

Defensive Play in Hurling & The Tackle



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On the menu tonight

- ▶ If you have come looking for a magic potion you are in the wrong place
- ▶ Ask Questions and follow up!!
- ▶ We are not snake oil merchants, we hope to speak about the evolution of defensive play and give you some new ideas to bring to your coaching.
- ▶ We could do a seminar on this not to mind a webinar, so we will touch on main points
- ▶ We will be happy to discuss further or do some practical workshops with groups when lockdown lifts.
- ▶ Emails and contacts details provided at the end.

Types of defending

- ▶ Hooking
- ▶ Blocking
- ▶ Flicking
- ▶ Body tackle
- ▶ Spare hand
- ▶ Positioning (right place of the opponent)

3 T's

► **Technical Proficiency (Know how)**

The ability to perform the underlying techniques of the game accurately, consistently and at match tempo.

► **Tactical Prowess (Know what and when)** The ability to weigh up match situations and decide on what option to take and when to take it

► **Team Play (Know Who and Where)**

The ability to anticipate movements and synchronise who goes where during play or set pieces

3 P'S

► **Physical fitness**

The ability to perform the basic techniques, engage in physical contests and respond to the signs, sounds and signals experienced during the game with the least possible expenditure of energy

► **Participant feedback/ Playing facts**

The ability to identify playing strengths and areas where improvement is required and to accept why changes in training, tactics and team line out etc may be necessary

► **Psychological focus**

The ability to maintain attention on the here and now and switch concentration as the need arises

FRONTAL BLOCK

- ▶ Importance of thumb
- ▶ The ball is the main outcome
- ▶ Main error is forgetting to protect oneself



1. Great awareness from player on the ball to avoid block



2. Great anticipation from defender to get Hurley up and to try and guess the direction of the ball leaving the Hurley of the other player



3. Great defending main thing is eyes on the ball at all times again anticipation of direction of ball in place and shows great work ethic to get in block



Hooking

- ▶ Direction of impact can alter difficulty of contact on opponents Hurley.
- ▶ When coaching its important you have a contact point to achieve hook.
- ▶ Wrist passed their shoulder you're going to be hit!!
- ▶ Scenarios



Flicking

- ▶ When an opponent is in possession of the ball either dribbling or soloing and a defender swings the Hurley and makes contact with the ball (or hurley).
- ▶ A skill being performed more and more in the modern game
- ▶ Key points
 1. Keeping eye on ball is essential
 2. Starting position of hurley
 3. Purpose of tackle i.e getting ball to ground, putting off the opponent.



Eyes on ball

Making clear contact with the ball



Coming across with the Hurley not down so not a chop and can often make player lose control of the ball



The Hurley should be ready to be used at all times

- ▶ Starting Position of Hurley??
- ▶ Use of Hurley??



Body Tackle

Reasons for coaching

- ▶ The most performed tackle in every senior game at moment
- ▶ If performed correctly can regain possession, win a free, motivate players around you
- ▶ If timed or performed incorrectly can give away most frees

Becoming more important

- ▶ As coaching and players are relying on fundamental movements more in today's game
- ▶ Players awareness on the ball is becoming more astute
- ▶ The only tackle players can get in a short space of time is a body check

Purpose of body tackle

If timed correctly:

- ▶ Can prevent players moving the direction they want to go
- ▶ Getting our body(mass) in the way of the direction the player wants to go!!
- ▶ Can provide enough time for defending team to swallow the player in possession resulting in a turnover or a free
- ▶ If the player on the ball is in the scoring zone, a good body contact can make player change direction preventing scoring opportunity



Importance of correct coaching

When timed incorrectly

- ▶ The player on the ball can evade the tackle quite easily



Poor Technique

- ▶ The player on the ball can use their hurley hand to push opponent away while moving to the space to perform next task on the ball.

Main coaching point when coaching body tackle

- ▶ The trunk of your body in line with opponents trunk if possible and don't let their hands above yours in tackle



Spare hand

- ▶ The media have portrayed the spare hand to be a negative way of defending in hurling
- ▶ This is far from the truth
- ▶ Spare hand defending is a very skilled task and if performed well can be very effective



Art of spare hand

Positives

- ▶ Can be used to knock possession away when player on ball is trying to perform task
- ▶ Important coaching point is like tackle in football hand in and out



Techniques

- ▶ Clear free
- ▶ Unforced error



- ▶ Same potential as first photo to be a lazy free but if hand is put in and out quick to put opponent off task has potential to be a textbook tackle



Positioning as a defensive method

- ▶ Positioning is so important in today's game
- ▶ Psychological focus= reading the game
- ▶ Through coaching you learn aspects of the game and how to defend
- ▶ Anticipating the break of the ball
- ▶ Protect the goals



Decision making

- ▶ As coaches we always talk about decision making with the ball
- ▶ Without the ball every bit as important
- ▶ This picture was a famous mistimed tackle
- ▶ Had he a better option in terms of defending ?



