



Defensive Clinic

Sample Defensive Practice Plan

6:15-6:20 Warmup (dynamic stretching) (coach explains what is on the agenda for today)

6:20-6:35 Defensive (stance, various breaks, etc)

6:35-6:40 Flag pulling (Coach explains what to look for, how to break down, etc)

6:40-6:45 water break (during water break coach asks questions about what the team has learned so far)

6:45-7:05 Zone defense (setup cones so players can see what zone they are responsible for. Have offensive players run routes

7:10-7:25 Install Defense.

- Start with middle to right side of defensive players. Players line up in designated spots. The other players line up as an offense and run routes making sure the players cover their zone and let the opponent leave their zone. Then cover who ever else comes in their zone.

- Coach calls play, players line up, coach makes sure they are lined up correctly, and run the play.

- Coach fixes any issues based on how the play has been run and/or praises successes.

7:25-7:30 water break (coach asks randomly asks 1-3 athletes what they learned to day)

*As you can see, every minute is accounted for. While the athletes are resting, they are still in football mode and being taught. Coaches for younger athletes (under 4th grade), you know the attention span of your athletes, adjust accordingly.

*Do not punish athletes for being late. It's not their fault. This is not Friday Night Lights. Parents are juggling multiple jobs, multiple sports, dealing with rush hour traffic, etc. If an athlete is late, have them do a simple warmup and jump right into the drill. Remember, your athlete wants to be at your practice!

NOTE: *I have seen many teams scrimmage too early. If they players don't know what they are to do, they can't play effectively. Once they understand your scheme, definitely scrimmage. That being said, a scrimmage is NOT a game. When something bad happens to your team, it is a coaching moment. Ask the opponent to line up again, and walk through exactly what they did. Show your team what happened and how you correct it. This skill is invaluable and will pay off later in the season.*

Defensive Back

Stance

When in your stance, you should have your knees slightly bent, with your feet shoulder-width apart. You also want to bend at the hips so that your torso is almost perpendicular to the ground, with your chest over your feet.

Your feet should be slightly staggered, with your outside foot up, inside foot back.

Your arms should be loose and you should be comfortable, ready to ease or explode into your backpedal.

Man or Zone

Man Coverage: If the defense is lined up with their butt pointed to the center of the field, they are in man. This means, the defensive player on you will go wherever you go.



The cornerback is lined up with hips pointed towards the center of the field, inside leg towards the line of scrimmage, and outside leg staggered back. By being in this position, the cornerback is using his body to deter the receiver from running an inside route (slant, post, in). He is giving up the outside routes (out route) because it's a harder catch to make and because he is using the sidelines as another defender forcing the receiver to run out of room to work with.

Zone Coverage: If the defense is lined up with their butt pointed to the sideline of the field, they are in zone. This means, the defensive player on you will stay with you only in their zone and let you go when you leave it.



The cornerback is lined up with his hips pointed towards the sidelines so you can see the what is happening in the adjacent zones near you. You are to keep one eye on your receiver and one eye in the area you are covering watching for other players to enter your zone.

If you are in a situation where you have 2 receivers in your area, always cover the better athlete.

When you see the quarterback do this,



they are going to throw the ball. You can break (turn your body in that direction) to go make a play.

Teaching Zone

Take cones, and divide all the zones as you see fit. 3 zones across, 4 zones across, it's your call what you feel you need to do to be successful. Having the cones will teach the athletes what area they are responsible for and not.

Coming Out

When you start your backpedal, you want to push off your front foot and *skate* your feet backwards, don't run backwards. Remember to keep your body in a low position to give yourself leverage when you make your break.

If you are too high in your defensive back stance, you will lose time by having to go back to a low position before you break. This makes your break slower, so stay low.

You can vary the speed of your backpedal based on how fast the receiver is running. If you are reading the quarterback, ease out by taking two slow read steps, and then immediately getting back into your backpedal and your eyes back to the receiver.

T-Step Breaks

There are two main ways cornerbacks come out of their breaks using the backpedaling technique. The first one I'm going to explain is how I learned, which is the T-step. It is called the T-step because you make a "T" shape with your feet when you make your forward and diagonal breaks.

