

## LEVEL 3 ASSESSMENT TASK #10 – WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT

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### WHAT RELEVANCE DOES THE CONTESTABLE 50m RESTART HAVE IN CREATING SCOREBOARD PRESSURE ON THE OPPOSITION, AND WHAT TACTICAL OR TECHNICAL CUES SHOULD WE BE COACHING TO ACHIEVE AN ADVANTAGE?

#### AIMS

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The majority of set piece coaching is focussed on scrum and lineout, but the 50m restart must be recognised as a hugely significant part of the game. From a technical and tactical perspective, it can be a source of possession in key areas of the field; but there is also an emotional effect in terms of setting the tone for the start of each half, and defining a team's response immediately following the scoring or conceding of points.

From a coaching perspective, there is a tactical choice between kicking short, and therefore contestable, or kicking long looking for positive field position. The aim of this paper is to identify the impact of kicking short contestable 50m restarts, any effect on the subsequent phases of play, and whether reclaiming possession actually has an influence on points scored by either team.

#### METHOD

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To assess the significance of reclaiming your own 50m restart kick, I have analysed a selection of teams from the 2013 Super 15 competition (excluding finals, 16 matches each team) to determine if they are next to score points following retrieval of a contestable 50m kick, and if so, how quickly this occurs. Looking at contestable (ie. short) restarts reclaimed by the kicking team only, I have recorded the following details:

- **How the ball was won:** Tap back, Clean catch, or Loose ball on the ground. This is relevant in determining the best method of winning the ball back, and therefore which skills we should be coaching our players.
- **The result of the contested restart:** Quick attacking breakdown, Neutral/Slow attacking breakdown, Halfbreak, Linebreak, Attacking penalty won, or Turnover conceded. This identifies the likely outcome of the contested restart, and therefore what attacking platform (or not) our team will have to work from.
- **Which team is next to score points:** Own try or penalty goal, Opposition try or penalty goal, No points (ie. between the restart and the half-time or full-time whistle). This is to determine whether there is actually any scoreboard change after winning the contested restart.
- **Time elapsed between the contested restart and points being scored:** 0-2 mins, 2.01 – 5 mins, 5.01 – 10 mins, greater than 10 mins. This will be important in identifying how soon points are scored following the contested restart, and therefore whether the restart genuinely has any effect on the scoreboard.

#### TEAMS ANALYSED

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**HURRICANES:** The Hurricanes are of interest because they kicked contestable (as opposed to long) 50m restarts most often in the competition (66 times), which constituted 63% of their total kick offs. They reclaimed 10 of these, a 15% success rate. This high volume of kicks suggests they had a pre-planned tactic of attempting to win back possession immediately rather than looking for field position.

**REBELS:** The Rebels ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> for kicking contestable 50m restarts, and significantly had the highest success rate of reclaiming possession at 23%. The outcomes of these kicks are of particular interest in determining whether they had any effect on their points scoring.

**WARATAHS:** The Waratahs had the worst success rate for reclaiming their own contestable 50m restarts (12%). Having kicked 42 in total (the 4<sup>th</sup> highest in the competition), this suggests that it was still a tactic to contest possession, but poor execution prevented them from reclaiming the ball. As such, it is worth determining whether this affected their ability to score points.

Fig. 1: Use of the short 50m restart across the 2013 Super 15 competition (16 games)

Team	No.	%	Won	%
Blues	41	46.1	5	12.2
Brumbies	32	45.1	7	21.9
Bulls	22	26.8	3	13.6
Cheetahs	33	35.5	6	18.2
Chiefs	39	43.3	8	20.5
Crusaders	38	46.3	7	18.4
Highlanders	52	48.6	8	15.4
<b>Hurricanes</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>62.9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15.2</b>
<b>Rebels</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>55.9</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>22.6</b>
Reds	42	50.6	7	16.7
Sharks	32	39	7	21.9
Southern Kings	34	28.1	6	17.6
Stormers	35	40.7	5	14.3
<b>Waratahs</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>43.3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11.9</b>
Western Force	30	30	4	13.3
TOTALS	600	42.9	102	17

#### METHOD OF WINNING THE BALL AND THE EFFECT ON THE NEXT PHASE

Figure 2 below shows that the majority of ball reclaimed from 50m restarts comes from a tap back (52%). In most cases this was a forward chasing a kick either to the left or right touchline, landing as close to the opposition 10m line as possible. However, the Waratahs had a clear tactic of kicking a flop kick (short, centrefield) for Israel Folau to chase. This is a higher risk strategy due to the reliance on only one chaser, usually contesting the ball in the air, often against several opposition players in space, which may explain the reason for the Waratahs' relatively low success rate from short restarts (12%).

