



# TACKLE SMART

## COACH REFERENCE MANUAL



**PLAY  
SMART**

PUTTING PLAYERS FIRST

# CONTENTS

---

**3** Partners in Coach Education – Rugby Canada (RC), World Rugby (WR) & the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP)

---

**4** Coaching Pathway Overview

---

**4** Tackle SMART & the Coaching Pathway

---

**5** Course Aims & Learning Objectives

---

**6** Key Factors & Coaching Cues for the Ball Carrier *(Table)*

---

**6** Key Factors & Coaching Cues for the Tackler *(Table)*

---

**7** Key Factors  
Figure 1 *(Ball Carrier Tracking – Pre)*  
Figure 2 *(Ball Carrier Preparation – Pre)*  
Figure 3A + 3B *(Ball Carrier Connection/ Acceleration – During)*

---

**8** Key Factors  
Figure 4A *(Ball Carrier Finish – Post)*  
Figure 4B *(Ball Carrier Finish – Post)*  
Figure 4C *(Ball Carrier Finish – Post)*

---

---

**9** Key Factors  
Figure 5 *(Tackler Tracking – Pre)*  
Figure 6 *(Tackler Preparation – Pre)*  
Figure 7A *(Tackler Connection – During)*

---

**10** Key Factors  
Figure 7B *(Tackler Acceleration – During)*  
Figure 8A *(Tackler Finish – Post)*  
Figure 8B *(Tackler Finish – Post)*

---

**11** Key Factors  
Figure 9A *(Tackler Finish – Post)*  
Figure 9B *(Tackler Finish – Post)*  
Figure 9C *(Tackler Finish – Post)*

---

**12** Key Factors  
Figures 9D *(Tackler Finish – Post)*

---

**12** Contact Warm-Up Games

---

**16** Modified Games

---

**18** Micro Skills

---

Version 1.0 – 2020    Version 2.0 – 2022

# PARTNERS IN COACH EDUCATION

Rugby Canada (RC), World Rugby (WR) & the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP)

**Rugby Canada:** As it relates to the Training and Education of coaches, Rugby Canada has harmonized the minimum standards of World Rugby and the NCCP into one program. As a result, upon completion, coaches walk away with 2 separate designations: A World Rugby Level Certification and an NCCP Qualification.

**World Rugby:** Is Rugby Canada's International Federation. As it relates to Training and Education, WR creates and shares rugby specific content on the "what" and "how" of coaching, match officiating, strength & conditioning and medical personnel. WR also determines minimum standards for the achievement of Levels of Certification. World Rugby training and certifications are tracked on the Passport.

**National Coaching Certification Program:** The NCCP is a partnership of Canadian sport and multi-sport organizations and the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) that has created minimum standards for coaching in various contexts of sport. The NCCP is based on a set of outcomes, criteria, and evidence of coaching behaviours. NCCP training and certifications are tracked on the Locker.

