

COACHING AND SKILL PROFILES OF MINI-RUGBY COACHES AND PLAYERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

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Master of Science in Sport Science
in the Department of Sport Science, Faculty of Education
at
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The crest of Stellenbosch University is centered behind the text. It features a shield with a blue and white pattern, topped with a red and white crest. Below the shield is a banner with the Latin motto "Pactura coluntur cultus recti".

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Co-supervisor: Prof Karel van Deventer

December 2017

DECLARATION

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own original work, that I have read and understand the Stellenbosch University Policy on Plagiarism and the definitions of plagiarism and self-plagiarism contained in the Policy [Plagiarism: The use of the ideas or material of others without acknowledgement, or the re-use of one's own previously evaluated or published material without acknowledgement or indication thereof (self-plagiarism or text-recycling)]. I also understand that direct translations are plagiarism. Accordingly, all quotations and contributions from any source whatsoever (including the internet) have been cited fully. I understand that the reproduction of text without quotation marks (even when the source is cited) is plagiarism.

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- † All the players and coaches who formed part of the experimental and control groups of the study.

DEDICATION

This thesis is firstly dedicated to my wife, Elunda, and children, Giulia and Luca. Thank you for all your love and understanding, it has kept me going, especially during the difficult times. I could not have done this without your support.

Secondly, I want to dedicate this thesis to all the coaches who are not passionate about the sport they are coaching, or do not put in the effort to develop the talent they are working with. In a peculiar way, you have motivated me to start this project. You have driven me to get involved to try and make a difference in this sport I love so much.

SUMMARY

The optimal development of mini-rugby players demands a substantiated, age-appropriate training programme, as well as good quality coaching and a structured methodology. However, due to a lack of qualified, experienced rugby coaches in the Western Cape Province primary schools, South Africa, the coaching of mini-rugby is often lacking and neglected. The first objective of this study was to compile a profile of mini-rugby coaches in the Western Cape Province, South Africa with the aim of establishing the coaches' experience in playing and coaching rugby, their coaching education and training, and their feelings of efficacy in terms of developing mini-rugby players. The second objective was to determine the effect of a skills intervention programme on the skill level of mini-rugby players with the purpose of investigating the impact of an organised and substantiated practice plan on the skill development of players.

This thesis followed a research article format. Article one will address the first objective of the study. The first major finding of this study was that the majority of coaches (51%) did not have any form of rugby coaching qualification. When this number was combined with the number of coaches who only had a World Rugby level one qualification, which does not require any assessment, it showed that a disturbing 84% of the coaches either did not have any form of coaching training or were not assessed on their knowledge of, or their ability to coach rugby. Furthermore, a significant number of the coaches did not feel efficacious in their coaching (23%) and did not believe that they were optimally developing the skills of the players (29%). The findings highlight an unfavourable situation where untrained and inexperienced individuals coach mini-rugby, which has important practical implications for rugby administrators, developers of coaching education courses, players, as well as the game itself.

Article two addressed the second objective of the study. The experimental group, when compared to the control group, showed significant improvements ($p < 0.05$) in five of the six skills (e.g. passing, catching, picking up the ball, tackling and taking the ball into contact). Although the control group improved in three of the skills, the improvements were not significant ($p > 0.05$). Considering the results, it can be concluded that the specific skills intervention programme significantly enhanced the skill level of the mini-rugby players. Furthermore, the

study highlighted the importance of appropriate coach education and training, as well as the value of a well-structured and substantiated training programme in the quest for players' skill development.

By investigating the coaching and skill profiles of mini-rugby coaches and players respectively, coaches and other relevant role players will be able to make more informed decisions regarding the coaching of mini-rugby and the development of mini-rugby players. An obvious recommendation would be that all coaches must be educated and trained to coach rugby and that a coaching education course designed specifically for mini-rugby will aid in preparing individuals to successfully coach mini-rugby and raising their confidence to do so. Another recommendation would be that all practice plans need to be well-structured to incorporate age-appropriate activities, suitable progressions, as well as the element of play and fun.

OPSOMMING

Die optimale ontwikkeling van mini-rugbyspelers vereis 'n gestaafe, ouderdomsgepaste oefenprogram, sowel as goeie gehalte afrigting en 'n gestruktureerde metodologie. Weens 'n gebrek aan gekwalifiseerde, ervare rugby afrigters in laerskole van die Wes-Kaapse Provinsie, Suid-Afrika, is die afrigting van mini-rugby, egter, dikwels gebrekkig en verwaarloos. Die eerste doelwit van hierdie studie was om 'n profiel van mini-rugby afrigters in die Wes-Kaap Provinsie, Suid-Afrika saam te stel met die doel om die afrigters se ondervinding in rugby speel en afrigting, hul afrigtingsopvoeding en opleiding, en hul gevoelens van doeltreffendheid ten opsigte van die ontwikkeling van mini-rugbyspelers te bepaal. Die tweede doelwit was om die effek van 'n vaardigheidsintervensieprogram op die vaardigheidsvlak van mini-rugbyspelers te bepaal met die doel om die impak van 'n georganiseerde en gestaafe oefenplan op die vaardigheidsontwikkeling van atlete te ondersoek.

Hierdie tesis het die formaat van 'n navorsingsartikel aangeneem. Artikel een sal die eerste doelwit van die studie aanspreek. Die eerste hoofbevinding van hierdie studie was dat die meerderheid afrigters (51%) nie enige vorm van rugby afrigtingskwalifikasie gehad het nie. Indien hierdie getal gekombineer is met die aantal afrigters wat slegs 'n *World Rugby* vlak een kwalifikasie gehad het, wat nie enige assessering vereis nie, het dit gewys dat 'n onrusbarende 84% van die afrigters in hierdie studie òf geen vorm van afrigtingsopleiding gehad het nie, òf nie geassesseer was op grond van hul kennis van, of hul vermoë om rugby af te rig nie. Daarbenewens het 'n beduidende aantal van die afrigters nie opgewasse gevoel vir die afrigting van mini-rugby nie (23%) en het nie geglo het dat hulle die vaardighede van die mini-rugbyspelers optimaal ontwikkel nie (29%). Die bevindinge beklemtoon 'n ongunstige situasie waar onopgeleide en onervare individue mini-rugby afrig, wat belangrike praktiese implikasies inhou vir rugby administrateurs, ontwikkelaars van opleidingskursusse vir afrigters, spelers en ook die spel self.

Artikel twee het die tweede doelwit van die studie aangespreek. Die eksperimentele groep het, in vergelyking met die kontrolegroep, beduidende verbetering ($p < 0.05$) in vyf van die ses vaardighede getoon (bv. aangee, vang, optel van die bal, duik en die bal in kontak inneem). Alhoewel die kontrolegroep

in drie van die vaardighede verbeter het, was die verbetering nie beduidend nie ($p > 0.05$). Met inagneming van die uitslae, kan daar afgelei word dat die spesifieke vaardighedsintervensieprogram die vaardigheidsvlak van die mini-rugby spelers aansienlik verbeter het. Verder het die studie die belangrikheid van toepaslike afrigtingsopvoeding en opleiding, asook die waarde van 'n goed gestruktureerde en gestaafde oefenprogram in die strewe na spelers se vaardighedsontwikkeling beklemtoon.

Deur die afrigtings- en vaardighedsprofile van mini-rugby afrigters en -spelers onderskeidelik te ondersoek, sal afrigters en ander relevante rolspelers meer ingeligte besluite kan neem rakende die afrigting van mini-rugby en die ontwikkeling van mini-rugbyspelers. 'n Ooglopende aanbeveling sou wees dat alle afrigters onderrig en opgelei moet word om rugby af te rig en dat 'n afrigtingskursus wat spesifiek vir mini-rugby ontwerp is, sal help om individue voor te berei om mini-rugby suksesvol af te rig en om hul selfvertroue daarin te verhoog. Nog 'n aanbeveling sou wees dat alle oefenplanne goed gestruktureerd moet word om ouderdomsgeskikte aktiwiteite, gepaste progressie, sowel as die element van spel en pret in te sluit.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DMSP	Developmental model of sports participation
FMS	Fundamental movement skills
IRB	International Rugby Board
KFA	Key factor analysis
LSD	Least significant difference
LTAD	Long-term athlete development model
SARU	South African Rugby Union
SASCOC	South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee
SEM	Sport education model
TGfU	Teaching games for understanding
WPRFU	Western Province Rugby Football Union
WR	World Rugby

APPENDICES

- A Instructions for authors: *International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching*
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

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1.1 Introduction

The benefits of organised sport in schools are mainly perceived to provide favourable physical as well as psycho-social outcomes (Hardy *et al.*, 2010). A traditional claim of youth sport programmes is that the quest to develop athletic talent results in positive personal, social and psychological outcomes, which makes sport participation intuitively appealing for players, coaches and parents alike (Gould & Carson, 2008). However, Gould and Carson (2008) warn that while some implicit benefits result from participation, not all experiences are positive and benefits are more regular and maximized when participation is diligently planned and structured in order to increase the likelihood of this positive experience. Today it is widely acknowledged that appropriate training and support are essential if talented individuals are to fulfil their potential. According to Chase and DiSanti (2017), maximizing potential has often been conceptualized in an area of study known as talent development, which refers to providing the most appropriate environment for athletes to stimulate their learning and performance (Vealey & Chase, 2016). An indisputable element of athletics is the variation that exists not just within individual athletes at each level of competition, but also within leagues, schools and individual teams (Vealey & Chase, 2016). Due to this diversity in the population of youth athletes, coaches should consider several important aspects to increase their athletes' chances of experiencing a positive impact through participating (Chase & DiSanti, 2017).

The complexity and physicality of adult rugby union provides unique challenges when introducing children to organized mini-rugby games (Thomas & Wilson, 2013). Mini-rugby games should be shaped in order for children of all levels of abilities to progress and develop. A practical dilemma for coaches and administrators is to decide which generic models and approaches they should actually subscribe to when there has been such a diverse range of contributions at the theoretical level (Gulbin *et al.*, 2013). The International Rugby Board (IRB), replaced by World Rugby in 2014, introduced mini-rugby as a means to increase participation in rugby through the adaption of the playing field and rules in order to facilitate skill development and enjoyment for youngsters between the ages of seven and 12 years (Rutherford, 1993). The laws have been designed to set guidelines for unions to develop non-contact rugby within their respective countries (IRB, 2011). In South Africa, the provincial unions, together

with coaches and schools, have the authority to determine the focus and competitive environment of the mini-rugby set-up. In studying the key principles of primary school sport programmes, Bloemhoff (2008) posits there is a call for school sporting opportunities to be re-engineered around children's motives for participating and for competition and performance not to be overemphasised.

Coaches play a primary role in teaching children technical, physical, psychological and tactical skills (Norman & French, 2013). Martindale (2015) alleges that an important role for any sport coach is to nurture young people and help maximise the natural talents they inherited. Regardless of the coaching programme, the attitudes and behaviours of coaches determine the quality of the sport experience (Vickers & Schoenstedt, 2011). The significance of the coaches' approach to sport in general and specifically his/her philosophy to coaching, is closely related to the sporting experiences of children of all ages, but seems to be especially significant to younger children (Keegan *et al.*, 2009). This entails that coaches' philosophical beliefs and behaviour are central to the sporting climate they create (Collins *et al.*, 2011). Gould *et al.* (2007) suggest that successful coaches regard fun, instilling values and the total development of the player as primary factors for achieving success. Conversely, pressures intrinsic to sport culture can influence coaches' philosophies and behaviour, resulting in coaches' behaviour focused more on the winning aspect and less on fun and development (Walters *et al.*, 2012). A sport of high national significance, as is the case with rugby in South Africa, raises the cultural expectation further. Consequently, the pressure on the coach is augmented to win matches, and therefore, reinforces coaches' excessive approach to winning (Walters *et al.*, 2012).

To attract, retain and to optimally develop youth rugby players, it is of the utmost importance to design age-appropriate activities and practices. As a result, the necessity of a well-structured training programme cannot be emphasized enough. Progressing basic movement skills through well-structured, fun activities and games will lay sound foundations on which subsequent, sport-specific skills can be developed (Stafford, 2005). McMorris (2015) purports that plenty opportunities for practice must be provided and that practice should be challenging, enjoyable and as realistic as possible. Within the sports coaching literature, different views exist concerning the use

of early specialisation versus early diversification, as well as utilising deliberate practice versus deliberate play. In spite of this lack of consensus, all would agree that the quality of the coaching session is the principal concern facing coaches. The focus should be on the quality of training and sport skill instruction that the athlete receives (Brylinsky, 2010). Brylinsky (2010:22) further asserts that:

“Sport skill instruction and sport training that focus on long-term athlete development provide the cumulative advantage to nurture talent, regardless of the training context in which it is offered”.

Nash *et al.* (2011) supports this view and state that a series of specific and appropriately periodized, well-structured schedules for practice and competition can go a long way to ensure optimum development throughout an athlete’s career. According to Nash *et al.* (2011), training sessions are the embodiment of the coach’s art and products of their holistic skill-set. Training sessions are the mechanisms through which coaches bring all the elements of effective practice together and are the points at which coaches impart their craft to their athletes.

1.2 Problem statement

Due to a lack of qualified, experienced rugby coaches in Western Cape Province primary schools, South Africa, the coaching of mini-rugby is often lacking and neglected. However, skill development during the mini-rugby years is of the utmost importance to facilitate the realisation of potential at later stages of the child’s development. This optimal development of mini-rugby players demands good quality coaching, as well as a structured methodology and a training programme that is based on scientific and substantiated mini-rugby principles.

1.3 Aim of the study

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the coaching and skill profiles of mini-rugby coaches and players in the Western Cape Province, South Africa.

The specific objectives of each article (Chapter three and four) are as follows:

Research article one (Chapter three): to compile a profile of mini-rugby coaches in the Western Cape Province, South Africa.

Research article two (Chapter four): to determine the effect of a 16-week individual skills intervention programme on the skill level of players in the Western Cape Province, South Africa.

1.4 Motivation for the study

The investigation of coaching and skill profiles of mini-rugby coaches and players will give all role-players a better understanding of the current reality facing mini-rugby in the Western Cape Province, and probably beyond the borders of the province. It might show a need for a well-founded training programme and appropriate training of coaches. Investigating the coaching profiles of mini-rugby coaches will probably validate the need for the training of such coaches with the purpose of equipping them sufficiently to optimally develop the skills of mini-rugby players. Furthermore, by analysing the results of the skills intervention programme, it will be clear what effect such a programme could have on the skill development of players and ultimately on the realisation of a player's potential.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is presented in research article format. The two research articles (Chapters three and four), were prepared according to the guidelines of the specific journals. Consequently, the referencing style used in the different chapters of this thesis will differ.

Chapter One: Introduction and problem statement: The chapter is included herewith and the Harvard method of reference is used in accordance with the guidelines of the Department of Sport Science, Stellenbosch University.

Chapter Two: Literature review: The purpose of this chapter is to summarise the coaching methodology and skills development literature in order to establish the literature review for this study. The chapter is included herewith and the Harvard method of reference is used in accordance with the guidelines of the Department of Sport Science, Stellenbosch University.

Chapter Three: Research article one: A profile of mini-rugby coaches in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. This chapter is included herewith in accordance with the guidelines of the International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching (Appendix A). The article has been accepted for publication in the International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching.

Chapter Four: Research article two: The effect of a 16-week individual skills intervention programme on the skill level of mini-rugby players in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. This chapter is included herewith in accordance with the journal guidelines of Perceptual and Motor Skills (Appendix B).

Chapter Five: Summary, limitations and future research.

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CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

Referencing within the chapter and the list of references at the end thereof has been done in accordance with the guidelines of the Department of Sport Science, Stellenbosch University

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2.1 Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that appropriate training and support are essential if talented individuals are to fulfil their potential. Because of the multitude of personal, environmental, and contextual factors that mediate athletic development, there is no standardized "recipe" for developing talent. However, coaches play a significant role in determining whether an athlete reaches his or her full potential and continues to participate and enjoy the sport experience (Chase & DiSanti, 2017:7). Phillips *et al.* (2010) explain that the sport expertise is acquired through successful adaptation of numerous environmental constraints or factors, as well as experiences in training and competition. Coaches, therefore, play critical roles in the talent development (Johnson *et al.*, 2008), by providing high-quality training programmes and sessions. Thus, a coach and a coaching process that offers a supportive learning environment, appropriate levels of challenge and engenders a passion for the sport can produce positive and productive sporting outcomes. Chase and DiSanti (2017) agree and assert that a primary factor in effectively developing youth talent and avoiding negative outcomes from sport participation for athletes is their coach. Specialists in the field of sport science, and in particular rugby coaching, would agree that the design of age-appropriate activities and practices is essential to attract and retain and to optimally develop mini-rugby players. However, the complexity and physicality of adult rugby union provides unique challenges when introducing children to organized mini-rugby games (Thomas & Wilson, 2013). The game should, therefore, be shaped in order for children with different levels of abilities to progress and develop. It would seem obvious that effective coaches are necessary to achieve this feat.

In studying the motivation of youth sport volunteers, Busser and Carruthers (2010) found that although there is an increasing emphasis on providing recreation and sport experiences that promote positive youth development, most youth sport coaches are volunteers with little formal training. In a similar vein, Kay and Bass (2011) state that youth sport relies heavily on volunteers and many parents, therefore, also take on the role of coach. In exploring high school rugby players' perception of coaching effectiveness, Broodryk and Van den Berg (2011) found indications that volunteer coaching at high school levels might not be on standard, with most coaches testing below average for the relevant efficiency constructs. Broodryk and Van den Berg

(2011) state that, in understanding the scarcity and importance of efficient coaches, one must realize that schools compete with one another to get the services of quality coaches. They further assert that traditionally, the bigger schools usually can afford to pay coaches higher salaries because of a bigger income from a larger number of learners, arguably supplying their players with better coaches. It seems that the majority of primary schools can unfortunately not afford the luxury of outsourced coaches, and even when they do make use of such coaches, they are utilised for the older age groups, which are considered more important. This unfavourable situation has led to fewer coaches who could be considered to be at the expert level, to coach youth sport. This is unfortunate, as it could be argued that young athletes in recreational sport contexts have the greatest need for expert coaches to develop the proper foundation for continued participation and advancement in sport (Huber, 2013, as cited in Gilbert & Trudel, 2013).

A major reason for the lack of effective and experienced rugby coaches in primary schools, is the declining number of male teachers largely because of the perception that education at this level is still women's work, as well as the societal stigma that portrays men as paedophiles (Petersen, 2014). The declining number of male teachers is not unique to South Africa, but can be observed worldwide (Mashiya, 2014; Williams & Castello, 2016). This is concerning for various reasons. Mashiya (2014:33) proclaims:

“One is left to wonder if the role of male teachers in childhood education has been undervalued and even misjudged in South Africa, where so many children lack positive male role models”.

Williams and Castello (2016) support the concern of Mashiya (2014), and assert that more single-parent households and higher divorce rates also highlight the importance of a male influence in a child's life. More pertinent to the current study, is another comment by Mashiya (2014:33) who, in reference to a case study of South African male foundation phase (grade one, two and three) pre-service students, stated:

“The fact that some male students introduced sporting activities where there had previously not been any also offers food for thought”.

According to Mashiya (2014), sport and coaching do not exist in the foundation phase of most South African schools, although the importance of physical activity for the

development of gross and fine motor skills in children of this age group is well established.

Subsequently, due to a lack of qualified, experienced rugby coaches in the Western Cape Province's primary schools (a province in South Africa), the coaching of mini-rugby is often neglected. An important role for any sport coach is to provide young players with the best chance of realising their potential, by structuring the practice sessions in such a way as to provide age-appropriate learning environments for the players to learn, and subsequently improve their performance. This is unlikely to occur without the presence of effective coaches. This study will attempt to show the significance of skill development during the mini-rugby years, and therefore, the necessity of good-quality coaching to achieve this.

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise the literature pertaining to rugby development and coaching in order to establish the theoretical background for this study. Firstly, this review will provide background on rugby and specifically rugby in South Africa, with a particular focus on the game of mini-rugby. Secondly, the major aspects of the coaching profession will be discussed and lastly, the facets of the skills development process will be considered.

2.2 Rugby union

2.2.1 Background

Rugby is an invasion and evasion game; once possession has been gained, the objective is to move the ball forward (by carrying or kicking) into opposition territory and ultimately score points (Rugby Ready, 2007). The principles of the game are: contest possession; go forward; provide support; create continuity; apply pressure; and score points (Rugby Ready, 2007). The range of skills and physical qualities required are what makes rugby a unique game. The uniqueness stems from two key principles: a) contesting possession of the ball; and b) continuing play (IRB, 2007). Maintaining balance between contesting possession and continuing play is what makes rugby challenging and unique. The skills required for the two key principles differ as each requires a certain set of skills in order to be effective, which led to players specialising in certain aspects of the game (IRB, 2007).

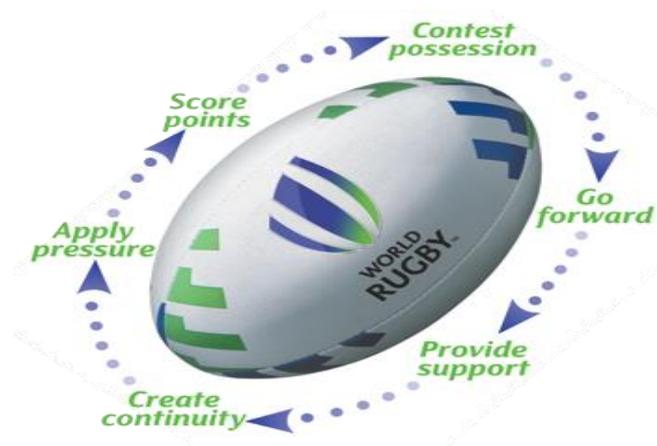


Figure 2.1. **THE PRINCIPLES OF RUGBY** (Rugby Ready, 2007)

Rugby is seen as one of the most popular sports today (Van Gent, 2003), and is played from primary school to senior level in more than a hundred countries worldwide (Van Gent & Spamer, 2005). The need for talented players at an early age is essential for the national rugby team of a country to be successful (Van Gent, 2003). It is a team sport that delivers significant social and health benefits, but it can also be a physically demanding and players should be physically and mentally prepared and understand how to play safely (World Rugby, 2017). It is the responsibility of everyone involved - players, coaches and parents - to ensure that a positive, safe, enjoyable environment is created where all players will be able to reach their fullest potential (World Rugby, 2017).

2.2.2 South African rugby perspective

The South Africa national rugby union team, commonly known as the Springboks, has been representing South Africa in international rugby union since 1891, when they played their first test match against a British Isles touring team in Port Elizabeth (SA Rugby, n.d.). South Africans are rugby mad; after soccer, rugby is the most popular sport in South Africa (SA Rugby, n.d.), with more than 600 000 registered players (South African Tourism, 2017).

Rugby in South Africa is governed by the South African Rugby Union (SARU), with 14 provincial rugby unions, of which the Western Province Rugby Union is one, managing and overseeing the game in the respective provinces (SA Rugby, n.d.). A function of

each provincial union is to provide a structure for school rugby within that particular province. The Western Province Rugby Football Union (WPRFU) has separate structures for high school and primary school rugby, and mini-rugby forms part of the latter (Jones, 2017).

2.2.3 Mini-rugby

Mini rugby is part of a well-defined training system introduced by the International Rugby Board (IRB), for boys' and girls' (Rutherford, 1993). The main aim of mini-rugby is to introduce young players to the game, to encourage them to enjoy the game and to develop different rugby skills (Meintjes, 2017). In South Africa, various provinces have implemented games for juniors with adjusted rules (Lambert & Durandt, 2010), and in the WPRFU, mini-rugby is played at under 7, 8 and 9 age levels. Table 2.1 shows the basic structure of mini-rugby in the WPRFU.

Table 2.1. BASIC STRUCTURE OF MINI-RUGBY IN THE WPRFU (Meintjes, 2017).

Age group	Number of players per team	Match duration	Size of playing field	Significant rules
Under 7	10 Players per team	2 Halves of 10 minutes each	From the try line to the 22m line on a senior rugby field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ball may not be kicked • No scrums or line-outs • Passes may be slightly forward
Under 8				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ball may not be kicked • No scrums or line-outs • Passes may not be forward
Under 9	10 Players per team (5 forwards and 5 backs)	2 Halves of 15 minutes each	From the try line to the 10m line on a senior rugby field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ball may not be kicked • Uncontested scrums and line-outs

2.2.4 Mini-rugby in the WPRFU

In an interview with the general manager of amateur rugby of the WPRFU, Mr Danny Jones, he explained that although there is no formal structure for the functioning of

mini-rugby per se, it is included within the union's structure for schools, but admits that there's a lot more than can be done. Jones made the following remark:

"I think we need to relook at focussing on mini-rugby that will lead to greater skills and greater participation. The time has come for us to actually focus on that [mini-rugby], and from a systems point of view, it is unregulated with a lack of quality control. It's too laissez-faire. It is one of the challenges that we need to address, and address it seriously, so we can improve the quality of rugby" (Jones, 2017).

He further asserted that there is no constructive and focused approach with regards to mini-rugby as a mechanism to improve the game and skills of the players. In offering a possible reason for this neglect, Jones (2017) makes mention of Australian rugby and states that due to their limited number of players, "they had to invest in the players a lot and that's why their skill level is so good". He affirms that there is an abundance of players in South Africa, "so we don't focus on skills and what is really required of a player".

In addressing the possible need for additional coaching education, specifically for mini-rugby, Jones said:

"I do believe that it's an area that we need to look at and start working at. The focus is more on the outcome of quality for the provincial teams than the outcome of good quality skills for the mass-based component. We need to look at improving skills in the mass-based component and support our primary schools and our primary school coaches by focusing on that" (Jones, 2017).

Jones added:

"We need to invest in them [mini-rugby coaches] by having more courses so they can learn from the material, so we can improve the skills of those coaches and in that way improve the skills at the mini-rugby level. Mini-rugby should be the foundation of skills programme of SA rugby" (Jones, 2017).

Jones (2017) is of the opinion that the bulk of the mini-rugby coaches might only have a World Rugby level one qualification, which is based on attendance only and that increasingly more female teachers who are not necessarily familiar with the game are coaching and that they might 'coach' by just throwing the players a ball and let them 'learn' by playing. Jones alleges:

"The danger of that is that the kids might pick up bad habits and poor skills, because the basics are not taught. My view on this is that to address the

fact that there's less skilled coaches at that level we need to make use of good coaches and produce coaching material and make it available to the coaches." (Jones, 2017).

Jones (2017) agrees that "There is certainly a need for such material."

2.3 The coaching profession

The legendary basketball coach, John Wooden, once said: "You haven't taught until they have learned" (Silverman, 2011:29). This statement has substantial implications for the coaching profession. The mere fact that the coach is coaching and the players are moving around, does not mean the players are learning and developing. The main aim of coaching should be the development of the athletes, which requires more than just physical activity. Gould (2016:15) believes "that scholastic athletes do not automatically catch the benefits of sport from merely participating on a team." The benefits are taught directly and indirectly by expert and caring coaches who are very calculated in their actions and how they structure the sport setting to enhance positive athlete development (Gould, 2016), and therefore, the coach has a critical role to play. Martindale (2015) agrees and claims that an important role for any sport coach is to nurture the potential of young people and help maximise their natural talents. A coach that offers a supportive learning environment, appropriate levels of challenge and that provokes a passion for the sport can produce productive sporting outcomes (Sproule, 2015). Regardless of the coaching programme, the attitudes and behaviours of coaches determine the quality of the sport experience (Vickers & Schoenstedt, 2011).

2.3.1 South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee

The South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC) is South Africa's national multi-coded sporting body responsible for the preparation, presentation and performance of teams in all multi-coded events, as well as looking after all the various National Federations who are affiliated to them, together with the various provincial sport councils (SASCOC, 2013a). At the SASCOC Coaching Conference in November 2011, the South African Coaching Framework was launched and endorsed as the official reference point and action plan for the development of South Africa's coaching system up to 2018. The framework seeks to establish an effective, inclusive, cohesive and ethical system that promotes transformation and

excellence at all levels of sport (SASCOC, 2013b). The key objective is to increase the number of skilled and qualified coaches in South Africa to guide the development of children, youth, talented athletes and high performance athletes at all stages of their development (SASCOC, 2013b). It is proposed by SASCOC that this will further promote South Africa as a nation committed to mass participation and sporting excellence achieved through the development of core objectives, programmes and models, with delivery being led by national sporting federations, which are responsible for working with coaches and stakeholders at district, provincial, national and international levels (SASCOC, 2013c). Existing and new coaches will be provided with education, development and recognition of prior learning opportunities on a phased basis, with the national sporting federations responsible for the sporting code's specific implementation (SASCOC, 2013c).

2.3.2 Coaching philosophy, goals and coaching styles

A coaching philosophy is a personal statement based on values and beliefs that direct one's coaching (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011). Similarly, Cassidy *et al.* (2009) consider a coaching philosophy to be a set of principles that guide an individual's practice. In describing what is needed for effective coaching, Gould (2016) lists a well-thought-out coaching philosophy as the first priority. It is the opinion of Martens (2012) that coaching is a challenging profession with many difficult decisions and ethical dilemmas. He contends that a well-developed philosophy aids a coach to make difficult decisions and coach more successfully. Without a well-developed philosophy a coach may lack direction and readily succumb to external pressures (Martens, 2012). The value of developing a philosophy is that it allows both coach and athletes a base from which to build and learn according to a consistent, coherent way of thinking (Cassidy *et al.*, 2009). Martens (2012:20) sees a winning philosophy as: "Athletes first, winning second". To clarify, Martens asserts that every decision made and every behaviour displayed by the coach should firstly be based on what the coach judges to be best for his/her athletes, and secondly on what may improve the athlete's or team's chances of winning. The coach may place some importance on winning and competitive success, but that should not come at the expense of physical, educational, personal and social-emotional development (Gould, 2016).

Kidman and Hanrahan (2011) claim that the quality of experience athlete's will get from a season will depend on a coach's value system, principles and beliefs. As previously cited, these elements are critical components of a coach's philosophy. Martindale (2015) purports that the course of a young person's sporting life can be shaped significantly at an early age and the influence of early coaches as the inspiration for many budding youngsters is reported on many occasions. Conversely, there are also reports of demotivated young people, burned out or dropping out because of excessive pressure and lack of appropriate support (Martindale, 2015). Therefore, a well-developed coaching philosophy is of paramount importance to enable coaches to guide and mould their young athletes appropriately. A coaching philosophy should determine and be reflected in a coach's behaviours, goals and coaching style.

According to Martens (2012), the goals coaches strive towards usually fall into three broad categories: to win; to help young people have fun; and to develop the athletes. Athletes can be developed physically (learning skills, improving physical conditioning, developing good health habits and avoiding injuries), psychologically (learning to control their emotions and developing feelings of self-worth), and socially (learning cooperation in a competitive context and appropriate behaviour) (Martens, 2012).

Sproule (2015) defines a coaching style as the way in which the coach delivers his or her coaching session, which will vary subject to the situational context, the needs of the participants and the emotional intelligence of the coach. Traditionally, coaching styles have been placed on a continuum, from the command (autocratic) style, where the coach makes all the decisions, to the democratic (interactive) style, where the athlete(s) discuss and negotiate issues/challenges, through to the laissez-faire (hands-off) style, where all authority is given to the athletes who determine goals, make decisions and resolve issues on their own (Sproule, 2015). Confusing variables pertaining to coaching styles include the necessity to distinguish between different levels of coaching, such as participation level to performance coaching, or factoring in age and a developmentally appropriate approach when coaching children (Sproule, 2015). A detailed explanation of the various coaching styles, as well as the

communication style and discipline approach associated with each is beyond the scope of this study. However, Martens (2012) could be consulted for more information.

2.3.3 Coaching methodology

Explanation and demonstration

Martens (2012) defines learning as a relatively permanent improvement in performance as a result of practice. If coaches are to achieve this relatively permanent change in the performance of their athletes, they need to ensure that instruction, verbal or visual or both, is clear and unambiguous (McMorris, 2015). To effectively convey a clear and unambiguous message, coaches need to consider and understand the manner in which humans use information. Research have found it useful to think of the human being as a processor of information very much like a computer (Schmidt & Lee, 2014). Information is presented to the human as input; various processing stages within the human motor system generate a series of operations on this information and the eventual output is skilled movement (Schmidt & Lee, 2014). According to Schmidt and Lee (2014), there are, amongst others, three separate information-processing stages, namely: 1) the stimulus identification stage; 2) the response selection stage; and 3) the movement programming stage. During the first stage the system's problem is to decide whether a stimulus has been presented and, if so, what it is. This is primarily a sensory stage, analysing environmental information from a variety of sources, such as vision, audition, touch, kinesthesia and smell. The second stage has the task of deciding what response to make, given the nature of the situation and environment. Finally, the third stage begins its processing upon receiving the decision about what movement to make as determined by the response selection stage and has the task of organising the motor system to make the desired movement (Schmidt & Lee, 2014).

In sport and exercise settings, instruction is commonly given to help learners enhance performance (Polsgrove *et al.*, 2016). Illustrating the importance of instruction, Silverman (2011) suggests that the more time devoted to instruction the more learning will occur and Brylinsky (2010) alleges that sport skill instruction and sport training that focus on long-term athlete development provide the cumulative advantage to nurture talent, regardless of the training context in which it is offered.

McMorris (2015) propose that there are three types of instruction - verbal, visual and verbal plus visual and that another word for verbal plus visual is demonstration. Explanation (instruction) and demonstration are the primary ways to help athletes acquire a mental plan for a technique (Martens, 2012). This will only occur if the coach presents the task to be performed effectively. Kidman and Hanrahan (2011) define an explanation as when the coach talks and the athletes listen and that the athletes' full attention should be gained and maintained. McMorris (2015) warns that when coaches use verbal instruction they must be sure that the learners understand what is being said as children often have limited vocabularies, so the coaches must choose their words very carefully. It is not easy to verbally explain how certain sport skills should be performed, which leads most coaches to use demonstrations instead (McMorris, 2015). McMorris (2015) warns that demonstrations will not solve all problems, as it is not possible to be certain that the learners are focusing on the key factors as to how the skill should be performed. Moreover, it cannot be assumed that their perceptual skills are such that they accurately perceive what they have seen (McMorris, 2015). A clear solution to this problem would then be to combine the verbal and the visual methods of instruction, which is called demonstrations, as previously stated. The verbal part consists of the coach drawing the learner's attention to the key points, which aids the athlete's perception of how the skill is performed (McMorris, 2015). According to Kidman and Hanrahan (2011), the purpose of a demonstration is to increase athletes' understanding of skills and tactics by providing a model. If coaches can provide their athletes with suitable visual representations of what is to be practised, athletes should be able to acquire images as a focus for the appropriate practise of sport skills and tactics (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011).

In studying the effect of the quality of instruction on motor performance, Polsgrove *et al.* (2016) found that more optimal performances result when instructions are aligned with the movement goal, while instructions that are confusing or not aligned with the movement goal result in a decrease in performance. By using more performance-based instruction coaches can provide more meaningful and appropriate information to enhance individual performance (Polsgrove *et al.*, 2016). It can be concluded that the quality of explanation and demonstration is critical in the coaching process, since

it determines the information conveyed to the athlete. This in turn influences the learning that takes place.

Feedback and error correction

Time spent in practice where the teacher actively monitors instruction, provides feedback and modifies tasks is strongly and positively related to student achievement (Silverman, 2011). Although Silverman (2011) is referring to teachers and physical education, it can likewise be applied to coaches and practice sessions. Coaches must provide their athletes with two types of information to correct errors to ensure practice is productive: firstly, how the completed performance compared with the desired performance; and secondly, how to change an incorrect performance to more closely approximate the desired performance. Both of these types of information provided to the athletes are called feedback (Martens, 2012). According to Weinstein *et al.* (2016), different types of feedback enhance the individual's self-efficacy: effort feedback highlights the individual's endeavours; ability feedback emphasises the individual's talents and capabilities; and performance feedback shows the individual that he/she is improving. The development of expertise requires coaches who are capable of giving constructive, even painful, feedback (Gilbert & Trudel, 2013), but Martens (2012) warns that frequent criticism from the coach increases the athletes' self-doubts and destroys their self-confidence. Martens (2012) advocates using the positive approach to providing feedback and asserts that specific positive feedback specifies to the athletes what was done correctly, but when athletes perform incorrectly, the coach should give them specific information on what they did wrong and then also what they need to do to correct it. It is important that coaches allow learning through trial and error and provide positive feedback where necessary (Hendricks, 2012). In presenting a checklist for effective coaching, Gould (2016) suggests that the coach should provide regular positive feedback, while belligerent or extreme criticism is minimized.

Coaches should also consider the amount of feedback given to their athletes. Too much feedback may overload the child and create coach dependence (Muir *et al.*, 2011). Martens (2012) agrees and claim that coaches who constantly provide feedback are doing all the problem solving, thus denying their athletes the

opportunities to learn to make their own decisions. In general, more feedback is better than less feedback when athletes are first learning a skill, and less feedback is better as the athletes become more skilful (Martens, 2012).

Creating a learning environment

Once the coach has provided the athlete with instruction and explanation, it is essential that the learner then practises the skill (McMorris, 2015). Similar to the way in which information is given to athletes during task presentation is of utmost importance, so too is the way the athletes practise. According to Patterson and Lee (2008), skill acquisition researchers have suggested that it is not only how much the performer practises (i.e., the absolute number of repetitions of a skill), but how the performer practises each repetition is the more important variable in the contribution of practice to skill acquisition. Abernethy (2008) agrees and state that although large amounts of practice are essential for becoming an expert it is also apparent that not all practice is equally beneficial. Horton and Deakin (2008) found research to show that high-level performers, both athletes and coaches, tend to do more with the time that they have.

Abernethy (2008) argue that in the design of junior sport a critical consideration should be to put systems in place that will maximize the frequency and probability of occurrence of the conditions known to favour expertise development. The focus should be on the quality of the sport skill instruction the athlete receives, regardless of the training context (Brylinsky, 2010). Therefore, the coach plays an important role in planning the practice session to provide a proper learning environment and subsequently to improve performance. One obvious thing to do is to maximize the opportunities for young athletes to gain practice and play experience (Abernethy, 2008), which will ensure the practice sessions are realistic. To ensure the practice is realistic and pertinent to the particular sport, the practice activities need to be specific to the demands of that sport. The well-established principle of specificity states: 'Practise like you play, and you're more likely to play like you practised' (Martens, 2012:153). According to Martens (2012), one of the most common mistakes in designing practice experiences is having athletes perform drills that do not help them learn the techniques required to play the sport. Feelings of competence and enjoyment will increase when there is a reasonable probability of success (Kidman & Hanrahan,

2011). An important way to build success into every practice is to select the right progressions for learning technical skills (Martens, 2012). Brewer (2011) agrees and state that skill progressions should be put in place to form progressive practices that enable the players to adapt over time. Coaches need to develop progressions that enable the players to develop skill mastery, then progressively increase the complexity of the demand of the task (Brewer, 2011). Brewer (2011) explains that such progressions will enable coaches to make activities more challenging for those individuals who are able to execute the skill challenges that the coach presents, or easier for children who find a particular skill too challenging. An important coaching goal is to ensure athletes enjoy the sessions and want to come back for more (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011). Children and young people who experience well-planned, well-organised and systematically progressed programmes tend to achieve both success and longevity in their sporting careers (Brewer, 2011).

The more a coach knows about the basic technical skills and about teaching these skills in the proper sequence, the more success and fun both coach and athlete will have (Martens, 2012). Not knowing how to teach technical skills puts a coach in the position of risking injury to athletes and causing frustration from repeated failures (Martens, 2012). Martens (2012:172) offers the following seven principles for technical skill practice:

1. Have athletes practise the right technique.
2. Have athletes practise the technique in game-like conditions as soon as they can.
3. Keep practices short and frequent when teaching new techniques.
4. Use practice time efficiently.
5. Make optimal use of facilities and equipment.
6. Make sure athletes experience a reasonable amount of success at each practice.
7. Make practice fun.

To provide such an appropriate learning environment, the coach must be effective in terms of his/her methodology of coaching.

2.3.4 Coaching efficacy and effectiveness

Broodryk *et al.* (2014) distinguish ‘coaching efficacy’ and ‘coaching effectiveness’ as two different concepts. Efficacy has a direct connection with coaching assessment, while effectiveness refers to the application of coaching skills, influencing the players’ perceptions. The coach’s perception refers to coaching efficacy, while the players’ perceptions refer to coaching effectiveness (Broodryk *et al.*, 2014). According to Boardley *et al.* (2008), coaching effectiveness is defined as the extent to which coaches can implement their knowledge and skills to positively affect the learning and performance of their athletes; they assert that effective coaches are generally those, who, through their behaviours, produce positive outcomes in athletes. Coaching efficacy is defined as the extent to which coaches believe they can affect the learning and performance of their athletes (Malete *et al.*, 2013), and according to Kavussanu *et al.* (2008), it is significantly related to numerous outcomes such as coaching behaviour, player satisfaction and player performance.

