



# TOUCH



## Playing The Game

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## Playing the Game

Touch is not a difficult game to learn. Its rules, not unlike many sports, begin with the basics and go onto more technical rulings. When teaching the game of Touch, one should remember that novices will not remember all the rules no matter how often you tell them – taking that into account, and for sheer enjoyment, only the basic rules need to be applied at this level.

As players become more conversant with the game itself, and are beginning to grasp the concepts required to diminish constant referee intervention – only then should one consider introducing the more intricate rules such as the interchange procedure, not playing the ball squarely, etc.

As we saw in module 1, the concept of the game is to score a touchdown by advancing the ball downfield without being “touched” by a defending player. The ball may be passed, knocked or handed between inside players of the attacking team who may in turn run or otherwise move with the ball in an attempt to gain territorial advantage and score. Defending players prevent the attacking team from gaining a territorial advantage by touching the ball carrier. Either defending or attacking players may initiate touches, upon which play stops and is restated with a Rollball - unless other rules apply.

Each team has six touches within to score a touchdown before the other teams gains possession of the ball. A touchdown is awarded when a player (without being touched and other than the half) places the ball on the ground on or over the teams attacking scoreline and within the boundaries of the Touchdown Zone. A touchdown is generally worth one (1) point.

The game consists of two twenty (20) minute halves, with a five (5) minute half time break. The team with the most touchdowns at the end of the game is declared the winner.

Now that we know the basics, let’s move onto some advanced skills - involving two or more players - that will assist teams in attacking (and defending) when they play the game. We’ll also look at some common player errors and how to overcome them.



# Common Errors

## Common Player Errors

It is usually the team that makes the least mistakes in a game – skill wise - that will win. Skill is defined as the application of a technique in a game situation, and therefore training in game scenarios is very important. Particular attention should be given to performance under pressure.

Common player errors include:

1. **Dropped Ball** – a dropped ball leads to a change of possession, which in turn can be interpreted as a change in potential advantage. Without the ball a team cannot score.

A player who continues to “spill” the ball should be encouraged not discouraged. Often the thought of dropping the ball is sufficient to cause error. The teaching factors of eyes on the ball, hands out towards the ball, and guiding the ball into control are vital. The more practice a player gets at handling, passing, and catching the more their confidence will improve.

2. **Over Running the Mark** – this may be described as breaking through the touch. What a player who runs past the mark of the touch may not consider is that whilst returning to the mark, defensive players have the opportunity to regroup.

Touch players must learn to react in anticipation of an imminent touch!

3. **Poor Defensive Communication** – touchdowns are usually scored because of poor defence than because of a good attacking play. There are few (if any) defensive skills that do not rely on communication, and communication should be practiced like any other skill.

Good communication is clear and precise. It should be understood by all. Whatever words are used, they should leave no doubt in anyone’s mind as to the required action.

4. **Running Across Field** – one of the most important principles of attack is going forward. Players that run across field attempting to avoid being touched are spoiling the teams chance to go forward and should be discouraged.

Running across field narrows the available room for outside players to manoeuvre, and often causes the attacking team to bunch – making it easier for fewer defenders to cover more attackers.

5. **Passive Defence** – failing to move forward when defending allows the attacking team all the time and space required to gain territory and set up lines of attack. Defending teams should be taught to move forward in a straight line.

Moving up and back in a straight line involves communication – both verbal and visual. All players need to be spatially aware of the player beside them to ensure that players do not get out of line. A player out of line creates a larger gap for an attacker to run into.

## Common Rule Infringements

Rule infringements usually occur as a result of poor knowledge, game pressures, and individual frustration of players.

Common rule infringements include:

1. **Passing after Touched** – “A player is not to pass or otherwise deliver the ball after a touch has been effected”. RULING - A penalty awarded to the defending team at the mark where the touch occurred.

One drill, which aids the early delivery of the ball, involves players moving towards a (stationary) defender, and passing prior to being touched. Once attackers are used to this, the defender is then allowed to move forward and attempt the touch. Unless the attacker executes an earlier pass they will be touched every time.

