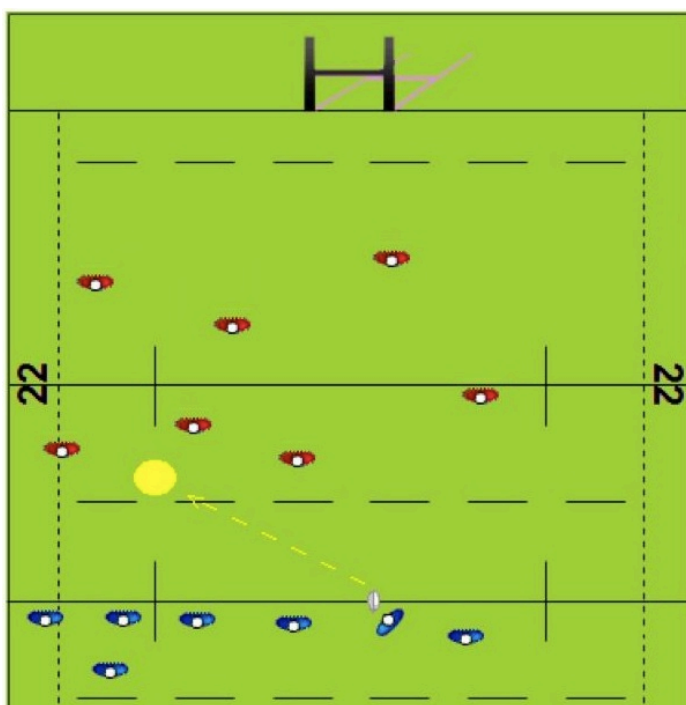


Sevens

Kick off tactics for 7s rugby

Sevens rugby is all about possession. When you kick off you should try and keep possession of the ball. If the opposition aren't covering an area and you think one of your player's can get the ball kick it into the space. But if you're playing a good team that are covering the field reasonably well recommend the following kick off to give you the best chance of retaining the ball.

The illustration below shows how the team should line up if you're kicking left.

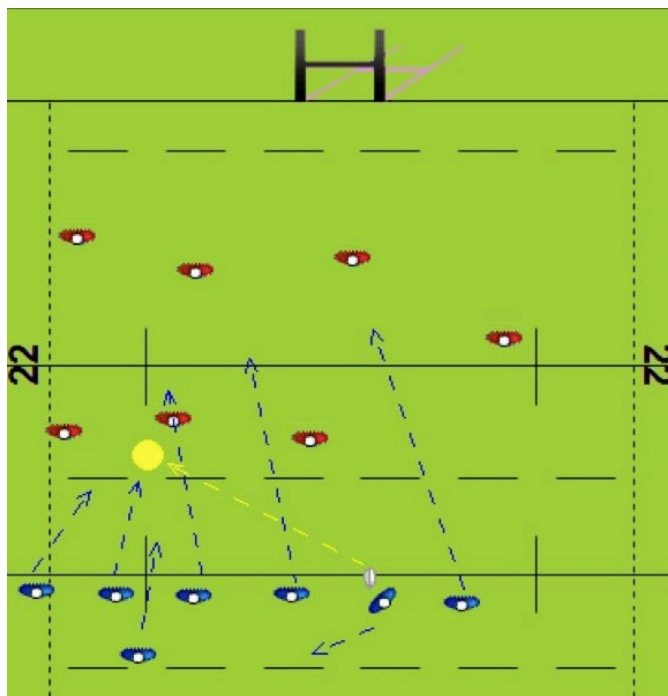


All the team should line up on the left of the kicker except the winger. The three forwards should be positioned on the far left so they are the shortest distance from where the ball will land, the scrum half just behind them. Kick the ball the distance and height to give your forwards the best chance of challenging for the ball and pressuring the opposition. This would normally be short and high as shown below by the yellow circle, but you could try long or kicking to a specific player depending on where the weaknesses are in the opposition.

