

Ground hero

What you tell your players the session is about:

- 1 Reclaiming the ball from the ground.
- 2 Contesting for the loose ball with an opponent.

What you tell your players to do:

- 1 Get your body between opposition and ball as soon as possible.
- 2 Think “down and up” in one movement.



what to shout

- “Slide into the ball.”
- “Pull the ball into the body before getting up.”
- “Dive straight onto the ball or if you have time drop on your side to gather it.”
- “Up into a strong body position with ball away from opposition.”



what to look for

- Determination to win the ball. Talk to the players about the right attitude for this type of skill.
- Poor technique in trying to gather the ball. Work slowly at first, with a static ball before advancing to a moving ball.



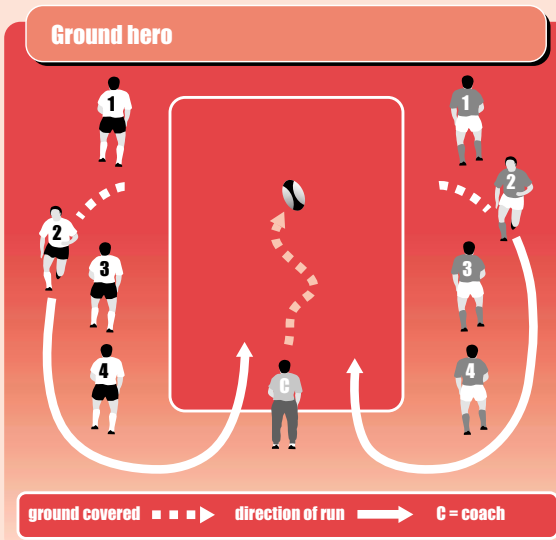
what to think about

What techniques do the players use in gathering the ball? Do the techniques differ if the ball is “rolling”, “bouncing”, or is “static”? Does the more determined player always win the ball? Are the players comfortable falling on both sides and if not why? What is the most efficient technique in getting back to feet?

What you get your players to do:

Introductory practice: In pairs standing behind a line, one partner rolls or throws the ball out 5 – 10m. Their partner has to chase the ball and retrieve it as quickly as possible by diving or falling on the ball. Partners take turns at this activity.

Main practice: Two teams of 4 stand at opposite sides of a grid. Each team member is numbered 1 – 4. The coach calls a number and those two players run round a corner and into the grid chasing the ball that the coach has rolled or thrown. They have to retrieve the ball before their opponent. Teams keep a score of how many times they win the ball.



Development

- 1 The coach changes position to roll or throw the ball.
- 2 The coach calls more than one number. (Say two players from each side or uneven numbers.)
- 3 After retrieving the ball the player gets an extra point if they can escape out the square before being tackled.

How would I put this into a game situation:

Condition a small sided (4 v 4) game with a rule that there are no passes. Players can only roll the ball to their teammates. This will ensure that the ball is on the ground a lot encouraging the skill of retaining and regaining the ball from the ground. Start the game allowing the ball to be rolled in any direction, before only allowing the ball to be rolled backwards. Touch and tag tackle could be used to start before contact is introduced.

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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