

The Point After II

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE WISCONSIN FOOTBALL COACHES ASSOCIATION, VOL. 32, No.3, SUMMER 2025



**2025 WFCA All-Star Games Benefiting Children's Wisconsin
Players and Coaches Raised More Than \$350,000**

**8-Player Game Final Score - North 53 – South 32
Small School Final Score - North 19 – South 12
D1-D3 Final Score - North 28 – South 6**



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Executive Director, Dan Brunner



Dan Brunner

Hopefully, this issue of *The Point After II* finds you all healthy. This is the time of the year that football coaches have been waiting for since the conclusion of last season! What an exciting time. The journey begins with a new team. I wish all of you a memorable experience with your players on and off the field.

WFCa MEMBERSHIP

The WFCa membership includes clinic registration! I am confident that no state has a better deal for their members. We are striving for 100% of the football coaches in the state to become WFCa members. We need all of you to help us achieve that goal. The WFCa membership program allows you to combine high school and youth programs for your staff rate.

The Membership Dues are as follows:

Small Staff (Maximum of 9 members)
\$405 (\$45/member)

Additional members (10-13) - \$55 each

Large Staff (Maximum of 14 members)
\$630 (\$45/member)

Additional members - \$55 each

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Note: Admission to the Annual Clinic is included in all levels of Membership Fees.

You may combine Youth staffs and High School staffs for all 3 staff rates!

In State Individual - \$55

Out-of-State Individual - \$60

*Note** WFCa membership is required for all Award Programs (All-State, All-Star, COY, etc...). Please see list of membership benefits on page 4 of this issue.

WFCa CLINIC

Please remember to set aside April 16, 17, & 18, 2026 for our Annual Gathering in Madison! We had one of the largest number of clinic attendees ever this past April. Save the Dates! I am excited to announce that we are bringing back the FIS (Fundamental Instruction Sessions). These sessions are perfect for all coaches, but are most valuable for Youth and Inexperienced coaches. They will teach the basic fundamentals for all positions on Offense and Defense, as well as Punters, Kickers & Long Snappers. Hall of Fame Coach, Stan Zweifel is lining up a great group of coaches from the high school and college ranks to present. **GET YOUR YOUTH COACHES** signed up for WFCa membership. The clinic is in-

cluded in that membership. They don't want to miss those sessions!

WFCa MENTOR MANUAL

WFCa HOF member and Past President, Bill Collar, along with a select group of current and past WFCa coaches have revised and updated the WFCa Mentoring Manual. It is the finest of its kind anywhere. It is a valuable resource for coaches at all levels. It's a must for Coaches, New and Old. Sales of copies have 100% of the proceeds going toward the Bill Collar Lineman Scholarship Fund. They are \$10. Email me or order from the website.

NHSACA HOF & COTY

A special congratulations to Greg Lehman and Chuck Raykovich, who were inducted into the National High School Athletic Coaches Association Hall of Fame this past June. Congrats Coaches, on a well-deserved honor! I am pleased to announce that Pat Rice was selected as the NHSACA COTY at the convention this past June. The award is based on the entire body of a coach's career. Pat joins Jerry Sinz, John Hoch and Bill Young as coaches who were past recipients. Congratulations, Pat, on a well deserved honor!

CONCLUSION

As I mentioned in my opening paragraph. Enjoy the journey with your team this year. Also remember the responsibilities that come with the title of "COACH". Speaking from experience, the satisfaction of running into former players and having them still address you as "COACH", is priceless. Earn that title.

THANK YOU TO OUR WFCa CORPORATE SPONSORS WHO SO GENEROUSLY SUPPORT FOOTBALL IN WISCONSIN.



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President, Jason Gorst, Spencer/Columbus



Jason Gorst

It is a great honor to write this, my first article as president of the Wisconsin Football Coaches Association. As I step into this role, I do so with deep gratitude—for the coaches who have paved the way, the players who inspire us daily, and the incredible leaders within the WFCAs who continue to push our sport forward.

This fall marks my 15th season as the head coach of the Spencer/Columbus Rockets. Along the way, I've had the privilege of serving the WFCAs in several capacities—first as a conference representative, then as a regional rep, northern vice president, and for the last two years, as president-elect. These roles have given me a front-row seat to the

dedication and passion that define this organization. I have coached twice in the WFCAs All-Star game and have also served as a liaison in River Falls for the week a couple of times. I have spent my entire educational career working for the School District of Spencer. I started out as a social studies teacher for ten years, then a MS/HS principal for eight years, and I am now entering my second year as a superintendent.

I want to take a moment to sincerely thank Brian Kaminski for his outstanding service as our most recent president. Brian's steady leadership and tireless work were instrumental in getting long-discussed playoff changes across the finish line. His legacy is one of progress, and I'm excited to carry the torch forward and ensure that we see that process through to completion in the coming years. One of my major goals is to continue to foster a positive working relationship with the WIAA. I also want to commend Jesse Norris and Andy LaVoy for their work on the new playoff formula. The change simply would not have happened without them.

As we look ahead, I believe we are in a strong position to build on the foundation that has been laid. The WFCAs is more than a coaches' association—it is a community, a network of professionals who care deeply about the growth of football, the development of student-athletes, and the betterment of the coaching profession. I am committed to fostering that

community, supporting our membership, and advocating for the needs of coaches at every level. Through my time in the WFCAs it has been a pleasure to work with Dan Brunner, Doug Sarver, Tom Swittel, Charma Kelsey, Tony Biolo, Travis Wilson, Brian Kaminski, Tom Yashinsky, Paul Ackley, Dave Lew, Don Kendzior, John Hoch, and many more. I have learned so much from these individuals, and I look forward to more years of continued partnership.

