

Attacking effectively in General play

Level 3 2011 written task

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Rugby Unions “objective” by the definition of the principles of the game is two teams, each of fifteen players, observing fair play, according to the Laws and in a sporting spirit should, by carrying, passing, kicking and grounding the ball, score as many points as possible.

To score points you need to be in possession of the ball to score a try, kick a penalty/field goal, or have a penalty awarded to your team from the opposition infringing.

Gaining possession arises from competition of the ball in one of two ways; set piece or general play.

What becomes an effective outcome from possession of the ball is part of the teams’ philosophy set by that of the coach and senior playing group.

I plan to demonstrate different ways in which teams are able to effectively attack with ball in hand from general play utilizing options that require players to have a proficient skill base to compliment the style of play needed to challenge themselves but more importantly the opposition.

It is not necessary to have many moves, more the ability to be agile and play what is in front of them. Variations and options from structured phase play will help to create and use the space more efficiently. Ability to engage, isolate and create doubt in the mind of the defender. ie: all players catch/pass under pressure, attack shoulders of defenders with variation of depth/alignment/speed and open mindedness.

Players that are multi skilled are able to win and retain the ball more often at the breakdown allowing more general play and attacking options. This means that the player’s number on their back is of major significance only from set piece. Not all players are ball players however having one or two forwards that are able to run at the line in addition to distributing to a runner or a wider ball player will compliment and challenge the defensive line and provides the attacking team more options in attack.

Defensive patterns and tackling technique have improved over recent years. Defence for some teams is an attacking weapon as it results in pressure being exerted on the attacking team. Line speed, integrity of the line and being able to slow down the ball are a few examples that requires the attacking team to work harder to get behind the ball and commit additional players to the breakdown, it also provides more time for the defensive team to re align.

Having players that are multi skilled will allow you to play a more open, dynamic and variable style of game. Playing on the front foot does not always occur with the ball in hand and a number of successful teams are renowned for being able to establish “front foot” ball with attacking kicks into open space/contestable or clearances from their defensive zone.

Creating space against strong ABC defence

Halfback organises the forwards to not only engage the defenders at ABC and C1 but also challenge the effectiveness of the tackler. We are trying to isolate defenders in zones 1 and 2 then play to the