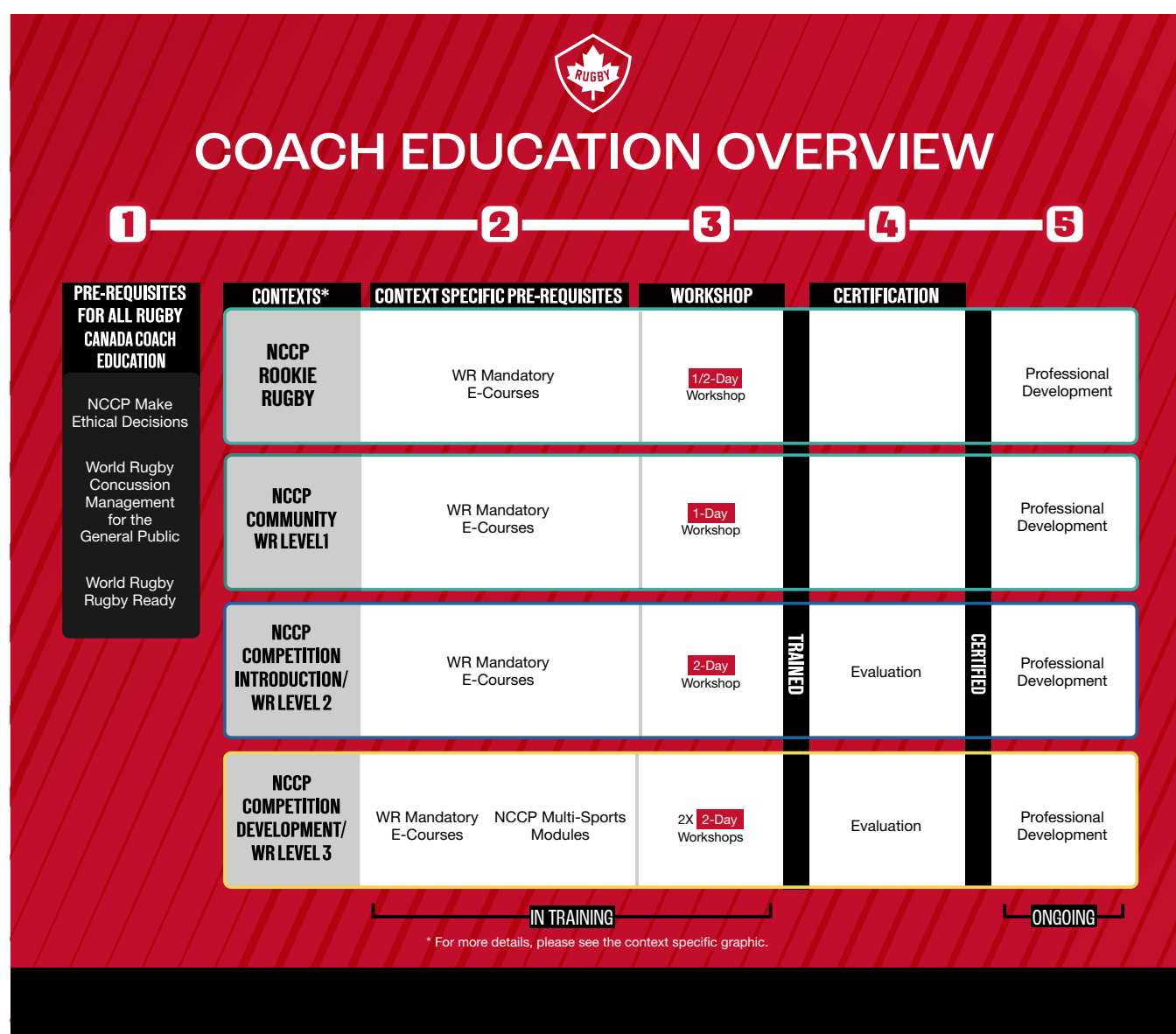
# TACKLE SMART & THE COACHING PATHWAY

## Coaching Pathway Overview

This course is a professional development offering directed at:

- New and experienced Community and High School rugby coaches seeking to enhance their knowledge and understanding of current tackle laws, techniques, and progressions to contact.
- Coaches working with athletes who are new to contact.

This course will give coaches professional development points towards the maintenance of their NCCP certifications.





# COURSE AIMS & LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The goal of this training is to prevent injury in the tackle by giving coaches the competence and confidence to coach the tackle and progress effectively to contact.

Following the training participants should be able to:

- Confidently and safely introduce the tackle to athletes new to contact.
- Clearly understand the Laws of the Game relating to the Tackle.
- Know how to access resources and support from Rugby Canada and World Rugby relating to the Tackle.
- Clearly understand the intent of Tackle SMART to reduce injury rate.



## KEY FACTORS & COACHING CUES FOR THE BALL CARRIER (BC)

		PRE		DURING		POST
		TRACKING	PREPARATION	CONNECTION	ACCELERATION	FINISH
BALL CARRIER	KEY FACTOR	<b>Evasive Running</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using footwork to get to a shoulder</li> </ul> <i>See Figure 1 on page 7</i>	<b>Body Shape</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knees bent</li> <li>Hips hinged slightly</li> <li>Core engaged</li> <li>3-points of contact on ball</li> <li>Eyes forward</li> </ul> <i>See Figure 2 on page 7</i>	<b>Stay strong</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knees bent</li> <li>Hips hinged slightly</li> <li>Core engaged</li> <li>3-points of contact on ball</li> <li>Eyes forward</li> </ul> <i>See Figure 3A on page 7</i>	<b>Leg Drive</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keeping “good” body shape (see Connection)</li> <li>Small, choppy steps</li> </ul> <i>See Figure 3B on page 7</i>	<b>Go to ground &amp; Place ball</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contact with the ground: Knees, Hips, Shoulders</li> <li>Place ball towards team (not throw or bounce)</li> </ul> <i>See Figure 4A, 4B &amp; 4C on page 8</i>
	CUE	“Branches, not trees” “Face to space”	“Activate”	“Shape”	“Explode”	“Knees, hips, shoulder”

