

RUGBY COACH WEEKLY

Learn • Train • Develop • Enjoy

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Issue 370

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KILLER BACK MOVES

7 KEY STEPS TO HELP YOU REFRESH YOUR PLAYBOOK

A NEW WAY TO STOP THE LINEOUT DRIVE

- WHY AVOIDING CONTACT WORKS
- LEARNING FROM SARACENS
- A DECISION-MAKING ACTIVITY

CREATING A BLIND SIDE

A GAME PLAN TO RUN OFF SET PIECES

LEARN WITH LADDERS

IMPROVE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL AGILITY IN OUR 2-IN-1 SESSION



< HOSEA GEAR DEADLY WING

PARENT POWER!

HOW TO RECRUIT MINI AND JUNIOR PLAYERS

10 TYPES OF PRESS-UP

Why the South trumps the North



Rugby Coach Weekly
Issue 370



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Toulouse and New Zealand wing Hosea Gear, in the colours of the Barbarians

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Touchline Tales

Scotland's defeat in South Africa last weekend completed a busy tour schedule for the European nations. England and Wales both came close to upsetting one of the big three. To understand why neither could finish the job, you must take your spectator's hat off and don your coaching cap.

The best coaches look for cause and effect, whereas most commentators and fans just see effect. Julian Savea's Hamilton hat-trick or the Springboks' late penalty try against Wales were the effects of a number of key causes.

First, they were the effects of huge pressure. Create enough pressure in one place and another part of the defence becomes weak. Shift the point of attack quickly enough and there will be gaps.

Pressure can come from set piece – like the lineout “catch and drive”. New Zealand, with Kieran Reid back in the fold, did just that. Suddenly England had to bring in defenders, giving the All Blacks more space elsewhere.

Pressure can also come from defence. Again, the All Blacks slowed England's ball, forcing kicks or errors, which allowed their counter-attack to tear into the visitors.

But the real reason the All Blacks were so successful, and the Boks and



Line break: Ben Smith penetrates an English defence that cracked under pressure

Wallabies too, was their ability to beat a defender one-on-one. Not in the wide, open spaces but close to the gain line.

In the final Test the All Blacks had one clean break for every three rucks, England one in six. South Africa had better than one in 2.5, Wales worse than one in four. In effect, the winning team was twice as likely to make a

“In the final Test, the All Blacks had one clean break for every three rucks”

break in open play than the losing side.

That creates the go-forward that stresses defences. It gives air to the dangerous runners. It makes it easier to execute 2 v 1s or 3 v 2s. It puts your team in the scoring zone more often.

This is why I'll be spending more time on my players' evasion skills. Winning those extra metres will win more games. It's the cause that counts.



Head coach



ASK DAN!

For your free one-to-one service, email: askdan@rugbycoachweekly.com
Individual answers straight to your inbox

HOT ON the heels of our *Ask Dan!* service, this week we bring you news of another exciting development – our first-ever webinar.

I won't go into detail here because you can read about it on page 7.

Suffice to say it's part of a package to give you great coaching advice in a variety of formats – meeting the needs of the modern rugby coach.

One area leapt out at me for our opening subject – the ruck. We all want to improve our efficiency at the ruck, both in retaining possession after the

tackle and recycling the ball quickly.

But what will be right for a pro side might not be right for an U13 team, which is why we want to help you design *your* perfect ruck drill.

By the end of the webinar, you should have lots of ideas to build on what you do already and have an exercise you can nail in the first ruck session back with your side.

And if afterwards you still have any queries about the ruck, or any other area of the game, just contact me at the *Ask Dan!* email address above. Between us we'll crack this coaching lark!



In this issue...

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A cracking move from a set piece



A new way to stop lineout drives

Standing off a lineout that you expect the opposition forwards to drive has risks as well as rewards. But top sides like Saracens are doing it more often – and with great success. Here’s why and how...

This article’s title is really a bit of a tease. This isn’t an entirely “new” way to defend the driving maul from a lineout – I first saw it deployed by Pierre Berbizier’s Italy team eight years ago and it has been periodically used by the Crusaders against strong-mauling South African sides in the Super 15.

However, it’s new in the sense that top-end coaches have never considered it seriously as an option until the season just finished. During the English Premiership play-offs, it became a legitimate weapon and I expect this method of maul defence to grow.

WHAT THE LAW SAYS

The “back-off maul defence” is based on a law interpretation at the lineout:

19.14(c) After the ball has touched a player or the ground.

A player not carrying the ball is offside if, after the ball has touched a player or the ground, that player steps in front of the ball, unless tackling (or trying to tackle) an opponent. Any attempt to tackle must start from that player’s side of the ball.

In practice, the law demands that if the defensive side doesn’t physically engage the opposition as they set for the drive, the ball remains the offside line and the forwards ahead of the ball are illegal.

Although this has taken time to become “accepted practice” within the refereeing community, the fact that it’s allowed by Test ref Wayne Barnes in our example from the Saracens-Harlequins semi-final shows that it’s now considered a legitimate response.

Quins used the tactic to good effect themselves against Northampton, whilst the Saints also fell foul of this ploy – conceding a penalty for obstruction – in the Premiership final.

Click on the “play” arrow above to see the Saracens-Quins example.

The key learning points are...

