

HEADSETS

WRITTEN FOR COACHES BY COACHES

VOLUME 3: ISSUE 5

defensive
DRILLS

**DEALING WITH
THE MENTAL STRESS
OF COACHING**

**SMALL SCHOOL
TWO-A-DAYS**

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We are so glad to run Headsets season three! It has been unbelievable to have so many coaches willing to contribute their time and efforts to the coaching community. A special thank you to the writers this season as we have a great line up in store covering:

- Head Coaching 101
- Special Teams
- Defense
- Offense
- Drill Work
- And More...

As you go through the articles, there are many live links to recommended materials, articles and videos.

If you would like to contribute to Headsets, email Coach Simpson: FBcoachsimpson@gmail.com and let him know.

Also, please help us spread the word via social media and email about our Magazine as it is our hope to help as many coaches as possible.

Thank you,

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TIME TO RAISE THE BAR



JAMESIMPSONDESIGNS
SPORTS GRAPHIC DESIGN

RURAL FOOTBALL REFLECTIONS

SMALL SCHOOL TWO A DAY IDEAS



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Long before State Associations started taking steps to either ban two a day practices or heavily modify them, we made drastic changes in 1999 to our two a day practices. We made these changes not out of concern for safety or weather (Coast of Oregon in Fall averages mid 60's), but for productivity of our program. After being hired in 1997, this was part of my plan to create a program verse fielding a team. In 1999, we were still a year away from the school board approving the Zero Period addition to the academic day, and our summer weight training was not close to where we knew it was for the program we were trying to develop. I also thought that the traditional two a day practices I had grown up with and coached in were not going to work with smaller rosters where concerns about injuries and depth are always present. So, in 1999, we drastically modified the two a day model for Gold Beach High School.

Morning Practices 7:30 AM to 10:00 AM (2.5 hours)

Our morning practices would be the longer of our two daily practices, being 2.5 hours. It was

going to be 2.5 hours because we were going to end each day with a weight room session of at least 45 minutes. This practice would also be in helmets only the entire week because the emphasis in the morning practices was going to be teaching, installing, special teams, tackling and speed development. I felt that if our kids were just in helmets, it would stop us from hitting too much and kids would have an easier time paying attention to teaching and installing periods. So, with this in mind we developed these morning periods:

Stretching, Calisthenics and Speed Period, we would start each day with this period to get our kids loose and ready for sprint / speed development work. While some might consider sprints as conditioning it really is not that for our kids, we emphasize running form and going full speed on each rep. We will also mix in some plyos, bounding or change of direction work during this period as well. Usually, a 20-minute period with the running part only being 7 to 10 minutes in length. Again, this is NOT a conditioning period, we will get our conditioning by going full speed in practice periods that involve running.

Form Tackling Period, like batting successfully in baseball, tackling in football every day is necessary for success. So, after the Stretching, Calisthenics and Speed Period, we transition to a 10-minute period working the fundamentals of tackling using several tackling non-padded drills to teach better tackling. This is a teaching period, not a contact period, I want coaches to spend time teaching kids proper and safe

tackling methods during this period.

Install or Team-Teaching Period, this is where we will put in an offensive play concept (Inside Veer) or a defensive package (40 Front & Cover 3) and get it taught to the entire team. We feel it is important for everyone to know their part and others' parts in what we are putting in during this period. Everyone needs to understand why we are putting in as well. These periods are usually 15-minute periods but can be stretched or reduced by 5 minutes.

Offensive or Defensive Indo Period, this period will follow the Install or Team-Teaching Period and will mirror the side of the ball from that period. This Indo period should focus on position fundamentals and re-enforcing concepts from the Install or Team-Teaching Period. This is a 15- to 20-minute period depending on the position coaches' needs.

Special Team Period, during this period our specialist will work on their specialty - kicking, punting, holding, returner etc. While our specialists are working their crafts their teammates, will be working on special team designed drills that promote solid coverage or protections. We can also install a special team now too. If installing a team or unit, we are not interested in it becoming a conditioning period, we want emphasis the teaching part. This period is 10 to 15 minutes depending on our needs.

Team Effort Period, this is the time period where we as a staff want to see a burning desire to perform at top speed. Is it a conditioning

period? The answer is YES, but we are not going to overdo it! If we have installed something defensively early, we will do our Team Pursuit Drill this period using two groups and rotating people into both groups. While we want to see effort and speed, we also want to see how groups of kids work together and push each other. If it is an offensive day, we will do Offensive Perfect Plays. Again, two huddles with lots of mix matching and rotating kids in to find the right effort combined with right team chemistry. This period is 15 minutes in length, and we are strict about not going over in this period.

Transition Period, our weight room and locker room facilities are on the other side of our campus from our stadium and practice fields, please do not ask why I already have several times! So, with this in mind we dismiss our kids from the field and give them 15 minutes to get to the weight room for a 45-minute lifting period. So, they will get some water, get some pre-workout formula in them, and get tennis shoes on for lifting.

Weightlifting Period, we are a program that lifts all in season to gain mass, gain strength and injury prevention. We will lift for 45 minutes at the end of each morning practice. If kids want to stay and lift longer, we allow it and usually they do!

Our student athletes will have a break till 4:00 PM, to go to work or prepare for the start of school. Some will choose to hang out for a while or arrive earlier than 4:00 PM to watch film in

continued on next page

their team room of upcoming opponents. We know when we see our kids spending time together after practice and before practices, we have the makings of a pretty darn good team.

Evening Practices 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM (2 hours)

This is our physical and padded practice each day. Because of that it is a shorter practice, to protect our kids from unnecessary injuries that set them and the team back. This is also a faster-paced practice because the learning is done in the morning, so the evening will be about getting quality reps. I should also point out that our kids can get water anytime they need to in the morning or evening practices. While it is rarely too warm for us, the wind does I fact dehydrate you if you are not paying attention. It should also be pointed out that two morning periods repeated themselves in evening practice but in pads; Stretching, Calisthenics and Speed Period and Form Tackling Period. Honestly, this is how every practice all year will start. Usually, the Speed part is less time and stretching is a little more time to ease soreness out. So, with this in mind here are the other periods included in the evening practices:

Pre-Practice or Kentucky Period, LOL I am aging myself here because this period is named after Coach Mumme when he was at Kentucky. This is our pre practice, and because we are a triple option team it is this period that adds our passing attack to the offense. It is our 3 QBs and a Coach throwing in our pass plays with each QB taking a drop and hitting a receiver after a few throws we rotate QBs to where they will end

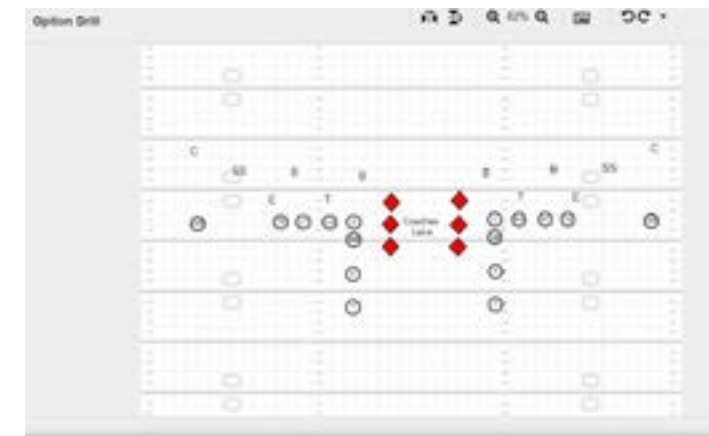
up throwing to each route in the pass play. We have found this is a great warm up period for our skill kids. The offensive line is either doing Can Drills (Chair Drills reviewing assignments) or working warm-up agilities on Coach Blazer's favorite apparatus – ladders. This is a 15-minute period usually.

Offensive or Defensive Indo Period, this is period will be the opposite side of the ball from the Indo Period in the AM practice. This Indo period should focus on position fundamentals and re-enforcing concepts from the Install or Team-Teaching Period. This is a 15-to-20-minute period depending on the position coaches' needs.

