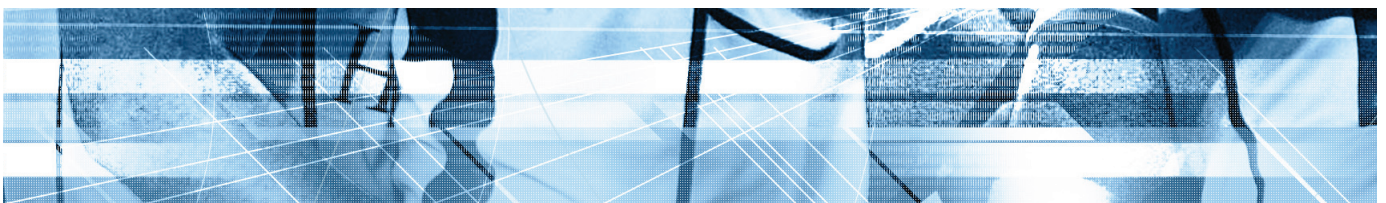


01.4

coaching tips & tricks from
the best in the game...

the waratah way...



01.4

Defence:

Dynamics
and Shape!

01.3

Defence: Dynamics and Shape!

The concept of defence can be broken into an individual or a group construct. From the individual perspective, players must have an awareness of pre-contact positioning and body shape, what they must do in contact, and the options available to them post-contact. When dealing with a defensive pattern, teams must be able to identify why they are defending the way they are and the options available to them.

It is important to note that while there are a number of defensive structures many are theoretically the same structure just with a different name!

Defence Structures:

There are quite a few defensive structures that a team can employ from Set or Phase play. These range from Man-on-Man, Drift through to Isolation or Compressed. The determinant of what defensive structure a team employs is dictated by the age and ability of the players.

Man-on-Man

A simple defensive structure all teams should be able to execute is the Man-on-Man defence. The premise behind this defence is that each player has correct technique through Track to Tackle; this will ensure that all players have confidence in the defensive ability of the players around them. Another function of the Man-on-Man defence is that the player's are aligned on their respective player but they defend the zone or channel they are in. This is an important aspect of Man-on-Man defence that many players and coaches find hard to comprehend.

To ensure simplicity, players should be given clear instruction as to what their roles and responsibilities are. This ensures that there is no confusion through the execution of the defensive structure. For Man-of-Man this means:

- Players **align** on the inside-shoulder of their attacking player;
- Players maintain their **shape** through their **line-speed**;
- **Ball Defender** maintains correct **tracking shape**;
- The inside **Hustle line** taken after ball passed outside player's channel;
- Responsibility of the **Hustle Defender** to defend inside pass;
- All players marking **Lateral Supporters** must maintain their **shape**; and,
- All players must **communicate** with the players around them;

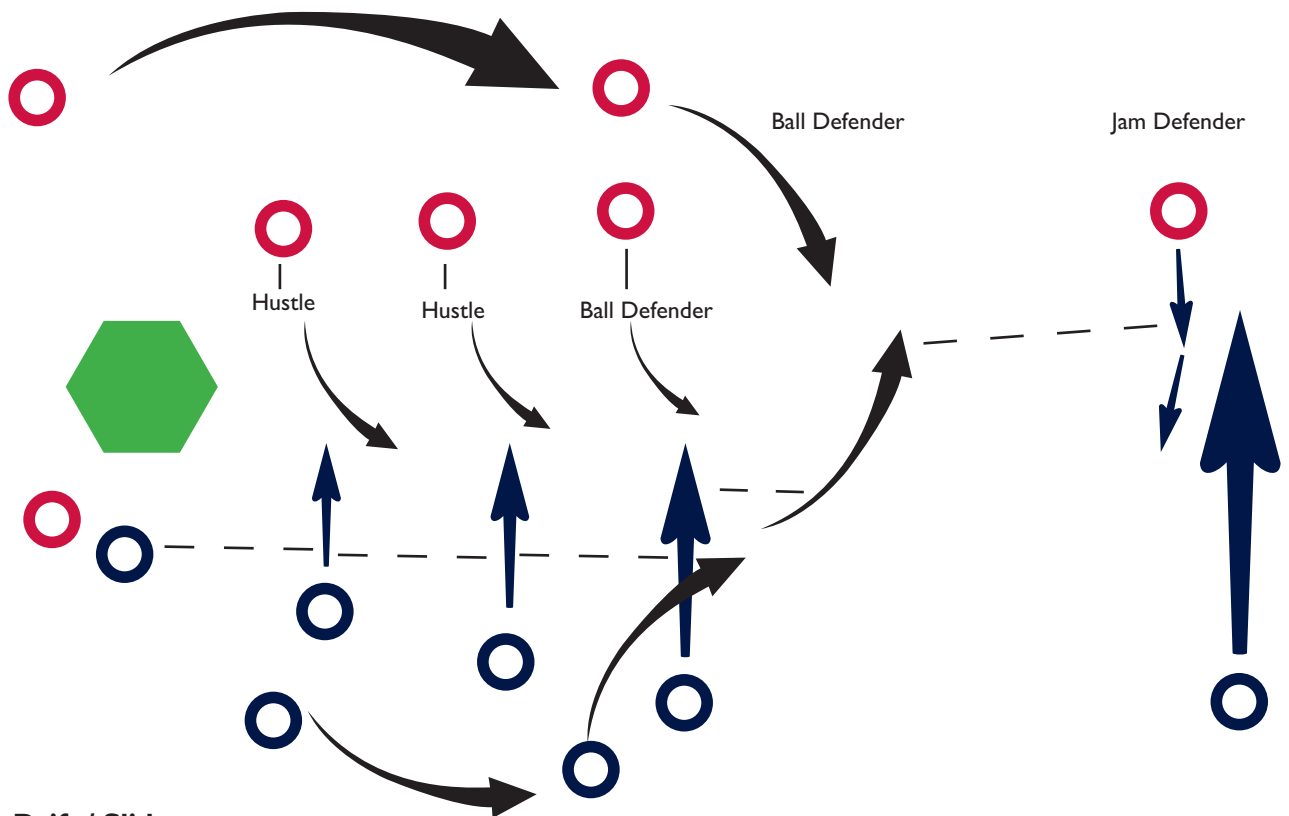
A major question most often asked is: How do you cover the fullback coming in on man-on-man?