Regarding effective coaching, Côté and Gilbert (2009:307), offer the question: “What differentiates effective coaches from ineffective coaches?” Chase and Martin (2013) purports that effective coaches teach new skills and tactics and prepare their athletes to perform at their highest potential. Côté and Gilbert (2009) define effective coaching as the regular application of integrated professional, interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge to improve athletes’ competence, confidence, connection and character. Nash *et al.* (2011) found that effective coaches construct a realistic coaching environment and have the ability to contextualize practice sessions. The effective coach has to orchestrate a large number of variables when planning and executing a training session. Success depends on: knowledge of the sport; knowledge of the athletes; appreciation of the skills necessary for performance in the specific sport; and the interpersonal skills to be able to effectively engage with athletes, teams and support staff (Nash *et al.*, 2011).

Nash *et al.* (2011) investigated the concept of excellence in coaching and found that elite coaches construct an authentic environment and also have the ability to contextualize practice sessions. According to Nash and co-workers, the expert coach has to orchestrate a large number of variables when planning and executing a training

session. The success with which they manage to do this depends to a large extent on their knowledge of their sport, knowledge of their individual players, appreciation of the skills necessary for elite performance in their specific sport and the interpersonal skills to be able to effectively engage with athletes, teams and the ever-increasing numbers of support staff (Nash *et al.*, 2011). Côté and Gilbert (2009) suggest that effective coaches are those who demonstrate the ability to apply and align their coaching expertise to particular athletes and situations in order to maximize learning outcomes. Moreover, Gould (2016) is of the opinion that effective coaches are knowledgeable and good teachers, and therefore, are influential at helping athletes improve their skills, which then helps the athletes feel competent.

The importance of the coach's knowledge and skills in coaching a sport is a common theme related to effective coaching. Where coaches have received little or no formal coaching education the situation is concerning, since they cannot help to improve, amongst others, their players' motor skills, resulting in little progress (Van Gent, 2003). Just as an athlete will not develop simply by attending practice after practice, so too will a coach's expertise not spontaneously improve by merely spending a certain amount of time coaching. Chase and Martin (2013) are of the opinion that without proper preparation, coaches will have a difficult time feeling efficacious. An effective, well designed coaching education programme is expected to enhance the level of one's coaching efficacy (Feltz *et al.*, 2008). Several authors have indicated a positive effect of coaches' coaching education and training on their coaching ability (Mallett *et al.*, 2009; Nelson *et al.*, 2013). Although the initial training of a coach is essential, the long-term and continuous development of the coach is equally important (Van Gent, 2003). Knowledge and skills associated with coaching should continually be updated to increase effectiveness long after the coach has been certified (Vickers & Schoenstedt, 2011). Gilbert and Trudel (2013) proclaim that ignoring the long-term development of coaches can result in unnecessary financial and emotional costs – to coaches and athletes.

The effect of coaches' playing experience on their coaching ability

Coaches rely on past sport experience as a player, or spectator to ply their trade as coaches (Weller, 2013). The most common way coaches acquire knowledge about

rules, technical and tactical skills is by playing the sport themselves (Martens, 2012), although the learning that occurs might be considered to be largely unintentional (Cushion, 2011). While the usefulness of knowledge developed during this period has to be subject to greater scrutiny and cannot simply be accepted as positive (Cushion, 2011), this experience of being observers and recipients of coaching as athletic participants, certainly affords coaches with implicit knowledge about the sport and coaching roles. It is clear that experience as an athlete directly influences the way in which coaches approach their craft (Young, 2013). However, not having played a sport does not mean a coach cannot acquire the knowledge needed to coach it (Martens, 2012). In his opinion, successful coaches enjoy being students of the sport and consider learning about coaching and the sport as a lifelong journey.

The effect of coaches' coaching experience on their coaching ability

Coaches learn from a wide variety of formal, non-formal and informal sources. Formal learning may involve studying for a coaching certificate; non-formal learning may include coaching conferences and workshops; while informal learning can range from previous experience as an athlete and a coach, to interaction with peer coaches, as well as self-directed learning (Mallett *et al.*, 2009). Although participating in a formal coach education programme is usually the only way to receive a certificate, coaches indicate that most of their learning comes from informal sources like books or videos, exploring internet-based resources, interacting with others, including mentors and the observation of other coaches (Cushion & Nelson, 2013). Coach education is very often classroom-based, assessment-focused and qualification-driven (Lara-Bercial & Duffy, 2013), and expertise is minimally assured by coach education qualifications and no assumptions can be made about the coaches' subsequent practise (Lyle, 2011). However, research suggests that coaches learn better from practical experience and interaction with other coaches, pointing to the need to balance formal coach education with an equal or greater number of learning experiences on the field (Lara-Bercial & Duffy, 2013). Practitioners learn through various informal avenues, including previous experiences as an athlete, informal mentoring, practical coaching experiences and ongoing interactions with peer coaches and athletes (Cushion, 2011).

The effect of coaches' coaching education on their coaching ability

Although education level alone cannot be used as a predictor of coaching efficacy (Weller, 2013), certification does convey a measure of quality assurance and may impact on professional recognition (Lyle, 2011). According to Nelson *et al.* (2013), coach education has been identified as a key vehicle for raising the standard of coaching practise. The importance of coach education seems obvious, yet, not all education programmes have the desired effect.

It is the opinion of Nelson *et al.* (2013) that, while attending coach education programmes can assist the development of knowledge and practise, its provision is often far from optimal and its impact is sometimes limited. Several authors have attempted to clarify this limited impact of coach education. According to Nelson *et al.* (2013), it would appear that coaching practitioners often have limited, if any, input into the design and delivery of the courses that they attend. Therefore, Nelson *et al.* (2013) argue that there is often a disjuncture between what providers of coach education perceive as being pertinent for the development of coaches and what the practitioners they work with actually desire. Mallett *et al.* (2009) offer another possible explanation and state that formal educational situations cannot encompass all of the experiential learning required to embed learning. An alternative reason for the limited impact of coach education is its condensed format. According to Gilbert and Trudel (2013), participating in formal coach education, while simultaneously working and coaching presents time challenges and, as a result, most formal coach education is delivered in a condensed format (i.e., a weekend clinic).

Several authors have offered suggestions to ameliorate this less than ideal situation. Mallett *et al.* (2009) propose that coaches need to access varying educational opportunities (formal to informal) that facilitate learning and subsequent coach development. Lara-Bercial and Duffy (2013) agree and state that learning will occur through exposure to a variety of situations and opportunities. It is not a matter of which form of education/learning is superior, but rather valuing all education and learning situations for their contribution to coach development, which is a lifelong process (Mallett *et al.*, 2009). Coach education and qualifications need to be tailored to both participation and performance coaching (Lara-Bercial & Duffy, 2013), which will ensure

that the education programmes are more pertinent to the coaches' needs. Furthermore, Vickers and Schoenstedt (2011) suggest that, to deliver high-quality coaching education programmes, coaching education needs to be standardised to include a minimum and common core of knowledge, skills and teaching techniques. According to Nelson *et al.* (2013), coaches support continuous professional development that enable them to develop their coaching knowledge in situ and through active learning interactions such as mentoring and collaborative activities with fellow learners. Mallett *et al.* (2009) support the notion of mentoring and state that the potential disadvantages of informal educational situations can be ameliorated by elements of structured mentoring and learning contracts.

The effect of coaches' perceptions of efficacy on their coaching ability

In 1999 Deborah Feltz and her colleagues presented the Coaching Efficacy Scale, which claimed to measure coaching efficacy. According to Myers *et al.* (2008), the multidimensional model posited that coaching efficacy consists of four specific efficacies that are related to one another: technique efficacy (coaches' efficacy beliefs about their instructional and diagnostic skills); game strategy efficacy (coaches' confidence in their ability to coach and lead their team to be successful in competition); motivation efficacy (coaches' confidence in their ability to influence the psychological skills and states of athletes); and character building efficacy (coaches' beliefs in their ability to influence athletes' personal growth and positive attitude toward sport). Thus, coaching effectiveness refers to the ability of coaches to implement their knowledge and skills, whereas coaching efficacy refers to coaches' beliefs of what they can do with their skills (Boardley *et al.*, 2008).

Boardley and colleagues (2008) thoroughly explained the link between coaching efficacy and effectiveness and state that the dimensions of coaching efficacy correspond to important components of effective coaching. Furthermore, they claim that high-efficacy coaches are more likely to be successful in their career, and therefore, more effective in being able to produce desired outcomes in athletes. Coaches who are confident in their ability to influence athletes' personal growth and positive attitude toward sport are likely to have the necessary skills to do so, because a major source of self-efficacy is to master activities (Boardley *et al.*, 2008).

In exploring athletes' perceptions of coaching effectiveness and athlete-related outcomes in rugby union, Boardley *et al.* (2008) found that athletes' perceptions of their coach's effectiveness on technique, motivation, game strategy and character building have important implications for some key aspects of their experiences in rugby, specifically so for the rugby players' effort, commitment, enjoyment, self-efficacy and prosocial behaviour on the field. Therefore, coaches need to be made aware of their potentially influential role on these key aspects of athletes' psychological functioning and understand that through their behaviour they can substantially affect the quality of the athletic experience. They suggest that coach education programmes should consider including specific guidelines on how coaches could develop their effectiveness in motivation, game strategy, technique and character building.

2.3.5 Session planning

To provide optimal learning, effective coaches must employ the essential coaching quality of planning. Brylinsky (2010) claims that the most critical element influencing athlete outcomes is the planning capabilities of the coach. The necessity of planning is exemplified in the popular saying 'Failing to plan is planning to fail'. The implication of this phrase, is that planning is essential to avoid failure, or more fittingly, to achieve success.

Coaches tend to meet with their athletes for a limited amount of time each week, with junior sport, like mini-rugby, often providing an average of only one hour per week for practice (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011). Every minute of such a practice have to be planned to ensure an efficient and constructive session, which will guarantee that the time will produce as much quality practice as possible. Time spent on organising during practice means less time for quality practice. Coaches must plan for maximum use of practice time through continuous action-based instruction, deliberate play (if appropriate), or highly structured inactive time, with a selection of drills that match the performance demands of the sport (Brylinsky, 2010). Athletes should engage in relevant practice activities for as much of the practice session as possible, which is referred to as time on task. Time on task is the time that athletes are actually engaged in the targeted task (Graham, 2008). Time on task will increase athletes' skill level,

tactical awareness and success rate (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011). Practice sessions that provide either frequent periods of inactivity or endless and usually meaningless repetitions of sport skills do not enhance athlete development (Brylinsky, 2010).

Several authors have studied the importance of planning and organisational management in physical education, which is relevant to the sporting context. The manner in which physical education teachers structure practice situations is important for student learning (Silverman, 2011). Physical educators have minimal control over individual student characteristics, but they do have a considerable amount of control over the teaching environment (Subramaniam, 2011). In terms of planning and achieving student learning in physical education, important variables that influence this goal include task organization, quantity and quality of practice, task structure, feedback, appropriateness of the skills and motivational climate (Hastie *et al.*, 2011; Rasmussen *et al.*, 2014).

Through planning, coaches are far more likely to keep their athletes actively involved, resulting in more learning and enjoyment (Martens, 2012). Planning allows coaches to provide challenging and relevant learning situations, to teach skills in the appropriate progression to maximise learning and safety and to pace the learning and conditioning so that the athletes are not overloaded or over-trained (Martens, 2012). Through planning, coaches can also make the best use of available time, space and equipment, minimise discipline problems, as well as increase the coaches' confidence in their ability to manage various situations (Martens, 2012).

2.4 Skills development and practice approach

2.4.1 Sport participant developmental models

If children are going to play organised sport, then it is important that their experience is as developmentally appropriate as possible (Thomas & Wilson, 2013), since developmentally inappropriate practice sessions often results in failure and frustration (Subramaniam, 2011). The provision of a learning environment that is developmentally and instructionally appropriate is the precursor to fostering the acquisition of knowledge, skills and confidence to engage and enjoy healthy physical activity Subramaniam (2011). This concern, together with the growing interest in producing

expert performance and increasing sport participation, has led to a number of models being proposed for optimal sporting development (Hendricks, 2012). Two of the most prominent sport participation development models across all sporting codes are the Long-Term Athlete Development Model (LTAD), presented by Istvan Balyi in 2002, and the Developmental Model of Sports Participation (DMSP) first introduced by Jean Côté in 1999.

Long-Term Athlete Development Model (LTAD)

The LTAD model is based on physiological principles, which allow players to be categorised into specific stages of development (Balyi *et al.*, 2013). Balyi and co-workers distinguishes between ‘early’ and ‘late’ specialisation sports (Bailey *et al.*, 2011:45). Early specialisation sport (for example, gymnastics and figure skating) conventionally require their players to begin to specialise and seriously train from a relatively early age. Late specialisation sport prescribes a more generalised approach, including an emphasis in the early stages on fundamental movement skills (FMS) (Bailey *et al.*, 2011). The classic stages of development for late specialisation sport, such as rugby, include the ‘fundamental’, ‘learning to train’, ‘training to train’, ‘training to compete’ and ‘training to win’ phases (Posthumus, 2013:28). Several international rugby unions, including the South African Rugby Union (SARU), have adopted the same terminology for these phases. SARU has outlined potential stages of development for boys according to age: ‘fundamental’ – age 6 to 9 years (U7 to U9); ‘learning to train’ – age 10 to 13 years (U10 to U13); ‘train to train’ – age 14 to 16 years (U14 to U16); ‘training to compete’ – 17 to 18 years (U17 to U19); and ‘training to win’ – age 19 years and above (Posthumus, 2013:28). Since the focus of this study is on mini-rugby, the fundamental stage is of particular interest. This fundamental stage supports all aspects of an individual’s subsequent development in physical activity and sport (Balyi *et al.*, 2013). The main objective should be the overall development of the child’s physical capacities and FMS (Bailey *et al.*, 2011), and the “ABC’s of athleticism - agility, balance, coordination and speed” (Balyi & Hamilton, 2004:6). During the fundamental stage, children should be encouraged to participate in a wide range of activities, which should enhance their physical literacy and their capacity to undertake long-term, sport-specific training programmes (Stafford, 2005). Although all

development stages should be well structured and retain an element of fun, it is particularly relevant to the fundamental stage.

A key element of each individual stage is that they provide “windows of opportunity” to optimise physical development during childhood (Bailey *et al.*, 2011:46). For example, during the fundamental stage, the development of overall physical ability and FMS are prioritised. According to the LTAD model, failure to take advantage of these opportunities will result in unfulfilled sport performance (Bailey *et al.*, 2011). Although the validity of this assertion has been questioned (Ford *et al.*, 2011), there is sufficient support for it in the literature (Gallahue & Donnelly, 2003; Stafford, 2005; Thomas, 2013). It seems to be clear that coaches need to pay particular attention to and abundantly exploit these opportunities.

Developmental Model of Sports Participation (DMSP)

The second sport participation development model, the DMSP, is a talent development model which outlines two skill acquisition pathways in sport: late specialisation (or early diversification); and early specialisation. Rugby union can be considered a late specialisation sport (Thomas, 2013). In the late specialisation pathway, Côté (1999) identified three specific developmental stages relating to sport, from childhood to late adolescence: the sampling years (ages 6 to 12 years); the specialising years (ages 13 to 15 years); and the investment years (age 16 years +). Similarly, to the fundamental stage of the LTAD, the sampling years are relevant to mini-rugby, and therefore, also to this study. In the sampling years, children are given the opportunity to sample a range of sports, develop a foundation of FMS, and experience sport as a source of fun and excitement (Bailey *et al.*, 2011). Côté (1999:412) introduced the term “deliberate play”, which can be described as sporting activities that are intrinsically motivating and involve a modified version of standard rules (Bailey *et al.*, 2011). Deliberate play activities form the basis of a late specialisation pathway, while the early specialisation pathway is often linked to deliberate practice activities (Thomas, 2013). Thomas (2013) suggests that children in the sampling years should participate in a wide range of sport with the focus being primarily on deliberate play activities.

2.4.2 Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS)

Gallahue and Donnelly (2003) define FMS as an organised series of basic movements that involve the combination of movement patterns of two or more body segments. Deli *et al.* (2006) consider FMS as the building blocks for sport-specific movement patterns and suggest that it should typically be the focus of physical development programmes for children from early childhood to develop gross motor skills. Abraham *et al.* (2015) purport that athletes must be able to demonstrate prerequisites in the FMS of stability (balance, landing mechanics, stability based exercises), locomotor (running and jumping techniques), and mobility (range of motion), before proceeding to more advanced physical development training. They further assert that these FMS should be acquired, linked and then applied to enable progression from fundamental into more specialised and sport specific functional skills. Hendricks (2012) proclaims that FMS lead to specialised movement sequences, which are required for adequate participation in many organised and non-organised physical activities, such as rugby. Martindale (2015) supports this view and claims that FMS and coordination form a crucial platform from which more sport specific skills can be developed. It is, therefore, worth promoting and reinforcing FMS at early stages. In the words of Abraham *et al.* (2015:27):

“Therefore, a young person’s coach needs to ensure that children are given sufficient opportunity to acquire and develop these movement competencies such that they can then be transferred and applied to a range of sporting activities and contexts.”

The importance of the development of FMS seems to be obvious. FMS development is essential to ensure that correct movement patterns are mastered in a safe and fun environment to ensure safe and effective performance of more complex sport movements at a later stage (Lloyd & Oliver, 2012). Oliver *et al.* (2011) also assert that a failure to fully develop these basic motor skills before more advanced forms of training may limit the potential of the sporting child and expose him/her to greater injury risks. It is important that FMS are developed during pre- and elementary school years since these children are at an optimal age in terms of motor skill learning (Lubans *et al.*, 2010). These views are supported by Gallahue and Donnelly (2003), who state that the development of mature FMS is a prerequisite to the learning and mastery of sport skills and that a failure to take advantage of this sensitive movement skill period

of learning in childhood makes it difficult for the child to attain higher levels of skill later on. They call this a “proficiency barrier” (p.64). Within a technical context, a proficiency barrier may be that a player is not competent or able to perform a specific movement or technical skill, such as quickly side-stepping to one side (IRB, 2011). The implications are that the young player should be exposed to a variety of skills during the early stages of development. In doing so, the player will develop a sufficient, broad base of skills, which can be used later to refine the more sport specific skills to ensure proficiency. The skills of interest to mini-rugby include: running (at various speeds, through various directions and changes of direction); stopping (with balance and control); weaving and chasing through a variety of patterns; passing and catching (using as large a range of techniques and methods as possible); falling; rolling; jumping; etc. (IRB, 2011). To truly develop these skills in young players, they must be provided the opportunities and encouragement to be active on a regular basis. It seems evident that the enhancement of FMS should always form part of the training regime, regardless of level or age and especially so for mini-rugby.

2.4.3 Deliberate practice and deliberate play

In 1973 Herbert Simon and William Chase studied skilled performance in chess and found that elite performers had spent approximately 10,000 hours practising before attaining such a proficient status (Simon & Chase, 1973). Similarly, Ericsson and colleagues studied the relationship between practice and the acquisition of expert performance and found the “10-year rule” to hold true (Ericsson *et al.*, 1993:366). They call this type of practice “deliberate practice” and describe it as “a highly structured activity, the explicit goal of which is to improve performance; requires effort and is not inherently enjoyable” (Ericsson *et al.*, 1993:368). Martindale (2015) echoes this perspective by stating that deliberate practice is designed specifically to improve performance, is not inherently enjoyable, but effortful and is motivated by wanting to achieve excellence. He does, however, affirm that although deliberate practice is, by its very nature, not inherently enjoyable, it can be in a sporting context.

The main focus of deliberate practice is to foster skill development and performance enhancement. However, it is not simply training per se that is necessary for the attainment of expertise, but the engagement in specific forms of practice (Coutinho *et*

al., 2016). The quality of the practice sessions and what the athlete does during the sessions is, therefore, of paramount importance. Coutinho *et al.* (2016) argues that the concept of deliberate practice as the prototype activity that lead to elite performance in sport suggests that young athletes who are involved in high amounts of deliberate practice early, will have a better chance to develop into elite performers. Therefore, individuals who have accumulated the largest number of practice hours throughout their career and consistently and deliberately engaged in high levels of practice for sustainable periods are more likely to attain expertise (Ward *et al.*, 2007). The implication of these statements is that the earlier an individual is engaged in deliberate practice, the better he/she will become, because he/she have the opportunity to spend more time engaging deliberately (Martindale, 2015).

As stated earlier, deliberate play are activities that have a structure modified from the structure of the existing sport and in that sense are also different from free play activities. Deliberate play contrasts with deliberate practice in that it is defined as activities that maximise inherent enjoyment, are focused on process and experimentation and are loosely monitored with no immediate focus on correction (Martindale, 2015). Deliberate play requires minimal equipment, flexible contexts and challenges and allows children the freedom to experiment with different movements and tactics (Bailey *et al.*, 2011). However, it is important at this point to emphasise that deliberate play is much more than a disorganised, unstructured rumpus. As the common maxim 'method to the madness' suggest, there must still be a purpose and rationale to the particular activities used in practice. Ward *et al.* (2007) agree with this view and note that without sufficient deliberate practice, playful activities do not appear to contribute to the development of elite performance. After conducting a literature review, Martindale (2015) found that the split between deliberate play and deliberate practice changed through the developmental stages: in the sampling stage there was a high frequency of deliberate play and low deliberate practice; through the specialising stage there was a similar amount of each; and through the investment stage deliberate practice dominated.

Considering deliberate practice and deliberate play, it seems logical that mini-rugby coaches should not utilise the one at the expense of the other, but rather use a

multifaceted approach where elements of both are exploited. Côté *et al.* (2013) suggest three additional types of activities that can be included on the continuum between deliberate practice and deliberate play: (1) play practice; (2) spontaneous practice; and (3) organized competition. 'Play practice' is of particular interest for the purpose of this study. Play practice share most of the characteristics of deliberate practice (i.e. prescribed by an adult and designed to improve performance), but, emphasise fun and games. These activities typically represent the games played by young people and is designed to keep them motivated (Côté *et al.*, 2013).

2.4.4 Quantity and quality of practice

It seems obvious that the amount of practice is of extreme significance to effectively develop athletes. Regrettably, as stated earlier, practice time per week is limited. With junior sport, like mini-rugby, often an average of only one hour per week is provided for practice (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011). Every minute of a practice session have to be organized to ensure an efficient and constructive session, which will guarantee that the time is used for as much quality practice as possible. The quantity of practice is highlighted by several authors. In general, the more practice opportunities children receive the better they become at a skill or game (Subramaniam, 2011). However, the investment should not only be in terms of the quantity, but also the quality of practice. Although time spent in practice is a crucial factor to learning, it alone is not sufficient to ensure high levels of performance in the particular domain. Referring to the 10,000 hours of practice needed before attaining expert status, as mentioned earlier, Brylinsky (2010:23) argues:

“The real issue here is the need for accumulating exposure to training that will develop relevant sport skills. Simply exposing young athletes to hours and hours of practice, without also stressing an appropriate instructional and training context, will not lead to the desired effects.”

Rink (2003:167) encapsulates this perfectly when she states “students who spend more time in good practice learn more”. A popular phrase among coaches and teachers, 'perfect practice makes perfect', carries with it the underlying assumption that practising incorrectly, or going through the motions, does not lead to gains in achievement (Janelle & Hillman, 2003).

The concept of deliberate practice captures the general idea that practice must be conducted structurally, methodically, frequently and must be done with effort. It is not the specialization or diverse sport-training experience that is critical, but rather the type of training and instruction provided in any training context (Brylinsky, 2010). Brylinsky (2010) further reiterates that training and skill instruction that focus on long-term athlete development provide the cumulative advantage to nurture talent, regardless of the training context in which it is offered. A series of specific and appropriately periodized, well-structured schedules for practice and competition can go a long way to ensure optimum development (Nash *et al.* 2011). They further assert that training activities must be purposefully planned to provide appropriate training time, authentic challenge, individual and team developmental opportunities and sufficient recovery periods. In exploring excellence in coaching, Nash *et al.* (2011) conducted interviews with elite coaches. One of the themes that emerged from their analysis is the quality and quantity of training sessions. All coaches indicated that they insist on high quality performances in their sessions. Although the coaches in the study by Nash *et al.* (2011) were considered elite coaches, there is a very significant lesson to be learned. Coaches need to insist on quality from their players in the way they train and compete and also from themselves in the way they structure and conduct practice sessions.

2.4.5 The games approaches to practice

Children simply cannot be coached in the same way as adults (Brewer, 2011). In the past, coaches and sport practitioners applied adult-based forms of training to children, however, with the increase in knowledge of human development, applying adult-based training to youth was quickly questioned (Hendricks, 2012). Muir *et al.* (2011:17) is of the opinion that within the domain of children's coaching it is the more dominant cultural influence of performance sport that has strongly contributed to "modified" adult sport-specific practices becoming the accepted norm. Many coaches equate their effectiveness to win-loss records, aspiring to emulate the behaviours of "high-performance" coaches. Common features of such practice include sporadic planning and delivery (i.e. responding to performances as opposed to working towards long-term goals), blocked practices that work on specific techniques, a focus on tidy practice that discourage mistakes (mistakes are often a key marker of children trying new things), communication methods focused on coach-led problem-solving and

selecting children on the basis of current performance (Muir *et al.*, 2011). This type of practice surely does not lead to the optimal development of athletes.

According to Muir *et al.* (2011), some coaches try to offer a more developmentally appropriate sporting environment for children. However, Muir *et al.* (2011:17) have the following doubts concerning this situation:

“This form of ‘coaching’, often delivered by parents and other volunteers, typically leads to less formalised, unstructured environments focused on keeping children ‘active and busy’. While these practices may be underpinned with some thought to ‘development through experimentation and play’, they probably lack sufficient structure and direction to ensure that learning occurs for everyone.”

Consequently, many children are at risk of being exposed either to demanding physical programmes that promote high volumes of competition and pressure to win, often resulting in a lack of playing time, or to practices that are so free that development is left to chance, and therefore, only the naturally gifted develop (Muir *et al.*, 2011).

Adults may be in danger of over-instructing young athletes on the technical skills and under-instructing them on how to play the game (the tactics), and in doing so, take the fun out of sport (Martens, 2012). At this point, it is relevant to distinguish between technical and tactical skills. Technical skills, or technique, are the specific procedures to move one’s body to perform the task that needs to be accomplished (e.g. passing or catching a ball), whereas tactical skills, or tactics, are the decisions and actions of players in the contest to gain an advantage over the opposing team players (e.g. running onto an opponent’s weak side) (Martens, 2012). Although many coaches are successful in teaching the skills, movements, tactics, or strategies, very few know how to successfully link them together in a single approach (Oslen *et al.*, 2011).

The right balance between challenge and success that practice games provide is critical in youth sport coaching (Light *et al.*, 2015). Quality coaching involves practitioners exploring ways in which their practice can be made more meaningful, purposeful, just and enjoyable (Cassidy *et al.*, 2009). One of the most significant developments in coaching is the shift from a focus on what the coach does to what the

players learn, which requires a major reassessment of the coach's behaviour because he/she must pay attention to what and how the players are learning and make appropriate modifications that demand more sensitivity to learning (Light *et al.*, 2015). Consequently, a different approach is needed to address these challenges, by adapting the sport to make it easier for children to experience, whilst still retaining the basic nature of the sport (Light *et al.*, 2015). Mini-rugby is an example of such a modified game approach.

Over the last 35 years, various models have been presented to meet the needs of a modified game approach. In 1982, Bunker and Thorpe proposed the "Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU)" approach, which was developed around the concept of teaching games to children by playing games (Bunker & Thorpe, 1982:5). "Game Sense" is an Australian variation of TGfU, developed by the Australian Sports Commission in collaboration with Rod Thorpe and Australian coaches in the mid-1990's (Light, 2004:116). Siedentop introduced his "Sport Education Model (SEM)" in 1994 and explained that it is a curriculum and instruction model designed to provide students with authentic experiences that are thorough and enjoyable and that contribute to their desire to become and stay physically active throughout their lives (Siedentop *et al.*, 2011:1). Launder presented "Play Practice" in 2001, and described it as an innovative approach to sport education that harnesses the immense power of play to create challenging learning situations (Launder, 2001:7). Approaches such as TGfU, Play Practice and Game Sense can make a significant contribution toward the development of specific areas of play such as tactical understanding, reading the game, decision-making, player independence and a general "sense of the game" (Light & Robert, 2010:104). Martens (2012) simply calls it the games approach to coaching and substantiates it by stating that today we know more about the way young people learn and this knowledge has led to the development of a better way to coach. The games approach emphasizes learning the game through game-like practice activities that create realistic and enjoyable learning situations; it teaches athletes how to play the game better and retains the joy of participation (Martens, 2012).

The games approach is based on practice being as closely aligned as possible with what actually occurs in games, which requires the coach to skilfully analyse the game

to structure game-like situations so that players learn what they need to know to play well (Martens, 2012). This involves the design of games and their management to provide an appropriate learning environment that keeps players on task and maintains the right level of challenge to optimize learning (Light, 2013). The coach structures learning instead of trying to control it with learning within a game context, making it meaningful and transferable to a match (Light *et al.*, 2015). Referring specifically to the use of Game Sense in rugby coaching, Light (2013) declares that it helps make learning to play rugby meaningful and transferable to a competitive match because it occurs within the context of modified games or game-like activities that resemble the real match. Learning is, therefore, contextualised with the modified practice games or game-like activities reproducing some conditions of a competitive match (Light *et al.*, 2015). For this to occur, the physical learning environment is designed to achieve the learning outcomes of the practice session and match the knowledge, abilities and interests of the learners (Light *et al.*, 2015). Light *et al.* (2015) also state that the coach needs to be able to identify when training activities or games need modifying, what modifications are needed and when to make the game better in terms of enjoyment and improving learning.

Coaches can do this by "shaping play", "focusing play", and "enhancing play" (Martens, 2012:155). Martens explains that a coach can shape play by changing certain aspects of the game to create a variety of learning situations; e.g. changing the rules in practice to create the required learning environment, or altering the number of players to increase player participation (Martens, 2012). Focusing play can be achieved by explaining the purpose of the game and labelling the key elements to be learned and then reminding players of these actions during play. This needs to be done to focus the players' attention on the key elements of the game, which needs to be learned, which in turn determines the quality of practice and helps players transfer what they are learning in practice games to real games (Martens, 2012). Finally, a coach can enhance play by presenting challenges during practices, using handicap techniques to make close contests and of course encouraging the players and recognizing them for the progress they make. Martens (2012) asserts that the games approach gives coaches a huge advantage in motivating their athletes because practices are much more game-like and, thus, much more enjoyable. He further states

that practices using the games approach are athlete-centred rather than coach-centred. According to Light *et al.* (2015) in coach-centred approaches the focus is on what the coach does (coach behaviour) to determine learning with him/her seen to hold knowledge that is transferred to the players, whereas a player-centred approach focuses on how and what the players learn and sees the players as being active learners. Put simply, it shifts the focus from instruction to learning (Light *et al.*, 2015).

2.5 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to summarise the literature pertaining to rugby development and coaching in order to establish the theoretical background for this study. This information provides greater insight into the various aspects of rugby coaching and skills development, which enables coaches and other relevant role players to make more informed decisions regarding the coaching of mini-rugby and the development of mini-rugby players.

From the literature reviewed, it is clear that there needs to be a concerted effort to address the lack of quality coaching in mini-rugby to optimally develop the young players. Appropriate training and support are essential if talented individuals are to fulfil their potential and coaches play a critical role in this process by providing high-quality training programmes to nurture the talent. The design of age-appropriate activities and practices is essential to attract and retain and to optimally develop mini-rugby players. To effectively achieve that, a coach need to exploit a suitable and substantiated coaching methodology and skills development model in order to provide a learning environment that is developmentally and instructionally appropriate.

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CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH ARTICLE ONE:
A PROFILE OF MINI-RUGBY COACHES IN THE WESTERN CAPE
PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

This article has been accepted for publication in the International Journal of Sports Science and Coaching. The article is included herewith in accordance with the guidelines for authors of this esteemed journal (included as Appendix A). Consequently, the referencing style used in this chapter may differ from that used in the other chapters of this thesis.

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A profile of mini-rugby coaches in the Western Cape Province, South Africa

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Abstract

A coach and a coaching process that offers a supportive learning environment, appropriate levels of challenge and that engenders a passion for the sport can produce positive and productive sporting outcomes. The aim of this study was to determine a profile of mini-rugby coaches in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. Mini-rugby coaches (N=91) completed a 15-item questionnaire to obtain descriptive information about the coaches as well as their perceptions about their ability and confidence to coach mini-rugby. The results indicate that a significant number of coaches did not have any experience in playing rugby (32%) or coaching mini-rugby (19%) and the majority of coaches (51%) did not have any form of rugby coaching education. The results also show that a significant number of the coaches did not feel efficacious in coaching mini-rugby (23%) and did not believe that they were optimally developing the skills of the mini-rugby players (29%). The findings from the current study highlight an unfavourable situation where untrained and inexperienced individuals coach mini-rugby, which has important practical implications for rugby administrators, developers of coaching education courses, players as well as the game itself. One recommendation to remedy this situation would be that all coaches must be educated to coach rugby. A coaching education course designed specifically for mini-rugby will specifically aid in preparing individuals to successfully coach at mini-rugby level. The content and structure of coaching education courses also need to be reviewed to ensure it is pertinent to the coaches' needs.

Keywords:

Mini-rugby, coaching experience, coaching education and training, coaching efficacy

3.1 Introduction

The legendary basketball coach, John Wooden, once said: “*You haven’t taught until they have learned*” [1, p. 29]. This statement has substantial implications for the coaching profession. The mere fact that the coach is coaching and the players are moving around, does not mean the players are learning and developing. The main aim of coaching should be the development of the athletes, which requires more than just physical activity. Gould [2, p. 15] believes “that scholastic athletes do not automatically catch the benefits of sport from merely participating on a team.” The benefits are taught directly and indirectly by expert and caring coaches who are very calculated in their actions and how they structure the sport setting to enhance positive athlete development [2], and therefore, the coach has a critical role to play. Martindale [3] agrees with Gould [2] and states that an important role for any sport coach is to nurture young people and help maximise the natural talents they inherited. A coach that offers a supportive learning environment, appropriate levels of challenge that provokes a passion for the sport can produce productive sporting outcomes [4]. Vickers and Schoenstedt [5] assert that regardless of the coaching programme the attitudes and behaviours of coaches determine the quality of the sport experience.

Coaches play a primary role in teaching children technical, physical, psychological and tactical skills [6]. This in itself is challenging and coaches need to know their players well [7] in order to plan the sessions in such a manner as to foster optimal learning and skills development [8]. Martindale et al. [9] state that, although other factors (parents, culture and sporting policies) can influence talent development, the coaching session is certainly the most reliable and controllable factor in developing athletes. Therefore, the coach plays an important role in planning the session to provide a proper learning environment and subsequently to improve performance. Abernethy [10] agrees and argue that in the design of junior sport a critical consideration should be to put systems in place that will maximize the frequency and probability of occurrence of the conditions known to favour expertise development. One obvious thing to do is to maximize the opportunities for young athletes to gain practice and play experience [10]. Launder [11] advise that coaches need to ensure all practice sessions are relevant, as young people will practise more purposefully when there is a clear relationship between the session and the real activity and when practice is appropriate

to their ability level. Feelings of competence and enjoyment will increase when there is a reasonable probability of success [12]. An important coaching goal is to ensure athletes enjoy the sessions and want to come back for more [12]. Interesting and challenging learning activities are more likely to be satisfying and enjoyable [13].

To provide a fitting learning milieu, the coach must be effective in terms of his/her coaching methodology. Broodryk et al. [14] distinguish 'coaching efficacy' and 'coaching effectiveness' as two different concepts. Efficacy has a direct connection with coaching assessment, while effectiveness refers to the application of coaching skills, influencing the players' perceptions. Broodryk et al. [14] state that the coach's perception refers to coaching efficacy, while the players' perceptions refer to coaching effectiveness. Regarding effective coaching, Côté and Gilbert [15, p. 307], offer the question: "What differentiates effective coaches from ineffective coaches?" Chase and Martin [16] purports that effective coaches teach new skills and tactics and prepare their athletes to perform at their highest potential. Côté and Gilbert [15] define effective coaching as the regular application of integrated professional, interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge to improve athletes' competence, confidence, connection and character. Baker et al. [17] believes that effective coaches influence a variety of areas such as sport performance, players' behaviour, well-being, moral values and character building. Also, Nash et al. [18] found that effective coaches construct a realistic coaching environment and also have the ability to contextualize practice sessions. The effective coach has to orchestrate a large number of variables when planning and executing a training session. Their success depends on: knowledge of the sport; knowledge of the athletes; appreciation of the skills necessary for performance in the specific sport; and the interpersonal skills to be able to effectively engage with athletes, teams and support staff [18].

The importance of the coach's knowledge and skills in coaching a particular sport is a common theme related to effective coaching. The more a coach knows about the basic technical skills and about teaching these skills in the proper sequence, the more success and fun both coach and athlete will have [19]. Not knowing how to teach technical skills puts a coach in the position of risking injury to athletes and causing frustration from repeated failures [19]. Likewise, Donaldson and Poulos [20] highlight

knowledge, attitude and behaviour as key instruments of coaches in implementing injury prevention strategies in junior sport. Where coaches have received little or no formal coaching education the situation is concerning, since they cannot help to improve, amongst others, their players' motor skills, resulting in little progress [21]. Although the initial training of a coach is essential, the long-term and continuous development of the coach is equally important [21]. Gilbert and Trudel [22] state that ignoring the long-term development of coaches can result in unnecessary financial and emotional costs – to coaches and athletes. Coaching knowledge and skills should continually be updated to increase effectiveness long after the coach has been certified [5].

Several studies have established a positive relationship between coaching experience and coaching ability [23-26] and also between coaching education and training and coaching ability [26-29]. It is, therefore, hypothesised that due to a lack of qualified, experienced rugby coaches in Western Cape primary schools, the coaching of mini-rugby is often lacking and neglected. Investigating the profile of mini-rugby coaches will provide a better understanding of the current reality facing mini-rugby in the Western Cape, and probably beyond the borders of the Western Cape. This could validate the need for training coaches with the purpose of equipping them sufficiently to optimally develop the skills of mini-rugby players. Based on the above background the purpose of this study was to determine a profile of mini-rugby coaches in the Western Cape Province, South Africa.

3.2 Research methodology

3.2.1 Study design

A survey approach was adopted, allowing for the thoughts and opinions of Western Cape rugby coaches on the profile of a mini-rugby coach [30]. Data collection was done using a self-designed questionnaire, consisting of both open- and closed-ended questions. Data from the survey was both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The coaches were identified through the Western Province Rugby Union School Coaches Association. An informed consent form (Appendix C and D) with a clear explanation of what the study entailed was provided. The questionnaire was distributed by email or in person to all the coaches, wherein they were asked to volunteer and to take part

in the study. The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Stellenbosch University (REC-050411-032).

3.2.2 Participants

91 coaches (N=91) participated in the study, 69% were male (n=63) and 31% female (n=28). Most of the coaches (40%, n=36) were between 21 and 30 years of age, while 8% were 20 years old or younger (n=7), 22% were between 31 and 40 years of age (n=20), 10% were between 41 and 50 years of age (n=9), and 21% were 51 years of age and older (n=19). The majority, 69% of the coaches, were involved as teachers at the schools where they coached (n=63), while 15% were external individuals who just coached at the schools (n=14), and a further 15% selected the option of “other” (n=14) as they were fulfilling other roles within the schools.

3.2.3 Data collection procedure

Questionnaire

To determine a profile of the typical mini-rugby coach in the Western Cape, a self-designed questionnaire was used (Appendix I). The questionnaire consisted of 13 closed-ended questions to ascertain descriptive information about the coach, as well as 2 open-ended (questions 14 and 15) to gauge the coach’s perceptions about his/her ability and confidence to coach mini-rugby. The questionnaire was distributed through and under the auspices of the Western Province Rugby Union (WPRU), to all primary school coaches that were affiliated to the WPRU. Only coaches who were actively involved in the coaching of mini-rugby during the 2016 season were considered for the purpose of this study.

Reliability and validity of the questionnaire

Prior to the commencement of data collection for the main study, the reliability (Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC)) and validity (face validity) of the questionnaire was established through a pilot study [31]. The purpose of the pilot study was to determine if the questionnaire could be used as a measuring instrument. To determine the reliability of the questionnaire, it was completed by rugby coaches (N=10) who did not form part of the main study. The same coaches were asked to complete the questionnaire again after 14 days, upon which the questionnaire yielded the same

results and the questionnaire was, therefore, proven reliable. Validity was tested using face validity, as the questionnaire was assessed by specialists in the field of rugby coaching. The questionnaire was considered as valid by the specialist coaches [31].

3.2.4 Statistical analysis

The Centre for Statistical Consultation Services of Stellenbosch University analysed the research data. The Statistica 13 package was used to process the data. Descriptive statistics for the questions were reported as frequencies (n) and expressed as percentages (%).

3.3 Results

The results will be discussed under the following headings: *response rate*; *rugby playing experience*; *coaching experience*; *academic qualifications*; and *rugby coaching accreditations and qualifications*; and *coaches' opinion of their own coaching abilities*.

Response rate

The questionnaire was sent to 207 coaches, and 91 successfully completed questionnaires were returned, resulting in a response rate of 44%.

