

D A S H

BY PLAYIQ

The Selection Blueprint

What separates selected rep players from the rest — position by position, by the numbers.

2026 Edition · Boys Pathway · U17 & U19

Built on **DASH: 1,615** player-seasons across **SG Ball, Harold Matthews, Cyril Connell & Mal Meninga**. No names. Just the pattern.

The gap is real — and it's measurable

Rep selection can feel like a black box. It isn't. We tracked **1,615 player-seasons** across the four boys pathway competitions and measured what the standouts actually do differently — by position, by the numbers.

We split every position into two groups using the DASH NRL Readiness Score:

Selection-ready

The standouts — top ~26% on readiness.
Priority + Target tiers (score ≥ 58)

The pack

Everyone else in the same rep comps.
Monitor + Development tiers (score < 58)

HOW TO READ THIS

For each position you'll see the metrics that **most separate** the selection-ready from the pack, for both U17 and U19. Bars compare the typical (median) player in each group. A red number like **+80%** is how far ahead the standouts sit. Every figure is a group average — there isn't a single child's name anywhere in this document, by design.

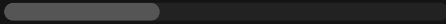
These are benchmarks, not predictions or guarantees. Every player develops on their own timeline — use this as a map of what to work on, not a verdict.

01 Fullback

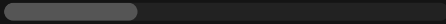
Last line of defence and a primary attacking weapon. Reads the play, defuses the high ball, and enters the line at pace to create and finish.

Creating chances per touch

U17 +183%

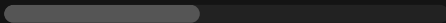
READY  0.068
PACK  0.024

U19 +237%

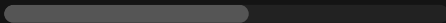
READY  0.054
PACK  0.016

Line-breaking threat per carry

U17 +126%

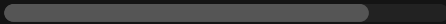
READY  0.628
PACK  0.278

U19 +80%

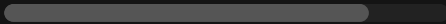
READY  0.59
PACK  0.327

Metres per carry m

U17 +22%

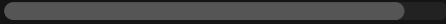
READY  11.8
PACK  9.7

U19 +23%

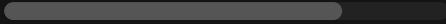
READY  11.3
PACK  9.2

Work rate carries/min

U17 +11%

READY  0.138
PACK  0.124

U19 +31%

READY  0.174
PACK  0.133

WHERE MOST KIDS FALL SHORT

Most young fullbacks return kicks and run hard — but don't influence the scoreboard. The pack barely creates: their median creation rate is near zero.

WHAT TO WORK ON

Build a fullback who arrives, not just runs. Train timing into the line and the late pass/grubber that turns a carry into a chance.

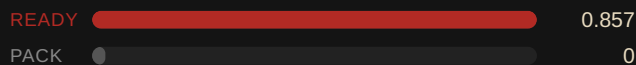
↳ **The Playbook — reading the line and timing the entry**

02 Wing

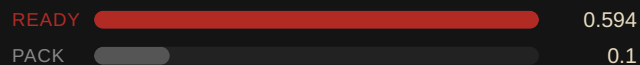
The finisher. Converts chances into tries, holds width in attack, and is busy on kick-returns and yardage carries.

Try-scoring rate per 60min

U17 pack median: zero

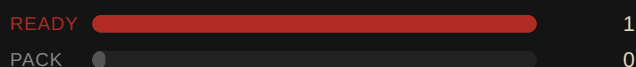


U19 +494%

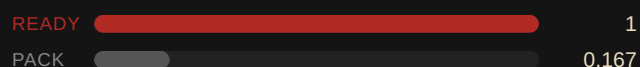


Finishing breaks tries/break

U17 pack median: zero



U19 +499%



Work rate (carries) carries/min

U17 +43%



U19 +47%



Post-contact metres m/carry

U17 +17%



U19 +27%



WHERE MOST KIDS FALL SHORT

The gap here is brutal: half the pack of wingers don't finish their chances at all (a finishing and try rate of zero). Selection-ready wingers convert and chase volume.

WHAT TO WORK ON

Two jobs: get more touches (chase work, force carries) and finish what you get. Yardage carries and finishing reps under fatigue.

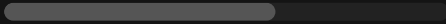
↳ **Player Development Series — work-rate conditioning + finishing**

03 Centre

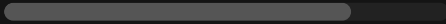
Wins the edge one-on-one in attack and holds the line in defence. Equal parts strike weapon and defensive anchor.

Beating your defender per carry

U17 +63%

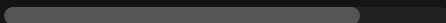
READY  0.607
PACK  0.373

U19 +28%

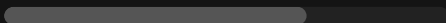
READY  0.564
PACK  0.44

Work rate carries/min

U17 +25%

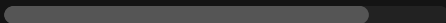
READY  0.148
PACK  0.118

U19 +48%

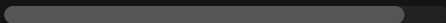
READY  0.16
PACK  0.108

Metres per carry m

U17 +22%

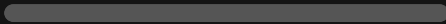
READY  11.1
PACK  9.1

U19 +11%

READY  10.4
PACK  9.4

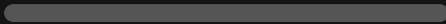
Ball security per touch

U17 25% fewer

READY  0.059
PACK  0.079

(lower = better)

U19 26% fewer

READY  0.056
PACK  0.076

(lower = better)

WHERE MOST KIDS FALL SHORT

Plenty of centres make their tackles but don't threaten in attack. The separator is the one-on-one — beating your man, not just running at him.

