

# NEW ZEALAND RUGBY SEVENS HANDBOOK

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Throughout our Rugby Development, New Zealand coaches have had to be innovative and constantly seek to find better ways of preparing teams in order to remain competitive. Hence, to stay at the cutting edge of quality performance our coaches must continually up-skill themselves.

The New Zealand Rugby Sevens handbook aims to provide coaches with a variety of tools to help them in their endeavours to become improved Sevens coaches.

Like all coaching, there is always more to learn but this document does provide a structured approach to the analysis of the game and content that will act as a starting point for you to develop game plans, patterns of play and tactics for your team.

It will investigate the coaching process and technical aspects of Sevens.

Congratulations on your decision to up-skill yourself by receiving this resource.

New Zealand Rugby values the contribution of coaches in developing our players, as if New Zealand are to remain top of the rugby world, coach education is the framework upon which we build the future.

Good luck in your coaching endeavours. I hope you enjoy the course and the information contained in this handbook.

**Peter Harold**  
New Zealand Rugby Education and Coaching Resource Manager

# SEVENS HISTORY TIMELINE

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- 1883 7's was born! Ned Haig and David Sorenson create the game of Seven-a-side rugby in Melrose, Scotland.
- 1921 First tournament was played outside of Scotland.
- 1926 Dr J.A. Russel Cargill sets up England's Major 7's tournament as a fundraiser for King Edward hospital. It raised 1,600 pounds.
- 1927 10,000 spectators attended the 2nd annual tournament.
- 1936 Middlesex 7's grows to include invitation teams to get top players from Wales, Scotland and England.
- 1973 1st Official sanctioned International tournament at Murrayfield, Scotland.
- 1976 Hong Kong 7's is launched.
- 1993 IRB 7's World Cup is launched.
- 1997 Women teams invited to compete in Hong Kong.
- 1998 1st Commonwealth Games, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- 1999 IRB 7's circuit launched.
- 2000 New Zealand claims first World Series.
- 2002 New Zealand take series with record 198 competition points.
- 2005 Orene Ai'i wins Sevens World Player of the Year award.
- 2006 New Zealand's dominance (with six straight series) broken with Fiji winning the series for the first time.
- 2009 IRB Women's 7's World Cup is launched, Australia win.
- 2009 Rugby reaccepted into the Olympic Games - Sevens only.
- 2010 New Zealand wins fourth straight Commonwealth Games Gold.
- 2011 IRB Women's 7's launched (Challenge Cup).
- 2011 Tenth European Sevens circuit renamed to 'Grand Prix Series'
- 2013 New Zealand wins inaugural Women's World Series.
- 2013 Gordon Tietjens made Knight Companion of the Order of Merit.
- 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games.
- 2016 Olympic Games.

# COACHING SEVEN-A-SIDE RUGBY

## INTRODUCTION

Speed, aerobic and anaerobic fitness are key components of the Sevens game.

We cannot all have the fittest, fastest or most skilled players in every tournament we play but this does not mean that we cannot be successful.

Being able to profile your team, and design game plans and tactics to suit your team gives you the best possible chance of maximizing the team's potential.

The material in this handbook and the workshop that accompanies it will assist you as a coach of Seven-a-side rugby to help you put together a comprehensive plan for your team.



## COACHING

Like coaching any sport or activity there are core components that need to be present if the coach is to be effective.

You need:

- To be organized through planning for on and off the field activities.
- To be connecting with your players through discussion, listening and understanding.
- To be an effective communicator with players, coaches and management
- To provide sound teaching practice through being well prepared, using shared ideas, setting specific goals, and producing both fun and discipline through your presentation.
- To ensure a good understanding of the ever-changing game through your own knowledge and research.
- To ensure specific conditioning for your players based on your game planning and selection.

## PRINCIPLES

The **Principles of Play** provide simple guidelines on which your team should base its play and also provides a checklist for coaches to analyse their team's performance. Coaching Sevens Rugby is simplified by understanding the principles on which the game is built.

In attack the principles of play are:

- Principle 1 - **Gain possession** of the ball;
- Principle 2 - use the ball to **go forward** to create space;
- Principle 3 - **Support** the ball-carrier;
- Principle 4 - maintain **continuity**;
- Principle 5 - exert pressure to **score** points.

On defence the principles of play are:

- Principle 1 - **Contest Possession**;
- Principle 2 - **go forward**;
- Principle 3 - with the **support** of teammates;
- Principle 4 - apply **pressure**;
- Principle 5 - regain **possession**;
- Principle 6 - **counter attack**;

If as coaches we strategize around each of the principles then we will ensure we have our whole game covered. Although there are many ways to achieve the principles we must remember that the principles cannot be moved or changed.

# ATTACK

## 1. GAINING POSSESSION

Gaining possession of the ball and retaining it via the set piece or restart ensures that the team has the greatest possible attack options available.

Possession is gained from the three set pieces of scrum, lineout and kick restarts. (These may be referred to as 'Identities'.)

### Scrum

There is an average of four scrums per game.

Square steady delivery from the scrum provides optimal ball for attack. Defensively at scrum the opposition should try to disrupt the quality of the attackers' ball.

### Lineout

There is an average of two lineouts per game.

At lineout time the aim is to deliver quality ball to initiate the attack. The defensive lineout aims to apply as much pressure as possible to disrupt the quality of the opposition ball.



## Kick Restarts

Kick restarts are the most important source of possession as on average, a try is scored every 74 seconds, which can require about 12 kick restarts per game. Restart patterns and appropriate skills need to be worked on both when kicking and chasing to retrieve and receive.

NOTE: Free kick and penalty restarts are a source of possession which does not occur under pressure from the opposition as the defenders must start 10 metres back. Although only a few are awarded during a game it is crucial that a plan is in place to utilize this 'free' ball.

## 2. GO FORWARD

Go forward with the ball to create pressure and space will ensure the opposition are on the back foot and will need to regroup.

Once possession has been gained the attack must negotiate their way across the advantage line. It may often be the case that teams use patterns that involve initially passing the ball a long way backwards to create the space to go forward, but the outcome must always be to go forward across the advantage line.

### Lateral Space

Space across the field will be created by the lateral positioning of team mates and the movement of the ball to a player in space who will ultimately penetrate.

Ideally, if the ball is in a congested area, it should be immediately moved laterally to space, and passing is best.

As defenders spread across the full width of the field to mark up to attacking team, space is created between each individual defender through which the attacker can penetrate.



### Example 1

When an attacker is able to isolate the defender (1 v 1), there is an opportunity to beat the defence through the space on the left or right of that defender with a support player ensuring they are bursting on to the ball.

### Example 2

An extra attacking player may enter the space between two attackers before the defence has been able to adjust. This can create uncertainty in the defenders and provides opportunities to penetrate.

### Example 3

Space can also be created by the ball-carrier running a variety of angles in an attempt to threaten the defensive line, with a support player receiving a pass or kick as they run into the space which has been created.

Remember 'Attack in 3's' (That is, set three man pods which allows the ball carrier to have support, either to build the phases and pass to support, or ensure that there are supporting players to blow over the ruck to maintain possession).

## Linear Space

Linear space is the space between the two teams. From scrums, lineouts, rucks and mauls it is the distance between the attack line and defence line.

It is manipulated by the attacking team's ability to exploit faults in the opposition's defence i.e. if the attack can exploit a loss in the alignment of the defence they will create space.

This is shaped most frequently by a defensive player moving ahead of team mates in the line or not staying up in the line and thus leaving a space. Attacking teams sometimes try to create extra space by moving away from the defence towards their own goal line. (But eventually they will have to go forward.)

The linear space between the teams can also be too great as it will provide the defence with time to regroup and set up the defensive line.

There is also space behind the defensive team and if the space is utilised by kicking into it, it can have an immediate effect if possession is regained.

Going forward with an organised attack pattern will enable you to support the collision zone and provide the necessary passing options. ('Attack in 3's'.)

## 3. SUPPORT

Support is a hugely important role in the game. To be effective the attacking players must work extremely hard "off the ball".

The attack is continued by supporting team mates who position themselves with depth and width in order to:

- provide options to the ball-carrier;
- communicate options;
- utilise space;
- provide continuity.

Although Sevens may look like a game that has very little structure due to the restricted numbers - it is important that team patterns of play are established to ensure support is present for off loads, rucks, and completion of line breaks.

Attack patterns are important to find space for penetrators and assist in setting up mismatches on the field. In Sevens there is so much more space with often six defending players covering a 70m wide field. Down the field there are usually only two lines of defenders to defend up to 100m of field.

When a ball-carrier attracts the defence it creates space elsewhere across the field that should then be used for the attack. The supporting players must be in this space and aware of the ball-carrier's options so they can be proactive in providing these options.

The attack alignment should be lateral and deep enough so that the attackers can react to the pass or the kick by the ball-carrier. Once the ball has been gathered the player can create more space with an immediate pass away from the congested area.

Players aligning in wide lanes across the field also assist support options as this enables each attacker to isolate a defender. Before they receive the ball they can use distractions to occupy a defender by changing running lines, feinting, and by communicating openly with team mates. Attackers can attempt to manipulate the defensive pattern by using these distractions.

Depending on the behaviour of the defence the support player may become the ball-carrier or continue to be a decoy.

As the ball-carrier, the player may have out manoeuvred the defence prior to receiving the ball, so that penetration can occur. If the defence continues to mark the support player, the player's role would be that of a decoy and the pass could be made to another support player further along the line.

Once a player's primary task as the ball-carrier has been completed, the player should assume a supporting role taking up a position in depth in their lane. This will keep the defence spread.





The exception may be a player who assists the ball-carrier retain the ball in contact and distribute to the players in space. It is important that the closest support player to the tackled player supports in the contact zone. If a player over commits and support is not immediate, the ball may be lost and the opposing team has space in which to attack.

An accurate profile of the strengths and weaknesses of your team should be taken into consideration when deciding on which attack patterns could be best implemented by your team. Another factor to be taken into consideration is the fact that Sevens is played in tournament format. Tactically you may need to modify patterns depending on the strengths and weaknesses of the variety of opposition you may encounter at a tournament although focusing on what you do best should be the priority.

## 4. MAINTAINING CONTINUITY

Maintaining continuity is imperative at the tackle/ruck point. It is necessary to engage the opposition with the assistance of your support, retain possession going forward, and then utilise the space that has been created generally either directly behind the tackle/ruck zone or by passing laterally.

The decisions made around ruck time in Sevens are similar to that of XVs. The functional roles are identical. The ball-carrier needs to look for space pre-contact and in contact make sure they have a secure placement of the ball. The ball carrier needs to attack space, drive through contact and attempt to draw in more than one defender.

Another decision that does become more prevalent in Sevens is the decision to pop the ball or push the ball back along the ground towards your own team. These decisions can be influenced by the support patterns you run as a team. Due to the lack of numbers on the field a narrowed gate becomes quite important.

The gate (where players must legally enter the breakdown) can be made narrow with the first player over the ball standing front and square, meaning opposition players run a higher risk of entering the ruck from the side.

The first arriving player needs to make several decisions. If there is a threat then clear it. If there is a threat but attack support is slow - bridge it. If there is no threat - pick up the ball and play it.

Work on recycling secondary possession by educating players on their roles. Use this decision making process to ensure clarity and continuity.

Both on attack and defence the objective is to win the battle of the advantage line.

Rucks can be valuable attacking tools in the sense that they create offside lines. Avoiding rucks means everything is general play and no offside lines are in play.

In some circumstances teams may try to avoid contact and avoid the ruck game. To do this, teams will often use a pattern involving a player positioned deep behind the ruck (in the 'pocket') to clear the pressure from a ruck.

As part of the attack players need to develop the ability to catch and pass. Width on the pass to both left and right, the ability to judge a bouncing ball, being able to keep the hips square while engaging the defence and still make the pass with speed, accuracy and a good follow through are all skills that can be developed with a good skills development plan.

Efficient gaining of quality ball and carrying it forward with support, thus maintaining continuity and possession should apply sufficient pressure to a defensive team enabling you to score points.

## 5. PRESSURE

Pressure occurs when the attacking team is able to retain possession going forward through effective support play and winning the contact points, until it scores.

Pressure can be exerted from anywhere on the field.

By exerting pressure on the defensive team through the above mentioned 'Principles of Play' a situation will often be created in which there are more attackers in a channel of linear space than defenders. When the ball is passed to an unmarked attacker the player penetrates and scores.

The same principles create situations which provide the ball carrier with plenty of space to attack a single defender which is often enough space for the attacker to penetrate using evasion skills.



# DEFENCE

## 1. CONTEST POSSESSION AT THE SET PIECE

The aim of the defensive team at scrum, lineout, kick off and tackle is to compete for the ball and turn it over, or at least reduce the quality of possession gained by the attacking side.

It is the quality of the possession that will initially determine the effectiveness of the attack.

Just as attack tactics and patterns are planned and practiced, the same applies in defence.

## 2. GO FORWARD

Going forward reduces the opposition's time and space and therefore the options available to them.

In defence the players must quickly extract themselves from the set piece to form a defensive structure that can push forward in a line and make a tackle on the attacking team's side of the advantage line. If a defence is able to achieve this they will create a situation where the attacking team is forced to retreat and realign.

## 3. SUPPORT

In any given situation every player must understand and communicate their role within the team's defensive pattern.

The defence must operate as a unit by moving forward together to deny time and space for the attackers.

Defensively it is vitally important to drill various patterns that suit your team. Again you can vary these tactically during a tournament depending on your opposition.

It is important to be able to form a defensive line from a set piece very quickly. Simple patterns and immediate identification of roles within the pattern need to be established.

