

ACTIVATE KIDS U11-U12

PROGRESS MOVEMENT COORDINATION & BALANCE

AN **INTERACTIVE** GUIDE FOR **COACHES** SUPPORTING THE
DELIVERY OF **ACTIVATE** ACTIVITY AS PART OF EVERY
TRAINING SESSION AND **PRE-MATCH WARM-UP**.



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Guidance on how to introduce new activities and exercises and tips on how to deliver Activate Kids in order to experience the full benefits.

5. 'KEY ACTIVATE 8' EXERCISES

The 8 key coaching points that are consistently referred to across all the Activate exercises and should be introduced as part of the U11-U12 Activate sessions to support the development of good body positions and correct technique.

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The Activate programmes and activities are appropriate for players of all ages. Visit the [Activate Home Page](#) for more information on the U9-U10, U11-U12, other age grade and Adult programmes.

THIS IS AN INTERACTIVE PDF.

Use this contents page and the footer to navigate to different sections.

The Activate 8 images and the images in Parts A, B and C are hyperlinks and will take you to the relevant video on YouTube.

This document is viewable on multiple devices. It is best viewed in Adobe Acrobat Reader.

1.

WHAT IS ACTIVATE?

THE GAME OF RUGBY
REQUIRES A NUMBER
OF DIFFERENT
SKILLS INCLUDING
**AGILITY, BALANCE,
COORDINATION, SPEED
AND FUNCTIONAL
STRENGTH.**

It is well known that players of all ages and abilities can develop and maintain these skills to help improve their rugby performance. Research now suggests that using a specific exercise programme which develops these skills can reduce the risk of injury.

The RFU launched the main Activate programme for U15 and above players in 2017; it extended it to include U13 and U14 in 2021. Research continues to evidence the benefits of using Activate regularly as part of training sessions and match-day preparations.

The Activate Kids U7-U12 resources use the principles of the main Activate programme to provide a framework for those coaching these age groups. The introduction of Activate at an earlier age offers the opportunity to support the development of movement control including **agility, balance** and **coordination** in young children. Something that is important for their general physical development outside of rugby and sport. It also introduces and progresses the players through exercises and practices that are aimed at injury prevention.

Evidence suggests that Activate Kids with its targeted exercises and challenging activities, can help children avoid injury while enhancing their performance. It is a focused and efficient programme to be used at the start of, or integrated into, every training session.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research has shown that developing a player's ability in these areas improves general fundamental movement skills and has the potential to reduce the risk of injury including concussion.

The RFU continues to progress the research and insight into injury prevention as well as to develop further understanding into different playing groups.

SCHOOL BOY STUDY

72% ↓
IN OVERALL MATCH INJURIES*

59% ↓
IN CONCUSSION*



2.

THE BENEFITS OF USING ACTIVATE

ACTIVATE HELPS PLAYERS TO DEVELOP AND IMPROVE FOUR KEY AREAS.

1: GENERAL MOVEMENT CONTROL

Develops adaptability allowing for better 'physical' decisions and reaction around the contact areas.



2: PRE-ACTIVATION

The progressive nature of the programme improves muscle activation and enables them to respond better to the demands of exercise.



3: FUNCTIONAL CONDITIONING

Over time functional power and strength develops which increases flexibility and range of movement.



4: PHYSICAL ROBUSTNESS

Develops the muscles, tendons and ligaments ability to endure physical demands and forces placed on them during exercise.



DEVELOPING THESE FOUR KEY AREAS CONTRIBUTES TO:

- > Support the development of a player's ability, balance and coordination
- > Build a foundation to prepare players for the physical demands of the game in future years
- > Improve general rugby skills and playing performance
- > Reducing the risk of injury including concussion.



3.

U11- U12 ACTIVATE KIDS ACTIVITY: 15 MINUTE FRAMEWORK

U11-U12 AGE GROUPS CAN ADD UP TO 15 MINUTES TO THE TRAINING SESSION TIME TO UNDERTAKE ACTIVATE KIDS ACTIVITIES.

It is important to note that the 15 minutes extra time MUST only be used for Activate Kids activities (as per the table below).

Coaches should use the following framework to design and deliver the Activate 15 minutes at the beginning of each training session and as part of a match day warm-up.