## KEY FACTORS & COACHING CUES FOR THE TACKLER

		PRE		DURING		POST
		TRACKING	PREPARATION	CONNECTION	ACCELERATION	FINISH
TACKLER	KEY FACTOR	<b>Tracking</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hands up</li> <li>Eyes up</li> <li>On balls of feet</li> <li>Small, quick steps</li> </ul> <i>See Figure 5 on page 9</i>	<b>Body Shape</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knees bent</li> <li>Hips hinged slightly</li> <li>Core engaged</li> <li>Eyes forward</li> <li>Hands up</li> <li>Elbows in</li> </ul> <i>See Figure 6 on page 9</i>	<b>Initiate Contact</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Head to the side</li> <li>Shoulder makes contact first</li> <li>Contact is made between Hip and Knee</li> <li>Hands punch through</li> <li>Arms wrap</li> </ul> <i>See Figure 7A on page 9</i>	<b>Leg Drive</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keeping “good” body shape (see Connection)</li> <li>Small, choppy steps</li> <li>Maintain squeeze all the way to the ground</li> </ul> <i>See Figure 7B on page 10</i>	<b>Back in the Game</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finish on top</li> <li>Move/Roll away</li> <li>Back on feet</li> </ul> <i>See Figure 8A, 8B, 9A, 9B, 9C &amp; 9D on page 11, 12</i>
	CUE	“Boxer stance”	“T-Rex arms” “Get low” “Same foot, same shoulder”	“Punch & squeeze”	“Squeeze and drive”	“Ninja”



**FIGURE 1**

### **Ball Carrier Tracking (Pre)**

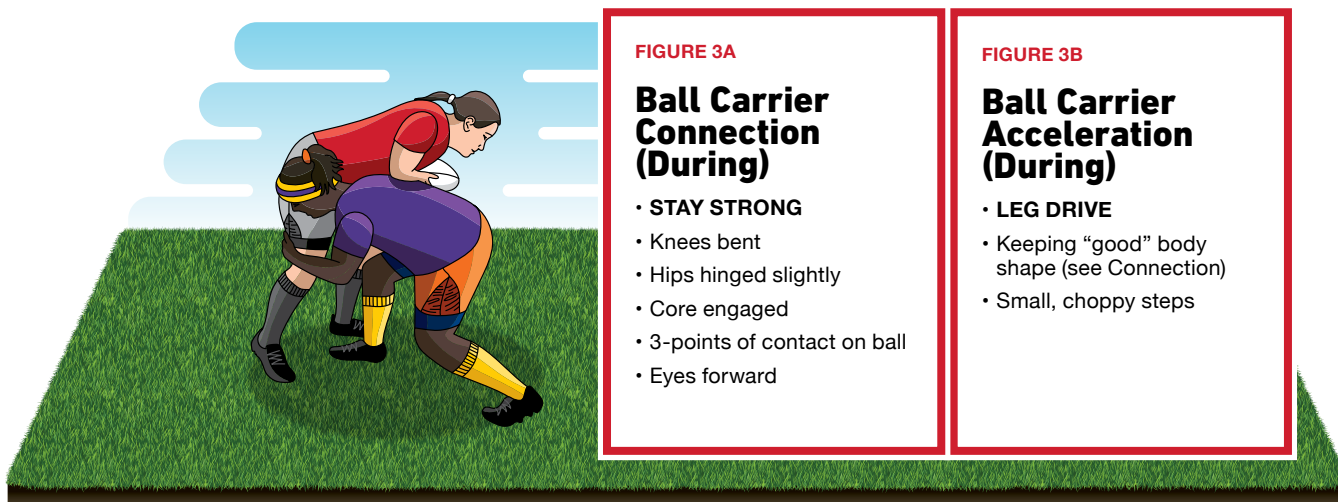
- **EVASIVE RUNNING**
- Using footwork to get to a shoulder
- “Branches, not trees”  
“Face to space”



**FIGURE 2**

### **Ball Carrier Preparation (Pre)**

- **BODY SHAPE**
- Knees bent
- Hips hinged slightly
- Core engaged
- 3-points of contact on ball
- Eyes forward



**FIGURE 3A**

### **Ball Carrier Connection (During)**

- **STAY STRONG**
- Knees bent
- Hips hinged slightly
- Core engaged
- 3-points of contact on ball
- Eyes forward

