

“COACHING THE TACKLE” Jim Mc CORRY

Defensive play is comprised of both individual defending and team defending and they form the platform for many a successful side. The purpose of this coaching session is to cover individual defence, concentrating primarily on the technical aspects of the tackle rather than team defence which has a tactical basis.

There are three basic types of tackle in Gaelic football:

- (a) Side on tackle (simplest and most common)
- (b) Front tackle
- (c) Tackle from behind

The 4 “D’s” of Defending ...,

- (a) Delay
- (b) Deny
- (c) Dispossess
- (d) Develop

are all explained in specific skill sets and condition games developed to illustrate to players, skills required in a game situation.

The role of Defender is first to prevent Forwards from gaining possession, which in turn would prevent scores or to prevent a Forward’s contribution towards setting up scores. The principles of Delaying, Denying and Dispossessing are all part of the tackle and are included in drill sets. Players must finally, “develop and distribute” from defence and link up with support play to form a platform for attack. These key elements of individual technical skills illustrated in the coaching session are extended into small sided and half-field conditioned games.

In working with minor football players for this session, each drill set was run at first without coaching to highlight aspects which would need improvement. Poor tackling technique was identified as the prime cause for poor defending. Utilizing the “Heads, Hands and Feet” principles, improvements were made in technique to assist the players. The lunge tackle and constant foul with the wrong tackle hand being used on the back of an opponent was also identified and explained with corrections in drills. Each tackling skill was designed to use “Heads, Hands and Feet” to slow the opponent, to assist in controlling the opponent, which in turn allows for the follow-on tackle. Utilising body positioning with the “Heads, Hands and Feet” principle, defenders can channel players away from the attacking zone.

SESSION – FIELD PLAN

A drill is set up in a 15m channel with markers at 5m intervals.

Players line opposite each other on markers with defenders (red) on one side and attackers (black) on the opposite side with balls.

Players at markers 1, 2 and 3 go around marker 6 into the channel to attack with the ball.

Players 4, 5 and 6 go around marker 1 into the channel to defend.

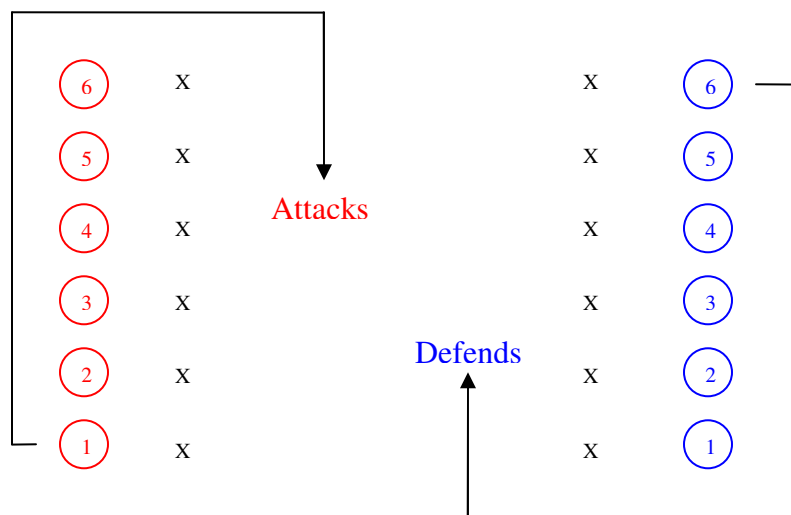
Each player returns to their original position. When all players have completed their tackle, positions are rotated and footballs are passed to opposite side.

This exercise is run with observation and no coaching for the first set. Coaches are encouraged to apply “spot and fix” in the tackle. The sequence of coaching should then be as follows:

- (1) Hands are placed behind back and players move to tackle with feet in the correct position, ie, not flat footed, feet not in line but in “a boxer’s staggered stance”, balanced on balls of feet to allow movement right or left. The upper body is pushed forward and the head is up observing the opponent. The body position is such to channel player in direction away from scoring zone.
- (2) The next sequence brings hands into the tackle with hands brought up and wide to allow for front tackle.