The Great Game

- ▶ Good example of the frontal block
- ▶ Good example of correct decision making because he blocked the ball
- ▶ If he failed to block the ball it would be argued why is he not on the line
- ▶ This is why we love sport its split second decisions that alter the result of any situation on the field



Defence Wins Championships

Poor Decision
Rash Tackle

Good Decision
Measured Tackle



The Tackle

- ▶ Defending and tactics have changed in the last decade
- ▶ Body tackles and spare hand being used as much as hooking and blocking
- ▶ Reason why tackling is so hard to coach its all based on decision making
- ▶ Many aspects happen at once
- ▶ Defining the purpose of tackle is extremely important at any age



What is the Tackle to Players

- ▶ *“Make the initial contact with the spare hand on the chest. Strong arms kept below chest height and tensed when engaging. Make sure not to be flat footed.” DOD*
- ▶ *“1. Get your feet right. Don’t have them planted as it’s easy to side step. One foot slightly forward so your body is at an angle. 2. Keep your arms strong so you don’t wrap an opponent. 3. Time your tackle to when they have taken 4 steps and they have to play the ball.” DM*
- ▶ *“1. Being able to adjust your feet to align with the centre of the opponent is very important. When he goes either side of you are relying on your upper body strength to prevent him passing you. 2. Focus on the ball. If he is taking you on be conscious of the amount of steps he has taken and wait for him to put the ball on the hurley. That is your opportunity to make an effective dispossession. Committing too early will give them an opportunity to go by you or give away a needless free. 3. Keeping your arms out wide in appropriate position. Not too high as you will give away a free, down low and strong. Ties in with upper body strength and controlling the opponent in the tackle.” SF*
- ▶ *“The most important that I find in relation to the tackle and applies largely to the modern game is being measured in the tackle. All the best technique goes out the window if a player is too aggressive. Force the opponent to you are tackling to take steps under pressure which then gives your teammates the opportunity to get to make another tackle. Players have adapted to winning easy frees so important not to give the referee an easy decision to make.” SF*
- ▶ *“For tackling the most important thing is keep your eye on the ball and set your feet. It is important not to jump in and instead delay the attacker until they take a touch or throw up the ball. Then you can make the move on the ball to get possession.” RE*

What is the Tackle to Players

- ▶ *“1. Feet position, staggered stance as you very seldom stop an opponent up completely if he running at you. Allows you to retreat backwards and continue to tackle if he breaks/half breaks tackle. 2. Central Position i.e try and get your body centred with his. Focus on centre point e.g middle of chest, this helps give a focus of where your body position should be when reacting to movement. 3. Focus on the Ball. While the above focus on slowing down your opponents momentum, the main aim of a tackle is to turn over your opponent. Keep your eye on the ball and know where it is at all times to allow you to flick, intercept or use spare hand when your opponent is trying to play the ball.” TM*
- ▶ *“The most important thing about the tackle is the selflessness of effort. You sacrifice yourself and your body for the betterment of the team in a controlled manner. Get in close and hands close too so you don’t wrap around the opponent and give away a free. A tackle needs to be measured and calculated”. CL*
- ▶ *“Getting your feet right when a man is running at you so you can get contact and stop his momentum and make him turn.” GH*
- ▶ *“1. Getting your body square with the attacker when making initial contact. 2. Use the spare hand to get contact on the chest of the attacker to kill momentum. 3. Don’t wrap your hands around the attacker, engage and disengage. Make it hard for the referee to give a free. But keep constant pressure”. BN*
- ▶ *“Most important for me is the first contact, hand on chest, gives you time to adjust your body and delay his momentum and break his stride and he uses more steps and may play the ball. If he does break the tackle then adjust your body so you don’t give away a free. Keep hands low to avoid high contact. Putting pressure in on the side your on. Anticipation of where the tackle will be and getting there to put myself in a position to make contact.” KH*

Key Words

- ▶ What were the consistent messages from players:
 - ▶ Feet
 - ▶ Body Position
 - ▶ Angles
 - ▶ Anticipation,
 - ▶ First Contact
 - ▶ Break Momentum
 - ▶ Measured and Calculated
 - ▶ Don't wrap, in and out
 - ▶ The Ball.

