
CHAPTER 10



Pass Blocking Technique

The time constraints facing the line coach are discussed in Section Four, along with some suggestions on how to fit everything in. The wing-T has to establish an effective running game. Therefore, before the offensive staff decides what the package of plays will be for a certain season, it must consider the effect the package will have on the line coach above all others, because he has the most to teach.

Even if your offense does include a dropback game, limited time will be available to teach the drills necessary to be effective pass protectors. The drills and skills described in the next two chapters takes that into consideration, as well as understanding the demands of a high school program. It is easy to listen to a college coach talk about pass protection and think that you have to teach all of that. While many drills can be done, and many pass protections can be drawn up, the line coach needs just the necessary skills to become a good pass protector in a high school setting.

The following is an outline of the progression that is covered in this chapter. Specific drills are found in each of the categories to reinforce the basic principles of dropback pass protection.

- **Hands and punch**
- **Footwork**
- **Stance**
- **One on One**
- **Balance**

Just like in the run game, pass blocking begins with the footwork . The ability to move the feet is the most important aspect of pass blocking. After we taught run game footwork, we then taught how to use the hands and shoulders in unison. This hold true here and we will teach the use of the hands, called the “PUNCH” after footwork is perfected. Tying together the hands and the footwork is the concept of balance in order to fight the pressure of a pass rush. Once the techniques are learned, we then teach specific blocks that are used within each scheme.



HAND PUNCH

The techniques involved in the dropback passing game require a punch of the hands. Pass protection is executed with an initial strike with the butt of the hands into the chest plate of the defender. This motion and technique are much different than the shoulder block fundamentals of the run game.

Coaching Points:

- Eyes on breast plate of defender
- The elbows should remain tight to the belly prior to extension.
- The fingers should be up in a clawed position.
- Use heels of the hand to punch
- Punch up and through the defender. Upon contact, the hands should be even with or above the eyes.
- Remind the blockers to lock out the elbows in the finished position.
- Goal is to stop the charge of the defender so he has to restart and redirect his pass rush
- Do not lunge. PUNCH & SEPARATE

The biggest problems will be dropping their hands after striking a punch. Carry hands high in a boxer position and strike up from the belt buckle

Drill Progression Punch Progression:

- Knees punch
- Knees clap
- Lean punch
- Three-punch settle
- Line side punch



Fig 83: Knees Punch

Knees Punch

Two players face each other on their knees. The offensive player starts with his hands in a pre-punch position, while the defender is holding a hand shield.

Hand Punch Progression (Figure 8-8):

- Punch & Fit
- Rapid Fire Punch
- Single-hand punch (A in Figure 8-8)
- Double-hand punch (B in Figure 8-8)
- Single-hand diamond punch (C in Figure 8-8)
- Double-hand diamond punch (D in Figure 8-8)

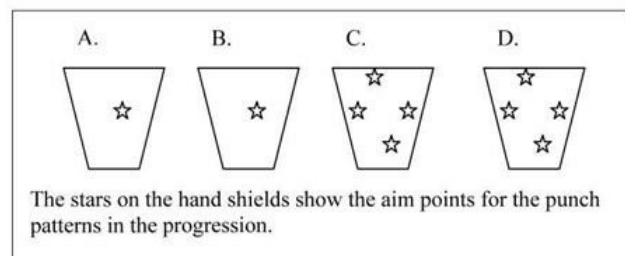


Fig 84: Hand Punch Progression



PUNCH & FIT: On the coach's command, the offensive player gives a sharp punch into the chest of the defender and holds the final position until all linemen are coached and the coach gives the "relax" command. The tempo of the drill should allow the offensive player to get eight punches accomplished in a 30-second interval.

Once the pattern is understood, the players move on to **RAPID FIRE**. Now the linemen execute as many quick punches as possible in the assigned pattern for a duration of 15 seconds. Each punch is executed with full extension of the elbow, and a violent blow is delivered with each repetition. These drills help to develop the feel of the punch and train the hands to be explosive in a functional way.

