

YOUTH FOOTBALL DRILL BOOK

Central Loudoun Youth Football League



www.clyfl.org

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SECTION 1



GAMES & WARM-UPS

This section provides an overview of pre-practice routines, warm-ups, and a series of games used for conditioning, evaluations, and fun.

1. Drop-back Passing Lines

Purpose:

- Keep kids focused and loosen up before practice starts.
- Work on the fundamentals of catching and the drop-back pass.

Coaching Pointers:

To the passer:

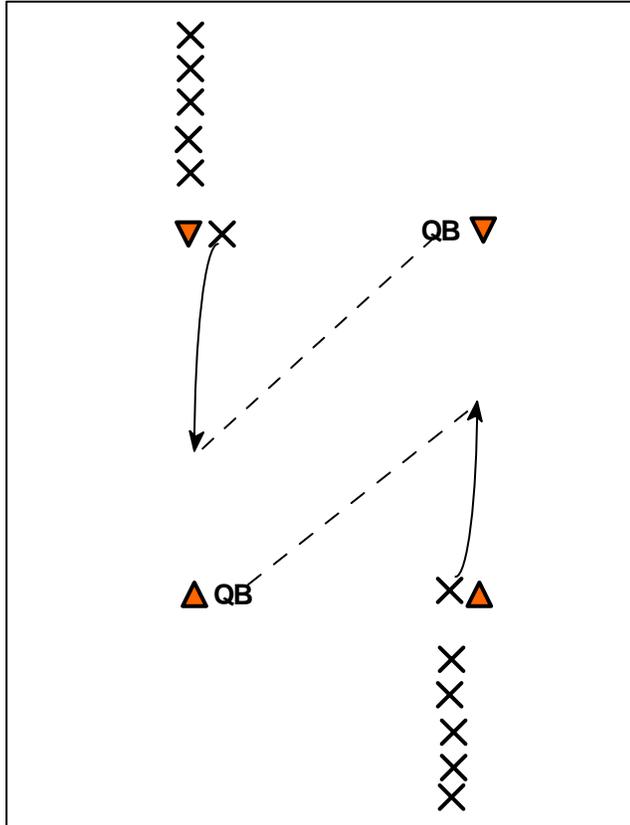
- Ball to trigger (earlobe).
- Step with opposite foot.
- Side to target.
- Follow through with thumb in the pocket for good spiral.

To the receiver:

- Watch the ball in to outstretched hands.
- After the catch, tuck the ball into the correct arm.

Set-up and Instructions:

Pick two passers and set up a line of receivers to the right of each passer. The receivers of passer #1 should be facing directly across from passer #2 on the opposite side of the field. The receivers jog a short pattern of the coach's choosing (5 yards to start and progress to 15 yards as practice nears). After they have been thrown to and hopefully made a catch, the receiver takes the ball back to the passer or to the opposite passer and goes to the back of the receiving line.



2. Sprint Out Passing Lines

Purpose:

- Keep kids focused and loosen up before practice starts.
- Work on the fundamentals of passing and catching.

Coaching Pointers:

To the passer:

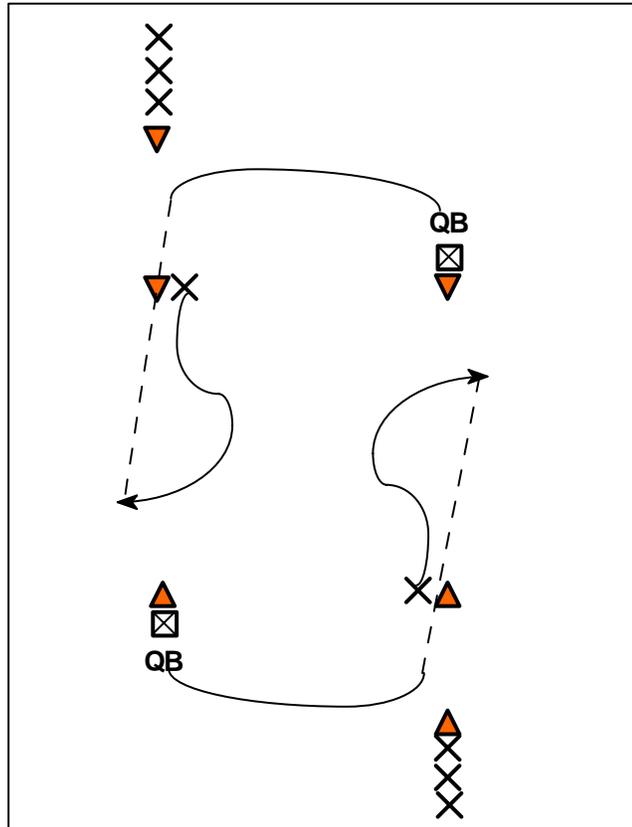
- Ball to trigger (earlobe).
- Little steps when preparing to throw
- Throw with opposite foot forward.
- Follow through with thumb in the pocket for good spiral.

To the receiver:

- Watch the ball in to outstretched hands.
- After the catch, tuck the ball into the correct arm.

Set-up and Instructions:

Pick two passers and set up a line of receivers to the right of each passer. The receivers of passer #1 should be facing directly across from passer #2 on the opposite side of the field. The receivers jog a short pattern of the coach's choosing (5 yards to start and progress to 15 yards as practice nears). After they have been thrown to and hopefully made a catch, the receiver takes the ball back to the passer or to the opposite passer and goes to the back of the receiving line.



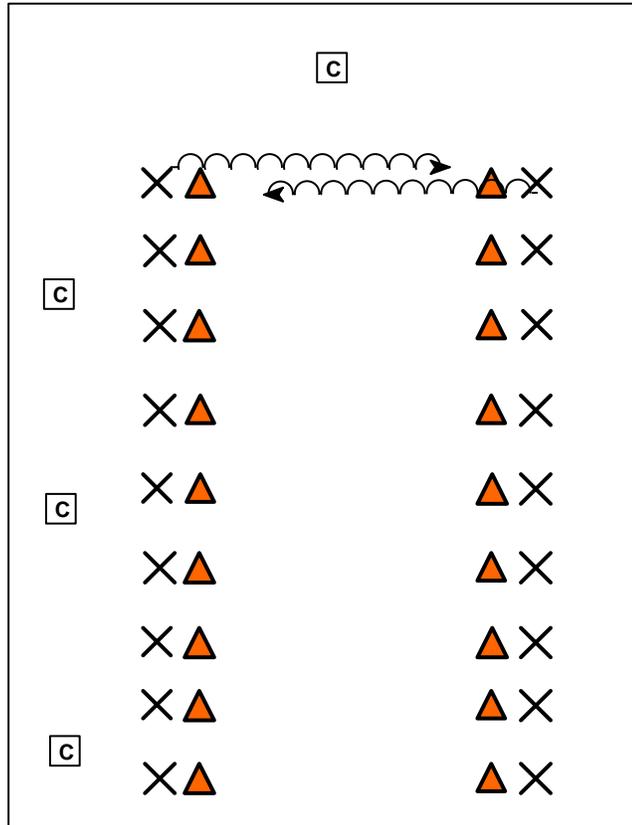
3. Dynamic Warm-up

Purpose:

- Quickly and efficiently get the kids loose and ready for practice.

Coaching Pointers:

- Do not spend more than 5 minutes on warm-ups. It is almost unheard of for kids this age to pull muscles or get injured from not being stretched out properly.
- Each coach watches a small group of kids and makes certain that his group does every movement correctly.



Set-up and Instructions:

Set up two lines facing each other about 10 yards apart. Have everyone get into a stance (vary the type of stance each time). Check for a perfect stance and have the kids perform a warm-up exercise or agility drill on your cadence. Some of the exercises we use are high knees, butt kickers, half speed jog, full speed jog, carioca, Frankensteins, get-ups, reverse get-ups, etc. This is also a good time to review hit position, stances, and varying the snap count.

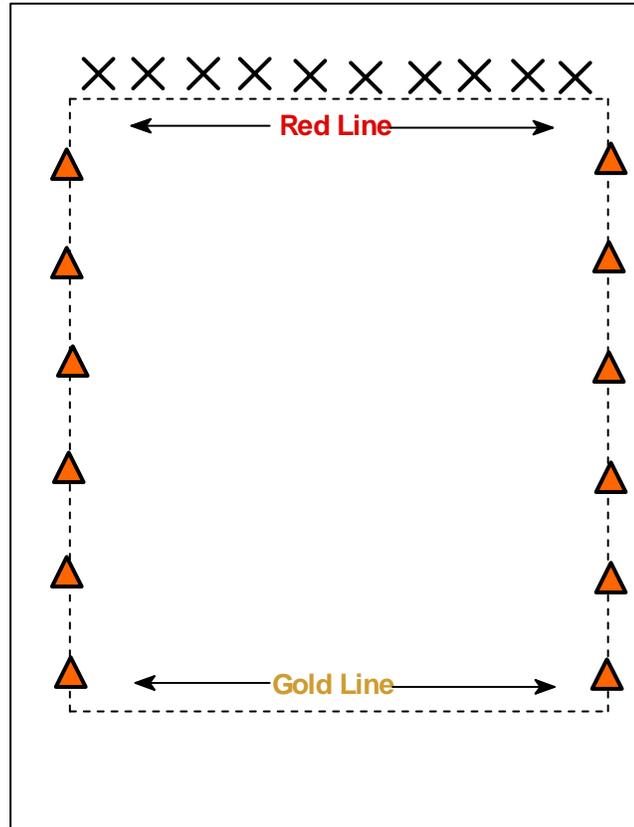
4. Red Line / Gold Line

Purpose:

- To introduce kids to the basics of football and the rules of your team.

Coaching Pointers:

- Follow the coaching pointers for proper stances (section 2).



Set-up and Instructions:

This is the first drill my teams do every season. Set up cones to create two lines. Explain to the kids which line is which. Our team colors are red and gold so we call one line the red line and the other the gold line. Feel free to change that. Have the kids start on the red line and then run to the gold line. Have them run back to the red line. Next we introduce our cadence, the hit position, and our stances. We will also add our attention getters (for us, three whistles means that the kids clap three times then run in and take a knee, if the coach says “give me two” the kids clap twice and get silent, if the coach says “eyes” the kids yell “snap” and snap their heads to attention.) We may add some of our agility drills to create additional commands (“high knees to the gold line from three point stance, butt kickers to the red line from hit position, etc.) Keep going back to previous commands to make sure the kids remember them all. Sometimes we will try to trick the kids and tell them to run to a line that they are already standing just to add some fun to the drill.

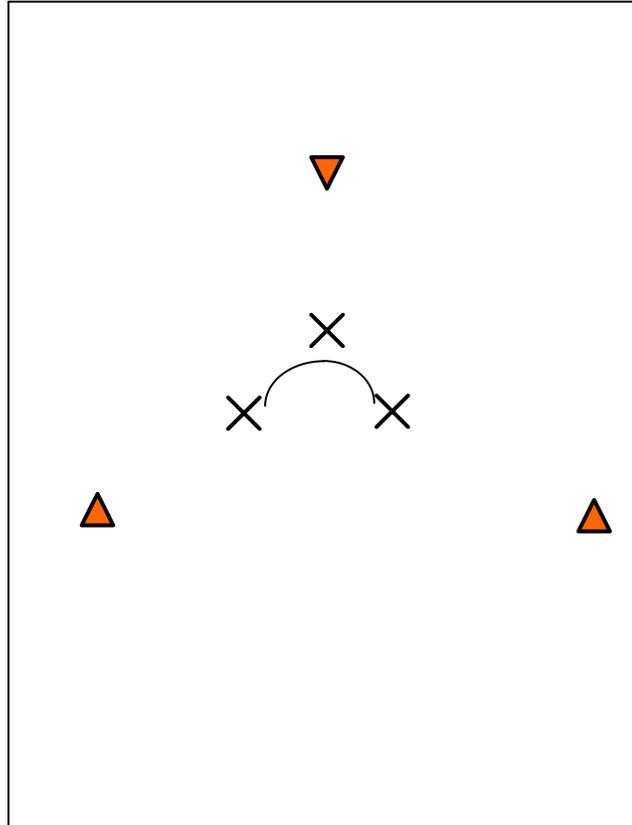
5. Towel Game

Purpose:

- Determine who are your strongest and toughest kids.
- Learn the importance of staying low and never giving up.
- Have fun!

Coaching Pointers:

- As an added twist, you can have the remaining players get behind the cone of the player they think is going to win, if they choose wrong, have them run a short lap, do push-ups, etc.



Set-up and Instructions:

Thanks to Dave Cisar (www.winningyouthfootball.com) for this drill. Take a large bath towel, roll it tightly the long way and tape off the ends by wrapping white athletic tape around the end 8-9 times. Also bind up the middle in same fashion. It now looks like a puffy rope. Now take three cones and space them off in a triangle about 7 yards from the towel in the middle. Select three fairly even kids and have each grab the towel at a taped area, one on each end and one in the middle. Make sure one cone lines up with each player, again about 7 yards away. Now the player must drag the other players toward their cone and touch the cone with one hand while keeping hold of the towel. To win, a player must touch his cone while still holding the towel. If a player loses contact with towel, he can get back in game as long as the game has not declared a winner by another player touching their cone. Kids and parents love this drill.

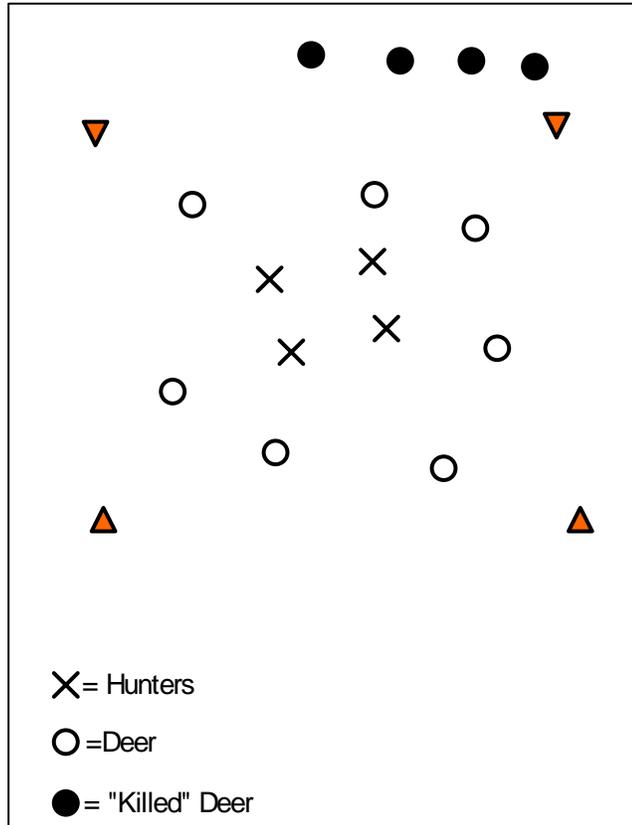
6. Deer Hunter

Purpose:

- Determine who are your best athletes.
- Conditioning.
- Have fun!

Coaching Pointers:

- Coaches are needed to supervise and make sure "killed" deer move to outside the circle.



Set-up and Instructions:

Another game from Dave Cisar. Use cones to create a square or circle that is about 40 yards by 40 yards. Choose 4 kids and give them each a soft ball that they can use to hit other players without hurting them. These are your "hunters". They throw the balls at the other players "deer" that have spread out inside the playing area. If a player gets hit, he goes to the outside and takes a knee. After a winner has been declared, pick four new hunters or allow the last four surviving deer to be the new hunters.

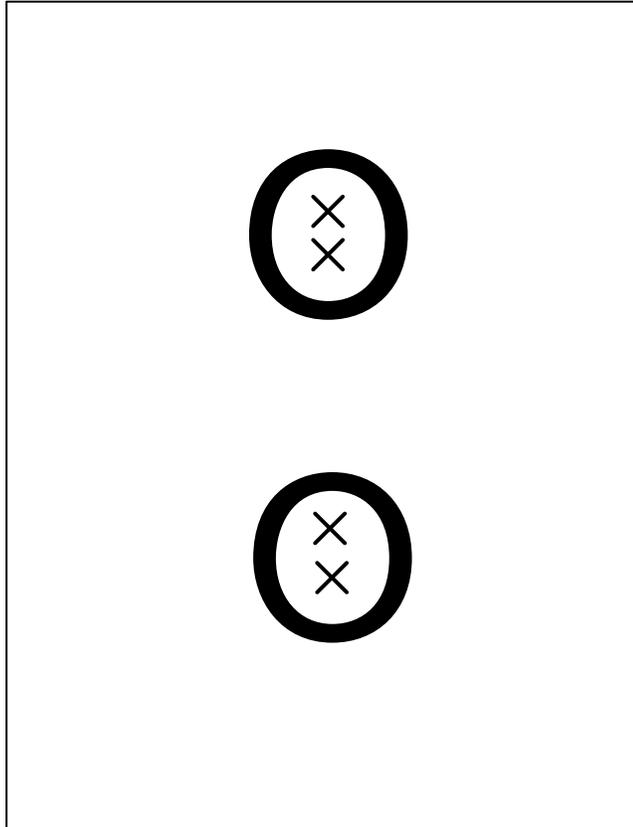
7. Sumo Drill

Purpose:

- Evaluate strength and aggressiveness.
- Teach staying low.
- Have fun!

Coaching Pointers:

- Make sure kids are evenly matched.
- Constantly remind kids that the lower man and the player who uses his feet the best usually wins and point out examples when they occur.
- Be Very enthusiastic.



Set-up and Instructions:

Select two equally matched players to face off in a circle. The size of the circle depends on the skill level of your players but imagine a sumo circle. Start them off in the middle either in low 2-point stances with their hands on the chest of their opponent or in a three-point stance. On the signal they are to push and drive the other player to the edge of the circle. The player whose body touches outside the circle or touches the ground first is the loser. No twisting or turning is allowed, only straight up power. You will find the player that stays low, gets his hips under his opponent, and uses his legs in short choppy steps usually wins. You can use this drill to emphasize blocking technique or the techniques employed by defensive linemen.

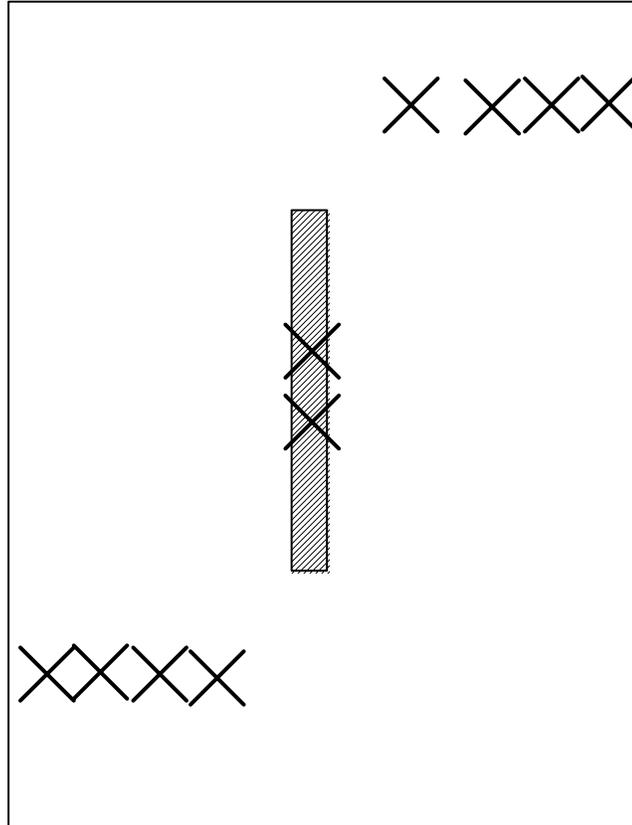
8. King of the Hill

Purpose:

- Evaluate strength and aggressiveness.
- Teach the importance of a wide base, moving your feet, and staying low.
- Familiarize the kids with contact and have fun!

Coaching Pointers:

- Make sure kids are evenly matched.
- Constantly remind kids that the lower man and the player who uses his feet the best usually wins and point out examples when they occur.
- Be Very enthusiastic.



Set-up and Instructions:

Have two equally matched players face each other about a foot apart on opposite ends of a long blocking pad or wooden board. Start them off in 3-point stances. On the signal they explode out of their stance and make contact with each other. They should meet in the middle with a collision and then attempt to drive each other backwards off of the pad or board. The player who drives his opponent off of the board is the winner. In order to be victorious, a player must keep his feet wide, stay low, and take short choppy steps.

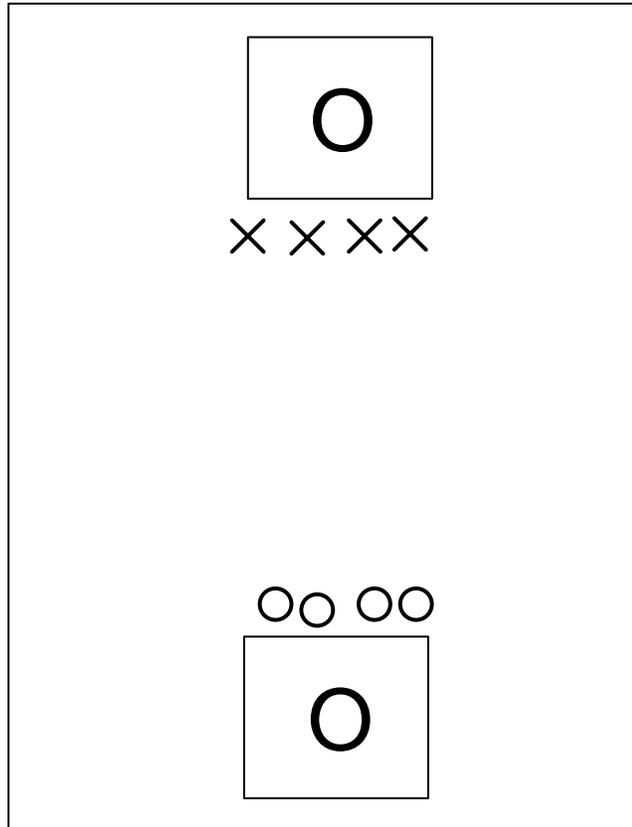
9. Gladiator Ball

Purpose:

- Have Fun!
- Condition.
- Increase teamwork and cooperation.
- Evaluate overall athletic ability.

Coaching Pointers:

- Make sure teams are evenly matched.
- Remind the kids that the team that cooperates and passes the best usually wins.



Set-up and Instructions:

Mark off two squares that are approximately 10' x 10' with spray paint or cones. Place a trashcan in the middle of each square to serve as the goal. The ball can be a soccer ball, Nerf ball of approximately the same size, or football. This is an ultimate game meaning that once you possess the ball, you are no longer allowed to move and must either pass or shoot. Teams advance the ball down the field by passing. If a pass is incomplete or intercepted, possession switches to the other team. A point is awarded every time a team is able to shoot the ball into the goal. No player is allowed into the square around the goal. If an offensive player scores a goal from inside the square, the point does not count. If a defensive player touches the ball while inside the square, it is an automatic goal.

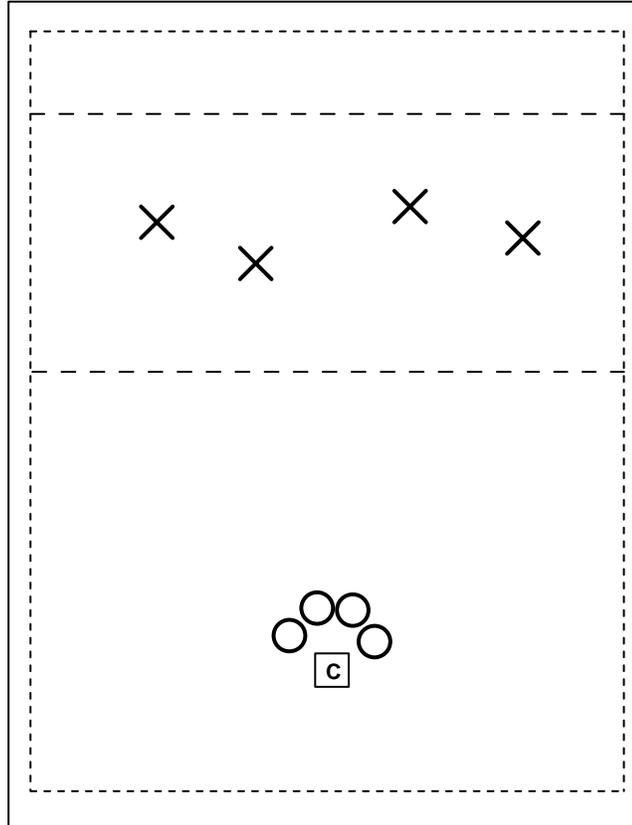
10. Golf Football

Purpose:

- Determine who are your best athletes and most elusive runners.
- Have fun!

Coaching Pointers:

- Make sure teams are evenly matched.
- Encourage the offensive players to spread out when running.
- The best defensive strategies are to assign each kid a man or zone to protect.



Set-up and Instructions:

Mark off a field with sidelines, a midfield line, and an endzone. Divide all players into teams of approximately equal numbers - 4 or 5 per team works best. Assign one team to be on offense and one to play defense. The offensive team huddles around the offensive coach who hands a golf ball to one of the players. The defensive team must stay behind the midfield line and should determine a strategy before play begins. When the offensive coach yells "Break", all of the runners try to get into the endzone without being tackled by the defenders or stepping out of bounds. If the player with the ball makes it into the endzone, it is a point for the offensive team; otherwise the defensive team gets a point. Rotate so that all teams play offense and defense and get to face off against all other teams.

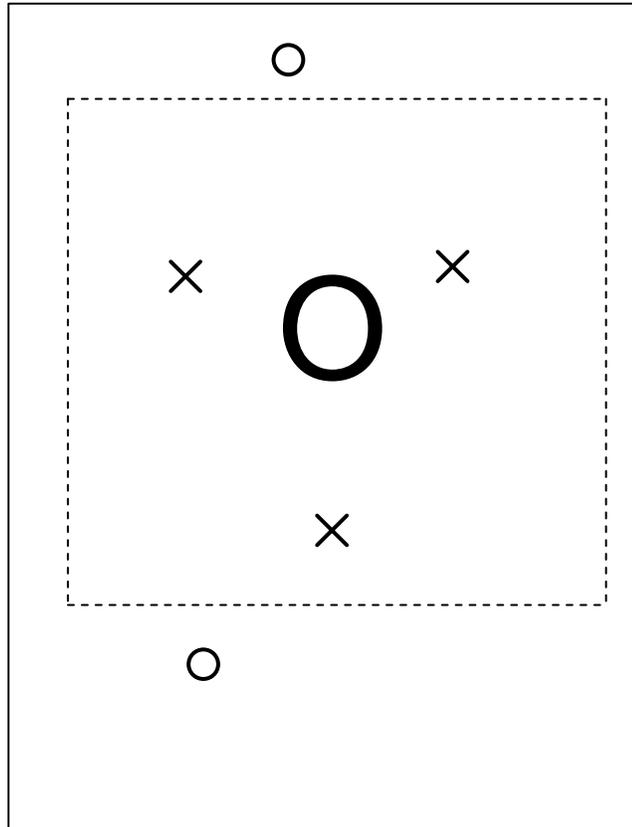
11. Slam Dunk

Purpose:

- Improve tackling and aggressive ball carrying.
- Have fun!
- Determine aggressiveness.

Coaching Pointers:

- Make sure teams are evenly matched.
- You may give each team 10 seconds to get together and formulate a strategy prior to starting each possession.



Set-up and Instructions:

Put cones together in a 10-yard by 10-yard square. In the center of the square, place a trashcan or hoop to serve as the goal. Select two players to be the offensive team and a defensive team with three players. Give each offensive player a football, at the signal the offense has 10 seconds to enter the square and slam the ball into the goal before they get tackled. The defenders must stay inside the square. If a ball carrier is tackled or driven out of the square he is done for that possession. This game helps develop teamwork and open field tackling skills and is a very competitive game. You must make sure that players are evenly matched. If you are coaching an older team or you have some especially aggressive hitters, you should carefully regulate the game.

