

HEADSETS



WRITTEN FOR COACHES BY COACHES

VOLUME 1: ISSUE 4

**PRACTICE
PLANNING**

organizing
RPOS

**7 EXERCISES
ATHLETES
SHOULD BE
PROFICIENT AT**

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I was hesitant to start writing longer columns for this magazine because I want to highlight others in our industry that do such a good job.

Since there are so many great informative articles included each issue, I will write more of a personal advice from an older coach article. Take it or leave it, no worries from me, but maybe this can help some as you continue on your coaching journey. So each issue I'll give a short column on some areas I am still working to improve or attempt to provide some insight that may help in your journey. You can find my first "Life Lesson Learned the Hard Way" on page three.

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Brad Smith Head Coach
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PROGRAM ORGANIZATION

PRACTICE GUIDELINES



Jeff Steinberg
Beaumont High School
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Every program is limited with the amount of time they get in preparation for a game. Some states have practice limitations where all teams are limited to a total amount of hours they may be on the field, in meetings. It is essential that practice time is used effectively and that we do not waste time. In our program we must have everyone on the same page and committed to getting as much out of practice as possible. It is the only chance we have to improve as a team. The following guidelines are designed to help us practice effectively.

General

Every player must be given the opportunity to learn when we are on the field. Any player recovering from an injury should follow his group and coach around the practice field. Football is a mental game as much as a physical game. Players should never debate with each other or their coaches on the field. Discussions are to take place in meetings or in private. We do not use practice when in season for coaches to lecture their groups or stand around and waste time talking. Those should be done in meetings. Players must learn by doing & watching other players perform the necessary skill.

We film various periods of practice for coaches to review in addition to go over with players in meetings. One new piece of equipment we have is a pixelate camera that live streams our games. This camera is also used to film the entire practice. It gives me a great opportunity to review how efficiently coaches are using their time while we are on the field. It provides me an opportunity to see everything and help the coaches improve their coaching skill as well.

The following are various periods we will incorporate at practice. It's important to ensure everyone is on the same page as to what the tempo of the period will be in addition if it will be tag, thud or live.

Early Outs/Run-Throughs/Defensive Fit up

This is the segment of practice in which all activities are done at a low intensity. We use this time to work on skills that need to be improved, make system corrections or insert new plays.

Individual Drills (Indo)/Every Day Drills (EDD's)

The emphasis during this time is on the quality of movement, not the intensity. This segment of practice is when you perfect individual techniques and skills. As players learn to execute each skill perfectly the intensity will be increased.

One on One

One on one drills are utilized to perfect a player's skills in a competitive situation. The coaching staff also uses this time to evaluate a player's ability/improvement in competitive situations.

Teach

These sessions are utilized when teaching and reviewing assignments. The intensity progresses from a half speed to full speed. Emphasis is on proper alignment, stance and movement to contact point.

7 o 7/ Inside Run/Perimeter Run & Pass/Group Drills

These segments are used to practice the pass or run at game speed. The intensity is 100% with the restriction that no blocking below the waist is allowed. This is done as a Tag or Thud Period and whistles will be quick. At times will want to keep contact up (stay off the ground).

Team Drills

The team segment is used to simulate actual game situations. The emphasis is on proper execution of assignments and timing. Intensity is 100%. Whistles will be quick. We will run this period as a Thud period with occasional Live situations.

IN-SEASON WEEKLY PLAN																																																																			
*This is how we will allocate our minutes during in season practice week (Games 1 through 5). (Note we will begin to reduce total time on the field)																																																																			
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LIFE LESSONS:

WHY EACH COACH'S KID SHOULD "RIDE THE PINE" AT LEAST ONCE



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I am a father of some pretty decent athletes. One is a young lady in the 9th grade and one a growing boy in the 7th grade (we have a 2nd grader also, but he is not at this stage yet). They have always been some of the better athletes in their group and seem to enjoy sports and competing.

This past year we moved to a larger school with much more competition, not just with our opponents, but on our own team as well. I want to pause point out that we have had some excellent coaches that have cared for and worked with both of my children and done a great job. At our new school, my son has excelled and my daughter did as well in one of her sports. Recently, my son joined an AAU team that is very talented, and my daughter's school basketball team was also very talented. Both of them played as much as they deserved (and had to work extra to earn), but it gave me some great perspective as a coach when they "rode the pine" more than they (and we) are used to.

Issue #1 - As a parent, my head tells me I want the team to win, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's my heart's ultimate goal. Read that statement again: As a parent, my head tells me I want the team to win, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's my heart's ultimate goal. As a coach, I 100% disagree with this statement, but as a dad... While I want my children to earn the time they get, I want them to be given multiple opportunities and want to see them excel. This is difficult to understand as a coach until you experience it as a parent. In my career, I have had multiple meetings with parents about all types of issues, but generally, they all start or finish with the issue of playing time.

Solution #1 - As a coach, it is imperative you try to find time for all athletes to develop. This is not the case on a Friday night, but it helps me to stomach the long Monday night games of watching JV football when I would rather be at home with my family. Giving kids a chance to compete under the lights helps a ton. Finding games where the final score is not the goal helps.

Working to give athletes opportunities may benefit you as you may find a contributor, or at least give an athlete a chance to play in a game and appease a crazy dad - like me!

Issue #2 - As a parent, you hope your child is cared for by your coach. I have been very fortunate to know that my daughter and son's coaches cared for them.

Solution #2 - It must be made clear through actions that each kid matters in your program, and this can be difficult at larger programs. Most parents just want to know that their child is being given every opportunity to succeed.

Issue #3 - You hurt for your child when they get frustrated. Both of my little ones want to compete and get better, but when that does not happen, frustration sets in. The easiest thing to do is to move the anger towards...the coach. Since I am a coach, when I first felt this, I understood pretty quickly that this is misplaced. However, our human nature finds the easy way out sometimes.

Solution #3 - As a coach it can be difficult to handle upset, frustrated parents, but we must realize while the actions at times are not acceptable, they are usually attempting to help their son/daughter. While the actions may need to be the same with parental meetings, realize that sometimes patience as a coach can help. Do not take abuse, but understand why there can be frustration. (Side note: at times parent meetings can quickly turn ugly, so I always recommend a witness in all meetings.)

We have been extremely blessed to have great coaches work with our children, and I am a coach for a living, but seeing some time on the bench definitely has helped me develop areas I didn't realize needed work.



COACHING RESOURCES

GETTING A HEAD COACHING POSITION



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In full disclosure, I have not gotten the job every time I wanted it. I don't claim to know everything there is to know about getting a job. I have, however, gotten the job a few times. I have also hired many coaches as a school Athletic Director, District AD, and now Director of Human Resources.

Disclaimer: All of this is my opinion. I'm sure there can be some different opinions out there and that's what makes this fun! Don't take any of this as me saying that any of it is absolute or there are not exceptions.

I think it's harder to get a head coaching position now than at any other time. It is very competitive. In most cases there are multiple quality candidates. Always keep in mind that only 1 person can get the job.

In my experience there are 5 steps you must follow and understand....

- Step #1 - Be Self-Aware
- Step #2 - Introduce yourself properly
- Step #3 - Prepare for the interview
- Step #4 - Be yourself in the interview
- Step #5 - Prove them right or wrong

Step #1: Be Self-Aware

So you want to be the Head Coach. So do a LOT of people. You have to think about it from the perspective of the person doing the hiring.

What jobs should you go for?

The truth is, it doesn't hurt to apply for any job if you think it will not affect your status at your current job. There are, however, certain jobs you will have a much better chance at attaining than others. This can vary for 1st time head coaches and experienced head coaches.

	Pattern I have seen...	Moral of the story...
1 st time Head Coaches	Coaches who are first-time head coaches will likely have a chance at either being promoted or taking a job that has really struggled. (Exceptions would be top assistants at really strong programs).	Statistically speaking, the best place you have at attaining a head job is where you are RIGHT NOW. Do the best job you can to make them have to hire you if the job comes open. Don't act like a team struggling is "beneath you". If you want a head job, this is the place to go prove yourself.
Experienced Head Coaches	Coaches who are experienced head coaches have a slight advantage over the inexperienced. They have a record but the record can be used for or against them. It is all about how that committee sees your previous experience.	You know what you have accomplished. When you apply for a job your record will help or hurt you. Be aware of how they probably see it. It can be harder to be "self-aware" as an experienced coach than a first-time coach. Embrace your past experiences. Make them a positive.

Before you even email the principal/AD or apply for the job, ask yourself these questions:

- Do I fit this job based on my current status and experience?
- Do I know anyone at this school or connected in some way that can vouch for me?
- Would I accept this job if it is offered? (Don't waste their time if you just like the chase and aren't actually planning on taking the job if offered.)

If the answer to these is "No", you probably need to skip the next Rules and wait for the next job.

If you answered "Yes", move on to Step #2!

Step #2: Introduce Yourself Properly

So now you have decided you fit the basic premise and want this job. Now you have to secure an interview. This is the step where the journey ends for most people. Based on what I have seen, on average, around 100 candidates apply for many of the Head Coaching Jobs in Georgia. I would guess the average interview pool consists of 5-6 candidates. So that means 95 candidates on average are getting stopped at this step. If you get stopped here, don't get discouraged. You had a 95% chance of it happening. Just keep working and take the same mantra that you tell your players...worry about what you can control. Make sure if they stop you here that you did everything you could control to make yourself an attractive candidate! Here are the things you can do to help you get to Step #3.

Don't try to be the first guy to email the principal. Let the previous coach get his 2nd foot out of the door before you try to take his job. You don't have to wait weeks but a day or two is not going to make the difference. Try to avoid looking desperate or not compassionate.

Resume

When you reach out to the administration, make sure to be concise and include a good resume and references. It is likely the admin will click on your attachments more than read a lengthy email detailing your accomplishments.