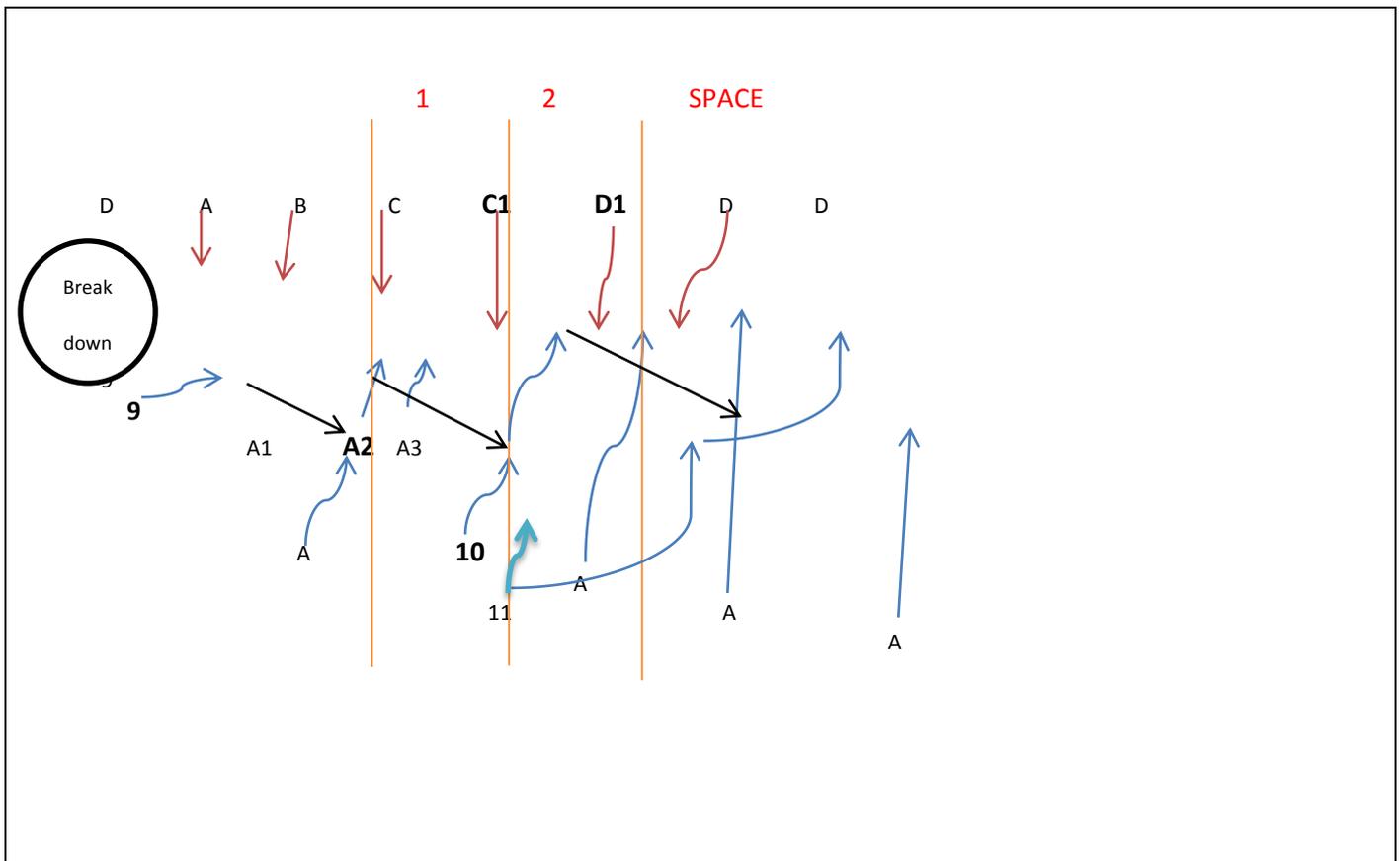
space in the outside channels; if the defenders outside of D1 need to come in and cover the space that has been created then ball can then be passed across the line to the supporting players.

The mini units of forwards must work hard at the ball to secure possession and off the ball to ensure continuity. It is essential for the units to have repeat efforts." Defending is harder than attacking". They need to work at these channels to preserve the space and to bend the defensive line and deliver front foot ball.

The second line of attack is where the attack will play once they have earned that right. How this right will be earned is reached by a number of processes where all players are required to contribute but is decided by the key players 9 A2 and 10.

These players will read and communicate which channel to attack depending on time, spacing and the player(s) filling that space.

Diagram 1



If the defensive numbers fail to fold around the corner the attacking team will either be able to bend or break the defensive line with the front line ball runners playing over the advantage line. If defenders from the outside are required to close down the attack in zone 1 then the second line of attack is given an opportunity to play to an open channel.

Key players being 9 A2 and 10 roles and responsibilities are very different but they must communicate, be patient and multi skilled to achieve the outcome.

The half back needs to be given space to get out of the of the breakdown and engage the defenders at A and B and play the ball to running forwards or requires second efforts from forwards at the breakdown to attack the A B channels.

Delivery of the ball to the second wave of attack is the result of engaging the narrow channels of defence at the breakdown and zone 1. Attacking in these zones provides the attacking team space (width) and the opportunity for greater involvement from the tight forwards. The ball can be passed to the second wave of attack from either the base of the ruck or preferably from a “ball playing” forward “A2”. As “A2” is an additional ball player, the attacking team is able to be more adaptable to change its point and speed of attack.

A2 is responsible to take the ball towards the line, work the outside shoulder of C, A3 will attack inside shoulder of C1. If the space is available, which is called from 10 A2 will pass behind his support player A3 to 10. The 10 is able to sit in behind the front attacking line, scan where the space is available and where the opportunities are on offer by the reactive defence and vary his depth accordingly. If 10 can work to zone 2 (outside shoulder of C1 and inside shoulder of D1), he will have the defence make a reactive decision to his positioning. If C1 has turned his shoulders in to cover the front line of defence the space will be available for 10 to attack.