**FIGURE 3B**

### **Ball Carrier Acceleration (During)**

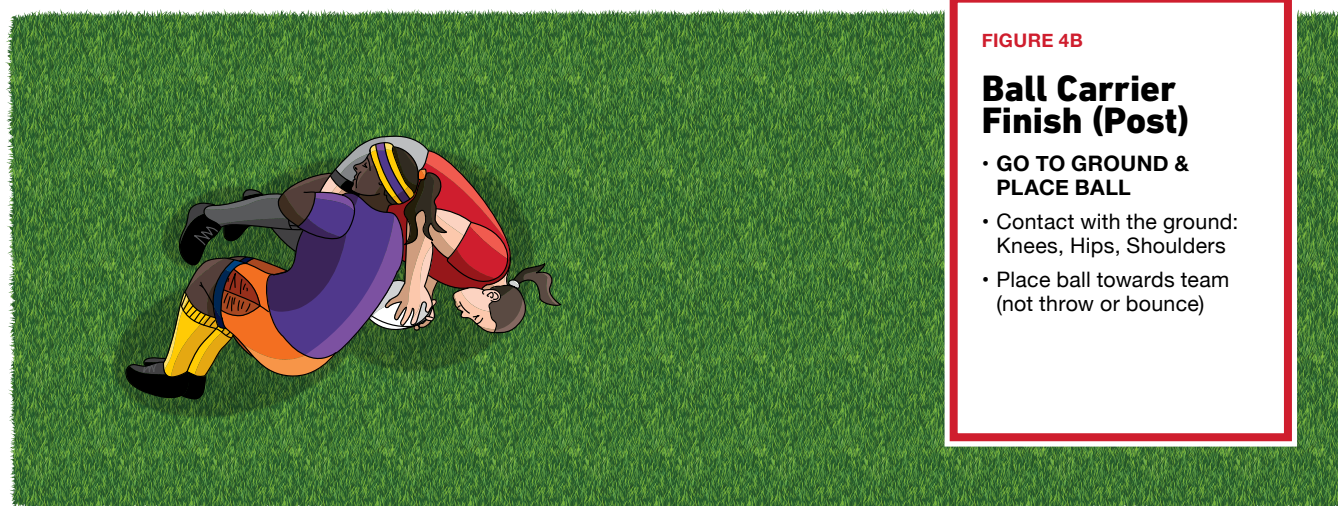
- **LEG DRIVE**
- Keeping “good” body shape (see Connection)
- Small, choppy steps



**FIGURE 4A**

### **Ball Carrier Finish (Post)**

- **GO TO GROUND & PLACE BALL**
- Contact with the ground: Knees, Hips, Shoulders
- Place ball towards team (not throw or bounce)



**FIGURE 4B**

### **Ball Carrier Finish (Post)**

- **GO TO GROUND & PLACE BALL**
- Contact with the ground: Knees, Hips, Shoulders
- Place ball towards team (not throw or bounce)



**FIGURE 4C**

### **Ball Carrier Finish (Post)**

- **GO TO GROUND & PLACE BALL**
- Contact with the ground: Knees, Hips, Shoulders
- Place ball towards team (not throw or bounce)





**FIGURE 5**

### **Tackler Tracking (Pre)**

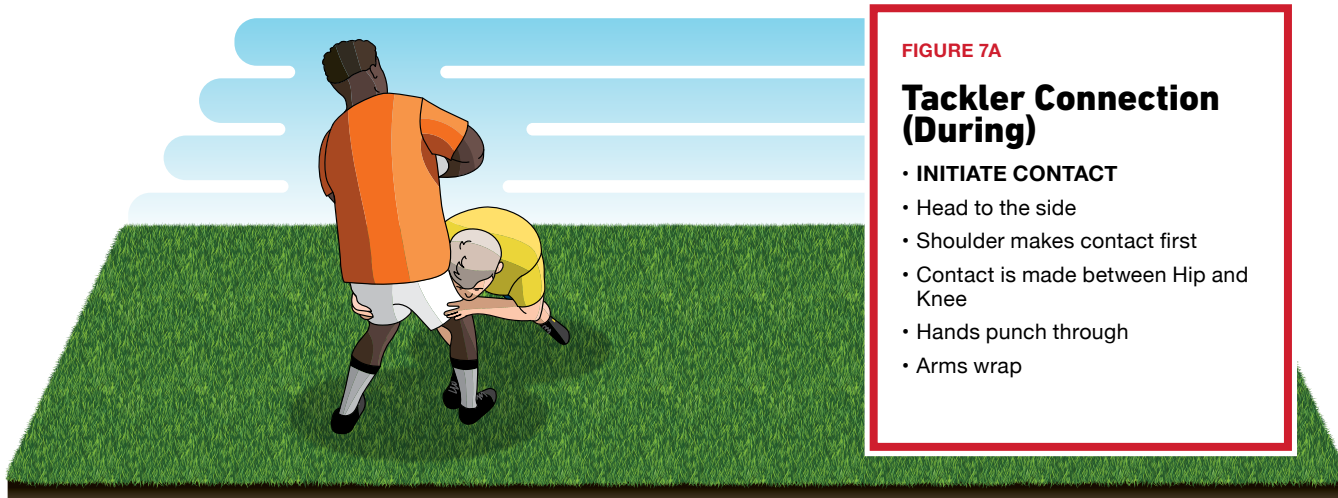
- **TRACKING**
- Hands up
- Eyes up
- On balls of feet
- Small, quick steps