2. **Forward pass** - “A player in possession is not to pass, flick, knock, throw or otherwise propel the ball in a forward direction”. RULING - A penalty awarded to the non-offending team at the mark where the ball was passed, flicked, knocked, thrown or otherwise propelled forward.

Many forward passes are the result of poor anticipation by the receiver, who gets themselves in a position forward of the passer. Players should be encouraged to stand (deep) behind the ball carrier at all times to enable a pass to be executed in a backwards manner.

3. **Offside at Rollball** – “All Players of the defending team are to retire a distance of not less than five (5) metres from the mark for a Rollball. Players of the defending team are not permitted to move forward of the five (5) metre position until the half has made contact with the ball”. RULING - A penalty awarded to the attacking team along a line five (5) metres forward of the mark for the Rollball and nearest the infringement.

Beginners usually encounter this infringement due to over anxiousness to make the touch. Players should be encouraged, and indeed practice, the action of retiring back five (5) metres before becoming involved in play again after effecting a touch. A good move for beginner teams is to restrict the whole teams movement forward, until the player who made the touch is back the required five (5) metres and level with team mates.

4. **Obstruction** – “Players of the attacking team are not to obstruct defending players from attempting to effect a touch. A player in possession must not run or otherwise move behind the referee or other players in the attacking team in an attempt to avoid a touch”. Obstruction is defined as a deliberate attempt by an attacking player to gain an unfair advantage by preventing a defending player from effecting a touch. RULING - A penalty awarded to the defending team at the mark where the infringement occurred.

All players should be educated on the spirit and the rules of the game. Little else can be done to prevent obstruction occurring in a game, yet should be dealt with as per the rules.

# Advanced Skills

## #1. The Wrap

The “wrap” occurs when a player passes the ball to a team mate, and then runs around (loops) behind that player into a position to receive the ball back.

The most frequent use for the wrap is to create an overlap whilst attacking. This move is often used from acting half – passing to the player who is first receiver – and then looping around behind and to the outside of that player ready to receive the ball again.

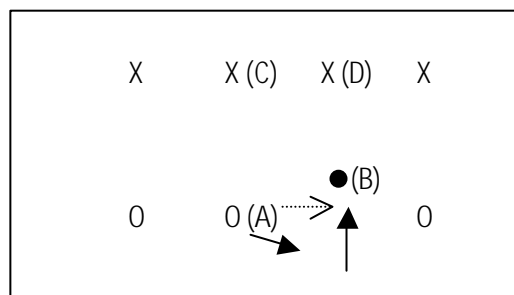
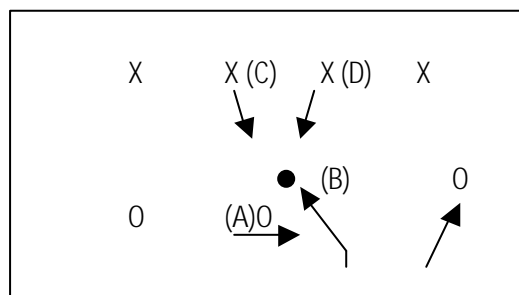
### Teaching Factors:

- Runner delivers a quick and accurate pass to the receiver.
- Receiver angles in towards where the pass came from.
- Outside support drifts wide to allow space for runner to run into.
- The passer then accelerates behind the receiver.
- Straightening into the gap once receiving the ball.

### Common Faults:

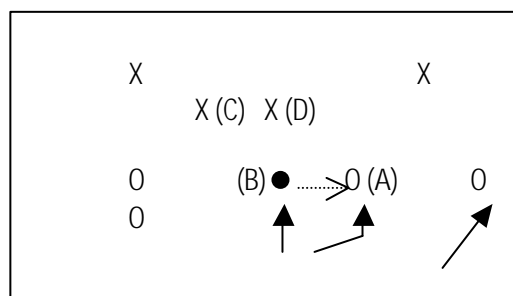
- Too slow with the first pass.
- Receiver not angling in.
- Runner too close to the receiver when running around.
- Not keeping eyes on the ball.
- Poor timing of second pass.
- Support not drifting wide and deep.

