

# HEADSETS

WRITTEN FOR COACHES BY COACHES

VOLUME 2: ISSUE 4

## *defensive* DRILLS

**MORE**  
WITH  
**LESS**

**RUN BLOCKING**  
**TECHNIQUES**

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Coaches helping coaches is an awesome thing to experience, and to be able to provide a material that gives a platform for coaches to educate others is the entire goal of Headsets Magazine. This is volume #2 of this magazine, and it will include six issues. Our goal is to cover all things football. As you read the articles, we have included links to each author. Be sure to connect with them and thank them for their time as they are doing this for free.

If you'd like to help contribute, please email [FBCoachsimpson@gmail.com](mailto:FBCoachsimpson@gmail.com) and I will get you set up. Coaches helping coaches is, and should always be, the goal in our profession.

Thanks,

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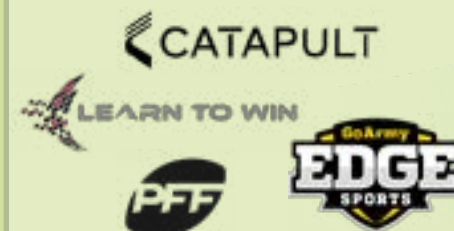
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# DEFENSIVE LINE BASICS

## ADVANCED BLOCK DESTRUCTION DRILLS



Quint Ashburn  
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In the last article I covered some basic pass rush drills that I like to teach my defensive linemen. This spring I have worked some extra pass rush drills that I have seen good results from my defensive linemen already in the way that they execute a pass rush. The two drills are the hoop drill and the club rip off of pop-up dummies.

These are drills that you will need some equipment for. If you don't have pop-up dummies, you can use players standing in a line to substitute. You don't need a fancy hoop for the hoop drill. You can get some cheap plastic hose, cut it, and tape it together at the end. If you don't want to do that, get some cones and make a big circle with it.

### Hoop Drill:

For me, the main purpose of the hoop drill is to teach defensive linemen to perform their pass rush move and lean against the offensive lineman on their path to the quarterback. If the defensive linemen don't lean against pressure, they will get forced out of their assigned rushing lane and could even get washed down into another pass rusher.

In this drill I am watching for them to trigger on the ball snap, perform a pass rush move, stay tight to the hoop, and finish through at quarterback depth. For this drill you will need a hoop, a person snapping the ball, and a blocker to simulate a pass blocking offensive lineman.

### Drill Progression:

Coach or player simulates a ball snap. The defensive lineman will fire out of his stance and will perform a pass rush move. He will stay tight to the hoop and finish through a cone set out at the top of his rush.

### Coaching Points:

Great get off.  
Violent hands on pass rush move.  
Defensive lineman must stay tight to the hoop.

[USE THE QR CODE OR [THIS LINK](#) TO VIEW DRILL VIDEO.]



Part 1: DL Triggers out of stance off ball snap.



Part 2: DL performs a pass rush move against the OL.



Part 3: DL stays tight to hoop and finishes through the cone.

### Club Rip Pop-Up Dummy Drill:

The club rip pass rush move requires two major parts to perform it well. First, you must have a heavy club against the offensive lineman and second you need to flip your hips toward the quarterback. I believe this drill is great to use with pop-up dummies. If your program does not have pop-ups, that is perfectly fine! You can line up your players to represent pop-ups and it will work as well.

To set up this drill I will line up about four pop-up dummies in a single file line with plenty of space in between them. I will have my defensive linemen make a single file line facing the line of dummies with one defensive lineman up and ready to go. You can start the drill from a 2-point or 3-point stance. I would advise you start the drill with your linemen in a 2-point stance until their footwork and timing is good enough. Once they have mastered that, move on to starting in a 3-point stance.

### Drill Progression:

One Defensive lineman will line up in front of the first pop-up dummy. On the coach's command or ball snap, the defensive lineman will club the pop-up dummy, flip their hips out and rip through. They will have quick feet and will set themselves in front of the next dummy. They will club the dummy with their other hand this time and will flip their hips out to the same side as the hand they clubbed with. They will repeat this process until they are through all of the pop-up dummies.



Part 1: Head up with Pop-Up.



Part 2: Club hard, flip hips and get to the second pop-up.



Part 3: Repeat the club to the other side.

### Coaching Points:

Heavy club  
Great hip flip.  
Fast, coordinated footwork.

[USE THE QR CODE OR [THIS LINK](#) TO VIEW DRILL VIDEO.]



In conclusion, these are just a few drills I use with the hoops and pop-up dummies. I have also included QR codes with footage of my players working these drills. I will be publishing a full defensive line manual soon with similar diagrams, pictures, and QR codes to drill clips throughout the whole book. I hope you enjoyed a taste of that within this article.

# QB RUN GAME

## POWER AND COUNTER READ



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### 12P POWER READ

12P (12 Personnel) or a one Back/two Tight End formation is an exciting and growing part of our Surface To Air System

repertoire for attacking modern Defenses. Urban Meyer once said that "Defenses hate empty, two Tight End sets, and Option Football."

At Surface To Air System, we attempt to run all three of those headaches in our scheme. The 12P part of the resumé has become a more diversified and growing part of what we do, because Defenses struggle to account for it properly.

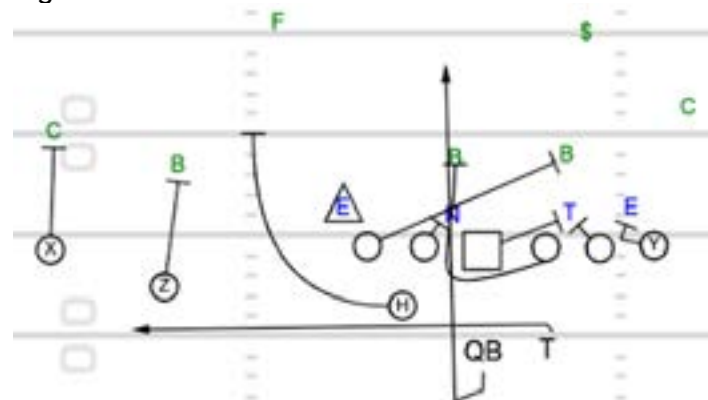
I hear numerous coaches often comment, "Well good idea, but I don't have Tight Ends at my school." My Tight End weighed about 175 pounds when we started fall camp in 2020 and my backup Tight End weighed about 165 pounds. They were taught to be good position blockers, play with leverage, execute RPOs and be tough.