Rugby playing experience

As can be seen in Table 3.1, almost a third of the coaches (n=29, 32%) indicated that they have never played rugby before and a further 6 coaches (7%) played rugby for less than 5 years. Of the remaining coaches, 15 coaches had between 6 and 10 years' experience in playing rugby (16%), 21 coaches had between 11 and 15 years' experience (23%), 12 coaches had between 16 and 20 years' experience (13%) and 8 coaches indicated that they have played rugby for 21 years or more (9%). Of the 62 coaches who had rugby playing experience the majority had played up to club level (n=27, 44%). Only 1 had played up to primary school level (2%), 18 had played up to secondary school level (29%), 14 indicated that they had played up to provincial level (23%) and 2 coaches indicated that they had played at international level (3%).

Table 3.1. Rugby playing experience expressed as n (%).

Question: Your experience in playing rugby? (in years)					
None	< 5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	> 21 years
29 (32%)	6 (7%)	15 (16%)	21 (23%)	12 (13%)	8 (9%)
Question: At which level did you play rugby?					
Primary school	Secondary school	Club	Provincial	International	
1 (2%)	18 (29%)	27 (44%)	14 (23%)	2 (3%)	

Coaching experience

As indicated in Table 3.2, the coaching experience of the coaches were fairly evenly spread across the spectrum, with the majority of coaches having coached rugby for 6 to 10 years (n=21, 23%). However, with mini-rugby in particular the most coaches (n=22, 24%) indicated that they only had 1 to 2 years' coaching experience. Of particular concern is the high number of coaches who indicated that they had no coaching experience or less than 2 years' coaching experience. With rugby coaching as a whole, 15 coaches had no experience in coaching rugby (16%) and a further 18 coaches (20%) had less than 2 years' experience. The situation is more concerning when looking at the coaching of mini-rugby, where approximately 43% of the coaches had either no experience (n=17, 19%) or less than 2 years' experience (n=22, 24%). Of the 15 coaches who indicated that they did not have any experience in coaching rugby, 8 (53%) had at least coached another sport before. However, 7 (47%) of the coaches who did not have any experience in coaching rugby, similarly did not have experience in coaching any other sport, and therefore, were coaching for the very first time. This equates to 8% of the total number of respondents.

Academic qualifications and rugby coaching accreditations and qualifications

Concerning the highest academic qualification of the coaches (Table 3.3), 20% indicated that they had a Grade 12 qualification (n=18), 7% had a certificate (n=6), 37% had a diploma (n=34), 24% had a degree (n=22), and 12% had a post graduate qualification (n=11). 86 of the coaches (95%) were BokSmart certified, while 5 (5%) were not certified. More than half of the coaches (n=46, 51%) indicated that they did not have any form of rugby coaching qualification. Additionally, 30 coaches (33%) only had a World Rugby (previously known as International Rugby Board) level 1

qualification, while 13 coaches (14%) indicated that they had completed a World Rugby level 2 qualification.

Table 3.2. Coaching experience expressed as n (%).

Question: Your experience in coaching rugby? (in years)					
None	1-2 years	3-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	> 16 years
15 (16%)	18 (20%)	12 (13%)	21 (23%)	5 (5%)	20 (22%)
Question: Your experience in coaching mini-rugby? (in years)					
None	1-2 years	3-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	> 16 years
17 (19%)	22 (24%)	17 (19%)	18 (20%)	5 (5%)	12 (13%)
Question: If you do not have any experience in coaching rugby, what experience do you have in coaching any other sport? (in years)					
None	1-2 years	3-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	> 16 years
7 (47%)	1 (7%)	5 (33%)	1 (7%)	0 (0%)	1 (7%)

Table 3.3. Academic qualifications and rugby coaching accreditations and qualifications expressed as n (%).

Question: Your highest current academic qualification?					
< Grade 12	Grade 12	Certificate	Diploma	Degree	Postgraduate
0 (0%)	18 (20%)	6 (7%)	34 (37%)	22 (24%)	11 (12%)
Question: Are you BokSmart* accredited?					
No			Yes		
5 (5%)			86 (95%)		
Question: Your qualification in coaching rugby?					
None	IRB** level 1	IRB** level 2	Other		
46 (51%)	30 (33%)	13 (14%)	2 (2%)		

Note: *Boksmart is a South African rugby safety programme, ** World Rugby replaced the IRB (International Rugby Board) in 2014

Coaches' opinion of their own coaching abilities

The purpose of the 2 open-ended questions was to measure the coaches' opinion of their own coaching abilities. The majority of the coaches (sufficiently equipped to coach mini-rugby: n=70, 77%, optimally developing the skills of the mini-rugby players: n=65, 71%) perceived that they were sufficiently equipped to coach mini-rugby and

that they were optimally developing the skills of the mini-rugby players. In spite of the previous descriptive data showing minor or a lack of rugby playing experience (Table 3.1), rugby coaching experience (Table 3.2) and rugby coaching education (Table 3.3), a considerable minority of the coaches (sufficiently equipped to coach mini-rugby: n=21, 23%, optimally developing the skills of the mini-rugby players: n=26, 29%), believed that they were not effective in this context.

Table 3.4. Coaches' opinion of their own coaching abilities expressed as n (%).

Question: Do you feel sufficiently equipped to coach mini-rugby?	
No	Yes
21 (23%)	70 (77%)

Question: Do you feel that you are optimally developing the skills of the mini-rugby players?	
No	Yes
26 (29%)	65 (71%)

3.4 Discussion

The aim of the current study was to determine a profile of mini-rugby coaches in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. The results indicate that a significant number of coaches did not have any or sufficient experience in playing rugby or coaching rugby and the majority of coaches did not have any form of rugby coaching education. The results also show that a significant number of the coaches did not feel equipped to coach mini-rugby and did not believe that they were optimally developing the skills of the mini-rugby players.

Response rate

This study had an overall response rate of 44%. This was similar to a previous study that had a response rate of 46%, which surveyed New England high school football coaches about their understanding and management of concussions [32]. However, in a survey on South African rugby coaches regarding their knowledge of prevention, identification and management of concussions, the response rate was only 28% [30]. A possible reason for the low response rate could be due to that the questionnaire only being available in hard copy and not online as well.

Rugby playing experience

As indicated by the results, a significant number of the coaches participating in this study (32%) had no experience of playing rugby before. This is of particular significance when considering previous evidence showing the effect of coaches' playing experience on their coaching ability [19, 33-34]. Although playing experience is not a necessity to be a successful coach in that particular sport, it is surely plausible that having the inherent knowledge gained from playing a sport, is conducive to a more natural and uncomplicated coaching ability.

Coaching experience

Approximately 43% of the coaches had either no experience (19%) or less than two years' experience (24%) of coaching mini-rugby. This is concerning when considering previous evidence showing the effect of coaches' experience on their coaching ability [23-26, 35-36]. Experience is defined as the knowledge or skill acquired by a period of practical experience of something, especially that gained in a particular profession [37]. Gaining this experience, by spending time in the profession, provides pertinent and significant opportunities for growth within the coaching profession. The acquisition of such coaching experience is an invaluable source of knowledge that contributes to an individual's comprehension of what is required by the coaching profession.

Academic qualifications and rugby coaching accreditations and qualifications

While the vast majority of coaches (95%) were BokSmart certified, it is worrying that 5% were not, since rugby coaches in South Africa, involved at all levels of the game, are obligated to adhere to certification. BokSmart is a South African rugby safety programme, of which the focus areas are education on safety techniques and laws, injury prevention, injury management, rugby safety and player performance with specific attention on serious and catastrophic head, neck and spine injuries [38]. Since the focus of BokSmart is predominantly on rugby safety and not on the coaching of specific rugby skills, it cannot be considered a coaching education course in isolation. Considering previous evidence showing the effect of coaches' coaching education and training on their coaching ability [26-29, 39], it is disturbing to note that 51% of the coaches in this study did not have any form of coaching education. A further 33% of

the coaches only had a World Rugby (previously known as International Rugby Board) level 1 qualification, which is for individuals who coach a group of players working under the guidance of a head coach [40]. The level one qualification is based on attendance only and the individual's coaching ability is not assessed in any way. Combining these figures, it shows that an astonishing 84% of the coaches (n=76) either did not have any form of coaching training or were not assessed on their knowledge of or their ability to coach rugby. Although the purpose and value of coaching education programmes have been questioned by several authors [27-28, 41-43], it should still be considered a vital resource which needs to be utilised to prepare and develop coaches. This is particularly true for novice coaches without playing or coaching experience.

Coaches' opinion of their own coaching abilities

Approximately a quarter of the coaches in this study did not feel sufficiently equipped to coach mini-rugby and felt that they were not optimally developing the skills of the mini-rugby players. These results are of particular significance when considering previous evidence showing the effect of coaches' feelings of efficacy on their coaching ability [16, 44-47]. Many of the coaches who did not feel sufficiently equipped to coach mini-rugby, indicated a lack of knowledge as a reason for their negative response. They substantiated their negative response with statements like: "*I was thrown into the deep end; I'm coaching two teams and do not know much about rugby*", "*I don't understand the sport and don't know how to coach it*", and "*I don't understand the game that well*". One coach simply stated: "*I know nothing*". Several of the coaches also indicated a strong need for coaching education and training with statements like: "*I don't have any coach training*", "*I would like to learn more and further my coaching skills*", "*I need more training to know how to handle smaller children and how to coach them*", "*I have no training*", and "*I need a coaching course*". Some of the other reasons given include: "*I don't have the skills*" and "*I don't have enough confidence to coach*", which reinforces a lack of effectiveness amongst these coaches.

The coaches who did not feel that they were optimally developing the skills of the mini-rugby players, again indicated a lack of knowledge and a need for training as reasons for their negative responses. Some of these reasons include: "*I don't have enough*

knowledge”, “*I don’t know enough about rugby*”, “*I cannot offer advice or tips for improvement*”, and “*With more training and experience I would feel more confident*”. One coach very pertinently stated: “*Due to my lack of knowledge, I’m doing the kids a disservice*”, and another coach highlighted the need for appropriate coach education by stating: “*I am always keen to learn and would encourage a course for mini-rugby*”. Disturbingly, statements like: “*I only do it because I have to; I’m actually a hockey player*” and “*Rugby is not my sport and I only coach it because I have to, since my school don’t have hockey*” also surfaced.

Given that previous research has established a positive relationship between these factors and a coach’s ability to coach effectively, the results of this study support the hypothesised notion that the coaching of mini-rugby is often lacking and neglected due to a lack of qualified and experienced rugby coaches. Of particular interest, are the reasons given by the coaches who did not feel efficacious in coaching mini-rugby or did not believe that they were optimally developing the skills of the mini-rugby players. These findings concur with previous studies investigating the relationship between playing experience, coaching experience and coaching education, and coaching efficacy and effectiveness [16, 44, 47-48]. Specifically, the coach who indicated a need for a training course for mini-rugby in particular, highlights the need for age-appropriate coaching education, which is consistent with the suggestions made by Wiersma and Sherman [29].

Practical application

The lack of knowledge, coaching education and confidence as indicated by the coaches in the present study, have important practical implications for rugby administrators and the developers of coaching education courses alike. The results highlight an unfavourable situation where untrained and inexperienced individuals are coaching mini-rugby. One recommendation would be that all coaches must be educated and trained to coach rugby by at least completing the World Rugby level one coaching course as well as the BokSmart workshop. Furthermore, a coaching education course designed specifically for mini-rugby will aid in preparing individuals to successfully coach mini-rugby and raising their confidence to do so. The content and structure of coaching education courses need to be reviewed to ensure it is

pertinent to the coaches' needs. The content of such courses need to be representative of what occurs in reality, enabling the coaches to apply theory to practice. Less formal formats should be integrated into existing formal education programmes, allowing for active learning interactions such as mentoring and supervised field experiences.

3.5 Conclusions

A major finding of this study was that the majority of coaches did not have any form of rugby coaching qualifications. When combined with the number of coaches who only had a World Rugby level one qualification, which does not require any assessment, it shows that an astounding 84% of the coaches in this study either did not have any form of coaching training or were not assessed on their knowledge of, or their ability to coach rugby. Another noteworthy finding was that approximately a quarter of the coaches did not feel sufficiently equipped to coach mini-rugby and felt that they were not optimally developing the skills of the mini-rugby players.

Recommendations

The fact that the questionnaire was only available in hard copy and not online as well, could be considered a limitation of this study. If the coaches had an opportunity to complete the questionnaire electronically, the response rate could have been greater, in which case a more representative profile of the mini-rugby coaches in question could have been produced. Future studies should explore the findings from the current study further and investigate the situation in the other provincial rugby unions to ascertain if there is a similar trend nationally. Further research is also needed to determine what specific content of coaching education courses would accurately address the coaches' needs and make them feel more efficacious to coach mini-rugby.

3.6 Acknowledgement

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CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH ARTICLE TWO:
THE EFFECT OF A 16-WEEK SKILLS INTERVENTION PROGRAMME
ON THE SKILL LEVEL OF MINI-RUGBY PLAYERS IN THE
WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

This article will be submitted for publication in the Perceptual and Motor Skills Journal. The article is included herewith in accordance with the guidelines for authors of this esteemed journal (included as Appendix B). However, to provide a neat and well-rounded final product for this thesis, the article has been edited to represent an actual published article as it would appear in this particular journal. This does not imply that the article has been accepted or will be accepted for publication. Consequently, the referencing style used in this chapter may differ from that used in the other chapters of this thesis.

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**The Effect of a 16-week Skills Intervention Programme on the Skill Level of
Mini-rugby Players in the Western Cape Province, South Africa**

Jacques Basson, Wilbur Kraak, and Karel van Deventer

Field of study: Sport Science (player development)

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The effect of a 16-week Skills Intervention Programme on the Skill Level of Mini-Rugby Players in the Western Cape Province, South Africa

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Abstract

To optimally develop youth rugby players, it is essential to design age-appropriate activities and practices. The purpose of the current study was to determine the effect of a 16-week skills intervention programme on the skill level of mini-rugby players in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. The participants of this study (N=181) attended four different primary schools in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town, South Africa. The schools were selected based on the researcher's judgement and knowledge of the particular schools and the mini-rugby structure at the schools, to ensure a uniform environment between the experimental and control groups. Two of the four schools were randomly allocated to the experimental group and the other two schools were randomly allocated to the control group. The mini-rugby players who attended these schools, therefore, formed the experimental group (n=84), and the control group (n=97) respectively. After being exposed to the skills intervention programme for the entire season, the experimental group showed significant improvements ($p < 0.05$), in five of the six skills related to this study. These skills were: passing; catching; picking up the ball; tackling; and taking the ball into contact. Although the experimental group did display improvement in their ability in evasive running, however, the improvement was not significant ($p = 0.32$). The control group displayed varied results in that the group as a whole deteriorated in three of the six skills and improved in the remaining three skills. However, none of the improvements, however, were significant ($p > 0.05$). A major finding of this study was that the specific skills intervention programme significantly enhanced the skill level of the mini-rugby players in question. This highlights the value of a well-structured and substantiated training programme in the quest for athletes' skill development.

Keywords:

Mini-rugby, skills intervention programme, skill development, fundamental movement skills

4.1. Introduction

Specialists in the field of sport science, and in particular rugby coaching, would agree that the design of age-appropriate activities and practices is essential to attract, retain and to optimally develop mini-rugby players. As a result, the necessity of a well-structured training programme cannot be emphasized enough. Progressing basic movement skills through well-structured fun activities and games will lay sound foundations on which subsequent, sport-specific skills can be developed (Stafford, 2005). Athletic development will not occur instinctively, nor will potential be realised spontaneously, when an athlete simply attends practice sessions. As Brylinsky (2010, p. 23) states so well, “*Simply exposing young athletes to hours and hours of practice, without also stressing an appropriate instructional and training context, will not lead to the desired effects*”. The quality of the practice sessions and what the athlete does during the sessions, is therefore, of paramount importance. A series of specific and appropriately periodized, well-structured schedules for practice and competition can go a long way to ensure optimum development (Nash, Sproule, & Horton, 2011). Rink (2003) believes the way in which a teacher organises practice situations may be the most important variable influencing appropriate opportunities in physical education. Although she referred to teachers and physical education, the same holds true for coaches in a sporting context.

McMorris (2015) states that plenty opportunities to practise must be provided, and that it should be enjoyable, but challenging and as realistic as possible. Brylinsky (2010) asserts that sport skill instruction which focus on long-term athlete development provide the cumulative advantage to nurture talent, regardless of the training context in which it is offered. Nash et al. (2011, p. 230), support this view and state that “*a series of specific and appropriately periodized, well-structured schedules for practice and competition can go a long way to ensure optimum development throughout an athlete’s career*”. Nash et al. (2011) asserts that training sessions are the embodiment of the coach’s art and products of their holistic skill-set. Training sessions are the

mechanisms through which coaches bring all the elements of effective practice together and are the points at which they impart their craft to their athletes (Nash et al., 2011).

One of the most prominent sport participation development models across all sporting codes is the Long-Term Athlete Development Model (LTAD) (Balyi, Way, & Higgs, 2013). The LTAD model is based on physiological principles, which allow players to be categorised into specific stages of development. The classic stages of development for late specialisation sport, such as rugby, include the 'fundamental', 'learning to train', 'training to train', 'training to compete' and 'training to win' phases (Posthumus, 2013). According to Posthumus (2013), several international rugby unions, including the South African Rugby Union (SARU), have adopted the same terminology for these phases. The SARU has outlined potential stages of development for boys according to age: 'fundamental' – age 6 to 9 years (U7 to U9); 'learning to train' – age 10 to 13 years (U10 to U13); 'train to train' – age 14 to 16 years (U14 to U16); 'training to compete' – 17 to 18 years (U17 to U19); and 'training to win' – age 19 years and above (Posthumus, 2013). Since the focus of the current study was on mini-rugby, the fundamental stage was of particular interest. According to Stafford (2005), this fundamental stage supports all aspects of an individual's subsequent development in physical activity. Stafford (2005) further emphasises that all development stages should be well structured and retain an element of fun, but these two qualities are particularly relevant to the fundamental stage. Progressing basic movement skills through well-structured, fun activities and games will lay sound foundations on which subsequent, sport-specific skills can be developed (Stafford, 2005).

A key element of each individual stage is that they provide "*windows of opportunity*" to optimise physical development during childhood (Bailey et al., 2011:46). For example, during the fundamental stage, the development of overall physical ability and fundamental movement skills (FMS) are prioritised. As an alternative, Gallahue and Donnelly (2003, p. 42) proposed the term "*sensitive learning periods*" and defined it as "*a broad time frame or window of opportunity when the learning of specific new skills is easier and quicker*". According to the LTAD model (Balyi et al., 2013), failure to take advantage of these opportunities will result in unfulfilled sport performance.

Although the validity of this assertion has been questioned (Ford et al., 2011), there is sufficient support for it in the literature (Gallahue & Donnelly, 2003; Stafford, 2005; Thomas, 2013). A training effect may be achieved at any time throughout the various developmental stages, but it is thought that, during these specifically sensitive and critical periods accelerated adaptation can be demonstrated, given appropriate training loads in terms of volume and intensity (Stafford, 2005). If these windows of trainability are fully appreciated and exploited, the training effect will be optimal and will significantly help to realise true potential (Stafford, 2005). It seems to be clear that coaches need to pay particular attention to and abundantly exploit these opportunities.

According to Gallahue and Donnelly (2003), a fundamental movement skill (FMS) is an organised series of basic movements that involve the combination of movement patterns of two or more body segments. Deli, Bakle, and Zachopoulou (2006) consider FMS to be the building blocks for sport-specific movement patterns and suggest that it should typically be the focus of physical development programmes for children from early childhood to develop gross motor skills. Furthermore, Hendricks (2012) concludes that FMS lead to specialised movement sequences, which are required for adequate participation in many organised and non-organised physical activities, such as rugby. When given necessary opportunities and appropriate encouragement, children have the developmental capability to achieve mature performance of FMS by age six (Gallahue & Donnelly, 2003).

The importance of the development of FMS seems to be obvious. Lloyd and Oliver (2012, p. 62) claim that “*FMS development is essential to ensure that correct movement patterns are mastered in a safe and fun environment to ensure safe and effective performance of more complex sports movements at a later stage*”. Oliver, Lloyd, and Meyers (2011) also assert that a failure to fully develop FMS before more advanced forms of training may limit the potential of the sporting child and expose him/her to greater injury risks. According to Lubans, Morgan, Cliff, Barnett, and Okely (2010), it is important that FMS are developed during preschool and elementary school years because these children are at an optimal age in terms of motor skill learning. These views are supported by Gallahue and Donnelly (2003, p. 43), who state that the development of mature FMS is a prerequisite to the learning and mastery of sport skills

and that “a failure to take advantage of this sensitive movement skill period of learning in childhood makes it difficult for the child to attain higher levels of skill later on”. Gallahue and Donnelly (2003, p. 64) call this a “*proficiency barrier*”. Within a technical context, a proficiency barrier may be that a rugby player is not competent or able to perform a specific movement or technical skill, such as quickly side-stepping to one side (International Rugby Board, 2011). The implications are that the player should be exposed to a variety of skills during the early stages of development. In doing so, the player will develop a sufficient, broad base of skills, which can be used later to refine the more sport specific skills to ensure proficiency.

The skills of interest to mini-rugby include: running (at various speeds, through various directions and changes of direction); stopping (with balance and control); weaving and chasing through a variety of patterns; passing and catching (using as large a range of techniques and methods as possible); falling; rolling; jumping; etc. (International Rugby Board, 2011). To develop these skills specifically in mini-rugby, the players must be provided the opportunity and encouragement to be active on a regular basis. It seems evident that the enhancement of FMS should always form part of the training regime regardless of level or age, and especially so for mini-rugby. This can only be achieved by presenting well-structured, age-appropriate training sessions that allow for player development. After all, players should be developed and not just kept busy. Based on the above background the purpose of this study was to determine the effect of a 16-week individual skills intervention programme on the skill level of mini-rugby players in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. Specifically, the current study’s aim was to determine the effect of an intervention programme on the ability of under 7, 8 and 9 players, respectively, to pass the ball, catch the ball, pick up the ball, take the ball into contact, run evasively with the ball and to tackle.

4.2. Research methodology

4.2.1 Study design

To assess the effect of the intervention programme on the skill level of the players, qualitative research was used by conducting systematic field observations of the players. During the pre-test, the skill level of the players, which represented the dependent variable, were measured. The players were then exposed to a skills

intervention programme, which represented the independent variable, and thereafter retested (post-test) in terms of the dependent variable. The participants were also subjected to a mid-test, to ascertain their progress, or lack thereof, during the study. Ethical approval (REC-050411-032) was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee: Human Research at Stellenbosch University.

4.2.2 Participants

The participants were selected from primary schools in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town, South Africa. Cluster sampling were used to select the participants, based on the primary researcher's judgement and knowledge of the particular schools and the mini-rugby structure at the schools, which the participants attend, i.e. the number of practice sessions per week and the length of the sessions. This was to ensure a uniform environment, apart from the coaching activities and methodology, between the experimental and control groups. The experimental group as well as the control group undertook one practice session of an hour per week, with a second session per week allocated to playing a match.

Four schools were included in the study, with each school providing under seven (U7), under eight (U8) and under nine (U9) groups. Thus, there were four groups per age group. Two of the four schools were randomly allocated to the experimental group and the other two schools were randomly allocated to the control group. Players (N=181) who participated in the three age groups of mini-rugby (U7 to U9) at the particular schools were included in the study as indicated in Table 4.1. Prior to the commencement of the study, informed consent form the participants' parents, as well as informed assent from the participants themselves were required.

Table 4.1: Participants per group

Age groups	Experimental group	Control group	Total per age group
Under 7 (U7)	27	33	60
Under 8 (U8)	26	26	52
Under 9 (U9)	31	38	69
Total	n=84	n=97	N=181

4.2.3 Data collection procedure

Pilot study

Since a self-designed testing protocol was used to assess the skill level of the players, a pilot study was conducted prior to the start of the main study. The testing protocol was agreed upon after a discussion with experts in rugby coaching and coaching education. During the pilot study, 20 rugby players from a primary school, which was not included in the main study, performed the pre-test and after a period of 28 days the same group of players performed the post-test. The results were subsequently compared upon which the tests yielded the same results ($r=1.00$) and the testing protocol was, therefore, proven reliable through Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC). The validity of the test battery was tested by using face validity. Specialists in the field of rugby coaching scrutinised the test items and found it to be valid.

Main study

The pre-test of the participants was conducted at the start of the 2016 rugby season for primary schools, which was at the beginning of the second school term. The pre-tests were undertaken during the first or second weeks of the school term so as to ensure the participants received minimal coaching before the pre-testing. This was done to establish the skill level of each player at the onset of the study. To ascertain the progress of the participants during the study, or lack thereof, a mid-test was conducted midway through the schools' rugby season, which was at the start of the third school term, approximately 14 weeks after the pre-test. The post-test of the participants occurred at the end of the schools' rugby season, which was at the end of the third school term, approximately six weeks later.

The players' ability in passing and catching of the ball, picking up the ball, evasive running using the side-step, tackling and taking the ball into contact were assessed using the key factor analysis (KFA) for each skill, as stated by World Rugby (WR), and shown in Appendix J. All tests were performed individually for each player and size four rugby balls were used. Players performed each test once, as described in Appendix J. Two video cameras were used to record the players' performance of each test. A description of the video camera's placement for each test is indicated in

Appendix J. The recordings were subsequently viewed with Windows Media Player to assess and grade the players' performance of each individual test, using Microsoft Excel. The same testing protocol and procedures as presented in Appendix J were used for the pre-, mid-, as well as the post-test.

4.2.4 Skills intervention programme

The skills intervention programme to which the experimental group was exposed between pre- and post-test, was designed by a panel of specialists in the field of rugby coaching. The panel of coaches had specific knowledge of and experience in coaching mini-rugby. The programme consisted of various activities and drills to address the FMS and each of the six rugby skills applicable to this study. The programme included a detailed description of each exercise with an indication of the area size and equipment needed, as well as progressions to alter the difficulty to match the players' needs and aspects on which the coaches should have focused to enhance learning. The complete intervention programme is presented in Appendix K. Before the start of the season, all the coaches of the teams who formed part of the experimental group and who were, therefore, going to use the skills intervention programme for the duration of the season, were given training regarding the programme. All the activities and drills were thoroughly explained and demonstrated using players who did not form part of this study.

4.2.5 Statistical analysis

The Centre for Statistical Consultation Services of Stellenbosch University analysed the research data. The Statistica 13 package was used to process the data. Descriptive statistics were reported as means and standard deviations. Data was analysed using mixed model repeated measures ANOVA. In these analyses, age, group and time were treated as fixed effects. School nested in group and child nested in school*group*age were treated as random effects. Fisher least significant difference (LSD) was used for post hoc testing. Results were considered statistically significant if $p < 0.05$.

4.3. Results

Overview

A total of 181 participants were assessed during the pre-test, consisting of 84 participants in the experimental group and 97 participants in the control group. For the mid-test, 140 of the original 181 participants were assessed (68 experimental group and 72 control group), and for the post-test, 141 participants were assessed (73 experimental group and 68 control group). The number of participants per age group are indicated in Table 4.1. All three age groups (U/7, U/8 and U/9) of the experimental group showed an improvement in all six of the skills from the pre- to the post-test. However, the control group displayed varied results. The control group's U/7 age group showed improvement in four of the skills, while two of the skills deteriorated. The U/8 age group improved in three of the skills and showed a decline in the remaining three skills, while the U/9 age group deteriorated in all six of the skills from the pre- and the post-test.

Comparison between the control and experimental groups for the different age groups and skills

The results showing a comparison between the control and experimental groups for the different age groups and skills are presented in Table 4.2. A comparison between the three age groups within the experimental group yielded consistent results. The U/7 age group showed the most improvement in two of the skills (passing and tackling). Similarly, the U/8 age group showed the most improvement in two skills (evasive running and taking the ball into contact), while the U/9 age group showed the most improvement in the remaining two skills (catching and picking up the ball). The U/7 age group made the most progress in their ability to take the ball into contact (from 29.07 ± 16.65 to 67.90 ± 13.54), and secondly in their tackling ability (from 32.78 ± 20.32 to 57.24 ± 17.21), while their ability in evasive running showed the least progress (from 51.78 ± 11.21 to 59.71 ± 10.62). The U/8 age group also showed the largest improvement in their ability to take the ball into contact (from 23.08 ± 14.20 to 69.91 ± 11.62), but their second largest improvement was in their ability to pick up the ball (from 35.77 ± 16.09 to 59.86 ± 15.09). The U/8 age group showed the least progress in their ability to pass the ball (from 61.50 ± 20.93 to 72.77 ± 11.92). The U/9 age group made the most progress in their ability to catch the ball (from 55.65 ± 15.42 to

85.00±16.87), which was only slightly better than the improvement they have made in their ability to pick up the ball (from 40.77±15.57 to 70.03±14.66), while their ability in evasive running showed the least progress (from 57.45±13.45 to 65.10±12.84).

As mentioned previously, the control group showed varied results in that the U/7 age group made improvements in four of the six skills, while the U/8 age group made improvements in only three of the skills and the U/9 age group showed deterioration in all six skills. As is evident in Table 4.2, the U/7 age group showed the largest improvement in their ability in evasive running (from 44.52±19.70 to 57.04±11.53), and secondly in their tackling ability (from 47.94±19.04 to 58.08±16.80), while their ability to pick up the ball deteriorated the most (from 51.48±15.95 to 44.64±12.54). A similar trend was observed with the U/8 age group who also made the most progress in their ability in evasive running (from 48.27±19.38 to 59.26±10.84), and secondly in their tackling ability (from 49.27±23.80 to 54.42±17.47). However, the passing ability of the U/8 age group deteriorated the most (from 69.85±19.98 to 62.32±18.35). The U/9 age group displayed the most deterioration in their ability to pick up the ball (from 61.39±20.59 to 53.42±15.54), and then their ability to take the ball into contact (from 62.76±21.17 to 57.63±15.24).

In comparing the experimental group with the control group, the results show that the experimental group showed significant improvements ($p < 0.05$) in five of the six skills. These skills were passing, catching, picking up the ball, tackling and taking the ball into contact. Although the experimental group did display improvement in their ability in evasive running, the improvement was not significant ($p = 0.32$). The only skill that showed a significant difference between the three age groups was picking up the ball and the results are, therefore, presented per individual age group (Figure 4.3, Figure 4.4 and Figure 4.5). The rest of the skills did not show significant differences between the three age groups. Hence, the three age groups are grouped together to compare the experimental group with the control group.

Skill 1: Passing the ball

In Figure 4.1 it is clear that the experimental group showed a substantial improvement from the pre- to the mid-test (from 58.69±21.72 to 74.28±15.78), in passing the ball

and a minor further improvement from the mid- to the post-test (from 74.28 ± 15.78 to 74.42 ± 15.11). The control group showed a deterioration from the pre- to the mid-test (from 69.02 ± 21.20 to 65.28 ± 18.46), and then a slight improvement between the mid- and post-test (from 65.28 ± 18.46 to 65.46 ± 16.85). Within the experimental group, the age that displayed the largest improvement was the U/7 age group (from 48.04 ± 21.38 to 67.52 ± 18.60). No significant differences between the three age groups were found ($p=0.72$).

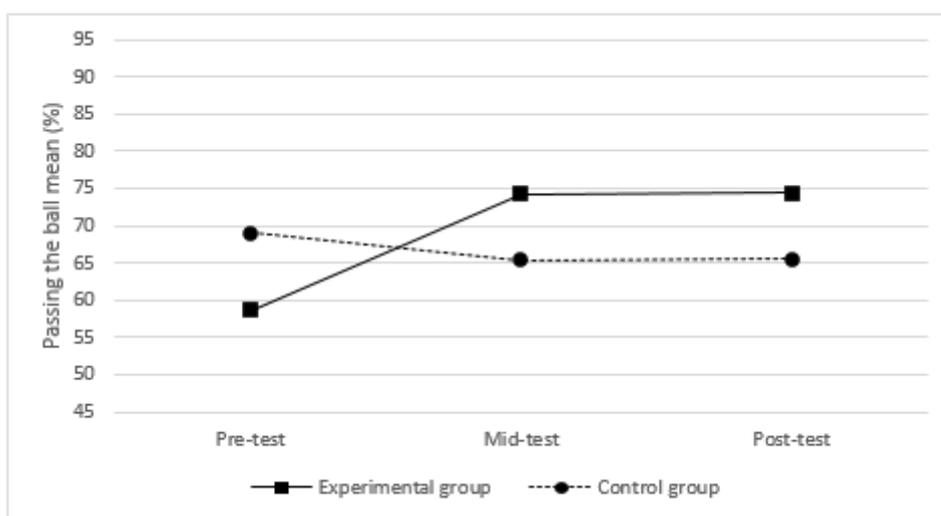


Figure 4.1: Comparison between control and experimental groups for passing the ball

Skill 2: Catching the ball

As shown in Figure 4.2, the experimental group displayed quite a large improvement from the pre- to the mid-test (from 55.95 ± 20.02 to 81.62 ± 15.94), and then deteriorated slightly from the mid- to the post-test (from 81.62 ± 15.94 to 78.08 ± 18.14). The control group initially worsened from the pre- to the mid-test (from 70.10 ± 21.54 to 63.89 ± 18.24), and thereafter improved from the mid- to the post-test (from 63.89 ± 18.24 to 70.96 ± 20.08). The biggest improvement was made by the U/9 age group of the experimental group (from 55.65 ± 15.42 to 85.00 ± 16.87). No significant differences between the three age groups were found ($p=0.09$).

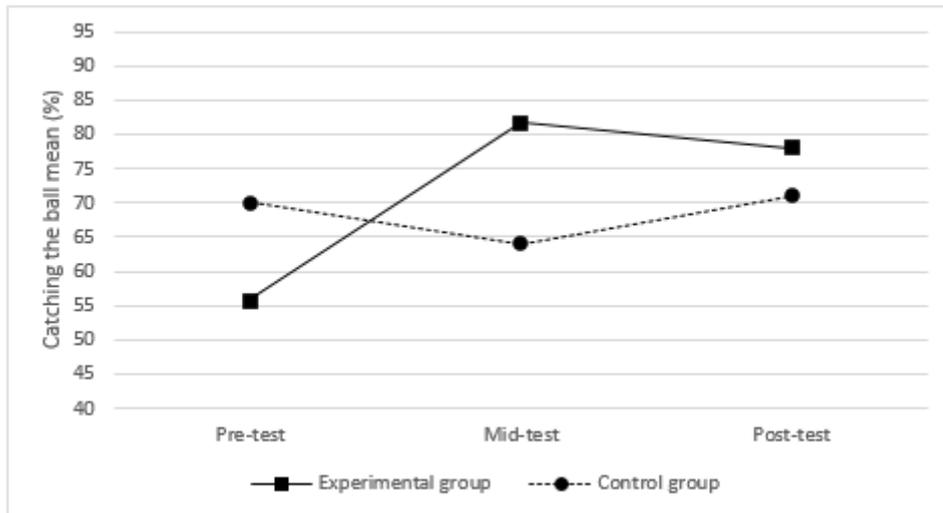


Figure 4.2: Comparison between control and experimental groups for catching the ball

Skill 3: Picking up the ball

There were significant differences between the three age groups ($p=0.04$). As can be seen in Figure 4.3, the U/7 age group of the experimental group showed a steady improvement from the pre- to the mid- to the post-test (from 36.78 ± 12.56 to 46.17 ± 13.58 to 53.19 ± 11.42). In contrast, the U/7 age group of the control group showed a virtually linear deterioration over the same period (from 51.48 ± 15.95 to 47.13 ± 12.82 to 44.64 ± 12.54). The U/9 age group of the experimental group exhibited the most progress from the pre- to the post-test (from 40.77 ± 15.57 to 70.03 ± 14.66).

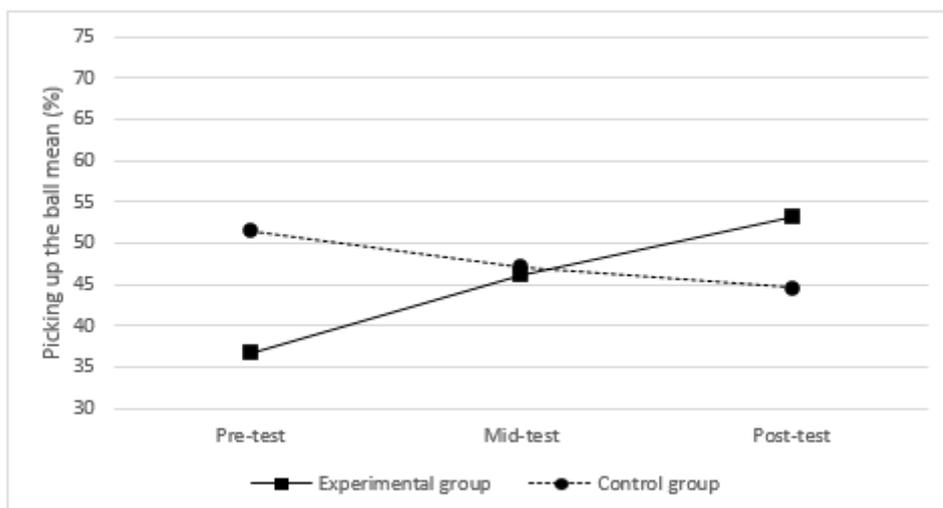


Figure 4.3: Comparison between the U/7 control and experimental groups for picking up the ball

Table 4.2: Comparison between control and experimental groups for different age groups and skills

Skills	Experimental group			Control group		
	Pre (n=84) M ± SD	Mid (n=68) M ± SD	Post (n=73) M ± SD	Pre (n=97) M ± SD	Mid (n=72) M ± SD	Post (n=68) M ± SD
Under 7						
Passing	48.04 ± 21.38	66.67 ± 17.09 [#]	67.52 ± 18.60 [^]	60.09 ± 22.41	61.25 ± 13.74	62.08 ± 14.07
Catching	51.85 ± 23.94	73.61 ± 20.06 [#]	66.67 ± 16.46 [^]	59.09 ± 24.86	58.33 ± 15.93	68.00 ± 18.43
Picking up	36.78 ± 12.56	46.17 ± 13.58 [#]	53.19 ± 11.42 [^]	51.48 ± 15.95	47.13 ± 12.82	44.64 ± 12.54 [^]
Side-step	51.78 ± 11.21	57.00 ± 9.60	59.71 ± 10.62 [^]	44.52 ± 19.70	55.25 ± 16.15 [#]	57.04 ± 11.53 [^]
Tackling	32.78 ± 20.32	51.00 ± 15.81 [#]	57.24 ± 17.21 [^]	47.94 ± 19.04	46.54 ± 16.27	58.08 ± 16.80 [*]
Contact	29.07 ± 16.65	53.89 ± 17.26 [#]	67.90 ± 13.54 ^{^*}	52.36 ± 23.55	44.04 ± 17.21 [#]	51.44 ± 19.19
Under 8						
Passing	61.50 ± 20.93	76.87 ± 15.55 [#]	72.77 ± 11.92 [^]	69.85 ± 19.98	60.33 ± 19.28 [#]	62.32 ± 18.35 [^]
Catching	60.58 ± 20.22	84.78 ± 14.58 [#]	79.55 ± 16.61 [^]	70.19 ± 17.35	64.29 ± 14.94	67.11 ± 14.56
Picking up	35.77 ± 16.09	54.30 ± 14.42 [#]	59.86 ± 15.09 [^]	52.58 ± 18.22	45.95 ± 10.62	46.42 ± 14.28
Side-step	49.85 ± 18.13	58.35 ± 14.82 [#]	66.77 ± 12.87 ^{^*}	48.27 ± 19.38	56.33 ± 12.89 [#]	59.26 ± 10.84 [^]
Tackling	41.58 ± 21.77	56.48 ± 17.28 [#]	61.45 ± 17.34 [^]	49.27 ± 23.80	52.43 ± 12.36	54.42 ± 17.47
Contact	23.08 ± 14.20	59.48 ± 13.20 [#]	69.91 ± 11.62 ^{^*}	49.88 ± 20.63	47.57 ± 15.12	52.58 ± 11.48
Under 9						
Passing	65.61 ± 19.65	77.15 ± 13.83 [#]	80.47 ± 12.30 [^]	76.21 ± 18.36	72.70 ± 19.63	71.46 ± 17.27
Catching	55.65 ± 15.42	84.26 ± 12.30 [#]	85.00 ± 16.87 [^]	79.61 ± 16.29	68.52 ± 21.48 [#]	77.08 ± 24.36
Picking up	40.77 ± 15.57	69.11 ± 14.99 [#]	70.03 ± 14.66 [^]	61.39 ± 20.59	54.30 ± 17.15 [#]	53.42 ± 15.54 [^]
Side-step	57.45 ± 13.45	59.11 ± 17.01	65.10 ± 12.84 ^{^*}	63.37 ± 13.08	56.48 ± 14.96 [#]	61.71 ± 10.76
Tackling	49.94 ± 19.78	68.00 ± 12.07 [#]	64.50 ± 18.90 [^]	64.53 ± 24.12	55.63 ± 22.60 [#]	59.71 ± 17.01
Contact	46.58 ± 15.58	68.11 ± 13.93 [#]	72.67 ± 9.64 [^]	62.76 ± 21.17	48.63 ± 14.32 [#]	57.63 ± 15.24 [*]

Note: SD – standard deviation, M – mean, [^]statistically significantly difference between pre and post, [#]statistically significantly difference between pre and mid, ^{*}statistically significantly difference between mid and post

As shown in Figure 4.4, the U/8 age group of the experimental group improved substantially (from 35.77 ± 16.09 to 54.30 ± 14.42), from the pre- to the mid-test and then showed further improvement from the mid- to the post-test (from 54.30 ± 14.42 to 59.86 ± 15.09). The U/8 age group of the control group displayed opposing results in that the group deteriorated from the pre- to the mid-test (from 52.58 ± 18.22 to 45.95 ± 10.62), and then improved slightly from the mid- to the post-test (from 45.95 ± 10.62 to 46.42 ± 14.28).

