

# SKILL BIASED GAMES

## Teaching Rugby League through Skill Biased training games



NRL Coach Education

Series Number 1

## What is a Skill Biased Game?

A skill biased game is a training aid designed to teach players an aspect of rugby league while practicing it in a game based situation. It can also provide a team with the same benefit of development.

The reasoning behind a skill biased game is to modify the rules and situations of normal rugby league to suit what you are trying to teach or practice. The games can be used for a variety of training, which could include fun skill based games for mini league players to more situational opposed games for junior international players.

In the following pages we will set out everything you need to know to create your own skill biased game and start using them in your training sessions. These Skill Biased Games can be:

- » Skill games
- » Fun games
- » Conditioning games
- » Teamwork games
- » Situational games
- » Problem solving games

## What Are the Benefits of Skill Biased Games?

*Skill Biased Game can benefit you as a coach through:*

- » Increased player participation
- » Increased core skill repetition within a game situation
- » More core skills such as passing and tackling can be attempted providing repetition for your players
- » Improved problem solving skills
- » Improved communication skills
- » Variety in your training



## How is a Skill Biased Game Different from a Training Drill?

The main difference between drills and Skill Biased Game is that a skill biased game encourages players to practice skills in an environment that mimics segments of the whole game on the weekend. There are 3 different ways you can teach skills in the core of your training session. They are:

- » Closed Drill: This would be simple drills that allow players to practice the skill without much distraction. This could include passing in pairs or stationary tackling
- » Open Drill: These are activities that allow players to practice skills and situations but are not in a game setting. This could include a simple 2 v 1 drill or passing in lines
- » Skill Biased Game: As we found out earlier, Skill Biased Game are modified games of rugby league. These modifications need to be made to practice a certain skill or situation



## How to use Skill Biased Games in a Training Session

You can use Skill Biased Game 2 ways. The first way would involve building towards a skill biased game by progressing through Closed Drill and Open Drill and using the Skill Biased Game as a way to practice the skill. The other way is to start with the Skill Biased Game, take them into a refining drill, and then back into a Skill Biased Game to practice those skills.

### PROGRESSION

- » Warm Up
- » Closed Drill
- » Open Drill
- » Skill Biased Game
- » Cool Down

### GAME - PRACTICE - GAME

- » Warm Up
- » Skill Biased Game
- » Open Drill
- » Skill Biased Game
- » Cool Down



**Building Session:** This way of training is a building block. It starts with a breakdown and practice of a skill or team play then progresses to a basic open drill. Once players have practiced the skill and completed the skill in a controlled activity you then move to Skill Biased Game.

**Game - Practice - Game:** This way of structuring your session is a step forward from the last. It involves starting with a skill biased game, identifying a skill that needs improvement, conducting a refined drill on that skill, and then coming back to the game. The outcome should see players concentrate on completing the skill better the second time around.

# Types of Skill Biased Games



## SKILL GAMES

These are games based around trying to improve individual skills like ball handling, passing, tackling etc.

## FUN GAMES

These are games that are purely designed for fun and enjoyment. They involve skills of rugby league in a fun way.

## CONDITIONING GAMES

Rather than use traditional conditioning, try and incorporate a game. These types of games usually involve making fields bigger, reducing player numbers, or making games continuous.

## OPPOSED TEAMWORK GAMES

These are games that are designed to improve team play. They are usually situational based and are opposed. The aim is to break down team play and practice individual sections of attack or defence.

## MINI / MOD GAMES

Games for mini mod ages need to be more skill related and fun. The more kids can practice in a game environment the better.

## INTERNATIONAL GAMES

Games for international ages can be fun but they also need to have games that are teamwork based and situational based.

# Skill Biased Games Matrix

## GAME OUTCOMES

What do you want your team or players to learn?  
Is it skill, teamwork, fun, or conditioning based?  
Is it attack or defence based?



## FIELD SIZE

What is the length and width of your field?

## PLAYERS PER TEAM

How many players on each team in the game?



## STOPPING PLAY

Highlight how a player is stopped in the game

Touch  
Tackle  
Grab  
Other

## RESTARTING PLAY

Highlight how a player restarts the game after a stop

Play the Ball  
Tap Restart  
Elbows & Knees  
Roll over & PTB



## RULE CHANGES

What are the rule changes in your game that differ from normal Rugby League? Be creative here to



## WHERE AND HOW IS THE GAME STARTED?

How is the game started? Is it a grid based game that starts from cones or line? An opposed game? Or a game that starts in a situation on the field?

# Skill Biased Games Matrix Explained



## What is your game outcome?

In this stage you must state what it is you want to achieve from your game. An example of this could be that you identified your team was deficient in marker defence during weekend games. The outcome of your session could be that you want to teach a new marker defence system or practice an existing one with the goal of improving communication. Your outcome also needs to be:

- » Skill, teamwork, conditioning, or fun based
- » Attack or defence based
- » Individual skill or team skill based

## What is the size of your field?

All you have to do here is explain your field size. What is the length and width? This will depend on your game outcome e.g. if you are designing a conditioning game your field will be large. If you are designing a skill game around the ruck area, it will be narrow.

## How many players per team?

Simply how many players per team. Most games will have 2 teams. Teams can be even numbers or can be uneven to help the attack or defence. Having fewer defenders will promote attacking games and vice versa

## How is play stopped?

How to you stop a player? In normal rugby league you are tackled, in a Skill Biased Game you can modify this to variations of tackle and touch. This could include

- » Tackle
- » Touch Variations
- » Grab

## How is play restarted?

Play is normally restarted with a play the ball. You can restart with:

- » Play the ball
- » Roll over on back before playing the ball
- » Tap
- » Hit elbows and knees before playing the ball

## Rule Changes

This section gives you the scope to modify the rules of normal rugby league to help teach what you want to teach. This could include rules like if you carry the ball in one hand it's a turnover or you may not have any markers in defence. Think creatively to come up with rules that help you to teach your outcomes.