These are all things that can be taught to Receivers at your school. Every school in America has a receiver or two that is pretty smart and tough, but can't run as fast as your traditional Receivers can. So convert them and create chaos for the Defense. One of the biggest reasons that 12P causes the Defense so many issues is they will quickly account for the first Tight End, but struggle to identify and

deal with the second Tight End in the structure. To exacerbate this problem for the Defense, we will align our Tight Ends in a variety of places.

We will align in Brick Right, Camel Left. This means the Tight End will align as an in-line Tight End to the right with both our Wide Receivers aligning away from him. The H Back (the Fullback in this formation) is aligning behind whichever Tackle or Guard we tell him to align (he will be tagged in the formation call). From this set, we then call Power Read to the left.

Figure 6-8



I discussed earlier that to the Open, or Shade/5 Technique side of the formation, the Defense can play Squeeze-Scrape and try to take the Defensive End down, while the weak Linebacker arcs to take the Running Rack. This type of formational set stops all of that. The H Back will 'Arc' for any box player that is looping to the perimeter and the Running Back and Quarterback are now both protected, one by the read and one by the extra blocker. If the H Back has no one to block, then he will block the force player (usually the Free Safety).

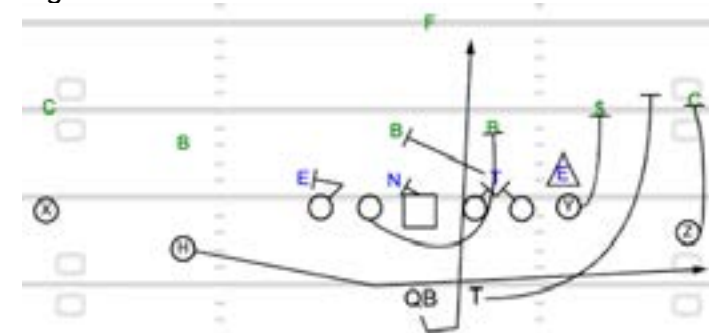
This set, and other 12P sets like it in S2A, force a great deal of confusion and stress on the Defense as they try to mitigate the problems of two blocking Tight Ends that are also eligible receivers in the run box. The possibilities for growth and formation

of wrinkles are almost limitless, but this style of Offense is something we enjoy and intend to use with increasing frequency in S2A for years to come.

### FLY POWER READ

Adding Fly Sweep action to the Power Read is another great way to dress it up and add another hat to the blocking surface on the perimeter. The Offense can simply align in a 2x2 set with an in-line Tight End and bring the Wide Receiver in Fly Motion and use him as the Running Back while the actual Running Back lead blocks for the perimeter.

Figure 6-9



There are two principal reasons to utilize this type of play.

The first reason would be if the Offense wants another additional blocker to the perimeter and block the force player. The Running Back can insert on the edge of the formation and take out the third run support defender.

The second reason is to distort the Defense or 'take their eyes away' from what the Offense is really attempting to do with the play. If the Offense wants to run the Quarterback, this is usually a pretty good way to get him loose. The Fly action by the motioning Wide Receiver will oftentimes force the Defense's eyes wider, allowing the Quarterback to slip underneath their over-pursuit and run the ball

off tackle.

These sorts of window dressed options make it much easier for the Offense to dictate where the defensive players' attention will be, and thereby, run the ball where and when we want to run it.

**At Surface To Air System, we attempt to run all three of those headaches in our scheme. The 12P part of the resumé has become a more diversified and growing part of what we do, because Defenses struggle to account for it properly.**

# FEED THE CATS

## THE CASE AGAINST FOOTBALL PLAYERS RUNNING TRACK



Tony Holler  
Speaker/Author/Founder  
of Feed the Cats and  
Track and Football  
Consortium  
[Courses](#)  
[Football Content](#)  
[@pntrack](#)

*1) Over half of high school track programs run too much and never sprint.*

*2) If football players lack athleticism, their participation in track meets may be minimal.*

*God makes sprinters, track coaches make milers.*

The three statements above are true. Track is not a good fit for all football players.

What! The guy that "Feeds the Cats" and co-owns the Track Football Consortium is telling football players not to run track? Blasphemy! Is this a thinly veiled attempt to make peace with the Neanderthals, to buddy up to the meatheads?

Let's talk about this idea that track is not for everyone.

First of all, track & field programs are typically under the direction of non-football people. The most likely guy to head a track program is the cross country coach. These people are runners. Running is like their religion. Running is good for you, the more the better, every damn day. The rarest track coach in

the world is a football guy with a sprint background, a CAT. Why do joggers have the advantage over cats to head track programs? My theory is that runners are organized, disciplined, and straight-A students. They probably also played in their high school band, served on student council, and were likely honored as an Eagle Scout. The guys with football backgrounds who sprinted as track athletes just aren't great candidates to head the biggest organizational and logistical nightmare in the high school sports world.

Alright, so we established that most track programs are led by distance nerds. Should football players run track for these guys?

I hate to ever answer a question with "it depends", but it truly does depend on the enlightenment of that head coach. If that coach is a "Feed the Cats" guy, football players will benefit from running track. If he's a 20x200 guy who worships "the cat-killer", Clyde Hart, then no, football players will NOT benefit. Feed the Cats programs are speed and power-based, a perfect fit for football players. Programs that run-run-run, will detrain speed and power.

My second point: only the best athletes on a track get to run in the best track meets. I have 92 kids on my track team at a school of around 2500 students. Yes, we have a handful of weekday "participation" meets, but those seem almost recreational compared to an invitational. Weekday meets resemble a scrimmage game in football without a scoreboard. If we go to a varsity invitational, my 30-32 kids entered in the meet will easily fit onto one bus. That means 60-62 kids are left home (thank goodness we typically schedule two-level meets). In a Feed the Cats program, sprinters take a day off after every meet and lactate workout. If a kid is not

good enough to make the traveling team, he's only getting a couple of workouts per week and very little opportunity to compete. Track is no different than any other sport. Those that get to play benefit far more than those who sit the bench. How can kids really improve if they seldom participate?

