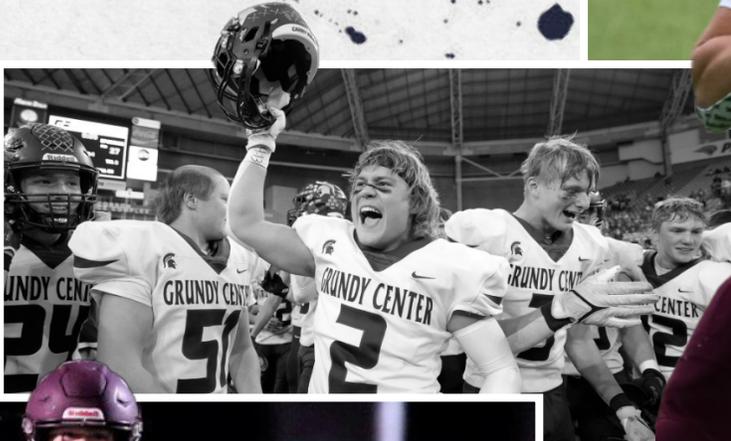
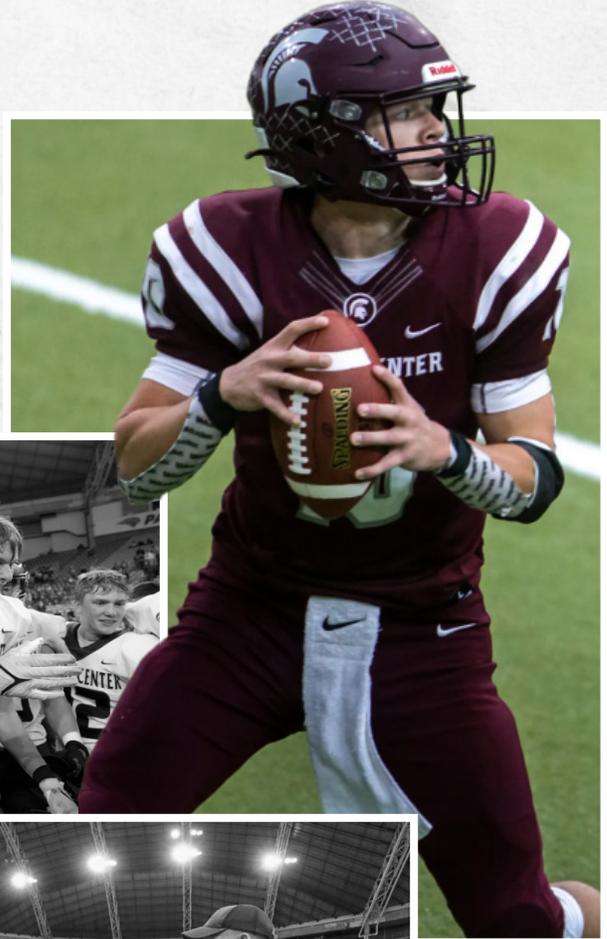


2025

# IFCA

JOURNAL





# IFCA MESSAGE

Coaches,

The Iowa football Coaches Association would like to thank P.J. Hedrington and the members of the IFCA Journal Committee for the work they do in putting out the yearly journal. I would also like to say "Thank you" to the coaches that take the time to share their football ideas by writing an article for the journal. If you have an idea you would like to share or if a member of the committee reach out, I hope you will volunteer to write an article to be a part of the journal. Thanks again to the committee, for your support of the IFCA.

Iowa high school football is better than ever. The playoffs are well attended and they

are now televised throughout the state. The IFCA and the IHSAA continually work together to find ways to improve high school football in the state of Iowa and will continue to do so in the future.

We need to support our association with your membership and your ideas. If you are

interested in being a candidate for the board of directors or serving on a committee please contact me or a member of the board in your area. The IFCA has a website at

[www.ifbca.us](http://www.ifbca.us) and a twitter account [@IFBCA](https://twitter.com/IFBCA). Please be sure to check it out.

Brian Wilken

Executive Secretary, IFCA

# IFCA JOURNAL-2025 EDITION

The IFCA Journal has a variety of authors again this year. We have coaches from Iowa sharing their knowledge and experiences. This year's journal edition has a new look. The articles are categorized by topics. This will help coaches that are looking for a certain theme. Enjoy reading this year's edition and please consider adding an article of your own next year.

P.J. Hedrington

## A BIG THANK YOU!

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Our journal has many contributors and I want to thank those coaches that submitted articles, and our Journal Committee! Special acknowledgement goes to Darrell Schumacher and Ken Winkler.

The IFCA strives to be one of the best football coaches associations in the United States. We are very pleased with the commitment of our coaches to this organization.

## THANK YOU

**“COACHING IS A  
PROFESSION OF LOVE.  
YOU CAN’T COACH PEOPLE  
UNLESS YOU LOVE THEM.”**

**-ED ROBINSON**

## **OLine Position Drills & Philosophy**

First off, I would like to thank the Iowa Football Coaches Association for allowing me the opportunity to write this article as well as for all they do for the football coaches in our great state. My name is Ross Wargula and I just finished up my first season as the Head Football Coach at Harris-Lake Park. The aspect of football that I am most passionate about is the offensive line. As a former offensive linemen, I am obviously very biased in this thinking.

### **Mentality & Cohesion**

There are so many details, techniques and skills that are vital to successful offensive line play. Maybe the most important aspect of offensive line play is the mentality that goes with playing the position. There are no stats and no glory. However, there is something so special about moving and dominating an opponent against their will to selflessly serve a teammate. Establishing the "want to" attitude amongst your offensive line is critical to success.

Playing cohesively is the "1b" to mentality being the "1a" for offensive line. When your offensive line group plays in a synchronized manner, it is a thing of beauty. Cohesion takes time and reps and reps and reps...you get the point. What we do and how we do on the offensive line needs to be practiced daily.

### **1 Step, 2 step & Drive for 6**

When I first started coaching football, I was able to be mentored by an incredible person and football coach in Bruce Larson. We did the 1 step, 2 step and drive for 6 seconds every day in practice. This is something that has stuck with me over my years of coaching offensive linemen. You will need a blocking dummy and hopefully a board (similar to a 2x12) for these drills. Get your OL in their stance with their facemask a few inches from the blocking dummy. On the cadence or the whistle, they should take their first step, no more than 6 inches, and strike the dummy. I usually go two to each side and rotate players. For 2 step, it is the same as 1 step but taking two steps. When you drive for 6 seconds is when the board comes into play to help your offensive linemen keep a powerful base. Players holding the dummy should hold it tough but not to the point where the offensive linemen doesn't get the intended result. We drive for 6 seconds as that is the average length of a play in football. As always, keep your players pad level to what you desire. The facemask should be the only part of the helmet that touches the bag to ensure safe blocking techniques.

### **Pass Protection Drills**

As much as I love running the football, the game of football is trending towards being able to pass more. It is vital to give our offensive linemen proper techniques so they have the tools in the toolbox to protect our quarterbacks. The following two drills are ones I picked up playing offensive line in college.

### **Mirror Drill**

Have your offensive linemen partner up. Make sure they are across from each other on a line. The offensive linemen get in their stance and on the cadence or whistle they should take their normal pass set. Their partner will go side to side and the offensive linemen should mirror their movement. The offensive linemen should always keep their power foot up on the line so we are not switching our stagger in our

stance. That will lead to the flood gates opening up and easy pass rush lanes for defenders. The offensive linemen should set no farther than nose to nose of their partner in this drill. They also do not need to practice the strike portion of pass protection in this drill but can as variance if you'd like.

### **Kicksets w/ a Punch**

For this drill, we have 3 defenders with hand shields standing at different depths so we can practice our kick sets and punches. I like to start my offensive linemen at a "T" line on the field and kick set back into the practice field. We start on the cadence or whistle and have the offensive linemen kickset at a 45 degree angle. Once they get to a the defender holding the hand shield, they wait for them to step at them so we can get a quality punch without over extending ourselves or over setting the defender. We get three reps each way in one pass set on this drill. We get through all guys going right and flip to going left when we do this drill.

### **Thank you**

Thank you for taking the time to read about some of my favorite offensive line drills and thoughts. The offensive line is the heart and soul of a football team. We need to prepare them for the battles in the trenches! Feel free to reach out if you have any questions!

Ross Wargula  
Harris-Lake Park Head Football Coach  
[rwargula@hlpcsd.org](mailto:rwargula@hlpcsd.org)  
[rwargula52@gmail.com](mailto:rwargula52@gmail.com)  
715-441-3583



## **Practice Schedule 101**

This is the weekly practice schedule I send out to all of our coaches. This is for a second-round playoff game. We are fortunate to have 11 total coaches at the high school level for a 2A program with 77 athletes.

### **Monday-shells**

We meet and watch film of the previous game. We have certain clips that we want to show for teaching points. We also do the same with the upcoming game with certain clips and that we want them to see to install our game plan. We also hand out awards such as players of the game and decals for our helmets for team goals. Next we go outside to practice in shells and do our install vs players holding blocking dummies. Our conditioning is receivers and backs running routes with quarterbacks and lineman working on pulling drills and pass protection.

### **Tuesday full pads**

We start off with a tackling circuit with 5 stations. Each group works on a skill for two minutes and moves on to a new station. This lasts for 10 minutes and is our conditioning for the day. We then move into offensive indy and team time for one hour and 15 minutes. During team time on offense we have two coaches take our linebackers and defensive backs who do not play offense to install and do indy work with them. We have a separate scout team defense working against our 1st and second team offense. We work on our varsity punt team for five minutes and move on to running two scout teams against our first team defense for 20 minutes. We end the day working on PAT's and field goals.

### **Wednesday full pads**

We start off with a two minute drill at all levels running plays on air for ten minutes. This is our conditioning for the day. We move into our defensive indy and team time for the next one hour and 15 minutes. During team time we have all the plays scripted on offense and defense. We are lucky enough to have two offensive scout teams run plays against our first defense with rotating defensive players. Next we work with our varsity punt return for five minutes and move on to having our varsity offense run plays against a scout defense for 20 minutes. We finish the practice working on PAT's and field goals.

