

Dan Cottrell

**The Ultimate**

**RUGBY**

**WARM-UPS**

**MANUAL**

More than 100 quick, easy  
and fun ways to kick-start  
your coaching sessions

**RUGBY COACH WEEKLY**

# Contents

## ***The Ultimate Rugby Warm-Ups Manual***

*More than 100 quick, easy and fun ways to kick-start your coaching sessions*

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Credits</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter 1</b> Pre-contact warm-ups	<b>9</b>
<b>Chapter 2</b> Fitness warm-ups	<b>19</b>
<b>Chapter 3</b> Handling warm-ups	<b>24</b>
<b>Chapter 4</b> Agility and speed warm-ups	<b>34</b>
<b>Chapter 5</b> Set-piece warm-ups	<b>49</b>
<b>Chapter 6</b> Warm-downs	<b>54</b>
<b>Chapter 7</b> Pre-match warm-ups	<b>56</b>

# Credits

Writer	Dan Cottrell
Editor	Andrew Griffiths
Design	LIMA Graphics Ltd
Illustrations	Kit Herman
Proofreading	John Cottrell, Julie Heathorn
Finance Manager	Julie Heathorn
Customer Services Representative	Duncan Heard
Production	Julie Lifton
Publisher	Toby Curthoys
Managing Director	Andrew Griffiths

## Disclaimer

Whilst the editor and publisher have made every effort to ensure the accuracy and above all safety of the information and advice contained in this publication, and have gathered the information from sources believed to be reliable, **Better Rugby Coaching** makes no warranty or guarantee as to the completeness, accuracy or timeliness of the information, and is not responsible for any errors or omissions.

In no event will **Better Rugby Coaching**, its affiliates or other suppliers be liable for direct, special, incidental, or consequential damages (including, without limitation, damages for personal injury or related claims) arising directly or indirectly from the use of (or failure to use) the information in this publication, even if **Better Rugby Coaching** has been advised of the possibility that such damages may arise.

## Copyright notice

This publication is protected by national and international copyright laws. No part of it may be reproduced, copied or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical (including photocopying), recording or by any information storage or retrieval system, without prior written permission from **Better Rugby Coaching**.

**Better Rugby Coaching** will take legal action against any individuals or organisations found to be infringing its rights, and will make that action public. Purchasers of this publication may circulate electronic or hard copies only to members of their own club or school, provided this is done without commercial gain. However, no part or whole of this publication may be circulated elsewhere or displayed on any website or distributed commercially except under licence from the copyright owners.

**Better Rugby Coaching** will pay a £250 reward for information leading to the successful legal prosecution against individuals or organisations copying or republishing this information in any format, including websites and bulletin boards. Your confidentiality is guaranteed.



Green Star Media Ltd

Meadow View, Tannery Lane, Bramley, Guildford, Surrey GU5 0AB, UK

Tel: 01483 892894 Fax: 01483 894148 E-mail: toby.curthoys@berrugbycoaching.com

© 2008 **Better Rugby Coaching**. All rights reserved. **Better Rugby Coaching** is part of Green Star Media Ltd, a company registered under the Data Protection Act 1998. No: Z5287130

# Foreword

Thank you for buying this guide. If you read, keep and use it regularly you should be able to:

1. Get your team better warmed up and prepared for training sessions and matches.
2. Make your coaching sessions more interesting, and your life easier.

As I prepared the material for this report, I reflected on my own experience as a coach. I asked myself what tools are needed to get a coaching session off to a flying start and how players can get the most from a session.

*The Ultimate Rugby Warm-Ups Manual* is the result. It should help you to:

1. Get your sessions going quickly, effectively and in line with your objectives.
2. Make sure your team is ready for a match, no matter how much time you have available just before kick-off.
3. Easily read and digest a menu of more than 100 warm-ups to call upon at any time.

Fitness experts and sports scientists are notoriously bad at agreeing best practice for warm-ups. One year a certain stretch is “bad news”, the next year it is “must do”.

My approach is as follows. First, I’ve adopted what appears to be the modern consensus that dynamic stretching is preferable to static stretching. Second, I’ve followed the eminently sensible thinking that in a warm-up you should be performing the same movements that are involved in the actions or movements that you are warming up for.



Editor

# Introduction

This guide provides warm-up and cool down drills, short drills to get players ready for specific types of session and a guide to warming up for a match.

Before a team gets into the nitty gritty of skills and game situations, there always should be some kind of physical and mental warm-up. This guide attempts to go beyond the scope of the “average” warm-up by offering a menu of games, preparations and activities to enhance your warm-up time and make the rest of the session, or the match, go with a zing.

## Why warm-up?

A warm-up is the exercise of body and mind before training or a match. It should be a gradual process. Perhaps surprisingly, given the gentle nature of much of what happens, the warm-up can make the difference between winning and losing, performing to one’s potential or delivering below par. Getting the warm-up right is also important because it can help to prevent injury.

According to sports science advice endorsed by the major international rugby unions, the key benefits from well-performed warm-ups are:

- reducing the chance of soft tissue injury by stretching muscles
- increasing the body’s temperature, blood flow
- allowing mental preparation for exercise
- increasing chances of better performance

In addition, most coaches would agree that a warm-up session should be:

- enjoyable
- varied
- supporting the player as an athlete as well as a rugby player

## The science of warm-up

Scientific research has increased our understanding of the best way to warm-up for sport. This has led to changes in accepted best practice.

Here is a summary of the consensus view of sports scientists.

1. Stretching for warm-ups should be dynamic, not static. Dynamic stretching means stretches that are carried out through a controlled range of movements rather than held for a period of time.
2. Warm-ups should be specific to the activity you are about to undertake.
3. Cool down is as important as the warm-up and should be performed every time.

Here are some of the key findings of recent research:

- To derive the greatest benefits from a warm-up, the work should mirror the actions that are to be taken while competing.<sup>1</sup>
- Specific warm-ups are best employed after completing a general warm-up, and this reduces the chance of injuries.<sup>2</sup>

### Guidelines

1. A light sweat over the entire body is the best indicator of the correct temperature (actually only a one or two degree Celsius increase in temperature).
2. Avoid letting your players get tired out.
3. The benefits of the warm-up are lost after between five and 45 minutes of rest. Once a specific warm-up is completed the athlete should remain active.<sup>2</sup>

### Why cool-down?

After a match or training session it is essential to use some form of warm-down or “cool-down”.

The benefits of a cool-down are:

- Helps to break down waste products in the muscles
- Helps to prevent muscle soreness, by coaxing muscles gently back into shape

A cool-down should include:

- Gentle movement (like jogging and skipping) and floppy “loose limb” movements.
- Static stretching. Stretching the muscles for 10–15 seconds. Don’t overstretch. You are trying to help the repair process and if the body has been bashed around in a game, the muscles will need to be gently coaxed back into shape.

✓ Do's:	✗ Don'ts:
Build the level of intensity gradually.	Bounce during stretching. Muscles increase their elasticity as the body warms up, so they will not take kindly to over exertion.
Ensure the technique is correct, even if the activity is light and gradual.	Stop for a long period of time after warming up (such as for team talks or game reviews) before moving into the activity.
Increase the heart rate first then move to stretching and specific activity.	Expect players to be warmed up at the same time. Different players need a different amount of time.
Have plenty of water available.	Warm-up on hard surfaces.
Take account of the weather conditions. Cold weather means there should be a shorter time between warm-up and activity. In particularly cold conditions it might be better to warm-up inside.	

<sup>1</sup> Costill & King (1983) – Quoted in Volume 4 of Coaching Science Abstracts.

<sup>2</sup> Ingjer, F., & Stromme, S. B. (1979). Effects of active, passive, or no warm up on the physiological response to heavy exercise. European Journal of Applied Physiology.

## Getting the most from your warm-ups – Do's and Don'ts

### Choosing a routine

A routine has to suit you, your players, the time available and the circumstances ahead. Even for a half an hour session (such as a games period at school or college) some form of increase in heart rate and specific stretching is required. Five minutes should suffice, though it must mean the session cannot be too taxing physically.

There are four types of warm-up:

**1. Essential warm-up:**

Every player should use this to start any session. It may be interspersed into other elements of the warm-up. It can include:

- increasing the heart rate
- dynamic stretching

**2. Pre-match warm-up:**

Physical and mental exercises to prepare the player for a game. Decision making, contact and a run through of the pre-determined plays will be in addition to an essential warm-up.

**3. Pre-session warm-up:**

Depending on the nature of the session, the warm-up will include areas specific to the drills that are going to be carried out, such as contact or fitness.

**4. Unit specific warm-up:**

Sometimes a session will break up into forwards and backs. More specific warm-ups might be needed to deal with scrummaging (contact and upper body), lineout (lifting and jumping) and backs' moves (handling and speed work).

### Golden rules of warm-up

Use FESTIVAL to remember why a warm-up session should follow these golden rules:

- F**un activities!
- E**asy to set up
- S**pecific to needs of the session or match ahead
- T**imely, not too long
- I**ncrease the heart rate
- V**aried from week to week to maintain interest
- A**ctivity builds up
- L**eads straight into the session or match

## Stretching

Stretching has an important role to play in warm-ups and cool downs.

Stretching the muscles has the following key benefits:

- Increases flexibility
- Improves the range of movement of the body
- Can help reduce injury

Scientific studies suggest that though “static stretching” is important, it is not beneficial to aid performance just before a session or match.

Static stretching is where the muscle is stretched to its maximum point and held for a period of time without pain.

Dynamic stretching is more likely to prepare players, since it is specific to the activity about to be undertaken. This type of stretching will not necessarily prevent injury, but it has been shown to enhance players’ performance.

All stretching should take place after the heart rate has been increased. Dynamic stretching can be harder than static stretching to perform correctly. Dynamic stretching will not increase flexibility.

## Hydration

Inevitably the body temperature will increase during a warm-up and a good way of knowing whether the session is effective is to check if the players are sweating. Make sure your players have plenty to drink at this stage, either water or a sports drink.

*Remember, hydration should take place before, during and after exercise.*

## Equipment you need

To complete a simple warm-up, you only need a basic amount of equipment and in this guide we have kept equipment usage to a minimum.

### 1. Basic list

- One ball per four players
- A set of cones

### 2. Intermediate list

- One ball per two players
- A set of cones
- Two agility ladders
- Four ruck pads

### 3. Advanced list

- One ball per player
- A set of cones
- Four agility ladders
- Eight ruck pads
- Poles
- Agility hurdles
- Tackle suits
- Tackle pads

**1. Pre-contact warm-ups**

2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

# 1. Pre-contact Warm-ups

**The aim:** To prepare players for full contact sessions

## 1. Parachute falls

*“Try this one with a ball”*

The player starts in an upright standing position with arms across his chest. He falls sideways by bending the knees. Contact with the ground should take place in this order: knees, hips, shoulder. A development of the fall is to add walking before falling, and then running before falling.



### ✓ What to say:

1. “Slowly to ground”
2. “Knees bend first”
3. “Keep the arms in”

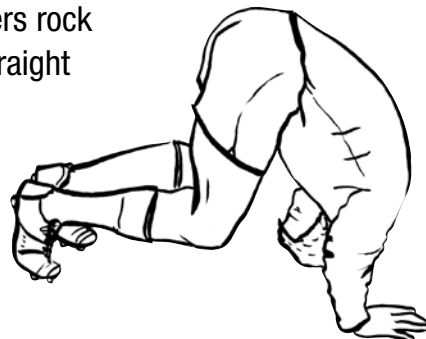
## 2. Forward rolls

*“Do this one slowly and get it right”*

To start the roll the player needs to squat with his knees together and place both hands flat on the floor in front of him. The player should tuck his head down while pushing with the legs. Some weight should be supported with the arms. Players should stand up without pushing on the floor with their hands. A good drill is to have the players rock onto their back and roll up to their feet keeping their arms straight out in front.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Keep chin tucked into chest on roll”
2. “Get arms wide on follow through”
3. “Get up quickly”



**1. Pre-contact warm-ups**

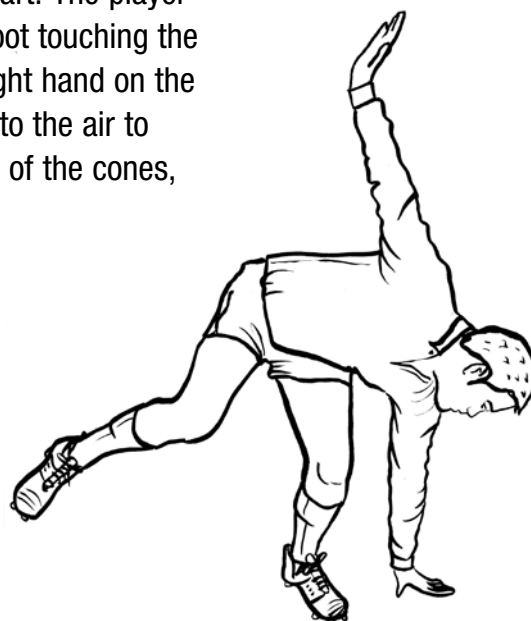
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

**3. Cart wheels***“The cones make this a more orderly drill”*

Place two cones on the floor about a shoulder width apart. The player should stand in line with the two cones with his right foot touching the nearest cone. He should reach sideways, placing his right hand on the ground just beyond the first cone, kicking his left leg into the air to start the cart wheel. The left hand lands on the far side of the cones, followed by the left leg on the far side of the cones.