My third point: God makes sprinters and track coaches make milers. FACT: the ability to sprint is genetic. I coached a guy named Marcellus Moore. Marcellus broke 11.00 in the 100m in August before his freshman year of high school. IMO, the coaching he had received had nothing to do with his remarkable speed. Marcellus had an elite CNS. He also had incredible feet and ankles. As a freshman on my track team, Marcellus ran the AGE-14 WORLD RECORD (all conditions) in the 100m, 10.40. The next year, at the age of 15, Marcellus set the IHSA State Record, 10.31. Last year at Purdue, Marcellus ran 10.12 which was #3 in the world U20. He also ran in the Olympic Trials. Marcellus Moore is now at Texas and recently ran 9.99. He's not yet 20. No one can take credit for the success of a genetic freak. Marcellus was born to sprint.

It can be argued that all really fast athletes are genetically superior to slow guys. Tendons, fast-twitch fibers, lean bodies, and central nervous systems are inherited. Around 90% of the fastest guys I've ever coached were fast when I met them as freshmen. Most elite sprinters were fast before they were introduced to their first good track coach. That's why so many college sprint coaches are frauds. If you recruit the fastest kids in the nation, you become an instant expert. In contrast, I don't get to import my athletes, all of my sprinters live in my neighborhood.

*(continued on next page)*

**"Let's make this perfectly clear at the risk of being repetitive. If you have a track program at your school that trains sprinters like sprinters and not like cross country runners, track is of significant value to any football player good enough to run in all the meets. Same can be said for your bigs. If you have a big strong explosive kid that is good enough to compete as a thrower on the track team, track will make that kid a better football player."**

Too many S&C coaches love to argue, "Correlation does not imply causation." Whenever someone posts the verified speed of a football player who was also a star track athlete, meatheads want to argue, "Of course star football players were star track athletes, they are genetic freaks!". This implies that competing in track and field does NOTHING to improve speed and power. These coaches see speed as purely genetic, "Track simply reveals speed". They are 100% wrong. They would want to fight me if I said something like, "The weight room simply reveals strength." Just like strong people get stronger in the weightroom, fast people get faster when they sprint.

TRACK, DONE RIGHT (FEED THE CATS), WILL IMPROVE THE SPEED AND ATHLETICISM OF FOOTBALL PLAYERS WHO ARE TALENTED ENOUGH TO TRAVEL WITH THE TRACK TEAM.

Let's make this perfectly clear at the risk of being repetitive. If you have a track program at your school that trains sprinters like sprinters and not like cross country runners, track is of significant value to any football player good enough to run in all the meets. Same can be said for your bigs. If you have a big strong explosive kid that is good enough to compete as a thrower on the track team, track will make that kid a better football player.

"63% of all players at the 2022 NFL combine and 55% of 2022 D1 signees participated in HS T&F. NFL and college football evaluator clients depend upon HS T&F performance data because it is verified, standardized and contextualized. HS football players not only gain recruiting exposure because of T&F participation but also develop necessary athletic attributes through the season without spending registration fees or traveling long distances to weekend long academies/combines."

~Brian Spilbeler of Tracking Football.

I can say this with total certainty, if you attend my high school, Plainfield North, and you are a potential college football player, YOU SHOULD RUN TRACK. You will be a VIP (yes, track does reveal talent), you will attend every meet, and you will get faster, more powerful, and more athletic.

But what about "the others", the guys who will never play college football because they are small and slow? Just lift and "do sprints"? Hell no. Speed should be prioritized in the off season for ALL athletes. When somebody says, "That kid is athletic!", they are NOT talking about weight room numbers and endurance. "Athletic" implies speed and explosive power. Speed is detrained by doing fatigue-seeking repeat sprints. Prioritize speed. Learn to coach speed. Train speed when fresh, prior to lifting. Keep telling yourself, "tired is the enemy". Learn to "Feed the Cats".



# FOOTBALL: 101

## RUN BLOCKING TECHNIQUES



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



Having an effective run game starts with the offensive line. Running the football effectively is how teams are able to manage the clock, and tire defenses out.

This week we talked to former New England Patriots Offensive Line coach Dante Scarnecchia. Coach Scarnecchia broke down his run blocking techniques and drill structure.

When it comes to drill structure, Coach Scarnecchia stresses that every drill should improve technique, build conditioning and

increase concentration.

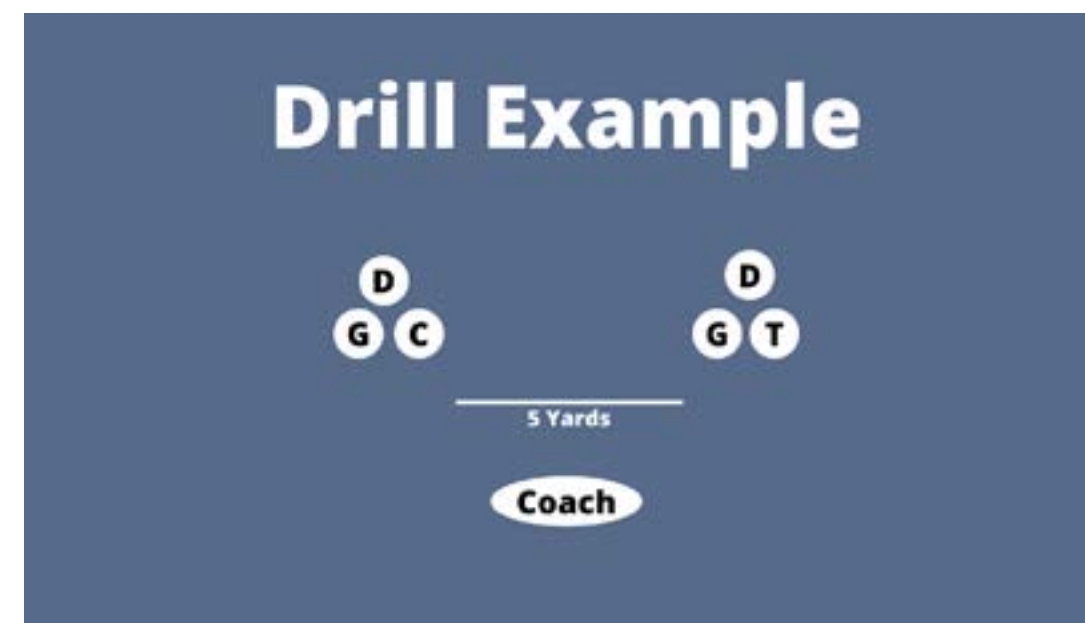
For example, one of Coach Scarnecchia's double team drills that he shared with us requires a lineman to always be moving.

