

# HEADSETS

WRITTEN FOR COACHES BY COACHES

VOLUME 3: ISSUE 2

*creating competition in*  
**PRACTICE**

**7 MISTAKES**  
**TO AVOID ON YOUR**  
**COACHING RESUME**

**CREATING AN IN-SEASON**  
**SCHEDULE**

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We are so glad to run Headsets season three! It has been unbelievable to have so many coaches willing to contribute their time and efforts to the coaching community. A special thank you to the writers this season as we have a great line up in store covering:

- 12 Head Coaching 101
- Special Teams
- 14 Defense
- Offense
- 17 Drill Work
- And More...

As you go through the articles, there are many live links to recommended materials, articles and videos.

If you would like to contribute to Headsets, email Coach Simpson: [FBcoachsimpson@gmail.com](mailto:FBcoachsimpson@gmail.com) and let him know.

Also, please help us spread the word via social media and email about our Magazine as it is our hope to help as many coaches as possible.

Thank you,

\*CLICK ON ANY TITLE TO GO STRAIGHT TO ARTICLE\*

# TIME TO RAISE THE BAR



JAMESIMPSONDESIGNS  
**SPORTS GRAPHIC DESIGN**

# RURAL FOOTBALL REFLECTIONS

CREATING AN IN-SEASON WEEKLY ROUTINE OR SCHEDULE



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In my first article, I emphasized the importance of having a plan for the off season and not just flying by the seat of your coaching shorts. Another thing I do during the off season is evaluate our weekly In- Season schedule or routine. I am a firm believer in developing a routine or rhythm that the players fall into when the season starts. I believe players today long for consistency and a routine that helps them and everyone involved stay disciplined and on the same page. This is not to say we will not adjust if need during the season and I should point out this is our regular season In-Season Routine, we have a totally different routine once the playoffs start and will share that in a later edition. After reading, if you have any questions please reach out!

“I believe players today long for consistency and a routine that helps them and everyone involved stay disciplined and on the same page.”

## Sketch of Weekly In -Season Football Schedule

### Sunday – Family Emphasis for everyone!

#### 2 to 3 Hour Staff Meeting for all levels:

##### Varsity Staff & Lower Level Head Coaches:

- 1) Finalize Game Plans & Practice Goals
- 2) Personnel update – injuries/ treatments Eligibility issues / study hall lists
- 3) Copies made of films & scouting reports

##### Lower Level Assistants:

- 1) All Football related facilities inspected, cleaned, repaired & disinfected.
- 2) All game gear and equipment inspected, cleaned, repaired, disinfected and stored.
- 3) Game Goals & Awards Boards updated.

### Monday – Scouting, Teaching, and Conditioning Emphasis:

#### All Squads:

- 1) Zero Period Lifting
  - a) Rehab and treatment for injured
  - b) Study hall for athletes with a 2 Ds or 1 F on bi-weekly grade checks.
- 2) Films of Opponents & Scouting reports. – 1 Hour
- 3) Practice in Shells only if Win, Full Pads after a loss. – 1.5 Hours

#### Coaches Duties:

- 1) Varsity Position Group assigned locker room clean up. The position coach for that group supervises the clean up.
- 2) Lower Level Position Group assigned laundry duty and their coach will supervise this duty.
- 3) All other coaches meet with each level's head coach for a 15 minute to 30-minute debriefing staff meetings.

### Tuesday & Wednesday – Fundamentals, Technique & Execution of Game Plan Emphasis:

#### All Squads:

- 1) Zero Period Lifting
  - a) Rehab and treatment for injured
- 2) Films of Opponents & Scouting reports. – At lunch
- 3) Practice in full pads. – 2.5 Hours
  - a) Varsity on Wednesdays will have Competition Scrimmage to end practice
  - b) Lower level teams will spend last hour of Wednesday's practice polishing and game review for Thursday games. Remember Special Teams are a third of the game's outcome!

#### Coaches Duties:

- 1) Varsity Position Group assigned locker room clean up. The position coach for that group supervises the clean up.
- 2) Lower Level Position Group assigned laundry duty and their coach will supervise this duty.
- 3) All other coaches meet with each level's head coach for a 15 minute to 30-minute debriefing staff meetings.

### Thursday – Dress Rehearsal and Lower Level Games:

#### All Squads:

- 1) Zero Period Lifting
  - a) Rehab and treatment for injured
  - b) Study hall for athletes with a 2 Ds or 1 F on bi-weekly grade checks.
- 2) Films of Opponents & Scouting reports. - At lunch

#### Varsity Squad:

- 1) Game Gear Rehearsal practice – No Pads – 1 hour
- 2) Support and Mentor Lower level team with the home game.
- 3) Captains' Dinner with Head Coach

*continued on next page*

#### Lower Level Squads:

- 1) Win with Class & Style – Make Our Community Proud of Your Efforts and Heart

#### Coaches Duties:

- 1) Varsity Position Group assigned locker room clean up. The position coach for that group supervises the clean up.
- 2) Varsity Position Group assigned laundry duty and their coach will supervise this duty.
- 3) Varsity coaches meet with head coach for a 15 minute to 30-minute debriefing staff meetings.

#### Friday – Rock and Roll Game Day:

##### All Squads:

- 1) Zero Period Lifting
  - a) Rehab and treatment for injured
  - b) Study hall for athletes with a 2 Ds or 1 F on bi-weekly grade checks.

##### Varsity Squad:

- 1) Proper Game Day Dress for School & Travel
- 2) Game Day Routines
  - a) Pre Game Meal provided by Parents or Coaches
  - b) Pre Game Routines and Rituals
- 3) Win with Class & Style – Make Our Community Proud of Your Efforts and Heart.

##### Coaches Duties:

- 1) Varsity Staff fulfill game day responsibilities (another handout).
- 2) Lower Level Coaches assigned Scouting or Game responsibilities (another handout).

#### Saturday – Game Review, Grading, Opponent Preparation & Game Plan:

##### Staff Meetings from 9AM to 3PM

##### Varsity Staff:

- 1) Grade Position Players from Friday's game
- 2) Review Game with Head Coach and determine strengths and weaknesses of game and game plan.
- 3) View Friday's game with Varsity players
- 4) Select Players of the Game
- 5) Determine what Game goals were met for the boards.
- 6) View Game Tapes or DVDs of next week's opponent.
- 7) Determine tendencies and personnel strengths and weakness.
- 8) Player injury report from Friday's game and status for upcoming week.
- 9) Scouting reports created for staff and teams.

