

HEADSETS

WRITTEN FOR COACHES BY COACHES

VOLUME 4: ISSUE 4

gameplanning
TEMPLATE

**KEEPING
BIG KIDS
IN THE GAME**

**THE TWO POINT
CONVERSION**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

GAMEPLANNING	2
THE TWO POINT CONVERSION	3
HOW TO CREATE A TARGET SKILLS SECTION ON YOUR COACHING RESUME	7
STEALTH SHIELD: THE ART OF HYBRID DEFENSIVE DISGUISE	9
MUSIC	20
KEEPING BIG KIDS IN THE GAME	23
PART 3: BE (A DEEP DIVE)	25
THE UNSUNG HERO OF THE UNSUNG HEROES	28



Kenny Simpson
Author/Coaching Consultant
HC - Southside, AR
[@fbcoachsimpson](https://twitter.com/fbcoachsimpson)
FBCoachSimpson.com

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.

28 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

DRILLS

GAMEPLANNING



Chris Haddad
Bellingham HS - MA
Defensive Coordinator
[Coach Tube](#)
[@chrsvlQtory](#)
[@vlQtorySports](#)



One of the more fun and stressful things to do as a football coach is game plan. Most of what we game plan for is based on our gut, what the film says, and the analytics we get from Hudl.

The biggest struggle I had in my early coaching days was knowing how to navigate Hudl properly and get the analytics I needed.

One of the most important coaching templates I use is what we call a "QB Launch Chart." This

template is built so you can see exactly where the quarterback is throwing from, who he's throwing it to, and the plays the opposing offensive coordinator is calling.

The best use I get out of this chart is the ability to see where the quarterback is throwing from in the pocket. Why is this important?

If the quarterback is throwing 70% of the time from outside of the pocket, then we need to make him pull up or attack him where he feels uncomfortable.

This QB Launch Chart will give you all the throw locations and will show you exactly how to attack the QB you're facing.

We have more details on the launch chart and how to use it [in this YouTube video](#). You can also find a free download of the launch chart there as well.

Week 12: HUDL	
QB Info	Targeted Players
EXAMPLE QB #1 QB Jr. 6'0" 20lbs Right Handed	#8: 2x #22: 1x #10: 11x #34: 1x #6: 7x #9: 1x #7: 5x #1: 2x #5: 2x
Seconds to Throw the Ball	Miscellaneous
3 seconds: 31 2 seconds: 15 4 seconds: 13 5 seconds: 1	20 completions/37 incomplete 2 INT/2 sacks/1 TD Scrambled 5x 64% run vs. 36% pass 35% out of Deuce Mostly balanced
Types of Plays	NOTES
Thunder 10% 4x Mesh Swing: 14% 3X Cross Right: 3% 1x Bubble: 10% 2x Cross Left: 10% 2x Viper: 6% 1x	- Example notes on QB - Example notes on QB - Example notes on QB - Example notes on QB

OFFENSIVE TALK

THE TWO POINT CONVERSION



Chip Seagle
Retired Full Time Coach
HC Lanett HS, Alabama
[@ChipSeagle](#)
[Football Talk](#)
seagle.chip@gmail.com

Why should a coach go for two instead of a one-point kick attempt?

When going for two, a coach must weigh many factors, such as the score differential, time remaining in the game, and the relative strengths of their offense and defense. The strategy behind the two-point conversion has evolved and been influenced by changes in coaching philosophies, analytics, and game situations.

The decision to go for two is not a mere whim but a calculated move backed by analytics. I have long advocated for following the chart, even before the advent of advanced statistical analysis.

In a wild-card playoff game, the New York Giants scored a touchdown to pull within 2 points of the Green Bay Packers. Instead of going for two, the Giants kicked an extra point. Troy Aikman praised the move, explaining that "the chart would say go for 2 and try to tie it up," but "there's a lot of time left in this game."

- Math is math, even in the first half.
- You are NOT guaranteed another chance at

points from the three-yard line.

- Throughout a season, a team is better off going for two and converting 51% of the time than being 100% on PATs.

If your kicker is not at least 85-90% on EXP, you might as well go for two.

- 50% on two-point conversions equals 100% on PAT.
- Converting 51% of Two Point Conversions is better than 100% on a PAT.
- The NFL's 2-point conversion success rate is 47.5%; the EXP success rate is 95%.
- Nationwide stats for PATs are not kept at the high school level. I estimate the conversion rate for extra points nationwide is below 80%. Some teams (very few) will have kickers who can make 100% of their extra points. I have been coaching HS ball for 40 years and have had one. Many teams do not have a kicker who can make more than half their attempts. Believe it or not, some parts of the country still do not play soccer except for a PE unit. These places still have straight-on kickers with a square-toed shoe.

Other factors to consider:

- What is the strength of your offense?
- Do you have a highly effective run or short passing game?
- Do what you do best or fake what you do best. Tricks based on your base stuff are good.
- What are your opponent's defense strengths? What are its weaknesses? Identify their weakest area on defense and attack it.
- Does the opponent have a good edge rush

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or special teams game plan?

- In the words of Sun Tzu in the Art of War, "The rule is not to besiege walled cities if it can be avoided."

- What is the current score in the game?
- How much time is left in the game?
- Do you have a good kicker, snapper, and holder?
- Four things must go right for a successful PAT.
- ALL the blockers must do their jobs.
- The snap must be on time and on target.
- The hold must be exact.
- The kick must be good; many factors go into just that aspect of a PAT.

NOTE: Running an extra point team onto the field after a TD looks good and impresses the fans. But remember this no one is impressed when the kicker drills one of your linemen in the butt or a shanked kick sails wide. I would rather win than look good for a bunch of folks who have no clue how much goes into a successful PAT.

Sidebar: A few years ago, we had a D-1 kicker. That is not hyperbole; he was a great kicker. He was invited to visit several SEC schools and signed with a non-SEC D-1 team (Kirby Smart told him that if they did not get their first choice, Georgia would sign him). He was so good that it did not matter who we put on the kick-off team with him; the ball went into or out of the endzone on every kick (we could have 10 players of my caliber out there and it would not have mattered). He was also accurate; I think he missed one extra point his senior season, and that was after he ran an interception back for a

90-yard touchdown. We knew we had a great weapon and could not afford to waste it. Our snapper worked all summer; anytime he was not involved with something else at practice, he would be on the side, working on his snaps. He became accustomed to looking at the world upside down. The holder, who had great hands, worked similarly. My point is that I cannot tell you how much went into just that aspect of our kicking game. There is more to an extra point than the kicker. Sometimes, going for two requires less preparation than going for one.

What to run on two-point conversions?

- I think you can run almost anything except for some passing concepts.
- If your receivers can win one-on-one, RPOs and Quick Game are good. The defensive coverage will be Man or some form of pattern matching.
- Wrinkles off your best run plays are good. We used to run option and loved pitching the ball to the RB and letting him throw to the corner of the endzone.
- Some coaches do not like this idea, but I have succeeded with misdirection.
- Motions and shifts are good since they are usually in Man Defense.
- Unbalanced formations work well, especially if you shift into them right before the snap or utilize a "Sugar Huddle" and rush to the line and quickly snap the ball.
- Trick plays and funky formations confuse young defenses. Let's face it; all defenses are young in high school and sub-varsity ball.
- Here are a few funky formations for conversion attempts: Lonesome Pole Cat, Swinging Gate,

Double Swinging Gate, and Emory and Henry (used by Steve Spurrier at the University of Florida).

