

CHAPTER 18: OFFENSIVE LINE BLOCKING DRILLS

INDIVIDUAL TECHNIQUES, BLOCKING COMBOS & PLAY SPECIFIC DRILLS

This chapter details how we train our offensive linemen in practice.

OFFENSIVE LINE EVERY DAY DRILLS (EDDs)

Our players do these drills every day—as the name implies. There are very few exceptions to this rule. We run these drills every day regardless of the type of practice (padded or unpadded).

Barrel EDDs

Common 50-gallon trash barrels picked up at any home improvement store are the primary equipment we use to execute our everyday drills. Our EDD barrel drills require seven 50-gallon trash barrels turned upside down and spread out over ten yards. The trash barrels are marked as dashed circles in the following illustrations (starting with Figure 206).

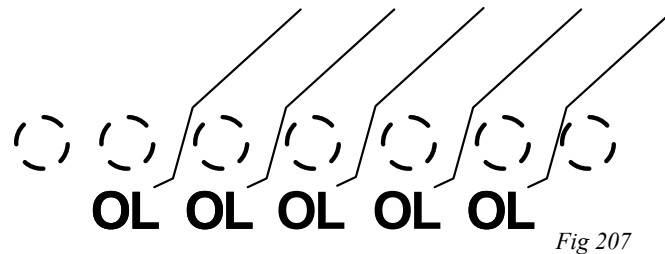


Fig 206

First Step Drill (Figure 207)

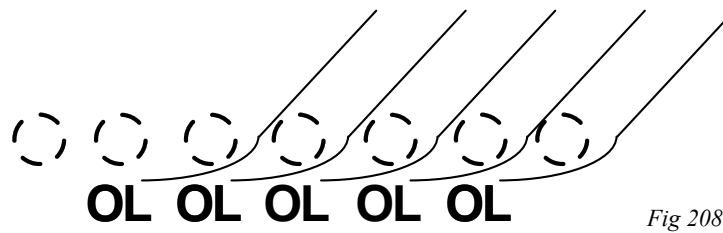
In the First Step drill players take one step, reset, and repeat four times with a barrel directly across from them. On the fourth step they release at a 45-degree angle.

The critical skill is learning to gain ground with the first step. Coaching point: teach players to push off of their back foot instead of just reaching out with their front foot. By pushing off the back foot you create more speed and power in departure off the line of scrimmage.



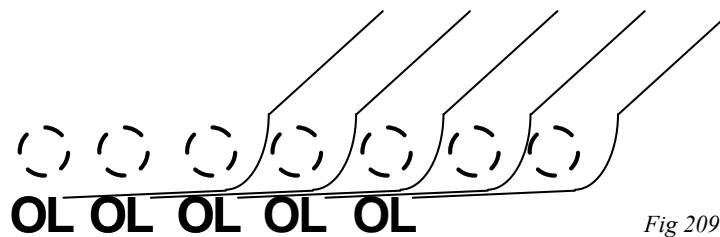
One-Barrel Reach Block (Figure 208)

Players reach block around to the adjacent barrel in the One-Barrel Reach Block drill. Coaching point: it is critical that players gain ground with the first step. Giving linemen a wide aiming point for the reach block (the next barrel over) helps train the reach. After clearing the adjacent barrel they square their shoulders and work towards the goal line at a 45-degree angle.



Two-Barrel Reach Drill (Figure 209)

The two-barrel Reach Drill emphasizes the need to move efficiently while moving laterally. Our goal is for players to take their first step lateral or slightly backwards when reaching. This is not a bucket step however. Bucket steps rarely gain much ground (if any) toward the point of attack. We do not teach our players to step backward. We do recognize that it is sometimes necessary to step backwards when reaching over a long distance however.



Backside Pull Drill (Figure 210)

After realigning the barrels we move to a series of pulling drills. The first drill is our backside pull drill. The drill practices the skip pull by the backside guard on Power. Two players go simultaneously. They skip pull around the adjacent barrel and proceed at a 45-degree angle past the outside number of the level two player represented by the deep barrel.

