

RUGBY

COACHING & DEVELOPMENT

*A Selection
of Papers
from the
Level 3
Coaching
Program*



AUSTRALIAN RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION LTD



FOREWORD

When Dick Marks, the National Coaching Director, started the national coaching courses in 1974 he brought a new dimension to Rugby in Australia.

Since then there has been a steady stream of resources and courses developed all designed to inform and extend our coaches and players. In 1991 in response to calls for another level of coach interaction and development a Level 3 program was designed under the auspices of the Australian Institute of Sport Rugby Program and the Australian Rugby Football Union. In addition to the player and match assessments that are co-ordinated by the ARFU National Squad Director Brian O'Shea, applicants are required to complete course work, practical coaching, and to submit a short written paper.

This publication contains some of the more technically oriented papers submitted. They have been published in the hope that they will stimulate coaches and players to consider and analyse the views expressed. The challenge of the 90s for Rugby is to question the conventional, improve players individual skills and build on the impetus that sports science and sports medicine is bringing to the game.

I hope that these papers may provide further stimulus to those endeavouring to make Rugby attractive to players, coaches, referees and supporters.

Hob Hitchcock
Level 3 Co-ordinator



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Off & Pre Season Fitness Training Program

Peter Abbott

I have decided to set out an OFF-SEASON and PRE-SEASON fitness training program designed for CLUB players. Not only for the elite and 1st Grade but for the entire club.

The aim is to show that is reasonably easy and inexpensive to assist the club players in attaining advanced levels of basic fitness which should help the Club Coach to concentrate on the players skill level and not to have to spend the first weeks endeavouring to get his players to some sort of fitness level.

To break up the different areas I have divided them into two categories:

- a. Off-Season (approximately November through to end of December)
- b. Pre-Season (January — February)

Attached are two relatively simple and self explanatory examples of two newsletters which could be distributed to players at:

1. The end of October (probably a good idea to have a Meeting of all club players, co-ops moving up to grade and recruits to explain the program)
2. The beginning of January (again you should have a gathering to monitor the players progress and discuss the next section of the program)

You must realise that these newsletters are written in simplistic terms for players to read and be able to understand. They are not designed as a coaches manual but as a players aid.

XYZ RUGBY CLUB

NEWSLETTER

OFF-SEASON FITNESS

To all XYZ Rugby players interested in improving their fitness in the Off-Season.

The three key fitness components are:

STRENGTH — ENDURANCE — SPEED

There are different phases in off-season and pre-season development. This Newsletter deals with the first two Months — the Off-Season.

The Off-Season is the time for the development of **GENERAL STRENGTH, SPEED DEVELOPMENT, ACTIVE REST AND GENERAL AEROBIC ENDURANCE.**

RUGBY at the levels now expected requires "elite" levels of fitness, therefore consideration must be given to an all year fitness program. This involves the Principles of Periodization i.e. Training Cycles.

PERIODIZATION

At this stage of the Off-Season the emphasis should be on:

Building on a wide general base of strength

Improving speed

Maintaining the end of season aerobic (endurance) fitness levels

Ball skills

An important principle to be aware of in Periodization, and at this stage of the program, is to stay fresh, enjoy the training and be aware of the scientific principles, e.g. there is no sense trying to build up muscles with weights, while losing weight through too many endurance running sessions.

OFF SEASON TRAINING

(1) AEROBIC MAINTENANCE

To maintain this you require at least three endurance running sessions every ten days. These should be interspersed with weights and speedtouch sessions — see guide later.

For most players at club level 30 minutes would be the target; do not overdo it, you are only maintaining your present level, emphasis on aerobic (endurance) fitness will come later.

You may use activities as *Running, Swimming, Cycling, Aerobics, or Skipping*. I strongly advise the heavy athlete e.g. 100 Kilo prop to vary the activities as continual running will place undue pressure on knees and back.

A comparison of the activity and distance required to use the same energy:

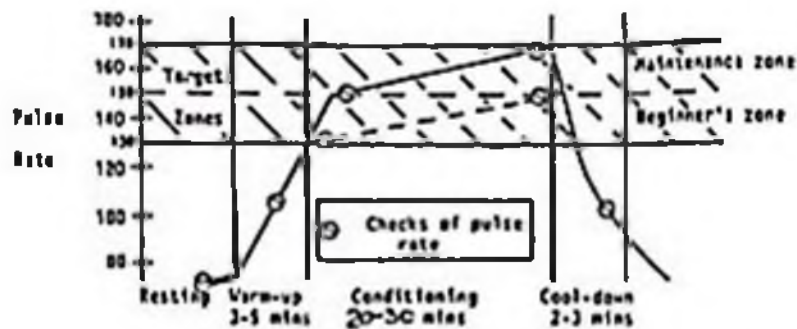
RUNNING 1 km assuming intensity heart rate 130-170 beats per min.

SWIMMING 250m maintained at the same level

CYCLING 2km 130-170 beats per min

However the key is the intensity while completing the activity and the time spent doing it.

To produce an aerobic training effect the pulse must stay in the 130-170 target zone for a minimum of 20-30 minutes.



(iii) SPEED DEVELOPMENT (Sprint training)

One night a week at XYZ Rugby Club, supervised session-time to be decided.

A further session on your own or linked with touch game

Ball skills, with sprint session or involved with formal touch, volleyball or basketball games.

Speed sessions will involve drills for technique, resistance work (power) and overspeed training. The emphasis is on quality and long recovery, therefore they are low volume sessions.

(iii) STRENGTH TRAINING (Weights)

Each player must end up on an individual program. Therefore he must contact his Club Coach, Club Trainer or Gym Manager after 4-5 weeks to be assessed and individual changes made if necessary.

There are many different ideas from "gym experts" but there are some important principles to follow. The general strength development program is for the 1st or 2nd year weight training and strength development.

<u>WEEKS</u>	<u>1-2</u>	<u>3-5</u>	<u>6-8</u>
<u>REPS</u>	15-20	10-12	8-10
<u>SETS</u>	3	4	4
<u>INTENSITY</u> % of one maximum lift	60-65	70-75	75-78
<u>VOLUME</u> no of reps	45-60	40-48	32-40

NOTE Each rep takes 4-10 seconds to complete per contraction phase. Yes that means slow power development is totally unnecessary at this stage of the program.

Establish within the first two sessions your maximum lift for each exercise. RECORD IT. Use it for the above table, use it as an indicator of your progress. Progress is only individual to you! Fitness and especially strength is individual.

This is the time of the year to MAXIMISE STRENGTH.

Of the three areas STRENGTH — ENDURANCE — SPEED the weakest overall in most clubs is strength which however is one on which we can easily improve. Do not rush this start to your weights program — BUILD A BROAD BASE — follow what is set down for the next eight weeks, record each work out and after 4-6 weeks discuss your progress with your trainer or coach.

SUGGESTED EIGHT WEEK STRENGTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Follow the progression through weeks 1-2, 3-5, 6-8 from the table above: REPS, SETs etc.

SCHEDULE A

LEG PRESS
PRESS BEHIND NECK (SEATED)
BARBELL OR DUMBBELL ROW
BENCH PRESS
LEG CURLS
SHRUGS (INTRO FOR POWER CLEANS)
NECK WORK
BACK RAISES/TRUNK EXTENSIONS
SIT UPS (SLOW)

SCHEDULE B (EXPERIENCED)

POWER CLEANS
SQUAT HALF
UPRIGHT ROW
LAT PULL DOWN
INCLINE BENCH PRESS
LEG EXTENSIONS
NECK WORK
GOOD MORNINGS
SIT UPS (CRUNCH)

Schedule A is for the raw beginner and B is for the person more experienced in technique.

You must keep a record of each of your training sessions so that an individual program can be planned for the next phase, PRE-SEASON — JAN/FEB.

FITNESS PROGRAM (OFF SEASON) EMPHASISING STRENGTH

1. POORLY MOTIVATED — 2 STRENGTH, 1 SPEED, 1 ENDURANCE

<u>MON</u>	<u>TUE</u>	<u>WED</u>	<u>THU</u>	<u>FRI</u>	<u>SAT</u>	<u>SUN</u>
SPEED	STRENGTH A		STRENGTH B		ENDURANCE	

2. MOTIVATED — 3 STRENGTH, 2 SPEED/BALL SKILLS, 2 ENDURANCE

<u>MON</u>	<u>TUE</u>	<u>WED</u>	<u>THU</u>	<u>FRI</u>	<u>SAT</u>	<u>SUN</u>
SPEED	STRENGTH A	END	STRENGTH B	SPEED	STRENGTH A	ENDURANCE

NOTE: Alternate A-B-A week 1 to B-A-B next week.

3. HIGHLY MOTIVATED — 4 STRENGTH, 2 SPEED/BALL SKILLS, 2 ENDURANCE

<u>MON</u>	<u>TUE</u>	<u>WED</u>	<u>THU</u>	<u>FRI</u>	<u>SAT</u>	<u>SUN</u>
SPEED	STRENGTH A	END AM STREN B	STRENGTH A	SPEED BALL SKILLS	STRENGTH B	ENDURANCE

IMPORTANT TRAINING HINTS

Always warm up. Skip it at your own peril!

If you have been involved in Rugby at senior level you should be aware of the requirements.

Always get the pulse rate up before stretching.

- Easy jogging for 3-4 minutes
- Then static (hold) stretches — the longer you hold the better
- 15 seconds minimum each muscle group concentration.

Warm down similar to warm up the function being to speed recovery and reduce post exercise stiffness.

- It is sensible to avoid eating and smoking for 1-1.5 hours prior to training.
- You should increase your water intake prior to training and take water both during and after training.
- Thirst is an indicator of water need, you should take water before feeling thirsty.
- Increasing training frequency – weights, sprints and aerobic, means greater demands are placed on energy via the food you eat. It is sensible to increase the amount of food you eat, especially those foods high in carbohydrates.

A trainer or coach can't really motivate a player to complete off-season fitness. The motivation will last possible to the first session! A trainer can provide information and back up, but the motivation to get fit and complete sessions from week to week can only come from each individual player.

XYZ RUGBY CLUB NEWSLETTER PRE-SEASON FITNESS

OFF-SEASON FITNESS

Congratulations to all those players who got involved with strength training Nov/Dec — it is obvious from the muscle bulk around that some hard work has taken place. Also there are some around who have picked up the odd metre with their involvement in the club speed training. Some backs will have to look out!

PRE-SEASON FITNESS

Those that have been associated with XYZ Rugby lately will be aware of the three key fitness components — **STRENGTH — ENDURANCE — SPEED.**

Also most would be aware that fitness levels cannot be raised to competitive levels on only two club training sessions a week. Each player who wishes to attain maximum benefit from our program will need to fit in four sessions a week on their own. **SIX** days a week is a **MUST** if as a club we are going to hit our straps for the first competition round, approx. ten weeks away.

FITNESS (adapted changes in existing levels) takes up to 16 weeks. Already the majority of senior players have completed two months of strength work. Now is the time to follow up with a further two months of **Strength Development.**

The aim is three sessions per week during January, the two sessions per week in February combined with Plyometrics sessions. All the strength work will have to be done outside the normal club training

The emphasis on club training during January, will be on skills and aerobic endurance. There will be a gradual increase of work load until the **PRE-SEASON TRAINING CAMP** towards the end of February.

Players must note that a club training system cannot go back and pick up late starters to fitness work. With already many players involved with Off-Season fitness development in strength and speed, now is the time to get started on individual programs.

ORGANISING YOUR TRAINING WEEK

Below is an example only — there are other feasible variations. As mentioned Club training will, fitness wise emphasise Aerobic Endurance during January. Your emphasis should be on three strength sessions plus one other aerobic session. Your individual sessions should not be drawn out torture. The aim is to increase your level of maximum strength; and distance and intensity of longer running.

Keep records of your workouts. Don't hesitate to ask for advice. Join in with existing weight training groups from the club.

TRAINING PROGRAM

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
WEIGHTS SEE CHOICE A,B,C,D,E	CLUB SWIM OR CYCLE	REST DAY STRETCH	CLUB	WEIGHTS	WEIGHTS	AEROBIC RUN 30-40 MIN PULSE 160-170

Do not start into regular six day training like a "bull in a china shop" unless you have been consistently doing the Off-Season work. Start gradually. If sore after the Tuesday and Thursday's club training, on Wednesday or Friday work out with ACTIVE REST, which is a gentle jog and 20 minute stretching, or half an hour swim or bike ride — steady pulse 140.

If you find your club sessions too easy, the next day work out on a good session of weights or higher intensity aerobic run — pulse rate 160-170 for 30-40 minutes.

Fitting in the weight sessions is necessary for every player.

One rest day a week is very important, plan ahead, develop your own individual program.

WEIGHT TRAINING PROGRAMS

As stipulated strength training is a must for every player — it is not too late to start now.

1. FOR THOSE THAT HAVE NOT DONE ANY WEIGHTS

Schedule 'A' and 'B' cover a wide cross section of exercises.

Program — Two sets of ten reps first two weeks - schedule 'A'
 Three sets of eight reps for next two weeks - schedule 'A'
 Balance of eight weeks 4 sets of 5 reps - schedule 'B'

Intensity (load) should be approximately 3 reps short of muscle failure in each set.

Tempo (speed of lifts) slow 3-4 second lift, hold 1-2 seconds and slowly down — except for power cleans.

SCHEDULE A

POWER CLEAN
 SQUAT
 PRESS BEHIND NECK
 BARBELL/DUMBBELL ROWING
 BENCH PRESS
 BARBELL CURL
 SIT UPS
 PARTNER RESISTANCE NECK
 LEG CURLS
 CALF RAISES
 BACK RAISES

SCHEDULE B

POWER CLEAN
 SQUAT
 OVERHEAD DUMBBELL PRESSING
 UPRIGHT ROWING
 LAT MACHINE PULL DOWNS
 INCLINE BENCH PRESS
 DUMBBELL CURLS
 TRICEPS PRESS ON LAT MACHINE
 FOUR WAY NECK WITH HEAD STRAP
 GOOD MORNINGS
 REVERSE TRUNK TWIST

2. FOR THOSE THAT HAVE DONE WEIGHTS

The following schedules are only for players who have completed an extensive Off-Season program of

weight training. It is not for beginners.

The number of exercises are less to allow for 5-7 sets for each exercise.

Schedule 'C' is a base work out for strength and power. For strength and power development this is best developed in the range of reps from as little as 1-2 up to 5-6.

While Schedule 'C' is effective on its own, Schedule 'D' and 'E' are more support programs best suited for combining with 'C'.

e.g. One week three sessions order C-D-C.
Next week three sessions order C-E-C.

SCHEDULE C

POWER CLEAN

SQUAT

DUMBBELL PRESS

CHINS OR DUMBBELL ROWING

BENCH PRESS

4 WAY NECK WITH STRAP

TWISTING SIT UPS

SCHEDULE D

LEG PRESS WITH CALF EXTENSIONS

POWER CLEAN & DUMBBELL PRESS

BARBELL ROWING

PARALLEL BAR DIPS

BARBELL CURL

SIT UPS - CRUNCHES

BACK RAISES

SCHEDULE E

BENCH STEP UPS WITH DUMBBELLS

POWER SNATCH

PRESS BEHIND NECK

UPRIGHT ROWING

LAT MACHINE PULL DOWNS

REVERSE TRUNK TWISTS

PARALLEL BAR DIPS

Listed below are some examples of systems that can be used on schedules 'C', 'D' and 'E'. Try them, vary your sessions, keep them less than 1.5 hours. Do not decrease weights to make target. Forget and try the next session when fresher and you are better recovered. **STRENGTH AND POWER ARE THE KEYS.**

TEMPO GUIDELINE

January — all exercises: quick steady lift; pause 1-2 secs hold, then slow eccentric phase (return to start phase)

February — all exercises — explosive lifts.

SYSTEMS

STEP SYSTEM:	40kg x 3,	55kg x 3,	60kg x 3,	62.5kg x 3
PLATEAU SYSTEM:	40kg x 3,	50kg x 3,	55kg x 3 X 3 X 3 X 3 X 3	
PLATEAU SYSTEM:	40kg x 5,	45kg x 5,	50kg x 5 X 5 X 5 X 5	
PYRAMID SYSTEM:	40kg x 6,	45kg x 5,	50kg x 3,	57kg x 7, 62.5kg x 1,
	55kg x 2,	50kg x 4		

Resistance would range from 55 to 60% of 1 RM with the initial sets up to as much as 90% of 1 RM, depending on the repetitions.

For those that find weight training a boring experience, the variations given with the different schedules 'C', 'D' and 'E'; plus the use of different systems (step to pyramid) should allow for challenging weight training sessions. If you need assistance ASK, but it is important to keep records of workouts so that worthwhile advice can be given.

In conclusion many players will not find the time or the energy to get involved in weight training. It is sometimes difficult to motivate oneself four extra times a week outside normal training times. However if you follow these guidelines you will get the benefits on match days throughout the season. The real work regarding fitness is done prior to the competitive season. Thus January and February is the time to build up further strength and aerobic endurance.

A good base of general strength will allow for more powerful, stronger and faster players, higher lineout jumpers etc. A fit skilful player is always more successful than just a skilful player.

In conclusion I wish to re-iterate that the preceding two newsletters are for a Club situation and are designed with the player in mind. It is set out as simply as possible to enable the player to read, understand, enjoy and implement it.

In practice I am sure that when players do an off season program, such as the above, the coach is going to find it much easier to concentrate on incorporating skills in the pre-season training program rather than full on fitness.

OUTLINE

The aim of this paper is to discuss procedures necessary to prepare players for club rugby. A lot has been written about preparation for Rugby but this is aimed at the higher level players and very few articles have been written to prepare the less skillful or those lacking motivation. To prepare players we have to recognise the makeup and commitment of the clubs players. Rarely do we find the perfect situation where all players are committed and willing to spend a pre-season doing general fitness work. Therefore the pre-season should have a balance of 'balkwork and fitness'. This is necessary to maintain interest and a continual increase in skill ability.

Having established the requirements for the Club, it must then be established which drills will be complimentary and acceptable for the various phases of training.

The term 'fitness' used in the paper covers the training of energy systems (aerobic and anaerobic), the style of fitness training will fall into one of three categories — general, special and specific.

Often it is a difficult task to establish quality fitness sessions for committed players particularly with the various levels of player fitness at the beginning of pre-season training. At the pre-season stage there are generally three categories of players, the first are those who have continued with a structured off season program, the second are keen, wish to establish an aerobic base and remove some off season lab, whilst the third group who are the most time consuming, are afraid of the hard work ahead and would prefer not to attend training prior to the first test. The first two groups require some encouragement but the third group will require supervision and encouragement and yet not detract from the benefits the first two groups should gain from the sessions.

Variations to training patterns are essential if you are to keep your players interested and motivated. Too often I have seen training nights where clubs have a pre-set non changing structured program, this pre-set pattern has removed initiative from training and therefore games. The more you stimulate the player the better the response.

FIRST PHASE

It is imperative that special/specific training be introduced in each session and that this skillwork be reasonable active. A mixture of individual and physical drill work will encourage greater dedication than general fitness work, if interest is to be maintained through a long pre-season period. In most cases the less fit player is also most lacking in skills. If all the effort is spent in improving the players fitness it is at the expense of specific skill work. Skills are difficult to rectify outside training whilst some general fitness can be conducted outside training, even though this may be difficult to implement with some players. Skill and drill work will help improve fitness but the reverse is not true.

Noting two of the groups have not conducted any strength training, general and special training will be necessary for both leg and upper body strength. It is not too late to start on a strength training program but players will have to ease into the program and be consistent to obtain benefits. It will take approximately four weeks to see some results and approximately 16 weeks to obtain value. If a weight training facility is available it provides a great alternative or addition to training.

Knowing that not all players will follow a strength program it will be necessary to schedule general strength improvement sessions at training. Exercises that are appropriate are push ups, chin ups and the use of medicine balls, bricks and squats (with players).

It is accepted that a minimum of three 30 min aerobic sessions a week are necessary during this period but there are a number of players who would balk if these were road runs. An alternative to the run is 30 mins of continuous exercise in a gymnasium environment. To obtain value from training nights a 3km or 1600m run once a week in the early period is a necessity. Timing the runs will provide the players with a personal target.

Provided below is an example of a weeks training session in the early part of pre-season, it is given with a balance between general and special fitness. Note it takes the body approximately four weeks to adapt to changes and therefore ensure adaptation is in place before imposing unrealistic demands on the players.

Session 1 — 15 min warm up, 45 min special/specific (drill 17, 43, 45 and 51 of L2 manual), 8 x 35 m sprint, 3 team in goal, abdomen and push-up session, warm down.

Session 2 — 15 min warm up, 3 km run, punching, 45 min special/specific (drill 13, 52, 58, 47 and 85 of L2 manual), warm down.

To achieve benefit for all players, place players of the same relative fitness and ability in the same grids.

For the 8 x 35 m sprint divide the players into 5 groups, this will allow the first group to go again on the 30 sec mark. Preferably start with the slowest group.

For the 3 team in goal work, players are divided into teams of three, the front man will sprint 6 x 10 m shuttle, the second man is resting whilst the third player does push ups. The change is taken on the front man completing the shuttle, the circuit is run through three times.

The abdomen and push-ups can be conducted in a pyramid by partnering players, start at 10, each taking it in turn doing the number working down to 1.

Punching — spend 15 secs on mauling shield or tackling bag, after 15 secs move to next shield and next player commences. Punch on six to eight shields.

The introduction of anaerobic training at an early stage is to train the 'fast twitch muscles'. (Dr Jenkins)

Note: recovery, warm up, warm down and regular hydration are very important at this stage.

Have players take their pulse reasonably regularly during the early sessions so they get to understand their body. For aerobic training keep the pulse at approx 65% of MHR. Prior to anaerobic sets reduce HR to approximately 120bpm.

There are numerous fitness drills that can be conducted and later tested to measure improvement, some are detailed in the NSC resource manual. The key is to conduct the exercises during the right training phase, eg. 10 x 400 m is not an appropriate exercise during the competition phase.

The above training schedule provides an opportunity for all players to train together under the Club concept yet provides for varying levels of fitness and ability and therefore the benefits for all players are not sacrificed. A relatively new training test is the 20m beep test, which is conducted with the use of a cassette recorder and 20m running area, it is possible to test a number of players at the one time and encourages a competitive attitude.

In the booklet 'A Seasonal Development of Aerobic Ability and Anaerobic Capacity for Rugby Union Players in Australia' Dr Jenkins provides a well structured and obviously a very beneficial pre-season training program aimed at training the aerobic and anaerobic energy systems. With the programs aimed at top level players I do not believe that you would be able to convince third and fourth grade players in most competitions to follow the program. However, the use of an Endurance or Sprint session from the booklet during the appropriate period would provide a well structured session.

PHASE TWO

The four week adaptation process only allows for two stages and a maximum of three if pre-season training commences at the beginning of February. Whilst it is easy to convince the serious player to commence earlier, most of these players are already training with representative squads and conducting a strength program. The lower grade player will generally not start earlier and therefore the balance between general and special/specific

has to be finely balanced and the content of the special/specific training complimentary for the desired outcome.

At week five a step up in the training process can take place, this should demand an increase in mileage and intensity. An example of two sessions is listed below:

session 1 — warm up, fartlek run (3km with 8 sprints), 50 min specific (drill 72, 73, 62, 15 and 94 of L2 manual) warm down.

session 2 — warm up, 40 min specific (drill 72, 67, 58, 45 and 98 of L2 manual; 4 x 50 m, 8 x 20, 10 x 10m.

This phase has provided one session of endurance and one session of sprints, if insufficient recovery time is given after sprints speed will not improve though the energy system will still gain benefit. The drills are constructed to provide one hard then one recovery drill. Active recovery is used during the fartlek run.

PHASE THREE

At the end of the second preparation phase some club members will have been involved in sevens Rugby and most players about to commence trial games. During the last preparation phase the change in specific training will not only require unit work but the latter part should see a progression towards unit skill in selected grades. It is important to note that Club morale is enhanced from all players combining regularly for skill work.

Below is an example of two sessions given during the third phase which should commence at either week 9 or 10. Again it includes an endurance and sprint session. In lieu of drills a broad description is given.

session 1 — warm up, 2 x 1600m, 2 x 800m, 2 x 400m, rucking, rucking and beat the man, warm down.

session 2 — warm up, 2 x 50m, 3 shuttle (5 x 20m), 8 x 35m x 2, mauling, stepping, tackling, passing and warm down.

It is important to graduate to at least 90 minutes of continual exercise during the last month of pre-season conditioning. Training for less than 90 minutes (regardless of quality) is likely to place you at a considerable disadvantage in the closing stages of your first matches. (Dr Jenkins)

CONCLUSION

Given the number of registered players and the percentage of serious athletes in that number (in the ACT there are 1310 senior registered players of that approximately 320 serious players (24%) the structure and balance of training session is very important if we are to attract and keep players in the game. If skill work is not introduced early to the less skillful player they often find themselves lacking confidence and feeling inept in the competition proper. The ability to test strength and endurance will provide a yardstick to the structure and balance of the training being conducted, along with the attendance at training. *It is only a small percentage of the club that plays first grade, but a well structured program can provide the skill and incentive for the remainder to want to play first grade.*

The proverb 'the fitter you get the more you can do, the more you can do the fitter you get' is appropriate which ever way training is structured.

This is one aspect of the game of Rugby which I believe is seriously neglected in both theory and practice in Australia. In a quick reference to a few coaching manuals including the Level 2 National Coaching Plan, the kick-off fails to get a mention. There would not be a coach from the club level through to the National level who could say that his team has mastered the art of the kick-off. One only has to observe the current Australian team performances throughout the 1992 season to detect our lack of finesse in this area. Although you would have to concede that viewing kick-offs is very difficult these days given the current T.V. coverage where ads are slipped in at every opportunity particularly when points have been scored. Invariably, the action has already started when the telecast resumes. However, given all that, the fact remains that kick-offs are still one of the weakest aspects of Australian Rugby.

For the purpose of this exercise it is my intention to focus on the kick-off to start and restart play. That is the kick-off from the half-way. Under amended laws introduced earlier this year, the LAW 10 states:

- Except at the start of each half all kick-offs will be drop kicks;
- If from a kick-off, the ball is kicked over the opposing teams' goal line without touching a player and is then grounded or goes dead, a scrum will be formed at halfway, with the opposing team putting in the ball.

This has effectively outlawed the long kick-off over the opposition dead-ball line thus eliminating unnecessary time-wasting in restarting the game at the 22 line.

The kick-off like the scrum or lineout needs to be a well organised team drill as no two kick-offs are the same. There is a common falling in most rugby training sessions to all but neglect kick-off practice. Training sessions usually consist of a warm-up session involving all players whilst we wait for latecomers and those requiring the obligatory strapping or rubs (usually just as the warm-up begins). Following the warm-up the players separate into their units — backs and forwards — to go off and practice their respective unit drills.

The backs have their multitude of sophisticated intricate moves, hardly any which are used or appear to work when used during a game. For the forwards it is off to the scrum-machine for the 50 or so scrum session. Each set is normally interspersed with serious debate on the merits of wheeling as opposed to shoving. Then it is over to the lineout drills where all conceivable throw-ins and formations are practised against an imaginary opposition. Once the forwards have completed their task and the backs go through the latest move just one more time it's time for a 'team' run. This is probably the one time that the kick-off rates a mention as the team run invariably commences with a kick-off at the half-way line.

It is essential that there be a well organised drill for receiving a kick-off. This is particularly important for the commencement of the game and restarts in play in order to set-up a solid base from which to launch the first assault into opposition territory. Also, the restart of play after scoring can often be a time when the concentration level is not what it should be as players may still be thinking about what has just happened rather than what is about to happen as the opposition prepares to advance back into your half.

THEIR KICK-OFF

As previously mentioned we need to have a well organised drill for receiving the opposition kick-off.

The concentration factor plays a major role here as there is a tendency for our players to be thinking about what just happened rather than what is about to happen.

In order to properly prepare ourselves to receive the kick-off we should divide our troops into Catchers/Receivers and Supporters/Blockers. The Catchers/Receivers are usually the spring-heeled types which in most cases would be the kickers/second rowers or No. 8 and possibly other members of the backrow. The Supporters/Blockers would therefore be the props and the remaining backrowers depending of the length and depth of the kick-off. Each participant in the kick-off formation should be very clear on the role they are playing;

Catchers/Receivers: their priority should be to catch and secure the ball from the kick-off on the move to enable us to drive play back towards the opposition territory.

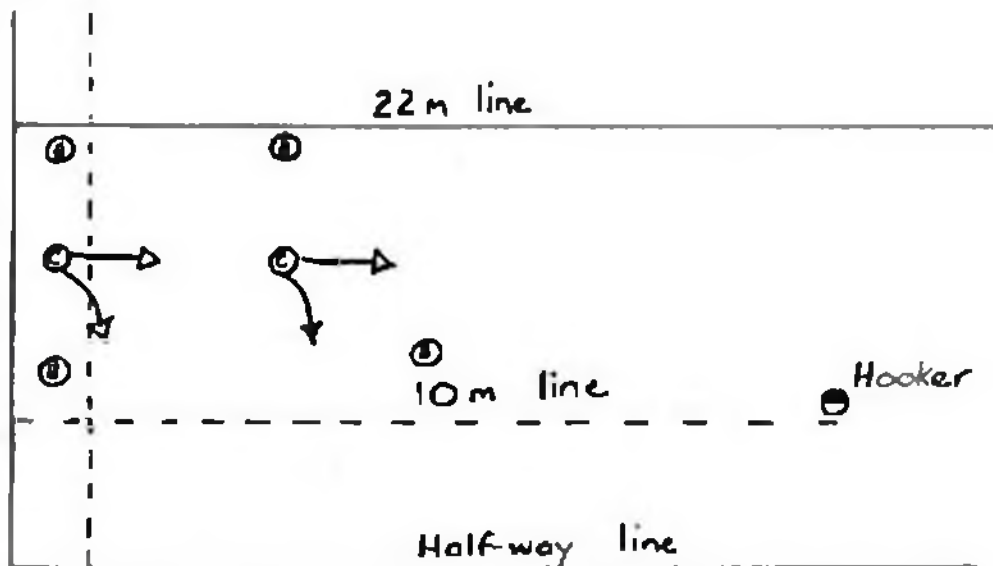
Supporters/Blockers: it is important that they are in position as the Catcher/Receiver catches the ball, not when he has caught it.

A point worth stressing here is that both groups mentioned above should be capable of interchanging roles as circumstances dictate i.e. when the kick-off falls short or is directed to a particular player.

TYPES OF KICK-OFFS

1. Conventional kick-off into the 90 degree sector from the 10m line to the 22m line. Figure 1. demonstrates the formation for this type of kick-off.

Figure 1.

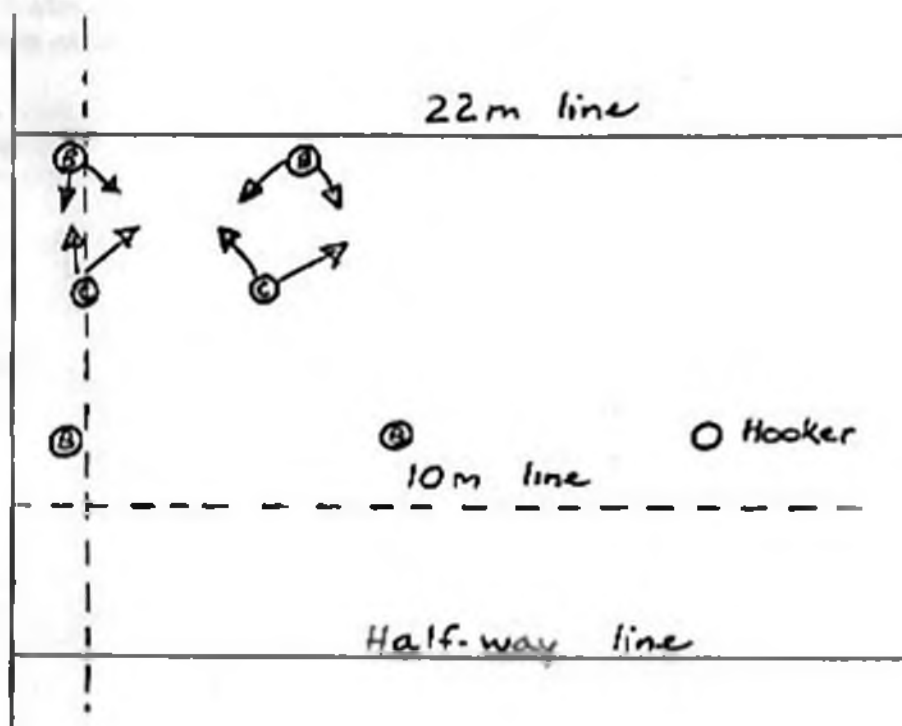


Catchers/receivers are positioned with space between themselves and the Blockers/Supporters which allows them to move forward with eyes on the ball in order to catch it and with the assistance of his Blockers/Supporters drives forward towards the oncoming opposition. The hooker is positioned on the 10m line as a deterrent to a possible short kick which would be difficult for the nominated Catchers/Receivers to reach. Once the ball has been secured we have a number of options open to us:

clearing the ball for the kick down field, half-back chipping over the top, half-back picking up a deep running forward or the forwards initiating a rolling maul.

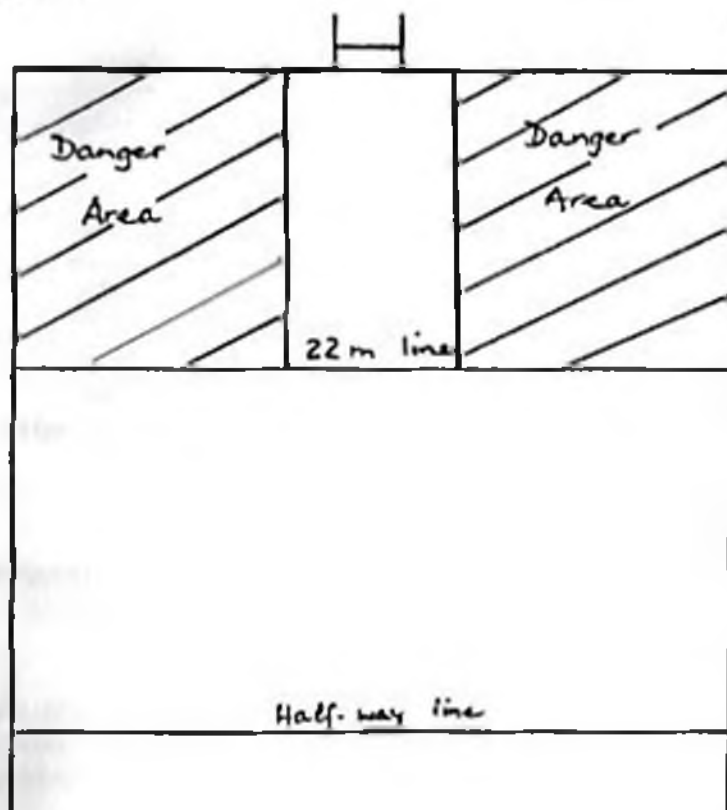
A deep kick-off will of course leave the Catchers/Receivers in a static position. It is most important that the Blockers/Supporters are in position as the ball is caught as Figure 2. illustrates.

Figure 2.



