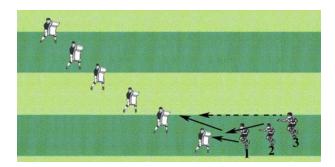


DECISION MAKING IN THE TACKLE By Kingsley Jones.

This session was delivered by Kingsley Jones to coaches at a World Cup coach education day at Wakefield in November, 2003.

1. Warm-up and decision-making.

- Using the pads set up as below
- Aim is to develop good decision-making at the tackle.



- Work in groups of three.
- 1st player hits the pad.
- 2nd player follows into contact, rips and rolls then takes the ball into the next pad.
- 3rd player then rips and rolls off player 2 and takes the ball into the third pad.
- Encourage the player taking ball into contact to transfer the ball onto the outside hip. The sequence in the diagram above will be: player 1 will have the ball on the outside (right, in this case) hip, player 2 will rip and roll and then take possession to the next pad and he *must* transfer the ball onto his outside (right hip) as he is running.
- Encourage the immediate support player to run close to the ball carrier so that he can make contact with the ball carrier just at the tackle contact.

<u>Progression – rip, roll and pop</u>

- Still working in groups of three with the pads set up as above.
- The sequence is as above but player 2 now rips the ball, rolls out of contact and pops a pass to player 3 who will take possession into the second pad.
- Emphasise the importance of (1) player 3 timing his run onto the pop pass and (2) communication between all players throughout whole drill.
- Ensure player 1 then follows the pop pass to contact to support and rip and roll on player 3.



<u>Progression – rip, roll then pop and pass.</u>

- Working now in groups of four.
- Sequence as above, but now add a pass to the fourth player before contact with next pad.
- Emphasise the same points about the ball on the outside hip, timing of player runs and communication.
- Communication is vital at the pass and player 3 must follow the pass and support player 4 as the ball is taken into next pad. The sequence then carries on.

Hit, go down and clear.

- Still working in fours with pads set up the same as in first diagram.
- Player 1 takes ball into contact, drives forward then goes to ground.
- Player 2 then clears pad away from the point of contact and the ball.
- Player 3 can then pick up and take into next pad with player 4 clearing out or using the pick and pop to player 1 or 2 (depending on which one can get there first), who will then take into next pad with player 1 or 2 clearing out. It is vital that all players understand the need for urgency to get into the next supporting role as quickly as possible, even when they have been on the ground.
- Keep emphasising the importance of communication, especially between the players involved in taking the ball to ground and the immediate support player. The hit and clear can be made more effectively when the players involved know what the others are going to do.
- Again, encourage the ball carrier to transfer the ball to the outside hip, allowing
 options at contact. The reason for placing the ball on the outside hip is to keep
 possession away from the inside, which is where the defending back row is likely to
 be coming from with the intention of turning over possession. The player taking the
 ball into contact should aim for the would-be tackler's outside shoulder as the ball is
 presented on the outside hip.
- Get players to use effective body positions at contact with a low position and driving legs. Explain that the cleaning-out action should be from low to high.

Hit, down, clear and bridge.

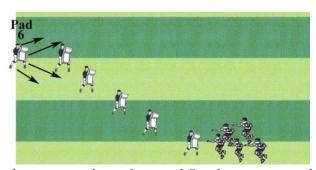
- Working in groups of four with the same pads set-up as in the first diagram.
- Player 1 hits the pad and, as in the previous drill, drives forwards and goes to ground on a call from player 2 who then clears the pad out.
- Player 3 then bridges player 1 on floor, ensuring he carries all his weight on his feet to comply with the Law.
 - o Ensure player 3 get a wide base but not beyond the player on the ground. If player steps beyond the player on the ground, the action is offering a leg upon which defenders can make a hold to initiate a drive.



