

Foot speed through impact training drills – Part 1

By Mark Sayers

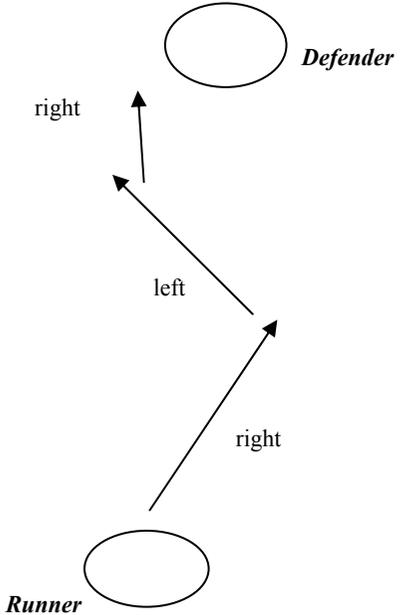
Drill Name	Description	Purpose	Key Coaching Points
Warm-ups			
<i>Toe up</i>	Bouncing off the Achilles tendon, landing on the midfoot and keeping the knees straight	Warm-up the calf area and reinforces notion of dynamic midfoot foot strike	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lock up abs 2. Rebound off the ground 3. Feel the spring in the Achilles
<i>Front step-overs</i>	Side running with dynamic step from rear leg	Warm-up groin area	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keep body square 2. Rear leg always steps to the front of the front leg 3. As players warm-up movement should become more dynamic
<i>Grape vine</i>	Similar to above but incorporates a rear step so that players run sideways alternating between front and back stepping	Warm-up groin area	As above
<i>Butt kicks no knee lift</i>	Taking small steps flex knee up rapidly so that foot strikes the butt. Don't use a knee lift	Warms up quads and hamstrings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keep foot strikes dynamic 2. Get players to check for asymmetric patterns
<i>Butt kicks with knee lift</i>	Taking small steps flex hip and knee up simultaneously so that foot strikes the butt. Minimise rear leg movements	Warms up quads and hamstrings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keep foot strikes dynamic 2. Get players to check for asymmetric patterns

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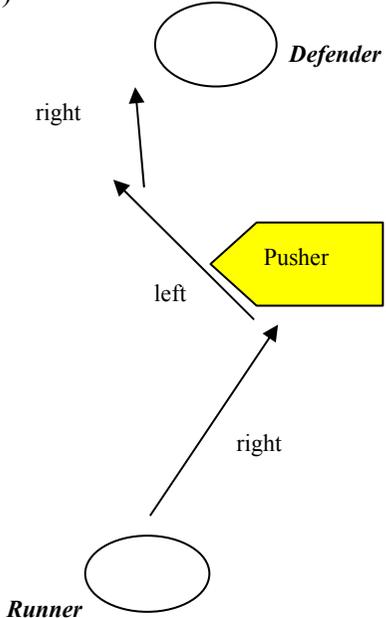
Foot Speed		Purpose	Key Coaching Points
<i>Indian runs</i>	Skipping drill where the player takes a small hop on each foot. Dynamic midfoot impact. Very stance width during successive drills (wide stance is quite a good warm-up for the groins).	This drill forces the players to move their feet faster than they would usually and acts as a form of neurological warm-up.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keep foot strikes dynamic 2. Speed is the key 3. Lock-up abs 4. Don't allow players to skip backwards – always use positive movements
<i>Indian stepping</i>	Similar to above although this time the players must step laterally during each of the small hops, creating a small side-step. Quite a good drill to do in pairs (on behind the other) with the rear player giving the front player feedback on their ability to step equally of both feet.	A continuation of above with the advantage that it encourages players to generate good rapid laterally forces during each foot strike	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As above 2. Players must move laterally during the hop
<i>Fast feet, relaxed mind</i>	Players organised into three lines. Players must concentrate on maximising stride rate while <i>passing</i> a clap down the line.	Reinforces foot speed, whilst emphasising the need to stay relaxed and not narrow your focus	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foot strikes should be powerful and dynamic 2. Players must not alter foot speed despite rhythm of clap 3. The legs produce a violent movement, while the upper body and head remain relaxed
<i>Fast feet and hands</i>	Players organised into three lines (≈ 1.5 m apart) with a ball feeder to one side. Players must concentrate on maximising stride rate while passing a ball along the line and back	Reinforces foot speed, whilst emphasising the need to stay relaxed and not narrow your focus	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foot strikes should be powerful and dynamic 2. Pass should be a relaxed pop pass 3. Players must not alter foot speed whilst catching and passing the ball

