



## CONTENTS

---

**2 Agility**

By Alex Corvo

**4 Reading the game**

By Barry Muir

**5 Consider the function of the drill**

By Phil Hertz

**6 Dummy half play**

By Shane McNally

**8 Positional play for fullbacks**

By Ted Verrenkamp

**9 Game plans**

By Dennis Ward

**10 Recruitment**

Mark Murray    Written by Bernie Pramberg

**11 Scrum base defence by the half back**

By Barry Muir

**12 Nutrition maximises player performance**

By Alex Corvo

**14 Communication**

By Paul Heptonstall

**18 Turning the opposition**

By Gary Dunbar

**20 How well do you know the laws?**

By Dean Parkin



# Agility

By Alex Corvo

**T**he complete Rugby League footballer must possess a wide variety of different skills and abilities to successfully play the game. In addition to the more obvious physical qualities such as flexibility, strength, speed and power, the player also needs to be agile in his movements on the field.

Agility includes the ability to change direction quickly, accelerate, to twist and turn, to out-manoeuvre an opponent. On a football field it is reasonable to expect that these actions will also be deliberate and controlled.

Activities in the game such as playing the ball quickly, moving up and back in defence, accelerating, changing direction and stepping, regaining your feet quickly after making a tackle require high levels of agility in their execution.

Agility when rapid response is required involves explosive efforts that produce these changes in movement and body position.

Coaches and trainers need to differentiate between agility and speed. However, agility could be expected to have a high degree of rapidity about it, training should be characterised by short sharp movements involving changes of direction and/or body position.

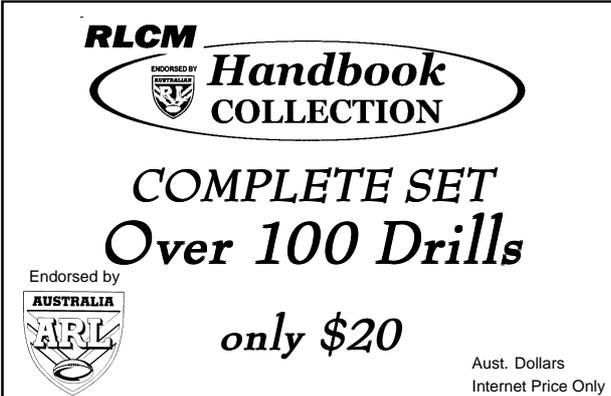
Speed training alone will not have a big influence on improving a player's agility. Accordingly, speed and agility should be treated as separate components BUT, inside the actual movement it is essential to train speed of movement.

The game of rugby league is unpredictable in its nature and players need to be able to react quickly to situations in the game and then move as efficiently as possible. Most of the time these movements will require high levels of agility in their performance.

There is no doubt agility has a reaction component simply because it involves change. Agility when rapid response is required involves explosive efforts that produce these changes in movement and body position.

Sometimes these movements will be completed in a time period of 3-4 seconds or less e.g. a dash from dummy half, followed by a play-the-ball and then a period of no involvement allowing the player a good recovery. At the other end of the scale the player's involvement may be 3 or 4 consecutive tackles around the ruck, followed by a cover defending sprint resulting in another tackle. Both of these circumstances in the game need to be addressed and trained separately. It is the actual agility movement inside the sequence of events that should be trained (keep this in mind when doing the drills).

**Available On-Line Today [www.rlcm.com.au](http://www.rlcm.com.au)**



**RLCM**  
ENDORSED BY AUSTRALIA ARL  
**Handbook**  
COLLECTION

**COMPLETE SET**  
**Over 100 Drills**

Endorsed by  
**AUSTRALIA**  
ARL

**only \$20**

Aust. Dollars  
Internet Price Only



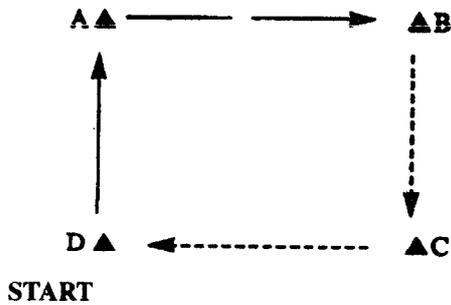
**COACHING**  
**KIDS**

One Coach's Philosophy

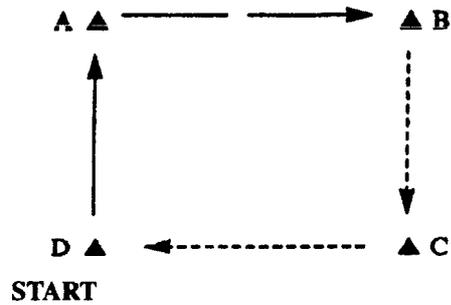
Written by Nigel Goodings

**Listed below are some agility drills that could be used.**

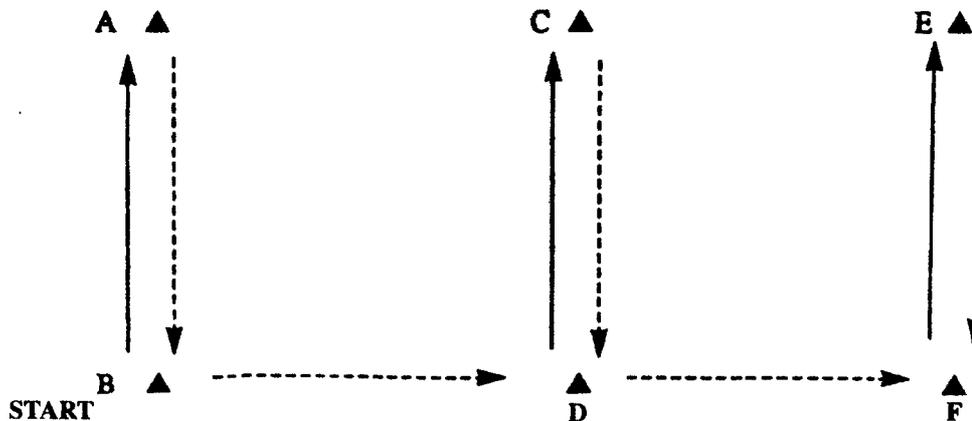
**1. 5 metre grid** - Continually facing the same direction the player commences and sprints forward to marker A, around it and moves sideways around marker B, runs backward to C and finally sideways to D.



**2. 5 metre grid** - Player lying on his stomach, regains his feet and plays the ball as quickly as possible. Runs forward to A and dives on the football, plays the ball and moves sideways to round marker B, runs backwards around C and sideways to D.



**3. 10 metres between each marker** - Player at starting position runs forward to A, dives on ground chest first, rolls onto his back then onto his stomach, regains his feet and runs backwards to B. Move sideways to D and repeats the previous movement at C and E. Once around F the player can repeat the movements moving back to B.



With some planning and thought it is possible for coaches to design their own agility drills involving the movements specific to the game.

When the movement being practised is predictable the movement risks being “patterned”. Agility training needs an unpredictable component to introduce the reaction ingredient into the movements.

To accommodate this, drills described above can be further advanced by including a “reaction” component. This can be achieved by having the coach give a signal to which the player must react as quickly as possible. Signals can be designed to indicate the different

movements required in a game. These could include running forwards, backwards and sideways, dropping to the ground chest and back first and then regaining your feet.

