

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Quarterback Academy

In this book, you will learn exactly how we develop our quarterbacks and how you can do the same. The quarterback position is you on the field, so you must have a plan to teach your quarterback throughout the year so that your offense can execute as you want it to. I have had an opportunity to take over five different programs, and have helped them be very successful with each school starting from very different places. One of the key things that have helped us succeed in each of these places is how we develop our quarterbacks.

Here are a few of the quarterbacks that have gone through this Quarterback Academy before: Karsten Sweet who went from a junior varsity quarterback throwing 30 interceptions into a varsity quarterback who led the state with 4,000 yards his senior year and went on to play at the University of Wyoming; Brandon Connette who I had the opportunity to coach at Santiago High School in his senior year and then had a dynamite year and became a good football player at Duke; Blake Barnett was at Santiago as well and started as junior and senior for us and wound up finishing off his college career at University of South Florida; and A.J. Springer at A.B. Miller was a very talented dual-threat quarterback who went on to be one of the top quarterbacks at the DIII level while at Sul Ross University in Texas. Each of these quarterbacks were very different athletes, yet each gave our teams an opportunity to

win a lot of games because they were great quarterbacks.

In all our years, we have seen eight of our quarterbacks get the opportunity to go on and play college football whether they were NAIA school, Division III, Division II, FCS or FBS. More importantly, they were incredible young men who were solid leaders and gave us everything that they had.

WHAT IS THE QUARTERBACK ACADEMY?

Our Quarterback Academy is a 12 month curriculum that teaches both in the classroom and on the field. The Academy begins in January for all our quarterbacks coming up in the program. We have approximately 40 meetings during the off-season from January through the end of July. Some of those meetings are 45 minutes in the classroom while some of them may be a 20-minute meeting, and some of them are a little longer. Some meetings we're going to have some tests, and some of them they're going to be learning. The quarterbacks should have notebooks to take notes so that they can review when they go home.

It's important when we do our Quarterback Academy, just like our off-season workouts with the team, to never pick up where we left off. We think that it's really important to rebuild the foundation. Each off-season starts at the beginning, just like you would install with your offense. We always have to restart with the foundation from the ground up. We believe that a strong foundation leads to a strong season for the quarterbacks. Within that foundation are two building blocks: intangibles and skills.

Teaching Progression of Intangibles

The first thing that is involved in our teaching progressions are the intangibles. We focus on their football IQ and other intangible skills that are not necessarily going to show up in the stat column. This in many cases may be the most important thing that a quarterback needs to have in his toolbox. Some of it is going to be produced at home by the way he was raised. However, coaches need a great character development program to be able to have their quarterbacks understand and gain these valuable skills:

Character: A young man who does things right.

Work ethic: A young man who knows how to work even when it's hard.

Knowledge: A young man that possesses the knowledge of what he is doing in

your offense and what defenses are doing and how to apply that your offense to.

Citizenship: the type of player that models behavior for all others.

Coachability: A young man who is extremely coachable is going to have a high ceiling

Leadership: The quarterback is in a natural position of leadership running the offense and you want guys to be able to gravitate towards him.

Confidence: The confidence will come about as a result of the preparation that he's going to put in.

Mental Toughness: Being mentally tough is doing something when it's tough to do and being able to see it through.

Athletic Ability: Speed, agility and quickness. Things that they can do with their legs to be able to extend plays and be more of a weapon on offense.

We have a lot of stuff that's done in the classroom with regards to the football IQ including the Six-Second Rule that the quarterbacks go through after each play. In those six seconds, there are certain things that need to go through his mind from when the ball carrier gets tackled, until the snap of the next play. After he gets the play, the quarterback must identify the defense, get us in the proper formations, and take care of those little things that help the team execute the play.

Teaching situations is also an important part of this process. We talk and teach our quarterbacks about running a Two-Minute Offense and also a Clock Offense where we want to waste time or take time off the clock because we may be ahead and we want to bleed the clock so we can finish the game with the ball. It is important for your whole offense to know how that works. It is also important to make sure your quarterback fully understands the Play Clock, such as when does the play clock stop? When does it start? You also need to teach him all your Blitz Checks. There are certain things that we will see defensively that will allow our quarterbacks to check to specific plays to beat that particular blitz. All of these components of Football IQ will help our quarterback be game ready.