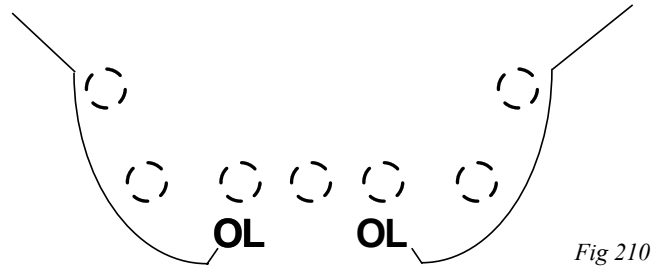


Fig 210

Frontside Pull Drill (Figure 211)

This drill teaches the G Load pull by the play side guard. G Load uses an open step pull instead of a skip pull. After clearing the adjacent barrel the linemen work downfield at a 45-degree angle to the second level.

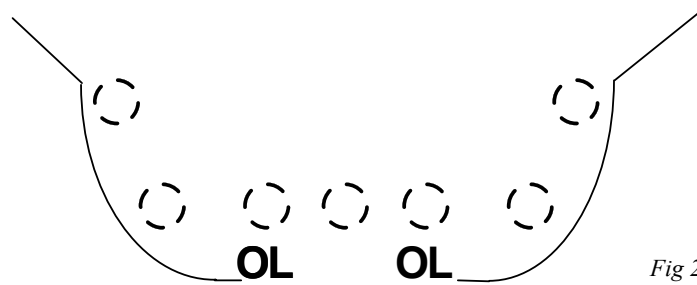


Fig 211

Pull & Trap Drill (Figure 212)

The widest barrels are moved behind the line of scrimmage for the Pull & Trap Drill. This is done to emphasize the drastic angle a pulling guard sometimes takes to kick out a fast penetrating defensive end. The drill trains the player how to adapt to a deep penetrating defender. Our linemen execute a skip pull or open pull in this drill.

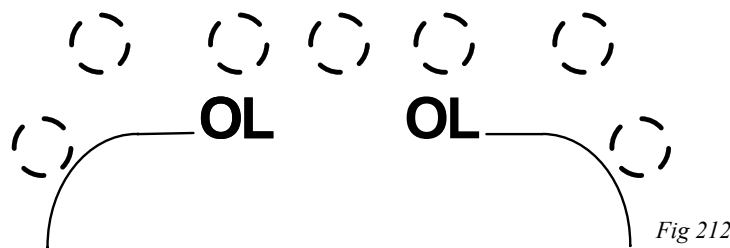


Fig 212

Base Block Drill (Figure 213)

Our EDDs continue without barrels at this point. Two players line-up across from each other for the Base Block drill—one is the offensive player and the other the defensive player. The offensive player steps, engages, and steers the defender on command. We steer by taking the defender wherever he wants to go. Coaching point: to avoid holding penalties we do not use a push-pull steer. Instead we turn our hands like a steering wheel. One hand pulls down and one hand pushes up.

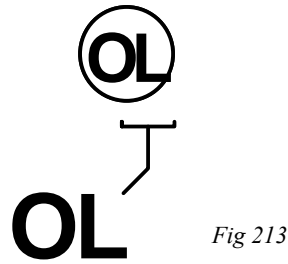


Fig 213

Steering is an important part of opening holes. We achieve the steer without offensive linemen putting their rear in the hole. This is done to avoid giving the defender a two-way release by turning their shoulders. It also makes the hole smaller in terms of space to run the ball through.

Effective steering is the best way to create space. Several players are able to work the Base Block Drill at the same time in pairs. Coaching point: the Base Block Drill works best when linemen step in both directions.

Guard & Tackle Iso Pull Drill (Figure 214)

The last EDD (Every Day Drill) is our Iso pull. Guards pull to Iso block on Power and tackles pull to Iso block on Tackle Pull Iso. The play side guard blocks the near defensive tackle in this drill. If the guard works to the A-gap, the pulling player works through the B-gap. If the guard works to the B-gap, the puller works through the A-gap. The puller must gather information as he moves to where he fits into the line of scrimmage. Coaching point: pullers need to stay square to the line of scrimmage.

We practice both guard and tackle pulls. Though not every day, we will also practice center pulls. We also practice pulls to the A-gap and B-gap as well as pulls to the right and left.