In my opinion, the resume should be more interactive than in years past. Show you are embracing technology and have new ideas. Looking at 100+ resumes they all tend to look the same. If you want to make an impression, here are some things you can do:

- Make sure your resume has pictures. Visible is better.
 - Make sure it has links to things about you and your teams.
 - You can even include video links if you think that is something that will help you.
- Here is an example of my resume.



References

Relationships are key to getting jobs. Relationships that help you get the job can come from your reference list or from informal communication.

You should include references in your application/email correspondence where you show interest in the job. You need to think about who is going to be your references. You should put your direct supervisors at all jobs if that is possible. This means your previous Principal, Athletic Directors, or Head Coaches. You have to assume there is a possibility someone at that school knows those people any way and it will seem odd if they are not on the reference list. Any successful administrator is going to put more stock into good references from people who have been your supervisor over friends.

Putting "famous" people on your reference list probably doesn't get the same traction that you think. If you really know a college coach or someone you think will be a great reference for you, it is more impactful for them to call on your behalf. You obviously can list them as a reference but if you don't know them well

enough to ask them to call on your behalf, don't list them.

If you have anyone that you know at the school or that is connected to that place in any way, it will help for that person to vouch for you. This was always the hardest part for me because I hated asking people to do this, but I know it helps. When I have hired coaches, I have had to lean on people I know and trust to give me good advice. Connection to the school in some capacity is a big part of getting hired.

After you reach out and show interest you may or may not get a quick response. If they ask you to go to another site and apply through the district, do that on the same day and respond you did it. It always amazed me that some people act like they are "too good" to do some more, professional, procedural work. If you are acting like it is too much work for you to complete an online application, you may not be giving off the impression you are the man for this job! Don't leave any stone unturned in your pursuit of your dreams. Do all the paperwork and do all the steps exactly how they ask.

Did they call you and set up an interview?
If you answered yes, move on to Step #3!

Step #3: Prepare for the interview

If you are interviewing for the job, you have obviously made a good impression. Now it is time to make sure you have a plan and prepare to convey that plan in the interview. I think this is a step a lot of people skip and assume they will do well in the interview without doing enough "homework"

Homework List

- Get to know the school, community, etc.* - show some genuine interest in the school and the community so when you go into the interview you are familiar with the place.
- Make a presentation* - I get the question "Should I have a portfolio or not?". The real answer is there is no way to know. It depends on how much value the principal/hiring committee places on it. My belief has always been to be over-prepared. I would have something prepared. What should you prepare? That is up to you and your skill set. You should have a plan and portray that plan in your presentation.
- Go over your plan and know the answers to the basic questions.*

Don't get caught not having a great answer. There are standard questions that you should expect. It is very likely your interview questions will consist of some variations of these.

(continued on next page)



Do you have a good answer to each one of these questions?

Have you done all your homework?

If you answered yes, move on to Step #4!

Step #4: Be yourself in the interview

Keep in mind that you are not trying to “trick” these people into hiring you. You want them to want to hire you. You want them to embrace you and your ideas....Not a person that isn't really you or ideas that you don't really know if you can do.

Don't go into the interview room	Do go into the interview room
◆ Nervous	◆ Confident
◆ Timid	◆ Charismatic
◆ Scared	◆ Engaging

Human beings pick up on these 6 traits inherently and quickly. You need to tell yourself “I got this” and go in and make it happen!

How do you want to come across?

You need to make sure you convey that you are the following:
Organized – you must show you can work with all the various aspects of the head football coach. This is where preparation comes in before the interview. Show you have a plan for everything.

Disciplined – you have to show that you not only “have a plan” but possess the skills to “make the plan happen”

Hard-Working – you don't have to talk about how many hours you spend at the field house but you can not come across as lazy or flippant.

Interview them...are you a good fit?

It is important that you get an impression of them as well. Whether you come up with a few formal questions or you just informally gather impressions, it is important that you are deciding if this seems like a place you want to be. Get to know the principal and AD as much as you can in that short period. Keep mental notes of anything they say about their background or experiences they have had. One of the last questions will usually be “Do you have any questions for us?”. I always asked about these three things:

What is the process for hiring assistant coaches?

What is the process for getting student-athletes in weight training class?

What is the schedule during the day for me?

The answers to these questions didn't necessarily determine whether I would take the job or not...it just provided me a blueprint for how much they really wanted to win and were willing to work with me to make a successful football program a priority. Remember, getting the job is not the ultimate goal.

What is your ultimate goal?

Keep in mind that your ultimate goal should NOT be to get the job. It should be to do WELL in the job after hired. To do this you must be yourself and interview them. I always compare it to College Recruiting. You have athletes who want to play college football and you have athletes who just want a “signing”. Some see the signing as the end of the journey. Some see the signing as the beginning of the real work. Coaches can be the same way. Are you trying to get a head coaching job as the end of some journey or are you understanding that attaining this goal will really just be the beginning of the work? If you are understanding of the work you will understand that you must be yourself in the interview. This is the only way to make it work for the long haul.

So now the interview is over...it's a time of waiting. Did you do the best you could have done? Did your preparation have you ready?

If you answered yes, move on to Step #5!

Step #5: Prove them right or wrong

If you get the job...Prove them right!!

These people chose you over likely 100+ candidates. What an honor! Go out and make them look like the smartest people on

the planet. Work immediately to implement your plan. Some key things to remember when you first take over:
Don't let petty things get in the way. Prove the admin right.
Don't focus on what you don't have. Focus on what you do have.
Don't make procedures/rules you are not going to be able to enforce consistently.

If you don't get the job...Prove them wrong!!

There is nothing wrong with being disappointed. You put a lot of effort into the job and no one wants to be told they didn't get a job. Take a while to feel sorry for yourself. It's ok. But don't let it last long. Remind yourself of how many people applied. Remind yourself you did all you can control. Most importantly, remind yourself that you plan on proving these people wrong. Make them wish they had hired you. Get back to work and when you do get the job, be ready and make this school wish they had hired you!

CONCLUSION:

It is a privilege to be considered and it is a journey to get to the destination you desire. Keep in mind you only control what you control. You should spend very little time dwelling on things you don't control. They will either select you for the position or they will not and you don't have the say. What you do control is how you navigate the process and how you present yourself. Spend all of your time on this and do the best you can. If you did the best you can and they accept you as their new coach, prove them right! If they don't accept you as their new coach, you did the best you can do and you didn't want to be anywhere that did not want you! I genuinely wish you all the best of luck in your pursuit of your dreams. Please let me know of anything I can do to help you along the way!



FIVE STEPS TO FOLLOW TO GET A HEAD COACHING POSITION:

#1 Be self aware

#2 Introduce yourself properly

#3 Prepare for the interview

#4 Be yourself in the interview

#5 Prove them right or wrong



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FOOTBALL 101

UNDERSTANDING DEFENSIVE GAPS & TECHNIQUES



Chris Haddad
Bellingham HS - MA
Defensive Coordinator
[Coach Tube](#)
[@chrish10tory](#)
[@v1QtorySports](#)



While gaps and techniques may seem obvious for defensive line coaches, it's often an understood term for linebacker and defensive back coaches.

If you're teaching your defensive players to fit the run, the first thing you must teach them is how to align correctly. Without telling each player how to align on every play, coaches will simply use terms like "Over" or "Under" to identify their defensive lineman positioning.

This is important because if the team is an odd or an even front, there may be more gaps to cover based on the coverage behind. On each play, the linebackers and defensive backs should know if they're in the run fit or not.

Remember, running backs run through gaps. If all the gaps are secured, it forces the running back to run horizontally. If they're running horizontally, it means they're not gaining yards.

First, identify the gaps on defense. As shown below, the "A" gap is between the center and guard, the "B" gap is between the guard and

tackle, the "C" gap between the tackle and tight end, and last, the "D" gap is outside of the tight end.

Next, techniques help players understand what gap fits they have, based on where they line up. The terminology on the technique chart is commonly used throughout coaching. Your version may be different, and that is just fine. Whatever helps your team get lined up correctly.



The easiest way to teach this to a player is to tell them that every head-up technique is an even number. Every outside technique is an odd number. Finally, any inside technique is the head-up number with an "i." This will help players get aligned more quickly. You can also adjust any fronts with a number of combinations.

Tag these fronts with names of your liking. For example, in an "over" front, the 3 technique will go to the strength, and the 1 technique will go weak. How you gameplan against the offense is entirely up to you.

Once these techniques have been assigned to the defensive lineman, patch up the remaining gaps with the linebackers and the safeties.



HIDDEN YARDS: MAKE SPECIAL TEAMS SPECIAL

GET YOUR PUNT RETURNERS IN THE
RIGHT SPOT



Chris Fore
Veteran Coach
[@chrisfore](#)
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As a Special Teams Coordinator, I can always determine very quickly how much time, effort,

and preparation another team puts into their Special Teams by the Kick Return team, and their Punt Return. Years ago, we played a team whose kicker never kicked it past the 18-yard line on Kickoff, but their opponent the week before us had their returners on the 5-yard line. I was amused by that and started licking my chops a bit. There was no way they were putting time into Special Teams film prep.

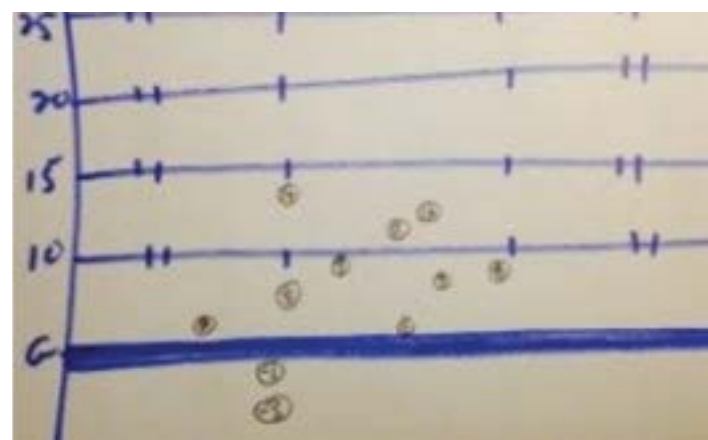
Why would you put your returners on the 5-yard line if the opponent had never kicked it past the 18? That makes zero sense. AND, that tells me that they just didn't do their homework on that kicker. One way to get your returners in the right spot is by creating what I call a "land chart."

