

**SYFA YOUTH FLAG
FOOTBALL COACHING
MANUAL**



COACHES RESPONSIBILITIES

Supervision

All program staff/volunteers shall report to the Shakopee Youth Flag Football Association President in all matters pertaining to their position.

Volunteer Coaches and Program Staff

- Is prompt.
- Is neat personally and in his/her work.
- Is constantly alert to the person who needs attention and encouragement.
- Develops original ideas and puts them into practice.
- Can get along with his/her co-coaches and program staff.
- Would rather do a little too much than too little.
- Is conscious of the safety factor in all activities.
- Recognizes the need for good public relations.
- Recognizes that sportsmanship is more important than winning.

Discipline

The best way to avoid discipline problems is to keep everyone busy. If a child is displaying a disruptive attitude, the following successive levels of action may become necessary:

- Ask the child to stop.
- Ask the child to go to the side and sit out part of the practice or game until the attitude improves.
- If a child is continuously disruptive, you can address the issue with the parent(s).
- Notify the Flag Director if this becomes necessary.

Coaching Objectives and Goals

- The primary objective should be to provide an atmosphere in which the players will enjoy learning and want to participate.
- Teach the players the necessary skills for enjoyment of the game (beginning players learn most from doing, not watching, or listening.)

Goals

- Teach the rules of the game.
- Teach the fundamentals: Throwing/Passing, Catching/Receiving, Carrying Ball,
- QB/Center Exchange, QB/RB Exchange, and ready stance.
- Teach the basic strategy of the game.
- Note: Coach must be familiar with these areas themselves. Demonstrations at the beginning of practice should be short and to the point (actual playing develops beginning players faster than any other method).

- Instill honesty, sportsmanship, self-reliance, and teamwork in players.
- Set an example by always displaying these characteristics. The emphasis should not be on winning but on the job of playing and self-improvement.
- Encourage the players to develop the necessary skills and knowledge of the sport and to enjoy it to its fullest.
Make sure the kids have fun!

Coaching Suggestions

- Be aware of the stage of physical and mental development of each of the players.
- Plan practice sessions according to players' ages and abilities.
- Keep competition into perspective to the players' ages, their accomplishments and abilities.
- Do not talk down to players, but communicate as part of the team by knowing what their interests are.
- Be firm and supportive, never negative.
- Be open, friendly, and cheerful to parents, players, and opponents.
- Go out of your way to keep both players and parents informed. If you must make a call, make it. Parents are very receptive to their children's involvement.
- Most important, be organized. Know what you are going to do every day.
- Never be late or miss practice without communicating to assistant coaches or making other arrangements

Equipment

- Mouthguards
 - Mouth guards are required during all games and practices for all grade levels.
- Footwear
 - Each player is responsible for shoes. Metal spikes are not allowed. Molded spikes are recommended.
- Clothing
 - Game Jersey and flag belts are provided, and both should be worn outside any other clothing. Flag belts must be worn on the outside of all clothing and worn on the players' sides above the hips.
- Personal Equipment
 - If a player wishes to use any personal equipment in place of the SYFA provided equipment, it must first be approved by the board via the flag coordinator to ensure it has the approved safety certification.
 - Coaches are to ensure that their players are properly equipped for both practices and games. Players not properly equipped may not participate on the field.

- Football
-The official size used at all flag levels is “pee-wee”

Fields

- Designated Fields
 - All games, scrimmages, and practices shall be played only on fields designated for SYFA by Shakopee’s Park & Recreation department
- Field Conditions
 - The Board Flag Coordinator shall be responsible for determining the condition of game fields as suitable for play. Determination of an unplayable field can be made up to game time. Communication will be made as soon as possible
- Field Sizes
 - Field sizes may vary based on location and grade level. It is possible there will be times the teams will need to adapt a field to the appropriate size using cones.
 - All teams will play with 2 endzones

Playing Rules - General

The intention of flag football is to introduce and develop players’ football love of game and skillset without contact. **The no- contact rule will be strictly enforced.** This is a development / instructional league with a secondary emphasis on competition. The goal is to provide players with coordination skills and the understanding of the game before the contact element of football is introduced.

