

# 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



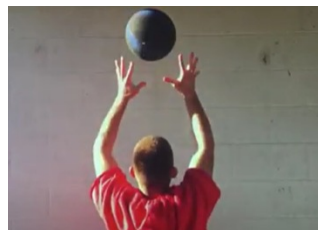
hips around. Also, we want the hand of his throwing arm to rotate downwards, just as if he were throwing a football. He needs to try and be as violent as he can on every rep. He should load the ball and then get a little bit of rest in between each rep. We would do about three or five sets per workout.

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.

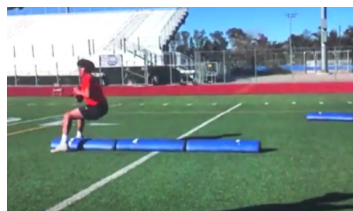
Then, the quarterback takes a drop and goes through the progression learning the timing and how to throw off hitches in his drop.

### **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.

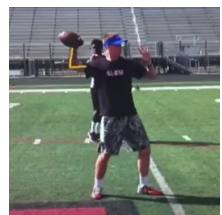
### **Bounce Pass Drill**

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**

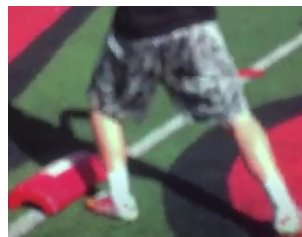
This drill is designed to fix the off arm of your quarterback because often, the quarterback's off arm gets away from the body. We want the elbow tight to the body so that when they pull that elbow around, they won't slash the football.



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

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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.



