

HEADSETS



WRITTEN FOR COACHES BY COACHES

VOLUME 2: ISSUE 3

get back
TO GREEN

11 Q&A

THROWING MYTHS

BUSTED

**SMALL SCHOOL
PRACTICES**

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

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

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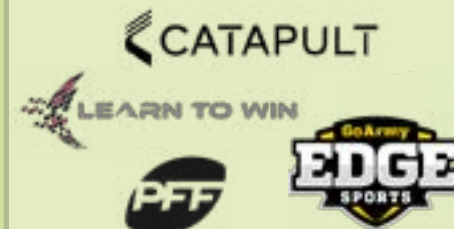
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DEFENSIVE LINE BASICS

PASS RUSH DRILLS



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In this article I will be giving you a few of the pass rush drills that I use with my defensive linemen. In my opinion pass rush is the fun part of being a defensive linemen when doing drills during your individual work time. It is the time where players get to let loose and go upfield, trying to get a sack, hit, or hurry the quarterback and get the crowd and their teammates pumped. For me, it is hard to coach because there are so many moves and strategies that go into pass rushing. What I try to do is keep things simple, give my defensive linemen a few moves to choose from, and make sure they stay in their rushing lanes.

I will show you three drills that I use to help prepare my players to react to a pass block. The first will be a hand combat drill that you can eventually use for pre-practice, a pass rush lane responsibility drill, and what I call the chop rip pass rush move.

Hand Combat Drill:

I use the hand combat drill beginning in my pre-spring practice morning sessions as well as summer sessions. This drill is meant to train my defensive line's hand eye coordination as a reaction to an offensive lineman trying to put their hands on them during a pass rush. The set up for this drill is simple. You will need your defensive linemen to pair up with each other. One lineman will act as an offensive lineman while the other will be the defensive lineman.

Drill Progression:

On the coach's command, the offensive line scout will begin shooting one or both hands at the defensive lineman, trying to get their hands on them and grabbing their jersey. The defensive lineman will react by swatting the offensive lineman's hands off of him. They can club their hands down, up, or to either side.

Once the offensive lineman's hands have been hit, they need to attempt to replace their hands, making the defensive lineman have to get their hands off.

Coaching Points:

Physical hands when getting the offensive lineman's hands off of them.

Don't guess when the offensive lineman is going to shoot their hands. See it and react.

Offensive line scouts will need to change up the timing of their hands to make sure that the defensive lineman is reacting correctly and not just guessing.



Pass Rush Lane Responsibility Drill:

This is a great drill to get your defensive linemen to understand that they have to stay in their assigned pass rushing lanes in order to make sure that they cover the quarterback properly and don't give an easy rushing lane up.

To set up this drill, you will need some cones, trash cans, bags, or even bodies to represent 5 offensive linemen and show the different gaps that the defensive linemen are responsible to cover. I use a simulated ball snap with each of my drills so instead of the center I like to have someone with a ball on a stick, snapping a football or moving their foot to start the drill. I will also have a bag or someone standing where the quarterback would be in order for the defensive linemen to fit up on the quarterback correctly.

Drill Progression:

On the snap or simulated snap of the football, the defensive linemen will fire out of their stances, rushing in their correct rushing lanes.

After rushing their correct lanes, they will fit up on the quarterback, bag, or trash can representing the quarterback. As a switch up you can have a person back where the quarterback should be. As soon as the defensive linemen get close, have the quarterback try to make a move on them and break their contain. This will force the defensive linemen to be focused and be ready to move in order to keep the quarterback contained.

Coaching Points:

Fast get off once the ball is snapped.

Stay in your rushing lane.

Break down on the quarterback.



Pass Rush Move: The Chop Rip:

This is one of the first pass rush moves I teach to my defensive linemen. This is a great drill to work after you have introduced the hand combat drill to them. The way I teach this pass rush move and all of my other moves is to begin the drill close up, performing the drill, and then work back to a three point stance where we read pass, gain ground, and perform the move.

The chop rip is where you chop the hands of the offensive lineman blocking you, turn your hips toward the quarterback, and rip through. This is a great beginner move to practice. It is low risk and even if the chop does not work, the rip move follow through can help get the offensive lineman off of you.

“In my opinion pass rush is the fun part of being a defensive linemen when doing drills during your individual work time. It is the time where players get to let loose and go upfield, trying to get a sack, hit, or hurry the quarterback and get the crowd and their teammates pumped.”

To perform a chop, the defensive lineman will need to wait until the offensive lineman has shot his hands at the defensive lineman. Once his hands are coming at the defensive lineman he will chop up, down, or to a side and will rip his arm nearest to the lineman through to make sure he has broken off contact. The rip move is very similar to an uppercut but with an open hand (the picture below will show it).

Chop Rip Drill Progression Part 1: Close contact:

To set up this drill you will need to pair up all defensive linemen. One will act as an offensive lineman and they will switch after each one gets a defensive rep. The defensive lineman will shade to one side of the scout offensive lineman to simulate the side they have chosen to rush.

Drill progression:

On the coach's command, the offensive player will shoot his hands at the defensive lineman as if they are pass blocking him.

The defensive lineman will chop the hands of the offensive lineman off while flipping their hips to where the quarterback should be. He will rip through and step behind the offensive lineman.

Coaching Points:

Physical hands

Fast hip turn

Big rip move



Chop Rip Drill Part 2: From a 3-point Stance:

This drill will be very similar to the chop rip from close up except that the defensive lineman will be in a 3-point stance and the drill will start with the snap of the football. You can go with a few groups at a time as long as the

defensive lineman can see the ball. It may be good to have a bag or someone stand at quarterback depth behind the scout offensive linemen for the defensive linemen to finish the drill on.

Drill Progression:

At the snap of the ball, the offensive lineman will pass set while the defensive lineman fires out of his stance. Once the defensive lineman closes the distance between himself and the scout offensive lineman, he will chop the offensive hands out of the way and will rip past him. The defensive lineman will break down at the quarterback or bag representing him.

Coaching points:

Great ball get off.

Physical chop and overemphasized rip.

Good finish on the quarterback.



These are just a few basic drills that I work with my defensive linemen in order to prepare them for pass rush situations. The best way, once again to work pass rush in my opinion, is to bring them up close, work the move, master the move, then put it all together.

FOOTBALL: 101

11 QB THROWING MYTHS BUSTED



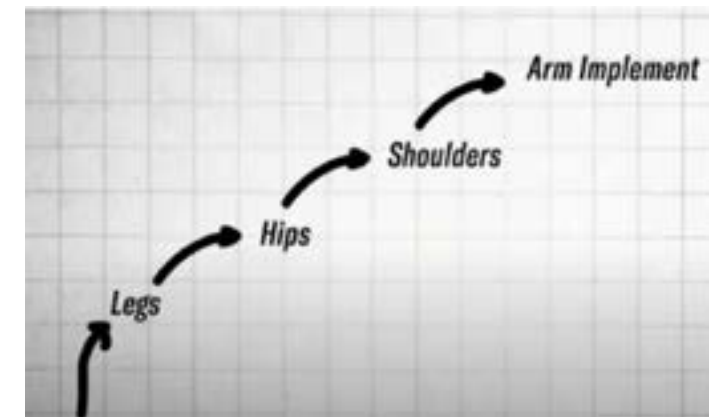
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Teaching quarterbacks how to throw a football

is one of the hardest things. The transfer of power from the lower body to the elbow is essential to generate both power and accuracy into a throw.