- Team Sizes
 - All Grades will be played as 7on7
 - Position structure should be 3 on the line at minimum
 - If a team cannot fill a team, coaches can agree upon 6on6 or any other mutually agreed upon rule set
- Game Length
 - Teams can arrive for a game 30 minutes prior for a light practice/warm up
 - Games are 60 minutes running clock, with even possessions each half
 - 10-minute halftime break – Halftime is at the half hour, no exceptions. First half is 25 minutes, 10 minute halftime, then 25 minute second half
 - First possession based on coin flip – No deferring to half
- Officials
 - Coaches are also officials, or if parents can step in, they can also fill this role so long as they understand their boundaries as an official.
 - Responsible to watch the clock, assessing penalties, and making sure huddle

times are reasonable

- **Penalties**
 - Simple 5-yard penalty from the line of scrimmage (LOS) (details below)
- **Possessions**
 - 4 downs to reach 10 yards from the original LOS (or score) resulting in fresh set of downs
 - Loss of yardage will result in a new LOS
 - (K-1st, if a team is backed up past 5 yds from midfield, if a team is at the “45” yard line already and loses yardage, ball gets placed back at the “45” yard line.)
 - No punting
 - At change of possession, new offense starts at their own 20 yard line
 - Full field games, no kickoff, teams start on their own 20-yard line
 - After a play, ball placement is determined by the coaches and should be based on where the ball was **when the flag was removed**. Ball placement is not determined by where the ballcarrier’s flag was dropped on the ground.
- **On Field Coaching**
 - While more than 1 coach can help the kids during the game, we encourage 1 coach be the play caller for offence or defense to avoid confusion for the kids
 - Try to have the offense play called and the players set within 60 seconds
- **Scoring**
 - Touchdown is worth 6 points
 - No extra point kicking
 - 2-point conversion attempt after TD from the 5-yard line
 - No safeties at this level, ball placed on 5-yard line if this happens

Playing Rules – Playing Time

- **Playing Time**
 - Players must evenly play ½ their PT on offense and ½ on defense
 - Player’s offense time should be split ½ on the line and ½ at skilled positions (QB, WR, RB)
 - Every player on a team gets even chances at QB over the course of the season

Playing Rules - Offense

- **Line Requirements**
 - Must have at least 3 players on the LOS (Center is required) teams can go “jumbo” on the line if they wish
- **Snap**
 - QB can take the snap however they are directed or comfortable with, recommend they take the snap directly under center vs shotgun
- **QB Sneaks**
 - No QB sneaks
 - QB should pass the ball or hand off/pitch to an RB or other teammate
 - If a sneak occurs, blow the play dead and reset the down, no loss of down/yardage
- **Eligible players**
 - All players are allowed to catch a pass.
 - If a panicked QB passes to the Center and he catches it, this is allowed.
- **Blocking**
 - blocks are allowed by placing hands on shoulders and remaining in place, meaning linemen can extend hands and arms.
 - Monitor pushing, shoving, stiff arming, or slapping, this is a penalty at the flag level.
- **Fumbles/Interceptions**
 - Catching interceptions will result in a turnover.
 - Fumbles will NOT result in a turnover. Fumbled ball will be placed where it is dropped. **A dropped pass will result in returning to the line of scrimmage**
 - Pump up and congratulate kids that cause the turnover, keep positive affirmation at the forefront of the game

Playing Rules - Defense

- **Defensive Rush**
 - Defense can cross the LOS after the defensive coach finishes counting “5 apples” OR the ball crosses the LOS via a pass or RB rush.
- 5 apple count does not stop when a handoff occurs
- **Defensive Line**
 - Defenders can line up at least 1 yard from the LOS

- **Line Backers/Defensive Backs**
 - Should stand at least 3 yards from the LOS
 - **Linebackers and DB's cannot rush the QB**
- **Grabbing Flags**
 - Players are to attempt to grab the flag ONLY. Players cannot hold an offensive player while trying to grab their flag. This will result in a defensive penalty.
 - When a flag is pulled, defender stands up with the flag in the air so the ball can be properly spotted for the next down
 - Players are allowed to jump and spin to avoid flag pull – absolutely no guarding of the flag or slapping hands away. This will result in a whistle and 5 yard penalty
- **NO Tackling**
 - Tackling in flag football is prohibited and can result in a player being benched upon multiple infractions in the same game.
 - Ongoing safety issues can result in a player missing games until they understand the rules for flag football

Player AND Coaching Conduct

Name calling, trash talking, profanity, and anything of the sorts is not allowed. Our flag program has no tolerance for this. Players failing to show sportsmanship and discipline with their peers can face benching, suspension, or can be dismissed from the league. No refunds will be given in these circumstances.