- Squat down with bent knees, thus making a low, strong position with a wide base.
- o Keep the head up.
- o Both hands grip player 1. The important thing is to get a good tight grip and this can be on shorts and shirt or both hands on the shirt.
- o Ensure that the bridged ball is inside the back foot of the player forming the bridge, so that when a defender(s) makes contact, the ball is still in a ruck and is not free to be taken.
- Player 4 then picks up the ball from between player 3's (bridging player's) legs and takes it into the next bag and the sequence is repeated.
- Again encourage communication throughout whilst the ball is placed precisely at the contact.
- Ensure bridging players adopt a strong, low body positions with a wide base. Heads are held up and a strong contact is made on the player on floor.

Decision making at tackle.

- Working in groups of five.
- Using all the previous options at the tackle, allow players to make their own decision on what to do, depending on what is in front of them and what the pads do.

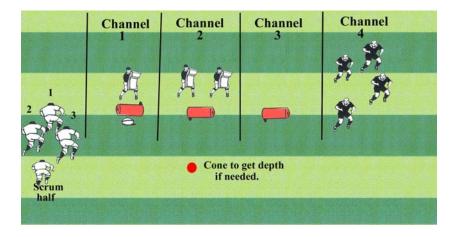


- Pad 6 can stay back as contact is made at pad 5 or he can move alongside pad 5.
- Allow players to go through the four pads as before, but get them to communicate and use the different options that are available. Keep on encouraging them to make decisions that are varied and relevant to what is in front of them.
- The ball carrier, player 1, hits pad five and drives until the call comes to go down. The next player, 2, will then clear out pad five and the other players must then make decisions depending on what pad six does:
 - o If pad six immediately moves up alongside pad five, the player 3 must then clear out and the player 4 can then pick and pop to player 5.
 - o If pad six stays back and moves in slowly, player 3 must then bridge the player on the floor and player 4 can pick and pop to 5.
- Stress communication, looking at what is in front of all players and strong body positions on *all* the pads, not just on the pad where more decisions have to be made.

2. Decision making at tackle as a back row unit.



 Working in a back row of three with a scrum half from the back of a line out or a scrum.



Players work through the channels 1, 2, 3 then 4.

- From the back of an imaginary line out, the scrum half runs and places ball in front of the bag in channel 1.
 - o Player 1 clears over the bag (tackled player) and clears the pad immediately behind.
 - o Player 2 bridges.
 - o Player 3 picks and pops to 9 (scrum half).
 - o The scrum half runs and places ball in front of next bag in channel 2.
- In channel 2.
 - o Player 1 drives through the middle and drives one pad out.
 - o Player 2 does same, driving other pad out.
 - o Player 3 bridges.
 - o Scrum half picks and places the ball at next bag in channel 3.
- In channel 3,
 - o There are no pads at this bag so the player picks and goes.
 - o The whole group then runs down channel 4.
- In channel 4,
 - o Players must then beat defenders.
 - Try to pull defenders away from centre and pass back inside (centre passing).
- Remind the players about the basics of what was practised at the beginning as they tend to think of the immediate skill/task.
- Ensure players aren't running lazy lines.
 - o Make sure they think about the angles of approach and how they can most effectively come into contact.
 - This is especially important at the ruck, where they must enter and drive through the middle.
- When players are clearing in channel 2, where they are trying to take out the two pads,

