INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
LEVEL 2 COACHING
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

Level 2 Coaching

Developing Rugby Skills

Course content

For the contents of each module, please see the first page of that module.

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

OVERVIEW

Overview

Contents

Foreword

Welcome to the IRB Level 2 Coaching course. This course is designed to provide coaches with the skills needed to coach teenage and adult players in the club or school environment (in major unions) and to higher levels in less developed unions.

The presence of sport in a person's life carries enormous benefits for social, physical and personal development while broadening cultural awareness. Rugby is uniquely inclusive sport, and you as the coach hold a position of genuine influence over the player's rate of personal development and their sense of community and self-worth.

The IRB Level 2 Coaching course aims to develop coaches who know **how to coach** as well as **what to coach**. The course is delivered using the following structure:

- Firstly, it uses the **principles of attack and defence** to give an overview of the game
- Secondly, it uses **key factor analysis** to allow you to explain, demonstrate, practise, perform and analyse the skills of the game
- Thirdly, the game knowledge modules are underpinned by **generic** modules covering planning, risk management, the role of the coach, communication, child & adolescent growth, fitness and the laws of the game.

Throughout the course you will be encouraged to practise your coaching skills. Grasp this opportunity for feedback from your IRB Educator and your peers. These opportunities will also form the foundation of your competency-based assessment.

I sincerely hope you enjoy the course and benefit from participation.

Kind regards,

Mark Harrington
Training Manager
International Rugby Board

IRB EDUCATION PROGRAMMES AND RESOURCES

COACHING

INTRODUCING **RUGBY**	DEVELOPING RUGBY **SKILLS**	ANALYSIS & PREPARATION **FOR COACHES**	GAME PLANNING **FOR COACHES**	COACHING **SEVENS**
(Level 1)	*(Level 2)*	*(Level 3)*	*(Level 4)*	

OFFICIALS

INTRODUCING **OFFICIATING**	DEVELOPING **OFFICIATING SKILLS**	ANALYSIS & PREPARATION **FOR OFFICIALS**	GAME PLANNING **FOR OFFICIALS**
(Level 1)	*(Level 2)*	*(Level 3)*	*(Level 4)*

COACHES OF MATCH OFFICIALS

INTRODUCING COACHING **OF OFFICIALS**	DEVELOPING OFFICIATING **OF OFFICIALS SKILLS**	ANALYSIS & PREPARATION **FOR COACHES OF OFFICIALS**	PERFORMANCE REVIEW **OF OFFICIALS**
(Level 1)	*(Level 2)*	*(Level 3)*	*(Level 4)*

TRAINERS AND EDUCATORS

TRAINER **OF EDUCATORS**	COACH **EDUCATORS**	REFEREE **EDUCATOR**

IRB coaching and officiating courses

IRB Coaching and Officiating courses were first developed in the mid 1990s. In 2003, when it became apparent that the content of these courses was becoming dated, the courses were critically reviewed.

As a result of this review, in early 2004 a Strategic Workshop for Coaching and Officiating Development was held in Lensbury, England, with invited participants who were actively involved in coaching and officiating education and development.

The set of benchmark competencies that were developed at this workshop formed the basis for the updating and redevelopment of these courses according to the structure shown above.

IRB courses are competency-based, designed to provide learning and training appropriate to the contexts in which coaches and officials are active.

Course timetable

Unit 1 – Game knowledge		
Module 1	The principles of attack and defence	2hrs 30min
Module 2*	Key factor analysis of skills - individual, mini-unit and unit	5hrs
Module 3	The relationship of the principles of attack and defence to key factor analysis	4hrs
Unit 2 – Planning		
Module 4	Practice: planning, conducting, skill development	1hr 45min
Unit 3 - Management		
Module 5	Risk management and ethics	30min
Module 6	The role of the coach (resource only)	-
Module 7	Communication (resource only)	-
Module 8	Child & adolescent growth (resource only)	-
Unit 4 – Technical		
Module 9	The laws of the game	1hr
Module 10	Fitness (resource only)	1hr

Total duration: 14hrs 45min (2 day course)

* **Module 2** - Key factor analysis of skills - individual, mini-unit and unit - is a particularly long module but it is divided up into a number of manageable sections for each of the skills of the game. For details of these sections, see the contents page at the beginning of the resource.

Sample programme

Day 1

8.30am	Overview
9.30	**Module 1** **The principles of attack and defence**
10.30	Morning tea
10.45	**Module 1 continued**
11.30	**Module 2 - Key factor analysis** **Individual skills** 1. Passing and receiving 2. Picking up the ball 3. Running and evasion 4. Kicking and catching
12.30	Lunch
13.00	**Module 4: Practice** Planning Conducting Skill development
14.30	**Module 2 continued** 5. The drop kick at restarts 6. The side-on tackle and falling in the tackle
15.00	Afternoon tea
15.15	**Module 2 continued** 7. Contact skills in attack 8. The place kick
16.30	Recap, questions & answers
17.00	End of day's work

Day 2

8.30	**Module 5 - Risk management and ethics**
9.30	**Module 2 continued** **Unit skills** 9. The line-out 10. The scrum
10.30	Morning tea
10.45	**Module 2 continued** 11. Back line Attack 12. Defence
11.30	**Module 6 - The role of the coach** **Module 7 - Communication**
12.30	Lunch
13.00	**Module 8 - Child and adolescent growth** **Module 10 - Fitness**
14.00	**Module 2 continued** **Mini-unit skills** 13. Phase play
15.00	Afternoon tea
15.15	**Module 2 continued** 14. Support play 15. Kick starts and restarts 16. Counter attack
17.00	Course review
17.30	Conclusion of course

Introduction to the course

The Developing Rugby Skills course provides coaches with the ability to coach the skills of the game. These skills constitute the most fundamental requirements of players if they are to perform successfully. Coaching is about understanding a technique and then working out how to coach a player to perform the technique in a competitive situation so that it then becomes a skill. The performance of the skill is not only technical; the involvement of decision making makes it tactical as well. Prior to performing a skill, a player has to assess the situation, decide which skill is required, and then successfully perform the skill. The aim of the coach is to provide players with a comprehensive 'menu' of skills so that they are able to succeed on the field of play.

It is therefore insufficient to provide coaches only with knowledge in the coaching of skills, as there is more to coaching than just skill application.

Following the whole-part-whole method of instruction, you will first examine the principles of attack and defence to a game so that you develop an appreciation of the game as a whole.

Principles of attack
Gain possession
Go forward
Provide support
Create continuity
Apply pressure

Principles of defence
Contest possession
Go forward
Apply pressure
Prevent territorial gain
Provide support
Regain possession
Counter attack

Once the application of these principles has been understood, the game is divided into its various skills and these are applied using key factor analysis. The core of this course is based on an application of these two elements - the principles and key factor analysis.

It also includes the following modules to support this core:

• Practice: planning, conducting and skill development
• Risk management and ethics
• The role of the coach
• Communication
• Child development and adolescent growth
• Laws
• Fitness.

General course information

Module resources required
• *Developing Rugby Skills modules*
• *The IRB 'Laws of the Game of Rugby Union' book.*

Assessment
In order to be awarded the IRB Certificate of Attendance the participant must attend all modules of the course.

In order to be awarded the IRB Certificate of Accreditation the participant must:

• *Attend and participate in all modules of the course*
• *Achieve an 80% pass mark in open-book, multiple-choice tests of the course modules and laws book*
• *Achieve completion of competency-based assessment*
• *Satisfactorily complete a 12-week diary for a team that is being coached in the current or next rugby season. The diary provides evidence of a coach's ability to apply the 'Plan, Do, Review' model.*
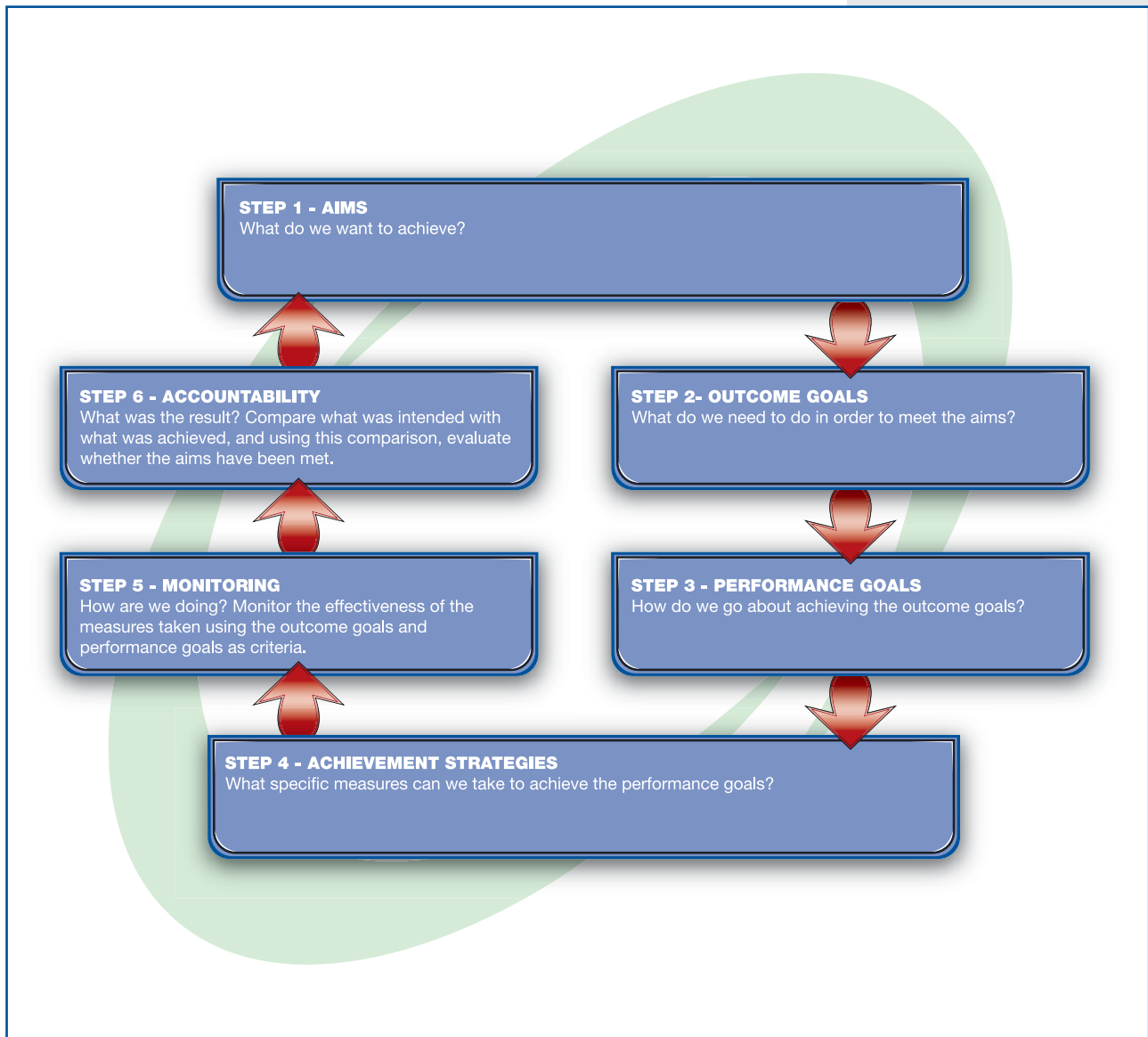
Delivery methods
This course will be delivered by:
• *Presentations*
• *Video analysis*
• *Problem solving tests*
• *Scenarios*
• *Practical sessions using explanation, demonstration and practice.*

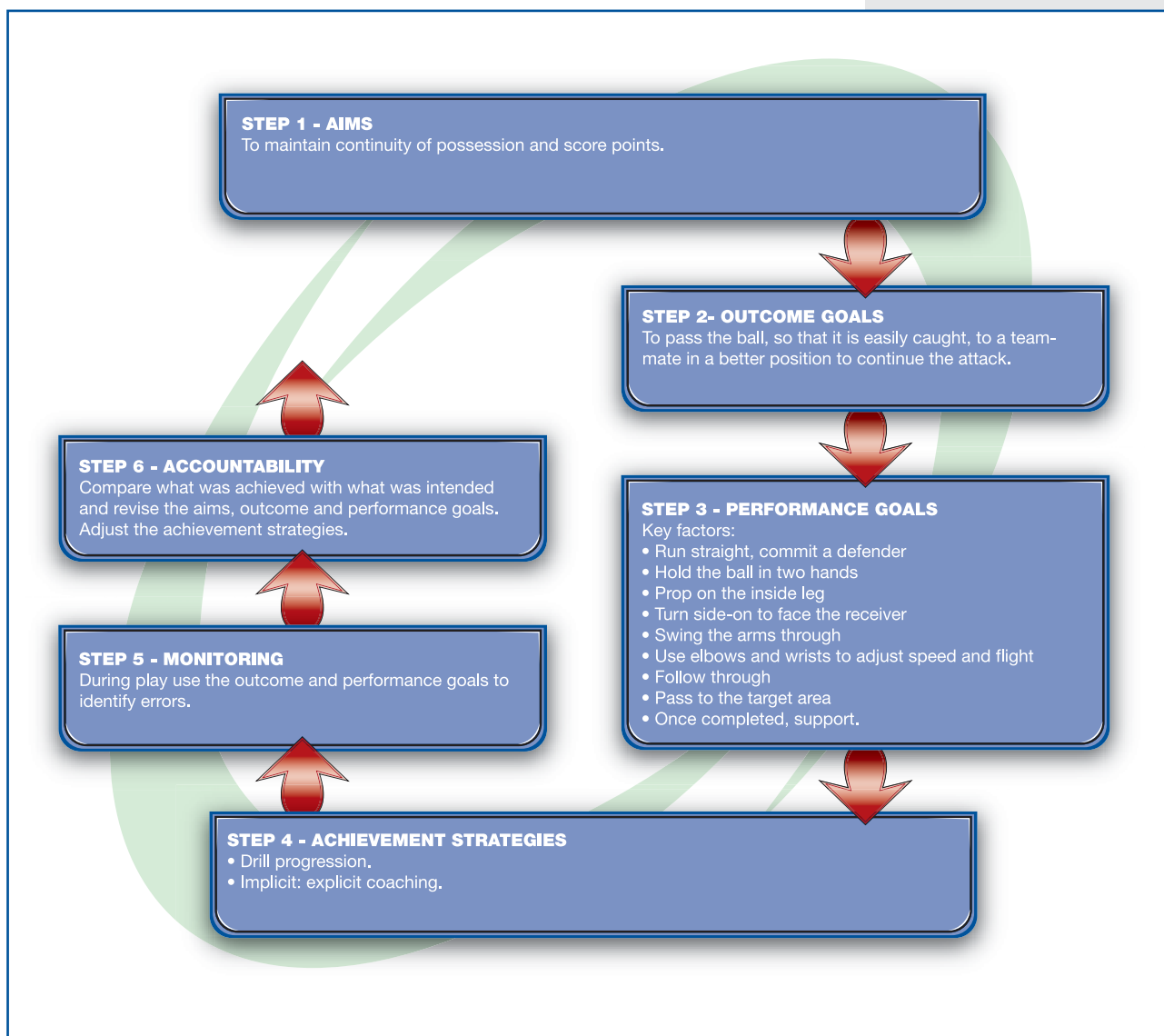# The modular framework - understanding the coaching programme

The decision-making models that follow begin with a generic model that shows the elements involved in a problem solving, decision-making process. Building on this generic model, the models that follow provide greater detail as they are applied to progressively more advanced rugby coaching. Therefore, the models are progressive in moving from a predominantly technical to a predominantly tactical approach.

It is the aim of the models to provide coaches with a logical method of coaching and with the 'tools of the coaching trade'.

STEP 1 - AIMS
What do we want to achieve?

STEP 6 - ACCOUNTABILITY
What was the result? Compare what was intended with what was achieved, and using this comparison, evaluate whether the aims have been met.

STEP 2- OUTCOME GOALS
What do we need to do in order to meet the aims?

STEP 5 - MONITORING
How are we doing? Monitor the effectiveness of the measures taken using the outcome goals and performance goals as criteria.

STEP 3 - PERFORMANCE GOALS
How do we go about achieving the outcome goals?

STEP 4 - ACHIEVEMENT STRATEGIES
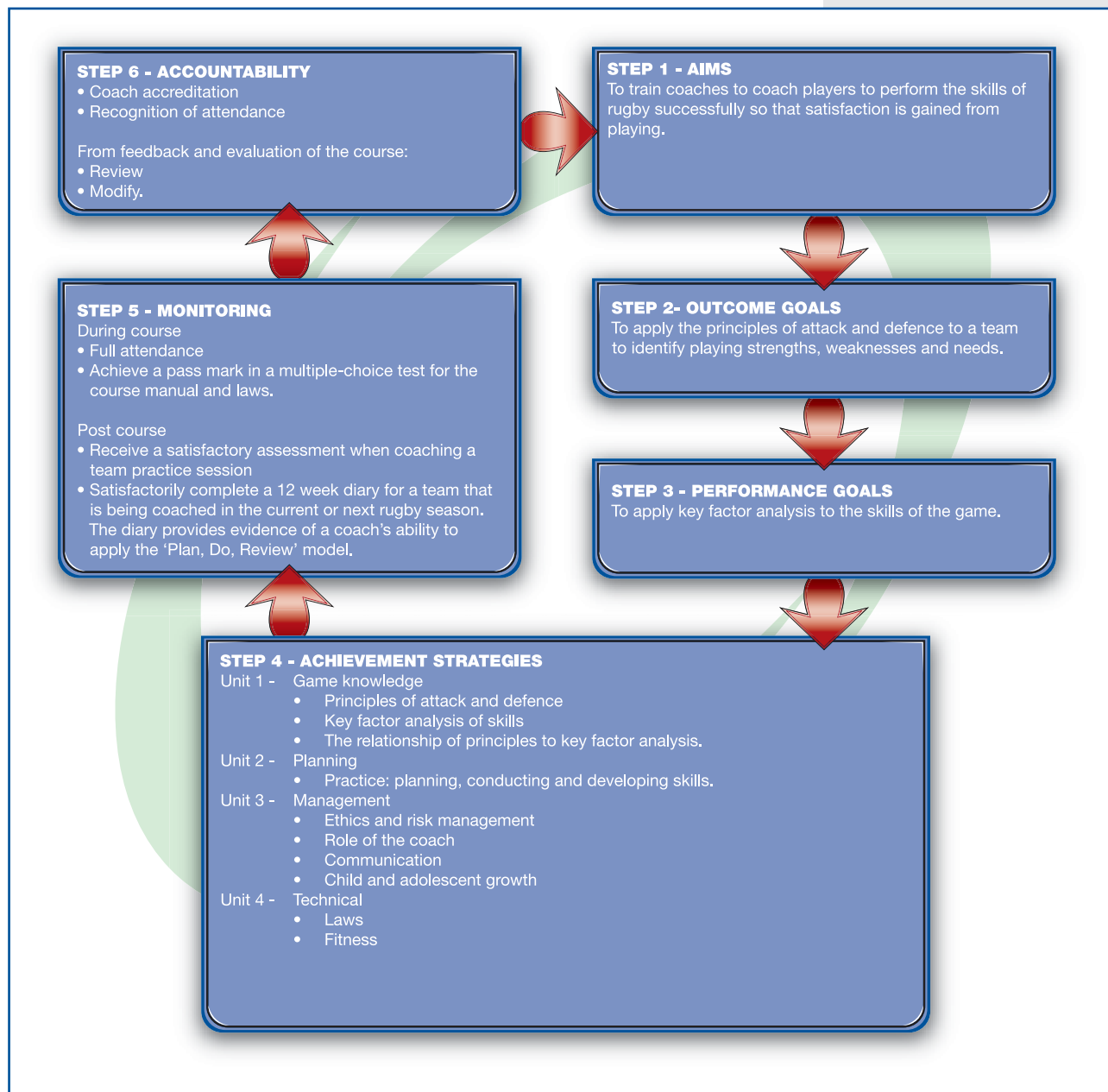What specific measures can we take to achieve the performance goals?

The modular framework - understanding the coaching programme

Applying the model to an individual skill: Passing

STEP 1 - AIMS
To maintain continuity of possession and score points.

STEP 2- OUTCOME GOALS
To pass the ball, so that it is easily caught, to a team-mate in a better position to continue the attack.

STEP 3 - PERFORMANCE GOALS
Key factors:
• Run straight, commit a defender
• Hold the ball in two hands
• Prop on the inside leg
• Turn side-on to face the receiver
• Swing the arms through
• Use elbows and wrists to adjust speed and flight
• Follow through
• Pass to the target area
• Once completed, support.

STEP 4 - ACHIEVEMENT STRATEGIES
• Drill progression.
• Implicit: explicit coaching.

STEP 5 - MONITORING
During play use the outcome and performance goals to identify errors.

STEP 6 - ACCOUNTABILITY
Compare what was achieved with what was intended and revise the aims, outcome and performance goals. Adjust the achievement strategies.

The modular framework - understanding the coaching programme

Applying the model to this Developing Rugby Skills course:

STEP 6 - ACCOUNTABILITY
• Coach accreditation
• Recognition of attendance

From feedback and evaluation of the course:
• Review
• Modify.

STEP 1 - AIMS
To train coaches to coach players to perform the skills of rugby successfully so that satisfaction is gained from playing.

STEP 5 - MONITORING
During course
• Full attendance
• Achieve a pass mark in a multiple-choice test for the course manual and laws.

Post course
• Receive a satisfactory assessment when coaching a team practice session
• Satisfactorily complete a 12 week diary for a team that is being coached in the current or next rugby season. The diary provides evidence of a coach's ability to apply the 'Plan, Do, Review' model.

STEP 2- OUTCOME GOALS
To apply the principles of attack and defence to a team to identify playing strengths, weaknesses and needs.

STEP 3 - PERFORMANCE GOALS
To apply key factor analysis to the skills of the game.

STEP 4 - ACHIEVEMENT STRATEGIES
Unit 1 -   Game knowledge
       •   Principles of attack and defence
       •   Key factor analysis of skills
       •   The relationship of principles to key factor analysis.
Unit 2 -   Planning
       •   Practice: planning, conducting and developing skills.
Unit 3 -   Management
       •   Ethics and risk management
       •   Role of the coach
       •   Communication
       •   Child and adolescent growth
Unit 4 -   Technical
       •   Laws
       •   Fitness

TRANSCRIPT FOR ACCREDITATION AS AN IRB LEVEL 2 COACH

COACH	
ASSESSMENT DATE & VENUE	
EDUCATOR / ASSESSOR	

Core competencies	Criteria	NYC* COMPETENT EXCELLENT	Comments / action required
A PLANNING	1. Identify personal goals for season		
	2. Identify team outcome and performance goals for season		
	3. Identify and organise appropriate equipment and facilities for the coaching session		
	4. Take into account the age and level of experience of the players, and the specific phase of the competitive cycle		
	5. Provide a written plan for each individual practice session		
	6. Provide a written coaching diary covering a minimum of twelve weeks of practice and play, including practice plans and self-reflection		
	7. Design game related practices		
B COACHING PROCESS (Communication & interaction)	8. Gain players attention before giving information		
	9. Communicate with players so that all can see and hear		
	10. Introduce session appropriately		
	11. Ensure practice progressions, e.g. simple to complex		
	12. Conclude session effectively		
	13. Maximise players' activity and engagement in practices		
	14. Provide demonstrations to facilitate learning		
	15. Observe players' performances objectively		

Core competencies	Criteria	NYC* COMPETENT EXCELLENT	Comments / action required
B COACHING PROCESS (Communication & interaction)	16. Analyse performance and adapt practices to match players abilities and experience		
	17. Give positive feedback when warranted for effort as well as performance		
	18. Question players to check for understanding and/or improve learning		
	19. Listen to players' questions and feedback		
	20. Review practice session with players and/or peer coaches		
C RUGBY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS	21. Deliver a game related warm up - 'Sweat, stretch and skill'		
	22. Use key factors to analyse performance and develop skills		
	23. Demonstrate safe coaching of individual skills, e.g. handling, running, kicking, contact		
	24. Demonstrate safe coaching of unit skills and team play, e.g. contests for possession (scrum, line-out, kick off)		
	25. Demonstrate safe coaching of game-like situations, with varying degrees of opposition (depending on the age, skills and experience of the players)		
	26. Manage practices which realistically simulate the time and space available in a competitive game		
	27. Demonstrate a balance of practice so that both attack and defence are practised		
	28. Ensure warm down at the end of practice (reduce intensity, stretch and hydrate)		

Core competencies	Criteria	NYC* COMPETENT EXCELLENT	Comments / action required
D RISK MANAGEMENT	29. Carry out regular safety checks on players, their equipment and clothing		
	30. Carry out regular safety checks on the facilities and playing environment		
	31. Know what the safety procedure is for the facility and who to contact in an emergency		
	32. Develop or be familiar with the written emergency plan to deal with a players injury or illness		
E ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR	33. Set a high standard of personal behaviour		
	34. Respect the Coaches' Code of Conduct		
	35. Expect the players to play within the spirit of the game		
	36. Manage inappropriate behaviour in players and/or others in the playing environment		
F SELF-REFLECTION AND ACTION PLANNING	37. Seek, and responds positively to, feedback		
	38. Prepare after action reviews of practise and play		
	39. Self-reflect honestly and accurately		
	40. Develop action plans to make improvements to own coaching behaviour		

* NYC = Not yet competent

Progress after level 2 course (to be completed by educator)

Coach self-reflection on the course

Status	Tick	Comments
EXCELLENT (E) - performed beyond competency standards. This student will receive accreditation.		
COMPETENT (C) - performed at the minimum standards defined by the competency criteria. This student will receive accreditation.		
NOT YET COMPETENT (NYC) - performed below the minimum standards. The course staff will need to action plan for this student to achieve accreditation e.g. provide written assignment, video performance, observation of performance etc.		

EDUCATOR SIGNATURE	COACH SIGNATURE	DATE

Rugby goals

Please complete the following tables for yourself and your team for the forthcoming season.

Personal coaching goals, season 20_____
1. Coaching skills
2. Planning and organisation
3. Communication skills
4. Theoretical knowledge acquisition
5. Other

Team goals, season 20_____	
What do you intend to achieve as a team coach this season?	How do you intend to achieve your outcome goals?
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

Glossary of rugby terms

Achievement strategies
The specific strategies that will be used to ensure the outcomes are met. These may be directly related to the mode of play or peripheral to it. They may be categorised into:
• Game knowledge
• Planning
• Management
• Technical.

Aim
What you are trying to achieve by undertaking this activity.

Functional roles analysis
This is a technique that enables the coach to judge if a player has adopted the most appropriate role in a situation. Having made this judgement, the coach is then able to see if the role has been performed successfully.

Game plan
The game plan explains how the team is going to achieve its aims in attack and defence.

Key factor analysis
This is the application of a sequential and prioritised checklist of actions. By performing these actions it can be expected that the outcome goal of each skill will be achieved.

Outcome goals
What needs to be achieved to meet the aims.

Performance goals
How the outcome goals can be achieved.

Tactics
The patterns that will be used against a particular opponent. The emphasis within the patterns of play will vary depending on the profile of the opposing team.

Patterns of play
The patterns that combine to achieve the team's game plan.

The principles of attack and defence
A sequential and prioritised checklist of principles that are used to analyse the play of a team.

Principles of attack
1.   Gain **possession** to
2.   go **forward** with
3.   the **support** of team-mates to
4.   maintain **continuity**
5.   applying **pressure** to
6.   **score** points.

Principles of defence
1.   Contest **possession** and
2.   go **forward**
3.   applying **pressure** to
4.   prevent **territory** being gained
5.   supported by or in **support** of team-mates to
6.   regain **possession** and
7.   **counter attack**.

The principles of the game
These are:
1.   The contest for possession.
2.   In attack - continuity of play.
3.   In defence - regaining possession.
4.   A multi-faceted game.
5.   Rewards and punishments or penalties.

These are the fundamental principles of a game of two teams.

Note: They are the principles of the game, not of a team. They provide the framework for analysing the game to ensure that there is a balance between continuity of possession and continuity of play. This is determined by the contest for possession along with its role in creating space.

The principles of the identities of the game
These form a sequential and prioritised checklist of which actions, when performed, will result in the outcome being achieved for each aspect of the game, e.g. scrum, line-out, backline attack, defence, kick starts and re-starts, phase play, rucks and mauls and support play in attack and defence.

NOTES

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

MODULE 1 - The principles of attack and defence

Unit one - Game knowledge
Module one - The principles of attack and defence

Contents

Learning outcome

At the conclusion of this module, participants will be able to use the principles of attack and defence to analyse the play of their team.

Introduction

In this module, the principles of attack and defence will be applied to the performance of a team in a game.

The principles of play are divided into the principles of attack and the principles of defence. For both attack and defence the principles are listed in sequential order as they occur in play.

The principles of attack apply when team has won possession of the ball and those of defence apply when the team has lost possession of the ball.

This will provide coaches with a systematic method of identifying their team's playing strengths, weaknesses and needs.

This analysis will be used to identify the order in which skills will be studied in the second module. These will be the team's prioritised needs. As such, the course will reflect the coaching method.

The principles of rugby

The charter video

For over 100 years rugby has evolved into a game that caters for a variety of players. The range of skills and physical qualities required of players in rugby union makes it a unique game. Seldom do other sports cater for such variety. The variety occurs in rugby because the game is based on two key principles:

• **The principle of contesting possession of the ball**
• **The principle of continuing play.**

The skills required for contesting possession and for continuing play are considerable, and few players are skilled in all aspects of the game to the same level of expertise. This has led to **specialisation**.

With the variety of shared and specialist skills that have evolved in rugby, it has become a complex and **multi-faceted game. The unique character of the game depends on maintaining the balance between the principles of contesting possession of the ball and continuing play.**

If one principle becomes more dominant, then that variety will be lost. This particularly applies to **contesting possession of the ball**. The skills required are different from those used in continuing play. The contest for possession of the ball begins at the set pieces.

As the purest physical contest of the game, the **scrum** tests the technique, strength and will of the forwards. The **line-out** demands agility and skill with variety in options from the choice of targets.

Once play gets under way, contesting possession can also take place immediately **after a player is tackled and at rucks and mauls.**

A team in **defence** may not decide to try to win the ball immediately. They must just defend by tackling and setting a defensive pattern, but they must be given opportunities to regain possession of the ball and play with it. They will only take part in the contest if they are given the possibility of turning over the possession.

The contest for possession at scrums and line-outs is achieved by having the ball thrown in down the centre. This gives both sides an opportunity to win the ball, so that they will contest for it.

Once play gets under way this contest must continue. The reason is clear.

Without a contest, the defending team will not be drawn into trying to recover the ball. Without a contest, after a tackle, or at ruck or maul, the opposition will simply spread out to defend. There will be few gaps through which to penetrate and this will substantially reduce the options available for the attacking team to go forward.

How then can we ensure that possession is contested so that the attacking side has space to operate?

The most obvious way is to make sure that players are on their feet when they try to get the ball off the ground after a tackle. A player's team-mates may be quicker than their opponents in support. If so, they will be able to bind together and push their opponents off the ball.

If players are lying on the ground and still involved in play, it is very difficult to push them off. They are not allowed to do this, as the laws do not permit these actions.

Of course, if a player is very quick the ball can be picked up and if the ball-carrier is held but remains standing, the opposing team is able to try and pull the ball away.

Each of these actions offers the defending team the opportunity to regain possession of the ball, and if they do, they can set up a counter attack and achieve continuing play.

If the contest for possession does not result in a turnover for the defending team, they've still been drawn in by the possibility and this has created space across the field. Entering the contest for possession reduces the number of players available for the defensive screen.

Depending upon how many players are committed to the contest from either team at any moment in the game, opportunities are created for attackers to use their attacking skills, and for defenders to react in defence, while contesting for possession. **The result of contesting possession is the creation of space, and space is necessary for continuing play.**

So, the game is one in which the contest creates space for the game to continue. For the game of rugby union to retain its unique character, the **balance** between contesting for possession and continuing play must be achieved.

For the player the variety in the many aspects of play generated creates greater satisfaction. There are many individual and collective contests during a game. Success in these min-contests may not be reflected in the score at the end of the game, but they allow players to gain satisfaction as they test themselves against opponents with similar missions to themselves.

If a team is good enough to win the ball, they have the opportunity to keep the game going but, if their continuity skills are not as good as the defensive skills of the other team, they may lose possession. The opposing team will now attack with it.
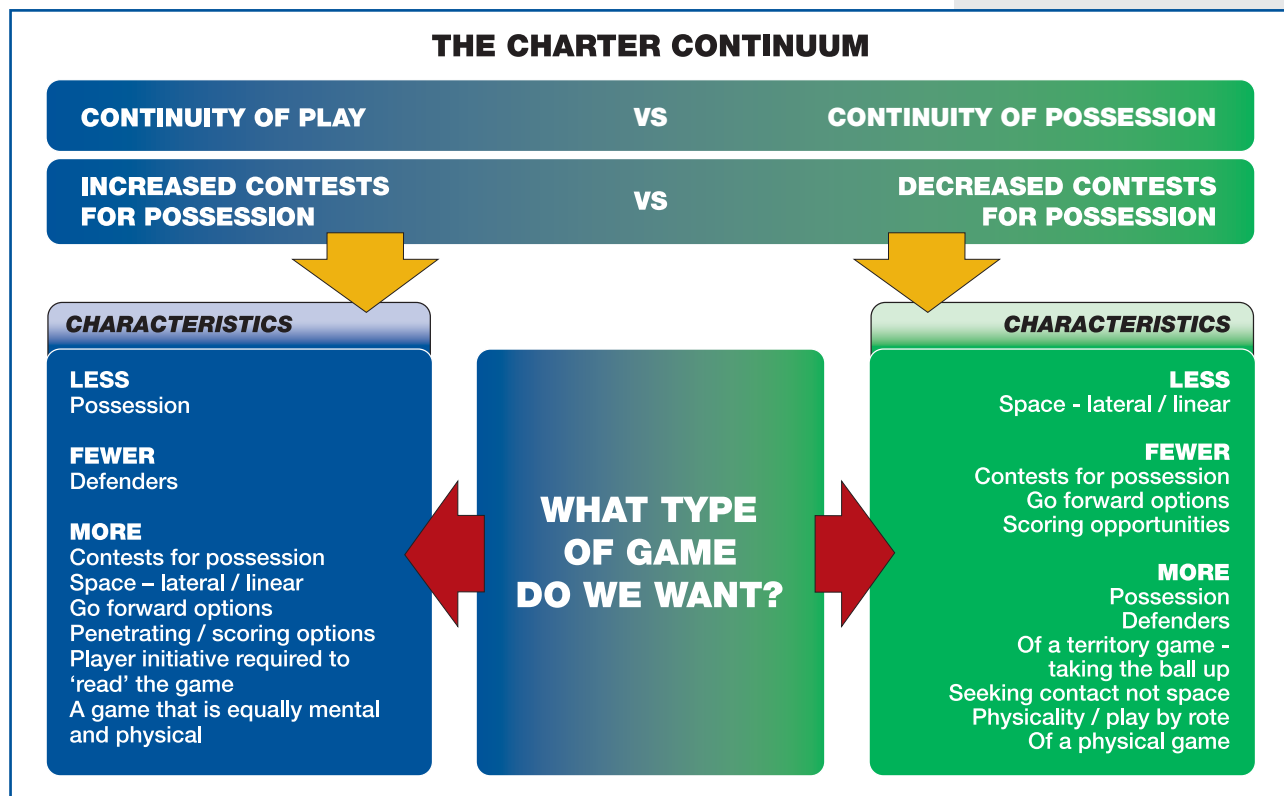
These are the principles that govern the game, and it is against these that the mode of play must be judged and analysed. Should the game move away from these principles, it will lose its unique character **so we are obliged to alter coaching practice, refereeing management and the laws of rugby to prevent this from happening**. These principles provide the context within which the game can be played.

The principles of rugby
• Contest for possession
• Attack - continuity of play
• Defence - regaining possession
• A multi-faceted game
• Rewards and punishments.

What is this game called rugby?

THE CHARTER CONTINUUM

CONTINUITY OF PLAY	VS	CONTINUITY OF POSSESSION
INCREASED CONTESTS FOR POSSESSION	VS	DECREASED CONTESTS FOR POSSESSION

CHARACTERISTICS

LESS
Possession

FEWER
Defenders

MORE
Contests for possession
Space – lateral / linear
Go forward options
Penetrating / scoring options
Player initiative required to 'read' the game
A game that is equally mental and physical

WHAT TYPE OF GAME DO WE WANT?

CHARACTERISTICS

LESS
Space - lateral / linear

FEWER
Contests for possession
Go forward options
Scoring opportunities

MORE
Possession
Defenders
Of a territory game - taking the ball up
Seeking contact not space
Physicality / play by rote
Of a physical game

The Developing Rugby Skills model

Task one: What is what and what comes first?

Question	Title	Step
	Performance goal	
	Aim	
	Monitoring	
	Outcome goal	
	Accountability	
	Achievement strategies	

1. Link the question on the right to the title in the table.
2. Place the titles in chronological order in the 'step' column.

Questions:

A. What do I want to achieve?

B. How is the outcome to be achieved?

C. What specific measures have to be performed to achieve the performance goals?

D. At the conclusion how do we evaluate what has been achieved in order to re-define the aims?

E. What needs to be achieved to meet the aims?

F. How do I make sure all effort is being channelled to the aim and outcome during performance?

The modular framework - understanding the coaching programme

Applying the model to this Developing Rugby Skills course:

STEP 6 - ACCOUNTABILITY
• Coach accreditation
• Recognition of attendance

From feedback and evaluation of the course:
• Review
• Modify.

STEP 1 - AIMS
To train coaches to coach players to perform the skills of rugby successfully so that satisfaction is gained from playing.

STEP 5 - MONITORING
During course
• Full attendance
• Achieve a pass mark in a multiple-choice test for the course manual and laws.

Post course
• Receive a satisfactory assessment when coaching a team practice session
• Satisfactorily complete a 12 week diary for a team that is being coached in the current or next rugby season. The diary provides evidence of a coach's ability to apply the 'Plan, Do, Review' model.

STEP 2- OUTCOME GOALS
To apply the principles of attack and defence to a team to identify playing strengths, weaknesses and needs.

STEP 3 - PERFORMANCE GOALS
To apply key factor analysis to the skills of the game.

STEP 4 - ACHIEVEMENT STRATEGIES
Unit 1 -   Game knowledge
    •   Principles of attack and defence
    •   Key factor analysis of skills
    •   The relationship of principles to key factor analysis.
Unit 2 -   Planning
    •   Practice: planning, conducting and developing skills.
Unit 3 -   Management
    •   Ethics and risk management
    •   Role of the coach
    •   Communication
    •   Child and adolescent growth
Unit 4 -   Technical
    •   Laws
    •   Fitness

Task two: The principles of attack and defence

The principles of attack and defence are a list of what has to be achieved for the team to meet its aim. Note that they do not cover how they are to be achieved.

Attack – When the team is in possession of the ball.
Defence – When the team is not in possession of the ball.

Prioritise and place in sequence the following principles by numbering them.

ATTACK		
Order	**Principle**	**Explanation**
	Go forward	Measured by whether the next contest for the ball at the tackle, ruck or maul is over the gain line from the set piece and each successive contest.
	Score points	Try, conversion, penalty goal and drop goal.
	Support	Is there support? Does the ball carrier use it?
	Maintain continuity	When a team have the ball and form a maul or a ruck, does it win the ball?
	Apply pressure	Possession – see gaining possession.
	Gain possession	Scrums, line-outs, kick starts and re-starts only. Is possession gained or not?

DEFENCE		
Order	**Principle**	**Explanation**
	Counter attack	When the ball is regained is the team in better field position at the next contest for the ball.
	Apply pressure	Tackle count - tackles made, tackles missed.
	Regain possession	In general play how many times does the defensive team regain possession of the ball?
	Prevent territory being gained	Do tackles stop the ball carrier or is the attack able to, with little delay, continue?
	Support	At the point of contact is there support that at the least slows down the opposing team recycling of the ball?
	Go forward	When the opposition wins the ball do the players go forward as a unit keeping a defensive line? Is the next contest for possession on our or their side of the gain line?
	Contest possession	Did the team win possession from scrum, line-out and kick starts and restarts? Did the team in challenging for possession reduce the attacking team's options?

Task three: Applying the principles of attack and defence to a team - a subjective analysis

1. You will now watch a video of a match. Using the table below, make notes on the performance of one of the teams. You'll be assigned one or more principles to focus on, depending on the number in the group. Remember that, by the nature of the game, there is more to note for the early principles than for the later ones.

ATTACK	
1. Gaining possession	
Strengths	Weaknesses
2. Go forward	
Strengths	Weaknesses
3. Support	
Strengths	Weaknesses
4. Continuity in rucks and mauls	
Strengths	Weaknesses
5. Pressure - possession, field position and pace	
Strengths	Weaknesses
6. Turnovers - ball lost by your team	
Strengths	Weaknesses

DEFENCE	
1. Contesting possession	
Strengths	Weaknesses
2. Go forward	
Strengths	Weaknesses
3. Apply pressure by tackling	
Strengths	Weaknesses
4. Prevent territorial gain - quality of tackling	
Strengths	Weaknesses
5. Support	
Strengths	Weaknesses
6. Regain possession / turnovers - ball won by your team	
Strengths	Weaknesses
7. Counter attack	
Strengths	Weaknesses

2. After the game has been played for a suitable period of time, the educator will stop the tape and use feedback from you and the other coaches in your group to collate a profile of the team's play. You should record this profile.

