



VISUALLY IMPAIRED RUGBY COACHING GUIDE





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VISION
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Vision Sports Ireland

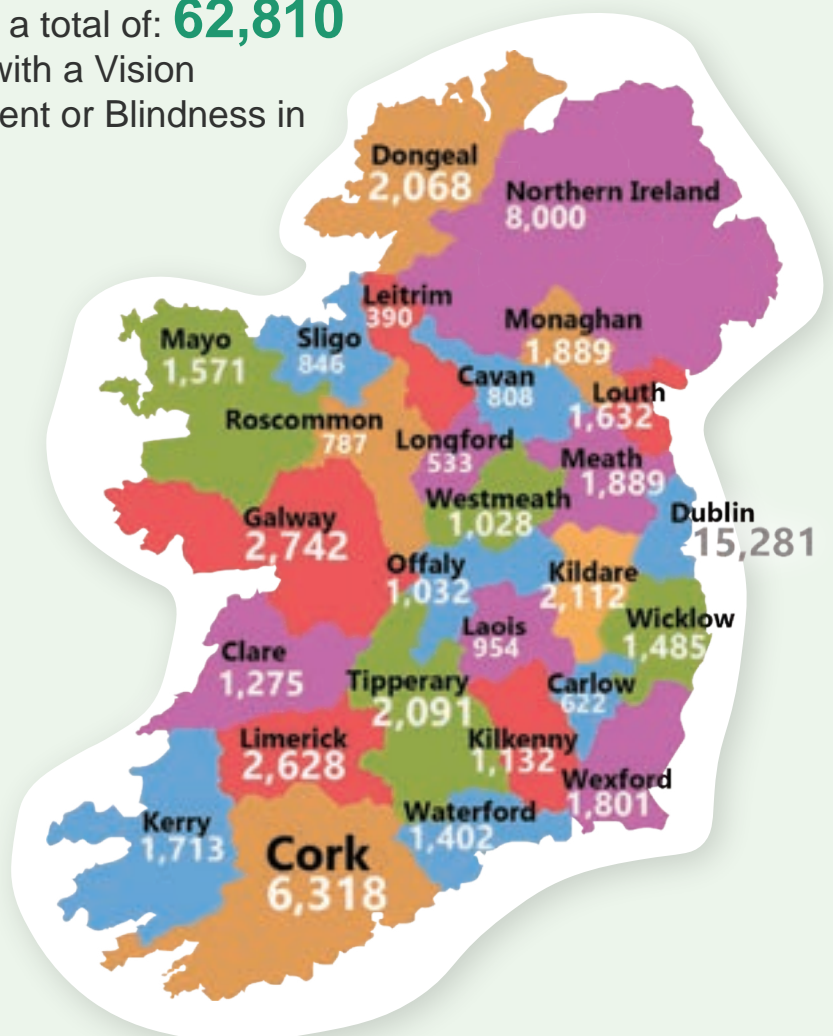
Vision Sports Ireland is the National Governing Body (NGB) for sport and physical activity for people who are blind, or vision impaired in Ireland. Vision Sports Ireland provide a variety of both mainstream and adapted sports.

Vision Sports Ireland was founded in 1988 and in March 2020 merged with The National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI) with the aim of increasing reach and opportunities.

Vision Sports Ireland advocates for people with vision impairment (VI) to have equal access to and enjoy the health benefits derived from regular participation in sports and physical activities of their choice from recreational to elite level.



There is a total of: **62,810**
people with a Vision
Impairment or Blindness in
Ireland



Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU)

The Irish Rugby Football Union is the National Governing Body (NGB) for Rugby in Ireland and works across the four provinces. In order to support the development of inclusive rugby and to promote opportunities for people with a disability to access the game. The IRFU aims to integrate as many players as is possible into existing rugby clubs, as well as partner with related disability organisations to provide rugby to players of all abilities.



The Change Foundation

The Change Foundation is an award-winning charity that uses sport to change the lives of marginalised young people.

Over the past 40 years The Change Foundation have successfully delivered award winning sports intervention programmes to vulnerable young people living in the UK and abroad.



Vision Impairment

The World Health Organisation defines vision impairment as a reduction or limitation of visual acuity and/or visual field. A reduction in visual acuity details a reduction in clarity of vision, and a reduction in field of vision describes the area in which they are able to see.

Having a 'vision impairment', means that an individual's vision cannot be fixed by corrective measures, including glasses or lenses.

There are thousands of different diagnoses that may result in impaired vision. Listed below are a small number of common eye conditions, but it is important to note that even if two people share the same diagnosis, each person may experience different vision, and may respond differently in different environments or under different conditions.



Diabetic Retinopathy

A person with diabetic retinopathy may have 'patchy vision' due to damage to the retina (back of the eye). The number, size, darkness, and location of dark 'patches' is dependent on the location of the damage, will be different for every person, resulting in a different loss of vision.

People who have Diabetic Retinopathy, like many other conditions, may experience sensitivity to glare/direct light, and difficulties with fine detail work and mobility.

Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP)

Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP) is a group of inherited eye conditions which generally arise during teenage to early adulthood. RP tends to result in a loss of peripheral vision, also referred to as 'tunnel vision', due to damage to the retina. The speed and severity of vision loss will depend on the condition.

People with RP may also experience





night blindness, difficulty adjusting to changes in lighting levels and glare sensitivity, and difficulty with colour vision. Peripheral vision loss may mean obstacles are difficult to detect unless directly in front of them, which may impact mobility, navigating stairs or uneven ground.

Glaucoma

Glaucoma is a condition which results in the loss of peripheral vision, as a result of damage to the optic disc over time. Glaucoma results in the gradual loss of peripheral vision, leading to loss of central vision in the later stages. Monitoring eye pressure and fields testing is vital to reduce progression.

People with Glaucoma may have contrast sensitivity, reduced clarity of vision, or difficulty with mobility, navigating stairs or uneven ground, and in later stages, fine motor skills



Macular Degeneration

Macular Degeneration may occur at any age, however, the most well known type of Macular Degeneration is Age Related Macular Degeneration (AMD). AMD is the result of damage to the macular, however, in most cases, it will not lead to a total loss of vision.

AMD results in reduced central vision, characterized by a skewing of the visual field, progressing to a loss of central vision.



AMD may also result in reduced contrast sensitivity, and often, a sensitivity to glare. Stargardt Disease is another form of Macular Degeneration. Similar to AMD, Stargardt's Disease impacts central vision, however, is most commonly diagnosed in children.

Cataract

Cataracts are one of the most common forms of vision impairment in the world.

A cataract will make the lens clouded or opaque, which impacts visual acuity. The impact of a cataract on a person's vision will depend on the size or location of the cataract on the lens.

Having cataracts may feel like looking through fog or a haze, and result in blurred vision and sensitivity to glare and bright lights. Cataracts may make it difficult to navigate fine details, read small print or recognise faces.



Nystagmus

Nystagmus is a condition which causes uncontrollable rapid eye movements, which may result in double or shaky vision. Nystagmus is frequently also associated with other forms of vision impairment, including Albinism.

Nystagmus may cause difficulties reading print, focusing on fine details, and issues with depth perception, balance, and coordination.



Hemianopia

Hemianopia describes a loss of segment of the visual field, as a result of damage or injury to the brain or optic nerve, eg trauma, brain tumour, or stroke. Often it may be the case that the eye is functioning correctly, but messages to the brain are interrupted.

The loss of visual field will be dependent on the location of the damage to the brain. An individual may experience total loss of visual field, or segments of the visual fields (for example, upper or lower, binasal or homonymous).

An individual with a hemianopia may experience difficulties with tasks such as reading, road crossings, or locating food on the plate, dependent on the field of vision loss.



perception. Due to reduced melanin in the skin, individuals may also be susceptible to heat and sunburn.

Albinism is also frequently co-diagnosed with nystagmus and refractive error.

Albinism

Albinism refers to a group of inherited disorders which result in a reduced or no production of melanin. Melanin is required for the development of the optic nerve, as well as colouring of our skin, hair, and eyes.

A person with albinism may experience sensitivity to light and glare, decreased clarity of vision, and difficulty with depth





Rugby

Vision Impaired Rugby or VI Rugby is for anybody with a visual impairment from B1 to B5, while for competitions players must be B2 to B4 and is based on rugby 7s touch format, which is non-contact. This allows the game to be safe and accessible for both adults and young people. The code of practise, its laws and spectacle of rugby are maintained while considering the inclusiveness of all VI participants.

VI Rugby is played with a full-size ball with bells and ball bearings inside to make it audible. The coaches and referees are key to the game play, they are to ensure there is a good communication system amongst players.

Vision Sports Ireland and the IRFU are delighted to be supported by The Change Foundation to bring Vision Impaired Rugby to Ireland for the very first time.

Recommendations for Coaches

We suggest a combination of training styles to support, engage, aspire, and teach the players. The key guidelines when delivering VI rugby are as follows:

Learning Individual Players Needs

Attention should focus on abilities rather than limitations, when considering playing or coaching. Individual players have distinct skills and learning abilities. Understanding the players learning style will help you to find the best methods to get the most out of the players. For example, some players will learn by going through the drill or the skill being taught, and some players will learn if they are being told and shown the drills and skills.

Simple and Effective Communication

Effective communication between the coach and amongst players is important both on and off the pitch. Clear and precise audio description of the drill plays a key role in running a successful session. When you need the attention of a VI player use their name prior to giving instructions or feedback.

Do not be afraid to ask questions and listen to individual player's needs.

Some questions to ask:

- Do you feel comfortable?
- What suits your sight best?
- What colour equipment works best?

Active Demonstration

Verbally communicating the drill is the key for coaching VI Rugby, it enables the VI participant to clearly understand the objective you are trying to teach. Along with active communication demonstrating the drill will help the players understand it better. If you find the sessions are not working, do not hesitate to modify it to suit the players.