A land chart shows you where the kicker has kicked the ball. I will document EVERY single kick that I can get my eyes on for that year. If we are playing a team in week 7, I hope to get at least 4-5 tapes, if not all of them. If we are playing week 1, I will look back to the previous year if the kicker is a returner.

This land chart will help you to determine where

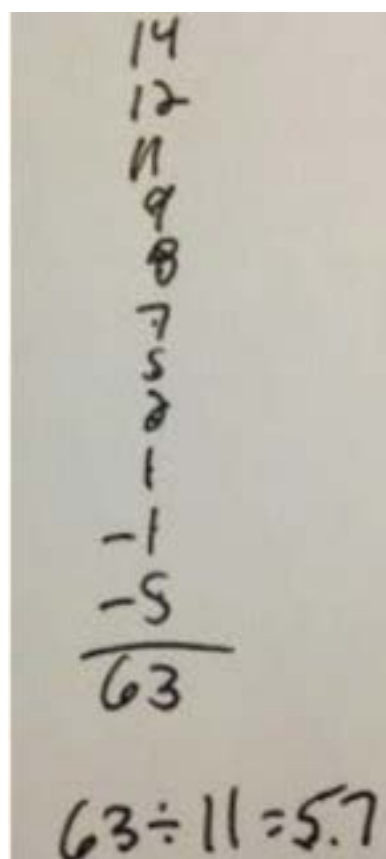
to put your kick returners! I have given this idea to numerous coaches over the years as I have helped them improve their Special Teams, and I get some interesting responses. "I've never even thought of that." Or, "man, that makes a lot of sense." I've been doing a land chart like this since 2002 when I first took over as a Special Teams Coordinator; a job I've held since 2002 at 4 different schools. Even as the Head Football Coach for eight years, I served as the Special Teams Coordinator!

Here is what a hit chart looks like:



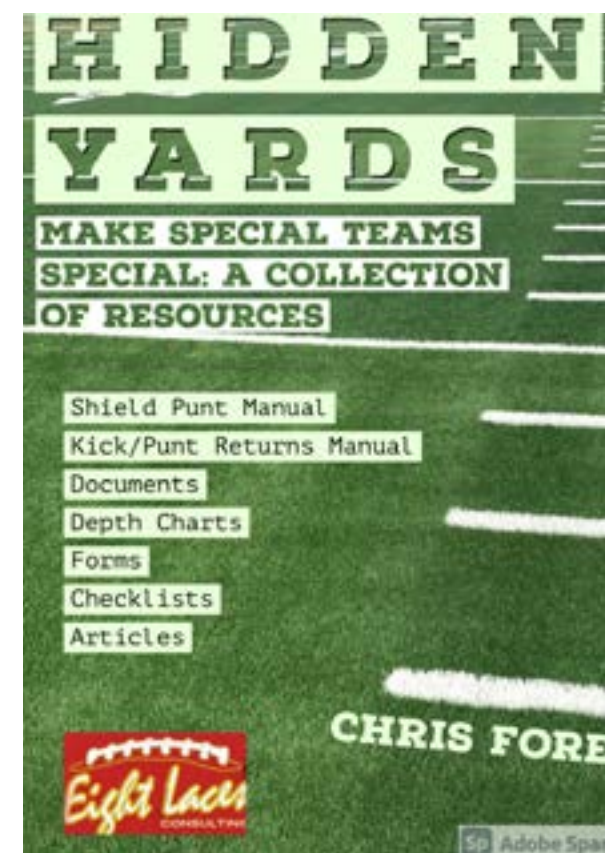
Here is how to figure out where to put your returner: add up all of the yards, and then divide by the number of kicks (finding an average).

So, in this case, we would put the returners on the 5-yard line. And notice WHERE the balls have landed: a majority to return's left-hand side. Does it make sense, in this case, to put a returner on each



hash? Or would you be better suited to the middle of the field with one, and left hash with the other? There might be other ways to do this, but this is what I have found to be the best way. It works for me. And we usually do a pretty good job of getting our kids in the right spots. We do a land chart for every punt as well. Again, how many times have you seen punts SAIL over a kid's head, or a kid NOT be able to field a punt because they are TOO far back. Finding the average dramatically helps your kids on punt return too!

The whole goal here is to have your returner move the least amount possible! If his feet aren't moving, then his knees aren't moving, then his hips aren't moving, his torso isn't moving he is STABLE to make the catch, secure the football and GO!!



If this is helpful information to you, or if you are looking for a tremendous Special Teams resource, check out my latest [Special Teams product](#). It's called [HIDDEN YARDS: Make Special Teams Special](#).

CHECK OUT THESE READER SUBMISSION PHOTOS!

West Seattle Wildcats - Submitted by Eric Evenson

Winning TD by QB Judah Holtzclaw, Westerville Central in 2nd Round Playoff in Ohio Large School Division - Submitted by Brent Morrison

Almont High School - Submitted by Jeffrey Bacholzky

Cedar Creek Christian School - Submitted by Jamie Gamel

Bristow, OK - Submitted by Brett Jones

OFFENSIVE LINE DRILLS

UNIQUE TEAM PERIODS



Lee Weber, CSCS
Rose Hill HS - KS
Head Football Coach
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One method of keeping your team's interest and focus sparked throughout a football season is to incorporate unique practice sessions beyond

your normal individual periods, inside run, 7 on 7, and team periods.

Here is a quick collection of unique practice period ideas that we have collected over the course of my career that we have used at various times to spark competition and have fun at practice.

3rd Down Period- Best of 10. Best on Best. 5 Offensive Plays. 5 Defensive Plays. With 3rd down efficiency being crucial to both sides of the ball, this period can be extremely valuable to develop a successful third down mindset for the players and play callers. Be sure to utilize your down markers and chains to make the situation more real for your players and coaches.

Fuji Period- 12 Plays in 1 minute. This period focuses on tempo and the chaos that may happen in a game. If you are a team that plays fast, then this period is invaluable to crank up that tempo intensity. This is a great period for your defense as well if you must prepare for an up tempo team.

Chaos Period- Best on Best for 5 minutes as fast as we can go! Similar to the Fuji Period, but longer and ensuring you go best on best.

Bad Call Period- A period where we work our calls in the worst possible scenarios. Everyone is hopefully good at running plays into the perfect scenario or even a neutral advantage situation, but how often do you work bad calls? This period forces your players to execute plays under the worst situations such as trap coverages, blitzing right into the play, or line stunts that screw up your blocking schemes.

½ Line 7 on 7- As simple as it sounds. This is especially useful when you have a limited number of athletes. This is great if you utilize route combinations built to one side of the field such as mirrored route concepts.

Tempo Period- Plays on Air. We find this to be very valuable for our offense in terms of execution. We want our players to be able execute perfectly on air and feel like that this helps them then carry over to better execution during live periods against a defense. It also eliminates the frustration you have dealing with the random defensive guys who line up incorrectly or don't play the play correctly according to the scout.

9 on 11 Goalline Period- This period is meant to put our offense at a disadvantage on the goalline and simulate the difficulty of the goalline situation. I would adapt to a 13 on 11 drill if you are exclusively in condensed formations like the wishbone or power I.

10 and In Drill- 3 Plays Best on Best. We do this to start our practice every day. It ramps up the intensity of our practice. Break out the down marker and use coaches as officials.

Double Barrel or Ricochet Drill: 2 offenses and 1 defense. Offense A is at the 50 yard line going in and Offense B is at the 10 yard line coming out. The defense aligns and defends Offense A's first play and plays it out with pursuit. They then turn around and defend Offense B's first play while Offense A resets on the 50 yard line again. Then, the process starts over with both offense's second play. It is a great way to prepare for a tempo based team when your scout teams are unable to simulate that tempo.

Excerpted and Expanded from my book, The Head Coaching Mentorship Manual, which can be purchased on Amazon [here](#).



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PJ Gibbs
East Lee County HS-Florida
Head Coach & Recruiting
Coordinator
 Author: [Book Available Here](#)
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To think how far we have come in practice-planning and getting tendencies on our opponents is incredible. I can

remember when I first started coaching, I was the breakdown person, charting everything we can do via the computer, and it is unbelievable. I can remember sitting for hours, staring at the computer with my clipboard and tendency chart, getting the down and distance, the hash mark, run or pass for every scout film we had on our opponent. After we would review the film early Sunday morning—at Manasquan we played Saturday afternoons—our defensive staff would head down to the old weight room, where there were three large whiteboards. We would draw up every formation from our breakdown and begin to chart plays out of it. It was a long process; one of the benefits being my old Pop Warner Coach, Bruce Bresnahan, would drop-off pork roll, egg, and cheese sandwiches for us to have for breakfast. After about three hours, Coach Kubu would pop his head in and say, “You got them shut out yet?” We would laugh and say “Yes, Coach we got them.” Coach had been a Defensive Coordinator, himself, at Brick Township HS under another great coach, Warren Wolf, and won a bunch of state titles. Learning from him on how to break down a team and their tendencies, you felt confident in the game plan and confident that the kids would execute the game plan on Saturday afternoon.

