

RUGBY LEAGUE COACHING MANUAL

WALES RUGBY LEAGUE



A GUIDE FOR NEW COACHES AND PLAYERS

Back to Basics!

The following manual is aimed at new coaches and will explain the basic composition and key components of the game of rugby league.

This is a document that will enable a coach to carry out a simple but effective game plan and it can be adapted to suit specific elements such as a small and mobile team.

The Wales Rugby League Manual will make regular compar-

isons to rugby union to enable a coach to get to grips with the differences between codes and adapt play appropriately.

So what's rugby league all about?

Rugby league is a thirteen aside, two dimensional invasion sport where the aim of the game is to score more points than the other team.

The game is played over two halves where each

team has six tackles or chances to score.

If, after six tackles, the team in possession have not scored, the ball is handed over to the opposition who then get the chance to score with their six tackles.

Unlike rugby union the score for a try is four points and the conversion is worth an additional two.

Penalty kicks are two points each and a drop or field goal is worth one.



"Each team has six tackles to score"

Player numbers, positions & roles

Full Back (1) – Last line of defence. Follows the ball behind his own defensive line and communicates to his players, identifying gaps. Drops deep on fourth/fifth tackle to receive kick. Offers options and support in attack.

Wingers (2&5) / Centres (3&4) – Superior

passing ability and positional sense. Mobile, good footwork and try scoring ability. Must be able to make one-on-one tackles.

Stand Off / Scrum Half (6&7) – Good leadership qualities. The playmakers / pivots in the side. Outstanding passing and kicking skills.

Hooker (9) – Also known as acting half back (AHB) or dummy half. Outstanding passing ability and can also take the stand off or scrum half role. Generally the player who is first at the play of the ball (similar to scrum half in rugby union). He is also the central player in the defensive line.



The prop is the engine room of the team

Props (8&10) – Strong ball carrier. Must strive to dominate his opposite number with aggression and commitment. An ability to pass is essential and run at gaps, not players.

Second Rower (11&12) – Highly mobile forward with an ability to pass. A partner for the props who together form the 'engine

room' of the team and generate 'go forward'.

Loose Forward (13) – Has 'backs' abilities with a forwards capacity to go forward. Provides an option either side of the pitch, running outside props and second rowers. Sometimes used as an extra pivot.



Player positioning from a scrum

Offense

Six Tackles

An offensive **set** is made up of six tackles in which the attacking team attempts to gain territory with the intention of scoring a try.

If the set is not completed with a score it is generally completed with an attacking kick to gain territory returning the ball to the opposition.

The early tackles of each set are normally made up of the players (usually forwards) making yards on one side of the pitch to lay a platform for a wide play. This has similar characteristics to a rugby union driving maul where the forward momentum should hopefully

attract defensive players into the ball therefore releasing space on the wings for the later tackles in the set of six.

Due to the nature and discipline of a defensive line in rugby league it is extremely difficult to break down defenses without laying a platform.

Play the Ball

After a player is tackled they must regain their feet, place the ball on the ground and roll the ball backwards with the sole of the foot to the player behind them (the acting half back). This is a unique component of rugby league and is known as play the ball (PTB).



“Running in to score a try”

The player must regain their feet before placing the ball onto the floor. They must also make contact with ball with the foot to play the ball backwards. Infringement of either of these actions will result in a penalty to the opposition.

As the defensive line

(except markers*) has to retreat ten meters after each PTB, most offensive strategies are based upon attaining quick play the ball. This will put the defensive line on the back foot or even cause a penalty as the players do not retreat the 10 meters.

Play the Ball in more detail

The play the ball (PTB) is how the game continues after the tackle has been completed. It is imperative that the actions are carried out correctly as an incorrect PTB results in a penalty.

It is advisable that players who are relatively new to rugby league, experience controlled falling sessions whilst carrying the ball prior to play the ball coaching.

Key Points

When a player is tackled their first objective is to land face down, protecting the ball with their full body pointing in the direction of play, not like rugby union where players land side on to present the ball.

If a player lands on elbows and knees there are two movements.