There is no right answer but only a number of options that can be employed. Firstly, if you're employing the defence only in your 22m zone, then it is as simple marking players; secondly, if outside the 22m, then players must work on their Tacking-Hustle-Jam lines and their communication; thirdly, the importance of the cover defence from 7, 8, 9 and the blind-side Winger cannot be over emphasised.

01.3

Defence: Dynamics and Shape!

Below is a diagram of a **Man-on-Man defence** against a simple attacking movement:



Drift / Slide

Drift and/or **Slide** defensive patterns are very similar but utilised through different scenarios on the field. **Drift** defence is normally used from set phase defensive structures, whilst **Slide** defence is normally used through phase play. The other aspect of **Slide** defence is that it can be used as part of a **Blitz** (fast forward-moving defence) or as a **Hover/Jockey** (slow to retreating-movement).

In order to complete a Drift or Slide defence, the defensive unit must (1) communicate effectively with each other, and (2) execute the defensive movement after the attacking 5/8 has passed the rugby ball. Upon the 5/8's pass all player move to the next player on their outside – thus drifting or sliding defensively.

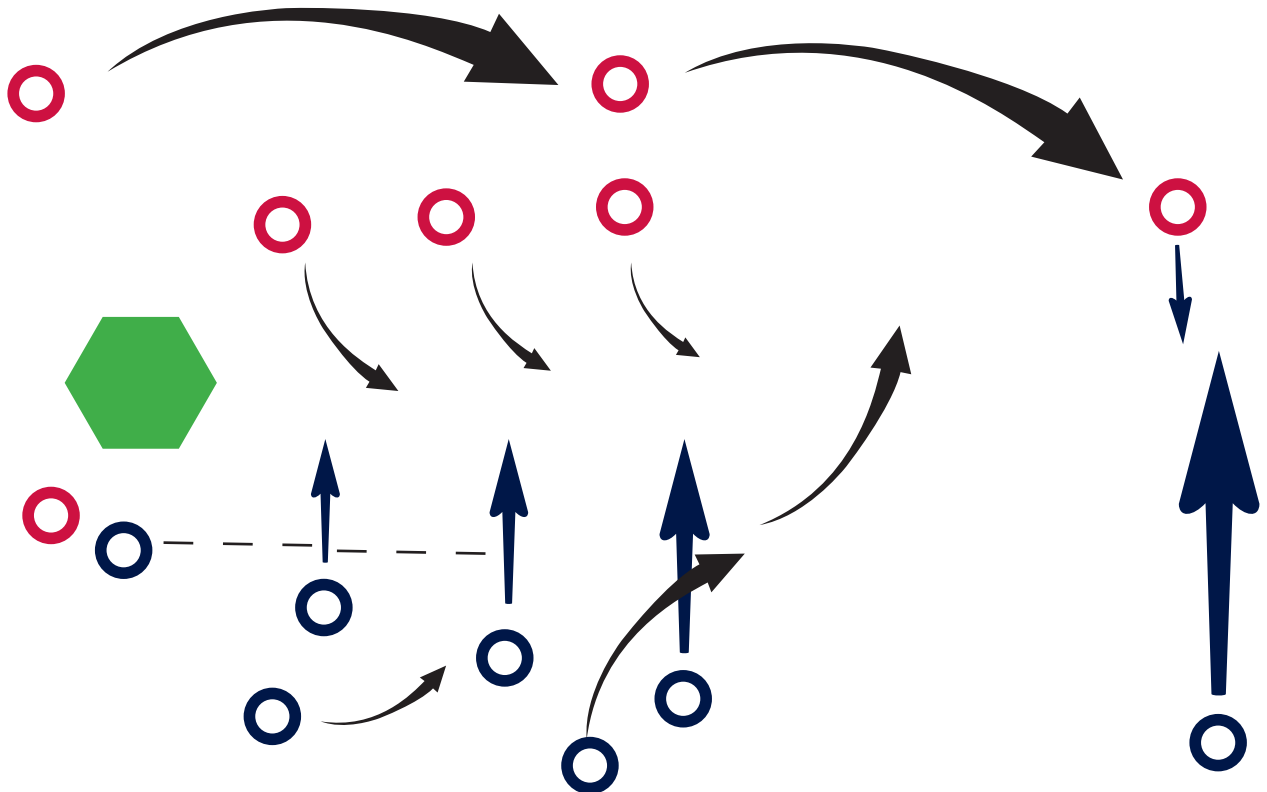
A major question most often asked is: How do you cover the lateral supporters if the 5/8 takes the ball to the line?

