

***CROSSOVER
SPORTS***

FLAG FOOTBALL

***COACHING
MANUAL***



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Dear Coach,

Thank you for your willingness to invest in our league and in our community. We are incredibly grateful for your commitment to your players this season and beyond. As a coach at Crossover Sports, there are certain expectations we have of you as a coach and as a leader. As coaches, we must:

- **Coach and act in a way that glorifies God and properly portrays the gospel.**
- **Be a positive influence in the lives of our players and their families.**
- **Understand that it is impossible to glorify ourselves and Christ at the same time.**
- **Treat referees, opposing coaches, league administrators, and parents with respect.**
Remember that this game is just that—a game—and that life is much bigger than the wins and losses that will occur over the next few months.
- **Put the long-term development and health of our players above our desire to win games.**
- **Take players and parents (if they so desire) through devotions each week, investing in our players' spiritual development just as much—if not more—than their athletic development.**
- **See this season as a chance to serve those around me, not to be served.**
- **Show grace to those around us when a mistake is made as a response to the grace God regularly shows us.**
- **Keep in mind that I grant permission and set standards by my actions and that I want those standards and permissions to be positive and uplifting.**

As coaches, you will be seen as leaders on your team, our program, and our community. The best example of leadership is that of Christ, who humbled himself for the sake of those he was leading and sacrificed himself for our sake. In that same way, coaches should sacrifice and serve those around them with the aim to be a transforming force in the lives of their players.

I have read and reviewed the Crossover Sports coaches and agree to be held accountable to these expectations.

Name _____

Signature _____

A. Rules for Flag Football

GAME

- a) At the start of each game, coaches from both teams shall meet at midfield for the coin toss to determine who shall start with the ball. The visiting team shall call the toss.
- b) The winner of the coin toss has the choice of offense or defense. The loser of the coin toss has the choice of direction. Teams may not choose to defer to the second half.
- c) The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has four (4) plays to cross midfield or they can elect a walk off punt that places the ball on the opponents 5-yard line. Once a team crosses midfield, they have four (4) plays to score a touchdown or they can elect a walk off punt that places the ball on the opponents 5-yard line
- d) If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive from the previous spot of the last down played or from its own 5-yard line if the previous offensive team elects a punt.
- e) If the offensive team fails to cross midfield, possession of the ball changes and the opposition starts its drive from the previous spot or from its own 5-yard line if the previous offensive team elects to punt.
- f) Teams change sides after the first half. Possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.

TERMINOLOGY

- a) Boundary Lines – outer perimeter lines around the field. They include sidelines, and back of the end zone lines.
- b) Line of Scrimmage – (LOS) an imaginary line running through the point of the football and across the width of the field.
- c) Line-To-Gain – the line the offense must pass to get a first down or score.
- d) Rush Line – imaginary line running across width of field 7 yards (into the defensive side) from the LOS.
- e) Offense – the squad with possession of the ball.
- f) Defense – the squad opposing the offense to prevent them from advancing the ball.
- g) Passer – the offensive player that throws the ball and may or may not be the quarterback.
- h) Rusher – the defensive player assigned to rush the quarterback to prevent him/her from passing the ball by pulling his/her flags or by blocking the pass.
- i) Downs (1-2-3) – the offensive squad has three attempts or “downs” to advance the ball. They must cross the line to gain to get another set of downs or to score.
- j) Live Ball – refers to the period of time that the play is in action. Generally used in regard to penalties, live ball penalties are considered part of the play and must be enforced before the down is considered complete.
- k) Dead Ball – refers to the period of time immediately before or after a play.
- l) Whistle – sound made by an official using a whistle that signifies the end of the play or a stop in the action for a timeout, half time, or the end of the game.
- m) Inadvertent Whistle – official’s whistle that is performed in error.
- n) Charging – the movement of the ball carrier directly at a defensive player who has established position on the field. This includes lowering the head, making contact with the defender with a shoulder, forearm, or the chest.
- o) Flag Guarding – an act by the ball carrier to prevent a defender from pulling the ball carrier’s flags by stiff arm, lowering elbow or head, or by blocking access to the runner’s flags with a hand or arm.
- p) Lateral – a backwards or sideways toss of the ball by the ball carrier.
- q) Unsportsmanlike Conduct – a rude, confrontational, or offensive behavior or language.

ELIGIBILITY

- a) All players' legal guardians must agree to online waiver or paper form waiver Crossover Sports league before participating.
- b) The league provides each player with a flag belt, Jersey and Shorts. Teams will use the football provided by their league.
- c) Players must wear shoes. Football cleats are encouraged; however, cleats with exposed metal are not allowed and must be removed. Mouthpieces will be provided upon request.
- d) Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear gloves, elbow pads, and kneepads. Braces with exposed metals are not allowed.
- e) Players must remove all watches, earrings and any other jewelry that the officials deem hazardous.
- f) Pants or shorts with belt loops or pockets must be taped.

FIELD

- a) The field dimensions are 30 yards by 70 yards with two 10-yard end zones, and a midfield line-to-gain. No-Run Zones precede each line-to-gain by 5 yards.
- b) No-Run Zones are in place to prevent teams from conducting power run plays. While in the No-Run Zones (a 5-yard imaginary zone before midfield and before the end zone), teams cannot run the ball in any fashion. All plays must be pass plays, even with a handoff.
- c) Stepping on the boundary line is considered out of bounds.
- d) Each offensive squad approaches only TWO No-Run Zones in each drive (one zone 5 yards from midfield to gain the first down, and one zone 5 yards from the goal line to score a TD).

ROSTERS

- a) Game is played with 5vs5 or 6vs6 or 7vs7, depending on number of players per team in each division.
- b) Teams must start a game with a minimum of five players. In the event of an injury, a team with insufficient substitute players may play with four players on the field, but no fewer than four.
- c) The default set up in each division is as follows, and will only deviate from this if there aren't enough players to play as planned:

-K5-1st: 6v6

-2nd/3rd: 6v6

-4th/5th: 6v6

-Middle School: 6v6

TIMING AND OVERTIME

- a) Games are played in four 10-minute quarters. Quarters are continuous clock except for the last minute of the 2nd and 4th quarters, which will be actual football clock. Other than that, the clock stops only for timeouts.
- b) Halftime is two minutes long, maximum.
- c) Each time the ball is spotted, a team has 30 seconds to snap the ball. Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced.
- d) Each team has one 30-second timeout per half.
- e) Officials can stop the clock at their discretion.
- f) In the event of an injury, the clock will stop and restart when the injured player is removed from the field of play.
- g) If the score is tied at the end of regulation, the game will go into overtime. Overtime (OT) Period is used to determine a winner.

OT format is as follows:

i) First possession choice goes to the winner of regulation coin toss; loser of toss chooses direction.

ii) Each team gets at least 1 possession; all regulation rules & penalties are in effect, there are no time-outs.

iii) Each team starts with the ball at the 6-yard line going towards closest goal line (1 play to score)

(1) Teams can run or pass the ball. Extra points will be the same as regulation play.

(2) Interceptions can be returned for a touchdown—this ends the game and the team that scored wins.

iv) Change of Possession:

(1) Change of possession takes place when Team scores or does not score a touchdown.

(2) Team B takes possession on the same 6-yard line going in the same direction as team A. Team B begins on the 6-yard line.

v) OT periods:

(1) 1st OT & 2nd OT: Team's alternate possession. Teams have one (1) play to score for each OT.

- 3rd OT or more OTs: score or yardage gained will end game. If teams score, then the game goes to next OT. If Team A doesn't score, then the yards gained is marked. Team B runs 1 play--if they don't score, yards gained is marked. Team gaining most yardage wins.

