# Coaching Tips and Drills

#### Overview

The purpose of this manual is to provide ideas, drills and activities for the coach to use at practice to help the players enhance their skills for game day.

# Strategy

Decide what style of game you want to play and plan your plays accordingly. There is only so
much you can teach the players in the time you have, so keeping to a reoccurring theme can
make it easier to understand what you are asking your players to do.

Example: Play for first downs, not touchdowns. This might be accomplished by using short passes and running plays.

# **Hydration Tips**

- Pre-hydrate
- Players should drink 16 oz of fluid first thing in the morning of a practice or game
- Players should consume 8-16 oz of fluid one hour prior to the start of the practice or game
- Players should consume 8-16 oz of fluid 20 minutes prior to the start of the practice or game
- Hydrate
- Players should have unlimited access to fluids (sports drinks and water) throughout the practice or game
- Players should drink during the practice or game to minimize losses in body weight but should not over drink
- All players should consume fluids during water breaks. Many players will say that they are not
  thirsty. However, in many cases, by the time they realize that they are thirsty they are already
  dehydrated or on their way to be dehydrated. Make sure all your players are getting the proper
  fluids

# **Defensive Tips**

- Pulling the flag
- Watch the ball carrier's hips as opposed to his or her feet, or head
- Stay in front of the ball carrier
- Stay low and lunge at the flag
- If you grab anything but the flag, let go immediately to avoid a penalty
- Playing Zone Defense
- Each defensive back is responsible for an area as opposed to a player
- This will enable you them to keep an eye on the receiver and the quarterback at the same time
- As receivers come through your area, try to anticipate where the QB wants to throw the ball.
   Then try to beat the receiver to that spot
- Playing Man to Man Defense
- Leave some space between you and the receiver (Your Cushion)
- As the receiver starts his, or her route you can start to back pedal
- When the receiver makes his or her break you can turn and run with them to try to break up the pass

Offensive Tips

Throwing the football

- Hold the ball near the back with your fingers over the laces
- Keep your elbow in tight to your body and hold the ball up by your ear
- Point your non-throwing shoulder toward your target
- Throw the ball by letting it spin off your fingers as you follow through toward your target

# Leading the Receiver

- As a quarterback, you do not want to throw the ball where the receiver is, but rather where he
  or she is going to be
- Practicing your routes with your receivers will help you to figure how far you can lead them with your throws

# Receiving a pass

- Keep your eyes on the ball at all times
- Form a triangle with your hands
- Catch the ball with your hands, not your body
- Keep your hands soft so that you can cushion the ball
- Once you have made the catch, tuck it away so you will not fumble

# Play Action

- Using a fake handoff can distract the defensive backs and linebackers enough to get the receivers open for a pass
- Trying a few running plays first to set up the play-fake when you are trying to throw the ball down the field

# **Short Passing Routes**

- Short passes are safe and effective ways to move the ball down the field
- Short passes can be run towards the sideline (Out Route), towards the middle of the field (In Route), or by turning back towards the QB (Hook Route) when you have found a hole in the defense
- Short passes can turn into a big gain with a few quick moves

# **Long Passing Routes**

- Long passes are great ways of moving the ball in a hurry
- Long passes can be run towards the sideline (Corner Route), towards the middle of the field (Post Route), or by running straight (Fly Route)
- Long passes are most effective when the defense is caught off guard. Using a mixture of running plays and short passes can open up the field for a long pass

# **Practice Drills**

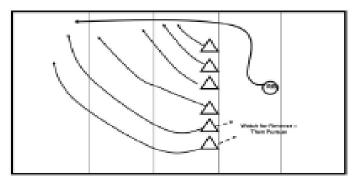
# Flag Pulling Drill

- Form two lines. One will be the defenders and one will be the runners. Each player should have their flags on and a ball. Line the first defender up in an 8 x 8 rectangle
- The offensive players will take off one by one against each defender. The offensive player must stay within the rectangle. After each turn have the players switch lines
- Make sure that the offensive player is not flag guarding. Make sure the defender gets into
  position. The defenders should be focused on pulling the flag and getting a good angle to get in
  front of the runner, so that the defender is better positioned to pull the flag

Variation: Run the drill without flags, so that the focus of the defender is getting a good angle and moving their feet to keep in front of the offensive player

# **Pursuit Drill**

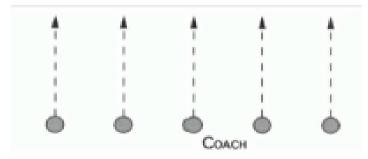
- In Football it's very important to teach your defense to take the proper angle of pursuit. Many young defenders will simply chase a running back from behind, or the defender will run to where the running back is now and not where they will be.
- For this defensive drill, explain the importance of the angle of pursuit. First walk your players through their pursuit. Players furthest from the play/ball carrier will take the largest angle to the play. Emphasize that the players should be running to where the running back will be (not where the ball carrier is now!)
- After walking your football players through their angles, set up the drill at full speed. This drill can be done with the entire defense
- At the coach's command or snap of the ball the defenders should simulate taking on a defender, drop to the ground, quickly get up and then begin pursuit of the ball carrier. For this drill the defenders should simply touch the ball carrier or pull the flag. The ball carrier continues down the sideline until all players have touched him. Ideally, the defense should touch the ball carrier every three to five yards



