

HEADSETS



WRITTEN FOR COACHES BY COACHES

VOLUME 4: ISSUE 1

unlocking
EXCELLENCE

**WHAT THE
MILITARY TAUGHT ME
ABOUT COACHING**

**BLITZ PATH
FOOTWORK**

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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 all things football.

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 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,

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TIME TO RAISE THE BAR



JAMESIMPSONDESIGNS
SPORTS GRAPHIC DESIGN

RURAL FOOTBALL REFLECTIONS

DEFENDING THE "C" GAP AGAINST OUTSIDE VEER AND BELLY G



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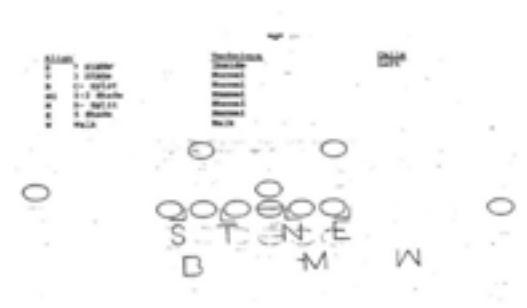
I was fortunate to grow up in a Coaching family, my father was an educator / coach for 52 years. As a child and a teenager, I was surrounded by coaches for most of my developmental years. This has had an enormous impact on me as a coach myself. So, one of the things I remember learning at this age was that the "C" Gap is considered by many as the weakest point in any defense. As I entered the profession in the early 80's this idea or philosophy stuck with me. Protect the "C" Gap on Defense and attack the "C" Gap on Offense. Through most of my early years I was a defensive coach, who was heavily influenced by Coach James and Coach Lambright. I was fortunate to be part of Santa Margarita's Catholic's Defensive Staff, who spent 1991 at Washington's Spring practices for a week learning the ins and outs of G and Tuff Fronts. If you recall this period, you will know that Nebraska and Washington had some epic battles in those years. While visiting with the Huskies Defensive staff, they openly talked about how their defensive philosophy was designed to stop the run game and specifically the Nebraska I Option attack. Part of Nebraska

devastating running game was Outside Veer and Belly Option plays that specifically attacked the "C" Gap of defenses.

Game on YouTube <https://youtu.be/IHuNw4JOCFO>

So, what are the advantages of Washington's G Front in defending the "C" Gap and in this case or blog, Outside Veer.

Washington's G Front from 1991 Defensive Playbook



When we were learning this defense in 1991, we made the mistake of saying "oh you folks are running an even front", Coach Lambright said jokingly "No it is a shoved weak Okie". He would go on to explain that their "Stud" defensive end was their version of Lawerance Taylor / LT. He was their best front 7 athlete and therefore he would be lined up in the defenses most vulnerable spot the "C" Gap in a 7 Shade or if a Bear Bryant guy 6i. Lambright would also say by playing the Stud End inside the TE in a 7 Shade, the TE would declare his intent on snap of the ball because of this alignment, which in turn would help his defense respond correctly. I have found over the years that at the high school level if you can line someone up in the gap, they want to attack you are going to cause them some issues.

The idea behind the "G" Front is to put offensive linemen in conflict concerning double teams and Outside Veer:

TE & OT Double Team Stud End

If the play is the dreaded Outside Veer, the 7 or 6i Stud End will force the double team between TE and OT. He cannot give ground. The Sam Backer seeing flow will come of the TE's block to play the Outside Veer inside out to QB & SS (not pictured in diagram) would have pitch. Lambright's mindset was the QB looks for give read to outside of TE and would have difficulty determining give or keep read with Sam Backer stacked on Stud End. The DT in the 3 Shade will have his outside arm and leg free from OG block allowing him to slide down the LOS to assist with Veer back hitting the congested "C" Gap.

OT & OG Double Team DT in 3 Shade

If the offense decides to try and wash the Stud End with only the TE, he must fight pressure and maintain gap integrity at all costs. The worst case at high school level is to drop outside knee and create pile in the "C" Gap. Meanwhile to 3 Shade DT taking on the OT & OG Double Team cannot be forced off the LOS, because it will cut off Mike Backer from helping on the play side "C" GAP & possible cut back lane. Again, the Sam Backer seeing flow will come of the TE's block to play the Outside Veer inside out to QB & SS (not pictured in diagram) would have pitch. Now let us look at Belly G Option that Nebraska ran so well for so many years and was the secondary reason for Washington's development of their "G" Front:

Here is what it looks like:



If you recall from earlier in this blog, one of the reasons James and Lambright liked 7 / 6i Shade is it would make the Y / TE declare his intentions immediately, so against the Belly G Log Block or potential Trap Block by the pulling guard:

DT 3 Shade vs Pulling Guard with Down Block by OT

If we are doing our jobs as Defensive Line Coaches, we should be telling our 3 Shade DT get off the ball and do not let Guard pull across your face! Get a punch and foot in gap to make guard bubble on his pull. If he does get a to cross your face because the OT is doing an excellent job down blocking you, grab guard's belt from behind and fall taking him with you.

Stud End 7/6i Shade vs Y/TE Climbing & Pulling Guard Log or Trap Block

Get off the ball, punch Y / TE and get your inside foot in the gap. Delay Y / TE long enough to let Sam read play and get a head start to defeating the Y / TE potential block. Feel Y / TE easing away blocking you and begin to squeeze, not getting up field as to allow for the trap block by the pulling guard. While on LOS be prepared to fight off the "Log" Block by the guard, by not