Instead of lining up 5 players, running the drill and waiting for everyone to come back and get reset - Coach Scarnecchia creates two groups 5 yards apart from one another to get maximum reps. He will give a snap count, the players will fire off and then he will blow the whistle. The next group will then go.

For teams that only have one offensive line coach, this allows coaches to see everyone's reps and still move at a fast pace.

This is a small fraction of what Coach Dante Scarnecchia talked about in our most recent YouTube video. [Watch the full video here:](#)

If you have any questions about the video, please let us know and we're happy to help out.



# RURAL FOOTBALL REFLECTIONS

MORE WITH LESS



Kevin Swift  
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So earlier this month I put out the question, what next for an article for Headsets. I got some great responses, thank you! One request caught my eye though, Coach Scott of Rice High School, Staff building, doing more with less and coaching up your coaches. This is a great subject and one I had to deal with when I got to Gold Beach in 1997. So here we go Coaches!

My late father laughed hard when I told him I was moving to rural Oregon coast in 1997. He said I would be stepping back in time, to a time when high school staffs in southern California were 2-to-3-man staffs that did everything from painting the fields to doing laundry to taping ankles. Holy Cow my old man was so right, there was nothing of a modern high school program here in Gold Beach when I got here in August of 1997. As I wrote in a previous article, Gold Beach had no real weight room. Gold Beach also had no certified Athletic Trainer, no Offensive Coordinator, no Defensive Coordinator, no Offensive or Defensive line coaches, and little or no football teaching equipment (bags or sleds etc.) I was like what have I done to myself. Well, what I had done to myself was give me an outstanding challenge and opportunity for some professional growth.

My first chore was to put together a staff and unlike southern California where an opening would bring at least 50 to 75 applicants. Of those 50 to 75 applicants over 1/2 would be highly qualified, so you just had to search for the right fit. LOL in Gold Beach there is no one applying, you got find somebody and chances are high they are NOT very qualified. So, what the heck was I going to do? Well, I started beating the forest for something to fall out. I found my Offensive Coordinator at the Middle School; he was older and was raised in the community. I thought it was particularly important to have a long-time resident of a small town on my staff because he would provide insight into what would fly and what would not fly in Gold Beach. We would install and build the Veer Offense together, although year one had a lot of trial and error. We would be split back for 2 years before we transitioned to the I. What he lacked in knowledge and coaching ability was made for by his love of the kids and community. He would stay with me till 2000 before retiring from the district. I would serve as Defensive Coordinator and Secondary Coach because that was my background and expertise. The other assistants were all good men, but where not going to help get us where we wanted to be. We went 0 & 9 my first year, snuck into playoffs year 2, and then faded quickly into a series of 4 & 5 seasons. To say I was frustrated would be an understatement. While coaching was not the only reason for the poor seasons (kids had not bought in yet), we had to improve the quality of coaches in the program, and I had to become a better coach! What I discovered in those first 5 to 6 years was small rural head coaches must be outstanding coaches at every position in the game; and I was not there yet! I had spent 12 years as a NCAA DIII and big high school defensive coordinator, who could coach secondary and outside linebackers extremely well but that was it - Yikes. I could hear

my Pops chuckling 900 miles away in southern California. He was right I was extremely limited in my coaching ability, and I had to quickly improve that and at the same time find a way to upgrade my small rural school football staff.

Starting in 2000 I would pour myself into learning offensive line play, fundamentals, and techniques. I would do this by attending clinics with the Offensive Line guys at Glazier and Nike Clinics on the West Coast. Heck I even put on a few pounds to fit in! I had one other idea, every summer we ran what was known as Beach Camp (Gold Beach Football Team Camp) for 2 weeks in June. We would have 12 to 14 teams each week, some were big urban schools, and some were small rural schools like Gold Beach. We made exceptionally good money running this and it would end up our Football account. I noticed that my issue was also what a lot of other small and medium size schools were dealing with as well. My plan would only work if I could get the right people on my staff in Gold Beach. So, in the off season after the 2000 season, I went recruiting for people we could turn into quality coaches. I should mention my one constant from the beginning of my reign as HFC was Coach Mike "Yoda" Becker. He had befriended me upon our arrival in Gold Beach and had played for the Panthers in the 1980's. His dad had served as the middle school administrator and coached basketball at middle school. Charlie Becker, Coach Yoda's dad would end up being one of my biggest supporters and confidants during my tenure in Gold Beach. Mike "Yoda" Becker would be our Equipment Man, Running Backs coach and or Defensive Ends coach. While his knowledge was limited, he was extremely loyal and a hard worker. He along with my other recruits would benefit from my idea of improving our coaching and staff. Next, I pulled off my biggest recruit Steve Yeiter, my Athletic Director, the man who hired me. My idea for Steve

was for me to give up coordinating the defense and teach the defense to Steve. He had been an All-State Linebacker at a much bigger school further up on the coast and had played small college football in Oregon. We had become friends and I convinced his wife to let him have some fun. She consented and he would coach Linebackers and Receivers along with being the Defensive Coordinator. This would be one of my absolute best moves! Next, I had to find a Secondary Coach because until I could find an Offensive Line and Defensive Line coach that vital position was going to be filled by me-Yikes! Well now a little luck came into play, our newly hired Baseball Coach wanted to get involved and would be happy to coach Secondary.



So how was I going to make everyone better including myself! First, I would spend the Spring meticulously teaching our new Defensive Coordinator, our defense. Fortunately, he picked it up quickly as he played in a similar system in college. We also agreed that I would still be the major component in defensive game planning because of my experience running it since 1992. I would produce 5 to 6 stunts or pressures to go with our base calls. That is not to say we could not run something from our playbook, but these would what we emphasized in practice that week. Then I put my idea for a way for everyone's improvement

in action. My idea was to create a terrific summer camp guest staff that could work with not only my coaches, but all our visiting camp teams could use. So, for 12 years we would create a super staff of guest coaches, that included Mater Dei's Offensive Line Coach Ed Begany, Mater Dei's QB coach and OC Money, Chapman University's Linebacker Coach John Hennigan, and several DI Coaches when it was legal and run pass their compliance officers. This combined with some outstanding coaches on visiting camp teams provided one of the best Football Clinic atmospheres around. Not only could my young staff visit with these coaches, but they could also watch them with their teams install stuff or teach fundamentals and techniques. Guest Coaches would come to our camp practices and assist my staff with installations, fundamentals, and techniques. Coach Begany of Mater Dei helped me install our Counter Trey back in 2002 and it would become one of the staples of our 10 years of great teams. Our staff learned and got better during this time. I am sure a reader is saying how is that going to help me, we cannot run a camp in our state or district. That is true but you can think creatively about how to improve your staff. Maybe you take a couple of days off from Spring ball and visit a state power in your state and your staff shadows them for a couple of practices. Do not go to a college, not that they are not quality coaches, but we coach high school student-athletes so find someone who does that well.