*Attacker (A) passes to player (B), and starts to drift behind.*



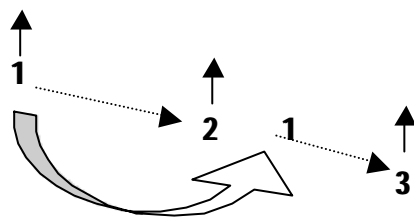
*Attacker (B) – now the ball carrier – angles in slightly, taking their defender (D) in with them.*

*Once the support runner (A) has passed behind the ball carrier (B), they straighten, with attacker (A) accelerating into the gap and preparing to receive the ball back.*



### Pass & Wrap

- Players work in groups of three (3), running up and down the field.
- The player with the ball, at one end of the group, passes the ball to the next player and then “wraps” that play, while the players jog forward.
- Once the “wrapper” gets around, the receiver passes the ball to the wrapper, who then passes and wraps the next player.
- The ball is then passed back along the line for the next player to become the “Wrapper”.



## #2. Wrap Defence

The wrap is designed to create an overlap for the attacking team. It stands to reason therefore that a defensive team should learn how to counter-act this manoeuvre. The skill of wrap defence requires effective communication between players to ensure that there is no confusion when marking up on attacking players.

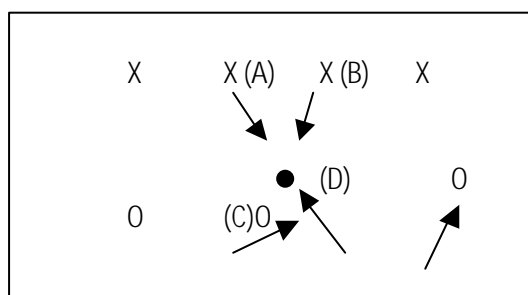
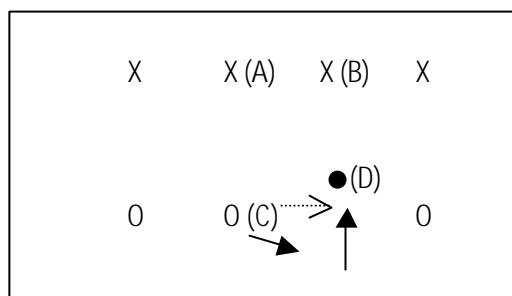
### Teaching Factors:

- Communication between defending players.
- Maintaining straight line.
- Drifting left or right as required.
- Marking up one-on-one.

### Common Faults:

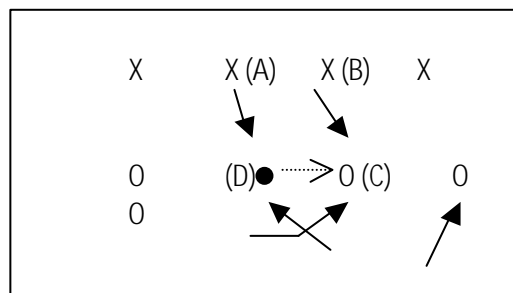
- Poor communication.
- Over anxious defender (rushing up)
- Poor fitness.
- Lack of anticipation (reading the wrap)

*Attacker (C) has passed to player (D). Two defenders (A & B) must be committed to the defence of the wrap.*



*The first defender (A) is marking the support runner (C) until such time as (C) passes behind the new ball carrier (D).*

*Once the support runner (C) has passed behind the ball carrier (D), the first defender (A) then marks the ball carrier, and defender (B) switches to mark the runner (C) who has looped behind.*





### #3. The Switch

The switch pass utilises a player who initiates a different line of attack. The move involves a player running across the field at an angle, and then passing to a player who has moved in towards (and behind) the ball carrier. The switch pass is commonly referred to as "scissors" due to the criss-cross action when performed.