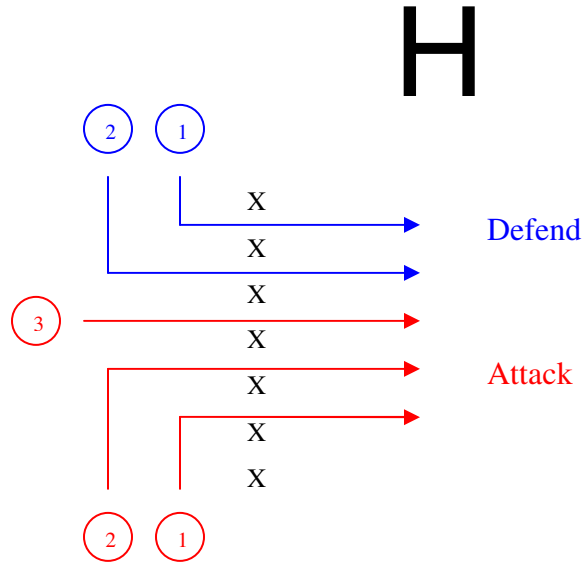
The principles of “Head, Hands and Feet” should be demonstrated to players and a series of tackles utilizing the channel, conducted with the Coach.

Utilising small grids 15m x 15m, this exercise can be developed into a 3 v 3 game were hands are kept behind back as part of tackle process in the first set and then hands are used in the second set.



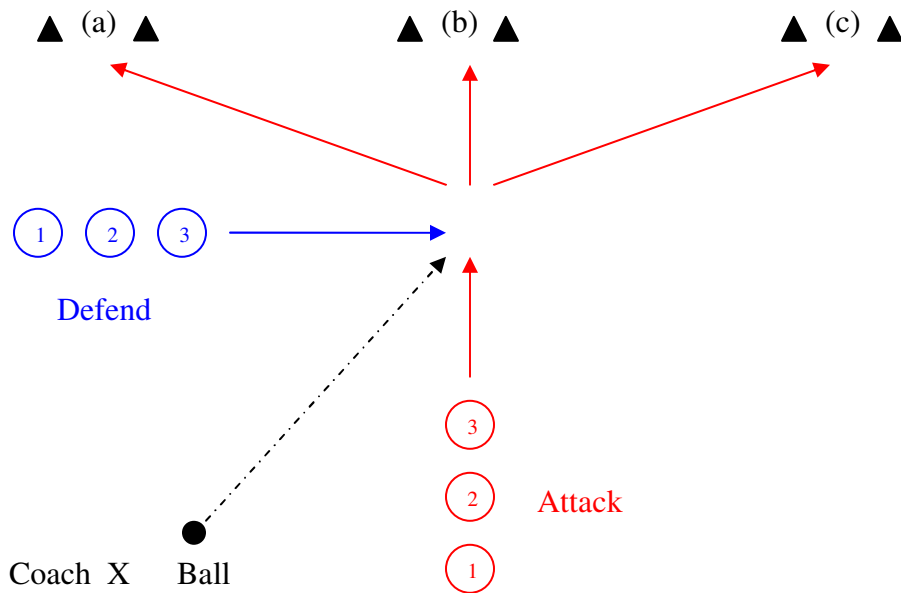
3 v 2 DEFENDING

Markers are set 5m apart. Forward 1 moves to position 2 and cuts in, Forward 2 moves to position 3 and cuts in, Forward 3 moves to position 4 and cuts in. Defender 1 moves to position 2 and cuts in, Defender 2 moves to position 3 and cuts in, both defend. This can be run on 2 x 2 with Coach providing ball or 3 on 2 to provide positioning of Defenders to jockey forwards away from scoring zone or to force shot for point.



