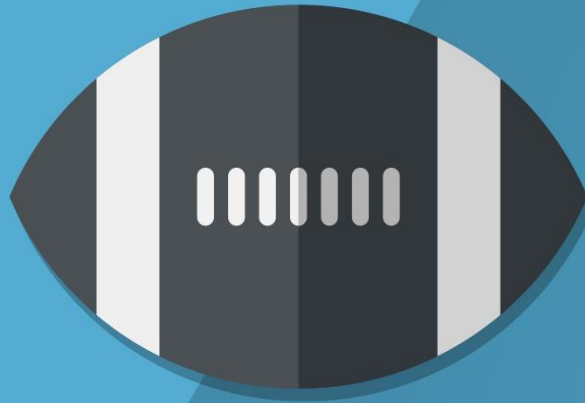




ESSENTIAL FOOTBALL PASSING GAME DRILLS



FUNDAMENTAL DRILLS
FOR A POWERHOUSE PASSING OFFENSE

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INTRODUCTION

A good passing game could be just what you need to dominate the competition and rack up win after win this coming season.

In this mini-book, we have included 27 passing game related drills that will improve your players' throwing, catching and route running skills so that they are able to properly execute your passing offense.

To help you better understand each drill we have included the skill level of each drill (beginner, intermediate and advanced) as well as its purpose, what is needed to run it, how it works and the expected result of the drill.

We have also included coaching tips to help you get the most out of each of the drills that you choose to run.

Perform these drills consistently with an attention to basic fundamentals and watch the effectiveness and efficiency of your passing game soar!

SNAP AND DROP BACK DRILL

Level:

Beginner

Purpose:

Pass plays start with the snap. Here your quarterback and center practice making a clean exchange.

What you need:

You will need your center and a quarterback. If you have more than one of each – great! You can have them working together.

How this drill works:

The quarterback will set up behind the center and the coach will call the cadence. On the final hutt, the center will snap the ball, the quarterback will receive it and then begin the drop back.

Result:

Players master the art of the snap, which is important because this is where each play begins.

Coaching Tips:

- The drop back should focus on proper form: good crossover back, holding the ball with two hands (with the throwing hand on the laces), and holding the ball at shoulder height with the head up looking downfield.



To avoid turnovers and poor timing on plays, it is essential that your center and quarterback master the snap.

CATCHING TRIANGLE DRILL

Level:

Beginner

Purpose:

Serves as a basic way for kids to learn to catch the ball.

What you need:

Put players in groups of three to throw the ball back and forth (or put players in groups of two).

How this drill works:

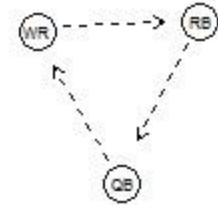
Players throw the ball to each other.

Result:

Players learn to catch the ball.

Coaching Tips:

- Passes should be caught with fingers outstretched and palms out, with the index fingers and thumbs nearly meeting to create a triangle window. Once caught, the ball should be brought down and secured to the body.



Players catch and throw in this classic drill.

HALF SKELETON DRILL

Level:

Beginner

Purpose:

Quarterbacks see what their receivers are going to do on each play.

What you need:

Set up with just a quarterback, a running back (to one side) and two receivers to one side. This will represent a half of an offense for the quarterback.

How this drill works:

When the quarterback drops back, he will see what his players are going to do in each situation when a play is called.

Result:

The half skeleton gives younger players the chance to see and learn what their teammates are doing on a given play while there is no pressure.

Coaching Tips:

- Watch that players execute all of the fundamentals on the plays that are called: proper drop back and holding of the ball, proper pass routes and cuts, and then proper delivery of the ball to the receiver.



Quarterbacks see what their receivers are going to do on different plays.

SLO-MO OFFENSE DRILL

Level:

Beginner

Purpose:

Offense (and defense) work on timing and execution.

What you need:

At first you can just line up the offense against tackling dummies. Later, once the execution is better, the defense can step in – but this drill is always run at half speed or less.