### **Thursday shells**

We start doing our pre game stretch. We hand out scout team players of the week awards. Next we work all of our special teams with our varsity against our JV team for 30 minutes. We go over our defensive adjustments and blitzes for 20 minutes. Next we

run plays with our offense against a defense holding dummies with the down lineman. We finish off with a two minute drill, PAT, field goal. Last we have a player or speaker come in and talk to our athletes for five minutes.

Friday—GAME DAY

Monday Weights AM

3:30 film and meeting in Hawf's room

4:00 practice in shells

4:10 O Line—LB DB install

4:25 defensive install

4:40 offensive install—run plays vs dummies with scout defense—Vander

5:00 skills—run routes-O line pull drill and pass blocking

Sweep the shed

Tuesday Weights AM

3:45 Tackling Circuit—HUSTLE

4:00 Offensive Indy and Team

Vander—scout defense—Kramer T Rozeboom take your group and install

5:15 punt team

5:20 defensive team vs 2 scout teams

5:40 PAT's

Sweep the shed

Wednesday Weights AM

3:45 2 groups of 2 minute offense—EXECUTE

4:00 Defensive Indy and Team vs 2 scout teams

5:15 punt return

5:20 offensive team vs scout defense

5:40 PAT's

Sweep the shed

Thursday Weights AM

Practice on game field

3:40 team stretch and meeting-awards

3:50 varsity vs JV special teams

4:20 defensive team—sets-adjustments-stunts

4:40 offensive team—run plays

2 minute-PAT

5:05 on deck speaker

Sweep the shed

Friday Weights AM

5:00 tape

5:30 meetings  
6:00 specialties take field  
6:10 team stretch  
6:20 defense  
6:25 offense  
6:30 offense run plays on air—2 groups  
6:38 go inside  
6:50 walk the walk  
6:55 National Anthem  
7:00 Beat

**Jay Rozeboom**

West Lyon High School

[jrozeboom@lwildcats.org](mailto:jrozeboom@lwildcats.org)



# 4-2-5

## Roadrunner Defense

I would like to thank the IFCA for asking us to write an article for the 2018 journal. I am a young head coach that has been very lucky, not only to have been coached by great coaches, but to coach with great coaches. I have learned most of the 4-2-5 defense from Coach Jeff Douglas. I played for him in high school and also in college. I am now lucky enough to have him on my coaching staff. Since implementing the 4-2-5 defense, we have had a lot more success on the defensive side of the ball. Our kids seem to pick up on it extremely fast, and understand it well. It is like anything else; if the kids feel comfortable, they will play faster.

The 4-2-5 is a balanced defense that is well suited for small schools. It is highly effective against the run and can be equally effective against the pass. It is a gap control front against the run, and extremely easy to install. Small high schools that play kids on both sides of the ball should be implementing this front as their base. There is minimal learning involved. With having to spend time with offense and defense during practice, the kids will pick it up fast, as well as have a great time running a simple, sometimes multi blitzing front.

We feel like the 4-2-5 gives us a lot of flexibility. It is our base defense. When needed we can jump into different fronts. There are times when we bounce to a 3 or even a 5 man front. We can adjust with the personnel group we have on the field, and we can substitute. That all depends on the game plan put together.

### **Pre-Snap:**

We teach our kids to go through a progression in their heads before the ball is snapped. We teach them the acronym **A.A.R.E.**. As soon as they get the call, they are suppose to be going over this in their head-

- **Alignment:** Everyone needs to know the proper technique to play
- **Assignment:** Gap assignment/ pass coverage assignment
- **Reads:** O-Line / Backfield reads
- **Execution:** DO YOUR JOB - 1/11th

## **Post-Snap:**

We emphasize **“RUN, HIT, CELEBRATE.”** When the play is blown dead we want as many Roadrunners at the ball as possible. We tell our kids they will be graded each play on defense. We put this quote in there defensive playbook;

- *As a defensive player you will be graded on each play. It will be determined if you have committed a **“LOAF”**. What is a **LOAF?**”*
  - *Not sprinting to the football*
  - *Change of speed*
  - *Staying on the ground*
  - *Not turning and sprinting to the ball*
  - *Getting passed by any player*
  - *Not finishing aggressively at the end of the play*
  - *Turning down a hit*

We run a lot of pursuit drills for conditioning during practice. Our kids must be in great shape to play both sides of the ball. Execution is vital and they must be able to use the **A.A.R.E.** concept.

## **Defensive Conditioning:**

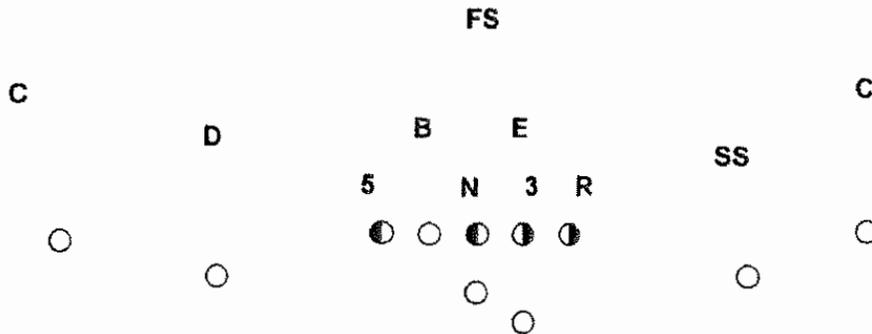
During this segment of practice we run pursuit drills. We will give them a call that they will have in Friday nights game. They should be going through the **A.A.R.E.** progression in their heads when the call is given.

Cones are placed on both sidelines. Players line-up in front called, execute **A.A.R.E.**, are instructed to chop their feet, do an up/down and then they are directed to sprint towards a sideline and have specific “gaps” they are assigned to sprint through. This works on everyone pursuing the ball carrier, should cover a minimum of 45 yds. Four(4) of these are done for each quarter and two for overtime.

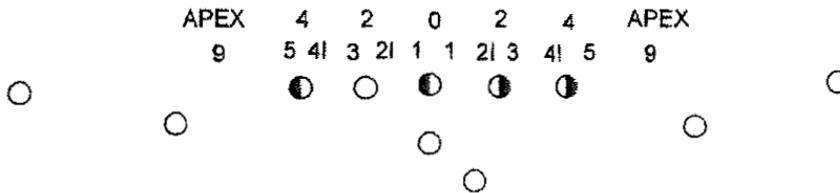
Mike Stuart  
Head Football Coach Interstate 35  
[mstuart@i-35.k12.ia.us](mailto:mstuart@i-35.k12.ia.us)

Jeff Douglas  
[jdouglas@i-35.k12.ia.us](mailto:jdouglas@i-35.k12.ia.us)

## 4-2-5 BASE FRONT



## TECHNIQUES



0, 2, 4 - THESE ARE ALL HEAD-UP TECHNIQUES.

2I, 4I - THESE TECHNIQUES ARE AN INSIDE SHADE OF THE O-LINEMAN

1, 3, 5 - OUTSIDE SHADES OF O-LINEMAN

GAP CALL - DEFENSIVE FRONT LINES UP IN THEIR GAP

NOT SHOWN - 6I, 6, 7 - TECHNIQUES ON TE

### NOTE:

**BASE CALL COVER 3 DIPICTED AT THE TOP:**

"C"- 6 TO 8 YDS OFF #1 RECEIVER - HEAD-UP OUTSIDE SHADE

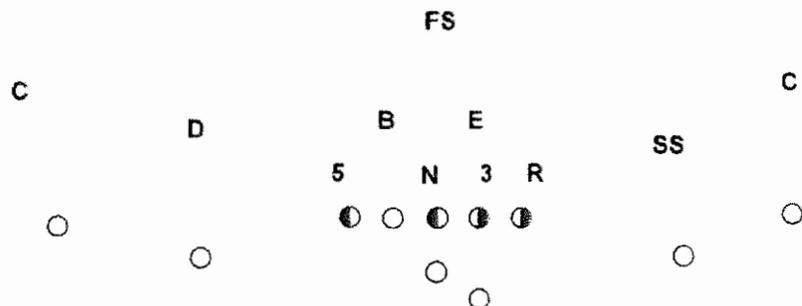
"D, SS" - NORMAL ALIGNMENT IS APEX OFF TACKLE OR HEAD-UP #2 RECEIVER (4X5 OFF TACKLE)

"FS" IS 9 TO 12 YARDS OFF BALL

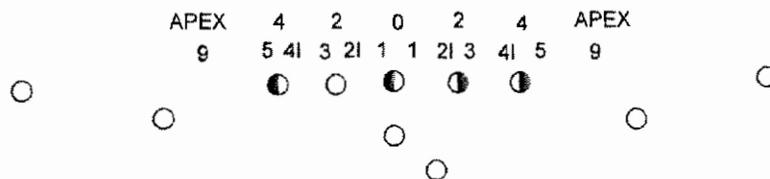
"B" IS IN A WEAKSIDE GAP ALIGNMENT

"E" IS IN A 2 TECH ON GUARD AT 5 YDS.

## 4-2-5 BASE FRONT



## TECHNIQUES



0, 2, 4 - THESE ARE ALL HEAD-UP TECHNIQUES.