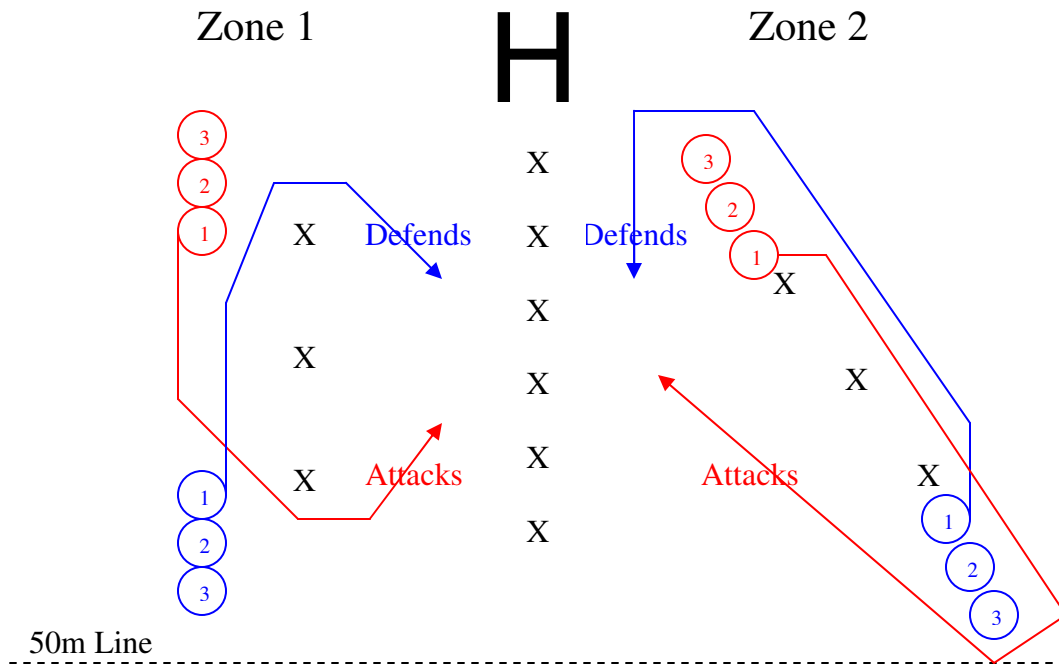
3 No. gates are set up using cones (a), (b) and (c) below. Forwards face cones 30m out, in single file without ball. Defenders are placed in row at right angles to Forwards 20m from cones. Coach passes ball into middle section for Forward to win and Defender to deny possession, or dispossess if Forward wins ball, and to prevent Forward moving through either 3 zones.

This can be developed with Coach calling a zone rather than allowing choice for Forward. It can also be developed with Defender passing ball to Forward in the first instance and defending thereafter.

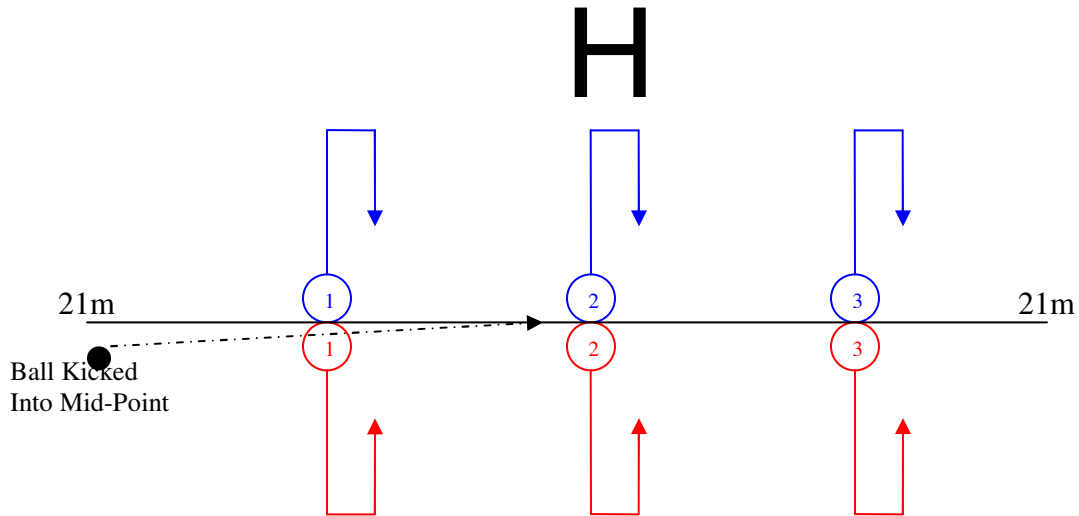


Markers are placed inside the “50” area to form two zones. Cones are placed in a straight line 20m apart in one zone. Forwards run with ball around the Defenders marker and attack.. The Forward cannot shoot until he passes the midway marker. Defenders run around Forward marker to defend.

