

# Leinster Rugby

*Coaching Through the Game*

**Sample Game-Based Activities**



FROM  
THE  
GROUND  
UP

## CORE 4

### Catch & Pass

Reach to receive  
Keep hips square  
Ball waist height  
Finished hands to target

### Ball Carry

Ball in two hands  
Accelerate into space  
Ball away from defender  
Fight through contact

### Tackle

Sight the target  
Chop feet & get foot close  
Keep hips & shoulders square  
Wrap arms & legs alive

### Continuity

Feet, fight, finish  
Keep ball alive - pre or post contact  
See the pass to support player

## CHALLENGE CORE 4 THROUGH GAMES

### Attack

- Are players catching ball early and moving ball across body?
- Are ball carrier's using effective evasion techniques?
- Are the attack looking to play pre/during/post contact?
- How do close support players need to react to ball carrier?

### Defence

- Are defenders 'hips focused'?
- Are defenders able to change their foot & head position based on direction of ball carrier?
- Are defenders chopping their feet and able to dictate where ball carrier should go?
- Shoulders turned?

# CORE BASE RULES

These core rules are used to **develop good habits** in training and **promote those habits** when players are **in matches**.

These core rules **remain the same** throughout all games.

**1**

## Ball Carrier – Pre-Contact

**Ball Carrier Must Take the Ball Moving**

### Why?

This is to promote players working early off the ball to be in a good position when they are on the ball

**2**

## Tackler

**ALL Touches Must be 2 Handed on Shorts**

### Why?

This is to promote defenders shutting down the BC's space and lower their body height in the 'contact' area

**3**

## Ball Carrier – Pre-Contact

**Ball Carrier must look to avoid contact while still going forward**

### Why?

This is to promote players attacking space and avoiding defenders while trying to keep ball alive

**4**

## Ball Carrier – When Touched/Tackled

**When touched/tackled, Ball Carrier must fall forward then recoil to place**

### Why?

This is to promote the Ball Carrier to be positive and fight through contact and not stop at the point of contact

If Players fail to demonstrate these 4 Core Rules in any game

Sanction = Turnover



# CHANGING THE PICTURE – SLIDING SCALE APPROACH

Using these three **Guiding Principles** of **Pitch Size**; **Player Numbers**; & **Rule Modifications**; you can change the focus of any game, to **increase** or **decrease** the **challenge**, which will alter your **players' responses** and encourage them to use **different skills** or to **interact differently** with their teammates

## Decrease Space

- Decrease Passing
- Increase Contact
- Increase Evasion



## PITCH SIZE

## Increase Space

- Decrease Contact
- Increase Passing
- Increase Spatial Awareness

## Decrease Numbers

- Increase Execution of Core Skills
- Builds confidence



## PLAYER NUMBERS

## Increase Numbers

- Decrease Skills Touches
- Increases Tactical Awareness

## 1. Change the Scoring System

## 2. Change the Scoring Zone

## RULE MODIFICATIONS

*Use your imagination along with these simple guides to change the Rules of the Game and see what effect that has on your players responses*

## 3. Change the Scenario

## 4. Use a Superpower

## MIS-MATCH BIB TOUCH

## ATTACK FOCUS

### GAME DESCRIPTION

This is a touch game played with two teams with equal numbers. On each team half the players are in bibs and the other half are without. The players in bibs may only defend players in bibs. Non-bibs can only defend non-bibs. Normal touch rugby rules apply.



## FROM THE GROUND UP

### GAME PURPOSE

Why Play?

Encourages attack to scan and identify mis-matches on the defence.

How?

Communicating mismatches and self organization. Loose your marker and strike where its on.

### CHANGING THE PICTURE

- Reduce the number of bibs per team.
- Introduce a different colour bib that if in possession has to be touched by 2 defending players
- Overload the numbers in attack.

### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- Are the players realigning and looking for mismatches?
- Are the players trying to manipulate the defenders, so they have an overload in attack with the constraints of the game?
- Are the attack effective in reloading and changing their point of attack based on how the defence are positioned?

### COACHING NOTES

Can you see

- Players actively scanning and problem solving?  
Attackers identifying & communicating mismatches and/or space?
- Effective passing to take opportunities?

## MIS-MATCH BIB TOUCH

### GAME DESCRIPTION

This is a touch game played with two teams with equal numbers. On each team half the players are in bibs and the other half are without. The players in bibs may only defend players in bibs. Non-bibs can only defend non-bibs. Normal touch rugby rules apply.



