## LAYING THE EGG FOR ATTACKING RUCK RUGBY

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In this paper I will endeavour to write about the art of laying the ball back for attacking rugby. Having been involved with junior rugby for fifteen years, I have found that about 90% of players that come through to the under 16 age group do not make the ball available to there team mates in a easy position for the side to continue the attack. They tend to throw the ball back in a hurry or untidy as well as getting their bodies in the wrong position for good placement of the ball. By doing this it slows down good attacking rugby. I think laying the ball back or placing the ball to form good ruck options for the backs and forwards is an important factor that allows for good rugby. I will try to show the rewards of good ball placement at the ruck. More to the point, I will try to sell the option of "laying the egg" placement of the ball for the player and team at the junior level.

Laying the egg for the junior players gives them confidents at contact. Laying the egg is the name given to the placement of the ball through the players legs (eg squeezed out). It works by the attacking player making contact with the defender in a front on position with his arm. Leg speed on the contact is again very important at this stage. When the player realises his momentum is slowing or asked to go to ground by the second supporting player, he goes to ground with the forearm and at the same time places the ball between his legs and squeezes the ball out the back. With the players more confident on the contact he can attack the tackler for the ruck option compared to the maul option were I feel the players at this age do not attack the tackler. They are more interested in getting into good position for the maul. Laying the ball back in this way is also effective to counter the straight line of defence being used by coaches in modern day rugby. It also allows the players an easier method of making the ball available if caught in a difficult position. The importance of this method of laying the ball is that the player needs to be strong at the contact. The need for greater leg drive and speed at contact is required. He would also be aware it is important for him to place the ball immediately on going to ground as it is with all ball placement. By laying the egg it also protects the ball in the sense that it makes it harder for the defending team to attack the ball.

By practising this part of the game at most training session with the under 16 age group I found that the players became far more confident with ball in hand knowing that laying the egg would greatly assist the team maintain procession. They were previously worried about there body position and mauling before trying this option and they all agreed that they tended to attack the tackler with confidents, knowing that it was giving them a very good chance of maintaining the ball and a good platform for the next phase or play. The four points I focused on with this age group were;

- (a) Making contact with the defender with the arm. A front on approach to the defender and attacking his left or right side. Make contact in a low body position.
- (b) Once the contact has been made the important part at stage is greater leg speed and drive. This is were you attacked the tackler.
- (c) Once the go forward slows the player must be strong to go to ground
- (d) On going to ground place the ball between the legs and squeeze the ball out(do not throw it back), hence laying the egg. At this time making sure that you had players to clean out.

As for a method to increase the go forward of the team I found it very productive in the under 16 age group. They related very well to the idea of laying the egg in the sense they felt far more confident by doing this the ability to retain procession. By laying the egg they found as a team that the ruck ball was won going forward and this presented the backs the opportunity to attack. The quick ball to the backs allowed them to take the ball over the advantage line. Laying the egg was an excellent way for them to set up second phrase ball. When it was used well it would only take three to four players to secure the ruck ball leaving the remainder:

- (a) To support in behind the back line
- (b) Move to the area where the next breakdown should occur
- (c) Also when the ball was run at the defence line with the aim of committing the defence at the breakdown with the aim of quick ruck ball to the supporting players.

The back row option were also very effective using this placement mainly because at this age group and below I have found that the majority of back rowers ran across field and when caught by the defence placed themselves and the ball to the advantage of the defending team not there own. With the laying of the egg it helped the back row in that it committed the defence inside backs to the breakdown thus giving the attacking side good clean ruck options from the breakdown. It allowed the back rower to attack the tackler with the knowledge that procession should be retained.

As a team we practiced laying the egg for the pattern of play that we were trying to achieve. This was:

- (1) Hit up centre field with two or three clean out
- (2) Forward runner with clean out
- (3) Inside runner with clean out off 5/8
- (4) Push ball wide with support. All plays were to use laying the egg as placement.

As you can see this is a basic pattern but given that the players were confident with ball in hand it would enable them to go forward that was required to attack the defence at the advantage line. It also enabled the supporting players to think if they can't make say part two then they knew where part three was to happen and they were there to support the player laying the egg, etc. So it gave them the chance to support the player at the depth and speed and the ability to maintain procession. This drill was preformed with one defending team with shields against the attacking team. The attacking teams aim was to commit defence to breakdown. They wanted to create the ruck option. They were not to commit to many to breakdown. It was just good quick ball to supporting players.

A drill we used to improve the effectiveness of laying the egg was that we would have three defences with shields and five attacking players with ball working in a 5 metre area. The attacking player would attack the defender in the front on position, make contact and improving his leg speed and drive. On going to ground squeeze the ball out while two attackers clean out defenders. Quick ball was then giving to the supporting player. The players all adapted to this way of ball placement in a very positive way.

With the defence pattern of today's rugby teams making it increasingly harder for attacking team to break through the defence line. The art of laying the egg in the junior age groups has helped the attacking team attack the defence with the idea of good quick ruck ball and knowing it is committing more defenders then attackers. It allows the attacking team to go

forward and retain procession. I feel the laying of the egg ball is ideal for the juniors to provide good second phrase ball thus allowing for good team continuity, it allows the team to put constant pressure on the defence. This is an option only and the conventual method of placing the ball should not be forgotten. At this age the basic skills of rugby are very important. Laying the egg will only work if the attacking player makes contact with good leg speed, being strong at contact and above all "support." It is only an option but it is one that helps retain procession at the junior level.

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