

THE QUARTERBACK MANUAL

A Guide to Training Quarterbacks from the Ground Up

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allaccesscoaching.com

ISBN 9798412111803

This book is dedicated to all those coaches who constantly seek ways to learn, grow, and help their players get better. I have been blessed throughout my career to meet incredibly creative coaches in the way they teach and share ideas. This is my way of giving back and helping others.

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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.

CHAPTER ONE

The Qualities of a Quarterback

There are specific qualities that a quarterback just must have if he wants to be the best leader and player he can be for his team. I really think that all schools have quarterbacks like this walking the hallways. One of the problems is that we sometimes either look past them or we identify them too late. I hope that this chapter will give you the opportunity to seek them out, find them, identify them early, and get them trained up to have a successful season and career. In this chapter you will find a list of must-have qualities a quarterback needs that goes into detail on the intangibles mentioned in the introduction. By the end of this chapter, you will know what to look for and what to teach your quarterbacks so that you can not only help a young quarterback get better in the game, but also a young man in life.

QUARTERBACK QUALITIES

Strong Work Ethic

This involves striving for perfection in their work. They must have a strong desire to be great, and they have to build consistency through the reps. And that's done through the monotonous drill work.

They must always have a great attitude, not just when things are going well, but especially when things are going tough. They're the first one on the field and last one off. There are always little things that they could be working on. They get on

THE QUALITIES OF A QUARTERBACK

the field to warm up before their teammates get on. And then at the end of practice, they usually spend about 10 minutes working on some fine detail. They always give 100%. They understand that just the role that they're in, of being the quarterback in our offense, that the eyes are always on them. So, they must have a strong desire to be the best. They're the most competitive player on the team and they thrive on competition. A lot of times, we don't pay enough attention to their body language, and it is often more important than their verbal communication. As coaches we must pay attention to their body language.

Determined to be the Best

They'll accept nothing less than perfection and victory and they understand that it's the hours of tedious work that get them to that point. They have to put in the work and they have to be dedicated.

They have to be determined and overcome fatigue. They must understand that they're going to be tired and they have to keep working through things and nothing great was ever accomplished without some adversity along the way.

Great Citizenship

What you see is what you get. They have high character on campus, they're terrific kids. They do very well in the classroom and go to class. And off campus, they're always great ambassadors for our football program.

Team Leader

They always think in terms of the team's success. They use our teammates to defeat our opponents. They understand that it's not just them and that they need the other 10 players on the field to be successful.

And that's how they gain the respect of their teammates by playing under pressure and being mentally tough. They thrive when things get tough in the games. They have total control at all times, both mentally and physically. They know the down the distance, the yardage necessary, the field position, the time remaining and the score.

High Confidence

They must have high confidence to be successful both on the field and in the huddle. They have the mental ability through preparation of film study, they do self-analysis, game film, etc. That mental preparation will also make them mentally

tough.

Their physical skills are going to be dynamite because they're going to prepare them through the way that they practice. They have quick feet, speed, quickness, and strength. They throw the football accurately with good velocity and to the proper receiver.

Pre-Snap Preparation

At the end of every play, they're going to understand that they must check the down and distance. They're going to note the time on the clock as the referee marks the ball. They're going to then turn to the sideline for the play.

Approach the line of scrimmage and go through their pre-snap reads. They're going to look left, middle and right to identify where the safeties are. How many are there? What is the front and the depth, eyes, and leverage of the defenders? And what's the front, is it odd or even? How many people are committed to the box?

Great Knowledge of the Offense

They study and learn on the side. There are things that they need to do outside of the hours that we spend on the field. They have to spend time off the field putting the work in. They have to understand how to attack both fronts and coverages. And understand both the strengths and weaknesses before we even get to our own plays.

These are things that they have to understand about how defenses work. They have to completely understand our offense, the philosophy of our offense, the strengths and the potential weaknesses of the things that we're doing. With every strength, there's some weaknesses involved as well. They have to understand our formations, our blocking scheme, our pass structures, and the types of reads that they're applying.

They have to understand the play and the purpose of the play. They are the guardians of every play. In order for the play to be successful, they have to have the ability for that play to move the chains in some way. We want to be able to get positive yardage. We want to be able to have a chance to run that play. Part of being the guardian of the play is that they have to understand that every series that we finish, we want to finish with a special teams play, even if it's a punt (which is always better than a turn-over).

Great Footwork

Our quarterbacks have to have great footwork. They don't necessarily have to be an incredible athlete, but they have to have great feet because it will give them pocket presence. Being a great athlete obviously helps but having great feet to move in the pocket like Big Ben and Dan Marino would be shining examples of that.

They have to understand that their drop always ties in with the route and the protection that are being used. We have various drops that we'll use, and they will always tie in with that pass concept. In our quick game concept for an example, our quarterbacks will use a drop that we call tap tap, it's a two step drop, that when their back foot hits the ground, the ball is either coming out on rhythm, or they're going to use what we call a "hang step" which is a slight pause before throwing.

Understand that the Ball is the Program

They're always working on the quarterback center exchange both under center and in gun. They put pressure from the bottom hand through the top hand, they understand that the ball to the third hand: the ball comes to your stomach.

Handoffs are always clean and consistent. They'll put the ball to the belly, and they'll get their eyes at ball level when working their handoffs. And that means that they are looking the ball into that pocket to their running back when they are executing the handoffs.

Their passes are always in a clear lane. And they also understand that they can move on to the next best thing with their passes.

The quarterback must be mistake proof. There's four elements that are going to make the quarterback tough to stop in a team and an unbeatable force. In being mistake proof having the ability to take care of the football is:

Ball security: We don't want fumbles or interceptions. Quarterback touching the ball every play plays a huge part in that.

Down preparation: Clears up post-snap process.

Understanding situational football: how to move those chains.

Great footwork: in both in the pocket and with what they do will will make us mistake proof.

TEACHING GREAT QUARTERBACKING

To be an outstanding quarterback as outlined above, there are 10 points of em-

phasis that you need to be coaching, teaching, and paying attention to. We want our quarterbacks to be a battlefield commander, NOT a celebrity. These coaching points below are meant to help you focus on the important details that will help your quarterback become like a battlefield commander while applying the qualities listed above.

Ignore the Noise

They don't focus outside opinion. They can block outside opinion, because at the end of the day, the only opinions that matter are the ones of the critique and the coaching that are done by those within the football program. They don't get caught up with their press clippings. They can ignore negative remarks from fans. We always tell them that fans will always be way off by giving too much credit or not enough credit. That credit should always be shared with your teammates.

Have Fun

You have to REALLY love the game, you have to love doing what you're doing, you have to love practice as much, if not more than playing the games. But don't be a clown by messing around at practice. True competitors really love the practice and the preparation that's involved.

Know Your Job

You have to be a master technician. You have to have a great understanding of all the details involved of being not only a great quarterback, but being able to be successful with the play that is signalled in. The greatest quarterbacks have football on their brain. Outside of practice, they're thinking of the schemes and the concepts that we run and how to tweak them or dress them up in different ways. And having ideas in their mind of being able to apply those concepts in different ways. It is terrific when you get a young man that's thinking along those lines, rather than just being a robot out there.

Know Your Teammates

A great quarterback has to know their players in the offense. They have to have a true knowledge of each guy, both their strengths and their limitations. They also need to know what makes each guy tick. This allows them have the ability to make each player in the offense feel valued and understand that they're all a big part of our offense.

Be Consistent

They're never way too up or too down. Whether they've scored the biggest touchdown and the most important touchdown of the game, or they've just thrown what could be a costly interception.

They should always be like a duck. They're always working but they look calm and relaxed. If you see a duck on top of the water, they look very graceful. But if you looked underwater and had a camera to see their feet, their feet would be flapping 100 miles an hour.

Be Smart with the Ball

They understand the defense that they're attacking. They also understand our reads and how to apply those reads to the play that we called. They have great anticipation. Great quarterbacks don't necessarily have to have these incredible arms. Strong arms do help at times, but it's more important to be able to anticipate that receiver coming open and getting the ball out early. They understand that it's important to live to see another down which in a lot of cases means that it's okay to throw the ball away.