Last year was a perfect example of how using grassroots efforts throughout our organization led to major changes. I am very excited for the new playoff format. There will likely be tweaks that need to be made along the way. I encourage patience and great communication within our organization to help effectively monitor and improve the formula if needed, as time moves on. I also believe the recent changes to summer coaching contact will be a pivotal part of the success of football in our state. If done right, we can elevate our game and our players through common-sense approaches. If done wrong, we could very well drive student-athletes away from our sport. I hope our association can provide leadership on this topic to keep us on the right track. The future of Wisconsin high school football is bright. I look forward to working with all of you to continue elevating our game and honoring the values that make this sport so impactful. Let's have a great season!

JOIN THE WFCAs TODAY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THESE BENEFITS:

- \$2,000,000.00 LIABILITY INSURANCE POLICY (details on page 54)
- Eligibility to participate in the WFCAs Grant Program
- Complimentary admission to the Spring Football Clinic
- Three issues of The Point After II newsletter
- All-Star games, nomination rights and free attendance
- All-State nomination rights
- Scholarship nomination rights
- Hall of Fame nomination rights
- All-State Championship rings
- Annual awards and recognition including Regional and State Coaches of the Year.
- WFCAs membership enhances professional growth and gives you the opportunity to contribute to the improvement of your profession
- A professional network of new contacts, a line of communication and a forum for the exchange of ideas and information within your profession.
- www.wifca.org, our professional website with the latest information about football in Wisconsin which provides unlimited resources to meet the needs of member coaches.
- 2 Badger tickets to home football games



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Editor, Director of Communications and Corporate Sponsors, & Head Football Coach, Wauwatosa East, Tom Swittel



Tom Swittel

Practice has started. I am writing this the day before most schools will be conducting their Scrimmage. I hope all of you have a great first two weeks of practice and are still a healthy football team. All of your team goals are still in place. I wish all of you the best of luck this year.

The 2025 WFCA Grant was made available shortly after the Spring Clinic ended. This is the fifth year of the WFCA Grant and we had 39 schools apply for it. As a reminder, the purpose of the WFCA Grant is to supplement high school football budgets beyond what a typical budget covers. So, basic equipment needs such as helmets, shoulder pads, uniforms, coach's salaries, etc., are not a part of the Grant. These items are covered, or should be covered, by a typical football budget. The emphasis of the WFCA Grant is player safety and injury prevention. Grant requests that fall into this category carry the most weight when Grant requests are reviewed. Grants up to \$3,000 are rewarded, but smaller Grants are considered, also. Up to \$50,000 is set aside yearly by the WFCA for this purpose.

As mentioned, 39 schools applied for the 2025 WFCA Grant. Of those schools, 19 were chosen for the Grant. A total of \$48,645 was awarded. Some of the items bought with the Grant include Guardians, tackle mats, tackle wheels, and crash pads.

Schools from across the state and from all divisions were included in this year's Grant winners. Schools awarded 2025 WFCA Grant are listed on page 12, along with some historical statistics about the WFCA Grant Program. 131 schools have been awarded the WFCA

Grant in the five years it has been available. A total of \$312,442 has been awarded. Around 33% of the schools in the state of Wisconsin that play football have received a WFCA Grant. There is no question this is one of the most worthwhile programs the WFCA offers. This program is unique. We are not aware of any other State Association that does something like this. I'd like to extend a huge thanks to the WFCA Grant Committee for working with me to make this happen. Grant Committee members are Matt Binsfeld, Steve Lyga, Don Kendzior, and Jim Hagen.

The WFCA Podcast just finished Season 3 with 17 episodes. The WFCA Podcast is hosted by Paul Nievinski, Tom Yashinsky, and myself. We do our best to discuss topics important to football in the state of Wisconsin and entertain. When we examine a topic, we get the "experts" in that area on to explain and exchange views on whatever is being discussed.

You can access all of the WFCA Podcasts by going to the WFCA website. If you haven't listened to a WFCA Podcast yet, please go to the library of Podcasts and check out some of the topics covered, not just this year, but in season 1 and 2, also. I'm confident you will find topics that will interest you.

On a personal note. Many of you are aware Hart Park in Wauwatosa was destroyed by the recent flooding in Southeast Wisconsin. My

team, Wauwatosa East, is housed at Hart Park. We both practice and play our games at Hart Park. All of our equipment is housed there. We lost a lot of things in the flooding. Needless to say, this has been an extremely difficult week for everyone connected to Wauwatosa East Football. We have to find a new home for our football operations. I know that we are not the only people affected by the flooding. My heart goes out to all who's homes and businesses were damaged by the flooding. I promise you we will get through this. We still plan on having a successful season. There will be no excuses.

My purpose, though, of bringing this up is to thank all of the coaches from around the state who reached out to me with well wishes. I was overwhelmed and humbled by the number of coaches volunteering to give me helmets, shoulder pads, a place to practice, a place to hold the scrimmage we were to host, etc. This just proved to me something I already knew. Football coaches are a great community of people. The camaraderie among football coaches is second to none. A huge thank you to all from the bottom of my heart.

Again, the best of luck this season. Thank you for your continued support of the WFCA. Feel free to contact me at: swittelt@gmail.com or (414) 315-1131 with any thoughts or comments you may have.