Every coach has their way of teaching quarterback mechanics. However, are the mechanics your teaching the most optimal?



To understand proper throwing mechanics, it's important that you understand the kinematic sequence.

This sequence is how the body transfers weight from the ground. If any part of the sequence is disrupted, this could lead to errant throws and

possibly elbow pain for your quarterback.

Once you understand the sequence as a coach, it's easier to train the quarterback's throwing motion.

We recently recorded a YouTube video with [Coach Danny Schaechter](#), who broke down 11 common throwing myths. Coach also shows you visuals and specific examples of how you can instantly improve your quarterback's play.

Click Image Watch:



PLAYING FAST WITH A ROSTER UNDER FORTY

THE ART OF PLAY DESIGN



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In order to take advantage of the different obstacles a defense presents, no matter the structure, an offense is best served to have all available options at its disposal. That means having the ability to be multiple in all facets of the offensive game plan: formations, motions, schemes and tags.

But how does an offense accomplish all that, especially with a roster under 40? Easier said than done, but definitely possible. In order to accomplish the multiplicity and flexibility required to have the ability to exploit every defensive scheme, an offense needs to be constructed in a way that it is capable of segmenting the various components of each play call.

Having "grown up" in the coaching world under a Wing-T offensive system, I was always taught that "If you don't practice the play during the week, don't call it in the game." I completely understand, and agree, with that philosophy. How would we as coaches expect our kids to execute an assignment in a game they haven't practiced at length, sometimes for weeks? Unrealistic in my opinion. The issue arises when a defense presents itself as vulnerable to a particular scheme or play call that is in your offense, but, due to film study and game planning, wasn't in the game plan that week. The temptation as a play caller is to call the play anyway, in the hopes that the players recall the necessary information (after all we have practiced it, albeit three weeks ago), and are able to successfully execute the call. Which invariably results in a phrase uttered by

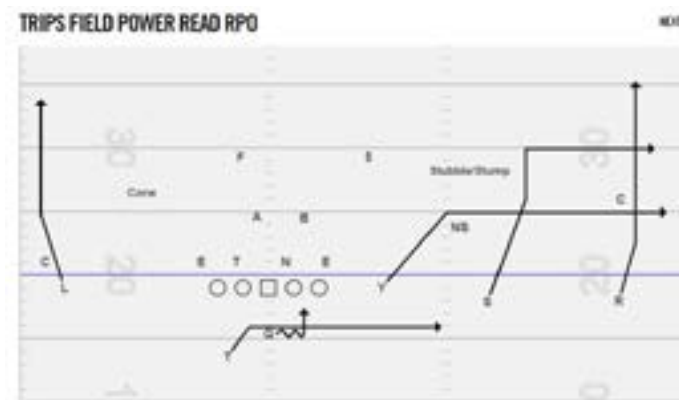
every coach at some point at every practice: "What are we DOING?"

So what's the solution? Segmenting your play calls into categories, or "ingredients" that make up the entirety of the play call, or "the meal". In the Wing-T system (and others), each play is grouped into a "series" of play calls: Belly (187), Belly Option (187 pitch), Belly Pass, etc. Each series of plays is a "prepackaged meal", with slight variations. If the defense is geared to stop Belly, counter with the Belly Option. If they load the box to defend Belly Run, call Belly Pass, and so on. Within the "series", all the components (ingredients) are "locked in"; the formation, motion, and scheme are the same, and there are standard "tags" that change the play from no read to read to pass. The issue with that mindset is the offense is always a play behind, and in my opinion, playing defense on offense. When segmenting the play call by formation, motion, scheme, and tag, you separate the play from the "series", thereby creating an individual stand alone play, but within the structure of an overall offensive identity. Think like preparing a meal. What's the main difference between meatloaf and a hamburger? They both have meat, bread, eggs and perhaps chopped onions, it's just that one has the bread on the inside, the other outside. So, essentially the same, with one variation (location of the bread); 187 v 187 pitch. Now, let's use meat and bread, but swap out the eggs and chopped onions for tomato sauce and pasta. Poof, totally different meal in spaghetti and meatballs!

"In order to accomplish the multiplicity and flexibility required to have the ability to exploit every defensive scheme, an offense needs to be constructed in a way that it is capable of segmenting the various components of each play call."

Continuing with the meal analogy; we have all the ingredients for all three meals in our kitchen (meat, bread, eggs, chopped onions, tomato sauce and pasta) and we've used all the ingredients separately, as well as collectively, in different combinations to prepare different meals. So, if a fourth recipe were to come along using the same ingredients, but one that we never prepared before, we should be able to simply follow the directions, use the ingredients that we already have and come up with a brand new meal. It's the same if you practice formations, motions, schemes and tags separately, as well as collectively. In our offense, we will practice all of our "ingredients" (formation, motions, scheme, and tags) individually each week, as well as collectively (play call sheet). During a game, you might face a situation you did not expect but want to take advantage of. Chances are, you did not practice a play during the week for that situation so it's not on the call sheet. But because you've practiced the individual components during the week, you can make a well-informed "off script" call, and have confidence it can still be executed with precision.

For example, if in a game week we have seen on film that an opponent favors playing two high safeties to trips because they prefer a certain coverage to trips (in Sabanese, this team likes to play Cone to the single receiver, and Stubbie or Stump to the trips). We might game plan for a Field Trips, Power Read & RPO play.



During the game, we notice that whenever we motion from 3x1 to 2x2, this team switches to man free, a coverage they had not shown previously that season, so we had not created a game plan specific play to take advantage of what we feel would be a favorable matchup (their NS v our Y). However, we have practiced sending the S in motion, and in fact might have done it several times already that game,

just not with that combination of field trips, power read, and rpo tag. Now, all we have to do is add an extra "ingredient" (S in jet motion), and we are able to get the matchup we prefer to how the defense is playing that play call.



Creating a play design system in which each component of a play call is individually practiced, and not created as a "packaged play" allows the system to be versatile and flexible. This in turn allows the system to adapt "in game" to any advantage the defense presents to the offense.

It also has a fringe benefit, and one that ties in nicely with a roster under 40. If a player is injured during a game, and a player that doesn't play that position is called on to assume that role, the play caller can amend each play call to adjust for the difference. In the example above, if the "S" were injured, and another player (the starting "H") were to take over the role, the play caller can switch the motion tag to fit the "new S" in a way the "H" can understand. The H doesn't have to learn anything "new" in game, just execute the motion tag from a different alignment.