COACHES, MAKE SURE ALL KIDS ARE HAVING FUN!

YOUTH FLAG FOOTBALL SKILLS

The following is a list of skills that can be taught to Shakopee youth flag football players during the season. The coach determines the methodology or technique of teaching if it is within the guidelines of the youth program.

- **Passing/Throwing**
 - Stance- Feet shoulder width apart
 - Grip- hands over laces
 - Point non-throwing shoulder towards target
 - Pump- Throwing arm back behind body
 - Step with opposite foot towards target
 - Follow through by letting your throwing arm come across your body
 - End with throwing arm pointing at target
- **Catching/Receiving**
 - Make triangle with both hands, between index fingers and thumbs
 - Always keep eye on the ball
 - Keep arms away from body
 - Point of ball should go through triangle
 - Absorb ball into body
 - Tuck ball away into “carry position” (see below)
- **Carrying Ball**
 - Place point of ball into palm of dominant hand
 - Put finger on tip of football, bring ball to rest against forearm
 - Curve wrist, so side of ball is resting against it
 - Tuck ball above abdomen, but below pectorals
 - Keep elbow close to your body
- **QB/Center Exchange**
 - Center lines up over ball
 - Knees bent, head up and behind ball
 - QB lines up under center and calls hike
 - Center hands ball between legs, while rotating the ball 90*
 - Center only holds balls for QB to take.
 - Make sure laces are facing up
 - QB takes ball by placing the heels of his/her palms together and wrapping hands and fingers around center on ball.
 - One hand on top, one hand on bottom
 - QB drops back and raises the ball to mid chest still holding ball with two hands.
- **QB/RB Exchange**
 - Complete QB/Center Exchange
 - RB is lined up 5-7 yards behind the QB on either the left or right side
 - As QB calls hike, RB moves forward to take handoff

- QB takes step pivots in direction of hand off
- RB forms a “pocket”
 - Pocket is formed by holding one arm across chest with palm facing down, the other arm goes across abdomen with arm up
- QB places ball in pocket
- RB transfers ball to “carry position”
- **Proper Ready Stance**
 - Get into a two-point stance before each play
 - Players stand with feet shoulder width apart
 - Put palms on knees and hunch over so arms are slightly bent
 - Receivers can use a modified two-point stance
 - One leg further back than the other
 - Three- or four-point stances will not be used

Youth Flag Football
WEEKLY PRACTICE FORMAT

Warm-up (Mental and Physical) 5 minutes

- Do exercise to warm-up.
- Share leadership by having each child pick an exercise or take a week to lead.
- Warm-up attitudes by reminding everyone of a couple of house rules.
- Suggest positive thoughts during exercise like “jog one lap and think about the best thing that happened today”.

Skill Focus-3 skills at 10 min/skill (35 min)

- Introduce a new skill every practice.
- Reinforce skills previously covered.
- Use the field to have more than one thing going on at a time – to involve more children and allow for more personal attention.
- Ask children to set their own goals related to a skill or exercise and evaluate them.
- Ask the children what skills they need to work on based on the last game, thus developing self-evaluation and direction.

Play/Scrimmage- Last 20 minutes

- Play simplifications of the game/activity.
- Play for specific period, not score.
- Play focusing on one or two rules at a time.
- Play focusing on one or two skills at a time.
- Foster teamwork in playtime.
- Make play exciting and increase chance of “success” by structure of the game/activity.

SAMPLE PRACTICE PLAN 1

warmups (5 Min)

- Mini circles
- Touch toes
- Jumping jacks
- High knees
- Caboose kicks

Skill Focus

- Positions (5 minutes)
Who can name an offensive position? Defensive position?
What is special about the QB, RB, WR, and Center?

1. QB/Center Exchange (see pages below) (5 minutes)

- Quick demonstration by coaches
- Split team into pairs and practice exchange
- Switch positions periodically so they get to try both
- Focus on Center holding ball for QB and QB taking ball from Center
- Make sure QB says “hike”-focus on not handing off until then

2. QB/RB Exchange (see page) (5 minutes)

- Quick demonstration by coaches
- Split team into pairs and practice exchange
- Switch positions periodically
- Focus on QB placing ball into the “pocket”
- Focus on RB having arms in “pocket” position
 - Try handoffs to the right and the left

3. Putting it all Together (10 minutes)

- Now run through the full Center/QB exchange, QB/RB
- Split into groups of 3 and have kids take turns at each position
- Reinforce the skills just taught