## FROM THE GROUND UP

### CHANGING THE PICTURE

- Reduce the number of bibs per team.
- Introduce a different colour bib player whom if makes a touch wins a turnover
- Overload the numbers in attack.

### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- Are defenders actively communicating as to not bunch together?
- Is there an even spread of Bibs/Non-Bibs based on what the attack are showing them?
- Are the defence all Going Forward as one line?
- Are players showing good Core 4 attributes...?

## DEFENCE FOCUS

### GAME PURPOSE

Why Play?

Encourages defenders to stay connected, identify the threats ahead of them and reorganise.

How?

Players to communicate & scan in defence and organize their connections and spacings.

### COACHING NOTES

Can you see

- Players actively scanning and problem solving?
- Defenders identifying and communicating threats?
- Defenders applying pressure on the attack by Going Forward?

## TRAMLINER TOUCH

## ATTACK FOCUS

### GAME DESCRIPTION

This is a touch game with two teams of equal numbers. The game is designed to encourage the attack to play with more width by having extra points for scoring in the 'tramlines' (5m from each sideline) Defenders can only enter the tramlines when the ball enters this zone.



## FROM THE GROUND UP

### GAME PURPOSE

Why Play?

Encourages attack to identify and take advantage of space on the wings.

How?

Through effective passing, straight-line running and preservation of 'good space' on the wings.

### CHANGING THE PICTURE

- Condition one attacker to be in the tramlines at all times.
- Encourage cross field kick.
- Change the scoring systems.

### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- Are the players focused on keeping their width?
- Do the players recognize the benefits of the constraints of the game?
- Are the attack actively reloading and realigning?
- Are they catching and passing while keeping their hips square?

### COACHING NOTES

Can you see

- Players actively scanning and problem solving?
- Effective passing to take opportunities?
- Players fixing defenders and maintaining the space outside for the attacker in the Tramline zone?



## TRAMLINER TOUCH

### GAME DESCRIPTION

This is a touch game with two teams of equal numbers. The game is designed to encourage the attack to play with more width by having extra points for scoring in the 'tramlines' (5m from each sideline). Defenders can only enter the tramlines when the ball enters this zone.

### CHANGING THE PICTURE

- Condition one attacker to be in the tramlines at all times.
- Encourage cross field kick.
- Change the scoring systems.



## FROM THE GROUND UP

### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- Are players numbering up and scanning?
- Is the backfield covered and scanning for the wide threats?
- What's the communication like from defenders?
- What's the tackle selection like and reload to feet/counter ruck?

## DEFENCE FOCUS

### GAME PURPOSE

Why Play?

Encourages defenders to stay connected, move as a unit and apply a 'numbers down' system.

How?

By keeping tight in the middle of the pitch and forcing attack to 'go around' and use touchline as an extra defender.

### COACHING NOTES

Can you see

- Players actively scanning and problem solving?
- Defenders applying pressure on the attack by Going Forward?
- Defenders reading the play?
- Defenders with appropriate spacing and reacting once the ball is moved to the tramlines?



## TWO – PASS TOUCH

## ATTACK FOCUS

### GAME DESCRIPTION

This is a touch game played with two teams with equal numbers. There is a minimum 2 pass rule in operation. Players need a pass from whoever is in the SH position to a first receiver and another pass. More than 2 passes is permitted & encouraged.



## FROM THE GROUND UP

### GAME PURPOSE

**Why Play?**  
Encourages attack to identify and take advantage of space on the wings.

**How?**  
Through effective passing, straight-line running and preservation of 'good space' on the wings.

### CHANGING THE PICTURE

- Instead of going to ground on second touch – encourage the offload, turnover for not keeping ball alive.

### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- Are the receiver's checking for opportunities in attack themselves?
- How are the players positioning and repositioning themselves?
- What are the support lines like ?
- Are the players trying to maintain continuity with footwork and channel support?

### COACHING NOTES

- Can you see
- Sufficient depth to enable the attack to execute a minimum of 2 passes?
  - Attack displaying the appropriate width and depth to enable the catcher receive and fix defenders and make the correct decision to run/pass?

## TWO - PASS TOUCH

### GAME DESCRIPTION

This is a touch game played with two teams with equal numbers. There is a minimum 2 pass rule in operation.

Players need a pass from whoever is in the SH position to a first receiver and another pass. More than 2 passes is permitted also.



# FROM THE GROUND UP

## DEFENCE FOCUS

### GAME PURPOSE

Why Play?

Encourages defenders to stop watching the rucks and scan across the attacking line.

How?

By being organized in defence and aware of threats..