Each 15 minutes should be split into 3 parts of 5 minutes, with a particular focus in each part.

Sections 6 - 8 of this resource provide some examples and ideas of exercises and activities that coaches can use during each of the different parts.

Using only one or two different activities in each part (per 5 minutes) is recommended to allow time to concentrate on the focus areas.

There are loads of ways to introduce the focus areas, so get creative!

More examples and ideas are available on the [Activate Kids U11 - U12 YouTube Playlist](#).

Part	Focus	Time
A	Running-based Preparation Running technique, agility, coordination and change of direction. Starting, stopping and landing to develop balance and movement control.	5 mins
B	Upper Body (Head/Neck, Shoulders, Arms, Upper Core) Movement control, balance, functional strength and range of motion.	5 mins
C	Lower Body (Ankles, Knees, Legs, Hips, Lower Core) Movement control, balance, functional strength and range of motion.	5 mins

4.

HOW TO COACH USING ACTIVATE KIDS

ACTIVATE FOR U11-U12'S IS FOCUSED ON PROGRESSING THE PLAYERS' MOVEMENT CONTROL.

In order for the Activate activities and exercise to have the most benefit the focus should be on **quality over quantity**. Coaches should look to correct technique and body positions to progress appropriate control and balances.

Activate Kids U11 - U12 is about continuing to progress the key movement patterns introduced and developed in the U7 - U10 age groups.

Set challenges and encourage players fault correct and give feedback to each other to progress their understanding of their own movement control as well as recognise good technique and form in others.

Creating good habits at a younger age can have a beneficial impact on players performance as they get older. This requires coaches to play a key role in monitoring and developing their players.

Ask players questions and encourage them to focus on technique quality to progress their understanding of how good control, balance and coordination can improve their rugby ability and performance.

More examples and ideas are available on the [Activate Kids U11 - U12 YouTube Playlist](#).



REMEMBER, EVERY SESSION SHOULD BE:

ACTIVE

Your sessions should include as much activity time as possible, and your practices should involve all of the players all of the time. Avoid any practices which involve players waiting for their turn to participate. If you notice players are struggling to get involved, amend the rules or provide challenges for players to increase their engagement with the session. Using games as the basis for your sessions should help with this.

PURPOSEFUL

Every session and activity within that session should have a purpose. Let the players know what the purpose is and ensure it is relevant to the Age group you are working with.

SAFE

If you abide by the codes of practice (applicable to **Age Grade Rugby**) and provide purposeful activities and plan effectively, your sessions should be as safe as possible. You should not, under any circumstances, join in as a player, or ask the players to do anything that is outside the rules of play for their age group. For example, you should not be playing 15 a side matches. If you wish to use rules from earlier age groups this is permissible, but you should not exceed the rules for your age group.

ENJOYABLE

If you get the **Active** and **Purposeful** right your session will more often than not be Enjoyable. However, enjoyment can be increased by adding individual and group challenges and an element of competition. Players may not enjoy their rugby if the session doesn't have high activity levels and if they don't feel they are improving. As a coach/referee you set the tone for this, so you need to enjoy your rugby experience as well.

10 TIPS

ON HOW TO DELIVER ACTIVATE KIDS:

1.

Take time to become familiar with the framework and plan the activities and exercises before starting each session.

2.

Use players to demonstrate certain exercises and to talk through the key coaching points for the whole group to see.

3.

Get creative! Think about how you can make it fun and engaging. To develop skills the repetition of exercises and body positions is important but they can be delivered in many different ways.

4.

Focus on only one or two key coaching points or Activate 8 positions at a time.

5.

Consider the introduction of a ball or other suitable equipment as a way to challenge players.

6.

Watch players carefully to identify and correct any incorrect technique. If needed, provide feedback. Remember that quality over quantity is the priority.

7.

Ask players questions to help develop their understanding of Activate and why it is used.

8.

Share your ideas. Talk to other coaches both in your own and other clubs to share ideas about Activate activities that work well and what the players enjoy.

9.

Support player development through setting individual player challenges in the different activities/exercises.

10.

Try to differentiate activities for individual players. If a player(s) struggles with some of the activities/exercises:

- regress and adapt appropriately
- encourage the player(s) to continue with the exercises as over time they should improve.

More examples and ideas are available on the [**Activate Kids U11 - U12 YouTube Playlist**](#).