How this drill works:

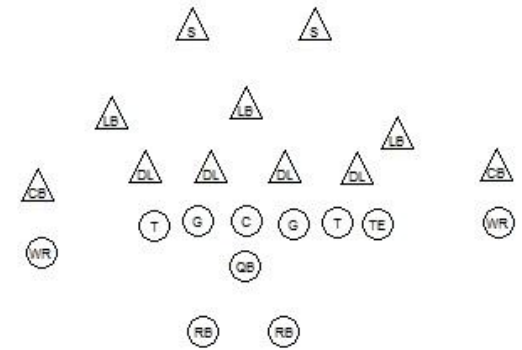
The offense will call a play and they will approach the line as normal. The QB will call out the cadence and snap the ball all at full speed. Once the ball is snapped, everything is done in slow motion (or at walking speed). This will allow players to make deliberate movements to the proper place in order for the play to work.

Result:

Players develop a greater understanding of their responsibilities..

Coaching Tips:

- Be sure all players are focused and paying attention during this drill to maximize its impact.



This walk-through drill reinforces players' responsibilities in various plays.

STEP, LOOK AND FIRE DRILL

Level:

Beginner

Purpose:

Helps quarterback work on drop and release for quick timing pass plays.

What you need:

Line up receivers by quarterbacks in this drill. Receivers run quick slants or hooks.

How this drill works:

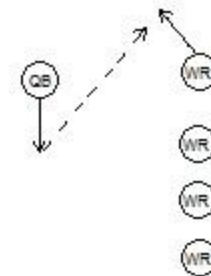
Upon the snap of the ball, the receiver will run a 2-yard slant. The QB will drop back three steps with his head looking forward (not at the receiver), and then once planted on the three step drop, he will turn his shoulders slightly at his target, look, and deliver the ball.

Result:

QB improves quickness throwing the ball.

Coaching Tips:

- This can be applied to a variety of patterns, and you might want to vary the pattern to increase the quarterbacks understanding of where they need to throw the ball.
- A pass with a three step drop should take no more than three seconds to complete – if that.
- Make this drill more difficult by having a defender there to watch for the slant pattern.



QB works on making a quick drop and release while the receiver runs a slant or hook pattern.

CATCH CONCENTRATION DRILL

Level:

Beginner

Purpose:

Receivers learn to catch the ball through a maze of hands and arms.

What you need:

Two lines – one of receivers and one of distracters.

How this drill works:

The ball will be thrown to the receivers, but between the receiver and the ball is the distracter. The distracter will be waving their arms, shouting and generally trying to keep the receiver from catching the ball – without touching the receiver.

Result:

Receivers learn to focus on catching the ball and bringing it in no matter what sort of distraction they might face.

Coaching Tips:

- Be sure players are using proper catching technique with index fingers and thumbs nearly meeting to create a triangle window.



Receiver must maintain focus and catch the ball as the defender tries to distract him.

PASSING TREE DRILL

Level:

Intermediate

Purpose:

Players learn the passing tree, which is a staple of any offense.

What you need:

Most teams will have an established passing tree – or a basic description of each passing route – hook, slant, square in, square, out, post, flag, fly, etc. You can have two QB's side-by-side and receiver lines on each side.

How this drill works:

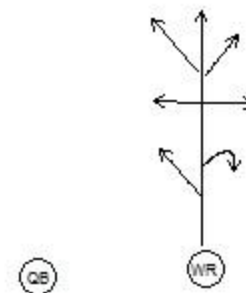
In each line, the receivers will run the routes included in the passing tree and the quarterback will throw them the ball.

Result:

Receivers learn the passing tree routes; the QB's and receivers improve timing on the routes and get familiar with each other.

Coaching Tips:

- Make sure receivers are running crisp, precise routes and that both receivers and quarterbacks are maintaining proper form and not developing any bad habits.



Quarterbacks and receiver s get used to running different passing routes in this drill.

BALL ADJUST DRILL

Level:

Intermediate

Purpose:

Receivers learn to react to where the ball is thrown.

What you need:

Two lines of receivers working with two QB's.