**FIGURE 6**

### **Tackler Preparation (Pre)**

- **BODY SHAPE**
- Knees bent
- Hips hinged slightly
- Core engaged
- Eyes forward
- Hands up
- Elbows in



**FIGURE 7A**

### **Tackler Connection (During)**

- **INITIATE CONTACT**
- Head to the side
- Shoulder makes contact first
- Contact is made between Hip and Knee
- Hands punch through
- Arms wrap



**FIGURE 7B**

### **Tackler Acceleration (During)**

- **LEG DRIVE**
- Keeping “good” body shape (see Connection)
- Small, choppy steps
- Maintain squeeze all the way to the ground



**FIGURE 8A**

### **Tackler Finish (Post)**

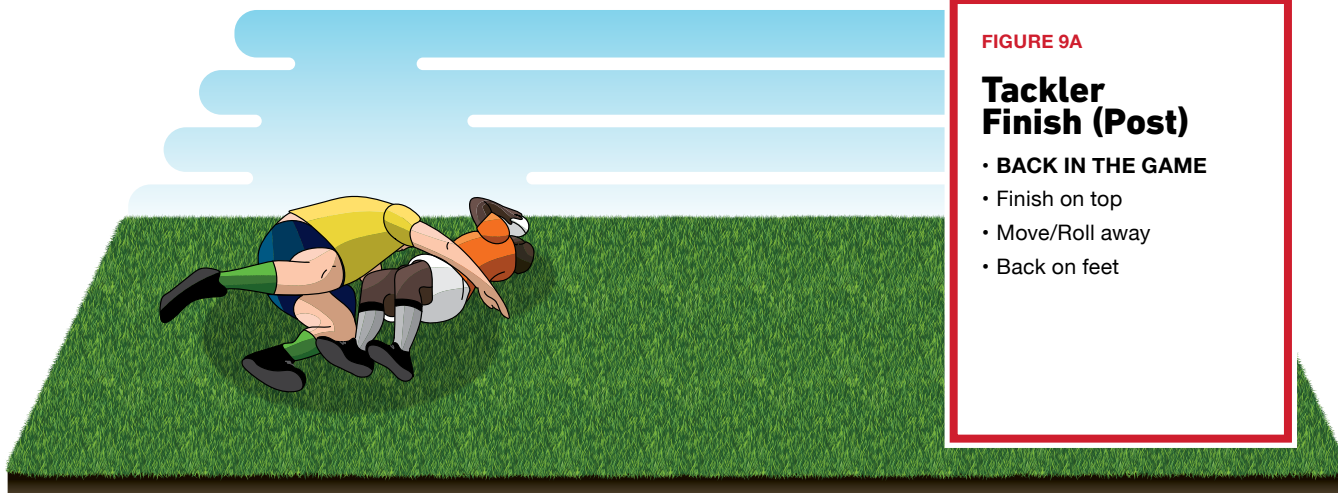
- **BACK IN THE GAME**
- Finish on top
- Move/Roll away
- Back on feet



**FIGURE 8B**

### **Tackler Finish (Post)**

- **BACK IN THE GAME**
- Finish on top
- Move/Roll away
- Back on feet



**FIGURE 9A**

### **Tackler Finish (Post)**

- **BACK IN THE GAME**
- Finish on top
- Move/Roll away
- Back on feet



**FIGURE 9B**

### **Tackler Finish (Post)**

- **BACK IN THE GAME**
- Finish on top
- Move/Roll away
- Back on feet



**FIGURE 9C**

### **Tackler Finish (Post)**

- **BACK IN THE GAME**
- Finish on top
- Move/Roll away
- Back on feet



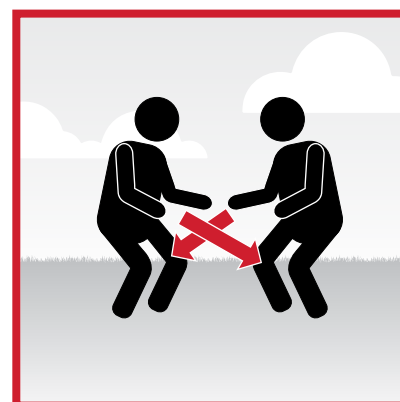
## CONTACT WARM-UP GAMES

### INSTRUCTIONS AND COACHING POINTS

#### KNEE SLAP

**How:** In pairs, participants have 15 seconds to try to touch the inside of their teammates knee.

**What:** Goal is for the participants to get into good body shape on their own, through doing the activity and raise their heart rate.