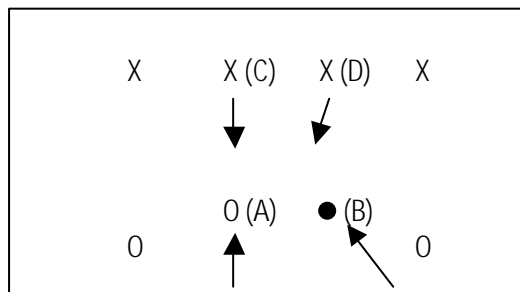
The switch pass is used to wrong foot the defensive team and create a hole - caused by a player running in the wrong direction. It may also be used when attack is near the sideline and the winger (the player closest to the sideline) is being forced out of room to move.

#### Teaching Factors:

- Communicate the move with the receiver.
- Passer runs across field at an angle.
- Receiver angles in when ball carrier begins to cross their path.
- Look at the receiver when passing.
- Rotate body in direction of receiver.
- Direct ball to receivers' arms.
- Receiver has eyes on the ball.
- Straighten attack and accelerate through the gap.

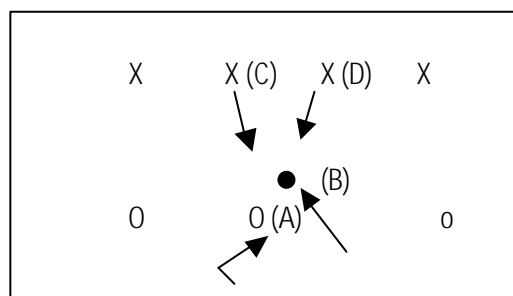
#### Common Faults:

- Not a wide angle.
- Receiver running in too early.
- Receiver not watching the ball.
- Passer turning wrong direction.
- Poor pass.

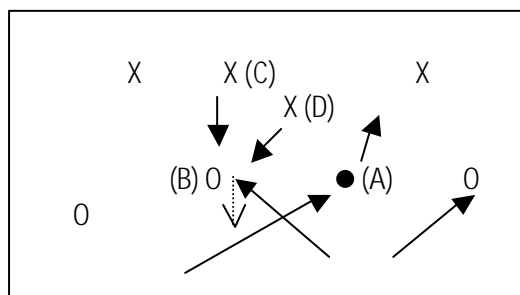


*Attacker (B) runs across field on an angle drawing in defender (D). Attacker (A) maintains their line to draw their defender (C).*

*Attacker (A) maintains line until such time as the ball carrier (B) crosses their path. Attacker (A) then angles across in the other direction, behind the ball carrier, ready to receive the ball.*

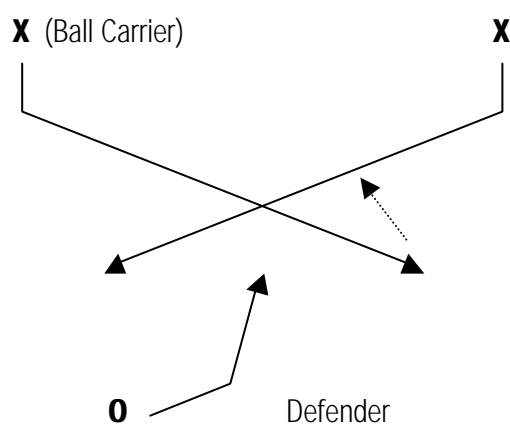


*Attacker (B) has drawn their original defender (D) whilst attacker (A) has angled behind in the opposite direction, creating an overlap. Attacker (B) turns in the same direction, delivering a deep pass to attacker (A). Support runner runs wide.*



## 2 v 1 Switch Pass

- Players with ball work in pairs, beginning 5-10 metres apart.
- The player with the ball runs at 45 degrees across the path of the other player.
- The receiver runs across behind the ball carrier, who passes the ball to the receiver.
- The defender attempts to put pressure on the attackers, especially at the point of the switch.
- Rotate player positions after every few turns.



## #4. Switch Defence

The switch pass defence requires communication. Both players involved in defending the switch must maintain a one-on-one policy without crossing a central position and causing confusion.