Suggestion: Allow the defense to line up and call the play to the best match-up.

- Heavy packages are GREAT! Two big blocking backs allow you to run gap scheme plays without pullers; you can run Buck, Power, or Counter without pulling any guards, and all of your OL are blocking Gap-Down-Backer.
- If you are not throwing to the TE, and your sixth-best lineman is a better blocker than him, put in the extra lineman. That has nearly the same effect as unbalanced.

In My Opinion, here are a few things NOT to do:

- Do NOT run a two-point conversion on two; you may end up on the eight.
- Roll-out passes may sound good, but you are already playing on a vertically compressed field (only 13 yards), and by rolling out, you are also compressing it horizontally.

NOTE: Regarding roll-out passes, giving an athletic quarterback the option to run or pass is beneficial. I would have the officials place the ball on the opposite hash I intend to use to increase the field you must operate with.

- Do NOT spend more than five minutes working on any one play.

Points to remember and things to teach your kids on two-point conversions:

- Make sure you are giving it to your best player, or at least faking it to him.
- Tell your QB **NEVER** to get sacked.

"Like everything else in football, it will work as long as it is sound, you put in the proper work, and the kids believe in it."

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Tell the ball carriers **NEVER** to get tackled short of the endzone.

NOTE: Regarding the two bullets above, the play is blown dead in high school football as soon as the defense gains possession. Tell the quarterback to throw it up for grabs before taking a sack, and tell your RB to fumble it forward before going down. Unlike pro and college ball, there is no “fumble forward” rule in NFHS. Any player may recover and advance. I am old enough to remember the “Holy Roller” done by the Oakland Raiders against the Chargers in the late '70s. That play is why it is illegal in the NFL and college ball. The play is still legal in NFHS games.

A team must practice these two-point plays. We did at least one five-minute period during the week and reviewed them again on Thursday. The summer is a great time to install funky formations and special personnel packages. That allows you to practice them during the season without having to install them and teach new stuff during the season.

We put in Swinging Gate in July several years ago and then practiced the four things we could do out of it every week for the entire season. We finally ran one in the state championship game. That's right, we installed it in July and did not run it until the 15th game of the season (the first week in December). It allowed us to tie the game going into halftime. We pulled away in the second half to win the title. That was 75 minutes well spent.

Prepare the team mentally for the idea that we just scored a TD, even if it fails. The psychological impact of a successful or failed two-point conversion extends beyond the scoreboard. A successful conversion can energize a team, demoralize opponents, and shift momentum in crucial game moments. Conversely, a failed attempt can deflate morale and provide a momentum swing for the opposing team. Understanding these psychological dynamics is essential for coaches and players alike. Many coaches fear losing momentum if they have a failed two-point attempt after a big TD, but if the team knows it is a part of the team's identity, the emotional and mental factor will not be as big of a deal—no one, not even Ted Williams or Steph Curry, hits every pitch or makes every shot.

In case you cannot tell, I am a big fan of going for two and have given it a lot of thought over the past 40 years. Like everything else in football, it will work as long as it is sound, you put in the proper work, and the kids believe in it. All those things are your job, which is why they put the “coach” in front of your name.

JOB SEARCH PREP FOR COACHES

HOW TO CREATE A TARGET SKILLS SECTION ON YOUR COACHING RESUME



Bill Vasko
Head Softball Coach,
Frostburg State University,
NCAA DII/Former College
Football/Baseball Coach
CEO: [The Coaching Portfolio](#)
[@xo_coach](#)

Including a target skills section on a resume is crucial for several reasons. First and foremost, it provides a quick snapshot of your qualifications, allowing employers to swiftly identify your key strengths and areas of expertise. In a competitive job market, where hiring managers often sift through numerous resumes, a well-crafted skills section enables you to stand out by immediately showcasing the relevant competencies you bring to the table.

Moreover, a targeted skills section tailored to the specific job you're applying for ensures alignment between your capabilities and the employer's requirements. This customization enhances your resume's relevance, demonstrating a clear understanding of the job's demands and presenting you as a candidate who possesses the essential skills needed for success in the role.

Additionally, an effective skills section facilitates the applicant tracking system (ATS) process,

which many companies use to streamline the initial resume screening. Including relevant keywords in your skills section increases the likelihood that your resume will be recognized and ranked higher by these systems, improving your chances of making it to the next stage of the hiring process.

Sample target skills for a high school or college level coaching resume:

Player Development: Proven track record of enhancing player skills through targeted training programs and personalized coaching strategies.

Game Strategy and Tactical Planning: Expertise in devising effective game plans, analyzing opponents, and making real-time strategic decisions during matches.

Recruitment and Talent Acquisition: Successful history of identifying and recruiting talented athletes, contributing to the overall competitiveness of the team.

Leadership and Motivation: Strong leadership skills with the ability to inspire and motivate athletes to achieve their full potential both on and off the field.

Effective Communication: Exceptional communication skills in conveying coaching philosophies, providing constructive feedback, and fostering positive team dynamics.

Team Building and Culture Development: Proactively contribute to creating a positive team culture, fostering camaraderie, and addressing conflicts to maintain a cohesive and focused team environment.

In-Depth Sport Knowledge: Comprehensive

understanding of the intricacies of [specific sport], including rules, techniques, and evolving trends within the college sports landscape.

Adaptability and Flexibility: Demonstrated ability to adapt coaching styles to meet the diverse needs of athletes and respond effectively to dynamic in-game situations.

Athlete Mentorship: Proactive involvement in the personal and academic development of athletes, fostering a holistic approach to student-athlete success.

Strength and Conditioning Expertise: Knowledgeable in designing and implementing fitness and conditioning programs to optimize athlete performance and minimize the risk of injuries.

Data/Video Analysis and Performance Metrics: Utilize video technology and data-driven insights and performance metrics to assess team and player performance, enabling continuous improvement strategies.

Remember to tailor these bullet points to align with the specific coaching position and the unique demands of the sports program you are applying to. Use quantifiable achievements and concrete examples to strengthen your resume. In summary, a well-constructed target skills section not only provides a quick overview of your qualifications but also aligns your capabilities with the job requirements, making your resume more impactful and increasing your chances of being noticed by potential employers.

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!](http://TheCoachingPortfolioGuide.com) We provide services that assist with all aspects of the job search process for coaches. Visit www.coachingportfolio.com to get started today!

ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT

STEALTH SHIELD: THE ART OF HYBRID DEFENSIVE DISGUISE



Sa'Quan Hicks
Certified Personal Trainer
Writer
Defensive Coordinator, Ben
Franklin HS - MD

Offenses are becoming increasingly creative and multifaceted, facing defensive coordinators with the daunting challenge of devising strategies to counteract the diverse array of threats posed by opposing teams. Enter the world of hybrid defensive schemes and strategic disguise – two powerful weapons in the defensive coordinator's arsenal that have revolutionized the game.