SCORING

a) Touchdown: 6 points

b) PAT (Point after Touchdown): 1-point (5-yard line) or 2 points (10-yard line) Note: 1-point PAT is pass only, 2-point PAT can be run or pass.

c) Safety: 2 points

d) A Safety occurs when the ball carrier is declared down in his/her own end zone. They can be called down when their flags are pulled by a defensive player, their flag falls out, they step out of bounds or they hit the ground with their knee or arm. A Safety also occurs when there is an offensive penalty in the end zone.

e) A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-point conversion (from the 5-yard line) or a 2 point (from the 10-yard line). Any change, once a decision is made to try for the extra point, requires a charged time out. Decision cannot be changed after a penalty. Interceptions on conversions cannot be returned.

f) Mercy Rule: After one team is winning by 28 points or more, the losing team gets one offensive series to continue regulation play. If they do not score, the game goes into scrimmage mode (game technically ends scoring wise). The losing team has the option of continuing to play offense and defense in a game situation or play offense only for the remainder of the game. Scores do not count after entering Scrimmage mode. The game continues until the clock expires. The defense on the winning team cannot rush the QB after going into scrimmage mode.

COACHES

- a) Coaches are typically volunteer parents or family members helping the players learn and enjoy the game. Parents are encouraged to support the coach at all time.
- b) Coaches are allowed on the field to direct players according to need and division. Coaches must move to the sidelines before the snap of the ball. Offensive coach can stay on field but must stay away from players playing; defensive coach must go to sideline prior to start of play.
- c) Coaches are expected to adhere to Crossover Sports sportsmanship philosophies, coaching guidelines and remember they are to display a Christ-like attitude.
- d) Coaches need to have their team at the appropriate field at least 10 minutes prior to game time to meet with referees.

LIVE BALL / DEAD BALL

- The ball must be snapped between the legs to start play
- Substitutions may be made on any dead ball. You must always substitute from the same side of the field.
- Team must have a minimum of four (4) players but no more than the decided amount on the field at a time.
- The play is ruled “dead” when:
 - Ball-carrier’s flag is pulled
 - Ball-carrier steps out of bounds
 - Incomplete pass
 - Ball hits the ground
 - Touchdown, PAT or safety is scored
 - Ball-carrier’s knee hits the ground

- Ball-carrier's flag falls out (ball is spotted where the flag is on the ground)
 - Receiver has one (1) or no flags when catching the ball (ball is spotted where the receiver caught the ball)
 - Any player who starts a play without a flag is down where he or she touches the ball
- There are no fumbles! Ball is spotted where the ball-carrier's feet were at the time of the fumble.
 - In the case of an inadvertent whistle, the offense has two options: 1. Take the ball where it was when the whistle blew down is consumed 2. Replay the down from the original line of scrimmage.

PENALTIES

The referee will call all penalties.

- Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play. This is considered a judgement call.
- Players cannot question judgement calls. Only the team captain or the head coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and rule interpretations.
- All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage, except for SPOT FOULS.
- Games cannot end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines.
- If the distance to the goal is shorter than the penalty yardage, then the penalty will be assessed half the distance to the goal.
- Loss of down means that down is consumed.
- Any loss of down on the third down results in a turnover on downs and the other team taking possession.

OFFENSIVE PENALTIES

PENALTY	ENFORCEMENT
Offside/False Start	-5 yds from LOS; replay the down
Delay of Game	-5 yds from LOS; replay the down
Illegal Motion	-5 yds from LOS; replay the down
Illegal Forward Pass	-5 yds from LOS; loss of down
Offensive Pass Interference	-5 yds from LOS; loss of down
Impeding the Rusher	-5 yds from LOS; loss of down
Screening, Blocking, or Running with the Ball Carrier	<u>SPOT FOUL.</u> -5 yds from spot; loss of down
Charging	SPOT FOUL. -10 yds from spot; loss of down
Flag Guarding	SPOT FOUL. -10 yds from spot; loss of down
Offensive Unnecessary Roughness	SPOT FOUL. -10 yds from spot; loss of down

DEFENSIVE PENALTIES

PENALTY	ENFORCEMENT
Offside	+5 yds from LOS; replay down
Illegal Rush	+5 yds from LOS; replay down
Illegal Flag Pull	+5 yds from LOS; automatic first down
Roughing the Passer	+10 yds from LOS; automatic first down
Taunting	+10 yds from LOS; automatic first down
Defensive Pass Interference	<u>SPOT FOUL</u> . Automatic first down
Holding	<u>SPOT FOUL</u> . +5 yds from spot; automatic first down
Stripping	<u>SPOT FOUL</u> . +10 yds from spot; automatic first down
Defensive Unnecessary Roughness	<u>SPOT FOUL</u> . +10 yds from spot; automatic first down
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	+10 yds from LOS; automatic first down

B. Coaching Responsibilities

As a coach involved in youth sports, our overall responsibility is three-fold:

1. Development *OFF* the field
2. Development *ON* the field
3. Ensuring that our players enjoy their time with us

Notice that winning games is not on the list of a coach's main goals or responsibilities. Let's walk through each of these quickly before moving on . . .

DEVELOPMENT *OFF* THE FIELD

First and foremost, the goal of Crossover Sports is to help our players, coaches, and parents grow in their knowledge, understanding, and devotion to God and His word. This means aiming to leverage each practice, game, discussion with referees, and pre/post game talk to glorify God and give a clearer picture of the gospel.

Coaches are the boots on the ground in the mission of building up of strong, confident, gospel-centered men and women in the context of sports and of life in general. Going through devotion material with the same passion we go through a practice and making it clear to our players that we care a thousand times more about who they are and how they are as a person than we do about how they perform as players.

Don't be content to simply be known as a person who teaches players about basketball but seek to be a transforming influence in the lives of those around you throughout the season.

DEVELOPMENT *ON THE FIELD*

Next, coaches should strive to help their players grow as much as they can as players and decision-makers on the field. This means that rather than teaching plays and scripts, coaches should teach decision-making and skills that translate to a game as much as possible. For younger players, this simply means ensuring that technique and form on basic skills. As players grow and develop, they should be challenged with not only WHAT their coaches ask of them, but WHY they make the decisions they do. This means helping them understand concepts like good route running, leading a receiver, anticipation, and spacing on offense and defense.

Our players should be able to tell us more than how to run “Set Play #1” and they should know more about the game itself after their season is over. Again, don’t just focus on WHAT or HOW, but focus on WHY players should play a certain way. If they can grow as decision-makers and can grow in their skill, as well as their Football IQ, they will be better prepared for the sport at a higher level and it will raise the level of our league as a whole.

ENSURING ENJOYMENT

Finally, coaches should do everything they can to make sure that each child in the program--and on their team, especially--has a good time while they are involved in Crossover Sports. No matter the player’s skill, stage, or age, we want to ensure that they come away from the season wishing it lasted longer and that it didn’t have to end.

To this end, if a coach can go through a season and finish with their players being excited about the sport--as well as hungry to continue in their development--they coach has had a successful season on the field.

Coaches should make practice as fun as possible and make games as enjoyable as they can, because they should coach with the proper perspective that the game has very little bearing on real life.

OTHER COACHING RESPONSIBILITIES

There are more concrete roles that a coach must fulfill or at least help fulfill throughout the season. A coach must serve as a primary communicator for the team, the head administrator, as well as the overall leader of the team.

- Communicator: This role will be the most important to ensuring that the season runs as smoothly as possible. Throughout the season, the coach will need to clearly and consistently notify everyone on the team of practice/game times, locations, and any changes that may occur during the season. This typically involves a weekly email letting the team know where they are expected to be and when they are expected to be there. They must also assist league administrators in the communication for special events like picture day or the end of the season celebration.
 - The primary form of communication is email, as well as the designated app. Coaches may also text their parents or use another messaging app like GroupMe.
- Administrator: While very similar to being a good communicator, the role of an administrator is a little different in the purpose it serves. This will come in handy when deciding if the team will have a snack schedule, organizing food for the end of the year celebration, and then deciding how early a team should arrive for games during the season. Once uniforms arrive, it will be important that the coach keeps a note of any exchanges or issues that need to be addressed, and then communicates those needs to a league administrator.
 - Parents can help a lot in this role, so be sure to seek out help from that extremely vital resource.