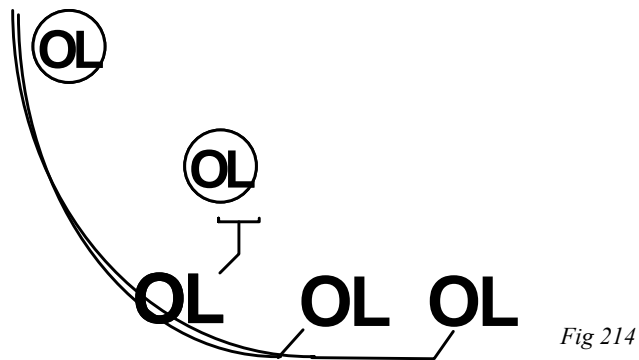


Fig 214

PLAY SPECIFIC DRILLS

G-T Counter Drill (Figure 215)

We work a drill that uses both backside pullers and the play side tackle to train G-T Counter. The backside tackle's inside release gives the pullers a visual cue as to how much space they get to operate. The pullers then work to block the defensive end and the play side linebacker.

The pulling guard must recognize if the defensive end is squeezing and log him. The tackle must also recognize the log and pull around to reach the second level linebacker. If the defensive end works up field, the pulling guard kicks out while the tackle works underneath. Coaching point: the tackle must learn to get more depth than the guard to get the time and space needed to react to the guard's block.

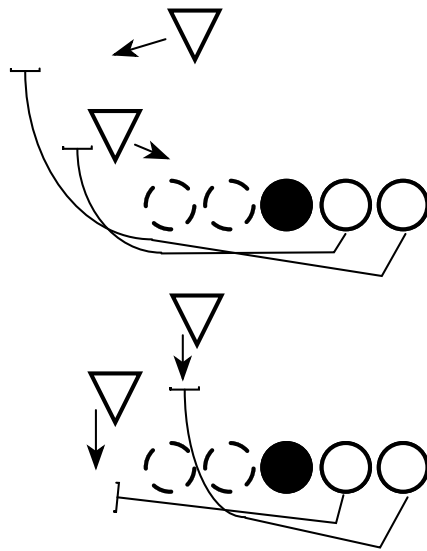


Fig 215

Combo Block Drill (Figure 216)

We use the combination block most often on the Double Pull Power. To teach the combo block we set up a two-on-one drill with two offensive players working against one defender. The offensive players begin by both stepping toward the defensive player. The goal is for the two blockers to get rear-to-rear so the defender cannot split them. Their intent is to get vertical movement toward the end zone. The inside blocker stays with the single defender when he slants to the inside. The outside player then comes off of the double team block and works to level two.

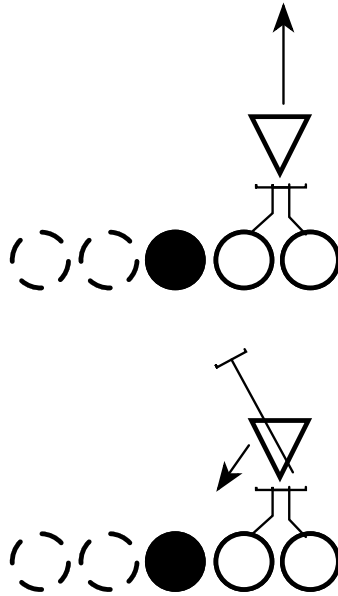


Fig 216

G Load Drill (Figure 217)

To teach the play side fold block on G Load we built a drill that utilizes the play side guard, tackle, and the fullback. The goal is to block the defensive end and the play side linebacker.

The drill starts by the tackle releasing inside and the guard pulling around him for the defensive end. The guard logs the defensive end if he squeezes. The fullback then works outside of the log and underneath the kick out to the play side linebacker on the second level. Coaching point: in game situations the second level block by the fullback is likely a cut.

