



Michael VOSS – Brisbane Lions

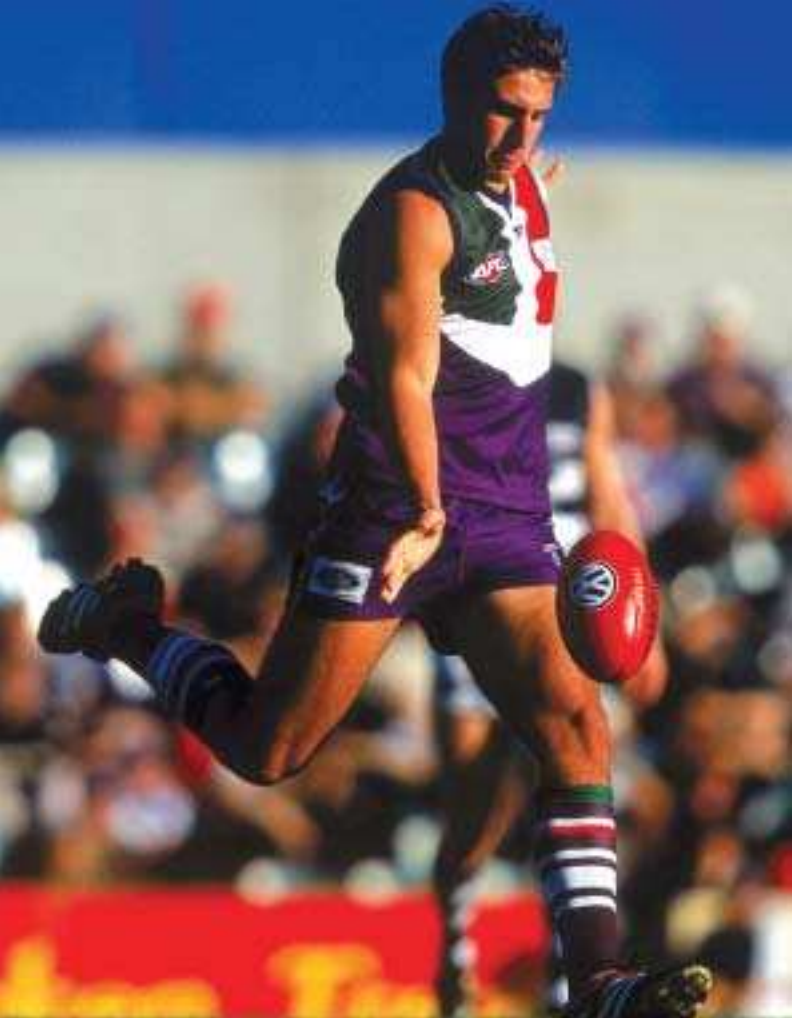
KICKING

Kicking is the most important skill in Australian Football. The basic skill of kicking should be taught at a young age and any faults rectified before it is too late. It is important players learn the right technique while they are young so that later in their careers, they will be able to demonstrate the ability to (a) kick under pressure, (b) pass the ball accurately to a teammate and (c) use the ball to the best advantage of their side when kicking from a set position. Try to study the kicking style of some of the AFL's best kicks, such as Matthew Lloyd (shooting for goal), Nathan Buckley (length), Leon Cameron (each foot) James Hird (accuracy) and Craig Bradley (technique).

Main Teaching Points

- 1** Line up your body with your target. Have your head slightly bent over the ball. Hold the ball over the thigh of the kicking leg.
- 2** Guide the ball down with one hand.
- 3** Point your toes at your target — see the ball hit the foot.
- 4** Follow through straight towards the target.

These four fundamentals apply to every kick. More information about each type of kick is given in the following pages.



Matthew PAVLICH – Fremantle

DROP PUNT

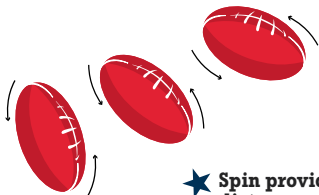
1. The Grip

The fingers are spread evenly along each side of the ball, with thumbs extending to the lacing. The grip is the same for both left and right foot kicks.