Knees Clap

Description: The objective of this drill is to reinforce the concept of keeping the head back and "sitting" when executing the punch. Leaning with the head and shoulders in a live pass-protection drill will cause overextension and pass-protection failure. This drill is done with the same organization as the knees punch drill, except that the defender will have his hands wider, preparing to clap the ears of the offensive player when the punch is executed.

On the coach's command, the offensive player gives a sharp punch into the chest of the defender. On the same command, the defender raises his hands and attempts to clap the ears of the offensive player. The offensive player pulls his head back so that the defender misses altogether and ends up "clapping his hands". The tempo of the drill should allow the offensive player to get eight punches accomplished in a 30-second interval.

Coaching Points:

- Remind the blockers to lock out the elbows in the finished position.
- The blockers must "sit back" on the heels when delivering the blow.
- The blockers must remove the nose from the action and slide the chin back.
- When the defender claps his hands, he should end up clapping a few inches away from the nose of the offensive player.

Lean Punch

Description: The objective of this drill is to teach the importance of getting out of the stance and executing a punch on the line. This drill is very effective for three-step pass protection, because the lineman is forced to punch violently, immediately before the defender leans too close and closes down the separation needed to deliver a good blow.

The offensive player begins in a three-point stance with his hand on the line. The coach is behind the offensive player. The defender stands in a two-point stance with his arms at his sides. The distance between the offensive player and the standing defender is approximately one yard.

This drill requires a two-part command. While standing behind the offensive player, the coach lift one hand, at which point the defender will begin to lean and fall into the offensive lineman. When the coach yells "set," the offensive player snaps out of his stance, settles the feet, and executes a pass-protection punch into the chest of the defender, halting the forward momentum of the defender. The drill will end once the punch is executed and the lineman holds the great finished demeanor of a pass-protection stance.



Three-Punch Drill

Description: Teaches how to reinforce the recoil needed after the blow in preparation for another punch, and teach the blocker to keep the defender between the legs and maintain separation. The offensive player begins in a three-point stance with his hand on the line. The coach stands behind the offensive player. The defender aligns in a normal defensive stance head-up or shaded to the left or right of the offensive player.

On the coach's command, the defensive player begins to execute a pass rush into the offensive player at full-speed. The offensive player sets to the technique of the defender, then settles his feet and executes a punch on the defender to retard the initial charge. The defender will then continue in a straight line into the offensive lineman, absorbing two more punches as the lineman separates each time and re-adjusts in preparation for each individual punch. The drill ends following the third and final blow, with the lineman in a perfect pass-protection demeanor with the elbows locked in extension (Figure 85).

Coaching Points:

- The blockers must "sit back" on the heels when delivering the blow.
- The blockers should settle their feet and keep the defender between the legs.
- The blockers must remove the nose from the action and slide the chin back.
- The blocker should finish with a great pass-protection demeanor.



Fig 85: Three Punch Drill

Line Side Punch

Description: The defender moves back and forth laterally in front of the blocker, never charging directly at him. He should vary his speed and direction from jog forward to walk backward to jog forward, etc. The offensive lineman faces the near shoulder of the defender with the hands in a pre-punch position, anticipating the lean of the defender (Figure 86). The blocker keeps the defender between the legs at all times while sliding in a pass-protection demeanor with the butt down and chest proud. The change of direction will reinforce the proper foot movement of the offensive player as he adjusts to the defender.

Every 1-2 seconds, the defender will stop and lean into the offensive player, giving him the side of the shoulder pad to punch. The blocker will punch the shoulder of the defender, at which time the defender will continue on his path (Figure 87). The offensive player should execute four to six punches from the sideline to the far hash. With the small surface area of the shoulder as the target, the offensive player is forced to keep the elbows tight to the belly and the hands together when delivering the blow.