In the next article, we will demonstrate how we communicate our play calls to the players, so that we can line up quickly, get the play call communicated to our players, and play at varying tempos, all the while giving the illusion to the defense that we are operating at warp speed at all times! We do this so we can take advantage of teams with smaller rosters of two way players that might not be accustomed to the stress an uptempo team places on the cardiovascular system, while at the same time not taxing ours.

QB RUN GAME

BASHING THE ZONE



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The Zone Read revolutionized the game of Football for the Quarterback run. The main problem for the Defense was they had a huge liability if they attempted to take away the Diveback in the form of a Quarterback who pulled the ball and attacked the perimeter. It became the mainstay of an Offense to feature this style of run and with Pre-Snap and Post-Snap RPO's, it made these plays downright lethal to combat. The Offense had to face a reality though, and that was they had to have a tremendous athlete at Quarterback or else the 10P Zone Read was limited.

The Defense, in order to adjust, defended these plays by divorcing the Secondary from the defensive box and reducing the number of conflict players that the Offense could attack. The Defense then pulled closer to the Offense and began to employ methods to slow 10P (one Back and no Tight End) based rushing offenses.

As you saw in earlier articles, the offenses then began to employ Tight End based schemes and added numbers to the edge of the box through the proliferation of 11P blocking schemes. You could be very good at this style of play if you used a Tight End, but trying to play 10P with a 2x2 or 3x1 set was becoming more difficult. That was until teams like Ohio State University and the Baltimore Ravens

“Bashed” the Zone.

Bash, or back to the backside, concepts are not as revolutionary as they might first seem. They are essentially based upon the idea that the Offense will allow the Offensive Linemen to work in one direction while the Running Back works opposite. It is really Zone Read in reverse.

In the normal Zone Read, the Running Back is the Diveback while the Quarterback is the perimeter player. The Bash Concept flips this responsibility and sends the Running Back wide and the Quarterback into the box. This has been done in the past with plays such as Speed Option.



Figure 5-1

While many teams have both Inside and Outside Zone blocking for Bash, S2A utilized Inside Zone blocking in one direction while sending the back to the opposite side. It was new and cutting edge when I first saw teams like Ohio State make a living doing it from a Mesh instead of a Pitch relationship. I still remember calling Offensive Coordinator Tom Herman and getting several good ideas from him and beginning to understand how much we could make this a part of our S2A game plans.

The first easy way to understand the play might be as simple as using the Tight End as a decoy, setting him to the boundary and executing Inside Zone

towards him while the Back works to the other side of the field on an Outside Zone or Bash path.

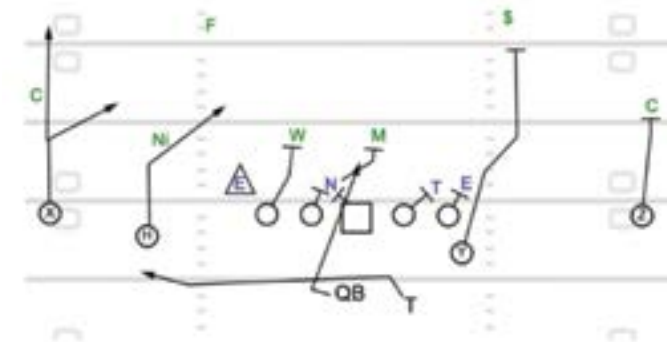


Figure 5-2

The Quarterback is essentially executing Power Read footwork and reading the backside C Gap Player, the same player he reads on the Zone Read path.

Instead of the Quarterback being the perimeter player, it is now the Running Back and the Quarterback simply meshes and decides if the Running Back can outrun the C Gap Player. If he can do so, the Quarterback leaves the ball with the Running Back and fakes the ball back to the inside. If the C Gap Player were to squeeze inside and stop the QB, then we have a Sweep play that is easy to block. If, however, the C Gap Player widens with the path of the Running Back to the outside, the Quarterback will pull the ball, “chase” the Offensive Lineman into the box and run the ball himself. In this way, the Quarterback has “flipped” the Zone Read and added a new dimension to the Defense’s reads and potential misery in stopping the run game.

Another way the Offense can make things tricky is to set the Tight End to the field. In this case the Offensive Linemen blocks away from the Tight End and the Back sprints outside, the C Gap Player is caught in a ‘Split Flow’ between the Offensive

“The Zone Read revolutionized the game of Football for the Quarterback run. The main problem for the Defense was they had a huge liability if they attempted to take away the Diveback in the form of a Quarterback who pulled the ball and attacked the perimeter.”

Linemen going one way and the Tight End going the other.

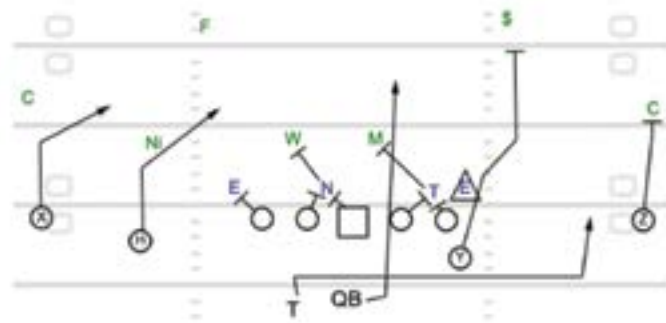


Figure 5-3

This type of bash play makes it hard for the Defense to process how the run fits should feel. If they play their Nickel to the Tight End side, they have gap issues away from him, but if the Nickel is away from the Tight End side, the Safety will have to serve as the force player, causing a host of other problems. The Offense can also elect to 'go heavy' and play with two Fullbacks in the game.



Figure 5-4

The use of two Fullbacks allows the outside Fullback to load and the inside Fullback to Ice block (see previous chapters for an explanation of this). The Defensive End or C Gap Player is now in immediate conflict as the player inside of him (the fill player) and the player outside of him (the force player) are both blocked and he has to save the day (which the average High School player has difficulty doing).

If the C Gap Player squeezes, then he will give up a Sweep to the outside with a lead blocker, but if he widens, he will give up a Quarterback run with a lead blocker to the inside. It is a Catch 22 that makes life as a player going against an S2A team immensely difficult to do.

The advent of the Bash concept has made the Quarterback run game a more diversified and difficult part of the Offense to stop. The reason this part of the modern Power Spread Offense is so good for the Quarterback is because it complicates the reads of the Defense without making life intellectually more difficult for the Quarterback. The QB does not have a hard read and it's essentially a read he has likely already mastered and implemented.

On the other hand, the Defense has to process a wide array of new looks and tendencies from the Offense. The Offense can now play from a 10P, 11P or even more heavy personnel package and make life incredibly difficult for the Defense. Just the threat of Bash will cause the Defensive staff to waste precious time teaching their Fill, Contain, and Force players to handle the Offense differently. It is not so much a matter of how good your Quarterback is at one versus the other, but instead, they are both options the Offense might employ. If the offensive play caller is willing to teach these concepts interchangeably, then he has built a viable threat to harm the Defense with multiple personnel groupings and looks the Defense will have to prepare for.