Team profile

3. Now, prioritise the team's needs based on a combination of solving weaknesses and improving strengths.

Priority	Needs	Reason for ranking	How needs will be met at practice
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			

Task four: Applying the principles of attack and defence to a team - an objective analysis

If you are to apply the principles of the attack and defence to your team in a game you must have a precise meaning for each of them. This can help you in your judgement and, if you so desire, you can use them statistically. An example of the definition for each principle written in the form of protocols follows.

Principles of attack - when your team has the ball

Principle	Protocols
Gaining possession	• Scrums, line-outs, kick starts and restarts only. • Does your team gain possession or not?
Going forward	• Once possession has been gained, is the next contest for the ball at the tackle, ruck or maul over the initial gain line? • From each successive contest, is the subsequent contest for the ball over the gain line from that contest?
Providing support	• Are the pace of play and options adversely affected by a lack of support? • Are the pace of play and options adversely affected by the ball carrier not being able to use the support that is available?
Creating and maintaining continuity	• When your team has the ball and forms a maul or a ruck, does it win the ball?
Applying pressure	• Possession - see gaining possession • Field position - use a field plan to plot the position of each restart of play in order to identify field position. • Pace - use a subjective assessment of the team's ability to maintain the pace of play.

Turnovers	• When your team has the ball, how many times do they turn the ball over to the opposition?
	      - By taking the ball to touch
	      - By making an infringement so that the opposition has the throw-in at the resulting scrum
	      - By losing the ball in general play
	      - By conceding a free kick or penalty.

Principles of defence - when the opposing team has the ball

Principle	Protocols
Contesting possession	• Did your team win possession from the scrum, line-out, kick start or restart? • Did your team challenging for possession result in the attacking team's options being reduced?
Going forward	• When the opposition wins the ball, do your players go forward as a unit, keeping a well-formed defensive line? • At the next contest for the ball, is the position of the ball as far down the field as its position at the previous contest?
Applying pressure	• How many tackles were attempted? • How many tackles were completed? • How many tackles were missed?
Preventing territory being gained	• Do your team's tackles stop the ball carrier or is the ball carrier able to either drive through the tackle, off load in the tackle, or make the ball available to a team-mate without it being contested?
Providing support	• At the point of contact, is there support that at least slows down the opposing team's recycling of the ball?
Regaining possession	• In general play, how many times does the defensive team regain possession of the ball?
Counter attack	• When the ball is regained, is the team in a better field position than when the ball was first regained at the previous contest for the ball?
Turnover	• How many times does the team regain possession either in general play, from penalty kicks or free kicks, and at the throw-in at the scrum or the line-out?

Task five - statistical analysis

1. Apply the protocol for the principle you are analysing to a number of 'episodes' of play of a game using the table on the following pages. An 'episode' is from the restart to the next time the referee blows the whistle.

2. If the principle has been performed successfully indicate this with a tick, and if it has been performed unsuccessfully use a cross.

3. Summarise the statistics for each principle by adding up the number of times the principle was performed successfully and unsuccessfully and express these as a percentage of the total.

4. Don't worry about getting each principle recorded in chronological order so long as all the information is recorded for each episode.

5. Because of the speed of play, it may be best to work in pairs or groups. One coach can 'call' the play based on the protocols, and the other can record the information on the chart based on the first coach's call.

Field position

If you also want to analyse field position, draw a plan of the field (or use the one on page 32 which is provided by way of a template). The plan should include the goal-lines, 22m lines and the halfway line. By plotting on the map the position of each scrum, line-out, ruck, maul and contest for possession, an accurate measure of field position can be made. At the end of the game the percentage of play in each part of the field can then be calculated.

Episode no Principle	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
ATTACK																				
1. Gain possession																				
2. Go forward																				
3. Provide support																				
4. Create continuity																				
5. Apply pressure																				
6. Score points																				
7. Avoid turnovers																				
DEFENCE																				
1. Contest possession																				
2. Go forward																				
3. Apply pressure																				
4. Prevent territorial gain																				
5. Provide support																				
6. Regain possession																				
7. Counter attack																				

Episode no Principle	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
ATTACK																				
1. Gain possession																				
2. Go forward																				
3. Provide support																				
4. Create continuity																				
5. Apply pressure																				
6. Score points																				
7. Avoid turnovers																				
DEFENCE																				
1. Contest possession																				
2. Go forward																				
3. Apply pressure																				
4. Prevent territorial gain																				
5. Provide support																				
6. Regain possession																				
7. Counter attack																				

Principles of attack	✔	✘	Total	% ✔	Principles of defence	✔	✘	Total	% ✔
1. Gain possession					1. Contest possession				
2. Go forward					2. Go forward				
3. Provide support					3. Apply pressure				
4. Create continuity					4. Prevent territorial gain				
5. Apply pressure					5. Provide support				
6. Score points					6. Regain possession				
7. Turn over possession					7. Counter attack				

Playing field plan for plotting of field position

Goal line   22m line   22m line   Goal line

Dead ball line   5m line   10m line   10m line   5m line   Dead ball line
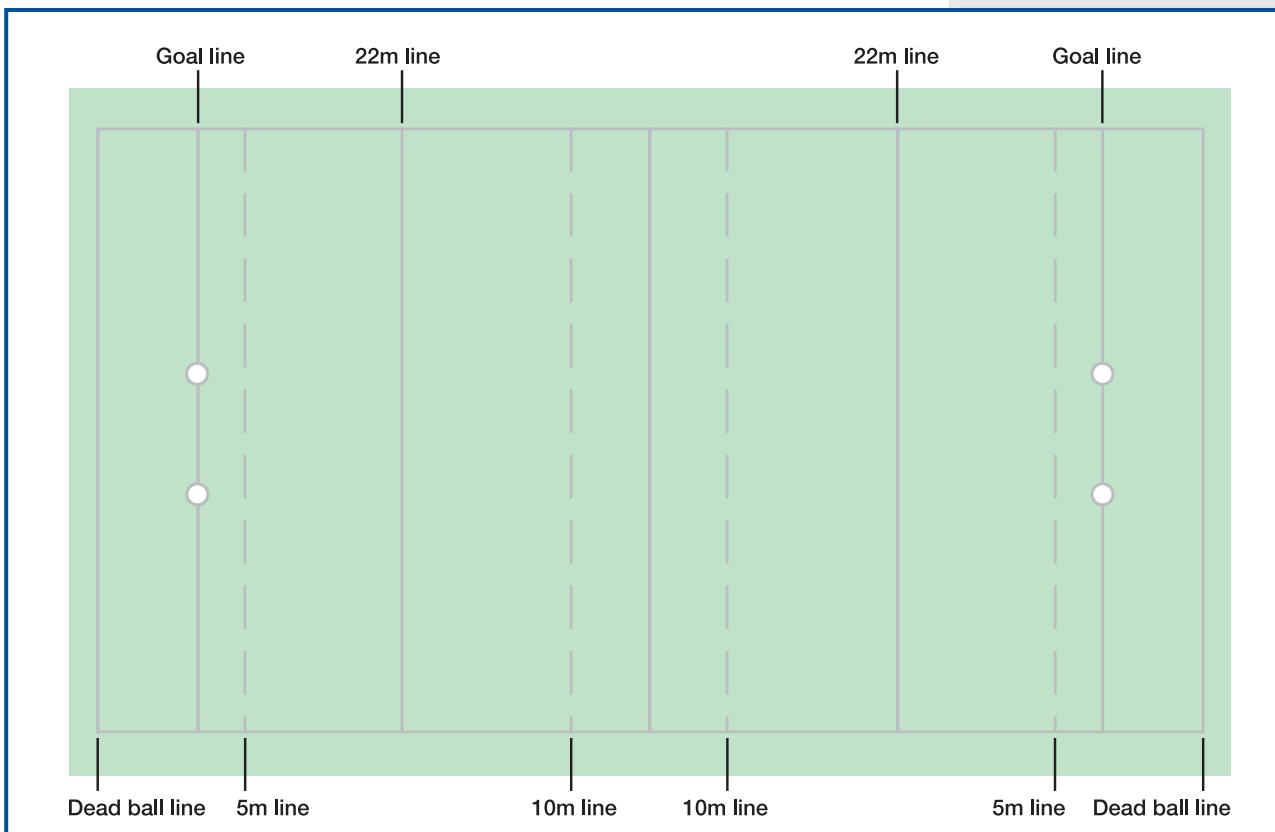
Supporting material - the principles of attack and defence

The principles of play identify what has to be achieved by a team to play successfully in a match. They provide the coach with a checklist that can be used to analyse the team's play.

They also provide a coach with categories in which to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of a team. These will help determine the team's game plan and patterns of play.

The principles of play are sub-divided into the principles of attack and the principles of defence.

Attack is when a team has possession of the ball. Defence is when it does not.

Principles of attack

In sequential order, the principles of attack are:

1. To gain possession of the ball
2. Using the ball to go forward
3. With the support of or in support of team mates
4. To maintain continuity which
5. Exerts pressure on the opposition resulting in
6. Points being scored.

1. Gain possession

To gain possession of the ball, the team must be competent in the individual, mini-unit and unit skills needed at scrums, line-outs, kick offs and re-starts. This involves collective skills at each of these formations as well as the individual skills of catching, picking up the ball and kicking.

2. Go forward

Once possession has been won, the team may attack by going forward. To do this, the individual skills of evasive running, passing and kicking will be used, as well as mini-unit skills of support and phase play and the unit skills of back line attack.

Opportunities for evasive running most often occur when the defence is disorganised and/or outnumbered. This creates uncertainty in the defence and gaps will appear.

This will happen because the backs, in mounting an attack, have created uncertainty. Operating the back line will create an opportunity for one back to break through the defence and run down the field.

Using kicks to move the ball forward may result in possession being lost. This is because the ball may be kicked to gain territory. In this situation, the distance gained down the field compensates for the loss of possession.

Mauls can also be used to move the ball forward if the opposing team does not contest possession.

The option chosen will depend, amongst other factors, on team strengths and weaknesses, field position, the conditions of play, e.g., weather and ground conditions, the score and minutes remaining.

3. Provide support

The attack may be continued by team-mates running in support of the ball carrier in a position to receive a pass.

Alternatively, the supporting player may position so as to attract the attention of a defender. If the defender ignores the supporting player, the supporting player could receive the ball and be in a better position than the ball carrier had been. Attracting the attention of the defensive players in this way ensures that they are not available to tackle the ball carrier.

Support play is the skill players will be performing most of the time, because clearly only one player can be in possession of the ball. It is the effectiveness of support play in combining to beat the fifteen defenders that will determine a team's success.

Supporting players must be used by the ball carrier to encourage them to continue to support. Once the ball has been passed the ball carrier should immediately become a support player.

4. Maintain continuity

If the defence prevents the attack from continuing it may be necessary to form a ruck or a maul. It is the role of rucks and mauls to enable the attacking team to re-establish the space needed to attack.

By forming rucks or mauls (often called phase play), the laws of the game re-establish the off-side line. More space is now available between the attack and the defence, giving the attacking team time to continue their attack.

In addition, space is created across the field. This is because rucks and mauls are dynamic forward moving formations. To stop forward movement and contest the ball, the defensive team must commit a number of its players to a very small space, creating space across the field.

If the defence does not contest the ruck or maul, the formation may go forward until a try is scored. This is difficult if a ruck is formed as the ball is on the ground and cannot be picked up until it is out of the ruck. So the main advantage of the ruck is the speed with which the ball is delivered. This must be fast so that the defence does not have time to re-organise.

When a maul is formed the ball is off the ground and the collective binding of the players around the ball carrier can drive down the field. If uncontested, a try may be scored, and if contested, the ball can be delivered from the maul and passed to the space vacated by the defence to make more progress.

5. Apply pressure

Pressure is applied to the defensive team by the attacking team gaining possession, going forward quickly and by moving into a field position as close as possible to the defensive team's goal-line.

Pressure, then, is based on possession, pace and (field) position. The three Ps create pressure on the defending team as they will have to react to the attacking team's choice of options.

Choosing the most effective type of attack

The type of attack that is chosen will depend on the team's relative strengths and weaknesses.

Amongst the options are:

• To attack close to the source of possession using mauling and driving play by the forwards. There are plenty of team-mates to help, but equally plenty of opponents to defend
• To attack one or two passes from the source of possession where there is more space, fewer opponents but then also fewer team-mates
• To attack four to five passes from the source where there is even more space, yet fewer opponents but even fewer team-mates to help
• To attack by kicking the ball down the field so far that, even though the opposing team will regain possession, they will have difficulty returning the ball
• To attack by kicking the ball over or through the defence so that it can be recovered by team-mates chasing it.

All things being equal, i.e., the teams being of about equal strength, the variables that influence most decisions are:

• Field position - both across and down the field
• The source of possession - scrum, line-out, ruck, maul, regained ball
• Weather conditions - especially the direction of the wind
• The score at the time and the minutes remaining in the game
• The space that is available based on the positioning of the defence
    - If the defenders are grouped, the ball can be passed away from them to space to go forward
    - If they are spread out, gaps will exist between individual defenders allowing the attack to go forward and through the defence.

Continuity in attack is achieved when these following conditions are met:

• Possession is retained
• The ball carrier chooses an effective option
• The other attacking players position themselves to support the ball carrier
• Upon contact, possession is retained and the ball is delivered so that the attack can continue.

The key skills are:

• Decision making
• Passing
• Running
• Support play
• Rucking and mauling
• Kicking.

When the attack has the skills to retain the ball for a long period of time they will be more likely to score. With time, the defence will become disorganised and space will be created.

Principles of defence

In sequential order, the principles of defence are:

1. Contest possession to
2. Go forward to a pattern
3. Applying pressure to
4. Prevent territory being gained
5. Supported by or in support of team mates to
6. Regain possession to
7. Counter attack.

It is the aim of defence to regain possession of the ball, although this may not be achieved by the first defender. It will be part of a collective effort that progressively works towards that goal as the defence applies defensive pressure to the attack.

1. Contesting possession

The contest for possession takes place at the scrum, line-out, kick-starts and restarts. In all these situations, it is the intention of the laws to encourage the defending team to contest the ball to regain possession and turn defence into attack.

Fundamental to this contest is the creation of space to attack. This occurs because the defence, either by law or to contest possession, commits players to the contest for the ball.

The law helps in creating this space by ensuring both forward packs are grouped at scrum and line-out. The attack must do likewise, so that whoever wins the contest, by moving the ball quickly away from the contest finds space to go forward.

Line-outs and scrums demand positional specialisation to ensure the team has the opportunity to win the ball.

Height at the line-out, along with the skills of jumping, catching and physical strength at the scrum, combined with binding and driving are all essential to ensure the team is able to compete for the ball. Because players need to be specialised in
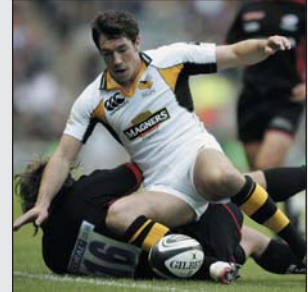
ball winning skills, they may not be as skilful in the skills of attack and defence. This will create opportunities for attack or defence as mis-matches will be created in general play.

If, however, the team is not successful in winning possession they should aim to reduce the options available to their opponents by vigorously contesting the ball so that their opponents' phase play is untidy, thereby limiting their attacking options.

The contest is therefore the first step of an effective defence pattern, limiting attacking options and building towards an opportunity to regain possession.

2. Going forward

By going forward, the defence reduces the time and space of the oncoming attack. This is more successful if the defence defends to a pattern. Within this pattern, each individual player has a role.

The aim of the pattern will be to reduce the attacking team's options. This will result in the option chosen by the attackers not being best choice, and the defence must be ready to react to this. Or, the option may be performed badly. Both possibilities may create a situation that allows possession to be regained.

The attacking team's options may be reduced by:

• Being inside a ball carrier, forcing the player away from support and into outside space, using up the space needed by the attacker's team mates
• Positioning to reduce kicking options so that the kick may be rushed or the kick made to an area of the field where the ball can be easily caught and a counter attack mounted
• Contesting set play (scrums and line-outs) so that untidy, delayed delivery from a stationary or backward moving set piece reduces options.

3. Applying pressure

Pressure is applied by tackling the ball carrier so that possession of the ball can be contested. After a tackle, the defence may have to settle for stopping the ball carrier running down the field and re-establishing the pattern as skilled ball carriers will make the ball available to team-mates.

Key to this is patience. To try and regain possession immediately may result in an infringement or the over-commitment of players. The first will concede a penalty and the second will create space for the opposing attack to penetrate.

4. Prevent territory being gained

Success here depends on the quality of the tackles that are made, as the aim of a tackle is to stop the ball carrier immediately and not let the player progress through the tackle beyond the point of contact. In close quarter play this is very important as any gain, however small, can allow the attacking team to build the momentum.

5. Providing support

The tackler usually needs the support of team mates in order to recover the ball. The support may assist by:

• Completing the tackle
• Picking up a loose ball
• Wrenching the ball from an opponent who has been held
• Intercepting a pass.

In addition, support players must be skilled at forming rucks and mauls to contest and regain possession.

6. Regaining possession

The outcome of regaining possession is the completion of the defensive phase of play from which the team can reverse the process and attack.

It is the culmination of the other principles progressively eroding the time and space to attack. As pressure is applied, the team will be rewarded with opportunities that allow them to regain possession.

7. Counter Attack

When possession is regained, the team should immediately react and attack. The team will miss the opportunity to take advantage of the momentary hesitation by opponents if there is any delay.

Counter attack can take place whenever possession changes in dynamic play.

Conventionally, the ball being kicked to a player by the opposition is looked on as the most common opportunity to counter attack.

Other opportunities occur whenever there is a turnover, when

• Advantage is played following an infringement
• A loose ball is gathered
• A pass is intercepted
• The ball is ripped from an opponent
• The ball is regained following a tackle.

The ball is a magnet, which attracts many players. When possession is regained, play which takes place around the place where the turn over took place will be more easily contested again by the opposition. Consequently, moving the ball away from the congestion to space across the field offers the best opportunity to take the counter attack forward.

Once the attack is initiated, the principles of attack then apply once again.

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

MODULE 2 - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union
1. PASSING AND RECEIVING

Unit one - Game knowledge

Module two - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union

1. PASSING AND RECEIVING

Contents

Learning outcome

At the conclusion of this module, you will be able to apply key factor analysis to the skills of the game to identify and solve problems.

Introduction

The principles of attack and defence identify what has to be achieved while the performance of individuals skills is the route by which this can take place. There is therefore a link between each principle and the skills used to the achieve the principle. This link is shown in the table on the next page.

ATTACK			
Principles of play	**Examples of skills**		
	Individual skills	**Mini-unit / team skills**	**Unit skills**
1. Gain possession to	Catching Picking up		Scrums Line-outs Kick-offs Re-Starts
2. Go forward with	Passing and receiving Evasion Running lines Kicking	Phase play attack	Back-line attack Mauling
3. The support of team-mates to	Passing and receiving Running lines	Support play	
4. Maintain continuity of play exerting	Falling in the tackle Ball availability in contact	Post tackle Rucking Mauling	
5. Pressure to score points			

DEFENCE			
Principles of play	**Examples of skills**		
	Individual skills	**Mini-unit / team skills**	**Unit skills**
1. Contest possession and	Catching Picking up Contact skills		Scrums Line-outs Kick-offs Restarts
2. Go forward	Running lines	Back three defence Front line defence Defence from phase play	Back line defence
3. Applying pressure to	Tackling Ball recovery in contact		
4. Prevent territory being gained	Tackling		
5. Supported by or in support of team mates to	Tackle completion Contesting possession	Post tackle Rucking Mauling	
6. Regain possession and	Ball recovery in contact Catching Picking up	Defence in ruck and maul	
7. Counter attack	Running and evasion Skills Passing Kicking Catching Picking up	Support Rucking Mauling	

Application of the key factors to video footage

1. View each video example in turn and analyse it using the table below (for the passer) and the table on the next page (for the receiver).

2. Decide if the desired outcome has been achieved. If it has put a tick, if it hasn't put a cross, and if it doesn't apply to the example put N/A.

3. Then analyse each of the listed key factors that may have contributed to the success or failure of the outcome. Put a tick, cross or N/A next to each key factor.

Space is provided for you to analyse up to five examples.

Outcome

To make a pass that is easily caught to a team mate who is in a better position than the passer to continue play.

What is key factor analysis?

Key factor analysis takes each of the skills of the game and gives the outcome that can be achieved by the successful performance of the skill. This then gives rise to a list of actions (key factors) that, when performed in sequential order, will result in the outcome being achieved. Each skill can be coached by:

- *explanation of the key factors*
- *practical demonstration of the key factors*
- *application of the key factors to video footage of the skill*
- *use of the key factors to identify the problems and solutions to a situation explained in a scenario.*

	PASSING	1	2	3	4	5
	Outcome achieved?					
	Key factors					
1	Run straight					
2	Hold the ball in both hands					
3	Commit a defender					
4	Prop on the inside leg					
5	Turn side-on to the defence, to face the supporting receiver					
6	Swing the arms through in the direction of the pass					
7	Use the elbows and wrist to control the speed and flight of the ball as the ball is released					
8	Follow through with the hands in the direction of the pass					
9	Pass to the 'target' area a chest height in front of the receiver					
10	Support the receiver once the pass has been completed					

RECEIVING A PASS		1	2	3	4	5
	Outcome achieved?					
	Key factors					
1	Position so that the ball can be run towards in its flight					
2	Run towards the space created by the passer					
3	Extend the hands to catch the ball early					
4	Watch the ball into the hands					
5	Catch the ball with the fingers and hands					
6	Once the ball has been caught, choose the best option					

Application of key factors to scenarios

1. Make sure that the scenario(s) you have been given are fully understood.
2. Identify the error.
3. Identify the player(s) responsible for the error. In some cases, more than one player may be responsible, even if the skill is an individual one. For example, when a pass does not achieve the outcome this may be the fault of the passer or the receiver, or a bit of both.
4. Discuss the causes of the error with your group, using the key factors as a checklist.
5. List these in order of priority.

On the table on the following page:
1. Name the skill
2. Explain the error
3. Identify the players responsible
4. Brainstorm and prioritise the possible reasons.

Scenarios

1. The half-back's pass is not reaching the first five eighth, so that the receiver has to bend down to pick up the ball.

2. #12 is passing to #13 such that it is necessary to look down to catch the ball.

3. When #10 passes the ball to #12, the receiver has to slow down to catch the ball.

4. When #15 enters the back line and receives the ball, there always seems to be a number of defenders to make the tackle.

5. When the winger receives a pass, the ball always seems to be fumbled and the player is seldom in a position to beat a defender.

6. Players are drifting in the direction they are passing. They are passing off their outside leg to get greater distance but this is accentuating the drift.

Scenario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

Passing

"A pass is only as good as the ease with which it is caught."

Outcome

To make a pass that is easily caught to a team-mate who is in a better position than the passer to maintain continuity of play.

Key factors

• Run straight to commit a defender
• Hold the ball in both hands
• Prop on the inside leg
• Turn side on to the defence to face the supporting receiver
• Swing the arms through in the direction being passed to
• Use the elbows and wrists to control the speed and flight of the ball as the ball is released
• Follow through with the hands in the direction of the pass
• Pass to the 'target' area at chest height in front of the receiver
• Support the receiver once the pass has been completed.

Explanation

The passer draws a defender by running at an opponent. It is best that this defender is the nearest opponent in the direction away from the direction in which the pass will be made. This creates space for the receiver and prevents the defender from assisting in defence elsewhere.

Once the defence has been drawn they can be kept in that position by the passer propping on the inside leg and turning side-on to face the supporting receiver. This action helps maintain continuity of play by further keeping the defence committed, enabling the ball carrier to 'dummy' pass, should the defence move away.

Secondly, by facing the supporting team-mate to whom the ball is to be passed, the speed and flight of the pass can be better judged, allowing the catcher to maintain continuity of run. This action shows the receiver exactly what the passer is doing, so the pass is more likely to be completed successfully.

Finally, by turning, the passer's thigh and hip are turned towards the tackler, reducing the risk of injury.

Swinging the arms through will enable the pass to be made with accuracy and force. The elbows, and the wrists in particular, can be used to fine-tune the pass's speed and flight.

If the receiver is some distance across the field, by spinning the ball along its long axis (spiralling), greater distance can be achieved. However, a spinning ball is less easily caught. For shorter passes the ball should not be spun, or spun only gently, so that it can be comfortably caught by the receiver.

If the receiver is some distance behind the passer, then floating the ball in the air will give the receiver time to get to the ball to catch it. Floated passes are the most easily caught, provided the receiver is far enough back to run towards the pass.

By following through, the passer is able to guide the ball to the target area, which is at about chest height in front of the receiver. If the pass is delivered to the target area, the receiver will be able to catch the ball without reducing running speed. In addition, the catcher will be able to catch the ball without looking down, therefore while at the same time watching the oncoming defenders.

Once the pass has been made, the passer should support the receiver. But to do this during the action of passing will allow the defence to move so that the receiver's options to maintain continuity are reduced. The pass is a distinct action whose outcome can only be achieved by completing it before doing something else.

The spiral pass

Outcome

To increase the length, speed and accuracy of the pass.

Explanation

The spiral pass uses the aerodynamics of the ball to achieve its outcome goal. When a pass is made over some distance, the spiralling of the ball allows it to retain its flight path and accuracy. While the speed of the pass and its rotation assist in this, they do make the ball more difficult to catch. If spiral passes are made over short distances, the passer should pass softly so that the ball is not too difficult to catch. Consequently the spiral pass should be used when it is necessary to clear the ball quickly from a congested area to a less congested area where there are greater attacking opportunities.

Key factors

• Catch the ball with both hands
• Turn the ball so that its long axis is approximately 30 degrees to the horizontal
• In the passing action, use the top hand to give power and to impart spin
• Use the bottom hand to provide stability and direction

The clearing pass

Outcome

To clear the ball from a source of possession to the back line.

Explanation

The clearing pass is a spiral pass which travels sufficient distance to allow the catcher to receive the ball with time and space to initiate an attack. Whether the ball is on or off the ground, it must be passed immediately in one movement to save time. This is achieved by sinking at the hips and bending at the knees. Too much bending at the hips will create instability. By placing the foot next to the ball sufficient power will be obtained and the player will be less likely to take two movements before passing, which would slow down the pass.

The spiralling action can cause the ball to curve back in the air. The halfback and the receiver should allow for this. It can be corrected to some degree by following through with the passing hand so that it points directly to the target area.

Key factors - for passing from the ground

- Body in a crouch
- Sink at the hips, bend at the knees
- Right foot to the ball when passing with the right hand and left foot to the ball when passing with the left hand
- Other foot a comfortable distance away for stability, pointing in the direction of the pass
- Head over the ball, eyes on the ball
- When passing right use the right hand for stability and the left hand for power.
- When passing left, use the left hand for stability and the right for power
- Gain power for the pass, by using each successive muscle group in very rapid succession from the foot to the passing hand
- Follow through with the passing hand pointing it in the direction of the receiver.

Common errors

Lifting the head. This reduces the power and lifts the flight of the ball
Reaching for the ball rather than putting the foot to the ball. This reduces power and the passer's hands can be knocked away as soon as they touch the ball
Being square on to the forward formation so that an adjustment of body position has to be made to pass to the left or the right. The player should anticipate the passing direction prior to arriving
Passing to the left from the scrum using the right hand. While this may seem the best way to pass left, the positioning of the opposition halfback allows that player to interfere with the pass. To prevent this, the halfback should put the left foot to the ball, placing the body between the ball and the opponent. Rather than pass right the player can pivot and pass left. The players hands and arms are then protected from the opposing halfback by the passer's body.

The dive pass

Outcome

To pass the ball quickly, without interference, to the backs.

Explanation

This type of pass results in the halfback being on the ground and out of play at its conclusion. However, because of the difficulty in tackling a player when dive passing, it does ensure the pass is completed. This type of pass can therefore be used to clear the ball in difficult conditions, especially if it is wet or when the delivery of the ball is untidy.

Tactically, it can allow the halfback to regain composure when difficulty is being experienced using the other passes.

There should be a direct line from the passer to the ball and to the receiver, so that all the effort is in a single direction. By scooping the hands under the ball, a ball in wet and muddy conditions can be controlled. It is important to avoid the passer being caught in possession behind the forwards. In difficult conditions, the dive pass is one way of preventing this.

Key factors

• Position to see the ball and the receiver in the same line of vision
• In a crouch, move to the ball
• Sink at the knees; bend at the hips, close to the ball
• Spread the fingers to scoop under the ball grasping it with the hands
• Drive with the legs and at the same time pass the ball to the target area using both hands
• Follow through and use the hands to control the direction, speed and flight of the ball.

The lob pass

Outcome

To pass to team mates in the space the ball carrier has moved away from. Remember the support principle: "the space you create is the space you move away from, not the space you are running into". So it is into this space that support player will be running to catch the ball.

Explanation

Ball carriers must be able to pass into the space from which they have moved away. If they are running to the right, this space is on the left and if they are running left the space is to the right.

This often happens when a player attempts to evade an opponent. If the evasion has been only partially successful, the player may not be able to penetrate and score. However, the defence will have been drawn towards the ball carrier and away from the space inside.

Sometimes the ball carrier will have been unable to straighten up. This makes the pass difficult because the defence is in a position to intercept an orthodox pass. Little power can be used because of the player's line of running is away from the space into which the pass is to be directed. The ball is therefore lobbed to avoid the defender.

The pass must give supporting players time to reach the pass and catch it. The lob allows support players this time.

Key factors

• With two hands on the ball, push the hands forward and slightly up
• Use the wrists and fingers to lob the ball into the gap.

The pass made through the tackle

Outcome

To pass to supporting players running into the space away from which the ball carrier has drawn the tackler.

Explanation

This is a pass that is made to support when the attackers are outnumbered by defenders. The ball carrier attacks the space and accepts the tackle turning to pass into the space the tackler has moved away from.

The impact of the tackle will turn the ball carrier in the direction from which the tackle has been made. When a player is tackled from the right, the player will be turned to face the right and when tackled from the left, turned to face the left.

To keep the arms free to make the pass the ball carrier may have to lift them up. There are two methods to ensure that the arms are kept free:

1. Attacking the space between two defenders. To tackle they will have to move from the space they have been defending and the tackle will usually be low, thereby freeing the ball carrier's hands.
2. Committing the defender by running at the player and then evading to the left or right. Again this results in a low tackle.

The pass that results is usually made to support players inside the ball carrier. This is because especially in back play, tacklers tackle them from the inside, turning the ball carrier in that direction. It is very difficult, and often unsafe, to twist the body so that the pass can be made in the opposite direction. To do this it is better to attack the tackler on the inside so that the ball carrier is turned into the outside space.

Key factors

• Hold the ball firmly in two hands to withstand the impact of the tackle
• Initially hold the tackler before attacking the space on either side
• When tackled, turn with the impact of the tackle
• Keep the arms free above the level of the tackle
• Before falling to the ground, pass the ball into the space into which the receiver is moving.

The screen or circle pass

Outcome

To pass accurately in contact.

Explanation

In congested situations where the ball carrier is in contact, it is difficult to pass accurately. By driving into the defender side-on in a braced position side on, the ball is protected. If the defender is on the ball carrier's left, the drive should be with the right shoulder and if on the right, with the left shoulder. Take care not to turn too close to the tackler as this can cause the ball carrier to be easily turned to face the opposition.

The ball carrier's body will be between the tackler and the ball. The ball carrier should turn sooner rather than later, as to be turning upon contact enables the tackler to pull the player away from the direction in which the pass is to be made.

To remain standing the ball carrier should ensure that the feet are shoulder width apart. The centre of gravity should be low. This can be achieved by sinking at the hips and bending the knees, rather than bending at the waist.

When contact is made, the player should turn back on to the tackler. Players driving in with their right shoulder should turn to the right and with the left shoulder turn to the left. By bringing the heel back, not the toe forward, the ball will be screened from the defence.

The receiver must be deep enough to adjust the line of running to run on the side the passer has turned to, to take advantage of the screen of the passer's body.

The length of the pass depends on the number and positioning of defenders. In congested areas, the receiver should run closer to the passer so the ball can be put into the receiver's hands.

Key factors

- Drive into a defender side on
- Remain standing upon contact
- Turn back on to the defender by bringing the foot back
- Screen the ball from interference
- Make a close pass to a team-mate.

Receiving a pass

Outcome

To catch the ball while retaining vision of the positioning of opponents so that the receiver has time to choose the best available option following receipt of the pass.

Explanation

By positioning so that the receiver can move forward towards the ball in its flight, the receiver will be able to maintain running speed and retain vision of opponents. If the receiver is too shallow, the pass may have to be rushed, making it a faster pass that is difficult to catch.

In some cases the rushed pass may have to be made to the receiver and not to the space in front, to avoid a forward pass. This will force the receiver to turn towards the passer, reducing vision of opponents and limiting options. This will also slow down the receiver's ability to pass the ball on to another team mate, as the adjustment required to do this will take time.

In the action of passing, the passer will move left or right, creating space on the other side for the receiver to run into. If the receiver and the passer are both moving in the same direction, space will be reduced and options limited. In this situation the passer's line of running will allow the defence to run with the ball towards the receiver. If this does occur, the receiver should move into the space inside the passer as this is the space being created.

By extending the hands in the direction the pass is coming from, the receiver provides the passer with a target. The ball can be caught earlier, giving the receiver more time to decide on what to do next and it can be passed on in a single movement. A pass received in the centre of the body will have to be moved back in the direction of the pass before it is moved on, all of which takes time.

By catching the ball with the fingers and the hands (not the arms), the receiver is able to make an immediate pass, should this be the chosen option.

The options that can be chosen are to pass, run or kick, depending on the situation. This will depend on the position on the field of play and on the positioning of opposing players. If defensive opponents are some distance away the player will have space to run with the ball.

If opponents are within four or five metres the player will be able to commit a defender before passing. However if the receiver is in a poor position and likely to be tackled as the pass is caught, the ball carrier may have to retain possession and accept the tackle making the ball available by placing it towards team-mates.

Receiving a pass (continued)

Teenage and pre-teenage players often take some time to kick the ball. To have time to kick accurately, the decision may have to be made before possession is gained and the kicker may have to stand deeper giving more time and space to make the kick.

Key factors

- Position so that the ball can be run towards in its flight
- Run towards the space created by the passer
- Extend the hands to catch the ball early
- Watch the ball into the hands
- Catch the ball with the fingers and hands
- Once the ball has been caught, choose the best option.

Passing and catching skill activities

Ball familiarisation

Players work individually with one ball per player. Players familiarise themselves with the ball by performing these activities a given number of times:
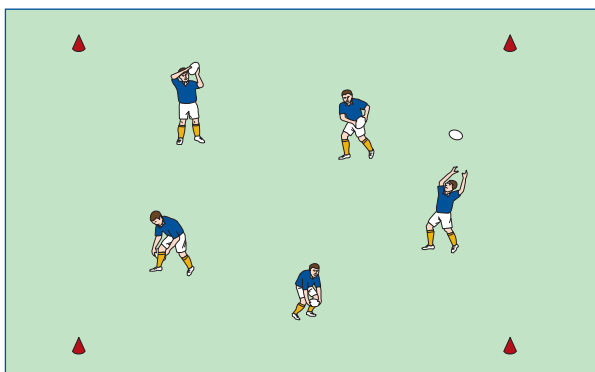
1. Pass around the head.
2. Pass around the waist.
3. Pass around the knees.
4. Pass around the ankles.
5. Pass in figure 8s through the legs.
6. Throw into the air, taking one step forward and catching behind the back.
7. Pass between the legs, leaving the ball in one place and changing the hands from left at the front, right at back, to left at the back, right at the front.
8. Running down the field passing the ball through the legs.

Activity variations

1. Close the eyes.
2. Perform activities on the run.
3. Use medicine balls.

Key points

- Spread the fingers
- Ball in both hands for maximum control
- Ball control is more important than running speed.

Zig-zag passing

Organise all players into two lines facing each other approximately 4-6 metres apart. Feed as many balls, one at a time, as the player's skill will allow to the first player in the line. These are passed zig-zag from one line to the other right down the lines. Once all of the balls being used have been handled by a player, that player runs to the end of the line to receive the balls again. The drill continues across the field and back.
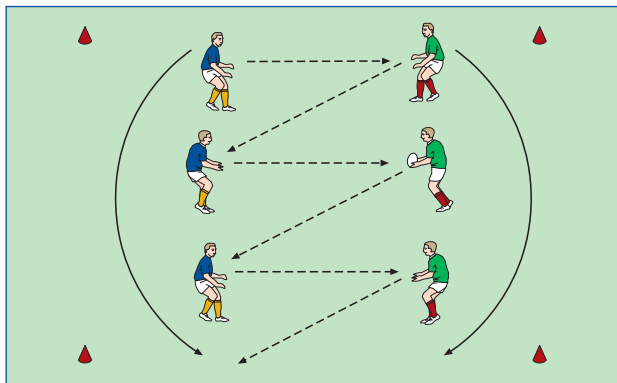
Key points

- Ball in both hands
- Provide a target with the hands for the passer at chest height
- Pass to the target
- Reach to receive the pass
- Pass only to a player who is ready.

Group passing

Players work in three groups of three in a 15 metre by 20 metre channel. Group A starts along the centre of the channel with groups B and C at either end of the channel. Group A has the ball and runs towards group B making as many passes as possible. When they reach group B the ball is given to group B who make as many passes as possible running towards group C. Group C then cross the channel back to group A and the drill continues.
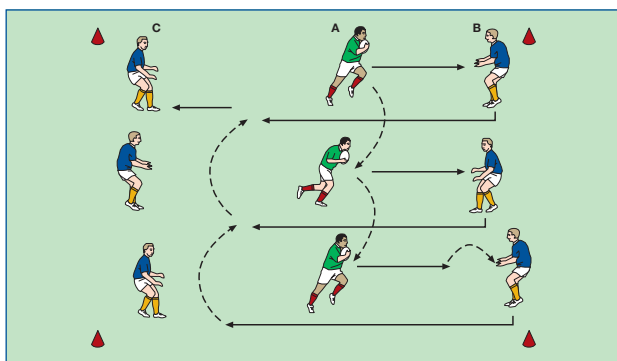
Activity variations

1. Incorporate specific passes e.g. miss passes, loops etc.
2. Place 1-2 defenders in the channel to reduce the time the players have to pass.

Key points

- Ball in both hands
- Reach for ball; catch early
- Pass in front of the receiver
- Receiver deep enough to run towards the ball
- Immediately pass the ball on.

Softball

Organise players into two equal teams. Use cones to define a playing 'diamond' about 15-20 metres square. Place cones in each corner to act as 'bases'. One team goes in to bat and the other is in the field. Members of the batting team kick the ball using any type of kick into the field and try to get as far around the bases as they can. If the kick is caught, the player is out. If the ball is passed to a base before a runner arrives, the player is out. Three players out equals team out. Play nine innings per team.
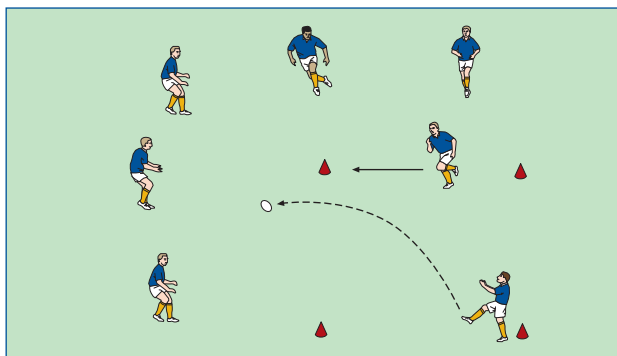
Activity variations

1. A set number of passes must be made to return the ball to the base.
2. Return the ball by kicking or with a specific type of pass.
3. Fielders cannot run with the ball - must pass or kick.

Key points

- Key factors for kicking and passing
- Look for and kick to space
- Catch / field the ball cleanly
- Catch before passing.

Pressure pass

Players work in three groups of five to six players in a 10m by 22m channel. Groups A and B line up facing each other approximately 10m apart with individual players approximately 5m apart. Each player in group A has a ball. The first player of group C jogs down between groups A and B receiving passes from the A players and passing them to the B players. With the balls now with the B players the next player in group C makes a pass from group B to A. The frequency with which the players in group C run depends on the players' passing skills.
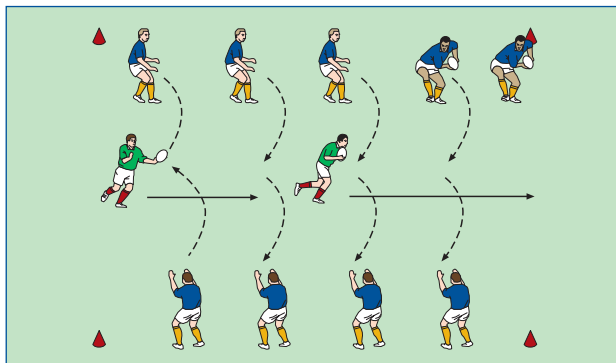
Activity variations

1. Spread out the players in groups A and B if the players need more time.

2. Stand these players closer together if the players need less time.

3. Have two group C players run at the same time.

Key points

• *Ball in both hands*
• *Pass in front of the receiver*
• *Reach to receive the pass*
• *Pass the ball immediately.*

3 players 2 balls

Players work in groups of three in a 22m by 12m channel. Each group has two balls. Each of the two outside players has a ball each. The three players run across the channel passing to the centre player who passes back to the player who made the pass to them.
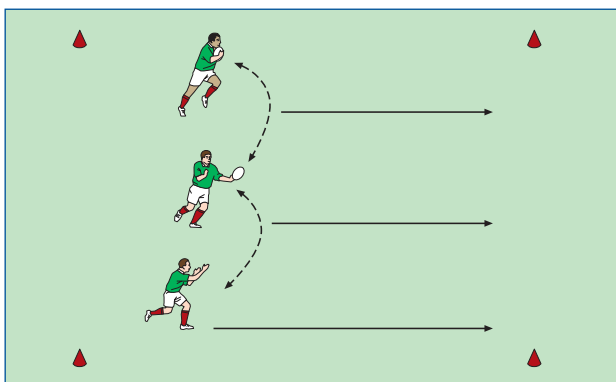
Activity variation

A passes to B, B passes to C and C passes back to A. Start with one ball with A and move to two balls, one with A and one with C.

