

HEADSETS

WRITTEN FOR COACHES BY COACHES

VOLUME 1: ISSUE 5

DEFENDING THE
TRIPLE OPTION

offensive
DRILLS

WORKING
TOGETHER
AS A
STAFF

PLAYER PICTURED: JACK PAUPERT, ALMONT RAIDERS - ALMONT, MICHIGAN

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Kenny Simpson
Searcy HS-Arkansas
Head Football Coach
Author
[@fbcoachsimpson](https://www.facebook.com/fbcoachsimpson)
FBCoachSimpson.com

Thank you for your interest in this coaching material. I have been very blessed to connect with some awesome coaches during the past year, and putting out a collaborative work was always a goal of mine. Be sure to visit our sponsors as they have been great to support all of this work and are truly interested in coaches' education and helping coaches.

Our theme has been "for coaches by coaches" and all of the writers have been gracious to donate their time and knowledge to the coaching community. Many of them also have additional works that are great resources for coaches. Be sure to take the time to check them out.

If you have any subjects you'd like to see us address or questions you'd like to answer or even pictures to submit to make the magazine, please feel free to do so. Simply email FBcoachsimpson@gmail.com or the one who truly makes all this work at Jameysimpson@gmail.com.

Thank you,

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Maximum Channels	6	4 - Upgradeable	2 - Upgradeable
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PROGRAM ORGANIZATION

WORKING TOGETHER AS A STAFF



Jeff Steinberg
Beaumont High School
California
Head Football Coach
[Coach Tube](#)
[@CoachSteiny](#)

Last newsletter I reviewed practice guidelines to demonstrate how practices can be organized and efficient with everyone on the same page. This newsletter we will look at ensuring the staff is all on the same page during practice. The best of plans can only be executed when everyone is working together and understands the expectations and their role.

I have been pretty fortunate to be on staffs throughout my career where coaches got along, worked well together and we had great staff chemistry. As an assistant, I'll be honest, I took this for granted. I learned early on as a Head Coach that you have to set the parameters and be thorough in managing your staff that same way you would of your players. I came up with guidelines that were included in our coaching manual so that each coach understood what is expected of him regarding his role as a coach with his position group in addition to how he fit in with other staff and his role on our staff as a coach.

In the area of relations between members of the coaching staff, there are two issues, which are critically important:

1) We must work hard to achieve open communication between all members of the coaching staff on all issues which affect our program in any way.

2) We must be united in our goals and objectives when decisions are made.

Open Communication – listen to each other - talk to each other - listen to each other.

In order to be an effective coaching staff, open communication is vital. In order for this to happen, all members of the staff must actively contribute to all discussions and ask for clarification when necessary. Even under the best of circumstances people could be misunderstood. EFFECTIVE, ACCURATE COMMUNICATION IS

DIFFICULT AND FRUSTRATING AT TIMES - LET'S BE PATIENT!

1) It is important to be positive and co-operative in all dealings with fellow staff members. Remember - we are all working for the same things.

2) If a coach has difficulty or is uncomfortable with a particular situation/suggestion, it is up to that person to approach the other staff member involved in order to rectify the situation. We are all men and must assertive. There is no room for any coach who doesn't seek clarification only to wind up bad mouthing or talking behind another coach's back.

3) Each member of the coaching staff must understand the Chain of Command. The HC makes all final decisions based on what I feel is best for the program (this includes schemes). The coordinators will make all final decisions on schemes. All discussions involving philosophy or schemes are to be done in the office. Never in front of the players. There is no time during practice to have these discussions. One of the things I always tell coaches early on each off season is "input doesn't imply acceptance". There is no score kept on who's ideas are used the most/least. Staff are all encouraged to provide input in meetings but each person understands there is a difference between making a suggestion vs a decision.

4) Always be sensitive to what the other coach has been teaching. Never contradict or criticize a technique or drill being taught by another coach in front of the players. Players are overly sensitive to this type of thing and may wrongly interpret "dissension" or poor planning and organization. However, every coach should have a PhD in attitude & effort. This should always be coached up.

5) If something is clearly wrong, it must be corrected. If it is not urgent, talk to your fellow coach after practice or take him aside if the opportunity presents itself. If you must discuss it in front of the players, take a co-operative approach.

6) There will be lots of opportunities to make constructive, positive input. The best place to do this are during coaching staff meetings. Many great ideas have come from coaches' meetings on our staff where one suggestion/idea has led to some great things we have implemented.

These are points I review each year with our staff at our meeting going into the off-season. They have really served as great ground rules and reminders for our guys in working successfully with each other.

LIFE LESSONS: LESSONS LEARNED WHILE SHOVELING SNOW



Kenny Simpson
Searcy HS-Arkansas
Head Football Coach
Author
[@fbcoachsimpson](#)
[FBCoachSimpson.com](#)

A while back in Arkansas we were hit with about 18 inches of snow. This is not common for me or our state, and after we had a ton of fun, we realized that in order to get out to get back to the real world, we would have to clear off our long, uphill driveway. As you can imagine, we are not expert snow shovelers.

Eventually, the job was done, but as I spent a few hours doing a job I was uncomfortable with, it caused me to reflect on some "lessons learned while shoveling snow":

1) The job seemed overwhelming

We have a long driveway that slopes up-ward, and it had over a foot of snow and ice covering it. My first instinct was to tell my wife we could just stay inside until it melted and hope for the best. Ramen noodles for a week couldn't be too bad, right?. As I looked at what we were going to need to do with limited tools and no experience, the temptation was real to simply go back in the house.

How often does this happen as we get our first head coaching job, and as soon as the rush wears off we realize how much needs to be done? I'd suggest that is one of the reasons many burn-out or fail early in their career. The job can overwhelm us to the point we don't know what to do and cannot create a plan of action. Many times as a head coach problems seem to spring up from every direction, especially when we don't have a clear plan.

2) We needed the right tools

As I mentioned, we are not accustomed to snow. So, the first thing I did was take my truck (thank you for 4-wheel drive) to the

local hardware store to get some shovels. Fortunately, they had one shovel left, and even though it wasn't a real snow shovel, it at least had a squared off surface. At one point before we could get out, we had used a rake, a mop and even a broom to help clear a path just to get our animals outside.

As a football coach we don't often get to control the tools we have from our support system, but we can control the tools we gain by learning the different aspects of coaching. We can grow and improve in communication, organization and of course we can always grow in our knowledge of the game. If we are not working hard in the off-season to improve our skills, we will be the crazy guy trying to rake snow off his porch with a broom.

3) Don't look back

About an hour into the job, I felt like we'd moved a ton of snow. My back hurt, I was tired and felt like we should be close to finished. Instead, I looked back and noticed I'd moved about 1/20th of the snow and had barely cleared a small path. I felt if that is all I had accomplished with that much work, I would never be done! The reality was that I had to try two or three different methods to find the answer.

As a coach it can be great to learn from the past, but often looking back and realizing all the work that produced little results can cause doubt and fear. There is no replacement for experience and often as coaches we have to learn by trying different methods. This can lead to some doubt as we find what works for us and for our program.

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COACHING RESOURCES

FIXING A STRUGGLING PROGRAM



Chris Parker
chrisparker@pickenscountyschools.org
[@chris_parker222](https://www.instagram.com/chris_parker222)
[Coach Tube](#)

When you take over a head coaching job, it can mean you are taking over a struggling program. This was the hottest topic on my Twitter poll this week so here it goes....my take on fixing a struggling program!

Disclaimer: I don't claim to know everything about fixing a struggling program. I do have a great deal of experience with it. I became the Head Football Coach at Chapel Hill High School in Douglasville, GA in 2008. The team was 15-65 in its 8 years of existence. They were 0-10 in 2007 (the year before we got there). In our first year we won 9 games and had the schools first winning season, first playoff appearance, first playoff home game, and first playoff win. We had some great players that bought in and allowed that program to turn around quickly. In 2012 I became the Head Football Coach at Pickens High School in Jasper, GA. They were 10-40 in the five years before and we were able to go 47-23 over the next seven years. The school has been around 62 years and we set the record for wins. We also won the school's first playoff game and first region championship. Again, good players made me look good!

While this article is about my experiences doing this in football, I would assume these same principles would be true for any organization attempting to turnaround. Depending on location, school size, and other factors some of this will apply more than others...but the principles are always true.

After looking back at my experiences at both schools, I

determined these to be things to "Focus" on when fixing a struggling program:

- Focus on relationships over everything
- Focus on what you have and not what you don't have
- Focus on the present and not the past
- Focus on rules you can enforce
- Focus on "our" plan

FOCUS on relationships over EVERYTHING

The truth is...if you don't understand this first "FOCUS", the other four really don't matter. If you don't do a great job with relationships and put relationships above everything else, you will not be successful with a program that is already struggling.

Relationships with players, coaches, administration, parents, and others will all determine how successful your rebuilding process will be. If you build a positive relationship with these people you will be much more likely to be successful at the other four "focuses" in this article.

I've not met many people that didn't want to build good relationships. No one intentionally messes this up. While it is something that some people are better at than others, it is also a learned behavior. I have found these are the key points to keep in mind to help build relationships with the people in your program:

KEY	WHAT DOES IT MEAN?	HOW CAN YOU DO IT?
Show them you care	You have to genuinely care and not be scared to show people you care about them. Be yourself. Be really proud of them when they do something good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take advantage of every opportunity to brag on someone. - Recognize birthdays
Get to know them	Don't treat them like they are just a part of the puzzle or a person you are using to help "your" program. Make them feel like part of "our" program by genuinely getting to know them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Talk to them all the time - Get to know their interests, their loved ones, etc.
Be honest with them	It is hard to tell someone something they don't want to hear. If you deceive people to make conversations easier it will come back to get you. Let them know you will be honest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Talk to people constantly about where they stand. - Don't ever lie to make it easier on you.
Put yourself in their shoes	Try to think of things from their perspective. Whether it's players, coaches, other sports, admin, etc. Always think of it from their perspective as well as yours. It's ok to disagree.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Show empathy - Be fair and consistent but also be compassionate
Be there for them	Always check on them when they need you. Treat them with the care and compassion you would your own children. When people are down, they are aware of who is there for them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Always check on injured players - Always be there when they have an illness/death in family

Don't forget the adult relationships

You must build relationships with the adults as well as the players. It seems that most coaches immediately attempt to do these things with students but struggle with the adults. BOTH groups are important in turning around a struggling program. Don't dismiss the idea of working with people from the "old regime".

