

## TRAINING ACTIVITIES TO USE AFTER THE RUGBY SKILLS ASSESSMENT.

*Last week's article, the contents of which probably emanated from the New Zealand Rugby Union Academy, suggested ways in which you can assess skill levels in the tackle, catch and pass and in contact.*

*These training activities might help coaches who want to use the assessment results to encourage improvement in individual players. They are not, by any means, a comprehensive list of what can be done, but they might get you thinking of the next step after the tests.*

### TACKLE

#### Level 1.

- (i) Use tackle bag:
  - Practise tackles on either shoulder, making sure that you alternate shoulders.
  - Approach bag in low body position with chin up and eyes open.
  - Imagine the bag is a player. Focus on the tackle zone and drive in with the shoulder. Wrap arms around the bag, keep the head well to the outside, keep the feet on the floor, drive through the tackle and end up on top of the bag.
- (ii)
  - Progress to opposed activities with both ball carrier and tackler on their knees (1 v 1).
  - Ball carrier moves around a confined space and tackler tackles, using alternate shoulders.
  - Same key tackle points as above.

#### Level 2.

- (i) Tackler on knees, ball carrier walking (1 v 1). Ball carrier walks around in confined space and tackler makes tackles, emphasising:
  - Alternative use of shoulders.
  - Use eyes to focus on tackle zone. Chin up.
  - Drive in with shoulder, wrap arms around with head to outside (or behind for side-on tackle).
  - Land on top of ball carrier. Get up first.
- (ii) Both participants on their feet (1 v 1). Make tackles in a confined space at a slow pace.

- (iii)
  - Emphasise key points identified in (i). Tackled player places the ball then tackler gets to feet, claims ball and roles reverse.
  
- (iv) Suggest to player that, in a quiet moment, he should see himself making effective tackles. Each tackle must be technically correct, i.e.
  - Approach opponent in low body position.
  - Chin up, eyes open, focus on tackle zone.
  - Drive in with shoulder, wrap arms around. Keep head tightly to outside (and behind for safe tackle).
  - Drive through the tackle, keeping both feet on the ground to generate leg power.
  - Practise with both shoulders.

### **Level 3.**

- (i) Groups of three (minimum) in a confined space.
  - One player is tackler, the others are runners and passers.
  - Tackler must tackle ball carrier to ground and make as many tackles as possible in one minute.
  - Use the shoulder and technique appropriate to each situation.
  - Progress to getting to feet and competing with support player(s) for the ball that the tackled player has left on the ground.
  
- (ii) Same as Level 2(ii), but now at a faster pace and with more ball carriers.
  
- (iii) Visualise tackling three to five times every other day (See activity (iii) of Level 2 activities. See yourself performing correctly under pressure.)

## **CATCH AND PASS**

### **Level 1.**

- (i) Practise ball position in hands for:
  - Swing pass – fingers along seams of ball.
  - Spiral pass – fingers across seams of ball.
  
- (ii) Swing pass to partner, or target on wall, alternating left and right sides. Work on the following technique.
  - Fingers down seams.
  - Follow through with passing hand finishing straight towards the target.
  - Follow through with other hand is less relevant.
  - Progression: Receive ball from partner by meeting ball early with fingers spread, thumbs up then give a swing pass to target in one movement.

- (iii) Spiral pass ball up in the air (to yourself) using one hand only. Hand must follow through straight to the target (ball in air).

### **Level 2.**

- A. Work with a partner. Run onto a pass in a straight line, receive the ball and swing pass to a target within two steps. Alternate left/right sides and use the following key factors:
- Head up, eyes on ball.
  - Meet ball early with hands spread and thumbs up.
  - Fingers along seams.
  - Swing ball in 'up and down' plane (not across body).
  - Follow through with passing hand going in straight line to the target.
  - Pass should hit the target at chest height and image the target to be an area in front of the receiver.
- B. Same as in A, but now move further away from the target and spiral pass, remembering:
- Fingers across the seam.
  - Turn passing hand over the ball to create spiral and that hand must continue in a straight line follow through.
  - Other key factors remain the same.

### **Level 3.**

- A. Work in groups of three (minimum).
- Receive and pass the ball (as in Level 2, A and B activities) with the addition of a defender who puts pressure on the passer.
  - This pressure should be minimal at the start, increasing as the passer becomes more skilled.
  - Ensure that you are passing in either direction and vary the length of pass to incorporate spiral passes.
  - If the defender is coming too quickly, slow down (shorten your steps) to create more time and space for yourself.
  - Progression. Groups of four (minimum).
  - Vary the length of the pass as the passer is about to receive the ball – i.e. put pressure on him by the defender and/or a call from passer or coach and complete a successful pass under that pressure.
- B. Visualise catching and passing three to five times every day. See yourself performing this skill perfectly under pressure, the result being an accurate pass (or dummy if you sense the defender running off you).

## CONTACT

### Level 1.

Work with a partner and move around a confined space. The ball carrier makes contact with his partner. Concentrate on:

- Carrying the ball in two hands
- Chin up, eyes open. Focus on the spot when you are to make contact.
- Widen your base and lower your body position on contact to increase stability.
- Take the ball away from contact – i.e. hit with your body in front of the ball.
- N.B. Make sure that contact is practised with each shoulder.

### Level 2.

A. Work with a partner and a hand-held hit pad.

- Concentrate on Level 1 key factors while increasing the impact.
- Shorten your steps on approach to improve your timing.
- Your last step before contact should be a wide ‘power step’, placing your foot beyond the defender’s feet to widen your base and generate leg power.
- Ball held in two hands.
- Shoulder rounded like a wheel to make contact.
- From here you can (i) go to ground, (ii) jack up (clean the defender out) or (iii) hit and spin to the side.

B. See yourself in contact situations when daydreaming. See your correct technique, adjusting quickly to the situation and ‘thinking contact’ to ensure that the ball is made available.

### Level 3.

A. Warm up with Level 2A activities

B. Groups of three (minimum) of which minimum of two who are each holding hit pads.

- Bag/pad holders defend a confined space and they can move in any direction.
- The challenge is to carry the ball from one side of the grid to another.
- Concentrate on adapting quickly to attackers and defenders.
- Take the ball away from the attacker in the contact area.
- Stay on your feet.

- Increase stability by adopting a wider stance and a lower body position.
  - Use your eyes to sum up each situation quickly.
  - Focus on the intended zone of contact and react with appropriate form of contact, i.e. (i) jack up (on smaller opponent?), (ii) hit and spin to the side (of a bigger opponent?) or (iii) blast between opponents if there is a slight gap.
  - The ‘power step’ is a key technique in generating power (see Level 2A activities).
- C. Visualise yourself in contact situations in a game (visualisation or daydreaming must be done in a quiet place with no distractions). See yourself reacting correctly to each situation (against bigger/smaller/opponents). Be aware of the key factors and see a successful result, which is ***retention of the ball.***