Key points

• *Ball in both hands*
• *Pass in front of the receiver only when they are ready*
• *Reach to receive the pass*

Magic squares

Divide players into four groups with each group positioned at the corner of a 10m or 15m square grid. The player at the front of each group has a ball. On "go" the ball carriers run diagonally across the grid and, as the reach the group diagonally opposite them, pass to the first player in that group. After passing, the player moves to the back of the line to which they have run. The ball receiver performs the skill back in the opposite direction.
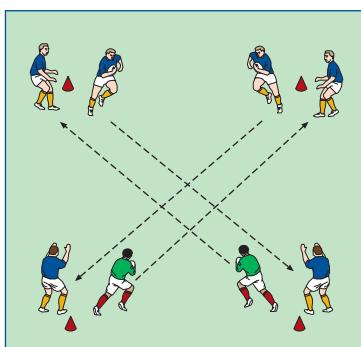
Key points

• *Accuracy in performing the skill so that possession is not lost*
• *Use peripheral vision to find, and evasion to use, space*
• *Reduce group sizes and the size of the grid to intensify the activity. Do the opposite to reduce the intensity.*

Activity variations: • Receiver leaving before the passer has reached the other side • Pop pass • 'Gut' pass • Grubber kick • Chip pass • Kick and recover • Two players run across passing to each other • Two players 'hit and spin' as they go across the grid • Increase the number of players involved at any one time.

Scissor pass

Players work in pairs in a 15m by 22m channel. The players start by the cones on one side of the grid. The players run forward and across the grid the ball carrier scissor passing with the partner. Players, once they have reached the perimeter of the grid run back towards the partner to repeat the skill.
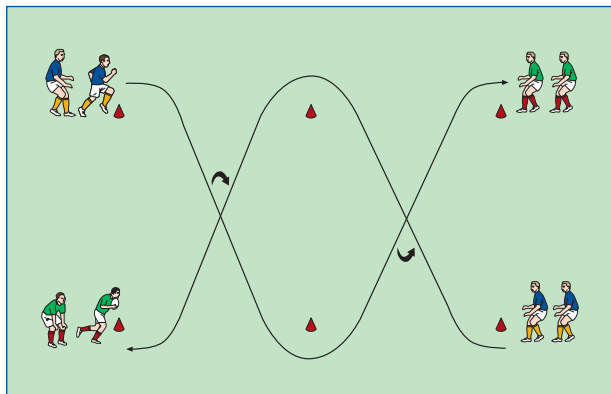
Activity variations

1. Increase the number of players to a maximum of 5.
2. Add in a tackler at each scissor pass so that the pass is made in the tackle using channel or screen passes.
3. The players initially run forward 5-10 metres before deviating across to simulate drawing a defender.

Key points

• Key factors for passing
• Running lines in the backs
• Turn towards the receiver when making the pass
• Straighten the lines of run after each pass.

Doubling round

Players work in groups of four or five with one ball per group, on a full field. Players start at one goal line. On "Go" the players jog down the field, running straight. The ball is passed along the line. As soon as each player passes the ball the passer doubles round to join the opposite end of the line. The activity continues from goal-line to goal-line.
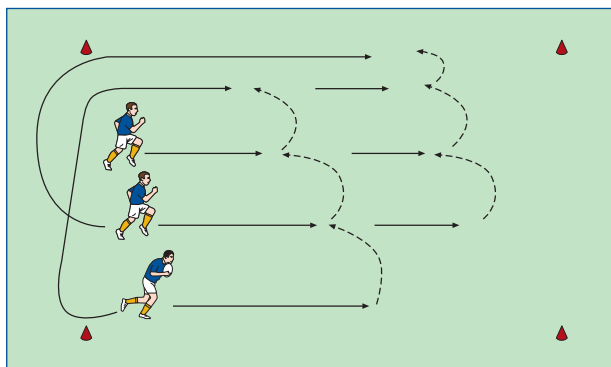
Activity variations

1. Blow a whistle to signal speed up or slow down.
2. Restrict the width of the field.

Key points

• Key factors for passing
• Run straight
• Keep depth so that the player can accelerate towards the ball when it is passed.

Passing in fives

Players work in groups of five in a 20m by 40m channel with one ball per group. Players line up across the channel approximately 4m apart. The third player has the ball. The group runs down the channel. The ball carrier passes to the second player who passes the ball back and runs to support outside the fifth player. The third player now passes to the fourth player who returns the pass and supports outside the first player. As each player moves in support the remaining players on this side move to within passing distance of the third player. Rotate players so that they all have a turn at being the third player.
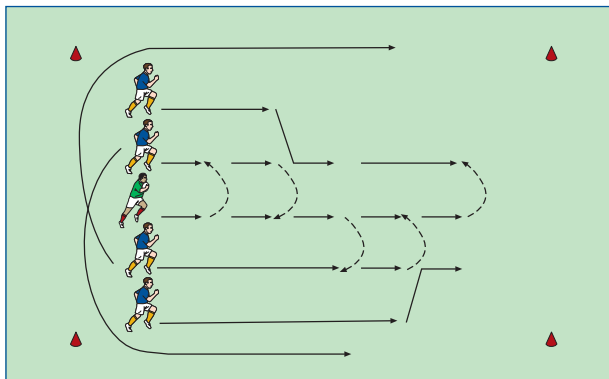
Practising three vs two

In a 15m by 20m grid, five players line up along a line. The first player passes to the second and immediately this player passes to the third the first two players defend against the remaining three.
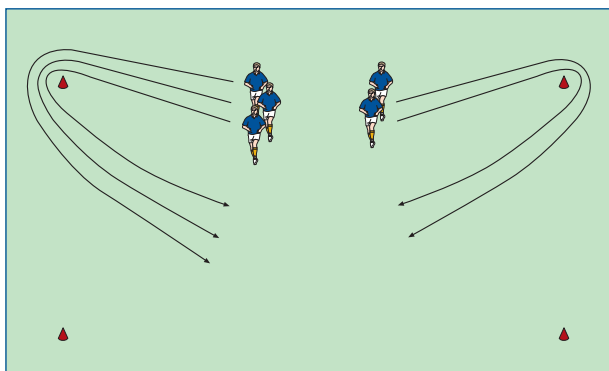
An alternative is to use a 10m by 15m grid. The players group at the halfway point along the 15m side. On the coach's call, two players run around the cone to the left and enter the grid as defenders. Three players run in the opposite direction and enter the grid from this end as attackers, thus creating a three vs two situation. This drill can be varied once the players become familiar with it. To do this, the coach varies the numbers in attack and defence. So a call of "2:1" means that two players will attack and one will defend, while a call of "5:3" means that five will attack and three will defend.

Finally, place cones along the perimeter on the attacking team side and designate the number of players who have to go round each cone. Those who go around cones nearby will be immediately in play while those who have to go further will enter play later simulating more closely what happens in a real game.

Options

a. 1 and 2 defend 3 and 4 so that they practise the overlap passing to 5.

b. 1 defends 3 and 2 defends 5 to practise the entry of the extra man - 4.

c. 1 defends 3 and drifts off to defend 4 so 3 practices dummy pass and go. 2 defends 5.

d. 1 defends 3 and 2 defends 5 but then goes in to defend 4. 1 passes to the free player - 5.

Key points

- *Decision making based on position of defenders*
- *Draw defenders*
- *Create space*
- *Lines of running*
- *Communication in attack and defence.*
- *Progress as the skill of the players will allow by first defending a designated player and then allowing one defender to choose which attacker the player will defend from a choice of two.*

No mistakes

Groups of four to six players play down a channel which is 5m-10m wide and 10-15m long. These channels are marked with cones across the field. Down each channel are four to six defenders, evenly spaced. Once the team in possession has passed one defender, the defender concentrates on defending the next group. After going down one channel the attack goes down the next and so on. When a group arrives at a channel for which there are no defenders they become defenders until all groups have passed down their channel after which they become attackers once again.
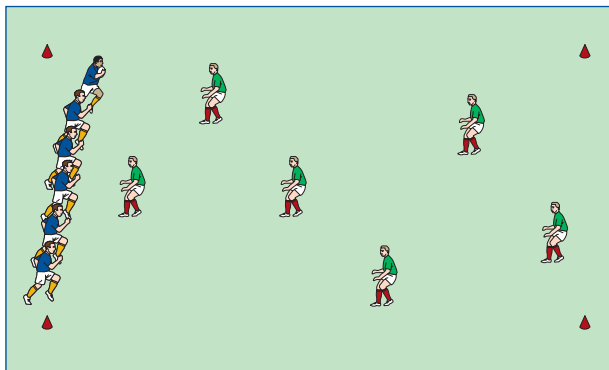
Key points

- *Key factors of*
  - *support play*
  - *passing*
  - *receiving*
  - *falling in the tackle*
  - *tackling.*

Continuous touchdown

Players work in two groups of four in a 15m by 20m grid. One group are the attackers. Two defenders are positioned on one long side of the grid and the remaining two on the other side. The attackers attempt to score 4v2 on one side of the grid. After scoring or committing an infringement the attacking players turn around and attack the other side of the grid. Play continues for a set period before the teams switch and the second team attempts to better the first team's score.
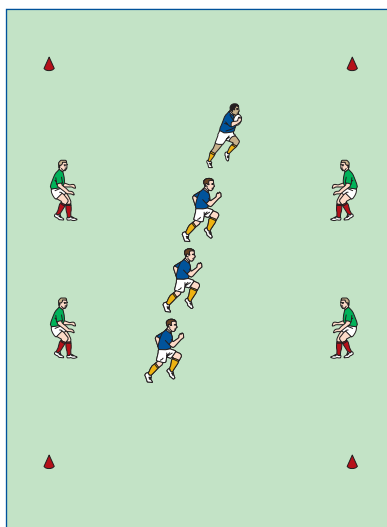
Key points

- *Alignment in attack and defence*
- *Passing to the unmarked player*
- *Creating and entering space*
- *Only passing to a player in a better position than the passer*
- *Creating and reducing time and space*
- *Communication.*

Touchdown

In a 10m by 20m grid, two teams of equal numbers line up opposite each other on the 20m side. One team has a ball which they pass along their line of players. On the coach's call, the ball carrier runs behind the team, around the end cone and into the grid. That player then attempts to place the ball in a 3m square in the centre of the grid which is the scoring zone. Meanwhile the player's opposite number has done the same and defends to prevent the ball carrier from scoring.
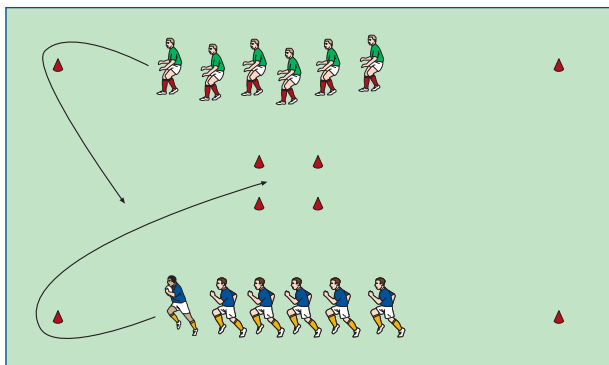
NOTES

Unit one - Game knowledge

Module two - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union

2. PICKING UP THE BALL

Contents

Application of the key factors to video footage

1. View each video example in turn and analyse it using the table below.
2. Decide if the desired outcome has been achieved. If it has put a tick, if it hasn't put a cross, and if it doesn't apply to the example put N/A.
3. Then analyse each of the listed key factors that may have contributed to the success or failure of the outcome. Put a tick, cross or N/A next to each key factor.

Space is provided for you to analyse up to five examples.

Outcome
To catch the ball while retaining vision of the positioning of opponents, so that the receiver has time to choose the best available option.

What is key factor analysis?

Key factor analysis takes each of the skills of the game and gives the outcome that can be achieved by the successful performance of the skill. This then gives rise to a list of actions (key factors) that, when performed in sequential order, will result in the outcome being achieved. Each skill can be coached by:

- *explanation of the key factors*
- *practical demonstration of the key factors*
- *application of the key factors to video footage of the skill*
- *use of the key factors to identify the problems and solutions to a situation explained in a scenario.*

PICKING UP THE BALL		1	2	3	4	5
	Outcome achieved?					
	Key factors					
1	Approach the ball in a crouched position					
2	Position above the ball side-on, straddling the ball with one foot to the front and the other behind the ball					
3	Sink at the hips and bend at the knees					
4	Keep the head up in a neutral position					
5	Steady the ball with the front hand and scoop it up with the back hand					
6	Bring the ball into the chest while assessing options					

Application of key factors to scenarios

1. Make sure that the scenario(s) you have been given are fully understood.
2. Identify the error.
3. Identify the player(s) responsible for the error. In some cases, more than one player may be responsible, even if the skill is an individual one. For example, when a pass does not achieve the outcome this may be the fault of the passer or the receiver, or a bit of both.
4. Discuss the causes of the error with your group, using the key factors as a checklist.
5. List these in order of priority.

In the table:
1. Name the skill
2. Explain the error
3. Identify the players responsible
4. Brainstorm and prioritise the possible reasons.

Scenarios

1. As the #7 tries to pick up loose ball, it is being knocked on.
2. At the tackle, in defence, the first arriving player is attempting to pick up the ball, but is being easily driven off by the opposition.
3. The half-back is knocking-on the ball when it emerges from rucks.
4. When the second wave of players arrives at the tackle they are slowing down and picking up the ball, and as a result they are being immediately tackled.

Scen-ario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
1				
2				
3				
4				

Picking up the ball

Outcome

To regain possession of the ball.

Key Factors

• Approach the ball in a crouched position
• Position above the ball side-on, straddling the ball with one foot to the front and the other behind the ball
• Sink at the hips and bend at the knees
• Keep the head up in the neutral position
• Steady the ball with the front hand and scoop it up with the back hand
• Bring the ball into the chest while assessing options.

Explanation

In most situations, there is a number of players gathered around the ball when it is on the ground. When players bend to pick it up, their position becomes unsteady. It is essential that they are in as strong a position as possible to withstand contact. To achieve this a crouched position, a side-on position to opponents is best.

By sinking at the hips and bending at the knees, this strong position is retained. Players should not, as far as possible, bend at the waist, as the lowering of the head will result in a very unstable position. This is why players must be encouraged to keep the head in a neutral position. This is the normal position in which the head is held and it is the strongest position in which the head can be.

The action of scooping the ball up with the back hand allows the hands to be placed under the ball so that it is not spilled. The supporting hand in front prevents the ball from being knocked on.

Finally, the ball is brought into the chest. The options once the ball has been secured may be to run, pass or kick, to form a maul or to ruck with team mates.

Picking up the ball often occurs after a tackle. At this time players from both teams will be arriving to contest the ball or to drive players off it. Players should practise to the level of their competency. As soon as possible after the players become technically sound, opposed practices should be used to simulate the contest that takes place. This will include competing for the ball on the ground, driving opponents off, being driven away from the ball and being driven past the ball while at the same time not falling over.

This skill is closely linked to the presentation of the ball by the ball carrier after a tackle as, by placing the ball towards team-mates, the ball carrier assists team-mates to recover it.

Falling to the ground to pick up the ball

Outcome

To regain possession of the ball.

Key factors

• Approach the ball in a crouch
• Slide into the ball on the hip and thigh
• Grasp the ball into the body
• Pass the ball to a team mate, or so that team mates can recover it, or stand up
  with the ball in possession

Explanation

Players can go to ground to recover the ball when the ball is in space. They may
not do so at the tackle. However, there are other situations in which this is the most
secure method. This particularly applies to wet and muddy conditions.

Note: This technique breaks the law if it is performed in close proximity to a tackled
player to recover the ball. Because the ball is on the ground, the player must be in a
crouch, so the player can slide to the ground to recover it.

Wet or muddy surfaces assist the player to slide into the ball. This should be done
with the player's back to the opposing players for both protection and to ensure the
ball is available to team mates.

By sliding into the ball on hip and thigh the player is able to stand up. This is
achieved by 'planting' the foot furthest from the ground on the ground and pushing
so that the player drives up in a low, forward moving body position. Passing and
handling activities, as well as running and passing skill activities, can be adapted to
practice picking up the ball.

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

MODULE 2 - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union
3. RUNNING AND EVASION

Unit one - Game knowledge

Module two - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union

3. RUNNING AND EVASION

Contents

Running - outcomes

In possession of the ball
To evade opponents while running towards their goal-line, without becoming isolated from team-mates unless a try can be scored.

In support of the ball carrier
To be in a position to react to the actions of the ball carrier and maintain continuity of play.

In defence
To be in a position to react to the actions of the opposing ball carrier to regain possession of the ball.

Running - key factors

Running with the ball

Note: It is best to carry the ball in both hands as this gives the ball carrier the widest range of attacking options.

• Run towards the nearest defenders.
• Change the direction of movement close to them, using a side-step, swerve, and/or change of pace.
• Move into the space furthest from the defenders.
• Accelerate to take advantage of the space that has been created.

By running towards the defenders, the ball carrier can force the defender to slow down because the defender knows they may have to tackle. The ball carrier then changes direction very close to the defender, reducing the defneder's reaction time, thereby assisting the ball carrier in evading the defender. To prevent the defender from recovering, it is important to accelerate away as fast as possible.

The side step and swerve are two other techniques. Young players will, in their natural play, dodge around to beat defenders. Don't take away this innate ability by making the players do something by the key factors when they have their own way of doing it. It is better to advise and improve on what they are already doing.

Side step

• Run towards the nearest defenders.
• Change direction close to them by pushing sideways - off the right foot to go left, and off the left foot to go right.
• Accelerate, to take advantage of the defender's / defenders' hesitation.

Swerve

• Run towards the nearest defenders.
• Change direction away from them by veering away into the outside space.
• Accelerate to take advantage of the defender's / defenders' hesitation.

Both the side-step and the swerve can be combined with a change of pace. The ball carrier's initial speed may be slower than that used after changing direction.

Running in support of the ball carrier

• Run in anticipation of the area in which play can be entered.
• Position so that play may be entered without slowing down by being behind the ball carrier.
• Advise the ball carrier of this positioning.
• Enter play in the most effective way.

Running in defence

• Run in anticipation of the area in which play can be entered.
• Position so that the ball carrier's options are reduced.
• When the ball carrier decides on the option, support to regain possession of the ball.

Players often find themselves some distance from the play. Players should try to anticipate to where play is moving, and move in that direction.

In attack, being behind the ball carrier, time is available to alter direction and to anticipate the skills that need to be used. If the support player gets too close, there will be no time to adjust to sudden changes in speed and direction, and to the actions of other players.

When the ball carrier changes direction, space is created in the space from which they have moved away. Support players should learn to run into that space. The ball carrier should learn to pass into it.

Application of the key factors to video footage

1. View each video example in turn and analyse it using the tables below and on the next page.

2. Decide if the desired outcome has been achieved. If it has put a tick, if it hasn't put a cross, and if it doesn't apply to the example put N/A.

3. Then analyse each of the listed key factors that may have contributed to the success or failure of the outcome. Put a tick, cross or N/A next to each key factor.

Space is provided for you to analyse up to five examples.

Outcomes

a. In possession of the ball
To evade opponents while running towards their goal-line without becoming isolated from team-mates unless a try can be scored.

b. In support of the ball carrier
To be in a position to react to the actions of the ball carrier and maintain continuity of play.

c. In defence
To be in a position to react to the actions of the opposing ball carrier to regain possession of the ball

What is key factor analysis?

Key factor analysis takes each of the skills of the game and gives the outcome that can be achieved by the successful performance of the skill. This then gives rise to a list of actions (key factors) that, when performed in sequential order, will result in the outcome being achieved. Each skill can be coached by:

- *explanation of the key factors*
- *practical demonstration of the key factors*
- *application of the key factors to video footage of the skill*
- *use of the key factors to identify the problems and solutions to a situation explained in a scenario.*

RUNNING WITH THE BALL		**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
	Outcome achieved?					
	Key factors					
1	Run towards the nearest defenders					
2	Change the direction of movement close to them using a side-step, swerve, and/or change of pace					
3	Move into the space furthest from the defenders					
4	Accelerate to take advantage of the space that has been created					
SIDE STEP		**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1	Run towards the nearest defenders					
2	Change direction close to them, by pushing sideways off the right foot to go left, and off the left foot to go right					
3	Accelerate to take advantage of the defender's / defenders' hesitation					

SWERVE	1	2	3	4	5
Key factors					
1 Run towards the nearest defenders					
2 Change the direction of movement close to them using a side-step, swerve, and/or change of pace					
3 Accelerate to take advantage of the defender's / defenders' hesitation					
RUNNING IN SUPPORT OF THE BALL CARRIER	1	2	3	4	5
1 Run in anticipation of the area in which play can be entered					
2 Position so that play may be entered without slowing down by being behind the ball carrier					
3 Tell the ball carrier this positioning					
4 Enter play in the most effective way					
RUNNING IN DEFENCE	1	2	3	4	5
1 Run in anticipation of the area in which play can be entered					
2 Position so that the ball carrier's options are reduced					
3 When the ball carrier decides on the option, support to regain possession of the ball					

Application of key factors to scenarios

1. Make sure that the scenario(s) you have been given are fully understood.
2. Identify the error.
3. Identify the player(s) responsible for the error. In some cases, more than one player may be responsible, even if the skill is an individual one. For example, when a pass does not achieve the outcome this may be the fault of the passer or the receiver, or a bit of both.
4. Discuss the causes of the error with your group, using the key factors as a checklist.
5. List these in order of priority.

On the table on the following page:
1. Name the skill
2. Explain the error
3. Identify the players responsible
4. Brainstorm and prioritise the possible reasons.

Scenarios

1. *The #15 is a very good side-stepper but is not beating opponents.*

2. *The wing is beating the first defender but is being easily caught by cover defence.*

3. *In support, players are receiving the ball on their hip.*

4. *As the ball-carrier evades a defender, the space of support players is erroded.*

5. *Runners from rucks are being easily tackled behind the gain line.*

Scen-ario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

Running and evasion skill activities

Single file running

Players work in groups of up to ten players with one ball per group. In a single file, the group jogs around the perimeter of the field. The ball is passed back along the line. When the ball reaches the last player, this player sprints, with the ball in both hands, around the outside of the line to the front. Once the player is at the front, the ball is passed down the line once again.
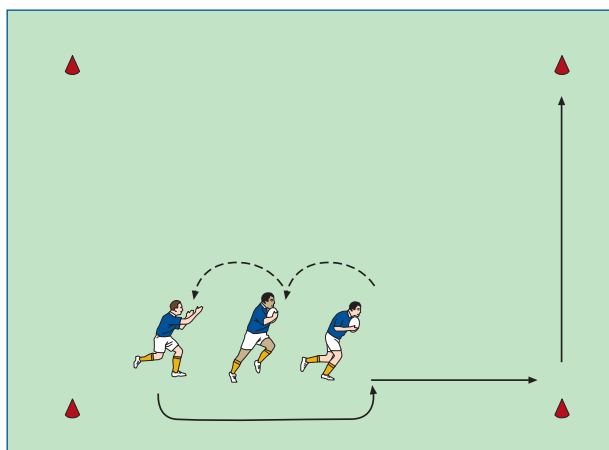
Activity variations

1. Use more than one ball.
2. Designate the type of pass to be made.
3. The runner weaves in and out of the players ahead on the way to the front.

Key points

- Sprint to the front
- Pass only to a receiver who is ready
- Be balanced when side-stepping and swerving between players on the way to the front.

Stepping over

Players work in groups of six to ten. They line up in single file on one side of the field. The first player bursts 3m to 4m and lies on the ground at right angles to the running direction. The next player runs, stepping over the player on the ground and lies down once the first player has been cleared. Each player does the same, stepping over all the players ahead of them. Players lie closer together for high knee raising and further apart for striding out.

A development of this activity is to replace the players lying on the ground with tackle bag lying on the ground across the line of running. Place a ball on the far side of each tackle bag. Individually, players step over the tackle bag, pick up the ball and place it on the other side of the bag. Each player performs this skill, which simulates the recovery of a ball at a tackle.
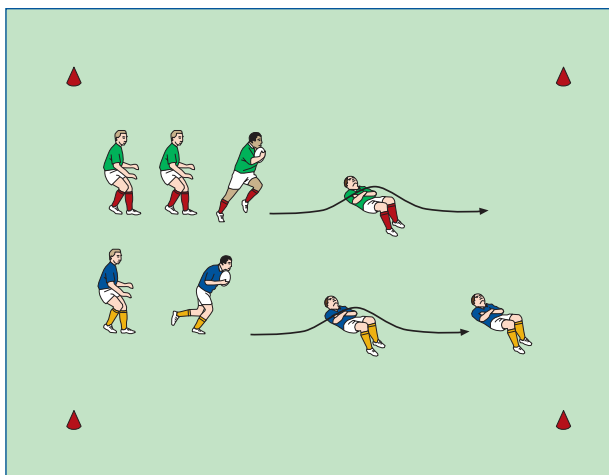
Activity variations

Add in a ball and:

1. Pass the ball as the player goes to ground.
2. Pass once the player has gone to ground.
3. Roll the ball back as the player goes to ground.
4. Step over the player on the ground, pick up the ball and go on.
5. After picking up the ball, make a short pass to the next player who takes the ball on.

Key points

- Acceleration
- Speed endurance
- Performing skills accurately when fatigued
- Recovery.

Shuttles

From the start line place cones at the starting point, 5m ahead, 10m ahead and 5m to the left and right of the 5m cone. Group the players based on fitness levels - the fewer in the group, the shorter the recovery period and the fitter players therefore have to be. The players run to the 5m cone, to the left cone, to the right cone, back in to the 5m cone, to the 10m cone and then back to the starting point.
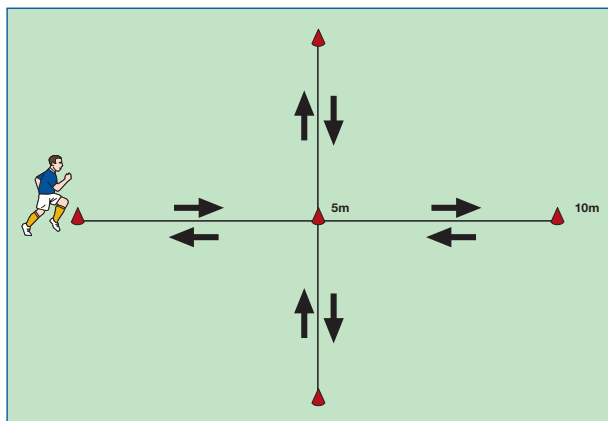
Activity variations

1. *Carry a ball.*
2. *Face forward throughout the activity so that side striding is practised when going sideways, and reverse running when running back to the start line.*

Key points

- *Acceleration*
- *Evasion*
- *Agility*
- *Balance.*

Shadow

Players work in pairs in a 20m by 20m grid, one ball for each pair. On the coach's call, ball carriers run evasively at speed, anywhere in the grid, evading other ball carriers. The player's partner tries to stay within 1m. The ball carrier runs for 15 to 20 seconds then the players recover before changing the ball carrier and repeating the activity.
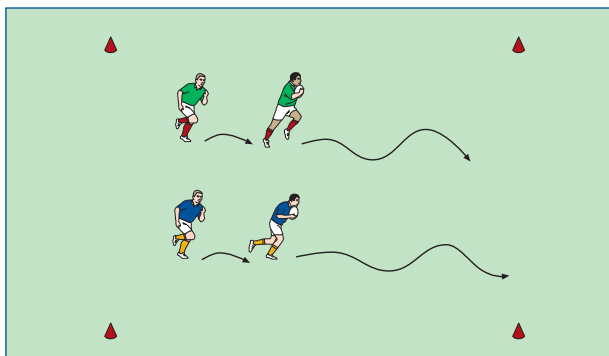
Activity variations

1. *On the coach's call, the ball carrier turns, sets and feeds to the partner who then becomes the ball carrier.*
2. *The ball carrier runs at the partner who tries to stay in front. If the ball carrier succeeds in getting past, the roles are reversed.*
3. *On the whistle, the ball is placed on the ground, recovered by the partner and the roles are reversed.*

Key points

- *Acceleration and peak speed*
- *Speed endurance*
- *Rapid changes of direction*
- *Working off both feet*
- *Stability and balance.*

220s

Divide the team into two groups. The groups take up position diagonally opposite each other in the corners of the field. Group 1 jogs the length of the field and sprints the width of the field. The coach names the player who leads the sprint. Once the players of group 1 reach the opposite corner they rest. Group 2 players jog the length of the field and sprint the width in the same way. When group 2 players reach the opposite corner group 1 players start again and the activity continues.
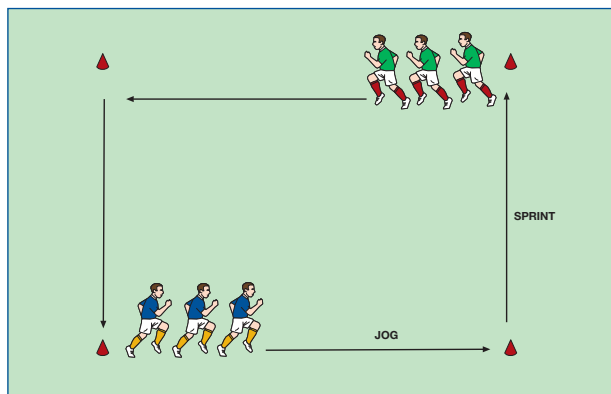
Key points

• Acceleration and peak speed
• Speed off the mark
• Speed endurance.

Power sprinting

Players work in pairs in the area from the goal line to the 22m line. Players pair up on the goal line. They face each other and place their hands on each other's shoulders. While the forward-facing player sprints to the 22m line using short, sharp strides, the other player provides resistance. Once the 22m line is reached, the roles are reversed and the players repeat the activity back to the goal-line.
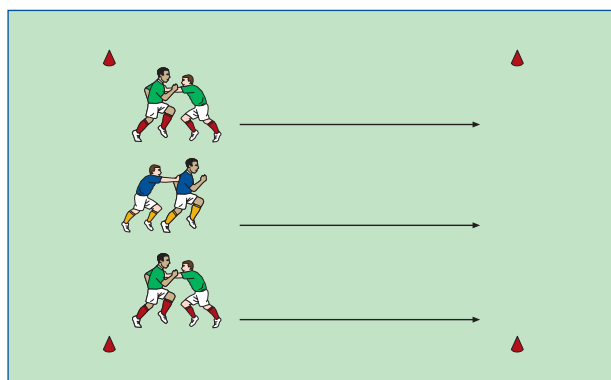
Activity variations

The pair stands facing the same direction, one behind the other. The player behind holds onto their partner's waist-band. The front player sprints hard against resistance provided by the partner using a low body position and short strides. As the intensity builds the front-runner calls "go," at which time the partner lets go and the runner sprints 10 to 15 metres.

Suicides in threes

Players work in groups of three, one ball for each group. The groups line up on the goal line. Cones are placed at distances from the goal line of 10, 15 and 22m. On "Go" the first player shuttle runs, carrying the ball, to the first cone and back, second cone and back and then the third cone and back. At the same time the second player does press ups and the third rests. Once the runner has completed running the roles are rotated. The coach decides how many shuttle runs have to be completed by each player.
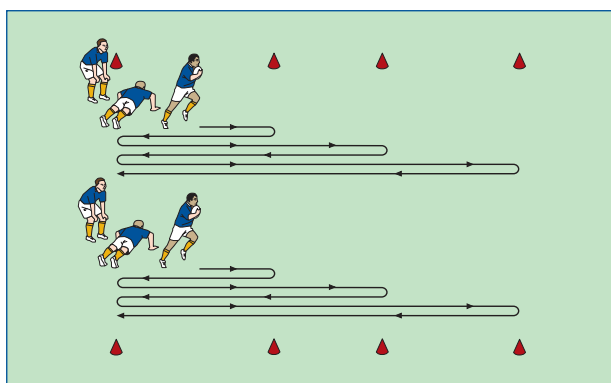
Activity variations

Use a different exercise e.g. sit-ups, burpees etc.

Key points

• Acceleration and peak speed
• Speed endurance
• Muscular endurance
• Recovery.

Ball pass vs group run

Organise players into two groups with between eight and 20 per group. Players work in a 10m by 10m grid or larger for greater numbers. Group A assembles inside the grid and group B lines up on a corner cone. Group B players run, with the ball in both hands, one at a time around the perimeter of the grid handing the ball to the next player when they return. At the same time group A players make as many passes as they can. Count the passes, reverse roles and compare the number of passes to decide the winner.
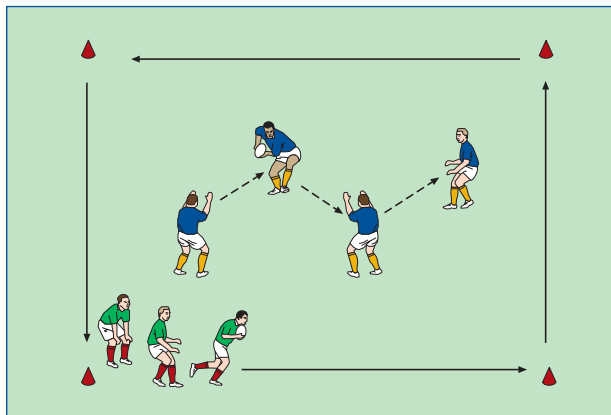
Key points

- Ball in two hands
- Fast hands
- Reach to receive the pass
- Sympathetic passes
- High work rate
- If the ball is dropped, the count starts again
- Passes must be more than 5m.

Rob the nest

Organise the players into four groups of three and position one group on each corner of a 10m by 10m grid. Place six balls in the centre of the grid, the 'nest'. Number the players in each group 1,2 and 3. On the coach's call, the player whose number is called tries to gather balls one at a time from the centre nest or the other team's nests, until three balls have been gathered. The first team to gather three balls is the winner. The activity continues until all players have been a robber.
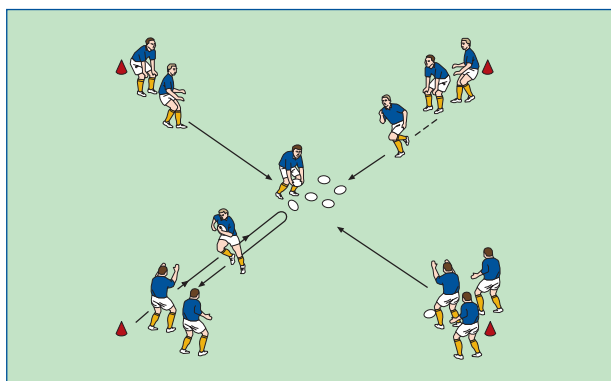
Key points

- Key factors for picking up the ball
- Run in a strong body position
- Protect the ball.

Quick hands

Players work in groups of six with one ball in a 20m by 10m channel. Players 1,3 and 5 go to one end of the channel and players 2,4 and 6 to the other. On "Go" players 1 and 2 run towards each other. Before they run past each other, they must complete a set number of passes (between one and six). Players may run straight or fan out so that passes are not made directly ahead of the receiver.
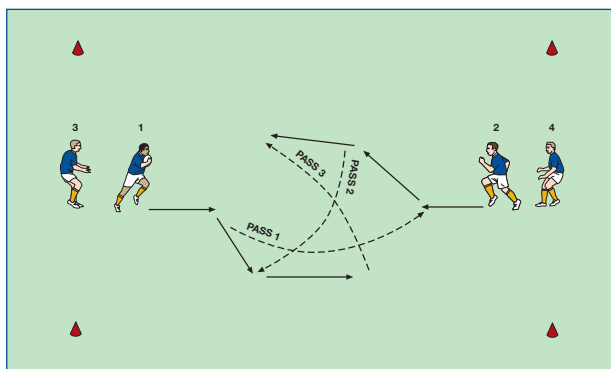
Key points

- Ball in both hands
- Pass in front of the receiver
- Reach to receive the pass
- Sympathetic passes
- Work rate.

Running straight while passing

Players work as a team in a 30m channel from goal line to goal line. Backs line up on one goal line with forwards evenly spaced along a touchline with a ball each. Backs align themselves with a marker at the far end of the field and attempt to remain on this line throughout their run down the field. The back-line runs straight down the field. As they reach each forward the forward passes the ball and it is passed along the back-line. The forward runs behind the back-line to receive the ball at the end of the line. The forward takes up a position on the opposite touchline and waits for the backs to repeat the activity as they return. Backs check their running line at the end of each length.
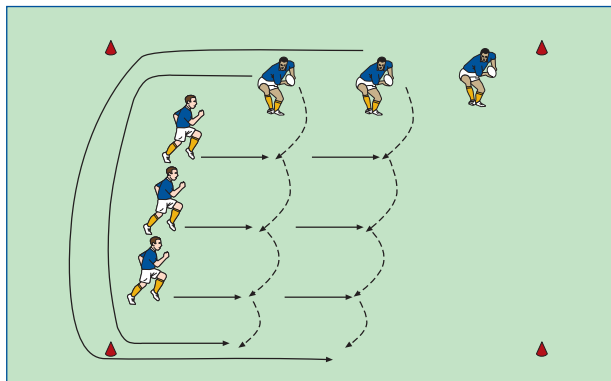
Key points

- *Key factors for passing*
- *Running lines in the backs*
- *Backline alignment.*

Centre run

Players work in groups of nine in a 10m by 10m grid with one ball. Two players stand in each corner, one behind the other, facing the team on the same side of the grid. One player stands on one side of the grid halfway along the start line. A corner player has the ball and, as the line of three players runs forward, the ball is passed along the line. When they get to the other side it is passed to the front player. The centre player now runs across the grid passing the ball with the two players from that side of the grid. The grid continues for a set number of times overloading the centre runner before another player has a turn.
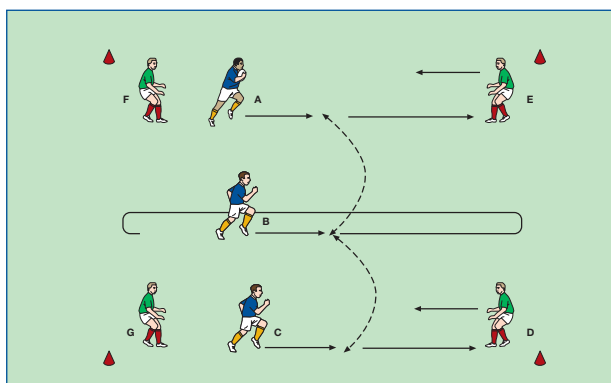
Activity variations

1. *Two players perform the centre run.*
2. *One player must avoid a tackle bag.*
3. *Place two hit shields in front of a player. The player must pass before the shields, or after crashing through them and performing an 'arms through' pass..*

Key points

- *Ball in both hands*
- *Maintain alignment. No forward passes*
- *Passes in front*
- *Quick hands*
- *Take the ball early*
- *Reach for the ball*
- *Quick pivot*
- *Rapid changes of direction.*

Picking up the ball relay

Players work in groups of five or six in a 10m by 20m grid with two balls per group. Players line up in single-file on one side of the grid. The front player initially has one ball and the second ball is on the 10m line. The ball is carried out 5m and placed on the ground. The ball on the 10m line is picked up and carried back to the start line and passed to the next player. The second player runs to the 10m line and places the ball on the ground and runs back to the start line picking up the ball on the 5m line on the way back. The ball is then passed to the third player and the activity continues.

STEP 1

STEP 2
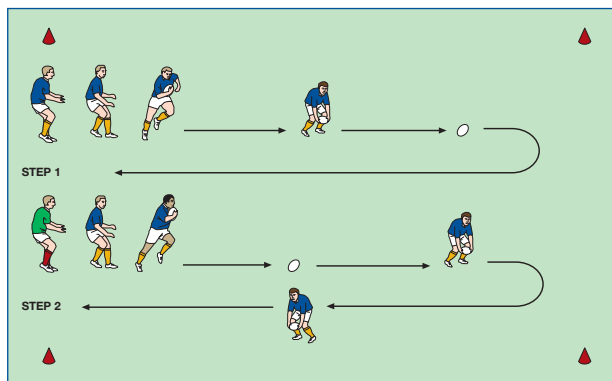
Key points

- Straddle the ball
- Bend at hips and knees
- Scoop ball with rear hand
- Use the front hand to control.

Running into space

Groups of four players work in a 10m by 10 m grid with one ball and with one player on each cone. One player starts with the ball. The ball is passed around the grid. After passing the ball, each passer follows the ball, touching the ground at the foot of the next receiver before returning to their original position. Count the passes made in a given time or the time taken to make a set number of passes.
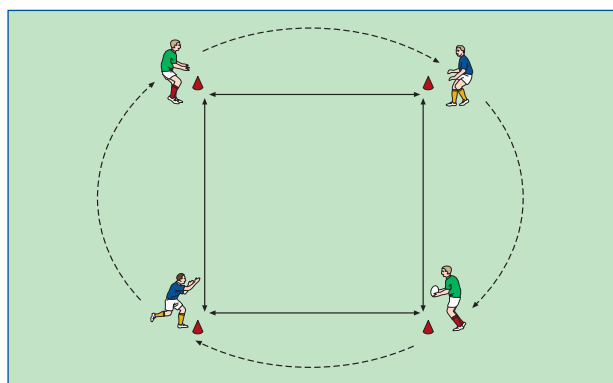
Activity variations

1. Pass in one direction and run in the other.
2. Take one player out. The ball continues along its original path with the non-passing player adjacent to the gap running to the gap to receive a pass.