1 ACTION AT THE THROW – NO CONTACT

As the throw is made, there’s no attempt to contest it, and the defensive team is careful to preserve the 1m gap between themselves and the opposition.

If any defender makes contact with an opponent in this phase of the lineout, a

maul could be formed and the point of the exercise would vanish. Worse, the attack could drive the maul at real pace with almost no resistance.

2 THE BALL IS THE OFFSIDE LINE – SACK THE BALL CARRIER!

With no contact having been made defensively, the usual rules of the maul (entry from behind the hindmost foot) don’t apply despite the presence of five Quins forwards in perfect formation ahead of the ball carrier!

Sarries 8 Billy Vunipola is fully entitled to run straight past them off the corner and sack the ball carrier, Luke Wallace.

3 TAKING AWAY THE OPPOSITION’S BEST WEAPON

The psychological impact of this form of maul defence can be significant.

Most sides that use the driving maul as a major weapon like to wear down opponents with their power. With the “back-off maul D”, this grinding-down process can never get off the ground.

Practise this method of lineout defence in Dan Cottrell’s session on page 4.



Words by:
Nick Bishop

Prevent the “catch and drive”

The defence is free to use any ploy in this session as they try to stop the lineout drive before it has a chance to get going. But make sure they sometimes “stand off” to fool the attacking side

WHY USE IT

As long as a maul hasn't formed, a defender can't be offside at the lineout if he's tackling the ball carrier, even if the ball hasn't left the lineout – see law 19.14(c) on the previous page. Practise your decision-making options in this activity.

SET-UP

One ball and a pitch corner.

HOW TO DO IT

A hooker throws into a 4 v 4 lineout, set up 5m from the try line. The defending team has the option to compete at any stage, and that can mean jumping for the ball. The attacking side aims to drive the ball over the try line (picture 1).

When the catcher is on the ground, the defending team has various options. They can try to:

- > Use a simple drive
- > Sack the lineout catcher as he lands
- > Stand off and send a player around to tackle the ball carrier at the back
- > Stand off and force a penalty for obstruction if the attack transfers the ball back from the front man in anticipation of a maul. Once you now engage with the attack, they should be penalised.

If you have more forwards available, add to both teams.

Referee it tough or get an injured player to referee it.

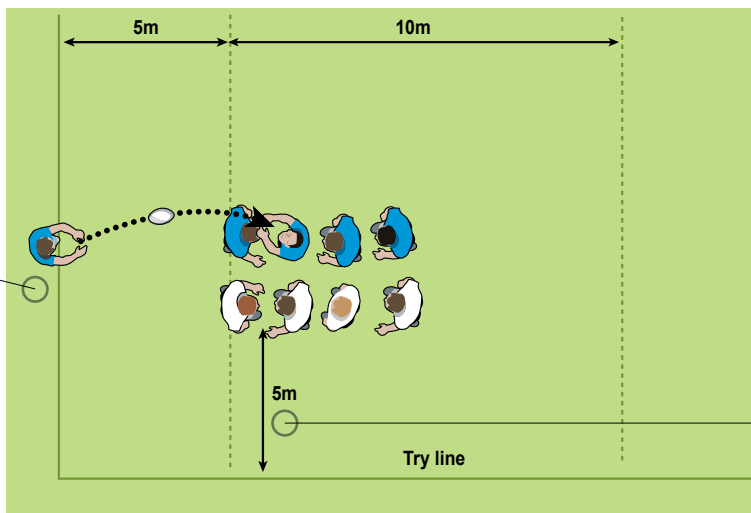
TECHNIQUE

- Decide on your defensive strategy early
- Time your intervention

Activity by: Dan Cottrell

1

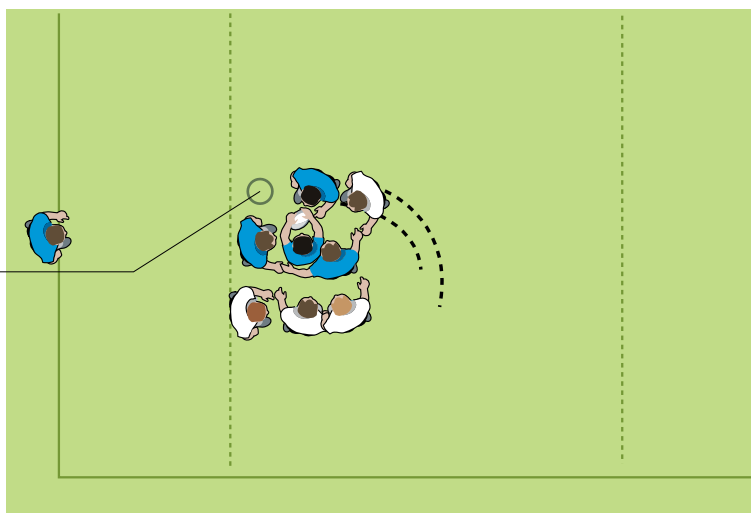
The attacking team throws into the lineout. The defending team decides whether or not to compete in the air



