



PRINT n' GO

FLAG FOOTBALL

PRACTICE PLANS

DEFENSE AND FLAG-PULLING

**17 Skill-Building Drills To Shut Down
Your Opponents and Win More Games**



**Includes 5
Printable Practice
Plans**

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CONTENTS

Dynamic Warmup	4
4-Corner Agility Drill	5
Basic Flag Pull Drill	6
Flag Battle	7
Angle Flag Pull Drill	8
Open Field Flag Pull Drill	9
Team Mirror Drill	10
Pass Rush Drill	11
No Passing Zone Drill	12
On a String Drill	13
Pass and Pull Drill	14
Quick Pass Defense Drill	15
Cone Cut and Pull Drill	16
Man to Man Defense Drill	17
Zone Coverage Drill	18
Backpedal Mirror Drill	19
Goal Ball	20

PRACTICE PLANS 21

60 Minute Defense and Flag Pulling Practice (Beginner)	22
60 Minute Defense and Flag Pulling Practice (Beginner)	23
60 Minute Defense and Flag Pulling Practice (Intermediate)	24
90 Minute Defense and Flag Pulling Practice (Intermediate)	25
90 Minute Defense and Flag Pulling Practice (Advanced)	26

1.

DYNAMIC WARMUP

Complete each exercise for 2 sets of 10-20 yards



High Knee Run



Buttkicker Run



Frankenstein Walk



Walking Lunge & Twist



Walking Knee Hug



Straight Leg Run

2.

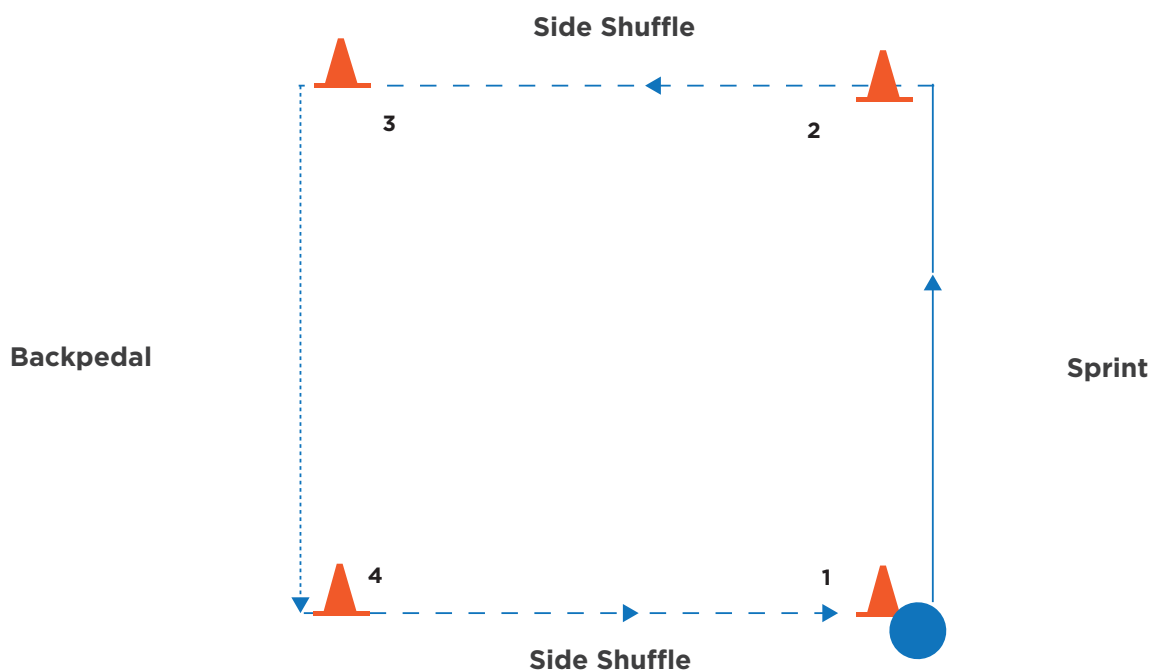
4-CORNER AGILITY DRILL

PURPOSE:

- Builds speed, agility and quickness.
- Especially valuable for helping defenders change direction quickly when pursuing the ball carrier.

SETUP:

Place 4 cones 10 yards apart in a square formation. The first player starts at cone 1.



HOW IT WORKS:

1. The player begins in an athletic position at cone 1.
2. On the whistle, he begins by sprinting down the right side of the box from cone 1 to cone 2.
3. After touching cone 2, he makes a reverse pivot right, throwing his shoulder counter clockwise, so his chest is facing toward the middle of the square.
4. He side shuffles from cone 2 to cone 3.
5. After touching cone 3, he reverse pivots again, throwing the right shoulder backward and backpedals from cone 3 to cone 4.
6. After touching cone 4, he side shuffles back to cone 1 to finish the circuit.

COACHING TIPS:

- Keep track of your player's times and track their improvement throughout the season.
- If possible, create 2 or 3 boxes in different parts of the field so multiple players can work at the same time.
- You can increase the difficulty by having your players carioca instead of side shuffle.

3.

BASIC FLAG PULL DRILL

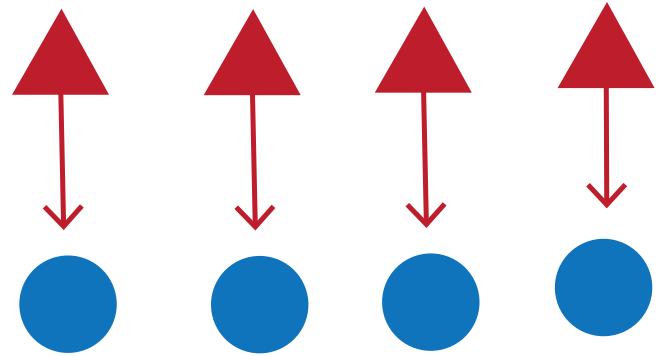


PURPOSE:

Players learn how to pull the flag which is the key to defensive success.

SETUP:

Pair up players of similar skill and make sure they each have a set of flags around the waist.