Phrases to Avoid:

- "It is over there"
- "By that cone"

Distributed Practises

It is a learning strategy that is proven to be more effective where the training is broken down into shorter sessions spreading them over a longer period of time. This would help the players master the skill quickly and not repeating the same drill

For example:

- The participants could be asked to do a certain drill for 4-5 minutes
- Then move on to a next drill and repeat it for 4-5 minutes
- And comeback and do the first one and repeat again

Modifying Drills

It is better to start at a low level and gradually include more challenging exercises as the players develop the skills and a better understanding of the game play. It is recommended to have experienced players in the team while developing these drills and games. To fully develop a player's potential, it is vital to up the challenges steadily.

Session's Venue and Time

- Try and ensure the location is well linked by public transport and provide information about nearest public transport where possible.
- Lighting – lighting and glare could affect the sight of a vision impaired participant so should be considered E.g. If there is very bright sun light, make the players turn their back to it when completing the drill.
- Minimise external noise where possible so the players can hear and follow instructions

Sighted Guide

Sighted guide is a way of safely and efficiently, walking with, and guiding, a person who is blind or visually impaired. To effectively provide sighted guide follow the following recommendations:

- Approach the person, introduce yourself and ask if they would like a guide (some may not). If they say yes, ask them which side they would like to be guided on. If they are a guide dog user, automatically approach from the opposite side to the dog.
- You should be half a pace ahead of the person you are guiding. Stay relaxed with your arm close to the side of your body
- Give brief but clear verbal instructions, mention appropriate hazards and say if there are steps or kerbs up or down.
- If you have to leave the person you're guiding at any time, let them know and leave them in contact with a solid object e.g. a wall
- For more information, please click to watch Vision Sports Ireland – Sighted guide instructional video



Colour Contrast



Colour contrast is extremely important to consider when planning and running a VI Rugby session. It is recommended that you use the colour that will contrast/stand out the most against its background/environment that it is in.

Colour contrast should particularly be considered for ball, bibs, cone colours and coaches clothing.

QUICK TIP: ASK THE PLAYERS WHICH COLOUR PIECE OF EQUIPMENT THEY WOULD LIKE TO USE DURING THE SESSION.

Please see the example below of a yellow and a white rugby ball on a white background. It is clear to see that the yellow ball stands out more, and as such, we would recommend that it is used in this scenario.





Training Drills

1. Keep Ball

The Game

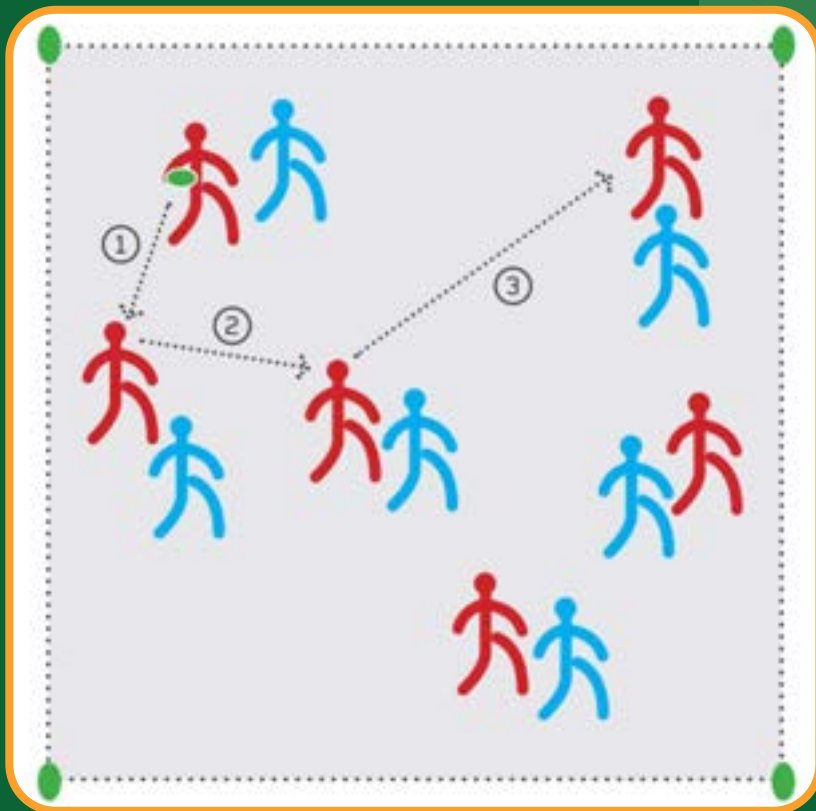
- Split the group into two even teams
- Mark out a square area using cones around 20 paces by 20 paces
- One team starts with the ball and have to pass to one another staying inside the coned area
- The other team have to try and intercept the ball
- Players are not allowed to move with the ball
- If a team makes it to 10 catches, then they get a point
- Once the ball goes to ground it is a turnover