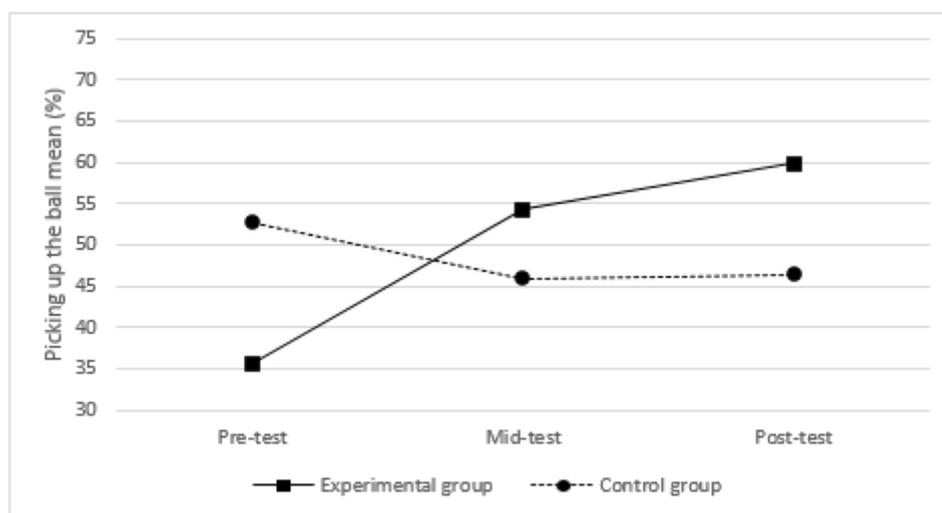


Figure 4.4: Comparison between the U/8 control and experimental groups for picking up the ball

Lastly, as is evident in Figure 4.5, the U/9 age groups displayed near similar results to the U/8 age groups. The U/9 age group of the experimental group improved considerably (from 40.77 ± 15.57 to 69.11 ± 14.99), from the pre- to the mid-test and then showed slight further improvement from the mid- to the post-test (from 69.11 ± 14.99 to 70.03 ± 14.66), whereas the U/9 age group of the control group worsened from the pre- to the mid- to the post-test (from 61.39 ± 20.59 to 54.30 ± 17.15 to 53.42 ± 15.54).

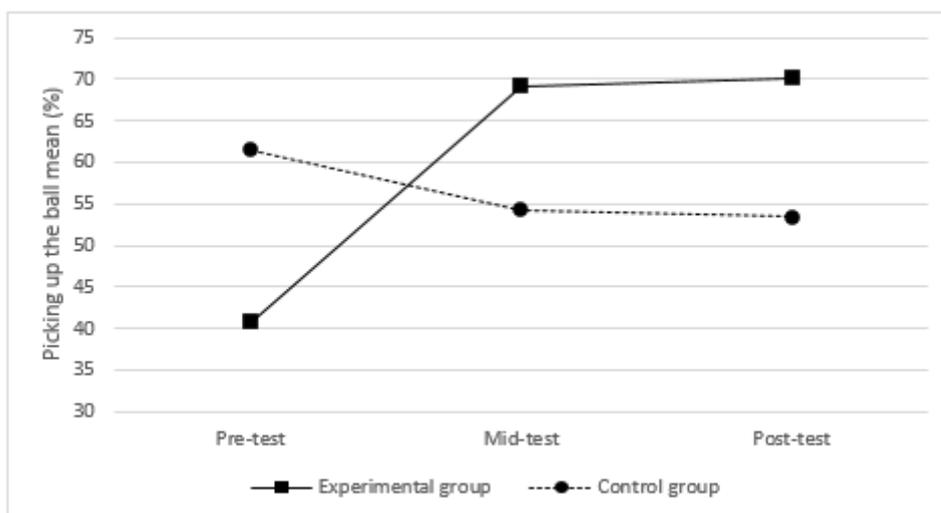


Figure 4.5: Comparison between the U/9 control and experimental groups for picking up the ball

Skill 4: Evasive running using the side-step

As shown in Figure 4.6, both the experimental group (from 53.27 ± 14.65 to 58.29 ± 14.44 to 64.05 ± 12.42), and the control group (from 52.91 ± 19.14 to 56.03 ± 14.62 to 59.31 ± 11.09) showed a steady improvement from the pre- to the mid-test and subsequently to the post-test. The biggest improvement was displayed by the experimental U/8 age group (from 49.85 ± 18.13 to 66.77 ± 12.87). There were no significant differences between the three age groups ($p=0.16$).

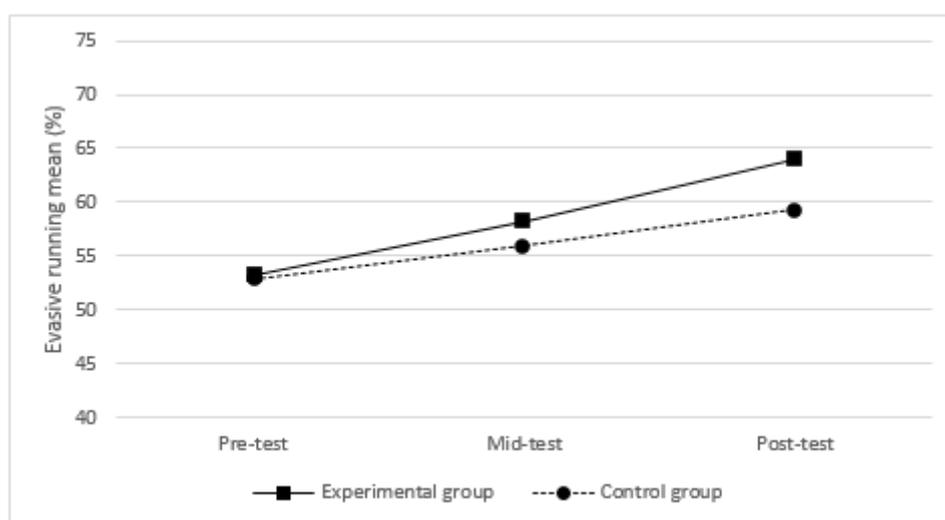


Figure 4.6: Comparison between control and experimental groups for evasive running

Skill 5: Tackling

As can be seen in Figure 4.7, the tackling abilities of both the experimental group (from 41.83 ± 21.56 to 61.49 ± 17.97), and the control group (from 54.79 ± 23.55 to 57.63 ± 16.94), showed improvements from the pre- to the post-test. Most of the experimental group's improvement occurred between the pre- and mid-test (from 41.83 ± 21.56 to 59.60 ± 16.42), while the control group deteriorated slightly over the same period (from 54.79 ± 23.55 to 51.67 ± 18.19), before showing improvement again. The largest improvement was made by the experimental group, and specifically the U/7 age group (from 32.78 ± 20.32 to 57.24 ± 17.21). No significant differences between the three age groups were found ($p=0.55$).

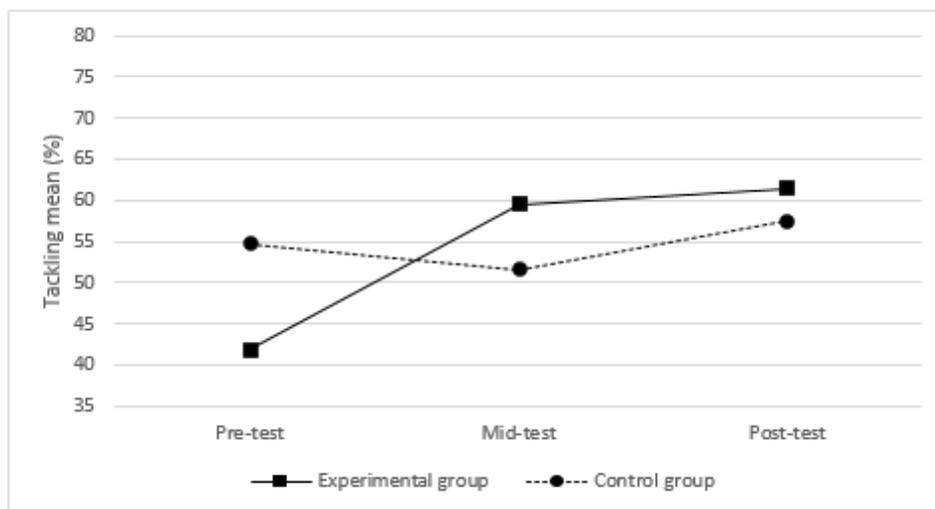


Figure 4.7: Comparison between control and experimental groups for tackling

Skill 6: Taking the ball into contact

As shown in Figure 4.8 the experimental group improved substantially (from 33.68 ± 18.43 to 61.43 ± 15.58), from the pre- to the mid-test and again showed improvement from the mid- to the post-test (from 61.43 ± 15.58 to 70.47 ± 11.48). The control group deteriorated from the pre- to the mid-test (from 55.77 ± 22.39 to 46.79 ± 15.48), and then improved from the mid- to the post-test (from 46.79 ± 15.48 to 53.94 ± 15.95). Particularly the U/8 age group of the experimental group displayed huge progress from the pre- to the post-test (from 23.08 ± 14.20 to 69.91 ± 11.62). There were no significant differences between the three age groups ($p=0.17$).

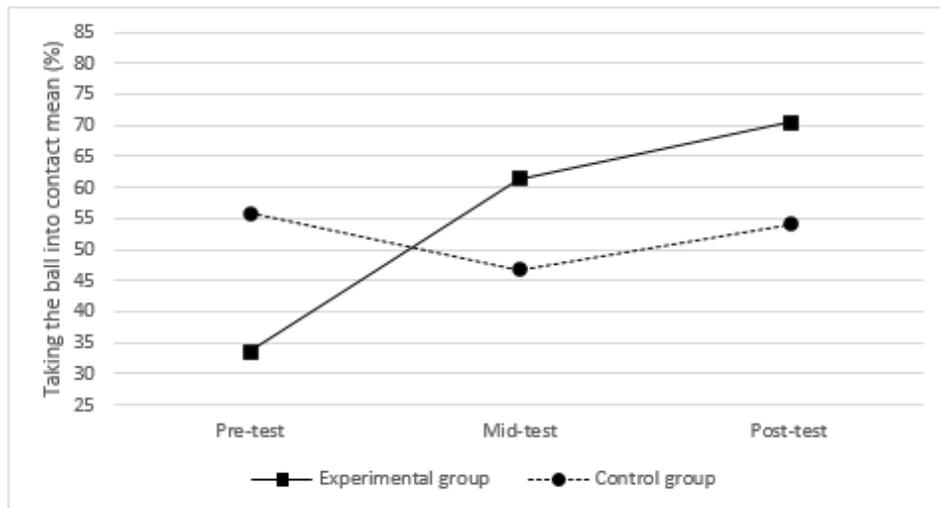


Figure 4.8: Comparison between control and experimental groups for taking the ball into contact

4.4. Discussion

The aim of the current study was to determine the effect of a 16-week individual skills intervention programme on the skill level of mini-rugby players in Western Cape Province, South Africa. Specifically, it set out to determine the effect of an intervention programme on the ability of mini-rugby players to pass the ball, catch the ball, pick up the ball, take the ball into contact, run evasively with the ball and to tackle front-on. The results show that all three age groups of the experimental group improved their ability in all six of the skills that were assessed and that the improvement was significant for five of the six skills, being passing the ball, catching the ball, picking up the ball, taking the ball into contact and tackling.

Skill 1: Passing the ball

The experimental group improved significantly from the pre- to the mid-test, with the U/7 age group in particular obtaining the most dramatic improvement. The results remained nearly constant from the mid- to the post-test. In contrast, the control group worsened from the pre- to the mid-test and then similarly remained virtually unchanged from the mid- to the post-test. It is interesting to note that the performance of both the experimental and control groups plateaued from the mid- to the post-test.

Skill 2: Catching the ball

The experimental group improved considerably from the pre- to the mid-test, with the U/9 age group improving by the largest margin. Unfortunately, from the mid- to the post-test, the performance of the experimental group declined slightly. The results of the control group displayed the opposite pattern, in that it deteriorated from the pre- to the mid-test, but then improved from the mid- to the post-test.

Skill 3: Picking up the ball

There were significant differences in the performance between the three age groups of the experimental group. The U/7 age group showed a practically linear improvement from the pre- to the mid- to the post-test, while the U/7 age group in the control group displayed a negative linear pattern over the same period. The U/8 age group of the experimental group improved considerably between the pre- and the mid-test, and thereafter showed further improvement between the mid- and the post-test. The U/8 age group of the control group initially deteriorated from the pre- to the mid-test and then improved slightly from the mid- to the post-test. The U/9 age groups obtained a similar pattern to the U/8 age groups, however, the improvement in performance of the U/9 experimental group was dramatic from the pre- to the mid-test, but then plateaued from the mid- to the post-test.

Skill 4: Evasive running using the side-step

The evasive running skill was the only skill in which the experimental group did not achieve a significant improvement, since the performance of the control group similarly improved from the pre- to the mid- to the post-test. Although both the experimental and the control groups had similar scores in the pre-test, the gains made by the experimental group between the pre- and the post-test was greater, with especially the U/8 age group improving considerably.

Skill 5: Tackling

The experimental group improved significantly between the pre- and the mid-test, with the U/7 age group in particular showing vast improvement. Thereafter, from the mid- to the post-test, the performance of the experimental group improved

slightly further. In contrast, the performance of the control group first declined from the pre- to the mid-test, but then improved from the mid- to the post-test.

Skill 6: Taking the ball into contact

Although the control group far outperformed the experimental group in the pre-test, the performance of the control group first declined from the pre- to the mid-test, after which it improved from the mid- to the post-test to finish on virtually the same level as in the pre-test, resulting in little change over the course of the season. In contrast, the experimental group improved dramatically from the pre- to the mid- to the post-test.

The results of this study indicate that an organised and substantiated practice plan can have a positive effect on the skill development of mini-rugby players. This is in accordance with previous studies showing a positive relationship between a well-structured practice session and optimum development of athletes (Stafford, 2005; Davids & Baker, 2007; Nash et al., 2011). The results also speak to the fact that the quality of practice is as important as the quantity thereof and that mere engagement in activities does not by itself lead to improvement in performance, but rather that appropriate practice is needed for learning and improvement to occur. This is consistent with studies highlighting the importance of the quality of a practice session (Rink, 2003; Brylinsky, 2010; Silverman, 2011). The skills intervention programme, which was utilised for the current study encompassed lead-up games, as well as age-appropriate activities with suitable progressions. These elements contribute greatly to the quality of such practice sessions (Stafford, 2005; Martens, 2012; Côté, Erickson, & Abernethy, 2013).

Another element that undoubtedly contributes to the quality of a practice session, is the ability of the coach (Cassidy, Jones, & Potrac, 2009; Nash et al., 2011; Vickers & Schoenstedt, 2011; Martens, 2012; Light, Evans, Harvey, & Hassanin, 2015; Martindale, 2015; Sproule, 2015; Gould, 2016), and the impact of effective coaches on the improvement of athletes' skill level have been illustrated by several studies (Côté & Gilbert, 2009; Nash et al., 2011; Chase & Martin, 2013). Considering previous studies that have highlighted the positive effect of coaching

education and training on coaching efficacy (Boardley, Kavussanu, & Ring, 2008; Chase & Martin, 2013), and taking into account the fact that the coaches of the experimental groups in the current study received training in the specific skills intervention programme, it could be argued that these coaches were effective in implementing the programme. Although the training was limited, it was very specific to the particular skills intervention programme, and thus, it could be expected to have been very effective in preparing the coaches for, and improving their competence in delivering the programme.

Practical application

The significant improvements displayed by the experimental group in the current study, have important practical implications for the design and structure of mini-rugby practice plans. The results show that a well-structured practice plan, like the skills intervention programme to which the players in the current study were exposed, is of vital importance and an obvious necessity to foster skill development. Such practice plans should incorporate age-appropriate activities with suitable progressions to allow the coach to alter the difficulty of the exercises from simple to more complex. The practice plan should also allow for the element of play and fun through the use of warmup and introductory games. It is furthermore essential to include and utilise the key factor analysis (KFA) for each of the various skills. These factors should be used for the step-by-step teaching of the particular skills to enhance learning by drawing the players' attention to specific aspects of the skill, as well as to correct errors. The necessity of appropriate education of coaches is clear and a detailed discussion on its significance to the skill development of athletes is beyond the scope of this study. Perhaps it is adequate to state that coaches will inherently influence the quality of programme delivery and will, therefore, greatly impact on the skill development of their athletes.

4.5. Conclusion

To our knowledge, the present study is the first to examine the effect of a skills intervention programme on the skill level of mini-rugby players. A major finding of this study was that the specific skills intervention programme contributed

significantly to the improved skill level of the mini-rugby players in question. In particular, the performance of the mini-rugby players improved significantly in the following skills: passing; catching; picking up the ball; tackling; and taking the ball into contact. Their performance in evasive running improved as well, however, the improvement was not significant, since the control group's performance in evasive running similarly improved. Except for the U/7 and U/8 age groups in evasive running, the three age groups of the control group scored higher than the experimental groups in all six skills in the pre-test. However, after being exposed to the skills intervention programme, the experimental group as a whole improved considerably from the pre- to the mid-tests. All three age groups of the experimental group also displayed a nett improvement from the pre- to the post-test in all six skills. This highlights the value of a well-structured and substantiated training programme, which incorporates age-appropriate activities, suitable progressions and the elements of play and fun, as well as the necessity of a coach who is trained in the specific training programme.

The current study was, however, not without limitations, mainly due to time constraints. Due to the large number of players that needed to be assessed and the limited time available for the tests, the players executed each skill only once during the pre-, mid- and post-tests, respectively. An average score over, for example, three trials would probably have produced a more accurate representation. This was more of a problem in the assessment of the players' ability to take the ball into contact and to tackle, since the players had to execute these particular movements only once, whereas with the rest of the skills they executed the movements more than once in each trial. Another limitation pertaining to time, is the fact that the schools, which were included in the study, only allowed one practice session of an hour per week, with the second session allocated to playing a match. With more practice time, the intervention programme could in all probability have been more advantageous.

Future studies should explore the findings from the current study further and specifically aim to assess the effect of more comprehensive training and education of the coaches, as well as a greater frequency of practice on the

effectiveness and success of such a skills intervention programme. This will help to further inform the design and implementation of future mini-rugby training programmes.

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4.7. Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE
RESEARCH

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5.1 Summary

Although a great deal of literature is available on quality coaching, no published literature could be found on the profile of mini-rugby coaches, particularly in a South African context. The same holds true for the effect of a well-structured skills intervention programme on the skill level of mini-rugby players. This study endeavoured to show the significance of skill development during the mini-rugby years, through a range of training activities and methodology that leads to the optimal development of mini-rugby players, as well as the necessity of good quality coaching to achieve this.

The first objective of this study was to compile a profile of mini-rugby coaches in the Western Cape Province, South Africa, with the aim of validating the need for the training of such coaches with the purpose of equipping them sufficiently to optimally develop the skills of mini-rugby players. The second objective of this study was to determine the effect of a 16-week individual skills intervention programme on the skill level of players in the Western Cape Province, South Africa, in an attempt to show what effect such a programme could have on the skill development of players and ultimately on the realisation of a player's potential.

This study was presented in four main parts, namely an introduction and problem statement (Chapter One), the literature review (Chapter Two), and two research articles (Chapters Three and Four). The article format of the thesis was approved by the Senate of Stellenbosch University and the two research articles were presented in accordance with the guidelines of the specific journals. Chapter One introduced the problem and stated the objectives of this study.

The literature review (Chapter Two) focused on rugby development and coaching to provide greater insight into the various aspects of rugby coaching and skills development. This chapter emphasised that appropriate training and support are essential if talented individuals are to fulfil their potential and coaches play a critical role in this process by providing high-quality training programmes to nurture the talent. The literature review showed that age-appropriate activities

and practices is essential to attract and retain and to optimally develop mini-rugby players. To effectively achieve that, a coach needs to exploit a suitable and substantiated coaching methodology and skills development model in order to provide a learning environment that is developmentally and instructionally appropriate.

Chapter Three is in a research article format entitled: A profile of mini-rugby coaches in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. The results indicate that a significant number of coaches did not have any experience in playing rugby (32%) or coaching mini-rugby (19%), and the majority of coaches (51%) did not have any form of rugby coaching education. The results also show that a significant number of the coaches did not feel efficacious in coaching mini-rugby (23%) and did not believe that they were optimally developing the skills of the mini-rugby players (29%). The findings highlighted an unfavourable situation where untrained and inexperienced individuals coach mini-rugby, which has important practical implications for rugby administrators, developers of coaching education courses, players, as well as the game itself.

Chapter Four is in a research article format entitled: The effect of a 16-week skills intervention programme on the skill level of mini-rugby players in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. The results show that the experimental group, after being exposed to the skills intervention programme for the duration of the primary school's rugby season, showed significant improvements ($p < 0.01$) in five of the six skills related to this study. These skills were passing, catching, picking up the ball, tackling and taking the ball into contact. Although the experimental group did display improvement in their ability in evasive running, the improvement was, however, not significant ($p = 0.32$). The control group displayed varied results in that the group as a whole deteriorated in three of the six skills and improved in the remaining three skills. None of the improvements, however, were significant ($p > 0.01$). Considering the results, it can be concluded that the specific skills intervention programme significantly enhanced the skill level of the mini-rugby players in this study.

In summary, the majority of mini-rugby coaches in the Western Cape Province, South Africa, are unqualified and a significant number of these coaches are inexperienced and do not feel efficacious in terms of rugby coaching. It can, therefore, be inferred that the coaching of mini-rugby is often insufficient and neglected. Furthermore, a well-structured and substantiated training programme significantly enhanced the skill level of the mini-rugby players in this study, which highlights the value of such a programme in the optimal development of mini-rugby players to facilitate the realisation of potential.

5.2 Conclusions

The conclusions drawn from this research study were presented in accordance to the set objectives in Chapter One.

Research Article 1: A profile of mini-rugby coaches in the Western Cape Province, South Africa

A major finding of this study was that the majority of coaches did not have any form of rugby coaching qualifications. When combined with the number of coaches who only had a World Rugby level one qualification, which does not require any assessment, it shows that an astounding 84% of the coaches in this study either did not have any form of coaching training or were not assessed on their knowledge of, or their ability to coach rugby. Another noteworthy finding was that several of the coaches did not feel sufficiently equipped to coach mini-rugby and felt that they were not optimally developing the skills of the mini-rugby players. These coaches indicated a lack of knowledge, understanding and confidence as reasons for their feelings of inefficacy and specifically pointed to a strong need for coaching education and training. Some of the coaches felt that they were doing the players a disservice and there were also coaches who indicated that they were only coaching mini-rugby, because they were forced to do so by their schools.

The lack of knowledge, coaching education and confidence as indicated by the coaches in this study, have important practical implications for rugby administrators and the developers of coaching education courses alike. The

results highlight an unfavourable situation where untrained and inexperienced individuals are coaching mini-rugby. One recommendation would be that all coaches must be educated and trained to coach rugby by at least completing the World Rugby level one coaching course, as well as the BokSmart workshop. Furthermore, a coaching education course designed specifically for mini-rugby will aid in preparing individuals to successfully coach mini-rugby and raise their confidence to do so. The content and structure of coaching education courses need to be reviewed to ensure it is pertinent to the coaches' needs. The content of such courses need to be representative of what occurs in reality, enabling the coaches to apply theory to practice. Less formal formats should be integrated into existing formal education programmes, allowing for active learning interactions such as mentoring and supervised field experiences.

Research Article 2: The effect of a 16-week skills intervention programme on the skill level of mini-rugby players in the Western Cape Province, South Africa

A major finding of this study was that the specific skills intervention programme significantly enhanced the skill level of the mini-rugby players in question. This highlights the value of a well-structured and substantiated training programme in the quest for athletes' skill development. The results of this study, furthermore, points to the fact that the quality of practice is as important as the quantity thereof, and that mere engagement in activities does not by itself lead to improvement in performance, but rather that appropriate practice is needed for learning and improvement to occur.

The significant improvements displayed by the experimental group in this study, have important practical implications for the design and structure of mini-rugby practice plans. The results show that a well-structured practice plan is of vital importance and an obvious necessity to foster skill development. Such practice plans should incorporate age-appropriate activities with suitable progressions to allow the coach to alter the difficulty of the exercises from simple to more complex. The practice plan should also allow for the element of play and fun through the use of warmup and introductory games. It is furthermore essential to

include and utilise the key factor analysis (KFA) for each of the various skills. These factors should be used for the step-by-step teaching of the particular skills to enhance learning by drawing the players' attention to specific aspects of the skill, as well as to correct errors. Furthermore, the ability of coaches will inherently influence the quality of programme delivery and will, therefore, greatly impact on the skill development of their athletes, which highlights the need for appropriate coaching education and training.

5.3 Limitations

The following limitations concerning this study can be indicated:

- The fact that the coaches' questionnaire was only available in hard copy and not online as well, could be considered a limitation of this study. If the coaches had an opportunity to complete the questionnaire electronically, the response rate could have been greater, in which case a more representative profile of the mini-rugby coaches in question could have been produced.
- Due to the large number of players that needed to be assessed and the limited time available for the testing, the players executed each skill only once during the pre-, mid- and post-tests, respectively. An average score over, for example, three trials would probably have produced a more accurate representation. This was more of a problem in the assessment of the players' ability to take the ball into contact and to tackle, since the players had to execute these particular movements only once, whereas with the rest of the skills they executed the movements more than once in each trial.
- Due to time constraints, the training given to the coaches to prepare them to implement the programme, was extremely condensed. A longer programme over two or three sessions would surely have been more beneficial.
- The schools which were included in the study, only allowed one practice session of an hour per week, with the second session allocated to playing a match. With more practice time, the intervention programme could in all probability have been more advantageous.
- The design of the testing protocol to assess the players' ability to side-step could also be considered a limitation of this study. This was the only skill that did not show a significant improvement. Upon reflection, the particular test

protocol was possibly too complex for the mini-rugby players, since the test involved three different components which were assessed. A better option would have been to isolate the specific movement of the side-step.

5.4 Future research

The results from this study accentuated the importance of further research on the profile of mini-rugby coaches in the other provincial rugby unions to ascertain if there is a similar trend nationally. Research is also needed to determine what specific content of coaching education courses would accurately address the coaches' needs and make them feel more efficacious to coach mini-rugby. This information would enable the developers of coaching education courses to review the content and structure of the courses to ensure it is pertinent to the coaches' needs. Additionally, future studies should aim to assess the effect of more comprehensive training and education of coaches, as well as a greater frequency of practice on the effectiveness and success of a skills intervention programme. This will help to further inform the design and implementation of future mini-rugby training programmes.

APPENDIX A

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3.1 Publication ethics

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4. Preparing your manuscript

4.1 Word processing formats

Preferred formats for the text and tables of your manuscript are Word DOC, RTF, XLS. LaTeX files are also accepted. The text should be double-spaced throughout and with a minimum of 3cm for left and right hand margins and 5cm at head and foot. Text should be standard 10 or 12 point. Word and (La)Tex templates are available on the [Manuscript Submission Guidelines](#) page of our Author Gateway.

4.2 Artwork, figures and other graphics

For guidance on the preparation of illustrations, pictures and graphs in electronic format, please visit SAGE's [Manuscript Submission Guidelines](#). Figures supplied in colour will appear in colour online regardless of whether or not these illustrations are reproduced in colour in the printed version. For specifically requested colour reproduction in print, you will receive information regarding the costs from SAGE after receipt of your accepted article.

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This journal is able to host additional materials online (e.g. datasets, podcasts, videos, images, etc) alongside the full-text of the article. These will be subjected to peer-review alongside the article. For more information please refer to our guidelines on submitting supplementary files, which can be found within our [Manuscript Submission Guidelines](#) page.

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If you use [EndNote](#) to manage references, you can download the [SAGE Harvard EndNote output file](#) [OR] the [SAGE Vancouver EndNote output file](#)

4.6 English language editing services

Authors seeking assistance with English language editing, translation, or figure and manuscript formatting to fit the journal's specifications should

consider using SAGE Language Services. Visit [SAGE Language Services](#) on our Journal Author Gateway for further information.

5. Submitting your manuscript

5.1 How to submit your manuscript

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IMPORTANT: Please check whether you already have an account in the system before trying to create a new one. If you have reviewed or authored for the journal in the past year it is likely that you will have had an account created. For further guidance on submitting your manuscript online please visit ScholarOne Online Help.

5.2 Cover letter, title, keywords and abstracts

Please supply a cover letter, title, short title, an abstract and keywords to accompany your article. The title, keywords and abstract are key to ensuring readers find your article online through online search engines such as Google. Please refer to the information and guidance on how best to title your article, write your abstract and select your keywords by visiting the SAGE Journal Author Gateway for guidelines on [How to Help Readers Find Your Article Online](#)

5.3 Corresponding author contact details

Provide full contact details for the corresponding author including email, mailing address and telephone numbers. Academic affiliations are required for all co-authors. These details should be presented separately to the main text of the article to facilitate anonymous peer review.

6. On acceptance and publication

6.1 SAGE Production

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6.2 Access to your published article

SAGE provides authors with online access to their final article.

6.3 Online First publication

Online First allows final revision articles (completed articles in queue for assignment to an upcoming issue) to be published online prior to their inclusion in a final journal issue which significantly reduces the lead time between submission and publication. For more information please visit our [Online First Fact Sheet](#)

7. Further information

Any correspondence, queries or additional requests for information on the manuscript submission process should be sent to the *Perceptual and Motor Skills* editorial office as follows:

J.D. Ball, Ph.D., ABPP
Eastern Virginia Medical School
ball@emeritus.evms.edu

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM - COACHES



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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

COACHING AND SKILL PROFILES OF MINI-RUGBY COACHES AND PLAYERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

You are asked to give consent to participate in a research study conducted by Jacques Basson, from the Department of Sport Science at Stellenbosch University. This research study will contribute to a thesis for a Master's Degree. You are asked to participate in this study, because you coach mini-rugby in the Western Province.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Due to a lack of qualified, experienced rugby coaches in Western Cape primary schools, the coaching of mini-rugby is often insufficient and neglected. However, this study will attempt to show the significance of skill development during the mini-rugby years, and therefore the necessity of good quality coaching to achieve this. This study will also endeavour to show a range of training activities and methodology that will lead to the optimal development of mini-rugby players to facilitate the realisation of potential. The specific purpose of this survey is to establish the profile of the typical mini-rugby coach in the Western Province.

2. PROCEDURES

If you give consent to participate in this study, your involvement in the research study will be as follows:

The questionnaire, consisting of 15 questions, will be sent to the school or club where you coach mini-rugby. You have to answer all the questions by selecting only one of the possible responses. The questionnaire should then be returned to the researcher.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no risks or discomforts associated with the completion of the questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of only 15 questions. Therefore, very

little time investment is however required to complete and return the questionnaire.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

There are no benefits associated with participating in the survey. Nevertheless, by participating in the survey, in particular the last two questions, might serve a self-evaluative function. This could possibly lead to the need for further development of the coaches.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There will be no payment for completing the questionnaire.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

There is no indication of your identity required when completing the questionnaire, thus anonymity will be ensured.

If the results of this study, or any other information whatsoever, is published or made available to any other party, e.g. the Western Province Rugby Union (WPRU), the identities of the participants will not be relevant, and will be kept confidential.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose to be part of this study or not. If you do not give your consent and subsequently do not complete the questionnaire, there will be no consequences of any kind.

The researcher may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. Any questionnaires returned after the two-week deadline, or spoilt questionnaires, in other words no response given or more than one response given, will be excluded.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Principal researcher: Mr Jacques Basson
074 203 2424
minorugbyproject@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr Wilbur Kraak

021 808 2379
kjw@sun.ac.za

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue your participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims or rights because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding the rights of a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

The information above was explained to me by Jacques Basson in English and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent to take part in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of participant

Signature of participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [name of the participant]. He/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX D

INGELIGTE TOESTEMMINGSVORM - AFRIGTERS



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UNIVERSITEIT STELLENBOSCH TOESTEMMING VIR DEELNAME AAN NAVORSING

AFRIGTING- EN VAARDIGHEIDSPROFIELE VAN MINI-RUGBY AFRIGTERS EN SPELERS IN DIE WES-KAAP, SUID-AFRIKA

U word gevra om toestemming te gee om deel te neem aan 'n navorsingstudie uitgevoer deur Jacques Basson, van die Departement Sportwetenskap aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch. Hierdie navorsingstudie sal bydra tot 'n tesis vir 'n Magistergraad. U word gevra om deel te neem aan hierdie studie, aangesien u mini-rugby afrig in die Westelike Provinsie.

1. DOEL VAN DIE STUDIE

As gevolg van 'n gebrek aan gekwalifiseerde, ervare rugby afrigters in Wes-Kaapse primêre skole, is die afrigting van mini-rugby dikwels onvoldoende en verwaarloos. Hierdie studie sal egter poog om die belangrikheid van vaardigheidsontwikkeling in die mini-rugby jare te toon en dus die noodsaaklikheid van goeie gehalte afrigting om dit te bereik. Hierdie studie sal ook poog om 'n verskeidenheid van oefen aktiwiteite en metodologie te wys wat sal lei tot die optimale ontwikkeling van mini-rugby spelers om die verwesenliking van potensiaal te fasiliteer. Die spesifieke doel van hierdie studie is om die profiel van die tipiese mini-rugby afrigter in die Westelike Provinsie vas te stel.

2. PROSEDURES

Indien u toestemming gee om deel te neem aan hierdie studie, sal u betrokkenheid by die navorsingstudie soos volg wees:

Die vraelys, wat bestaan uit 15 vrae, sal gestuur word aan die skool of klub waar u mini-rugby afrig. U moet al die vrae beantwoord deur slegs een van die moontlike antwoorde te kies. Die vraelys moet dan aan die navorser teruggestuur word.

3. POTENSIËLE RISIKO'S EN ONGEMAK

Daar is geen risiko's of ongemak wat verband hou met die voltooiing van die vraelys nie. Die vraelys bestaan uit slegs 15 vrae. Dus word baie min tydsbesteding egter benodig om die vraelys te voltooi en terug te stuur.

4. POTENSIËLE VOORDELE VIR DEELNEMERS EN/OF DIE SAMELEWING

Daar is geen voordele wat verband hou met die voltooiing van die vraelys nie. Tog kan die voltooiing van die vraelys, in besonder die laaste twee vrae, 'n self-evaluerende funksie dien. Dit kan moontlik by afrigters aanleiding gee tot 'n behoefte vir verdere ontwikkeling.

5. BETALING VIR DEELNAME

Daar sal geen betaling vir die voltooiing van die vraelys wees nie.

6. VERTROULIKHEID

Enige inligting wat verkry word in verband met hierdie studie en wat met u geïdentifiseer kan word, sal vertroulik bly en sal slegs bekend gemaak word met u toestemming of soos deur die wet vereis.

Geen aanduiding van u identiteit word vereis wanneer die vraelys voltooi word nie, dus sal anonimiteit verseker word.

Indien die resultate van hierdie studie, of enige ander inligting hoegenaamd gepubliseer of beskikbaar gestel word aan enige ander party, byvoorbeeld die Westelike Provinsie Rugbyunie (WPRU), sal die identiteit van die deelnemers nie relevant wees nie, en sal vertroulik gehou word.

7. DEELNAME EN ONTTREKING

U kan kies om deel te wees van hierdie studie of nie. Indien u nie toestemming gee en gevolglik nie die vraelys voltooi nie, sal daar geen gevolge van enige aard wees nie.

Die navorser kan u van hierdie navorsing onttrek indien omstandighede sodoende daartoe aanleiding gee. Enige vraelyste wat na afloop van die twee-week sperdatum teruggestuur word, of bedorwe vraelyste, met ander woorde geen antwoord gegee of meer as een antwoord gegee, sal uitgesluit word.

8. IDENTIFIKASIE VAN NAVORSERS

Indien u enige vrae of bekommernis oor die navorsing het, voel asseblief vry om die volgende persone te kontak:

Hoofnavorser: Mnr. Jacques Basson
074 203 2424
minorugbyproject@gmail.com

Studieleier: Dr. Wilbur Kraak
021 808 2379
kjw@sun.ac.za

9. REGTE VAN PROEFPERSONE

U kan u toestemming te eniger tyd onttrek en u deelname staak sonder enige straf. U hef geensins enige wetlike eise of regte op as gevolg van u deelname aan hierdie navorsingsprojek nie. Indien u vrae het oor die regte van 'n proefpersoon, kontak Me Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] by die Afdeling Navorsingsontwikkeling.

HANDTEKENING VAN DEELNEMER

Die inligting hierbo is aan my verduidelik deur Jacques Basson in Afrikaans en ek is hierdie taal magtig of dit is bevredigend aan my vertaal. Ek is die geleentheid gegee om vrae te vra en hierdie vrae is tot my bevrediging beantwoord.

Ek gee hiermee toestemming om deel te neem aan hierdie studie. Ek is 'n afskrif van hierdie vorm gegee.

Naam van deelnemer

Handtekening van deelnemer

Datum

HANDTEKENING VAN NAVORSER

Ek verklaar dat ek die inligting wat in hierdie dokument vervat is aan _____ [naam van die deelnemer] verduidelik het. Hy/sy was aangemoedig en oorgenoeg tyd gegee om my enige vrae te vra. Hierdie gesprek is in Afrikaans gevoer en geen vertaler is gebruik nie.

Handtekening van navorser

Datum

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT FORM - PARENTS



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STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

COACHING AND SKILL PROFILES OF MINI-RUGBY COACHES AND PLAYERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

You are asked to give consent that your child may participate in a research study conducted by Jacques Basson, from the Department of Sport Science at Stellenbosch University. This research study will contribute to a thesis for a Master's Degree. Your child was selected as a possible participant in this study, because he/she participates in mini-rugby at one of the schools that were chosen for this study.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Due to a lack of qualified, experienced rugby coaches in Western Cape primary schools, the coaching of mini-rugby is often insufficient and neglected. However, this study will attempt to show the significance of skill development during the mini-rugby years, and therefore the necessity of good quality coaching to achieve this. This study will also endeavour to show a range of training activities and methodology that will lead to the optimal development of mini-rugby players to facilitate the realisation of potential.

2. PROCEDURES

If you give consent that your child may participate in this study, his/her involvement in the research study will be as follows:

The mini-rugby teams at the various schools that were chosen for this study will be randomly assigned to the control group or the experimental group.

All the mini-rugby players, from both the control and experimental groups, will be tested on six different rugby skills. The players' ability in passing and catching of the ball, picking up the ball, evasive running using the side-step, the side-on tackle, and taking the ball into contact will be assessed. The test will be an observation of each player while he/she perform the particular skill in a controlled and non-competitive environment. They do not have to prepare for the test. The

same assessment will be conducted three times during the study. Firstly, a pre-test will be done at the start of the rugby season to determine the skill level of each player. Then a middle test will be done after the midyear holidays to determine each player's progress, if any. Lastly, a post-test will be performed at the end of the season to reassess the skill level of each player, and to then compare this with the pre-test results.

If your child is assigned to the control group, the three tests will be his/her only contact with the research, and he/she will continue with their normal practices with their usual coach as appointed by their school. However, if your child is assigned to the experimental group, his/her team will follow an intervention programme of 16 weeks. The experimental group will be coached, at their various schools, by their own coaches who will have been trained in terms of the relevant intervention programme and will have BokSmart accreditation. This intervention programme will be during their normal rugby practices, but they will be coached using the proposed skills programme and methodology. The aim of this proposed skills programme and methodology is to optimally develop the skills of each player.

To prevent any inconvenience to you, the skill assessments as well as the intervention programme (i.e. the rugby practices) will be done during the regular times and at the regular locations. Your child's involvement in the research study will be limited to the rugby season for primary schools, which are the second and third school terms. Therefore, no additional time investment from you or your child is required.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The players will be exposed to physical contact and exercise, which are inherent to the sport of rugby. However, there are no foreseeable risks, discomforts, or inconveniences specifically related to the study. The experimental group will be coached using the proposed skills programme, which is based on sound and safe principles. It cannot be guaranteed that no injuries will occur. However, in the unlikely event of serious injuries occurring, the experimental group coaches should be able to handle the injuries, since they will be BokSmart accredited.