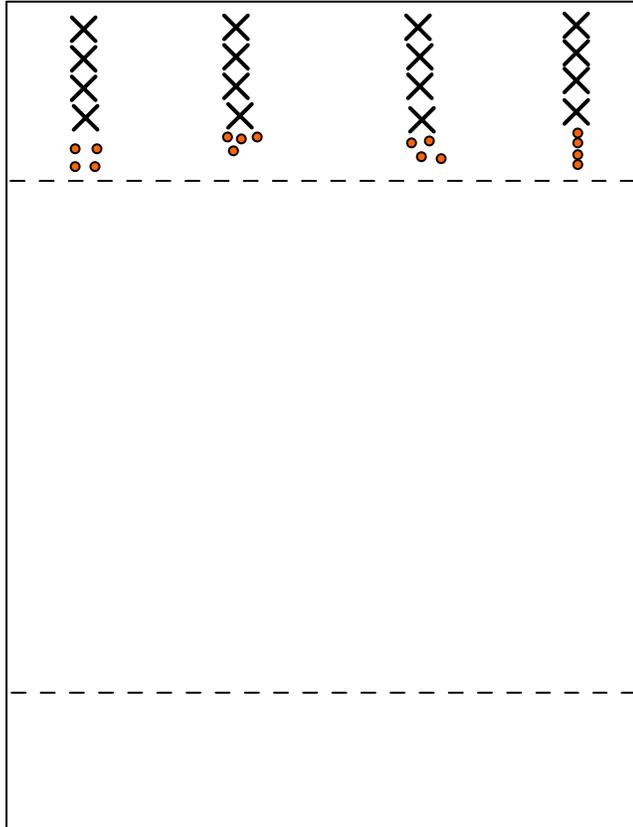
12. Hockey Puck Walk

Purpose:

- Improve teamwork and cooperation.
- Encourage critical thinking from your players.
- Have fun!

Coaching Pointers:

- Point out examples of good ideas and teamwork.
- Do not tell the kids how to accomplish the task but give clues that lead them to come up with a solution.



Set-up and Instructions:

This is a great team building activity. Put your players into teams of four or five. Each team is given 4 hockey pucks, coasters, tennis balls (much harder), or something similar. Mark off a line about 50 feet away from the starting point that the teams must traverse. One child from each team must walk on the hockey pucks and they may not touch the ground. The other kids should assist by balancing their teammate or moving the hockey pucks into position. Everybody should be involved in some way. If the walker touches the ground, the team must go back to the beginning and try again. If he hits the ground a second time, the team starts over with a new walker. Switch walkers every time the team successfully makes it to the opposite side.

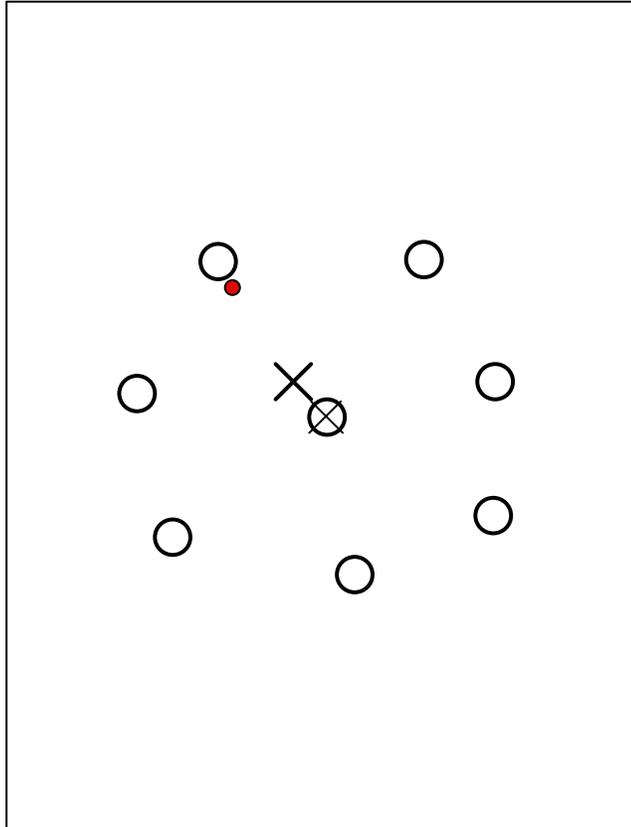
13. Target Ball

Purpose:

- Improve teamwork.
- Evaluate agility.
- Have fun!

Coaching Pointers:

- Encourage quick passing if a clear shot is not available. Do not allow players to hold the ball for more than a few seconds.



Set-up and Instructions:

Separate your team into groups of 8-10 kids. Each team forms a circle big enough so that players could put their arms out wide and still not touch each other. You may want to use cones or spray paint to define the circle as the kids have a tendency to scoot in as the game progresses. Select two kids to be in the middle of the circle. One player is the target and the kids on the outside will attempt to hit him by throwing a soft Nerf or gator ball. The other player in the middle is the bodyguard or shield. That player will attempt to position himself between the target and the player with the ball. If a player on the outside is able to hit the target, the target goes to the outside, the player who hit him becomes the shield and the person who was the shield becomes the new target.

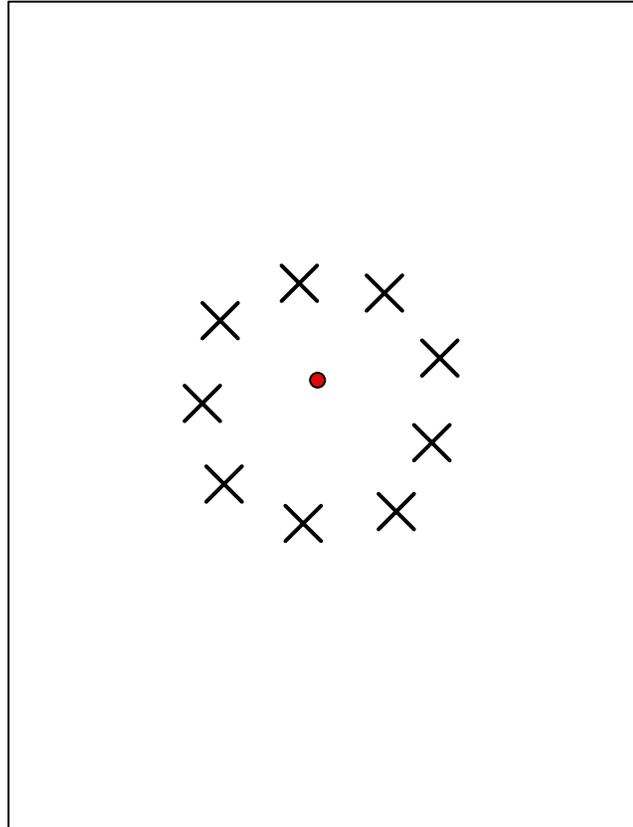
14. Straddle Ball

Purpose:

- To have fun!

Coaching Pointers:

- Quick hits and one-timers are effective shots.
- Players must stay on their feet and keep a clear space between their feet... no dropping down to their knees or squatting down low.



Set-up and Instructions:

Separate your team into groups of 8-10 kids. Teams form a circle with each player's feet touching the foot of their neighbor. The kids must have their feet as wide as comfortably possible. Give one player a soft Nerf ball. Players try to smack the ball to get it to go between the feet of one of the other kids in the circle. No player may pick the ball up and the ball is always free to be hit by anyone who is close enough to touch it. If a goal is scored, the player who had the ball go between their legs must retrieve it. If a player hits the ball out of the circle without it going between another player's legs, the player who hit the ball must retrieve it.

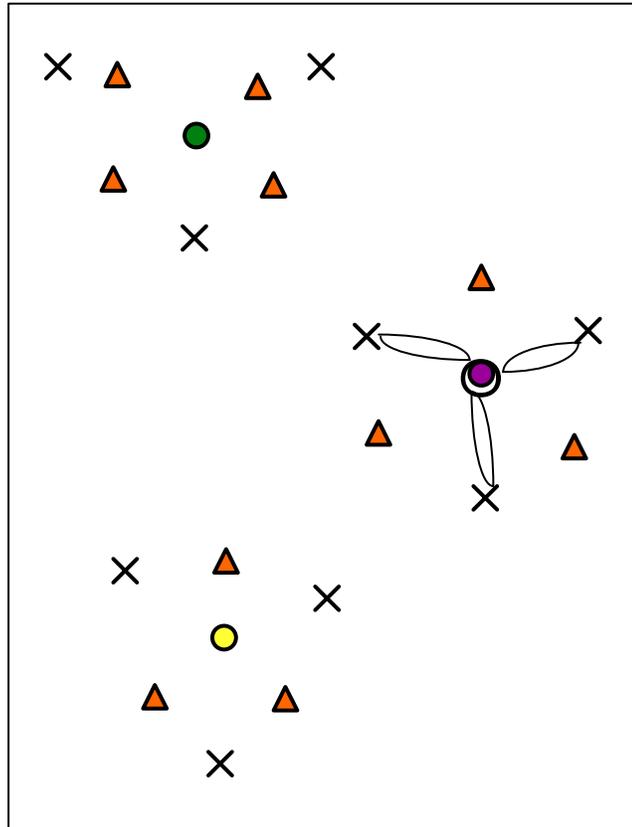
15. Toxic Waste

Purpose:

- To facilitate team building
- To challenge the kids' minds
- Have Fun!

Coaching Pointers:

- Give hints as needed but do not give away the secret.
- Point out examples of good ideas or good teamwork.



Set-up and Instructions:

Find an object that you can use to represent a canister of toxic waste. I use old tennis ball containers. If you really want to get creative, fill the container with water and add a few drops of food color for effect. Separate your kids into teams of 3 or 4. You must have a container of toxic waste for each team. Also prepare a packet of three long pieces of rope or jump ropes wrapped in a thick, strong, rubber band. Place the containers in squares or triangles that are big enough that the kids could not reach in and touch them (approximately 8' x 8'). Give each team the packet of ropes and tell them that this is the only tool they have to move the toxic waste without knocking it over. The coned off space is contaminated so no part of their body may enter that area. Teams will generally experiment with the ropes and ignore the rubber band before finally figuring out that the only way to be successful is to use the ropes to stretch the band out, place it over the container, and relax the tension so that the rubber band clasps the container. They should then be able to move it out of the contaminated area.

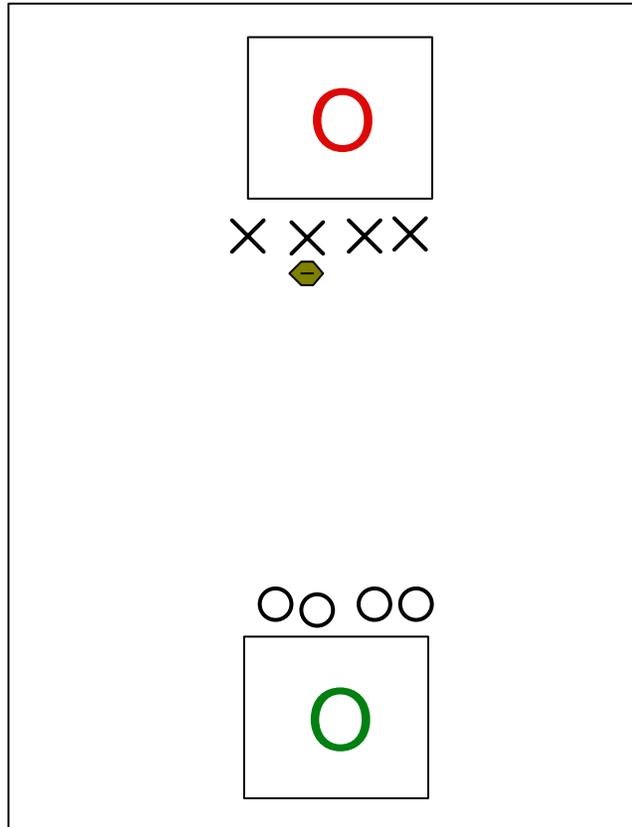
16. Ultimate Football

Purpose:

- Determine who are your best athletes.
- To encourage teamwork.
- To condition while having fun.

Coaching Pointers:

- Encourage shot passes unless a player is wide open.
- Teamwork and fun are the most important thing in this game. Do not let this turn into an argument.



Set-up and Instructions:

Mark off two squares that are approximately 8' x 8' with spray paint or cones. Place a hoop or spray paint a circle in the middle of each square to serve as the goal. The ball can be a Nerf football or regular football. This is an ultimate game meaning that once you possess the ball, you are no longer allowed to move your feet and must pass the ball to a teammate. Teams advance the ball down the field by passing. If a pass is incomplete or intercepted, possession switches to the other team. A point is awarded every time a team is able to place the ball into their goal. Only offensive players are allowed into the square around the goal. If a defensive player touches the ball while inside the square, it is an automatic goal. Offensive players may dive to place the ball inside of the hoop as long as their feet do not leave the ground.

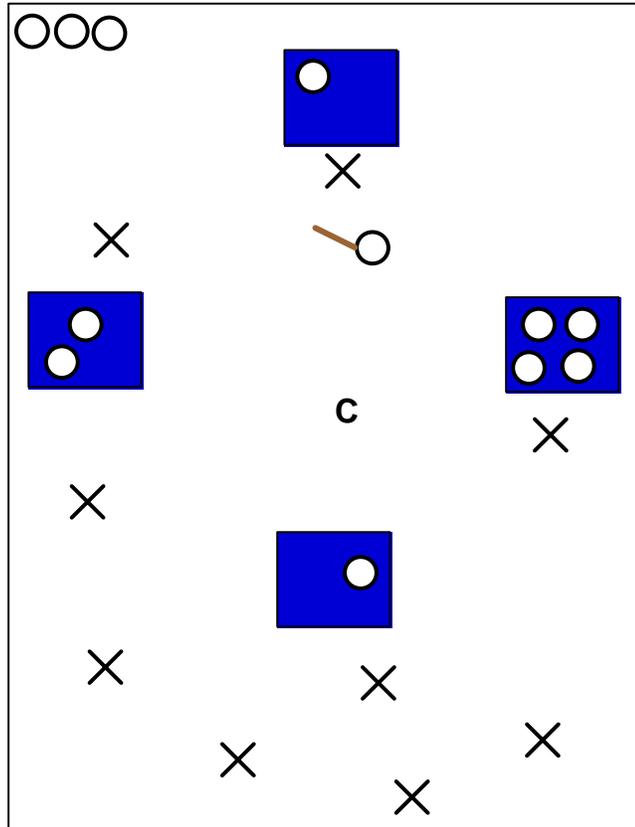
17. Continuous Baseball

Purpose:

- Enjoyable conditioning.
- To have fun.

Coaching Pointers:

- It's a good idea to have an adult as pitcher.



Set-up and Instructions:

Separate your kids into two evenly matched teams. One team will be up to bat and the other will be in the field. Mark off bases that are much larger than a normal baseball base. You can have more than 4 if you like. I suggest using a whiffle ball or some other substitute that is safer than a regular baseball as some of your kids will not have baseball experience and you will likely not be using gloves. There are no outs and there is no limit to how many players can be on a base at a time. When a player makes it to home plate, they do not stop but continue running the bases instead. The only way to stop the runners is to get the ball back to pitcher. After everyone has batted, switch the batting and fielding teams.

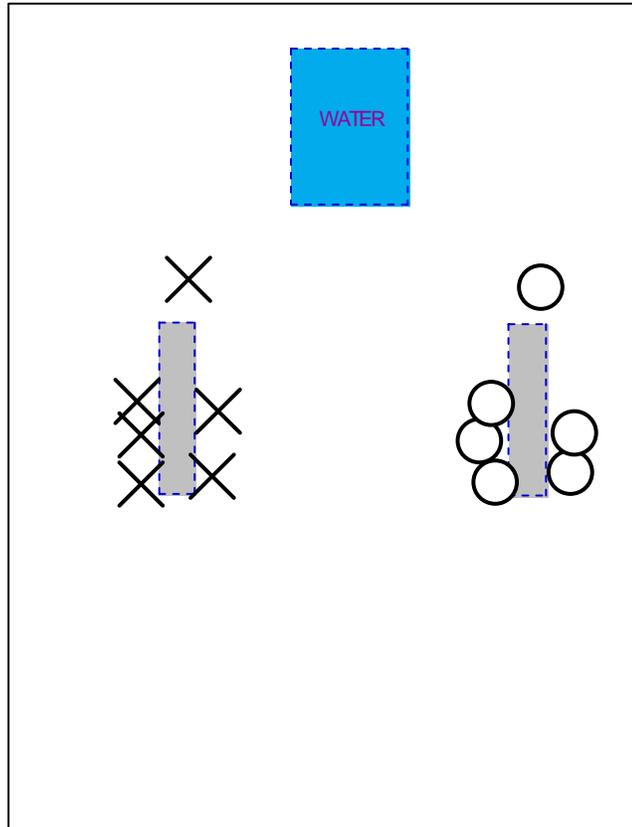
18. Rubber Ducky Relay

Purpose:

- Team building.
- To cool off on a hot summer day.
- To have fun.

Coaching Pointers:

- This game uses a lot of water. Make sure you have your water source filled up prior to practice.
- Pick a runner that is tall enough to pour into the top of the PVC pipe.



Set-up and Instructions:

Purchase some PVC pipe that is at least 6" in diameter and create sections that are approximately 4-5 feet long (maybe longer if you are working with older kids). Cap off one end of each segment so that it is watertight. Next, drill lots and lots of holes into the pipe. Separate teams into groups of 6-10 kids. Each team will have one runner with a pitcher. The other group members will use their fingers and bodies to plug the holes in the pipe. Place a rubber ducky, tennis ball, or other small object that floats into the pipe. The runner fills his pitcher in a nearby water source and will pour into the pipe. The kids who are plugging the holes will usually be drenched by water squirting out of the holes and by inaccurate pours from the runner. The first team to get their rubber ducky to float to the top and out of the pipe is the winner.

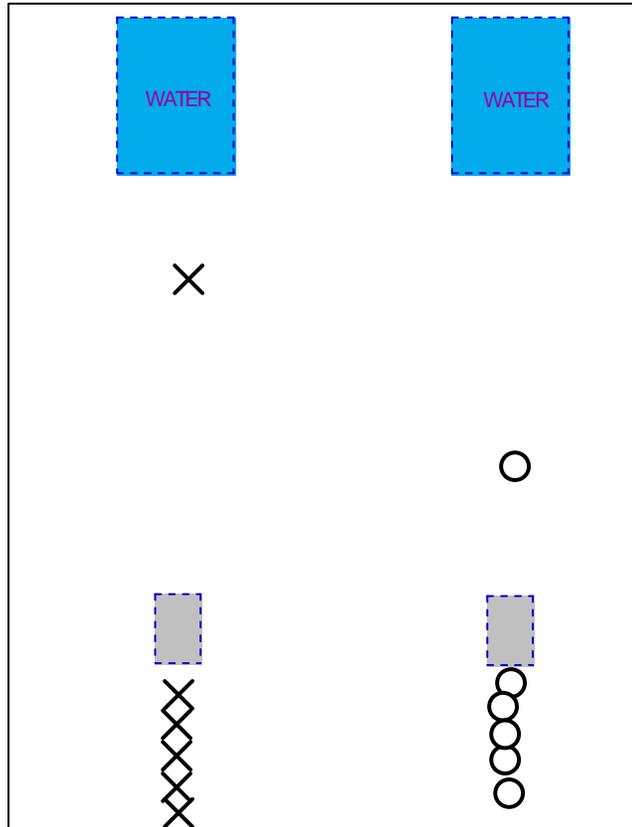
19. Water Race

Purpose:

- Enjoyable conditioning.
- Cool off on a hot summer day.
- Have fun.

Coaching Pointers:

- This game uses a lot of water. Make sure to have your water source filled up prior to practice.



Set-up and Instructions:

Separate your team into groups of 6 to 8. You will need a bucket and jug for each team. Drill a few holes into each jug. Set a large container or containers, filled with water about thirty or forty yards away from the buckets. Each team lines up behind their bucket and the first person in line holds the jug. Teams run, one person at a time to the water source. They fill their jug and must hold it over their head as they run back to their team. The water should spray out of the holes and onto the runner as they return. Once back at the bucket, the remaining water is poured in and the jug is handed to the next person in line. The first team to fill their bucket is the winners.

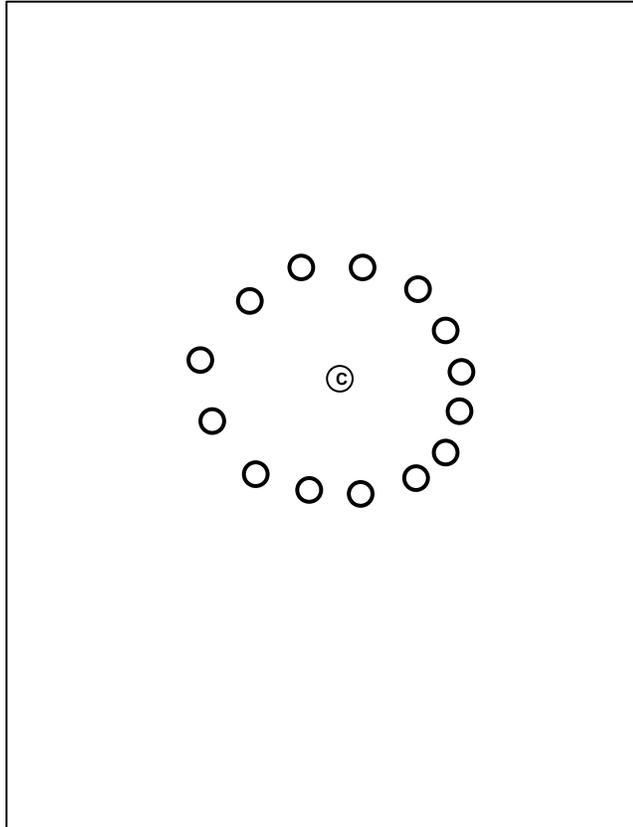
20. Zip-Zap

Purpose:

- Enjoyable conditioning.
- To have fun.

Coaching Pointers:

- You may have a player come to the middle and be the “zipper”



Set-up and Instructions:

Players form a circle with the coach standing in the middle. All players and the coach place their hands together as if they were praying. The coach moves around, points to a player, and says “Zip”. That player must duck down while his two neighbors turn to face each other, point with both hands, and yell, “Zap”. If anyone messes up, they must run a lap, sprint up a hill, do push-ups, etc. This is a great game that will have the kids begging to do conditioning.

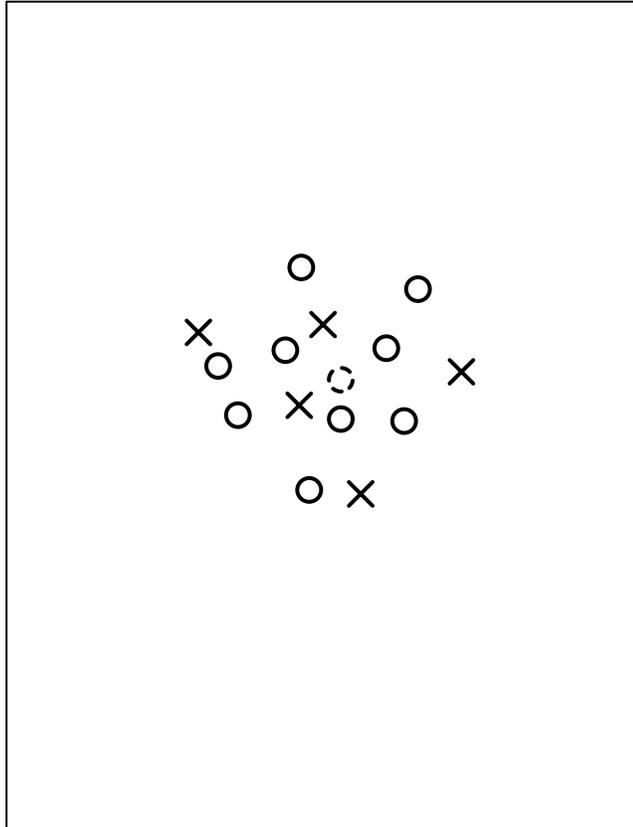
21. Ten Seconds to Live

Purpose:

- To have fun.

Coaching Pointers:

- Emphasize that once your hand is squeezed and you are “dead”, You must not give away the identity of the killer.



Set-up and Instructions:

Have all players duck and cover so that they cannot see anything. The coach walks around selects one player to be the killer by tapping him on the back. After the killer is selected, all players stand up and begin shaking hands. The killer may take out one of the other players by squeezing their hand during the handshake. If a child gets his hand squeezed, he walks around and continues to shake other players' hands for ten seconds at which point he will fall down and play dead. It is important that the player who gets his hand squeezed does nothing to give away the identity of the killer. Players who have not had their hand squeezed may try to guess the identity of the killer. If they are wrong, they too must die. If they guess correctly, the game is over and a new killer is selected.

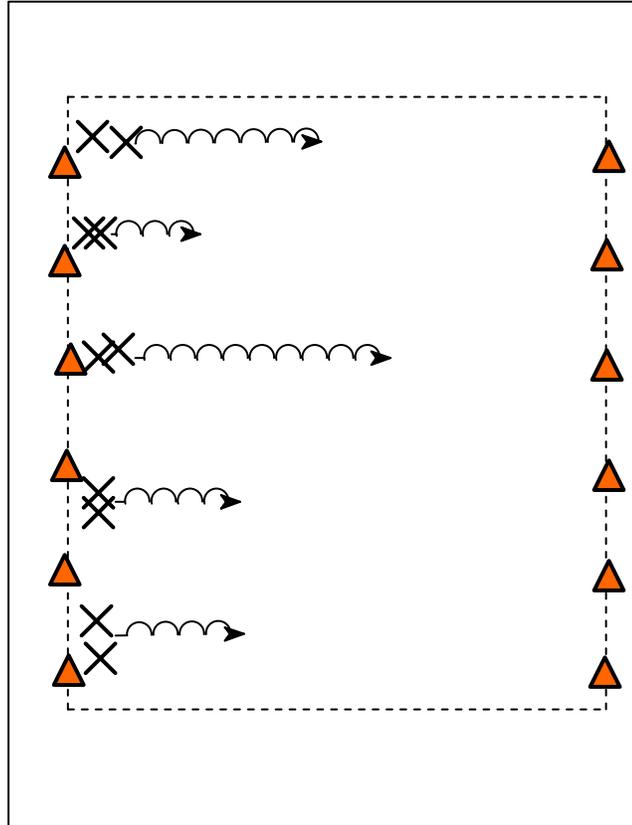
22. Only Two Feet

Purpose:

- To challenge the players' bodies and minds.
- Have fun.

Coaching Pointers:

- If you have two kids that have not been getting along, forcing them to be partners in this game will usually resolve the situation.



Set-up and Instructions:

Mark off two long lines that are approximately 30 feet apart. Players are partnered up and seated along one of the lines. It is a good idea to separate the kids so that one partner is big enough to carry the other partner. Teams must travel from one line to the other while maintaining contact but only two of their four feet may touch the ground on each trip. Teams get a point for each successful attempt and may not use the same technique twice. Common ideas are for one player to carry the other, for each to hop on one foot, for one to ride the other like a horse, wheelbarrow, etc.

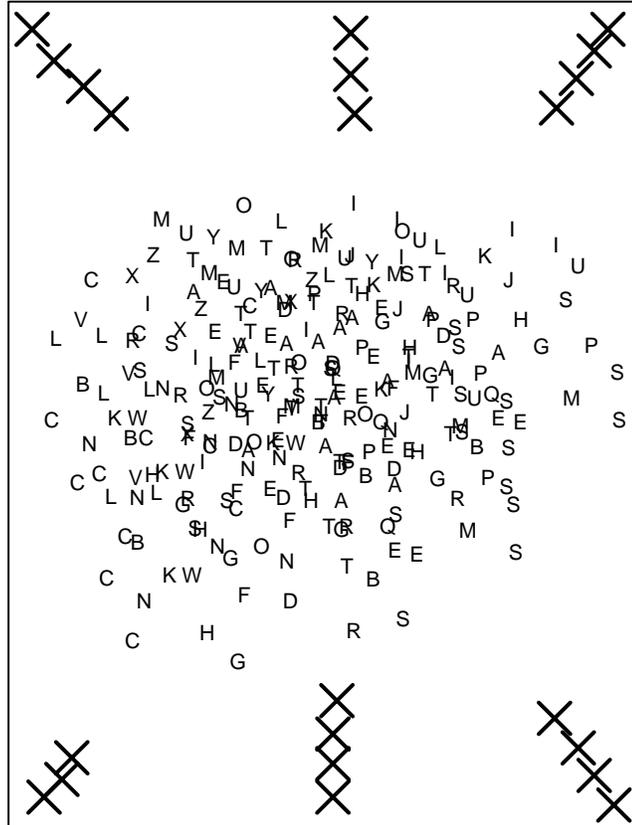
23. Football Scrabble

Purpose:

- Enjoyable conditioning.
- Have fun.