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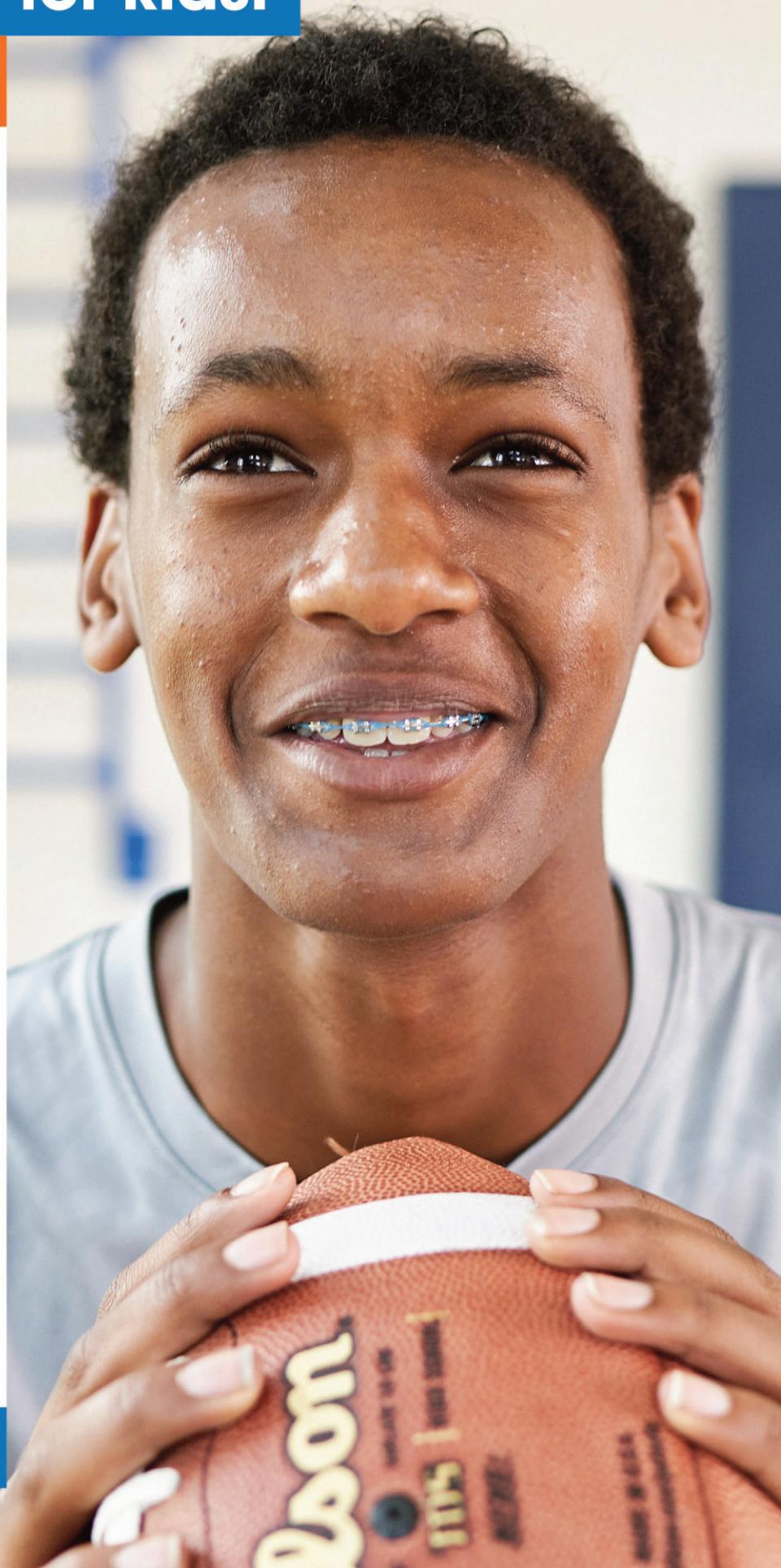
As always, we are grateful for all the generous families, champions and donors who believe, like we do, that kids deserve the best.

Thank you to the Wisconsin Football Coaches Association for your partnership and for helping us help kids.



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Hall of Fame Chairman, John Hoch



John Hoch

We have just completed the Annual Summer All Star Game. This was another successful year for helping the Children's Hospital of Wisconsin - our total donations to the Children's Hospital has reached 5.7 million dollars since 2007. Doug Sarver did another fantastic job coordinating this event. I also want to thank Jerry Golembiewski for his endless work for securing items to raffle to help raise money for the WFCA and Children's Hospital.

The All-Star Game also signals the end of summer and football is just around the corner. I hope everyone was able to get some time to enjoy their summer with family and friends. The WFCA Clinic was very well attended and our WFCA HOF Banquet was outstanding. I would

like to thank all those involved in preparing for this event – especially Charna. Next year our HOF Luncheon will be on Friday, April 15th. Put it on your calendar so you can attend this event.

We want to continue our efforts to raise money for scholarships. Every year we are amazed at the great individual student athletes that apply for our scholarships. With your donations and the fund raising efforts by Jerry and his group, we can continue to provide these student athletes with significant financial support. Donating is a great way for coaches to give back to this great game of football. On page 10, there is a list of donations received so far this year. We want to make sure everyone is listed, so if we missed you please let us know and we will get it corrected. This serves as a friendly reminder to help with the scholarship fund for 2025. For all of you who have already contributed – WE THANK YOU!

The 2026 class selected for the induction to the Wisconsin Football Coaches Hall of Fame is another great group of coaches. If you have time please drop them an email or note congratulating them and the 2026 Award Winners.

