

Touch square

What you tell your players the session is about:

- 1 Using evasion skills to beat the defender.
- 2 Improving footwork.

What you tell your players to do:

- 1 Always look for space.
- 2 Accelerate into the grid.
- 3 Read your opponents movements.
- 4 Use evasion skills to beat the opponent and get out the grid.



what to shout

- "Hold ball in two hands."
- "Accelerate and keep balanced."
- "Stay upright."
- "Drive off one foot to change direction."
- "Quick feet."



what to look for

- Players that have difficulty changing direction.
Solution – smaller steps or change of pace.
- Players that always move in the same direction.
Solution – ask them to beat the defender on both sides.



what to think about

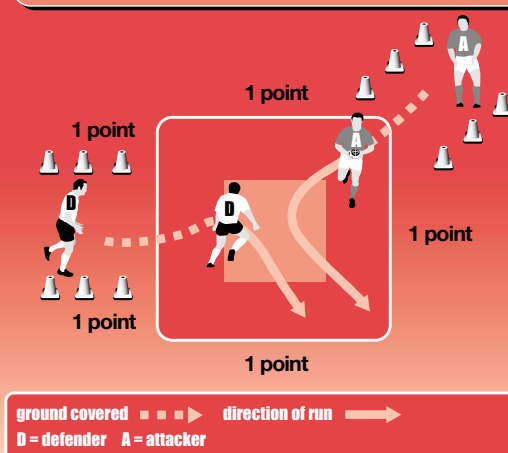
How the players can keep their balance while changing direction? What impact does the defender have by changing his lines of running (angle)? How does a change of pace by the ball carrier affect the outcome? What parts of the feet make contact with the ground for a sharp change of direction and a smooth change of direction?

What you get your players to do:

Introductory practice: Get into pairs inside the grid. Try to get away from your partner. Following partner has to "shadow" lead partner. Work no longer than 10 seconds and swap over.

Main practice: Players stand in teams, one at the side of the square, the other at the opposite corner. When the ball carrier (attacker) moves the defender on the opposite side can move. The attacker scores a point if they can get out of the grid after touching the small square in the centre, without being tackled by the defender. Start with a "touch" or "tag" tackle then move onto a contact tackle. Keep a total score for each team (1 Point if the attacker makes it out the grid).

Touch square



Development

- 1 Let the defender move first before the attacker.
- 2 Pass or roll the ball to the attacker as they move into the box.
- 3 Change the starting position for attackers and defenders.
- 4 Change the emphasis of the practice onto the defender.

How would I put this into a game situation:

Mark out 3 grids of widths 10m, 20m and 30m. Organise players into teams of 4 and play 4 v 4. Start in the 30m grid where there is plenty of space, move to the 20m grid then the 10m grid. By rotating the players onto different size playing areas it is testing their evasion ability in different situations, so that they will more easily transfer these skills into the full sided game.

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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