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<i>Fast feet and hands (variation)</i>	Similar to above although in this drill the coach stands in a position that puts pressure on the players or requires them to alter their pass rhythm slightly	Reinforces foot speed, whilst emphasising the need to stay relaxed and not narrow your focus	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foot strikes should be powerful and dynamic 2. Pass should be a relaxed pop pass 3. Players must not alter foot speed whilst catching and passing the ball 4. Players should maintain good vision and react to coaches positioning appropriately
<i>Fast feet and hands (variation2)</i>	Similar to original fast feet and hands drill although this time the lines are arranged approximately 3 m apart.	As above, but this drill places more pressure on the pass as it has to be longer. There should still be no noticeable change in foot speed even though the players should use a spiral pass	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foot strikes should be powerful and dynamic 2. Pass should be accurate and not too firm 3. Players must not alter foot speed whilst catching and passing the ball
Impact Posture & Acceleration			
<i>Body lean accelerations</i>	Players organised in pairs. One player supports the other (holding shoulders) in a pronounced forward lean. <i>Holder</i> jumps out the way and <i>Runner</i> is required to sprint out of this overbalanced position.	Encourages good body positions and teaches players to accelerate out of an overbalanced forward lean.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foot strikes must be kept under or behind (ideal) the hips. 2. Dynamic midfoot impacts
<i>Body lean accelerations (variation 1)</i>	Same as above although in this case a ball is placed midway between the <i>holder's</i> and <i>Runner's</i> feet (a harder variation is to place the ball at the <i>Runner's</i> feet).	Encourages good body positions and teaches players to accelerate out of an overbalanced forward lean. Makes players bend their knees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foot strikes must be kept under or behind (ideal) the hips. 2. Dynamic midfoot impacts 3. Players must bend from the knees and hips to pick-up the ball

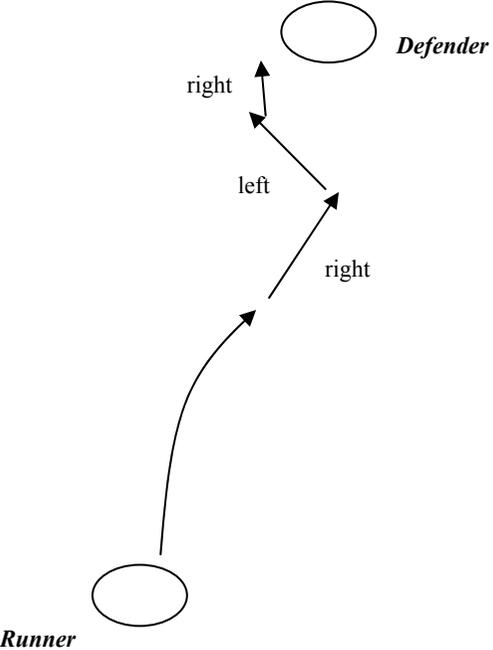
Setting up Impact			
<p><i>Three step drill</i> (Learning the Power Step)</p>	<p>Players arranged in pairs or threes. One player (<i>Defender</i>) stands approximately 1.5 m from the <i>Runner</i>. <i>Runner</i> initiates the last three steps into impact using the <i>dash-dot-dot</i> rhythm. <i>Runner</i> must get inside foot back onto ground as quickly as possible – the Power Step</p>  <p><i>Runner</i> then accelerates for 5 m past <i>Defender</i>. Two handed ball carry transferring ball away from impact</p>	<p>Develop an effective side-step that minimises the loss of horizontal speed. Encourages good body positions and teaches players to maintain balance even when moving laterally. Places the <i>Runner</i> in the best position possible to sustain an impact from <i>Defender</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lateral steps to be at around 45° (always have a lot of front the side-step) 2. Concentrate on dynamic third step 3. <i>Runner</i> should be accelerating throughout movement 4. Don't <i>come-up</i> during side-step (stay down) 5. Transfer ball away from <i>tackler</i> 6. Keep the <i>dash-dot-dot</i> rhythm and use good foot strikes (mid-foot) to accelerate past <i>Defender</i> 7. Encourage <i>Runner</i> to cut back behind the <i>Defender</i> 8. Lock up abs
<p><i>Three step running</i></p>	<p>Players arranged in a line and perform three step drill across the field concentrating on the <i>dash-dot-dot</i> rhythm (i.e. <i>dash-dot-dot</i>, <i>dash-dot-dot</i>, <i>dash-dot-dot</i>, etc.)</p>	<p>Remedial drill to designed to reinforce the ideal rhythm</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Check foot placement to ensure positive stepping