Set up nominations line speed and tackle tech.

### CHANGING THE PICTURE

- Instead of going to ground on second touch – encourage the offload, turnover for not keeping ball alive.

### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- Are the players nominating their roles D1, 2,3 etc?
- Are tacklers making effective tackles and testing the breakdown?
- Is their hold and fold policy working?
- Are they cutting off the offload options?

### COACHING NOTES

Can you see

- Defenders actively scanning and problem solving?
- Defenders effectively applying pressure and closing down the second pass?
- Effective alignment, realignment and urgency off the line?

## TABLE RUGBY

## ATTACK FOCUS

### GAME DESCRIPTION

This is a touch game played with overloaded attack in a small pitch. Defenders are 'fixed'/conditioned not to come past 5m line (from try line)

Overload attackers to defenders. Attackers attack line trying to score. Change defenders/attackers every 60 seconds.



## FROM THE GROUND UP

### GAME PURPOSE

Why Play?

Helps reinforce the principle of depth and encourages attack to hold their width based on a controlled defence.

How?

Through quick realignment/repositioning and scanning of attack opportunities.

### CHANGING THE PICTURE

- Widen/reduce the space
- Add/reduce defenders
- Introduce 'lives' or scoring system
- Introduce/reduce options to skip or switch

### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- Are the players realigning quickly and effectively?
- How is the attack players positioning effecting the attack?
- Are the key factors of good passing being executed?
- Are the players scanning for fatigued defenses?

### COACHING NOTES

Can you see

- Attackers actively moving to manipulate defenders to create space for themselves or other attackers?
- Use of footwork and change of direction to create space? Sympathetic passing required in a smaller area?

## TABLE RUGBY

### GAME DESCRIPTION

This is a touch game played with overloaded attack in a small pitch. Defenders are 'fixed'/conditioned not to come past 5m line (from try line)

Overload attackers to defenders. Attackers attack line trying to score. Change defenders/attackers every 60 seconds.



## FROM THE GROUND UP

### CHANGING THE PICTURE

- Widen/reduce the space
- Add/reduce defenders
- Introduce 'lives' or scoring system
- Introduce/reduce options to skip or switch

### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- What are the players connections like in defence?
- How is the communication and scanning of the defenders?
- What type of defence do you associate when we are down on numbers?

## DEFENCE FOCUS

### GAME PURPOSE

Why Play?  
Promotes 'Chain of 3' connections, connecting and scanning.

How?  
A high work rate that is under pressure from the attack.

### COACHING NOTES

- Can you see
- Can you hear defenders effectively communicating?
  - Connections in defence?
  - Defenders manipulating the attack with their choice of defence?



## TWO BALL TOUCH

## ATTACK FOCUS

### GAME DESCRIPTION

This is a touch game played with 2 even teams on a large pitch. Each team has a ball. Blue team play with 'blue ball', Red team play with 'red ball'. At any stage, the coach can call blue ball -blue team react and transition to attack with 'their ball'.



## FROM THE GROUND UP

### GAME PURPOSE

**Why Play?**  
Focuses on the alignment and realignment of attack and if they can organise to take advantage of weaknesses in the defence.

**How?**  
Transition game based on seizing opportunities from kick and turnovers.

### CHANGING THE PICTURE

- Breakdowns become 'live'.
- Increase attacking numbers.
- Change pitch size.

### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- Are the players working hard to realign and transition into attack?
- How are the players communicating opportunities?
- Pause the picture to emphasis and identify missed opportunities?
- Emphasise the importance of scanning and repositioning?

### COACHING NOTES

- Can you see
- Quick transitions between defence and attack?
  - Urgency to realign and fill the field?
  - Players staying in the game after line breaks?

## TWO BALL TOUCH

### GAME DESCRIPTION

This is a touch game played with 2 even teams on a large pitch. Each team has a ball. Blue team play with 'blue ball', Red team play with 'red ball'. At any stage, the coach can call blue ball -blue team react and transition to attack with 'their ball'.

### CHANGING THE PICTURE

- Breakdowns become 'live'.
- Increase attacking numbers.
- Change pitch size.



**FROM  
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### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- What is the transition of work rate from attack to defence?
- Are the players recognising quickly the threats?
- Ask the players about their positioning in defence from turnovers?
- Can you see too many players migrating to the ball?

## DEFENCE FOCUS

### GAME PURPOSE

**Why Play?**  
Focuses on the alignment and realignment of defence and if they can organise, connect and apply pressure.