Coaching Pointers:

- M



Set-up and Instructions:

Create a document of letters and print off copies so that you have a few hundred letters. You should have more of the common letters. For example, you should have at least 4 or 5 E's for every X. Scatter the letters in central location, separate your kids into teams of 3 or 4, and spread them out about 20-30 yards away from the letters. One player at a time runs for each group. He picks up one letter and returns it to his team. Teams use the letters they collect to spell words that are at least four letters long. At the end of the game, teams get a point for every letter they have used in a word (four letter word are worth four points, five letter words worth five points, etc.) If a word is football related, the point value doubles.

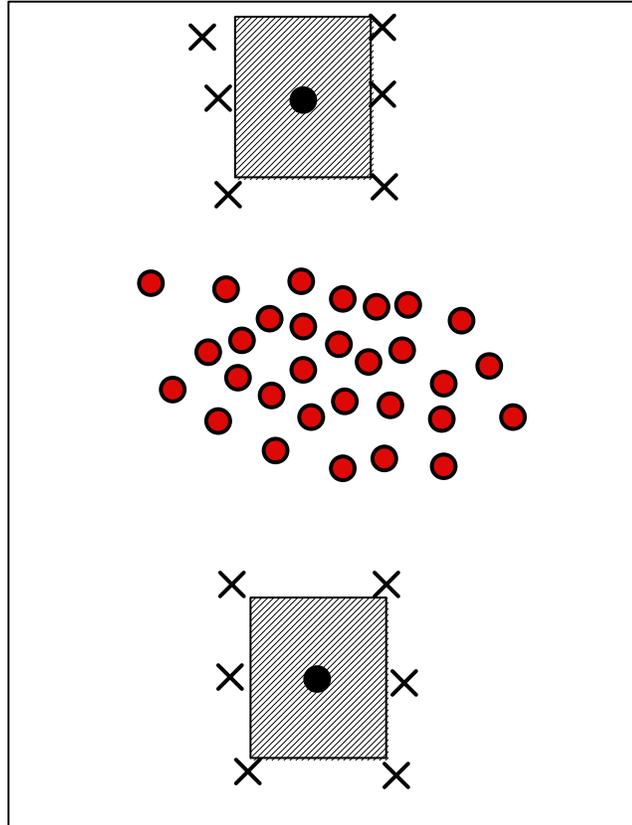
24. Sheet Ball Pick-Up

Purpose:

- Team building.
- To have fun.

Coaching Pointers:

- If a group is having trouble, try to help them.



Set-up and Instructions:

Cut a hole in the center of an old, twin size sheet. The hole should be just big enough that it can fit over a soft Nerf or gator ball. Drop a few dozen balls in the center of your field and place teams of 8 to 10 players about 20 feet away from the balls. Teams must work together to pick up a ball in their sheet, carry it back to their starting station, and drop it. You may want to mark off an area for each team to drop their balls. The kids may not use their bodies to manipulate the ball. When time runs out or all of the balls are gone, the team with the most balls is the winner.

SECTION 2



STANCES

There are a wide variety of stances and splits for various types of offensive and defensive systems. These are the coaching pointers that I have used to but they are not the only or even the best techniques.

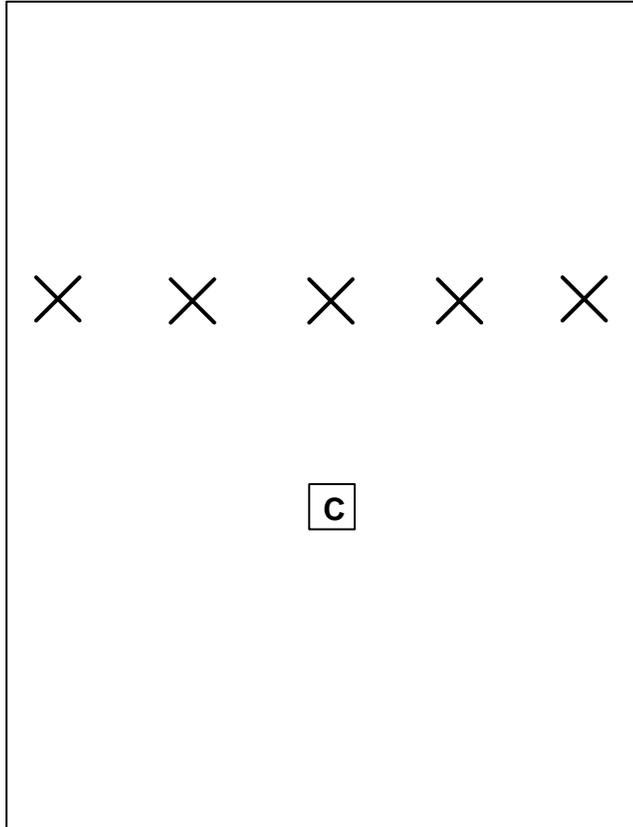
25. Hit Position

Purpose:

- To teach the basic hit position.
- Set the foundation for skills such as blocking, tackling, and other stances.

Coaching Pointers:

- Progress slowly. Check their position after every progression and make corrections.



Set-up and Instructions:

Line the kids up straight across from you and walk them through the progression of getting in a good hit position. Stand with feet shoulder width apart. Toes and knees face straight ahead, no pigeon or duck feet. Stand up tall like a soldier, flat back. Bend your knees and lean slightly forward. Head is up, eyes forward, and chin is out. Check every player to make sure they are in the proper stance and make any necessary corrections. Walk them through the same progression and check their stances one more time. Next, add the command “break down”. Whenever the coach yells “break down” at any point in the season, the kids let out a football yell and get into their hit positions as quickly as possible.

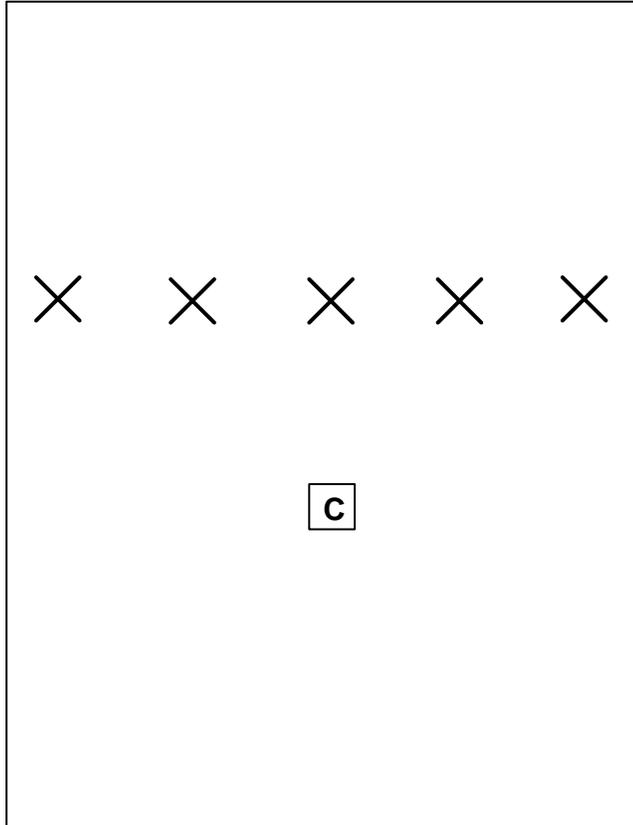
26. Two-Point Stance (WR & DE)

Purpose:

- To teach the basic two-point stance that can be used for WRs, DEs, and OLBs.
- Teach what inside (toward the ball or middle of the field) and outside (away from the ball or toward the sideline) mean in football terms.

Coaching Pointers:

- Make any corrections to the hit position before progressing to the two-point stance.



Set-up and Instructions:

This is a position specific stance (we use it for our wide receivers and defensive ends) and is different from the hit position. The hit position is, however, a prerequisite for teaching the two-point stance and all of the other stances as well. Line the kids up straight across from you and walk them through the progression of getting in a proper two-point stance. First explain that in football terms, “inside” means toward the ball’s location prior to the snap and “outside” means toward the sideline. Place a ball down somewhere and ask the kids to identify their inside and outside. Move the ball and ask them again. Next have them assume a proper hit position. From there, have them move their feet together slightly so that they are positioned directly under the hips. The inside foot goes forward and the outside foot back a few inches so that their center of gravity is directly between the two feet. From there, turn the head to look inside at the ball.

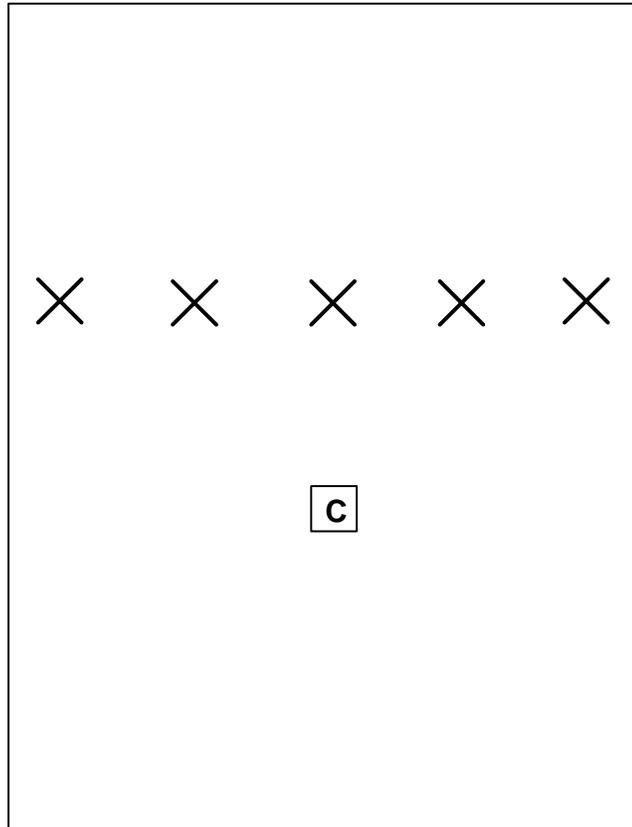
27. 3-Point Stance

Purpose:

- To teach the basic three-point stance.

Coaching Pointers:

- Progress slowly and start from the beginning before each new progression.
- Players should be able to pick up their hand without standing up or falling.



Set-up and Instructions:

Line the kids up straight across from you and walk them through the progression of getting in a proper three-point stance. First have them get into a good hit position and check to make sure they have their feet shoulder width apart, toes and knees pointed straight ahead, a slight bend in the waist, flat back, and chin out. From here, lower the center of gravity by bending at the knees and sitting. The players rest their elbows on the thighs. The knees should be at an angle slightly greater than 90 degrees. Make any correction then have the players lower their dominant hand to the ground to complete the three-point stance. The hand is positioned so that if the player's eyeball fell out, it would land on his thumb. There is just enough weight on the hand so that the player's fingertips turn white. Make sure the toes and knees have remained pointed straight ahead, that the back is flat, and the head is still up so that the boys can see what they are going to hit.

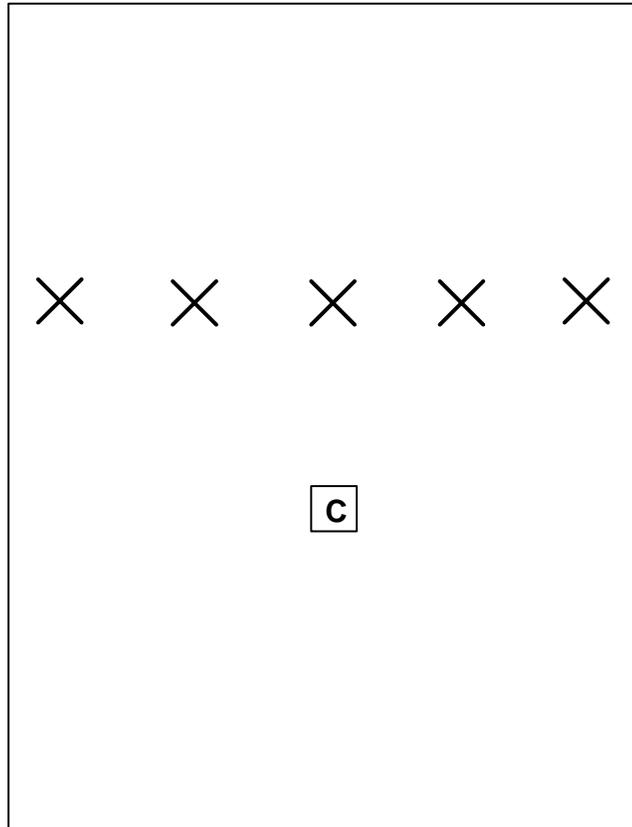
28. 4-Point Stance

Purpose:

- To teach the basic four-point stance.

Coaching Pointers:

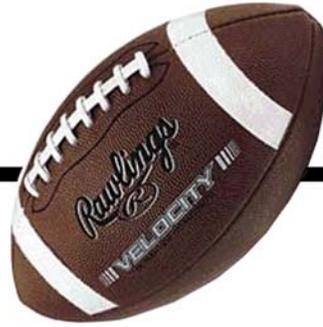
- Some players may need to place more or less weight on their hands.
- When firing out, check to make sure they are coming out low and fast. Make adjustments if not.



Set-up and Instructions:

Line the kids up straight across from you and walk them through the progression of getting in a proper four-point stance. First have them get into a good hit position and check to make sure they have their feet shoulder width apart, toes and knees pointed straight ahead, a slight bend in the waist, flat back, and chin out. From here, lower the center of gravity by bending at the knees and sitting. The players rest their elbows on the thighs. The knees should be at an angle slightly greater than 90 degrees. Make any correction then have the players fall forward until both hands are in contact with the ground. The hands are placed shoulder distance apart extended out in front of the player's head with approximately 65% of the weight on the hands. The arms are fully extended. Make sure the toes and knees have remained pointed straight ahead and the player is on the balls of his feet, ready to spring forward. The back is flat, and the head is still up with neck bulled. The back remains flat but the tail is elevated slightly above the rest of his body. Walk through the progression again and once everyone feels comfortable with their stance, have them fire out a few steps on a cadence or ball movement.

SECTION 3



OFFENSIVE SKILLS

This section covers drills that are important for the fundamental play of individual offensive positions and position groups.

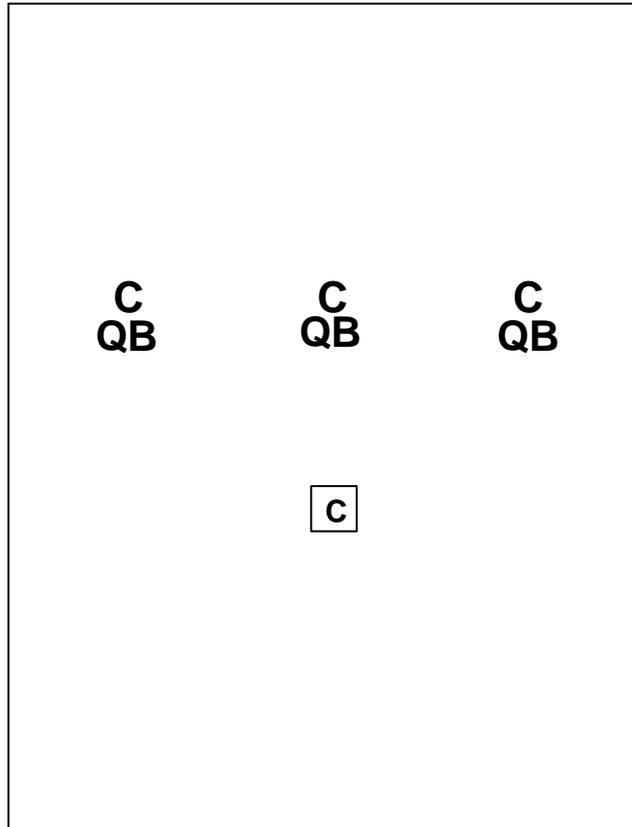
29. Under Center Snaps

Purpose:

- To teach the center – quarterback exchange in a direct snap offense.

Coaching Pointers:

- Begin to emphasize that no play can work without a good snap.
- Most fumbled snaps occur from either the center or quarterback taking off before the exchange is complete.



Set-up and Instructions:

Pair up your quarterbacks and centers. The center should primarily work with the quarterback that he will be snapping to in the games but it is also important to rotate so that all players get a few reps with each other. Place each group about 5 yards apart. The quarterbacks must extend their arms and wrist so that only hands make contact with the center. The center holds the ball with his dominant hand, the joint of his thumb on the laces. The other hand may be placed on the ground for balance. The coach calls cadence and the center snaps the ball firmly into the quarterback's top hand, twisting the ball as he brings it up so that the laces make contact with the quarterback's fingers. First have them snap with neither player moving. If there are problems at this point, try having the quarterback place only his top hand on the center and letting the ball fall to the ground after the snap. If the ball falls straight the snap is good, if it bounces forward then the snap is too short, and if it bounces backwards the snap is too far back. Advance by having the quarterback pull out and eventually having the center drive forward as well. You may want to have a coach with a blocking shield for the center to fire into.

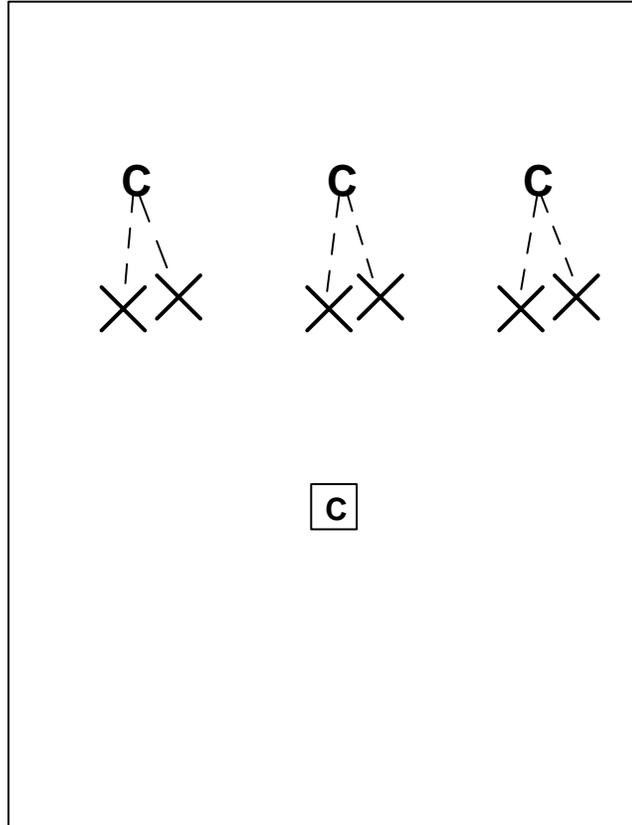
30. Direct Snaps

Purpose:

- To teach the center – quarterback exchange in a direct snap offense.

Coaching Pointers:

- If you will be using this snap, get many reps with the center firing out at a blocking shield or crab blocking. We do this every day in our pre-practice passing lines.



Set-up and Instructions:

This is how we teach the snap in the youth version of the single wing offense developed by Dave Cisar. It is specific to that type of offense but if you are looking to run something similar or to install a direct snap package to compliment your other plays, you may find this technique easiest to teach. Have each center work with a partner or in a group if you will have more than one potential target in your direct snap formation. At the beginning of the season, we will teach every lineman how to snap and will run this drill with no backs, only linemen rotating between center and backfield positions. First instruct everyone on the correct pre-snap stance. The key to the direct snap is having the backs lined up fairly close (2 ½ to 3 yards behind the center) and low to the ground. We have our backs assume a hit position then crouch low like a baseball catcher. Their pinkies are touching each other, palms facing forward, and fingertips make contact with the ground. We do not over-coach the center but allow him to grip the ball in whichever manner allows him to feel comfortable. The center must have his knees bent, butt up, and head down to look at the player he is snapping to. The pass must be nice and low, just slightly harder than a lob. If linemen are snapping to each other, have each center take 3-5 snaps and then rotate. Eventually have the centers fire out into a blocking shield or execute a crab block after their snap. Centers may practice this skill on their own by snapping into a lawn chair and attempting to get the ball to stay on the seat of the chair.

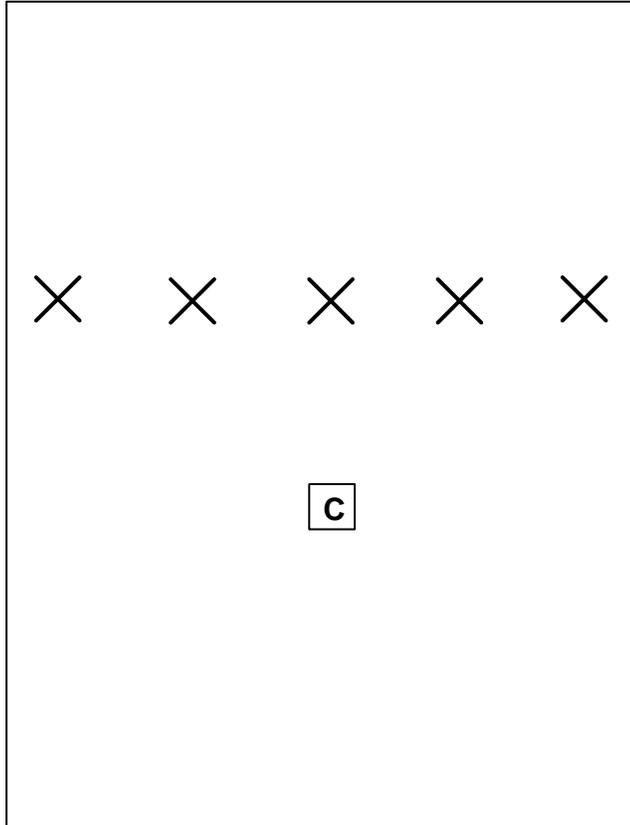
31. Bird Dog

Purpose:

- Teach the fundamentals of blocking on the line.

Coaching Pointers:

- Steps should be 6-inches (about the size of a dollar bill).
- “Guns”: Kids bring both hands back to their hips on their first step as if drawing guns in an old west shootout.
- “Flippers”: Take a second, 6-inch step and bring both arms out of the “Guns” position so that fists are touching at chest level. This should look like two flippers.



Set-up and Instructions:

Offensive linemen predominantly use this drill but we want every kid to learn how to block on the line. Start with kids in a relaxed two-point stance with shoulders square to the line of scrimmage. Demonstrate a gap step to the right by taking a short, 6-inch step with your right foot at a 45-degree angle. We tell the kids that their step should be about the size of a dollar bill. The upper body should stay low with the back remaining flat and close to parallel with the ground. Shoulders should turn 45 degrees to the right as well. If done correctly, you should look like a bird dog pointing. Have the kids execute the 6-inch step to the right and then to the left. Next add the “guns” command. Have the kids practice this technique to both sides and then add the “Flippers” command with a second 6-inch step. Practice this both ways several times before attempting to execute out of a 3-point stance. Walk them through the progression of Stance, Guns, and Flippers several times before trying to combine it all into one movement. Finish off the block with short, choppy, 6-inch steps.

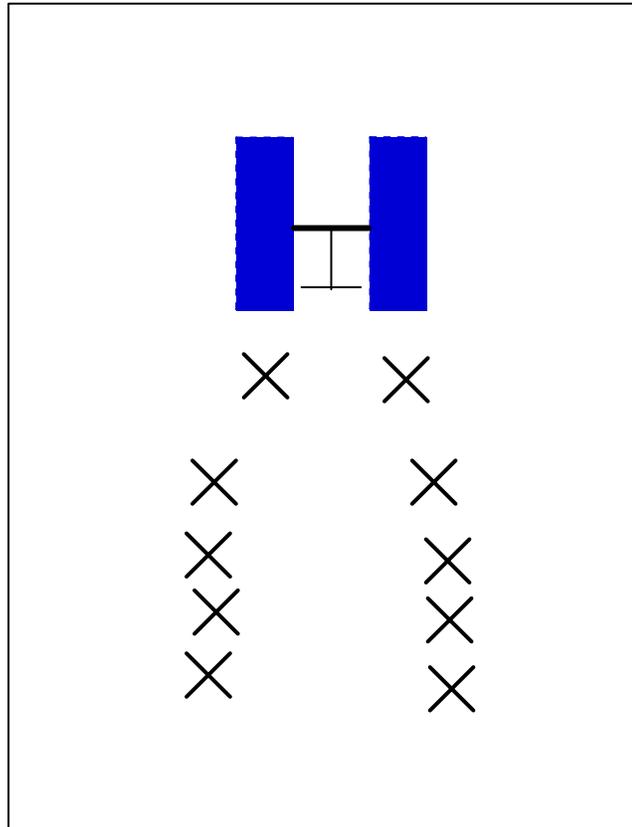
32. Sled Blocking

Purpose:

- Improve blocking skills.
- To get acclimated to and learn how to initiate contact.

Coaching Pointers:

- Flat back, stay lower than your opponent.
- Feet wide. Short, choppy steps.
- Keep your feet moving until the whistle blows.
- Always keep your head up when blocking or tackling.



Set-up and Instructions:

Take a small group of kids to your blocking sled. I prefer to keep the groups limited to 6-8 players to maximize reps and avoid a long wait where the kids might lose focus. You can use the sled to work on components of a drive block such as having the kids practice delivering a blow out of a 6-point stance or breaking down the movement into the “Stance”, “Guns”, “Flipper” progression. You can also practice the complete drive block as one movement. Always have the players block with their head on the outside and switch lines each time so that they work both shoulders. Make sure the players keep blocking until they here a whistle.

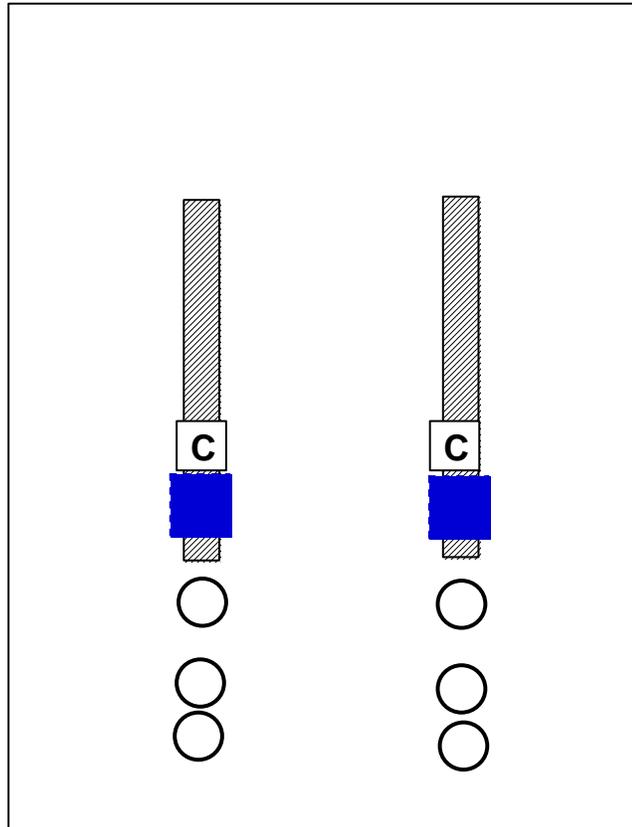
33. Board Drill

Purpose:

- To emphasize keeping the feet wide while blocking.

Coaching Pointers:

- Flat back, stay lower than your opponent.
- Feet wide. Short, choppy steps.
- Keep your feet moving until the whistle blows.
- Always keep your head up when blocking or tackling.



