

Football Coaching Guide and Defensive Playbook

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Introduction

This is a coaching guide that I put together with the help of several online sources. While some credit is given to professional coaches, I changed and/or added my own styles of coaching. This guide focuses mainly on defensive coaching and good coaching techniques, but also covers the planning and preparation of practices and games because devoting time to conditioning, stretching, warming up, special teams and offensive moves are equally important. Parts of this guide would be a good reference to understanding the language of football, and should be added to the player's assignments. I also designed a PowerPoint that will make it easy to develop printable plays by moving opponents around the screen and adding play routes. Throughout my own coaching experiences I am sure I will have more content to add.

Mission Statement

As a high school football coach, I will strive to make every player learn from and enjoy his/her football experience and want to be a member of a developing team, promote good sportsmanship, create an atmosphere where he/she is safe, allow every player the opportunity to contribute, stress the importance of academics and how they are an important factor in being able to contribute to the team, and present information or direction in a manner that the players can understand.

Philosophy

A high school football coach is a guide, leader, educator and a member of a team who understands that his/her players will make errors. A coach wants his players to also know that he/she is capable of making errors, but has the ability to assess the effectiveness of his/her own technique and instruction, as well as be able to learn from the team. The team will be looking for one who is knowledgeable and understanding of the positions they are playing on the field, so that they can learn effective ways to communicate with their team and learn how to read and react to their opponents.

In order to be successful coach, one needs to first take into consideration the safety and the personal, physical and mental health of the team. A coach needs to encourage the player's to eat healthy foods, get plenty of rest, spend time exercising, complete their school work, and stay away from people who encourage bad choices, drugs and/or alcohol.

Every player needs to know that they belong as a part of a team and are respected for their efforts, contributions and achievements. A coach wants the team to understand that every team member is wanted on the field to compete and participate on the field in front of their families who are watching from the stands. It is to be expected that there

will be many failures, and there is no need for insults or negative criticism. Failures offer the opportunity to learn and get better.

The coach needs to be able to praise both the athletes whose abilities come naturally, as well as the efforts of those who are giving the most of their ability. A coach needs to be able to recognize the mistakes, struggles, actions, good and bad habits, both in practice and at games, which will benefit the team's performance, so that they can learn and be prepared to offer competition during games.

A coach needs to always be prepared. The team is counting on him/her to get them ready to do their job on the field. The team wants to learn and be able to show they are capable of being winners. He/she needs to keep the team informed of events and practices, have answers to questions, be ready with drills that will improve the performance of the team, and attend regular staff meetings with other coaches.

Pre-season

A coach needs to meet with the players and their parents before the season begins. Getting to know the players and their parents is a great way to gain trust. If there are problems or concerns throughout the season, a coach should be able to be approached without fear. If a player has questions, problems or concerns on the field, he/she should feel as if they can approach the coach without being humiliated or downgraded.

Every player needs to have a physical evaluation with signed consent medical forms. A coach is responsible for any injuries or medical attention needed when under his/her care.

The players and the parents need to be aware of educational requirements. Just because a player may be a big asset to the team, doesn't mean that they will have the opportunity to play.

The parents can help in the conditioning of their children. They need to encourage good study and health habits.

Player Observation

A good coach needs to constantly be aware of each player as everyone will have an affect on the team. If there are team members that are not giving their all or there are situations keeping the team from succeeding, they need to be addressed with special time and attention. The team needs to know that they need everyone's participation and cooperation to succeed. The sport is about improving and developing the weaknesses and getting stronger does not happen through negative behavior and relationship.

As a coach, one needs to ask these questions:

1. Do they attend every practice session?
2. Are they on time for each practice session and game?
3. Are they paying attention to instruction?
4. Are they putting forth 100% effort in drills?
5. Do they show some improvement?
6. Are they displaying a positive attitude?
7. Do they give up, or keep trying when there is failure?

8. Do they put forth the same effort as if they are ahead when they are behind?
9. Do they enjoy the challenges of practices and games?
10. Do they show willingness to learn?
11. Do they have leadership skills which encourage the rest of the team?
12. Do they put other players down or are they being negatively criticized by other players?
13. Are they staying out of trouble and away from violence, drugs and alcohol?
14. Are they keeping themselves healthy by exercising, sleeping and eating?
15. Are they making the grades in the classroom?

Goals

It is important for a team to set goals for the year. These are the goals they would like the team to work for and achieve. As a coach, it would be good practice to post the goals and results so that the team can see their progress. The goals that are set should be attainable, but not without hard work and effort by everyone on the team. Some examples of goals are listed here:

1. Have the fewest penalties of any team in the league.
2. Score 14 or more points per game.
3. Give up 14 or fewer points per game.
4. Lead the league in turnovers.
5. Limit mental errors to 10% or less.
6. Make it through a season with 100% eligibility.
7. Win.

The players need to be encouraged to set their own personal goals on and off the field. They can do the same with their class work and conditioning. The players need to keep up their grades and improve in the weight room. Some players may not get the conditioning they need alone in practice, so they need to set goals on the weight machines that they use. The sport also requires speed and endurance so timed goals can be set for running. Trying to reach a personal weight goal is just one other example.

Having goals in anything a player does will help them prepare for college, get a job, take on responsibilities and succeed in life.

Priorities

Priorities are behaviors that will help the players meet their goal. A coach can remind his players of these behaviors so that they become more physically fit and mentally aware.

1. Paying close attention to every play.
2. Paying attention to coach instruction.
3. Leaving personal matters to be dealt with after practice.
4. Come prepared by knowing positions and routes.
5. Offering encouragement.

6. Giving 100% in every drill.
7. Giving 120% in conditioning.
8. Mentally picturing each drill or play before doing them.
9. Making sure that commands are understood.
10. Being well rested.
11. Getting injuries treated properly.
12. Eating properly.
13. Exercise and get in the weight room.

A coach should also take the time to encourage the players to stay on top of school work because if the grades drop, they will not be able to participate in games or practices.

1. Take the time to open the texts to do required reading.
2. Don't procrastinate.
3. Take the time to study for exams instead of hanging out with friends.
4. Do extra credit when available.
5. Don't stay up late because rest is important.
6. Stay away from video games.
7. Plan for college and work on scholarships.
8. Be productive with the time available.

Personal Responsibility

A coach should let the players know what their expectations are. They have responsibilities to:

1. Show up on time for practices, games or bus rides.
2. Know when practices and games are held.
3. Know their assignments.
4. Have equipment ready.
5. Be ready and prepared to take the field at any moment.

The players will either get better or worse. If they love the game and can see themselves improving their abilities by forcing themselves to take the time every day to condition and practice, they will have a season that they can be proud of regardless of the outcomes of the games. If they let any area of their personal development slide, they will regret it; so at the end of each day, they should ask themselves:

1. Did I practice to the best of my ability?
2. Am I a better player than the previous day?
3. What did I learn?
4. Am I faster, stronger, or better at handling the ball?
5. Did I get my school work finished?
6. Did I impress the coaches on any play that I made?

The players need to know that if they fail in their personal responsibilities, they will be hurting the team, because it isn't a one person sport. Every player needs to be ready to do their share in order to win.

The coaches also have personal responsibilities to the team. They also need to come prepared and ready to instruct. They need to keep in mind the behaviors that make a team weaker or stronger and apply the behaviors that will encourage the team to get better. They need to keep every team member involved and able to participate. They need to make sure that everyone understands the rules and techniques applied.

Teamwork

Coaches and players need to be able to work together. Communication and cooperation is how the game of football is played. Each member has to put their team first when making decisions, especially when it comes to personal responsibilities. Coaches are not the only ones able to offer help, and they should be encouraged to do so if they are able. A team is only as strong as it's weakest players. Good team work skills include:

1. Eliminating the word "I" from vocabulary.
2. Establishing that no player is better than the team.
3. Establishing that one player can not do everything on his own.
4. Asking every player to think of their contribution.
5. Realizing that the team's success is more important than personal accomplishment.
6. Making certain that everyone on the team is treated with respect and positive encouragement.
7. A positive attitude toward the team shows care for the team's success.