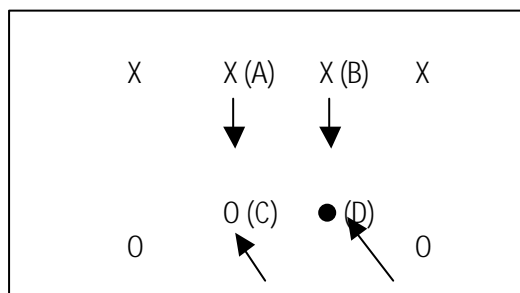
Defending players need to move with attacking players until they cross over, the switch defence should be called, and defending players then mark up on the player who has moved into their area of defence.

### Teaching Factors:

- Identify opponents.
- Follow ball carrier, and support player.
- Call the change of defensive responsibilities once attackers cross over.
- Decelerate and accelerate off inside foot.

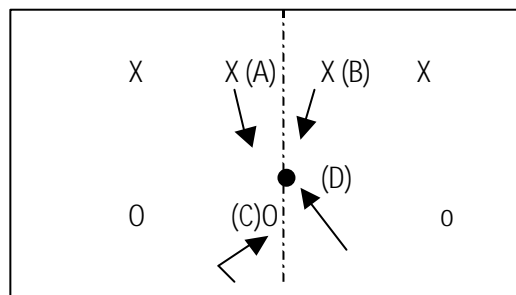
### Common Faults:

- Poor communication.
- Not maintaining one-on-one defensive policy.
- Not anticipating the switch pass.
- Defenders crossing over.

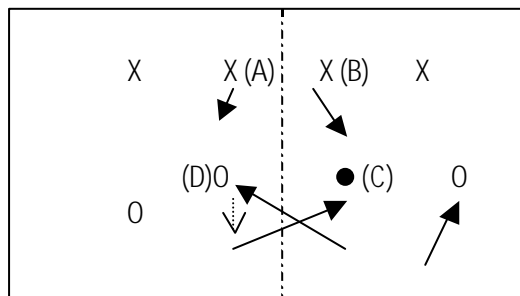


*Players (D & C) are performing a switch. The two defenders (A & B) must be committed to the defence of the switch.*

*Defender (A) is marking the support runner (C) and defender (B) is marking the ball carrier (D) - until such time as the attackers cross.*



*Once the attackers cross, defenders move in opposite directions, maintaining responsibility for their "zone" (indicated by the dotted line). The first defender (A) now marks the original ball carrier (D), and defender (B) switches to mark the runner (C) - who has angled behind and received the ball.*



## **#5. Settling the Ball**

A team's priority when in possession of the ball is to maintain possession of the ball and to gain territorial advantage. "Settling the ball" is the action of a player receiving the ball from the half and running straight towards the defence with the intention of being touched and performing the rollball as quickly as possible. This is repeated for at least four (4) touches – or as many times as required to get into the opponents half of the field.

Settling the ball is designed to make ground towards an opponents scoreline and forces the opposition backwards, not allowing them time to move up in defence.

If performed properly, settling of the ball allows a team to retain possession whilst gaining the best possible territorial advantage in attack. Often defending players will run in towards the rollball area – thus giving room for gaps to open out wide.

Settling should be used when a team gains possession of the ball close to their defending scoreline, or when they do not have any other planned move for that series of six touches.

### **Teaching Factors:**

- Quick rollball.
- Half listening for receivers call (left or right).
- Receiver runs straight, and close to the rollball area.
- Initiate the touch on defender.

### **Common Faults:**

- Over running the mark after a touch, allowing defence time to regroup.
- Ball carrier waiting for defender to initiate touch (remember both players can make contact).
- Receiver not running straight.
- Receiver not running onto the pass.

## #6. Ruck Defence

Ruck defence is the name given to a defensive policy used to stop a team settling the ball quickly. Like switch, and wrap defence, its main element is that of communication.

Ruck defence has three (3) options, with each option basically allocating certain responsibilities for defending players to stop attackers. Ruck defence skills are used when an attacking team performs a rollball and acting half pass.