After we met on the game plan for the week, we would sit down and discuss practice planning for the week. Each position coach would look at the schematics of the offense we were facing and decide what drill would or wouldn’t work best that week. Coach would always remind us about the fundamentals, making sure our players were excelling in them before we got into anything complicated in a drill. That is one thing I took from him, regarding practice. His attention to detail—how you never want to be a jack-of-all-trades and a master of none. That demand of

detail and fundamentals is something that needs to be stressed in your program and you need to understand what your players can and cannot do for you scheme. As a coach, you never want to put your players in a position that they will not be successful, as I was taught, coaches could deal with physical mistakes but not mental mistakes.

As players in our program, you had better know what your job is and the job of everyone around, so you always know where you fit in the defense. The way we practiced was something that I would take with me wherever I had the opportunity to coach and it maximized my time and efficiency. Depending on the size of our team and how many two-way players we had, we would always have specific days starting with either offense or defense in the beginning of practice. Monday was our day to review the film from the prior game with our players, lift weights, run, and watch the JV game. Tuesday was on offensive priority day, meaning our Varsity players would go with their offensive coaches and the JV players would start with the defensive coaches. In the middle of practice, we would go over to specific special teams and the personnel that was on them, so we did not have any confusion. After that, we would have specific situations for the offense, with 7 on 7 and inside run, so that the players would be prepared for anything that we might see during the game. Later, we would switch and the Varsity players would go to the defensive side of the ball and we would repeat the same process, all the time encouraging our scout team players that the reason we are going to be successful is because of the effort they would give all week against our Varsity players.

An important point for the coaches or younger coaches helping with the scout teams is that they need to have as much enthusiasm as if they were coaching the first team, maximizing the effort out of those players. Another important point for practice is to constantly give your players situations they will see in the game, based off the film and tendencies that your staff has seen during your meetings—have them prepared and ready to go for anything. Those specific parts of practice could be a goal line period, 3rd down situation, sudden change off a turnover, a specific formation they might run—have them ready for everything your staff has seen on film.

The following are sample diagrams of one of our practices from Palmetto Ridge High School (Naples, FL) and an example of a practice schedule from the International Bowl January 2020.

As a coach and staff, you can tailor this schedule to fit your both team and your program. We find it extremely effective with the numbers we have and get the maximum time efficiency out of each practice.

Learning this as a young coach allowed me to be successful on the International level over the last five years (specifically) coaching for USA football. I had the honor of being a Head Coach for the U17 Select Team in the 2018 and 2019 International Bowls and the U17 Japanese Team in this past January’s (2020) International Bowl. I applied what I learned from all my coaches at Manasquan in how to manage time, practice plan efficiently, and to get the most of my players. The week of the International Bowl is intense, not only are you representing your country, hometown, and high school, you are also representing a first-class organization in USA Football.

The Practice schedule is intense, and you need to be prepared with your playbook and have your coaches all on the same page going into the week. The number of practices you have include a forty-minute scrimmage against your opponent, for a total of 8 practices, and then you play a game on the biggest stage of the world at AT&T Stadium, the home of the Dallas Cowboys.

That game really shows how much preparation you have made, offensively, defensively and special teams. I cannot stress enough emphasis on how important special teams are in a game like this (or any game). As a coach, we need to take time for it during practice—Coach Kubu used to tell us that the kicking game will win or lose you two games a year, and for most of my coaching career, that has been the truth. All I can say is make sure that you are practicing with a purpose and make sure you have a plan and an objective. When you meet with your coaches take input, suggestions, you all have to work together to make sure that players are in the best position to succeed. Make sure you go over situations so that you players are prepared because if it comes up in a game and they have not seen it, that is on you as a coach—not the kids. Do not blame the kids for the fact that you and your staff did not have them ready for that situation. If you need to, call for a timeout, calm everyone down, and get everyone on the same page. Let the players see that you are confident in what you are calling and that if you need to, adjustments can be made on the sideline.

TEAM	START TIME	DRILL	OPPOSITE	DEFENSE
TEAM	8:00	OFFENSE		DEFENSE
TEAM	8:15	STEP BY STEP READ (INTRO TO FORMATIONS AND PLAYS)		FORMATION REVIEW... (JWI)
TEAM	8:30	ROLL		GROUP: GATOR, Rabbit, Falcon, Eagle
INDY GROUP	8:45	OL	TEB	QB
TEAM	9:00	STANCE/START/SHOOT		
TEAM	9:15	TEAM WALK	TEAM WALK	TEAM WALK
TEAM	9:30	TEAM WALK	TEAM WALK	TEAM WALK
TEAM	9:45	TEAM WALK	TEAM WALK	TEAM WALK
TEAM	10:00	TEAM WALK	TEAM WALK	TEAM WALK
TEAM	10:15	TEAM WALK	TEAM WALK	TEAM WALK
TEAM	10:30	TEAM WALK	TEAM WALK	TEAM WALK
TEAM	10:45	TEAM WALK	TEAM WALK	TEAM WALK
TEAM	11:00	WATER BREAK		
SPECIALS				
TEAM	11:15	PUNT		
TEAM	11:30	KO		
TEAM	11:45	XPT/FG		
TEAM	12:00	WATER BREAK		
SKELLY		OFFENSE		DEFENSE
TEAM	12:15	*SKELLY ID vs 10... 20 and 21		
TEAM	12:30	WATER BREAK		
SKELLY		OFFENSE		DEFENSE
TEAM	12:45	*SKELLY 10 vs 10		
TEAM	1:00	WATER BREAK		
TEAM		OFFENSE		DEFENSE
TEAM	1:15	*TEAM 10 vs 10... 20 and 21		
TEAM	1:30	WATER BREAK		
TEAM		OFFENSE		DEFENSE
TEAM	1:45	*TEAM 10 vs 10		

TEAM	START TIME	DRILL	OPPOSITE	DEFENSE
TEAM	8:00	OFFENSE		DEFENSE
TEAM	8:15	STRUCTURE DYNAMIC		STRUCTURE DYNAMIC
TEAM	8:30	DYNAMIC		STRUCTURE DYNAMIC
INDY GROUP	8:45	OL	TEB	QB
TEAM	9:00	STANCE/START/AGILITY		
TEAM	9:15	FOOTWORK		
TEAM	9:30	FOOTWORK		
TEAM	9:45	FOOTWORK		
TEAM	10:00	FOOTWORK		
TEAM	10:15	FOOTWORK		
TEAM	10:30	FOOTWORK		
TEAM	10:45	FOOTWORK		
TEAM	11:00	FOOTWORK		
TEAM	11:15	FOOTWORK		
TEAM	11:30	FOOTWORK		
TEAM	11:45	FOOTWORK		
TEAM	12:00	WATER BREAK		
INDY GRP		OFFENSE		DEFENSE
TEAM	12:15	OFFENSE GAPS PLAYS/DEFENSE DL/R/VEPER RUN FITS, DR/SWR 1 ON 1 DRILL		
TEAM	12:30	OFFENSE		DEFENSE
TEAM	12:45	7 on 7 OLB Work		
TEAM	1:00	WATER BREAK		
TEAM		OFFENSE		DEFENSE
TEAM	1:15	TEAM V. TEAM B		
TEAM	1:30	WATER BREAK		
TEAM		OFFENSE		DEFENSE
TEAM	1:45	TEAM REVIEW		



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NO HUDDLE NO MERCY

TIPS AND CONSIDERATIONS WHEN
IMPLEMENTING AN UPTEMPO ATTACK



Shawn Liotta, Head Coach
Burrell High School-PA
[Coach Tube](#)
[@ShawnLiotta](#)
Author: [No Huddle No Mercy](#)

As with any offensive system or philosophy, there will be some potential roadblocks and bumps in the road on your path to success. It is

important to recognize and have a plan to attack these potential pitfalls before they become a critical factor that will inhibit your success. I will take you through a few scenarios that you must be aware of as you implement an up-tempo no huddle system.

Overall Talent Level at My School

The first area you must always take into consideration when designing your offense is "what is the talent like at my school". You must be honest with yourself as you go about designing and implementing your offensive strategy that you are not attempting to pound a square peg into a round hole. If you want to design your offense to be a wide open passing attack but you currently are lacking a quarterback who can pass the ball greater than five yards then you are going to struggle. If you want to line up with two tight ends and a fullback and play smash-mouth football but you lack a strong offensive line and running back, then you are going to struggle to move the ball. For most of us at the high school level we do not get to recruit or pick our talent from year to year to fit a particular system. We have to coach-up the kids that we have and fit the system around them. That is why it is important to tailor your play design around the players that you currently have on your

roster and coming up through your school system.

School Size/ Roster Size

I have successfully utilized an extreme hurry up tempo at large schools with big rosters and the small school level with roster size in the low twenties. I actually believe running an uptempo no-huddle system at the small school level can have some definite advantages. If your players are both playing on both sides of the football at that level, there is a good chance that your opponent is going to be in the same situation. With the proper implementation of this system as outlined in this book, your players will be in top physical condition and will certainly wear down and out-last your opponent who may be used to more of a slower tempo, particularly if they are a huddle team. They will not be properly conditioned to handle your uptempo attack.

I do caution you to one situation where it may not be advantageous to operate at an extremely fast tempo. In a scenario where your conference consists of mixed classifications of teams where you may be a small school of a 28 man roster being forced to play teams with 80 man rosters. This is rare but does happen in areas around the country. I would hesitate to operate at an extremely fast pace when facing an opponent that is completely two platooning their offense and defensive units against your players who are going both ways. Fatigue will quickly become a factor as their waves of fresh players will have a

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decided advantage over your players who are never coming off of the field during the game.

Creating a Buy In

As with any successful offensive or defensive strategy, your players and coaching staff must be one hundred percent committed to your plan of attack. You must stay true to your plan with the belief that the results of your hard work will pay off. Success does not happen overnight in anything, it is a process to become great and your players and coaches need to have this mentality and belief in the system.

