

LEVEL 3
ASSIGNMENT

**LINEOUT THROWS,
BALL WINNING
AND
BALL USAGE
FROM
LINEOUTS**

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LINEOUT THROWS

There is no right or wrong way to throw the ball in. It is what works for the individual. What needs to be encouraged is the consistency of the movement, the repetition and break down of each component so it can be worked upon in stages.

Start all drills on knees so you can isolate the movement from your legs and feet.

Grip – Start with a left to right torpedo pass grip, it's a natural feel for the players. From there you can make adjustments as needed.

Start point - Try to minimise the backswing – it gives the jumpers to many cues as to when the ball is coming

Hands, Fingers

Forearms - Snap through with fingers pointing up and hands finishing together. If you find the ball is breaking one way in the air it will often come from a hand following through separate from the other. You should be able to generate good power using just these three tools.

Shoulders - Generate power from here, but be careful as too much shoulders leads to inconsistent throws. It's very important not to get too tense through the shoulders and flexibility is often neglected through the shoulders and is crucial given the amount of size a hooker/ thrower has in that area.

Core & Back - The real source of power and stability. Turn it on pre throw and hold it till ball release. The bend from the back should not be too exaggerated as it causes variances in the throw. Be cautious not to over tense up when turning the core on as you can choke the ball. All drills till this point should be kneeling

Feet Position – I encourage feet shoulder width apart on the line and finishing on your toes. Like a dead lift we want the whole body working in the same direction. The split stance can work well for some players and if that's the case don't

change it. Just be aware that it gives you more opportunities to falter in the ball delivery.

Repetition - I encourage about 500 throws per week. This can be done in various forms and drills. The most important factor is it is done the same every time. (Use a video when possible so the player can see the differences)

Drills - The most important factor is not to just throw lineout as a block all the time. Do them in game based situations. (Scrum, lineout, tackle, lineout etc) Do them under fatigue. Do them opposed and uncontested. Try and maximise the training time you have to get the most practical, game style repetition as possible.

BALL WINNING

YOUR THROW

In looking at winning possession from you lineout the first thing you need to do is assess the strengths and weaknesses of the players at your disposal. Too often we make grand plans and elaborate movements without looking at the players' capability of making it work.

Let's start with the lineout thrower; at Super 14 and Test level there are many hookers that show inconsistencies with their throwing, so it would be fair to say that inconsistencies would increase the further down the line we go. If a player can't hit the back of the lineout with consistency under pressure, that throw needs to be removed from the options. We always hear people talking about the best place to attack from a lineout is from the back, but our ability or lack of, to win that ball can lead to a turnover and hence no attack at all.

So, rule number one is only throwing in games where there is confidence and consistency.

Practice all the options, but use only the working throws. This needs to be communicated to the player calling the lineout. A big part of throwing

the ball comes down to confidence, so it seems logical enough to make sure the first couple of throws in a game are to the throwers strongest position. It also applies to when a thrower comes off the bench – they need to find their range too. So often a substitute thrower misses their mark on the first throw after coming on.

Lineout throwing is a closed skill, which means we can break down the mechanics of it and repeat it time and time again. It is not necessary for the lineout thrower to be the hooker, but we tend to limit our options to that position. The thrower should be getting up to 500 throws per week of correct, identical movement. The best practice is to video a session to note any inconsistency. The reality is if the thrower is not doing their job well the percentages of executing a play diminish.

The next thing to look at is the jumpers. How many are there and what is their individual ability? Selections should indicate the style of lineout you wish to have; most team like to have at least three genuine options and maybe a fourth alternative. Whilst Australia was playing a back row of David Lyons, Phil Waugh and George Smith it was limited to its locks and occasionally Lyons for its ball winners. This enables teams to isolate key jumpers and increase the pressure on both jumper and thrower. Obviously whilst Australia played with this combination, the locks moved around the lineout to cover all areas to attack from but you begin to telegraph your intentions. If you are fortunate enough to have a dominant lineout, you find the pressure gets reduced because teams tend to stop contesting and try and win the battle from the ground rather than the air.

