

## BRING QUALITY TO THE PARTY?

By  
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It's a wet, muddy, cold, training night and you have your session planned on your now soggy piece of folded A4 paper. Twenty five players (a remarkable turn out for the time of year) are standing in various states of wet-weather kit. They stand in front of you (wind blowing from behind you so that your voice carries!) in the time honoured semi-circular formation and you are centre stage. You have planned a traditional session of warm up, skills, team run and game related practice. You must include everyone, even Johnny who picks his nose during your very important, shortened (keep them working) explanation of the session to come.

Your cones beckon like a scene from 'It's A Knockout'. The club has spent a fortune on its shiny new tackle shields and, all in all, it is a very professional scene and definitely a good show for the shivering spectators. You have a very important new move that you want to introduce to the team, so important that you scribbled it out during the ad break in *Eastenders* and you are sure it will work well. Right, let's go!

I apologise for the mildly melodramatic scene setting for my article but I hope it rings a bell with you coaches, at whatever level of the game you personally operate. We as RFU coaches are doing a marvellous job of ensuring that as many people play the game as possible and our sessions are getting more and more organised; we are using our many collective talents to ensure our sessions are interesting and they include all our players in a vast, wide brushstroke of knowledge sharing.

I would like you now to take a step backwards. Let us take our imaginary coach's new drill, which is in his mind a simple lineout ball that goes off the top, through 9 and 10 with a double dummy switch in the centre with the full back coming into the line as the strike runner; his open-side winger would be in support. Easy to plan? Easy to execute? Let us first consider the components of the initial element of the pattern, which is to ***win the lineout throw*** and evaluate it a little more. What would we need our players to be able to execute? And what are the physical requirements for this element of our play?

### Lineout:

#### Requirements

#### Hooker-

#### Physical

Core Strength/throwing  
Strength in arms/hands  
Eye-to-hand co-ordination  
Aerobic endurance  
Power  
Pace  
Flexibility

#### Technical

Lineout call knowledge  
Correct hand position on ball  
Correct stance  
Correct follow through  
Ability to hit 2, 4, 6, Jumper  
Communication  
Support/pod knowledge  
Correct ruck/maul technique

<b>Props-</b>	Core strength/lifting Strength in arms/hands Eye-to-hand co-ordination Aerobic endurance Power Pace Flexibility	Lineout call knowledge Correct lifting technique Agility/fast feet Correct blocking technique Correct driving technique Communication Support/pod knowledge Correct ruck/maul technique
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<b>Jumper-</b>	Core strength/jumping Strength in arms/hands Eye-to-hand co-ordination Aerobic endurance Power Pace Flexibility	Lineout call knowledge Correct jumping technique Agility/fast feet Correct presentation technique Correct driving technique Communication Support/pod knowledge Correct ruck/maul technique
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When we look at the four players involved in the very first element of our ‘new move,’ I would identify a good hour’s individual technical coaching requirement with each of the players involved (we could probably work the props together in this instance) and then another hour on the unit itself, possibly a total of four hours’ work for the whole technical element of the piece. The physical side of the unit of play is not at this moment quantifiable; however, it can be accepted that it would involve a fair amount of physical development over a longer period. By this time, I can hear coaches across the country screaming, “Impossible!!! We could never spend that amount of time on individual players, we only see the whole team for two hours all week. What would the rest of them do?” You would be totally correct in your observations, but the point I am trying to make is that if you spend *no* time on individual coaching and skill development, you can have the best game plan in the history of the game and you will never realise its potential. ***Make time*** is my advice.

Ensure that you drip-feed individual skill and technique development into your sessions. Don’t take for granted that all your players know the technical detail of their position or of the skills they have to perform. If your hooker can only throw accurately to your front jumper, what are you going to do for the other portion of the game after your opposition has worked that out and has begun to win your lineout ball? In our coach’s *new move* we would like the ball thrown to the back of the lineout to enable us to get the ball quickly into our fly half’s hands before the defence has time to close his space. If we don’t spend the time on coaching this element of our team’s skill requirement, we will never be able to see whether the full back can actually run the hundred metres in 10.4 seconds as he will never get the ball in his hands. Teach him the technique, give him practices to do in his own time and monitor the results the following week.

Use all the facilities available to you. You might find that you can get help from extra specialist coaching staff brought in from outside your club. Pre-season positional skill sessions might be scheduled, senior player involvement may not yet be on your agenda and you could explore the possibility of using County development sessions or of using EPDC coaching personnel. You will find a massive benefit when you come to plan your game-play and your players have the requisite skill levels to execute your visions. If you focus some of your precious time with your players on quality instead of quantity, you might be pleasantly surprised to see what they fetch to the party.