5.

KEY ACTIVATE 8 EXERCISES

The 'Key Activate 8' are the foundation of the coaching points consistently referred to across all the Activate programmes. They form the basis for good form and correct technique.

At the U9-U10 age group, the Activate 8 should be introduced to the players more, and coaches should refer to the Activate 8 and how they are used to develop safe and correct body positions in the Activate exercises.

The Activate 8 provide the foundation for good rugby specific techniques and skills, introducing and developing these positions early in players develops their general athletic ability which can improve their physical readiness for rugby and other sports.

Coaches are encouraged to start to develop the Activate 8 with their U9 and U10 players in a fun and engaging way.

1. HEAD NEUTRAL OR HEAD LIFT

 WATCH VIDEO



2. CHEST-UP

 WATCH VIDEO



3. SHOULDER PINCH

SHOULDER PINCH



 WATCH VIDEO

4. ENGAGE CORE

ENGAGE CORE



 WATCH VIDEO

5. SHOULDER & HIPS LEVEL

 WATCH VIDEO



6. HIP, KNEE & ANKLE IN-LINE

 WATCH VIDEO



7. SOFT KNEES

SOFT KNEES



 WATCH VIDEO

8. KNEE ABOVE TOES



 WATCH VIDEO

ACTIVATE KIDS U11-U12: PART A

RUNING-BASED PREPARATION

⌚ DURATION **5** MINUTES

RUNNING TECHNIQUE, AGILITY, COORDINATION AND
CHANGE OF DIRECTION. STARTING, STOPPING AND
LANDING TO DEVELOP BALANCE AND MOVEMENT CONTROL.



ACTIVATE KIDS U11-U12 EXAMPLES & IDEAS

1. CRAB KEEP BALL

 WATCH VIDEO

PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- USING YOUR HANDS HOW MANY ROLLS CAN YOU COMPLETE IN YOUR TEAM?



FOCUS:

- Engage Core to keep hips up and off the floor
- Work on movement in different directions, whilst keeping good form.

COACH TIP:

- Get players to have their feet shoulder width apart and not wider
- Set players different challenges, number of rolls, goal area etc.

2. HUNGRY HIPPOS

 WATCH VIDEO



PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- HOW MANY DIFFERENT WAYS CAN THEY COLLECT THE BALLS?
- HOW MANY BALLS CAN THEY COLLECT?

FOCUS:

- > Head neutral and chest-Up when running
- > Good form and body position in movements to retrieve the balls
- > Use good body positions (e.g. shoulder & hips Level when doing bear crawl) when retrieving the ball from the nest.

COACH TIP:

- > Explore a variety of movements that the players need to perform
- > Create competition for keeping the ball whilst allowing players to develop running and evading skills.

3. TAG THE TAIL

 WATCH VIDEO



PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- CAN YOU GRAB THE TAIL WITH BOTH HANDS RATHER THAN JUST ONE?

FOCUS:

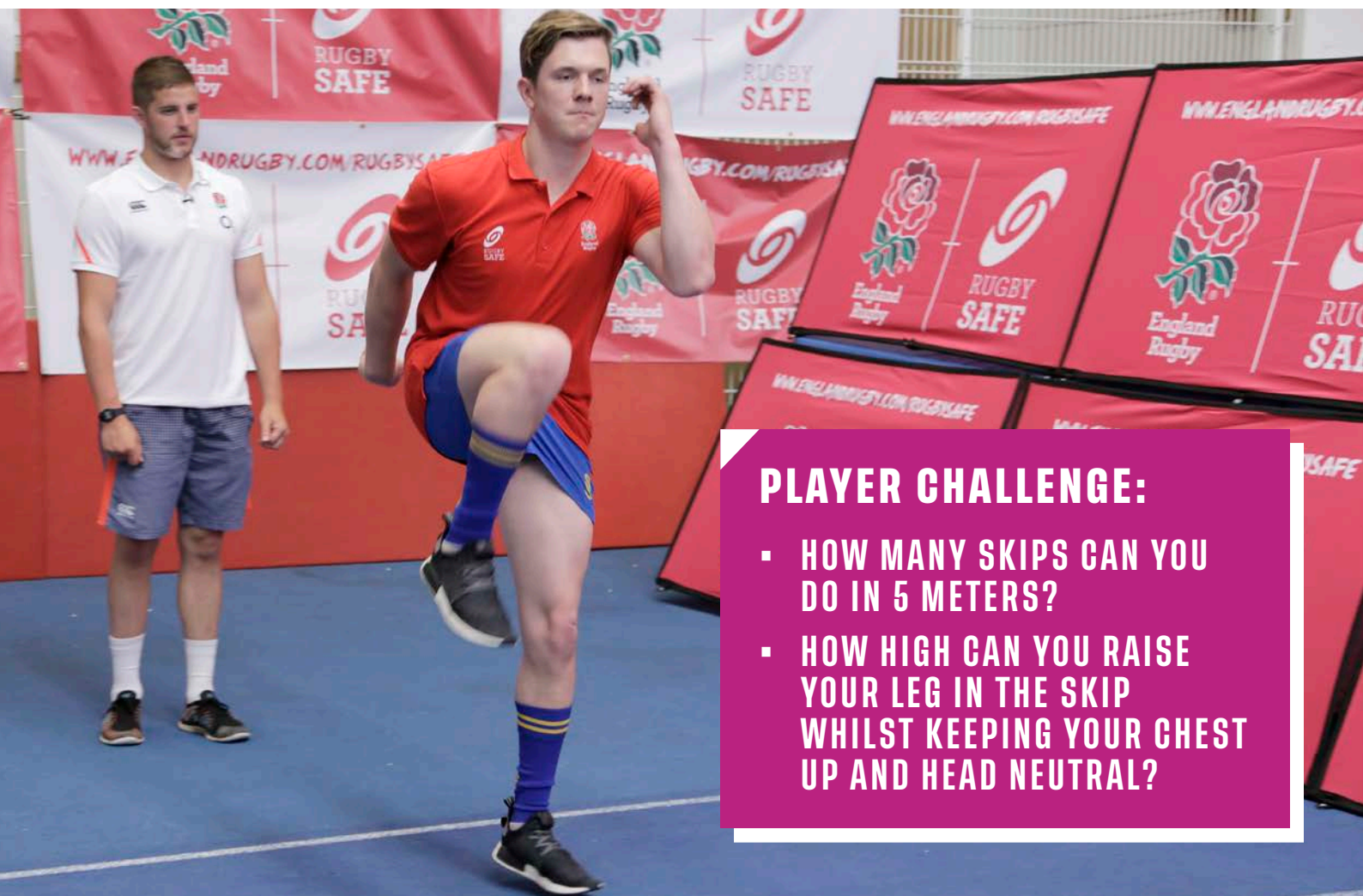
- > Ball carrier to have the ball in two hands
- > Tagger to have keep hips square to the ball carrier with slight bend in knees in order to keep low
- > Engage core and chest-up.

COACH TIP:

Encourage the tagger to get feet close to the ball carrier before trying to make the tag with their head to one side of the ball carrier (cheek to cheek).

4. LATERAL SKIP

 WATCH VIDEO



PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- HOW MANY SKIPS CAN YOU DO IN 5 METERS?
- HOW HIGH CAN YOU RAISE YOUR LEG IN THE SKIP WHILST KEEPING YOUR CHEST UP AND HEAD NEUTRAL?

FOCUS:

- > Keep facing forward, push off rear leg and raise lead leg at same time
- > High knee drive, feet shoulder width apart
- > Chest-up, head neutral and engage core.

COACH TIP:

Encourage players to focus on the movement and not how far or high they are skipping.

5. UNPLANNED PLANT & CUT



WATCH VIDEO

PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- HOW LATE CAN THE PLAYER REACT TO THE SIGNAL?



FOCUS:

- > Head neutral and chest-up
- > Emphasise the plant on the stepping foot
- > Knee above toes

COACH TIP:

Encourage players to step forward rather than to the side

ACTIVATE KIDS U11-U12: PART B

UPPER BODY

HEAD/NECK, SHOULDERS, ARMS & UPPER CORE

 **DURATION 5 MINUTES**

**MOVEMENT CONTROL, BALANCE, FUNCTIONAL STRENGTH,
AND RANGE OF MOTION.**



ACTIVATE KIDS U11-U12 EXAMPLES & IDEAS

1. BEAR CRAWL TAG

 WATCH VIDEO



PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- HOW MANY TAGS CAN YOU GET WHILE STAYING IN A GOOD POSITION?