Can't Focus on Time of Possession or Defensive Statistics

You must change your mindset around time of possession and defensive statistics, at least in the traditional sense. Because you will be getting more snaps offensively and piling up more yardage, and points; your opponent will in-turn get more opportunities with the football. The key metrics to focus on are three and outs and turnovers. Those are what we like to focus on with our defense. The opponent is going to get yardage on you and they may score some points, the key is winning the game and your defense will have the opportunity to provide opportunities for you to do that. In the 2019 season alone we recorded two shutouts in a season for the first time at our school since 2006, so those kinds of opportunities for your defense to make an impact will exist. The other bonus is that your defense will not feel the pressure to hold the opponent out of the endzone on every single possession as you are piling up points on your end of the scoreboard.

Time of possession is another factor that will certainly swing in your opponents' favor. The time of possession is not a metric that we care about as we will be trying to score in often a minute or two as we move quickly up and down the field. We focus on our total number of offensive snaps and yardage per play.

Physical Condition

I can not overstate this enough- You must be in better physical condition than your opponent to play at the tempo we want to operate at for four quarters. I have discussed how to ensure that you are getting your team ready to play fast and in optimum condition to execute an up-tempo attack. If you do not do this you will not be successful with this style of play.

Something Goes In - Something Comes Out

As I have discussed in detail throughout this book, keep your core menu of plays small. You must be able to practice your plays with high repetitions during the week. Get very good at a small number of concepts rather than have 50 plays that you can not execute properly or your players are confused on. If they are thinking they are not playing fast. Simply put when you insert a new play into your gameplan something should have to come out of the game plan for that week.

Do Not Run Plays You Do Not Practice

I can not stress this enough. If you did not properly practice the concept throughout the week and you feel very good about your players executing the play properly. Do not run it in the game, you will not experience success. I have seen it time and time again where a coach will say to me, "I can't get our slow screen to the running back to work". I later find out that they only run the play three times all week in practice during a team period. This play has no chance to work during the game because it has not been properly taught and the players have not had enough repetitions to execute it at a high level in a game situation. It is entirely ok as a coach to say "hey, you know what we are going to scrap this concept for this week because we are not ready yet". You will have much more success in executing concepts that your players believe in and have a high level of confidence executing.

Have Answers and Be Able to Adjust to the Defense Each Week

In the design of your offense each week you need to have ways to "fix" issues that will arise against defensive adjustments. This means that your plays have to have answers to the defense or be good against any coverage or you have to have ways to get into a better play call through game planned audibles. We design our offense in such a way that it does not matter what defensive alignment we face, our players are taught how to adjust their responsibility to attack the weakness in the defensive structure. This will allow you to not get "caught off-guard" when a defense has shown you a particular front and coverage structure on film but gives you an entirely different defense on Friday night. You should enter each and every game being able to accomplish the following three factors with your offensive play design.

(continued on next page)

Run plays should be good against most front variations with simple blocking rules for your players to adjust to the defensive alignment.

Pass plays should be designed to have answers to all defensive coverage and have multiple adjusting route concepts that will force the defense to always be wrong regardless of their coverage and alignment.

Pass protection should be designed to have answers to keep the quarterback clean with max protection adjustments, ability throw hot to uncovered receivers, slide the protection, and the ability to move the quarterback launch point

Don't have to always be in a "Perfect Play"

In our no huddle system we do not want to be a constant "check with me" team where the entire offense is constantly looking over to the sideline as the play caller attempts to put the offense into a better play call. We want to "play fast" and attack defenses, not stand at the line of scrimmage for 30 seconds trying to find the "perfect play call". Defenses can only do so many things and by slowing your tempo down as an offense you are playing into their hands to allow them to also make adjustments. Remember we want to always be attacking and with the threat of an immediate snap force the defense into static alignments as they are scrambling before the snap just to get lined up.

Playing Goliath

Coaches will often ask, is playing fast a good strategy for an underdog? Certainly, we have won many games over the years with this system when we were playing a superior opponent. This offense can be an equalizer and you force the defense to adjust to your tempo while having the ability to attack the entire field. Prepare your kids to win and believe in the system, and "playing fast" can be your sling-shot against a "Goliath" opponent.

Teams Playing Keep Away

Often times when playing an inferior opponent their strategy will be to shorten the game and attempt to have ball control and keep your offense off of the field. This sounds like a good strategy in theory, however, it still requires your opponent to be able to consistently make first downs to keep you off of the field. For games like this, you have to condition your team to focus simply on scoring on each possession and not the total amount of points that

you will score as your opportunities will be limited. Do not allow your players to get frustrated with the opponents keep away efforts as a 28-7 win is just as good as a 60-7 win.

Is weather a factor?

Another common detractor to the offense you will hear from critics is "you can't run that offense in bad weather". Well, I have spent my entire coaching career running this offense in the northeast of the United States where we deal with all four seasons. It is extremely hot at the start of training camp and if we are fortunate enough to play deep into the playoffs and a state championship we will have snow on the ground. We have thrown for over 400 yards in the remnants of a Hurricane, and broke the state scoring record in temperatures that were below 20 degrees. You can have success in any weather condition with this offensive system it has been proven time and time again.

Coach Liotta has recently introduced an intensive 15 hour clinic seminar on his record setting passing game that combines principles of the Air Raid Offense and the Run and Shoot at the high school level. Coach Liotta has designed this course in conjunction with his soon to be released book on the passing game, creating a true interactive experience. To register for this seminar visit <https://nohuddlenomercy.com/487-2/>

DEFENSIVE STRUCTURE

TIPS FOR RURAL SCHOOLS: GRIDIRON SUCCESS



Kevin Swift
Gold Beach HS - OR
Athletic Director
[@kdawgswift](#)
[Free Materials Here](#)

Those of you tuning in for more details on our defensive ideas and schemes at Gold Beach High School, I apologize but we are taking a BREAK from defense for this issue. I promise in the next issue of Headsets we will be looking at our secondary play in our Cover 5. This week, I thought I would share some lessons I learned when I left the big city stadium lights of southern California, for a little rural stadium on the southern coast of Oregon.

In the summer of 1997, my family and I left the urban football world of Southern California for the rural football world of the Southern Oregon coast. My coaching world was being tipped upside down on me. I was leaving the world of:

- 90 player rosters
 - 12 coaches on varsity level alone
 - 30 minutes max for road games
 - 2 to 4 lower level teams
- For a world of:
- 20 to 35 player rosters
 - 2 to 3 coaches in the whole program
 - 3 to 7 hours average travel for road games
 - No lower level teams

Needless to say, there were many more subtle differences that would keep my learning curve pretty steep. My first season as the Panther's head coach was a disastrous 0 and 9 campaign. The program has come a long way since that first year, including several undefeated seasons.

We really got our program's foundation set in 2003, after six years of hard work. Since 2003, the Panthers have played in 5 state title games, winning twice. We have captured 9 league titles and advanced to the quarterfinals of state

playoffs in 10 consecutive years (04 to 14). I've recently retired and had time to reflect on some things we learned that we believe truly help us maintain success.

Do not give up- stay the course

Open the world- show them something different

Baby steps- what do we need 1st, not everything at once

Zero period- building athletes

Food for thought & productivity- pregame meals, travel meals, food coolers

Do Not Give Up- Stay the Course

Nothing in life really worth obtaining should be easy to accomplish. Instant gratification in our world today has become the norm, yet this approach will not work when developing a rural football program. My first 6 years at Gold Beach truly tested my determination in accomplishing my goal. Living in the past and resisting change are staples in rural communities. When I arrived, I was expecting to immediately have a committed group of players. Instead, I was told we do not lift year-round or very hard, we do not participate in spring ball, and we do not really participate in our own summer camp either. Oh, and we didn't win much either. During those first six years, we only had sporadic, at best, success. More often than not we were a game or two below a winning season and out of the playoffs. This resulted in great dissatisfaction from the community that was really not willing to listen to my ideas. I went on to survive several petitions to get rid of me and several letters to the local paper describing me as a "loser". Thankfully, my administration did not bow to community pressure and the players began to show signs of change. Finally, at the end of a very successful 5 and 4 season in 2003, I had most of my players buying into my ideas for sustained success. Mind you now, my goals never changed, my offensive and defensive philosophies never changed. I never gave up and I stayed the course. So how did I finally bring about this buy-in?

Open the World- Show Them Something Different

Since the day I arrived in Gold Beach, I had been preaching

(continued on next page)

lifting year-round, spring ball, and summer workouts. Needless to say, all this was met with resistance to change and the opinion that these things weren't necessary to be successful. Since the early days, I had desired to take a group of players to Southern California, where I came from. The reason for the trip would be to show my players that programs actually did all those "crazy" things I was talking about. The program I wished to show my players was Mater Dei High School, under the leadership of Bruce Rollinson. I was friends with several of his assistant coaches and at one time had interviewed with Bruce. For six summers, I had tried to make it work. The problem wasn't financing, but getting 7 to 10 players to give up 8 days of their summer was the real challenge. In summer of 2004, a group of seniors finally committed. What a trip, seven days of fun, sun, and football in south Orange County. The football days involved arriving in Santa Ana at Mater Dei High School at 7 AM to workout with the Monarch's varsity football players till noon. Our players discovered that what made the Monarchs different than the Panthers was their work ethic and camaraderie. On the fun days, we watched the Orange County Football All-Star game, visited several colleges, visited Knott's Berry Farm and I got to surf at San Onofre and Salt Creek in warm water again. The players came back with a new outlook on what I had been asking them to do since day one. It was my first group of Panthers that were "all in". They had discovered that teams did work out and lift during summers and actually enjoyed it.

