

# Pop cycles

## What you tell your players the session is about:

- 1 Creating space in a narrow area by ball carrier changing angles.
- 2 Allowing supporting players to attack space in a narrow area with short passes.

## What you tell your players to do:

- 1 Keep changing running line when carrying the ball to exploit every bit of space.
- 2 Receivers, read the ball carrier's movements and be prepared to explode onto the ball.



### what to shout

- "Pass for the supporter, not to them."
- "Exaggerate your changes of angle."
- "Receivers, hold your run and react to the passer's movements."
- "Receiver accelerate onto the ball."
- "Passer, give the ball some loop."



### what to look for

- Forward passes because the change of angle has meant the passer has turned their shoulders away from the intended direction of the pass – players should extend their arms in front of their body and flick the wrists to deliver the pass.
- Players receiving the ball outside the narrow channel – keep the discipline of the exercise to explore the techniques in more depth.



### what to think about

Should the passer always be using two hands to pass the ball? Is there a need for the receiver to communicate? Who decides whether the pass should be on the left or the right of the passer – can it work differently for different players? What sort of trick passes can be used (for instance, over the shoulder or behind the back)?

## What you get your players to do:

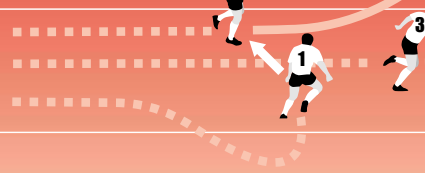
Set up a long five metre channel. Four or five players in a line, with the ball at the front. The first player runs forward then steps outside the channel. He passes the ball back inside and the next player accelerates onto the ball. This player immediately changes direction to run outside the other edge of the channel and passes the ball back in. Repeat until every player has passed the ball twice. Develop by making alternate players go out and back into the channel before passing the ball.

### Pop cycles

1



2



ground covered ■■■ direction of run → pass →

### Development

- 1 Shorten the length of the channel so players have to perform angle changes and passes quicker.
- 2 Have two channels running side by side, and the players have to run through a different channel after a certain distance.

### How would I put this into a game situation:

Set up a pitch which has four narrow channels. Start with two defenders, one five metres behind the other and four attackers with a ball. The coach designates a channel to attack and the ball must not leave this channel once the attackers have entered. Defenders can move sideways but not backwards or forwards.

Develop this by allowing the attackers to attack any channel they want, but once entered, they cannot change channel. Add defenders and reduce the space between them to increase intensity.

# 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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