

Heads up and away

What you tell your players the session is about:

- 1 Improving their decision making when confronted by defenders coming at them from unusual angles.
- 2 Searching and creating gaps for your attackers who are unmarked.
- 3 Defending against an overloaded attack.

What you tell your players to do:

- 1 Ball carriers – commit the defenders by attacking their “weak” shoulder (the shoulder not likely to be used in the tackle).
- 2 Support players – stay deep and run at gaps to draw defenders.



what to shout

- “Change your angles sharply to interest defenders”
- “Keep your head up to see your support and the defenders”
- “Defenders: force mistakes by pressurising the two inside players”
- “Defenders: have good line speed and communicate with lots of shouting”



what to look for

- The support players overrunning or taking the ball standing still. Holding the run is a discipline – players should trust their pace, moving forward slowly until they need to commit.
- The ball carrier making a rushed decision. Keep your eyes on their head – where are they looking? Ask them this same question. Tip: carrying the ball in two hands and at chest height helps keep the head up.



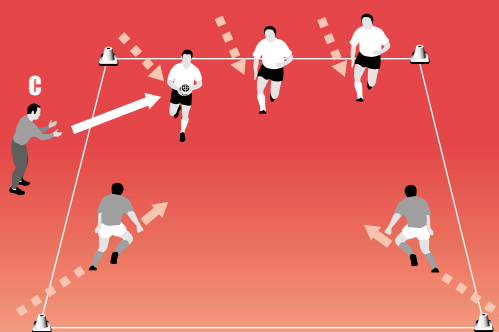
what to think about

When do your players use miss passes, dummies, cut or switch passes? Do you want your players to “fall away” with the pass, in other words, pass one way as the body falls the other? Balance the need to support versus committing defenders. Can your attacking players afford to take a little bit of contact? Can your defenders change their line speed to confuse the attackers?

What you get your players to do:

In a 15 metre square box, three attackers stand at one end. Two defenders start outside the corners of the opposite end. You stand halfway down the box. Throw the ball to an attacker. The play commences with the attackers trying to score at the far end of the box. Adjust the length and width of the box according to the success rate, which should be around 50:50. Too much success for either side means not enough pressure. Tackling can be modified using bags, tags, touch or scrag tackles.

Heads up and away



ground covered ■■■■ direction of run → pass →
C = coach

Development

- 1 Change the angles of the defenders by changing their starting positions.
- 2 Have three defenders, but only release two in each game.
- 3 Throw the ball in from the other side of the box.
- 4 Throw the ball at awkward heights or to another player.

How would I put this into a game situation?

Ruck and wrap

On a 40 metre wide pitch, split your players into two teams, 8 on 6 (or similar). The team of 8 receives the ball on the touchline and pass it in-field. One attacker will then try to break the line. If they are tackled then a “passive ruck” is formed (no defender is allowed to touch the ball). You count down from five, after when the ball is released to the attacking side again. This should create an overload for the attack. Your defenders will then need to decide how to defend this situation.



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.



50 GREAT BACKS MOVES

Dan Cottrell

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