

Open door policy

What you tell your players the session is about:

- 1 Getting the ball carrier through narrow gaps in the defence.
- 2 Keeping the ball going forward under hard defensive pressure.

What you tell your players to do:

- 1 Aim for the "doors" in the defence wall, that is the gaps between the defenders.
- 2 Supporting players to either push the ball carrier through the "door" or be able to secure the ball if the "door" closes.



what to shout

- "Keep the ball tight to the body in contact."
- "Step to the side of defenders."
- "Drive low through the contact area."
- "Pump legs, with short steps through contact area."



what to look for

- Ball carrier difficulties in finding the "doors" – use "high-low-high" body, where the ball carrier stays "high" on toes, bouncing around looking for the gap, then goes low to high through the gap.
- Losing the ball in contact – make sure the ball carrier is keeping fingers spread over ball, and the ball is under the nipple. Use the other hand to create width, with fends.



what to think about

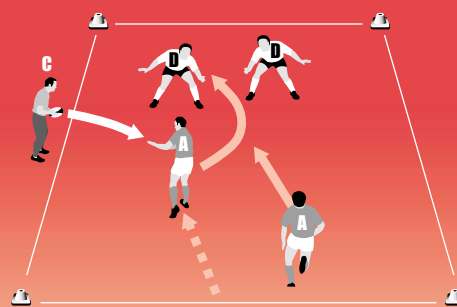
What policy do you have in the contact area – do you want your players to stay on their feet ("ball off the ground") for as long as possible, or do you want the ball carrier to go to ground, creating a quick ruck, because your team is smaller than most sides? What sort of communication are you going to use in this contact situation?

What you get your players to do:

Warm up: in groups of three, one player with a ball stands facing away from two other players. The non-ball carriers stay one metre apart, about two metres away, moving two metres left and then two metres right. When you shout "now", the ball carrier turns and "steps" through the "door" between the players. Defenders start passive (make no attempt to prevent ball carrier going through).

Drill: in a five metre square box, two defenders stand in the middle. You throw the ball to one attacker, who has to "step" through the door. Another player acts as a supporter, who can either push or drive the player through the door, and/or support the player after the contact situation. Scrag/holding tackles to start with.

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Development

- 1 Put in three defenders and have two attackers at the front of the box, one supporter outside the box.
- 2 Use ruck shields to start drill, but must progress to defenders without shields quickly.

How would I put this into a game situation:

In a 20 metre square box, have two teams of four players. You nominate one team as the attack team, and shout "go". Both sides run forward, and you pass the ball to the attack team. The later the pass from you the better. Start with "3 second touch" rules, where if a player is touched, they have three seconds to release the ball. The defence has an option to prevent the pass by holding the ball carrier. The better teams will have players who step through "doors" and offload to supporting players.



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 sessions 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 box 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 box?

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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