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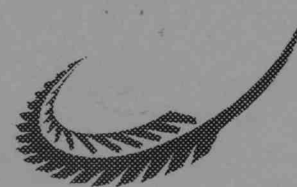
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## *Principles and Patterns of Team Play*



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Hillary Commission  
Alan Satchell  
Reg Hart

### AN OVERVIEW OF TOUCH NEW ZEALAND

Welcome to Touch New Zealand. Touch New Zealand is a non-profit incorporated society responsible for the promotion, administration and development of the sport of Touch. Founded in 1986, Touch New Zealand has 75,000 members in 20 provinces. Its aim is to ensure the long-term sustainability of the sport. This aim is achieved through:

- A comprehensive referee development programme from elementary to international level, supported by tutor and referee coach training.
- A comprehensive coach education programme from Junior to international level that compliments the Coaching New Zealand courses. This programme is also being supported by tutor training and development.
- Opportunities for competition above module level including a wide variety of regional and national inter-provincial tournaments and internationals including World Cups, Trans Tasman and South Pacific International Series.
- A comprehensive secondary schools competition structure launched in 1998/99, along with the Junior Touch development programme which includes Kiwi Touch as an official KiwiSport.
- Resource provision to modules including free scorecards and pocket-sized player rulecards.
- Management support and advice to provincial executives to assist in high quality module servicing, promotion, administration and delivery of Touch New Zealand technical and Junior development programmes and competitions.
- A marketing programme that includes media and TV promotion for the sport.

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## INTRODUCTION

The team skills contained in this publication should be considered as the basis for development of a team under the guidance of individual coaches. Coaches are encouraged to use their experience, natural flair, imagination and personalities to develop not only their players and team but the sport of Touch as a whole.

Alan Satchell  
1988

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## FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## COACHING INSTRUCTION vs INDIVIDUAL FLAIR

As coaches we have a responsibility to the teams we coach to help them achieve the goals they have set for themselves as individuals as well as for the team. If one of the goals that the team sets is to win the competition the coach must then evaluate each player's strengths and weaknesses and formulate a game plan which will make maximum use of each player's talents. They must also evaluate if the goals are realistic. For this reason the coach should always have the overriding input as to the team's style of play. However, the coach should not restrict players from using their individual flair at the appropriate time and place. Again it is up to the coach to instil a sense of discipline and control by explaining the reasons behind, and the benefits of, each set play that the team uses. If a player is confident of the reasons why they are expected to behave in a certain manner at any given point in the game, he/she is more able to make an informed decision whether to stick with the game plan or use individual skills. The latter option should only be used when the coach's game plan hasn't worked.

### KEY TO DRILLS

Players x y

$x_1$  is the first receiver

$x_2$  is the second receiver

$x_3$  is the acting half

$x_4$   
 $x_5$  are other attacking players

$x_6$  is the player who is performing the roll ball

Player who receives the ball or who has the ball at the end of a move (X)

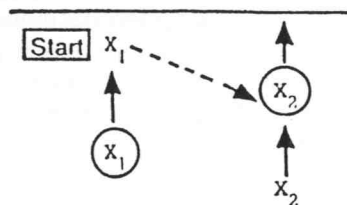
Lines

Movement of Players →

Movement of Ball - - - - -

Start of Movement [Start]

e.g. The following diagram denotes two players running to a line passing the ball.



## TEAM FORMATION

Good touch coaches need to be constantly challenging existing theories and practices and looking for innovative ways in which they may gain an advantage over their opposition.

An area often neglected and long overdue for consideration relates to the formation of the team and the particular skills and attributes that the coach requires of players.

X	X	X	X	X	X	X
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

What skills do you look for in each  
of the above players?

If we look at the figure above and assign skills for players in each position, the contemporary team may consist of players with the following skills:

PLAYER DESCRIPTION

1 & 7	Very fast, reasonable ball skills, ability to run off the ball player and good communication skills.
2 & 6	Good acceleration, good ball skills, ability to read the play and high work rate.
3 & 5	As for 1 & 7 though not needed to be as fast but with a higher work rate.
4	Quick off the mark, good ball skills, ability to read the play, ability to act as a general and good communication skills.

As an alternative to this formation above a team may consist of the following:

PLAYER DESCRIPTION

1 & 7	Very fast, good finisher, limited ball skills and excellent communication skills.
2 & 6	Next fastest to 1 & 7, reasonable ball skills and the ability to set up support.
3 & 5	Very quick off mark and good ball skills.
4	Quick off mark, good ball skills, ability to read play, ability to act as a general and good communication skills.

## PRINCIPLES OF ATTACK

As the skill level of players varies from team to team the set plays that you as a coach can employ and encourage may be limited. However, the following "principles of attack" can and should be used by all touch players to improve their game.

### PRINCIPLES OF ATTACK

- 1) Use the touch count
- 2) Go forward
- 3) Create confusion
- 4) Pressure
- 5) Support the ball carrier
- 6) Speed of play

1) Use of the touch count is probably the most important of the principles as it is relative to both the attack and defence of your team. If a side can maintain the use of the ball for eighty percent of any game it will make it very difficult for the opposition to score touchdowns. Conversely if your side can only maintain possession for twenty or thirty percent of the game they will find it extremely difficult to mount an effective attack. This lack of possession usually results from either the use of over-ambitious plays or a lack of discipline and control. Having possession for less than half the game leads to the team becoming frustrated and overworked from the defensive load. This frustration will in turn stifle any attacking flair your players may have.

One method of using the touch count to the fullest which is currently in favour sees teams ruck the ball for the entire six touches when play is in their defensive half and not using any set moves in their attacking half until after they have rucked the ball for at least four or five touches.