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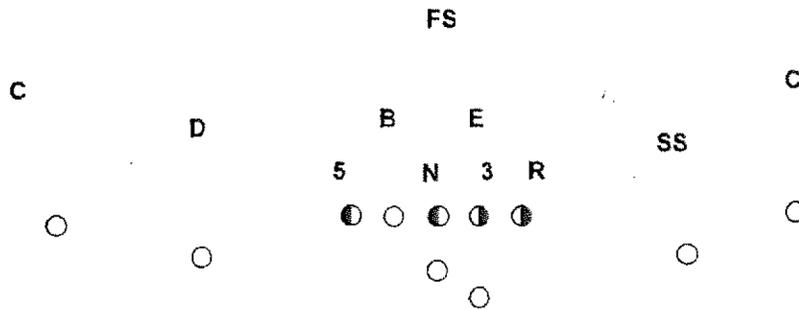
**"B" IS IN A WEAKSIDE GAP ALIGNMENT**

**"E" IS IN A 2 TECH ON GUARD AT 5 YDS.**

**BASE - COVER 3**

**GAP COVERAGE AND RUN RESPONSIBILITY IN BASE COVER 3**

**4-2-5 BASE FRONT**



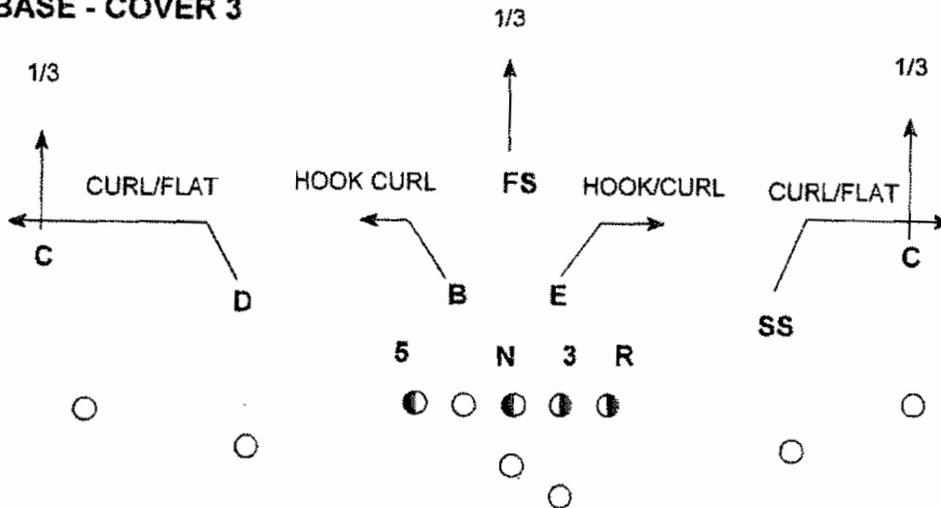
Position	Alignment	Key	Run TO	Run Away	Pass	Option
RUSH	6 Tech	TE	"C" Gap	Cutback Bootleg Reverse	Rush Contain CB	QB to Pitch
3 TECH	3 Tech	OG	Attack OG Ctrl "E" Gap	Cutback Reverse	Rush OE	Dive to QB
HOSE	1 Tech WS	OG	Attack OG Ctrl WS "A"	Cutback	Draw/Screen	Dive
5 TECH	5 Tech	OT	Attack OT Ctrl WS "C"	Cutback Boot/Reverse	Rush Contain QB	Dive to QB
DROP	5' Walk Away 4x5	TE/N.Back	Force Out/In	Cutback	Cover Called	Pitch
BACKER	3 Tech WS	Read G to Backs	"B" Gap	Step B Bounce Gaps	Hook to Curl Cover Called	Dive to QB
EAGLE	3 Tech	Read G to Backs	"A" Gap	Step "A" Bounce Gaps Cutback	Hook to Curl Cover Called	Dive to QB
SS	4x5	Near Back	Out/In	Cutback	Curl to Flat Cover Called	Pitch
FS	G S. Side	Guard	Pass Inside/Out	Pass Inside/Out	Cover Called	Dive/QB Pitch
CORNERS	Cover Called	Rec.	Out/In	C.Back	Cover Called	Pitch

## COVERAGES

COVERAGES CAN CHANGE WEAK TO WEAK. A BASE COVER 3 IS PROBABLY THE EASIEST TO RUN. THIS IS WHERE WE START AND MOVE FORWARD FROM THERE. WE WILL ALSO RUN A BASE COVER 2 AS WELL AS MAN - FREE. COVERAGES CAN BE EASILY DISGUISED AND YOU HAVE THE FLEXIBILITY TO GET AS COMPLICATED AS YOU LIKE. WITH TODAY'S PASSING GAME, RPO'S AND SO ON, WE BELIEVE YOU REALLY NEED TO MULTI FRONT AS WELL AS MULTI COVERAGE. MATCHING YOUR STUNT PACKAGES WITH COVERAGES CAN BE THE DIFFICULT PART. "REMEMBER TO COVER YOUR GAPS"

A BASE FRONT AND THREE COVERAGE CALLS ARE GIVEN AS EXAMPLES.

### BASE - COVER 3

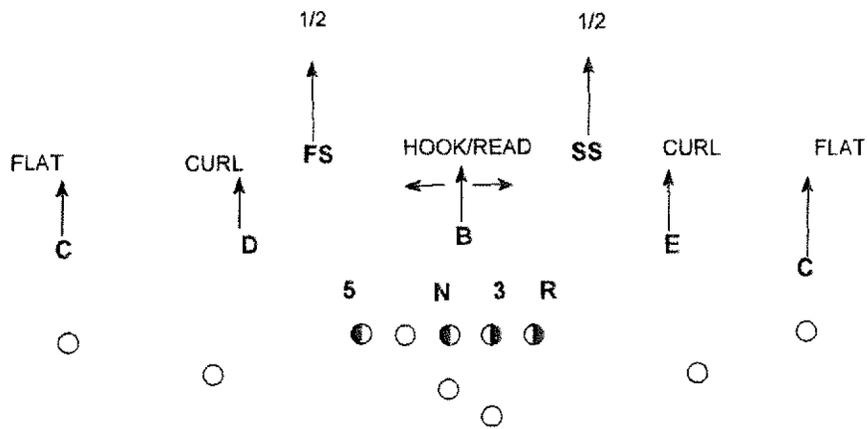


**B , E - DROPS ARE TO THE HOOK AND FLOAT TO CURL**

**SS/ D - DROPS ARE TO CURL AND FLOAT TO FLAT**

**C , F , C - DROPS ARE DEEP 1/3'S**

**BASE - COVER 2**



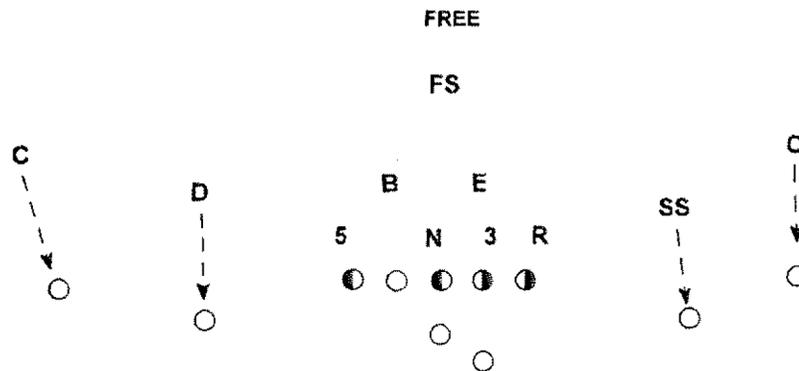
**B - DROPS MIDDLE OF HOOK, READS QB AND FLOATS TO THAT SIDE**

**D , E - DROP TO CURL**

**C , C - DROP FLATS (PRESS OR CATCH TECHNIQUE)**

**FS , SS - DEEP HALVES - ALIGN 12 TO 14 YARDS OF LOS**

**BASE - MAN FREE**



**C , C - HAVE MAN COVERAGE ON #1 RECEIVER THEIR SIDE**

**D , SS - HAVE MAN COVERAGE ON #2 RECEIVER THEIR SIDE**

**B , E - HAVE MAN ON #3 RECEIVER THEIR SIDE**

**FS - IS FREE. PLAYS THE FIELD**



Derek Doherty

Fort Madison High School Football

IFCA Journal

Changing the Culture of Fort Madison

Culture, what is it to you? We know that it has become a popular word that is being used a lot in programs throughout the nation. We often hear that a team's culture is the reason for their winning, their losing and everything in between. What is it to you though?

I am a firm believer that you must define it before you can change it. At Fort Madison we simply define culture as a way of connecting people. We have to be elite at connecting people. World wide that is done through language, traditions, behaviors and all of the other norms for "the culture." We try to do that through our program.

Before taking over as Head Coach for Fort Madison, I had the privilege to be an assistant for 10 years. During that time I had three different head coaches that I worked for. The benefit was that I got to see three diverse ways of doing things. There were a lot of things that I enjoyed and a lot of things that I told myself I would not do if I ever became a head coach. The experience was valuable to me. The biggest thing that I learned was that you have to be authentic. Kids can smell a hustle a mile away. They know if you're sincere or not. In order to change something, you really need to be in tune with yourself. We have a long way to go with our program to get to where we want to be, but we have progressed pretty fast.

Back to connecting people the Fort Madison way. I'd like to share a few things with you that we do. I believe that it starts and ends with relationships. I know that is not a new concept or the first time you have heard it. We use FaMily as our relationship word. We define that as unconditional love and sacrifice. If a kid feels like you only care about them when they're producing for you, that will be a weak relationship. Unfortunately in our business, that is how a lot of coaches operate. If you do not sacrifice time to support them in their other life interests,

that will be a weak relationship. It is a simple concept but hard to do. It is a lot of time spent in gyms, concerts, etc. But to us, it's worth it. It begins and ends with relationships.

Where your program has been, where you're at and where you're going is another way of connecting people. History is important. I did a year-long research project on the history of FM Football. Our athletes, coaches and even the community knowing the history, not all of it, is important. There are all kinds of quotes out there about the importance of history. There was an assumption that the program has been horrible for all of its existence. I found out that that's not true. There were several peaks in the past. Obviously a lot more valleys but we choose to bring the peaks to light. Knowing that it is possible is a huge mental boost for all. Taking a look at where we are at and why we are there was the next step. This was mostly through conversation, athlete lead. Finally, where are we going? We have telescope goals (long term) and microscope goals (short term) for both individuals and team. These are important for accountability. These are pretty easy conversations to have with those who are not living up to what they said they wanted to do or how they're going to get there. Tied in with this is a growth plan. Start, stop and continue is the simple version of it. What things do you need to start doing, stop doing and continue doing. It really helps tie everything together.

The last thing I'd like to share with you is our Athletic Enhancement. This is our strength and conditioning program. Physiology is a true passion of mine. I am lucky to have great support from our administration in the pursuit of developing our students in the weight room. I teach science but they have rearranged my schedule to allow me to teach two classes of weights and I also have an early bird, non credit. In the weightroom, I feel that it's not about what you're doing but how you're doing it. Most programs have a lot of similarities in the actual programming. How you do things is how you separate your program from the others. Prioritizing what is vital for your football players to be successful is a must. All of it is important, no doubt, but something has to come first. Is it strength? Power? Conditioning? Speed? You have to decide and program for it or at least talk to whoever is running your S&C program. I am the

head coordinator for all sports but the relationship I have with all of the other coaches is important. I feel that I am there to help them. What they feel is important is what I focus on for their athletes. If I disagree, I will have that discussion with them. Thankfully because we have focused on relationships, these conversations do not turn into arguments. All coaches have a right to know what's going on with their players and their development inside the weight room and they should be involved. That creates buy in with everyone!

