



Hong Kong Mini Rugby Football Union

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## Mini Rugby Coaching – September 2011



**Peter Hudson – HKMRFU Coaching and Refereeing Coordinator**

Dear Coaches,

Welcome to the first of what I hope to be regular 'Mini Rugby Coaching' Newsletters. This is your arena, so if you have any particular aspect of rugby that you wish to have information on or discuss, then please contact me and I will hound the experts and include their advice in these newsletters.

This edition is dedicated to training the onside/offside concept of FUN-damental Rugby! The introduction of the 3M offside law has already been discussed in the recent Chairman's Newsletter (30/08/11). Our advisor today is Jason Grier of Ready Rugby Australia ([www.readyrugby.com.au](http://www.readyrugby.com.au)) Jason has produced three FUN-damental coaching manuals that can form the basis of your progressive master training plan. In Hong Kong coaches of the U6s-U9s have a huge responsibility to ensure that their players are safely and progressively trained into contact rugby. This requires a holistic approach from the club, rather than just an age group approach. Your progression should focus on players acquiring skill sets and game knowledge, rather than on winning!

This edition of 'Mini Rugby Coaching' will highlight 5 FUN-damental games that can be used to safely and progressively training players in the concept of onside/offside. REMEMBER, it is the simple rules of the FUN-damental training games that will guide the players, not the laws! The laws will always form the foundation of the SIMPLE rules that make up the FUN games! The 5 FUN-damental games we will cover are: Line Tag, Corner Line Tag, Battle Line Attack, Line Raiders and Channel Ball.

### Line Tag

Onside and offside is a hard aspect of rugby to explain to a young player and it is often easier to have them facing each other from the start. What we want to get across to them from the start is that they have to defend from in front of the ball carrier. It may seem easy and logical to us but is a concept that can be foreign to some players.

The same problem occurs to players on the attacking team, supporters often stand in front of the ball carrier and hope to receive the ball. The best way to start teaching players about the onside and offside concept is to get them in a line and defending a given zone from front on. This is exactly what the line tag game tries to do in as simple a way as possible.

Teaching Points: The key phrases are:

- 1) "Move Up" – defending players should move off the line to tag in defence.
- 2) "Mark Your Opponent/Channel" – defending players should pick a target in front of them.
- 3) "2 Handed Tags" – this gets the players used to the idea of targeting the shorts and using two hands for contact tackle rugby.
- 4) "Look for Space" – attackers should "Go-Dance-Go", step into the branches of the trees rather than the trunks. Attackers should look for the space (gaps) in the defence.

### Game Organization & Rules

The aim of this game is to get players to understand onside & offside as well as line speed to defend.

- 1) Set up a narrow rectangle approximately 10M wide \* 5M long.
- 2) Split the players into 2 even teams and get them to face each other on opposite 10M lines.
- 3) Explain to the players that one team will be attacking and their task is to get across the opposition line without being tagged (2 Handed Tag).
- 4) The defending teams are told to move up quickly and tag a player (2 Handed Tag).
- 5) When a player is tagged he/she must run back to their starting line and wait until the next game starts. This should give the coaches a chance to see who really got through. The defending players can continue to defend.
- 6) If the attacking team manages to get a player over the line the attacking team wins, if not the defending team wins.
- 7) Once everyone has been tagged or players make it through without being tagged, swap attacking and defending teams. Ask the players about the importance of moving up quickly and in one line and try and draw out the answers from the players using open-ended questions.
- 8) A point score system can be kept in which an attacking team scores a point every time they get a player across the line and when the opposing team attacks they attempt to beat the score.

Note: This game should stimulate the players to realize everyone has to make sure they tag their target.

Note: Increase & Decrease pressure by varying the 5M distance between attackers and defenders.

Reference: Ready Rugby Coaching Manual – "Beginners Rugby – A 20 Week Non Contact Program"  
[www.readyrugby.com.au](http://www.readyrugby.com.au)

## **Corner Line Tag**

This game is a progression from Line Tag. This time around the defending 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 move up in a line rather than shooting up in one's and two's.