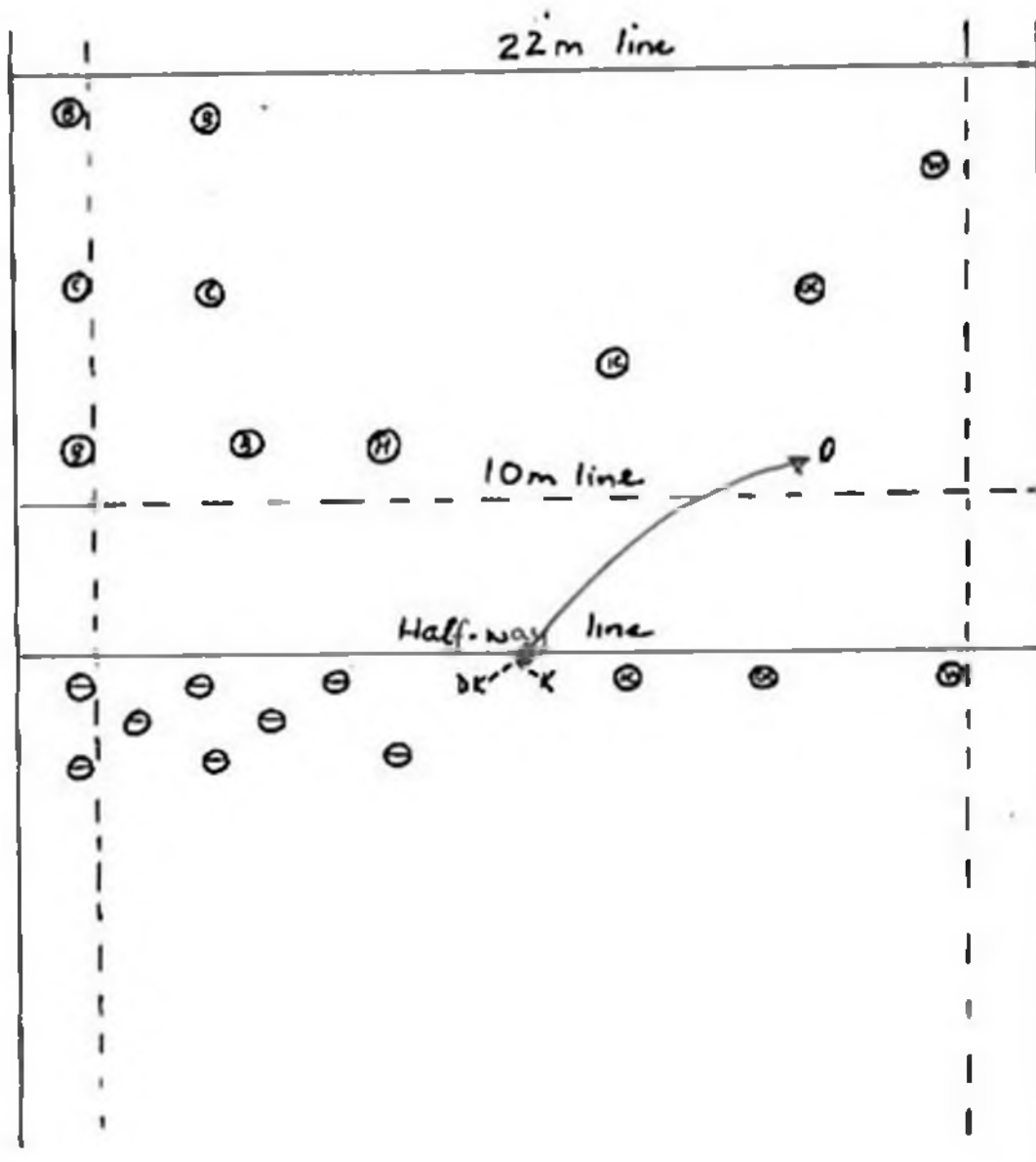
2. The long kick-off into the corners is designed to force a clearance kick with the opposition lineout throw-in deep in your half. It is important that the danger areas as shown in Figure 3, are covered by competent kickers or runners as the receiving side has the whole field in which to operate. The receiver can spot where the defence looks thinnest and either move the ball quickly with a long-pass or run in that direction.

Figure 3.



3. The Decoy kick-off to the opposition outside backs is used to try to catch them out of position or unprepared. This kick-off is executed by the nominated kicker feinting to kick-off to his forwards and a decoy kicker actually kicking the ball in the opposite direction towards the opposition outside backs as illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4.



This is not a kick-off designed to win any friends with the forwards as they are already positioned on the opposite side of the field in anticipation of an orthodox kick-off. They see no humour in then being forced to sprint to a possible breakdown on the far side of the field.

OUR KICK OFF

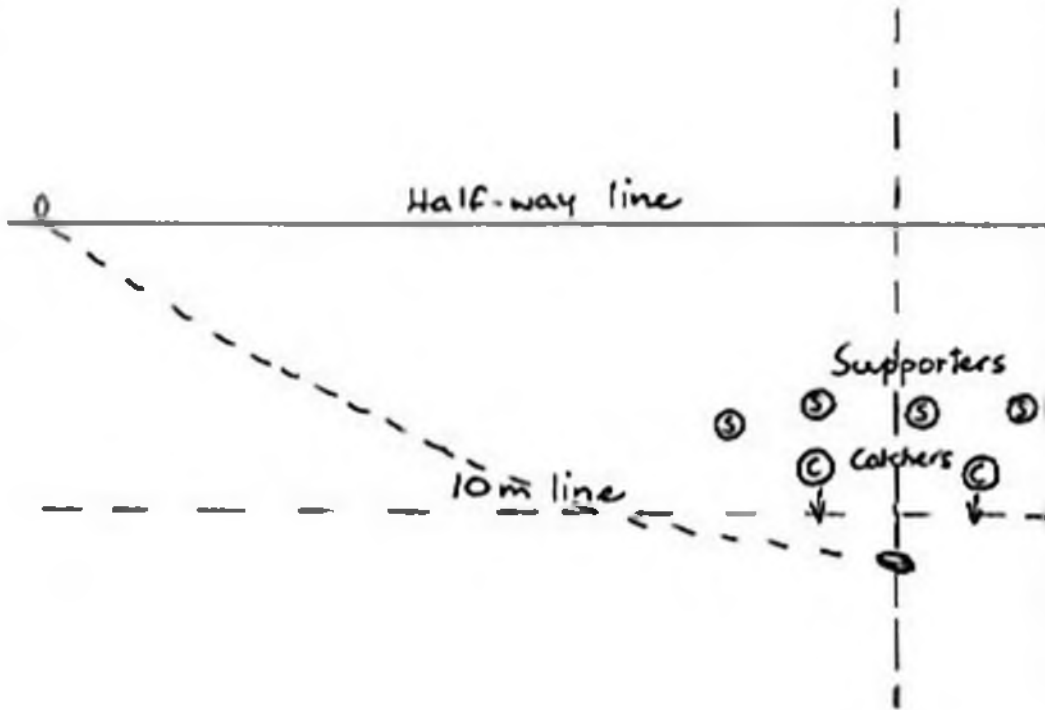
The Short kick-off to the opposition is a kick-off that the kicking side could reasonable expect to gain possession through. However, there are certain conditions attached: it requires a good high accurate kick and chasing players who reach the ball first. A very tall order indeed to satisfy both conditions.

For the chasing forwards to stand any chance at all of arriving with the ball they must work in unison with the kicker. This means starting from a point behind where the he begins his run-up to kick the ball. This is usually indicated by the kicker giving a hand signal as he approaches the ball. This co-ordination can only be achieved

by constant and consistent practice with the nominated kicker and the forward pack. As with receiving a kick-off, chasing a kick-off also requires players being nominated to perform specific tasks. This usually takes the form of Catchers and Supporters.

It is important that the Catchers and Supporters work in tandem with the Catchers attempting to catch or tap the ball down to the Supporters following in field and behind as illustrated in Figure 5. Again the constant and consistent practice will help develop an efficient and effective kick-off drill.

Figure 5.



The long kick-off into the corners can be an effective method of containing the opposition in their own half. Again this is conditional upon the kick landing deep in the 22m area towards the touchline and an effective chase follows isolating the catcher from his support thus forcing him to kick for touch. It is also paramount that the middle area of the field is effectively blocked off to prevent a break-out by the opposition from deep in their half.

Effective drills for use in practicing kick-offs can involve the full squad with the reserves and back performing the chasing and receiving rolls as desired.

The key factors involved with the team receiving the ball are the

* **COMMUNICATION** — ie. early call by the player electing to catch the ball.

* **CATCH** — ie. the timing of the jump if necessary, the use of the body in contact and subsequent delivery of the ball.

* **SUPPORT** — ie. the moving to the ball while it is in flight to support the catcher of the ball so that the catcher is not hit about and then to assist the catcher to turn so as to protect the ball. I believe the "support" also entails ensuring that there are players coming from the appropriate depth to tidy up the tapped balls that will undoubtedly result as the ball is contested. While there is considerable argument regarding whether the first support player should tip the ball or block in a ruck situation, when receiving the ball from the kick off, it is, for the reasons already advanced, essential to support the ball catcher by putting in the block first to protect him and to provide a more solid platform from which to begin the next phase of play.

* **COMMITMENT** — of the engagement.

Again, the failure to execute these key factors correctly increases significantly the opposing teams chances of regaining possession. It is my belief that these principles apply regardless of the tactics used ie. the split kick off used by the Scots against the All Blacks. The only advantage may be a surprise factor if the receiving team is disorganised and thus is unable to perform those key factors but this should not happen at the higher levels of the game.

The strategy of using your jumpers at the front to contest the ball in the air with the front rows standing behind to provide the immediate support has been relatively successful for Australia however, the game being a dynamic sport with constantly evolving strategies has seen the South Africans kicking the ball to an area behind the Australian jumpers, forcing them and their support players to turn and have to come back to join the engagement from an onside position; the height of the kick being such to allow the South African forwards to arrive simultaneously with the ball and with considerable momentum. In the second test in 1992 against the All Blacks in Brisbane a New Zealand 22 metre drop out saw Grant Fox kicking towards the back of the Wallaby forwards, the ball being caught by Troy Coker, Ian Jones making a committed chase was able to tackle Coker as he caught the ball without any Australian support being present to block and protect the ball. Admittedly tiredness may have been a factor but it still illustrates the dilemma regarding the formation to be used.

Yet if one counters this by bringing one's forwards back further then one is vulnerable to the shallow kick off as evidenced in the recent England versus New Zealand test where the kick was sufficiently well flighted to allow the English forwards to effectively contest the ball, winning it and then securing the possession to develop an immediate momentum which then were able to sustain for the course of the game.

The question then needs to be answered. What strategy should teams adopt? First, the team receiving the kick off or drop out needs to be organised so that there are no easy options available for the team kicking off. Every area of the field needs to be covered ie. the mid field area needs to be covered by the designated players so that a short kick straight ahead or the sudden switch, kicking shallow to the backs are considered too risky to consider. Obviously adjustments need to be made if it is a 22 metre drop out rather than a kick off from half way due to the laws of the game. If the receiving team is organised then the team kicking off will probably choose the more conventional options of kicking for the forwards to contest or kicking long.

Teams should be prepared for the long kick. Players should be drilled to support the player catching the ball so that the number of options is increased. This is to be achieved by limiting the angle of the defending kicker who will be further limited if he is right footed, as he will be kicking to his right hand side touchline. The team receiving the ball then needs to counter this by ensuring there is a supporting player to widen the angle and ensuring that the kicker is more than competent on the left foot.

It is not possible in this paper to cover every option open to the team receiving the ball so the emphasis will be on the receiving the kick off when both sets of forwards are contesting the ball. Those designated to contest the ball in the air and their support players should be in a close formation. One can argue as to where they should

exactly stand (ie. should the players closest to the sideline stand on or outside the sideline?) but there would be agreement that there should be sufficient depth so that the players can move forward to allow them to effectively contest the ball. This movement must occur immediately the ball is in flight and thus speed of decision making is critical as to the direction of the ball, the flight, the call and the specific role they will fulfil at the engagement. Timing is essential. This will not occur at any serious level of rugby without practice (unopposed and opposed). These drills need to extend to the next phase so that the players can handle a variety of initiatives ie. putting on a drive, rolling the maul, using a forward(s) as a runner off the side of the maul to punch the ball over the advantage line etc.

Perhaps it would be fair to say that Australian teams have been guilty of not being aggressive enough in taking the space where the ball is going to be contested. Whether the ball goes shallow or long does not matter if the forwards move quickly to the engagement, ideally the catcher is supported by the blocks forming a impenetrable wedge. The ball is then taken by the tapper secured and thus allowing decisions to be made regarding what option is to be taken.

With balls being sufficiently flighted at the higher levels of the game, the reality is that the ball will be contested and that a tapped ball may result. What is critical with this scenario is that those contesting on the receiving team are tight and supported by those designated thus providing some protection to those sweeping the loose ball. It is important to stress that those looking to catch the tapped ball are coming from a position of appropriate depth. Obviously the tap is important as a misguided tap has the capacity to create a dangerous situation which may be exploited. Again commitment is a most important key factor in determining the outcome. I have purposely refrained from designating who will stand where because that will depend upon the make up of the forwards. The coach will need to make those judgements on the basis of the resources he has to work with.

CONCLUSION

Australian rugby needs to give more emphasis to receiving k/k offs (and kicking off). There is no single solution to ensure a successful outcome but rather a number of key factors which must be executed correctly and applied according to the resources available. Teams need to be organised to cover all options however it would be of benefit to Australian rugby to concentrate on the speed of decision making and the subsequent committed response if they are going to be more successful at this specific aspect of rugby.

RESTARTS OF PLAY (THE ALTERNATIVE)

Kim Thurlton

Restarts...

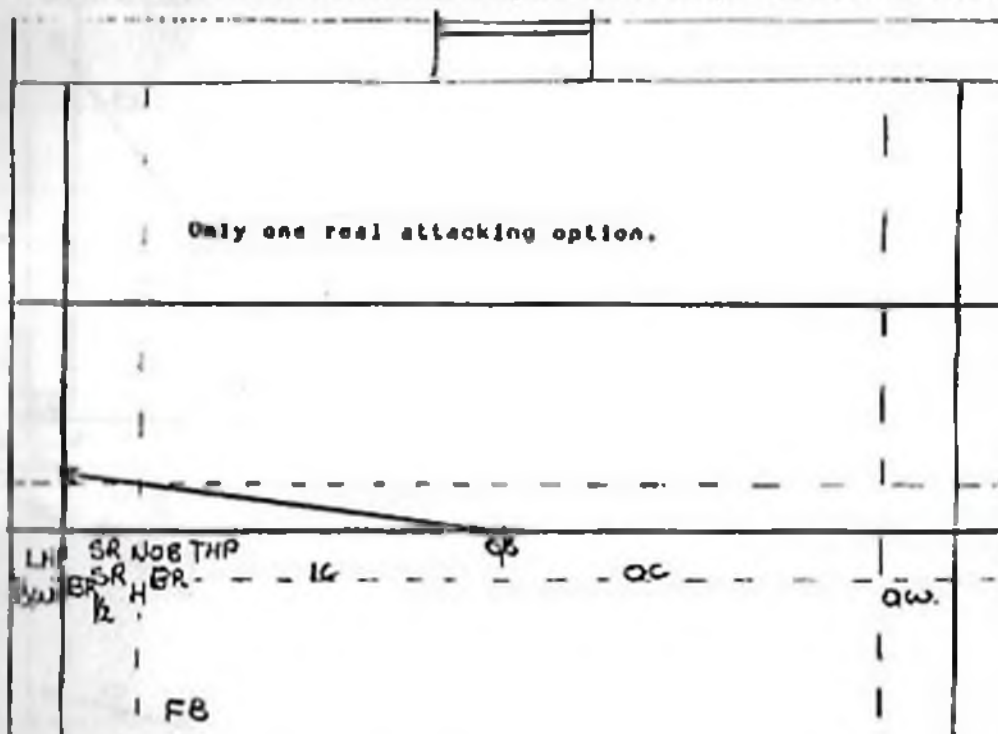
- The most underestimated source of attack.
- Totally controlled force with space, pressure and time.
- Committing opposition to your nominated area of attack.
- Variety.
- More player involvement, interest, responsibility and commitment.

Far too often Coaches, Players and Teams become sterile with their patterns of thought concerning the restarts of play from the kick.

In this paper I will endeavour to give my theories on kickoffs, both from the place kick and drop kick, including restarts from the 25 drop out.

On the 13th June 1992 the I.R.F.B. Law Changes were implemented, giving the attacking or the non offending teams a far greater advantage to expand their scoring opportunities and make the game more attractive to players and spectators. With the place kick being allowed only from the initial kick off and from the resumption of play after half time break, this has given greater scope for variety.

Let's look at the conventional restart, with the place kick or drop kick from the attacking team.



If for any of the following reasons the kick is not correct, you lose any advantage of regaining possession.

- If the kick is —
- Too Long
 - Too Short
 - Too Low
 - Too High

or if directed, the opposition will close your advantage down, consolidate and either mount an attacking raid down field or belt the ball down the touchline, where if they take that option they may have an advantage in the lineout.

Discussion — Advantage — Field Position LOST.

A.B.C. RESTARTS

(For want of a better name.)

Now we will look at the ALTERNATIVE.

Three options will be demonstrated by the following diagrams and will endeavour to give the reader a practical insight into the advantages of the expanded attacking options, available from this underestimated source of ATTACK.

- A — Loose head side of field.
- B — Centre field.
- C — Tight head side of field.

- 1. — Short kick
- 2. — Midfield kick
- 3. — Long kick

Kick options for III grubber and bomb.

Diagram 1.

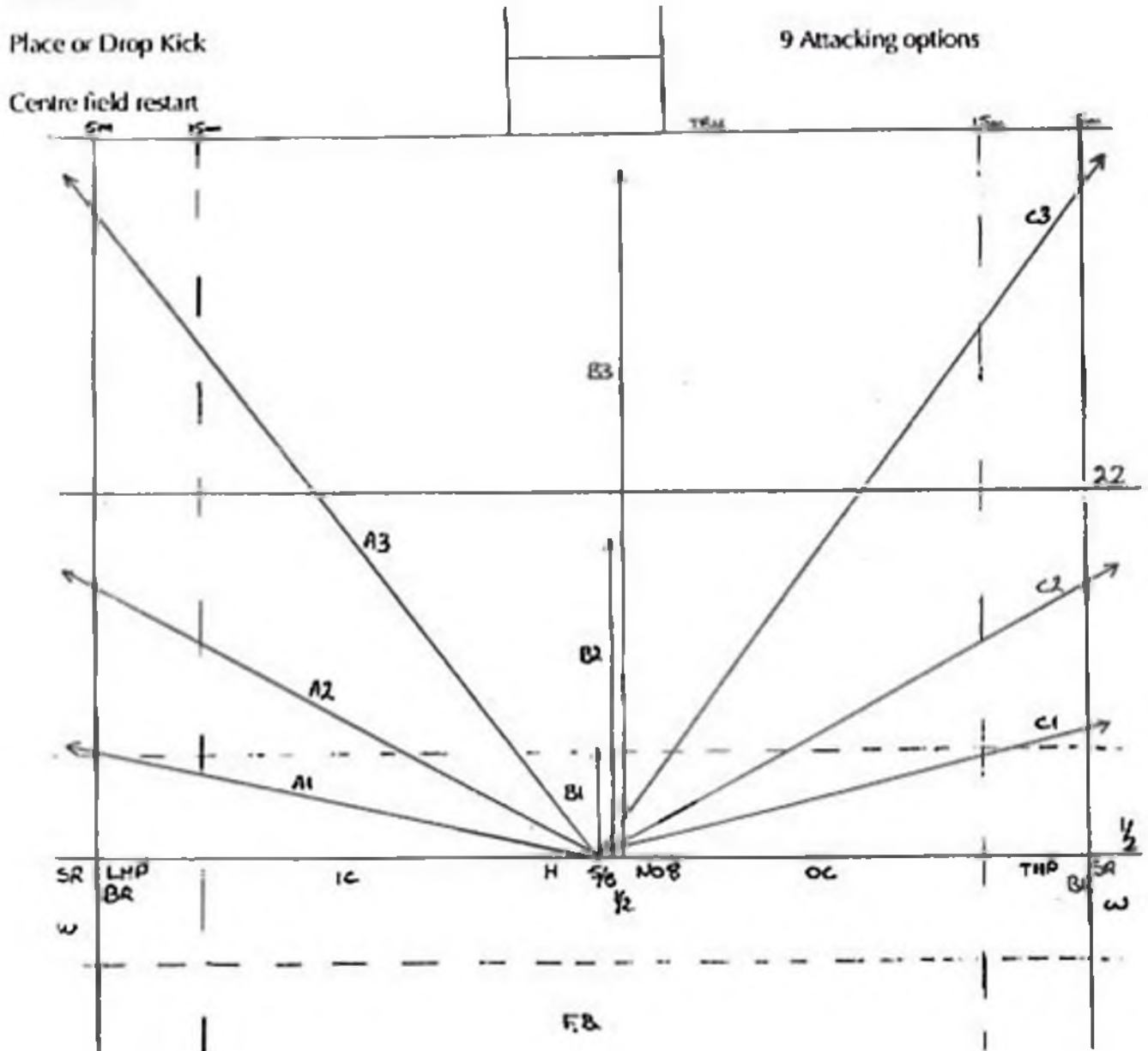


Diagram 2.

Drop Kick

Unlimited options

25 Drop Out — Midfield

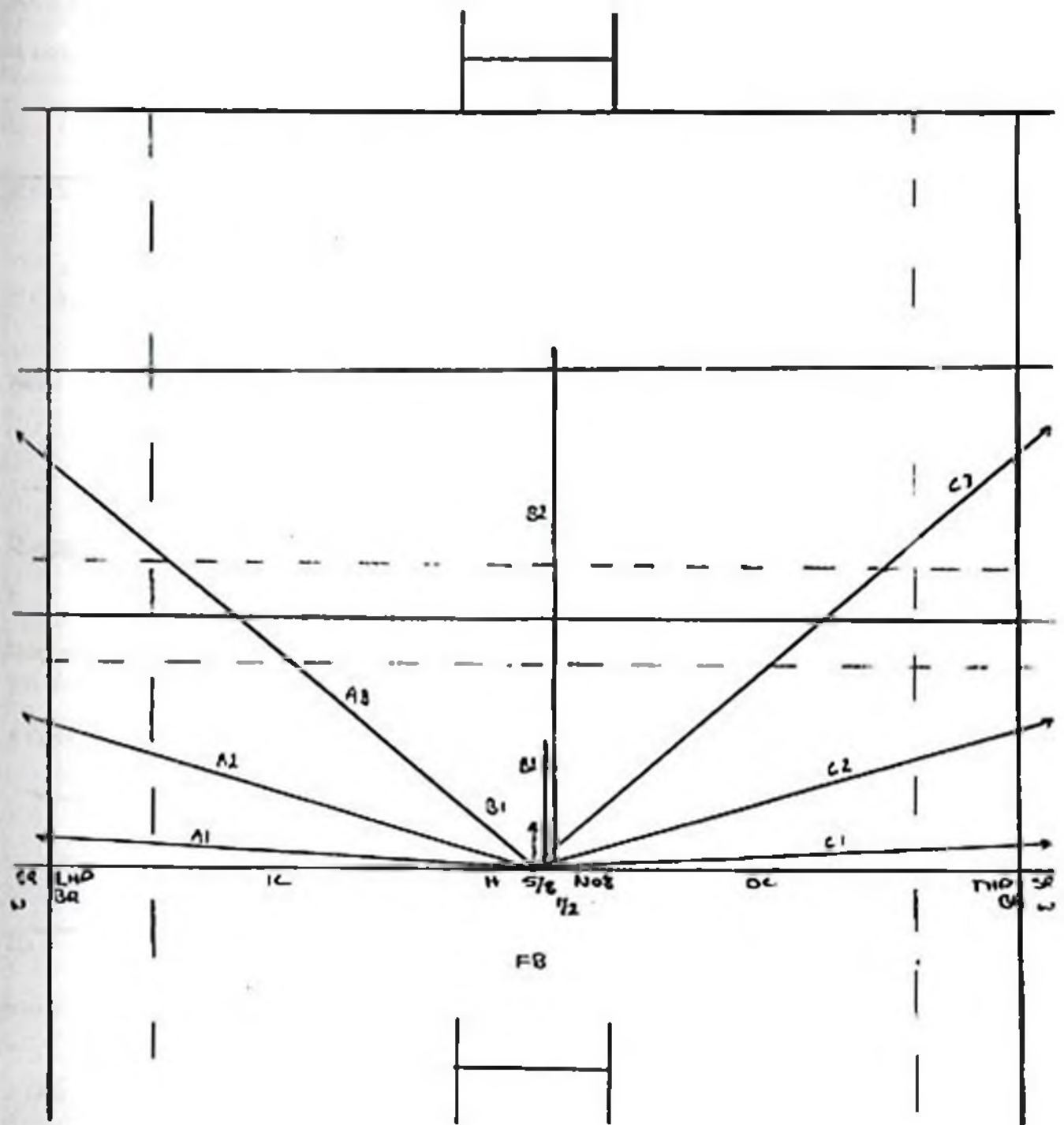


Diagram 3.

Drop Kick

Unlimited Options

25 Drop Out — Either side of Field

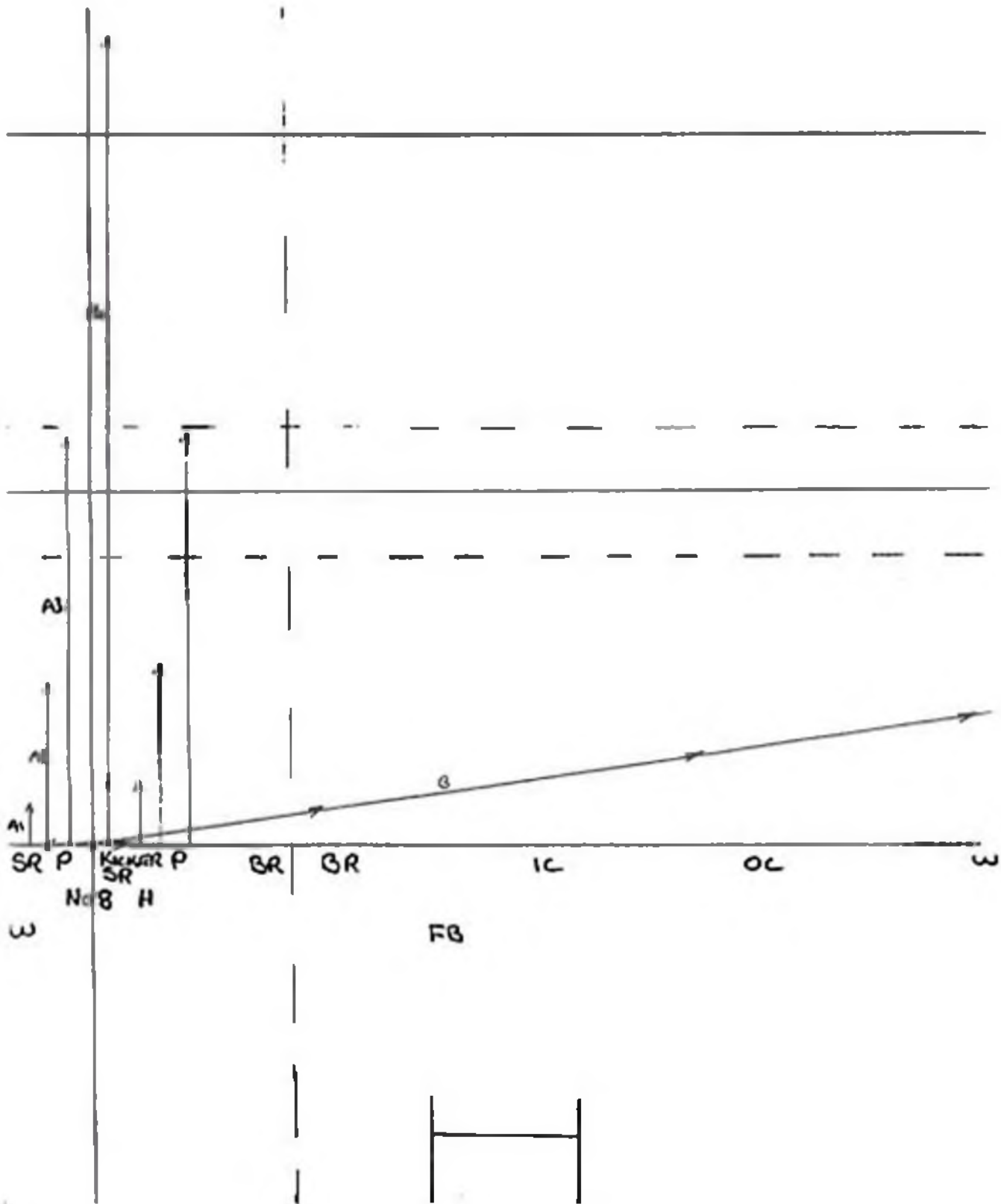


Diagram 1.

Kick off or resumption of play with the place kick or drop kick.

There are nine options for the kicker and the attacking team.

A1, 2 and 3 B 1, 2 and 3 C 1, 2 and 3

A Kicks:

- Always to the left hand side or loose head props side.
- Second Row, Backrow and Left Wing on that side of the scrum make up that attacking force.
- A1 Directed short high and towards touchline.
- A2 Directed midfield high and towards touchline.
- A3 Deep kick high towards corner post.

B Kicks:

- Midfield with Hooker, No 8, Five Eight and Half the attacking force.
- B1 Grubber kick with force to a selected player (pressure).
- B2 High midfield into space.
- B3 Deep and high centre field.

C Kicks:

- Always to the right hand props side of the scrum.
- Second row, Backrow and Right Wing on that side of the scrum make up the attacking force.
- C1, 2 and 3 as in A1, 2 and 3.

Note:

- The Inside Centre and Outside Centre will either become 1/2 or 5/8 depending on the success of regaining possession.
- The Fullback in midfield has enough time and space to cover all counter options from opposition or can be used as extra man in attack, in all phases, from any part of the field.

Diagram 2. — 25's unlimited kicking options.

- Field set up as in Diagram 1.
- But we have the extra option of not having to kick from centre field.

Diagram 3.

25's taken from within the ten and fifteen metre sidelines — unlimited kicking options.

A Kicks

- Tight five on the 25 metre line and between the ten and fifteen metre line.
- Back Row standing outside fifteen metre line directional angle towards touch.
- No 8 and Hooker directly behind tight five in driving and support position.
- Backs conventional alignment with the exception of open wing who will stand very wide.
- Kicker to be positioned between ten and fifteen metre lines.
- A1 Short Grubber or high bomb.
- A2 Mid field bomb.
- A3 Centre field bomb.
- A4 Long high deep.

B Kicks

- Depending where opposition mark up.
- How close — How wide — How deep.

In Diagram 3 this option must give the attacking team (kicking) the utmost advantage in being able to apply controlled pressure both mentally and physically in unfamiliar circumstances.

In all the situations we have looked at the opposition **MUST** mark up against the attacking team.

A negative response to the attacking alignment automatically gives the kicking team the advantage.

- With the deregulation of attacking alignment it must put doubt, uncertainty and pressure on ALL opposition players in all parts of the field.

- Counter attack by opposition is limited due to uncertainty, wrong options must occur.
- If the ABC option was successful in changing the direction of a game only once during the game or even once in a season, I think it must be a viable alternative.
- I don't say it should be the norm every restart but it is an option with unlimited options available to the team.

As they don't say in the Toyota ad "please consider".

A NEW LINEOUT FOR EVERY LINEOUT

E.G. Reed.

The subject is "Rugby", the assignment is to write a thousand words, no less, on any aspect of the game. The choice would seem very easy, for example, a forward would presumably write about his role in the game, what he would consider to be his speciality, how he approaches this area of his game and go into great detail as to how to best perform this particular skill. Those persons who play in the backline, who in their own minds presume to be of more intellect than those of us in the pigs' forwards, may even try to cope with writing about other areas of the game, some popular topics might include, hairstyles, the latest trends in fashion and many other areas of a feminine nature all to do with their roles in a rugby match.

As an ex forward, I have no inclination in discussing the roles and skills of backlines, (at least not in a thousand words). An area of the game that I as a coach can practice now and also very "radical" ideas is the lineout, it is this facet of the game I would like write about.

I do not wish to go into detail on the "keys" of a good line-out, e.g. the throw, the jump, the block, the rip and the drive, what I would like to discuss is the actual formation of the lineout and how best we can use it, not just win our own ball, but to also have a good chance of winning the oppositions as well.

To obtain any results from any lineout, yours or theirs, the lineout has to be perfect. This can only be achieved through practice. I think it would be an under-statement to say that not enough work is done on lineouts at training. The lineout is the single, biggest, source of possession that can be gained in any game of rugby, it therefore can have a great bearing on the result of any match. To achieve that dominance we have to practice all aspects of the lineout. For the throw to be straight and accurate, communications and skills of all players of a high standard, we will have to be prepared to spend more time at training on lineouts.

Under the new laws introduced in 1992 we now have the ability to be more radical in our organisation and form of lineouts. We can bunch up our players, space our players and even introduce more than the usual seven to the lineout. With a greater gap in the middle of the line we should be able to better protect our jumpers and the ball as well. The use of the inside arm only by the jumpers should also ensure a much cleaner delivery of the ball by the players.

The two areas that I would like to discuss are a. the spacing of our players and b. the positioning of them. In this discussion we are only considering the full lineout, using only eight players including the thrower.

Under the new laws recently introduced we are no longer required to have a gap of an arms distance between our players down our line. We can now bunch our players up, we can also spread them out or even bunch them at the front as well as at the back of the lineout leaving a gap in the middle. We are allowed a distance of ten metres to work in. Using seven players either bunched or spread this gives us a great ability to vary our jumpers.

The first example I will use is very basic in its construction, but is very effective when used against a somewhat lazy opposition. Instead of bunching our players on the first player in the lineout we bunch them up on the last player, the lineout is then formed from the fifteen metre line instead of the five metre line. This will then give us room at the front of our line in which we can work. The deception will occur in that the opposition will think that the ball is going towards the fifteen metre line. Even if some of their players do move forward to anticipate our throw there is always one who will not and therefore he tends to trip us his own teammates as they move forward. Because of our call we move forward as a unit, the ball does not even have to go to one of our specialist jumpers, they can be at the back of the lineout to cause an even greater deception.

This simple lineout variation shows how we can within the new laws of the game expand on the traditional tactics of throwing the lineout ball to either a number two, four, six or down the back jumper. I believe that the lawmakers have truly opened up the lineout for much greater variation. I have to emphasise the importance of players knowing how to bunch up. They will need to close all gaps that were such a big part of the old game.

the jumpers will have less room to move in but at the same time they should be given greater protection from the blockers. This formation of the lineout can also give greater support to the jumper when he is in the air and because our players are nice and tight the chance of being penalised for lifting is greatly reduced.

Because we no longer use the entire ten metres given to us for the lineout in its formation we can now play them as if we were using fewer players. An example being the old two man lineouts. With players bunched at the front and the back we can throw to the middle, into space. With our main jumpers on the fifteen metre line by themselves we can go to the front or visa-versa. By separating our jumpers from their usual blockers and the oppositions as well we can through training teach our other jumpers how to block and support, therefore giving our main jumper the advantage of support and lift whereas the opposing jumpers may not have these skills.

The amount of variation that we use in our lineouts is only restricted by our own imaginations. I could go into great detail on the formation of these lineouts but that depends on how far one wishes to explore their own players talents. I don't believe that height has to be a determining factor in the result of ones own lineouts, it is a matter of how much variation and the amount of time one wishes to spend on lineouts that will determine their outcome. The Japanese although short in stature have for many years been regarded as one of the games best exponents of the lineout.

The lineout is a big part of the game of rugby union, it is unique to rugby and will always be a big factor in the result of any game played. It is a shame that too many matches are won and lost simply because of the height of the players. I do believe though that if as coaches we were to spend a lot more time and be prepared to risk a lot more variation in our lineouts then this would not have to be the case.

I have been asked to write a piece on any aspect of Rugby. Many aspects of the game, e.g. the role of the back-row or the function of individual positions have been written about ad nauseam.

I decided to think through a practical problem which is quite a common occurrence. The problem is outlined in the introduction and I hope my response to it is assessed as being positive and hopefully proves to be a useful resource for coaches coming into the game.

It should be noted that all the examples given in this paper are deliberately simple. I am presenting an approach to the overcoming of a problem. The confidence with which coaches use the approach is ultimately up to them.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

BASIC PREMISE:

"The Lineout is recognised as being the biggest single source of possession in the game." — A.R.F.U. Coaching Manual.

Hypothetical Situation:

- Team X is competing in a club competition which is of a very high standard.
- Team X is a most competent outfit apart from significant deficiencies in the orthodox lineout situation.
- Team X have an outstanding 2 jumper, however, they are significantly deficient at 4 and 6 essentially because of a lack of height and experience when compared with their opponents week in week out.
- Coach of Team X decides to move outstanding 2 jumper to 4 and attempts to develop a competent 2 and 6 jumper.
- The movement of the outstanding 2 jumper to 4 is a failure as he is consistently opposite representative players and he lacks the height and knowledge of the position to gain the required possession from the middle of the lineout.
- Team X are really struggling to gain a minimal amount of possession from the lineout and opposing teams consistently play a sideline game against them. Opposing teams gain a great deal of positive field position and because of the standard of the competition this makes it increasingly difficult for team X to win games against those teams in the competition with extremely effective orthodox lineouts.

QUESTION:

Does Team X just accept this situation and do their best within restricted parameters or does the coach attack the problem?

IF HE DOES, WHAT DOES HE DO?

- To respond by saying "we will use short lineouts" is not an effective, complete answer to the problem.