Defensive Set Recognition Period, this is a mildly competitive period are younger kids serve as the offensive skill guys and hustle to the line (cans serve as opponent's offensive line) in an opponent's formation and our defensive must get line up and make calls perfectly or it is 5 up-downs on the spot. We are bigger believers that alignment and assignment are game breakers for a defensive unit. 15-minute period usually.

Option Drill Period, this is our most physical period and although it is designed as an offensive period our defense gets great and courageous work in the drill as well. The set up for the drill can be seen in the diagram below. Although diagram shows I Backs and a Strong side offensive line work, we can make it any one of our formations to work our base option plays and quick passing game. We will call a play, for example Double (Inside Veer) and we

will run play on left side first and coach heck out of it quickly before running it to the right. Example on one day in a 15-minute period we would run Double (Inside Veer) Strong vs. A 50 Tite look and Veer (outside Veer) Strong against the same look. It is a very physical high energy period where Coaches are coaching up both sides of the ball. Our defensive kids have a little advantage in that they know the play, but that is okay because we want it hard physically and mentally on our offense. We make sure that backfields switch so each set of backs and QBs run it both left and right. Best period of the day if you ask the kids or me. This is where we get to teach our kids to be stroing mentally and physically.



Special Teams Period, in the evening practice we rep what we installed in the morning not going live but instead going Thud. If we did not install anything that morning, we will add a play to our Punt Formation Playbook! We run a full offense out of our Punt formation, so if we have nothing to rep from morning practices in, we will put on of our many fakes in during this period. Usually, it is a 10-to-15-minute period.

“I also thought that the traditional two a day practices I had grown up with and coached in were not going to work with smaller rosters where concerns about injuries and depth are always present. So, in 1999, we drastically modified the two a day model for Gold Beach High School.

MORNING PRACTICE (2.5 HOURS)

EVENING PRACTICE (2 HOURS)

FRIDAY PRACTICE”

continued on next page

Team Period, as a small school we end with a team period, but it is not defined by an offensive or defensive emphasis because we need to get both done during this period. So, we give our kids rotation numbers and locations. For instance, my starting left Guard is also my Mike Backer, so he would go 4 and 4 and then rest for 2 plays. Coaches coach both sides of the ball and are bringer high energy, we want this a highly competitive period. The team is a 15-minute period.

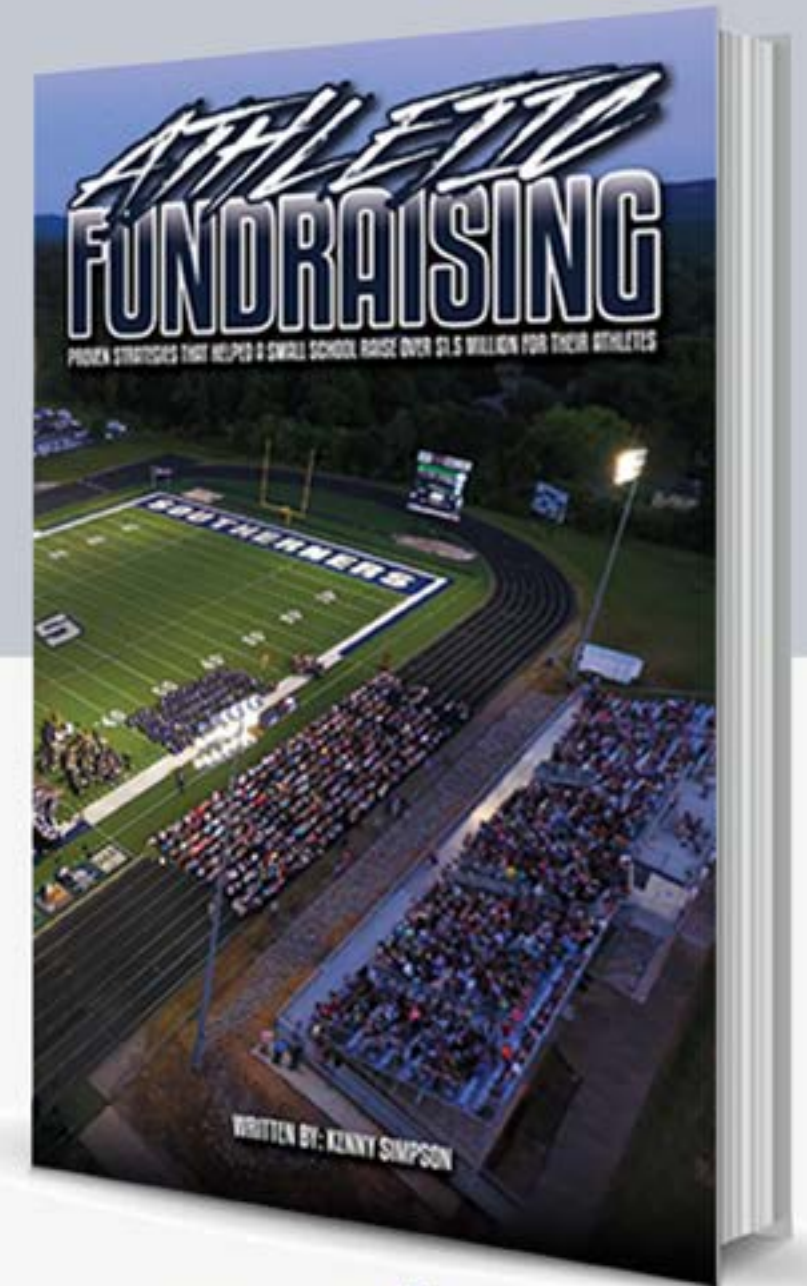
Friday Practice: We have always treated the Fridays of two a days as our Normandy Invasion Day. While I am a huge fan of Coach Holler's Feed the Cats Program, I also want our players to know how to push through adversity and be strong mentally as well as physically and finally leave no one behind attitude. So, we practice once on Friday morning, and it is two hours of hell. We are fortunate to be a high school right on the beach with a cool breeze on most days.

Practice will start with a 3-mile run to Kissing Rock, a rock formation a mile and half from the high school south on Pacific coast Highway. When they come back, they get some water and head to "Panther Hill," a road of about 50 yards that comes out of our sunken stadium. They will be put into 5 groups, and we will sprint the hill 15 to 20 times not concerned about times but more concerned with effort, no quit and taking care of fellow teammates to help and assist finishing the task - Brotherhood! Next, we will stay on the field and set up tire flipping teams and we will flip tires back and forth on the field again re-enforcing effort, no quit and taking care of fellow teammates to help and assist finishing the task. We will finish with 50-meter dashes on the beach sand, hence the name Normandy Invasion Day. While I am sure Coaches reading this are shaking their heads in disapproval our kids love this tradition and take considerable pride in accomplish it each year, it is part of our Program's Culture.



GOALS:

"We want to design all of our fundraising efforts in things that will produce 100% profit, will require as little time as possible, and will not risk losing any money or wear on our athletes or parents. While providing different opportunities to raise money is important, it is imperative to adjust to your community."



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DRILLS

DEALING WITH THE MENTAL STRESS OF COACHING



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vIQtory

Coaching stress is the elephant in the room that nobody really wants to address. Our entire off-season is dedicated to learning new schemes, drills, and ways to creatively beat our opponent. However, sometimes the biggest battle we face is in our own mind.

Constant stress from your players, coaches, administration, community, and sometimes from your spouse can add up. This stress can build up and, if you don't get ahold of it, can burn you out quickly.

How do you manage stress? How do you physically and mentally stay in shape? Here are just a few things that have helped me over my years of coaching that I hope can help you too.

First, you have to carve time out of the day to work out. This includes running on the treadmill or lifting weights. I recently invested in a Whoop, and couldn't believe how high my heart rate got during games. If you're out of shape, the

constant fluctuation of your heart rate during games could potentially have some long-term effects on you. Condition your heart to go through the ups and downs of a game.

Next, take care of your mental health. Control what you can control. I like to break down my 3 mental focuses throughout the season.

