Level 2 Coaching
Developing Rugby Skills
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Overview

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Foreword

Welcome to the IRB Level 2 Coaching course. This course is designed to provide coaches with the skills needed to coach teenage and adult players in the club or school environment (in major Unions) and to higher levels in less developed Unions.

The presence of sport in a person’s life carries enormous benefits for social, physical and personal development while broadening cultural awareness. Rugby is a uniquely inclusive sport, and you as the coach hold a position of genuine influence over the player’s rate of personal development and their sense of community and self-worth.

The IRB Level 2 Coaching course aims to develop coaches who know how to coach as well as what to coach. The course is delivered using the following structure:

• The coach demonstrates his/her current level of competence.
• The course explores Game knowledge and coaching process skills.
• The tools used are:
  - The principles of attack and defence
  - Key factor analysis
  - Functional role analysis
• Some additional modules are delivered via pre-course work, home study and the development of a coaching diary.

The course will be delivered through a range of methods and will be highly interactive. Throughout the course, you will be encouraged to practise your coaching skills. Grasp this opportunity for feedback from your IRB Educator and your peers. These opportunities will also form the foundation of your competency-based assessment.

I sincerely hope you enjoy the course and benefit from participation.

Kind regards,

Mark Harrington
Training Manager,
International Rugby Board

Acknowledgments

The IRB are enormously grateful to the original author and subsequent consultancy teams.

Original Author:
Lee Smith

2003 Consultancy Team:
Steve Aboud (RFU), Kevin Bowring (RFU), Ken Bracewell (RFU), Richie Dixon (SRU), Geoff Evans (IRB), Steve Griffiths (IRB), Keith Lawrence (NZRU), Peter Marshall (ARU), Warren Robilliard (ARU), Ian Scotney (ARU), Bruce Cook and Tom Jones (IRB)

2011 Consultancy Team:
Lee Smith (IRB), Nick Scott (RFU), Hilton Adonis (SARU), Norm Mottram (USA Rugby), Eric Voet (NRB) and Mark Harrington (IRB)

Design and production:
Sport Development
Contact Adam Pearson
+44 (0)1908 640240
adam@sport-development.com
IRB Training and Education courses

IRB Training and Education courses have evolved since the mid 1990s, and have been updated regularly since then using the expertise in member Unions and the skills of a select number of IRB Trainers who are also ‘content experts’.

Since 2006, the IRB provision has extended to serve more stakeholders, as demonstrated in the portfolio above. All courses are now competency-based, designed to provide learning and training appropriate to the contexts in which coaches and officials are active.

In addition, IRB courses can now only be delivered by IRB licensed Educators who have demonstrated their technical and facilitation skills to prescribed standards. All record keeping and certification is undertaken from the IRB’s headquarters in Dublin, Ireland.
## Course timetable

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| **Pre–course** | • Rugby Ready, Laws  
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• Prepare a session |
| **Module 1** | • Introduction - Needs - Assessment protocols  
• Deliver prepared task - Coaching #1  
• Educator demonstration of range of styles  
• Coaching process - ‘How’ to coach  
• Self-reflection and benchmarking |
| **Home study** | **Module 2** (LS and NS)  
• Rugby’s core values  
• Role of the coach  
• Developing a personal philosophy, including LTPD discussion  
• Apply principles of attack and defence – video  
• Team strengths and weaknesses  
• Planning guidelines |
| **Home study** | **Module 3**  
• Plan a practice based on video work  
• Plan a practice in groups  
• Deliver a session - Coaching #2  
• Review |
| **Home study** | **Module 4**  
• Key factor analysis introduction and video work (range of skills)  
  x 2:  
  - Pass, run, throw, jump, evasion  
  - Individual scrum shape, tackle, ball into contact, lineout lift, etc  
• Player welfare  
• Planning and practice - Coaching #3  
• Educator demonstration |
| **Module 5** | • Functional role analysis introduction  
• Dynamic - ruck, maul  
• Selection  
• Contemporary Law issues  
• Signpost to fitness, nutrition, Sevens, www.irbcoaching.com additional sites, etc  
• Diary and assessment guidelines |
Course timetable (continued)

Course duration:

- Face-to-face: 5 x 3 hour modules = 15 hours
- Pre-course and homework: 5 hours (approx)
- Six game diary (minimum) including sessions and reparation: 30 hours (approx)
- Assessment: 2 hours

Total course duration: 52 hours

The course may be delivered in a number of different ways:

- Five separate modules of 3 hours face-to-face, followed by diary and assessment
- 2 days incorporating the five modules face-to-face, followed by diary and assessment
- Diary of coaching followed by 4 days face-to-face incorporating the five modules and including assessment

Assessment:

In order to be awarded the IRB Level 2 Coaching accreditation, the participant must:

- Complete the on-line self-check tests at www.irbrugbyready.com and www.irblaws.com
- Attend and participate in all modules of the course
- Complete all homework tasks
- Be observed coaching in the coach’s own environment
- Satisfactorily complete a diary for a team that is being coached in the current or next Rugby season. The diary should cover a cycle of six games and the training sessions within that cycle. The diary should provide evidence of a coach’s ability to apply the ‘Plan, Do, Review’ model.

The coach’s progress during the course will be tracked on the IRB Level 2 Transcript for Accreditation. This serves as the ongoing assessment tool.
Glossary of Rugby terms

Outcome/aim
What you are trying to achieve during a session or cycle.

The principles of attack and defence
A sequential and prioritised checklist of principles that are used to analyse the play of a team.

Key factor analysis
This is the application of a sequential and prioritised checklist of actions. By performing these actions, it can be expected that the outcome goal of each skill will be achieved.

Functional role analysis
This is a technique that enables the coach to judge if a player has adopted the most appropriate role in a situation. Having made this judgment, the coach is then able to see if the role has been performed successfully.

Game plan
The game plan explains how the team is going to achieve its aims in attack and defence.

Performance goals
How the outcome goals can be achieved.

Tactics
The patterns that will be used against a particular opponent. The emphasis within the patterns of play will vary depending on the profile of the opposing team.

Patterns of play
The patterns that combine to achieve the team’s game plan.
Module 1 - Coaching styles and coaching process

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Coaching styles

There is a continuum of styles that can be used by a coach:

**COACH-CENTRED**
- Coaching through drills
- Instructional/didactic
- Technique driven
- Focus on performance
- Emphasis on winning
- Coach makes all decisions
- Authoritarian leadership
- Structured
- Tell and show
- Explicit and formal approach

**PLAYER-CENTRED**
- Coaching through games
- Questioning for understanding
- Needs of learner
- Individualised learning
- Focus on person
- Emphasis on development
- Player makes decisions
- Democratic leadership
- Chaos
- Hands-off style
- Ask and listen
- Implicit and informal approach

Coaches need to be able to use a range of styles and to select the most appropriate for the given participants, context and purpose. No one style is better or worse than the other. There is a time to tell, a time to watch and listen, a time to let participants do more thinking and take more responsibility. Each style will have its place, although some are likely to result in more lasting learning than others. You may demonstrate different styles within this continuum during a single session.
Coach-centred

The coach-centered coach typically shows the following behaviours:

- **Coaching through drills** - practices tend to be very structured with use of progressive drills. These can be unopposed, semi-opposed or opposed. Sometimes the drills are practised without relation to the game.
- **Authoritarian/instructional/didactic** - the coach provides lots of instruction and feedback. There is little opportunity for player input and often the coach has a specific technique or method in mind. This coach often rules with an ‘iron-rod’ and is a real disciplinarian.
- **Technique-driven** - the coach sets up lots of practices to improve technique. These are typically repetitive and unopposed. The coach often references key factors very well.
- **Focus on performance and emphasis on winning** - the coach is concerned more with the result than the development of individuals. This coach tends to have very short term goals and has little consideration for long term player development.
- **Coach makes all decisions and uses a structured approach** - the coach has very specific session plans with direct interventions. The coach progresses the session at his/her pace rather than referencing the players’ readiness. This coach is not comfortable when there is chaos within practices.
- **Tell and show** - the coach has a very formal structure for introducing practices or skills: ‘tell - show (demonstrate) - do’.
- **Explicit and formal approach** - the coach designs and delivers sessions for a specific purpose. Sessions develop in a very structured and formalised way.

Player-centred

The player- (or learner-) centered coach typically shows the following behaviours:

- **Coaching through games** - the coach uses games to help players’ understanding and decision making capabilities. The coach may use a ‘whole – part – whole’ approach where sessions start with a conditioned and opposed game, then specific skill weaknesses are worked on, and finally the coach returns to the game. This coach is not afraid of chaos and players making mistakes. This, in turn, gives players the confidence to express themselves rather than being fearful of failure.
- **Questioning for understanding** - the coach continually checks for players’ understanding. This can be physical or verbal questioning. Be wary that the verbal questioning does not take too long. This coach takes time to listen.
- **Needs of learner/individualised learning** - sessions and practices are designed and amended according to the players’ needs. Practices are often differentiated so that more able players undertake more challenging activities and the weaker players have simpler activities.
- **Emphasis on development** - the player-centered coach takes the long term view and puts development before the result. Of course, winning is important but the primary concern for this coach is the development of the individual and team.
- **Democratic leadership** - the coach involves other staff and key players in the leadership group. Strategy and tactics are determined by consensus whereby the whole group agree on the way forward. The coach may influence this process. This coach is very open-minded.
• **Hands-off approach** - the coach steps back and allows players to express themselves. This coach spends time observing and analysing performance before generating feedback in an interactive manner.

• **Implicit and informal** - the coach uses games as the vehicle for coaching. Learning is a byproduct of the conditioned nature of the games used in practice which enhance decision-making and game awareness.

**The 14 principles of a coaching session**

1. Safety is your first concern.
2. Use your aim as an important tool to give your session structure.
3. Make your explanation effective through explanation, demonstration and/or questioning.
4. Vary the skill in exercises and game-like situations.
5. Adapt your exercise if players get bored.
6. Use the following tools to challenge players:
   a. Use of space;
   b. Increase/decrease number of players;
   c. Time - vary time for an activity or the speed of the players (walk, jog, run or sprint);
   d. Vary positioning of players;
   e. Change material, e.g. use two balls instead of one.
7. Create an environment in which players are not afraid to make mistakes.
8. Observe players’ performances.
9. Give attention to individuals, groups and the team.
10. Encourage player input and make the session interactive.
11. Maximise players’ physical activity.
12. Players should feel they have made progress at the conclusion of a practice.
13. Review the practice.
14. Make practices enjoyable.
Coaching process - ‘How’ to coach

Traditionally, the focus of coach education has been based on the technical elements of the Game, e.g. techniques, skills, tactics, etc. This technical element is referred to as ‘what’ to coach. If we focus in on the work a coach does on the pitch, many of the skills are generic and across sport. These are referred to as the ‘how’ to coach skills. Some of the ‘how’ to coach skills are listed below:

- Keep sessions fun
- Keep participants safe
- Explain and instruct
- Provide demonstrations
- Observation and analysis
- Provide feedback
- Enhance learning
- Question and listen
- Set and negotiate goals
- Plan and prepare
- Manage behaviour
- Evaluate your own coaching

At Level 2, the IRB have chosen to focus on four key ‘how’ to coach skills:

1. Instruction and explanation
2. Demonstration
3. Observation and analysis
4. Providing feedback

The key factors for each of these skills are listed on the next page. Try to use the steps in your coaching and use these as a template to measure your effectiveness.
1. Instruction and explanation

1. Plan what to say before you speak
2. Gain their attention before you start
3. Keep the message short and simple
4. Invite questions and check for understanding

2. Demonstration

1. Position so all can see and hear
2. Focus attention on 1-2 key points
3. Repeat appropriate demo more than once
4. Invite questions and check for understanding
3. Observation and analysis

1. Focus on each key factor one at a time
2. Observe action several times from different positions
3. Compare observation with correct template to find matches and mismatches
4. Determine action - build on strengths, correct errors, do nothing

4. Feedback

**Feedback - PUSH**

**Feedback - PULL**

- **STEP 1**
  - State two positives
  - Ask, “What went well?”