THE ANSWER LIES IN THE EMBRACING OF A NUMBER OF FACTORS WHICH BECOME INEXTRICABLY LINKED. WHEN LINKED THEY PRESENT A REALLY EFFECTIVE OFFENSIVE GAME WHICH ESSENTIALLY ELIMINATES THE ENORMOUS DISADVANTAGES THAT PURSUING AN ORTHODOX LINEOUT GAME WOULD IMPOSE UPON THE TEAM.

Lineout variations are just a component in the overall plan which is outlined in parts 2 — 4.

PART 2: LINEOUT VARIATION

The physical beginning of attacking the stated problem is the development of LINEOUT VARIATIONS. As long as the variety is within the parameters of the laws of the game the options developed are only limited by the extent of creative thought and the ability of the players:

- e.g.
1. *variety within the framework of the orthodox lineout, i.e. stacking and throwing away from the stack;*
 2. *2 Man Lineout — using a forward as half-back;*
 3. *3 Man Lineout — using best 3 jumpers etc. etc. etc.*
- *The key factor is, of course, the organisation and hours of work spent on these variations. The establishment of an instinctive rapport between the thrower and the jumpers. This relationship develops to the point where the thrower can pick up the jumpers' movements even through eye contact.*
 - *Once the organisation is in place and the hours of work put in, the variety becomes very difficult for the opposition to combat. Even though opposing teams become aware of your use of lineout variety the fact remains that they do not possess your organisational efficiency and at the most they will have spent the week prior to the game on combating short lineout variations. That one weeks work unravels pretty quickly when put up against a well developed series of lineout variations.*
 - *The team using the lineout variations can use this area to really pick up the pace of the game if they so choose, e.g. it is essential that the lineout call is made on the way to the lineout so that the thrower can virtually pick the ball up and throw it to the player called. This speed of delivery is especially relevant when you are running forward to the lineout and as stated picks up the tempo of the game. When running back to a lineout where you are throwing in it is better to slow the speed of delivery to enable players who are offside to get back into position to ensure effective use of possession won.*

In complementing the variety on our throw we would need to work extremely hard on *developing a really offensive lineout when the other team are actually throwing in.* The key factor is that our lineout must as a line take the space down the middle with all players in our lineout conscious of the fact that in this situation they all become ball winners.

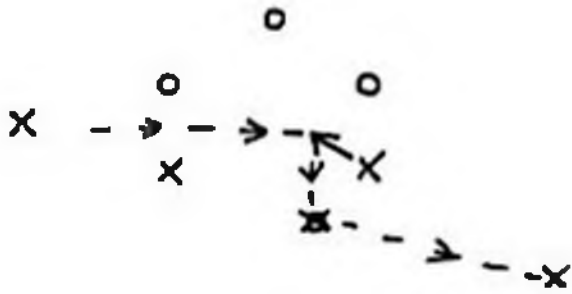
EXAMPLES OF VARIETY WITHIN ONE EXAMPLE OF THE SHORT LINEOUT

A. The Two Man Lineout

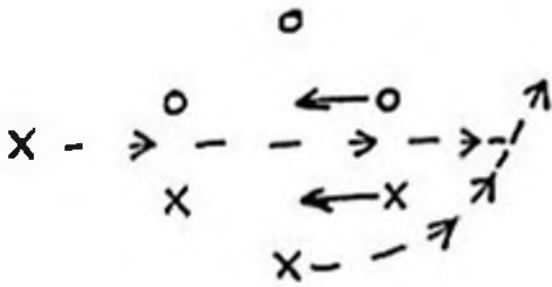
A1.



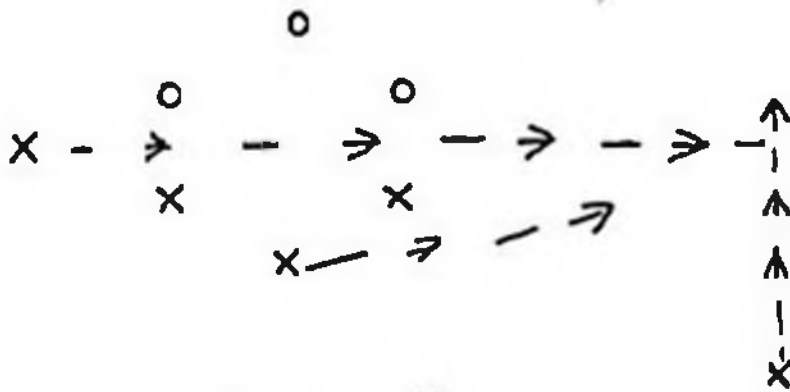
A2.



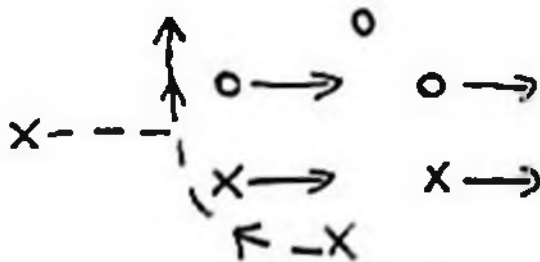
A3.



A4.



A5.



Explanation of Examples

- A1. Throw to the first player moving forward and deflected to acting half back who passes to first receiver.
- A2. Throw to 2nd player who has come forward. He deflects ball to acting half back who passes to first receiver.
- A3. 2nd player moves forward with his opponent instinctively going with him. The thrower picks up the acting half back as he sweeps around the back of the lineout.
- A4. Thrower delivers the ball right over the lineout to a receiver who has come from the 10m line.
- A5. On the call both jumpers move backwards hoping to draw their opposites with them. The acting half back runs into the space created at the front of the lineout and receives a quick ball from the thrower.

As indicated the above are only five examples from one specific lineout variation. The scope for variety is as stated only limited by the depth of creative knowledge of the coach and his team. The scope for variety/innovation is endless.

PART 3:

AN IMMEDIATE/SPECIFIED LINK BETWEEN THE ACQUISITION ON THE BALL AND ITS USE.

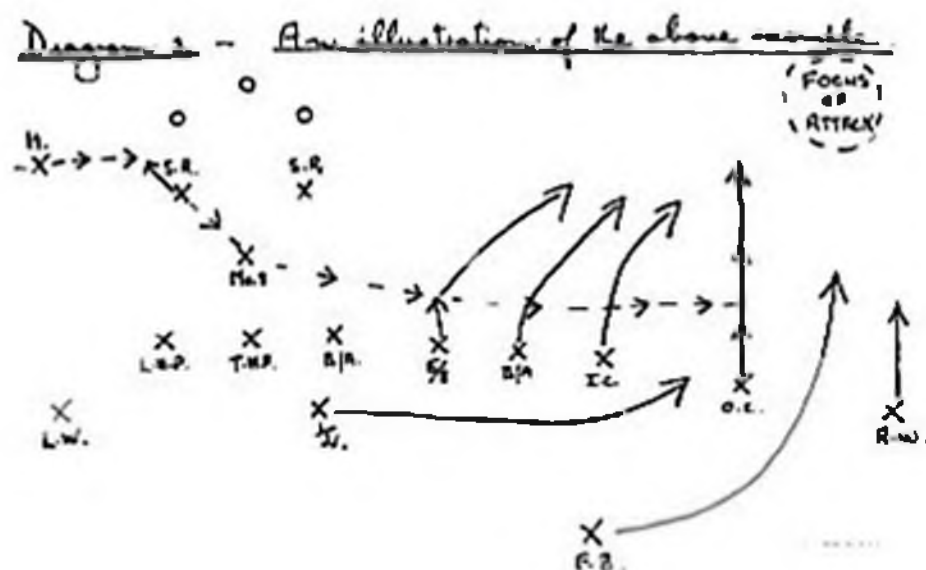
- It is obviously vital that when possession is acquired via specified lineout variations a constructive, creative use of possession takes place.
- e.g. As soon as the person responsible for calling the lineout variations does so this should be immediately followed by another call which determines the fate of that possession.

i.e. the S/R decides that upon receiving the ball he will miss the loose forward and the Inside Centre standing immediately on his outside and direct the ball straight to the Outside Centre who is standing quite wide.

Therefore the determination to attack the opposition *out wide* on this occasion will be reflected in the support players having a distinct advantage over the opposition to their support on the ball. This will give the attacking side a significant advantage regarding the maintenance of continuous play.

It is very important regarding this example of using the ball out wide to ensure the strategic placement of excess players (forwards not involved in the lineout) to ensure the area of the field where the ball goes is not cluttered by opposition players.

Diagram 1 — An illustration of the above example.



The key point is an appreciation of the fact that this is merely *one example* of the use of possession. That three areas of the field you can attack are obviously:

- 1) Through the Lineout itself
- 2) The middle of the field (which creates an attacking opportunity on either side of the field from the breakdown) and
- 3) As in the example using the width of the field.

The means of attacking these particular areas provide enormous scope for variations.

- It is important to note that all of the above refers to attacking the opposition with the ball in the hand. *The kicking options of the box, mid-field bomb and the long deep kick to the open become additional options.* There is almost an infinite number of options a coach could create.

PART 4:

IN ORDER FOR THE PRECEDING APPROACHES TO BE IMPLEMENTED AT A HIGH RATE DURING A MATCH THE TEAM MUST EMBRACE TOTALLY THE CONCEPT OF REDUCING THE NUMBER OF THROWS INTO THE LINEOUT THE OPPOSITION HAS IN ANY GAME.

HOW?

Before listing the very positive options a team can take in preference to just kicking the ball into touch and the game re-starting with the opposition throwing the ball into the lineout I would stress the following to the team:

"Our aim is to minimise oppositions throws into the lineout, however, if it is in the best interests of the team that the ball is to be kicked into touch than so be it."

OPTIONS TO CONSIDER

A. COUNTER ATTACK

When the ball is kicked into our 22 instead of giving the opposition the initiative by kicking into touch we always consider the option of counter attack. *Counter attack is a concept that needs to be worked on extremely hard at practice to ensure that all players embrace the options available and that the concept becomes a part of each player's mental make-up.*

B. STRATEGIES FROM PENALTIES OUT OF KICKING RANGE:

1) Up and Unders:

The high ball in front of the forwards with an enthusiastic, aggressive chase puts the receiver under enormous pressure. The chasers should, if possible, contest the ball in the air or if fractionally late put the receiver on the ground.

2) Tap Moves:

The coach and team can develop a number of tap moves which function best from either the middle of the field or the sides of the field. They are an extremely positive attacking option. *The structure and number of these tap plays is only limited by the combined depth of imagination of the coach and team.*

Very Basic Example

Quick tap pushed to midfield and driven deep to the open side wing. This kick is supported by a totally committed chase.

C. "DOWN TOWN FOOTBALL"

This option is very valuable when used against teams that "fancy" their capacity for counter attack. The concept is best illustrated through an example.

i.e. Our team has the feed into a scrum just outside our 22 on the left hand side of the field. The team we are playing pursue the concept of counter attack quite strongly. It is a vital aspect of the club's attacking philosophy. So as soon as our half-backs feeds the ball to our kicker (must be penetrative) our loose forwards and backline pursue the kick (which has been put down the line) from an offside position. They throw a 10m ring around the receiver who is then confronted with the option of pursuing counter attack or returning the kick. If the counter attack is pursued our defensive qualities can create enormous problems for our opposition. If they return the kick then our receivers will decide what is the option to take which is in the "best interests of our team". The key factors in the downtown game are the penetration of our kicker, the effectiveness and the offensive defensive game and our ability to take advantage of counter attacking opportunities which may arise as the result of a return kick from the opposition.

D. RIGHT HAND SIDE KICKING GAME FROM HALF-BACK:

This play is obviously best suited to a scrum in the oppositions territory, however, it can become an option from a scrum in our 22 in preference to just kicking the ball into touch. What we are doing is getting our chaser who would normally be our right winger to arrive to either contest the ball in the air or to tackle the receiver. The right winger would require very good support from the right hand side flanker and number eight as well as the appropriate line of defence on the open side of the field from our backline. The half-back would need to work really hard on this aspect of his game to ensure pinpoint accuracy. If the accuracy of the kicker is reliable and the contesting and defensive qualities of the winger are exceptional, then the team has created a situation where we are moving forward to a breakdown which may present 2nd and 3rd phase opportunities for us.

E. 5/8 KICKING INTO THE BOX:

Essentially the same principles apply as in D. You are creating a new gain line, one which the opposition needs to move backwards to and contest rather than giving them the comfort of a jog to a lineout with their throw into the lineout.

F. It can be seen from the options A—E that there are many alternatives a team has to just kicking into touch and giving the opposition the throw into the ensuing lineout. It is stressed that what we are trying to do is be aware of all our options to ensure we are able to minimise the number of times the opposition throws the ball into the lineout. This, of course, reduces the effectiveness of the potential ball winners and because we have opted for lineout variation on our throw puts us in a far more authoritative position regarding the lineout.

CONCLUSION

I have presented a solution to the problem of a weak orthodox lineout and demonstrated through that solution the inextricable link between Lineout Variations, the use of possession gained and the minimising of the number of times the opposition actually throw the ball into the lineout. Through the solution, I have given our lineout every chance of being superior to the oppositions and reduced the oppositions scope to use their outstanding lineout jumpers in the status quo of the orthodox lineout. In addition we have developed many positive options in attack and defence.

Perhaps the concept of Lineout Variation and the ensuing positive use of possession should be part of all teams make-up regardless of the strength of their orthodox lineout. Often the security of a strong orthodox lineout will prevent the coach from challenging his players to exploit more innovative lineout initiatives.

After all 99% of teams adhere to the basic situations of jumping at 2, 4, 6: I am sure all team members would appreciate the variety outlined in the solution to the problem I began with.

TO RUCK OR MAUL

THAT IS THE QUESTION

Chris Hickey

Rugby is a game of options. One of these options is whether to RUCK or MAUL in order to maintain possession and continuity. Depending on what happens in the tackle situation, sometimes there is no option... at other times the team in possession will deliberately try to dictate whether they RUCK or MAUL the ball.

What this paper will CONSIDER is the situation where: **THE TEAM IN POSSESSION IS TRYING TO DETERMINE IF THE SECOND PHASE BALL WILL BE "RUCK OR MAUL BALL"** and how either option may then affect **THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ATTACKING BACKLINE PLAY.**

THE LAST DECADE

If we look at the role of forwards over the last 10 years I believe it has changed significantly and has consequently effected backline play. Ten years ago the primary role of forwards was to gain possession from set and phase play for the backs to use. Now we see forwards using that possession to attack with themselves more often... particularly over the last 2-3 years, via the "rolling maul". This trend has led to teams (or coaches) choosing to try and deliberately use the maul as the preferred source of phase possession. The main advantage of mauling being considered that "maul ball" was more controlled and secure.

Teams have adapted their defensive tactics to counter this trend and since the introduction of the "revised maul/maul rules" in 1992, the maul has been characterised by the defensive team only committing a limited number of players while the remainder "fringe" at the edge of the maul. This has created problems for backline play, in particular the inside backs.

A TIME TO MAUL

There will be certain situations where the best option will be to maul, particularly where "ball security" is a priority. Some situations where a team may deliberately choose the mauling option would be:

- i) when close to your own line, and ball security is important with the most likely outcome of the possession being a kick
- ii) close to the opposition line when a driving or rolling maul may result in a try being scored
- iii) when moving back to a breakdown behind the advantage line
- iv) when a player finds himself isolated without any immediate support.

OUTSIDE THE SITUATIONS OUTLINED ABOVE, WHERE A TEAM IS ENDEAVOURING TO USE ITS SECOND PHASE BALL TO ATTACK VIA THE BACKS, THE OPTION OF WHETHER TO TRY AND ENGINEER "RUCK OR MAUL BALL" AT SECOND PHASE HAS A DIRECT EFFECT ON CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THE BACKLINE WILL OPERATE.

EFFECT OF MAULING ON DELIVERY OF BALL TO BACKLINE

- i) **BACKS RUNNING TO SET A MAUL** — as the ball carrier approaches the engagement, if he has it in his mind to set for a maul he doesn't attack the tackler... rather he is more intent on stopping and getting into a body position suitable to the maul he is trying to set up. Thus his run lacks drive and commitment... which, if he had sufficient of, could mean beating the tackler and carrying the attack further on.
- ii) **FORWARDS RUNNING TO SET A MAUL** — a similar problem arises when forwards run with the ball. Contrast the No. 8 who runs off the back of the scrum with the intent of setting a maul to a No. 8 in the "Buck Sheldford style" who is totally committed to breaking the tackle... then if unsuccessful and brought to

ground, sets the ball (usually over the advantage line) for his supports to either pick up and drive on or ruck over, maintaining the forward momentum he had initiated.

- iii) **DELIVERY OF BALL TO BACKLINE** — ball delivered to the backs from the maul situation, provided it is done while moving forward, is reasonable ball for the backs to use. The reality is today that this is not happening. While the forwards are going forward in a maul situation they are reluctant to release the ball... instead choosing to wait till they can't go any further (in other words, become "STATIC") before releasing the ball for the backs to use. In other words "we can't do anything more with it, so you can have a go".

This delivery of the ball from a static maul situation at must occur due to the "new ruck/maul rule" or forfeit possession and b) possession is poor quality ball for backs to try and use because of a number of factors:

- i) because the maul is static then so is the backline.
- ii) the time taken between the initial tackle and the eventual delivery of the ball to the backline allows the opposition to re-organise its defensive line.
- iii) while the attacking team may often commit 7-8 players to ensure possession comes back, the opposition only commit perhaps 5-6, leaving extra defenders. Thus the backline is not only faced with a re-organised defensive backline but also another line of defence from the uncommitted forwards. This extra defence makes it very difficult for the inside backs to operate.

These extra defensive players can also move quickly to the next breakdown (3rd Phase). So while the team mauling may gain the 2nd phase ball it becomes harder for them to secure possession at the next breakdown (3rd Phase).

Thus we see a static backline running against a re-organised defensive line, as well as extra defenders in the form of uncommitted forwards, all ready to move forward on release of the ball from the maul to knock over and dispossess the backline. Conditions not conducive to attacking backline play... (the obvious option becomes to kick... so much for our attacking backline!)

Contrast these factors to the situation where the attacking team is trying to set 2nd phase play via "RUCKING".

- ii) **BACKS RUNNING TO "RUCK"**
If the ball carrier knows his supports will be looking for "ruck ball" he is able to approach the tackle engagement with commitment and drive, thus giving himself a chance to beat the tackler and break the tackle line. If he is unsuccessful and brought to ground he will set the ball for his supports to ruck (as they expect). If he is held in a standing tackle he can convert this by staying on his feet, driving forward then deliberately dropping to the ground and making the ball available as his supports arrive.
- iii) **FORWARDS RUNNING TO "RUCK"**
The same can be said of forwards running with the ball. if a forward runs to set a maul, he is running to stop, or at least will lose a lot of forward momentum. Whereas the forward who attacks the tackler (even if brought down) is generating forward momentum for his support to capitalise on.
- iiii) **DELIVERY OF BALL TO BACKS**
In general, ruck ball is ball that is won going forward and presents the opportunity to be delivered to the backs with the following advantages: a) it is quick ball delivered from a platform which is moving forward, thus the backline is able to run onto the ball while the defending backline is on the back foot. This enables the backs to take the ball over the advantage line quicker and gives extra space to operate in.
b) because of the speed of delivery the opposition does not have time to re-organise its defence.
c) when well executed the players around the ball are cleared out. Thus the attacking backline at worst is opposed by the defending backline... not two or three extra defensive players who are standing off as in the maul situation.
d) when well executed it may only take 5-6 players to secure ruck ball leaving 2-3 players to:

- i) support the backline
 - ii) move immediately to the next breakdown to secure possession
 - iii) to run the ball at the defensive inside backs with the aim of committing them to the next breakdown and thus providing a numbers advantage to the backline from the next quick ruck ball.
- e) when the ball is taken off the back of a scrum to a ruck situation, in most cases, the opposition back row will be committed, thus eliminating at least one or two of the "extra defenders" the attacking backline has to work against. Again the speed of delivery of the ball does not allow the defending team to re-organise these "extra defenders".
- f) it is easier for the 5/8 to time his run off ruck ball than maul ball which may be held up.

SUMMARY

RUCK ADVANTAGE	STATIC MAUL DISADVANTAGE
Ball carrier can attack the tackle and run with drive and commitment	Ball carrier runs to set maul does not attack the tackle
Opp. defensive backline does not have time to re-organise	Opp. backline has time to re-organise
Ball delivered from a platform moving forward, giving forward momentum to backline	Maul is static — so is backline
Easier to 5/8 to time run onto ball	Difficult for 5/8 to time run as ball may be held up
Any 'extra defenders' should be taken out in the cleanout and speed of delivery does not allow others to replace them	'Extra defenders' (not committed to maul for inside backs to operate against
Support players on feet ready to move to next breakdown	Attacking team commits all forwards to ensure ball is not tied up by opposition
The great advantage of rucking is the simplicity of the supporting players role.	The support players roles are more complicated

NEW RUCK/MAUL RULES

The new "ruck/maul laws" require the player entering the ruck to enter from behind the last feet of his team. As a well executed ruck will see players being driven off the ball and on the back foot it has become very difficult for defending players to take up a position where they are able to stop the forward drive generated by the ruck. They find themselves moving back to try and defend a position which is moving away from them; while the team driving forward at the ruck is moving forward to the advantage line and at the same time advancing it further down field. So the new rules I believe actually assist teams to ruck well.

BACKLINE ATTACK

Over the last decade defensive patterns have developed significantly, making it increasingly difficult for backs to penetrate the opposition line.

The best chance the back line will have to use their individual and unit skills is when running forward with momentum at a disorganised defence... and where they are prepared to attack the tackle.

I feel that the ruck ball delivered quickly to the backline best provides the circumstances conducive to positive attacking backline play as opposed to the ball received from the more static maul.

CONCLUSION

A good team is the one which takes the best option available to it for the situation on offer. Clearly a team will need to be able to both ruck and maul effectively in order to have options. There are many times when mauling will clearly be the best option. However if we are seeking to provide second phase ball, conducive to attacking backline play then the advantage lies with the ruck ball.

CONTINUITY AFTER CONTACT — A FORWARDS VIEW

Duncan Hall

Introduction

The IRFB approved some 44 changes to the Laws of the Game in April 1992. One of the most significant and controversial areas of change has been within the area of Continuity after Contact, in particular, the Ruck and Maul.

The Experimental Law states:—

“When the ball in a ruck or maul becomes unplayable a scrum shall be formed and the ball put in by the team NOT in possession at the beginning of the ruck, except where the referee is unable to determine original possession, when the attacking team shall have the feed.”

Going hand in hand is the Tackle Law (18), which is an integral aspect of Continuity after Contact, it has been altered to incorporate “After a tackle any other player must be on his feet when he plays the ball.”

The underlying philosophy of the Laws remain to play the game on the feet.

Background

As I am writing this paper I am reminded of a previous Australian captain, who at an Elite coaching seminar held in Queensland, made a statement along the following lines — that the under 19 Laws are creating soft forward play — no one can run the ball forward for fear of losing possession at the break-down.

Being exposed to a number of players who first year out of school were playing top grade, one general difficulty was trying to get them to stay on their feet. As soon as a contact situation looked like developing they would “hit the deck”. This appeared at the outset to be the general approach to school boy coaches in my area. Or was it?

Watching the school boys titles in 1990, a year in which they had a successful UK tour, teams from all over Australia, generally, were doing similar things, i.e. “hit the deck” get the ball back immediately. I do not wish to appear to be too harsh on school boy rugby or coaches, because I do understand that under 19 Law required that if a maul was set and the ball did not emerge immediately then the referee would put down a scrum. Thankfully senior rugby players are allowed more time.

Coaches should adapt and develop the players as the Laws are changed. Yes, this particular Law is experimental, and it had been an under 19 Law which did not affect senior rugby, so it was not a concern. Today, this interpretation is reality, and therefore a concern.

Team Principles

The underlying key factors have not been altered with the new Laws, they are :-

1. Go forward
2. Support
3. Continuity
4. Pressure

Previously as coaches we could emphasis simplistic forward principles such as, in a contact situation, hold onto the ball and drive the maul forward to get the put-in to the scrum. This “skill” is easily structured and drilled.

Even under this scenario, the opposing team's attitude was still to tie up the ball, to stop continuity of phase play. Sure, the going forward team still possession from a scrum, while the defensive team got to regroup their defence from a set play situation.

The outcome, was a loss of advantage to the attacking side. One I might add was not always due to the skill of the team without the ball.

The other aspect which is intertwined with the break down is the interpretation of the Tackle Law by both player and referee, which has been varied and generally inconsistent. A good example was the latitude given to the Scottish players during the 1992 tour. One wonders who they will adapt in their upcoming season.

The "negative" tactics surrounding the Tackle Law which can play a significant role in the game, has in the minds of many been enhanced, since the Law change. The change is that the attacking team now has as *incentive to maintain possession and to distribute the ball.*

Defensive Principles

The key factors in defence remain, as follows:-

1. Contest
2. Force
3. Tackle
4. Cover

The objective of the defending team is to put the attacking team under pressure, and the ball carrier on the ground, so he has to release the ball. Some teams will persist in certain "negative" tactics, such as, lying over the tackled player, rolling around the side of a ruck/maul.

We do not always give credit to the defending team when they exhibit skill levels which force the ball carrier into error. They are able to tie up the ball when the blockers don't do their job, force a bad pass or placement of the ball. This is an integral part of the game.

Continuity a Forwards View

In my opinion, what happens in the tackle before a ruck or maul forms, is the essence of Continuity.

On the one hand, there is the first class tackle which puts the attacking player to the ground, neither plays the ball on the ground, support is instantaneous or one of the players quickly regain their feet. Continuity is maintained.

Then there is the situation where a good tackle is made, the defender ends up over the ball, doesn't move, a pick up begins, the referee has not interpreted any deliberate killing of the ball, possession is lost, or the referee finds a penalty against the attacking team who are frustrated at the man lying over the ball.

The other scenario is the attacking player who is able to maintain their feet in the contact situation. This player controls the game for that moment, he can give a pass, set the height of the Ruck/Maul, and determines whether Continuity will be maintained.

The experimental Law has created a new, more challenging Rugby game especially for the Forwards in areas, such as:-

- A. If the ball is not made available then possession is lost. The coaching mechanism should now be very positive in the development and encouragement of contact/balance skills. There should be a strong emphasis towards reaction and option drills.
- B. Defence players can solely *kill* a ball, either in a tackle or maul. The player's understanding, coach's philosophy, and referee interpretation of Law (18) are the major variables.
- C. The opposition does not have to commit as many players to Ruck/Maul, as the drive forward is not paramount. These players are now released to backline defence. Commitment of opposition forwards into close in situations. Possible ways are forwards running off back of the maul, rolling maul, drive straight through the centre of maul.
- D. To develop skill levels so that the opposition can be engaged with enough force that a tackle could be broken, or if not ball control is maintained. Play the game on the feet unless opposition do a first class tackle, or support in close proximity for clear out.

Rugby Is a Contact Game

Geoff Shaw in his paper on back play in 1991 said:-

"The problem is not really one of skill, but more of mental attitude. Players, both forwards and backs, when cornered into a situation where, contact is inevitable, try frankly to avoid it. Often this proves to be to their detriment as they sacrifice balance, momentum and often field positioning. On the other hand when the defence makes a tackle it is usually on their own physical and mental terms, because they pursued and initiated the contest.

The truth of the matter is that most defences are only comfortable making tackles when they can control and initiate the contact..."

Geoff outlined a particular type of running line when contact was inevitable for the backs. Similar principles as outlined above apply to the forwards, who should place the opposition in a position where contact is inevitable.

When a forward runs with the ball most try to skirt the defence. When this happens they are running away from supports, lining up an easier side on tackle, cutting off space for outside players. Their body position becomes vulnerable and they put themselves in a position where the ball can be smothered in the tackle.

I propose the point of contact for forwards should be close to the centre of the defender. This would make the attacking player initiate contact, and allow a good platform to be formed either front on or turning after contact.

The front on position is referred to as a "squeeze ball", the body position is similar to that of a prop. Here the player absorbs opposition pressure through a straight back and lowering of the knees. One hand controls the defender, the other the ball which is placed between the legs when the weight comes on. A player in this position should be able to hold a minimum of two defenders. As the player is maintaining their feet the ball cannot be killed, although it can be tied up, continuity is available.

The New Era

Overall, the Game does have the potential to be somewhat faster under the new Laws than previously.

In the initial stages a marked increase in the amount of kicking was evident. This was due in part to the amount of quick possession that was capable of being won, and to the "fear factor" of being tied up and therefore losing possession.

The quality of this possession had to be improved. Added to this was the noticeable increase in the number of the defending team's forwards staying out of the Rucks/Mauls. The backs were placed under undue pressure.

The attacking forwards become vital to the relief of pressure from the backs. They became an attacking weapon used to encourage the defending forwards to join their colleagues up front. This came in a number of ways, such as: a puncher close to the side of the phase play, a rolling maul, a maul driven up the middle should the defending team fringe.

The question arises, that if I continue to take the ball up we will get tied up and therefore lose possession. The answer to me was in the development of confidence in contact skills, whereby a player could run the ball up strongly and have a number of options available to maintain continuity. A few of these drills are outlined.

In my mind Rugby is truly becoming a 15 man game, the demands on the individual skill level required by all players will bring a new balance to the game.

Some suggestions for the development of individual control/confidence skills, against varying degrees of opposition are:

1. Tackle

- Encourage — correct way to fall
— proper placement of the ball
— regain feet as quickly as possible

2. Develop confidence in contact

A. Hit & Balance

- Body position — knee bend
— strong back
— present ball
- Strength — buy time, stay of feet
— wrestle ball

B. Hit deck

- Pick up
- Clear out

C. Stay front on

- on feet — squeeze ball

3. Develop Gut pass

- to maintain close support and continuity
- 1/3, 1/2 turn, if support Gut pass, if not then continue full turn, set maul

4. Develop Agility & Power

- Pin ball Drill

5. Develop Unit Skills

Maul

- ball carrier does a full turn
- seal ball, front of maul players are hip to hip
- tipper straight drive, can convert to a ruck
- tipper if turns, then full turn in small circle
- rolling maul

Ruck

- principles developed from clear out drill after "hit deck"

Conclusion

The emphasis in the initial stages of development is to become confident with running and individual skills that are executed under controlled pressure. During practice it is important to have regular opposed sessions, which have achievable goals, and reinforcement of correct techniques, eg. body height, body shape in contact.

In my opinion, a more physical contact game will be developed by teams wishing to adhere to the most basic team principle of GO FORWARD. This is a direct result of extra backline defence and a fear of losing possession. There will be no simple answer, and many structural difficulties when one has a small or young team.

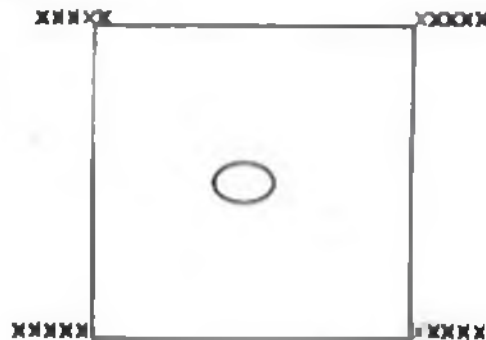
The other development within the forwards will be a increasing emphasis on producing the "Complete" rugby player. This player at the International Level will have to portray a basket of skills which are balanced between:

- set play,
- phase play,
- individual skills,
- fitness levels,
- nutrition,
- psychological factors.

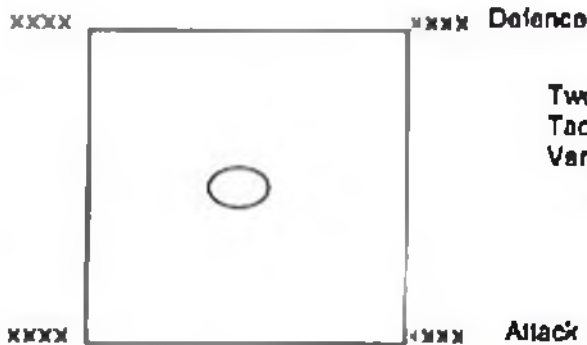
The adage of the S P's might never be more correct — A Proper Preparation Prevents A Poor Performance.

EFFECTIVE DRILLS

TACKLE



One ball in each corner.
player run to center hit
ground - place ball then
back to feet quickly & run
to opposite side.



Two lines work together
Tackle drill & pick ball up.
Vary Defence pick up
& Attack pick up

HIT & BALANCE

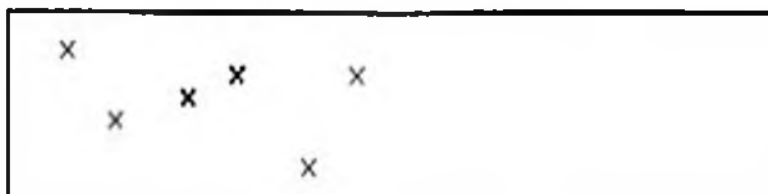


Defenders with shields, Attackers in threes
— Look at hit and balance, body position
— Increase contact from defender

Develop other skills from here with Clear out.
Pick up, Squeeze ball, Gut pass 1/2 turn

PINBALL DRILL

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000
00



Over 22 metres high intensity work keep ball in the Team tracks with shielded passes, keep the ball alive. Defender hit hard, react to run.

SEVEN BACK — "PIANO PLAYERS"

OR

SEVEN BACKROWERS — "PIANO PUSHERS"

Geoff Shaw

Historically Australian rugby teams have always been to the forefront in innovative backline play at International level. We have been able to combine genuine pace, skill and a natural ability to run with the ball to good effect.

The current trend is tending to stifle this great tradition of generations gone by and some alarming statistics of recent Test matches tend to support this. One cannot deny the recent success of the Wallabies but has this been at the expense, it seems, of a certain balance in the game.

A test match in which we see primary possession gained from set plays number 50, 46 of which are kicked; tends to alter ones thinking — Should we pick seven Backs or seven Backrowers. It is time to restore the balance if not at International Level, at a lower level where the full 15 players in a team can experience the joy of playing not necessarily just the joy of winning.

Having viewed many matches at all levels over the past few seasons one must admit there has been an enormous improvement in forward play. This can be attributed to many aspects e.g., strength, fitness, skill, technique and continuity development.

Statistical Analysis of Two Grand Final Matches at BALLYMORE

Colts 1 — Souths V University

Lineout

Lineout — Kick	13 (4 in 22m)
Lineout — Scrum	16
Lineout — Lineout	4
Lineout — Penalty	4
Lineout — 2 pass	6 (2 kicked; 4 Resulted in an indecisive R or M)
	43

Not one ball from set piece passed the inside centre.

Scrum

Scrum — Kick	16 (3 in 22m)
B/Row Move	10
Scrum — 2 pass	10 (4 Kicked; 6 Resulted in Indecisive R or M)
Scrum — 3 pass	1
	37

Ruck & Maul

Resulted in Scrum	16
Resulted in Ruck/ruck	4
Resulted in Kick	8
Resulted in Penalty	8
Resulted in 2 Pass	8 (3 of these were executed by the forwards)
Resulted in 3 Pass	6
Resulted in 4 Pass	2
	52

132 possessions resulted in 24 (18%) being available for use by the backs.

This match resulted in a 9 all draw, each team scored one try, both resulted from a ruck or maul on or near the try line. Extra time was played with no result being achieved. The match was replayed the following week-end with a decidedly different result.

Colts 1 Replay — Souths V University

Lineout

Lineout — Kick	6 (2 in 22m)
Lineout — Scrum	10
Lineout — Lineout	1
Lineout — Penalty	3
Lineout — 2 Pass	6
Lineout — 3 Pass	3
Lineout — 4 Pass	2
Lineout — 5 Pass	2
Lineout — R&M — 2 Pass	4
Lineout R&M — 3 Pass	<u>2</u>
	19

Scrum

Scrum — Kick	10 (2 in 22m)
U/Row Move	5
Scrum — 2 Pass	4
Scrum — 3 Pass	6
Scrum — 4 Pass	<u>3</u>
	28

Ruck & Maul

Resulted in Scrum	15
Resulted in Penalty	8
Resulted in Ruck/Ruck	8
Resulted in Kick	8
Resulted in 2 Pass	6 (2 executed by the forwards)
Resulted in 3 Pass	8
Resulted in 4 Pass	2
Resulted in 5 Pass	<u>2</u>
	53

120 possessions resulted in 44 (37%) being available for use by the backs.