We try to keep the close Hall of Fame fraternity advised when a member passes away by email. We have also created the Memoriam to let all member-coaches know. The kindness of a card can be very comforting to the family of those who have passed. These men have dedicated their career to the great sport of football. Please keep their families in your prayers.

In Memoriam

JERRY BONINO

June 22, 1939 - July 16, 2025

Jerry "Buns" Bonino, age 86, longtime resident of Two Rivers, passed away peacefully Wednesday morning, July 16, 2025 at Frontida Care Center, Manitowoc.

Jerry was born June 22, 1939 in Verona, Wisconsin to Sam and Lola (Mulcahy) Bonino. He was a 1957 graduate of Verona High School, then furthered his education at the University of Wisconsin - Madison, earning his bachelor's degree in Physical Education in 1962. He then went on to study at Winona State University in Minnesota to earn his master's degree in 1966. Upon graduating he began teaching and coaching football, baseball, and basketball at Iola-Scandinavia and also served as their athletic director. His second position was with Appleton-Xavier High School where he coached football and basketball, and his third position was with Two Rivers High School where he remained for the next 27 years. There he served as Phy Ed teacher and head varsity basketball coach for 12 years, freshman football for

8 years, J.V. for one year, and head varsity football coach for 18 years. Coach Bonino's Raiders became Wisconsin's first team to capture three consecutive state titles, winning the WIAA Division III championships in 1980, 1981, and 1982. He also led the Raiders to eight Eastern Wisconsin Conference titles in sixteen years with a career record of 127-58. Jerry retired from teaching and coaching in 1995.

He was named Lakeshore Area Football Coach of the Year in 1981 and 82; and North-eastern Wisconsin Football Coach of the year in 1981. He also received the WFCA 25-30 award; he was enshrined into the Lakeshore All-Sports Hall of Fame in 1989, and in 1998 was inducted into the Wisconsin Football Coaches Association Hall of Fame. Coach Bonino also officiated football, baseball and basketball for many years; and was assistant coach of the victorious North team in the 1996 Shrine Bowl. In his spare time, Jerry enjoyed playing softball, golfing, and gardening. He married the former Bonnie Andraska, February 13, 1982 in Two Rivers. The couple enjoyed traveling together and wintering in Florida for



WFCA HALL OF FAME CLASS OF 2026

Bob Hyland, *St. Mary's Springs Academy*

Dan Miller, *Racine St. Catherine's,
Racine Park HSs*

Guy Kopp, *Cuba City,
Prairie du Chien HSs*

Toby Golembiewski, *Monroe HS,
UW-Platteville (Deceased)*

Scott Kramer, *Verona, Whitefish Bay,
Grafton HSs*

Calvin Matthew, Jr., *Milwaukee King,
Milwaukee Washington,
South Milwaukee*

Pat Miles, *(Official)*

Frank Tierney, *UW-La Crosse*

Robin Rosemeyer, *Gilman, Cornell,
Chippewa Falls HSs*

Jim Hagen, *Colby HS*

Mark Murphy, *Green Bay Packers*

Lee Purdy, *Ashwaubenon, Mukwonago,
UW-Superior, UW-River Falls,
UW-Whitewater*

NHSACA

Ken Krause, *Muskego HS*

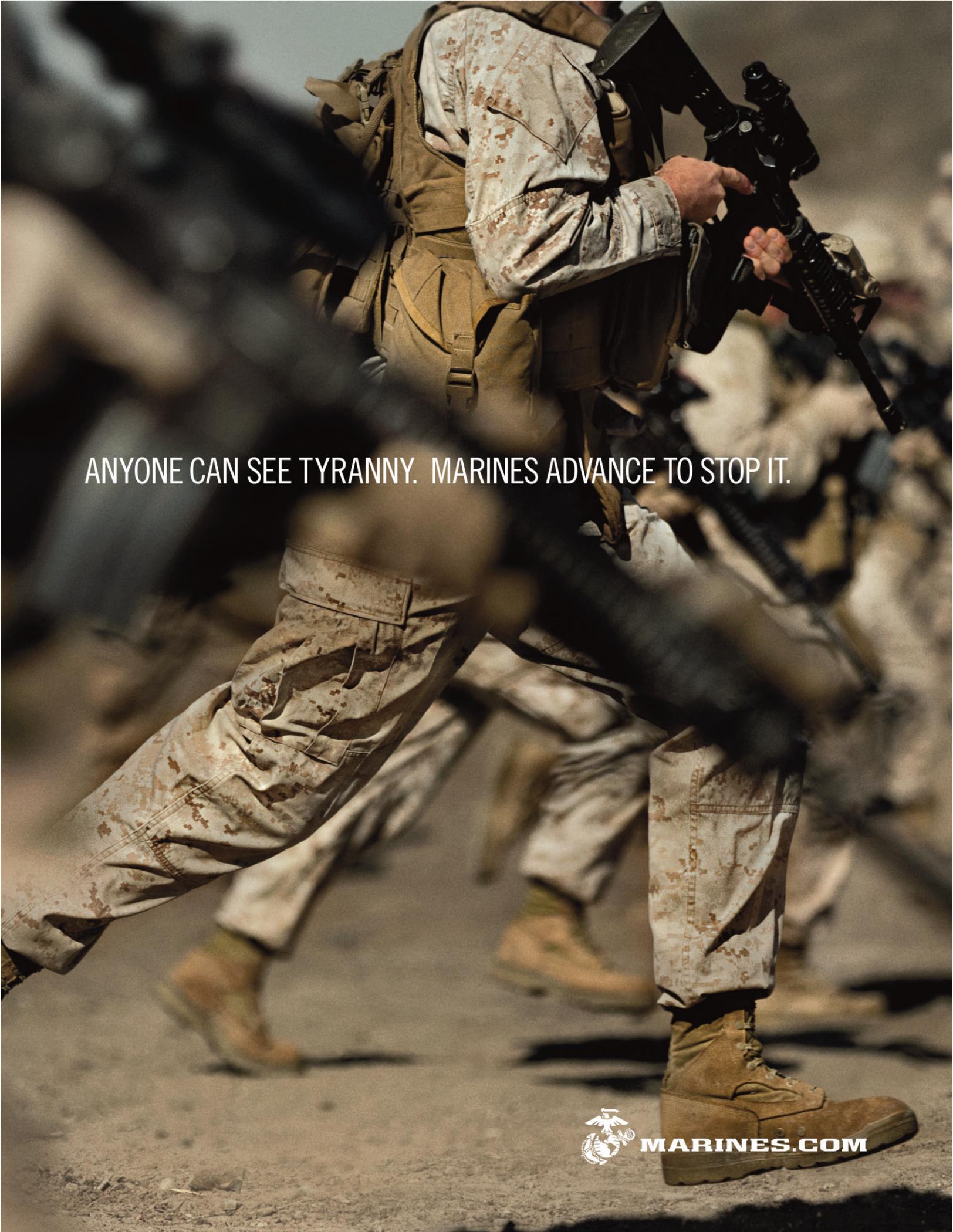
Bob Hyland, *St. Mary's Springs Academy*

