



Mental Toughness & Passing Under Pressure



AIMS & OBJECTIVES:

Develop mental toughness and focus when passing under pressure.

ACTIVITY CONTENT (Including Progression)

COACHING POINTS

PREPARATION AND WARM-UP

INTRODUCTION

Matches are sometimes frustrating and stressful. We need to practice thriving in these sorts of situations. The training environment is a safe area where skills and emotional control can be tested under pressure. In a game, the opposition can be ruthless and 'wind you up', or the players can do that themselves 'that umpire doesn't like me' etc. These thoughts distract from the game. Players have to learn to ignore these and focus (narrow attention) on aspects of the game, using positive thoughts.

In today's session you will learn mental skills and be able to use them to overcome challenging tasks.

Skill - Think differently:

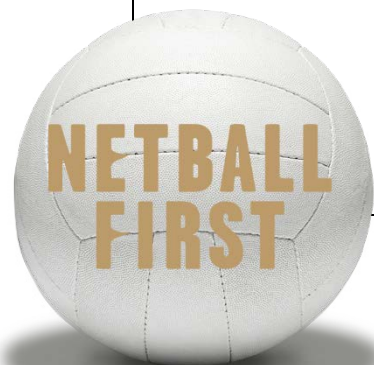
- 'Don't think of a blue kangaroo' what pops into your head?
- Turn negatives into a positive:
- Change 'don't do footwork' to 'land 1-2'
- Change 'don't drop the ball' to 'catch securely with 2 hands'
- Change 'that was a rubbish pass' to 'I could have passed that flatter'

PRACTICE AND PROGRESSION

PASSING & TURNING (TARGET OF 60)

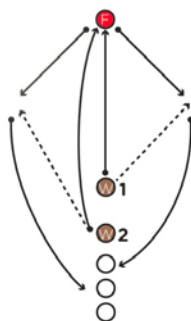
- Two balls.
- Pass to feeder, drive on an angle to left or right side, receive the pass and turn out to pass back to the next player in line.
- Each group to achieve 60 consecutive passes without any errors. If ball is dropped or an error made, the score returns to zero. Stay on this task till it is achieved. It may take longer than expected!

- Timing early enough so the feeder is not waiting.
- Ball placement flat and ahead of the moving attacker.
- Turn quickly.
- Catch release even on non-dominant hand.



Stress adding comments/actions:

- 'They do this at satellite level'
- 'This is really simple, no decisions, just repetition'
- 'This is just a quick task to get us going, why is it taking so long?'
- 'Some players need to go away and practice this-lots!'
- 'Let's add consequences, 5 sprints for the losing team'

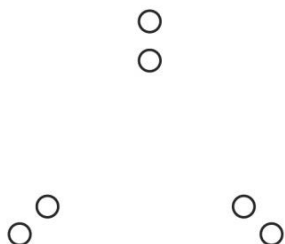


PROGRESSION

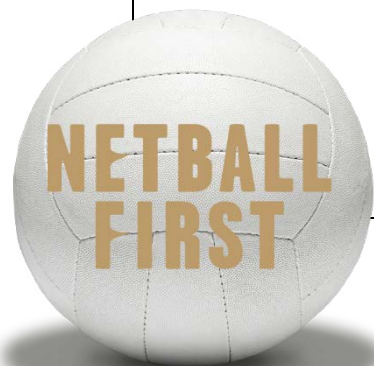
- Leadership roles such as giving feedback and supporting others to feel better.
- Lead out on the side that requires them to pass from their non-dominant hand.
- Player to pass in one second.
- Stress adding comments directed to specific players.

GETTING FREE AND PASSING – THREE INTO THE TRIANGLE (5 MINS)

In groups of nine or more, the players set up in three lines making a triangle. The players at the front of the lines work as a group, whilst the others queue up. The front three attackers sprint into the triangle space and re-offer till they have all caught the ball. The last one to receive the ball passes it to the next group (any line).