This match resulted in a 31-0 win to University. In winning University scored 5 tries — 3 by the wingers 1 by the full back and one by a backrower. One could categorise the first match as typical Grand Final rugby, winning may give some players the satisfaction of ending the season with the trophy. I just wonder in considering the first match how much satisfaction the outside backs gained out of playing a game in which the only time they touched the ball was in warm up.

If one doesn't believe that there is a conspiracy to reduce the game to 15 forwards then it is a time that one took a look at certain aspects of backline play.

Coaches tend not to know enough about backline play or don't pay enough attention to the principles of backline play. Some people find it harder to coach a backline unit because it is more fluid and not so easily structured as forward play. Quite a number of coaches are conversant with the National Coaching Manual.

It takes a long time to devour and digest this information – many find it too complicated and give up. They should be looking at trying to develop a strand of players with the skills that fit in anywhere.

Backline play in Australia in general has become tired, stereotyped predictable and unimaginative. The reasons:

1. Improvements and Emphasis on Defence Systems.

In general most backs, when they see people drifting off them, become reluctant to do anything. They become phased out by the activity confronting them.

2. Lack of Skill of the Individual.

Use of dummy pass, inside cut, sidestep, fend, and switch pass, as a basic skill is seldom seen. Backs are generally so programmed as a unit that they lack spontaneous reactions.

3. Lack of Imagination.

This is effected by the policy of the coach and the overall game plan. Backs tend to work the same old moves but don't extend themselves to the point of commitment and surprise with regard to the opposition's movements.

4. Lack of Communication.

For example, the fullback has a panoramic view, due to his geographical location. He doesn't do enough communication with the people in front of him. The majority of the fullbacks are stereotyped, more the custodian than the striker, and nowhere near adventurous. They should be visually probing the opposition's weakness throughout the match and reporting to people in front of him.

5. Lack of Initiative.

Seizing opportunities by taking in information. For example, a player transgresses another player's attacking channel – this should indicate to the non-ball carrier that an inside pass or a switch pass is a possibility.

Players have to be taught how to recognise signs of communication on the field. They have to take in visual information and react. The time spent practising moves would be better utilised involving players on an individual skills basis. One on one confrontations involving such basic plays as fend, inside cut, sidestep etc. could be better utilised. At times, it is better to make 3–4 metres than try to skirt wide and get knocked off at the gain line. There is a need for more seizure of opportunities. If you don't practice it, you don't react to it.

6. Lack of Support.

Understanding support lines and more attention to be paid to support roles of respective players at coaching sessions. Players tend to support too wide and too flat and the area becomes congested. The obsession with the pass, back-up philosophy with a second touch on the ball tends to put players out of the game due to the lack of depth in support lines. Coaches and players should recognise the need for initial speed in depth in support with a specific role-connected responsibility that decreases as the ball is moved wider from his support zone. This provides specific support rules and is highly beneficial in realignment and support running in channels. It eliminates overcrowding on one side of the field by backs eager to participate in the game.

7. Lack of Surprise.

Too slow to take the initiative, element of surprise is lost due to conventional backline configurations. In the case of channel 3 ball (from a scrum), the quality might be high, but the delivery is slow, thus placing pressure on the entire backline. Perhaps we should reintroduce channel 1 ball with a dive pass (preferably a long one) from the halfback to the five eighth. This method puts the onus on the halfback, but the skill of the dive pass under pressure has to be developed. This would help speed up the delivery to the backline and reduce the time the defence has to organise.

Some of the problems discussed above are accentuated by coaching which lacks reality.

UNREALISTIC OPPOSED

We usually involve ourselves in opposed sessions that execute our full repertoire of moves. This environment is unrealistic because to the opposition is usually aware or well informed of the moves being executed. There should be more time devoted to opposed individual skills such as fend, inside cut side step etc., but in backline formation. Players will then learn to react to a team mate's spontaneous action (ie, when he takes the initiative to beat his own man) and provide the striker with support. This visual communication (body language) helps players to instinctively read the play.

BAD COACHING – Realising the strength and weaknesses of players (Remedial Skills Programming). Some players can't fend etc. so the coach has to spend more time with the individual to give him the opportunity to perform at a higher level of skill. Coaches tend to stick to the tried and true, and never explore avenues of spontaneity.

UNSKILLED PLAYERS

In almost every team, irrespective of what level, there will be several above average talents. Coaches, having identified these talents, should spend more time developing play with the focus on them. Bearing in mind the need for overall skill development, there is general lack of work on individual skills and not enough correction of error, even at high levels.

SOME SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Correction of Error – attention to detail

We coach by key factors, we know the poor execution of these key factors, but there is little or no correction of error. A good active skills session sometimes appears to be productive, but a lot of players are just going through the motions, practising skills incorrectly. A prime example was the involvement of the Elite Coaching Academy candidates at a Queensland team skills training session. The lack of error correction left a great deal to be desired.

2. Divorced from Session.

With back sessions, because of the need for attention to detail, the coach has to have someone to run the session. The coach stands off and observes the players with a view to critical analysis and appraisal of their skill. This means that the players have to take more responsibility for their own development.

3. Emphasise Support Lines – Promote trailers

General concept of support is to get outside the ball. This is something that has to be remedied. Should we lay down a basic policy that any support player must stay inside the ball? Once a player (in support) gets outside the ball, the opposition starts to equalise because of a lateral line approach. More options are open to the support player if he stays **IN DEPTH INSIDE THE WALL**. The National Coaching manual highlights the importance of a change of pace, at the point of transfer, between the ball carrier and the support player. If there is no change of pace, the initiative is lost. As to the depth of the support line, there should be no restriction. All players have varying speeds, so he should choose a depth at which he is comfortable enough to change direction and at the same time reach the advantage line very quickly.

This support awareness of all backs gives us, in a structured order, a **SECOND LINE OF ATTACK**. This specific "second line of attack" is a more positive concept, removing the negative connotation of players merely being "a support".

SECOND LINE OF ATTACK

Circle ball is the most frequently misconstrued concept of modern backline philosophy. Many coaches see it as a specific name given to a particular set backline move. Its initial introduction as a skill in the game was to widen the options of all players, particularly backs. For years, backs have tended to only use 90 degrees of vision when going forward.

This was promulgated by the tendency to run at angles across the field, in search of space. Flatter alignment, channel running and stair passing will open up the full 180 degrees of vision in a back's sight. He would have the option of pushing the ball back inside to a support player in depth in a second line of attack. The player receiving the ball has a number of options which is not available on a lateral pass basis.

Some options:

1. He may inside cut if the ball carrier has taken his man off-line.
2. He may ghost across the back of the ball carrier for the outside gap.
3. He may receive the ball early and transfer wide to an outside player.
4. If the ball carrier has, say with the use of a fend, kept his opponent at bay, the support player can receive a pop pass or a quick hand transfer and continue going forward.

We already have a series of drills which make good use of the pass in the vertical plane. These drills make us more aware of sympathy with our pass, occupying space under the ball, and putting the ball into space for the support player to run onto it. We need to develop these drills further into a series of action/reaction drills incorporated into unit play. This ideally will lead to the situation whereby once a break is made, we have a series of second line attacks.

General Concepts

The basic Tenets of Backline Play revolve around the 4 Key Factors:

1. Angle.
2. Alignment.
3. Speed.
4. Penetration.

While we tend to base our general team philosophy around these key factors I feel the philosophy behind Backline Play has its roots in the first Principle of Team Play – Go Forward – We tend to forget that the Goal Posts are placed at the end of the field not on the sideline. The most common fault with most backs is the tendency to run across the field. This is promulgated by poor alignment and the belief of most players that they are faster than the opposition and chase space on the outside in an effort to round their man. This factor is apparent at the embryo stage of a player's career.

To watch an U7 team play, the only real breaks are made by the faster players who often go back and around the congested mass of players in an effort to make ground. We applaud this effort as often it results in a try and after all this is what the game is about.

Even at this early age we are encouraging and instilling a trait that defies the First Team Principle and it becomes more difficult to erase as the years pass i.e., chasing space – not creating space. We should be instilling in players at a very early age an ability to react to an eminent contact situation and therefore act accordingly. If we do not create training drills in which the players have to react to pressure and fast decision making then we can hardly expect them to achieve this during a match situation.

RUGBY IS A CONTACT GAME

The problem is not really one of skill but more of mental attitude. Players, both forwards and backs, when cornered into a situation where contact is inevitable, try frantically to avoid it. Often this proves to be to their detriment as they sacrifice balance, momentum and often the field positioning. On the other hand when the defence makes a tackle it is usually on their own physical and mental terms because they pursued and initiated the contest.

The truth of the matter is that most defences are only comfortable making tackles when they can control and initiate the contact. The importance of the inside shoulder as a target in an inevitable contact situation is important. By angling initial raids in attack at the outside shoulder of the defence, and then upon contact becoming highly probable, switching your angle to the inside shoulder to make contact, you will leave your defender unbalanced and powerless to match your momentum fully. You are simply making sure that you attack the inside of the body that is least prepared to make contact.

In open play situations where a clean break has been made usually on a flank the movement may often be deemed to finish, if only due to lack of space between the side-line and the defence. Quite often the attacker, in trying to avoid eminent contact finds himself being grounded by a side on tackle.

Terminology

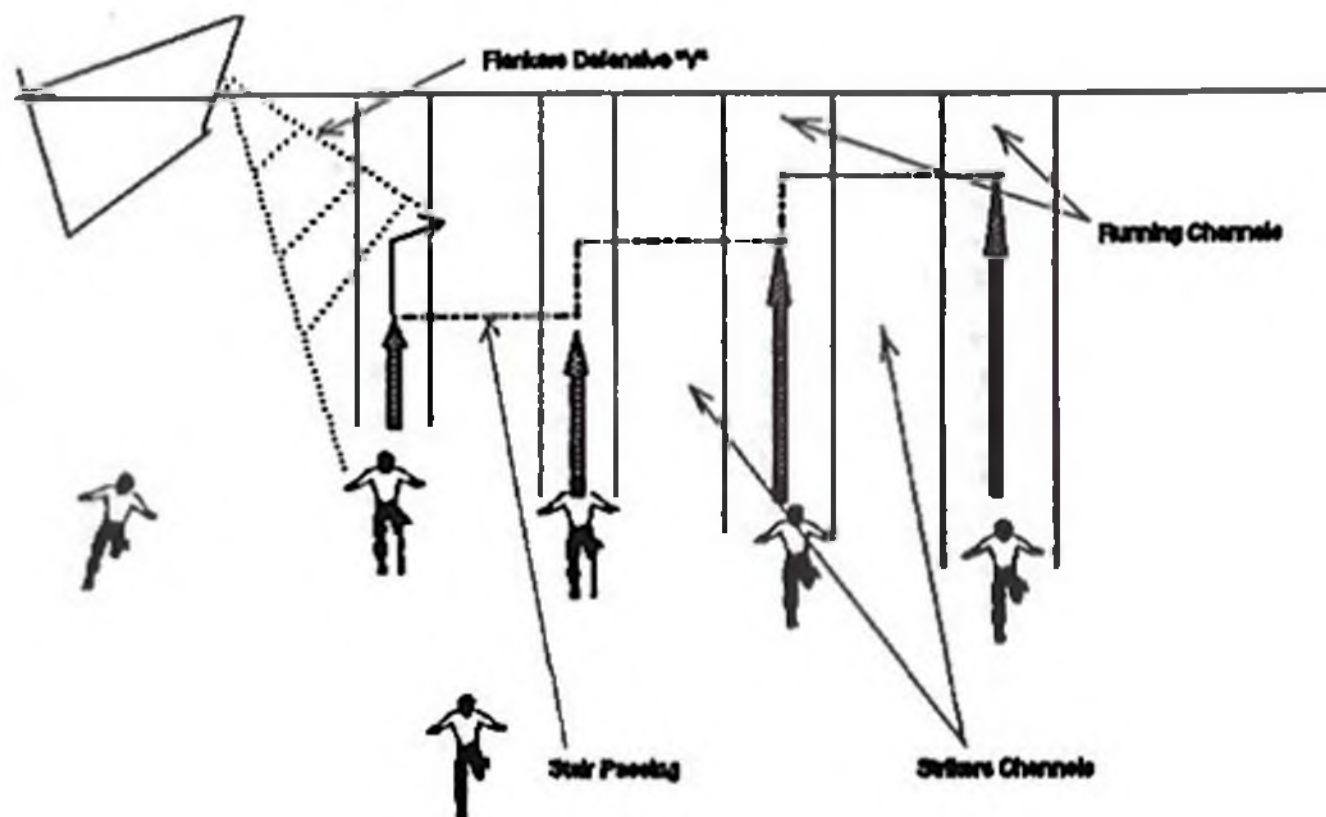
Most coaches are familiar with the general terminology relative to backline play i.e., key factors, cuts, lumps etc. Areas that need some reassurance and further elaboration on are creators, strikers, trailers stair passing, channel running etc.

Creators: By definition – Produce by what one does. These players have the ability to manoeuvre the opposition into a position, either by illusion or attraction, so as to create space which would not normally exist.

This may be achieved by a simple side step and the desired effect is to put a normally organised defence pattern off its line and create space for a striker to enter. Every player has the ability to be a creator by the mere fact that they have the ball in their possession.

Trailer: By definition – To follow along behind. This means that these players form the "Second line of Attack" and are in depth, in support, of the strikers and creators.

Old Backline Alignment "Stair Passing" & "Channel Running"



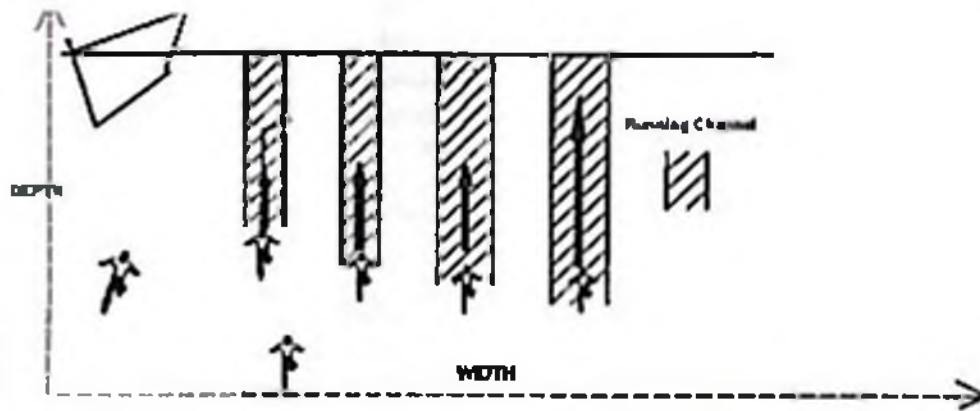
Stair Passing: As displayed in the illustration – At no stage in a normal backline passing sequence does the ball travel backwards to any degree. The ball is passed across the line for the player not to the player. The player has to occupy the space under the ball and take it forward. It is pointless to pass the ball back in depth to a player who then has to carry the ball forward some distance before it progresses forward from its initial position.

Channel Running

In an endeavour to ensure players run straight it would be ideal to have the oval marked with narrow running channels, on the field of play, parallel to the touchlines as a guide for players to follow. As this is not possible it can be achieved on a training area so as to enable the players to have an opportunity to practise straight running.

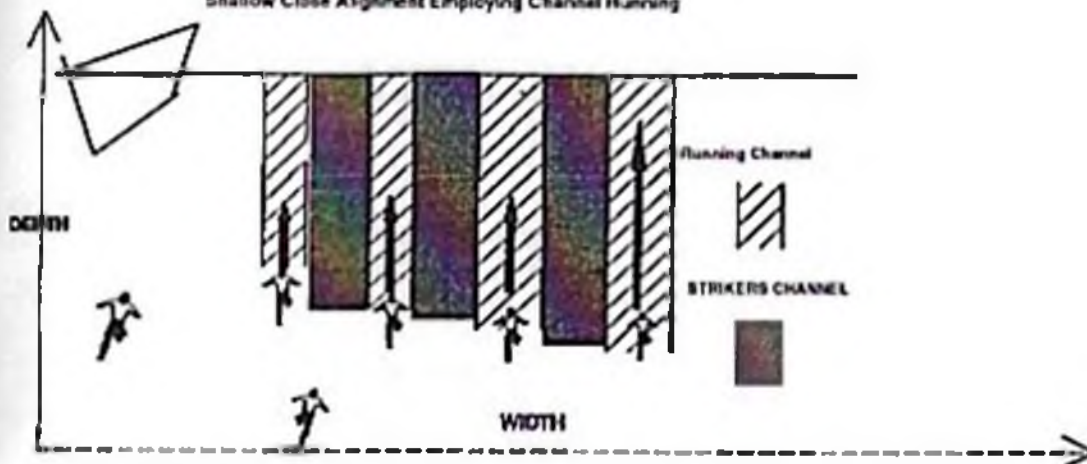
If we look at an example of the type of practice markings it reveals certain useful aspects that straight running can offer. Straight running reduces the width of the defensive channel that the opposition has to work in. It fixes the opposition within the channel and commits the defender to a one on one contest.

Shallow Close Alignment Employing Channel Running



1. The illustration shows the basic markings of a training field to promote straight running through the use of channels.
2. The position of the five eighth channel is determined by the strength of the half backs pass.
3. The width of the 5/8 & 1/2 channels is 1 to 2 metres.
4. The width of the backline i.e., the distance between the channels is determined by the age and skill of the players and should be in the order of 4 to 6 metres.
5. The depth once again is determined by the age and skill of the players and should not exceed 1 to 2 metres.
6. The depth of the five eighth from the tackle line once again is determined by the age and skill level of the players, as the skill level improves and the players become confident with the style of alignment the depth can decrease.
7. It is a reasonable assumption that if we don't put ourselves under pressure we will never put the opposition under pressure, therefore we have to reduce the time and space in which we work.

Shallow Close Alignment Employing Channel Running



Striker: By definition – A strike is to make an attack or to go in a different direction. Players with the ability to time their run in rhythmic sequence with a creator will make effective use of space created.

ALIGNMENT

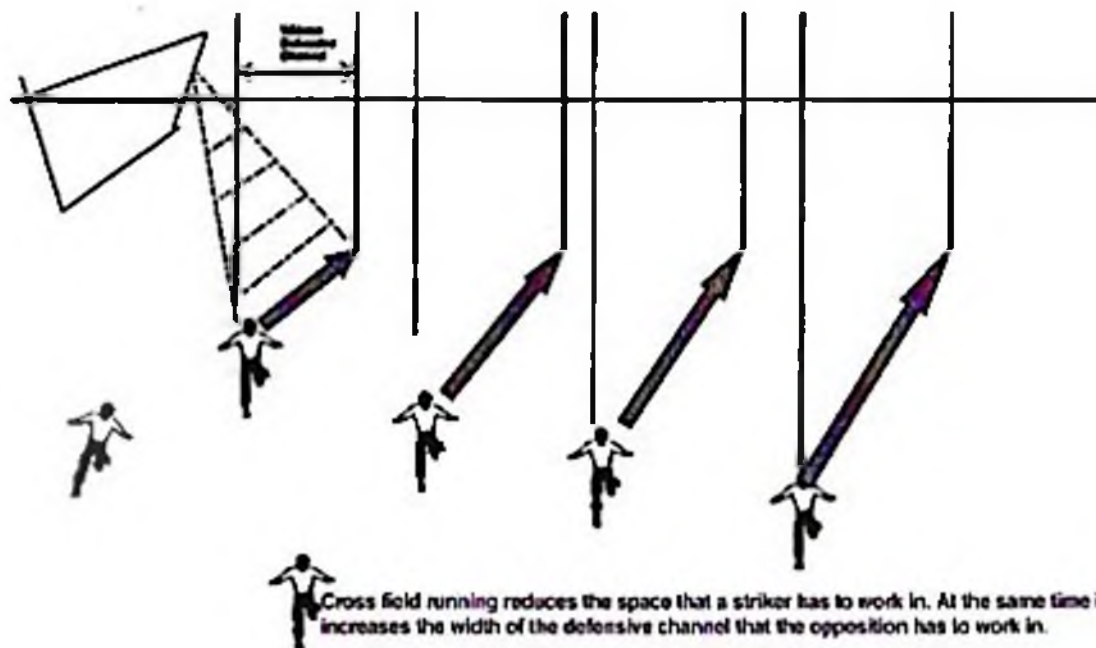
Width and Depth

In considering Alignment we ask the question what determines the width and depth of a backline. Some people believe that a close shallow alignment is the best way of crossing the tackle line. There are instances or particular movements which if they are to have any chance of success require this alignment. It would appear that the primary benefits of the shallow alignment are:

1. The ball reaches the advantage line more quickly.
2. It narrows the defenders cone of defence.
3. The fullback and wings have more room from which to attack.

Wider deep Alignments tend to be used by backlines with lower skill levels and it is a waste of time and energy because you can't beat the opposition till you reach them. This extreme depth gives the opposition more time to organise their defence.

A general guide to width and depth can be determined by the number of passes in the move sequence before the Striker secures the ball. If it is a simple but effective cut – one with the fullback in then the closer and flatter the alignment is to the opposition the more likely the striker is to hit the hole.



In considering the starting width of the backline pivot i.e., the five-eighth, he should at most times be 1 metre inside the extreme limit of his half backs pass. This places him at maximum distance from the pressure of the backrow. This also reduces the defensive V in which a flanker has to work his opposition five-eighth.

By standing deeper and tucked in closer to the scrum it gives the five-eighth the luxury of time and space. Unfortunately this decreases the angle at which he receives the ball from the half back. He therefore receives the ball running across field and broadens not only the defensive V of the opposition flanker but the defensive channel the opposition five-eighth has to work him in. The result is extremely common in most backlines and has a domino effect with all backs running across the field chasing space on the outside. The error is compounded by the reduction in space that is provided for the striker to work in.

This allows, at times, one member of the opposition to cover two players in the attacking line because one of the attackers has encroached upon another player's running space.

Another misconception is the idea that every player who wears No 10 on his back has to receive the first pass from the half-back at every phase of the play. There is only four times on the field that the backs are geographically located in their so called numbered position. That being the set pieces – kick-off, 22 metre drop out, scrum and line-out and the rest of the time he is one of fifteen players in a team or to be more specific one of seven backs.

Most backline moves revolve around creating a hole for a striker to hit – with not a great deal of thought given to support lines of the rest of the "Piano Players". Guidelines for backrow support play are outlined in most coaching manuals but little or no thought is given to the lines of support of the non strikers or non creators.

Players quite often are closer to the ball than the backrowers and we tend to judge the backrow by the tired expression of "1st to the breakdown". Why should we therefore assume that a breakdown has to occur when there are players freely available to continue the attack forward. If we can advocate the use of "trailers" then these free agents assigned to an area of responsibility can support the ball carrier with options before the breakdown occurs. With the introduction of "trailers" we allocate areas of support to certain players depending upon the movement of the ball along the backline. Once the ball moves out of a particular player's area of support he eases on his run so as to place himself in a good position to realign. This causes a sliding effect in the backline and prevents the common situation arising where players cross in an effort to regain their set piece position should a breakdown occur. At the breakdown the first movement of any back should be backwards in a line parallel to the touchline then to slide sideways towards the breakdown.

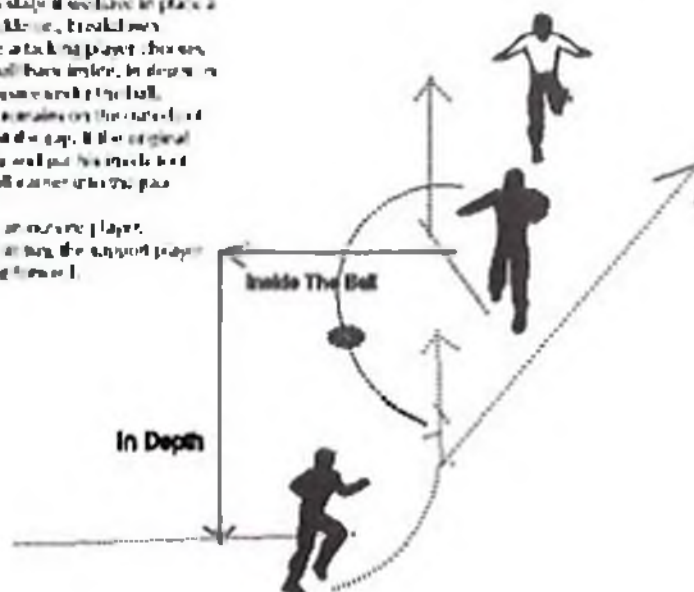
Players then place themselves in an ideal alignment to continue the attack independent of their so called geographical position. This philosophy enables all backs the opportunity to become involved in the game. Each back in turn has a support role to play and each back has a specific role in the event of a breakdown.

It may be an option, if the fullback was involved from the set piece, to direct one of the support players to push across to the short side. This allows the opportunity for him to trail the first two runners at the breakdown if they choose to push the ball back along the line in the direction the ball came from. If the opportunity presents itself he may inject himself into the backline as an extra man, thus causing some confusion to the opposition, or he may purely play the role of Trailer.

A further expansion on this philosophy, if pursued by any interested coaches will enhance the thinking on modern backline play. It is not meant to be a complete change of philosophy but a reference point to expand the thinking on one area of neglect in the modern game. I wish to thank all members of the various coaching structures that assisted in the discussions that led to the final written submission of this paper.

Geoff Shaw 1991

When a player realises that the opportunity has presented itself to engineer a break by leading his more useful skills are available to him (to secure the desired result), he will seek ideas. Sometimes a well thought out result may not be forthcoming. At this stage it would be in place a system of "trailers" that the result does not necessarily end in a tackle or breakdown. The "trailer" support line is basically in depth inside the half of the attacking player. However, say a side step and a tackle is imminent he immediately puts the ball back inside. In depth in a normal game (not a try) it should be allowed for the trailer to cut up the same track of the ball. The trailer has used it to a degree to him to exploit. If the tackler remains on the outside of the player originally with the ball he may take the outside pass and let the gap. If the original ball carrier has cut up the track causing the tackler to react quickly and put his tackle foot down then the "trailer" can ghost across the back of the original ball carrier into the pass provided by the side step. The trailer may also receive the ball early and transfer it quickly to an outside player. If the side carrier has, say, on the use of a hand, kept his support of the support player can receive a pass pass or a quick hand transfer and continue along the track.



A CHANGE OF DIRECTION – THE LOST DIMENSION

– Terry Burkett

“I have chosen to speak on a subject, which, through neglect, most likely as a result of a lack of understanding, has produced a generation of players who I believe do not utilise one of the fundamental aspects of the Running Game.”

THE BACKGROUND

The catalyst for these ideas and the subsequent skills associated has come from my personal observations of coaches and players during my seven years full-time involvement in Rugby.

I suppose that further provision for thought has come from my self-analysis and short-comings as a skills coach over a period stretching back 20 years.

If we were to identify one skill that could be identified as the Essential Focus of my argument, it would be the:

SWITCH PASS.

A further simplification might read:

- the more chaving the opposition has to do
- the more we take the opposition off their desired (easy) running lines
- the more we can shift the point of our attack, the better off we will be.

Today, far too often the path of the ball is predictable.

Early in my career as a Coaching Director, I observed that when Level 2 Coaching aspirants were assigned the Switch Pass as their Practical Assignment it was rarely, if ever, demonstrated properly.

This observation of coaches at this level continues to this day – if the coaches don't understand, the players never will.

From the period of my earliest observations, I considered my own honorary Coaching Career and realised that I had never coached the switch pass and I suggest that very few others had either – I had never been taught the KEY FACTORS of the pass in 20 years of playing.

My observations of players from the youngest through to the best in the country further substantiated my beliefs.

Whilst it is true to say that the gifted athlete can acquire the skill of the SWITCH PASS fairly quickly, the number of players who can perform this discipline under pressure is confined to an elite few.

Confronted with this evidence, I set about designing a set of drills that would help bring about a change in thinking and broadening of vision, starting with the youngest of players, although I believe they are applicable at all levels.

THE CURE

I have always believed that the space devoted to the Switch Pass in our Level 2 Manual is quite adequate with perhaps the inclusion of an extra KEY FACTOR –

- Fix the Opposition train back at the first defender)
 1. Widen the angle.
 2. Screen the ball.
 3. Support

With due deference to my colleagues who wrote that section of the manual, I believe that the SWITCH PASS should be treated as a separate subject and more time devoted to the explanation and demonstration at Accreditation Courses.

I might add that without the assistance of the colleagues about whom I earlier spoke I would not be delivering this document.

It would also be fair to say at this point that the ideas for drafting the following drills have come from the observation of a variety of personnel.

Not only do the drills have applications as an individual skill but extend to the areas such as *Counter Attack*, *Contact*, and modern *Backline Play*.

Some coaches may have used them in some variety of form however as an entire concept I believe they have rarely been implemented.

The merits are many, some of which I list as follows:

- Encourage *SYMPATHY* for the *RECEIVER*.
- An awareness for the *DIRECTION* of the *RECEIVER*.
- Encouragement to *AIR* the Ball rather than be a *SLAVE* to the *LATERAL PASS*.
- Encouragement to put the *BALL* through the *HANDS* quickly.
- Encouragement for the *RECEIVER* to *OCCUPY SPACE* under a *STANDING BALL* as opposed to passing to a receiver. Far too often we guide the ball rather than let the ball guide us.
- Encourage players to *PASS* the ball back in the direction of its *ORIGIN*.
- Encourage *SUPPORT*.
- Encourage *COMMUNICATION*.
- *DEVELOP PERIPHERAL AWARENESS*.
- *DEVELOP GROUND SKILLS*
- *DEVELOP VARIOUS FITNESS LEVELS*.
- Are *COST EFFECTIVE* in terms of *SPACE* and *SUPERVISION*.

Here are the drills in some order of Degree of Difficulty.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

R.J.J. Marks
 D.J.A. Clark
 G.A. Shaw
 B. O'Shea
 Level 2 Coaching Manual

ROPE DRILL

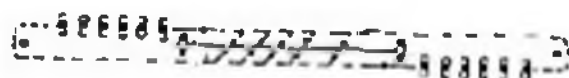


FIGURE 88
 SWITCH PASS
 MULTIPLE BALLS



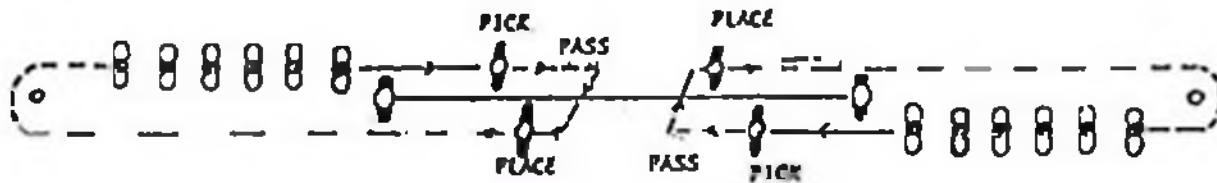
FIGURE 89
 SWITCH PASS IN WIDE LINE

Receiving a Basic Pass

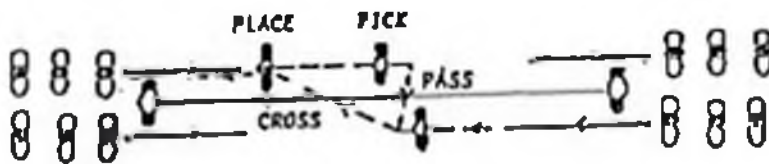
1. Vision - Look at the ball
2. Position - Be there early
3. Hands - Hands out early
4. The take - Stop the ball with one hand

Throwing a Basic Pass

1. Turn - Turn head and shoulders to look at target
2. Project - Bend arms and kick with two bike fingers behind ball



PICK PASS PLACE



PICK PASS CROSS PLACE

ROPE ON GROUND

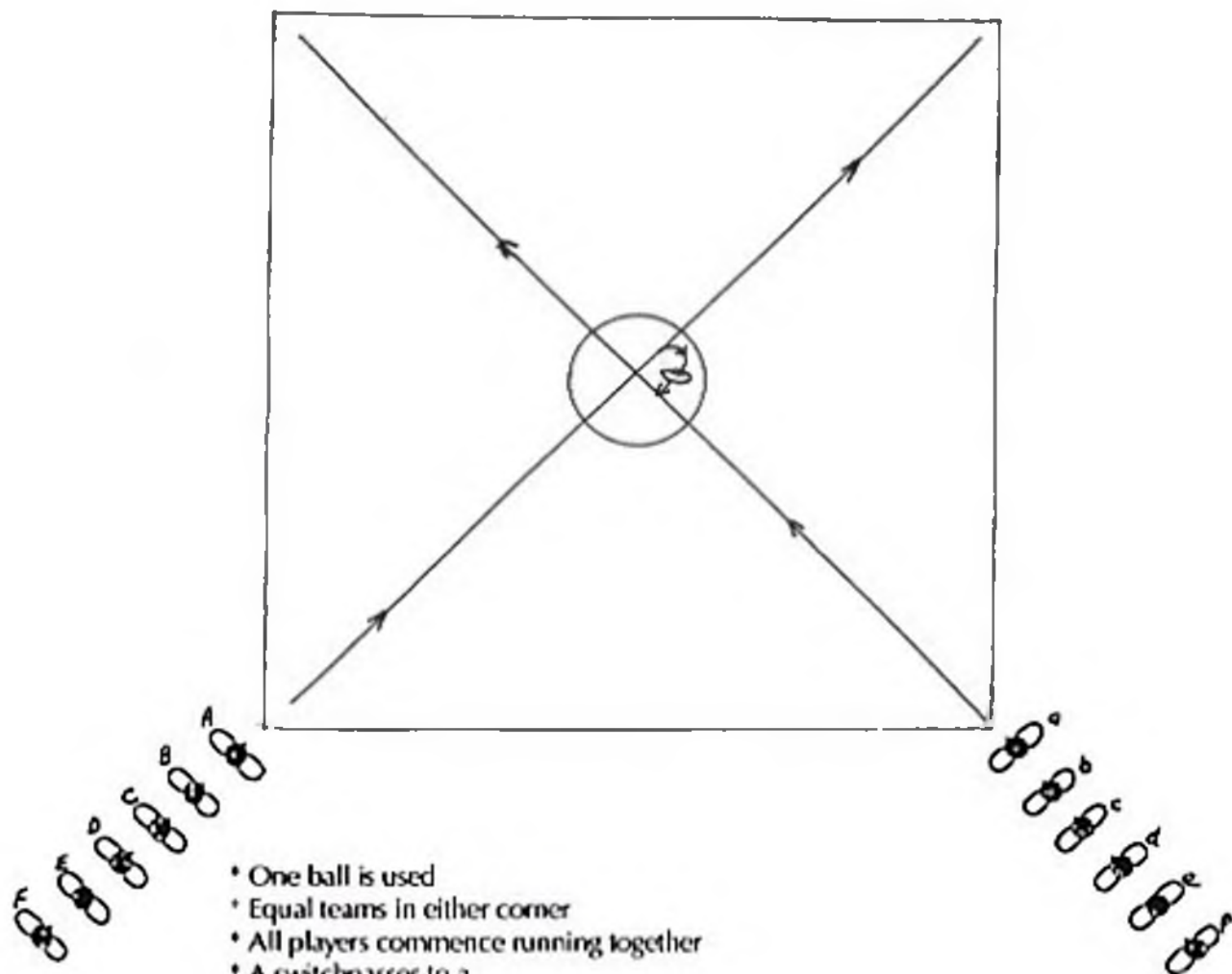
Receiving a Basic Pass

1. Vision - Look at the ball
2. Position - Be there early
3. Hands - Hands out early
4. The take - Stop the ball with one hand