Controlled Scrimmage (20 minutes)

- Focus on ready stance (see pages below)
- Focus on Line of scrimmage (No rushing)
- Focus on where each position lines up
- Run a few sample plays to the right and left
- Reinforce skills and roles
- Switch offense and defense halfway through and rotate positions every 2 plays

End with Games

Flag Pulling Game – Sharks vs. Minnows

- Set up a 20 x 20- yard area.
- Designate 2 “sharks” and the rest of the kids will be “minnows”
- The sharks are playing defense and the minnows offense.
- Sharks have to chase the minnows around the playing field, and they are trying to
- pull the minnow’s flags to get them out.
- The last two minnows then turn into the sharks for the next go around.
- Kids must stay within the boundaries, or they are out.
- Focus on proper flag pulling

SAMPLE PRACTICE PLAN 2

Warm-up (5 minutes)

Have your team jog or run around the field two times. Pick a player or two to help lead calisthenics. For example: jumping jacks, arm circles, high knees/butt kicks, arm and leg stretch.

Skill Focus (5 minutes)

- Recap the previous practice. Discuss and ask the kids questions about the skills learned. (QB/Center exchange and QB/RB exchange)

Carrying the Ball (10 minutes)

- Teach the proper carrying technique (see page below)
- Have kids practice it by setting up cones to zigzag through or sweep right or left
- Split into groups of 3 and have them practice all skills up to this point
- Have kids run routes focusing on carrying the ball properly
- Have stations to go through or change route every 2 reps each
- Add in defenseman to practice grabbing flags

Passing (5 minutes)

- Introduce the proper throwing technique (see pages below)
- Focus on grip, stance, step
- Quick coaches’ demonstration
- Partner up or form a line (depending upon ball availability)
 - Have kids throw to coach or each other

Catching (5 minutes)

- Introduce catching technique (see pages below)
- Quick coaches’ demonstration
- Focus on keeping your eyes on the ball and arms out
- Partner up or form a line to practice (depending upon ball availability)

Controlled Scrimmage (25 minutes)

- Split into offense and defense (example 8 kids=4 vs 4)
- Line up and discuss strategies for both sides of the ball (2 run plays and 1 pass)
- Incorporate the “ready stance” into scrimmage
- Incorporate the use of first downs
- Change possession after 4 attempts or a TD

Recap (5 minutes)

- Talk about what they learned in practice
- Maybe do a question and answer for what they learned

End with Games

Flag Pulling Game – Sharks vs. Minnows

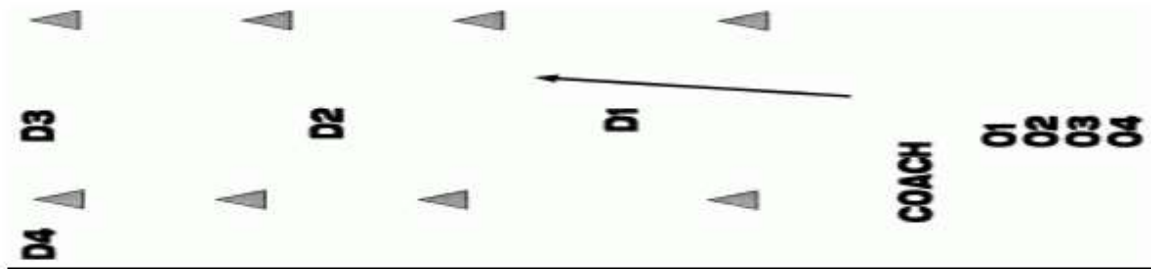
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Drills

Back pedal: From a good position, knees bent at a 45-degree angle, head up, back straight, arms hanging loose in front of the body, weight on the balls of the feet, push off the front foot and begin backpedaling for ten yards. Keep chest over the feet, feet close to the ground, and pump arms.

Distraction Drill: Create a 5 by 5-yard box with cones. One player is the defender and the other is the receiver. The defender can distract the receiver in any way they can. The receiver must stay square but try to move to insure the reception. Stay focused on the quarterback.