**✓ What to say:**

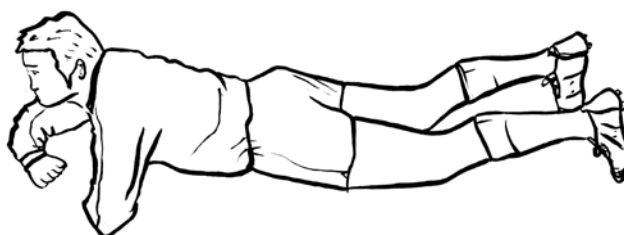
1. “Bounce up off feet”
2. “Jumping from foot to foot helps get a start”
3. “Use arms to maintain momentum through the air”

**4. Front crawl***“Prepares the whole body for contact”*

A player lies on his front on the ground. Using arms only he must propel himself across the ground. Try the exercise with a ball between the legs.

**✓ What to say:**

1. “Use elbows”
2. “Keep head up”
3. “Relax lower body”

**Developments for the four warm-ups above**

1. Run before or after the exercise.
2. Perform a rugby type skill, for example, passing or contact before the exercise.
3. React to a visual or verbal cue, for example, run to a cone.

**1. Pre-contact warm-ups**

2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

**5. Bumps***“Shout out a rhythm”*

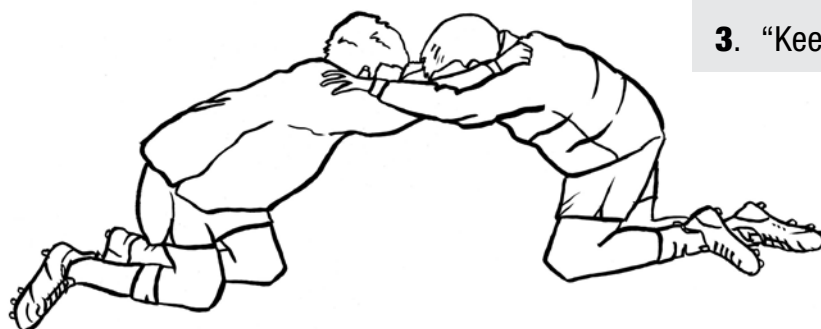
Two players stand side-by-side, less than one metre apart. Each using one shoulder they “bump” into the other player. After five contacts, change shoulders. The next stage is for the players to stand facing each other, first bumping left shoulders once together and then right, five on each.

**✓ What to say:**

1. “Start slowly”
2. “Eyes open and looking at opponent”
3. “Keep the knees bent”

**6. Kneeling engagement***“Not just for front rows”*

Two players kneel on the ground, facing each other. They engage by each putting their hands on the other player’s shoulders. Starting by rocking back and forth, they then try to either push the other player back or force his knees off the ground.

**✓ What to say:**

1. “Backs in line with the ground”
2. “Heads up, looking forward”
3. “Keep hips below shoulders”

**1. Pre-contact warm-ups**

2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

**7. Horse wrestling***“Mix big and small players for variety”*

Two players on their hands and knees face the same way, side by side. On your command they aim to make the other player's hips touch the floor, just using their arms and hips.

**✓ What to say:**

1. “Use hips for leverage”
2. “Strong grip on shirt”
3. “Roll shoulders to unbalance opponent's grip”

**8. Press up battles***“Stage a knockout tournament”*

Two players face each other in the press up position. On your command, each player tries to tap one of the hands of the other player. Pulling or grabbing the other player is not allowed. Three taps to win.

**✓ What to say:**

1. “Keep some flexibility in the arms”
2. “Spread the load evenly across the hands and feet”
3. “Bounce up off both hands to keep opponent guessing”

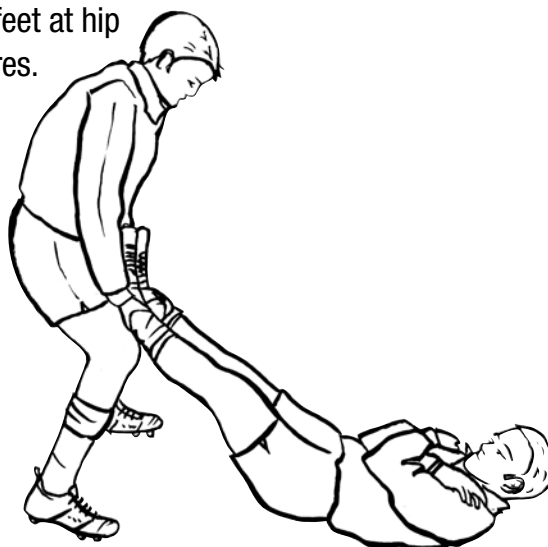


**1. Pre-contact warm-ups**

2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

**9. Drag pull***“Preparation for contact”*

One player lies on their back on the ground, with their arms across their chest, and head up. A second player holds the first by his feet at hip height and walks backwards, dragging the player five metres. The player on the ground should have his shoulders in contact with the ground and upper back only. A controlled exercise that must be done slowly. It is not a race.

**✓ What to say:**

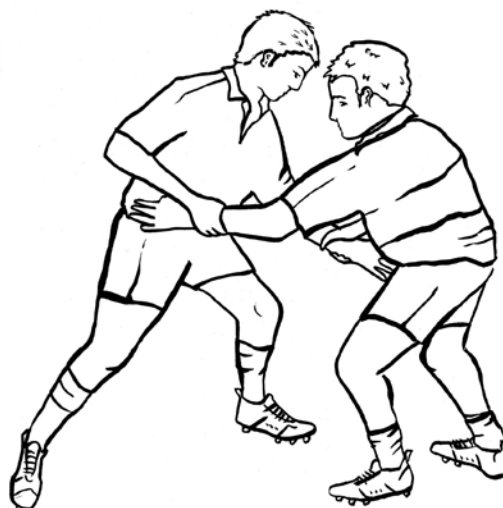
1. “Head up, keep weight on the upper back”
2. “Brace the middle of the body”
3. “Point the toes to add stability through the legs and spine”

**10. Hip hand fight***“A good way to improve mobility with strength”*

Two players face each other, each using their right hand to grip the left wrist of the other. The aim is to touch the other player’s hips, either with his own hand or the other player’s hand

**✓ What to say:**

1. “Swivel hips to get closer as well as to avoid contact”
2. “Feet should be no more than a shoulder width apart to keep balance”
3. “Roll shoulders to adjust height of hands”



**1. Pre-contact warm-ups**

2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

**11. Tackle fall***“All the actions of a front-on tackle”*

A player stands in a tackle ready position and falls backwards to the ground, rolls over on to his front and gets up. For development, make them hold a ruck bag or ball, or following the fall, get them to sprint off.

**✓ What to say:**

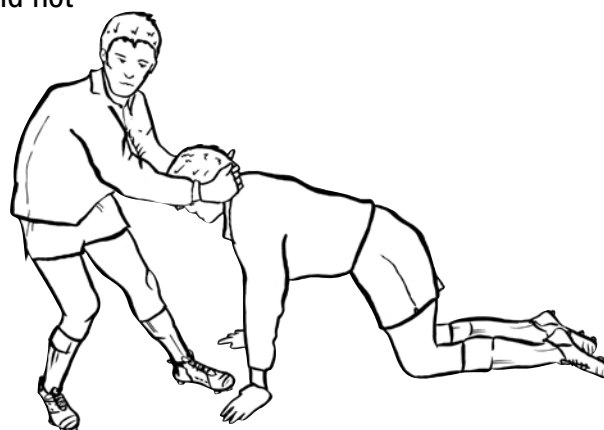
1. “Do it once left and once right”
2. “Fall on to your bottom first”
3. “Keep your head up for as long as possible”

**12. Neck pull***“Really useful for front five players”*

One player goes on all fours on the ground with his head up. A second player places two hands behind the first player's head and pulls him forward by the head. The player on the ground must keep his head rigid and resist with his hands and knees. The puller should not jerk the head, but gradually increase the pressure.

**✓ What to say:**

1. “The player on the ground gives the commands for pulling”
2. “Solid grip right behind neck”
3. “Back should be straight and hips below shoulders”

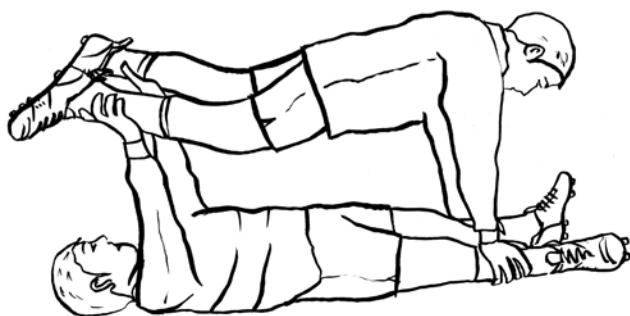


**1. Pre-contact warm-ups**

2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

**13. Double press ups***“A team building special”*

One player lies on his back. A second player lies head-to-toe on his front over the first in a press up position. Each player grabs the ankles of the other and in tandem they perform press ups.

**✓ What to say:**

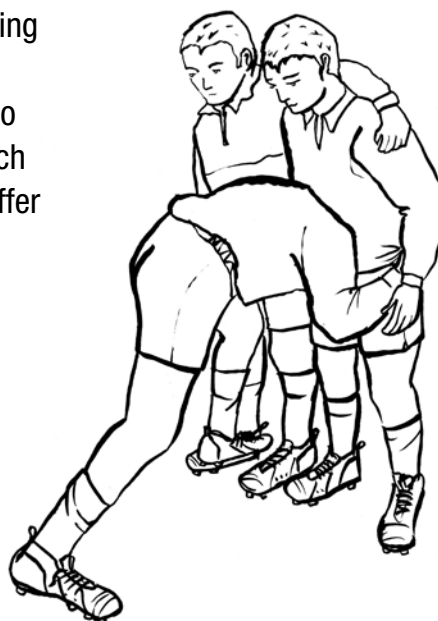
1. “Keep backs straight”
2. “Heads up”
3. “Lower chest with arms, don’t dip”

**14. Driving the players***“A real emphasis on good body positions”*

Two players bind together shoulder to shoulder. A third, facing them, binds at hip height and puts his head through a gap between their hips. The single player drives on the other two backwards for 20 metres. The players swap around and each one performs two “drives”. The two bound together must offer a certain amount of resistance.

**✓ What to say:**

1. “Keep hips below shoulders”
2. “Look up when driving”
3. “Short steps to start momentum”



**1. Pre-contact warm-ups**

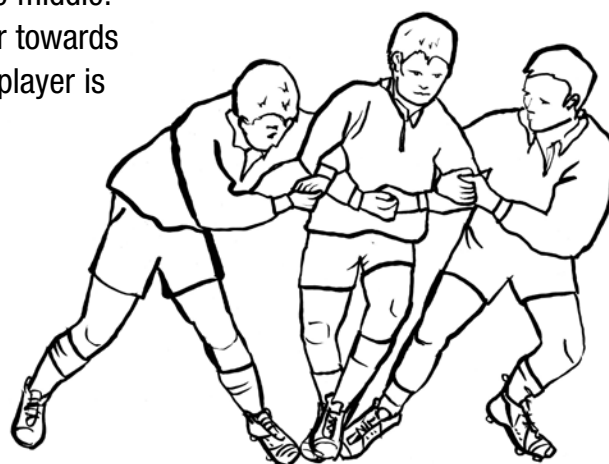
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

**15. Tug of war***“Stresses the use of the whole arm”*

Three players stand side by side. The two on the outside hook their inner arm into the nearest arm of the man in the middle. Both outside players attempt to pull the middle player towards them. Keep going for 15 seconds or until the middle player is moved more than two metres one way or the other.