The players that don't start or take the field for the majority of every game needs to know that they are important in helping the others become more prepared. The starting players need to know that they should take the time to talk to and teach their replacements what they have learned from their experiences. Every team member should feel appreciation for their contribution when the team communicates well together.

Winning Attitude

Whether the team wins or loses, it is important for the team to believe they can achieve a win and never give up. Mistakes will happen that may set the team back in their games, but the team should be encouraged to learn from their mistakes and continue to give it their all until the game is finished. It is possible to recover from mistakes and the players that continue to try again will become stronger and more mentally aware. Games are just like practices but against a team they will not always be able to predict.

The players need to know that they should not be critical of other's mistakes or the outcomes of their mistakes. Everyone needs to give each other encouragement and help each other when times are rough. The team members who are watching from the sideline

need to represent the team by cheering and encouraging the players that are on the field. It is also the coaches job to set the example for the team.

Position Placement

A coach needs to realize that players will arrive on the first day wanting to play a specific position. After being tested in several areas, the team needs to be aware that they were placed in their position, regardless of whether they obtained the position that they wanted, because they have abilities that will better serve the interests of the team and themselves. They need to know that every position is equally important and they were picked for the position because it is vital to the teams performance, but if a team member finds after a time that he/she is unhappy with his/her position, a coach could give the players the opportunity to prove themselves worthy by retaking tests that will show whether they have taken care of the personal responsibilities necessary to be fit for the position they want. Some of the tests might include:

1. Number of sit-ups and push-ups in a minute. (shows basic strength)
2. Time in the twenty and forty-yard dash. (can show speed)
3. Distance in the standing broad jump. (can show explosive leg muscles)
4. 30-yard shuttle. (can show quickness)
5. Football throwing for distance and accuracy. (can show basic arm strength)
6. Punting and kicking-off. (can show leg strength and coordination)
7. Catching and receiving. (can show catching and handling ability)

Common Mistakes Youth Football Coaches Make

*Credit for this section goes to Coach John T. Reed, Copyright 2001
(This is a document I felt was worth adding to my guide and is a reflection by Coach
John T. Reed)*

<http://www.johntreed.com/mistakes.html>

- *Having any assistant coaches who are not your brother, sister, son, father, spouse, or other close relative or longtime personal friend. About 95% of youth football head coaches make this mistake. If you have assistant coaches who played football in high school or college and who have kids on the team, most of them will argue endlessly with you about everything. The dissenters will often go against your instructions when your back is turned. Most will bad mouth you to their son and to the other parents on the team. If you miss a practice or game, these men will put in the systems and plays they want and abandon your approach while you are away. If you stand firm against some change they want, some will go to the board and try to get them to order you to do it your assistants' way or to get you fired. Read my lips. No assistants who are not trusted relatives, proven in past coaching with you, or longtime close personal friends.*
- *Wasting practice time on conditioning and low-priority drills. An efficient practice with minimal standing-around time will take care of conditioning better than pure conditioning drills like calisthenics, gassers, running the stadium steps, grass drills, and the like. Because of limited practice time and players usually*

- going both ways, youth coaches can rarely find time for drills. Teaching assignments and making sure each player knows them takes priority and consumes almost all practice time, especially early in the season.*
- *Subjecting players to sadistic football rituals like leg raises or bull in the ring in the name of conditioning or toughening. The real reason is to let middle aged men impress kids with how tough the middle-aged men were when they were kids. I should sell tee shirts that say, “the older my coach gets, the better he was and the more oblivious he becomes to how little we care” to youth players.*
 - *Taking more than 20 to 30 seconds per play in practice. The typical youth football practice features coaches talking for three to five minutes between each play while the players stand around listening or staring into space. Problems must be fixed and that takes as long as it takes, but only the coordinator in charge of the segment should talk out loud and only he should determine when the next play begins.*
 - *Not working out the details of blocking assignments against various defenses and making sure the players know them.*
 - *Failing to give centers, long snappers, holders, passers, and option quarterbacks enough reps so they can master their assigned skill.*
 - *Failure to use the best athlete on the team as the place-kick holder.*
 - *Failing to insist that linemen stay lower than their line opponent. This requires massive discipline efforts but there is no alternative.*
 - *100% platooning; that is, prohibiting any players from playing both offense and defense. The best 11 should be on the field as much as permitted. Typically, that means about seven guys go both ways and you only platoon about four each on offense and defense. Platooning is generally only a college and pro thing because youth and high school teams do not have enough good athletes to platoon. It is a classic nature-versus-nurture problem. Platooning gives you more time to teach but teaching a weak player is less effective on game day than using a less trained but superior athlete.*
 - *Failing to hold a parent meeting at which you explain your offensive, defensive, and special team’s schemes and policies on position assignments and playing time.*
 - *Failing to practice and perfect administrative duties like getting substitutes in and out of the game on time.*
 - *Neglecting to spend at least 15 minutes on each of the six special teams per week.*
 - *Ignoring the need to teach and practice clock-management techniques.*
 - *Killing their own drives by throwing incomplete passes or interceptions. This stems from the notion that one must pass about 20% to 50% of the time or risk having one’s coaching manhood questioned. That much passing is fine if your team can execute it, but throwing incompletions and interceptions is not passing.*
 - *Varying the snap count (or even having a snap count), thereby causing false starts, which, in turn, result in punting away possession of the ball on the series in which the false start occurred.*
 - *Failing to fix obvious problems like repeated fumbled handoffs or incomplete passes.*

- *Giving prestigious positions out on the basis of nepotism rather than ability and team need.*
- *Putting all good players in the backfield or at wide receiver and all weak players on the line.*
- *Failing to insist on ten minutes per practice of perfectly executed form tackling.*
- *Failing to insist that kickoff and punt returners catch the kick in the air whenever possible.*
- *Failing to scout upcoming opponents.*
- *Running practice scrimmages against your own offense and defense. The one team I guarantee you will not face during the season is your own. You should never run your offense against your defense with the possible exception of an initial scrimmage or two where you are evaluating your players abilities to execute your schemes and you do not yet have scouting information on upcoming opponents. I am talking about the scheme, not the personnel. When you are practicing offense, have your defense line up in the upcoming opponent's defense, not yours. Ditto when you are practicing defense. Have your offense line up in the upcoming opponent's formations and run their plays.*
- *Failing to videotape all games and some practices, identify problem areas, and fix them.*
- *Putting undisciplined good athletes at contain on defense instead of disciplined players.*
- *Kicking off and punting to the opponents' best running backs.*
- *Letting receivers backpedal or do 360-degree spins when trying to catch long passes. Just run under it.*
- *Letting players hit full speed and tackle to the ground in practice. A month or two of full-speed hitting is necessary to get rookies over their fear of hitting. Veterans needs to show the rookies what hitting looks like and feels like. One or two sessions of full-speed hitting are also necessary to ascertain which players belong in the offensive and defensive line and who wants to make tackles. But full-speed hitting should generally be eliminated from practice by the end of the second month.*
- *Accepting penalties as an inevitable part of football, or, worse, as a welcome sign of aggressiveness. You will generally be forced to punt or turn the ball over on downs in the same series that you draw a penalty on offense. On defense, penalties enable an opponent who was about to have to punt to you to keep the ball for four more downs.*
- *Having too many plays, formations, and defenses. You should have about four to twelve plays (the older the players, the more plays), one or two offensive formations, and one or two defenses. You do not need more and it will be a bear just to teach that many.*
- *Failing to give your defense enough practice stopping the most difficult plays: sweep, reverse, fake reverse, counter, slant pass, halfback pass.*
- *Substituting minimum-play players as an entire 11-man unit (usually with a non-minimum-play quarterback and running back). Minimum-play players should only be substituted one at a time at flanker (split end if you are using a full-house backfield offense like the double-wing or wishbone) on offense or interior line on*

defense. An entire offensive unit of minimum-play players will almost invariably go three and out, often losing yards in the process. You only get 6 to 10 possessions a game. An all-MPP defense often gives up a touchdown on every play.