The Gauntlet: The coach hands off to the offensive player. The offensive player tries to make it through the gauntlet by running as much vertically as possible. Focus on running hard and not looking down or hesitating when flags are pulled on. Defenders should work on getting the proper angle on the runner and getting in front of them. O1 moves to D4 after running. D1 goes to O4, D4 moves into Gauntlet and other D players move up a position in Gauntlet

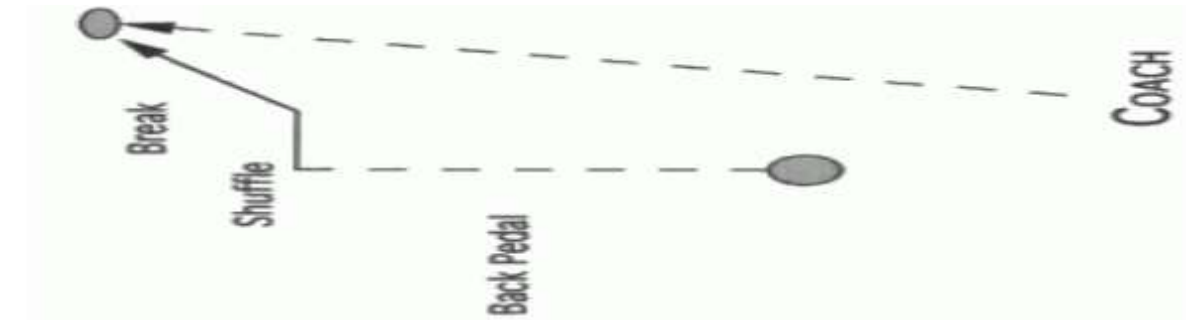


Jingle Jangle: Place cones to create a 15 x 15 square. Line up all your players and one cone. Players sprint to first cone, sidestep shuffle to the second cone (make sure players don't cross their feet), backpedal to the third cone and sprint back to the starting cone. Modify drill: Throw a football to each player as they cross the finish line.

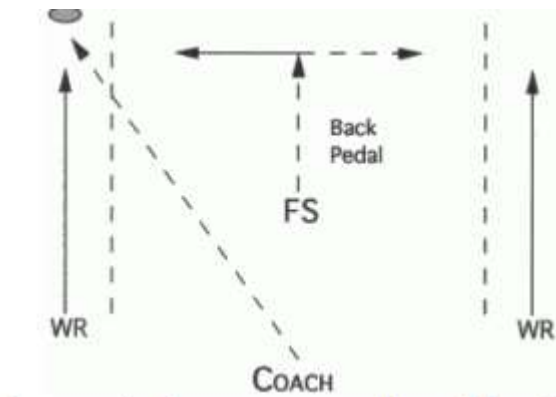
NFL Ultimate: Use as much of your field area as possible. If you have too many players, then divide your players in to three teams and rotate teams with the winning team staying on. The concept is simple. The team with the ball must pass the ball to teammates without dropping it while moving towards the end zone. The player with the football has 8 seconds to pass or pitch the ball to a teammate. The ball can be passed forward or pitched sideways or backwards only. The player with the ball can take only two steps after catching it. The offensive players without the ball can move anywhere on the field to get open. 6 Points are awarded for a touchdown and after the touchdown the ball to the defensive team or the team rotating in. The ball starts on the 5-yard line. If the ball is dropped or intercepted, play continues

with the team in possession at the point of the turnover. The defenders must stay at arm's length from the player with the ball.

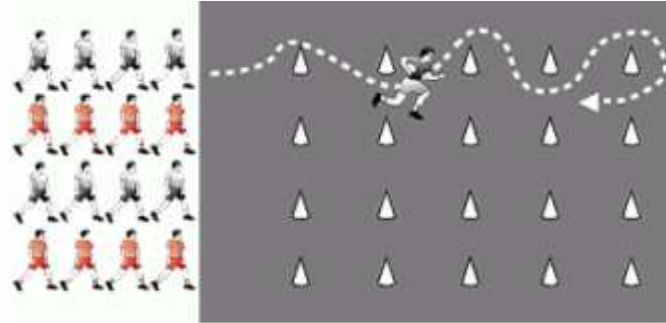
Pass Coverage 1 on 1: From the back pedal go into a shuffle for two to three steps to get the knees turned in order to be able to run with the receiver. Turn both feet at a 45-degree angle to the inside and go into a shuffle or slide step. Defensive back breaks on the ball on the release from the quarterback or coach.



