
RUGBY

Games & Drills

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Simon Worsnop



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**To my mother and father for giving me a good start
and to Carys and Josie for making me such a proud dad—S.W.**



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		Small group	Team						
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		Small group	Team						
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Game or Drill title	Page #	Number of players		Handling: Catching and passing	Handling: Decision making	Kicking	Defensive organization	Team attack	Team defense
		Small group	Team						
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Game or Drill title	Page #	Number of players		Handling: Catching and passing	Handling: Decision making	Kicking	Defensive organization	Team attack	Team defense
		Small group	Team						
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Preface

Welcome to *Rugby Games & Drills*, a resource for rugby coaches, conditioning coaches, and teachers involved in rugby union and rugby league at all levels. This comprehensive book is packed full of ready-to-use games and drills and will help you design your own games and drills by outlining key pointers in the process. The activities in this book can be used by players of all ages and abilities; some of the simpler games that can be used with small children as major parts of a session are also suitable as part of a warm-up with adults. Many of the more complex games can and have been used to good effect with international professional players. With greater involvement, participants enjoy themselves more and are more receptive to learning, whatever their age and ability.

As a player, how many training sessions have you attended that were boring? How many hours have you spent doing mindless, repetitive drills? How much time has your field conditioning consisted of endless sprints between cones for no particular reason? How many sessions lacked any intensity during the technical and tactical part only to be followed by 10 minutes of gut-wrenching interval sprints completely unrelated to the previous hour's work?

If the preceding scenarios are familiar to you, then your coaches had little awareness of a games approach to coaching or an understanding of integrated field conditioning. This book will help you avoid falling into those traps; instead, you will create interesting, effective, and enjoyable sessions. Players of every age love to play games; this is the reason they started playing and continue to play the sport. Playing games keeps players focused and on task and physically active and develops in them a positive attitude to physical activity. The approach outlined in this book is especially useful for those who have limited time to spend with their players and must make every second count. Following is a brief explanation of what you will find in each chapter.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 looks at the theory and practice of drills and games. It touches on theories of skill acquisition, the learning process, and games understanding.

Chapters 2 and 3

Chapters 2 and 3 look at small-sided handling and kicking games, respectively. These games can be used with any age group; some of them could be used as general games activities with children. For older players, you can use them as general skills warm-up games or as competitive but fun activities within sessions.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4, Attacking and Defensive Drills, explores ball-handling drills that aim to improve attacking play in quite closed situations. Some of these drills can also be used to develop defensive decision making. These drills were developed to improve skill in closed situations, but they can also be used as conditioning activities. The chapter explains how to adjust the number of players and conditions to get the best out of these drills.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 is a comprehensive guide to defensive conditioning drills using bags and shields. The focus of the drills differ: some are clearly technical, and others are more purely fitness based.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6, Non-Specific Rugby Games, explores ball games derived from other sports such as Australian and American football. These are often used as fun fitness sessions in the pre-season.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 looks into small-sided rugby-specific games. Many of these address specific aspects within a game. These games can be used within warm-ups or to address particular needs within a session, particularly as a build-up to a larger-scale game.

Chapter 8

In chapter 8, Large-Sided Rugby Games, you will learn about more demanding rugby-specific games. These games address technical and tactical requirements specific to either one or both codes of rugby. With planning, you can use these as technical and tactical development games or as a conditioning tool. In fact, with a clear, integrated approach, you can use them as both.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9, Fitness Requirements for Rugby, provides a simple and clear analysis of rugby league and rugby union. Without going into too much physiological detail, the chapter outlines the physical demands of the sports by using information from previous and current match data. From this you will begin to be able to create a picture of the necessary components of field sessions. The chapter then looks at the differences between games and drills. It looks at the uses of both of these in developing the participant as a rugby player and an athlete. You will learn how to construct drills and design games to meet the specific needs of your players and team. Once you understand this, the world will be your oyster and you will not look back.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 addresses planning for the season, which is often a missing weapon in the coach's arsenal. Coaches often ignore the importance of progressing within a session and between sessions and constructing linked sessions throughout a training phase. Many coaching books are distant and theoretical

about planning. This chapter provides a simple guide to planning your sessions based on the time of year. Finally, it provides some sample sessions using activities from within the book and explains how to construct your own.