- Short quick changes of direction
- Variety in movement skills and ways of getting free
- Balance space
- Time move into space
- Catch release on both sides of the body



STRESS (DISTRACTIONS):

The player with the ball calls the name of a player in their group and passes to someone else. The coach blows the whistle every time a poor pass is made but does not correct or give verbal feedback. The player who makes a passing or handling error has to defend till they win a tip or interception
Competition: Keep score of the number of completed sets by a team or errors by an individual.

PROGRESSION

The next group needs to be moving to receive the ball rather than static posts at the line. The three attackers become defence once the ball is delivered to the next group. They defend that group only and then join the lines again.

GAUNTLET: GAINING GROUND AND PASSING

Three feeders spread along both sides of the third. The attacker has to pass to feeders 1 to 6 in order, whilst being defended. The attacker completes as many passes in 30 seconds as possible.

**STRESS (DISTRACTIONS):**

Any passing errors gain a 5 second penalty (work for 5 seconds or more).

PROGRESSION

Add a 2nd defender floating in the space Two attack working together against two defence (increase work time to 1 minute)

- Depth of movement – forward to go back, or back to go forward as well as lateral (side to side) dodging.
- Attacker to take on the defender and aim to get ahead of the feeder.
- Elbows shoulder height or more for high and wide release around the defender
- Defender to maintain a ball side position on an angle to see the attacker and ball at the same time
- Strong 2nd stage defence: 2 arms over the ball



GAINING GROUND AND PASSING (2 X 7 MINUTES)

Three defence set up in each third who are restricted to these areas. Attack are in teams of three lined up on the backline. The first group plays through court obeying the footwork rule and 'over a third' rule. Once they cross the baseline at the other end, they sprint back to the start position. The next group can start when the previous group have entered the goal third at the far end. After 7 minutes swap the attack and defence over.

STRESS ADDING ACTIONS:

Ignore obstruction rule.

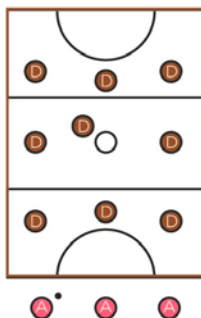
Withdraw verbal and visual support.

Reduce 3 seconds to 2 seconds.

Penalise players for infringements that did not occur e.g. footwork

PROGRESSIONS

Overload defence in one area. Give the attack 5 seconds to sprint back to the start position, or they lose their point.



- Penetrate space
- Pass and re-offer quickly
- Deliver pass into space
- Defence to step up early and meet opponent to deny the space
- Defence to overload one side of the attacker when using a 2nd stage defence

CONDITIONED GAME

7V7 GAME

(15 minutes)

When a player makes an unforced error they must self-evaluate and sprint off the court to complete 20 passes against a wall or with a spare player. Encourage self-directed practice time.

- Remain balanced when catching and throwing
- Use a catch release to get around the defender



SUMMARISED POINTS/NOTES

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS AND REVIEW DURING GROUP STRETCHING:

- How did you feel and how did you cope?
- What was the most stressful point?
- What have you learnt from this process about your own stress response and coping strategies?
- How does this relate to a game? What benefits or consequences are there to a game situation?
- Highlight players that were singled out for criticism or pressure comments/actions. Offer them praise. Turn this all into a positive learning experience.

- Use open questions. Allow enough thinking time, try not to interrupt or answer questions for them

Mental Toughness - Think Differently.

- Expect to overcome challenges and obstacles.
- Accept criticism as an opportunity to improve
- Recover quickly from setbacks.
- Understand that you can always learn and improve with hard work.
- Understand that the coach is not being personal when they give feedback; respond positively.

How to Coach Mental Toughness

- Add physical pressure (working for time periods e.g. 15 minutes as a group or 30 seconds of high intensity individual work)
- Add mental pressure (targets, criticism, consequences).
- Add distractions (count backwards from 100/filming/wrong umpire decisions).