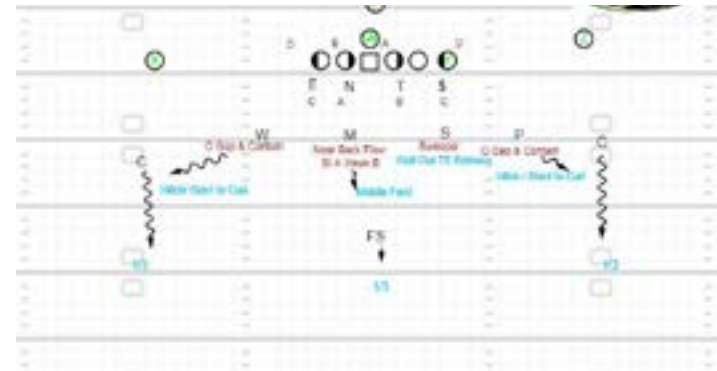
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getting depth you are forcing the guard to make the more difficult block on you. Drive the Pulling guard outside shoulder and chest plate to QB and Fullback mesh point. The idea is to not get up field to fast allowing trap or QB to duck underneath you, but instead to drive spikes at play forcing it to bubble each time to sidelines or secondary makes tackle. Sam Backer should see Y/TE slowed release with flow to his side. Sam Backer must attack inside out on ball from C Gap and the Y/TE block to seal him in the C Gap. In a Base Call- Sam Backer would have QB on the option part of play, unless a "switch" call with SS. In a "switch" call SS attacks QB from outside leverage, while Sam Backer races inside out to pitch back using the sidelines to squeeze ball carrier.

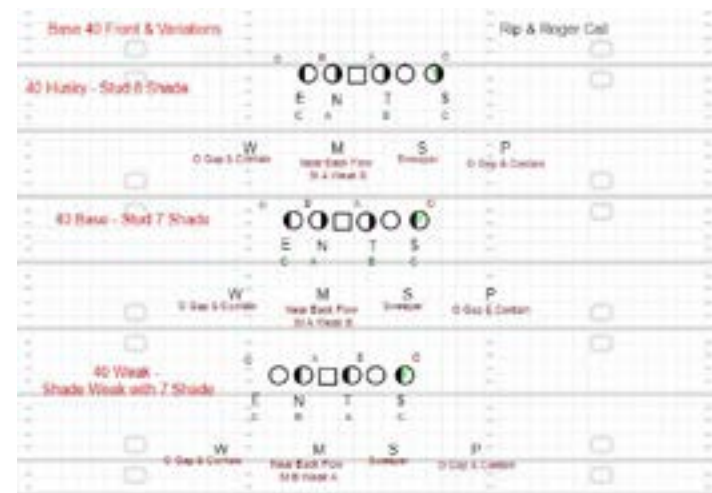
Defense Fits or Rotation:



This is our version of G Front - 43 - Meaning a 40 Front with Cover 3:



This has been a great defense against the traditional offenses we see in rural Oregon, Wing T, Double Wing, Split T, and I Back Offenses. Simple tags let us stem and move around up front to keep those offensive linemen thinking rather than attacking. Two of these tags are in diagram below, Husky and Weak.



We love the idea of shade alignments for the simple reason it helps with defeat down blocks and creates difficulty in pulling linemen cleanly on counters or the dreaded Wing T Buck play. We also teach our kids something I learned from my collection of mentors in SoCal back early in my career. This little nugget empowers our kids to a degree, if the opposing offensive linemen is flat out a better athlete than me cheat or shade more towards the gap and if we are the better athlete cheat the shade to more head up on lineman. Another thing we had to learn was to control our depth. When we had learned the defense in 1991, Coach Hart (Husky's DL Coach) and Coach Lambright talked about speed and penetration by the defensive linemen in their scheme. That did NOT translate well to the high school level and high school defensive linemen,

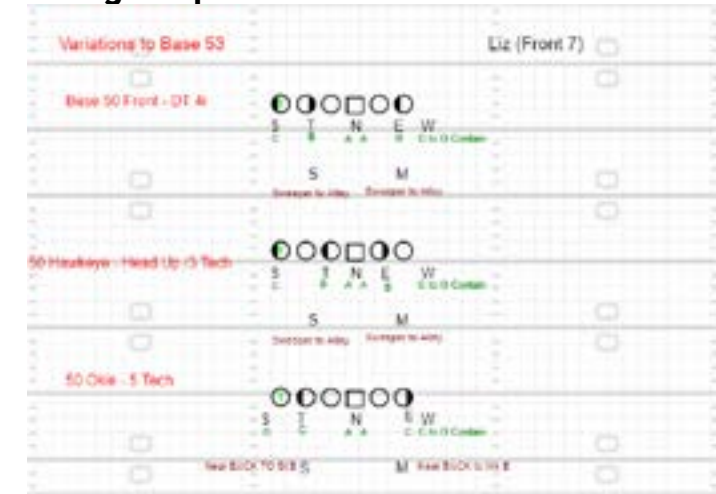
they would lose gap integrity and get too far up field and offensive plays would go underneath them constantly. So, we did two things:

1) We taught attacking the 1/2 Man of our opposing offensive linemen and taught to control him with our hands while placing our feet and hips in our designated gap. We called it "Playing a Gap and Half a Man."

2) We dug out a lot of videos to show our kids what great defensive looked like and played like! Great defenses involve scenarios that look like this; 2-yard gain followed by another 3-yard gain, followed by an incomplete pass. Or another series that looked like this 4- yard gain followed by a 2-yard loss, followed by a 5-yard completion. We spent a lot of time talking about defenses that have a loss for 5 to 7 yards have much more to do with the offense making a bad play worse than the defense making it happen.

This took a great deal of time and patience on behalf of our coaching staff to engrain in our young athletes. However, by teaching and re-teach gap control and depth we opened the door for our desire to become a multiple front defense playing 4-man front (40) and 5-man fronts (50). This simple gap control concept was huge for us!

Below is a diagram of our 50 looks with no change in personnel:



DRILLS

BLITZ PATH FOOTWORK



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viQtory

Typically when we coach our players to blitz, it's blitz with a meaningful purpose. It's blitz with a reckless, but controlled mentality.

A well timed and crafted blitz can put a dent in the offensive line and instantly disrupt the play.

However, when blitzing off the edge, it's important to have proper footwork so you don't get beat to the outside.

This past off-season I had the chance to experiment with some new footwork for edge blitzers.

Instead of just running full speed off the edge, I changed their footwork to more of a controlled shuffle. When the cadence starts, they will start to work toward the line of scrimmage with short choppy steps.



If you notice this player's footwork, he has a wide base as he's tracking his blitz path. A wide base allows you to redirect your momentum quickly, as you move toward the line of scrimmage.