Fig. 2: Method of winning the ball

Method	No.	%
Tap	15	52%
Catch	11	38%
Loose Ball	3	10%

The main advantage of the tap back is the speed of ball that is generated once it is gathered by another attacker. Figure 3 shows that 42% of taps result in either a linebreak, halfbreak, or, if the ball carrier is tackled to ground, a very quick breakdown (less than 2 seconds to recycle the ball). However, there is a risk associated with the tap due to its lack of control, which is demonstrated by 57% of taps resulting in a turnover of possession.

Fig. 3: Outcome from a contestable 50m restart tap back

Method & Outcome	No.	%
Tap & Halfbreak	2	14%
Tap & Linebreak	2	14%
<b>Tap &amp; Turnover</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>57%</b>
Tap & Quick BD	2	14%
Tap & BD Neutral / Slow	0	0%
Tap & PK Won	0	0%

A clean catch provides more control in securing possession, and this is reflected in Figure 4 with 86% resulting in the ball carrier being tackled to ground and quick ball for the attacking team. A clean catch is obviously less likely due to opposition pressure in the air, and we might presume that many of the tap backs are the result of the chasing player initially trying to catch cleanly but being unable to get two hands to the ball.

From a coaching perspective, it will therefore be important to develop our players' aerial skills, both in chasing, jumping, and catching the ball overhead, but also in tapping the ball back to a team mate with as much control as possible when under pressure from an opponent.

Fig. 4: Outcome from a contestable 50m restart catch

Method & Outcome	No.	%
Catch & Halfbreak	0	0%
Catch & Linebreak	0	0%
Catch & Turnover	1	14%
Catch & Quick BD	6	86%
Catch & BD Neutral / Slow	0	0%
Catch & PK Won	0	0%

## POINTS SCORED

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In analysing points scored after reclaiming a contestable 50m restart, Figure 5 shows a spread between the attacking team scoring either a try or penalty goal next (48%), the opposition regaining possession and scoring points themselves (31%), or there being no further points scored in the half (21%). There is not enough variance in these numbers to suggest reclaiming the restart has a huge influence on which team scores next.

Fig. 5: Next points scored after a contestable 50m restart

Score Type	No.	%
Try	9	31%
PK	5	17%
Opp Try	7	24%
Opp PK	2	7%
No Score	6	21%

Once we start separating these figures according to the method in which the ball is won, a better pattern emerges.

Figure 6 shows that there is a 60% chance the attacking team will score next if the restart is reclaimed with a tap back by one of the chasers, with the opposition only 27% likely to score next. As mentioned above, we can surmise that the speed of ball from this tap back may be significant in taking advantage of a disorganised defensive line. This conclusion is reinforced by Figure 7, which shows a greater spread of outcomes when the ball is caught cleanly, suggesting the defensive line has had more time to reorganise and contain the kicking team's subsequent attack.

Fig. 6: Next points scored after a contestable 50m restart reclaimed with a tap back

Score Type	No.	%
Tap & Try/PK	9	60%
Tap & Opp Try/PK	4	27%
Tap & No Points	2	13%

Fig. 7: Next points scored after a contestable 50m restart reclaimed with a clean catch

Score Type	No.	%
Catch & Try/PK	3	20%
Catch & Opp Try/PK	4	27%
Catch & No Points	4	27%

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## TIME ELAPSED

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Time elapsed is perhaps the most important element measured in this study since it will demonstrate how soon points are scored following the successful contestable restart chase, and therefore whether there is really any connection between the two events.

Figure 8 shows that almost a third (31%) of all points scored are in the next 2 mins following the restart. However, since this figure includes points for either team, it does not necessarily indicate the reclaimed restart has been advantageous.

