

Open field decisions

What you tell your players the session is about:

- 1 Communicating in broken play to find defensive weaknesses.
- 2 Moving the ball to the weakness and exploiting it.

What you tell your players to do:

- 1 All players responsible for identifying space to attack.
- 2 Players need to preserve the space in front of them by using the ball quickly.
- 3 Don't run toward the space, fix the defenders and move the ball.



what to shout

- "Heads up, scan for gaps, look for mismatches, communicate."
- "Don't take up the space in front of you if there is space wider."
- "Wide men stay wide – stretch the defence."
- "Passers, once you have passed, support on the inside shoulder."
- "Support runners keep your depth and hit the line at pace"



what to look for

- Over use of the miss pass – more quick passes are likely to hold defenders; use a miss pass to find a penetrating runner.
- Players running sideways in the face of tight defence – only effective against a spread defence where there are more gaps between the players (assuming the ball carrier is fast enough to exploit the gaps).
- If ball carrier is running laterally make sure support runners hold defenders by running straight.



what to think about

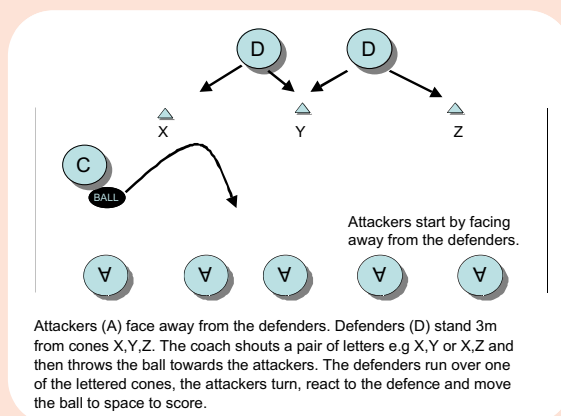
When should players use switch/cut/scissor passes and loops? What should be the call to get the ball wide quickly and the call to penetrate because there is no space wide? Is there a role for a kick behind the defence? How can you effectively use 'decoy' or 'option' runners?

What you get your players to do:

Handling warm up: five players in a 30m channel have to pass the ball from one side of the channel to the other without moving forward more than 10m. Narrow/widen channel depending on ability.

Decision drill: in the same channel, two defenders who are standing 3m behind 3 cones; five attackers, who are facing away from cones and 15m away from the defenders. (Coach can act as defender if not enough players).

The coach shouts two letters, indicating which two of the three cones spread across the channel the defenders should run over. At the same time the attackers turn and receive the ball from the coach. They then try to beat the defenders.



Development

- 1 Wider/narrower channel to attack in.
- 2 More defenders/more attackers.
- 3 More cones to go around/different starting points for defenders.

How would I put this into a game situation:

Supersize attack game: 7 attackers v 4 defenders, on nearly the width of a pitch. Teams start about 20m apart. Coach runs up and down the attacking line and then releases the ball to an attacking player. The game then starts.

Depending on amount of contact required, can use touch-tackle, full tackle. Can allow offloads, but don't allow rucks or mauls. The attack has 5 attempts. The coach can sometimes kick the ball behind the attack to add the element of counter attack.

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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