The attacking team aims to drive the ball over the try line

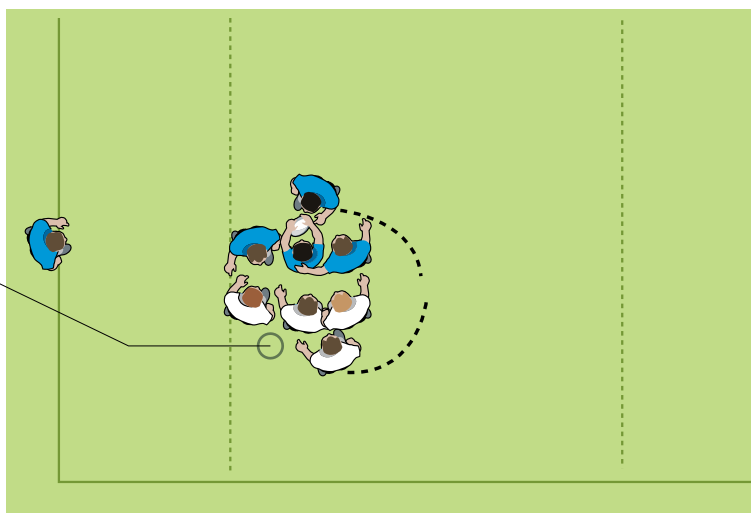
2

The defending team may choose to stand off and, as the ball is transferred to the back, have a player charge around to tackle the ball carrier



3

Alternatively, the defending team may choose to stand off and then engage once the attack has set up for the maul – if the ball has been moved to the back player. The attack should be penalised for obstruction



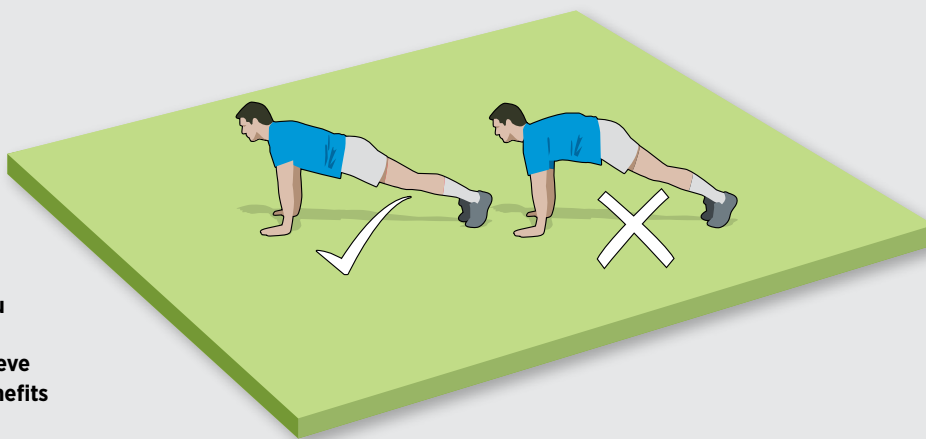
Pass →

Ground covered - - - - -

Direction of run →

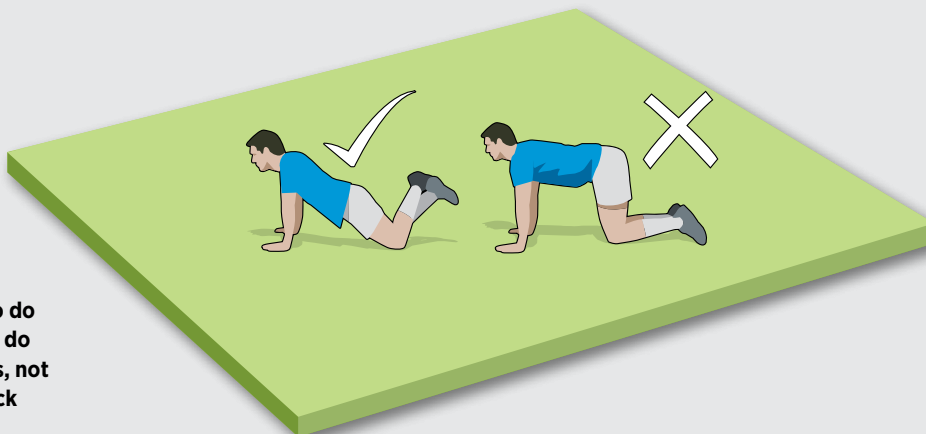
GOOD AND BAD TECHNIQUES

Avoid the temptation to curve the back to reduce pressure on the arms. You must keep a straight line through the body to achieve strength and stability benefits



Start with a small number of repetitions and increase gradually in line with good body shape

If a player is struggling to do normal press-ups, he can do them resting on his knees, not his feet. However, the back must still remain straight



Keep up the press-ups

There's no need to go to the gym to perform the simple press-up, which should be part of any rugby conditioning programme. Here are 10 types to integrate into your players' training...

Press-ups help develop the upper-body strength that all players need. Specifically, they improve the chest, upper back, core, shoulder and arm muscles.

Most players do a press-up in only one way, but by altering the methods and speeds they can accrue a variety of benefits. Different techniques place more, or less, strain on the core muscles and develop various aspects of strength, such as explosive power, core tension, balance and muscular endurance.

You should build press-ups into regular parts of your sessions, including the warm-up and warm-down, or do them before or after drills and games.

Explaining why the exercise is performed in a certain way will benefit the players. It should become a core skill they enjoy. Over time, players will feel stronger and more confident in contact.