Another aspect of the touch count to consider is where to leave the ball after the sixth touch has been effected. For example, if you were to play against a team who concentrate on using alternate rucking it is best to take the ball to one sideline to reduce their options. However, against a team who use "two up rucks" or "dual sweeping rucks" it may be preferable to leave the ball in the middle of the field and make the attacking team use some of the touch count to ruck the ball into position.

2) Going forward is a basic requirement of the game of Touch if a team is going to score touchdowns. In most cases the amount of ground gained is an indication of how well a team is applying this principle. However, on other occasions such as in the early stages of a wrap or switch, the gaining of ground in a forward direction is secondary to ensuring that the defensive player ends up in the desired position for your attack to be effective. The important aspect of going forward is that players should always be instructed that it is their aim to cross the "advantage line" before being caught in possession.

3) Confusion is probably the most commonly used of "the principles of attack" as all set moves are designed to create uncertainty in the mind of the defender as to which attacking player they are responsible for. From the attacking team's point of view the more defenders who are required to exchange responsibilities the more chance the defenders have of making a mistake which would result in a scoring opportunity for the attacking team.

In fig. (1) below the attacking player would only beat the defender if the attacking player had superior individual skills.

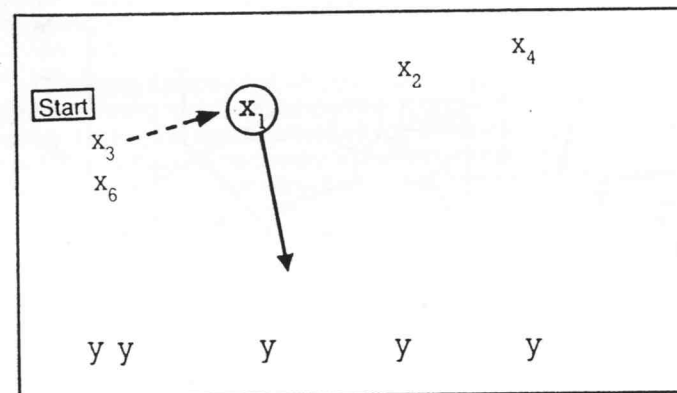


FIG 1: MAN ON MAN DEFENCE  
NO EXCHANGE OF RESPONSIBILITY

In figs. (2A) and (2B) which depict the standard wrap and switch it is evident that a degree of confusion has been introduced as the two defending players are required to communicate and exchange the attacking players for which they were responsible.

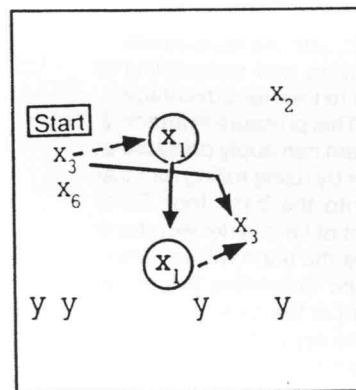


FIG 2A: WRAP

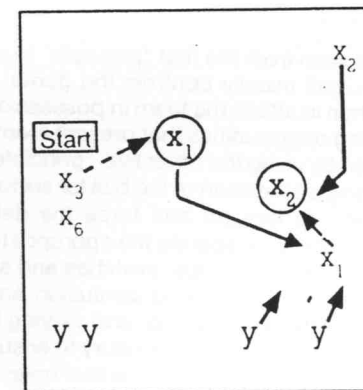


FIG 2B: SWITCH

TWO PLAYERS EXCHANGE RESPONSIBILITIES

It is now apparent that even these two basic moves greatly increase the chances of a defender making a mistake.

If we now progress one step further to the "double wrap" and "two off switch" as shown in figs. (3A) and (3B) it is becoming quite evident that more and more defenders are required to contribute to an effective defence which results in a marked increase in the chances of a mistake being made.

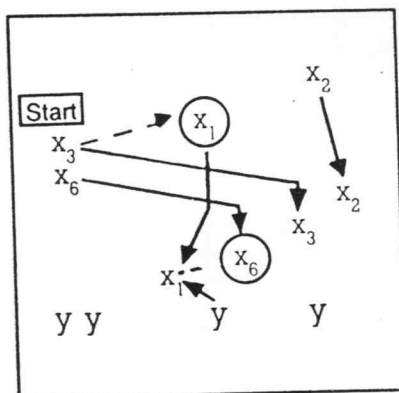


FIG 3A: DOUBLE WRAP

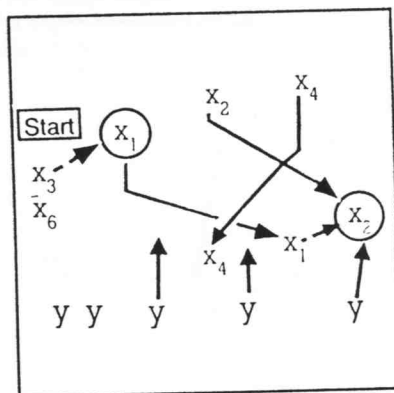


FIG 3B: TWO OFF SWITCH

### THREE PLAYERS EXCHANGE RESPONSIBILITIES

The progression as outlined can be continued until the whole team is involved with the only limitations being the coach's imagination and the skill level of the attacking players involved.

(4) As was seen from the first "principle" that we dealt with the team which controls the ball usually controls the game. By applying and maintaining pressure when in possession the team in possession is able to take full advantage of any scoring opportunities that present themselves. This pressure in attack is maintained by using the other five "principles". A team can apply pressure by maintaining possession of the ball for six touches or by using rolling rucks to continually go forward and force the defence onto the back foot. By ensuring that the team spends the appropriate amount of time in developing their ability to perform wraps, switches and set moves the team will be able to apply pressure by causing confusion amongst the defending players. While supporting the ball carrier and varying the speed of the game are also valuable tools in the coach's armoury to ensure that the opposition is always under attack, the underlying fact is that unless the team controls the ball and uses the touch count they will not be able to put the defence under any real pressure.