Throwing a Basic Pass

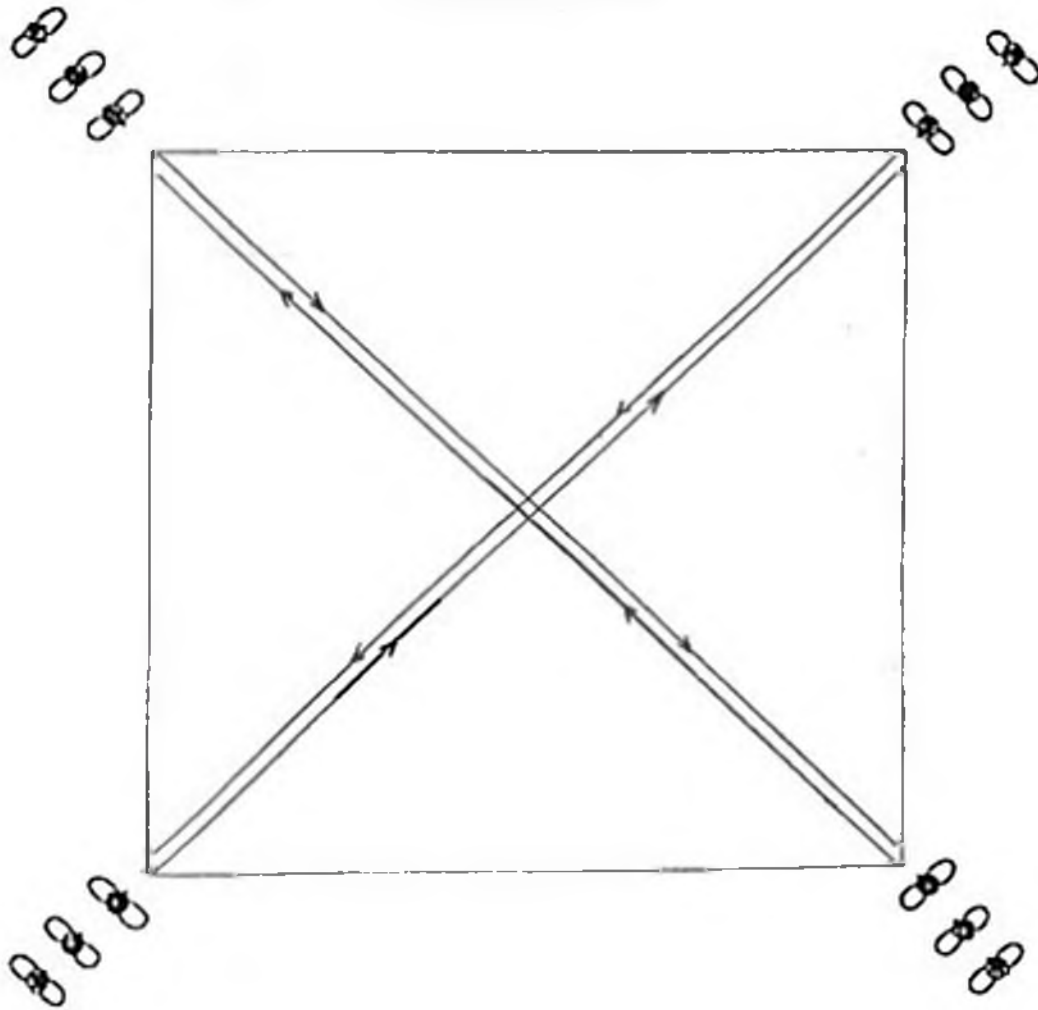
1. Turn - Turn head and shoulders to look at target
2. Project - Bend arms and kick with two bike fingers behind ball

Centre Ball

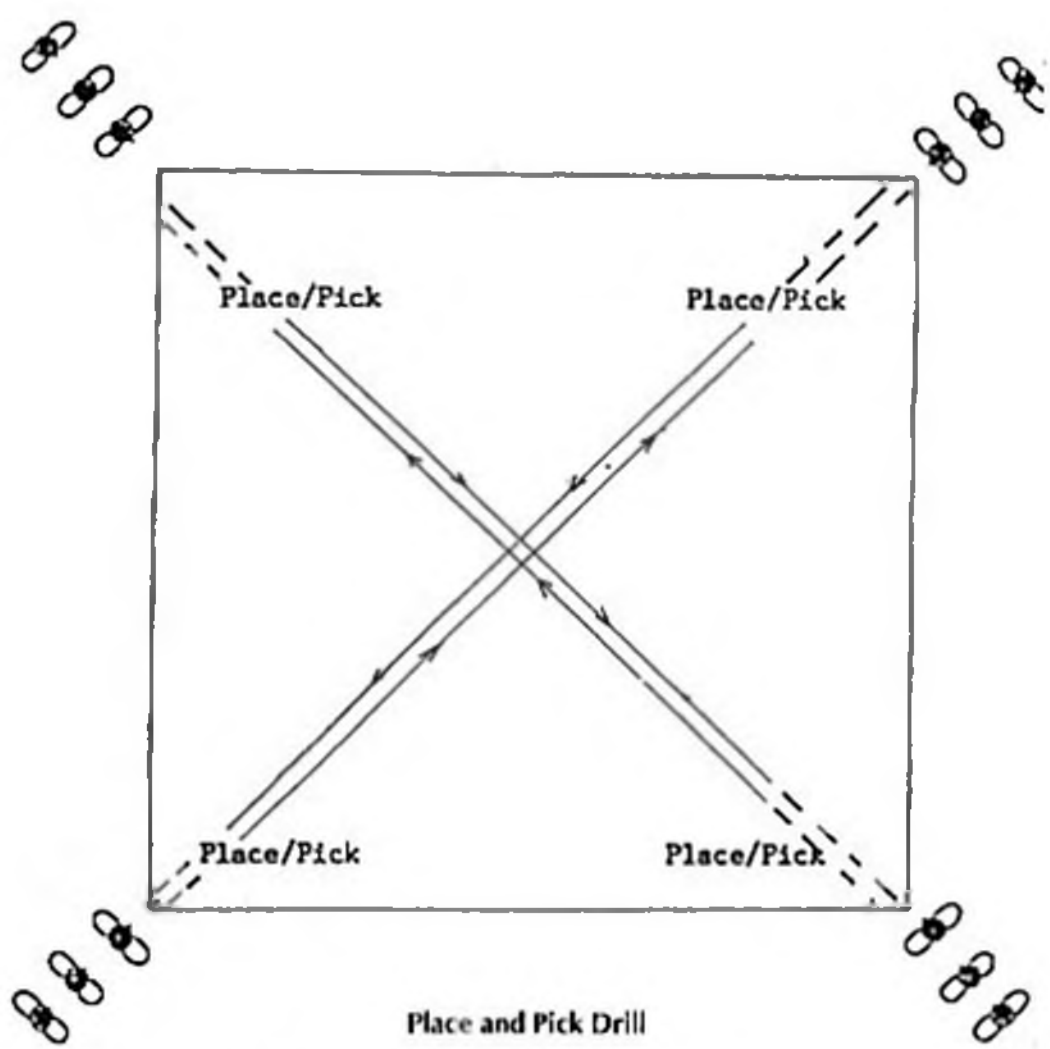


- One ball is used
- Equal teams in either corner
- All players commence running together
- A switchpasses to a
- a switchpasses to B
- B switchpasses to b etc.....
- Regroup in opposite corners and continue drill non-stop from those corners
- Ball must remain in circle – ideal ball path is vertical
- Target – Good – 75 passes/minute
 - Excellent – 95 passes/minute

HAND ON
SYMPATHETIC PASS

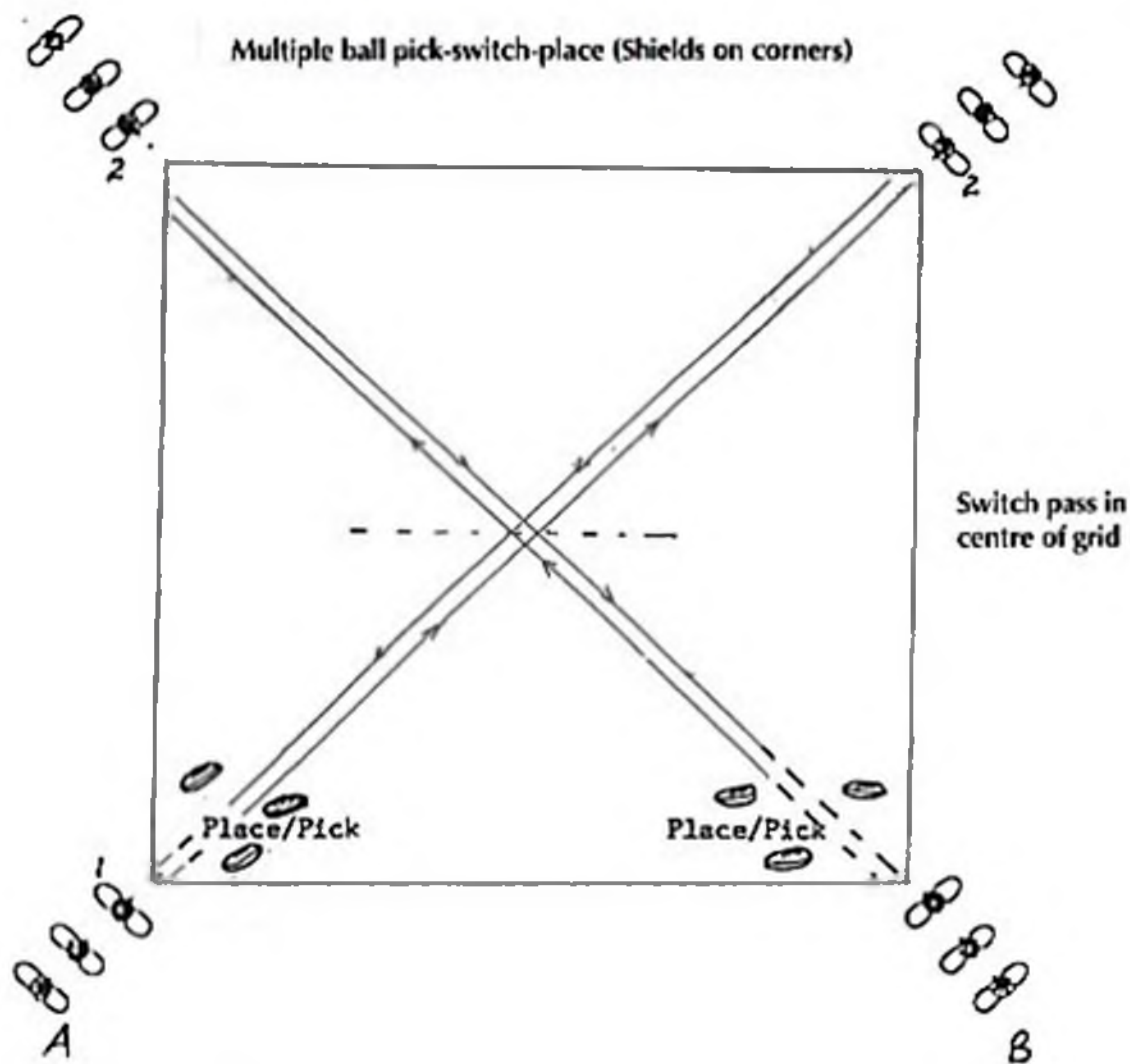


1. Receiver is static when receiving the ball
2. Receiver is moving forward (two paces off corner) when receiving ball.



Place and Pick Drill

1. Place and Pick (Introduce multiple balls)
2. Place and Pick (Introduce shields on corners)



MULTIPLE BALL PICK-SWITCH-PICK (SHIELDS ON CORNERS)

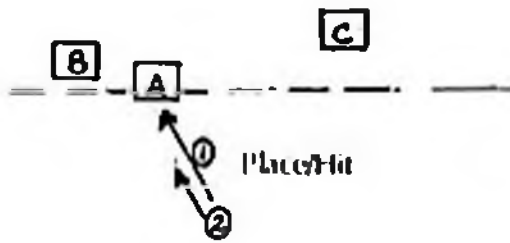
- Equal numbers (no less than three) in every corner
- Two or three balls in Corner A
- Two or three balls in Corner B
- Balls must not travel past centre line, i.e. they (balls) travel from A to B via centre, OR they (balls) travel from B to A via the centre
- SWITCH PASS is effected in centre of the grid

Players MUST:

- (i) Call (identify) a support eg. 1 calls 2 before picking up the ball
- (ii) Involve themselves in the drill i.e. call a support and pick up ball as soon as there is a ball in front of them.

Adaption to include "continuity" (contact) component.

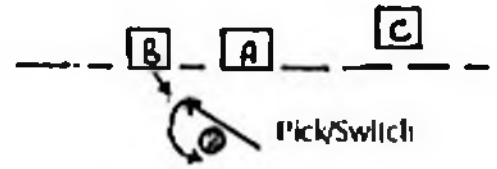
A player in corner A holds a "hitting shield", receives three "hits" from players placing balls, then hands shield to another player who receives another three hits, etc...



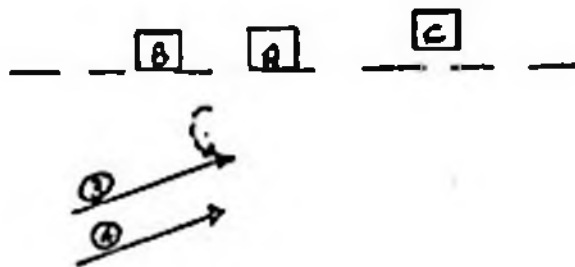
- 1. Places/Hits
- A Pressures 1
- 2 (First support player) moves in to pick

VARIATION TO PLACE/HIT

- 1. Hit/Transfer (Rip)
- 2. Hit/Go to ground/place.

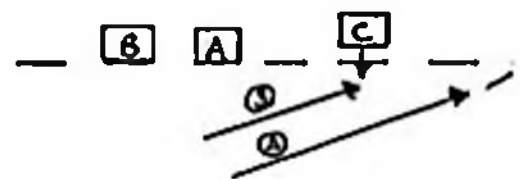


B moves forward to pressure 2 on advantage line as 2 Picks/Switches



3 moves in to take the space where the ball is placed in a vertical plane (flight)
4 supports 3

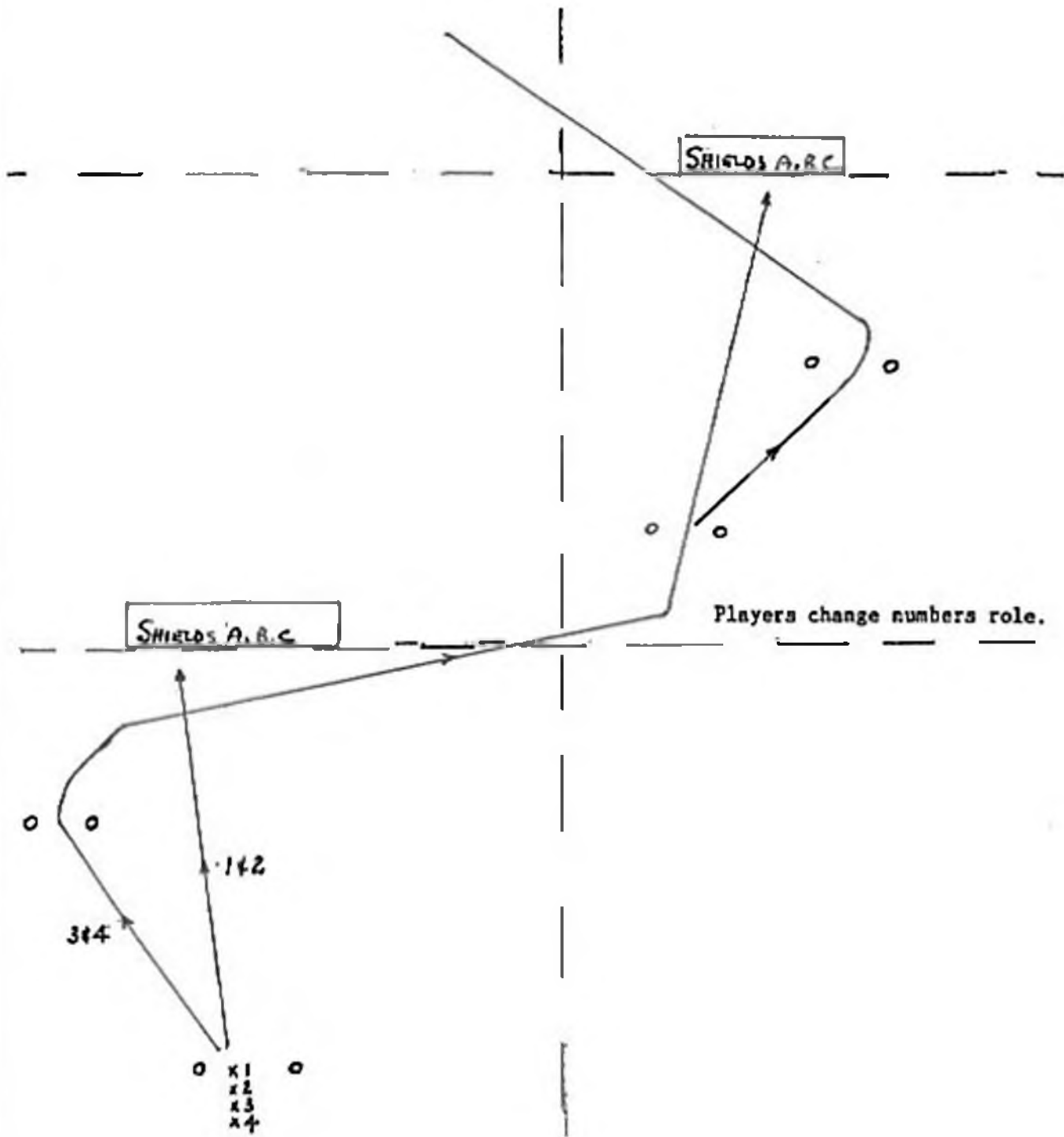
④



C moves forward onto advantage line to pressure 3
3 unloads with either screen, lateral or deep delayed pass, to 4.
4 continues to next contact point and becomes 1 place/hit as in Diagram 1.

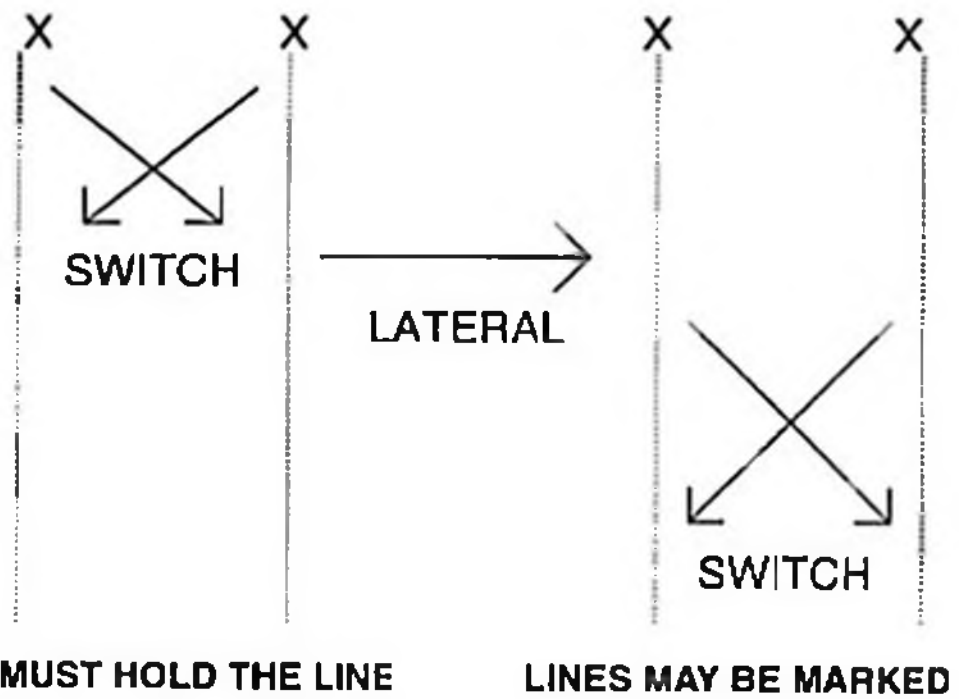
CHANGE OF DIRECTION DRILLS

(Overall concept)



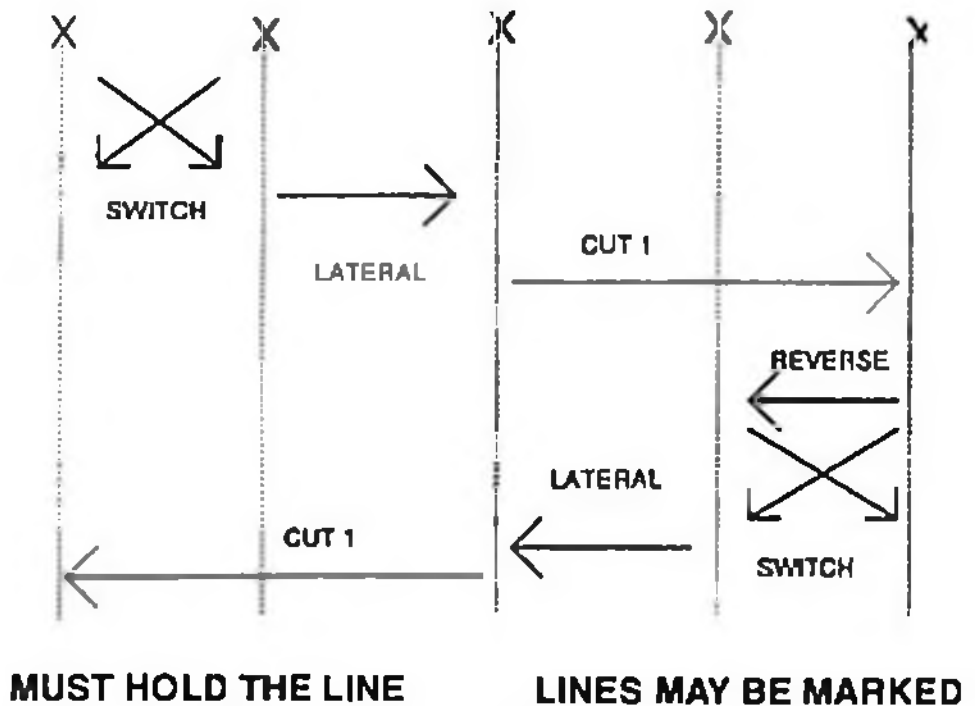
SWITCH PASS – UNOPPOSED

4 PLAYERS



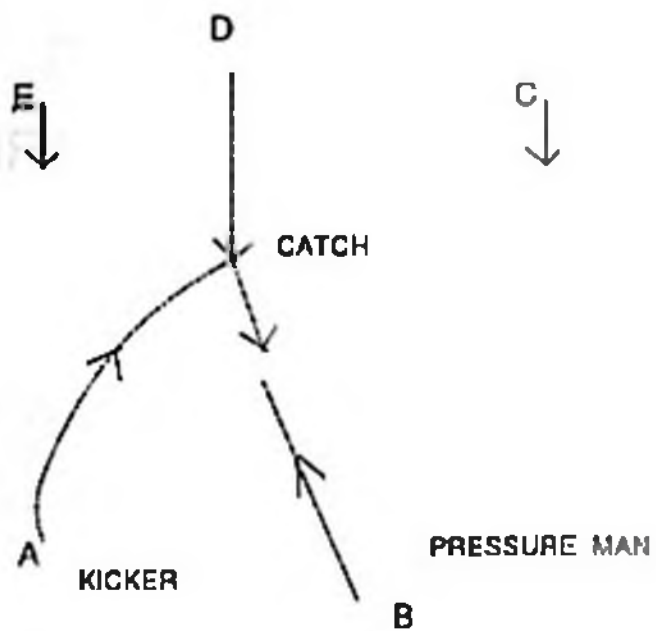
SWITCH PASS – UNOPPOSED

5 PLAYERS



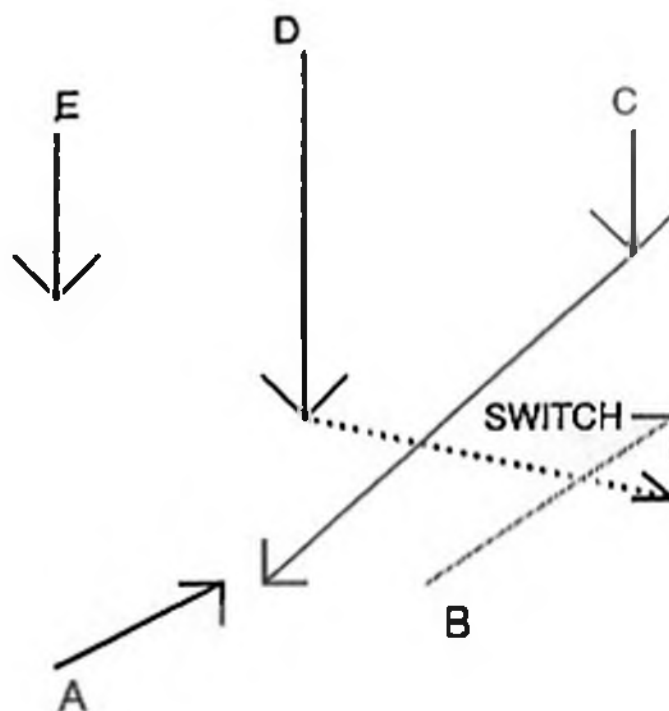
COUNTER ATTACK

5 PLAYERS



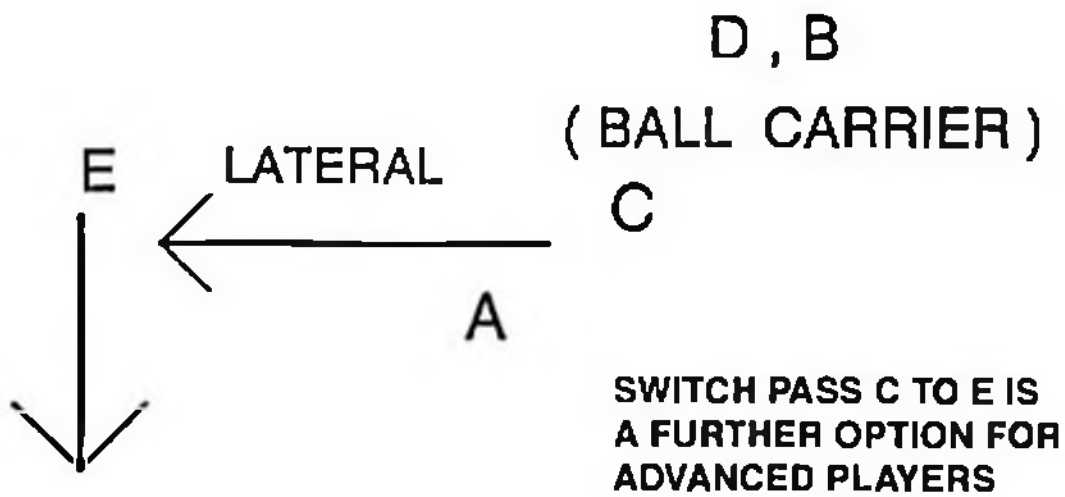
COUNTER ATTACK

5 PLAYERS

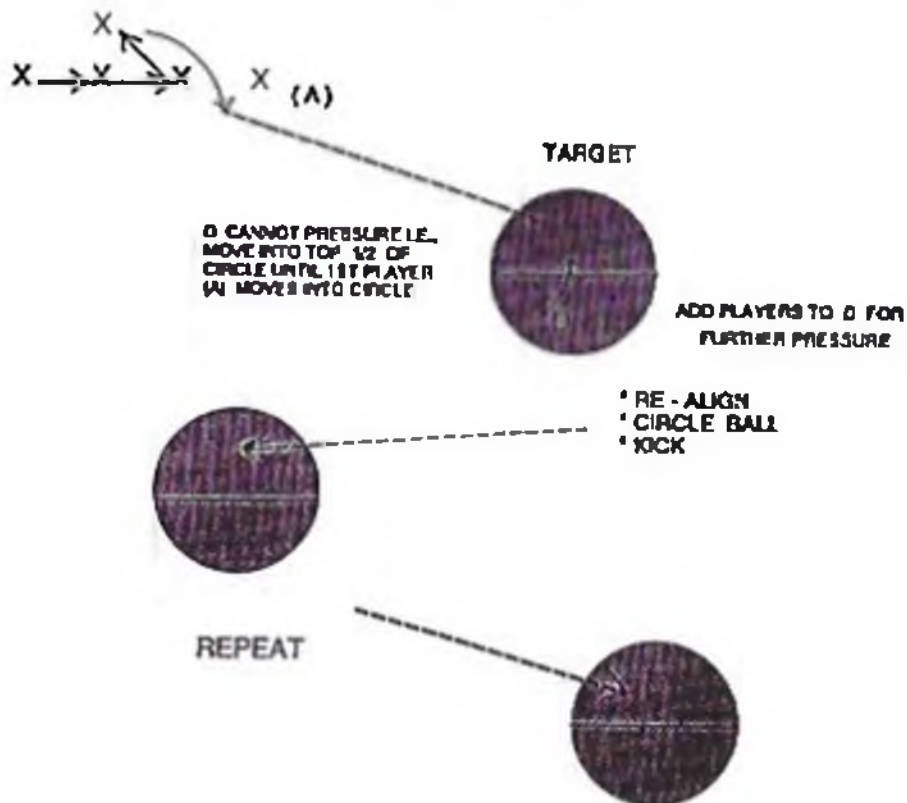


COUNTER ATTACK

5 PLAYERS

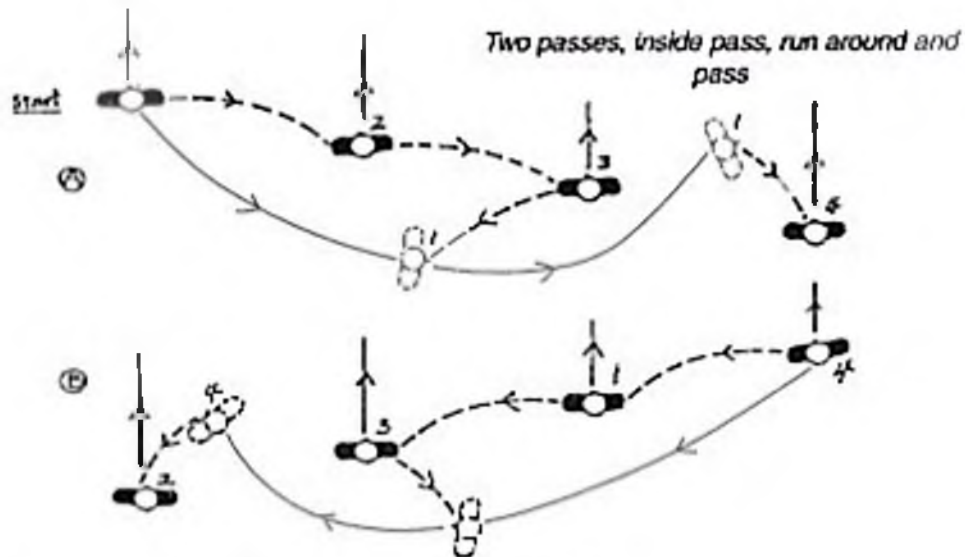


ADVANCED CIRCLE BALL



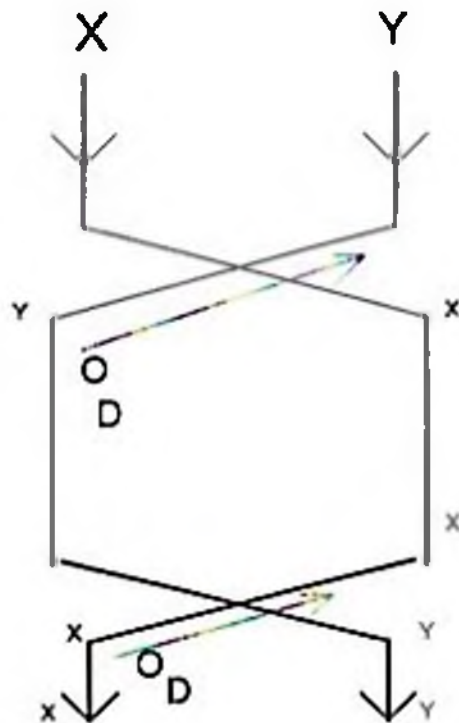
Circle Ball

Work up and down the field with a group of four.



- (a) The sequence is pass, pass, inside pass, run around and pass.
- (b) The ball then comes back the other way with the same sequence.

SWITCH PASS – OPPOSED



"SPONTANUITY"

– Matt Williams

Spontaneous Continuity

How to educate a team to play a pattern of three to five phases.

INTRODUCTION

The term "spontaneity" came about when ex-Wallaby 5/8 Stephen James attempted unsuccessfully to say "spontaneous continuity". Amongst the "rib poking" and laughter the term "spontaneity" has stuck.

Spontaneity is a series of drills that commence with simple passing drills in groups of 6 to 8. These build into full fifteen a side drills that form a pattern of play from set pieces. This provides the players with a basic pattern of play in certain situations i.e. midfield scrum, lineout on attacking 22 metre line etc.

The amazing success of Australian rugby over the past decade can most definitely be put down to the individual skills of the players. One of the most important skills that attracts the least amount of attention is the ability to retain or win possession at the breakdown. To play six to eight "tackle" rugby is to set up a winning edge. Sadly in many schools and clubs, the emphasis is still on scrums, lineouts and a single phase backline moves that are in simple terms one phase options.

The idea of spontaneity is to show players how to take the individual passing, running, rucking and mauling skills currently taught and use these in game situations, rather than only as isolated skills. Spontaneity is also helpful to change the emphasis from winning first phase ball and running backline moves against organised defence patterns to a situation where players understand how they can manipulate the opposition defence to create overlaps and opportunities off 2nd, 3rd and 4th phase ball.

This paper is not about detracting from the importance of the set piece as the primary source of possession or of the set backline move to gain the advantage line against a set defensive pattern. This paper is about showing the players that they must think two to three phases ahead.

I must take this opportunity to state that the materials used in this article are the combination of the ideas, drills and experience of the Waratah Rugby coaching and Development Staff, Andrew Blades, Bob Egerton, Warren Robilliard and myself. I must also acknowledge the contribution of other players and coaches whose ideas and drills the staff have observed as players or coaches and therefore have contributed to the end result we now refer to as "Spontaneity".

PART A

THE BASIC DRILLS

There are a number of basic handling drills that are the basis of the Spontaneity drills. These are simple continuity and ball handling activities that are used by many coaches in similar situations.

The drills are listed below with a page reference in the Waratah Skills Manual (WSM) or National Coaching Plan Level II manual (Level II)

WARATAH SKILLS MANUAL

The basic drills are:

- Mid-line support p35 WSM
- lateral passing Level II Manual p21
- outside support WSM p35
- mini maul WSM p77
- mini maul converted to ruck WSM p83

hit drive drop take out WSM p83
side step Level II manual p33
In and away body serve Level II manual p34
switch pass WSM p44-46 & Level II
manual p 29
loop pass WSM p44
circle ball Level II manual
cut out pass Level II p24

All of these drills should be practised as warm up drills or incorporated into the Individual skill and fitness activities of the players before combining them into the Spontaneity Drills. This is essential as the players must be fully equipped with the basic drills so they can perform the combination of these drills without pausing to decide what is the correct technique for that drill. Players who are uncertain of the basic drill techniques will have difficulty in performing the Spontaneity exercise.

SPONTANUITY

PART B

More complex handling drills that have two or three phases are introduced.

The players have to consider moving the ball laterally then placing the ball and moving it again.

Group number 6 to 8

The process is set out sequentially below.

1. Lateral passing. Place the ball at the end of the group. Realign then pass laterally back across the group.
2. Realignment and Support Drill p37 Lateral pass place. Two passes same way. Place again. Lateral passing back across the group. Place at the end. Realign two passes the same way. Place. Repeat.
3. The same drill as above is repeated except that the last two men in the lateral sequence do not do a simple lateral pass. They have a number of options. They can either switch, loop, circle ball, cut out and loop.

The ball is then placed and two passes are added in the same direction.

4. The same drill is repeated with the variation of the switch loop etc being performed after the lateral passing and the place. The sequence would then read lateral passing, placed, switch (or loop etc), place, lateral passing, place, switch place repeat. In this section the mini maul and ruck situation is introduced instead of the place. Obviously the mauling and rucking drill techniques have already been taught correctly.

The series of drills explained in Part B are repeated with the exception that instead of a PLACE after the series of lateral passes, a mini maul or mini ruck is substituted.

The basic spontaneity drill in groups of 8 to 10 would read, Lateral passing across the line, mini maul at the end of the line, two passes in the same direction, mini maul, lateral passing etc.

SPONTANEITY

PART C

Combination Passing

This is the combination of two or more of the basic drills.

Combination drills mostly include two types of passing drills with an individual skill or unit skill used as a link between the two.

For example in groups of 8 to 10.

The group sets up a mini maul with the remaining players aligned to the right. Lateral passing starts across the line. The last man does an "In and Away". He then gives an inside pass Fig. 1. The group continues on using mid line support. On a given signal etc. a whistle or a marker, a mini maul is set up Fig 2. The resulting position issued as the outside support drill is set up and the team realigns in the opposite direction (in this case the right) and then the drill is repeated. See Fig 5.

This type of combination has as many variations and combinations as the coach wishes to add.

The combinations we mostly use are listed below.