**✓ What to say:**

1. “Pullers keep driving with the legs”
2. “Try gripping one hand on to the other wrist”
3. “Roll shoulders slightly forward and back to add more pressure”

**16. Grippers v Rippers***“Mauling glory”*

One player stands holding the ball. A second and third player must try to get the ball off the first by wrestling without putting the first player on the ground.

**✓ What to say:**

1. “Ball carrier roll the shoulders to unbalance the opposition”
2. “Rippers, pull away fingers to loosen grip”
3. “Try to get arm between ball and body”



**1. Pre-contact warm-ups**

2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

**17. 15 seconds off the ground***“Important for the ball carrier to stay on his feet”*

In a three metre square one player with a ball needs to stay on his feet for 15 seconds whilst two other players attempt to pull him to the ground without grabbing his legs below the knee.

**✓ What to say:**

1. “Stay on balls of feet and bounce away from contact if possible”
2. “Target hips to tackle”
3. “Communicate to reduce options of player trying to stay on their feet”

**18. Circle falling***“Are you in the circle of trust?”*

In a tight circle of a minimum of four players, one player stands in the middle with his feet together and arms across his chest. The middle player leans one way and then the other with the circle of players stopping him from falling over.

**✓ What to say:**

1. “Push on shoulders and back, not the head”
2. “Ease the body into a push, don’t shove”
3. “Leaner: keep your body braced at all times”

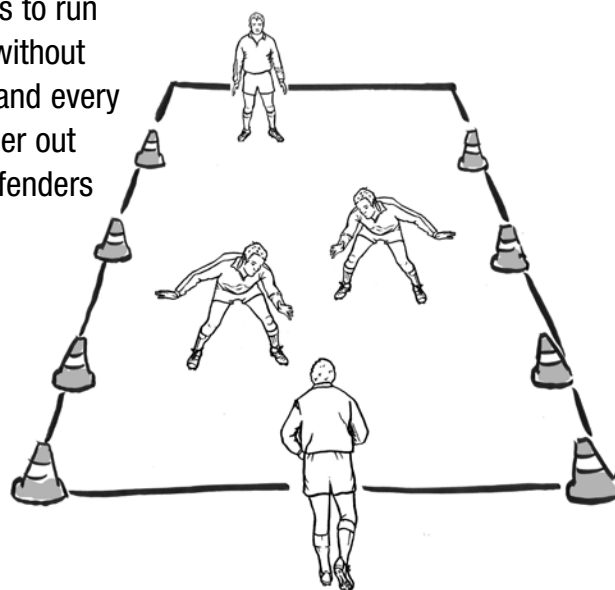


**1. Pre-contact warm-ups**

2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

**19. Gauntlet***“Physical but fun”*

In a four metre channel, a player carrying a ball has to run from one end to the other getting past defenders, without being pushed out of the channel. The defenders stand every five metres in the channel and try to push the runner out using their arms only, not shoulders. Ideally the defenders use rucking pads.

**✓ What to say:**

1. “Drop hips and keep low”
2. “Short, quick steps”
3. “Head up and anticipate contact”
4. “Spin and roll as much as possible”

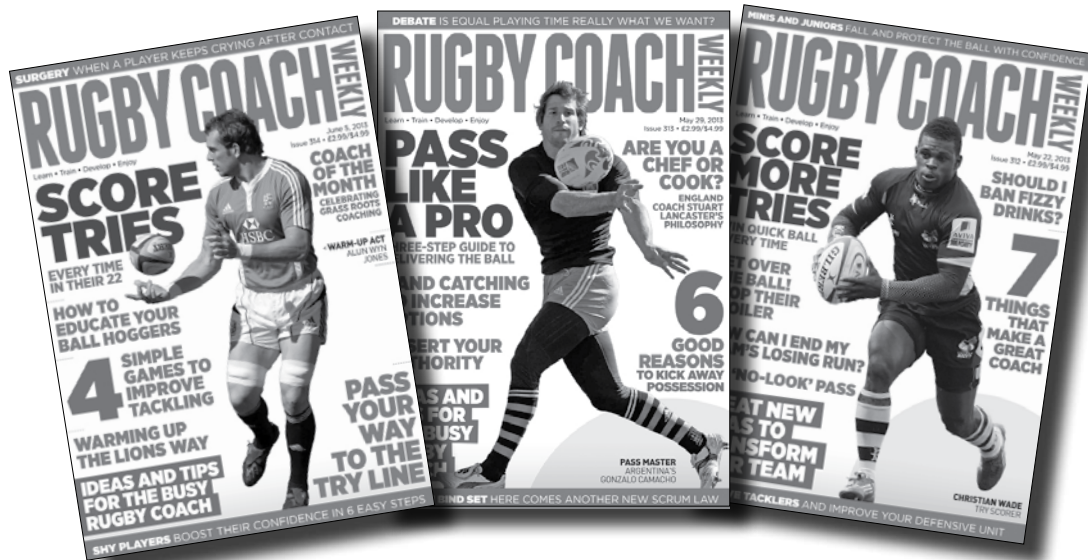
**20. Crab squatters***“Fantastic quad burner”*

Two players stand back to back. They can place a ball between their shoulders and then lock arms. First, they have to simply move up and down where they are standing. After that they should try to move in directions as specified by you.

**✓ What to say:**

1. “Tell the other player what you are doing”
2. “Keep your upper legs in line with the ground in the squat position”
3. “Shoulders forwards but heads up”

# RUGBY COACH WEEKLY



***Rugby Coach Weekly* is an e-magazine that gives you quality rugby coaching information every week including:**

- Our coaching experts dispense real world advice so you have exactly the right information for our team.
- Comprehensive coaching sessions so you always have an exciting, fresh coaching plan at your finger tips.
- The latest news, law changes and coaching developments to keep you ahead of the game.
- Training secrets and motivational tips from experienced professional coaches.

.....  
***Now you can take out a special five issue trial for ONLY 97p and get the current issue today.***

**To find out more and subscribe go to:  
[www.rugbycoachweekly.co.uk/landing](http://www.rugbycoachweekly.co.uk/landing)**

1. Pre-contact warm-ups

**2. Fitness warm-ups**

3. Handling warm-ups

4. Agility and speed warm-ups

5. Set piece warm-ups

6. Warm-downs

7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 2. Fitness Warm-ups

**The aim:** To prepare players for cardiovascular activity

### 1. Walk, jog, stride

*“Put style before speed”*

Players walk for five metres, jog for ten metres, and stride for 15 metres. Then they slowdown to a jog, and then a walk. Repeat six times.

#### ✓ What to say:

1. “Use arms to increase speed”
2. “Lengthen stride, use the same number of steps for each section until slowdown”
3. “Keep head up, face and hands relaxed”

#### Summary

Walk 5 metres ⇄

Jog 10 metres ⇄

Stride 15 metres ⇄

Slowdown to jog ⇄

Repeat six times

### 2. Press up, bump, back, run

*“Putting fitness and contact together”*

Players walk three metres, drop down for three press ups, get up, then “bump” into either a player or a ruck pad with a shoulder. Straight after the “bump”, they run backwards for three metres then forwards three metres, slowing down to walk for three metres, and repeat. The “bump” or pad player sets the distance by moving backwards after each “bump”.

#### ✓ What to say:

1. “Relax on the walk”
2. “Swap shoulders on every bump”
3. “Drive through three steps on the bump, low to high”

#### Summary

Walk 3 metres ⇄

Do 3 press ups ⇄

Bump into bag ⇄

Run backwards and forwards 3 metres ⇄

Repeat

1. Pre-contact warm-ups

**2. Fitness warm-ups**

3. Handling warm-ups

4. Agility and speed warm-ups

5. Set piece warm-ups

6. Warm-downs

7. Pre-match warm-ups

### 3. Winders

*“Good mix of long and short runs”*

This warm-up starts from the dead ball line and uses the pitch marking lines. Players line up in pairs. The first player runs to the nearest try line and back. The second player does the same. The first player then runs to the nearest five metre line and back, then to the try line and back. The second player repeats. The first player runs to the nearest 22 metre line and back the five metre and back, and then the try line and back. The second player repeats. The

#### ✓ What to say:

1. “Drive hard from every line”

2. “Relax the running style between the lines”

3. “Run as hard on every section”

drill is repeated on every line until the halfway. Give a ball to each player to change their running style.

#### Summary

Try line and back ⇄	5 metre line and back + try line and back ⇄	22 metre line and back + 5 metre line and back + try line and back ⇄	10 metre line and back + 22 metre line and back + 5 metre line and back + try line and back ⇄	Halfway line and back + 10 metre line and back + 22 metre line and back + 5 metre line and back + try line and back
---------------------	---	--	---	---

1. Pre-contact warm-ups

**2. Fitness warm-ups**

3. Handling warm-ups

4. Agility and speed warm-ups

5. Set piece warm-ups

6. Warm-downs

7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 4. Five minute end-to-end

*“Almost continuous running”*

Start each player on the try line. On the command “go”, all players must complete a length of the pitch in under 30 seconds, ideally with five to six seconds to spare (this is the rest time). On 30 seconds, shout “go” again and the players run back. In all the players complete ten lengths of the pitch. Start fitter players on the deadball line and slower players on the five metre line.

### Summary

Start on “go” ⇌

Run length of pitch  
in under 30 secs ⇌

Start run back on  
30 seconds ⇌

Ten lengths of the pitch

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Keep a relaxed running style”
2. “Only slow down ten metres from the line”
3. “Don’t run again until I say”
4. “Sprint the last length”

## 5. 30 second challenge

*“Individual fitness challenge”*

Each player starts on the try line holding a cone. When you shout “go” they have to run with the cone as far as they can up and down the pitch, turning on the other try line in 30 seconds. When you say “stop”, each player places his cone and walks back to the starting point. The players then have four further runs where they attempt to run past their cone. The recovery time should be no more than 30 seconds. You might change the recovery times to replicate different recovery

### Summary

Start on “go” ⇌

Run with a cone as far  
as you can in 30 secs ⇌

Place the cone on  
the ground ⇌

Have four more goes  
at beating your record

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Stand with players with similar speed and fitness to you.”
2. “Challenge each other as well as yourself”
3. “Relax the top part of the body in the long stretches – think “jelly jaw””

times during the game.

---

1. Pre-contact warm-ups

---

**2. Fitness warm-ups**

---

3. Handling warm-ups

---

4. Agility and speed warm-ups

---

5. Set piece warm-ups

---

6. Warm-downs

---

7. Pre-match warm-ups

---

## 6. Three minute test

*“Super exercises that use body weight”*

In pairs, each player performs six different exercises for 30 seconds, for a total of three minutes. The partner keeps count of the number of repetitions achieved. Depending on the ability of the team, here are some example exercises to use: press ups, star jumps, sit ups, squat thrusts, lunges, burpees. Record the scores for next time.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Make sure each exercise is high quality”
2. “Add up the total repetitions as you go”

## 7. Numbers up

*“Ideal for improving reactions when players are tired”*

Working between the dead ball line and the try line (or any ten metre distance between lines), the players start by jogging slowly between the lines. At every line, they have to put the flat of one hand on the line before they turn. At random times you shout a number which refers to an action which must be performed immediately. For example “one” for two press ups, “two” to change direction, “three” to run backwards. Players should stay in line at all times and react quickly to the numbers. Work for at least five minutes.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Fitter players: talk to other players to keep them in line”
2. “React quickly and keep exercise quality high”
3. “Ensure every line is touched by the hand”

---

1. Pre-contact warm-ups

---

**2. Fitness warm-ups**

---

3. Handling warm-ups

---

4. Agility and speed warm-ups

---

5. Set piece warm-ups

---

6. Warm-downs

---

7. Pre-match warm-ups

---

## **8. Realign**

*“Forces players to talk in defence”*

Split the players into two groups. One group starts on a line and the second group jogs on the spot right behind them. When you lift your hand straight up, the first group comes forward in a line, an arm’s distance apart. If you point left, players move left; if you point right, the players move right. If you point towards them they move backwards. Players should be always on their toes, always maintaining the line, only moving forward when you point up. When you shout “change”, the two lines swap. Once the teams are used to the movement, you run along the line starting from the middle. You point at different players and tell them to get to either end and the players have to run to the end of the line. The group then has to realign to fill in the gaps.