FOCUS:

- > Shoulders & hips level
- > Engage core
- > Head neutral.

COACH TIP:

- > Knees off the floor with a 90-degree bend
- > Get players to look through eyebrows and not lift their head.

2. PARTNER RESISTED ARM MOVEMENTS

 WATCH VIDEO



PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- CAN YOU BE MORE CREATIVE WITH DIFFERENT RESISTED ARM MOVEMENTS?

FOCUS:

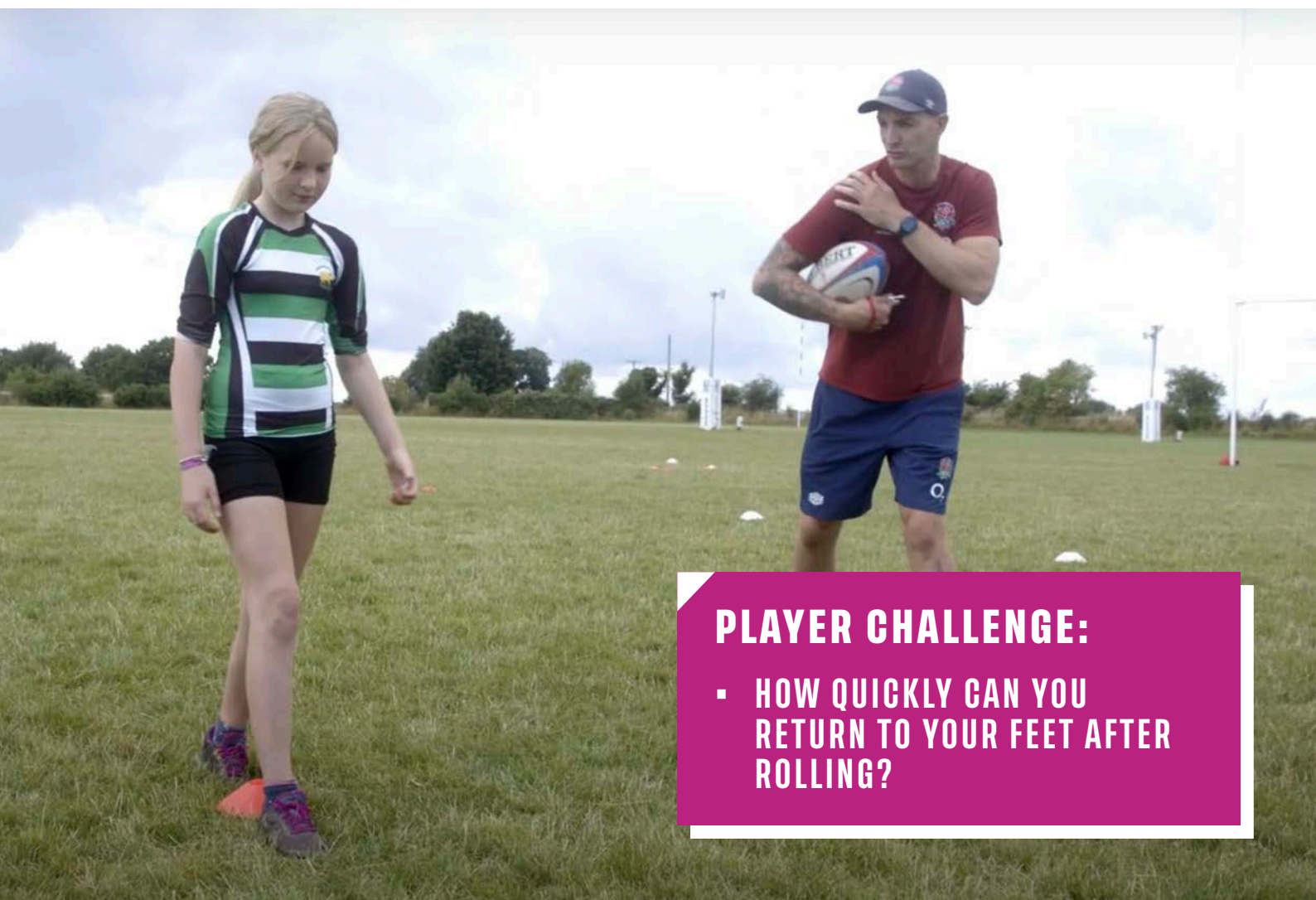
- > Head neutral looking forward
- > Chest-up and engage core
- > Resisted arm rotations: concentrate on trying to keep arms and shoulders in same position with resistance in front or behind from partner.