Score Touchdowns

It's very important to finish every series with a special teams play. Worst case scenario, the special teams play that we would be finishing with would be a punt. A punt is always better than putting the ball in your opponent's hands with a turn-over. The next way to get your team in the end zone would be with a field goal. And then obviously, if you're finishing with a PAT or a two point play, that means that you've just scored a touchdown.

Manage the Game

Part of managing the game is always understanding the score, the down and distance, and how much time is left on the clock. He also has to understand how the clock works.

HOW TO SELECT A QUARTERBACK

In high school we identify specific players that are going to play quarterback for us. Most other positions, when young men come up through middle school, we always tell them that you can try for any position that you want on the team, and at the end of the day, the coaches will have the final decision. But we allow players to go

in and try out for a position and a lot of times their body types, their speed, their skill will determine the position that's best suited for them. But with the quarterbacks, we try to identify them as early as possible. We go to the youth games and seek kids in the community that are playing other sports. We try to identify somebody that we think is going to fit into that quarterback mold as we see it in our football program. We also try to start working with them as early as possible. One of the things with our Quarterback Academy is that we work with young players and high school players during the offseason. We get players from our own program, as well as players coming from other programs. A lot of cases, we'll have kids that we've worked with for a number of years before they start to even enter high school which will put them ahead of the curve.

One of the most important traits to look for is a competitor. We want the people that are playing quarterback in our program to be UBER competitive. They need to hate to lose more than they love to win. We want players that have great grades, they take care of business in the classroom. I've always believed that if you aren't taking care of business in the classroom, it starts to affect the way that you're going to play football because it's hard to play football when you have other challenges, such as not getting homework done, borderline failing classes. It's hard to be focused on football if you haven't taken care of all those "little things." And in most cases, grades are going to get you further in life than football will. So, we want them to be successful in the classroom. They're the kind of guy that makes good decisions when they're with their friends. They're going to be the leader. They're going to be the guy who helps their friends out and maybe keep some of their teammates from venturing off that path and keeping them on the straight and narrow.

And then ultimately, the Head Coach in the program will make the decision on the athletes that are going to play quarterback at every level in the program. Usually at the freshmen level, and sub-varsity, it just requires a stamp of approval. Our coaches do a great job of selection when we start our off-season workouts, especially at the freshmen level. I'll always know who's playing quarterback at all the levels in our program and like I said, it's the only position in the entire program that is not open for tryouts. And we'll make all the decisions on who's going to work out at the quarterback position.

Our Kind of Guy

Expounding on the type of players that we want as our quarterback; we always tell them we need “Our Kind of Guy” (OKG).

CHARACTER: Having somebody who plays quarterback that has high character, they do the right thing in public and private. They’re not a different person when they’re out with friends than they are with their teammates or their family. What you see is what you get, they live in truth. They’re great people and they are low maintenance.

ACADEMICS: Academics are important to them. They want to learn, they want to graduate, they compete in the classroom, just like they do on the field. And the number one competition is with themselves. They want to try to do better than they’ve done the day before. And they’re constantly trying to be the best student that they can be.

INTANGIBLES: they love football, they love going to practice, they’re competitive. They’re driven to be great. They are physically and mentally tough, emotionally stable. They’re super coachable, and they’re all about the team. As great as the statistics can be. The most important statistic for them is in the win column. It’s not how many attempts and completions they had, it’s not the yards that they threw or the touchdown to interception ratio. It’s ultimately moving the chains putting the team in the end zone and winning games and being there for their teammates.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, your quarterback needs to be a specific type of person. As you have read, not everyone is a quarterback and we don’t hold tryouts for this position. The player must be a stand up guy who you can trust to lead your team when it gets tough out there on the field. The process that follows in the rest of this book will cover a lot of the physical and mental development as it relates to playing the game, but all the information in this chapter might be the most important. When you have a player that holds these qualities, you have a great chance at having an elite quarterback.

CHAPTER TWO

Reading Coverages

Teaching your quarterback how to read defenses usually begins with teaching him the different coverages that defenses play as well as their weaknesses and how to attack those weaknesses. Developing this skill in your quarterbacks is a must and that is why we begin here.

COVERAGE FAMILIES

One of our first lessons in understanding coverages is to teach the quarterbacks the two families of coverages. In a single safety coverage, we talked about the middle of the field being *closed*. It means if you look between the hatches at the high school level, you'll generally see a safety anywhere from 12 to 15 yards occupying the middle of the field. Once he's in the middle of the field, and we've determined that it's a single safety coverage, it can only be one of two things: it's Cover 1 (man coverage), or it's going to be Cover 3 (zone coverage).

When there are two safeties deep, we consider the middle of the field *open*. You'll have a safety at somewhere between eight to 15 yards just outside the hashes. This family has got a few more different coverages that we can see. We can see anything from Cover 2 to Cover 4 (quarters) and all the variations that exist within those two coverages.

Another middle of the field open coverage would be when there are no safeties

deep. The safeties would be up tighter than eight yards, so they would be below what we call the hard deck line. In that case, it's Cover 0 (blitz coverage).

Method for Determining Coverages

To determine the defense's coverage, we teach them about the depth, eyes, and leverage of the defenders. The very first thing the quarterback needs to do is to locate safety. Look down the field, do you see two safeties, one safety or no safety? The quarterback needs to then determine if the coverage is in the middle of the field open or closed family.

Depth

He then needs to look at the position of the safeties and outside linebackers in relation to the hard deck line. The "hard deck line" is an imaginary line that is eight yards downfield from the line of scrimmage. That line gives us a frame of reference to determine if any safeties are going to be rotating or if any linebacker is going to be coming because you see the safeties stacked behind linebackers.

Next, the quarterback will determine the width and the depth of the corners. Are they above the hard deck line? Or are they at or below the hard deck line? Below the hard deck would signify a Cover 1 press look, or perhaps a hard Cover 2 look.

Eyes

Third, the quarterback will look to where their eyes are. At high school level the eyes don't lie. We tell them that eyes and body position help give a lot of coverage away. So, if their eyes are on the receiver, it's generally man (Cover 1 or Cover 0) and their bodies are a little more rigid. If they're open and looking into the football, it's most of the time going to be zone coverage.

Leverage

Lastly, the quarterback will look at their leverage. Are they inside or outside shade? The defenders' leverage position will help you see where they can expect help. Inside leverage tells you that they either are using the sideline for help or a deep safety. Outside leverage tells you that the defender expects some inside help whether that be a linebacker or safety.

When you teach the quarterback to take the depth, eyes, and leverage into consideration, he'll be able to start determining coverages much better. Coverages can change, so before the snap, they may show two high and as the ball gets snapped,

they rotate to one high. But if you look exactly where they're located in relation to the hash, or where their feet are, they don't lie and then you'll be able to figure out what their intentions are.

Understanding Zone Coverages

It's important for your quarterbacks if they're going to attack defenses to understand how the zones work.

These zones don't change in each coverage. When we take a look at the underneath coverages the underneath

DEEP LEFT		DEEP MIDDLE		DEEP RIGHT
FLAT	CURL	HOOK	CURL	FLAT

coverages start at the line of scrimmage,

and they go to about 18 to 22 yards downfield, and there's five underneath coverages. The underneath areas are: the flats on each side, the curl on each side; and one hook. These zones are where the defensive players position themselves in zone coverage. And so, there are only five zones because there are only five players that can go out for a route at any given time. Starting at 18 to 22 yards, all the way through the back of the end zone, there are the three deep zones. The number of these defenders they put in these zones depend on the coverage (Cover 2 = two deep; Cover 3 = three deep; Cover 4 = four deep). In the following sections, we will go over each of these zone coverages and learn how the number of deep defenders affects the underneath zones. From there, you will learn how to teach your quarterback the weaknesses to each zone coverage.

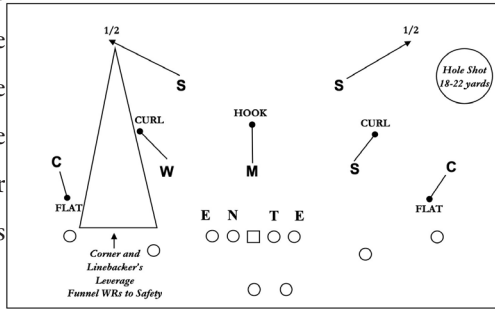
Cover 2

Again, the areas don't change. There are always five underneath zones and three deep zones with the defense determining how many players they need to go cover those zones in relation to what you're doing offensively. When a team is playing Cover 2, they want to take away your quick game. Sometimes with a zone blitz they may give up five of those underneath areas, but in normal Cover 2, there are five underneath defenders in each zone with two deep safeties splitting the deep part of the field.

