

Coach T Newsletter

Dedicated exclusively to youth football

Let me take a moment and thank all of you for your support of the Coach T Newsletter. For those of you who have visited my web site at www.coacht.tv to inquire about my DVD series **How to Coach Youth Football**, I thank you! I'm especially excited about the number of people who support youth football and find my DVD and my newsletter to be useful tools.

I don't know about you but I don't think it's ever too early to start thinking about football. The upcoming football season is only three months away and it's time to put your game plan into action. Whatever offensive, defensive and special teams approach you take, remember to keep it fun while you're teaching.

This newsletter is dedicated to the value of teaching good fundamentals. Without a good fundamental foundation, your West Coast offense or Cover 2 defense has no chance of succeeding.

There is some truth to the old adage that football is about blocking and tackling. And while that may seem too simple, it really is anything but simple. Coaching at the youth level is all about the basics. When you break down the basics, step-by-step, it can become complicated... especially for an 8 year old. The correct stance, how to explode off the ball, even how to throw, are all things that may seem second-nature to an adult but may never had been taught or executed properly by a youth athlete.

It's no secret that football teams who stress fundamentals are successful football teams. Likewise, understanding how to coach the proper fundamentals is the foundation for achieving success, having fun and keeping it safe. When you teach fundamentals you're going through each movement step-by-step. Whether you're teaching blocking, tackling, or running, many of the same principles apply regarding leverage and firing off the ball.

Form Running

One of the most neglected aspects of coaching is teaching proper running technique. Like throwing and catching, it's assumed that running is a natural skill. It isn't... what may seem to be second nature to an adult may never have been taught or executed correctly by a young athlete. Correct form running will increase a player's speed and quickness. The earlier you can coach good form running, the easier it will be to correct

bad habits. One very important aspect of form running that needs to be emphasized is that the "cheek to hip" hand movement is essential for proper running form. When one hand is up by the cheek, the other hand is at the hip. This movement should become piston-like, creating a consistent power movement.

Drive Blocking

The drive block is the first blocking technique to teach. It really is the foundation of all blocking techniques because other blocking methods branch out from the basics of the drive block. The drive block is used on running plays or play action pass plays when the defender is "on" the blocker, or head-to-head with the blocker. It's important that the blocker utilizes the power step, quickstep, making contact in a fit position, keeping the feet going in short, choppy steps. Make sure that the contact is low on any block. Many young linemen feel it's important to "pancake" the defender. Stress that it's more important to engage the defender, tying up the opponent so that he can't make the tackle.

Tackling

A defense lives or dies with form tackling. Here's a thorough breakdown of proper form.

The first phase is the *Approach*. Teach your defenders to keep their momentum under control until they get within three to four yards of the ball carrier. They should then break down in a good fit or hitting position utilizing short choppy steps while closing in on the ball carrier

As the defender approaches the ballcarrier, the defender should bend his knees to assume a balanced base; he's square to the target. His feet are spread the width of his shoulders. His back is slightly arched. His head is up as his eyes are focused on the belt buckle of the ballcarrier.

The second phase of tackling is the *Contact* phase. At the moment of impact or Pop, the tackler drives his helmet through the ball as he rolls the hips, thrusting the arms and utilizing power from the lower back and legs. The first contact is made with the chest and shoulders. At the point of pop, the arms are thrust in an upward direction around the buttocks or hips of the ballcarrier. The arms then bring the ball carrier towards the defender. Remember, the head is up at all times!

The third and final phase is the *Follow through*. The tackler lifts the ball carrier off the ground and drives him back. Here's a teaching point - keep reminding your players to tackle through the ballcarrier. Many times, especially with younger players, the tackler will approach, make contact,

wrap up and then fall to their knees, hoping their weight will bring the ballcarrier down.

“Tackling through” the ballcarrier will only happen if the defender develops “lift” in the tackling process. Follow through is achieved by the contact coupled with the power of the leg drive.

Tackling is all about form and technique. It's about attitude and a relentless pursuit intended to squash any ball carriers' ill-conceived ideas of gaining positive yardage. There are five things to consider:

- 1. Keep the head up - never tackle with the head down.**
- 2. The tackler should stay square to the ball carrier in order to maintain good balance and leverage position when making contact.**
- 3. The tackler should wrap-up to secure the ball carrier from**
- 4. Keep the feet moving to insure good position and provide power at impact.**
- 5. Finally, never give up!**

Good execution begins with good form. Teach form, demonstrate form, critique form, reinforce form, and never sacrifice form. Watch for lunging and see if the players roll their hips when they lift.

In my June newsletter, I'll talk about some of the drills I use to emphasize good fundamentals. Please feel free to send me some of your favorite drills by e-mailing me at coacht@coacht.tv. I'd love to share them with everyone on the Coach T network.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to share them with me. You can communicate with me through my web site at: www.CoachT.tv

I'd love to hear from you!

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