

Basic Attacking Strategies

Many players start playing Touch and quickly pick up the basic rules, however, some teams can struggle to score touchdowns in 'line attack'- where the team in possession gets to within 10-15m of the opponents touchdown line. This month we look to address some of the common problems facing teams looking to breakdown a defence. This is just a brief suggestion of some key factors which an individual and team need to think about, and is not comprehensive!

Use your 6 Touches- but don't just drive the ball: Completing your allocated set of 6 Touches is vital. It is common for teams to try and force a score early in the Touch count (ie on Touch 1 or 2). This often leads to rushed and panic play in attack, with 50/50 passing which are dropped under pressure. Try and use the 6 Touches to first move the defence around, exploiting spaces and gaps which may occur. This does not simply mean running forward and taking the Touch through driving play. This can be done through a combination of long passes (between middles and links), 'fades' when the Middles drag across to their Link and takes a touch, making the defence chase across the field. It is important that a team knows the Touch count, and it may be that a scoop is required on the 5th Touch. This happens when, following a quick roll ball, the Half attempts to run past offside defenders into the Touchdown zone, and then pass to supporting team mates.

Depth and Width: One of the key issues in Touch is maintaining width and depth in attack. The wingers set the width, and should hug the touchlines, stretching the opposition defence, being available for long passes. Links should also try and stay wide, to allow Middles to isolate their opposite Middles, and create uncertainty. Too often, inexperienced players seek to wrap (or loop) in the wrong areas of the field, and play gets cramped, making defence easier. Often a player who has just passed needs to hold their position and width, to maintain space for the ball carrier.

Depth is vital in Touch, especially for sub-unit skills such as the cut (switch) pass. A player coming on a cut, needs to be deep enough so that one defender cannot simply step across and cover the 2 players performing the cut. Once a player has passed, they will often have to take 3-4 steps backwards to re-align. The wingers can set a teams depth, and ensure that Links and Middles re-align.

Don't roll inside the 5m line: Unless a player is seeking to set up a quickie (fast pass off the ground, possibly with a dive to score) players should avoid performing a rollball in the 5m area. Rolling inside the 5m line puts the Half under pressure and lead to a touch and pass, as the defence may only have to retreat 3-4m before being able to come forward.

Keep the ball in the Middle/Link areas: As a general rule, it can be an advantage to keep the ball in the middle of the field, whilst driving and in line attack, this will give attacking options on both left and right sides of the field and keep the defence guessing. Often, teams will try and spin the ball wide to early without having enough 'go forward' first. This means that a defence will simply drift across the

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field as the the ball travels. Teams should generate forward momentum by running forward and possibly taking touches, to get the defence committed and rolling backwards.

Hit your holes!: This is a common call on the field and it is important that all players recognise which gaps between defenders they should be trying to run into. In general, wingers should be staying wide and getting outside their opposite players. In the Middle and Link positions, if an overlap has been created by a step or change of direction from a ball carrier, players need to recognise the gaps outside their opponents. Cuts (switches) should be the last option, especially if a defender is beaten on their outside. Players may also seek to hit inside holes if they spot a gap or if the cover defence isn't close enough to 'shutdown' and has to chase infield hard to make a touch. Often, in Touch, this chasing inwards by the defence will create a situation for 2nd phase play, ie quick rollball or dump split, to create overlap situations. If a defence is forced to scramble like this, taking a touch can make a 4 v 3 situation a 3 v 2 one, which is easier to execute.