The principles discussed above would still need to be applied to this form of agility training.

With the new 10 metre rule and the increasing speed of the game it has become even more important for the player to be agile to assist in the movement patterns needed in the game. As such a player’s agility is one of his biggest assets. Agility training should be time-tabled into the training program.

# Reading the Game

By Barry Muir

---

**T**he non-playing coach may be a disadvantage at times because he is not close enough to the action to see clearly what is happening on the field. Therefore, it is essential that the captain has the ability to read the game, so that at half-time, he can relay his impressions to the coach identifying tactics the opposition is using and the failures of his own team.

At half-time the captain and coach must be able to communicate constructively and agree on tactics for the second half, particularly if the game is running against them.

Every player should work to develop the ability to “Read the Game”

Half backs and full backs especially should have this skill. A half back must have the ability to probe any weakness in the opposition’s forwards and be able to identify the slow player, the poor tackler, the injured player, the fatigued and listless player. A big, tired forward may sometimes place himself on the blind side defence position hoping that the play will go to the open side. Once the half back or play maker notices this, he should attack to the blind side, or use a fast runner to turn off him to beat this man.

A tired forward will leave himself in this position until he recovers his strength, so it is essential that the half back/play maker spots this quickly and attacks as soon as possible. The coach’s tactics before the game may be to attack through the back line. However, the opposition may be standing up flat in defence or have another method to nullify this tactic.

The captain or half back should read this quickly and change the play. He should encourage the forwards to take charge of play and “split” them up the middle, or rely on the half back to vary the play with grubbers, to kick over the top, or to use the blind side. This will cause a flat or off-side back line to hesitate, placing them in two minds, and your back line to take over.

A full back is in the ideal position to read the play, pick any weakness in the centre-three quarter line, assess the cover defence coming across, the flatness

of the defending three quarter line, the opposition full back out of position in defence, a weakness on the blind side. He should immediately relay this information to his captain and team-mates.

A good ball-distributor in the forwards should be able to pick any weakness in the opposition defence and use it to his team’s advantage, therefore taking pressure off his back line.

A coach must be constantly watching the opposition and his own team and recognise the signs of tiredness and frustration in either team.

Examples

1. A tired player will get rid of the ball quickly to anyone, anywhere.
2. A tired player will often stand on the blind side during defence play.
3. A team not in a straight line of defence is either tired, has lost concentration or has given up.
4. Dying with the ball continually might suggest that team-mates do not want to be in the play.
5. Unnecessary kicking means players are flustered or lost.
6. A half-hearted tackle means loss of concentration and determination.
7. A team that talks constructively on the field is more likely to be alert and want to win.
8. A team that shouts and screams is a team beaten and not playing together as a team.

A coach must know these signs if he is to talk confidently to his team at half-time - confirming successful tactics, reassuring the team and reassessing situations so that weaknesses of the opposition are exploited and his own team’s strengths are used to the greatest advantage and effect.

Every player should work to develop the ability to “Read the Game”

# Consider the function of a drill

By Phil Hartz

---

**H**ow far have we come? Rugby League training once consisted of three laps of the oval, a couple of toe touches, 20 minutes of sprints and a half an hour of “ball work”. But then someone invented the “drill”. The drill was the saviour!!

Now there are drills for passing, receiving, tackling, kicking and all the skills. Young coaches use them, old coaches use them, mini coaches, mod coaches and International Laws coaches use them. In fact, there is a disease - D.O.D. Drills Overload Disease.

You see some coaches use drills and haven't got the foggiest idea why, how or when to run them. Drills are observed by some coaches and immediately put in their ever changing repertoire of “training methods”.

Drills are not complete coaching sessions but form only a part of them. Lets stop for a minute and consider a few things.

When we want to do a drill with our players what should we consider? Obviously the realisation of what we want to practise is important!! Will the drill meet the result we are looking for? Improve our players' skills or the team play?

What are the function of drills:

1. Warm-up activity?
2. Re-enforcement, practice? (Drilling it in)
3. Learning?

There are a lot of questions that need answering. This article will give you the questions you need to consider, and you must supply the answers.

Firstly, what skill or play factors are we wanting to improve? You must first and foremost identify what we want to achieve?

The practical part of the drill is next, it needs to be designed - how will it work?

How many players will be involved? Remember we don't want a “super” drill that only six players can do while the rest of the team is standing idle. What active time is involved? Have we got a good rotation so all players are performing each section of the drill?

Is your new drill suitable for all ages or just your team?

What equipment is needed? How long does it take to set up? How long would it run? Is there a suitable rest time included?

It is amazing that coaches program drills to operate without any consideration to the fitness strain on players. How many coaches actually try out their drills personally prior to exposing their players to it?

Having decided that your “new drill” will meet your goal it must be easy to explain. You must be able to explain to your players why they are doing it and what benefits will accrue. Players must be able to witness their improvement.

Now maybe is the time to remind ourselves to assess if the drill is achieving our goal? Well is it? Or does it simply look good because no one is dropping the ball or whatever? If it isn't, you may have to adjust it a little, or a lot, but don't let it continue without a purpose.

Increasing pressure through the elements of time and space and emphasising skill technique will separate a drill from an activity.

Okay, so it is going well, achieving your goals and the players are learning as well as enjoying the drill. Can you explain it to someone else, verbally or written, perhaps you have to do it or demonstrate it.

There's a technique involved. Maybe have a look at other people's style and come up with your own. But why not share it? After all, before you designed your “new drill”, where did you get all your others from?

Remember:

1. Identify what you want to do. Come up with a problem?
2. Plan it, design how it works, reconstruct that segment of play on a small isolated basis.
3. Put it in working order, test it.
4. Conduct it.
5. Refine it.

And it works, it really achieves your goal. It's a good feeling! You may even be classed as an innovator in time to come!! GOOD LUCK.

# Dummy Half Play

By Shane McNally

**T**he skill of effective dummy half running can not be undervalued by the coach. The game (International Laws) requires the defensive line to retire 10 metres from the advantage line at the play-the-ball. As a result, increased opportunities exist for clever dummy half running to gain an advantage.

The coach should have a “standard” method of running from dummy half. He should explain why the selected method is best, teach it, and then provide for constant practice. Practice should commence with the basic movements of the “standard” run and progress to a situation where defence is added. In this judgement and decision making processes can be built into the practice (game like), to develop the abilities of where, when and how to run from dummy half.

**All players in the team should be capable of effective dummy half running. Obviously, the natural attributes of some players will allow them to excel more than others at this aspect of play. However, if a player chooses to run from dummy half, he is expected to gain at least 10 metres or put a player into a gap. Short probing runs using support players continually puts an opposition on the back foot.**

Some players natural attributes will allow them to excel more than others at this skill but all players should be at least adequate at performing the skill.

In a senior game of rugby league there is approximately 100 play-the-ball movements and of these, players will run from the dummy half position on something like 30 to 60 occasions.