- A. Tap kick, lateral passing, in and away, midline support, mini maul, lateral passing, outside support, mini maul, change sides for alignment and repeat.
- B. Tap kick, midline support, mini maul, lateral passing, last man In and away, midline support, mini maul lateral pass outside support, mini maul change direction of realignment.
- C. Mini Ruck hit, drive, drop, two or three step over and take out. Lateral passing cut pass and loop around second last and last man. Last man does In an away, inside support, Mini Ruck, Lateral pass, outside support mini ruck. Realign opposite direction and repeat.

"The Use of the Dummy Half in the Modern Dynamic Game".

- Michael von Berg

1. Executive Summary.

The modern game has become far more dynamic in particular with forward play where there is a requirement for all rugby players to perform the normal rugby skills. The new laws, the level of fitness, attitude of players and coaches and a more professional and thinking approach has spawned a fifteen man running game in particular from phase and broken play. With the new laws and the exploitation of those laws both sides are intent in the attack in hitting opposition "soft spots" and working on continuity and breaking up the opposition and in defence, less players committed to the break down and spread flat and short as a defensive line.

This paper is designed to be a catalyst for only one phase of the game, the dynamic rucks, mauls and broken play in attack.

The trips to the AIS have illustrated the importance of cross fertilisation across a range of sports to pick the best out of those sports for the benefit of our running game. The ball handling skills and drills of the Australian-AIS Netball Team is just one of the sports that we can learn a lot from in particular in field and peripheral vision.

The other sport which is obviously much closer to our code irrespective of the purists opinions, is Rugby League which we can watch on TV every Sunday. The similarities between "the play the ball" in League and the Union dynamic ruck with forwards from both codes punching holes on or over the gain line is without parallel and it is in this vein the use of a "dummy half" concept in Rugby will be reviewed.

2. The Rugby Scrum Half.

In most instances in any attacking phase (notwithstanding caught in the ruck) the scrum half is the ball distributor. He is the general at the base of the ruck, maul or broken play choosing to either run on, kick, or pass off to a forward or back. He orchestrates and directs a driving maul and due to the fact in the tight play, the forwards have poor vision the scrum half is the eyes and ears of the pack. Obviously in other phases of the game he has specific tasks to perform in particular in defence and running lines but this paper is not designed to cover this area.

3. The League Scrum Half.

In the set play (if one can call it that) he plays a similar role but in the "play the ball" (ruck) he plays a very different role to the Rugby scrum half. He stands slightly wide, one off to either run, kick or pass off to another forward or back. As an analogy he is more of a stand off than a scrum half and that is the basis of this paper.

4. Similarities between Ruck and Play the Ball.

In the old days "the play the ball" was called "the ruck". In fact a part of the law still stipulates that the marker can rake or "ruck" the ball. The laws of League state that there must not be more than six tackles otherwise the attacking team must hand the ball over. In most cases the ball is kicked on the fifth tackle for field position. The key to this phase of play in League is yardage, possession and keeping unforced errors low. It also is looking to break up the opposition defence and shorten the defensive line for quick back play.

What a coach would give for a six phase continuity play in Rugby! The skills obviously in the areas of ball retention, support play, cleaning out and refereeing are paramount in creating this type of continuity and with time and training these skills at all levels will improve. With the "man off" concept and more and more forwards becoming runners and distributors, rather than just jumpers, pushers and shunters means that the similarities between both rucks in this phase of the game are evident. The only difference is that in Rugby the ruck ("play the ball") is much quicker if a quality dynamic ruck and in League the ball is cleared from "the play the ball" (ruck) by a "dummy half" (a forward) and not the scrum half.

5. A Different Approach.

The dynamic ruck and maul in nearly all instances has a forward off either as a runner or a follower depending on the strength and tightness of the opposition pack. Why can't a forward act as a dummy half and free the scrum half up for another task?

Indeed why not? With forwards becoming far more skillful and adept at ball handling all forwards should be capable of passing off the ground or from the hand. In League the dummy half is normally the Hooker but due to the phases of play and the tight's becoming loosies and vice versa this may not be advantageous but for the dynamic phases of the game when most points are scored why not have the scrum half standing off to receive and pass off as in League?

This immediately gets an extra man into the back line with the minimum of fuss and close to the forwards in case of break down. All that happens is that all backs move out one. We seem to be hell bent on creating all sorts of fancy backline moves which look great on replay but when analysing in many instances the attacking back with ball in hand has not made the gain line. In addition when there is a breakdown it's invariably miles from the forwards.

Wingers in at pace from set play to create dynamic phase play is fine but from the third or fourth phase when confusion is supreme and the defence is stretched, chain passing to the wings is still the best attacking weapon. To have the scrum half standing one out should without any complicated or fancy back moves give the attacking team an overlap and a more composed and steady second line of attack through the "back three" who can choose to penetrate or act as a "trailer".

6. Opposition Defence.

Obviously after one or two games the opposition will know that in this phase of the game the scrum half is standing in the stand off spot and the drift defensive will pick up the overlap out wide, but what it cannot pick up is where the second line of attack is going to penetrate and at what angles. In theory, having an extra man in close in the attack will push defences wide leaving an opportunity to the attacking team to hit the opposition in the midfield through the second attacking back line or a loose forward.

7. For and Against Argument.

For.

- a. Creates an extra man in back line.
- b. Under pressure the stand off has more time to kick (2nd 5/8).
- c. Position in attack (dynamic) offers better vision.
- d. Better placed to execute back row moves slightly wider of ruck.
- e. In case of break down better defensive angles.
- f. Gives opportunity to forward to pick and run or pass. (surprise)
- g. Keeps traditional back line intact if scrum half takes ball up.
- h. Gets forwards more involved (and thinking).
- i. Back three have more options in particular on wide short side.
- k. If ball held up a forward has more upper body strength to clear maul

Against.

- a. Unreliable ball skills of forwards.
- b. Unreliable ball skills of scrum half in unfamiliar role.
- c. Only seven or six forwards committed to ruck.
- d. Short side scrum half defence too far away from gain line on that side.
- e. It's different and radical.

B. Conclusion.

The game is in many instances taking a League approach in professionalism and the way that we promote the game. There is a lot to learn from the other code in the areas of advertising and promotions and it's not just the availability of dollars.

It's a matter of reviewing all aspects of the game including the way that all contact ball games are played. Hopefully in this short paper there may be something worth considering. If not, let's get on with the next review and opportunity.

Introduction

Many notable scholars of the game have noted the significance of scrummaging to the success of a team. The Level II Manual notes five points that emphasise the importance of a dominant scrum which are best paraphrased as follows:

1. Loose head scrum ball is the most dependable source of possession.
2. A controlled and reliable source of possession allows a team to best dictate the next phase of play.
3. The scrum is the only phase of play where a team not in possession can be pressured in an organised fashion.
4. A team that struggles at the scrum wastes energy through inefficiency and this reduces effectiveness at other phases of play.
5. A good scrum can be confident in the fact that a high percentage of stoppages are resolved with a scrummage therefore giving them an opportunity to reassert their dominance.

As such an important phase of play, the scrum has always been an area for specialist attention at training. Many coaches build their reputation around their ability to develop a dominant scrum as the corner stone of a successful team.

The problem for most coaches is the fact that expert scrummaging coaches tend to be ex-front row players. This is due to the following factors:

- * scrummaging is essentially a 'covert' activity. It is not open to the easy visual assessment that is available in assessing a defensive pattern or a back line move.
- * scrummaging relies more on the sense of touch rather than the sense of vision that almost all other skills in the game depend on. A good flyhalf "reads" a game, but a good front rower "feels" it.

These factors make it very difficult for the coach who is inexperienced in the scrummaging area. Such a coach must rely on the experience and knowledge of others to develop their expertise in this vitally important area. The Level II Manual could be a starting point for a coach devoid of experienced contacts. This is limited though by its own admission. While the text deals with such areas as the Key Factors of assembly, generation and resistance of forces, engagement, position specific roles, and general options such as wheels and crabs, its range of information is qualified by the statement,

"Detailed descriptions of advanced front row techniques have purposely been omitted from this Level 2 stage as a description of the 'winking and nodding' tricks of these curious people may distract a mere mortal from the understanding of the principles".

The "winking and nodding" is unfortunately a very important component to an average A grade front row who shapes up against the best front rows that have existed at clubs like Randwick and Souths in the last few years. Under 19 coaches and players who are protected from such manoeuvre as the push over try and excessive delayed eight man shove may survive on good body position and strength alone, but an extended understanding of scrum forces and their effective direction is necessary for any coach who ventures to open grade coaching.

The following text is based on the simplistic explanation of front row force direction that allows an intelligent, but significantly smaller or weaker pack to best resist the force of larger and stronger opposition.

Front Row Novice

The topic of two versus one comes from an inadvertent piece of advice from John Connolly on front row play. Advice from other experts was all based on a "if this happens, try this" approach. Advice like this was like telling

a novice golf player to alter their stance or swing but never really giving them an understanding of why they are changing it.

The very basis of front row play is to gain an advantage at some point across the front row. This could be achieved in a one on one engagement, but the easiest way to achieve it is to be able to isolate an opposition player between two of your own for a two on one advantage.

The concept of attacking a player in the front row will require certain specific techniques to aid in the application of forces. A position that allows for best leverage is covered in the Level II Manual under engagement and are rudimentary to the effective organisation of any front row forces.

Before the options of such a theory can be expanded it is essential to look at the breakdown of the application of forces in the front row.

Forces

Two essentials taught to every scrum is that a low front row formation and a large engagement force will maximise a scrum's ability to apply and resist forces. All things being equal with two teams on these factors, a scrum would come down to a measure of strength or power.

However the forces in a scrum are not equally distributed across the front row. The sustained load of a front row is distributed as follows:

• Tight head prop	40%
• Hooker	27%
• Loose head prop	33%

In interpreting these figures one can assume the following:

1. There is less resistance to the loose head side of a scrum advancing
2. If a tight head can overpower the applied forces, he is accounting for almost half the resistance of the resistance of the opposition scrum.
3. A player can only sustain that load that he can apply. Differences in technique and strength will mean that opposing players will be mismatched, 33% of a load for one tight head in a scrum may not be equal in quantity to the 33% of the diagonally opposing tight head.

The measurement of sustained forces are made with the assumption that all six players involved in the confrontation from both packs are applying forces in a direction that is parallel to the sideline. These loads will vary with changes in the direction of the loading but these options are limited.

A loose head force will only be applied to the opposition tight head.

A tight head can alter the direction of his forces between the opposition hooker and loose head but will always have to deal with the forces of the opposition loose head.

The hooker is at a disadvantage in a loose head scrum as the ability to alter forces is limited by the role of striking. Therefore the hooker in a tight head scrum is at the greatest advantage.

The Hooker is the Key.

A loose head hooker binds with closed shoulders with his loose head prop as they work as a unit of two to resist the forces of the tight head and place the hooker closer to the entrance to the tunnel. This provides a two versus one advantage. If the opposition hooker is ignored this means that the loose head front row will easily overpower the defensive tight head. Still ignoring the opposition hooker we see that the attacking tight head is best suited to power the defensive loose head.

The effective addition of the defensive hooker and his sustained load of approximately 27% will hold the key in turning the figures to his side's advantage if he can apply his forces effectively.

This gives the defensive front row three options. One of these is relatively passive. A second can be devastating but can be relatively easily defended against. The third, the least used, is also devastating but is virtually undefendable, if not predicted before engagement, and depowers the attacking scrum where their power is normally most effectively applied.

These options and the best situation application will be described as they would be organised into a front row. It should be remembered that a dominance of choice of any option will reduce its effectiveness through prediction. Variation is the key to any well organised scrum. The opposition should be kept guessing, but every defensive scrum should be attacking in nature. Any scrum should look to apply pressure in an organised form at every single scrum.

Option A

We will work through the options from the right hand side of the defensive scrum. This option is best known as "Bunching". The hooker directs his force at the opposition hooker while the tight head tries to apply as much force as possible at the opposition hooker, if possible discarding the opposition loose head.

The key to this is the ability of the tight head to apply his force without exposing a shoulder to his sternum by angling his shoulder away from the opposition loose head. This could result in him being lifted or popped. Just as the loose head hooker may roll his shoulder to protect from the defending hooker, the defending tight head can apply the same tactic to close the opposition loose head out.

Option B

The simple option of each man working his opposite number. While it is a less damaging option it can be used to give valuable feedback as to where individual advantages lie in a one on one situation. It must be remembered that it is still an attacking scrum.

Option C

This option is rarely chosen. Due to the focus on the feeding side of the scrum the other side of the scrum is normally ignored. The basic problem with the transmission of forces in the front row is that if an attacking scrum chooses to trap the ball and advance the scrum through an eight man shove, they can only effectively do so if their tight head prop is able to advance due to the large load sustained by this position and its more central alignment to the resistance of the opposition scrum.

The defending hooker will ignore the feeding side of the scrum and attack the opposition tight head. The loose head will also attack the tight head. In effect they are bunching the tight head.

The two on one advantage on this side of the scrum will mean that the tight head will find it near impossible to advance his side of the scrum. Also if the attacking tight head is repelled to an alignment behind that of the loose head, the alignment of the tunnel hampers the ability of the attacking hooker to get close to the ball. This also impress the angle of the defensive left hand flanker to closet down any back row move to the right of the field.

Option A is best used at the following situations:

- against a taller pack
- against a front row with poor body height
- on your right hand side of the field
- when the opposition is looking for channel three ball
- to assist a loose head wheel

Option B is best used at the following situations:

- in the opposition defensive half
- against a smaller or lighter pack

Option C is best used at the following situations:

- against an impending pushover try
- to assist the closing down of an opposition's back row options to the right
- to assist a tight head wheel

Conclusion

The beauty of this simplistic look at front row play is that a pack should never be totally decimated in a scrum situation in a game – no matter who their opposition is.

The whole exercise in the front row is a game of "Paper, Scissors, Rock". Any team that plays heavily to any one option of putting pressure on the opposition can be easily reduced in effectiveness by attacking them on their unguarded area of the front row. The hooker is the man who must co-ordinate his front row and the forces behind them.

I have utilised this technique with a number of novice hookers and props at First grade level. The effectiveness of the method is measured in the fact that on a number of crucial occasions when a big scrum was needed they repelled props of the strength and ability of the ranks of our present national squad by simply double teaming on them when an advantage could not be coded.

I agree with the original statements on winking and nodding attributed to the Level II Manual. Indeed an entire series of editions of technical manuals could be filled with tactics for the front row. In a time of importance though when you need to have an answer to an opposition scrum a theory that can be applied is a greater ally than a trick that might work if they do as you predict.

¹Marks R.P. National Rugby Union Coaching Plan Level 2 Manual
Rothmans Foundation National Sports Division, 1986, p49.

²Marks R.P. National Rugby Union Coaching Plan level 2 Manual
Rothmans Foundation National Sports Division, 1986, p53.

DEFENCE – A matter of Semantics or Running Lines?

– Warren Robilliard

Coaches today tend to work on the premise that they will attack and defend roughly equal parts of the game. The Level II Manual states that the key factors for Defence are:

- (i) Contest – the ball which creates a poor attacking platform.
- (ii) Force – the opposition, denying space and time.
- (iii) Tackle – which halts progress
- (iv) Cover – counters attacking raids

It goes without saying that these points are paramount in the execution of defensive patterns. However, it is not always the position of a defender, the line he runs or whether he is capable of making the tackle which counts.

Offensive tackling is difficult at the best of times. More often than not, defence comes down to desire. Therefore, the terminology we use in defence is important. If we look at the line a defender takes, we know the components are:

- III the approach
- III the balance, and
- III the drive

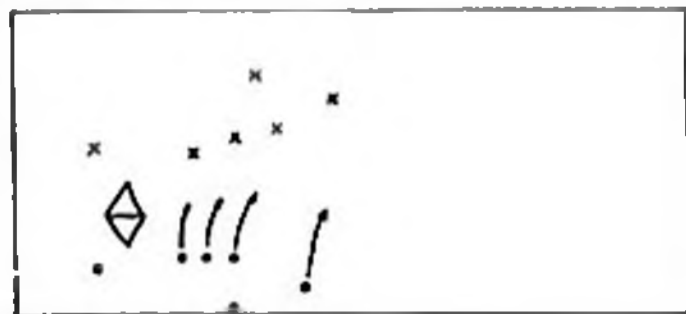
It is my belief "the drive" should be re-named "the crunch". It's easy to relate to a player the "a-b-c" of defence, finishing with the crunch-tackle.

Looking further afield, coaches talk about "Drift" or "Slide" defence. Everyone knows that this is a "one-off" pattern. The words "drift" and "slide" indicate that something will occur later. Defence occurs now – not later. Defenders must deny attackers time and space. Tell a well-groomed winger that you are playing "slide" defence and he'll slide off the field, into the grandstand and sit next to some glamorous female.

When you talk about defence, you talk about "Conflict and Communication". Therefore, this defensive pattern should be re-named "Blitz" defence. The word itself conjures up images of conflict. If your team Blitzes the opposition it suggests it is done with urgency.

In fact, you could call the defensive patterns Blitz – 1, Blitz – 2, Blitz – 3 and so on, depending on what a coach wanted his team to play in different areas of the field or against scrumlineout primary possessions.

When we look at the running lines of defensive players, it is still common to find centre three-quarters standing on the outside (shoulder) of their attacking opponent. When this occurs in defence, the 5/8 and two centres lose a "closeness" which means it is easy for them not to advance in one line. This only occurs when the three inside backs stand relatively close together. Because they line up on their opponents inside shoulder, it is easier to force the attack across field to the sixteenth defender – the sideline. This in turn means that should the defenders have to make a tackle, it will be a side-on tackle. Defensive line-ups should appear something like the diagrams below.

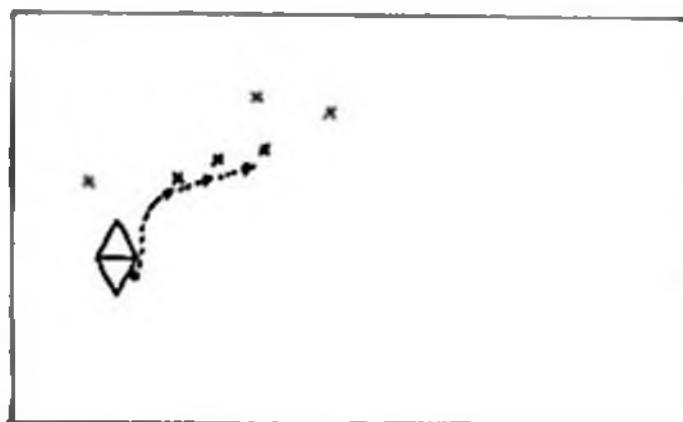


The running lines of the backrow should also be noted. Should an open-side flanker run at the inside shoulder, outside shoulder, an arc or run for the attackers midline? The answer lies in the approach the Coach wishes to take. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note the line that say, David Wilson or Simon Poidevin take from scrums.

More often than not they run an arc, breaking forward and on the five-eighths inside shoulder (to cut off the option of the five-eighth returning behind the pack for protection) and then moving across to his outside shoulder. This tends to force the live-eighth sideways, but more importantly, keeps the flanker in the play.

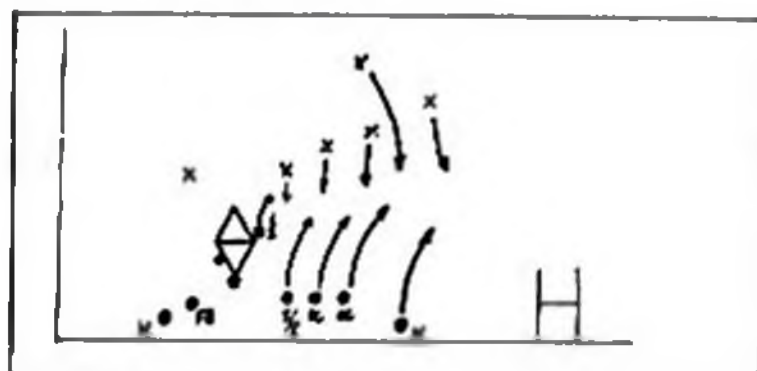
If the flanker runs directly to the five-eighths outside shoulder, and the five-eighth runs the ball straight, and then delivers a flat pass to an outside support player, the flanker would be out of the play as the five-eighths body would obstruct the flanker from moving onto the ball. Mark Ella was quite adept in setting up his outside supports in this way. More often than not, the support player (ball carrier) would advance across the advantage line, which in turn meant, his forwards would be supporting (the ball carrier) in some depth. The flanker should run a similar path from lineouts for the same reason.

A diagrammatic representation of this would be:



Another area of concern is who calls the "go" for the defensive backline to advance from primary possession. Too often it is the five-eighth, who brings up the outside men. In essence, it should be the outside centre who gains a better "look" at the ball because he has a wider angle. It also means that the outside centre can adjust his speed of advancement to the men inside. If the five-eighth calls the "go" he could easily get out of alignment (from his two centres).

Defence close to one's goal line on the left hand-side of the field to another area often neglected. The NSW, Queensland and Australian teams use the following formation.

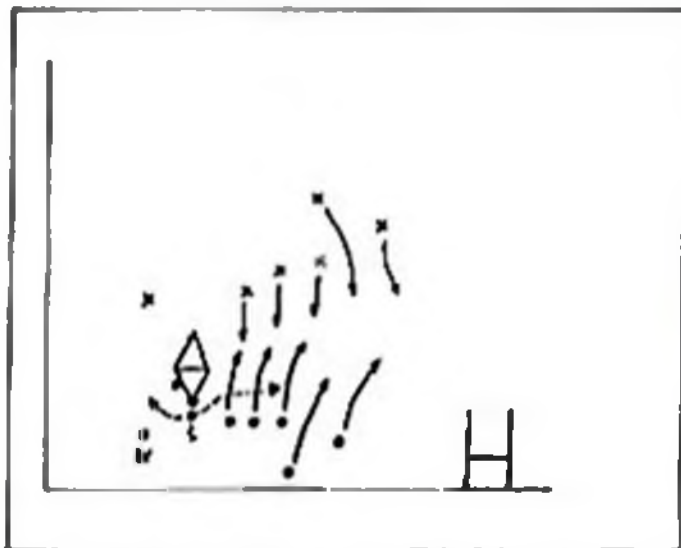


With this formation it means that the half-back has one job in defence - tackle the five-eighth. The rest of the defensive backline play a "one Diablitz" pattern.

Should the attacking team run the blindside then defensive players are given the following roles:

Blindside Flanker	-	1st ball carrier on blind
No. 8	-	2nd ball carrier on blind
Fullback	-	3rd ball carrier on blind
Wing	-	4th ball carrier on blind

However, if a team sets up in the following formation an extra rule can be utilised.



With this pattern, the halfback concedes possession to the attackers and falls back just behind his No. 8. The backline is then playing man-to-man defence. Should the attacking team run the ball blind, the defensive players are given the following roles:

Blindside Flanker	-	1st ball carrier on blind
No. 8	-	2nd ball carrier on blind
Half-back	-	3rd ball carrier on blind
Wing	-	4th ball carrier on blind

If however, the attacking team choose the openside to attack, then the half runs in behind his advancing defensive (back) line, not forgetting that the open flanker is also available to tackle.

I believe this system is a good option, taking into account that the majority of club/representative teams,

- (i) use channel 3 ball, and
- (ii) attack the blindside with constant regularity when receiving a loose head feed, in the attacking quarter, with a wide blindkick.

The subject of defence is a complex issue considering the variables which exist. The Coach must not only work out the pattern best suited to his team but also know something of the psychology of his players and strengths/weaknesses of the opposition.

One factor is certain with regard training for defence – on the whole it is a neglected facet of play in Australia. The Wallabies are one team which have spent time practising not only the patterns, but the execution. Their results speak for themselves.

7th September, 1992.

CONFIDENCE – A KEY FACTOR?

– Tony Evans

From examples of papers compiled for the Level 3 Program in the past the Rugby subjects chosen have taken problem areas of play and analysed them in the mind of the writer.

No doubt all of us have variations that we have applied, given that most of us do not have the luxury of ultimate team (size and ability), to expect another version of a similar line of thought would achieve little.

I have decided to write on what I perceive as a very simple problem encountered over the last two seasons. A problem though simple – had not been mentioned at coaching courses and became apparent only on analysis of why we lost the game we should have won.

The Problem became apparent when coaching a medium level Representative team where the knowledge of players and time to assess them was limited. Their skills and technique had been reasonably well mastered and they had an overall confidence in their general ability. There emerged the problem of players lack of confidence in their peers and also the management. This problem can be especially severe with players coming back from a higher level. I believe this problem needs to be identified so that coaches and players are aware of the detriment it can cause, before it happens.

CONFIDENCE

– A KEY FACTOR?

The Purpose of this paper is to promote the idea to Administrators and Coaches that "Confidence" is a key factor to be identified, analysed and presented as a vital ingredient of winning Rugby.

Preamble Elite Coaches and Administrators of many sports make reference to confidence as a major requirement. A point few would disagree with.

At elite level I have no doubt that all facets of individual and team requirements are attended to by the management team available. At club and early representative level, available expertise is limited, coaches have to be lack of all trades and any information passed down from above can only be helpful.

IDENTIFY CONFIDENCE

Coaching manuals comprehensively provide detailed lists of skills, drills and techniques that virtually cover all phases of play for individual and group situations. Additional information is provided e.g.

- Diet
- Strength
- Fitness
- Mental Approach

Reference to confidence in coaching manuals is very limited. The only major reference in the Level 2 Manual is in relation to confidence in contact.

There is no doubt that gaining expertise and efficiency in individual and group skills and technique builds confidence in the players ability to perform.

I would suggest that at grass roots level and above, that it is principally assumed that once the skills and technique are mastered that confidence is automatically created. This is partially correct having developed the players confidence to perform his individual role. It has not necessarily developed confidence in the player to perform his team responsibility or to be completely confident of his peers the coach and the program.

EXAMPLES OF CONFIDENCE

1. Individual
2. Group/Team
3. Management

To further identify confidence, I will present examples using a specific identify or team to more easily clarify the subject.

1. The Individual

The logical choice is David Campese.

Campese plays a natural ability combined with a thorough knowledge of the skills required. He possesses a natural confidence probably superior to any other Rugby player in Australia. He has the confidence to continually try moves that a less confident player would only think about. He has the added super confidence that after a failure he seems to immediately retain that confidence and be looking for the next opportunity.

Obviously coaches don't teach this type of confidence, but they play a significant part in promoting or discouraging this talent in a player.

2. Group/Team

Confidence in this section is probably the most important factor of the game as it enables a team to control the ball. If all members are individually well trained in skills and have natural ability for their specific role then the task ahead is much easier. Where team members have confidence in the ability of their peers to perform and support – once again they have no hesitation to try moves.

The NSW senior team under Rod MacQueen in 1992 demonstrated on a number of occasions total confidence in each other. The number of phases strung together totally controlled, no panic, working together to the required position before a planned move, everyone totally confident of each other, forwards even "confident of backs".

The backline defence employed by Australia in recent times, though sometimes lacking in precision, displays a tremendous confidence in each other to support.

3. Management

If the management have confidence in all of their players then the task ahead is obviously much easier. However in relation to the players having confidence in the coach/management we can find a much larger problem that may often be unrecognised.

I would suggest that the Waratahs in 1992 displayed confidence in Rod MacQueen.

The Under 21s – Sydney, NSW Country and NSW packs when instructed by John Griffiths showed a huge lift in performance. They had total confidence in the coach and his knowledge.

ANALYSIS

The Individual

1. Natural Ability and Confidence

- a) Should be encouraged and guided to blend into and enhance the team performance.
- b) Because these players can be erratic and difficult to support, coaches may try the easier option to devalue the player to a more stereotyped performer. This action can be difficult, sometimes impossible to reverse once the confidence is gone.
- c) Other team members recognise the good/bad points and require guidance in extracting the best from a talented team mate.

2. Fitness, Skills and Technique

Obviously the higher the standard of achievement in these facets the more confident all players will be. This section is readily understood and accepted.

The majority of players are the tradesmen of the game – A Vital Part. For these as individuals mastering the above provides their confidence.

3. Confidence/Overconfidence

A player having represented at a higher level returning to his former team:

- Can be of great value providing knowledge and experience. Leading by example creating confidence in his supporter/followers.
- Can create many problems where his confidence in his own ability in relation to his peers is overdone. The player takes over responsibility and tries to make the play. Usually this results in a loss of form for the individual and a game plan out the window.
- Becomes frustrated with his peers and loses motivation.

ANALYSIS

Group/Team

1. fitness, Skills and Technique

(See Individual 2)

2. Confidence in Peers

Having established competency at section 1 and with the individual confidence that comes from it, the vital steps are blending the individuals in to a confident unit.

- Have players recognise their own ability to create and support.
- Recognise the ability of others to create and support
- Work together in developing the creative/support combination e.g.

The ability of Phil Kearns to get over the gain line and set up
or

Willie O in defence to create the opportunity for attack from a heavy tackle.

The increased confidence of both the creative player and his supports when soundly developed together can be the difference between the teams of equal individuals.

The confidence to pop the pass, tap to the sweeper, to "Attack" is because the support will be there.

3. The Plan

Vital to sections 1 & 2 is the players confidence in the Coach and the game plan.

Given that the players have successfully achieved the required levels at section 1 & 2 the effort can all come undone if there is any doubt in relation to the game plan.

Defence is probably the easiest example eg:

- Because there is a choice
- Because there are arguments for and against each type
- Because the physical makeup of players available may not lend itself to the preferred plan

All the above will fail if any player lacks confidence in the plan or their peers ability to support the plan. The slightest hesitation can create the gap. Players have to be totally confident that when they do their job both inside and outside will be doing theirs.

ANALYSIS

Coach/Management

Coaches have a vast amount of programs and knowledge available to them to plan and achieve fitness/skills/technique and at many levels this may be enough to compete and maybe even win.

The coach must be confident in his knowledge of the above. He must frequently assess his own actions and be convinced that his knowledge and understanding is correct.

There are numerous qualified people to discuss problems with and run through techniques so they are thoroughly understood.

The players can detect the confident knowledgeable coach and support him.

Coaches require:

- a) The ability to assess individual/team strengths and weaknesses.
- b) To develop the strategy best suited to the available resources.
- c) To identify the common goal for all to benefit.
- d) To be able to confidently and clearly explain ideas to the team and individuals.

Coaches often tell teams "This is the plan and all I want you to do is play to the plan. If you do this I will be happy. If it doesn't work I'll take the responsibility"

NOT GOOD ENOUGH – LACKS CONFIDENCE – LACKS UNDERSTANDING

A player trying to impress selectors won't handle looking bad for long and then we have created a problem.

SUMMARY

The purpose as stated is to create thought amongst coaches and administrators as to the importance of confidence in winning Rugby. That the experience of senior coaches would be recorded and developed as an addition to the current coaching program.

I have acknowledged the fact that a large part of confidence is already well established and accepted, being developed from a high standard of fitness/skills and technique.

I have endeavoured to identify the types of confidence within the player both individually and in the group situation and in relation to the management. Also to explain other facets of confidence that perhaps are taken for granted or have not been readily identified in programs to this time.

I have tried to promote the importance of understanding and developing this part of confidence further and to making it an integral part of the program of success.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT CONFIDENCE IS A KEY FACTOR.

CAN RUGBY SURVIVE ACCELERATED EVOLUTION?

A short survey of changes made to rugby football under the guise of improvements.

– Bruce Norton

Those unwilling to study history, are doomed to repeat the errors.

September 1992.

Rugby football, from its very beginnings, has been a player driven game; one where the laws/rules follow the play, and are not forced by theory. Actions on the playing field eventually become adopted into the framework of the laws. Subtle adjustments being made to the laws to accommodate changing playing styles, developing tactics, and even social mores.

At least that was the case for the first 200 years!

Within this period a number of changes, often quite minor, resulted in the formation of the five other major football codes. These revolutionary changes occurred within the span of some 50 years; roughly between 1855 and 1905. None of these changes were instituted or directed by players. These rugby revolutions provide a sober warning to those wishing to direct the game along any particular path.

In addition to the five revolutionary changes the game has been subjected to six major law reviews/alterations over its life; four of these being in the modern era i.e. post-1949/50. There has been a plethora of variations, expansions, explanations, instructions and notes; all to try to correct anomalies arising from the laws being altered in the first place. More and more additions are made to 'control' on-field situations. Additions range from what became necessity like Under-19 Safety Laws! through the well-intentioned to the meddlesome. Some are veritable time-bombs.

The Laws of Rugby Football have expanded from a small, 3-page pamphlet in 1485 (when the game was already some 70 years old), through to a small, 48-page booklet, about the size of a book of stamps (in 1950), to the current full-sized tome, bound, of A6 size and over 200 closely printed pages.

The game is still recognisable as rugby, and it still clings to some high ideals and principles, but for how long?

How long before the sixth revolution?

THE RUGBY REVOLUTIONS.

There have been five revolutions in the history of rugby – so far! They have involved the drawing up of rules to remove aspects of the rugby game which were considered dangerous, offensive, politically unacceptable, unattractive to spectators (and players?), or not properly directed. They have all involved the same basic process – changes to the laws of rugby such that the resultant game becomes unrecognisable from the source.

In turn, rugby was ...

- 1) softened to become a means of keeping players of a perceived 'major' sport (cricket) fit in the off-season. The concepts of off-side, tackling/hacking and set pieces were all removed.

Australian Rules 1850s

- 2) stripped to eventually become a tribal rite for the masses. Again set-pieces were removed, contact reduced and no handling or carrying of the ball permitted.

Association Football (Soccer) 1860s

- 3) set into discreet tableaux, eventually becoming suitable for commercial presentation to spectators via the mass visual medium. All broken/general play was removed and positive ball possession instituted.

American Football 1880s

- 4) separated from rugby (and soccer) to provide a national identity, with unashamedly political motives. Rules were drawn up to contradict the "English" games.

Gaelic Football 1880s

- 5) simplified to become a game suitable for the paying spectator and the paid player. Line-outs were dropped, and positive possession at the tackle was introduced.

Rugby League (orig. Northern Union) 1890s

What ? and when ? the sixth revolution.

RIPPLES IN THE POND.

Often very small alterations to a law, or practice, have triggered an expanding swell of changes, with end results nobody envisaged at the time.

When one W.W. Ellis caught the ball and then elected to run forward rather than retire and take his kick (familiar?) his peers saw the action as sly, improper, not the done thing. Twenty-two years later his action, now called "running in", was legitimised in the laws of the game.

The 1905 All Blacks stormed through the U.K. playing rugby the likes of which had never before been seen. Their 2-3-2 scrum formation with its wing forward being subjected to intense scrutiny and continual suspicious mutterings. It was not until 1932 that this scrum was outlawed, the wing forward being branded a 'cheat'. Fortunately it had outlived its tactical usefulness, seven men no longer able to compete with eight in the scrums.

Some 20 years later (in 1949) the actions of a Springbok No:8 named 'Hennie' Muller, in standing opposite the centres at line-outs and wreaking havoc amongst the N.Z. backs, eventually led, some 15 years later, to limits being placed upon line-out length. His actions were considered detrimental to good back play; a case where the laws were changed to eliminate particular tactics, not legitimise them.

In 1964 the off-side line at scrums (and rucks and mauls) was changed from through the ball to behind the hindmost foot. For some 25 years prior the scrum laws were tinkered with in attempts to 'improve' the set scrum - oddly enough trying to make it into a balanced contest, rather than just an organised contraction to restart the game. Nothing had the desired effect. Then this small alteration to the off-side lines, MADE TO GIVE THE BACKS MORE ROOM, AND IMPROVE BACK PLAY, started to weave its pernicious spell up front. Within five years the power scrum emerged. With increasing emphasis on domination up front, effort and energy were channelled for ever-longer periods into a tight-knit confrontation. Back play withered. The power game spread with the success of the '71 Lions in N.Z. and the '74 Lions in S.A. Scrums, rucks and mauls all became separate, almost independent, games within the game. Then a further twist. A devastating spectre arose to blight the game. The broken neck!

The power scrum is only for those physically and technically equipped. The power game is not for the very young, the social player, or even players of the 'wrong' shape. It had taken some 15 years for a small alteration to the laws; made to improve the quality of back play, to not only affect the reverse, but to breed a monster.

Evolution moves in its own directions.

A BIG BANG!!

For some 20 years the lawmakers have tinkered with the line-out laws – trying to eliminate the ‘mess’ and reduce supposed villainy. All that has happened is the line-out is now more formalised, wilting under the weight of a burgeoning pile-up of law sections, and withering in the gales of whistle blasts from “all-seeing” referees.