- **STEP 2**
  - State the major weakness
  - Ask, “What didn’t go so well?”

- **STEP 3**
  - Tell the player what to do next
  - Ask, “What will you do next time?”

‘Push’ is when you give feedback.

‘Pull’ is when you draw feedback from participants.

Your personality and coaching style will determine your push/pull preference.

Some circumstances also influence your choice of feedback method, e.g. in very cold and wet conditions, ‘pushing’ is more appropriate.
Module 2 - Values of the Game and principles of attack and defence

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Introduction

In this module, we will look at some of the values and principles that will underpin
the Game of Rugby Union and your involvement in it. Secondly, we will apply the
principles of attack and defence to the performance of a team in a game.

For both attack and defence, the principles are listed in sequential order as they
occur in play:

• The principles of attack apply when a team has won possession of the ball.
• The principles of defence apply when a team has lost possession of the ball.

This process provides coaches with a systematic method of identifying their team’s
playing strengths, weaknesses and needs. This analysis is used to prioritise the
order of the skills that need to be addressed by the coach. We will look closer at
skills analysis in the second part of this module. This analysis gives the coach the
team’s prioritised needs.
Part 1 - Values of the Game

Rugby's core values

Rugby's core values are:

- Integrity
- Solidarity
- Passion
- Respect
- Discipline

These values have been identified by the member Unions of the IRB. Everyone involved in the Game should be familiar with them and do their very best to promote the Game's core values.

The ethics of coaching

Increasingly, sporting and educational circles have become aware that the enjoyment and fulfilment of children's involvement in sport has required their total participation.

It is important that the Rugby coach taps into this willingness to participate. The coach provides the controlled environment within which the participation of the players - physically, emotionally, and mentally - can be made.

A code of ethics for the coach must be explicitly stated. This checklist of attitudes and methods of involvement provides a means by which coaches can judge their contribution to the team and to the player.

The coach's code of ethics in detail

1. Be impartial in the treatment of players
   Don't concentrate on the better players. The less able need at least equal time, if not more time. Use the more able players to coach the less able players. Have a team pattern or try to play in a way that allows all players to use the skills they have been practising. Don’t talk about players behind their backs to other players.

2. Lead by example
   This example must be set in many areas. Some of these areas are:

   - Have respect for the Laws. Teach the players that these are mutual agreements, which no one should erode or break.
   - Have respect for opponents, as without them there is no Game.
   - Have respect for officials, especially referees for whom refereeing is their recreation and from which they have a right to derive enjoyment.
   - Appear as a fit, clean, well-mannered adult.
   - Be punctual, well prepared, 'on the ball' and constructive.
The coach must:

- Be impartial in the treatment of players.
- Lead by example.
- Positively reinforce the actions of players.
- Involve players in the making of team decisions.
- Set realistic aims for the team and its players.
- Be open-minded in treatment of players and attitude towards the Game.
- Be thorough, knowledgeable and effective in coaching methods.
- Be honest with self and players.
- Follow informed, professional, medical advice at all times.
- Create an enjoyable environment in which to play the Game.

Remember that Rugby should be regarded as an element of a lifelong fitness habit and, in order for this to apply, the experience must be constructive and enjoyable. It is by setting a good example that respect is gained and a rapport that leads to a very effective coaching environment is established. It is hard to gain and easily lost.

3. Positively reinforce the actions of players
Criticism must be positive, sandwiched between praise for things done well and suggested improvements for things not done so well. You should suggest ways of improving techniques and suggest alternatives for doing something in a different and more effective way.

Praise must fit the occasion and while this may be difficult to judge, a general rule is to constantly reinforce good activity. Players who believe they are being successful will progress rapidly.

4. Involve players in the making of team decisions
This will depend largely on the maturity of players. In general, young players should be encouraged to be a part of some of the decisions being made. This involvement must be controlled and can easily be a part of practice sessions, e.g., asking for feedback at the end of each practice. To obtain useful feedback, you must be prepared to listen, but players must understand that you have the final say.

5. Set realistic aims for the team and its players
Remember that playing Rugby is just one of the demands being made on the players’ time and the aims set for the player and the team must reflect this. Aims should be achievable and not based on results, but on the acquisition of techniques and skills by the player and the team.

Aims should be explicit and specific and may be worked out in conjunction with players. All must know these aims and if they are worked out with the players, they will feel committed to them.

With very young players, attempting to work towards a single goal is a worthwhile exercise. Implied in this is that the aims and objectives must reflect the character of the team and not an ideal ‘dream’ team.
6. Be open-minded in treatment of players and attitude towards the Game
This involves being a good listener, listening to successes as well as problems. Listening must be practised. It is often not what is said directly, but what is behind the words, that is most important.

You must endeavour to keep up with developments in the Game and use these to improve the performance of the players. Your aim is to pass the player on to the next level as a competent player.

7. Be thorough, knowledgeable and effective in coaching methods
Make sure that equipment and facilities are in sufficient quantity, in good condition and are appropriate to the age and ability of the players. Practices should be as frequent and as long as the maturity of players allows. It is better to have a short, sharp, enjoyable practice than one that drags on and puts strain on the concentration span of players.

During a practice, follow these simple procedures:

• Work from the known skills to the new skills.
• Work from the simple to the complex.
• Work from the individual; to the pair; to the group; to the team.
• Divide activities and techniques into a series of simple stages.
• Make sure your instructions are simply expressed, specific and not too long.
• Correct faults but balance this against maintaining continuity in the practice.

If players are to retain what they have learned and use it in the Game, the playing environment must be relatively free from tension. If a degree of tension does exist, as it will before a game, you must avoid the temptation to give the last little ‘gems’ of advice.

8. Be honest with yourself and your players
Realise that if you always tell the truth, you will not fall into the traps that inconsistencies can create.

9. Follow informed, professional medical advice at all times
When coaching maturing players, a player’s physical welfare is more important than the success of the team. It is not worth aggravating an injury to achieve short term success. This applies particularly to head and joint injuries, as damage to these vulnerable areas can have long term effects. You must know what is safe and effective, and have a knowledge of first aid. A sideline first aid kit should be provided by the club.

10. Create an enjoyable environment in which to play the Game
While children want to have fun, as players mature, enjoyment can be gained by successfully performing the skills of the Game. If they are done successfully, success on the scoreboard will result, but the first emphasis should be on skill development. Children are not small adults. They are individual people in their own right at a different stage of development.
Responsibilities of the coach

A coach should be each and several of the following at any one time:

- A leader.
- A manager and administrator with good organisational skills.
- A social worker, counselling and advising.
- A friend, supporting and sustaining.
- A trainer, improving fitness.
- A teacher, imparting new skills and knowledge and developing positive attitudes towards the Game.
- A student, willing to listen and learn.
- A setter of standards determining a system of recognition and correction.

A coach also needs to have a knowledge of:

- The Game and its Laws.
- Practice techniques and skills.
- Motivation.
- Physical fitness.

Fair play codes for all of Rugby's stakeholders

Fair play codes exist to:

- Return the elements of enjoyment and satisfaction to the young player.
- Make adults aware that young players play for their own satisfaction and not necessarily for that of their peers, nor of adults.
- Improve physical fitness by encouraging participation by making the Game attractive, safe and enjoyable.

PARENTS’ CODE

1. Do not force an unwilling child to play Rugby.
2. Children are involved for their own enjoyment, not yours.
3. Ensure your child plays within the Laws of the Game.
4. Teach your child that honesty is more important than victory.
5. Emphasise skill improvement and good sportsmanship, more than winning. Never ridicule your child for making a mistake.
6. Applaud the good play of others. Children learn best by example.
7. Do not question the referee’s judgment and never their honesty.
8. Support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from the Game.
9. Recognise the value and importance of volunteer coaches.
1. Develop basic skills and avoid positional specialisation in the formative year.
2. Create opportunities to teach sportsmanship in the same way as you would teach basic skills.
3. Reward skill improvement and sportsmanship with praise.
4. Be reasonable in your demands of players’ enjoyment and enthusiasm.
5. Ensure that skill learning and free play, involving the implicit coaching of Rugby, have priority over highly structured competitions.

6. Make a personal commitment to keep informed of sound coaching principles and developments.
7. Help players understand the differences between the Game they play and the adult Game shown on television.
8. Help children understand the responsibilities and implications of the freedom to choose between fair and unfair play.
9. Make children aware of the physical fitness values of Rugby and its lifelong recreational value.

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1. Modify the Laws to match the players’ skill level.
2. Use common sense to ensure the game flows.
3. Ensure good sportsmanship.
4. Compliment teams on their performance if it is justified.
5. Be consistent, objective and courteous.
6. Keep informed about refereeing principles and the growth and development of young players.

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1. Create equal opportunities for all players to participate.
2. Rugby is for those involved in play, it is not a spectator sport.
3. Ensure that equipment and facilities reflect players’ needs.
4. Adapt Laws to the maturity of the player.
5. Play is for its own sake, don’t emphasise rewards.
6. Distribute other codes of conduct so that they are well known.
7. Let others know they are equally responsible for fair play.
8. Appoint only competent coaches and referees.
9. Organise courses to train coaches and referees.
### SPECTATORS’ CODE

1. Players play for their own enjoyment, not yours.
2. Do not use bad language.
3. Do not harass players, coaches and referees.
4. Applaud good play by both teams.
5. Show respect for opponents - without them there is no Game.
6. Condemn the use of violence.
7. Respect the referee’s decision.

### PLAYERS’ CODE

1. Play for your own enjoyment, not to please others.
2. Play by the Laws of the Game.
3. Never argue with refereeing decisions.
4. Control your temper.
5. Play for yourself and your team.
6. Recognise good play by teammates and opponents.
7. Treat all other players as you would like to be treated.
8. Don’t be a ‘show off’.
9. Co-operate with your coach, teammates and opponents.
Part 2 - Principles of attack and defence

The principles of Rugby

The Charter (to be read in conjunction with the Charter video)

For over 100 years, Rugby has evolved into a Game that caters for a variety of players. The range of skills and physical qualities required of players in Rugby Union makes it a unique Game. Seldom do other sports cater for such variety. The variety occurs in Rugby because the Game is based on two key principles:

- The principle of contesting possession of the ball.
- The principle of continuing play.

The skills required for contesting possession and for continuing play are considerable, and few players are skilled in all aspects of the Game to the same level of expertise. This has led to specialisation.