### **Back Pedal Drill**

From an athletic position:

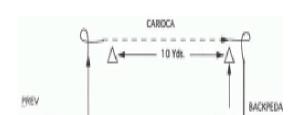
- Knees bent at a 45-degree angle
- Head up, back straight and arms hanging loose
- Weight on the balls of the feet, push off the front foot and begin backpedaling for ten yards
- Keep chest over the feet, feet close to the ground and pump arms
- The coach may stand in front and use a football to direct the player's movement from side to side as well as angels



Jingle-Jangle Drill

Place cones at corners of 15-yard square. Line up players at one corner of square

Players then:

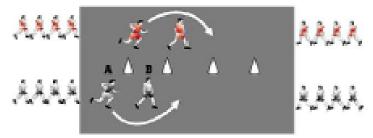


- Sprint to first cone
- Side-step to second cone
- Back pedal to third cone
- Sprint back to beginning of line
- Throw a football to each player as he or she finishes the drill

Repeat drill to other side after everyone has had a turn

# Quarterback / Center Exchange Drill

- Set out a 20 x 20-yard area. Divide teams into even groups and place in even lines. Place cones in middle of drill four yards apart. One football per team; the entire team can participate
- This is a relay race
- The quarterback (QB) and center on each team start the race
- The center snaps directly to the QB. The center will stand still while the QB runs to the next cone
- The QB now becomes the center and the center now becomes the QB, continue until course is completed.
- The race is continued until each participant gets a turn
- Center must place the ball on the ground before snapping
- Progression: Shotgun snaps



### Individual Pass Drill

# 5 Yard Curl:

The Wide Receiver (WR) runs up the field five yards, stops and returns back towards the QB

## 5 Yard Out:

• The WR runs up the field five yards and cuts to the sideline

#### 8 Yard Post:

The WR runs up field eight yards and cuts towards the center of the field on a 45-degree angle

# Streak:

• The WR runs straight up the field as fast as possible

# Post Corner:

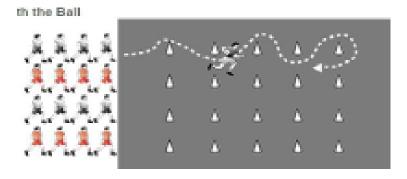
• The WR runs up the field. At eight Yards cut towards the center of the field and after two yards, cut towards the corner of the end zone

#### 5 Yard Smash:

• The WR runs up the field five yards turns toward the QB and then side shuffles to the right or left while facing the QB.

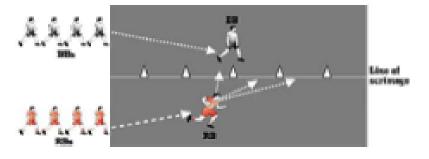
# Running with the Ball Drill

- Set out a 20 x 20-yard area. Cones are set eight yards apart to simulate a mini-end zone. One ball per team. The entire team can participate. If cones are limited, use t-shirts, shoes, or tape on the floor as markers
- This is a relay race between teams
- The first participant in each line has a football and will run with the football around each cone and then come back to the beginning of his or her line
- When the participant returns to the line, they will hand off to the next participant at the front of the line and will go to the back of their team's line
- The player switches arms carrying the football, with the football always carried in the arm nearest the sideline
- Players cut on their outside foot, not crossing their legs over when they go around a cone
- The race is won by the first team to have each participant complete the race
- Progression: Have players back pedal or hop over the cones.



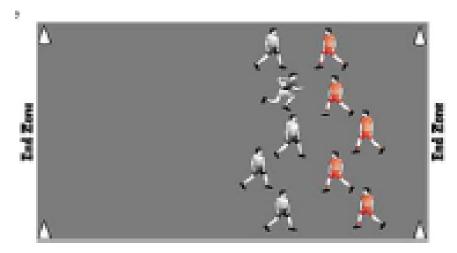
# Oklahoma Drill

- Set out a 10 x 20-yard area. Place the cones five yards apart. One football is needed. The entire class can participate in this drill which, can be duplicated for more players if space permits
- The object is for the RB to run along the line of scrimmage and select an area between the cones to run through
- RB starts with the football. On coach's signal, RB begins running. The DB must mirror the RB and attempt to capture the RB's flag before the RB selects a hole between the cones
- This drill simulates making a one-on-one flag capture.
- RB must keep head up and the football firmly tucked away
- DB must keep shoulders square and head and eyes looking up the field
- DB watches the RB's hips
- Progression: Use two defensive players