(5) Failure to support the ball carrier is probably the most common reason why some promising plays are not converted into touchdowns. Most players are of the opinion that as they are not as fast as the player in possession there is no point in backing up. This is not correct as in many instances the play would continue if a player is handy just to act as a link between two faster players by simply catching and passing the ball.

All players must be encouraged to support the players either side of them and if one of these players is in possession of the ball this becomes even more important. The mere presence of a support player causes the defence to look at more than the player in possession.

(6) Changing the speed at which the game is played is sometimes a very effective attacking tool. For example, if in your pre-match assessment of your opposition's strengths and weaknesses you believe that your team is lacking in fitness, then it may be necessary to instruct your players to slow down the speed of the game and not allow themselves to be run off their feet.

Another way in which changing the speed of the game may be used is by rucking the ball forward slowly for four or five rucks. This tactic usually results in the defence also slowing down as it feels that "nothing's on". On the fifth or sixth ruck, the first receiver again takes the ball up, as if he/she is going to settle, but at the last minute the dummy-half performs a late wrap on the first receiver. This change in the speed of the game has the effect of standing the opposition up and catching them flat-footed.



## PRINCIPLES OF DEFENCE

As the defensive team must in most cases react to, rather than dictate to, the attacking team there are far fewer "principles of defence". However, as most teams defend for approximately the same period as they attack each player should have a thorough understanding of these principles.

### Principles of Defence

- (1) Communication
- (2) Pressure
- (3) Commitment

(1) If causing confusion is the major "principle of attack" then communication must be considered to be the overriding component of any defence. Every player on the defending team must be able to designate with confidence which of the attacking players they are responsible for. Players must be encouraged to nominate the attacking player they are marking at each and every rollball, to ensure that their team mates have sufficient time to make any adjustments should it be necessary. Communicating is especially critical when defending wraps, switches and set moves as each defender's responsibility may exchange between three or four attacking players and it is important that at no time are two defenders committed to the one attacking player.

(2) As with the "principles of attack" pressure can only be applied in defence after the other principles have been mastered.

Communication can be used effectively to apply pressure as you are not only informing your team mates of the attacking player you are responsible for but you are also making that attacking player aware that you have them covered. Applying pressure in this manner often results in the attacking player panicking and choosing the wrong option or throwing a bad pass.

A team which contains players who are committed in defence will generally frustrate attacking teams because of their attitude that the player they are responsible for is not going to score a touchdown or be instrumental in one being scored. This relentless "terrier" type of persistence causes the attack to become fragmented and lose control of their game plan resulting in more frequent loss of possession.

The important elements that the attacking side require to penetrate the defence are time and space and if the defence is to put the attack under pressure they need to deprive the attacking team of either or both of these components.

3) Commitment like motivation is a much used and maligned term. When talking of commitment as a "principle of defence" it means that players are required to give their "all" to ensure that the player they are responsible for at any given stage of the game is placed under pressure and not allowed to contribute to an effective attack. This will almost certainly mean that at some time a player will have to dive to effect a touch or turn and chase to make up for a mistake they have made.

When talking to the team about commitment it is important to stress to all players that touch is a team game and as such there will be times when they will require help from their fellow team members while at other times they will be called upon to assist.

Coaches should tell their players, "We are not going to make any mistakes in defence but if we do we are all going to do our best to cover rather than to say don't you be the one who lets through the winning touchdown".

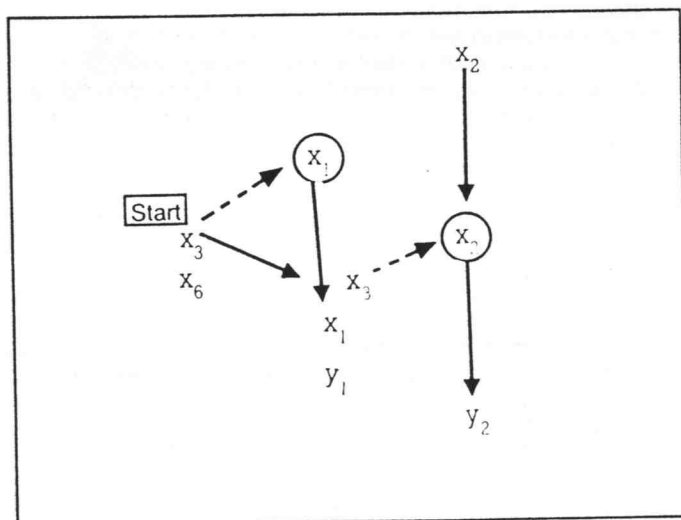
An example of commitment is when the team is defending one off rucks in which the attack is continually running at the player who last effected the touch. A committed defensive player will not only ensure retiring five metres before making a touch but retreating five metres once again and then going forward one or two metres. By taking these two forward steps the defensive player will put the attacking team under pressure as they try to gain the maximum distance with each ruck.

## ATTACKING AND DEFENSIVE TEAM PLAY

### Settling the Ball (Rucking up in Attack)

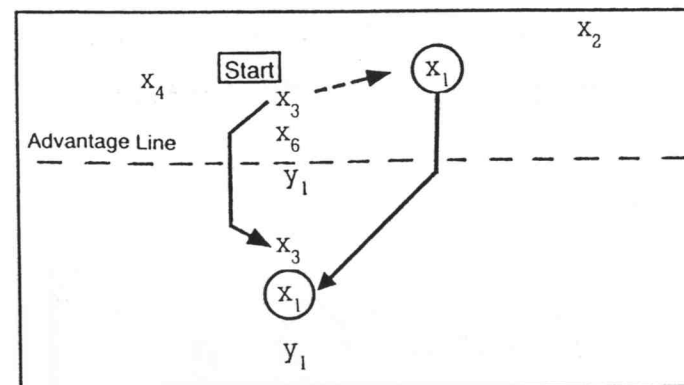
#### WHAT IS SETTLING THE BALL?