**Teaching Points:** The Key Phrases are:

- 1) "Spread Out" – the defenders should learn to spread across the try line quickly.
- 2) "Mark Your Opponent/Channel" – once spread across the try line defending players should pick a target in front of them.
- 3) "2 Handed Tags" – this gets the players used to the idea of targeting the shorts and using two hands for contact tackle rugby.
- 4) "Look for Space" – attackers should "Go-Dance-Go", step into the branches of the trees rather than the trunks. Attackers should look for the space (gaps) in the defense.

### **Game Organization 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 a progression of Line Tag.

- 1) Set up a narrow rectangle approximately 10M wide \* 5M long.
- 2) Split the players into 2 even teams and get them to face each other on opposite 10M lines.
- 3) 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).
- 4) The defending team is told to line up at one of the try line corners and when signaled by the coach they are to attempt to tag the attacking players (by spreading out across the try line first) before they get across the line.
- 5) As the game develops the attackers will naturally start on the side furthest away from the defenders. To prevent this, place the fastest runners on the side closest to the defenders.
- 6) Explain to the attackers about the idea of changing running angle to step towards the branches of the defenders trees.

The aim is that when the coach signals the start of the game, 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.

Note: Increase and Decrease pressure by varying the 5M distance between attackers and defenders.

**Reference: Ready Rugby Coaching Manual – "Beginners Rugby – A 20 Week Non Contact Program"**  
[www.readyrugby.com.au](http://www.readyrugby.com.au)

## **Battle Line Attack**

This game is designed to introduce the need to move forward in attack and defence. Both teams will have to work as a group to win the opponents battle line. Explain to the players the importance of moving up in defence and attack.

**Teaching Points:** The Key Phrases are:

- 1) "Spread Out" – the defenders should learn to spread across the field quickly.
- 2) "Move Up" – both attackers and defenders should move forward as quickly as possible. (Concept of Pressure by cutting down time and space)

### **Game Organization and Rules**

The aim of this game is to increase the players understanding of onside and offside as well as teaching them to defend across the field.

- 1) Set out a playing field appropriately sized. Along each sideline set the cones 5M apart – place a different colored cone on the second last cone at each end of the field, as this is the winning line or try line.
- 2) The aim of this game is to teach the 2 teams to run forward as quickly as possible to the line.
- 3) Split the players into 2 teams and line them up with 1 team on the try line (attackers) and another on the 2<sup>nd</sup> line out from the try line (defenders).
- 4) Explain to the players that the middle line is the "battle line" and it is a race to see which team can get the most players to the line first (coach is the judge).
- 5) The team that manages to get the most players to the line first wins the battle line and gets to start on that line. To begin the defenders can't win the battle line because the attackers can't go back any further. Note: The option does exist to start the game at any of the lines.
- 6) The losing team then retires 2 lines and the winning team starts on the contested line. Both teams battle for the next middle line.
- 7) This continues until the attacking team wins the 2<sup>nd</sup> last battle line i.e. the line out from the defenders try line.
- 8) Once the attackers win the winning line, the defenders then become the attackers and see if they can win the battle line up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> last battle line from the end of the field.

**Reference: Ready Rugby Coaching Manual – "Beginners Rugby – A 20 Week Non Contact Program"**  
[www.readyrugby.com.au](http://www.readyrugby.com.au)

## **Line Raiders**

This game is designed to promote decision making, as a player is forced to make a decision between going for the ball or allowing the opponent the ball but defending successfully. This is crucial as players this age will automatically want to win the ball and can get despondent if they lose so they give up. Giving the player the chance to redeem him/herself creates an awareness of the importance of defence.

Teaching Points: The Key Phrases are:

- 1) "Soldier Running" – pump the arms and lift the knees.
- 2) "Take Control" – players should try and get control of the ball.
- 3) "2 Handed Tags" – this gets the players used to the idea of targeting the shorts and using two hands for contact tackle rugby.
- 4) "2 Hands" – the ball carrier must run with the ball in 2 hands.