2. The Release

The ball is guided down and kicked on the bottom point, along the lower laces of the boot. It should spin in a backwards end-over-end fashion.



★ Spin provides distance and accuracy



DIPPER SAYS...

"The drop punt is the most used kick in the game. You should practise kicking short and long distances, hard and soft."





Ben GRAHAM – Geelong

TORPEDO PUNT

1. The Grip

The ball is held on an angle across the body. For a right foot kick, the left hand is slightly forward and the right hand slightly behind the lacing. For a left foot kick, the hand positions are reversed.



2. The Release

The ball is guided down with one hand at a slight angle to the ground, and is also angled across the kicking leg. When the foot makes contact with the ball, the ball should spin in a spiral motion.



★ Rotation causes the ball to 'cut' through the air, like a torpedo



DIPPER SAYS...

"This is a great skill to know for those times when you need to kick the ball a long distance. It is good for when you need to kick for goal after the siren or when you're kicking in from full-back."





Chris GRANT – Western Bulldogs

BANANA KICK

1. The Grip

The ball is held like a reverse torpedo punt, with the right hand forward for a right foot kick and the opposite for the left foot kick.



2. The Release

The ball is guided down so that it drops at an angle across the boot. The boot makes contact under the right side of the ball, causing a curved spin on the ball.



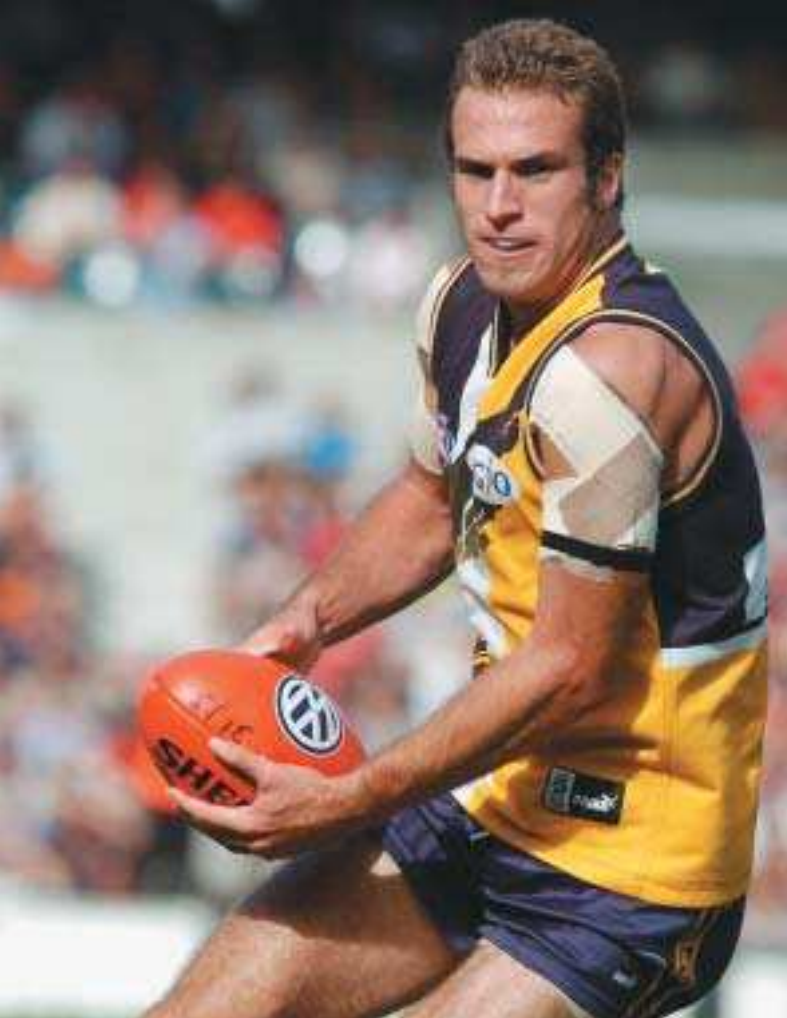
The banana kick is generally used when shooting for goal from close to the boundary line, near the behind post.