##### Lower Level Staffs:

- 1) Make Copies of all Scouting Tapes or DVDs for all Varsity Staff members.
- 2) Laundry (game gear) done and ready to put away on Sunday
- 3) All Scouting Tapes and DVDs broken down and tendencies determined and supported with data reports for Varsity staff.
- 4) Cards of Formations, Offensive Plays and Defenses created and color coded for scout teams and coaches.
- 5) Practice Goals and plans created for lower level teams.

##### Varsity Squad:

- 1) Films of Friday Game with varsity coaches.
- 2) Post Game practice – 1.5 hours
  - a) post game lifting routine
  - b) stretching
  - c) jogging
  - d) report injuries

# DRILLS

## CREATING COMPETITION IN PRACTICE



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**viQtory**

I was scrolling Twitter the other day, and I found this drill from Bryant University, posted by our good friends over at the New England Football Journal.

What may seem like a standard 1v1 drill with "a bunch of people standing around", it was actually a competition drill. Offense vs Defense.

This is something we experimented with last year, and the kids LOVED it. Practice can be long and tiring for high school kids.

How do we spice it up? Add competition.

If you're a small school, you may not be able to do offense vs defense, you can however draft teams before the season starts.

In the middle of practice, we will blow a long whistle and scream "COMPETE!" every player yells compete and everyone circles around midfield. One of our coaches will then pick 2 random players to go up against each other.

We are only doing 3 reps, and it should take no longer than 2 minutes. The key is to reenergize practice and force the kids into the competition.

The competition can range from:

- 1v1 Board Drills
- 1v1 WR/DB Drills
- 1v1 Tackling Drills

However, you want to structure it, make sure that the kids are having fun and there is a clear winner and loser.

This is a great way to add energy and competition into your practice without wasting time putting together drills.

# JOB SEARCH PREP FOR COACHES

## AVOID THESE SEVEN MISTAKES ON YOUR COACHING RESUME



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It's very easy to overlook some simple mistakes that many coaches make on their resume. Here are some of the most common mistakes I see when doing resume reviews that you should try to avoid.

1. **Resumes that are too long.** I once did a resume review on an 8 page resume. Insert "mindblown" emoji here! Your resume should not be longer than 2 pages in most cases, no matter how much experience you have. I know it is tough to remove things that you feel are relevant, but you must focus on keeping the reader's attention. I typically scan resumes the first time I look through them, and anything longer than 2 pages loses my attention. Just like reading a newspaper, make sure your best stuff is on the first 2 pages. If you have a lot of experience, just list employer/position/dates for any job you held more than 15 years ago. Using a resume template that uses two columns on each page will help you organize your information allowing you to reduce the number of overall pages.

2. **Using an objective statement or professional summary instead of a professional skills section.** Objective statements or professional summaries are not necessary. Not only do they

take up valuable resume space (see above) but the information is typically generic and can be included in your cover letter. Instead, create a professional skills section at the beginning of your resume that highlights your skills that make you uniquely qualified for the position you are applying for. This is where you can list some of the things that are currently on your resume in your experience section. Try to list things that are very specific and unique that will make you stand out from other candidates. Really focus on skills that you have that are relevant to the position you are applying for. Do your homework and make sure you know what skills are important to the hiring committee. Avoid using very basic and generic skills or traits.

3. **Boring layouts.** If you are still using Microsoft Word to build your resume, then it is most likely dull and boring. A word processing program also doesn't allow you much flexibility to move things around on the page. Using PowerPoint or a program like [Canva \(www.canva.com\)](#) will allow you to create a more dynamic layout and also permit you to use the entire page to fit more info. When you sign up for our [portfolio package](#), you get 20+ resume templates created on Canva for absolutely FREE!

4. **Not sending the resume as a PDF document.** Always make sure you save your resume as a PDF before sending it out. This preserves your formatting. If the reader is using a different program or version of a program, or looking at your resume from their phone, it may change the formatting. A resume saved as a PDF will be the same no matter what they are reading it with.

5. **Eliminate resume buzzwords.** Too often, coaches use phrases in their resume or cover letter that are generic and cliché. They believe these phrases will make them stand out to the hiring director or search committee, when actually, these

phrases are traits and characteristics that we EXPECT to see from successful coaches!

Below are phrases that I have seen on actual coaching resumes that I have reviewed. If you are using any of these phrases, get rid of them. Instead, use descriptive sentences that tell the reader who you are as a coach/person, and the things you have accomplished throughout your coaching career!

Self-motivated individual  
Results-oriented professional  
Excellent team player  
Strong communication skills  
Strong organizational skills  
Strong work ethic  
High character  
Goal driven  
Attention to detail  
Relationship builder  
Fast learner  
Experienced  
Dynamic leader  
Professional  
Enthusiastic  
Works well in team atmosphere  
Proven program builder  
Student-athlete centered  
Good listener  
Excellent interpersonal skills  
Positive  
Great work ethic  
Adept at prioritizing work  
Multi-tasker  
Teachable  
Life-long learner  
Self-starter  
Multi-faceted  
Innovative coaching professional  
People management skills

6. **Leaving off your references.** Personally I like to see who you know. If I know someone on your list, I will text or email them immediately. If you don't have a lot of experience and you have good references, I will contact them to learn more about what makes you stand out in their mind.

7. **Not telling your story.** Too many people just list general duties and responsibilities for each of the positions they held. That doesn't make you stand out. Focus on accomplishments, achievements, improvements....how did you bring value to the program/organization?

The biggest red flag to a hiring director when looking at your resume is when you have omitted your accomplishments or achievements in each of the places that you've worked. Most AD's and head coaches will put your resume in the "no" pile if they cannot tell how a program improved while you were in a previous position. Typically, coaches tend to list what position they held and then list some of their general duties and responsibilities. One of the best ways to separate yourself from other candidates is to create a detailed list of things that were achieved and improved upon while you were at each of your previous positions. It could be team accomplishments or individual player accomplishments or things in general that were improved throughout the program while you were there.

Need help with your coaching resume? Sign up for one of our **job prep packages** at [The Coaching Portfolio Guide](#) today to get started!

# O-LINE DRILLS

## PASS PROTECTION EDDs, THE KICK STEP



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For the quarterback, running backs, and receivers to look good under the lights the offensive line must

protect them, especially in the passing game. No coach or fan likes to see the quarterback get sacked while trying to drop back and throw the ball. The Oline must keep the defense off the QB to allow him time to make the play.

To have good pass protection the offensive linemen need to have great footwork to make and stay on their blocks. Pass protection should be worked on in every day drills (EDDs) and in pass protection group O or pods in practice.

