

# Christmas cheer

## What you tell your players the session is about:

- 1 Making the players reduce their unforced errors.
- 2 Working hard to bust some of the Christmas calories.

## What you tell your players to do:

- 1 Through constant movement, make decisions on the best pass, best space to move into and/or best attacker to mark.
- 2 Maintain skill levels under pressure using communication and vision.



### what to shout

- "Anticipate space – don't move into it before you need to."
- "Keep moving by changing pace, slow to fast to slow."
- "Use voice and hand signals to show the ball carrier where you are."
- "Pass so the players can move onto the ball."



### what to look for

- Players slowing down their movement in drill time – high intensity for a short period, so it is mental as well as a physical skill.
- Panic passes – stress "control" by helping players to think about anticipating their next move as well as their co-players and opposition.



### what to think about

Types of passing that might be most effective in different circumstances? How can players create more space by their speed of movement or different types of alignment? Why do players work harder in games than in skills training? How should mistakes be dealt with by the coach – types of penalty?

## What you get your players to do:

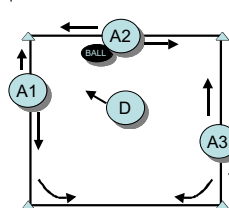
Two mini games, one in a square, the other in a rectangle (size depends on ages of players, but for adult, try 7 x 7 and 14 x 7).

Game one: 3 players can only run on around the edges of the box and cannot be in possession of the ball for more than 4 seconds. They must keep moving and cannot receive a pass unless they are moving. Add a defender who can block passes/tackle.

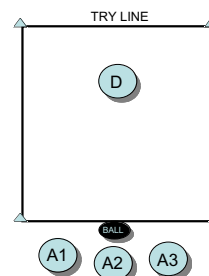
Game two: 3 players who can run and pass in any direction score at the far end of the rectangle. A defender attempts to block the ball or touch/tackle the player in possession. The attackers have three attempts which end either on scoring or if they are touched in possession, drop the ball, go out of the box, or receive the ball standing still.

Attackers (A1, A2, A3) can run up and down any of the lines. They are not allowed to stay still. A receiver must be moving when he receives a ball. How many passes in 30 seconds?

Add a defender to increase the pressure.



Attackers have to score over try line. They can pass forwards and backwards, but cannot receive a pass standing still. Game over when: try scored, ball dropped, attacker with ball touched/tackled, player receives a ball standing still.



## Development

- 1 Add more defenders into each game.
- 2 Must only use rugby type passes (no American football spear passes).
- 3 No spin passes allowed.

## How would I put this into a game situation:

"No mistake" touch: it's Christmas, so reduce the injury count. The game emphasises constant movement by attackers and defenders.

Normal rugby laws. If a player is touch-tackled, the ball goes through the legs. The ball is turned over if there is an infringement such as a dropped ball, forward pass or a player steps into touch. The defence must always retire 3m back from the touch-tackle, but can move forward as soon as a player touches the ball again after the touch-tackle. One final rule: a pass can only be received by a player who is moving.

# 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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