

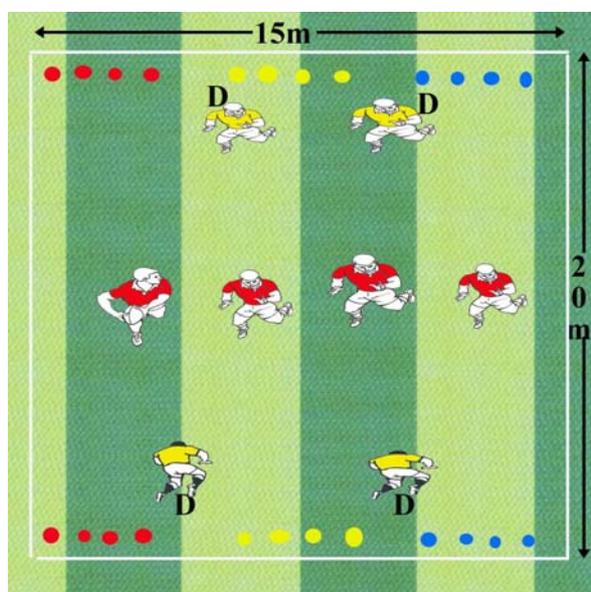
DEVELOPING RUGBY ATHLETES – RUGBY GAMES FOR UNDERSTANDING BY ELITEPERFORMANCE SPORTS CONDITIONING

Eliteperformance has a website that is available for those interested in the development of rugby at www.rugbydevelopment.com. It features coaching articles, equipment, tours and an online store.

This article will focus upon the use of conditioned games to help players develop their rugby skills. There is often too much emphasis upon drills that require little rugby-related decision making. The players must be placed in situations that they may encounter in a game. The skill of the coach is the ability to get across the necessary information by letting the players work out a solution to the problem.

In the beginning, for example, 4 v 1 situations should nearly always bring success. Once this has been learnt the number of defenders can be increased and methods to beat them explored.

The first game focuses upon continual scoring with four attackers versus two defenders.



Once the attackers have beaten the first two defenders, they immediately turn and attack the next two, who were waiting behind them at the initial attack. This is repeated until ten

tries are scored.

The players are encouraged to work out the best way to beat the defence, be it running from depth, two waves of attack or fixing defenders and using width if required. Furthermore, the use of the switch and loop can be encouraged throughout.

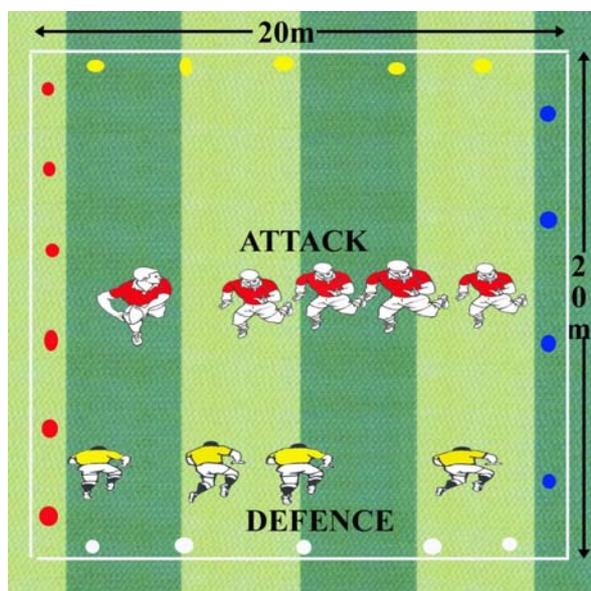
Once the attackers become accomplished and can turn the 4v2 into an effective 2 v 1 that is followed by a score, the coach can add ways to challenge the decision making and add sufficient pressure to mimic the situations that may occur during a game.

Once a try has been scored in any of the three coloured areas, the players are not allowed to score the next try at the same colour. For example, if the try is scored at the red cones, the attackers can now score at blue and yellow only. The space to score has now been reduced, which should encourage support from depth and at pace. This helps with alignment and quick decision making and discourages the use of pre-planned moves.

360° rugby

The second game focuses upon the recognition of space, quick realignment, support running and evasion skills.

Five attackers line up against four defenders.



The attackers attempt to score along the white set of cones. Once this has been achieved, the try scorer nominates another colour and the team attack that set of cones. The try scorer must pass the ball to start the next attack.

The game encourages the scorer to look for the best opportunity to score based upon where the defence is standing and how close the support is. Once the colour has been called, both the attackers and defenders must realign quickly.

Players are encouraged to fix the defenders before passing. During the initial attempts at this game, players often throw large miss passes out wide and use all the available space, thereby allowing the defence to drift. If this happens, the coach can place a condition that there must be a minimum of three passes before a try can be awarded or each player must touch the ball before any score. As in the previous game, the use of the switch and loop to move defenders to create space should be encouraged.

Support players can attack in two waves with a single player standing further behind the other four players, for example. This can simulate a full back bursting through into the line or a second wave of forwards at a ruck. Players can be encouraged to attack in various ways. As the players advance, they can decide to attack up the middle or outside.

To change the emphasis from the try scorer having to identify the space to attack, the coach can nominate a player in the attacking team. (Tactical Decision Maker). It is his job to quickly recognise the attack and call the players into position.

All players, regardless of position, should have a go at being the TDM during the practices. This gives them the opportunity to identify space and the confidence to attack it. The introduction of full contact ensures that quick ball is required because of the number of defending players. From this, the coach can progress from no contesting to full contesting at the ruck.

There are many ways to condition the game to work on specific areas. For example, a larger area and only using forwards may allow the introduction of a lineout to restart the play. The players could then improve their restart and their decision making in a simple game which can easily be coached.