The Benefits of a Good Scrum System and Following Proper Process

Introduction

The scrum is the mechanism or system used to begin play after a minor infringement. The two forward packs meet; the ball is placed between the two front rows, and then hooked for distribution by the number eight or half back. While this appears to be a simple process for restarting the game, it has become a major platform for both attack and defence, and in the modern game (especially 2006) provides a great opportunity – through the employment of various techniques – for one team to gain an advantage over the other (see Total Impact Method: A Variation on Engagement Technique in the Rugby Scrum; McCymont, Cron 2006).

Is the scrum a system? Does the scrum require an ‘all 8’ focus? I believe the scrum is an ‘all 8’ system because it relies on each component taking steps to achieve the optimum force and eventually a positive outcome. (See Clip 2) Conversely, if these steps are not followed, a negative outcome will occur. (See Clip 1.)

The Four Stages of a Good Scrum System

The four stages of the scrum system are:

- pre-set up;
- speed of engagement to middle;
- post chase;
- and reloading to a 120 degree optimum angle (and a combination of 9, 8 to 9, and/or 8 to 10 pass in an attacking strategy, and the 9, 7, 8, and 6 roles in defence strategy).

I would now like to objectively discuss in detail the steps of building a scrum, which requires a focus and purpose for each individual and a similar focus and purpose for ‘all 8’ combined.

I believe by following this process, your scrum will be a platform for better attack and defence. Coaches should be encouraged to follow this method and process, and improve an area of the game that often leaves people guessing on some of the decisions coming out of the mystery vault! More importantly, we need to encourage youngsters to take up a position in the scrum, and this will require parents having knowledge of, and taking comfort from, the safe preventative methods in the market place.

The Ten Steps towards Building a Scrum

1. Spines in Line

- The first most important element
- How do you achieve the Axis of the scrum? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
- Old way of Front 3 engaging before back 5 produced 446 power
- New way of back 5 with number 8 first exploding the front 3 in produced 930 power
2. Body Awareness
   - Heads – The head weighs on average 4.5 kgs; Correct angle determined by eye level as below; you can use the head and neck tension when activating core, right shoulder
   - Can use a harness to assists the players feel for correct positioning
   - Eyes – Crouch and hold with your eyes looking just above the sunglasses
   - Chin – No chin on chest – shorten your neck
   - Posture and tension – avoid round shoulders – neck tension – be proud
   - Back u – Pelvic tilt back gives you slight u - check hamstrings solidness
   - Hips 1st; knees 2nd
   - 120 degrees sit

3. Drills for skill acquisition
   - Core- Ups and Downs building functional core strength introducing a pass and then another ball
   - Extend – extended – caught up – and sink 1 v 1 drill
   - Catch up – chest to chest – feet on ground is power - catch up extend
   - Sit – sink to 120 degrees knee at strongest

4. Speed to engage
   - 2nd most important element
   - What makes you go forward?; Balance
   - Back 5 fire in Front 3
   - Eyes over centre line 1st – Move forward
   - Catch UP, Sit at 120 degrees knee at strongest
   - Why? Because they are likely to be at 90 degrees and will have to readjust
   - Can use a harness to assist player with the feel of going forward

5. Building the Scrum
   - Hooker set - ready for props – throw chest in front of knee – not too wide
   - ¾ set produces optimum forces
   - Down set - may be required because of a referees request but can imbalance the unit and therefore players being on balls of feet and at 120 degrees angles just prior to engage is critical
   - Locks coming in calling OPEN or a flick for prop to provide entry for the locks head and bicep curl
   - Number 8 – all weight on front foot, connect with square shoulders, head almost in hole for speed – fire them in
   - Flanker’s optimum step is 1,2 and sight your line and man

6. Balance
   - Just before engage
   - Make sure you are balanced forward for speed
   - Achieving tension with neck and head sideways and avoiding pushing forward to imbalance front 3

7. Channelling
   - 9 Coming in call to hooker; hooker decides on hook
   - Channel 1 hook with inside foot
   - Channel 2 hook with foot and heel over ball
   - 8 – 9 combinations
   - 8 – 10 combinations
   - 9 – 10 combinations

8. Tight head v loose head drill
• Simulate success for one position over the other by achieving the ideal position
• Coach to act as a mechanic underneath between 2 players

9. 3 v 3 Drill (2 on 1 options)
• Simulate right shoulder activation together
• Mealamu and Hayman attacking Holmes because he attempts to come around and not through using his inside leg, head on his tit, short bind, and tricep out with neck tension.