Set-up and Instructions:

Some days we will omit the sled and replace it with the board drill. Split the kids into groups and have each group form a line behind a long 2x4. The first player in line will step onto the board and execute a drive block on a coach-held dummy or shield. Just like the sled, have the players keep their head on the outside (or inside if you want to have them turn the dummy at the end of the block) and switch lines every time so as to work both shoulders. Having the board between their feet forces the kids to use a wide base and to keep their feet moving. Make sure they continue to block until the whistle is blown.

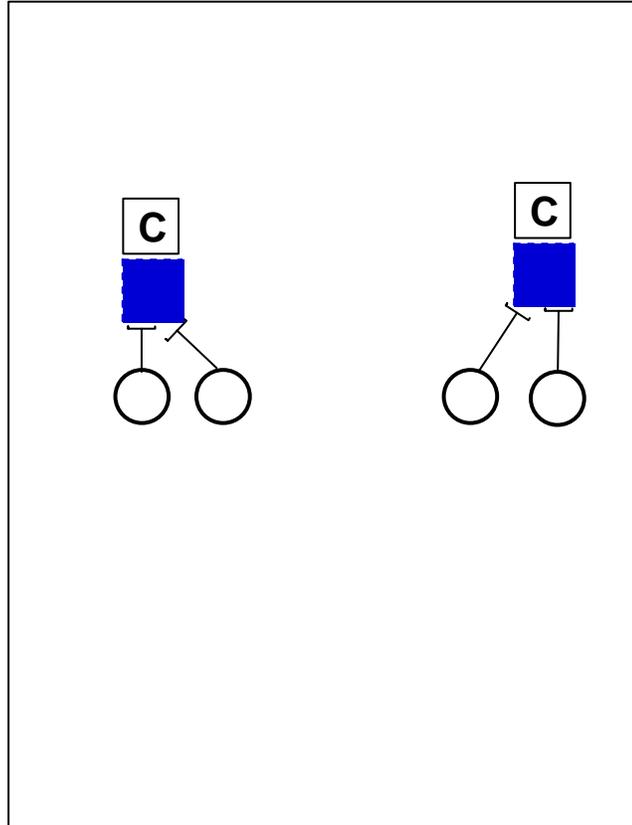
34. Double Teams

Purpose:

- To teach the fundamentals of the double team block.

Coaching Pointers:

- Flat back, stay lower than your opponent.
- Keep your hips and shoulders glued to your teammate.
- Feet wide. Short, choppy steps.
- Keep your feet moving until the whistle blows.
- Always keep your head up when blocking or tackling.



Set-up and Instructions:

You will need two adults to hold blocking dummies. Split your players into two groups and have each group go to a dummy. Two players at time will execute the double team. Place the dummy head up on the outside player. The player who has the dummy over top of them is the post man. He must get his head on the outside of the dummy (in a game this would be the defender's inside but we want to drive the dummies away from the other group). The other offensive lineman will be the drive man. He must position his head on the inside so that they have effectively pinched the defensive lineman with their heads. Both players must keep their hips and shoulders connected while working together to drive the dummy.

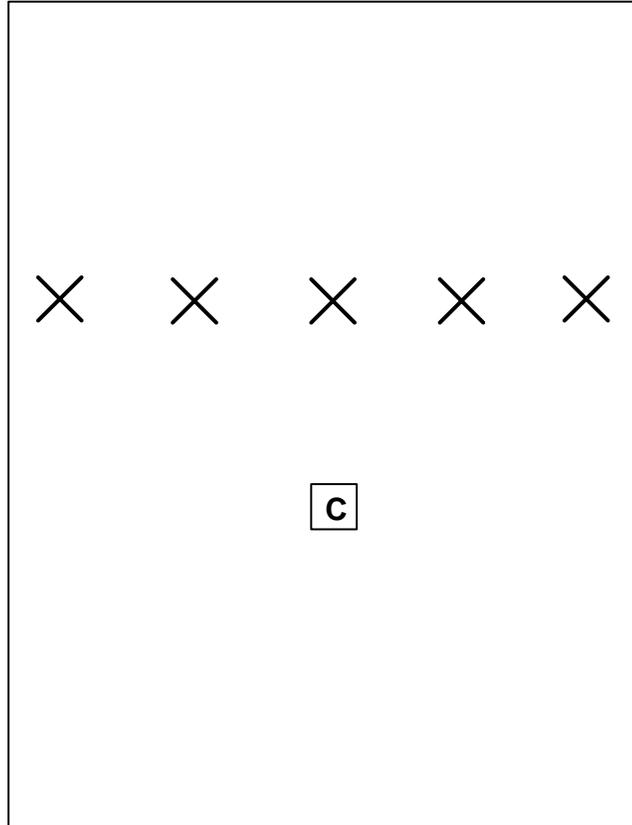
35. Pulling Progression

Purpose:

- To teach the lineman how to pull for lead or trap blocking.

Coaching Pointers:

- If the lineman can do so without giving away that they are pulling, he may take some weight off of the hand in the three-point stance.
- Players will need to get a little depth when lead blocking. We like them to keep their shoulders square to the line of scrimmage.
- Players should go straight down the line or slightly into the line on a trap block.



Set-up and Instructions:

Line the kids up straight across from you and walk them through the pulling progression repeating each step several times before moving on. Start in a relaxed two-point stance and take a 6-inch step to the right with the right foot. The foot opens to a 90-degree angle and drops six inches back from the original starting position. Pivot on the left toe and rotate the shoulders so that everything is pointed to the right. Check to see that all players remain in a low crouch. Next have them throw their right elbow backward as they take the 6-inch step. The arm stays close to the body as it is swung around, facilitating the pivot. Next we do this out of a 3-point stance, again checking for proper foot placement and to see that the kids remain low. We will then have them take the step with elbow swing out of a 3-point stance and freeze. If the players are in good position, the coach signals them to continue on in the path of a trap or lead block repping each a few times. Finally we will add a coach with a shield or blocking dummy for the players to block, again practicing both the trap and lead blocks. Practice this entire progression to both sides. Once the kids become skilled at pulling, you may add the splatter technique for additional practice.

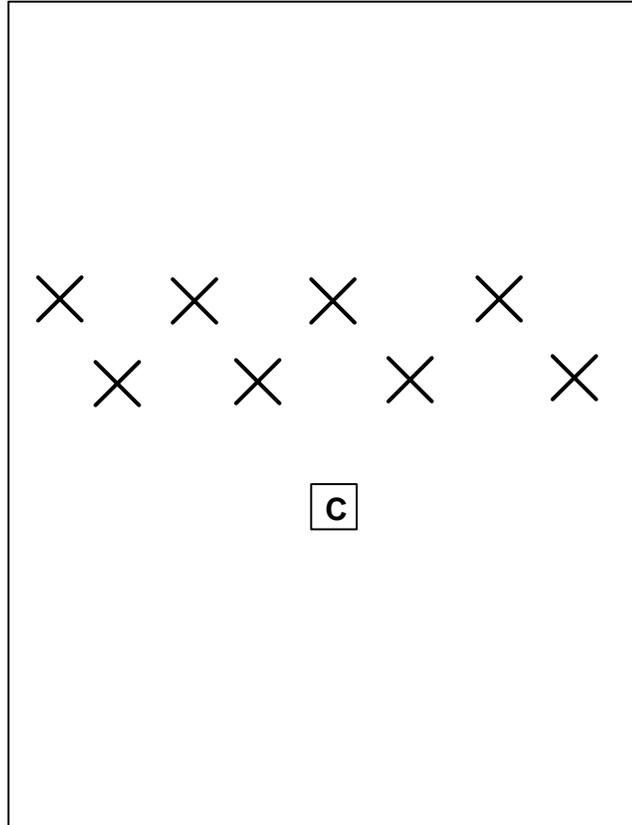
36. Crab Blocking

Purpose:

- Teach the crab block

Coaching Pointers:

- Have the defender back up as he is being crab blocked. He may also place his hands out if he is uncomfortable with the blocked crabbing into his legs.



Set-up and Instructions:

Crab blocking is a safe alternative to cut blocking. It will allow a player to neutralize a much stronger opponent or to make a block at a difficult angle without the potential for injury that comes with driving through the opponent's lower extremities. Place your offensive linemen in two rows, facing each other about one yard apart. One side will represent the offensive linemen and the other side the defensive. Players are partnered up with the child directly across from them. Have all of the defenders take a big side step to the right so that they are to the left of their partner. Defensive players assume a comfortable hit position. On the cadence, the offensive linemen shoot their right (far) arm across their body and across the front of their partner's legs. They do not hit the defender's legs but brush the arm across as if shining his shoes with the blocker's arm. The offensive lineman should land on his hands and feet with his rib cage making contact with the defender's legs. The blocker has his butt high in the air. The next progression is to have the blocker keep his arms and legs moving and "crab" into the defender. Do two reps then switch which partner is the blocker and which is the defensive lineman. Make sure to rep this skill to both sides.

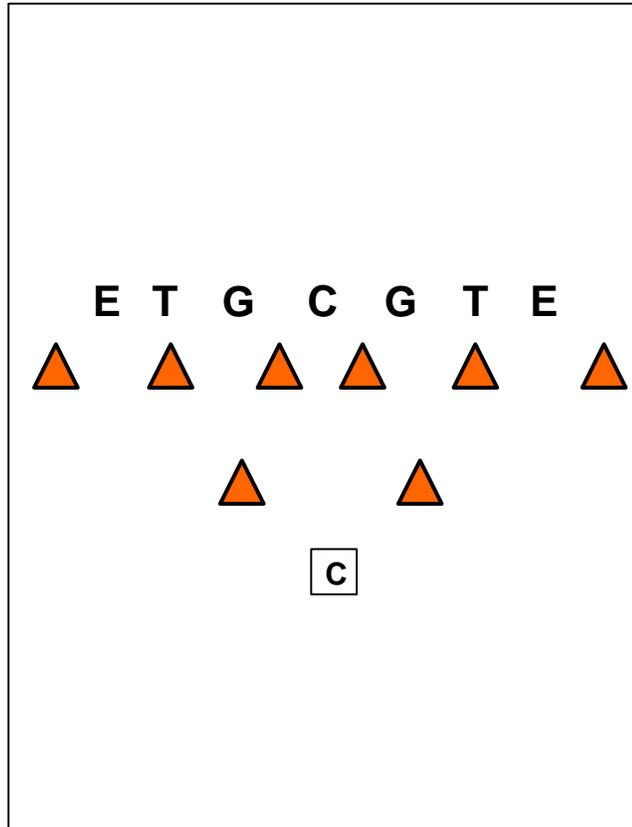
37. Smart Blocking

Purpose:

- Make sure your offensive linemen know their assignment for each play.
- Review the fundamentals of stance and blocking technique.

Coaching Pointers:

- Have the players stay in bird dog until you have checked everyone. This will allow you to make sure that everyone is correct and the players will strengthen their core at the same time.



Set-up and Instructions:

Line up your offensive line with players in their correct positions. If you have extra players, find a way to get them involved other than as a dummy. Next place a marker on the ground where the ball would be. The center must line up on this marker every time so that we get a consistent look at where the defenders would be. Set up cones or some other objects (I use T-Ball tees because they stand up and allow the players to show me proper head placement) to represent a common defense or the expected defense of your upcoming opponent. Call a play and have your linemen step to the correct block on the cadence. If they are to execute a drive block, I only make them take two steps but they must use the “Guns” & “Flippers” technique. If they are pulling, blocking a linebacker, or running a pass route I will have them fully execute their block. Do not let the kids play with the cones or knock them out of position.

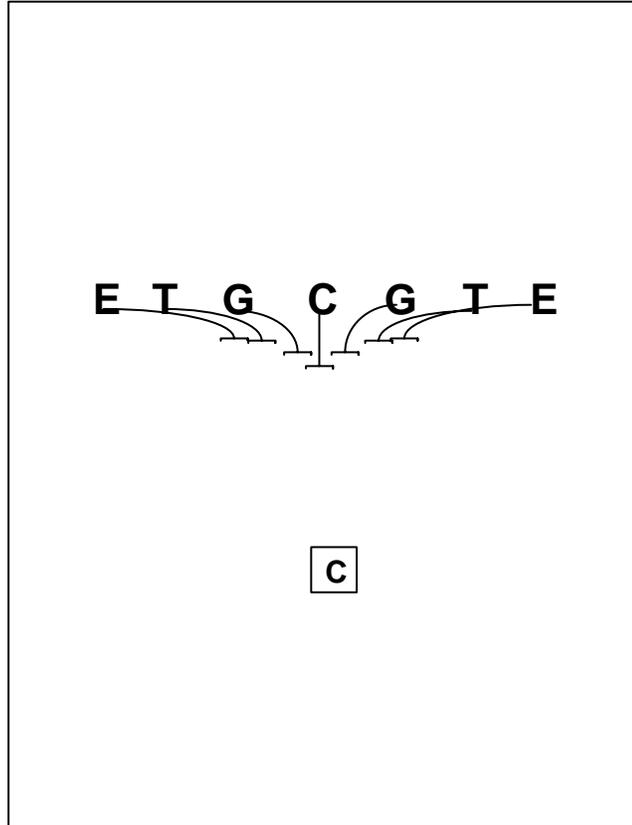
38. Wedge Progression

Purpose:

- To teach the wedge block.

Coaching Pointers:

- Do not rush this and do not add a progression until the line is ready.
- You do not have to get through the entire sequence in one day.
- One final progression you could add would be to execute the wedge with eyes closed.



Set-up and Instructions:

We always want to wedge on the middle offensive lineman. If you are using a balanced line, wedge on the center. In an unbalanced line you would want to wedge on the strong side guard. The center man just steps forward with flippers up at shoulder level and fists touching. Take your time with each step and get plenty of reps before progressing. This does not have to be done in one day. We will generally not run the wedge until we have practiced it for at least two weeks and it rarely starts to look good until the third week.

- 1: From 2-point stance, step with inside foot and place it just inside and behind the foot of your inside neighbor.
- 2: Same as above but add the inside shoulder to the rib cage of your neighbor. The outside hand pushes on the near shoulder of your neighbor.
- 3: Same technique but out of a 3-point stance. We are only getting a fit right now and not moving. Make sure the wedge looks like a 'V'.
- 4: Again, have them form the wedge out of a 3-point stance, then have them take small steps on your count. Count slowly at first then gradually speed up as they get better. You are not allowed to grab your neighbor or interlock but all players must stay connected.
- 5: Speed up the count and make them go a longer distance (10-15 yards).
- 6: Have a coach hold a dummy or blocking shield at the point of attack. Again, freeze on the dummy before starting a count. Explain that you do not have a certain man to block but only worry about pushing on your inside neighbor.
- 7: Without freezing, go immediately into the drive. The coach still counts steps.
- 8: Do the full motion without freezing and without the coach counting.

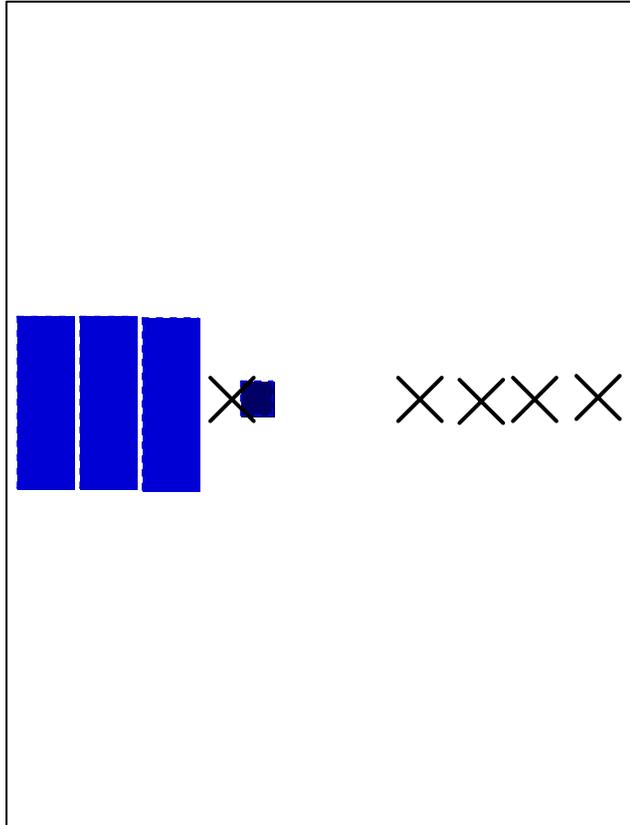
39. Splatter Blocking

Purpose:

- To acclimate the players to contact in a safe environment.
- To get a feel for finishing off a block.

Coaching Pointers:

- This is one of our players' favorite drills and they may enjoy driving a teammate to the mattress but do not let them stray from using perfect technique.



Set-up and Instructions:

Splatter drills are one of the best ways to practice technique and acclimate your young players to contact. If you have a mattress (full size or bigger and the thicker the better) that you can transport to your practice field, I suggest using that. Otherwise, create a landing mat by placing three or four long tackling dummies side by side. If you have to use the latter method, you will need to have a coach stay by the dummies to make certain that they do not become separated. If you do have a mattress, place one tackling dummy at the front so that the blockers will need to use their hips to lift the player over the bag. Give one boy a blocking shield and have him stand a few feet in front of the landing area. Line up the other players and have one boy come up close to the shield holder. That player executes a drive block, finishing the block by driving the shield holder back and onto the landing area. Switch the shield holder every five or six reps. You can also use this drill to practice pulling.

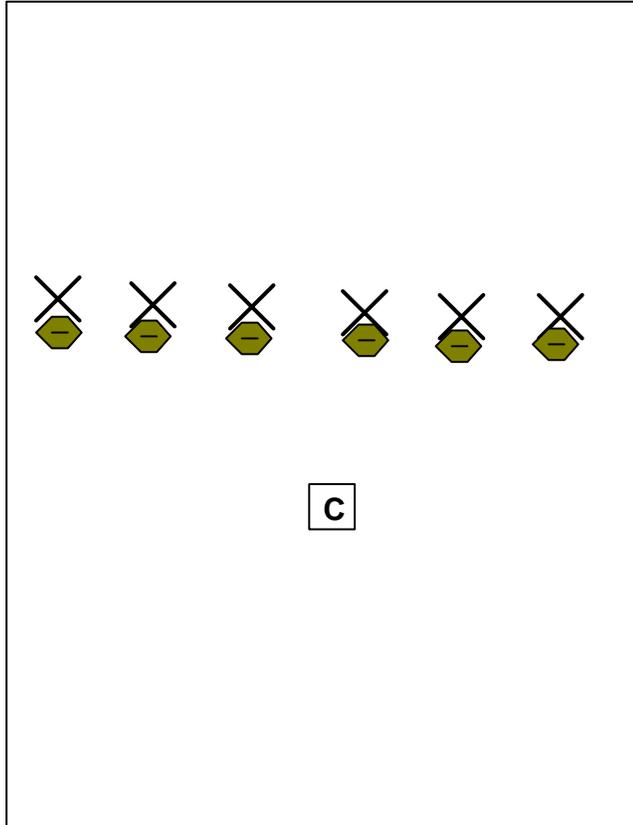
40. Get a Grip

Purpose:

- Teach the proper way to carry the football.
- To teach / review what inside and outside mean in football terms.

Coaching Pointers:

- You may try to knock the ball out of a player's grip by gently swatting at it.



Set-up and Instructions:

Line up a group of kids up straight across from you. Each child needs a football. First explain that in football terms, “inside” means toward the ball’s location prior to the snap and “outside” means toward the sideline. When running with the football we want the ball carrier to hold the ball with his outside arm (right arm if running to the right and vice versa). First have them hold the ball with their right arm. Tell the boys to make an eagle’s claw with their right hand. One point of the football goes into the armpit and the other point is covered by the eagle’s claw. Make sure the ball is also in contact with their rib cage and forearm so that there are four points of pressure. Make any corrections and then practice on the left side. Point to one direction and ask them to show you where the ball should be when running to that direction and then switch once more.

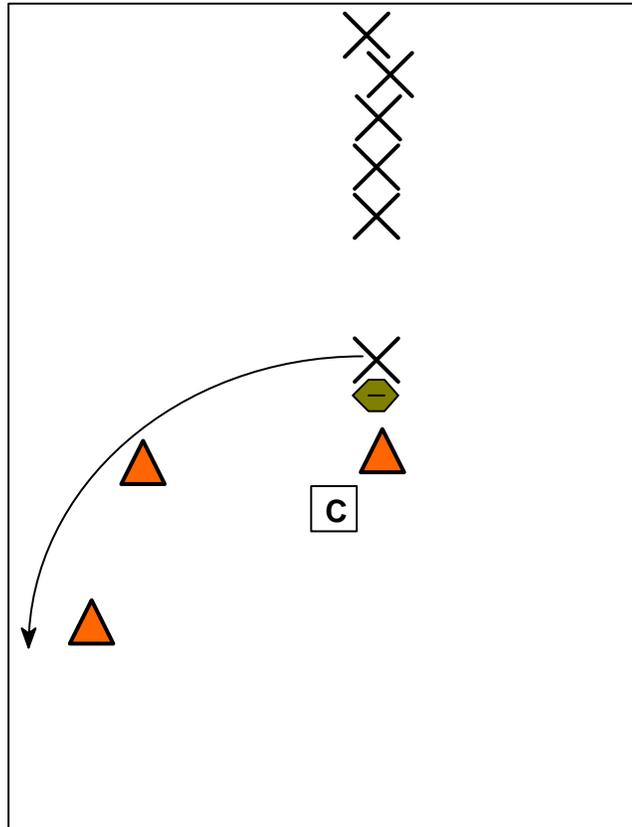
41. End Run

Purpose:

- To teach / review the proper way to carry the football.
- To get a feel for carrying the football while running at full speed.

Coaching Pointers:

- Eagle claw.
- Four points of pressure: hand, forearm, armpit, ribcage.



Set-up and Instructions:

Set down a cone and line up a group of players behind it. Give a football to the first three or four players in line. Set an additional cone about ten yards to the right and slightly in front of the first cone and one more cone about 15 yards downfield. Check to make sure each player is holding the ball correctly in his right hand before saying, "Go". On the signal kids run through the cones at top speed, accelerating as they go. After running, the ball carrier returns to the group, gives the ball to the next person in line who does not already have one, then goes to the back of the line. Practice this drill to the right and left. For an added progression, you may want to have a coach or another player pitch or hand the ball off to the ball carrier.

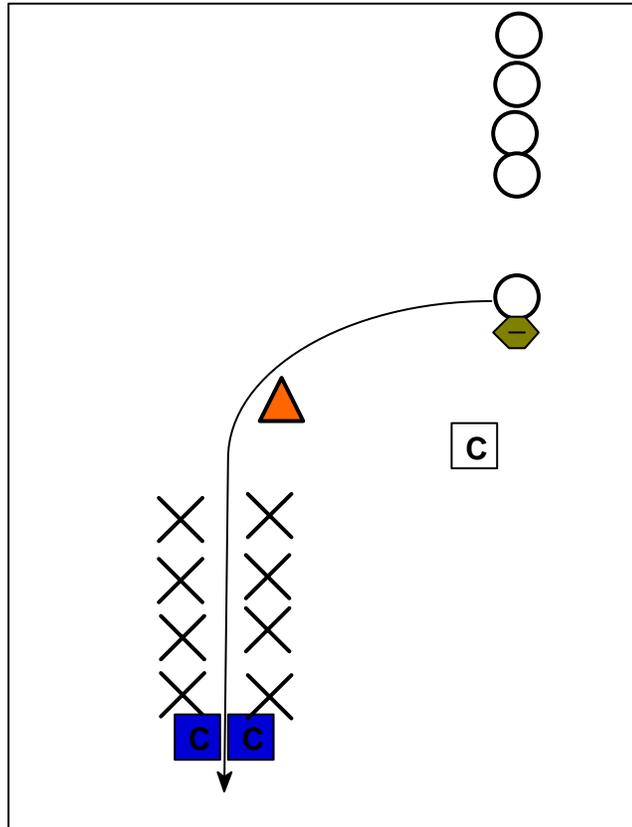
42. Gauntlet

Purpose:

- To teach / review the proper way to carry the football.
- To get a feel for carrying the football while running at full speed.
- Learn to secure the ball in traffic.

Coaching Pointers:

- Eagle claw.
- Four points of pressure: hand, forearm, armpit, ribcage.
- You may secure the ball with your other hand in traffic



Set-up and Instructions:

This drill is similar to the end run but with two columns of players at the end that the ball carrier must run through. Check to make sure the ball carrier is holding the ball in the correct arm with four points of pressure. On the signal, the runner goes around the cone and through the gauntlet. Players making up the gauntlet try to knock the ball out by swiping at it or hitting it. They are not allowed to move their feet. You may want to have two coaches at the end of the gauntlet holding dummies. It is important for the runner to accelerate through the gauntlet and to explode through the contact of the coaches popping the dummies together at the end. After running, the ball carrier returns to the back of the line, giving his ball to the next player in line without one. Practice this drill to the right and left.

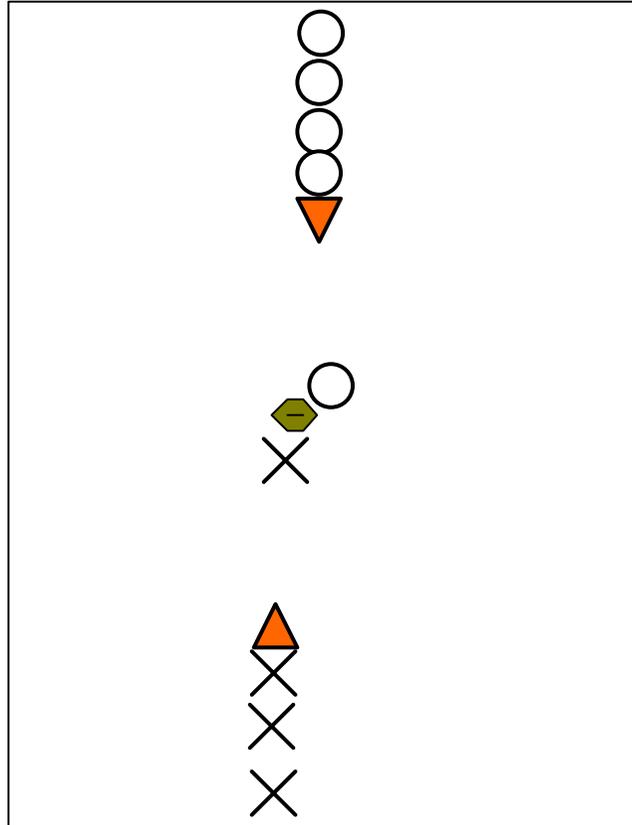
43. Handoff Lines

Purpose:

- Teach the proper way to hand the ball off.
- Teach the proper way to receive a handoff.

Coaching Pointers:

- When handing off, extend arms and look the ball into the pocket.
- When taking the handoff, make a big pocket with near arm up. Make him smell your armpit.



Set-up and Instructions:

Create two lines of players about 10 yards apart and directly facing each other. Give a football to the first three or four players in one of the lines. The first two players jog to each other and execute a proper handoff. Make sure the player receiving the handoff makes a wide pocket with his near arm on top. The player who is handing the ball off must make sure to focus on the pocket and correctly situate the ball. Players continue on their path and go to the back of the opposite line. The player who received the handoff gives the ball to the next player in line who does not have a football.