### **✓ What to say:**

1. “Look around to see what’s going on next to you”
2. “Players on the end help to keep line spacing right”
3. “No bunching in the middle”
4. “To change direction, stay on your toes and keep balanced”

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
- 3. Handling warm-ups**
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 3. Handling Warm-ups

**The aim:** To prepare players for handling and decision-making exercises

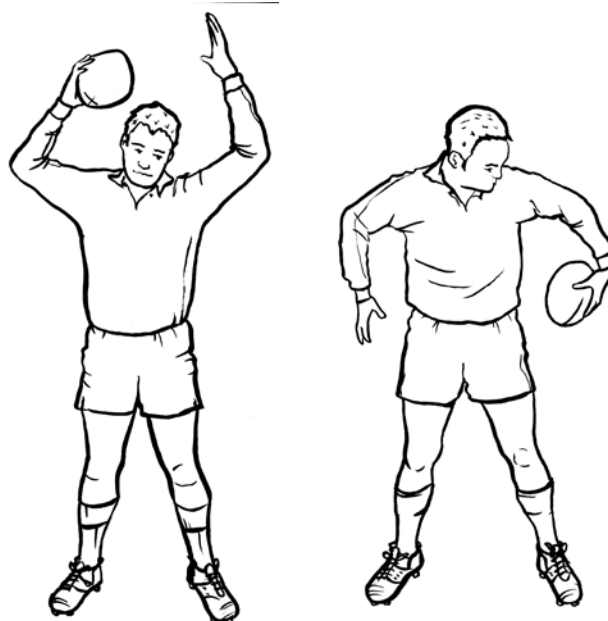
### 1. Round the head, round the body

*“Excellent for one handed ball control”*

Using both hands, a player circles the ball clockwise and then anticlockwise above the top of the head. Next he does the same around the middle of the body, not touching the body. The drill progresses further by doing the same whilst walking and then jogging.

#### ✓ What to say:

1. “Start slowly, skill first, speed later”
2. “Use fingers to control ball”
3. “Keep body upright”



### 2. Ball juggling

*“Worth persevering with over the whole season”*

The player passes a ball flat from his left to his right hand. He then passes flat from left to right and loops the ball back from right hand to left. Adding a second ball, the player juggles, so that one ball goes from left to right whilst the other loops over from right to left. More adept players can try three balls or try to run whilst juggling two.

#### ✓ What to say:

1. “Keep your head up and look at both hands”
2. “Feel and push the ball in the direction it needs to go”
3. “Don’t fear failure – it may take some time to master this skill”



1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
- 3. Handling warm-ups**
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

### 3. Leg flips

*“A fun ball trick to master”*

Get a player in a crouching position to hold the ball off the ground between his legs, with his left arm behind his left leg and his right arm in front of his right leg. Then get him to swap hands without the ball touching the ground. This means the left hand comes in front of the body and the right hand goes behind the right leg to catch the ball.



#### ✓ What to say:

1. “Bend the knees and keep a straight back”
2. “Flip the ball up a little with the finger tips”
3. “What is the best way to hold the ball – by the ends or in the middle?”

### 4. Ball bouncing

*“Another way of showing off ball sense”*

A player bounces a ball on the ground so it bounces back to him. The ball should start around hip height, be held in the middle and with one end pointed down towards the ground slightly. You can progress the drill by trying to bounce the ball while running.

#### ✓ What to say:

1. “Wide grip with hands”
2. “Push the ball down”
3. “Learn the mechanics of the bounce by experimenting with different angles”



1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
- 3. Handling warm-ups**
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 5. Distance passing

*“Simple drill that promotes accuracy”*

Two players with one ball stand two paces apart, facing each other. The first remains in the same place throughout and passes the ball to the second. After each pass, the second player moves two steps backwards, away from the first. Each pass must go into a target area between the shoulder and hip. Every time a pass fails to reach the target area (or is dropped), the second player moves two paces forward towards the first.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Accuracy before speed”
2. “Vary the passes between normal and spin”
3. “Keep on your toes when passing”

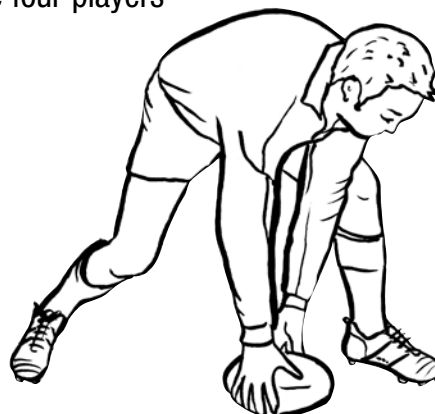
## 6. Scrum half passing

*“Not just for scrum halves”*

In a ten metre square marked out with cones, place two balls, one in each corner of one side. One player (the passer) stands over one ball and a second player (the receiver) stands at the opposite corner on the diagonal. The passer passes to the receiver, passing the ball from the ground, scrum half style. The receiver puts the ball on the corner he is standing on. The passer then moves to next ball and the receiver moves clockwise to the next corner. This is repeated, with the players working their way around the square. For variation, the passing player can use dive passes or spin passes and should change direction after one circuit. To develop the drill you can use four players with one on each corner, two passers and two receivers.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Make sure the ball is centrally between your feet before passing”
2. “Point foot towards receiver when passing”
3. “Keep everything low in passing action”



1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
- 3. Handling warm-ups**
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 7. Pass reaction

*“Puts players under passing pressure”*

Two players, one with a ball, stand between three and five metres apart, with the receiver’s back to the ball carrier. When the ball carrier shouts “go”, the receiver turns around, receives the pass and then passes straight back. To increase pressure the ball carrier moves immediately after the pass, or sends the pass at the same time as he says “go”. To develop the drill further, change the pass to high or low.



### ✓ What to say:

1. “Active hands on turn – arms bent, fingers splayed and facing upwards”
2. “Weight and balance should be evenly spread”
3. “Return pass should be on target”

## 8. Continuous passing

*“Promotes better running angles and timing of passes”*

Two players, one with a ball, each run the same figure of eight around two cones, starting from opposite ends. Just before they cross in the middle of the cones, the ball changes hands with a switch or pop pass. Get them to pass the ball earlier or later to create longer and shorter passes.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Adjust speeds to avoid forward passing”
2. “Put ball in front of runner to encourage him to run on to it”
3. “Only pass when the receiver is ready, so slow up if necessary”

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
- 3. Handling warm-ups**
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 9. Numbers

*“Simple to set up – endless variations”*

Players split into groups of three or four in a ten metre square. With a ball in each group, they move to space and pass the ball after no more than three seconds. When you shout a number, the players change passing skill, for example “one” equals a gut pass, “two” equals a one handed pass, and “three” is a pass from the ground.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Communicate with group members”
2. “Head up to find space”
3. “Pass gently, it is only small space”

## 10. In and out

*“Keeps players active after passing”*

Get three or four players to stand in a five metre square with one ball and perform a variety of passes. Every time a player passes the ball they must then move outside the square, getting both feet clear. They can then come back into the square to receive a pass. Players must leave the square on a different side each time they exit.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Keep your head up to look for the next pass”
2. “Call names and show where you want to receive the pass”
3. “Make passes gentle and directed at the space where a receiver is going to arrive”

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
- 3. Handling warm-ups**
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 11. Fall and pop

*“Ideal for developing tackled player skills”*

A group of three or four players with a ball run up a narrow channel. After three metres, the ball carrier falls to the ground and pops up the ball. After making the pop, the player either performs a forward roll or one press up before rejoining the group, which is moving forward.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Turn shoulders towards receiver”
2. “Use wrists to deliver the correct pace on the ball”
3. “Pass needs to be looped up rather than passed straight to the receiver”

## 12. Pass around the box

*“A classic pass and move drill”*

In a five metre square three players, one with a ball, stand on three corners. The ball carrier passes to the player on the corner on his left and runs to the right. The receiver does the same and the other players continually pass left, run right. After five passes each, the players change direction. Better players can pass on the move, drawing the other players off their cones.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Accuracy of pass comes first”
2. “Firm pass to target”
3. “Use arms and wrists to add weight”
4. “Pass in front of players to help them make quicker decisions”

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
- 3. Handling warm-ups**
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

### 13. Four in a line

*"All about discipline for the non-ball carriers"*

In a ten metre channel, get four players to stand in a line, facing up the channel. The ball starts at end of the line with one player. The ball carrier runs forward five metres and then passes back to the next player, who has set off when the ball carrier reaches three metres. This is repeated along the line, until it reaches the last player who accelerates to the other end of the channel.

#### ✓ What to say:

1. "Hold the run until the last moment"
2. "Pass in front of the player to draw them forward"
3. "Present hands to passer to give better target"

### 14. Coach roller

*"Creates a new passing environment every time"*

In a ten metre square four players wait on one line, facing in. You stand about halfway up the square on the left hand side and roll the ball in. One player picks up the ball and it must then be passed once to every player, always in a direction away from you. This might mean very short passes depending on how quickly the ball is rolled in and how the players react.

#### ✓ What to say:

1. "Passer step towards me before passing"
2. "Receivers, hold depth"
3. "Ball retriever, pick and pass straight away, just like in a tight game situation"

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
- 3. Handling warm-ups**
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 15. One foot

*“One for better balance”*

Players split into two queues lined up side by side. The front two players set off (walking, jogging or running) and when they reach a cone five metres in front of them, they start hopping forward on a nominated foot. You then pass one of the players the ball and they have to then pass it to their partner, whilst still hopping.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Emphasise the use of the hips to pass”
2. “One footed player, keep head up to keep balance and good sight of receiver”
3. “Make sure each foot and all passing directions are used”

## 16. Chaser

*“Passing exercise with competition”*

Using a ten metre square, five players line up along one line facing in, with one player standing just outside the square. Standing in front of this player, you throw him the ball. The player runs forward three metres (marked with a cone), passes to the next player and runs around to join the end of the line. The others have to run forward, passing the ball along the line to the end player, who tries to score before the first player reaches the end of the line.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Draw the runners onto the ball by passing in front of them”
2. “Keep the ball at chest height for speed of passing”
3. “Step towards the ball”

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
- 3. Handling warm-ups**
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 17. Pop out and in

*“Develops better running angles”*

At least four players stand in a line in a five metre channel. The first player in the line, with a ball, runs out diagonally and towards the opposite edge of the channel. He passes the ball back inside to another player. The receiver runs to the other edge and passes back in. This repeats until all the players have received the ball at least twice. Add some pressure by making the passers perform one press up straight after their pass. Receivers should change pace and angle of run as soon as possible.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Passers, pass inside with sympathy”
2. “Loop the pass in the air more than normal”
3. “Runners, hold run”
4. “Runners shout “left”, “right”, “deep”, “short”, “flat”, “wide”

## 18. Looping the loop

*“Improves weight of short passes”*

Four players start in a queue. The player at the front with the ball moves forward, steps one way and passes a short pass the other way. The first player then runs around to join the back of the queue. Each player repeats this action.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Receive the ball in front of you”
2. “Step towards the passer”
3. “Don’t start to loop until you have passed the ball”

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
- 3. Handling warm-ups**
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 19. Ready, Steady, Pass

*“Helps players think about positioning to receive pass”*

Four players stand in a bunch by a cone. You stand by the side of the cone. On the signal “go” the players line up at least five metres behind you, ready to attack the direction you are facing. You throw the ball over your head, the players catch it, run forward and pass. Every player should receive a pass. Stand facing in different directions, and repeat the drill.

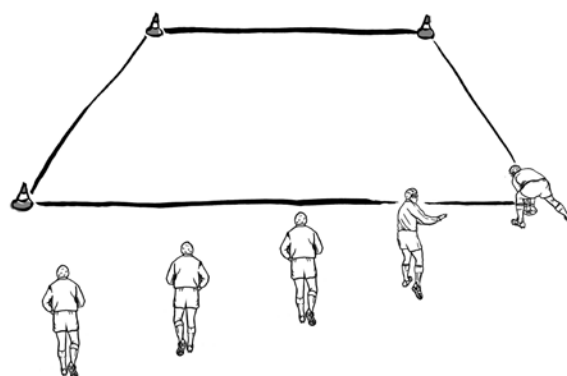
### ✓ What to say:

1. “Talk to each other to get into position”
2. “Face towards the ball as soon as possible”
3. “Set the attacking line off the first player”

## 20. Attack the box

*“Gets players to realign quickly”*

Four players and one scrum half line up diagonally outside a ten metre square, with the scrum half on one corner of the square. A ball is placed on the corner. The scrum half passes to the first player and the ball is passed along the line so that the last player can place the ball on the nearest corner of the square to him. All the players then move to the next side of the square and repeat the drill.