### Game Organization and Rules

The aim of this game is to get the players used to running up in attack and defence.

- 1) Set up a field approximately 10M in length \* 15M in width. Place all the rugby balls in the centre of the field along a middle line.
- 2) Split the players into 2 groups and tell them to stand at opposite ends of the field with a ball between them (on the middle line of the field).
- 3) Explain to the players, on the coaches call, they are to run to the middle and steal a ball and run with the ball back to their home base.
- 4) The players that miss out on getting a ball are to attempt to tag the ball carrier before he/she reaches their home base.
- 5) If a player successfully steals the ball and gets back to base before getting tagged they win. If a player gets tagged before getting back to home base he/she must return the ball to the centre.
- 6) Once winners are assessed, all balls are returned back to the middle line and players start at their home bases again.

Note: The coach may have to move players around to find a fair race for the ball.

Note: This game helps the players assess if they have a chance at winning the ball and then deciding whether to attack or defend.

**Reference: Ready Rugby Coaching Manual – "Beginners Rugby – A 20 Week Non Contact Program"**

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## **Channel Ball**

This game appears complicated at first; however, it is designed around continual attack and defence. The key to this game is getting the players to understand they have to run around one of the markers on their side of the field before they can attack or defend again. The aim of the game is to put pressure on the defenders forcing them to choose the most important ball carrier to defend against.

Teaching Points: The Key Phrases are:

- 1) "2 Handed Tags" – this gets the players used to the idea of targeting the shorts and using two hands for contact tackle rugby.
- 2) "Work Together" – taggers should work together to catch the attackers.
- 3) "Play what's in front of you" – attackers should watch what's in front of them and try to evade them, defenders should mark their target/channel and work together to maintain a defensive line.

### Game Organization and Rules

This game is designed to teach about retiring to an onside position when the tag is made.

- 1) Set up a field approximately 10M in wide \* 15M in length. Place all the balls at one end.
- 2) Split the players into 2 even teams and send them to opposite ends of the field.
- 3) The attackers are the players with the ball and the defenders are the players without the ball.
- 4) Explain to the players that the attackers are to try and get the ball to the defenders line to score a try. Once they have placed the ball, the ball remains there until all balls are assembled on the defenders line. Player can't take balls back.
- 5) The defenders are to try and stop the attackers by tagging them before they reach the line.
- 6) After a successful tag both the defender and the attacker must return to their line by running out and around the corner marker of the field. Once they have rounded the marker they can enter the field again and attempt to score or defend.
- 7) To begin with, very few attackers will get the ball over the line. However, as the players start rounding the markers, more space opens up and the defenders become less organized.
- 8) Attackers are allowed to pass backwards to other attackers. If the ball is dropped the attacker must take the ball back around the corner marker as if he was tagged.

This is a very good decision making game as the defenders need to decide which attackers are of greatest danger of getting the ball across the try line.

Note: Attackers can pass backwards, defenders must communicate to maintain a defensive line.

**Reference: Ready Rugby Coaching Manual – “Beginners Rugby – A 20 Week Non Contact Program”**  
[www.readyrugby.com.au](http://www.readyrugby.com.au)

So there you have it, 5 FUN-damental games that you can use to progressively train your players in the concept of offside/onside. REMEMBER – The more players actually play these FUN-damental games the quicker they will understand the rules and skills to be successful.

These games are included in Ready Rugby’s Coaching Manual “Beginners Rugby – A 20 Week Non Contact Program”. This manual can be purchased online at [www.readyrugby.com.au](http://www.readyrugby.com.au) The HKMRFU is currently working towards these manuals being translated into Chinese. I would to thank Jason Grier for allowing the HKMRFU to reprint these 5 FUN-damental games.

Until next time, have fun!

Yours Sincerely,

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