Ideally, all press-ups should be done with only the toes and hands in contact with the ground. But weaker players can go on their knees if necessary (see graphic above). In both cases, keep a straight line through the body to

enhance core strength and stability, and strengthen the lower back.

Here are 10 types of press-up you can ask your players to perform...

- > **1. STANDARD** – hands are spread the width of the shoulders. Have a straight back and lower the body weight towards the ground with back and legs in a straight line. Keep the head up and avoid locking arms when they're straightened.
- > **2. WIDE ARM** – the hands are placed wider than the standard press-up. This leads to a lower descent.
- > **3. DIAMOND** – put the hands together so fingers and thumbs form a diamond.
- > **4. CLAPS** – an excellent plyometric exercise that improves explosive strength. The player has to clap their hands when they come up from the press-up, meaning they have to lift themselves off the ground.
- > **5. RAISED FEET** – put the feet on another player's back or a chair. The back and legs should still be straight when performing the press-up.
- > **6. ONE HAND** – for show-offs only! Keep one hand behind the back and

perform the press-up with just one hand.

- > **7. PRESS AND TWIST** – at the top of a normal press-up, rotate the body and reach up into the air with one hand, before returning to the normal position. Alternate which side of the body rotates and which hand is raised.
- > **8. STAGGERED ARMS** – one hand is placed further ahead of the other hand.
- > **9. ONE LEG RAISED** – perform the press-up with one leg raised.
- > **10. ONE ARM RAISED** – one arm is placed on a platform.



Words by: Dan Cottrell

THE CONTINUOUS PRESS-UPS TEST

Get your players to do a press-up test. A full standard press-up must be completed and the press-ups need to be continuous. Use the table below as a guide to success. Younger, growing players will have more varied scores, but you're looking for improvement.

How many press-ups can you do in one go?

Age	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
10-15*	>44	35-44	25-34	15-24	<15
16-29	>54	45-54	35-44	20-34	<20
30-39	>44	35-44	25-34	15-24	<15

* This is guidance only. Take into account different stages of physical development

Ladder attack decisions

Skilful footwork can improve acceleration, agility and balance. In this activity you can derive double the benefit by using footwork ladders to also develop players' heads-up decision-making

WHY USE IT

It's a great way to improve agility in decision-making exercises – and very easy to set up and vary.

SET-UP

Five foot-speed ladders (or cones placed at intervals).

HOW TO DO IT

Set out the ladders as illustrated. Starting with a 2 v 1, the attackers run through the ladders, putting one foot in each space before exiting (picture 1).

Then, add two ladders to create a 3 v 2, with the defenders offset (picture 2) or coming from the side as in a drift defence (picture 3).

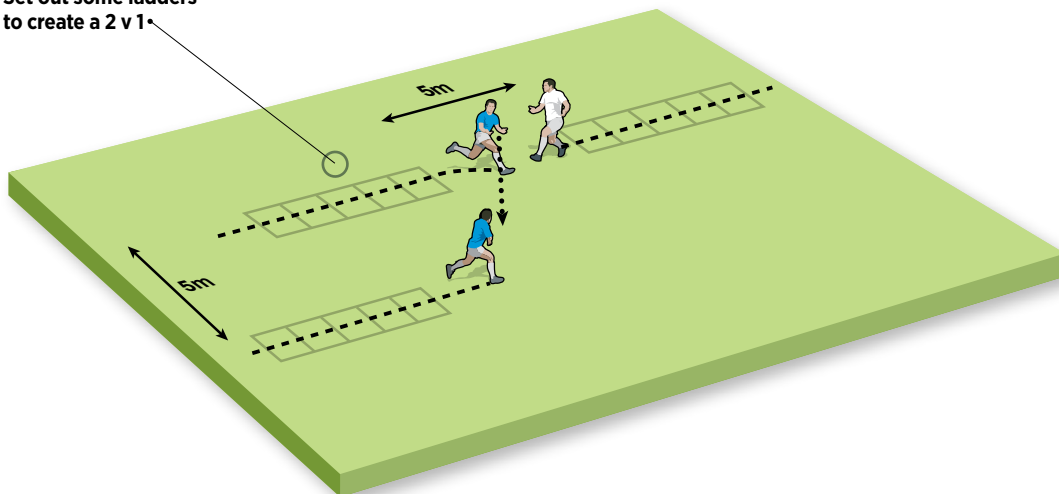
To develop, the first attacker receives a pass just after he comes out of the ladder. Also, change the footwork patterns within the ladder (such as both feet in each space).

Finally, try shortening the ladders and getting players to run into them from a few metres away (before performing the agility footwork needed).