The weakness of Cover 2 is that they're taking two defensive players to cover the whole field. The cornerback is going to play your wide receiver with outside leverage.

READING COVERAGES

The outside linebacker is going to be playing with inside leverage over the number two receiver. And what these two players are going to do is they're going to squeeze your inside and your outside receiver up to the safety (as demonstrated with the triangle).

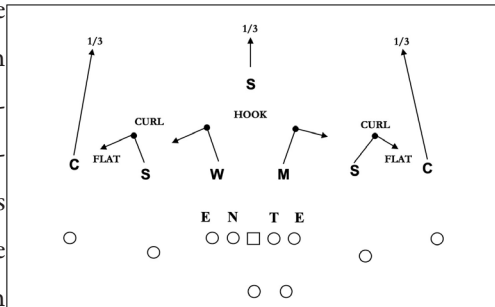


One of the giveaways for Cover 2

is that safety is going to get off the hash in a hurry because he has an entire half of a field to cover. One of the things that really hurts Cover 2 is if you can get your wide receiver outside of the corner, and throw a hole shot at 18 to 22 yards downfield (demonstrated by the circle). Another way to hurt the coverage is if you can get a player to attack the middle of the field at 18 to 22 yards. One of the things that teams will try to take away in recent years is they're going to play a version of cover two, which people call Tampa 2, where they're going to take the middle linebacker and run him down the middle of the field to cover the hole because they realize that's a big part of where teams want to attack Cover 2.

Cover 3

The strength of Cover 3 is you're going to get three players to cover each of the three deep zones. As a consequence, you will then have four players underneath to cover the five areas that are there. They will always have to give up one of those underneath zones when they add a defender deep.



They're never going to give up the curls because the curls also become seams on anything deep and if your players aren't running with curls, they're going to give up a seam and that creates a stressful life for the free safety.

When teams are showing two safeties while playing Cover 3, they're going to roll the safeties. Roll means one safety will go the middle of the field and the other will come down to play curl to flat. We would attack this the exact same way that we

would attack any Cover 3. We'll identify the underneath area where they are getting to late (or not at all because they are giving up one of those underneath zones) and we will attack them underneath with our quick game concepts.

There is also an area that we call "the jungle" which you can exploit with a back shoulder fade or a comeback to your number one receiver. You can also attack this area by throwing downfield in the seam to your number two receiver. If you have the speed or can run great releases and not get touched by the outside linebacker or strong safety, you'll make life miserable for the middle of the field safety as you run your seams downfield.

Sky and Cloud

Sky means that the one of the safeties is going to cover the flats while Cloud tells the one of the corners to cover the flats. The drawing on the previous page shows Cover 3 Sky with both corners playing the right and left deep zones. In Cover 3 Cloud, one of the safeties would play a deep outside zone over one of the cornerbacks in the flat.

The teams will generally play Cloud because they want to take away one of your wide receivers and quick game to the field. In this case, they're covering up your best quick game receiver because they don't want you to get an opportunity to play catch. He's going to be leveraged outside of this receiver forcing him to go in because if he allows him to go outside, it's going to be a long way for the safety to get over the top. One of the key giveaways that you're going to notice is the safeties aren't quite on the hash. He's going to be well-off the hash and he's going to have to be moving before the snap to get to his deep third over the Cloud cornerback.

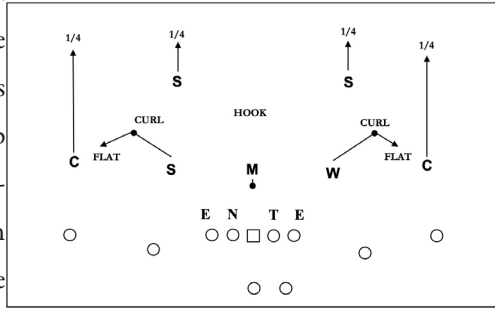
For both Cloud and Sky, you can teach your quarterbacks through film to read the hips of the safety who is either rolling or going over the Cloud cornerback. For Sky, the safety cannot stay at the hash at the snap, but will have to be coming down in order to play his zone. Likewise, in Cloud, the safety will probably start opening his hips to the outside zone he is going over. Usually these things will tend to give the defense's intentions away through doing film study.

Cover 4

One of the strengths of Cover 4 or Quarters Coverage is any pattern that's run over 10 to 12 yards is covered up and possibly double teamed. Another strength

READING COVERAGES

is they're going to sit the safeties a little tighter, and they're going to be involved in the run game. As soon as they see a run, they're going to fit up into the box. A weakness of the coverage is the quick game, particularly in the flats because there are only three underneath defenders. The other way



that we would attack them is with play action to try to get a deep shot down the middle of the field or inside up the hashes.

The safeties are going to take read steps when the ball is snapped. In Cover 2, you're generally going to see them fly out of there. In Quarters, they're going to sit and read the end man on the line of scrimmage. If the man on the line of scrimmage gives them a run, they're going to fit down at some point in the box based on how the outside linebacker is fitting. As soon as they see the pass, they're going to read number two. And if number two continues deep, it now just becomes like man coverage for that safety. If number two cuts his route right off short, that safety is now looking up number one, and it becomes a double team on number one. The cornerback is going to be sitting a little deeper, sitting in outside shade, and he's going to pick up number one on any deep. If number one runs anything deep, he becomes his man. If number one cuts his pattern off short, he now doubles up on number two who's running anything past 12 yards. The outside linebacker are going to go out to the flats, usually a little late because they are coming from inside the box.

HOW TO TEACH THE COVERAGES

Every year we teach the quarterbacks the coverages from the drawings and on the board. Before we even get to watch any video, I get my players up on the board to ask them them questions and to draw up coverages. If they've played in our offense, they'll know some of the stuff that we've run ourselves. Board work is a great way for coaches to check the understanding of their quarterbacks as you're teaching them. PowerPoints and the presentations are great but you've got to actually get your quarterback up on a board and get him working through some of these problems. One of the ways that they check for understanding in school is to have the students actually

work on some problems in the class, so this does the same thing for the quarterbacks. So, during this time, we ask our quarterbacks to know the coverages and then be able to explain how to attack the coverage within the context of our offense.

Let's look at Cover 2 as an example of how we teach the quarterback on the whiteboard. As mentioned earlier, the strength of Cover 2 is five players underneath. They've got five players to cover the five zones underneath and it can be really hard to run short to intermediate range patterns. However, the weakness of Cover 2 is there are only two players covering the three deep zones. One of the things that they're relying on is that no offensive player will have the opportunity to run free through a zone to get to the deep zones. So, even though there's only two players deep, they're relying on the five guys underneath to get hands on offensive bodies so that players are not running free to make the safeties' job really difficult.

The very first thing that I ask our quarterbacks is how can we take what they do well, and use it against them to complete some quick game passes. So, I'll ask them can you run? Can you run slant-bubble? And the answer should always be "no." Because the slant, which is number one, eventually becomes number two. And number two, the bubble, eventually becomes number one. Even though a player is moving as he sees the bubble, he eventually hears an in-call and moves to cover the slant with the cornerback sitting right on top the bubble. So, that route combination should never be open.

So, then we ask them to think of other routes that we do or you've seen that could take advantage of what they're doing well. The quarterback should take notice of the leverages of the cornerback (outside leverage) and the outside linebacker (inside leverage) and think of something that can attack in between. So, if we run a double slant with the outside receiver runs a three step slant and the inside receiver runs a one step slant, the linebacker becomes the key defender read.

If he turns his hips and runs inside and prevents the inside slant from running inside by melting to him, there is a huge window to throw the outside slant because this route is breaking away from the cornerback's leverage.

That's just an elementary way of showing your players or getting them to work through how to use some quick game concepts versus Cover 2. There's a lot of different ways that you can use your players to manipulate defenders and apply what

they're doing against them in your favor.