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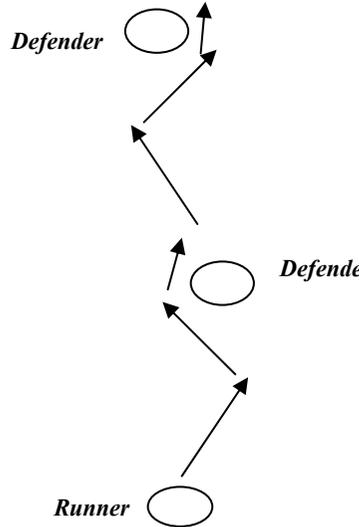
<p><i>Three step drill (variation)</i></p>	<p>Similar to three step drill although this drill uses a third player as a <i>pusher</i> (see diagram above) to try and disrupt the footwork and balance of the <i>Runner</i>. The <i>pusher</i> pushes violently at the hip of the <i>Runner</i> just prior to the third step (when the stability of the <i>Runner</i> will be compromised if the <i>Runner</i> is using poor technique)</p> 	<p>As above. The <i>Runner</i> will overbalance if they are too high, have not maintained a tight core and/or not used the <i>dash-dot-dot</i> rhythm. Reinforces the need to achieve a rapid <i>Power Step</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As for Three Step Drill
<p><i>Body lean accelerations (variation 2)</i></p>	<p>Same as above although players are now organised in threes. The third player stands in a position that requires the <i>Runner</i> to side-step around him. Introduces the <i>dash-dot-dot</i> rhythm</p>	<p>Encourages good body positions and teaches players to maintain balance even when moving laterally. Music can be useful aid here to help players establish an effective rhythm</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lateral step to be at around 45° 2. Concentrate on dynamic third step 3. Don't <i>come-up</i> during side-step 4. Transfer ball away from <i>tackler</i>