I tried to go into the move with an open mind about each coach and get to know them. If you have a plan and build relationships, you can make it work. At Pickens I was able to bring in a few coaches that were familiar with my system but not familiar with the Pickens community and blend those coaches with coaches from the old staff that were very familiar with the community.

I was fortunate that my brother always coached with me. I knew I had one person that knew what I wanted to do...but he didn't know the Pickens community. The coach who was the longest tenured coach on the previous staff was someone I immediately went to see. He had also wanted the job and sometimes that can cause issues. We hit it off immediately and he has since become one of my best friends. We blended our ideas with their ideas to create a plan that was best for everyone. I really believe this "blending" of the new with the old is one of the main reasons we were able to turn it around.

Building relationships with adults also included administration, parents, and the leaders of the other sports and organizations in the school. Some keys to keep in mind when building relationships with these groups:

- 1) We are all in this together
- 2) Praise in public - bring up issues in private
- 3) Recognize the groups for helping you as much as possible
- 4) Try to see things from their point of view

FOCUS on what you HAVE; not what you don't

This is such an important aspect of turning around a struggling program. When you go to a new place that is struggling, it is very easy to focus on what you do not have. If you focus on things that your new school does wrong, you will fall into the same situation as before. If you focus on what you do have you can grow from there.

When I went to Chapel Hill High School after the 2007 season there was a lot of work to do...here was the landscape that I remember as I took the job:

- The football team had not had any on-field success and the confidence was very low.
- We did not have great facilities. We shared a locker room with basketball and soccer.
- We got parts of 3 different middle schools but none exclusively making it very difficult to build
- It was difficult to raise money in the recession.

- The other sports had performed well. Chapel Hill Track & Cross Country programs had won multiple state championships. Basketball and baseball performed well.

I distinctly remember getting to work in January 2008 and having to tell myself at the time to focus on what we did have. It was easy to complain about the facilities and money. It was easy to catch yourself being jealous of the success of the other sports. It was easy to worry that you would not be able to win with these players who had not won before. I was a PE teacher, so I spent a lot of time in the gym.

After a few days in the gym it was evident we had some good athletes! It was evident there were some good coaches there. I got to meet the Track & XC Coach, the Basketball Coach, Baseball/Softball coaches and others and they were very encouraging. It was easy to see why their teams won. If all of these programs had won at this school, why not football? I was gaining confidence that we could really make this happen!

I started to spend my time focusing on ways to get the best athletes to play football. I started to focus on ways to get the best athletes out in space so we could use their athleticism to our advantage. I picked the brains of all of the other successful coaches at the school on what they were doing to help their teams. None of this changed the fact that we still had to share a locker room with basketball and soccer, and we didn't have a great structure with the middle schools. But I rarely thought about those things. This was in the early days of the spread offense in Georgia and we were running some version of this. They had not run this before. That could have been a negative, but we just focused on the fact that they had no bad habits. They were happy to be out there because we were happy to be out there. It would have been so easy to focus on our inadequacies and not on the good.

Keys to "Focus on what you have"

- 1) Avoid petty problems
- 2) Work with other sports
- 3) Be self-aware
- 4) See your challenges as opportunities
- 5) Implement a no complaining rule
- 6) Realize you determine your attitude and effort

FOCUS on the present and NOT the past

This is another easy thing to fall into accidentally....

The team has been struggling. Your initial instinct may be to tell them how bad they used to be and run down everything they

(continued on next page)

did in the past. This is an issue for these reasons:

- 1) It brings no value – those people do not have a time machine and can't change the past
- 2) It tears down relationships – you are new and don't know the previous staff's relationships with everyone. You may be making an enemy for no reason.

When I became the Head Coach at Pickens High School after the 2011 season, they had been down for a few years. They did have some success years before and I took over for a longtime head coach at the school. It was very important that we were able to get the people who supported changing coaches and the people who did not to BOTH buy in to our plan and help the program get back on the right track. I feel like the first year or so people constantly wanted to talk about the old staff to see what I would say. I remember making it a point to be positive but try to turn the attention to the coming season. I think this was one of the best things I ever did there. Eventually that talk waned and we just started focusing on the task at hand. We did that without making many unnecessary enemies or burning bridges before we even got started. I still work in this district today and the former coach is a man I respect and see occasionally. When we finished the regular season 10-0 and won the school's first region championship in 2018, he was one of the first people to see me after the game and congratulate me. That meant a lot to me. Those decisions I made to focus on the present 10 years ago are still paying dividends today.

FOCUS on rules you can enforce

A key mistake I have witnessed over the years is coaches coming into a new environment intent on "fixing" the place by making them "work harder" or "take care of the little things". Don't get me wrong...those things are REALLY important and those coaches usually mean well. The issue is they pick things to focus on that will likely be difficult to enforce all year.

(I hope I don't offend anyone by my next example....)

Imagine if you take over a new team that is struggling and you have a long list of team rules. One of them is they must hang their helmet on the left side of the locker every day at the end of practice. When someone asks you why they are doing that, you respond "because I said so" or "because we are going to do every little thing exactly right". Those answers aren't bad, but it does create an environment where you have now mortgaged your relationships with those players based on you going into the locker room after everyone left and checking every locker, every day. My experience has been that coaches come up with plans like this and enforce them for a while but eventually the attention to it wanes. When this happens, kids subconsciously

don't have as much regard for the rules, little things, or working harder. Ironically the thing you were trying to fix is the thing that is now worse.

So instead of coming up with a long list of rules, focus on one or two things. Make it something that affects winning and build from there. If the players do a great job with those few things, then add some more later. I tried to focus on these rules...

Off the field	On the field
1. Be where you are supposed to be	1. Give great effort
2. Do right	2. Have a great attitude

Those seem generic for a reason. We could easily enforce those rules. We focused on those two things in my first years at Chapel Hill and Pickens. If it didn't fall under those 2 rules, I didn't worry too much about it. That doesn't mean that other stuff isn't important, but we needed to have clear expectations and I would rather have a few rules than a bunch of rules we could not enforce.

You earn so much respect from players when you take a common-sense approach. This goes for off-field rules and on-field rules. The common on-field mistake is getting onto a player for doing something they obviously didn't do on purpose (fumble, throw INT, miss tackle, etc) by yelling and demeaning them. Absolutely correct the player but don't make them feel like they did it on purpose. If they fumbled, tell them to carry the ball high and tight with 4 points of pressure. If they threw an INT, ask "what did you see?". If they missed a tackle, talk to them about their angle or their approach. Kids will respect you SO much more for that. They know when they have messed up and it doesn't do much good to redundantly point it out. With that being said, I sometimes lost my mind about things that involved attitude and effort. Players knew the phrase "is that the best you can do?". If the answer was "no" it wasn't a great atmosphere at practice for a short period of time. The players knew there was no excuse for a bad attitude or bad effort. We could live with about everything else.

A key to building that trust and respect that turns struggling programs around is following up on any negative reinforcement. If there was a time when effort or attitude was lagging and I had to get on a young man, I always made a point to find the player later in that day and pump them up. This is great chance to remind them of the team rules. I would say something like, "you know I love you and want to see you be as successful as you can be. You know we only get on to you about your attitude and your effort. We don't get on to you for messing up. Just give us your best, that is all we want." Most kids respond well

to that and move on. This is a HUGE part of fixing a struggling program. You must have high standards and get on to people for bad attitude and effort, but you can not afford to lose respect or excitement for the new program while doing so.

FOCUS on "OUR" plan

I realize if you are reading this, you probably know that I have been putting "plans" on Twitter and showing coaches things I did that they could use. I have received a lot of praise for this. The reality is those plans win ZERO games. It is not the plan that is magical. The magic is in EXECUTING THE PLAN.....but in order to execute a plan, you do need to have a plan. It is important you convey your plan to everyone in the program and turn it from "your" plan to "our" plan. Try to avoid using words "I", "my", etc. when describing the program. Say "we", "our" instead.

When "your" plan becomes "our" plan the magic will start happening. It is a great feeling to see the plan begin to work and you can see the excitement in the athletes, coaches, parents, administration, etc.

Making "your" plan become "our" plan

We had a plan for everything (as you have seen if you follow me!). It doesn't matter if you like to do things different than I do. Just have a plan! Your plan needs to include the following:

- Awards/reward system – you need a system to recognize and reward people in your program. (Even after graduation). Recognitions matters now to kids – get over it.

- Great social media presence – this serves two important factors in success – good marketing and good communication.

- Plan to work with others – have plans in place for kids to play multiple sports and have conversations with the other coaches before you put those plans down on paper.

- Have fun and make it fun – have team building activities and anything else new you can come up with that makes football fun and fresh for your previously struggling program.

- Have a clear, realistic plan for the following:

- Defense
- Offense
- Special Teams
- Strength & Conditioning
- Player Development/Procedures
- Coach Development/Procedures
- Practice Plans
- Game Day Procedures

Booster Club/Parents
Sub-Varsity Program

Executing your plan

Don't get your feelings hurt – Vision over feelings. Keep the program's vision at the front of your mind. Don't let your feelings take over the vision. The vision should steer all decisions.

Execute your plan regardless of hurdles – There will be hurdles. When something bad happens (at it will), you must adapt this philosophy. You can't let your hurt feelings affect the next thing that has to be done. What has happened is over and all you control is what is about to happen!

Your plan can change...it's ok – constantly evolve and adapt the plan. Some ideas work and others do not. Don't feel like you must have the perfect plan right now. You don't need the perfect plan...but you do need a plan!

Never, ever, ever, ever quit working on your vision and plan!

CONCLUSION

Keep in mind that everyone wants to win and only half the teams win each week. No one is messing up on purpose. Begin with the end in mind and think about where you want to be as a program. Then come up with a plan to get you there. Be yourself and be genuine with people. Come up with reasonable expectations and hold people to those expectations. It is a very difficult task to be one of those 50% of the teams that win each week but the team that does all of this has a great chance to be in the good column! (Also.....some good players help!!!!)