The next thing that I would do with the quarterbacks is we would actually bring up game film of our games. Sometimes we bring up some NFL and college game films as well. We bring up the film from the games and have them identify the different coverages that they learn. I would recommend that when you're installing new concepts, install them, and draw them up a bit and see how they attack the various coverages.

CONCLUSION

The two coverages that we left out, Cover 1 and 0, are a whole different bird. Those are coverages where we want to take advantage of matchups or create matchups through certain routes. For identifying man coverage, as mentioned earlier, the eyes usually give it away because they are staring directly at their man. For the zone coverages that we went over here, I hope that you are able to use this as a foundation to teach your own quarterbacks. Having a quarterback that can communicate these things to you is a big advantage and by the time they have gone through a whole off-season, they should know all the coverages your team will see and what routes your teams runs to attack those coverages.

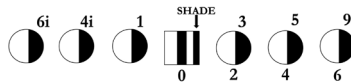
CHAPTER THREE

Identifying Fronts

The quarterback is an extension of the coach on the field, so although he will not audible based off fronts, he needs to know them so that he can communicate to help keep everyone on the same page. To be on the same page, we're going to teach them all the details about defenses and that includes the fronts and how the structures operate based off the fronts. We teach why a defense would play a certain core, and then how we would attack it. If we want to be on the same page, we have to be able to teach it to them, from the ground up. This is all part of the process of building a great foundation for our quarterbacks.

DEFENSIVE LINE TECHNIQUES

Before we even get to naming different defenses that we're going to see, we teach our quarterback a communication system of the shades that defensive linemen will line up in. These shades will then help us understand their responsibilities.



Starting with our center, if they are playing one side of the center or the other, we call that lining up in a “shade.” If they line up on the inside shoulder of our guard, we call that a “1 shade.” If it’s the outside shoulder of the guard, we call it a “3 shade.”

IDENTIFYING FRONTS

If they're inside the shade of the tackle, we call it a "4i." If he's outside the shade of the tackle, we call it a "5." And then with the tight end or a tight slot, if he's inside shade, we would call it a "6i," and if he's outside shade, it would be a "9."

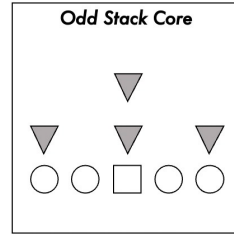
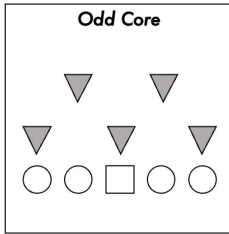
Anytime a player is head up on one of our offensive linemen, we give it an even number. So, head up on a center is "0," head up on the guard is "2." Head up on the tackle is "4," and head up on a tight end or a tight slot is "6."

If we add linebacker, we would just add a zero to the numbers to communicate. So, a linebacker at depth that is lined up head up over top of the guard would be in a "20 shade." If he's in the gap, we would just call out the gap that the linebacker is lined up in. This really helps us out with not only our quarterbacks but anytime our linemen come off the field, and we need to find out where guys are lined up. When they know these shades, they can talk us through it, and then we can draw it up, and we can diagram to draw out any adjustments that we want in terms of the blocking scheme. Having a communication system makes things much easier than a player coming back and saying, "Hey, coach, he was lined up on my shoulder." So, this way if it's a guard, he just has to come back and say, "Coach, he was lined up in a three on me."

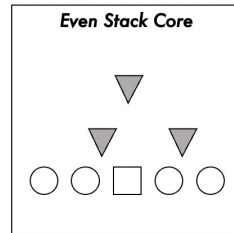
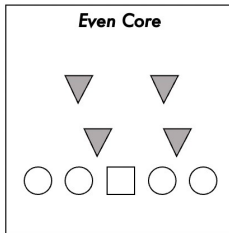
Early in my career, I often wondered why it was so important to be able to communicate the shades of defensive linemen. Well, there are some defensive linemen where it would be an advantage to run to if they were in certain shades while in other shades it would be an advantage to run away from them. For instance, anybody that would be lined up in a 5 versus our offense would be great to read in our zone ready concept. If somebody is playing a 3, we love running counter and power to the 3 shade versus if that player is in a 1 shade.

DEFENSIVE CORES

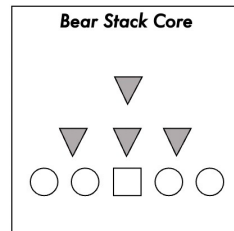
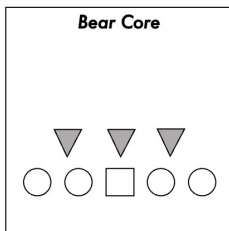
The term "Defensive Cores" refer to the interior part of the defense that will involve one, two, or three defensive lineman, and one or two linebackers. If you take a look at both of these cores that we've drawn up on the next page, these are odd structured cores. In that first drawing, the defensive linemen cover the center and tackles with the linebackers over the guards in 20 shades while the other one has just one linebacker stacked. This difference helps us know what their responsibilities are in regards to the A and B gaps. In total, there are six basic cores that you'll see.



In the drawings above, you see the two “Odd Cores.” As mentioned before, the linebackers’ shades determine if the core is just going to be normal like the drawing on the left, or if it will be a “Stack Core” like the drawing on the right.



In this second diagram, we’re going to look at cores with two defensive linemen. If we take a look at the diagram on the left, the center doesn’t have a defensive lineman head up on him. In essence, the center is uncovered while both guards are covered by some sort of defensive lineman shade. Then there’s going to be two players at linebacker depth over the B gaps. We would then call this an “Even Core.” The reason the drawing on the left is an “Even Stack Core” is because there is a linebacker right over the center. That single linebacker could be playing anywhere within the B gaps.



The third structure is when all three of your interior lineman are covered by defensive lineman and we call that a “Bear Core.” Anytime we get this look, we’re going to get one of two types. On the left we’re going to have the center and both guards covered, but no linebacker in the B gap to B gap areas. They’re generally going

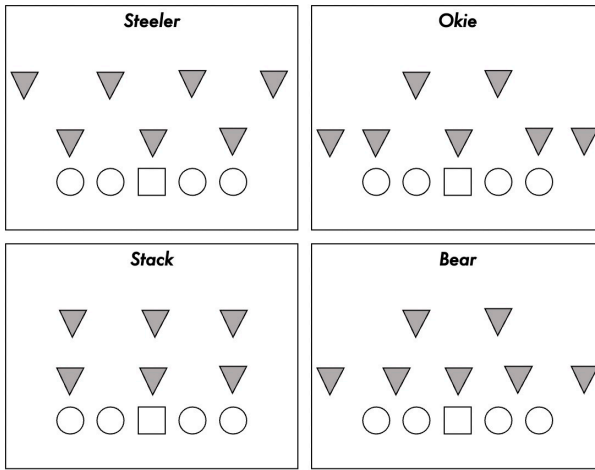
IDENTIFYING FRONTS

to be aligned over the tackles in the C gaps in that case. When all three defensive linemen are lined up on top of the center and guards and there's one linebacker over the center, we call that "Bear Stack."

COMMUNICATING FRONTS

The next thing we do is we try to use the same terminology on both sides of the ball. You want to communicate the front in a concise way so that you'll be able to get a description or an image in your head.

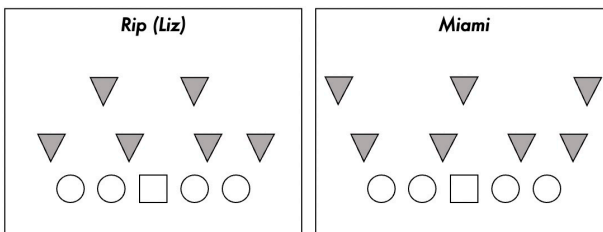
Fronts in Odd and Bear Cores



The main difference between Steeler and Okie, although they look very similar in terms of the core, is that in Okie, the outside linebackers have no pass responsibility and they're more like rush ends. This leads to the strong and free safety generally being involved in coverage. A lot of times this will be a pressure defense bringing Cover 0. Against a Steeler front, they're more going to be C gap run defenders getting inside and underneath the number two receiver.