Players work on basic technique for pulling flags

HOW IT WORKS:

1. With the head up, the player approaches the runner, lining up the outside shoulder with the middle of the ball carrier's chest.
2. Once the defender approaches the ball carrier, he or she will open the arms and reach at waist height, while still keeping the outside shoulder on the path to the middle of the chest.
3. Players should not make contact with the ball carrier, except to grab the flags.
4. The defender will lean into the carrier, with the arms outstretched and the head up looking to grab the flags.

COACHING TIPS:

- While this is not a game of tackle football, the approach to flag-pulling is somewhat similar – without the contact, of course.
- Keeping the ball carrier in front of them is extremely important for the defensive player.

4.

FLAG BATTLE

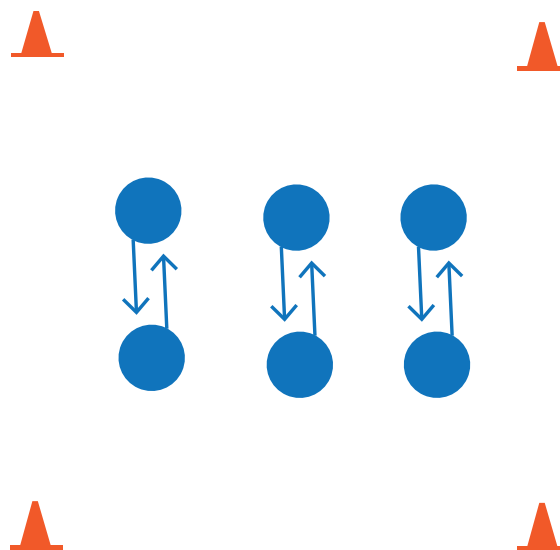


PURPOSE:

Defenders learn to reach and pull the flags down.

SETUP:

Set up a 40 x 40 yard playing area. Partner up players of equal skill, size and speed. Give each player a set of flags.



Players try to pull their partner's flags.

HOW IT WORKS:

1. This is a game of one-on-one, where the object is to try and grab your partner's flags.
2. The players will start off an arm's reach apart. When the whistle blows, they juke and move, and reach to try and grab their partner's flags.
3. Players cannot block flag reaching with their hands.
4. They must move laterally or run forward or backward to avoid the pull.

COACHING TIPS:

- The defender should be reaching out across the body of the offensive player (without making contact). He should also have his head up and be focused on the flags.

5.

ANGLE FLAG PULL DRILL

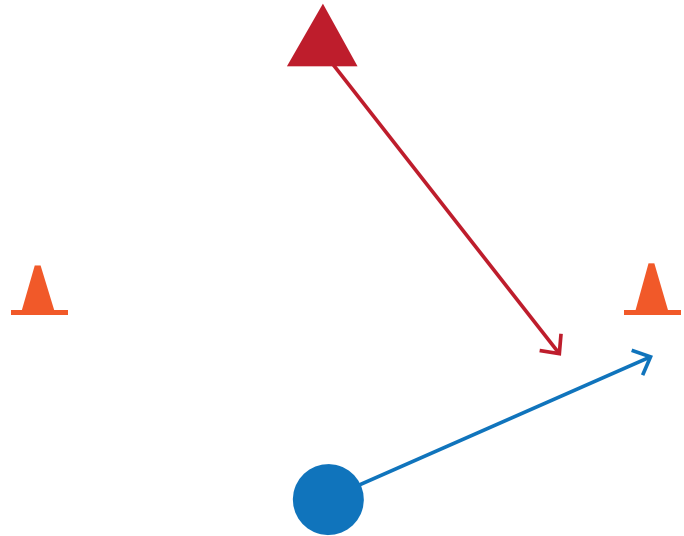


PURPOSE:

Defenders learn to make the flag pull while running at an angle to the runner.

SETUP:

Set up a line of runners and a line of defenders about 10 yards apart directly in front of each other. Set up two cones – on the line of scrimmage – one to the left 10 yards from the center and one to the right 10 yards from the center.



Defenders work on pulling the flag from an angle.

HOW IT WORKS:

1. On the snap of the ball, the RB will decide which cone to run towards.
2. The defensive player will need to take an angle of pursuit that will help him reach the ball carrier before he gets to the outside of the cone.

COACHING TIPS:

- The defender should be reaching out across the body of the offensive player (without making contact). He should also have his head up and be focused on the flags.

6.

OPEN FIELD FLAG PULL DRILL

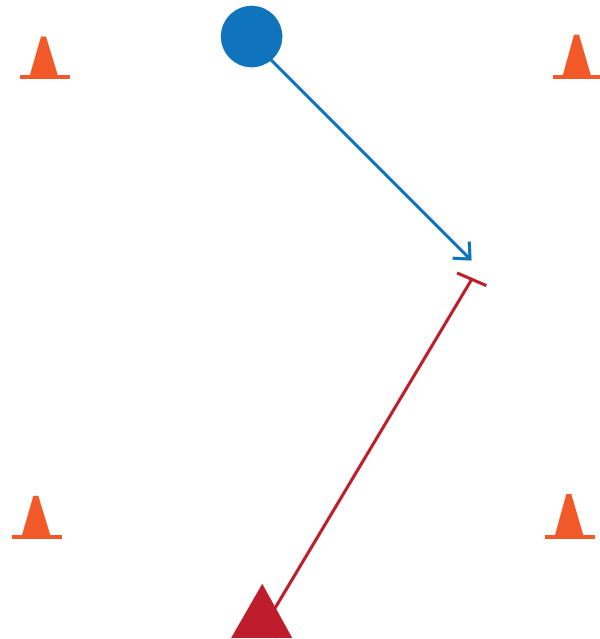


PURPOSE:

Focuses on footwork, agility and speed

SETUP:

Set up one line of defenders and one line of runners. Place cones in order to create a 20 yard by 20 yard area. The offensive player starts on one side and the defensive player on the other.



Defenders work on pulling the flag in the open field.

HOW IT WORKS:

1. Coach says "Go" or blows the whistle.
2. The ball carrier tries to get from one side to the other without his flag being taken or being forced out of bounds

COACHING TIPS:

- Players should stay under control and have their legs bent and their head up.
- The player's arms should be out in front, prepared to grab the flag.
- In game action, player should try to angle the runner to the sideline, or to the inside if help is nearby.