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FOOTBALL 101

UNDERSTANDING XYZ RECEIVERS



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



In every offense, there are 5 eligible receivers. Coaches will often create their own system of labeling receivers, in order to add complexity to their offensive system.

One of the more common ways to label an offensive system is to use letters for each receiver. These letters often pertain to the positioning of the player within the formation.

Coaches can simply add a tag to any play call, in order to change the play. This gives the offensive coordinator control over every play call.

For example - Strong Right Slot Z Right Spider 2 Y Banana Z Over

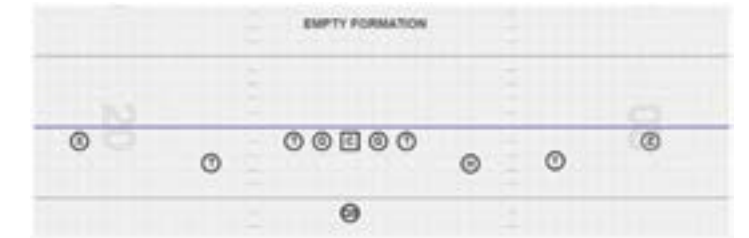
The way to control the play call is to alter what the Z does within the play and the route that he runs after going in motion (Z Right).

Before we start to explain exactly what each letter means, it's important to note that every coach labels their offenses differently. The lettering system below is the most common type of labeling.

If you want to watch a video on XYZ receivers, watch our full breakdowns:
[Watch On YouTube Here](#)

[Watch On Tik Tok](#)

We're going to cover the 5 most common letters in labeling receivers - X, Y, Z, H, T



X Receiver - The X receiver is typically the receiver that is on the line of scrimmage and poses a vertical threat. These receivers can line up to the left or right of the formation. Coaches will often use the X receiver as their number one.

Z Receiver - This receiver can also line as the widest receiver. Coaches will also use the Z receiver to be off of the ball and motion across the formation.

Y Receiver - The Y receiver is typically the slot receiver in most spread offenses that use a 2x2 formation. If a team has a traditional tight end, they will often use the Y as the tight end.

H Receiver - The H receiver is the other slot receiver in a traditional 2x2 formation. If the team has a hybrid player who can play both slot and as the off-the-ball tight end, they will often label this player as the H.

T or A Back - The running back or single set back in the formation is often referred to as the A or the T. The T of course stands for the tailback. In an empty set, the T or A may be flexed out into the slot.

Again, If you want to learn more about the XYZ receivers, watch our full breakdowns:

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HIDDEN YARDS: MAKE SPECIAL TEAMS SPECIAL

RETURNING THE UNCONVENTIONAL KICKOFF



Chris Fore
Veteran Coach
[@chrisfore](#)
[eightlacs.org](#)
[Coach Tube](#)

In 2014, my team had some really tremendous kick returners. My top guy averaged 29.3 yards

per kick return and 26.8 on punt returns, both of which led the state of California. Unfortunately, people were wise enough to stop kicking to him. So, our team saw a lot of ugly kicks the rest of that season, starting about halfway through our 13 games.

We had to practice kickoff return differently than we did the first half of the season. For the first half of the season, it was all about setting up schemes against the teams we were going to face. I have always spent a great deal of time through film in trying to put our return team in the best possible position. Sometimes that means double teaming their leading tackler, sometimes it is putting in a brand new return to take advantage of their scheme weakness or sometimes it is adjusting where our returners are standing.

When we started seeing nothing but squib kicks and pooch kicks, we had to start practicing our kick return team differently. It became about defending those two kickoff philosophies.

Some coaches just teach their players to fall on

the squib kick, and catch the pooch kick. Simply securing the ball where the kickoff team puts it is all that this philosophy cares about. I'm a little different here. I want to get yards. I look for ways for us to get yards when the opponent squibs or pooches. I like to be aggressive with my kick return because usually kickoff teams don't see aggression; they see a passive team who just secures the ball.

There are two main goals that come with defending the unconventional kickoff. They are not any different in word and on paper than defending the traditional kickoff: secure the football and get return yards. That seems simple enough, but it's not all that simple if you really want to do it right.

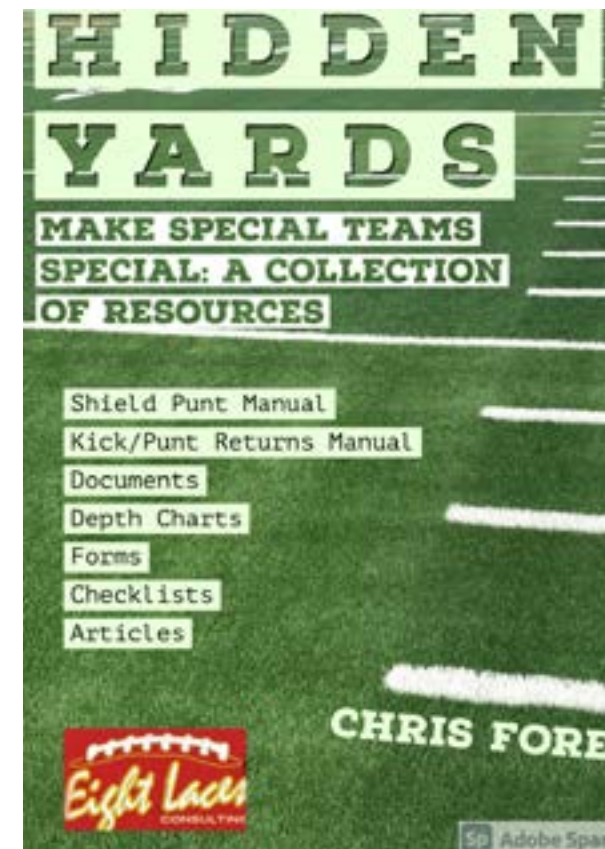
One of the first things you need to look at if you're expecting pooches or squib kicks is your personnel. For instance, I like using big linemen in my "wedge" back deep near the kick returners, similar to what many NFL teams do. However, those kids won't do well with squibs or pooches. Change them out for running backs or receivers. If I expect pooches or squibs, I put linemen on the front line to block. We don't ask them to get very deep as the first line of defense. I move the linebacker/safety type of kids off the front line, and put them on the back two lines. I want the ball in their hands.

For the pooch kick, if a team pooches often, we will set up a sideline return right to that pooch side. We number the kickoff kids, 1-10, left to right. And we will set up a man return right up the sideline. If they pooch to our left, we will most definitely block those 5 coming down at us on that side with 7-8 kids. We teach the returner to catch the ball and get up the sidelines as well as they can.

For the squib kick, we are going to also try to return that up the sidelines. Most teams will squib right

down the middle of the field, maybe at a little bit of an angle. We are going to put more of our "bulk" up the middle of the field, but tell them not to touch the football. I want my second or third lines securing that ball because they can run with the ball more effectively. Again, we number the kickoff team, and assign each returner to block one of those men, not a zone return scheme, but man.

That's how we handle pooches and squibs. We are aggressive in getting return yards by setting up man return schemes, right up the sidelines. Remember, nobody can tackle you from the sidelines.



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](#).



DEFENSIVE CULTURE & FUNDAMENTALS

DEFENDING THE TRIPLE OPTION OUT OF FOUR DOWN



PJ Gibbs
East Lee County HS-Florida
Head Coach & Recruiting
Coordinator

Author: [Book Available Here](#)
[CoachTube Course Here](#)
[@coachPJGibbs](#)

In this article, I will discuss multiple ways of defending the Triple-Option Offense in a

4-down front, a 6-1 look, and with pressures. The 4-down front your team can be multiple because of the pressure that you can bring, but you will still have Dive, QB, and Pitch players, regardless.

We call our 4-down front "Maverick." It can look like a 6-2, depending on the alignment of your Overhang players, who are 2x5 off the Wingbacks. These Overhangs need to be Strong Safety types, because they need to be able to play in space. In the base Maverick, our DEs are in 4Is and DTs are in 2Is, and they are Dive players. We have two Inside Linebackers in 30s, and they are ready for the QB. If you open up to the direction of the linebacker, that player will be a QB player and the other Linebacker will hit the Dive. If you are facing a team that runs Counter-Option, you really need to drill the correct read for your Inside Linebackers. The Overhangs are 2x5 off the Wingbacks and are Pitch players, again with Counter-Option. If they get Wingback motion away, they are blitzing to take on the Counter-back with their inside shoulder to force the play to the inside.

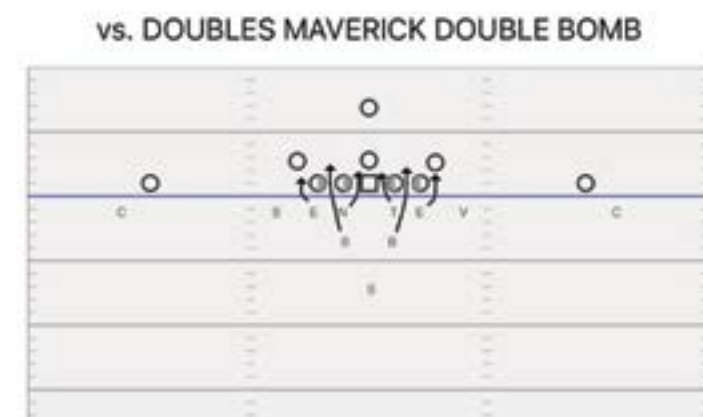
We play Maverick out of Green (Cover 3), where the CBs are outside leverage playing the deep 1/3. The FS is the bonus player—he is at 10 yards depth, flat foot, and reading the QB. If he reads run, he will help QB-Pitch late; if he reads pass, he gets to the middle 1/3. Also, against Counter-Option, if we get the wingback motion, we will lock the CB to the motion-side because of the blitzing Overhang.