Baby Steps- What Is Your First Priority

Upon arriving at Gold Beach in 1997, I immediately noticed that much of what successful football programs have, the Panthers did not. No linemen sleds, no tackling sleds, no step over or other bags, and most importantly, no real weight room. In a perfect world, upon my arrival, all these needs would have appeared immediately, right? This goes to show that it isn't a perfect world we live in, so I had to prioritize. I believe most coaches experience this when taking on a new job. Well, I needed to make some decisions. What would be priority number one or in other words, what would be the program's first "baby step" be? I chose to develop a serious athletic weight room. I figured by spearheading a more developed weight room for all the school's athletes would gain much-needed support. So that was it, I spent the next four years pouring fundraising money into creating a wonderful, small school athletic

weight room. While none of our opponents those first six years would really notice, we had laid the foundation of our program. It was my thinking that this had to be the first. Strength, power, and speed would be vital to developing a solid program, and the only way to ensure these qualities was to create an athletic weight room. The weight room I believe is even more important to a rural school because it can ultimately prevent injuries that could destroy a small school team's chances for success.

Zero Period- Building Athletes

I often have heard fellow coaches and administrators say they are unsuccessful because they have none or a low number of natural athletes. Well duh, with barely any elementary or middle school physical education and the onset of video games, our youth is not only un-athletic but in general, unhealthy too. Here is what we did at Gold Beach: developed a zero-period athletic training class. I convinced my district to allow me to teach an early class before the normal school day started. I had to agree to teach this class for free and open the class to any athletes, not just football players and it could not be mandatory. With a new and up-to-date weight room, the kids rallied to enroll, football players, other athletes, and general students. It began at 7 AM and kids had to get there on their own. Now being rural and having some kids come as far as 40 miles, we had to work through some procedural issues concerning attendance. The student-athletes all receive a grade and a course or class credit for an entire year. The class involves a full year. The class involves a variety of activities and lessons. We cover all the latest in strength, training, and speed workouts. We go over nutrition, leadership qualities, and more in an effort to make them superior student-athletes. This class has paid huge differences for our student-athletes in our program as you would suspect. However, a very valuable side effect has also come out of this class. The kids workout, shower, get a school breakfast, and head to classes. They arrive at their first academic class awake and alert, not still trying to wake up as many of our other students are trying to do in their first couple of academic periods. If a zero period will not work in your community, I strongly suggest you attempt to put it in as an elective offered early in the academic day. Zero periods offer major benefit for all athletes, not just football because it doesn't conflict with specific sports' after-school practices.

Food For Thought & Productivity

Being new to small school rural football when I arrived at Gold Beach 24 years ago, my biggest mistake was not keeping my players' gas tanks full when on the road. During the first few years, we lost several games late in the second half. After about 3 years, I met with our bus driver to discuss the upcoming road games. She suggested we leave 30 minutes earlier than I planned in order for the team to get a meal on the way to wherever we were headed. She thought this would help their performance. Holy cow, I thought to myself, she has hit a problem I had overlooked that was hurting our end results. I immediately gave her a huge hug. Then the question became how best to fill up a teenage boy's gas tank to perform at an optimum level athletically. Home games were incredibly easy because upon my arrival I start a Parents' Home Game Meal Committee. The parents would fix wonderful and nutritional meals and compete with each other to outdo the parent group from the week before. Our road games were where we had to make some serious adjustments. There is a saying in rural Oregon, "if you can win on the road, you've got a pretty good team.", so we made some changes to how we would travel. Preseason and league games under 4 hours away, involved giving ourselves an extra 45 minutes of road time to stop and get a hot meal in

our kids a couple of hours before the game. Our wonderful and sports-crazy cafeteria ladies would also feed the team just before we got on the buses to depart for these games. On game over 4 hours, we always seem to have a couple of marathons every year, we followed the same routine as other road games but instead of stopping once we might stop twice. We also would put two coolers of fruits, lunch meats, and cheeses together with some crackers, water, and other drinks in the locker room before games so they could graze right up to game time. We would do this also for all playoff games home or away. These adjustments to feeding our players made a huge difference for us when traveling. Our kids are warriors when their tanks are full. One last bit of advice is checking their backpacks when they get on the bus, sugar kills! We allow no candy or sports drinks on the bus, only nutritional snacks are allowed. There is nothing as devastating to a high school football team than the lows after the sugar highs that usually hit in the 4th quarter.

There is obviously a lot more that has gone into maintaining our program over the years, but after much review, we feel these five tools are the foundation for the Panthers of Gold Beach's success. Thank you for the time and we hope these tools can be of use to your respective programs.



OFFENSIVE RESOURCES

ORGANIZING YOUR RPOs



Brent Morrison
Westerville Central HS-Ohio
Head Football Coach
[@BrentMo03800724](#)

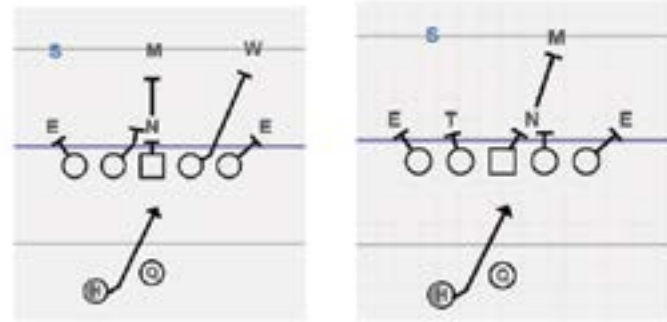
As RPO's come more and more into the mainstream of football, it is important that we evaluate how we organize them. Our offense has successfully been running RPO's since 2008 and I found that we kept adding more and more RPO's to the offense without a clear system to organize them.

Some may ask the questions, why do you need to organize them. The proper organization can help the players understand what you are trying to accomplish along with an understanding of how to read each one differently.

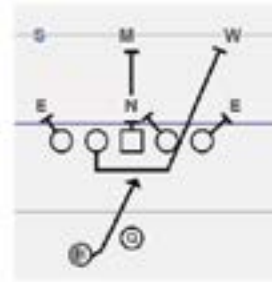
I recently had a new QB in our system and he began asking me a lot of questions about our RPO game that were simple questions, but things I took for granted. How do I know when I can run in an RPO? How do I know if I am reading a player or a match-up? How do I know if it is pre-snap or post-snap? As he began to ask these questions, I realized that our QBs of the past have all just memorized these things without me giving them an easy classification or organizing them properly. As I was going through the process of organizing these, I heard some great presentations about how some colleges were doing this for their QBs. One that stuck in my head was a presentation by the Offensive Coordinator at Wisconsin-Whitewater, Peter Jennings. I would highly recommend searching him out if you have questions about the RPO game.

We organize our RPO's into 3 categories(RPO's, Triple RPO's and KYP's)

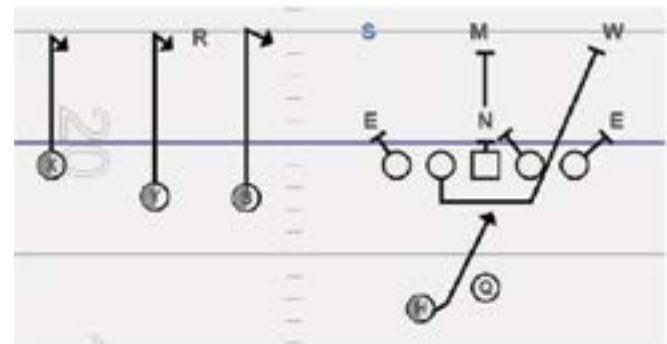
RPO's: These are designed for the QB to stay in the pocket and give or throw. We typically build these by combining -1 second level defender run plays and quick passing game or screens. -1 run plays means that we are down a blocker compared to the defense. Here are 2 examples of us being 10 personnel attacking a 6 man front with an Inside Zone Lock concept. In both situations we are -1 and the S is unblocked.



When building these RPO's it is important to understand your rule book. I am in a state that gives a 2 yard downfield allowance at the point of release. We have also been given an additional official in our games with the intention of enforcing the rule. So you must evaluate your passing concept timing along with the tracks of the OL. In the first example above our RG climbs very fast to the second level because he is uncovered and doesn't have a threat. You have to make a decision about how you are going to teach your OL. Some believe in teaching the OL to only attack LB's if they move down hill. I believe in calling the play that matches the front to slow the lineman down. If we see the 4 man front we will likely be calling Inside Zone Lock while against a 3 man front we will be calling our form of one back power, we call it ISO G.

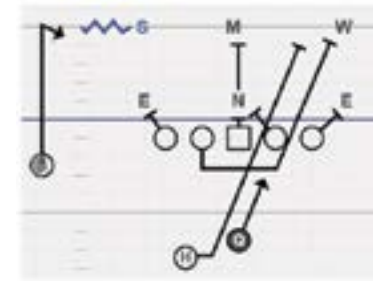


We then pick a quick game passing concept that attacks the S. This makes the read for the QB very easy. Eyes on the Sam and if he attacks the run, then pull and throw. When in doubt, hand the ball off.



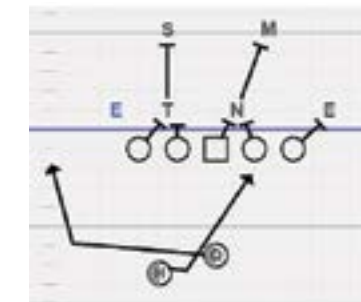
While there is nothing revolutionary about this basic RPO concept, it is all about organizing it in a way that your players know the read. What if your QB reads the play wrong? In a standard double read RPO like this, the QB is not on the run so what does he do if he pulls the ball and the S doesn't create

the space you want? The H is told if he does not get the ball he becomes a lead blocker. The QB is told if you read it wrong then follow the H. Our RPO's often times will look like a hot draw play because they end up looking like this:

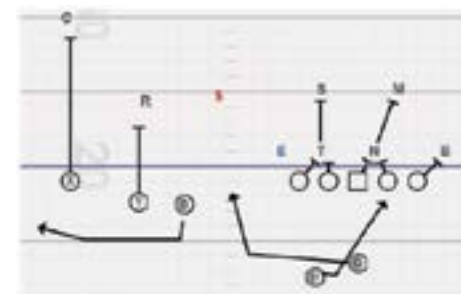


TRIPLE RPO's: These are designed for a more mobile QB and allow us to stretch the field horizontally. We are going to pair a -1 run play with a first level defender unblocked along with screen game, typically. In the past we have used some down field throws on our triples, especially in the red zone. As more and more officials are added and trained the downfield throw has become less and less effective.