As the game of football continues to evolve, so too must defensive strategies adapt to keep pace with the ever-changing landscape. Traditional defensive approaches are no longer sufficient to contain the dynamic offenses seen at all levels of play. To effectively neutralize these potent offensive attacks, many defensive coordinators have turned to hybrid defensive schemes – versatile formations that blend elements of multiple traditional schemes to create a cohesive and adaptable defensive unit.

At the heart of the hybrid defensive approach lies the concept of versatility. Defensive coordinators can tailor their schemes to counter

specific offensive threats while maintaining the element of surprise by incorporating elements of both 3-4 and 4-3 defensive alignments, as well as various nickel and dime packages. This flexibility allows defenses to seamlessly transition between different fronts, coverages, and blitz packages, keeping offenses off-balance and unable to predict defensive intentions.

The effectiveness of hybrid defensive schemes extends beyond mere versatility. Strategic disguise, or the art of concealing defensive intentions until the last possible moment, plays a crucial role in keeping offenses guessing and disrupting their rhythm. Defensive players can deceive opposing quarterbacks and offensive linemen, leading to hesitation, confusion, and ultimately, turnovers by employing pre-snap and post-snap disguises.

In this coaching article, we will examine the perplexities of hybrid defensive schemes and strategic disguise, exploring the principles, tactics, and strategies that underpin these innovative defensive approaches. From the fundamentals of defensive alignment and assignment to advanced disguise techniques and exotic blitz packages, we will provide coaches with the tools and knowledge they need to implement these tactics effectively and maximize defensive success on the field.

Coaches will gain a comprehensive understanding of how to integrate them into their defensive game plans and adapt them to their team's personnel and opponent's tendencies by examining both the theory and

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R-PS

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practice of these tactics.

In the pages that follow, we will begin a journey into the world of stealth shield defenses – a world where versatility meets deception, and where innovation is the key to defensive dominance. Join us as we unravel the mysteries of hybrid defensive schemes and strategic disguise, and discover how these tactics can elevate your team’s defensive performance to new heights.

1. Hybrid Defensive Schemes Explained

Hybrid defensive schemes have emerged as a versatile and effective approach to counter the complexities of modern offenses. In this chapter, we will dive into the definition, principles, evolution, and advantages of hybrid defensive schemes, laying the groundwork for mastering the art of defensive disguise.

Definition and Principles of Hybrid Defensive Schemes

Hybrid defensive schemes are characterized by their fluidity and adaptability. Unlike traditional defensive systems that adhere strictly to a single alignment or philosophy, hybrid defenses incorporate elements from various schemes, blending concepts to create a dynamic and unpredictable unit.

At the core of hybrid defensive schemes lies the principle of versatility. Players are often asked to fulfill multiple roles and responsibilities, seamlessly transitioning between different alignments and assignments based on game situations. This versatility enables coaches to tailor their defensive approach to counter the strengths and exploit the weaknesses of

opposing offenses.

Evolution of Hybrid Defenses in Response to Modern Offensive Trends

The evolution of hybrid defensive schemes can be traced back to the shifting landscape of offensive football. As offenses have become increasingly diverse and sophisticated, traditional defensive systems have faced challenges in effectively neutralizing dynamic playmakers and complex schemes.

In response, defensive coaches have turned to hybrid approaches to counter spread offenses, the rise of mobile quarterbacks, and the proliferation of versatile skill players. Hybrid defenses offer a strategic advantage in adapting to the ever-changing offensive landscape.

Advantages and Benefits of Employing Hybrid Defensive Philosophies

The adoption of hybrid defensive philosophies offers several distinct advantages for coaches and players alike. Firstly, the versatility of hybrid schemes allows defenses to remain unpredictable and adaptable, keeping offenses off-balance and unable to exploit predictable tendencies.

Secondly, hybrid defenses provide flexibility in personnel deployment, enabling coaches to maximize the strengths of individual players and create favorable matchups against opposing offenses. Coaches can exploit mismatches and create confusion for opposing quarterbacks and play-callers by deploying players in multiple positions and alignments.

Hybrid defensive schemes promote creativity and innovation, encouraging coaches to think outside the box and develop unique strategies tailored to their personnel and opponents. Coaches can create custom-tailored game plans that capitalize on their team’s strengths while exploiting opponent weaknesses by blending elements from various defensive philosophies.

The art of hybrid defensive disguise lies in its ability to combine the best elements of traditional and modern defensive concepts, creating a dynamic and adaptable unit capable of neutralizing even the most potent offensive attacks. Coaches can master the art of defensive disguise and elevate their team’s performance to new heights by blending elements from various defensive philosophies.

2. The Versatility of Hybrid Defensive Schemes

Defensive strategies continue to adapt and innovate. One of the most intriguing developments in recent years has been the rise of hybrid defensive schemes, characterized by their flexibility, unpredictability, and adaptability. In this chapter, we will examine the art of hybrid defensive disguise, exploring the key elements that contribute to its effectiveness and strategic advantage.

Flexibility in Base Formations

One of the defining features of hybrid defensive schemes is their ability to seamlessly transition between different base formations. Whether deploying a traditional 3-4 alignment, a 4-3 front, or utilizing nickel and dime packages, coaches have the flexibility to tailor their

defensive approach to match the strengths and weaknesses of the opposing offense. This adaptability keeps offenses guessing and prevents them from gaining a strategic advantage based on pre-snap reads.

Hybrid Personnel Groupings

Central to the success of hybrid defensive schemes is the use of versatile players with diverse skill sets. Coaches are able to create mismatches and disrupt offensive game plans by fielding athletes who can excel in multiple positions and roles. Whether it’s a linebacker who can drop into coverage or rush the passer, or a safety who can play both deep zones and cover slot receivers, hybrid defenses rely on players who can execute a variety of responsibilities with precision and effectiveness.

Blending Defensive Philosophies

Hybrid defensive schemes are not bound by the constraints of traditional defensive philosophies. Instead, they draw from a wide range of principles and concepts, blending elements of both man-to-man and zone coverage, as well as incorporating various blitz packages and stunts. Coaches can keep offenses off balance and prevent them from establishing a rhythm or exploiting predictable tendencies, by incorporating diverse tactics and strategies.

Strategic Disguise and Deception

At the heart of hybrid defensive schemes lies the art of disguise and deception. Defenses can create confusion and hesitation in the minds of opposing quarterbacks and play-callers by presenting multiple looks and disguising

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their intentions pre-snap. Whether through pre-snap shifts, disguised coverages, or well-timed blitzes, the goal is to keep the offense guessing and force them into making mistakes or misreads.

Adapting to Offensive Trends

Offenses are constantly evolving and innovating. Hybrid defensive schemes offer coaches the flexibility and adaptability to counter these trends and stay one step ahead of the competition. Whether facing spread offenses, RPO-heavy attacks, or up-tempo schemes, coaches can tailor their defensive approach to neutralize specific threats and exploit vulnerabilities in the opposing game plan.