I thank you for taking the time to read through this and I hope that you took at least one thing to help you and your program. If I can assist you in any way or if you have any questions please feel free to reach out. Coaching collaborations are very important to me. Good luck to you and your program.



Adam Goodvin  
Head Football Coach  
Marshalltown High School  
Marshalltown, Iowa

## **Quarterback Development: In Season and Off Season**

The quarterback is the most important and valuable player on a football team. Don't let anyone try and tell you any different; they're wrong. There's not any other player on the field that touches the football after every single snap. The quarterback is the most counted on player on every team to do his job. As a coach, it's our job to prepare and teach quarterbacks at the high school level what it truly means to be in this position, and it all starts with developing them correctly as soon as possible.

I hold my quarterbacks to a higher standard than other members of our football team. Higher standards in the classroom, weight room, film room, and on the practice field. It's the coach's job to prepare them for the many ups and downs they will experience throughout their career and embrace the risks that come with playing this position. My quarterbacks definitely get treated differently than the average quarterback. As a team, we put our hands in the dirt and push the sled weekly. It doesn't matter if you're an offensive lineman, defensive back, kicker, holder, or even the quarterback. I believe it's important to develop mental and physical toughness within my teams most valuable asset; especially at a young age. To me, this is equally as important as honing in on their skill set and developing them into efficient football players.

Below I will describe how I develop my high school quarterbacks in and out of season.

### **Off Season Development**

The off season development plan is the most critical time for quarterbacks to develop. As a coach, it's important to have a plan. We have to teach and show young quarterbacks what this looks like. The off season is a time for quarterbacks to obviously live in the weight room, but also work on footwork and ball skills. From the time the season ends to mid-spring, I encourage my quarterbacks to improve on all-around skills such as getting stronger, improving footwork, ball handling skills, and throwing. The off season plan I provide for my quarterbacks consists of throwing, footwork, and ball handling drills; many of these drills are done daily in the fall. We

always begin with footwork and end with throwing. Anybody can throw a football, but great footwork is hard to come by at the high school level. It can be the difference in an average quarterback and a great quarterback.

**Footwork Drills:**

1. Hash Drops x 4 (reach, cross, reach - USE A LINE!)
2. Drops x 10 each direction (1-step, 3-step, play action, sprint out → be able to sprint out opposite!)
3. Bags (run forward, drop backwards, shuffle forward, shuffle backwards, slide both directions - can use cones or mini hurdles)
4. Line Drills x 20 secs (back 'n forth, 1 foot/2 foot back 'n forth - as quick as possible)
5. Mark Sanchez footwork drill (Todd Norman Youtube; 6 cones)
6. Full Court Footwork Drill (3-step drop/slide;3-step drop/sprint,backpedal,sprint; Sprint out/throw)

**Throwing Drills:** 10 throws and switch/ “stay tall, stay balanced, deliver the ball”

1. One knee
2. Right Foot/Left Foot Forward
3. Cross Body throw
4. Foot Patter/throw (ball ready/on balls of feet)
5. Back it up. Easy 3-step; throw.
6. 5-10 yard staggered; throwing back and forth w/ partner (quick release) - i.e. hitch route
7. Back and forth on a line w/ partner

I always encourage quarterbacks to attend off season camps and get out there and learn as much as they can to improve their skills physically and mentally.

By mid-spring, I push my quarterbacks to not only focus on improving individually, but also work on implementing our scheme at Marshalltown High School with running backs and wide receivers. This is the perfect time for them to connect with their teammates to work on backfield mesh and timing on passing routes that are all within our system up until the summer program begins. Once the summer begins, it is again important that I have an effective plan in place to be prepared by day one of fall camp. The focus is on mastering the basics and being picky with quarterback technique to avoid wasting time teaching the “little things” in the fall. As the saying goes, “don’t practice it until you get it right, practice it until you can’t get it wrong.”



## **In Season Development**

There is time to do bag work and cone work, but during the season our focus is sharpening up the skills that we see on film each week. We don't like to take time to practice skills that are rarely used on Friday nights. During camp we like to start from the beginning and get good at our base plays. We have set drills for both footwork and throwing; with the addition of ball skills every other day. These are drills that we've identified are most important, and are done daily throughout the entire season and do not take up a great amount of time. The quarterbacks know what is expected out of them and they get the work done.

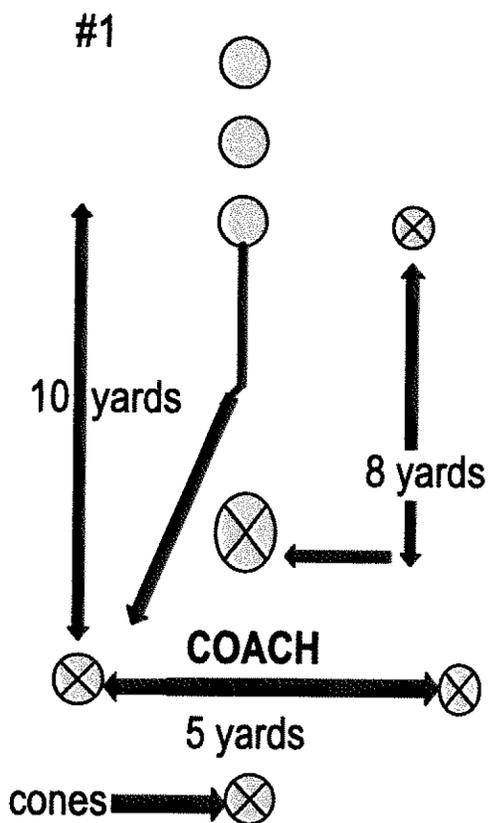
During the season, our quarterbacks focus shifts to offensive unit improvement. The quarterbacks are the leaders of the offense and know that it's up to them to make sure we don't take steps backwards. The majority of the skill development is set in place; and a stronger focus on the mental and physical attributes of the game is implemented. Like I said earlier, we put our quarterbacks on the sled, through cones, and involve them in tackling drills like the rest of the players every week to maintain and build even greater physical and mental toughness.

How to watch film effectively as a quarterback is another skill I like to teach my guys. I know a lot of coaches sit down with their teams and talk about opposing teams' schemes and alignments that they will see in the upcoming week and also how they can improve themselves. One very important skill I believe is important to teach quarterbacks, is how to look for tendencies of opposing players. Not necessarily the looks we will see from the defensive front or coverage wise, but how players move and react during plays. Throughout the entire game. By doing this, I often have my quarterbacks telling other teammates what they've picked up on and occasionally bringing up things our coaching staff hadn't even picked up on.

Developing an effective quarterback takes a lot of planning, and hard work on their part. Get him to trust you and the overall goals for the entire team. It takes getting to know the kid personally and developing a positive relationship with him. But most importantly, teaching them to understand that the risk of playing the quarterback position is always worth the end reward.

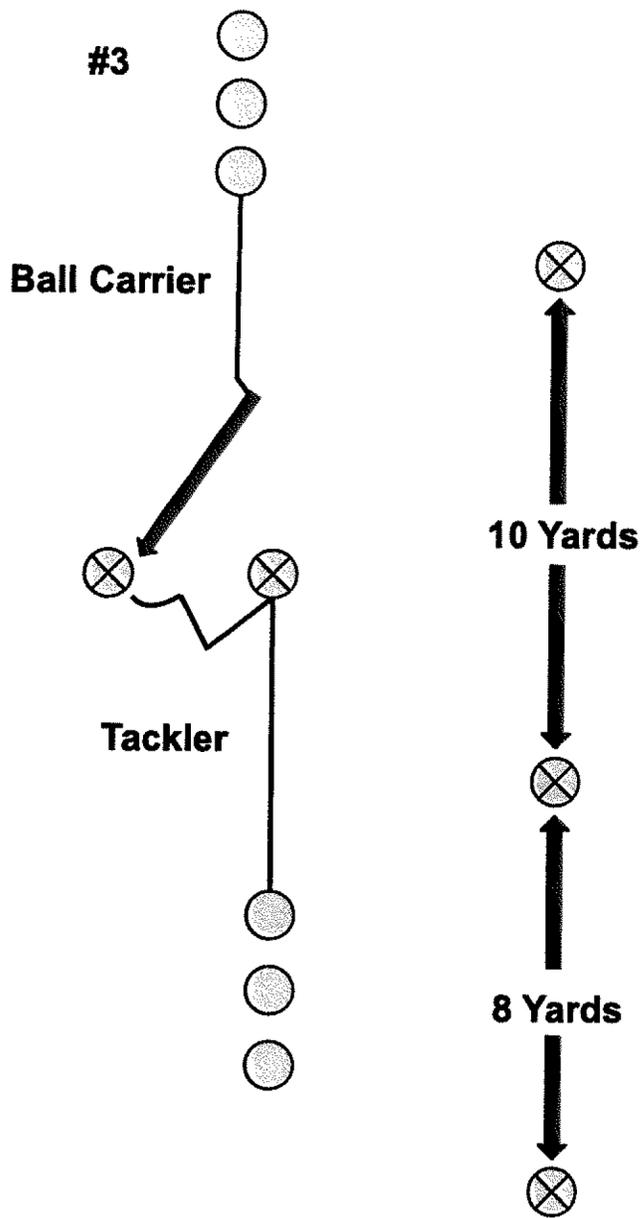
**Tackling Drills**  
**(Early Season/Late Season Non-Contact Drills for Trapping the Ball)**  
**Head Football Coach Davis County High School**  
**Shane Blake**

These tackling drills are designed to teach good technique when closing to and re-directing to the ball carrier. The three most common errors are: 1. Not closing to the ball carrier at full speed. 2. Idling down to re-direct too far away from the ball carrier. 3. Getting too far apart in a balanced position making your first step short and off balance when redirecting.