If integrity of the line is kept by the defence, 10 attacks the space between two defenders C1 and D1; the defence will close that space meaning that there is an open channel on either inside or outside the ball carrier, if not the ball can be recycled. 10 will have a number of options if players fulfil their roles, changing running lines, varying depth and width is the crucial to allowing the 10 to pick the best available option. Communication of all players must be direct with “little talk” having two attackers running at either shoulder of a defender will give opportunity for the ball carrier or that of a supporting player.

Example 2

Creating space from structured phase play

Set piece is ideal for backs to attack as more space available with less defensive players filling that space. There is an expectation that teams will attack from set piece. However by setting up a breakdown and securing possession of the ball and having players moving off the ball into better position increase the possibility of the defensive teams players not getting themselves into the correct position and thus providing the attacking team with more options by ways of a mismatch or players not numbering up.

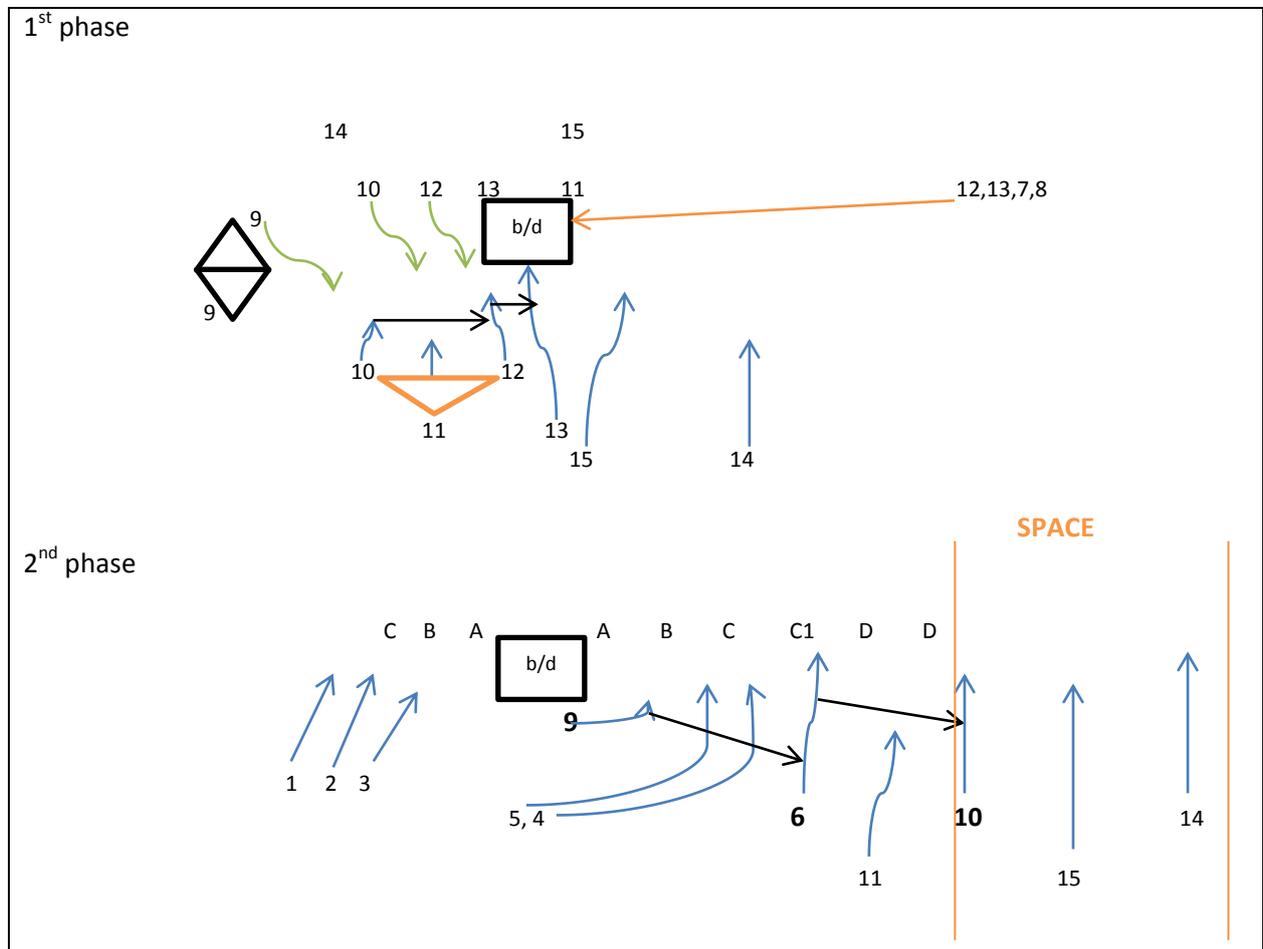
Defensive numbers as a rule of thumb will fill the inside channels first starting with the A B and C then outwards. Teams are generally happy to leave the outside channels open and are confident in closing down those spaces if teams attack them there. Jockey defence is an effective way of sacrificing ground whilst not having a team break through the line and having the sideline act as an