## Where and how is the game started?

If your game is based around opposed work and not individual skills then you need to identify what situation they are in. What area of the field are they in? Are they attacking or defending? Is it tackle 1 or tackle 4 that they start at? The game can also start from lines, behind cones or play the ball

# Strategies to Increase Learning in Skill Biased Games

## Game Sense

Game sense is a relatively new approach to teaching and coaching which uses games as the focus of the session. By focusing on the game players will better communicate and become tactically aware to make better decisions during the game. This is all done whilst developing the skills of the game in a realistic context. The way that players learn in a game sense approach is for a coach to use questioning skills to assist players to solve problems rather than tell players what is right or wrong. If the phrasing of the questions is effective it will help “guide” the players to the right answer. The right type of questions to use are open questions, which are questions that promote discussion and interaction rather than yes or no answers. Examples of grate open questions could be:

- » Where is the best place to run the ball and why?
- » Which is the best person to pass to & why?
- » How can you make it more difficult for your opponent to score?
- » When is the best time in a game to attack?
- » Is it better to pass or run in that situation?
- » How can you assist your teammate?

If you can get the players to answer these questions with your guidance then they are much more likely to retain the information. It will also help your players learn exactly what you are trying to teach them.

## Penalty / Reward System

When you are teaching a team or individual to perform an aspect of the game, you must have a penalty or reward system so that players learn what is good and bad. A penalty system means that if you don't do what is required in the game then you penalized. Just like in rugby league. The penalty must be immediate rather than built up at the end of a session so that players understand exactly why they are penalized. A reward system is the same concept, you are just rewarding them when they display behaviour that you want them to. Examples of both penalties and rewards are displayed below.

### PENALTIES

- » Changeover of possession
- » Loose a tackle from the tackle count
- » Loose points for your team
- » Loose a player for a determined amount of time.

### REWARDS

- » Gain possession of the ball
- » Gain extra tackle's in the tackle count
- » Gain points for your team
- » Gain extra players.

# SBG1

## Two Hand Carry



Any Age

10 mins

Min. 6 Players

### Game Objectives / Outcomes:

for all players to learn to run with the ball in two hands when

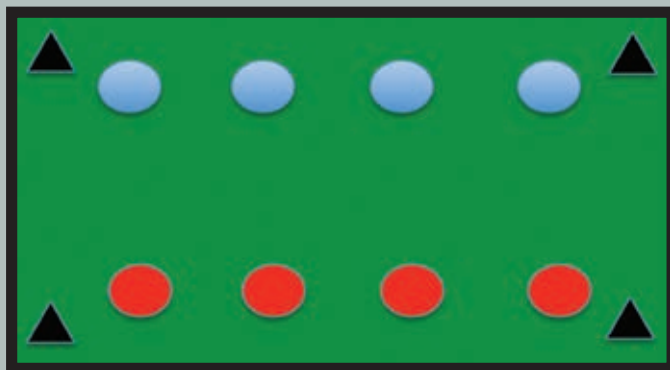
### Skill Area(s):

Catch & Pass, Carry, Attacking Play

### Drill Description:

Normal of game of touch Rugby League applies. The rule change is if a player runs the ball and doesn't have the ball in two hands there is a penalty against them. You can choose the severity of this. Penalties can be:

- » Loosing points
- » Loosing possession
- » Player being called held and having to play the ball



### Just fill in the blank boxes below to complete your game.

Field Width		Stopping Play	Normal	Team A Size	
Field Length		Restarting Play	Normal	Team B Size	
Rule Changes	If the ball carrier doesn't hold the ball in two hands, there is a penalty against them			Number of Plays Per Team	

### Progression

Increase or reduce the size of the field, and players per team

# SBG2

## Continuous Attack



10+

10 mins

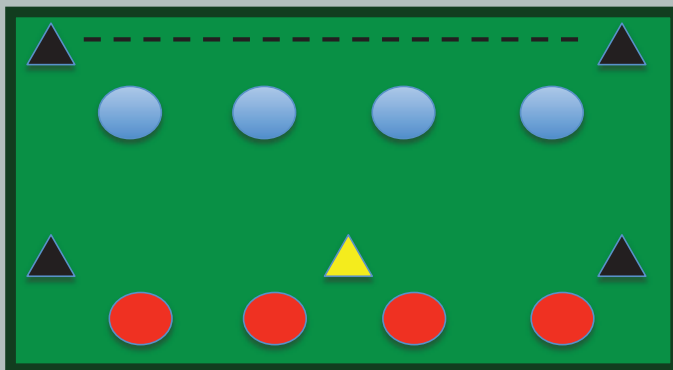
Min. 8 Players

**Game Objectives / Outcomes:** for players to practice different attacking options and develop awareness and communication

**Skill Area(s):** Attacking team play

**Drill Description:**

- » Red team starts with the ball on the yellow cone and has 4 plays to score a try against the blue team.
- » If the red team makes a mistake that would end possession of the ball or their 4 plays expire, they return to the yellow cone and start again.
- » One team has possession for a defined period of time e.g. 4 mins. Then possession is changed over and the blue team will have the same time with the ball.



**Just fill in the blank boxes below to complete your game.**

Field Width		Stopping Play	Two Hand Touch	Team A Size	
Field Length		Restarting Play	Roll on back before playing the ball	Team B Size	
Rule Changes	If the ball carrier doesn't hold the ball in two hands, there is a penalty against them			Number of Plays Per Team	

**Progression**

Increase or reduce the size of the field, and players per team