



INFORMATION PAGE

Week of June 2nd, 2006

1 North America 4

The Canadian leg of the NA4 is now complete. The 27th May third round matches produced the following results:

Canada East 34 USA Hawks 11
Canada West 25 USA Falcons 24

The standings, with everything to play for at the half-way point of the competition, are:

	P	W	D	L	PF	PA	PD	BP	PTS
Canada West	3	2	1	0	151	52	+99	1	11
Canada East	3	1	1	1	76	68	+8	1	7
USA Falcons	3	1	0	2	75	72	+3	3	7
USA Hawks	3	1	0	2	44	154	-110	1	5

The American leg will be played in Ohio, 22nd – 29th July. A full account can be read at the NA4's website: <http://narugby.com>

2 Coaching Options – Part 2

See attached the second instalment of the Coaching Options paper from Lee Smith, the IRB's Regional Development Manger in Oceania, following a recent IRB Level 4 /NZRFU Practicum. Coaches were given current coaching problems to solve, using players in a practical situation. Lee has provided a summary of each as they may be of use to you with your team. Thanks again to Lee.

...and don't forget **Total Rugby Radio** this week. The NA4 is again featured. You can listen by following the links on www.irb.com

Best wishes to all.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Jones".

Tom Jones
Regional Development Manager

Playing Problems and Some Solutions to them

Defence

1. From kicks to gain ground we are unable to close down their counter attack and they are carrying the ball so far back that the kicking gain is more than halved.
 - Solutions
 - From set pieces have a chasing pattern of #'s 6,7,12,13, and the wing on the side the ball has been kicked to.
 - Chase in alignment so that there is some peripheral vision.
 - Chase in an arrowhead with the "point" players angling to the ball carrier from one side only.
 - If the ball has been kicked down a touchline force the opposition down the touchline so that the touchline can be used as an extra defender.
 - From set pieces, in anticipation of a return kick being made, #'s 8, 9, 10, 15 and the unemployed wing form a receiving team.
 - From general play, rucks and mauls players standing in the relative positions as those mentioned above perform the roles.
 - Chase to tackle, not in the hope that the kick will be returned.
 - Don't chase so fast that agility is lost. Chase hard to start with but then slow down to force a decision on the ball carrier. Keep moving forward and don't get flat-footed.
2. We are drifting immediately giving the opposition too much time with the ball so they are able to make sound decisions.
 - Note – drifting may allow the tackler to only give the ball carrier one way to go but too steep an angle means that there is no "body" in the tackle and play can be made through the tackle – so:
 - Position on the designated attackers inside shoulder. A faster defender may be able to stand a little further inside.
 - Accelerate forward to take away time and space while retaining alignment.
 - Slow down but keep the feet moving to force the attacker to make a decision.
 - Adjust to the kick or pass and, if the ball carrier "has a go" accelerate into the tackle same shoulder same leg to drive the ball carrier back driving through the player and not to the player.
3. We find that the only way we can stop a maul is to break the Law.
 - At line-out try the following options:
 - Try and stop the line-out maul before it starts by:
 - Use #2 to join the line-out after the ball has been thrown to support the front jumper along with a another supporter. A second pod follows at #3, 4 and 5 in the line-out with the tallest line-out forward being an unassisted jumper second from the back. #7 stays at the back to cover the overthrow which is the aim of the system.

- “Sacking” the ball carrier as soon as he lands on the ground (before the maul is formed).
 - Stepping away so no contact is made. By definition no maul has been formed and the ball carrier can be tackled.
 - Once the maul has been formed:
 - Drive it to touch by letting it spill down the near touch side and then driving it using their own momentum.
 - Give the opposition limited resistance so that the maul splits off in parts as it goes forward. They may end up front running and get penalised or the ball carrier may be exposed and can be tackled.
 - Step away so that it is not a maul. Don't do this near your goal-line.
4. When we tire the defence line is coming up slowly and is not moving up together.
- Concentrating on tackles that, at the very least, slow down the ball.
 - This can be an upper body tackle that tackles the ball and the man. While they might get a drive going the ball will be slow to be delivered.
 - Secondly, it can be a low tackle taking the legs away, so no progress is made. To prevent play being made through the tackle the defender inside or outside the position in the line “tackles” the exposed ball as the ball carrier turns in the tackle.
 - Close to the goal-line coming up slowly can be a problem as they will score but elsewhere it is in itself a solution. This is because the initial attackers may just pass the ball creating no commitment from the defence allowing the defence to shuffle out to group as many defenders as possible where a ball carrier has a go. If the first or second receiver has a go then a tackle can be made. The problem player is the one who can draw the man deciding whether to pass or penetrate based on the behaviour of the defender. There are not too many of these and their team-mates often muck things up for them.
 - Retain alignment slightly staggered back from the source of possession to retain peripheral vision. Communicate with team-mates as to who has who. Move up from inside your potential ball carrier never getting ahead of the defender inside. Remember the defence has not been penetrated if it is still in formation in front of the attack line. Your team may concede space but the line may still be intact.
5. We are being beaten by the extra man from set plays and by overlaps from phase play.
- Ideally the extra man enters the space outside the play maker from behind the play maker or, if he/she is really good, from out of the shadow of the next player in the backline. The play maker