If you are seeing a stud WR in this offense and need to double him, we will run a cover we call "Brown." In this coverage, we

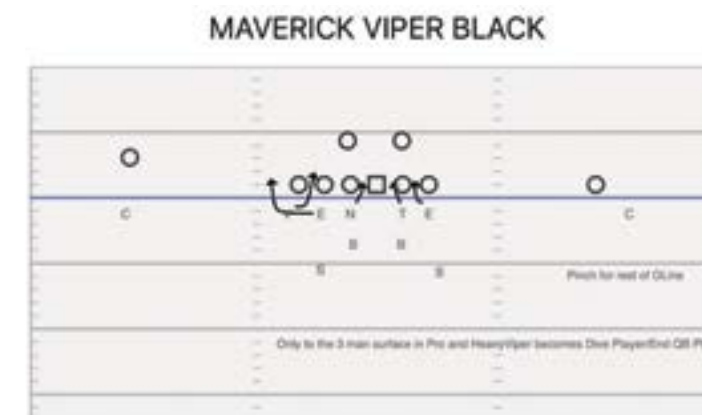
will double that WR with the CB and FS—the CB will have outside leverage and the FS will rob any inside route. The backside of that will be man, as well, with the Overhang on the Slot and CB on the other WR. The Overhang will also be to the Brown side to lock, up as well. The diagram (Figure 27) below will show you that we can line up in Maverick to the basic Flex-Bone Attack. If we get Unbalanced Slot Over, we will bump out the Overhang. If we get a TE in, or the Wingback on either side becomes a TE, we will just have the Overhang play a 9-Technique with the same option responsibility.



The next progression in Maverick is to install the pressures to help make the QB think about his read. In our base Maverick front, he has been seeing the same read consistently. Now with our pressures, we can make him think and that is usually when the turnover occurs. The first pressure we will install the Double Bomb, which means we are blitzing both Inside Linebackers into the B-Gaps, and they become Dive players. The DE's will move from their 4Is, rip outside to become QB players, and the overhangs are automatically pitch players—Overhang Counter-Option rules remain the same. The great part about this pressure is we can run Bomb to a single side, as well. We run Field Bomb to the wide side, and Boundary Bomb into the short side, depending on the tendency of the team we are playing. Below, is the diagram (Figure 28) of how we run Double Bomb against the Flex Bone. The Secondary in either Double, Field or Boundary is locked up to that side or with Double Bomb, we turn into Cover 1.



In the event you are playing a Flex Bone team that likes to use a TE, Slot on the ball, or Split back veer team, there is another stunt that we used that was successful against the run. We called it our Viper Stunt; we exchanged gaps between the Viper and the DE to the 3-man surface. The Viper would slant first, become a dive player, and the DE would wrap around the outside and become a QB player. Again, we are trying to make the QB think, hold the ball, and then put it on the ground. In the diagram below (Figure 29), we show you how we ran the Viper Stunt and played Cover 0 behind the pressure. It is imperative that you teach the DL that this is an automatic pinch call so the rest of them are Dive players and cannot be washed down the line of scrimmage.



In the last segment of this chapter, we will look at the change-up to the Maverick front which is Bubble. I learned this front early on my coaching career from Coach Cahill and Coach Price—it was something that they had learned from some college visits that they had made in the early 2000s. This front is Cover 0 with everyone having to execute their job and responsibility. The only time you will go to Cover 3 is if you get the unbalanced slot—we will be switching from Bubble Black (Cover 0) to Green (Cover 3). The intention is to switch up the QB's read, make him think, hold the ball, and turn it over. This is still out of your 4-down front and you always make a Lucky call. The Ends are in 5-Techniques and can stand up—they use their inside hand to make contact with the Offensive Tackle and their responsibility is the QB. The DTs are in a 3-technique and shade on their respective offensive lineman. They have Dive responsibility and cannot be washed down the line of scrimmage. The remaining two Inside Linebackers will line up in the open A- and B-Gaps and play Dive along with the 3-Technique and the Shade. Your best player will play the S Super-Mike at 8 yards and he will play all three responsibilities: Dive, QB, and Pitch. This player is usually your Mike Linebacker, or a Strong Safety, and they need to check all three responsibilities. The Secondary's responsibility is man coverage and the Safeties are locked on the Wings. If

the Wings go in motion, the Safeties will go with them, but the coaching point is they have to stay on their inside hip and do not over pursue. The CBs are on an island and need to play great man technique not to get beat inside or deep on a pass. Below (Figure 30) is a diagram on how we play Bubble and how to line up against the Flex Bone.



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NO HUDDLE NO MERCY

GAMEPLANNING IN THE NO HUDDLE NO MERCY OFFENSE



Initial Film Review of Opponent

We begin the game planning process with an initial film review of our opponent. We will ask the following questions each and every week to get a total picture of "who is our opponent".



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

Each and every week it is important to do a thorough evaluation and analysis of your upcoming opponent.

- 1) Who are they (Defensive Front/ Coverage Category)
 - Are they an Odd or Even Front
 - Are they an attacking or read and react run fit
 - Do they use man or zone coverage principles or a combination
 - Do they reveal uncovered shots on our receivers with their alignment
- 2) How do they align to our base formations
 - Have they faced similar formations this season- how have they aligned
 - How do they adjust to motion and shifting
3. Pressure Package
 - What are there pressure packages against our formations
 - Are they a man or zone pressure team
 - Have they shown any simulated pressures
 - Line Stunts and Twists
 - Will they show zero coverage pressure
4. Substitution Tendencies
 - Will they keep the same defensive personnel on the field regardless of our package

The challenge when it comes to the game planning process is to work efficiently to establish an effective plan of attack that will be easily digested by your players, and that you are able to effectively practice and prepare each week. As coaches we tend at times to think that we can win the game on a whiteboard with our unbeatable schemes. Reality will soon set in that as coaches we are only successful with what our players are ultimately able to digest and execute. This is an important footnote to always keep in mind as you go through your game planning process. Is this "too much offense", and "can we effectively practice this plan" should always be at the forefront of any offensive game planning conversation.

Remember it all looks good on paper, but how will your players execute it when only given limited reps during the week at practice. When you are eating in a restaurant everything on the menu tastes good- but you can only digest so much. Keep that at the forefront of your game planning strategy. Also your plan must take into consideration your offensive personnel. A well timed double reverse pass is useless if run by a receiver who can not throw a football ten yards. All of these factors must be taken into consideration when laying out the initial gameplan.



What are their substitution tendencies (hard to pick up on film)
Have they previously faced an up-tempo team this year
What is the overall condition of their players

Examination of Defensive Personnel

Now that we have established an outline of who our opponent is defensively, we will begin to further evaluate the film to take a closer look at the defensive personnel. This is probably the most important aspect to game planning at the high school level in my opinion. Our offense is not trying to attack an entire eleven man defensive structure on each play. We are trying as much as possible to isolate and attack the weakest part of the defense. This could be a weakness in coverage or defensive alignment or quite simply attacking the worst players on the defense. We want to attack PLAYERS not ENTIRE DEFENSES. The key is to find those matchups and getting your best players into position to be able to attack the worst players on the defense.

The first thing we will examine is what are their strengths, and does their personnel dictate that we will need to game plan specifically to handle that individual player. We will breakdown the defense at all three levels.

- 1st Level= Defensive Line
- 2nd Level= Linebackers, Strong Safety, Nickle
- 3rd Level= Corners, Safety

As we examine these areas we are looking for players at all three levels that we must plan for. It is important to understand that this is not a video game. This is high school football and their best players may simply be too much of a match-up problem for our players unless we plan accordingly and give help when needed. For example do they have a defensive linemen who is a complete match-up problem that in passing situations we will need to give help in protection by chipping him with a running back or another adjustment. Or do we need to check away from him in the run game. These are all questions that you must ask yourself when facing a dominant defensive lineman. Do not let this player wreck your gameplan by constantly putting him in one on one situations with an offensive lineman that simply can not block him. If left unaccounted for on an island this player will ruin your entire gameplan.

We will then take a look at them at the second level. First at their alignments, depth to the line of scrimmage, and how they key and run fit. Are they keying guards, do they attack down hill. Are they a man to man team, and if so how do they handle empty, do they banjo coverage on a back out of the backfield. Are they aggressive against the run, can we RPO or pop pass any particular linebacker. If a zone coverage team are there any uncovered shots on the perimeter. Do they apex their linebackers to the number two receiver in zone coverage.

Finally we will examine the personnel on the back end of the defense by reviewing their corners and safeties. We begin by looking at the depth and leverage of those players in each of their coverage categories. We will look to see if there are any potential alignment tendencies if the defender is aligned into the boundary or the field. We will find out who their best cover corner is. Does he stay on one side of the field or does he "travel". What I am referencing by this is does he always align on a teams best wide receiver, strength of formation, field/boundary, or is he always just aligned on the right or left side. Does he every play slot corner if we place our best receiver inside. If he is matched up on our #1 receiver how does he adjust if a player goes in motion outside of him (can we force him to expand out to the new #1 wr or will he stay at slot corner). We will look for ways to formation and create potential matchups. We will then examine the location and depth of the safeties in relation to our formations and field landmarks such as the hashes. Then take a look at the overall aggressiveness of the secondary in regards to who can we double move and can we take advantage of play action or sucker plays to exploit their aggressive nature defensively.

Once we have identified who we want to "avoid" on their defense and if we need to design a special plan to handle that player, we begin the process of identifying and attacking the worst players on their defense. Who can we run by, who can we run at, who does not want to run fit. Those are really the three simple questions that we will ask ourselves as we identify the worst three players at all levels to attack. Now some defenses will be harder than others to find a weakness but every team has one somewhere that you can attempt to exploit. As we identify these players we will start to sketch out how we can best utilize our

(continued on next page)

formations, motion, and shifting for the week to isolate and attack these players.

Self Scout of our Own Offensive Tendencies

Now that we have given an in-depth review of our opponents scheme and personnel, it is important that we take a look at ourselves offensively. As part of the on-going self scout process we will break down our own offense in the same manner as our opponent. What are our situational play calling tendencies? Have we created a situation where we have become predictable in a particular area that we can use to our advantage this week as a tendency breaker in a certain situation or area of the field. Have we shown any glaring weakness in a particular area that our opponent will try to exploit. It is important to assume that our opponent is going through the same game planning process that we are in evaluating our personnel for strengths and weakness that we can attack.

The Game Plan Outline

After we have established who the opponent is defensively and what their strengths and weaknesses are we will begin to lay out our offensive play menu for the week. As I have said countless times throughout this book, it is important that this menu is laid out in a very deliberate manner with thought towards how we will utilize and tweak our existing schemes while adding potential new concepts and adjustments that can be efficiently practiced during the week prior to the game.