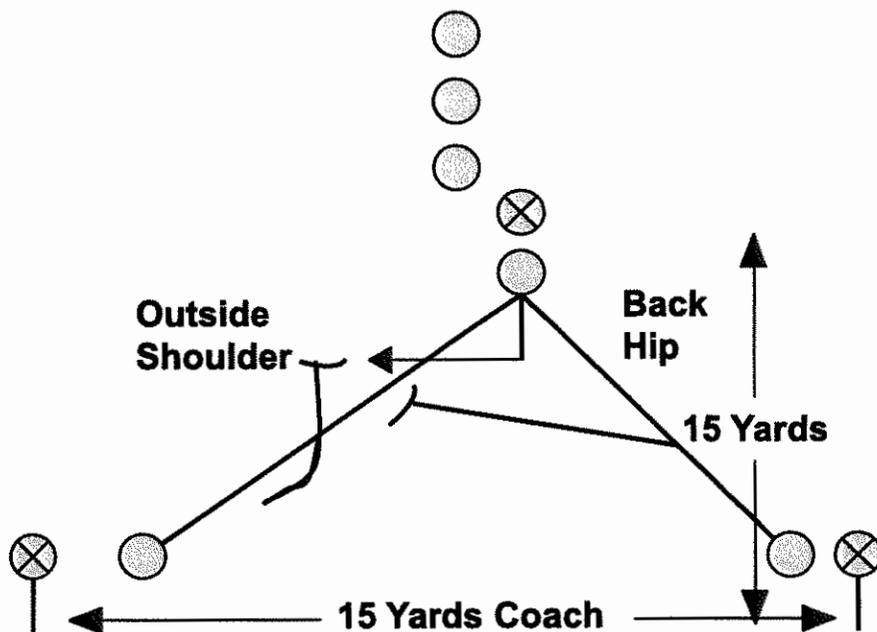


**#1 Close at full speed to the cone. To re-direct, squeeze your knees together and drop your hips with your weight onto the balls of your feet. This will enable you to take a power step when redirecting. On the coach's movement, the tackler should redirect to the cone.**



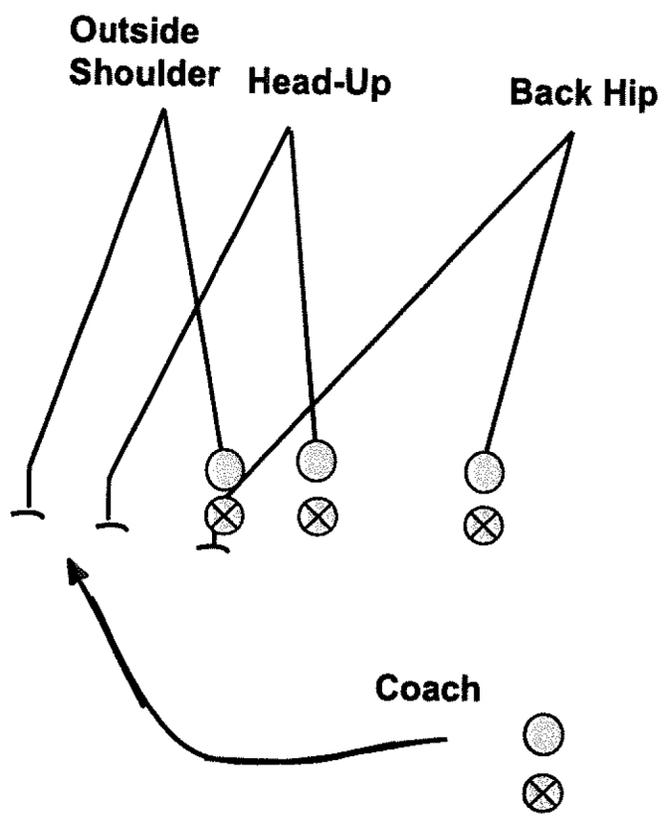


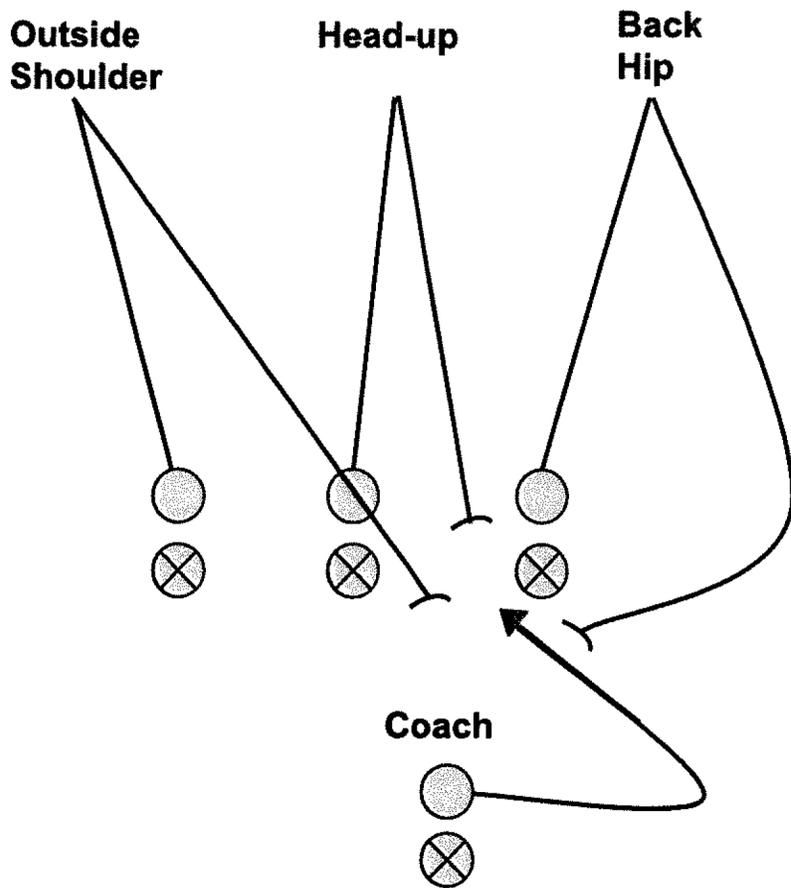
**#3 The ball carrier sprints to the cone and breaks to the next cone. The tackler should run the drill as before, but re-direct to the ball. When tackler reaches the ball carrier, the tackler extends the hands up into the pads keeping the ball carrier at arms length.**



The ball carrier will run forward at full speed and make a cut to the left or to the right. The tackler will close on the ball carrier at full speed taking an outside shoulder angle (or number approach). When the ball carrier makes his cut, adjust your angle as you close. When the tacklers reach the ball carrier extend the hands up into the ball carrier and run by him not making contact.

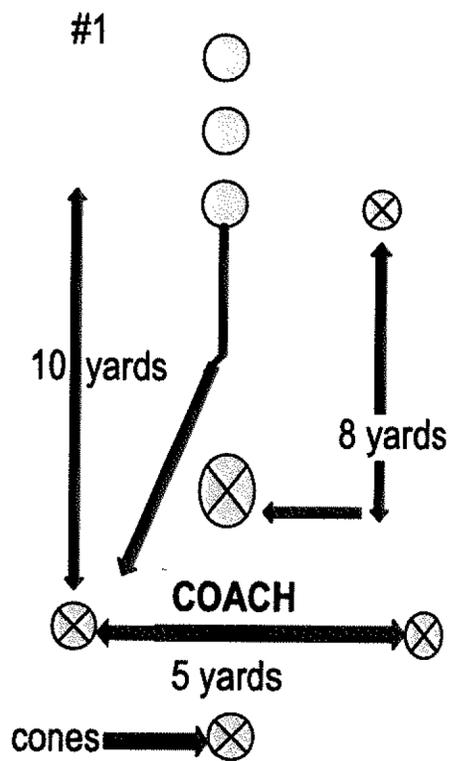
The tacklers make a pass drop on the command of the coach (defensive lineman would do a hip row in the direction the coach points). The coach will hand the ball to the back who will break to the outside or go inside or go outside and cut back inside. The tacklers will work together using good angles to trap the ball.