In the second zone, cones are placed on an angle 20m apart, and the same principle applies. In both instances, the Forward cannot shoot until they pass the mid-point. This prevents early shot and allows tackler opportunity to pressurize forward.



3 Defenders and 3 Forwards line up on 21m line, 5m apart, in front of goal. Defenders face goal and Forwards face “50”. On 1st whistle from Coach, Defenders run towards goals, Forwards run towards “50”. On 2nd whistle, both turn and sprint back to starting point. Coach throws ball into central area to be won by Defender and distributed or to be won by Forward to score. Defenders are coached in face-on tackle and man-to-man marking rather than marking in lanes as starting position.



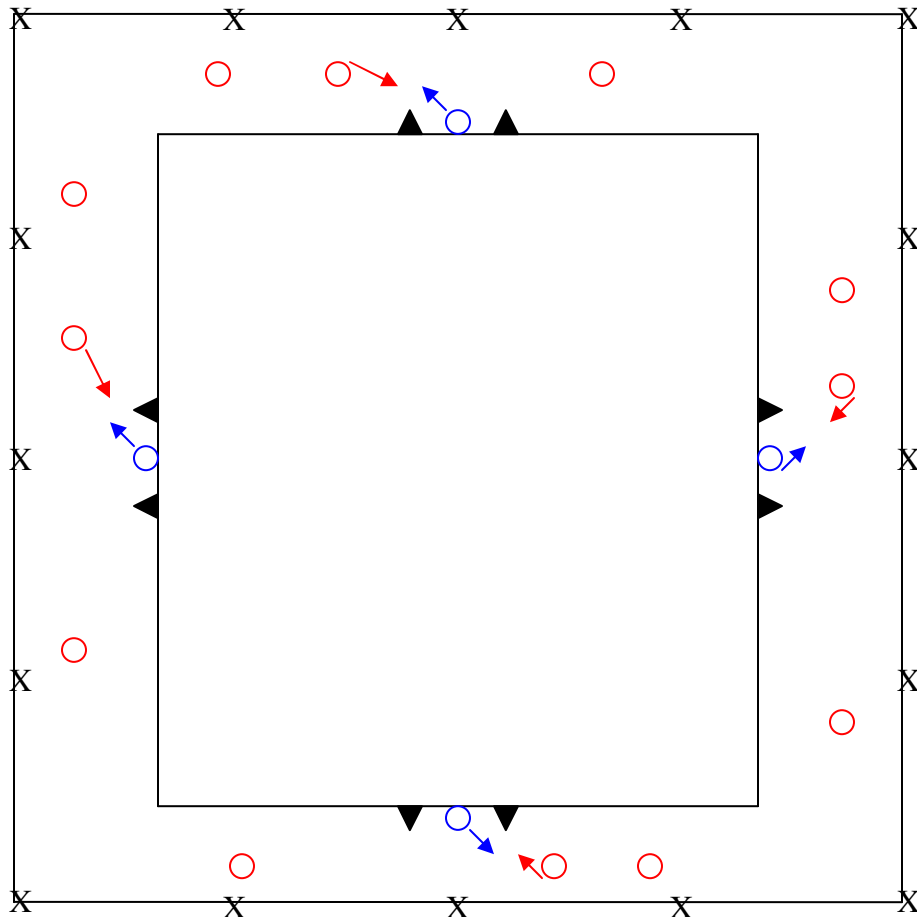
SMALL SIDED GAME

Markers are placed to form 2 grids. An inner grid 40m² and outer grid 50m².

Cones are placed to form four gates 3m apart along sides of inner square. 4 Defenders are placed between the gates and they become “gatekeepers”. Remaining players are given a ball and continuously move around outer zone. The objective of the game is for players to move through the gate with “gatekeeper” applying principles of defending to prevent access.

Only 1 attacker with ball can attack “gatekeeper” at any one time. Coaching points for tackle must be observed and player reminded of same. Variation on this small sided game would be to reverse with players on inside having to force their way into outer zone through gates.

Gatekeepers should be rotated and players who move through gate should continue to move with ball around zone while other players move out or in of zones.