Weekly Offensive Menu

1) Base Run

What are our Base Concepts for the Week

How will we formation and window dress these base concepts

How are we putting the defense in conflict with attached reliefs (RPO and SRO)

Are there any variations or adjustments to our base blocking schemes needed

What is our best short yardage run this week

Play-Action and Boot Game

2) Base Pass

How are we protecting the quarterback, protections, multiple launch points

Quick Game

Base Pass - Multiple Adjusting Routes

Potential New Pass Install or Adjustments

Plan for Pressure

Plan for Press Man Under Coverage

3) Behind the Line Throws

Fast Screens

Slow Screens

Key Screens (Double Screens)

"Sucker" plays off of Screens

4) Exotics

Exotic Formations, Motions, and Shifts

Scatter Package

Gadget Plays (4 Total)

Situational Planning

The next step in our game planning process is to start to place our offensive menu into situational areas. We will put plays into categories or buckets according to many different areas that we will be faced with on game day as a play caller. We begin by taking our entire offense and looking for play concepts that we will want to execute according to "field zones" or location on the field. Here are some examples of how we categorize plays by yard line.

Field Attack Zones in Game Planning

Green Zone GL- - 15

Yellow Zone -15 to -30

Open Field -30 to +20

Red Zone +20 to GL

Money Zone +5 to GL

Situational Categories

The next step in placing our offensive menu into situational categories is to take a look at play concepts that we want to run in certain situations. Some examples would be as follows

Hash

Down and Distance

Short Yardage (Goal Line)

Long Yardage (XXL)

Exotics and Gadgets

Sudden Change

This is an area where we want to make turnovers count. I

always want to have some playcalls that will be triggered following a momentum swing in the football game. In this area I will always have a script of some downfield "shot" plays or an off-tempo exotic gadget play that can really break the defenses will with a big play. It is important to recognize the body language of your opponent following a turnover or sudden change of momentum swing. This will give you a great opportunity to be like a shark to blood in the water and attack the defense at their weakest point mentally.

Special Contingency Planning

These are areas that you may not ever need to call upon, but a solid plan of attack that your players can execute is absolutely necessary. You must have a plan for situations that will arise that will cause adjustments to your plan of attack. These may occur due to an extreme situation in the game, weather conditions, an injury to a key player, or a very untimely penalty. It is important to have some contingency plan in effect in the event of the following situations.

Potential Extreme Weather Conditions

Plan for your Backup QB (Wildcat)

Last play of Half or Game

Extreme Penalty Situation- an example of this could be you score a touchdown with no time on the clock to pull within two points however your team is flagged for a celebration penalty on the touchdown that forces the pat attempt back to the 18 yard line. You must have a plan in place to run a 2-pt play from the 18 yard line to tie the game. If you have practiced this play with your players in advance you will not be simply grab-bagging a play and they will have confidence that they can execute effectively.

Drive Starters

We do not script our first 10 or 15 plays of the game like many teams will attempt to do. I will script what I refer to as "drive starters". This is the first play called off of the sideline to start an offensive drive. These play calls are great opportunities to break know tendencies offensively, and to provide the defense with some exotic looks by starting in one formation and quickly shifting to another. This pre-snap shift serves two purposes. It will allow us to see how the defense aligns to two of our different formations and it will reveal if the defense is using auto checks to align to our offense. These drive starters are also great opportunities to get your quarterback into a rhythm early on the drive by

getting the ball out of his hand quickly on a high percentage quick throw or a behind the line throw. These are also great opportunities to flood a defense with a formation into the boundary and see how the defensive alignment adjusts to this situation.

Plan for Pressure

We enter each game assuming that every team will bring blitzes with zero across man to man coverage. We must have a plan for this and our players must be confident in attacking the pressure. Our team should invite and get excited when a team plans to bring pressure and play us in man to man coverage with no safety help. As I have revealed in our practice planning we will spend time each day in a blitz period to prepare for potential situations where we will be seeing pressure. We will have our concepts game planning accordingly with specific "blitz beater" play designs that we practice each week. As part of our plan for pressure, we will spend significant time teaching our receivers how to defeat man under coverage. It is important that you spend time each day on releases and getting open against this category of coverage, and we will have corresponding play calls in our game plan menu that we will use to attack any man under coverage attempt that we will face.

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

INTRODUCTION TO COVER 5: PART I

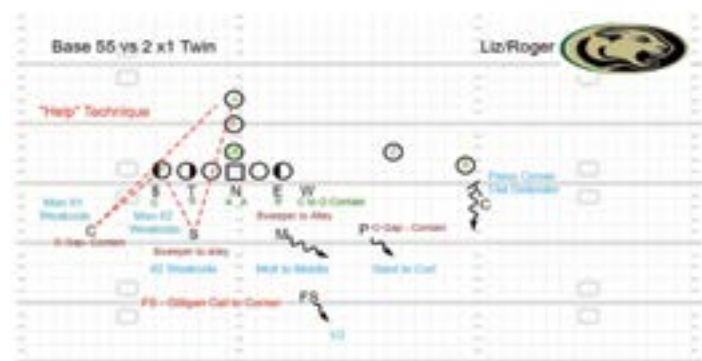


Kevin Swift
Gold Beach HS - OR
Athletic Director
[@kdawgswift](#)
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As a Defensive Coordinator in Southern California, I was always a 2 High Safety guy. I loved the flexibility and coverages you could deploy against some of the country's

best high school offenses. I loved all of the variations of the Cover 2 or Tampa 2. However, as I stated in my first article on our defense at Gold Beach, during my initial evaluation process on what our defense should look like it was a single High Safety. Stopping the run and basic pass schemes would be the key to our sustained success at Gold Beach. So, with that said, Cover 3 became our primary coverage. Explaining that would be insulting to the readers of this article. Our Cover 5 is another story though. It is a combo coverage that we use maybe 30% of the defensive snaps in a season. If we had to break down our coverages by use, it would be Cover 3 - 50% of the time, Cover 5 - 30% of the time and a Cover 9 (later article) - 20% of the time.

Cover 5 is a Combo coverage, Cover 2 to the 2 receiver side of the field and Man Coverage to single side or boundary. We like it against teams running quick 3 Step Passing attacks and Bubble Screen teams. It also allows us some flexibility vs. Trips formations. Below are 2 basic diagrams of our Cover 5 against Formations we regularly see at the small rural school level.



Perhaps one of the biggest reasons I like Cover 5 is that Oregon is a NFHS state which means traditional wide hashes. Playing man to man to the boundary is considerably easier with wide hashes. I also get to teach a little bit of that Cover 2 that I grew up teaching early in my career.

The Basic - Nuts and Bolts of Cover 5:

Like many of you, when teaching a coverage or defense, we start with it against our offense's base formations. Below is 45 vs. 2x1 Flanker



As you can see from the diagram above we teach this primarily as a "hash" coverage or defense. We rarely use it when the ball is in the center of the field. As the diagram shows we are playing Cover 2 to the two receiver side of the field.

Cover 2 Side:

Field Corner - will play a "Press Corner" technique. The more experienced players will make it look like Cover 3 and walk up during cadence. Corner from "Press Corner" alignment will deny receiver an outside release and force receiver to inside. If receiver does get outside, which can happen at the high school level, the Field Corner will open his hips and eyes to inside at QB. He will "sink" with the

receiver that got outside for up to 15 yards in an effort to force QB to throw over the top of him, buying our FS/ 1/2 Player time to get over the top. If the receiver is forced inside we are now squeezing the #1 receiver to Panther/SS. We are now playing "Match Cover 2" with Panther/SS, with my hands on the #1 but eyes on #2 looking for a threat. There is no high school 5 yard rule like in the NFL, so the more physical we can be the better.

Panther/Strong Safety - He knows he has help in the Flat and on wide hitches vs. a TE, align 5x5 off TE. From this alignment he knows the Sam Backer to his side is going to "wall" TE's release and force the TE upfield to FS over the top or out to a waiting Panther. Knowing this allows him after reading pass to flash his eyes to #1 and jump slant if it shows. If he was 2 receivers to his side, his alignment changes to 5 yards off and 2 - 3 yards inside the #2 receiver. He will collision and attempt to re-route #2's release stopping or delaying a vertical route. While colliding #2, his eyes will find #1 and he will play "Match Cover 2" with Field Corner.

Sam Backer - Set to 2 receiver side with a TE. Wall his release for up to 15 yards making sure he cannot cross the formation. If set to single receiver or man side and it's a TE, let your Boundary Corner know you are using "Help" Technique with him vs. TE and Back's releases. "Help" Technique is the idea that TE's release will determine if Sam or Boundary Corner takes him or other threat, the Back. TE releases inside Stud End and he becomes Sam Backer's man and Back becomes Boundary Corner's man. Obviously, outside release by TE flips cover responsibilities.

Free Safety - Align in typical Cover 3 Alignment. Make a "Gilligan Call" to Boundary Corner to remind him he is on an island with no safety help in his Man coverage. During cadence slide or cheat to alignment that allows you to get to Deep 1/2 Coverage over the top of multiple receiver side. Remember verticals on sidelines take long to arrive than verticals from inside receivers, plan and play accordingly.

Man Side:

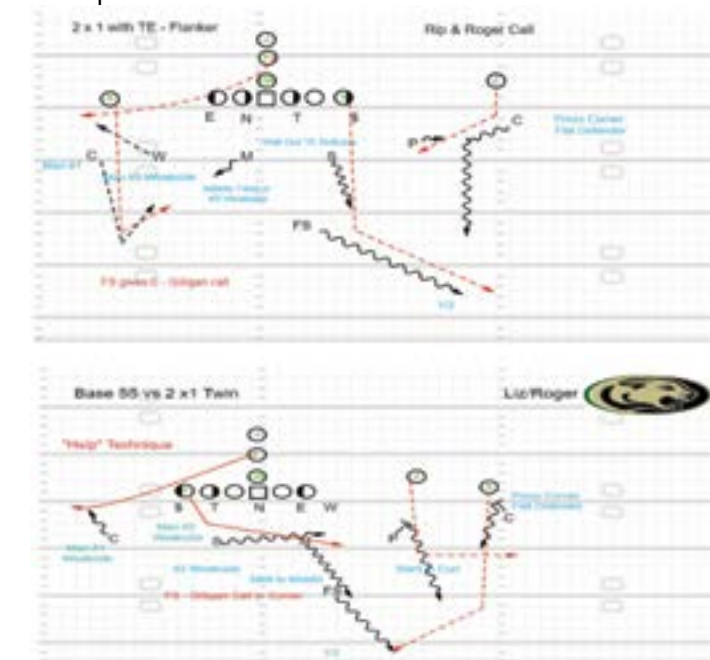
Mike Backer - If aligned on man side you will have #3 out to Man Side. If no one shows melt to middle colliding any receiver trying to cross your face. Do not fly up to LOS to collide. If to Cover 2 side you have no man responsibility

and melt to middle - again not letting anyone cross your face.