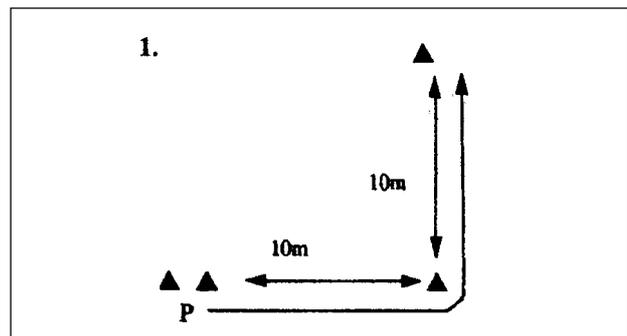
There are two basic ways to run from dummy half effectively:-

1. A method, (described below) to best avoid the marker defence and;
2. Use of decoy runners to draw the attention of marker defence.

Looking first at No 1. Too often players run the way they face and too close to the play-the-ball making themselves an easy target for the marker defence and of course wasting a vital opportunity in possession.

A good “standard” method that all players should be able to perform is simply to sprint across field for about 5 to 10 metres, away from the marker defence, then straighten to attack the defensive line. The advantage of this method can be best explained by two players of equal running speed having a race over 10 metres. One player gets to say “go” - that player will always win the race. This then equates to the marker trying to anticipate the run and then performing a tackle on the player. At best, a marker in this situation will chase and make a jersey grab from behind. Even so, this is difficult as chasing like this tires players and many coaches instruct their marker defence to remain just inside a dummy half running across field so as to cover a ball passed to an inside runner.

## Drill for “Standard Method”



This method of running can be very effective in gaining ground, making breaks and/or creating space. If the dummy half targets players who are slow at recovering or moving up in defence there is real opportunity to break the line. More elusive and speedy players should perfect this method and constantly be on the lookout for these opportunities throughout the game.

Looking at No 2. The use of decoy runners can also be an effective tool in dummy half running. A committed decoy running in the right place will in most cases draw the attention of the marker defence. Marker defence these days is highly drilled. This causes the markers to react automatically, the use of quality decoy runners will allow for more opportunities for the dummy half.



# Positional Play for Full Backs

By Ted Verrenkamp

---

**I**n watching Rugby League games, it is amazing to see the number of tries that are scored as a result of poor positioning by the defending full back.

How often have we seen attacking sides make a break and score the try in the corner with the defending full back a metre or so short of the tackle that could have saved that try?

There are, of course, many instances where teams plan to take advantage when defending full backs “fall short” in defensive positioning.

When coaching young full backs in positional play in defence, a basic guide for positioning is to be moving and “follow the ball”.

To elaborate, if a ball is being relayed along an attacking back-line, the defending full back, positioned

## A Practice

A back-line set for attack from the half-way to the “22”.

Forwards oppose the back-line to the inside centre position, forcing the defensive full back to “work” out wide.

For this practice the defensive full back positions himself behind the play-the-ball and follows the ball across, remaining slightly inside the ball. (Learning to govern his speed in relation to the ball and regulating his run is important).

The ball must reach the wing before the winger reaches the advantage line.

The ball can be moved inside or outside, at any position, and the full back must read the play and be in position to cover the ball.

## The Golden Basic Rule “Follow the Ball”

behind his own back-line and slightly inside the ball, moves across covering and following the ball all the way.

Some full backs take off late in their covering, with the result that the ball beats the covering defender. A quick passing movement along the back-line can often “catch-out” the out of position full back.

Where a full back covers ahead of the ball in a passing movement, he leaves himself open to an inside pass which could put him out of effective play.

The Practice includes - the positioning of defending full back; evasion for outside centre and winger; speed passing; chiming-in for the attacking full back; the use of all types of passes.

### Some Hints:

The angle of the full backs run depends on his speed and initial position (regulating his run). The further he is from the ball and the slower he is, the greater the angle of the run.

Slower players need to hold a position close to level with the straight running line of the attacker.



**Over 100 Rugby League Drills**  
**[www.rlcm.com.au](http://www.rlcm.com.au)**

**Available On-Line Today**

# Game Plans

By Dennis Ward

---

**Y**ou don't win Tests or Grand Finals without a game plan of some sort.

The game plan is simply that - a game of how the team is to play the game, it is a system of play, a prescription for organised play that reflects the way the coach strategically coaches the team to play so as to achieve the desired result. A truly precise plan would usually contain instructions for each team member as to the role he personally would play in the game. Game plans, particularly the more complicated type, should not be a strong consideration for teams below the age of 15 years.

In its simplest form a game plan could be - 'Run the first 5 dummy half and kick on the 6'. On the other hand it can be a little more complex. Here is an example, general in nature, of a game plan.

## **DEFENCE:**

Two markers to be used other than 5 metres from the own goal line and 5 metres from touch.

Front marker to chase, back marker to hold.

Half Back to play in defence line for the first four tackles, then drop back.

Front row to hold ruck centres. Centres to play left and right - rest to fill-in.

Wingers: short side wing up, open side slightly back.

## **ATTACK:**

To run the ball out of the RUN OUT ZONE before kicking downfield.

In the DRIVE ZONE work the ball to centre field and to kick on 4, 5 or 6.

SPIN ZONE - Forwards work the ball for two or three rucks to the 20 metre line using any of four ruck moves that use decoy players and can attack either side of the ruck.

On the 20 metre line - the backs assume control on the 4th play.

## The game plan can be as simple or as complex as you like.

The ball can be moved again to the short side or to the open depending on judgement of the caller.

On 6, the team would attempt to run the ball. The ball carrier must be able to kick on the run for touch when he is closed down.

SKY ZONE - The aim is to score in 5. Same movements as used in the spin zone OR a work up for a designed play.

The 6th tackle is either a high ball or a grubber. However the OPTION to run the ball on 6 should remain.

Of course, a number of factors can determine the nature of a plan, e.g. notice is taken of weak-points in the opposition, play can revolve around dominant players, player ability will determine the scope.

Also, there is a range of factors that occur inside the general game plan. Some of these include scrum behaviour when the feed changes, run outs when receiving the opposition kick offs and free kicks after the penalty.

The game plan can be as simple or as complex as you like. It is dependent on skill level and player ability - it becomes the way the coach coaches his team to play.

# Recruitment

By Bernie Pramberg

---

**M**ark Murray, the former Test half back believes young players should be aware of the ever-increasing implications of recruitment in the game.

Dozens of keen-eyed, well-informed talent scouts are scouring the country for young players with the potential to make the grade at the highest level.

Almost every under-age and school carnival is attended by representatives of clubs playing in the major competitions.

The clubs know what they want - but do the players and their parents know what to expect?

Murray's coaching experience with Sydney Eastern Suburbs involved considerable first-hand knowledge of player recruitment at various levels.

"Like most things, recruitment is governed by supply and demand", Murray said.

"When I first started coaching in Sydney most of the recruitment involved players of 18 or 19 years. But it didn't take long to realise many of the best players were taken by then and the recruiting age went back to 17. Now, kids as young as 15 and 16 are receiving approaches.

Murray, formerly a school teacher, has a balanced philosophy on recruitment - he appreciates the qualities sought by a club as well as the pitfalls that can beset young players and their parents.

"In today's game, players of 15 and 16 should be aware of what clubs are looking for" Murray said.

"The obvious things are football ability, height and weight - but it goes much further than that.