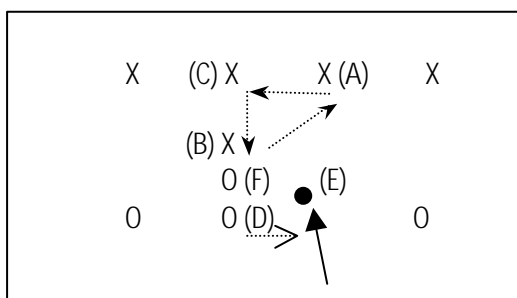
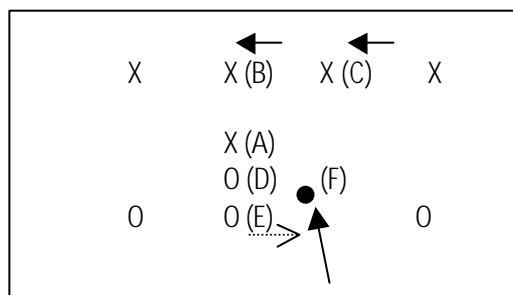
### Teaching Factors:

- Select option and train for this option!
- **Option 1:** The player who makes the initial touch marks the half.
- **Option 2:** The player who makes the initial touch marks the player who performs the rollball.
- **Option 3 (Preferred) :** The player who makes the initial touch moves sideways and backwards. Two other players nominate to mark the runner and half. This option involves three (3) defending players rotating in a triangle fashion.

### Common Faults:

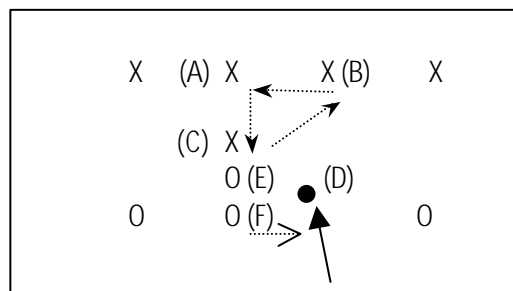
- Not moving up.
- Outside defenders becoming anxious and chasing in.
- Poor communication.

*OPTION 3: - Defender (A) made the initial touch. The half (E) passes to player (F). Defenders (A, B & C) will be involved in the "triangle" defence.*



*Defender (A), after making the touch, rolls back and to the side. Defender (B) comes forward and makes the touch on the ball carrier (F). Defender (C) moves in behind the ruck where (B) came from.*

*Defender (B), after making the touch, rolls back and to the side. Defender (C) comes forward and makes the touch on the next ball carrier (E). Defender (A) moves in behind the ruck where (C) came from – and the process begins again.*



# Putting it all into Practice

## **Further understanding of the Game**

Novice players that are new to the game may find it difficult to understand the concept. The following actions may assist:

- Show the players a video of the game being played, or take them to see a demonstration game.
- Invite an experienced Touch person to run a rules / skills session. Contact your state association for further details.
- Encourage the players to develop self-analysis, and monitor their progress.

Show enthusiasm and enjoyment when teaching the game – players feed off the example given to them.

## **Dominating Players**

Players make take a dominant role in the game to the detriment of their team mates. This may include “hogging” the ball, peers playing amongst themselves, boys excluding girls in their team etc. The following strategies may assist:

- Substitute players regularly during the course of the game.
- If the team is mixed, set the rule that a female must touch the ball at least once in every set of six (6) touches.
- Lessen the number of players on the field. This will force more substitutions and will lessen the chance of ‘exclusive combinations’.

Ensure players rotate positions on the field. For example, the two wingers (the players on the outside of the team) swap with the two players in the middle.

## **Role of the player(s)**

Participants have the following responsibilities when playing the game of Touch:

- Play by the rules.
- Do not argue with the referee.
- Control your temper.
- Be a good sport.
- Play as a team player.
- Have fun, and improve your skills.

All participants / players should be reminded of their responsibilities before each game situation.

# **Now get out there & have Fun !!**