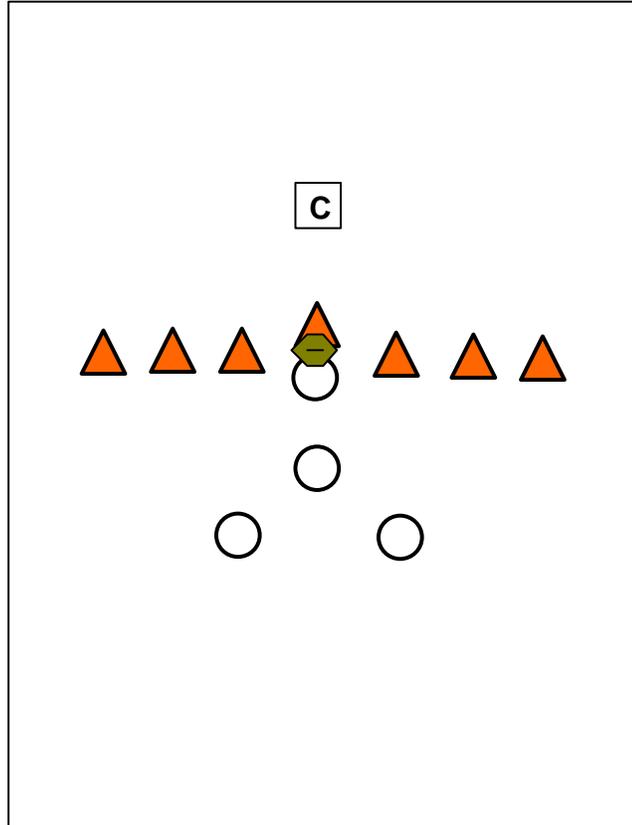
44. Skeleton Backfield

Purpose:

- Learn and review the offensive plays.
- Practice skills that are essential for allowing our plays to be successful.

Coaching Pointers:

- If your backs are used as blockers, you will want to have a coach with a blocking shield.
- Get as many reps as possible. Players and coaches must hustle to get ready for the next play.



Set-up and Instructions:

I use a painted fire hose to represent the offensive linemen. You may be able to acquire an old hose from your local fire department. If you cannot, use cones to represent the linemen. Make sure the spacing is accurate. Call a play and have your backfield execute it with the runner carrying the ball out at least 15 yards. Have any back who is executing a fake do the same thing.

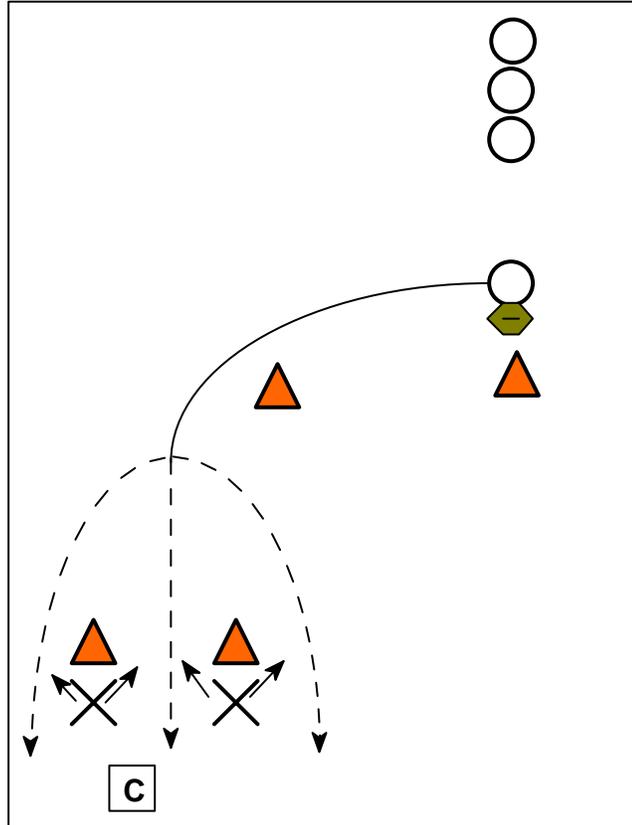
45. Alley Drill

Purpose:

- Teach the runner to run to daylight.
- Improve vision and decision making skills.

Coaching Pointers:

- Always cut off of the opposite foot (when cutting to the left, do so when the right foot is planted and vice versa).
- Adjust the ball to the correct side if cutting all the way back across the field.



Set-up and Instructions:

Line up a group of players behind a cone and give a football to at least the first three kids. Set up an additional cone to have the players run around and two more cones approximately 5 yards downfield. The two cones have created three running lanes – an outside lane, one that is straight ahead, and a cutback lane. Have two coaches or players stand behind the cones. The coach will decide which lane will remain open and the coaches or players will fill the other two lanes as the ball carrier turns the corner to come upfield. The ball carrier finds the open lane and runs through it as smoothly and effortlessly as possible. Is running to the outside lane, cut off of the inside foot and off of the outside foot for the cutback lane. Also make sure the runner is carrying the ball in the correct hand, switching if he has to cut back to the opposite side of the field.

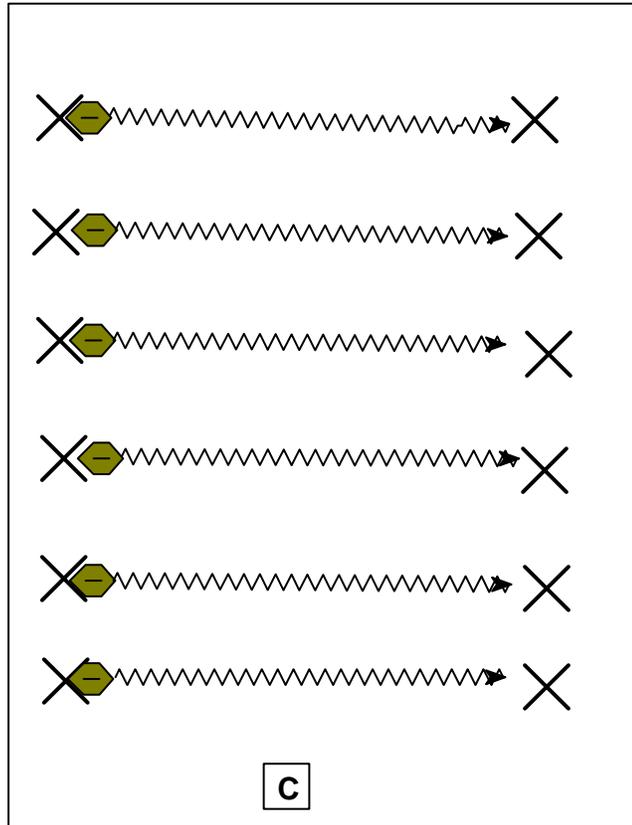
46. Watch it In

Purpose:

- To practice receiving the ball in different situations

Coaching Pointers:

- Catch the ball with your hands and eyes (watch it all the way in).
- Ball above the waist – thumbs in. Ball below the waist or over the shoulder – thumbs out.
- Be confident. Most kids can catch a football if they believe in themselves.



Set-up and Instructions:

Pair off your backs and receivers (anyone who might need to practice receiving the ball) and give each pair a football. Have the players form two lines approximately 5 yards apart at first. Each boy is facing directly across from his partner and is lined up at least 5 yards away from his neighbors. Have the kids play catch, emphasizing that they must keep their eye on the ball until they have secured it and that they must catch the ball with their hands, not letting it hit any other part of their body first. We start with underhand tosses for accuracy and a good spiral. The receiver may turn his shoulders to the right, left, or all the way around to simulate different pass-receiving positions. The passer may alternate between high passes and low passes. If the ball is at or above the receiver's chest, he should catch it with thumbs together. If it is a low pass or if his back is turned to the passer, he should catch it with thumbs out and pinkies touching. Eventually we allow the receivers to separate to a greater distance and to execute overhand passes.

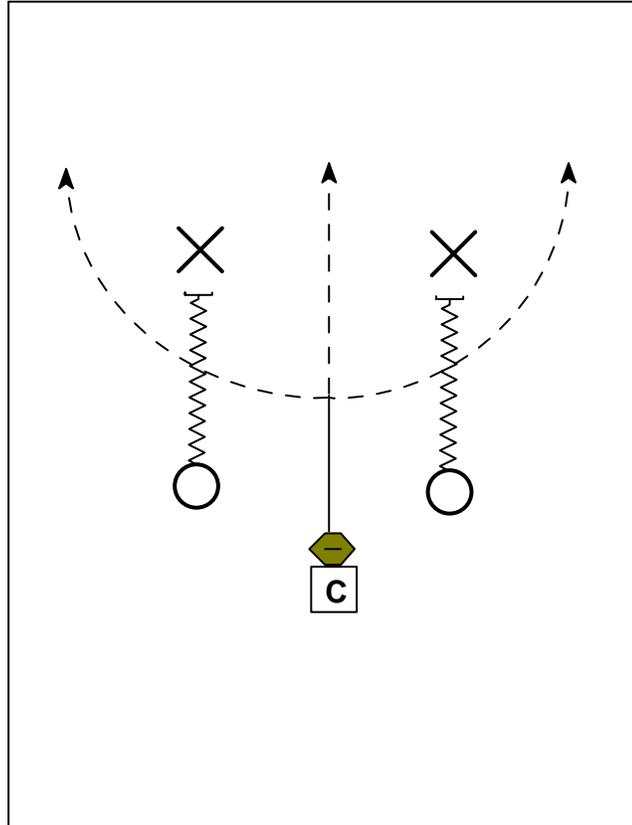
47. Stalk Block

Purpose:

- Practice blocking in open space.

Coaching Pointers:

- Keep your hands on the guy but do not hold. The official can easily see if you are holding in this situation.
- Keep your feet moving and stay in front of the defender. This does not need to be a devastating block.



Set-up and Instructions:

Select two blockers and line up a defender approximately 4 yards directly across from each one. The coach may act as ball carrier or, if you have additional players, one of them may carry the ball. On the signal, the blockers attempt to stalk block the defenders who will be trying to get free and tackle the ball carrier. The runner may pick his running lane based on the movement of the defenders. The blockers do not have to make a particularly devastating block or turn the defenders as certain direction. They only have to stay on their man and take him whichever way he wants to go. As long as the receivers do not turn the defender free, the ball carrier should be able to score.

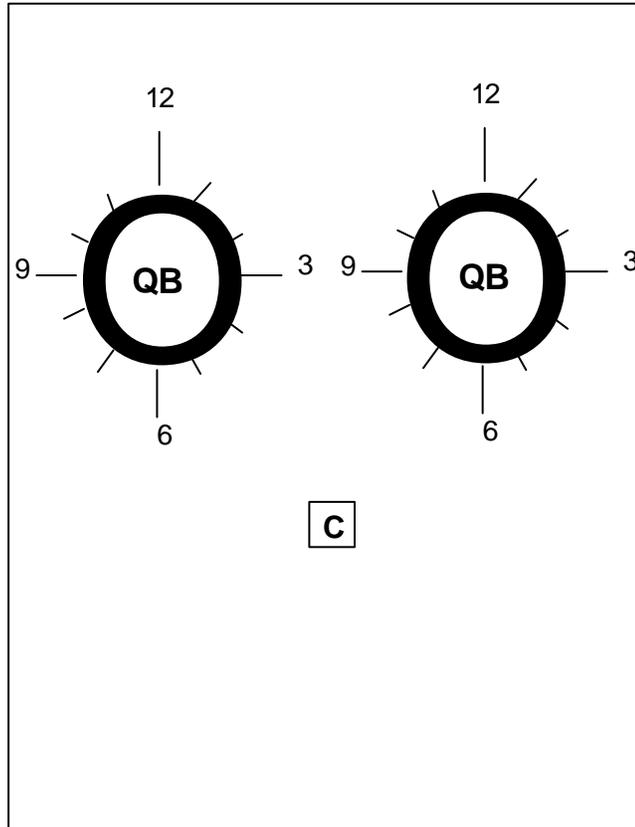
48. Footwork Clock

Purpose:

- Teach the quarterback the proper steps for each play.
- Improve footwork in general.

Coaching Pointers:

- This drill is better suited for older kids.
- Correct any huge errors but do not be too picky here. If you try to make things too perfect, you will end up slowing the kid down.



Set-up and Instructions:

Use spray paint or cones to create a circle for each of your quarterbacks. The circle should be about ten feet in diameter. Compare the circle to a clock with the front being twelve o'clock, the back being six o'clock, etc. Break down the QB's footwork for all your plays by direction (ex. Right foot to 3 o'clock followed by left foot to 5 o'clock). Kids this age are usually able to learn skills better with an example that they are able to visualize in their heads. Use these numbers as a reference for your quarterbacks when running plays in skeleton or full team sessions.

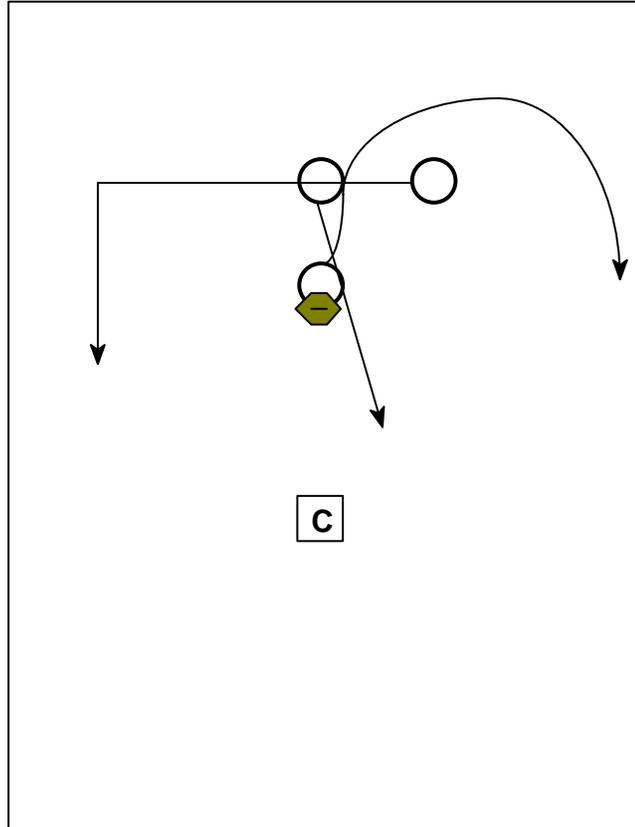
49. Fool the Coach

Purpose:

- Emphasize the importance of good faking.
- Practice your misdirection plays.

Coaching Pointers:

- When faking, run all out for at least 10-15 yards. Dip the front shoulder and rock the cradle so the defense can not see that you do not have the ball



Set-up and Instructions:

Use this drill if you have a misdirection series in your offense wherein many plays look the same but each goes to a different point of attack with a different ball carrier. Set up a complete backfield with a coach watching them. The QB selects a play and communicates it to the rest of the backs. The coach should not know what the play is. The backfield runs the play being sure to execute great fakes. The coach attempts to identify the play and ball carrier. To make this drill fun, you can have the coach do push-ups if he is unable to immediately figure out where the ball is. Be sure to point out any errors for faking, ball carrying, and executing your plays correctly.

SECTION 4



TEAM OFFENSE

In order for your offensive unit to be successful, players will need to apply their individual position skills to the offensive team and work with each other. This section provides drills that will help develop offensive team concepts and cohesion between your players.

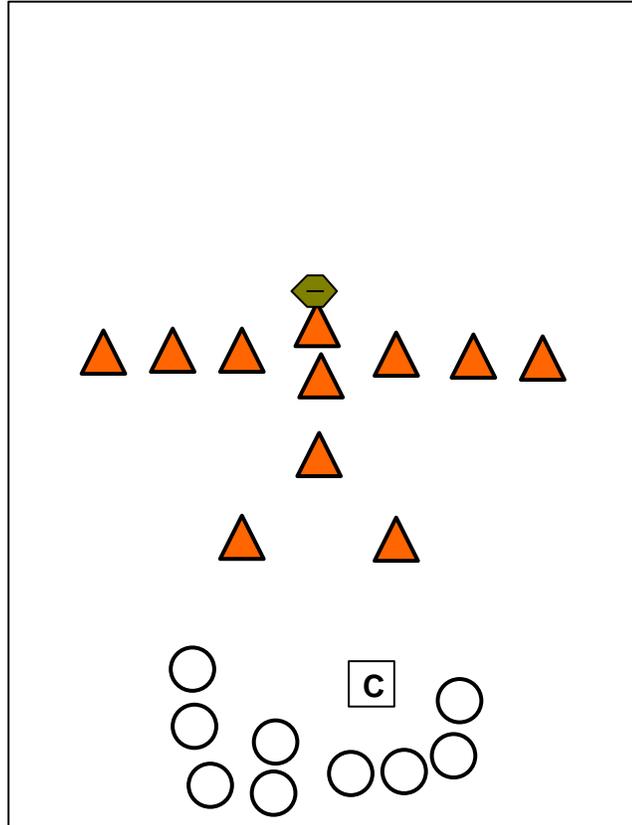
50. Numbering System

Purpose:

- Teach your numbering system to the team.

Coaching Pointers:

- If you have a young team, they will have a hard time understanding this at first. Be patient and review it until they are comfortable with the concept.



Set-up and Instructions:

Set up cones, shields, or some other objects to represent your base offense. Have all players take a knee behind the formation while the coach explains the numbering system. First number your backs and have the kids review by asking a player to go up and touch the 2-back, another to touch the 4-back, etc. Next, communicate how you would number the point of attack (some use a system where they number linemen, most will assign a number to the hole) and again review by having a player touch the 3-hole, the 8-hole, etc. Next explain how the full numbering system works. For us, the first number is the ball carrier, the second number is the point of attack, and the tag word at the end is the blocking scheme. Review this with your team. See if they can tell you that on a 16 power the 1-back will carry the ball through the 6-hole and the line will use the “Power” blocking scheme.

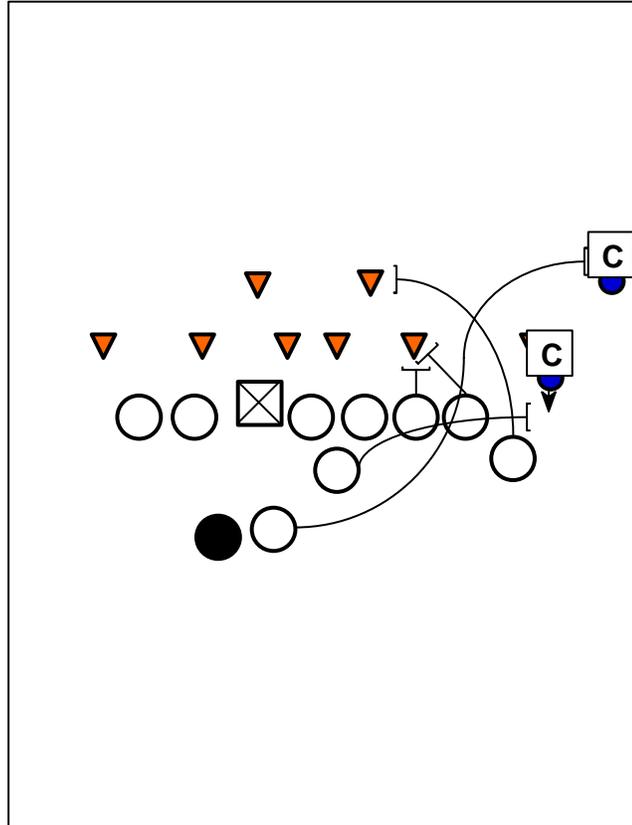
51. Perfect Play

Purpose:

- Make sure that every player knows his assignment and technique for each play.
- Safely practice your plays in a controlled setting.

Coaching Pointers:

- You want as many reps as possible. Coaches and players must hustle back and get ready for the next play.
- Make corrections on the fly and repeat a play until it is perfect.



Set-up and Instructions:

Line up your offense with players in their correct positions. Place a marker on the ground where the ball must be spotted each time so that we get a consistent look at where the defenders would be. Set up cones or some other objects (I use T-Ball tees because they stand up and allow the players to show me proper head placement) to represent a common defense or the expected defense of your upcoming opponent. You should also have a few coaches with shields that can move around to represent key defenders that must be accounted for in order for a given play to succeed. Call a play and have your players execute their assignment with correct technique. If blocking, we ask them to freeze to show the coaches that they have proper head placement. Early in the season we will have the kids walk a play, jog it, then run it at full speed. Never progress unless the play has been executed perfectly.

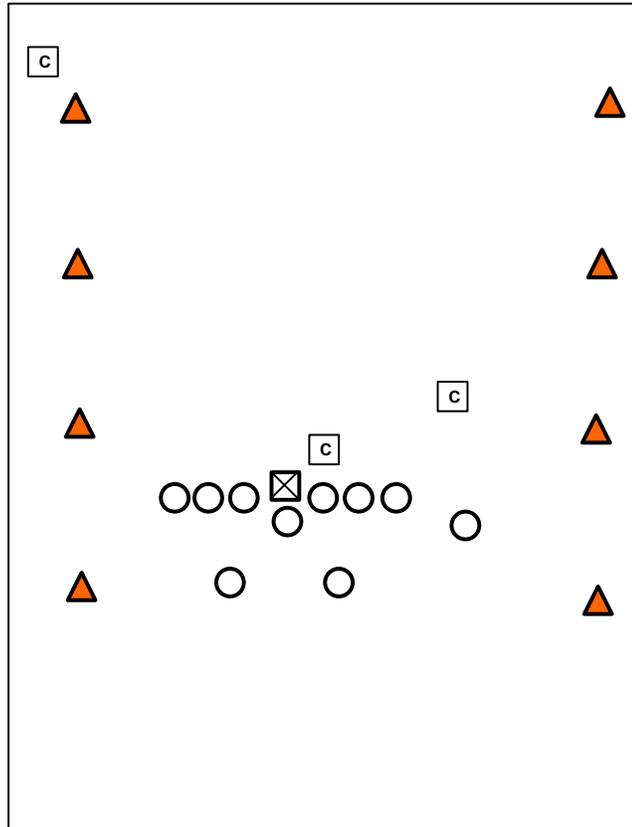
52. No Huddle

Purpose:

- To practice the no-huddle.
- Safely rep your plays in a controlled setting.
- Condition.

Coaching Pointers:

- Practice different situations you may encounter when running no-huddle (rotating players, hurry-up, spike the ball, different down and distances, etc.)
- Get a lot of reps. Make corrections on the fly.



Set-up and Instructions:

Set up two rows of cones to represent the sidelines. Have your offense take the field with any coaches that you can spare holding shields or dummies and moving around to play as defenders that must be accounted for in order for a given play to succeed. The coaches should know which play has been called so if your team uses wrist coaches, give one to each coach. One of these coaches is also responsible for spotting the ball after each play. Have whichever coach calls your plays go to the sideline as he would in a game situation. If possible, have another coach take any players that are not being used with him to run a separate drill. Otherwise, rotate them in.

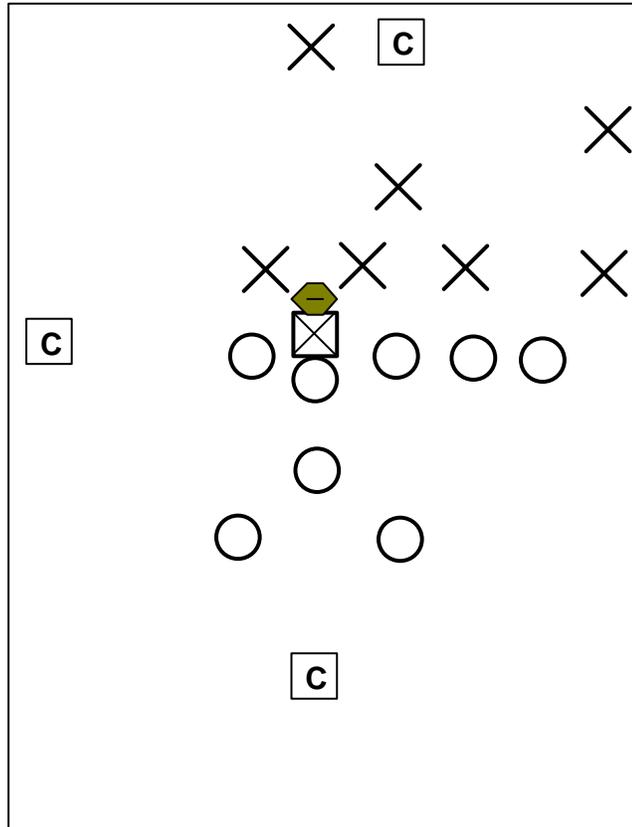
53. Half Line Scrimmage

Purpose:

- To practice your offense and defense in a live situation.

Coaching Pointers:

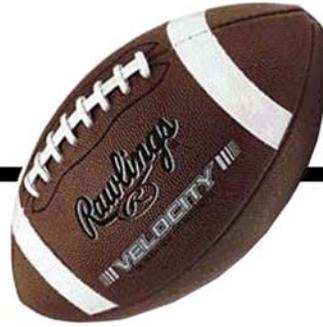
- Try to get as many plays in as possible. Coach your players on the fly.
- Rotate halfway through or every other day so that everyone has a chance to play both offense and defense.



Set-up and Instructions:

This drill seems to work better for some groups of kids than for others. In 2004 I was an assistant coach on a team that participated in half-line scrimmages for a half hour at each practice. It was a great opportunity for the kids to learn in a game situation and for us coaches to instruct on the fly. My 2006 team never seem to get the same benefits and we eventually stopped scrimmaging altogether. The greatest gains will come if you have two capable coaches – one whose area of expertise is on the offensive side of the ball and another who is able to concentrate on the defense. Our 2004 team practiced three days each week. On the first day we would only use our own offense and defense. On the second day, we would run our plays against the expected defense of our upcoming opponent. On the final day of practice, we would look at our opponent's plays against our defense.

SECTION 5



DEFENSIVE SKILLS

This section covers drills that are important for the fundamental play of individual defensive positions and position groups.

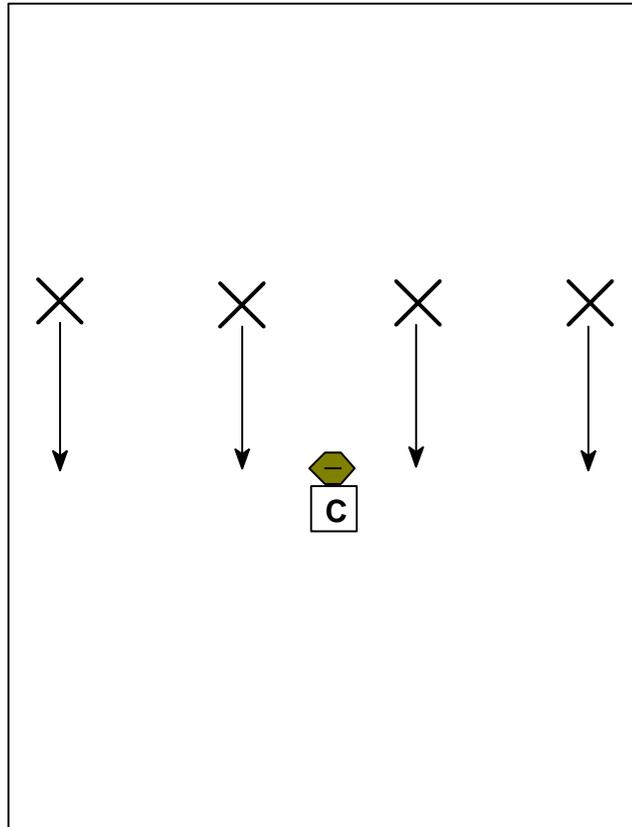
54. Stance and Take-Off

Purpose:

- To review the defensive lineman stance.
- Practice a fast, low, Explosive take-off.
- Strengthen the leg muscles.

Coaching Pointers:

- Start with a little more weight forward than usual.
- Turn this into a race but do not allow the players to raise up tall out of their stance.



Set-up and Instructions:

Line up a small group of defensive linemen across from a coach. The coach is holding a football just as a center would. Check for proper stances before beginning the cadence. Vary the snap count and try to get the defense to jump offside. Once the ball moves, the linemen should explode out of their stance as quickly as possible. Emphasize a low charge. Have the linemen finish out the drill by running about five yards.