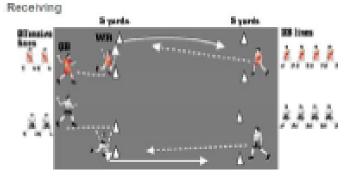
#### Ultimate NFL Drill

- Set out a 20 x 40-yard area. Pair up six participants. Rotate players, or duplicate the drill if space permits
- The concept is for the team with the football to pass the ball to teammates without dropping the ball, all the while moving the ball toward the end zone
- The player with the football has 10 seconds to pass or pitch the ball to a teammate. The ball can be passed or pitched forward, sideways or backwards
- The player with the ball can only take two steps after catching the ball. The offensive players without the ball can move anywhere on the field
- If the ball is dropped or intercepted, play continues with the other team in possession of the ball from the point of the turnover
- Each defensive player must stay at an arm's length from the player with the ball. The defensive play is like that of basketball
- WRs must work to get open and not bunch up



# Passing and Receiving Drill

- This drill helps players understand simple passing routes, from the perspective of both quarterback and receiver
- Passers learn accuracy and how to lead receivers. Receivers learn how to run pass routes
   Defensive Backs learn how to watch receivers and cut to the ball
- Divide your team into three groups. The first player in line is the first passer; the second goes
  out to play defensive back; the third is the receiver. The outside groups run simple 10-yard
  square out patterns, while the middle group runs 10-yard turn-ins or buttonhooks
- Rotate each line: After passing, the quarterback becomes the next receiver; the next player in line becomes the passer; the first receiver becomes the defensive back; and the first defensive back moves on to the next group
- Make sure players get chances at all three position



# **Throwing Techniques**

# **Hand Placement:**

- Place ball in your hand in a comfortable position, try to keep several fingers on the laces.
- There should be a pocket of air between the ball and your palm, ball should not be pressed against the palm.
- The index finger should be the last finger off the ball.

#### **Arm Movement:**

- Bring the throwing hand above the shoulder when delivering the ball.
- Throwing hand should follow through and finish at the left pocket of a right handed QB
- Back shoulder (throwing shoulder) finishing over front foot for proper weight transfer.
- Keep the non-throwing shoulder closed during throw.

#### Footwork:

- Take short steps & strides back to set to throw.
- Weight should transfer onto front foot when throwing.
- Stand tall with knees slightly bent.

# **Throwing Drills**

**Basic Drill 1** - Pair up players and place them 5 yards apart. Watch their arm movement and follow-through, and the type of ball they're throwing. If the ball is not a tight spiral there needs to be adjustments made.

**Basic Drill 2** - Place each pair of players 10 then 15 yards apart have them throw back and forth, and evaluate their technique.

**Dynamic Throwing Drill 3** - Place different players in different spots downfield. Have the QB drop back 3 steps then throw to the player who puts their hands up as a target. Evaluate their footwork, follow - through, arm movement, and accuracy. Repeat with 5 & 7 step drop backs.

**Dynamic Throwing Drill 4** - Place players downfield in different spots and have the QB drop back three steps then run right - have one player lift their hands as a target and have the QB throw the ball to the intended target. Correct footwork (finishing on the front foot), proper arm movement (keep arm up while throwing - point non-throwing shoulder towards target). Repeat with 5 and 7 step drop backs, then have them move to their left and repeat process.

# **Throwing & Catching Competitions/Games**

**Long Toss Game** - Place two circles of cones approximately 6 feet in diameter in the back of each corner of an end zone. Have a QB drop back and throw a ball from approximately 20 yards back with the objective of landing the ball in the air (on-the-fly) into one of the two circles of cones. Place players further back as they begin to master a shorter distance.

**Two-Minute Drill** - Take one QB, two receivers and a center. Start the game at a line of scrimmage 15 yards from the end zone. A QB has 2 minutes to complete as many passes as possible to his receivers in the end zone, including his center. Each receiver alternates going out for a pass after each attempt. Each player rotates to a new position after each attempt (i.e. each receiver rotates in as a center and the center becomes the next eligible receiver). Have all four players rotate in as a QB for 2 minutes at a time. Reward 2 points for every TD catch made to both the QB and the receiver. Points carry over to each 2 minute game. The player with the most points wins.

**Game Changing Catches** - Have a QB throw balls to receivers that run routes that end at a specific 3' x 3' space on the field. Have receivers run different routes into those spaces. Each receiver gets 10 throws and 1 point for catching the ball with one foot in the box and 2 points for balls caught with two feet in the box.

Bonus Game (at coaches discretion) - additional 2 points for one handed catches.

**Ultimate Football** - this is a great game that engages every player in throwing, catching, running patterns as well as defending against the pass. This game also serves as a great form of conditioning. Form two teams of equal numbers or multiple teams of equal size for multiple games. Create a field with two end zones. Field size is determined by the number of players you have playing at one time. For example, if you have a total of 6 players the field size should be no larger than 30 yards long by 20 yards wide. The objective of the game is to score a touchdown. There are no downs, play is continuous. Players can only throw the ball to each other and can hold the ball no longer than 3 seconds at a time before throwing to a teammate. The ball can be moved in any direction of the field. Change of possession occurs when a player drops a ball, takes more than two steps with the ball before throwing, a ball goes out-of-bounds, or when a touchdown is scored.

