This paper talks about the importance of the Lineout and its scoring potential from it.

The lineout has evolved over the last 20+ years and the whole concept of lineouts have changed with players now legally allowed to ‘support the jumper’ in the air. Naturally the players and coaches have been allowed to develop greater complexities in the structure of the lineout, however as we try and get ‘any’ edge with our coaching are we spending enough time on ensuring our lineout gets the time it needs to ensure a maximum result from it?

Obviously a major part of rugby is possession of the ball and maintaining possession in all parts of the field and it is obviously a key factor to winning games, and when possession is not had it is then working hard to win the ball back. Whilst there are always attacking opportunities in general play and or on turnover ball the art of being able to use the opportunity when it’s your lineout to a team’s advantage needs to be factored into any weeks training as games can be won or lost on a single lineout throw.

There are invariably more lineouts per game than scrum’s and with this it gives the attacking (throwing) team a wonderful opportunity to attack from this facet of the game. Given that some lineouts are not contested (refer statistics below) if the attacking side can execute the skill and win their own ball from all parts of the field and then utilising options from the composition of the lineout it gives the backs a wonderful opportunity to run a starter play. and whilst it is essentially a 7 vs. 7 contest (based on a full numbered lineout) it allows the attacking side to create a 4v3, 3v2 or 2v1 opportunity which whilst this happens in general play is often harder to orchestrate than from a lineout situation where players have the time to organise a play and then attempt to execute. Supporting statistic’s will support this theory.

It is one thing to factor in that you will win your lineout however there are some key components to ensure this occurs, primarily the key players involved in the lineout and their function.

1. The Thrower - Key factors (but not limited to)
   - Grip ball correctly
   - Throw accurately and to space
   - Strong core
   - Stability and generate power on release

2. The Jumpers - Key factors (but not limited to)
   - Quick footwork
   - Powerful jump
   - Strong body shape in the air
   - Good ball skills
   - Good communication
   - Able to shift from linear movement to a vertical jump quickly

3. The Lifters - Key factors (but not limited to)
   - Explosive lift strength
   - Quick hands and feet
   - Reaction and co-ordination
   - Good communication
Is enough time taken when working out weekly training schedule’s to fully understand how important winning your lineout possession is and how many scoring opportunities then come from that possession, below are some interesting facts.

Statistically, more tries come from lineouts than scrums, or any restart and the statistics below will show that the importance of the lineout and the opportunities to score a try from the lineout

In the 2013 Six Nations there was an average of 25 lineouts respectively per game. That is 12 potential try scoring opportunities in a game providing the team win their own lineout ball. With such a potent attacking weapon it makes perfect sense that the lineout has become a crucial part of the game and we need to ensure that enough time is spent to perfect the skill of winning our lineout.

Based on the 2013 6 Nation Championships the following statistics on lineouts are below

In the 2013 tournament the average number of lineouts per match was 25, the lineout success was 84% and lineouts were contested on 47% of occasions.

The highest number of lineouts in any match was 31, the lowest was 18.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRY SOURCE</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LINEOUT</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPPONENTS KICK</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TURNOVER/HANDLING ERROR</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCRUM</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PENALTY KICK</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESTART</td>
<td>3%</td>
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</tbody>
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NB. The winners - Wales scored 5 of their 9 tries from Lineouts – 55% success rate

- It is worth noting that over the last three 6 Nations that lineouts have contributed on average 34% as the source of the try over that time.
- It is also worth noting that Italy had 92% success on their own ball (up from 85% in 2012). This fact could be argued against as Italy did not take advantage of the high amount of possession, however it will be interesting if indeed they can have select players who create greater attacking opportunities in the future from a lineout and see if there results change!

The 2011 World Cup showed similar statistics to confirm that the lineout is indeed a major source of trying scoring potential.

In the 2013 tournament the average number of lineouts per match was 24, the lineout success was 82% and lineouts were contested on 57% of occasions.

The highest number of lineouts in any match was 33, the lowest was 14.
Source of Tries – 2011 RWC

There were 262 tries scored in the RWC 2011. The teams scoring the tries obtained the possession of the ball prior to the scoring of the try from a variety of sources. Analyses of matches played at international level over several years, have shown that the most fruitful source of possession has consistently and clearly been the lineout – and this was maintained in RWC in 2011.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRY SOURCE</th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lineout - Own</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrum - Own</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover/Handling error</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opponents Kick</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penalty/Free Kick</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restart – Opp</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lineout – Opp</strong></td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrum– Own</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restart - Own</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: 2007 RWC Lineout – 32% (the highest source of tries)

- 36% of tries came from winning own ball or winning opposition ball
- The eventual winners NZL scored 40 tries for the tournament with 15 (37.5%) coming from Lineouts.

As a coach you then ascertain that if you have a good lineout and get good quality ball from your lineout especially in the 22m to goal line (attacking) area’s that you should create good scoring opportunities.

Whilst the lineout can be proven that it is a major source in providing tries it is crucial that the time spent to create variation and work on the execution’s required to make up the dynamics of a successful lineout.

It also seems and the statistics also back this up, that a lot of teams simply do not contest against every lineout. It would seem that by upsetting opposition lineout ball it may limit a try scoring source against you based on statistic’s alone.

So whilst we need to practise our own lineout ball it is also imperative that enough time and analysis is done on a weekly basis (if possible) of our opposition lineout ball and then attempt to stop their flow of possession.

There are so many variations used at various levels of rugby and some key points may change based on game day conditions, however there is no doubt the lineout must have variations and change the composition of the lineout to keep the opposition guessing.
Lineout Composition’s

It is one matter to have received good possession from a lineout however there needs to be good options available.

Any number of compositions can be used to give every chance to win possession and then enhance your attacking opportunities.

A team may choose to play a 7 men or full lineout in the 22m to goal line areas as all the forwards are near the ball. Conversely there are opportunities to have 4/5/6 man lineouts and have forward runners in the backs.

The key to most successful lineouts is (but not limited to)

- Keep the calling sequence simple
- Whilst players can move around ensure that the jumper wins the space on the ground and lifters are active at all time's
- Practise the skill involved both offensively and defensively

It is also crucial that there are options from a lineout and the lineout needs to have an action after the ball is won, below are some common options

1. Off the Top – usually played when width is wanting to played as an attacking option
2. Drive – perfect close to the both tryline's, from an attacking opportunity and also defensively to enable halfback to box kick
3. Down and Pop – used if the opposition 7 is flying hard up on your fly half
4. You can incorporate peeling off the front and or rear of lineout

Summary

When accessing how we allocate time to our training it may be worthwhile to look at the amount of time spent on lineout. Whilst other aspects are indeed important, statistics tell the story about scoring opportunities that come from the lineout and that if we execute this facet of the game and spend enough time at practise, and then our try scoring opportunities could/should increase. It should also be noted that we spend enough time also on our defensive lineout to limit the opposition source of try scoring and to challenge every lineout rather than just give them ‘uncontested possession’.

Ross Hopkins – ARU Level 3 - 2013

Sources