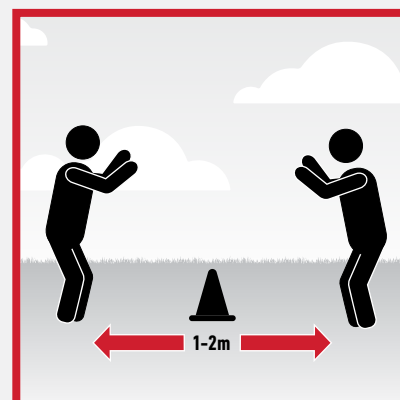
#### HEAD, SHOULDERS, KNEES, AND CONES

**How:** In pairs, and with a cone, have participants face each other 1-2 m apart with the cone on the ground in between.




Coach calls various parts of the body that they must touch, like Simon Says, and then yells “cone”.


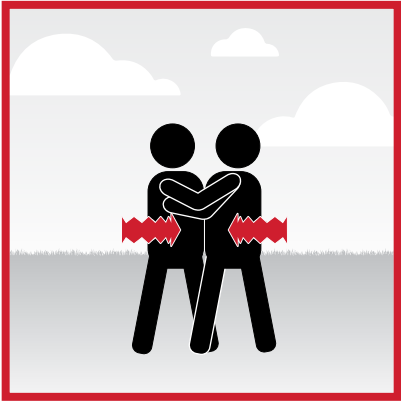

Participants must try to be quick and grab the cone first.



**What:** Goal is for participants to get into good active body shape for contact, activate their mind and work on reaction.







<p><b>OVER, UNDER, THROUGH</b></p>	<p><b>How:</b> In pairs, participants do the following. When coach calls “over” one participant leap frogs the other. When coach calls “under” one participant rolls sideways and the other jumps over. When coach calls “through” one participant must crawl through the legs of the other.</p> <p><b>What:</b> Get participants used to being on the ground, rolling around, and raise heart rate.</p>	
<p><b>SCRAMBLE</b></p>	<p><b>How:</b> Set 1 ball in the middle of a group of participants all lying on their stomachs. Have 3 participants standing near the ball. On go, the 3 standing must do whatever they can to prevent the players on the ground from crawling toward the ball (roll them, drag them, etc.)</p> <p><b>What:</b> Get participants used to being on the ground, rolling, crawling, etc.</p>	
<p><b>AROUND THE WORLD</b></p>	<p><b>How:</b> In pairs, have participants set up one giving the other a piggy-back. On “go” they must attempt to get the person on their back all the way around their bodies and back on their back.</p> <p><b>What:</b> Goal is for participants to engage their cores and work together.</p> <p>*Ensure participants have reached an age and stage where they are capable of being successful without injury. Try to match players of similar size.</p>	

<p><b>HUG &amp; SQUEEZE</b></p>	<p><b>How:</b> In pairs, have participants start in a hug, each with one arm over the shoulder and one arm under. On “go” each participant must try to get both arms under and to lift their partner up.</p> <p><b>What:</b> Goal is to activate participants’ upper bodies and get them used to close contact with another person.</p> 
<p><b>SUPER HUG</b></p>	<p><b>How:</b> In pairs, have one participant start hugging the other as hard as they can. On “go” the other participant must do their best to get out of the hug.</p> <p><b>What:</b> Goal is to activate participants’ upper bodies and get them used to close contact with another person.</p> <p>*Recommended for younger age groups.</p> 
<p><b>SHOESTRING</b></p>	<p><b>How:</b> In pairs, starting on all fours, participants must try to untie their partners’ shoelaces (or undo Velcro or take off sock).</p> <p><b>What:</b> Goal is for participants to get used to contact with the ground and to elevate heart rate.</p> 

<p><b>RAT-TAIL</b></p>	<p><b>How:</b> In a grid, all participants tuck the end of a pinnie into the back of their shorts. On “go” participants try to collect as many pinnies as possible. Not elimination, participants keep going even if their pinnie has been stolen.</p> <p><b>What:</b> Goal is to elevate heart rate and work on evasive footwork.</p> 
<p><b>FIGHT TO FEET</b></p>	<p><b>How:</b> In pairs, have one participant start lying on top of the other. On “go” the one underneath must try to get up off the ground while the other tries to prevent them by moving around (no grabbing).</p> <p><b>What:</b> Goal is to get participants used to being on the ground and in close contact with another person.</p> 