Settling the ball is when a receiver takes a pass from the dummy-half and runs to the defence with the intention of taking the touch and performing the rollball as quickly as possible. This procedure can be repeated as many times as necessary or as required by the coach.



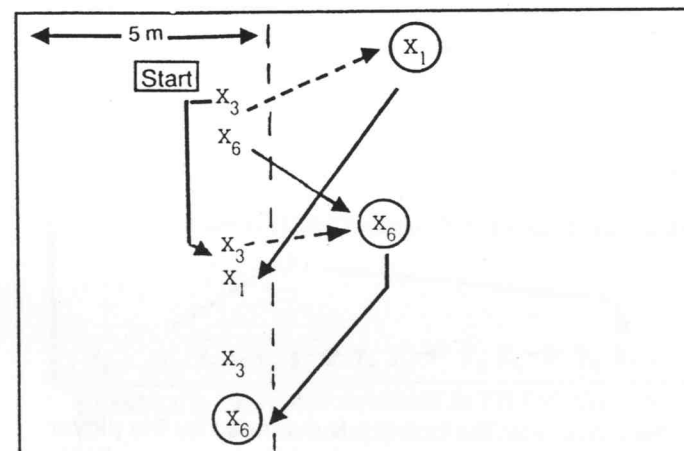
EXAMPLE 1: SETTLING THE BALL STRAIGHT AHEAD

In example 1, the dummy-half ( $X_3$ ) passes to the first receiver ( $X_1$ ) who runs straight at the opposite player ( $Y_1$ ) and effects the touch. The original dummy-half moves quickly to the rollball and passes to the second receiver ( $X_2$ ), who runs straight at the opposite player ( $Y_2$ ) and effects the touch.



EXAMPLE 2: SETTLING PATTERN CUTTING IN BEHIND THE RUCK

In Example 2, the dummy-half ( $X_3$ ) passes to the first receiver ( $X_1$ ), who runs straight ahead to the advantage line, cutting back in behind the ruck area and effecting the touch on the player who last effected the touch ( $Y_1$ ). This type of rucking is trying to draw the defenders into the area around the ruck and is used by most touch teams.



EXAMPLE 3: THREE PERSON SETTLING PATTERN

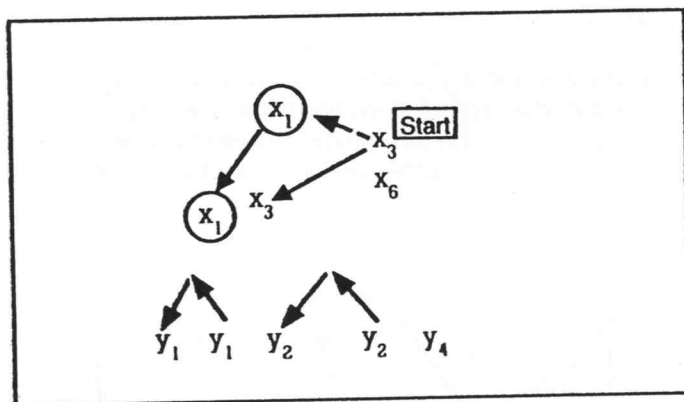
The dummy-half ( $X_3$ ) passes to the first receiver ( $X_1$ ) who runs in front of the ruck area back towards the sideline and effects the touch. The same dummy-half moves in behind the player with the ball and the original player who rollballed ( $X_2$ ) and then takes the first receiver's position. This settling pattern continued down the sideline gains plenty of ground.



## Settling the Ball

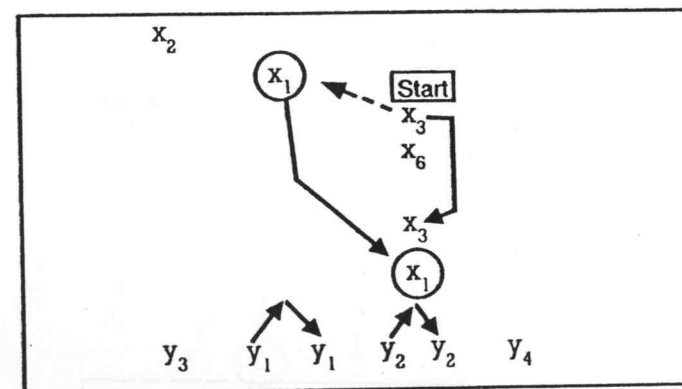
### (Rucking up in Defence)

The defence against a team that settles the ball varies in different areas. However, whichever defensive pattern is decided upon, all players must adhere to that decision.



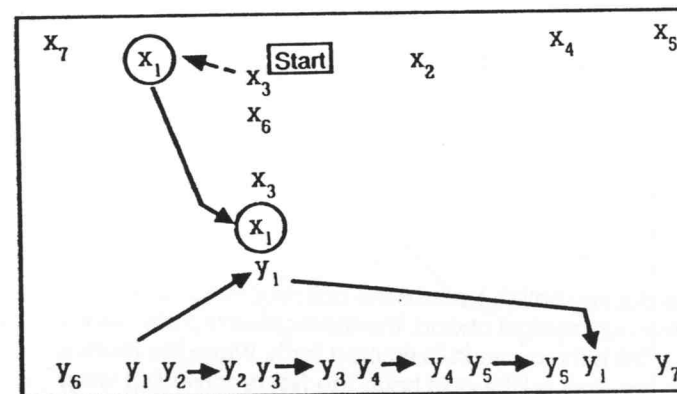
EXAMPLE 1: DEFENCE AGAINST SETTLERS.

In Example 1, the player with the ball ( $X_1$ ) is defended by the player opposite ( $Y_1$ ). The player covering the dummy-half ( $Y_2$ ) takes up a similar position in front of the ruck as for the previous rollball. The player effecting the touch ( $Y_1$ ) retires and takes up a position with  $Y_2$  to cover the ruck ball. Defender  $Y_4$  checks the player who effected the original rollball.