With the variety of shared and specialist skills that have evolved in Rugby, it has become a complex and multi-faceted Game. The unique character of the Game depends on maintaining the balance between the principles of contesting possession of the ball and continuing play.

If one principle becomes more dominant, then that variety will be lost. This particularly applies to contesting possession of the ball. The skills required are different from those used in continuing play. The contest for possession of the ball begins at the set pieces.

As the purest physical contest of the Game, the scrum tests the technique, strength and will of the forwards. The lineout demands agility and skill with variety in options from the choice of targets.

Once play gets under way, contesting possession can also take place immediately after a player is tackled and at rucks and mauls.

A team in defence may not decide to try to win the ball immediately. They must just defend by tackling and setting a defensive pattern, but they must be given opportunities to regain possession of the ball and play with it. They will only take part in the contest if they are given the possibility of turning over the possession.

The contest for possession at scrums and lineouts is achieved by having the ball thrown in down the centre. This gives both sides an opportunity to win the ball, so that they will contest for it.

Once play gets under way, this contest must continue. The reason is clear. Without a contest, the defending team will not be drawn into trying to recover the ball. Without a contest, after a tackle, or at ruck or maul, the opposition will simply spread out to defend. There will be few gaps through which to penetrate and this will substantially reduce the options available for the attacking team to go forward.
How then can we ensure that possession is contested so that the attacking side has space to operate? The most obvious way is to make sure that players are on their feet when they try to get the ball off the ground after a tackle. A player's teammates may be quicker than their opponents in support. If so, they will be able to bind together and push their opponents off the ball.

If players are lying on the ground and still involved in play, it is very difficult to push them off. They are not allowed to do this, as the Laws do not permit these actions.

Of course, if a player is very quick, the ball can be picked up and if the ball carrier is held but remains standing, the opposing team is able to try and pull the ball away.

Each of these actions offers the defending team the opportunity to regain possession of the ball, and if they do, they can set up a counter attack and achieve continuing play.

If the contest for possession does not result in a turnover for the defending team, they’ve still been drawn in by the possibility and this has created space across the field. Entering the contest for possession reduces the number of players available for the defensive screen.

Depending upon how many players are committed to the contest from either team at any moment in the game, opportunities are created for attackers to use their attacking skills, and for defenders to react in defence, while contesting for possession. The result of contesting possession is the creation of space, and space is necessary for continuing play.

So, the Game is one in which the contest creates space for the game to continue. For the Game of Rugby Union to retain its unique character, the balance between contesting for possession and continuing play must be achieved.

For the player, the variety in the many aspects of play generated creates greater satisfaction. There are many individual and collective contests during a game. Success in these mini-contests may not be reflected in the score at the end of the game, but they allow players to gain satisfaction as they test themselves against opponents with similar missions to themselves.

If a team is good enough to win the ball, they have the opportunity to keep the game going but, if their continuity skills are not as good as the defensive skills of the other team, they may lose possession. The opposing team will now attack with it.

These are the principles that govern the Game, and it is against these that the mode of play must be judged and analysed. Should the Game move away from these principles, it will lose its unique character so we are obliged to alter coaching practice, refereeing management and the Laws of Rugby to prevent this from happening. These principles provide the context within which the Game can be played.
The principles of the playing charter

The principles of the Game are the principles on which the Game is based. They enable participants to identify clearly what makes Rugby distinctive as a sport.

Attack
The team is in attack when it has possession of the ball.

Defence
The team is in defence when it doesn’t have the ball.

Contest possession in order to attack
The contest for possession is a key principle in Rugby. Various forms of this contest take place throughout all stages of the Game. This may be in dynamic play when a player from one team is in contact with the opposition, or at static restarts - scrums, lineouts or kick restarts.

All of these contests must have a degree of fairness for both teams, so that each team has the chance to gain and/or retain possession. At restarts, the initiative to commence the restart is given to the team that has not made an error.

Examples:
1. When a player who is running with the ball is tackled and places the ball on the ground in a position from which team-mates can easily pick it up, then the team is rewarded by being able to continue play.

2. When a player from one team knocks the ball forward, and a scrum is ordered by the referee, the offending team is denied the right to throw the ball into the scrum. This role is given to the opposing team. This gives the team an advantage in gaining possession when play is re-commenced.

Attack by moving the ball forward
The team in possession is, by definition, the attacking team. It tries to advance the ball, by carrying or kicking the ball forward, in the direction of the opposing team’s goal-line.

The attacking team’s players can use both the lateral space across the field of play, and the linear space down it, to perform the attack, and eventually score. The aim of the attacking team is to keep possession and to use their skills and physical abilities to move the ball forward.

Retain possession by using phase play to re-create space
As the opposing team is trying to stop the attack and regain possession of the ball to launch their own attack, the attack may be forced to regroup at a ruck or maul in order to re-establish the space to move the ball forward.

The space is regained as the ruck and maul results in defensive players grouping to contest the ball and to stop the forward movement of the maul. This creates space across the field. Space down the field is provided by the Laws of the Game creating offside lines at the hindmost foot of the maul or ruck. This means that the defending team cannot advance beyond the hindmost foot of their team until the ball is out of the ruck or maul.
A team maintains continuity of play in attack by keeping the ball and advancing the ball towards their goal-line.

**Defend to regain possession**
The initial task for the team not in possession is to deny the attacking team the space and time they need to advance the ball down the field. If the defending team achieves this, they may also be able to regain possession of the ball and launch an attack of their own. This action maintains continuity of play.

**A Game of many aspects and abilities**
The cumulative effect of the first three principles is to create a multi-faceted Game in which all the players have the opportunity to perform a wide range of individual and team skills: running, passing, catching, kicking, tackling, rucking, mauling, lineout play, scrummaging and so on.

In this way, the Game offers players of very different abilities and physical characteristics the opportunity to participate in a team together. Individual players will have many skills in common while at the same time they are able to specialise in specific positional skills that best suit them.

**Rewards and penalties**
If a team is able to play within the Laws, they will be rewarded, and if they have to play outside the Laws, they will be penalised.

**The rewarded team**
Being able to gain territory, retain possession and eventually score points rewards a team that is able to penetrate through an opponent's defence. Even though they may not have the throw-in, a team's scrum may be able to push their opponents off the ball and regain possession. For this superior skill, regaining possession of the ball is the reward.

**The penalised team**
A team in possession that kicks the ball off the field of play because other options are less favourable will be penalised by conceding the throw-in at the lineout. Their opponents will be advantaged through forcing this situation by being given the throw, and thereby the initiative, in throwing to their strength to win possession.

The players of a team in defence who are ahead of the offside line when their opponents have begun to play with the ball from scrum, lineout, ruck or maul and whose actions reduce their opponent's options will be penalised by the referee. The penalty will be in the award to their opponents of a penalty kick.

**Summary - the principles of Rugby**
- Contest for possession.
- Attack - continuity of play.
- Defence - regaining possession.
- A multi-faceted Game.
- Rewards and punishments.
The principles of attack and defence

The principles of play identify what has to be achieved by a team to play successfully in a match. They provide the coach with a checklist that can be used to analyse the team’s play.

They also provide a coach with categories in which to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of a team. These will help determine the team’s game plan and patterns of play.

The principles of play are sub-divided into the principles of attack and the principles of defence. Attack is when a team has possession of the ball. Defence is when it does not.

The principles of attack

In sequential order, the principles of attack are:

1. To gain possession of the ball…
2. …using the ball to go forward…
3. …with the support of or in support of team-mates…
4. …to maintain continuity, which…
5. …exerts pressure on the opposition, resulting in…
6. …points being scored.

1. Gain possession
To gain possession of the ball, the team must be competent in the individual, mini-unit and unit skills needed at scrums, lineouts, kick-offs and re-starts. This involves collective skills at each of these formations as well as the individual skills of catching, picking up the ball and kicking.

2. Go forward
Once possession has been won, the team may attack by going forward. To do this, the individual skills of evasive running, passing and kicking will be used, as well as mini-unit skills of support and phase play and the unit skills of back line attack.

Opportunities for evasive running most often occur when the defence is disorganised and/or outnumbered. This creates uncertainty in the defence and gaps will appear.

This will happen because the backs, in mounting an attack, have created uncertainty. Operating the back line will create an opportunity for one back to break through the defence and run down the field.

Using kicks to move the ball forward may result in possession being lost. This is because the ball may be kicked to gain territory. In this situation, the distance gained down the field compensates for the loss of possession.

Mauls can also be used to move the ball forward if the opposing team does not contest possession.
The option chosen will depend, amongst other factors, on team strengths and weaknesses, field position, the conditions of play, e.g. weather and ground conditions, the score and minutes remaining.

3. Provide support
The attack may be continued by team-mates running in support of the ball carrier in a position to receive a pass.

Alternatively, the supporting player may position so as to attract the attention of a defender. If the defender ignores the supporting player, the supporting player could receive the ball and be in a better position than the ball carrier had been. Attracting the attention of the defensive players in this way ensures that they are not available to tackle the ball carrier.

Support play is the skill players will be performing most of the time, because clearly only one player can be in possession of the ball. It is the effectiveness of support play in combining to beat the 15 defenders that will determine a team's success.

Supporting players must be used by the ball carrier to encourage them to continue to support. Once the ball has been passed, the ball carrier should immediately become a support player.

4. Maintain continuity
If the defence prevents the attack from continuing, it may be necessary to form a ruck or a maul. It is the role of rucks and mauls to enable the attacking team to re-establish the space needed to attack.

By forming rucks or mauls (often called phase play), the Laws of the Game re-establish the offside line. More space is now available between the attack and the defence, giving the attacking team time to continue their attack.

In addition, space is created across the field. This is because rucks and mauls are dynamic forward moving formations. To stop forward movement and contest the ball, the defensive team must commit a number of its players to a very small space, creating space across the field.

If the defence does not contest the ruck or maul, the formation may go forward until a try is scored. This is difficult if a ruck is formed as the ball is on the ground and cannot be picked up until it is out of the ruck. So the main advantage of the ruck is the speed with which the ball is delivered. This must be fast so that the defence does not have time to reorganise.

When a maul is formed, the ball is off the ground and the collective binding of the players around the ball carrier can drive down the field. If uncontested, a try may be scored, and if contested, the ball can be delivered from the maul and passed to the space vacated by the defence to make more progress.
5. Apply pressure
Pressure is applied to the defensive team by the attacking team gaining possession, going forward quickly and by moving into a field position as close as possible to the defensive team’s goal-line.

Pressure, then, is based on possession, pace and (field) position. The three Ps create pressure on the defending team as they will have to react to the attacking team’s choice of options.

Choosing the most effective type of attack

The type of attack that is chosen will depend on the team’s relative strengths and weaknesses. Amongst the options are:

• To attack close to the source of possession using mauling and driving play by the forwards. There are plenty of team-mates to help, but equally plenty of opponents to defend.
• To attack one or two passes from the source of possession where there is more space, fewer opponents but then also fewer team-mates.
• To attack four to five passes from the source where there is even more space, yet fewer opponents but even fewer team-mates to help.
• To attack by kicking the ball down the field so far that, even though the opposing team will regain possession, they will have difficulty returning the ball.
• To attack by kicking the ball over or through the defence so that it can be recovered by team-mates chasing it.