When building a running attack for the Quarterback, the key is to diversify your portfolio and make things as difficult for the Defense as you can while keeping life simple for the Quarterback to process at all times.

FEED THE CATS THE WAVE THEORY



Tony Holler
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Consortium

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One of the most famous
track coaches of all
time, Bill Bowerman,
believed that moderate

daily training would never result in world records. He said that hard days were never hard enough and easy days were never easy enough.

I was reluctant to use the word "hard" in the above paragraph. Football coaches are obsessed with "hard". They are also obsessed with "soft". There's probably some psychoanalysis that could be done on this hard and soft issue, some double entendre for sure. Manly men are hard, "others" are soft. Football is where boys become men! Football is the last bastion of toughness for American males! Since I'm not a psychiatrist, I will leave these studies to Freud, Erikson, Jung, etc.

Instead of Bowerman's hard and easy, I like to think of it as high and low. In football, specifically, I like to see football as alternating "performance days" and "fundamental days".

I call this "The Wave Theory" of training.

Instead of practicing "hard" (there's that word again) with lots of "hard work" and "high effort" every damn day, I believe you need to incorporate performance days into your practice week. To do

this, you must set those days up with "low days" where you teach, coach, strategize, and practice football fundamentals with no intention of going at game speeds. In fundamental practices, there should be a blinking neon sign in your head saying DON'T BURN THE STEAK... DON'T BURN THE STEAK... DON'T BURN THE STEAK. This is essential to the Feed the Cats approach to coaching football.

Let's take a look at the approach of football programs that I vilify.

Monday: short practice with coaches angry about all the damn mistakes on Friday night, followed by punitive conditioning for points allowed, missed tackles, and turnovers in the previous game. A 60-minute film session follows, where the anger starts to boil over. A couple players cry. Tuesday: three hour practice, hard of course, with coaches ranting like madmen about effort. Practice ends with tons of conditioning. Wednesday: three hour practice, again, hard as hell. Coaches scold players for being SOFT. "Fatigue makes cowards of us all." Practice ends with, of course, more conditioning because the players were lethargic and lifeless. "The beatings will continue until morale improves!" Thursday: high speed pre-game but coaches think players seemed sluggish and lacked enthusiasm "Damn, we haven't conditioned enough!" Friday: The big game, where the dumb team beats the dumber team. Coaches drink a lot after the game, either celebrating or drowning their sorrows. Saturday: "Embrace the grind!" 7:00 AM practice to do 30 minutes of "recovery running". Coaches are suffering from terrible hangovers. Sunday: After another night of heavy drinking (hair of the dog!), coaches consume several energy drinks and meet for six hours preparing for the next game. After the meeting, coaches discuss family problems and upcoming divorces.

When I went to Franklin, TN, in 2004, it blew my mind to be taking my mattress to Franklin High School for the first week of football practice (considered "camp"). All varsity football players slept on the gym floor, coaches slept on the floors of the PE offices. I literally was sleeping at my new school before I ever taught my first Chemistry class. We were on the field for over six hours, in player meetings for two hours, and suffered through staff meetings at night. Football coaches truly believe in outworking the competition. HARD WORK is the one and only key to winning. Rise and grind!

Somehow we placed 2nd in the state of Tennessee in 2004, losing to Riverdale in the TSSAA championship game. Success reaffirms the process and the bullshit continues.

18 years later, I see schools in our area (Chicago area) trying to get the most out of their 25 allowed contact days in the summer. Athletes show up at 7:00 am and go home at noon. Football coaches complain about their low numbers and wonder why basketball players resist football like it's the plague.

Nothing in the 396 words found in the four paragraphs above would be a part of a football program that I would endorse.

Buckminster Fuller said, "You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete." So, what would the new model look like?

There are alternatives to my practice week but this is the one I think fits high school programs best. Monday: Fundamental. Tuesday: Performance.

Wednesday: Fundamental. Thursday: Performance (45 minutes). Friday: Game. Saturday: Off. Sunday: Off.

No conditioning... NONE. Tired is the enemy, not the goal.

Stop running from drill to drill. Yes, your practice looks good when there's constant movement, hustle, and effort... but a constant state of fatigue lowers outputs. High output is the key to winning games.

Two-way players play ten minutes of high-output football on Friday night. Why do we think that three hours of running around slowly in practice would even remotely train kids to play fast for ten minutes. Vince Anderson says, "If your practice does not look like performance, you are detraining performance". John Wooden said, "Never mistake activity for achievement". Traditional football practices are all activity and no achievement.

"Instead of Bowerman's hard and easy, I like to think of it as high and low. In football, specifically, I like to see football as alternating 'performance days' and 'fundamental days.'"

Players should do nothing on weekends. Encourage sleep. Encourage kids to watch college football on Saturday and the NFL on Sunday. Create an eagerness to get back to practice on Monday.

No in-person coaches meetings on weekends. Let coaches work at the times that work best for them AND THEIR FAMILY. Communicate by text, phone, and through shared Google Docs. Communicate with players the same way. Send them important video clips. Like players, coaches need to rest, recover, and become eager for a return to practice. Steve Spurrier said, "Tired coaches make bad decisions".

No team film sessions.

Incorporate a brief speed workout twice a week (check out my "Atomic Workout" on YouTube). Let the "Atomic Workout" (16 minutes long) replace the stupid warmup that football teams do. Record sprint times. Get faster throughout the season. (Speed is a wonderful barometer of health.)

In performance day practices, make sure there is an internal wave going on. Separate high sessions with fundamental or teaching sessions. High efforts are not high outputs. High outputs are built on a foundation of recovery.

At the Track Football Consortium in Ankeny, IA, Iowa State coach Matt Campell talked about running game-speed clusters of five plays followed by five minutes of those players getting coached as a new offense ran five plays. This accomplishes high outputs. The recovery session allows coaches to coach, players to learn, and sets up the next high session. I can't say this loud enough, YOU CAN'T HAVE HIGH OUTPUTS WITHOUT RECOVERY.

My good friend, Dan Casey, is an innovator. Dan actually incorporated a halftime during his practices. Why not? Games have halftimes. Are games soft?

In the winter, I would pursue speed and power, period.

In the spring, I would encourage every kid that could help the track team to run track, unless the coach is a distance guy who believes in the Clyde Hart 20 x 200 method of training. If your track coach "feeds the cats", it's a no-brainer. 67% of NFL players ran track in high school. The ones that didn't were almost all basketball players. The idea that football players should simply lift weights in their 9-month off-season is the Neanderthal approach to athleticism.

In the summer, I would train four days a week, no Fridays, Saturdays, or Sundays. Once again, I would pursue speed and power along with getting a jump on the season in terms of football fundamentals and installing offensive and defensive schemes. No conditioning. Instead, add a sprint capacity workout once a week in July. Don't burn the steak.