The D's

- ▶ **Delay**
 - ▶ Break momentum
 - ▶ Allow others to get to the tackle
- ▶ **Deny**
 - ▶ Close space
 - ▶ Deny running lanes
 - ▶ Force to sideline
- ▶ **Dispossess**
 - ▶ Force steps
 - ▶ Wait for ball to be played
 - ▶ Force overcarry
- ▶ **Develop**
 - ▶ What do you do when you win the ball back
 - ▶ Transition from defence to attack

Implementing and working the Tackle into Sessions.

- ▶ Jumping straight into small sided games
 - ▶ What are you trying to achieve
 - ▶ Have you equipped the players to do it.
- ▶ Building Capacity
 - ▶ **Physical Capacity**—embodying concepts such as strength, range of motion, stamina, and balance—is a key pathway through which individuals maintain their ability to carry out activities.
 - ▶ Farmers, builders, boxers, road runners.

Ideas in a GAA Context

- ▶ 1 vs 1 or 2 vs 2
- ▶ Small Area
 - ▶ 7x12/10x10/5x5
 - ▶ 3x3
 - ▶ Combative but fun.
- ▶ Desired Outcome may be for time
- ▶ Another option is to put in some entry gates
- ▶ Keep coming up with unique ways to create change and diversity



Looking to Other Sports

- ▶ Literature or information is limited
- ▶ Most of it has been created in the last 2-3 years
- ▶ What do we do in training??
 - ▶ What we have been exposed to ourselves
 - ▶ What we have seen in intercounty sessions/warm ups
 - ▶ What we have seen other coaches doing
 - ▶ Can we come up with new and innovative ideas ourselves??

American Football-Offensive Linemen

- ▶ The Men who Protect the Man.
- ▶ To be successful, an offensive lineman needs to have these five characteristics: intelligence, toughness, work ethic, good character, and athletic ability.
- ▶ The offensive line dictates how well a QB can play on every single down.
- ▶ David Bakhtiari - 4 year €92,000,000 contract.



Similarities

- ▶ American Football
- ▶ Stop the defence reaching the QB
- ▶ Chopping - 15 yards
- ▶ Clipping - 15 yards
- ▶ Facemask - 15 yards
- ▶ Holding - 10 yards
- ▶ GAA
- ▶ Stop the player passing you.
- ▶ Cant tackle low at legs
- ▶ Can't push in the back
- ▶ Can't go high or grab
- ▶ Can't hold jersey



Closer Look



- ▶ How does this transfer.
 - ▶ Hand Movement
 - ▶ First Contact on Chest
 - ▶ Feet movement
 - ▶ Hips aligned
 - ▶ Short intense burst
 - ▶ Same energy system

- ▶ https://twitter.com/rugby_str_coach/status/1151152560742522880?s=24

How would I do this in training

(Bare with me)

- ▶ 5-10min block at the start of training. Without hurleys to start
- ▶ 4 cones in diamond shape - 2 steps between each cone
- ▶ One player inside, one player outside
- ▶ Player inside tucks bib into their shorts
- ▶ No Contact, cannot enter cones area
- ▶ Inside, lateral feet, keep hips lined up. Don't show back.
- ▶ Outside, unpredictable movements, explosive
- ▶ Progression
- ▶ Add in contact, player inside can contact chest to keep outside player away. Creating Space.
- ▶ Add ball, take away bib.
- ▶ Player outside has ball in hand, first touch ball ideal.
- ▶ Must touch ball off inside players back.
- ▶ Inside player uses chest contact as before to create space and then swipes down at ball.
- ▶ Final progression add in hurleys.

Oklahoma Drill



- ▶ 2(a,b)v1(c) in a square, 5x5 in size
- ▶ 1 of group of 2 has the ball(a with ball, b without)
- ▶ Player b at 2m and Player A at 4m
- ▶ Player c must break passed player b and get to player a with the ball, initiate contact and turnover.
- ▶ Once player c passes player b, player a can move to try and get passed player c.
- ▶ Unrealistic but touch work and lots going on. Reaction!!!
- ▶ <https://youtu.be/q-aiksuAczQ>

Lastly

- ▶ Encourage workrate and the swarm tackle and build into sessions.
 - ▶ 1 tackler = 1/6
 - ▶ 2 tacklers = 50/50
 - ▶ 3 tacklers = 8/10
 - ▶ 4 tacklers = 100%
- ▶ What you do on the pitch must come back to your overall principles. These must overarch your session and technical built in after.
- ▶ What are your overall thoughts on your defensive system, zonal, man marking, sweeper, deep lying HF line, deep MF, roaming CF.
- ▶ Forwards **MUST** tackle more

Thank You

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