The format for the games and drills in this book is simple and uses easy-to-understand annotated diagrams to help you follow the text. Each chapter follows a simple theme, but keep in mind that an activity may appear in one chapter and be able to be modified to fit into another. These modifications often appear in the Variations sections of games and drills. This means that although the cover of the book indicates that 119 games and drills are provided, in fact, the book contains many more. The activities can often be adapted by varying the numbers of participants or the grid size or by subtly altering the rules.

Each activity includes the following sections:

- Appropriate ages and the physical and mental components developed
- Objectives
- Equipment
- Set-up
- How to play
- Coaching points
- Variations

Appropriate Ages and Physical and Mental Components Developed

At the beginning of each game or drill, a relevant age or age range is provided. Keep in mind that this is merely a guide; early-maturing or more gifted players may be able to do more advanced drills. Likewise, beginners or players with poorer fitness may not be able to do drills designed for their age. This section also lists the physical and mental components of skill execution, decision making, speed, agility, endurance, and speed endurance. Each component is given a rating, ranging from 0 to 5, as follows:

- *0*—A rating of zero indicates that this drill or game provides very little, if any, stimulus to this physical or technical component (e.g., Zigzag Runs may have a fitness element but involves no decision-making skills by the player).
- *1*—A rating of one indicates that this drill or game provides below-average stimulation to this physical or technical component (e.g., Quick Ball Touch provides very little speed stimulus, despite its name, because the game is continuous and therefore, there is no required recovery period to enable near-maximal speed activities to take place).
- *2*—A rating of two indicates that this drill or game provides somewhat below-average stimulation to this physical or technical component (e.g., in 2 v 1 v 1, agility is rated a 2 because, whilst there is a turn at the end of the grid, the fact that there is only one defender means that there is a below-average use of “footwork” by the attacking player).
- *3*—A rating of three indicates that this drill or game provides average stimulation to this physical or technical component (e.g., in the Cover

Adjustment Drill, both speed and speed endurance are rated a 3 because speed is required to beat an opponent but never is maximal speed attained since it is a short distance; however, as the drill is repeated a number of times there is an average speed endurance component).

- 4—A rating of four indicates that this drill or game provides above-average stimulation to this physical or technical component (e.g., in Kick Return, speed endurance is rated a 4 because there is a series of repeat kick chases carried out over quite a large distance at moderately high speeds).
- 5—A rating of five indicates that this drill or game provides near-maximal stimulation to this physical or technical component (e.g., Pre-Exhaust the Defence provides maximal stimulation to the endurance component; however, remember to observe the correct work to rest ratios otherwise this will not occur and the score will drop).

These ratings are just a guide and alterations to an activity will affect how it stimulates the components (e.g., reducing the pitch area may increase agility and decision-making ratings; altering the number of players will alter both these components and the endurance element; changing the work-to-rest ratios will impact speed, speed endurance and endurance). And, of course, the skill and fitness levels of your players will also affect the outcome of each activity.

Objectives

Each activity lists the objective(s) it addresses. This section will help you choose activities directly geared towards your own goals for your players and the skills and components you want to address in your session.

Equipment

A simple list of equipment is included so you will know what is required to start the activity, such as how many cones you need to mark out the grids. We recommend that you have a minimum of 60 (we know 60 seems like a lot!) cones of four different colours in your stock. You should also have at least two full sets (15) of different-coloured bibs and tags and tag belts, a minimum of six tackle shields, and a similar number of tackle bags.