EXAMPLE 2: DEFENCE AGAINST SETTLERS CUTTING IN BEHIND THE RUCK

In Example 2, if the ball carrier ( $x_1$ ) cuts in behind the ruck, the ruck defender ( $y_2$ ) takes the ball carrier ( $x_1$ ) and the first defender left ( $y_1$ ) moves across to the right and takes up the position of behind the ruck for the next rollball. Defender  $y_4$  checks the player who rolled the ball.

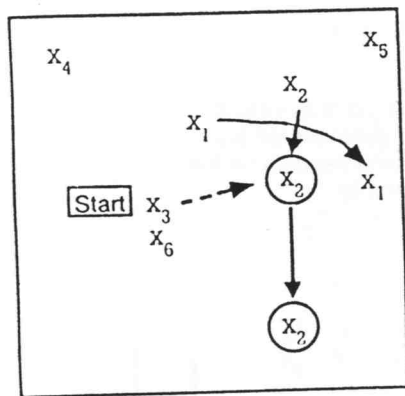


EXAMPLE 3: DEFENCE AGAINST SETTLERS CUTTING IN BEHIND THE RUCK.

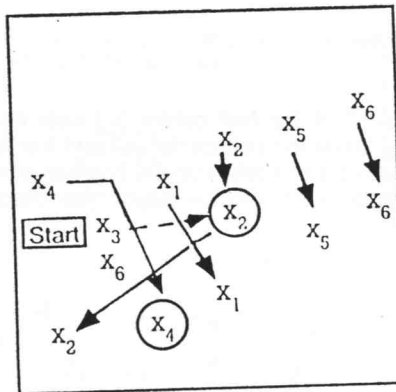
In Example 3, the ball carrier ( $x_1$ ) cuts back in behind the ruck. The first defender ( $y_1$ ) effects the touch then continues running in an arc rejoining the defensive line. The other defenders shuffle across to cover the ruck.

## GENERAL ATTACK

Attack moves are designed to confuse the defence so that touchdowns can be scored. Set moves should be a part of your team's arsenal, as good set moves can position the defence in an area of the field enabling overlaps or "holes" to be created.



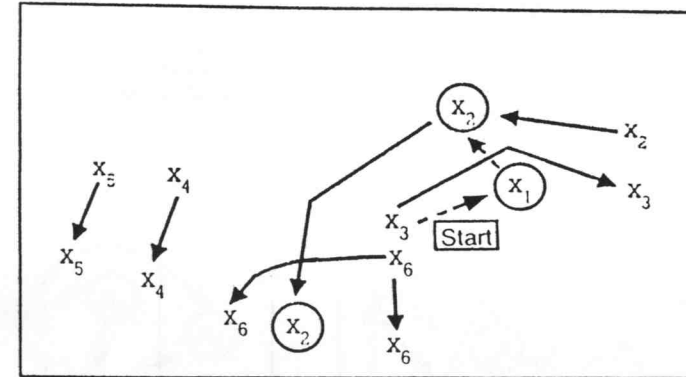
EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 1A

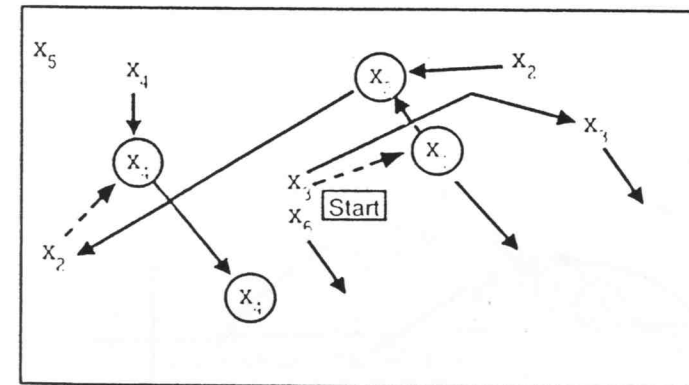
In Example 1, the dummy-half (X<sub>3</sub>) passes the ball directly to the second receiver (X<sub>2</sub>) who then runs straight ahead. The first receiver (X<sub>1</sub>) then wraps the ball carrier (X<sub>2</sub>). This is the move in its simplest form. When the team is proficient, we can progress a little and have the first receiver (X<sub>1</sub>) wrap wide to allow the first receiver left (X<sub>4</sub>) to wrap between the ball carrier and the first receiver (X<sub>1</sub>). As a variation, the player (X<sub>4</sub>) could run between the dummy-half and the ball carrier to give the ball carrier two options. (See Example 1A.)

**Remember:** In all set moves "timing" is of the utmost importance.



EXAMPLE 2

In Example 2, the dummy-half (X<sub>3</sub>) passes to the first receiver (X<sub>1</sub>) then wraps the ball carrier (X<sub>2</sub>). The first receiver (X<sub>1</sub>) dummies to the dummy-half before giving the ball to the second receiver (X<sub>2</sub>) who has run back towards the ruck (switch). The player who played the ball (X<sub>6</sub>) moves to support the second receiver (X<sub>2</sub>) either inside or outside. The other players also move to support the new ball carrier.



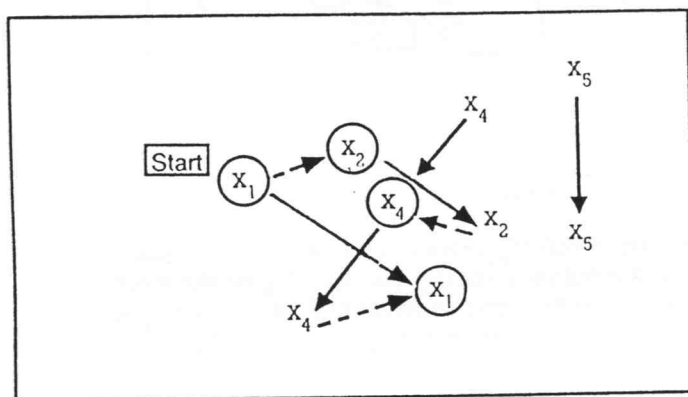
EXAMPLE 3: VARIATION (DOUBLE SWITCH)

When the team has mastered the previous move a variation can be introduced by having the first receiver left (X<sub>4</sub>) switching with the ball carrier (X<sub>2</sub>) who crosses the ruck.

