

Ruck to maul

What you tell your players the session is about:

- 1 Setting up mauls from ruck situations.
- 2 Producing great possession by changing from a static to a dynamic situation.

What you tell your players to do:

- 1 Communicate at a slow ruck that a maul is going to be set up, e.g. "tiger ball".
- 2 Work in pairs to take the ball into contact on feet; 1st man works hard to stay on feet, 2nd man in targets ball and drives.
- 3 Retain possession with the player furthest from the first point of contact.



what to shout

- "Go from low to high" – drive the body up at contact point.
- "Two pairs of hands on the ball before contact" or "four hands before contact."
- "Drive forward, short steps and pump the legs."
- "Attack close to the ruck, don't go sideways, look for space."
- "Ball to the back."



what to look for

- Players getting isolated in contact – good communication and awareness between ball carrier and supporters.
- Players falling over – need to keep a strong base in the contact, with short steps and balanced body shape. The player should be self-supported – if the defender falls over then the players can still stay on their feet.



what to think about

Where on the field and when in the game? Minimum number of players into the mauls? Just forwards? How does a maul build with more than two players? How could players also "roll" the maul – i.e. drive and then roll outwards, away from the ruck? Should the "ruck to maul" then turn into another ruck? When do you want the ball delivered?

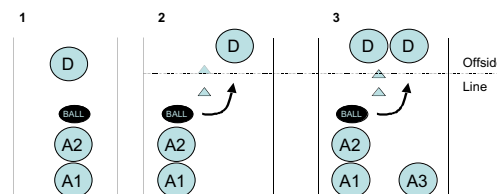
What you get your players to do:

Three drills to build up skills.

First, two attackers (A1, A2), one defender (D). A2 picks up the ball and drives into D as A1 binds on ("four hands").

Second, repeat, but A2 and A1 have to go around cone denoting back foot of ruck.

Third, add an attacker and defender who are standing in the "post" position, which is next to the ruck.



- (1) Player A2 picks up the ball and runs into D, with A1 supporting to form a maul.
- (2) Player A2 picks up the ball, runs out then forward into D. A1 and A2 form a maul.
- (3) Same as 2, but extra attacker and defender.

Development

- 1 Change sides to attack.
- 2 Set maximum time allowed to hold onto ball before release in the maul.
- 3 Make the defenders choose different forms of defence, e.g. try to tackle to ground, driving back.
- 4 Score points for drives that go more than 3m and players still on feet.

How would I put this into a game situation:

Small-sided game in a narrow area. For instance 4 v 4 in a 10 x 10m square.

Start with the ball on the floor for one team with the other team defending. The team with the ball has to score by simply being in possession of the ball and on their feet over the try line. This encourages players to stay on their feet in contact and go forward. Three attempts and then change over.

Change the starting distances between the teams to replicate different sorts of pressure.

Development: start the ball on the edge of the square, with the defending side set up across the box, and two metres back from the ball.

The attacking side has two players standing behind the ball and then the rest spread across the box.

Same scoring system as above.

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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