Key points

- Ball in both hands
- Pass in front of the receiver
- Reach to receive the pass
- Rapid changes of direction
- Sympathetic passes
- Work rate.

NOTES

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

MODULE 2 - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union
4. KICKING AND CATCHING

Unit one - Game knowledge

Module two - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union

4. KICK AND CATCH

Contents

The punt kick - key factors

• Stand with balance
• Shoulder forward: right footed kicker - left shoulder forward, left footed - right shoulder
• Hold the ball in both hands so that its long axis is aligned with the foot
• Allow the ball to fall to the striking position in this alignment, and at the same time:
  - Step onto the non-kicking foot, which should be in line with the target
  - Swing the kicking foot through the line of the ball, striking it along its long axis
  - Adjust the flight of the ball by adjusting the angle of the foot and the point at which the ball is struck
  - Follow through with the kicking foot
  - Extend the arm on the opposite side of the body for balance
• Throughout, keep the head down and eyes on the ball.

Catching - key factors

• Position so there is space to move towards the ball
• Assess whether the ball can be caught by staying on the ground or by jumping into the air to catch it
• Extend the arms in the direction of the ball as a guide
• Position with the shoulder and hip towards opponents
• Call "my ball"
• Watch the ball into the hands
• Catch the ball at eye level, guiding it into the hands, arms and eventually into the body
• Brace the body in anticipation of opponents tackling.

Kicking - application of the key factors to video footage

1. View each video example in turn and analyse it using the table below.
2. Decide if the desired outcome has been achieved. If it has put a tick, if it hasn't put a cross, and if it doesn't apply to the example put N/A.
3. Then analyse each of the listed key factors that may have contributed to the success or failure of the outcome. Put a tick, cross or N/A next to each key factor.

Space is provided for you to analyse up to five examples.

What is key factor analysis?

Key factor analysis takes each of the skills of the game and gives the outcome that can be achieved by the successful performance of the skill. This then gives rise to a list of actions (key factors) that, when performed in sequential order, will result in the outcome being achieved. Each skill can be coached by:

- *explanation of the key factors*
- *practical demonstration of the key factors*
- *application of the key factors to video footage of the skill*
- *use of the key factors to identify the problems and solutions to a situation explained in a scenario.*

Outcome
To gain territory or to regain possession of the ball.

THE PUNT KICK	1	2	3	4	5
Outcome achieved?					
Key factors					
1 Stand with balance					
2 Shoulder forward: right footed kicker - left shoulder forward, left footed - right shoulder					
3 Hold the ball in both hands so that its long axis is aligned with the foot					
4 Allow the ball to fall to the striking position in this alignment, and at the same time:					
5 Step onto the non-kicking foot, which should be in line with the target					
6 Swing the kicking foot through the line of the ball, striking it along its long axis					
7 Adjust the flight of the ball by adjusting the angle of the foot and the point at which the ball is struck					
8 Follow through with the kicking foot					
9 Extend the arm on the opposite side of the body for balance					

Kicking - application of key factors to scenarios

1. Make sure that the scenario(s) you have been given are fully understood.
2. Identify the error.
3. Identify the player(s) responsible for the error. In some cases, more than one player may be responsible, even if the skill is an individual one. For example, when a pass does not achieve the outcome this may be the fault of the passer or the receiver, or a bit of both.
4. Discuss the causes of the error with your group, using the key factors as a checklist.
5. List these in order of priority.

In the table:
1. Name the skill
2. Explain the error
3. Identify the players responsible
4. Brainstorm and prioritise the possible reasons.

Scenarios

1. The #10 is not getting good distance with kicks.

2. The #10 is having difficulty getting distance both into the wind and with the wind.

3. Your team's up-and-unders are going too far, so that the ball cannot be recovered.

4. Your right- footed #10 is having difficulty gaining distance on the right hand side of the field.

Scen-ario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
1				
2				
3				
4				

Catching - application of the key factors to video footage

1. View each video example in turn and analyse it using the table below.
2. Decide if the desired outcome has been achieved. If it has put a tick, if it hasn't put a cross, and if it doesn't apply to the example put N/A.
3. Then analyse each of the listed key factors that may have contributed to the success or failure of the outcome. Put a tick, cross or N/A next to each key factor.

Space is provided for you to analyse up to five examples.

What is key factor analysis?

Key factor analysis takes each of the skills of the game and gives the outcome that can be achieved by the successful performance of the skill. This then gives rise to a list of actions (key factors) that, when performed in sequential order, will result in the outcome being achieved. Each skill can be coached by:

- *explanation of the key factors*
- *practical demonstration of the key factors*
- *application of the key factors to video footage of the skill*
- *use of the key factors to identify the problems and solutions to a situation explained in a scenario.*

Outcome
To catch the ball so as to retain possession.

CATCHING		1	2	3	4	5
	Outcome achieved?					
	Key factors					
1	Position so there is space to move towards the ball					
2	Assess whether the ball can be caught by staying on the ground or by jumping into the air to catch it					
3	Extend the arms in the direction of the ball as a guide					
4	Position with the shoulder and hip towards opponents					
5	Call "my ball"					
6	Watch the ball into the hands					
7	Catch the ball at eye level, guiding it into the hands, arms and eventually into the body					
8	Brace the body in anticipation of opponents tackling					

Catching - application of key factors to scenarios

Scenarios

1. When the #15 catches the ball, it is frequently knocked forward.
2. The #15 is being beaten to the 'bomb'.
3. From kick-offs, your team is catching the ball, but the opposition is driving them back.
4. Your team is letting the ball bounce from a high ball.
5. Your team is having trouble retaining possession once the ball has been caught.

Scen-ario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

Kicking skill activities

Pair kicking

Players work in pairs with one player on the goal line and the other on the 22m line. They have one ball per pair. Players kick the ball accurately to each other across the grid. Punts and drop kicks should be made so that they can be caught on the full. For grubber kicks, the ball should almost stop before reaching the partner. Players should practise kicking with both left and right feet.
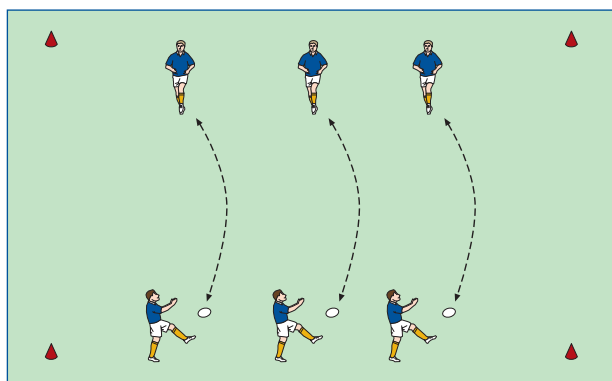
Force back

Two groups play on the full field with one ball. The rules are:

1. All kicks must travel at least 15m.
2. Kick off from half way as in a game.
3. If a kick is caught on the full, the catcher may advance 10m before kicking. If dropped, the catcher must retreat 10m.
4. If the ball is recovered but not caught, the next kick is made from the point of recovery.
5. If the ball is kicked into touch from inside the 22m line the next kick is taken 15m in from where the ball went out. If kicked directly into touch outside the 22m, play restarts 15m in from the point of the kick.
6. Score one point if the ball crosses the goal line, 2 points if it goes between the posts and 3 points for a drop kick between the posts.
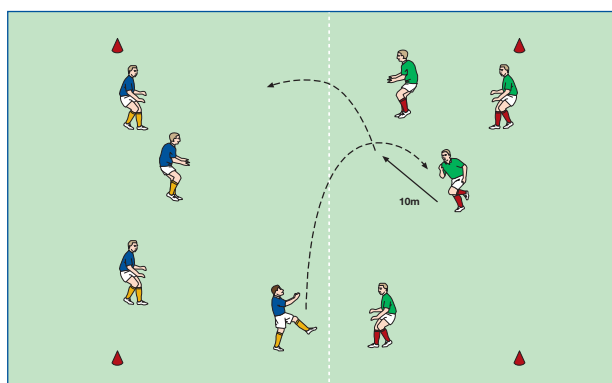
Activity variations

1. Increase pressure by reducing time to kick.
2. Increase the group size to three - the kicker follows the kick to challenge the catcher who then kicks to the third player, follows and challenges.

Key points

- Key factors for kicking type
- Key factors for catching.

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

MODULE 2 - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union
5. THE DROP KICK AT RESTARTS

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD

Unit one - Game knowledge

Module two - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union

5. THE DROP KICK AT RESTARTS

Contents

The drop kick

In teenage and pre-teenage rugby, the drop kick is a restart of play. The kick can be made to gain territory by kicking the ball downfield, or to regain possession by kicking the ball high enough so that team-mates can run forward and catch it.

The kick that is used will depend on the skill of the kicker and the extent to which the playing surface can be relied upon to provide a regular bounce.

At higher levels of play, the skill level of the players may allow for a variety of kicks to be used in different situations, based on tactical selection.

The key to the drop kick is the position of the support foot. By placing it at hip width along side the point to which the ball will be dropped, the kicker will be able to exert maximum power. With the instep aligned in the direction of the kick the ball will be well directed.

Finally, by turning the non-kicking shoulder towards the target area, initially the hips will be opened up. This will maximise the power of the kick.

Application of the key factors to video footage

1. View each video example in turn and analyse it using the table on the next page.
2. Decide if the desired outcome has been achieved. If it has put a tick, if it hasn't put a cross, and if it doesn't apply to the example put N/A.
3. Then analyse each of the listed key factors that may have contributed to the success or failure of the outcome. Put a tick, cross or N/A next to each key factor.

Space is provided for you to analyse up to five examples.

Outcome: To restart play, within the laws governing restarts.

THE DROP KICK AT RESTARTS	1	2	3	4	5
Outcome achieved?					
Key factors					
1 Hold the ball so that when dropped to the ground it bounces up in the same alignment and to the same height each time					
2 Step forward onto the non-kicking foot aligning the line of the instep with the target					
3 Drop the ball to the ground the width of the hips from the non-kicking foot					
4 Turn the shoulder of the non-kicking foot towards the target					
5 Keep the head down and over the ball					
6 Swing the kicking foot through the line of the ball so that it is struck at the point of maximum velocity					
7 Make contact with the bone on the top of the instep. For low kicks strike the ball close to the ground, for higher kicks let the ball bounce higher					
8 Follow through in a natural arc onto the toes of the non-kicking foot.					
9 Use the arm of the non-kicking side of the body for balance.					

Application of key factors to scenarios

1. Make sure that the scenario(s) you have been given are fully understood.
2. Identify the error.
3. Identify the player(s) responsible for the error. In some cases, more than one player may be responsible, even if the skill is an individual one. For example, when a pass does not achieve the outcome this may be the fault of the passer or the receiver, or a bit of both.
4. Discuss the causes of the error with your group, using the key factors as a checklist.
5. List these in order of priority.

In the table on the following page:
1. Name the skill
2. Explain the error
3. Identify the players responsible
4. Brainstorm and prioritise the possible reasons.

Scenarios

1. *The kicker is getting insufficient height for the catchers to get to the ball.*
2. *The kicker's catcher is knocking the ball on when they jump to catch it.*
3. *The receiving team's catchers are getting insufficient height on the jump.*
4. *From a long kick the opposition are able to recover possession and return the ball over the half-way line.*
5. *The kicker is having difficulty kicking the ball over the 10metre line.*

Scen-ario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

Kick off skill activities

Kick-off practice drill

Create a target area just past the 10m line on one side of the field, delineated by three players holding hit shield or tackle bags positioned to form a 5-7m triangle. Assemble the remaining team members in three lines behind the half way

line on the same side of the field one line in touch, the second on the 5m line and the third on the 15m line. At the centre on the half way the kicker has a number of balls that are drop kicked to the target area for the first players in each team to run forward and catch the ball. Those players marking the target provide stationary interference. Once the ball is recovered, the catching group passes and runs to the 22m line before returning the ball to the kicker.
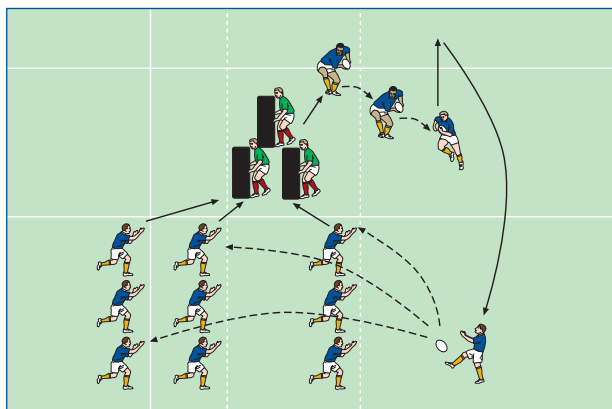
Activity variations

1. *Allow those in the target area to move.*
2. *Send two groups, one to recover the ball and create phase, play the second to attack when the ball has been delivered.*
3. *Replace the target players with players who contest the ball.*

Key points

- *Make recoverable kicks within the laws and with sufficient height*
- *Run towards the ball to catch it, not with the flight of the ball, so that the ball is moving away from the catcher*
- *Have a strategy for recovering the deflected ball.*

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

MODULE 2 - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union
6. THE SIDE-ON TACKLE AND FALLING IN THE TACKLE

INTERNATIONAL
RUGBY BOARD

Unit one - Game knowledge

Module two - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union

6. THE SIDE ON TACKLE & FALLING IN THE TACKLE

Contents

Side-on tackle - application of the key factors to video footage

1. View each video example in turn and analyse it using the table on the next page.
2. Decide if the desired outcome has been achieved. If it has put a tick, if it hasn't put a cross, and if it doesn't apply to the example put N/A.
3. Then analyse each of the listed key factors that may have contributed to the success or failure of the outcome. Put a tick, cross or N/A next to each key factor.

Space is provided for you to analyse up to five examples.

Outcome
To prevent territory being gained and to regain possession of the ball.

What is key factor analysis?

Key factor analysis takes each of the skills of the game and gives the outcome that can be achieved by the successful performance of the skill. This then gives rise to a list of actions (key factors) that, when performed in sequential order, will result in the outcome being achieved. Each skill can be coached by:

* *explanation of the key factors*
* *practical demonstration of the key factors*
* *application of the key factors to video footage of the skill*
* *use of the key factors to identify the problems and solutions to a situation explained in a scenario.*

The side-on tackle

There are many types of tackle used in rugby. A good starting point is the side-on tackle, because being the simplest to perform, it breeds confidence in young players.

By positioning inside the ball carrier, the tackler prevents the ball carrier from having a choice as to which side of the tackler the ball carrier will run.

Being in a crouch, the tackler is in a position in which any movements of the ball carrier can be countered. In this crouch it is vital that the tackler keeps the head up so that the back is straight and the neck in a stable, strong position so as to withstand impact. With the head up, the tackler is able to sight the target and make adjustments before impact.

The tackler should position as close to the ball carrier as possible before driving with the legs. This ensures the tackle is made with maximum force. Contact should be made firmly with the shoulder on the target area. Being just below the ball carrier's centre of gravity, the impact of the tackle should make the ball carrier unstable.

Higher tackles do not 'take the legs away' however the tackler may want to drive the ball carrier back or smother the ball so that the ball carrier cannot release it.

The tackle complete, the tackler should stand and re-enter play as soon as possible.

THE SIDE-ON TACKLE	1	2	3	4	5
Outcome achieved?					
Key factors					
1 Position inside the ball carrier					
2 Run in a crouched position					
3 Head up, back straight					
4 Sight the target - just below the ball carrier's buttock					
5 Drive with the legs to make firm contact with the shoulder on the target					
6 Head behind the ball carrier's body					
7 Wrap the arms around the ball carrier's lower torso					
8 Hold on tightly until the ball is on the ground					
9 Get to the feet and recover the ball					

Side-on tackle - application of key factors to scenarios

1. Make sure that the scenario(s) you have been given are fully understood.
2. Identify the error.
3. Identify the player(s) responsible for the error. In some cases, more than one player may be responsible, even if the skill is an individual one. For example, when a pass does not achieve the outcome this may be the fault of the passer or the receiver, or a bit of both.
4. Discuss the causes of the error with your group, using the key factors as a checklist.
5. List these in order of priority.

In the table on the following page:
1. Name the skill
2. Explain the error
3. Identify the players responsible
4. Brainstorm and prioritise the possible reasons.

Scenarios

1. The flanker is being easily beaten, by mid-field runners, from phase play.

2. When the #10 makes tackles, the tackle is easily broken by the ball-carrier.

3. The #6 is frequently dazed after a tackle and you are worried that it may result in concussion.

4. The #12 is being beaten on the inside weaker shoulder by the ball-carrier.

5. The team is making tackles but not recovering the ball.

Scen-ario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

Falling in the tackle - application of the key factors to video footage

Outcome
To retain possession of the ball. (To retain possession of the ball, a ball carrier will have to rely on the support of team-mates as the laws require the ball to be played upon the completion of a tackle.)

	FALLING IN THE TACKLE	1	2	3	4	5
	Outcome achieved?					
	Key factors					
1	Hold the ball firmly in both hands while running down the field					
2	When being tackled, turn with the impact					
3	Pass to supporting players					
4	Land on the back of the shoulder					
5	Lie at right angles to the line of running					
6	Pass the ball or place the ball so team mates can recover it					

Falling in the tackle - application of key factors to scenarios

1. Make sure that the scenario(s) you have been given are fully understood.
2. Identify the error.
3. Identify the player(s) responsible for the error. In some cases, more than one player may be responsible, even if the skill is an individual one. For example, when a pass does not achieve the outcome this may be the fault of the passer or the receiver, or a bit of both.
4. Discuss the causes of the error with your group, using the key factors as a checklist.
5. List these in order of priority.

In the table on the following page:
1. Name the skill
2. Explain the error
3. Identify the players responsible
4. Brainstorm and prioritise the possible reasons.

Scenarios

1. *Before the tackle is completed, the ball is being lost.*

2. *Even though the ball-carrier is placing the ball correctly, your team is not retaining possession.*

3. *The #13 is frequently hurting a shoulder when falling in the tackle.*

4. *The ball-carrier is losing control of the ball as they fall to the ground in the tackle.*

Scenario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
1				
2				
3				
4				

Other types of tackle

The front-on tackle

Key factors

- Be in a low crouch
- Move slightly inside the ball carrier
- Move forward into the tackle
- Drive with the legs
- Make firm contact with the shoulder between the waist and the hips
- Wrap with the arms
- Turn with the impact
- Regain the feet and recover the ball.

Explanation

A front-on tackle may be unavoidable if a ball carrier quickly changes direction and there is insufficient time for the tackler to adjust. By crouching low the tackler will be in a better position to make the tackle. This enables the tackler to move the head outside the line of the ball carrier.

By the tackler moving forward, the ball carrier is given less time and the tackler is able to ensure the ball carrier absorbs some of the impact. As with all tackles, the power should come from the drive of the legs through the body to the shoulder, which must make firm contact with the ball carrier. This contact should be between the ball carrier's waist and hips, just below the centre of gravity. Upon impact, the tackler should wrap his/her arms around the ball carrier tightly.

In most circumstances it is both safer and a more effective tackle if the tackler turns with the impact of the tackle. Upon completion of the tackle, the tackler is usually on top and therefore better able to stand up and regain the ball.

Tackling from behind

Key factors

- Target the waistband
- Drive with the legs as close to the ball carrier as possible
- Make impact with the shoulder
- Wrap with the arms
- Get back on feet and recover the ball.

Explanation

It is difficult to tackle from behind because the ball carrier's feet may back kick the tackler as the ball carrier moves away. To compensate for this risk, the tackler should aim slightly higher than with a side-on tackle, i.e. the waistband. Even if the ball carrier moves away as the tackle is made, contact will still be made with the buttock/upper thigh area. The other key factors for tackles apply.

The smother tackle

Key factors

- Move forward towards the ball carrier
- Plant the foot as close to the ball carrier as possible
- Drive with a shoulder firmly to make contact just above the position of the ball
- Continue to drive the ball carrier back
- Wrap with the arms to prevent the ball being released or grab the ball carrier by the jersey
- Turn the ball carrier towards supporting team mates, or...
- Take the ball carrier to the ground, turning the player so that the ball has to be released.

Explanation

The maul law that enables the defending team to regain possession if the ball has not been released from a maul has increased the use of the smother tackle. By making firm contact with the shoulder above the ball and wrapping the ball carrier up with the arms, the tackler prevents the release of the ball.

A maul usually forms and, in most cases, the tactical option is to prevent the release while supporting team mates ensure that the maul remains stationary or is driven back. When the ball carrier is standing, the tackler can recover the ball using either of two methods.

The first is to hold the ball and use the tackler's weight and body strength to take the ball to the ground. The second is to reach up with both hands inside the ball carrier's arms. Once the hands are clasped above the ball, it is pulled down.

As a maul will probably have formed, the tackler has time to regain the ball. Any urgency is with the ball carrier, whose team will lose the put-in to the scrum if they are unable to deliver the ball.

A further alternative is to grab the ball carrier by the shoulders and pull the player to the ground as the maul moves forward. If the tackler is able to remain standing the ball can immediately be contested. Care must be taken to make sure that the tackler does not assist the attack in doing this, by developing a driving maul.

Tackling skill activities

Tackle bag work

Organise players into groups of four or five with one ball and one tackle bag for each group. One player holds the tackle bag and remaining players line up 10m away. Players can perform a number of activities:
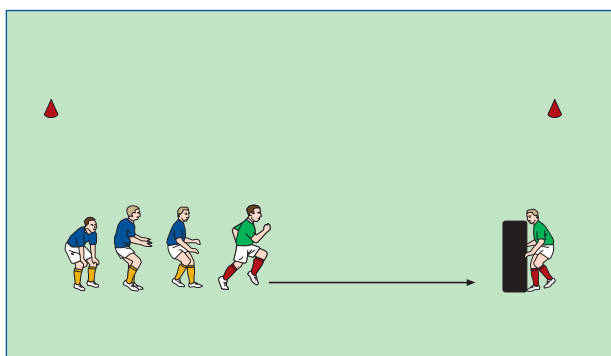
1. Tackle the bag
2. Put a ball down at 5m, tackle the bag at 10m, recover the ball and pass to the next player in line
3. Start with the ball on top of the bag. Tackle the bag, recover the ball...

Key points

- *Key factors for tackling*
- *Key factors for recovering the ball*
- *Work rate.*

Getting the correct line

Place up to eight held tackle bags, evenly spaced, along a line five metres apart. Place a cone 5-7m directly in front of each bag and one cone at 45° to the first bag in line with the other cones. The players start on the 45° cone and run forward, tackling the first bag. Once the bag has been tackled, the player runs backward to the cone directly in front of the first bag and moves forward at an angle to tackle the second and so on. Players tackle all the bags before replacing the bag holders.
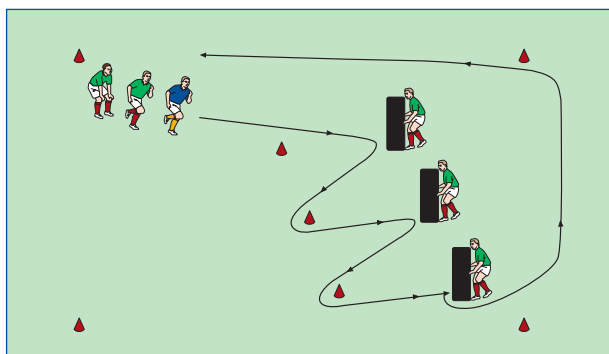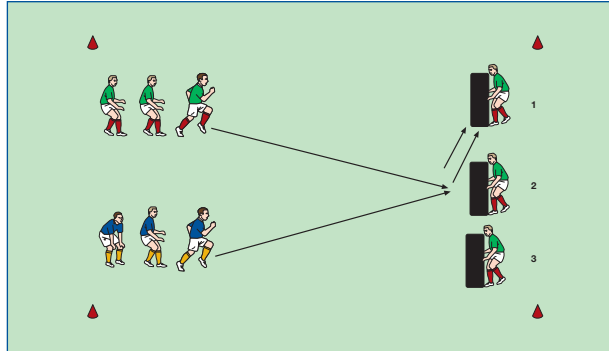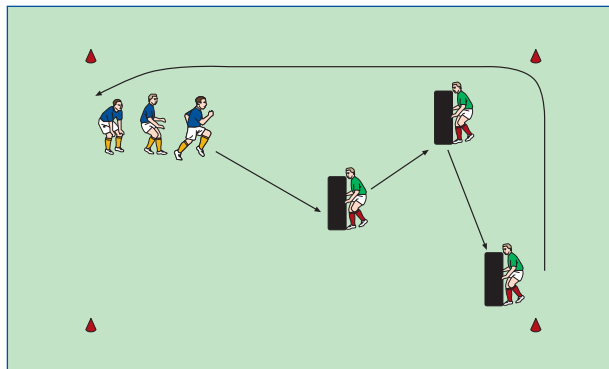

Key points

- *Head to the side*
- *Make contact with the shoulder*
- *Head up, back straight*
- *Drive with the legs*
- *Hold on and squeeze*
- *Line of running from inside out*
- *Run back by running backwards.*

Calling numbers

Players work as a team in a grid 22m by 10m. Evenly space the tackle bags in a line 10m from the players. Number the bags. Assemble the players in two lines in the centre of the line 10m from the bags. The coach calls a number and the first two players tackle the bag with that number. The number called will depend on the fitness of the players. Both players run towards the bag with the number called, but as soon as another number is called one of the tacklers breaks away and goes to the next bag that has been called.

Key points

- *Head to the side*
- *Make contact with the shoulder*
- *Head up, back straight*
- *Drive with legs*
- *Hold on and squeeze*
- *Agility*
- *Anaerobic fitness.*

Repetition tackling

Players with tackle bags are arranged in zig-zag alignment every 5m along a 5m by 15m grid. On "Go" the players tackle each bag in succession. Once the players have completed their tackles they go to the back of the line. The second player leaves after the player ahead has completed two tackles.
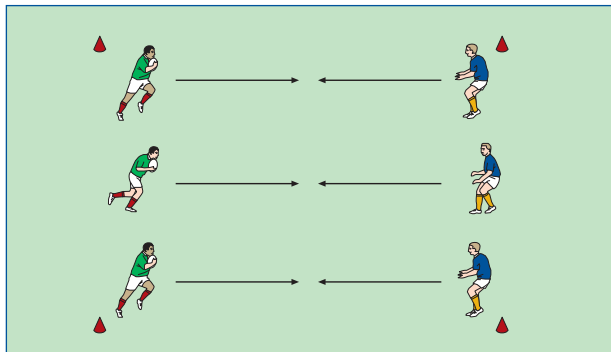
Activity variation

The tackler picks up the tackle bag, thus allowing the former holder to tackle the next tackle bag.

Key points

- *Key factors for tackling*
- *Head to the side*
- *Make contact with the shoulder*
- *Head up, back straight*
- *Drive with legs*
- *Hold on and squeeze.*

Spear tackling

Players of similar size work in pairs in a 5m by 22m channel. Players line up in two lines opposite partners. One line is designated '1' the other '2'. On the coach's call, '1' or '2' the two lines jog towards each other. The players in the line that has been called smother their partners, who attempt to lift the lead leg as they do so.

Overload defence

Groups work in grids the maximum size of which is 10m by 15m grids. Organise players into groups of no more than five players in which the attack outnumbers the defence. The number on each side and the size of the grid determines how much pressure the coach wishes to place on the defence. Groups play tackle rugby within their grids according to the laws of the game. The players rotate within the group after a try has been scored or possession lost.
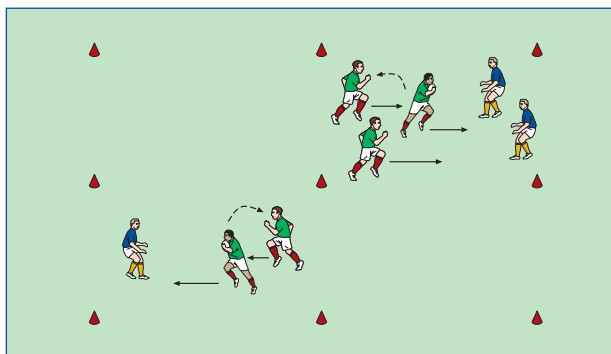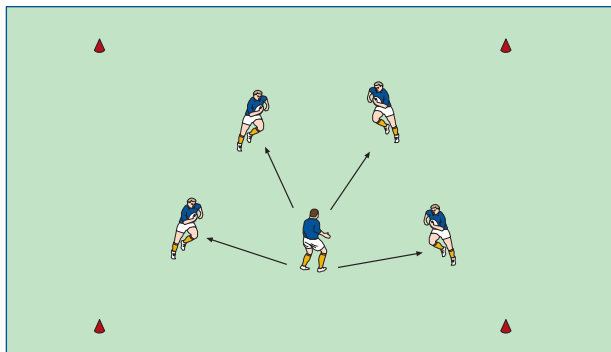

Activity variation

Add in a ball. If the number called is the team with the ball, they pass the ball immediately to their partner.

Key points

- *Head to the side*
- *Make contact with the shoulder just above the ball*
- *From a low position, drive up*
- *Wrap with the arms*
- *Drive with legs*
- *Hold on and attempt to turn the ball carrier towards team-mates.*

Key points

- *Communication in attack and defence*
- *Defending inside out*
- *Key factors for tackling*
- *Key factors for falling in the tackle*
- *Picking up the ball at the tackle*
- *Using the extra player on attack.*

Time limit tackles

Players work in groups of five in a 10m by 10m grid. Four players carry balls and one player is the tackler. The tackler tackles as many players as possible in a set time period (1 or 2 minutes). Once the time is up, the tackler becomes a ball carrier and another player becomes the tackler.
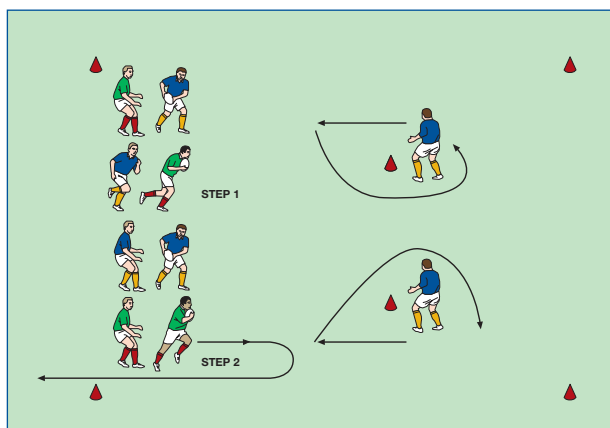

Activity variation

After each tackle the tackler recovers the ball and the tackled player becomes the tackler.

Key points

• Head to the side
• Make contact with the shoulder
• Head up, back straight
• Drive with legs
• Hold on and squeeze
• Key factors for falling in the tackle
• Key factors for picking up the ball at the tackle.

Moving into the tackle

Players work in groups of five in a 10m by 10m grid. One player is the tackler positioning along the back line of the grid in the middle. Place a cone on this spot. The remaining players form two pairs, one pair on the left side of the grid and one on the right.

Each group has a ball and the ball carriers take turns at trying to run across the grid without being tackled. After each tackle is made the tackler retreats to the cone, running backwards so that the attack can be seen. The tackler reaching the cone cues the next ball carrier to run.

Activity variations

1. The ball carrier must only attempt to beat the tackler on the outside.
2. The ball carrier may attempt to beat the tackler by running back inside.

Key points

• Move into the tackle inside out
• Prevent the ball carrier cutting inside
• Head to the side
• Make contact with the shoulder
• Head up, back straight
• Drive with the legs
• Hold on and squeeze
• Key factors of falling in the tackle.

Offensive tackling

In a 10m by 10m grid set up three lines, one for groups of three tacklers on one side of the grid, one for groups of three ball carriers on the opposite side of the grid and one halfway across for two groups of two blockers. The blockers bind as a two person front row and move sideways to block the path of the tacklers as they move forward to tackle the ball carriers. On "Go" both ball carriers and tacklers move forward, the ball carriers trying to reach the other side of the grid before they are tackled. As the space is limited, the tacklers should attempt to make a smother tackle.
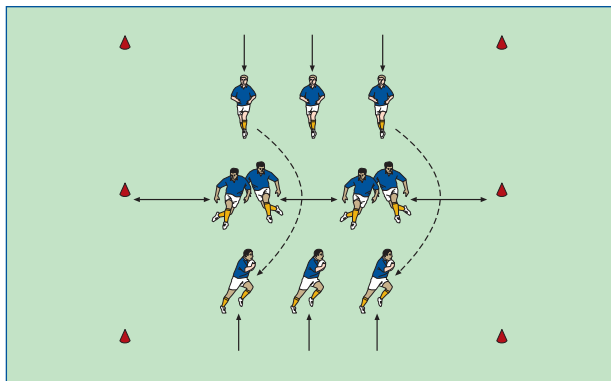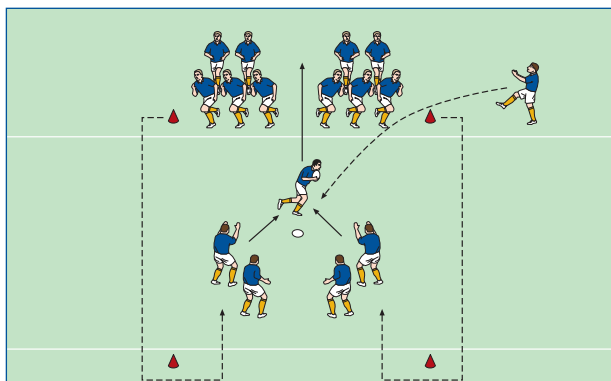
Key points

- *Key factors for the smother tackle*
- *Body position.*

Tackle competition

In a 22m grid from the goal-line to the 22m line, group the players in two equal teams on the goal-line. The coach kicks the ball into the grid and a stipulated number of players from each group runs along the outside of the grid and enters the grid from tthe 22m line. Vary the number to compete after each contest. Here they compete for the ball and attempt to carry the ball over the goal-line; the group that succeeds scores a point for their team.

Activity variations

1. *Play with no laws*
2. *Gradually introduce the laws of the game so that eventually the contest is played according the laws.*

Key points

- *Tackling*
- *Falling in the tackle*
- *Support in attack and defence*
- *Eventually, playing to the laws of the game.*

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

MODULE 2 - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union
7. CONTACT SKILLS IN ATTACK

Unit one - Game knowledge

Module two - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union

7. CONTACT SKILLS IN ATTACK

Contents

Application of the key factors to video footage

1. View each video example in turn and analyse it using the table below.
2. Decide if the desired outcome has been achieved. If it has put a tick, if it hasn't put a cross, and if it doesn't apply to the example put N/A.
3. Then analyse each of the listed key factors that may have contributed to the success or failure of the outcome. Put a tick, cross or N/A next to each key factor.

Space is provided for you to analyse up to five examples.

Outcome
To retain possession of the ball while in contact with opponents.

CONTACT SKILLS IN ATTACK		1	2	3	4	5
	Outcome achieved?					
	Key factors					
1	Run in a position that is able to withstand impact					
2	Carry the ball in both hands so that options can be performed immediately					
3	Anticipate contact by turning side on					
4	Drive into contact in this position by sinking low and driving up					
5	Spread the feet to shoulder width, sink at the hips, bend at the knees					
6	Turn to face team-mates					
7	Make the ball available					
8	Perform the best option to maintain continuity					

What is key factor analysis?

Key factor analysis takes each of the skills of the game and gives the outcome that can be achieved by the successful performance of the skill. This then gives rise to a list of actions (key factors) that, when performed in sequential order, will result in the outcome being achieved. Each skill can be coached by:

- *explanation of the key factors*
- *practical demonstration of the key factors*
- *application of the key factors to video footage of the skill*
- *use of the key factors to identify the problems and solutions to a situation explained in a scenario.*

Side-on tackle - application of key factors to scenarios

1. Make sure that the scenario(s) you have been given are fully understood.
2. Identify the error.
3. Identify the player(s) responsible for the error. In some cases, more than one player may be responsible, even if the skill is an individual one. For example, when a pass does not achieve the outcome this may be the fault of the passer or the receiver, or a bit of both.
4. Discuss the causes of the error with your group, using the key factors as a checklist.
5. List these in order of priority.

In the table below:
1. Name the skill
2. Explain the error
3. Identify the players responsible
4. Brainstorm and prioritise the possible reasons.

Scenarios

1. *As the #8 takes the ball into contact, the player is being smothered and is unable to release it to team-mates.*
2. *Your team is being cleaned out by the opposition in post-tackle play.*
3. *When your team drives into the post-tackle, they are going past the ball so quickly that it is out before it can be cleared and the opponents are picking it up.*
4. *At the tackle the tackled player is making the ball available only to have it taken by opponents.*

Scen-ario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
1				
2				
3				
4				

More about contact skills in attack

The aim of contact skills in attack is to retain possession of the ball while in contact with opponents.

This is achieved by the ball carrier being able to stand in contact. If the ball carrier is able to remain standing, the range of options is much wider than if the player falls to the ground. To retain this range of options the ball carrier must both protect the ball and maintain stability.

A stable position for running is one in which the ball carrier's centre of gravity is over the feet. It is not as it would be with an Olympic sprinter (well forward of the body) because in this position a tackle would immediately cause a rugby player to fall to the ground. Therefore, a rugby player needs to run more on the balls of the feet and less on the toes. Also, the hips need to be lower and not so far forward.

When contact is made, the impact may dislodge the ball. The impact may also knock the opposing tackler away, creating space and time for continuity to be maintained. To avoid the former and to take advantage of the latter, the ball should be held firmly in both hands.

By turning side-on, the ball carrier presents thigh, hip and shoulder to the opponent. These are strong parts of the body and can be used to withstand the impact. Also, the ball will not be in immediate contact with the opposing players. The ball carrier wants the impact of the tackle to turn them to face team-mates, thereby making the ball available to them.

Sinking down and driving up into contact ensures that the ball carrier has a low centre of gravity. By driving up from a low position the player may be able to force opponents back. Care must be taken not to stand upright or be pulled into an upright position. Because of the instability of this position, opponents would be able to pull the ball carrier to the ground or turn the player to make the ball available to them.

Options after the tackle will depend on the effect the impact has had on the ball carrier and the opposing tacklers. If the tacklers have been knocked back, the space should be used to transfer the ball to support players and maintain the continuity of the attack. This will not be achieved if the ball carrier runs on into the space that has been created ahead. By doing this there would be a risk of becoming isolated and consequently losing possession of the ball.

By turning both in contact and when space has been created, these are some of the options are available:

• Pass to a team-mate (but make sure the ball is not intercepted in the congested space around the point of impact)
• Hand the ball directly into a team-mate's body (this is less risky because the ball is not passed through the air)
• Bind with a team-mate who has driven into and bound onto the ball carrier. The ball can then be transferred once the two have bound to each other
• Turn into space and continue to run down the field. The ball carrier will often push the tacklers to the left or right upon impact. By continuing to turn the ball carrier will be able to run into the space from which the tackler has been pushed away. This is often called 'hit and spin'. Upon turning, the ball carrier may find that the space is partially blocked. However, the ball can be handed to a support player whose pace and body position may allow the partial gap to be used to run forward.

If defenders prevent play from continuing, it will be necessary to ensure the ball is delivered once a bound mass has been formed, i.e. a ruck or a maul.

For skill activities, see the skill activities listed in the previous section on tackling, as most of these involve practising the various aspects of contact.

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
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MODULE 2 - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union
8. THE PLACE KICK

Unit one - Game knowledge

Module two - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union

8. THE PLACE KICK

Contents

Practising goal kicking

1. Initially at least, players should practise close to the goal posts, so that technique is not compromised for the sake of power. Move away from the goal posts as the successful development of technique allows.

2. Work in an arc from where the 22m line meets the 15m line and move 5m-10m around with each kick, keeping the same distance from the goal-posts.

3. Move closer to the posts if the kicks are being missed, and pay close attention to each of the key factors.

4. Use the whole-part-whole method to demonstrate and practise when problems occur.

5. To practise accuracy, kick along the goal-line aiming to hit the upright above the cross bar.

6. When the player is competent, build in game-play distractions.

Application of the key factors to video footage

1. View each video example in turn and analyse it using the table on the next page.
2. Decide if the desired outcome has been achieved. If it has put a tick, if it hasn't put a cross, and if it doesn't apply to the example put N/A.
3. Then analyse each of the listed key factors that may have contributed to the success or failure of the outcome. Put a tick, cross or N/A next to each key factor.

Space is provided for you to analyse up to five examples.

Outcome
To kick accurately to score points.

THE PLACE KICK	1	2	3	4	5
Outcome achieved?					
Key factors					
1 Choose a kicking tee that suits the player's kicking style					
2 **Placing the ball** - Lean the ball slightly forward to expose the 'sweet spot'. This is approximately one third of the way up the back seam of the ball					
3 **Moving back** - Before moving back, stand over the ball in the kicking position - Move back to a distance that feels comfortable. This is usually approximately 4-6 paces back from the ball and 2-3 paces to the left (for right footed kickers) or to the right (for left footed kickers) - Watch the 'sweet spot' when moving back - When happy with the starting position, stand facing the ball					
4 **Before approaching the ball** - Relax - Focus, remember key words, e.g. 'head down', 'follow through' - Use imagery to picture the completed kick					
5 **The approach** - Approach by running in an arc to open up the hips and get maximum power - Place the non-kicking foot hip width from the ball, with the line of the instep of the foot in line with the target - Keep the side seam of the ball in line with the ankle - Move the arm of the non-kicking side forward to turn the shoulder side-on to the target					
6 **Striking the ball** - Bring the kicking foot down and through the strike zone - Keep the head directly above the ball - Make contact with the bone on top of the instep					
7 **Follow through** - Follow through in an arc with the kicking foot - Rise onto the toes of the non-kicking foot					

Application of key factors to scenarios

1. Make sure that the scenario(s) you have been given are fully understood.
2. Identify the error.
3. Identify the player(s) responsible for the error. In some cases, more than one player may be responsible, even if the skill is an individual one. For example, when a pass does not achieve the outcome this may be the fault of the passer or the receiver, or a bit of both.
4. Discuss the causes of the error with your group, using the key factors as a checklist.
5. List these in order of priority.