Coaching is only about a third to a half of what staff do, in reality there is so much more to the job. Daily laundry, grade checks, classroom discipline issues, field prep etc. How can all this be done with only 3 coaches on staff, and they teach all day? This is where head coaches struggle in how to get it all done and look like a successful program off the field as much as we do on the field. I know it was for me, I wanted

a program that we could be proud of on the field and off the field. Again, I thought outside the norm here. We are a small school with less than 200 kids, and I see most of them coming through my classes each day. I also created my Captains in the Spring each year and they would be coming through my classes each day. So here is a breakdown of things programs must get done and how they are getting done at Gold Beach High School.

**Daily Laundry** – practice gear and towels, I as HFC would start the laundry every morning after Zero Period Weightlifting, then throughout the day I would send captains or players down to transfer to dryer and start another load at the end of one of my class periods. This would go on throughout the day all week long, in season and out of season.

**No certified Trainer on campus or required in Oregon** – we recruit two to three students who are interested in being involved with program and want to pursue something in the medical field. We used to send to summer camps that Cramer Athletic Training Supplies hosted around the country to learn the basics of taping and injury identification. Later, with our camp's success, we brought in certified trainers and our student-trainers would shadow them for the two weeks of camp. We have a local Doctor who graciously attended all our games and oversees our student-trainers. I have been blessed with not having to tape an ankle or wrist my entire tenure as HFC at Gold Beach High School.

**Getting the field painted for practices and games.** For practice we teach our captains how to use aerosol cans, string to line, and paint the field. We do it a couple of days before fall camp starts. It has to the point that we do not even need a coach out there anymore supervising them. They take immense pride in the field prep skills. Getting the

field painted on gameday is done by a group of Dads who during the season take Friday's off. They will bust out a bigger spray rig, get the string out to line and make our stadium field look like a small college facility they do it so well. It is Amazing! I take pizza out to them for lunch, and I tell them how much I appreciate their efforts on behalf of our program. Every year when I take pizza down, they say pizza should have beer that goes with it, and I say perhaps but we need straight lines LOL.

**Laundry after Games and Locker Room Clean Up** – we ask a lot of our Captains. We tell them being a leader means doing more NOT less. So, the Captains arrive on Sunday after Church around 10:30ish. They sort the laundry and start it, then they go about cleaning up the locker room and disinfecting the locker room. MRSA is a real threat and can dismantle a great season in hours, so we do this deep cleaning and disinfecting once a week on Sundays. I will buy lunch for them, and we will sit around for a hour in my classroom / office. We will discuss team morale and how we are performing as a team. It is a wonderful time and I hope they enjoy it as much as I do. After lunch they will help me watch our upcoming opponent and look for clues, strengths, and weaknesses. They certainly are not experts, but we have spent a lot of time as staff over the years teaching our kids the game. Around 2:30 they will finish laundry and put it away and move to disinfecting our beloved weight room. Now everything is clean and ready to go for the upcoming week.

**Off Season Coaching** - because we lift and do football activities during Zero Period having staff there is just not realistic on a everyday basis. Our seniors who stay in the class after the season become coaching interns and will coach the under classmen in all aspects of our off-season program.

A lot of these seniors will stick around and help during our team camp, it is important to them that THEIR Program continues its success.

**“Coaching is only about a third to a half of what staff do, in reality there is so much more to the job. Daily laundry, grade checks, classroom discipline issues, field prep etc. How can all this be done with only 3 coaches on staff, and they teach all day? This is where head coaches struggle in how to get it all done and look like a successful program off the field as much as we do on the field.”**



# MORE THAN THE GAME

## MOVE THE CHAINS: USING FIELD ZONES TO INCREASE SCORING PROBABILITY



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Organization is the key to a great organization. In his book *Make The Call*, Mark Richt describes how he organizes the football field into specific zones, then breaks down the "Black Zone" and the "Red Zone" for his readers. The area of the field from the Goalline to the -20 yard line is Richt's Black Zone. Richt's Red Zone is familiar to most football fans, as it describes the area of the field from the +20 to the Goalline. Moreover, for play calling purposes, Richt divides the Red Zone into the "High Red Zone," from the +20 to the +10 yard lines, and a "Low Red Zone," from the +10 to the +3 yard line. Organizing the field into zones allows Richt to game plan for the specific situations his team will encounter throughout the game.

Expounding on Mark Richt's idea, I've divided the field into five specific zones, which cover the entire 100-yard playing surface from Goalline to Goalline. Like Coach Richt, my field zones begin with Black, but advance toward Green, mirroring the emotional traffic light our program uses to build mental toughness in athletes (covered in the previous issue of *Headsets*). Moving from left to right on the diagram, the five field zones include:

**Black Zone:** From the Goalline to the -20 yard line.

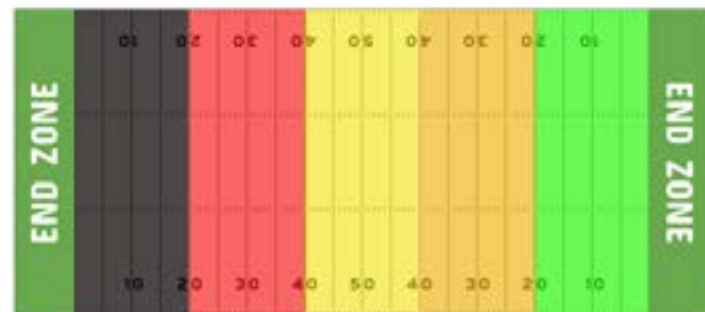
**Red Zone:** From the -20 to the -40.

**Yellow Zone:** From the -40 to the +40.

**Gold Zone:** From the +40 to the +20. The Gold Zone is

the area of the field where our offense is most likely to "take a shot."