In EDDs the linemen will work their kick step. The kick step is a quick backwards step or kick to gain depth and some width against a rushing defensive lineman. As the outside or directional kick step occurs the opposite (post) foot will push to the kick step to keep the lineman's base square and strong. The depth and number of kick steps will vary based on the depth of the quarterbacks drop. For example, if the quarterback is taking a three step drop, the initial kick step may be shorter and the linemen may only take three kick steps as the quarterback should get rid of the ball quickly. On a 5 step drop by the quarterback the first kick step may be deeper, and the lineman may take 5 or 6 kick steps to maintain

his block longer as the quarterback needs more time to make the throw. The offensive system and passing concepts will dictate these depths and number of steps taken. Each offensive line position may also need different depths to create the passing pocket.

The offensive tackle is usually blocking a defensive end or outside linebacker who is usually smaller and faster than him. So, the depth and number of steps the tackle needs make may be deeper and more steps than a guard or center who is blocking a defensive tackle, who is usually more similar to his size and speed.

Now to the details. The kick foot will point outward when the step happens with the knee driving down towards the ground. The post foot will stay pointing straight ahead and have the players body weight inside on it, somewhere around 80% to give the player a starting point. The hips should stay square and elbows in tight to be ready to strike the rushing defender. Each foot must have all the cleats in the ground, meaning all of the foot is in contact with the ground maintaining footing, balance, and a strong base.

When the kick happens the foot should quickly rise and hit the ground as not to be in the air too long. The post foot should slide while "mowing the grass", meaning it does not rise too high off the ground to again ensure that the lineman's footing is in solid contact with the ground. We usually begin with a set of one kick step and slide. Then we progress to two kick steps, and then three. If you use a slide protection scheme you would want your line working together so they kick and slide together. If you use Big on

Big (BOB) or Man on Man (MOM) protections you may not need to slide together. In slide protection the idea is to build a wall so the spacing between each linemen is important, so working together is critical.

After taking reps on air, you will want to start adding in defenders. This can be one on ones or a full defensive line against the offense. Depending on your team, if you want best on best you may need to do half line or one on ones to get these matchups.

Depending on your pass game, if you use 3 step and 5 step drops you would incorporate the various counts and depths by the line to ensure they are ready to protect the QB for your passing game. Then you would want to work on any play action and/or screen game techniques with the linemen. For play action you may begin with a standard run block step, like a drive step then into the kick step for pass pro. For screens you may work kick steps into the downfield lane to block at the second level.

If your passing game uses rollouts or sprint outs by the QB you would need to rep these with a moving pocket. For this you may use a slide technique or move the pocket. This may also use a standard pass pocket protection with a pulling lineman to "escort" the QB on the rollout or sprint out.

If you use a tight end (TE) in your pass blocking, you will want to have them rep with your offensive line. One or more running backs may also be in your pass protection scheme so again you will want these backs to rep with the linemen. This may be in a pod or group offensive session to ensure timing and spacing with the players is perfected to keep the QB upright and able to

make the throw's he needs to make. Tight ends will use the same kick step technique like the offensive tackle as he will be against defensive ends or outside linebackers. One advantage the TE may have is he probably is quicker than the typical tackle, so he can keep up better with the speed of the DEs and OLBs. The disadvantage is he may be the same size or smaller than the defensive player he is blocking. The same may be true with the RBs blocking. For a RB he is usually moving forward towards the defender rushing. For the RB his job is more to cut off the lane of the defender and force him to take a wider angle as his block is later in the play.

To finish up, offensive linemen need to keep the QB clean so he can make the throw to his receiver(s). The basic footwork is the kick step and slide with the post foot. This allows him to gain depth and an angle on the rushing defender. This should be repped daily in practice on air, and at least once a week against live defenders. Having good footwork in the pass blocking game will allow the offense to have the opportunity for the big plays in the passing game.

# OFFENSIVE TALK

## LEARN FROM YOUR MISTAKES AND MOVE ON



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I was recently reading Trevor Moawad's book [It Takes What It Takes](#) and learned this little nugget:

*"Previous performance is not an accurate predictor of future performance. Our lives are divided into three segments; what has happened (the past), what is happening (the present), and what will happen (the future). What has happened will only influence what is happening if we let it. As far as what will happen. Well, we better have our focus on what is happening right now, or another failure is just over the horizon. Do not let past mistakes multiply into future mistakes. By the same token, do not let past successes keep us from focusing on the present. Be in the present, only use the past for the lessons we can learn from it and the future will take care of itself.*

One of the worst things we can do after a loss -- or a failure -- is to sit around and brood about it. That is not to say that we should not reflect on what happened. Of course, we must spend some time thinking about where we went wrong and learn from our mistakes. We should never sit around feeling sorry for ourselves and wallowing in self-pity. No one wants to be around some immature petulant child that has their lips poked out feeling sorry for themselves. NOTE: The last sentence is aimed at self-important coaches.

We cannot dwell on a failure and let it consume us. We need to realize that it is in the past and place our focus on the present. When we spend too much time dwelling on it, failure can lead to us having negative thoughts about our next effort. Saying things like, "I am not good at that," "I really screwed that up last time," or "I can't do that." It is this mindset that causes mistakes to multiply and snowball. We need to take a step back, breathe deeply, and start having positive thoughts about the next try.

I am not promoting some new-age self-help guru's psychobabble when I say this, I am talking about reinforcing

yourself with internal messages that remind you of the fundamentals of doing your job successfully. For instance, an offensive lineman might use the following internal message to remind him what it takes to be successful: "Eyes and head up; short power step; explode through the target; shoot hands tight; thumbs up; elbows inside; finish the block."

If you think the paragraph above is some kind of namby-pamby crap, then I reckon Jim Brown was a namby-pamby player and full of crap too. Brown was one of the best and toughest running backs in the history of football; it was said, "Superman wears Jim Brown underwear." Brown said he would play the game before the game; that all week long he would see himself doing the job -- catching passes, making blocks, end runs -- reacting to every conceivable situation. And when he did perform well, he wasn't surprised because he had been telling positive stories to himself all week.

I am 100 percent positive that the following quote by Trevor Moawad is 100% true; "Negativity affects you negatively 100 percent of the time." Many years ago, I read a book that dealt with self-talk, you know, the stuff we tell ourselves about ourselves. It had a lot of good points, but the one major takeaway I got from the book is that we cannot change our life's storyteller, but we can change the stories we tell ourselves. Researchers tell us that the human brain absorbs negative messages at a rate seven times higher than positive messages. To me, it makes sense to tell ourselves things that will help us succeed and not remind ourselves of our failings; that is if want to succeed on the next rep or snap.