DAVE MCCLAIN DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Don Kendzior, *Retired Luck HS
WFCA 8-Player League Coordinator*

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Greg Roman, *Milwaukee Reagan HS*



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many years. Jerry always enjoyed humor, and loved to make people laugh.

He is survived by his wife, Bonnie; three daughters: Sandy Lewis, Vicki Bonino, and Terri (Bob) Boerger; his four grandchildren: Carter Lewis (Caroline), Jenna Lewis (Dan), Nick Strzyzewski, and Noah Strzyzewski

PHILL DOBBS

September 11, 1944 - May 11, 2025

Phil met Beth Bowles (Centerville, SD.) at General Beadle. They were married in Madison, SD, and eventually blessed with two children, Gwyn and Tony. Phil began his teaching and coaching career at Chester High School, SD. In 1968, Phil, Beth, and Gwyn moved to Fort Dodge, Iowa where Phil continued teaching English and was assistant football, and track and field coach.

In 1971, the family moved to Racine, WI after accepting a teaching and assistant coach position at Racine Park. In 1973 he became Head Coach of Panther Football. From 1979 1995 Park Football had great success.

There were six conference championships and numerous other achievements, culminating in the 1988 Division 1 State of Wisconsin Football Championship.

Football was family affair with Tony playing on the team, Beth the statistician, and Gwyn the

super-fan. In total, Phil had 21 winning seasons, and a career coaching record of 159-77-1. Off the field, Phil served on the board of directors of the Wisconsin Football Coaches Association (WFCA), and was inducted into the WFCA and Dakota State University Hall of Fame.

After a 35-year career, Phil and Beth retired to Kings Ridge in Clermont, Florida. They enjoyed golfing, socializing, and the Florida sun. As an avid sports fan, Phil followed the Minnesota Vikings, Wisconsin Badgers, Milwaukee Brewers, and the University of Central Florida Knights.

Phil is lovingly remembered by his wife of 61 years, Beth; Children: Gwyn Beighton (Bob) Delavan, WI; Tony Dobbs (Stacy) Chandler, AZ; Grandchildren: Dylan Beighton (18), Ellie Dobbs (14); along with many other family members and friends.

JOHN WAINWRIGHT

JUNE 7, 1943 - May 10, 2025

John William Wainwright, age 81, passed away peacefully on May 10, 2025. He was born June 7, 1943, in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, son of Robert and AnnaLucy (Hoffman) Wainwright.

He graduated from Prairie du Chien High School in 1961 as a multiple letter winner in

football, baseball and track. He received his Bachelor of Science degree from UW-Platteville and his master's degree from UW-Superior.

Coach "JDub", as he was called by his athletes, began his 36 year coaching career at La Farge High School, then Black Hawk High School and concluded following 26 years at Northland Pines High School. His football record includes 172 wins, four conference titles, 3 undefeated seasons and 3 playoff appearances, including a state runner up trophy.

During John's coaching career, he was honored as Conference Coach of the Year six times and as District Coach of the Year three times in football and track and honored to be inducted into the Wisconsin Football Coaches Hall of Fame in 2002, joining his grandfather in the Hall. He was inducted into the Eagle River/Northland Pines Athletic Hall of Fame in 2007. He retired from teaching in 2000 and from coaching in 2002.