"Previous achievements away from football are important. If the player had put time and effort into other areas, such as school work, and apprenticeship or community involvement, it is an indication he will knuckle down to the demands of professional football.

"Athleticism, character, mental skills and level of desire are all factors. It is important for club representatives to meet the family of the player to gain a feel for his general background. At Eastern Suburbs we had live-in camps over three days for prospective recruits - it

**Dozens of keen eyed, well informed talent scouts are scouring the country for young players with potential to make the grade at the highest level.**

was an opportunity to observe how each individual handled himself.

"The manner in which players conduct themselves is paramount".

Murray said talented juniors were frequently feted and fussed over when sought by clubs, but the realities of life were different once the hard slog of football in the "big smoke" started.

"Players should remember they are always made feel a lot more important before the sign than after" Murray said.

"If they're good players, everything is laid on for them - that situation can produce a selfish mentality in the player.

"It's important for the club to keep things in balance. At Easts we formed a committee specifically to take a personal interest in the welfare of young players we had signed".

Murray said relocation from a home environment was a major factor for players signed to play with the major clubs.

"Players have virtually got to look after themselves with accommodation and transport" he said.

"That can be difficult for 16 and 17 year olds unless they go into a situation of full board.

"Recruitment has become an intricate part of the game and youngsters should be well prepared if they are approached".

# Scrum base defence by the half back

By Barry Muir - Former Queensland and Australian Half Back

## 1. When not feeding the ball

Stand as near as possible to the opening (within the laws) keeping arms-length clearance from the side of the scrum standing spring-like on toes, not flat footed.

If the opposing half gets a clean fast heel from the scrum do not chase or follow him around scrum base. This will take the defending half out of play if the attacking half passes or runs. Rather, take a step back and out and then move across in cover defence. Stay as close behind your backline as possible and keep inside the ball, anticipating an opposition break. All opposing backs are covered by keeping inside the ball. A must is to let your backs know that cover is there as this gives each of them confidence to take the man with the ball.

If the opposing half gets a slow ball from the scrum, then this is the tie to bustle him stopping play at the base of the scrum.

The half and lock must have a good understanding at the scrum base. At all times, the lock must first look to cover the opposite side to which the half feeds the ball into the scrum.

## 2. When feeding the scrum

The half stands as close as possible to the scrum tunnel when feeding. He takes the necessary step back to the

barest inside position after feeding the ball into the scrum. If the ball is won, movement back to the inside position already has the half on the move, placing him between the opposition half and the ball. But, be careful not to over-retire, for if the ball is lost, this gives the opposing half an advantage, particularly if he receives a quick ball.

If you have lost the scrum, it is always best for the defending half to delay a fraction at scrum base before going across in cover defence. There could be a switch of play with the lock or 5/8, and this must be covered.

A half must constantly talk to his second rowers and lock. A good defence pattern between half, lock and second rowers at the scrum base or while moving across in cover defence is essential. Good cover between these four players can force the opposition to run wide and crowd the wingers.

Too many halves are inclined to be over relaxed at the scrum base. This is a bad fault. The half back must always be on his toes ready for the split second an opportunity might present itself. Saving of a fraction of a second at the scrum base can result in a try scored or a try being saved.

A half must constantly talk to his second rowers and lock. Good cover between these four players can force the opposition to run wide and crowd the wingers.

Available On-Line Today [www.rlcm.com.au](http://www.rlcm.com.au)



Endorsed by  


**RLCM**  
RUGBY  
LEAGUE  
COACHING  
MAGAZINE

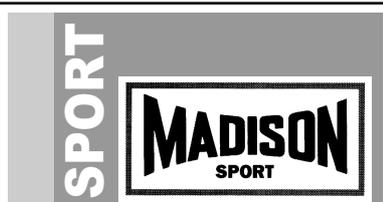
Since 1993

**\$10** per book

Learn the game  
you love!

Aust. Dollars  
Internet Price Only

[.com.au](http://www.rlcm.com.au)



**SPORT**

**COACH**

*Talk*

**YEARBOOK**

Written by Robert Rachow

Includes  
Wayne Bennett  
Chris Anderson  
Wayne Pearce  
Brian Smith  
John Lang  
Phil Gould  
Royce Simmons  
Mark Graham  
& others

# Nutrition

By Alex Corvo

## *maximises player performance*

---

**A**s a coach do you advise your players on their eating habits? Much of the hard work put into training and preparation for games could be wasted without good eating habits by the players. Good nutrition is necessary if a player is to reach his full potential.

With all the advances in the game it is surprising to hear that some clubs don't give nutritional advice to their players. As these clubs seek to become more professional they will realise the importance of good nutrition in maximising player performance.

It is impossible to supervise a player every hour of every day. Therefore coaches can only give the information to the players and hope the advice is followed. Coaches could ask their players to keep an accurate record of all foods eaten over a set period.

### **EAT IN SMALL AMOUNTS**

Butter, Polyunsaturated Margarine, Sugar, Olive Oil, Reduce fat spreads, Polyunsaturated Oil

### **EAT MODERATELY**

Lean meat, Eggs, Fish, Chicken (without skin), Nuts, Milk, Cheese, Yoghurt, (including reduced fat & low fat varieties)

### **EAT MOST**

Vegetables, Fruits, Dried Peas, Beans and Lentils, Cereals (including whole grain cereals and wholemeal bread), Bread

This activity may help to make each individual player and the coach more aware of the types of foods that are consumed. Once a player's diet is analysed, advice can be given on how the diet can be improved.

Food consists of seven nutrients, and each has its own set of functions. Nutrients and their functions are:

Carbohydrate - energy

Fat - energy

Protein - growth and repair of tissue

Vitamins - growth and repair of tissue

Minerals - regulation of body processes

Dietary fibre - regulation of body processes

Water - regulation of body processes

## **Carbohydrates**

Carbohydrates can be divided into two main groups - simple and complex. Simple carbohydrates or sugars do not give sustained energy and generally lack other important nutrients such as vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre. These foods are usually high in fat content. Foods rich in simple carbohydrates include sugars, honey, jams, chocolate bars, soft drinks including flavoured mineral water, cordials, beer, sweet wines and liqueur. Players need to avoid these types of food.

Complex carbohydrates are found in food such as bread (preferably whole grain), rice (brown), pasta, potatoes, peas, corn, carrots, bananas and most fruits and vegetables.

Complex carbohydrates are recommended in preference to simple carbohydrates because they are absorbed more slowly into the blood which allows a longer lasting energy source for the player. These foods are also higher in vitamin, mineral and dietary fibre content than simple carbohydrates.

Nutritionists recommend that 55-60% of a player's total energy intake should be from carbohydrates. Most players would probably be under this figure.

## **Fats**

A small amount of fat in the diet is necessary. In a balanced diet fat should form between 25-30% of a player's total energy intake. For the average person this figure is probably anywhere between 30 and 50%. Most players would need to make an effort to decrease the amount of fat in their diet in comparison to their normal diet.

Fat is the most energy dense of all nutrients. In other words there is more energy contained in one gram of fat than the same amount of protein or carbohydrate. It is easy to see why a diet high in fat is usually associated with being overweight.