Though touched on earlier and will be covered much more later, teaching your quarterback about identifying defense and how your offense attacks certain looks is one of the biggest parts of teaching Football IQ. They must be able to identify various fronts that they're going to see whether they're odd or even, and how the line-

backers are configured in those fronts. What are they doing in the box? And then as it relates to the front, what are the coverages that are going to tie into those various fronts? That all ties into our system of how we're going to read the defense. We have various ways that we read the defense depending on the type of passing concept that we're using and we need to cover that in the off-season.

We also teach the quarterbacks how to apply the R4 system into the offense that we're running. That is a system that came about through Darin Slack and Dub Maddox. It's a great system that can fit into anybody's offense. And then lastly, we teach the quarterbacks our system and everything that goes with it. So, there's a lot of time that we will spend in the classroom, almost as much as we're spending on the field teaching skills.

Teaching Progression of Skills

Over the course of the year, there are a variety of different skills that the quarterbacks need to have in order to be successful in the season. We have come up with a 12-month teaching progression to build these necessary skills.

As for the quarterback's mechanics, we do not want to make wholesale changes, but just clean them up and make them more efficient. If we have to do a bunch of work because their mechanics are such a mess, then it is probably going to be very difficult for that young man to be able to win the starting job and be an effective quarterback.

One of the main physical things we work on is their pocket presence. Whether they have the athletic ability of a Patrick Mahomes or lack the athletic ability and are maybe a little more of a pocket passer like a Dan Marino or a Tom Brady, you must teach them to develop incredible pocket presence so that they can move around and navigate the pocket to see those open windows to get the ball out. We also work with the quarterbacks on ball handling skills such as run game fakes, option mechanics, and play action fakes. Also, we always work the variety of drops they will be using. In our offense operates in gun most of the time, so the quarterbacks are going to take a one step drop or a two step drop, and then a three step drop where the quarterback is throwing on rhythm when his back foot hits the ground with the ball coming out. That leads to being able to hitch up in the pocket and working on play action drops, bootlegs, and screen passes. Each of those will incorporate different

drop mechanics in them.

We also take time during the offseason to work under center quarterback exchanges. And I think that is kind of a lost art. There are going to be times when your quarterback may have to get under center. It is well worth it to take the time during the off-season to work that skill. And then obviously the gun center exchanges, which is pretty much the norm nowadays, especially if you're running the spread. Over the years, we have felt that these skills are the most important for building up a quarterback to succeed on the field.

Yearly Schedule By Month

In this section, you will learn how we organize the teaching for all the intangibles and skills covered in the prior sections of this introduction. Every year we go back to this plan of how we're going to attack both the off-season, pre-season and in-season with the quarterback. In each month, there are certain lessons that we want to go over and you will see them listed under each month.

January

We meet with the quarterbacks one day a week in January. At the same time, the team is in the weight room doing speed and agility development, just to get back into things. We will cover leadership, the "Cougar QB Qualities," Mechanics, and then the pre-snap procedures.

February

In February, we start incorporating some quarterback workouts where they are throwing with the wide receivers once a week, just pitch and catch. We're not running any of our offense at this point and the wide receivers are just getting their hands back in tune. This drill work lasts for about 45 minutes to an hour and just one day a week. In the classroom we will meet one day a week as well, usually on the same day so we don't spend two days in the week on it. Generally, we're meeting on the weekend because I'm running this with an open Quarterback Academy where players that aren't in our program and youth players as well can join. We'll go in on the weekend, and it'll be a two-and-a-half-hour workout getting both the classroom and the on-field work in.

I always invite quarterbacks of other programs, and they can bring their receivers to catch for them. We also open up the classroom sessions to the receivers as well

OVERVIEW OF THE QUARTERBACK ACADEMY

so that they can see what the quarterbacks are going through. It's great to develop that chemistry with the receivers and get everyone on the same page.

The four lessons we'll cover are a continuation of leadership and mechanics, and then we'll start to look at identifying fronts and coverages.

March

In March, we start to amp it up where we'll meet with the quarterbacks two days a week. For the guys in our program, we'll meet with them both one day during the school week, and the other day will be on the weekend. And then in March in California, you can have off-season workouts that are non padded workouts, so we also start to practice as a team once a week. These practices would be a little more skill work and we'll start to install our offense a little bit. Those team practices are 90 minutes, but we also have a separate skill session for our quarterbacks one day a week. In those skill sessions, because we're running it in conjunction with the Academy, we will run it just like we do in February where we combine the skill work outside and the Football IQ work inside on the same day.

