

RugbyCoach junior



For coaches of players aged 8 to 13 years

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Concentrate on the Five

There are five core areas of the game that even the top players practise every week. Colin Ireland sets out an exercise for each of these essentials: running, passing, tackling, support and contact.

These exercises are quick to set up and explain and could easily be used as part of the warm-up for training or a game. Watch out for some developments in coming issues.

Running

Through the box: Mark out a ten metre square. Have four players stand one on each side facing the centre. Place four other players in the square as chasers. On your signal the players on each side have to run through the square and get to the opposite side without being touched by the chasers. If caught they stand in the square as extra obstacles.

Passing

Shuttle pass opposition: Mark out a ten metre square. Group players into teams of four. Place two groups at one side of the square, with the other two groups opposite. The first group passes a ball along the line as they move through the square. Once they reach the other side they hand the ball onto the next group who repeat the exercise in the opposite direction. To create opposition you could have two groups moving from opposite ends at the same time.


Tackling

Tri tackle: Organise the squad into groups of three with the first group spread out on a line facing three contact shields. On your signal the three tacklers move forward and drive into the shields knocking them back. They then quickly move back to the line and repeat. The next group of three then take over.

Supporting

Gate support: Organise your players into a lateral line of six. Spread out poles or markers (the gates) across the pitch in front of them. On your signal the players run forward passing the ball. The player who has the ball when they cross through the gates then accelerates away, with the other five players supporting from behind and running through the gate the ball carrier went through.

Contact

Drive and place: Organise the players into lines of four, with the lead players holding a ball. The ball carrier is faced by an opponent three metres away. The line moves forward with the ball carrier taking contact and passing after contact or falling and placing the ball. The support players pick the ball up and pass it away. The exercise is then repeated. 

editor's letter

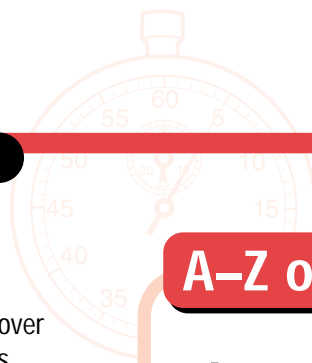
I recently spoke to a fairly experienced coach working with a squad of U11 players. He asked me if I had any more advanced exercises and drills which he could use this coming season. When I questioned him further he admitted his team's passing could be better, their tackling was not always great and they lost a lot of possession in contact.

My advice to him was the same as it would be to any coach at any level: concentrate on the basics. You don't need complicated drills and games to take players to the next level. In fact overcomplicating things often has the opposite effect.

Colin Ireland has written an excellent article on this issue in this edition, in which he draws on his experience at the very top of the game. He suggests you concentrate on the core skills, running, passing, tackling, supporting and contact, and use simple exercises and games to hone these skills in all your players.

Rugby is a simple game which is easy to overcomplicate especially for young players. The best teams are those which do the basics very well and keep things simple.

Paul Tyler
Joint Editor



Look the Part

Rugby is a lot about psychology and getting an edge over other teams in a variety of ways. One of these ways is looking the part. Teams will often play how they look. If they look smartly turned out as a team, that's how they will play.

- All coaches need to be smartly turned out in the same club or school kit. If you look organised and together that will rub off on your players.
- Players must all be turned out the same. They should have the same strips, shorts, and socks for games and warm-up in tracksuits, sweat shirts or waterproofs all with the club name or logo if possible. Looking like a team will help them play like a team.
- Have a team set of water bottles that are stacked in carriers. Make sure these are filled up and ready before the warm-up starts.
- Use new or good quality rugby balls in the warm-up and games.
- Set up your warm-up early and logically so you can move from section to section quickly and efficiently without any standing around.
- Make lots of noise in the warm-up working on togetherness and communication.

Organising your squad's kit in advance and looking good before the match can be worth it if your opponents are watching what you are doing rather than focusing on their own pre match routine. 🏉

A-Z of Child Protection

“L” is for “Liability”

There is an increasing trend for individuals to seek compensation through the courts for any sort of accident or injury.

All your coaches should be covered by their governing bodies' insurance providing they have completed a recognised coaching course and are registered by the club. Schools will need to have their own insurance in many cases to cover contact rugby.

Make sure you have fully completed consent forms for all children taking part in any activity. If a new player turns up make sure a parent or guardian completes a form straight away and before the child takes part in any activity, even a warm-up or game of touch.

Keep complete records of any injuries and accidents that occur while the children are in your care however trivial they might seem. These will be important if there ever needs to be an inquiry into an incident.