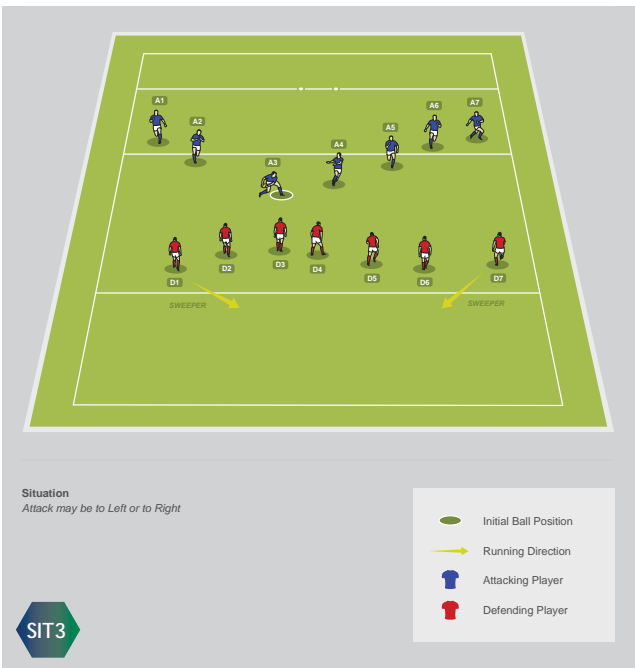
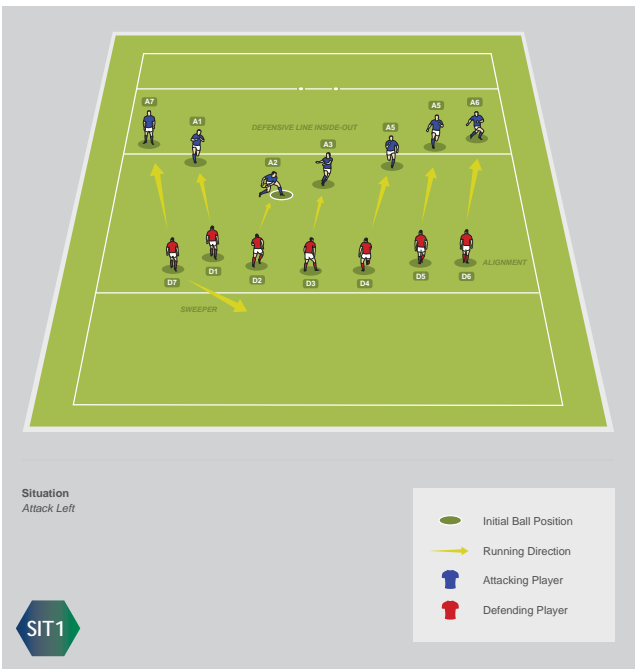
A common defensive pattern would be to use six players forward with one player dropping back to act as a fullback or sweeper. Variations of alignments on this formation can be determined by the profile of your players and also tactical variations depending on the given strengths and weaknesses of each opposition.

As a basic philosophy players should move up and across together so that the ball-carrier can be tackled from the inside.

If the defender is outside the ball-carrier, the player will have to move in to make the tackle and should endeavour to tackle the player and the ball to halt the attack. While this may be effective, better players will pass to a support player running to penetrate through the space which the defender has moved away from.

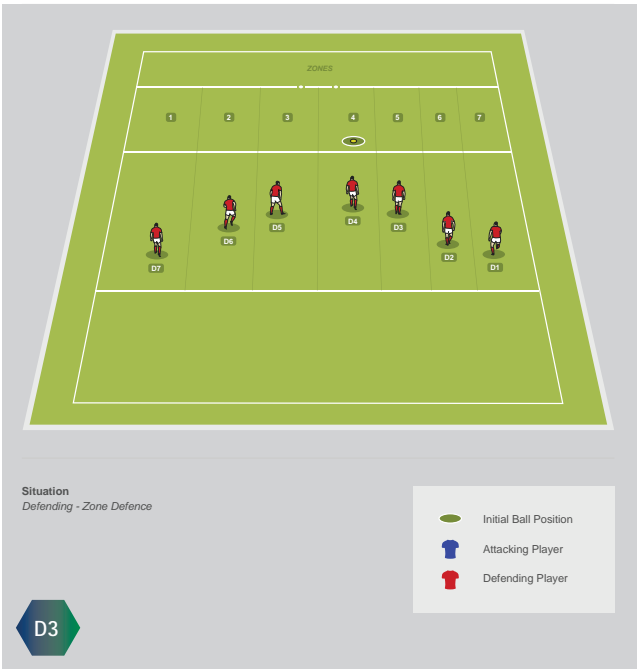
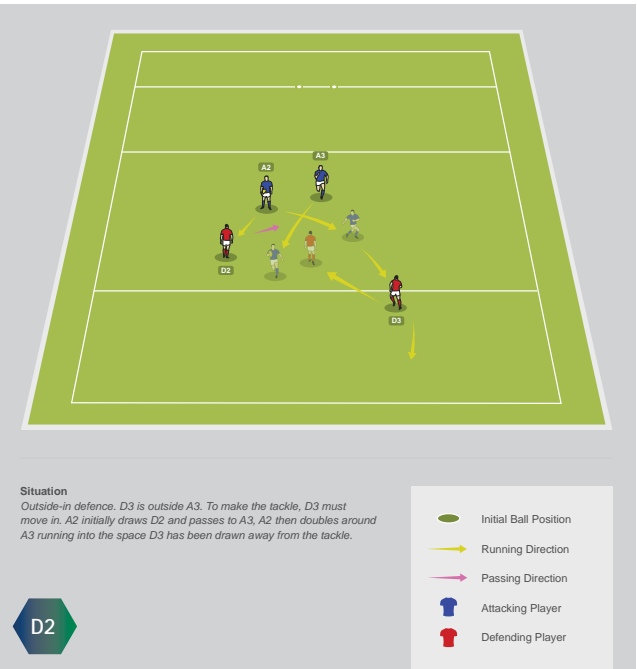
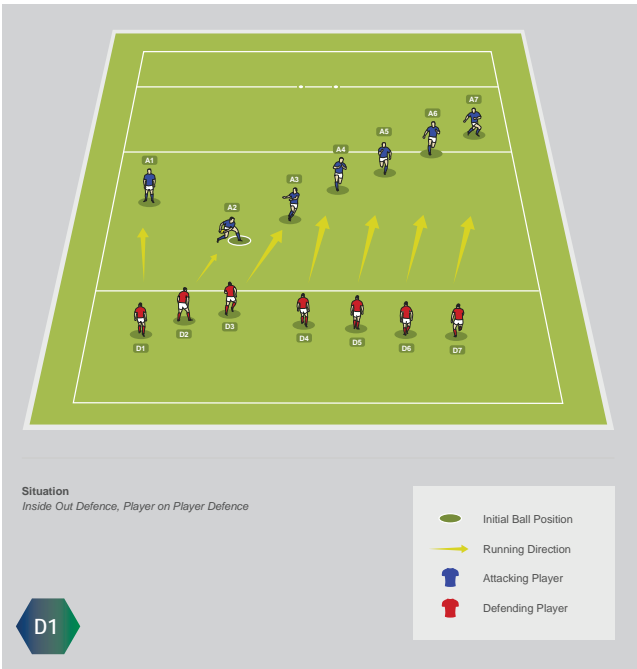
The 'outside-in' defensive pattern may be useful in open field situations but will require the remaining six defenders to know their roles and act as one to fill in any holes created before they are attacked.

The basic method of defending is, therefore, 'inside-out', although defences may develop variations to this. \*See situation 1, 2 and 3.



To play as a unit the defence must play to a pattern. The two main patterns are:

1. where each defender is designated an attacker by numbering along the backline to select their opponent i.e. player-on-player defence. (See diagram D1, defending inside-out and diagram D2, defending outside-in.)
2. by defending a zone (D3) and being responsible for a ball carrier in that zone. A major advantage of zone defence is that it prevents the defenders from bunching when the attack is lateral. i.e.: across the field, as they are defending a space not a player.



## 4. APPLY PRESSURE

Defensive pressure occurs when a team goes forward with support making effective tackles and competing for the ball or tackling the player and the ball, to stop the attackers' continuity.

If support is not available and the pass is not made, the ball will become contestable as it will have to be played immediately the tackle has been completed.

Therefore, it may be better defence to use a smother tackle to prevent the pass being made in the first place and create a contest by sending in a second defender so that possession may be regained. The philosophy for the defenders is to keep the ball carrier off the ground, form a maul and rely on the "use it or lose it" Law to obtain the feed at the ensuing scrum.

Sound judgment is necessary as if a team commits too many to a counter ruck and does not win a turnover they will leave a lot of space for the attacking team. If they have an initial counter ruck and then determine they will not get the desired turnover, they must be prepared to reform the defensive line very quickly.

Defensively it is important to apply pressure by tackling to prevent a territory gain and to slow the ball down.

The art of tackling in wide open spaces and then attacking the tackle point are crucial skills to have players master in the game of Sevens. Tackling and then immediately attacking the ball applies pressure and in a best case scenario for the defenders affects the speed of the recycle for the attacking team. Unstable attacking rucks can be turned over and like all other aspects of the game, accurate decision making is vital. The tackler and one other should carry out these roles.

To ensure the off load in the tackle is not effective the defender from the inside must fill in the space inside the tackler and the defender on the outside of the tackler must have sufficient depth to cover a support runner on the outside shoulder of the attacker by moving in for the tackle. If a normal pass is made the outside defender is in a position to tackle from 'inside-out'. (Defend in 3's)

Defence systems in Sevens have evolved. Probably the most common form of defence is a 6 man 'jockey' system with one player hanging back in the fullback or sweeper role.



A '**JOCKEY**' defensive system is not generally recognised as an offensive tackling approach, different from the rush or a central umbrella style.

The main purpose of the jockey system is to ensure the width of the field is covered, but also is a style that allows secondary or cover tacklers opportunity to get into position if the attacking team successfully makes inroads.

Essentially players move to the side along where the ball is being shifted to (and if anything track slightly backwards and not committing to a tackle). Remember this is Sevens so wide and probing attack is more common.

The defender widest out (moving out as the possession is shifted) is essentially the jockey, and the other defenders are the 'riders' following, allowing the line to cover all possession.

Defenders who no longer need to be the riders as the point of attack shifts can then commit to cover duties.

#### PROS

- Covers the width of the field
- Very effective against teams who play an open game
- Effective when the defence is outnumbered
- Almost automatically sets up secondary defence
- Relatively effectively against a kicking game

#### CONS

- Must be coordinated as like with a 'rush' defence one player out of sync presents big gaps
- Can be prone to switch plays, such as cutting back or an inside pass
- Offence is given a bit more time due to the focus on spreading the defence wide and not pushing forward

The '**UMBRELLA**' system is a tackling template that can be applied with two major variations, technical in application and simple in difference.

A forward umbrella system is where your team's position (i.e. going forward) is equal to the arch of an umbrella, coming up hard in the middle and hanging back slightly on the outsides.

This system allows the forwards to create the top arch of the umbrella, and in principle they will shut down the attack before it moves wide - but if it does, the fact that the backs create the outside edges of the umbrella (so then hang back slightly) gives them flexibility to act as cover defence.

The backward umbrella defensive screen isn't favoured in the modern game but does have its advantages; essentially the middle section (or forwards) does not come forward hard, almost allowing the attack to begin the first phase.

However the outside edges of the umbrella come up hard, limited an attacking team's ability to shift position wide. This defensive approach is similar to a pincer movement, where the attack comes up the middle and the defence wraps them up like, well, a pincer!

#### PROS

- Allows variations which can work against running or kicking games
- If operated (forward and back umbrellas) in the same match, it creates massive uncertainty for the offence
- Is a system that allows an effective separation in defensive orientation for the pack and the backline
- Causes uncertainty, especially the backward system, as defenders sometimes are wary of space that later closes

#### CONS

- Has so many variations sometimes lacks the killer singular approach of the best defences
- Is a precise system that requires careful coordination between players
- Is not a defensive screen that can quickly snap into place after loose play

When a **RUSH DEFENCE** is executed to perfection with the flood of players moving forward at extreme speed it can be an awesome sight, especially for attacking teams.

However for all of the system's potency, there are many effective ways to counter such an approach, while lack of perfect execution with a rush defence will, unlike any other tackling wall, leave plenty of holes for an offensive team.

Quite simply the rush defence moves so fast that the line of advantage essentially ceases to exist.

A rush defence must move forward as one, for the speed of the approaching line is such that any missing players create dramatic gaps.

#### PROS

- Intimidates the option takers of opposition attack.
- Causes the offence to second guess itself or take hurried options.
- If executed properly will shut down most running offences.
- Is a motivational system, watching your fellow players make rush tackles gets the blood pumping.

#### CONS

- It takes just one player to make the entire system redundant - if they move up too fast or not fast enough.
- If the first up rush is ineffectual, the attacking team is generally through the defensive line.
- Can be prone to a smart kicking game, especially chips and grubbers.

The spacing and the connection between players in the defensive line is the key to executing a 'connected and aligned' defensive pattern.

Six players are effectively covering 70m of open space so gaps and defensive misreads can allow a strong attacking team to penetrate at will.

Defensively in Sevens a strong tactic is to shepherd (or shift) a team to the side of the field - this allows you to effectively trap them and go in for the tackle. Picture this play as being similar to a sheepdog pushing his sheep into one corner.

This takes timing and experience as you do not want to commit if the player can still get the ball out - for otherwise your defence has also been shifted to one side of the field and there is a great deal of space available for the attacking team to take advantage of.

This is often what causes teams to attack certain channels such as the blind side.

Once an attacking player is in a position where a tackle can be made then it must occur without relying on a support tackler.

One on one tackling is a key competency. Once the tackle has been made then the defensive support can make decisions on attacking the ball or resetting the line.

## 5. REGAIN POSSESSION

Contesting possession and causing poor quality ball for the attacking team from set piece gives the defensive line time to go forward.

Players in support when pressure is applied and tackles affected provide the opportunity to regain possession and turn defence into counter attack situations.

Regain possession via:

- making effective tackles, attacking the ball and turning the ball over
- re-gathering the loose ball
- tying up the ball when it is off the ground
- recovering the ball after it has been kicked
- commitment to tracking the ball at all times

Re-gathering the loose ball occurs when the ball is placed after a tackle or is hit loose in a tackle and when errors occur in passing and receiving a pass, usually because of defensive pressure. In Sevens, offside Laws are far less effective because so much of the play is general play which allows for defensive pressure.

General play is play not initially based on a source of possession from which offside lines exist for the defending team. The latter are the scrum, ruck and maul in which an offside line exists through the hindmost foot of players in the formation. Players who are not involved in the contest for possession are offside if they are in front of this line before the ball leaves the formation.

Much the same applies to lineouts; however, from lineouts the line is 10 metres from the centre line down the middle of the lineout. Once the ball leaves the lineout there are no offside lines for the defence.

Consequently the defending team may position anywhere until the tackle zone is formed, after which the restriction once again applies.



The Law preventing a defender from entering play from their opponents' side of the ball will have important implications for the attacking team (see maintaining a narrow gate above). The offside law should be studied in detail to get the best from your coaching.

Restrictions exist for attacking players who may not enter play from a position ahead of the player in their team who has last played the ball.

For the defence, play can only be entered into from the defending team's side of the ball.

However, when a tackle is made a defending player who was part of the tackle can attempt to recover the ball from a position in front of the ball-carrier.



Retreating defenders will not be able to enter play without first passing the line of the ball within close proximity of the tackle. This means that when a tackle is made and the ball is rolled or placed towards the tackled player's team mates, the retreating defender cannot recover the ball if it is within one metre of the tackle.

In Sevens, players must retain possession at all costs even if this means initially conceding territory.

To prevent unnecessary turnovers the ball should not be kicked out of play unless the tactics call for it.

Kicking doesn't have the same importance in Sevens, but it is still a core rugby skill, and it will inhibit your team's tactical portfolio if certain situations (such as rain or a slippery ball) call for some kicking in general play.