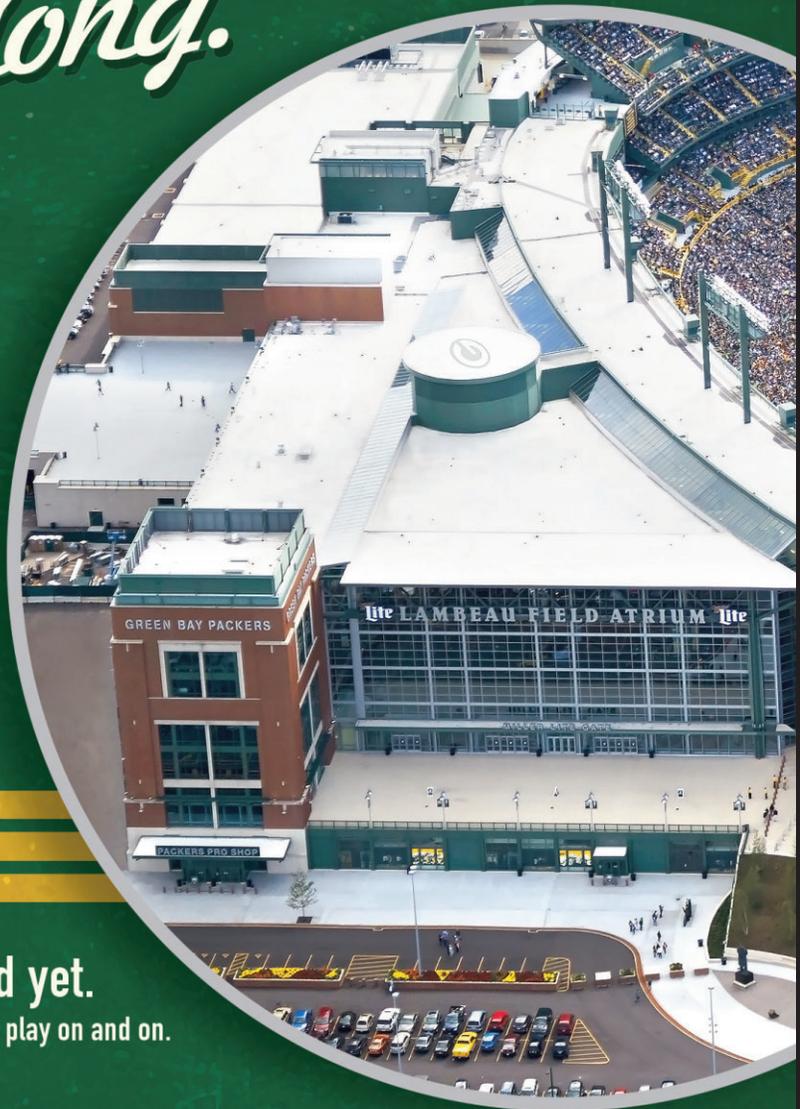
John is survived by his wife of 58 years, Judith; children Kristina Tomlanovich, Curt (Cheri) Wainwright and Tony Wainwright; seven grandchildren Kevin, Shelby, Steven, Jonathan, Dylan, Matthew and Grace and great granddaughter Lydia and many other nieces, nephews and friends.

2025 CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WFCA HALL OF FAME SCHOLARSHIP FUND.

Lee Ackley	\$100.00	Brent Engleright	\$100.00	Terry Laube	\$100.00	Dave Richardson	\$100.00
Pete Baganz	\$100.00	Scott Erickson	\$100.00	Len Leudtke	\$100.00	Dave Rusch	\$100.00
Mike Bartholomew	\$100.00	John Galewski	\$100.00	Bob Lieberman	\$100.00	Don Scharbarth	\$100.00
Mike Bartholomew	\$100.00	Harlan Gruber	\$100.00	Steve Lyga	\$100.00	Al Schlies	\$100.00
<i>In Memory of Bill Bartholomew</i>		Jerry Hannack	\$100.00	Clayton Lynde	\$100.00	Richard Sheahan	\$200.00
Bob Berezowitz	\$100.00	John Heineke	\$100.00	Jim Meckstroth	\$100.00	Dan Simon	\$100.00
Dan Brunner	\$300.00	Keith Hensler	\$100.00	Mick Miyamoto	\$100.00	Tim Simon	\$100.00
Frank Budzisz	\$100.00	Bill Hoagland	\$100.00	Danny Mock	\$100.00	Jerry Sinz	\$100.00
Thomas Chase	\$100.00	Mark Hoffman	\$1,000.00	Dennis Moon	\$100.00	Fred Spaeth	\$100.00
Rick Coles	\$100.00	<i>In Memory of John Richmond & Gregg Dufek</i>		Rick Muellenberg	\$100.00	Dan St. Arnauld	\$100.00
Pat Connors	\$100.00	Duane Jenson	\$100.00	Brad Nemec	\$100.00	Jim Strommen	\$100.00
Kip Cramer	\$100.00	Wayne Jentz	\$100.00	Paul Nevinski	\$100.00	Tom Swittel	\$100.00
John Curtis	\$100.00	Richard Jones	\$100.00	Tom Noennig	\$100.00	Dario Talerico	\$100.00
Ed De George	\$100.00	Dick Jones	\$100.00	Keith O'Donnell	\$100.00	Mark Traun	\$100.00
Tony DiSalvo	\$100.00	Dan Juedes	\$100.00	Bill O'Leary	\$100.00	Bill Turnquis	\$100.00
Robert Domenosky	\$100.00	James Kemerling	\$100.00	Jim Peterson	\$100.00	Patrick Wagner	\$100.00
John Doyle	\$100.00	Pete Kittel	\$100.00	Bob Prahl	\$100.00	Mike Williquette	\$100.00
Tim Eastlick	\$100.00	Steve Klister	\$100.00	Dave Puls	\$100.00	Gary Zauner	\$100.00
Bill Ehnerd	\$100.00	Carlos Kreibich	\$100.00	Pat Rice	\$100.00	Jay Zimmerman	\$100.00
				<i>In Memory of Bill Rice</i>			

These gifts have been received since January 1, 2025. Contributions are being accepted now through December 31 for 2025. You can make a donation online at <https://wfca.sportngin.com/register/form/297074764> or by sending a check to the office: PO Box 8, Poynette, WI 53955. Questions can be directed to Charna at office@wifca.org or 608.635.7318.