Fronts in Even Cores

Below you can see two popular fronts that we see within the Even Core. In the



drawing on the left, we call this front “Rip” if the 3 shade is on the right, and we call the front “Liz” when the 3 shade is on the left. On the right, we will call the front “Miami” when there is one linebacker over the center.

Joker Fronts

Sometimes you’ll go against teams and you’ll see that you can’t even identify the front. Until we figure it out, we will call it “Joker” and that tells our guys that the front was non-identifiable.

Teaching Through Game Day Samples

It is also important to use pictures in the classroom. We take screenshots from pro and college games that show various teams playing different fronts. It helps the quarterback to see the fronts in a real game and from a defensive perspective. We like to put the images up and then ask a quarterback to identify the core and then describe the shades that defensive linemen and the linebackers are in.

CONCLUSION

When your quarterback comes off the field, you need to make sure that you and your team have a system of communication in place, so that everyone is on the same page. A perfect example would be if there’s certain plays that we’re going to call that our quarterback needs to know the direction that we’re going to run that play. For instance, if we were running trap against a team that has an even core, we want to run to the wider of the two interior shaded defensive lineman. We would just signal trap and then the quarterback would look and he would know that we’re gonna run it at the one that’s in the three shade. The only way this is possible, however, is if you have a strong off-season program which allows you the time and structure to teach these important things to your quarterbacks.

CHAPTER FOUR

Teaching the Play

There are a lot of things racing through the quarterback's head when he runs a play. Therefore, it is imperative that you are good at teaching the processes of the play to your quarterback. We have divided the mental processes that the quarterback must go through into two: pre-snap and post-snap.

PRE-SNAP

When a quarterback gets the play call, specifically a pass play, there are certain mental processes we ask him to go through. These processes help him make better post-snap decisions. There are three primary ways that we do this: covered and uncovered rules, clean and dirty rules, and single side access.

Covered and Uncovered Rules

These rules indicate when the defense has honored our receivers by either leaving them covered or uncovered. To determine this we use the hard deck line as a reference and we categorize three situations that a receiver can be in. They can be the *single* receiver to a side (think the backside of trips); they can be the *inside* receiver (think the slot receiver in any 2x2 set); and lastly, they can be the *outside* receiver (think the number one receiver anytime there are other receivers inside him).

Single

This receiver is covered if a defender is within seven yards of him (or below the

TEACHING THE PLAY

hard deck line). Contrariwise, a receiver is uncovered when there is no defender under the hard deck.

Inside

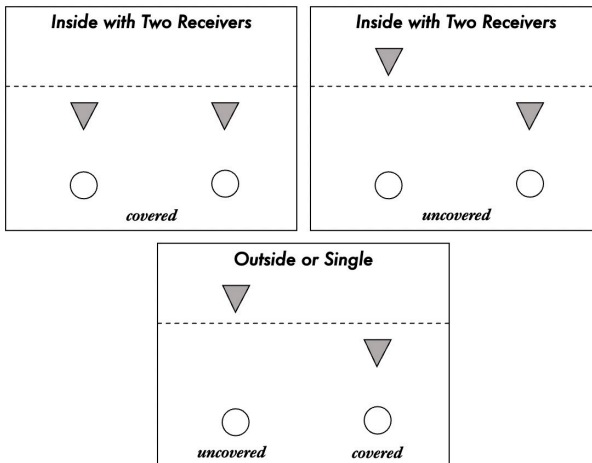
There is going to be one inside receiver in 2x2 sets and there will be two inside receivers in 3x1 sets, so there are two ways to judge whether these receivers are covered or uncovered. Below, you will find that the rule uses the hard deck, but for inside receivers you can lower your reference point to five yards.

If there is just one inside receiver, the same rule as if he was a single receiver applies. A defender under the hard deck would mean the receiver is covered while no defender under the hard deck would mean the receiver is uncovered.

For multiple inside receivers, they will be covered only if there are two defenders below the hard deck line. In all other instances, they will be uncovered. For example, if there is one defender below the hard deck line over the two inside receivers, then we would consider the pair uncovered.

Outside

There are two primary places an outside receiver can find himself: to the short side of the field or to the wide side of the field. An outside receiver to the short side is uncovered if there is no defender below seven yards. An outside receiver to the wide side is uncovered if there is no defender below 10 yards. Below are drawings of the primary situations:



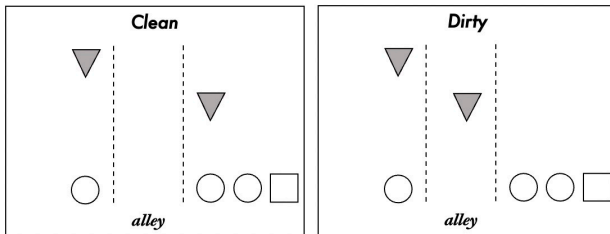
Clean and Dirty Rules

Being able to identify whether a receiver is covered or uncovered is not enough to help the quarterback determine whether the single side receiver is open or not, so we also have clean and dirty rules. The clean and dirty analysis rounds out the picture for the quarterback by giving him tools to analyze a defender on a horizontal plan. For example, linebackers are usually involved in covering the inside receivers and can play inside or close to the run box while being near the single receiver. The clean and dirty rules will help the quarterback know if that defender is able to cover that receiver. “Clean” means no defender is in the alley and the receiver is in a one-on-one situation. “Dirty” means an overhang linebacker or safety is in the alley in position to help.

Also, because linebackers are usually involved in covering the inside receivers and can play inside or close to the run box, we will consider the receiver uncovered if the defender is within a few yards from the end man on the line of scrimmage even if he is under five yards.

In our offense, we want to play catch all day with a single receiver in a clean look. We consider it kind of like backyard football where we’re going to just take opportunities throughout the game when we have a receiver that’s on the single side and the defense isn’t giving us a dirty look.

We use these words because we want our communication to be able to bring up images in our quarterback’s head to make the system very clear. When our quarterback comes off the side and we tell him that on that single side you’ve got a clean look, and you should be playing pitch and catch with him, he should know exactly what we’re talking about.



Single Side Access

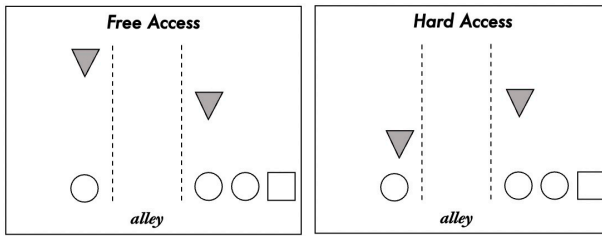
Once we identify if a single receiver side is clean or dirty, we discuss what kind

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of access we have. This identification further describes the quarterback's ability to get the ball to this receiver. The four terms we use are free or hard and limited or no. These are subcategories to clean and dirty and speak to how the defense is playing that player in the alley and the depth of the corner.

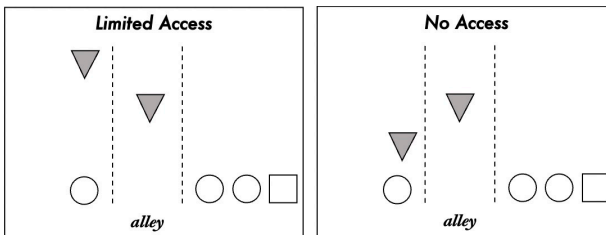
Clean Alley: Free Access or Hard Access

Both of these accesses to the single side receiver exist in a clean alley, so we want to be able to get the ball to this receiver, but the type of access we have will dictate the route we are able to run. As you can see in the drawings below, both show a clean alley. Free access means the corner is soft while hard access means the corner is in press.



Dirty Alley: Limited Access or No Access

Both of these accesses exist in a dirty alley, so it is more difficult to get the ball to this single side receiver. When the defense shows limited access, your best bet is going to be an RPO reading the defender in the alley to try to get him back in the box, or to use a running back route to pull him outside and try to throw behind him on a slant. No access is just that and that is not a look we'll attack.



POST-SNAP

The post-snap decision terms we teach our quarterbacks describe the types of reads that they are going to make on passing concepts. In total, there are four different types of reads we use: progression, key defender, object receiver, and solo flight.