Sample -1 run play(First level defender)



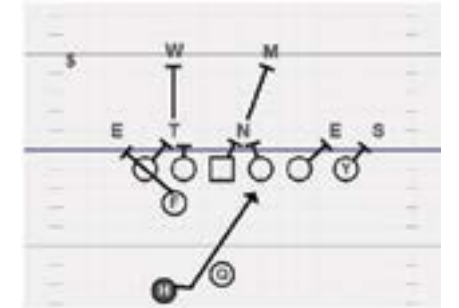
In this IZ Read situation, we will then attach a screen to it(Bubble, Smoke, Quick, etc).



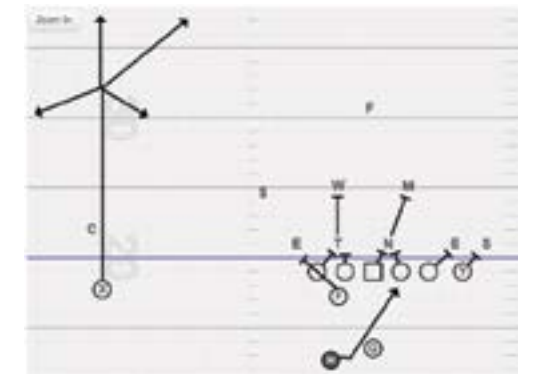
We have entire seasons where we look at our personnel and do not run a single triple RPO and other years we make a living on them. It comes down to the athleticism of your QB and how much practice time you want to devote to it. The running throw to a screen is not easy. We are looking for a gunslinger or a shortstop. It may not be pretty, it may not be mechanically sound, but you get the ball there as fast as possible on the run by contorting your body and throwing it at any time you have

the run taken away from you.

KYP RPO's: These are plays that are blocked completely and you may even be +1, but you have a called route to one of your best players and a match-up that you really like. Here is an example of us matching 7 blocker for 7 box defender and we are great to hand the ball off with a numbers advantage.



KYP=Know Your Personnel. Basically, can your guy win? If so, then get him the ball. When I first became an offensive coordinator I built everything to win based on scheme. I was a snob in thinking I could create the needed numbers and space to find success on any play. Then, very quickly it became apparent that there are just times when players make a difference. I still remember the first time I was exposed to this idea it was called a "HIM" route. As in, get HIM the ball. We have all seen the play or the game where it doesn't matter what scheme is being used, the better players prevailed. We are typically going to call a play like this on a 2nd and short or a 1st and 5 after a penalty. We are going to tag a route that will get us at least 10 yards or something from a drop back concept. In this situation if we are going to throw the ball if the defender is playing man and we can win or the defender is giving space we can take advantage of. Here is a look we saw this past season where the additional back brought the \$ tighter, so we had a great man match-up on the perimeter.



Can our X beat the C because of alignment or ability? The QB is in a great position, he has full ability to just hand the ball off and be fine. We have also just tagged this play X GIFT. In this situation the QB and the X have the ability to call the route they like best.

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As you grow your RPO game, I would recommend a few things.

-Find an organizational method that works for you and your team.

-Create streamlined verbiage so communication to players is universal.

-Figure out if your QB will be a runner. This may be determined by ability or depth at the position. If the QB is a runner, then he can give you a numbers advantage in the blocking schemes and now even your doubles RPO's can become more effective.

-Find out what throws your QB can make. For instance there are a lot of 2 high teams that bring their safeties down in run support Can your QB read a 3rd level defender and throw a post?

-Understand your state's rules and enforcement associated with players being downfield. Because it may restrict some of your abilities to throw 2nd and 3rd level RPO's

-Think about where the ball is spotted horizontally. Being on Hashes or the middle of the field can greatly increase or diminish your abilities to call RPO's

-What are you going to do on the backside of the RPO? We add a pre-snap read route, typically a hitch. Very similar to the KYP/HIM route discussed earlier.

-Are you getting the same look pre and post snap? Are defenses rolling and disguising coverages? Defenders that roll back are much easier on a qb than defenders that roll down. Build it into practice.

-Finally, have conversations with your QB about why they did certain things in the RPO game. It helps to understand how they are thinking and their logic might be better than yours. One time a QB handed off and we had our best WR with a great match-up and press coverage. The QB justified it by saying we were running ISO and I saw their LB was breathing really heavy so I knew he would get crushed by the lead blocker. That wasn't how I saw it from the sideline, but he had a much better view than I did.

We have recently transitioned to a wristband system and the type of RPO is indicated on the wristband so we can have complete clarity of the RPO structure. As we organized our RPOs into these categories, we found that our QB's had a greater understanding of what we were trying to accomplish with the play. It helped them with their reads and it also allowed us to be way more multiple with formations, motions, and play selection.



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PRACTICAL ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT

SEVEN EXERCISES EVERY ATHLETE SHOULD BE PROFICIENT AT



Deerick Smith, CSCS
Southside Charter HS, AR
Strength & Conditioning/
Assistant Athletic Director
Smith Performance
[@coachdeesmith](#)

When it comes to exercise selection for coaches and athletes that are hundreds of choices that coaches can choose from. The number one rule in strength and conditioning is to do no harm so form is critical. While form is critical it's important to not be restricted by wanting perfect form. I look for our athletes to be proficient rather than perfect when it comes to their movements. I say this for athletes because their goal is to not be professional level Olympic lifters or power lifters but rather to be a better athlete. To accomplish this, we must keep them safe but also improve their performance. Below are lifts that are beneficial to every athlete regardless of sport or gender.

Olympic Lifts or their variations

The clean is one of the most butchered lifts in many high school and college weight rooms. We hear a lot about how Olympic lifts take too long to teach as coaches pass off less than proficient form but in many cases, it's not that it takes too long to teach it's that the coach did a poor job teaching it. Now do all our athletes need to look like team U.S.A or team China Olympic lifters? No, however, they should be proficient in the movement in terms of front rack and a proper catch position. If they have mobility issues and cannot achieve a proper front rack simply do just the pull. While the snatch can be a risky lift due to its overhead nature it is a great option for athletes to develop power as athletes can achieve a higher barbell velocity than many other options available when utilized correctly. Again should all your athletes be able to sit in a full snatch with Olympic level technique? No, but they could be served by being able

to power snatch or hang power snatch a moderate load at a high rate of speed.

Front Squat

Perhaps the most beneficial lifts for athletes in my opinion is the front squat. It allows athletes to hit depth more naturally while also keeping their spine more vertical. It also doesn't compress the spine in the manner that a back squat can, leading to it being a great option in season.

Four Corner Touch

This is one that would not appear on most list as it's not a very popular exercise, but it is great for ankle and hip stability. The athlete simply balances on one leg and imagines that they are in the middle of a four cornered box. From here they then touch each corner in the following sequence: top right, top left, back right, back left. You will quickly see who lacks unilateral stability within your program.

Chin up/pull up

The chin up is the squat of the upper body. If you have an athlete that is looking to add mass to their upper body this is one of the more beneficial exercises. I also like it from an injury perspective as a large number of programs have overhead presses, but they don't include a lot of overhead pulls. Another added benefit of the chin up is it teaches athletes to strain. So many times, young athletes have a heavy single or double on a compound movement and simply give up and collapse into the spotting arms when they truly could have finished the rep. The chin up teaches athletes to strain to finish each rep as the repercussions of a missed attempt simply aren't that high. The chin up is also a great way to build confidence within your athletes. There is nothing better than when a girl in our program goes through our chin up progressions and finally hits her first body weight chin up, this gets me more excited than a 500lb squat does any day of the week.

RDL

If you want to become a better coach teach a group of 7th graders how to do an RDL. The RDL is one of the best hinge-based movements for athletic development. It allows the athlete and coach to target the hamstrings and lower back in a manner that compound movements can't. While it is an accessory in our program it is a staple accessory in terms of being used as much as the core lifts within our program.

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Split Squat

A large amount of various sports are played with a unilateral emphasis although for years coaches have trained their athletes through bilateral means primarily. The split squat and variations from it allow the athlete to load their body in a unilateral fashion which can have greater carry over to their respective sports. It can reduce asymmetries in terms of the leg that the athlete typically favors and has shown to be just as effective as the back squat with regards to strength building.