COACH TIP:

Encourage players to try and keep their arms as close to the starting position as possible

3. WALK & ROLL

 WATCH VIDEO



PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- HOW QUICKLY CAN YOU RETURN TO YOUR FEET AFTER ROLLING?

FOCUS:

- > Walk forward, then lean forward and tuck head and shoulder towards one side
- > Roll forward onto tucked shoulder.

COACH TIP:

- > Make sure players roll on their shoulder not their head
- > The lower players can get to the floor from standing the less impact it will have on the shoulder.

4. PRESS UP TO PLANK

 WATCH VIDEO

PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- CAN YOU KEEP A GOOD BODY POSITION WHEN MOVING THE BALL?
- HOW MANY TIMES CAN YOU MOVE THE BALL AROUND YOUR BODY/ THROUGH YOUR LEGS?



FOCUS:

- > Head neutral with shoulders, hips & knees In-line
- > Engage core.

COACH TIP:

- > Be creative, use different movement with body and ball
- > Focus on good form rather than ball

5. STATIC NECK CONTRACTIONS

 WATCH VIDEO

PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- CAN YOU KEEP YOUR HEAD NEUTRAL THROUGHOUT?



FOCUS:

- > Use hand to apply force in different direction, resist using neck contraction
- > Chest-up and engage core
- > Keep head neutral.

COACH TIP:

Player's head stays still and resists the force from the players hand.