"I think you often have to think about what doesn't have to be there, rather than what does." ~Charlie Francis

Please read Greg McKeown's "Essentialism".

Speed Kills.



RURAL FOOTBALL REFLECTIONS

SMALL SCHOOL PRACTICES PART 2



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In the last edition of Headsets, I went over some of the practice routines we use at Gold Beach High School. Gold Beach is a small school playing 11-man football still with anywhere from 18 to 35 players. In this edition or Part 2 of my Small School Practice ideas, I will cover our Thursday practices, our game day routines and finally what our Zero Period looks like in season.

Thursday Practices:

Thursday practices are only 45 minutes to an hour and in game uniforms with helmets but no pads. We want to get unis out Thursday before practice, so we know if we have any issues the night before. This also assists the Coaching staff if we are travelling on Friday, the kids have their uniforms to pack Thursday after practice or Friday morning during Zero Period. Thursday's practices start at 3:45, not 4:00 like Monday through Wednesday. At 3:45 the Punters, Long Snappers, Kickers, and other specialists work their crafts on one side of the field, while the Panther linemen play Linemen League touch football on opposite half of the field. These first 15 minutes of practice allow our specialists to get their work in a more relaxed atmosphere and allows our linemen some fun in getting warmed up and loose. We really want Thursdays to be light

physically and heavy mentally. We also want to have some fun after 3 days of intense focused work on preparing for Friday's contest. Our linemen live for Thursday touch football and while some of our staff is working with specialists on other end of the field, I get to watch All State Offensive Guards live their dream at Quarterback. It is good fun, and you know for linemen the game is played at a pace slightly faster than a jog. I know there is a coach reading this shaking their head, saying man an injury on a small squad could kill your season. I was that Coach, early in my career but after seeing kids for 20 some years get injured in PE class, in the hallways, in science classes, I am willing to roll dice for team morale. Once 4:00 PM strikes it is work time again. 4:00 to 4:10 is reviewing all our Special Teams and their personnel groups. From 4:10 to 4:15 we review our Offensive Game Plan and from 4:15 to 4:20 we review our Defensive Game Plan. The last 10 minutes of practice we do a simulated game, meaning we will run through all our Special Teams, Offense and Defense unit groups checking for attentiveness and mentally tuned in. So, on Thursdays we are done by 4:30 or 4:45 if we need more time to go over something. This allows our players to attend our girls' home volleyball games if they are home or go hunting or fishing if there is no home game. In other words, time to be just a teenager, not a student-athlete. This free time is important for them mentally and physically. My assistants get some quality time doing some of the same things hunting or fishing and then some quality time with their families. The only problem is if they drop a Roosevelt Elk, they get the non-playing football classmates and dads to dress it and get it hung. It has happened and that is exactly what has happened dads and friends take care of the elk or deer. If we have a home game, our team captains, our female student-trainers, and a few players chosen by me will arrive at my

home for Captain's Dinner at 6:30 PM. Dinner usually consists of barbecued steaks of some kind, potatoes, and a salad. I handle the grilling and potatoes while my lovely wife puts together a salad. Our student trainers make wonderful homemade desserts for the end of the meal. After the main course it is meeting time! During these very informal meetings we discuss team morale, team issues, school issues, and finally how each one of them is going to contribute to a winning effort on Friday night. These dinners are an important part of developing leadership in our program and helping us to be successful on Friday nights. Before writing about our Game Day routines, let us look at how Zero Period fits into our weekly practice routines.

Zero Period Weightlifting in Season:

Zero Period is our morning weightlifting and conditioning class that meets from 6:45 to 7:35ish every morning. While it is open to all students, all the football players are in it. On Mondays, we do NOT lift because our players have lifted late on Sunday afternoons when we meet for film of previous week's game. We meet on Sundays from 4:00 to 5:30, 45 minutes of film and 45 minutes of lifting. So, Mondays are either study hall or in gym reviewing option plays and rules verse upcoming week's opponent, or it is Defensive Set Recognition verse upcoming week's opponent. Sometimes we attempt to do a little of both, however study hall needs trump all football activities, we must keep kids eligible and grades matter! Tuesdays we have our Linemen do Squats and Cleans with some lower body auxiliaries, and Backs will do Bench and Military / Push Press with some upper body auxiliaries. Wednesdays they flip routines. Thursdays Linemen with do lighter weight full range / deep Squats and then Clean doing heavy weight trying to make gains. We decided long

ago that trying to just maintain our strength did not work for us and we were going to lift hard for gains during the season. On Thursdays are Backs are attacking the Bench and Push Press like they are trying to PR in each one. While this model or plan is NOT for everyone, it has given us the results we desired from our players. I will discuss Fridays when I write about Game Day Routines next, but because it is a graded class, we do have to meet on Friday mornings.

Friday and Away Games:

On Fridays when we have away or road games, kids arrive at school by 7:00 AM to check their gear and pack the travel bags. This means they have 30 minutes to get their gear hardware checked, bags packed and get lined up in squads for coaches to check their travel bags. Freshmen will also pack a bag full of clean towels and 1 extra gear bag (a complete set of gear as if for a player). If you have coached for a while, we have all experienced the dread of "I forgot my girdle Coach." Our upper classmen often will get packed, check their helmet and shoulder pad hardware, and then head to weight room to get a quick modified workout in. Linemen seem to like getting extra power cleans or bench press in and our backs like to get some extra stretching in or light squat work, but it is their choice. Other upperclassman may watch some extra game film of our opponent. At 7:30 AM everyone is lined up in squads with their travel bags open for coaches to inspect. Coaches move down the squad line checking each player's travel bag and when complete the Coach tosses in a pair of game socks. Then each kid will take their bag and load it into our equipment truck that follows the bus to each game. Coaches and freshmen will then load the helmet repair kit, towels, extra gear bag, ball bag and headphones. We have a travel checklist that I, as the head coach, check items off as they

get loaded. Another thing we do is players who are injured and will not play still pack their gear to travel, this helps with the "Coach I forgot my pants." Because of our rural location, we often depart for road games right after lunch (2 league opponents are 4 hours away). Our team lines up in the hallway that leads to our bus waiting. Here we will make sure they are in their team sweats (our travel attire), have their scouting reports to review while driving and we check their personal bags to make sure there is no candy, sugar, or energy drinks. The right kind of nutrition helps with victories we have found out. As we travel, we always make sure we leave an hour for a team meal somewhere on our path to our opponents' destination. Pre-Game routines for Away games are another article coming soon.