Fig 86: Punch Side of Defender

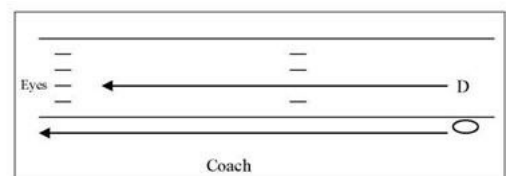


Fig 87: Setup for Line Side Punch



FOOTWORK

MIRROR DRILLS

We do a series of drills that teach the footwork. The blocker faces the defender and both are standing up, but the blocker is in a proper pass protection stance as describe on the previous pages. Two cones are set up five yards apart, the defender moves between the cones, and the blocker “mirrors” or follows him while maintaining a good stance . The drill duration is five to seven seconds. Footwork is the most important part of being a good pass blocker, and these mirror progressions are the best way to teach this skill.

Coaching Points:

- Keep the defender between the legs at all times.
- Keep at least one foot between the feet and stay off the toes
 - He must not "click" the heels together.
- Maintain foot contact with the ground and brush the top of the grass with the cleats of the shoe.
- Teach the blocker to "sit" on a stool with the chest proud and chin up.
- The lead step is with the foot in the direction of defender flow.

Mirror Line Drill

Blockers have their hands behind their back. You do not want the linemen using their hands in this drill yet, because you want them to learn to move their feet. The defenders go back and forth, right and left, and make their partners move his feet and mirror him. You do the mirror drill with all the offensive linemen facing a partner. You do it with all the linemen at the same time.



The offensive player must keep the defender between the legs with the chest proud As they mirror, they lateral step with the KICK FOOT first. This is the foot that is slightly back in the staggered stance. This step allows them to always have space between their feet. The trail foot “slides” and follows. So the buzzword is: “**Kick-Slide**”

Mirror Jam Drill

The second part of the pass-protection progression is jam drill (Fig 93). In this drill, the offensive pass blocker is going to assume a good pass-blocking position, with knees bent, shoulders back, neck pulled, and target with his hands. He is going to block through the picture window created by his hands at his target. The defensive partner will come forward. The blocker will jam one good shot, then recoil, and separate. The defensive man will keep coming. Then, the pass blocker will jam again, lock him out, and ride the defender upfield past the quarterback. You emphasize keeping a good body position, pass rusher between the legs, good knee bend, neck pulled back, all the proper fundamentals you have taught in the other drills.

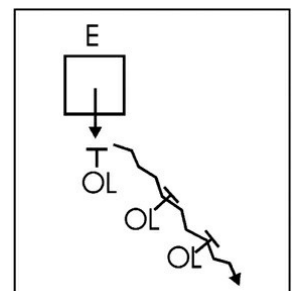


Fig 93: Mirror Jam Drill



Mirror and Jam

The next thing you want to do is combine the first two drills. The defensive man is going sideways and then attacks the blocker, forcing the blocker to jam him. The defensive man can go back and forth, left and right. Whenever he wants to, he can attack forward. Whatever simulates a pass rusher rushing an offensive lineman is what you want this defensive man to do. You will have the defensive man head fake to one side and then go to the other side, and you want the offensive blocker to execute a good jam on him. If the hands of the offensive player come outside of the framework of his body, the eyes are moving faster than the feet and the offensive player must move to stay in the proper relationship with the defender.

Mirror Spin

The defender starts with slight lean into the blocker, who has his hands on the defender, arms extended, and in good pass protection stance. On the coach's command, the defender spins right or left on either side and continues to spin until the whistle. The offensive player must keep the proper relationship by moving the feet, and also must keep proper distance from the defender. As a coaching point, the offensive player should not let the defender into his chest and needs to adjust the feet accordingly to prevent this action from occurring. The spin drill reinforces footwork and the separation that must be maintained between the offensive player and the defender.

Ninja

This drill is identical to the spin drill, with the exception that the offensive player must have his eyes closed. This loss of the sense of vision will cause an increased dependence on maintaining hand contact with the defender and moving the feet. Requiring the lineman to "feel" the defender will create added confidence for the offensive lineman. Any lapse of concentration will cause the lineman to lose contact with the defender, and therefore be defeated in a game situation.