7.

TEAM MIRROR DRILL

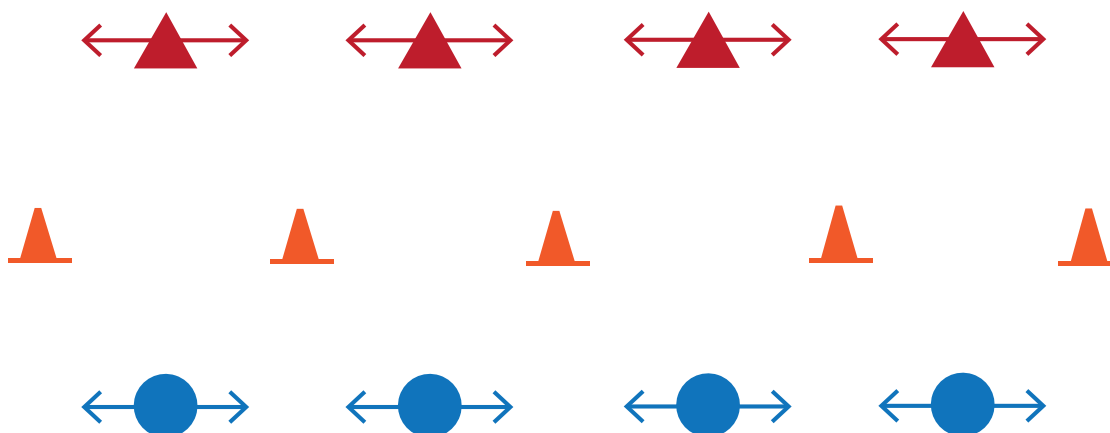


PURPOSE:

Helps defenders read a runner's hips and stay in front of him by mirroring his movements

SETUP:

Set up a row of five cones, roughly 8 yards apart. Pair up players of similar size and ability. Partners stand facing each other, on opposite sides of the cones. One is the runner, the other is the defender



Defenders mirror the movements of the offensive players before trying to make a flag pull

HOW IT WORKS:

1. The object of the game is for the defensive player to "mirror" the movements of the offensive player
2. On the coach's whistle, the runners begin to juke back and forth, staying on their side of the cones
3. The defender mirrors those movements, keeping his shoulders square to the runner
4. After about 10 seconds, the coach blows the whistle for a second time. Now, the runner will try to beat the defender and pass through the cones
5. The defender will try to pull the runner's flags before he gets past him
6. The defensive team gets 1 point for every successful flag pull
7. Switch sides and repeat

COACHING TIPS:

- Teach the defenders to watch the runner's hips and belly button – don't be fooled by the eyes, head or shoulder fakes
- Avoid crossing your feet over or turning sideways to the runner. Keep your shoulders square to the cones and shuffle sideways until the runner commits to a path
- Pursue the runner under control – avoid diving or lunging at the flag

8.

PASS RUSH DRILL

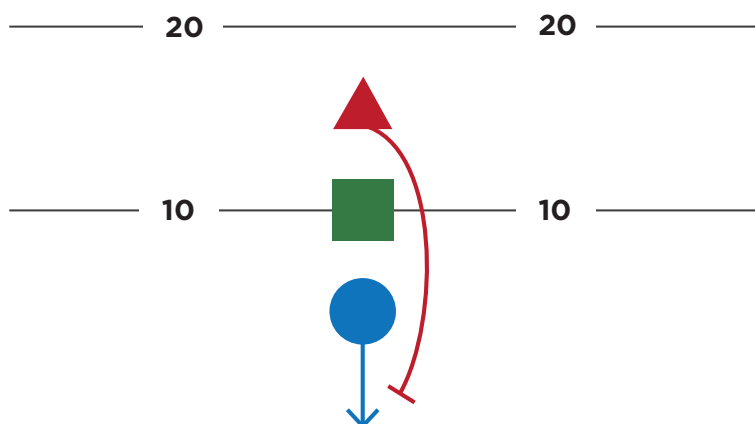


PURPOSE:

Defenders learn to rush the quarterback.

SETUP:

Place a center and quarterback at the line of scrimmage. Set up a line of pass-rushers 5 yards upfield.



Players exchange the ball four times during this drill.

HOW IT WORKS:

1. On the coach's signal, the center will snap the ball to the quarterback. The quarterback will take a 5 step drop, then try to elude the pass-rusher by moving side to side or forward.
2. The pass-rusher will immediately rush the quarterback on movement of the ball. He has 5 seconds to pull his flag and make the sack.
3. The drill resets after a flag pull, or after 5 seconds has elapsed.
4. Pass-rusher moves to center, center moves to quarterback, and the next player in line becomes the pass-rusher.

COACHING TIPS:

- The pass-rusher should begin in a good two point or three point stance, with his feet shoulder width apart, knees bent and eyes up
- Teach the rushers to go on the movement of the ball – not the whistle or the quarterback saying "hike"

9.

NO PASSING ZONE DRILL

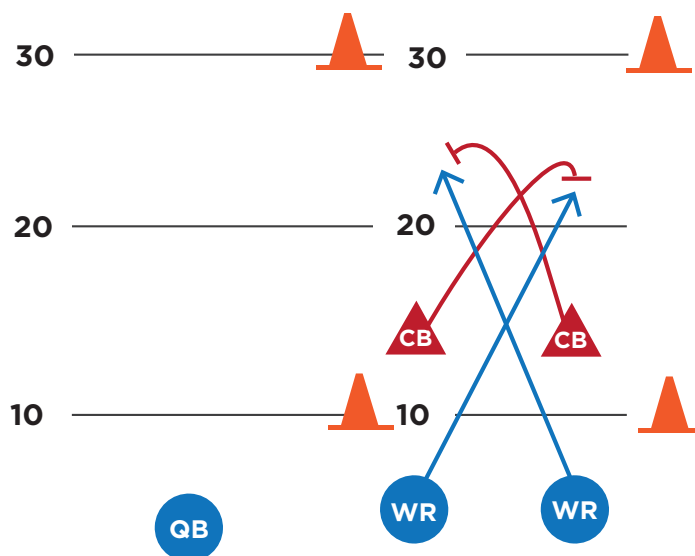


PURPOSE:

Defensive backs and receivers learn the basic fundamentals of their positions.