## GENERAL PLAYS

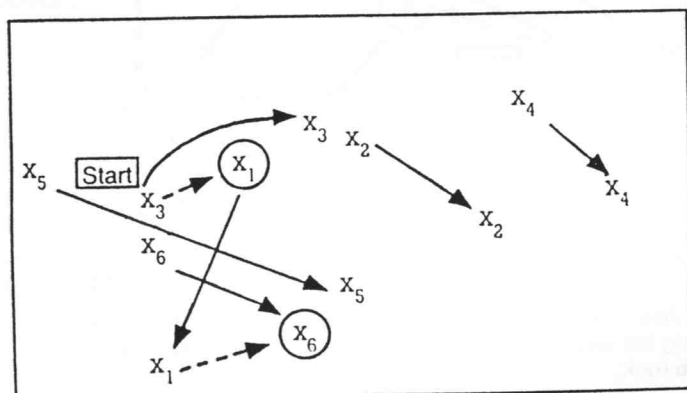
Listed below are a number of general plays which coaches use with their teams. These plays represent only a few of an unlimited supply. Coaches and players can come up with many more through innovation and imagination.

1. Name: General Play I



**Explanation:** The first receiver ( $x_1$ ) passes to the second receiver ( $x_2$ ) who runs wide and switches with a support player ( $x_4$ ). This player runs back towards the rollball area and switches with the first receiver ( $x_1$ ) who links up with other support players ( $x_2$  and  $x_5$ ).

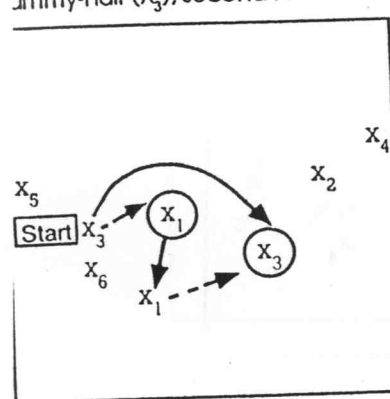
**2. Name: General Play II**



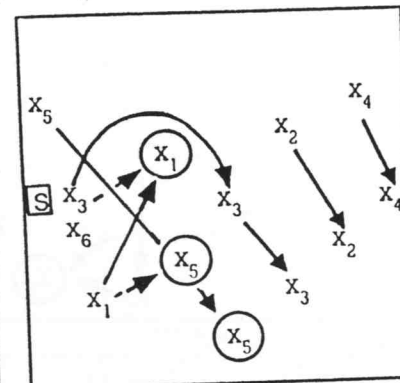
**Explanation:** The dummy-half ( $X_3$ ) passes to the first receiver ( $X_1$ ) then wraps. The first receiver ( $X_1$ ) dummies to the dummy-half ( $X_3$ ) and cuts back into the ruck area doing a switch with the player who rollballed ( $X_8$ ). The attacking player ( $X_2$ ) times the run to support the player in possession ( $X_8$ ).

### Options for General Play II:

The first receiver ( $X_1$ ) gives to the dummy-half ( $X_3$ ) as in a normal wrap. The first receiver ( $X_1$ ) switches to attacking player ( $X_5$ ) who links up with dummy-half ( $X_3$ ), second receiver ( $X_2$ ) and  $X_4$ .

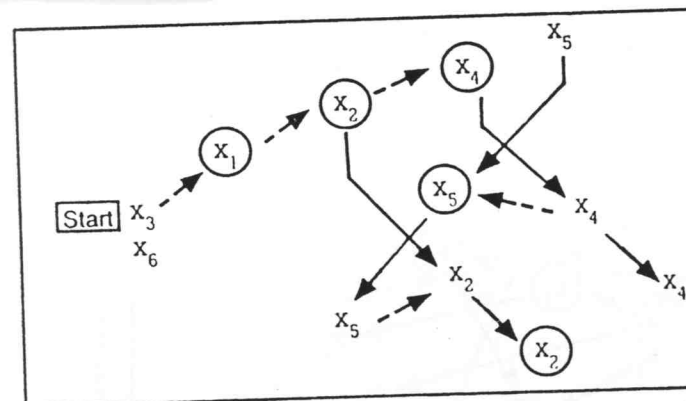


OPTION 1: GENERAL PLAY 2



OPTION 2: GENERAL PLAY 2

3. Name: General Play III

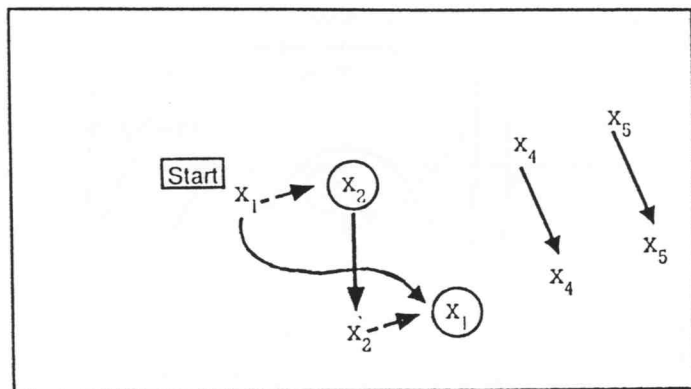


**Explanation:** From the rollball, the ball goes to attacking player ( $x_4$ ) who switches with player ( $x_5$ ) who continues across and switches with the second receiver ( $x_2$ ) who links up with the player ( $x_4$ ).