That way, if your C-Gap blitz path forces you to chase a toss sweep or something to the outside, you're not caught in a trail position. You can simply put your foot in the ground and redirect.

We explain this more in detail on our viQtory Coaches Show below (Watch at 12:50)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvTuAAFb6EY>

This small change in footwork allowed our players to play the edge more effectively and track any outside sweeps or QB scrambles.

As always if you have any questions or would like to see more film on this technique, feel free to reach out contact@viqtorysports.com

OFFENSIVE TALK

WHY AND HOW TO GO FAST IN YOUR OFFENSE



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The obvious answer to this question is that an up-tempo offense will not allow the defense to get correctly aligned by hurting their communications. This article explores why a football team should run plays at a fast tempo, highlighting the strategic advantages of executing your offense at a fast pace. I want to answer why and how to go fast on offense at strategic moments in the game.

Here is a quote from an offensive lineman who just played his first game in a no-huddle offense, "...it speeds up a lot of things and puts more pressure on the defense. I'm sure you'll see it have more of an effect as the season goes on. All of us like it. Whatever it takes for us to win, we'll love." That quote was from a former teammate of mine, Jim Kremer, on the 1983 Troy State Trojans. We had just won our first game of the season, 33-6. A year later, we won the NCAA D-II national championship, running the Wishbone Offense with a no-huddle offense that had the added weapon of being able to go up-tempo when the situation called for it. The Trojans also won the Natty in '87 using the "hurry-up no-huddle" on the game-clinching drive (click the link below to see for yourself). We were not in a hurry most of

the time, but we could quickly speed things up when we needed to with a series of one-word calls that forced the defense to be very basic and vanilla. That was when I became a fan of not having a huddle and having the ability to go fast when we needed or wanted to. A no-huddle offense can get favorable match-ups by making the defense run their base or burn timeouts. The offense does not always need to be in a hurry; they only need to have the ability to go fast to affect the defense negatively.

If the offense does not huddle or substitute, it can prevent the defense from subbing by having a one-word call that will catch the defense with too many or not enough men on the field. The no-huddle offense can flip a switch to go fast by making a one-word call. In essence, the no-huddle can be a threat even at normal speed. The no-huddle offense that has demonstrated the ability to go fast can cause the defense to be very basic. By minimizing the time between plays, the offense limits the effectiveness of defensive adjustments, catching opponents off guard and increasing the likelihood of mismatches. According to a survey of over 1,000 coaches, this was the top reason for implementing an up-tempo attack.

Imagine adding to your offensive arsenal without adding any more plays or formations. That is precisely what you are doing when you add a "hurry-up" package to your offense. No new plays or formations, but you have added to your offense and what opposing defenses have to prepare for. A team with the ability and threat

continued on next page

of going fast also puts pressure on a defense. A rattlesnake does not have to strike at me to get my attention; the sound of its tail gets my attention. Your team will also be better prepared when they have to go fast at the end of the first half or late in a game. It will be second nature to them.

The conditioning aspect cannot be overlooked in a "hurry-up" attack. If you know you will be running plays at a high tempo, you can train all year to do so effectively, whereas your opponent is practicing at a more traditional pace. Practicing fast is what I like to call "practical football conditioning." Instead of thinking about where they need to be on every play, the defense will focus on when their next rest break is coming. A defense with their hands on their hips is a beautiful sight for the offense. As Vince Lombardi said, "Fatigue makes cowards of us all."

Here are a Few Ways to Implement a Hurry-Up Attack:

The snap count must be simple and repped to the point of boredom. We use our snap count in our off-season workouts. Use it in the weight room, mat room, agilities, stretching, conditioning, etc. Using your snap count year-round, you can practice going fast all year. An added benefit is teaching your team not to jump offside.

Use a few simple schemes; do NOT try to run everything you have in your offense in your up-tempo package. We use one or two pass pro schemes and limit our run schemes to the plays we are most proficient at running. We restrict our

up-tempo run package to Buck, Power, Counter, and Jet. We run these plays out of basically two formations when we go fast.

We love to script, repeat, and flip plays when we want to go fast. If we gash them on 1st and 10 with Power right, we will likely line up and run Power from the same formation as fast as possible. If we have a good gain on Jet to the field, we like to flip the play and formation and run Jet to the field again. We also flip the formation and run a play with Jet motion to the field, maybe a Counter back to the boundary with a Jet fake to the field.

You should know what you are going to do beforehand. We love to have an automatic or two built into our call sheet. For example, you may like running a particular play on a specific down and distance. Guess what? Your opponent probably knows you like that play, too. To keep the defense from loading up on you, have a one-word call, line up fast, and run your favorite 3rd and short play as soon as the ball is set for play. If your favorite play on 3rd and short is Power right, have a one-word call that tells your offense that you are lining up in a particular formation and running Power right NOW! That one word communicates formation, play, direction, and snap count. You need to practice that play all week. We always run it on one to eliminate us jumping and turning 3rd and short into 3rd and medium. Do this a few times early on and later in the game: hurry up, get in the same formation, and run "no play." I promise you that the defense will jump because you have sped them up.

One of the up-tempo techniques we started to employ several years ago was to treat an explosive play like a sudden change situation. We would hurry up on the ensuing play and go for the jugular. You do this by hustling down the field and running another play while the defense is still reeling from the previous play. For instance, if we threw a screen right into the boundary and it went for 20 yards or more, we would line up as fast as we could and run another play that made the defense run, something like Jet left. Doing things like this can tire out a defense and force them to run their base defense with the same eleven that you just exploded on. Another cool thing about doing this is that it is almost impossible to pick up on it from watching film. TIP: Make sure your camera person knows NOT to record your offense between plays, no matter how fast you are going.

NOTE/COACHING POINT:

You must practice this one-word call a ton. Do it during your Inside Run period and during Team time. We have even yelled out the one-word call during conditioning; the kids will run to the ball a coach has spotted, get lined up, and run the play versus air. Do not forget to practice your "no play" call when you are doing this. In a perfect world, we would have a run and a pass with which we could do this, along with "no play." If you take nothing else from this article, take this idea and put it into practice. By the way, you can do something like this even if you are a team that usually huddles. It might be more effective since you normally huddle.