- **Sweep** Bring leg

around the opposite leg to the ball carrying arm

- **Touch** play the ball with the opposite leg. The sole of the boot must make contact with the ball

Player on belly (three movements)

- **Snap** both knees to chest in one movement
- **Sweep**
- **Touch**

If a player lands on side or back there are four movements.

- **Roll to the ball**
- **Snap**
- **Sweep**
- **Touch**

Considerations

- The player must keep control of the ball until the sole of the foot touches the ball



Snap

Sweep

Touch

* See Page 5

Offensive Strategies

Wales has a strong history of breeding highly skilled, attack orientated players, however, rugby league is ultimately a game of utilisation of possession.

When a team receives possession, the offensive strategy they implement will depend on where they are after each tackle.

WRL has separated the pitch into three zones similar to a traffic light where the colour relates to the level of risk in your offensive strategy.

Red Zone

In this zone the team



need to make the 'hard yards'. This involves low risk plays and forward drives.

Amber Zone

In this zone you start to build the attack. You can identify weak spots and develop field position.

Green Zone

In this zone you can implement the full offensive strategy, empowering the players to make their own decisions.

A successfully completed set in rugby league is either scoring points or handing over

possession on your terms. When handing possession over the most effective way is in the form of a kick deep into the opposition territory therefore giving the opposition up to one hundred metres to cover to score themselves.

Ball Handling

Holding the Ball

The ball should always be carried in two hands prior to contact:

- Thumbs spread
- The ball should be carried central to the body.
- Elbows out.



Holding the ball

- Ten points of contact (fingers and thumbs but no palms)

The six o'clock pass

The six o'clock pass is designed to allow quick passing of the ball through the hands with no re-adjustment between catching and passing a ball.

The player passing should:

- Point the ball down.
- Rotate shoulders.
- Place weight over the front foot.

- Keep eyes on the target.

- Squeeze the ball through the fingers.

The player receiving the ball should:

- Hold hands up.
- Place hands in a 'W'
- Keep eyes on the ball



six o'clock pass

Catching the Ball



Defence

Defence is the function of the team when not in possession of the ball. It is important that an attitude is developed that defence is another form of attack.

Key points for defence are:

- Exert pressure
- Gain ground
- Physical domination
- Win back possession

For each tackle the de-

fensive line positions players across the pitch ten metres from the play of the ball.

On the 5th tackle the fullback and wingers will drop back out of the line of defense in preparation to receive the kick.

Points to consider:

- If the half backs (pivots) are weak in tackling move them out between wing and centre.
- If opposition always attacks down one side place 13 down that side.



Defensive Organisation

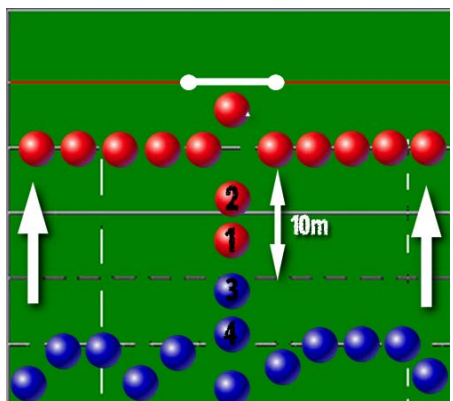


Marker Play

When a tackle is complete all players must retreat ten meters apart from two players called markers.

The markers:

- Must be square to the player tackled (i.e. one directly behind the other)
- Must be at least arms



1=1st Marker ; 2=2nd Marker ; 3=Play the Ball; 4 =Acting Half Back

length from the tackled player.

ineffective due to the inability to react.

The first marker, after regaining his feet, should take a step backwards so no contact is made with the player playing the ball.

Once the ball has left the foot of the tackled player it is in play and the first marker chases.

The second marker should be arms length behind first marker.

The second marker covers the inside attacking options.

The markers should not get too close to the tackled player as they will be

It is an offence to interfere with a player who is playing the ball.

Tackling

Rugby league has a reputation throughout the world as one of the most physically confrontational team sports. Teams can make 300 tackles per match and correct technique under pressure is

paramount for success. Putting the ball carrier onto his back and dominating rewards the defensive line with more time to retreat ten metres and prepare to move forward for the next tackle. The main objective for the tacklers is to dominate the ball carrier aiming to finish on top of the tackle.