Adaptions

- Allow the players to run with the ball
- If they are tagged with 2 hands the ball is then turned over
- The ball cannot go over head height
- If the ball is dropped each player must do 5 star jumps

Key Skills

- Identify key communications skills amongst the group such as verbal communication
- Improving on the players ability to handle a moving ball
- You can use this game to identify who in your team is a natural leader



2. Bulldog

The Game

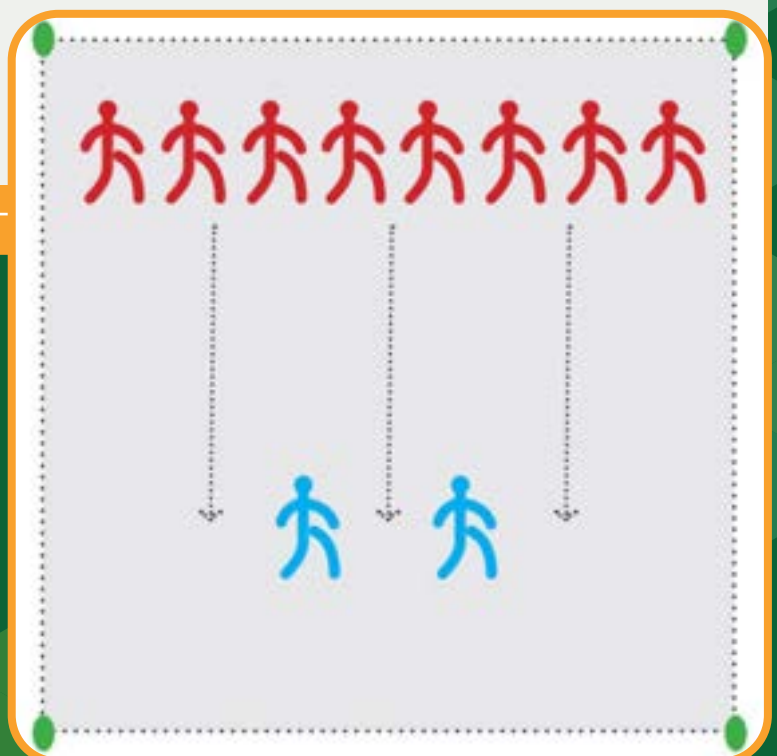
- Mark out a square 20 by 20 paces using cones
- Start the group on one side of the square
- Choose 2 catchers to be in the middle
- The players have to get from one side of the square to the other without being caught
- If the catchers touch a player with two hands, they become a catcher
- The winner is the last person to be caught
- If a player steps outside the square they get a warning, if they do it a second time they become a catcher

Adaptions

- Start the game at a walking pace
- Introduce a ball
- The catchers may pass a ball to one another and tap the players with the ball to catch them
- The ball cannot be thrown at a player
- Add in more balls as more catchers are caught

Key Skills

- Catchers need to work together as a team
- Improving on the players ability to handle a moving ball whilst passing backwards
- Encourage the players to change direction to avoid capture



3. Rugby Netball

The Game

- Split the group into 2 teams
- The team with the ball has to complete 5 passes before they can score
- To score you must throw the ball into your TRY zone marked out by cones where it is caught by your team mate
- Players cannot run with the ball
- If the ball is dropped it is an automatic turn over
- Players are not allowed in the oppositions TRY zone

Adaptions

- If the ball is intercepted the team who have intercepted the ball can try and score straight away
- Players can run with the ball but if tagged with two hands the ball is turned over
- No overhead passes

Key Skills

- Encourage the players to use effective communication
- Look for players using their spatial aware



4. 2v1

The Game

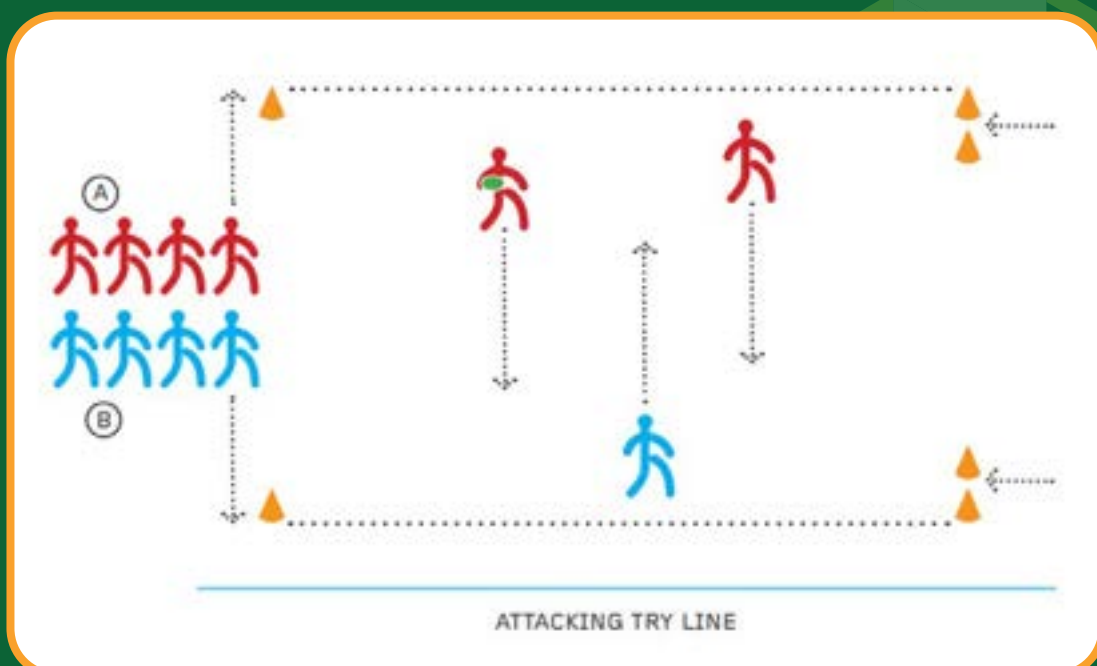
- Start with 2 teams; attacking and defending
- When the coach passes the ball to the attacking team, 2 attacking players will run around the playing area and through a gate, as shown in the picture below
- At the same time 1 defending player will run around the opposite side of the playing area and through a gate marked out parallel to the attacking gate
- Once through the gate there will be a 2v1 situation
- The attacking team have to work together to get around the defending player

