

# 01.5

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

---

## the waratah way...

---



# 01.5

---

## Defence:

---

Block &  
Impact Tackles

# 01.5

## Defence: Block & Impact Tackles

### Block Tackle

#### “Most commonly executed front-on low tackle”

This style of tackle should be the first taught to all young rugby players. It should result in the tackler landing in a position on top of the ball carrier and done correctly will allow the defending player to exert enough force to go forward in the tackle. The tackle should not be considered complete until the tackler is back on their feet and in a position to pick up the ball.

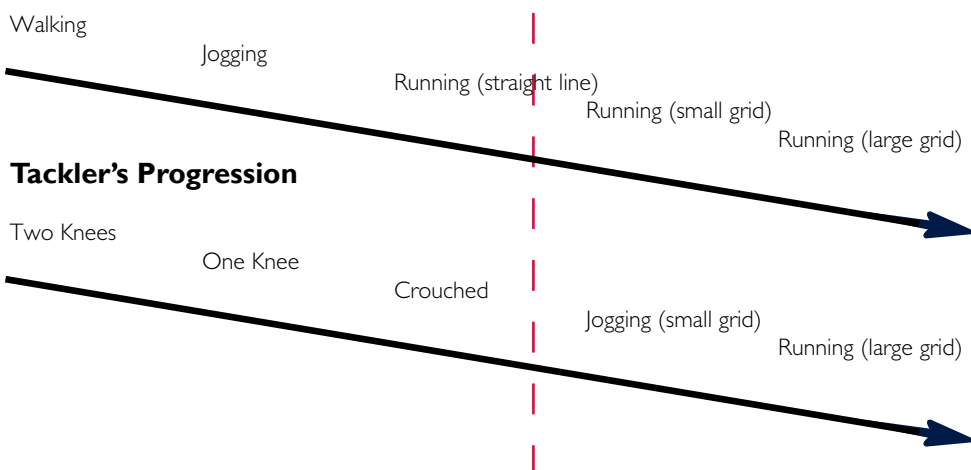
In the early stages of teaching the block tackle, the focus on correct technique (to ensure safety and effectiveness) should be paramount while the more specific elements of the game (incl. pressure etc) can be introduced once players are comfortable and confident with the contact. (Figure 1)

Some benefits include:

- It halts the forward progress of the ball runner immediately, nullifying the opportunity for the ball carrier to continue leg drive after contact.
- If performed correctly, enforces ruck ball for the attacking team, giving the defending team far greater opportunity to contest the ball. This will also bring an emphasis on the attacking team support to be there on time.
- Requires less brute force than other methods of front-on-tackles, thereby allowing smaller tacklers to safely and effectively stop larger ball runners. (often you will notice your best leg tacklers are small players)

The block tackle can be taught with the following sequence to ensure that correct technique is learnt before game related pressure is applied.

### Ball Carrier's Progression



Technique	Technique + Pressure (tracking)
-----------	---------------------------------

Figure 1: Teaching tackle technique – suggested sequence

# 01.5

## Defence: Block & Impact Tackles

When implementing the block tackle, it is important to take the following coaching points into consideration:

**Head placement** – Eyes open, chin up and head to the side of the ball carrier. It is important to keep head in line with the spine and have head as close to target as possible. This will allow good shoulders contact on the thighs of ball carrier. (Figure 2)

**Contact point on ball carrier** – Players should be targeting the thighs or shorts of the ball carrier and implementing the squeeze to the thighs to prevent continued forward movement (Figure 3). Players might need to slide down the leg and squeeze when tackling bigger players.

**Strong Arm, Wrap & Squeeze** – Initial contact will be made with one shoulder, chest and arm (broad contact area) and therefore it is important that the contact is dynamic and strong. This can be achieved by using a strong arm (wrist to shoulder). Wrap arms and lock (hand to elbow if possible). The squeeze component will allow the tackler to Stick to the ball carrier, hence decreasing the possibility of falling off the tackle. (Figure 4)

**Footwork in contact** – After the lead foot is close to the ball carrier and contact is made, use small dynamic steps to aid in chasing the initial contact. This will provide leg drive in contact. While the ball carrier is going backwards (or sideways), they may not be in a position to provide a clean ball presentation / transfer.