As coaches, we must consistently feed positive messages to our players because they are constantly bombarded with negativity from everything from music to the ever-present social media. I am not talking about telling them they are the best all the time and pumping them up artificially with "you the man" mantras. I am talking about teaching them the right way to do things repeatedly. Also, I am NOT talking about saying things like, "Don't fumble," or "Catch the ball." Instead, we should say things like, "Five points: high and tight," or "Focus on the tip (of the ball), look it in." Both are positive messages that remind them of what we have been teaching them and put their minds on what they must do to be successful. We must bombard them with practical positive messages to cancel out the negative ones.

I have been rethinking something I have been doing for nearly 40 years of coaching; the Sunday or Monday film review with the team. For most of my career, it has been a Monday thing, but at a recent coaching stop, we did it on Sunday afternoons. Either day, I have concluded that it is not necessarily the positive I have been thinking it was. Nick Saban and many other coaches have the 24-hour rule. That is, we have 24 hours to reflect on or celebrate the last game and then it is on to the next one. Ask yourself, how beneficial is it to play a player's mistakes repeatedly, in slow motion, in front of his peers? On top of that, doing it 48 or 72 hours after the fact. In the words of Bill Belichick, "We are on to (insert next opponent)."

With the advent of the HUDL app and similar technologies, we can text/email video clips with coaching points (notes of improvement and praise) to individual players and position groups by noon Saturday. I am a firm believer that immediate feedback (or soon as possible) is much more effective than waiting two or three days. Remember, we are dealing with teenage boys and whether or not we want to admit it, when it comes to that last game they are ... well, let us just say, "... on to (girls, buddies, video game, girls, food, girls, social media, cars, schoolwork, girls, football)."

When Michael Jordan first got to the NBA, he had a hard time accepting how some of the veteran players dealt with losing. He would sit around the locker room after every loss, beating himself up over what he could have done differently. The vets would shower, get dressed, and seemingly go about their lives. He could not understand their approach and it drove him crazy.

One summer, he went back home to North Carolina and visited with his legendary college coach Dean Smith. He relayed his frustration with his new teammates to his old coach. Coach Smith told Jordan that he should not spend more than 20 minutes reflecting on a bad performance. He said that was enough time to figure out what he needed to do better the next game. Smith told Jordan he should spend more time thinking about playing great basketball in the next game and not think about not playing bad basketball. Coach said, "If all you do is keep reliving your mistakes, you're going to destroy yourself."

Do you remember what I said earlier about how the human brain absorbs negative messages at a higher rate than positive ones? I accidentally discovered something a few years ago that kind of goes along with this idea. We

were doing a Wide Receiver screen drill in practice and the linemen were getting out to the flats too soon because they were rushing their process. To slow down their release I had them verbally go through their process when the ball was snapped. Their process was, "Pass set, punch the DL (or punch air if nothing was on them), throw the DL, and GO!" Well, I told them to say those things out loud (loud enough for me to hear them from 8-10 yards away) on every rep of the drill. We did it that way for every rep of the Screen Drill for the rest of the season. The offensive linemen would say, "SET, PUNCH. THROW, GO," on the screen drill repeatedly for literally hundreds of reps for the rest of the season. At first, others thought it was humorous, but eventually, it became as much a part of our practices as the snap count.

The WR Screens became a staple for us that season as we went undefeated and won another state title. It was a WR Screen that we used to clinch the championship game when we scored on a 30-yard pass in the fourth quarter. As I greeted the linemen after the extra point, I noticed they were laughing. I asked them, "What's up?" A senior guard pointed to our big sophomore tackle and said, "This man is out there saying, 'set, punch, throw, go.'" This is the kind of "PRACTICAL" positive self-talk that I am talking about, not some The Little Engine That Could, "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can," stuff. It took all those reps, but the positive message eventually resonated in the mind of a 16-year-old offensive tackle. We need to say practical positive messages to ourselves that cue our brains to the things we must do to be successful. When we do this, it leaves no room for the negative messages that remind us of failure.

I will finish where I started. I cannot recommend Trevor Moawad's book, [It Takes What It Takes](#) highly enough; it is a must-read for coaches. He was a sports psychologist who worked with professional athletes including quarterback Russell Wilson, Fred Taylor of the Jaguars, and pitcher Marcus Stroman of the Cubs. He also worked with the University of Alabama, Florida State, and the University of Georgia football teams.

# SPECIAL TEAMS

## CREASE AND PUNCH KICK OFF RETURN PART 2



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In the last issue of "Headsets", I wrote out our base kickoff return scheme. I call it "Crease and Punch", because the aim is for the first level

blockers to create "crease" in the coverage team so the wall blockers and returners can "punch" through. In the last issue, I covered the basic scheme which had the front 6 blockers crossing the field to kick out their assigned cover man. In this next issue, I'll share some of the adjustments we've made to the scheme to account for different kicks we expect to see from week to week.

### Adjusting the Basic Concept:

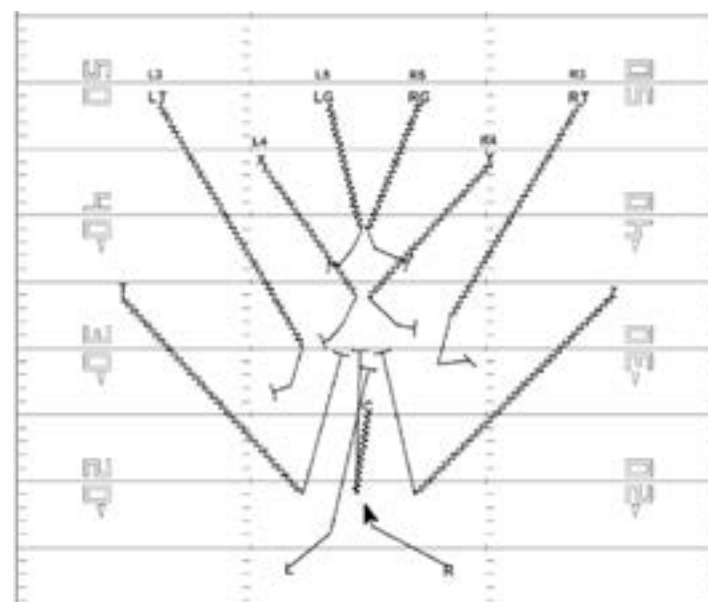
The central idea of this KO Return is to create blocking angles and use those angles to create a crease in the coverage team. Then, a wall of blockers will penetrate through the crease to "punch" and clean up any remaining members of the coverage team. Our base return does this by having the front line cross the field. However, sometimes a team refuses to kick deep and that can make the crossing much more difficult. To account for this, we will simply have the front line drop inside a cover man on their side of the field.

