Developing the Driving Maul and Defending the Driving Maul from a Lineout
Glossary of Italicised Words used in this Document

**Jumper**: player in a lineout who attempts to catch the ball

**Lifter**: player in a lineout who assists a jumper

**Ripper**: player who takes possession of the ball in a maul

**Ripping**: the process of taking possession of the ball in a maul

**Sacker**: a tackler in a lineout who drags the opposing jumper to the ground

**Sacking**: the process of dragging the opposing jumper to the ground in a lineout

**Correct Jumping Technique**: hands in picture frame (thumbs together and fingers spread) at chest height, with palms of the hands facing the line of touch. Jumper’s feet need to be pointing at 25 to 1 or 25 past 11 (clock face) depending upon the line of touch

**Rolling out of the maul**: players (numbered 5, 4, 8 and 2) detach themselves from the lineout and the jumper corkscrews through the maul, whilst the above players continue their forward momentum

**Cumberland Throw**: player grips the jersey of a jumper with the ball when he is back on his feet, then throws the jumper off balance and over his thigh to dump the jumper flat onto the ground
The driving maul from a lineout is one of the most powerful ways to move the ball forward in a simple and constructive manner and done properly, is difficult to stop. In this assignment I will discuss the following methods in relation to both developing and defending the driving maul.

It will be set out in sub headings as follows:

1. **Constructing the Maul from the Lineout**
   1.1 …with 2 lifters facing forward (page 4)
   1.2 …with 1 front lifter facing forward (page 5)
   1.3 …with 2 lifters facing backwards (page 7)

2. **Defending a Driving Maul**
   2.1 Destroying the Platform (page 10)
   2.2 Sacking (page 12)
   2.3 Driving the Jumper (page 14)
   2.4 Moving the Maul across the Field (page 14)
It is important to note, that in developing a driving maul and in defending a driving maul, each player has an important role to play, and that he/she is fully aware of what it involves. Furthermore, it is just as important to emphasise the basics of implementing good lineout skills through:

1. **Winning the ball** in the first instance.
2. Making sure *throwers, jumpers, lifters* and *rippers* constantly **practise the basic techniques** under all types of conditions.
3. Working the body into a **good driving position**
4. Using **powerful leg drives**.
5. **Reacting quickly** to all situations
6. **Keeping the maul straight**.

These six factors are fundamental in achieving success at any level of rugby union, whether in setting up a dynamic driving maul, or in being able to roll out of a maul when necessary, and finally, when effectively defending the opposition’s driving maul.

1. **Constructing the Maul from the Lineout:**

   1.1…with 2 *lifters* facing forward

Firstly, the ball must be won by Players numbered 5 or 6 (Diagram A). It is important that the *jumper* has the *correct technique* and communicates to the *lifters* (Players numbered 1 and 3, or 3 and 4) in Diagram A, when to ‘lift’, how long to ‘hold’ and when to ‘bring down’. From this point, both lifters step forward and face the opposition’s try line as seen in Diagram B.
It is important for both *lifters* to keep their hips square-on, only once the jumper is back on the ground. When ‘in the air’ they are facing each other. In order to gain forward momentum after the *jumper* has landed, each *lifter* must have his/her inside foot placed forward in front of the *jumper* (facing the opposition’s goal line). This is essential in order to create stability in driving the maul.

Setting the maul with both *lifters* facing forward can result in the maul being easily splintered, unless the *lifters* get into position quickly. However, when done properly, this is the most effective way of developing this momentum required for driving a maul.

1. **Constructing the Maul from the Lineout:**
   1.2 ...with 1 front *lifter* facing forward

As with the 2-*lifter* strategy, it is important to win the ball in the first instance. It is important that the *jumper* has the correct technique and communicates with the *lifters*. The *lifters* (Players numbered 1 and 3, or 3 and 4) must immediately shield the *jumper* with the player at the front of the lineout facing forward, as seen in Diagram C. (Player on right hand side as seen in Diagram C)
This is also an effective way to both establish momentum and to move the maul forward. However, it is invariably harder to splinter a maul if the players react quickly and place themselves in position readily.

If the above techniques are not successful, through the lifters failing to be quick enough to shield the jumper, or in their not having the strength to stabilise the maul, one can always resort to the next best option, which is the “rolling out” technique. This latter technique is not quite as effective, but it at least achieves stability within the maul. It does this by allowing the players to roll out and then to contribute to the forward momentum of the maul.

A coach who finds that the jumper is being sacked or the lifters being splintered and driven off the jumper, should exercise this useful option of stabilising the maul by getting the forwards to roll out of the maul and to move forward.
1. **Constructing the Maul from the Lineout:**

1.3 ... with 2 *lifters* facing backwards – thus enabling players to roll out of the maul.

As with the 2 forward-facing *lifter* strategy, it is important to win the ball in the first instance.

Once more, the *jumper* should have the correct technique and should communicate with the *lifters*. (Players numbered 1 and 3, or 3 and 4) must immediately shield the *jumper* with their backs to the opposition as seen in Diagram D.