## MODIFIED GAMES

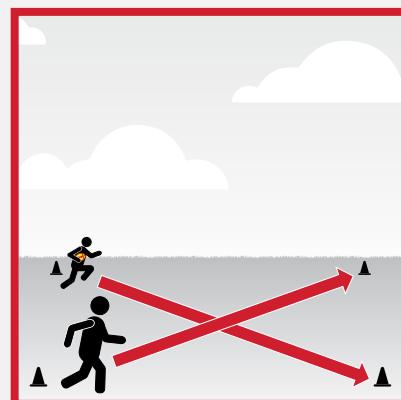
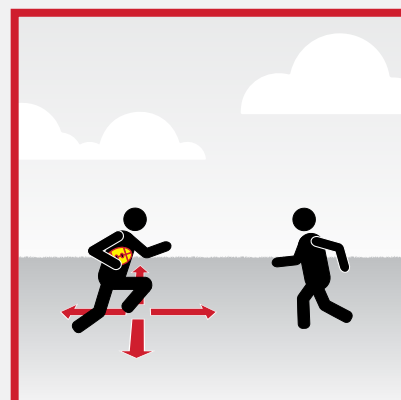
	PRE/DURING/POST	COACHING POINTS
OCTOPUS	PRE	<p><b>How:</b> Arrange 10x15 m rectangle.</p> <p>Have half the participants find a partner and hold hands (or each hold on to one end of a pinnie) within the grid. The other half starts at one end of the grid and must make their way across without being tagged. No more than 3 participants to an "Octopus". Octopi must work on footwork together to tag, the other participants must work on evasive footwork to make it around.</p> <p><b>What:</b> Goal is to have participants work on evasive footwork, defensive footwork and to work together on defense.</p> 
PINBALL	DURING	<p><b>How:</b> Arrange 10x15 m rectangle. Split group into two. One team will play the role of "Ball carriers", with the other team being "Tacklers". Ball carriers will be inside the rectangle, with tacklers arranged on the edge of the rectangle. Ball carriers will try to escape the rectangle, with the tacklers preventing them from doing so by initiating a tackle, but not completing by taking down to ground. Tacklers can move to different edges of the rectangle, but a maximum of two tacklers per side of the rectangle at any one time.</p> <p><b>What:</b> Goal is for participants to work on evasive footwork and defensive footwork (same foot same shoulder).</p> 



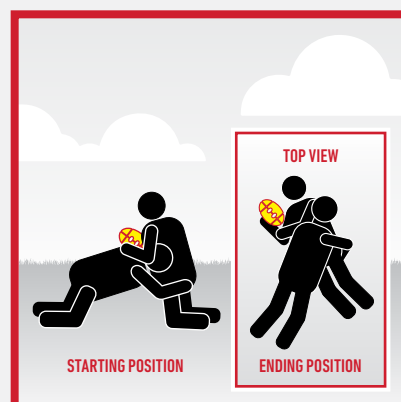
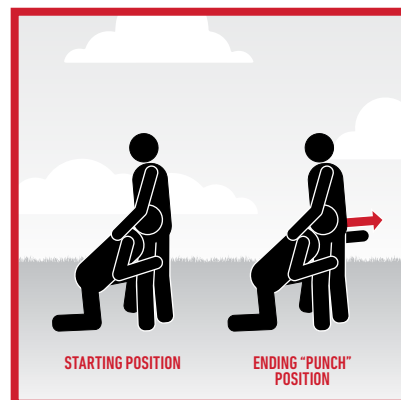
TACKLE TOUCH	DURING/POST	<p><b>How:</b> 2 teams in a large grid. When a Touch occurs the Ball Carrier stops, makes a pass, then is tackled by the Defender who made the Touch.</p> <p><b>What:</b> Goal is to lessen the intensity of the tackle while still giving the opportunity to practice live.</p> <div> </div> <div> </div>
RUCK TOUCH	POST	<p><b>How:</b> 2 teams in a large grid. When a Touch occurs the Ball Carrier goes to ground and places the ball, 1 player from each team may then enter a Ruck to maintain/contest possession.</p> <p><b>What:</b> Goal is to lessen the intensity of the Ruck while still giving opportunity to practice live.</p> <div> </div> <div> </div>