### ✓ What to say:

1. “Step towards the passer”
2. “Don’t run too far with the pass, so take the ball and give”
3. “Reach for the pass with your hands, keeping the ball at chest height”

## A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR NEW COACHES

**With so much to cover when coaching young players, it can be a daunting task to know the basics... now there's help**

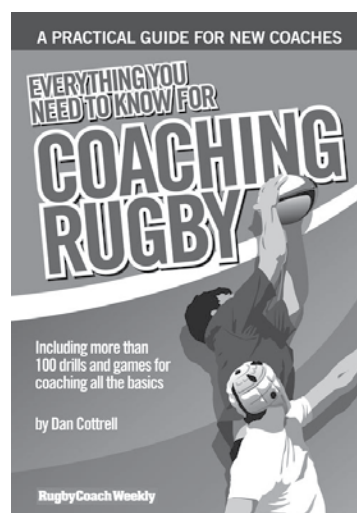
# Everything You Need to Know for Coaching Rugby

## Including More than 100 Drills and Games for Coaching All the Basics

**Coaching Rugby** is created for new and aspiring coaches of junior players. It is specially designed to help you build your players' techniques, skills and understanding of the whole game from ages 8 to 16.

*"This resource is excellent. I'm sure that it would aid any new coach in the game."*

**Warren Robilliard, Coach Education Manager,  
Australian Rugby Union (ARU)**



- **Contains everything you'll need to do and say at training.** Covering health and safety, to long term athlete / player development (LTAD)
- **All the exercises and sessions you'll need for the year ahead.** More than 100 training sessions, rugby games and developments to take you through the whole rugby coaching year... and for seasons to come
- **Ideal for beginners.** Supports new and aspiring coaches, coaches working towards their level 1 courses and beyond, coaches covering unfamiliar areas, and more experienced coaches looking for a fresh approach
- **A unique resource for schools and junior clubs.** Covers the key technical aspects of the players' long term development from ages 8 to 16
- **Provides a solid base for all the core skills** your players will need throughout their rugby playing careers

**Find out more at [www.rugby-coach.com/coachingrugby](http://www.rugby-coach.com/coachingrugby)**

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
- 4. Agility and speed warm-ups**
5. Set-piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 4. Agility and Speed Warm-ups

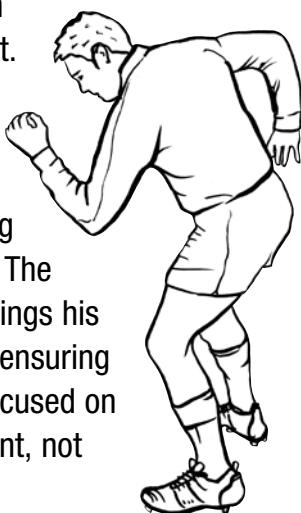
**The aim:** To prepare players to run faster and be more agile

The first four warm-ups are to prepare the muscles for increased speed

### 1. Chicken wings

*“This is really good with music or any kind of rhythm”*

Get the player to start in a standing position with his knees slightly bent. The arms are in a sprint position, bent at 90 degrees, with the forefinger touching thumb on each hand. The player then slowly swings his arms back and forth, ensuring that all the effort is focused on this plane of movement, not side to side.



#### ✓ What to say:

1. “Elbows should go back to shoulder height”
2. “Hands should come forward to shoulder height”
3. “Keep the head up, eyes forward and face and hands relaxed”

#### ✓ Developments:

1. Sit down to perform the exercise
2. Use weights on each hand
3. Carry a rugby ball under one or both arms

### 2. Karate kid

*“Locks the ideal sprinting position into their athletic memory”*

Get the players in a standing sprint position, with one foot on the ground, and only the ball of the foot touching the ground. The other leg should be held with the knee at hip height. Both arms should be bent at 90 degrees. The elbow on the same side as the lifted leg should be held as high as possible. The arm on the other side should have the hand at shoulder height. Get them to hold this position for 20 seconds and then swap.



#### ✓ What to say:

1. “Imagine you’re sprinting”
2. “Relax and hold”
3. “When changing positions, do it quickly”

#### ✓ Developments:

1. Swing the leg whilst maintaining other limbs in position
2. Swing the arms and move the free leg up and down

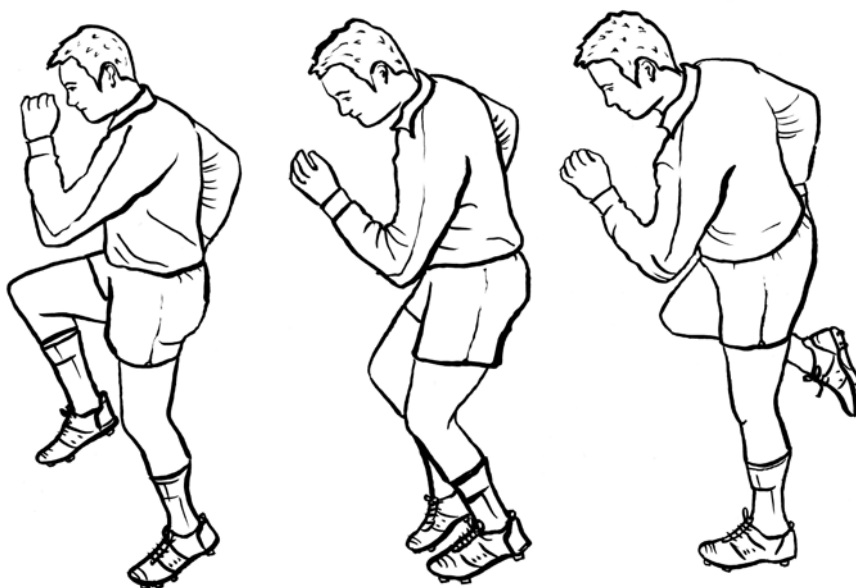
1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
- 4. Agility and speed warm-ups**
5. Set-piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

### 3. Dancing feet

*“Helps them concentrate on technique and leg speed”*

Over ten metres, perform two or three each of the following basic drills.

- 1.** The players walk at normal pace on the balls of their feet, but drive their knees up quickly to hip height. The player should experience the sensation of being six inches taller.
- 2.** The players walk at normal pace, but kick their heels into their buttocks. The heel should rebound quickly and return to the ground.
- 3.** The players walk at normal pace, but tap their toes into the ground quickly. They should concentrate on keeping their heads up, with the feet remaining straight and in line.



#### ✓ What to say:

- 1.** “Move your arms faster and your legs will move faster”
- 2.** “Keep the arm swings pointing forward”
- 3.** “Avoid arms swinging across the front of the body”
- 4.** “Keep leg movements pointing forward”
- 5.** “Concentrate on technique and leg speed, not on moving forward”

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
- 4. Agility and speed warm-ups**
5. Set-piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 4. Sprint marching

*“A brilliant one to get them going faster”*

From a standing sprint position, players drive their whole body up as high as possible, without moving forward more than a walking stride. Players should take off and land on the same foot. Walk for one stride before changing take off foot. The arms need to be over extended, the knee driving up and beyond hip height. All the power should be focused up and forward.



### ✓ What to say:

1. “Drive up opposite legs and arms”
2. “Keep elbows bent, but the leading arm can be nearly straightened to gain extra momentum”
3. “Keep the head still and looking up”
4. “Try to get as far off the ground as possible”

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
- 4. Agility and speed warm-ups**
5. Set-piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

The next four warm-ups are to prepare players to cover the ground faster

## 5. Moonwalking

*“Think like a triple jumper”*

From a jogging start, get the players to try to cover 20 metres in as few strides as possible.

Count the number of strides over four attempts.

### ✓ What to say:

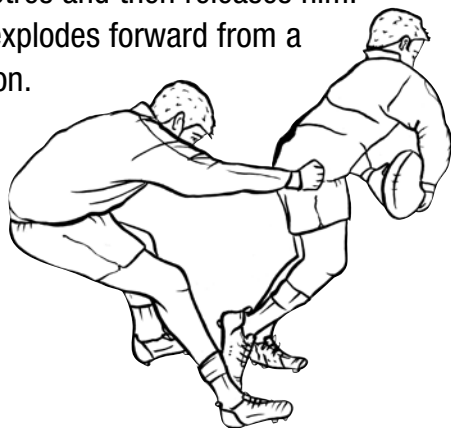
1. “Drive with the arms to get more distance”
2. “Keep the head up and relaxed”
3. “Keep momentum forward by landing on your heel and driving off your toes”



## 6. Ping!

*“Promotes explosive sprinting”*

One player with the ball is held by another from behind by the shorts. The held player leans forward and tries to start running. Maintaining resistance, the holder lets the runner move a couple of metres and then releases him. The runner explodes forward from a falling position.



### ✓ What to say:

1. “Runner: use short steps to regain balance”
2. “Runner: work the arms to maintain balance and then into a running action”

### ✓ Developments:

1. Use an old shirt or towel to hold the player in position
2. Decide who initiates the “let go” – the holder or the runner

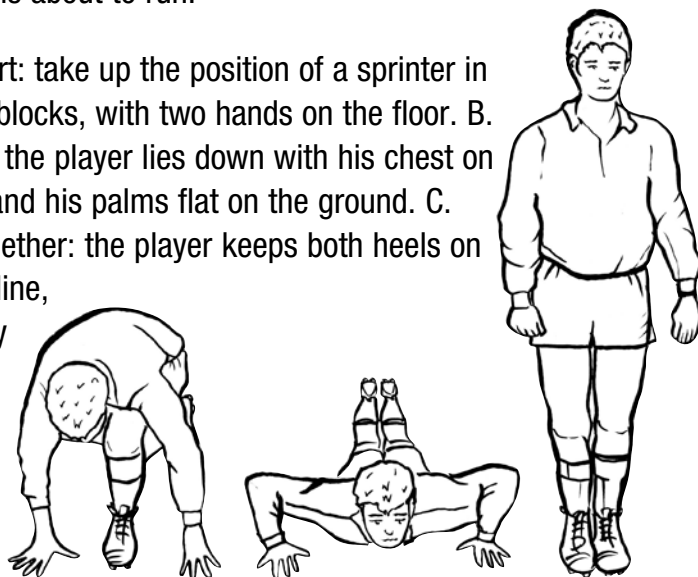
1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
- 4. Agility and speed warm-ups**
5. Set-piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 7. Funny starts

*"Imitates game sprint start positions"*

Use the following starting positions to improve reaction time and transition into running actions. The distance covered should be no more than 20 metres, with the first five to seven metres marked as the distance to get into the best running style. Note, the player is always facing in the direction he is about to run.

A. Sprint start: take up the position of a sprinter in the starting blocks, with two hands on the floor. B. Lying down: the player lies down with his chest on the ground and his palms flat on the ground. C. Two feet together: the player keeps both heels on the starting line, with arms by his side.



### ✓ What to say:

1. "For the first five metres, your head should remain down and looking at the ground"
2. "To initiate your start, thrust one arm forward"
3. "Use fast arm movements in the first ten metres"
4. "Gradually lengthen your stride"
5. "As you start, never step back with either foot"

## 8. Changing gears

*"Helps get the feeling of acceleration"*

From a starting cone, place cones at 10 metre intervals for 40 metres. Get the player to jog to the first cone, run at 50% of sprinting speed to the second cone, then adds 10% at each cone before slowing down after 50 metres. Speed should be increased at each cone.

### ✓ What to say:

1. "Move your arms faster at each cone to increase speed"
2. "Try to relax more at each transition"
3. "As each cone is passed, visualise your head rising up a few centimetres"
4. "Keep your stride length the same, to increase speed your legs move faster"

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
- 4. Agility and speed warm-ups**
5. Set-piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## Agility

The following eight warm-ups prepare players to stop and start quickly, as well as change direction

### 9. Shadow battle

*“Adds a competitive element to agility”*

Two players start side by side. One player is the runner, the other the shadow. To start with the runner is only allowed to run forwards and backwards. Over 20 metres, the runner runs at different speeds, turning only at the end, trying to make the other player overrun him by more than two metres. If the runner stops, the shadow must stop as soon as possible without making adjustments to get level. The shadow cannot be more than two metres behind the runner. Do the drill for 30 seconds, then swap.