- *Assigning the most junior, inexperienced coach to the offensive line. That was my first assignment when I first started coaching. In my final years, I also coached the offensive line myself as head coach, but then I did it because I had figured out that it is the most important unit and the one most in need of coaching.*
- *Thinking that if the players do it, I must drill it. Very few things need to be drilled.*
- *Looking for excuses for losing instead of trying to find ways to win. I am starting a collection of youth-football-coach excuses for losing. If you have heard one not included in this list, please send it to me.*

Youth-football-coach excuses for losing:

- *We're slower than other teams;*
- *Our kids have not been toughened by living in a high-crime neighborhood;*
- *We have too much recruiting competition from soccer in our area;*
- *We're too small;*
- *I have too many kids who are on Ritalin;*
- *We don't have a winning tradition;*
- *We are a 13-year-old team in a Jewish area and many players miss many Saturday games to attend their own or each other's Bar Mitzvahs (Sounds like a legit excuse. I just thought it was interesting. And you thought you had problems!);*
- *What do you expect from a bunch of mamma's boy's that have never gotten into a fight before;*

Never say or tolerate statements which follow the format: "We have no hope of winning because of the following facts which are outside of our control: _____." Either focus on finding ways to win among the things which are in your control or get out of the way and let someone else do it.

I attended several youth practices just to observe. Except for visiting the practices of a four-time Pop Warner world champion coach, I have not been to another coach's youth practice since 1989. I was appalled.

My impression is that the vast majority of youth coaches have no clue what they are doing. What they do appears to be a crude recreation of their high-school or college football program, only they forgot the nitty-gritty details. All they remember are the daily rituals like conditioning and drills. They mimic the way football coaches used to talk thirty years ago, spouting tough-guy clichés right and left. "Ya gotta stick yer nose in there!" or "Lay the wood on 'im!"

They run conditioning drills whose main purpose appears to be to cause the players to feel pain and wish the drill was over. They run football-related drills heedless of whether any of their plays or defenses calls for the skill being practiced or whether the players have already mastered the skill in question. They run excruciatingly slow scrimmage periods where the team might run five plays in twenty minutes. They are blind to the fact that half their players do not know their blocking assignments and move on to the next play even though the last one was a disaster.

At pre-season football camps, players often put on an end-of-camp skit in which they impersonate their various coaches. The typical youth-football practice truly bears more resemblance to such skits than it does to a well-coached high-school or higher level practice.

If you have no training at football coaching, at least use common sense. Youth football starts with a play, not with conditioning or drills or fundamentals. Put in your first play first. Then, run it and see if it is going smoothly. If the center and quarterback fumble the snap, which they will, they need to step aside and practice that. If a handoff is being fumbled, the personnel in question must step aside and practice that. Set up a scout defense and walk through the play over and over until every single offensive player is absolutely sure whom he blocks against each potential defense. Finally, run it live against a scout defense and watch closely. When there is a breakdown, find out what caused it before you proceed. Fix that problem immediately. It may require a different player in a key position, or a drill to improve technique, or a change in the way the play is run. The main point is put in your play and perfect it before you move on to the second play or defense. That will force you to do some drills and other coaching. But only do the drills you are forced to do in order to make the particular play work. No way do you have time to do generic drills for no reason other than you did them when you were in high school.

Preparing for Practice

When preparing for practice a coach needs to first decide:

1. What is going to be covered for the day?
2. How much time will be allocating to each segment of the practice?
3. What method is going to be used for instruction?

Areas that should be covered in practice are:

1. Establishing expectations.
2. Addressing teamwork.
3. Warm-ups and stretches.
4. Getting the team in condition to play.
5. Insuring a positive attitude.
6. Teaching safe and proper techniques.
7. Teaching the plays for the game.

8. Teaching the rules the players need to know.
9. Introducing fun activities and challenges.
10. Addressing schedules.

Warm-Up and Stretching

Every practice should start with a warm up run. Have the team take a couple laps around the field. Have the team space themselves out on each five yard line to do their stretches; this is very important as it will increase flexibility and agility, but do not over stretch because it may tear muscle fibers and decrease reaction time. It might be good to have a team captain or another coach lead the stretches while another coach takes roll call to kill two birds with one stone. Possible stretches may include:

Neck Stretches

- turn head from side to side, use hands to hold your head in place for a few seconds;
- turn head from front to back;
- roll head around from side to back to side to front;

Quadriceps Stretches

- stand and lift each foot behind to your butt for 10 seconds;

Hamstring Stretches

- lay on your back and have another team member lift each leg up and press slowly;
- sit upright with each leg at a 30 degree angle and touch each tip of the toe for 10 seconds;
- sit upright with both legs straight and in front and touch both tips of the toes for 10 seconds;
- stand up and touch both tips of your toes for 10 seconds;

Groin Stretches

- sit with legs as far apart as you can and lean forward to the ground;

Piriformis Stretches

- cross one leg over the other above the knee and grab the other leg behind the knee and pull toward your chest, this stretch is good for players who need to change directions quickly;

Gastroc Stretches

- take one step forward with one leg and try to touch your heel to the ground behind you while leaning forward on your front leg;

Upper Torso Stretches

- stand straight with both hands behind your head and twist left and right

Arm Stretches

-pull an arm across your chest with another hand and hold for a few seconds, then do the other one;

Teaching Offensive and Defensive Plays

The time following stretching is a good time for the introduction of any new team offensive or defensive plays and may not be needed as the season progresses. This period needs to feature a quick explanation of the new play focusing on assignments. Once everyone has been given their assignment, each team should run through the play at half speed. Try to introduce only one or two plays during this time too allow the players to memorize their assignments. Make the introduction of the material as quickly as possible and get the players moving as soon as you can.

Individual Techniques

Now you should divide up the team by position into as many groups as possible based on the number of coaches on the staff. Focus on teaching the individual techniques needed to play each position. Each coach should take his group to a designated area of the field for individual practice. Try to have this location the same each day to prevent players from wandering around and wasting time. During this period, it is important to:

1. Feature many drills that each focus on teaching one technique.
2. Move from one drill to another with speed.
3. Limit talking and give the players as many repetitions with your coaching as you can.
4. Try to establish a routine that the players know and can execute with a minimum of coaching.
5. Make sure each drill does not last more than a few minutes.

Have some drills at every position, like getting into a stance and then firing off - the group can be lined up across the field and execute the drill at the same time. For other techniques the drill may only allow for one or two players to go at a time. Keep your players moving as much as possible to prevent them from standing around and getting bored.

1. Start by teaching the basics.
2. Review the techniques at the start of the period each day.
3. Introduce new techniques later in the period.
4. Focus on the techniques that your players will need to have success in your system.

Special Teams

During the next period, you can take time to coach special teams. Plan to cover two phases of the kicking game during each practice session.

1. Punt and punt return on one day.
2. Kickoff and kickoff return on the next.
3. Field goal and field goal block on the next.

The coaching staff should be divided during this period so that every segment of the kicking game is coached properly. As an example, during the punt period the staff could be divided:

One coaching the punter;
One the snapper;
One the outside cover men;
One the right side blockers;
One the left side blockers;
One or two coaches making certain the punt return team is set correctly.

Focus on only one phase of the game at a time, then on the other phase during the second half of the period.

Group Team Work

In one practice, several groups can practice techniques at a time. One offense group can practice passing routes. Another group can work on blocking. After that, right offense can practice against the left defense. While they are doing that, right defense can practice against left offense. Then turn it around.