WHAT TO WORK ON

Footwork and the ball-play before contact: when to take it on, when to draw-and-pass. Train the edge as a decision, not just a sprint.

↳ [The Playbook — reading the edge + Player Dev Series footwork](#)

04 Halves (Halfback & Five-Eighth)

The controllers. They steer the team around the park, create for others, and have to be a running threat themselves.

Creating chances per touch

U17 +158%



U19 +200%



Running threat per carry

U17 +70%



U19 +80%



Ball control / involvement touches/min

U17 +23%



U19 +36%



Ball security per touch

U17 41% fewer



(lower = better)

U19 30% fewer



(lower = better)

WHERE MOST KIDS FALL SHORT

The pack of halves touch the ball but don't make it count — their creation rate is roughly a third of the standouts', and they run far less of a threat.

WHAT TO WORK ON

The whole game lives here. Game IQ first: when to play what, where to attack, how to control a set. Then the running game that keeps the defence honest.

↳ [The Playbook](#) — the core game-IQ curriculum for playmakers

05 Hooker

Engine of the ruck. Defends in the middle, runs and organises from dummy-half, and sets the team's tempo.

Running threat from dummy-half per carry

U17 +63%



U19 +9%



Defensive workload tackles/min

U17 +24%



U19 +26%



Tackle reliability %

U17 +6%



U19 +9%



Ball security per touch

U17 36% fewer



(lower = better)

U19 33% fewer



(lower = better)

WHERE MOST KIDS FALL SHORT

Selection-ready hookers do more of everything — they carry the biggest defensive load AND stay a running threat. The pack tends to do one or neither.

WHAT TO WORK ON

Build the engine and the threat from dummy-half: defensive volume and reliability, plus the darting run and service that punishes a lazy ruck.

↳ **Player Development Series — engine + defence; Playbook for service IQ**

06 Prop

Sets the platform. Wins the collision, eats metres through the middle, and earns the minutes a team can trust.

Dominant carries (post-contact) m/carry

U17 +32%



U19 +31%



Winning the collision per carry

U17 +26%



U19 +37%



Minutes trusted with min/game

U17 +18%



U19 +10%



Metres per carry m

U17 +13%



U19 +13%



WHERE MOST KIDS FALL SHORT

It's not about size — it's about post-contact. Selection-ready props win the collision and keep moving, so coaches trust them with more minutes.

WHAT TO WORK ON

Leg drive and footwork into contact, plus the conditioning to hold dominance deep into a game. Dominant metres, not just metres.

↳ [Player Development Series — contact, leg-drive and conditioning](#)

07 Second Row

Workhorse of the edge. Heavy involvement in attack and defence, with the threat to break a tiring edge.

Edge threat per carry

U17 +102%



U19 +35%



Involvement / work rate actions/min

U17 +15%



U19 +23%



Dominant carries m/carry

U17 +23%



U19 +12%



Metres per carry m

U17 +15%



U19 +9%



WHERE MOST KIDS FALL SHORT

The pack of edge forwards work hard but don't hurt the defence — their edge threat is about half the standouts'. Volume without threat doesn't get picked.

WHAT TO WORK ON

Turn work into damage: footwork on the edge, the late ball, and dominant carries that bend the line rather than just hitting it.

↳ [Player Development Series — edge running + The Playbook edge IQ](#)

08 Lock

Middle-third all-rounder. Links the ruck, carries hard, defends big minutes, and adds a running threat through the middle.

Running threat per carry

U17 +57%



U19 +0%



Dominant carries m/carry

U17 +10%



U19 +25%



Metres per carry m

U17 +11%



U19 +17%



Discipline per min

U17 12% fewer



(lower = better)

U19 29% fewer



(lower = better)

WHERE MOST KIDS FALL SHORT

Locks who get picked carry a genuine threat through the middle and stay disciplined. The pack tends to be busy but blunt.

WHAT TO WORK ON

Add a running threat to the engine: lines off the ruck, footwork at the line, and the discipline to do it without conceding cheap penalties.

↳ **Player Development Series — running + conditioning; Playbook for ruck IQ**

So what do you actually do with this?

- 1 Find your child's position above.** Look at the two or three metrics where the gap is biggest — that's where selection is won or lost.
- 2 Be honest about where they sit.** Use the self-check feel: are they closer to the pack bar or the ready bar on the metrics that matter most for their spot?
- 3 Train the gap, not everything.** Pick the one separator to attack this pre-season. The "what to work on" line for each position tells you where to start.
- 4 Make it measurable.** These same metrics are how DASH tracks progress — so you can see the gap close, not just hope it does.

Want to know exactly where your player stands?

The position courses turn each of these gaps into footage and drills you can run at home. And with an **IQ+ Game Review**, send us a game and get a position-specific breakdown against these exact benchmarks — the standout's blueprint, applied to your player.

playiq.com.au

Methodology: DASH NRL Readiness Score — position-specific KPI percentiles benchmarked within age group and position, across SG Ball U19, Harold Matthews U17, Cyril Connell U17 and Mal Meninga U19 (2026). "Selection-ready" = readiness ≥ 58 (Priority + Target tiers). Figures shown are cohort medians. Aggregate data only — no individual players are identified. © PlayIQ 2026.