# **Catching Techniques**

# **Hand Placement**

- Balls thrown chest level and above
- Fingers on both hands reach for the sky spread apart.
- Both thumbs should touch and stay together throughout the catch.

# **Balls Thrown Below Chest Level**

- Fingers on both hands should extend down to the ground spread apart.
- Both pinkies should touch and stay together throughout the catch.

#### **Arm Placement**

- Both arms should extend out to meet the thrown ball.
- Both arms should bring the thrown ball back to the body to secure football.

# **Catching Drills**

Focus (watching the ball into your hands) while many distractions happen around you is key to a successful receiver. Executing the fundamentals of the catch is also key but we also emphasize maintaining a player's balance. Without the ability to get back to center/balance after a catch a player cannot extend or finish a play. Therefore we practice drills that are challenging and extreme, yet fun. This increases the learning curve and encourages more repetitions by taking the boredom out.

**Drill 1** - Set-up three to four stations with 3-4 kids per station. Place one - three foot 2 x 4 on the ground. Have a parent/coach at each station throwing passes to players who run different routes and finish by catching the ball while maintaining balance on the 2x4.

**Drill 2** - Repeat the set-up in Drill 1, but specify that all catches must be made while maintaining balance on one foot on the 2x4 board.

# **Ball Handling Techniques**

# Securing the ball:

- When running and holding a football there should be 4 points of contact the front tip of the ball in the
  hand, the back tip of the ball between the arm pit, the outside of the ball inside the forearm, the inside of
  the ball against the chest.
- The ball should never lose contact with any of those 4 points.
- The hand holding the ball should be held up and near the side of the chin. When running, the ball should continue to be held high with the elbow driving up and down to maintain good running form and ball security at the same time.
- When transferring the ball from one arm to the next you must keep the ball pressed against your chest, immediately establishing the four points of contact on the opposite arm. The ball should be transferred at chest level.

# Running Routes, Defending a Pass, Avoiding or Making a Flag Tackle -

When running a route, defending a receiver, and making a flag tackle, the player must be efficient in the following athletic skills:

**Acceleration -** To accelerate properly your body should be as close

to a 45 degree angle as possible

- Arms should be locked at 90 degrees
- Hips should be pushed forward
- Execute good knee drive
- Ankle placed behind the knee
- Toes should be up
- Create the longest stride possible

# Change of Direction -

- Wide base of support with feet
- A low center of gravity with the hips & trunk low to the ground
- A 45 degree angle with the outside plant leg and weight over the inside leg
- Drive off the inside or weight bearing leg with the outside of the player's foot
- Drive off the outside or plant leg with the inside of the foot

#### **Deceleration -**

- Get down with a low flat back
- Good posture
- Shoulder over front knee and ankle
- Chop feet with a soft landing

# **Running Routes**

**Route Drills** - A receiver must learn to keep their body under control while moving in different directions. In order to make a quick change in direction to get away from a defender and get open for a pass, a receiver must be able to decelerate as well as be efficient in changing direction. Once a receiver begins to make a move the movement should be sharp and precise (no rounding off runs), with arms out stretched - towards the QB presenting a good, large target for the QB to see.

**DRILL 1** - Mark off a route with small disc cones placed where you want the receiver to cut and where you want the receiver to finish. Be sure the receiver accelerates out of his stance correctly, decelerates, changes direction properly, and executes the correct catching techniques explained above.

**COMPETITION 1** - Time how fast a receiver can run a route. Incorporate a pass and subtract a 1/2 second for every ball caught on the finishing spot.

# **Defending a Pass**

**Backpedaling** - is a vital skill for a defender in flag football. The most important techniques to backpedaling are staying low (in a deceleration type position) with head & shoulders over your feet at all times (this keeps a player's body well balanced preventing him from falling back and losing his balance, and well-prepared to make a move to follow a receiver once they break to catch a ball.) A player's arm movement must be quick with a proper movement (chin to pocket), with 75% of their weight distributed onto the balls of their feet.

**DRILL 1** - Have a group of players backpedal approximately 5 yards, the coach stands directly in front of all players and directs them by pointing to where he would like them to break and run (to the left, right, directly back, and forward). Watch for their reaction time, change of direction and running form techniques.

**DRILL 2** - Set-up a course with cones. One cone placed 5 yards downfield, with two cones placed at a 45 degree angle 5 yards to the right and to the left, two cones placed at 90 degree angle downfield from the first cone 5 yards to the right and 5 yards to the left, and one cone placed directly behind the first cone or 180 degrees 10 yards downfield. Have players start by backpedaling to the first cone and cutting/turning to a pre-determined cone. After backpedaling to all pre-determined cones several times, the coach can start to point to a cone as they arrive at the first.

**Competition 1** - Use same course as explained above in Drill 2. Time each athlete to each pre-determined cone then again directing them to each cone.