The latest (1992) batch of changes piles even more upon the line-out. In addition to changes made to those laws directly governing (it) the line-outs (some eight or so) further Experimental Variations (E.V.s.) applied to other facets of the game will impinge directly upon the line-outs. In some cases the effects of the E.V.s will counteract the desired results of the direct line-out law changes. The contentious E.V.s are those designed to open-up mauls, or even reduce their numbers. The majority of mauls form from line-outs, so any fiddling with the maul will impinge directly upon line out play in the following manner. The maul E.V.s given the scrum feed, and hence possession, to the team not in possession at the maul’s start. This emphasises the need to trap the ball carrier, to smother the ball; to kill the play. At the line-out the ball-catcher will be smothered, the ball locked in and the ensuing scrum feed awarded to the smothering team.

The solution? Don’t catch the ball. Tap or guide it directly (and quickly) to the half-back, or a support player. The two-handed catch is destined to become a rarity.

An additional factor is the relaxation of the spacing between players in the same line. This opens gaps, allowing players to breach the line and attack the halfback as soon as the ball is tapped. Halfbacks are in for a very rough time; they will either grow, or be replaced with compact prop-like players. We will see a lot more of the sweepstake-up manoeuvres; and a likely push towards double-lanking and/or lifting.

These ‘predictions’ are already in train. They will be the norm before the year’s end. No longer the luxury of watching changes trickle slowly through the game, taking decades to reveal their full effects. They now take effect immediately, and not necessarily in the direction envisaged, or desired.

THE CULPRIT? A NEW PLAYER.

In the past the ripples from law changes have expanded slowly, as players used the trusted method of trial and error. No more! A new ‘player’ is in the game; the analytical coach equipped with the omnipresent video camera, and backed up by batteries of supporting experts. Trial and error is not for this new ‘player’ – the game is for winning; now! Laws are only to provide a framework, often very flexible, for what can be done. They are there to be exploited, to gain a winning edge.

Law changes no longer ripple through the game at their own slow pace, allowing players to adapt as the need arises, and the law-makers to ‘correct’ the situation before too much damage is done. Now we have coaches dissecting every aspect of the game; looking for an edge, an advantage, however slight. They extrapolate the laws, bending and twisting them beyond the limits ever envisaged by the law-makers. Moves and manoeuvres are studied, manipulated, modified and nullified. Players are exposed, their strengths and weaknesses revealed for cataloguing and correction; their capabilities matched to particular positions. All to eliminate errors and not lose.

The robotic conformity of a brave new world approaches.

We are in the era of accelerated evolution. No longer can we all sit back to see what may happen when minor alterations are made to the laws. ‘New’ laws must be subject to predictive scrutiny before implementation.

Although coaches on the one hand, and the law-makers/enforcers on the other approach the game from diametrically opposing viewpoints, they can provide the balance necessary to preserve the game. The game needs them to work together – not one after, and often against, the other.

THE SIXTH REVOLUTION?

by Bruce Norton

A long view of the effects the 1992 law alterations will have upon rugby football.

"We know what we are, but know not what we may be".

Shakespeare (Hamlet)

Rugby football has been radically "improved" on five separate occasions. Each "improvement" the result of externally driven changes being made to the rules, and each resulting in a new, and very different, game.

The five revolutions have, so far, produced . . .

Australian Rules Football
Association Football (Soccer)
American Football (Gridiron)
Gaelic Football

and, Rugby League (originally Northern Union)

This year, 1992, saw a number of alterations to the laws, plus the introduction of a number of 'Experimental Variations' (E.V.s) all introduced after the moratorium period, prior to the 1992 World Cup, expired.

The stated reasons for the changes are . . .

- to reduce practices that cause irritating stoppages,
- to improve the line-out, by exposing illegalities,
- to rationalise the points scoring system,

and, - to improve player safety.

While these changes, separately, appear minor, the cumulative effects will prove otherwise.

The short-term effects of the law changes have been well documented with many of the predictions being realised; but what of the long term? Players and coaches live in the present, they operate in the immediate. The lawmakers, by contrast, must look to the future; to preserve the best of the game, its variety, its colour, its character, its very ethos. Without this long vision the game slips toward another "improvement".

Are we at the leading edge of the sixth revolution?

BASES OF REVIEW.

Rugby football has an intrinsic nature, which governs ALL the on-field actions; and this must be considered when laws are altered, or new laws framed.

This nature is, in essence, defensive.

The concept of 'side' (of being "off-" or "on-"); limiting the method of moving the ball forward to only carrying, or kicking; and, limiting the margins for error; all enshrine the game's defensive ethos. Defenders (the team without the ball; outnumber attackers (the team with the ball)) in most match situations.

While the nature of the game is defensive there is an over-riding desire by all players to win. The object of the game may be open to question, but the objective of every rugby team is to win! To win, a team must attack. To attack a team must use very means available, from power and pace, strength and skill, to deception, disguised obstruction, and exploitation of the laws.

The words of Vince Lombardi – "Winning isn't everything; it's the ONLY thing!" – provides the drive to overcome the game's very nature. Regardless of the lawmakers intentions, players play the game to win.

The long-term effects of the 1992 Law Alterations (including the E.Vs) are examined from the above viewpoint, coupled with the belief that the game must remain player driven.

WITHER THE FUTURE?

The changes are considered in totality; they inter-relate so intimately that to review each in isolation is not only meaningless but deceiving.

THE 5 POINT TRY, AND . . .

Intended to stimulate running attack, it also heightens defensive intensity. When coupled with the relaxing of a number of previously penalty (3 points) offences to free-kick (now zero points) offences the defensive noose tightens. Teams have always been prepared to risk 3 points (read cheat) to save 6 – now they can risk nothing to save 7. The widening of the gap between the try and scorable penalties expands the defensive options. Reducing the punishment for, so-called, 'technical' infringements limits the attacking team's tactical options by illegal, or unfair, means.

Tantamount to extending the licence to cheat!

The anticipated stimulation to produce 'running rugby' will further back-fire as the scrum option becomes increasingly attractive. The scrum provides a 'safe' platform; consolidates the defence; and allows for direct scoring through the drop-goal option. More scrums will mean bigger scrums (as in each player becoming bigger/heavier) to provide the necessary power/strength to maintain the safe platform.

How far away is the 1 tonne scrum?

Thus moves to promote running options increases the importance of set-piece domination.

PLAY THE GAME ON YOUR FEET . . .

The simple, single word, change to the tackle law (Law 11) – substituting the word "when" for "before" when describing the actions of support players in the tackle situation – reinforces the above tenet. Correctly applied it will eliminate the wall-of-bodies approach, and reduce the number of scrum inducing pile-ups. It outlaws the "flum ruck" and promotes high-speed continuity. A very desirable result.

In the long-term the opposition of first support player will become the province of the solid, ground level, ball player. The field positions affected being the flankers, in particular the open-side flanker, and the centres.

In the short-term this elegant, positive move has been almost totally negated by the E.Vs introduced to open-up the maul, supposedly to provide an improved environment for open, running, rugby.

E.Vs AND OTHER MALADIES . . .

The aspect of the introduction of the E.Vs applied to Law 21 (ruck) and Law 22 (maul) that defies logical explanation is that these E.Vs have been tried over a number of years, and found deficient, even destructive. The lawmakers appear to be almost totally out-of-touch with the majority of the players. The E.Vs reverse the basis of continuity; deny reward to the team honouring one of the game's principles, to go forward; destroy clean catching line-out play and reward the negative approach.

The E.Vs promote the upright smother tackle, with the defenders standing to smother the ball; while the carrier goes to ground, attempting to keep the ball free. Completely arse-about! The exact reverse of what is desired. In addition we have seen an increase in the incidence of high/dangerous tackles.

Adding a smother tackle over-ride condition will partially restore the situation to one where the defenders tackle to free the ball; the attackers trying to remain on their feet and promote continuity. It is only a partial solution, as the reward for going forward is still largely absent.

As things stand defenders have the freedom to fringe; fewer players being needed in the maul, thus more and more spread out in a flat defensive line cluttering the in-field areas and stifling attacking opportunities.

In any match the majority of mauls form from line-outs. Fiddling with the maul will impinge directly upon line-out play; thus, despite changes being made directly to the line-out laws to improve the opportunities for 'clean' catching, the maul E.Vs have nullified any improvements. The player catching the ball will be smothered, the ball locked in and the consequent scrum feed awarded against the catcher. Tapped ball, to a fast-moving sweeper will become the norm – especially as there is no need to match-off bodies in the line and the consequent gaps expose the halfback.

Once again law alterations designed to promote open, running, rugby, by virtue of the "use-it or lose-it" approach do not achieve the desired results. The game closes in to a form of high-speed tunnel ball, or tap-to-run, played by players of a singular somatotype – endomorphic.

The effects of these E.Vs in the long term will totally alter the game. I would hope that sense will prevail and the ruck/maul E.Vs will not have a long term future. They should be discarded as soon as their trial "life" is over.

QUICK THROWS, KICKS AND OFF-SIDE . . .

These latest revisions have given rise to a curious interlinked mish-mash of laws producing activity without much purpose. Rather akin to running on-the-spot.

The quick throw-in is but a shadow of what it could be – initially given some freedom, then emasculated by restrictions imposed upon the thrower, and reduction of the opportunities for its use. It will revert to a tactical oddity; to be used mainly to provide for a 'safe' touch kick from within one's 22; once the present publicity glare dims.

While the free-kick options will contract, as the need for control and consolidation is once again recognised; field kicking will continue to increase as the options provided by strong off-side players advancing are fully explored. It is still easier to 'gain' field position by kicking than by any other means.

Teams are still working on the conflicting needs of applying pressure through chasers, while covering the kick receiver area. The short-term has produced kick-to-kick duels, with little running from depth – a situation unlikely to change. Running requires support, kicking doesn't.

The long-term will produce some radical shifts in player field positions and alignment to meet the conflicting needs. Attacking kicking from close to the ball source allows for chasers (e.g. centres and back-row) plus cover in depth by the back three (fullback plus wings) in case the ball is returned. This attacking option becomes even more attractive as the in-field clutter closes out the passing/running options. The dreaded 10 man (plus chasers) will enjoy a resurgence in popularity – because it can win.

Set-piece dominance, plus a kicker, will remain a match-winning 'style'.

NO MORE TANGLED WEBS TO WEAVE?

"Neither . . . (halfback) . . . should take any action while the ball is in the scrummage to convey to the opponents that the ball is out of the scrummage". Law 20 (17) (b).

Why? This addition is designed to remove a minor irritation (for whom?); one that can easily be "controlled" by the on-field participants without recourse to this sort of bureaucratic c-slotting. The addition is minor, an irritant in itself, but the precedent it sets is potentially devastating.

This addition attacks the very foundation of the game – deception!

What comes next? In the short term extend this law to cover line-outs; then mauls; then rucks; and eventually general play. Does it go as far as to cover players acting as half-back?

In the long term, then what? Outlaw the dummy? the dummy switch? screen-type tap moves? the rolling maul? any maul?

This minor addition is a spear point touching the very heart of the game.

It must go!

WHERE TO NEXT?

Questions that need to be answered are; do the law alterations and variations achieve the stated objectives? Is the game improved? and, if so, how? and for whom?

Much has been made by the advocates of 'running rugby' of the need to provide a framework of laws that favour this style of play. This current batch of changes have been considered in a favourable light; although the more radical state that the changes do not go far enough. This needs closer examination.

Australia, as current World Champions, and with some players of exceptional individual flair are held up as shining examples of the 'running rugby' school. Admittedly they play (exploit) the current laws well – they have the team to do it. The biggest forward pack on the international scene; indeed! Solid, fast chasing centres; definitely! A well organised and disciplined defence; right! And even a couple of world-class kickers; spot on! Disciples of winning rugby? Yes! But, of 'running rugby'; no way!

A popular recent criterion for evaluating a game's worth is the time the ball remains "in play" the 'better' the game – a view pushed by followers of rival, derivative, codes. Nonsense! This is a clear case of confusing quantity for quality. The time the ball is 'alive' matters little – what is done with it in this time is what really matters.

We must judge the 'new' laws on the grounds of quality, only. We have no need for other criteria.

October 1992.

"SINK OR SWIM THROUGH THE NINETIES"

A Paper on Rugby

Mark Nightingale

Australia's recent successes on the Rugby fields of the world have been as a result of intense planning and management by a select group and some very talented athletes loaded with the courage and commitment to attain their goals as well as their mentors.

The same can be said of the Queensland and New South Wales teams of recent years as well.

All these teams of men use a Squad system. To maintain his success and to cultivate and grow it, we have to establish the roots. Herein lies my paper.

The gap between elite players and coaches and club players and coaches is widening. The extent to which elite players dominate club rugby when they make a rare appearance is staggering, and has widened over the last three years significantly. The likes of Lynagh, Wilson, Campese, McCall, Eales, Horan, Little, Farr-Jones totally dominant in their roles leave regular A Graders floundering and appearing as if the standard of club rugby is sliding. Perhaps, but not altogether true, as the improvement in elite players has also been substantial over recent years.

There is an old saying . . . "Don't wait till it's broken to fix it" . . . and to this end I put forward my ideas covering three agendas:-

- 1: Squads
- 2: Competition
- 3: Game

1) SQUADS

Brian Jones and Ian McKinnell take the credit for introducing squads to Britain in the early '70s when the Welsh were at their best. They believed it was essential to the sort of rugby that a club of Newport's standing was expected to play, i.e. consistently successful rugby.

Squads do work if everybody is committed to them. Here I stress – everybody – from the part time 4th grader to the committee member who turns up at every second monthly meeting.

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Step One | Establish the guidelines at the committee level first and thence with your coaches, managers and trainers. This makes them all aware of your goals and the planning and management practices you will use to achieve them. These people must be supportive of your system. |
| Step Two | A players' meeting where the same guidelines are set out and explained in conjunction with all participating coaches, managers and trainers. |
| Step Three | Select the squad of 40 (forty) two months before your first game and begin your refinement. This is done after some initial pre season work where everybody is training as a club specifically on pre season programming. |

It is important in selecting your initial squad that some aspects are addressed . . .

- i) It is not an ironclad squad – players can move in and out – through lack of effort, attendance, commitment and later on from an injury or form.

- ii) It includes representative players – who you will probably see very little of during the season and who are also partaking in training programmes that may be a little different to yours. These players may come to your training for the club spirit, rest or recuperation from injury among reasons. Talk to them closely about training because if they do not participate fully it can be disruptive and detrimental to the overall scheme of events. Shadow players can replace these people when they are unavailable.
- iii) Specialist positions – nowadays nearly all positions are specialist, but hooker and halfback stand out, followed by props, as the most important to your squad.

My breakup is as follows:-

Tight Head	2)	One or two players
Loose Head	2)	should be Inter-
Hooker	2)	changeable
Second Row	4		
Back Row	6		Allowing Open/Third/No. 8
			Flexibility
Half Back	2		Two types
Five Eighth	2		Two types
Centres	3		
Wing	3		
Full Back	2		
Utilities	2		

Do not demean the utility. Players with the abilities of Horan, Kellagher, Herbert are worth their weight in gold.

Make sure you have selected a few who will "lead" with a view to captaining.

Use programme designs that identify needs for each position.

This can be a basis of selection –

Second Row	Apart from height/weight, etc. look at - Explosive Power Pushing Jumping Running Catching
Loose Forwards	Upper body strength Running

After a set time or period, evaluate and if necessary make modifications.

It is a good idea to pilot your programmes. Have a couple of dummy runs with other coaches, senior players, etc.

In developing a squad system in your club, it will bring out the "achiever" in a person. I believe expectation of success and awareness of possibilities is a strong long term motivation. People who fear failure eventually fall off the pace.

Some advantage of a squad system . . .

- Lift standard of your club – more people training at a higher level.
- Develops consistency at training and in game situations.
- "Horses for courses" – wet or dry trackers, 10-man or open – provides flexibility in selections.
- Develop utility players.
- Identify and blood younger players when appropriate.

- Rest players without the "stigma" of dropping them.
- All players know the moves and signals.
- Everybody trains together and gets to know each other in the same environment.
- Builds morale in squad and club.
- Can cover injuries, head bin, blood bin.

On a club basis, the practical use of a squad system is advantageous to the higher grade. You may end up with two full teams and four fit fresh reserves. In this case, they may play planned half games or sit on the bench for both games and/or play half games in the higher grade. This is useful if players are doubtful through niggling injuries, come down with flu or are injured early in the proceedings.

Fresh reserves are beneficial in that if an A Grade player is injured early, it does not necessitate a second grade player playing virtually two full games. This usually weakens the team and the replacement player is hard put to find the same energy reserves he had for his first game.

Another way of using the squad is by playing people short on condition hard for twenty to thirty minutes and then replacing them. This saves getting a half-hearted performance from a player just not up to it physically at the time.

Game plans play a part in squads. If it is raining and heavy, we may play 10 man rugby necessitating a change at half back or five eighth whilst on the other hand we can revert to running open rugby with a faster service and perhaps more mobile open side flanker. The options are the answers.

2) COMPETITION

If we do not establish an East Coast or National Club Competition in the near future, it will be to the detriment of the Code and ultimately our mantle as World Champions will be at risk. At the moment, Basketball, Soccer, Hockey, Baseball and League are making great inroads in this medium. In Brisbane alone, crowds of 10,000 at Baseball games are not uncommon, not to mention Basketball. In 1995, there will be three new Rugby League teams in their N.S.W. Rugby League Competition. To say these won't have an effect on Rugby Union is "head in the sand" stuff. They may not get the Hurans or Littles, but most A Grade Union players would be looking at carrots come 1995.

They need an incentive - be it a trip to Sydney or Melbourne or Canberra every second or third week to play in an East Coast Cup or a sponsor's tracksuit and boots.

Initially, I would envisage

- 4 Brisbane teams
- 4 Sydney teams
- 1 A.C.T. team
- 1 Gold Coast/Newcastle team

played on a home/away basis involving first grade squads.

This would mean some changes to the local competitions whereby Sub Districts would combine with local clubs thereby increasing the standard of subbies who would now play with and against local club competitors.

The standard of the East Coast Cup would be lifted because the better players would gravitate towards those clubs and it would be a larger pool for State and National selections.

Clubs would be initially ranked and then relegated or promoted on performance with a view to other States being included down the track. It would also be a more appropriate and serious Australian Club Championship.

It would require a total restructure of local, state and national commitments to games and tours, however I feel this is overdue anyway with the number of games our representatives are currently required to play without including the game invented by backs so forwards couldn't get the ball (Sevens).

3) GAME

The new rules make our game a better spectator event and for this I applaud the changes because the spectators provide the dollars to entice the sponsors to keep our game in the public eye.

Ten years from now, what will the rules be?

The game is a lot faster and cleaner. It is now about longevity, especially with big corporate sponsorships and career enticements. Will we become more Americanised with protective headwear, neck braces, chest pads, thigh pads? Will Michael Lynagh now pushing 40, run on and give University Harlequins a last shot at field goal from 45 metres with the clock stopped at 25 seconds and Sydney Old Boys putting their eight defensive guards against him – all around 6'6" and 210lbs – and then the game referee signals time on and John Eales now a filled out 32 year old veteran picks up and runs looking for wing receiver Damian Smith who only has to cross the goal line and spike the ball for Victory? Will he score? Will Rugby score? Let's hope so!

IN SUMMARY because of the widening gap between elite player abilities and grade player abilities, I recommend that all clubs look at developing a squad system which in future competitions could be very beneficial to players and clubs alike.

I would also recommend schools implement the same sort of system so as to establish a footing for their future development.

MAKING THE MOST OF A SWITCH TO RUGBY

Greg Sawyer

BACKGROUND

In country areas or states, like Tasmania, where Rugby is a minor, but growing sport, and has a limited schools and junior base, clubs often rely on bolstering their numbers with players who make the switch from other sporting codes.

In the last two years, for instance, Tasmanian clubs have each gained at least two and up to fifteen players who have played Rugby before. These players have been recruited from a wide range of sporting backgrounds (soccer, hockey, tennis, Amateur League and Gaelic football!), but by far the largest numbers make the switch from Australian Rules Football.

As a club and representative coach over the past ten years, two things became evident to me about these 'converts':

- (1) In many cases, unless these players had a natural aptitude for Rugby, they were being left to 'sink or swim'.
- and*
- (2) Those who adapted quickly and well to Rugby were not being fully helped to make the most of their abilities.

It is common, on the Tasmanian scene, for a 'convert' full of enthusiasm for his new-found sport and inspired by vickers of Campese, Moran, Fales et al, to take to the field in Second Grade (our lowest grade) and come face to face with a wily, semi-retired, ex-state player who proceeds to demolish his opposite number. Or, after playing only a handful of games, a promising new player will be promoted to First Grade to fill-in for an injured player or because the club lacks depth of players and talent.

Both of these can often result in these players failing to reach their potential or even being lost to the game. In developing Rugby areas more needs to be done to avoid losing new players and to give them every opportunity to improve their skills and their play.

This paper aims to provide some ideas and strategies to help players to make the most of a switch to Rugby.

CONTENTS

- 1 What position do you play?
- 2 Observation and self assessment
- 3 A Vet or Buddies program
- 4 Using the skills of a new player
- 5 'What are the rules umpy?'
- 6 Equipment
- 7 Off-season opportunities

1. WHAT POSITION DO YOU PLAY?

This is a question that can take many seasons for a player to answer . . . indeed in the case of some players it may never be answered.

As a starting point club coaches will need information from a new player about his previous sporting involvement and standard, and a list of the skills and abilities that he possesses. This can be obtained by using a short questionnaire which will enable the coach to develop a player profile - an example of such a questionnaire is shown in Appendix 1.

Some new players will now where they want to play and, within reason, should be accommodated (one of the quickest ways to lose a new player is to play them in a position where they don't want to be), but most will have to be observed at training and in their early games to try and work out their best suited position.

Player assessment and the communication skills of the coach are crucial for this. The coach will need to use assessment processes such as those described in Section 2 as well as discussing any positional changes with the player. The coach will also be responsible for pointing out the skills that the new player needs to work on or acquire to remain in his desired position.

The benefits, both of allowing a new player to develop in his preferred position and of a coach's perseverance and encouragement were demonstrated in one of our local club's reserve grade team this year. A new player arrived at the beginning of the year who was built like a front row forward and had played some league as a front rower in the past. Like many tight forwards, when asked where he wanted to play he said, "In the centres". It soon became obvious that catching and passing the football were not this player's greatest assets but he was a strong runner and refused to learn the finer points of forward play. The coach persevered and continued to play him in the centre or on the wing and spent as much time as possible at training working on the player's handling skills and encouraging him, despite frustrations. By the end of the season the player had improved considerably and, on one occasion, when the team was short of a second-rower, this player volunteered to play in that position – such was his enjoyment of the game and his wish to help out his team and coach.

Sometimes new players will learn the game in the backline but, after a few seasons, develop into a very capable loose forward. For this to occur successfully coaches need to be aware of a player's strengths, abilities and ambitions in rugby, and must be able to discuss options with the players and help him to develop a program to achieve short and long term goals.

2. OBSERVATION AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

For players and coaches to establish goals for any player, observation and assessment of the player's performance must occur and be recorded.

Self-assessment sheets (eg. Appendix 2) enable players to examine their own performance and provides valuable discussion and training material for the coach. The form enables the coach to follow up on post-match discussion in his own time and can provide some valuable information that did not emerge earlier.

Just as valuable to players, new and experienced and coaches is the use of observation sheets, an example can be found in Appendix 3. This strategy is successful with the new player being 'observed' by an experienced player or coach but is equally valuable with the new player observing an experienced player who is playing in the same position. Discussion between the two players after the match or prior to the next training session is essential to gain the maximum benefit from this exercise. The exercise works well when combined with the Peer or Buddies program outlined in Section 3.

Some hints:

- At the training session prior to the game, the coach should let a player know that he will be observed/observing and discuss the observation sheet with him.
- Discuss the Observation with all club members so that they are aware of the benefits and aims of the exercise.
- The coach must be clear of his aims and what he is trying to achieve by using observation sheet and design one appropriate to the purposes helping new players; establishing problem with technique; as a tool for encouragement; etc . . .).
- Be sure to follow up the Initial Observation with a later one to show improvements i.e. is of limited use as a 'one-off' but beware of over-use. Discussion with the player concerned can often help to decide when an observation sheet is needed.

3. A 'PEER' OR 'BUDDIES' PROGRAM

Educationalists will confirm that some of the best and most effective learning occurs from one's peers. Likewise, watching and working closely with experienced players is a valuable way for new players to learn Rugby skills. By linking each new player with a 'Peer' or 'Buddy' (an established player who has a good knowledge of the game and good skills) his development will be enhanced. It would be an advantage for the players to be in the same or similar position, but this is not essential.

The 'Peers' or 'Buddies' can help each other before, during and after training as well as pre- and post-match – the new player has someone with whom he can discuss problems, ask questions or gain advice, as well as learning skills on a one to one basis.

The observation exercise described in Section 2, can be carried out by the 'Buddies'.

This situation occurred successfully (and accidentally) in one local club this year. An experienced player introduced a number of new players to the club. All of the 'converts' were Australian Rules Footballers and knew very little about Rugby. They learned very quickly and were helped by having an experienced player who was on hand to answer questions and discuss performances. By the end of the season, four of the new players had played in the club's first grade team.

One of the new players said:

"Having someone to ask about things I didn't understand especially the laws, was really useful. I didn't worry so much about my game, about making up – I knew I could work on it at training. Richard (the experienced player) sometimes found it hard to help me because he is a forward and I was playing in the backs".

By formalising and refining this 'Peer' or 'Buddies' program clubs could benefit greatly in the areas of player development, integration and retention. The experienced Peer or Buddy will also find some benefits – his coaching skills will improve and his confidence and self-esteem will be enhanced.

The program is of immense value to the coaching staff as it takes a lot of pressure off them and provides excellent support in the development of individual skills and player encouragement.

Clubs who use this program are advised to begin with volunteers and gradually build up a 'pool' of experienced 'Buddies' who could work closely with the coaching staff.

4. USING THE SKILLS OF A NEW PLAYER

Many of the players who make the switch to Rugby come to it with skills learned in other sports. We might take advantage of these skills on the field by using the Aussie Rules 'convert' to take the kick to touch, but how often do we give them the opportunity to pass on their skills to others in the club.

By using new players who have specific skills to coach these skills, the new player feels that he is an integral and valued member of the club and his confidence and self-esteem is further developed.

5. "WHAT ARE THE RULES UMPY?"

The biggest hurdle that new players encounter when switching to Rugby (and indeed the main problem coaches have when teaching the game to new players) is the Laws of the Game! Very few players are likely to take a Law Book home for some bed-time reading, so how can we help them to learn the Laws?

Most new players are left to learn the hard way by making mistakes which can be frustrating for them and for their team-mates. The Observation exercise and the Peer or Buddies program, outlined earlier, will go some way towards helping the new player gain a better understanding of the Laws, their interpretation and any recent changes, but it enables the Club Officials and players to build some rapport and understanding with the Referee's Association.

All players, especially new layers, should be encouraged by their clubs to attend refereeing seminars and coaching courses to improve their knowledge of the game and its Laws.

The Referee's Association can play its part by encouraging its members to train regularly with clubs and to talk to club meetings. Club Officials must take the responsibility of ensuring that such sessions are for information-giving and seeking rather than being an opportunity for players to criticise refereeing decisions.

6. EQUIPMENT

Limited equipment can be a problem for small clubs. The importance of having sufficient equipment for all players to be able to practise their skills before and after training as well as during training is paramount – especially FOOTBALLS!

New players are only going to be able to develop their ball skills if they have access to footballs, essentially, each player should have his own football but this is unlikely so the club should supply at least one ball for every three players. Clubs should also provide footballs that can be borrowed by players so that they can practice in their own time.

To increase the number of footballs available clubs could consider building a training ball option into their subscription or fee structure. Training balls cost \$20-25 and could be:

- (1) Supplied by the club as an early payment bonus for players.
- (2) Provided by players as part of the subscription/fee.
- (3) Supplied by sponsors and given to players on the payment of their club subscription/fee.

Such schemes can only benefit the club and could save it money: it will only have to supply the match ball and, because everyone will have a football, balls are less likely to mysteriously "disappear". It will also enable all players, and especially new players, to improve and develop their ball skills.

7. OPPORTUNITIES IN THE OFF-SEASON

The Tasmanian Rugby Union has established an adult Walla Rugby Competition in Hobart during the off-season. At least three clubs have taken advantage of this to keep fit and have encouraged their new and inexperienced rugby players to use Walla to help improve their handling skills. There have been a number of other benefits but new/rugby players have found the game both enjoyable and useful for their skill development.

In conclusion, there is no substitute for experience on the field but, if we can help new players to develop the skills and knowledge of the game that will enhance their enjoyment and progress, we will keep them playing Rugby and increase our numbers. This paper has outlined some of the ways that clubs, coaches, players and referees, in developing Rugby areas, can help new players to make the switch from other sports. What is important is that clubs encourage new players and develop a strategy to teach them the game, to make them feel a part of the club and to make the most of their abilities. Too often we cross our fingers and hope that they'll pick it up or, even worse, adopt the "they'll learn the hard way" attitude. The easier we make it for new players to understand the game and develop their skills, then the bigger and more popular our game will grow.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

After questionnaires failed, material and ideas for this paper came from my own observations and interviews with Tasmanian Club coaching staff and officials, as well as interviews with players who had recently made the switch from other sports.

My thanks to all those who contributed.

APPENDIX 1

Player Information Sheet

NAME:

ADDRESS:(Home)

.....(Work)

OCCUPATION:

Preferred Positions:

Playing Background(Experience Schools, clubs, rep. teams, years, etc):

Skills and abilities:

Other sports played:

Rugby Ambitions:

APPENDIX 2

Match Performance – Self Assessment

Match: VS Date:

Players Name:

Position(s) Played:

Please comment, where possible, on the following:

1) General Skills:

- Handling Skills.....
- Running Skills.....
- Tackling Skills.....
- Kicking Skills.....
- Ground Skills.....
- Support Play.....
- Defensive positioning.....
- Rucking Skills.....
- Mauling Skills.....
- Scrummaging.....
- Lineout work.....
- Knowledge of the Laws.....

2) • Contribution to the team effort.....

3) • Fitness.....

4) • What was your most impressive contribution?

5) • In what area(s) did you improve from?.....

6) • Where do you need to improve?

7) • What did you learn from the match?

8) • Any other comments

APPENDIX 3

Match Performance – Observation Exercise

Match: VS Date:

Players Name:

Position(s) Played:

Playing Conditions:

Please comment, where possible, on the following:

- 1) General Skills:
 - Handling Skills
 - Running Skills
 - Tackling Skills
 - Kicking Skills
 - Ground Skills
 - Support Play
 - Defensive positioning
 - Rucking Skills
 - Mauling Skills
 - Scrummaging
 - Lineout work
 - Knowledge of the Laws
- 2) Contribution to the team effort
- Ball Winning – Scrum
- Line Out
- Breakdowns
- Use of the Ball (Decision-making, going forward, etc)
- Pressure on opposition
- Support Play
- Impact on Game
- 3) Fitness
- 4) What was your most impressive contribution?
- 5) Area needing most improvement?
- 6) Any other comments

Differences in the method of playing the game at club level in South Africa V Australia, with the resultant effect on refereeing style/techniques/skills.

Stuart Dickinson

The game of Rugby is played throughout the world in many countries and by players with many varied skills and philosophies. And so it is with South Africa that there is a great difference in the way the game has been played in that part of the world to the way it is played in Australia. There are a great many factors other than geographical and sporting isolation that have influenced the method of the game and referees at club, provincial and in recent seasons the International level. After just having returned from refereeing at club level in South Africa I believe there is a noticeable difference in the method of play and also the methods of referees in general. I will attempt to show what these differences are and explain what factors have contributed to them.

There is no doubt that isolation is a major cause for the differences in methods, however I would qualify that statement by saying that isolation is not the only factor. It is my belief that there are a significant number of factors, for example, competition structure, the importance of the Currie Cup and others that spawn from isolation culminating with these and other issues playing their small but intricate part in the overall scheme of events. I will touch on the issues such as the Currie Cup, media influence South Africa's International Level and the general structure of Rugby in South Africa so as to help show an overall picture and help explain why there are differences in club Rugby and therefore refereeing styles/techniques and skills in South Africa.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE GAME

Rugby Football in South Africa is now controlled by the South African Rugby Football Union and is basically divided into six Test Provinces, those being, Natal, Orange Free State, Transvaal, Northern Transvaal, Western Province and Eastern Province. There are numerous smaller affiliated Provinces and Unions, however, due to isolation the South Africans had no alternative but to make the Currie Cup competition the highest possible level of Rugby to be played in that country. The six Test Unions play in the major competition and there is a Currie Cup A, B and Shield section for the lower provincial sides with relegation and promotion possible. The referees are also graded by their provincial panels and there is a national panel of referees who control the major Currie Cup fixtures. On the surface this appears to be a very good system, however, the prosperity of the Currie Cup is at the expense and downfall of the club competition in South Africa.

The Currie Cup competition for 1992 began in March with friendly matches and a Transvaal Night Series before the competition proper began on April 3 and continued through to the final on September 12, 1992. The teams play somewhere in the vicinity of 20 - 25 National Competition matches each year. It is obvious that the best players will be involved at the highest level and due to the fact that both the club season and Currie Cup season run along the same basic timetable, the club season and competition suffers because the best players are not available to play and hence lift the standard and importance of that competition. Therefore, the effect this has on the club level is massive and the consequences are far reaching for not only players but referees.

The club competition should serve the purpose of being the area where players and referees can hone their skills in a competitive, intense and skillful competition with the result being the development of players, referees and the game. Obviously, the better players and referees are then able to move onto the next level of Rugby. In Australia, this process is plain to see as the club competition takes precedence and is therefore stronger and has greater depth, thus allowing referees and players a suitably structured and far less difficult progression into each new level of competition.

This is not the case in South African Rugby at this stage as there is a very visible gulf between club and Representative Rugby in that country. The inherent problem is that club rugby in South Africa rarely sees its Currie Cup players and therefore the competition is not exposed to the intensity, speed and greater skill level

that is offered at the highest level. This unfortunately creates a situation where players and referees are isolated from that strong grade competition and unable to experience and learn a vast amount in their particular grade of the club competition before moving to the next level of either club or representative rugby. The visible difference of the top club team and bottom club team is such that they are beaten by fifty points a match and this is not an ideal environment for a player/referee to learn. For example, it is similar to a referee or player going from fourth grade to first grade in the space of a week and being expected to be competent at that next level when it is quite obvious that their previous experience does not allow it.

Having refereed 1st Grade club matches in the Orange Free State and in Sydney I have witnessed first hand, the significant difference in methods of play such as game structure, forward play, backline positioning, intensity etc, and the resultant effect and difference upon their refereeing styles/skills/techniques. Due to the isolation from International Competition the South African game has evolved in its own way and certain by laws and interpretations have been formulated purely for South African Rugby. For example, the South Africans have allowed lifting in their lineouts in contrast to the rest of the world where lifting is banned. With South Africa now rejoining the International scene they will have to adapt and rectify these methods/aspects to come into uniformity with the rest of the Rugby world's standards. The 1st Grade club matches I refereed in Bloemfontein were apparently the match of the day and I found them nowhere near as physically hard or intense as the Sydney club matches. Couple this with the fact that only three out of the eight teams in the competition are actually competitive and it leads to the obvious situation where only one or two referees a week would be exposed to some sort of competitive game. In this situation compared to Sydney's club rugby where there are at least twelve referees of 1st Grade standard required per week, Orange Free State require only four 1st Grade referees per week. Therefore the referees are not getting the hard week to week exposure of pressure, speed, intensity and the like to allow them to develop their styles/techniques/skills. More importantly for the better referees, this would have a marked effect on their being ready and having the confidence, skills and ability to move up and referee at the next level. However, I would say that all the Provinces suffer the same restrictions as the Free State in relation to Currie Cup players non availability for club teams for the majority, if not entirety of the club season.

The major difference with the structure of club rugby in Australia v South Africa is the fact that Australian club rugby is the major competition and as such it attracts the best players and referees for the majority of the competition. This creates a situation where strong competition is guaranteed from week to week in all grades thus allowing all participants to benefit greatly. The Representative matches are then an extension of the club competition to allow the better players and referees more exposure to higher levels of competition. This is in direct contrast with South Africa where the Currie Cup is a competition within itself and as already stated the club rugby suffers due to the fact that these players are not available. In fact, we have witnessed in Australia the phenomenon of criticism that players are away from their clubs too often due to representative matches. This criticism is a statement in itself of what high regard and of what great importance and value club rugby is to the development of the game, players and referees in Australia.