The art of hybrid defensive disguise represents a strategic evolution in modern football. Coaches can create defenses that are unpredictable, adaptable, and effective against a wide range of offensive schemes by embracing flexibility in base formations, utilizing versatile personnel groupings, blending defensive philosophies, and employing strategic disguise and deception. Mastering the art of hybrid defensive disguise is essential for coaches seeking to gain a competitive edge and shut down opposing offenses with precision and effectiveness.

3. Strategic Disguise and Deception

Defensive strategies must constantly adapt to keep offenses guessing and off-balance. One of the most effective tools in a defensive coordinator's arsenal is strategic disguise and deception. In this chapter, we dive deep into the importance of disguise in modern defensive tactics, focusing on pre-snap movement and post-snap adjustments to confound

quarterbacks and disrupt offensive rhythm.

Importance of Disguise in Modern Defensive Tactics

In today's game, offenses are highly sophisticated, with quarterbacks adept at reading defenses and exploiting weaknesses. To counteract this, defenses must employ tactics that obscure their intentions and disguise their coverage schemes and pressure packages. Defenses can disrupt timing, force turnovers, and create opportunities for game-changing plays by keeping the offense guessing.

Pre-snap Movement

A crucial aspect of defensive disguise is pre-snap movement, which involves shifting alignments, personnel, and coverage disguises to confuse quarterbacks and offensive linemen. This can include showing different defensive fronts, rotating safeties, or disguising blitzes and coverage rotations. Defenses force offenses to make quick decisions and adjustments, increasing the likelihood of mistakes and misreads by presenting multiple looks before the snap.

Shifting Alignments

Defenses often employ pre-snap shifts and alignments to disguise their intentions and create confusion for the offense. This may involve moving defenders across the formation, shifting the defensive line, or rotating coverage responsibilities. Defenses force quarterbacks to adjust their reads and offensive linemen to adapt their blocking assignments, disrupting the rhythm and timing of the play by altering the defensive alignment just before the snap.

Personnel Disguises

Another effective tactic is personnel disguises, where defenders initially align in one formation before shifting to another just before the snap. This could involve linebackers dropping into coverage, safeties blitzing from unexpected angles, or cornerbacks rotating into different coverage responsibilities. By using personnel disguises, defenses keep offenses guessing and prevent them from identifying potential vulnerabilities in the defensive scheme.

Coverage Disguises

Coverages are often disguised through subtle movements and positioning changes by defensive backs and linebackers. This may include "showing" one coverage before the snap, only to rotate into a different coverage post-snap. Defenses can bait quarterbacks into throwing into coverage traps or force them to hold onto the ball longer, increasing the likelihood of a sack or turnover by disguising coverages.

Post-snap Adjustments

In addition to pre-snap movement, post-snap adjustments are crucial for maintaining defensive disguise and deception. This involves seamlessly transitioning between coverage schemes and pressure packages based on the offense's actions and the quarterback's reads. Defenses can keep the offense off-balance and limit their effectiveness by reacting quickly to the offense's movements and adjusting on the fly.

Seamless Transitioning

Effective post-snap adjustments require

disciplined communication and coordination among defenders. Linebackers must read the quarterback's eyes and react to route combinations, while defensive backs must communicate switches and rotations to maintain coverage integrity. Defenses can disrupt offensive rhythm and force quarterbacks into difficult decisions under pressure by seamlessly transitioning between coverage schemes and pressure packages.

Strategic disguise and deception are essential elements of modern defensive tactics. Defenses can create opportunities for turnovers, sacks, and game-changing plays by employing pre-snap movement and post-snap adjustments to confound quarterbacks and disrupt offensive rhythm. Mastering the art of defensive disguise is a hallmark of elite defensive units and a key component of success on the football field.

4. Implementing Strategic Disguise: Practical Strategies and Techniques

Mastering the art of disguise can be a game-changer. The ability to conceal true intentions and strategically alter defensive looks can confound opponents, disrupt offensive rhythm, and ultimately lead to success on the field. In this chapter, we will explore practical strategies and techniques for implementing strategic disguise as a key component of hybrid defensive schemes.

Using Pre-Snap Checks and Audibles

One of the most effective ways to disguise defensive intentions is through pre-snap checks and audibles. Coaches and players can create uncertainty for opposing quarterbacks and

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play-callers by observing offensive alignments and adjusting defensive formations and assignments accordingly. For example, shifting from a traditional base defense to a nickel or dime package at the last moment can catch offenses off guard and force them to adjust on the fly. Additionally, employing simulated blitzes or coverage rotations pre-snap can sow confusion and disrupt offensive timing.

Utilizing Complex Coverage Rotations and Pattern Matching Concepts

Another tactic for defensive disguise involves utilizing complex coverage rotations and pattern matching concepts. Defenders can bait quarterbacks into making ill-advised throws or misreading defensive intentions by seamlessly transitioning between different coverage schemes and assignments. For instance, disguising a Cover 2 shell before the snap and then rolling into a Cover 3 or Cover 4 look post-snap can deceive quarterbacks into throwing into coverage or holding onto the ball longer than intended. Incorporating pattern matching concepts, where defenders read and react to offensive routes rather than adhering strictly to predetermined zones, adds an extra layer of complexity and unpredictability to the defense.

Incorporating Exotic Blitz Packages and Simulated Pressures

To further enhance defensive disguise, coaches can incorporate exotic blitz packages and simulated pressures into their game plans. Defenses can create confusion and overwhelm offensive protection schemes by sending blitzers from unexpected angles or dropping linemen into coverage while rushing

linebackers or defensive backs. Additionally, utilizing simulated pressures—where defenders show blitz before dropping into coverage or rushing from unexpected positions—can disrupt quarterback reads and force hurried decisions. The key to effective blitz disguise lies in maintaining disciplined execution and timing, ensuring that defenders maintain their assignments and disguise their intentions until the last possible moment.

Implementing strategic disguise is a fundamental aspect of mastering hybrid defensive schemes. Defenses can keep opponents guessing and gain a competitive advantage on the field by using pre-snap checks and audibles, complex coverage rotations and pattern matching concepts, and exotic blitz packages and simulated pressures. However, effective disguise requires meticulous preparation, disciplined execution, and a thorough understanding of offensive tendencies and vulnerabilities. With diligent practice and attention to detail, coaches and players can harness the power of defensive disguise to become formidable adversaries and elevate their team's performance to new heights.

5. Psychological Aspects of Strategic Disguise

The concept of defensive disguise has emerged as a powerful weapon in the arsenal of coaches seeking to outsmart their opponents. In this chapter, we will examine the psychological aspects of strategic disguise and explore its impact on quarterback decision-making, defensive player confidence, and overall defensive success.

Impact of Disguise on Quarterback Decision-Making and Offensive Efficiency

The intent to create uncertainty and confusion in the mind of the opposing quarterback lies at the heart of defensive disguise. Defensive coordinators aim to disrupt the rhythm and timing of the offense, forcing quarterbacks to hesitate or make ill-advised decisions under pressure by presenting pre-snap looks that differ from post-snap realities.

Research has shown that quarterbacks rely heavily on pre-snap reads to anticipate defensive alignments and coverage schemes. Therefore, effective disguise strategies can force quarterbacks to second-guess their initial assessments, leading to indecision, hesitation, and increased vulnerability to defensive pressure.