All things being equal, i.e. the teams being of about equal strength, the variables that influence most decisions are:

• Field position - both across and down the field.
• The source of possession - scrum, lineout, ruck, maul, regained ball.
• Weather conditions - especially the direction of the wind.
• The score at the time and the minutes remaining in the game.
• The space that is available based on the positioning of the defence:
  - If the defenders are grouped, the ball can be passed away from them to space to go forward.
  - If they are spread out, gaps will exist between individual defenders allowing the attack to go forward and through the defence.

Continuity in attack is achieved when these following conditions are met:

• Possession is retained.
• The ball carrier chooses an effective option.
• The other attacking players position themselves to support the ball carrier.
• Upon contact, possession is retained and the ball is delivered so that the attack can continue.

The key skills are:

• Decision-making.
• Passing.
• Running.
• Support play.
• Rucking and mauling.
• Kicking.

When the attack has the skills to retain the ball for a long period of time, they will be more likely to score. With time, the defence will become disorganised and space will be created.

The principles of defence

In sequential order, the principles of defence are:

1. Contest possession to...
2. …go forward to a pattern...
3. …applying pressure to...
4. …prevent territory being gained...
5. …supported by or in support of team mates to...
6. …regain possession to...
7. …counter attack.

It is the aim of defence to regain possession of the ball, although this may not be achieved by the first defender. It will be part of a collective effort that progressively works towards that goal as the defence applies defensive pressure to the attack.

1. Contesting possession

The contest for possession takes place at the scrum, lineout, kick-starts and restarts. In all these situations, it is the intention of the Laws to encourage the defending team to contest the ball to regain possession and turn defence into attack.

Fundamental to this contest is the creation of space to attack. This occurs because the defence, either by Law or to contest possession, commits players to the contest for the ball.

The Law helps in creating this space by ensuring both forward packs are grouped at scrum and lineout. The attack must do likewise, so that whoever wins the contest, by moving the ball quickly away from the contest finds space to go forward.

Lineouts and scrums demand positional specialisation to ensure the team has the opportunity to win the ball.

Height at the lineout, along with the skills of jumping, catching and physical strength at the scrum, combined with binding and driving are all essential to ensure the team is able to compete for the ball. Because players need to be specialised in ball winning skills, they may not be as skilful in the skills of attack and defence. This will create opportunities for attack or defence as mismatches will be created in open play.

If, however, the team is not successful in winning possession they should aim to reduce the options available to their opponents by vigorously contesting the ball so that their opponents’ phase play is untidy, thereby limiting their attacking options.
The contest is therefore the first step of an effective defence pattern, limiting attacking options and building towards an opportunity to regain possession.

2. Going forward
By going forward, the defence reduces the time and space of the oncoming attack. This is more successful if the defence defends to a pattern. Within this pattern, each individual player has a role.

The aim of the pattern will be to reduce the attacking team’s options. This will result in the option chosen by the attackers not being best choice, and the defence must be ready to react to this. Or, the option may be performed badly. Both possibilities may create a situation that allows possession to be regained.

For example, the attacking team’s options may be reduced by:

- Defensive player positioned inside the ball carrier, forcing the player away from support and into outside space, using up the space needed by the attacker’s team-mates.
- Positioning to reduce kicking options so that the kick may be rushed or the kick made to an area of the field where the ball can be easily caught and a counter attack mounted.
- Contesting set play (scrums and lineouts) so that untidy, delayed delivery from a stationary or backward moving set piece reduces options.

3. Applying pressure
Pressure is applied by taking away space and time, tackling the ball carrier so that possession of the ball can be contested. After a tackle, the defence may have to settle for stopping the ball carrier running down the field and re-establishing the pattern as skilled ball carriers will make the ball available to team-mates.

Key to this is patience. To try and regain possession immediately may result in an infringement or the over-commitment of players. The first will concede a penalty and the second will create space for the opposing attack to penetrate.

4. Prevent territory being gained
Success here depends on the quality of the tackles that are made, as the aim of a tackle is to stop the ball carrier immediately and not let the player progress through the tackle beyond the point of contact. In close quarter play, this is very important as any gain, however small, can allow the attacking team to build the momentum.

5. Providing support
The tackler usually needs the support of team-mates in order to recover the ball. The support may assist by:

- Completing the tackle.
- Contesting possession at the tackle, e.g. picking up a loose ball.
- Wrenching the ball from an opponent who has been held.
- Intercepting a pass.

In addition, support players must be skilled at forming rucks and mauls to contest and regain possession.
6. Regaining possession
The outcome of regaining possession is the completion of the defensive phase of play from which the team can reverse the process and attack.

It is the culmination of the other principles progressively eroding the time and space to attack. As pressure is applied, the team will be rewarded with opportunities that allow them to regain possession.

7. Counter attack
When possession is regained, the team should immediately react and attack. The team will miss the opportunity to take advantage of the momentary hesitation by opponents if there is any delay.

Counter attack can take place whenever possession changes in dynamic play.

Conventionally, the ball being kicked to a player by the opposition is looked on as the most common opportunity to counter attack.

Other opportunities occur whenever there is a turnover, when:

- Advantage is played following an infringement.
- A loose ball is gathered.
- A pass is intercepted.
- The ball is ripped from an opponent.
- The ball is regained following a tackle.

The ball is a magnet, which attracts many players. When possession is regained, play which takes place around the place where the turnover took place will be more easily contested again by the opposition. Consequently, moving the ball away from the congestion to space across the field offers the best opportunity to take the counter attack forward.

Once the attack is initiated, the principles of attack then apply once again.
Module 3 - Planning and delivery

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Learning outcome

At the conclusion of this module, participants will have shown the ability to:

• Apply the practice planning method explained and demonstrated in the module.
• Apply skill development techniques to Rugby skill problems.
Practice planning and conducting skill development

Base the aim on the team’s performance, not on the outcome. By doing this, the focus will be on how the players play, their skills and decisions. These are the aspects that you, personally, as coach, have the power to develop in a positive way. Through your team performing as successfully as it can, the team’s outcome goals will see the same improvement.

Prioritise what you need to cover so that the most important needs are met. Do not try and cover everything. You won’t have sufficient time to do everything as comprehensively as you would like.

It can be better to treat the entire practice time between two games as one single block of time, and plan the practice as if it is one long one instead of two shorter ones.

The allocation of time is flexible. It is getting the job done that counts. Time allocation should reflect priorities and the quality of the practice. Don’t move on if the improvement that can be reasonably expected at a certain time is not observed.

A perfect practice probably means that there is insufficient opposition. It will lead to artificial confidence that will result in a lack of success in a game. Remember that Rugby is an imperfect sport as the contest between two teams for one ball can never be duplicated in a game as it is practised, as there are too many variables. It is better to sequence play together at practice as it occurs in a game and to teach players how to adapt to the ever-changing situations with which they are faced. By players getting better at making decisions and adapting to what is happening in front of them, you are doing what is best for them.

Practices are learning experiences in which pressure results in errors being made. Players learn from these errors. It is better to start from a single skill and to then sequence that skill into a range of skills in play. In this way, the players will be practising as they play. Sequencing and variety create functionality that will achieve the game plan.

Another option is the ‘whole – part - whole’ approach, which starts with a game in which faults are identified, progresses to a practice which addresses those faults, and then moves back to a game in which the corrected skill can be implemented.

Activities should simulate the team’s play. Borrowed activities should only be used if they are going to address your team’s needs. Activities are a means to an end - not an end in themselves.
The practice structure

Briefing and administration
Ensure that the logistics of the practice are explained. Amongst these items are:

- Balls, cones, tackle bags and other items of equipment.
- Time, place and the duration of the practice.
- Practice objectives and structure.
- Standards of behaviour, code of conduct and player organisation procedures.

Warm-up (5-10 minutes)
For between five and ten minutes, the players should ‘sweat-up’, raising their body temperature, doing some dynamic stretches and practising simple skill activities that reflect their needs. Progressively increase the pace of the activities so that the players are warmed up and ready for a suitably intensive practice.

Individual skills (15-25 minutes)
The individual skills are:

- Handling.
- Running and evasion.
- Tackling and falling in the tackle.
- Falling.
- Kicking.
- Contact skills and body position.

Progress from the simple to the more complex. Concentrate on the skills players are least likely to perform in their own play. This particularly applies to the use of the weaker side of the body. For most players, this is the left side. Increase the intensity of practice by reducing recovery time, increasing the duration of each player’s ‘turn’ and increasing the speed and distance of each ‘turn’. Remember all skills can be practised in a conditioned game.

Unit skills (10-20 minutes)
- Forwards - scrumming and lineout play.
- Backs - attack and defence.

Mini-unit skills (10-20 minutes)
- Phase play - rucks and mauls.
- Attack and defence following phase play.
- Support play in attack and defence.
- Kick-offs, 22m drop-outs, penalty kicks and free kicks.

Team play (10-20 minutes)
As a team, practise how the team will play in games both in attack and defence, i.e. the patterns to which the team will play. The team practice should reinforce the performance of the skills.

Warm-down (5-10 minutes)
- Reduce the level of intensity.
- Stretch to assist in recovery.
- Use ball skills while warming down.
Debriefing
Meet with other members of the team’s management and, should they be mature enough to contribute, the players themselves, for a few minutes to invite feedback on the practice session.

The 10 principles of a skills practice

1. Practice the skill in a game-like situation as soon as your players are able to do so.
2. The time devoted to learning a new skill should be short and frequent.
3. Every player should work on the common range of skills throughout the practice.
4. Maximise the use of available equipment and facilities.
5. Players should feel they have made progress at the conclusion of a practice.
6. Create an environment in which players are not afraid to make mistakes.
7. Encourage player input and feedback depending on their experience and maturity.
8. Practices are for team and player improvement.
9. Ensure players use their weaker side - most people are right-handed.
10. Make practices enjoyable.

Physical and mental preparation

Physical preparation
- Coaches should understand the general principles of fitness and encourage players to regard these as the basis of a lifetime fitness habit.
- The fitness programme should be divided into three periods:
  - Off season.
  - Pre-season.
  - In-season.
- As players mature, the fitness sessions can increase in duration and the fitness can be specific to positional and player needs.
- The main variables that must be considered when developing a fitness programme are:
  - Player maturity.
  - Body type, height and weight.
  - Positional requirements.
  - Level of play.
  - A player’s initial physical condition.
- The main components of a fitness programme are:
  - Aerobic fitness/stamina.
  - Anaerobic fitness/interval training.
  - Strength.
  - Speed.
  - Agility.
  - Flexibility.
  - Power - strength and speed.

For further information go to: www.irbrugbyready.com or www.irbsandc.com
Mental preparation

- Get to know your players by:
  - Individual conversations.
  - Team meetings.
  - Speaking to the players’ family and peers.
  - Becoming familiar with the psychological make-up of the age groups you coach.