Set-Up

The activity set-up explains how to set up the playing area, how many players are involved on each team, and where the players are positioned at the start of the game. This will provide you with information on how the game will start and will importantly allow you to draw a map of your training session in order to help you organise it so that players can move safely and freely between activities.

How to Play

This section explains how to set up and run the activity, enabling you to easily explain it to the group. It contains the rules of the activity, which determine the particular skill and fitness component being developed.

Coaching Points

This section gives two or three points you may need to emphasize to develop your attackers and defenders. These simple cues will help the players be successful within the activity either in attack or defence.

Variations

This section provides alternative ways of running the activity. These alternatives are achieved through minor rule changes, which may affect the skill or physical component being developed.

A Note About Safety

With any coaching activity, you must carry out an adequate risk assessment. This includes checking the venue and playing surface. All cones and other rugby equipment must be checked. The players must be competent to carry out the activity you have chosen, and if they are not, you must adjust the activity accordingly. There should be an adequately trained first-aider at the venue, and you must be familiar with emergency procedures. Make sure fluid is available at all sessions; this is particularly important for younger children, who cannot efficiently control their body temperature. Encourage all players to bring their own fluid.

Also note that many of the smaller activities in this book can be used as warm-up and cool-down activities. After these activities have been used to raise the pulse and warm the muscles, some general mobility and dynamic stretching can be carried out (this is outlined in the sample sessions in chapter 10). It is important that this protocol is followed, along with some general dynamic mobility activities.

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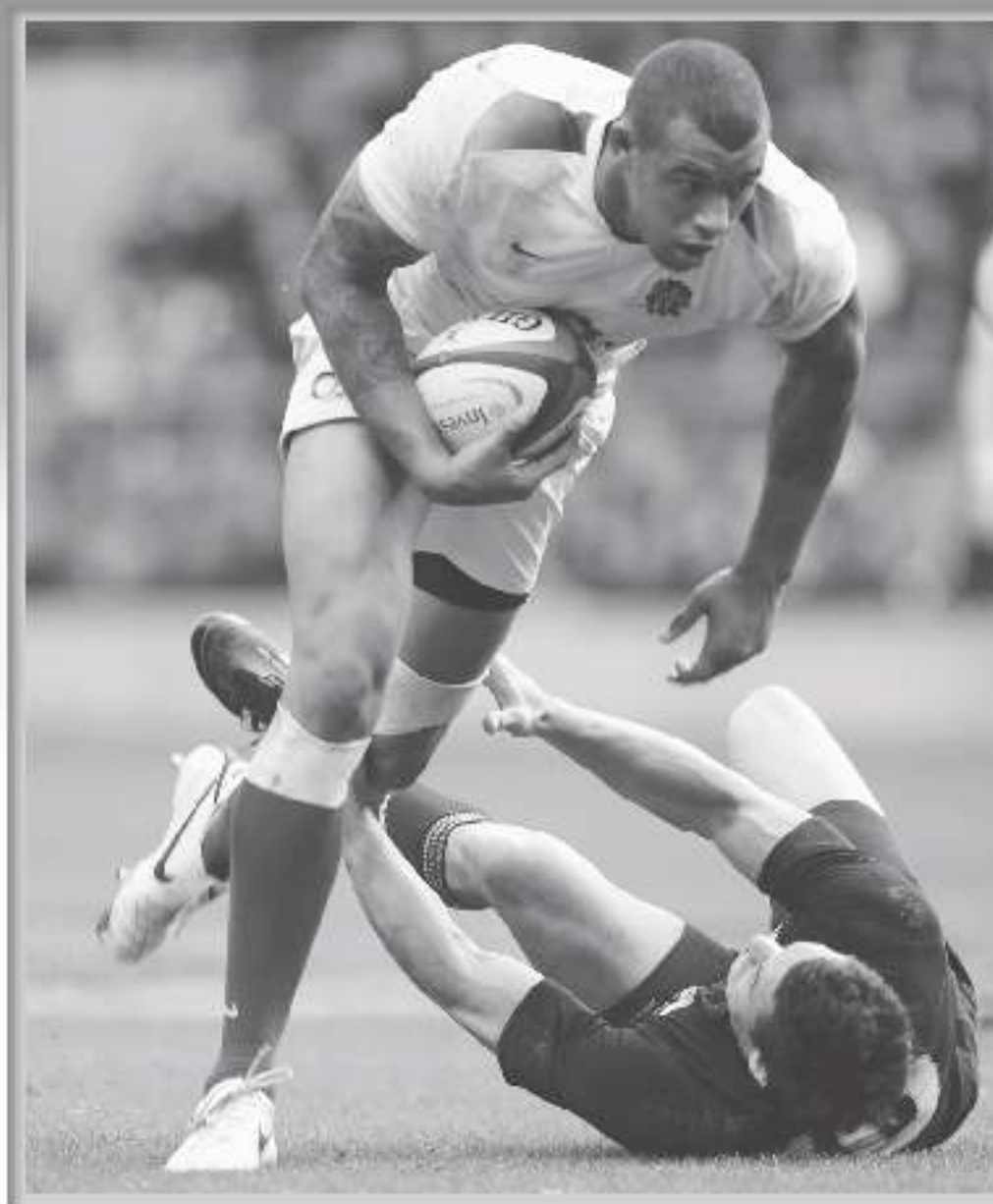
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Key to Diagrams