Your child might feel a bit scared during the assessments, since they usually perceive tests as threatening. However, the researcher will do his utmost to put them at ease.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The participants who will be part of the experimental group will be exposed to a particular skills programme and coaching methods through which their skills will hopefully be developed optimally.

If this research study shows that the skills programme does in fact lead to the optimal development of mini-rugby players' skills, it will be beneficial to the greater rugby community.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There will be no payment for your child's involvement in the research study.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

The identities of the participants who will take part in the study will not be made available since it will not be relevant. The names of these players will only be used for administration purposes, i.e. the testing of the players and to control their attendance, but their identities will not be relevant in terms of the results of the research and will therefore be kept confidential.

If the results of this study, or any other information whatsoever, is published or made available to any other party, e.g. the Western Province Rugby Union (WPRU), the identities of the participants will not be relevant, and again will be kept confidential.

With your permission, the three assessment sessions will be video recorded to provide evidence of each player's skill assessment, and to facilitate the accurate and just assessment of their skills. These recordings will strictly be used for educational purposes and only the researcher and his study supervisor will have access to it. All recordings will be erased at the conclusion of this particular study.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether your child will be part of this study or not. If you do give your consent for your child to take part, you may withdraw him/her at any time without consequences of any kind.

The researcher may withdraw your child from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. Participants who miss any of the three skill assessments, will be excluded from the study. In addition, a participant in the experimental group who misses four or more practice sessions during the intervention programme will also be excluded.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Principal researcher: Mr Jacques Basson
 074 203 2424
 minirugbyproject@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr Wilbur Kraak
021 808 2379
kjw@sun.ac.za

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue your child's participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims or rights because of your child's participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding the rights of a research subject, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT'S PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN

The information above was explained to me by Jacques Basson in English and I am in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to me. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent that my child may participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Child (Participant)

Name of Parent / Legal Guardian

Signature of Parent / Legal Guardian

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [name of the participant] and/or his/her parent/legal guardian _____ [name of the parent/legal guardian]. He/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX F

INGELIGTE TOESTEMMINGSVORM - OUERS



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UNIVERSITEIT STELLENBOSCH TOESTEMMING VIR DEELNAME AAN NAVORSING

AFRIGTING- EN VAARDIGHEIDSPROFIELE VAN MINI-RUGBY AFRIGTERS EN SPELERS IN DIE WES-KAAP, SUID-AFRIKA

U word gevra om toestemming te gee dat u kind mag deelneem aan 'n navorsingstudie uitgevoer deur Jacques Basson, van die Departement Sportwetenskap aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch. Hierdie navorsingstudie sal bydra tot 'n tesis vir 'n Magistergraad. U kind is gekies as 'n moontlike deelnemer in hierdie studie, aangesien hy/sy deelneem aan mini-rugby by een van die skole wat gekies is vir hierdie studie.

1. DOEL VAN DIE STUDIE

As gevolg van 'n gebrek aan gekwalifiseerde, ervare rugby afrigters in Wes-Kaapse primêre skole, is die afrigting van mini-rugby dikwels onvoldoende en verwaarloos. Hierdie studie sal egter poog om die belangrikheid van vaardigheidsontwikkeling in die mini-rugby jare te toon en dus die noodsaaklikheid van goeie gehalte afrigting om dit te bereik. Hierdie studie sal ook poog om 'n verskeidenheid van oefen aktiwiteite en metodologie te wys wat sal lei tot die optimale ontwikkeling van mini-rugby spelers om die verwesenliking van potensiaal te fasiliteer.

2. PROSEDURES

Indien u toestemming gee dat u kind mag deelneem aan hierdie studie, sal sy/haar betrokkenheid by die navorsingstudie soos volg wees:

Die mini-rugby spanne by die onderskeie skole wat gekies is vir hierdie studie sal lukraak aan die kontrole groep of die eksperimentele groep toegewys word.

Al die mini-rugby spelers, van beide die kontrole- en eksperimentele groepe, sal getoets word oor ses verskillende rugbyvaardighede. Die spelers se vermoëns in die aangee en vang van die bal, die optel van die bal, ontwykende hardloop deur middel van die systap, die duikslag van die kant af, en om die bal in kontak in te neem sal beoordeel word. Die toets sal 'n observasie van elke speler wees, terwyl

hy/sy die spesifieke vaardigheid in 'n beheerde en nie-mededingende omgewing uitvoer. Hulle hoef glad nie voor te berei vir die toets nie. Dieselfde assessering sal drie keer gedurende die studie uitgevoer word. Eerstens sal 'n voortoets gedoen word aan die begin van die rugbyseisoen om die vaardigheidsvlak van elke speler te bepaal. Dan sal 'n middeltoets gedoen word na afloop van die midjaarkvakansie om elke speler se vordering, indien enige, te bepaal. Laastens sal 'n natoets aan die einde van die seisoen uitgevoer word om weer die vaardigheidsvlak van elke speler te bepaal, en om dit dan met die voortoets uitslae te vergelyk.

Indien u kind toegewys word aan die kontrole groep, sal die drie toetse sy/haar enigste kontak met die navorsing wees, en hy/sy sal voortgaan met hulle normale oefeninge met hulle gewone afrigter soos aangewys deur hulle skool. Indien u kind egter toegewys word aan die eksperimentele groep, sal sy/haar span 'n intervensieprogram van 16 weke volg. Die eksperimentele groep sal afgerig word, by hulle onderskeie skole, deur hul eie afrigters wat opgelei sal word in terme van die bepaalde intervensieprogram en ook oor BokSmart akkreditasie beskik. Hierdie intervensieprogram sal tydens hul normale rugby oefeninge plaasvind, maar hulle sal afgerig word deur die voorgestelde vaardigheidsprogram en metodologie te gebruik. Die doel van hierdie voorgestelde vaardigheidsprogram en metodologie is om die vaardighede van elke speler optimaal te ontwikkel.

Om enige ongerief vir u te verhoed, sal die vaardigheidstoetse asook die intervensieprogram (dit wil sê die rugby oefeninge) gedoen word tydens die gereelde tye en op die gereelde plekke. U kind se betrokkenheid in die navorsingstudie sal beperk word tot die rugbyseisoen vir primêre skole, wat die tweede en derde kwartale is. Geen bykomende vereistes van tydbesteding deur u of u kind is dus nodig nie.

3. POTENSIËLE RISIKO'S EN ONGEMAK

Die spelers sal aan fisieke kontak en oefening blootgestel word, wat inherent is tot die sport van rugby. Daar is egter geen voorsienbare risiko's, ongemak of ongerief spesifiek met betrekking tot die studie nie. Die eksperimentele groep sal afgerig word deur die voorgestelde vaardigheidsprogram te gebruik, wat gebaseer is op gesonde en veilige beginsels. Dit kan nie gewaarborg word dat geen beserings sal voorkom nie. In die onwaarskynlike geval dat ernstige beserings wel voorkom, behoort die eksperimentele groep afrigters egter die beserings te kan hanteer aangesien hulle BokSmart akkreditasie sal hê.

U kind mag dalk 'n bietjie bang voel tydens die assesserings, aangesien hulle gewoonlik toetse as bedreigend ervaar. Die navorser sal egter sy uiterste bes doen om hulle gerus te stel.

4. POTENSIËLE VOORDELE VIR DEELNEMERS EN/OF DIE SAMELEWING

Die deelnemers wat deel van die eksperimentele groep gaan wees, sal blootgestel word aan 'n spesifieke vaardigheidsprogram en afrigtingsmetodes waardeur hul vaardighede hopelik optimaal ontwikkel sal word.

Indien hierdie navorsing toon dat die vaardigheidsprogram in werklikheid lei tot die optimale ontwikkeling van mini-rugby spelers se vaardighede, sal dit tot voordeel van die groter rugbygemeenskap wees.

5. BETALING VIR DEELNAME

Daar sal geen betaling vir u kind se betrokkenheid in die navorsingstudie wees nie.

6. VERTROULIKHEID

Enige inligting wat verkry word in verband met hierdie studie en wat met u geïdentifiseer kan word, sal vertroulik bly en sal slegs bekend gemaak word met u toestemming of soos deur die wet vereis.

Die identiteit van die deelnemers wat gaan deelneem aan die studie sal nie beskikbaar gemaak word nie, aangesien dit nie relevant sal wees nie. Die name van hierdie spelers sal slegs gebruik word vir administratiewe doeleindes, dit wil sê die toetsing van die spelers en om hul bywoning te kontroleer, maar hul identiteite sal nie relevant wees in terme van die resultate van die navorsing nie, en sal dus vertroulik gehou word.

Indien die resultate van hierdie studie, of enige ander inligting hoegenaamd gepubliseer of beskikbaar gestel word aan enige ander party, byvoorbeeld die Westelike Provinsie Rugbyunie (WPRU), sal die identiteit van die deelnemers nie relevant wees nie, en sal weereens vertroulik gehou word.

Met u toestemming, sal die drie assesseringsessies op video opgeneem word om bewyse van elke speler se vaardigheidsassessering te verskaf, en om die akkurate en korrekte assessering van hul vaardighede te fasiliteer. Hierdie opnames sal streng vir opvoedkundige doeleindes gebruik word en slegs die navorser en sy studieleier sal daartoe toegang hê. Alle opnames sal aan die einde van hierdie spesifieke studie uitgewis word.

7. DEELNAME EN ONTTREKING

U kan kies of u kind deel van hierdie studie gaan wees of nie. As u wel toestemming gee vir u kind om deel te neem, kan u hom/haar te eniger tyd onttrek sonder gevolge van enige aard.

Die navorser kan u kind van hierdie navorsing onttrek indien omstandighede sodoende daartoe aanleiding gee. Deelnemers wat enige van die drie vaardigheidsassesserings mis, sal uit die studie uitgesluit word. Daarbenewens sal 'n deelnemer in die eksperimentele groep wat vier of meer oefensessies tydens die intervensieprogram mis, ook uitgesluit word.

8. IDENTIFIKASIE VAN NAVORSERS

Indien u enige vrae of bekommernis oor die navorsing het, voel asseblief vry om die volgende persone te kontak:

Hoofnavorser: Mnr. Jacques Basson
074 203 2424
minirugbyproject@gmail.com

Studieleier: Dr. Wilbur Kraak
021 808 2379
kjw@sun.ac.za

9. REGTE VAN PROEFPERSONE

U kan u toestemming te eniger tyd onttrek en u kind se deelname staak sonder enige straf. U hef geensins enige wetlike eise of regte op as gevolg van u kind se deelname aan hierdie navorsingsprojek nie. Indien u vrae het oor die regte van 'n proefpersoon, kontak Me Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] by die Afdeling Navorsingsontwikkeling.

HANDTEKENING VAN DEELNEMER SE OUER/WETTIGE VOOG

Die inligting hierbo is aan my verduidelik deur Jacques Basson in Afrikaans en ek is hierdie taal magtig of dit is bevredigend aan my vertaal. Ek is die geleentheid gegee om vrae te vra en hierdie vrae is tot my bevrediging beantwoord.

Ek gee hiermee toestemming dat my kind mag deelneem aan hierdie studie. Ek is 'n afskrif van hierdie vorm gegee.

Naam van Kind (Deelnemer)

Naam van Ouer/Wettige Voog

Handtekening van Ouer/Wettige Voog

Datum

HANDTEKENING VAN NAVORSER

Ek verklaar dat ek die inligting wat in hierdie dokument vervat is aan _____ [naam van die deelnemer] en/of sy/haar ouer/wettige voog _____ [naam van die ouer/wettige voog] verduidelik het. Hy/sy was aangemoedig en oorgenoeg tyd gegee om my enige vrae te vra. Hierdie gesprek is in Afrikaans gevoer en geen vertaler is gebruik nie.

Handtekening van navorser

Datum

APPENDIX G

ASSENT FORM



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND ASSENT FORM



TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: Coaching and skill profiles of mini-rugby coaches and players in the Western Cape, South Africa

NAME OF RESEARCHER: Jacques Basson

ADDRESS: 5 Coral Crescent
Langeberg Ridge
Durbanville, 7550

CONTACT NUMBER: 074 203 2424

What is research?

Research is something we do to find new knowledge about the way things (and people) work. We use research projects or studies to help us find out more about children and teenagers and the things that affect their lives, their schools, their families and their health. We do this to try and make the world a better place!

What is this research project all about?

This project is about mini-rugby and the development of the mini-rugby players. I want to see how mini-rugby players develop if they are practising in a certain way.

Why have I been invited to take part in this research project?

You have been invited to take part in this project, because it is all about mini-rugby, and you are a mini-rugby player.

Who is doing the research?

My name is Jacques Basson, and I like rugby very much. I am doing this project as part of my studies, because I want to see if I can make mini-rugby a little bit better.

What will happen to me in this study?

During the rugby season, you will go to rugby practices as you always do, but the coach will be asked to coach you in a specific way. You will also be asked to perform three tests, but these are nice tests, because you don't have to study for them. In these tests you will be asked to do some rugby skills, like passing and catching a ball. The three tests will be the same each time and will be done at the beginning of the season, in the middle, and at the end of the season. Being part of this study won't mean that you need to practice more, because everything will be done in your normal rugby practice times.

Can anything bad happen to me?

Not really. You might feel a bit scared during the tests, but you don't have to, because you will just be doing some rugby skills, and that is fun. We will be doing normal rugby activities which include contact and exercise, so sometimes you might get tired or hurt because of that. Your coach will be well trained and will know what to do to help you if anything does happen.

Can anything good happen to me?

I really hope so, because I want to improve your rugby skills, so that you can pass and catch better, tackle better, and just play better.

Will anyone know I am in the study?

Only your parents, the coach, your teammates and I will know that you are taking part in the study. No one else need to know that you are in the study.



Who can I talk to about the study?

You can talk to me at any time if you have questions or feel unsure about anything. You can also talk to my study supervisor, Dr Wilbur Kraak. He has to make sure everything in this study goes well. His telephone number is 021 808 2379.

What if I do not want to do this?

If you don't want to be a part of this study, you don't have to be, even if your parents said yes. No one can force you to do this. Even when you do take part, and you feel that you don't want to anymore, you can stop whenever you want to, without getting in trouble.

Do you understand this research study and are you willing to take part in it?

YES

NO

Has the researcher answered all your questions?

YES

NO

Do you understand that you can stop being in the study at any time?

YES

NO

Signature of Child

Date

APPENDIX H

INSTEMMINGSVORM



DEELNEMER INLIGTINGSTUK EN INSTEMMINGSVORM



TITEL VAN DIE NAVORSINGSPROJEK:	Afrigtings- en vaardigheidsprofiel van mini-rugby afrigters en spelers in die Wes-Kaap, Suid-Afrika
NAAM VAN NAVORSER:	Jacques Basson
ADRES:	5 Koraalsingel Langeberg Ridge Durbanville, 7550
KONTAKNOMMER:	074 203 2424

Wat is navorsing?

Navorsing is iets wat ons doen om nuwe kennis te kry oor die manier waarop dinge (en mense) werk. Ons gebruik navorsingsprojekte of studies om ons te help om meer uit te vind oor kinders en tieners en die dinge wat hul lewens, hul skole, hul families en hul gesondheid beïnvloed. Ons doen dit om die wêreld 'n beter plek te probeer maak!

Waarom is hierdie navorsingsprojek?

Hierdie projek is oor mini-rugby en die ontwikkeling van die mini-rugby spelers. Ek wil sien hoe mini-rugby spelers ontwikkel wanneer hulle op 'n sekere manier oefen.

Waarom is ek genooi om deel te neem aan hierdie navorsingsprojek?

Jy is genooi om deel te neem aan hierdie projek, want dit is oor mini-rugby, en jy is 'n mini-rugby speler.

Wie doen die navorsing?

My naam is Jacques Basson, en ek hou baie van rugby. Ek doen hierdie projek as deel van my studies, want ek wil kyk of ek mini-rugby 'n bietjie beter kan maak.

Wat sal in hierdie studie met my gebeur?

Gedurende die rugbyseisoen, sal jy na rugby oefeninge gaan soos jy altyd doen, maar die afrigter sal gevra word om jou op 'n spesifieke manier af te rig. Jy sal ook gevra word om drie toetse te doen, maar dit is lekker toetse, want jy hoef nie te leer vir dit nie. In hierdie toetse sal jy gevra word om 'n paar rugbyvaardighede te doen, soos om 'n bal aan te gee en te vang. Die drie toetse sal elke keer dieselfde wees en sal gedoen word aan die begin van die seisoen, in die middel, en aan die einde van die seisoen. Deur deel te neem aan hierdie studie beteken nie dat jy meer hoef te oefen nie, want alles sal gedoen word in jou normale rugby oefentye.

Kan iets sleg met my gebeur?

Nie regtig nie. Jy gaan miskien 'n bietjie bang wees tydens die toetse, maar jy hoef nie te wees nie, want jy gaan net rugbyvaardighede doen, en dit is pret. Ons gaan normale rugby aktiwiteite doen wat kontak en oefening insluit, so partykeer kan jy miskien moeg word of seerkry as gevolg daarvan. Jou afrigter sal goed opgelei wees en sal weet wat om te doen om jou te help indien enige iets wel gebeur.

Kan iets goeds met my gebeur?

Ek hoop regtig so, want ek wil jou rugbyvaardighede verbeter, sodat jy beter kan vang en aangee, beter kan duik, en sommer net beter kan speel.

Sal iemand weet ek is in die studie?

Net jou ouers, die afrigter, jou spanmaats en ek sal weet dat jy deelneem aan die studie. Niemand anders hoef te weet dat jy in die studie is nie.



Met wie kan ek praat oor die studie?

Jy kan enige tyd met my praat as jy vrae het of onseker voel oor enigiets. Jy kan ook met my studieleier, Dr. Wilbur Kraak, praat. Hy moet seker maak dat alles in hierdie studie goed gaan. Sy telefoonnommer is 021 808 2379.

Wat gebeur as ek dit nie wil doen nie?

As jy nie deel van hierdie studie wil wees nie, hoef jy nie te wees nie, selfs al het jou ouers ja gesê. Niemand kan jou dwing om dit te doen. Selfs wanneer jy besluit om deel te neem, en jy voel dat jy nie meer wil nie, kan jy stop wanneer jy wil, sonder om in die moeilikheid te kom.

Verstaan jy hierdie navorsingstudie en is jy bereid om daaraan deel te neem?

JA

NEE

Het die navorser al jou vrae beantwoord?

JA

NEE

Verstaan jy dat jy enige tyd kan ophou om in die studie te wees?

JA

NEE

Handtekening van kind

Datum

APPENDIX I

COACH QUESTIONNAIRE



UNIVERSITEIT • STELLENBOSCH • UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvenoot • your knowledge partner

QUESTIONNAIRE TO DETERMINE THE COACHING PROFILE OF MINI-RUGBY COACHES IN THE WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

This research is being conducted for a Masters-degree project at Stellenbosch University. Ethical clearance for this research was obtained from the Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities).

Motivation for the study

Due to a lack of qualified, experienced rugby coaches in Western Cape primary schools, the coaching of mini-rugby is often insufficient and neglected.

Problem statement

The main objective of this questionnaire is to determine the coaching profile of mini-rugby coaches in the Western Province Rugby Union, South Africa.

Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Principal researcher: Mr Jacques Basson
074 203 2424
minirugbyproject@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr Wilbur Kraak
021 808 2379
kjw@sun.ac.za

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:	
Participant school:	
Participant number:	

Please note:

- Select only one response for each question.
- Indicate your response clearly by marking the circle next to the applicable response.

ITEM	POSSIBLE RESPONSES
1. Your gender?	<input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female
2. Your age? (in years)	<input type="radio"/> 20 years and younger <input type="radio"/> 21-30 years <input type="radio"/> 31-40 years <input type="radio"/> 41-50 years <input type="radio"/> 51 years and older
3. Your highest current academic qualification?	<input type="radio"/> Less than grade 12 (Matric) <input type="radio"/> Grade 12 (Matric) <input type="radio"/> Certificate <input type="radio"/> Diploma <input type="radio"/> Degree <input type="radio"/> Postgraduate qualification (Honours, Master's, PhD)
4. Your involvement at the school/club where you coach mini-rugby?	<input type="radio"/> Teacher <input type="radio"/> Parent <input type="radio"/> External individual just coaching at the school/club <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify): _____
5. Do you get financial reward for coaching mini-rugby?	<input type="radio"/> No, I'm a volunteer <input type="radio"/> Yes, I get paid
6. Your experience in playing rugby? (in years)	<input type="radio"/> None <input type="radio"/> Less than 5 years <input type="radio"/> 6-10 years <input type="radio"/> 11-15 years <input type="radio"/> 16-20 years <input type="radio"/> 21 years and more

7. At which level did you play rugby?	<input type="radio"/> None <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If “None”, please answer question 8. <input type="radio"/> Up to primary school level <input type="radio"/> Up to secondary school level <input type="radio"/> Up to club (university) level <input type="radio"/> Up to provincial level <input type="radio"/> Up to international level
8. If you do not have any experience in playing rugby, at which level did you play any another sport (highest level)?	<input type="radio"/> None <input type="radio"/> Up to primary school level <input type="radio"/> Up to secondary school level <input type="radio"/> Up to club (university) level <input type="radio"/> Up to provincial level <input type="radio"/> Up to international level
9. Your experience in coaching rugby? (in years)	<input type="radio"/> None <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If “None”, please answer question 11. <input type="radio"/> 1-2 years <input type="radio"/> 3-5 years <input type="radio"/> 6-10 years <input type="radio"/> 11-15 years <input type="radio"/> 16 years and more
10. Your experience in coaching mini-rugby? (in years)	<input type="radio"/> None <input type="radio"/> 1-2 years <input type="radio"/> 3-5 years <input type="radio"/> 6-10 years <input type="radio"/> 11-15 years <input type="radio"/> 16 years and more
11. If you do not have any experience in coaching rugby, what experience do you have in coaching any other sport? (in years)	<input type="radio"/> None <input type="radio"/> 1-2 years <input type="radio"/> 3-5 years <input type="radio"/> 6-10 years <input type="radio"/> 11-15 years <input type="radio"/> 16 years and more
12. Are you BokSmart accredited?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No

<p>13. Your qualification in coaching rugby?</p>	<p> <input type="radio"/> None <input type="radio"/> IRB* level 1 <input type="radio"/> IRB* level 2 <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify): _____ </p>
<p>14. Do you feel sufficiently equipped to coach mini-rugby?</p>	<p> <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No (please explain): _____ _____ _____ </p>
<p>15. Do you feel that you are optimally developing the skills of the mini-rugby players?</p>	<p> <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No (please explain): _____ _____ _____ </p>

* IRB (International Rugby Board) is now known as World Rugby

APPENDIX J

OUTCOMES, KEY FACTORS AND TESTING PROCEDURES OF THE SIX SKILLS

SKILL 1: PASSING THE BALL

Outcome

To make a pass that is easily caught to a teammate in a better position than the passer to maintain continuity of play (International Rugby Board, 2011).

Key factors

- a. Run straight
- b. Hold the ball in both hands
- c. Turn side-on to face the supporting receiver (a hoop, for the purpose of this test)
- d. Swing the arms through in the direction of the pass
- e. Follow through with the hands in the direction of the pass
- f. Pass to the 'target' area at chest height in front of the receiver (a hoop, for the purpose of this test)

Testing procedure

The players had to run, with a ball in both hands, from marker A to B, 8m away in a straight line. Upon reaching the middle, the player had to pass the ball, while running, through a hoop that was set up at torso height and 2m away perpendicular to the running line. The player then had to continue running to marker B, where he had to pick up a 2nd ball, turn around and repeat the procedure. The players passed the ball to their right hand side as well as their left hand side.

Camera placement

The cameras were placed approximately 2m behind marker B and in line with the players' running line from marker A to B. From these positions, both the front view and rear view of the player executing the test could be recorded.

SKILL 2: CATCHING THE BALL

Outcome

To catch the ball while retaining vision of the positioning of opponents so that the receiver has time to choose the best available option following receipt of the pass (International Rugby Board, 2011).

Key factors

- a. Keep enough depth to run towards the flight of the ball
- b. Extend the hands to catch the ball early
- c. Watch the ball into the hands
- d. Catch the ball with the fingers and hands

Testing procedure

A setup similar to that used for passing the ball was used for assessing the players' ability to catch the ball. The player started at the 1st marker, without a ball, and had to run in a straight line to the 2nd marker. Just before the player reached the middle, a ball was passed to him by the person administering the test (tester), who was standing 3m away perpendicular to the running line. The player then had to continue running to the 2nd marker, where he had to put down the 1st ball, turn around and repeat the procedure. Thus, the players were forced to catch a ball that was passed from their right hand side as well as their left hand side.

Camera placement

The cameras were placed in the same position as for the test to assess the players' ability to pass the ball. These positions again allowed for both the front view and rear view of the player executing the test to be recorded.

SKILL 3: PICKING UP THE BALL**Outcome**

To retain or regain the ball so that the team can attack (International Rugby Board, 2011).

Key factors

- a. Approach the ball in a crouched position
- b. Position above the ball side-on, straddling the ball
- c. Sink at the hips and bend at the knees
- d. Keep the head up in a neutral position
- e. Steady the ball with the front hand, scoop up with the back hand
- f. Bring the ball into the chest while assessing options

Testing procedure

To assess the player's ability in picking up the ball, 3 markers were set up in a straight line, 3m apart. The tester stood perpendicular to the middle of the 3 markers, 5 m away. The player started behind the middle marker, facing the tester. The tester rolled a ball straight to the player, who had to pick up the ball and throw it back to the tester. The player then had to run to one of the markers to the side where another ball was rolled to him. The process was also repeated at the 3rd marker. To ensure consistent rolling, the ball was rolled along its longitudinal axis.

Camera placement

The cameras were placed approximately 2m diagonally behind both sides of the tester's position. The cameras were zoomed out enough to capture the entire testing area which allowed for different views of the players executing the test.

SKILL 4: SIDE STEP

Outcome

To develop the instinct to 'hold' the defence and to then attack the space to the left or right of the defender (International Rugby Board, 2011).

Key factors

- a. Carry the ball in both hands
- b. Run towards the nearest defenders
- c. Change direction close to them, by using the side-step
- d. Shift the ball to the arm furthest from the defender
- e. Use the arm closest to the defender to push the defender away
- f. Move into the space furthest from the defenders
- g. Accelerate to take advantage of the space

Testing procedure

The player runs between agility poles, which simulated defenders. 6 poles were arranged in a zigzag pattern approximately 8m apart. The player started at a marker that was placed 5m away from the 1st agility pole and in the middle of the zigzag channel. He had to run towards the nearest pole, evade that "defender" by sidestepping and simultaneously protect the ball by shifting the ball to the arm furthest away from that particular pole. This procedure was repeated in a zigzag pattern from pole to pole and the player always had to side step towards the middle of the channel.

Camera placement

One camera was placed next to the tester, approximately 3m past the last agility pole, in the centre of the channel and the other camera was placed at the other end of the channel, next to the players' starting position. From these positions, a frontal as well as a rear view of the players side-stepping to their right hand side as well as their left hand side could be recorded.

SKILL 5: FRONT-ON TACKLE

Outcome

To prevent territory being gained by the attacking player and to regain possession of the ball (International Rugby Board, 2011).

Key factors

- a. Be in a low crouch
- b. Move forward into the tackle
- c. Drive with the legs
- d. Make firm contact with the shoulder between the waist and hips
- e. Wrap with the arms
- f. Get back on feet and recover the ball

Testing procedure

A narrow channel of 6m x 2m was fixed with markers. Players of similar build were partnered together to form groups of 2. The players stood at opposite sides of the 6m long channel. One player had the ball and was the attacking player,

while the other player was the defending player who had to execute the tackle. On the tester's signal, both players ran forward towards the middle of the channel, where the defending player had to tackle the ball carrier using a front-on tackle. The ball carrier was asked to run straight down the middle of the channel to make it easier for the defending player to tackle him. This test was done in a small and controlled environment to ensure the safety of the players.

Camera placement

To view and record the most important aspects of the skill, the cameras were placed at the corners of the one long side of the channel, approximately 1m away, facing diagonally in towards the middle of the channel. From these positions, both the front view and rear view of the player executing the test could be recorded.

SKILL 6: TAKING THE BALL INTO CONTACT

Outcome

To retain possession of the ball while in contact with opponents (International Rugby Board, 2011).

Key factors

- a. Run in a position that is able to withstand impact
- b. Carry the ball in both hands
- c. Anticipate contact by turning side on
- d. Drive into contact in this position by sinking low and driving up
- e. Spread the feet, sink at the hips, bend at the knees
- f. Turn to face team mates
- g. Make the ball available

Testing procedure

A narrow channel of 6m x 2m was demarcated with markers. Players of similar build were partnered together to form groups of 2. One player stood in the middle of the 6m long channel and was the defending player while the player to be assessed had a ball and stood at one end, 3m away. On the tester's signal, the attacking player with the ball had to run forward towards the stationary defending player and carry the ball into the contact situation. The player then had to drive forward into the defending player while protecting the ball, before falling to ground and placing the ball.

Camera placement

Since a similar setup was used, the cameras were placed in the same position as for the front-on tackle, which allowed for the most important aspects of the skill to be viewed and recorded.

APPENDIX K
SKILLS INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

MINI-RUGBY
SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

2016

This program is part of a research study conducted by Jacques Basson, from the Department of Sport Science at Stellenbosch University. This research study will contribute to a thesis for a Master's Degree.

Please note:

1. This program belongs to Jacques Basson, and may not be copied or distributed.
2. This program may only to be used by the designated coaches of the mini-rugby teams of Koos Sadie Primary School and Vredelust Primary School.
3. For any assistance or problems, please contact:

Jacques Basson

074 203 2424

minorugbyproject@gmail.com

CONTENT

1. FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENT SKILLS (FMS)
2. GAMES FOR WARM-UP AND COOL-DOWN
3. BALL FAMILIARISATION (PICKING UP THE BALL)
4. PASSING & RECEIVING
5. INTRO EXERCISES FOR CONTACT & TACKLING
6. TACKLING
7. TAKING THE BALL INTO CONTACT (& RUCKING)
8. EVASIVE RUNNING (SIDE-STEP)
9. SMALL SIDED GAMES (for combined skills)
10. OUTCOMES AND KEY FACTORS FOR SELECTED SKILLS

FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENT SKILLS (FMS)

As part of the warm-up, after the dynamic stretching, let the players do the following movements individually:

1. Kangaroo hops (on both legs)
2. Hopping on one leg
3. Gallop (same leg in front the whole time)
4. Skip (alternate legs in front)
5. Cart wheels
6. Baboon walk (on all fours)
7. Crab walk (backward)
8. Crab walk (forwards)
9. Pencil rolls
10. Forward rolls

- These exercises can be done in an area marked out with cones; the players can move to a cone and then back to the starting cone again.

GAMES FOR WARM-UP AND COOL-DOWN



1. Shadow twin (agility)

- **Description:**

All the players form groups of 2; in each pair, one player leads and the other player follows (the “shadow”). The lead player has to lose their shadow. After several seconds call “STOP” and see who has managed to lose their shadow; each pair counts the number of steps they are apart. The winning shadow is the one nearest to the lead player, and the winning leader is the one furthest away from the shadow. Then swap the pairs around.

- **Coaching points:**

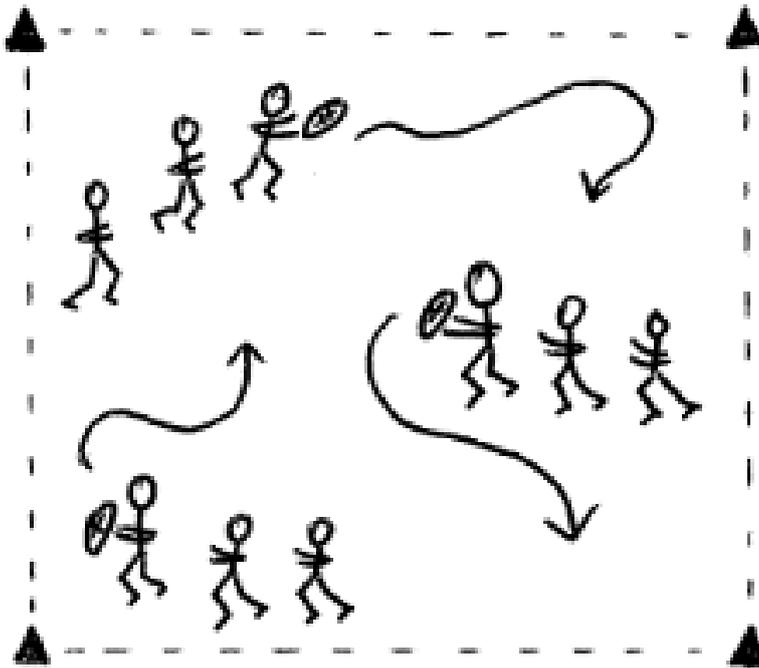
- Find space and move into it.
- Take short steps when changing direction.
- Keep your head up to see what’s going on.

- **Equipment:**

- None, just cones to mark out the area

- **Area:**

Approx. 15m x 15m (depending on group size)



2. Follow the leader

- **Description:**

Divide the players in groups of 3-4, and set up a square area of approx. 15m x 15m (depending on the number of players). All the groups are in the area and move around between the other groups, with the front player ("leader") of each group holding a ball and the rest of his group following him in a line. They have to concentrate to avoid bumping into another group and into each other. The coach shouts the command and the front player has to:

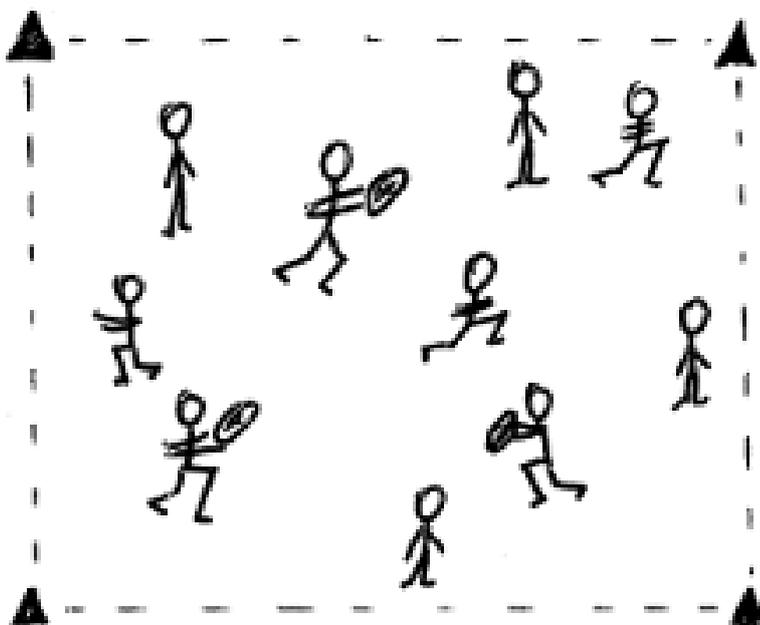
- "pass" - turn and pass to the next player
- "pop" - pop the ball over his head to the next player
- "down" - put the ball down for the next player
- "roll" - roll the ball for the next player to pick up,

As soon as the leader has let go of the ball, he goes to the back of his line, and the next player becomes the leader who needs to follow the coach's commands.

- **Coaching points:**

- Find space and move into it.
- Stay close to the player with the ball.
- Move quickly onto the ball.
- Communicate.
- Keep your head up to see what's going on.

- **Equipment:**
 - Balls
 - Cones to mark out the area
- **Area:**
Approx. 15m x 15m (depending on group size)



3. Tag ball (agility & handling)

- **Description:**
One in four or five players are the chasers. Each chaser has a ball, and they need to chase and tag the rest of the players within the area, by touching them with the ball on the chest or back. They cannot throw the ball and must hold it in two hands. The players have to stay within the area. When a player is tagged or runs outside of the area, that player turns into a statue and must stand still where they are until the last player is tagged.
- **Coaching points:**
 - Find space and move into it.
 - Take short steps when changing direction.
 - Keep your head up to see what's going on (to watch the player that you're chasing, but also all the other players).
 - Use fast feet.
- **Equipment:**
 - Balls (one for each chaser)
 - Cones to mark out the area
- **Area:**
Approx. 20m x 20m (depending on group size)

4. Crabs and crows (reaction time & agility)

- **Description:**

Divide the group into 2 equal teams. Use cones to mark 2 lines approx. 20m apart and also a centre point between the 2 lines. The 2 teams line up next to one another at the centre point, with all members of a team standing behind one another and facing the coach. The one team is called the “crabs” and the other team the “crows”. When the coach shouts “crabs”, the crows have to run away towards the line on their side (safe zone), while the crabs have to try and catch them. When the coach shouts “crows”, the crabs have to run away and the crows have to try and catch them. Each crab is paired up with a crow, and for that round, they may only chase and catch that particular player. If the player makes it to the safe zone, they win, and if they player is caught before reaching the safe zone, the catcher wins.

- **Progression:**

- ↑ Distance to the safe zone
- Chaser must tackle the opposing player (make sure the paired players are of similar size)

- **Coaching points:**

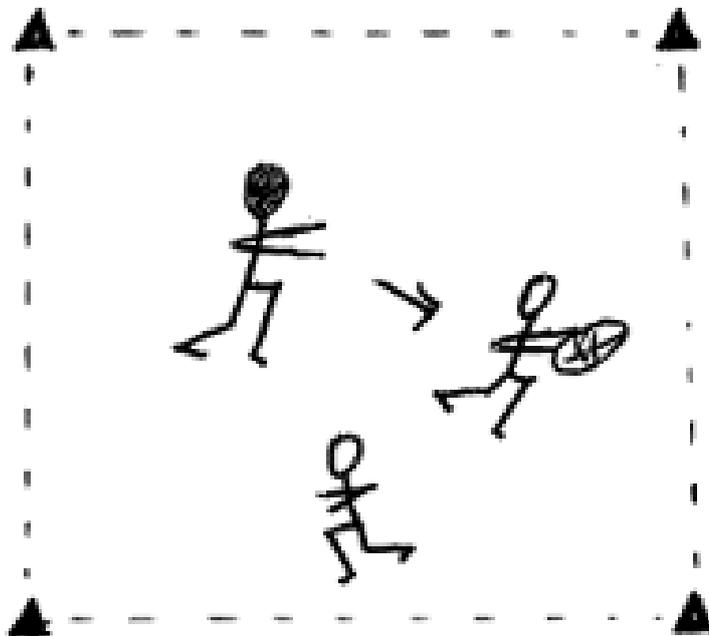
- Pay attention to the call, and react quickly.
- Use fast feet to accelerate away from the catcher.

- **Equipment:**

- Cones to mark out the lines and centre point

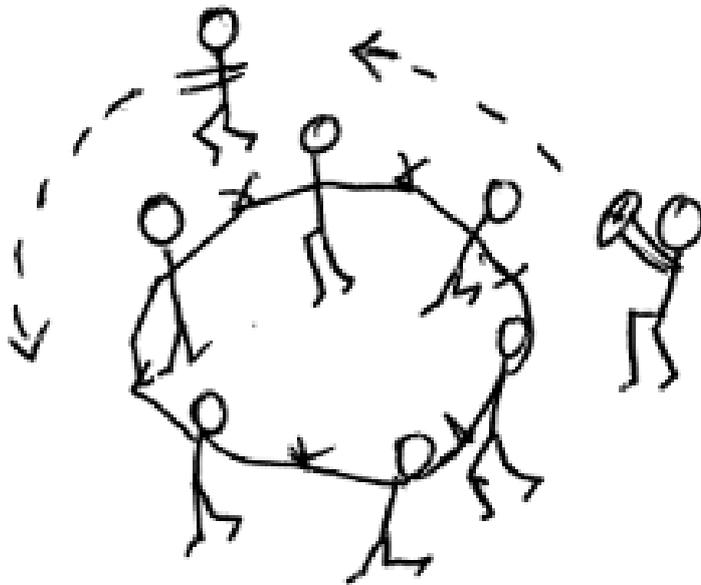
- **Area:**

Two lines approx. 20m apart



5. Chase the ball (agility)

- **Description:**
Players form groups of 3. Set up square areas of 5m x 5m, with a group of 3 players in each area. One player is the chaser and has to chase and tag the ball carrier. When the ball carrier is caught, he immediately passes the ball to the 2nd player and the chaser now chases him. After a certain time period (determined by the coach), a new player becomes the chaser.
- **Coaching points:**
 - Keep your head up to see the movement of the chaser, as well as the 2nd player.
 - Take short steps when changing direction.
 - Use fast feet.
- **Equipment:**
 - Balls
 - Cones to mark out the areas
- **Area:**
Square areas of 5m x 5m (one area of every 3 players).