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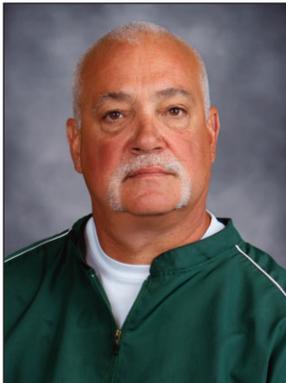
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8-Player League Chairman, Don Kendzior



Don Kendzior

This is a very exciting time for 8-player football. With the expansion to 32 teams qualifying for the playoffs it gives teams a sigh of relief going into the season knowing if they have a winning record their team will play in the playoffs.

I hope everyone had little difficulties moving up their schedule to accommodate for the playoff expansion. This is the point values and which teams are eligible for the 2025 postseason.

There will be some adjustments on All-State voting and All-Star districts with the addition of more 8-player teams.

Good luck this season!

Point Value	TeamName	Enroll3YearAvg
3.3	Menominee Nation	361
3.3	Chequamegon/Butternut/Mercer	304
3.3	Green Bay N.E.W. Lutheran/Oneida Nation/Providence Academy (Green Bay)	304
3.3	St. John's Northwestern	304
3.3	Abundant Life Christian/Saint Ambrose	253
3.3	Montello	233
3.3	Kickapoo/La Farge	230
3.3	Wisconsin Heights	229
3.3	Algoma	227
3.3	Marion/Tigerton*	211
3.3	Phillips	210
3.3	Shell Lake	208
3.3	McDonell Central Catholic*	203
3	Hurley	196
3	Williams Bay	193
3	Wonewoc-Center/Weston	193
3	Princeton/Green Lake	192
3	Sevastopol	192
3	Bowler/Gresham	189
3	Washburn	189
3	Wayland Academy	182
3	Thorp	178
3	Three Lakes/Phelps	178
3	Valley Christian (Oshkosh)	175
3	Gibraltar	174
3	Tri-County	174
3	Lena/Saint Thomas Aquinas	173
3	Wabeno/Laona	170
3	Northwood/Solon Springs	168
3	Rosholt	166
3	Alma Center Lincoln	165
3	Oakfield	165
3	Wild Rose	158
3	Gillett	157
3	Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah	154
3	Winter/Birchwood	147
3	Rib Lake	143
3	Flambeau	140
3	Port Edwards	140
3	Niagara	134
3	Owen-Withee	134
3	Prairie Farm	131
3	De Soto	129
3	Siren	127
3	North Crawford	124
3	Wausaukee	124
3	Bruce	122
3	Elcho/White Lake	121
3	Athens	120
3	Frederic	120
3	Suring	120
3	Luck	115
3	Newman Catholic	115
3	Florence	114
3	Belmont	113
3	Prentice	111
3	Almond-Bancroft	106
3	Cornell	106
3	Gilman	101
3	Highland	99
3	New Auburn	97
3	Monticello	95
3	Clayton	91
3	Pembine/Goodman	90
3	Lake Holcombe	87
3	Mellen	80
3	South Shore	65

*Denotes playoff eligible for the 2025 season. Tournament procedures 1. b. Note: Schools qualifying with a three-year average enrollment of 200 or less in the first year of the two-year commitment will be allowed to participate in the second year of their two-year commitment regardless if their average three-year enrollment exceeds 200.



2025 WFCA GRANT RECIPIENTS

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Arcadia HS | New Glarus HS |
| Egerton HS | Niagara HS |
| Iola Scandinavia HS | Omro HS |
| Iowa Grant HS | Roncolli HS |
| La Crosse Logan HS | Siren HS |
| Little Chute HS | Turtle Lake HS |
| Living Word Lutheran HS | Watertown HS |
| Melrose-Mindoro HS | Wauzeka-Steuben HS |
| Milwaukee Bradley Tech HS | Waukesha North HS |
| Monticello HS | |