Progression Read

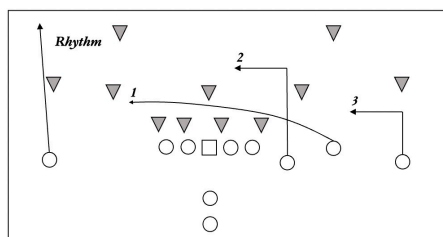
The progression read is the very first and most common read that we make. In this read, the quarterback is going through a checklist: first to second to third to fourth and sometimes he might even get to the fifth receiver. It's not so much that the quarterback is looking to see if guys are open, but as he's looking to the different route areas in the progression. Then, based on what the defense is doing we'll give him a look that will tell him to move on or throw the ball. We call this a: "1-2-3 checklist" where he's going to go across the board, and he's either going to go from right to left, or left to right on the progression.

Keys to Executing the Progression Read

First, the quarterback must go through a pre-snap process in order to assess where the threats might be. Are they in two high or are they rolling coverage? That's the most important thing to look at in the secondary.

Second, we teach the quarterback that the progression is like a checklist that he goes through to decide whether or no to throw the ball. It is like a series of snapshots where the quarterback will decide yes or no if he can get the ball out to that receiver. If it's a no then he moves on to the next guy, not waiting for any guy to come open or give him a little more time.

Third, we work on the getting the feet and eyes synced up because the feet need to follow the eyes properly. We'll do drills with our quarterbacks where their feet are moving in sequence with their eyes, where the feet follow the eyes and the feet will help tell the quarterback if the receiver is open or not.



In this progression read, the outside receiver on the left is going to run a vertical that we'll throw on rhythm if it's open. So, if we're taking a three-step drop, the quarterback will hit his third step, and if it's open, will throw right then. If it is not open, then the quarterback looks to the shallow receiver coming across the field where he's

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going to naturally be the second guy coming open in the progression. Now when you look at a progression passing system, you'll notice that all the receivers will be breaking one way so that the quarterback's eyes can move left to right. And then the last guy in the progression is not only the last guy open, but also the most outside guy to go to as he comes back to his right. So, we'd be looking for one getting the ball out on rhythm, but if that's not there the quarterback will take one hitch for every read he goes through.

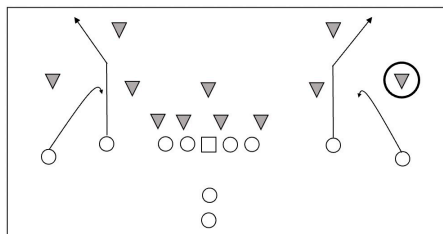
Key Defender Read

The key defender read is the second most common type of read. This read is very similar to the thought process that goes on in a zone-read running play where you make a decision based off one player's movements. So, in the zone-read play you read the C gap defender and if he gets upfield, you hand the ball off to the running back, but if he squeezes down, you're going to pull the ball. The same type of read exists in the key defender read. One of the reasons why we love this read so much is because the quarterbacks naturally do it when we're running the ball, so it makes it that much easier to install in the passing game because it's already a part of what we do. Say, if we have a slant and a bubble, and he goes outside chasing the bubble, we throw inside to the slant and if he drops back to the slant, then we go outside to the bubble. Another reason we have success with this type of read is because most of the players have been doing it since youth ball.

Keys to Executing the Key Defender Read

First, the quarterback needs to understand the big picture. He needs to be able to identify the defender for each concept that he needs to make his read off of.

Second, and just like the progression read, the feet follow the eyes and the feet will tell you if he's open or not.



The drawing above of the smash concept is a classic example a key defender read

on a cornerback. For this concept, we teach the quarterback to read the cornerback and that's it. If the cornerback backs out, the quarterback throws the sit route. If the cornerback comes down, the quarterback throws the corner route. Rather than reading this as high-low, we've cleaned it up by turning it into a key defender read where we watch the feet and hips of the corner, which will tell us where we're going to go with the football.

For this key defender read, the primary keys are the feet and hips of the corner. But if we're using a concept where we're going to throw a quick game off of an outside linebacker, then the shoulders of the linebacker are going to be the primary key.

Another important skill the quarterback must build to execute the key defender read is anticipation. Lots of reps will help him build the picture in his mind of what open looks like for each defender he is reading whether that be a corner or outside linebacker or down safety. Lastly, you must teach your quarterback to be willing and decisive so he is able to throw the ball immediately upon seeing somebody's reactions. Otherwise, the throw will be late, and the ball will be knocked down or intercepted.

Object Receiver Read

The object receiver read is what we also can refer to as a triangle read. We always try to go to the middle of the triangle first. This receiver is who we want the ball to go to (which is why we call him the object receiver). Now, depending on how they are playing that receiver, if they squeeze him or invade from the inside, we then go to the inside part of that triangle read. Then, if they squeeze him from the outside we will then go to the outside receiver in that read. Therefore, it always starts off with wanting to go to a specific player, and then the quarterback will use his eyes to move and manipulate the defense thus turning the read into a progression.

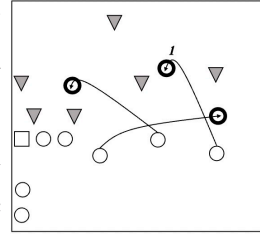
Keys to making sure this object receiver read works

First, the quarterback must know who can invade the receiver's area. We consider those players as the danger players. It could be by alignment, and so the quarterback will have to use his eyes to influence the defender to protect the route.

Second, the quarterback must see the big picture. He must be looking four yards to either side of the object receiver's break point so that he can feel if somebody is going to invade either from the outside in or from the inside out.

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The drawing on the right shows an example of an object receiver read. As you can see, if we drew and connected all of the circles, it would form a triangle. We always want to go to the middle of that triangle and then feel from which direction the defense squeezes that route. So, if the middle route winds up getting squeezed from the outside, the quarterback should anticipate that the flat route would come open. If the outside linebacker squeezed the middle route from the inside, then the quarterback should put the ball away from the next linebacker to the sit route as the number three receiver comes into the box.



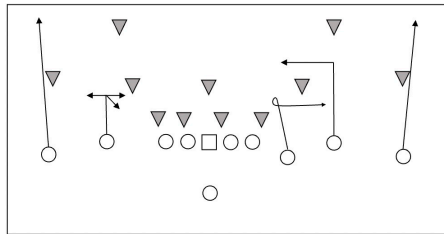
Solo Flight Read

Solo Flight Read is the last read that we teach our quarterback. This read just revolves around a one-on-one matchup pattern, and it doesn't matter if they're playing man or zone. If he's not open, then it always turns into a progression read from that just like with the key defender read.

Keys to making sure this solo flight read works

First, analyze the matchup. Is he leveraged inside or outside? Is he uncovered?

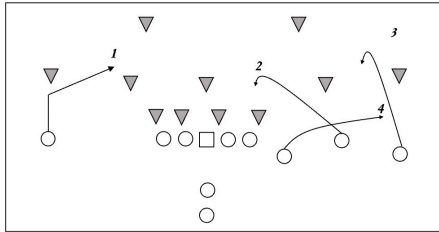
Second, the quarterback needs to make sure he still sees the big picture, so that he can work through the progression if the solo flight read is not open.



In this read you want to match up a receiver on a route versus a particular defender of coverage. The drawing above is an example of where we'll use a choice route on one side combined with a dig grab on the other. We also have two outside receivers that are running matchup routes as well (which we call "gift routes" because they're just going to run take offs like they're going to take the top off the coverage). Then, if you have a receiver that you feel like you have a mismatch with, you can take a shot, but the read actually starts off on the left slot's choice route. This route will

break depending on the defender's leverage. The slot is either going to run a hitch, break out, or slant in. So, if we had no outside linebacker and they brought inside pressure and the safety was down, then he would run in. If he was uncovered he would just spot up. If he's leveraged inside, then he would break out. If that route is not there, the quarterbacks will reset his feet and progress from the dig to the grab.

Combining Reads



The drawing above is an example of both a key defender read and a progression read because we often combine the two. Here, we'll just focus on the passing concept on the right which is an object receiver read called the spacing concept. However, we treat this as a progression read because we are combining a key defender read on the left with an object receiver read on the right. So, the quarterback will start left and go through the read for that key defender read. If it's not open, then he will scan right and go to each route in the progression.