ACTIVATE KIDS U11-U12: PART C

LOWER BODY

ANKLES, KNEES, LEGS, HIPS & LOWER CORE

⌚ **DURATION 5 MINUTES**

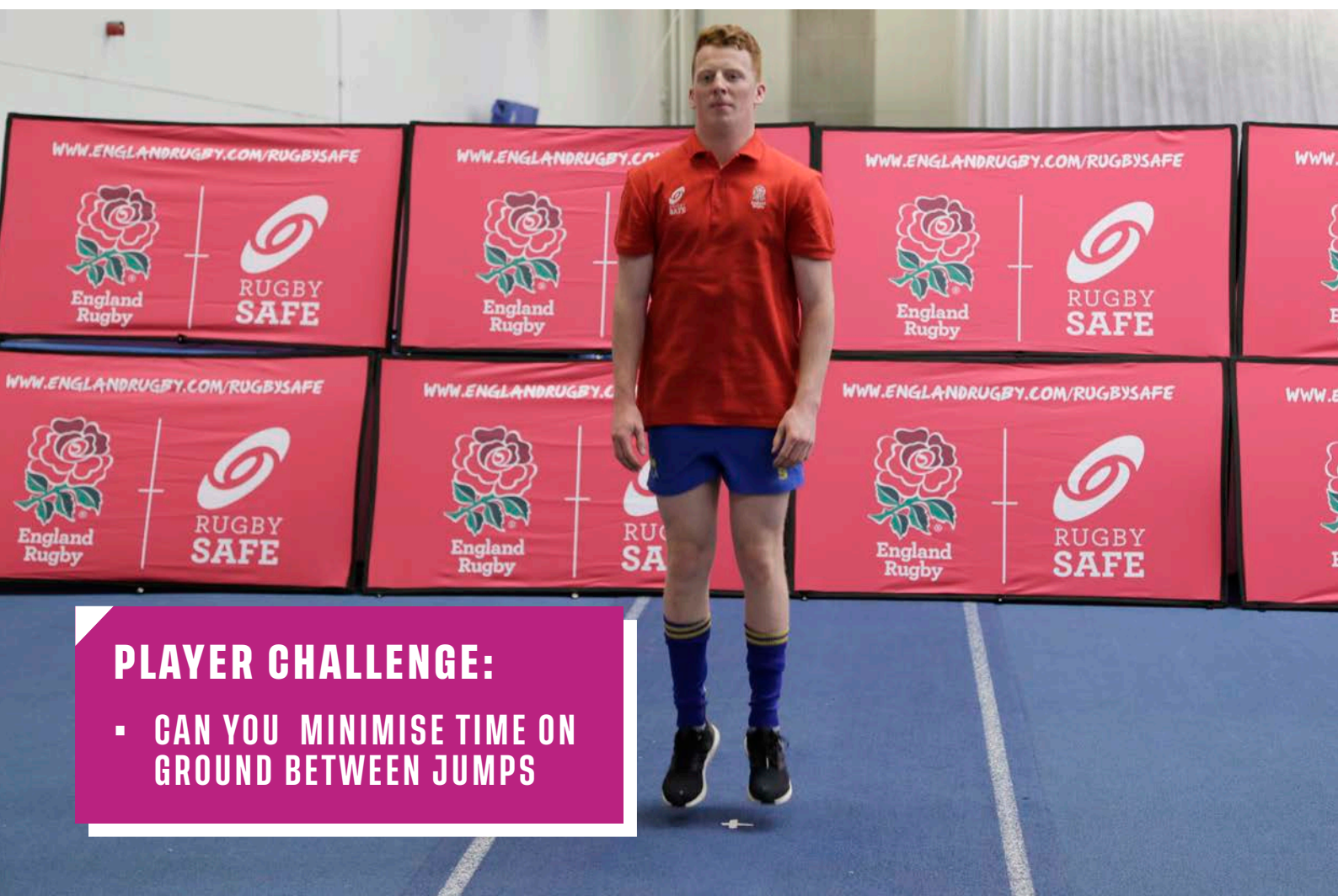
**MOVEMENT CONTROL, BALANCE, FUNCTIONAL STRENGTH
AND RANGE OF MOTION.**



ACTIVATE KIDS U11-U12 EXAMPLES & IDEAS

1. POGO JUMPS

 WATCH VIDEO



PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- CAN YOU MINIMISE TIME ON GROUND BETWEEN JUMPS

FOCUS:

- Feet shoulder-width apart
- Jump on the spot continuously, landing squarely on the feet with soft knees but minimal knee bend.
- Head neutral, chest up and engage core

COACH TIP:

Get players to focus on keeping legs slightly bent and jumping by extending through the ankles only

2. ZOMBIE SQUAT TAG



WATCH VIDEO



PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- CAN YOU SQUAT AT 90° WHILE KEEPING YOUR HEELS ON THE FLOOR AND KEEP YOUR BALANCE
- HOW MANY PEOPLE CAN YOU TAG?

FOCUS:

- > Evasive running and change of direction to avoid being tagged or when tagging
- > When squatting - bend at knees and hips, keep heels in contact with the ground
- > Keep chest-up.

COACH TIP:

- > Help players with squatting form - quality or speed.
- > Encourage the players to have feet shoulder width apart and not to roll knees in when squatting down.

3. FORWARD BOUNDS

 WATCH VIDEO



PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- CAN YOU KEEP YOUR HEAD UP AND LOOK FORWARD AT ALL TIMES WHEN PERFORMING THE MOVEMENT?
- HOW QUICKLY CAN YOU MOVE IN BETWEEN BOUNDS WHILE KEEPING BALANCE AND HOLDING THE LANDING?