Whip - If aligned on LOS you follow alignment rules and rush. If you are off the LOS to a single receiver side you have #2 - the Back out of the backfield. Keep inside out leverage on the #2/Back pressing/walling to sideline. If off the ball to the Trips side, collision and wall #3 receiver for up to 12 yards not letting cross formation. If #3 and #2 are breaking out try to get underneath deep inside route by #1 receiver. If both are going out someone has to be coming in or deep.

Boundary/Gilligan Corner - Man to Man on #1. The sidelines are your friend or help - use it! Align off the ball with inside leverage but do not try to jump shallow routes. There is no help to your side from the Free Safety. Do not give up easy deep one and be a great tackler.

Example Route & Cover 5 looks:



OFFENSIVE DRILLS

WIDE ZONE 1/2 LINE DRILL



Lee Weber, CSCS
Rose Hill HS - KS
Head Football Coach
[Coaching Resources](#)
[Children's Book: Coach Dad](#)
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POSITION: Offensive Line & Skill Players

FOCUS: High Tempo Repetitions of Wide Zone

Blocking and Mechanics

DRILL SET-UP, LANDMARKS, & ROTATION:

This drill is set up using the entire width of the field mimicking our landmarks for our receivers and running backs (numbers & hash marks.) Split your offensive line into two groups depending on your philosophy. If you flip flop your offensive linemen or have a strong and quick side then you will want to be sure they get repetitions both ways. I do think it is valuable to have your offensive line trained to be able to play either right or left side. You do you.

To operate this drill effectively, you will need to utilize 2 centers, 2 quarterbacks and 2 running backs. I would also consider if you have the numbers to do so to put your backside guards in this drill as well so they can work with your center on the wide zone technique with a head up nose or shade.

As you notice in the diagram, we have included our wide receivers and defensive backs in the drill as we feel like this play turning at some points into a perimeter run that those blocking techniques need to be worked. You may choose to exclude them and work other skills and drills during this drill.

Our coaching of the quarterback and running back in our version of wide zone is from the pistol with a reverse out and then boot action so be sure to pay special attention to your quarterbacks' boot action. If you have space, you may want to have the right side group start 10 yards or more behind the left side group so your quarterbacks are not booting into each other if that is a technique you use.

COACHING POINTS:

This drill is designed to get you multiple and high tempo reps at wide zone so that your offensive line and back can work together. That relationship between the offensive line and running back in the wide zone is quite important and unique so working together is paramount.

We all may have different techniques that we teach in wide zone or outside zone, but having your offensive line and running back work those techniques together is critical.

For us, our offensive line is taking a wide zone step and trying to get to the outside shoulder of their man. Once they engage or climb to the next level, they are to lock on that defender and either reach him or turn him out depending on how the defender plays the play. The defender can't be right if our offensive line stays engaged. We want vertical movement, but strive to create horizontal space as well.

Our running back is taking a track like a train on train tracks to the butt crack of the tight end (or ghost tight end.) His eyes

are open and looking to either Bend, Bang, or Bounce the play depending on the green grass he sees and the blocking in front of him. I have a great Bend, Bang, Bounce drill that teaches this technique on buckets that has appeared in an earlier issue of Headsets. We want him to read the blocks of the offensive line, the flow of the defenders, and look for green grass. We coach him to make one cut and explode through the line of scrimmage. Once we are through the line of scrimmage, we are looking to get to "The Expressway." For us, an expressway is where cars go fast so we want to get to the area of the field where we can go fast. "The Expressway" on a football field is outside the numbers. It is where you will typically encounter the least number of defenders and create tough pursuit angles for all defenders.

This drill just allows you to practice an important chunk of this play multiple times. The backside blocking is important and should be worked as well, but the relationship and timing on the front side is critical. This allows you to drill down on those techniques and focus your attention there as well as allows you multiple repetitions with both sides of your offensive line to block multiple fronts and techniques.

[Check out this great video representation of the wide zone 1/2 line drill here from Notre Dame Football as shared by Coach Danny Schaechter on Twitter:](#)

One word of caution is that you have to discipline your backs to not always cut back in 1/2 line. It is always open because there are no backside defenders.

VARIATIONS

In the pre-season, I would recommend running multiple different alignments as chunks by your defense. Utilizing 1/2 line allows you to show many different fronts with minimal teaching of the scout defense. As you continue through your season, then obviously you would tailor the drill to your opponent's tendencies.

While we typically like to run wide zone to a 3 man surface, you can take out the tight end if you run wide zone to an open side and then work your slot receivers blocking the D gap defender which is our general run game rule.

RPO's are a simple addition to this drill. We don't typically do much RPO game in the wide zone scheme because we are in the pistol, but we could work our wide zone glance concept with a post by the outside receiver if the safety is a fast fill defender.

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

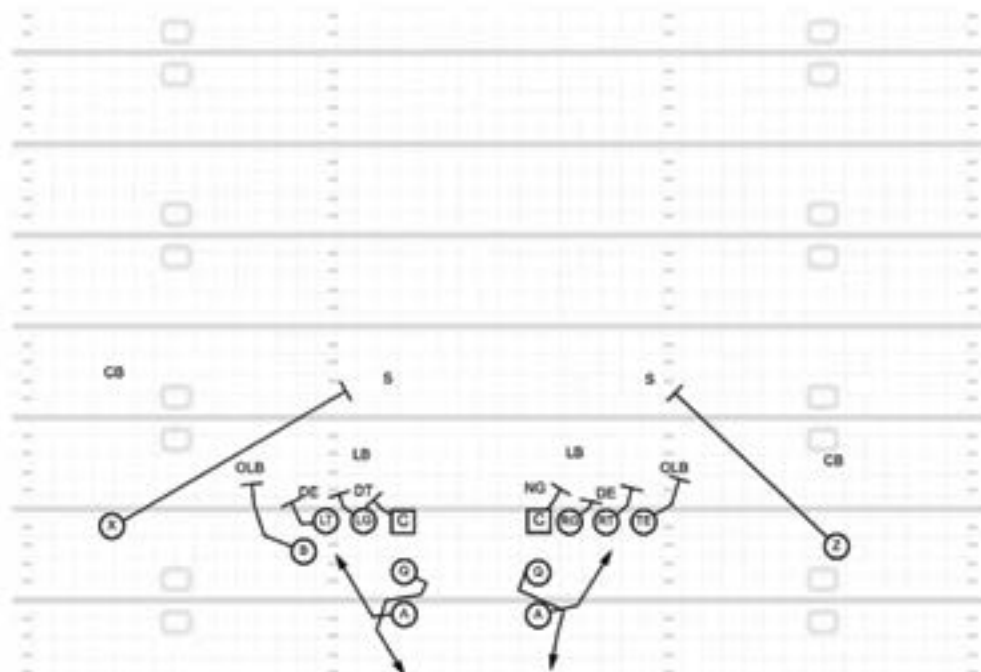


Diagram 1: Wide Zone 1/2 Line Drill Set Up



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PRACTICAL ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT

FOOTBALL SPECIFIC CONDITIONING & DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN SKILL AND LINEMAN



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

Nearly every day on social media you see strength coaches bashing the manner in which some football coaches' condition (myself included). However, what you rarely see is them providing a practical solution or alternative method to condition. What we are going to go over in this issue is practical alternatives to traditional conditioning methods.

For years 110's and 300 yd shuttles have been used by coaches as a means of conditioning their athletes. While these methods do get athletes into a general condition, they do not do much for the development of their conditioning with regards to meeting the demands of the game. The typical football play lasts between 4-5 seconds with around 25-35 seconds rest before the next play depending on what type of offense you run or are playing against on defense. Comparing this with the standard 110 where many of your top tier athletes are operating at 60-70% simply trying to make a time where they are not conditioning at their max effort. This leads to early in-season athletes having cramps and not playing up to their level because they are having to play the game to actually get in football shape. No matter what you do or how you practice there is going to be a level

that the game provides that you cannot replicate in your training. However, we can produce game-like scenarios in summer that can help speed this transition up.

One thing we implemented across the board for our athletes was the tribe test developed by Coach Scott Kuhen or rugby strength coach as he is known on twitter. To do this test essentially you pair your athletes up in pairs of two and one is a runner and one is a spotter. A coach gives the cadence of a play, and then the athlete has 5 seconds to run to the 20 and as far back as they can in that 5 seconds. The spotter then marks where the athlete got to as the athlete is given 25-35 seconds to rest. Upon the start of the next rep, the athlete is trying to beat or make it to their previous mark. If they beat it the cone is moved up, if they don't get near as far the cone is moved to where they got to. You continue doing this for the allotted amount of reps. When doing this I always start small, generally 6 reps. From here we progress to 8 reps then 10 reps then 12. As we get later in the season, we often will increase this workload even more, but we break it down by quarters. We may do 6 reps; switch and the partner run their 6 reps and then switch back and play another quarter.