SETUP:

Mark off a 10 yard wide and 30 yard deep area. You can have a QB and 2 WR and 2 DBs.



Receivers work to get open against tight coverage.

HOW IT WORKS:

1. This is a drill that works on defensive coverage.
2. The QB and the receivers call a play.
3. The DBs line up across from the WRs in coverage.
4. On the snap of the ball, the receivers must stay in the marked off area, and the DBs maintain coverage.
5. The QB must get rid of the ball in 5 seconds, or it is considered a sack.
6. Give the offense one point if they are able to complete a pass, and give the defense a point for an incomplete pass and 2 points for an interception.

COACHING TIPS:

- Defenders can't hold receivers, instead they should be mirroring their moves and then moving on the ball when it is thrown.

10.

ON A STRING DRILL

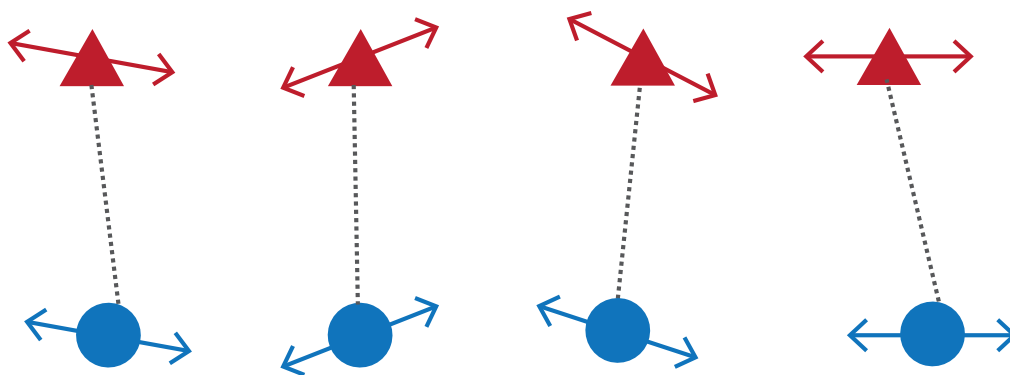


PURPOSE:

Defenders improve their one-on-one defensive coverage skills.

SETUP:

You'll need ten to twenty 10-foot long pieces of string. Partner up players with similar speed and ability – one is the receiver, one is the defender. Attach the string (or other 'breakable' material) to each of the player's belts, so each pair is connected.



Defenders must stay close to the receiver in this fun coverage drill

HOW IT WORKS:

1. On the coach's signal, the receiver will start moving at half-speed. He should go left, right, forwards and backwards
2. The defender will need to stay close to the receiver and prevent the string from breaking
3. Continue for 15-20 seconds, then switch roles
4. After each player has gone at half speed, go "live" – the receiver will now try to escape from the defender while staying inbounds
5. Continue for 15-20 seconds or until the string is broken, then switch roles

COACHING TIPS:

- Encourage the defenders to get up close to the receivers and really try to mirror their every move.

11.

PASS AND PULL DRILL

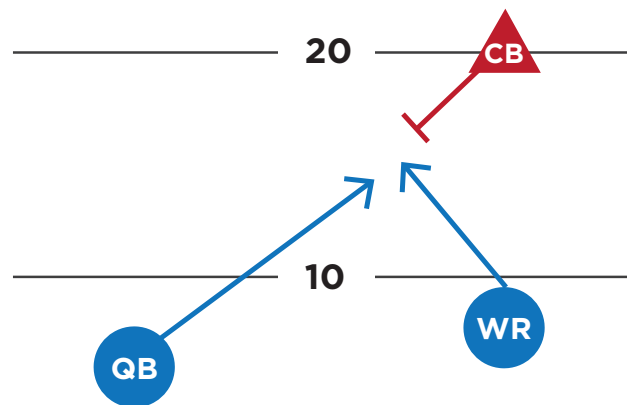


PURPOSE:

Defenders work on pass coverage and on being able to close on a receiver and pull the flag.

SETUP:

Place a quarterback at the line of scrimmage with a receiver 5 yards off to the side. A defender stands opposite the line of scrimmage, 10 yards from the receiver. You can set this up at multiple stations to get more kids involved.



Defender works on closing and pulling the flag.

HOW IT WORKS:

1. The quarterback takes the snap and makes a 3-step drop
2. The receiver runs a simple slant or hook pattern and receives the pass from the QB
3. The defender will mirror the receiver as he runs his route, then allow the pass to be completed
4. On the reception, he immediately closes in on the receiver and pulls his flag, limiting the number of yards after catch.

COACHING TIPS:

- Four keys to stress to defensive players in this drill – stay on your feet, run through the ball carrier, use both hands and focus on the hip and swipe down.

12.

QUICK PASS DEFENSE DRILL

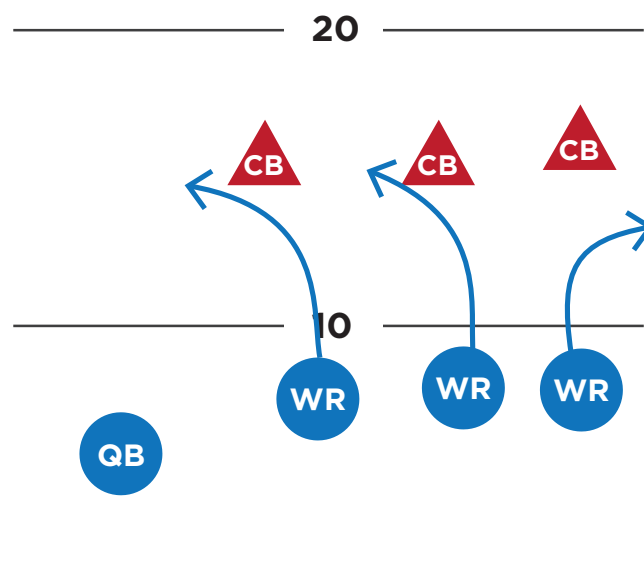


PURPOSE:

Players work on defending quick passes.