Bad kicks in XV's might be recoverable, in Sevens a poor kick is a crisis so remember the fundamentals including communicating to team-mates and ensure chasers are ready if the ball is kicked.

Contact should be avoided as much as possible, reducing the likelihood of losing the ball.

This will lessen the opportunities for the defence to regain possession.

## 6. COUNTER ATTACK

When possession is regained then a counter attack policy is important. This part of the game creates instability for the attacking team as it is suddenly required to transition to defence. An initial strike from a turnover can catch the opposition off-guard.

The opportunity to counterattack occurs immediately after possession is regained through a recovered kicked ball; the attackers dropping the ball; the ball being turned over in contact; or a pass being intercepted.

The first response from turnover ball is to get the ball in to space and go forward as quickly as possible.

If there are no passing and running options available the ball-carrier can create space by seeking close quarter support and forming a ruck or maul from which play can develop. The important aspect is to keep the ball once it has been recovered.

# 7's Personality

Within each of the principles of the game rugby has certain components that are termed identities of the game. The Identities of the Game are the unit and mini-unit aspects of play that provide rugby with its unique character.

7's has its own personality in the fact that although the identities have the same name as in XV's and the basic concepts and skills are similar, there are obviously a lot of different requirements at unit, mini unit and individual roles.

In this section we will look at each identity and the functional roles (what is required from the player in a particular position) as well as the key factors around each players role.



# Starter Plays

## SCRUM

### Objectives

To restart play following a stoppage, penalty or lost ball

Attack - to gain quality possession to launch an attack

Defence - to contest possession so that the attack does not gain quality ball.

### Aim

To deliver the ball to the halfback from a stable platform so that the attacking team has the greatest range of attacking options available.

### Introduction

- The scrum is a restart that binds three players in a small area, allowing greater space on the field for the other team members to launch an attack.
- The 5 metre offside line at the scrum provides extra space and time in which to mount an attack.
- This extra space should create forward momentum for the backs which leads to faster and cleaner post-tackle ball and ruck possession.
- The defensive team should put the opposition attacking backs on their heels with strong scrummaging and defence and so frustrate their ability to use a multi-pass attack. The attack will then become more predictable and easier to defend.
- A strong scrum will create confidence in the whole team.

### Principles - Set Up

- Three players form up as a front row.
- Follow the ref's calls to 'crouch - bind - set'. Maintain stability with feet shoulder width apart, shoulders staying square against the opponent, outside arms binding on the opponent, bent knees ready to drive forward, squeezing the upper body in to strong steady position and maintaining the pressure. (Strong arm bind, pushing chest through, knees bent at 120 degrees)
- On contact maintain the pressure as the ball is rolled in by the halfback. The hooker (middle player) will then strike with their right foot sweeping across the ball while maintaining stability on their left foot. The delivery of the ball should be part of the one consecutive dynamic movement,

### Tighthead Prop (Right hand side)

The role is to keep the scrum steady by maintaining a square position with their feet and shoulders. It is very easy in Sevens to turn a scrum around the axis (the TH prop) to force a turn over. The role of the tighthead is to depower the opposition loose head to prevent them from assisting in turning the scrum around or pushing straight through. They will have to work hard by driving their right shoulder forward.

### Hooker

To strike for the ball (channel ball/walk) Often a hooker can gain more power to walk over the ball by binding over the props. Defensively it is often a good tactic to bind underneath the props to enable a quick exit from the scrum in order to be available to defend.

## Loosehead prop (Left hand side)

On attack they must keep their body shape square to counter balance the scrum on the axis and ensure a clean delivery of the ball to the halfback.

On defence it is the loosehead who can cause a lot of disruption for opposition scrums by driving forward and inwards to destabilize the opposition tight head.

More often than not a front row in sevens consists of players who would not normally find themselves in a front row. Therefore the coaching of sound technique and excellent body position is important for safety.

Although there are not as many scrums in sevens they are can be proportionately far more crucial in the sevens game than in the XV's.

In 14 minutes of abbreviated rugby, possession is a key component of the game. A scrum is an opportunity both on attack and defence to gain the valuable possession.

## Functional Roles

1. Hooker
2. Props
3. Halfback

### 1. Hooker

#### Key Factors

1. Coordinate assembly.
2. Bind under or over props. (easier to release if binding under/more power if binding over)
3. Eyes open and face up.
4. Chin off chest.
5. Hips below shoulders.
6. Spine in line.
7. Sight target.
8. Crouch - Bind - Set.
9. Hook ball

#### Coaching Points

- The hooker must take the responsibility for the assembly of the scrum.
- Bind firmly at the far armpits over the props' shoulders or under shoulders. Keep shoulders square with props.
- Players may choose the option of binding first and crouching, or crouching first then binding.
- Coordination with the deliverer will allow the ball to be hooked then channeled between the legs of the loosehead.
- Drive forward into engagement from the BIND position on the referee's call (same as props).
- Few defensive hookers contest possession; common practice is to channel their strength into pushing to slow down the speed of the hook

## 2. Props

### Key Factors

1. Weight on balls of feet and heels on the ground.
2. Feet shoulder - width apart.
3. Bind with hooker; shoulders square.
4. Eyes open and face up.
5. Chin off chest.
6. Hips below shoulders.
7. Spine in line.
8. Crouch - Bind - Set.

### Coaching Points

- Before the two front rows come together they must be standing not more than an arm's length apart.
- Props bind with the hooker anywhere between armpit and hip.
- Position correctly on referee's call. "Crouch"
- Sink down into a crouch position, face in neutral position, eyes open, looking forward
- The front rows must interlock (ear to ear) so that no player's head is next to the head of a team-mate. Crouched and bound.
- Feet, hips and shoulders are all square.
- Bend at the hips and knees.
- Shoulders above hips at all time.
- Back straight - spine in line.
- Weight off the heels and on balls of feet.
- Referee will call "BIND"
- Using their outside arm each prop must bind.
- A loose head prop must bind on the opposing tight head prop by placing the left arm inside the right arm of the tight head and gripping the tight head prop's jersey on the back or side.
- A tight head prop must bind on the opposing loose head prop by placing the right arm outside the left upper arm of the opposing loose head prop and gripping the loose head prop's jersey with the right hand only on the back or side.
- Following a pause the referee will then call "set" when the front rows are ready.
- The front rows may then engage. (The "set" call is not a command but an indication that the front rows may come together when ready.)
- Transfer scrum's weight to the opposition by maintaining body position with a straight back, face in neutral position, shoulders above the level of the hips forward of the knees.
- Maintain pressure until the ball is out by sinking and pushing forward by extending knees and taking small steps to maintain balance and apply pressure until ball is delivered.

### 3. Halfback

#### Key Factors

1. Be ready early.
2. Coordinate the put-in and the weight application.
3. Choose best options for ball distribution.

#### Coaching Points

- By being ready prior to the scrum engaging there is no delay in putting the ball in. This will reduce the risk of the front rows collapsing or the scrum being destabilised.
- Must co-ordinate put in with hooker. (Verbal or physical indicator) This is essential for the pressure-feed-strike phases to be coordinated.
- Once the ball is channeled through the scrum, a decision will be made as to what option will be used to clear the ball.

#### General Coaching Points

- Safety is paramount. The most effective pushing position is the safest.
- All members of the scrum are pushers.
- Scrum first, as a basic philosophy.
- General awareness, understanding the post-scrum options and knowing where to go are all important.



Situation  
Positioning during Scrums

- Initial Ball Position
- Attacking Player
- Defending Player

SCR1



Situation  
Positioning after Scrums

- Initial Ball Position
- Attacking Player
- Defending Player

SCR2

# LINEOUT

## Objectives

To restart play following the ball having gone into touch.

Attack - to gain quality possession to launch an attack

Defence - to apply pressure to the quality of possession the opposition receives.

## Aim

To obtain controlled possession of the ball so that the team has the greatest range of options with which to go forward.

## Introduction

Like the scrum, the lineout groups 2-3 numbers of players from each team in a small area. In contrast to the scrum, the lineout forms only between 5- and 15-metre lines, thus allowing full width of the field for teams to attack. The opposing backlines must be 20m apart until the lineout finishes which gives time and space for attacking options.

## Principles

- Assemble to create a tactical advantage. 2 + halfback entering, or 3 with space for movement.
- Call a jumping option that will ensure that the possession is gained.
- Manoeuvre to create space for the catcher. May require decoys.
- Throw accurately to the space
- Move quickly into the space to jump for the ball
- Support the jumper so the player is stable at a maximum height.
- Deliver the ball so that the best option can be used.

## Functional Roles

1. Thrower
2. Jumpers/Catchers
3. Lifters
4. Link Player



## 1. Thrower

### Key Factors

1. Understand options.
2. Know the call.
3. Throw accurately.
4. Support as required.

### Coaching Points

- The skill of throwing, while unique to each individual, should demonstrate the following key factors:
  1. Fingers of right hand spread across the back half of the ball with the thumb on or near the point. This hand provides the power. The left hand should be spread across the front half and used to provide direction.
  2. Ball held directly above the head with elbows in.
  3. Push elbows forward and propel from the wrists and forearms.
  4. Follow-through with both hands pointing to the target.
- It is important that throwers understand likely options at various field positions.
- Know the call - both the position of the jumper and the type of jump. Communication between thrower and jumper can be verbal or non-verbal.
- Throw using the type of throw required by the jumper.
- Most jumpers have a minimum of two throws (i.e. front/flat and back/lob).
- Once the ball is thrown in, the thrower will mostly take up the position of distributor/link player.





## 2. Jumper/Catcher

### Key Factors

1. Understand options.
2. Drive upward using legs and arms.
3. Eyes on ball.
4. Soft hands.
5. Controlled delivery / drive.

### Coaching Points

- Create space by out-maneuvering opponents before the throw is made. By moving back, the opposition is drawn back, creating space in front; by moving forward, space is created behind.
- Move into the space on the throw so that the jump is vertical.
- Adjust arm position to prevent opponents blocking arm movement. Keep arms in close and drive them upwards.
- The two-foot take-off is ideal for timing, i.e. one foot forwards, stop, together, then explode upwards from a 45 degree knee bend
- Catch with soft hands so the ball is not tapped in an uncontrolled way. The ball can be released at the top of the jump or after coming back to the ground. It may also be driven.

At the top of the jump the catcher should remain strong by pointing their toes; squeezing their stomach muscles, and biting down on their mouthguard.

- Confidence in support players is critical to allow jumper to concentrate only on catching the ball.
- The ball that is caught in two hands should be moved immediately away from the centre line and opponents by pivoting to face the halfback - the jumper is reliant on supporters to assist with this by blocking close on each side of them in a strong position.



### 3. Lifters

#### Key Factors

1. Understand options.
2. Coordinate the jump.
3. Create space when lifting
4. Stay strong.
5. Step inwards.
6. Feet shoulder-width apart.
7. Drive upwards.
8. Lock elbows with arms at full stretch.
9. Control the descent.

#### Coaching Points

- Lifters must create stability and strength around the jumper by stepping in close and sealing him off from the opposition. Lifters must avoid stepping in front of the jumper as this will be deemed obstruction.
- Take the cue off jumper as to when support is required and applied.
- Once the jump commences, both lifters need to step towards the jumper with a 45 degree knee bend and grip on to the shorts (back lift) and not below the thighs (front lift). The back lifter will rotate their fists inwards; the front lifter will squeeze their arms inwards and they will then drive upwards, using the arms and legs.
- When the lifters are supporting the jumper through the jump phase, it is important that they stabilise the jumper by locking their elbows with the arms held at full stretch. Feet shoulder-width apart.
- The jumper should be held in position until the catch is made.
- Support of the jumper through the descent phase is important whether the ball has been caught or not.

### 4. Link Player

#### Key Factors

1. Understand.
2. Communicate.
3. Complete the task.

#### Coaching Points

- Know the role requirements and preferred attacking option.
- Be alert to option changes resulting from the actions of the opposition.
- Coordinate the delivery of the ball.
- Decide on the best option, communicate and carry it out.

#### General Coaching Points

- Be creative, i.e. vary roles, vary options, and use deceptions.
- Every player in lineout must understand options and carry out roles as communicated.

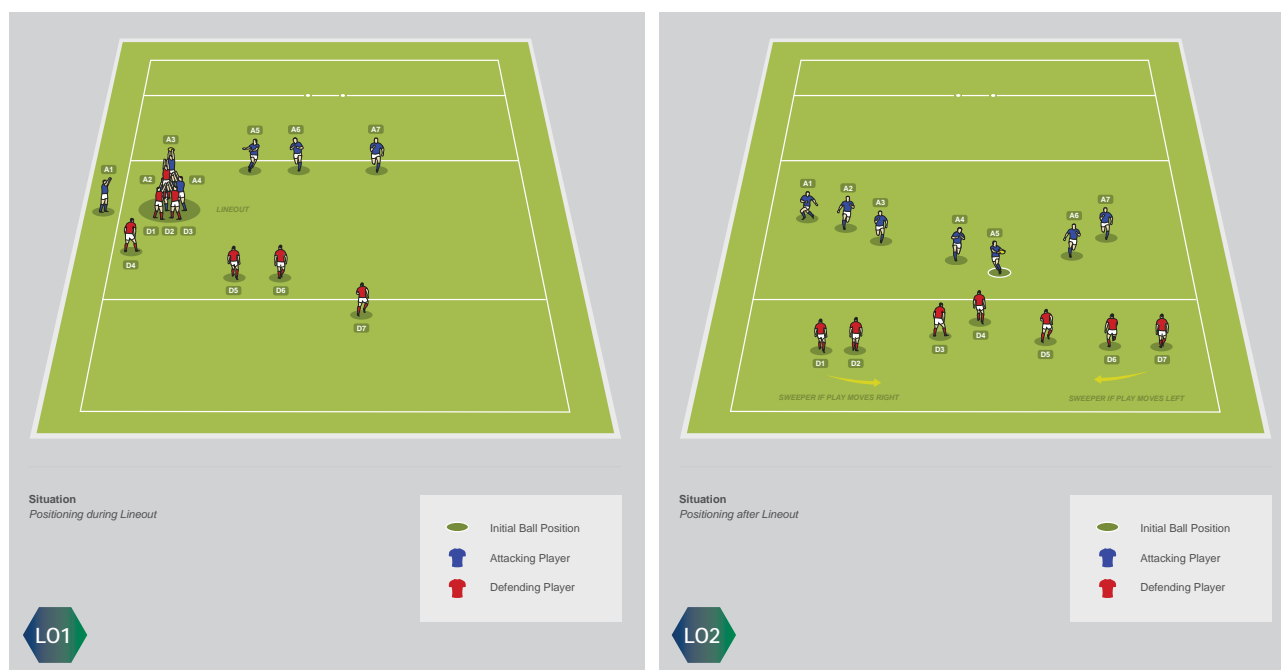
## Overview

You can be creative in this area of the game. You may choose, depending on the team profile, to find space on the ground without using lifters. A one man lift may be an option (safety is paramount for the lifter must use a forward or back angle to compensate for lack of a second body).