## MICRO SKILLS

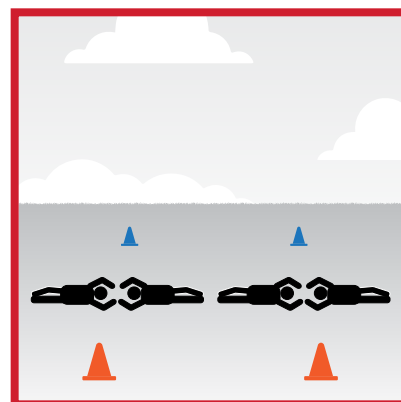
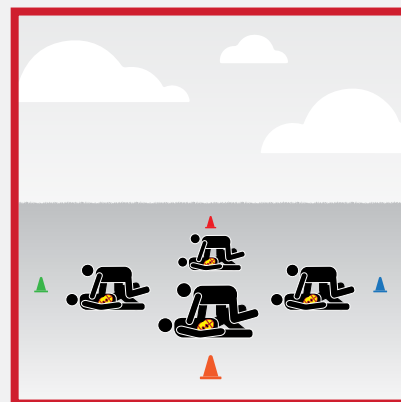
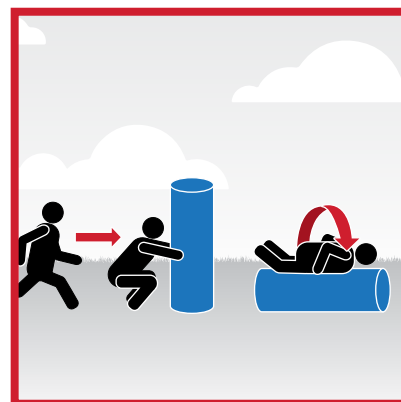
	PRE/DURING/ POST	COACHING POINTS
1 ON 1 STEP	PRE	<p><b>How:</b> In pairs, have participants stand 1-2 m apart facing each other, one with a ball.</p> <p>The Ball Carrier will step diagonally to one side of the Tackler and the Tackler needs to step forward to meet them (foot in the hoop). Both should be in body shape ready for contact.</p> <p>Common errors for the Tackler include stepping backwards before forwards, standing too tall, and reaching with arms.</p> <p><b>What:</b></p> <p>BC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Get to a shoulder, strong shape</i></li> </ul> <p>Tackler</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Same foot, same shoulder, foot in the hoop, strong shape</i></li> </ul>
1 ON 1 TRACKING	PRE/DURING	<p><b>How:</b> In pairs, have participants mirror each other's movements (forward, backwards, side to side).</p> <p>Progressions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>One with a ball, have participants enter a small grid from opposite ends and track (touch only)</i></li> <li>• <i>One with a ball, have participants enter a small grid from opposite ends and track (punch with shoulder)</i></li> </ul> <p>One with a ball, have participants enter a small grid from opposite ends and track (punch with shoulder and squeeze).</p> <p><b>What:</b></p> <p>BC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Get to a shoulder, strong shape</i></li> </ul> <p>Tackler</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Same foot, same shoulder, foot in the hoop, strong shape</i></li> </ul>



PUNCH	DURING	<p><b>How:</b> In pairs, have one participant stand and the other on one knee (outside knee up).</p> <p>The Tackler is on one knee and should start with their shoulder and head on the Ball Carrier's thigh already and have one arm wrapped.</p> <p>When ready, the Tackler will try to connect their ear to their shoulder by squeezing their head and bicep. This will make a punching motion with the arm that is wrapped.</p> <p>Ball Carrier needs to provide slight resistance.</p> <p><b>What:</b></p> <p>BC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Strong shape</i></li> </ul> <p>Tackler</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Punch through (make sure they are using neck and arm)</i></li> </ul>
SQUEEZE	DURING/POST	<p><b>How:</b> In pairs, have participants both on knees, one set perpendicular to the other.</p> <p>Have the participant who is facing the other, set themselves with shoulder on thigh and cheek to cheek. When ready the Tackler will squeeze both arms and drive with the hips and butt at the same time. Tackler will land on top, then release and move away from the tackle.</p> <p>Ball Carrier should hold three points of contact, then place the ball.</p> <p><b>What:</b></p> <p>BC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>3 points of contact on the ball, fight for good ball placement</i></li> </ul> <p>Tackler</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Explode and drive from hips and butt, land on top, move away</i></li> </ul>



ROLL ON	DURING/POST	<p><b>How:</b> Participants start 2 m back, approach and tackle a sausage bag, land on top, then roll away to the side.</p> <p>Progression:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add a second bag and tackler, race to getting back up on their feet</li> <li>• Use this as the trigger to start an activity</li> </ul> <p><b>What:</b> Tackler</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Punch, squeeze, land on top, move away</li> </ul>
FIGHT TO PLACE	POST	<p><b>How:</b> In pairs, have one participant start lying on top of the other, who has a ball. On “go” the one underneath must try to move closer to their team and place the ball while the other tries to prevent them by moving around (no grabbing).</p> <p><b>What:</b> BC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fight for good ball placement</li> </ul>
FISH OUT OF WATER	POST	<p><b>How:</b> In pairs, participants lie facing each other 3 m apart with different coloured cones lying one to each side about 5 m away. Coach calls a colour and participants need to get to their feet as quickly as possible and make it to the coloured cone first.</p> <p><b>What:</b> Tackler</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get back to feet</li> </ul>







**PLAY  
SMART**  
PUTTING PLAYERS FIRST

# THANKS FOR USING THE **TACKLE SMART COACH REFERENCE MANUAL.**



For more information on Rugby Canada's player welfare initiatives, go to [playsmart.rugbycanada.ca](https://playsmart.rugbycanada.ca) or scan the QR code to visit the website.



@rugbycanada