DIPPER SAYS...

"This is a kick we used to practise all the time after training. When you score a goal with a bannana kick, it is a great feeling. A ripper."





HANDBALL

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the use of the handball became more important in Australian football. Before then, players were generally told not to handball in the backline and only to handball to get themselves out of trouble. In today's game, handball is a major attacking weapon as players run the ball from defence into attack. It is a skill that needs to be practised regularly and by watching great handball exponents such as Michael Voss, Brett Ratten and Scott West, you can improve your game.

Main Teaching Points

- 1** The ball must be gripped firmly with the platform hand and hit with a clenched fist. Players should have their eyes on the ball.
- 2** The punching fist is formed by placing the thumb outside, not inside the fingers.
- 3** The stance is nearly side on to allow the punching arm to swing through freely. Knees slightly bent to maintain balance.
 - For a right-handed handball, the left foot is forward, and vice versa for a left-handed handball.
 - Punching arm also slightly bent.
 - After contact is made with the ball, the fist remains on the platform hand — “catch the fist”.



MARKING

One of the most spectacular features of Australian Football is marking, particularly the high mark. However, it is just as important to be able to pull in a safe chest mark on a consistent basis without fumbling the ball. Like all skills, marking needs to be practised. No matter what your size there will always be a situation in a game where you are in a position to mark the ball.

Main Teaching Points

- 1** Eyes must be focused on the ball all the way from the player's boot to your hands.
- 2** Position your body in line with the flight of the ball.
- 3** Move forward to meet the ball; never wait for it to come to you.
- 4** Skilful players should take the ball in their hands with fingers spread and thumbs close together. Beginners should use the chest mark.



DIPPER SAYS...

“‘Soft’ hands is the key. Trying to grab the football with stiff hands can lead to dropped marks. Just relax your hands when going for the ball.”





Jonathan BROWN – Brisbane Lions

ARM or CHEST MARK

Main Teaching Points

- 1** Keep your eyes on the ball and line up the body with the flight of the ball.
- 2** The fingers and hands are extended — palms up.
Tuck the elbows in to the side.
- 3** The ball is taken on the hands and arms and guided to the chest.
- 4** The ball is hugged tightly to the chest. This is an important marking style if the ball is wet or muddy.



DIPPER SAYS...

"If you need to mark the ball on the run, arch your back forward so your opponent can't punch the ball from behind."





HAND MARK

Skilled players should practise taking the ball in the hands at all times, in preference to letting it hit the chest. This will help quick disposal and prevent opponents from punching the ball from behind.

Main Teaching Points

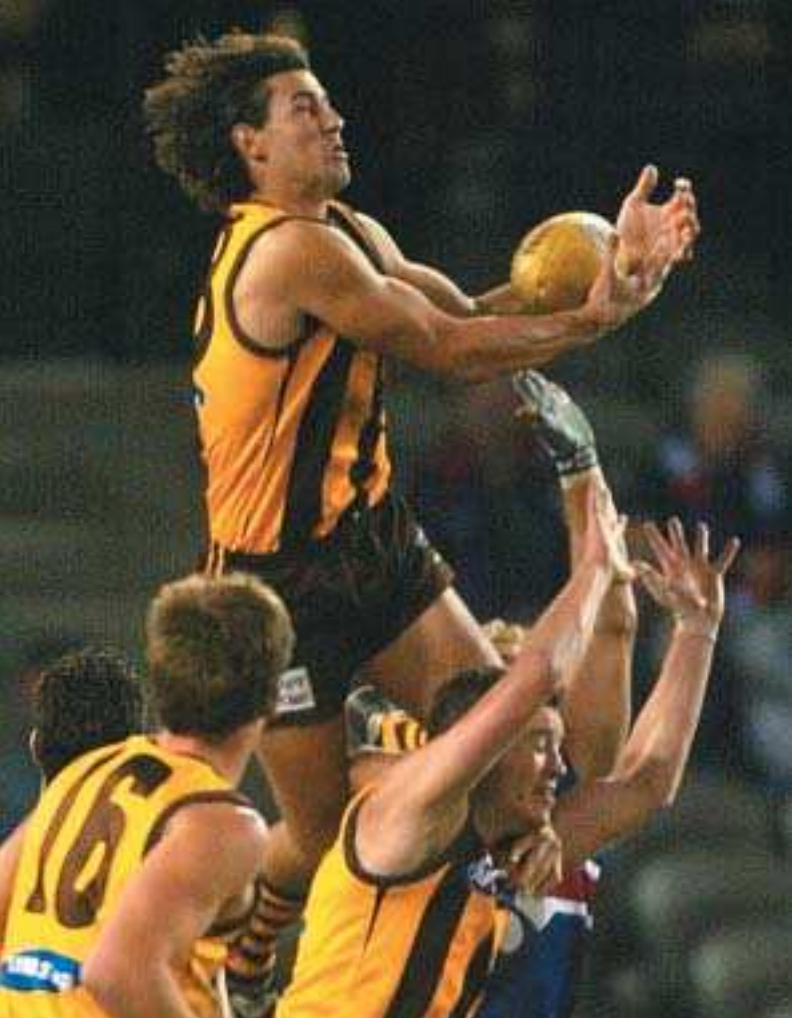
- 1** Eyes must be on the flight of the ball.
- 2** The fingers should be outstretched, pointing towards the ball.
The thumbs are positioned behind the ball.
- 3** The arms must be extended — “long arms”.
- 4** The ball is firmly gripped in the fingers.
- 5** Ensure your body is behind the flight of the ball.