Foods high in fat include cream, butter, margarine, full cream milk, cheese, ice cream, yogurt, fatty meat, chicken with skin, nuts, chocolate, cakes, pastries and fried foods. Takeaway foods are also usually high in fat content.

To decrease fat intake players would be well advised to choose low fat alternatives such as “trim milk” low fat yogurt, low fat cheese, etc.

## **Protein**

Protein is essential in the diet for the building and repair of all bodily tissue. Protein intake should be 10-15% of a player’s total energy intake. Many players mistakenly believe that they must increase their intake of protein. In a well balanced diet the recommended daily protein intake is 1.3 - 1.6 g/kg of body weight. Children and adolescents may have slightly increased requirements.

As a guide an average steak (weighing 150g) contains 45g of protein. A chicken breast (150g) contains 40g of protein.

Good sources of protein are found in lean meat, chicken, fish, eggs and milk products (preferably low fat).

## **Bulking Up**

Some players wish to “bulk up” from one season to the next. Weight training should be an important part of this process.

Players seeking to gain weight need to spread their energy intake throughout the day. Rather than sticking to three basic meals, they should eat extra protein, or take supplements so long as a balanced diet is followed.

When “bulking up” it is not as important that players eat low fat foods. To a certain extent players can afford to be less careful increase their energy intake.

Weight gains up to 0.5kg per week can be expected when following a weight training program. Gains in excess of this normally mean there has been an increase in body fat levels.

## **Takeaway Foods**

Takeaway food has become a big part of the eating habits of Australians today. Unfortunately much of

this food is high in fat and salt, fried chips and pizza being good examples. Occasionally it is necessary to buy takeaway food, i.e. when travelling to games away from home. If this is the case healthier foods such as salad sandwiches, plain hamburgers and barbecued chicken without the skin are good choices. Team managers may like to prepare their own food and bring it along with them. If travel occurs on game day, certain nutritional guidelines should be followed. These are discussed under the PRE GAME MEAL SECTION.

Good nutrition is necessary if a player is to reach his full potential.

## **Alcohol**

Alcohol has little or no nutritional value yet is very high in energy content. It also has a dehydrating effect on the body and so shouldn’t be consumed the day or evening before training or a game. Alcohol also dilates the blood flow to injured areas of the body. This results in injuries becoming more serious due to greater internal bleeding. Consumption of alcohol after games should be discouraged.

## **Pre Game Meal**

Many players place a big emphasis on their pre-game meal without realising that their eating habits in the days prior to the game are probably even more important. The pre-game meal should consist mainly of carbohydrates. Foods high in fats and protein need to be avoided. Fatty foods are difficult to digest and protein rich foods have a dehydrating effect.

The meal should be eaten at least three hours before the game. It should contain enough foods to be satisfying and to prevent the onset of hunger and weakness. Players would be well advised not to over-eat in this meal as this may hinder performance.

Some players find it difficult to stomach food before a game. In this instance they may find a liquid meal more compatible. There are a number of these types of drinks available e.g. Sustagen.

Foods which could be eaten as a pre-game meal include breakfast cereals with low fat milk, fruit and fruit juice, bread, toast, crumpets, muffins, pancakes, potatoes, pasta, rice and noodles. Avoid having fatty meat sauce with pasta.

## **Water**

During training or playing a player can lose up to two to three litres of fluid. Thirst is not a good indicator of



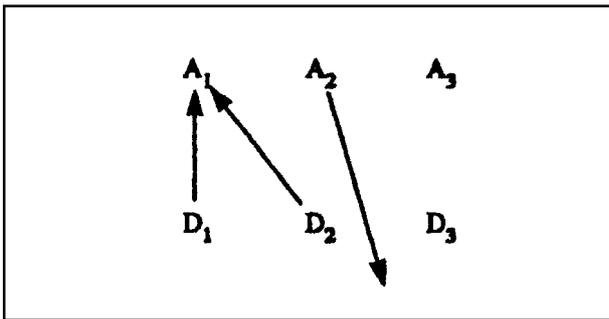
# Communication

By Paul Heptonstall

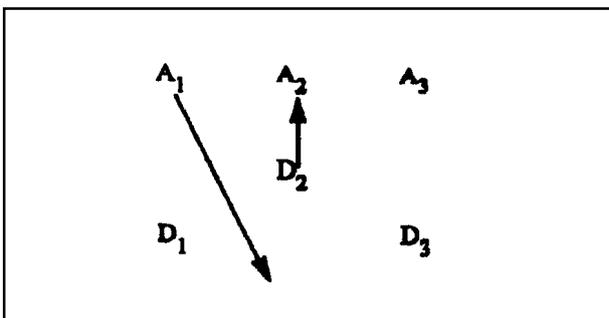
**B**esides being able to tackle, one of the most important aspect for a teams defensive success is the communication between players on the field. A team that talks well in defence will be more co-ordinated, organised, more efficient and less likely to leave gaps for the opposition. Good on-field communication leads to team work and players covering for each other.

It is not new to see two players stand off a 'bomb', let it bounce and the commentators to remark that "there was no communication there".

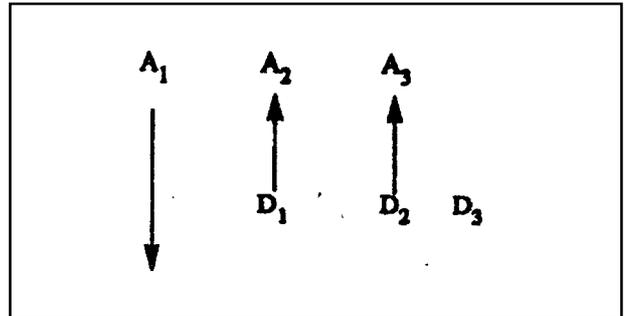
The diagrams below may emphasise the point and the need for an effective system of constructive talk.



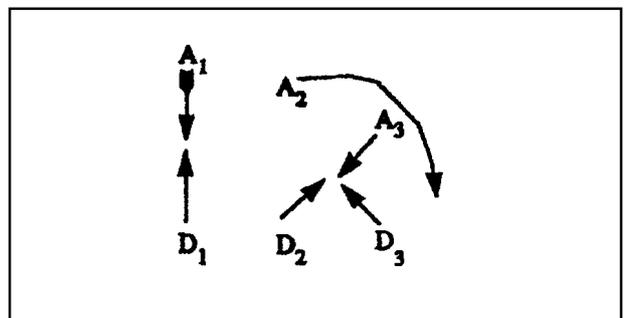
Defenders have not informed team mates who they are going to tackle. If D1 had told D2 he has nominated A1 to tackle, then D2 may have remained with the next defender.



Defenders failed to move up in a straight line. D2 has moved up more quickly than D1 and D3, leaving a gap which the attacking side could run to. D2 should have called D1 and D3 to move up with and alongside him. Commence this talk process prior to moving forward.



Defenders have not nominated an attacker each, therefore somewhere on the field one defender will be responsible for two attackers. This is a double barrel problem, (a) the outside defender should have nominated the outside attacker and communicated to his inside player, so that they could have adjusted accordingly; (b) D1 has not (i) looked; (ii) aligned himself to A1, an attacker obviously closer to the ball; (iii) talked to his own inside player.