SETUP:

Line up the QB in a shotgun formation. The receivers (2 or 3) line up with defensive backs right across from them.



Defender tries to jump the receiver's pattern and intercept the ball.

HOW IT WORKS:

1. The quarterback takes the snap and makes a 3-step drop
2. The receiver runs a simple slant or hook pattern and receives the pass from the QB
3. The defender will mirror the receiver as he runs his route, then allow the pass to be completed
4. On the reception, he immediately closes in on the receiver and pulls his flag, limiting the number of yards after catch.

COACHING TIPS:

- Defenders should watch the alignment of the receivers and try to guess what patterns they are running to be able to make a quick break on the ball.

13.

CONE CUT AND PULL DRILL

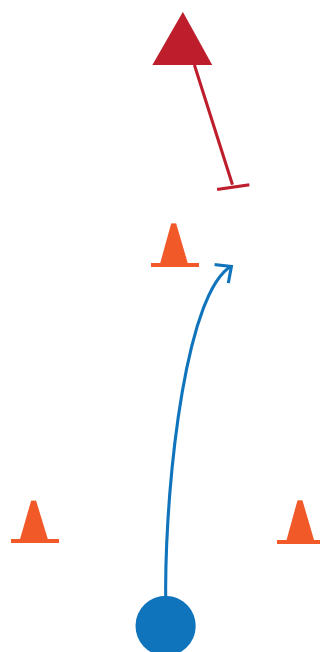


PURPOSE:

Defenders work on making a flag pull on a runner coming with a head of steam

SETUP:

Set up two cones about 5 yards apart to act as the line of scrimmage. Set up another cone 5 yards into the defender's side of the ball. Place a defender 5 yards behind that cone, and a line of runners 5 yards behind the line of scrimmage



Defender tries to read the offensive player's cut and pull the flag.

HOW IT WORKS:

1. On the whistle, the ball carrier will move forward between the two cones at the line of scrimmage.
2. The runner will run towards the cone on the defensive side of the ball.
3. Once at the cone, the ball carrier must choose one way or another to cut and go.
4. The defender must read the cut and try to make the flag pull.
5. The ball carrier is only allowed to make one move in this drill.
6. Score one for a flag pull and one if the ball carrier gets by.
7. The runner becomes the defender, the defender goes to the back of the line, and the next player in line becomes the runner

COACHING TIPS:

- Defender should keep their feet moving in short, choppy steps and stay balanced as he goes to meet the ball carrier.
- Defender should focus on the offensive player's hips and swipe down as he goes for the flag.

14.

MAN TO MAN DEFENSE DRILL

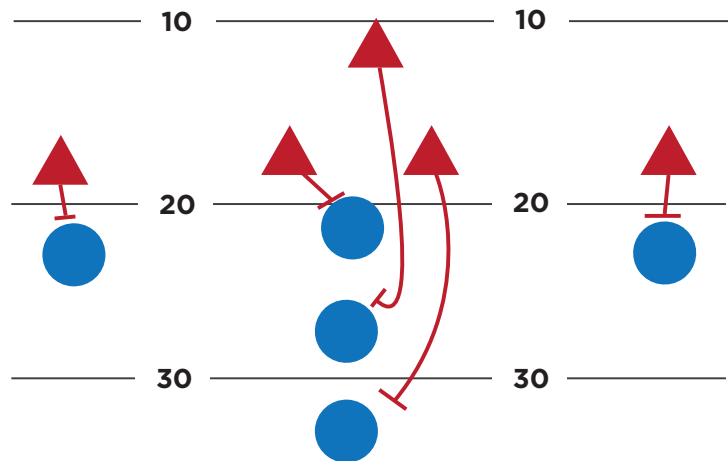


PURPOSE:

Defenders learn how to match up and play man to man defense

SETUP:

Set up an offense and defense with at least four players per side – a center, QB, RB, and at least one receiver for the offense. Have one defensive player match up with each offensive player.



Defenders are given man assignments in this drill.

HOW IT WORKS:

1. Explain the concept of man to man defense to your team – each player is responsible for shadowing a single offensive player
2. Have your offense run a basic handoff play at half speed. The defense should mirror the movement of the offense and try to make a flag pull at or behind the line of scrimmage
3. Have your offense run a basic passing play at half speed. The defense should mirror the movement of the offense and try to break up the pass or make an immediate flag pull on the reception
4. Once they get the hang of it, you can go live at full speed. Play a modified scrimmage using the rules of your flag football league

COACHING TIPS:

- As you go from half-speed to full-speed, make sure you continue to emphasize the man to man defense concepts
- Try giving each defender a grade on how well they executed their assignment. Explain what they did well and what they could do better on the next play

15.

ZONE COVERAGE DRILL

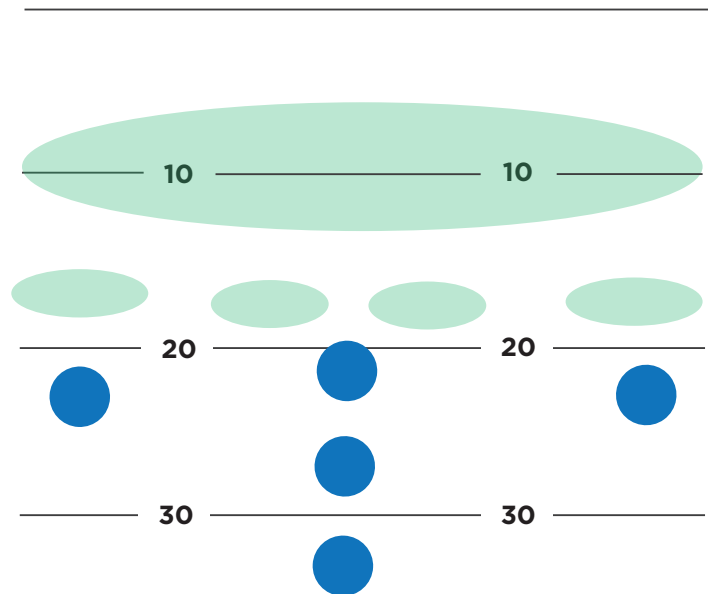


PURPOSE:

Defenders learn the principles of playing a zone defense.