#### ✓ What to say:

1. “Runner should keep changing pace, with walks, jogs, strides or sprints”
2. “Stop by shifting your weight to the opposite direction and pressing down with your toes”
3. “Shadow, learn the body shape of the stopping player and anticipate this happening”

#### ✓ Developments:

1. Change the distances that players can be apart
2. The runner carries a ball in two hands
3. Play “chicken”, where the runner stops and then runs to either end line, trying to beat the shadow

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
- 4. Agility and speed warm-ups**
5. Set-piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 10. Boxes

*“Ideal to involve all the players”*

Set out four different sized boxes between three metres and ten metres square, with cones or poles, including a marker in the middle of each side. The boxes should all have one side on the same line. Four players take part at the same time, but you could use any number of players. In each square, starting at one of the corners on the line, a player has to run outside every corner of his box but inside the middle cone. He runs three sides of the square to return to the line. Repeat the drill but start at the other corner, then switch to a larger or smaller box.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Use the inside of the foot to drive off”
2. “Take shorter steps on corners, longer steps on the lines”
3. “Start the exercise slowly so you get used to arcing round the middle cone and stepping around the corners”

### ✓ Developments:

1. Use a ball in both hands, followed by a ball switching between left and right hand
2. Create a race. Faster players have to use the slower (bigger) boxes

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
- 4. Agility and speed warm-ups**
5. Set-piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 11. Turn and spin

*“Agility through disorientation”*

Set out two three metre wide corridors of ten metres parallel to each other. One player stands at the end of one corridor and a second player stands at the opposite end of the other corridor. Turn: They each run down their corridors until they have just passed each other and then turn and run the other way down other corridor. They therefore have to co-ordinate the turn with each to avoid bumping. Spin: The players run down their corridors and just before they cross, spin their bodies into the other corridor, avoiding each other.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Take short steps before the turn or spin, and accelerate away”
2. “Start the spin by turning on your inside foot – your foot closest to the other corridor”

### ✓ Developments:

1. Add a third corridor to force the players to make their turns and spins wider
2. On the spin drills, add another runner in each corridor who starts a few seconds later, so there needs to be two spins

## 12. Wide, narrow, wide

*“A very tiring one”*

Set out two lines of cones, two shoulder widths apart. After five metres, put the cones only one shoulder width apart, then after another five metres, widen the channel back to two shoulder widths. Players start in the channel. First they jump forward inside the channel with both feet together, then they jump forward outside the channel with both feet apart, hopscotch style. This continues to the end of the channel.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Use your arms to help you jump”
2. “Bounce up and out as much as possible rather than landing and stopping”

### ✓ Developments:

1. Change the width of the cones
2. Have a ball inside the cones to be picked up
3. Change to running instead of jumping, with both feet outside the wide set of cones and then both feet inside the narrow set of cones
4. Change to two foot jumps where both feet must land outside the cones on either side

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
- 4. Agility and speed warm-ups**
5. Set-piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 13. Pole dancing

*“A good combination of fast feet, balance and speed”*

Set up two courses of poles of no more than 20 metres. The first course is a simple slalom, with players dodging in and out of the poles. Players simply run through with a ball in two hands. The second course has gates, two poles about a metre apart, through which a player must run. Each gate will force players to run sideways, backwards and forwards to complete the course like a canoe slalom course. Again players should carry the ball.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Do not touch the poles. This is not skiing!”
2. “Use the ball to lead your body, and keep the ball away from the poles”
3. “Keep your head up to maintain balance and anticipate the next turn”

### ✓ Developments:

1. Have a second player follow the ball carrier through and receive a pop pass
2. Add some contact points, such as someone holding a rucking pad, between the gates to disorientate the runners

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
- 4. Agility and speed warm-ups**
5. Set-piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 14. Tigger bags

*“Easy to turn into races”*

Using ruck pads or tackle bags, set up the following exercises:

- A. Simple hop:** a player runs up to a bag, two foot jumps over the bag and sprints away.
- B. Triple hop:** a player runs up to a bag, two foot jumps over the bag, backward jumps over and then back over again and sprints away.
- C. In, side, out:** place two bags on the floor, with one at right angles to the other in the shape of an “L”.  
A player runs up to the bag, jumps over it and then immediately jumps sideways over the other and then sprints.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Bounce up from every jump”
2. “Stay on the balls of your feet”
3. “Bend your knees when landing”
4. “Keep elbows away from the body to add stability and balance – even when carrying the ball”
5. “Don’t look at the ground”

### ✓ Developments:

1. Make the jumps higher by stacking ruck pads
2. Players graduate from two foot jumps to one foot jumps, using alternate feet in each exercise
3. Change the angle that players approach bags

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
- 4. Agility and speed warm-ups**
5. Set-piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 15. Get up before you go go

*“Fast and furious”*

Set out a box no bigger than ten metres square. Place four cones or balls anywhere on the edges of the box. Get any number of players to run around in the box passing balls between them. When you shout “down”, the players have to touch their chests on the floor, get up and touch each cone or ball before return to the grid.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Bounce off the floor by getting hands just above hip level to drive up”
2. “Drive knees through to get to feet”
3. “Take short steps to get going”
4. “Ball carriers place ball when going to ground and pick ball up on the upwards part of the bounce”

### ✓ Developments:

1. Players have to roll over before getting up
2. Players have to perform an exercise like a press up or sit up before getting up

## 16. Stepping pairs

*“Really good for pre-match warm-ups”*

Two lines of players face each other three metres apart, each facing a partner. They jog on the spot and wait for your instructions. When you shout “left”, the players sidestep left, run five metres forward and then return to the line to face each other. You can call “right”, “spin”, “back” or other calls for players to react to.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Tap the feet on the ground so you can react quickly”
2. “Imagine the steps you need to do the movements”
3. “After the initial movement, accelerate away”

### ✓ Developments:

1. Each pair works separately, with one player calling the instruction
2. Get the pairs to swap around to learn reactions to different players

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
- 4. Agility and speed warm-ups**
5. Set-piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## Ladders

Ladder work has the following advantages:

- helps footwork
- makes a change from other forms of warm-up
- aids upper body control

All the drills have a rugby-related outcome. Simple ladder work helps players get used to controlling their feet inside the small space of the ladder. Once a player is comfortable with this, he can move to doing more complicated exercises.

### ✓ What to say: *(when doing ladder work)*

1. "Aim to keep your head up. Don't look at your feet"
2. "Bounce on the balls of your feet"
3. "Use your arms to balance and drive through the ladder"
4. "Concentrate on quality rather than speed"

## 17. Simple ladder

*"Quality first"*

Get the player to go through the ladder with the following foot patterns:

- Left foot in the first space, then right foot in the second space, and so on. Swap the starting foot on the next repetition.
- Run, with both feet going in each space.
- Hop, hop on right foot into first and second space, then step into the third space with left foot and hop into the fourth space.
- Stride, with a space being missed with every stride.

- Forward three spaces, back one, forward three back one. First time do this with one foot in each space, and then both in each space.

### ✓ Developments:

1. Without and with a ball
2. Carry the ball in one hand, then swap to the other hand
3. Have a ball to pick up in one of the spaces

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
- 4. Agility and speed warm-ups**
5. Set-piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 18. Ladder defence

*“Get the players to shout who they are marking”*

Get two players to stand facing each other at one end of the ladder at right angles to it. One player steps forward into the first space and then steps sideways through the spaces until he reaches the middle. He then steps backwards out of the ladder for five metres and then returns to the middle of the ladder, before stepping sideways in the ladder and out. At the same time another player mirrors him from the other side, either in another ladder or using an imaginary ladder.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Concentrate on keeping the opposite player in front at all times”
2. “Keep your body position low, with knees slightly bent, head up, and arms out”
3. “When running back keep facing the opposition”

### ✓ Developments:

1. You call “hit” at any time when a player is in the ladder and they have to move forward and make contact with the player opposite. Ensure the level of contact is appropriate to the level and stage of the practice
2. Have more ladders joined together and have three or four defenders working together, and having to maintain a defensive line

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
- 4. Agility and speed warm-ups**
5. Set-piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 19. Ladder lineouts

*“Develops jumping ability”*

A jumper starts in a middle space in the ladder, facing a thrower five metres away from the start of the ladder. Place three cones next to any three spaces in the ladder, with a letter A, B or C. A third player, standing next to the ladder like a scrum half, shouts a letter. The jumper runs backwards or forwards to the designated cone and jumps to receive a ball from the thrower.

### ✓ What to say:

1. “Jumper: concentrate of getting both feet in the jumping space”
2. “Jumper: keep your arms in front of your body with hands at shoulder height. In a game, any lower with the hands and they are likely to be interfered with”

### ✓ Developments:

1. A jumper should jump forward one rung for a flat throw and back one rung for a lob throw
2. Get two players to act as supporters and lift or bind on the jumper. They will have to move up and down the ladder as well
3. Put another ladder alongside with some opposition jumpers
4. Get the jumper to start beside the ladder and then move inside to step up and down the ladder

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
- 4. Agility and speed warm-ups**
5. Set-piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 20. Advanced ladders

*“Work outside the comfort zone”*

Using ladders to enhance different aspects of the game.

- 1.** L shaped ladders – fold the ladder at right angles in the middle so players have to change directions quickly.
- 2.** In ladder, out decision – a player runs through the ladder and then has to react to a coaching direction when they exit, such as “beat a defender”.
- 3.** Passing ladder – two players move up a corridor, with one player in the ladder and one out. The player in the ladder will give and take a pass from the other player.
- 4.** Exercise ladder – a player starts by performing an exercise, like a press up, five metres from the ladder, runs into ladder and then steps out half way along, performs

another exercise, re-enters and out. The aim is to break the running rhythm up so players don’t become accustomed to simply stepping through the ladder.

### ✓ Developments:

- 1.** Pressure players by timing them. Add time “faults” when players step on the sides or rungs of the ladder
- 2.** Place cones inside the ladders, which cannot be stepped on
- 3.** Place ruck pads over some of the space, which need to be hurdled

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
- 5. Set piece warm-ups**
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 5. Set Piece Warm-ups

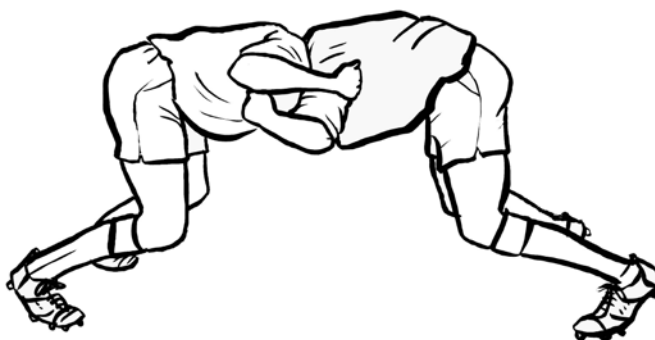
**The aim:** To prepare players mentally and physically for full scrum and lineout practice

### Scrummaging warm-ups

#### SAFETY NOTE

Players should always:

1. Use pre-contact warm-ups first.
2. Use dynamic stretching to prepare the upper body, especially the neck, shoulders and back.
3. Engage gently, or “fold in” for the first few contacts.
4. Have their shoulders above their hips.
5. Bind correctly, with their left arm under their opponent’s right arm and binding on the side or back of the other player on their team.



#### ✓ Key points: (for all scrummaging drills)

1. Good for all players as they help teach good body position, develop strength and communication
2. Keep hips and shoulders in line
3. Take short steps
4. Talk to each other

### 1. Ball lift

*“Helps focus on the ball as well as scrummaging”*

Two players facing each other bind together with right arms, each using their left hand to help each other pick up a ball between them. They then have to put it down. For variation, change binding and hands. Make the players move to different points whilst remaining bound, to pick up and put down a ball.



1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
- 5. Set piece warm-ups**
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 2. All four corners

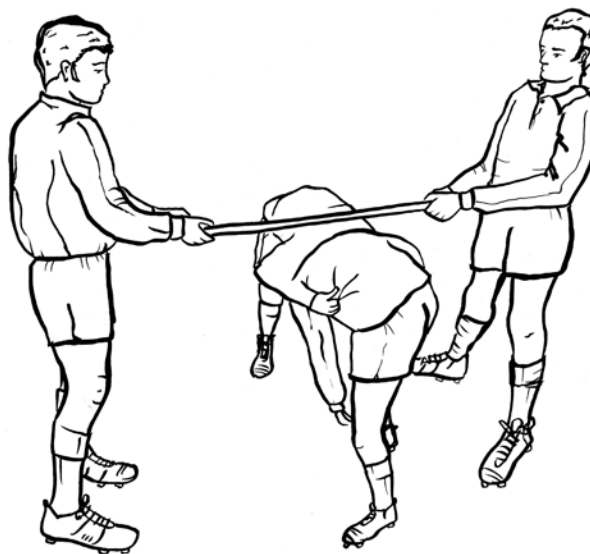
*“Get them to move slowly”*

Two players facing each other bind together in a five metre square, with four different coloured cones on the corners. Starting in the middle, the players remain bound and move from cone to cone on your orders, whilst maintaining the same axis they started on. This means forwards, backwards and sideways movements.

## 3. Front row limbo dancing

*“Helps players understand different heights for engagement”*

Two players hold a pole (you could use a corner flag post) at hip height. Two players bind in the one-on-one scrummage position and then walk backwards and forwards under the pole, without touching it. Lower the pole depending on the success.