Stick jump

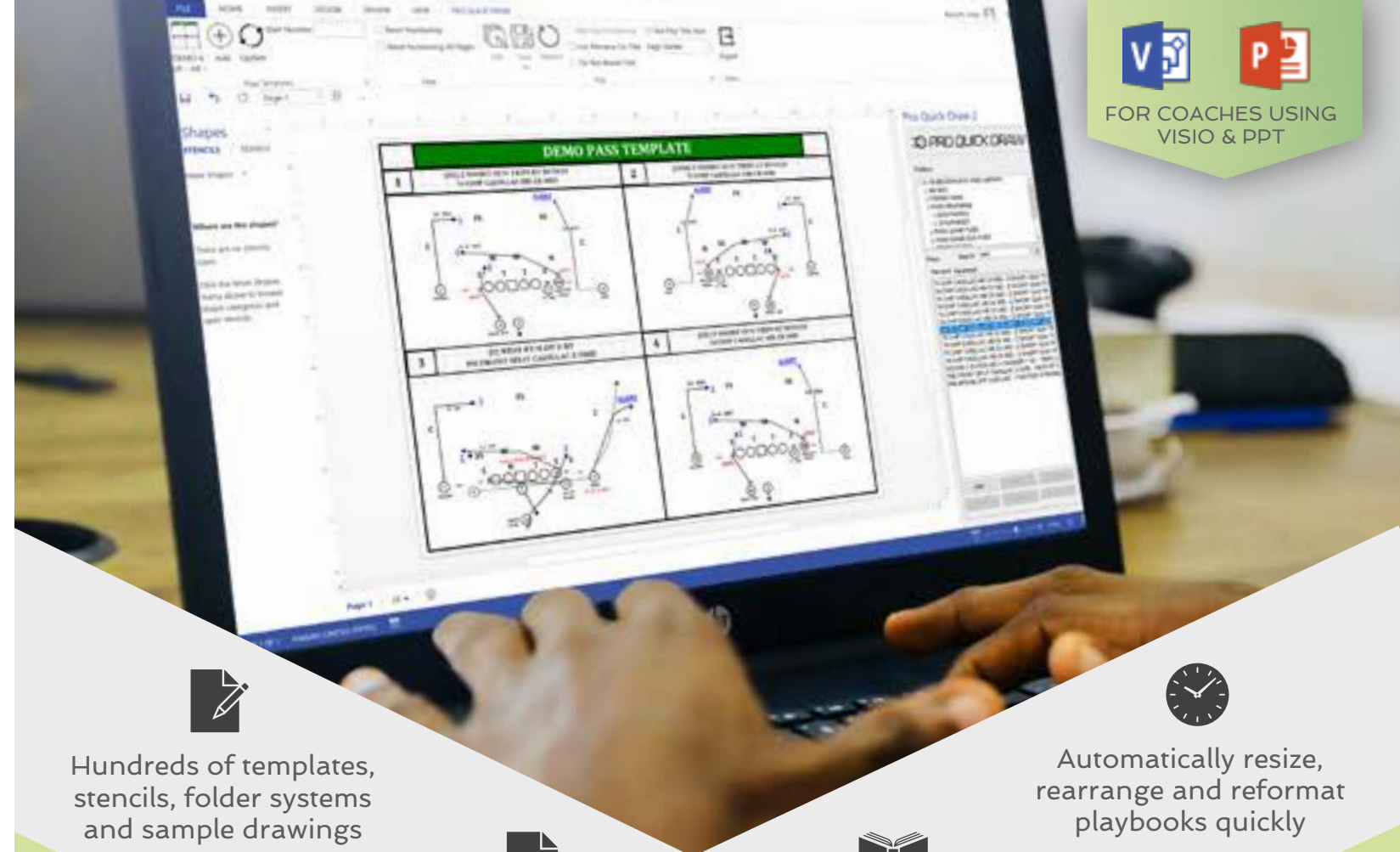
While athletes are actually playing their sport, they often find the most efficient way to jump. While they do this when playing in training outside of their sport It is often not the case. The stick jump is great for teaching not only jumping mechanics but landing mechanics. The athlete will start with their hands overhead up on their toes, they will then rip their arms down while bringing their body into an athletic position, from here they then throw their arms back up and jump as high as they can. The landing is just as important as the jump in terms of development. Athletes will want to land in a toe-heel transition and stick the landing absorbing the force upon the completion of the jump.

7 EXERCISES EVERY ATHLETE SHOULD BE PROFICIENT AT:

- 1) Olympic Lifts and Their Variants
- 2) Front Squat
- 3) Four Corner Touch
- 4) Chin Up/Pull Up
- 5) RDL
- 6) Split Squat
- 7) Stick Jump



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GUEST WRITERS

Jay Gore:

1979-2021, finishing 42 season, State champs 2x on 2 different staffs, 5 finals appearances, 8 semifinal appearances. Coached at private, public, urban and rural environments. Have coached DB's, LB's, OL, and Q's. 9 years as HC on Middle School level, 14 years HC on Varsity level, ass't coach for 28 years on varsity level. Husband for 41 years "to the same girl", father of one son (Georgetown MBA, spring 2021). Currently the HC/athletic director at a large inner city school in Nashville, Tennessee.

Bob Gecewich:

14 years coaching, 6 years as an HC, (3 league coach of the year awards), 8 as an assistant including 2 on state title teams. I have been extremely fortunate to coach in rural, urban, and suburban schools, getting to work with many different student athletes. I have a wife and 3 kids that are active in our program, community and coaching, it's their team too!

A GUIDE FOR YOUNG COACHES

"An apprenticeship is a system for training a new generation of practitioners of a trade or profession with on-the-job training."

In 2010 I became the head football coach at an inner-city school in Nashville. In doing so, I inherited a young assistant coach by the name of Bob Gecewich. After several years of coaching together, Bob moved on and has since become a head coach himself. Over the years our friendship and respect for each other have remained. We talk often, usually about attacking opponents or new schemes that we have run across. It seems that more often we talk about common issues that we both encounter as head coaches; dealing with parents, weight room programs, fundraising, etc. On multiple occasions, the conversation has turned toward hiring and mentoring young coaches and the challenges that it presents. As an attempt to improve that mentoring process, Bob and I have created a checklist from which we can start the discussion with our young coaches, but also can be used as an evaluation tool at the end of each season.

I have been very blessed over my 43-year career to have been mentored by some great men. Men that patiently and sometimes not so patiently helped me refine my craft of coaching. I owe a debt of gratitude to each one of them for the wisdom they chose to pass on to me, and in their honor, I pass this on to the next generation of coaches.

We divided the items into 3 levels of expertise: Apprentice, Craftsman and finally Master. We wanted a starting point that would allow the coach a framework from which to start, a growth plan to help him develop, and finally, a goal for himself. This

article will only deal with the first phase of the apprenticeship plan.

Apprentice: Getting started

- Show Up
- Demonstrate Integrity
- Be an Example
- Take Ownership
- Take Initiative
- Put Family First
- Define your drills
- Efficient use of Time
- Don't Trust your Memory
- Be Coachable

You can't get better if you don't show up. As with any apprentice relationship it only works if both parties are present and eager to teach and learn. Show up each day with energy and passion to do your job. As a player, you might have missed because you were having a bad day. As a coach, you don't get that luxury. You have made a commitment to this team, Show Up and Grow.

Integrity is measured over time; it doesn't change day to day. Be reliable, honest and loyal to your players and to your Head Coach every day. Be honest with your players, if you don't know the answer to a question say, "I don't know, but I will find out". One of my previous bosses would say "Above all else be loyal. If you are loyal then you do all the other things naturally".

Be an example for your players. If you want them to work hard, be on time, hustle, ask questions, and be accountable then you must model that behavior for them. Be aware that you are a coach now, not a player. Watch your language and actions. I

had a young coach who was sitting down one day watching a drill. When I corrected him, his response was "I am really tired, this teaching and coaching is not easy". The problem was he was still acting like a kid in his day to day routine, staying up late, playing video games, going out with friends. As we grow up our routines must change to reflect our priorities and obligations.

Take ownership of your position. Do the jobs that are assigned to you, without having to be reminded or supervised. If you want responsibilities to be assigned to you then you must demonstrate that you can handle it. If you are the DB coach, then be the Head Coach of the DB's. This doesn't mean that you have all the answers or don't need help, it means that you have the maturity to seek out the answers and ask for help when needed.

Take initiative, look for things to do that add value to your position. Equipment issues, putting up field equipment, and taking out the trash are all things that must be done. It is like I tell my OL guys on pass protection, "Look for work"! Don't think because no one comes through my gap I can take a play off, look for someone to help. As a young coach, one of your assets is your youthful energy. Use it to your advantage by looking for ways to help and in so doing you will learn how to do more things that in turn make you more valuable to the team.

Most young coaches are either recently married or thinking about it. Whatever your situation may be, those relationships are extremely important. It is impossible to be fully engaged in what you do if there are problems at home. As coaches, we spend too much time with other people's kids and not enough with our own. Make family your #1 priority. Make sure your partner feels like a partner, share your life and theirs. Spend quality time with family. When you are at home, "be at home"! Turn off the cell phone. Kids know that you have a job, but they should know that they are your #1 concern.

Drills give the opportunity to teach and execute a skill to perfection in a controlled environment. Game scenarios create imperfect situations, but the difference in a skill executed at 85% of perfection and 85% of imperfection can be the difference in a win/loss or game saving tackle/career ending injury.

Here are 3 things to remember:

Define the purpose of the drill. Be specific and clear
Define the space for the drill. Use cones, hoses, bags, yard marker. All games are played with boundaries, so should drills. Most drills should have a predetermined winner. Structure success for the player that you are training. Success builds confidence.

Time is your enemy. You only have a limited amount of it, and it can't be reclaimed. Limit your drills so that you are not having to explain new things every day. Limit your vocabulary to the important things by creating a set of short phrases for your position. Less talk and more reps create better results. If you are having to explain and re-explain, the problem may be with you, not them.

Don't Trust your Memory. "We did it this way" is not always accurate. We remember things from our playing days the way we want to remember them, not necessarily the way they were. For example you probably didn't practice for 6 hours in 120-degree heat with no water breaks or run 127 gassers in one day, or line up 20 yards apart for tackling drills and just run over each other. And you probably weren't as good as you remember. But even if you were, you aren't playing, they are. So, it is not about what you can do, it is about what you can teach them to do.

Just like when you were a player "Be Coachable". You are going to get coached by the HC, OC or DC. Don't be offended by criticism, expect it, ask for it. Take it as an opportunity to get better at your job. Disagreements happen in the office, not on the field. Earn the players respect by your relentless compassion for them and your commitment to the program.

I wish you all good luck in your endeavors and hope this helps you "Along the Way".

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