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“Doing things like this can tire out a defense and force them to run their base defense with the same eleven that you just exploded on. Another cool thing about doing this is that it is almost impossible to pick up on it from watching film.”

What about formations? As I said earlier, we use very few formations when we go fast, and we do not change the formation until the next dead ball, or we kill the tempo. An example of why we choose to kill tempo is when we get behind the sticks. Staying on schedule is a must for going fast tempo. The only motion we use when we are in tempo is Jet because the Jet has been such a significant part of our offense over the years, and we do not want to eliminate it from our tempo play menu. We do eliminate shifts from our up-tempo package. If you have time to shift, so does the defense. As stated earlier, we like to use the same formation or make subtle changes. The subtle changes are things like your H-Back being in a Wing right or Wing left or being in Sniffer right or Sniffer left. Another minor adjustment is aligning the running back on the right or left. These are small changes that should not slow you down. You can have a multi-formation offense with multiple shifts and motions but cannot do that as effectively if you are trying to go fast. Another formation note is to leave players where they are when the whistle blows, especially Wide Receivers. Nothing kills your tempo more than running a WR from one side of the field to another.

We get asked about substitutions while in "hurry-up" mode, and the answer is simple, "Don't do it!" We only like to sub on dead balls if we are in our fast mode. If you have time to sub, the defense has time to sub. Always assume that your opponent knows at least as much as you do. A play-caller who thinks they are the smartest kid in the room will eventually be disabused of that notion when the opposing defensive staff

demonstrates they get a vote on the outcome of every play. Substituting in tempo gives the defense time to process and properly align, which defeats the purpose of going fast. All that being said, we have subbed out WRs on long pass routes. Have your WR subs near you on the sideline, and as soon as the whistle blows, run your fresh WR onto the field as you are calling or signaling the next play. A WR jogging back to the line after a 40- to 50-yard route will kill your tempo; get him off the field. Like everything I have told you, this must be practiced with plenty of reps.

A FEW MUSTS:

Your team must be in great shape. Tiring out the defense is counter-productive if you are also gassing your offense. Your offensive players must take pride in being the most well-conditioned team on the field. They will get this way by practicing fast every day. Besides getting them in game shape, another positive side effect of practicing fast is increasing your reps in practice. Our goal in practice is four plays per minute. Since we practice in increments of five-minute periods, we want to get 16-20 plays a period in Team time. Recording practice when you are going fast is essential to coaching them later. Coaches can use the apps on their phones for this, it will be uploaded before you return to the fieldhouse.

A Few Closing Thoughts:

1) The Defensive Coordinator and Offensive Line coach must be bought in, and the DC and OC/play-caller must be on the same page.
2) An offense can only go as fast as the offensive

line lets it. We coach our OL to find the Umpire after every play and jog to him as they look to the sideline for the next play call. We encourage this by rewarding them with less conditioning after practice if they hustle and we do not have to wait for them.

3) We teach our skill guys to always hand the ball to the nearest adult in practice. Do NOT flip or toss the ball to the refs (coaches in practice) – HAND IT TO THEM.

4) We do NOT always go fast in games, even though we almost always practice fast. We, like most of you, have limited personnel, and many of them play on both sides of the ball and special teams. We pick our spots in the game and use up-tempo strategically.

5) Using your one-word situational calls to speed up the defense on 3rd down in the middle of a regular tempo drive can cause the defense all sorts of issues and prevent them from getting in a rhythm.

6) Practice is not boring to anyone when you are practicing fast. It keeps nearly everyone engaged – players, coaches, managers, and trainers.

7) Choose your spots; you do not always have to go fast to affect the defense.

8) I do NOT like going up-tempo when we are behind the sticks. There is no shame in slowing it down and calling the right play to get back on schedule.

9) A fast-paced, up-tempo offense makes defenses play their base even when you are not going fast. You should see fewer blitzes, stunts, and situational substitutions.

10) Unless the other team is up-tempo, it is almost impossible to duplicate it with their scout offense.

Going fast is not for everyone, but I believe any offensive style can do it; it is not just for Spread or Air Raid teams. We did it when we were Wishbone, Wing-T, and even I Formation back in the day. The Troy Trojans won two NCAA D-II national titles going "no-huddle" in 1984 and 1987 while running the Wishbone (follow the link below to see it in action). In closing, let me say that if your team is not very good and you are just trying to keep games close, DO NOT TRY THIS! Thank you for your time, and please feel free to contact me at seagle.chip@gmail.com.

Link to video of Troy choosing their spot to go fast: <https://youtu.be/Jr9PvdcfmDg>

JOB SEARCH PREP FOR COACHES

HOW DO YOU SEPARATE YOURSELF FROM OTHER CANDIDATES IN A COACHING SEARCH?



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In the competitive realm of coaching searches, where qualified candidates abound, the challenge of distinguishing oneself becomes paramount. Beyond the conventional qualifications and credentials, the process demands a unique blend of strategic self-promotion, distinctive coaching philosophies, and a compelling personal narrative. This article discusses the top strategies that aspiring coaches can employ to not only stand out but to leave an indelible mark in the minds of decision-makers. From cultivating a distinct coaching identity to showcasing adaptability and innovation, the ability to separate oneself requires a thoughtful and proactive approach. Here are some tips to help you stand out and land your next job!

Build a Strong Coaching Résumé:

- Highlight your coaching experience, achievements, and any championships or notable successes you've had in previous

coaching roles.

- Emphasize your ability to develop players both athletically and personally.

Networking:

- Establish and expand your network within the coaching community. Attend coaching clinics, seminars, and conferences to meet other coaches, administrators, and influential figures in the field.
- Seek recommendations and endorsements from respected individuals in the coaching profession.

Continuous Learning and Certification:

- Stay current with the latest coaching methodologies, strategies, and innovations.
- Obtain relevant coaching certifications and showcase your commitment to ongoing professional development.

Clearly Define Your Coaching Philosophy:

- Clearly articulate your coaching philosophy, including your approach to the game, player development, and team culture.
- Demonstrate how your coaching style aligns with the values and goals of the organization you're applying to.