In the table below:
1. Name the skill
2. Explain the error
3. Identify the players responsible
4. Brainstorm and prioritise the possible reasons.

Scenarios

1. The kicker is getting insufficient:
   a) length
   b) height.

2. The ball is going:
   a) left
   b) right.

Scen-ario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
1a				
1b				
2a				
2b				

NOTES

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

MODULE 2 - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union
9. THE LINE-OUT

Unit one - Game knowledge

Module two - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union

9. THE LINE-OUT

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Application of the key factors to video footage

1. View each video example in turn and analyse it using the table on the next page.
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Space is provided for you to analyse up to five examples.

Outcome
To obtain controlled possession of the ball so that the team has the greatest range of options with which to go forward.

THE LINE-OUT		1	2	3	4	5
	Outcome achieved?					
	Key factors					
1	Line up along the line of touch*, one metre from the opposing lineout, in a formation that enables possession to be gained					
2	Throw accurately, down the line of touch, to the catcher					
3	Step to the line of touch and jump to secure possession either by catching or deflecting the ball					
4	Drive up with the arms to increase the height of the jump					
5	Support the catcher above the waist once the player has left the ground					
6	Catch or deflect the ball					
7	Move the ball and turn the body away from opposing players					
8	Land in a stable, fully supported body position					
9	Hold the ball low so that team-mates can drive in a low body position and thereby secure the ball					
10	Bind with the catcher and other team-mates to form a protective screen					
11	Control the ball					
12	Deliver the ball, or drive forward and then deliver the ball					

*Definition: The line of touch
An imaginary line, at right angles to the touchline at the point at which the ball went into touch, along which the ball must be thrown in the line-out.

Application of key factors to scenarios

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3. Identify the player(s) responsible for the error. In some cases, more than one player may be responsible, even if the skill is an individual one. For example, when a pass does not achieve the outcome this may be the fault of the passer or the receiver, or a bit of both.
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Scenarios

1. The jumper is being shouldered from the line-out in jumping for the ball.
2. The throw is accurate but the catcher is fumbling the ball.
3. When the ball is deflected from the line-out, the opposition is coming through the lineout.
4. The jumper is getting insufficient height to catch the ball.
5. The opposition is 'sacking' your team's ball-carrier.
6. The opposition is challenging in the air successfully wherever your team throws the ball.

Scen-ario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

More about the line-out

With the teams lining up one metre apart at the line-out, space is created between the two lines, giving the players room and time to perform their roles.

There are variations in the positioning of players at the line-out. However, in selecting a team, two or perhaps three players are selected primarily for their line-out catching ability - usually the locks and one loose forward. In other positions, the primary skills for which forwards are selected are scrummaging (the front row) or the ability to support the backs once play gets underway (the loose forwards).

The tall catchers are positioned at positions 2, 4 and 6 in the lineout, with the other players at positions 1,3 and 5, from which they can offer support. The support is usually provided by the forwards binding to each other, to produce a protective screen. Or, the supporting players on each side can lift the catcher, enabling the player to take the ball up high, and stabilising the player in the air giving time for the ball to be caught and brought down under control.

These supporting players must not assist the catcher to leave the ground. However they can support the catcher by hoisting and holding the player in the air. Pre-gripping is allowed prior to the catcher jumping for the ball. This allows the supporting players to move with the jumper. The grip should be made no lower than the waist at the back and the knees at the front. The catcher can be stabilised by the support players locking their elbows. The support must remain bound to the catcher until the player is safely returned to the ground.

The player throwing the ball in is usually the hooker, although any player can perform this skill. While the importance of the hooker's scrumming ability cannot be under-estimated, current practice shows that hookers must be equally well skilled at throwing in to the lineout.

The player at the end of the line-out may have specialised line-out ability, but the most important skill of this player is to support the backs in attack and defence. Consequently, positioning so as to enable the backs to be supported as soon the attack commences is the most important task for this player.

The most common line-out formation is:

Player	Number	Role	Position in line-out
Hooker	2	Thrower	At the front inside the 5m line
Loose-head prop	1	Support / jumper	1
Tight-head prop	3	Support	3
Lock	4	Jumper	2
Lock	5	Jumper	4
Blind-side flanker	6	Support / jumper	5
Open-side flanker	7	Linking with the backs	7
Number 8	8	Support / jumper	6

The throw should be made down the line of touch so that it is at catching height for the catcher - this will vary depending on how high the catcher is capable of jumping. A catcher may require one of a number of different throws, such as the lob throw, which has a lot of 'air' and a fast flat throw, which is more direct.

The thrower should indicate where the throw will go with a pre-arranged a call that team-mates will understand.

Once the throw has been released, the key player becomes whoever is going to jump and catch the ball. As the ball is thrown, this player should step to the centre before jumping to catch the ball. By stepping to the centre the player is able to jump vertically. This means that there is less likelihood of the player being pushed away from the ball when contact occurs. Players who attempt to jump up and across to the ball from their standing position can be pushed away upon contact.

The catcher must look to gain maximum height from the jump. To do this the player should step in a half crouch to the centre and immediately leap into the air. The height of the jump can be increased by driving up with both arms.

A combination of an accurate throw and good timing between the thrower and the catcher's jump, should enable the catcher to jump and catch the ball without interference. This combination can be achieved by either of two methods.

Firstly, the jumper can fake a forward movement, drawing the opposing jumper forward, and then move back and across into the space from which the opponent has moved. A lob throw can then be made over the head of the opponent.

The alternative is to fake backwards, drawing the opponent back and then moving forward and across for a flat, hard throw.

The players supporting the catcher may assist in gaining height once the player has left the ground. This support may assist in gaining height, may stabilise the player at maximum height and must ensure the player lands in a stable position.

Of course, the most obvious place to throw the ball is to where there is a mismatch in favour of the throwing team. The accuracy of the throw need not be as great as there is less need for movement on the ground before jumping.

The ball should be caught with relaxed hands even though the player is jumping strongly towards the ball. This will reduce the likelihood of the ball being fumbled and knocked away. It also enables the ball to be deflected in a controlled way to the halfback or another forward.

Upon catching the ball the catcher should move the ball towards team-mates, turning to be 'back-on' to opposing players.

The catcher should land in a semi-crouch position. Such a position should be stable enough to prevent opponents turning the player and claiming the ball. The ball should be held low. This is because it is often a target for driving forwards. By holding it low, the catcher's body position will be low and more effective as they drive in to begin a maul and transfer the ball away from the opposition.
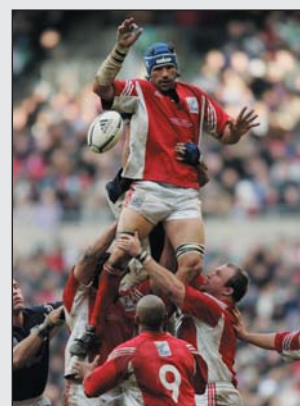
The forwards should bind with each other and the catcher as soon as possible to protect the catcher and the ball. This is done by moving towards the opposing team and squeezing up on the jumper, so that the line moves together, binding to form a protective screen. The screen is usually six players wide and only one player deep. This prevents opponents from breaking through and gives the half back time to recover the ball, should it fall loose.

If the immediate delivery of the ball is not conducive to the attacking cause, then players can form a maul once the ball has been controlled.

The decision to deflect or pass the ball directly to the halfback or to catch the ball and drive before delivery, will depend on a number of factors. The most important of these are the team's relative strengths, field position, and the use that is to be made of the ball to go forward.

The backs should have called a move prior to possession being won. Before the line-out has ended, the back lines will be about 20m apart. If this amount of space and time is needed to perform the attacking move, the ball should be delivered from the line-out before it has ended. This will be for moves that require many passes.

On the other hand, fewer passes may be used in a move. With the defence 20m from the attack, they will have time to react to the move to stop it. In this situation, the ball may be driven forward off the line of touch so that the line-out has ended.

This will draw the defence forward to the hindmost foot (the offside line from ruck or maul). This will reduce their reaction time because they are closer. The move will therefore be more likely to be successful.

Practising line-out play

1. Once the calls and techniques have been established, combine interval training with line-out play so that the fatigue players feel in a game is simulated.

2. Move to different field positions that have an impact on where the ball should be thrown, to test decision making.

3. Use three balls from the line-out: the first for the backs without the forwards in support, the second for forward play from the line-out and the third for a team pattern from that field position.

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
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MODULE 2 - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union
10. THE SCRUM

Unit one - Game knowledge

Module two - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union

10. THE SCRUM

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Application of the key factors to video footage

1. View each video example in turn and analyse it using the table on the next page.
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3. Then analyse each of the listed key factors that may have contributed to the success or failure of the outcome. Put a tick, cross or N/A next to each key factor.

Space is provided for you to analyse up to five examples.

What is key factor analysis?

Key factor analysis takes each of the skills of the game and gives the outcome that can be achieved by the successful performance of the skill. This then gives rise to a list of actions (key factors) that, when performed in sequential order, will result in the outcome being achieved. Each skill can be coached by:

- *explanation of the key factors*
- *practical demonstration of the key factors*
- *application of the key factors to video footage of the skill*
- *use of the key factors to identify the problems and solutions to a situation explained in a scenario.*

Outcome
To deliver the controlled ball to the half back from a stable scrum so that the team can perform it's preferred attacking option.

THE SCRUM	1	2	3	4	5
Outcome achieved?					
Key factors					
1 Select players according to body type					
2 Assemble quickly with the front row one arm's length from the opposing front row					
3 Bind securely but comfortable as a unit before engaging the opposition					
4 Engage by following the sequence 'crouch - pause - engage'					
5 Crouch low so that the front rows drive up into position					
6 Upon engagement keep the head up, back straight, spine in-line and square on					
7 Co-ordinate the throw-in with the scrum pushing forward - have a call for this					
8 Hook the ball between the loose-head prop's feet					
9 Channel the ball to the right of the number 8					
10 Deliver the ball to the half back / scrum half					

Application of key factors to scenarios

1. Make sure that the scenario(s) you have been given are fully understood.
2. Identify the error.
3. Identify the player(s) responsible for the error. In some cases, more than one player may be responsible, even if the skill is an individual one. For example, when a pass does not achieve the outcome this may be the fault of the passer or the receiver, or a bit of both.
4. Discuss the causes of the error with your group, using the key factors as a checklist.
5. List these in order of priority.

In the table on the following page:
1. Name the skill
2. Explain the error
3. Identify the players responsible
4. Brainstorm and prioritise the possible reasons.

Scenarios

1. The loose-head prop is buckling upon contact.

2. The scrum is frequently collapsing.

3. When the scrum settles, your team is losing its forward drive.

4. The opposition halfback is frequently interfering with your halfback's attempts to clear the ball.

5. The scrum is wheeling on your team's throw-in, resulting in a turn-over.

Scen-ario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

More about the scrum

General principles

The aim at the scrum is to deliver a controlled ball so that the team can select its preferred attacking option and perform it successfully.

Throughout adolescence, players will grow at different rates, some maturing physically later than others. In addition, the build of players prior to their growth spurt might be substantially different than that after maturation. This means that you should think carefully about being too definitive about what position a player should be playing in during their adolescent years.

More specifically, this has implications for the forwards, and especially for the front row players. This is because of the pressure exerted by the remaining forwards when a scrum takes place.

To reduce the risk of injury during a scrum, appropriate physical selection is vital. Front row players should be short and stocky with a low centre of gravity. Strengthening of the neck, shoulders, torso and thighs will help a front row player. However, the primary criteria must be the player's body type.

In order to maintain stability upon contact, the distance between the scrums prior to contact should be a maximum of one arm's length. This distance is short enough to prevent too much force being generated upon contact and does not compromise the pack's strong body positioning by having to extend forward too far to make contact with the opposing pack.

Referee management of phased engagement is mandatory in law, reinforcing the importance of maintaining this spacing.

By crouching, the front row will be in a position to move forward into engagement without folding in at the waist. Folding in increases the potential for the front rows to go to ground, thereby forcing the scrum to be reset. Crouching with the head up ensures safe firm contact using the strength of the major muscle groups to lock the front rows together.

Binding by locks and loose forwards must also be firm, so that the scrum engages as a single unit.

Binding

Binding within an individual scrum should be as follows:

Hooker - The hooker binds over the shoulders of the props, gripping at the prop's armpit.

Props - The props bind around the hooker's torso gripping the hooker's hips on the far side of the hooker's body. Binding should be high enough to allow the hooker to remain flexible about the torso and hips.

Locks - The locks bind to each other across the shoulders and onto the armpit. Their shoulders should be level if possible. The locks may bind to the props around the props' hips gripping at the waistband of the shorts or they may bind onto the props by binding through the crutch and gripping on to the prop's waistband.

To be in a position with their head between a prop and hooker and their shoulders beneath the prop's buttock, the locks need to engage from a low body position. This is achieved by kneeling on the inside knee. This will adjust the position of the shoulders so that firm contact is made with the outside shoulder on the prop with less force being directed onto the hooker.

Alternatively the locks may crouch into the squat position in order to move into position. This may be awkward for young players because they may lack the flexibility to do this. They may not be able to get low enough and as the front row moves into contact, the locks may be left behind. This will result in a gap occurring between the prop's buttock and the lock's shoulder, leading to loose binding upon engagement. For more mature players this has been found to be more successful in maximising impact upon engagement.

To get into position the locks, should enter from about knee height and move up into position. The front row players should be firmly bound, but the binding should not be so tight that it becomes uncomfortable for the locks, causing them to twist their body.

The locks' spines should be in line, i.e. parallel to the ground and to the touch-line, as should the props' spines, upon engagement with the opposition. To ensure this, the locks should lift their heads and push their stomachs down. If the back is not straight, it will be bowed and pressure can aggravate the bow - this is unsafe.

Flankers - The flankers support the props by binding onto the locks around their torsos and placing their inside shoulder under the prop's outer buttock. This complements the lock's shoulder on the prop's inner buttock. This prevents the prop from losing spinal alignment. It keeps the prop square ensuring the body does not become twisted. The flanker may push straight ahead or inwards at a slight angle to assist in supporting the prop. The flanker should be in a position to see the ball as it moves through the scrum.

No. 8 - The #8 binds onto the locks around their hips with shoulders below their buttocks. The head should be up and the back straight - as with the locks.
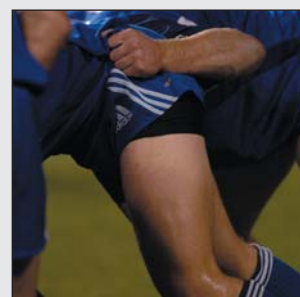

Hooker & props

Locks

Flankers

Number 8

Full scrum

Foot positions

It is fundamental for safe scrummaging that the props, locks and #8 should be square on to the touchline. To achieve this, their feet should be shoulder width apart and in the same line, i.e., one foot should not be ahead of the other.

If the front rows engage too far apart, the players will become unstable upon engagement and feel the need to step forward. If this does occur, they must be coached to move their feet back to alignment once contact has been made. This can be physically difficult. If the outside leg is ahead of the inside leg there will be a tendency for the outside shoulder to be ahead and the prop will be twisted in towards the scrum. This is a very unstable position and should be avoided. It can be avoided by ensuring the scrums are a maximum of one arm's length apart prior to engagement.

Locks in the kneeling position will have to make this adjustment upon engagement to ensure the square position.

Flankers may also be in this position. However it may be more comfortable to have the outside foot ahead of the inside foot. On the loose-head side, the inside foot may be turned to channel the ball that has been hooked between the loose-head prop's legs across to the feet of the #8.

The hooker should be in a position to hook the ball. This is achieved by having most of the weight on the left leg, the right leg being used to strike the ball in a hooking action between the loose-head prop's legs.

Engagement

Only when the scrum has completely assembled should it move into engagement as its completed formation will ensure stability on contact. As stated above, engagement should be phased under the direction of the the referee whose prime responsibility is to ensure safety. Each command in engagement is an instruction to complement what the players must be coached. The referee will call "crouch" then "touch". The front rows crouch and, using the outside arm, each prop touches the point of the opposing prop's outside shoulder. The props then withdraw their arms. The referee will then call "pause". Following a pause the referee will call "engage". The front rows may then engage.

By being close and in a crouch, the front rows will be able to move forward and up into engagement. Each member of the front row moves into the gap on the left of their opposite number.

Upon engagement, the front row players should be in a position in which the weight is being borne on the shoulders and upper back, not on the player's neck.

The props should bind immediately upon engagement with their outside arms. The left or loose-head prop binds onto the tight-head prop with the arm parallel to the ground, the elbow bent and the hand gripping the jersey of the tight-head's upper back. The tight-head binds with a straight arm gripping down the loose-head prop's back. Binding must be onto their opponent's body, not the arm.

Post-engagement

At the engagement, the throw-in, the hookers strike and the push should be part of one continuous movement.

Engagement is co-ordinated by the referee, however during practice the responsibility should be that of the tight-head prop. The tight-head engages first. This aligns the front row slightly to the left so the hooker is turned closer to the ball. The hooker will therefore be able to hook the ball more easily.

In a match, the body language of the front rows should cue the referee into a rhythm on the engagement call that leads to a successful engagement.

Prior to engagement, the scrum-half should ensure they are ready to throw the ball in, minimising the delay once a secure, stationary engagement has been completed. Either on the call "coming-weight" or on the hooker's hand signal, the scrum-half co-ordinates the throw-in with the application of weight.

According to law, the throw-in must be straight with the ball hitting the ground in line with the inside shoulder of the loose-head prop. Here the hooker is able to stroke the ball in a sweeping motion with the right foot, directing it between the legs of the loose-head. The drive forward by the remaining forwards assists in this, by pushing the front row past the ball. The forward drive is achieved by a straightening of the legs, in unison, by all forwards except the hooker.

This force is transmitted through the props and into the opposition scrum. The aim is to push the opposition back, or at least hold the scrum stationary, providing a steady platform for the attack.

In situations in which the scrums are evenly matched, this stability may be achieved by driving the knees down in a sinking motion, the call being 'coming-sink'.

After the strike by the hooker, the pressure must be sustained until the ball is out. The ball is channelled to the tight-head side of the #8 by the loose-head flanker and the #8. Note that the locks do not assist in this task, as this would destabilise the scrum. From this position, the ball can be easily cleared or the other attacking options performed.

Practising scrummaging

1. Practise as many scrums as it takes to get to the stage where your team is operating successfully as a unit. This is not just down to the number of scrums you practise; it also requires honesty, application and discussion that addresses any problematic issues so that an improvement can be made.

2. Use scrum machines for timing and stamina training.

3. Use live scrumming to improve technique and competitiveness.

4. When the first team practices against the second team give the second team the throw in so that they can experience initial success.

5. Practice within the laws. It is a good idea to have a referee involved to 'educate' both parties.

6. As a warm up exercise, pair players in the same position and practice one-on-one, two-on-two and three-on-three i.e. the two front rows against each other.

7. It is good practice to practise the tight head side against the loose head side. As they are from the same team they will learn from each other. It is also a good alternative when opposition of suitable strength is not available. This starts with three against three - tight head prop, tight head lock and tight head flanker against the loose head prop, hooker and loose head lock in their normal scrumming positions. Add the #8 to the first group and the loose head flanker to the second to involve the entire forward pack.

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

MODULE 2 - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union
11. BACK LINE ATTACK

Unit one - Game knowledge

Module two - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union

11. BACK LINE ATTACK

Contents

Application of the key factors to video footage

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- *application of the key factors to video footage of the skill*
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Outcome

To create space through which one member of the back-line is able to penetrate the opposition's initial line of defence.

BACK LINE ATTACK	1	2	3	4	5
Outcome achieved?					
Key factors					
1 Stand sufficiently far apart to isolate each defender					
2 Align so as to allow sufficient time to pass the ball along the back line					
3 Retain the alignment as the back line moves forward					
4 Draw an opposition defender before passing					
5 Pass in front of the next back in the line so that the ball is easy to catch and peripheral vision is retained					
6 Create a gap just before the tackle line for the extra player to run through the initial line of defence					
7 Enter the gap to ensure the defence has insufficient time to tackle the extra player					
8 Use the disorganisation in the defence to pass to an unmarked player					
9 Accelerate through the gap					
10 Use support players to continue the attack					

Application of key factors to scenarios

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4. Discuss the causes of the error with your group, using the key factors as a checklist.
5. List these in order of priority.

In the table below (for scenarios 1-3) on the following page (for scenario 4-7):
1. Name the skill
2. Explain the error
3. Identify the players responsible
4. Brainstorm and prioritise the possible reasons.

Scenarios

1. *The opposition's defence is able to drift with our passes.*
2. *Your team's players are catching the ball on the hip.*
3. *The #12 is not creating space for the penetrator.*
4. *The penetrating ball carrier is having difficulty passing to support players.*
5. *Our penetrators are having difficulty timing their entry to the back line.*
6. *At phase play the opponents are able to stop your team getting to the gain-line.*
7. *At phase play the defence is out-numbering the attack and with each pass along the line the ball carrier is more likely to be isolated.*

Scen-ario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
1				
2				
3				

Scenario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
4				
5				
6				
7				

More about back line attack

The aim of back line attack is to create space through which one member of the back line is able to penetrate the opposition's initial line of defence.

If the backs are positioned too close together then one defender may be able to cover two of them. If they stand too far apart then the pass may be so slow and laboured that the ball is slow in the air when it is passed. Spacing should be sufficient to isolate each defender, but close enough so that passing is quick and accurate.

Therefore the alignment of a back-line is determined by the speed with which the players can pass accurately and their running speed.

If the back line is too close to the opposition, there will be insufficient time to pass the ball along the back-line. The players slow hand speed, and/or fast running speed, will result in them being tackled by the defence before the ball has reached the penetrating player. If they align too far from the opposition, they will have time to pass, but this additional time will allow the opposition to adjust to the attack.

Therefore, players with fast, accurate skills can align flatter. This moves the attack closer to the defence, giving the defence less space and time to react. Slower running may also allow a back line to stand flatter, though this will not assist in penetrating as the players will be easily defended. In these circumstances, acceleration, i.e., a change of pace, might create penetration. This could be done by a ball carrier in the back line or a player entering the back line. Not all players will have this ability.

Alignment should be deep if the extra player is to enter the back line out wide, as more passes will be involved. It should be shallower if the extra player is to enter the back line close to the source of possession.

Throughout the attack the alignments should remain so that each pass is received with the receiver deep enough to move towards the ball to receive the pass.

Space can be created in the action of passing by the passer pulling the pass back from the line of contact (the tackle line). This means that while the passer may be close to the defence, the pass will create space for the receiver, who may be five metres or so further back. The receiver must resist the temptation to creep up. Space created in this way is so immediate that the defence has difficulty adjusting.

If the back-line loses its alignment, players might run across field to gain more time and space in which to pass. This can cause passes to be rushed.

In running across the field, the player will not draw a defender. This allows the defender to drift across the field and assist with defending elsewhere. In addition, this will take up the space of other players in the back-line, preventing them from performing their skills effectively. In this situation, the space that the ball carrier will have created is the space back inside. It is difficult to pass to a player in this space unless it is a deliberate move.
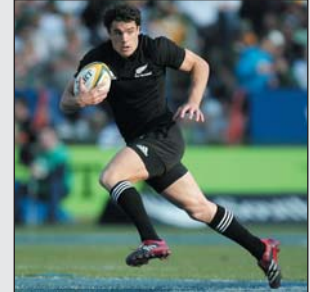
If the backs have lost their alignment, the pass will have to be made to the player rather than to the space in front. The pass will be rushed and in the rush it will have to be flat to ensure a forward pass is not made. This will reduce the receiver's vision. This will be aggrevated if the flat pass is lower, causing the receiver to look down to take the ball.

A pass to the receiver will result in the player turning towards the passer to catch the ball. By turning the players field of vision will be reduced.

The pass should be made to the target area in front of the receiver. It should be at chest height so the receiver is not made to look down.

The receiver must be deep enough to run towards the ball so that there is no need to slow down to make the catch. This is also achieved by running straight. Initially the line of running may be straight down the field. As a player's skill develops, the line should be straight at a defender to commit the defender before the pass is made.

At a higher level of skill, the ball carrier may initially run at a defender to commit and then run at the spaces on the defender's left or right. This will draw the defenders out of position. If they don't move to make the tackle, the ball carrier might be able to penetrate. If they do, a pass can be made to a player in the space from which the tackler has been drawn, enabling the attackers to penetrate.

The extent to which a back line player can draw a defender depends on whereabouts in the back line the backs are going to attempt to penetrate. If this is some distance along the line then the early receivers should use up very little space as it will be needed by a player to draw a defender elsewhere.

Wherever the move is to be initiated, a gap will have to be created for a penetrating player to run into. To reduce the time the defence has to react to the move, it should take place just before the tackle line*.

Because the defence line is closer to the gain line (a line down the centre of scrums, line-outs, rucks and mauls) the tackle line is on the attacking team's side of the gain line. It is vital that teams practise attack knowing the position of the tackle line as it determines the time and space they have in which to perform their move.

Being too close to the tackle line will result in the ball not reaching the area of the attack, while being too far from it will afford the defence time to reach to the attack and tackle the ball carrier.

The gap in the defence is created by the ball carrier drawing a defender by running straight, or more accurately running at the inside defender. This is achieved by running slightly back in the direction of the pass. The ball should be caught as soon as possible to give the ball carrier time to commit the defence, i.e., caught before it reaches the centre of the receiver's body.

To reduce the reaction time of the defence, the player entering the gap should enter as late as possible and change the pace of the attack by accelerating.

*Definition: The tackle line

The tackle line is the line at which both back lines meet. It is halfway between the original defence line (the offside line in law) and the attack line (the initial line of alignment of the attacking back line).

With the entry of the extra attacker, ideally there will be three attackers and two defenders. As the defence reacts, it may become disorganised. The pass should be made to the unmarked attacking player to penetrate. Players need practice in observing the behaviour of the defence and in passing to the unmarked player.

Based on the behaviour of the defence in the three versus two situation, there are four options:
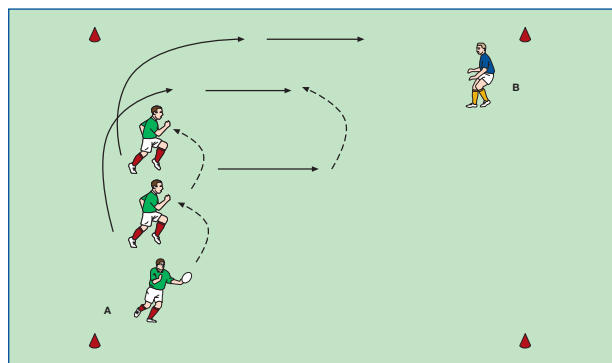
1. The first two players draw the first two defenders and pass to the third attacker who will be in space.
2. The ball carrier 'dummy' passes and goes if the defender drifts onto the penetrator.
3. The ball carrier passes to the penetrator if the two defenders stay on the players they were initially defending.
4. The ball carrier passes to the next player in the back line if this player's defender moves in to tackle the penetrator.

To prevent the defence recovering the penetrating player should accelerate. Unless a try can be scored, the ball should be passed to supporting players to continue the attack.

Back line attack skill activities

Double and reverse

Players work in groups of five or six with one ball in a quarter of the field. Two half backs are required. The remaining players form a back line, A and B. The ball starts with halfback A. The ball is passed quickly along the back line. After making a pass, backs double around to the end of the line to receive and make another pass. The half backs remain stationary. When the last back receives their second pass, the ball is passed to half back B, who repeats the activity in the opposite direction, with the second backline.

This skill activity makes players more aware of the players around them, and the position of the gain line and tackle line.

Key points

- *Align as flat as players' skill levels will allow*
- *Maintain alignment and re-align quickly after each attack*
- *Run straight*
- *Apply the key factors for passing.*

Backline formation

Players work in groups of nine with two balls per group. Appoint a half back / scrum half. The remaining players form two back lines, facing each other across a centre line. The halfback starts at position A, passing the ball, setting back line 1 in motion. As soon as the pass is made, the half back runs to position B, picks up the other ball and passes to back line 2 in motion. Once this pass has been made, the halfback runs back to position A ready to pass to back line 1 again.
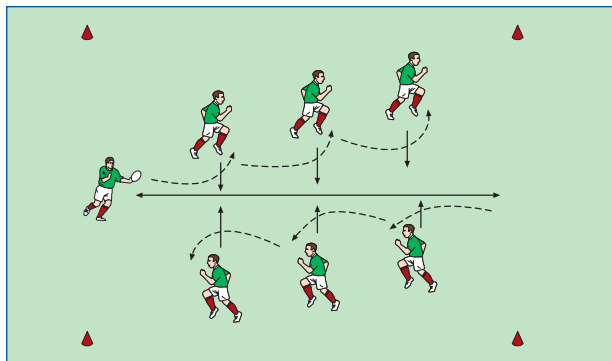
Continue for a given number of plays with back lines realigning each time the ball is passed along the line. Have the players change position to become familiar with being out of position, as often happens during phase play.

Key points

- *Align, maintain alignment and re-align quickly*
- *Run straight*
- *Support only after making a pass that commits at least one defender.*

Around the cones

Players work in groups of five around the perimeter of a 20m by 20m grid. Players line up as a back line from the first cone running towards the grid. The ball is passed along the back line so that it gets to the last player before and inside the second cone. The last receiver puts the ball at the cone and the players re-align on this cone. After the ball has been passed along the line once again, the last receiver puts it down next to cone three, and similarly at cone four when it has been passed from cone three. Once around the grid results in four attacks - one from each side of the grid.
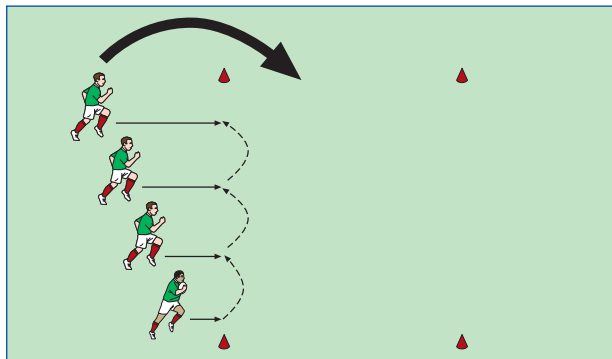
Key points

- *Alignment and re-alignment*
- *Running straight creating space*
- *Depth and creating depth when passing*
- *Linear support*
- *Lateral support*
- *Decision making.*

Activity variations

1. Reverse the direction of the attack.
2. Introduce a penetrating player in the back line movement. This player can enter between any passing players or outside the last player.
3. Allow the penetrating player to break through the gain line and play inside the grid where the player is supported by the other backs to score on the other side of the grid.
4. Place defenders on the gain line and, eventually, inside the grid. The number and their positioning will depend on the players' skill level, and what the players wish to achieve.

Decision making arcs

Players work in groups of five in a 20m by 20m grid with one ball per group. Players line up in single file on one side of the grid, behind the ball carrier. The four receivers run in an arc to the left or the right to receive a pass from the player inside them. Once the last player has received a pass, all players form a line behind this player. Once the single file line has been formed, the players 'arc' once again, receiving a pass from the player inside them as they do so. The activity continues for the length of the grid.
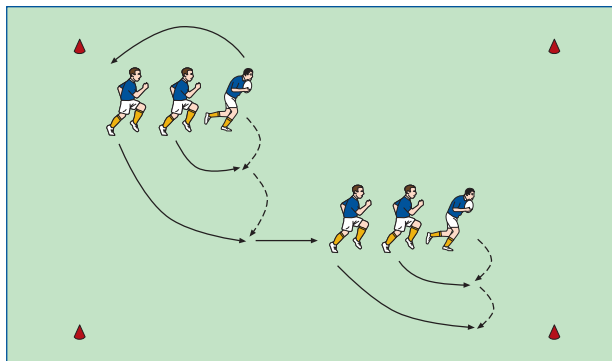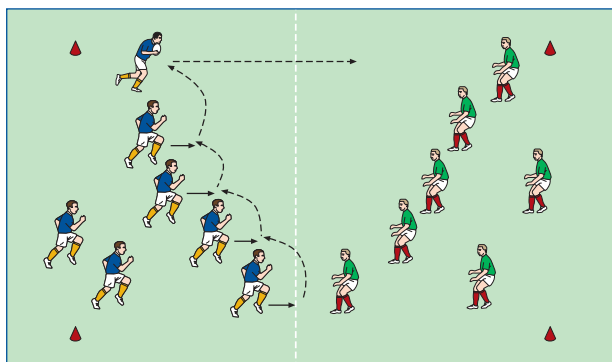
Activity variation

Introduce defenders who line up in single file facing the attack and arc out to defend each attacker. The number of defenders will be determined by the skill level of the attackers, but it will always be less than the attack so that a defensive decision has to be made as to who to tackle and, based on this, the attack can practise identifying and passing to the unmarked player.

Key points

- *Using running lines inside out to create space on the outside*
- *Committing the defender*
- *Pulling the pass back to create space for the receiver*
- *Scanning to 'read' what the defence is doing*
- *Identifying and passing to the unmarked player.*

Backline continuity

Two back lines are organised in half a field - an attacking line and a defensive line. The coach rolls the ball to the attacking group to commence play. The other group defends.

Key points:

- *Alignment*
- *Create space for your group, reduce the space for the other group*
- *Take immediate advantage of a turnover of possession.*

Rules in attack:
- All players except the wing must pass the ball. They cannot take a gap.
- The wing can take the outside gap only.
- Once the gap has been taken or a ball carrier is held, the ball must be placed on the ground.

Rules in defence:
- Use 'hold' tackles only. Once the ball is on the ground, the coach calls which group is to be in possession following the stoppage.

The coach can interrupt play at any time.

NOTES

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

MODULE 2 - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union
12. DEFENCE

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD

Unit one - Game knowledge
Module two - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union

12. DEFENCE

Contents

Application of the key factors to video footage

1. View each video example in turn and analyse it using the table on the next page.
2. Decide if the desired outcome has been achieved. If it has put a tick, if it hasn't put a cross, and if it doesn't apply to the example put N/A.
3. Then analyse each of the listed key factors that may have contributed to the success or failure of the outcome. Put a tick, cross or N/A next to each key factor.
Space is provided for you to analyse up to five examples.

Outcome: To create space through which one member of the back-line is able to penetrate the opposition's initial line of defence.

What is key factor analysis?

Key factor analysis takes each of the skills of the game and gives the outcome that can be achieved by the successful performance of the skill. This then gives rise to a list of actions (key factors) that, when performed in sequential order, will result in the outcome being achieved. Each skill can be coached by:

* *explanation of the key factors*
* *practical demonstration of the key factors*
* *application of the key factors to video footage of the skill*
* *use of the key factors to identify the problems and solutions to a situation explained in a scenario.*

DEFENCE		1	2	3	4	5
	Outcome achieved?					
	Key factors					
1	Align within the back line on a slight angle back from the source of possession					
2	Keep the alignment when moving forward towards the opposing players					
3	Align in relation to the probable ball carrier, with the outside shoulder in line with that player's inside shoulder					
4	Run on an angle from inside the ball carrier					
5	Tackle the ball carrier if the player has the ball					
6	If the player has passed the ball, alter the line of running to support in regaining the ball when a tackle is made					
7	If the ball has been kicked before a tackle has been made, run quickly to support the player who is most likely to catch or recover the ball					
8	Assist in regaining possession by choosing the best option					

Application of key factors to scenarios

1. Make sure that the scenario(s) you have been given are fully understood.
2. Identify the error.
3. Identify the player(s) responsible for the error. In some cases, more than one player may be responsible, even if the skill is an individual one. For example, when a pass does not achieve the outcome this may be the fault of the passer or the receiver, or a bit of both.
4. Discuss the causes of the error with your group, using the key factors as a checklist.
5. List these in order of priority.

In the table below (for scenarios 1-3) and on the following page (for scenario 4-7):
1. Name the skill
2. Explain the error
3. Identify the players responsible
4. Brainstorm and prioritise the possible reasons.

Scenarios

1. From line-outs the opposing #12 penetrates & passes to #13 without being tackled.

2. Your team's #13 is being easily beaten on the outside.

3. The opposition is penetrating easily on cutback moves by #12 and #13 from scrums.

4. The opposition is using the wipers kick from #12 to gain lots of territory.

5. From line-outs the opposing #9 is box kicking and your team's blindside wing is being caught in possession.

6. From the tackle the opposition is able to pick and go, gaining ground.

7. Your team is being penalised after defending for a number of phases owing to frustration at lack of possession.

Scen- ario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
1				
2				
3				

Scenario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
4				
5				
6				
7				

More about defence

The aim of defence is firstly to prevent territory being gained, and secondly to regain possession of the ball.

The purpose of aligning on a slight angle back from the source of possession is to ensure that each defender is able to see play as it develops. This enables them to choose what their actions will be. Too flat an alignment reduces peripheral vision and too deep a one affords too much time to the attack.

This alignment should be retained as play develops, so as to retain this breadth of vision. Players will naturally turn their heads so as to watch what is happening, but their feet position should be such that they are able to defend inside-out without adjusting.

Even more important is the need for backs not to get ahead of those inside them, as this creates a gap in the defence through which an opposing attacker can penetrate.

Individually, the defenders should align inside the player they expect to tackle. This means that the defenders defend from inside the ball carrier, i.e., inside-out. It is therefore important for each defender to know who their 'matching' ball carrier is.

The matching ball carrier might not be their opposite shirt number. This is because the attack may bring in an extra player to try to penetrate, it may be confusing if the players are directed to tackle their opposite number.

A better system may be for each defender to be responsible for a designated 'pair of hands' in the attack. This compensates for the entry of the extra player in the attack who becomes a numbered pair of hands and immediately has to contend with a designated tackler.

Because the defender is aligned inside the ball carrier, this player will be easily tackled if an attempt is made to move inside.

The inside alignment allows only for an attempted outside break, and a standard side-on tackle will stop this.

The defender may have to adjust alignment to be further inside their 'matching pair of hands' to prevent the attacker running straight at the defender. Running straight, the attacker will have both inside and outside gaps, confusing the defender.

When defending against phase play, rucks and mauls, the defence is most vulnerable close to the source of possession, because, a) there is less time to adjust, b) the ball carrier is closer to the gain line, and c) once the defence has been breached, the whole field is available to the attack. By numbering outside-in, any spare defenders will be stationed in this vulnerable area. This doesn't mean that the defence will be outside-in. It must remain inside-out so that space for the attack is not left on the outside.

By continually altering their line of running so that they can move towards the ball, defenders who haven't had to tackle will be kept in play. It has become standard practice for these players to hold their position for a minimum of two passes along the back-line. This ensures that the space inside the ball is defended if the attack cuts back into this space.

Once this eventuality has been dealt with, the players should move forward to support if the attack is running and passing.

A pattern should be established to meet the two most frequent situations, i.e., the ball carrier being tackled on the tackle line, and the extra player penetrating through a gap in the defence.

One method is for those closest to the ball to move to it while those further away run back and across in anticipation of a breakthrough. A further alternative is for each defender to stay in their lane as they move back, thereby isolating the ball carrier so that the full back is able to tackle this player in a one-on-one situation.

Examples of defence

Example 1: Man on man defence from a scrum - full back enters outside second five eighth / inside centre

Pair of hands	Player's position	Tackler's position
1st	Scrum half / half back	Flanker
2nd	Out-half / fly half / first 5/8	Out-half / fly half / first 5/8
3rd	Inside centre / second 5/8	Inside centre / second 5/8
4th	Full back	Outside centre
5th	Outside centre / centre	Full back / wing*
6th	Wing	Wing / full back*

* This depends on the pattern being used.

Example 2: Man-out defence from the line-out - full back and blind side wing enter the backline, creating seven potential ball carriers

Pair of hands	Player's position	Tackler's position
1st	Scrum half / half back	Second last player in the line-out
2nd	Out-half / fly half / first 5/8	Last player in the line-out
3rd	Blind side wing	Out half / fly half / first 5/8
4th	Inside centre / Second 5/8	Inside centre / Second 5/8
5th	Outside centre / centre	Outside centre
6th	Open side wing	Wing
7th	Full back	Full back

Note: The blind-side wing has not been used to tackle, and is therefore available to recover any kicks.

If the ball has been kicked behind the defenders, they must hurry back to support the player contesting possession. In any defensive situation, the following individual skills are necessary to support in recovering the ball:

• Completing the tackle
• Picking up the ball
• Ripping the ball off the opposing ball carrier
• Binding and driving to form a ruck or maul
• Being in a position to receive a pass
• Initiating a counter attack
• After receiving a pass, kicking to touch to relieve pressure and gain field position.

The tackle skill activities and all opposed back line attack activities seen earlier can be used to practise defence by changing the emphasis from attack to defence.