Within the laws of the game the throwing team can have as many players in the lineout as they please as long as they do not go outside the 15m mark and that they have a halfback in position.

The rules state you cannot walk into a lineout to be lifted or become the lifter until after the ball has left the throwers hand. This is often difficult to time and at various levels of the game referees interpretation can come into play here.

Defensively it can be disadvantageous to compete as players in the air as it means no one is on the ground to defend space. Profiling your players and what you require in this area of the game can be very valuable. Again as in scrums the ability to win your own ball from the set piece is proportionately a lot more important in the sevens game than the XV's.



## KICK-OFF

### Objectives

Attack - to regain the ball in the air or to place the opposition under pressure as deep as possible in their half.

Defence - to gain possession of the ball and keep it.

## Kick-Off (Kick Starts and Restarts) - Kicking Team

### Objective

To regain possession using a short, high kick, or gain territory by kicking off accurately and long and applying pressure.

### Aim

The aim is to chase hard and to apply pressure, making contact with the opposition as soon as possible. By tackling and creating contestable possession, the eventual aim is to regain the ball.

### Principles

- Follow the kick to a pattern that reduces the opposition's options.
- Compete for the ball in an organized way to regain possession.
- Use the regained possession to apply the principles of attack.

#### Key Factors

1. Communicate intentions of kick.
2. Accurate kick.
3. Apply pressure.
4. Contest possession.
5. Regain possession

#### Coaching Points

A range of starts and restarts may be used e.g.:

1. Kick to an opposing player who is behind the majority of their teammates, preferably with them receiving the ball just outside the 22m zone. The ball cannot be kicked directly into touch on the full or marked. Fast chasing players should tackle or hold the catcher, forcing the opposition to retreat before they can go forward and placing the receiving team under pressure.
2. A deep kick to the corners with a fast chaser applying pressure and a fast chasing line of 2 or 3 in support can force a hurried return kick.
3. Varied shorter distance kicks to individual catchers or into a space which allows a chaser to arrive from different angles provides an opportunity to regain possession directly.
  - Players from the kicking team should angle their run away from the touchline so that they are running in-field towards the ball. This enables them to see the ball clearly throughout its flight.
  - As they leap to catch the ball they will be able to turn in the air and back onto opponents.

#### Common Errors

- Not communicating the option.
- Poor kicking technique resulting in poor execution. Must be high or long.
- Chasers taking eyes off ball and not attacking the ball from an angle and in the air.
- Lack of effort by chasers and support players.
- Not chasing long kicks in a short line to shut down counterattack options.

## Receiving Team - Jumpers/Catchers

### Objective

To secure and retain possession from the kick-off.

#### Key Factors

1. Awareness of options.
2. Call for ball.
3. Catcher works with support players.
4. Move towards the ball.
5. Contest the ball. Keep eyes on ball.
6. Catch ball above eye level.
7. Place body between ball and opposition.
8. Get side-on to opponent.
9. Catch or deflect ball to teammates

#### Coaching Points

- The initial positioning of the catchers is very important. Four players should be spread across an imaginary line 15 metres from the halfway with the remaining three players spread across a line about 15 metres from their try line.
- Catchers must be able to move towards the ball. Use all players to cover all kick-off options.
- The lifters and catchers must work in unison with both roles interchangeable.  
Catchers must be comfortable being lifted by one player; or in attacking the ball in the air without any assistance.  
NB: Forward-moving players should have priority in contesting the ball.
- Communication: a clear concise call is vital.
- Catching the ball is always preferable to deflecting it.

#### Common Errors

- Calling from poor position or not calling.
- Not moving forward to ball or taking the ball flat-footed.
- Taking eye off ball.
- Taking ball below eye level
- Slapping at ball; knocking on.



## Receiving Team - Lifters

### Objective

To assist the jumper/catcher to contest possession.

#### Key Factors

1. Communicate effectively with jumper.
2. Watch jumper not ball.
3. Support jumper in air.
4. Stay in contact with jumper.
5. Support with hands.
6. Support jumper back to ground.
7. Bind onto and in front of jumper.

#### Coaching Points

- Pair up with a jumper, assisting that player into the air to catch the ball and providing stability for that player while in the air.
- Communication between jumper and lifter is vital.
- The lifter will need to move quickly in to the support role as the kick is in the air.
- After supporting the player and the catch is made, the lifter becomes a supporter in order to go forward.
- Even if ball is to be delivered immediately, lifters should protect the jumper/catcher and move forward.

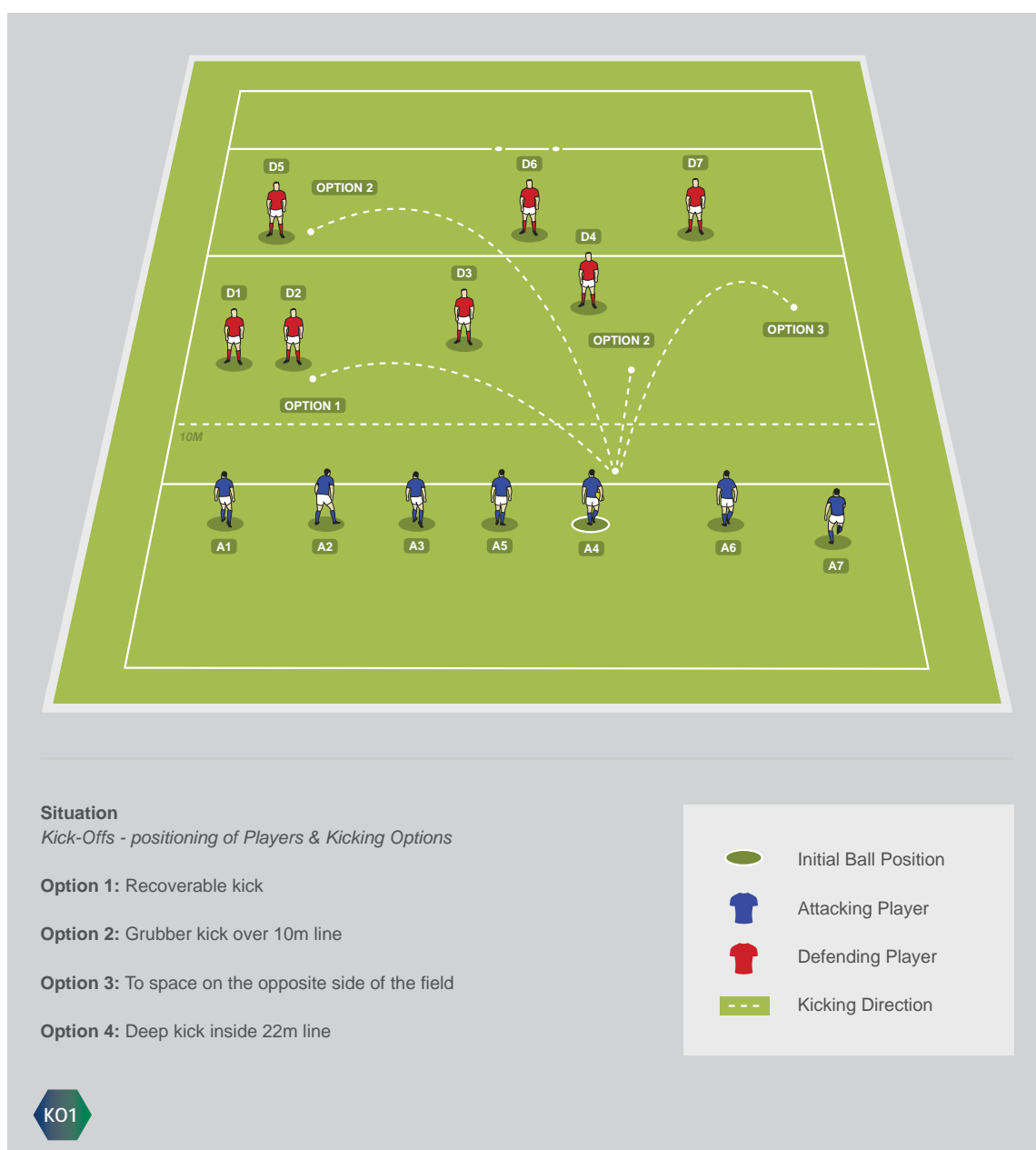
#### Common Errors

- Not communicating with jumper.
- Being separated from jumper.
- Not supporting jumper back to ground.
- Not initiating drive once ball is caught.



## Additional Points

- When kicking off, the type of kick you use can greatly depend on the ability of your kicker.
- A short high contestable kick may enable you to regain possession. To do this it is important so that you focus on functional roles around the chasers. For example - someone to take the catch, a player in front of the ball for opposition tap-backs (who will in theory be offside if you initially take the catch) and a player behind the ball for your catcher to tap to. Work in 3's.
- The other option is to go for depth on the kick with a sound chase pattern to force the receiving team to play out from deep from within their 22.
- If you are the receiving team it is also important that functional roles are identified for the receipt of the short kick and a pattern to carry the ball forward is established for the long kick off.



# Phase Play Attack Skills

## BALL INTO CONTACT

### Ball-Carrier Standing in the Tackle

#### Objective

To retain possession while engaging the opposition. To set an effective target for supporting players or utilise options created by support players

#### Key Factors

1. Look to penetrate either side of opposition first. (create a weak shoulder)
2. Focus on contact area. (Fend/Shoulder/Arms free)

#### Driving into contact

1. Face up; eyes open.
2. Low, crouched body position.
3. Ball in two hands, away from contact. 'Body before ball'
4. Small steps on approach to create balance.
5. Wide "power step" into contact.
6. Plant front foot close to defender's feet. (Square up outside hip/leg)
7. Contact side-on with hard parts of body; jack up on contact. Hit with right side on opponents left side and vice versa.
8. Maintain low, stable base; face up; eyes open.
9. Hold ball in close at hip height. Body and ball facing own team.
10. Brace for impact (from defence and support).
11. Transfer ball after initial contact and forward movement

#### Coaching Points

- Ball-carrier must retain "ownership" and responsibility for maintaining possession. Large numbers of turnovers occur in the transfer from ball-carrier to support.
- Once the ball-carrier has assessed that passing is not the best option, the player should attempt to stand in the tackle which will 'buy time' for their support players.
- Ball-carrier will dictate height of the supporting drive by the height at which they present the ball.
- "Hard parts of body" refer to the shoulders and hips.
- "Jack up" refers to moving from a low to high position on contact to unbalance the tackler.

#### Common Errors

- Head down; eyes closed.
- Leading with ball.
- Too upright.
- Narrow base of support.
- Front foot planted too far from defender's feet - easily taken to ground.
- Shoulders below hips.
- Holding ball in one hand.
- Ball-carrier failing to turn and give support a target to drive on.



## Contact - Taking Ball into Contact

### Objective

To engage opposition. To maintain possession. To give teammates time and opportunity to support

#### Key Factors

1. Focus on contact zone of opponent.  
Weak shoulder.
2. Chin off chest; eyes open.
3. Ball in two hands.
4. Low body position.
5. Body before ball.
6. Small steps on approach. Balance and shift to weak shoulder.
7. Wide "power step" into contact.
8. Plant front foot close to the defender's feet.
9. Contact side-on with hard parts of the body e.g. shoulder, hips. Stay square.
10. Maintain low, stable base, face up, eyes open.
11. Short steps, drive forward and stay on feet as long as possible.
12. Protect and then present the ball at the appropriate time.

#### Coaching Points

- The ball-carrier is the "determinator" of ball retention at contact. This person will have the single greatest influence on ball retention.
- They must effectively shield ball from opponents by positioning ball away from defenders.
- Low body position and power step increase force and stability at contact.
- Every player on the field will take ball into contact, therefore every player must understand and be competent in the key factors of this skill.
- The contact option, if taken, must be more advantageous than continuing the passing movement.
- Setting a target for support is not the only option when taking the ball into contact. Other options include: - Hit and spin - Hit and pass - Hit and drive to ground and pass - Hit and drive to ground to set a ruck.

#### Common Errors

- Too upright at contact.
- Narrow base of support at contact causing instability.
- Front foot planted too far from defender.
- Shoulders below hips.
- Avoid T-boning on contact, i.e. sternum of player

## Ball-Carrier On the Ground

### Objective

To engage opposition. To retain possession. To set an effective target for supporting players.

#### Key Factors

1. Look to penetrate either side of opposition first.
2. Focus on contact area.
3. Face up; eyes open.
4. Low body position.
5. Ball in two hands away from contact.
6. Small steps on approach to impact.
7. Body before ball.
8. Use power step to meet impact and continue forward movement.
9. Contact side-on with hard parts of the body.
10. Strong leg drive forward before going to ground.
11. Immediately place ball to side of body towards your support and place with long arms.
12. Body at right angles to touchline by snapping from the hips and twisting

#### Coaching Points

- The longer you stay on your feet moving forward, the more defenders you will commit, thus creating space elsewhere.
- When driving to the ground, tuck shoulder and roll with the impact.
- The ball must be placed or passed immediately, giving advantage to attacking team.
- Once the ball is released, the player cannot become involved in play in any way until they have regained their feet.
- Ball can be passed to support immediately from ground in tackle situation.
- Regain feet and join play as quickly as possible.

#### Common Errors

- Ball-carrier leading with ball.
- Body position too high - easily turned toward opposition.
- Going to ground too early.
- Poor presentation of ball to support.
- Playing ball or interfering with play while still on ground.

# PASSING AND RECEIVING

## Handling (1) Passing

### Objective

To maintain continuity of play by passing to a teammate in a better position.

#### Key Factors

1. Run straight. (Hips square)
2. Hold the ball in two hands.
3. Commit/fix defender.
4. Sight target (Receiver)
5. Punch arms ahead of target
6. Follow through to target
7. Pass at chest height in front of receiver.
8. Complete pass, support

#### Common Errors

- Running with the pass.
- Not having a straight follow-through.
- Not passing to target area.

#### Coaching Points

- By running straight down the field or towards the closest defender the passer draws a defender. The passer commits a defender preventing them from assisting in defence elsewhere. Look the defender in the eye so you have their attention.
- Hold ball in two hands: standard pass - fingers spread down the seam; spiral pass - fingers spread across the seam.
- Look at receiver to assist accuracy of pass. A show pass may be used to create a gap to run through. Turning inside shoulder, thigh and hip to the tackler reduces the risk of injury.
- A straight follow-through to the target by both hands reduces error. The elbows and wrists can be used to fine-tune speed and flight of the pass. The standard pass is the preferred option in most instances because it is quicker and easier to catch and pass. The spiral pass should be used for greater accuracy and speed when passing over longer distances. Players should be equally proficient passing off either hand.
- By following through the passer is able to guide the ball to the target area. This is at about chest height just in front of the receiver. The receiver is therefore able to catch the ball without reducing running speed. In addition, the catcher is able to catch the ball without looking down. (Fingers pointing towards the ball.) This will enable the ball to be caught while observing opponents.
- Once the pass has been made, the passer should support the receiver. A pass is only as good as the ease with which it can be caught.