For example, when breaking to the left, you wanna stop your backpedal with instep of your right foot. Then you bring your left heel to just inside your right foot, making a "T" shape, with the toes of your left foot pointed in the direction you want to go. You then drive off your left foot hard into the direction your left foot is pointing.

My father calls it the "brake, click" because your "braking" with your outside foot and "clicking" the heel of your inside foot into the instep of your brake foot. It's a quick three-step motion with purpose of changing directions as quickly as possible.

One caveat to T-Step breaks is that when your legs get strong enough, you won't have to "click". Instead, you'll be able to just push off your back leg

Quick-Step Breaks

The second breaking technique also widely used by cornerbacks is called the quick-step. Many players and coaches swear by the quick-step because they say you don't turn your body in another direction when you plant as you do when using the T-step.

For example, when breaking to the left with the quick-step you would use the balls of both feet to stop your backpedal, patting your feet to absorb the force, before breaking.

I feel they aren't as fast as the T-step because there are potentially too many steps are involved. They also require very powerful calf muscles in order to be fast with them and, because you're braking with the balls of your feet, they can increase your chances of getting turf toe.

Regardless of their disadvantages, it is to your advantage to work on you quick-step, so that you can be versatile in coming out of your breaks and impress any coaches who prefer them over the T-step.

Backpedal Drill

Purpose:

To develop the proper foundation for a defensive backs footwork and technique when moving in pass coverage.

Setup:

Have the players form a line, with the first player in line stepping forward and turning around to face the line.



Player executing backpedal with correct technique.

Instructions:

1. On the coach's signal, the players will break and begin to backpedal.
2. As they backpedal, they should focus on keeping their chest down and keeping their weight on the balls of their feet.
3. Player will continue to backpedal for about 10-15 yards, driving their heels back with each step and focusing on pumping the arms the same way they would if they were moving forward.
4. Have the next player in line step up and continue the drill.

Coaching Tips:

When first teaching this technique, go one at a time and take the time to evaluate each player's technique. Make sure that they are starting each rep in the correct stance, with a strong Z in the lower body and that they maintain something close to that posture as they continue to backpedal, keeping their weight on the balls of their feet and their nose over their toes.

Backpedal Shuffle Break

Purpose

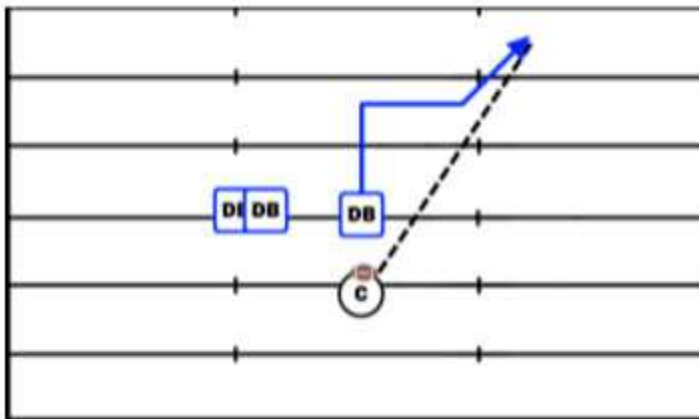
To work on footwork, agility and develop ballhawking instincts.

Set Up

- The defensive backs will form a line 5 yards in front of the coach, who will have a football in hand.

Execution

1. The DB will keep his eyes on the ball in the coach's hand.
2. The coach will lead the DB with the ball, with first movement signaling a snap and for the DB to get into a backpedal.
3. Next, the coach will point to the right, and a DB will plant and shuffle to his left.
4. Lastly, the coach will throw a pass at a 45 degree angle over the head of the DB – as soon as the coach begins his throwing motion, the DB will open their hips and break on the ball, intercepting the ball.