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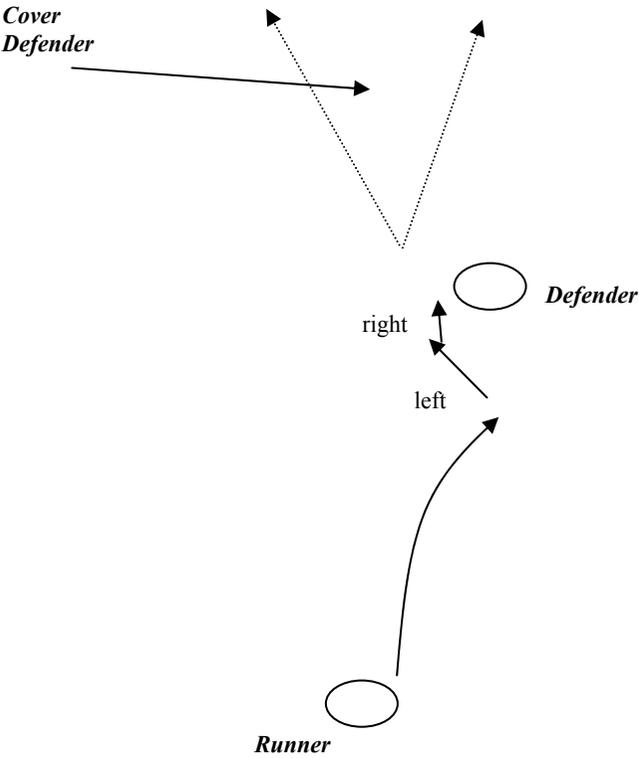
<p><i>Three step drill into impact</i></p>	<p>Similar to the <i>Three step drill</i> although in this instance the <i>Runner</i> will run into the <i>Defender</i> who is wearing a <i>hit vest</i>. On impact <i>Runner</i> must try and drive <i>Defender</i> back for three fast steps before going to ground (twisting away from the <i>Defender</i>) and setting up the ball.</p>	<p>Works on dynamic impacts and initiation of ball retention. Reinforces the importance of perfect ball set-up</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As for Three Step Drill 2. Keep up leg speed after impact 3. <i>Runner</i> must bend from hips and knees at impact 4. Use good body twist to go to ground away from <i>Defender</i> 5. Keep ground contacts under or behind (ideal) the hips 6. Do not <i>T-bone</i> the shield 7. No ball roll
<p><i>Three step drill into impact with tackle</i></p>	<p>Same as above but in this case the <i>Defender</i> applies a tackle.</p>	<p>An advanced skill of above</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Same as above, although errors are punished by the <i>Defender</i> more severely. 2. Players often start to <i>T-bone</i> the <i>Defender</i> so watch for the three step set-up
<p><i>Three step drill into impact with tackle (game)</i></p>	<p>As above although in this case the <i>Defender</i> gets 5 points every time the ball is not set-up correctly (i.e. protected by body with no roll). As the attacker has the advantage, they get only 1 point every time the ball is set up correctly. Keep players no more than 1.5 m apart to minimise injury.</p>	<p>A competitive version of above. Can be turned into a defensive drill</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As above 2. Check for perfect ball placement despite attentions of <i>Defender</i>