How this drill works:

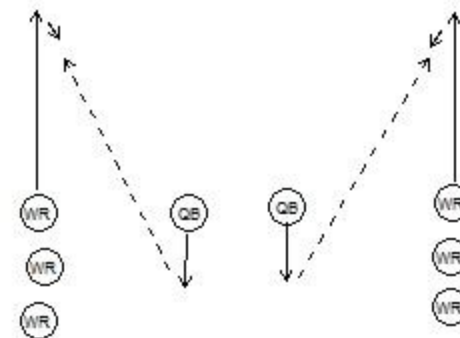
Once the ball is snapped, the receiver is going to run their regular route, but the QB is going to deliberately throw an errant pass. One of the easiest ways to begin this drill is with a fly route. Traditionally thrown to the inside shoulder, sometimes the ball is on the outside and the receiver needs to adjust his body to make the catch. Furthermore, the ball can often be behind the receiver or they may have to turn the body completely in order to make a catch.

Result:

Receivers learn to make on the fly adjustments during their routes to get them into better position to make catches if a pass is not thrown perfectly or is disrupted in the air.

Coaching Tips:

- If you are concerned your quarterbacks will develop bad habits by participating in this drill, you can have coaches throw the passes to the receivers.



Receivers learn to adjust on poorly thrown balls.

PROGRESSION DRILL

Level:

Intermediate

Purpose:

Quarterbacks learn to go through their progressions and find the open receiver.

What you need:

You need a quarterback and a three-receiver combination (2 WR, 1 TE or 2 WR, 1RB, etc).

How this drill works:

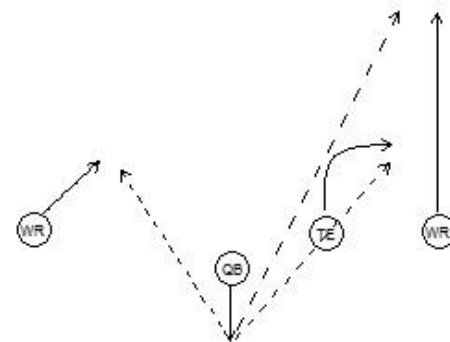
On the snap, the receivers will run their patterns at $\frac{3}{4}$ speed as the quarterback drops back. The quarterback should have his head up, and looking downfield at his receivers. The coaches should have a primary, secondary and tertiary target picked out before the play. The quarterback will look at each of his targets in this drill before deciding which one is the best choice. He will make the pass to the appropriate player.

Result:

QB improves his recognition skills, which are crucial to making the right pass at the right time during a game.

Coaching Tips:

- The ball should be released within 3 seconds of the QB setting at the end of his drop.



QB works through his progression.

CONES AND OUTS DRILL

Level:

Intermediate

Purpose:

Receiver work on improving their cuts.

What you need:

For each passing route requiring a cut, the coach will place the cones where he wants the player to make the cut. This will vary, depending on the length and type of route the receiver is running.

How this drill works:

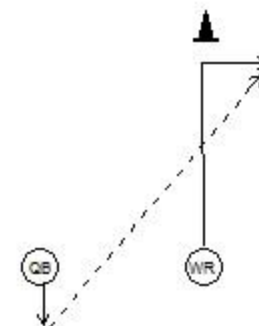
The receiver will sprint to the cone, and make a quick fake and then the proper cut. Even with the fake, the cut needs to be made at the proper time – not a step before, or a step after – or the pass will likely be missed.

Result:

Improves time of receivers' cuts. Many pass patterns are run off of timing, and the quarterback is throwing to an area they expect the receiver to be in at a given time. If the cut is not proper or executed on time it can result in a turnover.

Coaching Tips:

- Look for preciseness and consistency in the receivers' routes.



Receiver makes a hard, precise cut at the cone.

LIGHTNING CATCH DRILL

Level:

Intermediate

Purpose:

Receivers develop quick hands and good concentration. Quarterbacks improve accuracy on throws.

What you need:

One line will be for receivers and you will line up three quarterbacks for this drill.

How this drill works:

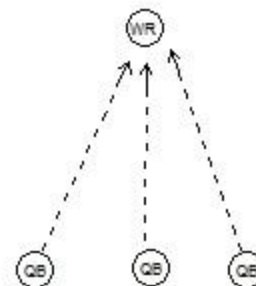
The quarterback to the receiver's right should start by throwing to the receiver. Once the receiver catches and secures the ball, then the middle quarterback will throw. The receiver must drop the other ball and prepare to catch the next ball. Then, once the second ball is secured the third quarterback will throw, and the process repeats itself. Then the third quarterback throws again, then middle, then left – with the same catch, secure, throw repeated for each one. The receiver will handle six balls total.