Team defence skill activities

Alignment

Place cones to show alignment for both attack and defence using a line on the field to serve as the gain line. Pair players up with a player of similar size and skill, one member of each pair standing on a defensive cone and the other with
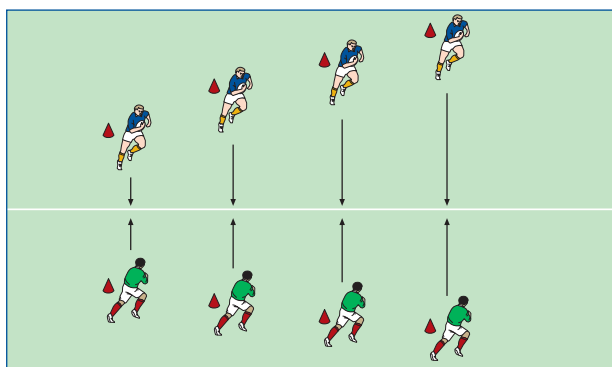
a ball on the attacking cone. On the coach's call, the lines move towards each other making sure that alignment and timing is retained. The defence tackles inside-out. Once the tackle has been made, the players run backwards to their line and move one cone further out. When they are in position, repeat the activity. When players get to the last cone they return to the first cone. Any surplus players wait for their turn at the first cone.

Phase play defence

The team lines up in a defensive formation. Up to eight extra players in tackle suits line up against the team, each with a ball. On the coach's call, a ball carrier attacks

the defensive line. The defence makes a tackle and re-adjusts its positioning so that all ball carriers can be defended. Adjust the frequency with which the ball carriers attack to the speed with which the defence is able to recover.

Activity variations

1. Designate the number of defenders that have to be committed to the contest at the tackle.
2. Create a maul that is allowed to move down the field committing defenders so that an adjustment has to be made.
3. Commence the drill from a scrum or line-out formation.
4. Vary the tackle from low tackles to smother tackles and alignment near the source of possession to outside-in compared to alignment two passes away which should be inside out.
5. Use the ball carriers to create frequently used attacks.
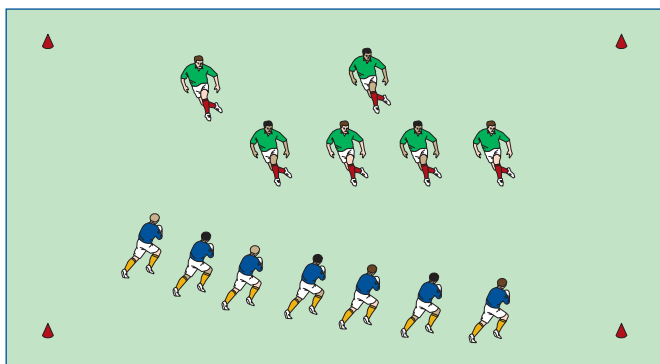
Activity variations

1. When the tackle is made, the tackler recovers the ball and the pair swap their roles.
2. Introduce a 'rogue' ball carrier who can enter the attacking line at any time, forcing the defensive line to adjust to the player's entry.

Key points

- Defensive players mustn't get ahead of those inside them
- Tackle inside out.

Key points

- Balance the defence after each attack
- Tackle the ball carrier so that the ball is contestable.

NOTES

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
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13. PHASE PLAY

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Space is provided for you to analyse up to five examples.

Outcome
To maintain continuity of play by recreating time and space to attack.

PHASE PLAY		1	2	3	4	5
	Outcome achieved?					
	Key factors					
1	Anticipate the location at which the ball carrier will be held or tackled					
2	Run on a line conducive to entering play					
3	Move into play running a line that is parallel to the touchline					
4	Bind with team-mates					
5	Drive into a position in the formation between two players					
6	Drive with the back parallel to the ground and the head up					
7	Drive forward as a bound unit while delivering the ball.					

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- *practical demonstration of the key factors*
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- *use of the key factors to identify the problems and solutions to a situation explained in a scenario.*

The key factors for phase play apply to rucks and mauls; however, because in law, the ball is on the ground at a ruck and off the ground in a maul, the following additional key factors apply.

RUCKING		1	2	3	4	5
	Outcome achieved?					
	Key factors					
1	Drive forward as a bound unit while delivering the ball					
2	Drive as far forward as possible without becoming isolated					
3	Fall parallel to the goal-line, so that the player's body is between the opposition and the ball					
4	Place the ball towards team-mates					
5	Bind as a front row and drive past the ball					
6	Remaining forwards bind and drive as a scrum past the ball with sufficient width to protect the delivery of the ball					

MAULING		1	2	3	4	5
	Outcome achieved?					
	Key factors					
1	When held, remain standing					
2	Stand in a stable position					
3	Turn to face team-mates					
4	Hand the ball to the first supporting player					
5	Support by binding on both sides of the original ball carrier					
6	Bind and drive forward in a balanced formation, similar to a scrum					
7	Select the best attacking option based on how the opposing team is defending					

Application of key factors to scenarios

1. Make sure that the scenario(s) you have been given are fully understood.
2. Identify the error.
3. Identify the player(s) responsible for the error. In some cases, more than one player may be responsible, even if the skill is an individual one. For example, when a pass does not achieve the outcome this may be the fault of the passer or the receiver, or a bit of both.
4. Discuss the causes of the error with your group, using the key factors as a checklist.
5. List these in order of priority.

In the table below (for scenarios 1-3) and on the following page (for scenario 4-7):
1. Name the skill
2. Explain the error
3. Identify the players responsible
4. Brainstorm and prioritise the possible reasons.

Scenarios

1. *When the ball carrier has been tackled, the ball is available very slowly resulting in the defence being in a good position to defend your team's attack.*
2. *Your team is being penalised for contesting the ball at the tackle and post tackle. In trying to avoid conceding penalties, the ball comes back too slowly or the opposition are regaining the ball.*
3. *When attempting to set up a maul in general play, it seems to go to ground before it has become stable and its instability allows the opposition to break it up, exposing the ball carrier to a tackle.*
4. *When the ball is delivered from a ruck, the defence is able to interfere with the number 9 as the player tries to pass the ball.*
5. *Support players are having trouble getting to the ball carrier after the tackle.*

Scen-ario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
1				

Scenario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
2				
3				
4				
5				

Rucks

It is best to ruck the ball when quick progression of the attack will give an advantage. This occurs if play has moved forward to or beyond the gain line. In this situation, the pace of the attack should be maintained to prevent the opposition from regrouping.

Other similar situations occur if there is lateral space into which to move, i.e., enough space across the field for a further attack in the same direction before reaching the touch line. The speed of delivery will stretch the defence, making it easier to penetrate.

To form a ruck the ball carrier goes as far forward as possible. The further forward the player goes, the easier it is for support to be provided and the more difficult it is to defend against. However, the player must avoid becoming isolated, as once the tackle is made, the ball must be made available. Consequently, support must be immediate to continue open play and for the attack to continue.

Once the ball carrier is on the ground the ball must be immediately played, after which the ball carrier is out of play. As the area is likely to be congested, a pass could concede possession. The best option is to place the ball on the ground on the attacking team's side. By accepting the tackle and turning so that the ball carrier's body is parallel to the goal-line, the ball carrier ensures that there is no obstacle to the team keeping possession of the ball.

As with the ball carrier, other players on the ground are out of play and will be penalised if they interfere with play while on the ground.

To avoid falling to the ground, players should bind with each other and drive past the ball. They should have a body position that enables them to withstand the impact of their opponents who will of course be contesting the ball in the same way. To achieve this, they should approach the ball in a crouch, with the head up and the back straight. They should be running parallel to the touchline so the direction of drive is directly downfield.

Upon approaching the ball, they should sink low and drive up and past the line of the ball. As they drive past the ball, they should make contact with at least one opponent. This forms a ruck and thereby creates space, because there is now an offside line past which the defending team cannot go.

As soon as the ball is available, the ruck is over and the offside line no longer exists. This means that the scrum half / halfback must move quickly at the breakdown of the ruck. Later arriving forwards can delay the delivery of the ball, though they may be needed to give more control and power to push the 'front row' past the ball.

Ideally, the ruck should be formed similar to a scrum, as this offers the best pushing formation and it also has sufficient width to protect the scrum half / halfback in making a pass or in performing other moves. The ball should be delivered while the forwards are driving forward. If it is delivered when the ruck becomes stationary, the defence will have had time to regroup and the attack will therefore be less effective.

Mauls

As the ball is off the ground in the maul, it can be moved down the field towards the opposing team's goal line while in the maul. This creates an off-side line which moves towards the goal-line, forcing the defence to adjust and move back with the maul to avoid infringing the law. This will create space for the attack. Because the ball is off the ground, the timing of delivery from the maul can be varied.

A ruck is a better option when quick progression of the attack is required. The advantage of the maul is that it can be used for both quick progression, and in those situations where it suits the attacking team to slow things up a bit - to allow formation of the back line in preparation for an attack, for example.

As the ball can only be moved forward when it is off the ground, the ball carrier must be able to stand in contact and turn to face team-mates.

The first support player should drive the ball carrier forward and secure the ball back from the line of contact to prevent the opposition from contesting it. The next supporting players provide forward drive and also secure the ball by driving one on the left and the other on the right of the ball carrier. Having established this platform, a second row can drive onto the front row, moving the ball down the field.

As the opposing team moves to stop the drive, it may slow down. The choice then is either to deliver the ball so that the space created in the defence can be used, or to roll the maul around the opposing team's drive. Care must be taken when rolling the maul, that the ball is secured and not exposed so that the opposition can contest possession of it.

When the maul rolls, the supporting players must drive into positions past the ball to protect its position. The priority is to drive the maul forward, sealing off possession before using options involving the ball.

Finally, strict adherence to the 'use it or lose it' law, and delivering the ball as soon as it is stationary, should ensure delivery occurs before the maul stops moving forward.

For teenage or less skilled players, it is preferable to play to one pattern, i.e., either ruck or maul, so that there is no confusion in decision-making and so that they become skilled at the techniques. The easier of the two methods to master is the ruck.

Notes on practising phase play
1. Phase play is both a forward's and a back's skill as the players nearest to the tackle / contact should form the phase.
2. The high frequency with which these situations occur means that they must be practised many times.
3. Once players understand their roles and can perform them competently, opposition should be provided at a level with which players can cope.
4. Hit shields and tackle suits can be used to provide some protection upon contact.
5. Practise players to the stage where their fatigue is just starting to erode their skill. The aim is to try and progressively increase this fatigue threshold.
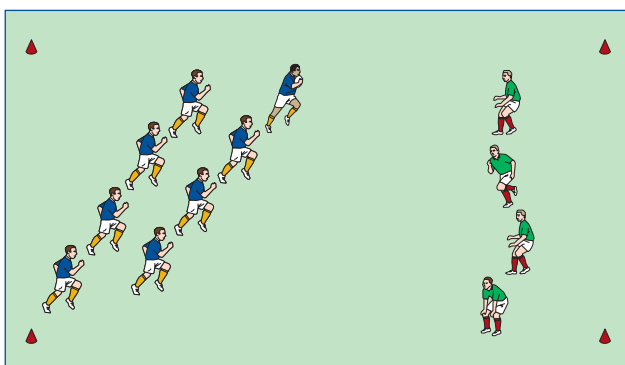
Phase play skill activities

Many balls

Place a number of balls around a half to a quarter of the field. At each ball place some opposition players. Call a ball to which the players are to go to set up phase play. If they have to go back or the ball is near a touch line, they should form a maul. If they go forward and the ball is away from a touch line, they should form a ruck.
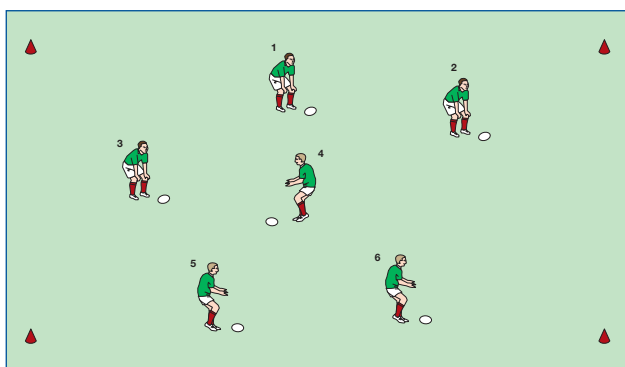
Repitition rucks

Form two groups of players, passing distance from each other. In front of each group, have up to four defenders. The first group takes the ball into the ruck and delivers it to the halfback. The halfback passes the ball to the first player in the second group who take it forward to form a second ruck, from which it is once again delivered to the half back. The half back sets the first group going, and so on.

Rolling mauls

In groups of six to eight players with one ball per group, the groups run down the field and every 5-10m set up a maul. At each maul, vary the roles each player performs. The roles are ball carrier, link player, blocks, locks and back row. Once the ball has been secured at the back of the maul, on the ball carrier's call organise the rolling of the maul left or right, from which close support play can follow, before the next maul is formed.
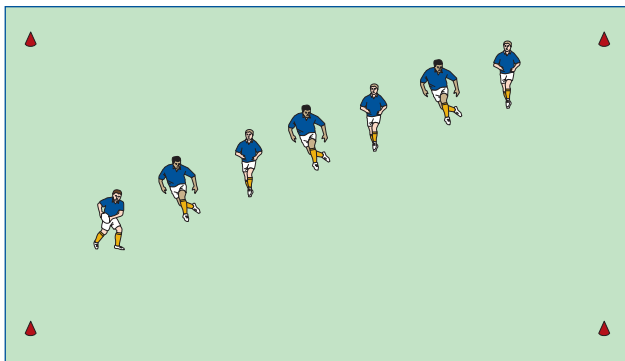
Around the cones

Set up a 10-15m grid. Players group in one corner in groups of six to eight players. Along the diagonal line from corner to corner, station two to three players either with hit shields or in tackle suits to provide opposition. The first group runs forward with a ball, and upon driving into the defence sets up a ruck or a maul. If a ruck is formed one player plays half back / scrum half and when the ball is delivered this player runs back to the first cone, followed by the other group members. They then run along the perimeter of the grid to the second cone, round it and diagonally into the defence that has moved to be in front of the group where another ruck can be formed. This pattern is followed around the second cone onto the third and around it and along to the fourth. If a maul is formed, the drive and the roll of the maul continues along the diagonal line from the first to the third cone. When they get there the coach tells them to go right or left to the second or fourth cones which they round and move into the defence to set up another maul. Vary rucks and mauls so that the players have to adapt.
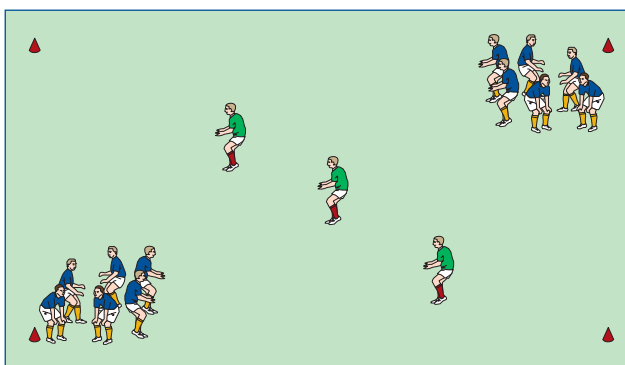
INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

MODULE 2 - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union
14. SUPPORT PLAY

Unit one - Game knowledge
Module two - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union

14. SUPPORT PLAY

Contents

Application of the key factors to video footage

1. View each video example in turn and analyse it using the table on the next page.
2. Decide if the desired outcome has been achieved. If it has put a tick, if it hasn't put a cross, and if it doesn't apply to the example put N/A.
3. Then analyse each of the listed key factors that may have contributed to the success or failure of the outcome. Put a tick, cross or N/A next to each key factor.

Space is provided for you to analyse up to five examples.

Support in attack - outcome
To be in a position that gives the ball carrier options to continue play.

SUPPORT PLAY - ATTACK		1	2	3	4	5
	Outcome achieved?					
	Key factors					
1	Anticipate how play will develop					
2	Adopt running lines so as that a good position is found from which to enter play					
3	Position close to but back from the ball-carrier, in support					
4	Support to ensure possession is retained and that the ball is moved forward					

What is key factor analysis?

Key factor analysis takes each of the skills of the game and gives the outcome that can be achieved by the successful performance of the skill. This then gives rise to a list of actions (key factors) that, when performed in sequential order, will result in the outcome being achieved. Each skill can be coached by:

- *explanation of the key factors*
- *practical demonstration of the key factors*
- *application of the key factors to video footage of the skill*
- *use of the key factors to identify the problems and solutions to a situation explained in a scenario.*

Support in defence - outcome
To regain possession of the ball.

SUPPORT PLAY - DEFENCE		1	2	3	4	5
	Outcome achieved?					
	Key factors					
1	Anticipate how play will develop					
2	Adopt a running line so as that a good position is found from which to enter play, rather than have play move away					
3	Complement the actions of the players closer to or at the ball, to ensure possession is regained					

Application of key factors to scenarios

1. Make sure that the scenario(s) you have been given are fully understood.
2. Identify the error.
3. Identify the player(s) responsible for the error. In some cases, more than one player may be responsible, even if the skill is an individual one. For example, when a pass does not achieve the outcome this may be the fault of the passer or the receiver, or a bit of both.
4. Discuss the causes of the error with your group, using the key factors as a checklist.
5. List these in order of priority.

In the table on the following pages:
1. Name the skill
2. Explain the error
3. Identify the players responsible
4. Brainstorm and prioritise the possible reasons.

Scenarios

1. The opposition are getting between the ball carrier and the supporting players so that a pass cannot be made.

2. The support is receiving the pass on the hip or they are having to slow down to catch the ball.

3. The ball carrier is running into the space in which the support players are running, thereby taking away their space.

4. As the support player is bending down to continue the pick and go, the player is being tackled.

5. The ball carrier is 'forcing' the pass to support where it is being spilt, and the opposition regains the ball.

6. The ball is being passed laterally when the defence outnumbers the attack, resulting in the ball carrier becoming isolated.

7. To get the ball to an unmarked player when the attack outnumbers the defence, the players are using miss-out passes, but the defence is always able to make the tackle.

Scenario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
1				
2				
3				
4				

Scen-ario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
5				
6				
7				

More on support play

The aim of support play in attack is to be in a position that gives the ball carrier options to continue play.

Each player in a team must know which side of the field the team is going to attack. In addition, some teams have a call indicating firstly if the ball is to be kicked or passed and secondly where the penetrating player is going to attempt to break through the defence.

By running slightly deeper than the anticipated position of the ball, the support player will be able to move forward into play.

However, the support player must be careful not to get too close, unless sure what the ball carrier is going to do. By holding back, time and space are available to adjust to the actions of the ball carrier. By telling the ball carrier "left" or "right", "close" or "deep", the support player can assist the ball carrier and make that player's actions more predictable. By being directly behind the ball carrier the support player is in the best position to make an adjustment.

The range of skills that will ensure the retention of possession, going forward and continuity are:

• Receiving a pass
• Picking up the ball
• Chasing the ball if it is kicked
• Binding to form a ruck or maul.

In defence, the aim is to assist the initial defender in regaining possession of the ball.

The support player should run back initially before moving forward into play. If they do not, they will be moving in the same direction as the attack. This makes it difficult to break the attack's momentum.

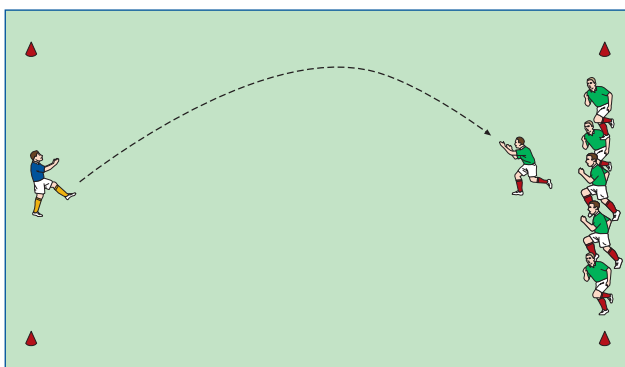The skills that are needed to regain possession of the ball are:

• Completing the tackle
• Gripping the ball free
• Picking up the ball
• Catching the kicked ball
• Binding and driving with team mates to form a ruck or maul.

Support play skill activities

Counter attack

The team, in groups of five or six, take turns running in support of a team-mate on the 22m line. The ball is kicked, using a variety of kicks to this player. As soon as the ball is kicked a group runs out to support and using running and passing attacks back to the goal-line.

Exhausting the channel

Organise players into three groups of four or five. Players work in a 22m by 1m channel. Groups A and C start at one end of the grid and Group B at the other. Group A has the ball. On "Go" group A runs single file down the channel. Player A1 runs outside the channel and passes to A2 back inside the channel. A2 does the same as A1 and passes back into the channel to A3 who does the same for A1 once again and so on. The ball carrier uses a change in the line of running to create space for a team-mate and passes back into the space. At the end of the grid the ball is passed to group B who return it across the grid. The relay continues with group B passing to group C.

Activity variations

1. Place cones down the channel a comfortable distance apart. The ball carrier now moves out of the channel just before each cone.
2. Move the cones closer together so the players have less time to perform the skill.
3. Place a tackler at each 'gate'. Initially the tackler makes a low tackle on the ball carrier so that the hands are free to make the pass.
4. Vary the tackle so that different methods have to be employed to make the ball available to the next receiver.
5. Start all groups from the same start point and increase the group size to six. They each perform the skills explained above. Players 1-3 form a back line after they have performed the skill. Players 4-6 form a ruck at the end of the channel from where the ball is passed to the back line.
6. Play down a second channel from the last receiver in the back line.
7. The defenders may move to defend the back line, or the second channel, or both.
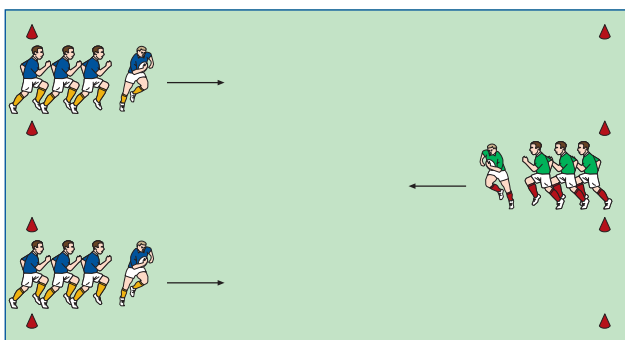
Activity variations

1. Introduce rucks and mauls to create space before bringing the ball back to the goal-line
2. Create opposition by a second group moving forward, once the team-mate has recovered the ball, and defending the goal-line.
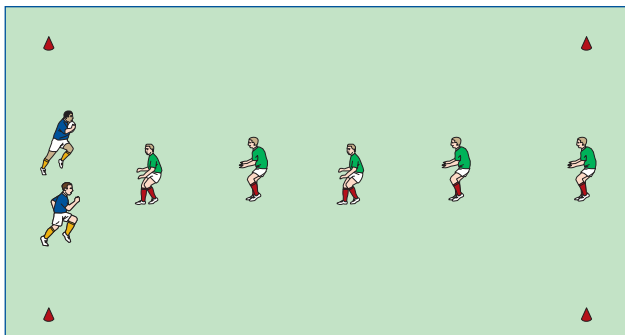
Key points:

- Create space by running lines
- Pass into the space that has been created
- Make sympathetic passes into the space
- Depth in support
- Accelerate towards the ball
- Use linear support to create lateral space and move the ball to the space.

Gate activity

Players work in pairs in a 50m by 15m channel. A defender is positioned every 10m in the centre of the channel. These are the gate keepers. Starting at one end of the channel, pairs with a ball run down the field using 2-on-1 skills to beat the defender at each gate. The defenders can move sideways only and not forwards. Once they have passed a defender the attacking pair moves immediately on to the next defender. Continue the play even if the ball is dropped or the laws infringed.
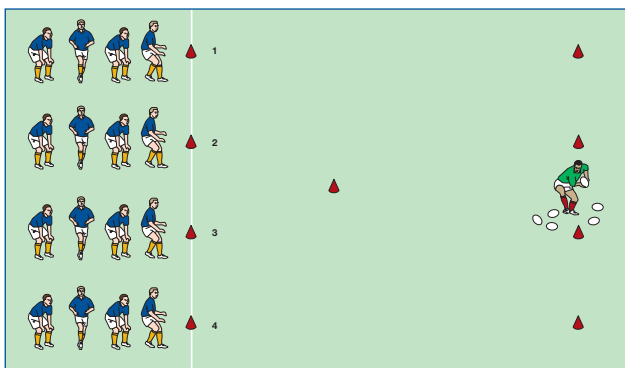
Activity variations

1. *Vary the number of defenders and attackers.*
2. *Allow the defenders to defend running back in support of others once they have initially been beaten.*
3. *If a group is having difficulty send a number of other players in support.*

Key points

- *Commit the defenders*
- *Time the pass*
- *Pass in front of receiver*
- *From depth, run onto the ball at speed and into space*
- *Re-group and keep going if problems occur.*

Running straight

Players line up in three to four lines behind cones 5m apart along the goal-line. One cone is placed 3m in front of this line. Four cones are placed 5-10m ahead in a line 4m apart. A passer with a number of balls is positioned between the second and third cones. Each line of players has a number and the coach calls the number of the player from each group to receive a pass from the player with the balls. Prior to passing the 3m cone the player called must let the passer know if the player is running right or left and whether the player is running close or wide out. The player receives the pass and runs on to score at a 'gate' 10m ahead.

Key points

- *Communication*
- *Depth*
- *Passing to a player in a better position*
- *Identifying the unmarked player*
- *Lateral and linear support.*

Activity variations

1. Call more than one number. The first number called is that of the player who calls the side and distance of the pass, and receives it. The other player(s) run in support.
2. Add more 'gates'.
3. Position defenders at each gate.
4. Reduce the width of the gates to 1m to practise linear support. The players run in single file and move outside the gate drawing the tackler away and pass the ball to support in the space that has been created.

Rotation

Divide the team into an attacking group and a defending group. The attack group has one or two more players than the defending group, with a maximum group size of six. Players work in two adjacent channels 15m by 22m. The attacking group runs towards the defending group in channel 1, using various attacking ploys to penetrate and score. When a score occurs or stalemate results, the attacking team regroups with the ball, runs out of the first channel and down the second channel. The defensive group moves immediately across to the second channel without rounding the cone. Coaches indicate the specific options to be practised.
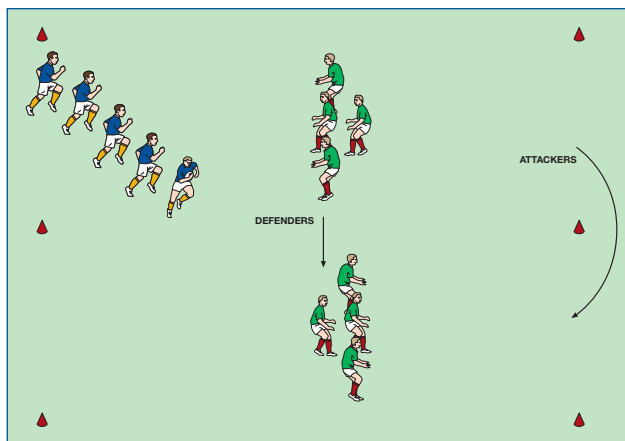
Activity variations

1. Passing, running and support play only.
2. Include phase play.
3. Allow kicking.

Key points

- Alignment in attack and defence
- React to what is happening to the ball carrier and the defensive player in contact
- Sequencing play
- Creating, using and retaining space.

Scanning

Players work in groups of four to six in two adjacent channels 15m by 22m. The players line up in two teams - one attacking team and one defending team, along the line dividing the two lanes. They stand along the line in single file, facing away from each other. On the coach's call, both the attacking group and the defending group run around the end cone and enter the grid. The attacking group attempts to score by placing the ball over the defending team's goal line and the defending team attempts to stop them, regain possession and score themselves.
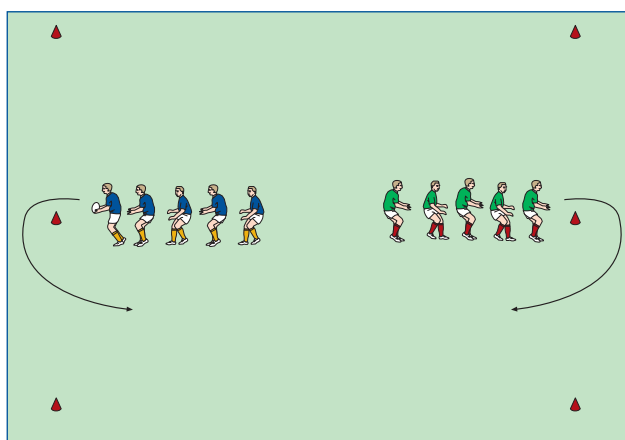
Key points

- Sequencing play in attack
- Decision making based on the number and positioning of the defence
- Defensive organisation and alignment
- Post tackle and phase play roles and options.

Activity variation

The defence is not allowed to watch which of the two channels the defence is running down. Once they have made their choice of channel the defenders are not allowed to change. If all go left and the attack goes down the other channel then the attack will be able to score unopposed. If they all choose the correct channel then the attack has to cope with equal numbers. In reality they will split and the attack will be able to practice decision making against different numbers of defenders.

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

MODULE 2 - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union
15. KICK STARTS AND RESTARTS

Unit one - Game knowledge

Module two - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union

15. KICK STARTS AND RE-STARTS

Contents

Application of the key factors to video footage

1. View each video example in turn and analyse it using the table on the next page.
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3. Then analyse each of the listed key factors that may have contributed to the success or failure of the outcome. Put a tick, cross or N/A next to each key factor.

Space is provided for you to analyse up to five examples.

What is key factor analysis?

Key factor analysis takes each of the skills of the game and gives the outcome that can be achieved by the successful performance of the skill. This then gives rise to a list of actions (key factors) that, when performed in sequential order, will result in the outcome being achieved. Each skill can be coached by:

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The kicking team - outcome
To retain possession of the ball.

KICK STARTS & RESTARTS - THE KICKING TEAM		1	2	3	4	5
	Outcome achieved?					
	Key factors					
1	Kick high enough to allow team-mates to be in position to catch the ball					
2	Run to catch the ball on an angle from the touch-line					
3	Catch the ball while at the same time turning back on to the opposition					
4	Bind onto the ball carrier if the ball has been caught **or** position to recover deflected ball and bind in support of the ball-recoverer					
5	Form a ruck or maul from which the team can build an attack					

The receiving team - outcome
To gain possession of the ball.

KICK STARTS & RESTARTS - THE RECEIVING TEAM	1	2	3	4	5
Outcome achieved?					
Key factors					
1 Position back from the likely position of the ball once it has been kicked					
2 Move towards the ball to catch it					
3 Position to recover deflected ball					
4 Bind on the ball carrier to form a ruck or maul from which the team can attack					

Application of key factors to scenarios

1. Make sure that the scenario(s) you have been given are fully understood.
2. Identify the error.
3. Identify the player(s) responsible for the error. In some cases, more than one player may be responsible, even if the skill is an individual one. For example, when a pass does not achieve the outcome this may be the fault of the passer or the receiver, or a bit of both.
4. Discuss the causes of the error with your group, using the key factors as a checklist.
5. List these in order of priority.

In the table on the following pages:
1. Name the skill
2. Explain the error
3. Identify the players responsible
4. Brainstorm and prioritise the possible reasons.

Scenarios

The kicking team
1. *The jumpers are knocking the ball on.*
2. *The ball is being knocked back but the opposition is recovering it.*
3. *From long kicks the opposition is returning the ball a considerable distance.*
4. *Kicks are creating a blind-side for the opponents.*

The receiving team
1. *While your team is contesting the ball, the opposition is driving them back because they are able to run towards the ball.*
2. *Spilled ball is not recovered*
3. *The opponents are splitting their team at kick-offs.*
4. *The #8 is receiving the kick-off behind the forwards, but just outside the 22, risking isolation.*
5. *The opposition is grubber-kicking off.*
6. *The opposition is kicking deep into the corner and using chases to prevent your team from getting the ball back into their territory.*

The kicking team

Scen-ario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
1				
2				
3				
4				

The receiving team

Scen- ario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
1				
2				
3				

The receiving team

Scen-ario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
4				
5				
6				

More about kick starts and restarts

The kicking team

The ball should be in the air long enough for the kicker's team-mates to run to the location where it can be caught. This is why the kick is made from the centre of the field to the left of right. The ball is in the air long enough for a team-mate to get to it without the ball moving too far down the field for this to take place.

Problems arise, however, when the field surface softens. With most kick-offs being drop kicks on a soft surface, the ball often doesn't bounce very high. This prevents the kicker's foot from getting under the ball. Consequently, the ball's time in the air is reduced. Sometimes just reaching the 10m line (the minimum requirement for the restart of play) is all that can be achieved in teenage rugby.

It is better if the kick off is made within the law, i.e., the ball is kicked 10 metres, than failing to reach 10m, the result of which is that the opposition will have the put in to a scrum on the halfway line. This seldom occurs for 22m drop-outs, because the ball has only to cross the line.

So that the catcher can easily see the ball throughout its flight, the catcher should run towards the ball by positioning on the touchline. The catcher requires considerable skill in catching the ball. Often it is deflected. To prevent it being deflected forward, the catcher should turn in jumping so the ball is deflected to waiting team-mates. These team-mates should be close enough to recover the ball but far enough away so they can move forward to recover the ball should it be deflected in any direction. Once the ball has been recovered play continues.

The receiving team

In order to be able to compete for the ball, the receiving team must be able to move forward towards it. If the catchers are stationary, or have to move back to catch the ball, they will be at a disadvantage.

The catcher can be supported in the jump for the ball by another player, just as when the catcher is supported in a line-out. To achieve this support, both jumper and support player have to move in unison. This also depends on how accurately the receiving team anticipates the position of the kick.

As the ball may be deflected, the catcher should turn in the jump so that any deflection is towards supporting players (i.e. rather than knocked forward). The supporting players should be close enough to recover the ball before an opponent, yet deep enough to move to the ball should it be deflected unexpectedly.

Of course, if the kick gives the receiving team time to catch the ball uncontested, few of these problems may arise. Once the ball has been caught, the best option is usually to set up a ruck or maul and continue play from there. This is because the ball will be caught in a congested area in which there are many players. Rucks and mauls create space for an attack.

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

MODULE 2 - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union
16. COUNTER ATTACKING

Unit one - Game knowledge

Module two - Key factor analysis of the skills of rugby union

16. COUNTER ATTACK

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3. Then analyse each of the listed key factors that may have contributed to the success or failure of the outcome. Put a tick, cross or N/A next to each key factor.

Space is provided for you to analyse up to five examples.

Outcome
To attack immediately after regaining possession to be in a better field position at the next stoppage of play.

What is key factor analysis?

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- *use of the key factors to identify the problems and solutions to a situation explained in a scenario.*

COUNTER ATTACK		1	2	3	4	5
	Outcome achieved?					
	Key factors					
1	Secure possession of the ball					
2	Hold opponents while moving the ball away to space by passing					
3	Support in space to offer receiving options					
4	After passing, run in support					
5	Retain possession and go forward until the next stoppage in play					

Application of key factors to scenarios

1. Make sure that the scenario(s) you have been given are fully understood.
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3. Identify the player(s) responsible for the error. In some cases, more than one player may be responsible, even if the skill is an individual one. For example, when a pass does not achieve the outcome this may be the fault of the passer or the receiver, or a bit of both.
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5. List these in order of priority.

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2. Explain the error
3. Identify the players responsible
4. Brainstorm and prioritise the possible reasons.

Scenarios

1. *After a line-out, as the opposition takes the ball forward in the mid-field, the #12 loses the ball in the tackle forward of your team's number 10 and number 7. Number 3 recovers the ball and goes immediately into contact where the player is smother tackled resulting in a scrum with opposition throw in.*

2. *From a scrum just inside the opponent's 22m line, 15m from the left hand touch-line, the opposition number 9 kicks a high touch kick that is caught in the field of play on halfway and 10m from touch by your number 11. Number 11 runs across the field and makes a looping 15m pass to the number 15 who receives the ball standing still in the middle of the field. The opposition have come forward in a line and the number 15 is tackled - ball and all.*

3. *From a line-out on the opposition 10m line, the opposition number 10 kicks the ball to our number 15 standing in mid-field and just outside your team's 22m line. The number 15 runs to the open side running across the field towards the open side wing who is ahead of the ball. The number 15 is taken in a high tackle and is unable to release the ball, resulting in a scrum with opposition throw in.*

Scen-ario	Skill	Error	Player	Reasons
1				
2				
3				

More about counter attacking

Securing the ball from a kick clearly relies on the catcher's ability. This is helped by team-mates keeping the catcher informed of how much time is available, the relative positioning of opponents and where the available support is. This allows the catcher to concentrate on the primary task of catching the ball for which they may have to leap into the air.

In this situation the opposition is held by the ball carrier standing to draw them or running towards them so that they cannot defend elsewhere. Support players support in the space the ball carrier has created by holding or running at the opposition. The ball carrier can then pass to players in the space to develop the attack.

If there are no passing and running options available, the ball carrier can create space by seeking close-quarter support and forming a ruck or maul from which play can then develop.

If the ball is regained close to opponents at the tackle, ruck, maul or in general play, all players will be converging on the ball. Once the ball has been recovered it should be moved quickly into space. Upon seeing the ball being recovered, support players must move to the space so that 2-3 passes can be immediately made across the field to the space, after which play can attack the space and go forward.

As with all support play, the space that is created is the space play has moved from not the space it is moving into. As a result players in possession must not run in the direction they intend passing to as the defence will be able to run in the same direction and tackle other attackers.

Counter-attacking skill activity

Players work in groups of six to eight with one ball. One player stands on the 22m line - the receiver. One player kicks the ball to the receiver using a grubber or punt kick.

The remaining players run out and support the receiver, recover the ball and counter attack passing the ball or using a rolling maul or both to return the ball back to the goal line. Rotate player positions.
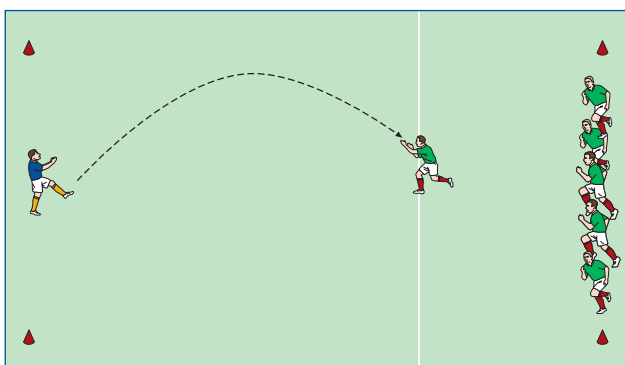
Activity variation

Divide the group into two, one that supports the receiver as soon as the ball has been kicked and one that defends once the ball has been caught.

Key points

- Use running lines to hold the defence and pass away from them into the space that has been created
- Speed in support
- Quick counter attack
- Communication.

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

MODULE 3 - The relationship of the principles of attack and defence to key factor analysis

Unit one - Game knowledge

Module three - The relationship of the principles of attack and defence to key factor analysis

Contents

Learning outcome

At the conclusion of the module you will be able to analyse play, and from this analysis, develop coaching techniques to meet your team's needs.

Introduction

This module links the unsuccessful performance of a principle to the skill responsible for the lack of success, to the key factor of the skill responsible, and finally to practice activities that can be used to solve the problem.

Video activity

• Use video footage to analyse examples of episodes of play from the restart to the next stoppage. Analyse each example in two ways:

1. Identify which of the principles are performed correctly, which incorrectly and which are not applicable because play does not progress that far;

2. Focus on the principles that were performed incorrectly. For each, identify the skill that was performed incorrectly and establish which key factor was at fault.

• Devise coaching techniques and drills designed to specifically address the problems that have occurred. The solution may be achieved not only by correcting errors, but also by improving strengths. It is a matter of judgement as to what approach should be used. It will be a question of priorities, which are often determined by the practice time that is available to you. Your drills should demonstrate the correction or development of the skill. They should also follow a progression resulting in their inclusion in your team's patterns of play.

• Finally, demonstrate your drills to the rest of the group. Watch the other demonstrations and see what you can learn to use in your own coaching.

Method

Task one
Use the principles to skills worksheets that follow. Firstly, identify if the team you are analysing is in attack or in defence. For the episode of play, write down what would be the team's desired outcome at the conclusion of the episode. Take into account:

• Field position - down the field as well as across the field
• The initial source of possession - kick-off, drop out, scrum, line-out, penalty kick, free kick or mark
• Ground and weather conditions
• The score, and the minutes remaining in the game
• Anything you may know of the playing profile of each team.

Task two
Write down the ideal sequence of play that would achieve the desired outcome. Discuss with your group to achieve a consensus.

Task three
Play the episode to view the complete sequence of play. Decide if the desired outcome has been achieved from the team's point of view and if the sequence of play has followed what you had anticipated. Identify the principles that were fulfilled and those which were not. Put a tick next to principles performed successfully and a cross next to the principles performed unsuccessfully.

Task four
Identify the skills that were not performed correctly and, using the key factor chart, identify the key factor whose failure led to the incorrect performance of the skill.

Task five
Develop two skill drills that could be used to coach the players in correcting the error, the first to correct the skill and the second to include the skill into the team's pattern of play. Do not overlook the fact that by developing a skill that is already a strength, the need to address a weakness may be unnecessary. This is a matter of priorities.

Your skill drills can take any form you wish. Please ensure that you produce diagrams and an explanation of how the skill drill should be performed.

Principles to skills - episode 1

Game: vs	
Desired outcome:	
Sequence of play:	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

Which principles of play were a) performed successfully, or
b) the reasons for the team not being able to achieve their outcome?