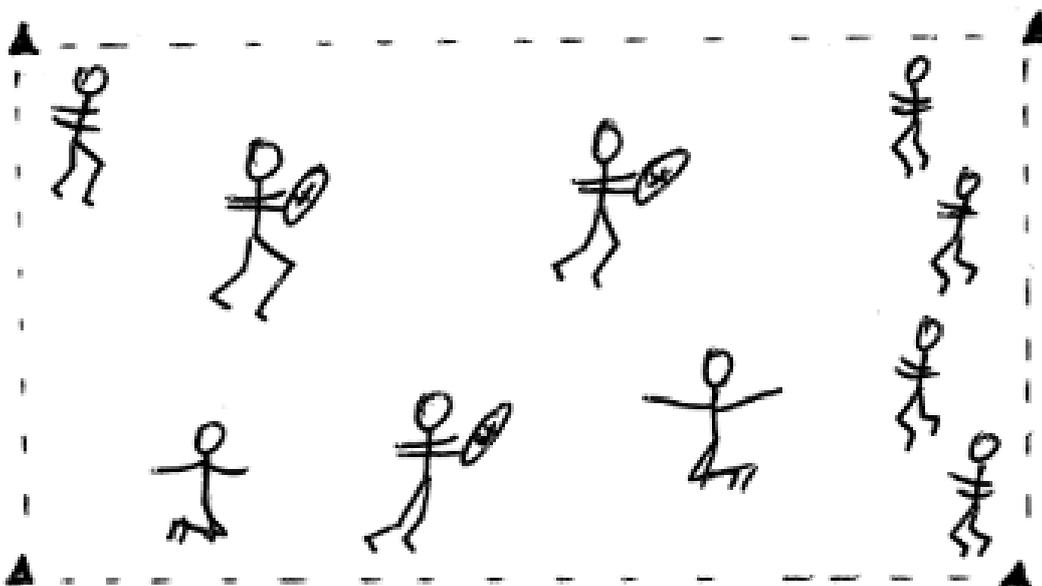


6. Circle tag (agility)

- **Description:**
6-8 players hook their arms in to one another and form a circle. 2 more players stand around the outside of the circle; one player holds a ball in both hands and stands to the opposite side of the circle of the “target” player. The ball carrier must try to tag the target player by chasing him around the circle. The players in the circle try to protect the target player by turning the circle in both directions, and also by allowing the target player to run through the circle. The chaser is not allowed to enter the circle, but the target player may only be in the circle for

a few seconds. When the target player has been tagged, or after a time period determined by the coach, the players swop so that 2 new players are the target player and chaser.

- **Coaching points:**
 - Keep your head up to see the movement of the chaser.
 - Take short steps when changing direction.
 - Use fast feet.
- **Equipment:**
 - Balls
- **Area:**
 - Open area

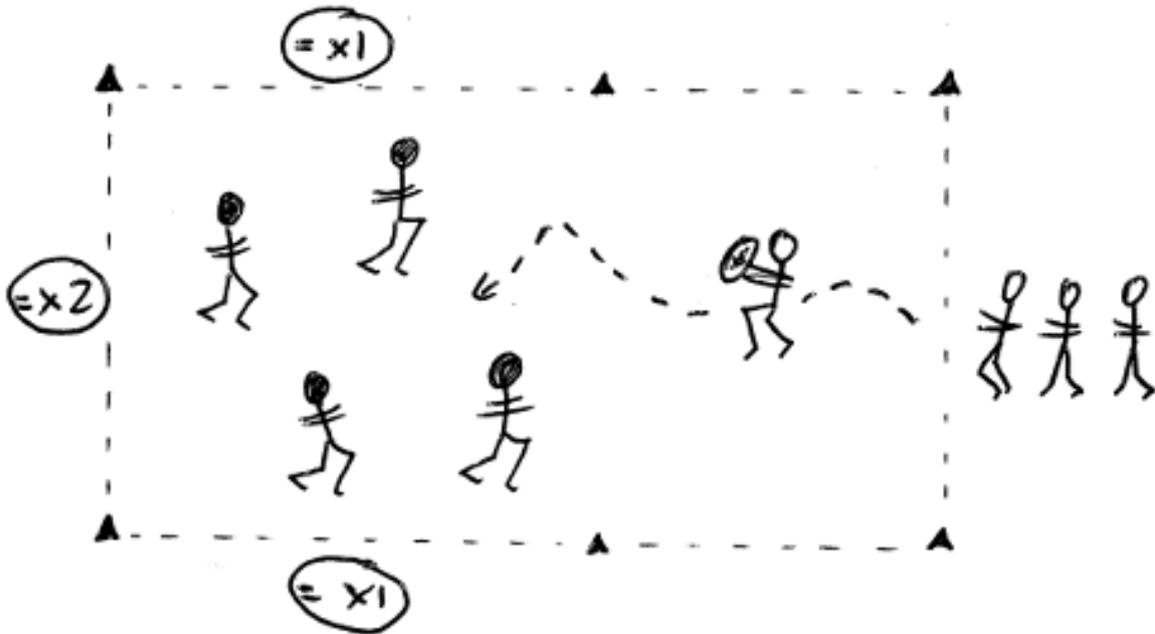


7. Under the sea (agility & evasion)

- **Description:**

Three or four players in the group are the “sharks”, and they stand in the middle of the area (“sea”) each holding a ball in 2 hands. The rest of the players (“fish”) stand at one end of the area, and on the whistle they need to “swim” through to the other end while they try to evade the “sharks”. If they are eaten by a shark (tagged by the ball), they become “octopuses” and must sit on their knees and wave their outstretched arms around. If they touch a fish, the fish also becomes an octopus. The fish swim through from side to side until all the fish have been eaten.
- **Coaching points:**
 - Find space and move into it.
 - Take short steps when changing direction.
 - Keep your head up to see what’s going on (to watch the player that you’re chasing, but also all the other players).
 - Use fast feet.

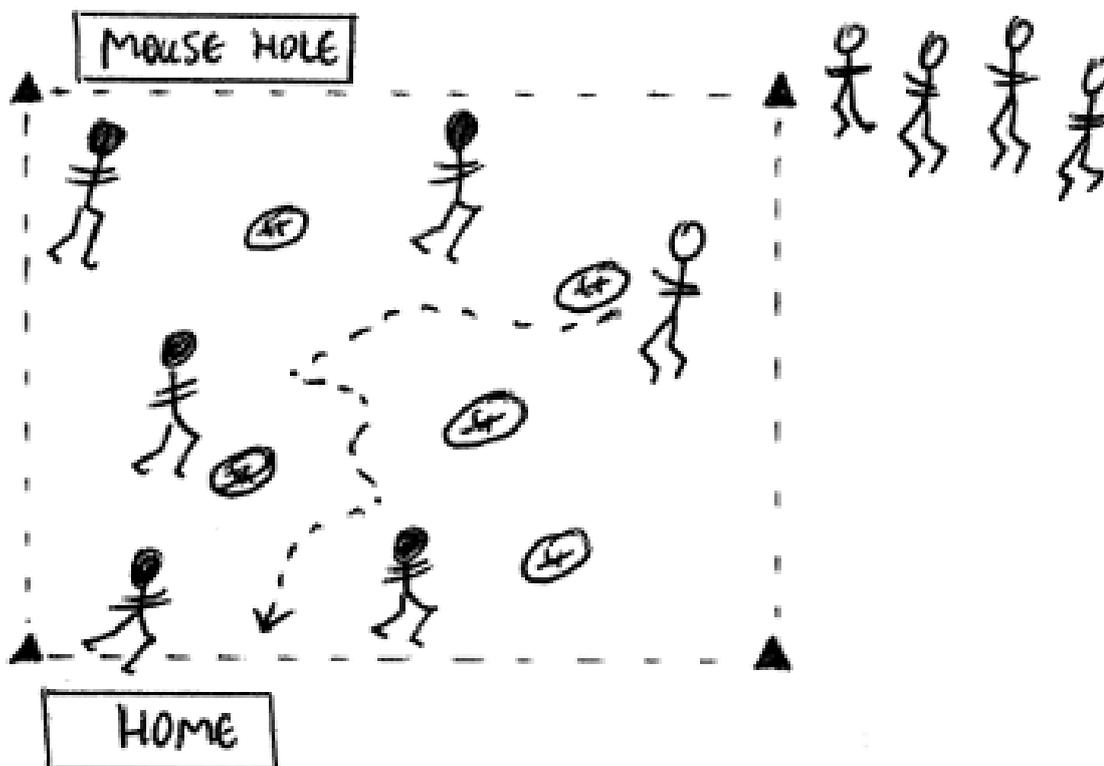
- **Equipment:**
 - Balls (one for each shark)
 - Cones to mark out the area
- **Area:**
Rectangular area of approx. 15m x 20m (depending on group size)



8. Cowboys & crooks (agility & evasion; progression into tackle)

- **Description:**
Divide the group into two teams, facing each other at opposite sides of the playing area. One team is the “cowboys”, and the other team is the “crooks”. The “cowboys” must try and take the “treasure” (a ball) to the “bank”; either through the side or the far end, without being caught (tagged or touch tackled) by the “crooks”. One “cowboy” runs at a time, while all 4 “crooks” can come into the area. If the “treasure” is taken out the side of the area, the “cowboys” only get one point, and if they get it to the other end of the area without being caught, they get two points. The “crooks” get a point for every “cowboy” that is caught. Once every “cowboy” had a chance (or 2), the teams swop roles.
- **Progression:**
 - Smaller area
 - Tackle
- **Coaching points:**
 - Find space and move into it.
 - Take short steps when changing direction.
 - Keep your head up to see what’s going on (to watch the player that you’re chasing, but also all the other players).
 - Use fast feet.

- **Equipment:**
 - Ball
 - Cones to mark out the area
- **Area:**
Rectangular area of approx. 15m x 20m (depending on group size)



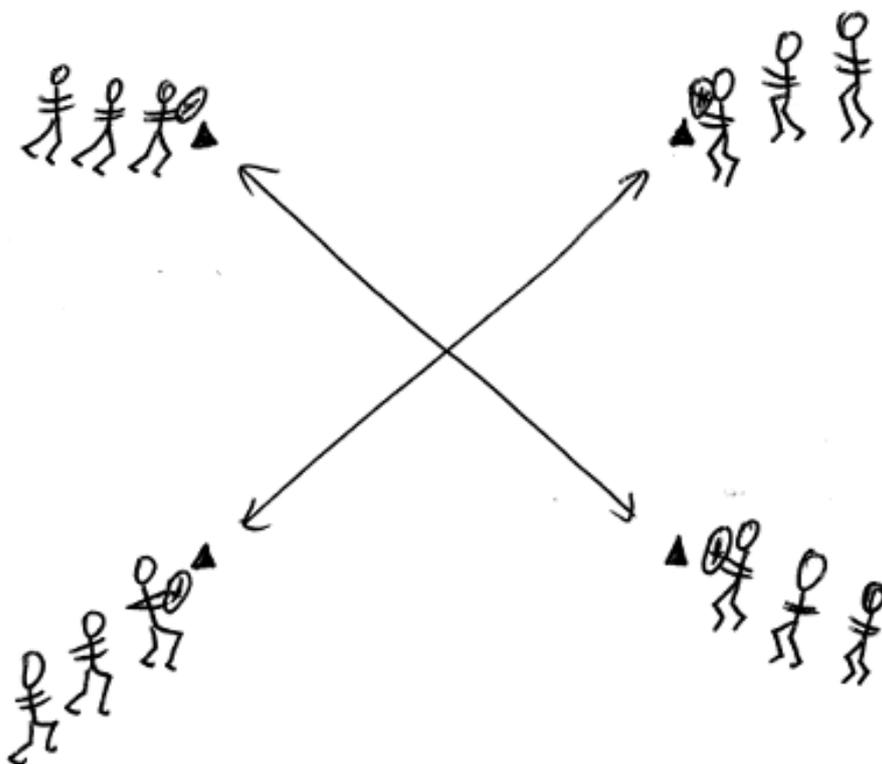
9. Cat & mouse (agility & evasion; progression into tackle)

- **Description:**
Divide the players into groups of four or five; one team of “cats” and one, two, or three teams of “mice” (depending on group size). The first group of mice take position on a corner of the rectangular area, and the “mice home” is on the opposite diagonal corner, with the “cats” taking position on a corner next to the “mice”. If there are more than one group of “mice”, the groups take turns. Place one ball per mouse throughout the playing area. The mice have to pick up a ball (the “cheese”) and get it “home”. The cats have to tag the mice to capture them. If caught, a mouse goes to the “mouse hole” to cheer on his or her team.

Start with 1 mouse vs 1 cat; then 2 mice vs 2 cats, etc.

- **Progression:**
 - Smaller area (progression for evasion), or larger area (progression for defending)
 - Tackle

- **Coaching points:**
 - Find space and move into it.
 - Take short steps when changing direction.
 - Keep your head up to see what's going on (to watch the player that you're chasing, but also all the other players).
 - Use fast feet.
- **Equipment:**
 - Balls (one for each mouse)
 - Cones to mark out the area
- **Area:**
Rectangular area of approx. 10m x 15m (depending on group size)



10. Traffic (handling & evasion)

- **Description:**
Set up an area of approx. 10m x 10m, and divide the group into four teams of 3-4 "delivery men", one on each corner of the playing area. Give a ball (the "parcel") to the first player in each group. On the whistle, the four "delivery men" must "drive" (run) diagonally across the "traffic intersection" (square) and deliver the parcel to the delivery men on the opposite corner. After delivering the parcel to the first delivery man in the group, each delivery man then join the back of that group. As soon as a delivery man receives the parcel, they drive to the opposite corner, and the game continues.

- **Progression:**
 - ↑ Speed (Walk → jog → run)
 - Smaller area (higher density)
 - While they're running across, each player has to throw and catch the ball (once → twice), touch the ball on the ground (once → twice), move the ball around their body.
- **Coaching points:**
 - Hold the ball in two hands.
 - Look for space.
 - Keep your head up to see what's going on, to avoid running into other players.
 - Use fast feet, and change of pace to avoid other players.
 - Communicate with other players.
- **Equipment:**
 - Balls (one for every two groups of delivery men)
 - Cones to mark out the area
- **Area:**
Square area of approx. 10m x 10m

11. How many passes? (handling & evasion)

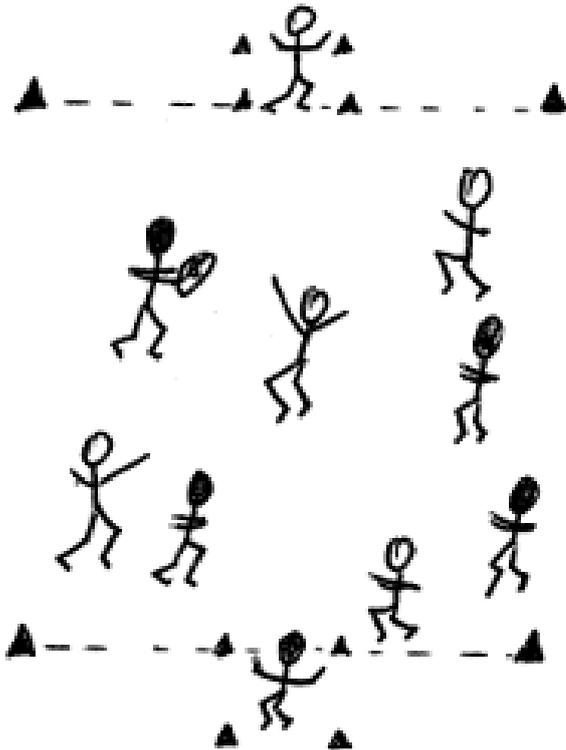
- **Description:**
Divide the group into equal teams of 3-4, and each group receives a ball. All the players are in the same area, spread out in-between one another. On the whistle, they have to see how many passes they can make to their team mates. They can pass in any direction, but must always carry the ball in two hands. All the players run around in-between one another in the area. The team that completes the most passes in the given time (to be decided by the coach), wins. If the team drops the ball, they have to start counting their passes from 0 again.
- **Progression:**
 - ↑ Speed (Walk → jog → run)
 - Smaller area (higher density)
 - Number each player in the team, and they may only pass in a chronological order (i.e. number 1 passes to number 2, who passes to number 3, to number 4, and then back to number 1, etc.)
 - May only pass backwards
- **Coaching points:**
 - Hold the ball in two hands.
 - Receivers keep their hands up to show the target.
 - Look for space, and move into the open space.
 - Keep your head up to see what's going on, to avoid running into other players.
 - Use fast feet, and change of pace to avoid other players.
 - Communicate with other players.
- **Equipment:**
 - Balls (one for each group)
 - Cones to mark out the area
- **Area:**
Square area of approx. 15m x 15m (depending on group size)

12. Don't feed the monkeys (handling & evasion)

- **Description:**

This is similar to “How many passes?”, but the players are divided into only two equal teams. Again, the aim for the players is to make as many passes as possible without losing the ball to the other team. The team with the ball (the “zoo keepers”) have to pass the ball amongst themselves, without the other team (the “monkeys”) intercepting it. Monkeys are not allowed to grab the ball from a zoo keeper, but may intercept the ball and also try and hit the ball down to stop the pass. As soon as the monkeys intercept the ball, or the ball goes on the floor, restart with the other team in possession. If the ball or a player goes out of the playing area, restart with the other team in possession.
- **Progression:**
 - ↑ Speed (Walk → jog → run)
 - Smaller area (higher density)
 - Number each player in the team, and they may only pass in a chronological order (i.e. number 1 passes to number 2, who passes to number 3, to number 4, and then back to number 1, etc.)
- **Coaching points:**
 - Hold the ball in two hands.
 - Give a pass that is easy to catch.
 - Receivers keep their hands up to show the target.
 - Look for space, and move into the open space.
 - Keep your head up to see what's going on, to avoid running into other players.
 - Use fast feet, and change of pace to avoid other players.
 - Communicate with other players.
- **Equipment:**
 - Ball
 - Cones to mark out the area
- **Area:**

Square area of approx. 15m x 15m (depending on group size)



13. Goal ball (handling & evasion)

- **Description:**

Mark out two “goals” at each end of the playing area. Divide the players into teams of 4-5, and nominate a catcher from each team to stand in the goal. Each team has to pass the ball between them to get the ball to their catcher. They may not run with the ball, but may pass in any direction. Opposition players can intercept and knock the ball down to win it, but are not allowed to grab the ball once a player has caught it. If the ball is dropped or intercepted, restart with the other team in possession. If the ball or a player goes out of the playing area, or the catcher leaves his goal area, restart with the other team in possession.

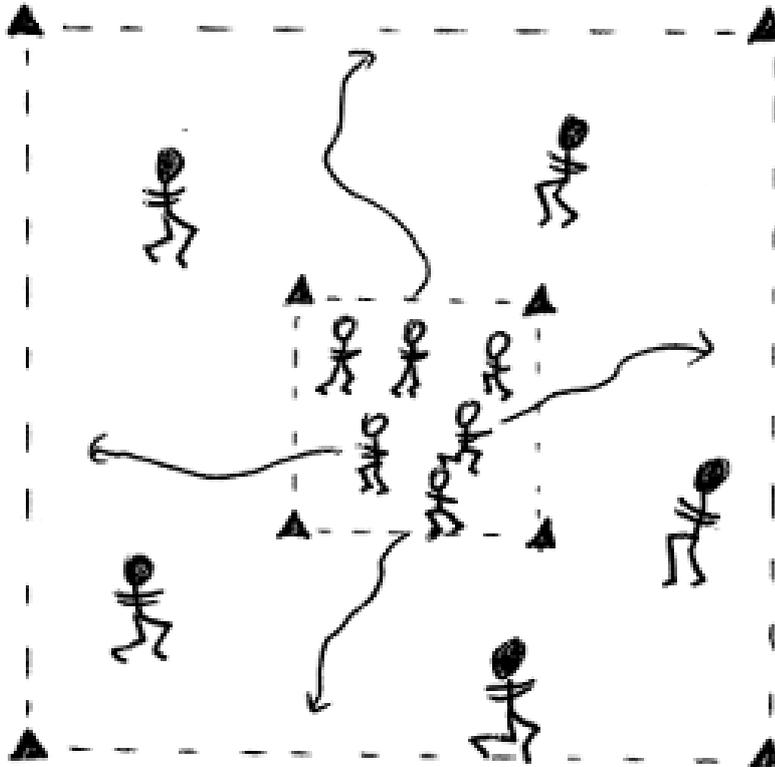
- **Progression:**

- ↑ Speed
- Smaller area (higher density)
- Number each player in the team, and they may only pass in a chronological order (i.e. number 1 passes to number 2, who passes to number 3, to number 4, and then back to number 1, etc.)

- **Coaching points:**

- Hold the ball in two hands.
- Give a pass that is easy to catch.
- Receivers keep their hands up to show the target.
- Look for space, and move into the open space.
- Keep your head up to see what’s going on, to avoid running into other players.
- Use fast feet, and change of pace to avoid other players.
- Communicate with other players.

- **Equipment:**
 - Ball
 - Cones to mark out the area and the goals
- **Area:**
Square area of approx. 15m x 15m (depending on group size)



14. Bugs & spiders (agility & evasion)

- **Description:**
Set up a smaller area (approx. 5m x 5m) within a larger area (approx. 15m x 15m). Divide the group into 2 teams of 6-10 “bugs” and 4-5 “spiders”. The bugs start in the smaller area (safe zone), and on the whistle they have to run out of the safe zone (in any direction) and try to reach the boundaries of the larger area before getting caught by a spider. If caught (2-handed tag), a bug becomes a spider and also has to catch the bugs. The spiders are not allowed to go into the safe zone. It continues until all the bugs have been caught. Change the spiders and repeat.
- **Progression:**
 - Smaller safe zone
- **Coaching points:**
 - Find space and move into it.
 - Take short steps when changing direction.
 - Keep your head up to see what’s going on (to watch the player that you’re chasing, but also all the other players).
 - Use fast feet.

- **Equipment:**
 - Cones to mark out the two areas
- **Area:**

Approx. 15m x 15m, and safe zone in the middle of approx. 5m x 5m (depending on group size)

BALL FAMILIARISATION (PICKING UP THE BALL)

1. Hot potato:

- **Description:**

The players form a big circle, or 2 smaller circles depending on the number of players. They start passing the ball around in a certain direction, while singing the song "Hot potato". The player that has the ball when the song ends, is "burned" by the hot potato and must sit down. The last remaining player wins.

- **Progression:**

- Every time the coach blows the whistle, the direction changes.

- **Coaching points:**

- Keep watching the ball.
- Keep your hands up and expect to get the ball.
- Give a pass that is easy to catch.

- **Equipment:**

- Balls

- **Area:**

Open area.

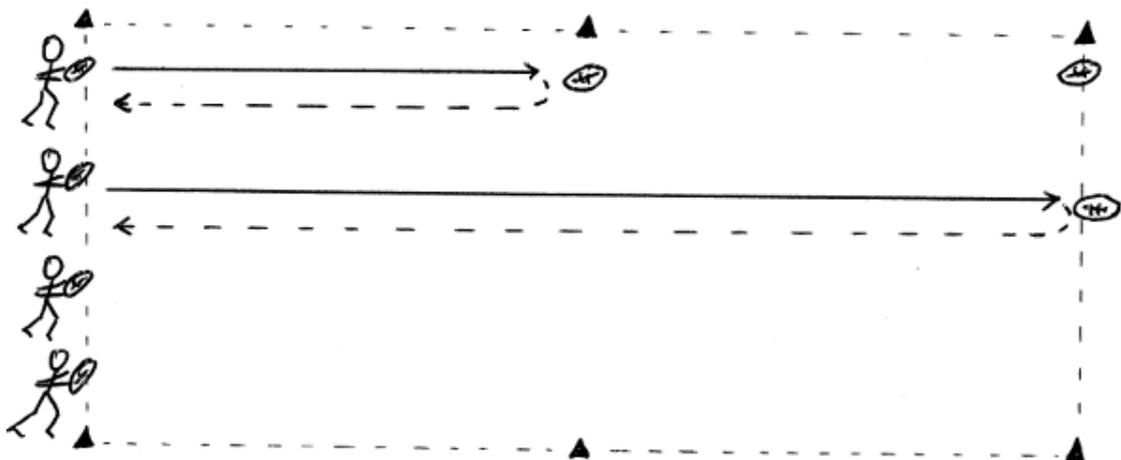
2. Set up an area of approx. 15m x 15m (depending on the number of players). Divide the players into groups of 2-4 (depending on the number of players and balls available). Each small group of players are numbered, i.e. 1-2-3-4. On the coach's whistle, all the players of all the groups start to move around in the area. The 1st player (player number 1) then rolls the ball forward into an open space and player number 2 must go towards the ball and pick up the ball, and then in turn roll it forward for player number 3, etc. The last player then rolls it forward for player number 1 again. The team members of the ball carrier must stay behind him before he rolls the ball forward for the next player.
3. Groups of 2-4 (depending on the number of players and balls available). Players stand across from one another, approx. 5m apart, and roll/pass the ball to one another. When a player receives the ball, he must either
 - i. roll the ball around his body,
 - ii. move the ball between his legs in a figure 8,
 - iii. throw the ball up, clap, and catch it again,
 - iv. etc. and then throw the ball back to the other player who repeats the same action(s).

Variation:

- players can also stand in a big circle to do this exercise, or 2 smaller circles depending on the number of players
- players stand behind one another, 1m apart, facing the same direction; groups compete against one another



4. Divide the players into groups of 4-5, and each group lines up behind a cone. In front of each line, there are 4 cones, 3m apart, in a straight line. On the coach's whistle, the players in front have to run zigzag between the cones, while continuously throwing the ball up into the air and catching it again. Once he gets back to the start, he gives the ball to the next player and then goes to the back of the line. This can also be done as relay competition. Variation: players must move the ball around their bodies while moving between the cones.



5. **Score a try and come back:**

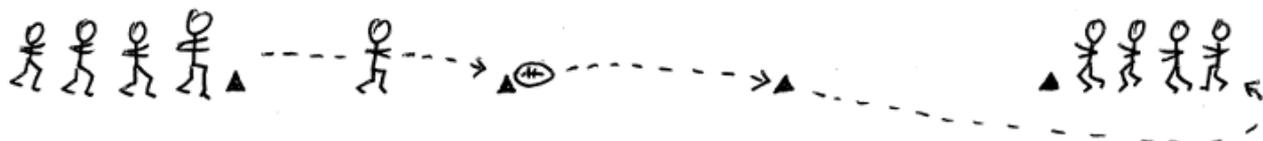
- **Description:**

Set up a rectangular area of approx. 5m wide and 20m long; this is for when you have 3 ball available. The area can be wider if you have more balls and can therefore form more groups. Place a cone in the middle of each of the long sides of the rectangle. Space 3 cones on one short side of the rectangle and let the players line up behind the cones (if you have more balls available, 5 or 6 cones can be placed in a larger area). Each of the players at these cones hold a ball in 2 hands, and the rest of the players line up behind them. On the coach's whistle, they run to the middle of the rectangle (indicated by the middle cones) and put their balls down (score a try), turn around and race back to the starting line. When everyone is ready, the coach blows the whistle again and they run to the middle to pick up their balls and carry on to the end of the rectangle to place their balls on that side, turn

around and race back to the starting line again. When everyone is ready again, the coach blows the whistle for a 3rd time and they run to the furthest side of the rectangle to pick up their balls, turn around and race back to the starting line. The next line of players then gets a chance.

- **Progression:**
 - ↑ Speed
 - Competition between the players in each line racing against one another.
- **Coaching points:**
 - Run with the ball in both hands.
 - Control the ball when placing the ball.
 - When picking up the ball:
 - Keep your eyes on the ball.
 - Approach the ball side-on and sink low at the knees and hips.
 - Keep the head up.
 - Scoop the ball with the back hand and stop (control) the ball with the front hand.
- **Equipment:**
 - Balls (at least 3-5, to form 3-5 groups)
 - Cones to mark out the area
- **Area:**

Rectangular area of approx. 5m wide and 20m long



6. Picking up & placing the ball

- **Description:**

Set out 4 cones in a straight line, 5m apart. Divide the players into 2 equal teams, and each team line up behind the furthest cones on opposing sides of the line. Put the ball on the 2nd cone. The front player of the group closest to the ball, walks forward, picks up the ball, continues walking forward and puts the ball down next to the 3rd cone. The player then goes to the back of the opposing group. The front player in that group then walks forward and repeats the procedure from the other side and moves the ball back to the 2nd cone. This procedure continues back and forth.
- **Progression:**
 - Faster (walk → jog → run)
 - Set up in a square, with the lines working diagonally across the area.
- **Coaching points:**

- Keep your eyes on the ball.
- Approach the ball side-on and sink low at the knees and hips.
- Keep the head up.
- Scoop the ball with the back hand and stop (control) the ball with the front hand.
- **Equipment:**
 - 1 Ball per line of players (2 groups)
 - 4 Cones to mark out the positions
- **Area:**
One line of approx. 15m per line of players.



7. Continuous picking up & placing the ball

- **Description:**
Set out 8 cones in a straight line, 3-4m apart. The 2 cones on opposing sides of the line, are for the players to line up behind. Of the 6 middle cones, place a ball on each of cones 1, 3, and 5, and cones 2, 4, and 6 should be open. The front player on the side closest to cone 1, moves forward and picks up the 1st ball and puts it down next to cone 2; he then picks up the ball at cone 3 and puts it down next to cone 4, and does the same between cones 5 and 6. He then goes to the back of the opposing line. The front player on that side then repeats the procedure from that side. This procedure continues back and forth.
- **Progression:**
 - Faster (walk → jog → run)
 - Less distance between the cones.
- **Coaching points:**
 - Keep your eyes on the ball.
 - Approach the ball side-on and sink low at the knees and hips.
 - Keep the head up.
 - Scoop the ball with the back hand and stop (control) the ball with the front hand.
- **Equipment:**
 - 3 Balls
 - 8 Cones
- **Area:**
One line of approx. 20m per line of players.



8. Picking up a moving ball

- **Description:**

Set out 2 cones approx. 5m apart. The coach stands at the one cone with a few balls, and the players line up behind the other cone, facing the coach. The coach rolls a ball forward towards the front player, who must move towards the ball and pick up the moving ball. Player 1 then passes it back to the coach, and goes back and go to the back of his line. The coach repeats the procedure with all the players.

- **Progression:**

- Coach rolls the ball faster.
- Coach rolls the ball over its longitudinal axis, and then over its transverse axis, which makes the roll unpredictable.

- **Coaching points:**

- Keep your eyes on the ball.
- Short steps when closer to the ball (to be able to change direction quickly).
- Sink low at the knees and hips
- Keep the head up.
- Put out both arms to form a bucket to scoop the ball up, and immediately bring close to the chest.

- **Equipment:**

- Balls
- Cones

- **Area:**

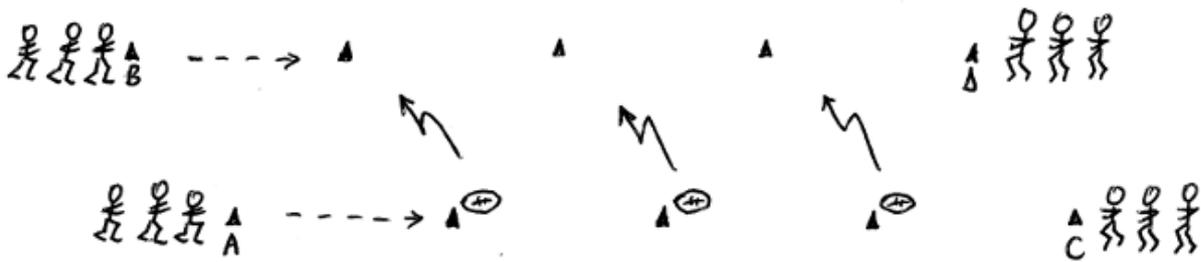
One line of approx. 5m.

- **Variation:**

The same as above, but include a 2nd line of players, who will be the support runners. The support runners should start 2-3m back to ensure they run from depth. The coach rolls the ball to the front player in the line, who picks up the ball and then passes it to the support runner.

- **Coaching points (for the passer and receiver):**

- The passer must give a pass that is easily caught by the receiver.
- The receiver must move from depth, keep the hands up to show the target, and communicate with the passer.



9. Pick up & pass

- **Description:**

Set out 2 lines of 5 cones each, 5m apart. The 2 lines are not next to one another, but the one line is approx. 3m further back (so an imaginary line around all the cones will form a trapezium). Divide the players into 4 equal teams, and each team line up behind the furthest cones on opposing sides of the 2 lines. Put a ball on each of the 3 middle cones in the line between cones A and C. The front player at cone A moves forward and picks up the first ball, and passes it to the front player at cone B who is also moving forward, but a few paces back. He catches the ball and puts it down at the 1st of the 3 middle cones on his line. The player from cone A repeats the procedure with the 2nd and 3rd balls, and the player from cone B does the same with the balls he receives. These 2 players then goes to the back of the lines at cones C and D respectively. The procedure is now repeated from the other side, and continues back and forth.

- **Progression:**

- Faster (walk → jog → run)
- Move the 2 lines further apart.

- **Coaching points:**

- **Passer:**
 - Keep your eyes on the ball.
 - Approach the ball side-on and sink low at the knees and hips.
 - Keep the head up.
 - Scoop the ball with the back hand and stop (control) the ball with the front hand.
 - Give a pass that is easily caught by the receiver
- **Receiver:**
 - Move forward from depth.
 - Keep the hands up to show the target.
 - Communicate with the passer.

- **Equipment:**

- 3 Balls
- 10 Cones

- **Area:**

Approx. 20m x 5m apart.



10. Turn around to pick up the ball

- **Description:**

Form groups of 2, one of the two players has a ball. Set out cones in a line, approx. 5m apart. Each of the groups of 2 players stand next to a cone. All the ball carriers face in the same way, and the 2nd player in each group stand in front or next to them, facing them. On the coach's whistle, the player with the ball rolls the ball past the 2nd player, who must turn around to chase the ball and pick it up, and then turn towards the cone again and run back past the cone.
- **Progression:**
 - The ball is rolled over its longitudinal axis, and then over its transverse axis, which makes the roll unpredictable.
- **Coaching points:**
 - Turn around quickly and accelerate towards the ball.
 - Keep your eyes on the ball.
 - Short steps when closer to the ball (to be able to change direction quickly).
 - Sink low at the knees and hips
 - Keep the head up.
 - Scoop the ball with the back hand and stop (control) the ball with the front hand.
 - In a pressure situation (when defending players are close), slide onto the ball, turn and get up to face the defenders.
- **Equipment:**
 - Balls
 - Cones
- **Area:**

Cones are approx. 5m apart.
- **Variation 1 (picking up the ball, taking the ball into contact & tackling):**

The same as above, but after rolling the ball, the player who rolled the ball becomes the defender and moves towards the player who is recovering the ball. The defender can only move forward on the coach's 2nd whistle (1-2 seconds later). The player who picked up the ball must turn and make contact and drive into the defending player.

- **Coaching points:**
 - Decide if you have time to pick up the ball, or if you have to slide into the ball to pick it up.
 - Turn quickly and anticipate the contact by taking a wide stance, sinking at the hips and knees, and presenting the one shoulder to make contact.
 - Take a big step into contact and keep driving forward.

- **Variation 2 (picking up the ball, evading & tackling):**

The same as variation 1, but after rolling the ball, the defending player has to wait a bit longer (2-3 seconds) before advancing. Set up an area of approx. 5m x 5m in which the players are allowed to move. After picking up the ball, the player must turn and then try to evade the defending player to score a try past the starting line.

 - **Progression:**
 - Smaller area.
 - Introduce a 2nd defender (and also a support player for the attacker).
 - **Coaching points:**
 - Decide if you have time to pick up the ball, or if you have to slide into the ball to pick it up.
 - Turn quickly and look for space.
 - Use change of pace and change of direction to avoid the defender.
 - Use fast feet to accelerate away from the defender.

PASSING & RECEIVING

1. Circle passing

- **Description:**
Divide the players into groups of 6-8 (depending on the number of players). Each group hold hands and forms a circle, and then let go of their hands. They then turn around where they are to face away from the middle of the circle. They have to keep their feet still where they are. One player has the ball in 2 hands and then start by giving the ball to the next player and the ball moves around in the circle. They have to use both hands (using the correct grip), and may not pass the ball. Each receiving player has to keep their hands out towards the ball, and then just swing their hips and shoulders across the body to give it to the next player.
- **Progression:**
 - ↑ Speed
 - Each player takes a step forward to enlarge the circle; now they have to pass the ball.
- **Coaching points:**
 - Hold the ball in two hands.
 - Look at the target.
 - Give the ball into the next player's hands.
 - Receivers keep their hands up to show the target.
 - Swing the ball in front of the body by turning the hips and shoulders.
 - Communicate.
- **Equipment:**
 - 1 Ball for each circle
- **Area:**
Open area



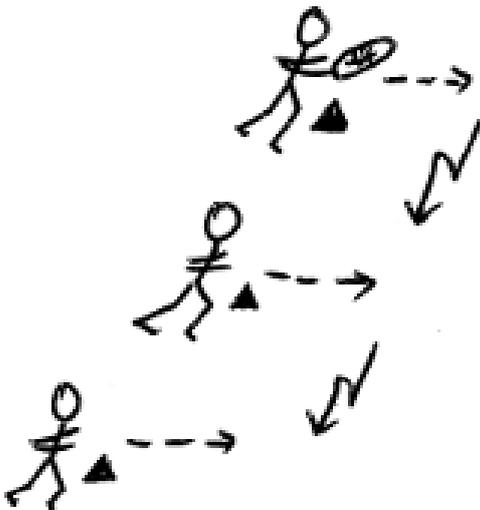
2. Passing while kneeling

- **Description:**
Groups of 3-4 (depending on the number of players and balls available). The players in a group sit upright on their knees next to one another in a line,

approx. 1-2m apart, all facing the same way. The player on one end has a ball in 2 hands, and on the coach's whistle, he passes the ball to the next player who receives the ball and passes to the next etc. When the ball reaches the last player, the ball is passed back in the opposite direction, so the ball is passed back and forth along the line. They are not allowed to move or turn their knees to the sides, but may only turn their shoulders to receive and then pass the ball. After passing back and forth a few times, the players change positions, so the players on the ends move in, and the middle players move to the ends.

- **Progression:**
 - Players position further apart (longer pass).
 - Players stand upright, but are still not allowed to move.
 - The groups can compete against one another by passing back and forth in a relay.
- **Coaching points:**
 - Passer:
 - Keep knees still, and only turn shoulders to receive and pass the ball.
 - Watch the receiver.
 - Give a pass that is easy to catch.
 - Receiver:
 - Turn shoulders towards the ball and keep hands up to show the target.
 - Watch the ball.
 - After receiving the ball, swing the arms in front of the body to give a pass to the next player.
 - Communicate with the passer.
- **Equipment:**
 - 1 Ball for every group
 - Cones to mark out the area
- **Area:**

Rectangular area of approx. 4-5m wide and 10m long (depending on the number of lines)



3. Staggered line passing (progression for “Passing while kneeling”)

- **Description:**

Set up a rectangular channel of 3-4 cones approx. 1-2m apart, by 15-20m long. The cones where the players start from, should be staggered away from the rectangle with the 1st cone on the corner of the rectangle and the other cones moving further away from the short side of the rectangle (to ensure that the players start behind the ball). At the other end of the rectangle, place a cone in line with each of the starting position cones (to ensure that the players move straight forward). Divide the players into groups behind the 3-4 cones, all facing down the channel, and the 1st player in each group holding a ball in both hands. On the coach's whistle, the whole group of 3-4 players start walking forward to the cone opposite their starting positions. The ball carrier passes the ball to the next player, who in turns passes it further down the line. The ball gets passed back and forth down the line. When they reach the other side, the player in possession of the ball keeps the ball and the players run back around the outside of the area to go the back of the line again; the players should also change positions, so the players on the ends move in, and the middle players move to the ends.

- **Progression:**

- Players position further apart (longer pass).
- ↑ Speed (walking → jogging → running).

- **Coaching points:**

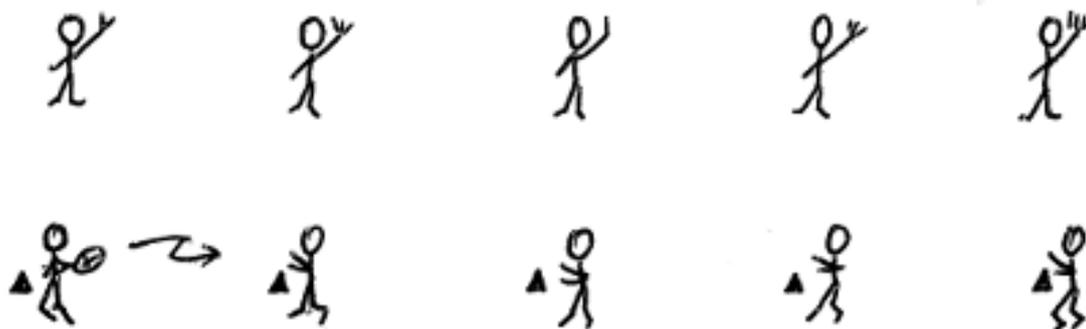
- **Ball carrier:**
 - Carry the ball in both hands.
 - Keep moving when receiving and passing (DON'T STOP)
 - Run straight.
 - Watch the receiver.
 - Give a pass that is easy to catch.
- **Receiver:**
 - Stay behind the ball carrier, to come from a position of depth.
 - Turn shoulders towards the ball and keep hands up to show the target.
 - Accelerate into the ball.
 - Keep hands up to show the target.
 - Communicate with the ball carrier.

- **Equipment:**

- Balls
- Cones to mark out the area

- **Area:**

Rectangular area of approx. 4-5m wide and 15-20m long.