- Know why players participate in Rugby. Different player motivations require different actions from the coach (see the table below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for participating</th>
<th>What is needed from you</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| To have fun              | • Make practices and games enjoyable  
                          | • Maximise player participation |
| To improve skills and acquire new ones | • Balance explanation (5-10%), demonstration (10-25%), and practice (65-85%)  
                          | • Demonstrations must be successfully and competently performed  
                          | • Provide feedback without upsetting the rhythm of the practice  
                          | • Give instruction to everyone not just the highly skilled  
                          | • Set performance goals to which players can aspire |
| To meet and play with friends | • Offer free time in which the players can organise activities for themselves  
                          | • Create and build team spirit by planning social occasions |
| To play an exciting and enjoyable game | • Try to be innovative to maintain excitement  
                          | • Invite ‘guest’ coaches  
                          | • Use a range of activities to achieve a goal |
| To succeed and win games | • Keep winning in perspective. For each winning team, there’s a losing one. Sometimes that will be you  
                          | • Emphasise performance and not outcome goals for both the team and each individual player |
| To get fit                | • Participation in matches will not increase fitness  
                          | • Fitness is the key to enjoyment. Unfit players will feel tired and will not be able to perform skills satisfactorily |
Module 4 - Key factor analysis and player welfare

4(a) - Key factor analysis of the skills of Rugby Union

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Learning outcome

At the conclusion of this section, the coach will understand the concept of key factors, identify the key factors of a skill that are not being correctly executed and design a session to address the issues.

Introduction

The principles of attack and defence identify what has to be achieved while the performance of individual skills is the route by which this can take place. There is therefore a link between each principle and the skills used to achieve the principle. This link is shown in the two tables below.
## ATTACK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles of play</th>
<th>Examples of skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Gain possession to</td>
<td>• Catching&lt;br&gt;• Picking up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Go forward with</td>
<td>• Passing and receiving&lt;br&gt;• Evasion&lt;br&gt;• Running lines&lt;br&gt;• Kicking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The support of team-mates to</td>
<td>• Passing and receiving&lt;br&gt;• Running lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Maintain continuity of play exerting</td>
<td>• Falling in the tackle&lt;br&gt;• Ball availability in contact</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Pressure to score points</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## DEFENCE

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1. Contest possession and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Picking up</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Contact skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Go forward</td>
<td>• Running lines</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Applying pressure to</td>
<td>• Tackling</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Ball recovery in contact</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Prevent territory being gained</td>
<td>• Tackling</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Supported by or in support of team-mates to</td>
<td>• Tackle completion</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Contesting possession</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Regain possession and</td>
<td>• Ball recovery in contact</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Catching</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Picking up</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Counter attack</td>
<td>• Running and evasion skills</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Passing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Kicking</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Picking up</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
What is key factor analysis?

Key factor analysis takes each of the skills of the Game and breaks that skill into its component parts, which, when executed in the correct sequence, will enable the player to execute the skill correctly. This list also provides a coach with a template to compare a player’s performance against and identify areas that need to be addressed.

Application of key factors to the video clips

1. Review the clip and try to identify the player whose skill breaks down and which component of that skill has an issue. It may be more than one player or contributions by multiple players.
2. Identify the key factors breakdown.
3. Discuss the causes of the error with your group, using the key factors as a checklist.
4. List these in order of priority.

Application of key factors to scenarios

1. Make sure that the scenario(s) you have been given are fully understood.
2. Identify the error.
3. Identify the player(s) responsible for the error. In some cases, more than one player may be responsible, even if the skill is an individual one. For example, when a pass does not achieve the outcome this may be the fault of the passer or the receiver, or a bit of both.
4. Discuss the causes of the error with your group, using the key factors as a checklist.
5. List these in order of priority.
Key factor analysis checklist

INDIVIDUAL SKILLS

Handling

PASSING

- Run straight
- Hold the ball in two hands
- Commit a defender
- Prop on the inside leg
- Turn side on to the defence to face the supporting receiver
- Swing the arms through in the direction being passed to

- Use the elbows and wrists to control the speed and flight of the ball as the ball is released
- Follow through with the hands in the direction of the pass
- Pass to the ‘target’ area at chest height in front of the receiver
- Support the receiver once the pass has been completed

RECEIVING A PASS

- Position so that the receiver can run towards the ball in its completed flight
- Run towards the space created by the passer

- Extend the hands to catch the ball early
- Watch the ball into the hands
- Catch the ball with the fingers and hands

CATCHING THE KICKED BALL

- Position to move towards the ball
- Assess whether the ball can be caught by staying on the ground or by jumping into the air to catch it
- Extend the arms in the direction of the ball as a guide
- Position with the shoulder and hip towards opponents

- Call your name and ball, e.g. “Jim’s ball”
- Watch the ball into the hands
- Catch the ball at eye level, guiding it into the hands, arms and eventually into the body
PICKING UP THE BALL

- Approach the ball in a crouched position
- Position above the ball side-on, straddling the ball with one foot to the front and the other behind
- Sink at the hips and bend at the knees
- Keep the head up in the neutral position
- Steady the ball with the front hand and scoop it up with the back hand
- Bring the ball into the chest while assessing options

SPIRAL PASS

- Turn the ball so that its long axis is approximately 30 degrees to the horizontal
- In the passing action, use the top hand to give power and to impart spin
- Use the bottom hand to provide stability and direction

CLEARING PASS

- Body in a crouch
- Sink at the hips, bend at the knees
- Right foot to the ball when passing with the right hand and left foot to the ball when passing with the left hand
- Other foot a comfortable distance away for stability, pointing in the direction of the pass
- Head over the ball, eyes on the ball
- When passing right, use the right hand for stability and the left hand for power and vice versa
- Follow through with the passing hand by pointing it in the direction of the receiver

DIVE PASS

- Position to see the ball and the receiver in the same line of vision
- Approach the ball in a crouched position
- Sink at the knees, bend at the hips, close to the ball
- Spread the fingers to scoop under the ball grasping it with the hands
- Drive with the legs and at the same time pass the ball to the target area using both hands
- Follow through and use the hands to control the direction, speed and flight of the ball
### Passing Out of the Tackle
- Hold the ball firmly in two hands to withstand the impact of the tackle
- Upon being tackled, turn with the impact of the tackle
- Keep the arms free above the level of the tackle
- Before falling to the ground, pass the ball to the space the receiver is moving into

### Screen Pass
- Drive into a defender side on
- Upon contact remain standing
- Turn back on to the defender
- Screen the ball from interference
- Make a close pass to a team-mate

### Evasive Running with the Ball
- Carry the ball in both hands
- Run towards the nearest defenders
- Change the direction of movement close to them, using a side step, swerve, and/or change of pace
- Move into the space furthest from the defenders
- Accelerate to take advantage of the space that has been created

### Side Step
- Run towards the nearest defenders
- Change direction close to them by pushing sideways off the right foot to go left and the left foot to go right
- Accelerate to take advantage of the defender's hesitation

### Running
SWERVE

- Run towards the nearest defenders
- Change direction away from them by veering away into the outside space
- Accelerate to take advantage of the defender’s hesitation

RUNNING IN SUPPORT OF THE BALL CARRIER

- Run in anticipation of where play can be entered into
- Position so that play may be entered without slowing down by being behind the ball carrier
- Tell the ball carrier this positioning
- Enter play in the most effective way

RUNNING IN DEFENCE

- Run in anticipation of where play can be entered into
- Position so that the ball carrier’s options are reduced
- When the ball carrier decides on the option, react to initiate regaining possession of the ball
Kicking

**PUNT KICK**

- Stand in balance
- Shoulder forward: right foot - left shoulder; left foot - right shoulder
- Hold the ball in two hands so that its long axis is aligned with the foot
- Allow the ball to fall to the striking position in this alignment, while at the same time:
  - Stepping onto the non-kicking foot, which should be in line with the target
  - Swinging the kicking foot through the line of the ball, striking it along its long axis
- Adjusting the flight of the ball by adjusting the angle of the foot and the point at which the ball is struck
- Follow through with the kicking foot
- Extend the arm on the opposite side of the body for balance
- Throughout, keep the head down and eyes on the ball

**DROP KICK**

- Hold the ball so that when it is dropped to the ground it bounces up in the same alignment
- Step forward onto the non-kicking foot aligning the line of the instep with the target
- Drop the ball to the ground the width of the hips from the non-kicking foot
- Turn the shoulder of the non-kicking foot towards the target
- Keep the head down and over the ball
- Swing the kicking foot through the line of the ball so that it is struck at the point of maximum velocity
- Make contact with the bone on the top of the instep. For low kicks, strike the ball close to the ground; for high kicks, let the ball bounce higher
- Follow through in a natural arc onto the toes of the non-kicking foot
- Use the arm of the non-kicking side of the body for balance
PLACE KICK

- Choose a kicking tee that suits the player’s kicking style
- Lean the ball slightly forward to expose the ‘sweet spot’
- Before moving back, stand over the ball in the kicking position
- Move back to a position that is comfortable
- Focus on the ‘sweet spot’ when moving back
- Relax
- Focus, e.g. ‘Head down, follow through’
- Use imagery if needed
- Approach by running in an arc to open up the hips and get maximum power
- Place the non-kicking foot hip width from the ball with the line of the instep of the foot in line with the target
- The side seam of the ball should be in line with the ankle of the non-kicking foot
- Move the non-kicking arm forward to turn the shoulder side on to the target
- Bring the kicking foot down and through the strike zone
- Keep the head directly above the ball
- Make contact with the bone on top of the instep
- Follow through in an arc with the kicking foot
- Rise onto the toes of the non-kicking foot

Tackling/Contact

SIDE-ON TACKLE

- Position inside the ball carrier
- Run in a crouched position
- Head up, back straight
- Sight the target - just below the ball carrier’s buttock
- Drive with legs to make firm contact with the shoulder on the target
- Head behind the ball carrier’s body
- Wrap the arms around the ball carrier’s lower torso
- Hold on tightly until the ball carrier is on the ground
- Get to the feet and recover the ball
FALLING IN THE TACKLE

- Hold the ball firmly in two hands while running down the field
- When being tackled, turn with the impact
- Land on the back of the shoulder
- Lie at right angles to the line of running
- Pass the ball or place the ball so team mates can recover it

BALL PRESENTATION IN CONTACT

- Run in a low position that is able to withstand impact
- Carry the ball in both hands so that options can be performed immediately
- Anticipate contact by turning side on
- Drive into contact in this position by sinking low and driving up
- Spread the feet to shoulder width, sink at the hips, bend at the knees
- Turn to face team-mates
- Make the ball available
- Perform the best option to maintain continuity

FALLING ON THE BALL

- Approach the ball in a crouched position
- Slide into the ball on the hip and thigh
- Grasp the ball into the body
- Pass the ball to a team-mate or
- Place the ball so that team-mates can recover it or
- Regain the standing position in possession of the ball
### FEND/HAND-OFF

- Prepare to side step or swerve around an opposing player
- Transfer the ball to the arm furthest from the tackler
- While side stepping or swerving away from the tackler, allow the tackle to come within arm’s length
- Using an open hand, push the tackler away by straightening the arm very firmly

### FRONT-ON TACKLE

- Move slightly inside the ball carrier
- Move forward into the tackle
- Drive with the legs
- Make firm contact with the shoulder between the waist and the hips
- Wrap with the arms
- Turn with the impact
- Regain the feet and recover the ball

### TACKLING FROM BEHIND

- Target the waistband
- Drive with the legs as close to the ball carrier as possible
- Drive with the legs and make impact with the shoulder
- Wrap with the arms
- Regain the feet and recover the ball