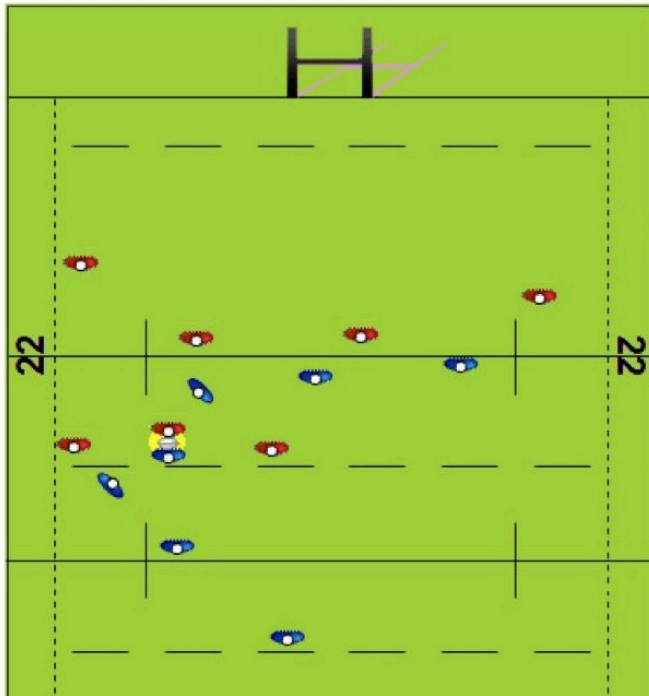
When you kick off the forwards should aim to get one player beyond the ball to intercept the opposition if they try to tap the ball back. This could be any of the forwards depending on where the ball lands so it's important that the forwards talk to each other as they run, letting each other know what role they are taking. The player beyond the ball should also get in the way of the opposition scrum half making it as difficult for them as possible pressuring

them if they get the ball. One forward should compete for the ball in the air and one should stay behind this player providing support if the ball is tapped back or the player takes contact.

They should also be aware of any threat from the opposition on the blind side of where the ball lands pushing out to cover this area if the opposition manage to get a pass away. The scrum half should be behind the competing forwards so they can tap or pass the ball back to them. If the ball is passed back to the scrum half they should have support from the kicker who drops back after kick off, or be able to hold the ball until the rest of the team drops back in support.



The backs should push up into the oppositions line as shown in illustration entitled step 3, so they can intercept or stop any passes. This will put maximum pressure on the opposition preventing them passing the ball or supporting each other. The kicker dropping back after kick off should adopt the sweeper role.



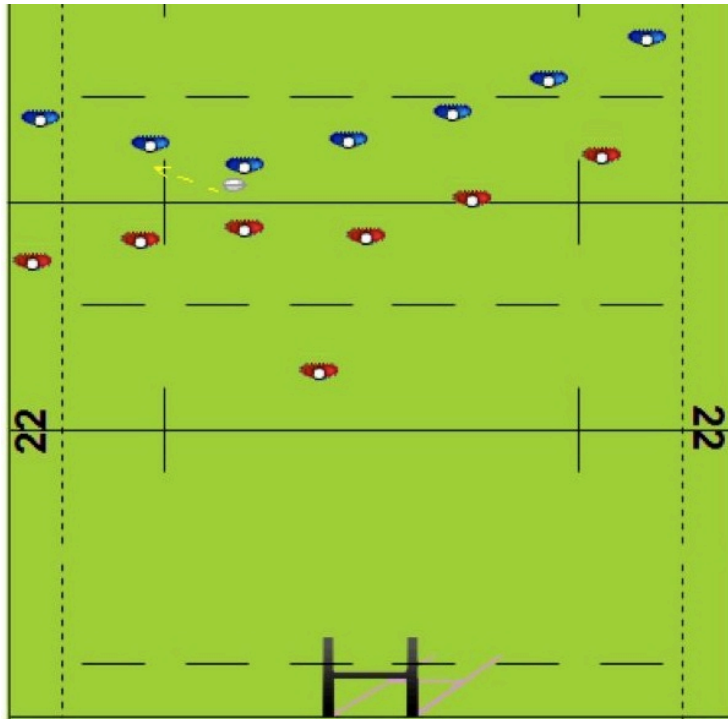
Tactics for defending in 7s rugby

The main concept of defending is to create a barrier with your players that prevents the opposition from scoring. As there is so much space in sevens it can be a difficult task, but by adopting the technique below you should be able to stop the opposition from breaking through your line.