SETUP:

Using cones, mark out four or more defensive zones. Set up an offense with at least four players per side – a center, QB, RB, and at least one receiver for the offense. Have one defensive player assigned to each zone.



Defenders are given zone assignments in this drill.

HOW IT WORKS:

1. Explain the concept of zone defense to your team – each player is responsible for a specific area of the field, marked by the cones
2. Have your offense run a basic handoff play at half speed. The defense should cover the area inside and immediately around their zone and make a flag pull
3. Have your offense run a basic passing play at half speed. The defense should cover the area inside and immediately around their zone and try to break up the pass or make an immediate flag pull on the reception
4. Once they get the hang of it, you can go live at full speed. Play a modified scrimmage using the rules of your flag football league

COACHING TIPS:

- Experiment with different zones depending on the personnel you have and types of offenses you will face.
- With more experienced players, it can be helpful to change up your zone depending on the down/distance situation.
- Emphasize that players should NOT chase players out of their zone. Demonstrate what happens on reverses and cutbacks, and why it's important for the defenders to maintain their responsibility.

16.

BACKPEDAL MIRROR DRILL

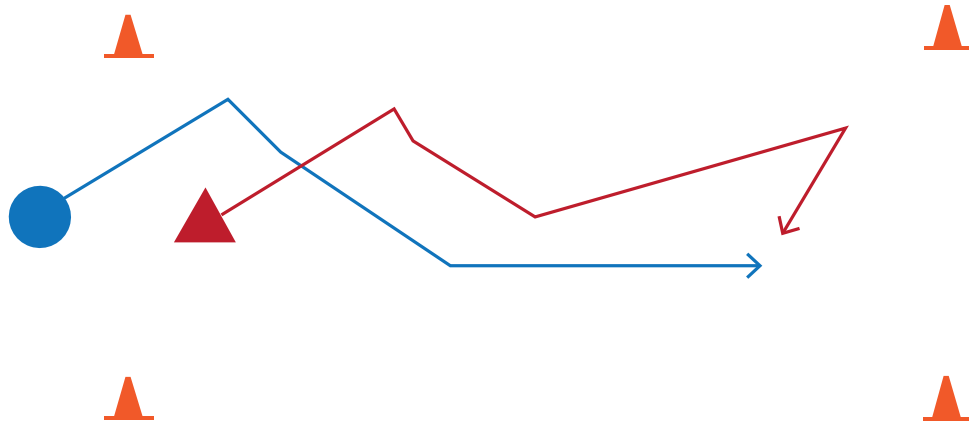


PURPOSE:

Develops defensive skills of backpedaling and pulling the flag.

SETUP:

Using four cones, set up a playing area 15 yards wide and 30 yards long. Line up the players at the first set of cones. The first player in line is the defender. The second player is the runner.



Defenders backpedal and mirror the defender for 15 yards, then try to pull the flag when the drill goes live

HOW IT WORKS:

1. The object of this drill is for the defender to “mirror” the movements of the runner while backpedaling, then try to pull his flag before the runner can score
2. On the coach’s whistle the runner begins zig-zagging at 50% speed towards the opposite set of cones
3. The defender backpedals, maintaining a cushion between himself and the runner, and mirroring the zig-zag movements
4. Around halfway through the playing area, the coach blows his whistle for a second time. This is the signal for the drill to go “live” and the runner to try to score.
5. The defender will stay in front of the runner, cut him off and try to pull his flag
6. After a score or a flag pull, the drill resets. The runner becomes the defender. The next player in line is the runner.

COACHING TIPS:

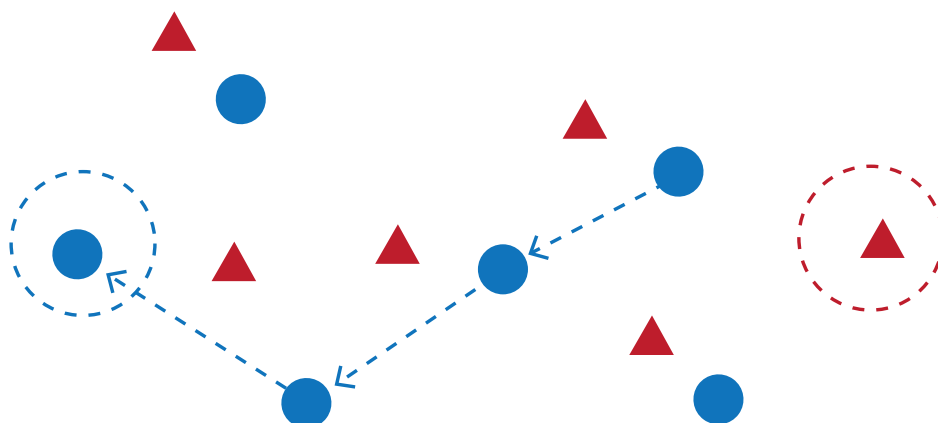
- This is designed to mimic a defensive back shadowing a receiver, then breaking towards him for the flag pull when he receives the pass
- For added realism, you can pitch the ball to the offensive player before blowing the second whistle
- During the backpedal the defender should have his arms pumping, knees bent, butt down, and maintain a slight forward lean – “nose over toes.”

**PURPOSE:**

Helps develop proper receiving and passing skills. Also, teaches players how to spread out and use the entire field.

SETUP:

Set out a 40 x 40-yard playing area. Divide the team into two teams. Using cones or hula hoops, create a circular "goal" on either side of the playing area. Place one player from each team inside the "goal"



Teams try to score by passing the ball to their teammate inside the circular goal

HOW IT WORKS:

1. Team 1 starts on offense. One player has the ball in the middle of the field. His teammates spread out across the field and try to get open
2. Team 2 starts on defense. Each defender matches up with an offensive player.
3. The object of the game is for the offensive team to throw the ball to the player standing inside the goal. They can throw it directly to that player or throw it to a series of teammates first.
4. The player with the ball can only take two steps, similar to basketball. Everyone else can move around freely. Except the player in the goal, who cannot leave that area.
5. The ball must be passed within 10 seconds or the other team gets possession of the ball.

