

# THROWING – IN. THE MOST DIFFICULT CLOSED SKILL TO EXECUTE ACCURATELY AND CONSISTENTLY DURING A GAME OF RUGBY.

By  
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## **1. Introduction and warm-up with two hookers throwing to each other.**

- (a) The line-out is used to restart a game and all throwers, usually hookers, need to be able to throw a variety of different throws, heights and distances in varied conditions. The hooker must take conditions into account when executing each throw.

Warm-up should take into consideration both flat and lob balls. Progression is the increasing distance between the hookers. A Swiss ball (see 2) and/or weighted ball can be introduced into the warm-up phase.

### **(b) Key points.**

- (i) The hooker needs to develop a *feel* for the ball. He should be able to determine, by the way the ball leaves his hands, whether or not the throw will be accurate before it reaches its destination.
- (ii) Everything needs to be pointing at and moving in a straight line towards the target.
- (iii) The ball's flight needs to be consistent, so hand placement on the ball is crucial and should always be the same.

### **(c) Equipment.**

- (i) Appropriately sized rugby balls.
- (ii) Swiss ball (optional).
- (iii) Weighted ball (optional).

**2. Flat ball throws to 2 and 4 jump areas. Hooker sits on a Swiss ball and throws at target.**



- (a) The throw needs to be fast.
  - (i) Balance is very important and the Swiss ball can be of real assistance in developing this balance. When the hooker sits on it to throw, his upper body is isolated and the power in the triceps and latissimus dorsi can be assessed.
  - (ii) Progression and development would be to use a weighted ball and/or a stability disc under the feet with or without the Swiss ball.
  - (iii) Always finish off with the hooker throwing as he would in a game. This can be either when fresh or fatigued, depending on where the hooker is in his development.
  - (iv) All hookers need to be aware that if the opponents put up an early lift at 2 and the target jump is at 4, the throw needs to be changed to a lob or it should be a 'get-out' flat ball to the front man in the line-out (usually a prop).
  - (v) There is another practice that can assist the hooker's 'feel' for the throw and assists his balance. Again a Swiss ball is used and he lies on it whilst under the crossbar, which is the target.



**(b) Key points.**

- (i) The hooker must stay relaxed in order to achieve an accurate, powerful throw. Such relaxation is difficult to achieve during a game, so coping mechanisms need to be developed in practice
- (ii) It is necessary to use as little body movement as possible to reduce the risk of error and to reduce the risk of opponents 'reading' the throw and its timing sequence.
- (iii) Hands finish pointing in the direction of the ball's flight. This may not be exactly at ninety degrees to touch as the throw may well be aimed at the jumper's inside shoulder.

**(c) Equipment.**

- (i) Appropriately sized rugby balls.

**3. Lob ball throw to 2, 4 and back. Hooker stands on stability disc and throws ball to brush against or land on top of the target.**

- (a)** This is the hardest of throws to execute accurately.



- (i) The technique is very similar to the basketball free throw.
- (ii) Balance is crucial in the consistency and accuracy of any throw and the stability disc will improve both with practice.
- (iii) Progression is in increasing the distance of the throw.
- (iv) Always finish off with the hooker throwing as he would in a game. This can be either when fresh or fatigued, depending on where the hooker is in his development.

**(b) Key points.**

- (i) Hands need to finish high.
- (ii) The thrower needs to add a slight arch to his back, which will assist the ball's travel in the correct trajectory.
- (iii) Not tensing the abdominals before release will help the throw.
- (iv) Throw through the target, not at it, so that the ball does not drift at the end of the throw.

**(c) Equipment.**

- (i) Appropriately sized rugby balls.
- (ii) Stability disc.
- (iii) Target of appropriate height.

**4. Timing. Hookers increase their awareness of when to begin each throw through practice with lollipops. Each standard throw is simulated using a lollipop.**

**(a)** Hookers need to practise this awareness skill with the team for best results

- (i) Fatigue level of players needs to be taken into consideration, especially with the speed and height of the lift.
- (ii) Apart from getting the ball straight, this is the most crucial aspect of the closed skill. Without good timing, the opposition will have a good chance of taking the ball, even on an accurate throw; at worst they will oppose effectively and make a clean catch difficult.
- (iii) Progression is to add lollipops as defenders and/or use Swiss ball and/or the stability disc.
- (iv) If enough specialised players are available, lifting pod(s) can be exchanged for lollipops.

**(b) Key points.**

- (i) Use the jumper's body language as a timing cue. This can be simulated by the person holding the lollipop if necessary.
- (ii) Timing must always be consistent with the jump.
- (iii) The trajectory of the ball will affect timing of the throw. This has to be taken into consideration, especially when the throw has to be changed from flat to a lob ball because of defensive pressure.

**(c) Equipment.**

- (i) Appropriately sized rugby balls.
- (ii) 3 lollipops per hooker (these are easily made).
- (iii) Swiss ball.
- (iv) Stability disc.

**5. Weather conditions and throwing a wet ball. Hooker should always consider all external factors including wind strength and direction, a wet ball and its limitations and the contours of the pitch.**

**(a)**

- (i) It is nearly impossible to simulate the wind in practice, yet the hooker must take it into consideration on every throw he makes in a game when it is blowing.
- (ii) Both wind strength and direction have to be considered and allowed for regarding the trajectory of the ball, especially on the lob when the ball is in the air for longer than on the flat throw.
- (iii) It is easy to reproduce the wet ball with a bucket of water and all practices should be carried out with a wet ball at some stage
- (iv) Before the game, the hooker needs to assess the pitch's contours as the throw might be starting from higher or lower than the level the jumpers are working from. This could affect the height of the throw.
- (v) To get the hooker used to varying the height of throw, a low step can be used in practice. On match days, he should practise on the pitch before the game.

**(b) Key points.**

- (i) The hooker must assess the external factors before each throw.
- (ii) Depending on his ability to grip a wet ball, the points of grip on the ball may need to be adjusted. It may be best for the dry ball to be gripped with the finger tips whereas the wet ball is thrown from the palm of the hand.
- (iii) Whatever is the chosen method, the player must practise.

**(c) Equipment.**

- (i) Appropriately sized rugby balls.
- (ii) Bucket of water.
- (iii) Step.
- (iv) 3 lollipops per hooker.
- (v) Swiss ball.
- (vi) Stability disc.