Create a Coaching Portfolio:

- Develop a comprehensive coaching portfolio that includes your coaching philosophy, career highlights, and testimonials.
- Use video footage, if available, to showcase your coaching style and the success of your teams.

Leadership and Management Skills:

- Highlight your leadership and management skills, emphasizing your ability to make tough decisions, manage a coaching staff, and handle pressure situations.

Communication Skills:

- Showcase your effective communication skills, both in written documents (such as your coaching philosophy) and in verbal communication during interviews.
- Emphasize your ability to motivate and inspire players.

Adaptability and Innovation:

- Illustrate your ability to adapt to changing circumstances and showcase any innovative strategies or approaches you've implemented in your coaching career.

Demonstrate Player Development:

- Provide examples of players you've coached who have gone on to achieve success, whether at higher levels of competition or in their personal development.

Conduct Mock Interviews:

- Practice interview scenarios to ensure that you can confidently and effectively communicate your coaching philosophy, experiences, and vision for the team.

Emphasize Character and Integrity:

- Highlight your commitment to ethical coaching practices, sportsmanship, and integrity. Character matters, and organizations often look for coaches who can serve as positive

role models.

Show Passion and Enthusiasm:

- Demonstrate your passion for the sport and your genuine enthusiasm for coaching. Coaches who are genuinely passionate about their work can inspire and motivate others.

Remember that the hiring process is not solely about what you say on paper or in an interview but also about the overall impression you leave. Be authentic, confident, and thoroughly prepared to showcase your skills and accomplishments!

Need Additional Help?

If you need help with your coaching resume, your portfolio, or the interview process, be sure to sign up for one of our job prep packages at [The Coaching Portfolio Guide!](#) We provide services that assist with all aspects of the job search process for coaches. Visit www.coachingportfolio.com to get started today!

LEADERSHIP

WHAT THE MILITARY TAUGHT ME ABOUT COACHING



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The football coaching journey doesn't start the same for everyone. Some of us started as a High School Senior, staying on staff after our final season. Some of us went to college to play ball and became a GA after. And some of us went off in other directions until the world brought us back to football. That's the path my journey took. I've proudly served in the US Army National Guard for 17.5 years. I've worked in many different industries and held a whole slew of titles. However, it's the military training that I see show up the most in coaching. These two worlds may even be destined to cross.

"Excuses make today easy, but tomorrow hard. Discipline makes today hard, but tomorrow easier."

DISCIPLINE

It's no secret that the military requires discipline. Whether it is being up early, staying up late, completing rigorous training, physical fitness, keeping your "booger picker off of the bang switch," standing guard in a tower on a JCOP

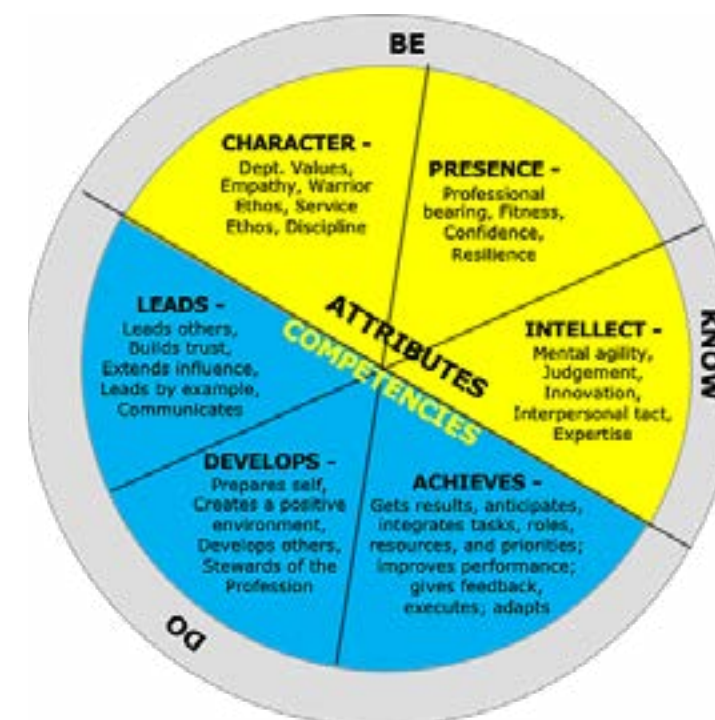
in Northern Afghanistan, or hauling missiles across the desert in other sandy places... we constantly need discipline to ensure the outcome of the mission is a successful one. Hours of preparation go into each mission, sometimes practicing for a year or more to do a single mission correctly. Football is much the same. We aren't practicing year round for our sport, but coaches are (or should be) getting better at their craft throughout the offseason. Many players spend that time in the weightroom or competing in other sports as well. We spend countless hours prepping, planning, and practicing for ~10 guaranteed competitions. But, those competitions need to be flawless, so the investment pays off. The military taught me the discipline to spend the time now, to make things easier when the season rolls around.

"Leadership is requiring someone to walk through Hell, and having them look forward to the trip."

LEADERSHIP

Leadership is another aspect of coaching that I found myself pre-developed in. Unfortunately, it's a very meticulous concept that you're expected to have as a coach but no one really knows how to teach it to fellow coaches, or our players for that matter. For many schools, leadership is a great speech (or one that sounds great in our heads) before running out of the tunnel. For some it's being the "reminders" coach after practice each day. Getting a Head Coach job, or being made the JH Head Coach for a program is what some coaches think leadership is all about. Luckily, the military does this a bit better.

There truly are an infinite number of things that can be considered leadership, and it's a combination of these that makes a true leader. There are plenty of opportunities for a coach to be a leader too. Being on time, picking up trash, washing those nasty road whites after a mud bog of a game, living the values you preach to your players, pulling your star QB in a must win game when he's showing sign of a concussion, having respectful conversations with players, parents, and admin when something is going wrong, and adopting philosophies such as "Extreme Ownership." To practice leadership is so much more than a single position or title. In the military we follow the "Be, Know, Do" concept of leadership (See the graphic below) to ensure our Soldiers always know what they can expect their superiors to provide them, as well as what they should be expected to develop themselves. We believe in Servant Leadership, you've been assigned a job that holds more power and authority but you're expected to use that power and authority to serve those below



you. Leadership isn't one speech, one title, one position of authority. It's a conglomerate of attributes (things we are) and competencies (things we do) that we must practice and display each and every day. The military taught me that not all people in leadership positions are leaders, and not all leaders hold a position.