C. Practice Procedures

- Time/Location: All teams will practice during the week on one of the following nights: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, or Friday (if needed). Teams will also have the option to practice on Saturdays. These days, times, and locations will remain set throughout the season unless a special circumstance requires an adjustment.
 - Practices will take place on three possible fields: the Chapel Field, Sharon Field 1, or Sharon Field 2. The Sharon Fields are located next to the newest building on the campus of Sharon Church, while the Chapel Field is located next to the White Chapel Building.
 - There may be up to three teams on a single field at a time so plan on sharing space and be prepared for an imperfect practice environment.
 - Typically, younger teams are placed at the earliest time slot possible (around 5:30 or 6:00), and the older teams will fill in the rest of the schedule.
 - Practices will only last an hour so it is important that coaches and their teams arrive at least a few minutes early so they can start as soon as their hour begins. This also means that it is important for teams to clear the field as soon as possible after their hour is up and that they keep all equipment near the practice space for the next team.
- Equipment: Crossover will provide footballs, cones, and some practice flag belts for teams early on. This will not be enough to sustain an entire practice, so it is recommended that coaches bring some of their own equipment as well. All of the equipment will be located in the white Sharon Church trailer that will be parked in the parking lot by the fields.
- Clean-Up Procedure: The coach should place all equipment back in the trailer at the end of their practice.

D. Game Procedures

The most important part of a coach's gameday is their preparedness for the game and their ability to limit the new distractions that may come up due to the chaos of a game day. This could include where they will meet their team before the game, having a solid plan for substitution patterns, as well as main coaching points during the game. There will be more information about substitution patterns and coaching points/styles later on in this manual, but here are some practical points for game days:

- Pre-game: It is typically recommended that coaches and players try to arrive 30 minutes before their game is set to begin. This gives them an opportunity to verify their roster for the day, talk with players for a bit about things other than the game, and then be ready to take the field as soon as the prior game ends. Choose a designated spot to meet as consistently as possible to limit confusion and to keep the team in a reliable routine each week.
 - The recommendation is that coaches warm their team up with stretches and then a couple of simple drills to get blood flowing and prepare players for the physical activity ahead of them.
 - Referees will lead teams in prayer at midfield before the game, as well as open the floor for any questions about rules or how the game will be called.
- Halftime: As previously stated, halftime will typically only last a few minutes, so it is best to use it as a chance to let players catch their breath and stay hydrated. Go over any adjustments that may seem necessary but don't overload players as they probably won't remember much in the heat of the moment.

- Post-game: No matter how the game turned out or how the team performed, coaches should always end on an encouraging note. Go over the game, encourage players, and remind them of when the next team event is.
 - Be sure to clean up the bench area and to leave it better than it was at the start of the game. Trash cans will be placed all around the gym so there is no reason trash cannot be thrown away.

Part II: Coaching points

The majority of time spent in practice this season will consist of combining a series of skills to practice plays or formations, however, there are some baseline skills necessary to perform well in game situations.

SKILLS & DRILLS

THROWING/PASSING

Throwing technique

Hand placement: Have fingers spread with at least a couple of fingers on the laces--typically the pinky and ring finger, at least. Players should not have all four fingers on the laces, as this leads to a tossing or pushing motion rather than a true throw. The pointer finger and thumb should form a “C” shape. When throwing the ball, the pointer finger should be the last finger to touch the ball.

Arm/Shoulder movement: The ball should be held with the throwing arm in an “L” shape. Bring the ball up to the shoulder, behind the ear (arm is shaped like a “V” at this point), and then back out. Release the ball at the top of that release and follow through toward the opposite hip. Off-shoulder should remain closed rather than square, and the throwing shoulder should finish over the top foot--this means that the shoulders should remain perpendicular to the sideline and allow the off shoulder and the top foot to serve as the aiming mechanism when throwing.

Footwork: Feet should be stacked, about shoulder-width apart and knees bent. Toes should point to the sideline along with the hips. Step toward the target with

the top foot on the throw and shift weight from the back foot to the front foot as you release the ball.

When dropping back to pass after receiving a snap, the QB should slide back three to five steps with their eyes up and the ball ready to be thrown when a receiver comes open.

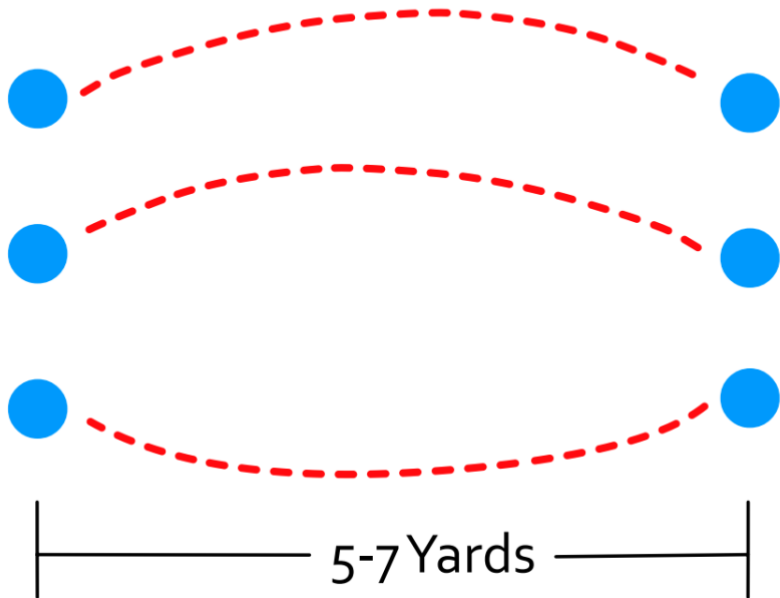
This should all be one smooth, fluid motion with the ball coming over the top, the feet staying spaced and active, and the weight moving toward the target. It is important to throw the ball so that you lead the receiver so they can catch the ball without having to stop--throw the ball where

Throwing Drills

“Simple Passing”

Pair players up and have them stand 5 to 7 yards apart. Simply have them throw the ball back and forth while they work on using proper technique; focusing on how they hold the ball, stepping into their pass, and then keeping their hips squared toward the “sideline.” Look for a tight spiral and check their grip and follow through if the spiral is too loose. As players start to get the form down, have them take a few steps back after every few passes. The key in this drill is technique and doing things right rather than doing them quickly or with flash.

Simple Passing

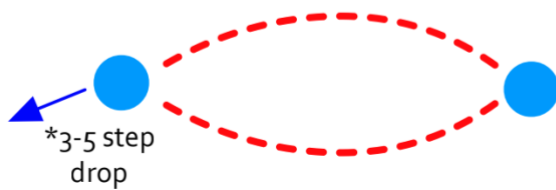


“Progressive QB”

This drill helps refine and improve passing technique by concentrating on proper arm and hand movement, as well as perfecting throwing motion while using only the throwing arm. Pair off participants into two parallel lines. Players start on both knees, throwing to their partners five yards away. Show players how to follow through with their arm, so that their thumbs end up pointing down. Have each player begin with football held above his or her waist. Demonstrate how to throw from no higher than their ear.

-Progressions: After several throws, have players switch to kneeling on right knee. Then after several throws that way, have them switch to left knee. Next, have them throw standing up with feet together. Finally, have them practice a three-step drop, then a five-step drop before throwing.