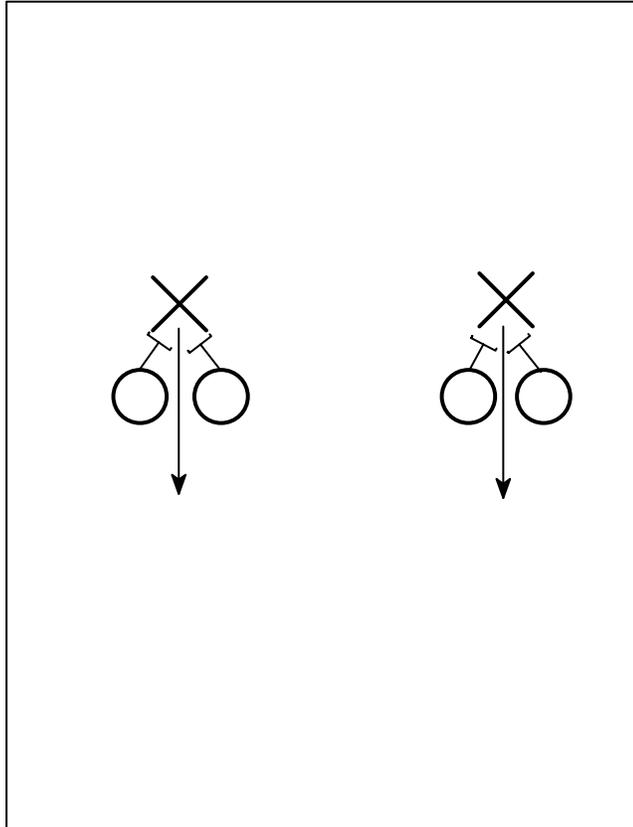
55. Blow the Gap

Purpose:

- To review the defensive lineman stance and explosive take-off.
- Practice shooting through a gap and taking on double teams.

Coaching Pointers:

- Start with a little more weight forward than usual.
- If you make it through the gap, gain control, find the ball, and make the tackle.
- If stalemated, stay low and keep fighting.
- When getting moved backwards, get on the ground and create a bus wreck.



Set-up and Instructions:

Put your defensive linemen into small groups. You will need two coaches or players to hold shields or dummies for each group. If you do not have enough shields, you can have some of your other players try to prevent the defender from penetrating but keep in mind that this is a drill for developing technique and confidence in your defensive players. The offensive linemen should not deliver a devastating block. Like all drills involving the take-off of defensive linemen, it is a good idea to have a coach snap a football to instill good habits. On ball movement, the defensive linemen explode out of their stance and attempt to penetrate the gap between the two offensive players. He must use a low charge and keep his feet moving. It is ok if the defender falls or if they are unable to split the blockers as long as he continues to fight. If he cannot get through the gap, neither can the ball carrier. The worst thing he can do is to attempt to get past the blockers by taking any path other than directly through the assigned gap. Remind the defenders that if they are getting driven back on a double team, they are to get to the ground and create a pile.

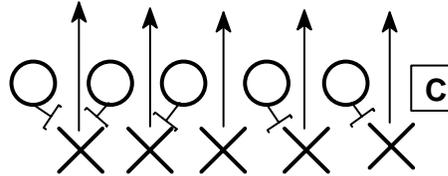
56. All Gaps

Purpose:

- To review the defensive lineman stance and explosive take-off.
- Practice shooting through a gap and taking on one-on-one blocks and double teams.

Coaching Pointers:

- If you make it through the gap, gain control, find the ball, and make the tackle.
- If stalemated, stay low and keep fighting.
- When getting moved backwards, get on the ground and create a bus wreck.



Set-up and Instructions:

Separate the defensive linemen into two lines that are facing each other. One group will play as offensive linemen and the other as the defensive line. If you have an odd number of players, the offensive line gets the extra player. Otherwise you can have a coach with a shield or dummy stand in to represent an offensive lineman. The defensive players align in the gaps of the offensive players. It is a good idea to use a ball for this drill or you can just have one player put out their hand and snap and imaginary ball. The coach calls cadence and the defensive line goes on ball movement. They attempt to fire through the gaps and get into the backfield. The offensive linemen are free to block either of the defenders that are near to them. This will result in some defensive linemen getting blocked one-on-one, some getting double-teamed, and some coming through unblocked. The defensive lineman must determine what is happening and react accordingly. Against a one-on-one block, fight the pressure and penetrate into the backfield. If unblocked, gain control and break down to find the ball. When double-teamed, attempt to stay low and split the block but get on the ground and create a pile if being driven back. The defensive linemen can never leave their assigned gap in this drill. Every player rotates one spot clockwise after every one or two reps.

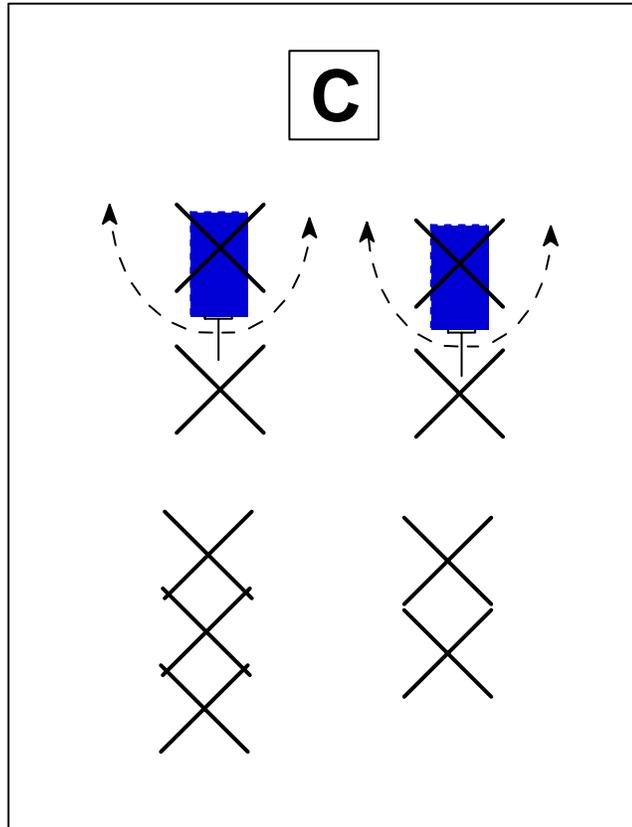
57. Drive and Rip

Purpose:

- Teach the technique for playing as a head-up, two-gap defensive lineman.

Coaching Pointers:

- Deliver the blow and knock the offensive lineman backward.
- Extend your arms to create space.
- Be prepared to come off to either side.
- Make a decision quickly, lose the blocker, and get to the ball.



Set-up and Instructions:

Set up lines of defensive linemen with no more than four kids in each line. Line up a coach or player with a shield, representing an offensive lineman, in front of each line. It is also a good idea to have a coach or player acting as center so that the defenders get used to firing off on ball movement. The coach stands behind the dummy holders. When the ball moves, the defensive linemen fire off directly at the offensive linemen, making contact with the chest, both hands, and facemask (with head up). After the initial explosion, the defender attempts to lock out the offensive lineman and drive him backwards while looking into the backfield and in this case, at the coach. The coach signals the direction that the ball is going at which point the defenders should drop their far shoulder and rip the far arm underneath of the blocker, almost in an uppercut motion, to create separation. They then pursue down the line to get into position to make the tackle. At this age, defensive linemen have a tendency to pick a gap without any regard to where the ball is going. The defensive linemen in this drill should never pick a side until they get a signal from the coach. Switch dummy holders after every three to five reps.

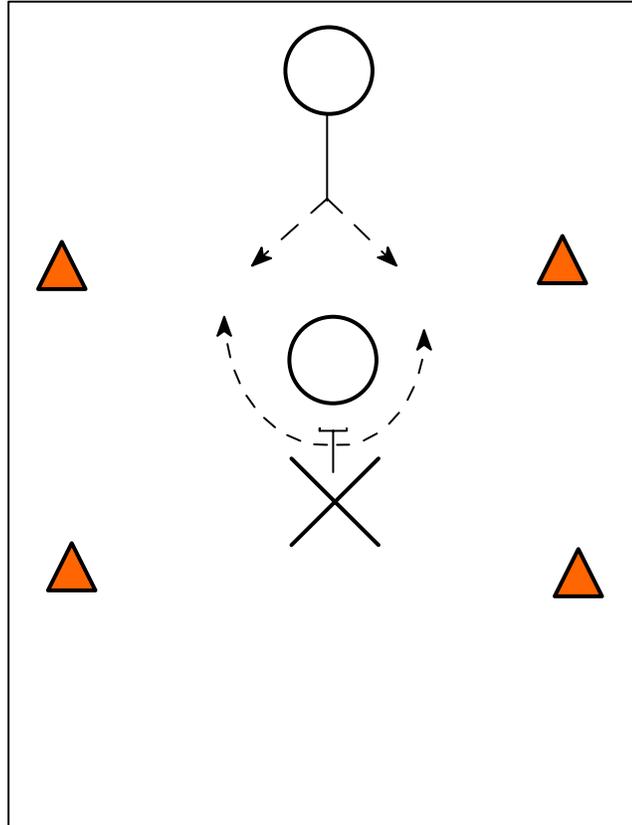
58. 2 vs. 1 DL Drill

Purpose:

- Teach the technique for playing as a head-up, two-gap defensive lineman.

Coaching Pointers:

- Deliver the blow and knock the offensive lineman backward.
- Extend your arms to create space.
- Be prepared to come off to either side.
- Make a decision quickly, lose the blocker, and get to the ball.



Set-up and Instructions:

Three of you linemen will be involved in any given rep of this drill. If you have a surplus of players, it is a good idea to have more than one instance of this drill going on at a time so that players are not waiting around too long. Select one player to act as a defensive lineman, one as an offensive lineman, and one as a ball carrier. Set up an alley of cones, approximately 5 yards wide that the runner must stay within. On the cadence or ball movement, both linemen will fire out and make contact while the ball carrier attempts to run to daylight. The offensive lineman attempts to block the defender but we do emphasize that this is a defensive drill. If the blocker is more skilled than the defender, we ask him to ease up slightly but to still make the defender work hard to make the play. The defensive lineman fires off directly at the offensive lineman, making contact with the chest, both hands, and facemask (with head up). After the initial contact, the defender attempts to lock out the offensive lineman and drive him backwards while looking into to see which side the ball carrier has chosen. If the defender has created separation, he can use the rip move or another technique to get away from the blocker and make the tackle. Rotate positions after each rep.

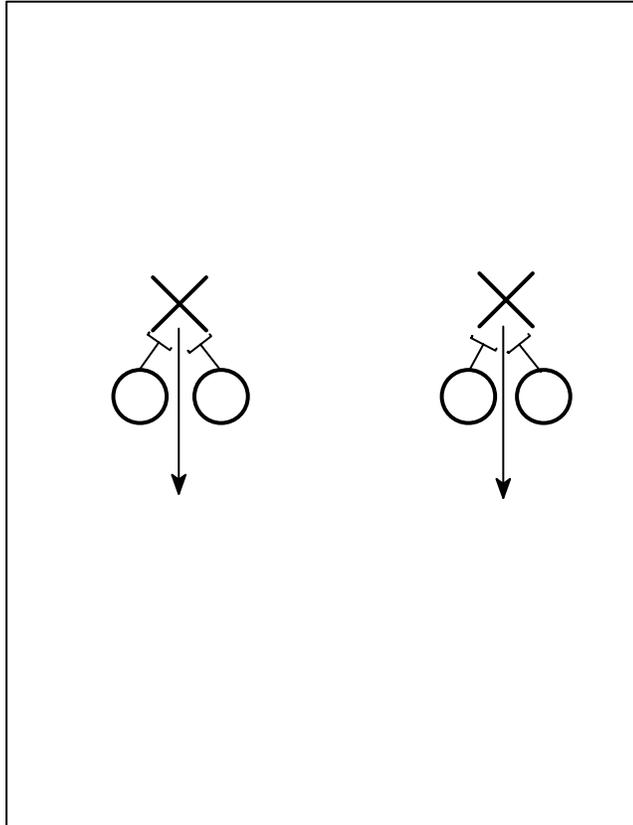
59. Beat the Double

Purpose:

- Learn the technique for taking on double team blocks.
- React to different situations that occur when being double teamed.

Coaching Pointers:

- If you make it through the gap, gain control, find the ball, and make the tackle.
- If stalemated, stay low and keep fighting.
- When getting moved backwards, get on the ground and create a bus wreck.



Set-up and Instructions:

Divide your defensive linemen into groups of three. Two players will represent offensive linemen while the other plays a defensive lineman. The defender aligns in the gap between the two blockers. On your signal or on ball movement, the blockers attempt to execute a double team block. The defender explodes low and hard with his head up, attempting to split the blockers. If he is getting stalemated, the defensive lineman can get lower, even to one knee, and continue fighting to get through. If being driven back, the defender should get on the ground and create a pile as quickly as possible. The worst thing the defender can do is to leave his assigned gap. Rotate which player is the defender after every 1-2 reps.

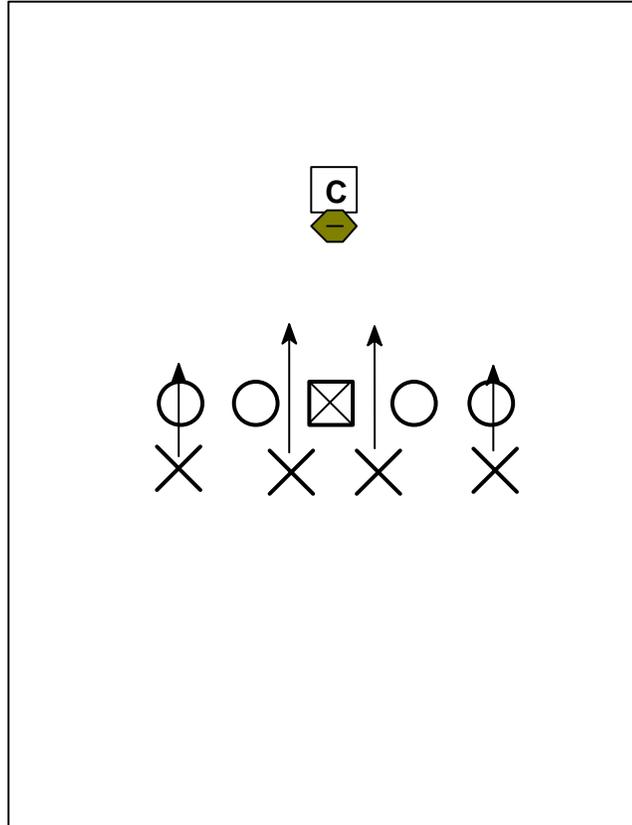
60. Hands Up

Purpose:

- Ingrain the importance of getting your hands up during a pass rush.

Coaching Pointers:

- Review the coaching pointers for stance and take-off.
- Rush the quarterback like mad, get your hands up in his line of vision or his throwing path if you can not make the sack.
- Never hit the QB once he has released the ball.



Set-up and Instructions:

Have a group of defensive linemen get set in their positions. On cadence or preferably ball movement, the line executes their normal technique. The coach, acting as quarterback, drops back and raises the ball in a passing position. Once the defense recognizes that the play is a pass, they take the correct pass rushing path to the quarterback attempting to get a sack or at least to disrupt the QB's normal throwing motion by forcing him to run or by getting in the way and making him change his throwing path. If the quarterback attempts to throw before the lineman can sack him, the defenders should raise their arms and hands to get in the way of where the QB intends to throw. Try to knock the ball down but if not, at least force the QB to change his throw. The coach can mix up runs, dropback passes, and play action passes to keep the defense honest.

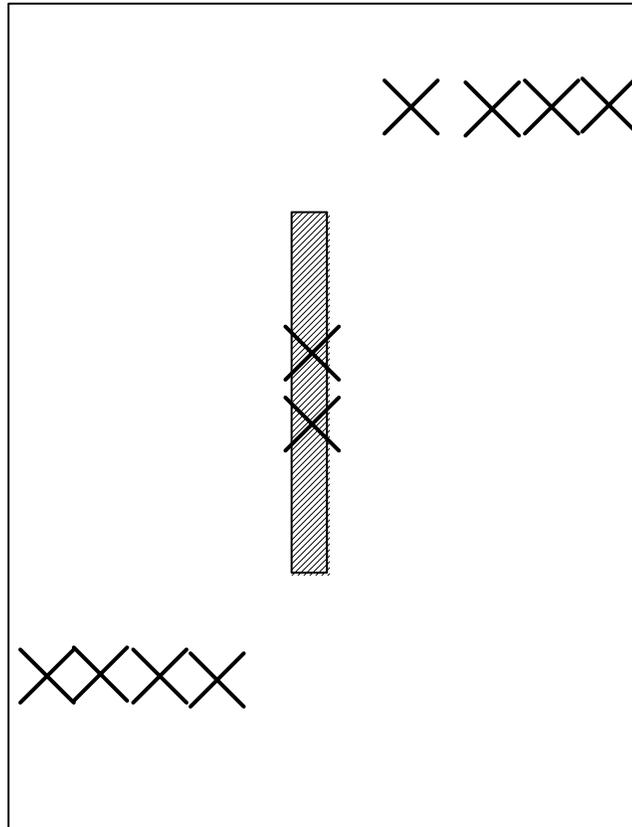
61. King of the Hill

Purpose:

- Evaluate strength and aggressiveness.
- Teach the importance of a wide base, moving your feet, and staying low.
- Familiarize the kids with contact and have fun!

Coaching Pointers:

- Make sure kids are evenly matched.
- Constantly remind kids that the lower man and the player who uses his feet the best usually wins and point out examples when they occur.
- Be Very enthusiastic.



Set-up and Instructions:

Have two equally matched players face each other about a foot apart on opposite ends of a long blocking pad or wooden board. Start them off in 3-point stances. On the signal they explode out of their stance and make contact with each other. They should meet in the middle with a collision and then attempt to drive each other backwards off of the pad or board. The player who drives his opponent off of the board is the winner. In order to be victorious, a player must keep his feet wide, stay low, and take short choppy steps.

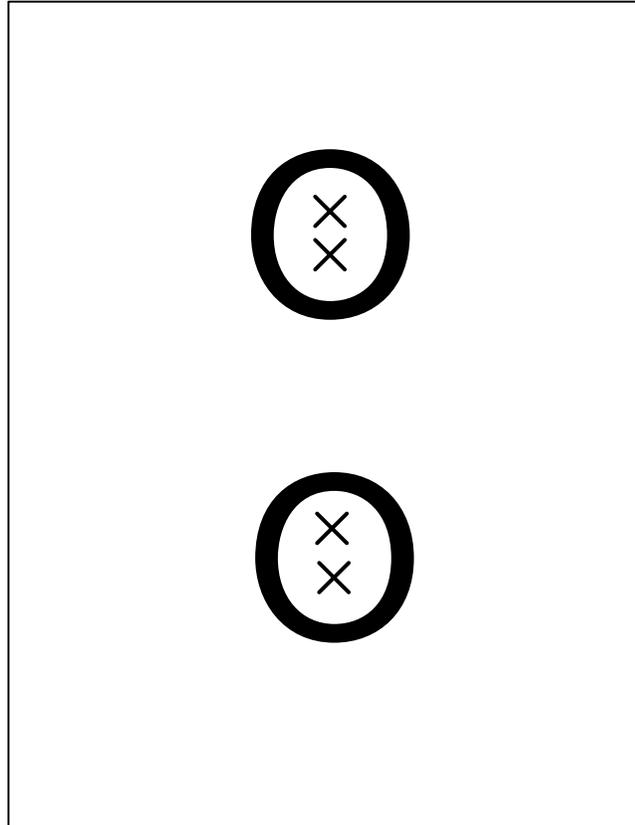
62. Sumo

Purpose:

- Evaluate strength and aggressiveness.
- Teach staying low.
- Have fun!

Coaching Pointers:

- Make sure kids are evenly matched.
- Constantly remind kids that the lower man and the player who uses his feet the best usually wins and point out examples when they occur.
- Be Very enthusiastic.



Set-up and Instructions:

Select two equally matched players to face off in a circle. The size of the circle depends on the skill level of your players but imagine a sumo circle. Start them off in the middle either in low 2-point stances with their hands on the chest of their opponent or in a three-point stance. On the signal they are to push and drive the other player to the edge of the circle. The player whose body touches outside the circle or touches the ground first is the loser. No twisting or turning is allowed, only straight up power. You will find the player that stays low, gets his hips under his opponent, and uses his legs in short choppy steps usually wins. You can use this drill to emphasize blocking technique or the techniques employed by defensive linemen.

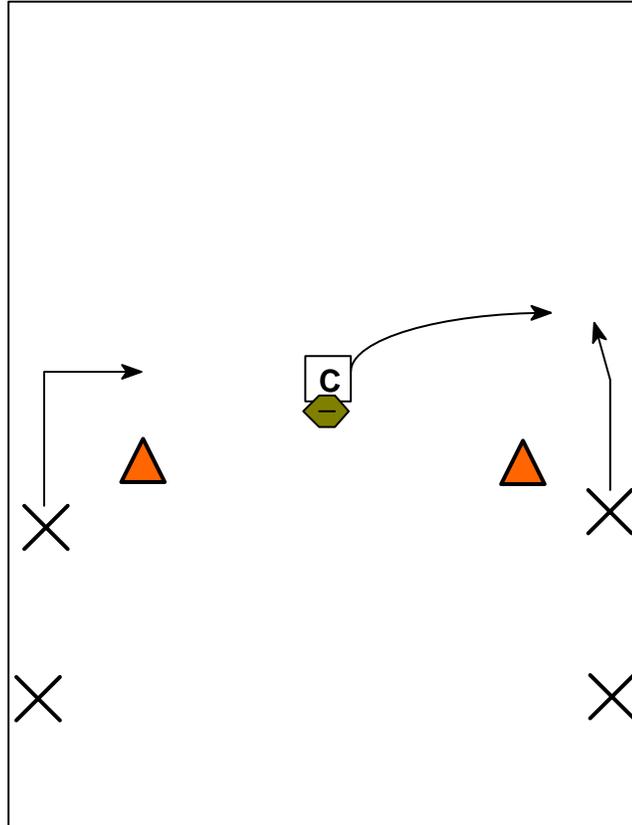
63. Spot, Contain, Pursue

Purpose:

- Teach the box technique for contain.
- Rep the fundamentals of contain responsibility to your defensive ends or outside linebackers.

Coaching Pointers:

- Keep your shoulders square to line of scrimmage. Never show your jersey numbers to a blocker.
- Keep the outside shoulder free.
- If play goes away, stay home looking for counter, cutback, bootleg, or reverse.
- You may rush the QB on a pass but take an “L” path under control.



Set-up and Instructions:

Place two cones about 8 yards apart to represent the offensive tight ends. The coach stands between the two cones holding a ball. Have your defensive ends form a line behind each cone. The first two defensive ends step up and assume a proper stance outside of their cone. For our defense, we have the ends align one yard outside a tight end and two yards outside of a wing. The coach calls cadence but the ends move only when the coach simulates a snap. The coach, acting as quarterback, first drops straight back checking to see that the ends penetrate straight into the backfield, not quite as deep as the ball, without angling in. The ends must stay square, never turning their shoulders so that the coach would be able to see their jersey number. Have the ends rotate to the opposite line after each rep. The next step is to have the ends penetrate to the same depth and then to move inward in the shape of an 'L'. Again, they must not turn their shoulder or cross their feet. The next progression is to have the coach move to one side or the other to simulate a blocker coming out of the backfield. The defensive end that the coach comes at must get low and attack with his inside shoulder, keeping the outside shoulder free. The backside defensive end must slowly pursue through the backfield being prepared for a bootleg, cutback, or reverse coming back to him. Once your contain players have become proficient at these fundamentals, you can get more advanced having the coach execute cutbacks, bootlegs, dropback passes (ends rush in the shape of an 'L'), or other plays that might cause concern. You can also use the extra players to serve as blockers coming out of the backfield or pulling guards.

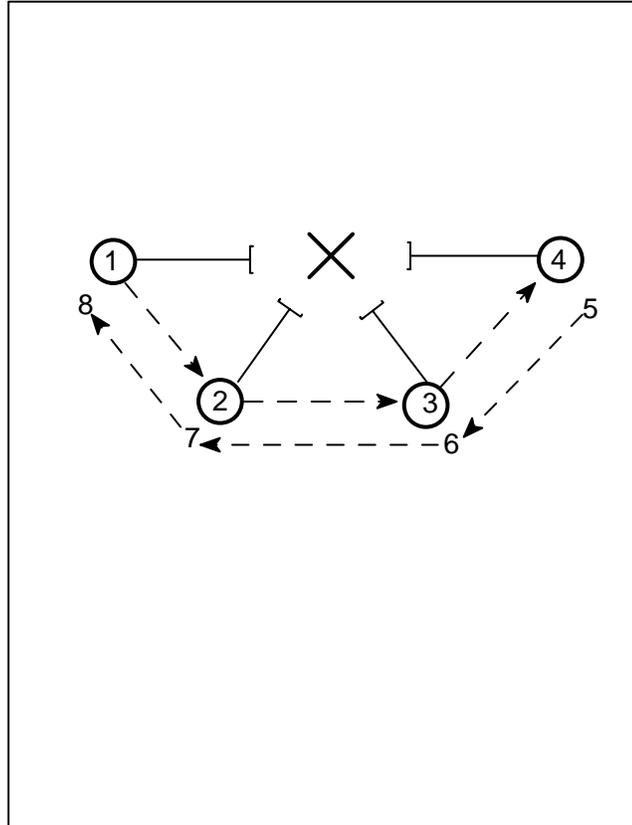
64. Sam Huff

Purpose:

- Practice taking on and shedding a blocker.
- Acclimate players to contact.

Coaching Pointers:

- Don't just accept the blow, deliver one of your own as you shed the block.
- Use your shoulders to deliver the blow and your arms to separate yourself from the blocker.



Set-up and Instructions:

Separate players into groups of 4 or 5. One player will be in the middle with two players to the side and the other player(s) in front of him. The boys should line up relatively close to the middle player, no more than 3 or 4 yards distance between them. Start with the player to the right side of the middle player coming in to execute a block. The middle player must step in and take on the block with his right shoulder, gather himself, and be prepared for the next hit. One at a time from left to right, the other players will step up to hit the middle boy who must use proper form to take on each blocker. The player to the far left will execute to blocks in a row and then the other boys will make contact once more in reverse order. Rotate a new boy to the center and repeat until everyone has gone.

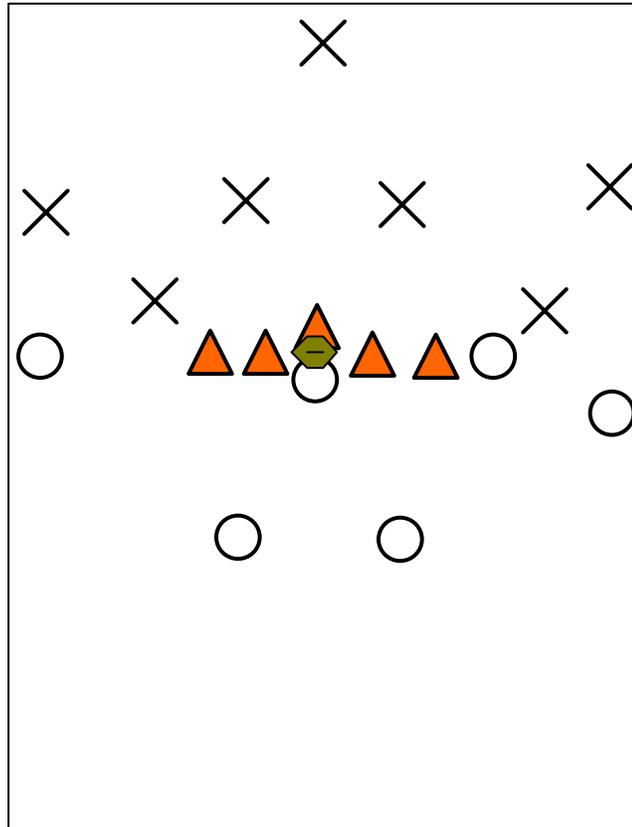
65. Outside Drill

Purpose:

- Practice defending plays with your defensive backs and linebackers.
- Learn to work together to defend sweeps, passes, and isolation plays.

Coaching Pointers:

- Try to get a lot of reps. Coach on the fly and spend minimal time in the huddle.
- If it will increase the number of reps you can get, have a coach play quarterback.