Machine Gun

The organization of this drill changes, as the offensive player faces a line of three to four defenders at a depth of four yards (Figure 94). On the coach's command and direction, the first defender attacks a cone to the right or left or straight ahead. The offensive player must slide over to square on the rusher and give a pass-protection punch into the chest of the defender. As soon as the first defender has been contacted, the next lineman starts toward the offensive player with a different attack area. The drill continues until all defenders have attacked the offensive player. This drill reinforces the position that the body needs to be in to execute an adequate punch—square and prepared with a great base ready to deliver the blow.

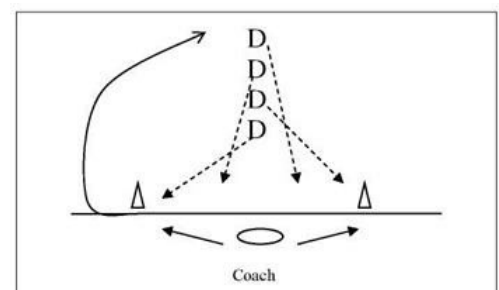


Fig 94: Machine Gun Drill



STANCE

The philosophy of the PISTOL WING-T is to use formations to our advantage and gain leverage over the defense. We don't believe in getting in a 2-point stance for passing situations and declaring to the defense that we are passing the ball. So while traditional pass blocking teaching is done from a 2-point stance, the Wing-T lineman has to adapt from the 3-point stance, which is really not that difficult to do.

We start with footwork and the important thing to remember is that both feet work together. When one moves, the other foot has to react. While doing all of these drills, make sure that linemen are in the following:

Feet

Staggerred stance, weight on inside foot, feet wider than shoulders;

- POST FOOT is closest to QB and slightly forward
- KICK FOOT is away from QB and slightly back
- Outside foot in crotch of defender, belt buckle on inside leg of d

Back & Shoulders

Back is straight, creating 45-degree angles with your legs

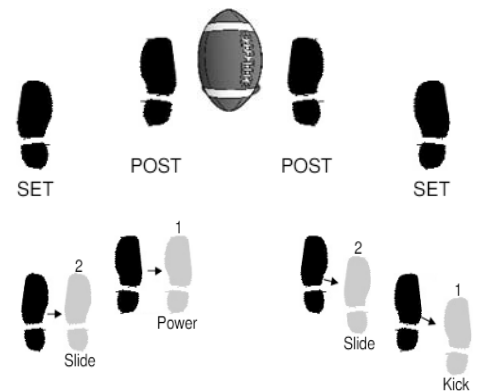
Shoulders Square

Weight

Butt low

Balanced, distributed on instep of feet,

Knees buckled inward to shrink expansion of your hips and control weight distribution.



Head & Eyes

Chin tucked, head back, Eyes on breast plate of defender

Arms

Raised, relaxed, tight to body, within the framework of the chest



Figure 88: Good Pass Protection Stance



PASS BLOCKING TEACHING PROGRESSION

- Setting up quickly in your pass set is very important. The blocker needs to get in position very quickly
 - The depth of the set is determined by the technique in which you are executing
 - Set to an inside-out relationship on the defender
 - outside foot to crotch of defender, belt buckle on inside leg of defender.
- Maintain leverage between QB and rushing defender
 - Develop a cushion between yourself and the defender
- Know where the QB is and the depth of his set.
- Understand alignments and movement of rushers.
- Maintain your “square” balance and angles (Keep the door closed, feet lead hands)
- Always know where your help is.

Inside Leg Heavy. Never let your man beat you inside. The inside lane is taken away by keeping the inside leg heavy, inviting the outside rush rather than the inside lane to the quarterback.

Outside Shoulder Pull. This works in conjunction with inside leg heavy concept. Blocker invite rushers to outside by slightly opening the outside shoulder. The main concept again is to take away the inside and force the defender wide, away from the quarterback.

Nose Separation. Instead of mentioning the negative by stating "do not overextend," use the coaching point of "keep the nose separated" as a more positive and visual way to get the same point across. A good pass-protection posture, includes keeping the chest proud and the shoulders back. Keeping the nose back helps maintain this and discourages overextending into the block. Facemask contact occurs during initial contact, but separation needs to immediately following the punch to force the defender back and gain space between the players.