Full-Team Work

The next practice period could be devoted to full team work. During this period, an entire offensive team will work against an entire defensive team. This could be done over two practices where the focus is put on offense one day and focus is put on defense the next day.

Once the season begins, if it is an offensive period, the defense should try to give the offense a look at the alignment of the opponent's defense. If it is a defensive period, the offense should run the opponent's plays.

This period should be used to:

1. Coordinate and tune-up the timing of your offensive plays and defenses.
2. Make certain that each player knows his assignments.
3. Have each player demonstrate the correct techniques needed to execute his assignment.
4. Run plays at full speed to get everything ready for game speed.

Plan for all down and distance and field position situations during this period. Try to sit down prior to coming to the field and write up a script for the offensive plays and

the defenses that you will cover each day during this period. Circle or highlight any play or defense that needs more work and include it at the beginning of the next practice.

Make individual corrections when the player is not involved in the drill. Let the other players continue to practice as you take one player aside and correct what he has done wrong. This would also be the period when, early in the year, you might have a scrimmage. A scrimmage should be the only time when tackling is needed for the drill.

Conditioning and Cooling Down

Conditioning should not only consist of doing sprints, push-ups, sit-ups, and/or up-downs. The team should be running drills with 100% effort. They should be doing passes that require running twenty to thirty yards into the end zone. They need to be holding their blockers until the whistle is blown. It is a good opportunity to run the plays until the players get it right. There should be no time wasted between plays. In order for the team to get ready for the games, they need to know what it is like to get back to the line of scrimmage for another play even when they are tired.

Coaching and Preparing Beginners

As their coach it is our job from the very first practice session to:

1. Recognize that some of the players will have a natural fear of contact.
2. Understand that this fear is real, and verbally challenging their courage will not erase or eliminate the fear.
3. Show empathy, encouragement, and patience to any of the players who demonstrate a reluctance to have contact.
4. Realize that this fear may resurface when actual games begin.

Football has two major areas of contact: blocking and tackling. The challenge for a coach is in allowing the players to have an opportunity to become gradually acclimated to the contact in football during practice, thereby slowly losing the fear they originally felt concerning the game. In order to accomplish this, it is important that a coach:

1. Introduces contact in a safe manner.
2. Teaches contact techniques by introducing the techniques at half speed.
3. Make certain our half speed contact is limited to one-on-one situations.
4. Organize drills to have contact occurring between players of like size and temperament at the beginning of the year.
5. Limit the duration of each drill.
6. Understand full-speed contact should only be permitted after the player fully understands the proper technique and then on a limited basis.

If there is access to a stand-up dummy, both blocking and tackling can easily be introduced using this stationary target. The players will then become accustomed to making contact with pads in a correct manner. Because the dummy is not going to hit back, this is often one of the best methods to first teach contact to younger players.

As they hit with more and more authority and utilize all the proper techniques you have taught them, you can slowly eliminate the dummy and begin to work players against each other.

Drills

Initially in any one-on-one blocking or tackling drill, one of the players should be passive and allow the other player to execute the technique. During a blocking drill, the offensive man should be active while the defensive player absorbs the block. During a tackling drill, the defensive man will be the active player and ball carrier becomes passive and allows the tackle to take place. All drills should initially be done at half speed.

Blocking

When teaching drive blocking, the two players can be lined up across from one another in a normal stance.

The offensive blocker needs to be taught to:

1. Drive off the ball with short choppy steps.
2. Stay low.
3. Keep head up.
4. Make contact with either shoulder.
5. Drive the defensive man off the line.

During the drill, the defensive man should step toward the blocker and then allow the blocker to drive him back.

Tackling

When teaching tackling, the two players can start five yards apart and move toward one another at half speed.

The tackler needs to be taught to:

1. Bend at the knees.
2. Keep his back straight and head up.
3. Step forward with the foot on the side of the shoulder with which he is making the tackle and explode up and through the ball carrier.
4. Surround the ball-carrier's body with both arms and lift him off the ground.

When the ball-carrier sees that contact is going to be made, he should be coached to jump in the air to aid the defensive man making the tackle.

Try to keep in mind that contact, which for you is a normal part of football, is going to be foreign to many young players, and they are coming to you with a natural fear and apprehension. Be patient, positive, and slowly introduce the players to this part of the game by teaching safe and correct techniques in a controlled setting over an extended period of time.

Secretive Communication

Making calls on the field need to be secretive so that the opposing team will not be able to predict our strategy. In order to make encrypted calls concerning the positions being addressed, names for the positions may be substituted, so players need to study and recognize the positions based on the name. It would be beneficial to periodically test the players for their understanding of the names so that there isn't any miscommunication on game day. For example:

Richard, Rake-	Right Cover
Lance, Lawn Mower-	Left Cover
Fisher, Fence-	Free Safety
Sanders, Shovel-	Strong Safety
William, Wheel Barrel-	Weak Linebacker
Mathew, Wagon-	Middle Weakside Linebacker
Morris, Sprinkler-	Middle Strongside Linebacker
Randy, Garden Hose-	Right Defensive End
Leonard, Lawn Edger-	Left Defensive End
Nathan, Hedge Trimmer-	Nose Tackle

Signals may be given to represent numbers that the opposing team will not be able to understand. For example:

- 1- point to your nose because you only have one.
- 2- point to your lips to signal "tulips."
- 3- place your hands behind your butt because a three turned 90 degrees looks like one.
- 4- take both hands and circle your eyes to signal four-eyes.
- 5- put a hand in the air to signal high five.
- 6- cover your stomach with your hand to signal a six-pack.
- 7- place your arm straight out to your right to make yourself into a seven.
- 8- point to your wrist or watch to signal hourglass.
- 9- "nine" is German for "no," so bend your index finger back and forth.
- 0- place your hands as if they are going into your pockets and then shrug your shoulders with your hands up as if you are financially broke.

Defensive Calling

A basic method of determining how many defensive players will be linemen and how many players will be linebackers is to signal out two numbers. The first number determines the number of linemen and the second number determines how many linebackers. For example:

- Calling 3-4, means that there needs to be 3 linemen and 4 linebackers
- Calling 4-3, means that there needs to be 4 linemen and 3 linebackers
- Calling 5-2, means that there needs to be 5 linemen and 2 linebackers
- Calling 5-3, means that there needs to be 5 linemen and 3 linebackers
- Calling 6-1, means that there needs to be 6 linemen and 1 linebacker

Calling 6-2, means that there needs to be 6 linemen and 2 linebackers

Calling Gap 8, means that there needs to be 8 linemen and no linebackers

After determining which players will be linemen and which players will be linebackers, additional direction should be given to accommodate:

1. Any change in defensive line charge.
2. Any linebacker blitz.
3. Any stunt between two defensive linemen.
4. Any stunt between a lineman and a blitzing linebacker.
5. Any blitz by a defensive back.

To determine weak and strong sides, the players need to determine which side of the field the Offensive Tight End is lined up on.

After determining additional direction, player coverage of the defensive backs needs to be directed. Use a signal such as touching both hands to your head to signal a coverage call followed by a signaled number.