**Competition 2** - Pair up a receiver to run a pass route with a flag belt and flags on. Set-up several cones downfield that a receiver must run to at the end of each route. The defender starts no closer then 3 feet from the receiver. The objective is for the defender to pull the receiver's flag before reaching a specific cone. The defender cannot pull a flag until the receiver has traveled at least 5 yards downfield.

# Making a Flag Tackle

The main components to making a flag tackle are:

- Change of Direction
- Deceleration
- Breakdown Position
- Dynamic Breakdown
- Ripping of the arms

The flag tackle is one of the more difficult athletic skills that a young athlete will perform. However, perfecting this skill is an excellent training tool for the foundation of all athletic movements and can be transferred to any sport.

While performing a flag tackle the athlete must learn to stay low in a 45 degree position with their head held up, their shoulders pinched back, and their body as square to their opponent as possible. When the player attempts to pull his opponent's flag, it's best if they execute proper deceleration techniques.

#### **Drill 1 - The Mirror Drill**

Start by having two players standing 6 feet apart facing each other. Place two cones 5 yards apart. Designate one player on offense and one on defense. On the whistle have the offensive player slide from one cone to the next and have the defensive player slide and stay with the offensive player. Be sure each player stays in a breakdown position (shoulders pinched back, back straight, knees bent in a sitting position, head up, both arms locked at a 90 degree angle in a holster position near each pant pocket). On the second whistle the offensive player can slide in either direction attempting to reach a cone before their defender.

**Competition 1** - Start by setting-up the Mirror Drill, but add two cones 5 yards behind the defensive player and five yards apart. Each player wears a belt with flags. Begin the competition by having the offensive player slide from cone to cone with the defensive player trying to stay with him. On the second whistle, the offensive player attempts to run upfield past the defensive player without having his flags pulled before he passes the cones 5 yards downfield. Defensive player must attempt to stay with the offensive player and can move to pull one of the offensive player's flags on the second whistle. Object is to pull the offensive player's flag before he can get 5 yards downfield. Offensive player must stay within the 5 yard wide area at all times.

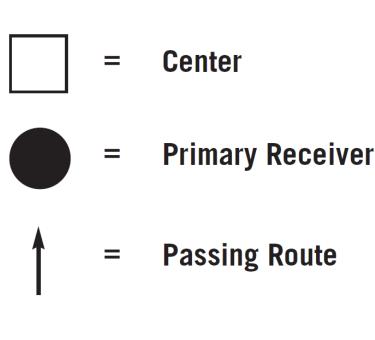
**Competition 2** - Set-up a 5 yard box marked by 4 cones in the corners of the box. Place a 5th cone in the middle of the box. One player on offense starts at any one of the 4 corner cones. The defensive player starts at the middle cone. The game starts on a whistle, and the offensive player must then attempt to touch as many cones as possible without having one of his flags pulled. Players are free to move in any direction throughout the box, but cannot leave the box and re-enter. If a player leaves the box the competition ends.

Keep score by counting the number of cones touched before a flag is pulled. The players/teams that have the least number of cones touched win.

**Key Coaching Observations:** Watch for how well a player is executing change of direction, deceleration, balance, and body position techniques. For example, if a player is standing high while attempting to pull a flag, please note and correct by explaining that a better technique would be to stay low and get as close to a 45 degree angle as possible.

The following is to give you some ideas of different passing routes as well as some plays. None are required to use, but merely ideas to help you get started.

# Player & Play Key



---- = Run

# FLAG Plays - Passing Tree Receiver Route Definitions

This is a 5-8 yard route forward then the Quick Out (1): 5 yds receiver cuts out towards the sideline then looks for the ball. Slant (2): This is a 3-5 yard route forward then the 7 yds receiver breaks towards the middle of the filed on a 45 degree angle and looks for the ball 12 yds Deep Out (3): This is a 10-15 yard route. If should be run exactly like the quick out only deeper. Drag / In (4): This is a 5-8 yard route forward then the 7 yds receiver breaks into the middle of the field on a 90 degree angle and looks for the ball. Flag (5): This is a 10-15 yard route forward then 15 yds the receiver breaks at a 45 degree angle towards the sideline and looks for the ball. Curl (6): This is a 5-8 yard route forward then the receiver stops and turns to the ball. Post Corner (7): This is a 12-20 yard route forward then the receiver cuts on a 45 degree angle to the middle of the field for a few steps then the receiver cuts on a 45 degree angle towards the sideline and then looks for the ball. Post (8): This is a 12-20 yard route forward then 7 yds the receiver breaks on a 45 degree angle towards the middle of the field and looks for the ball. 15 yds Fly (9): This route is run straight up the field with the receiver looking for the ball after he gets past about 15 yards.

# **Play Calling**

The Quarterback will call the play in the huddle. Next to each play is, the Play Name, Play Call, and \* indicating how the play is run. The play call tells how the quarterback will share the play with the other players in the huddle. There are three main components to the play call:

**A. The Formation** (T Formation, T right or left, Twins right or left, Trips right or left and I formation).

**B.** The Play Name

C. The Cadence, or Count

(ie. Hut one, hut two, hut three... or Go, Go, Go...)