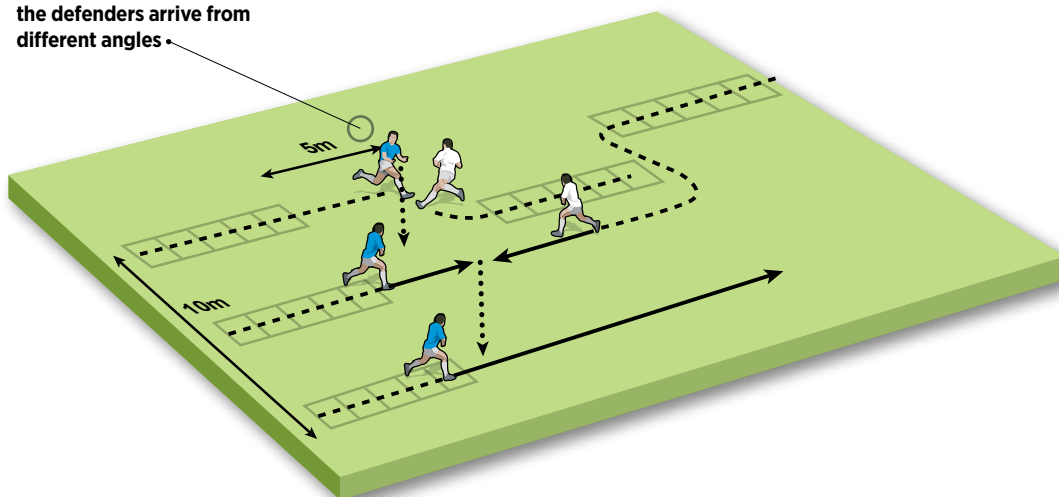
TECHNIQUE

- Run on the balls of your feet and use your arms
- Stay balanced and keep your feet underneath you
- Accuracy, *not* speed

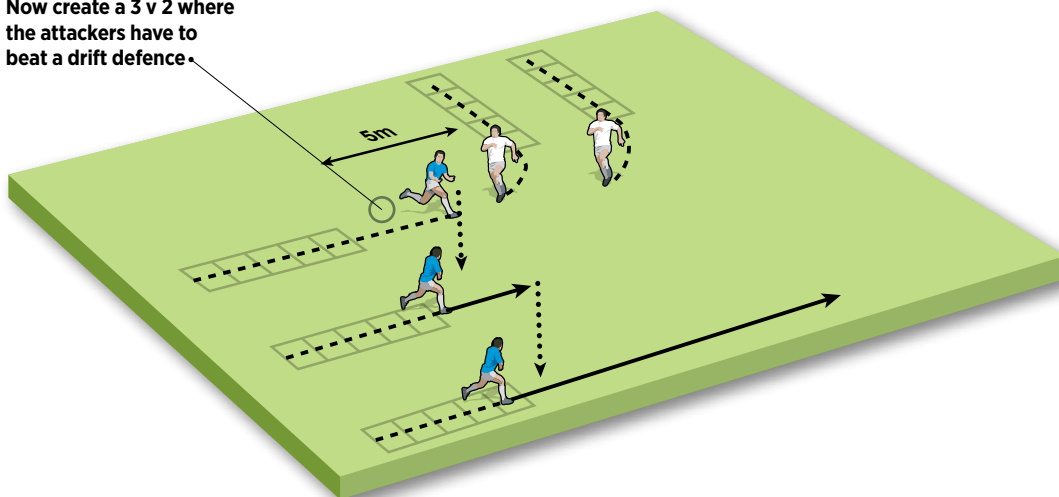
1 Set out some ladders to create a 2 v 1



2 Next, create a 3 v 2 where the defenders arrive from different angles



3 Now create a 3 v 2 where the attackers have to beat a drift defence



Activity by: Dan Cottrell

Pass Direction of run ———

Ground covered - - - - -

NEW!

Watch our ruck webinar

Learn how to design the **perfect ruck drill** by joining Dan Cottrell and other coaching experts for our inaugural webinar next week. It's just part of our outstanding portfolio of services for readers

This week we announce an exciting development – the first of a series of webinars that allow readers to interact with us and obtain instant feedback.

Instead of the normal magazine PDF, next week's issue (371) will be a webinar explaining how to design the perfect ruck drill – see the details below. It's part of a range of services we offer that includes magazines, webinars, videos, archive access to more than 2,000 drills and our new one-to-one *Ask Dan!* service.

WHAT IS A WEBINAR?

It's a seminar on the Internet. The host invites people to participate and, once logged in, those people can interact with each other.

You can either watch and listen passively or actively participate by asking questions or making comments. The webinar will feature slides, drills and polls to vote in.



WHAT WILL I LEARN?

The host chooses the topic and chairs the webinar. Dan Cottrell, our head coach, will be the presenter and will be joined by editor Alan Pearey and two of our coaching experts, Ian Diddams and Eamonn Hogan.

The subject of our first webinar will be how to design the perfect ruck drill.

PERFECT RUCK DRILL? TELL ME MORE...

The webinar will comprise six components:

- > **1. Ruck drill mistakes** – and how to make sure you avoid them
- > **2. Two crucial laws** – which will refocus your thinking on designing a drill
- > **3. Ruck numbers crunched** – what the stats tell us about what wins rucks
- > **4. Improving our approach** – hints and tips to make a ruck drill sizzle
- > **5. Know-how from the pros** – what we can learn from the top level
- > **6. The perfect ruck drill** – the nirvana you've been searching for!

WHEN IS IT?

It takes place on **Thursday 10 July**, starting at 9pm (BST). It will last about 30 minutes.

HOW DO I TAKE PART?

Click in the box to the right – it will take you to a registration page. Enter your name and the email address you use for your RCW subscription and you'll be emailed an exclusive web link to join the webinar.



You can access the webinar on a PC, iPad or Android device. You may be asked to download some software, which takes just a few seconds.