Friday and Home Games:

Home games, they still arrive by 7:00 AM and must have their locker game day ready for inspection by Coaches at 7:30 AM. Again, the student-athletes can review game films, play catch, and stretch in gymnasium, or get some lifting in weight room. Equipment/ Coach's Office is open so players have access to helmet kit and other hardware related to football pads or helmets can be found. Coaches are there supervising areas our players are using both for home games and away games. As the Head Coach, I have spoken to my teams about football as being just like hunting, in that the hunter spends night before the hunt fine tuning his rifle, scope, camo and boots to ensure success. That is really what those 30 minutes on Friday mornings of gameday are for, our players preparing their gear for a successful game. We do an excellent job of teaching this because we have rarely had equipment failures in a game. Over the years (20 of them), our kids check gear and equipment, then migrate to weight room for lifting both heavy and light. While films are always available few

watch on Friday mornings, much more likely to see someone finishing an academic assignment. Freshmen are also doing freshmen chores, doing laundry, dressing the game field, and restocking equipment kits. At 7:30 everyone is in front of their locker, Coaches go through checklist with each kid and when everything is checked off the Coach throws game socks in locker. Then the players are off to a school breakfast and classes till 3:15 PM. Again, I will discuss Pre-Game routines in another upcoming article.

Conclusion:

I am sure there are many coaches out there who have read these past two articles and went heck this is nothing special or it is too short of time to practice they are leaving stuff on field they have not practiced enough to be good at it. While we have had remarkable success doing it these ways here at Gold Beach, it may not work elsewhere. One of the tricks to our fall practice routines is our kids. Our kids do a yearlong Zero Period, a week of competitive team camp in June, and 3 practices a week in July. So, our fall practices can be shorter because we have been running the same stuff all spring and summer long. We have been running the same offense, defense, and special teams since 1997, so we do not start from nothing each year.

HEAD COACHING 101 COMMON MISTAKES



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Mistake #1 - Feel that if it is simple, it is too easy

I like to feel smart and important. It's a natural instinct that many of us have in the coaching world. This has led to many problems I've had to work through, but one of the main problems has been feeling that the answer is too simple. That I can make it better if I just do "X".

Most of my best teams, have done the simple things very well. Most successful companies, organizations, teams or any groups share that same trait. Understand the goal and keep it as simple as possible to attain the goal. Learning to simplify and make things less complex is a great skill that most elite leaders possess.

I have also found that the ego in me wants me to always be unique and different. That is selfishness wanting to get credit. It is not what is best for the team or the organization. While being creative is great, usually the doing very simple things well will always be more effective.

Mistake #2 - Overcomplicate things for those around me.

I enjoy having multiple options. I like to debate and look at all aspects of an idea. Especially if it is scheme related. I want to teach those I work with all that I know so they have plenty of information they can use.

The problem I learned is many will struggle with "paralysis by analysis". Or, if given too many options, they will struggle to be successful. I'd give out 20-page game plans to players that did not need that amount of information and they would be thinking too much instead of playing.

There are those in your organization that will thirst for more knowledge, and I'd recommend you give it to them. But the majority need to know the least amount of information to be successful in their task. Work to make sure that the most important message gets across to those in your organization, but do not think each person needs (or cares) to know all the details.

Mistake #3 - Not delegating enough to the right people.

Every organization/team has those that are "rising stars". Or those that want to go above and beyond. Those people do not need to be stifled. Find those people and work to use them to their potential.

I am not saying do dump work on them with no guidance, as I did as a young coach. I am suggesting that you teach them how you want portions of your program run and then empower them to have more of a stake, leading the program. This can be done with assistant coaches and players that have the desire and ability to lead.

MORE THAN THE GAME

GET BACK TO GREEN



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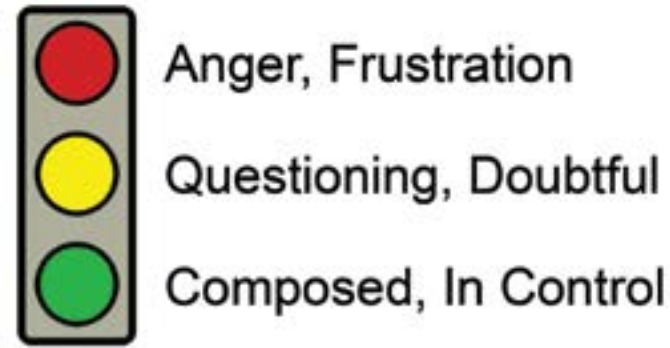
In the 1960s, Al Davis identified four characteristics that he looked for in an athlete. These attributes were the player's "football character" and they included:
 The player practices hard.
 The player knows their assignments.
 The player is not a disruptive force in the locker room.
 The player plays hurt.

Davis' "football character" remains just as relevant today as it was in 1960, with one minor adjustment: coaches today would NEVER ask an athlete to "play hurt" when injured, but we do ask athletes to push past pain and discomfort. Football character is built after an athlete has recovered from the stress of competition, both physically and emotionally.

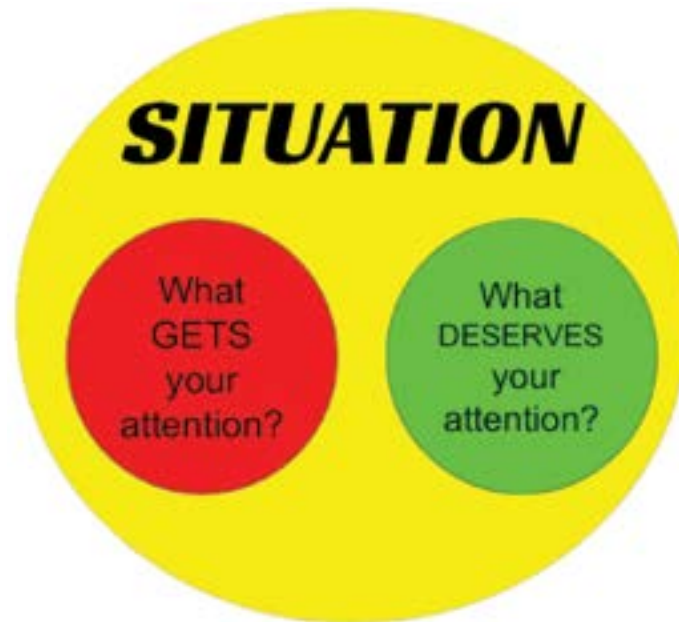
Emotional recovery works like a traffic light. The purpose of a traffic light is to regulate cars and drivers on busy roads in the absence of police. Vehicles stopped at red lights allow cars with green lights to pass by fluidly. Yellow lights indicate caution and notify drivers that the flow of traffic will change soon. When drivers obey the rules of regulation, traffic is able to flow autonomously.

Everybody has an emotional traffic light that regulates their readiness and decision-making. While red, yellow, and green signals do not mean stop, warning, and go, as they do to drivers, color classifications can provide insight into the emotional state of an individual. Here

are the colors and emotions of the emotional traffic light:



Coaches can effectively use the emotional traffic light by practicing outcome-based thinking with their athletes.