## Handling (2) Receiving a Pass

### Objective

To catch the ball so that the attack momentum continues.

#### Key Factors

1. Face up, eyes open.
2. Move straight onto ball.
3. Extend hands towards ball, fingers spread.
4. Watch ball into hands.
5. Choose best option

#### Common Errors

- Not presenting target.
- Not meeting ball early.
- Hands too rigid.
- Taking your eyes off the ball.
- Not being aware of what the team mate and the defender are doing. (Not looking)

#### Coaching Points

- By positioning with depth, the receiver can move forward onto the ball, and will be able to maintain running speed and retain vision of opponents.
- The passer can move left or right, creating space on the other side for the receiver to run into. The receiver needs to be aware of what their team mate is doing and what the defender is doing.
- By extending the hands (fingers spread and pointing towards the ball) in the direction the pass is coming from, the receiver provides the passer with a target. In addition, the ball can be caught earlier, giving the receiver more time to decide on what to do next. Catch with the fingers first and not the palms.
- By catching the ball with soft hands the receiver is able to make an immediate pass should this be the option chosen.
- The options that can be chosen are to pass, take the ball into contact, run or kick, depending on the situation. This may depend on the position on the field, but generally will depend on the positioning of opposing players.



## Handling (3) Spiral Pass

### Objective

To transfer the ball quickly and accurately over a longer-than-normal distance.

#### Key Factors

1. Be aware of options.
2. Catch the ball in two hands.
3. Turn the ball long ways with the end pointing to the target and the fingers propelling hand spread under the ball.
4. In the passing action use the passing hand to give power and to impart spin.
5. Use the guiding hand to provide stability and direction.
6. Follow through with both hands towards receiver.

#### Coaching Points

- When a spiral pass is made the ball is spinning. It is therefore more difficult to catch if it is passed from close range.
- Consequently it should only be used to increase the distance of the pass.
- By spiraling the ball with fingers across the seam it is able to travel greater distances at a faster speed. Consequently the spiral pass should be used when it is necessary to clear the ball from a congested area to a less congested area where there are greater attacking opportunities.
- Players should attempt to run straight while passing the ball. Don't fall away from the pass.

#### Common Errors

- Not focusing on a target.
- Lifting head too early.
- No follow-through.
- Drifting with the pass.



## Handling (4) Clearing Pass (ie. Halfback Pass)

### Objective

To clear the ball quickly off the ground from a congested area.

#### Key Factors

1. Body in a crouch.
2. Sink at hips, bend at knees.
3. Eyes on the ball.
4. Plant passing foot close to ball.
5. Wide stance.
6. Leading foot pointing to target.
7. Head over the ball.
8. Passing hand provides power, guiding hand provides stability.
9. Transfer of weight to leading foot increases power.
- 10 Follow straight through with both hands to ensure accuracy.

#### Coaching Points

- This pass is used by the player positioned in the normal halfback role to clear the ball away from the source of possession to less congested areas.
- The ball is usually on or near the ground when the halfback gathers it. The player must, therefore, be able to crouch to the ball while remaining stable.
- This is achieved by sinking down at the hips and bending at the knees. Too much bending at the hips will create instability.
- The halfback must focus on the ball. By placing the inside foot next to the ball sufficient power will be obtained through extending the arc of the passing arm. In addition, the player will be less likely to take two movements before passing.
- The greater distance is assisted by the power created from a stable base.
- Transfer of weight to the leading foot during the passing action increases power.
- The spiraling action can cause the ball to curve back in the air. The halfback should allow for this. It can be corrected to some degree by following through straighter with the passing hand and aiming the point of the ball at the target.

#### Common Errors

- Not keeping eyes on ball.
- Lifting the head.
- Reaching for the ball rather than crouching and getting the passing foot into position.
- Standing up before passing
- Being square-on to the ball.

# PHASE PLAY TACKLING SKILLS

## Tackle Technique

### Objective

Get opposition ball-carrier to ground as quickly as possible.

#### Key Factors

1. Sight target - face up.
2. Short steps for balance and dip at knees.
3. Leading Leg (power step) - leading shoulder
4. Punch arms through from chest position
5. Drive with the shoulder and wrap with the arms.
6. Leg drive
7. Finish on top

#### Coaching Points

- Leading leg needs to be close to the contact to generate the most power and for the ability to get 'shoulder on'. This is created by getting in to balance using short steps, keeping the face up, and exploding forward.
- Players with poor technique will bend at the hips, here they lose power and generally the back is slumped with the head curled over.
- Dipping at the knees keeps the back straight and generates more power.
- Punching the arms through the contact puts emphasis on tackling with your shoulders and chest area vs. swinging arms.
- Wrap - is to secure the attacker
- Leg drive will dominate the collision with momentum
- Finishing on top enables the tackler to get to their feet to attack the ball or go forward past the ball.

#### Common Errors

- Bending at the waist and not at the knees.
- Dropping the head (chin to chest).
- Closing the eyes.
- Not getting good shoulder contact.
- Not driving through the tackle.
- Not getting to feet immediately to attack the ball.

## Recovering to Drive Through the Tackle Area

### Objective

To dominate the breakdown and 'drive through' the tackle area - ensuring fast continual possession on attack, or force the turnover on defence.

### Key Factors

1. Come in through the gate.
2. Head up, but back down in a movement similar to propping a scrum.
3. If joining players, link with them to drive as a unit.
4. Clear players from the area using arms as well as shoulders and with safety (no shoulder charges).
5. Leg drive.
6. Move beyond the tackle zone.
7. If on deck, you are out of the game.

### Coaching Points

- Encourage a pack mentality here, pods of bound players driving forward will have far more momentum and force that solitary players.
- While you want players to generate force to drive through, 'missile' style charging is to have zero-tolerance.
- Ensure players track back into the ruck as if running a clockwise or counter clockwise motion, this gets them realigned to the gate.
- Drive through with arms to ensure that shoulders only are not used to clear players away.
- Don't be reckless, sometimes setting up at the ruck - binding and not charging - will be enough to drive through.

### Common Errors

- Diving into contact instead of getting close with feet to generate leg power.
- No use of arms.
- Driving to the tackle not through the tackle area.





## Smother Tackle

### Objective

To smother a player with such effect that a pass cannot be thrown or the tackled player cannot go to ground.

### Key Factors

1. Smother tackles require upward tackling, so can be broken by strong upper body ball carriers.
2. Unlike a traditional 'hit' tackle, a smother is essentially an enveloping motion - not too dissimilar from cuddling.
3. Smother tackles work better with coordinated calls, a supporting tackler makes the smother more dominant.
4. Make a decision instantly, go for the ball, or go for the body.
5. Going for the ball constitutes a ripping style motion once completed.
6. Going for the body requires a drive upwards to keep the player off the deck.

### Coaching Points

- Watch your head position, often smothering tackles can lead to risk of a head clash.
- Drive harder into the tackle, the higher position of the tackle needs momentum otherwise the tackle will be ineffectual.
- Close the gap fast, if a smother tackle is successful there needs to be little warning for the tackled player.
- Make a decision fast, smother to ground or attempt to keep the tackler player off the deck.
- Try to include the ball carriers arms in the smother.
- If possession is trying to be turned over, supporting players add to the drive of the original smother tackler.



# Phase Play Attack Patterns

## Lateral Space

### Objective

To use lateral space to create further options on attack, or shift the defensive players around the field

### Introduction

Lateral space or the manipulation of the horizontal line allows a Sevens team to use the whole width of the field. Technically the simplest manner of achieving this is via passing, the ball always moves faster than a player.

However shifting the ball isn't just about getting the ball away from contact, it is about forcing the defence to make a decision that then breaks their own lateral line which creates space.

### Key Factors

1. Players need to be quickly into position
2. Judge the defensive line, don't shift towards where they have numbers
3. Don't forget space, even laterally, ultimately attack must have elements of go-forward. Don't crab from sideways, someone will need to straighten
4. Look for shifts in the line that might be cause for a switch of direction
5. Outside players need to be set, bunched players running outward doesn't create lateral space

### Coaching Points

1. Communication is critical.
2. Patience in the play is needed with no panic if the defence shuts it down. Ensure possession is retained and move calmly onto the next phase
3. Catch and pass, but eyes on your target
4. Eventually a lateral attacking movement must go forward

# Phase Play Defence Patterns

## Defence

### Objective

To apply pressure and prevent the opposition team from scoring. To regain possession

### Introduction

Defence is the use of a system to stop the opposition attack going forward by working together and tackling aggressively. The prime objective is for the defenders to stop the opposition scoring, regain possession, launch a counter attack and score.

#### Key Factors

1. Attack opposition's set piece.
2. Have awareness of attackers' options and communicate them.
3. Play to team defensive pattern.
4. Tackler identifies player they are responsible for and communicates. This is fluid depending on what the attackers do and so one defender may be responsible for several different attackers in one play.
5. Align on opponents inside shoulder.
6. Give ball-carrier an outside option only.
7. Move forward in a line to cut down opponent's options.
8. Cover after pass is made.
9. Make an effective tackle.
10. Get to feet immediately.
11. Regain possession.
12. Counterattack.

#### Coaching Points for the Inside-Out Pattern

- First player in defensive line to lead the line-up.
- Instruct players to move forward together in defence to avoid gaps appearing with each player knowing what the defender inside them is doing.
- One player organises defence and makes sure communication goes right through the team.
- Communication must be specific to ensure defenders are tackling the right opponent.
- Tackle with an intent to turn the ball over or tie the ball up. This is every player's responsibility.
- Provide immediate support from the inside to the tackler and other defenders outside.
- Understanding the general play law as it relates to tackle situations is essential.
- Putting the ball-carrier on the ground means ball must be released immediately.
- This gives opportunities for tackler's support players to re-gather the ball.

#### Common Errors

- Shooting ahead or lagging behind the defensive line.
- Lack of communication.
- Not maintaining an 'inside out' line.

## Principles of Defence

### Objective

To deny opposition space and time. To stop penetration. To regain the ball.

#### Key Factors

1. Identify and form alignment (inside shoulder of opposite).
2. Communicate with each other and work together in the pattern.
3. Exert maximum pressure on attackers by going forward to cut down their space and time.
4. Reduce attackers' options.
5. Tackle effectively.
6. Support/Cover.

#### The Back Defensive Line

1. Provide effective cover defence.
2. Position to counter any kick option.
3. Communicate with each other to ensure all options are covered.

#### Coaching Points

- Communication must be specific. Players have a responsibility to use key words which reinforce the system being used.
- The front defensive line must defend together as a unit. It is normal to form a tight line, which gives the visual impression of an impregnable defensive wall.
- From a set-piece, if the first line is broken, blindside winger and fullback should be in position to tackle the ball-carrier. (The sweeper)
- Positioning will depend on weather conditions and opposition's patterns, strengths and weaknesses.

#### Common Errors

- Staggered alignment leaves holes.
- Lack of communication.
- Coming up too fast or too slow.
- Coming up too straight and getting beaten.
- Low work-rate (not covering).
- Ineffective tackling.
- Not holding zones and pushing over from the inside.
- Basic Defensive Patterns

## Man-on-Man Defence

### Objective

To make a dominant tackle without support.

### Introduction

Man-on-man defence, a first up hit, a one-on-one tackle or as commentators simply call it a dominant tackle.

It allows the remainder of the team to react dynamically as the opposition's play, if the tackle is effective, comes to a shuddering halt.

#### Key Factors

1. It must be a "ball and all" tackle, for a dominant cutting or low tackle can allow a player to offload
2. The ball carrier must be completely tracked to ensure you make the effective hit
3. Call for the hit, communicating to players essentially that 'you've got this'
4. First arrival or halfback must be at the ruck quickly to complete this phase
5. Tackles must be made with such an approach due to the commitment of other players to make such tackles
6. Transition play is important here as often it allows the rest of the team to counterattack

#### Coaching Points

1. Players need to learn how to tackle off either feet, that is shifting their bodyweight to maximise power in the tackle
2. The best man-on-man defence eliminates requirement of sweep or second phase defence
3. This defensive systems needs to drive forward for required dominance
4. Trust in your mates to make the tackle

#### Common Errors

- Staggered alignment leaves holes.
- Lack of communication.
- Coming up too fast or too slow.
- Coming up too straight and getting beaten.
- Low work-rate (not covering).
- Ineffective tackling.
- Not holding zones and pushing over from the inside.
- Basic Defensive Patterns

# SELECTION

At this current time there are not too many players who specialize in only the Sevens game, therefore selectors are looking at XV's players and trying to discover those who will cross over to be effective Sevens exponents.

Some of the traits to search for would be:

- pace
- evasion and agility
- vision
- long pass and catch
- 1 on 1 tackle effectiveness
- defensive agility and strength
- decision making at the break down as first arrivals.

Assuming there is a squad of 12 to be named a coach could well base selections using the following criteria:

1. Strikers (3). These are generally forwards from the fifteens game who have the ability to carry the ball strongly, crash it up, hit the gaps, create problems by attracting several defenders, keeping the ball in contact and have the ability to off load in the tackle. However unlike the 'typical' forward these players will need to have high levels of fitness. Flankers and bigger backs often meet this portfolio.
- 2- Ruckmen (2). The Ruckman is the individual who has the ability to secure ball on the ground, turn ball over in the tackle, and retain ball in pressure tackle areas - in essence the Sevens open side flanker.
- 3- Playmakers (3). Quite often an inside back from fifteens these players are the steppers and organisers with an advanced ability to make good decisions for the team and drive it around the field both on attack and defence.
- 4- Speedsters (4). Nothing matches straight out speed in sevens. The more speed the better. This player may well be a key defender as the sweeper.

A strong "never say die" attitude is a good quality which will stand out in trial matches - if a player doesn't run back on defence they probably don't have that quality. Testing to assist selection could include speed, Beep or Yoyo and speed endurance.

Lots of games are crucial to improving at 7's.

Specific conditioning for Sevens becomes a vital cog in the success of the team. A sound aerobic base is required and players need to be able to handle large volumes of running. Speed endurance is the key with players required to run at top speed for as long as possible through the 14 or 20 minute game periods.

Recovery during tournaments is maximized if the athlete is well conditioned.

## PLAYER WELFARE

Player welfare and management during, before and after a tournament can be strong contributing factors to your success as a team. Rest, recovery, nutrition, hydration will assist with performance at tournaments. However the basic conditioning preparation will be the foundation for how well players will last in long tough tournaments.

Once players reach their threshold during a game they need to be able to push themselves. A strong aerobic base will provide for a higher anaerobic threshold.

Being able to continue to perform with composure and vision while being fatigued comes from being stressed under similar conditions during training.

Constant accurate activities, working at high fatigue levels help players get familiar with the game and with their teammates.