Set-up and Instructions:

Place 5 cones or alternate objects to represent the offensive center, guards, and tackles. Line up your defensive personnel in their positions without the interior defensive line. Those players should be working on another drill or, if you do not have enough skill players to run a scout offense, the defensive linemen can play offense (they usually enjoy this as it gives the linemen a chance to play positions that they normally would not be able to.) Prior to the start of practice, the coach will have drawn up cards with the offensive plays of your upcoming opponent or common plays that you feel the defense needs to work on. It is best to use a letters for each position on the card and assign each of your scout players a letter (Billy is 'T', Jack is 'F', and so on.) Show the play to the scout offense using as little time as possible, break the huddle, and check the defensive alignment. When executing the plays, we will run full speed but with no tackling. Coach your players up after each play and then quickly huddle for the next rep.

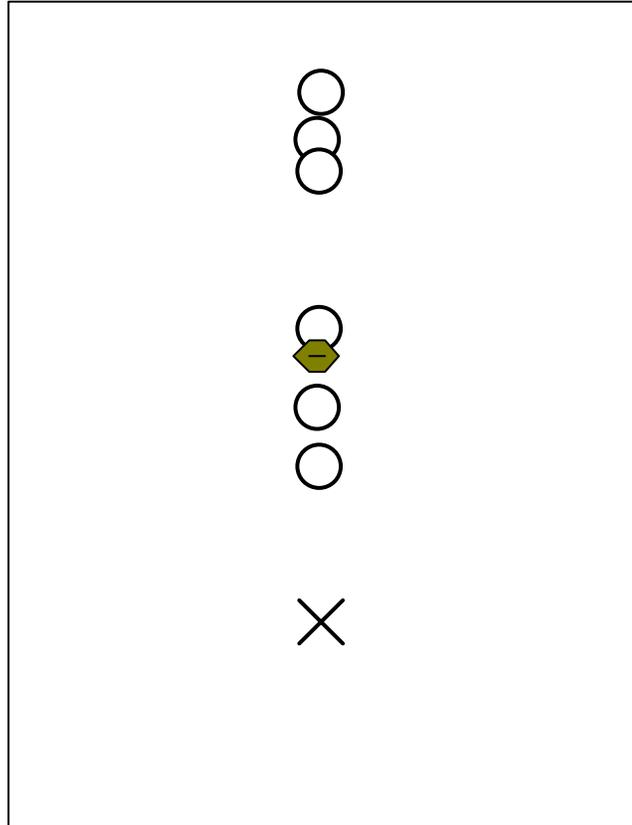
66. Shed the Block

Purpose:

- Learn how to take on and get rid of a lead blocker.

Coaching Pointers:

- Attack the blocker. Don't just take the hit.
- Get low, step and take on the block with your shoulder.
- Don't engage him. Get rid of him. Use your arms to toss the blocker to the side.
- The initial contact and the shed are all one continuous motion.



Set-up and Instructions:

Set up any players that will be participating in the drill in a straight line. Have the first person in line step out approximately 4 yards in front of everyone else, turn, and face the group. With the rest of the players still in line, give a football to the third player. The first player in line will charge out and execute a block on the player in front of him. That boy must shed the block with either his right or left shoulder, gather himself, and prepare for the next blocker. The second person in line will come out immediately after the first block has been shed. He will be followed by the third player who is holding a football and acting as a ball carrier. The player out in front will shed the block, this time using the opposite shoulder, gather himself, and then execute a form tackle on the third player without taking him to the ground. After each rep, the player out in front goes to the back of the line, the player who was first in line comes out in front, and everyone else moves one spot up in the line.

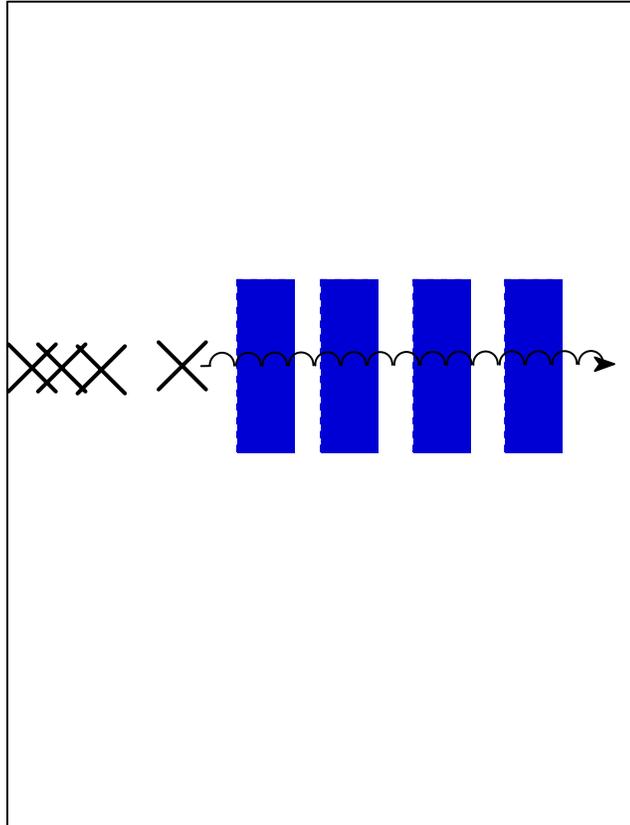
67. Bag Work

Purpose:

- To improve overall agility and athleticism.
- Teach players to stay square to the line of scrimmage while pursuing a ball carrier (good drill for linebackers).

Coaching Pointers:

- Keep your shoulders square when moving laterally.
- Lift your knees up high when going over a bag or cone.
- If you fall, get up quickly.



Set-up and Instructions:

This drill is typically done at the higher levels with 5 or 6 tackling dummies or agility bags. Since most of us will not have access to that type of equipment, cones or rolled up bath towels may be substituted. Lay down the obstacles in a straight line with about two feet in between each one. The distance between objects should allow the players to maneuver comfortably and may vary for different age groups. Have a group of about 6 players make a straight line behind the first bag and execute the following agility drills as they travel through the bags: 1) High knees, 2) Bunny hops, 3) Side shuffle in a zig-zag while facing forward, 4) turn sideways and run forward and then backpedal in a zig-zag, 5) turn sideways and high knee over each bag. Do each skill twice.

This is a great drill for linebackers as it teaches them to move laterally to the line of scrimmage without turning their shoulders.

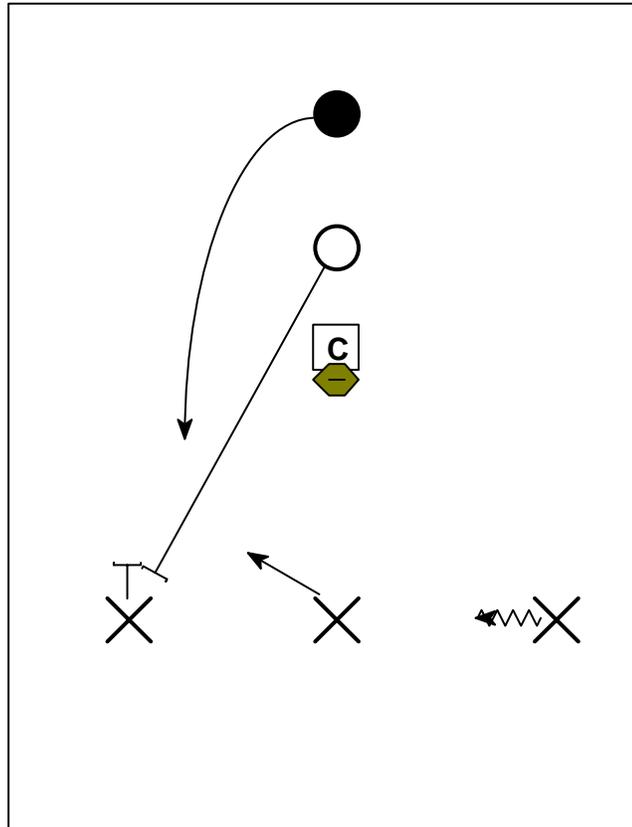
68. Triangle Drill

Purpose:

- Practice taking on and shedding a lead blocker.
- Learn how to defend the isolation play.

Coaching Pointers:

- Attack the blocker. Don't just take the hit.
- Get low, step into the man and take on the block with your outside shoulder.
- Don't engage him. Get rid of him. Use your arms to toss the blocker to the side.
- The initial contact and the shed are all one continuous motion.



Set-up and Instructions:

I call this the triangle drill because we typically have three linebackers but you can do the same drill with only two backers. Have the coach represent the quarterback and have your backers align in their normal defensive spots. Take two extra players as offensive backs and align them in either an I formation or as splitbacks. Typically we use this drill to practice defending the isolation play. Tell your backs which direction you will be running to and have one of them act as a lead blocker, attempting to block the playside linebacker. The linebacker must step up and take on the block with his inside shoulder, keeping the outside shoulder free. If done correctly, the back will have to cut the ball back to the oncoming backside linebacker or widen to attempt to get outside of the playside backer's free shoulder. If he chooses the latter, the playside backer must play off the block and wrap up on the ball carrier. We never bring the back to the ground in this drill. Although this drill is chiefly done to practice defending the iso, we could also practice proper pursuit angles on sweeps and coverage against passes.

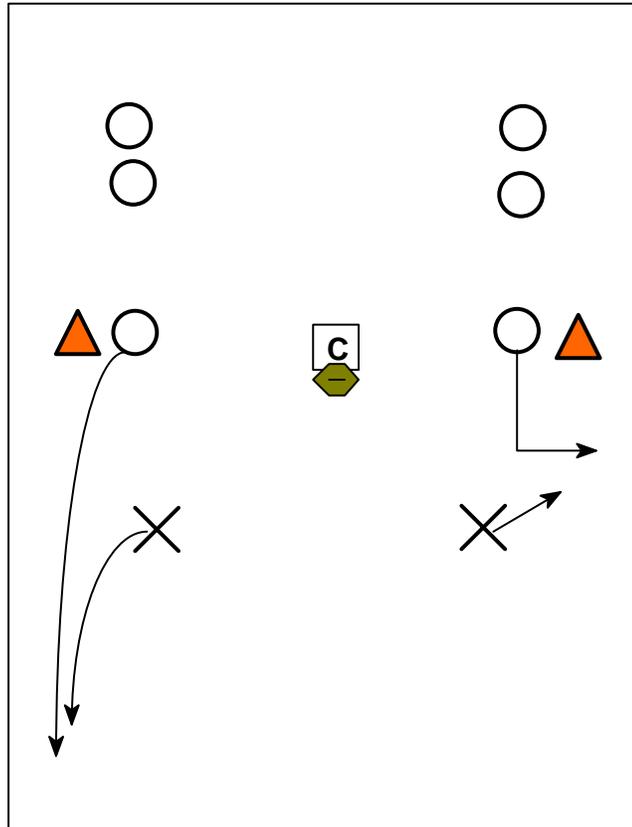
69. Man Coverage

Purpose:

- Practice man coverage technique.

Coaching Pointers:

- Align one yard inside and three yards off of the receiver.
- Keep your eyes on the receiver and stay with him wherever he goes.
- Stay just inside and just behind the receiver. If he gets past you, turn and run to catch up.
- When his hands come up, put your hand in between his hands and in front of his face as you look for the ball.



Set-up and Instructions:

Place two cones anywhere from 20 to 30 yards apart from each other. Two even lines form behind the cones and the coach, acting as quarterback will stand in between the cones. You may want to separate your more experienced or skilled players into one line and your players who are still developing into the other line. The first player in each line comes out and plays defensive back. He will use man coverage technique on the player who is now at the front of the line. On the coaches signal, the receivers are free to run any route that they choose. The coach must choose a receiver and throw the ball relatively quickly. After each rep, the defender goes to the end of the line and the receiver becomes the defender. Coach the players on the techniques that you stress regarding man coverage. For us, we want the defender to align three yards off of the receiver and one yard inside. Once the play starts, stay just behind and just inside of the receiver keeping your eyes on him the entire time. Always be in position that if the receiver does catch the ball, you can tackle him right away. If the receiver gets behind you, turn and run as fast as you can to catch up. When the receiver looks for the ball, you place your hand in between his hands and in front of his face, turn and look.

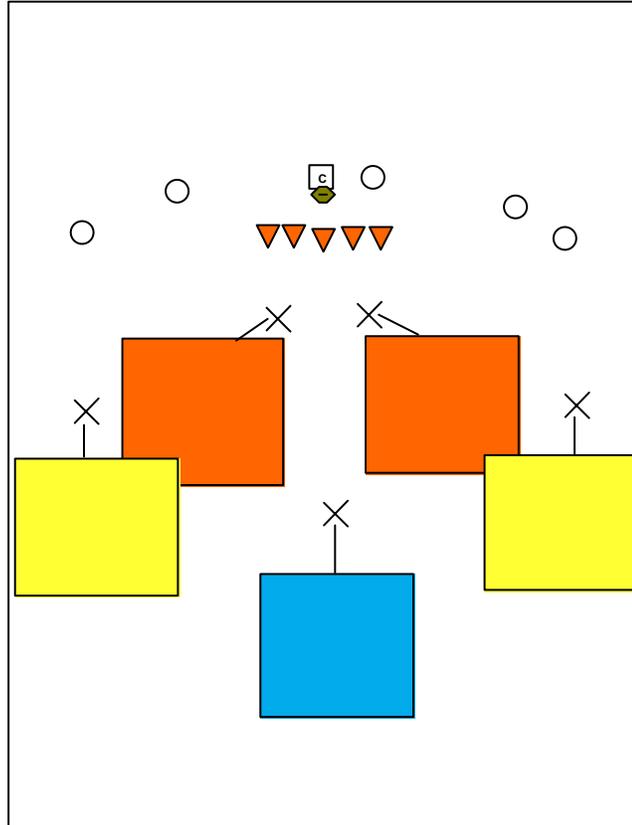
70. Zone Coverage

Purpose:

- Teach zone coverage concepts and technique.

Coaching Pointers:

- You are covering an area of the field, not a particular man.
- Use peripheral vision to be aware of receivers in your zone but watch the QB. His eyes and body motion will show you where he intends to throw.
- Once the pass is in the air, all zones disappear. Get to the ball.



Set-up and Instructions:

Place cones down to represent the offensive players and set up a skeleton defense using only the positions that are active in pass coverage. Explain the situations where you would use zone coverage and the difference between zone and man coverage (man you cover a specific player no matter where he goes, in zone you cover an area of the field and are responsible for any player that enters that area). In man, we teach our defenders to keep their eyes on the player they are covering but in zone, we want them to look at the quarterback and to use their peripheral vision to be aware of any receivers that enter the zone. The quarterback's eyes and body will indicate the direction to which he intends to throw. You may want to use cones or spray paint to set up boxes that represent the different zones your defenders will have to cover. The coach will simulate a snap and drop back into his passing stance. All defenders that are in zone coverage will drop to their designated zone while keeping their eyes on the quarterback. As the quarterback looks, turns, or rolls to different directions, the defense may adjust as necessary. The coach throws the ball and all defenders run toward it (the zones disappear once the ball is in the air). If someone intercepts, they yell "Sideline!" and all players head to the near sideline. As the defense improves, you may add receivers or use zone coverage in your passing scrimmage.

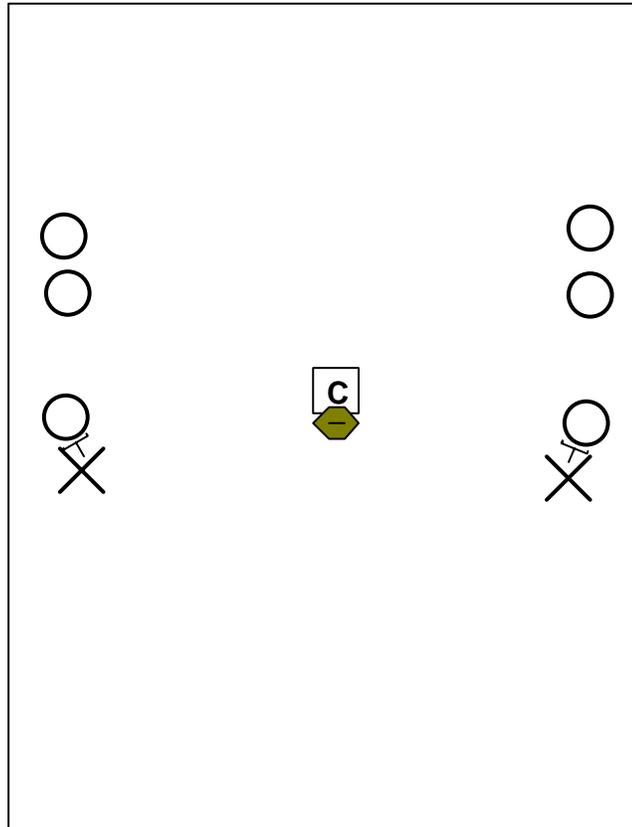
71. Jam Coverage

Purpose:

- Practice jam coverage concepts and technique.

Coaching Pointers:

- Align on the inside shoulder of the receiver, as close to him as possible. Your outside leg dissects the receiver.
- Keep your eyes on the receiver. When he moves, you move.
- Punch his chest with the palms of both hands and try to jam him on the line.
- If he gets away, follow him and maintain man coverage.



Set-up and Instructions:

Review the situations where you would use jam coverage with your players and the techniques you want them to use. For us, we try not to overdo it with techniques but instead tell them to be very physical here. We want them to align on the inside shoulder of the receiver and as close to their man as possible without being offside. They look only at their man and are concerned with nothing else. When their man moves, we want to punch him in the chest with the palms of both hands and keep him from releasing for a pass. If he does release, follow him and maintain regular man coverage. If your man blocks, continue to engage him but look inside to see if the play is a run coming your way. If so, shed the block and make the tackle.

Place two cones about 20 yards apart from each other. Two even lines form behind the cones and the coach, acting as quarterback will stand in between the cones. You may want to separate your more experienced or skilled players into one line and your players who are still developing into the other line. The first player in each line comes out and plays defense. He will use jam coverage technique on the player who is now at the front of the line. The offensive players can either run a pass route or block. The coach can pass or run depending on what the offensive players are doing. After each rep, the defender goes to the end of the line and the receiver becomes the defender.

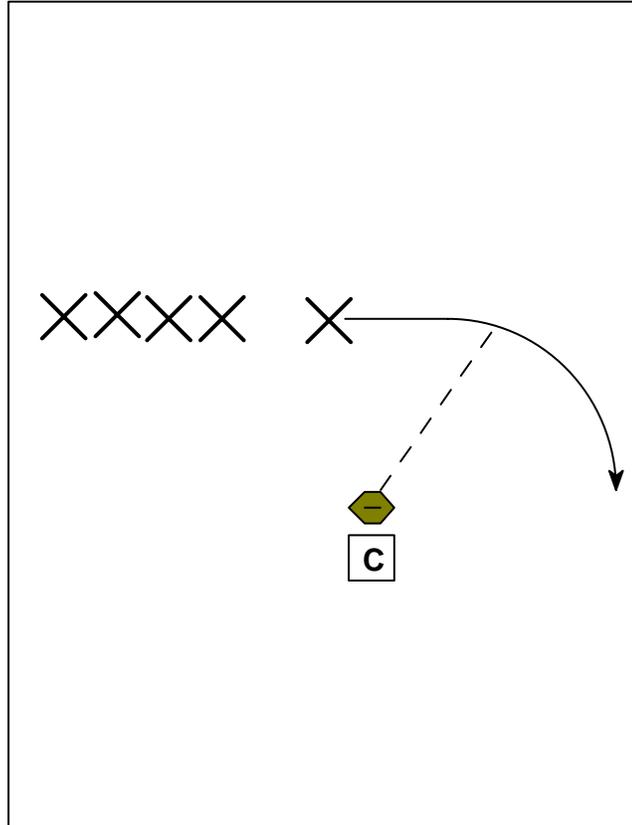
72. Interceptions

Purpose:

- Apply catching techniques to intercepting the ball on defense.
- Learn what to do once an interception has occurred.

Coaching Pointers:

- Catch the ball with your hands and eyes.
- If you make an interception, yell “Sideline!” and head to the nearest sideline.
- If you hear “Sideline!”, one of your teammates has intercepted the ball. Find which sideline he is headed to and get in front of him to block. Never block an opponent in the back or below the waist.



Set-up and Instructions:

A group of no more than 6 players forms a line behind a cone. The coach kneels down about 10 feet away from the line with several footballs beside him. First remind the kids or ask them about what happens when we make an interception. The player who makes the interception yells, “Sideline!” and heads for the nearest sideline. All of his teammates find which sideline he is headed toward and go that way attempting to block an opponent. Emphasize that they must never block below the waist or behind the back. After this, the players run one at a time at about three quarters speed. The coach tosses a football to the player who tries to catch it with his hands. If he makes the catch, the player yells “Sideline!” and continues as if running down the near sideline. Make sure that the player returns the ball to the pile near the coach before going to the back of the line. Give each player 4 or 5 reps of this drill.

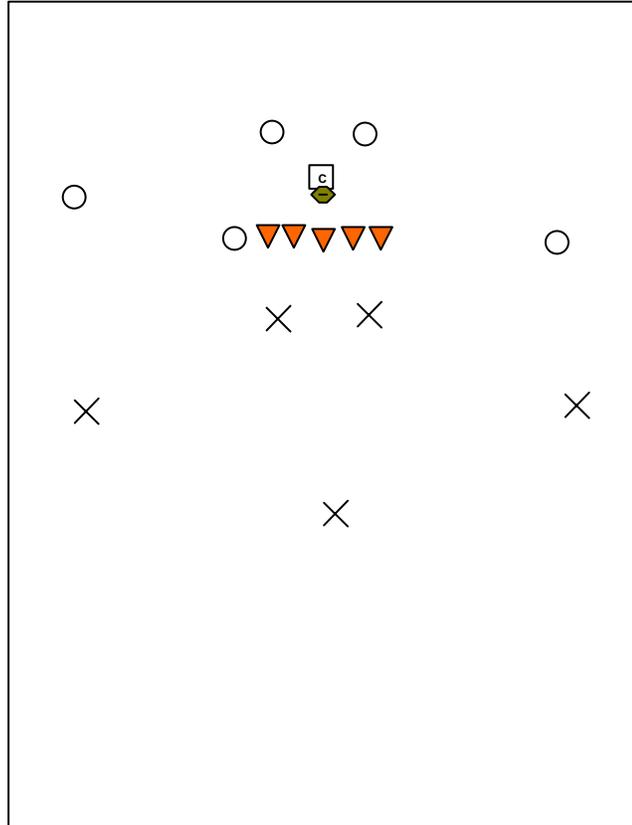
73. Passing Scrimmage

Purpose:

- Review and practice the responsibilities of your defensive backs and backers against the pass.
- Practice the fundamentals of man and / or zone pass coverage in a game situation.

Coaching Pointers:

- Review the concepts for man and zone coverage.
- Get many reps. Coach on the fly.



Set-up and Instructions:

Place five cones down to represent the five interior offensive linemen and set up a skeleton defense using only the positions that are active in pass coverage. If you have enough extra skill players, they will serve as the offensive runningbacks, receivers, and tight ends. The coach can play as quarterback. If you do not have enough extra skill players, the linemen always enjoy the opportunity to play skill positions. Prior to practice, create note cards with common pass plays or the plays of your upcoming opponent. It is best to use a letters for each position on the card and assign each of your scout players a letter (Billy is 'T', Jack is 'F', and so on.) Show the play to the scout offense using as little time as possible, break the huddle, and check the defensive alignment. When executing the plays, we will run full speed but with no tackling. Coach your players up after each play and then quickly huddle for the next rep.

SECTION 6



TACKLING & TEAM DEFENSE

This section provides drills that will help develop defensive team concepts and cohesion between your players, as well as a variety of drills for introducing and improving tackling.

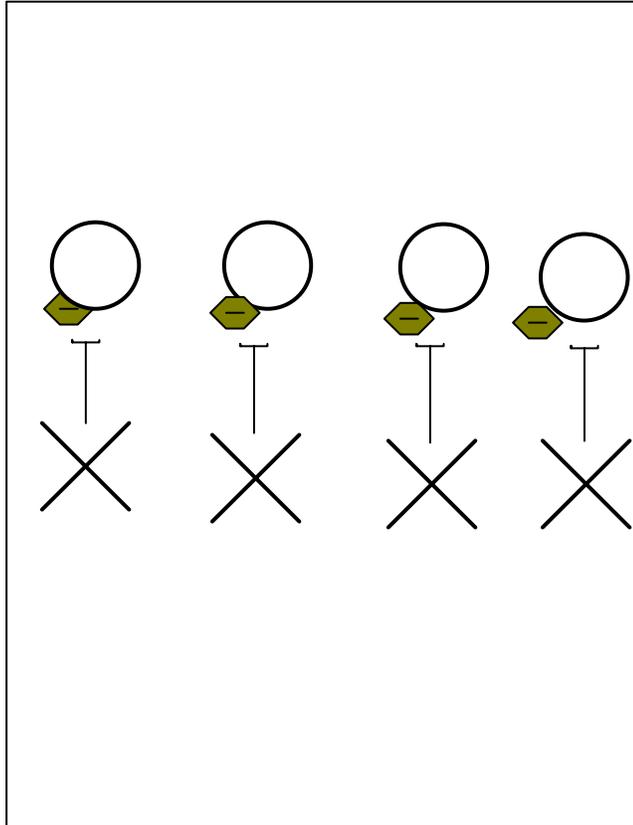
74. Form Fit

Purpose:

- Introduce the fundamentals of a form tackle.

Coaching Pointers:

- Tackling starts with a good hit position.
- Place your shoulder in his midsection.
- Wrap the arms around his butt or just underneath. Lock the hands or grab cloth.
- Always keep your head up when tackling. Screws to the ball.
- Lift on contact and keep your feet moving. Don't hit the man, hit through him.



Set-up and Instructions:

This is how we introduce tackling to our players. First we will have everyone take a knee as we read the warning on the back of the helmet to them, emphasizing that they must keep their head up at all times. Next we show them the two screws that hold the top of the facemask to the helmet and explain that when we say “screws to the ball” we mean that we would like them to keep their head up so that those two screws make contact with the ball while executing a tackle.

Players find a partner that is of comparable size and line up facing directly across from them. Partners should be only a few feet apart and at least five feet away from any other group. We designate one side to be the tackler and the other side as the ball carrier. You may give the runner a ball or just have him hold his arm as if carrying a football. Slowly go through the progression of a proper form tackle. Start in hit position, take one step, put the screws to the ball with shoulder in the runner's stomach. The arms wrap around the butt or just below and the tackler locks his hands or grabs cloth in the back. Do this a couple of times with the ball on both sides and for both partners.

Next, have the tackler keep his feet moving, driving the runner back a few steps after the form fit. Be sure not to go to the ground here. Again, rep this progression a couple of times. The final step is to have the tackler attempt to lift the runner and carry him backwards. If their partner is bigger, players may not be able to lift for very long and that is ok. We just want them to get a feel for lifting when tackling. Again, be sure not to go to the ground and rep this several times.

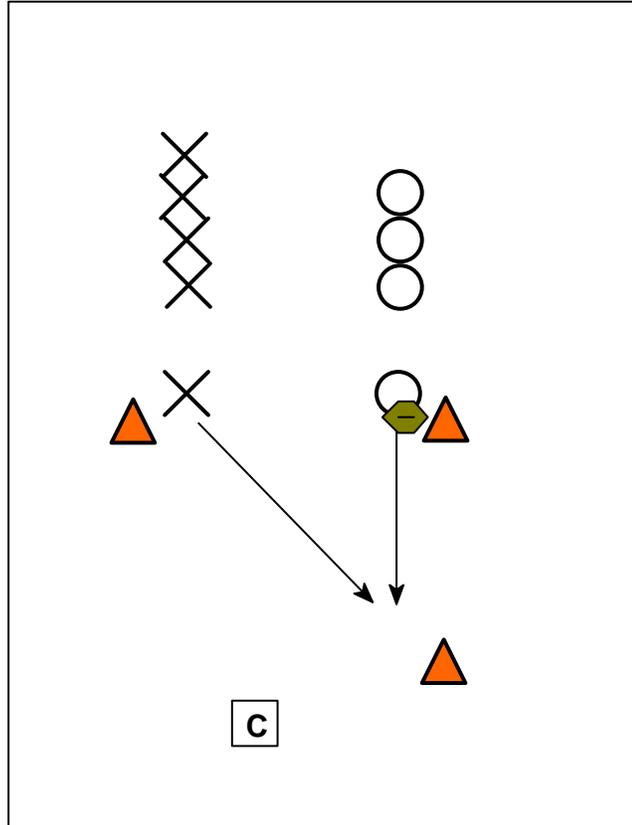
75. Angle Tackling

Purpose:

- Teach proper form when executing an angle tackle.
- Get acclimated to contact in a controlled setting.