**Green Zone:** From the +20 to the Endzone.



Dividing the field into zones allows our offensive coaches to evaluate scoring probability. Monarch Football had 91 cumulative offensive possessions throughout the 2021 season, which ended in 27 touchdowns and 0 field goals for a scoring success rate of 30%. But, by using the field zones described above, we were able to more closely measure our team's scoring probability based on the deepest zone reached each possession. The following data is a breakdown of Monarch Football's team scoring probability for each zone, based on our total possessions from the 2021 season.

### **Black Zone Scoring Probability: 0%**

Twice throughout the season, an offensive drive both started and ended in the Black Zone. Because our team failed to score on either possession, our Black Zone scoring probability was 0%.

### **Red Zone Scoring Probability: 7%**

One-third of our total offensive possessions in 2021 failed to reach beyond the Red Zone. Two long touchdowns from a Line Of Scrimmage in the Red Zone increased our team's scoring probability from 0% in the Black Zone to 7% in the Red Zone, but we scored on just 2 of the 30 possessions that ended in the Red Zone last season. Moving the ball beyond the Red Zone is a point of emphasis for our offense in 2022.

### **Yellow Zone Scoring Probability: 6%**

18 drives ended in the Yellow Zone in 2021, resulting in just one offensive touchdown, making our team's scoring probability similar to the Red Zone at just 6%.

### **Gold Zone Scoring Probability: 33%**

Scoring probability increased dramatically by advancing the Line Of Scrimmage from the Yellow Zone to the Gold Zone. "Shot" plays resulted in 4 touchdowns during the 12 possessions in this zone, giving our offense a 33% scoring probability.

### **Green Zone Scoring Probability: 77%**

The overwhelming majority of our team's touchdowns were scored on drives that entered the Green Zone. 20 times out of 26 opportunities last season resulted in touchdowns, which made our team's Green Zone scoring probability 77%.

In conclusion, field zones and scoring probability can organize your offense and increase your team's offensive efficiency. These two tools clearly illustrate the value of every drive and emphasize the importance of moving the chains from zone to zone down the field. Knowing your numbers will allow you to better understand your team's tendencies and prepare your athletes for the situations they will face in a game. And when you know better, you do better. Keep moving the chains!

"Expounding on Mark Richt's idea, I've divided the field into five specific zones, which cover the entire 100-yard playing surface from Goalline to Goalline. Like Coach Richt, my field zones begin with Black, but advance toward Green, mirroring the emotional traffic light our program uses to build mental toughness in athletes (covered in the previous issue of *Headsets*)."

# LESSONS LEARNED

## WHERE DO CONFIDENT PLAYERS COME FROM?



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John Boyd was a fighter pilot in the Korean War and became a military strategist later. Boyd had the unique ability to make explicit the implicit. His revelations

on how to make decisions amidst chaos are relevant to football coaches and something we can all learn from in order to better prepare our players and increase their confidence.

As it would be, Boyd allegedly had an IQ of 90 “which he claimed was an advantage because it forced him to be more efficient.” Whether or not Boyd’s IQ was that low (and beyond the point of how much the value we should put in IQ), I appreciate Boyd’s perspective – you’ve got to do the best with what you’ve got.

In high school football, your players show up in the June before their freshman year and then about 41 months later they leave your program. You must take advantage of all 41 months with an efficient, repeatable process that develops them into the players you need them to be.

And what I will argue for in the rest of this article is that an efficient, repeatable process is the basis for building confidence in your players.

Let’s go back to John Boyd and take a brief look at his process for making decisions amidst chaos: the OODA loop.

### *Learning to teach your players how to think*

OODA is an acronym for a decision making process through the following loop of steps: Observe, Orient, Decide, Act.

I first heard about this process in Cody Alexander’s book *Match Quarters* where he demonstrates its use as a model for teaching a pre-snap thinking process for his defensive players.

I am not going to go over every point in the loop here, but if you’d like to learn more about it, you can do so in this article.

In short, the OODA loop is a process that takes you from learning more about your situation (observe), choosing a way to frame the situation you are in (orient) so that you can make the best decision and then act. Your action will then cause a result that you must observe, thus starting the process over again.

The point of talking about the OODA loop is to demonstrate that there does exist a proven (John Boyd was a fighter pilot who lived to explain his ways) framework that provides confidence in the middle of uncertainty by filtering out what’s important and what isn’t important.

And confidence is just that: a belief in knowing that you are going to do the right thing. But how do you know that you can do that?

Because you know what causes things to happen. In other words, you know what matters and what doesn’t.

### *The importance of playing with confidence*

Peyton Manning sums up the importance of playing with confidence when he said that “pressure is something you feel when you don’t know what the hell you’re doing.”

Playing football, or any sport, requires a certain tolerance for pressure, and because of that, you’ve got to have a plan to teach players how to operate in this environment. You do that by proving to them that they have prepared for the game’s demands. You prove to them they have prepared by putting them through a proven and repeatable process.

The players must have confidence that they can perform because they not only have done it before, but they have figured out how to do it before. In other words, you must give your players a process that allows them to make better decisions by teaching their focus to process

what matters and what doesn’t matter.

Back to Manning. What’s interesting about his perspective on pressure is that he views it as something relative. In his view, you have the ability to affect the pressure you feel. But think about pressure in the physical sense.

If you press a flower in a book, the flower’s physical shape will be affected – it will be flat. If you go deep enough in water, you will feel the pressure build in your ears.

Is pressure in sports the same or can you escape the pressure?

According to Manning, you can relieve pressure when you know what you are doing. In other words, you can escape pressure by preparing. And the act of preparation is the foundation of confidence. Preparation weakens pressure’s ability to induce poor performance.

But Football has so much ambiguity and requires instant reactions that you must develop mental processes that players can operate within that produce repeatable results no matter the situation.

### *“The best way to succeed is to revel in ambiguity”*

In *The Mind of War*, a book on John Boyd, the author Grant Hammond argues that the essence of Boyd’s thought was in developing a way to deal with ambiguity.

Hammond reveals how “ambiguity is central to Boyd’s vision . . . not something to be feared but something that is a given. We never have complete and perfect information.” As a fighter pilot, Boyd had to learn to react to uncertain stimuli in split seconds over and over again. He took his decision making process and codified it in the OODA loop.

The OODA loop provides a repeatable process that fighter pilots (or anyone who makes decisions) can use to navigate their way through ambiguous chaos because it turns that chaos into meaning by filtering out the noise.