The defensive line should consist of 6 players in the front line and 1 player behind sweeping. The sweeper should be close enough to prevent the opposition chipping the ball over the first line of defence and far enough away to control the front line ordering players to fill any gaps. The front line should work in 3's, constantly aware of where the team mate to the left and right is and who they are covering.

As there are only 6 players in the front line they need to be constantly moving to cover the 7 opposition players. If the ball is passed one way, the team should drift to mark each player along the line the ball is being passed. Then move back the other way if the ball is passed in the other direction.

The sweeper should track the ball as it moves through the opposition's hands staying on the inside of the player with the ball. This will help if a player breaks through the defensive line as the sweeper will be able to use the touchline to close the attacking player's space. If a player breaks through the line it's important the sweeper controls the other defenders telling them which attacking players to pick up to help prevent a try. It's no use every player trying to tackle the man with the ball if he can simply pass to a supporting player for an easy try. The sweeper should try and shepherd the ball carrier to where they want them to go directing his teams mate which player they need to cover.



Retaining the ball in 7s rugby:

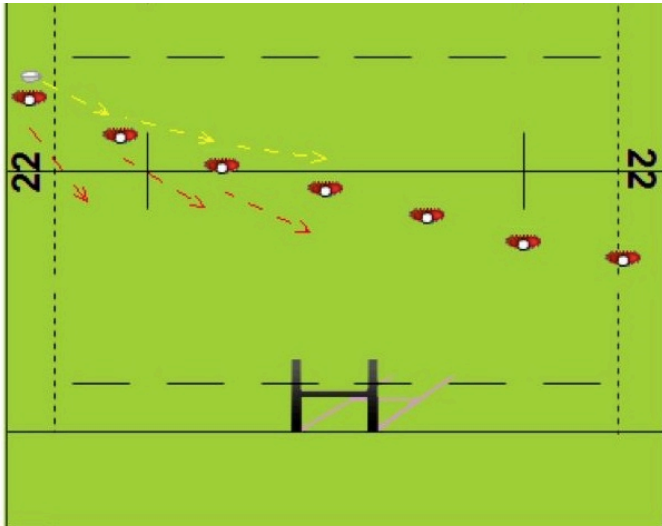
The pull out

It's very important in sevens rugby that your team is comfortable with the ball. This means that they are able to pass the ball through the team without getting themselves under pressure or losing the ball. In sevens rugby it's easier to attack than defend and by just keeping the ball will help you wear the opposition down and help your own team recover.

Start with your players in a line across the width of a pitch as they would in a sevens game. Start with the ball at one end getting your players to run forward with the ball before passing ensuring the ball is passed backwards.

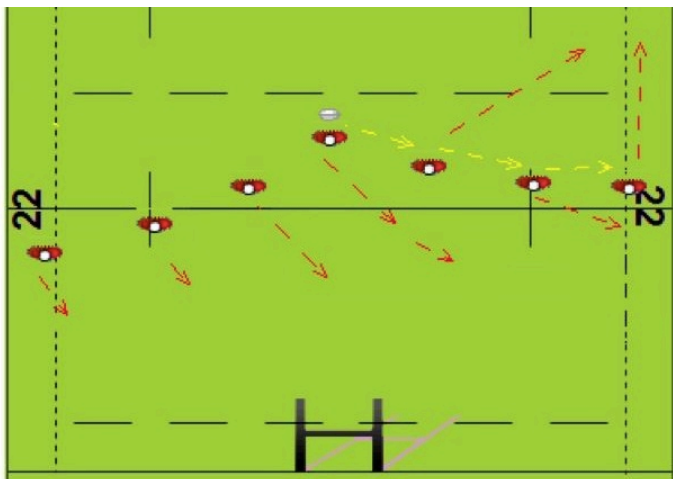
After the player with the ball has passed they should drop back following their pass so they are in a position for the receiving player to pass back to them. This also means that if the player receiving the ball gets tackled they are close enough to help ruck or wrestle for the ball to keep possession.