extra defender. However playing direct and having more than one or two ball playing threats enable the attacking team to keep the defence square and preserve the outside space.

Winning the ball at the breakdown is the responsibility of the closest players available at the time. From starter plays there may be designated players to win the ball which then gives options to have other ball players come into play and engage and threaten defence from general play.

The following example provides structure whilst allowing players to play the space in front of them. Utilizing 3 man plays is an option as is having supporting players in pockets. The first phase can be played from either side of the field and at will deliver options to attack either the open or short side. The ball players of this play are 6, 9 and 10. These players are reliant on their team mates to win the first phase breakdown and then work hard off the ball and offer themselves up as supporting players and ball runners.

Diagram 2



The first phase play can be any option that attacks the 13 of the defensive team. To do this you need to isolate this player by having the blind side winger working in the pocket of 10 and 12 which allows him to support either player by maintaining depth, by maintaining his depth 11 can also change his line and support the 13 if required.

10 needs to stay square and take the ball forward, once 12 receives the ball he first attacks the inside shoulder of 13 then the space between 12 and 13 before offloading to 13 who is running a late unders line. The role of 15 is to work the open side winger by changing his running line by first supporting the 13 then attacking the outside shoulder of the oppositions 11. Quick ruck ball is ideal as it does not allow the defensive line to re align and provides dynamic delivery. The players responsible to win the ball are the ball carrier 13, 12 primary supporter and 7, 8 to clear any threats.

Whilst the ball is being secured from the first phase all other players have roles to fulfil to enable the second play to progress. If the second rowers are not required at the breakdown they work behind the breakdown to scan and then run lines to where the oppositions B and C defenders are positioned. These lines are not straight but are arcs that allow the players to maintain a flat running line whilst keeping leg speed. In addition they will get in the eye line of the defenders and ideally making eye contact will improve their effectiveness.

Two wide passes can create space for the outside players however the outcome will be decided by the supporting players' ability to fix a defender.

Again the halfbacks' role is to engage the B defender and then play to 6 who has become our second ball player who can then attack C1 by running or passing to the outside channel to where 10 is now positioned. When the ball is passed to 10 again options again are abundant; three man plays are available as is the option of running, passing through the line or kicking down the line. Communication, the understanding of roles and responsibilities needs to be excellent as does the execution needed for this phase play option to be successful.

Every player has a role to play and depending on the style of play variation of that style is required to compliment not only that of the attacking teams' capacity, but also on how the effective the defence is. Supporting players are required to vary their depth, width and running lines to compliment that of the leg speed and physical abilities of the ball carrier. The skill is to isolate and challenge the defensive line that in turn will create a poor read in defence, mismatch or simply more numbers in attack and preserve the space in the outside channels.

Therefore it is important for players to improve the necessary skills to improve their specific role, in addition to have the awareness of acquiring the physical and mental ability required to play rugby effectively. There is a need for all players to be multi skilled for the numerous roles required to perform whilst playing rugby.