Disguise can disrupt offensive efficiency by limiting the effectiveness of scripted plays and predetermined reads. Defenses can force offenses into reactionary mode, diminishing their ability to execute plays with precision and timing by concealing defensive intentions until the last possible moment.

Building Confidence and Trust Among Defensive Players

Successfully executing disguise-based defensive schemes requires a high level of coordination, communication, and trust among defensive players. Each player must be fully committed to their assigned roles and responsibilities, trusting their teammates to execute their assignments effectively.

1. Hybrid Defensive Schemes Explained

2. The versatility of Hybrid Defense Schemes

3. Strategic Disguise and Deception

4. Implementing Strategic Disguise: Strategies and Techniques

5. Psychological Aspects of Strategic Disguise

6. Training and Prep for Hybrid Defenses and Strategic Disguise

continued on next page

Building confidence and trust among defensive players begins with thorough preparation and repetition in practice. Coaches must emphasize the importance of attention to detail, alignment discipline, and situational awareness in executing disguise strategies.

Coaches must instill a sense of ownership and accountability among players, empowering them to take ownership of their roles within the defensive scheme. Coaches can cultivate the confidence and trust necessary for players to execute disguise and deception strategies with precision and effectiveness by fostering a culture of accountability and mutual support.

Maintaining Discipline and Composure Under Pressure

In the heat of battle, maintaining discipline and composure under pressure is paramount to the success of disguise-based defensive schemes. Defensive players must remain focused and poised, resisting the temptation to abandon their assignments or freelancing in search of big plays.

To mitigate breakdowns in disguise-based defensive schemes, coaches must emphasize the importance of mental discipline, situational awareness, and controlled aggression. Players must understand their individual roles within the larger defensive scheme and trust that their teammates will execute their assignments with equal precision.

Coaches must prepare players to handle adversity and adjust to unexpected developments during the course of a game. Coaches can ensure that

players remain poised and composed under pressure, even in the face of adversity by instilling a mindset of adaptability and resilience.

The psychological aspects of strategic disguise play a crucial role in the success of hybrid defensive schemes. Coaches can maximize the effectiveness of disguise-based defensive strategies and elevate their team's defensive performance to new heights by understanding the impact of disguise on quarterback decision-making, building confidence and trust among defensive players, and maintaining discipline and composure under pressure.

6. Training and Preparation for Hybrid Defenses and Strategic Disguise

Mastering the art of hybrid defensive schemes and strategic disguise requires meticulous training and preparation. In this chapter, we will explore the essential components of training and preparation that are integral to the success of stealth shield defenses.

Practice Drills and Simulations: Building Versatility and Communication

The foundation of any successful defense lies in the versatility and communication of its players. To cultivate these essential skills, coaches must incorporate a variety of practice drills and simulations into their training regimen.

- 1) Position-Specific Drills: Tailor drills to the specific responsibilities of each position within the hybrid defense. Focus on techniques such as coverage reads, gap control, pass rush moves, and zone drops to ensure that players are proficient in executing their assigned tasks.
- 2) Versatility Exercises: Challenge players to

adapt to different roles and scenarios on the field. Rotate players between positions and assignments during practice to enhance their versatility and strategic understanding of the defense as a whole.

- 3) Communication Training: Emphasize the importance of clear and concise communication among defensive players. Implement drills that require players to communicate coverage assignments, shifts, and adjustments in real-time to enhance cohesion and coordination on the field.

Film Study and Opponent Scouting: Exploiting Tendencies and Vulnerabilities

The key to effective strategic disguise lies in the ability to identify and exploit opponent tendencies and vulnerabilities. Coaches must dedicate time to film study and opponent scouting to gain insights that can be leveraged to deceive and outsmart the opposing offense.

- 1) Film Analysis: Review game footage to analyze opponent tendencies, formations, personnel groupings, and play-calling tendencies. Identify patterns and tendencies that can be exploited through disguise and deception strategies.
- 2) Opponent Scouting: Conduct thorough scouting of upcoming opponents to gather intelligence on their offensive schemes, key players, tendencies, and weaknesses. Use this information to devise disguise-based strategies that capitalize on opponent vulnerabilities and exploit predictable patterns.
- 3) Disguise Formations and Packages: Develop disguise formations and defensive packages that strategically conceal the true intentions of the defense. Use pre-snap alignment variations, deceptive movements, and disguised coverages

to confuse and mislead the opposing offense.

In-Game Adjustments and Halftime Evaluations: Fine-Tuning Disguise-Based Strategies

Coaches must be prepared to make in-game adjustments and halftime evaluations to fine-tune disguise-based strategies based on real-time observations and feedback.

- 1) Real-Time Observations: Continuously assess the effectiveness of disguise-based strategies throughout the game. Monitor opponent reactions, offensive adjustments, and defensive performance to identify areas for improvement and adaptation.

- 2) Halftime Evaluations: Conduct comprehensive halftime evaluations to assess the success of disguise-based strategies and make necessary adjustments for the second half. Analyze film footage, review player feedback, and consult with assistant coaches to develop a game plan for the remainder of the game.

- 3) Adaptive Strategies: Adapt disguise-based strategies based on the success or failure of previous attempts. Make strategic adjustments to disguise formations, coverages, and blitz packages to keep the opposing offense off balance and maintain a competitive advantage.

Training and preparation are essential components of mastering the art of hybrid defensive schemes and strategic disguise. Coaches can effectively prepare their teams to execute disguise-based strategies with precision and confidence on game day by incorporating practice drills, film study, opponent scouting, in-game adjustments, and halftime evaluations

continued on next page

into their coaching approach.

Final Thoughts

In the journey through "Stealth Shield: The Art of Hybrid Defensive Disguise," we've explored the perplexing world of modern defensive coaching, where adaptability, innovation, and strategic thinking reign supreme. From understanding the foundational principles of multiple defensive philosophies to implementing deception and disguise tactics, coaches have been equipped with the tools necessary to revolutionize their defensive strategies. By blending elements of various schemes and concealing intentions through strategic disguise, coaches can keep opposing offenses guessing and gain a competitive edge on the field.

Coaches must be willing to break away from traditional defensive paradigms and embrace new ideas and approaches. Coaches can outsmart opponents and stay one step ahead in the game by staying ahead of the curve and continuously evolving their defensive strategies.

Strategic thinking and effective communication are two pillars of successful defensive coaching. Coaches must analyze game situations, anticipate opponent tendencies, and devise creative solutions to counteract offensive threats. Clear and concise communication among coaches and players is essential for executing defensive strategies with precision and unity.

As we conclude our exploration of hybrid defensive schemes and strategic disguise, I issue a call to action to all coaches: Embrace


innovation, think strategically, and dare to be different. Success demands a willingness to break free from convention and explore new frontiers. Coaches can elevate their team's defensive performance to unprecedented levels of success by adopting hybrid defensive schemes and leveraging strategic disguise as essential tools in their coaching arsenal.

Mastering the art of hybrid defensive schemes and strategic disguise requires a comprehensive understanding of defensive principles, strategic thinking, and effective communication. Coaches can disrupt opposing offenses, generate turnovers, and elevate their team's defensive performance to new heights by incorporating elements of multiple defensive philosophies and implementing strategic disguise and deception.