### Adjusting the Alignment:

Our base KO return formation has four players aligned on the 50 yard line. The guards are 2-3 yards inside the hashes, and the tackles are on the tops of the numbers about 9-10 yards from the sideline. The

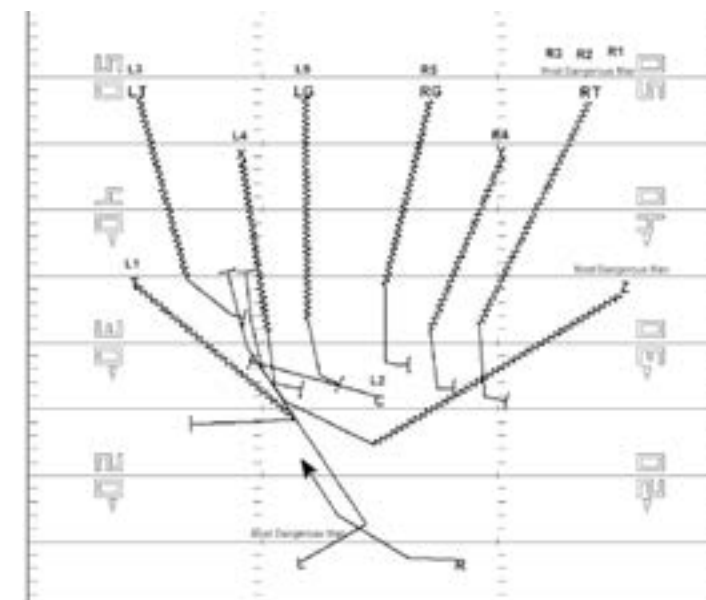
two ends, X & Y, are aligned on or 2 yds outside the hashes on the -43 to -44 yard line. Our alignment only changes slightly. We tell our front line blockers to align head up to inside of their assigned block, as long as it does not create a terrible imbalance in our alignment or leave us vulnerable to an onside kick. The rest of our alignments do not change. We adjust the depth of our 2nd and 3rd level based on the kicks we expect to see this week.

### Alternate Middle Return without Crossing Blockers



Pos	Drop	Assignment
X	25 - 30 yd line	Drop inside and kick out L4
LT	35 yd line	Drop inside and kick out L3
LG	35 yd line	Drop inside and kick out L5
C	10 yds in front of ball	Call and form wedge. When wedge is set, make a go call, and block first threat.
RG	35 yd line	Drop inside and kick out L5
RT	35 yd line	Drop inside and kick out L4
Y	25 - 30 yd line	Drop inside and kick out L3
T	To C	Form wedge w/ C. Block first threat on go.
Z	To C	Form wedge w/ C. Block first threat on go.
L	Return ball or 25 yd to T	Return ball or form wedge, w/ T. Block first threat on go.
R	Return ball or 25 yd to Z	Return ball or form wedge, w/ Z. Block first threat on go.

### Left Hash Return



Pos	Drop	Assignment
X	25 - 30 yd line	Drop away from side line and wall off L4
LT	25 - 30 yd line	Drop away from side line and wall off L3
LG	25 - 30 yd line	Drop away from side line and wall off L5
C	No drop. Delay contact	Kick out L2. Delay contact as long as possible
RG	25 - 30 yd line	Drop toward left sideline, get inside R3 and wall off
RT	25 - 30 yd line	Drop toward left sideline, get inside R1, R2, or R3 (Most dangerous man) and wall off
Y	25 - 30 yd line	Drop toward left sideline, get inside R4 and wall off
T	Inside Left Hash	Kick out L1
Z	10 yds in front of ball	Lead returner, block 1 <sup>st</sup> or most dangerous threat
L	Return ball or to Z	Lead returner, block 1 <sup>st</sup> or most dangerous threat
R	Return ball or to Z	Lead returner, block 1 <sup>st</sup> or most dangerous threat

### Tips / Lessons Learned:

As you can see, you can adjust the alignment and rules of your front lines to create better blocking angles, but you do not always need to cross the front lines. You can simply have them drop and block.

We've also had success blending the alternate schemes with our normal crossing scheme. For example, if our LT & RT have trouble crossing the field, you can have them drop vertically and inside, then KO R3 & L3 without crossing the field.

If you face a team that likes to pop the ball up in the air and kick high and short, simply have the LT/RT, X/Y, and LG/RT drop back to kick out 1, 2, & 3 to that side. The blockers will need to protect the T or Z so the T or Z can make a fair catch signal.

If the KO team uses a bunch style KO, then simply telling the players that X & Y have the 1st person after

they cross mid-field, the guards have the 2nd person, and the tackles have the 3rd person. If the players communicate effectively, then the blocking will not be a problem.

### Additional Resources:

You can see film of the [Crease and Punch Kickoff Return from 2008](#) by following the hyperlink. If you would like to see more of this return or any of our other special teams, please don't hesitate to reach out to Abe Mikell at [smikell@augusta.k12.va.us](mailto:smikell@augusta.k12.va.us).

**“In the last issue of “Headsets”, I wrote out our base kickoff return scheme. I call it “Crease and Punch”, because the aim is for the first level blockers to create “crease” in the coverage team so the wall blockers and returners can “punch” through.”**



# FLAVORS OF GT COUNTER

## AN IN DEPTH LOOK AT THE GT(H) PLAY



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In this series of articles, I will discuss how we run the GT(H) Counter Play with the Yonkers Brave. The Yonkers Brave is a cop-op team, composed of student athletes from Saunders Trade & Technical High School, Lincoln High School, Barack Obama School for Social Justice High School, and Palisade Prep High School, all located in Yonkers, NY, which borders the Hudson River to the West, and New York City to the South. In this second article, we will discuss the different RPO tags we utilize to put the defense in conflict in order to protect the point of attack for the run scheme.