Wide Base. The concept of maintaining a wide base is not only important in executing the run block, but also in being an effective pass protector. An offensive lineman with a wide base on contact with the defender in a pass protection has great balance and is able to react to the movement of the defender. Basketball shares this concept, in that to be a good defender, the base needs to be wide and the feet slightly outward to allow for quick reactions..

Capt Obvious. Get between the defender and the QB. Don't get beat inside.



Stance to Start Drill

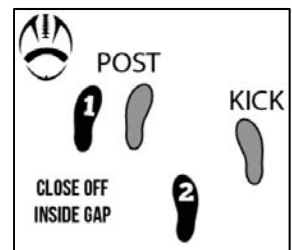
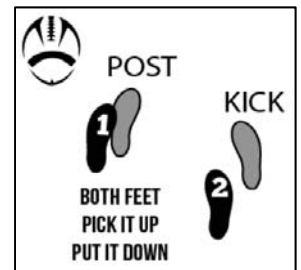
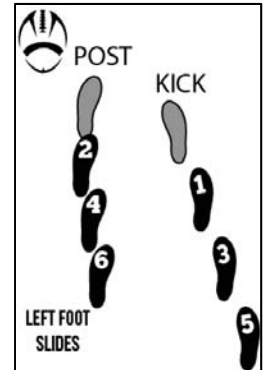
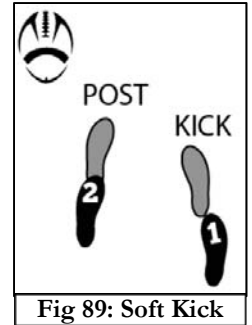
Put each player on the Homer's dairy, in a stance where the lines intersect.

1. The coach will say: "Soft Kick", count to three and say "Ready."
 - a. Kick the outside foot (KICK FOOT) 6-inches behind where it was.
 - b. The POST FOOT immediately slides after the kick step. (Fig 89)
 - c. Players freeze in a good pass protection stance (Fig 88).
 - d. Coach walks around, evaluates form, and make corrections.
 - e. Players get back in stance.

2. The coach will say: "Long Kick", count to three and say "Ready."
 - a. Kick the outside foot (KICK FOOT) three "kicks" (steps) backwards.
 - b. The POST FOOT follows the Kick Foot in sliding motion. (Fig 90)
 - c. Freeze in good pass pro stance.
 - d. Coach make corrections.
 - e. Players get back in stance.

3. The coach will say: "Soft Post", count to three and say "Ready."
 - a. Pick both feet up and place back on ground. (Fig 91)
 - b. POST FOOT moves laterally inside 1-2 inches
 - c. The KICK FOOT moves slightly back 2-3 inches.
 - d. Freeze in good pass pro stance.
 - e. Coach walks around, evaluates form, and make corrections.
 - f. Players get back in stance.

4. The coach will say: "Hard Post", count to three and say "Ready."
 - a. Move the inside foot (POST) as far laterally as possible.
 - b. The KICK FOOT follows and is slightly back 2-3 inches.
 - c. Freeze in good pass pro stance.
 - d. Coach walks around, evaluates form, and make corrections.



Coaching Tips

- This should be a high repetition drill. The more it is practiced the faster a player will create muscle memory.
- Do not overstep. If the first step is too wide, the DL will knock the blocker off balance. Always have both feet on the ground when making contact with a DL.



LINE POST

Description: The objective of this drill is to teach proper post-step technique with inside POST FOOT. Linemen are organized in two lines facing the coach. On the coach's command, the linemen proceed down the line, executing great technique with the power-step. A great pass-protection demeanor should be maintained during the drill and the lead foot should "pound" into the ground, taking away the inside rush lane.

Coaching Points:

- The blockers must lead with the inside foot.
- They must maintain a proper pass-protection demeanor.
- The coach should hear the pounding of the front foot, which is six inches in front of the backside foot.
- The backside foot also pounds the ground.
- As lateral movement occurs, the feet of the linemen should never be closer than 18 inches from one another;
- Blockers must keep the entire foot in the ground.
- They must execute a punch on air with the inside arm (same side as the lead step).