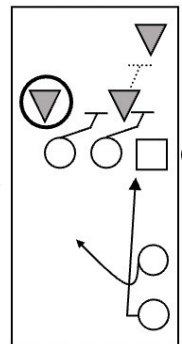
RUN GAME

Core Drill

The Core Drill is a great drill to teach your quarterbacks how to operate the run game, and it is also good at teaching them the foundational process of going through a pass read. This drill is also a great refresher drill for your running backs and offensive linemen early in the season because you can present them with a variety of defensive cores in a short amount of time.

If you take a look at the drawing on the right, you will see that this is a half line drill. You can run this drill with any of your run plays, and in this case, we're running one of our zone read concepts.

We will run this drill with multiple groups going at the same time lined up down the field.



CONCLUSION

We believe that all of these tools give our quarterbacks a great chance to succeed when they step on the game field. The pre-snap processes of identifying covered and uncovered as well as identifying clean and dirty give the quarterback quick images in his head to help put the team in the best situation. For example, we like for the quarterback to check if the single side is clean and dirty even on run plays because that will tell us if there is an extra defender over there that we can potentially throw an RPO off soon.

When you combine the pre-snap reads with the post-snap reads of progression, key defender, object receiver, and solo flight, it can seem like a lot. However, it is all built into the system in a clean way which builds off upon itself. When a player comes into the program as a freshman, we don't expect that he's going to be able to execute all four reads. But we know that what we can do is perform a quick game with him and so we'll teach him the key defender read and run a lot of quick game.

Then as they progress through the program, from sub-varsity up to varsity, we will make sure that they get to the point where they know all four reads. During the freshman year, the key defender read would be on day one, and they would progress into the object receiver and progression read, but we don't get too much into the solo flight read yet because that usually ties in with coming off and going into a progression read. Also, because each play has a read tied to it, the quarterbacks will have to learn the read they are going to use every time we teach them a new play or concept.

We're always keeping the quarterbacks at the edge of their seat, making them feel that it's not going to be cushy through practice. We're always going to force the issue on them so that they feel a little uncomfortable. That way, when they get to the game, they are used to the pressure and ready to execute at an elite level.

CHAPTER FIVE

Quarterback Drills

Having a set of drills for your quarterbacks is another essential part of the process for developing quarterbacks at an elite level. We do drills all year and split them up into three primary categories: off-season drills, daily warm up drills, and then drills to fix mechanics.

OFF-SEASON DRILLS

Rubber Band Pulls

The image on the right shows what we would do both in and around the weight room to keep our quarterbacks' arms strong and work on their rotator cuffs. In this drill, the quarterback pulls the band to his face and rotates his thumbs outwards.



This will work on his rotator cuff and get in behind

his shoulders. It's important that as he does it, he must have his elbows up and not drop them down by his side.

In this image, the quarterback is going to raise his arms over his head as he pulls the rubber band back and then turn his thumbs outwards. It's basically the same thing, where he's trying to rotate,



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and turn them outwards. Normally, most programs do so much work that build the anterior of the shoulder up that we often get muscle imbalances. That's why this drill is actually going to help as it will develop the muscle groups in and behind the shoulder blades.

Both these variations are something you can do every other day, preferably with high reps, perhaps three sets of 15 reps to three sets of 20-25 reps.

Medicine Ball

We also use medicine balls to work the arms, but also really focuses on the core. One of the first drills we'll do with a medicine ball is just bouncing it off a wall with just the one hand and using the fingertips. His elbows should be high and the ball should not touch his palm. They will do this for a specified time which will get a good burn in their forearms as they execute this.



This image on the right is another drill using a medicine ball where the quarterback takes a punch step with the medicine ball loaded by his side. He wants to step and throw the ball violently at the wall. As he performs this drill, we'd like the toe to be off that imaginary line and let him open up his foot a little more so that he can bring his



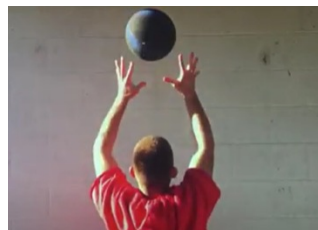
hips around. Also, we want the hand of his throwing arm to rotate downwards, just as if he were throwing a football. He needs to try and be as violent as he can on every rep. He should load the ball and then get a little bit of rest in between each rep. We would do about three or five sets per workout.

This drill has the quarterback rotate and throws the ball off the wall which works the core rotational muscles of their torso. Have your quarterback perform this drill using both sides while throwing it as fast as possible and transitioning from the catch to a throw as quickly as he can. We



We will keep the reps fairly low for this drill as well and won't go over ten reps because we want them to focus on throwing the ball as violently as they can.

This drill focuses on the triceps of the quarterback. The quarterback will throw the ball with two hands from behind his head up off the wall and then catch it and throw it from behind his head again.



These medicine ball drills are all very important so we'll practice them throughout the offseason three days a week. Then, when we get to the season, they're going to perform the routine two days a week in the weight room just to keep up their arms.

RG3 Drill



In this drill, we want the quarterback's feet to learn to follow his eyes. So, the quarterback will bring his eyes around with his feet following to keep them in rhythm of getting the ball out on time. The quarterbacks will buzz their feet (with clean footwork), punch step and then throw the football. They would do this both ways; turning once towards the right and then once to the other side.

Cone Retrace Drill

In this drill, we have a series of cones around which the quarterback will shuffle around, and as the coach claps he will come back to the previous cone. We want to be working on keeping a good wide base and not allowing the feet to get too close together. When it comes to get the ball out, the quarterback needs to be quick and efficient with their throw.

Four Corners Drill

In this drill, four cones are set up in the shape of a rectangle. The quarterback will take a drop from one cone to another, shuffle over to another cone, work up the another cone, and then shuffle back to the original cone. As seen in the image above, it starts with the quarterback working his drop to the first cone, then slides across

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to the second cone and shuffles up to the pocket going to the third cone and make a throw. We will work this both directions.

Puppets on a String Drill

This drill simulates pocket presence or moving around the pocket. The quarterback will take a drop and the coach will stand in front of him pointing up or back or left or right. The quarterback will then shuffle whichever way the coach points and then he'll finish with a throw. A variation to this drill is to add a "flush" where the quarterback will flush out of the pocket at the end and make a throw on the run.

Pocket Presence Drill (Forward and Back)

This simple drill has the quarterback simulate moving forward and back using small steps within the pocket to avoid the rush. The quarterback should take a drop and then move forward and back never crossing his feet. At the coach's direction, the quarterback will stop, set his feet, and make a throw.

Zig Drill

We also use a variety of bag drills, an example of which is the Zig drill. They are usually used as part of the warm-up just to simulate moving around the pocket, though it's not as realistic as some of the other drills that we do. It helps in warming legs up and building muscle memory, and working back and forth in the pocket.



As you can see in the image, the quarterbacks just work through the bags to help improve their feet. They are having to work, extend, run, turn their hips in different directions, make quick cuts and learn to deal with going in different directions while exercising control.

Rhythm Drill

This drill teaches the quarterbacks to throw on rhythm. "On rhythm" means that on the last step of a quarterback's drop, he throws. This means there is not hitch. The quarterback simply takes a drop and throws on the last step.

Progression Drill

The progression drill simulates the experience of going through a progression by placing wide receivers out where they would be within a certain route concept.

Then, the quarterback takes a drop and goes through the progression learning the timing and how to throw off hitches in his drop.

Line Drops

The line drop drills allow the quarterback to see if he is drifting in his drop by making him drop on a line on the field. We do this drill every day in our off-season practices. This drill does not use a specific drop like a three step or five step, but rather has the quarterback drop until a wide receiver at the top of the line throws his hands up. Then, the quarterback needs to set his feet and get the ball out without a hitch. This element of the drill will tell us if he's executing the proper drop and throwing on rhythm versus a bad drop which would lead to him hitching up to throw.

Bag Slide (Forward and Back)

This drill works on keeping the feet with a good wide base. They will go back and forth over the bag and then execute a throw without a hitch. Also, their back leg should come through over the bag.



Change of Direction Drill

This drill has the quarterback run one direction as if he were rolling to make a throw. Then when he gets to a cone he'll turn the other way to mimic as if he were rolling the opposite way. He'll then get a signal to stop, flip his hips around, and make a throw while having to maintain his balance.

