

Offload basics

What you tell your players the session is about:

- 1 Creating the opportunity to offload the ball out of a tackle.
- 2 Penetrating the defence by getting level and beyond before delivering the ball.
- 3 As used by Gareth Thomas and Shane Williams to score the decisive Welsh try against Australia in the autumn international series.

What you tell your players to do:

- 1 Isolate defenders and attack them.
- 2 Use fast feet to 'fix' defender and attack the space either side of them.
- 3 Get arms free and drive the legs to get beyond the defender.
- 4 Support needs to arrive at pace right on the ball carrier's shoulder.



what to shout

- "Attack the defender at pace."
- "Fast feet in front of the defender" – will 'fix' the defender.
- "Attack the sides of the defender not their body."
- "Drive the legs through the tackle."
- "Ball in two hands. Hard arms through the tackle, soft hands."



what to look for

- Ball carrier not moving defenders – need to get defenders off balance.
- Ball carriers holding ball under one arm.
- Ball carriers not getting beyond the defender.
- Offload passes being knocked on due to being forced – if it's not on, hold on!



what to think about

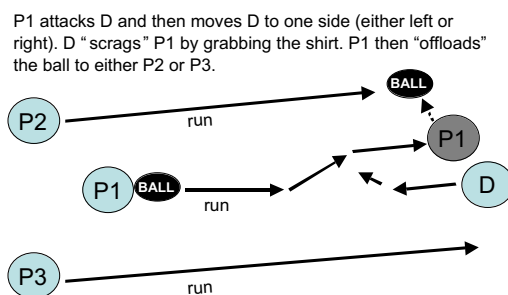
How far beyond the tackle does the ball carrier need to get? Does the ball carrier need to hold the ball in two hands? Does the ball carrier need to be able to see the support player he is passing to? Can we get support players either side of the ball carrier? In what situations would the ball carrier not look to offload?

What you get your players to do:

P1 (with the ball) attacks the defender (D) and tries to get passed, the defender scrags P1 by the shirt or shorts and gives some resistance.

P1 drives through the tackle and then offloads to either player 2 or 3 coming from depth at pace.

The two support players must work to get close to the ball carrier and communicate when they want the ball passed. P1 should be able to offload to both players.



Development

- 1 Move on from scrag to full contact and make it competitive between ball carrier and defender.
- 2 If the support players are consistently too early have them perform an exercise before they start their runs (i.e. 3 clap press ups then go).
- 3 Add a second defender 3 metres to the side of the first one; the ball carrier has to attack the space between the 2 defenders and still work to get the offload away.

How would I put this into a game situation:

'Offload Touch' is a good warm up game to get your players into the mindset of always looking for the offload.

When the ball carrier is touched they must offload the ball within 2 seconds to a supporter within 2 metres of them (otherwise it's a turnover).

You can build it up to scrag rugby; again the ball carrier must offload within 2 seconds to a support player close to them.

Finally play full contact games where teams get points for offloading and lose points for going to deck with the ball.

How to use smart sessions

Print off the session and take it to training. It should take you less than five minutes to read the instructions, set up the session, and then you are ready to communicate what happens to your players.

Number of players

You only need six players to complete a session, though it can easily be expanded to meet your needs. With lots more players you could have a number of grids working at the same time.

Timings

The timings are for a twenty minute session, but it can be expanded or reduced to meet your needs. It's your call.

As a rule of thumb 10 minutes would be enough time for a well executed first drill, development and feedback. Any shorter and you have not explored the full skill range or asked enough questions of the players. Longer is fine as long as you feel the session is developing. The game related element adds another 10 minutes.

Equipment

The equipment used is simple. A set of cones (or trainers or tops) as markers and a couple of balls.

You can add in tackle bags, suits and rucking shields where you feel you need them – we just assume that you don't have them because sometimes the shed is locked or another coach is using them.

Training area

The size of the training area is left for you to decide. Smaller players need a smaller area, but the session will never need more than a 20m x 20m grid for initial drills. The smaller the area the more intense the training.

The standard and age groups

Smart sessions are based on the core skills of rugby. They will challenge any standard because a player can always perform the core better.

The "development" ideas can be used to differentiate between the different standards of your players; the "think about" section can challenge the more advanced; the "game related situations" can change the contact situations the teams face.

Elements of the session

What to tell your players the session is about:

This is your introduction and outlines the objectives of the session. Just read this out. The players then have an objective. Return to this at the end of the session to see if you have achieved your objectives.

What you tell your players to do:

This is how you want your players to achieve the objectives. You can tell the players straight away how to achieve the objectives, or you can tease it out of them as the session goes on.

What you get your players to do:

This shows you how the session is going to work. Depending on what is going to be achieved, it sets out what actions the players are going to take. There are no exact measurements, or complicated patterns – the approach is "simple, stupid, successful". Slow motion the first few patterns – get the drill right and the skill right first before speeding up. Use the "What to shout" prompts to keep the players focused. Use the "What to look for" to keep your eye on why the players might be failing.

Development

No session is worth doing unless there is some form of progression. Normally there will be an increase in pressure, say by adding more defenders, or by restricting the time available. Other areas for you to think about are: Where do I stand as coach? Do I throw the ball into the grid?

How would I put this into a game situation?

All the elements of the session are geared to the game, but this section puts the session one step away from a full game, with attack, defence and a goal line.

What to shout

Have the words handy, because apart from the usual words of encouragement, it is good to shout the key factors to players. Of course you can hold some of these "shouts" back and ask the players to identify how they can improve.

What to look for

You need to keep your eyes open for "best practice". This section helps you identify quickly where players might go wrong so you can quickly put them right.

Think about

Here you have the chance to challenge the players and situation, either by using feedback or just asking yourself the questions. It is a little more advanced and might not be appropriate for your players.

Where does it fit:

To help you file and order our coaching we have given you the core areas of individual and team skills that the session covers.



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Dan Cottrell

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