It is the player's responsibility who has passed the ball to protect the player receiving the ball. When the next player passes they in turn should drop back to support the player receiving the ball and so on as shown below in step 1.



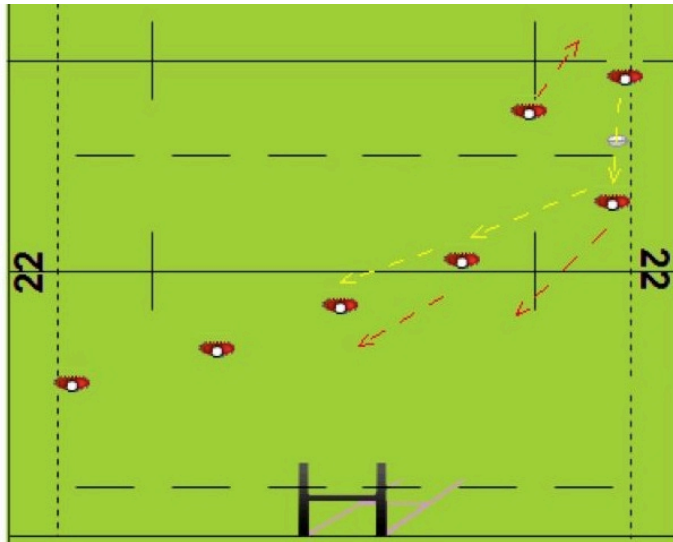
Once the team have mastered the pass and follow, try and progress to the pull out. In it's simplest form you pass the ball to the wing, the player inside the winger drops back behind the winger. This means the winger can pass the ball back to them if they're under pressure. The other players drop back to form a line to support the player inside the winger who has dropped back.

This allows the winger to probe for a possible gap in the oppositions defence with the option of passing back to the player behind them and the ball can be moved along the line away from the oppositions pressure.



The next stage of this is to add a player running a hard line. This is particularly useful if the opposition are in your line preventing a pass. Or to ensure the opposition don't start creeping into your line. When you pass the ball to the wing the first player inside should drop back for the pull out pass. The second player inside should run a line for the wing to pop him the ball as shown in step 1 and 2 below. The player passing him the ball should follow the run providing support if the player needs to pass back or to win the tackle area.

The wing doesn't need to pass to the player on the crash as using this as a dummy run can also open holes in the opposition's defence. Again the rest of the team should line up from the player on the pull out reacting quickly to any break through of the opposition's defence.



The scrum

The scrum in sevens is made up of three players from each team and a scrum half who puts the ball in. This creates a great opportunity for both the offensive and defensive teams. Because of the number of players in the scrum it gives the offensive team more space for their players to attack. But it also gives the defensive team a chance to disrupt the offensive team's ball and gain possession.

On your put in (offensive team)

The most important thing is to keep possession. One of the key elements to help you keep possession is to control the stability of the scrum and with a firm base. The opposition may use a number of techniques to disrupt your scrum and it's worth reading the defensive section so you better understand what you may be up against. If you can keep the scrum tidy and hold a strong platform your scrum half will have an easier pass which will help you keep possession.

Putting the ball in

There are two options when putting the ball in the scrum, the ball needs to go down the middle of the channel formed by the two teams so any advantage you can take to ensure your hooker is ready will help. The first is to put the ball in as soon as the players engage. The opposition hooker might not be ready giving your player a free strike. The other option is to wait for your player to tap to signify he is ready.