Adaptions

- Start at a walking pace
- Advance the game into a 3v2 situation

Key Skills

- Encourage player awareness
- Identify who is a natural leader in the team
- Encourage the attacking players to hold their run but attack the ball with pace



5. Running Lines

The Game

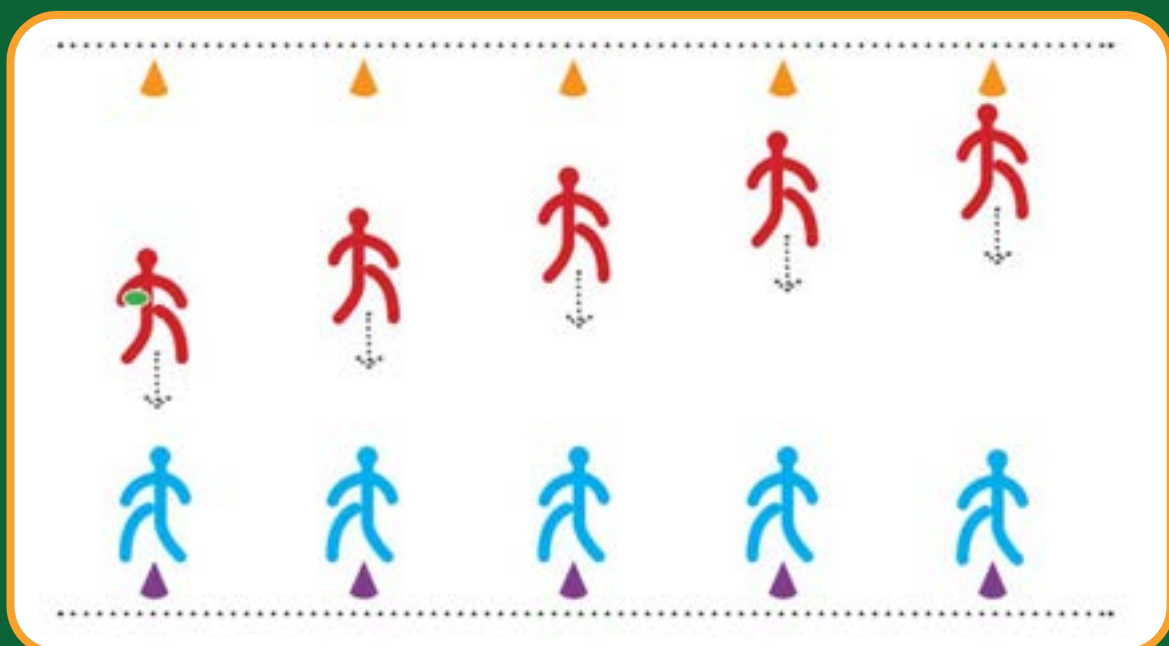
- Line up 2 sets of cones opposite one another
- Use 4 or 5 cones dependant on the numbers in the group
- The group set off towards the opposing line and pass the ball backwards along the line
- Once they have passed the ball through the line they pop it off to the next line waiting and join the back of the cue
- Start slow and build the pace up
- Ensure that each player receiving the ball shows the passer a target with their hands

Adaptions

- As the group get better look to include variations on the pass, such as; pop pass, spin pass, loop pass, miss pass or close and longer range passing
- Add in defenders to encourage looking up and awareness
- Build in further movement from defenders