Result:

Receivers develop better hand-eye coordination and work on catching and securing the ball. Quarterbacks develop accuracy and get better at making quick release throws.

Coaching Tips:

- You can increase the complexity of the drill by having the quarterbacks throw quicker, making the receiver catch and release much faster.



Receivers must be ready to catch the ball quickly in this fast-paced drill.

HOOK AND TURN DRILL

Level:

Intermediate

Purpose:

Teaches a basic hook move that all offensive players should learn.

What you need:

You can put your quarterbacks in one line (to alternate throwing this pattern) and your receivers in another. Or, you can have two quarterbacks working side by side, with one line of receivers to the right of them (for one QB), and another receiver to the left of them (for the other QB).

How this drill works:

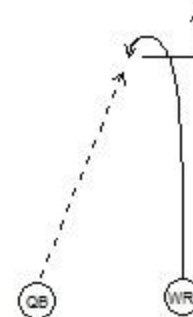
Upon the snap of the ball, the receivers will run 10 yards and then stop and step back 2 yards toward the QB. This is the hook pattern. The QB will throw the ball to them, the receiver will make the catch, tuck and tap, give a quick quarter-turn one way but then go the other.

Result:

This is a basic maneuver for receivers to use on this pattern, and one of the most common patterns QB's will throw. It is good to learn the timing (for QB's) and the turn for receivers.

Coaching Tips:

- Both receivers and quarterbacks should switch sides for receiving and throwing.



In this drill, receivers learn a little fake move that could allow them to pick up extra yards .

CUT UPFIELD DRILL

Level:

Intermediate

Purpose:

Breaks players of the bad habit of running parallel to the line of scrimmage instead of upfield for yards.

What you need:

The running back should be behind the QB in his normal position and the WRs should be lined up in their spots as well.

How this drill works:

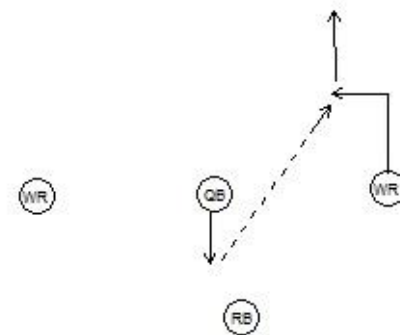
Upon the snap, the QB will execute either a running play or a passing play. In this drill, the object is for the player carrying the ball to turn and square up to the line of scrimmage so they can drive the ball forward, rather than run parallel to the LOS. You can add a few defensive players in here to make the drill more interesting.

Result:

Your players will start to develop the habit of running upfield, rather than “juking and jiving” sideways all of the time.

Coaching Tips:

- Look for proper form both in catching the ball and taking the handoff in this drill.



Players learn to stop messing around and instead head straight upfield in this drill.

ROLLOUT PASSING DRILL

Level:

Intermediate

Purpose:

Quarterbacks learn to throw while on the move.

What you need:

Have two quarterbacks side by side taking snaps. You will have a line of receivers about 10 yards downfield facing the QB.

How this drill works:

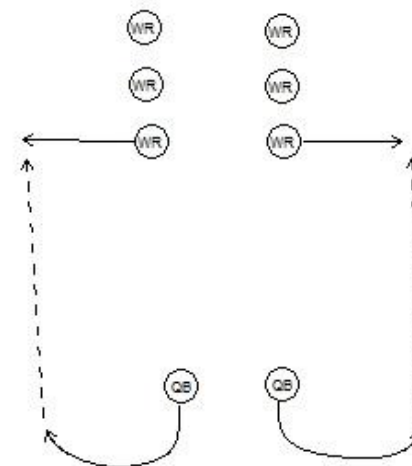
Upon the snap, the quarterback will sprint out to the right or left (open side of the drill) keeping between 6 and 8 yards away from the line of scrimmage. The receivers will break towards the sideline, and the quarterback tries to hit the receiver before he gets to the sideline.

Result:

QB gains a greater ability to maneuver and throw outside the pocket.

Coaching Tips:

- QBs need to square up their shoulders, hips and head toward the target area so the throwing arm can come through properly toward the target.



Quarterbacks learn to roll out and hit targets while on the move.