Progressive QB



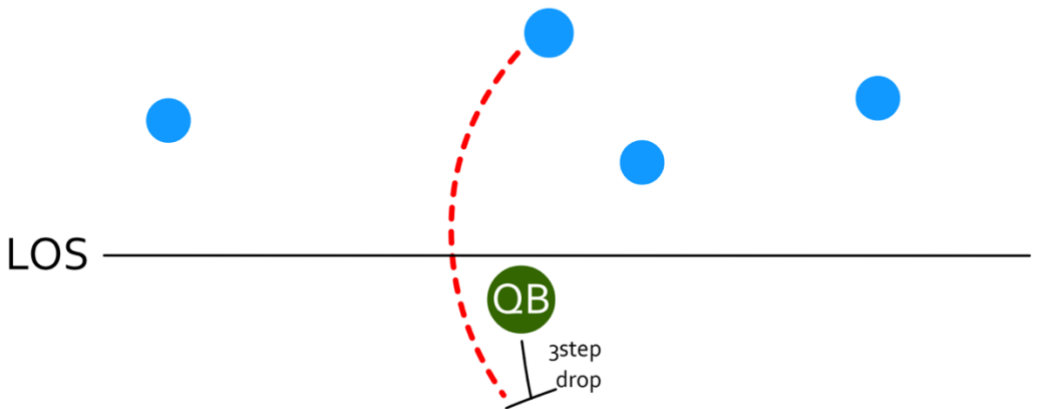
“Drop Back and Pass”

Place one player at the line of scrimmage (LOS) and then place three or four players out in the field. The player at the LOS will be your QB and the players in the field will be receivers. The drill begins with the QB taking a three-step drop surveying the field. At the top of the drop, one of the receivers in the field should throw their hands up to their chest as a target, and then once the QB sees the target, they should step into a throw towards the target.

-Coaches can stand behind the QB and point to the receiver they want to have the ball thrown to (so the QB can't see and plan ahead of time), or the coach can simply number the receivers and shout a receiver's number at the top of the drop if they want.

-For younger or less experienced players, it would be wise to begin with the drop back and pass to a predetermined target before you move on to the concept of decision-making from the quarterback position.

Drop Back *And Pass*



CATCHING

Catching Technique

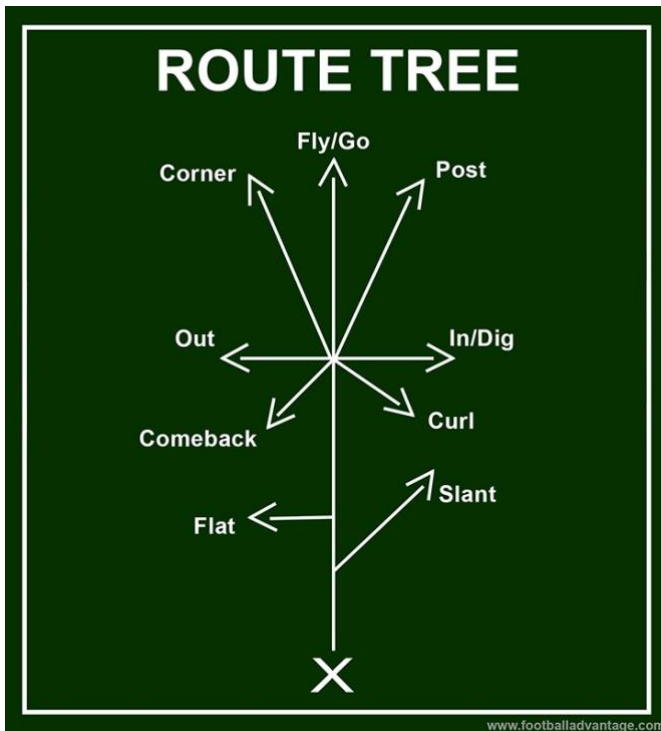
Eyes: Receivers should watch the ball all the way to their hands. At younger ages, players will naturally want to close their eyes. This makes it important to remind them that the best way to keep the ball from hitting them is to have their eyes on the ball and have their hands up!

Hands: A receiver's hands need to be spread out while their pointer fingers and thumbs should form a diamond shape in front of their body. Upon receiving the ball, they should squeeze the ball with both hands--one-handed catches always look great, but they should not be practiced at these age groups. If a player makes a catch like that, don't discourage it as long as they don't make a habit of only going for one-handed catches. Remember: Hands spread, diamond in the middle, and squeeze!

Attack the Ball: A great skill to have in any sport is attacking a ball while it is in the air rather than simply letting the ball fall to you. Receivers should "high point" the ball--this means to jump up and extend their arms/hands in order to catch the ball at the highest point possible. Once they grab the ball, they should immediately pull it into their chest and secure it.

RECEIVER ROUTE TREE

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Post | 6. Out |
| 2. Corner/Flag | 7. In Route |
| 3. Post-Corner | 8. Slant |
| 4. GO-Route | 9. Drag |
| 5. Screen | 10. Curl/Comeback |

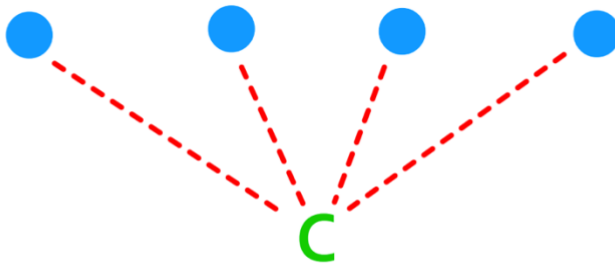


Catching Drills

“Coach Throw and Catch”

This drill is extremely simple but should become more and more difficult as your standards for technique get higher as the season progresses. The drill consists of three or four players in a line five yards from the coach (the quarterback) --as things progress, have another player fill this role. The coach will throw the ball to each of the players down the line and make sure that they use proper technique and form when doing so. As the players get better at it, the coach can throw “bad” passes that force adjustments by the receiver, as well as have the receivers move back to maintain the challenge within the drill.

Coach
Throw and Catch

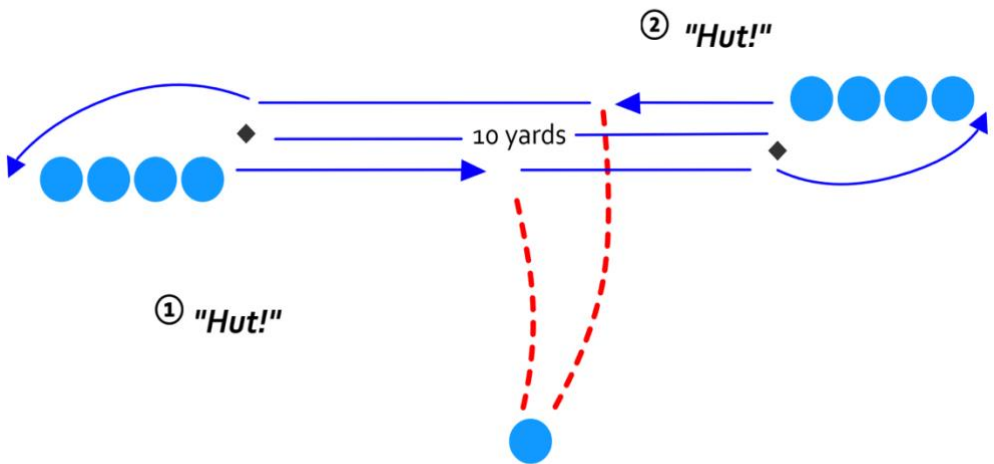


“Back and Forth”

Set up two cones on each end of a 10 yard line, have players split up into two lines at either end of the line, and then have a coach (or a player for more game-like reps) stand at a point 5-10 yds away with a football--they will be your QB. When the quarterback yells “HUT!” or “GO!”, the first player in one of the lines will run to the cone on the other end of the line with their eyes up and their hands ready. Around the midpoint in the “route”, the QB will throw the ball to the receiver, who should catch the ball, get in the back of the line closest to them, and then throw the ball back to the QB or a nearby coach. The drill will repeat until each player has gotten reps from each side and until the coach sees fit.

-To add another skill to this, coaches can add a center to the drill and have the players run on the snap of the ball. This will get players in the habit of watching the ball rather than listening to the quarterback, and it will help you work on the C/QB exchange.

Back and Forth



“Run the Route”

Set your players up with a center, a quarterback, and one receiver lined up out wide. Choose a route for your receiver run (SEE ROUTE TREE FOR REFERENCE) and have them execute the route once the ball is snapped.