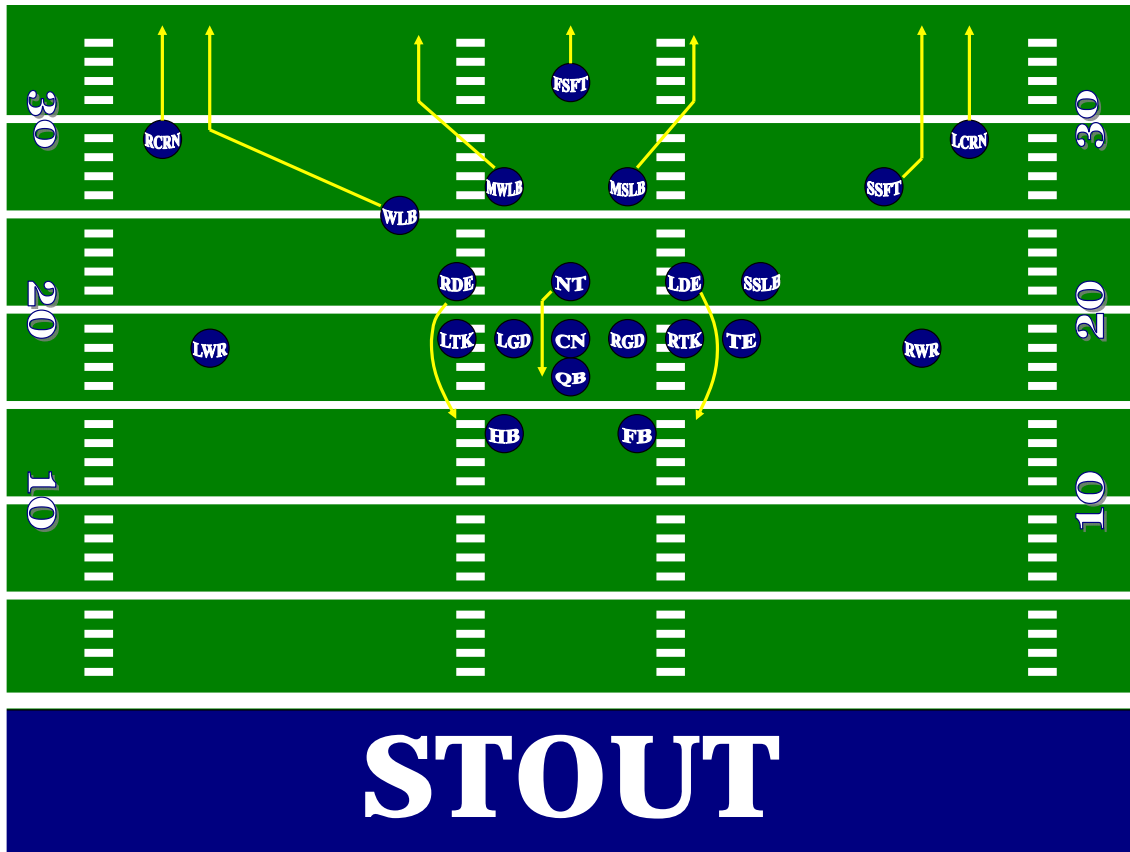
1. Man-to-man coverage with no free safety in the middle is called Cover 0.
2. Man-to-man coverage with a free safety deep in the middle of the field is called Cover 1.
3. Two-deep zone coverage is called Cover 2.
4. Three-deep zone coverage with rotation to the wide side of the two receivers and is usually called direction left or direction right is called Cover 3.
5. Four-deep zone coverage usually used at the end of the game or at the half when the offense must throw deep is called Cover 4

When you are choosing a coverage call, there are several tips to consider:

Defending a Good Passing Game

-With the use of four defensive backs, you are better suited to stop any team with a good passing game. With four linebackers on the line of scrimmage, the defense creates indecision for the offense as to which player they will have to block. It also provides a variety of potential rushes and pass coverage.

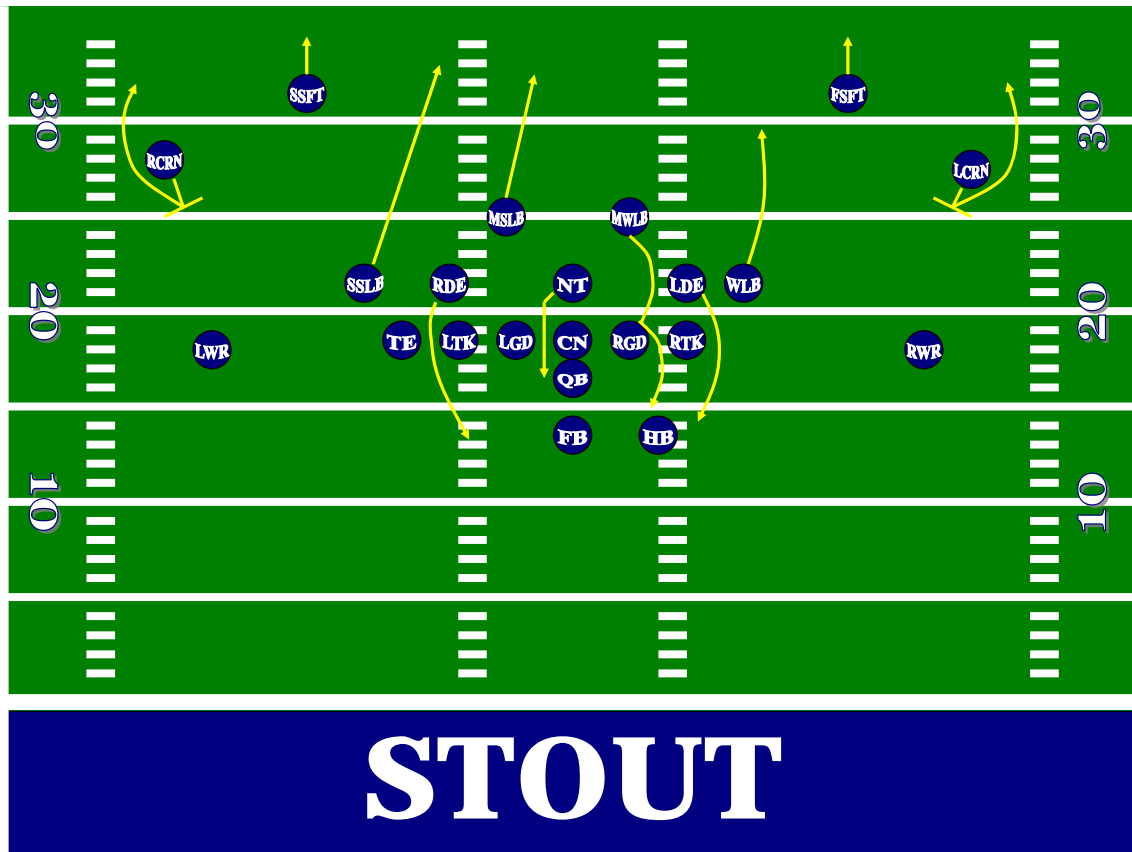
Signal 3-4 Cover 3: 11 Players (3 Linemen, 4 Linebackers, 4 Defensive Backs in 3-Deep Zone Pass Defense.



Defending a Good Passing Game by Blitzing

-When trying to blitz, use the Middle Weak Linebacker because that position has better ability to blitz on the snap and react properly in the direction of the offensive play being run. Call Mathew to announce a blitz to the team. The Middle Weak Linebacker will then move right over the offensive guard on the snap of the ball. A Two-deep zone coverage will allow for quick support by both Cornerbacks if the ball is run wide to their side of the formation.