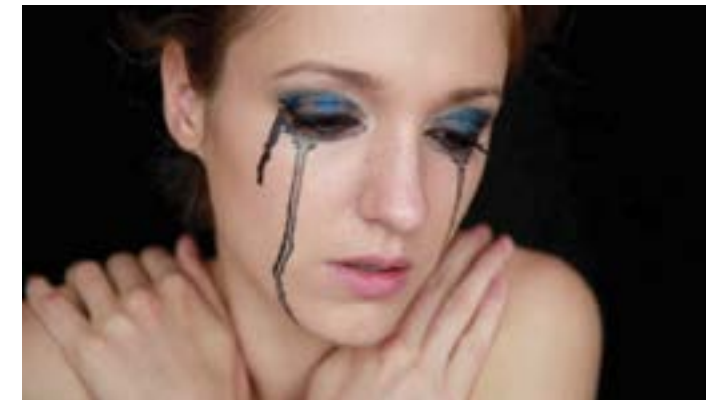


Think of a situation as yellow, warning an athlete that the environment around them is changing. The red area inside the situation indicates all of the things outside of that individual's control. These are the things that get an athlete's attention. An individual can choose to focus on them, but energy and effort spent in the red will not directly impact the outcome of the situation. For example, a student who fails a test may worry about how their grade will change as a result of their performance on the test, but worrying about the test's result will have no impact on restoring their grade in that class. The lower grade in this situation gets the student's attention.

On the other hand, the green area inside the situation

indicates all of the things that an individual can control. These are the things that deserve your attention because they will directly impact the outcome of the situation. Using the example above, the student who failed a test should focus on studying more, then request a retake with their teacher. These two actions are within the student's control and will directly impact their grade.

In order to achieve peak performance or experience flow, an athlete must be operating in the green. Individuals who can move from red to green or yellow to green emotionally during times of uncertainty or stress experience faster rates of recovery and will regain their composure quicker than athletes who cannot. While many coaches tell their athletes to focus on what they can control and ignore the rest, we must help kids practice outcome-based thinking by recognizing the difference between what is getting their attention and what deserves their attention in any situation. It is our job as coaches to help athletes stay green emotionally.



Have you ever seen one of your female athletes have a really tough day? Makeup smears down their face and their eyes become puffy. These are visible signs that she is red emotionally. In her book *Girl, Wash Your Face*, author and super-influencer Rachel Hollis tells young women that when they feel overwhelmed, unworthy, and are ready to give up, to go to the bathroom and wash their face. Hollis educates readers to move from red to green with one simple action. By washing their face, your athletes can reset emotionally, start fresh, and prevent people from knowing they are having a tough day.



NFL All-Pro tight end George Kittle has another physical cue to reset emotionally. Before a game, Kittle uses a Sharpie marker to draw a power button on his hand. When he misses a block, drops a pass, or draws a penalty, Kittle holds down the power button for a few seconds and resets himself mentally. Powering down is Kittle's way of getting back to green, which allows him to focus on what deserves his attention: the next play.



New York Yankee outfielder Aaron Judge has a routine that helps him emotionally whenever he steps into the batter's box. Just before every at bat, Judge grabs a fistful of dirt and rubs it between his hands. Dirt from the batter's box reminds him to be gritty when facing major league pitchers, especially when down in the count. The ability to stay green in high-pressure situations has made Judge one of the most dynamic hitters in baseball today.



Jay-Z has been staying green since 2003 when he released his hit song "Dirt Off Your Shoulder." In the song, "dirt" represents people who are trying to bring you down. It can also represent those who are jealous of your success. The lyric "get that dirt off your shoulder" is usually accompanied by Jay-Z casually wiping off his shoulder. By brushing away negativity, Jay-Z is able to ignore the noise and get back to green emotionally.



Like Jay-Z, Taylor Swift also has a strategy to stay green. Swift warns her listeners that "the haters gonna hate, hate, hate, hate, hate," before mentioning her solution to getting back to green in the next line. "Baby, I'm just gonna shake, shake, shake, shake, shake. I shake it off. I shake it off." By shaking off the haters who get her attention, Swift is able to focus on the things that deserve her attention.



How can you help your athletes get back to green? Settle their emotions by adopting a simple physical cue. Coach Nick Winkler in Clintonville, Wisconsin keeps a small mason jar of dirt on his desk. Given to him by his college coach after playing four years of college football, the dirt is from Michigan's Upper Peninsula and serves as a reminder that people in the U.P. are just a little tougher. Whenever life gets hard, the mason jar reminds Coach Winkler to rub some on it and toughen up emotionally.

In conclusion, the ability to get back to green after facing adversity and stress speeds up recovery, builds resilience, and strengthens character. Think about the last time you had a bad day. What was the situation? What got your attention? What deserved your attention? Was it a bad day or really just a bad five minutes that you let bother you all day? Get back to green and continue to be elite!

LESSONS LEARNED

WHEN SIMPLE ISN'T ENOUGH



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Why do football coaches seek simplicity so much?

Football coaches talk about "simplicity" in a positive light all the time. In the sharing of

ideas online, at clinics, in books, or within personal conversations, coaches claim that what they do is simple and then claim that simplicity to be a good thing.

That claim rarely gets explored to any meaningful depth. As a result, nobody has to defend simplicity in any level of detail that reveals what exactly they are talking about or is persuasive in regards to the benefits of simplicity.

Here, I want to explore the word simple to propose a different way to think about its relationship to football.

I am arguing that you do not need to pursue a simple structure to produce simplicity. Instead, to produce simplicity for your players, you need to have a well-defined structure and teach well.

What makes something simple?

Let's look at how our friends at Merriam-Webster define the word simple: readily understood or performed.

For our purposes, simple is an adjective. For example, a "simple offense" would be an offense that the players can easily understand and perform.

There is no suggestion that the offense has only a few

formations, motions, shifts, and plays, that the offense doesn't contain lots of verbiage, or that the offense is run by players who have a "low football IQ."

The only reasonable interpretation is that the players are able to understand the offense and then execute it.

And if that's the case, then why is simple worth mentioning as a differentiating factor? Shouldn't every offense be easily understood and executed by the players?

A friend recently expressed this point well saying that we should replace "simple" with "learnable." Learnable puts the emphasis on what you can teach and the structure of what you're teaching.

So if you want something to be "simple," then it better be learnable. In other words, if you want something to be simple, then you need to be a good teacher.

Albert Einstein supposedly said that "the definition of genius is taking the complex and making it simple." With a new understanding of the word simple, Einstein was simply saying that a genius takes that which is complex, and teaches it well so that people can understand it. Now I am not saying that we have to be geniuses, but we can pursue genius in our commitment to pursuing simplicity as a result of our effective teaching.

So now we must look at what makes something complex to round out my point.

What makes something complex?

Here's how our friends at Merriam-Webster define complex: a whole made up of complicated or interrelated parts.

For our purposes, the "whole" is an offense. The "complicated or interrelated parts" are the players, the coaches, the formations, the motions, the routes, the blocking schemes, etc.