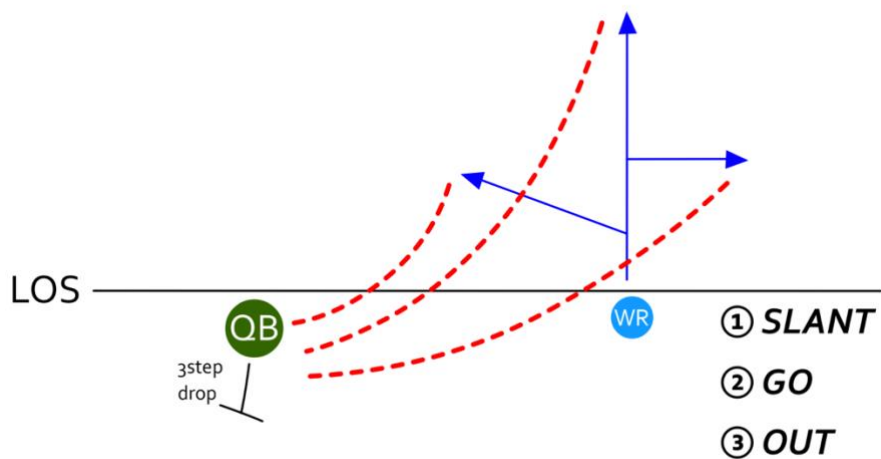
-Be sure to emphasize that routes need to be crisp and sharp: receivers need to cut hard and move in straight lines unless the route is curved. Have your receivers plant their foot hard on cuts and explode out of it with their eyes up and hands at their chest ready for the pass.

-As things progress, you can add defenders to cover the receiver, or to play a zone in a certain part of the field. It is also possible to add a rusher to force quicker decision-making by your quarterback.

-These drills will also help your defenders work on locating the ball in the air while playing defense. Even on defense, players should attack the ball in the air and do their best to catch the ball/bat the ball down.

NOTE: These catching and passing drills are both a great chance to work on both skills at the same time, so when you are working on passing, encourage proper technique on the catch. When you are working on catching, encourage good form and habits from your quarterbacks in the drills.

Run the Route



HANDOFFS AND PITCHES

The handoff between a quarterback and a runner is a relatively simple skill that takes a lot of practice to perform at a consistently high level. Pitches are the same way but are closer to passes and catches so it is a little easier for players to grasp. Either way, both skills have two parts: the quarterback and the runner.

Handoff/Pitch Technique

HANDOFFS

For the RB:

- The runner's inside arm should be up--that is, the arm closest to the QB. If the handoff is to the left, the RIGHT arm should be up; if the handoff is to the right, the LEFT arm should be up. No matter which direction, the inside arm is up.
- The outside arm should be around the runner's belly button, creating a clear opening for the quarterback to place the ball.
- Make sure they don't reach out for the ball or lean into the handoff, rather they should allow the QB to place the ball in their gut.
- As they get more comfortable, they should build the habit of keeping their eyes up to survey open lanes.

For the QB:

- The quarterback must place the ball in the opening between the running back's arms, so it is important to look at their "target" and ensure that the ball gets there.
- Their arm should be extended, and they should allow the ball to simply meet the runner--they do not need to slam the ball into their teammate's gut or onto their arms.

- After receiving the snap and securing the ball, the QB should move their feet to get the ball to the runner in the backfield.

PITCHES

For the RB:

- Due to the increased distance covered in these pitches, runners should treat the pitch like a pass and catch it with two hands.
- Runners should keep moving and not stop to catch the ball unless they absolutely have to.

For the QB:

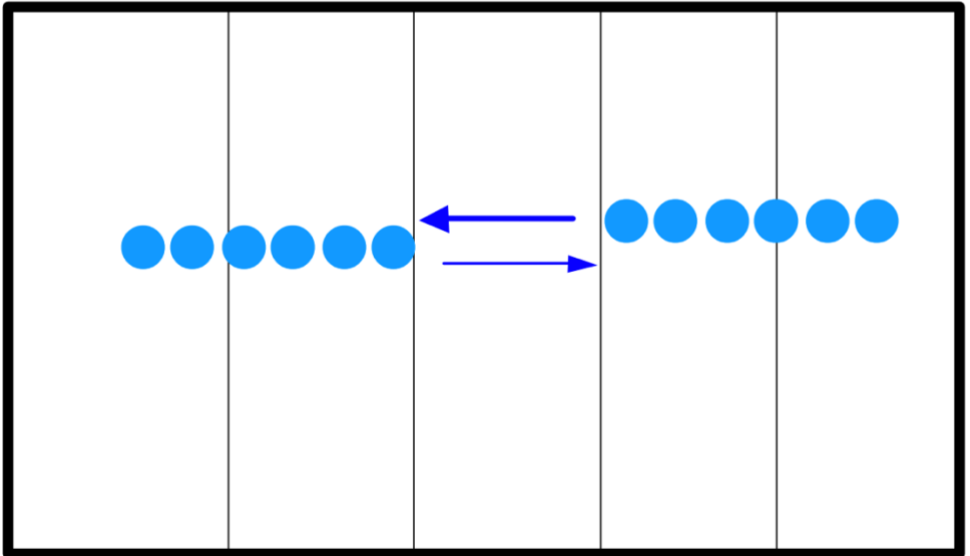
- QBs should hold the ball with two hands and toss the ball out to where the runner will be.
- The ball should move (in the quarterback's hands) from their outside hip toward their target with a smooth follow-through.
- Encourage the QB to step toward their target and finish with arms extended toward their target.

Handoff Drills

“Handoff Relay”

Here, you can have a number of players work on the proper way to give and receive a hand-off. Divide the team into two lines facing each other with approximately 20 yards in between them. One line will have the footballs and then after the drill ends, move the balls to the other side. On the coach’s signal, the players at the front of both lines will run toward straight ahead. The players should meet in the middle with the “quarterback” holding the ball out and pushing it into the running back’s gut; the running practice proper arm alignment. After the exchange, both players continue to the back of the next line. Continue until all players have gone through once from each side and then switch which sides the balls are on. Emphasize holding the ball properly when running, good hand-off exchange (hand-off acceptance target, and good hand-offs into target). This is a great drill to use if you are employing reverse, double or triple reverse plays that rely on a smooth hand-off to be effective.

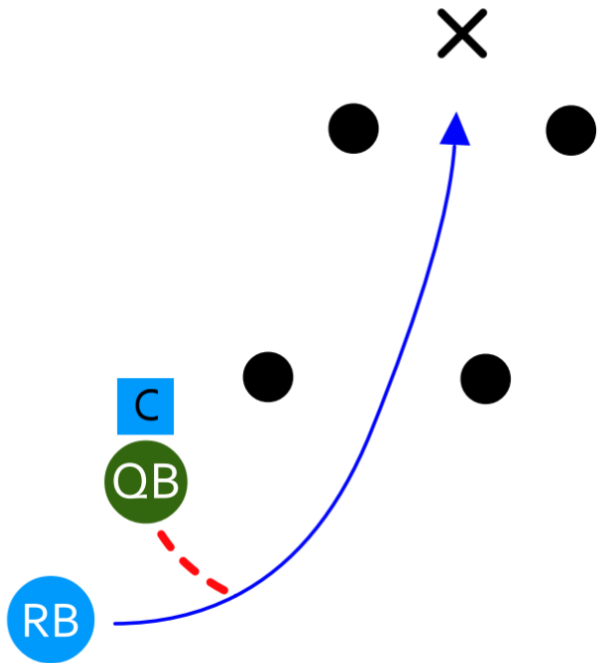
Team Hand-Off Relay



“Sweep Angle Drill/Don’t Run Too Wide”

While one of a Running Back’s goals is not to be tackled, the more important goal is to gain yardage and score. Many young players only concentrate on not getting tackled and run in an East and West direction and then finally running out of bounds for no gain. This happens a lot when a sweep play is called. Use this drill to help correct the habit of sweeping too wide when running with the ball. Set up a pair of cones about seven yards from the center, where a tight wide-receiver would line-up. This is the area that the runner should run through. At the snap of the ball, the QB will hand-off to the RB who will then cut up field and through the cones. Add another set of cones a few yards apart about 5 yards down field and put a defender there – the RB needs to get through the cones without having his/her flag pulled by the defender. Rotate positions as you progress.