Now is the time to revolutionize defensive coaching, to blur the lines between tradition and innovation, and to redefine what it means to be a defensive powerhouse.

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MUSIC



Tom Walls
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Canada
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[Insta: tom.walls.104/](https://www.instagram.com/tom.walls.104/)
[Twitter: @TomWalls6263](https://twitter.com/TomWalls6263)
[MATERIALS](#)

I once had a younger coach ask if we could play music during practice. I was completely against it. I had visions of a basketball team my son had played on where the coach let the kids play music and players did more dancing than listening.

This changed during a spring practice at the University of North Dakota.

Head Coach Bubba Schweigert told us that he had been against music, but when he saw the “zip it put in his kid’s step” he relented. As the opening beat to Twisted Sister’s “We’re Not Gonna Take It” came over the stadium’s PA system, I saw what he meant. Seventy-two NCAA, Division One, athletes sprinting on the field and doing jumping jacks in time to Dee Snyder’s voice and a bass drum’s kick made me want to charge on the field.

I have found that music on both the football field and in the classroom can be just what your players/students need to “put a zip in their step”. However, it is a tool that needs to be used purposefully.

I played music in my classroom when I first started in 1993. Although my intension was good, it was more for entertainment purposes than as a motivational tool. I remember playing Janis Joplin in my American History class, because there was a group of girls who liked her. I remember getting into an argument with a student when he wouldn’t remove his headphones. His logic was that if we could listen to music, why couldn’t it be his choice of music. I didn’t have a good response to that. I probably rationalized that the class music was designed to enhance concentration (It wasn’t). I may have even told him, “Because I’m the big person in the room.”

Since then, I have become more purposeful in using music in the classroom. During quiet times, I will play instrumental music. This is a lesson I learned from my high school Health teacher, John Perricone. He used to say that “lyrics get in the way.” If my students want to listen to their own music, that is not a mountain that I choose to die on. I do remind them of Mr. Perricone’s words, but then I just move on. They enter the classroom to smooth jazz and leave to Rocking Instrumentals. By not forcing this issue, I have discovered a Pavlovian Effect where just the playing of certain music, at certain times of the day, signals a change in instruction. It has also provided countless opportunities to discuss

the connections between music and all of the curriculums. Two great examples would be Credence Clearwater Revival on Fridays and the Theme to Shaft during our Super Happy Amish Fun Time.

For some reason I got into the habit of playing CCR on Fridays. It may have been a purely selfish action as I have a Spotify playlist called Friday Night Drinking Music, which features lots of Classic Southern Rock. Regardless of the origins, this classroom tradition has become so ingrained in my students that if I forget to put it on, they will request it. They don’t always remember the name of the group, but will ask for “That Vietnam music” if I am asleep at the wheel on a Friday.

For the last twenty minutes of class on Friday we play games. The games have to be non-electronic and all of the kids put their phones away. It’s kind of like when your parents forced family game night, with the never-ending game of Monopoly. We generally play simple card games, but the purpose is the same as family game night; I want to create community through games. We call this “Super Happy Amish Fun Time,” apologies to Jerry Seinfeld. Somehow we started using the acronym SHAFT for this period, which led to playing of the Theme to Shaft by Issac Hayes. So conditioned to this song are my at-risk students, that in the middle of an enthusiastic game of spoons, they will sing out, “Shut yo mouth! Just talking about Shaft. Damn right.” People literally stop to see what’s going on in the class.

Purposefully applied music can set themes in the classroom, I have also seen this applied on the football field.

All coaches understand the visceral properties of music in a violent game. However, it’s important to realize what may stir your blood may mean nothing to a seventeen year old. After noticing the effect that CCR and the Theme to Shaft had on my students, I decided to apply the same logic to my football team. Our pregame practice (for us, that is Thursday) is typically a less intense practice. There are no sprints or hitting, and generally we will not go out in full pads. To celebrate the end of the work week, we set this practice to music. The playlist for the practice is created by the winning team from the previous week’s fun game. We call this game Super Happy Fun Time (yes, the same idea as in my classroom). These games range from a relay race with hula hoops to eating contests. The team that wins gets to create the playlist for the next week’s pregame practice. Not only has this been fun, but it has given us some insights into our kids that we never would have guessed. Such as:

The 300 pound guard whose playlist consisted of nothing but Nickelodeon theme songs.

The outside linebacker whose playlist was nothing but 1980s classic rock.

The bookish kicker whose playlist was exclusively Nordic Death Metal.

We warn the kids that there is a limit of three

swears and no use of the N-word. For better or worse, that eliminates lots of the rap and punk playlists. Music has created a unique opportunity to not only motivate and engage the kids, but has provided a reminder of how diverse the kids are. This in turn has been a good reminder that every kid is different, and what motivates one, may not motivate another.

Purposefully applied music can make your classroom and football practice more vibrant.

Post script: When players fail to remember their playlist, the music automatically defaults to the Coaches Playlist. This collection is made at our

first coaches meeting. We are always hoping that the winning team will forget. I still get a "zip in my step" if we are running Team O and Jump Around comes on. We sometimes have to stop and take a dance break.

Post, post script: Because music is important to me, I have always found ways to incorporate it into my classroom. One of the most powerful applications was using the song Strange Fruit by Billie Holliday in both my American History and ELA classes. Her use of metaphors to describe lynching during the Jim Crow era is disturbingly profound.



TRENCH TRAINING

KEEPING BIG KIDS IN THE GAME



Joel Nellis
Head Coach Brookfield
Central HS
Owner of [Trench Training](#)

As a head coach, I have the good fortune of meeting college coaches from around the midwest who stop in during the winter and spring recruiting periods. They stop by to talk specifically about our kids, ask about the top players in the conference and continue to develop a trusting relationship. Often the first question out of their mouths when we begin a dialogue is, "Do you have any linemen we need to see?" If the answer happens to be no, the follow-up question is "Are there any linemen in your conference I should be going to see?"

Offensive and defensive linemen have become the top commodity in the world of college football, both from a high school recruiting standpoint and from the transfer portal. One coach (group of 5 schools) shared with me that one of his offensive lineman, who had started a number of games the previous year, was offered 6-figures to transfer to one of the top programs in the country. Protecting the quarterback and rushing the quarterback have become key differentiators, and often separate the good teams from the elite teams. This is the reason why there is a premium on top linemen talent.

What you find as you go down the football continuum, is that linemen are at the heart of

every successful team. Dominating the line of scrimmage fuels the impressive stat sheets of the skill players, but also the win-loss columns. As important as these big players are, they're not exactly flooding into youth and high school programs begging to play offensive and defensive line. As was stated very eloquently in a recent clinic talk I attended, "Remember fellas, hardly any kid in the youth levels gets signed up and says, 'I can't wait to play right guard!'"