### Why RPO's?

There are many ways with which to protect plays, such as using a "series" of plays (i.e. Wing-T belly series), the various triple option schemes of the double wing teams, or any other "if/then" type play call. We utilize the RPO to protect the counter play because we feel that gives us the most options to segment the defense, or keep each defender in their quadrant of the football field (see Headsets Vol. 2 Issue 5 for how we "segment" the defense into different quadrants). The RPO tag we will utilize depends on two factors; the personnel grouping we have on the field and the method by which the defense is deploying to combat the counter play. For the purposes of this article, we will explain the different RPO tags for our "10" personnel package, or one running back and zero tight ends (future articles will discuss RPO tags for "20" and "11" personnel).

### Base RPO Tag

Our base RPO tag to protect the counter play is going to be "Slout" or Slant and Out. We run this out of a 3x1 set, in an

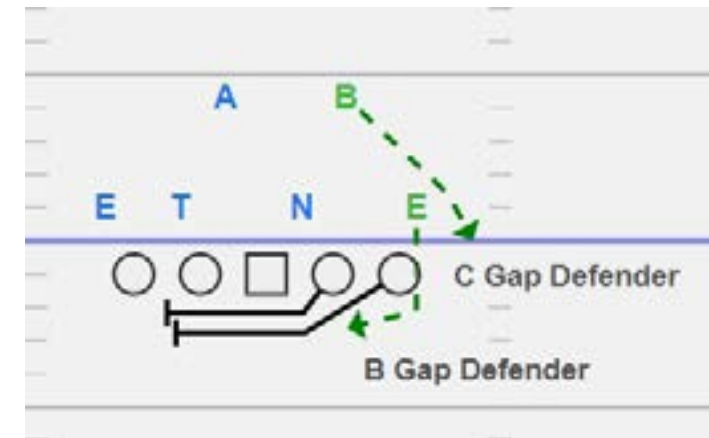
effort to remove safety support at the point of attack for the run scheme as most teams will not play a two-high safety structure to a 3x1 set. Whether the front is odd or even, as long as the box contains six defenders we feel this is our best option to achieve the highest leverage for the offense. Pre-snap, if the quarterback believes the offense has a favorable matchup for the go routes, the quarterback will convert the play into a vertical stretch pass play and throw the outside fade. Post-snap, the leverage of the defenders over #2 and #3 signals to the quarterback which route in the two-receiver combination to make the first read in the RPO progression. In the diagram below, the defense chose to put their nickel-sam outside #3, and their strong safety outside #2. Due to the wide split of #1, they played their field corner inside #1. This makes the slant-in the first read in the RPO progression. If the defense decided to reverse the leverage, and play their nickel-sam and strong safety on inside leverage of #2 and #3, then the quarterback would make the out-cut the first read. The shaded area represents the area of concentration for the quarterback. We teach the quarterback to "see the secondary through the EMOL", much the same way linebacker coaches teach their inside linebackers to "see the running back through the guards". This allows the quarterback to have wide vision, and places the defense in tremendous conflict. The reason for attaching an RPO tag to the play is to force the backside of the defense to honor those receivers, and not allow defenders to "fold late" and get involved in the run aspect of the play; either the running back cutback lane, or the quarterback running in the backside alley.



### The "Bend and Scrape" Teams

One of the classic ways defenses use to defend any "read" play in an effort to "bait" the quarterback into a poor decision is to "gap exchange" the backside B and C gap defenders. Defenses will employ the end man on the line of scrimmage (EMOL) as the B gap defender (traditionally that player is the C gap defender), and the inside linebacker

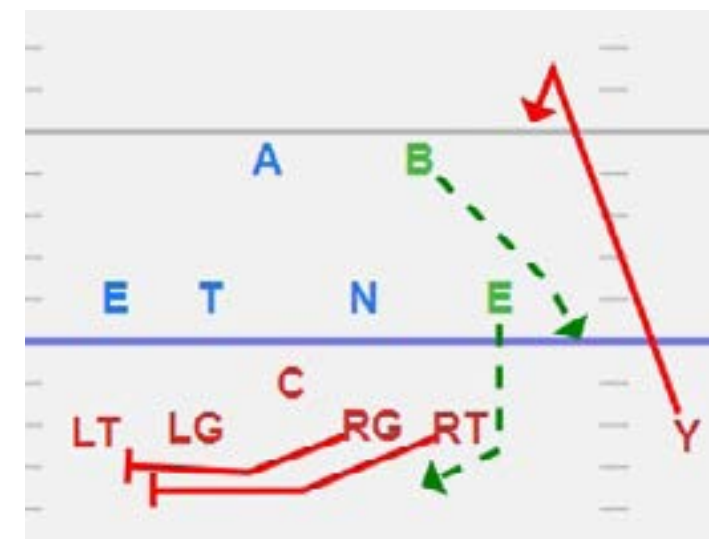
as the C gap defender (traditionally a B gap defender). We will utilize several different RPO tags to take advantage of that tactic, and the choice is based on the best available match-up/leverage.



Keep in mind in order to soundly execute this maneuver, a "three-down" defense must bring a sixth defender into the box to the side of the running back (for which a possible solution would be to run same-side counter), or a "four-down" team must set their 3 tech away from the back. Both options have pluses and minuses for the defense.

### Stick RPO

The first RPO will be our "stick" RPO, where the #3 receiver will run a stick route in the area vacated by the scraping linebacker. We coach the #3 receiver to "replace the heels of the linebacker at his pre-snap alignment". The EMOL bending into the B gap will trigger our quarterback to pull the ball, and the scraping linebacker into the C gap will trigger a throw to #3.



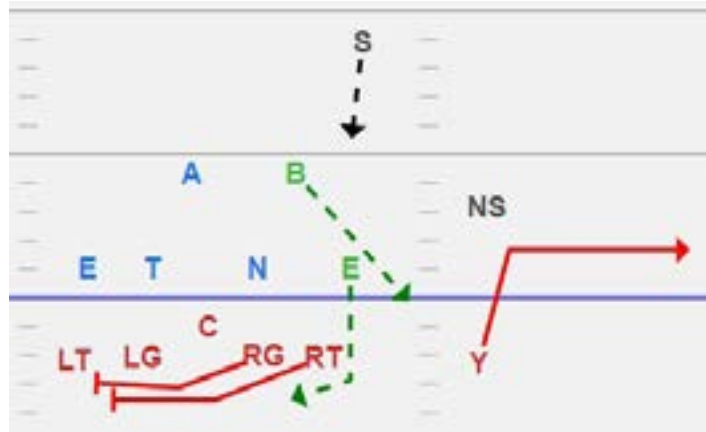
## "Why RPOs?"