![Diagram D](image)

The following then must occur in a systematic manner: Player numbered 4 comes in and rips the ball from the *jumper* as seen in Diagram E.
Then players (numbered 6 and 8) come in past Player numbered 4, leaving this Player numbered 4 at the back of the maul. In this way, the maul is kept straight and stabilised, through the strongly, low-packed body positions, as shown in Diagram F.
The hooker, (Player numbered 2), then joins in at the back and the ball is transferred to him from Player numbered 4, as seen in Diagram G.

Diagram G

The maul is then in a position to be edged forward and players can roll out of it – in a forward direction. All of these movements must be quick and the binds must be tight. It is important that this maul is narrow in width and that all players, apart from the three players forming the platform, (i.e. Players numbered 1, 5 and 3, or 3, 6 and 4), all have their hips square-on and their backs braced firmly. The correct depth and body positions can be seen in Diagram H.
Diagram H

The driving maul from a lineout can be used effectively anywhere on the field. A driving maul puts the defence under pressure, as the defence has to expend a great deal of energy in trying to slow it down.

2. **Defending a Driving Maul**

The first priority is to contest the possession. If and when the opposition secure possession, the team not in possession is then liable to defend the driving maul. This can obviously be done by ensuring participants have the correct techniques and reactions. If that fails, we must look at the following techniques to defend the maul:

All players, when defending the driving maul must react quickly with aggression, using powerful leg drives and low, packed-down body positions. This will form a barrage to ensure that the driving maul from the lineout is stopped, or sufficiently disrupted.
2. Defending a Driving Maul
   2.1 Destroying the Platform

When the decision is made not to compete for the ball, the defenders can then be in a position to splinter the opposition’s jumper from their lifters (the two Players labelled L as seen Diagram I). It is important that the defenders (Players numbered 1 and 3) start their defence by maintaining a strong, low, packed-down body position, as seen in Diagram I.

They must be determined to splinter or break the platform immediately the jumper returns to the ground. This will stop the maul from being developed. This is arguably the best way to stop the opposition. The defending drivers should make a quick decision as to which direction to drive the opposition’s maul.

Diagram J shows the lifter (the right-hand Player labelled L in Diagram I) being splintered from the jumper, by Player numbered 3.
2. Defending a Driving Maul

2.2 Sacking

This term is commonly used to describe one player from the defending team tackling the opposing jumper, which is legal, because a maul has not yet been formed. Just trying to grab the player and drag him to the ground can be ineffective, due to the weak, unbraced body position of the sucker, because, should the sucker miss the grips on the jersey, then no sack will result.

I suggest the sucker takes a grip on the jumper’s jersey and uses the combined momentum of his body and that of the jumper, to throw the jumper over his thigh and on to the ground. This move is commonly known as the Cumberland Throw, and is seen in Diagrams K, L and M. This technique will ensure the jumper is forced to the ground. In this way, a successful sack is achieved.
2. Defending a Driving Maul

2.3 Driving the Jumper

Driving the *jumper* directly backwards when his feet hit the ground, can be an effective way to stop the driving maul.

Once the *jumper* places his feet on the ground Players numbered 1 or 3 can then drive either forwards or sideways. This will help the defenders gain momentum in the drive. If done effectively, it will dislodge the attacking *lifters* and thus place the *jumper* in a strong position to complete the tackle. The *driver* can change his angle and move the *jumper* towards the sideline or into a desirable position.

2. Defending a Driving Maul

2.4 Moving the Maul across Field.

Moving the maul across field is another way of defending the driving maul. All of the above-mentioned techniques can be used, depending on the team’s strategy and the opposition’s strengths and weaknesses. Where the lineout takes place, there is usually a plan put in place as to which direction the maul should be moved. It is important that ineffective players either retreat, or peel off some 2 metres to the back of the maul, so as to be able to scan the situation before entering the maul in the correct place. They must use the correct body position and the powerfully aggressive leg drives, to move the maul in the most effective direction. This will disrupt the momentum of the opposition and thus hopefully gain the defenders an advantage.
Concluding Comments:

The driving mall, or the rolling out of a maul, or even, as with the less skilled players, the peeling-off of, and the re-entering into the maul, are all effective ways of moving the ball forward towards the attacking team’s goal line. It is important that each player knows his or her place when setting up the maul, apart from ensuring that the maul has a strong platform and depth. Defending the driving maul can be done by sacking the player, destroying the platform, driving the jumper backwards and by moving the whole maul across field. It is important to note that winning the opposition’s ball first, should be the prime objective.

The above-listed strategies outline how to set up a driving maul, how to roll out of a maul and how to defend a driving maul. The outcomes will be effective, only if the basics of the lineout are adhered to. To revisit these basics, one should bear in mind the following:

1. The team must **win the ball** in the first instance
2. Players must **react quickly** to the situation and pack down their bodies into a strongly-braced, low position of attack
3. All players must use a **powerful, aggressive leg drive**, in attack and in defence
4. Players must have a strategy and be **clear** in which **direction** they wish to move the maul - both in the attacking position and in the defensive position.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that the setting up of, or the defending of, a driving maul, can be executed in a number of ways depending upon the age, strength and skill of the players. It is important to develop the respective strategies peculiar to these situations, and to any other prevailing conditions. An innovative coach will need to continually develop strategies to keep pace with the ever-changing nature of the game.