There was a period where a lot of movement and decoys seemed to happen at every lineout, but of late the best jumpers have just beaten the opposition off the ground. The prime example is Canterbury's Chris Jack, at four in the lineout – you all know it is going there, but little to do stop him. Jumpers need to be consistent with their movements, so that a thrower knows they will be in the same spot each time they go up in the air.

Finally, there is lifting. Every forward should be able to be competent with a lift. The last thing you need to be limited by is a player's inability to lift.

So in conclusion on winning your own throw; there are many variations and movements you can use, but the critical factor is to use options that

the players can reproduce with confidence under pressure. The basic skills of the throw, jump and lift need to be installed into the players.

OPPOSITION THROW

This is the easiest of the set pieces to create a turnover and to disrupt the opposition ball.

There are three schools of thought; Man marking, zone defence & not contesting.

Man marking is excellent to combat a line out that you know pretty well. In test and super rugby it is used most often as they have time to analyse the opposition's plays. It relies on players matching up and following the movement of their counterpart.

Zone Defence is my preferred option as it is not reactive to what the opposition does and all players know their role prior to a lineout. It takes out the guess work. It also means that if you are limited with jumping options you can dictate to the opposition where they should throw the ball. For example if you only have two jumpers against three and they have a lineout 5 meters from their own try line you could cover the front and middle of the lineout and concede the back. The percentage of error is a lot higher and any over throw can be pounced upon. At the other end of the field you could cover middle and back and sack at the front. A smart lineout will manipulate the opposition throwing options.

Not contesting – Primarily for a defending lineout close to your own line to shut down the driving maul. It takes too much pressure off the lineout throwers when not contesting in other parts of the field. Spoiling the ball is the best way to shut down a driving maul.

BALL USAGE

So you won the ball, now what to do with it?

Like winning the lineout the same rules applies – you can only play to the players abilities.

No point planning to get the ball to the right wing if the backs aren't competent in left to right passing (as many top level players can't). For the exercise let's assume that our players can all catch and pass and kick adequately.

Policies need to put in place so that in certain parts of the field certain rules apply – Given they can always be broken if players choose to play what's in front of them.

Opposition Ball – this is great ball to attack from, there is plenty of room between the attack and defensive lines for the ball to be distributed wide. The hardest place to defend (outside centre) should be the point of attack and try creating a decision for the defender. Even in your own half there is opportunity to have a look at taking them on. If the options are not there you can look to recycle and start again or play territory once the defending wingers have been committed into the line. Only if the ball is very slow should the forwards look at taking this ball back at the opposition.

Own Ball – Again there needs to be policies put in place. Much will determine on the quality of your pack and the dominance it can create through the driving maul. If done well it is an enormous weapon that both mentally and physically drains the opposition. Close to the try line it also is effective and minimises the chance of backs getting isolated. Keeping this in mind in the defensive zone you may look to play territory after a driving maul (cautious not to drive too far out of the 22 so a long pass back is needed and little net gain). In the next section you may look to play a wave play so that the play can be structured. In the next section you may look to go wide and in the attacking 22 either a forwards drive or a direct play.

There are countless styles and methods you can be adopted by the players. Some play sequence, some pattern and some play what's in front of you – it shouldn't matter too much if you keep in mind the following:

- How will the weather (wind and rain) affect things?
- Are we the fitter pack to play an 'exhaust' pattern?
- Do we have speed in the back row to play wide?
- Are we likely to drive them at the maul?
- Do we have kicking options on both sides of the field?
- Do we have the capability to distribute the ball wide?
- Do we have speed out wide to take advantage of?

By answering these questions you will be able to determine the options from a line out. It may well leave you with very few options at all, but at least you will be able to complete them with competence.

As coaches we need to ensure that the players and in particular the decision makers understand the importance of playing to your ability.