LINE KICK MIRROR

Description: Teach proper kick-step technique, as well as the relationship between the blocker and the defender. Linemen are organized in two lines facing the coach, with a defender lateral and to the outside of the lineman executing the drill (Figure 95). On the coach's command, the linemen kick step back away as the defender walks or slow jogs in a straight line. The offensive lineman places the hand on the inside number of the defensive player in a postpunch position. The offensive player must maintain a tempo that keeps the defender in front and never pass the hips of the offensive player.

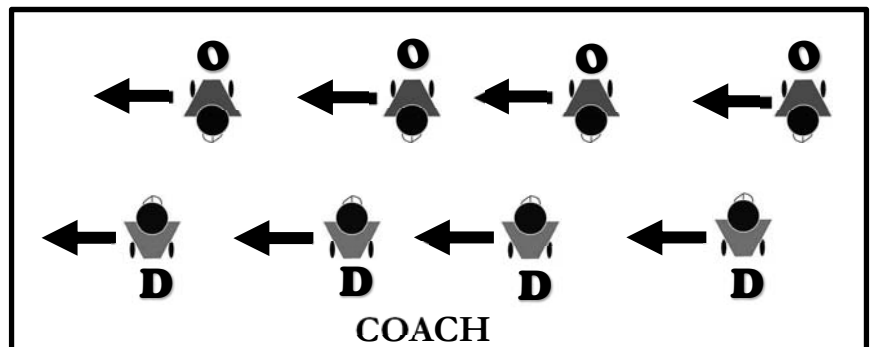


Fig 95: Line Kick Mirror Drill

Coaching Points:

- The outstretched arm should always maintain contact, which assures that proper spacing is being secured.
- The blockers must use great kick-slide technique.
 - Kick step and slide with quickness and not allow the defender on the outside to gain a parallel hip position.



LINE KICK STEP

Description: The objective of this drill is to teach proper kick-step technique with outside KICK FOOT. Linemen are organized in two lines, facing the coach. The linemen kick step back away from the coach while maintaining eye contact with him. A great pass-protection demeanor should be maintained, with the kickside arm executing a punch on air during the drill. The kick step should reach back, while the front foot slides in unison with the kick step.

Coaching Points:

- The linemen should kick back with the outside foot.
- They must maintain a proper pass-protection demeanor.
- Drag inside foot while keeping shoulders square.
- Maintain wide stance and feet 18 inches apart.
- They must keep the entire foot in the ground.
- They must execute a punch on air with the outside arm (same side as the kick step).

COMBINATION DRILL

Description: The objective of this drill is to teach proper kick-step and power-step technique. The linemen are organized on the grid as shown in Figure 96. On the coach's command, the linemen will kick step back away from the line, then move to a post-step to the next grid intersection. At each successive intersection, the lineman will switch back between the kick step and the post step. When working in this direction, the left leg is always forward. The kick step is back with the right foot, while the post step is firm and lateral with the left foot. The next player in line will start the combination drill when the first lineman reaches the second intersection or transition point.

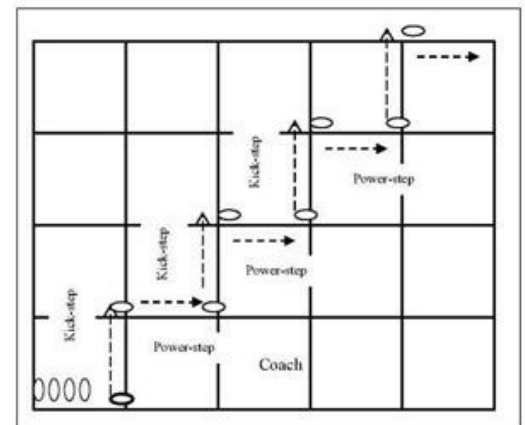


Fig 97: Combination Drill

SAND BAGS

If available have linemen do pass set drills with sandbags or medicine balls. They should weigh approximately 20 pounds. They start in 3 point stance, holding the bag, which is lying on the ground. When they take their Post and Kick Sets, they need to bring the sandbag up and punch on the first step of the post or the first step on the kick set while holding the sand bag.