Dominant tackle

Individual Tackling Skill



Head in close and grip strongly

prepare to grapple

- **Target area** underneath the ball
- **Contact:** Hit with the shoulder and drive with the same leg
- **Body position:** Straight back and leg drive will add power
- **Grip:** Head in close and grip strongly
- **Drive:** maintain the leg drive and look for a 'handle' such as the

Rugby league requires all players to have a solid defensive ability. It is therefore essential that the individual technique is very important.

Key Points

■ **Approach:** a very high percentage of tackles are missed because of poor footwork. The tackler has to be able to react to the movement of the ball carrier by good effective reactive steps.

- Hands up, head up-



Drive

Approach



thigh to lift and continue to drive.

- **Studs:** use studs to drive thus testing ball security. Finish on top of ball carrier
- **Reloading:** regaining feet at the head of the tackled player to become a marker before play the ball
- **Second effort:** stay alert for marker positioning.



Reloading from the tackle

Restarts

Kick Off

- Must be a place kick from centre spot.
- Ball must travel ten metres forward.
- The ball must bounce in the field of play.

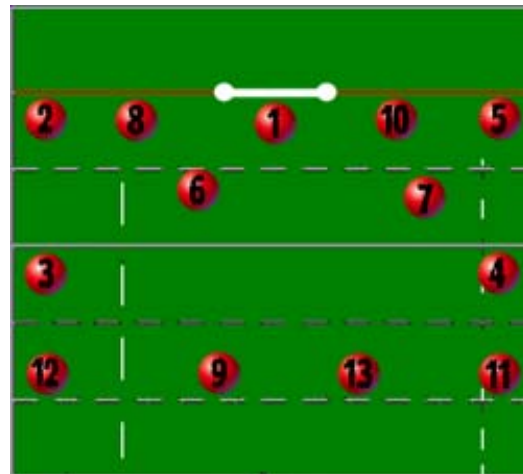
Twenty metre restart

A twenty restart is a tap penalty taken at the centre of the twenty metre line and is a result of:

- An attacking player kicking or touching the

ball out of play and over the dead ball line.

- An attacking player concedes a penalty in the in-goal area
- A defending player catches a kick 'on the full' in the in-goal area. This is also known as 'defusing the bomb'.



Kick off positioning (receiving)



Goal line Drop out

This is a drop kick taken from underneath the goal posts by a defender and is the result of:

- A defender intentionally kicks or knocks the ball over his own dead ball line.
- A defender touches the ball dead in his own in-goal area.
- A defender is tackled in possession in his own in-goal area.

Scrum

A scrum is formed after:

- The ball has gone into touch.

- The ball has been knocked on.

- A forward pass.

The scrum-half must roll the ball in from the side nearest to touch (blind side).

The hooker uses his foot

to move the ball out of the back of the scrum to the loose forward.

The six backs not in the scrum must be at least five metres behind the scrum until the ball is out of the scrum.



The ball on it's way out of the scrum

Conclusion

This manual is designed to help you develop the basic skills, strategy and organisation for teams that are new to the game of rugby league.

These core skills are vital to the game of rugby league and have allowed it to develop into the most dynamic and exciting team sport in the world.

As experience and knowledge increases, teams will be able to form their own strategies.

A simple example of this could be a team that lacks size and bulk but have highly mobile and skilled players. This would allow for a more adventurous attitude in

areas of high risk.

Last but not least, don't forget to enjoy the game.

Andy Lindley

Andy Lindley
Head of Coach Education
Wales Rugby League



Enjoy the game!

WALES RUGBY LEAGUE

© Copyright Wales Rugby League

2006

www.CymruRL.com

Written by Andy Lindley & Wayne Williams, Design & Editing by Mark Harris, Photographs by Mark Harris & Jane Harris

Featured players: Mark Devine (Cardiff Demons), John Breakingbury (Valley Cougars), Jon Tricky (Cardiff Demons), Geraint Davies (Celtic Crusaders), Byron Williams (Blackwood Bulldogs), Kevin Ellis (Celtic Crusaders), Andrew Jenkins (Swansea Valley Miners), Neil Davies (West Wales Sharks), Stephen Williams (Valley Cougars)