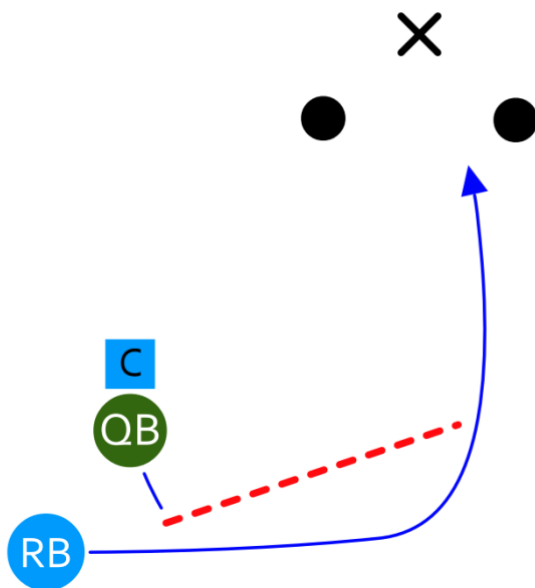
Don't Run Too Wide



“Fake Handoff, Pass to RB”

This drill is essentially the same as the previous drill, except the quarterback will fake the handoff to the running back, who will then swing out wide and look for the ball from the QB. At that point, the quarterback will throw the ball to the running back; the RB will then need to avoid having their flag pulled by the defender down the field.

Fake Hand-off **Pass to RB**



SNAPPING THE BALL

This is one of the more overlooked parts of the game, but it is possibly the most important part of any play you run. If a quarterback has a good snap, it can give them an extra second or two to make decisions or get the play going, but if the snap is too high or too low (or even too soft/hard), the rusher gets an extra step on the play and the QB is at a disadvantage.

Snapping Technique

HAND PLACEMENT: The most important parts in snapping the ball are the center's hand placement and the center's stance. In terms of hand placement, the center's strong hand should be spread on the ball (as if they are throwing it) with the ball on the ground--they may want to have their off hand on the ball as well, but they do not have to. When given the signal, the center should bring the ball backwards between their legs and into the QB's hands.

For shotgun snaps, the hand placement should be the same, but a second hand will probably be necessary. On the snap, the center should essentially throw the ball backwards between their legs with enough force to reach the QB. They do not need to sling it or roll it, but simply bring the ball off the ground, straight back toward the quarterback.

STANCE: Commonly, the center tends to just bend over while keeping their legs straight; this leads to a lot of discomfort, as well as poor balance. Instead, the center should bend their knees to a squat position, with their knees at about a 90° angle, and their back should be straight. Be sure to encourage them to keep their head up and maintain their balance.

The CENTER/QB exchange is something that can be practiced along with almost every other skill you would practice, so it is encouraged to practice this exchange every practice with as many different combinations as you can. This is a simple skill but gives teams a lot of trouble if they don't practice it enough.

NOTE: ALL DIVISIONS CONTAINING PLAYERS ABOVE THIRD GRADE **MUST** SNAP THE BALL THROUGH THE CENTER'S LEGS. KINDERGARTEN THROUGH SECOND GRADE MAY SNAP THE BALL FROM THE SIDE.

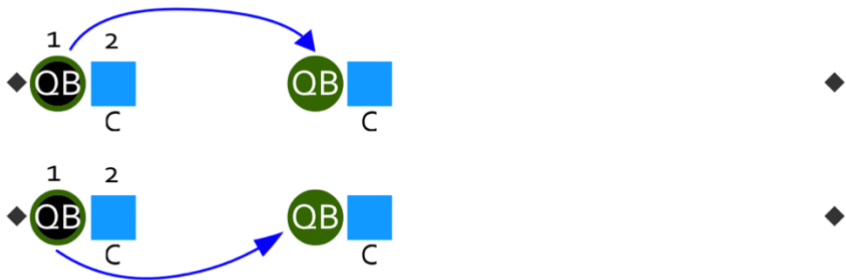
Snapping Drills

There aren't many drills that specifically practice the skill of snapping the ball other than simply pairing players up and having them snap the ball to one another and then rotate. Once they have mastered the simple skill, start adding a shotgun snap and then add a route for the center after they snap the ball.

"Snap Leapfrog"

One drill that coaches can use as a fun competition for a change of pace in practice is a game of leapfrog. Coaches will place two sets of cones about 10 yards apart from one another and have two pairs of players at one end of each set of cones. One player will start as the center and the other will be a quarterback. On the coach's signal, the center will snap the ball to the QB; after the QB receives the snap, they will take the ball and get in a snapping position in front of their partner--the QB is now the center and then center is now the QB. They will continue that pattern until they reach the other cone at the end of the line. The team that crosses the finish line first wins. Continue until each player has gotten a turn and continue to switch up teams to improve comradery and familiarity with teammates.

Snap Leapfrog



PULLING FLAGS

This is the primary focus of defense in flag football. If a team can consistently pull flags when first given the chance, they will have a significant advantage over the course of the game. Pulling flags well allows defenses to keep offensive gains minimal while preventing explosive plays.

Flag Pulling Technique

Defenders should always be in an athletic stance with their knees bent, their head up, and their feet moving. When pulling flags, defenders should keep their eyes on the hips of the offensive player--don't watch the ball or the ball carrier's eyes--and their hands should be out and ready to go after the flags. A few key points regarding pulling flags:

- Once the defender is within a few yards of the offensive player, they should shorten their stride and take quick, choppy steps to remain balanced.
- Slow down enough to be able to change directions when the ball-handler makes a move to avoid the defender.
- Players should not swipe at the ball carrier's flags, rather they should reach for the top of the flag and pull down with both hands.
- When pursuing a ball carrier, it is important to run at an angle in order to meet the player down the field. Run where the player is going, not where they are at the moment.
- Players should use the sideline like a second defender and try their best to funnel the offensive player towards the sideline to limit the amount of space they have to move.

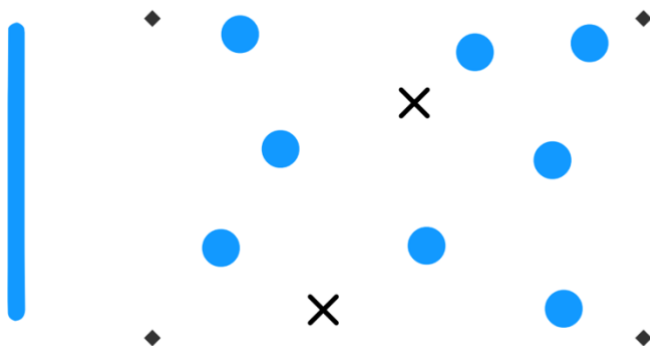
Flag Pulling Drills

“Sharks and Minnows”

For this game, designate an area on the field for play. All players must stay within this designated area. Start with one or two players designated as the “Shark(s)”. The rest of the players are the “Minnows”. The object of the “Shark” is to grab the flag of the “Minnows”. Once a “Minnow” has their flag grabbed, they then become “Sharks”, and attempt to grab the flag from the other “Minnows”. At the start of the game the “Minnows” should be on the run trying to avoid the “Sharks”. The game ends when there is only 1 “Minnow” remaining.

-Variation: The drill is the same but have the “minnows” run from one end zone to the other. Once they make it safely, allow them to catch their breath, then have them go back the other way. When an offensive player has their flag pulled, they go on defense for the next run.