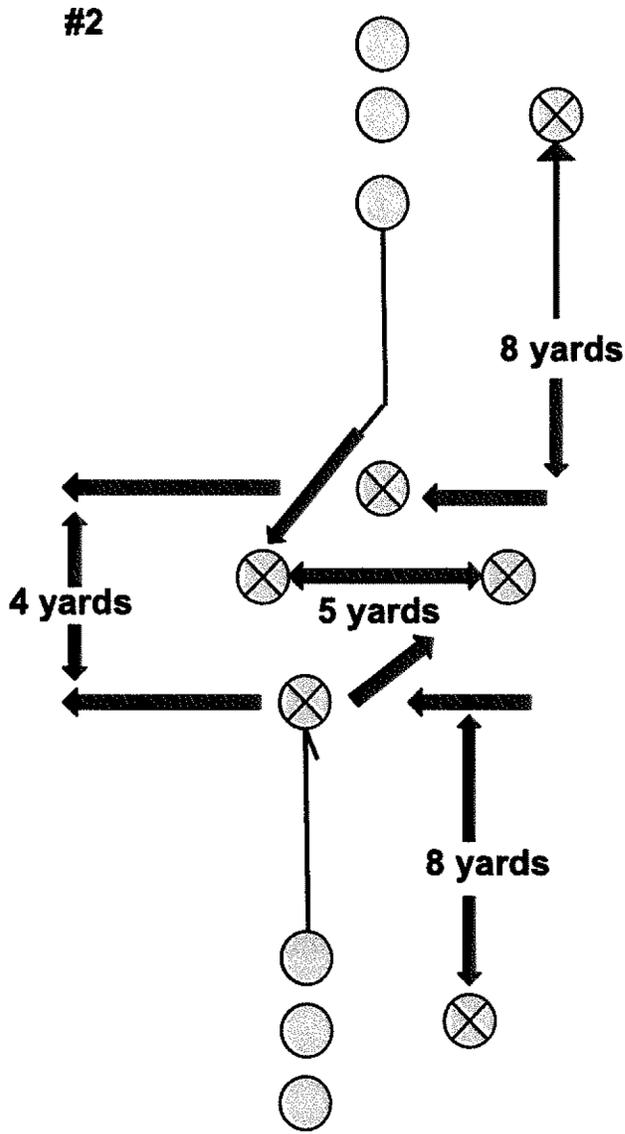


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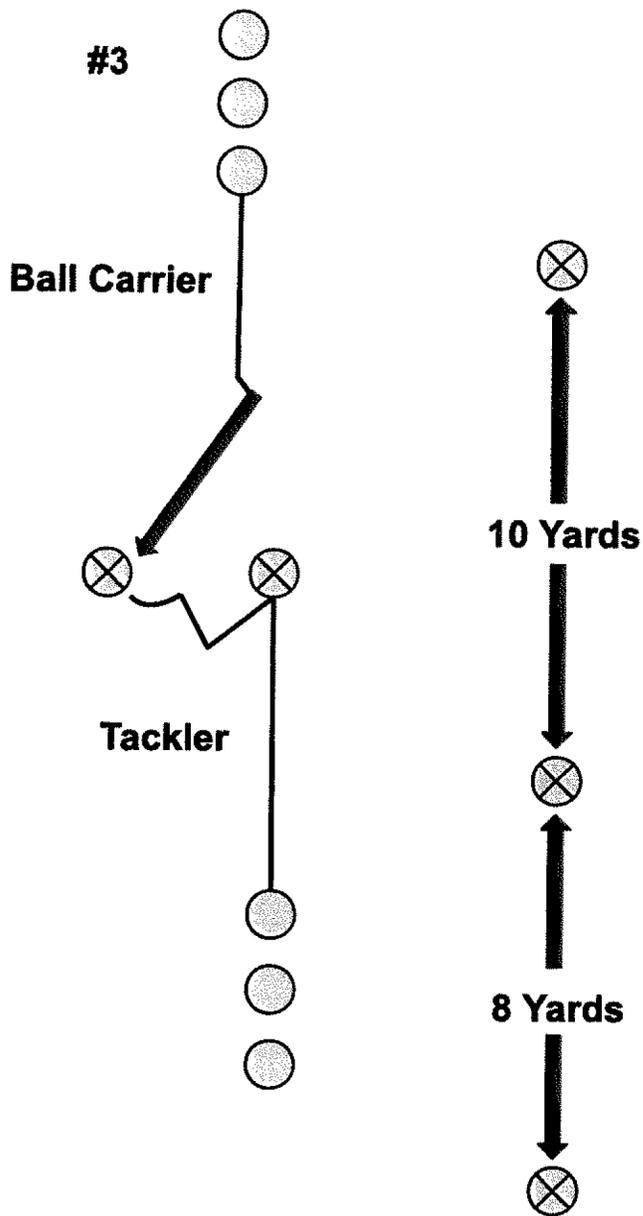
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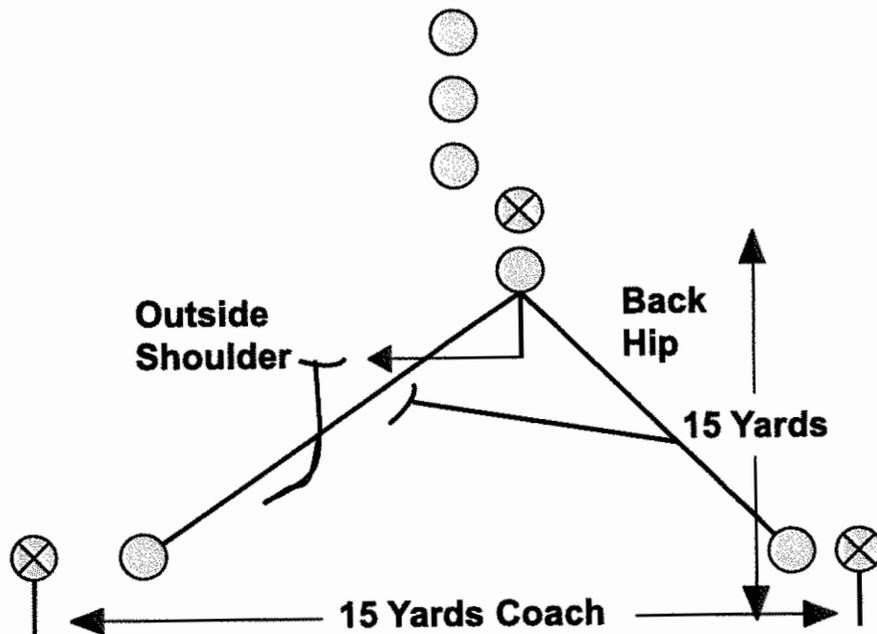
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#2 Tackler should run full speed at the cone, idle down just before the cone and re-direct to the next cone. Watch for the tacklers; keeping at full speed, idling down too soon, getting feet too far apart. The tacklers should race each other to the cones.

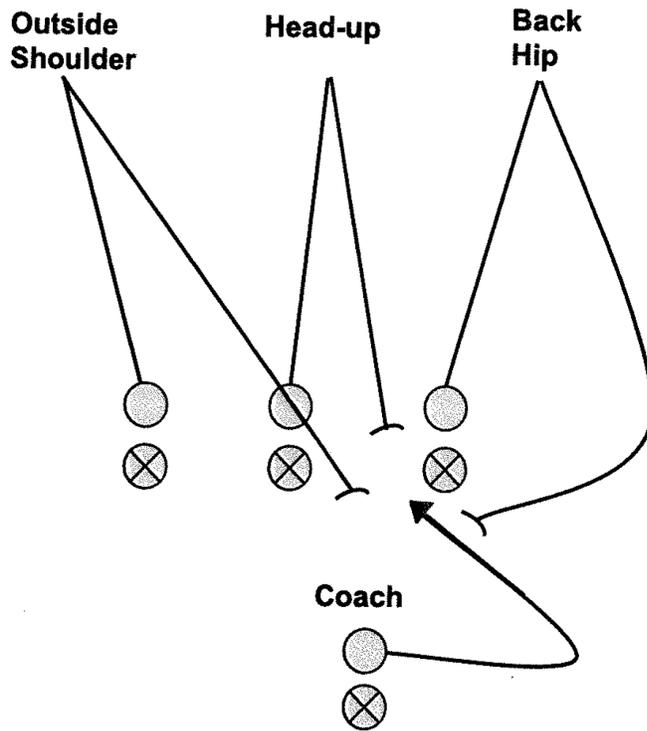
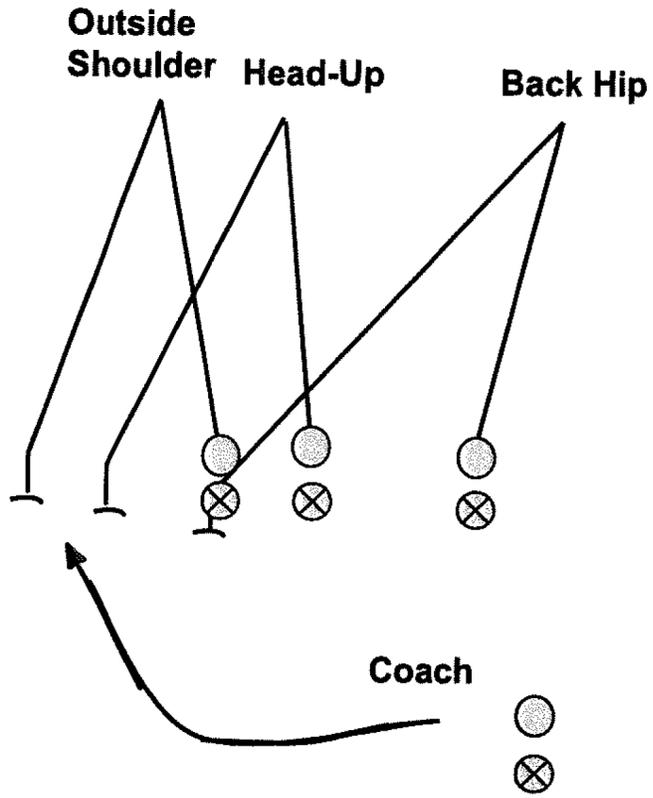


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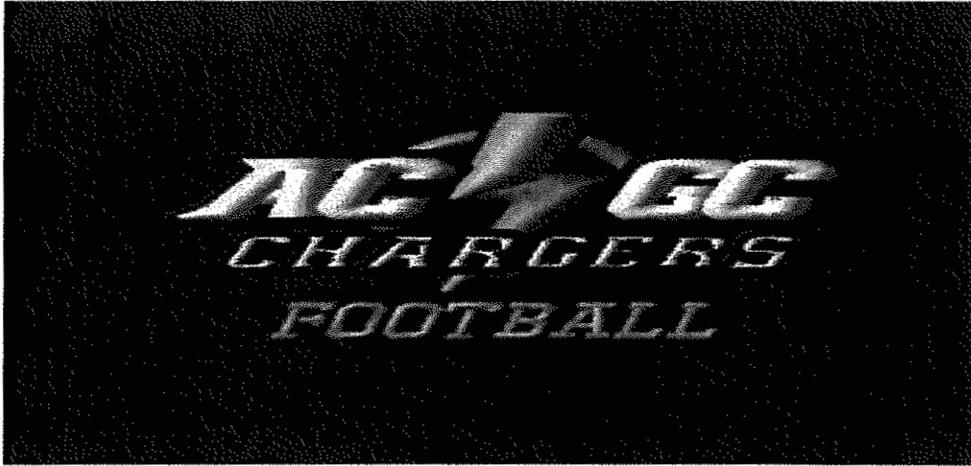
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**Building a Program:  
1st year HC Cody Matthewson AC/GC High School**



In February 2018, I was named head football coach at AC/GC high school. A school that had recently started whole grade sharing and currently entering their 3rd year as Adair Casey-Guthrie Center. I was the 3rd head coach for my soon to be Seniors and most of them had 1 career win in their high school football careers. Before I get into my current position, I want to share with you my background in the sport of football. I played for Coach Randy Hinkel at Madrid during the seasons of 2005-2008. I went on to play for Coach Mel Tjeerdsma at Northwest Missouri State from 2009-2014. When I hung up the cleats, I joined Coach Hinkel at Madrid during his last season in 2015. I had the opportunity to coach under future Hall of Famer Gregg Webb during the 2016 & 2017 seasons at Truman High School in the Kansas City metro. Fall 2018 was my first season as head football coach at AC/GC.