10. 4 v 4 specifically for tight head learning
• Again simulate the feeling for tight head - assists him with the feeling for chasing and activating right shoulder

Example of Correct and Incorrect Scrum System

Wallabies ball in Jade Stadium. (See clip 1 on disk; All Blacks v Wallabies at Jade Stadium; 2006 Tri Nations)

1. Incorrect (Attack)

• LHS Attacking Strategy quick channel 1 ball for number 8 carry or 9 to 10 pass for clearance from d.
• Wallabies: PRE Set Up not in symmetry
• Back 5: lack of 120 degrees knee at strongest; angle Hamstring to calf
• Front 3: lack of 120 degrees knees at strongest; and core to hip flexor
• Front 3: Down Set on crouch & hold call before opposition and for longer time
• Back 5: Join lightly but locks drop knees and then come up and just before the
• Not all on balls of feet
• Balance is reasonable but how to keep power when you are set in DOWN position early in the crouch call?
• Waiting for the Engage gun to go off
• Wallaby speed to middle wins but the unit becomes extended on their hit and do not catch up and sit at optimum angle of 120 degrees
• Wallaby nine delays ball entry before deciding entry (This is too late)
• All Black Tight Head activates step back
• Wallaby Loose head is working out and not with his hooker
• Wallaby tight head aims in rather than out and walks into All Black Strategy
• Back 5: Get Wheeled through the All Black 1 2 and this extends the Wallaby pack legs with the secondary weight coming through and the Wallaby pack optimum angles for force are all too high.
• Feet get moved no power on
• Achieve poor unstable scrum. Disrupt for All Blacks.

2. Correct (Defence)

• RHS Defence Strategy is to force Wallaby scrum TH back to their Left hand touch line.
• All Blacks: PRE Set Up in symmetry
- Back 5: 120 degree Hamstring to calf
- Front 3: 120 degree ditto, and core to hip flexor
- Front 3: ¾ Set on crouch & hold call
- Back 5: Join lightly with backside up and feet square and just before the
- All on balls of feet
- Balance is power
- Waiting for the engage gun to go off
- Beaten by Wallaby speed to middle but still chase their hit
- All Black nine prevents Wallaby nine easy entry for channelling ball
- All Black Tight Head activates step back
- Back 5: Wheel 1 2 and extend Wallaby pack and apply secondary weight once reloaded through their loose head.
- Feet on ground is power and reloaded for chase.
- Achieve good Outcome.

Wallabies ball in Jade Stadium. (See clip 2 on disk; All Blacks v Wallabies at Jade Stadium; 2006 Tri Nations)

1. Correct (Attack)

- LHS Attacking Strategy quick channel 1 ball for number 8 to pass to 9 for a launch wide.
- Wallabies: PRE Set Up in symmetry
- Back 5: Almost 120 degrees knee at strongest; angle Hamstring to calf
- Front 3: Almost of 120 degrees knees at strongest; and core to hip flexor
- Front 3: Down Set on crouch & hold call before opposition and for longer time
- Back 5: Join lightly but locks drop knees and then come up and just before the
- On balls of feet
- Balance is reasonable but how to keep power when you are set in DOWN position early in the crouch call?
- Waiting for the Engage gun to go off
- Wallaby speed to middle wins but when the unit becomes extended it catches up and sits at optimum angle of 120 degrees
- Wallaby nine ball entry is a little quicker
- All Black Tight Head activates step back
- Wallaby Loose head has got under the All Black tight heads right breast and been strong with neck tension and short bind with tricep out
- Wallaby tight head aims out and activates right shoulder on sit
- Back 5: Get Wheeled through the All Black 1 2 and this extends the Wallaby pack legs with the secondary weight coming through and the Wallaby pack optimum angles for force are all too high.
- All feet on ground means power
- Achieve scrum platform for 8 9 pass.
Conclusion

It would be fair to say that this is not an exact science, but by persevering and repeating the above behaviours often, and reviewing and pursuing with the right detail what is required in each position for a particular attacking or defensive strategy, the whole sum of the parts have a better chance of achieving optimum force. (See Total Impact Method: A Variation on Engagement Technique in the Rugby Scrum; McCymont, Cron 2006).

It also brings opportunity for good 1st phase launch attack and line speed in defence but more importantly, builds the confidence of coaches for teaching and guiding players and will see more Mums approving of their sons playing in the front row!

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