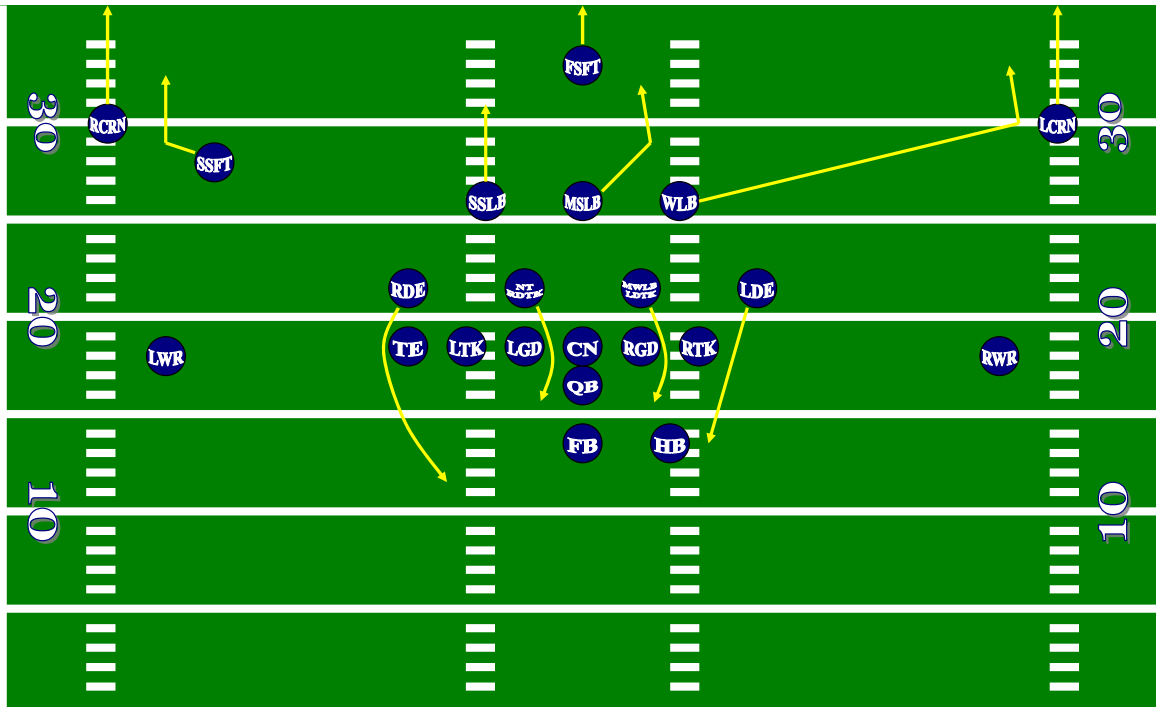
Signal 3-4 Mathew Cover 2: 11 Players (3 Linemen, 4 Linebackers, 4 Defensive Backs in 2-Deep Zone Pass Coverage Defense with a Mathew Blitz.)



Defending a Good Inside Running Game

-When the offense has a strong inside running game, the linebackers can limit the offense's penetration by lining up on the line of scrimmage; this defense will not allow for multiple coverages. The other three linebackers are off the line of scrimmage with the Middle or Middle Strong Linebacker free to move from sideline to sideline. The defensive ends will be widened out.

Signal 4-3 Cover 1: 11 Players (4 Linemen, 3 Linebackers, 4 Defensive Backs in (Man-to-Man Pass Defense)



STOUT

Definitions

2-Point Conversion- when a team that just scored a touchdown starts a play at the opponent's 2-yard line (3-yard line in college) and crosses the goal line to earn 2 points;

Audible- verbal commands shouted by the quarterback to his teammates at the line of scrimmage to change a play on short notice;

Backfield- the area behind the line of scrimmage;

Backs- the running backs; the halfback and the fullback;

Balanced Line- a formation in, which there is an equal number of linemen on either side of the center;

Ball Carrier- any player who has possession of the ball;

Beat- when a player gets past an opponent trying to block or tackle him;

Birdcage- the facemask worn by linemen that feature extra horizontal and vertical bars;

Blind side- the side away from which a player is looking;

Blitz- a play where the defensive team sends players rushing towards the line of scrimmage as soon as the ball is snapped to try to sack the quarterback;

Blocking- the act of preventing a defensive player from getting to the ball carrier; blockers use their arms and bodies but may not hold an opponent;

Bomb- a long pass thrown to a receiver sprinting down the field;

Bump-and-Run- a technique used by pass defenders, where they hit a receiver once within 5 yards (1 yard in college) of the line of scrimmage to slow him down, and then follow him to prevent him from catching a pass;

Buttonhook- a pass route in which the receiver heads straight downfield, then abruptly turns back toward the line of scrimmage;

Call a Play- instruct players to execute a pre-planned play;

Chain Crew; the group of three assistants to the officials who handle the first down measuring chain and the down box;

Cheap Shot: an act of deliberate violence against an opponent, and one that is committed when the opponent is not expecting it and is not able to defend himself;

Check Off- to change a play at the line of scrimmage by calling an audible;

Clipping- blocking an opponent below the waist from behind; this illegal block is a personal foul, punishable by a 15-yard penalty;

Clothesline- to strike an opponent, often a pass receiver breaking downfield, across the face or neck with an extended forearm; clothesline is illegal;

Coffin Corner- any one of the four corners of the field. A punter, when he is close enough to the opposition goal to do so, attempts to kick the ball out of bounds near the coffin corner, preventing a return and forcing the receiving team to put the ball in play dangerously close to its own goal-line;

Coin Toss- the ceremony before a game in which a coin is flipped to decide which team will receive the kickoff; the team that loses the toss is permitted to designate which goal it wishes to defend;

Complete Pass- a forward pass to a teammate who catches it in the air;

Completion- a forward pass that is caught by a receiver; also called a reception;

Controlling the Game Clock- the use of tactics by an offensive team to either save or use up time on the game clock, which often dictates its choice of plays;

Cornerback- either one of the two defensive backs who plays behind and to the outside of the linebackers, and whose duties include defending against passes and stopping running plays to the outside;

Cover or Coverage- preventing a player from gaining yards; in pass coverage, a defender follows a receiver to prevent him from catching a pass; in kick coverage, members of the kicking team try to prevent a long kick return;

Crackback- a block delivered by an offensive player who first heads downfield then turns back toward the middle of the field to cut down a linebacker or defensive back from the side; the crackback block is illegal;

Curl, Curl In- a pass route in which the receiver runs downfield, then turns back toward the line of scrimmage;

Cut- to make a quick change of direction in an effort to elude an opponent;

Cut Back- a sudden change in direction taken by a player to make it more difficult for defenders to follow and tackle him;

Dead Ball- a ball becomes dead when a play is over and becomes live as soon as it is snapped for the next play;

Defensive Back- any one of the four members of the defensive backfield; the two safeties and the two cornerbacks, who are positioned behind the linebackers; it's the job of the defensive backs to defend against passes and give support on running plays;

Double Coverage- when 2 defensive players cover one receiver;

Down- one of 4 chances a team on offense has to gain 10 yards; also, the state of a player who has just been tackled; also, a ball that a player touches to the ground in the end zone to get a touchback;

Down the Field- in the direction of the opponent's goal line;

Down-And-In- a pass route in which the receiver runs straight downfield, then cuts sharply toward the middle of the field;

Down-And-Out- a pass route In which the receiver runs straight downfield, then cuts sharply toward the sideline;

Down Box, Down Indicator- a metal rod approximately seven feet long on which is mounted a set of four cards numbered from 1 to 4 which are used to keep track of the number of the down being played; Tthe rod is placed along the sideline to mark where the ball is spotted;

Down the Field- in the direction of the opponent's goal line;

Draw Play- an offensive play in which the quarterback drops back as if to pass, drawing in the defensive linemen, but then slips the ball to a running back who sifts his way downfield through the onrushing defenders to and down;

Drive- the series of plays a team puts together in an attempt to score;

Drop Back- when a quarterback, after taking the snap, takes a few steps backward into an area called the pocket to get ready to pass;

Eligible Receiver- a player allowed by the rules to catch a forward pass; all offensive players are eligible except linemen and the quarterback, who must notify the referee if they wish to become eligible and stand at least one yard behind the line of scrimmage before the snap;

Encroachment- if a player (besides the center) is in the neutral zone and contact occurs prior to the snap; a foul punishable by a 5-yard penalty;

End- either of two players who line up on opposite sides of the offensive or defensive line;

End Line- the boundary line that runs the width of the field along each end;

End Zone- the area between the end line and goal line bounded by the sidelines, which a team on offense tries to enter to score a touchdown;