COACHING TIPS:

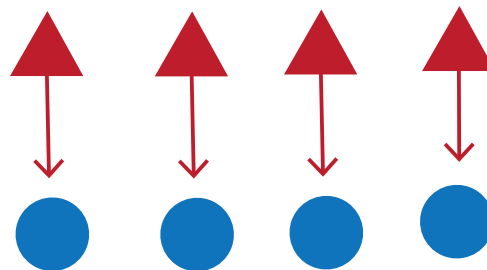
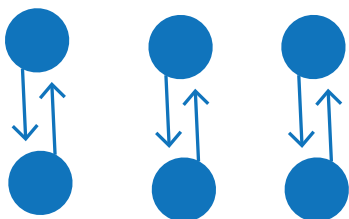
- Stress the importance of spreading out and being in position to receive a pass from a teammate. In a game situation, the offense has an advantage when there is more room to move.



PRACTICE PLANS

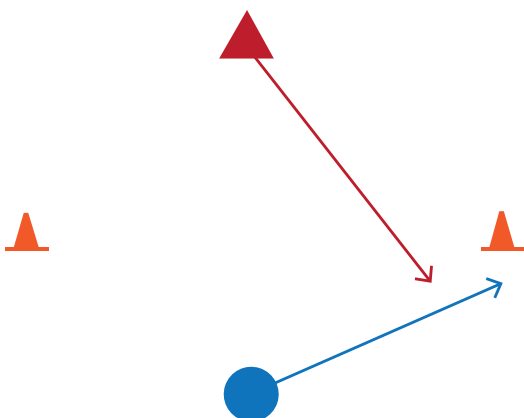
1.

60 MINUTE DEFENSE AND FLAG PULLING PRACTICE (BEGINNER)

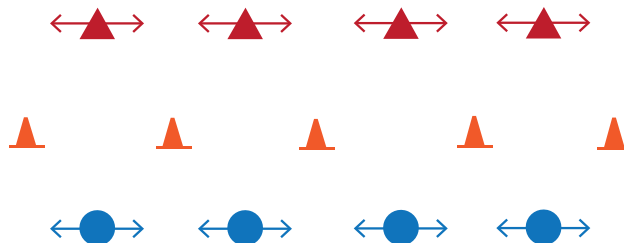


Flag Battle:
10 minutes

Basic Flag Pull Drill:
10 minutes



Angle Flag Pull Drill:
10 minutes



Team Mirror Drill:
10 minutes

Play Review and Scrimmage: 20 minutes

Split team into two groups and practice your offensive plays at half speed against a dummy defense. Then full speed against live defense.

2.

60 MINUTE DEFENSE AND FLAG PULLING PRACTICE (BEGINNER)

Dynamic Warmup: 5 minutes



High Knee



Buttkicker



Frankenstein



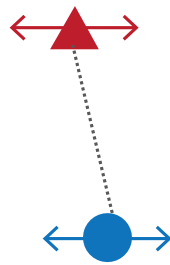
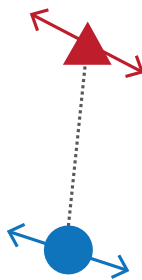
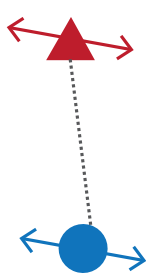
Walking Lunge &
Twist



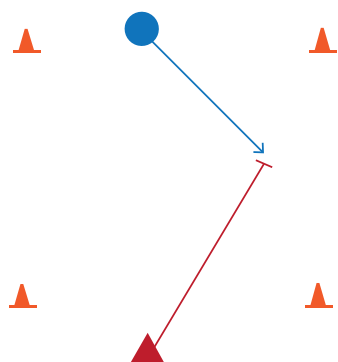
Walking Knee Hug



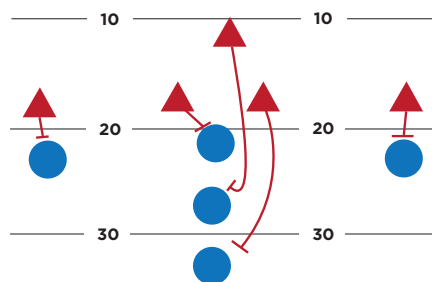
Straight Leg
Run



On a String Drill:
10 minutes



Open Field Flag Pull Drill:
10 minutes



Man to Man Defense Drill:
10 minutes

Play Review and Scrimmage: 20 minutes

Split team into two groups and practice your offensive plays at half speed against a dummy defense. Then full speed against live defense.

3.