Read and React: Form two lines for receivers and have them run a vertical route. The free safety back pedals and then breaks to the route being thrown to. Continue to widen receivers as the defensive back gains ball reaction and confidence

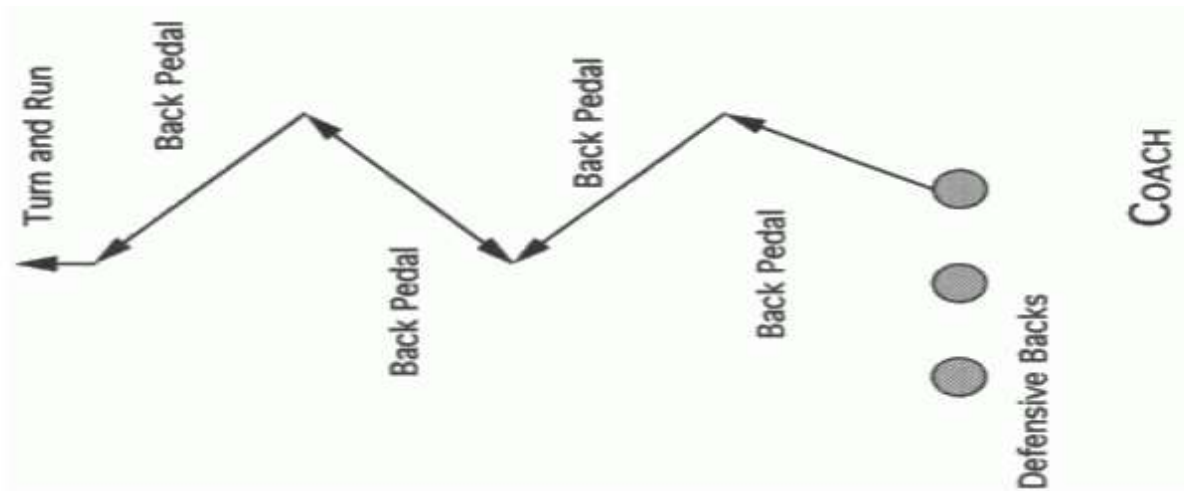


Running Back Cut (relay race): Set up cones a line of 6 to 8 cones 8 yards apart. Set up multiple lines of cones depending on the number of players you have. This is run as a relay race to keep it moving fast. The first player in each line will run around each cone and then come back around each cone to the beginning of his or her line. They will then hand off the ball to the next player in line and return to the back of the line. Key points - make sure running backs switch the football to the arm nearest the sideline. Players should cut on the outside foot and make sure they don't cross legs when changing direction. Progression - Have players backpedal through cones



Swarm: Set up your players in two or three rows (depending on how many players you have all facing in the direction of the coach. There should be 5 to 8 feet between each player. The coach holds a football, when he points the football left the players move left, points right they move right. Puts his arm back to pass they move back. When he yells swarm, they all swarm the coach, and everyone must touch him or her with one hand.

Weave: On the coaches' command with football in hand and ready to throw, will signal by pointing the ball in the direction that he wants the defender to plant and change directions. On command the coach will signal the defender to turn and run. Finish the drill by turning and running a hard ten yards. The defender must keep his eyes on the coach.