DIPPER SAYS...

“Practise the different marks by bouncing a football off a wall and catching it, or throwing it up on your own or having a mate throw it to you.”





OVERHEAD MARK

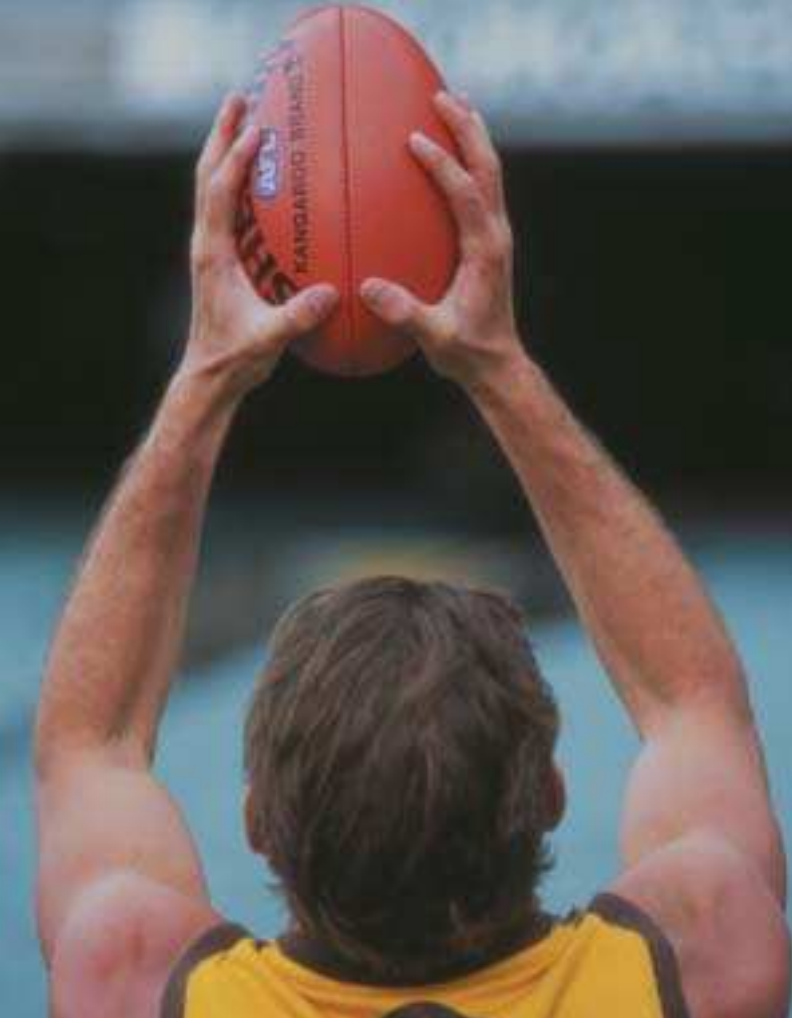
This is the mark fans and commentators love to see. It takes great skill and athleticism to launch yourself into the air, but a high mark can inspire teammates and bring other players into the game.

