

Week 1(Ball Skills)

- ☞ Catch & Pass (Right and Left hand)
- ☞ Run - Catch – Pass @ speed

Week 2 Line Work (Attacking)

- ☞ Unders lines
- ☞ Down Lines at the ruck area
- ☞ 4 man passing drills (X, XY, XX, Blocks) @ speed.

Week 3 Line Work (Defensive)

- ☞ Speed of the line
- ☞ Correction on space coming off the line
- ☞ A and B Markers working off the line and at markers

Week 4 Tackle Technique

- ☞ Proper take downs
- ☞ Hit and stick technique
- ☞ Ground Work, Maximizing 3 second hold down (Turtling)