This was fantastic for our skill position players and also helped with our lineman however after looking into it more I found more applicable methods for our lineman with regards to how they condition. We essentially took the same timetable and method but added a sled push. They won't

be able to make it back and turn around but adding a sled makes it more applicable to what they actually do in a game to get even more sport-specific you can place them at angles for down blocks or even work pulls with your guards if you run a pull heavy offense. Another variation I've found beneficial for our lineman's conditioning is med ball throws following the same timetable. While the med ball throws don't elicit the strength response that the sled push does it does elicit the quick-twitch power response that lineman need to develop AND maintain over the course of a game. Lineman essentially have to exert maximum power in under one second many times over the course of a football game. In this method, the lineman straddles a med ball with their hands on the outside and underneath it and on the whistle, they rip the med ball from the ground and explode up throwing it as high as they can. From here they have 25 seconds rest over the top of their med ball and then throw it again on the next whistle. I recommend lighter med balls for this due to them really being able to throw them as high as they absolutely can. We use 8lb med balls for this method. When doing this you essentially want to mimic drives on a football field so complete 8-10 reps, rest the time that the defense or offense would be on the field and complete another drive. I would start with one single drive of 8-10 reps and then over the course of a summer build to 6-8 drives.

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OFFENSIVE RESOURCES

PRACTICE PLANNING FOR OFFENSE



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

One of the questions I get asked all the time is how do you practice. I truly believe that there are so many factors that come into play when developing a practice plan, that each team needs to customize what is appropriate for them.

Here are the things that I truly evaluate every pre-season before we begin making practice plans.

- What will we be known for?
- What is our depth situation?
- What do we need to improve on?
- How well do we know football?

Below is a sample practice plan for our team. I will walk through each of the periods and what we do to explain how the above questions come into play.

Before I begin explaining each of these periods let me explain that we steal time as much as we can during special teams practice. None of the offensive coaches in our program are responsible for special teams once the season begins. Instead they are getting extra offensive individual time. Our OL only works on field goal, which is not very time consuming, so once they get that done, then they begin working on blitz pick-up or blocking schemes against different fronts. Our QB's are rarely on special teams, especially the varsity starter, so they have the opportunity to get their entire warm-up completed. All other skill guys that are not actively participating in special teams will be either working routes on air or an individual drill with their position coach. This system will minimize the players just standing around watching and also make sure that all of your

coaches are actively engaged at this time.

Question #1 above is "What will we be known for?" I believe that this should be the first thing done in your offensive practice. We are a fast paced no-huddle offense, so we start every offensive practice with Perfect Plays. For us the ball is set on the 40 going in and we signal a play and it is snapped as fast as possible going against air. They continue their responsibility until I blow my whistle, which is about 3-4 seconds. Another coach has spotted a ball and the offense must sprint to the ball and snap as fast as possible. We are coaching intensity and speed more than anything in this drill. The offense will run 5 plays and then sprint off, the next offense is lined up ready to roll on the 40 as the coaches sprint to meet them and keep the energy going. Our goal is 20-25 snaps of the football in a 5 minute segment.

The next segment says Individual, which rarely is the case. Remember we have stolen time during special teams which means we can use this time for combined drills. This time is set aside for 2 or more position groups to get together and work on a shared task. For instance the QB's and RB's may be together working on hand-offs. The OL and TE/FBs may be together working on pass protections or combo blocks. The WR's and QB's may be together working on throwing fades on the goalline. Rarely do our position groups work alone. It would only be if they are working on a highly specialized skill or task. Part of my reasoning for this is 11 players on the field are working together on every play, so let's practice that harmony as much as possible. Also, coaches can now hear each other's coaching points on certain things. For instance maybe our WR coach hears how the OL coach is teaching hand placement while blocking and now he can use those same coaching points with the OL. Also, you may have a new coach that needs to be around other coaches to see a model of coaching in your program. Another benefit of this is players being around a variety of coaches and positions which makes moving kids and asking them to do different skills much easier.

The next segment is our daily bonus segment. In this particular practice, it was pass protection and bubble period. This is the time every practice where we sit down as a staff and decide what we really need to work on specific to our teams needs or our opponents. This week we were facing a team which blitzed like crazy, so we felt additional pass protection time with the QB's and RB's involved was needed. We also had an issue where we

were struggling to block the perimeter on our bubbles, so we had the drills running simultaneously. This is a great example of why our coaches need to work together as much as possible on the offensive side of the ball. Our QB coach can not be at the pass protection and the bubble drill, so the coach and the players need to be comfortable with each other. There can be no egos if another staff member is trying to help a player from a different position group. This segment will look different every single day and could range from extra individual skills work or potentially even some sort of whole team activity.

Next is Group Run. This is pretty self-explanatory, but sometimes we will do team run. We are a very heavy RPO team so this is a great time to get that work in. There are days when we keep it to just run so the RB's can really get work on carrying the ball and finding holes. Again the receiver unit is split here, so the WR coach has to be comfortable with someone else coaching his players while he is working on his individual time.

7on7 is the next segment along with an OL individual period. Many times the OL is going to work with the scout DL during this time on specific needs. I have tried to run Group run and 7on7 simultaneously before, but the problem we have faced is depth. Our players were getting 0 reps off in this time period and it was taking a toll on their bodies. Our RB's especially. They were getting more carries and tackled more in the Group Run than an entire football game.

Next is our scripted team segment v. the scout team. This is our time when everyone knows what to expect and the offense should be able to have success against the scout team but still have a level of resistance which makes them execute with confidence.

Our final segment of the day is unscripted v. the best players available. This is where depth and knowledge of the game come into play. If depth is an issue then manipulate the scout team to be more JV or varsity players. Also this segment gets adjusted daily to be a situation. Our staff decided what situations were the most critical to a football game and we make sure they show up in this segment at some point in the season. If your player's football IQ's are high just say it is 3rd and 8 and call a play. If it is the first time doing 3rd and 8s, then take the beginning and explain the situations, how you should handle it as a player. I rarely script these segments. It is an opportunity for our play caller to also be put into a stressful situation. We have coaches on the sideline for this period, it is as close to a game situation as possible. There is always a

winner and a loser during this time. It can be painful to end an offensive practice with a loss, but the hope is that it will remind them that there is not always a next play, or a next drive. As a coach it may also tell you a lot about your team or individual players. We have had QB's that are great players for 95% of the game, but when the 5% of the game that requires them to lead under fire comes up they can not perform. If this segment is a drive, then we give them an end goal. For instance:

- Drive from the 50 and must score a TD
- Drive from the -20 and must kick a field goal
- Drive from the -1 and must score or flip the field with a punt
- 1st and goal from the 10
- 2 minute situations(how much time, timeouts, yardline, points required to win)
- 4 minute situations(take time and make time consuming decisions)

Another fun way to do a drive is to start the drive in a unique situation. If they execute then the drive extends, if not then the next group comes on or you punt or kick a field goal. This is always a great time to keep your punt and field goal teams engaged in practice.

For Instance:

- 1st and 20(teach them how much a holding call can kill a drive)
- 2nd and 1(teach them that statistically this is a free play and we will take a shot)
- 3rd and 10(teach them to execute or your drive ends)

(continued on next page)

QB	RB	WR	OL
Perfect Plays			
Individual	Individual	Individual	Individual
Pass Protection v. Scout/Bubble	Pass Protection v. Scout	Bubble Period	Pass Protection v. Scout
Group Run	Group Run	Indy-Y/F w/ Group Run	Group Run
7on7		Individual Drills	
Team Script v. Scout Blitz Cards/Team Script Scout v. Zone			
Unscripted Team Drive v. Best			



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Another strategy we use is a certain situation performed multiple times and score kept

2 point conversions and we must execute 3/5 plays successfully to win

3rd down situations and we must execute 3/5 plays successfully to win

1st and 10 situations, must get at least 4 yards on the play 3/5 plays successfully to win

Other things to consider when practice planning:

Contact level - We rarely tackle to the ground in practice, typically when momentum is stopped the whistle blows. We also teach segments where we tap the hips in a good tackling position to down the runner. This must be taught to the players and the coaches and everyone has to be on the same page.

Coaching - Each segment has a flow to it and coaches need to understand how to approach it. Are they allowed to stop a drill and teach? Are they allowed to just yell out words? Are they on the sideline in a game day situation?

Play count - My goal is to run every play and properly execute it 15 times full speed before it is ready for a game. Some plays that are installed in the summer will definitely hit that mark and essentially need a weekly tune-up and only a few reps, while newer plays will dominate your time. If you install a play, it is likely 2 weeks from working they way you want it to

Player reps - Make sure you have rotations for your players. The rotations of each position do not need to be the same. For instance, does your starting QB and RB look better because he is always with the best OL. Maybe the back-up is just as good when the quality of the players around him is elevated.

Practice Time - At our school we have very limited space and if we don't practice fast, then we get sent to a field that is less than desirable. So a normal in-season practice for us is 30 minutes Special Teams, 60-70 Minutes Offense and 60-70 Minutes Defense. We lift or watch film during the school day and our installs are sent to the players the night ahead of time with play cards and a video of a coach explaining it. We have all learned how to better incorporate technology into our program, so continue to use it to keep things as efficient as possible. I want my coaches to eat dinner with their families 6 of 7 nights in the week.

I strongly believe that trying to steal another team's practice plan is almost impossible, but using this template from above and customizing it to meet your needs is the best way to go about the process.

“I truly believe that there are so many factors that come into play when developing a practice plan, that each team needs to customize what is appropriate for them.

Here are the things that I truly evaluate every pre-season before we begin making practice plans.