Click **HERE** to view a short video to help you if you're new to webinars. If you find you can no longer attend the webinar, you may cancel your registration at any time.

WHAT IF I CAN'T PARTICIPATE THAT DAY?

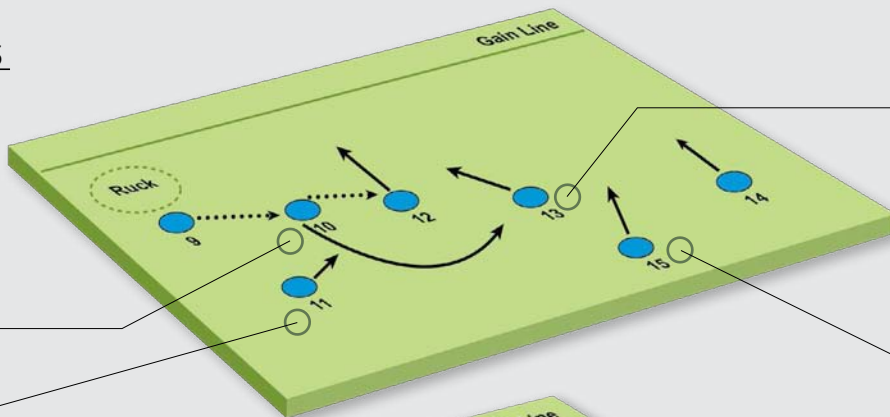
The webinar will be recorded and made accessible to subscribers on our website.

And following the webinar, we'll send our **FREE** Perfect Ruck Drill pack of favourite activities to anyone who registers.

JOHNNY SEXTON'S TRY v ARGENTINA

1

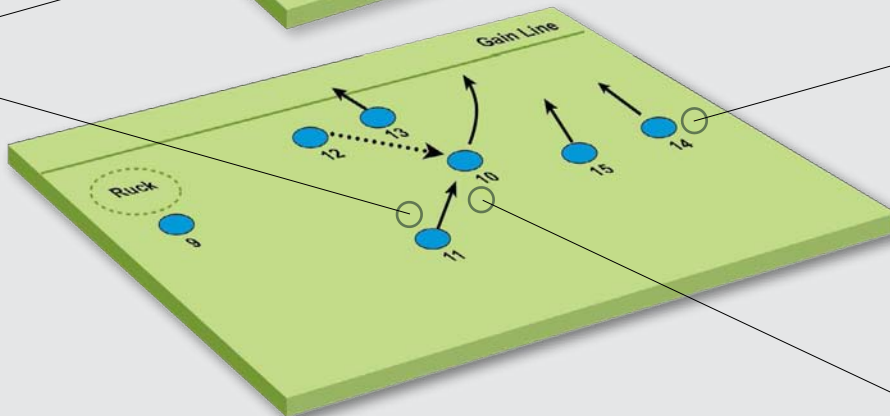
10 takes a pass from 9 and passes quickly to 12 before looping around



13 runs a hard line towards 12

11 tracks behind 10 to support

2



15 and 14 run wide to open up the space for 10

12 passes behind 13 to 10, who goes for the gap

7

steps to killer back moves

Good teams will refresh their playbook from year to year to keep opponents on the hop. Before you design some imaginative new moves to excite your players, here are the key guidelines...

1 IDENTIFY YOUR STRIKE RUNNER AND HIS TARGET

Play to your strengths. If you have a quick full back, for example, devise moves to get him into the game as often as possible and in a variety of channels.

Aim to vary your strike runners and the areas they're targeting, but always set a target area so support runners know where they need to be.

2 IDENTIFY THE BALL SUPPLIER

This is the player who's going to pass to the strike runner. It's usually the 10 but can be 12 or 13 if you're attacking a wider channel.

3 IDENTIFY DECOY RUNNERS

Think of these as "strike runners who don't get the ball". They should run

with the same purpose as the strike runner to commit defenders. They must expect the ball in case the ball supplier spots a gap opening up for them.

4 HOW CLOSE TO THE GAIN LINE?

This depends on your players' skill levels but in general the closer to the gain line you operate, the more likely you are to cross it. To go wide, you'll have to operate deeper than if you go short.

5 THE PURPOSE OF THE MOVE

Not all moves have to penetrate the defence. You can use strike runners to suck in defenders and provide quick ball for a second-phase attack.

6 ALLOCATE SUPPORT TASKS

Whatever the anticipated outcome

of the move, everyone needs to be aware of all eventualities – especially when and where they need to be to support the strike runner.

Whether the strike runner busts the line, gets held but can offload or gets tackled and goes to ground, the support must be in position and ready to act.

7 STARTING POSITIONS

Once you've decided who's going to end up where and how they're going to get there, you can determine where each player needs to start from to best disguise what you want to achieve.

Don't always start with a regular set-up. Try spreading or compressing the line, putting a winger beside the 10, or positioning the open-side winger right on the touchline.



Words by:
Paul Tyler

APPLYING IT TO A REAL EXAMPLE - AN IRELAND PLAY

Let's apply these steps to a recent try you may have seen, writes Dan Cottrell. Namely, Johnny Sexton's try for Ireland last month in Argentina ([click on the arrow to view](#)).

