

Straighter Defence

What you tell your players the session is about:

- 1 Preventing gaps appearing in the defensive line.
- 2 Getting in the right positions to make your tackles.

What you tell your players to do:

- 1 Keep heads up and scan what's in front of them (don't ball watch).
- 2 Communicate with the defenders on their immediate left and right.
- 3 Keep a straight line and move forward at a uniform pace.
- 4 Shout who is going to tackle who.



what to shout

- "Keep your spacing – no gaps."
- "Look around you – be aware of attackers in front and defenders either side."
- "COMMUNICATE – nominate your man."
- "Move up together – at the pace of the slowest defender."



what to look for

- Defenders moving out of line – either up too fast or lagging behind.
- Players not being in position to make a tackle with the shoulder.
- Players having to rush to regain their position in the line.



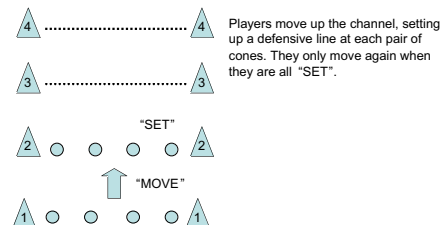
what to think about

What pace do you want your defence to move up at? Are there times in the games or areas on the pitch where you want your defence to move up faster or slower? If someone moves out of the line how can you correct it? Do you use trigger calls (e.g. SET, HOLD, and PRESS)? If so do all your players call exactly the same calls every time?

What you get your players to do:

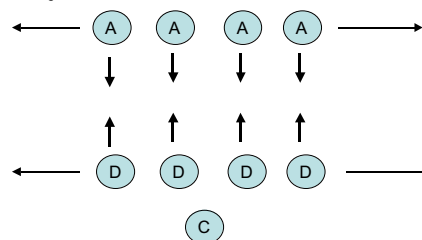
Drill 1 Mapping: Groups of 4 players move along a channel (about 12 metres wide) setting a defensive line at each pair of cones (about 5 metres apart).

Drill 1: Mapping



Drill 2 Mirroring: The coach stands behind the line of defenders and directs the attackers to move left and right, on the coach's signal the attacking line moves forward and the defenders move up to meet them.

Drill 2: Mirroring a line of attackers



A line of attackers (A) move from side to side directed by the coach (C). They are mirrored by a line of defenders communicating which player they are covering. The coach calls 'UP' and the attackers move up and are met by the defenders.

Development

Drill 1: Have the players hit the deck at each set of cones and get back to their feet as quick as possible and set again. As the players move up, the player at the right hand end drops out and moves to the far left, the other players must drift across and cover the space.

Drill 2: Drop one of the attacking line back as a floating attacker, they can move anywhere behind the line and must be covered when the line moves forward. Allow the players in the attacking line to swap positions (simulating switch/cut moves).

How would I put this into a game situation:

Defensive scrag game: 6 attackers play against 12 – 15 defenders in a scrag game (somewhere between touch and full contact). Every time a tackle is made the coach calls out how many of the defending side need to contest the ruck (i.e. 4). The defenders kneel at the ruck area and the rest of the defensive team have to re-align. On the coach's whistle the attacking team play the next phase. You can instruct the attack on how to play so as to work on specific areas of your defence.

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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