Communication With Your Spouse - There's nothing worse than coming home from practice or a game and instantly fighting with your spouse. Make sure you're in constant communication with them throughout the year. If you say you will be home at a certain time, honor it. If you're a head coach, are you holding your coaches for 5 hours on a Sunday? Cut meetings down to 2 hours and stick to it. This will make you much more productive in that meeting, and it will give your coaches their family time back.

Communication With Your Coaches - Losing sucks. Losing & drama sucks even more. There's nothing we can do about parents complaining in the stands, but you have to ensure your coaching staff is on the same page. Constantly communicate with your coaches and make sure the ship is being steered in the right direction. Drama kills teams. Try to eliminate it as much as possible.

Communication With Your Self - I know we're all big bad football coaches, but you have to keep your mental health in check. There is a rollercoaster of anxiety that comes with coaching during the football season.

If you don't meditate, I highly recommend you try it. 10-15 minutes each day during the season will help you relax. Do some deep breathing in a quiet room first thing in the morning. This will help you separate your mind from stressful situations. I started it last year and felt much more in control and could think clearly during big moments.

We all coach because we love football. I hope that all of us can coach well into our 70s without any issues. The work you do now, as a young 30, 40, or 50 year old, will help to contribute to that. Take care of yourself and prioritize your physical and mental health. Be kind to yourself, coach.

As always, if you have any questions, [feel free to reach out contact@victorysports.com](#)

6 VIDEOS

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THROW DEEP PUBLISHING

O-LINE DRILLS

RUN BLOCKING PROGRESSIONS



Michael Fields
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Once the season is going and the linemen have been working on their footwork daily with the EDD's that session should move quickly. At least once a week you should focus on run blocking basics and run blocking progressions. This is a back to the basics of technique session that all linemen need. We usually do this on Tuesdays after the base install on Monday has been completed.

The first is to rep their stance, while this seems so elementary, players get lazy especially as they think they know everything. For this it should be just a minute or two long to remind them of good habits. We have the starting 5 line up then have all the rest of the linemen fill in lines behind them about two or three yards apart. We go through the stance and correct mistakes or lazy habits. We use the outside hand down in our 3-point stance and we reinforce this in every session. We like feet just outside the armpit to shoulder width apart. The foot behind the down hand should be back to about the middle of the opposite foot. The other hand should be coiled at the hip ready to strike. We teach to have most of our weight on our feet so they should be able to pick up their down hand and not fall. After reviewing the stance and correcting anything

needed, we move on to the next progression. We work gets offs on a coach's cadence and change the snap count to practice different counts. Next, we work our splits, we have them huddle, break jog up and line up. We use even splits of about 18 inches to 2 feet between all positions across the line, the exception is the TE may be as wide as 3 feet. This should only need to be done a couple times per group.

After we work splits and stance, which combined should only be a few minutes, we work our hand placement and leverage. For this a partner lines up across from the linemen with a blocking shield. We prefer to have shields to reduce injured hands and fingers. Our target is to strike the defender at the chest plate and use our hips to drive him up and away. Then we perform our different blocks incorporating our footwork into a more live simulation. First is the drive block, the partner with the shield will provide some resistance for the guy working at about 75% allowing the offense to win. Then we go through the rest of our blocks, down blocks, reach blocks and seal blocks. For this session each block is performed while we watch the correct hand placement and footwork. We only drive for a few steps to focus on the hand placement and leverage of our hips.

Next is the fit and finish, once we get the hand placement, we want to uncoil the hips and finish the drive. Now we start in our stance, fire out and drive for five. Again, we go through each of our blocks of drive, down, reach, and seal. The fit and finish is to work on getting to the right place, using the hips to uncoil and disrupt

the defender's movement. For this we are partnered again but now do not use blocking shields, rather we go live with the offense as the declared winner, so we are again reducing the risk of injury. We do not use the 5 man sled very often as we do not really teach a linear plane drive block. We do utilize it at times for our hand placement and leverage, but we do not drive it around the practice field.

We will also work on our pulls as we are a pulling team and our second level blocks. For our pulls, we use a pull kick and pull wrap for our base play. To work this we have our two guards line up where they would be, and use a player to simulate the defensive linebackers we kick and seal with the wrap. They move based on the coach's instructions to simulate the live action of a game. In a previous article I discussed pods or group work and talked about the hurdle drill, if time allows we mat break out and run this drill next and have our tackles and TEs work on down blocks.

This whole session is completed from stance, hands and leverage, to fit and finish in about 10 minutes. The hurdle drill would be a second session completed after the positional work adding another 5 to 10 minutes of work.

Repping the basics should be done at least once a week to continue to build good habits for the linemen. Linemen are critical to the success of a football team, working on the basics helps ensure that they perform week in and week out, giving your team the best chance to be successful.

“At least once a week you should focus on run blocking basics and run blocking progressions. This is a back to the basics of technique session that all linemen need. We usually do this on Tuesdays after the base install on Monday has been completed.”

OFFENSIVE TALK

BE PREPARED, BECAUSE CRAP HAPPENS



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I am old enough to remember the meme, "Crap Happens (I cleaned it up)," from the 1980s. It was on bumper stickers, and t-shirts, and many people were saying a version of it in their everyday lives. I remember a geology professor from grad school saying, "Shift happens." I also remember the principal at my first coaching stop telling the students that if they did not take the bumper stickers off their cars, he was going to suspend their cars from the school parking lot until they did. The kids were smart, they left the stickers on but cut the 'S' and 'H' off. You got to love adolescent ingenuity.

This article is not about 1980s nostalgia, but I wanted to open with that blast from the past because in the immortal words of the great Southern philosopher, Forrest Gump while he was running across the country and stepped in dog poop, "IT happens!" Let us get started and talk about what we can do when "IT" happens, because believe me, "IT" will.

I am all about being properly aligned so we can always react quickly by being where we are supposed to be on any given play. Proper alignment is also important when it comes to our mental and emotional state. To be properly

aligned we must know that there is always a real possibility that bad things (those we can and cannot control) are going to happen in a game and in life. To think otherwise would be naïve and irresponsible.

Here is what we need to understand, ahead of time:

When crap happens, and crap will happen, we must be prepared to act accordingly. Whether or not those crappie things are a "setback" will be determined by how we respond to them. The outcome of a football game, like life, is more often determined by our response to events rather than the events themselves.

Let me say it again; bad stuff is going to happen, but it will be our responses to the bad stuff that determines if we are successful or not. We cannot control 100% of anything except our responses and reactions. We must learn to control the things we can control and respond appropriately to those we cannot.

Here is a list of a few things we cannot control:

Talent: We can improve and maximize it, but it is what it is.

Weather: We all must deal with it. When it rains, it rains on everyone; whoever deals with it best is often the winner.

Other people and their actions: A bad call by an official or a bad choice by a teammate or coach are things we cannot control.

The opponent: We can only affect our opponent's performance through our performance. We can only affect our performance through our

preparation, effort, and attitude.

Bounce of the ball (BoB): A football is a lot like life in that it has a funny shape and there is no telling where it is going once it starts rolling and bouncing.

When we focus on things we cannot control, it takes our attention away from things we can control. It creates negative energy. We are not focused on the moment. Our performance will suffer because our head is in the wrong place. Here is a list of a few things we can control; they have already been mentioned but not listed:

- **Effort**
- **Attitude**
- **Preparation**
- **Response**

When we focus on the things we can control, it takes our attention away from things we cannot control. It creates positive energy. We can focus on the moment. Our performance will improve because our head is in the right place.

When we know and accept that crap will happen, our ability to re-focus with our response puts us way ahead of someone who is caught off guard and stuck in a fog of "Why is this happening, poor pitiful me." Mentally prepare yourself by accepting that crappie things will happen. Know it, acknowledge it, and fully accept it. By doing this you will never be a victim of circumstances, but a victor over circumstances.

I love this equation that I learned from Tim and Brian Kight of Focus 3; **E + R = O**. The parts of the

equation are **Events, Response, and Outcome**.

- Accept that **Events** are always happening around us and to us.
- We always have a choice in how we **Respond**.
- Our **Response** will always play a major role in the **Outcome**.