John Wayne Drill

This is a simple, yet effective drill that teaches the quarterback to focus on getting the ball out properly under not so perfect conditions. The quarterback will take a drop and throw the ball the receiver, but during the drop, a coach will just tap them with a bag to mess with the drop just a little. We are not trying to kill them when they are being hit with the bag, but just trying to hit different parts of their body while they focus getting their ball out to their target.

Pop Up Bag Figure Eights

This drill also stresses to the quarterback to maintain his focus and mechanics. In this drill the quarterback will do a figure eight around large bags that are usually for defensive linemen or linebackers. Here, the quarterback will go through them

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until he is given a signal on which he will throw the ball. We start out with just one quarterback working through the drill at a time and then progress all the way up to three. The more quarterbacks you add, the more distracting it gets because they now have to focus on not running into the bags, but also each other. It is really important to stress to the quarterbacks to keep their eyes downfield and the ball up and tight to their body.



Dodge Ball Drill

This is another drill we use during the off-season to teach the quarterbacks pocket presence, keeping their head downfield, feeling the rush and not looking down or at the things coming at them in the pocket. We just use the big stability balls, and as the quarterbacks drop, we roll the balls so that he has to move around and avoid them while keeping his head downfield.

WARM UP DRILLS

Every day we commit to doing 15 minutes of these “Every Day Drills.” These drills can change and the following drills are not exhaustive nor do we do every single drill every single day. Our goal is to get them warm for the practice, and then focus on some of their mechanics.

Ball Drills (Around Back, Each Leg, Fig Eight, Catch & Drop)

These are drills we taken from basketball where the quarterback gets used to handling the ball in different ways. The quarterbacks will rotate the ball around their back and each leg just using their fingertips and going as fast as they can. We also like them to switch directions on each part of the body as well. So, clockwise one time and then counter-clockwise the next. Like many of these drills, we want the quarterback to keep his head up and not have to look down at the ball the whole time. This drill is great for before practice because it will really get their fingers and forearms warmed up before they



have even thrown a ball.

Feet Stationary Drill

This next drill has the quarterback keep his feet parallel and posted in the ground while throwing. He should just rotate at the torso and finish strong throwing towards the target. We want the quarterbacks as they're throwing their target, to aim between the eyes, get the ball up high, and get their elbow coming up over the top.

The next one that you see to the right is where they have their throwing shoulder facing their target while still keeping their feet posted in the ground. They will have to over exaggerate opening up and throw over the top of their body. You can do the same concept from a few different positions to make sure the body is warmed up ready to go. In general, we like to only do about seven throws per position.



Also, one of the key points that you can focus on during this drill is how the quarterback finishes each throw. In the follow through, we want the hand to really extend towards our target. We also want to see the quarterback rotate his shoulder so that he'll be facing sideways. As they throw, they should have to rotate hard to come over to their left side.

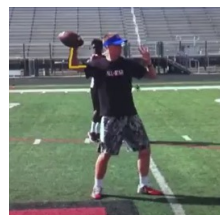
Bounce Pass Drill

This drill simply helps the quarterback getting used to catching a shotgun snap. As seen in the image to the right, the quarterback is on a knee and just bounces the ball and then throws the ball. They need to keep their heads up and not look down to get the ball.



Finish Drill

This drill is just another way to teach the quarterback to learn to finish each throw well. As you can see in the image, the quarterback is starting the drill in the middle of the throw. The quarterback will start by forming an L-shape with his back arm. His front arm should be raised in a position that most



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coaches call “eating the burger.” Their hand needs to be close to their face, keeping their elbow tight to the body. We want the quarterback to bring the throwing elbow above his shoulder line as he finishes the throw.

Forward and Back Drill

This drill gets the legs warmed up. The quarterbacks partner up and stand about seven yards apart. Then, they will kind of “yo-yo” back and forth with one quarterback running forward and throwing the ball while the other quarterback back pedals and catches the ball. We usually do about seven or 10 reps of this.

Line Drops

Although this was mentioned earlier, we end the warm ups with line drills. The quarterbacks take their drops and work on reacting to a visual cue to throw on rhythm.

Final Thoughts on Warming Up

It is essential to have your quarterbacks start practice off with a routine that is consistent and will warm their arm and body up for practice. They should be fully ready to throw at velocity when you get to the first drill in practice. It is also really important for you to teach your quarterbacks to understand that when they get out there, it’s not about playing catch with receivers, but that this is a valuable piece of time for them to focus and warm up.

They don’t need to stress their arms by having their working partner be too far away, they just need to focus on the little things and do enough to break a sweat. Remember, we need to protect the arms and avoid at all costs having the quarterback start throwing while they’re cold and end up getting injured.

DRILLS TO FIX MECHANICS

Lastly, we have a few specific drills that work on developing the quarterback’s mechanics and arm strength. However, at the end of the day we feel that if a young player can get out there and have a watchful eye — somebody who can work with them and correct them on all the little things that they may need to tighten up mechanically — he is going to get the training he needs to become a more efficient passer who’s got a stronger arm as well. Remember, the only way that you’re going to get your arm better is to actually get out and throw!

Using Pads to Keep Elbow Tight

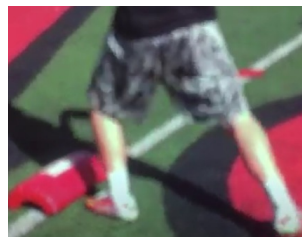
This drill is designed to fix the off arm of your quarterback because often, the quarterback's off arm gets away from the body. We want the elbow tight to the body so that when they pull that elbow around, they won't slash the football.



To fix this concern, we place a small pad or towel under their armpit where they are forced to use their elbow to keep it in tight. If this is a problem for a quarterback, then this is something that we would work during the season while just playing catch every day. By using these pads, it forces them to consciously keep their elbow into their body and as they get good at it, it'll be a subconscious thing that they're going to just naturally do.

Using Bags to Correct Overstride

A common mistake for a lot of quarterbacks is that they will take too long of a step and will over stride as they are throwing to their target. This is not a good thing because as you over stride with the front leg, the back arm is going to be longer and you will have a very long delivery and a longer time to release the ball. We don't want this to happen as we want to be efficient with our release.



To fix this concern, we put a bag out about six inches in front of the foot of where they're going to step to. Then, we want our quarterback to take a short punch step, just off the imaginary line, that's going to the receiver. By shortening that punch step, the ball will come out quicker. When the quarterback does this drill, as he opens up, his foot barely comes off the line and just enough that he's able to bring his hips around.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the course of this chapter, you learned a great variety of drills that we use with our quarterbacks all year. Now, we are always working mechanics with our quarterbacks, but we don't really need any special drills to do that. The key as a coach is to have is a keen sense of knowing what's going wrong and what's right in playing quarterback. In order to clean up your quarterback's mechanics, we need to

QUARTERBACK DRILLS

pay attention to everything from how they grip the ball, to getting their elbow above the shoulder line, and also their follow throughs. Knowing what to look for will allow you to use all of these drills as they are needed for your quarterbacks.

During the off-season, we work a lot of these drills weekly during the Quarterback Academy. During the season, aside from coming out and warming up before practice, which is not considered QB Indy time, the quarterbacks will work and warm up on their own. But, to be able to get to that point, you need to teach all these drills to your quarterbacks early. As you progress through the offseason, you can hit the drills at various points and by the time the season starts, they are already pretty efficient and proficient in doing all the different drills.

About the Author

Coach Steinberg is the Head Football Coach at Beaumont High School in Southern California. He joined Beaumont after successful stints at Rancho Verde, Corona Santiago, AB Miller and Ridgecrest Burroughs. He won CIF Championships at Rancho Verde and Burroughs.

At each of his schools, Coach Steinberg has implemented a hurry up no huddle spread offense that sees tremendous results every year. Also known for his organization and program building experience, Coach Steinberg led five different high schools in Southern California to over 20 playoff appearances. Coach Steinberg's teams have earned eight league titles, three quarter final appearances, four semi-final appearances, and three California Interscholastic Federation Championship appearances and winning two of them. In total, Coach Steinberg has amassed 183 wins as a Head Football Coach. Throughout his career Jeff has developed record setting Quarterbacks in his programs who have gone on to all levels in NCAA in addition to NAIA schools.