

## **Pace**

### **An Article by David Adamson**

Last month I wrote about speed training and the relative training methods. While these are important concepts and methods foot speed is only one component of what I call back pace.

Back pace comprises:

**Running Speed**

**Passing Speed**

**Thinking Speed**

**Support Speed**

**Running Speed:**

The minimum absolute requirement of any back is to have excellent running speed. Players must train constantly to improve speed and evasiveness at speed. The simplest way to beat the opposition to the gain line is by sheer speed.

**Passing Speed:**

The goal for running backs when passing is to pass the ball within 2 paces. The ball should be carried in front of the body with 2 hands, this ensures that passing can be achieved quickly either way and the opposition is kept guessing as to which what the ball is to be passed.

The ball being carried by that attacker at pace must be able to be passed at pace to beat the oncoming defender. Any form of back at-tack must be based on moving the ball from a pressure attack position to one of relative space and freedom, the speed of transfer to this region is usually achieved by the accurate and speedy passing.

This can only be achieved by constant passing and running practice with the complete backline. Players should have the ball in front and on their fingertips, passing should be crisp, fast and accurate. The ball should be passed in front of the receiver and at the correct chest height.

Receivers should have their hands in catching position and ready to receive and rapidly pass onto to the next player. I use a term called "soft hands catching, hard hands passing".

### **Thinking Speed**

Backs usually have 3 options of passing, running or kicking when receiving the ball. They need to make their decision quickly and confidently so as to avoid losing space and time with the ball in hand.

It is just as important to be able to observe an opposition mismatch as to be able to run and pass quickly.

Is the individual decision to run/kick/pass in support of the general team game plan and pattern of play?

Is there support where the player is running?

### **Support Speed**

How many times have we seen a wing break the line to be tackled and the ball turned over because there was no supporting player ready to take the inside pass, hit the ruck or change the angle of attack from a wrap around pass?

I believe that the player who backs up all the way to the try line is as important as the try scorer. It not only gives confidence to the at-tacking player with the ball but also puts doubt in the defensive line of the opposition.

A back player should always look to put himself in an support position that creates space or threatens the defensive line.

### **Summary**

A coach should emphasise again and again these basic tenets of speed and train at speed. Accuracy and confidence with the ball in hand will reflect on the scoreboard during the season.