Extra Point(s): additional point(s) scored by a team after it has scored a touchdown, either by a point-after-touchdown (1 point) or a 2-point conversion (2 points);

Fair Catch- when a kick returner decides only to catch a punt or kickoff and not advance it, protecting himself from being hit by an opponent; he signals for a fair catch by raising one hand in the air and waving it;

Field Goal- a place kick that passes above the crossbar and between the uprights of the goalpost, earning the team that kicked it 3 points;

Field Position- the location of a team on the field relative to the two goal lines; good field position for a team is near its opponent's goal line, while bad field position is close to its own goal line;

First Down- the first chance out of 4 that a team on offense has to advance 10 yards down the field; as soon as it gains those yards, it earns a new first down;

Flanker- an offensive player who lines up to the right or left of a formation and usually acts as a pass receiver;

Flat- the area of the field to the right or left of a formation;

Flood- to send more than one player into the same area of the field or court with the idea of overwhelming the defensive coverage in that area;

Forward Pass- a pass thrown by a team closer to the opponent's goal line; a team is allowed to throw only one forward pass per play, and it must be thrown from behind the team's line of scrimmage;

Forward Progress- the location to which a ball carrier has advanced the ball, even if he was pushed backwards after getting there;

Foul- a violation of football's rules by a team or player, punishable by a penalty;

Free Kick- a type of kick taken to start or restart play after a team has scored, with no defenders nearer than 10 yards away; includes a kickoff and a kick after a safety;

Free Safety- one of the two deepest defensive backs and the one who is free to follow the play wherever it happens to develop; he is not assigned to cover a specific member of the offensive team;

Freeze- to attempt to retain possession of the ball for an extended period of time without making an effort to score;

Front Four- the players who make up the four-man defensive front line, that is, the two ends and two tackles;

Fullback- a player who, along with the halfback, lines up behind the quarterback; he is frequently assigned to carry the ball;

Fumble- when a ball carrier loses possession by dropping the ball or having it knocked away before a play ends; the first player to regain possession of the loose ball is said to make the recovery, and his team becomes the offense;

Goal Line- a line drawn across the width of the field, 10 yards inside each end line, which a team must cross with the ball to score a touchdown;

Goal-line Stand- a strong defensive effort in which the opposition's repeated attempts to score from very close to the goal line are turned back;

Goalpost- a tall metallic structure that stands at the back of each end zone; consists of a crossbar and two uprights that extend upward from it, supported directly above the end line by a base; teams try to kick the ball above the crossbar and between the uprights to score a field goal or extra point;

Going For It- when a team facing a fourth down decides to try for a new first down instead of punting; if it fails, it loses possession of the ball;

Gridiron- a football field;

Guard- either of two offensive players who are positioned on either side of the center; they create holes for the ball carrier on plunges into the line, pull from the line to lead the ball carrier on sweeps, and protect the quarterback on pass plays;

Halfback- a player who, along with the fullback, lines up behind the quarterback; he is frequently assigned to carry the ball or hand off;

Hold, Holding- using one's hands to restrict the movement of an opposing player; holding is illegal;

Hand-Off- a running play where the quarterback hands the ball to a back;

Hang time- the length of time a punt is in the air;

Hitch-and-Go- a pass route in which the runner breaks straight downfield, fakes to the right or left as if he is about to catch a short pass, then races farther downfield;

Holder- the player assigned to hold the ball upright for the kicker on field-goal and extra-point attempts;

Holding- a foul where a player impedes the movement of an opponent by grasping or hooking any part of his body or uniform; punishable by a penalty — 10 yards if against the offense, 5 yards (10 yards in college) plus a first down if against the defense;

Hole- the opening between two linemen through which the ball carrier plunges;

Home Field Advantage- the benefit a team gets by playing games in the area where it is based, due to fan support, familiarity with its surroundings and the lack of required travel;

Home Game- a game played in a team's own stadium;

Huddle- a brief gathering among members of the offensive or defensive teams in order to receive instructions for the upcoming play;

Illegal Motion- movement by a member of the offensive team other than the one man in motion after the team is set and before the ball is snapped; illegal motion is an infraction that results in a five-yard penalty;

Illegal Procedure- an instance in which the offensive team is guilty of one of several rule violations, including an illegal shift, illegal formation, or the failure to pause one second after the huddle; the result is a five-yard penalty;

In Bounds- the region of the field inside the sidelines and end lines;

Incomplete Pass- a forward pass that touches the ground before being caught;

Incompletion: A forward pass not caught, not caught in-bounds, or intercepted;

Inside- toward the center of the field;

Intentional Grounding- a foul called against a quarterback who purposely throws an incomplete forward pass solely to avoid a sack; cannot be called if the pass lands at or beyond the line of scrimmage;

Interception- a pass caught in the air (picked off) by a defender whose team immediately gains possession of the ball and becomes the offense;

Key- to observe an opposing player closely in an attempt to determine the direction in which he is going to be moving; a running back; for example, who draws his left foot back slightly as he lines up, may be going to carry the ball to the right;

Kickoff- when a player kicks a ball from a tee at his own 30-yard line (35 in college) to the opposing team, whose player tries to advance it the other way; used to start the game, the second half and overtime, and to restart play after each score;

Lateral- a pass thrown to a teammate backwards from the team's line of scrimmage or parallel to it; unlike a forward pass (which can be thrown only once per play), players may lateral the ball as often as they want;

Linebacker: Any of the usually three defensive players forming a second line-of defense behind the ends and tackles;

Line Judge-: an official posted near one of the sidelines to assist the referee, and who is chiefly responsible for watching for offside violations and the position of the quarterback on pass plays; the line judge is also the game's timekeeper;

Line of Scrimmage- an imaginary line which no player may cross before the snap; each team has its own line of scrimmage, separated by the neutral zone;

Lineman- a player who starts each play within 1 yard of his line of scrimmage;

Live Ball- a ball becomes live as soon as it is snapped or free kicked (as in a kickoff); opposite of a dead ball;

Loose Ball- a ball that is not in possession of either team, such as after a fumble or a kickoff; it can be recovered by either team;

Man-in-Motion- a single player on the offense who is permitted to move prior to the snap; he may only run parallel to the line of scrimmage or away from it;

Man-to-Man Defense- a defensive system in which each member of a team on defense guards a particular member of the offensive team;

Midfield- the 50-yard line, which divides the length of the field in half;

Necessary Line- the imaginary line the offense must cross to achieve a new first down;

Neutral Zone- the region that contains the ball as it sits on the ground before each play; the area between the two lines of scrimmage;

Nickel Defense- when a defense brings in a 5th defensive back to replace a linebacker on the field, increasing its pass coverage;

Nose Guard- the defensive lineman who is positioned between the tackles and opposite the offensive center;

Numbering System- a system in which uniform numbers are assigned according to a player's position, as follows:

1-19: quarterbacks and kickers;

20-49: running backs and defensive backs;

50-59: centers and linebackers;

60-79: defensive linemen and offensive linemen;

80-89: wide receivers and tight ends;

Offending Team- the team that committed a foul;

Offensive Backfield- the players who line up behind the linemen and include the quarterback and the running backs;

Offensive Holding- illegal use of the hands when blocking a defensive player; the penalty is 15 yards;

Offside- when any part of a player's body is beyond his line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped; a foul punishable by a 5-yard penalty;

On Downs- the term used to describe a team's loss of possession if it fails to reach the necessary line on a fourth down play;

Onside- being on or behind the line of scrimmage;

Onside Kick- a short kickoff by which the offensive team hopes to get possession of the ball; if the ball travels the legal minimum of 10 yards, it can be legally recovered by the kicking team;

Open Receiver- a player who has no defender closely covering him;

Option Play-: an offensive play in which the ball carrier has the choice of running with the ball or passing it;