The defenders have not adjusted to changes in an attacking line. Following a scissors movement by A3 and A2, the defenders D2 and D3 have committed themselves to the same attacker, A3. Either D2 and D3 should have nominated an attacker and stayed with that player, or communicated their intentions to each other.

The processes involved in communication include, interpreting a situation, letting others know of your interpretations, receiving other players perceptions of the same situation, providing feedback regarding other players perceptions, and comparing ideas, then as a team deciding another course of action. Not all of these steps follow a sequence and while the processes seem

lengthy it happens in a flash and improves with practice and experience.

Although some teams will play different defensive patterns, the basics of team talk never changes. If a team is playing to a particular pattern such as 'compression' or 'umbrella' defence, it is vital that every player performs his role in that pattern. Definitive and constructive communication will reinforce a player's role on the field and will reduce the chances of confusion. It is also an advantage for each player to be aware of other team members roles, so that they can reinforce and support their actions.

Several tips when communicating on the field include -1. Use a player's name. This will attract his attention and assist with his concentration - also everyone else in the team will know who you are talking to.

2. Use key words and phrases. Use words that can define a desired movement which every team member will know and respond to in the same way. Example key words could be: go left, drift across, shuffle, hold tight. Brevity in defence language is essential given the limited time to converse, make decisions and act.

3. Provide feedback. This lets other players know that you understood the message and that you will either respond to them accordingly or suggest a different action. A short OK or repeating the words spoken to you, could be enough. Let your team mates know that you know what is to happen.

4. Be positive and constructive. This will enthuse and encourage other players, provide support and build team spirit. Negative comments only serve to disrupt team cohesion, lower morale and confidence. Screaming and yelling indicate that you have lost control, whilst comments such as "that was stupid" or "you're hopeless" or something similar provides no positive information. Spend your time reinforcing good movements rather than highlighting poor responses.

## Effective Communication

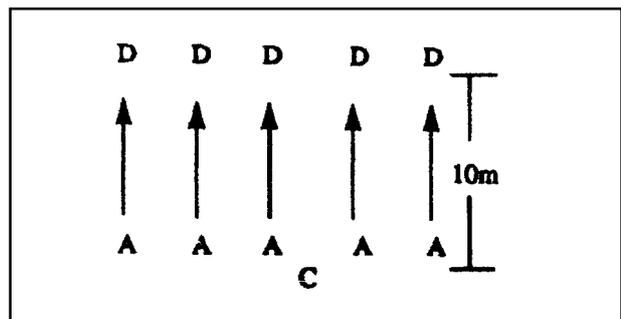
The most effective communication will come from the players standing beside you. This is a building block for team work. Some information may need to be relayed to every team member one by one. Therefore, on receiving information from a team member on one side of you, it is important to relay that information to the team member on your other side. This ensures that every player receives the same information.

Communicate regularly, but don't chatter for the sake of it. This allows players to respond to even the smallest changes, keeping their minds on the job required.

Several smaller changes in defence gives a team greater chance of success, than one or two larger adjustments.

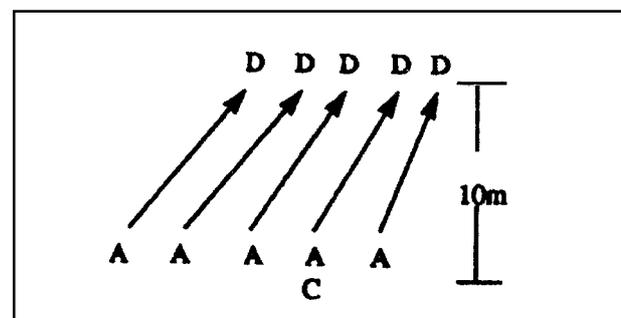
Look before you leap. There is an absolute need for players to concentrate throughout the game and endeavour to read what is happening. If unsure of a situation, slow down your movements, assess the situation and determine what the required responses are. Once you are sure of your movements communicate them to others. It is more effective to slow down your actions and then decide what to do rather than rush into a movement and decide halfway through to change it. It takes players time to receive information and process it into actions, therefore having to change a decision will only result in confusion and a delayed response from team members.

Below are several drills that can be used at training to assist with developing communication skills. These drills range from very simple activities that can be used for even the youngest age groups to more advanced activities that require a lot more experience.



Players from the defence lay on the ground face down.

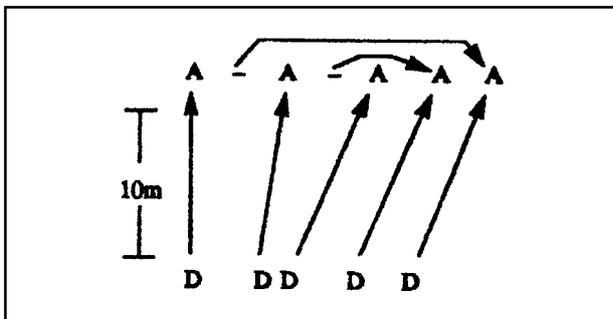
On the coaches call the attacking side moves forward and the defending side stand and move forward in a straight line until they reach the attackers. Emphasis is on communication to keep the line straight. Players should communicate with the player on each side by using comments such as "slow down John", "keep the line Barry" or "move up Jack".



As for Drill No 1, except that the attacking side is directed by the coach to move left or right whilst the defending side is lying face down.

On the coaches call members of the defending side nominate the player they are going to tackle, (as well as talking to the team mate beside him) and adjust their run to move up in a straight line of defence.

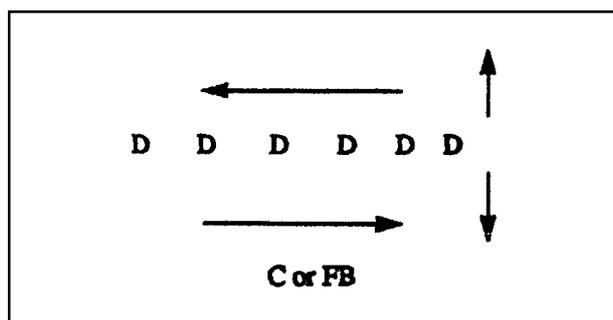
Comments such as “slide left” and “I’ve got the end player” are those that should be heard in this drill.



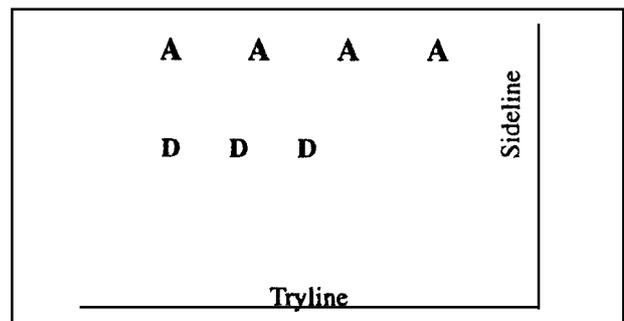
As for Drills 1 and 2 except that one or two players from the attacking side are directed by the coach to move in a different position in the attacking line.

On the coaches call, the defenders stand, assess the new situation, nominate a player and move up in a straight line.

Emphasis is on slowing down the play until all defensive intentions are clearly communicated. Comments such as “Ben, take the red head, I’ve got the end player”. Feedback such as, “red’s mine keep the line” are good examples of effective communication.