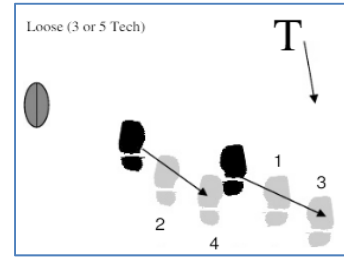
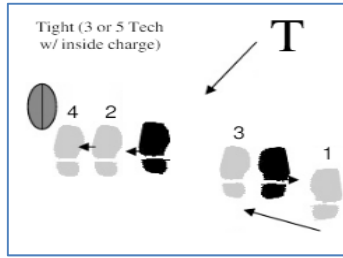
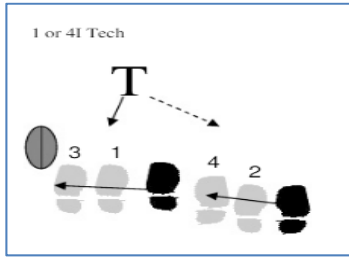
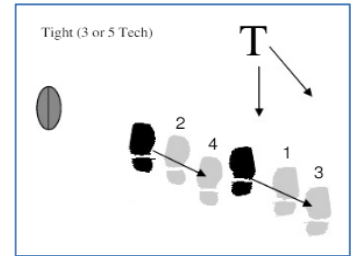
They can then progress to making a chest pass with the bag or ball to their partner. So for example, after performing 4 post and punches down the line with the sand bag in both hands, they throw the sandbag like a chest pass in basketball. Repeat with kick steps.

Fig 97: Combination Drill



1 ON 1

POST SETS



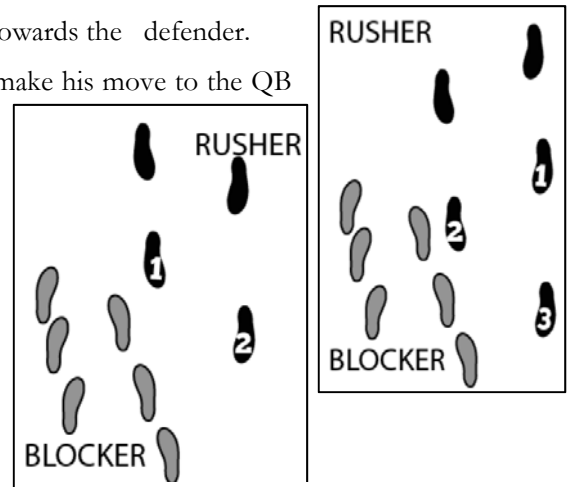
KICK SETS

TECHNIQUE VS WIDE RUSH END

The most difficult skill to master in pass protection is the Tackle's block on a wide aligned rusher.

1. Narrow the stance with the toe pointing outward slightly. Narrow stances allows blocker to cover more ground. Increase the stagger of the stance.
2. Determine the junction point, which is the point that the defender will turn his shoulders towards the QB. When this happens the blocker wants his shoulders turned towards the defender.

- a. If the rusher's outside foot is back, he will usually make his move to the QB on the 3rd step.
- b. If the rusher's inside foot is back, he will usually make his move to the QB on the 2nd step.



NOTE: If the rusher's backbone is pointed in rather than upfield, the above does not apply. Now block him like a normal rusher.

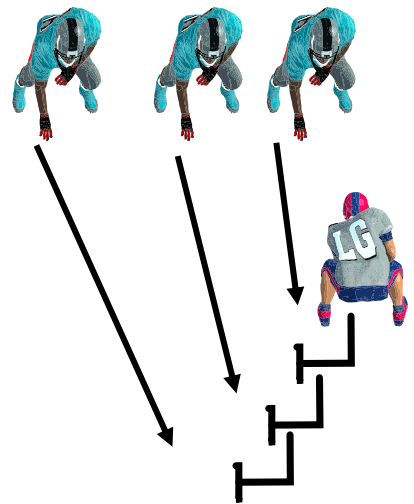


KICK SLIDE THREE-MAN PUNCH

This drill is used to help the guards, tackles, and centers work on the kick slide set. A lineman lines up on a yard line. (Two linemen can do this drill at the same time.) Three defenders stand to one side, spaced out 2 to 3 yards and staggered in alignment.