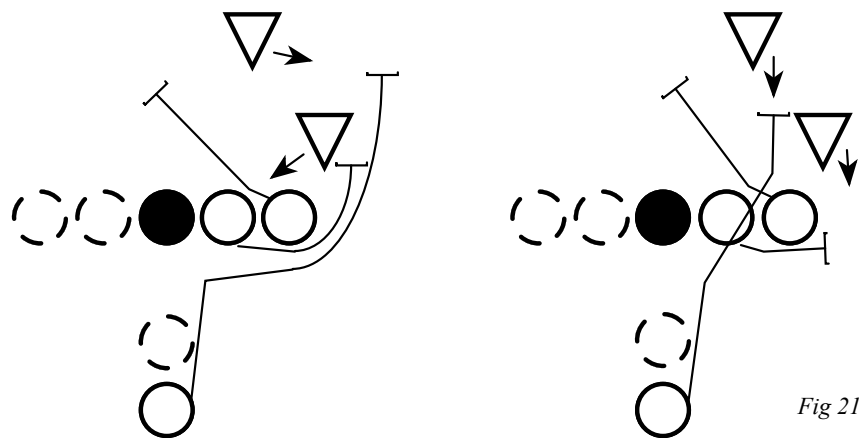


Fig 217

Veer Drill (Figure 218 and 219)

The Veer drill trains the play side guard and tackle to handle the defensive tackle and the play side linebacker. The set-up includes the play side guard and tackle working against three defenders (the defensive tackle, defensive end, and play side linebacker). The drill starts with the guard blocking the near defensive tackle and the offensive tackle releasing inside to the play side linebacker.

This drill trains linemen to combat two different defensive scenarios. Scenario one: the linebacker stays home in the B-gap when the defensive end works up field to contain. This scenario is easier for the tackle to handle by working to the outside number of the linebacker.

The more difficult scenario two is the squeeze-scrape, or gap exchange defense. When this happens, the defensive end squeezes down to take the B-gap and the linebacker scrapes outside to play the C-gap. To combat this scenario the tackle must take a banana release to the scraping linebacker.



Fig 218

The Veer Option chapter explained how the blocking scheme changes if the defensive tackle is a B-gap player (3-technique). We prepare for this change by practicing the fold block against a 3-technique. The tackle down blocks the defensive tackle and the guard pulls to the play side linebacker in this situation.

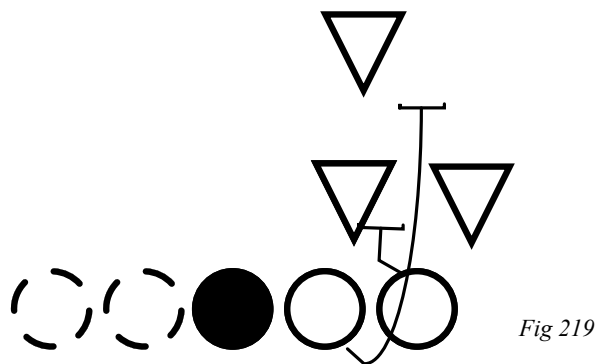
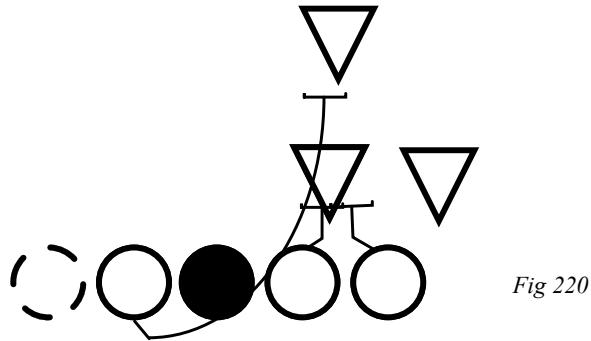


Fig 219

Double Pull Power Drill (Figure 220)

This combines the Combo and the Skip Pull Power blocks into one drill. The guard and tackle execute a double team on the play side 3-technique defensive tackle. Coaching point: we use a barrel as a placeholder for the center. Putting a player in that spot to practice back blocking is also an option.

The pulling guard must read the movement of the double team to know where he inserts into the line of scrimmage to attack the play side linebacker. The guard then takes the first opening he sees. He pulls tight if the double team moves vertically. The guard potentially pulls slightly wider if the double team moves laterally however.



Coaching point: previous sections showed drills practicing these skills separately. In a time crunch this drill is effective at training both the combo and skip pull blocks at the same time.

Pass Protection Drill (Figure 221)

Our final drill is Drop Back Pass Protection. We teach this by working against one-on-one pass rushes by our defensive linemen. Coaching point: the offensive player works to keep his shoulders as square as possible while punching with the thumbs up.