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

When teaching young players the technique of the tackle sequence, it is important to explain when a tackle is complete (finished). The laws state that a tackle is deemed over when:

1. The ball has been released (placed, rolled or passed) and is more than a meter away from the tackled player.
2. Two (one from each team) or more players are in contact over the tackled player (and ball) a ruck is formed a hence the ruck laws apply.
3. A player on his feet plays the ball and lifts it off the ground.

In completing the tackle sequence, players should be encourage to immediately getting to their feet and attempt to regain possession. While attempting to recapture the ball at the tackle, players should be instructed to assume and maintain a strong body shape (wide stance, low body height etc). Once this has been achieved and the tackler is attempting to steal possession from a strong position above the ball, the tackle has been completed.



Figure 6



Figure 7

# 01.5

## Defence: Block & Impact Tackles

### Impact Tackle

The impact tackle is designed to physically dominate the ball carrier at the point of contact. The tackler assumes a position of authority by generating a strong and powerful force through contact and positioning their arm(s) 'inside' the ball carrier. This style of tackle requires the defender to apply the correct foot work (short quick steps) to ensure that they 'present to the tackle' with the strongest body shape to dominate the impact. This includes:

- Foot close to target
- Sink at hips
- Hands & arms up
- Head up with chin of chest, &
- Eyes open and looking forward.

### Advantages of the impact tackle

1. It physically dominates and quite often intimidates the ball carrier in contact.
2. It halts the progression of the ball carrier and if executed well, will result in the attacker being driven back past the point of contact.
3. It restricts the opportunity for ball transfer in contact, along with the opportunity to tie up the ball. This may result in a turnover through a scrum feed.
4. Can allow the tackler to dislodge the ball through the use of a strong-arm alone. This is in addition to the contact of the chest and shoulder.

### Disadvantages of the impact tackle

1. It provides the opportunity for the ball carrier to leg drive through contact.
2. It encourages the attacking team to use the maul, which done correctly can be an extremely successful tool to go forward.
3. Is difficult to obtain a clean 'shot' when the attacker comes at low body height or has room to move on either side of the tackler.

When implementing the impact tackle, it is important to take the following coaching points into consideration:

1. **Target area** - the target area for the impact tackle is the lower end of the sternum. Most jerseys have a logo or sponsor printed on them, which serves as an ideal target.
2. **Spreading the impact** - To avoid injury and increase the possibility of performing a successful, strong impacting tackle, players should spread the contact area across the chest, front of shoulder and arms. It is important to encourage players to get a strong-arm wrap on their target. This will allow players to 'stick' to the ball carrier and chase the hit. (Figure 9)
3. **Getting on the inside the ball carrier through contact** - Getting the tacklers arm (strong arm) in under the arm pit of the attacker. This will bring the attacked closer for greater impact and provide an opportunity to dislodge the ball. (Figure 9)
4. **Body Position** - Good body position will ensure that the momentum and force generated by the leg drive and approach is conducted through the body and exits at the contact point i.e. tacklers shoulder. Head up and chest through and ensure that the hips and torso is straight and in line while the abdominal muscles are on (flexed). (Figure 10)
5. **Foot positioning into and through contact** - It is paramount that the tackler get their lead foot 'to or through' contact (which ever foot) to assist in the balance and stability as well as the power generated. Imagine there is a 'hula-hoop' around the feet of the ball carrier; the lead foot must be inside the hoop for the tackler to be in a position to generate enough force to effectively execute the tackle.

# 01.5

## Defence: Block & Impact Tackles



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

### Summary

When performing a tackle, players must be thinking about the end result, that being the regaining of possession. The tackle is not over until the tackler is back on their feet and attacking the ball from a position above the tackled player.