### *Seeking processes that allow players to play with confidence*

Boyd said that “uncertainty is irrelevant if we have the right filters in place.” Those filters are what you must

build into the thought processes that you create for your players.

With 22 players moving in a somewhat organized way, it is imperative that you teach your quarterback what to look at (observe) and then how to analyze the information he sees (orient). He then must figure out where the ball should go (decide) and then execute the throw, handoff, or pitch (act).

The quarterback will face new situations every game that he must navigate through. He must make quick decisions that everyone will judge. To play with confidence, he must be confident in his decision making abilities. In order to make simple the complex, he must have a process that he is comfortable operating within. When the circumstances change on the field, whether that be different defensive presentations or a two-minute drill to win the game, he must know that his process works.

### *Final thoughts*

You must give your quarterbacks the tools to succeed in the situation that they operate in: the football field. You must account for all that is going on. You can’t reduce their thinking process for the sake of simplicity. You also cannot complicate it by giving him multiple variations without rhyme or reason. It must make sense in the given environment and it must be repeatable.

Expert coaches can do this and it looks simple. But what those expert coaches have mastered is the ability to “have the right filters in place.” That is what I strive to do: watch enough and learn enough football as to start to see the patterns arise that reveal what is important and what is not important. In the meantime, I am learning to teach like they do by learning from the processes they employ.

# HEAD COACHING 101

## BURNOUT WILL COME: HOW TO DEAL



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*"There are two types of coaches, them that's fired and them that's gonna be fired". -Bum Phillips*

If you have not figured it out yet, every coach has a down season and faces the doubts from many people. The hardest doubts will always come from within. You will go through periods where you will question if this was the right fit for you as a career choice. When you lay yourself out in the public light, you will be criticized often by those you feel you can trust. My advice is to ignore both the cheers and the boos and focus on those who truly matter - your family.

At any job a coach can take, there will be detractors. They can take the form of many shapes, a disgruntled parent or player. They can be a coach who may not be bought in to what you are wanting to accomplish. It could be an administrator or teacher in the school you work. In this chapter I am not advocating for a coach to stay in a place they are not respected and appreciated, but I do want to mention even at the best schools this issue happens.

There are no perfect situations, and if you leave every time you have those that disagree this may not be the profession for you. Coaching is a calling and unfortunately it is becoming more and more difficult to simply do the job we want to do without those that will detract from the goals you set out.

There are also going to be several "no-win" situations

a coach will run into during his career. Understand that your number one job is to protect your players even when they are at fault to the media. This means accepting blame even if you feel that you have done all that could have been done to give your athletes a chance to win. Being a coach often means not being liked and often is a very lonely position, especially as a head coach.

Remember this when working with the media:  
If the team wins - the players earned it.  
If the team loses - it was the coaches that must own it.

I've personally had many moments that I felt I was a failure. Losing games can take it's toll, but I am not talking about that aspect. Losing the ability to help athletes has been the hardest part of the job for me during my career. Watching young men/women make poor choices and having to let them go from your team is difficult. For every success story that I am so proud to have been a small part of, there are many that I was not able to reach. It is a very difficult decision to remove a player, or a coach, from the program, but you must remember that as the leader of a program you are tasked to do what is best for the entire organization.

Understand that losing will cause every aspect of the program to come under the microscope and winning often is the perfume to cover up the body odor. Often, when we win we feel everything was done right and when we lose everything was wrong. Most likely, there are always ways to improve and not every part of what was done was a failure if the game did not turn out how we had hoped. Continue to work through the losses and through the wins. One of the most difficult things to do is to keep the team focused on improving during a winning streak, or to understand that not everything they are doing is wrong during a losing streak.

# SPECIAL TEAMS

## ORGANIZATION AND PLANNING



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I've been coaching high school football since 2001. For the majority of that time, I've coordinated special teams or been responsible for several of the units. One of the main issues with special teams is getting the other assistant coaches and the players to buy in. Here below are some suggestions for how to make the most out of your special teams.

### Coaching Responsibilities and Organization

First and foremost, your HC needs to take an active role in coaching ST. Our HC runs most of the scout teams, except for scout KO, because he has a position to coach on KO return. Our scout teams work well. It may be that he can motivate them to try hard simply, because he is the HC.

Each coach has a position to coach on 1-2 special teams, KO, Punt, etc. During the preseason, they are responsible for teaching the technique that their position will use to execute their assignment. During preseason camp we work 1-2 phases a day and the coach will get 5-7 minutes with their positions. We will also do circuits to work on specific phases and skills, and the coaches are responsible for stations in the circuit. We have 6 coaches on staff, and 4 are used on each ST except for KO, and then everyone is used except the HFC. He has scout KO return.

I am the coordinator, which means that I design and teach the schemes to the players and coaches. I am

also responsible for creating the scouting report during the season and planning how to use the time for ST during the practice day. I also adjust the depth charts during the games and for the upcoming week based on input from the "position" coaches.

### Player/Personnel

We usually have a relatively small squad, but one of the most beneficial things that we have done is to create a special teams practice squad. We use this much more in the early part of the year and in preseason. For each team, I have a 2 deep depth chart and a scout team. Ideally, it would work like this: The starters on punt would be your scout team punt, unless they are on the 2 deep for punt return. Your starters on punt return and your scout punt return unless they are on the 2 deep.

The guys that are left over go with the coaches who don't have a position responsibility. They can work on whatever they want, football skills, whatever. Most of the time these guys will be your OL. The only ST most of them will be on is PAT/FG.

If your personnel are not getting it done, fire them. I feel like I prep our kids well. One year, I posted the weekly scouting report and depth charts for the team to read on a board in the locker room. It is their responsibility to see and read it, especially the depth/personnel. I still go over and communicate any changes, but this way they get it more than once. By the way most of our subs this late in the season have played on that ST at some point in the year, they made a shift up or down the depth for one reason or another, usually injury.

### Practice Plans

Ideally, need 15-20 min a day for specials teams. One season, our HFC was forgetting to give any time on Mondays to ST early in the season. It showed in our production. We sucked the 1st couple of games,

and he knew it. He gave the time back. Be organized in your time. Try to get as much done in your time as you can, but still be clear in your communication, don't rush too much. During the season, here is our schedule.