There is no right answer but simply put, if the attack moves closer to the defensive line prior to passing then the players would remain in their Man-on-Man defensive mode. However, if the 5/8 passed early, then all players would move to the attacking player outside of them. Conjecture occurs with the discussion of the Winger and Fullback but there is no right or wrong on who takes the attacking extra player or winger – the players must, however, know who they are supposed to mark and track that player!

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Defence: Dynamics and Shape!

Below is a diagram of a **Drift defence** against a simple attacking movement:



Sting / Hover

Sting and **Hover** defence are primarily used of phase play defence. A **Sting** defence is normally called when there are more defenders than attackers and a **Hover** defence is called when there are more attackers than defenders. As with any defensive structure it is important for all players to have an understanding to their roles and responsibilities.

The most important aspect of the Sting / Hover defence is that the players outside the primary ruck defence are player watching and not ruck watching. These players are in the best position to view if (1) they have a defensive overload or the attackers have more numbers, and (2) communicate with the players inside them as to the defensive adjustments needed to be made.

With regards to a **Sting** defence, players need to align on the outside shoulder of their attacking player. In this way they can force the attacking players back in towards the mass of defence, as if they are running in a 'hockey stick' shape. Further to this, a player can ascertain if there is a weak attacker in the attacking-line and target them by rushing them on their outside shoulder; if they follow through into contact, they are in a position to make a dominant tackle.

With a **Hover** call, the outside player has identified that there are more attackers than defenders. By calling "Hover" the players on the inside know they must shift into the next channel after the pass is made (like a drift on each pass). The other aspect of the Hover defence is that players do not advance forward as they would in a normal defensive pattern by judge their movement on that of the attackers; this may mean they retreat in order to keep their shape until players have filled in and they are once again in a Man-on-Man pattern.

01.3

Defence: Dynamics and Shape!

Ruck Defence – 10 / 20 / 30

In relation to ruck defence most teams have employed a policy of placing three defensive players either side of the tackle contest. There are many names for which teams use as a calling system but the primary objective is to reinforce the roles and responsibilities of the players defending this area.

The roles and responsibilities for the ruck area are:

1st Defender – called 1 / 10 / Pillar / etc.

- Identifies that they are the first defender by both call and signal;
- Takes a 3-point starting position – low and strong – in order to defend any forward 'pick and go' by the attacking team;
- Is "non-negotiable": they do not move out of their position until the attacking team have played the ball;
- Their first movement is straight – they do not follow the ball initially across field – until they have gone past the opposition's off-side line;
- Their job is to tackle outside-shoulder in, so that the attack is stopped at the initial tackle contest.

2nd Defender – called 2 / 20 / Post / 9 / etc.

- Identifies that they are the second defender by both call and signal;
- Watches the ball and has responsibility for calling the defensive line's movement;
- Can either stay (non-negotiable) or slide (negotiable);
- They are defending a "running 9" or the inside ball from 9 to a runner;
- Their first movement is straight – they do not follow the ball/9 across field – until they have gone past the opposition's off-side line;
- Their job is to tackle outside-shoulder in, so that the attack is stopped and pushed back toward the initial tackle contest.

3rd Defender – 3 / 30 / Key / Dart / etc.

- Marks the first receiver (i.e. 10) – depending on defensive policy either inside or outside shoulder;
- Watches the player not the ruck;
- Players coming from the ruck area push this player out – therefore, vision and communication important;
- When the "break" call is made they track the attack until they become the Ball Defender.