On the coaches command, the lineman does one kick slide and punches the closest defender who rushes from a tight, outside shade alignment. Once contact is made that defender continues running upfield out of the drill. The blocker takes his 2nd kick slide and punches the 2nd defender who started his rush as soon as contact was made with the first defender.

The 2nd defender runs upfield out of the drill and the blocker takes his 3rd kick slide to punch the 3rd defender, who started his runs as soon as contact was made with the 2nd defender. The blocker continues to aggressively block the 3rd defender as long as possible.



BALANCE

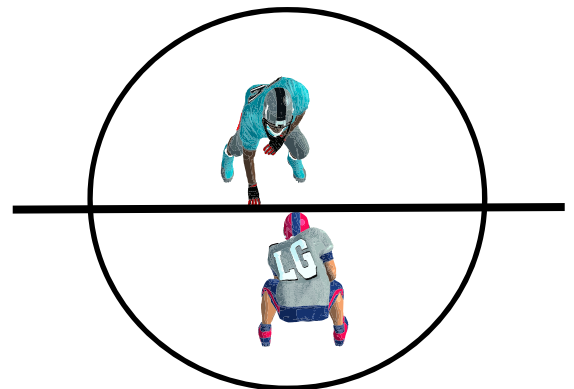
The body demeanor in a pass-protection set is a key aspect of pass protection. A blocker must have great balance to maintain a wide base in the lower body while moving side to side in reaction to the movement of a defender. Adequate core strength (between thighs and chest) is needed in pass protection. A defender will attempt to push, pull, and manipulate the balance of an offensive lineman to try to gain the advantage. A solid conditioning program with a lot of core work is essential, in addition to the following two functional drills for football.

SUMO PASS PRO IN THE HOOPS

This is the favorite off-season drill for many offensive linemen. Place a hoop on a yard line so that the hoop is split down the middle. One offensive lineman stands on one side of the line in the hoop, and another lineman stands on the other side of the hoop.

Players must keep their heads back. Each lineman places one hand in the armpit of the other lineman. The outside hand is placed on the outside of the partner's upper arm. On the coaches command, each player tries to throw the other out of the hoop. The player must sink his hips and really try to hold his center of gravity. After the players go, they are free to use hand replacements on each other – whatever they need to do to get the other out of the hoop.

Keep score of wins and losses. Create elimination tournaments to find out who is King of the Hoops.



Push - Pull

Description: Teach the offensive players how to fight against pressure. The players are partnered up in the middle of the five-by-five boxes on the HOMER'S DAIRY. The offensive lineman starts in a perfect pass- protection demeanor, but with his hands behind the back. The defender has one hand on the hip and other hand on the opposite shoulder. Defender will pull and push the blocker forward, backwards, and side to side.



Figure 8-14. Starting position for the pass pro balance drill

The offensive player must fight the resistance and force of the defender and maintain balance. If the blocker is pushed, he must "sit" and drop his weight, refusing to be moved. If he is pulled, he must sense the severity of the pull and shift the weight back to provide more of an anchor for the lower body. Side-to-side pressure will allow the lineman to understand how to maintain balance when being moved.



QUARTER-EAGLE

Description: Stress the importance of body position and change of momentum through movement forced at the core. A good thigh burn will occur if the drill is done correctly. The linemen are arranged in a two-point stance on the grid with proper spacing and poised in the pass-protection demeanor. The coach points right or left and the offensive linemen jump a quarter-turn to the directed side and maintain their pass-protection demeanor. The coach continues the commands for a total of 10 to 12 commands per set, while players continue changing their staggered stances so that the kick foot alternates.

A-B DRILL

This drills makes sure offensive linemen are getting out of their stance quickly, setting their hands, and not be knowcked off balance. Defender holds a hand shield like a baseball bat and swings it hard at the blockers face. The blocker does not come out of his stance until he sees the defender starting to swing the bag.



Fig 99: A-B Reaction Drill