The above bullets should make you smile. Why? It means that regardless of what crappie events happen you still have an impact/a say so on the outcome by how you respond. How we respond to our circumstances is everything.

Brian Kight says the **E+R=O** mindset is built on three simple and direct principles.

- We do not control Events.
- We are in control of our Response.
- We can create outcomes, but we do not control them.

Whatever the event might be, it happened so now what? Your response to a negative event will determine whether the outcome is another negative. Choosing to dwell on it can lead to multiplying one negative event into a batch of negative events. Do not make a bigger deal out of it than it already is and act like it is the end of the world. It happened, and what happens next has more to do with how you choose to deal with it than what already happened does. Choose your response, accept the outcome, and move on to the next event. The past does not predict the future any more than your horoscope does.

One way we can help ourselves choose a proper response is to play it in our heads in advance. We do not always know how we are going to respond, and we definitely will not know if an event takes us off guard. Our team had a bad habit of letting mistakes multiply on us. We might jump offsides to make a second and five a second and ten, but then we would compound the mistake by making two or three more mistakes that resulted in us punting on a fourth and 25. We let one mistake fester into more mistakes. We alleviated this problem by practicing how to react to mistakes. The coaches would make up stuff to force the kids to focus on the next rep and not wallow around in the muck of the last mistake. We would hold them accountable for every little thing at practice; things such as not touching a line or not being across the line during summer conditioning. Little things that they had to learn to deal with as a team and overcome.

Several years ago, we had a really good defensive lineman. The kid could really play, he was a smaller high school version of Aaron Donald. He was even built like Donald except shorter. He had one major issue, he was impulsive; check that, he was a hothead. He was averaging about one personal foul or unsportsmanlike conduct penalty a game. To break him of his impulsiveness we started having the scout team offensive linemen push him after the whistle and talk crap to him. We told him if he retaliated in any way (verbally or physically) against the other players that he would have to run hills (we have a really steep hill in our stadium), not after practice, but during practice; this kid loved to

practice, especially during team defense. He got sent to the hill once or twice before he got the message. By putting him in a position to practice his responses we improved his responses during the game. I do not remember him getting another penalty for the rest of the season. We won another state title with him leading the way on defense and he was named first-team All-State. We can improve our responses to crappie things by anticipating them, accepting they are going to happen, and practicing our responses.

We must stay even and keep our brains neutral. By staying mentally neutral (never too high or too low) we are in a better position to shift our minds into the gear we need to be in and go in the right direction. Crap happens, why not be prepared for it?

SPECIAL TEAMS

ORGANIZING, SCOUTING, & INSTALLING YOUR KICK RETURN TEAM

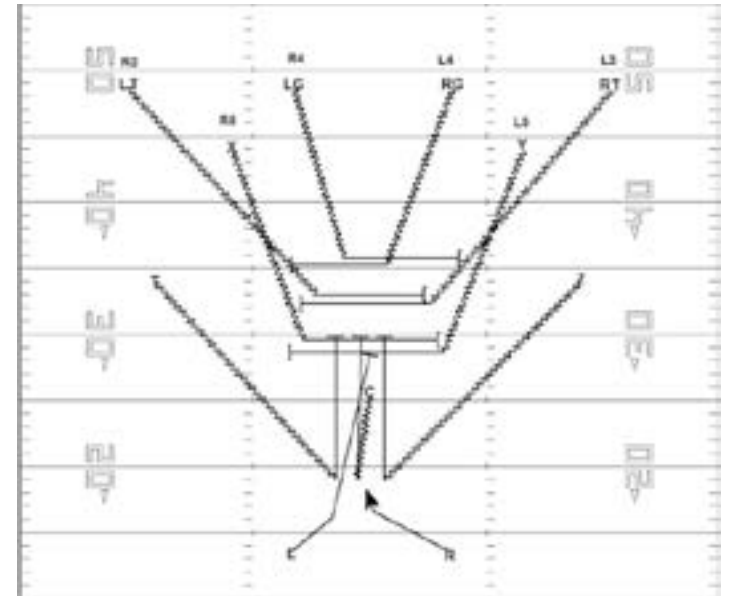


Stephen Mikell
Offensive Coordinator and
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Stuarts Draft High School
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Over the last four issues, I've gone into a deep dive on our "Crease & Punch" Kick Off Return. In this issue, I'll share how we organized and game plan for our kick return team. You don't need to spend a ton of time on the group, but you do need to prepare. While the roles for each team can be divided, I strongly recommend that each head coach assign someone on staff to be their special teams coordinator. Just as with the offensive and defensive coordinators, they should be in charge of game planning, scouting, and staff organization for special teams. This is a great opportunity to give a young coach ownership over a vital phase of the game. After a brief and TERRIBLE stint as a young head coach right out of college, I was able to serve as an STC. This allowed me to be creative and aggressive in our special teams, and I believe this gave us an advantage on Friday nights.

Staff Organization & Personnel Choices

Just as with offense & defense, each group of players needs a coach specific to their position. This applies to all special teams, but I'll focus here on Kick Return. Below is the scheme for our "Base Middle Cross Return".



We divide the team into three groups: The Front Six make up one group, the 2nd level make up a group, and the 2 returners make up a group. Each of those gets its own coach. We usually do not involve our OL or DL coach in special teams unless it involves most of their players such as with PAT/FG.

Ideally, our Front Six is made up of TE/LB/DE types or fast linemen. Because of the personnel, we usually try to assign a TE, wing or H Back coach to this group. We're a Wing T based scheme, so our guards are usually pretty mobile. In our scheme, the RG/LG are mobile players who can hit. They need to be able to run, because their drops can be up to 15 yds. The RT & LT must be VERY mobile. Depending on the scheme we are using, they may be asked to cross the far hash to execute their blocks. These guys can be WR. The X & Y on this team are big, mobile guys who can hit. They don't typically have to drop as far as the other positions, so they can be big hitters.

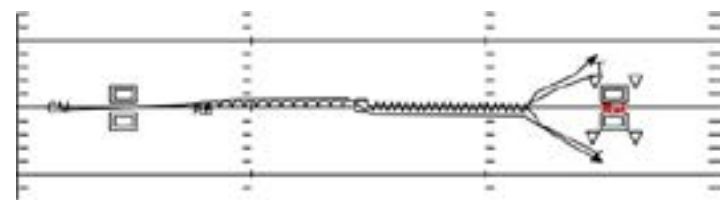
The 2nd level players need to be great blockers in space. The T & Z are back up returners, RBs or

WR, & the C is usually a tailback/fullback type. He sets the wedge, so he needs to be a vocal player. The coach for this group is usually a RB or WR coach.

The 2 deep returners need to have the best hands and be the best athletes/playmakers. This is usually coached by someone on staff who was a returner themselves. For us, this is our head coach or our RB coach.

Preseason Installation

When I first took over as the STC at our school, we began special teams installation on day one. We do things a bit differently now. Now, we use drills during the preseason to build the skills needed in special teams as well as to condition our players. We choose drills with a lot of "bang for the buck" meaning they work multiple skills at once. For example, the drill "Defend the Box". It's great for working on KO and punt coverage, but it also really helps to teach open field blockers on coverage teams that they only need to "ride" players past return men. They don't need to have kill shots.



Weekly Game Planning & Installation

When scouting an opponent, I use a field diagram that I use to mark the location of each kick off I see on film. Based on this form I tell our kids approximately where the ball will be kicked, both by depth and placement on the

field. Teams in our area usually have a pretty set way they kick off, so we usually have a good idea of what our opponent is going to do. Each week, I send a simple scouting report to our players with one page for each special team. I will also include any schematic adjustments we need to make for the week.

Samples are included on the next page.

During the week, our installation looks like this:
Monday: 1/2 pads, Install & Rep Punt & KO Coverage Teams 10-15 min total

Tuesday: Full Pads, Install & Rep Punt & KO Return Teams 10-15 min total

Wednesday: Full Pads, Install & Rep PAT/FG Team & review other teams 10-15 min total

Thursday: Helmets Only, Review & Rep all ST including Miracle & hands teams time varies, but we will have 2-4 reps for each phase of the game. PAT/FG gets a lot of work on Thursday.