	Attacker
	Defender
	Player holding tackle inside
	Player holding tackle outside
	Cone
	Ball
	Player movement
	Ball movement

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Using Drills and Games



A technical skill involves the specific movement of a player's body to perform a particular task (e.g., passing to the left). A technical skill may break down if the player is fatigued, particularly if the player is not proficient at executing the skill (i.e., the player will revert to a previous poor skill pattern). Players must be able to repeat technical tasks as efficiently as possible (e.g., a correct pass in the 80th as well as the first minute). To make this possible, players must practise and develop skills in situations that are as close to match situations as possible, which is where the use of drills and games comes into play.

Normally, a game has a minimum of two teams and a scoring system that results in one team winning. However, in warm-up games and games with young children, the score may not be that important. In the case of drills, scoring is often not used, and the players are not necessarily in teams. However, there is a sliding continuum from drills that are strictly drills to those that may easily be changed into games right through to pure games. In addition, you can increase the pressure on players by increasing the pressure of the opponents or by having them play in a fatigued state. In this way, drills and games can be conditioning tools.

Furthermore, by incorporating skills such as small-sided games, your athletes will develop greater game sense through increased teamwork, better communication skills, and increased awareness. Also, your athletes will perform better in pressure situations during matches and develop into tactically smarter players while increasing their fitness. Finally, and probably most important, most athletes tend to enjoy skill-based conditioning more than traditional fitness conditioning methods (Coutts 2002).

Advantages and Disadvantages of Drills

Simple drills have the following advantages:

- They are easy to set up and organise in terms of numbers and equipment.
- They are easy to monitor.
- Many can be used as purely fitness activities.
- Players are unable to hide in many of them because they are quite structured and tightly-controlled.

Because of the ease of set-up and the closed nature of simple drills, they can often be combined. You can also combine them in such a way that players go from a very closed activity to progressively more open ones and finally finish with a game. For example, when concentrating on defensive decision making, you can have a group of players move progressively from a repeated static situation in which the attacking players hold shields to the same activity in which the attacking players use the ball and finally to an open modified game (see chapter 10 for more information).

You can also use drills with a fitness emphasis to exhaust players prior to a skill drill to test a particular skill under fatigue. An example of this would be to have the players do some up-and-down shuttles up a grid for one minute and then immediately go into a continuous 3v2 + 2 in which their attacking, passing, and decision-making skills are pressurised. You can combine attack

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