"A key to achieving success is to assemble a strong and stable management team."

SMALL TEAM MANAGEMENT

The entirety of the US Army is built around Small Team Management. There's some verbiage somewhere (a better Soldier would likely know) that dictates that each leader should be in charge of no more than ~10 other Soldiers. It's a system that has worked for literally hundreds of years (1636 was a long time ago). I am all about, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it," and it ain't broke. From what I've seen in coaching thus far, most coaches don't understand this principle. We quickly become overburdened by the inability to divide and conquer. You can't be the main point of contact for 35+ kids. Much like Dunbar's Number, which says you can only have 150 meaningful contacts, you can only be the go-to coach for so many players. You're not only hurting yourself, but your players as well. They need a more attentive person to bond with, and that just can't be you. Not to mention that dividing up your team into squads and assigning squad leader players to work with each of your assistant coaches helps to build leadership throughout each group, which I've

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already mentioned as one of those weak points in coaching. The military taught me how to divide up my teams, and how to manage them from a perspective of decentralized command.

"If you want something done right, and with precision, find a Non-Commissioned Officer...."


In conclusion, I spent over 17 years (so far) serving my country and it's not unlike serving the players on my team. The military engrained discipline, leadership skills and leadership development, and small team management on my brain. Other Soldiers are out there too, with these exact same skills well practiced. If you're looking to add to your staff, consider reaching out to your state's Troops to Teachers representative and work with them to bring a Soldier to your

team. If you're a Soldier in need of a new career, consider looking into Troops to Teachers (turn any 4-year degree into a teaching certificate) and connect with Soldiers to Sidelines to gain some baseline knowledge of coaching football, or any sport.



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ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT

UNLOCKING EXCELLENCE: A DEEP DIVE INTO YEAR ROUND ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT FOR FOOTBALL PROGRAMS



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In the realm of football coaching, the pursuit of excellence is an unending journey, one that transcends the boundaries of the playing season. As a football coach, your mission is not just about winning games; it's about sculpting athletes who consistently perform at the pinnacle of their potential. This comprehensive guide delves into the intricate strategies, practical methodologies, and real-world examples that football coaches can leverage to maximize the potential of their players throughout the entire year.

1. Foundations of Physical Training: Crafting Resilient Athletes

a. Periodization: Tailoring Training Phases to Football's Rhythms

Effective periodization is the backbone of year-round success. Consider the seasonal demands of football and structure training phases accordingly. For instance, in the offseason, emphasize hypertrophy and foundational strength. Transition to power-focused workouts in the preseason, aligning with the approaching

competitive season. As the season unfolds, adjust training to maintain peak performance while managing fatigue.

Example: In the offseason, a focus on hypertrophy can involve compound movements with higher rep ranges to stimulate muscle growth. As the preseason approaches, shift towards power-focused exercises like box jumps and explosive medicine ball throws.

b. Strength and Power Training: The Core of Football Athleticism

Building functional strength is non-negotiable. Incorporate compound movements into training routines, emphasizing proper form and progressive overload. Power training is equally critical, enhancing an athlete's ability to generate force rapidly.

Example: Integrate Olympic lifts like cleans and snatches to develop explosive power. For strength, consider a foundational workout featuring squats, bench presses, and deadlifts with a focus on strength gains.

c. Speed and Agility Workouts: Translating Quickness to the Field

Football is a game of split-second decisions, demanding agility and rapid changes in direction. Tailor drills to mimic football movements, integrating ladder drills, cone exercises, and shuttle runs.

Example: Implement the "L-Drill" to enhance lateral agility. Players start at the base of an L-shape and sprint to the tip, touch the ground, shuffle sideways to the next corner, shuffle back, then sprint to the starting point.

d. Cardiovascular Conditioning: Endurance

Tailored to the Game

Football's dynamic nature requires a blend of aerobic and anaerobic endurance. Interval training that mirrors the stop-and-start nature of the game is key.

Example: Implement high-intensity interval training (HIIT) sessions, alternating between sprints and brief recovery periods to simulate the demands of football.

2. Nutrition as a Game-Changer: Fueling Performance from the Inside Out

a. Balanced Nutrition Plans: The Engine for Optimal Output

Educate players on the importance of a balanced diet, emphasizing the role of macronutrients and micronutrients. Customized nutrition plans can address individual player needs.

Example: Create individualized meal plans based on players' positions and energy requirements. A lineman's diet may differ from a wide receiver's, aligning with their distinct physical demands.

b. Hydration Protocols: Quenching the Thirst for Victory

Dehydration can compromise performance. Establish clear hydration protocols, ensuring players consistently consume water throughout the day.

Example: Track individual hydration levels using urine color charts and encourage players to maintain pale yellow to clear urine as an indicator of proper hydration.

c. Strategic Nutrient Timing: Precision in Pre- and Post-Game Nutrition

Optimize nutrient intake around training

sessions. Pre-game meals should provide sustained energy, while post-game nutrition focuses on recovery.

Example: Pre-game meals might include complex carbohydrates like whole grains and lean proteins. Post-game, emphasize protein-rich options for muscle repair and carbohydrates for glycogen replenishment.

d. Supplementation Guidance: Enhancing Performance Safely

Collaborate with sports nutritionists to identify appropriate supplements. Emphasize that supplements should complement a well-rounded diet, not replace it.

Example: Consider the use of branched-chain amino acids (BCAAs) during intense training periods to support muscle recovery and reduce muscle soreness.

3. Recovery: Preserving the Athlete's Body and Mind

a. Prioritize Quality Sleep: The Ultimate Recovery Tool

Quality sleep is a linchpin of recovery. Establish sleep hygiene practices, emphasizing consistent sleep patterns.

Example: Implement team-wide strategies such as blackout curtains in team hotels to create an optimal sleep environment during away games.

b. Active Recovery Sessions: Balancing Rest and Movement

Incorporate active recovery sessions, including activities like swimming or yoga, to enhance blood flow and reduce muscle soreness.