Key Skills

- Communication
- Passing to a target
- Awareness of your surrounding



6. Under Pressure

The Game

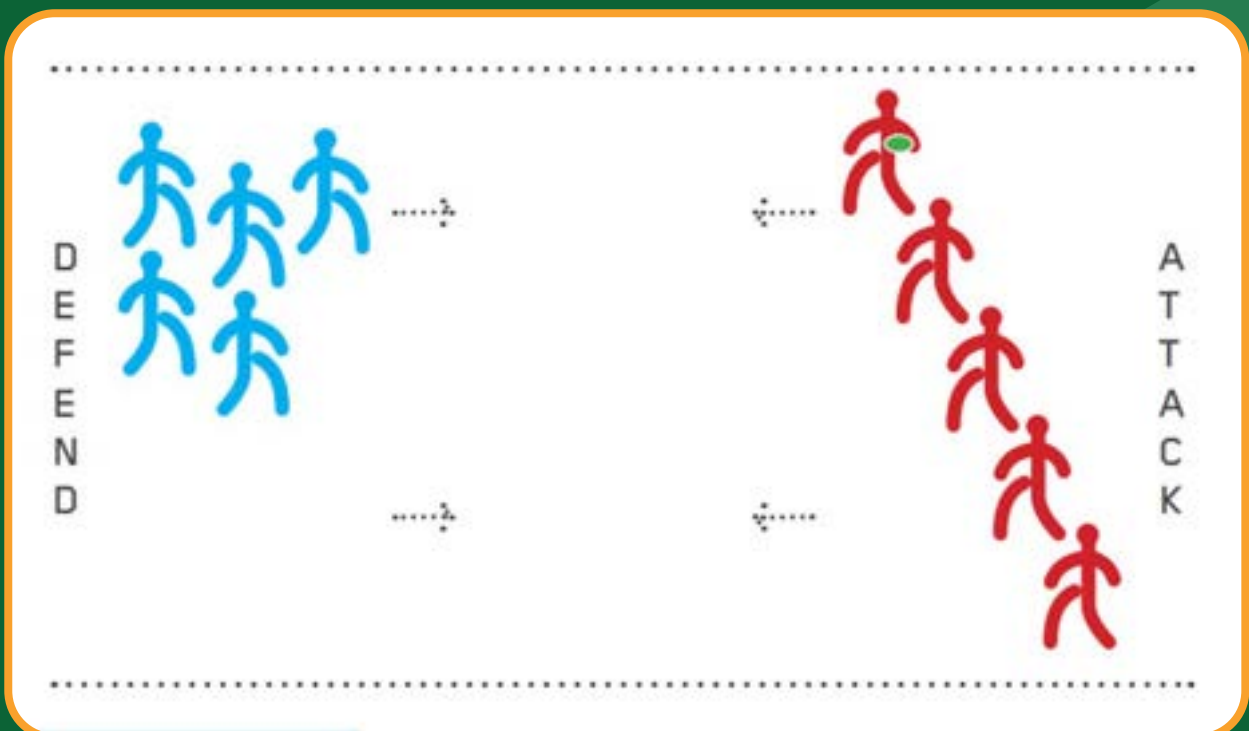
- Split the groups into 2 teams, attacking and defending
- The attacking team choose a play between them for example; The defending team have to work for 20 – 30 seconds by doing exercises called out by the coach for example; press ups, squats or star jumps
- When the coach shouts 'Go' the attacking team run their play
- The defending team have to get into position and defend their try line

Adaptions

- Extend or shorten the period of exercise time
- Choose a play for the attackers to run
- Reduce or add numbers to attackers or defenders

Key Skills

- Awareness of surroundings
- Keeping calm under pressure
- Being able to communicate under pressure