Technique Pictures

Ready Stance



Wide Receiver Ready Stance



Center Starting Position for snap



Performing the Snap



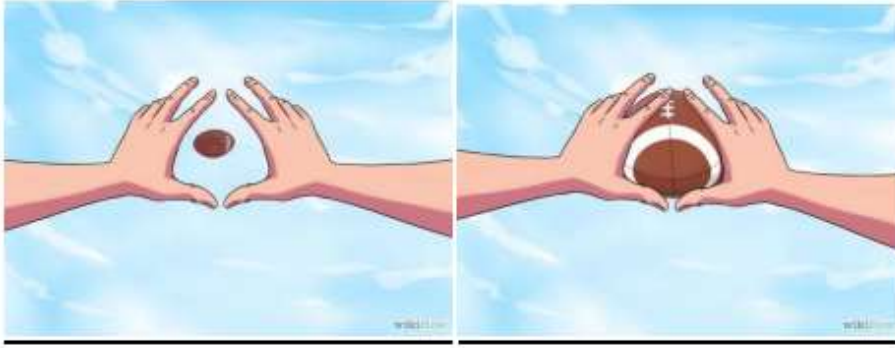
How QB Receives Snap



Proper Carrying Technique



Catching/Receiving



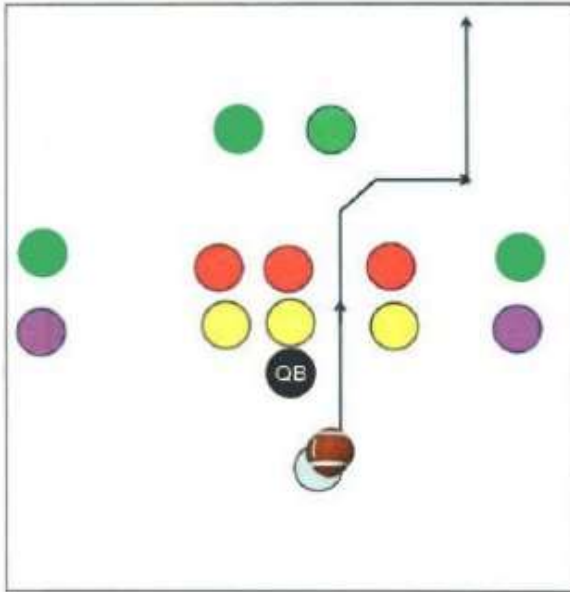
Passing



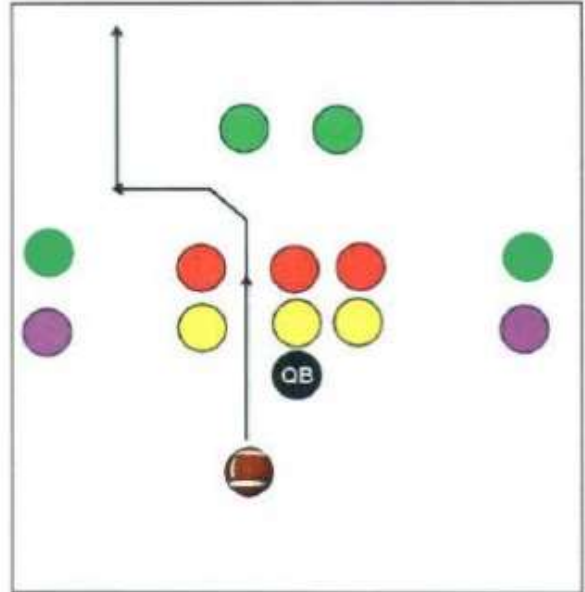
QB/RB Exchange



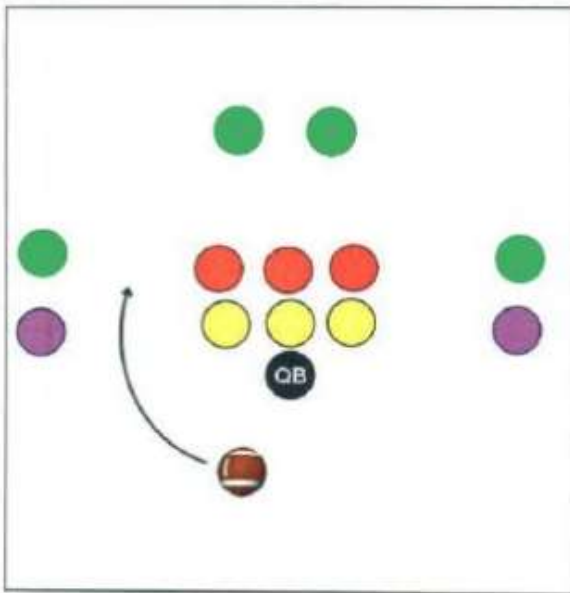