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Example: Introduce a post-game yoga session focused on stretching and relaxation to aid recovery and mental rejuvenation.

c. **Massage and Bodywork: Treating the Athlete's Canvas**

Invest in regular massage and bodywork sessions to address muscle tension and prevent injuries.

Example: Schedule weekly massages for players during intense training periods, targeting areas prone to tightness, such as the lower back and shoulders.

d. **Cryotherapy and Hydrotherapy: Harnessing the Power of Temperature**

Alternating between hot and cold treatments can accelerate recovery. Consider cryotherapy and hydrotherapy options.

Example: After a grueling practice, implement contrast baths, alternating between hot and cold water immersion, to reduce inflammation and promote recovery.

4. Mental Conditioning: Forging Warriors of the Mind

a. **Visualization Techniques: Shaping the Mind for Success**

Introduce visualization exercises to enhance mental focus. Encourage players to visualize successful plays and scenarios.

Example: Before a crucial game, conduct a team visualization session where players mentally rehearse successful plays and strategies.

b. **Mental Toughness Drills: Building Resilience through Challenges**

Simulate high-pressure situations during practice to fortify players against adversity and

build mental toughness.

Example: Create scenarios in practice where the team is behind on the scoreboard, challenging players to maintain composure and execute under pressure.

c. **Mindfulness and Relaxation: Calming the Storm Within**

Teach mindfulness and relaxation techniques to manage stress. Incorporate deep breathing and meditation into routine practices.

Example: Implement a brief meditation session before important games to help players stay focused and calm.

d. **Goal Setting and Team Bonding: Unity in Purpose**

Facilitate goal-setting sessions for individual players and the team. Establish clear objectives to foster a sense of purpose and camaraderie.

Example: Set specific team goals for the season, whether it's winning a championship or achieving a certain win-loss record. Regularly revisit these goals to maintain focus and motivation.

5. Skill-Specific Training: Sharpening the Tools of the Trade

a. **Position-Specific Drills: Precision in Role Mastery**

Tailor drills to specific positions, ensuring players hone the skills essential to their roles on the field.

Example: Quarterbacks can benefit from specialized passing drills, while linemen may focus on agility and blocking techniques.

b. **Game Simulations: Replicating Pressure**

Scenarios in Practice

Integrate game simulations into practice sessions. Create scenarios that replicate in-game situations for strategic decision-making.

Example: Simulate a two-minute drill in practice, challenging the offense to execute under time pressure while the defense works on clock management.

c. **Technical Proficiency Clinics: Perfecting the Fundamentals**

Conduct regular clinics to refine technical skills. Dedicate time to perfecting fundamentals, from tackling techniques to route running.

Example: Host a tackling clinic with a former professional player or coach to provide insights into proper tackling form and techniques.

d. **Film Study Sessions: Decoding Success and Identifying Areas for Growth**

Use film study as a valuable tool for player development. Analyze both team and individual performances to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.

Example: After a game, conduct a thorough film review session, highlighting successful plays and discussing areas that need improvement.

6. Injury Prevention: Safeguarding the Team's Physical Capital

a. **Preventive Strength and Conditioning: Building Resilience Against Injuries**

Design strength and conditioning programs that address common football-related injuries. Strengthen vulnerable areas to reduce the risk of injuries.

Example: Incorporate exercises targeting the hamstrings and quadriceps to prevent common

football injuries like strains and tears.

b. **Biomechanical Assessments: Precision in Injury Mitigation**

Collaborate with experts to conduct biomechanical assessments. Identify and rectify imbalances or weaknesses that may contribute to overuse injuries.

Example: Work with a sports biomechanics specialist to analyze players' movements and identify any imbalances that may lead to injury.

c. **Comprehensive Warm-Up and Cool Down: A Ritual for Physical Preparedness**

Prioritize thorough warm-up and cool-down routines to prepare muscles for intense activity and aid in recovery.

Example: Implement a dynamic warm-up routine that includes joint mobility exercises and dynamic stretches before every practice and game.

d. **Strategic Player Rotation: Managing Workload for Longevity**

Develop a rotation strategy to manage player workload. Avoid overtraining and minimize the risk of fatigue-related injuries by strategically rotating players during practices and games.

Example: Rotate players during practice drills to ensure they get adequate rest between intense activities, preventing fatigue-related injuries.

7. Strategic Planning: Crafting a Blueprint for Seasonal Success

a. **Long-Term Development Plan: Navigating the Journey with Purpose**

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Collaborate with coaching staff to establish a comprehensive long-term development plan. Set team-wide goals and individual objectives, ensuring alignment with the overall vision for the program.

Example: Outline a five-year plan that includes goals for player development, team achievements, and program growth. Regularly revisit and adjust the plan based on progress and evolving objectives.

b. Regular Assessments: Data-Driven Decision-Making for Continuous Improvement

Conduct regular assessments to track progress. Use objective data to evaluate the effectiveness of training protocols and make adjustments as needed.

Example: Implement regular physical assessments, such as speed tests and strength benchmarks, to measure players' progress over time.

c. Adaptability in Coaching Approach: Embracing the Unpredictable Nature of Sports

Embrace adaptability in your coaching approach. Recognize the uniqueness of each player and be open to adjusting strategies based on individual needs and team dynamics.

Example: If a player demonstrates a particular aptitude for a new position, be flexible in adapting their role to maximize their impact on the team.

d. Rest and Periods of Deloading: Preserving Physical and Mental Freshness

Integrate planned rest periods and deloading phases into the annual plan. These breaks are crucial for preventing burnout, allowing physical

recovery, and maintaining mental freshness. Example: Schedule strategic breaks during the offseason to give players time to rest and recover before ramping up intensity for the next phase.

Conclusion: Nurturing a Legacy of Excellence

Maximizing the potential of football players is a multifaceted endeavor that requires a holistic and unwavering commitment. As a football coach, you are not merely a strategist; you are a sculptor, molding athletes into champions. By weaving together the threads of physical training, nutrition, recovery, mental conditioning, skill-specific drills, injury prevention, and strategic planning, you craft a tapestry of athletic excellence.