## COMMUNICATION

Sevens can become quite frenetic so a key quality to have in a team is quality communication. Simple calls ensure that team mates are on the same wavelength. Consistency around selection also assists with understanding and developing strong communication protocols.

Don't stop talking at any time, even though you are trying to treasure every single breath you have.

As a coach, make sure you can get your point across quickly, with six matches in two days you need to be able to deliver your messages efficiently - you do not have a week between each game.

## DISCIPLINE

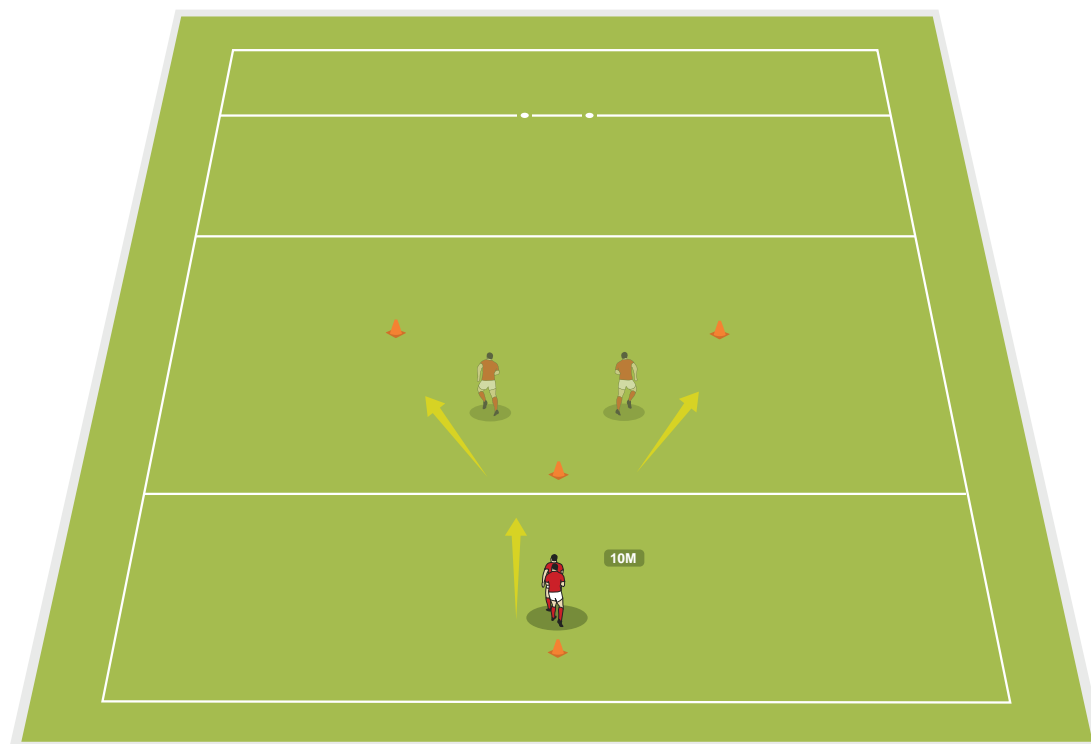
Discipline in Sevens is crucial. A yellow card in Sevens is common and equates to a player being out of action for 1/7th of the game. By comparison you are only out for 1/8th of the game for a XV's yellow card. Further to this you now end up with six players defending a 70m width as opposed to seven. This in turn contributes to the fatigue factor if you are defending for the two minutes your player is off the field.



# ACTIVITIES

## SPEED & AGILITY PARTNER OPTIONS (SAP):

### SAP1: Resisted Sprints with Direction Change



#### Aims of Drill

*Acceleration & Agility/Footwork development*


In pairs, one partner resists by holding the shirt tail while the other runs.


Runner starts by leaning forward and running on the spot. Runner then starts driving forward with high knees and strong arm drive and torso on a 45 degree lean.


Once runner reaches the first cone the resistor yells left or right and the runner accelerates in that direction immediately. Change runner each time x 4.

**NB:** The speed quality mentioned first, is the number one priority for development for this drill.

e.g. acceleration before agility for the above speed drill.

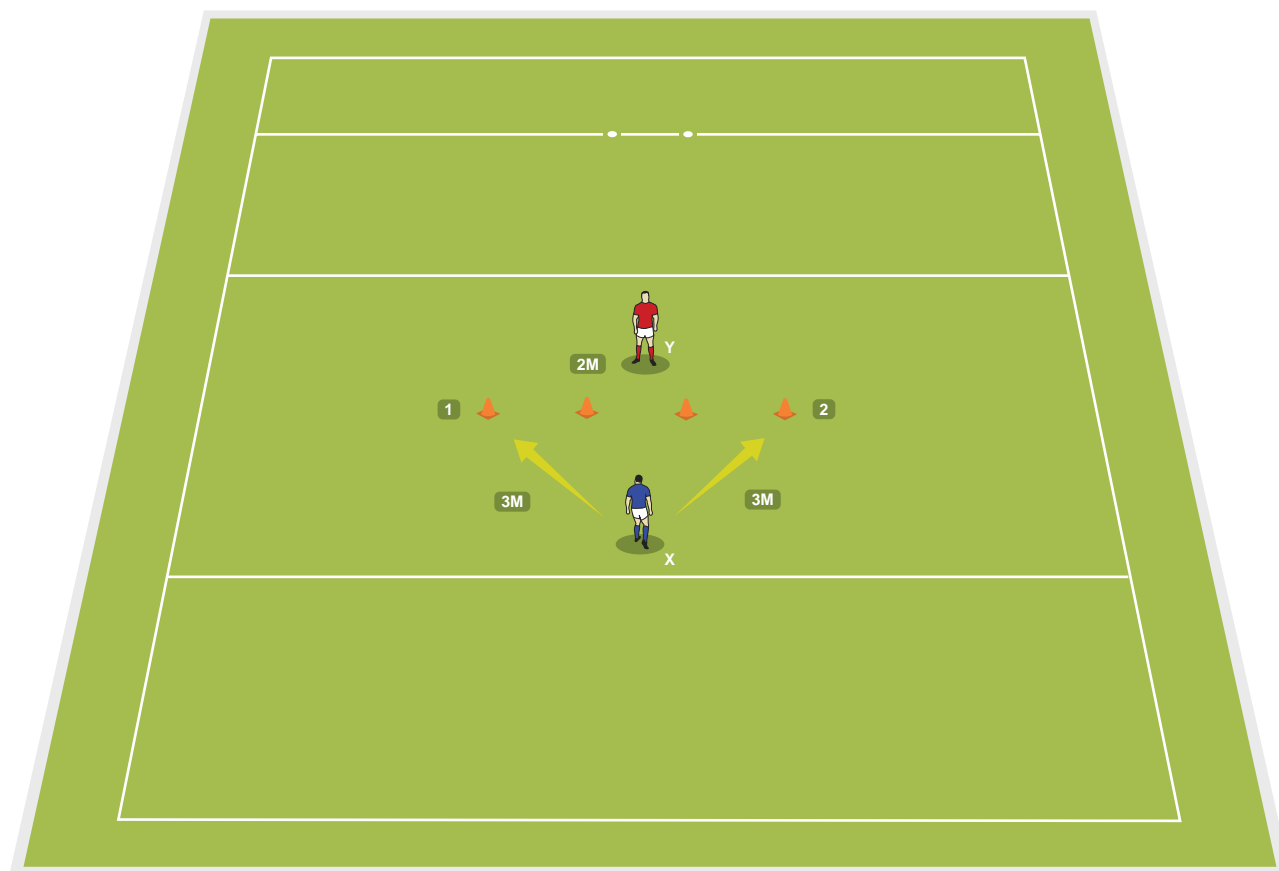
 Running Direction

 Drill Runner

 Drill Cones



## SAP2: Shadow Running



### Aims of Drill





*Agility, Acceleration and Footwork development*

In pairs, **X** is the attack and **Y** is the defence.

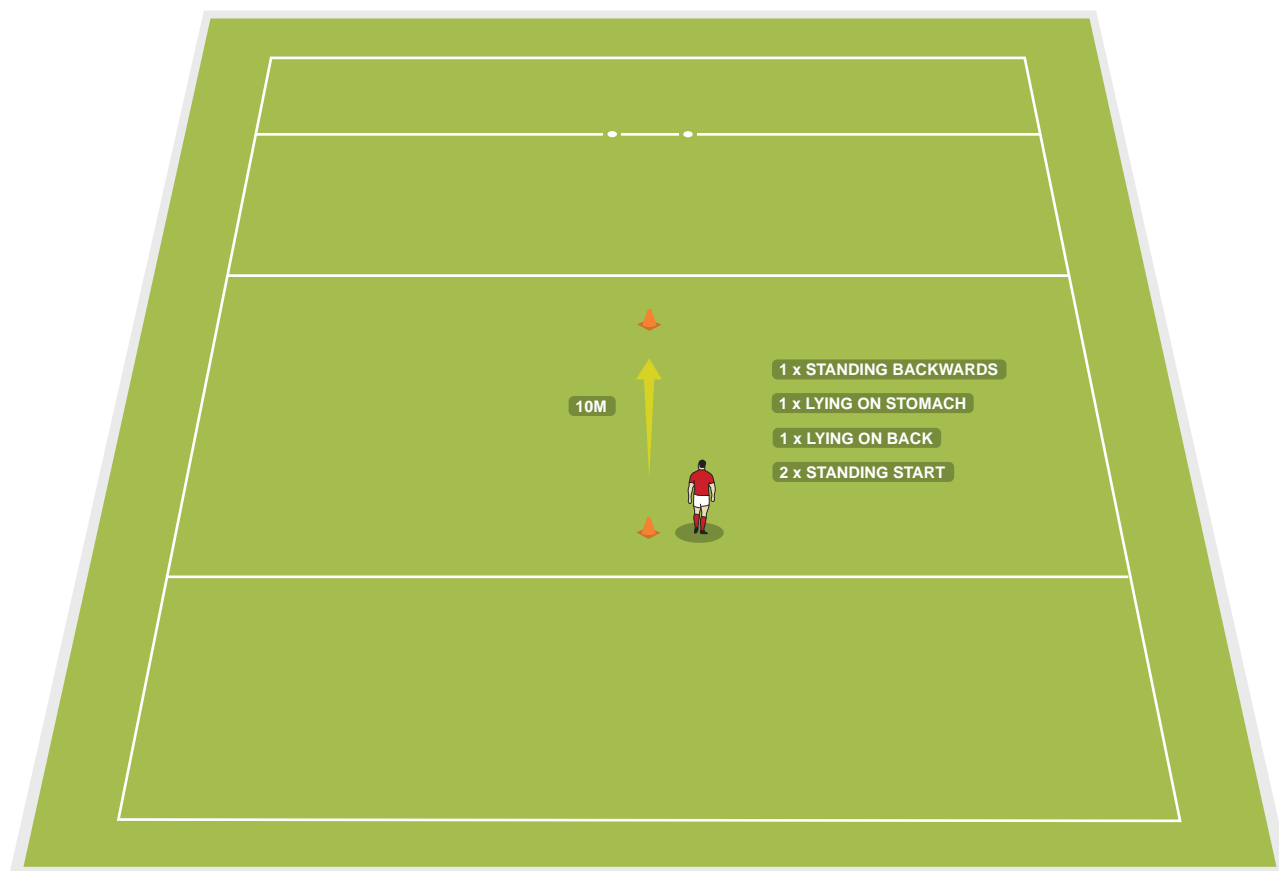
**X** attempts to touch either cone **1** or **2** without being tagged. **X** may not change direction once outside the two inner cones.

**Y** may not cross over the line and must attempt to make a 2 hand tag.

**15 - 20 seconds** recovery between efforts, **3** attempts as **Y** and **X**.

-  Running Direction
-  Drill Cones
-  Attacking Player
-  Defending Player

## SAP3: 10m Standing and Get Up Sprints



### Aims of Drill

*Acceleration development*


1 x standing backward & turn start.


1 x lying on stomach facing forward.


1 x lying on back, feet forward.

2 x standing start.

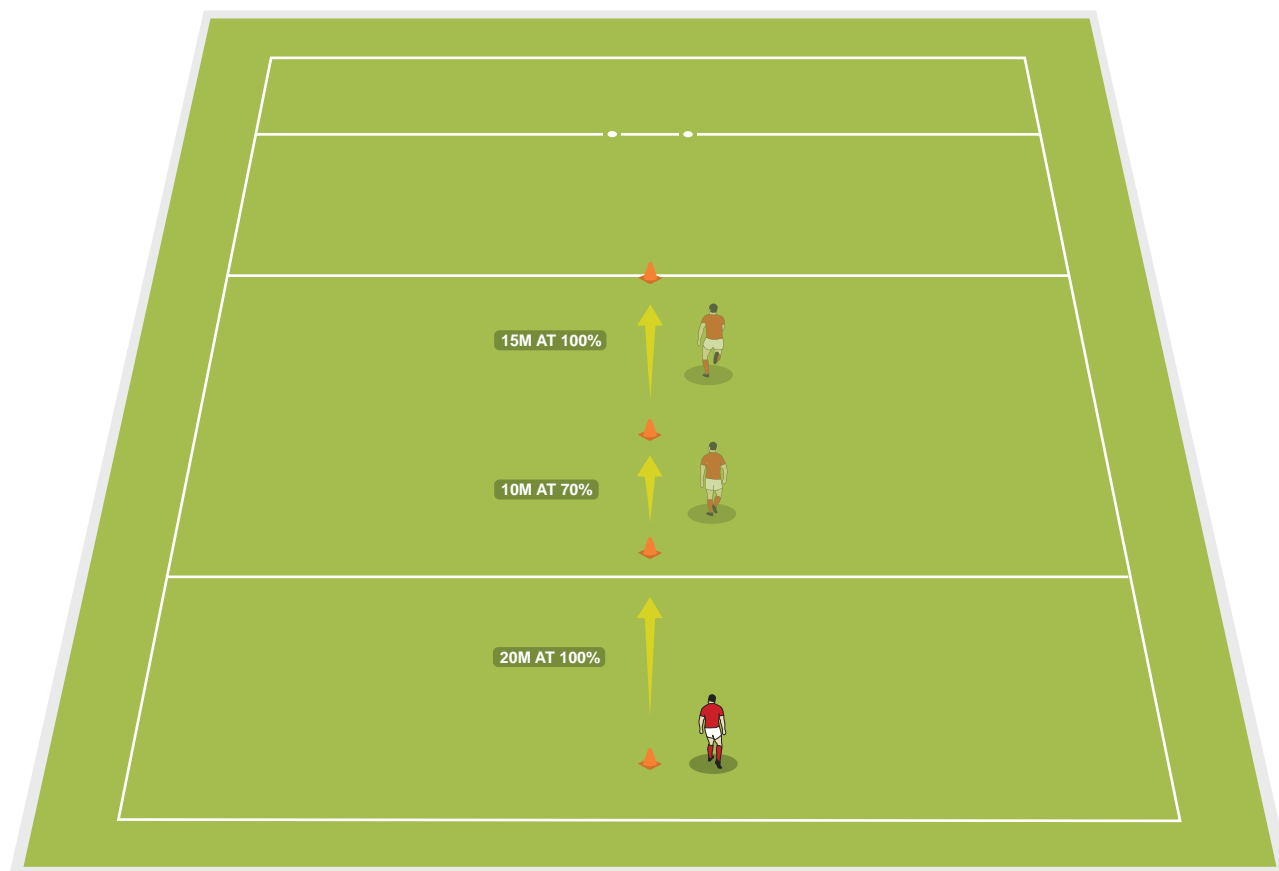
**30 seconds** recovery between efforts.