The first question I reflected upon was, "where do I start?". A lot of the things I do and wanted to implement came from coaches and cultures, whom were Hall of Fame coaches. I wanted to take a little bit of Hinkel's style, a little bit of Tjeerdsma's style, a little of Webb's style, and also the style of coach that I wanted to be.

**Surround yourself with good soldiers**

I wanted to surround myself and my players with winners. Coaches who knew how to win and knew the expectations of what it takes to be successful. I was joined by my father, who spent 23 years with Coach Hinkel and had coached in 7 state title games. I also filled my staff with a position coach who had won 40 games in his high school year, a coach who had won a state title at Emmetsburg, head coaches from other sports, and coaches who have coached at the collegiate level. As a staff, we set expectations for ourselves, our program, our kids, youth football, and the junior high football program. I truly believe that you are only as good as the coaches you surround yourself with.

## **2. Build a Strength and Conditioning Program.**

The number one thing I wanted to get started was implementing a strength and conditioning program. Along with my football responsibilities, I was also the strength and conditioning coach for our male and female athletes. I used a unified approach starting this past summer. There were no sport specific workouts, we lifted on game days, and our boys/girls did the same lifts/workouts. This approach worked great and we have carried that over into the school year. We do not have lifting classes or anything along those lines where we are able to handle lifting throughout the school day. We have a Monday, Wednesday, and Friday approach. Our in-season athletes lift at 6:30 AM before school and our off-season athletes lift after school. Our 9-12 enrollment is about 240 kids and we average 90-100 athletes everyday. We use a program called Rack Performance which allows us to create our daily workouts that are displayed through a projector. We use timers to within our system to set the amount of rest and work time for each lift and set. This has been a huge asset to our S&C program.

## **3. Leadership & Accountability**

Before the summer started, we had a summer draft with all the athletes we believed would be out for football the following year. We had a 5 teams with 2 co-captains, splitting up our senior class of 10. Captains were notified that points would be based off of attendance, competitions, and community service. Teams were drafted and points were given for weight room attendance, offensive and defensive implementation on Sundays, community service projects, and competitions every Friday after weights. At the end of each month, the team points were added up and the winning team received a bbq courtesy of the coaches. We did this for the month of June and the month of July. This was great for our team and players as they learned about becoming leaders and holding their teammates accountable, even in the off-season. We also developed a leadership council. When we had our captains voting ballot, we also had a leadership council where the team picked two players from each grade to represent their class. These 8 individuals were the group that we relied on for things from sock color, all the way to changing the energy and body language at practice. Our leadership council were also responsible for making sure the locker room was cleaned and swept everyday. We have a class rotation for cleaning duties throughout the season. The 2 individuals for that class who were named to the leadership council were responsible for making everything was cleaned and swept to our standards.

## **4. Create Multi-Sport Athletes**

When our head track and field coach resigned for another job, I immediately stated that I wanted the job. In my professional opinion, there is a direct correlation between the two. During my time as an athlete, the success we had between track and football may make me bias. I want my players to develop speed, quickness, acceleration, and coordination throughout their off-season. Track and field is a great place to develop those attributes, along with creating an environment of competitiveness. Next, find ways to motivate your players to play a sport in the winter, spring, and summer. Our head wrestling coach was brought onto the football staff and the relationships built during football season reflects his numbers on the mats. Another coach

that we brought on to our staff this fall will also be our head baseball coach. I have a feeling there will be some kids out this summer who have not been out in the past because of the relationships he has built in the fall.

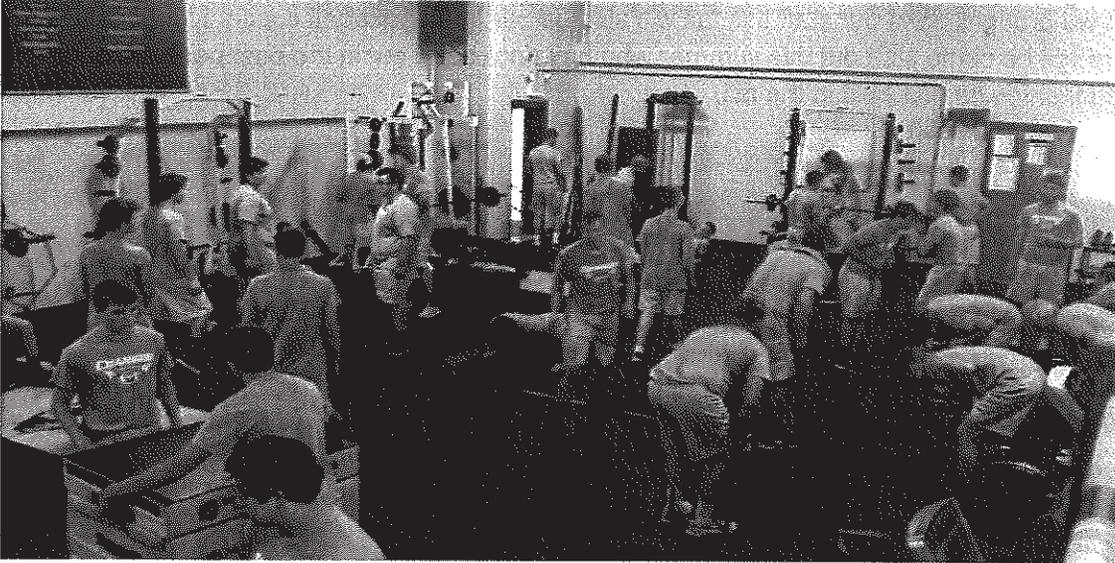
## **5. Build Relationships**

### **Community, Players, Coaches, Alumni**

The most important thing that I wanted to implement in our program was building relationships. We do everything in our power to tap into our tradition and our communities. One of the best things we did in my first year was our golf tournament for the football program. This brought in alumni, local businesses, parents and fans. It was a great way for our staff to mingle with our fan base and for them to get to know us on a personal note. We also had our players in attendance where they were capable to mingle with everyone, as well. As I noted previously, community service was implemented in our off-season programs. Some examples of community service we participated in included street clean up, 5k fundraisers, Guthrie River Ruckus, and youth football refereeing. It is a great way for us to show our appreciation to the communities who do so much for us.

## **6. Personal Pride**

During fall camp, each player paid a \$30 entry fee which bought them their pre-season gear. The players received 2 pairs of Charger football shorts, as well as 2 Charger football shirts. It was mandatory for players to wear one of the two during weights and practice. Our approach to this was to show our kids that no one is better than anyone on the team. We were all equal and on the same path towards success. We play for the school across our chest and not the name on our backs. We are a family and we are going to approach it in that manner. We want our kids to take pride in our program and to be proud of our logo across their chest. The players took this approach one step further and organized their attire everyday so that everyone was wearing the same color shorts and shirt each practice. This was something that I learned during my time at NWMS and Coach Tjeerdsma.



### 7. The Charger Way

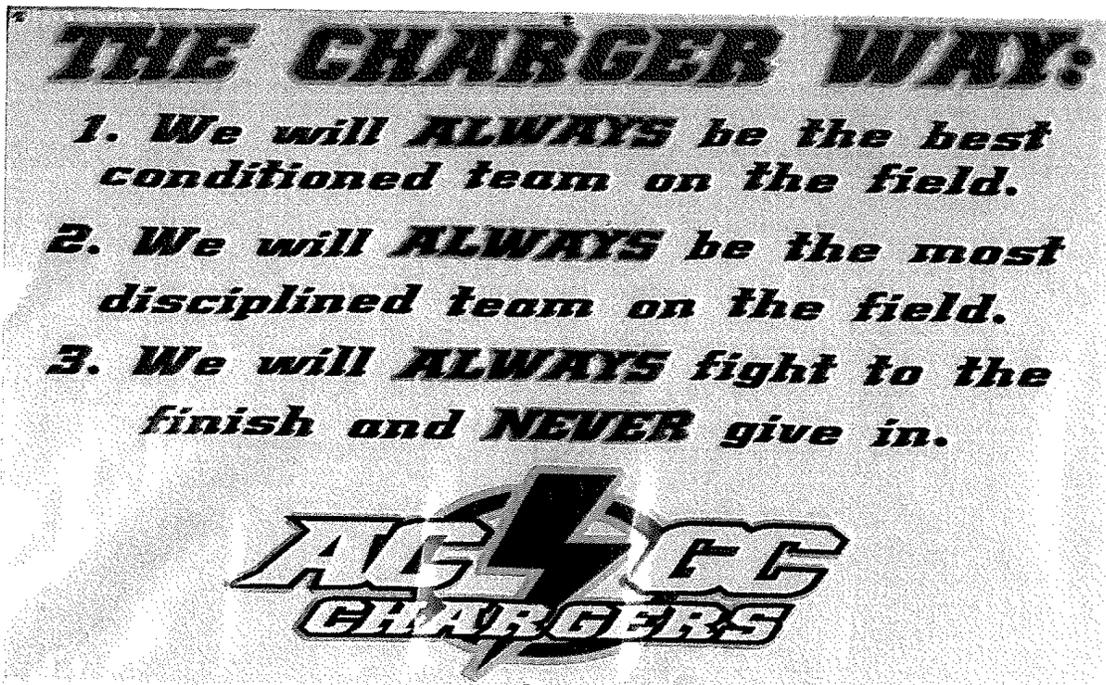
We live by 3 principles in everything we do on the field, off the field, and in the weight room. This is something that we take pride in and want our program to be known for as a program.

We will ALWAYS be the best conditioned team on the field.

We will ALWAYS be the most disciplined team on the field.

We will ALWAYS fight to the finish and never give in.

We call this "The Charger Way". We have this banner hanging in our weight room to remind them of these 3 principles everyday.