**How?**  
Transition game with a high focus on scrambling in defence and be organized quickly.

### COACHING NOTES

- Can you see
- Quick transitions between attack and defence?
  - Players identify initial threat and organize numbers accordingly?

## RIVER GAME

### GAME DESCRIPTION

This is a touch game played with two teams of equal numbers. There are two ways to score points;

1-kick and land in the back field = 1 point

2-counter attack and score try = 3 points

If defending team catch kick on full, they score one point.

Defenders can only come forward to defend once attacking team run into the river.

If attackers are touched in possession of the ball, it is a turnover and ball must return to new attacking teams side of the river.



## FROM THE GROUND UP

## ATTACK FOCUS

### GAME PURPOSE

Why Play?

Encourages attack to scan and identify mis-matches & scoring opportunities based on the defence in front & backfield.

How?

Passing & kicking the ball to space. Positioning & repositioning and staying in the game. Counter attack & quick transition from defence to attack.

### CHANGING THE PICTURE

- Change the scoring system, nominate a 'rover' who is always on attack, condition type or height of kick, increase number of touches before turnover.

### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- Ask where is the space? How are we effecting the decision making?
- How is the players decision making based on the picture in front?
- What is the players work rate and anticipation like off and on the ball?
- What's is the fielding of the ball like? Why?

### COACHING NOTES

Can you see

- players identifying space and exploiting opportunities?
- players working off the ball?
- quick transitions between defense and attack?

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# FROM THE GROUND UP

## DEFENCE FOCUS

### GAME PURPOSE

Why Play?

Counter attack from defence. Covering pitch space & develop reaction times to minimise run, pass and kicking opportunities.

How?

Communicating and effective self organization. Front & backfield connections, regain ball and quick transition from defence to attack.

### CHANGING THE PICTURE

- Introduce points for good defensive decisions.
- Nominate a player on the defensive side that can defend both sides of the ball or wherever that player can be effective

### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- How many players in the front line and back field?
- Are we covering all spaces adequately with our player numbers?
- How are we judging the flight of the ball?
- Are we ready to transition/counter?

### COACHING NOTES

Can you see

- quick transitions between attack and defence?
- players repositioning in the front and back field?
- players reading the play and reacting accordingly?



## BACK TO BASE

### GAME DESCRIPTION

This is a touch game played with two teams with even numbers. There are coloured cone 'bases'. This is a start point (breakdown). The coach calls a colour, players react and give life to the ball, align, identify space and exploit.



### CHANGING THE PICTURE

- Breakdowns become 'live'
- Increase attacking phases
- Introduce more bases and or adapt the layout to present different pictures

### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- What is the reaction from the players on colour called?
- Life of the ball carry ,evasion, clean presentations?
- Are surrounding bases reloading with width on short and open side?
- Can we get a second line of attack with some players?

## ATTACK FOCUS

### GAME PURPOSE

**Why Play?**  
Encourages attack to scan and identify mis-matches & space on the defence. To give life and width both sides of the ball from source.

**How?**  
Reacting and realigning into effective positions to manipulate defence from source. Play to space and attack where it is on.

### COACHING NOTES

- Can you see
- quick transitions between defence and attack?
  - players identifying space and exploiting opportunities?
  - players working off the ball?

**FROM  
THE  
GROUND  
UP**

## BACK TO BASE

## DEFENCE FOCUS

### GAME DESCRIPTION

This is a touch game played with two teams with even numbers. There are coloured cone 'bases'. This is a start point (breakdown). The coach calls a colour, players react and defend the life to the ball, align, identify space and apply pressure.



## FROM THE GROUND UP

### GAME PURPOSE

**Why Play?**  
Encourages defence to scan, be effective & close down attacking space. To apply pressure on attack both sides of the ball from source.

**How?**  
Identifying mismatches and react & realign before the attack, staying connected & go forward in appropriate way base dependent.

### CHANGING THE PICTURE

- Breakdowns become 'live'
- Tackler plus one more player
- Introduce more bases and or adapt the layout to present different pictures

### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- What is the reaction from the players on colour called?
- Life of the ball carry, evasion clean?
- Are surrounding bases reloading with width on short and open side?
- Can we get a second line of attack with some players?

### COACHING NOTES

Can you hear defenders effectively communicating off the ball?

- Can you see
- players identify initial threat and organize numbers? accordingly both sides of each base?
  - players actively scanning and problem solving?

## THE LANE GAME

## ATTACK FOCUS

### GAME DESCRIPTION

This is a touch game played with two teams with even numbers. Attack has 5 lives (balls) and can score different points depending on how close they score to the posts. Set up 5 (or more) channels & a scoring system for example middle channel being worth most points or vice versa.



