

The Roll Ball



As players you should be aware that the game we love consists of only a few 'fundamental skills' that are then combined in an almost limitless way to give us multiple options to score. Please note the avoidance of the term 'basic skills' because it has connotations of being beneath elite players to practice, however, the feedback for all England Teams post 2010 Euros was that in order to compete more effectively at the higher levels we (England) need our 'fundamental skills' to be sharper, quicker and error free. For this section we will be looking at the roll-ball or more commonly called 'the dump'.

There are several technical elements related to dumping the ball which will be heavily scrutinized at higher levels of Touch which should be considered:-

- On the mark - You must dump the ball at the point where the touch is made. This is most likely to go wrong on yards when players 'ride the touch' and take an extra step
- Dumping square- Common infringement when running on an angle and dumping the ball. Players must have their hips square with the dead-ball line when dumping the ball
- Hips over the ball when dumping - This is a common infringement when the attacking team are near the oppositions line and they adjust their dumping technique. Players must get their backside over the ball when dumping to avoid conceding a penalty

As an attacking team you ultimately want to be able to control as much as possible of the game, deciding who to attack, where to attack and hence when you want to dump the ball. Every thing you do should be done with purpose. Remember that ball security is key. First priority is to place the ball cleanly on the ground – not to drop it. However as you progress you will need to be able to dump the ball single handed and with either hand. This allows you to initiate the touch with your free hand. Once you can do that, you are able to control when you dump the ball. We don't want the defenders dictating play.

There are 2 types of dumps,

- Driving-dump and
- Line-dump

The priorities remain the same – PROTECT THE BALL + PLACE THE BALL STATIONARY FOR A CLEAN PICK-UP. Likewise the steps to each are exactly the same.

While running towards the defensive player, the ball should be in both hands so the defence cannot tell on which side you are going to initiate the touch. Once you are close to the 'toucher', choose which side you plan to make the touch on.

You should be trying to get to the side of the defending player, (supporting attacking players should expect this), but NOT running away from them or you will have no 'half'. Communication between both the ball carrier and the players on either side is key to prevent this. Ball should be moved to the hand opposite/away from the defender to protect it from being knocked down in the touch. As you make the touch bend the knees and step forward and past the defensive player. Place the ball (never roll it) just

The Roll Ball



inside and behind the heel of the foot you stepped into the touch with. Touch the defender between their knees + hips, preferably across their front so they cannot sidestep your touch.



If you are going to initiate the touch on the left-hand side of the defensive player place the ball in the right-hand. Hold the ball at the widest point so when you place the ball on the ground the ends are pointing to each sideline. Place the ball (never roll it) just inside and behind the heel of the foot you stepped into the touch with, keeping hips square to the score-line. The fundamental difference between the 2 types of dump now occurs:

- **A driving-dump:** keep the running speed up going into the touch (this speed will vary depending on how well you can maintain control). Your momentum should be maintained and carried forward after the ball has been placed by stepping over the ball with the other foot so you clear the ruck and are in position to be half for the next drive.
- **A line-dump:** momentum coming for the dump is a lot slower as you don't want to power over the ball, but rather want to get back on-side to get back into the attacking line. So after the ball has been placed, immediately 'spring' sideways and backwards (to get out of the ruck) and get on-side for a return pass.

Are there players can I watch in the England squads who perform these dumps particularly well?

For a driving-dump Jon Lovell, who plays in the Mixed over 30's (cleverly featured in this month's who's who section'), completes this at pace with very few mistakes. For a line-dump Ryan Miemczyk, who plays for the Mixed Open, always gets back on-side after placing the ball and is then ready to receive the pass. I have seen these two players many times so have chosen them, but there will be other good examples around in your own squad so I suggest you ask your coach who's best to watch/copy.

All good coaches will tell you that 'Practice makes perfect' and this is particularly true for motor skills i.e. those using your muscles.

The Roll Ball



Passing the ball from the deck

Once the dump is complete, the half must ensure that the ball is on the floor for the minimal time possible, communication is key in this instance.

Basic concepts:

- Place the opposite foot to the direction the pass is going next to the side of the ball. i.e. if you are passing left, place your right foot next to the ball
- Maintain a wide stance and place the other foot pointing to the direction you want to pass
- Bend the knees, focus on staying low (crouch) while picking up the ball
- Continue to stay low when you pass, standing up wastes valuable time
- Head should be in the direction of the pass
- Drop your knee to rotate the torso
- Use a sweeping pendulum motion to pick up the ball



How can I practice each of these?

Fortunately, unlike a lot of Touch skills, dumping can be practiced on your own. For a driving-dump take a ball down to your local park and use the goal posts as a person on whom you are going to make the dump. Start off at more than 5m away and run at a speed where you can perform the dump 50% pace and 100% accuracy (100% speed and 0% accuracy is pointless!). Then place the ball in one hand and effect a touch on the post with the opposite hand using the above steps as a guide. Once your accuracy is high, increase the speed at which you do the drill.

For a line-dump pick any wall and start exactly 5m away, approach the wall and effect a touch on it using the steps above. For additional value have a 'buddy' standing as half to pass the ball straight back to you after it has been placed.

Rule of thumb: It takes 50 repetitions doing it CORRECTLY to learn a skill, 500 times for it become mastered and 5000 for it to become automatic.....so get practicing!