OVER THE SHOULDER DRILL

Level:

Intermediate

Purpose:

Receivers learn to make one of the more difficult catches – the over the shoulder catch on the deep throw.

What you need:

Line up two quarterbacks side-by-side, one with a line on his left, and another with a line on his right.

How this drill works:

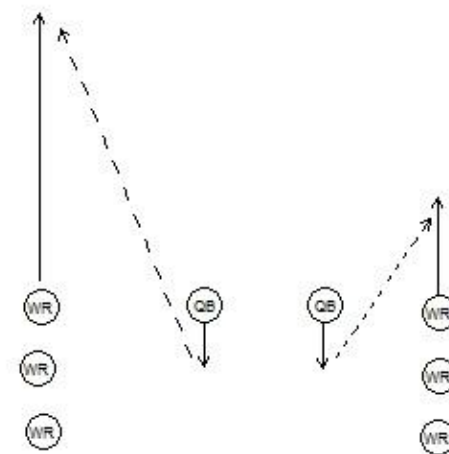
The receivers will take off down the field in a straight fly pattern. When you first start this drill, the QB should throw the ball within the first 5 yards or so. This makes it a short pass, and the receiver can get used to catching the ball over his shoulder. As the QB and the receiver are able to get on to the same page with the deep ball, they can start running the patterns a little deeper, giving the receiver better development of this skill.

Result:

Receivers learn to catch the ball over their shoulder and QB's perfect their touch on the deep pass.

Coaching Tips:

- Watch for proper cradling of the ball when it is received – and the catch, tuck and tap.



Receivers learn to catch the ball over their shoulder while quarterbacks improve their touch on deep throws.

SIDELINE CATCH DRILL

Level:

Intermediate

Purpose:

Receivers learn to catch the ball along the sideline while quarterbacks improve their accuracy on this throw.

What you need:

You can split this drill into two stations, one on each sideline, each station with a quarterback (or two), and a line of receivers about 10 yards out from the sideline.

How this drill works:

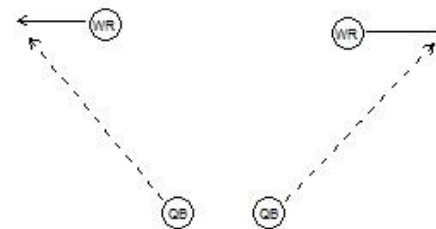
This drill is the same for receivers each time it is run, however it can be done three different ways for quarterbacks. In the first one, on the snap of the ball the receiver sprints toward the sideline and the QB takes a three-step drop and then fires the ball to the sideline. The catch must be made in bounds. In the second one, on the snap of the ball, the QB can be on a sprint out and attempts to make the same pass. For the third part, you can have the quarterback right up against the sideline and throwing directly in front of him to the receiver at the sideline.

Result:

QB gets work throwing sideline routes and receivers work on concentrating on the ball while making sure they stay in bounds.

Coaching Tips:

- QBs and receivers should switch up the side they are on to get work on both sides.



Staying inbounds on sideline catches is an important skill for wide receivers to develop. This drill focuses on helping them develop that skill.

QB READ AND ACCURACY DRILL

Level:

Intermediate

Purpose:

Quarterbacks work on going through proper reads and progressions and making the right pass.

What you need:

You can set this drill up with your quarterbacks and 4 targets. The targets can start off as tackling dummies and then eventually become live receivers.

How this drill works:

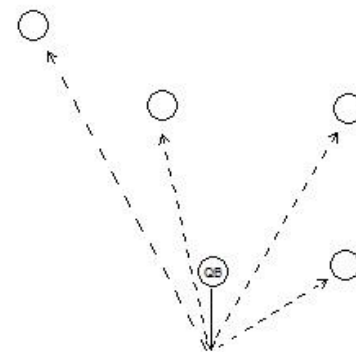
On the snap of the ball, the quarterback will make his first read and then throw the ball. Then on the next snap, the QB will look at his first read, then progress to the second read and then throw the ball. Then progress to the third read, throw and so on – right to the fourth read and throw.

Result:

QBs learn to make their proper reads and progressions in order to make the right throw on the field.

Coaching Tips:

- Add live targets to make this drill more difficult as the quarterback will have to make the read and then gauge the speed of the receiver to make the throw.