Main Teaching Points

- 1** Line your body up with the flight of the ball. Keep your “eyes on the ball”.
- 2** Jump off one foot and swing the other knee up to gain maximum height.
- 3** Eyes are kept on the ball, fingers are outstretched and thumbs almost together.
- 4** The ball is met slightly in front of the head with arms extended – “long arms”. It should be firmly gripped in the fingers.

The Grip

- Ensure the fingers are outstretched and the thumbs are almost together.
- Keep your eyes on the ball with the arms outstretched. Hands in “W” position.



Nick HOLLAND – Hawthorn

General COACHING Hints

The ball should be pulled down quickly onto the chest when marking in front of an opponent.

When the ball is wet, the hands are brought closer together, the fingers tap the ball down where it is gathered on the chest.

For beginners

- **Throw the ball in the air for yourself.**
- **Progress to the ball being thrown overhead from a short distance.**
- **Practise overhead marking in a stationary position, gradually taking a few steps run-up.**

For Advanced

- **Meet the ball with a running approach and jump to mark the ball.**
- **Practise against an opponent to develop the skills of using the body to get front position.**



RUCKWORK

The role of the ruckman is a crucial one in Australian Football. A good ruckman sets up play from a variety of contests such as the centre bounce or boundary throw-in. To create opportunities for his smaller, running players, it is important that a ruckman has the skill to direct the ball to his teammate's best advantage. It is worth watching top-class ruckmen such as Matthew Primus, Peter Everitt, Luke Darcy and Jeff White to see how they use their various skills.

The techniques involved in ruck work are needed to move the ball toward goal or to get the ball to teammates from a ball-up or boundary throw in.

Main Teaching Points

- 1** At first, practise in a standing position extending to a run-in and jump.
- 2** Practise without opposition and then extend the practice to include an opponent.
- 3** Hit with the palm and then use the fist.
- 4** Attempt two-handed hitting and then progress to one-handed palming.
- 5** Follow the ball to where you hit it, so you can then help your teammates.



PALMING: Front

Palming to the Front — One Hand

Watch the ball through the air and leap off one foot using the arms and other leg to gain lift.

The arm is swung forward.

The ball is hit with the open palm and fingers and directed with a straight follow-through.

Palming to the Front — Two Hands

The hands are positioned behind the ball and the ball is hit with both open hands simultaneously.

The ball is directed with a follow-through towards the target.

Palming to the Forehand

The player leaps for the ball and contacts it with the open palm.

In the hitting action, the arm should be straight with a follow-through in the desired direction across the body.



DIPPER SAYS...

"You can practise jumping anywhere. If you're in the backyard or a park, try touching a tree branch. If you're at home jump up and touch the ceiling or a door frame."





PALMING: Back

Palming to the Backhand

The player leaps (off one leg or two) and the arm is bent immediately before impact.

The arm is straightened at the elbow and the ball directed to the backhand side with the open hand.

Palming over the Back

The player leaps and with a straight arm reaches forward and overhead.

The ball is hit with an open hand over the shoulder towards the target.

Centre Bounce

- **Jump off one leg**
- **Turn body sideways to protect yourself**
- **Hit with outstretched arm at highest point of jump**



PICK UP: Moving Ball

Many different situations occur during a game when the ball must be picked up off the ground. Young players need to become competent at meeting and handling a moving ball.

The body is in line behind the path of the ball in a semi-crouched position.

The arms and hands are extended with the fingers almost touching the ground, palms towards the ball.

The ball is picked up cleanly in two hands. The elbows are kept close together.

The ball is then brought into the hands for disposal. Eyes on the ball at all times.



DIPPER SAYS...