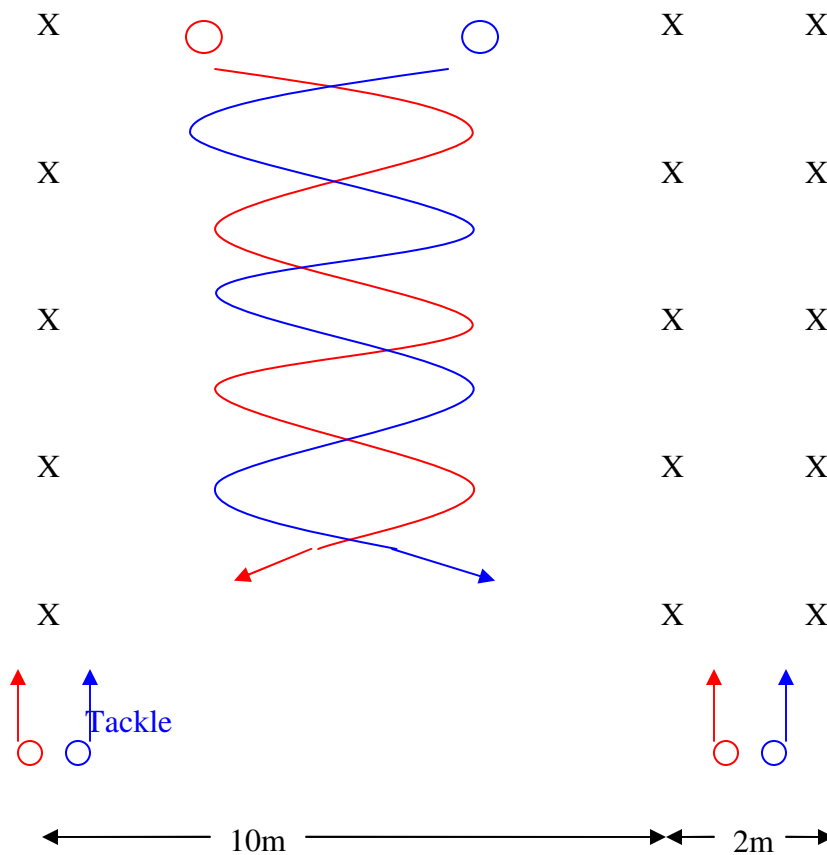


Two Channels are provided with 2m distance and 10m distance apart.

Players are in pairs side by side along one line of markers. Player A with ball must run in straight line along markers. Player B must tackle with correct side, in that if Defender is on right side, right hand tackle, if player crosses to left side, then left hand tackle must be utilized with correct alignment of feet and body.

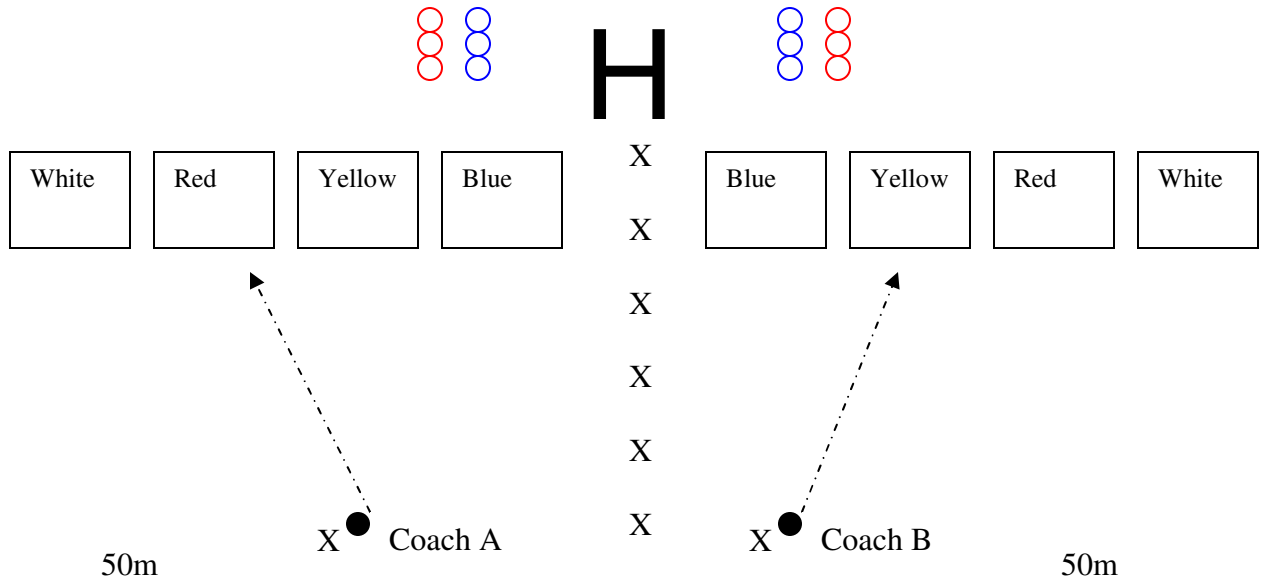
Players then move into 10m zone and ball handler is encouraged to cross right and left to allow for change of foot and change of hand for tackle.