- > 1. The 10 (Sexton) is the strike runner.
- > 2. The 12 (Luke Marshall) is the ball supplier.
- > 3. The 13 (Darren Cave) is the decoy runner, running a hard line towards the 12.
- > 4. The play operates right on the gain line.
- > 5. This is a try-scoring move.
- > 6. The blind-side wing (11, Simon Zebo) and 15 (Felix Jones) should be in position to take an offload.
- > 7. This play works best off second-phase ball. Here, it followed a break by Jordi Murphy.



LAST SEASON

THIS SEASON



HOW TO RECRUIT MINI AND JUNIOR PLAYERS

Talk to parents at school events and at the school gates



YOUR PLAYER AND PARENTS



Get mobile phone numbers of new players' parents so you can text them



Hold special introductory events



Make early sessions about fun, not about the team



Talk to friends with children



Ask PE teachers and/or the head teacher for recommendations



YOU

Give new parents a warm welcome



Ask friends to ask friends with children



Talk to parents at your child's other sports clubs



Set up Facebook and Twitter accounts. "Friend" and follow lots of people



Send out reminders and teasers ("looking forward" messages) every few days



boost your numbers

Don't find yourself short of players for next season. Harness the power of parents to swell your ranks in August and September – these tips will help you plan your recruitment campaign

1 PLANT THE SEED AT SCHOOL BEFORE THE BREAK

Most kids won't be thinking about rugby, and certainly won't be considering joining a team. But you can still plant the seed in their minds. How? By asking your own players to talk about next year to their mates.

More importantly, work on the "school gate" jungle drums. Ask parents of your own players to mention it to their friends at pick-up time or at the end-of-term barbeque.

2 BRING-A-FRIEND TRAINING

When the season starts, it's difficult for new players to pitch up and join an established team. They'll be nervous enough just trying a new sport.

So consider holding a special training session where you encourage new players to come along. If you promote it in the right way, you may well attract a new crowd.

A good training session is essential, but

parental support on the sidelines is even more important. Assign some parents to act as liaisons to answer questions, chat, or hand out drinks and cakes.

Generally, a good club side creates friendships on all levels and this will keep the players coming, whatever the weather.

3 TWITTER AND FACEBOOK DRIVE

Are you getting the theme now? The kids are important, but the parents are even more crucial. Keep copying in or sharing posts with parents of potential players.

Upbeat messages during the summer, even on a basic level ("I can't wait for next season" etc), will provide a drip-drip effect that helps persuade others to join.

4 BACK TO SCHOOL

The season starts in earnest once the kids are back at school. Again, you should be working at the school gates and on social media. Lots of small messages lots of the time.

Follow up players with other players. Find out why they're not coming. And make sure the first sessions are still open, with plenty of support for new players and parents.

5 ENLIST THE HELP OF PE STAFF

Drop a line to the PE staff at the start of the year, because they're often keen to help their better athletes get involved in team sport. If not the PE staff, then the head teacher.

A quick call or note to put on the school website – talking about the community benefits of the local club – can help push a player towards your club and so boost the mini and junior ranks.



Words by:
Dan Cottrell



WANT MORE TRAINING SESSIONS? THEY'RE JUST A CLICK AWAY!

For more activities, log onto rugbycoachweekly.com and search for the area you're interested in (such as "pass" or "tackling"). Then download. They're free to subscribers if you register using your subscription email address.

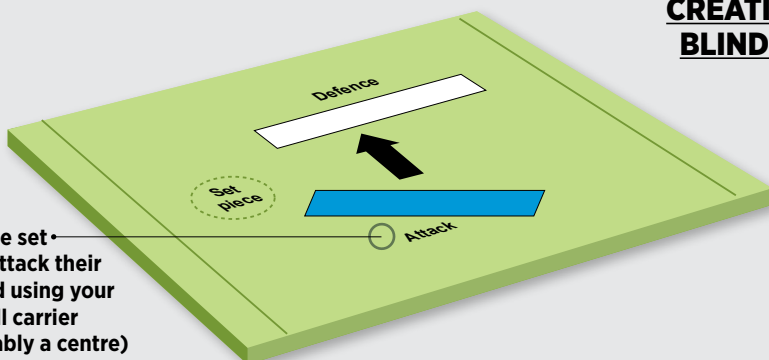


ASK DAN!

For your free personalised one-to-one service, email: askdan@rugbycoachweekly.com
I'll send you individual answers straight to your inbox

1

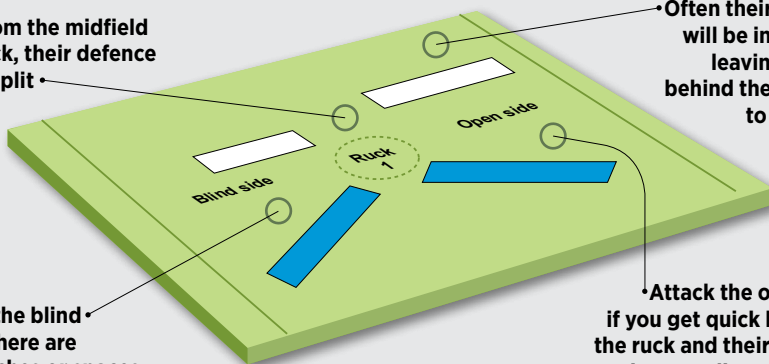
From the set-piece, attack their midfield using your best ball carrier (preferably a centre)



CREATING A BLIND SIDE

2 From the midfield ruck, their defence is split

Attack the blind side if there are mismatches or spaces



Often their wingers will be in the line, leaving spaces behind the defence to kick into

Attack the open side if you get quick ball from the ruck and their defence is struggling to realign

Q “We’re good at winning our set-piece ball but struggle with the ensuing phase. Can you suggest a move to run from the set piece?”