**FROM  
THE  
GROUND  
UP**

### GAME PURPOSE

**Why Play?**  
Encourages tactical decision making and strategy formulation. Attack to scan and identify mis-matches & space on the defence.

**How?**  
Communicating mismatches and realign & react before the defence, play to space and attack where its on, yet remembering the scoring system.

### CHANGING THE PICTURE

- Change the scoring system and or number of lanes
- Give a target or scenario to achieve
- If touched by 'superman' attacking team loose all points or a life

### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- Ask players to recognize the lanes and options available.
- Do we go through, over or around the players?
- We have 3 options Kick ,run or pass! Which one suits best?
- If we are down points what's the best way of scoring now?

### COACHING NOTES

- Can you see
- attackers actively trying to move and manipulate the defenders to create space for themselves or other attackers to score?
  - players using strategy to score in certain lanes?

## THE LANE GAME

### GAME DESCRIPTION

This is a touch game played with two teams with even numbers. Attack has 5 lives (balls) and can score different points depending on how close they score to the posts. Set up 5 channels & scoring system, middle channel being worth most points or vice versa. Defence win points for stopping the attack.

### CHANGING THE PICTURE

- Introduce/Change defensive scoring system to each lane
- Give a target or scenario to achieve
- If touched by 'superman' attacking team loose all points or a life



### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- Where are they trying to score?
- How might we stop them in this area of the field?
- Where are they strong at the moment?
- What do we not want to do here at this time or in this position?
- If we are up points what's the best way of defending now?

## DEFENCE FOCUS

### GAME PURPOSE

Why Play?  
Encourages defence to scan, position & reposition-in order to cover as much of the pitch as possible and reduce attacking scoring options

How?  
Working in chains of 3 across the pitch. Realign & React before the attack, defend from life of the ball & apply pressure.

### COACHING NOTES

- Can you see
- Players reacting quickly to get their defence set?
  - Are the players communicating spacing and connections?
  - Muscle in Speed outside as often as possible?

**FROM  
THE  
GROUND  
UP**



## POWERBALL

## ATTACK FOCUS

### GAME DESCRIPTION

This is a touch game played with two teams with even numbers.

2 touches are allowed

- 1sttouch = opportunity to pass
- 2ndtouch = a condition (i.e. kick/pop/offload/turnover)

1 player from each team is allowed to be offside or 1 player is always on attack and can be anywhere on the pitch eg. kick to him/her!



**FROM  
THE  
GROUND  
UP**

### GAME PURPOSE

Why Play?

Encourages both lateral and channel support, keeping the ball alive and decision making under pressure.

How?

Manipulation of front line of defence with adequate support to create line breaks, options both sides of ball carrier & other players holding width.

### CHANGING THE PICTURE

- Change the conditions and or player action on the second touch
- Introduce a range of Kicking options

### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- Ask players to recognize the lanes and options available.
- Do we go through, over or around the players?
- We have 3 options Kick ,run or pass! Which one suits best?
- If we are down points what's the best way of scoring now?

### COACHING NOTES

Can you see

- attackers actively trying to move and manipulate the defenders to create space for themselves or other attackers to score?
- Players using strategy to score in certain ways/areas?
- Quick transitions between defence and attack?

## POWERBALL

## DEFENCE FOCUS

### GAME DESCRIPTION

This is a touch game played with two teams with even numbers.  
2 touches are allowed

- 1sttouch = opportunity to pass
- 2ndtouch = a condition (i.e. kick/pop/offload/turnover)

1 player from each team is allowed to be offside or 1 player is always on attack and can be anywhere on the pitch eg. kick to him/her! Defence win points for stopping the attack.



## FROM THE GROUND UP

### GAME PURPOSE

Why Play?  
Variation of defensive scenarios, players preventing & defending line breaks in order to make good defensive decisions under pressure.

How?  
Variation of defensive set up in order to close down space & options for attack. Communicating mismatches & connecting to apply pressure.

### CHANGING THE PICTURE

- Change the defending player action's on the second touch
- A touch must be made by 2 players together -double tackle concept.

### CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- Ask players to recognize the lanes and defensive options available.
- Are we able to make double tackles to simulate turnovers?
- Are we scanning and communicating defensive weaknesses from back to front?
- If we are up points what's the best way of defending now?

### COACHING NOTES

- Can you see
- Players actively scanning and problem solving both in front and second line of defence?
  - Players working hard to get back and support second line?
  - Players applying pressure on both the ball carrier and supporting players?