

The real decoy

What you tell your players the session is about:

- 1 Making decoy runners confuse the defence and open gaps.
- 2 Used extensively by the All Blacks in the autumn international series.
- 3 Holding the defence on the gain line, who expect the "front" players to take the ball, not the players running behind.

What you tell your players to do:

- 1 Decoy runners should set themselves in front of the attacking line.
- 2 Jog towards the potential pass and then accelerate at the gaps between defenders.
- 3 Always expect to take the ball.
- 4 Players receiving ball stay deep (stay hidden) and come at pace.



what to shout

- Decoys: walk, jog, and then run with conviction.
- Decoys: hands out and shout, expect the ball.
- Scott Gibbs (Lions centre) shouted: "Don't waste me".
- Passers make the pass almost skim the backside of decoy.
- Actual receivers, start deep and drift out, the gaps are wider out.



what to look for

- Know the laws! A player must not intentionally move or stand in a position that prevents a player from playing the ball. (Law 10d)
- Decoys running too early and not towards the ball carrier – they need to "hold" the defence and not prevent the defence from tackling the player – timing is everything.
- Decoys not looking convincing – the defence must think they are getting the ball.



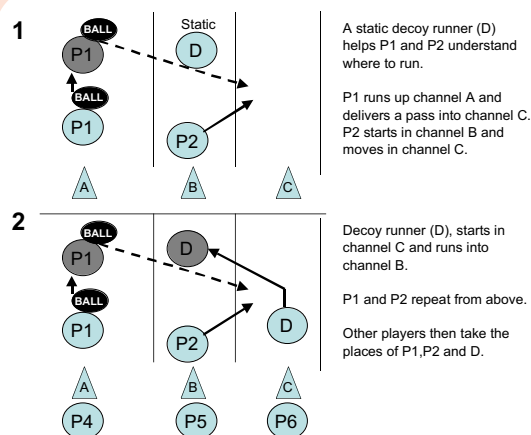
what to think about

In setting up, do we need cones to show the channels? How deep should the receiver be? Where on the field should decoy runners be used? Who are the best players to use as decoy runners? What the downsides of using decoy runners? Are they decoy runners or option runners (i.e. a player who might receive the ball anyway)?

What you get your players to do:

Start with the decoy runner being static – passing the ball behind a player to another runner can be difficult. The passer moves up and passes behind static decoy. The receiver starts behind the decoy (about 5m) and then runs out and away from the passer to receive the ball on a diagonal.

Once perfected, the decoy runner now starts in the channel where the ball is going to be received and then moves into P2's channel whilst P2 moves into the decoy runner's channel.



Development

- 1 Add static defenders – decoy runners need to run into gaps.
- 2 P1 can choose whether to pass either decoy runner or P2.
- 3 Add two more players, with P2 now passing behind another decoy runner to another player further out.
- 4 Put two decoy runners together and pass behind both of them.

How would I put this into a game situation:

Decoy runners, apart from set backs moves, are best employed from second phase. Any player should be comfortable with running a decoy or receiving a pass, however it is best for the fly half or similar to pass the ball.

Run a series of set pieces to second phase, e.g. a back row move or a backs move close to the scrum. From the second phase, first unopposed, use the decoys. Then add some opposition and see what happens.

Remember to emphasise the laws.

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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