 Running Direction

 Drill Runner

 Drill Cones

## SAP4: In's and Out's



### Aims of Drill



*Acceleration and deceleration development*

From a standing start, sprint at 100% for 20m.

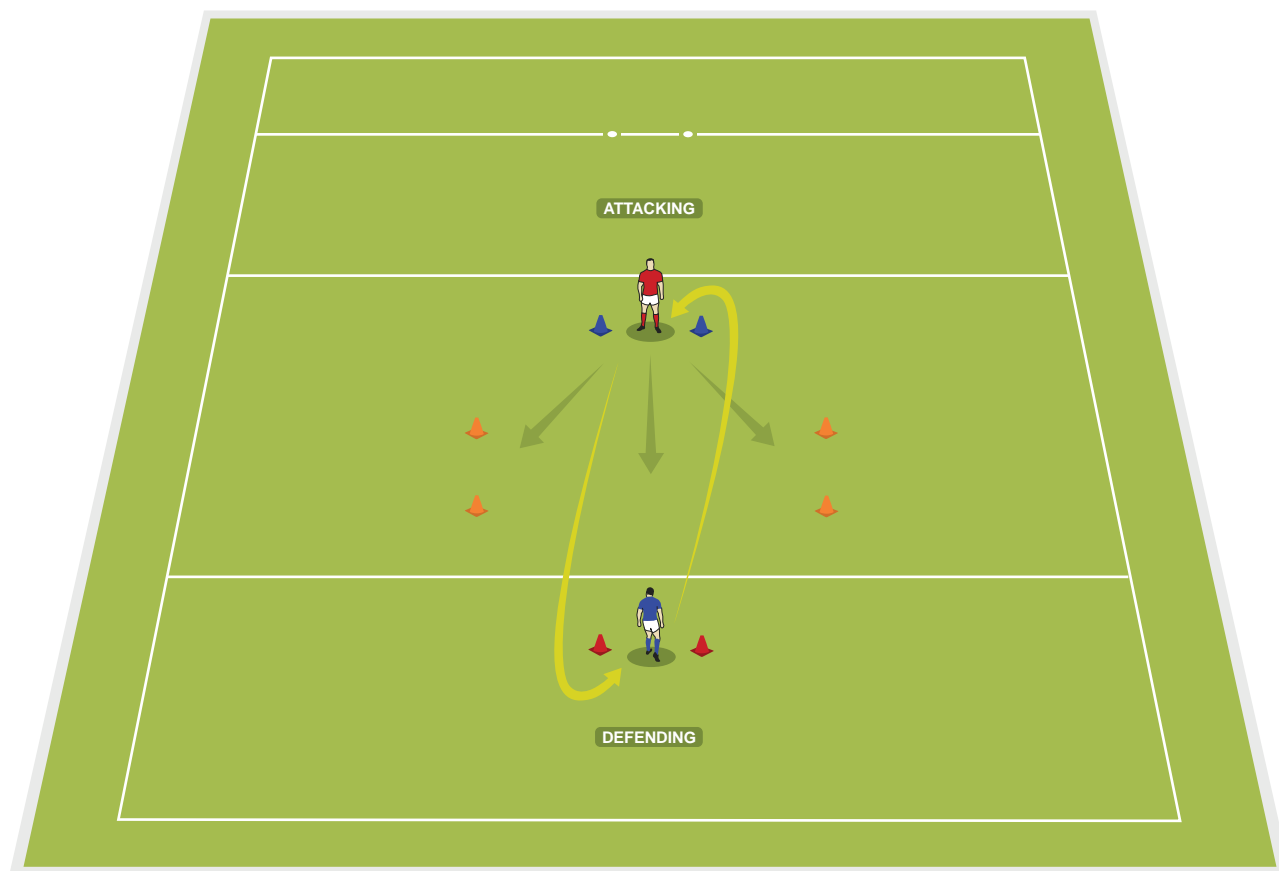
Decelerate / Cruise (70%) for 10m.

Sprint at 100% for the last 15m.

Repeat this **3 - 5** times. Walk back recovery **30-60 seconds**.

-  Running Direction
-  Drill Runner
-  Drill Cones

## SAP5: 1 v 1 Diamond Tag



### Aims of Drill

*Acceleration and Agility / Footwork development*




Player on red cone (attacker) sprints around blue cones. Players must go around and enter between cones.

Player on blue cone (defender) sprints around red cones.

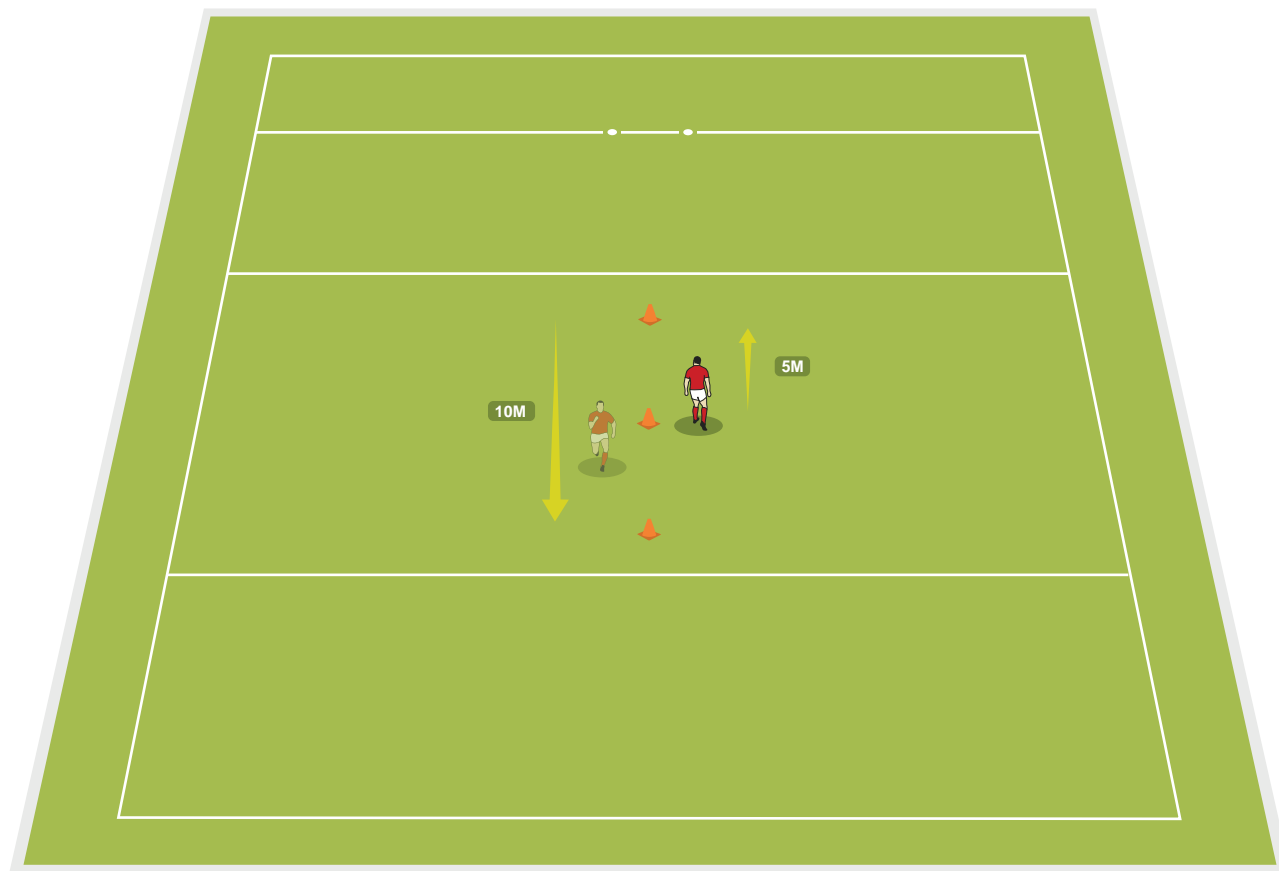
As players turn into grid, attacker attempts to get between orange cones (1pt) or red cones (3pts).

Defender attempts to stop by making a 2 handed touch.

Work in teams of individually, swapping roles regularly.

-  Running Direction
-  Drill Cones
-  Attacker
-  Defender

## SAP6: 5m - 10m - 5m Sprints (Race)



### Aims of Drill

*Acceleration and Agility Development*

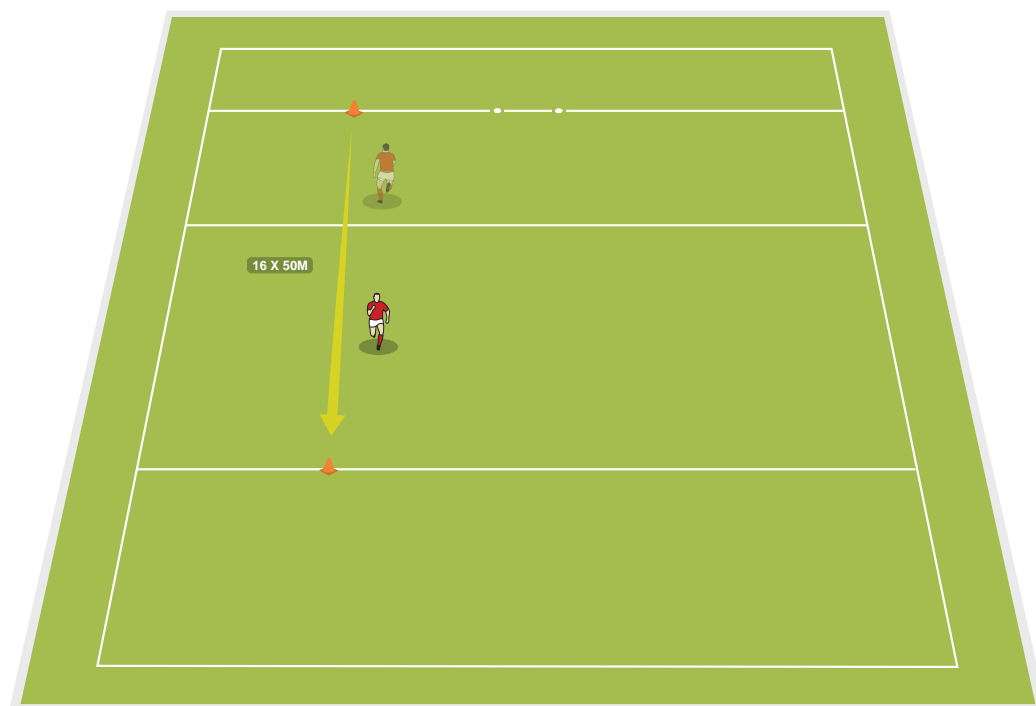
Player starts at middle cone.

Sprint forward 5m, turn and sprint back 10m, turn around sprint back to start (5m).

Can race partner.

-  Running Direction
-  Drill Runner
-  Drill Cones

## SI1: Short Interval (SI) Training



### How To

**16 x 50m sprints (TT = 7 - 9 seconds) / 50m jog** (repeat every 40 seconds).

Starting at the goal line of a rugby field, sprint 50m in **7-9** seconds (nearly full sprint) then jog through to the other end. You have what is left of 40 seconds to recover.

Turn around and run back the other way.




The goal is to maintain near maximal speed (i.e. 7 - 9 seconds) for each 50m sprint.

Have a **4** minute break (active recovery + hydrate).

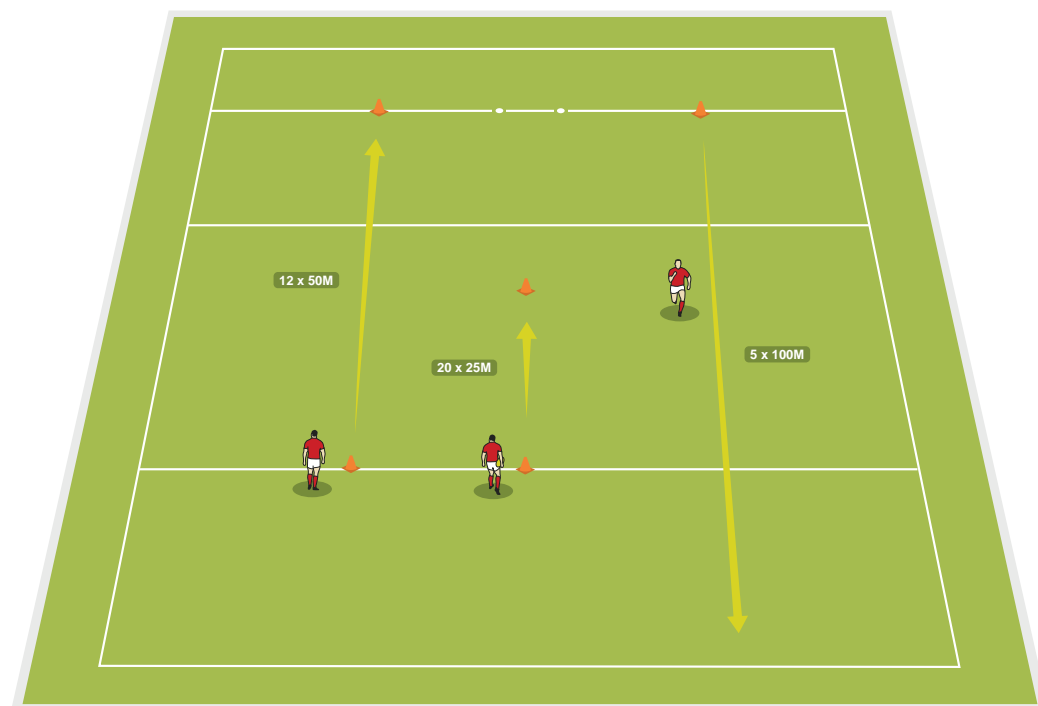
Complete again (16 x 50m sprints), with the same targets.

**NB:** For all repeated speed warm ups perform 5 minutes moderate intensity aerobic exercise and dynamic stretches.

**NB:** It is crucial to take appropriate time post exercise, to maximize your recovery. This includes active recovery, rehydration, followed by 5 - 10 minutes of stretches.