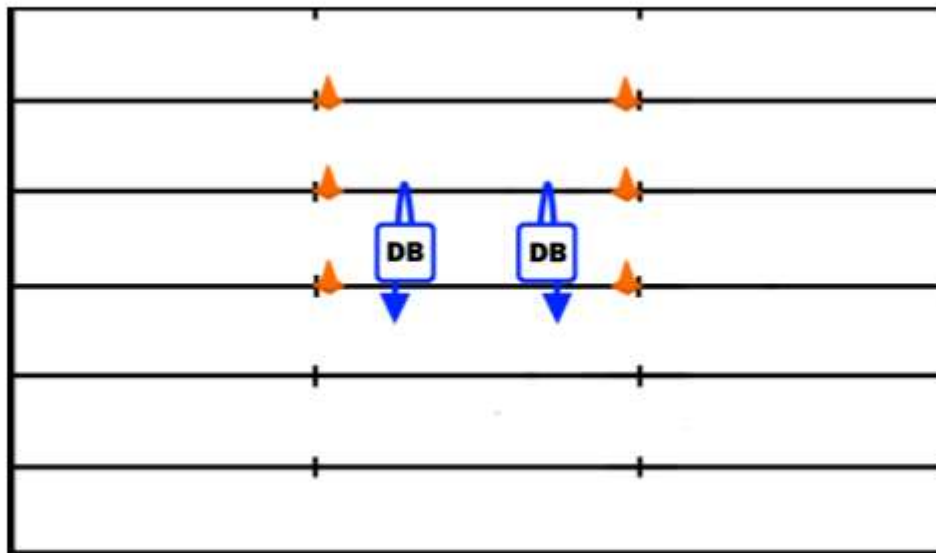
Plant Cone Reaction Drill

Purpose

To teach and reinforce the proper technique when backpedaling and changing direction.

Set Up

- Set out two pairs of cones about 10 yards apart, with 2 more pairs 5 and 10 yards behind the first.
- Players will form two lines, with the first two players stepping out to the first two cones.
- You'll also need a coach in front of the players with a ball.



Instructions

1. The coach will use the ball as a signal for the defensive players. On his first signal the defensive players will begin backpedaling.
2. Once they reach the second set of cones, the coach will signal for the defenders to break forward to the first cone again.
3. Once they reach the first cone, the coach will signal again for them to backpedal, leading them all the way to the cones at the back.
4. The coach will then signal one final time, sending the players forward and through.

Coaching Tips

- Players should not be looking behind – all their focus should be on the coach and the ball.

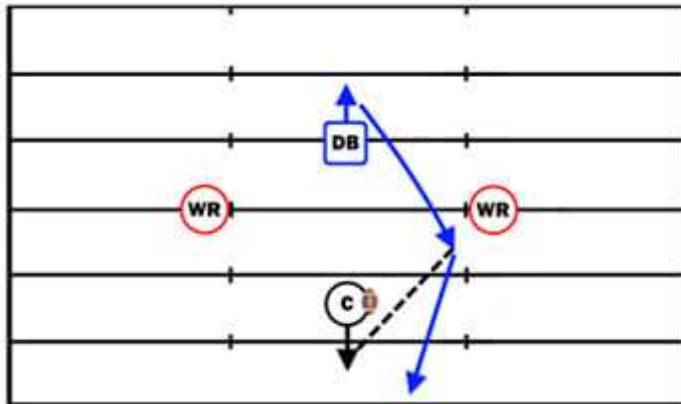
DB Zone Break

Purpose

To teach defensive backs how to read the quarterbacks eyes and drive on the ball when in zone coverage.

Set Up

- You'll need two WRs and a passer, as well as a line of DBs.
- The first DB in line will stand 15 yards in front of the QB, with the wide receiver 5-10 yards apart 10 yards downfield.



Execution

1. The QB will take his drop, and the DB will begin to backpedal.
2. When the QB plants, he will turn his shoulders and eyes toward one of the WRs.
3. The DB must read the QB plant, and drive on the ball as the QB releases the pass.
4. The DB must then intercept the ball and accelerate upfield.

Coaching Tips

- There are two keys to making an ideal break on the ball: the eyes and the feet.
- The DB should have his eyes on his QB on the backpedal, the WR on the break, and the ball as he accelerates.