On the oppositions ball (Defensive team)

The goal of the defensive team is to make things difficult for the opposition, hopefully enough to cause them to lose possession by stealing their ball from a knock on or infringement. There are various ways for achieving this including the pressure from your scrum half or one of the following;

Wheeling the scrum

By coordinating your players to push up on one side and give ground on the other, the scrum will rotate left or right. Moving the scrum in a particular direction could create a difficult pass for their scrum half and give your scrum half a greater chance of disrupting the pass. For example if all the offensive team are lined up on the left and you wheel the scrum right the scrum half will have a harder pass and be exposed to your scrum half.

Crabbing

Mainly used in 15's but if all players in the scrum from your team take a step left or right your scrum will rotate creating the same affect as above.

Line Out techniques in sevens rugby

The line out in sevens normally consists of 3 forwards from each team and a scrum half. One player throws the ball into the line, one player jumps for the ball and the other two players support the jumper. The player jumping for the ball should catch the ball and pass it back to the player that threw it in as they run round to pass to the backs.

There aren't many line outs in sevens as the game is more about possession then territory but you can expect to have a couple during a game. As a result you probably won't have a specialist player to throw the ball in. It's best to play to your strengths, remember that the player throwing in will probably have to pass a long pass to the backs, so you might find it better for your scrum half to play this role. The important thing is they throw the ball in straight and can get it away quickly. If they threw it in underarm it doesn't matter as long as you get the ball back.

The next most important player is the jumper. They should be a good ball winner in the air and a size which means the other forwards can support the player safely.

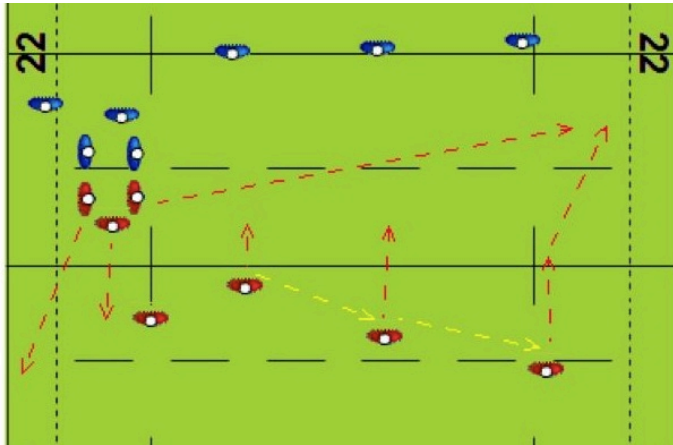
To set the line the two forwards should stand parallel to the player throwing in as shown below. You want to make it difficult for the opposition to predict where the ball will be thrown in, so I'd advise the jumper starts outside the line and enters to be in front of the opposition jumper. As the jumper enters the line they should squat jump, inline with the supporting players. This will give

the forwards chance to set themselves in position to support the jumper. The supporting players should stand with both feet and hips square in the direction of the player to be lifted.



Wait till the jumper is reaching the top of their jump and is ready for the pass. The player throwing the ball should then run round to catch a pass and then pass the ball out to the backs.





Sevens Rugby Tournament Warm up and Cool Down Advice

A tournament can be a long day and it's important to insure you are as ready for the first game as the last. If there are long breaks between games players often stiffen and run the risk of injury. To help prevent this I've outlined a warm up for a day at a tournament.

You will also need to bear in mind your food and liquid intake during the day. This is personal preference; some players will want minimal food in their stomachs for playing where as others will need more. But it's good advice for all players to eat a light but substantial meal the night before that includes carbohydrates. Then snack through the day with bananas or other light carbohydrates when there are sufficient breaks between games. Drink lots of water, sugar drinks can help but make sure you don't dehydrate.

Warm up for the first game

Part 1 (10 mins) It's good to build up slowly, so engage all your muscles with a light jog. For this first part you don't need to run as a team, but the players should stay reasonably close together.