That begs the question, what are you doing to keep big kids in the game? If you're a high school coach, how are you intentionally attracting and retaining the big kids to grow the right way in your program? Here are a couple important things that I've done personally, or I've seen work in other programs:

Appropriate conditioning for linemen. I remember when I had just taken over as the head coach at Brookfield Central (BC) and I saw a 7th grade team running laps to start practice around 4 large soccer fields. I hustled over to the coach and asked what was happening. He explained that he wanted his kids to be in "good shape" and I explained how football shape is much different and that none of these kids, especially the linemen, joined this sport to mimic cross country. In fact it is quite the opposite. From then on, I've reinforced to our coaches in our entire program that they need to use appropriate conditioning and training techniques that fit how football is played. Especially for the big kids, who have no desire to run laps and inevitably finish last, it is something that could really deter them from continuing.

Publicly recognize linemen for their role in the team's success.

"What you reward gets repeated" is often a tagline in team culture talks. If you want a behavior or tradition to take hold, you need to have a recognition for it on a regular basis so that everyone is aware that it's important. Whenever I address our youth teams, I make it a point to tell the linemen how vital they are to the program. I explain to their teammates the sacrifices they make to help the other players be successful and that without them, real tackle football doesn't happen. If I'm at a practice or game at the lower levels, I'm always trying to build up young linemen for being physical and aggressive at the point of attack. I need them to know that the head varsity coach cares about line play. The message happens year after year and becomes a part of your culture. As players get older, while they may continue to grow into their size and only fit into a lineman position, they know their role is valued and feel instrumental in the team's success.

Proper coaching, emphasizing the fundamentals of the position.

I personally believe that kids and parents today quit coaches more than they quit the actual sport. Nowhere in the game is that more true than linemen. The coach that is entrusted with that group not only needs to demonstrate a high level of care, but also be a technician of that position. Offensive line is one of the least natural positions in all of sport and the only one where you don't get to see the ball while you're doing your assignment. It requires a TON of skill work and feedback to improve. Yet you'll still see kids at all lower levels

getting yelled at to "block somebody" rather than actually being coached with specific feedback. Worse yet, you'll see coaches prioritize fancy schemes over sound techniques and put kids in positions to fail because there is not enough time for foundational work. For your players to want to continue to play, they need to know that their position coach can help them improve day by day using the correct techniques. When they feel and see for themselves the correct technique put into action with positive results, you'll really have them hooked.

I'm in a unique position as a head coach and a skills trainer to see kids from all different programs around our area, and hear some of the successes and horror stories of these three points. The driving force behind Trench Training is to keep big kids in the game. We do that through small group sessions in the winter and spring, as well as online training for both youth and high school coaches. We know many youth coaches don't have an OL/DL background and that's why we've put together online training opportunities for any coach or program to leverage. This will help give every coach and team the chance to be successful in the trenches! I hope you'll check out our resources for your program, in hopes of building a steady pipeline of linemen that will fuel the program's success for years to come.

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LEADERSHIP

PART 3: BE (A DEEP DIVE)



Daniel Chamberlain
Football Coach
Co-Host of "The Football Coaching Podcast"
Co-Host of "Coaching 101 Podcast"
Cell: 580-222-8381
Email: ChamberlainFootballConsulting@gmail.com
Twitter: [@CoachChamboOK](https://twitter.com/CoachChamboOK)

In the last issue (Headsets Volume 4, Issue 3), I introduced you to the US Army's leadership model of "Be, Know, Do." I didn't go too much into detail because I know it's a lot to take in. But, now that you've had time to digest it all (you did read the last issue, right?), I want to take you on a deep dive into the 3 critical pieces of the leadership model. We will start with "Be."

Although "Be" comes first in "Be, Know, Do," we have to first understand that no one piece is more important than the others. The entire concept relies on a leader's ability to sit atop all three pillars. You cannot "Be" without also "Knowing," and even if you look the part and understand what you're supposed to do, if you do not take action, or "do," then you're still not filling the role of a leader.

"Be" is, however, a great place to start when understanding where you stand as a leader, because it's the one pillar that is represented by a physical manifestation every morning when you look in the mirror, and it's the first thing you're judged on when other people see you

(first impressions are everything). "Be" is **WHO YOU ARE.**

The two main focuses of "Be" are Character and Presence. Character is defined in many ways. Generally, in the Army, we define it as, "doing the right thing, even when no one is looking." That tends to be a great way to summarize the depth of what determines your character. Character is the internal side of "Be."

Army Values:

The US Army Values; Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage, or as commonly referred to as the acronym LDRSHIP, are the essential values of every Army Soldier. Everything we do, or don't do, is measured up against these 7 words. Obviously you don't have army values to live up to as a coach, or civilian leader. But, they're a great place to start regardless of your profession. Many times when we think about the best and worst leaders we know, whatever put them at the top or bottom of our measuring scale is on this list.

Empathy:

The ability to "put yourself in someone else's shoes," is a large part of who we are as leaders. We create standards that fit the group as a whole. But, we must understand that the people we are in charge of will not be perfect and often have hardships that we do not know about. Having empathy doesn't make you a weak leader, in fact it's quite the opposite. An understanding leader is praised and memorialized in the mind of young athletes.

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Warrior Ethos:

Once again, the Warrior Ethos are a list of "commandments" that Soldiers live by, and may seem out of sorts for a football coach who is in charge of teenagers.

- I will always place the mission first.
- I will never accept defeat.
- I will never quit.
- I will never leave a fallen comrade.

But, just because you aren't a Soldier, and you aren't training Soldiers, doesn't mean these ethos don't pertain to you. When we coach our student athletes, we ask them to live by some version of these exact statements. "Always compete. Always give your best effort. Protect the Family. Place the Team above yourself. We not Me." These statements are oozing with the intent of the Warrior Ethos. Put the needs of others before yourself and don't stop until someone makes you, or you get the final prize. We as coaches have to live the exact same way if we expect our players to. You can't quit just because the opponent is up by 35. You can't leave a fellow coach in a bad situation. You have to put the mission, developing great young men and winning football games, above yourself. Maybe we are all Warriors after all.

Discipline:

Discipline, for most coaches, isn't overly complicated. Do what you're supposed to do, in the best way possible, regardless of the circumstances and whether or not you actually want to do it. Most of us will relate this to film breakdown, gameplanning, traveling to the JV games, washing laundry after the game, etc. But, many of us do not equate this to mental

and physical health. Be disciplined enough to continue taking care of yourself, even when the grind of the season has you down. You won't let a player skip practice because he's tired from school. So, why do we (I AM POINTING DIRECTLY AT MYSELF) allow ourselves to skip our morning runs, weight room sessions, time with our families, educational time, and so on.

Where Character defines the qualities of a leader that are internal and give you the drive and morals to do what's right, presence is about what you display on the outside.

Professional Bearing:

Let's be honest with ourselves for a moment. If you know what professional bearing is, you can probably admit that you've not maintained it perfectly throughout your life. Professional bearing is simply acting as a professional, regardless of the situation, at all times. I can think of plenty of times that I've acted out when confronted by another coach, when the ref calls the game the wrong way, when my players give up yet another deep ball when we've been in Cover 3 all night... you get the point. However, if you're losing your cool way more than necessary, or it's become your default to try and "scare" others into doing things your way, you have created a shortcoming in your leadership. Great leaders maintain a cool head, they collect their thoughts and consider their actions before executing them.