## 4. Crabs

*“Cracking pre-match warm-up for everyone”*

Get six players to bind together in pairs, one-on-one and stand within a six metre square. On a signal they have to move around within the square without touching another pair. There must be only slow movements and definitely no contact. This works the shoulders and provides contact without crashing into anyone. Make sure players switch and work with different partners.

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
- 5. Set piece warm-ups**
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## Lineout warm-ups

Before starting, get the players to:

1. Use dynamic stretching to warm-up upper body and legs. This should include jumping and bounding.
2. Do some one-on-one player lifts. One player grabs another by the waist as he jumps up and holds him up for two seconds before letting him down.

### 5. Time and jump

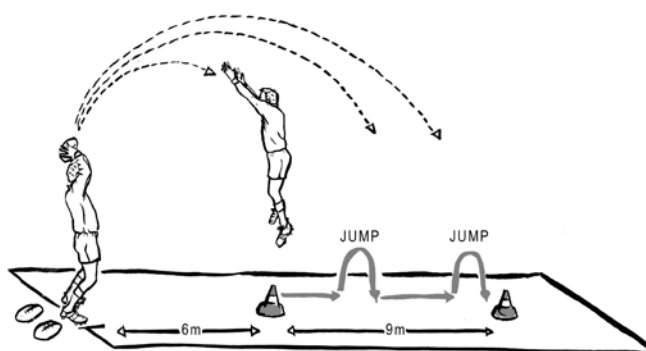
*“Good to get everyone warmed up immediately”*

You need a thrower and jumper. Three cones, with the second at six metres and the third at 15 metres. The thrower stands by the first cone.

1. The jumper jumps first from a standing position at the second cone, then from in between the second and third cones, and then at the back cone. The ball is thrown for him to catch in the air with each jump.

2. The jumper starts by the six metre cone again. When the thrower pulls the ball back behind his head, the jumper walks backwards for a count of three seconds, stops and jumps. The thrower times the throw to hit the jumper. Next, the jumper moves backwards from the six metre cone to the 15 metre cone, stops for three seconds and then jumps.

Repeat with the jumper walking forwards for three seconds and jumping at the 6m cone, and finally, running forwards to take a flat throw at the front cone. Set up five or six of these so everyone is involved.



#### ✓ What to say:

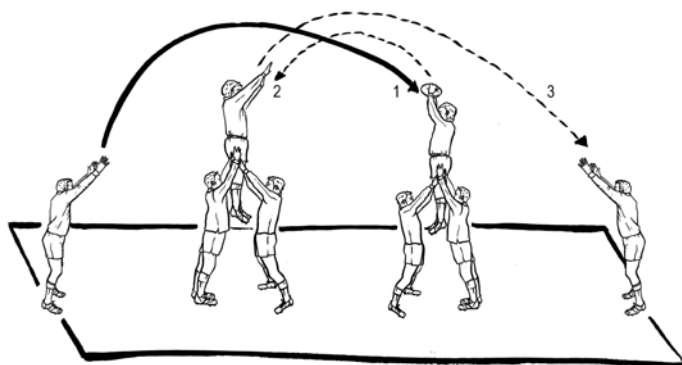
1. “Jumper, take off with two feet”
2. “Thrower, throw earlier when jumper is further back”
3. “Jumper, always try to turn towards a real or imaginary scrum half after receiving the ball”

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
- 5. Set piece warm-ups**
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

## 6. Line out ballet

*“Develops soft hands for the jumpers”*

You need two throwers and two pods of players (a pod is one jumper and two lifters or supporters). The two pods face each other about seven metres away from their respective throwers. The first thrower throws into the first pod (lifted). This pod then passes the ball to the second pod, which throws the ball back to their thrower. The process is repeated in reverse, with the ball returning via both pods to the first thrower.



### ✓ What to say:

1. “Second pod, go up in reaction to first pod”
2. “Catcher, keep your arms bent to allow an accurate transfer of the ball”
3. “Lifters, raise the jumper up quickly, and bring him down slowly”

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
- 5. Set piece warm-ups**
6. Warm-downs
7. Pre-match warm-ups

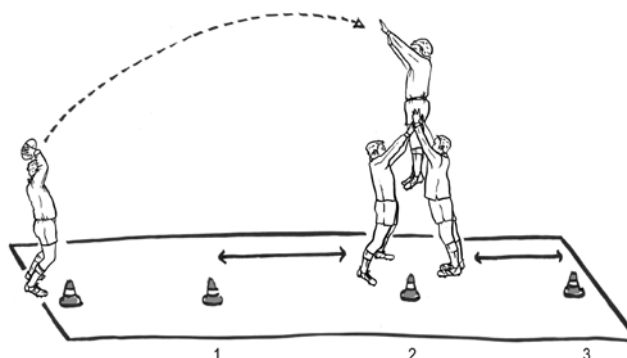
## 7. Three in a boat

*"Helps with timing"*

For this drill you require one thrower and one pod (one jumper and two lifters). Set three cones as markers, three metres apart, with the thrower five metres away at another cone. Each cone is given a number. Two numbers are called. The pod moves quickly to the first cone called, performs a dummy jump and then moves to the second cone called, where they then jump for real. (The same drill can be performed with the jumper jumping alone with no lifting allowed, and the three players forming a wedge after the catch).

### ✓ What to say:

1. "Take short steps"
2. "Lifters, keep your eyes on the lifting points on the jumper, when jumpers are moving"
3. "Lifters, make sure you are well set before lifting – safety first"



## 8. Jumper in the middle

*"Useful defensive lineout warm-up"*

Either a pod or just a jumper stands in the middle of four players with one ball. The ball is passed around the players, until one player pulls the ball back into throwing position. The jumper or pod has a limited time to react, turn and jump for the ball.



### ✓ What to say:

1. "Jumper, move to keep your hips in line with the player with the ball"
2. "Lifters, follow the jumper's hips"
3. "Lifters, keep your feet a shoulder width apart, use short steps and small jumps to keep in line"
4. "Keep hands and arms in active jumping position to react quickly"

**“The scrum has emerged as the most deadly try-scoring weapon” ARU on Super 14 matches in 2008**

**SECRETS**

# of the **FRONT ROW**

**The insider’s guide to better scrummaging...**

A ground-breaking coaching and skills manual that shows you how to get more power from your scrum and deliver top quality first phase ball.

*60 pages on how to:*

- Win the engagement and put in
- Disrupt opposition ball
- Dominate effectively
- Reduce pressure
- Adopt stronger body positions
- Deal with cheating
- Train with scrummage machines
- Practice successfully
- Use better binding options
- Play tight or loose head

**Secrets of the Front Row** is an instruction and training manual for every aspect of front row play.

Players considering taking up one of these roles should read the individual chapters on the idea characteristics required for the positions.

Experienced members of the front row fraternity will find new angles and tactics from the extensive quotes and advice gathered from around the world.

Coaches will find fresh tips and guidance that they can use for session after session.

*You can save an amazing 33% if you order today!*

To order or to find out more go to  
[www.rugby-coach.com/secrets](http://www.rugby-coach.com/secrets)

Your choice of electronic format (PDF) and/or bound version.

## 6. Warm-downs

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
- 6. Warm-downs**
7. Pre-match warm-ups

**The aim:** To help players prevent muscle soreness and break down unwanted by-products of exercise in the body

Warm-downs are very important, and take very little time. They should be part of a routine that you follow after every training session and match. Players are tired and do not want to be stimulated, so the routines should not be challenging or different.

### 1. Light running-type activity

(2 minutes)

A typical ten-minute warm-down session might include the following.

- walk five metres, jog ten metres, walk five metres
- walk 5m, skip 10m, walk 5m
- in a box, jog forwards, sideways and backwards for 30 seconds.

**For example:**

Walk 5 metres ⇄	Jog 10 metres ⇄	Walk 5 metres ⇄	Repeat three times
Walk 5 metres ⇄	Skip 10 metres ⇄	Walk 5 metres ⇄	Repeat three times
Jog forward 5 metres ⇄	Jog backward 5 metres ⇄	Jog sideways right 5 metres ⇄	Jog sideways left 5 metres

### 2. Dynamic stretching

(4 minutes)

Each over 10m:

Gentle lunges ⇄	Slow high knees ⇄	Easy buttock kicks
-----------------	-------------------	--------------------

Then jog and every 5m perform the following:

Five slow press ups ⇄	Five easy sit ups ⇄	Two forward rolls
-----------------------	---------------------	-------------------

With a partner:

Five high kicks with a partner holding onto the shoulder for support ⇄	Five cross kicks ⇄	10 seconds resisted jogging with partner holding shorts
--	--------------------	---

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
- 6. Warm-downs**
7. Pre-match warm-ups

### 3. Static stretching

(4 minutes)

Use long stretches (holding for more than 15 seconds), starting with the large muscle groups, and working through the body.

#### Examples of static stretches

##### **Legs: hamstring, thigh and calf stretches**

*Hamstring:* sit on the ground with one leg out in front and the other tucked in, so the foot touches the knee. With both hands, slide down the outstretched leg until you reach the edge of the comfort zone and hold. After two repetitions swap legs.

*Thigh (quad):* in a standing position, pull one foot into your back with the hand and hold.

*Calf:* in a press up position, rest one leg onto the other, then push the heel slowly towards the floor and then hold at edge of comfort zone.

##### **Back and middle: groin and back**

*Groin:* sit on the ground with feet pressed flat together. Hold the feet with the hands and rest elbows on knees. Rock from side to side. Then hold one side down for 15 seconds and change.

*Back:* in press up position, drop hips into floor and pull head up to the sky as far as possible and hold. Then arch back, with hips as far in the air as possible and head just touching the ground and hold. Repeat three times.

##### **Shoulders**

*Shoulders:* place one arm across body, so the elbow is as near to the opposite shoulder as possible. Face the palm upwards and use the free arm to push the other into the body. Hold and swap three times.

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
- 7. Pre-match warm-ups**

## 7. Pre-match warm-ups

### Introduction

A pre-match warm-up contains physical and mental preparation for the game. The warm-up programme for a match should be decided in advance of the day of the game and, if possible, should be kept the same for every game. However, the warm-up should be tweaked according to different variables, such as weather conditions and changes in personnel.

Pre-match warm-ups are to alert the mind and body to the game about to be played, without the players getting overexcited or too fired up. The level of alertness needs to be raised slowly, to keep players as calm as possible when they go onto the pitch.

On the psychological sides pre-match warm-up periods should be tactical, not strategic – so don't stray from familiar territory. For example, make sure that any adjustments you suggest to playing tactics are small ones.

### Some Do's and Don'ts

✓ Do's:	✗ Don'ts:
Build the intensity gradually.	Add new warm-up drills not previously used.
Use game related activities, especially exposure to contact.	Start hours before kick off – physical activity as a team should last for no more than 50 minutes before kick off, though players may want to go through organisational options earlier.
Make sure there is time for every player to know their role for the day.	Stop physical activity for more than ten minutes, especially on cold days. Bodies cool down and the benefits of an increase in muscle temperature will be reduced.
Remember that different players have different ways to prepare themselves mentally – give them a chance to do so.	Forget that the referee will want to talk to the team – ask him long before you start the warm-up about when he wants to do so, as this will avoid disruption.
Allow time for individuals and small groups to practise their individual skills, such as kicking, high ball catching. Time spent here might count for more than a team drill.	Talk about the season, talk about the match. Break the match down into segments and aim to achieve targets within that time scale.
	Use ladders. They are a means to an end rather than being game specific. Players focus on a narrow technique, not the wider picture of the game and the skills required.

- 
1. Pre-contact warm-ups

---

  2. Fitness warm-ups

---

  3. Handling warm-ups

---

  4. Agility and speed warm-ups

---

  5. Set piece warm-ups

---

  6. Warm-downs

---

  - 7. Pre-match warm-ups**
- 

## What should be in a pre-match warm-up?

### 1. Warm-up warm-up

One lap of the pitch to get a feel for all the conditions. Some players might choose this moment to change what they are going to wear (they may be too hot or too cold, or want to change their studs or cleats). Some sides have a little game of touch rugby, again ideal to get a feel for the conditions, as well as reduce the pressure levels.

### 2. Heart rate up and stretches

Using a series of dynamic stretch exercises and footwork drills, players start to prepare their bodies for the warm-up and related activity. This is a good time to build team cohesion as each exercise should be performed as a group.

### 3. Handling

Handling in small areas to build up ball and game awareness. Use rectangles where groups run across from one line to another, with the width of the square being varied for different skills.