There are many ways with which to protect plays, such as using a "series" of plays (i.e. Wing-T belly series), the various triple option schemes of the double wing teams, or any other "if/then" type play call. We utilize the RPO to protect the counter play because we feel that gives us the most options to segment the defense, or keep each defender in their quadrant of the football field (see Headsets Vol. 2 Issue 5 for how we "segment" the defense into different quadrants).

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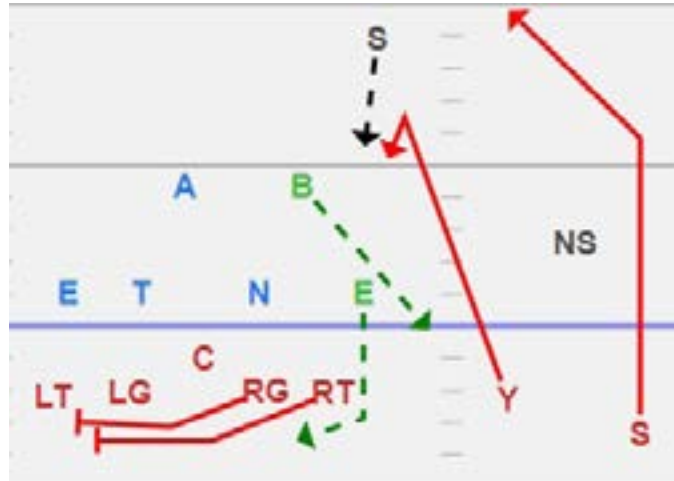
### Flat RPO

A common way for bend and scrape defenses to adjust to the stick RPO is drop a safety into the box post-snap to replace the scraping linebacker. With the EMOL attacking the running back, the defense can expect the well-coached read teams to pull the ball. Therefore they no longer need the safety as an inside out overlapping run fitter at the point of attack in the counter scheme, and can afford to employ that safety as a backside pass defender in the RPO scheme. In that case, we will run the #3 receiver into the flat, away from the support safety. This relies on the nickel-sam having either head up to inside leverage of #3 pre-snap, or a favorable offensive matchup between the #3 receiver and the nickel-sam.



### Stick-Glance RPO

In the event the #3 receiver/nickel-sam matchup does not favor the offense, or the defense is employing outside leverage pre-snap, we will utilize the stick-glance RPO. With this RPO, we are placing the post safety in conflict, as well as out-leveraging the inverted safety. Now, when the defense drops the post safety into the box post-snap to defend the stick route, we possess the ability to throw the ball in the area vacated.



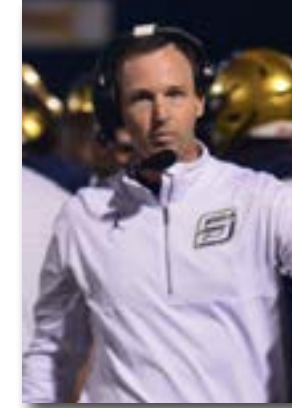
### Man to Man Pass Defense

In the event the defense plays man-free pass coverage (cover one), we will call our base RPO and instruct the quarterback to select the "best matchup" for the first read in the RPO progression. If the defense drops another defender into the box, and plays with seven defenders and true man coverage (cover zero), we will either instruct the quarterback to "auto" pull the ball and convert the play into a play-action pass (understanding we are run-blocking and the ball must leave the pocket quickly), or bring an H-Back (Y-off) into the game to handle the seventh defender in the box. That decision will be based on scouting and is game plan specific.

In the next article, we will discuss using an H-Back (Y-off) to further put the defense in conflict and combat various ways defenses will trigger their box players in an effort to negate the effectiveness of the play.

## HEAD COACHING 101

### ADVICE ON INTERVIEWS



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An excerpt from [Find A Way: What I Wish I'd Known When I Became A Head Football Coach](#)

There are several websites that can give you the pretty standard questions (what is your strength? Weakness? What makes you different?). All of these are good sites and you need to have a very good idea of what you will say to these questions. Do the best you can to prepare for the expected questions, but be aware you will generally get several questions you were not expecting. It is ok to take time to find an answer (I usually repeat the question or ask for clarification to buy time if I need it), but it is not ok to have no answer for a question.

I have gone into each interview I have been able to gain for whatever position with the mindset of being myself. You obviously want to impress the interviewers, but I don't want to gain a position with them thinking I am someone I am not. You also want to find out as much about the school as possible. I have always written out questions I wanted to know. These typically dealt with off-season program, budget, coaching hires/moves and other areas. I learned quickly to also ask about when they expected to make a decision, as it gave me an excuse to call if I had not heard anything (also it is usually not a good sign if that date passes and they have not called, just a head's up).

One small thing I have learned is to also send a thank you card or email (I prefer the card) to the interviewers thanking them for the opportunity. Again, you are

trying to set yourself apart from all other contenders for the position and this lets the school know you are someone that goes above and beyond. You will want to mail this to them the day of, or the day after your interview to be sure it gets to them quickly.

I have been in several head coaching interviews so far and each were vastly different with one giant exception, NO ONE IN THE ROOM KNEW MUCH ABOUT FOOTBALL. The questions had nothing to do with x's and o's or if I even knew the general rules about football. I learned then and there that getting a head coaching job had a lot more to do with how you could sell yourself and the program you were going to bring to the job. On a side note if they are very concerned about the type of offense or defense you will run, that may be a red flag of another sort.

I am not saying do not bring playbooks, philosophies, and football related material. I am simply saying to not expect that to be a major part of the interview. Usually it will be touched on somewhat to discuss coaching needs (number of assistants, types of jobs each will have) and organizational (practice times and off-season), but that will not be the meat of the interview. At a few schools I was asked basic questions about the type of offense or defense I preferred and how I chose to run those, but I was not asked nearly as many X and O questions or philosophy of offense or defense as I was when I interviewed to become a coordinator.

Come prepared with some type of folder to hand out to everyone in the room. This should include: copy of resume, cover letter, powerpoint (printed) of your vision for a program, handouts over "off the field" activities and assistant coach/player development plans and anything else you wish to leave behind. Find someone that is good at making these look professional and make sure it is representing you well.

# STOP DOING THIS

## PERFORMANCE ATROPHY AND WHY IT IS KILLING YOUR PROGRAM

by: Coach Joe Ashfield and Dr. Dutch Franz



COY Jay Northcutt and MVP QB Hud Hutcheson from Frenship High School in West Texas, review pre-snap protection calls and post-snap reads during an off-season virtual reality training session. Hutcheson plays baseball and will miss most of the winter and spring workouts, but the REPS VR simulation training keeps his MVP skills honed to a razor's edge.