Sample Running Plays



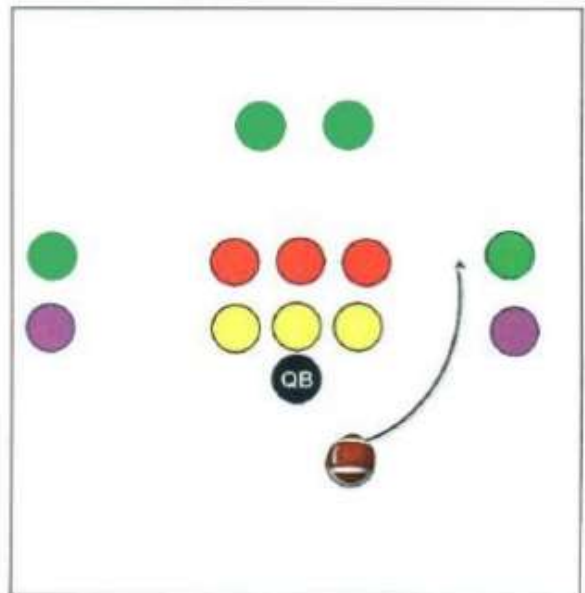
Dive Right



Dive Left

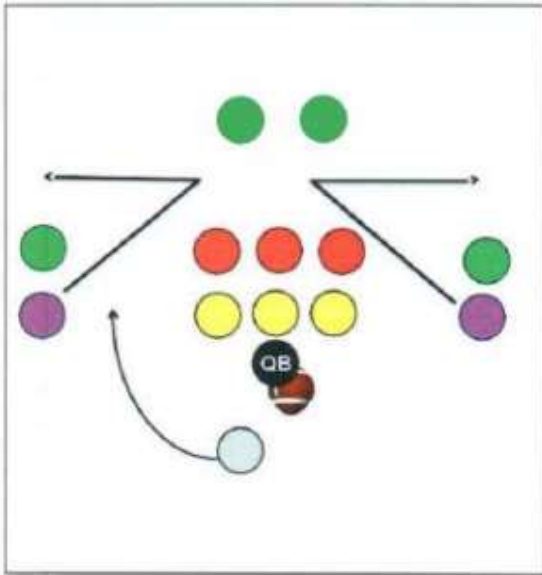


Sweep Left

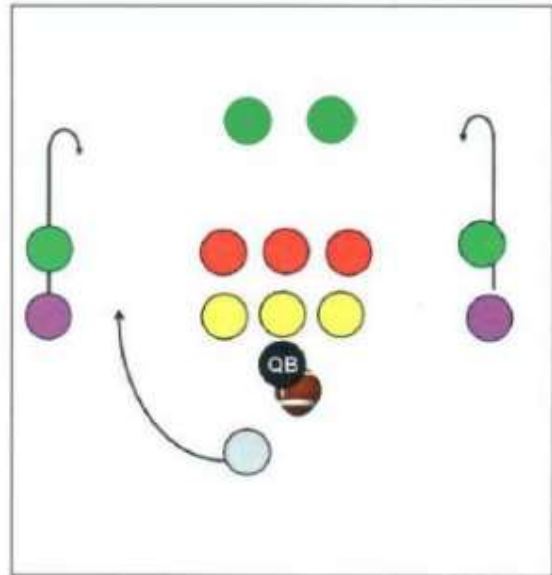


Sweep Right

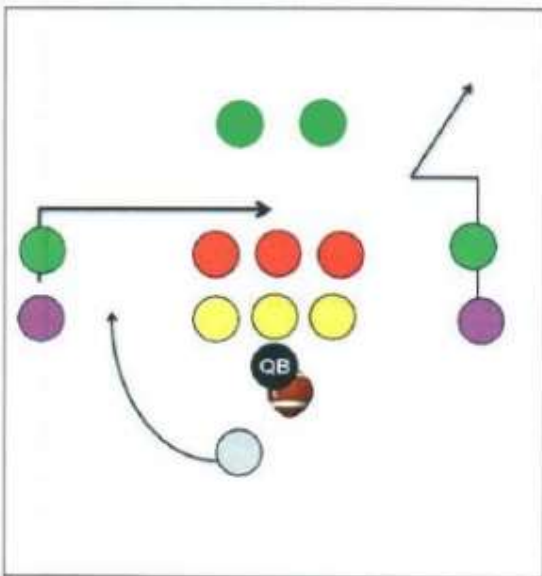
Sample Passing Plays



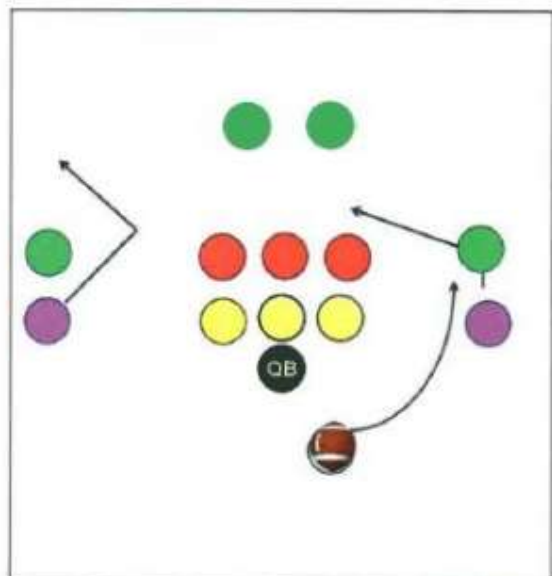
Outside Cut



Curls



Pass Right



Slants Left