"Make sure you protect the bouncing ball by crouching over it as you run. Keep the ball in front of your body so you have more than one chance to pick it up."





PICK UP: Stationary Ball

One-Handed Pick-Up

The ball is approached to one side.

The player runs slightly past the ball then swings one arm down with his hand scooping under the ball.

The free arm can be used to steady the ball, once it is picked up.

Two-Handed Pick-Up

The ball is approached from the side. As the player draws level with the ball, he bends down and picks up the ball cleanly with two hands.



DIPPER SAYS...

"It is important to keep your balance when running with the football. Most of us don't practise doing that. You should!"





Hand Dribbling

The skill of hand dribbling — or tapping the ball along in front — is a necessary component of picking up and is a useful tactic in a game.

Often a player cannot pick up the ball cleanly or is in danger of being tackled from behind by an opponent.

The ball is tapped out three to five metres in front and the player can accelerate to get clear of his opponent before picking up. This is also useful when a number of players are contesting the ball.

General Coaching Hints

Begin with:

- **hand dribbling without an opponent and then introduce opposition.**
- **a slow speed and then build up to a fast speed.**
- **the ball rolling slowly away from the player and then progress to faster rolling balls with less predictable bounce.**
- **use both hands and keep your body behind the ball.**



BALL HANDLING

When learning skills it is important to handle the ball as much as possible. A football is an odd shape and the more familiar you become with the ball, the easier it will be to master the skills. You won't always have someone to practise with, so these drills can be done before or after training or in your spare time.

- 1 Lay on your back and using both hands tap or throw the ball from hand to hand. Vary the height and speed of the throws as you become more competent. This is great for hand-eye co-ordination and learning how to mark effectively.**
- 2 Pass the ball in a figure eight movement in and out of the legs. This will develop your grip strength, making it easier to mark, handball and guide the ball on to your foot when kicking.**



Scott CAMPOREALE – Carlton

RUNNING

Running has become a major skill in modern day football with the emphasis now on running with the ball to maintain possession. Similarly, defensive and offensive players are required to run and chase. There is great value in teaching children how to run correctly, in order to improve their running speed. Running speed and acceleration are the product of stride length and frequency. The distance covered with each stride taken and how quickly the legs move are key factors in sprinting.

Good running technique involves:

- Moving arms and legs in a straight line and not across the body.
- Slight forward body lean.
- Keeping head and trunk steady, eyes looking ahead.
- High knee lifts.



DIPPER SAYS...

"It is important to keep your balance when running with the football. Trying running straight at an object with the ball tucked in one arm to improve this skill."





BOUNCING THE BALL

Players are required to bounce the ball every 15 metres when running.

Main Teaching Points

- 1** The ball is held slightly on top by the bouncing hand.
- 2** The ball is pushed down with one hand.
- 3** The ball strikes the ground at an angle of about 45 degrees.
- 4** The ball is bounced far enough in front so that it will bounce into the player's hands as he runs forward.

The distance at which the ball is thrown out in front is directly related to the player's speed — the faster he is running, the further out in front it must be thrown.

Wet weather bounce

On wet days, the ball will skid away or fail to bounce back. In this case, it should be touched on the ground, using both hands.



SIDESTEP

Main Teaching Points

- 1** Watch your opponent closely.
- 2** Hold the ball out to the side as the opponent approaches.
- 3** Push hard off the foot planted on the same side as the ball.
- 4** Pull the ball back quickly as you move around the opponent.
- 5** Ensure that you change direction and don't run in a straight line.



DIPPER SAYS...

"Start by practising these moves with a teammate who is not moving, then have them walk toward you while you walk through the movements. Finally, go through the skills at a running pace."





Ben COUSINS – West Coast

BLIND TURN

The blind turn is used to evade an opponent when the player is being chased from behind and you are heading away from the direction of your goal.

To turn on the right side:

As the opponent gets closer, hold the ball out to the left hand side.

Dig the left foot into the ground and push hard to step to the right hand side as in the side step.

Pull the ball back 'inside' towards your team's goal and accelerate quickly away.



DIPPER SAYS...

"Practise by stepping around mum and dad, or even the clothesline."