As you guide your team through the year-round challenges and triumphs, may your dedication be mirrored by the resilience and achievements of your players on the field. The pursuit of excellence is a continuous journey, and with the right guidance, commitment, and passion, your team can ascend to new heights, leaving an indelible legacy of success. Here's to a season filled with triumphs, growth, and the relentless pursuit of excellence in every kick, tackle, and touchdown.



The advertisement has a black background on the left side and a white background on the right. On the right, a grey bucket hat with a wide brim and a chin strap is displayed on a white stand. To the left of the hat, the text 'ORDER NOW!' is written in bold yellow letters. Below this, a list of features is presented in white bullet points: 'DURABLE DESIGN', 'COMFORTABLE FIT', 'SIZES: M, L, XL', 'ADJUSTABLE STRAP', and 'BUILT IN FOX 40 WHISTLE'. At the bottom of the advertisement, the words 'COACH'S CAP' are written in a large, bold, white, italicized font with a black outline.

DRILLS

RUNNING BACK DRILLS



Michael Fields
La Grande HS, OR
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Running backs in the NFL have been losing their reliance and number of touches, many teams will employ

a two to three back platoon for the RB position. As we watch the playoffs, the importance of the RB positions once again shows up.

At the high school level running backs are still able to change a game or even season. How do you train a running back to carry the load. Well, running backs have to be able to do a little bit of everything. Even in pass happy spread systems and Air Raid, the RB has to carry the ball, block, and catch passes. Often at the high school level the RB is the most or one of the top athletes on the team due to the multitude of skills needed to play the position.

Running backs come in a variety of sizes, from the 6'+ 200 pound plus bruiser to the 5' 130-pound speedster. However, to train them in all the skills they need to be at their best on Friday nights, they must all go through a variety of drills. A quick internet or YouTube search will yield thousands of drills for running backs, some are pretty good, some a great, others are a waste of time. In my years of coaching what

I have found is there are just a few basic skills that should be worked on daily, others a time or two a week, and some skills that just need to be repped a few times a season.

Here is a list of what should be done every single practice with running backs, mesh point, ball security, cutting and moving up field. Skills that should be done at least once a week or maybe twice a week include pass pro, receiving and any trick plays they have to do, whether that be passing the ball or handing off a reverse.

This article will go through some every day and weekly drills for running backs. We start every individual period with our running backs taking handoffs from each other. This is our mesh point work. This is the traditional two lines of RBs facing each other and running towards the other guy and giving/taking hand offs, we usually do three handoffs on each side. This drill does a few things they need every day, mesh, ball security, and it helps them warm up by jogging or running. The first week of camp we will have a coach hand the ball off to the backs to work mesh, before this drill to get the hand offs clean and to check their arm and hand position to receive a handoff.

Next, we do ball security, we do this in a variety of ways, but the one we utilize the most is a partner drill, one back has the ball secured, and the partner jogs next to him punching, slapping, and pulling on his arm securing the balls, and the end they try to rip it out. This drill is performed as a ten-yard length down and then back. Each running back secures the

ball in each arm at least twice. Combined with the handoff drill these two drills maybe take 5 minutes.

The next drill we run almost daily is "run to daylight". For this we place 3 to 4 agility bags perpendicular to the yard lines creating 2 or 3 gaps between the pads. We put one less player on the opposite side of the RB who at the start of the rep fills all but one gap, the back has to read the open gap and hit the hole and run to daylight. We usually set two stations up next to each other going in opposite directions, so the backs work each direction (we use a gap scheme offense, but this works for zone schemes as well). After the first few days we add a level by having a player or coach either with a bag or shield at the LB spot and the back then has to hit the hole, then cut away from the LB. Having a shield allows us to hit the RB incorporating a ball security aspect to the drill, simulating a more game like scenario. We have also run this without the agility bags and just have 3 or 4 players in a line at a predetermined distance and they step forward and create a hole for the RB to see and hit. This version may be better for zone schemes as there is not a "gap" to run to, rather an opening that develops as the players move.

We work these drills almost daily. We will combine run to daylight with ball security by having players or coaches having shields or bags hitting the ball carrier as the run through the hole. We even built a piece of equipment to punch the ball, we took an old boxing glove and tapped it on the end of a piece of PVC pipe and

“The more game-like situations you can put the running back in, the better he will be at game time. Working on the basics every day, mesh, hitting the hole, cutting, ball security will help your running backs when the game is on the line.”

covered the PVC with a foam pool noodle and will have a coach or player punch the ball. This gives another layer to many of the drills we run as we can have a ball security element included. At least once a week we have the RBs go with the offensive line for group O and work on our pass protection. We use two versions of slide protection, so they will work each one on air and live. RBs will work on blocking as well in one-on-one situations also. They work on blocking for runs and pass plays as our backs may serve as lead blockers on certain plays.

The final element we work on is receiving. We run screens and bubbles to our RBs so catching is an element they must be capable of doing. We will usually have them catch on air with our screen routes and in the pass play routes. Then we will have a defender or two to simulate the traffic of the plays. When we work on pass protection with the offensive line will rep the screen plays also to get the timing down on the release.

We run the Wing T Power Spread, which is version of the shotgun wing T. Our base running play our version of buck sweep. We install this play first and rep it every day in practice. One day a week all season long we run the "hurdle drill". We had run a version of this without hurdles just using agility bags, but found that for the linemen and RBs that hurdle gives a better target and keep them in better position to block and accelerate through the hole. For this drill we use three hurdles, one just inside the back side guard that they have to pull step through and stay low, one hurdle is for the front side guard

to kickout, and the third hurdle is for the back side guard to wrap inside through. After we are comfortable with this drill we will add a second level defender, usually a coach with a bag or shield for the RB to cut away from or work on stiff arming or another move to avoid getting tackled. Our punchout glove is also added at this level to incorporate ball security. This drill then works on everything a RB needs to do on every running play, mesh point, follow his blockers, cut, and secure the ball.

The more game-like situations you can put the running back in, the better he will be at game time. Working on the basics every day, mesh, hitting the hole, cutting, ball security will help your running backs when the game is on the line.