After five minutes start stretching with short jogs between your stretches. For example stretch your left calf then right then jog for 5 -10 paces. Use slow static stretches with holds of 5 seconds then increasing the time until you can feel the muscle relaxing. Use which ever order you prefer but I'd recommend starting with your ankles working up your leg, back shoulders and neck.

Part 2 (10 mins) At this point I'd recommend coming together as a team to build up the intensity of exercises till players reach their full pace. For this you could mark out an area for players to run shuttles, play some light touch, handling drills or games to encourage movement. Break at regular intervals to perform some dynamic stretches such as leg swings, squats and press ups. Build up the intensity and ensure players aren't pushing themselves too hard until most of the dynamic stretches are complete.

Part 3 (5 mins) Use this period to run through your pull out techniques and defensive patterns to ensure you are comfortable in open play. Run some game situations with your starting team and substitutes running as opposition. If you need to run through your lineout or scrum this would be a good time.

Part 4 (5 mins) Run some high intensity drills to encourage footwork before the game. You could use ladders, gates or just run one-on-ones against each other (touch not contact) in a confined channel.

After a game

After a game your legs will be full of lactic acid, it's important to remove this so you can be ready for the next game. I'd recommend lying on your back shacking or cycling your legs for a few minutes while the team coach or manager gives their debrief. You could do this on your own (known as dead ants) or in pairs with one player on their back while the other stands holding the player on the floors legs giving them a gentle shake.

After a few minutes of this take a gentle jog performing long static stretches in regular intervals.

Before the next game

The warm up routine before the next game will depend on how long you have. If you have less then 30 minutes you'll only get a few minutes after your warm down before you have to start again if you have over an hour you might need a light jog to ensure your muscles don't stiffen before your warm up.

Less then 30 minutes between games

If you have less then 30 minutes between games your muscles will still be warm from the previous game but it's important you carried out a proper warm down. This is probably the most important thing to ensure you're ready for the next game along with taking on fluids.

Most teams use the tournament to gage when they should warm up. As a rule you should start warming up before the start of the game before yours. This will give you 14 minutes, but you might need more time to work on any weaknesses from the previous game. Start with a light jog with static or gentle dynamic stretches for 3 – 5 minutes. Move onto some handling drills or drills that focus on any weaknesses highlighted from the previous game (5 mins). Finish with high intensity footwork drills as in part 5 of the first game warm up.

Longer the 1 hour between games

The risk with a long break between games is players can get stiff from not moving around. To reduce this I'd recommend carrying out Part 1 of the first game warm at least 30 minutes before you start the warm up for the next game.

This is low intensity but gets the muscles moving to reduce the chance of them getting stiff.

Then follow the warm up routine from the above session entitled 'less then 30 minutes between games' increasing the period of time for static stretches and so increasing the total warm up period for at least 20 minutes.

Drop Kicks

The drop kick is a major feature of sevens rugby. It's used to start the game and re-start a game after a try. As a result you can expect more kick off's then any other set play. This shows how important this element of the game can be, a good drop goal kicker can mean the difference between winning and loosing a game.

Place your hands either side of the ball. Your hands should be pointing down with finger tips just below the middle of the ball as shown in the illustration below.



Try and target a point roughly 5 meters past where you intend the ball to land. Focusing on this should help clear your mind of distractions and help you concentrate on your kick. Your looking to take 1 or 2 steps before kicking so judge your distance behind the line so your striking the ball just behind the line.



Hold the ball straight out in front at arms length as shown below, pointing your body roughly towards the corner flag. Take a step with your left foot planting a firm stance to provide a strong base for your kick. As you plant your foot release the ball from your outstretched arms. Aim for the ball to bounce 1 foot in front of your left boot.



As you drop the ball pick your right foot back, point your foot and strike through the ball, keeping your head down and body weight over the ball. Think about your target and concentrate on the follow through.



As you follow through keep your balance on your left foot light, adjusting position to control your right leg swinging through. Your right leg should act as a pendulum similar to a golf swing so the weight of your body swings through the ball. Don't try and force the kick the power will come from perfecting your technique.