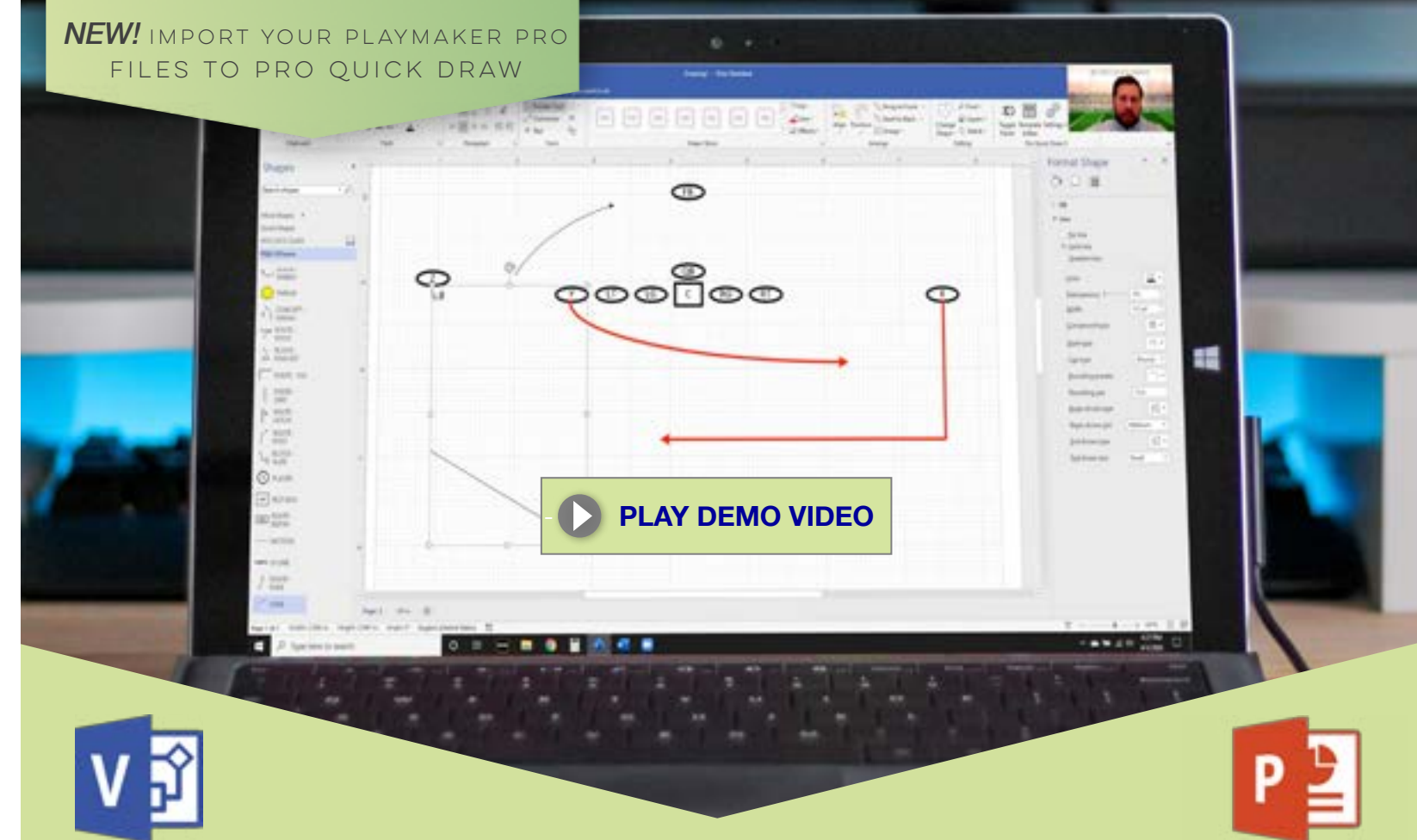
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THE PERFECT PLAYBOOK: MAXIMIZING EDUCATION & PRESENTATION

While on the peloton bike recently, the coach shouted, "It's about progress, not perfection". I agree with that sentiment concerning exercise, and it got me thinking about that in terms of playbook creation. Both are journeys with an ever-changing finish line. However, the finish line for the perfect playbook is simple: *whatever the player needs*. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced coaches and teachers to get beyond their normal and deliver information by leveraging technology to reach where they are at both physically and mentally. The perfect football playbook for your players blends different versions of the same concept and delivers the information in a vehicle that is accessible and repeatable for the player. The information must be comprehensive enough to lay a solid base for the player, but not too deep that it is overwhelming for them to begin. When the ideal playbook is created, it allows you to maximize the important in-person opportunities with them.

Here we explore several playbook softwares (free and by subscription) that help you achieve the perfect playbook. When used together, these platforms aid in ease and efficiency of creation as well as presentation and delivery to players; both key elements to achieving your goal.

COMPONENTS OF THE PERFECT PLAYBOOK

Recently, in discussion with an NFL Special Teams Coordinator, he said players mostly identify with being "visual" learners. But what is a visual learner, and what type of visual is the best? The perfect playbook contains diverse visuals that work together to give the players the complete picture and supplement what they are physically asked to do.

DRAWINGS: The traditional 2-D drawing will always have a place in the football playbook. It is important that players have a basic understanding of football structure. There are ongoing twitter discussions, Facebook posts and forums that discuss the best playbook software - and one I use and you'll find to be debated is Pro Quick Draw. I have found that PowerPoint and Visio are the most versatile and accessible for coaches - and Pro Quick Draw is the plugin to use with those programs. It improves the widely-used Microsoft platform to be more football coach-friendly by efficiently creating professional looking playbooks, scout cards and presentations.

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COACHING POINTS

- "ALERT" THE QUICK THROUGH
- #1 - CURL, 1 HITCH
- #2 - FLAT CONTROL, 1 HITCH
- #3 - BURST, 2 HITCH
- 2/3 JET MAN SLIDE PROTECTION

ADJUSTMENTS

- SWITCH H & F FLAT CONTROL
- RUN IN EMPTY WITH "ZORRO"
- USE A NASTY SPLIT ON BACKSIDE

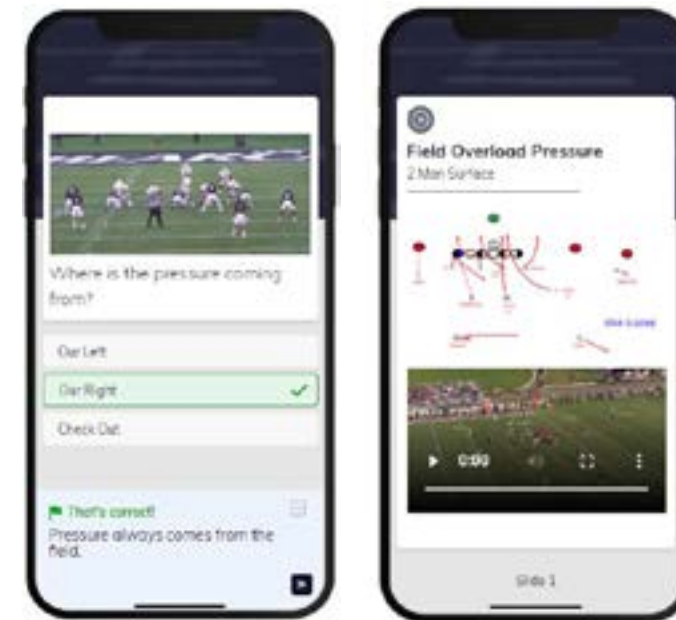
COACHING POINTS: These can be bullet points or text boxes on the drawing that describe the concept in words. These words provide a soundtrack for what the player is seeing in the drawing as well as exposes them to the team's terminology. Don't forget to provide players with a glossary of what terms mean.

3-D SIMULATION: Technology has advanced to the point where playbooks can come alive (Madden style) and bring the play off the page. This allows the player to see the field from their vantage point. GoArmy Edge Football is a free 3-D playbook solution available on iOS, Android and PC, with the ability to copy videos and screenshots into playbook software.



FILM: The final piece of the playbook is live film from a practice or game; something that the players will be able to see themselves doing. This will provide the nuances of the individual positions as well as opponent reaction. Film clips built into your playbook do not need to be large cut-ups, those types of clips belong inside your film program. The clips in the playbook should purposefully selected to highlight the coaching points.

ACCOUNTABILITY: Delivering the information is one thing, but do they understand it? Comprehension of your material will allow you to get the most out of the next step (practice or a meeting). The best interactive teaching platform asks questions in a variety of ways such as multiple choice, free response, check box, etc. so the coach can truly identify the holes in a player's understanding. Also, some questions should elicit questions from the player, which can be addressed by the coach in a future meeting. Learn to Win, a software based on active learning and training content creation, has an interface that makes it easy to create cloud-based installs. Follow up by offering your player quizzes that can be taken from their Apple or Android device.



CONSTRUCTING THE PERFECT PLAYBOOK

Close your eyes and picture the best playbook you have ever seen. ✓personalized over ✓4 inches thick ✓color plays and ✓the answer to every situation. While these traits may be part of all playbooks in some form, it is more important to start with an understanding of what a player is able to digest and understand. Having the adjustment and check to every formation variation of every personnel group is good information, but is all that information the best way to lay a foundation of understanding for the player? Consider covering the details of a concept that will give the player a base of knowledge, provide them an

opportunity to explore what is next and then answer questions during practice/meeting time with the coaches. As skills improve and knowledge of the game is gained, more can be added making the learning and playbook dynamic.

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY: Too much information can be crippling to player development. Even as a veteran coach, looking at a new playbook can be overwhelming because there is so much you do not know. Be purposeful with what you present to the players in a way that is less intimidating.

CONSISTENT CONTENT: When creating playbooks, installs and scouting reports it is important to have a process that is repeatable week to week.

MAKE IT ACCESSIBLE: Digital playbooks are advantageous for the coaches responsible for making them as well as the players learning the concepts.

DELIVERY OF THE PERFECT PLAYBOOK

Quality content of the playbook is important, but the delivery system for the player will impact how much the players get out of it. Technological advances have given coaches some great vehicles to get their message to the players without having to be in the same room.

DIGITAL DELIVERY: Your playbook should be able to handle the previously mentioned components: Drawings, Simulation and Film, and should be accessible for players and coaches in a manner that they are used to; on their mobile device. This gives them the opportunity for micro-learning; studying the content in small, repeatable bursts.

VOICEOVER: While VO teach tapes are not new, I believe the pandemic really showed coaches how powerful it can be for player understanding. Download a screen recording app (there are many free programs available) and talk through the drawings, film and simulation that make up your playbook as you would in an in-person meeting. These teach tapes can be distributed to your players through your video service.

When creating these videos, resist the urge to conduct a "coaches clinic" and focus on being clear and succinct as you are talking to your players, not fellow coaches. Try to keep the videos under 10 minutes.

CONCLUSION

The perfect playbook takes many forms and may look different year-to-year because of the makeup of the team. Ask questions

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to find out how your current players like to learn. Zero in on what works for your staff and to take advantage of the tools available to aid in the construction of your playbook. I find Pro Quick Draw to be the tool that provides coaches and players the greatest opportunity to build the perfect playbook because of its robust platform and versatility as it integrates with other softwares.

If you focus on the needs of the players, the perfect playbook constructs itself.

"We will chase perfection, and we will chase it relentlessly, knowing all the while we can never attain it. But along the way, we shall catch excellence." Vince Lombardi

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