

The driving maul

The session

What you tell your players the session is about:

- 1 Creating a driving maul with three players in an "arrowhead" and the ball carrier at the back.
- 2 Controlling a maul so the ball carrier can detach and attack.

What you tell your players to do:

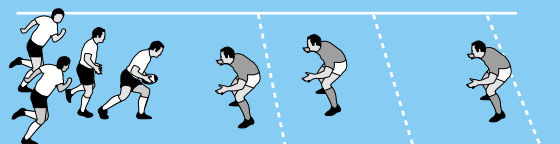
- 1 Ball carrier: slow down before contact and turn to face your support.
- 2 Stay on your feet in contact.
- 3 The first support player must always secure the ball.
- 4 Create a "skin" of players around the ball and move it to the back of the maul.
- 5 Form the maul into an "arrowhead" or "dart" shape.
- 6 Scrum half: direct the drive and be aware of your options.

What you get your players to do:

Four players line up in a 7 metre channel, with one in front of another and two at each side. Facing a defender only a few metres away, the first player picks up a ball and drives into the defender. Staying on their feet, the other attackers bind on, with the second player ripping the ball. When the maul goes more than four metres (indicated by a line), the ball carrier breaks loose and then goes into the next contact. Repeat twice more along the channel.

The driving maul

Attackers



Defenders

Developing the session

The training session can be developed as follows.

- 1 The defenders try to bring down the ball carrier before the maul is formed.
- 2 Have two defenders on each line.
- 3 Set a time limit to get to the end of the channel.
- 4 The attackers have to start outside the side edge of the box and run in, like from the side of a ruck.

A game situation

The session can be developed further by playing the "mauling gauntlet" game. Widen the channel to about 10 metres, with three lines about 10 metres apart. Set up two teams with equal numbers. Split the defence so that half of the defenders have to defend the middle line and the rest the last line. The attackers are thrown the ball and use any normal means possible to score. The defenders on the middle line can help the defenders on the last line, but not vice versa. Adjust the width of the channel so that when all the defenders are in a line, they cover the width at about an arm's distance apart.

Coach's notes



What to call out

- "Talk the ball back"
- "Three or four hands on the ball until it can be moved back" (that is, two players drive in together, holding onto the ball)
- "Take short, sharp steps. Bend the knees"
- "Ball carrier: keep the ball away from the opposition"
- "Ball carrier: slow down – wait for support, don't get isolated"
- "Don't let the opposition see the ball"



What to look for

- The ball carrier getting into a poor position in contact. They must shield the ball from the opposition and open up their body enough for a support player to rip it clear.
- The ball carrier taking contact without adequate support and so is forced to the ground or turned.
- Binding players not protecting the ball carrier. They must get their hips at least in line with the front player and turn inwards to avoid opponents coming through the middle.



What to think about

When are mauls most likely to be used? What communication should be used, e.g. when to break? What are the likely actions of the opposition and how can these be countered?