**Options:**

1. Attacking player ( $x_4$ ) dummies to ( $x_5$ )
2. Attacking player ( $x_5$ ) dummies to second receiver ( $x_2$ ) and passes to first receiver ( $x_1$ ).

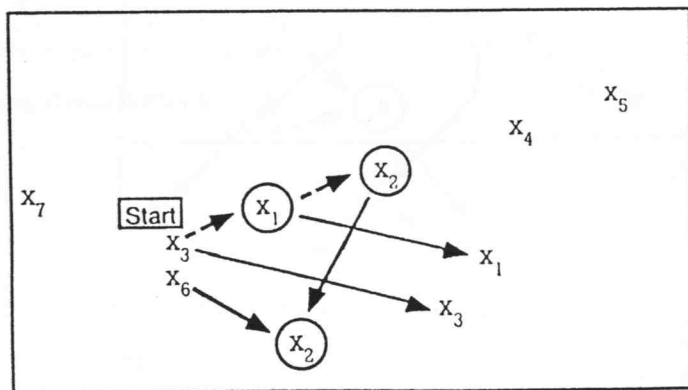
**4. Name: General Play IV**



**Explanation:** The first receiver ( $x_1$ ) passes to the second receiver ( $x_2$ ) who holds the ball up. The first receiver ( $x_1$ ) runs across in front of the second receiver ( $x_2$ ) who gives the ball to the first receiver ( $x_1$ ) who links up with  $x_4$  and  $x_5$ .

NOTE: Instead of a normal wrap the runner goes across in front of the pivot.

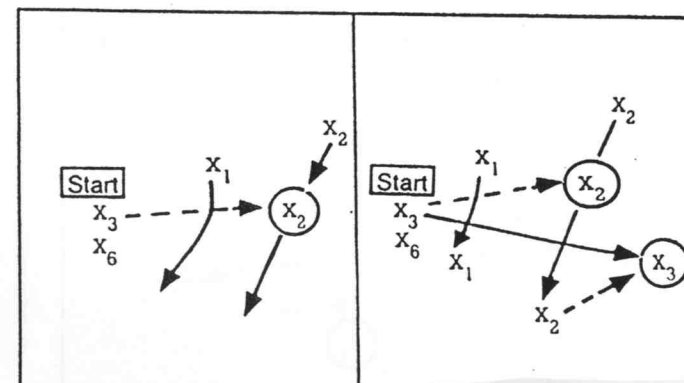
5. Name: General Play V



**Explanation:** From the rollball, the ball goes to the second receiver ( $X_2$ ) who runs slightly back towards the ruck area. The dummy-half ( $X_3$ ) and the first receiver ( $X_1$ ) wrap and when the second receiver ( $X_2$ ) takes the touch, the player who rollballed ( $X_4$ ) goes to dummy-half.

**Options:** The second receiver ( $X_2$ ) switches with either the first receiver ( $X_1$ ) or the dummy-half ( $X_3$ ).

6. Name: General Play VI

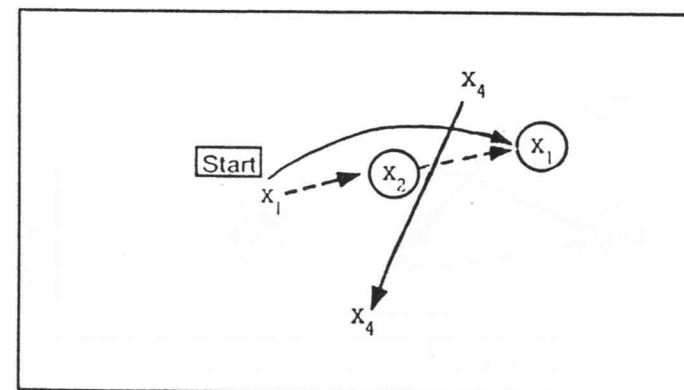


**OPTION: General Play VI**

**Explanation:** The dummy-half ( $X_3$ ) passes to the second receiver ( $X_2$ ) after dummifying to the first receiver ( $X_1$ ), who fades at the very last moment to the right, looking as though he/she is receiving the ball. The second receiver ( $X_2$ ) runs into the gap created by the first receiver ( $X_1$ ) and receives the ball from the dummy-half ( $X_3$ ).

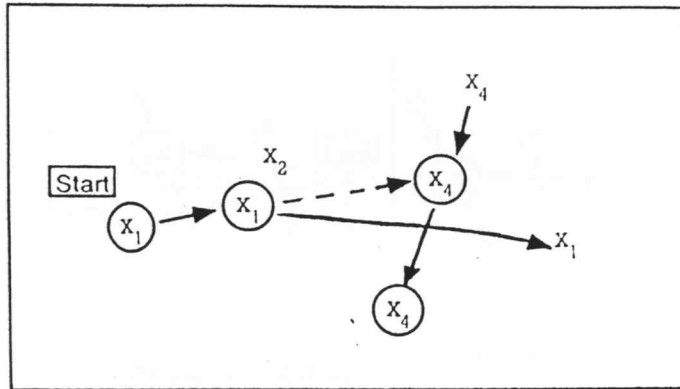
Option: The dummy-half ( $X_3$ ) wraps the second receiver ( $X_2$ ).