4. How many fingers? (vision while passing)

- **Description:**

Divide the players into 2 groups. The players in a group line up next to one another, approx. 1-2m apart, facing the same way. The players in the 2nd group also line up next to one another, approx. 1-2m apart, approx. 3m away from the 1st line and facing the 1st line. So each player should have a player in front of him. The coach stands next to the first player in one of the lines and then passes the ball to that player. The player catches the ball and then has to look up at the player in front of him to see how many fingers he holds up, shouts out that number and then passes the ball to the next player. This same procedure is repeated down the line, and can also be passed back to the start again. They are not allowed to move or turn their knees to the sides, but may only turn their shoulders to receive and then pass the ball. The players in the 2 lines then swap roles.

- **Progression:**

- Players position further apart (longer pass).
- ↑ Speed

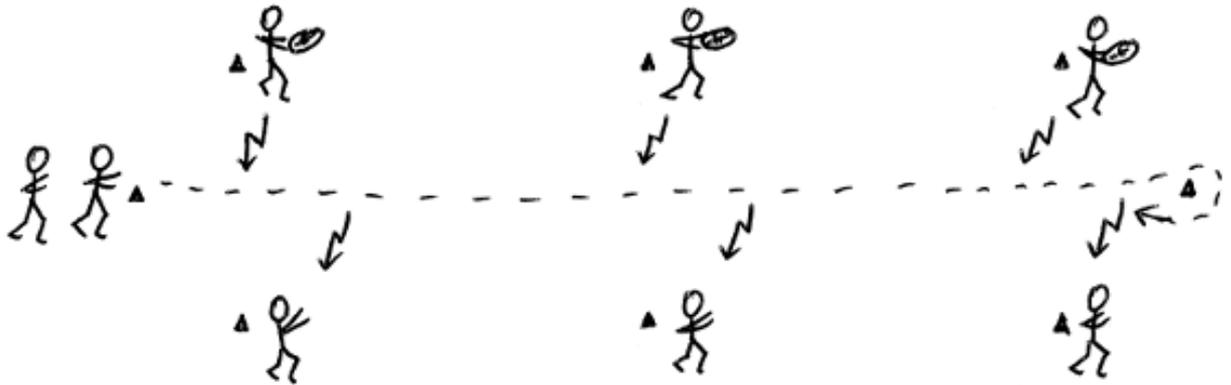
- **Coaching points:**

- **Passer:**
 - Keep knees still, and only turn shoulders to receive and pass the ball.
 - Make sure to catch the ball first, before looking up to see how many fingers are held up.
 - Watch the receiver.
 - Give a pass that is easy to catch.
- **Receiver:**
 - Turn shoulders towards the ball and keep hands up to show the target.
 - Watch the ball.
 - After receiving the ball, swing the arms in front of the body to give a pass to the next player, while simultaneously looking to see how many fingers are held up, and shouting the number.
 - Communicate with the passer.

- **Equipment:**

- Ball
- Cones to mark out the area

- **Area:**
Rectangular area of approx. 4-5m wide and 10m long (depending on the number of lines)



5. Argentinean passing:

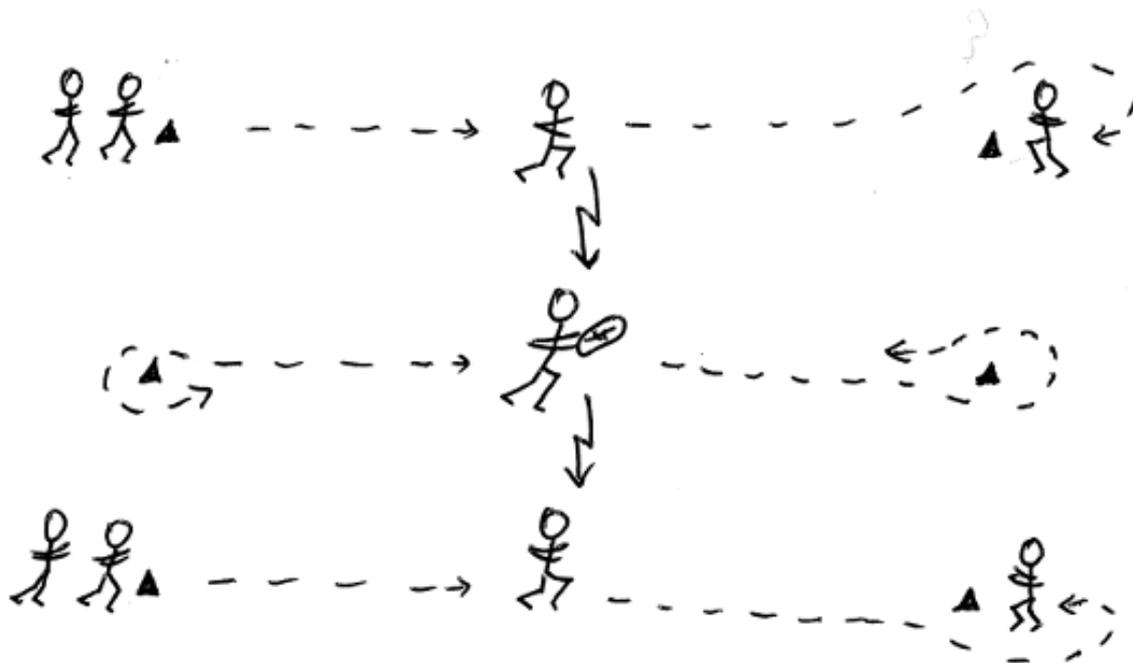
- **Description:**

Set up a rectangular channel of approx. 3-4m wide and 10m long. Also place a middle cone on each of the 4 sides of the rectangle, but the cones on the short sides should be 3m away from the side of the rectangle. Let 6 players stand on the 4 corners as well as the 2 cones in the middle of the long sides of the rectangle; these are the “side players”. All 3 players on one side of the rectangle should have a ball. The rest of the players line up behind the cone on the one short side of the rectangle; these are the “middle players”. On the coach’s whistle, the first middle player start moving forward down the middle of the channel. He receives the ball from the first side player, continues to move forward and then passes the ball to the player on the other side of the rectangle. He then receives the ball from the next side player, moves forward and passes it to the player on the other side of the rectangle. He also does the same with the last pair of side players. He then goes around the middle cone on the furthest side, and then comes back down the middle again, moving towards the starting cone, while repeating the procedure of receiving and passing the ball. After completing the last pass, he goes to the back of the line and the next player starts the run. The procedure is repeated until all the middle players had 2-3 runs down the middle (depending on the number of players). The players then swop so that there are 6 new side players.

- **Progression:**

- Players position further apart (longer pass).
- ↑ Speed (walking → jogging → running).

- 2 Players in the middle → 3 players in the middle (then the space between pairs of “side players” as well as the width of the channel should be increased).
- **Coaching points:**
 - Receive the ball while still behind the player.
 - Turn shoulders towards the ball and keep hands up to show the target.
 - Keep moving straight forward.
 - After receiving the ball, swing the arms in front of the body to give a pass to the receiver on the other side.
 - Watch the receiver.
 - Only pass the ball when you’ve moved ahead of the receiving player.
 - Give a pass that is easy to catch.
- **Equipment:**
 - Ball
 - Cones to mark out the area
- **Area:**
Rectangular area of approx. 3-4m wide and 10m long.

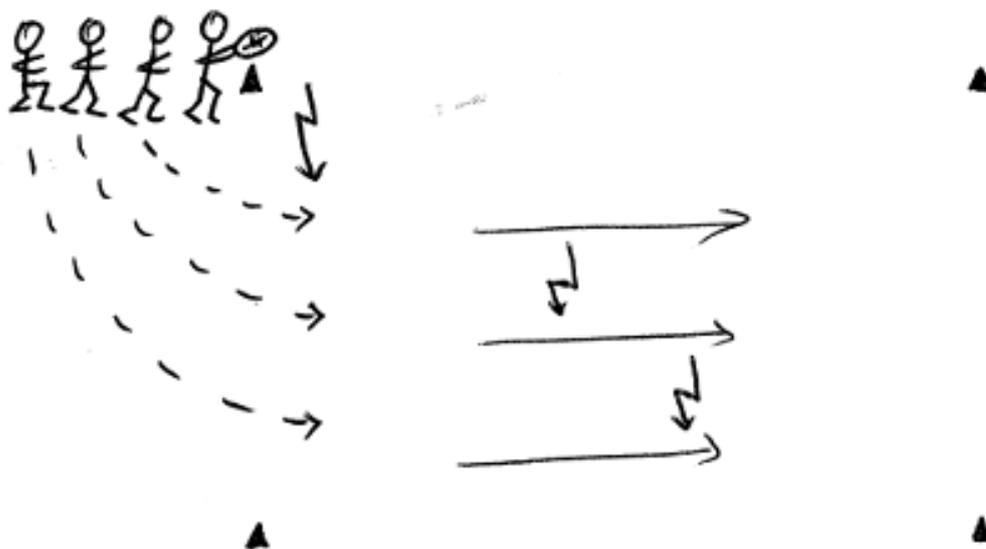


6. Centre run

- **Description:**
Set up a rectangular channel of approx. 4m wide and 10-15m long. Also place a middle cone on each of the two short sides of the rectangle. Divide the players equally, and let them line up behind the 4 corners of the rectangle facing the rectangle. Only one player stands on the middle cone on one side of the rectangle. The 3 players on that side start moving forward and pass the ball back and forth until they reach the opposite side of the rectangle, where the 2 players on the side go to the back of those lines, but the player in the middle

just turns around and goes back with the next 2 players. Upon reaching the original starting position again, the middle player is substituted with another player and the procedure is repeated, until all players had a chance to be the middle player.

- **Progression:**
 - Players position further apart (longer pass).
 - ↑ Speed (walking → jogging → running).
- **Coaching points:**
 - Ball carrier:
 - Carry the ball in both hands.
 - Run straight.
 - Watch the receiver.
 - Make sure you're in front of the receiver.
 - Give a pass that is easy to catch.
 - Receiver:
 - Stay behind the ball carrier, to come from a position of depth.
 - Turn shoulders towards the ball and keep hands up to show the target.
 - Accelerate into the ball.
 - Keep hands up to show the target.
 - Communicate with the ball carrier.
- **Equipment:**
 - Ball
 - Cones to mark out the area
- **Area:**
Rectangular area of approx. 4-5m wide and 10-15m long.



7. Flare out passing

- **Description:**

Divide the players into groups of 3-5. Set up an area of approx. 5m wide and 10-15m long. The players line up behind one another, behind the one corner of the rectangle, and the front player has a ball. On the coach's whistle, the ball carrier moves forward into the rectangle, and the players behind him must all move out simultaneously and form a staggered line to the ball carrier's left or right (depending on which cone they start from). The ball is then passed down the line while the players move from one side of the rectangle to the other side. Do the exercise from opposing sides so the passing can be to both left and right sides.

- **Progression:**

- ↑ Speed
- ↑ Number of players (3 → 4 → 5)

- **Coaching points:**

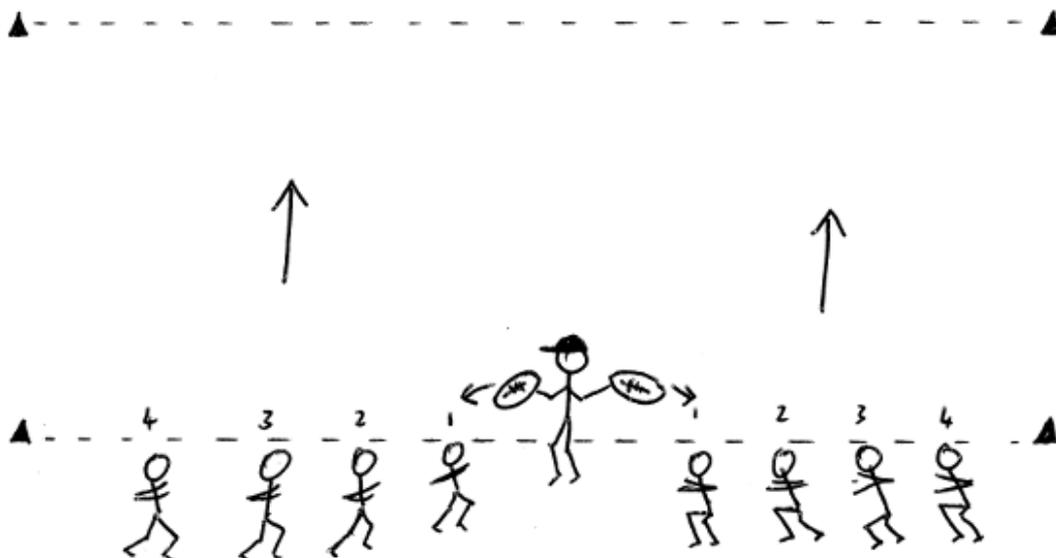
- Hold the ball in two hands.
- Give a pass that is easy to catch.
- Receivers keep their hands up to show the target.
- The players behind the ball carrier must accelerate and work hard to get into position in the line to receive the pass.
- Stay behind the ball carrier and run from a position of depth onto the ball.
- Communicate with other players.

- **Equipment:**

- 1 Ball for each group
- Cones to mark out the area

- **Area:**

Rectangular area of approx. 5m x 15m



8. Lateral passing

- **Description:**

Divide the players into groups of 3-4. Set up a rectangular channel of approx. 15-20m wide and 20-30m long. The coach stands in the middle of the one long side of the rectangle and 2 groups line up at either side of the coach, also on the line. The coach holds 2 balls and simultaneously hands a ball to the 1st player of each group. The groups then start running forward while passing the ball down the line. Each player should run with the ball in 2 hands, and should at least run a few steps with the ball before passing. The player on the end of the line then goes and score a try at the other end of the rectangle. The groups swop around and the players in a group also swop positions.

- **Progression:**

- Players position further apart (longer pass).
- The groups compete against one another.

- **Coaching points:**

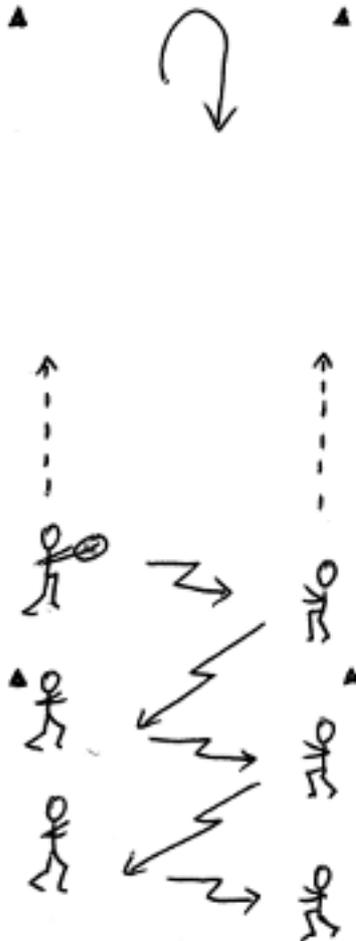
- Ball carrier:
 - Carry the ball in both hands.
 - Run straight.
 - Watch the receiver.
 - Make sure you're in front of the receiver.
 - Give a pass that is easy to catch.
- Receiver:
 - Stay behind the ball carrier, to come from a position of depth.
 - Turn shoulders towards the ball and keep hands up to show the target.
 - Accelerate into the ball.
 - Keep hands up to show the target.
 - Communicate with the ball carrier.

- **Equipment:**

- Balls
- Cones to mark out the area

- **Area:**

Rectangular area of approx. 15-20m wide and 20-30m long.



9. Z passing

- **Description:**

Divide the players into groups of 6-8, and set up a rectangular channel of approx. 2-3m wide and 20-30m long for each group of 6 players. Let the players line up behind the 2 cones on the short side of the rectangle facing the rectangle. One of the front players has a ball, and on the coach's whistle, all the players start moving forward down the channel. The ball carrier passes the ball to the player next to him, who then passes the ball to the player behind the original ball carrier. That player passes to the player next to him, who in turn passes backwards to the side again. This is repeated until the ball reaches the last player. The group turns around and does the same back down the channel.

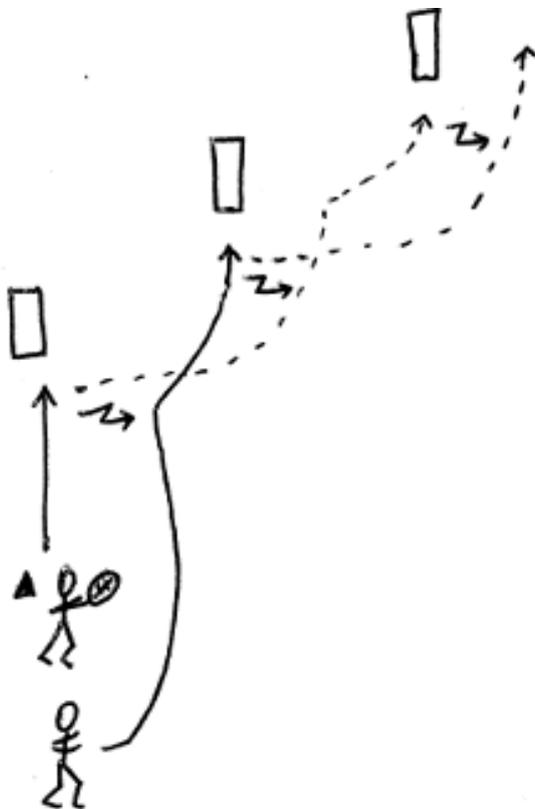
- **Progression:**

- Players position further apart (longer pass).
- ↑ Speed (walking → jogging → running).
- Every time a player passes the ball, he goes to the back of his line so that the passing can continue until reaching the end of the area.

- **Coaching points:**

- Ball carrier:
 - Carry the ball in both hands.

- Run straight.
- Watch the receiver.
- Make sure you're in front of the receiver.
- Give a pass that is easy to catch.
- Receiver:
 - Stay behind the ball carrier, to come from a position of depth.
 - Turn shoulders towards the ball and keep hands up to show the target.
 - Accelerate into the ball.
 - Keep hands up to show the target.
 - Communicate with the ball carrier.
- **Equipment:**
 - Ball
 - Cones to mark out the area
- **Area:**
Rectangular area of approx. 2-3m wide and 20-30m long.

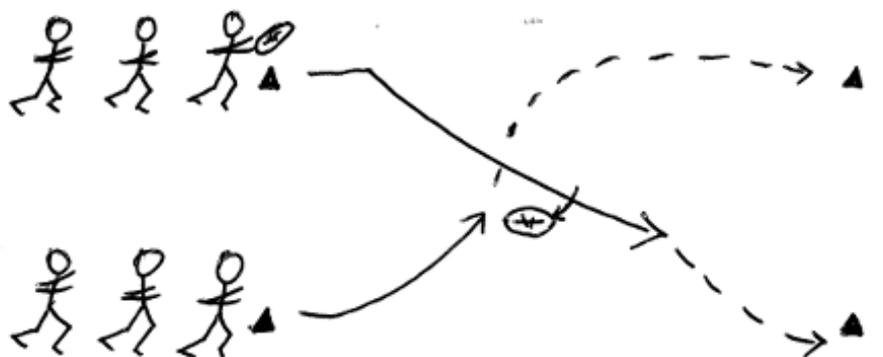


10. Pass & loop around (support)

- **Description:**
Set up 3-4 tackle bags, agility poles or players as defenders in a diagonal line approx. 5m apart. Place a cone 3m from the 1st “defender”. The players form groups of 2 and line up behind the cone, with the front player holding a ball in 2 hands. The ball carrier moves toward the 1st defender, with the supporting player behind him. The support player comes out from behind the ball carrier (towards the other defenders), and just before making contact with the

defender, the ball carrier passes the ball to him. He then moves towards the next defender, while the original ball carrier loops behind him and then receives the ball back from him before he makes contact with the 2nd defender. They keep passing and looping around to receive the ball again, until they go pass the last defender.

- **Progression:**
 - ↑ Speed
 - The defenders can start moving forward and grab at the ball
- **Coaching points:**
 - Ball carrier:
 - Run straight at the defender to commit him.
 - Time the pass (too early = the defender can follow the receiver, too late = the defender can tackle the ball carrier)
 - Watch the receiver.
 - Give a pass that is easy to catch.
 - Follow the pass and become a support runner.
 - Support player (receiver):
 - Run from a position of depth.
 - Accelerate into the ball.
 - Keep hands up to show the target.
 - Communicate with the ball carrier.
 -
- **Equipment:**
 - Balls (or more so players don't have to wait for the ball)
 - Cones to mark out the area
 - Tackle bags / agility poles
- **Area:**
Approx. 20m x 20m



11. Scissors passing (u/9's only)

- **Description:**
Divide the players into 2 equal groups. Set up a square area of 5m x 5m, and place another cone in the middle of the area. The groups line up behind 2 of the corner cones facing towards the area. The players on one side has balls. On the coach's whistle, the 2 front players start moving forward into the area for a

few steps before changing direction and moving towards the opposite cone. They cross one another at the middle cone, where the ball carrier runs in front of the support runner, and passes to him as he is crossing behind him. The players then continue to the opposite cones, and runs back around the outside of the area to fall back in line again. They continuously swap lines to alternate between ball carrier and receiver roles.

- **Progression:**
 - Larger area.
 - ↑ Speed (walking → jogging → running).
 - Place a defender at the middle cone who has to stand still, but may swing his arms to try and get the ball.
- **Coaching points:**
 - Ball carrier:
 - Carry the ball in both hands.
 - Run straight before side-stepping to change direction.
 - Watch the receiver.
 - Give a pass that is easy to catch, and towards the side where the receiver is coming from.
 - Receiver:
 - Run straight before side-stepping to change direction.
 - Stay behind the ball carrier, to come from a position of depth.
 - Keep hands up to show the target.
 - Accelerate into the ball.
 - Communicate with the ball carrier.
- **Equipment:**
 - Balls
 - Cones to mark out the area
- **Area:**
Square area of approx. 5m x 5m.

INTRO EXERCISES FOR CONTACT & TACKLING

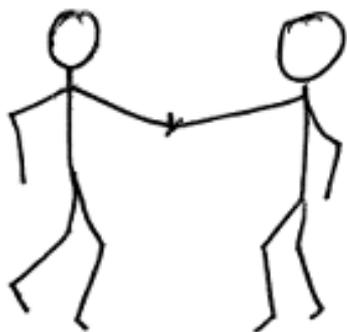


1. Just fall down:

Each player on his own, in an open space. Players sit upright on their knees and cross their arms in front of their chests. From this position they just fall down, without putting out their arms to stop the fall. They have to fall down “in segments”, by bringing their hips to the ground first, then their upper body and rolling onto their shoulders.

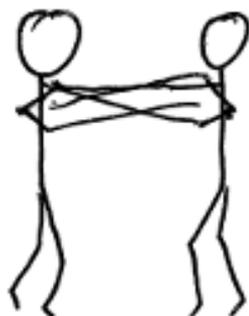
Progression:

- Kneeling position → upright position; first bending at their knees and making contact with their knees, then their hips and then rolling onto their shoulders.
- Walk forward 3-4 steps, and then fall down.
- Each player can hold a ball while they're going to ground; control the ball and turn to place the ball.



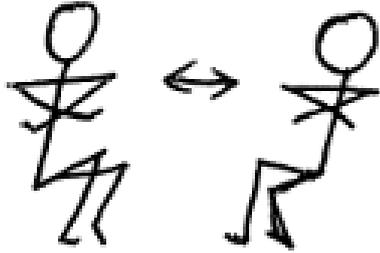
2. Pulling arms:

Groups of 2 (similar size). Players stand facing one another and hold one another's R-hand. On the coach's whistle, they have to try and pull the other player off balance by pulling his arm. Change to the L-hand.



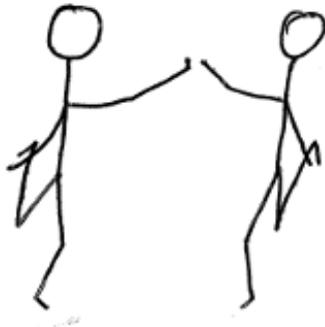
3. Pulling shoulders:

Groups of 2 (similar size). Players stand on their knees facing one another. They put both their hands on the other player's shoulders. On the coach's whistle, they have to try and pull/push the other player to ground. They can also do this standing upright.



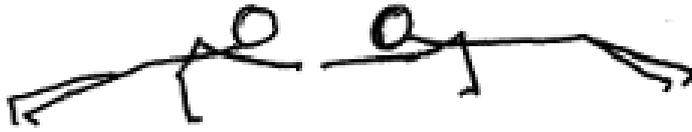
4. Chicken bump cars:

Groups of 2 (similar size). Players cross their arms in front of them, and go down onto their haunches. On the coach's whistle, they have to try and knock the other player over by bumping into them. They must bump the other player with their shoulders.



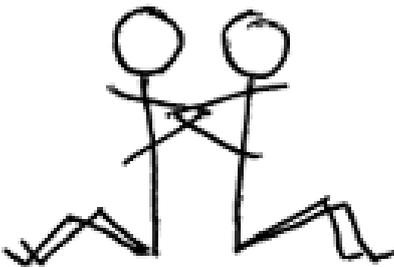
5. One-legged bump cars:

Set up a square area of approx. 10m x 10m (depending on the number of players). Players stand on one leg and hold the other leg behind their backs. All the players are in the area. On the coach's whistle, they have to start hopping around and try to knock the other players over by bumping into them. They must bump the other player with their shoulders. The last remaining player wins.



6. Push-up arm wrestling:

Groups of 2. Players lie opposite one another and go up into the push-up position. On the coach's whistle, they have to try and slap the other player's arm(s) away so that they fall over, and at the same time try and stay up while the opposing player is trying to slap their arms from under them.



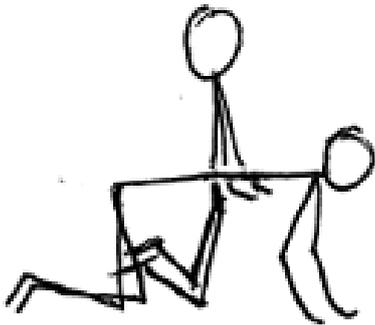
7. Back-2-back wrestling:

Groups of 2 (similar size). Players sit with their backs against one another and arms hooked into one another, and their legs pulled up so their knees are flexed. On the coach's whistle, they have to try and pull the other player to the left. The player who manages to pull the other player onto the ground to his left, wins. Repeat by pulling to the right as well.



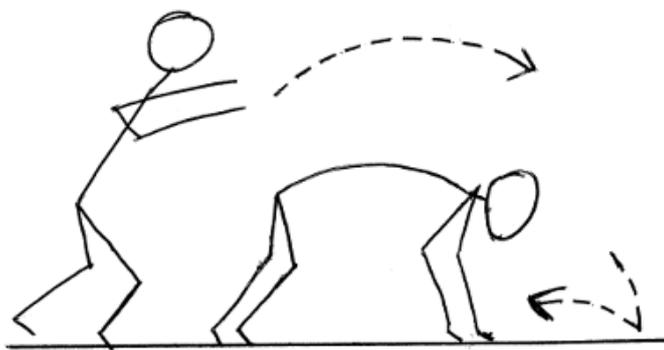
8. Hugging wrestle:

Groups of 2 (similar size). Players sit on their knees and “hug” one another by putting their arms around one another. On the coach’s whistle, they have to try and pull the other player to the left. The player who manages to pull the other player onto the ground to his left, wins. Repeat by pulling to the right as well.



9. Flip the turtle:

Groups of 2 (similar size). One player sits on his hands and knees (all 4’s position), and the 2nd player sits on his knees to the one side of the player, with his arms underneath the other player’s stomach. On the coach’s whistle, the player on his knees has to try and throw the player on all 4’s off balance by flipping him over. The 2 players then change roles.



10. Over & under:

Groups of 2 (similar size). One player stands on his hands and feet (“on all fours”), and the other player stands behind him. On the coach’s whistle, the back player jumps over the front player’s back by spreading his legs to the side of the front player’s body and pushing on his back with both hands. Once he lands in front of the player, he immediately turns around and crawls through the player’s legs. At the back, he turns around and repeats the procedure. This can be repeated 3-5 times before the players change roles.

Progression:

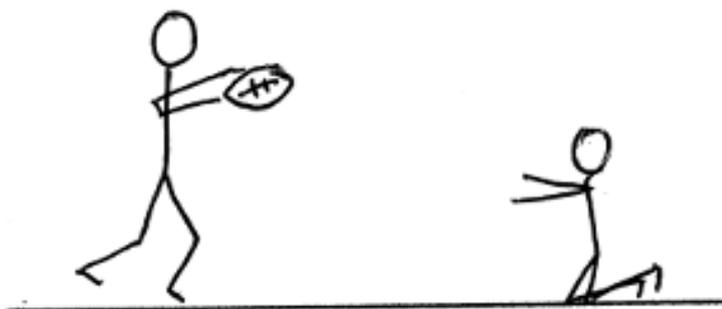
- The player on all fours, has a ball between his arms. The player at the back jumps over, immediately turns around and has to tackle the other player who picks up the ball and moves forward towards him. The player on all fours may only pick up the ball once the jumping player has landed.

TACKLING



1. Footwork game (warm-up for tackling)

Groups of 2 in an open area. The players stand in a boxer's stance facing one another; arms up and 1 foot forward towards the other player. They have to try and step onto the other player's feet. The one who scores the most points, wins.



2. Tackling on the knees

- **Description:**

Set up cones to form 2 lines, approx. 2m apart. Groups of 2 (players should be of similar size); both players on their knees, one player on each line, facing one another. On the coach's whistle, the one player (attacking player) "walks" forward on his knees towards the defender, who must tackle him to ground. The attacking players are only allowed to go the left of the tackler, so the tackler knows which shoulder to use and which side his head must be. Then to the right as well. After repeating the procedure 3-5 times, the attackers and defenders swop positions.

- **Variation (lead-up to this activity):**
 - the tackler holds his hands behind his back, and when the ball carrier walks towards him, the tackler just hits him with the shoulder; one shoulder and then the other shoulder
- **Progression:**
 - The attackers can decide which side of the tackler he wants to attack; the tackler must then adjust accordingly.
 - Change body position (on knees → on haunches → in crouched position): first slow and then faster.
 - More space between the players.
 - Ball carrier can carry a ball; after the tackle, the attacking player must try and turn and place the ball, while the defending player gets up to play the ball.
- **Coaching points:**
 - Keep your head up & sight the target.
 - Hit with the shoulder & put your head on the side of his body.
 - Wrap arms around the attacker's body and pull towards you.
 - Drive forward from your legs.
 - Get up as quick as possible and contest for the ball.
- **Equipment:**
 - 1 Ball for every group of 2 players
 - Cones to mark out the lines.
- **Area:**

Rectangular area of approx. 2m wide and 10-15m long (depending on the number of groups)



3. Tackler in the middle

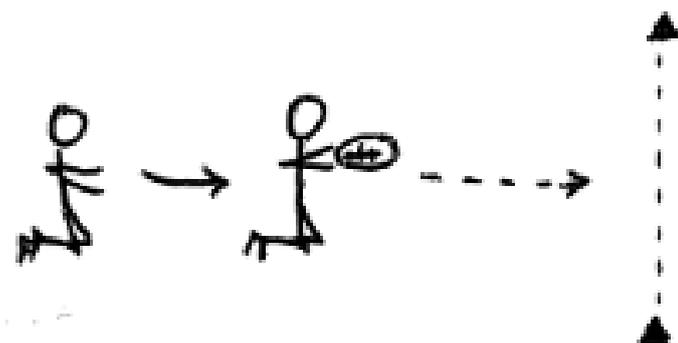
- **Description:**

Groups of 3 (players should be of similar size). In an open area, all 3 players sit on their knees in a line next to one another. The 2 players on the sides (attacking players) face one direction and the middle player (tackler) faces in

the opposite direction. On the coach's whistle, the middle player first has to tackle the one player, and then the other player. After repeating the procedure 3-5 times, the attackers and defender swap positions.

- **Progression:**
 - The coach calls "left" or "right" and the tackler must then tackle that player first, and thereafter the other player as well.
 - Competition to see who can complete the most tackles in a certain time (alternating between the 2 sides).
- **Coaching points:**
 - Keep your head up & sight the target.
 - Hit with the shoulder & put your head on the side of his body.
 - Wrap arms around the attacker's body and pull towards you.
 - Drive forward from your legs.
- **Equipment:**
 - None
- **Area:**

Open area large enough for all the players with sufficient space between groups.

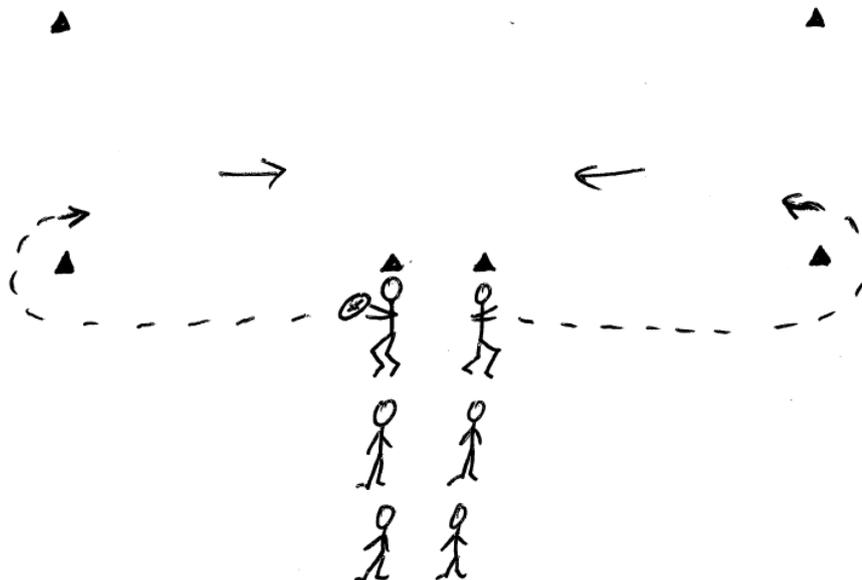


4. Rear tackle

- **Description:**

Form groups of 2. Both players sit on their knees, 1m apart and behind one another, facing a line or cones approx. 3m away. The front player has a ball. On the coach's whistle, the ball carrier has to "walk" forward on his knees and try to reach the line to score a try, while the tackler has to try and catch him to tackle him from behind. After repeating the procedure 3-5 times, the attackers and defenders swap positions.
- **Progression:**
 - Change to an upright, standing body position.
- **Coaching points:**
 - Defenders:
 - Keep your head up & sight the target.

- Hit with the shoulder under the ball carrier's bottom & put your head on the side of his body.
- Wrap arms around the attacker's body and pull towards you.
- Drive forward from your legs.
- Get up as quick as possible and contest for the ball.
- **Equipment:**
 - 1 Ball for every group of 2 players
 - Cones to mark out the "try line"
- **Area:**
Rectangular area of approx. 4m wide and 10-15m long (depending on the number of groups)



5. Attacker vs Tackler

- **Description:**
Set up a rectangular area of approx. 3m wide x 6-8m long. Place 2 cones 1m apart in the middle of the one long side of the rectangle. The players form groups of 2, with someone of similar size, and line up behind the 2 middle cones, facing towards the rectangle. One of the 2 players has a ball. On the coach's whistle, the 2 players run towards the closest corners of the rectangle (1 left and the other one right), runs around the corner cone and enter the rectangle from opposing sides. The ball carrier has to try and beat the defender to go score a try at the other end of the rectangle, while the defender has to tackle him. The area is quite narrow to ensure a greater chance of the defender having to make the tackle. The 2 players then goes to the back of the other line to swap their roles.
- **Progression:**
 - ↑ Speed (jogging → running)
 - 1 vs 1 → 2vs 2

- **Coaching points:**
 - **Tackler:**
 - Limit the attacker's space by moving quickly towards the attacker.
 - Slow down when getting close to the attacker, so you can adjust to any direction changes.
 - Keep your head up & sight the target.
 - Sink low at the hips and knees and take a power-step into the contact.
 - Hit with the shoulder & put your head on the side of his body.
 - Wrap arms around the attacker's body and pull towards you.
 - Drive forward from your legs.
 - **Ball carrier:**
 - Hold the ball in 2 hands.
 - Draw the defender in one direction before changing your direction.
 - Take short steps when changing direction.
 - Accelerate away from the defender.
- **Equipment:**
 - Ball
 - Cones to mark out the area and starting positions.
- **Area:**
Rectangular area of approx. 3m wide and 6-8m long



6. Continued attack & defence (taking the ball into contact & tackle)

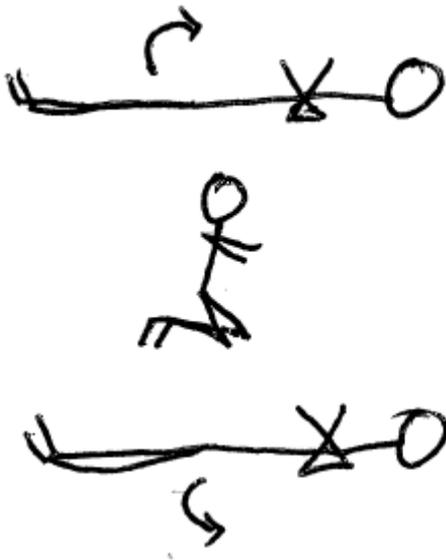
- **Description:**
Form groups of 4; one group of 4 attacks with the ball, and another group of 4 defends. The attackers line up behind one another behind a cone and the defenders line up in front of them, but 5m away from the cone and spaced out 5m from one another, behind one another. The defenders are on their knees and face the attackers. The first attacker moves forward towards the 1st defender and gets tackled. As he is falling towards the ground, he turns towards his support players and places the ball for them. The 2nd attacker picks up the ball and passes to the 3rd attacker who runs from depth. Attacker 3 then moves towards the next defender and gets tackled. The sequence is repeated until the

group moves past the last defender. The attackers and defenders then swap positions.

- **Progression:**
 - Attackers move faster (walk → jog)
 - Defenders change body position (on knees → on haunches → in crouched position)
- **Coaching points:**
 - Defenders:
 - Keep your head up & sight the target.
 - Hit with the shoulder & put your head on the side of the attacker's body.
 - Wrap arms around the attacker's body and pull towards you.
 - Drive forward from your legs
 - Attackers:
 - Receive the ball by coming from depth.
 - Take a step into the contact of the tackle and sink low at the knees and hips.
 - Move the ball away from the defender.
 - Lower your shoulder and make contact with your shoulder.
 - Turn with the tackle when going to ground, and place the ball towards your support players.
- **Equipment:**
 - 1 Ball per group of attackers
 - Cones to mark out the positions
- **Area:**

One line of approx. 20m per group of attackers and defenders.

TAKING THE BALL INTO CONTACT (& RUCKING)



1. Roll overs (warm-up exercise for cleaning)

- **Description:**
Groups of 3; 2 players lie on their backs, approx. 2m apart with their arms crossed on their chests, and their bodies straight and stiff. The 3rd player kneels in the middle of the other 2 players. On the coach's whistle, the middle player must roll over one player and then immediately roll over the 2nd player; from the middle outwards). He then has to move around and roll the 1st player back towards the middle, and then the 2nd player. He keeps on rolling them over away from the middle and back towards the middle. Players change roles, until everyone had a chance to start in the middle.
- **Coaching points:**
 - Legs wide apart and sink low at the hips and knees.
 - Drive from the bottom up.
 - Keep the head up, and keep looking up.
- **Equipment:**
None
- **Area:**
Open area (depending on the number of players)

2. Keep ripping & rolling (warm-up exercise for ripping the ball)

- **Description:**

Set up a large square area of approx. 15m x 15m. Groups of 4-5 (depending on the number of players and ball available), and the players are numbered from number 1 to 4 (or 5). All the groups are in the area and all the number 1's have a ball. On the coach's whistle, all the players start moving around in the area; the ball carrier stays in front and the others follow him. Every time the coach blows the whistle, the ball carrier has to stop, turn side-on and present the ball to the back. The next numbered player then has to drive into him, rip the ball and roll to the side and carry on moving forward. The procedure is repeated for a time period determined by the coach.

- **Progression:**

- ↑ Speed (walk → jog).
- Add a defender: the original ball carrier, turns and passes the ball to the next player who must then drive into the defender (original ball carrier). The 3rd player then has to rip the ball, and for the next round becomes the defender.

- **Coaching points:**

- Ball carrier:
 - Wide stance when stopping (as if making contact).
 - Turn your shoulder to make contact with the defender.
 - Protect and present the ball for the support player.
- Support player ("Ripper"):
 - Wide stance when making contact with the ball carrier.
 - Turn your upper body sideways and get your shoulder past the ball.
 - Rip the ball down from the ball carrier, using the arms and whole upper body.
 - Keep rolling around and to the front of the ball carrier and break away going forward.

- **Equipment:**

- 1 Ball for every group
- Cones to mark out the area.