QBs can start out throwing to tackling dummies and then progress to live targets as their read and progression skills improve.

OVER THE MIDDLE DRILL

Level:

Intermediate

Purpose:

Receivers practice maintaining concentration on pass routes over the middle.

What you need:

Two lines – you can split receivers up, or you can have defensive backs in the other line if you like.

How this drill works:

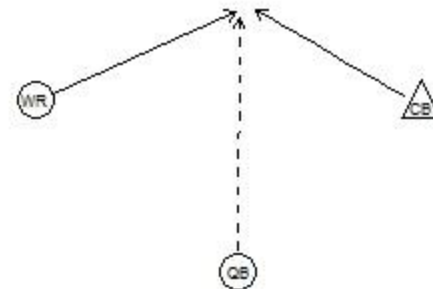
The receivers sprint across the field at an angle so they catch the pass at about the 15 yard mark (or less for younger players). The defenders barrel towards the same spot – making noise, waving their hands, and even feigning a hit on the wide receiver, but they will not actually hit the receiver.

Result:

Receivers learn to catch the ball over the middle of the field and not be tentative when they try to receive a pass.

Coaching Tips:

- At some point, you may consider making quarter contact, or a 'pop' once the receiver catches the ball – in preparation of future contact in a game situation.



This drill helps receivers stop hearing “footsteps” as they cross over the middle of the field.

POCKET PRESSURE DRILL

Level:

Intermediate

Purpose:

Quarterbacks learn to feel the pressure in the pocket.

What you need:

5 players, or coaches with tackling dummies. One quarterback is needed for the drill. You can set up one or all of your wide receivers, depending on the level of difficulty you want to achieve.

How this drill works:

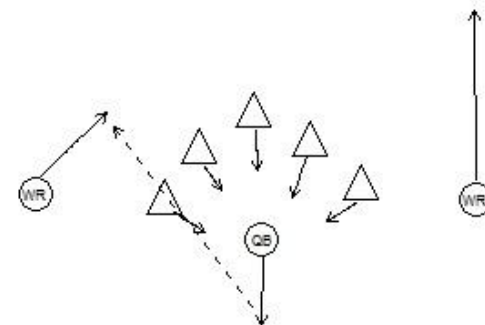
In this drill the 5 players (or coaches) with tackling dummies, will gradually creep closer to the QB as each second passes. They should be at the quarterback with their tackling dummies raised as high as they can, to impede any possible pass. The QB needs to be aware of the closing pocket, and make a quick read and then set up to pass within this 5 to 7 second window.

Result:

QB becomes more aware of the pass rush around them and becomes more comfortable with dropping back, making the reads and then passing the ball to the right player.

Coaching Tips:

- As your QB improves, you may want to occasionally shorten the time limit because with some blitzes the 5 to 7 second window is too long.



Quarterbacks learn to deal with pressure and still make the right throw while under duress.

CONTINUOUS PATTERN DRILL

Level:

Intermediate

Purpose:

Receivers learn to maintain focus while running crisp pass routes.

What you need:

Two QB's and a coach should be feeding balls between routes. You will need a line of wide receivers.

How this drill works:

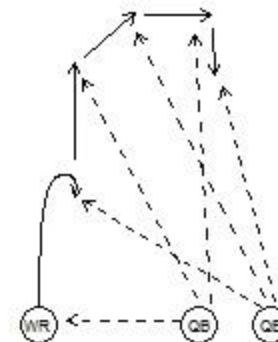
Two QB's will be dropped back, the first one will start by passing a hitch to the wide receiver (then the coach gives him another ball), then the second receiver hits the hook pattern (then coach gives him another ball). Then you go back to the first QB again, who is going to hit the go route (at 15 yards), then the next throw is to the post, next to the crossing route, and then the final pass will be made to the comeback route over the middle.

Result:

Improves passing accuracy for QBs on selected routes and provides receivers with good work on their hands and conditioning.

Coaching Tips:

- Be sure the QB must be reassuming proper throwing position to get ready for their next pass. Improper preparation means inaccurate throws.



Receivers improve their pass catching ability and conditioning in this quick-hitting drill.