Of course the best form of protection is prevention. You need to make sure you have a complete set of risk assessments in an accessible place and make sure they are up to date. 🏉

In the next issue: “M” is for “Management”



The Essentials

Scrum Engagement

Below is an explanation of the “engage” procedure which you and all your players need to be very familiar with.

Crouch

The two opposing front rows have bound together and stand facing each other about a metre apart. When the referee is satisfied that both are ready he will call “CROUCH”. The front rows should simultaneously bend their knees and drop their hips. Their backs should stay straight and they should be looking forward with their heads up.

Touch

Once the front rows are crouched opposite each other the referee will call “TOUCH”. Each prop should reach out

and touch their opposite number on the shoulder and then drop their arm again. They should under no circumstances keep hold of their opposite prop.

Pause

Once the props have dropped their arms the referee will call “PAUSE”. Both front rows should pause in their ready position. There should never be an attempt to engage before the referee's command.

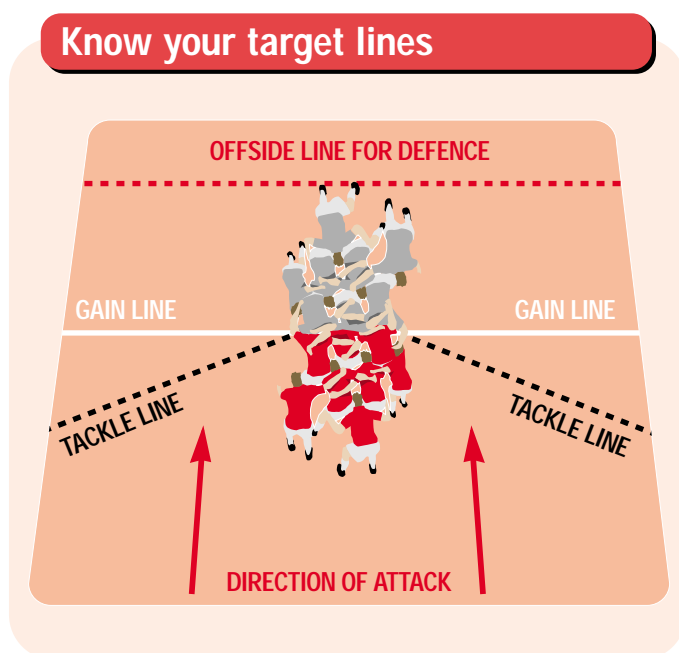
Engage

When the referee is satisfied that both front rows are ready he will call “ENGAGE”. At this point both front rows should slowly engage ensuring their heads are going in the right position – that is to the left of their opposite player's head. 🏉

Understanding Your Attack

Your team won't score a try every time they receive the ball, so it's important the players understand what they can achieve with their attacks. In this article, Paul Tyler tells us how to make players more aware of the "gain line" and "tackle line".

Using the scrum as an example the diagram below shows the "gain line", "tackle line" and the "defensive offside" line.



Gain line: An imaginary line across the field at the point the ball is won.

Tackle line: This line shows where a normal defence should meet the attacking players when both sides are moving forward. It is behind the gain line and gets further into the attacking backfield the further away the ball is from the initial scrum or breakdown.

Offside line for defence: The back foot of the scrum where the defence have to stand until the ball is out.

Breaking the Gain Line

Getting over the gain line means your team is going forward and the defence is retreating. This gives the attack an advantage because the attacking forwards are running onto the ball. There may also be less defenders between the ball and the try line.

Tactically, the closer your attack ball is to the scrum, the

easier it should be to get over the gain line as there is less distance between the tackle line and the gain line.

As you attack wider there is a bigger distance between the two lines and the defenders appear to have the advantage. However there is likely to be more spaces wide out.

Better Understanding for Your Players

Split your squad into pairs with partners facing one another. One player is the attacker and he stands 5 metres behind the gain line (marked out with cones). The other player is the defender and stands 1 metre behind his side of the gain line, where the offside line would be.

On your signal ask both players to walk forwards until they meet each other, which should be about 2 metres from the gain line on the attackers' side.

Ask the players questions about what is in front of them. For instance:

- Who has the advantage in this situation?
- What can the attack do to meet the defence closer to the gain line?
- What could the attack do to slow down the defence from coming forward?
- At a ruck or maul where are most of the defenders?
- Where would be the defence's weakest point?

Discuss the different options with your players such as: the advantages or disadvantages of a deep pass, flat pass, pick and drive or a long pass wide in certain situations. Get them to try different options at walking speed to see what works and what doesn't. Increase the speed of the game and see what difference it makes to the success of the attack. 🏉

"At the core of my vision was getting the players to think for themselves... I had to give them the freedom to find out what worked and what didn't."

Phil Jackson (b.1945), record winning basketball coach for Chicago Bulls and now the LA Lakers