DB Man Press Drill

Purpose

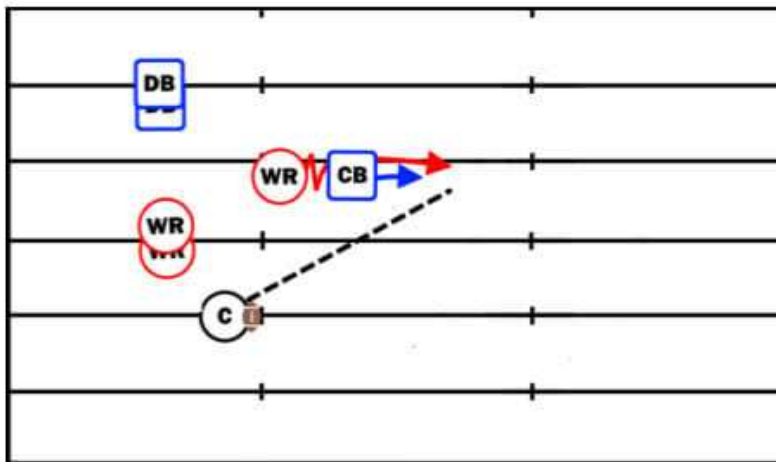
To give WRs and DBs a chance to get reps in a 1-on-1 game-like coverage situation.

Set Up

- Have players pair off by size and speed.
- The first pair will step up, with the DB up in press coverage on the WR.
- A coach or passer will stand 10 yards to the right.

Execution

1. On the coach's snap, the DB will attempt to jam the WR, and the WR will attempt to beat the press.



Coaching Tips

- Make sure to vary your WRs routes so that they get a chance to work on a variety of ways in which they can beat man press.
- The goal of the DB is to disrupt the timing of the route.
- Begin by working the DB with an inside shade, but much like how you need to vary the WR routes, the DBs need to get practice working outside shades as well.

DB Tip Drill

What you need – Your [tag]coach[/tag] to throw the ball and a single file line with the appropriate catching players.

How this drill works – The first person in the line will be the tipper and the next in line will be the catcher. The coach will toss the ball and it is the tippers job, not to knock down, but to tip or deflect or to distract the player catching the ball. The receiver tries to catch the ball regardless of what the tipper does.

Once you go through the first pair, then the receiver will go to the tip position, and the person behind him will be the catcher – and you continue the drill.

Defense Concepts

Flag Pulling

There is one skill that all flag football players need above all else when it comes to defense: flag pulling.