ATTACK	✔ / ✗	DEFENCE	✔ / ✗	SKILL _____ Key factors:	✔ / ✗
1. Gain possession		1. Contest possession		1	
2. Go forward		2. Go forward		2	
3. Provide support		3. Apply pressure - tackle		3	
4. Create continuity		4. Prevent territorial gain - tackle quality		4	
5. Apply pressure		5. Provide support		5	
6. Score		6. Regain possession - turnover		6	
7. Ball lost / turnover		7. Counter attack		7	
				8	
				9	
				10	

Skill drill 1

Name of drill: . . . .

Equipment required: . . . .

Number of players and organisation *(e.g., 20 players in 4 groups of 5 players):*

. . . .

Drill Diagram:

Drill explanation:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Principles to skills - episode 2

Game:	vs
Desired outcome:	
Sequence of play:	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

Which principles of play were a) performed successfully, or
b) the reasons for the team not being able to achieve their outcome?

ATTACK	✔ / ✘	DEFENCE	✔ / ✘	SKILL _____ Key factors:	✔ / ✘
1. Gain possession		1. Contest possession		1	
2. Go forward		2. Go forward		2	
3. Provide support		3. Apply pressure - tackle		3	
4. Create continuity		4. Prevent territorial gain - tackle quality		4	
5. Apply pressure		5. Provide support		5	
6. Score		6. Regain possession - turnover		6	
7. Ball lost / turnover		7. Counter attack		7	
				8	
				9	
				10	

Skill drill 2

Name of drill: . . . .

Equipment required: . . . .

Number of players and organisation *(e.g., 20 players in 4 groups of 5 players):*

. . . .

Drill Diagram:

Drill explanation:

....

1.
....

2.
....

3.
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4.
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5.
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6.
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7.
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8.
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9.
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10.
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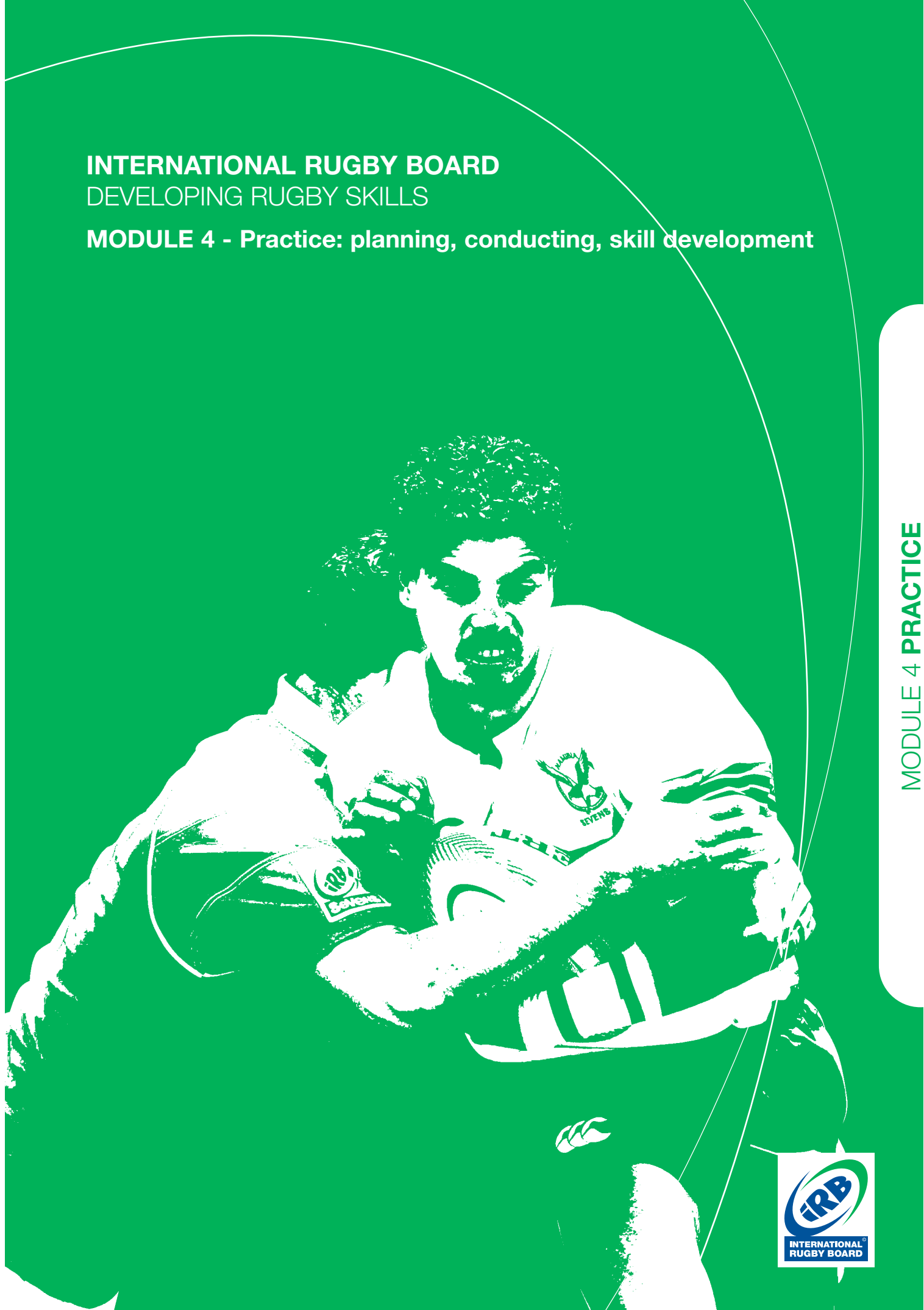
INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

MODULE 4 - Practice: planning, conducting, skill development

Unit one - Game knowledge

Module four - Practice: planning, conducting & skill development

Contents

Learning outcome

At the conclusion of this module, participants will have shown the ability to:
• apply the practice planning method explained and demonstrated in the module
• apply skill development techniques to rugby skill problems.

Activity 1 - Planning a practice

• Either individually or in groups as directed by your educator, plan a practice
  based on a selected team's strengths, weaknesses and needs.
• Use the team analysis completed in 'Module 1: The Principles of Attack and
  Defence' to demonstrate how to plan the structure and content of a practice
  session, based on the planning blueprint.
• Use the tables on the following two pages to record the details of your practice.
• Present your practice plan to the course.

PRACTICE PLAN

Areas of concern

1

2

3

Session aims

1

2

3

Equipment

Practice plan	Time	Drills / details	Coaching points & techniques
Briefing administration			
Warm up			
Individual / team skills			
Unit skills			
Mini-unit skills			
Team play			
Warm down			
De-briefing / administration			

Activity 2 - Correcting skill faults

The educator will now explain each of the skill development methods, and for one of the skill problems in the table below, will explain how to correct the fault. In groups, solve 2-3 more of the problems listed. Report back to the course on at least one of your solutions.

	Player fault
1	When weight is applied in the scrum, the player's back is bending.
2	When throwing into the line-out, the player is not throwing straight.
3	When the weight is applied in the scrum, the player's hips are moving out.
4	When catching the ball in the line-out, the player is fumbling the ball.
5	When catching the ball in the line-out, the player is falling to the ground once the ball has been caught.
6	When defending at the scrum, the player is allowing opponents to run past before trying to tackle them.
7	At the line-out, the player is being beaten to the tackle / post-tackle by the opposing number 7.
8	When the player runs from the back of the scrum, the number 8 is being driven backwards and sideways.
9	From scrums, rucks and mauls, the pass to the number 10 is weak.
10	The player is not challenging the defence, thereby allowing them to drift.
11	The player is being beaten to the high ball following opposition kicks.
12	When defending, the player is being beaten by evasive runners.
13	When being tackled, the player is losing the ball.
14	The player is having difficulty defending against faster opponents. Number 14 is standing wide so they can't run around the player, but this is not working.
15	When kicking for touch, the player is not achieving any significant distance. Frequently, the ball is sliding off the side of the boot.

Solution to problem number _____

Solution to problem number _____

Solution to problem number _____

Activity 3 - Applying the implicit - explicit continuum

1. Applied to introducing the game

The educator will now explain the implicit - explicit continuum. If you are introducing the game to a group of players new to the game, where along the continuum would you coach the following aspects of the game? Tick a box from 0 to 10 for each aspect.

'Introducing the game' progression	Implicit					Explicit				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Pass in any direction when touched.										
2. Pass or kick in any direction when touched.										
3. Pass only backwards.										
4. Replace any touch with a two handed touch on the hips and progress to the side-on tackle. Also introduce falling in the tackle.										
5. Picking up the ball.										
6. Off-side - the player who next plays the ball must have come from behind the ball carrier - the penalty kick.										
7. Recovering the ball at the tackle - the ruck.										
8. When a player is held but not tackled - the maul.										
9. What happens if the ball goes forward off the hand - the scrum.										
10. What happens when the ball goes outside the field of play - the line-out.										
11. How to start and re-start play - kick starts.										

2. Applied to meeting the needs of a team

Based on the team you are currently coaching, where along the continuum would you coach the following aspects of the game?

Meeting the team's needs	Implicit					Explicit				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. The right hand side of the scrum is not being advanced on your team's ball, cutting out options based on playing to the right.										
2. The line-out is working well - but is there anything more you can do?										
3. The back line from set pieces is not reaching the gain line.										
4. Your team's maul at the line-out is very good, but can you use this skill more often elsewhere?										
5. Players supporting laterally in attack from phase play are getting ahead of the ball carrier.										
6. Your team's low tackling is very good - but could you use it better to increase turnovers in our favour?										
7. When the back three counter attack, they are becoming isolated.										
8. Handling a wet and / or sweat covered ball.										
9. At the line-out, when the opposition contests the ball, your team is tapping back, reducing attacking options.										
10. From phase play, your defence is being penetrated because of mismatches in the line.										

Activity 4 - Understanding game sense

From a video of a match, concentrate on one episode. (An episode runs from the restart to the next stoppage.)

1. Name the situation, who is playing whom, and whether your team is attacking or defending.

Situation: _____ **vs** _____

Attack or defence? _____

2. In groups of 3-4, decide on an option for how your team should proceed and record it on the top line of the table below. The educator will then gather together the suggestions from each group. Record them on the other lines on the table below, and then the course will discuss the relative merits of each option, ranking them in order of how effective each would be.

Option - where is the space and how should we use it?	Ranking 1=Best 6=Worst
a.	
b.	
c.	
d.	
e.	
f.	

3. Based on the 'best' option, what can realistically be achieved by the next stoppage in play?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. List the reasons for setting this outcome goal.

a.	
b.	
c.	
d.	
e.	

5. The educator will now play the episode; record what actually happened.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. Analyse why the outcome you had set was not achieved in reality, separating the reasons into good ones (where the team exceeded your prediction) and bad ones (where they failed to meet your expectations).

Positive reasons (prediction exceeded)	Negative reasons (expectations not met)

7. Note the following:

a) whether the team was in attack or defence

_____

b) the principle that was performed poorly

_____

_____

c) the skill that was performed poorly

_____

_____

d) the key factor(s) that was/were not performed successfully.

_____

_____

8. Develop and perform a game sense skill drill that should lead to play being more successful.

More about practice: planning, conducting and skill development

Skill development - steps used to teach skills

Step one - setting up the practice

- Ensure that there is plenty of equipment and that it is in good condition.
- Establish routines to start the practice.
- Define a set practice area. Use cones to sub-divide it for various skill activities.
- Have a set way of gaining the players' attention. The most obvious is a whistle.
- Use both your voice and your body language to retain the player's attention.
- Have a strategy for dealing with disruptive influences.
- Use language with which your players are familiar with. Be brief and to the point.
- Position yourself such that you can be heard and that all the players can see you.
- Consider the need to adjust your practice set up to:
    - the number of players
    - the variety in the height of the players
    - weather conditions
    - potential distractions such as another team practising nearby.

Step two - introducing the skill

- Name the skill to be practised.
- Link the skill to other skills.
- Demonstrate the complete skill. Only do this yourself if you are competent to do so.
- Demonstrate each component of the skill if there are more than one.
- Demonstrate the complete skill once again.
- Explain how it will be used in a game and how it can improve team performance.
- Answer any questions your players may have.

Step three - practising the skill

- After the explanation and demonstration, have the players perform the skill within an activity. Skills can be practised in a variety of ways. Of course, they have to be practised many times before they become second nature. By varying the activity, boredom will be less likely to occur, even though the skill being practised will be the same.
- Maintain the flow of the practice by:
    - being aware of the players' level of readiness
    - stopping to correct major faults (especially if there is the risk of injury)
    - slowing down the activity if the pace is creating problems
    - dividing the skill up into stages
    - correcting common faults before correcting those specific to the individual
    - allowing the activity to continue. Many problems will work themselves out as the players become more aware of what exactly they need to do to perform the skill successfully.

Pre-planning

Know the players

Through knowing the players as individuals, you will be able to make the most of their talents as their coach. Part of getting to know the players is understanding the mental and physical abilities of players at a particular age, so that you are able to appreciate the efforts they are making to develop their skills.

When players become fatigued, as they will do in games and practice sessions, you should guide them sensibly so that they are able to cope while still enjoying playing the game. This will result, eventually, in players being able to make a contribution in terms of how they feel practice should be conducted, how their games should be played.

Step four - providing feedback to correct errors

• Correct areas that threaten safety immediately.
• Correct other major errors once the players have become familiar with the dynamics of the activity.
• Correct one error at a time.
• Correct those that come earliest in the sequence of actions first.
• Explain the correction that is needed by commending the players on what they are doing well and then explaining how they could improve other aspects of the practice.
• Test player understanding by asking open questions before allowing the activity to continue.
• Remember that many corrections can be made without stopping the activity.

The ten principles of a skills practice

1. Practice the skill in a game-like situation as soon as your players are able to do so.
2. The time devoted to learning a new skill should be short and frequent.
3. Every player should work on the common range of skills throughout the practice.
4. Maximise the use of available equipment and facilities.
5. Players should feel they have made progress at the conclusion of a practice.
6. Create an environment in which players are not afraid to make mistakes.
7. Encourage player input and feedback depending on their experience and maturity.
8. Practices are for team and player improvement.
9. Ensure players use their weaker side - most people are right-handed.
10. Make practices enjoyable.

The principles of effective practice planning

Physical preparation

• Coaches should understand the general principles of fitness and encourage players to regard these as the basis of a lifetime fitness habit.
• The fitness programme should be divided into three periods:
    - off season
    - pre-season
    - in-season.
• As players mature, the fitness sessions can increase in duration and the fitness can be specific to positional and player needs.
• The main variables that must be considered when developing a fitness programme are:
    - player maturity
    - body type, height and weight
    - positional requirements
    - level of play
    - a player's initial physical condition.

Correcting faults

Step one
Observe what is happening.

Step two
Identify the areas where mistakes are occurring.

Step three
Divide the play into its separate components.

Step four
Sequence these through the play and focus on those that occur first.

Step five
Isolate these components and devise a skill activity that will practise the component with which the players are having difficulty.

Step six
Go back to the stage in the practice in which this skill was needed and practise the skill in context. As the activity continues, be precise and direct when instructing, focusing on how the skill should be performed.

- The main components of a fitness programme are:
  - aerobic fitness / stamina
  - anaerobic fitness / interval training
  - strength
  - speed
  - agility
  - flexibility
  - power - strength and speed.

Mental preparation

- Get to know your players by:
  - individual conversations
  - team meetings
  - speaking to the players family and peers
  - becoming familiar with the psychological make-up of the age groups you coach.
- Know why players participate in rugby. Different player motivations require different actions from you the coach.

Reason for participating	What is needed from you
To have fun	• Make practices and games enjoyable • Maximise player participation
To improve their skills and acquire new ones	• Balance explanation (5-10%), demonstration (10-25%), and practice (65-85%) • Demonstrations must be successfully and competently performed • Provide feedback without upsetting the rhythm of the practice • Give instruction to everyone not just the highly skilled • Set performance goals to which players can aspire
To meet and play with friends	• Offer free time in which the players can organise activities for themselves. • Create and build team spirit by planning social occasions
To play an exciting and enjoyable game	• Try to be innovative to maintain excitement • Invite 'guest' coaches • Using a range of activities to achieve a goal
To succeed and win games	• Keep winning in perspective. For each winning team, there's a losing one. Sometimes that will be you • Emphasise performance and not outcome goals for both the team and each individual player
To get fit	• Participation in games will not increase fitness • Fitness is the key to enjoyment. Unfit players will feel tired and will not be able to perform skills satisfactorily

Practice planning

Base the aim on the team's performance, not on the outcome. By doing this the focus will be on how the players play, their skills and decisions. These are the aspects that you, personally, as coach, have the power to develop in a positive way. Through your team performing as successfully as it can, the team's outcome goals will see the same improvement.

Prioritise what you need to cover so that the most important needs are met. Do not try and cover everything. You won't have sufficient time to do everything as comprehensively as you would like.

It can be better to treat the entire practice time between two games as one single block of time, and plan the practice as if it is one long one instead of two shorter ones.

The allocation of time is flexible. It is getting the job done that counts. Time allocation should reflect priorities and the quality of the practice. Don't move on if the improvement that can be reasonably expected at a certain time is not observed.

A perfect practice probably means that there is insufficient opposition. It will lead to artificial confidence that will result in a lack of success in a game. Remember that rugby is an imperfect sport as the contest between two teams for one ball can never be duplicated in a game as it is practised, as there are too many variables. It is better to sequence play together at practice as it occurs in a game and to teach players how to adapt to the ever changing situations with which they are faced. By players getting better at making decisions and adapting to what is happening in front of them you are doing what is best for them.

Practices are learning experiences in which pressure results in errors being made. Players learn from these errors. It is better to start from a single skill and to then sequence that skill into a range of skills in play. In this way the players will be practising as they play. Sequencing and variety create functionality that will achieve the game plan.

Another option is the whole-part-whole approach, which starts with a game in which faults are identified, progresses to a practice which addresses those faults, and then moves back to a game in which the corrected skill can be implemented.

Activities should simulate the team's play. Borrowed activities should only be used if they are going to address your team's needs. Activities are a means to an end - not an end in themselves.

The practice structure

Briefing and administration

Ensure that the logistics of the practice are explained. Amongst these items are:
• balls, cones, tackle bags and other items of equipment
• time, place and the duration of the practice
• practice objectives and structure
• standards of behaviour, code of conduct and player organisation procedures.

Coach's motivation checklist

- *Be positive.*
- *Understand the effects of competitive stress in players and learn to direct it positively.*
- *Control arousal. If over-arousal does occur, learn how to cope with it.*
- *Know your players' individual needs.*
- *Emphasise that doing as well as you can is as much as can be asked.*
- *Reduce uncertainty as much as possible.*
- *Demonstrate your own and emphasise player self-control.*

Warm up (5-10 minutes)

For between five and ten minutes, the players should 'sweat-up', raising their body temperature, stretching out and practising simple skill activities that reflect their needs. Progressively increase the pace of the activities so that the players are warmed up and ready for a suitably intensive practice.

Individual skills (15-25 minutes)

The individual skills are:
• handling
• running and evasion
• tackling and falling in the tackle
• falling
• kicking
• contact skills and body position.

Progress from the simple to the more complex. Concentrate on the skills players are least likely to perform in their own play. This particularly applies to the use of the weaker side of the body. For most players this is the left side. Increase the intensity of practice by reducing recovery time, increasing the duration of each player's 'turn' and increasing the speed and distance of each 'turn'.

Unit skills (10-20 minutes)

• Forwards - scrummaging and line-out play
• Backs - attack and defence.

Mini-unit skills (10-20 minutes)

• Phase play - rucks and mauls
• Attack and defence following phase play
• Support play in attack and defence
• Kick–offs, 22m drop-outs, penalty kicks and free kicks.

Team play (10-20 minutes)

As a team, practice how the team will play in games both in attack and defence, i.e., the patterns to which the team will play. The team practice should reinforce the performance of the skills.

Warm down (5-10 minutes)

• Reduce the level of intensity
• Stretch to assist in recovery
• Use ball skills while warming down

Debriefing

Meet with other members of the team's management and, should they be mature enough to contribute, the players themselves for a few minutes to invite feedback on the practice session.

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

MODULE 5 - Risk management and ethics

Unit two - Planning

Module five: Risk management and ethics

Contents

Learning outcome

By the conclusion of this module, you will have demonstrated a basic understanding of first aid so that you are able to recognise types of injury and the appropriate primary responses in treating them.

Activity - risk management and ethics scenarios

In groups, discuss the following scenarios and decide how you would tackle each situation.

1. An 'ugly' parent, who is a regular attendant at your team's games, continually abuses the opposing team and their supporters, upsetting everyone.

2. Another 'ugly' parent thinks their child is a future international player and is by far the best player in the team, but this is not, in your opinion, the case. This behaviour upsets you and prevents you from coaching to the best of your ability.

3. You arrive at a ground to find the surface uneven and no pads on the goal-posts. You consider that these factors pose an injury risk for your players.

4. A very good girl is being cut out of play by the boys in your mixed gender team in which there are three other girls.

5. Your key midfield back has sprained an ankle in a club game four days prior to a 'big' inter-school game. The available replacement is much inferior, but treatment and strapping will not only result in the midfield back playing below standard, but may also risk longer term damage to the ankle.

6. Your assistant coach likes to be Mr. Good-Guy and has taken it upon himself to be the hub of the team's social life. This involves too much alcohol in your view, but the rapport that is developing with the players is making them very loyal to him. The behaviour is affecting the performance of the team in your view and that of the club captain.

7. The referee for today's game is a top referee who is used to refereeing adult rugby. You are coaching an under 19 team. From the start of the game the opposing team is playing to international law at the scrum, and your team is losing possession and the scrum is breaking down. The referee seems to be unaware of the laws at this level.

Rugby coaches are in charge of a sport which involves physical contact. Any sport involving physical contact has inherent dangers. It is important to use the referee's authority in order to ensure that the game is played within the laws, and as safely as possible.

It is important that coaches train players in techniques which reduce the risk of injury upon contact, encourage players to play within the law as safely as possible with a spirit of fair play, and to fully respect the referee's decisions. Coaches have a duty to coach players in the best techniques both to be effective in the game and to reduce the likelihood of injury. This section of the module examines the legal duties of the coach, standard of care and risk and safety management strategies including injury management.

The coach and the law

Coaches can be liable for injuries resulting from their negligent conduct. This section will examine how the possibility of liability arises, and the standards of conduct that are expected of coaches.

The legal duty of the coach
Coaches have a duty to teach players safe technique, so as to reduce the likelihood of injury. If a rugby coach were to ask, "Who is likely to be injured if I fail to exercise reasonable care in the performance of my duties?" The answer is obvious - the players. Coaches undeniably owe a duty of care to the players under their control.

The standard of care
Coaches do not risk legal liability just because a player on their team is injured in a game or practice. Before a coach can be held liable in negligence, a court must find that the coach's conduct fell below the standard that should reasonably be expected and that it caused the injury that occurred. In the area of coaching liability, the courts have set out the expected standard of care - with language varying according to the status of the coach.

The main distinction to be made is between the school rugby coach and the coach who works with players outside of the school context. As far as school coaches are concerned, the duty of a coach is to exercise supervision in the manner that would be expected of a prudent and careful parent.

The standard of care expected of coaches outside the school context is not as high as that of careful or prudent parent, but it is still exacting. The test for legal liability is whether the coach acted in accordance with the ordinary skill and care of a selector / coach in the game in question. The coach should act in accordance with the laws of the game. If this is done the coach would not be found negligent. This, therefore, is the standard that must be met by a volunteer coach.

Risk and safety management strategies
Procedures and practices that are designed to ensure a reasonable standard of conduct and to protect the coach against litigation are referred to as 'risk management', a term that also includes procedures and practices that respect the rights of athletes.

'Safety management' is a narrower concept and refers to common sense procedures and practices designed to protect players from harm and injury. The rather open-ended test requiring the use of reasonable care and skill by a coach emphasises that there are situations in which coaches can be held liable for their conduct.

Rugby coaches can implement a number of strategies both in order to minimise the risk of injury or harm to players and also to reduce the risk of litigation to themselves.

Physical facilities
It is important that players practise and play in an area free of hazards. In particular:
• Posts must be padded
• If flag posts are used to mark the field, they must be made of a flexible material so as not to cause injury upon contact and be properly placed in accordance with the laws of the game
• If a significant number of spectators is likely to be in attendance, the fields must be roped and the rope must separate the spectators from the touch-lines and in-goal areas
• Obstacles such as light standards, which are within the immediate vicinity of the field, must be padded
• Sprinkler heads must be recessed and flush with the playing surface
• Adjacent hard surfaces should be adequately covered
• The surface must be as level as could be expected and there must be no holes in the surface or objects protruding
• Scrum machines should be checked annually for potential hazards.

Coaching specific skills

Scrum
The following suggestions emphasise that players in the scrum should be taught good technique and understand the laws that relate to the front row. Front row players are vulnerable to the possibility of cervical spine injuries upon scrum engagement. Accordingly, in coaching front row play, the coach should address the following factors:
• Check that players have the appropriate body type and physical characteristics for their positions
• Check that players are appropriately matched, even in practice situations
• When binding against opposition, the props should be coached to keep their shoulders above the level of their hips
• Coaches should know the law variations for players under 19 years of age, especially the law variations relating to the limits on the 'push', the number of players in the scrum and provisions for the substitution of players in the scrum.

Tackle
In teaching tackling, the coach should:
• emphasise that the head is placed to the side when tackling from the front or back, or behind when tackling from the side
• encourage the tackler to tackle with the shoulder and not the head
• practise tackling technique at every practice so that it becomes as commonly performed skill as all the other skills
• develop practices that proceed from low to high intensity
• check that the players understand the key factors in tackling
• discourage illegal and dangerous tackling.

Ruck and maul
All players are required to ruck and maul and should have the opportunities to develop and practice these skills. Coaches should:
• emphasise correct body position, in which the back is flat and parallel with the ground and the chin is away from the chest and contact is made with the shoulder
• discourage players from techniques which tend to cause the chin to drop to the chest and place the player in a vulnerable position
• progress from low to high intensity and, during the progression, pay attention to body position as players approach and enter the ruck or maul.

Injury management

Despite the implementation of safety management strategies, injuries inevitably occur in an intense contact sport. It is important for coaches and management to have a basic knowledge of how to respond to injuries and to know the procedure for dealing with serious injuries. In many situations, these responsibilities are those of the coach. Four factors of injury management in particular require close attention:

Emergency action plan
Each club or team should have an Emergency Action Plan. This should be clearly posted and should include important telephone numbers.

The coach should carefully plan practices. The practice should follow a progression especially when coaching contact skills. Practices should be documented and indicate the overall structure, objectives, and an outline of the activities that were covered. Regularly remind players and reinforce the performance of the correct technique.

Concussion, spine and neck injuries

Coaches should have a basic understanding of how to respond to serious and life threatening injuries, including in particular, cervical spine and neck injuries and concussion. In particular, coaches should scrupulously follow the resolution of the International Rugby Board which states:

"A player who has suffered a definite concussion should not participate in any match or training session for a period of at least three weeks from the time of injury, and then only subject to being cleared by a neurological examination."

Bleeding wounds

There is a low risk of transmission of hepatitis or HIV when a player who is infected has a bleeding wound or a skin lesion with 'exudate' (weeping) comes into direct contact with another player who has a skin lesion or exposed mucous membrane. To conform with the safety advice of the IRB, all coaches must be aware of the following directive:

"When a player is injured in such a way that bleeding results, it is the responsibility of his or her club, school, or team management to arrange treatment so as to stop the bleeding and cover the wound. Failure to comply will result in the referee applying the provision which states that the referee may '...require the player to leave the field to be examined medically.'"

Skin infections

Scrum pox, herpes simplex, impetigo, or any pus-producing skin lesions are very infectious and readily transmitted through direct contact between a lesion on the infected player and a lesion or abrasion on another player. Follow this guideline:

"All players contracting cutaneous infective lesions must be seen or treated by a doctor and will not be allowed to play until cleared by a proper medical examination."

Injury prevention

Players should be physically fit to play rugby, and coaches should take the necessary precautions to avoid injuries and, where appropriate, heat stress, dehydration and hypothermia.

Strength training

Players should be encouraged to undertake fitness programs that are appropriate to the positions in which they play. Young players should not lift weights that are going to cause joint damage, though they can practice sound technique with weights with which they are comfortable.

Aerobic fitness

Coaches should encourage players to develop good levels of aerobic fitness to offset the effects of fatigue and reduce the risks of injury.

Stretching and warm-up

Players should be advised to complete a thorough warm-up and slow stretching program prior to and after games and practices.

Mouth guards

Under 19 players in some unions are instructed to wear a specially made and fitted mouth guard during games and practices. Adult players should be encouraged to wear mouth guards.

Hydration
Coaches should ensure that an adequate supply of water is available to players before, during and after games and practices, especially during hot weather.

Spirit of the game
The safety of players is heavily dependent upon the spirit in which players actually play the game. Coaches should encourage players to know the laws and play within them. They should actively discourage foul play, if necessary, by refusing to select players who have been found guilty of repeated foul play. The attitude imparted to players in practice and during pre-match talks should not encourage foul play or disregard for the laws.

Coaches may wish to develop fair play agreements and codes of conduct for themselves and their players.

Risk transfer

Coaches should be aware of the opportunities that are available to reduce risk and in particular, should take steps to:
• become accredited
• continue to develop their skills through subsequent certification and coaching courses
• check with a club or union for the existence of liability insurance
• explore through their local union the use of waiver forms.

Transportation
If coaches are responsible for organising the transportation of players they should:
• avoid drivers who have a known poor driving record
• in the case of bus or mini-bus transportation, verify that drivers have a licence appropriate to the vehicle
• take reasonable care in making all transportation arrangements.

Players' rights
The players have the right to competent coaching, adequate supervision and a safe and properly maintained practice and game environment. The players have the right to a fair process in the case of selection. Coaches must:
• Establish selection policies
• Develop the criteria for selection
• Ensure a fair selection process and inform players of their status, strengths, weaknesses.

Injury logistics

For serious injuries ensure you should know:
• *where the club stretcher is kept*
• *how to contact the emergency services*
• *where road access is available for the services*
• *how to complete a serious injury report.*

Types of injuries

Soft tissue injury

Because of the soft nature of developing tissues, young players are more susceptible to bone and muscle injury. Care must be taken not to overtrain these players.

Soft tissue injuries include sprains, strains, bruises, abrasions and cuts. These involve damage to muscles, tendons, ligaments and joints. Injury to soft tissue can cause bleeding into the damaged area. Blood and other fluids collect in the area, leading to the swelling and bruising often seen with such injuries. The amount of blood and fluid entering the area is related to the amount of damage incurred and determines the healing time. It is most important to stop the bleeding s soon as possible, limiting the amount of swelling, pain and loss of function. Care must be taken to prevent any infection.

Bleeding

Make sure that the law regarding bleeding cuts and wounds is complied with. A player who is bleeding must leave the field and be attended to immediately. That player may return to the field once the bleeding is controlled and the wound is cleaned and covered. The player may be replaced temporarily. If the player is unable to return, the replacement becomes permanent.

Treatment
• Apply pressure to the wound
• Protect yourself and others from contact with blood
• Raise the affected body part so that it is above the heart if possible.

Haemorrhage (haematoma)

The rupture or tearing of soft tissue is associated with most sports injuries. This rupture of tissue involves blood vessels, leading to blood leaking into and around the site of injury (called haemorrhage). This is recognisable by the swelling and discolouration of the area.

Stage 1, acute (0-24 hours)
This is the time immediately following the injury which lasts until all bleeding has stopped, usually 0-24 hours, although appropriate injury management can reduce this time period considerably.

Stage 2, middle stage (24-48 hours)
This is the stage when haemorrhaging has ceased, but the injury is still susceptible to bleeding restarting. If the acute stage is shortened, then the middle stage will also be shorter. If proper procedures are not followed there is a danger of the injury returning to the first stage.

Recognition of injury

There is no simple method of distinguishing between a severe and a less severe injury. A means of recognising an injury is the disabling effect it has, e.g., if weight cannot be borne on an injured limb or performance is impaired. A minor injury can become serious if it is not attended to. It is better to err on the side of caution. It is important to remember that regardless of any other factors, e.g., the importance of the match, the player's welfare must come first.

Stage 3, final stage (48 hours)
This is when bleeding has ceased and there is little chance of it restarting. At this time therapeutic care can greatly enhance recovery. Healing in the form of soft scar tissue occurs gradually during this stage.

Fractures & dislocations

If a fracture or dislocation is suspected the player should leave the field. Before removing the player take the appropriate action to immobilise the injured area. If a neck or spinal injury is suspected the player should not be moved except by a qualified medical person. Broken arms are immobilised by bandaging the arm to the torso. Broken legs are immobilised by bandaging the affected leg to the good leg above and below the injured area. In all cases, seek qualified medical assistance immediately.

If a fracture or dislocation is suspected
- The injured limb should be supported with a splint, while the player is lifted onto a stretcher or helped from the field.
- X-rays to confirm the diagnosis are essential and should be performed as soon as possible.
- If the fracture is found to be compound (bony fragments protruding through the skin) the area should be covered with a clean towel while waiting for the ambulance.
- The player should not consume food or drink until cleared by a doctor just in case a general anaesthetic is required.

Head injuries

If a tooth is knocked out

The tooth should be replaced immediately in its socket (if it has become dirty, wash it first with milk) with aluminium foil moulded over the replaced tooth and its adjacent teeth. The player should then seek immediate dental advice.

All other head injuries are serious and must be treated by a medical practitioner. Concussion and skull fracture can be fatal if left untreated or treated incorrectly.

If a player is unconscious

- Always suspect an associated spinal fracture.
- If respiratory arrest occurs, Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) should be performed.
- **Call an ambulance.**
- Determine the manner in which the injury occurred, and determine if there is sensory or power loss.
- If there is no one experienced in the management of this problem, **the player should not be moved.**
- Ensure the player is kept sufficiently warm.

Care of soft tissue injuries

Sprains and bruising can be treated using the method known as PRICED:

P *prevention*
R *rest*
I *ice*
C *compression*
E *elevation*
D *diagnosis*

- ***Prevent*** *further injury by ceasing activity as soon as injury occurs i.e. **rest**.*
- *Place crushed **ice** in damp towel.*
- *Apply for 20 minutes - if skin is sensitive, apply oil to avoid burning.*
- *Use a **compression** bandage to hold the ice pack in place and **elevate** the limb.*
- *After 20 minutes remove ice pack and apply a **compression** bandage.*
- *Keep the limb **elevated**, on a stool or cushions, between ice treatments.*
- *Repeat the **ice** treatment and **compression** bandage every four hours for first 24 hours.*
- *After 24 hours exercise gently and follow with ice treatment.*
- *If there is no improvement in two days, consult a doctor.*

Concussion

Concussion occurs when, after a blow to the head, there is brain injury with some immediate disturbances to cerebral function.

Signs and symptoms
• Confusion and disorientation
• Loss of consciousness
• Loss of memory
• Double vision
• Giddiness or unsteadiness
• Vomiting.

A player showing any of these signs or symptoms should be removed from the field and referred for medical attention.

Prolonged loss of consciousness as a result of a blow to the head may be indicative of a more serious injury, so the player should be immediately referred to a hospital for further attention. Players who suffer from a brief loss of consciousness should be removed from the game for immediate medical assessment.

Head or neck injury

Ensure that the protocols for major catastrophic injury are complied with. If it is suspected that a player has a neck or spinal injury:
• do not move the player at all
• if there is not trained medical professional in attendance, get someone to call one
• contact the emergency services
• stay with the player and keep them warm until trained professional assistance arrives.

Internal injuries

These often go undetected as the symptoms are not easily recognised. As a general rule a change of bodily function can serve as a guide e.g. nausea, severe and persistent abdominal pain, or blood in the urine. Seek immediate medical treatment from a medical practitioner.

Other health problems

Colds and influenza

Strenuous activity soon after recovery can result in a relapse the player being out of the game longer than initially. Infection can easily spread throughout the team.

Dehydration

Coaches should ensure that an adequate supply of water is available for players at training and during games. To prevent infectious diseases players should bring their own, named water bottles to the game.

WARNING

Potentially serious complications may occur in the 24 hours after a seemingly slight head injury. Accordingly, deterioration of consciousness after apparent recovery or the onset of symptoms such as headaches, increasing drowsiness, blurred vision and vomiting, require immediate medical assessment.

Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation

If you have been trained in CPR remember the Dr ABC Rule:

D *danger*
R *response*
A *airway*
B *breathing*
C *circulation*

At the first indication of heat exhaustion or hypothermia the player should:
• stop play
• seek shade
• replace lost fluids with appropriate drinks.

Cold exhaustion (hypothermia)

At the first sign of cold effecting a player, the player should:
• stop play
• warm up with blankets and warm clothing indoors
• have a warm drink.

Medical requirements for player care

The following are the minimum recommended requirements for unions and clubs:

• Each union or club should have a medically trained person in attendance at each match.
• At least one stretcher that is suitable for the transfer of suspected spinal injuries, preferably a scoop stretcher. A set of cervical collars of varying sizes must also be available.
• Access to a medical room, which is regularly cleaned, equipped with adequate lighting, running water, first aid equipment and telephone.
• A sign should be erected noting the emergency telephone numbers of your union or club doctor, ambulance and nearest hospital.
• The medical officer should ensure that appropriate items of first aid equipment are available.
• Appropriate safety instruction for referees, coaches and first aid attendants.

Prompt medical advice (usually at an accident and emergency department of a local hospital) should be obtained if:
• unconsciousness, persistent headache, vomiting, or nausea occurs after a blow to the head, or a concussion injury
• breathing difficulties occur after and injury to the head, neck or chest
• severe pains in the neck occur, particularly if radiating to the arms
• abdominal pains occur, particularly if associated with shoulder tip pain
• blood is present in the urine
• an eye injury occurs
• if a player collapses separate to any trauma
• there is any concern over a player's injury or health following training or a match.

The club's responsibility

• Send a team or club official with the ambulance and notify the parents or spouse of the injured player.
• Call the National Union Serious Injury Hotline if there is one.
• Do not talk with the media until the club has been contacted by the Serious Injury Case Manager.
• The National Union in conjunction with the club, will proceed with the Serious Injury Management Protocol.

Elements of a first aid kit

All teams should have a basic first aid kit containing the following items:

• *dressing strip*
• *first aid scissors*
• *skin closures*
• *aspirin*
• *compression bandages*
• *antiseptic swabs*
• *triangular bandage*
• *eye bath*
• *sterile pads*
• *forceps*
• *sticking plaster*
• *A&E pack*
• *safety pins*
• *first aid box*
• *Ice and ice bucket*
• *Water*
• *Rubber gloves*
• *Paper towels / tissues*
• *Towel*
• *Antiseptic cream and antiseptic solution.*

In addition, the first aid room must be equipped with:

• *stretcher*
• *neck brace*
• *special stretcher for moving players with suspected neck and back injuries*
• *Emergency telephone numbers.*

Coaching ethics

Dealing with players

The coach must:
• make reasonable demands on the players time as rugby will not be their only commitment
• teach players to comply with the laws of the game
• be impartial in the treatment of players giving each player an equal opportunity to participate and excel
• ensure that players who are not selected are the first to know.
• follow the advice of informed, medical professionals regarding player injury and illness at all times
• be positive in disciplining players offering constructive criticism that is task oriented, never personal.

Safety issues

Coach responsibilities
Before a player plays rugby the club or school should organise sessions to physically prepare the player for the contact aspects of rugby. It is recommended that players practise for a minimum of four one-hour sessions prior to playing a game.

In these training sessions the coach should concentrate on the contact aspects of the game including:
• tackling
• falling to the ground
• scrummaging
• catching the ball when it has been kicked
• body position in contact situations including rucks and mauls.

Duty of care
A coach is required not only to exercise 'reasonable care', but to also be of the standard of competence expected from a person coaching at this level. For coaches to be of this standard they must carry out at least ten important duties when conducting a coaching session.

These duties are:

1. To provide a safe environment.
2. To adequately plan activities.
3. To evaluated participants for injury and incapacity.
4. To make sure participants are not miss-matched in competition.
5. To provide safe and proper equipment.
6. To warn participants of rugby's inherent risks.
7. To closely supervise activities.
8. To know how to administer first aid.
9. To develop clear, written rules for training and general conduct.
10. To keep adequate records.

Personal standards

The coach must set a good example in all aspects of life. Minor things such as punctuality are just as important as having high personal standards. You must keep your own counsel and must not discuss issues with those who are not directly involved.

The team

• *The coach must be inclusive in developing team policies while at the same time ensuring that all know that the final say is with the coach.*
• *The coach must set realistic aims for players and the team.*
• *The coach must ensure that the team practices and plays in as safe and enjoyable an environment as possible given that rugby is a contact sport.*

Protective clothing and equipment

To make rugby a safer sport the following equipment is recommended:

• mouth-guards
• hit shields
• padded goal posts
• flexible non-rigid corner flags
• scrum machines in good working order
• rope and supports used to keep spectators back from the field of play. These should be far enough back so that players do not make contact should play spill over the touch-line.

The following items of clothing can be worn but are optional:

• shoulder pads, provided they are made from soft, thin material that is no thicker than 1cm when compressed and is incorporated into an undergarment and covers the shoulder and collar bone (in addition, shoulder pads worn by female players may cover the chest area)
• shin pads, worn under the socks with padding incorporated, in non-rigid fabric, no thicker than 0.5cm when compressed
• headgear made of soft and thin material provided the headgear is no thicker than 1cm when compressed. Headgear does not prevent concussion, but can reduce cuts and abrasions.