7. Attack v Defence

The Game

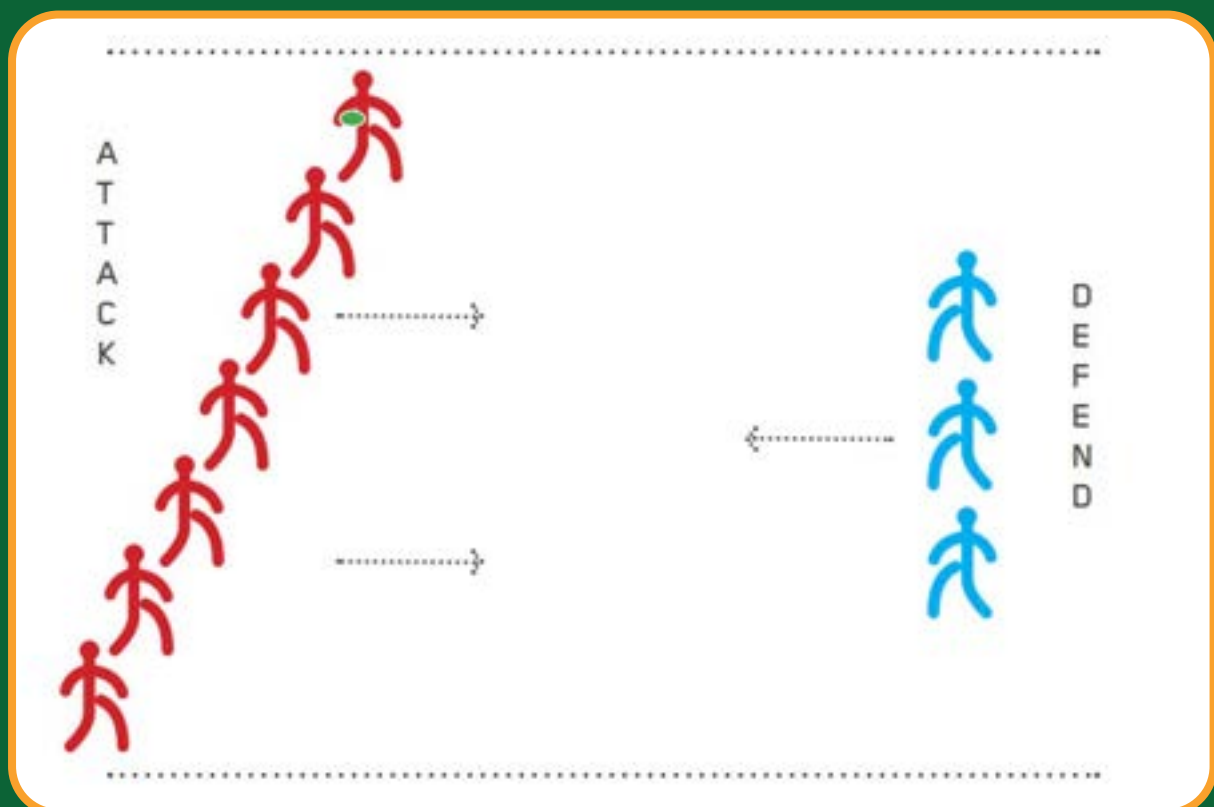
- Split the group into two teams
- One team of 7 attackers and one team of 3 defenders
- Mark out a pitch which is 20m in length and 25m in width
- The 7 attackers have 3 chances to run plays against the defence and score
- As soon as a try is score or someone is tackled both teams re-set

Adaptions

- Add in more defenders to make attacking harder
- Start the game with a kick
- Start from a LINE-OUT or a SCRUM

Key Skills

- Ball handling skills



8. Attacking When The Scrum Half Runs

The Game

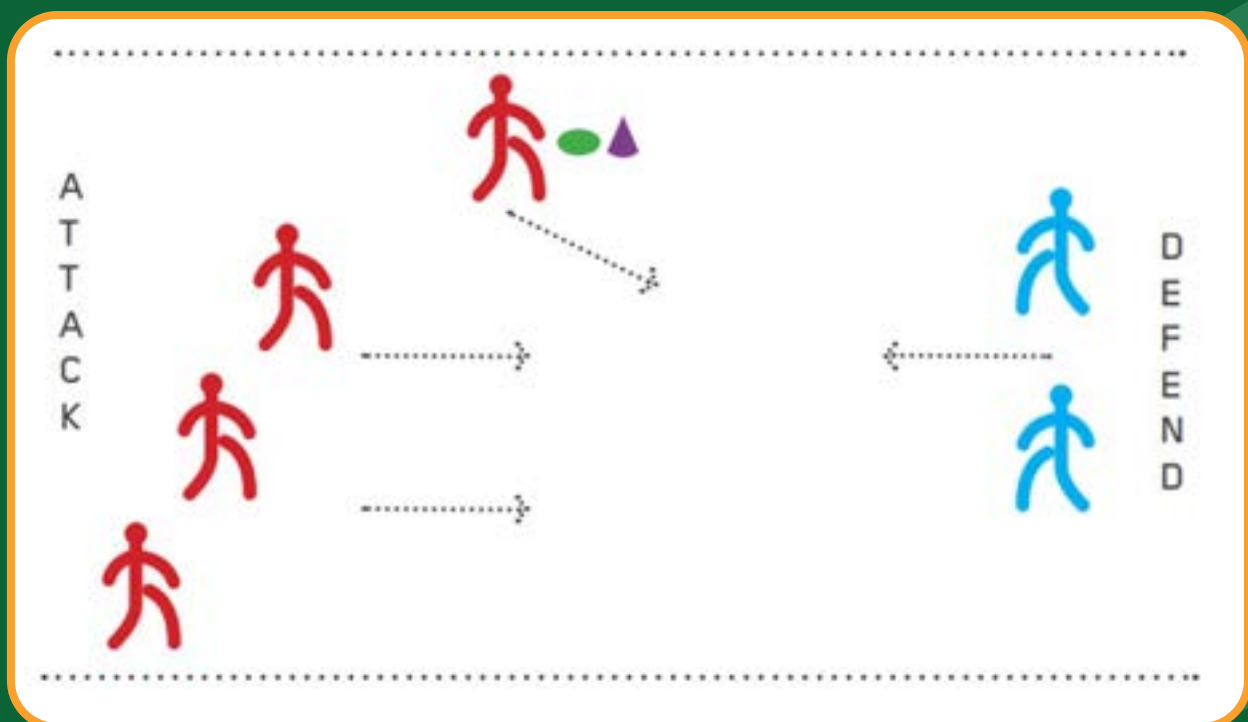
- Split the group into 2 teams, 4 attackers and 2 defenders
- Set up cones or a tackle bag acting as a tackle
- The scrum half attacks the ruck and picks and runs
- The rest of the attackers have to support the scrum half before they are tackled
- The aim is to beat the defenders and score a try