QUICK SLANT DRILL

Level:

Intermediate

Purpose:

Players learn the slant, which is a great play for younger players.

What you need:

You can have two quarterbacks side-by-side with two receivers to the left and two to the right.

How this drill works:

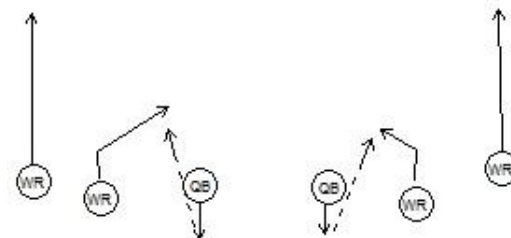
QB makes a preset call (for example: quick slot), and that triggers the slotback (inside WR) to immediately run a quick slant (2 yards forward, then in), so the quarterback can make a one or three step drop and then pass to avoid the rush.

Result:

QB learns to get rid of the ball quickly and avoid the sack.

Coaching Tips:

- Work with your young QB to help them realize when a blitz might be coming and they should call this play (for example, when a linebacker comes up to the line of scrimmage)



Running the quick slant is a great way to avoid the sack.

CHECK OFF PASS DRILL

Level:

Advanced

Purpose:

Helps quarterbacks master the skill of checking downfield and then making the dump pass.

What you need:

Have the quarterbacks working with the running backs on this drill, but the drill is more for QB recognition than anything else.

How this drill works:

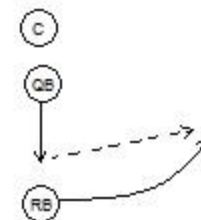
To start the drill, the QB will be under center and they will snap the ball and drop back – 3 or 5 steps. They need to check downfield first for receivers (which are not there in this drill), and then they need to make the decision to throw to their safety valve running the flare route.

Result:

Once the quarterback becomes comfortable throwing this pattern it will become second nature and it will be completed on a far more regular basis.

Coaching Tips:

- Make sure QBs are turning their shoulders toward their target when making the pass to the advancing RB. Far too often QBs will just side arm the ball over to the RB and this sacrifices accuracy.



Learning to settle for the dump-off pass can be a difficult skill to master. This drill helps QBs get familiar with throwing the ball to the running back in the flat when nothing else is available.

RAISE HAND RECOGNITION DRILL

Level:

Advanced

Purpose:

Helps quarterbacks improve their downfield recognition skills.

What you need:

You will need a quarterback and three or four receivers to do this drill. Each receiver is between 10 and 25 yards away from the quarterback, and spread about the field.

How this drill works:

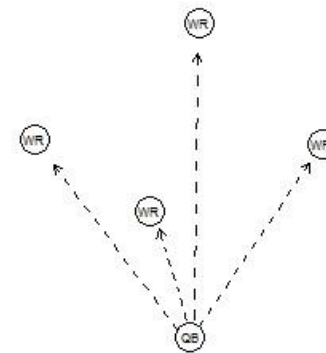
The coach will stand behind the QB, and prior to the snap, will point to the receiver that is going to be open. The coach will tell the QB how many steps the drop will be (3, 5 or 7) before he needs to find the receiver and complete the pass. At first, the player will raise one hand to show that he is the intended receiver. But, to make the drill more difficult, and more important for the quarterback to read, the players will all raise one hand, and the intended target will raise two hands.

Result:

QB dramatically increases his ability to find and complete the passes to his intended targets down the field.

Coaching Tips:

- The coach should enforce a three second release rule for the QB after he reaches his drop.
- To increase difficulty, you can extend this to 5 receivers (an RB flat pattern), and you can lengthen the throws.



Quarterback learns to spot the open target in this drill.

CATCH PYRAMID DRILL

Level:

Advanced

Purpose:

Receivers and backs work on developing quick reactions and the ability to find and collect the ball in the air.

What you need:

5 players and 3 footballs.

How this drill works:

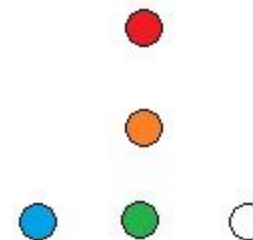
Balls start at the red, green and white positions to begin the drill. Here's how it goes. Red starts the drill by passing to orange, and looks to receive from blue. At the same time, orange passes to green and green decides to pass to white or blue. White or blue (whichever has the ball) will pass back up to red again. It should make a continuous passing between the all of the players.