Fitness:

I am notorious for calling out coaches about their health and fitness. Even on the podcasts,

I have stated multiple times that a person who can maintain their own body shouldn't be yelling at student athletes to stay fit. I know it's an unpopular opinion in some circles, but I have to stand by my conviction. As a leader, if you cannot show that you have what it takes to do what you're asking others to do... you're probably losing the trust of those around you. Look, I fully understand that Andy Reid isn't the most fit human on Earth. That's why this is my opinion and not scientific fact. But, in the military and in life, I fully believe you need to look the part of a leader just as much as you act the part. And fitness builds resiliency (see two paragraphs below).

Confidence:

Confidence and Competence are two of my most valued traits of a leader. Many of the things in this article, and those I've written before, are critical to being the "perfect" leader. But, confidence and competence are non-negotiables to do your job. Confidence will inspire your team to do anything you ask. A soft timid leader will be questioned without a doubt.

Resilience:

Resilience, or your ability to handle adversity, is an overly stated and under-trained topic. We, as coaches, love to tell players to rebound from whatever just happened. We want a QB with a short memory. We require kids to play through bumps and bruises. We want maximum effort, even when the D1 player on the other team just ran for his 3rd consecutive TD unscathed. As a leader we must practice resiliency too. We must keep the team's chin up when we lose

the star player to a season ending injury, or when we get a terrible seeding in the playoffs because we lost a game we shouldn't have, or when the starting RB is ineligible due to grades and our rival is coming to be our Homecoming game. Truthfully, there's not a lot of scenarios in coaching that resiliency isn't required. So, we must train it when we can. We must practice it throughout the year, not just hope it shows up in-season when the pressure is on. "You can't just turn on the switch."

In closing, the pillar of leadership, "Be," is all the things that physically make you a leader. Whether that's physical traits that you display through your actions, or the philosophy and morals that you live your life by. To be a complete leader, you must "Be" a leader.

DRILLS

THE UNSUNG HERO OF THE UNSUNG HEROES



Michael Fields
La Grande HS, OR
JV Head Coach/OC
[CoachTube](#)
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I have played, coached, and watched a lot of football in my life. I know have my biases about the game from

my playing days and as an offensive coordinator. I grew up in the coaching world as a defensive guy, and still work with LBs, but I know the game is won in the trenches. Linemen are the ones who is responsible for winning games.

On Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, and every other day the great game of football is played, the QBs, WRs, and RBs who get into the endzone and score the touchdowns get the glory. The real heroes are offensive linemen. Often referred as the unsung heroes. So, who is the unsung hero of the unsung heroes? The center. My bias is that I played center through middle school and lived this silent role of defeat and success. Due to my size I moved to TE/Slot in high school.

Why the center? The center when performing well, goes unnoticed. If he makes a mistake, EVERYONE knows. He is responsible for initiating the start to every offensive play, he puts the ball into motion to the QB. If there is a bad snap on TV, the camera points right at the

center. A fumbled snap, blame the center, the unsung hero of the unsung heroes.

Why is this position so important? Other than initiating every play he is responsible for the offensive line. He sets the calls, communicates the calls, sometimes the play or scheme. If he is wrong, the play fails. If he is right, the QB, backs and receivers look like they are unstoppable.

At first glance, the role of the offensive center may seem straightforward, snap the ball to the quarterback and block opposing defenders. However, several responsibilities that demand unwavering focus, skill, and teamwork are at stake with his calls and actions. The center serves as the play caller or QB of the offensive line, bearing the weight of the team's goals on their shoulders with every snap. Here are some essential skills that the center must perform on every play.

The Snap

In the game of football, where split-seconds and quick decisions can determine victory or defeat, snap accuracy is key to success. The center's ability to deliver an accurate snap to the quarterback is critical on every offensive play. A millisecond's hesitation or a fraction of an inch off-target can disrupt the timing of the entire play, leading to missed opportunities, fumbles or the dreaded scop and score. The snap is an art and science performed over and over throughout the game, whether the QB is under center, in shotgun or pistol, it must be on target and delivered at the right speed each time.

Protecting the Quarterback on Drop Backs

While quarterbacks often receive praise for delivering accurate passes and game-winning drives, much of their success depends greatly on the protection provided by the offensive line, with the center as its leader. Like a brick wall, the center must protect the QB and runners from opposing defenders. This may be one or two defensive linemen, blitzing or stand-up linebackers or a combination of all. Through correct positioning, flawless technique, and unwavering determination, the center helps to create a solid pocket, allowing the quarterback time to survey the field with and deliver the ball to his receivers.

Run Blocking and Creating Lanes

In the chess match between offense and defense, the ground game is an important weapon, capable of grinding down the opponents and controlling the tempo of the game and managing the clock. The center is the strategist, setting the stage of effective run blocking. With a combination of strength, agility, and football IQ, the center clears the way through the opposing defense allowing ball carriers to gain yards, first downs and touchdowns.

Communication and Play Calling

In the middle of all the chaos happening on the field each play, effective communication is the key to success that holds the offensive line together. As the quarterback or leader of the offensive line, the center assumes the role of communicator, relaying play calls, identifying defensive schemes, and making split-second adjustments to ensure cohesion

OFFENSIVE CENTER ROLES:

1. THE SNAP

2. PROTECT THE QB ON DROP BACKS

3. RUN BLOCKING AND CREATE LANES

4. COMMUNICATION AND PLAY CALLING

continued on next page

and effectiveness. Through clear and concise communication, the center ensures that every member of the offensive line is aligned properly and prepared to execute their assignments correctly.

In high school football, where every game is a battle and every victory hard-fought, the importance of the offensive center cannot be overstated. Though their efforts may go unnoticed by the casual fan or observer in the stands, their impact echoes throughout the field, shaping the outcome of their team with every snap, block, and call.

So with all this responsibility, how do you train the center?

First, they should snap the ball a lot in practice. We have our center snap to the QB several times in practice, not just in team or group work. They snap pre-practice too. They snap when it is raining, or cold, or hot, or snowing, like the US Postal Service, they must always deliver the ball. They should have drills where they snap to a stationary target like a pop-up dummy or net. Drills where they snap to a moving target like a player or coach. They should also snap under pressure with linemen or coaches over them bringing pressure to block. They should snap a wet ball before it rains to be prepared for the weather.

Next, they should have a high football IQ. This is developed by watching film, drawing plays against various defensive fronts, and building a good relationship with the QB and offensive

coordinator and line coach. They should know and study everyone's position on the offensive line and be able to align them properly and be able to explain their job on all plays.

Blocking, this one may sound obvious, but the center must be able to perform every type of block there is. Drive blocks, reach blocks, double teams, down blocks and more. In pass protection they may have to slide or kick. They should work with the other linemen daily on blocking techniques (I wrote a previous article in Volume 3 Issue 1 on Oline EDDs).

Communication drills, this should be in every practice. The center should be making calls every time they break the huddle or line up on the ball in group or team time. Where is the defensive strength. What the front is. Who might be blitzing. Setting the direction of the protection. Blocking audibles or tags, double teams and more.

So, the next time you witness a touchdown pass or a game-winning drive, take a moment to recognize the driving force at the heart of it all, the offensive center, the unsung hero of the unsung heroes of football.



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