

CLEARING AND PARKING: An effective way to retain possession

By Colin Ireland

When you've put all that effort into an attacking move the last thing you want is to lose the ball in the tackle or subsequent ruck. You can give your team the ability to retain the ball by coaching your players "clearing and parking".

In a tackle situation the ball carrier should do everything they can to present the ball with two hands back towards their team mates. Retaining possession is then about the support players and the options they take.

1. If there are no opposition players they can pick the ball up and run or pass.
2. If an opponent is on their feet trying to win the ball the supporter needs to drive or "clear" them out, leaving the ball free for the next support player.
3. If the defenders have been driven away but there is no time to make a pass, the supporter should "park" over the ball to secure it.

Clearing opponents away

When clearing defenders away from the ball, it's important to have the right attitude as well as good technique.

- Arrive in a low driving position with your head up.
- Bind onto team mates as you arrive.
- Target one opponent only and drive them back.
- Bind onto opponents and use leg drive to clear them backwards or to the side.

Parking over the ball

Parking over the ball helps secure possession. You are forming a ruck, so defenders have to stay onside.

- Arrive in a low position and bind onto the clearing player in front. This keeps the ball in the ruck.
- Stay on your feet and ensure the ball stays between your feet. This keeps the ball secure.
- Keep the low body position until the scrum half picks the ball out and passes.

Developing clearing and parking

Organise your players into groups of two defenders and four or five attackers. The ball carrier takes the tackle and presents the ball.

The first two or three support players clear away the second defender. The third or fourth support player parks over the ball. The final support player picks up the ball to run with it or pass it away.

Walk through the exercise at first, correcting the players' technique until they are comfortable with the roles. Then increase the pace to a jog, then to full speed.

Attacking from slow ball

By Paul Tyler

What I mean by slow ball is any ball from the tackle area that gives the defence the chance to regroup and get organised. In these situations any attacking team that can use slow ball to their advantage is going to be more successful. So here are two simple tactics to speed up possession following slow ball.

Option 1 - "Pick and go"

Pick and go is an effective way to turn slow into quick possession. Don't overuse it as it becomes very easy to defend (and it's pretty boring for the players).

- Get one of your best ball carriers at the back of the ruck – the player with the lowest centre of gravity is usually the best option.
- Make sure there are two or three support players very close to the ball carrier.
- One player picks up the ball and runs in a low position round the side of the ruck, driving low into a defender. They aim to drive for two or three steps and then go to ground, making sure the ball is well presented.
- The support players must be close so that as soon as the ball carrier goes to ground they can ruck over.
- The scrum half must then be positioned so they can get the ball away quickly.

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Option 2 - "Runners off 10"

Getting players to run a bit wider off the fly half (the number 10) can be more effective than getting a player to run off a pass from the scrum half.

- As with the pick and go, you need to start by getting a couple of your best ball carriers in the right position, one either side of your number 10.
- Make sure you get support runners behind the ball carriers and ensure they are close.
- The number 10 makes a decision about which runner to give the ball to. The ball carrier's aim is to run at space and get in behind the defender.
- The support runners should stay as close as possible to the ball carrier and react to what happens.

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* Wise up *

Get your players focusing on picking up the ball before the match starts

By Dan Cottrell

Before games it is important to get your players' mind and body tuned up for the intense conditions they will be facing in the match. If they run onto the pitch cold, still thinking about last night's film, you've got problems.

The "ball lift" warm up, taken from my *Ultimate Rugby Warm-Ups Manual*, is a great way to get players focusing on the ball as well as on scrummaging.

Two players face each other. They bind together with their right arms, each using their left hand to help each other pick up a ball between them. They then have to put it down.

Then change the binding arm and "pick up" hand. Next have the players move to different points whilst remaining bound, to pick up and put down a ball.