Sharks and Minnows



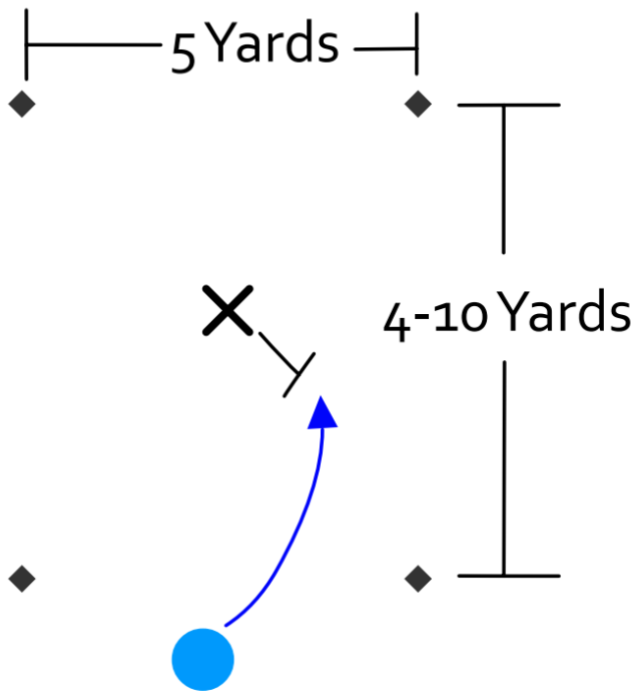
“Run the Lane”

Set up a playing area with four cones in a rectangle that is about 4-10 yards deep and only five yards wide (on the short side). Place one defender in the middle of the box and one ball carrier on one end of the box. The ball carrier must try and get to the other end of the box without getting their flag pulled by the defender. Coaches can conduct this in multiple sets across the practice space in pairs or trios to allow for maximum reps as both the ball carrier and the defender. Encourage the defenders to use the sideline as an extra defender, to remain low and balanced, and to keep their eyes on the ball carrier’s hips.

-VARIATION: As your players do this more and more, you can begin to expand the playing area (or shrinking it) and then change the dynamics, as well. Here are some examples:

- 2 Defenders v. 1 Ball Carrier
- Gauntlet: Have a line of ball carriers at the edge of the box and have them go one after the other to test the endurance and focus of the defender(s).

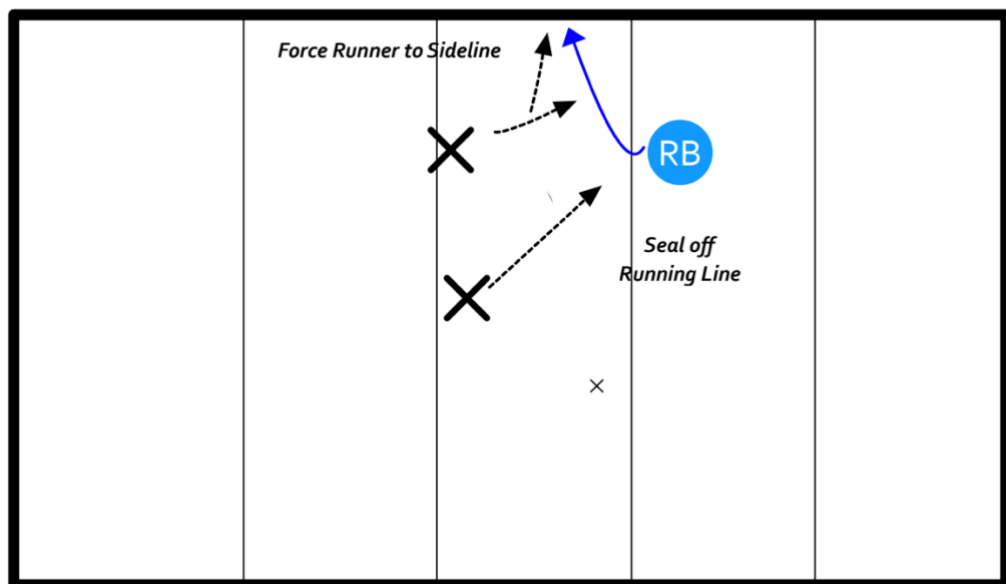
Run the Lane



“Use the Sideline”

The sideline can be looked upon as an extra defender. If defenders get the ball carrier close to the sideline, they limit the number of directions the ball carrier can run. For this drill, shorten the width of the field. At one side place a cone and the sideline should be used as the other boundary. This is the area that the runner is restricted to. This drill is performed with 1 ball carrier and 2 or more defensive players. On the coach's command, the ball carrier should start down field. It is the defenders' job to cut off the ball carrier's running lanes, forcing the runner towards the sideline. The Defense is essentially cornering the ball carrier.

Use the Sideline

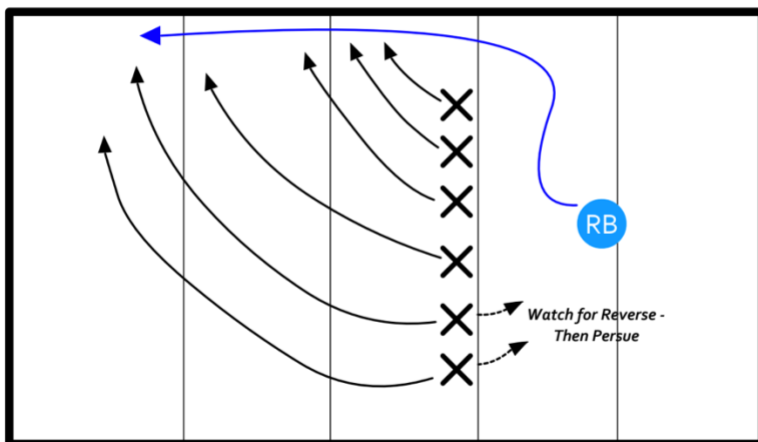


“Angled Pursuit”

It’s very important to teach your defense the proper angle of pursuit. Many young defenders will simply chase a ball carrier from behind, leaving you with players behind the ball carrier all the way down the field. Here, explain the importance of pursuing from an angle rather than a straight line. First, walk your players through their pursuit of the ball carrier. Players furthest from the play/ball carrier will have to take the largest angle--that is, they will have to run furthest down the field. Emphasize that the players should be running to where the ball carrier is going, not where they are now. After walking the defenders through their angles, you can set up the drill to run at game speed.

This drill can be done with only a few players at a time or the entire defense. At the coach’s command or snap of the ball the defenders should begin pursuit of the ball carrier. For this drill the defenders should simply touch the ball carrier. The ball carrier continues down the sideline until all players have touched him. Ideally the defense should touch the ball carrier every three to five yards if they take the proper angle.

Angled Pursuit



FOOTWORK

Footwork Technique

There are a few different techniques that your players will need when it comes to succeeding in flag football, but they can all be summed up in either changing speed, changing direction, or both.

When **changing speed**, the primary goal is going to be maintaining control without slowing down/speeding up too much. As previously mentioned, the primary technique for this is chopping your steps and staying balanced.

In **changing direction**, players should still seek to maintain control and balance, but the goal is to be explosive when they change direction. Whether running a route, running with the ball, or pursuing an offensive player, players should be explosive when a quick change of direction is needed. The final point when changing direction is trying to maintain fluidity in the hips and using them as a steering wheel of sorts--most of the time, a player will go wherever their hips are pointing.

No matter the context, instruct players to build the proper habits. They should:

- Sink their hips
- Bend their knees
- Chop their feet
- Keep their weight on the balls of their feet--don't lean forward or play flat-footed.

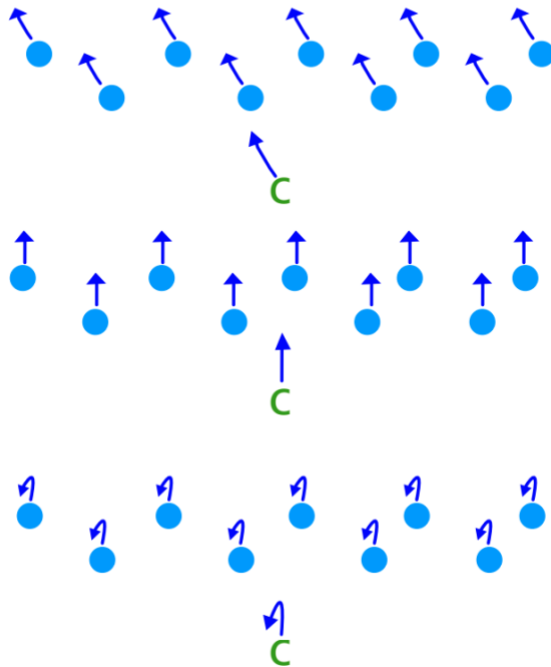
Footwork Drills

“Simple Change of Direction”