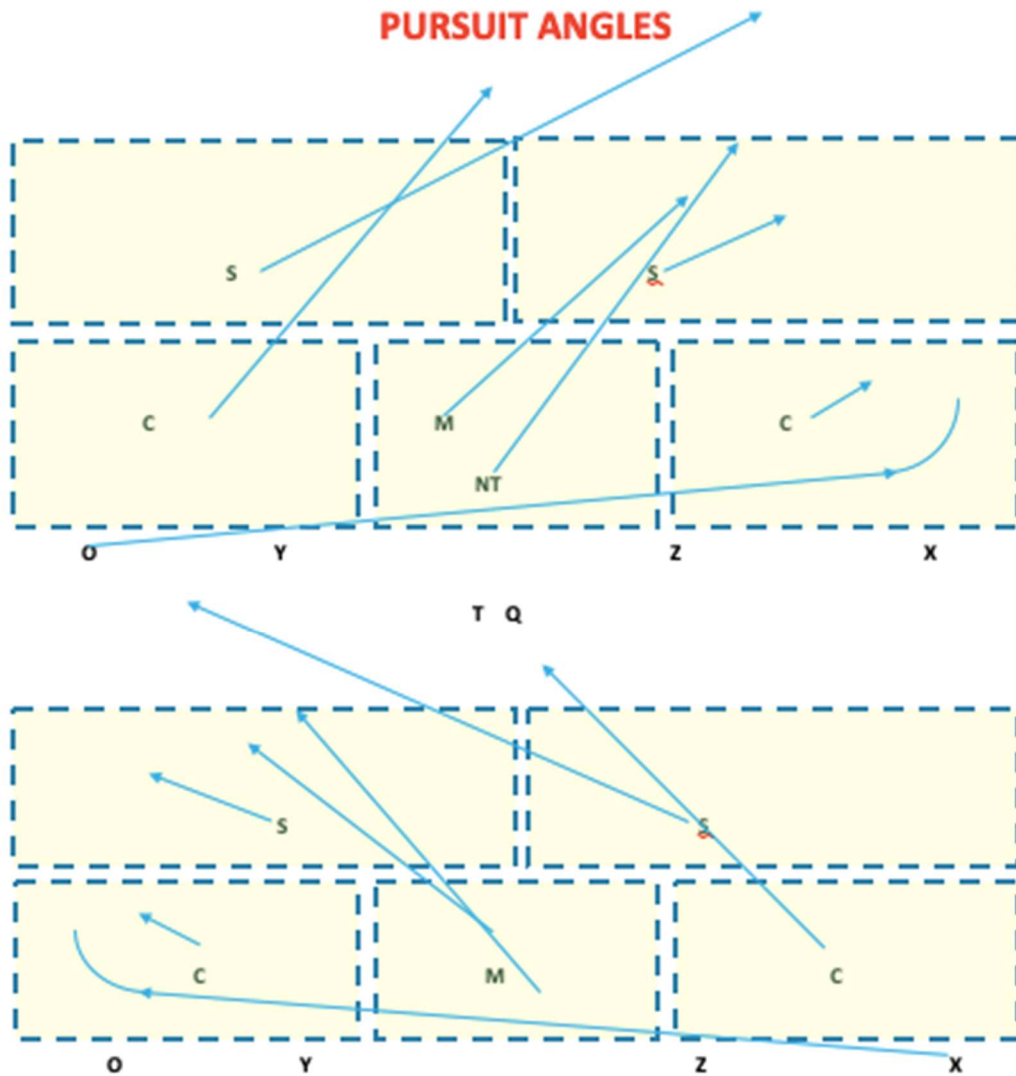
Flag pulling is perhaps the most important skill in flag football, and when coached correctly, it can be truly transformational to your team's flag football defense. Solid flag pulling can turn a poor defense into a solid competitor and turn a mediocre defense into a great defense. A team that is good at pulling flags will make it very difficult for the opposing offense to score, while teams with weak flag pulling will often see 5 yard runs turn in to 50 yard runs and 10 yard plays turn in to touch downs.

Individually each player can improve their flag pulling by learning and performing the proper techniques. Below are some guide lines for teaching players how to excel at flag pulling. Establishing these techniques early in the season, and practicing them often will pay huge dividends in your teams game time performance.

1. Stay on your feet. This is first in the list for several reasons. First off it's against the rules in many leagues for safety reasons. Secondly a player that dives and misses, has effectively removed themselves from the play. Instead you should coach the players to follow step #2
2. Run through the ball carrier. This may sound a little odd, and its important to emphasize what this ISN'T. This isn't a collision or tackle. There are 2 reasons to coach this method. First, teaching your players not to stop and take a swipe a flag as the runner goes by a full speed. Second using your body to slow the runners momentum.
3. Use both hands. As the player approaches the ball carrier he should spread his arms out slightly with hands in front of him. The player should always attempt to grab a flag with each hand, one on each hip.
5. Focus on the hip and swipe down. This is simple, but not something many kids come up with on their own, so they need to be coached in to it. Players should start at the top of the flag belt and move his or her hand straight down the length of the flag.

Pursuit Angles

Instead of conditioning, have the team practice pursuit angles. This is teaching the defense as to where to go if an offensive player breaks open.



Let's say X catches the ball on our tunnel route. Everyone has a responsibility as to where they need to go on the field to catch the opponent preventing a score. The last defender to catch the opponent is the opposite side corner who is in a dead sprint to the corner of the end zone.