should have drawn the defender screening the penetrator from this player. The gap should have been increased by the next attacker drawing his defender wide and the penetrator should enter off the play maker's shoulder so that the next defender is as far away as possible and has to come in to make a tackle. So you can see there are a lot of "ifs" and "buts"; "shoulds" and "coulds". If they are good enough to do all this you are in trouble. But, few "extra" players do this. Most don't "back" their pace and either stand in the line so they are not "extra" or they are there too early and a poor pass is made or no pass is made at all.

- The secret to stopping both is to move up slowly giving the attack the responsibility to make the decision and then react to it. The decision by the attack is usually to lose patience and pass too early, without committing a defender, to miss pass in an attempt to get the ball out there where there are attacking numbers or to get too anxious flattening up the attacking line so that it has no forward momentum receiving the ball stationary.
- It is all a matter of the defence giving themselves time and space and forcing the attack to make a decision and commit themselves to a course of action the defence can then react to.

6. We are tackling to stop the opposition going forward but this is not resulting in an acceptable number of turnovers.

- The first option is to coach the low tackle with the player getting up and recovering the ball in a single action as one skill. The advantage is that the tackler doesn't have to go through the "gate".
- If the tackles are upper body tackles then the team may need greater commitment to make sure the maul stays a maul and doesn't become a collapsed maul which is frequently regarded as a ruck.
- If tackles are made around the legs the ball carrier has more often than not been tackled from the side. The impact of the tackle will turn the ball carrier in the direction of the tackler. If the ball carrier tries to turn the other way the bottom half of the body will be going in the direction of the tackle and the upper body in the opposite direction. This awkward and uncomfortable position will enable a support player to drive in on the ball to secure it. In the other situation it becomes the role of the defender that the ball carrier has been turned the ball carrier towards to perform this role.

7. They are penetrating from phase play close to the source of possession.

- I guess the principle is that you have the greatest commitment to defence on or close to the ball – so:
 - Step One - contest the ball as explained above.
 - Step Two –if you can't recover it, delay their delivery without infringing the Law.

- Step Three –join the defensive screen at the hindmost foot near the ball and have team-mates shuffle out.
- Step Four avoid mismatches. These may be of two kinds:
 - One-on-one mismatches. Near the ball this will usually be a powerful runner against a slightly built defender. So make sure that the heavy weights in your team occupy the space nearest the ball.
 - Numerical mismatches in which more attackers are attacking a space than the number of defenders defending it. So it's heavy weights again, close together as their opponents are not going to be very evasive and are unlikely to pass the ball as, in this congested area, loss of possession is quite likely. It is a matter of meeting force with force.
- Step Five position to defend both the charging runner and the cut back.
 - To defend the charging runner around the legs is very difficult especially for the defender directly in front. This defender cannot get low enough. So try this. The player in front offers a target but doesn't go forward allowing the ball carrier to gain some ground but also to accelerate away from support. The players that do go forward are the defenders on either side who are in a position to make a side-on tackle with the player directly ahead in a position to contest the ball during and once the tackle has been completed. The first defender should be slightly wide offering the gap between the source of possession and him/herself. Should the ball carrier take this gap the first defender defends outside in tackling the player back in towards the source of possession.
 - To prevent the cut back runner making progress the team should have 2-3 defenders within arms distance of each other on both sides of the ball and, as the ball is passed across them they can move up taking the rest of the defensive line with them but they should only crab across gradually. They should not cross and they should not go ball chasing as the opposition will cut back into the space they have vacated.
- Step Six – make, at least, a delaying tackle if not one that drives the opposition back with help from those close by. Stop the off-load and drive them back. The play may not concede a turnover but one may eventuate if the ball becomes unplayable and a scrum results. It is hard to support a team-mate going backwards.