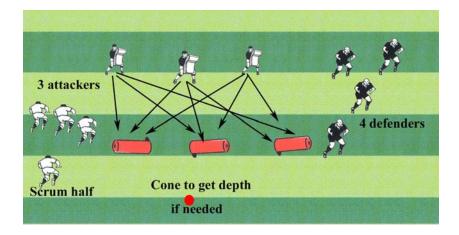


- o Encourage players to clear up the middle from in to out, which might freeup a space for the pick and go.
- o Get the first player to take one pad and second player, close behind or at the same time, to take the other one.
- This is more efficient than the first player trying to take both or both players linking to take of the opposition as they may miss one of them.
- Emphasise the importance of communication, so that the players know who is taking which pad.
- Ensure that, when players are beating defenders down channel 4, they are attacking ball from depth and are drawing defenders.
- To make it slightly more game-like and to encourage player to come from depth,
 - O Use a whistle to signal when players can move from one channel to another, so they do not just follow the scrum half. Make players stay at the breakdown until the whistle is blown.
 - Cones can be added in front of the bags so that players must run round these to get depth before going into contact
- See the following as important and parts of the process to be thought about throughout:,
 - Develop a strong hit at the ruck, look for contact and take hold of players.
 - Take players out at the ruck with a strong leg lift, driving them back.
 - No linking before hit as you may miss players.
 - Make the hit at the ruck from inside to out to clear a space near the ball.
 - ➤ Communication let each other know who is doing which job.
 - Make sure players are effective, otherwise more numbers will need to be committed to win the ball.
- This can be developed to working in groups of six and running as two **pods**. The first pod of three would win the ball and it is then transferred to the second pod, who do the same. This can carry on continuously with the two pods alternating their roles.
- The position of the bags can be varied to simulate different situations on the field. Players can practise coming into contact when going forward *and* after they have had to run backwards to get to the contact phase.

• Progression – develop more decision-making.

- In order to get players thinking more and making more decisions, you can now move the pads from behind the bags and allow them to float behind and make various different defensive decisions as the attackers run through.
- It is now important that the players look at what is in front of them, read the situation, make a decision and communicate.





- Emphasise the importance of communication as players approach contact and *throughout* the contact.
- Allow the scrum half to run and place the ball at any of the bags so that the players have to move around. Continue to get them thinking about their running lines, speed and depth.

This drill can also be changed to work on lost ball or getting turnover ball. By putting the ball on the other side of the bag, the opponents' side, you can get players to work on getting to the breakdown, stepping over, picking the ball and placing it back on their side.

• Turning over ball at tackle.

- Get player in pairs.
 - One player makes tackle.
 - He then gets to his feet quickly.
 - That player reaches over the tackled player, picks the ball up and places it on his side of play.
- To develop this even further, get the tackler to
 - Get quickly back onto his feet so he is on the defender's side of the ball with his back to the other defenders. He should now be facing his own players as he picks up the ball and places the ball over the tackled player and on his own side. The option is also available for him to set for support or pop out to support.
 - By getting into this position, it also means that if ball is dropped it will go backwards on *your* side.

Progression.



- To get players doing this from different angles, get one player kneeling down with the ball in front of him. Player 2 will then run in a circle around him and as soon as player 1 picks the ball up, player 2 can make a side tackle, get to his feet, pick up the ball and plant it on his own side.
- Tackler must think about getting on *the opponents*' side to pick up the ball and then must plant the ball on the correct side as this will be different each time as the tackle can be made at any time whilst running round in a circle.

Progression.

- To put this into a more realistic situation, now get the players working in a small grid and make the tackle a running tackle.
- Attacker will run at defender and the defender will try to make the tackle, regain his feet, pick the ball up and plant it on his side.
- Ensure players are performing the tackle correctly and not half tackling to allow themselves more freedom to get to their feet more quickly than is realistic.

Further progression into game-related practice.

• Little game for practising support and options at the tackle for both attackers and defenders.

A	В
С	D

- 4 grids on pitch.
- 1v1 in all the grids.
- 3v3 wait in middle of pitch.
- Coach calls a grid and 1v1 then run at each other. One player makes the tackle and the other sets the ball.
- 3v3 in middle then support, ensuring that they come from the correct side. One group of 3 acts as defenders and the other 3 as attackers. Support must come through the gate from the back foot.

At the end of the session Kingsley emphasised the following important points:

- Hold depth. It might seem to take a bit longer but with the right lines and depth players will get a better contact/hit.
- Always try to come from immediately behind the ball.
- Maul out to in think of an arrowhead shape.



- The ruck has the same shape. Ruck in to out like an arrowhead.
- Adopt a low body position for maximum effectiveness and keep the head up at all times.