### SMOOTHER TACKLE

- Move forward towards the ball carrier
- Plant the foot as close to the ball carrier as possible
- Drive with a shoulder firmly to make contact just above the position of the ball
- Continue to drive the ball carrier back
- Wrap with the arms to prevent the ball being released or grab the ball carrier by the jersey
- Turn the ball carrier towards supporting team mates or
- Take the ball carrier to the ground, turning the player so that the ball has to be released where the tackler’s team can regain it
UNIT SKILLS

LINEOUT

- Line up along the line of touch one metre from the opposing lineout in a formation that enables possession to be gained
- Throw accurately down the line of touch to the catcher
- Step to the line of touch and jump to secure possession either by catching or deflecting the ball
- Drive up with the arms to increase the height of the jump
- Assist the catcher by lifting the player. The front lifter should lift on the thighs and the back lifter just below the buttocks

- Catch or deflect the ball
- Move the ball and turn the body away from opposing players
- Land in a stable fully supported body position
- Hold the ball low so that team-mates may drive in a low body position and secure the ball
- Bind with the catcher and other team-mates to form a protective screen
- Control the ball
- Deliver or drive forward and deliver the ball

SCRUMMAGING

- Select according to body type
- Assemble with the front row one arm’s length from the opposing front row
- Bind securely but comfortably as a unit before engaging the opposition
- Engage by following the sequence, “Crouch” - “Touch” - “Pause” - “Engage”
- Crouch low so that the front rows drive up into position
- Upon engagement - head up, back straight, spine in line and square on

- Bind onto the opposing prop’s upper body
- Co-ordinate the throw-in with the scrum pushing forward. Have a call for this
- Hook the ball between the loose-head prop’s feet
- Channel the ball to the right of the number 8
- Deliver the ball to the half back/scrum half
BACK-LINE ATTACK

- Stand sufficiently far apart to isolate each defender
- Align to give sufficient time to pass the ball along the back-line
- Retain the alignment as the back-line moves forward
- Draw an opposition defender before passing
- Pass in front of the next back in the line so that the ball is easy to catch and peripheral vision is retained
- Create a gap just before the tackle line for the extra player to run through the initial line of defence
- Enter the gap to ensure the defence has insufficient time to tackle the extra player
- Use the disorganisation in the defence to pass to an unmarked player
- Accelerate through the gap
- Use support players to continue the attack

BACK-LINE DEFENCE

- Align within the back-line on a slight angle back from the source of possession
- Keep the alignment when moving forward towards the opposing players
- Align with the defender’s outside shoulder in line with the attacker’s inside shoulder
- Run on an angle from inside the ball carrier
- Tackle the attacker if the player has the ball
- If the player has passed the ball, alter the line of running to support in regaining the ball when a tackle is made or to tackle ball carriers running back in the opposite direction
- If the ball has been kicked before a tackle has been made, run quickly to support the player who is most likely to catch or recover the ball
- Assist in regaining possession by choosing the best option
PHASE PLAY

- Anticipate the position at which the ball carrier will be held or tackled
- Run on a line so that play can be moved into
- Move into play running a line that is parallel to the touchline
- Either pick up the ball if it is available or bind with team-mates
- Drive through the line of the ball (through the ‘gate’) pushing opponents away from the ball
- Drive with the back parallel to the ground and the head up
- Use binding to prevent falling over the ball

RUCKING

- Drive forward as a bound unit while delivering the ball
- Drive as far forward as possible without becoming isolated
- Fall parallel to the goal-line so that the player’s body is between the opposition and the ball
- Place the ball towards team-mates
- Bind and drive past the ball coming through the ‘gate’
- Create a formation with sufficient width to deliver the ball from a protected position

MAULING

- When held, remain standing
- Turn to face team-mates
- Stand in a stable position
- Hand the ball to the first supporting player
- Support by binding on both sides of the original ball carrier
- Bind and drive forward in a balanced formation similar to a scrum
- Should the maul ‘roll’ to the left or right, go with the movement unless it is likely to result in the ball going into touch
**SUPPORT PLAY - ATTACK**

- Anticipate the way play will develop
- Take running lines in depth so that play can be entered into
- Position close to but back from the ball carrier
- Tell the ball carrier where the player is in support
- Support to ensure possession is retained and that the ball is moved forward

**SUPPORT PLAY - DEFENCE**

- Anticipate the way play will develop
- Choose a running line so that play can be moved into rather than have play moving away
- Complement the actions of players closer to or at the ball to ensure possession is regained

**KICK STARTS AND RESTARTS - THE KICKING TEAM**

- There are a number of options for kick starts. Here, the high kick in which the kicker’s team-mates can recover the ball will be explained
- Kick high enough to allow team-mates to be in position to catch the ball
- Run to catch the ball on an angle from the touchline
- Catch the ball while at the same time turning back-on to the opposition
- Bind on the ball carrier if the ball has been caught or
- Position to recover deflected ball and bind in support of the ball-recoverer
KICK STARTS AND RESTARTS - THE RECEIVING TEAM

- Position back from the likely position of the ball once it has been kicked
- Move into the ball to catch it. The player may be assisted by being lifted into the air by gripping the shorts. This provides greater height and stability
- Position to recover deflected ball
- Bind on the ball carrier to form a ruck or maul from which the team can attack

COUNTER-ATTACK

- Secure possession of the ball
- Hold opponents while passing the ball away to space
- Support in space to offer receiving options unless the ball carrier is tackled. In this situation, support as for phase play
- After passing, run in support

For practices, go to www.irbcoaching.com
4(b) - Player welfare

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Learning outcome

By the end of this section, you will be able to identify factors involved in player welfare management and demonstrate safe coaching of individual and unit skills.

Introduction

Rugby coaches are in charge of a sport which involves physical contact. Any sport involving physical contact has inherent dangers. It is important to use the referee’s authority in order to ensure that the Game is played within the Laws, and as safely as possible.

It is important that coaches train players in techniques which reduce the risk of injury upon contact, encourage players to play within the Law as safely as possible with a spirit of fair play, and to fully respect the referee’s decisions. Coaches have a duty to coach players in the best techniques both to be effective in the game and to reduce the likelihood of injury. All participants on an IRB Level 2 Coaching course should have completed IRB Rugby Ready either as a face-to-face course or via the online self-check test at www.irbrugbyready.com.
Coaching specific skills

Scrum
The following suggestions emphasise that players in the scrum should be taught good technique and understand the Laws that relate to the front row. Front row players are vulnerable to the possibility of cervical spine injuries during the scrum. Accordingly, in coaching front row play, the coach should address the following factors:

- Check that players have the appropriate body type and physical characteristics for their positions.
- Check that players are appropriately matched, even in practice situations.
- When binding against opposition, the props should be coached to keep their shoulders above the level of their hips.
- Coaches should know the Law variations for players under 19 years of age, especially the Law variations relating to the limits on the ‘push’, the number of players in the scrum and provisions for the substitution of players in the scrum.

Tackle
In teaching tackling, the coach should:

- Emphasise that the head is placed to the side when tackling from the front or back, or behind when tackling from the side.
- Encourage the tackler to tackle with the shoulder and not the head.
- Practise tackling technique at every practice so that it becomes as commonly performed skill as all the other skills.
- Develop practices that progress from low to high intensity.
- Check that the players understand the key factors in tackling.
- Discourage illegal and dangerous tackling.

Ruck and maul
All players are required to ruck and maul and should have the opportunities to develop and practice these skills. Coaches should:

- Emphasise correct body position, in which the back is flat and parallel with the ground and the chin is away from the chest and contact is made with the shoulder.
- Discourage players from techniques which tend to cause the chin to drop to the chest and place the player in a vulnerable position.
- Progress from low to high intensity and, during the progression, pay attention to body position as players approach and enter the ruck or maul.

Risk transfer
Coaches should be aware of the opportunities that are available to reduce risk and, in particular, should take steps to:

- Become accredited.
- Continue to develop their skills through subsequent certification and coaching courses.
- Check with a club or Union for the existence of liability insurance.
- Explore through their local Union the use of waiver forms.
Transportation

If coaches are responsible for organising the transportation of players, they should:

- Avoid drivers who have a known poor driving record.
- In the case of bus or mini-bus transportation, verify that drivers have a licence appropriate to the vehicle and appropriate insurance.
- Take reasonable care in making all transportation arrangements.

Players' rights

The players have the right to competent coaching, adequate supervision and a safe and properly maintained practice and Game environment. The players have the right to a fair process in the case of selection. Coaches must:

- Establish clear selection policies.
- Develop the criteria for selection.
- Ensure a fair selection process and inform players of their status, strengths, weaknesses.

Personal standards

The coach must set a good example in all aspects of life. Minor things such as punctuality are just as important as having high personal standards. You must keep your own counsel and must not discuss issues with those who are not directly involved unless you have a leadership group of senior players and staff.

The team

- The coach must be inclusive in developing team policies while at the same time ensuring that all know that the final say is with the coach.
- Ensure the coach’s and players’ goals are aligned.
- The coach must ensure that the team practices and plays in as safe and enjoyable an environment as possible given that Rugby is a contact sport.

Coach duties

The coach’s duties are:

1. To provide a safe environment.
2. To adequately plan activities.
3. To work with medical staff to evaluate participants for injury and incapacity.
4. To make sure participants are not mismatched in competition.
5. To only utilise safe and proper equipment.
6. To warn participants of Rugby’s inherent risks.
7. To closely supervise activities.
8. To know how to administer first aid and have an emergency plan in place.
9. To develop clear, written rules for training and general conduct.
10. To keep adequate records.
Module 5 - Functional role analysis, selection and Laws

5(a) - Functional role analysis

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Learning outcome

At the conclusion of this section, the coach will understand the concept of functional roles, the importance of the selection of the correct role by players and be able to analyse passages of play to identify different functional roles. For each functional role, identify the responsibilities and skills required. Finally, the coaches will understand the design of a coaching session to develop functional role selection by players.

Introduction

This section introduces the concept of functional roles and their use in Rugby. In Rugby, each player has an identified and named position; however, they only really take this position, or role, at the scrum. During open play, players are ball carriers, supporters, tacklers and many other roles. Players must be able to identify and assume the correct role and coaches must understand all the roles, responsibilities and required skills for the role the players should be assuming.
What are functional roles?

Functional roles are the roles that players assume during the game. While players have designated positions, they spend more time assuming and executing a large number of different functional roles. So while a player may be a prop with 3 on their back, during the game they will also be a lifter, ball carrier, supporter, tackler, rucker, etc, etc.

Often, players are technically proficient at executing each role but make the wrong decision as to the role to assume in a given situation. This module is intended to focus the coach on functional role identification, selection and player decision-making on role selection.

Functional role analysis

Functional role analysis is the process that a coach uses to identify different functional roles and which role a player should select in a given situation.