DAN SAYS: “Here’s a simple game plan that you can use from set pieces. It’s called ‘Creating a blind side’.

From your lineout or scrum, you attack into midfield (details below). If you don’t break the line, set up a midfield ruck. Now there are two places to attack – the open side or blind side.

Your 9 or 10 can decide which way to play. Often the 10 is in a better position to call this. He could shout “yes” if he wants to attack the same way, or “no” if he wants to switch the play.

It depends how quickly the opposition defence gets into position. However, often the slower forwards are left covering the blind side, giving you an opportunity for a mismatch.

ONE OR TWO RUCKS

You can develop this further. When you call the move – before you’ve even attacked the midfield to set up the initial ruck – add on the call “one” or “two”.

> “One” means you’ll have just that initial ruck before the 9 or 10 chooses whether to switch back to the blind side. In other

words, you run the move as described above.

> “Two” means you’ll automatically play another phase, setting up a second ruck on the open side, before choosing whether to go blind.

In either case, the key is the decision about whether to go blind, which hinges on whether the defence is slow or quick to cover across.

The other advantage of this plan is that it often brings wingers up into the defensive line, leaving more space to kick behind the line if you want.

ATTACKING THE MIDFIELD

From a scrum, use your best ball carrier (like 12 or 13) to take an angled run at the opposition 10. Ideally your back row supports him in contact. But make sure your key decision-makers (like 10 or 15) are on their feet to make the next play.

You can do the same from a lineout, or use a shortened lineout and get a powerful forward to carry the ball up. Whatever move you choose, the play should always aim to bust the line, not just set up another phase of play.

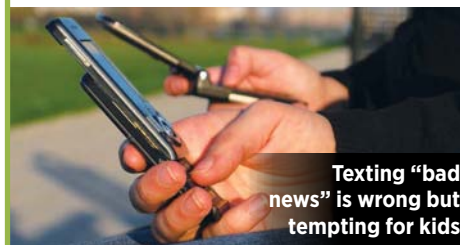
Click [HERE](#) to see a visual of the game plan and my accompanying explanation.”

Q “One of my players quit last week via text message, which I found rude. Should I speak to his father about it or is there no point?”

A “I think you should let it go. As you’ve suggested, there’s nothing to be gained from dragging out this event, though you’re quite justified at feeling let down.

Contacting the player’s father might bring you an apology from the dad regarding the rather unceremonious way his son’s time at the club was ended, but what else is there to take from this situation?

Consider too the child. You don’t mention what age group you coach, but if he owns a mobile phone he’s perhaps of an age where he’s embarrassed about having to tell you he



doesn’t want to play for the team anymore. Such situations can prove uncomfortable for players, so his actions may have been out of fear rather than just a lack of manners.

Your best bet is to move on, letting the player do the same. And why not be the bigger man by texting him to say he’s welcome to return at any time? It wouldn’t surprise me if he were back on that phone a few months down the line asking to rejoin!”

Answered by Clodagh Dark, a semi-pro coach from Skerries, Ireland

HAPPY READING to our issue 366 book competition winners, who each receive a copy of *The Mud, the Beer and the Rugby*. They are Paddy Greenleaf from Viseu, Portugal; Dominique Danton from Leiden in the Netherlands; and Mario Iglesias from Gijon, Spain.

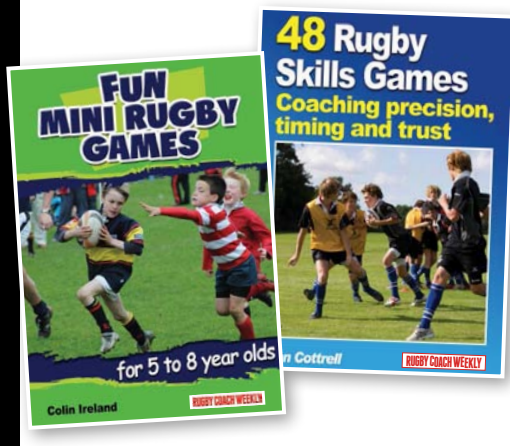




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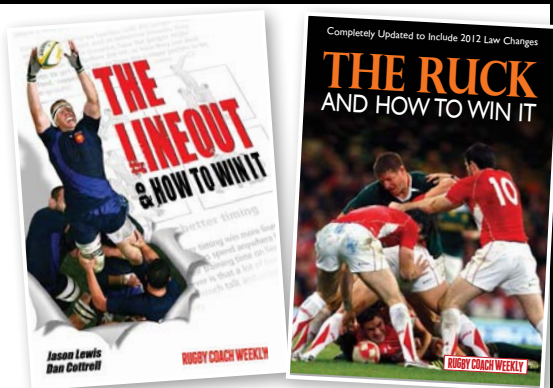


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