<p><i>Stepping off an angled run</i></p>	<p>Similar to the three step drill although this time the <i>Runner</i> stands approximately 5 m from the <i>Defender</i> and sets-up his step by creating a slight angle in his approach</p>  <p>The <i>Runner</i> is not to run across field; rather they are to create an angle by arching towards the <i>Defender's</i> outside shoulder. The stepping pattern remains identical to the three step drill. To set the drill up place two cones 5 m apart (<i>Defender</i> on one, <i>Runner</i> on the other). Place two cones 2 m from the <i>Runner</i> about 1 m apart.</p>	<p>Gives players an effective option when they have a little more room the set-up the impact.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The stepping pattern must remain the same as the three step drill 2. <i>Runner</i> must attack the outside shoulder of the <i>Defender</i> and step late concentrating on accelerating past the <i>Defender</i>. 3. Must be done at pace 4. <i>Runner</i> must not run too side-ways and should only arc slightly
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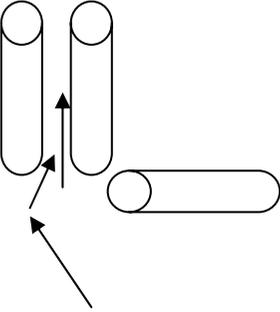
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<p><i>Step with a fend</i></p>	<p>This drill is similar to the three step drill mentioned previously although this time the <i>Runner</i> applies a fend to the <i>Defender</i>. The fend must be a dynamic action with the push coming from the shoulder and not the elbow. <i>Runner</i> should aim for the outside chest of the <i>Defender</i>.</p>	<p>Encourages the <i>Runner</i> to try and beat the <i>Defender</i> whilst teaching / reinforcing correct fending techniques. Places more emphasis on the quality of the third step.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Runner</i> will need to get themselves more to the side of the <i>Defender</i> in order to make the fend more effective. 2. <i>Runner</i> must not leave fend arm out (gives the tackler something to grab) 3. Needs a solid fend (<i>Defender</i> can provide feedback on fend quality) 4. Make sure <i>Runner</i> doesn't arc away from tackler (usually means poor core stability and/or poor 3rd step)
<p><i>Double fend challenge</i></p>	<p>Similar to above but this time an extra <i>Defender</i> is added (see diagram below).</p>  <p>The diagram shows three players represented by circles. At the bottom is the <i>Runner</i>. Above it is a <i>Defender</i>. At the top is another <i>Defender</i>. Arrows indicate the following movement paths: the <i>Runner</i> moves up towards the middle <i>Defender</i>; the middle <i>Defender</i> moves down towards the <i>Runner</i>; and the top <i>Defender</i> moves down towards the middle <i>Defender</i>.</p>	<p>Genuine challenge to balance and coordination for many players. Teaches players to stay down and keep their core solid and they change direction and fend.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As above 2. If the third step is too slow the play will not be able to cut inside the second <i>Defender</i>.

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<p><i>Stepping the Cover Defender</i></p>	<p>Similar to the <i>Stepping off an angled run</i> drill with the addition of a <i>Cover Defender</i> positioned to the side. <i>Cover Defender</i> either over commits (in which case the <i>Runner</i> steps behind them) or holds (the <i>Runner</i> will need to make a decision as to the appropriate action). NB: I would rather use a coach as the cover <i>Defender</i> as this drill will reinforce poor defensive technique in your players (note this is an attacking drill).</p>  <p>The diagram illustrates the drill setup. A Runner (represented by a circle) is at the bottom, moving upwards and to the right. A Defender (circle) is positioned to the right of the Runner's path. A Cover Defender (circle) is positioned to the left of the Runner's path. Arrows indicate the Runner's path, the Defender's position, and the Cover Defender's position. Dotted lines show the Runner's potential path if the Cover Defender overcommits or holds.</p>	<p>Excellent decision making drill. Encourages players to keep their vision and to react to the defence.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. See comments for the appropriate drills2. Check that <i>Runner</i> is making an effective decision based on the <i>Cover Defender</i>'s positioning.3. Watch for players who are overstriding early and so are unable to avoid the <i>Cover Defender</i>
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<p><i>Attacking the space</i></p>	<p>This drill can be used as a variation to the <i>Three step drill into impact</i> and <i>Stepping off an angled run</i> drills. In this variation the <i>Defender</i> is replaced by two large tackle bags (held upright by two players) arranged approximately 30cm apart. The role of the <i>Runner</i> is to use the three step pattern to attack the space between the bags, accelerating through the impact and maintaining balance. Can also use players with hit shields or players in tackling suits depending on the degree of contact designated for the session.</p>	<p>Encourages players to attack the space in offence, accelerate through impact and maintain balance</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. See comments for the appropriate drills 2. Make sure the <i>Runner</i> still sets-up the impact by using a direction change 3. <i>Runner</i> must accelerate through the impact
<p><i>Attacking the space (Pick-&-Go variation)</i></p>	<p>Similar to above drill but this time the <i>Runner</i> takes the ball off the ground adjacent to a ruck (tackle bag on its side) and attacks the space between two upright bags positioned as guard dog and #1 Defenders (bags kept 30cm apart)</p> 	<p>As above, but uses a pick-&-go.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As above 2. Make sure the <i>Runner</i> stays down during the acceleration