The lesson plans will continue to involve both leadership and mechanics. We will begin to look at the pre-snap decision process and the post snap decision process which continues on reading coverages. This is when we start to teach how to apply the R4 Reading System. We also start to look at our install.

April

In April, we do our Quarterback Academy two days a week, and one of those days will actually be in conjunction with our team practice. When we go team practice in April, right before the team practice, the quarterbacks will come in, and we'll get some classroom time with them. And then the second session will be on the weekend where they're getting their skill work. We'll have the quarterbacks do both the classroom and personal skill work, where we're working on the development of working on mechanics on the weekend.

As always, our lessons will include leadership and mechanics lessons. We'll also start to look at blitz identification, and continue analyzing the coverages, and installing the offense.

May

When we get to May, spring football is in full effect. We generally won't bring

them in on their own on the weekends once we get to May because we figure going four days a week is more than enough. We do the Quarterback Academy two days out of those four practices during the week and we'll attend one spring seven on seven tournament with the team where we can start to work on our pass offense a little more, and test out the things that we've been working on.

The May lessons once again include leadership as well as specific examples of how to apply the leadership they've been learning all year. We'll give them examples and critique things that we've seen them do or not do to help them grow in their leadership. We'll then continue to do Spring Ball Install, look at practice film, review our offense with them, and analyze coverages.

June

We hit a dead period in June, so we'll have 21 days where we're not on the field and we're taking a break. We get on the field beginning the last week of June, and we'll go four days a week with two days containing time for the Quarterback Academy. At this point, we're starting to work our offense a lot more. So, we've progressed from the intangibles and the general things about playing quarterback to the specific things as they relate to our offense.

For our lessons, we continue to look at leadership. In June we start to do opponent and practice film review as well. We also start to teach how they should understand time and possession. They learn all about timeouts, our "mayday" offense, and the four-minute clock offense.

July

Now as we get to the end of the summer, we're really amping up our Quarterback Academy and are now meeting with the quarterbacks three days a week. At the end of the summer, we're watching seven on seven films and we're doing installs with them. We're looking at our offense. We're also finishing up things that would be part of their developmental progressions as well. We also continue with the summer workouts, lifting, conditioning, getting skill work done, and we're working on our scheme.

The lessons in July start to focus on the fine details and we spend a considerable amount of time just on opponent film review, and reviewing our own practice.

August - December

Once we hit August, it's football season! We believe our quarterbacks by that point are game ready, and we're game planning with the quarterbacks. So, we do film review with them, and continue to do different drills to keep their skills sharp throughout the season.

How We Teach in the Classroom and on the Field

In our QB Academy, we will do both drill work on the field so that drill work will tie into developing their mechanics, working their pocket presence, doing even agility drills and then drills that would tie in with the scheme that we're running. And then in the classroom, we will use video, GoArmyEdge, PowerPoint, and we'll use tests to get our emphasis across in our different lessons. And we will always put both the drill work and the classroom sessions up on Hudl so that they can review

Classroom Training Review

As you have seen throughout this introduction, we have a detailed progression of skills and intangibles that we are developing from January through the end of July. It will start with expectations and responsibilities for the players as quarterbacks. We will go through great detail concerning both the physical and mental qualities of what it takes to be a quarterback in our offense. As you read, leadership training takes a lot of time and specifically, we are teaching them how to lead and how to be a vocal leader in order to give them the confidence to be able to run our offense. We also spend a good amount of time going through the pre-snap physical procedures. We go over the six-second rule and just how they're going to take a play in, how they're going to communicate the play, and how they're going to look over the defense. We'll teach them how to identify the fronts. Both identifying the fronts, understanding the strengths and the weaknesses, and then how to attack those fronts. We'll do the same with the coverages. Understanding the strengths and the weaknesses of the various coverages that they're going to see, and how to attack them. We'll teach them how to apply the R4 Reading System. We'll teach them what our uncovered rules are and the types of reads in our passing game because we have various ways that we will read a defense based on the concept that we're using. We will go through our playbook install with our quarterbacks as we go through the off-season so that when we hit the season, they have a great understanding of not only

how to identify an attack defense, but how to take our offense and apply it in those situations. And then lastly, through the summer, we analyze the opponents that we play before we get to the season. We are going to analyze all of our non-league opponents so that the quarterbacks have a great understanding of the different coverages and fronts that they're going to see from our various opponents. As a coach, you must have a plan to teach all these things to your quarterback so that they are "game ready" before the season.