Final Thoughts

Working Kickoff Return, or any other special team, does require a ton of time, but it does take clear and purposeful practice & communication. Once you build the skills your players need to execute the scheme, you can then begin to work on the scheme itself. With simple adjustments, your KO Return group can be a powerful weapon in your arsenal.

If you have any questions, comments, or thoughts, please reach out to me at smikell@augusta.k12.va.us.

KO Return Notes

- Gap will kick outside, squib, and pop up kicks. They will kick from the middle of the field.

KO Return Depth					
LT: L1/L3		LG: L3/R4		RG: R5/L4	
Wagoner		Cash		J. Watkins	
Acosta		Marshall		Marshall	
	X: L2/R5		C: L4/Wedge		Y: R4/L5
	Rice		D. King		A. Fitzgerald
T: Ret/Wedge	Beltran	Lt: L5/Wedge	Fomby	Rt: Return/MDM	Beltran
A. Smith		Nice		Howard	
Wang		Woodson		Sawyer	
					Z: MDM/Wedge
					Balser
					Wang
Miracle Depth					
Left Tackle		Left Guard	Middle	Right Guard	Right Tackle
Branch		Roach		D. Fitzgerald	Cooke
Left	X End		Center		Y End
	Balser		D. King		J. Watkins
T-back		Left Returner		Right Returner	Z-Back
A. Smith		Nice		Howard	Shirley

Short Left KO Return



DEFENSIVE LINE BASICS

FILM YOUR INDIVIDUAL DRILLS



Quint Ashburn
Defensive Line Coach: Searcy
High School - AR
[Defensive Line Coaching
Group on Facebook](#)
[@CoachAshSearcy](#)
[Defensive Line Manual](#)
[CoachTube](#)

Tackling on the defensive side of the ball is crucial. If your team can't tackle well, the success rate of your team will always suffer. There will be crucial games that are lost because players will miss key tackles in important situations.

Defensive linemen need to work tackling that is practical to them. Most of their tackles will come from fighting through a block or right after they get off of a block. Rarely will a defensive lineman make a ton of open field tackles. They will need to be trained in how it feels to make a tackle right off the block when there is hardly any time to think.

In this article I will share three different drills that I use to teach tackling specifically to my defensive linemen. I will include pictures and QR codes to video of the drills as well.

- 1) Profile Tackle
- 2) Box tackle drill
- 3) Off the block tackle (reach block)

Profile Tackle:

Most of the time defensive linemen will make tackles in more of a stand up position instead of taking out the legs like a traditional hawk tackle (wrap, squeeze, roll). The Profile tackle drill works this well in my opinion.

Drill Set Up:

- 1) Pair up defensive linemen across from one another.

Have them shade to the right or left since we teach near hip shoulder tackling.

2) Make sure they are not set up too far away from each other.

3) Make sure that the defensive lineman doing the tackling is in an athletic stance. Feet shoulder width, knees slightly bent, head up, chest out.

Drill Progression:

1) On the coach's command or whistle the defensive lineman will shoot their hands from low to high behind the lineman getting tackled. They will need to grab the jersey to secure the tackle. They will also need to shoot their hips to knock back the lineman being tackled.

2) The defensive lineman will drive their feet for five yards or however long you want them to.

3) The defensive lineman will stop at the designated spot.

Coaching Points:

- 1) Explosive hands and hips.
- 2) The defensive lineman MUST move their feet after initial contact (very important).



[Click here or scan the QR code to view the drill live](#)

Box Tackle Drill:

Tackles by defensive linemen are rarely pretty. This drill simulates how a defensive lineman has to get a tackle while still being blocked at times. This is a great drill for any box player honestly.

Drill Set Up:

1) Put defensive linemen into groups of three. One will be the defensive lineman, the offensive lineman, and a back.

2) Put the defensive lineman into a pre-fit position with them in a position like they are performing a rip move with the offensive lineman still on them. The offensive lineman's hands need to be on the defensive lineman.

3) The back needs to be about three to four yards away. They don't need to be far behind the offensive lineman. This is a close up tackling drill.

Drill Progression:

1) On the coach's command the defensive lineman will fight off the blocking offensive lineman. The offensive lineman should be working to put resistance on the defensive lineman while the back begins to run toward the shaded defensive lineman.

2) The defensive lineman will finish off the blocking lineman with either a rip or some other escape move.

The defensive lineman will finish with a tackle on the back as they come downhill and slightly outside the defensive lineman.

3.) The defensive lineman will drive their feet on contact until the coach stops the drill.

Coaching Points:

1) The scout offensive lineman needs to give great effort when blocking.

2) Defensive lineman needs to fight hard off the blocking offensive lineman.

3) The defensive lineman can start the tackle out with one arm and get the second arm on the back once they fully get off the block.



continued on next page



Off the Block Tackle:

This drill is used to simulate any kind of block a defensive lineman may see in a game and how they would make a tackle after beating the block right away. In this example I am going to show a reach block with pictures and video to make it clear how I run it.

Drill Set Up:

- 1) Get defensive linemen into groups of three. There will be one performing the rep as the defensive lineman, a scout offensive lineman, and a back.
- 2) Line the back up where they would need to be for the purposes of the drill.
- 3) The defensive lineman will need to be shaded or head up with the offensive lineman depending on how you want them lined up.
- 4) Have someone with a ball on a stick, a football to snap, or using their foot to start the drill.

Drill Progression

- 1) On the snap of the ball the offensive lineman will begin to block the defensive lineman based upon the block the coach set up before the snap. The back will begin to run the way that the coach instructs them to.
- 2) The defensive lineman will fire out of their stance once the ball is snapped towards the offensive lineman.
- 3) The defensive lineman will read and react to the block that the offensive lineman gives them.
- 4) The defensive lineman will escape from the block and will tackle the back after getting off the block.



[Click here or scan the QR code to view the drill live](#)



[Click here or scan the QR code to view the drill live](#)

These are the main types of tackling drills that I will use during the season with my defensive linemen. In my opinion, they are more realistic to the position that I am coaching, and I can see them in the game film on Friday nights.

GUEST WRITER

FOOTBALL AND CHESS



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Often, from the announcers' booth on Saturday and Sunday, we hear the comparison that

football is like a chess match. More specifically, that this chess match involves a back and forth movement of strategy from opposing coaches, teams, or players. Football, like any other sport, is built with layers of complexity. Much like checkers, the weekend commercial football experience, is extremely accessible, and allows the average fan to be an armchair quarterback. As a coach however, you begin to understand the immense, and often times overwhelming complexity that this sport entails. If you haven't guessed, I'm the weird guy who watches replays and analysis of famous chess matches, so as I head into my first offensive coordinating position, I felt it appropriate to look at football as just that, a true chess match.

The Pieces and their Functions

Strengths & Weakness

Summer is about to begin, and if you are like me maybe you don't exactly know what to expect heading into the fall season. Maybe you are a veteran coach, and you know every kid in the program by name, date of birth, and who's parents and grandparents played ball with you.

Whichever camp you fall into, one thing is to be certain, the chess pieces you have now are all you are about to be working with for the next few months. So where do we start? In chess, we take inventory of our pieces to separate out our areas of strength, but also better understand how to develop our overall strategy utilizing pieces which may have a more limited skill set.

Lets' first start with our most important piece, the queen. This could be the senior captain, the alpha dog in the locker room, the head coach, or just about anyone that breaths life into your program. I find most programs immediately identify who this person(s) is, and nearly everyone outside of the program can usually identify them quickly as well. Often, in chess, the real challenge becomes how to utilize a queen without leaving them under-utilized or over exposed. We all know a number of programs, maybe our own, who have experienced one of those indispensable pieces being "sidelined" and frustrated, or over utilized and burnt out. Without the queen on the board, winning any chess match becomes extremely difficult. To avoid these mistakes in chess, some goals are set as we inventory our pieces, namely we never want to bring our queen into play until we have surrounded it with other supporting pieces and built solid protection for the king.