Monday: 10 min punt/10 min punt return. On each, I go over the game plan and adjustments for 3-5 min then 5 min or so of team reps. 1/2 are live and 1/2 are 15 yd cover or punt blocks. I try to get subs in, but it doesn't happen much. Punt Block time is diminishing due to a small, but helpful adjustment I made. The defense is our punt return, but we will sub in 3 DL to get speed/fresh legs on the field.

Tuesday: 4 reps punt, 8-10 min KO, 7-8 min KO Return. Punt reps and fast and rapid. This week we had to work on getting on the field and executing a punt in under 17 secs including shifts and motion. KO: 3-4 min review and scout then 1/2 the reps are to 15 yard coverage, then 1/2 are full speed. KO Return: 3-4 min review and scout then 1/2 the reps are to contact, then 1/2 are full speed.

Wednesday: 3 reps Punt and Punt Return. (We may punt during team offense.) PAT Skill/Position work 5-7 min, PAT Block 5-8 min depending on what our opponent does. Sometimes, we don't do PAT block on Wednesday. The only reason we do PAT block is to go over a muddle huddle/swinging gate defense or if we have a new block to install that week.

Thursday: We rep every ST 3-4 times and rep PAT and PAT Block live for 3-4 reps. We will move our PAT/FG around the field to see how we are kicking. We run this essentially like a simulated game.

If you don't need to make many adjustments, or if your opponent is vanilla, I think you can get by with 10-15 min a day. However, you may want to spend the extra time on skill/technique work. My position

coaches also don't play much of a role in these practices, except for watching and coaching their positions on the fly. If we do individual groups, they will see them then.

### Other notes and thoughts

Our staff works very well together and will generally do what is asked of them, but I try, sometimes better than others, to communicate as much as possible my expectations. In an ideal world, I will have the ST practice plan ready on Sunday and tell everyone what I want them to do each day. I think if you communicate your expectations and even tell them what to do, most coaches, and kids for that matter will do what is asked. Try to eliminate the guesswork/thinking. Do it all for them, so they just have to come in and coach what you want them to. Eventually, you won't have to do that.

As a team, we don't do individual rewards or awards, but we did at my last school. It worked ok, but can be a lot of work for you. I'm not sure that it's the most efficient use of my time.

Over the course of the next several issues, I'll be sharing some schemes, drills and other ideas to help you make the most of your special teams. I hope you can use and adapt some of these or others to fit your situation. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out.

# PLAYING FAST WITH A ROSTER UNDER FORTY

## COMMUNICATION IS KEY



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In the previous article, we explained how we design our plays in order to create the ability for diversity in an attempt to create flexibility in our plays. With our communication system, we are going to have the ability to relay that information to the players on the field as fast as possible, all the while maintaining various tempo's.

When it comes to communicating play calls to the offense, there are multiple variations to accomplish the task. For many years, an offense would gather on the field together away from the defense (either in rows or an oval), and "huddle" together for the play call. The quarterback would communicate the play to the other 10 players, and then all would separate and line up in the formation called and execute the play. As offenses became more sophisticated, and the details more intricate, coaches started calling the plays. This necessitated a way for the coach calling the plays to communicate the call to the quarterback. Two basic forms emerged; the coach would either communicate with a player on the sideline and have that player run on the field to communicate the call to the quarterback, or the coach would communicate directly with the quarterback by having the quarterback run back and forth from the sideline to the huddle. Those forms existed for years, but created its own set of issues. In the NFL, with the advancement of technology, those "quarterback communication" coaches were able to solve the issue of fatigued quarterbacks (that's a lot of running for a quarterback each game) by installing an electronic communication device directly inside the helmet of the quarterback. That system is still mainly used today in professional football. For others without

the luxury of the electronic device solution, they needed a way to communicate the play to the players without substituting players. Two forms of communicating the play call to the players emerged: wristbands or hand signals, both of which have their pros and cons. With the ability to communicate the play call to all 11 players simultaneously, teams no longer needed the huddle, and the proliferation of "no-huddle" teams began at every level of football. We are a "no-huddle" team and utilize hand signals for two main reasons. One, we feel hand signals give us more diversity with our calls, and two we think it's difficult for players to read on the move. And we always want our players on the move in an effort to maintain our tempo.



When communicating via hand signals, there are various ways to accomplish the mission, and essentially there are three phases to the operation.



Phase 1: Coach to Coach  
 The play caller can verbally communicate the play call to one, or several, coaches that will signal the play to the players (Phase 2). We utilize a single coach to signal the call to the players due to personnel issues. We only have five total varsity coaches on staff, and with a roster under 40, we do not have many (any?) players to spare and use as signalers. In an ideal world, we would utilize six

signalers: one each for the quarterback, running back(s), outside receivers, inside receivers, superior and a "dummy" signaler attempting to confuse anyone trying to decipher signals in an effort to give their team a competitive edge. St. John's Bosco in California uses their five backup quarterbacks as signalers. We don't do that.



**Phase 2: Coach to Player**

The play caller can communicate directly with players wearing wristbands, or hand signals directly to the players, eliminating the need for Phase 1. When the play caller signals directly to the players, the "speed of transmission" from decision to communication is clearly the fastest, as there is no "middle man". However, when the play caller is signaling the current play call, the focus must be entirely on the signals. Therefore, the speed in which the play caller can shift the thought process to the next play is not as fast. We want the ability to maximize the time spent on our thought process for the next play call while still maintaining the possibility to snap the ball at the fastest tempo.



**Phase 3: Player to Player**

Using wristbands eliminates the need for player to

player communication (Phase 3), but also eliminates the possibility of calling plays not contained on the wristband. When signaling the play call to the players, if you are not utilizing signalers for each position group, then player to player communication is necessary. Most teams without multiple signalers will either signal to the quarterback and receivers or the quarterback, running back(s) and receivers. After receiving the signal, the quarterback will communicate with the offensive line. We do the latter, as our running backs must learn to "align for success" because we do not include their alignment in our plays calls.

Because our play design has four main components (Formation, Motion, Scheme, Tag), we only need a maximum of four "communication tools", or signals. This allows us to communicate quickly and effectively, and in turn keeps the operation moving efficiently. If any desired play call requires more than four signals we will "one-word family" the play call (see the article in Issue 1 Volume 7 of Headsets for how we accomplish that aspect).

In the next article, we will demonstrate how we create multiple conflicts within the defense and the appearance of complexity while maintaining simplicity.