*Fig. 8: Time elapsed between contestable 50m restart and next points scored*

Time	No.	%
NA	6	21%
0 to 2 min	9	31%
2.01 to 5 min	7	24%
5.01 to 10 min	3	10%
10.01 min plus	4	14%

Looking more specifically at when the kicking team scores after reclaiming its own restart, Figure 9 shows that 50% of points are scored in the subsequent 2 min period. This is soon enough to suggest that there has been a direct attacking advantage to winning that restart.

21% of points are scored between 2.01 mins and 5 mins. Arguably this could be the result of pressure generated from the restart win, but in reality possession has changed hands several times in this period, with other set pieces in between, so there is unlikely to be a correlation. Anything later than 5 mins I would suggest has no relevance to the restart win, which includes another 28% of points scored.

*Fig. 9: Time elapsed between contestable 50m restart and next points scored when own team score*

Time	No.	%
Try / PK - 0-2 min	7	50%
Try / PK - 2.01-5 min	3	21%
Try / PK - 5.01-10 min	2	14%
Try / PK - 10.01 plus	2	14%

Figure 10 shows opposition points scored across the same time ranges. Although not a large pool of data, the even spread of percentages demonstrates that there is no strong correlation between winning the restart and how long it takes the opposition to score next points.

*Fig. 10: Time elapsed between contestable 50m restart and next points scored when opposition score*

Time	No.	%
Opp Try / PK - 0-2 min	2	22%
Opp Try / PK - 2.01-5 min	4	44%
Opp Try / PK - 5.01-10 min	1	11%
Opp Try / PK - 10.01 plus	2	22%

## CONCLUSIONS

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The main conclusion from this study is that there is minimal correlation between reclaiming possession from a contestable 50m restart chase and scoring points in the immediate period thereafter. Figure 11 shows that the chasing team that reclaims its restart is just as likely to generate quick ball to attack from as it is to turn the ball over to the opposition.

Fig. 11: Next phase post-contestable 50m restart

Outcome	No.	%
BD Quick	10	34%
BD Neutral / Slow	3	10%
Halfbreak	2	7%
Linebreak	2	7%
PK Won	2	7%
Turnover	10	34%

Furthermore, in studying the time elapsed between winning the restart and scoring points, there is no indication that the points are scored soon enough to have been the direct result of the reclaimed restart. For the Waratahs, even with a player possessing an especially unique aerial skillset, such as Israel Folau, their success rate was still low compared to the rest of the competition.

The only significant pattern of data emerges when looking at attacking opportunities from ball that is tapped back to a team mate, as opposed to caught cleanly – this is the most likely scenario, and also most likely to lead to the attacking team scoring next points. However this also comes with a higher level of risk and therefore turnover of possession to the opposition.

Investing coaching time in chasers catching the ball cleanly overhead is recommended, with the data indicating it will almost certainly result in quick breakdown ball for the next phase and therefore an excellent attacking platform against a disorganised defence. Time should also be spent on the tap back, the supporting attackers, and the attacking options from this.

It will be important also not to overlook the necessity for a well-executed kick with aerial hang-time and accuracy, allowing chasers to best position themselves to contest the ball.

Overall, I would suggest teams are better advised to kick the 50m restart long, establish a good chase line, and apply pressure on the opposition's exit to create attacking opportunities from a more beneficial field position.

#### **LIMITATIONS TO THIS STUDY & FURTHER RESEARCH**

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It would be advantageous to expand this study to a much larger pool of data. The remaining 12 teams should be considered in gaining a true picture of the 2013 Super 15 competition and to provide a more balanced review of the outcome of contestable restarts. It is also worth analysing the contestable restarts that were won by the receiving team, as opposed to the chasers.

Furthermore, it would also be useful to study 50m restarts that have been kicked long, rather than contestable, and establish whether this has had any effect on the time elapsed before next points scored.

It is worth noting that any attacking success the Hurricanes, Rebels and Waratahs have had following a successful restart chase is only in context of their general attacking effectiveness. In other words, a poor attacking team will still be a poor attacking team even if they win possession from their own restarts. Equally, a successful team will be more likely to score next points regardless of the restart outcome.