Supporting Cast & Combination Attacks

Any winning program, as well as any winning chess champion are often masters of deploying and developing their supporting cast. These are the people in your program who are bought in, have differing skill sets, but are ready to contribute at a high level. In the proper role, these

people can be deployed at moment's notice to propel the attack forward. A grand master's sole focus at the beginning of any game is to provide the right environment to get these pieces into favorable positions. "The opening" portion of the chess match is almost exclusively focused on the development of these pieces. Development in position, paired with space and freedom to perform their duties provides strength and flexibility as the game progresses. A true grand master does not just haphazardly move this cast of characters around but has planned out what opening might be the most effective for his own initial goals, and the match in its entirety. This planning phase helps develop coordinated attacks with pieces of varying levels of strength and skill. Deviation from the planned opening, can often cause chaos, disorder, and frustration. Valuable people in your program may feel ill prepared or anxious when they are not aware of the plan or see how they fit with your goals. Much like chess, a winning program must set clear goals and expectations before any piece begins to move. Clear expectations allow all those involved to coordinate and support one another to propel the program forward.

Pawns & Promotion

In chess, just as in your football program, we have the proverbial elephant in the room, the pawns. Every team has a lot more pawns than queens, and they often times clutter the board and playing field alike. We move them around indiscriminately to get our "important" Jimmys and Joes in order, we sacrifice them for the good of the team, and in some cases we dream of a world where we could just wipe them off the board completely. This is where a true

chess grandmaster's thought process seems to diverge from the average player. The value in the pawn may not lie in the attacking power, but in the stability they provide. The straight "A" student who isn't much of an athlete, the parent who helps with the chains, and any number of other people in your program who may not receive the recognition but provide even just one singular point of value. As with the queen, it takes some amount of forethought and planning to utilize the pawns on a chess board. Pawns, although their nature is one of little value, are the only piece in chess who can be "promoted" or improved by swapping it out with a more valuable piece. Every chess champion will tell you that a great understanding of how to deploy and utilize a pawn is undervalued by the average player. A pawn is at it's best when the task is straight forward, achievable, and keeps them engaged. Pawns without a purpose simply clutter up the field of play making it difficult for any piece to move around effectively. Keep it simple, remember, you will likely have more pawns than queens and supporting pieces put together.

Once we have the pieces inventoried, a plan of development in place, and better understand how each piece fits into the gameplan, we can begin. The opening phase in chess, much like football, is a mix of rigid planning and extreme flexibility when met with any number of unplanned scenarios. By identifying your pieces, setting achievable and purposeful goals, and keeping the plan simple, you are ready for the "opening". You like me may be a long way from checkmate, but at least we can be prepared for our first move.

COACHING YOUTH

WHAT I LEARNED COACHING YOUTH SPORTS THAT MAKES ME A BETTER VARSITY COACH



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I love team sports, LOVE THEM. Always have. I was never a great athlete, but I just wanted to play and compete. Football

ended up being the only real successful sport for me. Still, playing multiple sports is sooo good for kids. My coaching career has been fairly sporadic. The Lord just had a little different path for my family and career. There was about a nine year gap in between formal (getting paid for) coaching gigs. Thankfully though, I have been able to combine the thing I love doing most, coaching, with the people I love the most, my six children (and wife too of course). Those youth sports have been almost entirely not football. But I learned A LOT about working with young people that has made me a much better varsity coach now. Disclaimer: these are not building blocks to a career. Typically a coach doesn't move up from youth, to middle school, to high school, to college, and so on. These are just some of my experiences that I hope others find useful.

Focus On ALL The Positives:

Mr. Bommarito from the St. Louis CYC (Catholic Grade School League) taught a required coaches

education course. One of his examples was from coaching youth baseball. At practice a ground ball got past his shortstop. It was decently hit, but "coulda/shoulda" been playable. How he reacted to this play was genius. "Look at all the great things that just happened," I remember hearing him say. He pointed out how the left fielder did a good job backing up the shortstop and hustled to get the ball. The shortstop likewise did a good job of providing a cutoff and turning to throw to second base. The second baseman covered second, first baseman stayed and covered first, etc. etc. etc. There were way more positives than negatives on that play and they all came together to hold the runner at first base. Additionally he was able to reinforce coaching points with the entire team, not just correct one kid playing one position.

Now anyone that's been in education for a while has probably heard of the "compliment sandwich". At parent-teacher conferences, say something good about the student, then the negative thing, and end with another positive. The idea has merit, even though the way some school administrators present it is cringeworthy. We don't want to just tear down students and players. So for ten years now I have made, and continue to make, a conscious effort to do exactly what Mr. Bommarito taught me that night, whether I'm teaching high school math, 4th grade basketball, or Varsity football. So instead of saying, "GET YOUR HEAD UP!" Coach them up, "You're stepping the right direction and keeping your pads low, but you have your head down and can't see the man you should be blocking." "That's a great route, now get your head around to see the ball." I have told this

to free safeties and linebackers so many times, "You read your key perfectly, now just do it faster. Don't second guess yourself, as soon as you see it go right now."

This concept works really well in team film sessions. Especially so when the entire team is together, if nothing else to make sure everyone is engaged. Now I focus primarily on self-scouting anyway. But I imagine all of us have pointed out something like this in film, "Look here, good down block, good down block, that kick out block needs to be tighter to the line so the DE doesn't get inside, but the wrapper is there to lead block and the back takes a good path. We got four yards and almost broke for a BIG gain." Again, there's a lot of good things happening on that play and everyone should be engaged in the conversation, learning and improving their football IQ.

Of course there can always be a little too much of a good thing. Like sometimes things are just bad and people need to be held accountable. You don't want to sugar coat actual problems. If you're otherwise a pretty positive person, then those admonishments will be doubly effective. Also word efficiency is always important. Don't stop the flow of a drill too often and waste all your time talking at practice. Players need reps and they're only going to remember a couple of the things you say anyway, so try to keep it as quick and positive as possible and keep going. That is why I like doing a lot of this in film, because you are supposed to talk about things in film. Lastly though, don't get into a confrontational thing where it looks like the back is always messing up the play or the QB is

always making the wrong read.

Looking Ahead

As I am wrapping up this article we just finished our first session of summer weights. After the past couple years of coaching Varsity OL/DL at my current school I am taking over as the middle school head coach. So positivity and encouragement were huge this morning as many of these kiddos have never seen the inside of the weightroom. But we had 34 middle school and 50 high school boys show up the first day, as well as 13 coaches from the various boys' sports, that's a GREAT START!!!! Hopefully this article is also a good start to several articles around this topic of things I've learned coaching youth sports. Have a great summer everyone, and God Bless.



“I GOT THE JOB; NOW WHAT?”

PART THREE: MASTER CRAFTSMAN



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Welcome back to the 3rd article in the series titled “A Coaching Career: A Job Guide for Coaches”. If you have not read the previous two articles, let us introduce ourselves. I am a 44 year veteran of coaching high school football and Bob has coached for 17 years with the last 8 as a head coach. He was on my staff for several years before moving on to take over his own programs as a head coach. These articles are the product of countless conversations that we have had over the years. Because coaching is an apprentice based profession we have chosen the tradesman vernacular. We have broken a coaching career into 3 parts: apprentice, craftsman and master craftsman. This article deals with the latter of those three.

Webster defines “master craftsman” as a “master of a specific trade or craft who may

employ and train apprentices”. As a master craftsman, a person has reached the highest level of craftsmanship in their field. To attain this title, a person must complete years of on the job training, rising from apprentice to journeyman to master. While this is applicable, I found a description of the master craftsman that I believe better suits the profession of coaching. The description of a master craftsman states “that compelling careers are not courageously pursued or serendipitously discovered, but are instead Systematically Crafted. This process of career crafting always begins with the mastery of something rare and valuable.”