Safety in play

Scrums
Ensure that:
• the scrum engagement sequence is understood, practiced, performed and refereed correctly
• the body types of players in the front row is of the endomorph body type, i.e., short, squat and strongly built
• front row players have an exercise and fitness programme that will prepare them for their specialised scrummaging role.
• players practise the safety skills for use if the scrum collapses

In the event of a front row forward being ordered off, the referee will confer with the captain of the team to determine whether another player is suitably trained and experienced to take the vacant position; if not, the captain shall nominate one other forward to leave the playing area and the referee will permit a substitute front row forward as a replacement. This may take place immediately or after another front row player has been tried in the position. When no other front row forwards are available due to a sequence of players ordered off or injured or both, the game will continue with non contested scrums, defined as:

"A normal scrum except there is no contest for the ball, neither team is permitted to push, the team putting in must win it, the referee must take additional care to ensure a soft engagement".

Foul play

Coaches and referees should be severe on players who engage in foul play or in any form of retaliation. Players who repeatedly infringe should be made to stand down by the coach.

Team selection

Coaches are requested not to select players who have been found guilty of repeated illegal or foul play. Touch judges shall report incidents of foul play under law 10.4.

The flying wedge and the cavalry charge

The formations generally described as the 'flying wedge' and 'cavalry charge' are to be regarded as dangerous play and accordingly shall be penalised under law 10.4.

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

MODULE 6 - The role of the coach

Unit three - Management

Module six - The role of the coach

Contents

The ethics of coaching

Increasingly, sporting and educational circles have become aware that the enjoyment and fulfilment of children's involvement in sport has required their total participation.

It is important that the rugby coach taps into this willingness to participate. The coach provides the controlled environment within which the participation of the players - physically, emotionally, and mentally - can be made.

A code of ethics for the coach must be explicitly stated. This checklist of attitudes and methods of involvement provides a means by which coaches can judge their contribution to the team and to the player.

The coach's code of ethics in detail

1. Be impartial in the treatment of players
Don't concentrate on the better players. The less able need at least equal time, if not more time. Use the more able players to coach the less able players. Have a team pattern or try to play in a way that allows all players to use the skills they have been practising. Don't talk about players behind their backs to other players.

2. Lead by example
This example must be set in many areas. Some of these areas are:
• Have respect for the laws. Teach the players that these are mutual agreements, which no one should erode or break.
• Have respect for opponents, as without them there is no game.
• Have respect for officials, especially referees for whom refereeing is their recreation and from which they have a right to derive enjoyment.
• Appear as a fit, clean, well-mannered adult.
• Be punctual, well prepared, 'on the ball' and constructive.

The coach's code of ethics

The coach must:

• *be impartial in the treatment of players*

• *lead by example*

• *positively reinforce the actions of players*

• *involve players in the making of team decisions*

• *set realistic aims for the team and its players*

• *be open-minded in treatment of players and attitude towards the game*

• *be thorough, knowledgeable and effective in coaching methods*

• *be honest with self and players*

• *follow informed, professional, medical advice at all items*

• *create an enjoyable environment in which to play the game.*

Remember that rugby should be regarded as an element of a life-long fitness habit and in order for this to apply, the experience must be constructive and enjoyable. It is by setting a good example that respect is gained and a rapport that leads to a very effective coaching environment is established. It is hard to gain and easily lost.

3. Positively reinforce the actions of players
Criticism must be positive, sandwiched between praise for things done well and suggested improvements for things not done so well. You should suggest ways of improving techniques and suggest alternatives for doing something in a different and more effective way.

Praise must fit the occasion and while this may be difficult to judge, a general rule is to constantly reinforce good activity. Players who believe they are being successful will progress rapidly.

4. Involve players in the making of team decisions
This will depend largely on the maturity of players. In general, young players should be encouraged to be a part of some of the decisions being made. This involvement must be controlled and can easily be a part of practice sessions, e.g., asking for feedback at the end of each practice. To obtain useful feedback you must be prepared to listen, but players must understand that you have the final say.

5. Set realistic aims for the team and its players
Remember that playing rugby is just one of the demands being made on the players' time and the aims set for the player and the team must reflect this. Aims should be achievable and not based on results, but on the acquisition of techniques and skills by the player and the team.

Aims should be explicit and specific and may be worked out in conjunction with players. All must know these aims and if they are worked out with the players, they will feel committed to them.

With very young players attempting to work towards a single goal is a worthwhile exercise. Implied in this is that the aims and objectives must reflect the character of the team and not an ideal 'dream' team.

6. Be open-minded in treatment of players and attitude towards the game
This involves being a good listener, listening to successes as well as problems. Listening must be practised. It is often not what is said directly, but what is behind the words, that is most important.

You must endeavour to keep up with developments in the game and use these to improve the performance of their players. Your aim is to pass the player on to the next level as a competent player.

7. Be thorough, knowledgeable and effective in coaching methods
Make sure that equipment and facilities are in sufficient quantity, in good condition and are appropriate to the age and ability of the players. Practices should be as frequent and as long as the maturity of players allows. It is better to have a short, sharp, enjoyable practice than one that drags on and puts strain on the concentration span of players.

During a practice, follow these simple procedures:
• Work from the known skills to the new skills.
• Work from the simple to the complex.
• Work from the individual; to the pair; to the group; to the team.
• Divide activities and techniques into a series of simple stages.
• Make sure your instructions are simply expressed, specific and not too long.
• Correct faults but balance this against maintaining continuity in the practice.

If players are to retain what they have learned and use it in the game, the playing environment must be relatively free from tension. If a degree of tension does exist, as it will before a game, you must avoid the temptation to give the last little 'gems' of advice.

8. Be honest with yourself and your players
Realise that if you tell the truth always, you will not fall into the traps that inconsistencies can create.

9. Follow informed, professional medical advice at all times
When coaching maturing players, a player's physical welfare is more important than the success of the team. It is not worth aggravating an injury to achieve short term success. This applies particularly to head and joint injuries, as damage to these vulnerable areas can have long term effects. You must know what is safe and effective, and have a knowledge of first aid. A side-line first aid kit should be provided by the club.

10. Create an enjoyable environment in which to play the game
While children want to have fun, as players mature, enjoyment can be gained by successfully performing the skills of the game. If they are done successfully, success on the scoreboard will result, but the first emphasis should be on skill development. Children are not small adults. They are individual people in their own right at a different stage of development.

Responsibilities of the coach

A coach should be each and several of the following at any one time:

• *a leader*
• *a manager and administrator with good organisational skills*
• *a social worker, counselling and advising*
• *a friend, supporting and sustaining*
• *a trainer, improving fitness*
• *a teacher, imparting new skills and knowledge and developing positive attitudes towards the game*
• *a student, willing to listen and learn*
• *a setter of standards determining a system of recognition and correction.*

A coach also needs to have a knowledge of:

• *the game and its laws*
• *practice techniques and skills*
• *motivation*
• *physical fitness.*

Fair play codes

Fair play codes exist to:
• return the elements of enjoyment and satisfaction to the young player.
• make adults aware that young players play for their own satisfaction and not necessarily for that of their peers, nor of adults.
• improve physical fitness by encouraging participation by making the game attractive, safe and enjoyable.

Parents' code
1. Do not force an unwilling child to play rugby.
2. Children are involved for their own enjoyment not yours.
3. Ensure your child plays within the laws of the game.
4. Teach your child that honesty is more important than victory, so that the result of the game without undue disappointment.
5. Emphasis skill improvement and good sportsmanship, more than winning. Never ridicule your child for making a mistake.
6. Applaud the good play of others. Children learn best by example.
7. Do not question the referee's judgement and never their honesty.
8. Support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from the game.
9. Recognise the value and importance of volunteer coaches.

Teachers' code
1. Develop basic skills and avoid positional specialisation in the formative year.
2. Create opportunities to teach sportsmanship in the same way as you would teach basic skills.
3. Reward skill improvement and sportsmanship with praise.
4. Be reasonable in your demands of players' enjoyment and enthusiasm.
5. Ensure that skill learning and free play, involving the implicit coaching of rugby, have priority over highly structured competitions.
6. Make a personal commitment to keep informed of sound coaching principles and developments.
7. Help players understand the differences between the game they play and the adult game shown on television.
8. Help children understand the responsibilities and implications of the freedom to choose between fair and unfair play.
9. Make children aware of the physical fitness values of rugby and its life-long recreational value.

Referees' code
1. Modify the laws to match the player's skill level.
2. Use common sense to ensure the game flows.
3. Ensure good sportsmanship.
4. Compliment teams on their performance if it is justified.
5. Be consistent, objective and courteous.
6. Keep informed about refereeing principles and the growth and development of young players.

Administrators' code

1. Create equal opportunities for all players to participate.
2. Rugby is for those involved in play, it is not a spectator sport.
3. Ensure that equipment and facilities reflect players' needs.
4. Adapt law to the maturity of the player.
5. Play is for its own sake, don't emphasise rewards.
6. Distribute other codes of conduct so that they are well known.
7. Let others know they are equally responsible for fair play.
8. Appoint only competent coaches and referees.
9. Organise courses to train coaches and referees.

Spectators' code

1. Players play for their own enjoyment, not yours.
2. Do not use bad language.
3. Do not harass players, coaches and referees.
4. Applaud good play by both teams.
5. Show respect for opponents - without them there is no game.
6. Condemn the use of violence.
7. Respect the referee's decision.

Players' code

1. Play for your own enjoyment, not to please others.
2. Play by the laws of the game.
3. Never argue with refereeing decisions.
4. Control your temper.
5. Play for yourself and your team.
6. Recognise good play by team-mates and opponents.
7. Treat all other players as you would like to be treated.
8. Don't be a 'show off'.
9. Co-operate with your coach, team-mates and opponents.

Types of coach

Authoritarian
• Autocratic
• Demanding
• One way of doing things.

Under these circumstances the player becomes disciplined, organised, better conditioned and have good spirit when the team is winning. When the team is losing the coach can become disliked or feared. Because the team is continually being driven, it can easily become fatigued.

Mr Nice-Guy
• Well liked
• Flexible
• Sociable
• Involves players in decision making.

Good for team cohesiveness, players produce above their expectations, and problem players are handled well. But the coach may be seen as weak. Deceitful players can cause problems, and quieter players may feel left out.

Intense
• Similar to the authoritarian coach.
• Tends to worry and take things personally.
• Overemphasises preparation.

The team is usually well prepared and is supported when it works hard, by a totally committed coach. Can be too demanding and emotional, poor at handling sensitive players, and may overwork the team before a big game.

Easy-going
• Unemotional
• Dislikes exact schedules
• Pressure free
• May appear lazy.

The team feels little pressure and does not complain about being over-worked. The players feel independent and free to have input into the team. Because the coach can be seen as lazy, the team may lack good physical condition and be unable to handle pressure.

Business-like
• Well prepared
• Educated
• Continually learning and improving
• Organised, logical and plans ahead to avoid unexpected problems
• Uses up to date techniques and is prepared well for competition.

The players feel confident. May be uncaring, using players as pawns, maybe too technical, can be hard on disorganised players and may ignore the importance of team spirit and emotion.

Seldom are these types of coach as specific as indicated. Each coach will be a mixture of more than one of these types, and it is the skill of the coach to produce the behaviour that best suits the situation.

Styles of coaching

The command style
• The coach makes decisions and the player follows directions.
• This style often occurs when the coach believes that their experience is much greater than that of the players.

The submissive style
• The coach has a laissez fair approach, with the players making most of the decisions and the coach as facilitator.
• The coach is lacks confidence and is generally lazy.

The co-operative style
• The coach shares decision-making with the players.
• The coach serves in a leadership role and guides the players in developing their skills and reaching their goals.

Approaches to coaching

The directive approach
• Based on rewards and punishments, less attention to the needs and feelings of individuals.
• Little player input.

The supportive approach
• People Oriented – uses positive reinforcement, encourages others to show their feelings.
• Creates harmony.

The participative approach
• Is democratic and shares responsibility with the players for success and failure.

No single style or approach applies to a coach. It is important for the coach to develop a style that is comfortable, drawing on the strengths of a number of different approaches, but it is most important that a coach evolves a style that fits their personality.

Personal qualities

1. Manner
• Is pleasant, friendly, courteous.
• Displays confidence and assurance.
• Treats players with respect.
• Co-operates with the mentor and the team.
• Is able to justify / modify willingly.
• Has initiative.
• Is dressed appropriately for training / game.
• Displays emotional maturity.

2. Attitude
• Seeks guidance and is willing to accept it.
• Attends to routine matters.
• Is punctual.
• Displays keenness to improve.
• Displays interest throughout the season.
• Shows awareness of personal development needs.

3. Communication
• Listens to mentor and players.
• Communicates enthusiasm and interest verbally and non-verbally.
• Communicates at a level the player understands.
• Displays player empathy.

Self-evaluation and mentoring

It is desirable that each trainee coach will have a mentor or advisor. The mentor coach should meet with the trainee after each session that is viewed so that each can reflect and evaluate the performance and discuss areas for improvement.

Professional qualities

1. Planning and knowledge
• Has planned a structured session to the team's ability.
• Sets up training aids prior to session.
• Includes individual and unit sub-sections.
• Displays knowledge of game's principles.
• Utilises support staff.
• Displays good mental preparedness.

2. Behaviour
• Displays professional behaviour to players and match officials.
• Displays an ability to motivate players.
• Displays enthusiasm and interest verbally and non-verbally.
• Displays application of game principles.
• Actions advice.

Summary - the basic requirements of a coach

• A knowledge of rugby and a willingness to keep up-to-date in rugby knowledge including the laws of the game.
• The ability to motivate and instill the right attitude in players.
• The ability to motivate players to achieve their own and the team's performance goals.
• The ability to plan and organise practice sessions and pre-game, in-game and post-game situations.
• The ability to apply physical, technical, tactical and managerial information to the playing of the game.
• The ability to identify and solve problems.
• The ability to be flexible and to adapt to changing situations.
• The ability to set a good example in all aspects of personal behaviour and appearance.
• The ability to communicate with players by being at least as good a listener as a speaker.
• The ability to develop team spirit based on on-the-field performance.

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

MODULE 7 - Communication

Unit three - Management
Module seven - Communication

Contents

Overview

Coaches require good communication skills. You need to be able to share information with players, their parents, other coaches, officials, club staff, teachers and many others. Most coaches are good at telling, at giving instructions and explanations (information) but many need to work hard to improve their ability to take in information from others - from what they say, how they behave or respond. They need to develop their listening and observation skills and learn to use questioning to raise awareness, as well as to check for understanding or knowledge. Good communication is always a two-way process.

Verbal communication

The objective of verbal communication is to transmit a message so that the listener understands it. For any communication to take place we need a sender, a receiver and a message.

If you are the sender of the message you need to build in a way of getting feedback to make sure that the receiver has understood what you have been saying. Asking questions in the appropriate style and manner can do this. However there are a number of barriers that only allow a proportion of the message to get through. As a result, often we only receive part of the message, and often, only the part that we want to hear.

Non-verbal communication

While the ability to communicate verbally is important for any coach, it is nevertheless true that visual messages are more easily retained and that this type of communication is more effective than verbal. The effective use of gestures and body language certainly goes a long way towards a message being understood. You can use your hands to indicate things such as size, shape and direction. Making eye contact with the person or group to whom you are speaking can also serve to reassure you that your message is getting through. Important elements of non-verbal communication are:

Verbal communication

Helpful hints to remember in your verbal communication

- Tone - use the right tone; try to suppress inappropriate emotions.

- Words - keep it simple; don't use more words than necessary.

- Non verbal - be aware of the other person's body language and if it seems to be negative, try to change it by use of words, tone and posture.

- Clarity - ensure you speak clearly and don't mumble. Check that the person at the back of the group can hear you - try not to get yourself into a situation where you have to shout.

- Speed - speak at an even pace, neither too quickly nor too slowly.

- Emphasis - don't speak in a monotonous voice. Emphasise the vital words, relating to the points you want to put across.

- Jargon - avoid it where possible. It assumes a level of knowledge in your listener which may not be present.

- appearance & dress
- facial expression. A nod, a wink, a smile, a contorted expression - all betray emotion
- posture & body language
- clapping
- listening
- gesture
- use of a whistle
- touch (with due care and attention of course) - a pat on the back or an arm around the shoulder
- written message
- use of a flip chart, blackboard or Powerpoint
- video / film / photographs.

Like it or not as coach you are, to some extent, a performer. A coach to a group of players often has the task of projecting their persona and their coaching approach to that group. You will neither convey the sense of an explanation nor gauge the reaction of your players unless you have developed ways of amplifying and projecting to the group.

Appearance

There is no doubt that clothing and how you appear speak volumes to your listener. The coach's clothes and appearance are an important part of your overall success. The impression you make will determine the way other people view, and therefore treat, you.

How do players learn?

The way we say things has greater impact than the words we use.
In determining impact, evidence suggests that:

- less than 10% is conveyed by the words used
- almost 40% is conveyed by the way the words are spoken
- over half is conveyed by non-verbal communication (e.g. gestures, expressions, body language).

Most coaches are good at giving instructions and explanations. Telling is useful when:

- time is limited
- something has to be done in a highly specific way (e.g., stretching exercises)
- you are coaching a large and/or unfamiliar group
- there are important safety considerations.

However, there are also some limitations. Instructions and explanations:

- can be misunderstood, confusing or boring
- may not encourage learning or effort
- can be interpreted as criticism which dampens enthusiasm
- do not encourage players to take responsibility and make their own decisions.

Body language

Manner of speech

Choice of words
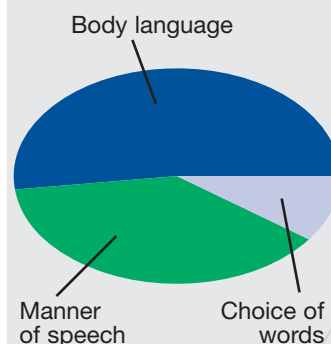
A proven process to use when giving instructions to players:

1 Plan in advance what you are going to say, including the exact words to use to explain the technique, organise the group or set up a drill
2 Gain attention and silence before you start to speak, maintain eye contact and scan the group to check for understanding and motivation
3 Keep the content simple (and jargon free) and the words to a minimum to get the point across
4 Always check for understanding - you need to do more than simply ask if the players have understood, because most will inevitably say yes, whether they have understood or not. Consider asking the players to tell you what they are going to do, or to repeat back to you what you have said to them.

Asking questions

In coaching, questioning the players can be used to achieve a number of aims, including to:

• Get to know your players, which is an essential part of being able to motivate them to stay involved in rugby, develop their skills, and indeed contribute to their personal development physically, socially and emotionally:
> What do you enjoy most about rugby?
> How are you getting on at school?
> Are your parents interested in coming to the matches?

• Find out what they already know and can or cannot do:
> Can you explain what to do and not do when you tackle from the side?
> Can you tell me three important things to remember when warming up?

• Check for understanding of what other players have said or your instructions and demonstrations:
> Can I check I have understood you correctly?
> Did you mean that …?
> So what will you do when you go back on the field?
> What are the key points to remember at the line out?

• Help players to learn, often by involving them in their own learning, focusing their attention and raising their awareness or helping them find solutions:
> Where is your attention as you go down into the scrum?
> What did you notice as the ball left the fly half's hands?
> Where was your weight as you kicked that ball?
> What could you do to stop this happening?

To be able to use questioning as an effective coaching skill requires practice. You need to plan how you will phrase the first question in advance and then really listen to the responses you receive. One of the most powerful reasons for reducing telling and increasing questioning is that it helps players to take responsibility, solve problems and make decisions by themselves.

Listening

A good tip for any coach would be to watch and listen more than you speak, for good observation and listening skills are essential if you're going to be effective with your players. If, as we've seen, 90% of understanding takes place non-verbally, think how much coaches can learn about their players, their motivation and understanding, just by watching their expressions, gestures and body language. Really listening to them is also important. Some coaches can be poor listeners; they half listen, for often they are more interested in planning what to say next, working through their own ideas or moving on to something else.

Provide demonstrations

Demonstrations play an important part in the learning process but to be effective, they should be set up in the right way and used at the right time.

- Demonstrations should be used when there is a need for a visual picture of what is required - a technique, a drill, a movement.
- Demonstration is particularly important in the early stages of learning a new technique or practice, when players need to understand what is required and what it should look like. It is also a very powerful tool with younger players who are particularly good at mimicking.
- You should always ensure that the demonstration is at an appropriate level for the ability of your players.

The demonstration needs to be an accurate replication but does not necessarily need to be performed by the coach. It is often better to use a competent player or a clip of video (but make sure it is relevant to the ability level of the players). Where possible, relate the demonstration provided to something that has already been learned. Demonstrations need to be well planned to ensure coaches have identified the key features or coaching points to be highlighted and you should have determined exactly the words to use to complement the visual picture. Good demonstrations don't just happen by themselves.

In truth, there are advantages and disadvantages to providing demonstrations yourself and to asking a competent player to do it for you.

	Coach performs demonstration	Coach asks player to demonstrate
Advantages	• You are in control • You can emphasise what you want • You can slow it down • You can show the action accurately	• Highly motivating for the athlete chosen • Perceived to be achievable by group • You can pick out key points as the demo takes place • You are still in control of group
Disadvantages	• Your action may not match the technical template • You are not in control of the group • You cannot easily pick out things to observe as they happen	• The demo may not be accurate • The player may not be able to repeat the demo

A proven process to use when providing demonstrations to players:
1 Position the demonstration so that the players are not distracted (by other players, the sun, etc) and can clearly see and hear you
2 Gain the players' attentions before starting and focus their attention on one or two specific coaching points. This helps to define in advance exactly what you will say to complement the visual picture; sometimes it may help to use verbal prompts while demonstrating (e.g., "look at the position of the hand now")
3 Show the action required and repeat it several times, if necessary separating out specific elements, showing them in slow motion or showing it from different angles, always finishing with the full speed action
4 Invite and answer questions, check for understanding and give players plenty of time to practise for themselves.

It is also worth remembering that unplanned demonstrations can also occur. Less experienced players can learn a great deal from observing, copying and practising with more experienced and skillful players. There is some value therefore in encouraging younger or less experienced players to watch the training sessions of their more talented peers. However, they can also pick up bad habits so make sure they model the best possible practice.

The key points of effective communication

Point one - be consistent
• Practice what you preach as demonstrated by:
    - your attitude towards officials
    - your attitude towards players
    - your attitude towards opponents.
    - your attitude towards your own fitness
    your social behaviour
• Show trust and be trustworthy.

Point two - be positive in your approach
• Give appropriate praise and recognition for things well done.
• Give positive criticism that is task related - never personal.
• Be realistic in your goals and expectations.

Point three - be sure of what you are going to say
• Are you giving content, demonstrating techniques or practicing to raise player skill levels?
• If you are giving content, link it to what is already known and performed correctly.
• Be specific, simple and brief. Have players perform as soon as possible.

Point four - effective listening
• Give your undivided attention.
• Listen to the total message before speaking.
• Reply to the total message. This may include body language and what is implied in the words.
• Be patient, don't interrupt and don't attack minor flaws in what the player is saying. It may have taken a lot of courage to even approach you in the first place.
• Listen to player's self praise as well as their problems.
• To reply constructively you can't afford to be emotional.

Point five - body language
This conveys the real meaning of your message. Some variables are:
• posture
• facial expressions
• the pitch of your voice
• personal mannerisms
• gestures
• your dress
• your level of fitness
• your preparation and planning
• your attitudes and behaviour including punctuality.

Observation

In order to improve your players, you will need to know how to watch them in both practice sessions and matches. With effort you can really improve your observation skills.

A proven process to use when observing players:

1 Know what you are looking for, e.g., the key factors of an activity or the position of a body part at a particular stage of a manoeuvre
2 Vary your position for observation. Varying angle can provide different feedback for the coach on a second viewing.
3 Look for one key factor at a time.

Communication before the game

Control your youthful enthusiasm. Do not arouse the players. Adopt a quiet, unruffled style that creates security confidence and enthusiasm. Actions must reflect words. Some worthwhile messages for players are:

• to encourage them to test the skills they have been taught during a game

• to encourage them to perform the skills more effectively than they have previously

• to encourage them to set a skills-based goal for themselves

• to encourage them to enjoy themselves.

Communication during the game

Do not speak if you cannot improve on the silence. If you do talk, be sure to:

• be positive.

• be courteous

• be constructive

• set a good example

• avoid overloading players in a tense situation.

Communication following the game

Suggested feedback questions are:

• What did we do well?

• What did our opponents do well?

• What could we improve upon?

• What could we do to improve?

• Name one good thing each of us did well.

Communication after practice

Suggested feedback questions are:

• What did you like most about the practice?

• What would you like included in practice?

• What skills are you having problems with?

Communication with parents

Parents have a great influence on players and their positive support must be encouraged. Bear in mind that some parents can be biased and have difficulty objectively viewing the performance of their son or daughter. To cope with this, be objective and do not get too close to parents.

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

MODULE 8 - Child & adolescent growth

Unit three - Management
Module eight - Child and adolescent growth

Contents

The bones

The growth of the skeleton takes place through epiphyseal plates that are sited near the ends of each bone. These soft growth points do not set until the player matures. Players will grow at different rates. There are periods in which the growth of bones takes place at different rates than the growth of muscles. Problems of co-ordination are experienced at these periods. During these periods, the coach must show patience and understanding as the player's lack of co-ordination can lead to frustration.

The muscles

Muscles are bundles of fibres which work in pairs, one contracting to cause movement as the other relaxes and extends, e.g., the quadriceps muscle and the hamstring muscle when running. The muscles, in moving, convert stored energy into action energy.

Tendons attach the muscles to the bones.

Ligaments connect the bones to each other at the joints. Bones, tendons and ligaments have a poor blood supply, and are slow to heal when they are injured.

The heart

The heart pumps blood around the body carrying the oxygen that enters the heart through the lungs. This oxygen is transferred to the muscles that use it in energy production. In the muscles carbon dioxide is produced as a waste product. This is carried back to the lungs by the blood where it is released and exhaled.

Muscle and bone injuries in young players

The growth of the soft bone endings is completed, on average, by the age of 19 for women and 20 for men.

Stress can cause damage, and while it may appear to have healed, long term permanent damage may result. Overuse leads to inflammation, swelling and pain in the tendons and ligaments. The player should be referred to a doctor and must stop play and practice until they have recovered.

Early teenage years

Skeletal growth
- This is the transition period in the growth of the player's body.
- The rate of growth is very rapid.

Muscular development
- Muscular growth is very rapid.
- Restlessness may accompany rapid growth.
- Poor co-ordination will occur when muscular development and the growth of the player's skeleton get out of step.
- Posture may be stooped and careless.
- The player may be awkward.

Organic development
- The heart is not growing as rapidly as the body.
- Blood pressure may fall.
- The fatigue point in games may be reached sooner than expected and this should be anticipated.
- More rest is needed and longer recovery time should be allowed for.

Characteristics
- Players tend to be individual.
- Players differ widely in physical maturity and temperament.
- The following characteristics are indicative of the extremes between individuals:
- Increase in size and strength will lead to greater interest in competitive sport.
- There will be respect for good sportsmanship and a willingness to submerge personal ego in well organised team games.
- Unskilled players will be self conscious and reluctant to take part. When players go beyond their fatigue point they will become destructive, straining relationships.
- Players may have a ravenous appetite. This is often associated with irregular and changing eating habits and a tendency to eat junk food. This may cause dietary problems.
- Players will usually be willing to practise skills to gain proficiency. Informed coaching is required.
- Players need at least 10 hours rest each day.

Early developers

For players who mature at an early age, success will come easily. This earlier maturation will result in them being bigger, more co-ordinated and more powerful than their peers. This will encourage the player to use their physical abilities to achieve success, neglecting their skills. These skills need to be developed in spite of the player, if need be, to ensure they can still compete when slower developing players catch up.

Middle teenage years

Skeletal growth
• Players will reach maturity between 16 and 20 years of age.

Muscular development
• Reduced awkwardness and improved co-ordination will occur.
• Muscles will become hard and firm.

Organic development
• Periods of glandular instability may occur with fluctuations in energy levels.
• Symptoms may include a headache, nosebleeds, nervousness, palpitations, and acne.

Characteristics
• While the player may be physically mature they will lack experience.
• In seeking to find their place in life a player may become emotional.
• Their desire to conform to the standards of peer pressure tend to be stronger than their response to adult guidance.
• There may be a close attachment to and almost unlimited admiration of an adult role model whom the player considers to be outstanding. If this is the coach, a high standard of personal behaviour and coaching expertise is essential.
• Players are capable of competing in games requiring complex skills and can be coached to perform at a high level of expertise.
• Appetite is enormous, but there is a tendency towards having an inadequate breakfast, or none at all. The diet may be imbalanced and deficiencies may effect performance.
• Unobtrusive adult guidance is needed. This should not impinge on the players feelings of being an adult.
• Players need constructive ways of using their excess emotions and energy.
• Players should have a minimum of 10 hours sleep.

Specific factors relating to growth and development

Water
• Water should be available at all times as a fluid replacement prior to and during physical activity.

Body temperature regulation
• Players should not participate for over 30 minutes in temperatures in excess of 30°C, with humidity over 50%.
• Young players are more susceptible to heat loss and gain, and particular care must be taken when performing in inclement weather.

Weight loss
• Methods used to reduce weight to make a particular threshold are extremely dangerous and should not be used under any circumstances.

Late developers

The late developer will be hesitant and it is the coach's task to build confidence and to increase the player's skill level. By performing the skills well the late developer is able to compete and as they mature their skill level will enable them to participate into adulthood.

Lifting weights
• Players up to 16 years of age should not lift weights. However, the bar should be used to practise correct lifting techniques.
• Isometrics and skills practice are more beneficial.
• The dangers of lifting weights are:
    - elevated blood pressure
    - damage to growth plates
    - joint injury though faulty technique.

• Detrimental exercises are:
    - deep knee bends
    - hyperextension of the spine: forced back bends.
    - forced flexion of the spine: touching the toes with straight legs.
    - stretching exercises done with a bouncing movement.

• While some inherent characteristics can be changed by training it is not possible to alter the genetic structure of the individual.

Coaches and administrators must ensure that players are matched as closely as possible based on the criteria of age, size and level of maturity.

Age	Physical development	Motor skills development	Social and emotional maturity
5-8	• Enjoys vigorous activity but easily tired. • Difficulty focusing on the ball. • Poor peripheral vision.	• Needs uncomplicated games. • Enjoys repetitive practice and simple skills.	• Variable attention span. • Wants to enjoy what they are doing. • Needs to have self esteem and confidence encouraged.
9-10	• An increase in recovery time after vigorous activity. • Greater co-ordination. • Needs to stretch muscles before activity.	• Repetition still essential. • Beginning to develop spatial awareness and the use of time, space and direction. • Able to learn and apply safe techniques in contact.	• Increased attention span and focusing on the task. • Needs to accept and understand variations in abilities. • Growing confidence if successful and accepted by the group.
11-13	• Rapid growth leads to tiredness, poor co-ordination. • Needs structured guidance. • Needs activity to retain flexibility and fitness. • Good hand to eye co-ordination.	• Can apply speed, accuracy distance and space to the performance of skills. • Proficient at previously learned skills. • Keen to learn new skills.	• Very willing to accept advice. • Increased leadership roles and decision-making. • Feels rejection strongly. • Needs guidance in setting goals.
14-15	• Rapid but uneven growth. • Very sensitive to physical appearance. • Flexibility and cardio-respiratory fitness needed.	• Continuation of skills practices.	• Prefers short-term goals. • Growing need for peer acceptance. • Difficulty in controlling emotions. • Needs positive encouragement to participate.

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

**MODULE 9 - The laws of the game
of rugby union**

IRB
**INTERNATIONAL
RUGBY BOARD**

Unit four - Technical

Module nine - The laws of the game of rugby union

For this module, you are referred to the IRB publication, "The Laws of the Game of Rugby Union."

NOTES

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD
DEVELOPING RUGBY SKILLS

MODULE 10 - Fitness

MODULE 10 **FITNESS**

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD

Unit four - Technical
Module ten - Fitness

Contents

Components of a warm-up

Aerobic exercise
• Do some jogging for 10-15 minutes to raise the body temperature so that the body is sweating lightly.

Stretching
• Stretch all the major muscle groups used when playing.
• Choose both dynamic and static stretches
• Dynamic stretches - stretching movements performed at gradually increasing speed. These should be specific to the skills to be performed in rugby. You should ensure that they are performed correctly.
• Static stretches - placing the muscle in its most lengthened position and holding it for 30 seconds. Tension should be applied to the muscle without it becoming painful. Players shouldn't bounce up and down while stretching.

Follow these with some rugby specific exercises, e.g., shuttle runs.

Hydrate throughout the warm-up.

Cool-down and stretch

Cooling down and stretching after activity reduces the risk of injury and promotes flexibility. It helps dispose of lactic acid which hinders recovery and reduces strength. Adrenaline is removed from the system so that the heart is not placed under stress and blood is prevented from pooling. In rugby this takes place in the legs. It is desirable that this blood returns to the heart.

This low intensity exercise should last for 5-15 minutes and should include slow jogging and stretching. For greater flexibility static stretch each muscle group for 60 seconds during the cool down. Do not use ballistic stretches during the cool down as the bouncing action can cause muscle stiffness and resistance to stretching.

Make sure that players re-hydrate. The length of the cool down will vary with the duration and intensity of the game or practice.

Warm up

Warming up prepares the mind, heart, muscles and joints for the game. It prevents a rapid increase in blood pressure, improves the flow of blood to the heart, increases muscle temperature and makes muscles more pliable. By increasing muscle temperature the speed and efficiency of the nerve messages and the biochemical reactions that cause movement will speed up. By warming up, players will improve their physical and mental performance and reduce the risk of injury.

Warm-up primes the energy systems allowing for an efficient use of fuel and lower lactate levels. Warm up also allows players to assess the light, wind and temperature, the playing surface and surrounding hazards. It improves the players' ability to concentrate and visualise their performance.

Physical conditioning

Training should start before the season commences so that the players are prepared for contact. The incidence of injury is greater at the start of the season and it is thought that the major factor is lack of preparation.

What does a conditioning programme involve?

A conditioning programme should be balanced and include training exercises for each of the following areas that are relevant to rugby.

Strength training

Body weight strength training or resistance training using free weights or weights machines are the most common methods of strength training.

• Begin each session with a warm-up.
• Provide thorough instruction.
• Avoid single maximum lifts, especially overhead lifts, until the end of adolescence.
• Avoid explosive lifts in early adolescence and introduce these gradually in later adolescence. The same applies to high intensity plyometrics.
• Progress gradually from low volume to high volume and high intensity in a systematic and safe way.
• Overload training in small increments - no more than 10% per week.
• Ensure adequate recovery. Initially training should be two to three times per week.
• Include exercises for all muscle groups and provide balance between opposing muscle groups e g. quadriceps and hamstrings.

Speed exercises

Fartlek training - short bursts of speed integrated into the normal training session.

Power exercises

These exercises combine speed and strength to produce explosive force. The best exercises to improve power are hill sprints and squat jumps.

Flexibility exercises

Flexibility conditioning will provide a greater range of pain-free motion.The exercises for flexibility are explained in the warm up section of this module.

Endurance exercises

These exercises allow players to repeat the same action, or too exercise continuously, without getting too tired. Exercises that develop endurance are stair walking, circuit training and regular runs of more than 20 minutes.

Balance exercises

These exercises reduce the likelihood of players falling awkwardly. Exercises to achieve this are to walk along a straight rope on the ground, balancing on one leg with the eyes closed and doing this with a ball that can be passed around the body in a range of ways.

Guidelines for stretching

• *Stretch slowly until a comfortable tightening within the muscle is felt.*
• *Hold each muscle in a state of near maximal stretch for a minimum of 30 seconds.*
• *Relax and breathe out as you move into the stretch. Avoid holding the breath.*
• *Avoid bouncing.*
• *The correct posture and stretch position should always be maintained and kept within the limits of comfort.*
• *Stretch both sides of the body.*
• *Concentrate on the major muscles that will have a large demand placed on them during play and those in which the players have demonstrated a lack of flexibility.*
• *There may be a need to individualise some stretches for specific players.*
• *Take into account the temperature. If it is cold the warm-up will need to be longer.*

General conditioning principles

1. Make sure the training is planned, directed and purposeful.
2. Follow the FITTE principle of training:

F -Frequency: three to five times per week.
I -Intensity: 60-85% of heart rate maximum.
T -Time: 20-60 minutes.
T -Type: Run, jog, cycle, row etc.
E -Enjoyment: this will increase the likelihood of the player keeping to the programme.
Each element should be specified in the training programme and developed to meet player needs.

3. Progressively increase the intensity and / or duration of training as players improve their conditioning levels. Gradually progress from easy training to intense training to reduce the risk of injury. Increase the training load by no more than 10% per week.

4. When players stop training for as little as two weeks their conditioning levels decline. In the off-season try and ensure the players continue a maintenance programme.

5. Reduce the amount of training during competition to prevent "burn out" and fatigue.

6. It is necessary to have specific programmes by playing position and for individual players for some aspects of the conditioning programme. In these situations it is beneficial to group players with common needs so that they are able to work together self reinforcing their collective efforts.

Hydration and nutrition

Hydration and nutrition are critical aspects of a rugby fitness programme. Hydration replaces fluid lost during sweating and maintains sports performance. Nutrition provides an essential fuel supply for exercise, promotes a nutritional environment that allows players to recover more efficiently between training sessions and satisfies the basic nutrient requirements of good health and growth and prevention of lifestyle diseases.

Fluids and dehydration

The detrimental effects of dehydration are:
• Decreases concentration levels leading to increased clumsiness.
• Decreases endurance capacity.
• Decreases performance levels through increased fatigue and headaches.
• Decreases the ability to judge accurately the distance from other players or the ball when tackling and catching.
• Delays recovery.

Endurance training

• *Buy good footwear.*
• *Warm-up.*
• *Follow F.I.T.T.E. - see below.*
• *Base the programme on the player's current fitness level.*
• *Progress from three alternate days to five to six sessions per week.*
• *Progress from 10-15 minutes to 40-60 minutes.*
• *Progress from 60% to 80% heart rate maximum. Heart rate maximum is calculated as 220 minus age and it can be determined after two to four minutes of all-out exercise in rugby related activities.*
• *Train appropriate muscles.*
• *Take care with young players. Distance of less than two kilometres are recommended for players of less than 12 years of age. These players are more susceptible to thermal stress owing to their inability to sweat.*

The conditioning process

1. *Identify the position specific needs of players.*
2. *Determine the player's current physical condition using physical tests and the player's history.*
3. *Identify the player's specific training needs.*
4. *Design and implement an appropriate training programme to meet these needs.*
5. *Based on regular testing fine-tune the programme.*
6. *Monitor and evaluate the programme at a later date.*

Nutrition for exercise

Good nutrition:
• increases energy levels, leading to more active participation
• helps develop strong bones reducing fractures
• helps repair muscle damage
• allows the body to recover between physical activity sessions
• provides for growth.

Poor nutrition:
• decreases concentration through decreased energy levels
• causes poorly developed muscles and bones, and may lead to iron deficiency
• decreases a player's endurance capacity

High-carbohydrate foods
These are used for energy during moderate to high intensity exercise. Examples include bananas, fruit, pasta, bread, rice, potato and breakfast cereals. Specialised sports bars and drinks are a convenient and easy to transport to training, games and for use in recovery.

Food containing protein

Protein is essential to build, maintain and repair the body's tissue. Examples include eggs, chicken, fish, red meat, legumes (such as beans) and dairy products - the low fat versions. Dairy products contain calcium. Red meat contains zinc and iron.

Encourage players to:
• ensure that over half the food intake comes from carbohydrates
• increase the intake of carbohydrates before activity
• ensure that their diet contains 1.2-1.7g of protein per kg of body weight
• eat enough food to provide sufficient energy for training and games.
• maintain a hydrated state
• avoid foods high in fat and fibre before and during exercise.

Best practice for the good hydration and nutrition process

Before exercise
• Consume a high carbohydrate diet for a few days before competition.
• Pre-hydrate.

During exercise
• Balance fluid intake with sweat losses.
• Include carbohydrates in exercises that last more than one hour.

After exercise
Consuming fluids and food immediately after competition or training replenishes players' glycogen stores and reduces the effects of fatigue.
• Aim for 1.5g carbohydrate per kilogram of body weight in the first 30 minutes and repeat every two hours for four to six hours.
• For a 70kg player 105g would be provided by a 500ml sports drink, a large banana (30g), a bread roll (25-30g) and a piece of fruit (10-15g).

Health and safety considerations for strength training

• *Players should be old enough to be 'coachable' before they lift weights.*
• *Pay particular attention to any joint pain.*
• *Teach proper breathing. Avoid holding the breath during repetitions.*
• *Ensure that players maintain the curvature of the spine during exercise.*
• *Ensure correct techniques are used and there is appropriate supervision.*

Good hydration strategies

• *Pre-hydrate during the day before training and games. Two hours before activity consume 500-600 ml, 15 minutes before 500ml, during exercise 150-350ml per 15 minutes and 1-1.5 litres per kg of body weight.*
• *Increase fluid intake in hot and humid conditions*
• *Drink fluid that is flavoured and cool.*
• *Drink well formulated (4-8% carbohydrate) sports drinks during activity lasting longer than one hour. Water is best used for activity less than one hour.*
• *Players should avoid caffeine, energy drinks, smart drinks and alcohol after exercise as these increase fluid losses.*
• *Avoid sharing drinks bottles between players so that 'flu, hepatitis and other infections don't spread between players.*

Conclusion

I hope you have enjoyed the IRB Level 2 course. Please do take time to complete the feedback form as this will help inform future courses. The IRB strives to provide leading edge training solutions to support unions and individuals around the world.

If you have any general education and training queries please go to www.irb.com and follow link to education and training.

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Level 2 Coaching

Developing Rugby Skills

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