**Kick-outs and midfield play**

Midfielders (traditional vs modern)

Midfield play used to be one of the main spectacles of Gaelic games. Win or loose supporters went home fairly happy from matches seeing some great scores, a couple of hard hits and of course numerous high catches from midfielders. There was a time when you won the greater percentage of kickouts, there was a fair chance you won the game. Big names still widely talked about from the great Mick O Connell to Jack O Shea to the Darragh O Shea's were the King pins of the skies when it came to catching the long kick out.

However love it or hate it, kick outs and midfield play has dramatically changed over the last few years. The "spectacle" is no longer important and winning is all that counts. The role for the traditional 8 and 9 have changed and the chances of seeing double figured high catches may now be a thing of the past. At this stage the groans from the crowd to "kick it out" is gradually fading away as every kick is becoming a statistic and that's all the matters, right??? It's all about increasing the percentages and having better statistics than the team in the other dressing room which should result in a win.

The role of the goal keeper has also changed, and it could be argued that he is the most important player on the field. Would Dublin be so successful if they hadn't Stephen Cluxton? I certainly don't think so. If you look at any goal keeper in the country there is certain to be another ball at the post ready to start the next "attack". Will it be far into the future when our goal keepers can take a kick out just as comfortably off their weaker side, just to give them an additional and a quicker option?There was a time when the ball went over the end line you could catch your breath and wait for the long kick out but, now it's a chance to catch the opposition out of position and spring board the next attack. Here we will look at the challenges facing managers in the modern game from the kick-out and I'll try to provide some ideas on how to give your team the "statistical" edge.

long Vs short kick-out which is best????

Positives with winning traditional long kick-outs:

* Ball is well away from danger area
* If ball is won clean you can score within 6/7 seconds by using long kick passing (opposition may not have as many players back)
* A lift to your team mates if the ball is won clean in the air
* If you win the oppositions kick-out, its a good platform to start an attack
* On oppositions kick-outs it can be easily boxed back into your forwards to start another attack

Negatives with traditional long kick-outs

* If kicked long out to middle area, it's a 50/50 chance of winning possession
* It's easier for the opposition to box ball back into the forwards
* It may mean kicking a ball out 50/50 in vital times in a match
* If you have smaller midfielders it may be very hard to win long 50/50 kick-outs

Positives with short kick-outs

* Retain possession easier
* More useful if you have a smaller midfielders
* Can be a reliable platform for attacks
* If playing a sweeper it can be a very useful option for kick-outs if played properly
* Can be a quick platform for attacks

Negatives with short kick-outs

* Dangerous area if you loose the ball after a short kick-out
* Your team can be pinned back easier if the opposition push up on you
* It's a long way from goals to launch attack
* Can be very energy sapping working the ball up the field
* High levels of fitness needed
* Goal keeper may not be comfortable kick ball short
* Goal keeper may have a weak and strong side for kicking the ball to

So let's tease out some options for you.........

Modern placed kick-out options

* down middle to midfielder and try to win clean or by break
* Out long to outside of midfielders who start run from the middle
* Midfielders can criss cross
* Into the middle area for midfielders who run from outside to inside
* Long kick out to centre half forward
* Placed kick to wing half back
* Shorter kick to full back line
* Shorter kick to your sweeper
* Over load one side to leave space for ball to be kicked into opposite side

What sort of goal keeper have you got?

* Have they a long or short kick-out?
* Are they comfortable taking short kick-outs?
* Have they a good side and a bad side for kicking to?
* Is their kick-out a high or low trajectory kick?

A lot of responsibility lies with your goal keeper.....

If your keeper has a ball at the ready each time the ball goes over the end line, they may have more options for the next kick-out

Teaching points for high catch

* Hands in a W shape
* Head up and eyes open
* Opposite knee up for protection and for projection into the air
* (Straighten the knee at the highest point to hang in the air)
* elbows extended for extra reach
* Get ball out of traffic quickly to launch attack

Key to winning break ball

* Increase the percentages! Commit more players around the break ball
* Always have a player in under the jumping players
* Encourage some players to run across to win breaks
* Have understanding with players around you to that break ball can be knocked to I.e. Front, side or over the top

Improving your vertical jump through a proper S&C program

* Need good strength in your legs
* Activate your fast twitch fibres in your legs
* Good ankle mobility
* Perform plyometric exercises e.g.
* Tuck jumps
* Squat jumps
* Hurdle/cone jumps
* Skipping

Advanced exercises e.g.

* Box jumps
* Dept jumps
* Alternate step up jumps
* Split squat jumps