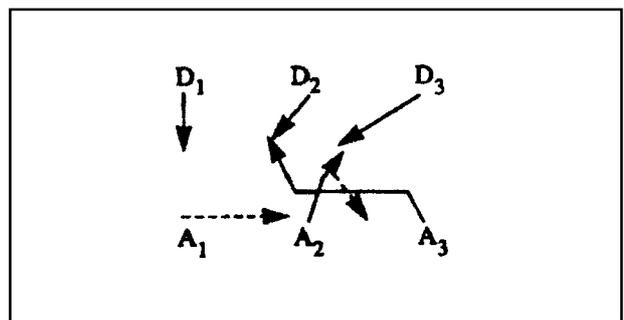


The defensive line jogs slowly towards one end of the field in a straight line. The fullback or the coach stands behind these players and gives instructions to move left, right, forward or backwards. The full back will be responsible for keeping the players equal distance apart, whilst the players in the line will be responsible for keeping a straight line.

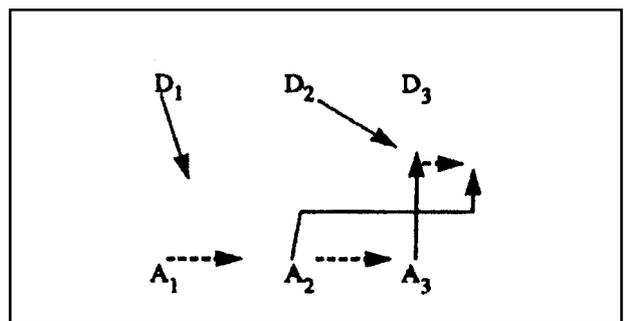


‘4 on 3’. Four attackers play against three defenders, in a confined area. The attacking side has six tackles to score.

Defenders must communicate with each other to avoid being scored against. A two handed tag will indicate one tackle. This may be extended to include a hold or an actual tackle; two players in a touch or tackle; double markers. These progressions increase the need to elevate the quality and meaning of communication even more.



-----> Pass      -> Run



‘3 on 3’. Defensive players have to respond to the attacking teams use of scissors, angle running or run-around plays. Defending players must decide whether they stay with the player they originally marked off against, or change to another player. Comments such as “ball carriers mine” or “Matt, take the inside player” are needed to clarify each defenders role. (Note, that in these drills the defenders can respond in different ways - the coach may even have a set role for defenders when confronted by scissor movements and run arounds).

# Turning the Opposition

By Gary Dunbar

---

Dominance in the forwards is looked upon as a pre-requisite to winning games. Getting through the middle, turning the opposition around suggests superiority of one team over the other.

Turning the opposition forwards means causing the defence to turn and chase or run toward their own goal line - not running back into position while facing the ball-carrying team's goal line.

As a result it is necessary to penetrate the line, not merely reach the advantage of defence line and be halted at one of those points.

Turning the opposition commences with taking the ball forward and quick play-the-ball movements.

This situation is greatly assisted if the defence is - (a) standing still and waiting - common description "not moving up" or (b) is still going backwards i.e. at a play-the-ball.

Obviously, for the opposition i.e. the defence, this means slowing down the play - mostly delaying the play-the-ball - again evident in the language of "pile and peel".

Just as obviously this gives the defence time to recover position and recover physically. In other words, to get set.

Keeping the defence on the back foot then is greatly assisted by quick play-the-ball movements.

**SPEED IN THE PLAY-THE-BALL IS IMPERATIVE**, and this requirement must be drummed into players.

Quality of the play-the-ball is essential but speed and accuracy of the acting halfback's pass is just as essential if this sequence is to be rounded off effectively.

Getting into a field position that spreads the defence will make it easier to attack what might be weaker points in the defence line. For example, working 20 metres from a touch line will require the defence to spread its numbers to cover both sides of the ruck. It is now likely that there are two fringes to work at, as well as the centre of the ruck. What is the size of defensive personnel on the fringes and how short is

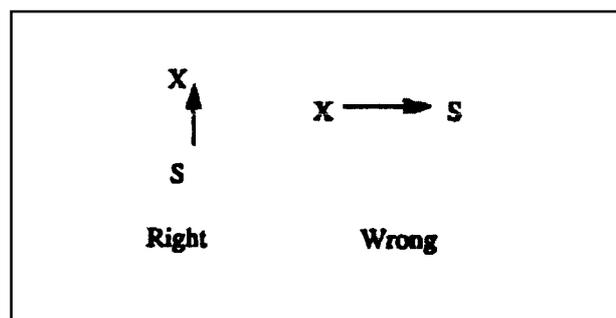
the line of opposition forwards?

Meeting the defence before it advances to the advantage line is the initial requirement, preferably it is better to be at the advantage line before the defence line begins to move forward. Now, we have a quick play-the-ball supported by a ball receiver taking the ball from the dummy-half just before the defence settles on the 10 metre mark to move forward. This requires the support player to practise the preparation for his run and his timing onto the ball at the advantage line.

Taking care to avoid the marker defence, runners should aim at a:-

- (1) line moving
- (2) player who is a poor tackler
- (3) smaller player
- (4) player who has just completed the previous tackle
- (5) position that engages more than two defenders in the tackle

The runner should ensure that he has support in behind him rather than out to his flank.

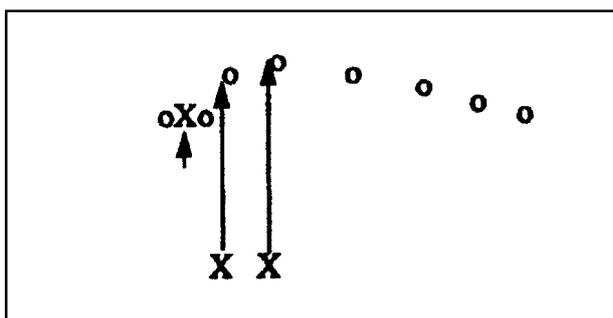
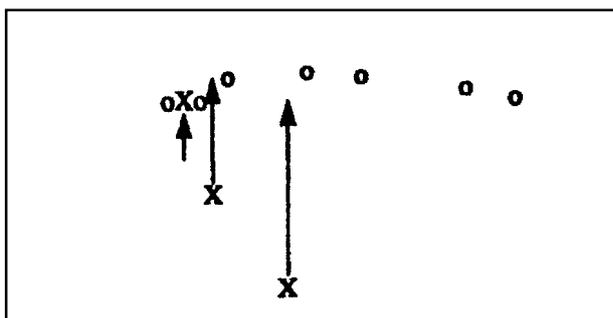
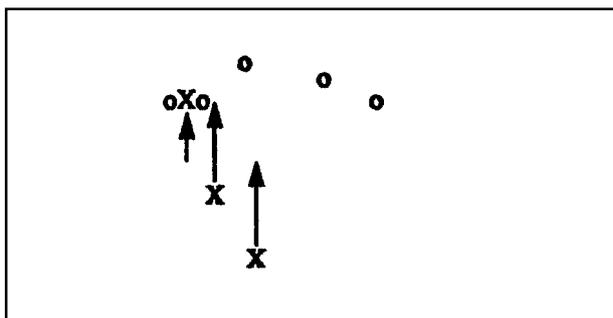
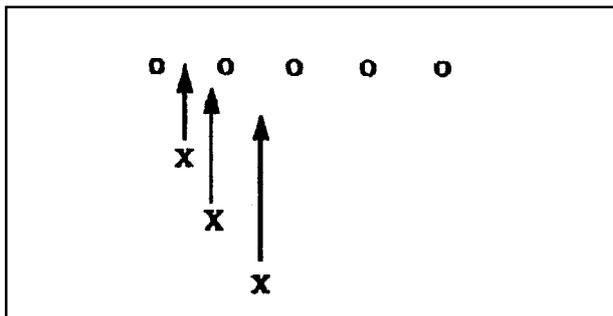


Running to engage more than one defender causes the defence to draw to a central point .i.e. the ball carrier. Importantly, this has a tendency to bring in the defensive players standing to the outside of the tacklers. If they don't come in there is room around the tackle, if they do come in there is likely to be room wide of the tackle.