Functional roles in open play

As the game moves from set piece to open play, the responsibilities and skills required from the players changes. As the ball is moved into open play, the players must be able to recognise the role they must assume to enable the team to be successful. These roles include:

- Ball carrier
- Jumper
- Catcher
- Supporter
- Tackler
- Lifter
- Kicker

While there are a number of others, this gives the concept of the different roles and that players must assume and change roles during the game.
Functional roles in set play

While the functional roles in the scrum are typically set, the lineout and other set pieces have roles that can change dynamically. A good example of this is the lineout. While the props are usually lifters, the other players can be either lifters or jumpers. This dynamic role change depends primarily on the tactics and opposition. The roles in the lineout are listed below:

- Thrower
- Decoy
- Catcher
- Lifter
- Distributer

These roles will change dynamically from lineout to lineout and even within a given lineout.

Functional roles at the breakdown

The most dynamic area for functional role selection is in contact. Often the ball is won or lost based on the correct role selection by the players involved, not necessarily on the skill proficiency of the players. The following table details examples of the roles, responsibilities and skills required at the breakdown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functional role</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Skills required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Ball carrier    | • Place ball in position to be retained  
                   • Enable quick ball  
                   • Frame narrow ‘gate’  | • Avoid strong contact with defender using evasion  
                   • Ensure ball is not tied up  
                   • Use long body or jack-knife to narrow ‘gate’ |
| 1st rucker      | • Clear tackler away from ball carrier | • Approach with low body position  
                   • Clear tackler lying on ball carrier  
                   • Drive poacher away from ball  
                   • Clear poacher over the ball away from the ball |
| 2nd rucker      | • Secure possession | • Strong body position over ball  
                   • Engage defenders as they arrive |
| 3rd rucker      | • Support 2nd rucker | • Strong body position  
                   • Engage to 1st rucker in strong support position  
                   • Prepare to move into 2nd rucker position if they are moved out of position by defence |
5(b) - Selection

Contents

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N.B. It is assumed that functional roles will have been completed before starting this section.

Learning outcome

By the conclusion of this section, the participants will be able to develop and use functional roles analysis to establish the criteria for selection by playing position and use the criteria to select a team.

When selecting a Rugby team, it is essential that the selectors use the same set of criteria for each playing position because each player who is competing for the position must be judged by the same criteria. The functional roles analysis that has already been completed provides coaches with a method of deciding on these criteria. Consequently, this technique is used as the basis of the criteria. To help you with this, the positional requirements of each position are now explained.
Positional requirements

Once the selectors have a game plan, they can take each position and list the positional requirements needed to achieve it. Listed below are the positional requirements for each position. The positional requirements listed are not for a specific game plan, they are a checklist for selection that can be modified to suit the game plan that has been developed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game situation</th>
<th>Positional requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scrum</strong></td>
<td>• ‘Call’ the scrum into engagement with the opposition. &lt;br&gt;• ‘Lead in’ by being the first member of the front row to contact the opposing front row on your throw-in. &lt;br&gt;• Stabilise the scrum when the ball is put in on the loose-head so that the ball is delivered from a stable platform.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lineout</strong></td>
<td>• Take up the same stance in the lineout no matter where the ball is thrown. &lt;br&gt;• Stand square-on to the opposition with the outside leg slightly ahead of the inside leg to the opposition. This minimises body movement when lifting the catchers. &lt;br&gt;• As the catcher moves to the centre to jump and catch the ball, move in unison so that the support play prevents opponents making contact. &lt;br&gt;• Assist the catcher to jump higher and to stabilise the jumper at maximum height until the ball is caught. &lt;br&gt;• Once the ball has been caught, make sure the catcher lands in a stable position, back on to opponents. &lt;br&gt;• Hold the line to provide a protective screen when the ball is not thrown to #2 and #4 jumpers. &lt;br&gt;• Alter positioning to ensure protected delivery of the ball by being back on to the half back and contribute to the drive by turning front on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Field play</strong></td>
<td>• Decide on the best role to ensure clean ball is won to continue play when approaching phase play. &lt;br&gt;• Carry the ball aggressively when in possession. &lt;br&gt;• Rucks - options when the team is in possession are: &lt;br&gt;  - Bind and drive past the ball. &lt;br&gt;  - Bind to form a screen to protect the delivery of the ball to the half back or other distributors. &lt;br&gt;• Rucks - options when the opposing team is in possession are: &lt;br&gt;  - Drive forward to stop their drive and to slow their delivery of the ball. &lt;br&gt;  - Position on the side of the ruck and perform the defensive scrum role of a flanker. &lt;br&gt;  - Join the defensive screen to tackle a designated ball carrier. &lt;br&gt;• Mauls - options when the team in possession are: &lt;br&gt;  - Bind on the side to protect the delivery of the ball to the half back. &lt;br&gt;  - Act as the pivot for a rolling maul after initially binding and driving forward. &lt;br&gt;• Mauls - options when the opposing team is in possession are: &lt;br&gt;  - Drive forward to slow down or stop their drive and to slow their delivery of the ball. &lt;br&gt;  - Stop the rolling maul by driving onto the side towards which the maul is rolling. &lt;br&gt;  - Stop the rolling maul by allowing it to roll towards the near touchline and then driving it into touch. &lt;br&gt;• In defence, at all times be aware that the ball carrier could cut back against the initial flow of play. Be prepared to tackle the ball carrier.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LOOSE-HEAD PROP
(Only additional requirements to those listed for the tight-head prop are mentioned below.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game situation</th>
<th>Positional requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Scrum**                           | • Bind tightly with the hooker so that the hooker is as close as possible to the ball about to be put into the scrum and to prevent the hooker and prop being ‘split’. Do not bind so tightly that it becomes difficult and uncomfortable for the lock to push effectively.  
• On the put-in, drive slightly upward to open up the tunnel, letting the hooker have an unimpeded strike at the ball.  
• Reach as far forward as comfortable with the outside arm upon engagement. Transfer the opposing tight-head’s weight to the area between the shoulder blades. |
| **Lineout** (first position in the lineout) | • Assume the same stance for all lineouts. This will be difficult if the player is used as a catcher as well as a supporting player.  
• Develop catching options: Amongst these options are:  
  - To catch a fast, flat throw.  
  - To catch a back lob which the player takes moving backwards after feinting to go forward.  
  - To deflect the ball directly from the top of the jump to the half back.  
• Become the receiver of the ball from a deflected catch at the end of the lineout. If there is a gap in their lineout, penetrate and link with team-mates. Aim to go past the gain line before looking for other options.  
  
  *N.B. This player is seldom used in a catching role at lineout; however, if mismatches eliminate other options, throws to the taller prop can enable the team to gain possession.*  
• Be alert to catch ‘bobbled’ or deliberately deflected ball so that it is recovered cleanly using two hands. Attempt to recover this ball without leaving the line of touch to prevent opponents breaking through the formation. |
| **Field play**                      | • Use the advantage of having only one shoulder bound in scrums to make a fast ‘get away’ in a supporting role. This must not be done before scrummaging responsibilities have been completed.  
  
  *Both props may perform a lifting role for the locks when kick-offs are shallow and contestable.* |
### Hooker

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game situation</th>
<th>Positional requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Scrum**      | • Make your first priority to win ball on the loose-head.  
                  • Choose options on the tight-head so that they are of greatest tactical value and catch the opposition by surprise.  
                  • Exert tactical and physical pressure on the opposing hooker at all scrums. |
| **Lineout**    | • Know the throw-in requirements of the lineout forwards and perfect them.  
                  • Stand in a position that enables maximum protection for the half back from deflected ball. Mark the opposing hooker closely.  
                  • Take up a position that enables an unimpeded line to the opposing team’s deflected ball.  
                  • Exploit the general play situation that often occurs when the ball is deflected. This occurs in the time between the conclusion of the lineout and the formation of a phase play.  
                  • Hookers may be used to support catchers on the opposing team’s throw.  
                  • Because hookers are not bound into the lineout, they can enter general play very quickly. |
| **Field play** | • From scrums, the options are the same as for the other members of the front row.  
                  • As the hooker may be the last to leave scrums, it is very important to assess the options.  
                  • Depending on the hooker’s skills and speed, the player may join the back attack, usually on the blind side. |

### Locks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game situation</th>
<th>Positional requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Scrum**      | • Bind to each other and to the front row so as to be in a good pushing position once the opposing scrum is engaged.  
                  • Once contact is made, do not alter foot positions.  
                  • Maintain a stable scrum on the throw-in. On the opposing team’s throw-in, push forward to disrupt the delivery of the ball. |
| **Lineout**    | • Initiate both the support and the throw by stepping to the line of touch and leaping vertically to catch the ball.  
                  • Drive up with the arms to gain maximum height.  
                  • Watch the ball into the hands.  
                  • Once the ball has been caught, move it immediately away from the opposing players turning the body to follow the ball.  
                  • Land in a stable body position back-on to opponents.  
                  • Hold the ball low. It is the target for driving support players. If it is held high, they will be too high in their body position to drive effectively.  
                  • Deliver the ball based on the team’s proposed pattern of attack. |
| **Field play** | • Move quickly towards the anticipated position of the ball.  
                  • Bind and drive into rucks and mauls to push them forward.  
                  • If the opposing players have not been committed to the ruck or maul and the ball is available, drive forward with it in hand.  
                  • Be aware of the options that are available to run, pass or set up phase play. |
| **Field play** | • Run in a crouch so that a tackle can be made if attacking players cut back towards the source of possession. |
## BLIND-SIDE FLANKER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game situation</th>
<th>Positional requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Scrum**                    | • Work as a unit with the lock to support the prop.  
• Channel the ball to the #8 (loose-head flanker).  
• Push until the ball has left the scrum.  
• Watch the ball as it moves through the scrum. |
| **Lineout (fifth position)** | • Lift the #4 catcher to jump and catch the ball.  
• When the ball is thrown elsewhere, hold the line to prevent opposing players from breaking through.  
• Initiate the drive when the ball is thrown to #2. |
| **Field play (attack)**      | • Anticipate the position of the ball and move as quickly as possible to that position.  
• Ensure possession is retained by complementing the roles of the players who are at the ball earlier.  
• Choose the best option to maintain continuity.  
• This may be to join the attacking line.  
• Once one role has been completed, move quickly to the next. |
| **Field play (defence)**     | • From lineouts, move towards the ball and anticipate the ball carrier cutting back so that the flanker is in a position to make a tackle.  
• From scrums, it is difficult to be involved in the front line of defence because the player must be bound until the ball is out. It is better to work out a specified supporting role, similar to that at the lineout.  
• Stop any runners as soon as possible from scrums.  
• When a tackle has been completed or partially completed, react to regain possession. |
## OPEN-SIDE FLANKER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game situation</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Scrum                   | • Work as a unit with the lock to support the prop.  
• Channel the ball to the number 8 when on the loose-head side.  
• Push until the ball has left the scrum.  
• Watch the ball as it moves through the scrum.  

| Lineout (seventh position) | • Position close to the opposition on your ball to control the movements of the opposing #7.  
• Position away from the opposing #7 on their ball so that the flanker can run directly towards the opposition backs.  
• Face the opposition.  
• Be further infield than the opposing #7.  
• Only contest lineout possession from infield of the opposition #7.  

| Field play (attack)      | • Be the link player between the backs and the forwards to maintain continuity of play.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Field play (defence)     | • From lineouts, move towards the ball and anticipate the ball carrier cutting back to make a tackle. Depending on the defence pattern, tackle the first receiver, usually the #10.  
• From scrums, the requirement that loose forwards must remain bound until the ball is out will vary the degree to which the flanker can be involved in the first line of defence. This will depend on a number of factors, amongst them being scrum alignment, the depth of the #10, the length of #9's passes and the ability of the #7. Flexibility and sound communication during a match can cause the role to vary.  
• Stop any runners as soon as possible from scrums.  
• When a tackle has been completed or partially completed, react to retain possession.  