8. From set pieces our midfield defence is getting too square on and can be beaten by the ball carrier.
- See the section on drift defence above. The problem is the reverse of this situation and attention needs to be given to the mechanics of:
 - Alignment on each other and the designated attacker.
 - The defenders running line in moving forward.
 - The speed with which the defender runs forward and the need to be agile adjusting to the running lines of the attacker.

General Play

9.1 When one of our back 3 (#'s 11, 14 and 15) counterattack they are not being supported and, as a result, infringe or concede possession, when they go into contact.

- Play to a pattern so that team-mates know where to go in support. They don't go to the ball but to a position that enables an attacking move to take place.
- Some patterns are:
 - Run towards the "City", to the mass of players and especially the mass of defenders to hold them there, and pass to the "Country", the space you are creating by running away from it. It is up to the support to position in the country to continue play.
 - If the chasing pattern is a line across the field, in other words lateral, then attacking them linear with the ball carrier attempting to beat the nearest defender but at least taking the player left or right. "The space you create is the space you move away from not the space you move into". Support gets in behind to run into the space the ball has been passed into. At the very least, by being linear the support is in good position for phase play and the recreation of space that this affords.
 - Play immediately in front of the chasing line moving the ball across the complete width of the field. Support players know to go to the space the ball is to be passed into and not to go to the ball.
 - Recognise the kicking options that the positioning of the opposition creates:
 - Flat line – chip and chase.
 - Over-committed chasing line – up and under, wipers kick to the open side, deep kick to the corners.

9.2 When a player penetrates lateral support is being blocked off by defenders.

- Linear support should be used in which the support player converge on the channel the ball carrier is penetrating down. Knowing that the support is coming from behind the ball carrier can apply the Golden Rule

of Support Play and pass to the space created by evasion.

- The transfer of the ball will be determined by the amount of attention the defence is applying to the ball carrier. It varies from place, clean-out and pop to the next support player to the arms through pass and everything in between.

9.3 From the tackle/ruck quick ball is being used by our forwards to pick and go and the attacking line is only getting the ball when this has been exhausted. The possession is from a stationary platform.

- First of all the rule for the forwards is that if you have to slow down to pick up the ball it is not yours. Drive through the ball to take out the threats and create space for those following behind.
- Secondly, #9 should call for the ball and get it before the play becomes stationary. The ball should not be the attacking lines if the opposition have not been drawn in, nor should they get it when the attack has been stopped and the defenders near the ball are rejoining the defensive line. As the forward momentum is slowing is a good time for delivery as the slowing down does indicate that the defence is being committed.

9.4 The ball carrier is going as far as possible and becoming isolated. As a result the player has to struggle to the ground to try and find an "escape" route for the ball and it is slow getting to team-mates.

- Support player should let the ball carrier know how close they are. If they are closer than the nearest opponent then the call can be "down" and the support can be there immediately the ball carrier goes to the ground protecting the ball. For quick possession the ball carrier's escape route for the ball is to fall on the opposition's side of the ball, parallel to the goal-line and place the ball as far away from the body as possible directly out from the body. The ball carrier, generally, threatens the outside gap so that, if tackled, the players body turns back towards where the support is coming from.
- If the support player is further away than the nearest opponent, the call should be 'up' indicating that the ball carrier needs to "buy" time so that the support can get there. This can be achieved in a couple of ways:
 - If going to ground is unavoidable then the player can fall longways, parallel to the touch-line, and the ball squeezed down the length of the body emerging between the legs. The distance the ball has to move buys time. (Not permissible at Under 19.)

- The other method is to remain standing while at the same time retaining the option to go to the ground. So the ball carrier enters contact low driving up and not up trying to get down. In the low position the player will be able to use leg drive. This may be to drive on but this may risk isolation. It may be just to remain standing by spreading the legs to create a stable platform and turning to face team-mates. It may be to hold the opposition with the other arm creating a maul that cannot be collapsed. Whatever the situation the aim is to buy time. It is not a silly idea to slow down or move back towards the support making their job easier.