Use of Technology

We also try to be on the cutting edge of technology to teach our players the concept of understanding the coverage triangle. For us, the coverage triangle is an outside linebacker, a corner, and a safety. Another coverage triangle could be an inside linebacker, outside linebacker, and safety. So, we use coverage triangles as part of how we identify what the defense is going to do, what their intentions are, and ultimately what the coverage is going to be. Regardless of what coverage they're in, or what we're teaching them, there are only two types of triangles that we teach and use. To map this out in a classroom setting, we use GoArmy Edge, a computer software that creates 3D visuals from play drawings. You can use this software to draw up the defenses you will see and get your quarterback to identify the coverage triangles before he ever steps on the field.

On the field, we use a GoPro to film from the quarterback's perspective to also use in the classroom to identify coverage triangles and just to see what the quarterback sees. I highly recommend you try to film as much as possible, so that you get the quarterback's perspective. Then when you're watching film, it becomes easier to teach because you can see what the quarterback would see in his peripheral versus the all-22 from the press box that a lot of guys use. It helps us to analyze and critique, but from a quarterback's perspective. From this shot you can now look at the depth, eyes, and leverage of the corners and outside linebackers. Where's their eyes? What's the leverage? These shots help us teach the quarterback to determine what the coverage is going to be.

We usually have the GoPro on a mast about 10-feet high and angled down controlled on a phone by our manager who stands about five yards behind the quarterback. Right after practice it gets uploaded to Hudl and then the next day when we

get into the classroom for the Quarterback Academy, we're going to review the film right from the quarterback's perspective.

BENEFITS OF THE QUARTERBACK ACADEMY

One of the great things about the Quarterback Academy is it will always give you an opportunity to have a top quarterback. For instance, when you involve the community in it, I can start training them and identifying them when they're young. There's an opportunity that by the time he gets into the ninth grade, in most cases, he's going to have a great understanding of what we've been teaching all those years. If not, we're going to use concepts when he's in the ninth grade that he's familiar with and that are easy to use. And then through the end of his freshman year, after the season's done and then all the way through a senior year, he's going to be training with the same coach every year to develop his quarterback skills, both in the classroom and on the field. So, we feel like we're always going to have a great quarterback no matter when we are introduced to him. As long as the player loves football, he has a passion and desire to win, loves to compete, and he shows up every day, we believe he can become a great quarterback in this Academy.

The physical development is actually not too difficult. A lot of kids are able to throw a football and we can usually always find somebody who's a pretty good athlete, and a guy that does well in the classroom. As long as they can bring those intangibles to us in terms of their work ethic, we'll always have a great quarterback.

Even if the quarterback isn't a true passer, there are still great things you can do. We believe that if a quarterback is a little more athletic, then you are still going to be able to be able to do some things in the pass game because people are going to play the box a little different than if he's got an incredible arm and he's super gifted at playing the quarterback position. We've had some years where our quarterback may have lacked a little bit in the arm strength or in the passing department in general, and because he was such a gifted runner, it actually opened up a lot of different things for us to throw the ball because of all the work he put in during the off-season in the Quarterback Academy.

Also, thi Quarterback Academy applies to all offenses. We run a spread offense running with four and five wide, but when we started running this we were two back, three wide receivers, and in 21 personnel as well. Going through the Academy

will allow you to get your quarterbacks ready to understand the game of football and attack defenses regardless of the offense you run. I think that any coach would want a quarterback that has a great command of what defenses are doing and how your offense attacks those defenses. You can customize this Quarterback Academy to fit with what you're doing in your system.

CONCLUSION

I hope you can now see the benefit of having a full-year plan to developing your quarterback. Not only do you need to work on the physical skills that the position demands, but the intangibles like leadership and a high Football IQ that are essential to being an elite quarterback. It is absolutely critical to have some sort of system developed during the offseason and I hope you can use the rest of this book to help shape your own plan.