Exercise is moved into narrow channel and players must not move out space. This encourages tighter marking, tighter tackling with Coach emphasizing correct technique for body, feet, hand and head.

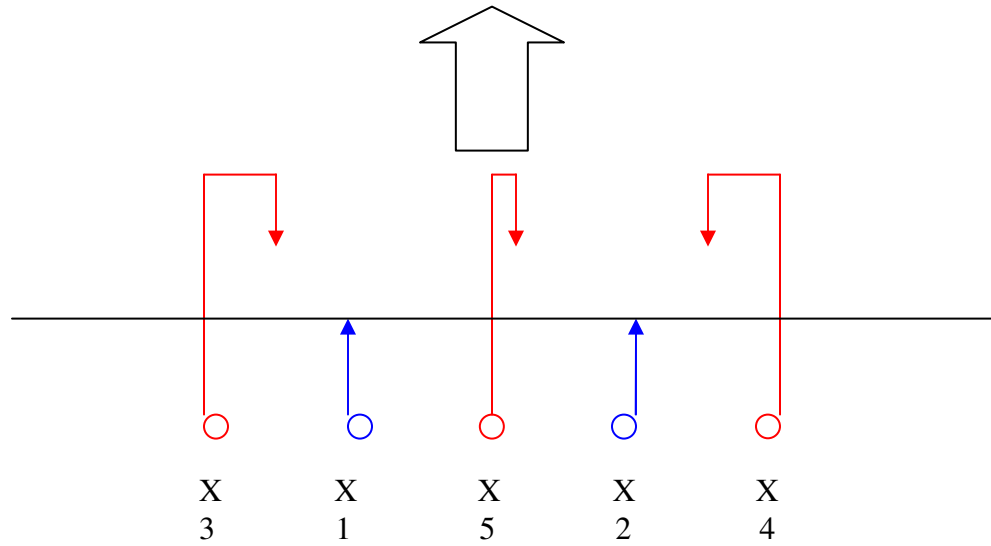


Utilising area up to “50” zone, Coach divides area into 2 sectors. Forwards and Defenders are placed behind endline facing out and 4 coloured zones are placed 14m out in front of them. The Coach who is positioned on the 50m line, calls a colour zone and kicks ball towards same. The Forward must win ball with Defender marking to deny possession or if won, to tackle player on the ball.

This allows for 2 Coaches to use 2 zones. At the conclusion of the drill, both are brought together with 2 v 2. Drill can also be used for shooting exercise for forwards.



5 players form line 2m apart. Defenders are in positions 1 and 2, Forwards are in positions 3, 4 and 5. Players run forward at speed with Defender 1 passing to 2. Defender 2 passes to Forward 3 and both Defenders 1 and 2 stop to become tacklers. Forward 3 then passes to Forward 4 who passes to Forward 5. All three then turn to become 3 Forwards attacking 2 Defenders.



Players are in line facing across pitch. Player 1 solos ball and places it 5m out. Player 2 runs to ball, picks up same and lays off a pass to player 3. Player 1 then tackles player 3 who having passed Defender, sets down ball and becomes tackler. This exercise is worked across pitch and back to allow for repeat tackles for all 3 players.