Support play now becomes relevant and if it is behind the runner, as it should be, it adds further to the call for defence to change position. Support from behind

has the effect of “chopping” through the defence line and dragging defenders in.

The effect on the defence line is something like this.



The line has been, in effect, stretched back at one point.

Attacking players should “attack” the defence line and execute the play on or in the line. To do this support must more often than not, be close if defenders are to be pulled toward the point being attacked.

(There is some semblance in this of what Duncan Thompson may have called “contract football”).

Opposing this is a line attack similar to two flat arms coming together - the ball will stop at the first point of contact.

Support is therefore an integral part of breaking set lines in close.

This leads to pushing the defensive line back, and the ability to engage more than one defender and the presence of support momentarily further disorganises the defence.

If a break is not made the scene is now set to “roll the ruck” and turn the opposition around. Momentum and the pace of play does not allow the defence to recover. The extension of pulling players in to cover that space then begins to occur in the backs.

However, the momentum and pace of this type of attack is just as severe on attacking sides as it is on the defence. The precision and concentration for this form of work is a little too much to ask for a full 80 minutes. What it does indicate though, is what effect this type of play can have on the opposition.

Variety of ruck play also leads to the same outcome but is more sophisticated in its approach. Forward movement, timing and pace or speed of the game are built into a few simple variations that are introduced to add uncertainty in already existing difficult circumstances for the defence.

Ruck halves darting to probe at the line to the advantage of support players, followed up by simple reverse runners at the next ruck is a workable example.

The best place to set up for attack on the field to turn the forwards is where an opposition has to split or divide its defence.

Fast play-the-balls are imperative.

Taking the ball on the advantage line is essential.

Reaching the defence line is a must.

Engage more than one player.

Support players for the ball carrier make it work.

Must be played at speed.

And don't forget decoy plays.



# How well do you know the laws?

By Dean Parkin

---

**W**e all are quick to identify the mistakes of Rugby League referees. Even the television “experts” bellow at an apparent bungle and then agree to disagree after watching three slow motion replays. But how substantial are our credentials? I challenge you to honestly consider the following.

How well do you know the laws? Have you ever read any of the 49 pages, 17 sections, 226 laws, 122 notes and the 4 page glossary of terms and definitions of the Laws of Rugby League. Most importantly, do you know and understand the advantage law?

## Advantage

Allowing the advantage means, allowing play to proceed if it is to the advantage of the team which has not committed an offence or infringement.

Thank goodness for this law. The application of the advantage makes rugby league the exciting, fast, open spectacle that it is. Without it, the game would be a never ending series of kicks and restarts from set play. However, the application of the “advantage” is what makes refereeing a difficult job, it is an interpretation of an event which is weighed by an independent thinking referee. The referee has not only to detect infringements but has to make an almost instant decision on whether to penalise or allow play to continue. He will not always make the correct decision. Remember, however, that the advantage law does not apply to starts of play.

And “advantage” can be gained in many ways. Most often the “advantage” is possession of the ball such as in the instance when a team “knocks on” and the other team falls on the ball. Advantage can be territorial as well. If after knocking on, the ball is kicked 40 metres down field the referee would be likely to stop play and set the scrum back where the first infringement took place. Often the advantage is tactical, especially since the introduction of the 10 metre rule which allows attacking teams to get a roll on.

For example: a team makes a half-break on the third tackle and is 30 metres out from the goal line. The tackler is all over the man trying to get up for a quick

play-the-ball and the defensive line is struggling to get on-side. The referee applies the advantage and allows play to proceed. The ball is played and spun across the backline, two defenders are off-side. The referee again plays the advantage. It’s tackle 5, 10 metres out and the marker takes off early to tackle the kicker: again the referee plays the advantage, the bomb goes up, the ball is spilt and the attacking team scores under the post to win the game. Half of the crowd cheers in admiration of great play, a courageous effort and a great win, the other half questions the referee’s parentage!

## Advantage Explained

The laws of rugby league facilitates speed which is one of the games major attractions. To attain the speed mentioned the advantage rule is at the referee’s disposal, and its application means either speed or a slowing down of the game.

Naturally, the objective is to attain the speediest game possible and whilst the advantage rule should be utilised to the limits, it should be understood that possession is not always an advantage.

It has been seen in the early stages of the game a referee will penalise immediately when a breach occurs so as to impress upon the players that breaches are being observed. However, the referee is in order in keeping the breach under observation whilst noting whether the non-offending side gains an advantage. If no advantage occurs the referee would be justified in ruling on the breach committed. Referees should not stop the game if the advantage can be applied but let offenders know at the first opportunity.

In general play, the advantage rule should always be applied where possible. Many a brilliant movement has resulted from the referee waiting after a breach occurs to watch the trend of play and, in some instances, even after two breaches by the one side, (e.g. Red knock on, attempt to regather, knock on again and a Blue player picks up the ball and runs down field) their opponents have gained the ball and scored or gained considerable ground. In general play



RUGBY  
LEAGUE  
COACHING  
MAGAZINE

www.rlcm.com.au



The publishers wish to thank the Queensland Rugby League and the New South Wales Rugby League for their editorial contributions and assistance in compiling this publication.

**RLCM**

3 Andrews Street,  
Southport, QLD, AUST. 4215  
Phone: (07) 5591 1430  
Fax: (07) 5591 6623  
Website: www.rlcm.com.au  
Email: rlcm@rlcm.com.au

**Publisher**

Gary Roberts

**Circulation Manager**

Keith Hookway

**Contributors**

Alex Corvo  
Barry Muir  
Phil Hertz  
Shane McNally  
Ted Verrenkamp  
Dennis Ward  
Mark Murray  
Paul Heptonstall  
Gary Dunbar  
Dean Parkin

**Writers**

Bernie Pramberg

**Production**

Reagan Roberts

**Photographer**

Ian Thompson

**DISCLAIMER**

The information in this publication is given in good faith and has been derived from sources believed to be reliable and accurate. However, neither Shamrock Books, nor any person involved in the preparation of this publication accept any form of liability whatsoever for its contents including advertisements, editorials, opinions, advice or information or for any consequence for its use.

**No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in any retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or ink-jet printing without prior written permission of the publishers.**

ISSN 13281526

National Library Collection

National Sports Information Library

Rugby League Coaching Magazine