These three components are all that the players need to know in order to run a successful play. The formation tells them how to line up, the play name tells them what the play is and the cadence or count tells the center when to snap the ball.

In this manual you will find nine running plays, and nine passing plays. In actuality there are 18 of each as all plays can be run to the right or the left by easily reversing field side of players, and routes of players, and then calling it left, or right accordingly.

# **Formations**

# A. T Formation 3 2 5 1 B. T Formation with Shotgun 3 2 4

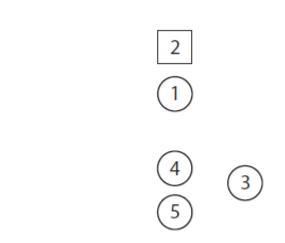
# C. Twins Right



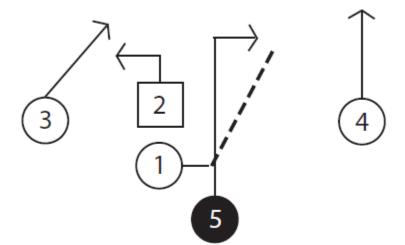
D. Trips Left



E. I Formation



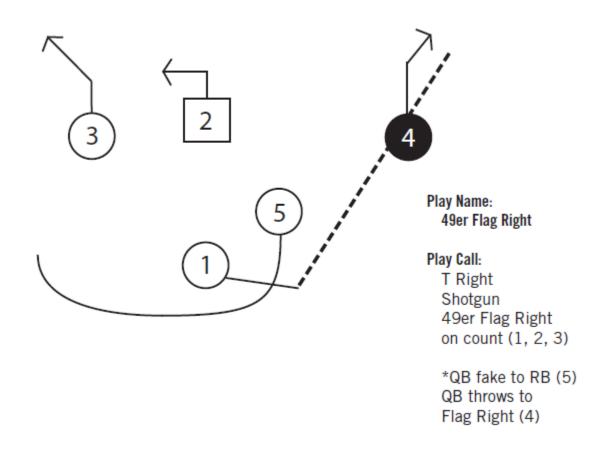
# **Pass Plays**

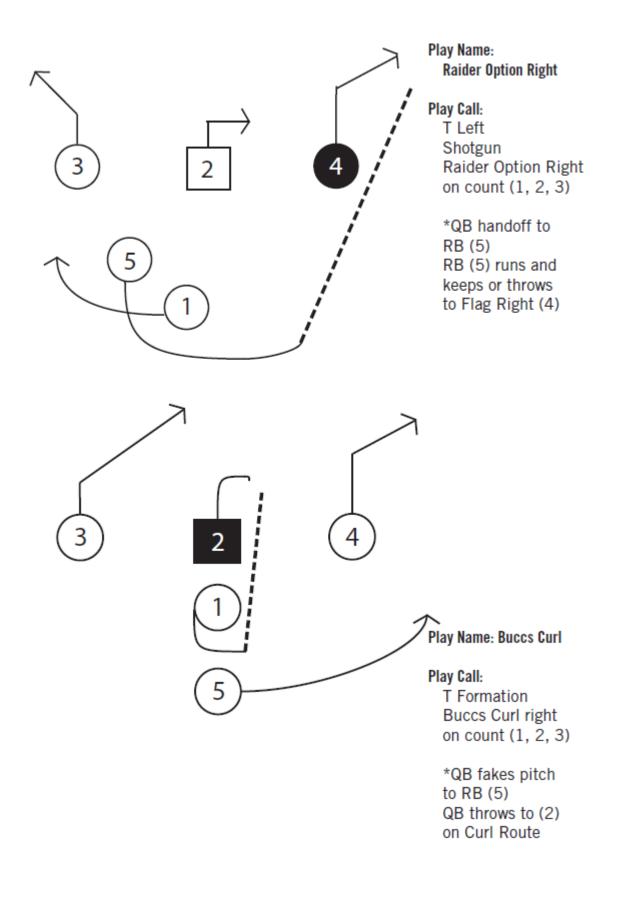


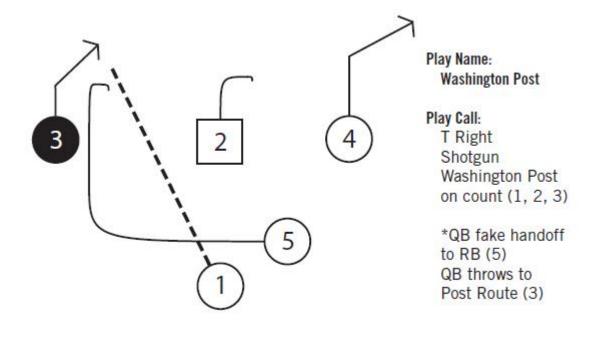
Play Name: Browns Out

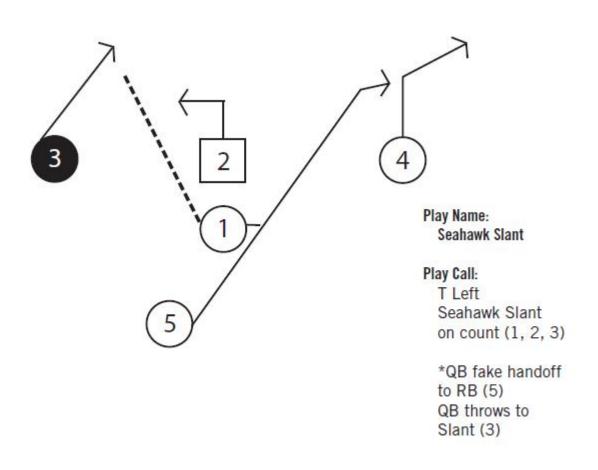
Play Call: T Right Browns Out on count (1, 2, 3)

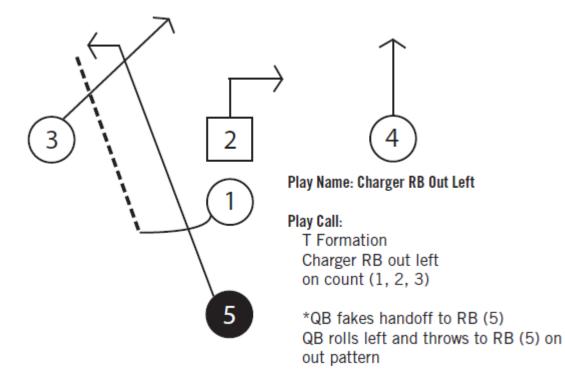
> \*QB fake handoff to RB (5) QB rolls right and throws to RB (5) on out

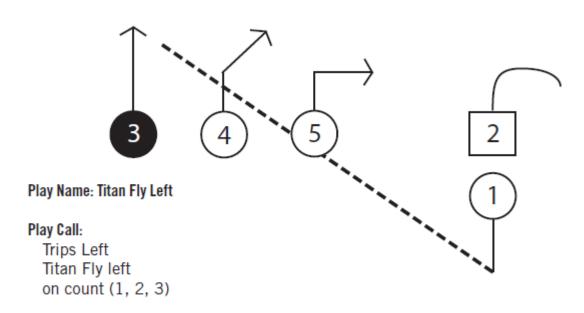




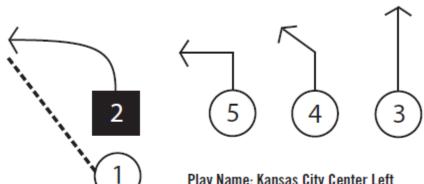








\*QB takes 3-step drop and throws to WR (3) on Fly Pattern



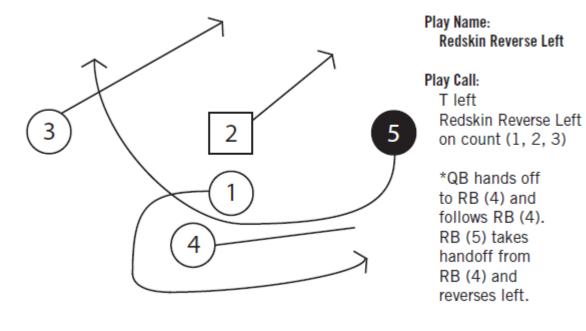
Play Name: Kansas City Center Left

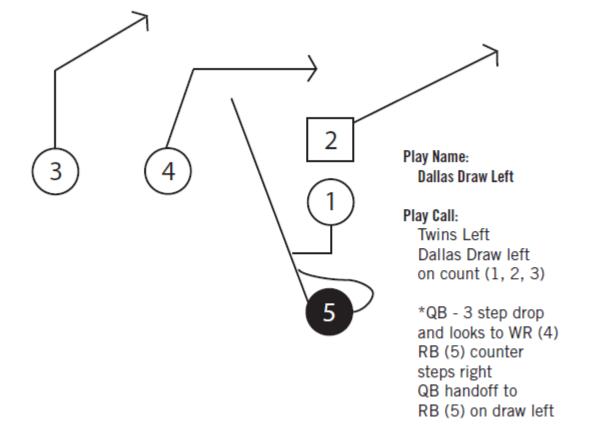
# Play Call:

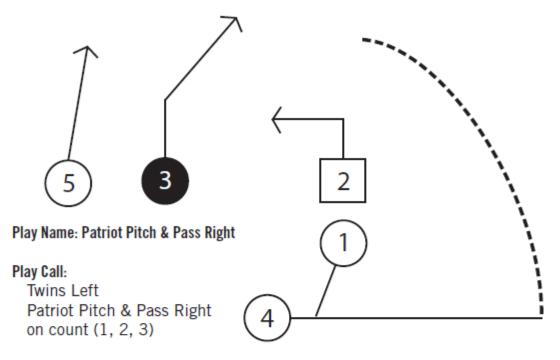
Trips Right Kansas City center left on count (1, 2, 3)