# Aligning Practice Plans to Meet Defensive Goals

*"It's not what you teach, it's what you emphasize." -John Wooden*

Following the 2017 season, I spent a lot of time completing our off-season self-scout searching for answers as to why we played some very good football, but often failed to make plays in critical situations. For example, we really struggled to get off the field on third down, with opponents converting 47% of the time! The more I got into the numbers, the more I realized where we were falling short. While we had established core values, defense essentials and game goals, they were not always reflected on the field on Friday nights. I love the above quote by John Wooden and am a firm believer that any organization will be great at what they emphasize. I realized that everything we valued was aligned, but the one place where gaps existed was in our practice structure.

We have identified four key areas that we must be great at defensively in order to help our team be in our best position to win a football game: **tackling, turnover creation, third downs, and terminating explosive plays**. From that, we developed our game goals that are aligned to our essentials, but also our larger core values. Once again, while this was being emphasized throughout the off-season, summer, and fall camp, it was not always reflected in practice. We were very traditional in our practice structure at this time. We had the typical periods of individual, 9 on 7, skelly/5 on 5, and team. As offenses have evolved from when I started coaching, I noticed that the cards we were running in our inside periods were becoming more similar to the plays being run in our team periods. Our periods lacked focus; they were missing a specific intent. I asked our coaches, "How do we expect our guys to be great on third down or to make a red zone stop if we are not intentional about it in practice?" We decided to eliminate our 9 on 7 period and replace it with a 10-minute period specific to meeting our defensive essentials and game goals.

## Indianola Defense

- If...We develop a defensive philosophy focused on four essentials (tackling, turnovers, third down %, terminating big plays/creating havoc plays)
- If...We establish specific and measurable performance goals to determine success
- If...We develop and install a defensive system that is multiple, flexible, and teachable to allow athletes to play fast and minimize errors
- If...We schedule practice periods with a specific focus of maximizing our preparation at winning the margins (turnovers, negative plays, third downs, red zone percentage, etc)
- If...We practice position specific drills with a defined focus
- If...We develop a culture of servant athletes and coaches who are team-focused and intrinsically motivated

**Then...We will have a defense that will put our team in its best position to win on Friday.**

## **Focus: Tackling/Turnover**

With tackling, I think the most important place to start is by creating a system that includes each type of tackle a player will be asked to execute, common language that will be used, a detailed progression for how it will be taught, and then specific drills that are aligned to that progression. Start this early with youth programs! Many of the early stages of tackling do not require pads, heavy contact, or any equipment so teaching can start early. As far as practice planning, we begin each practice during fall camp with a 3-station tackling/turnover circuit that starts with fundamental drills and will increase in complexity. For example, on day one, we may do a three-step form tackle that will eventually evolve into a reactive box tackle. With additional time constraints during the season, we will incorporate these drills within our individual segments.

One of the many things I have stolen from other coaches over the years is rewarding turnovers that are created in practice and in games. If an athlete gets an interception, forces/recovers a fumble, or blocks a kick in practice or a game, I will buy them a dessert turnover and bring it to shakeout on Saturday morning. It is a simple thing to do, but it creates a great deal of enthusiasm among the team, raises the level of competition in practice, and reinforces the focus and importance of creating turnovers!

## **Focus: Negative Plays**

Common sense tells me that creating a negative play through a tackle for loss or a sack at any point during a possession would help a defense make a stop and keep points off the board. I was not able to quantify that until I came across a tweet from SportSource Analytics that provided FBS data on the actual impact of creating negative plays. According to their research, a team's chance of scoring points on a drive drops from 40% to 16% if a sack occurs on that drive and from 43% to 25% with a negative play.<sup>1</sup>

Our focus period on Monday is our pressure period. Based on where we see opportunities to bring pressure and to create negative plays, we will run a high tempo walkthrough where the offense presents a formation and we attack it based on the game plan. The offense in this drill is dead. Questions we ask are: what are our opponent's favorite formations/motions/shifts on third down? How do they want to attack us once they get into plus territory? How can we attack their protections? This is a great period to run on a Monday! It gets our guys thinking, moving, and most importantly, communicating. It also sets the stage for the rest of the week as pressures are built into our different periods. We will review this package again during a Thursday walkthrough. My biggest takeaway from adding this period is that we have fewer mental mistakes when bringing pressure on Friday night, and in turn, have given up fewer explosive plays while generating more negative plays.

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<sup>1</sup> SportSource Analytics. Twitter Post. August 16, 2020, 4:45 PM. <https://twitter.com/sportsourcea/status/1295109372075479041>

## Focus: Red Zone

Our defensive goal is to get a red zone stop in 60% of red zone possessions. Developing a mentality that we can and will make stops anywhere on the field is a powerful foundation to build a defense on. Forcing an offense to beat you by kicking field goals or the change in momentum from getting a turnover on downs in the red zone significantly impacts the outcome of games. In our nine wins in 2021, we were right near reaching our goal by making a stop 56% of the time. In turn, we were awful in the red zone in our two losses, making only one stop in ten trips. This will be a stat our players will hear often next fall!

We run a ten play, heavy thud, red zone period on Tuesdays using a script of plays our opponent has previously run. We will run the play from the same hash, yard line, formation, down and distance, etc. as our opponent. Before each one of these periods, I make sure our guys are well aware that we are replicating actual game scenarios. I have found that when we are intentional about these situations, the focus and energy dramatically increases by our guys as opposed to “just running cards” during a traditional period.

One additional thing to note when scouting an opponent’s red zone offense: try to determine at what yard line an offensive coordinator’s play-calling changes. The 20-yard line really holds no value to me as a play-caller if our opponent is still running base offense. Instead, at what yard line do they start to run their red zone offense. For some teams, that may be inside the 20. For others, it may be the eight or nine, or even inside the five. Regardless, that is valuable information in determining how we will attack them.

### Game Goals

1. **WIN**
2. **Points**– 17 or fewer (<1.6 ppp)
3. **Run**– <3.9 yards per carry
4. **Pass**– <6.0 yards per attempt
5. **Turnovers**– 2+ per game
6. **Explosive Plays**– 3 or fewer > 15 yards
7. **Red Zone**– No TD 60% of possessions
8. **3rd Down**– < 35% conversion

Specific, measurable game goals, such as red zone defense, should be aligned to overall philosophy, be practiced with intent and reviewed weekly. Like many coaches, I love displaying and updating goal boards!

## Focus: Third Down

Getting stops on third down is absolutely critical in winning football games! Forcing a punt rather than allowing another set of downs directly impacts field possession, gets our offense back on the field, ends our opponent's chance of scoring, and continually builds confidence and momentum. As I previously mentioned, we were horrible on third down in 2017, and it is a main reason we gave up 24.5 points per game. But in 2017, we did not emphasize third down in practice!!!! How did I expect us to make stops if we did not make it a priority and devote practice time to being great at it? Our game goal for third down is that opponents will convert less than 35% of time. Since emphasizing this, we have been great each year since, including only allowing opponents to convert 30.9% of the time in 2021.

Much like our red zone period, we script ten opponent's plays that were run on third down in previous weeks. We will not move the ball to the same yard line where the play was snapped in game but will run the play from the same hash, formation strength, and, of course, distance. This period for us is on Wednesdays. I love doing this on Wednesdays for a couple of reasons. First, this is our guys' favorite period of the week! This is also a heavy thud period and the intensity level on both sides (scout team) gets cranked up a few notches. We will have a manager be the first down marker and keep track of the number of plays the offense converts vs the number of stops we make. Even though we are defending our scout team, we still strive to make seven or more stops in the ten plays to meet our goal. The second benefit to having this period on Wednesday is that the game plan is in by now, and we are honing in on the finer points of our preparation. I would recommend including the distance and personnel grouping and/or formation on your practice script, but leave off the play! This provides a great opportunity as a play caller to be put into a game scenario where defensive plays are called without the temptations of calling the "perfect play" due to knowing what the offensive play is. Better yet, put one of the other coaches in charge of this period. Have him develop the practice script and draw the cards to be run so that the DC is left to call a play based on his preparation and film study!

## Additional Focus Periods

There will be times during fall camp or when preparing for a specific opponent that we will replace one of our focus periods (usually our pressure period) with a different focus in mind.

1. **RPO**—We will run this period two to three times during fall camp. As RPOs have become a staple of many offenses, the ability to defend it has become increasingly important. I recommend watching college bowl games and spring games and drawing up the various RPOs that teams are running. Football is a copycat sport! If something is being run in college, it will likely make its way to high school next fall. We use a script of 10-15 plays with various RPOs during this fall period. If run during the season, it will be solely based on RPOs run by our opponent.
2. **Screen**—Similar to RPOs, we will build a script of the various screens that teams have run against us and have had success in the past. This is another 10-minute period that we will sometimes replace skelly with.

3. **Option**—This would be a period if we were to defend a true option team. We like to take the ball out of the drill, run the play, and make sure each defender knows his responsibility: dive, quarterback, pitch. To keep terminology the same, we use the same language when defending an RPO. For example, if a team is running a zone with a backside glance, we would assign defenders to the dive (zone), quarterback (zone keep), and pitch (glance).

Intentional Practice Schedule					
		DL	ILB	OLB	Secondary
1					
2	Primers				
3					
4	Special-Punt Return				
5	Tackle/TO				
6	Circuit	3 Step Profile	Fumble Recovery—City vs Country		Standing Hawk
7					
8	Indy Defense				
9					
10	3rd Down				
11					
12	Skelly	5 on 5 Pass Rush			
13					
14					
15	Team				

Practice plan includes the beginning of practice through our defensive periods.

Developing an overall practice plan with intentional periods aligned to our goals has made a tremendous impact on our defense. As another coach on our staff put it, “It’s the best thing we have done in the last ten years.” Our defensive improvement has not been because we run a red zone period on Tuesdays. Instead, it is because we aligned our mission/core values, defensive goals, and game goals to our practice plan. I would be very disappointed if someone walked into our practice and asked one of our players why they were running a certain drill, and he was unable to make the connection for how it applies to him/us on Friday night. When student-athletes have clarity in their mission and task, they will become intentional and diligent in their work. For years I developed game plans with a focus on teaching our players to defend formations, players, and plays. While we had some success in doing so, it was not until I determined what to emphasize in practice that realized our true potential.

If any of this sparked an interest to talk more, please do not hesitate to reach out. I do not have many hobbies and am a bad golfer, but I do enjoy talking about the game of football.

Josh Lullmann  
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 Indianola High School  
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