Line your players up in two parallel lines with five to seven players in each line. Place a coach in front of the lines in the middle of the lines with a ball in their hands. The lines should be facing the coach and should begin in a low and loaded defensive stance. The coach will give a series of signals that will instruct the players where to go, and each series should end with a sprint back toward the coach. Encourage players to keep their eyes up the entire time and to never take their eyes off of the coach. The signals are all based on the direction the coach points the football and are as follows:

- **Straight back**→ Backpedal
- **Back left/right**→ Turn hips at a 45-degree angle and move the direction the coach is pointing
- **Hard left/right**→ Bring hips square and slide to whichever side the coach signals
- **Pull ball back**→ Plant back foot and sprint in a straight line until they pass the coach’s line

Simple Change of Direction

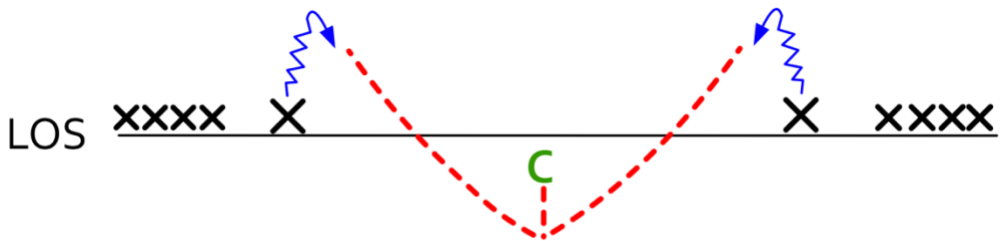


“Backpedal and Attack”

This drill will simulate players defending a player on the perimeter and trying to prevent a completed pass. Place players in a line out wide on the opposite side of the LOS of the coach. The players will take turns playing as defensive backs (DB) one at a time on a simulated receiver. On the snap, the coach will drop back and simulate surveying the field; on the snap, the player will backpedal as if they are defending a receiver. After the coach completes his drop, he will throw a pass as if he was throwing a curl route--the defender should stop their backpedal and sprint to attack the ball in the air and try their best to intercept it or bat it down.

Once you go through this a couple of times, the next logical progression is to simply go 1-on-1 on the perimeter.

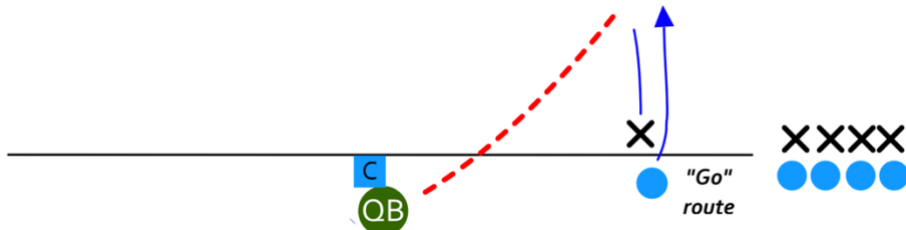
Backpedal and Attack



“1-on-1: DB and Receiver”

Now, replace the coach with a center and a quarterback. Next, split the line out wide in half and send one of the lines to the offensive side of the ball. A coach will assign a route to the WR and make sure the QB is on the same page. Once the offense is ready, the QB will take the snap and the WR will run the assigned route; the DB should be in a low defensive stance and will defend the route with proper footwork and technique. The DB obviously does not know the route so it will simulate a game situation and should lead to more transfer in game--they will struggle with this concept initially but will be better players the more they work on it.

DB/WR 1v1



NOTE: Be sure that your defenders are not pulling on the receiver's jersey or arms, and that they do not lose their balance. One way to play is to give the WR a cushion of about five yards to allow your defenders time to react without getting beat right off the line of scrimmage. This means the defenders play off the LOS a little more and react when the receiver makes a cut, and that they turn their hips to keep up with the WR without opening them up completely and allowing the receiver to come wide open.

DRILL KEY



Quarterback



Receivers



Center



Wide
Receiver



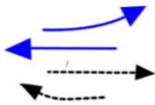
Running
Back



Coach



Defenders



Player Movement



Pass/Throw



Cones

PRACTICE FLOW

One of the toughest things to do as a volunteer coach is to find time/energy to plan practices each week. We know each coach has their own job, family, and life that they need to devote time and energy to before they get around to planning practices and getting ready to coach each week. We want to provide each of you a template for an overall practice plan that will cover the general content for your first eight practices. Please note that these are not a catch-all solution to coaching. Just like the drills we listed above are not the only drills you need or the only drills you should run, these practice templates are not the only thing you need to plan a good practice or have a good season.

GENERAL SEASON-LONG PRACTICE PLAN

Practice #	WHAT (Skills Covered)	HOW (Possible drills used)
1	Team Evaluation + Intro to Basics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Flag Pulling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sharks & Minnows ○ Run the Lane ● Simple Passing ● Handoff Relay ● Snap Leapfrog ● Simple Change of Direction
2	Skills (Cont.) + Team Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Flag Pulling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2v1 ○ FP w/ Sideline ● Handoff Relay ● Simple Change of Direction ● Route Tree Intro <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ QB drop-back intro ○ 3v0 Route Run & Catch ● 3v0 Snap, Handoff, Flag Pull ● Formation Intros + Lining Up/Moving On Ball

3	Intro to Offensive Development + Defensive Basics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● QB dropbacks+throws <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Add rusher/defender ● Route Combinations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Add defenders ● Run the Lane <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Flag pull 2v1 ● Handoff + Angled Pursuit
4	Defensive Development + Offensive Basics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Defensive formation intros ● 1v1 Routes with defender <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Snap + QB Drop Back ● Rushing QB ● 5 or 6 D v. 3 O
5	Skills Refresher + Intro to Playbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Run the Lane ● Handoff Groups/Handoff Relay ● Gauntlet ● 2v1 Flag Pull <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In middle of field ○ Sideline pursuit ● Footwork Drills ● Shell offense

6	Defensive Formations + Fundamentals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Formation refresher/explanation ● Defense v. Run ● Defense v. Pass ● Angled Pursuit ● Footwork ● Gauntlet
7	Plays + Basic Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Combo drills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Snaps + passes + defend ○ Snaps + handoff + run the lane ● Go through playbook and fine tune
8	Offensive & Defensive Refresher + Final Game Prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Q & A ● Scrimmage v. Teammates/Coaches ● Rules Refresher

Substitutions

GAME # 1	1 st Quarter		2 nd Quarter		3 rd Quarter		4 th Quarter	
Player Name	Off	Def	Def	Off	Off	Def	Def	Off
1) JIM	X	X		X		X	X	
2) KEVIN	X	X		X		X	X	
3) MICAH	X		X	X		X		X
4) OSCAR	X		X	X		X		X
5) KELLY	X		X		X	X		X
6) TOBY	X		X		X	X		X
7) MICHAEL		X	X		X		X	X
8) RYAN		X	X		X		X	X
9) HOLLY		X		X	X		X	
10) ANDY		X		X	X		X	

GAME # 2	1 st Quarter		2 nd Quarter		3 rd Quarter		4 th Quarter	
Player Name	Off	Def	Def	Off	Off	Def	Def	Off
1) JIM		X		X	X		X	
2) KEVIN	X	X		X		X	X	
3) MICAH	X	X		X		X	X	
4) OSCAR	X		X	X		X		X
5) KELLY	X		X	X		X		X
6) TOBY	X		X		X	X		X
7) MICHAEL	X		X		X	X		X
8) RYAN		X	X		X		X	X
9) HOLLY		X	X		X		X	X
10) ANDY		X		X	X		X	

GAME #	1 st Quarter		2 nd Quarter		3 rd Quarter		4 th Quarter	
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Player Name	Off	Def	Def	Off	Off	Def	Def	Off
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Player Name	Off	Def	Def	Off	Off	Def	Def	Off
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GAME #	1 st Quarter		2 nd Quarter		3 rd Quarter		4 th Quarter	
Player Name	Off	Def	Def	Off	Off	Def	Def	Off
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