At some point in our coaching career we crossover into the 3rd phase. It probably goes unnoticed until one day someone asks you a question and without hesitation you launch into a discussion where you realize that you are no longer thinking before you speak, you are just talking. It is who you have become. The auto mechanic who hears the problem as you drive in, the doctor who notices something even before the tests come back, the carpenter who sees the problem before it becomes a problem. We call it instinct, but it isn’t natural, it is earned. It is created by hours and hours of work and repetition. We no longer have to think about what we want to teach, we have become it. When we are asked to talk about coaching with others it comes naturally. The language, the confidence, the fluidity, and, hopefully, the humility. We talk about philosophy and the “how to” more than the schemes. We speak of the game in its totality, not in bits and pieces. We use words like selflessness, grit, teamwork,

dedication, and commitment, not as adjectives that we just throw in, but as the backbone of our beliefs.

While this may have taken us into the head coaching ranks, it doesn’t have to. There are a great number of assistant coaches who never wanted to be a head coach, but are great coaches and who deserve the title “master craftsman”. In this phase of our coaching here are several things to consider:

- Be sure to give back. Help young coaches just like someone helped you. Engage young coaches in conversation. We often play the game “who has the chalk last”. Some see it as a futile exercise, but the benefit for a young coach to watch older guys play this out is tremendous.
- Be open to learning something new. Many times the young guys see things differently due to their youth but also because they don’t know any better. New ideas are like pearls of wisdom...they can be found in the most unlikely places. I can remember the days when everyone huddled before every play. It was probably a young coach who challenged that. Now hardly anyone huddles.
- Keep learning to avoid “staleness”. A professor of mine once told me “when you stop learning, you start dying”. The game has evolved and will continue to do so. Give your young coaches a chance to teach you something new.
- Create opportunities for young guys on your staff. Encourage your coaches to attend clinics,

“While this is applicable, I found a description of the master craftsman that I believe better suits the profession of coaching. The description of a master craftsman states ‘that compelling careers are not courageously pursued or serendipitously discovered, but are instead Systematically Crafted. This process of career crafting always begins with the mastery of something rare and valuable.’”

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webinars, and even invite other teams' staff to come to your school and clinic with you. When I worked as an assistant in the early 2000's, our head coach took us away for a 3-day retreat where he would have each of us teach our position to the rest of the staff. If you attend 9th grade and JV games (if you can, do!), just coach a position. Allow your assistants to grow from calling the offense and the defense and discuss it afterwards. They will learn by doing and learn by reflecting.

- Be aware that you will probably be sought after. Programs are always looking for good people and being in coaching for several years gives you the connections to those people. Know what to look for in a job move. You soon realize that the "grass is not always greener". Every job has its challenges and its problems.

Whether you are a current Head Coach or an assistant coach, realize that as growth and success come, you will have opportunities to seek head coaching job positions. Here are some questions to ask yourself with each job opportunity:

- Will I be supported?
 - Is this a place where I can make a difference?
 - Is this the best place for me and my family?
- Talk it over with your partner, although you are the one that they are hiring, the consequences will be felt by the whole family.
- Does this move help me financially, emotionally or professionally?(I will move sideways but never backwards and at least one must be an improvement)
 - What do I see as the problems with this

program? Are they things that I believe I can overcome?

- Beware the "greater fool" mentality. Don't let ego blind you from true assessment. There is a reason others have failed, why will I be different?

As the HC, we are the CEO of our organization. Here are a few thoughts for you to ponder:

- Be all-in on your philosophy and live it everyday. If you cannot live it, do not preach it. You are the captain of the ship, you set the course.
- Continually assess the job, set priorities, and establish goals. Be proactive, not reactive with your situation. Celebrate your victories and your accomplishments, just don't rest on them. There is always work to be done.
- Evaluate coaches, set expectations, let go of obstacles(fire or diminish impact of coaches that are drains on the program), hire to your weakness. Coach coaches, set examples, give them opportunities to grow and develop.
- Solicit help from alumni, community and parents. To do the job successfully you will need a community of support. To build the program you must first build bridges into that community.
- Delegate, but don't give away the keys to the kingdom. This does not mean that you give responsibility and then forget about it. Remember everything comes back to you.
- Who is on your "speed dial"? Have a community of coaches that you learn from and ones that you help along the way. It is helpful for me to remember the rule of 3: One to mentor me (older), One to Challenge me (contemporary), and One to remind me (younger).

FLAVORS OF GT COUNTER

AN IN DEPTH LOOK AT THE GT(H) PLAY



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In this series of articles, I will discuss how we run the GT(H) Counter Play with the Yonkers Brave. The Yonkers Brave is a cop-op team, composed of student athletes from Saunders Trade & Technical High School, Lincoln High School, Barack Obama School for Social Justice High School, and Riverside High School, all located in Yonkers, NY, which borders the Hudson River to the West, and New York City to the South. In this fifth article, we will discuss using a BASH (Back Away from Scheme) scheme utilizing the quarterback as the focal point in the run game to further put the defense in conflict and combat various ways defenses will trigger their box players in an effort to negate the effectiveness of the play.

Why use BASH?

Utilizing the quarterback as the focal point of the scheme is a great way to break tendencies, and is another variant to give the end man on the line of scrimmage (EMOL), or the defender being read. The BASH (Back Away from Scheme) action gives that player a different look in an effort to present a plethora of things to defend. With BASH, the back attacks the sideline opposite the run scheme with a fast, flat path (similar to power read) but, unlike power read, the quarterback does not shuffle along with the back towards the point of attack, but rather meshes with the back while remaining stationary. By remaining stationary, the mesh point creates a different angle than previously presented to the EMOL with this run action, and increases the difficulty of the "mash charge" technique possibly employed by the defender. One standard way for defenses to attempt to disrupt the power read play, is to "jet" the EMOL opposite the back up the field in an attempt to mesh charge and

"short circuit" the stretch part of the power read play. If a defense is employing this technique (or in the vernacular of Iona Prep (NY) HS defensive coordinator Lou DiRienzo - "Flat to"), then the EMOL will not be in a position to mesh charge as the mesh is not taking place in the near B Gap (as is the case with power read), but rather directly behind the center. This also has the intended effect of slowing that player down when the play call is power read, as that defender will not be sure to attack the mesh point in the near B Gap, or behind the center.

What type of QB favors a BASH Scheme?

When the quarterback is the focal point of any run scheme, it is important the quarterback is at least a "capable runner". We define a capable runner as a player that can gain four yards or more when provided enough room past the first level defenders. For us, given that criteria, we will either use our base personnel quarterback to employ the scheme, or, if we have a classic "pocket passer" quarterback that struggles to get back to the line of scrimmage when pressured in the down when a pass play is called, we will bring in a "wildcat" type quarterback to run this scheme (and will have other "wildcat" calls to protect the BASH play). Another thing to consider when employing a BASH scheme with the base quarterback is whether the quarterback can easily adjust to the different footwork/read angle the scheme requires. We have had quarterbacks that were more than capable runners, but did not utilize the BASH scheme with that player because the adjustment proved to be too difficult for that player. At the end of the day, always think players not plays/schemes.

Base BASH GT Counter

With our base BASH GT Counter, nothing changes for the five offensive lineman (see Headsets Vol. 3 Issue 1 for our base blocking scheme). Our back will employ the same technique used for the power read play, so there is tremendous carry-over for both the offensive line and running back. The quarterback footwork and read angle will change however. The quarterback will catch the ball and immediately keep his feet square while reading the secondary (we RPO all of our base run game, by simultaneously reading first and third level defenders) and keeping the EMOL in the quarterback's field of vision. If the EMOL does anything but close with the pulling tackle, the

continued on next page

quarterback will pull the ball. If the EMOL squeezes hard and chases the tackle, the quarterback will give the ball to the back.



Base BASH GH Counter

With our base BASH GH Counter, nothing changes for the five offensive lineman (see Headsets Vol. 3 Issue 3 for our base blocking scheme). This is a great variant to use if the defense decides to bring a seventh defender onto the box and play zero coverage on the receivers.