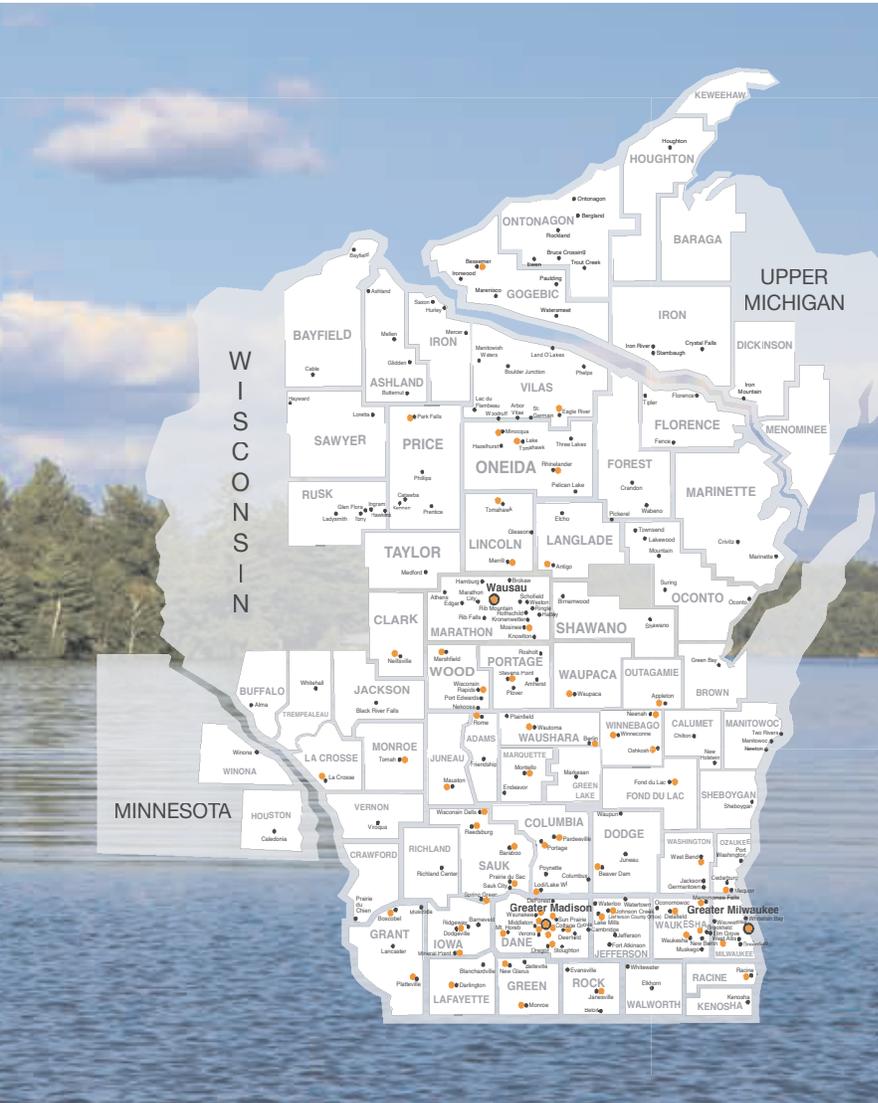
HISTORY OF THE WFCA GRANT

- 2019 – 46 schools, \$96,415 awarded
- 2022 – 26 schools, \$63,890 awarded
- 2023 – 20 schools, \$53,974 awarded
- 2024 – 20 schools, \$49,488 awarded
- 2025 – 19 schools, \$48,645 awarded

TOTAL

\$312,442 has been awarded to 131 High School Football Programs

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- 🏠 Wautoma
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South Central & Southwest WI

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- 🏠 Cambridge
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- 🏠 Dodgeville
- 🏠 East Madison
- 🏠 Fitchburg/West Madison
- 🏠 Janesville
- 🏠 Jefferson County
- 🏠 La Crosse
- 🏠 Lake Mills
- 🏠 Lodi/Lake Wisconsin
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- 🏠 Middleton
- 🏠 Mineral Point
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- 🏠 Montello
- 🏠 Mount Horeb
- 🏠 New Glarus
- 🏠 Oregon
- 🏠 Pardeeville
- 🏠 Platteville
- 🏠 Portage
- 🏠 Prairie Du Sac
- 🏠 Reedsburg
- 🏠 Spring Green
- 🏠 Sun Prairie/East Towne
- 🏠 Tomah
- 🏠 Waunakee
- 🏠 West Towne
- 🏠 Wisconsin Dells

Central, Northwoods, West Central WI & Upper MI

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- 🏠 Bessemer
- 🏠 Eagle River
- 🏠 Marshfield
- 🏠 Merrill
- 🏠 Minocqua
- 🏠 Mosinee
- 🏠 Neillsville
- 🏠 Park Falls
- 🏠 Rhinelander
- 🏠 Rome Lakes
- 🏠 Stevens Point
- 🏠 Tomahawk
- 🏠 Wausau
- 🏠 Wisconsin Rapids



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UPDATE FROM THE WISCONSIN FOOTBALL FOUNDATION

By: Al Minnaert, Hall of Fame, President, Wisconsin Chapter of The National Football Foundation

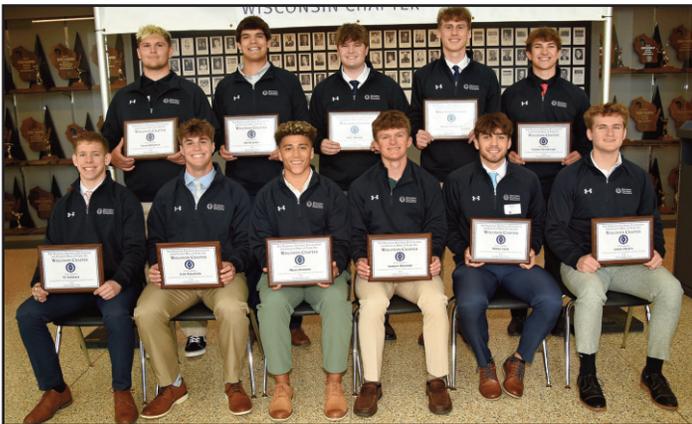
Congratulations to the following members selected by the Wisconsin Football Foundation for the 2024 Football season. Members were honored at the WFF Recognition Event at Edgewood High School, Madison, Wisconsin on Sunday April 27, 2025. Each of the players received a \$2000 scholarship to help with their college or university education.

- Jude Ballinger, Marquette University HS
- Logan Bockman, St. Croix Falls HS
- Grant Chandonais, SPASH HS
- Miles Dawkins, Verona Area HS
- Cole Johnson, Lakeland Union HS
- