

INTRODUCTION TO
CONTACT RUGBY
A COMPLETE 20 WEEK TRAINING PROGRAM



**40 GAMES DESIGNED TO INTRODUCE AND
INCREASE THE PLAYERS CONFIDENCE IN
CONTACT**

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MANUAL OBJECTIVES

The first thing a Junior coach must understand is that **their role is to lay the foundations** for the future of the young players he/she is coaching. One of the keys to providing a very good coaching program is the **acceptance that they can't teach the players everything**, especially not in one season.

Unfortunately, too often the coach feels over whelmed with all the skills and rules that have to be taught to the young players under his/her guidance. In his/her attempts to provide the best coaching program for the players they attempt to teach the players everything in one or 2 seasons, leaving the players perplexed with all the information and saddening the coach as he/she struggles to understand why they aren't getting better.

A good, well designed training program should be based on progressions. Each level building onto of the last, with clear guideline for the coaches to establish the necessary development criteria.

Our aim with this manual and the following manuals is to provide a clear pathway for coaches to follow. Each age group will have a number of key skills that need to be mastered before moving onto the next age group. The 20 weeks are structured to increase the players skill level, understanding and enjoyment. **For the coach it is an easy to follow guide with clear objectives, coaching expressions and techniques that will achieve results.**

Below is a simple diagram showing the stages of skill development. This diagram clearly shows how a player will develop his/her game over the years up to the under 10's (9 years old).

Activity	U6/7s - 5/6 years	U8 - 7 years	U9s - 8 years	U10s - 9 years
Spatial Awareness				
Passing				
Running				
Onside/Offside				
Kicking				
Tackling				
Break down				
Defence Structures				
Positional Play				

AGE GROUP DYNAMICS

Kids go through many changes in their lives and most of the major physical changes occur before they reach the age of 10 years old. Usually by the age of 5 years old (when they enter rugby) a kid can do all the major life skills such as walk, run, catch and throw, however, at lower to intermediate coordination level. They are ready to take part in group activities and their curiosity level is very high.

Below is a quick overview of the phases a player will go through in their rugby career;

Phase 1 - 5-9 year olds - Fun and Fundamentals

At this age the players are ready to learn through fun activities. They have short concentration spans and need high level activity.

Phase 2 - 10-12 years olds - Skill and Structure

At this stage they still want fun games, however, they now want to know how these games are going to effect their rugby game. They are interested in isolation skills and practicing these skills for improvement.

Phase 3 - 12-17 year olds - Technique and Tactics

The final stage of development is the stage in which the players are mentally ready to learn the different facets of the game. They are interested in how the game as a whole can be manipulated and tactical decision making plays a large role in this development. They are keen to learn how they as a player contributes to the team and the game's successes.

U8 Objectives - Tackle confidence and introduction to the ruck

At this stage the 7 year old players should have had 1 to 2 years of fun skill development and understand the basic structures of onside and offside. **The aim for this year is to introduce the players to tackling and the ruck.**

This is the year mum dreads the most as she envisages tackling as she sees on TV in the open age groups, however, at this age it is more of a process of grab as the players come to terms with techniques necessary to bring a player to the ground. This year is probably one of the most important years in a players rugby development because if he can confidently tackle and enter into contact then the other skill facets fall into place.

Tackling Confidence

We want to teach the players about 3 key things get close, get low and squeeze both the legs tightly together.

Ruck Confidence

There are 2 key area that a player needs to learn, 1 when tackled place the ball back to your team mates, 2 push or drive the opponents away from the ball.

If you as a coach can achieve these objective this year you have done your part in the players development.

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

This training manual is design on a **fortnightly rotational system**, each coaching session is repeated twice before moving onto the next session. Repetition is necessary for the coaching techniques to sink in and with a single training session every week players forget the skills learned quickly and or they become over whelmed by too much change.

Each training session is **finished with a short modified rugby game** designed to give the player the chance to put into practice the skills learnt. It is important that the coach focuses on reinforcing the skills learnt by repeating the phrases learnt during the training games and stopping the game briefly (very briefly, no speech) to explain to the players what is expected of them.

Phrases or trigger words

Through out the training manual **trigger words or phrases are used with the distinct purpose of providing the coach with a trigger** that should remind the players of the technique necessary to perform a skill. It is important the coach uses these words or phrases as often as possible to create a clear understanding and reduce the amount of explaining a coach has to do. It is very helpful during game time for the players as all the coach has to do is call out the phrase and it should trigger a response.

Week Overview

Each week will contain a weekly summary page followed by the game sheets.

Weekly summary

This page is useful for an overview of what and why the games will help develop the players rugby game. For a coach this is very important, knowing and understanding the progressions and concepts behind a given game makes it easier to explain the game to the players.

Game sheets

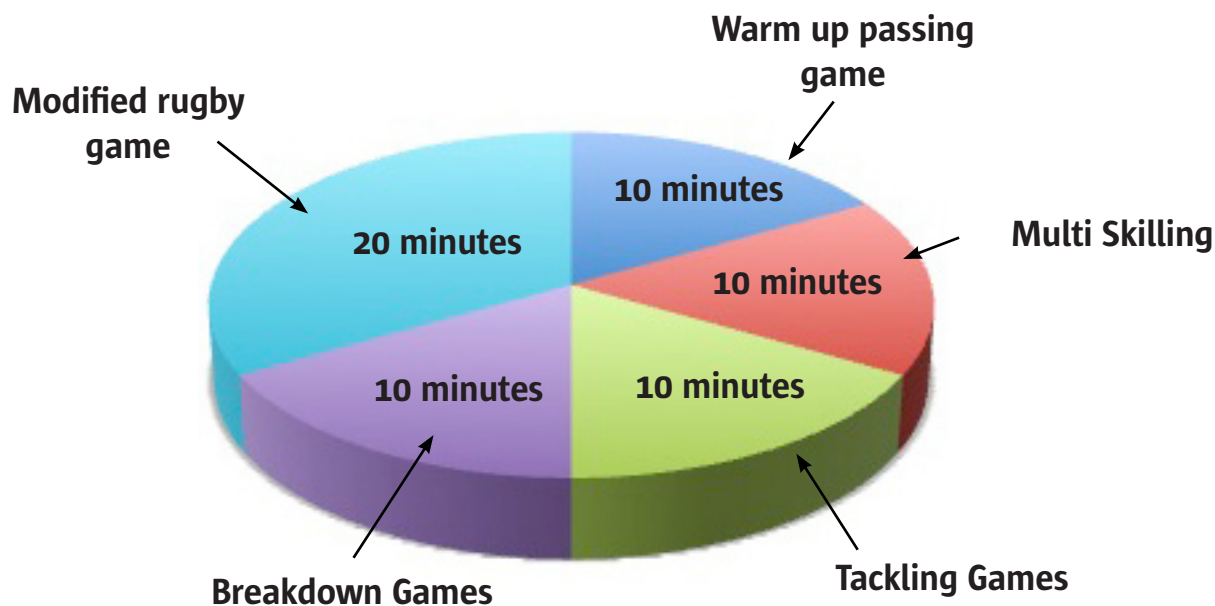
This is the engine room of the manual we would suggest these sheets be printed and brought along to training for referral at all times. The game sheets explain the rules of the game and the trigger phrases as well as a diagram illustrating the set up and structure of the game.

SESSION TIME ALLOCATION

It is important to try and stick to a good time management system. **The key for this age group is to try and rotate a skill after 10 minutes.** This gives the coach time to quickly explain the technical requirements, demonstrate and then get into a game.

Each game sheet explains the key phrases and their learning points. After 4 games based skills sessions the players should be given time to put the skills into practice in a modified rugby game. The rules of the game are explained, however, if a coach feels like modifying them by adding or subtracting rules feel free. The more game time a player gets the better chance the technical skills will stick in their mind.

Below is a pie chart showing the break down of time over a 60 minute session.



EQUIPMENT

This program has been specifically designed with the objective of producing games that can be coached effectively anywhere and one of the key criteria is the reduction in equipment needs. We understand that junior rugby has limited funding which usually translates into less equipment. This manual uses two pieces of equipment;

Equipment

Rugby Balls -

Obviously these are necessary for the games to be played. We would suggest a size 3 ball, however, if the club has limited funding the players will adapt to the sizes available. If the club has funding limitations it might be worth asking the players to bring a ball with them to every training session.

Diagram



Markers

Markers are necessary for the marking out of the field boundaries or grids. It is best to split the markers into 2 or more colours, this helps with the clarification during games (pointing out colour zones etc).

The best practice is to set as many games up before the players arrive as this will get them excited about the up coming games. It also shows the players that you know what you are doing which is very important when trying to gain their respect. When a game is finished and you have to set up for another the best thing to do is send the players for a drink break while you set up the next game.



MODIFIED RUGBY GAME OVERVIEW

The purpose of the modified rugby game is to give the players the chance to put into play the skills they have learnt through out the training session and to allow the players more game time. **The more players actually play the rugby game the quicker they will understand the rules and the skills needed to be successful.**

Here are some tips when refereeing the game;

Referee by the rules

Try and be consistent when refereeing, this will give the players a better understanding of the game. It is easy to be lenient on them when they make a mistake but it just creates more grey areas which you will have to explain later. Make sure you explain to them why you have blown the whistle, what the ruling is.

Coach throughout the game

It is great for the players if you run a small commentary as the game goes, they love this. If this is too hard when you blow the whistle for an infringement ask them the question “do you know why we are stooping” and explain to them what is expected of them.

Stop for short breaks during the game

A short water break here and there is good for them to get their breath back as well as yours. Let them get some water and then get back under way again.

Make the teams even

If you know there are stand out players place them on opposite teams to cancel out any advantages. Feel free to change the teams as the game is played or as you see unfair advantages. Sometimes it is also a good thing to have teams with unfair advantages for players to learn about loosing, however, this is very hard to manage so I wouldn't recommend it.

Let parents join in

In the last 5-10 minutes allow parents to join in the game, the kids love the opportunity of playing with their parents. Another option is to play parents against kids, this is very popular for the players.

Use the trigger phrases

Don't forget the trigger phrases, call them out through out the game, the more you use these phrases the more they stick in the players minds.



MODIFIED RUGBY GAME RULES

TEACHING POINTS

The coach should do the following;

- 🏉 Referee to the rules
- 🏉 Explain what is expected of them when they make a mistake
- 🏉 Coach through out the game
- 🏉 Make the teams even

EQUIPMENT

1 Rugby Balls
6 Markers



GAME ORGANISATION AND RULES

The aim of this game is to bring all the skills the players have learnt together into a rugby game situation. It is necessary the coach focuses on the skills learnt in the training session.

- 🏉 Set Up a field wide enough to suit the players skill level and the number of players. Players just beginning are better to have a narrower field. A suggested field size is 15m wide and 20m long.(the narrower the field the easier it is to tackle and gain confidence)
- 🏉 Split the players into 2 teams with even numbers or as close as possible.
- 🏉 The rules should be as close to the competition game laws of that age as possible. (The rules for this modified game are simply a guide line for what can be used and the coach can change them where necessary.)
- 🏉 Explain to the players the aim is to score a try by placing the ball over the opponents try line without being tackled.
- 🏉 The game begins with a kick off in which one team kicks from the middle of the field to the opponent. The receiving team must receive the ball and be given a chance to run with the ball before being tackled (as the teams get better at the game this rule can be slowly eliminated).
- 🏉 When a player is tackled he/she must release the ball backward towards a teammate. Each team is allowed push past the ball (clean out) and pick the ball up when it is free (ref should call 'ball is free').
- 🏉 If a team drops the ball forward, passes forward a non contested scrum takes place. If a player runs over the side line the opposing team throws the ball into the line out (suggested 4 man line out).
- 🏉 When a team scores a try the scoring team returns to the half way line and kicks to the opponents.
- 🏉 A try counts as 5 points.
- 🏉 It is important the coach referees the release of the ball on the ground consistently. The aim is to get the players releasing and cleaning out as early as possible.

The key to this modified game is to provide the coach the chance to stop the game when necessary and explain what is expected of the players. The more the players play in a game based format the better they will perform on the field in a competition situation.

WEEK 1 AND 2

Each weeks training session has been designed to last 60 minutes with 40 minute dedicated to skill development and 20 minutes to a modified rugby game.

Week 1 and 2 will involve the following games;

Hot Potato

What we are trying to achieve with this game is increase the player's passing skill. Generally at this age the players are reluctant to pass the ball because they believe they won't get it back again. This is designed to make the players pass the ball and as they get better the speed and pressure will increase. Try to bring in the rule of no back passes, a player cannot pass back to a player he received the ball from.

Corner Line Tag

This game is a defence oriented game teaching the defenders to spread out to the side lines as quick as possible. The players start from a corner and have to learn to spread out along the width of the field if they want to stop the attackers. It is important the coach explains to the players that it is easier to defend in a line rather than shooting up in ones and twos.

Bear Hug Royal Rumble

The bear hug is the key to players understanding the 3 key points of a tackle, get close, get low and squeeze around both legs. It is important the coach emphasises these key points when explaining a bear hug, this will help the players relate later when the bear hug tackle is called. This is the foundation of tackle confidence, if the players learn this well they will happily tackle.

Ball Place Leap Frog

The ball place will be a crucial development this year. The tackle zone is a messy area at this age and if the players learn to place the ball back as quick as they can it makes the break down a breeze to coach. It is important the coach uses the "place" trigger phrase a lot and explains the link so that in the game it will become and instinct.

Modified Rugby Game

Finally finish the last 20 minutes with a modified rugby game. It is important the coach focuses on the skills learn during the training session and reenforces them. The more the players play rugby the quicker they start to understand the game rules and the more competent they will become.

HOT POTATO

TEACHING POINTS

The key word is HOT POTATO which should stimulate

- ✎ Pick a target - passers should pick their target before passing
- ✎ Space - players should try and get into areas of space
- ✎ Hands out - catchers should have their hands out ready to catch

EQUIPMENT

1-2 Rugby Balls
4 Markers



GAME ORGANISATION AND RULES

- ✎ Set out a field approximately 20m x 10m.
- ✎ Create a square big enough to fit all the players in the square with a little room to move.
- ✎ Show the players the rugby ball and tell them this is a hot potato and will burn their hands if they hold onto the ball too long.
- ✎ Explain to them they won't get burnt if they catch the ball it's only when they hold on too long. The coach can add in the rule of 3 seconds before having to pass the ball.
- ✎ The coach then passes the ball to one of the players who tries to catch the ball and pass it on.
- ✎ If a player drops the ball there are 2 options to play, when the mistake occurs;
 1. the dropper goes to one knee and can be redeemed if he/she catches the ball next time, this continues from one knee to 2 knees then sitting down.
 2. the dropper is eliminated and the game continues until there is only one player left. When it gets down to the last 2 players they can move around to speed the game up. (a bad pass eliminates the passer)
- ✎ Once the players understand the game start counting the passes aloud and see if they can beat their record number of passes before dropping the ball.

The coach should attempt to correct any passing errors after the game and explain the correct passing techniques using the key phrases.



CORNER LINE TAG

TEACHING POINTS

The key words are

- ✎ Spread out - the defenders should spread across the try line quickly
- ✎ 2 handed tags - this gets them used to the idea of using 2 hands for tackling later

EQUIPMENT

- 0 Rugby Balls
- 4 Markers

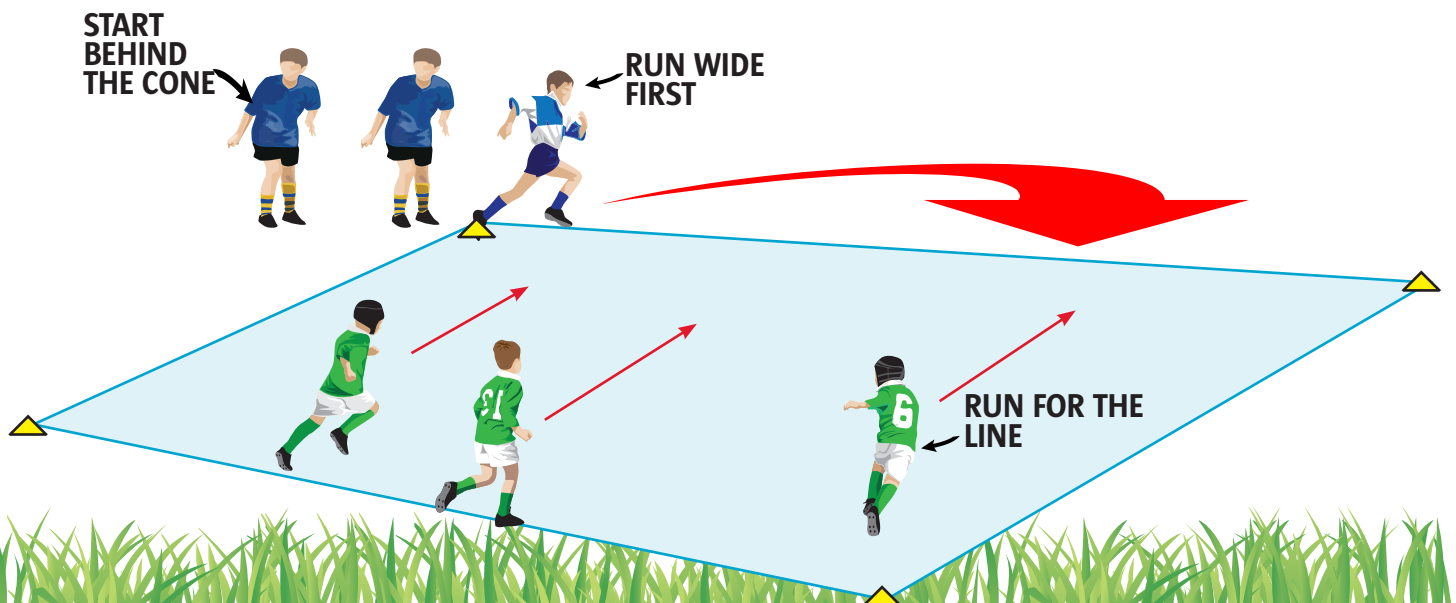


GAME ORGANISATION AND RULES

The aim of this game is to get the defending team to understand the importance of spreading out in defence. This game is an progression of Line Tag.

- ✎ Set up a narrow rectangle approximately 10m wide x 5m long.
- ✎ Split the players into 2 even teams and get them to face each other on opposite 10 meter lines.
- ✎ Explain to the players that 1 team will be attacking and their task is to get across the opposition line without being tagged (2 handed tag).
- ✎ The defending team are told to line up at one corner of the field and when signalled by the coach they are to attempt to tag the attacking players before they get across the line.
- ✎ As the game develops the attackers will naturally start on the side furthest away to the defenders, to stop this place the fastest runners on the side closest to the defenders.
- ✎ Explain to the attackers about the idea of changing running gale to step the defenders.





The aim is that when the coach signals the start the defending players will spread across to the other side of the field quickly and defend the entire field width. Explain to the players the importance of spreading out and defending in a line.



BEAR HUG ROYAL RUMBLE

TEACHING POINTS

We want to teach the players these 3 key learning points

-  Get close to the opponent
-  Grip around the lower half of the body
-  Squeeze your grip tight around both legs
-  Lift and drive with the legs

This is a good warm up exercise before a game









EQUIPMENT

4-8 cones



GAME ORGANISATION AND RULES

This game is designed to teach the players the importance of a low body height, getting close to the players and squeezing tightly. The first step in preparing the players for a tackle.

-  Set up a square approximately 10m x 10m and tell all players to stand inside the square.
-  Begin by telling the players to find a partner and face them with their hands on each others shoulders. Ask the players if they know what a bear hug is and get them to demonstrate. Make sure it is clear to effectively bear hug they have to get close, get low and squeeze tightly to lift an opponent off the ground.
-  Tell the players they are going to play a Royal Rumble, this means the last man in the ring wins.
-  Tell them that when the coach gives the signal all players are to try to get everyone else out of the square by using a bear hug and dragging them over the side line.
-  If, during the process, the bear hugger steps over the side line while taking a player out, the bear hugger remains in.
-  If, during the process, a player/players fall to the ground they can get up and start again, however, if a player goes to the ground 3 times they are out. (or deliberately drops to the ground)
-  If the players are taking a long time contemplating who to attack give them a 3 second countdown and any players not involved in a rumble is are out.
-  Once the last player/players are left the game can begin again.

The aim of this game is to help the players gain confidence in contact and understand the 3 key points of tackling, get close, get low and squeeze tight.