Variants to BASH GH Counter utilizing 20 personnel

With our 20 personnel BASH GT Counter, nothing changes for the five offensive lineman (see Headsets Vol. 3 Issue 4 for our base blocking scheme). This is a great variant to use if you have two quality backs, want to keep the defensive front balanced, or want to attack the flanks of the defense with a downhill run blocking scheme. There are three main variants we like; comet, triple and alley.

COMET



TRIPLE



ALLEY



In the next article, we will discuss protecting the GT (H) play with screens to further put the defense in conflict and combat various ways defenses will trigger their box players in an effort to negate the effectiveness of the play.

JOB SEARCH PREP FOR COACHES

GETTING YOUR FOOT IN THE DOOR;
ADVICE FOR YOUNG COACHES
LOOKING FOR COLLEGE JOBS



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The competition for GA and entry level college coaching positions, even at the lower divisions, is insane. This is especially true in football and basketball. There are so many coaches and aspiring coaches, young and old, who are looking to get their foot into the college coaching door. Things have gotten so crazy at the Power 5 level that we see top assistants or even head coaches who get fired and become GA's at other programs (obviously this is the case if they already did not have a master's degree).

Unless you played or have really good connections, it can be near impossible to land a GA position. Most GA positions are filled with someone the coach knows or by someone who was referred to them. Rarely does an unknown person come in and get the job unless they've got an outstanding playing or coaching resume.

Many young aspiring coaches think they are going to land a GA job and work another job on

or off campus to make ends meet financially. It just doesn't work that way. When you are a GA, you are typically expected to be there full time. That means minimum 10 hours a day 7 days a week during the season, and 40+ hours in the offseason. That's why most GA's can only afford to do it when they are young and single.

If you're out of college and looking for a way to get into college coaching, your best bet to get experience without totally sacrificing everything financially is to seek out volunteer or part-time positions at smaller colleges near you. Make in-person visits to talk to the coach and see if there is anything you can do to help. That way, you can get a position that will give you more flexibility to work a second job. If you really want to work your way into the profession, then expect to spend every spare hour you have at the athletic office. That's the only way to learn and also gain a good recommendation from the head coach.

I have a lot of volunteer and part-time experience in my early years on my resume. But most of those jobs, I spent full-time hours at the office because I knew I had to make an impression if I wanted to move on to a better position. Since I spent so much time working and had so much responsibility, I did not have to list those jobs on my resume as "volunteer" or "part-time." I worked full-time hours for part-time pay or for free. If you just show up for practice and pre-practice meetings, don't expect the head coach to give you a glowing recommendation when you start applying for full-time positions.

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I took a part-time D1 position a few years ago, when I was 41 years old. I was divorced and determined to make a run at a full-time D1 position. I worked 10 hours a day the entire school year for \$15,000. It ultimately paid off with a full-time D1 assistant position. Sad part was, I still make less than I did as a high school teacher 10 years prior.

Here are some tips from Ron McKeefery on getting a GA or entry level college position. Ron has spent many years as the head strength and conditioning coordinator at several Division 1 and NFL programs.

1. Are you credible? Do you have your degree, certifications, and practical experience that qualify you for the position you are seeking? Most of the time, people think just because you have these things you are qualified. The reality is that it just keeps you in the conversation.

2. What do you bring to the table? Can you sell yourself to the Head Coach of the sport you are going to work with. In the world of coaching, it is important that the coaches and athletes believe in you. Hard to believe in a coach that has never played that sport, or coached it somewhere prior. I am not saying you don't understand sport. I simply stating that understanding the sport complexities are a positive. That is why a well-rounded background is important. It is also why former athletes have an advantage.

3. Who else says you are good? There are plenty of good coaches out there for only a few jobs. You have to get your foot in the door and that comes through networking. Rarely do I hire

someone I do not know. Every time I have, I have been burned. You need to get out and meet as many coaches as you can, and leave a lasting impression. The more they see your face the better chance you have.

4. It is important to understand that there are hundreds of coaches that want the same job you are applying for. You must do your part. You must have a resume that qualifies you, experience with that sport, and someone to validate your skills. However if you do what has been suggested and work hard, you will make it. It is this combination of credibility, experience, and marketability that often makes it easier and more practical to move up the college coaching ladder.

How Do You Build a Coaching Portfolio with Limited or No Coaching Experience?

I received an email from a new portfolio guide member who was a college athlete that had just recently received his undergraduate degree. He asked how he should build a coaching portfolio when he lacked coaching experience. In my opinion, it is important for young, aspiring coaches to start to put their thoughts and ideas down on paper to develop their thought process regarding the profession. This will not only demonstrate their commitment to the profession to potential employers, it will also allow them to critically think about what their values and philosophies are as a coach.

Here are the sections I would focus on in a portfolio for someone who recently graduated from college with minimal coaching experience:

Career highlights - I would put your playing career highlights - honors, awards, individual and program achievements. I would also talk about off the field activities you were involved in, especially any mentoring or community service activities. As a young assistant, you are going to be asked to head up a lot of the off the field activities, so if you were an active participant as a player, you want to demonstrate that you can also lead those things as a coach.

Coaching Philosophy - If you haven't created one yet, now is the time to do so. I made mine while in college and I still use it today. There is a section in the coaching portfolio guide on how to get started.

Core values - this is another section you can start to develop even without much coaching experience.

Letters of recommendation - I do not include these now, but I did when I was just starting out in the profession. Get them from your head coach, position coach, strength coach, etc. Ask them to make the letters out to "Whom It May Concern" so that you can use them in your portfolio.

Recruiting - You won't necessarily have a "recruiting plan" but I think you should put some thought into how you could be successful at recruiting potential student-athletes. That will be a big part of your position. Young staffers spend hours on the phone calling/texting recruits. Think about ways you can connect with young prospects that will make you stand out.

Young coaches are so important in connecting with today's recruits. Recently the NCAA came out with new recruiting rules permitting coaches to play video game with recruits virtually. I'm like, why the heck would I want to play video games with a recruit??? But today's recruits love that type of interaction with young assistant coaches who are recruiting them.

Building Culture within a program - Again, even though you may not have much coaching experience, you can still start to map out your thoughts on what it takes to build a strong culture within a program. A program is only as strong as the assistant coaches. The head coach has so many administrative duties to deal with that they rely heavily on their assistants to set the standard for the day to day culture.

Academics - If you were a strong academic student, maybe discuss what things helped you be successful. Young coaches are often in charge of study tables and serve as liaisons for academic advisors. This would be a great way to show the value you could bring to a program.

Social Media / Photoshop - if you are not proficient in these areas, you need to be. GA's and young coaches are often responsible for running social media accounts and creating graphics, especially at smaller schools. If you are really good at these things, show samples of your work.

Strength & Conditioning - many small schools still have to utilize their coaches to run the S&C

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program. If this is an area you are strong in, discuss some of your philosophies here. This was an area that I gained a ton of experience in as a young coach.

Tactical Philosophies - at some point, you will most likely be asked to get up on the white board and show what you know. Put together some thoughts on key elements of positional play for those positions you know well.

I don't believe you have to have all of these things in your portfolio as you start out, but I think these areas would give you a great start in developing your personal philosophies and beliefs. The job market for GA coaches is extremely competitive, especially in football and basketball. Anytime you apply or even if you are reaching out to head coaches to inquire about any openings, be sure to correspond with a brief but professional introductory email. Add your resume and portfolio as attachments. I get many unsolicited emails from players who are about to graduate and are seeking GA

opportunities. The ones who stand out are the ones who are professional and provide info on what they could bring to my program. It's easy to filter out those who are strictly looking for a GA position because they want to get their master's degree or those who have put no thought into what it may be like to actually coach.

Need Additional Help?

If you need help with your coaching resume or portfolio, check out The Coaching Portfolio Guide. The Coaching Portfolio Guide is an instructional, membership-based website that helps you develop a personalized portfolio for any sport. We also have tips and templates for resumes and cover letters. Receive a FREE copy of The Complete Guide to the Coaching Interview, which includes over 250 sample interview questions specific to coaching jobs + the best answers to common interview questions, when you sign up for The Coaching Portfolio Guide at www.coachingportfolio.com.

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