Out of Bounds- the region of the field touching or outside the sidelines and end lines; as soon as a ball carrier or the ball itself touches out of bounds, the play is over;

Outside- toward the sideline;

Overtime- an extension of playing time beyond the established limit to decide the winner of a contest when the score is tied; in professional football, an overtime period is 15 minutes long, but the winner can be declared if any of the teams score before the 15 minutes is over;

Pass Defender- a defensive player who covers an opposing receiver;

Pass Patterns or Pass Routes- pre-determined paths receivers follow to help the passer quickly locate them so he can more easily get them the ball;

Pass Protection- blocking by offensive players to keep defenders away from the quarterback on passing plays;

Pass Rush- a surge by defenders to get past blockers and sack the quarterback;

Penalize- to punish an individual or team by means of a penalty;

Penalty- the punishment imposed upon an individual or team for breaking a rule. In football, a team is penalized by losing yardage;

Personal Foul- a foul that might cause injury; punishable by a 15-yard penalty;

Picked Off- intercepted;

Piling On- the action of one or more defensive players who jump on the ball carrier after he has been tackled; piling on is illegal and the penalty is 15 yards;

Pitch-Out- a lateral tossed from a quarterback to a running back;

Place Kick- a kick towards the goalpost for a field goal or extra point; held between the ground and another player's finger;

Play- a spurt of action that begins with a snap and ends with a dead ball;

Playbook- a usually spiral bound, three-hole notebook which contains a team's formations, plays, and a vocabulary of the technical terms it uses; a playbook is issued to each member of the team at the beginning of the training season;

Play Clock- a clock displayed above each end zone that limits the time teams may take between plays to 40 seconds (30 in college); the ball must be snapped before the clock runs down to 0;

Play-Action Pass- a passing play after the quarterback has faked a hand-off;

Pocket- the area behind the offensive line, where the quarterback is protected by his blockers;

Point-After-Touchdown- a place kick taken from the opponent's 2-yard line (3-yard line in college); awarded to a team that has scored a touchdown, it is worth 1 point if it goes through the goalpost;

Possession- to be holding or in control of the football;

Post Pattern, Post Route- a receiver runs 10-15 yards down field then breaks toward the middle at a 45% degree angle; post refers to the general direction of the goal post;

Power Sweep- a pass route where the quarter back throws a short pass to a running back moving to the outside;

Previous Spot- where the ball was snapped to begin the last play;

Primary Receiver- the player who is designated to receive the ball by the quarterback in the huddle;

Punt- when a player 10 yards behind the center catches a snap, drops it and kicks it before it hits the ground; an opponent tries to catch and advance it the other way;

Punt Return- the runback of a punted ball;

Pylon- a short orange marker at each of the end zone's 4 corners;

Quarter- one of four equal periods of playing time in which some games are divided;

Quarterback- the leader of a team's offense, he takes the snap from the center and either hands the ball to a running back to run with, passes it to a receiver or runs with it himself; he also communicates each play to his teammates;

Quarterback Sneak- an offensive play in which the quarterback upon receiving the ball from the center plunges into the line, with the center and guards blocking for him;

Quick Count- the instance of a quarterback calling the signals at the line of scrimmage at a faster than normal pace in an effort to take the defensive team by surprise;

Quick Kick- a surprise punt;

Reading the Defense- recognition by the quarterback of the defensive formation; he may then call an audible to adjust the offense;

Receiver- an offensive player who catches or attempts to catch a forward pass;

Recovery- to gain or regain possession of a fumble;

Red Zone- the imaginary area between the defense's 20-yard line and its goal line from which the offense is most likely to score points;

Return- an attempt by a player who has just caught an interception, punt, or kickoff to advance the ball the other way;

Returner- a player who is assigned to run back punts and kickoffs;

Reverse: An offensive play in which a ball carrier who is running toward one side of the field hands the ball to a teammate who is running in the opposite direction;

Roll Out- when a quarterback runs parallel to the line, looking for a receiver;

Roughing the Kicker- a personal foul that is called when a defensive player runs into or knocks down the punter without touching the ball; the penalty is 15 yards from where the ball was spotted on the previous play;

Roughing the Passer- a personal foul that is called when a defensive player runs into or tackles the quarterback after a forward pass has been thrown; the penalty is 15 yards from where the ball was spotted on the previous play;

Runback- the act of returning a punt, kickoff, or intercepted forward pass;

Running Back: A member of the offensive backfield who is used to carry the ball on running plays or is assigned to block.

Rush- a running play or a pass rush;

Sack- a tackle of the quarterback behind his line of scrimmage;

Safety- when a ball carrier is tackled in his own end zone after bringing the ball there under his own power; the defense earns 2 points and receives a free kick from the offense's own 20-yard line;

Safety Blitz- an all-out charge by one or both of the safeties in an effort to spill the quarterback;

Safety Valve- a short pass thrown to a running back when the wide receivers are covered;

Scrambling- evasive movements by a quarterback to avoid being sacked;

Screen Pass- a short forward pass either to the right or left to a running back in front of whom a wall of blockers has formed;

Secondary- the four players consisting of two safeties and two cornerbacks who make up a team's defensive backfield;

Series- the group of 4 downs a team has to advance 10 yards;

Sideline- the boundary line that runs the length of the field along each side; a ball carrier or ball that touches or crosses the sideline is out of bounds;

Slant- a running play in which the ball carrier moves into the line at an angle;

Slot- on the offensive line, a wide gap between a pass receiver and a tackle;

Snap- when the center while facing forward quickly hands the ball between his legs to a player standing behind him (usually the quarterback) to start each play;

Spear- to lunge helmet-first at an opponent;

Special Teams- the group of players who participate in kicking plays;

Split End- a pass receiver that lines up several yards away from the player closest to him;

Spike- when a player throws the ball at the ground to celebrate a touchdown;

Spot- a location on the field, determined by an official, to mark forward progress or the place of a foul;

Square-In- a pass route in which the receiver runs downfield for several yards, then cuts at a right angle toward the center of the field;

Square-Out- a pass route in which the receiver runs downfield for several yards, then cuts at a right angle toward the nearest sideline;

Stiff Arm- a push by a ball carrier to ward off a tackler;

Stunt- when a defensive lineman moves into a position that would normally be filled by another defensive lineman; it is done to confuse the offense;

Succeeding Spot- where the next play would start if no penalty was called;

Sweep- a play in which the ball carrier dashes for the outside behind blocking linemen before turning up field;

Swing Pass- a short pass to a back running to the outside;

Tackle- a player position on both the offensive and defensive lines; there is usually a left and right offensive tackle, and a left and right defensive tackle;

Tackling- contacting a ball carrier to cause him to touch the ground with any part of his body except his hands, thereby ending the play;

Territory- the half of the field a team protects against its opponents;

T-Formation- an offensive formation in which the quarterback lines up directly behind the center, and two or three running backs are positioned four or five yards behind the quarterback;

Third-and-Long- when the offense faces a third down and is more than a short running play away from a first down; usually third-and-5 or greater;

Three-Point Stance- a ready position assumed just before the play begins by linemen and running backs in which a player crouches with his feet spread, leaning forward;

Touchback- when a player who gains possession of a ball in his own end zone kneels to the ground and automatically starts the next play at his own 20-yard line; also awarded if his opponent kicks the ball across the end line;

Touchdown- when a team crosses the opponent's goal line with the ball, catches a pass in the opponent's end zone, or recovers a loose ball in the opponent's end zone; earns a team 6 points;

Trap Block- a block in which a defensive lineman is allowed to penetrate through the offensive line to be suddenly blocked from an unexpected direction by an offensive player;

Turnover- the involuntary loss of possession of the ball during a play, either by a fumble or by throwing an interception;

Zone Defense- a defensive system in which each member of the team on defense is assigned to cover a certain area of the or field;

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