7. Name: General Play VII



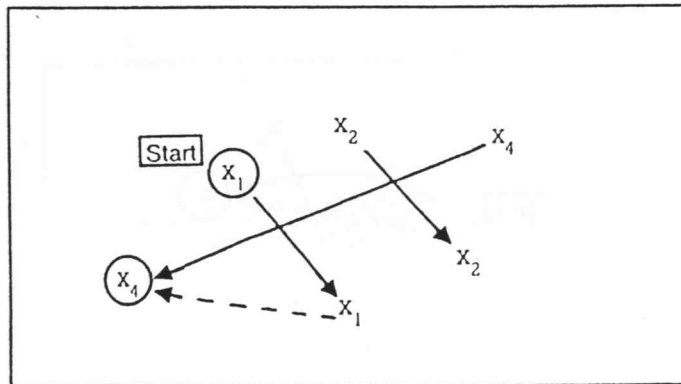
**Explanation:** The first receiver ( $x_1$ ) gives the ball to the second receiver ( $x_2$ ) who calls  $x_4$  to come close off the left hip angling back to the right, running in front of the second receiver ( $x_2$ ). At the same time the first receiver ( $x_1$ ) is running behind the second receiver ( $x_2$ ) and receives the ball from  $x_2$ . It has to look as though  $x_4$  is actually receiving the ball as the second receiver ( $x_2$ ) is passing to the first receiver ( $x_1$ ).

### 8. Name: General Play VIII



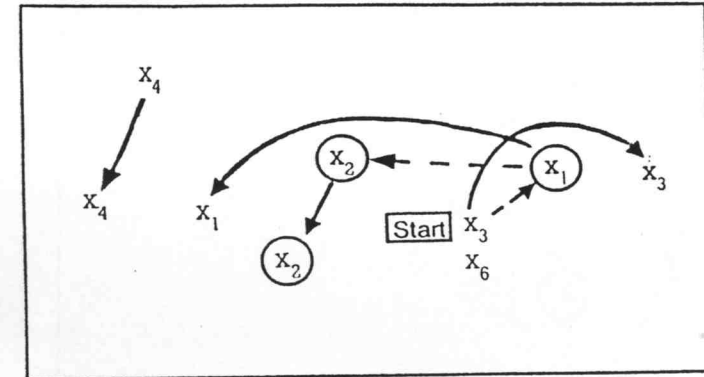
**Explanation:** The first receiver ( $x_1$ ) has the ball and runs towards the second receiver ( $x_2$ ) as if there is a short pass on but uses  $x_2$  as a decoy and gives a cutout pass to  $x_4$  who is running on an angle. The first receiver ( $x_1$ ) then wraps the player.

### 9. Name: General Play IX



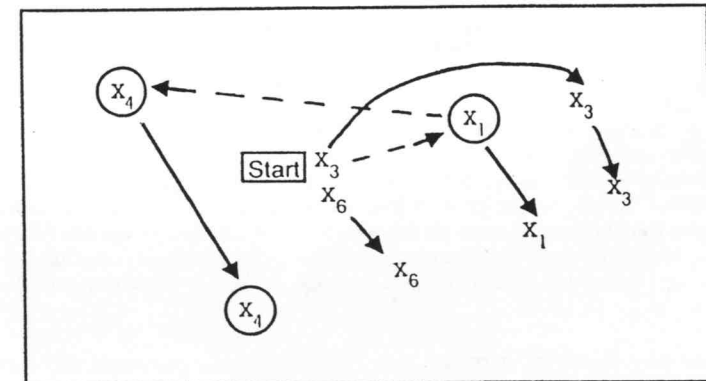
**Explanation:** The first receiver ( $x_1$ ) and second receiver ( $x_2$ ) run across the field towards the sideline. At the very last moment  $x_4$  changes direction and receives the ball from the first receiver ( $x_1$ ).

### 10. Name: General Play X



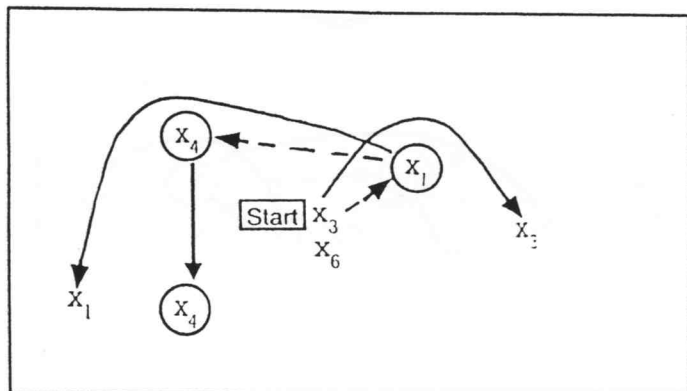
**Explanation:** The dummy-half ( $x_3$ ) passes the ball to the first receiver ( $x_1$ ) and then wraps  $x_1$ , who dummies to the dummy-half ( $x_3$ ) and passes to the second receiver ( $x_2$ ). The first receiver ( $x_1$ ) then wraps the second receiver ( $x_2$ ) to link up with the support player ( $x_4$ ).

### 11. Name: General Play XI



**Explanation:** The dummy-half ( $x_3$ ) passes and wraps the first receiver ( $x_1$ ), who dummies to the dummy-half ( $x_3$ ) and passes to  $x_4$ , who links up with  $x_6$ ,  $x_1$  and  $x_3$ .

### Option: General Play XI



**Explanation:** The dummy-half ( $X_3$ ) passes to the first receiver ( $X_1$ ) and wraps. The first receiver ( $X_1$ ) dummies and passes to  $X_4$ , then wraps and runs down the blind side.

## CONCLUSION

There is an old saying that applies to all sports and that is "Keep it Simple". The simpler and easier you make it for the players to remember, the more chance you have of the players carrying out your instructions when they are on the field. Good coaches should always ask their players for input when formulating moves and policies as you will achieve a better response from a team who feel that they have contributed to the game than from one that feels that they are being led. Besides you might just learn a new move or two yourself.

No matter how complex a move may be, it will work provided that your players can perform the basic individual and sub-unit skills such as wraps, switches, quick hands, acceleration, deceleration and quick rollball. As a good coach you should always be looking for flaws in your players' techniques that do not allow them to reach their full potential because without the correct technique even simple tasks become impossible. For example, have you taught your players the correct way to score a touchdown?

## CONTACT

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