\*QB takes 3 step drop and looks down field toward WR (3) QB throws to center (2) on out route pattern

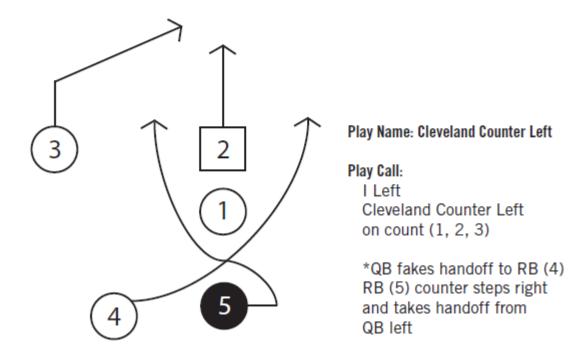
# **Run Plays**

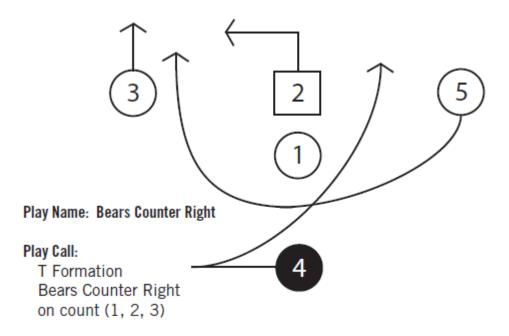




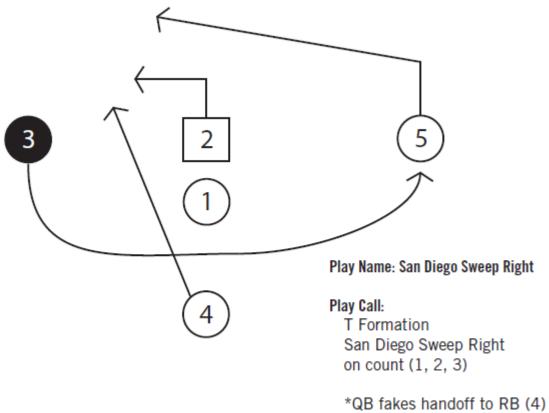


\*QB pitches or hands off to RB (4). RB (4) option to run or pass to WR (3) on Post

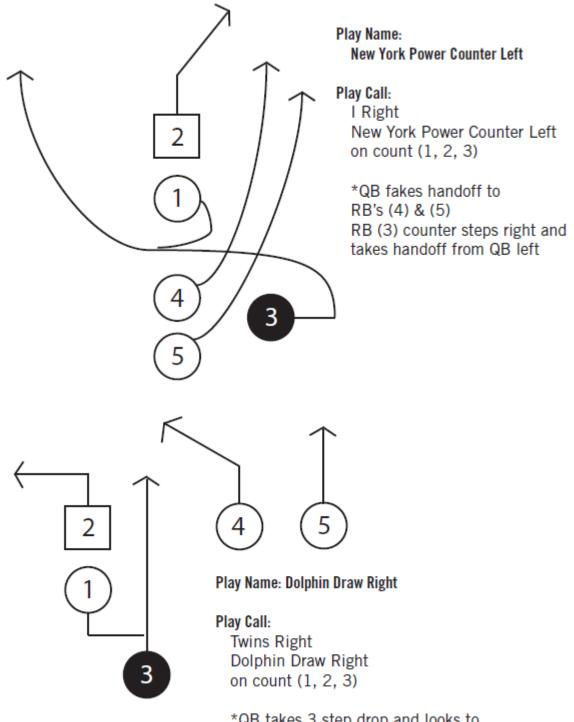




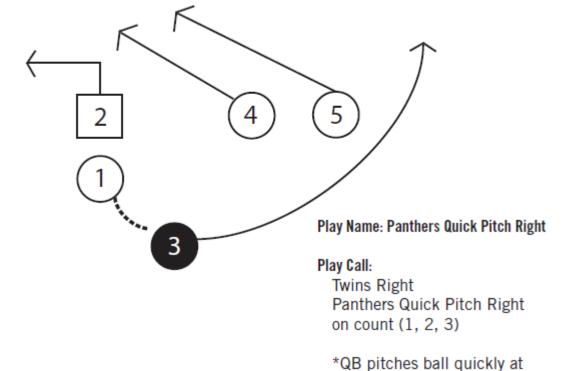
\*QB fakes handoff to WR (5). RB (4) counter steps left and takes handoff from QB right



\*QB fakes handoff to RB (4) QB hands off to WR (3)



\*QB takes 3 step drop and looks to WR (4) then hands off to RB (3) on draw right



# Coaching Tip Let Them Play Football!!!

snap to RB (3)

RB (3) sweeps right

The temptation to be another Don Shula, or Bill Walsh will have to wait. This is NFL FLAG. While teaching football skills and strategies is important, keep your lessons as simple as possible. As your team grasps the basics, move onto more advanced ideas. Overloading young players with too much information too early can cause confusion for them and headaches for you.