

Intense defence

What you tell your players the session is about:

- 1 High quality defending when players are tired.
- 2 Organisation, communication and technique under intense pressure.

What you tell your players to do:

- 1 Keep focused on tackle targets right to the end.
- 2 Work together as a group to lift each other – don't be weakest link.
- 3 Turn the pressure on the defence into pressure on the attack.
- 4 Get to the attacker as quick as possible – close down their space.
- 5 Don't relax after a tackle, get back into the game.



what to shout

- "Technique first – eyes open, tackle to ground."
- "Sprint to the tackle, slow down and fast feet before the hit."
- "Eyes on target, hit with shoulder, drive the legs, finish the tackle."
- "Tackle, up and back in the game."
- "Head up, communicate with other defenders."
- "Shout at your victim, put him under pressure."



what to look for

- Heads going down as the players get tired – feedback from the players on ways to keep themselves concentrating – each player will have different triggers.
- Slow back to position – crucial to maintain discipline to prevent wave after wave of defence.
- Defenders tackling with arms not shoulders when they get tired – lazy footwork.

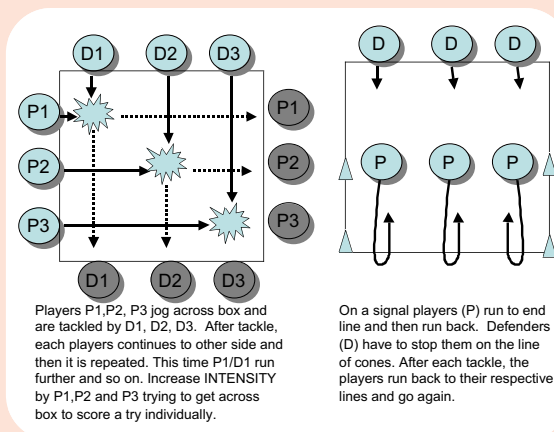


what to think about

How long does your team have to defend in one stretch of time?
 How many tackles does each player make in an average game?
 Can you use trigger phrases to help your players concentrate on the tackle? Which of your players are strong enough to 'hit high' and which players are better tackling low?

What you get your players to do:

- 1 Side on intensity: An equal number of attackers and defenders line up at right angles to each other across a box. The attackers jog across in a line. The nearest defender will tackle the nearest attacker, get up and run across to the other side of the box. The attacker will get up and run across to their opposite side. When all the attackers are on the other side they jog back and get tackled in the same way. Repeat 3 times.
- 2 Front on intensity: Equal numbers of attackers and defenders, attackers start on a line of cones, run back 3m and then try to get beyond the line of cones. The defenders move forward from 5m away to prevent this progress. As soon as the tackle is performed, players return to their starting points to go again. Repeat 4 times.



Development

- 1 Attackers carry balls and attempt to score tries.
- 2 Have fresh attackers every other cycle to create even more pressure.
- 3 In *front on intensity* defence, add another attacker who starts further back and arrives late.
- 4 Have defenders perform disorientation tasks before having to make the tackle (i.e. 2 press ups, 2 sit up alternated then up and tackle).

How would I put this into a game situation:

Set out 3 lines 10m apart. Have two attacking teams and an equal number of defenders. The defenders stand in the middle, the attacking teams at each end. The defenders defend the middle line against the first set of attackers. When the coach shouts "Change", they then turn around and defend the same line from the next set of attackers. The defenders win if they prevent two attacks in a row, lose if they can't stop two in a row.

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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