### 4. Unit skills

Forwards and backs need to split to work on moves. The scrum half should go with the forwards, and a back act as scrum half to work with the backs. This role could be played by a reserve scrum half or back. See unit skills warm-ups for more.

### 5. Defence

Individual and team defence can be more than half the game. In the warm-up, time should be spent on preparing the body and mind for tackling and also for controlling the tackle area, as well as practising defensive alignment. For individual tackling it is sometimes worth just working for one minute in slow motion so players can visualise the tackles they are going to make without over exerting themselves.

### 6. Patterns

An unopposed run through of backs moves is a popular preparation for the game, but it is not favoured by all coaches. Unopposed may work better earlier in the warm-up, but in the last moments before the game, a semi-opposed session may be more beneficial. Assuming no substitutes, then ten v five at half pace can work to help players establish running lines off set pieces and second or third phases. The subs can be in the defence side and then swap in. The ten attackers should include scrum half and fly half.

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
- 7. Pre-match warm-ups**

## Pre-match warm-up drills

### 1. Handling

In a ten metre square box, line up four or five lines of players standing on one side of the box facing in. In each line one player at the end of the line has a ball. The player with the ball in the first line runs out three metres and then the ball is passed along the line. The first line of players then jogs round and joins the back of queue. All the lines do the same thing. Repeat twice and then change sides the ball starts on.

*First development:* the second player passes to the fourth, missing out the third player, who loops behind the fourth to receive the next pass.

*Second development:* the third player passes to the fourth using a switch or cut pass.

*Third development:* the first player shouts a pass type, such as “switch”, “miss” or “loop”, which the other players have to react to.

*Fourth development:* two players act as pass defenders putting pressure on second and third player.

### 2. Handling and footwork

In a ten metre square box get a line of players on each edge of the box. Every line of players has a ball. Each line has a letter. You call a letter and the type of passing the letter should be performing: for example pop passes, wide passes, gut passes, rip and spin. The lines then move back and forward across the box, avoiding contact with the other groups and reacting to changes of pass indicated by you.

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
- 7. Pre-match warm-ups**

### 3. Footwork

Set up a ten metre wide by 30 metre long rectangle with a line of five evenly spaced cones every seven metres. Get three or four players to set off down the box, changing pace and running style at every line of cones. When they reach the end of the grid, they jog round and join the back of the queue. Variations can be as follows.

1. A change of pace on every line of cones.
2. Sideways running, then backwards running, then sideways running facing the other way.
3. Heel flicks, then high knees, then striding out.
4. Jog up the grid, changing the angle of run every time they reach a cone. Increase the pace and encourage the players to change angles so they are running at least three metres sideways for every seven metres forwards (weaving in and out of the cones).

### 4. Contact and defence

Four players stand five metres from a line of four players, facing each other. On a signal from the coach (normally touching a ball on the floor) the first four come forward to meet second four. They then:

1. Bump shoulders.
2. Grab and drive.
3. Tackle to the ground.
4. Carrying a ball, they are tackled to the ground, get up and then compete for the ball.

**Remember to change shoulders and switch round the two teams.**

#### Tackling before a match

1. Players should take some form of contact before a match.
2. Build the intensity of tackles without going to full pace.
3. More important to visualise the contact than take the contact.
4. Make sure that there are only positive outcomes from tackling warm-up. That is, avoid circumstances for missing tackles in the warm-up.
5. Injuries are just as likely for the tackled player as for the tackler, who is unlikely to be going at full pace. The coach must be very attentive.

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
- 7. Pre-match warm-ups**

## **5. Rucks and mauls**

This warm-up requires one defender with a rucking pad and a group of five attacking players. The first attacking player goes forward with a ball, driving into the defender and pad. The drill can then follow these options with the attacker in turn:

1. Turning and feeding the next player who then passes the ball out to the other players.
2. Turning to allow the next player to rip and roll off, passing the ball out.
3. Turning with the next player binding and feeding a third player, who passes out.
4. Going to ground, with the next player clearing and the third player passing the ball out.
5. Going to ground, popping the ball and passing it out.

*Development.* Use two bags and two defenders. As above, but each time the ball carrier attacks the space between the two defenders.

## **6. Patterns, from set piece**

This involves the whole team. In the first element, the forwards kneel on the ground in a scrum formation. The scrummage releases the ball to the backs and the planned patterns of play are worked through. In the second element lineout players kneel on the ground in lineout formation, except the jumper and the last man in the line. The ball is passed to the jumper who then releases the ball to the scrum half and the backs. To simulate play from a catch and drive, after receiving the ball, the jumper walks three metres forward and the other forwards crawl after him, some binding on.

## **7. Kickers warm-up**

All kickers need to spend some time getting used to the conditions on the day of the match. Players who are likely to be punting or receiving the ball should be practising, ideally along a ten metre corridor up and down the pitch.

The place kicker will need first to find his rhythm for kicks before having a few shots at goal. One way is to strike a ball with a ruck pad placed in the way only a couple of feet off, so the ball does not fly off. With a couple of these kicks under his belt, the goal kicker can then try for the posts at both ends to take account of the elements.

A drop kicker will want to test the hardness of the ground to work out how the ball will respond to being dropped on the ground.

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
- 7. Pre-match warm-ups**

## **8. Scrum warm-up**

If there is a scrum machine, the forwards can spend some time packing down. It is worthwhile having the scrum half here for this section. This is a time to check bindings, timings and make sure the hooker is comfortable. Fold in gently for the first few engagements and then increase the pressure.

If there is no scrum machine, follow these procedures.

- One against one scrums, gently to start with.
- Tight head against hooker and loose head.
- Two locks (plus front row replacement if you have one) against front row, so the hooker can practise his strike.

## **9. Lineout warm-up**

Lineouts ideally should be the first warm-ups to take place, even before the warm-up warm-up. Otherwise warm players involved in the lineout will get cold standing around whilst the lineout is practised. Follow these elements

- Start simple. Get the front jumper just to go straight up, then move through variations.
- Move around the pitch practising pre-arranged calls in various areas.
- Get the hooker to throw up to 25 balls at a post from varying distances.
- Ensure the lifting pods get their timing and movement right before the ball is introduced.
- Don't forget defence: run through your defensive lineout patterns as well.

*Pushed for time?*

- Concentrate on simple lineout options.
- Do the warm-up in one place, but give players scenarios, for example "imagine we are on the 22 metre line".
- Don't forget defensive lineouts.

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
- 7. Pre-match warm-ups**

## 10. Backs set piece warm-up

The backs need to work through their preferred moves for that day. The state of the ground underfoot can dictate how far back players align. Here are several elements:

1. Without the ball, go through three simple moves, just to get the running lines right.
2. Add the ball and complete the moves again.
3. Run through any other moves – remember that some will be from line outs and some from scrums, rucks or mauls.
4. Run the moves that are close to set piece or breakdown with 10, 12, 13 against the wingers, fullback and the backs sub.
5. Reverse with 10, 12 and 13 acting as defence.
6. Run some second phase moves after the first phase to help practice lines of running.
7. Practice receiving kicks for counter attack options.

*Do not:*

1. Introduce new moves.
2. Run at full pace until players are thoroughly prepared.

### HINT:

Practise your moves across, rather than up the pitch, to avoid the opposition seeing what is going to happen. (The author has scored several interception tries from observation of the opposition moves before a game!)

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
- 7. Pre-match warm-ups**

## **11. Whole team set piece warm-up**

### *Kick offs*

Get the team to stand in their positions for kick off. Given that during the game a team must receive at least one kick off, and it is a psychological advantage to gain secure ball at the start of any half, it is well worth making sure that everyone is aware of their positions.

### *Back row moves*

Run through your back row moves with the whole team. Inevitably these moves will involve the backs as well, particularly in a second phase. A quick run through can be advanced to a pattern warm-up.

## **12. Penalty and free kick moves**

One of the great crimes in rugby is the over indulgence of practising penalty moves. Instead, teams should just have one great move, stick to it, and run through it only once, and take the chance that the opposition are not watching. The players will have enough to think about without having to remember several penalty move options.

Much more important are free kick manoeuvres, not least because there are now more free kicks in the game. Secondly, kicking to touch from a free kick is not a strong option as you lose possession of the line out throw. Therefore at least spend time talking through the free kick options. If the ball is going to be run immediately, players need to be aware of who is going to take responsibility for what.

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
- 7. Pre-match warm-ups**

## Timings

All teams have a limited time for pre-match warm-ups. Even with good organisation the whole team is not always available for the start of the warm-up. Pre-determined timings can therefore be difficult to implement. However, here is an “ideal” batting order of elements of warm-up that are worth performing:

## Warm-Up Priorities

*What to do first if you have limited time*

	<b>Shortest time</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>1</b> Heart rate	2 mins	Must get a “sweat” on, prepare the whole body.
<b>2</b> Dynamic stretches	5 mins	Mentally and physically get the whole body ready for vigorous activity.
<b>3</b> Set piece	5 mins	Psychologically an important area to have prepared.
<b>4</b> Patterns	5 mins	Need to know where to run, normally with unopposed or semi opposed. Creates some rhythm. Might start with kick offs.
<b>5</b> Contact	5 mins	Preparing the mind and body for ruck or maul and offload.
<b>6</b> Defence	5 mins	Should include individual and team defence.
<b>7</b> Handling	5 mins	Though much of what has gone before includes handling, look at the specifics of moving the ball effectively.
<b>8</b> Footwork	5 mins	Remind the mind and body of the right movements for good speed and agility.
<b>9</b> Kicking	5 mins	Get the kickers’ eyes in.

1. Pre-contact warm-ups
2. Fitness warm-ups
3. Handling warm-ups
4. Agility and speed warm-ups
5. Set piece warm-ups
6. Warm-downs
- 7. Pre-match warm-ups**

*What to do if you have ample time*

	<b>Ideal time</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>1</b> Heart rate	5 mins	Start the session with a gradual build up. Lap of the pitch, gentle touch rugby.
<b>2</b> Dynamic stretches	5 mins	Get the whole body ready for action and continue to intersperse dynamic stretching throughout the rest of the warm-up as well.
<b>3</b> Footwork	5 mins	Since the heart rate is now up and the body is ready, players can start to prepare themselves for the pace of the game, and the changes in direction.
<b>4</b> Handling	5 mins	Get the ball in the hands and focus on using the ball effectively, with different types of pass and catching. Could be part of the footwork warm-up as well.
<b>5</b> Set piece	15 mins	Backs and forwards split and go through their various plays.
<b>6</b> Contact	5 mins	Come back together for contact drills: offloading, rucking and mauling.
<b>7</b> Defence	5 mins	More about checking organisation than actually tackling, but can have some low level tackling.
<b>8</b> Patterns	10 mins	A team run.
<b>9</b> Kicking	5 mins	Practice receiving and taking kick offs and then kickers and potential kick receivers stay out: practise place kicks and kicking out of hand.

# 50 GREAT BACKS MOVES

Get your hands on a copy of  
Dan Cottrell's coaching guide  
**50 Great Backs Moves**

A single backs move can win a match. This **unique coaching tool** contains **50** blistering moves that could transform your team's backs play.

*"A must for any coach"*

Adrian Curran, Dhuibhne RFC, Ireland

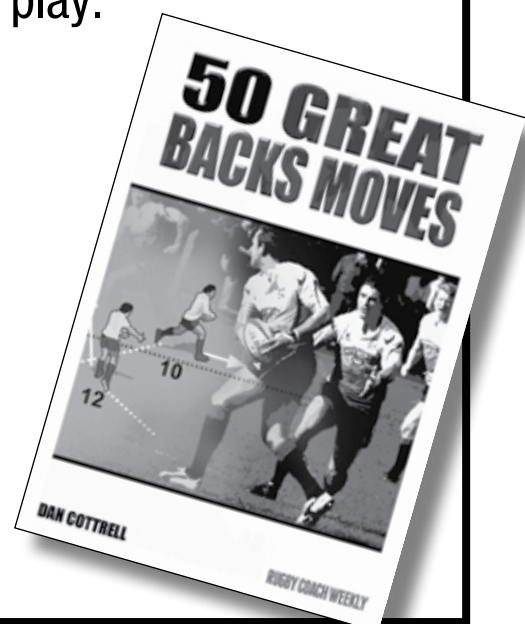
*"I could not be happier with this purchase"*

T. Scott Adamson

*"I love it"* Nancy Kechner

*"An excellent resource"* John Sherratt

*"Has helped me enormously"* Tony Todd



To order or to find out more go to [www.rugby-coach.com/50bm](http://www.rugby-coach.com/50bm)  
You can **save an amazing £41** if you order both the hard copy and PDF file!