Result:

Receivers improve hand and eye coordination, ability to locate the ball quickly and ability to focus on making the catch.

Coaching Tips:

- The passes should not be option-type tosses – they need to be real passes.
- You can switch the players every 20 total catches, so about 6 times through the drill.



This is a great drill for improving receiver hand-eye coordination.

TWO RECEIVERS, TWO DEFENDERS DRILL

Level:

Advanced

Purpose:

Pits receivers against defenders to see who will come out on top.

What you need:

Two QB's side to side, each with two receivers (one slot, one split out), and they are matched against two defensive backs.

How this drill works:

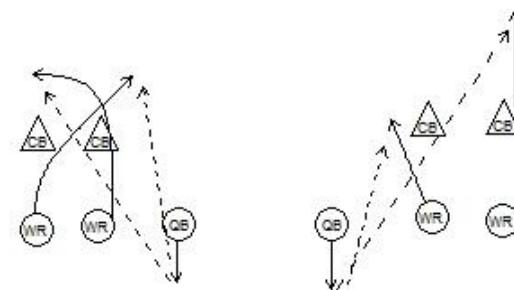
The defense will have its coverage and the offense will call its own play. At the snap of the ball, the receivers will run their patterns, the QB will drop back, make a read and throw – all with the defenders trying to cover them. If the ball is caught, the play does not end until the receiver is taken down.

Result:

Receivers and QBs learn to work together and DBs get practice against live receivers.

Coaching Tips:

- Award points to the offense for catches and broken tackles, and to the defense for passes deflected (and not caught), and intercepted passes.



Receivers match up against defensive backs in this competitive drill.

HIGH, LOW PASSING DRILL

Level:

Advanced

Purpose:

Receivers practice catching both high and low passes.

What you need:

Two QB's side by side, and lines for receivers on the left and on the right.

How this drill works:

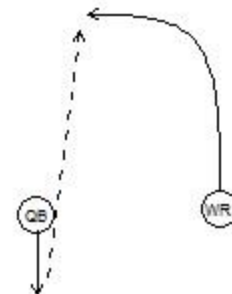
As the receivers go out for their pass patterns, the quarterback will drop back and then throw to the receiver. Instead of throwing a picture perfect pass, the QB will throw it over the head of the player (forcing them to adjust their catching position), or below the waist (again, an adjustment needs to be made).

Result:

Receivers understand the fundamentals of catching no matter where the ball comes in from the quarterback.

Coaching Tips:

- If you are concerned about your QBs developing bad throwing habits, you can have coaches throw the ball to receivers in this drill.



Receivers practice making difficult high or low catches.

READ AND RECOGNIZE SKELETON DRILL

Level:

Advanced

Purpose:

Quarterbacks learn to read what defense is being called and react to it by throwing to the right spot.

What you need:

Have a skeleton offense and defense comes together (should be 7 on 7 or so).

How this drill works:

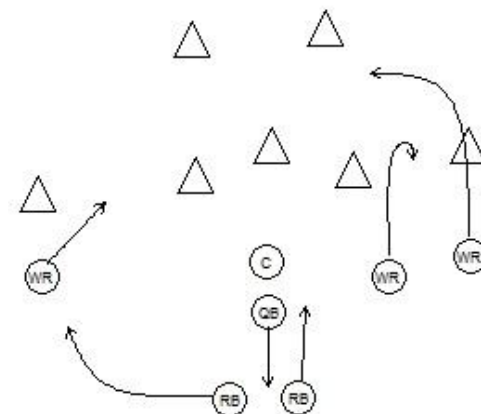
Each side will call a play (without the line involvement), and upon the snap, each person will execute his duties on the field – whether it is a pass pattern, dropping into a zone, etc. The quarterback will need to read the defense, recognize where players are going and then make the right pass to the WR.

Result:

All players in the skeleton will be able to improve their skill level as the speed of this drill increases.

Coaching Tips:

- Watch all of the players and how they are executing their individual assignments. For instance, be sure routes are being run correctly and players are dropping far enough into their zones.



Quarterback learns to read the defense and make the right throw in this competitive drill.

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