There is no suggestion that the execution of something complex cannot be done simply. There is a suggestion that to execute something complex, you need to be able to understand the connection between the “complicated or interrelated parts.” A good teacher connected those complicated or interrelated parts and communicates those connections well to their students.

Now people often say that football is simple by nature. They might claim that it’s just about numbers or matchups. I disagree.

Anything that involves 22 human beings interacting with each other after hours and hours of planning cannot be simple. That number does not even include the coaches, support staff, family, or the rest of the school. Whether we like it or not, there are many factors outside of football that affect football (and complicate it).

And that is the precise reason that coaches strive for simplicity. Football is not simple, so in order to combat the chaos, we attempt to simplify what we can control. In the conversation here, that would be an offense.

Marrying the two

You must have a level of complexity in your offense because football is a reactionary sport.

But you can’t react in the most optimal way if you cannot make quick connections.

In football, you must teach your players to react to certain stimuli over and over again in a way that puts them in position to succeed for whatever task you are asking them to execute. But if you have simplified their reactions, then you are pulling tools from their tool belt.

Instead you must simplify the process for how they are to react, not the number of reactions they have available to them.

I used to prioritize simplicity because I needed simplicity. However, I am a coach – I’m not on the field expected to make plays.

So the level of complexity or simplicity that your system will have is directly related to what your players need to win football games against the opponents you face.

In other words, you must provide your players all the tools they need to execute at a high level. It is then your job as a coach to teach the connections between the tools and provide a clear structure for your players to operate in. That could mean you have lots of plays, formations, or motions. That could mean you have just a few. But you have to give your players what they need. You cannot simplify for the sake of simplifying.

Final thoughts

Football is a fun, complex game. There are too many factors that go into a singular game for us to even consider.

And even though that drives us to seek simplicity for our players in the form of structure, we must prepare for what we see. We must have answers in our systems because the more answers your players have, the more you increase your odds at winning.

As a position coach, I do not want our position to limit the offense’s potential. It’s my job to teach them the offense and connect the dots as well as help them develop the physical skills. As a coach, it’s my duty to pursue the knowledge and ability to do that without settling for simplicity for simplicity’s sake. It’s not easy, but it’s worth it.

HOW WE WILL BECOME ELITE

10-80-10 PRINCIPLE



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The 10-80-10 Principle categorizes athletes’ performance as being ELITE, Average, or Defiant/Disinterested. The ELITE are typically the top 10% of the team, the Average are typically the

middle 80% of the team and the Defiant/Disinterested are typically the bottom 10% of the team. For a team to be ELITE, the team must reduce the number of Average athletes, improve or eliminate the Defiant/Disinterested and increase the number of ELITE athletes.

It takes leadership from coaches and athletes to achieve this!

IMPORTANT: These labels are applied to an athlete’s performance and attitude/behavior, NOT their talent level.

ELITE: Those who have self-discipline, self-respect, an incredible work ethic and embody ALL of our Core Values. They are fierce competitors who live and work every day with intention and purpose. These athletes hold others accountable.

Average: The majority of a team. Generally, these are good workers who are reliable and do what they are told. They embody SOME of our Core Values. They show up and put in the work that is expected of them, usually nothing more or nothing less.

Defiant/Disinterested: These are the athletes

that require extra attention to get them to do what is expected of them. They distract their teammates and coaches and prevent them from being their best. They embody 1-2 of our Core Values. Defiant/Disinterested athletes hate being alone, so they will drag others down with them. They may even be incredibly talented, but not have the self-discipline, self-respect, or work ethic to perform to their potential.

OUR CHALLENGE: As coaches and leaders, we need to influence and inspire the ELITE athletes to “Pull Up” the Average athletes to an ELITE level. A lack of leadership can allow the Defiant/Disinterested to “Pull Down” the Average, making their performance worse, which cannot happen! Remember, this principle is about performance and attitude/behavior, which means it can be influenced fairly easily one way or the other. That is why all leaders need to step up and invest in those around them. HOW to make this principle effective

(Below):

- *Identify which category each player is in and why.
- *Give the players feedback and help them develop a plan on how they can improve.
- *Challenge ELITES to improve the Average.
- *Coaches need to focus on the Average and develop them to be ELITE. ELITE will keep getting better without constant influence and inspiration.
- *Avoid spending too much time with the Defiant/Disinterested. Challenge Average and ELITE players to influence them.

As a young coach, I thought I absolutely had to put the BEST players for each position on the field to give our program the best chance to win and that makes complete sense. However, after a while, I did not feel we were playing at our full potential or as a team, for that matter. At that time, I was very stubborn and believed that what we were doing was going to work and that I knew everything, so why change anything, right? Wrong! Fortunately, my father coached football for over 25 years and he is the reason I became a teacher and a coach, so I swallowed my pride and listened to his advice. He had

told me a story about when he had to bench his All-State starting linebacker 4 games into their season. His team had not been playing to their potential on defense and my father finally realized that the other 10 players on defense had no positive relationship with their "Leader" on the defense. Apparently, he had been spreading the word off the field that he was the only reason they were ever competitive in games, and without him, the team would be nothing. Not only did my father realize the players did not respect this teammate, but they also were now questioning their trust in the coaching staff because they were allowing someone who is not a team player and does not model their core values to start. My father understood that even though he was the best football player on the team performance-wise, he was not a team player. His attitude and behavior was not "ELITE," and this was impacting how their program was doing overall.

After hearing that story, I began to read a lot of coaching books, more specifically, books about Leadership and Culture. This was the best thing I could do for our program; it is not about the X's and O's; it is about developing our Culture and you do that with Leadership and "ELITE" student-athletes. I began using the 10-80-10 "ELITE" model and it made an incredible difference in our program. You will need to spend some time determining where your athletes will be placed between these three categories and you must be extremely critical of these placements, but be able to back your decision up as athletes will ask why. Some athletes may be upset, but being honest with them is much more important and impactful than telling them they are something they are not. The level of "ELITE" must be credible and not an easy level to reach, but you must define how athletes can reach it. This way they are driven to attain

that level and can see how it is done and that it can be done. What we have found is that most of your athletes that are categorized as "Average" will strive to reach that "ELITE" level once you have discussed with them their path to reach that. Your "Defiant/Disinterested" athletes do not seem to care, which is why they are categorized as so; however, we have had players originally in that "Defiant/Disinterested" category reach not only the "Average" level, but even the "ELITE" level towards the end of the season, which is so awesome to see! Even more impactful is our Leadership Council will be the final voters to approve of the athlete's placement after the coaches approve. Remember, in the end, everything you do should be for your players and what is best for your program. The players are the ones putting in the demanding work on and off the field, so find ways to give them ownership in your program when possible! If you have the right coaching staff around you, this idea will flourish! When you do this, you will find that you will have a higher percentage of "ELITE" and "Average" athletes wanting to work their way up! When you can have your athletes following your program's core values, this leads to unselfishness and, in turn, players that want to play for one another. You now have a FAMILY!



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