Coaching Pointers:

- Review the techniques for a proper form tackle – hit position, screws to the ball, wrap around the butt, etc.
- Head must always be in front on an angle tackle.
- You may want to have a coach stand to the side to insure that the players do not go to the ground.
- Do not do this drill with your whole team. Any more than 8-10 people creates unnecessary waiting.



Set-up and Instructions:

Form two lines about 5 yards apart from each other. Place a cone in front of one line and give the first three people in the line a football. That line will be the runners and the other line, the tacklers. On the coaches signal, the players jog at three-quarters speed to the cone. The tackler will execute the proper form for an angle tackle, driving the runner a few steps before releasing him. We want a little bit of contact here but we do not want our players to go to the ground. After each rep, the runner gives the ball to the next person in line who does not already have one and both players go to the back of the opposite line. After everyone has gotten a few reps, switch which line is the runners and which line is the tacklers.

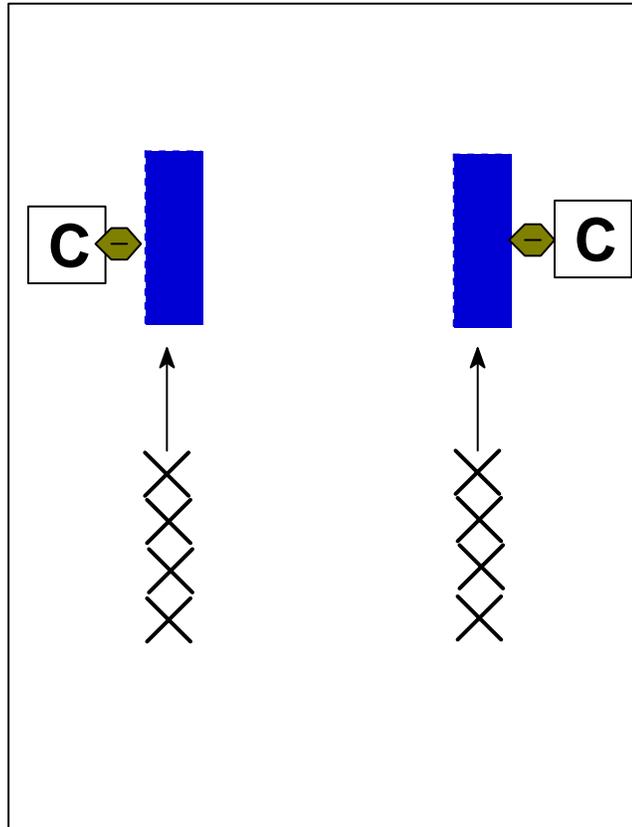
76. Popsicle

Purpose:

- To teach full speed form tackling in a controlled setting.
- Emphasize keeping the head up and putting screws to the ball.

Coaching Pointers:

- Review the techniques for a proper form tackle – hit position, screws to the ball, wrap around the butt, etc.
- Don't just hit the man, hit through the man.
- Do not do this drill with your whole team. Any more than 8-10 people creates unnecessary waiting.



Set-up and Instructions:

For this drill you will need two tackling dummies and a coach for each bag. Set down cones 5 or more yards away from each dummy and form a line behind each cone. The coaches keep the dummy up, holding it the outside while placing a ball against it at about the level where a runningback would carry it. On the signal, the first player in each line will execute a running, full speed form tackle on the dummy, making sure to keep his head up and placing the screws on the ball. We want our players to know that if they place the screws on the ball, it can create a fumble and that is exactly what should happen in this drill. After the tackle, each player recovers the fumble that they created, gives the ball back to the coach, and then returns to the back of the opposite line so that on their next rep, they may practice tackling with their head on the other side.

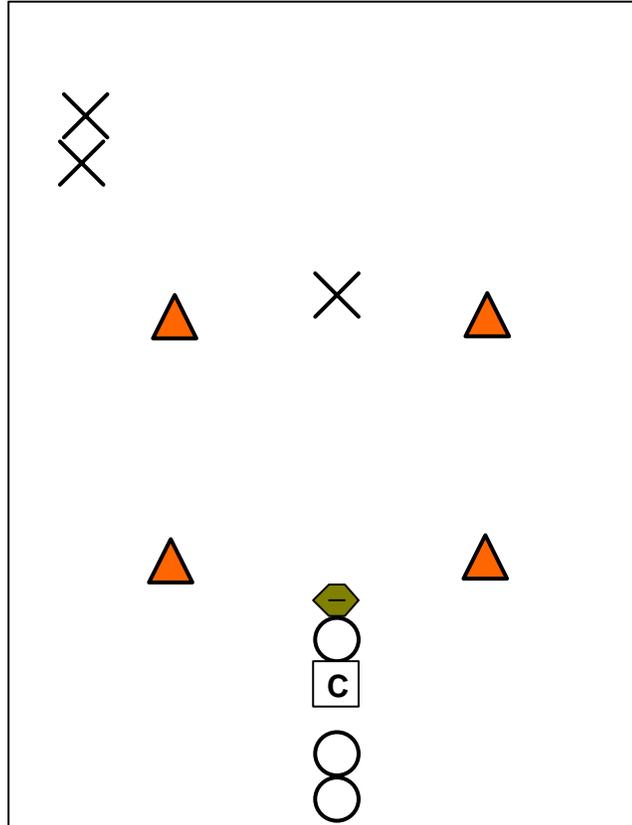
77. Get Up Tackling

Purpose:

- Teach form tackling in a controlled setting.
- Acclimate the kids to contact.

Coaching Pointers:

- Review the techniques for a proper form tackle – hit position, screws to the ball, wrap around the butt, etc.
- If the player is losing the man, grab on to his shoe, part of his jersey, something... Just don't turn him loose. Someone is coming to help you.
- Create even match-ups.



Set-up and Instructions:

An old favorite with a slight variation. Set up four cones to create an alley that is about 6-8 yards long and 4 yards wide. Form two lines, one line of runners behind the coach and another line of tacklers off to the side. It is important that the line of tacklers stays out of the way of the drill. The first player in each line enters the alley. The tackler will lay down on his back and the coach will grab the back of the ball carrier's shirt. On the signal, the tackler must get up as quickly as possible. Once he is to his feet, the coach will release the ball carrier. The runner may not leave the alley as he attempts to get past the tackler. After each rep, coach the players and have them return to the back of the opposite line (runner goes to the tackling line and vice versa).

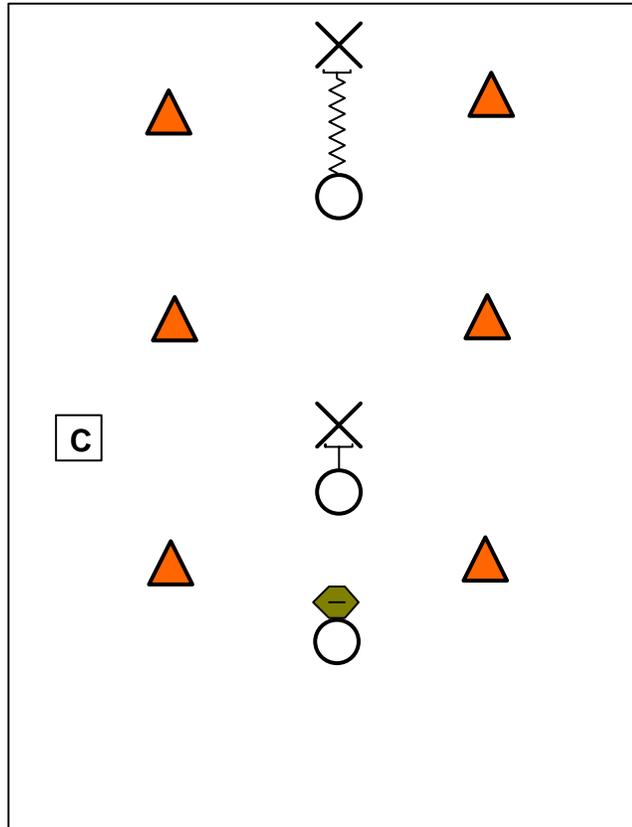
78. Oklahoma

Purpose:

- Review offensive line and stalk blocking techniques.
- Practice defensive line technique for a two-gap defender.
- Practice tackling.

Coaching Pointers:

- This is a down and dirty drill. Be very energetic and keep the kids fired up.
- Try to create even matchups.



Set-up and Instructions:

Use cones to set up a running lane approximately 5 yards wide and 10 yards long. Five players at a time will participate in the drill. At the beginning, two linemen will line up close to each other in three point stances. About 6 yards beyond that, two skill players will align in hit position approximately 3 yards apart. On the signal the offensive players will attempt to block the defenders who are trying to get free and tackle a ball carrier.

While one group is going, it is a good idea to have coaches matching up kids for the next round so as to maximize reps.

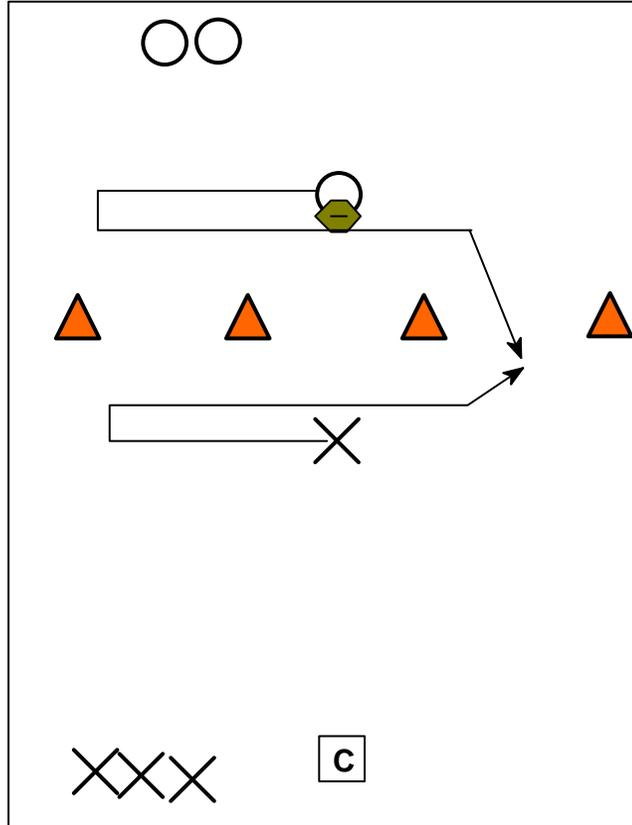
79. Three Slot Challenge

Purpose:

- Improve tackling.
- Practice staying square to the line of scrimmage while moving laterally.

Coaching Pointers:

- The defender must keep his shoulders square to the line of scrimmage (an excellent drill for linebackers).
- If you do not bring the man down, grab hold of him and don't let go. Someone would be coming to help you.
- This is more of a full speed tackling drill. You may want to keep some kids out until they are ready.



Set-up and Instructions:

Set down four cones in a straight line. Each cone should be about 6 feet apart. Divide your players into two groups and have each group go to a separate side of the cones. One group will be the ball carriers (give them footballs) and the other will be the tacklers. The first player in each line will come forward and face each other standing about 5 yards apart in the middle of the cones. The offensive player begins moving laterally back and forth while the defender mirrors him, always keeping his shoulders square to the line and never crossing his feet. When the ball carrier is ready, he will run in one of the three available slots (it can be his choice or the coach can tell him where to run). The defender must meet him and bring him down by executing a form tackle.

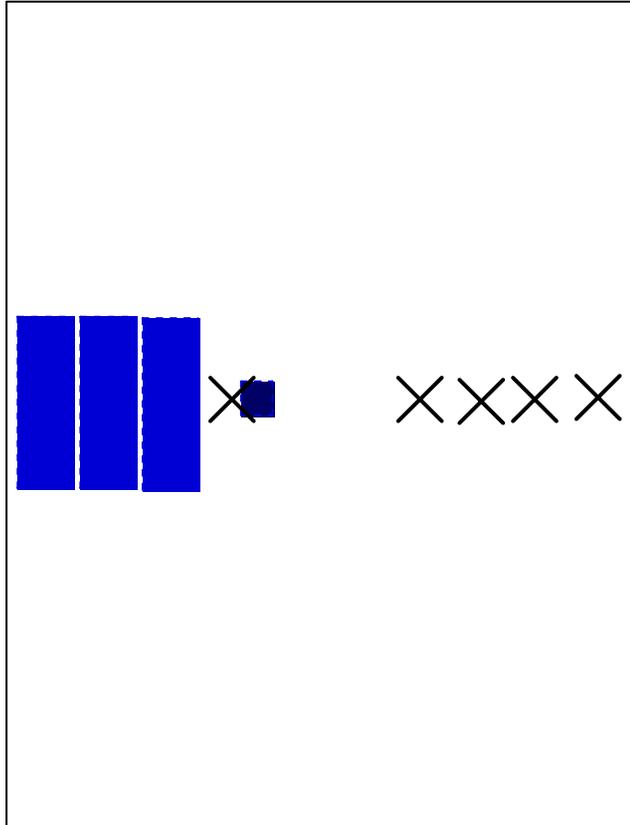
80. Splatter Tackling

Purpose:

- Teach form tackling in a safe, fun environment.
- Acclimate your kids to contact.

Coaching Pointers:

- Keep the tackler close to the bag holder. Never allow more than a few feet of running start.
- This drill is a favorite but do not let the kids get wild and sloppy. We are trying to improve form tackling.



Set-up and Instructions:

Splatter drills are one of the best ways to practice technique and acclimate your young players to contact. If you have a mattress (full size or bigger and the thicker the better) that you can transport to your practice field, I suggest using that. Otherwise, create a landing mat by placing three or four long tackling dummies side by side. If you have to use the latter method, you will need to have a coach stay by the dummies to make certain that they do not become separated. If you do have a mattress, place one tackling dummy at the front so that the blockers will need to use their hips to lift the player over the bag. Give one boy a blocking shield and have him stand in front of the landing area. Line up the other players and have one boy come line up about 5 feet away from the shield holder. Make sure he stays reasonably close to prevent him from gaining too much momentum prior to contact. That player executes a form tackle on the shield holder, lifting him up over the dummy and onto the landing area. You can use this drill for straight ahead or angle tackling. Switch the shield holder every five or six reps.

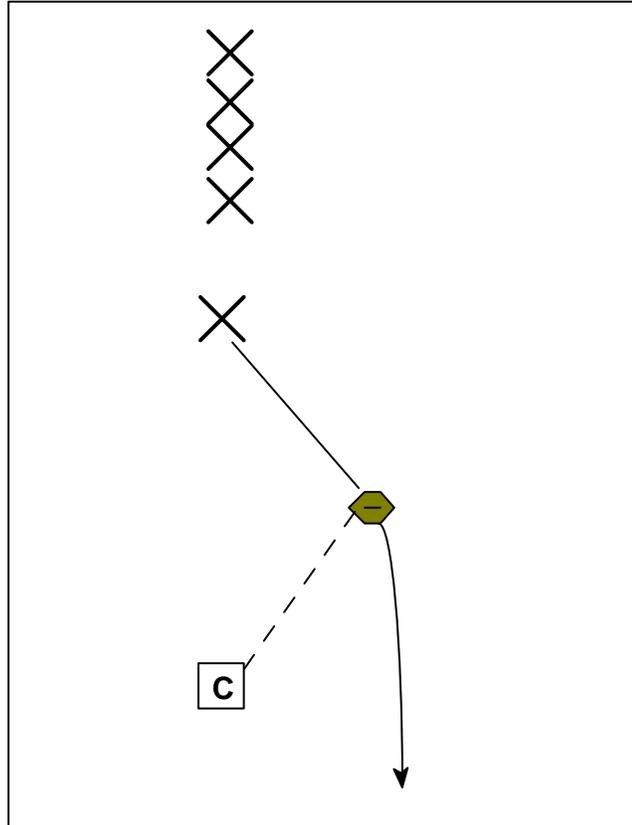
81. Fumble Recovery

Purpose:

- Learn when to pick up a fumble and when to fall on it.
- Learn how to protect yourself when falling on a fumble.

Coaching Pointers:

- If an opponent is near the ball, fall on it and tuck into the fetal position to protect your arms and legs.
- If no opponent is around, slow down half a step and scoop the ball with arms totally extended. Run for a touchdown.



Set-up and Instructions:

Form a line with a group of no more than 8 players. First remind the players that when we are on defense, if the ball is loose and an opposing player is going for it, we want to fall on the ball to make sure that we recover it. Emphasize the importance of laying on your side and tucking your arms and legs in the fetal position. This will protect you if somebody falls on you after the recovery. The coach kneels about 10 feet away with many footballs around him. He will throw out a ball and yell, "Go!" for each player to run, recover, and tuck into a ball. Throw the balls into different areas so that multiple players can safely do the drill at the same time. Each player must set the ball down next to the coach as he returns to the back of the line.

Next, tell the players that if the ball is loose and there are no opposing players around, we want to pick the ball up and score. The preferred technique is to slow down just half a step, fully extend the arms with no bend in the elbows, and make sure the ball is secured before you take off running. Again, the coach kneels about 10 feet away with many footballs around him. He will throw out a ball and yell, "Go!" for each player to run, pick up the ball, and continue for another ten yards. Throw the balls into different areas so that multiple players can safely do the drill at the same time. Each player must set the ball down next to the coach as he returns to the back of the line.

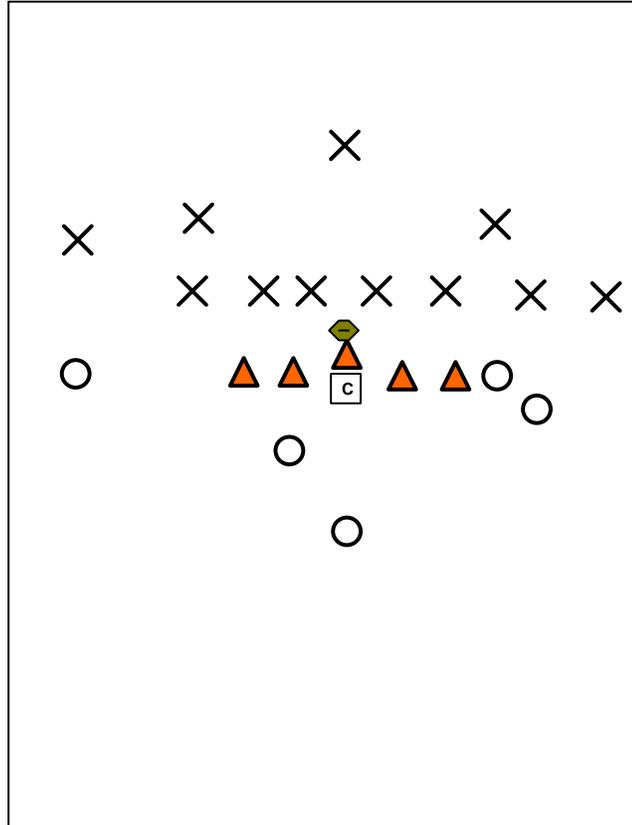
82. Adjust to Formations

Purpose:

- Practice aligning to different offensive formations and adjusting to shifting and motion.

Coaching Pointers:

- Try to get a lot of reps. Coach on the fly and spend minimal time in the huddle.
- It's ok to have more than one player standing at a given position.
- If you have a position that does not adjust, do not include them in this drill.



Set-up and Instructions:

Place five cones down to represent the five interior offensive linemen and assign extra players to serve as the offensive skill positions. The coach can play as quarterback. Prior to practice, create note cards with common formations, the formations of your upcoming opponent, or special formations that may give you trouble such as an unbalanced line, empty backfield, etc. It is best to use a letters for each position on the card and assign each of your scout players a letter (Billy is 'T', Jack is 'F', and so on.) Show the card to the scout offense using as little time as possible, break the huddle, and check the defensive alignment. Make sure each player is lined up correctly and knows what to do once the ball is snapped. You may place a man in motion to see if the defense can react properly if you like. Make any corrections and hurry back to the huddle for the next rep.

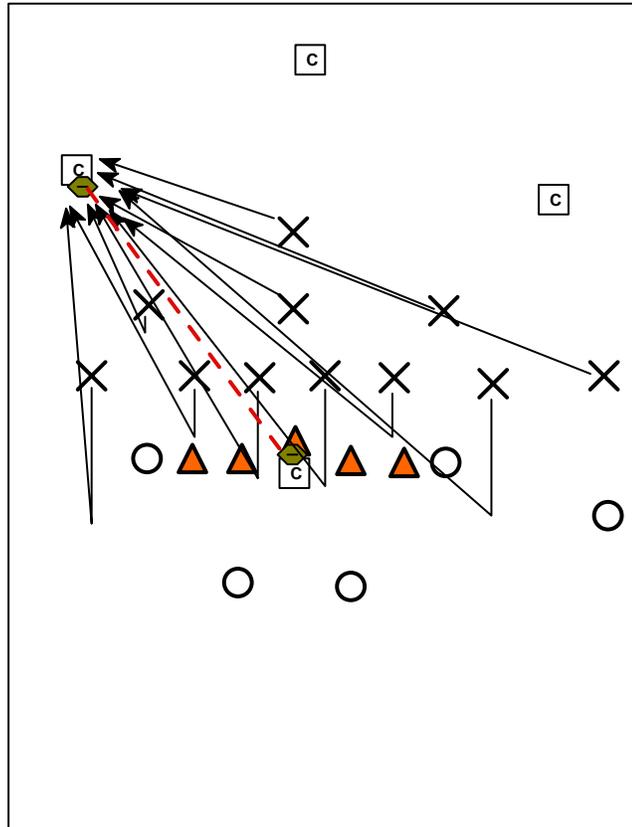
83. Do Your Job

Purpose:

- Review formation adjustments.
- Make sure everyone knows their assignment once the ball is snapped.
- Emphasize gang tackling.

Coaching Pointers:

- Try to get a lot of reps. Coach on the fly and spend minimal time in the huddle.
- It's ok to have more than one player standing at a given position.



Set-up and Instructions:

Place five cones down to represent the five interior offensive linemen and assign extra players to serve as the offensive skill positions. The coach can play as quarterback. You will need three or four coaches scattered around the field on the defensive side of the ball. Prior to practice, create note cards with common formations, the formations of your upcoming opponent, or special formations that may give you trouble such as an unbalanced line, empty backfield, etc. It is best to use a letters for each position on the card and assign each of your scout players a letter (Billy is 'T', Jack is 'F', and so on.) Show the card to the scout offense using as little time as possible, break the huddle, and check the defensive alignment. Make sure each player is lined up correctly and knows what to do once the ball is snapped. You may place a man in motion to see if the defense can react properly if you like. Make any corrections and hurry back to the huddle for the next rep.

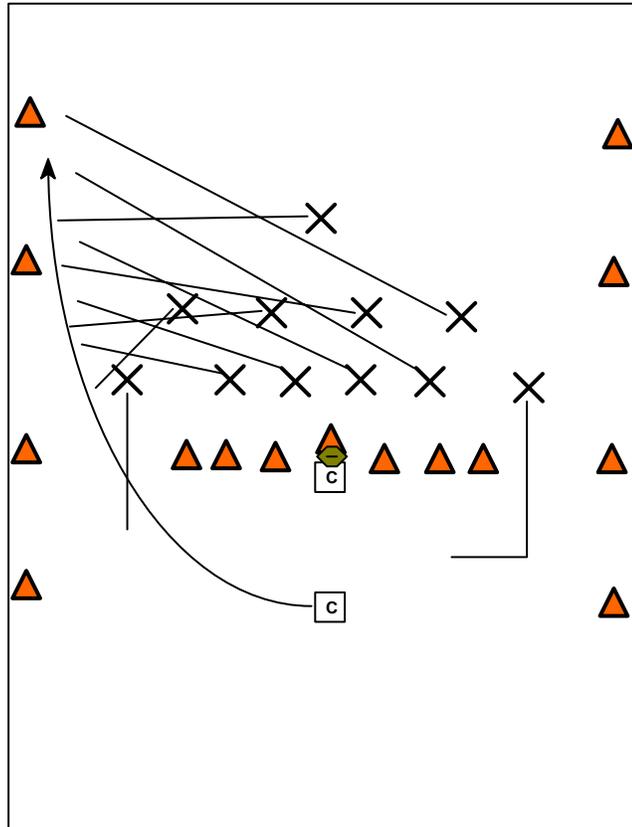
84. Angle Pursuit

Purpose:

- Practice taking the proper angles against outside runs.
- Condition.

Coaching Pointers:

- Make sure players are out of the way as they return for the next rep.
- This is a lot of running for the coach. You may need to switch off with another coach.



Set-up and Instructions:

Thanks to Scott Gettier for showing me this drill in 2006. We have done it weekly and I think it has helped prevent at least a dozen touchdowns since then. Set up cones for sidelines and also to represent the offensive players so that the defenders know where to align themselves. It's best if you have two defensive groups that can rotate after each rep. You will need one coach to act as quarterback and another coach, who is in good shape, to act as the runner. On the snap, the first coach will pitch the ball to the other who will execute a sweep to one sideline or the other. All defenders must take their proper pursuit path and cross in front of the ball carrier's face. Be careful not run any of your players over or, in some cases, not to get run over by them. For some variety we may add QB fakes, passes, or reverses as the season progresses.

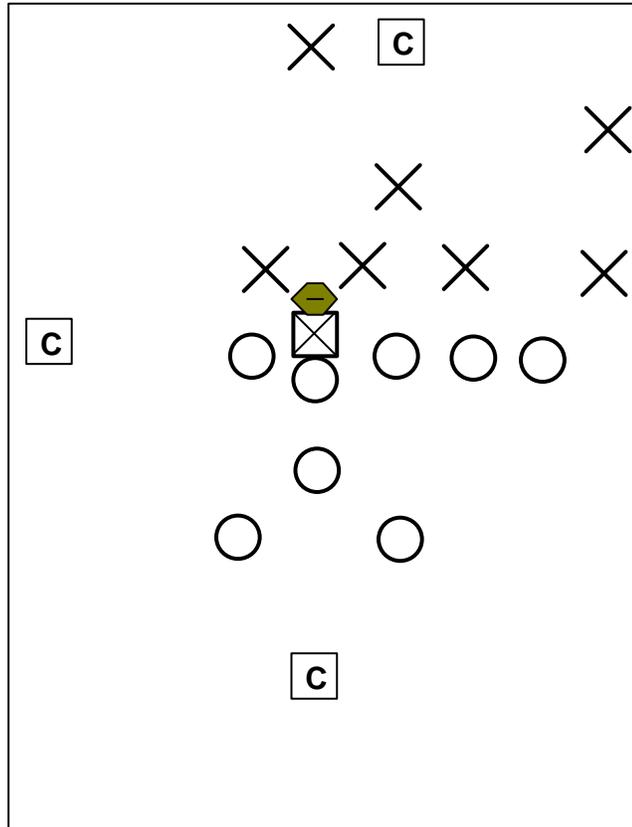
85. Half Line Scrimmage

Purpose:

- To practice your offense and defense in a live situation.

Coaching Pointers:

- Try to get as many plays in as possible. Coach your players on the fly.
- Rotate halfway through or every other day so that everyone has a chance to play both offense and defense.



Set-up and Instructions:

This drill seems to work better for some groups of kids than for others. In 2004 I was an assistant coach on a team that participated in half-line scrimmages for a half hour at each practice. It was a great opportunity for the kids to learn in a game situation and for us coaches to instruct on the fly. My 2006 team never seem to get the same benefits and we eventually stopped scrimmaging altogether. The greatest gains will come if you have two capable coaches – one whose area of expertise is on the offensive side of the ball and another who is able to concentrate on the defense. Our 2004 team practiced three days each week. On the first day we would only use our own offense and defense. On the second day, we would run our plays against the expected defense of our upcoming opponent. On the final day of practice, we would look at our opponent's plays against our defense.