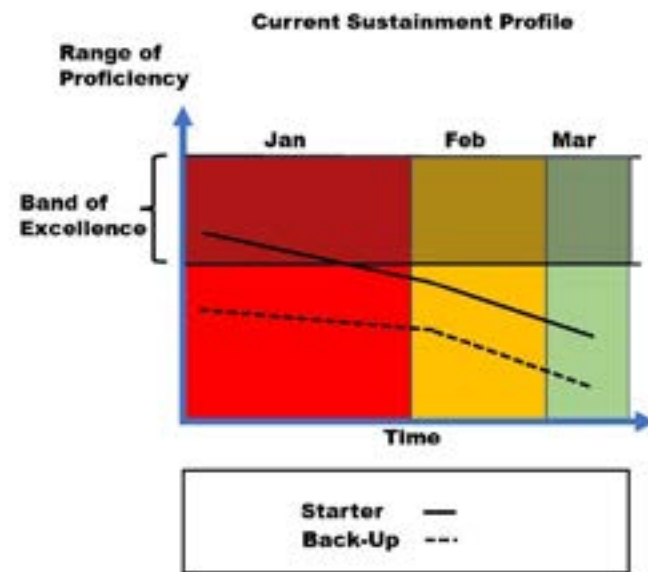
Do you ever feel like each year is a rebuilding year? The senior starters leave, you spend spring ball trying to develop underclassman physically and mentally to do the job but you never get to where you want to be by summer. This is a common problem from high school to college, performance atrophy is real, and it is killing your ability to craft a Program of Excellence. You know, the programs that are perennial powerhouses for no apparent reason, the programs you wonder why they are so good every year.

Let's see if this sounds familiar. Your season ends in November or December and you take a Christmas break until January. In January, February and March you have your team in the weightroom, some players are doing other sports (as they should) and if you have a "football" period during the day it is usually weights

or some kind of film review. REPS works with over 60 programs nationwide from the small high school to the large college, and we see the same cycle everywhere. This cycle is killing you and limiting your potential growth in the spring and summer and success in the fall. Here is why.

### Skill Atrophy in the Off-Season

When you look at a typical skill profile during this off-season period this is what it looks like.



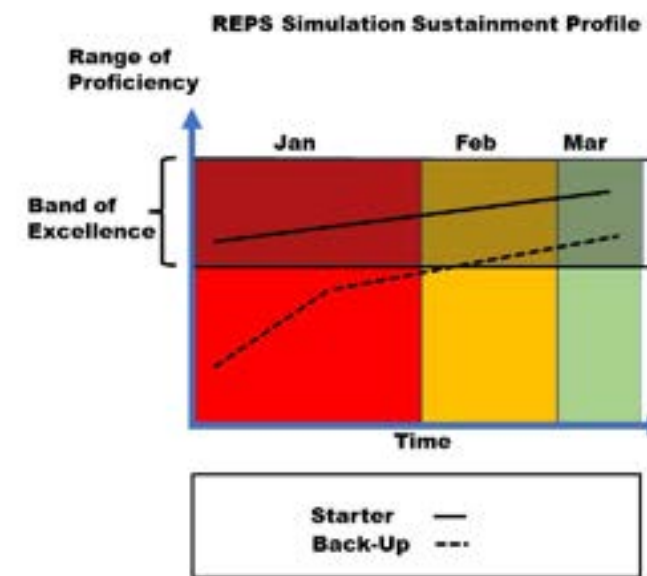
If you are lucky enough to have returning starters, they will likely begin January still in the band of excellence – the high performing band they were in at the end of the season. But this won't last, it takes about six to eight weeks for these skill centers to start to atrophy if they are not used. By the end of January they will dip below the band and the further they get away from December the greater the downward curve. This means slower reaction times, poor pattern recognition needed to make good decisions, and lost conceptual knowledge. If you are not matriculating a returning player, the outlook is even worse. Given how most teams fail to develop non-starters, the back-up player that will become the starter was never in the band of excellence to begin with so there is a significant gap in knowledge and skill. While the starter is trying to

sustain knowledge and skills, the back-up player still must develop those skills and attain that conceptual knowledge.

**RIGHT NOW** - The three months from January through March is the golden time for skill development from both a cognitive and physical perspective. Most teams waste this time or only focus on strength training.

### Skill Development in the Off-Season

Here is the profile of players that use off-season virtual simulation to maintain and develop skills.



What we see with returning starters that adopt an off-season simulation training program is a gradual increase in performance throughout the winter. More importantly, the returning starters don't drop out of the band of excellence. This means when spring ball begins you are months ahead of where you normally would be and can accelerate installs and get to mastery quicker.

For the back-up that is now a starter the impact is even more significant. Let's face it, we do a terrible job developing the back-ups. He was largely forgotten all season, so he starts already below the band of

“The three months from January through March is the golden time for skill development from both a cognitive and physical perspective. Most teams waste this time or only focus on strength training.”

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excellence and will stay there until the spring without intervention. With simulation training, the back-up can get the reps they missed during the season and improve reaction time and decision-making while developing the conceptual knowledge to fit seamlessly into the system in the spring. Virtual simulation training allows the back-up to attain the band of excellence, at least mentally, without much extra work from the staff. Virtual simulation training with REPS can be done quickly and easily from a school system or by the player at his home. Think of simulation training like high-intensity training for the brain. Short, intense, bursts of training lasting about 20 minutes total. These 20 minutes can easily be integrated into and distributed through strength training periods (five virtual simulation reps between sets), during film sessions, or as dedicated training blocks. Add physical exertion to the training period and you get the bonus of developing poise and mental toughness while developing conceptual knowledge and decision-making.

Your biggest hurdle as a coach is to maintain and improve proficiency at the individual and team level. If you do what everyone else is doing you will stay with the pack and start over every year. Complaining about the lack of skilled players in your program and the lack of time to develop high-performing team systems. Or you can do something different and adopt a Program of Excellence model and integrate virtual simulation into your off-season program.

### ***About the Authors:***

Joe Ashfield - Joe is a co-founder of REPS and played quarterback at St. John's University (Minn.) under legendary coach John Gagliardi and spent five seasons as an assistant coach for Stanford University. He has coached at all levels of the sport and is currently the quarterbacks coach and pass game coordinator at Black Hills State University.

Dutch Franz, PhD - Dutch is a co-founder of REPS and a practicing performance psychologist and has worked

with several NCAA Division I national championship programs. Prior to earning his PhD, Dutch spent 20-years as an officer in Army Special Operations perfecting how to train the nation's elite to perform in the most demanding situations.

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