Adaptions

- As a progression add in more attackers and defenders
- Choose a play for the attackers to run

Key Skills

- Support for the scrum half when they pick and run
- Awareness of surroundings and other players
- Using quick hands to pass the ball down the line



7. Attack Of The First Receiver

The Game

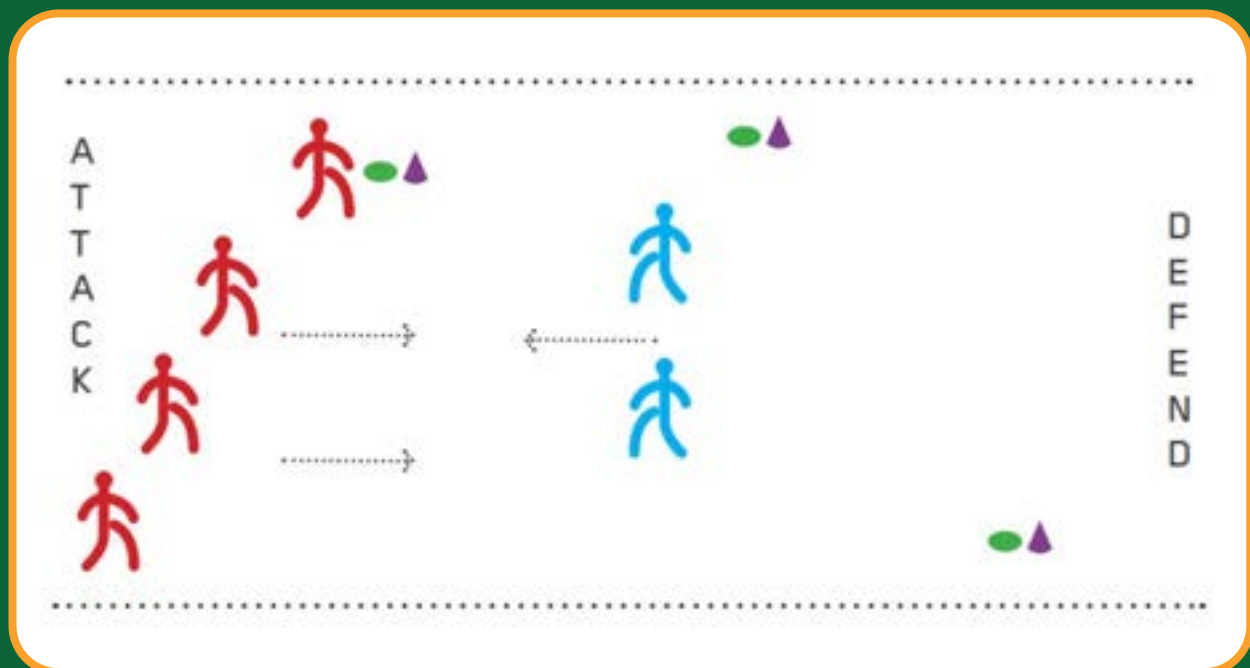
- Split the group into 2 teams, 4 attackers and 2 defenders
- Set up cones or tackle bag as a tackle
- The scrum half attacks the ruck and passes off to the 1st receiver
- The rest of the attackers have to support the 1st receiver before they are tackled
- The aim is to beat the defenders and score a try

Adaptions

- Set up 3 – 4 tackles on the pitch so once a play has been made the scrum half can get to the next tackle and a different 1st receiver will receive the ball
- Add in more defenders
- Choose a play for the attackers to run

Key Skills

- Attacking open space
- Communications between scrum half and 1st receiver
- Continuity in play



Further Training and Education Opportunities

Vision Sports Awareness Training

Vision Sports Awareness Training is designed to educate coaches, volunteers and teachers on Vision Impairment and how small adaptations to sport and physical activity sessions can make a huge difference to the experience of the participant with a vision impairment. Attendees will learn about the various types of Vision Impairment, basic techniques of sighted guide training and the importance of description and colour contrast when delivering a session.

Examples will be presented of various Blind and Vision Impaired sports and adapted equipment available. Attendees will also be informed of the various programmes available through Vision Sports Ireland. Vision Sports Awareness Training has been endorsed by Sport Ireland Coaching.

Individual fee: €15 (public course)

Private course: €250 (Max of 20 participants) - Available to NGBs, LSPs, schools, clubs and community groups.

More information and bookings can be found at – [Vision Sports Awareness Training](#) - [Vision Sports Ireland](#):



References

1. <https://www.thechangefoundation.org.uk/>
2. <https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/disability-rugby/visually-impaired-rugby/>
3. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/blindness-and-visual-impairment>

Contact Us

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Notes

Notes

Lined area for notes.