-  Running Direction
-  Drill Runner
-  Drill Cones

## SI2: Short Interval (SI) Training



### How To

**12 x 50m sprint (TT = 7 - 9 seconds) / 50m jog** (repeat every 40 seconds).

Have a 4 minute break (active recovery).




**20 x 25m sprint (TT = 4 - 5 seconds) / 25m jog** (repeat every 20 seconds). Use different start positions including ball carrying, picking up, 3-point, on your foot, on your back, rolling left and right, chipping, grubber kicking etc at the start of each sprint.

Have a 4 minute break (active recovery).

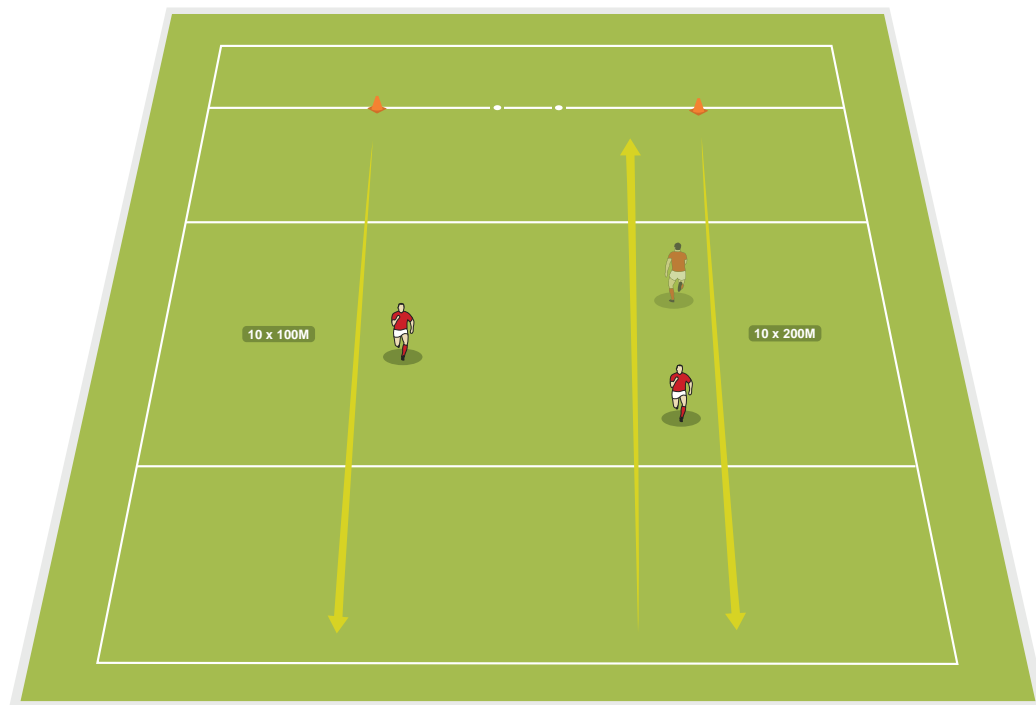
**5 x 100m sprint (TT = 18 seconds)** (Repeat every 60 seconds).

**NB:** For all repeated speed warm ups perform 5 minutes moderate intensity aerobic exercise and dynamic stretches.

**NB:** It is crucial to take appropriate time post exercise, to maximize your recovery. This includes active recovery, rehydration, followed by 5 - 10 minutes of stretches.

-  Running Direction
-  Drill Runner
-  Drill Cones

## SI3: 100'S / 200'S



### How To

Sprint **100m (TT = 15 - 17 seconds)**. Recovery = what is left of 1 minute (when clock hits 60s).

When clock hits 60s, sprint **200m (TT = 33 - 38 seconds)**. Recovery = what is left of 1 minute.

Complete 10 sets of this (10 x 100m and 10 x 200m).

If needed, take 60 seconds recovery after your 5th set (5 x 100m and 5 x 200m).

**NB:** For all repeated speed warm ups perform 5 minutes moderate intensity aerobic exercise and dynamic stretches.

**NB:** It is crucial to take appropriate time post exercise, to maximize your recovery. This includes active recovery, rehydration, followed by 5 - 10 minutes of stretches.

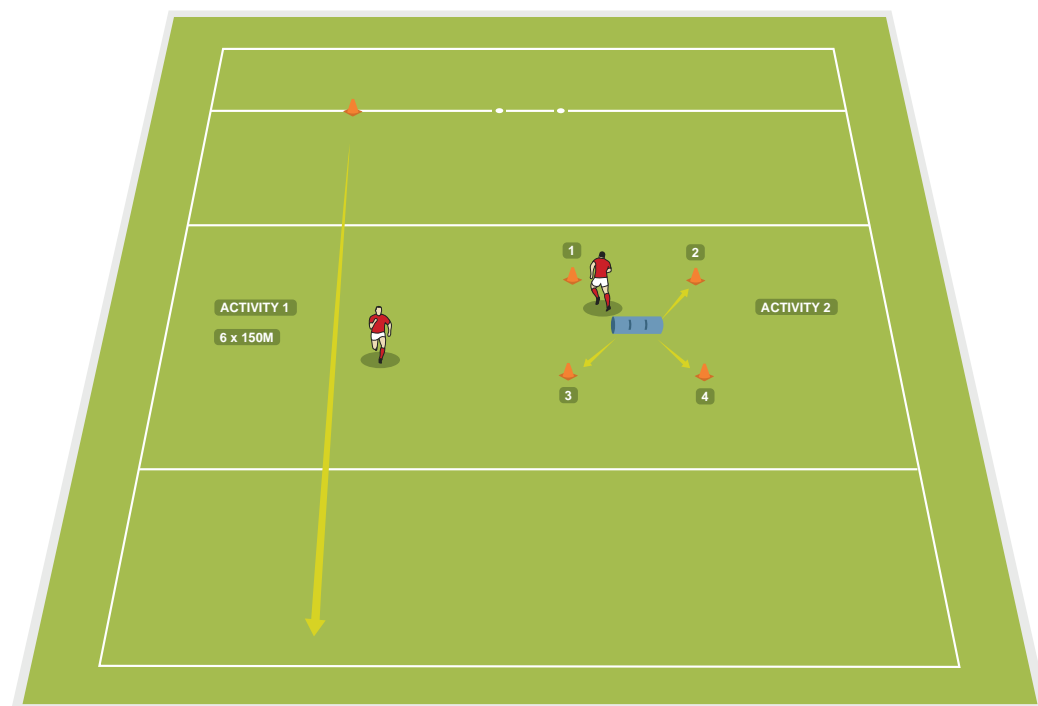
→ Running Direction

👤 Drill Runner

🚩 Drill Cones



## SI4: 150's + Exercise



### How To

#### Activity 1

Complete 6 x 150m sprints (**TT = < 25 seconds**) with 45 seconds recovery between sprints.

Have 2 minutes 30 seconds recovery (Active).

#### Activity 2


Start next to the powerbag or SB (filled with water) in the middle of the square. Accelerate forward to the first cone; turn and accelerate back to the power bag, complete a down and up on the power bag (chest to bag), up onto feet, power clean the bag to shoulders and explosively throw overhead. Accelerate out another cone, turn and accelerate out to the power bag. Complete down and up, clean and overhead throw as before. Continue until you have accelerated out and back to all 4 corners and completed 4 down and ups, power bag clean and overhead throws (**TT = 60 - 75 seconds**).


Recovery (active) for the same time it took you to complete this circuit.


**Perform Activities 1 and 2, three times each (follow above instructions).**

**NB:** For all repeated speed warm ups perform 5 minutes moderate intensity aerobic exercise and dynamic stretches.

**NB:** It is crucial to take appropriate time post exercise, to maximize your recovery. This includes active recovery, rehydration, followed by 5 - 10 minutes of stretches.

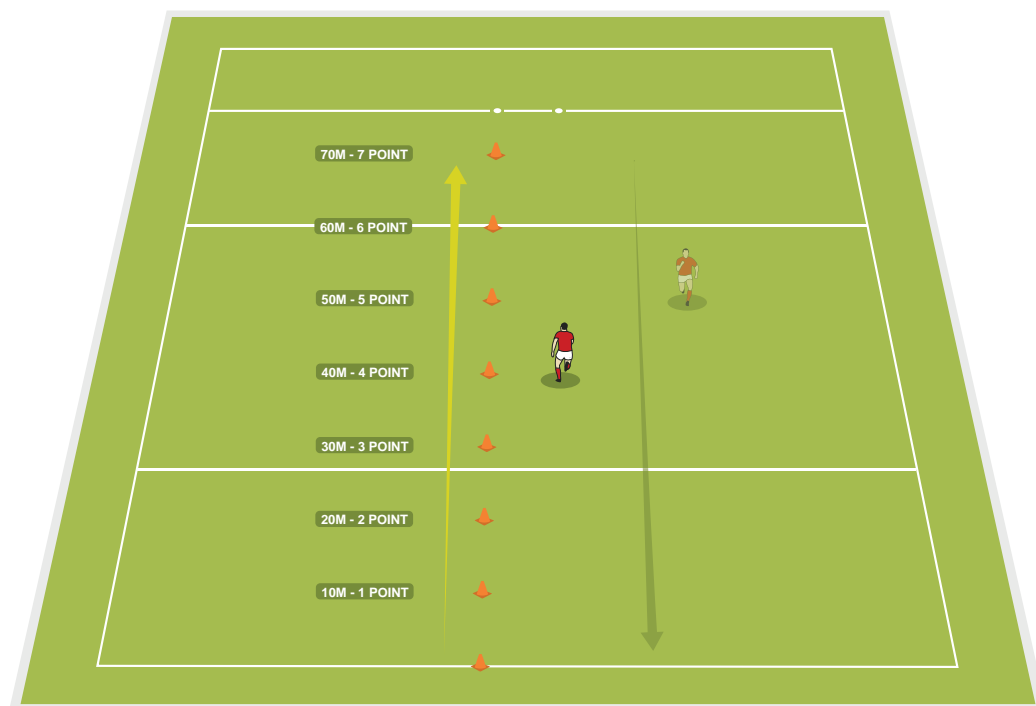
 Running Direction

 Drill Runner

 Drill Cones

 Powerbag / SB

## SI5: 7 Minute Points Challenge



### How To

#### 14 x 7 Sprints (x4) , both forwards and backs.

Sprint for a maximum of **7 seconds** with a jog back recovery.

You will begin each sprint on a **30 second** turnaround, therefore after your 7 second sprint you have 23 seconds to decelerate and jog back to the start line.



You gain **1** point for every **10m** you sprint to e.g. if you sprint 52m 7 seconds you reward yourself 5 points.

Add your points up every run. Your target is to get more than **55** points over 14 sprints.

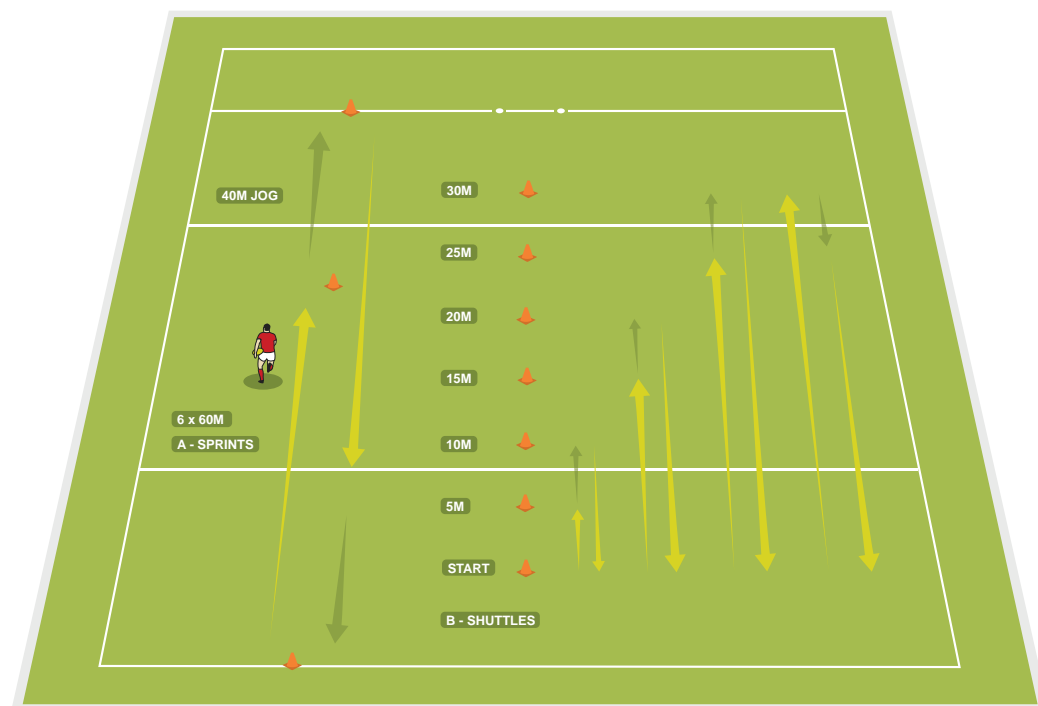
Recover for 2 minutes (Active). Complete **4** sets in total.

**NB:** For all repeated speed warm ups perform 5 minutes moderate intensity aerobic exercise and dynamic stretches.

**NB:** It is crucial to take appropriate time post exercise, to maximize your recovery. This includes active recovery, rehydration, followed by 5 - 10 minutes of stretches.

-  Running Direction
-  Jog Recovery
-  Drill Runner
-  Drill Cones

## SI6: 60m Sprints and Shuttles



### How To

#### (A) 60m Sprints

6 x 60m sprints with a 40m jog between sprints (TT = <8s). Attempt not to sprint in a straight line - add in curves/steps. Carry a ball.

3 minutes active recovery. Repeat for 3 sets.

#### (B) Shuttles

From the start line (0m) sprint to cone at 5m, decelerate to cone at 10m, turn and sprint back start line.

Decelerate and jog back to start line and sprint to cone at 15m, decelerate to cone at 20m, turn and sprint back to start line.

Sprint to cone at 25m, decelerate to cone at 30m, turn and sprint back to start line.

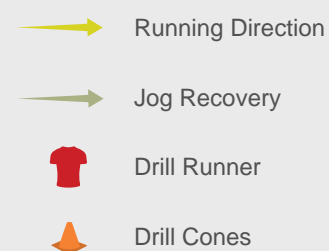
Decelerate and jog back to start line. Sprint to cone at 30m, decelerate and jog back to cone at 25m and sprint back to try line.

Continue down until you have run from the 5m cone back to the start.

Take 90 seconds recovery and complete 6 sets.

**NB:** For all repeated speed warm ups perform 5 minutes moderate intensity aerobic exercise and dynamic stretches.

**NB:** It is crucial to take appropriate time post exercise, to maximize your recovery. This includes active recovery, rehydration, followed by 5 - 10 minutes of stretches.



# MAS (Max Aerobic Speed)