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE REFEREES

There is no doubt that for any person to improve their performance they must be provided with an environment that allows them exposure to a better quality so they can learn from it. And so it is with refereeing. I have touched on the point of how well structured and important club rugby is in Australia and the resultant benefits from this. As I have explained there is a vast difference in the quality of club rugby in South Africa as compared to its Currie Cup competition and it is this vast difference that is having a major impact on the referees of South Africa. In refereeing terms, this competition is so important because it provides a structured base and path for referees to move along and as they move up from one grade to the next they are aware of what is required and the step up is not beyond them. Unfortunately for referees in South Africa, the fact that the club competition holds little or no significance overall due to the Currie Cup and that they don't have enough of the better players at that club level to make the competition stronger, ultimately means that the quality of matches is limited and this eventually has to affect the referees style, techniques and skills.

In Australia we have the benefit of having a National Coaching Director and Rugby Plan, Level I, II and III Coaching Courses and Referee Development Courses. This has played a significant role in the development of the game, players, coaches and referees throughout Australia because it has allowed all persons the opportunity

to develop their skills from the grass roots level through to the highest level. These important courses allow ideas and standardised methods to flow through to, and be implemented at the club level to improve the quality and standard of all facets of the game and at the same time create a universal style of Rugby that will be played throughout the country. For referees, this allows the development of skill, technique and style because the competition they are refereeing is well structured, competitive and being continually improved all the time. Unfortunately for South African Club Rugby, with all emphasis being placed on the Currie Cup as the main competition, it has meant there has been no National Rugby plan, similar to that of Australia, that has been developed within the country during Isolation. Instead of this, each Test province has had to structure their own coaching and development programs and this had led to six variations of coaching and playing styles and strengths within the Provinces. The effect this drastic variation has upon refereeing styles/techniques/skills throughout the different Provinces would appear to be obvious.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIA

It is plain to see that Rugby Union is the number one winter sport in South Africa and as such has attracted huge television coverage and corporate sponsorship for their Currie Cup competition. Although this is a financial and promotional plus for the game there certainly has been a negative spinoff for the referees that has affected the style and general position of referees throughout the country. The game has become a spectator sport and as the game has evolved to be a free flowing, high scoring event, the problems that have emerged here for referees at the top level are quite unbelievable and it certainly flows back down through the ranks. The referees are exposed to a situation where the media places unwarranted, unjust and unfair pressure on these people and as such it has certainly influenced skills and styles. I was fortunate enough to see this in action during my visit and I will relate some examples so as to demonstrate my point.

1. I viewed a replay of a Currie Cup match where a prop forward ran from outside the twenty two metre line into in-goal and punched another player. This resulted in a brawl in-goal involving 10 or 12 players. The resultant action was a stern word to the player and a five metre scrum. I was lucky enough to meet the referee concerned and asked him why the player wasn't sent off and he replied, "We like to finish the game with 30 players to make it better." Understandably, there were about six or seven smaller fights during the game and I was asked by several people if I knew why the fights had suddenly occurred. The resultant effect upon club football and players/referees is quite obvious as players see that behaviour is tolerated and the referees are left in a no win situation. The most astonishing point is that I was assured that the referee would have been castigated in the press had he sent the player from the field and furthermore would have been blamed for spoiling the game.

2. I viewed a replay of another Currie Cup match where a stalker ran onto the field and tackled a player. The stalker entered from about the twenty two metre line and the touch judge at this stage was at the half way line headed toward the twenty two line to follow play. Yes, you guessed it, the touch judge was castigated for three weeks in the paper as to his non effort to stop the stalker and the fact that it was all his fault that the particular team did not score the try. The touch judge then had to referee club matches for the following weeks and you could imagine what sort of a reception he got at those games. Completely unfair, unjustified and unwarranted, but what right of reply did he have.

Although these two examples relate to matches higher than club level it is not hard to see the problems that the referees have to put up with. I am not suggesting that the referees do not referee according to the laws or that they do not referee well, I just make the point that style, technique and skills and options taken for granted by referees/players/administrators in the rest of the world are certainly influenced somewhat in South Africa by the pressures of television commitments, sponsors and how these people want the game played so as to keep the ratings etc at the highest level. The referees are manoeuvred into a situation where they don't have the backup if certain decisions are made. The effect this has on club rugby is that the referees and players at that level can see what has happened at the level above and being involved in a level far below that of Currie Cup they enter the competition with certain unwarranted and unjustified pressures upon them due to the precedent already set at a higher level. The resultant effect is the referee, to a certain extent, subconsciously removes or places less emphasis on certain courses of action that should be second nature in his repertoire. I am certainly not making a point that the Rugby is dirty in South Africa, however, I have used these examples to simply make a point about the extent to which referees and the game have been influenced by the media in that country. The mere

fact that a referee has external forces such as these to contend with even before he controls the match must have serious consequences upon the referees style/techniques/skill.

CONCLUSION

Refereeing a game of rugby can be both the best and worst experience. The factors influencing the outcome and mode of play can be both inside and outside of your control, however no referee would deny the fact that you have a great deal of work and responsibility on the rugby field. There are four pages in the Law Book explaining who the referee is and what his function is during the game, so in basic terms any person can learn the laws and read that section and they can then referee a rugby match. Or can they? We are all aware that a game with the same universal laws is played so differently in many parts of the world and one could speculate that is a reason for the game's popularity and enjoyment by so many, however, the main word in that statement is that the laws are universal. If that is the case then why aren't referees all the same all over the world. We basically are to some extent, but I have shown in this paper how certain forces, be they positive or negative can influence the way a game is played and hence how it is refereed. There is no doubt that Australia has played the game differently to South Africa and that the club rugby structure and method of play are different and that each competition serves a completely different purpose in each country. It is these contrasts that ultimately have an effect on refereeing style/techniques/skills in each of the countries. The development of the game and its personnel is only limited by the restrictions you put upon it and its participants and also by what future plans you have for it. I have shown that club rugby in South Africa is certainly affected by such factors as its limited club structure, the media influence, the influence of the Currie Cup and others, and that in turn this has had a severe effect upon the development of referees. While I certainly don't criticise the South African referees, I will make the final point that many factors have influenced their development/non development. Isolation and the endemic problems arising from it have played a vital part, however, the fact that the Currie Cup has prospered in that country at the expense of the grass roots club rugby level and that no National Plan was able to be drawn up has meant that the area where referees should 'Learn Their Trade' has been downgraded to a level that will mean that South African referees in general will have to do a lot of work to make up lost ground.

It has certainly not been my intention in this paper, nor would it ever be, to criticise certain aspects or styles of referees in a destructive manner. I have attempted to give a general picture of the structure of South African Rugby in order to show how, why and what the differences are at club levels between the two countries and the way in which these can affect the referees style/techniques/skills of the South African referees such as positioning, use of the whistle and man management as compared to those in Australia and the rest of the world. I can validate this point with the fact that during my stay in South Africa several referees I spoke to were all in agreement that South African referees have a lot of ground and lost time to make up.

7-A-SIDE RUGBY UNION

"A NEW LOOK AT AN OLD GAME"

- Glen Millar

This paper looks at the game of Seven-A-Side Rugby with special emphasis on the key factors of the game being possession, pressure and continuity.

The need to have an organisation defensive approach with clear roles and responsibilities with suggested methods and techniques to assist coaches and give confidence to players, is strongly stressed.

Special drills are provided to stimulate the coaches thinking in adapting skill drills to suit 7-A-Side Rugby and add emphasis to training methods that relate to the game and the various theories outlined in the paper.

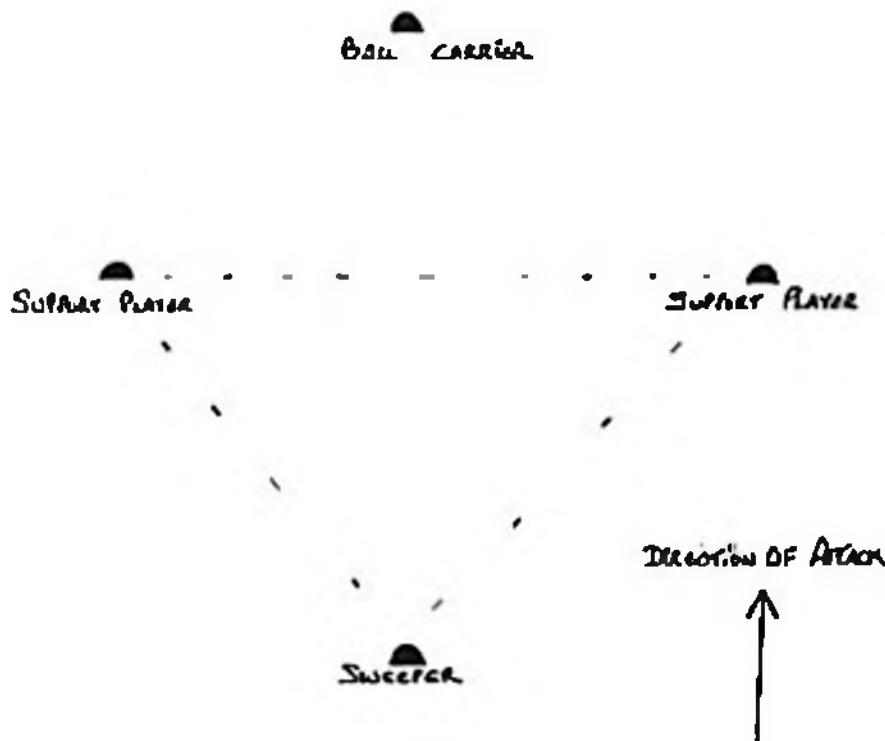
Seven-A-Side Rugby has grown in popularity in recent years and with the prospect of a "Rugby World 7s" not very far away it is time to have 'A New Look at an Old Game'.

As is the case with the 15-A-Side Game methods and approaches to 7-A-Side have changed a great deal over recent years. For so long, decades perhaps, the 7-A-Side Game was used as a warm up or warm down game by coaches with little regard for the special skill requirements and attitude of the players taking part.

Coaches will be required to develop a better understanding of the requirements and basic fundamentals of the Seven-A-Side Game in such things as defence and support. Development of a new game plan, fundamentally different to the fifteen aside game, the type of players required to perform the skills and tasks at a high level over the duration of a game, games and eventually tournaments.

The individual players role, within any game plan, should be clearly defined so that a complete understanding of just what they are required to do and what role must be played at various times, depending who has possession of the ball. By providing basic concepts for players to follow, then those concepts become almost second nature and has the effect of freeing up the player to be more creative at the appropriate times.

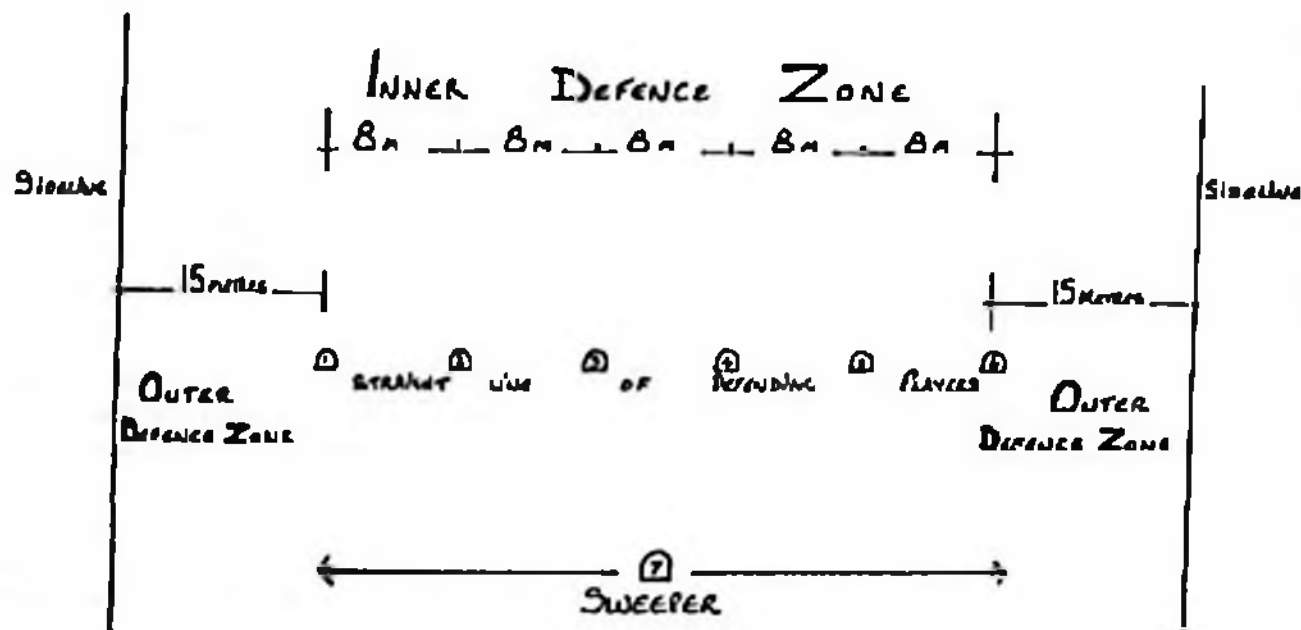
A balanced blend of physical attributes and players with 'touch' or feeling for the game must be found. It is not a case of simply finding someone who is bigger, stronger and runs faster than everyone else. What you need are players with natural speed, agility and can display the range of skills required to play the game of rugby union, under physical strain and psychological pressure.



The essential ingredient of "Sevens" is to be continually running "off" the ball and supporting the ball carrier at a far deeper field position than in the Fifteen-A-Side game. Rather than engage the opposition to draw the defenders as in the traditional game, the ball carrier should "play off" the defence of the opposition players. There is very little value in isolating yourself, unless you are certain you can score a try.

Contact situations should remain 'One-on-One' but still must be winnable. Lateral movement of the ball, to a support player at depth can be used to change the running angle and create attacking opportunities. Support on either side of the ball carrier is essential to provide the best passing option and may be aided by way of an inverted triangle, using a very deep "SWEEPER" at the apex directly behind the ball carrier.

Team Members must develop confidence in each player's ability to get into the correct support position regardless of field position. Player not in possession of the ball needs to work extra hard to provide the inverted triangle (—) support. Therefore the physical fitness component of the individual is an essential foundation for successful "Sevens Rugby". Every player will be required to display a continuous blend of anaerobic and aerobic fitness.



The inclusion of a "Sweeper" in both attack and defensive patterns can add the real key to success. The 'Sweeper' can provide the very deep support or change of angle essential in penetrating the defence. Chiming into an attacking move at any point, at an oblique angle can be devastating attacking play. Similarly acting as an overseer in defence herding attackers to the skidlines and reducing their options.

Defensively a team should be made up of first time tacklers, who have the self discipline to adhere to a basic defence plan of a six player straight line across the field. Leaving two openings on either side of the playing field (these would measure approximately 15 metres each). This is done in an attempt to invite teams to attack the skidlines. This would leave a further 40 metres in an Inner Defence Zone broken up into 5 areas of 8 metres.

Continuity, pressure and support are the key factors involved in 7-A-Side Rugby. Where the natural inclination in the 15-A-Side game is to engage and consolidate in tight situations, the passing option remains first and foremost in Sevens. What the ball carrier needs to resolve is which support player is in the best position tactically, to create the best attacking option. Deeply positioned support players laterally or directly behind the ball carrier can provide the greatest opportunities.

Possession is the name of the game in 'Sevens' and continuity is one of the major influences of the game. The ball should be retained regardless of field position. Attacking plays should be created off the defence of the opposition.

Pressure on the opposition should be centred on a straight-line of defence with a man-on-man approach using only six players who form the initial front-line and the seventh player acts as the deep sweeper. The formation of the defence line should occur from the outside inwards with the players on the flanks constantly communicating to the players inside him.

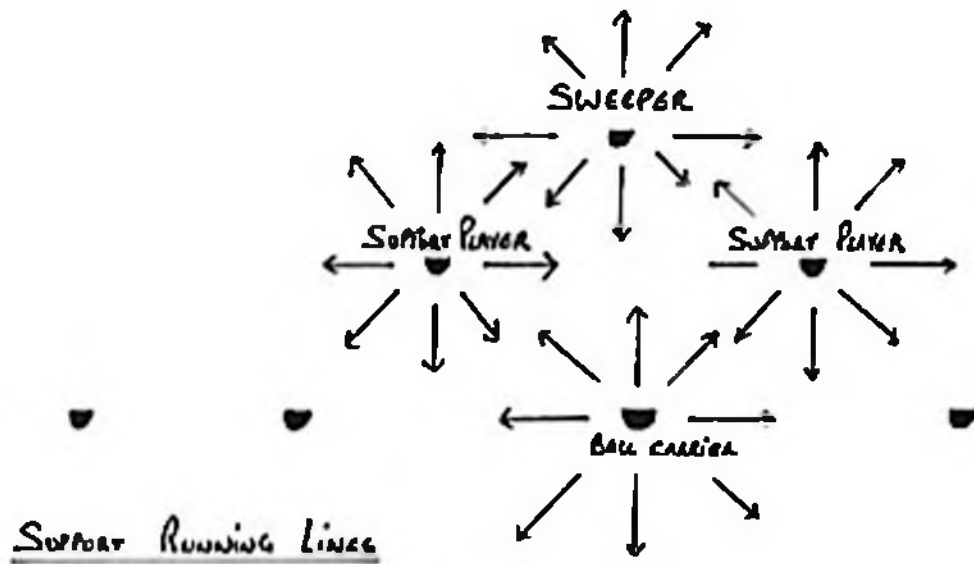
Support to the ball carrier should be provided at greater depth than usually applies in the 15-A-Side game. Constant change in the attacking running lines and angles of support with the extra man created by the sweeper with roles constantly interchanging. Should the ball carrier be forced to ground or into a tackle the support to secure the ball, should be provided by the nearest lateral support player, whose role it is to clear the ball as quickly as possible.

Obviously any team playing rugby must have the ability to win possession of the ball, at set plays or lineouts and scrums. The new laws of rugby union have placed an even greater emphasis on the lineout and with the suggested defence pattern outlined in this paper, of inviting teams to attack through outer fringes of the playing field, ball retention from the lineout is of major importance to the teams success.

An agile tall forward who is able to jump in a lineout and win ball consistently is essential. This big man should also have a sound tackling technique, a strong upper body, good ball and running skills. Much the similar can be said for the other forwards but "The Hooker" must have the ability to win the ball in the scrummage and a forward must have a sound lineout throw.

Backs should have a blend of speed, agility and flexibility. A good game understanding sevens rugby and an awareness of space is essential. A very high level of ball skills and good communicators should make-up any 'sevens' backline. Defensively each player should be able to make an effective 'first time' tackle, thus needing a strong upper body.

The game plan tactic of playing a 'sweeper' who patrols behind the whole team should receive special consideration by a coach. The 'sweeper' acts as a deterrent to attacking teams and the last line of defence but readily available to turn defence into attack should the ball be turned over, by providing good deep support.

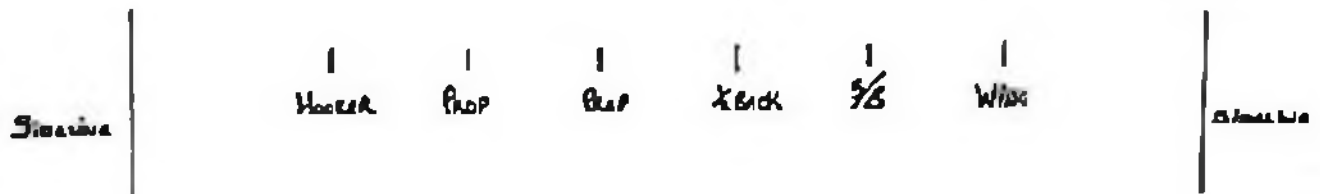


GENERAL CONCEPTS

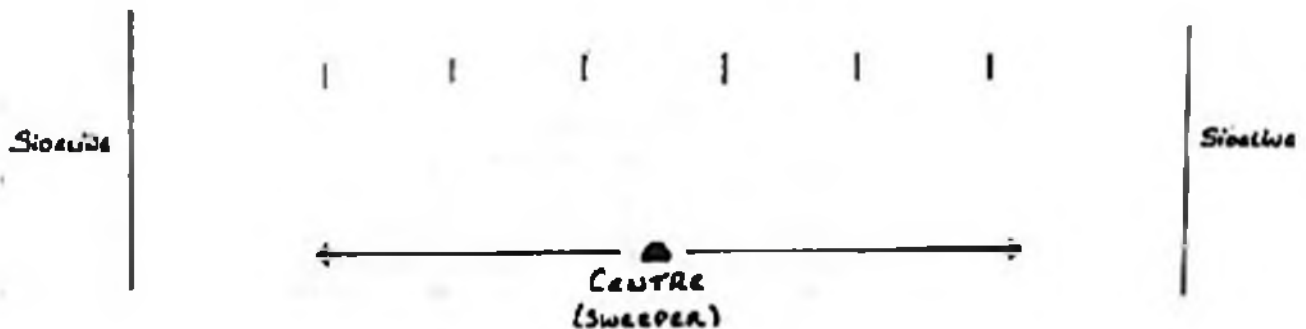
Defence

A defensive team forms a straight defence across the field utilising six players. Sharing an Inner Defence Zone of 40 metres in width (5x8 metres) with two 15 metre Outer Defence Zones, which collectively covers the full width of the rugby field.

As tackles are applied it is every player's responsibility to as quickly as possible re-align into the defence pattern. Obviously just which players are going to act in each of the required positional roles will depend on the coaches preference. Depending on speed and other factors the following may be considered appropriate.



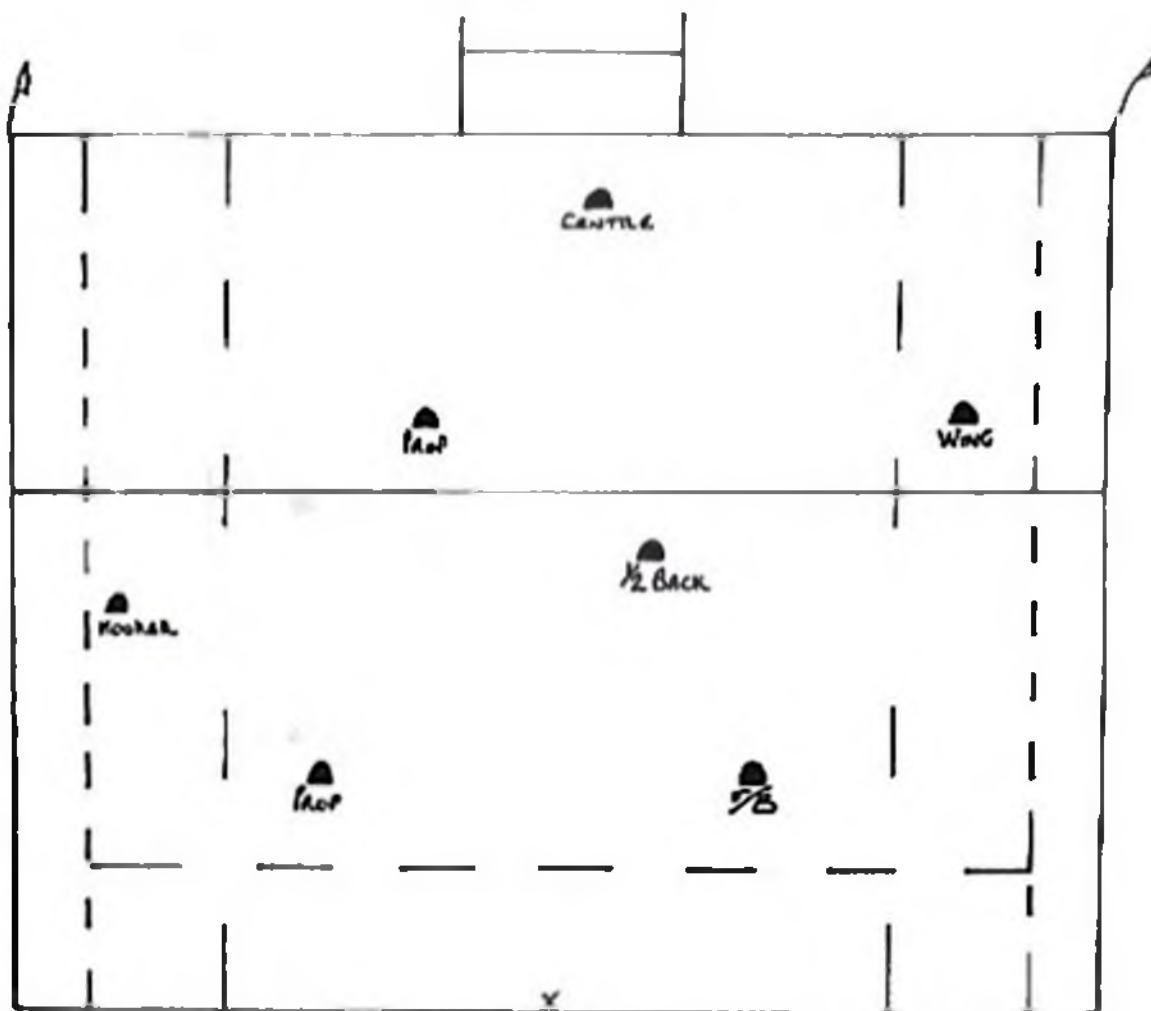
The seventh member of the team acts as a rear guard or **SWEEPER** patrolling the width of the Inner Defence Zone (40 metres wide), keeping the ball in front of him and positioning himself the equivalent of one kick behind the frontline of defence. Obviously if the break is made his role would be to herd the ball carrier and any support to the nearest sideline, cutting back space to mount further attacking options. The best or most talented player must do this role, (i.e. centre or winger) and have the ability to read play in advance of it happening, with the skill to capitalise on any situation.



KICK OFF - Alignment to receive the ball

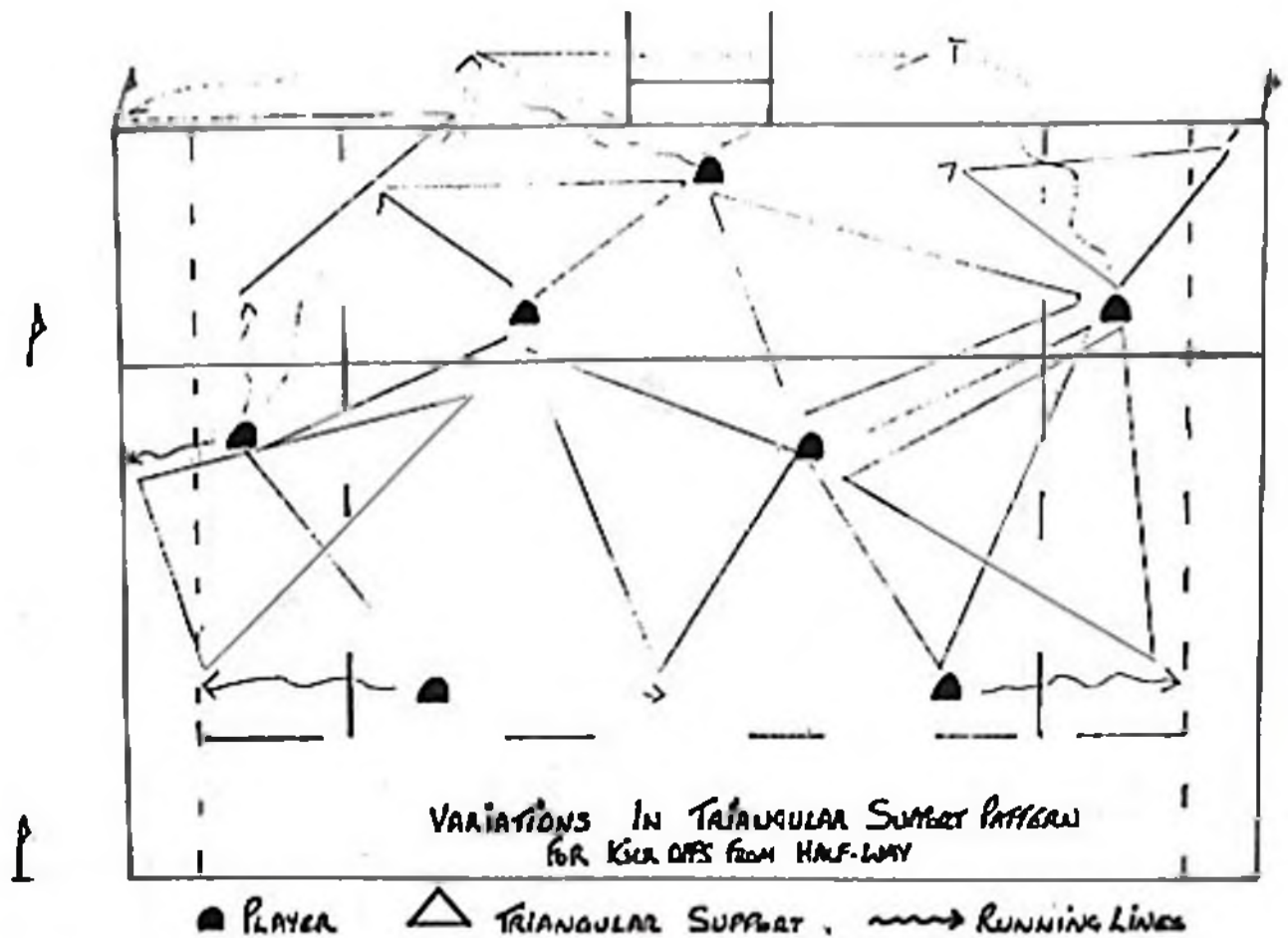
The concept of using a triangular alignment is again used for the "Kick-Off". This allows the players the widest range of support options once the ball is in the air. Again the use of a deep "Sweeper" is utilised with all players having to react to the ball and who is to receive it.

To sub units of three forwards and three backs, are employed, each sub unit covering one side of the field with the "Sweeper" supply the support in depth. Obviously these sub units are made up of three forwards in a triangular formation and three backs forming a triangle covering the other side of the field.



KICK OFF FROM THE HALFWAY LINE

Drills to reinforce field position for the two sub units and sweeper may be as follows. Players through rehearsal will begin to understand the triangle support concept with the supporting players always being considered the base on the triangle.



The ball receiver should be looking to transfer the ball to another player who is at depth on either side of him considering himself as the head of a new triangle and those two other players will have positioned themselves at depth on the two base points. Remembering that the ball can be transferred by any method and a quick lateral, but deep pass will draw the defence further down and across the field.

As the kick-off occurs and the ball is kicked to a particular location on the field player should react by dropping back to the base of the triangle created and predetermined by the ball receiver/collector.

Much the similar can be achieved in miniature for 22m drop-outs.

Skill Drills

These Skill Drills are designed to reinforce the principles outlined in this paper. Coaches would use them to build confidence and understanding, in the players mind, of the goals, aims and objectives the coach has set for the team. This in turn will provide the environment for the individuals to establish their personal aims and objectives as part of that team.

SUPPORT RUNNING

Required:

- 4 players, 1 ball, 4 cones, marking a 10x20m grid.

Drill:

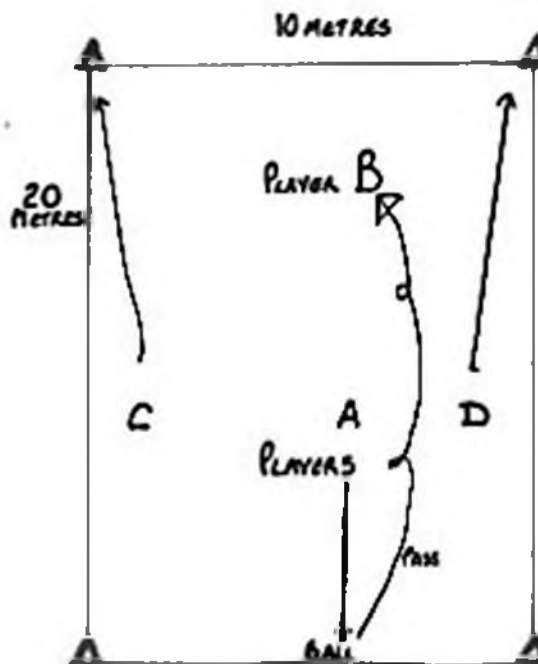
- Player 'A' collects the ball and pass to Player 'B'.
- Players 'C' & 'D' follow the flight of the ball and support 'B' at depth, who passes to either, while carrying the ball to the front of the grid.
- Players interchange positions and repeat.

Extensions:

- Each player must be involved in a switch pass.
- Player 'A' must fall back into the 'sweeper' role.
- Each player must be involved in a scissor move.

Coaching Points:

- Fast re-alignment.
- Support at depth.
- Passing options and variations.
- 'Sweeper' position must be rehearsed.



RE-ALIGNMENT

Required

- Groups of 3 players with 6 cones per group.

Drill

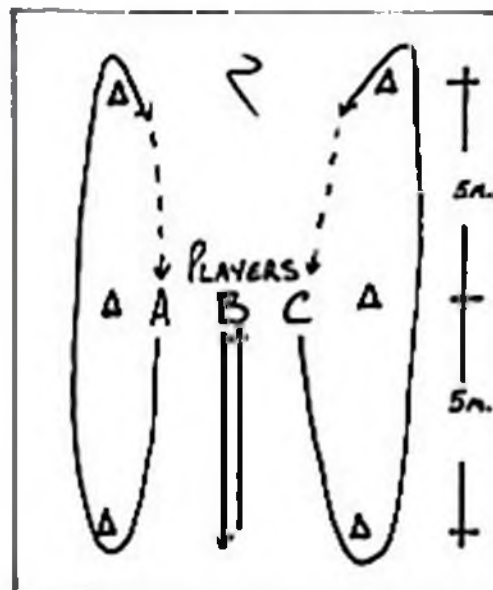
- 3 players start in a flat line between centre cones.
- All 3 players sprint forward to front cone.
- 'A' & 'C' continue out and around and back to the rear cones.
- 'B' reverses back to original position.
- 'A' & 'C' rejoin 'B' and repeat the drill.
- Players interchange positions and repeat the drill.

Extensions

- Middle players 'B' picks up a ball at forward cone and after reversing to original position passed to either 'A' or 'C'.
- Vary the passing options.

Coaching Points:

- Stress triangular realignment.
- Speed of realignment.
- Ball carrier always has two supporting players providing a variety of passing options.



COUNTER ATTACK

Required:

7 players, 1/2 of a rugby pitch and 1 ball.

Drill

- Players in position to receive a kick-off.

DIAGRAM

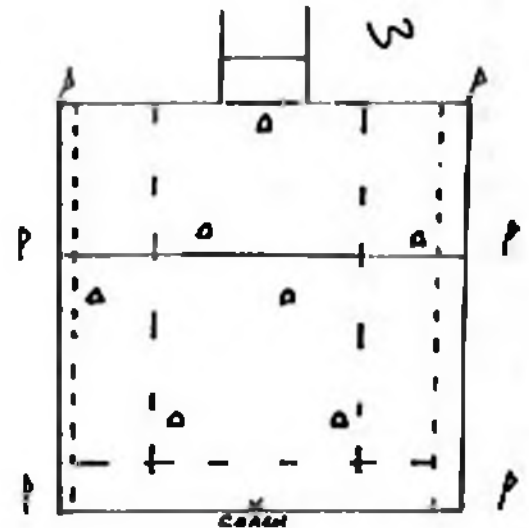
- Coach in centre of the field with a ball.
- The ball is kicked or thrown to any player.
- Players use triangular support pattern and 'sweeper' to counter attack back to half-way.

Extensions:

Use of extra players to apply defensive pressure.

Coaching Points:

- Triangular support pattern
- Use of the 'sweeper'.
- Depth of support.
- Movement of the ball laterally.
- Variations of passing options.
- Speed of re-alignment into support position.



In conclusion one would suggest that there is a need for coaches to reconsider the way in which they have traditionally viewed 7-A-Side Rugby.

It is a game that requires a rock solid defence which can only be achieved by good communication, understanding and awareness of each player's role in the overall team defensive pattern. Organisation and responsibility can provide assistance, to the players, by a basic game of which defence has a major role.

Possession is first and foremost within a game of 7-A-Side Rugby and therefore consideration must be given to methods of retaining the ball and the momentum in attack. Proper use of the total available playing space within a rugby field leads to deep supporting players behind the ball carrier with the ability to move the ball laterally into space. Variations in the angle of attack can be achieved by the use of a "sweeper".

A Seven-A-Side team should be committed to the principle of working off the defence of the opposition side and have absolute resolve not to get isolated with the ball.