## NUMBER 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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| Scrum                   | • Channel the ball to the right hand side of the scrum so that the #9 is able to pass with minimum interference from opposing players.  
• Position between the loose-head lock and flanker so long as it doesn’t disrupt the stability of the scrum.  
• Deliver the ball, preferably when the scrum is stable if not moving forward.  

| Lineout                 | • Be a catching option at #6. Initiate play around the end of the lineout.  
• Drive forward if possession is gained, especially if, in lifting, the opposition catchers have left a gap at the back of their lineout.  
• Hold the line when the ball is caught elsewhere in the lineout.  

| Field play (attack)     | • Run in support of the #7 (open-side flanker) to ensure continuity of play.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Field play (defence)    | • Scrum - see flankers.  
• Lineout - move in support of the #7 to tackle the ball carrier cutting back against the initial movement of the ball.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
HALF BACK/SCRUM HALF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game situation</th>
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</table>
| **Passing**    | • Pass to the left or to the right with no back swing and in a single movement. Two-thirds of all passes are made using the left hand as the predominant hand.  
• Place the support leg as close as possible to the ball. This is the right foot when passing to the left and the left foot when passing to the right. However, to protect the ball at the scrum, the passer may turn to pass when passing left. In which case, the left foot should be placed close to the ball.  
• Avoid reaching away from the body to pick up the ball as this will lead to an unstable body position and it will reduce the power in the pass.  
• Be adaptable - use the pass most appropriate to the situation.  
• Always be in a position before passing so the receiver and the ball can be seen at the same line of vision.  
• Demand that the forwards drive past the line of the ball so that the pass can be made without interference from opponents.  
• Pass a long, yet ‘sympathetic’ pass that can be comfortably caught by the receiver. |
| **Kicking**    | • Move back from the mass of forwards to gain time and space to make an accurate kick.  
• Kick high enough to clear the mass of forwards in front.  
• Be able to make the desired kick while facing in any direction.  
• When kicking over the forwards, be conscious of the 10 metre off-side Law requirements and actions needed to allow those in front to rejoin play.  
• Judge the success of the box kick by having sufficient time to run forward at good speed and challenge for possession of the ball. |
| **Running**    | • Develop combinations with loose forwards and inside backs.  
• Run infrequently but as the opportunity arises to prevent the defensive loose forwards drifting to assist with defence elsewhere.  
• Run either straight down the field or straight at an opponent. Do not drift across the field.  
• Unless a try can be scored, seek support before being tackled. |
| **Tactics**    | • Read the game so that decisions are made and action taken without hesitation.  
• Vary the options available based on the game plan so that they complement it.  
• Positionally, the half back is in a very congested area and is instrumental in moving the ball away from congestion.  
• When playing into the wind, develop a range of blind-side skills to control the game in these circumstances.  
• Control your area and be vociferous in organising players in front (the forwards) and immediately behind (the first five-eighth and second five-eighth). |
**FIRST FIVE-EIGHTH/OUT HALF/FLY HALF**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game situation</th>
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</table>
| **Passing**    | - Stand deep but receive as flat as the play will allow.  
                 - To make a long pass, it is an advantage to receive the ball in a stable, standing still position. From this position, the long pass can be made more accurately. Stand flatter to ensure that the opposing defenders don’t drift and to compensate for not moving onto the ball.  
                 - Take care to spiral pass only when it is really necessary because the spiral pass is more difficult to catch.  
                 - For all other passes, hip sink pass to prevent the defence from drifting, to gain maximum power and control and to provide the opportunity to make a dummy pass and penetrate through a gap. |
| **Kicking**    | - Kick to space unless the height of the kick allows the ball to be regained. Because regaining possession from the opposing teams throw at a lineout is difficult, do not kick to touch unless the territory that is gained more than compensates for the loss of possession.  
                 - Base kicking on the positioning of the defensive backline. If it is flat, use the kick, but if it is deeper, use backline moves to gain territory.  
                 - Be able to kick accurately while under pressure, using both right and left feet. |
| **Running**    | - Balance running onto the pass to commit the defence whilst retaining some space and clearing to supporting players who need the space to attack.  
                 - Use evasive running skills to attack the defence especially from scrums as the loose forwards are less available to defend.  
                 - When running the blind, over-commit the defending players by initially standing flatter on the open-side. Run across the back of the scrum so that, before or after receiving the ball, the angle of running is away from and not towards the loose forward defence.  
                 - Demand correct backline alignment at set pieces and phase play in attack and defence so that the backline can operate as a unit. |
| **Tactics**    | - Choose options that fit in with the team game plan and the tactics that prove successful as the game progresses.  
                 - If possible, choose the tactic to be employed before receiving the ball. This is based on play to this point in the game or on the profile of opponents developed before the match.  
                 - Communicate the chosen option to those involved in its execution. In the event of disruption to the chosen option, make quick decisions to use other options.  
                 - At breaks in play, involve others in decision-making.  
                 - Attacking options, i.e. when in possession, should take account of the opposing team’s defensive behaviour and exploit the best available space.  
                 - Defensive options, i.e. when not in possession, should be chosen to create uncertainty in the opposing team by reducing their attacking space and options. |
| **Defence**    | - Communicate clearly the pattern to be used.  
                 - Make the most effective tackle for the situation that takes into account the ball carrier’s relative body size.  
                 - Move into the tackle.  
                 - Take appropriate action so that attacking plays are stopped as soon as possible.  
                 - Develop an effective cover defensive role by moving with the ball if it is passed by the designated ball carrier before the player is tackled. |
# MIDFIELD BACKS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game situation</th>
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</table>
| **Passing**    | • Stand deep but run onto the ball to create maximum commitment from the defence while giving those being passed to time to perform their role.  
• Generally know who the ball is to be passed before receiving it.  
• Make a ‘sympathetic’ pass that gives the receiver options.  
• Pass only to a player who is in a better position.  
• Do not be forced into passing if the area becomes congested. Rather, retain possession, stand in the tackle, draw supporting players to the ball and make the transfer hand to hand, reducing the risk of interference.  
• Be able to pass before, in and through the tackle.  
• Make space for the extra player joining an attack by moving into the pass, thus creating space on the outside. |
| **Kicking**    | • The wiper's kick to the open-side is often very successful, especially from scrum possession, because the open-side wing has had to move forward to the front line defence.  
• Be aware of the positioning of the opposing blind-side wing. This player can often drift across field as an open-side attack develops, allowing a kick back towards the blind-side to be made.  
• When following and contesting an up-and-under kick, run just beyond the flight of the ball so that it is being caught while turning with the player’s team-mates. This reduces the likelihood of a knock forward. The player should also jump early to catch the ball on the way down. This prevents a defending player from jumping directly up to the ball. |
| **Running**    | • Run straight to give left and right penetrating options.  
• During set moves, run predictable lines so that supporting players can perform their roles.  
• Create space for support players by veering left to create space on the right and veering right to create space on the left.  
• Run in balance so that running and passing manoeuvres can be executed successfully.  
• When the defence drifts to defend elsewhere, retain possession and penetrate using evasive running skills.  
• When in support as a decoy, draw defenders away from the point of penetration.  
• Develop ‘lanes’ when running in support of the ball carrier so that the ball carrier knows where the support is.  
• Be able to vary the pace of running.  
• Retain and re-cycle the ball after being tackled.  
• Provide support at the post tackle and ruck if you are nearby. |
| **Defence**    | • Maintain alignment to prevent defensive gaps so that the whole attack can be seen as it develops.  
• Identify the designated ball carrier and defend that player from the inside.  
• Tackle to prevent territory being gained and, if possible, to regain possession. |
## WINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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| **Passing**    | • Develop an in-field pass to support if there is insufficient space on the outside.  
                  • If opposing players are likely to catch a ball passed in-field, use contact skills, e.g. ‘hit and spin’ to move in-field towards supporting players. The ball can then be transferred with greater certainty.  
                  • When entering a back line as an extra player, insist on a pass that is easily caught giving vision of the opposing players.  |
| **Kicking**    | • At top pace, use the kick ahead and recovery as an attacking ploy.  |
| **Running**    | • Stand deep enough for the ball to be received running at close to top pace while retaining maximum vision to assess the options available.  
                  • Develop a range of individual attacking ploys that can be performed at pace and with stability.  
                  • Determine the most suitable ploys taking into consideration physical attributes and develop these ploys to a high degree of efficiency.  
                  • Use supporting players to continue the attack. The more they are used, the more unlikely they will make the effort to be available in support.  |
| **Tactics**    | • To be an attacking threat, exploit every opportunity and continually look for work. By being an attacking threat, the opposition wing will be held in a defensive position and be unable to enter play elsewhere.  
                  • More than any other position, the wings must make the game happen for themselves by seeking involvement.  
                  • Once forward momentum has been initiated on attack, use support to keep the movement going. Avoid the touchlines.  |
| **Defence**    | • Know the patterns and keep to them because once the ball reaches the attacking wing and the attack is well advanced, the pattern must operate automatically and instinctively.  
                  • Cover from the blind-side with a specific role in mind, e.g. if the full back has had to move forward to tackle, position to catch a kick. Mentally play as the full back.  |
**FULL BACK**

<table>
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<tr>
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| **Attack**     | • Enter the backline to make a positive contribution. Don’t stand in the backline as an extra pair of hands.  
• When entering the backline on attack, make an impact by changing the pace, angle and rhythm of the attack. Do not enter if an extra pair of hands is going to slow the attack.  
• Enter the line as late and as unexpectedly as possible.  
• Do not stand in the gap that is to be run into prior to play starting.  
• The pass should give the full back three receiving options:  
  - Close to the ball carrier  
  - In the gap  
  - Drifting out with the ball to an outside gap  
• Be deep enough to sum up the options. |
| **Defence**    | • Determine the pattern for the back three, set it early and if necessary ‘talk’ it into place as the attack develops.  
• Be positive in making the tackle; make the move early to reduce the opposing player’s reaction time.  
• Generally, encourage a ball carrier to take an outside break so that the touchline can be used as a defensive boundary. If the player is outnumbered, maintain a defensive position so the pass is delayed, giving time for support to arrive.  
• Adjust your position to suit the playing conditions and the position of the set play on the field.  
• With confidence, ‘imagined’ gaps can be left, ‘conning’ the opposing players to kick into them. This enables a skilful player to predict the position the kick will be made to allowing the ball to be moved into and regained.  
• Rather than be caught standing under the ball flat-footed, such a move enables the full back to run to the ball, catch it and move away. The full back is more difficult to tackle when moving and can leap into the air to catch the high ball. |
5(c) - Laws

All IRB Level 2 Coaching candidates should have completed the on-line Laws test at [www.irblaws.com](http://www.irblaws.com) prior to attending. The purpose of this small section is to discuss contemporary Law issues. The Educator will organise an experienced referee or Referee Educator to attend. Please take the opportunity to ask questions and discuss any element of Law that you are uncertain of.