60 MINUTE DEFENSE AND FLAG PULLING PRACTICE (INTERMEDIATE)

Dynamic Warmup: 5 minutes



High Knee



Buttkicker



Frankenstein



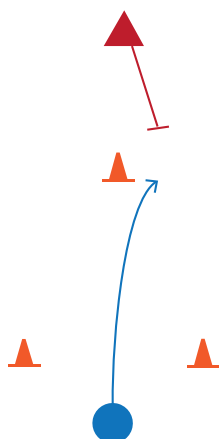
Walking Lunge &
Twist



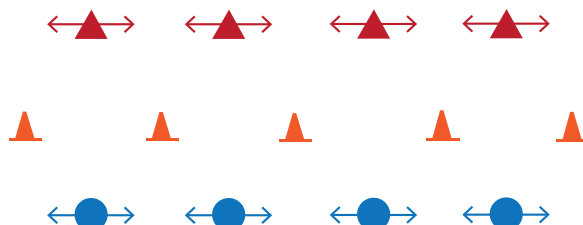
Walking Knee Hug



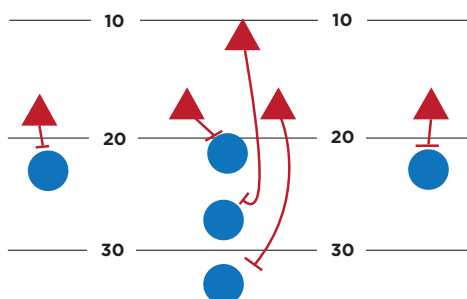
Straight Leg
Run



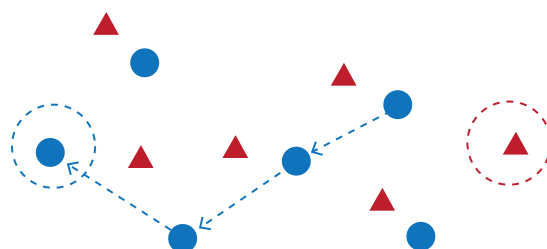
Cone Cut and Pull Drill:
10 minutes



Team Mirror Drill:
10 minutes



Man to Man Defense Drill:
10 minutes



Goal Ball:
20 minutes

4.

90 MINUTE DEFENSE AND FLAG PULLING PRACTICE (INTERMEDIATE)

Dynamic Warmup: 5 minutes



High Knee



Buttkicker



Frankenstein



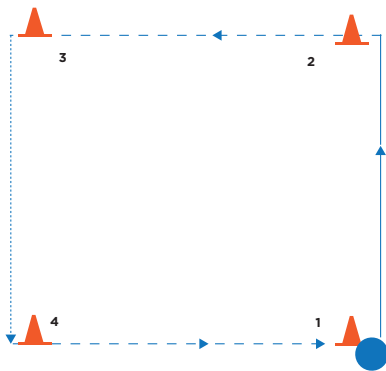
Walking Lunge & Twist



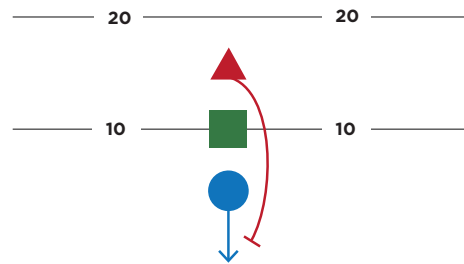
Walking Knee Hug



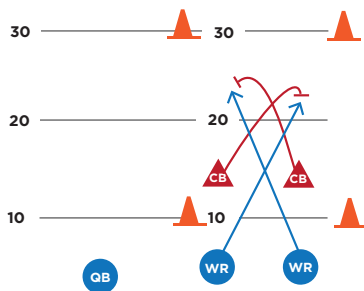
Straight Leg Run



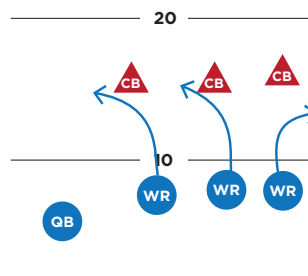
4-Corner Agility Drill:
10 minutes



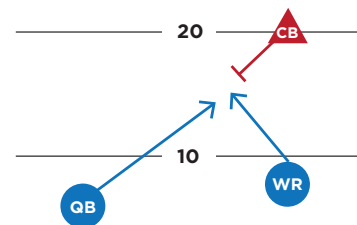
Pass Rush Drill:
10 minutes



No Passing Zone Drill:
10 minutes



Quick Pass Defense Drill:
10 minutes



Pass and Pull Drill:
15 minutes

Play Review and Scrimmage: 25 minutes

Split team into two groups and practice your offensive plays at half speed against a dummy defense. Then full speed against live defense.

5.

90 MINUTE DEFENSE AND FLAG PULLING PRACTICE (ADVANCED)

Dynamic Warmup: 5 minutes



High Knee



Buttkicker



Frankenstein



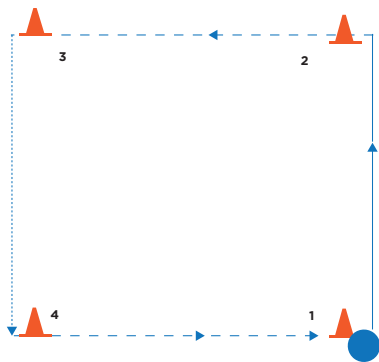
Walking Lunge & Twist



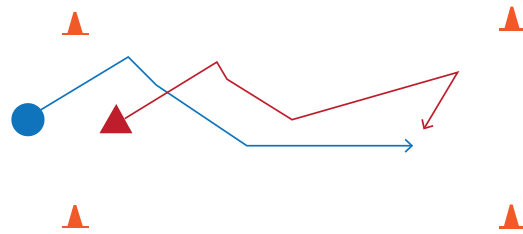
Walking Knee Hug



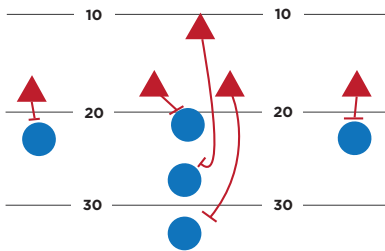
Straight Leg Run



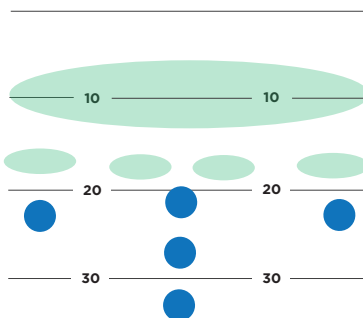
4-Corner Agility Drill:
10 minutes



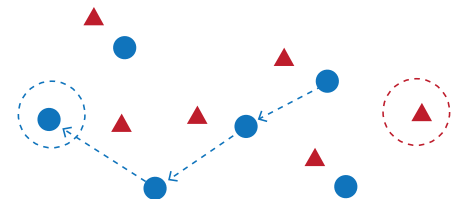
Backpedal Mirror Drill:
10 minutes



Man to Man Defense Drill:
10 minutes



Zone Coverage Drill:
10 minutes



Goal Ball:
20 minutes

Play Review and Scrimmage: 20 minutes

Split team into two groups and practice your offensive plays at half speed against a dummy defense. Then full speed against live defense.