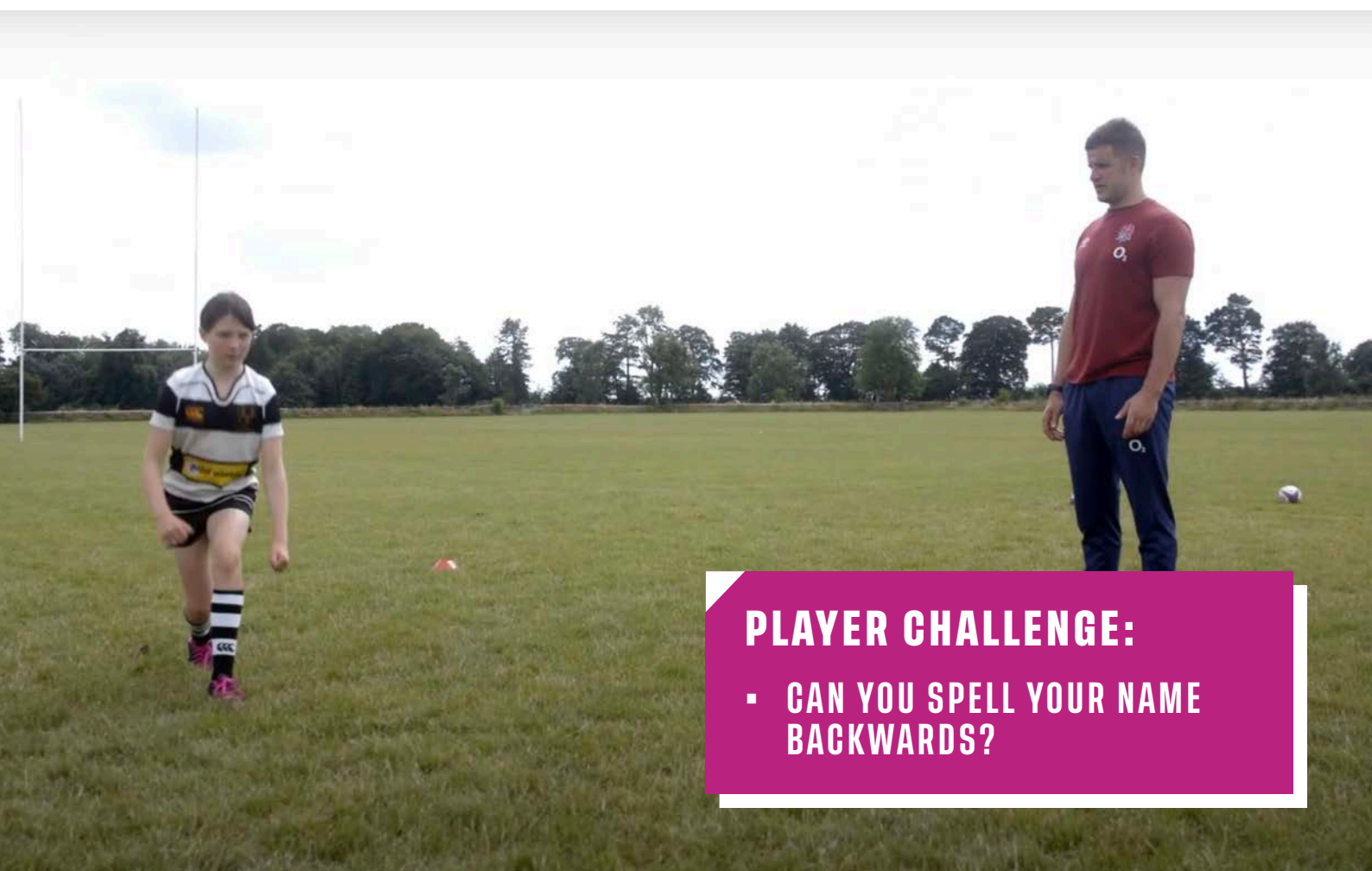
FOCUS:

- > Start with feet shoulder - width apart
- > Keep chest-up
- > Keep soft knees and knee above toes on landing.

COACH TIP:

- > It's not about how far or what height players jump but how the players stick and hold a good body position on landing
- > Get players to think about minimising time on the ground between bounds.

4. LUNGE & SPELL NAME



PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- CAN YOU SPELL YOUR NAME BACKWARDS?

FOCUS:

- > Lunge forward, backwards or laterally to spell name in capital letters
- > Keep head neutral looking forward with chest-up
- > Hip, knee & ankle in-line.

COACH TIP:

- > Encourage the players to be facing forward the whole time
- > Smaller quality lunges rather than longer larger ones.

5. PARTNER ASSISTED EXERCISES



WATCH VIDEO



PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- HOW LOW CAN YOU GO WHILST STILL BEING ABLE TO STAND UP?
- CAN YOU HOLD FOR 5 SECONDS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SQUAT AND STILL STAND?

FOCUS:

- Work with partner to balance, counter-balance and/or perform exercise with good form
- Chest up and engage core during balances
- Keep head neutral and looking forward where possible

COACH TIP:

- Get partners to support each other and correct each other's form.
- Toe to toe squat: Encourage players to lean back and squat through heels
- Back to back squat: Encourage players to lean fully on to each other.

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