Nick STEVENS – Port Adelaide

THE DUMMY

Players such as Nick Stevens have an amazing ability to change direction without greatly reducing their speed.

The dummy is a movement used to evade an opponent approaching head on.

Main Teaching Points

- 1** As the opponent approaches, shape to handball or kick in a forward direction. The player must look in that direction so as to give his opponent the impression of handballing or kicking in that direction.
- 2** As the opponent moves to smother the football, the player draws in the ball and moves around him by pushing off hard as in the side step
- 3** The player is then in the clear and can accelerate away past the opponent. Again, changing direction is important.

Use this tactic when you are stationary and an opponent is running towards you quickly.



DIPPER SAYS...

"Practise by stepping around a bin or some other object in your backyard."





SMOTHERING

A good smother can deflate the spirit of a player who thinks he is about to get an easy kick. It also lifts the side which has made the smother, because it requires great courage to put your body on the line.

Main Teaching Points

- 1** The hands are brought from the hip level, close together. "Shoot from the hips" with the fingers pointing straight ahead.
- 2** The arms and hands are extended at about 45 degrees over the kicking boot. Smother the ball when it is on or has just left the kicker's boot.
- 3** The smotherer must keep his eyes on the ball at all times.



TACKLING

From Behind

Approach the player who has the ball, from one side, so he is not pushed in the back. The head should be placed on one side. The player is grabbed on the arms just above the elbows and then swung or spun off balance.

From the Front

The tackler approaches the player with his arms at waist level. The tackler places his head to one side of the player, with his chin tucked into his chest. He then pins the arms of the other player and spins or turns him off balance. Your shoulder and arm make first contact to an opponent's chest.

Ensure your head is behind the opponent's back and out of any danger. Use your body weight to slow down your opponent.

General Coaching Hints

Begin with:

- **The opponent stationary and the tackler walking in.**
- **Extend to the tackler jogging in.**
- **Tackling can take place below the shoulders and above the knees.**



Mitchell HAHN & Paul CHAPMAN – Western Bulldogs / Geelong

BUMPING

A player can legally bump an opponent when the ball is within five metres.

Lean towards the opponent, pushing hard from the foot furthest from the opponent.

The arm is bent, with the elbow tucked into the side.

Make contact with the shoulder and upper arm — preferably when an opponent is settled on one foot, so he is easier to unbalance.

The bumping player should keep his feet on the ground at all times.

Only bump when an opponent does not have the ball.

If he does have the ball — apply a tackle.



DIPPER SAYS...

"At home you'll love practising this skill with your brothers or sisters, but don't be a bully!"





SPOILING

Spoiling is an effective method of preventing an opponent from marking or gaining possession of the ball. Once again when spoiling, especially from behind, the spoiling player must not infringe by making contact with his opponent's back, head or shoulders. If performed correctly, spoiling can be an attacking skill, whereby the ball can be placed to the advantage of teammates.

Chest Mark

Approach the opponent from one side. Keep your eyes on the ball.

Punch the ball with a clenched fist before it reaches the opponent's arm.

Overhead Mark

The spoil should be used when a player is not confident of marking.

The fist should be clenched and arms outstretched ("long arms") at point of contact with the ball.

As with marking, the spoiling player's run must be timed to gain maximum height with the arm following straight through the flight of the ball.

Be careful not to put the other hand on the back of an opponent's neck as this is an infringement.



Peter VARDY shepherds for David NEITZ - Melbourne

SHEPHERDING

The aim of a shepherd is for a player to block the approach of an opponent to stop him making contact with the player's teammate.

A shepherd is achieved by using the arms and body to form a barrier to protect a teammate.

The fingers are outstretched with the arms spread below shoulder level.

An opponent can be legally shepherded by placing the body between the player and the ball, as long as the ball is not more than five metres away. Bend your knees and be strong but do not hold or grab your opponent.

A shepherd can also be used when contesting an overhead mark. The player shepherding must communicate clearly with his teammate, telling him he is all clear to mark.



DIPPER SAYS...

"When shepherding, it is important to let your teammates know they are in the clear by telling them loudly."