- **Area:**

Square area of approx. 15m x 15m (depending on the number of players)



3. Roll it and go get it

- **Description:**
- Groups of 2 (players should be of similar size), and a ball per group. In an open area, the 2 players stand facing one another, approx. 2m apart. The player with the ball rolls the ball to the 2nd player who has to pick up the ball and make contact with the 1st player, driving into him while protecting and presenting the ball. After contact of a few seconds (determined by the coach), they separate, swop roles and repeats the procedure.
- **Progression:**
 - 2 vs 2 (1st player takes the ball into contact and the 2nd player rips the ball)
 - 3 vs 3 (1st player takes the ball into contact and drives forward before going to ground, the 2nd and 3rd players clean the defenders away).
- **Coaching points:**
 - Ball carrier:
 - Take a wide power-step into the contact.
 - Turn side on and make contact with the shoulder.
 - Legs wide apart and sink low at the hips and knees.
 - Drive from the bottom up.
 - Keep driving forward with the legs.
 - Make the ball available for supporting players.
 - Support player:
 - Wide stance when making contact with the ball carrier.
 - Turn your upper body sideways and get your shoulder past the ball.
 - Rip the ball down from the ball carrier, using the arms and whole upper body.
- **Equipment:**
 - Balls
 - Cones
 - Contact shield(s)

- **Area:**

Rectangular area of approx. 4m wide and 10m long



4. Running into contact:

- **Description:**

Set up a line of 4 cones, approx. 3m apart. Divide the players equally between the 1st and last cones, facing towards one another. Place a ball next to one of the middle cones, and the coach stands next to the other middle cone holding a contact shield. The front player of the line closest to the ball moves forward, picks up the ball and then drives into the contact shield before going to ground and placing the ball next to the 3rd cone. He then goes to the back of the opposite line. The coach moves to the other middle cone and turns to face the opposite group, who then repeats the procedure. The procedure is repeated for a time period determined by the coach.

- **Coaching points:**

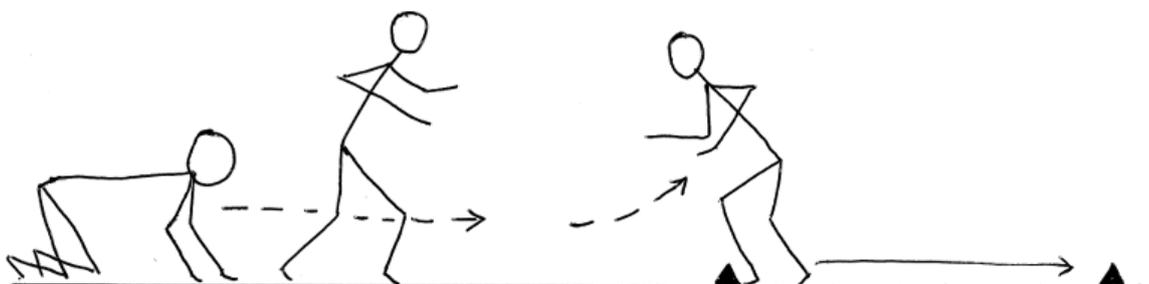
- Take a wide power-step into the contact.
- Turn side on and make contact with the shoulder.
- Legs wide apart and sink low at the hips and knees.
- Drive from the bottom up.
- Keep driving forward with the legs.
- Control the ball when placing it.

- **Equipment:**

- Ball
- Cones to mark out the positions
- Contact shield

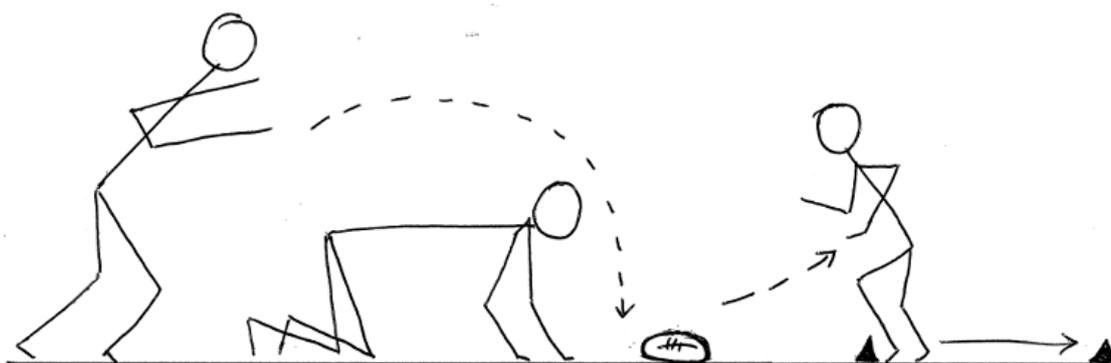
- **Area:**

Line of approx. 10m long



5. Through the legs & up (clean from a low position)

- **Description:**
Groups of 3 (similar size). The 1st player is sitting on his hands and knees, just behind the 2nd player who is standing upright with his legs spread apart and facing the same way as the 1st player. The 3rd player is standing at a cone 3m away from the 2nd player and facing the other 2 players; he should be in a wide stance, ready for contact, and can hold a contact shield if available. On the coach's whistle, player 1 needs to crawl through player 2's legs, and then from this low position start rising up into player 3. Player 1 should get his arms around player 3 and drive him to a cone/line 2m back. They can repeat this procedure 2-3 times before changing roles.
- **Progression:**
 - Introduce a 4th player, lying sideways with a ball next to him, in front of player 3. Player 1 needs to go through player 2's legs, drives over player 4 to drive the defender away. Player 2 acts as a supporting player who picks up the ball.
- **Coaching points:**
 - Keep the head up and make contact with the shoulders.
 - Start low, make contact with the defender and drive him up and away from the ball.
 - Keep driving forward with the legs, and drive over the breakdown.
- **Equipment:**
 - Balls
 - Cones
 - Contact shield(s)
- **Area:**
Open area (depending on the number of players)



6. Help the bunny:

- **Description:**
Groups of 3 (similar size). The same setup as "Through the legs & up", but player 1 is standing upright and player 2 is standing on his hands and knees in front of him. There is also a ball lying between player 2 and player 3. On the coach's whistle, player 1 needs to jump over player 2's back (bunny hop) and

pick up the ball. He then has to drive into player 3 who is the defender trying to stop him. Player 1 then goes to ground and places the ball. After player 1 picks up the ball, player 2 gets up from the kneeling position, and follows player 1 into contact. After player 1 goes to ground, player 2 needs to get his arms around player 3 and drive him away from the ball to a cone/line 2m back.

- **Coaching points:**

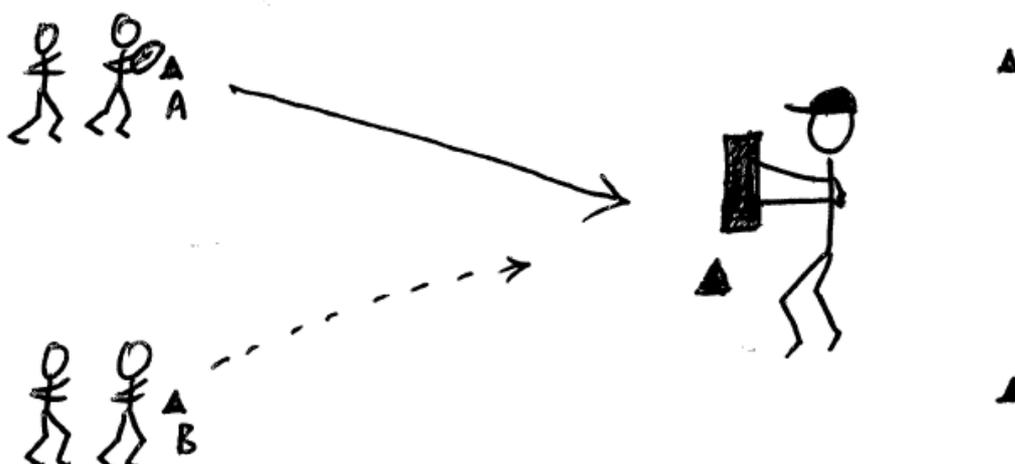
- Ball carrier:
 - Take a wide power-step into the contact.
 - Turn side on and make contact with the shoulder.
 - Legs wide apart and sink low at the hips and knees.
 - Drive from the bottom up.
 - Keep driving forward with the legs.
 - When going to ground, place the ball for supporting players.
- "Cleaner":
 - Take a wide power-step into the contact.
 - Keep the head up and make contact with the shoulders.
 - Start low, make contact with the defender and drive him up and away from the ball.
 - Keep driving forward with the legs, and drive over the breakdown.

- **Equipment:**

- Balls
- Cones
- Contact shield(s)

- **Area:**

Open area (depending on the number of players)



7. Contact & rip:

- **Description:**

Set up a rectangular area of approx. 4m wide and 10m long. Split the players into 2 and let them line up behind the 2 cones forming the short side of the

rectangle. The coach, or 1-2 players, with contact shields, stand in the middle of the rectangle. The front player at cone A has a ball, and on the coach's whistle, he runs towards and make contact with the defender(s). The attacking player stays on his feet and drives into the defender, while presenting the ball for a supporting player. On the coach's 2nd whistle (1s later), the front player at cone B also runs towards the defender and drives into the maul formed by his teammate and the defender. The supporting player rips the ball from the ball carrier and rolls to the side of the maul, and then breaks away and runs to score a try behind the line of the rectangle. The original ball carrier then goes to the back of the support players' line and the support player goes to the back of the ball carriers' line. This procedure is repeated by the next 2 players.

- **Coaching points:**

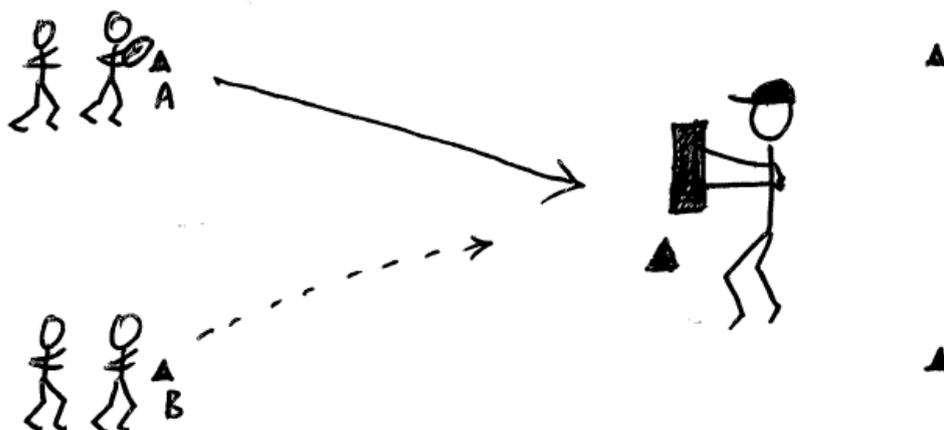
- Ball carrier:
 - Take a wide power-step into the contact.
 - Turn side on and make contact with the shoulder.
 - Legs wide apart and sink low at the hips and knees.
 - Drive from the bottom up.
 - Keep driving forward with the legs.
 - Make the ball available for supporting players.
- Support player:
 - Take a wide power-step into the contact.
 - Secure the ball as soon as possible.
 - Keep driving forward with the legs.
 - Keep the head up to see what's happening in front of you.
 - Decide when to break away and then accelerate away.

- **Equipment:**

- Balls
- Cones
- Contact shield(s)

- **Area:**

Rectangular area of approx. 4m wide and 10m long



8. Contact & ruck

- **Description:**

Similar to “Contact & rip”, but in this exercise a ruck is formed and then cleaned. The ball carrier at cone A runs towards and make contact with the defender(s). The attacking player stays on his feet and drives into the defender for 2-3m, then goes to ground, and places the ball for his supporting players. The 1st supporting player (from cone B) runs towards the breakdown and cleans the defending player away by driving over the breakdown. The next supporting player then arrives and picks up the ball and breaks away and runs to score a try behind the line of the rectangle. The players change between ball carrier, 1st arriving player and 2nd arriving player roles.

- **Progression:**

- A 3rd supporting player can be added. Then the 1st arriving player drives the defender away, the 2nd player picks up the ball and passes to the 3rd player who runs onto the ball from depth.

- **Coaching points:**

- Ball carrier:
 - Take a wide power-step into the contact.
 - Turn side on and make contact with the shoulder.
 - Legs wide apart and sink low at the hips and knees.
 - Drive from the bottom up.
 - Keep driving forward with the legs.
 - When going to ground, place the ball for supporting players.
- “Cleaner”:
 - Take a wide power-step into the contact.
 - Keep the head up and make contact with the shoulders.
 - Start low, make contact with the defender and drive him up and away from the ball.
 - Keep driving forward with the legs, and drive over the breakdown.

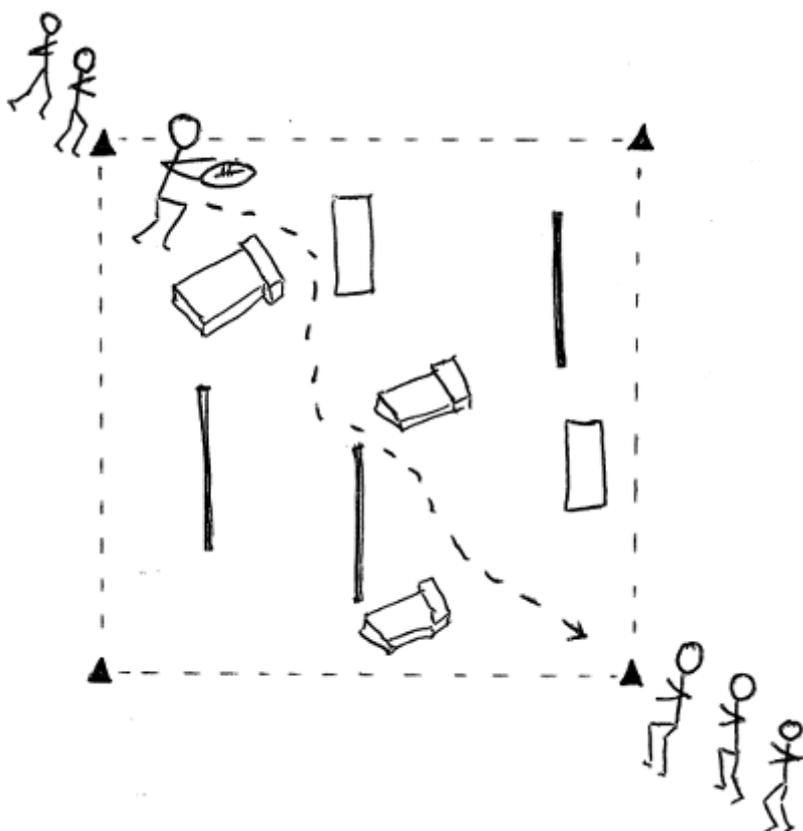
- **Equipment:**

- Balls
- Cones
- Contact shield(s)

- **Area:**

Rectangular area of approx. 4m wide and 10m long

EVASIVE RUNNING (SIDE-STEP)



1. War zone

- **Description:**

Set up a square area of approx. 10-15m x 10-15m (depending on the number of players). Place “bombs” (contact shields, tackle bags, agility poles, cones etc.) all over the middle of the area. Divide the players into 2 equal groups who line up behind 2 opposing corners of the square. The front players of each line should have a ball. On the coach’s whistle, the 2 front players start running through the “war zone”. They can take any route to get to the other side, but have to step the “bombs” as well as the other player to get to the other side safely. Once at the other side, they hand the ball to the front player on that side and then goes to the back of the line.

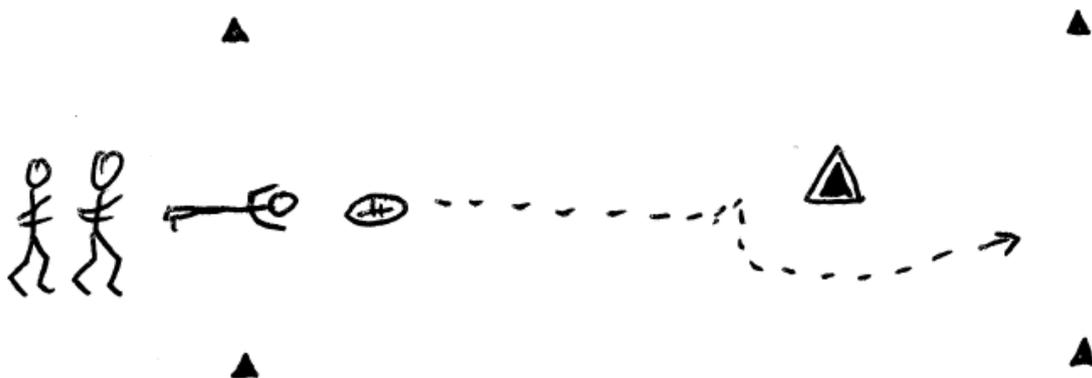
- **Progression:**

- ↑ Speed (jog → run).

- **Coaching points:**

- Hold the ball in 2 hands.

- Take short steps when changing direction.
- Keep watching to see all the “bombs” and the other player.
- **Equipment:**
 - Balls
 - Cones to mark out the lines
 - Tackle bags, contact shields, agility poles.
- **Area:**
 - Square area of approx. 10-15m x 10-15m (depending on the number of players).



2. Dodge the cone

- **Description:**

Set up rectangular areas (depending on the number of players) of approx. 3m x 5m, with another cone (preferably a different, bright colour) 1m from the end of the furthest short side and in the middle of the rectangle. The players divide equally between the areas. One player lies flat on his stomach in the middle and in front of the opposite short side of the rectangle, facing the middle of the rectangle. Place a ball in front of the player. The rest of his group lines up behind him. The player has to jump up, pick up the ball, and then run towards the other end of the rectangle side-stepping the cone that is in the middle in front of him, and score a try. He then runs back to his line and places the ball in front of the next player who is already lying on his stomach. All the players repeat the procedure. Let all the players first side-step to one side, and then to the other side.
- **Progression:**
 - ↑ Speed (jog → run).
 - Substitute the “defender” cone with a player who is allowed to move across the width of the rectangle from where he starts, but is not allowed to move forward towards the attacker.
- **Coaching points:**
 - Hold the ball in 2 hands.

- Draw the defender in one direction to create space, and then move into the open space.
- Take short steps when changing direction.
- Accelerate away from the defender (cone).
- **Equipment:**
 - 1 Ball for every group
 - Cones to mark out the lines
- **Area:**
Rectangular areas of approx. 3m x 5m

3. Zigzag stepping

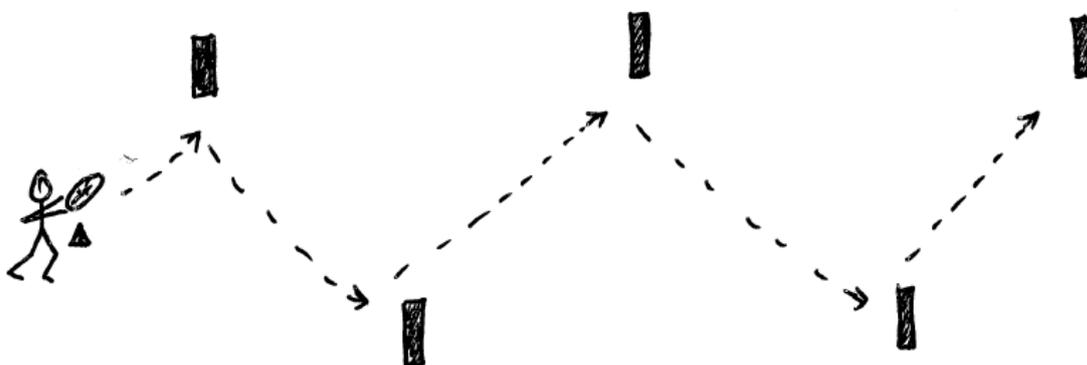
- **Description:**
Set up 3-4 lines (depending on the number of players and balls) of 5 cones, 3-4m apart, and then a 6th cone approx. 5m further. The players divide into equal groups behind the first cone in each line, and the front player in each group has a ball. On the coach's whistle, the front player moves towards the first cone and side-steps the cone to one side, and then runs to the 2nd cone and steps that cone to the other side, and so on until he passes the 5th cone. He then runs towards the last cone and scores a try, and runs back to his line and gives the ball to the next player who repeats the procedure.
- **Progression:**
 - ↑ Speed (walk → jog → run).
 - Move the cones closer together.
 - Let the lines race against one another.
- **Coaching points:**
 - Hold the ball in 2 hands.
 - Take short steps when changing direction.
 - Accelerate away from the defender (cone).
- **Equipment:**
 - 1 Ball for every line
 - Cones to mark out the lines
- **Area:**
Rectangular area of approx. 25m long and approx. 10m wide (depending on the number of lines)

4. Step the standing defender

- **Description:**
Set up a square area of approx. 8m x 8m. Split the group in two; the attacking players line up behind one corner (cone A), and the defending players line up in the middle of the side opposite to where the attacking players are standing (cone B). The attacking player have a ball and on the coach's whistle, he has to run from cone A to the line between cones C & D to score a try. The front defending player at cone B starts simultaneously and has to try and tag the attacking player before he can score the try. The attacking player either has to run straight for the line (and then also shift the ball to the outside arm to protect it from any possible contact) or has to draw the defending player in one direction

and then evade him by side-stepping to the opposite side. Do the exercise from both sides to get the attacking players stepping off both feet. Swop the attacking and defending players.

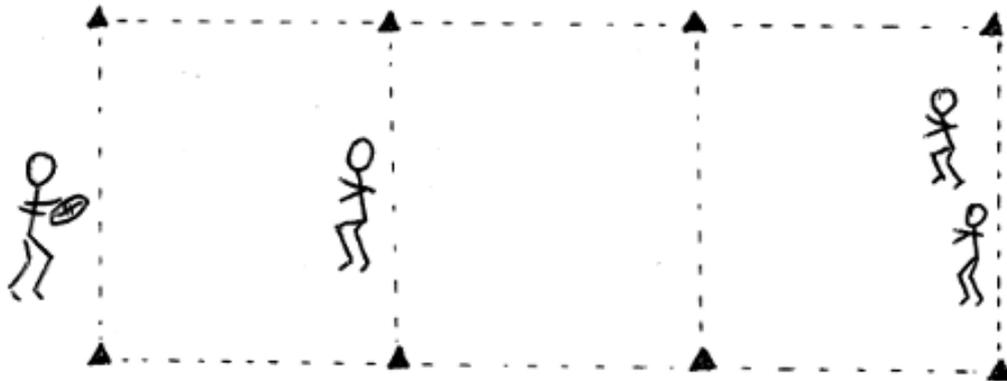
- **Progression:**
 - Smaller area
 - The defending player may tackle.
- **Coaching points:**
 - Hold the ball in 2 hands.
 - Draw the defender in one direction before changing your direction.
 - Take short steps when changing direction.
 - Accelerate away from the defender.
- **Equipment:**
 - 1 Ball (or more so players don't have to wait for the ball)
 - Cones to mark out the area
- **Area:**
Approx. 8m x 8m



5. Side-step down the channel

- **Description:**
From the starting cone, set up 4-5 “defenders” in a zigzag pattern in front of the cone. The “defenders” should be approx. 5m apart, and can be upright tackle bags, agility poles, or players holding contact shields or even just holding out a straight arm. Depending on the number of players and equipment available, more of these “gauntlets” can be set up. The players line up behind the starting cone, and the front player has a ball in 2 hands. On the coach’s whistle, the ball carrier moves towards the closest “defender” while moving the ball away to the furthest arm from the defender, and then pushes the defender away with his closest arm, while he side-steps the defender towards the middle line of the gauntlet. He then runs towards the next defender and repeats the procedure all the way through the gauntlet. After passing the last defender, he runs back and gives the ball to the next player who repeats the exercise. **Progression:**
 - Less space between the “defenders” (need to react faster)
 - When using players as the defenders, let them start grabbing at the ball.

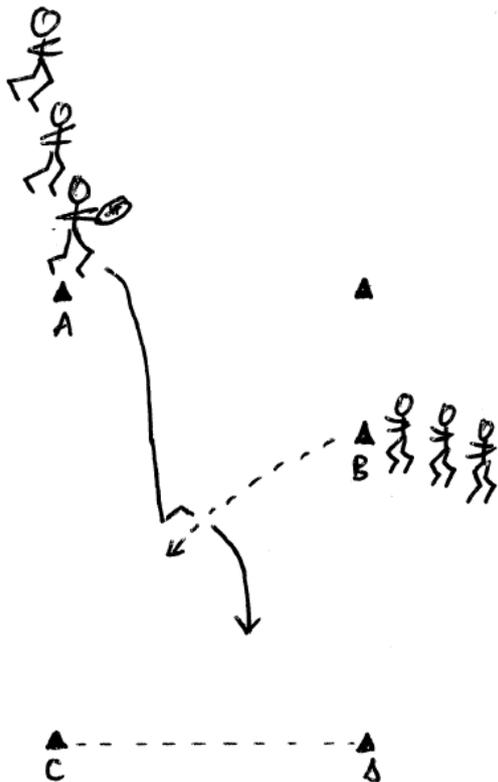
- **Coaching points:**
 - Hold the ball in 2 hands, before shifting the ball away from the defender and using the closest hand to push the defender away.
 - Draw the defender in one direction before changing your direction.
 - Take short steps when changing direction.
 - Accelerate away from the defender.
- **Equipment:**
 - 1 Ball (or more so players don't have to wait for the ball)
 - Cones to mark out the area
 - Tackle bags / agility poles
- **Area:**
A Rectangular area of approx. 20m long and approx. 5m wide (depending on the number of lines)



6. Running the gauntlet

- **Description:**
Set up a rectangular area of approx. 8m wide and 20-25m long. On the long sides of the rectangle, place another 2 cones evenly spaced, to form 3 equal areas within the rectangle. Place 3 defenders inside the rectangle; 1 in the 1st “inside” area and then 2 in the 3rd “inside” area of the rectangle. These defending players have to start from the back line of their areas (further away from the ball carrier), and may not defend outside of their areas. The rest of the players line up behind the short side of the rectangle, closest to the single defender; the front player should have a ball. On the coach’s whistle, the front player start running through the “gauntlet” and has to try and evade the defenders. The 2 defenders in the 3rd area may only start advancing towards the ball carrier once he enters the 2nd area. The defenders have to get a 2-handed touch on the ball carrier to stop them from beating the gauntlet.
- **Progression:**
 - Smaller areas.
 - 2-Handed touch → full contact (tackle).
- **Coaching points:**
 - Hold the ball in 2 hands.
 - Draw the defender in one direction to create space, and then move into the open space.

- Take short steps when changing direction.
- Accelerate away from the defender.
- **Equipment:**
 - Balls
 - Cones to mark out the areas
- **Area:**
 - Square area of approx. 8m x 20-25m



7. Step the moving defender (evasive running & tackling)

- **Description:**

Set up a square area of approx. 8m x 8m. Split the group in two; the attacking players line up behind one corner (cone A), and the defending players line up in the middle of the side opposite to where the attacking players are standing (cone B). The attacking player have a ball and on the coach's whistle, he has to run from cone A to the line between cones C & D to score a try. The front defending player at cone B starts simultaneously and has to try and tag the attacking player before he can score the try. The attacking player either has to run straight for the line (and then also shift the ball to the outside arm to protect it from any possible contact) or has to draw the defending player in one direction and then evade him by side-stepping to the opposite side. Do the exercise from both sides to get the attacking players stepping off both feet. Swop the attacking and defending players.

- **Progression:**
 - Smaller area
 - The defending player may tackle.
- **Coaching points:**
 - Hold the ball in 2 hands.
 - Draw the defender in one direction before changing your direction.
 - Take short steps when changing direction.
 - Accelerate away from the defender.
- **Equipment:**
 - 1 Ball (or more so players don't have to wait for the ball)
 - Cones to mark out the area
- **Area:**

Approx. 8m x 8m

SMALL SIDED GAMES (for combined skills)

1. Outnumbered

- **Description:**

Divide the players into teams of 4 and set up a square area of approx. 5m x 5m for each group. The team of 4 is divided into 3 attackers and 1 defender, and start from opposite sides of the area. The attackers have to evade the defender and may also pass forward to go score a try at the opposite side of the area. The defender has to use a 2-handed touch to “tackle” the ball carrier. When a ball carrier is tackled, or goes beyond the borders of the area, or drops a ball, that attacker swops places with the defender and the game is replayed.

- **Progression:**

- The attackers may only pass backwards.
- 3 vs 1 → 3 vs 2 (larger area).
- The defenders can tackle.

- **Coaching points:**

- **Ball carriers:**

- Hold the ball in 2 hands.
- Draw the defender in one direction before changing your direction.
- Take short steps when changing direction.
- Accelerate away from the defender.
- Support runners play towards the ball.
- Communicate.

- **Defenders:**

- Limit the attacker’s space by moving quickly towards the attackers.
- Slow down when getting close to the attacker, so you can adjust to any direction changes.

- **Equipment:**

- Ball
- Cones to mark out the area and starting positions.

- **Area:**

Area of approx. 5m x 5m

2. Run around

- **Description:**

(similar to “Attacker vs Tackler” - Exercise 5 in Tackling)

Set up a square area of 10m x 10m, and place 2 cones 1m apart in the middle of the one side of the area. Divide the players into groups of 3, with 2 groups positioning at the 2 middle cones. On the coach’s whistle, the coach passes a ball to one of the groups and both groups run towards the closest corners of the square, run around the corner cone and enter the area from opposing sides. The attacking team has to try and pass the defenders to score a try at the opposite side of the area. They can use running, evasion and passing skills to beat the defenders. The defenders have to tackle the ball carriers to stop them.

- **Progression:**

- ↑ Speed (jogging → running)
- 3 vs 3 → 4 vs 4 (larger area)

- **Coaching points:**

- **Defenders:**

- Limit the attacker’s space by moving quickly towards the attackers.
- Communicate to work with your fellow defenders (keep a straight line).
- Slow down when getting close to the attacker, so you can adjust to any direction changes.
- Keep your head up & sight the target.
- Sink low at the hips and knees and take a power-step into the contact.
- Hit with the shoulder & put your head on the side of his body.
- Wrap arms around the attacker’s body and pull towards you.
- Drive forward from your legs.

- **Ball carriers:**

- Hold the ball in 2 hands.
- Draw the defender in one direction before changing your direction.
- Take short steps when changing direction.
- Accelerate away from the defender.

- **Support runners:**

- Adjust your running line and position to complement the actions of the ball carrier.
- Play towards the ball when contact has been made.

- **Equipment:**

- Ball
- Cones to mark out the area and starting positions.

- **Area:**

Area of approx. 10m x 10m

3. Rule of 2's

- **Description:**

Divide the players into teams of 4-6 and set up an area of approx. 10m x 10m. Three teams can play in a square, with 2 teams in the area and the 3rd team waiting to come one. If there are more teams, more areas can be set up. The teams start from opposite sides of the area; one team has a ball and they have to try and score at the other end. The defenders have to get a 2-handed touch below the waist of the ball carrier to "tackle" him. Once the ball carrier is touched, he must stand still and within 2 seconds pass the ball to a teammate who is within 2m from him. The tackler and tackled player may not move until the ball has been passed again. If the attacking team scores a try or drops the ball, the defending team gets the ball.

- **Progression:**

- After a "tackle", the 1st arriving player must go and rip the ball from the ball carrier.
- The defenders have to tackle the ball carrier.

- **Coaching points:**

- **Ball carriers:**

- Hold the ball in 2 hands.
- Draw the defender in one direction before changing your direction.
- Go forward to make it easier for the support players to play towards the ball.
- Once touched, turn and pass quickly.

- **Support runners:**

- Adjust your running line and position to complement the actions of the ball carrier.
- Play towards the ball when contact has been made.

- **Equipment:**

- Ball
- Cones to mark out the area and starting positions.

- **Area:**

Area of approx. 10m x 10m

4. Turnovers

- **Description:**

Divide the players into teams of 3 and set up a square area of 10m x 10m for each group. The 2 teams start from their own try lines (2 opposing sides of the area). On the coach's whistle, the coach rolls the ball to one of the groups who then becomes the attacking team; the other team has to defend. The attacking team has to try and pass the defenders to score a try at the opposite side of the area. They can use running, evasion and passing skills to beat the defenders. The defenders have to use a 2-handed touch to "tackle" the ball carrier. When a ball carrier is tackled, he has to put the ball down and the whole team returns to their try line. After 3 seconds, the other team picks up the ball and attack, while the opposite team becomes the defenders.

- **Progression:**
 - 3 vs 3 → 4 vs 4 (larger area).
 - The defenders can tackle.
- **Coaching points:**
 - **Ball carriers:**
 - Hold the ball in 2 hands.
 - Draw the defender in one direction before changing your direction.
 - Take short steps when changing direction.
 - Accelerate away from the defender.
 - Support runners play towards the ball.
 - Communicate.
 - **Defenders:**
 - Limit the attacker's space by moving quickly towards the attackers.
 - Communicate to work with your fellow defenders (keep a straight line).
 - Slow down when getting close to the attacker, so you can adjust to any direction changes.
- **Equipment:**
 - Ball
 - Cones to mark out the area and starting positions.
- **Area:**
Area of approx. 10m x 10m

5. Jackal

- **Description:**
Divide the players into teams of 3 and set up a square area of approx. 6-8m x 6-8m. Three teams can play in a square, with 2 teams in the area and the 3rd team waiting to come one. If there are more teams, more areas can be set up. The teams start by going in a certain direction in the area, but then they all start moving in between one another. The coach stands on the side and passes the ball to one of the players. Immediately, the teams separate again with the ball carrier's teammates falling back behind him and all the defenders going to the front of the ball carrier to defend. The two teams then move in their original directions as when the play started. The attackers need to go forward, but when the ball carrier gets tackled, the tackler must jump up and be a jackal and try to steal the ball, supported by his teammates. The attacking team must try to protect the ball by cleaning the jackals away by driving them off the ball. The rules of the breakdown applies, so the jackals must be on their feet when playing the ball, and the cleaners must come through the "gate". If the jackals succeed to steal the ball, they become the attacking team and the other team must try and steal the ball. The coach lets this carry on for 15-20 seconds, and whichever team is in possession when the coach blows the whistle, wins.
- **Progression:**
 - 3 vs 3 → 4 vs 4 (larger area).
- **Coaching points:**
 - Ball carrier:

- Take a wide power-step into the contact.
- Turn side on and make contact with the shoulder.
- Legs wide apart and sink low at the hips and knees.
- Drive from the bottom up.
- Keep driving forward with the legs.
- When going to ground, place the ball for supporting players.
- “Cleaner”:
- Take a wide power-step into the contact.
- Keep the head up and make contact with the shoulders.
- Start low, make contact with the defender and drive him up and away from the ball.
- Keep driving forward with the legs, and drive over the breakdown.
- “Jackal”:
- Keep your head up & sight the target.
- Hit with the shoulder & put your head on the side of his body.
- Wrap arms around the attacker’s body and pull towards you.
- Drive forward from your legs.
- Get up as quick as possible and contest for the ball.
- **Equipment:**
 - Ball
 - Cones to mark out the area and starting positions.
- **Area:**
Area of approx. 6-8m x 6-8m

6. Mauling monster

- **Description:**
Divide the players into teams of 5-7, and set up a rectangular area of approx. 10m wide and 20-30m long, with a middle line indicated by cones. One team starts the play from the middle line where the ball is lying on the ground, and the defending team is 2m away from them. On the coach’s whistle, the attacking team picks up the ball and the ball carrier makes contact with the opposition. The ball carrier’s teammates bind onto him and start mauling forward. They are not allowed to pass the ball and must maul forward until they score a try at the opposite side of the area. The defending team must try and stop them. If the maul goes over the sides of the area, the play is restarted with the defending team getting the ball. If the maul becomes stationary for too long (determined by the coach), the coach shouts “change” and starts counting back from 5-4-3-2-1, and blows the whistle for the play to start again. In the 5 seconds, the attacking team puts the ball down and retreats 2m back, and the defending team regroups to become the attackers.
- **Coaching points:**
 - Ball carrier:
 - Take a wide power-step into the contact.
 - Turn side on and make contact with the shoulder.
 - Legs wide apart and sink low at the hips and knees.
 - Drive from the bottom up.
 - Keep driving forward with the legs.

- Make the ball available for supporting players.
- Support players:
 - Take a wide power-step into the contact.
 - Secure the ball as soon as possible.
 - Keep driving forward with the legs.
 - Keep the head up to see what's happening in front of you.
- **Equipment:**
 - Ball
 - Cones to mark out the area and starting positions.
- **Area:**
Rectangular area of approx. 10m wide x 20-30m long

OUTCOMES AND KEY FACTORS FOR SELECTED SKILLS

Passing the ball (swing pass)

Outcome:

To make a pass that is easily caught to a team-mate in a better position than the passer to maintain continuity of play.

Key factors:

1. Run straight.
2. Hold the ball in both hands.
3. Turn side-on to the defence, to face the supporting receiver.
4. Swing the arms through in the direction of the pass.
5. Follow through with the hands in the direction of the pass.
6. Pass to the 'target' area at chest height in front of the receiver.

Receiving the ball

Outcome:

To catch the ball while retaining vision of the positioning of opponents so that the receiver has time to choose the best available option following receipt of the pass.

Key factors:

1. Keep enough depth to run towards the flight of the ball.
2. Extend the hands to catch the ball early.
3. Watch the ball into the hands.
4. Catch the ball with the fingers and hands.

Picking up the ball

Outcome:

To retain or regain the ball so that the team can attack.

Key factors:

1. Approach the ball in a crouched position.
2. Position above the ball side-on, straddling the ball with one foot in front of, and the other behind, the ball.

3. Sink at the hips and bend at the knees.
4. Keep the head up in a neutral position.
5. Steady the ball with the front hand and scoop it up with the back hand.
6. Bring the ball into the chest while assessing options.

Evasive running (side-step)

Outcome:

To develop the instinct to 'hold' the defence and to then attack the space to the left or right of the defender.

Key factors: (running with the ball and side-step)

1. Carry the ball in both hands.
2. Run towards the nearest defenders.
3. Change direction close to them, by pushing sideways off the right foot to go left, and the left foot to go right. (side-step).
4. Shift the ball to the arm furthest from the defender.
5. Use the arm closest to the defender to push the defender away.
6. Move into the space furthest from the defenders.
7. Accelerate to take advantage of the space that has been created.

Tackling (side-on tackle)

Outcome:

To prevent territory being gained and to regain possession of the ball.

Key factors: (tackling from the front)

1. Be in a low crouch.
2. Move forward into the tackle.
3. Drive with the legs.
4. Make firm contact with the shoulder between the waist and the hips.
5. Wrap with the arms.
6. Get back on feet and recover the ball.

Contact skills (taking the ball into contact)

Outcome:

To retain possession of the ball while in contact with opponents.

Key factors:

1. Run in a position that is able to withstand impact.
2. Carry the ball in both hands so that options can be performed immediately.
3. Anticipate contact by turning side on.
4. Drive into contact in this position by sinking low and driving up.
5. Spread the feet to shoulder width, sink at the hips, bend at the knees.
6. Turn to face team mates.
7. Make the ball available.

APPENDIX L

ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



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Approval Notice

Response to Modifications- (New Application)

23-Nov-2015

Basson, Jacques J
Private Bag 19063
Matieland

Proposal #: HS1199/2015

Title: Coaching and skills profiles of mini-rugby coaches and players in the Western Cape, South Africa.

Dear Mr Jacques Basson,

Your **Response to Modifications - (New Application)** received on **28-Oct-2015**, was reviewed by members of the **Research Ethics Committee:**

Human Research (Humanities) via Expedited review procedures on **23-Nov-2015** and was approved.

Please note the following information about your approved research proposal:

Proposal Approval Period: **23-Nov-2015 -22-Nov-2016**

General comments:

Regarding the risk-benefit ratio, the REC wishes to clarify its comment in the previous feedback letter. The REC is aware that the control group will not receive the intervention as part of the protocol. Here, the REC was referring to the possibility of making the intervention available to the control group if the outcome of the research is found to produce favourable results. In the case of a positive outcome it is ethical for the researcher to also roll out the same intervention to the control group after the research had been done and reported so that the control group also receive the similar benefit (in a case of positive outcome). The researcher is requested to consider this recommendation but should note that a response is not required in this instance.

Please take note of the general Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

Please remember to use your **proposal number** (HS1199/2015) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research proposal.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Also note that a progress report should be submitted to the Committee before the approval period has expired if a continuation is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki and the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health). Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number REC-050411-032.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 218089183.

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham

REC Coordinator

Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

APPENDIX M

PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT



Directorate: Research

Audrey.wyngaard@westerncape.gov.za

Tel: +27 021 467 9272

Fax: 0865902282

Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000

wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20151202-5865

ENQUIRIES: Dr A T Wyngaard

Mr Jacques Basson
5 Coral Crescent
Langeberg Ridge
Durbanville
7550

Dear Mr Jacques Basson

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: COACHING AND SKILL PROFILES OF MINI-RUGBY COACHES AND PLAYERS IN THE WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **05 April 2016 till 30 September 2016**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr A.T Wyngaard at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number?
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:
**The Director: Research Services
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.
Signed: Dr Audrey T Wyngaard
Directorate: Research
DATE: 02 December 2015

APPENDIX N

LANGUAGE EDITOR LETTER



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17 August 2017

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I, Prof Karel J. van Deventer, hereby declare that I conducted the language and technical editing of the Master's thesis titled, *Coaching and skill profiles of mini-rugby coaches and players in the Western Cape, South Africa* authored by Mr Jacques Basson.

Yours sincerely

KJ van Deventer
(Emeritus Associate Professor [Retired])



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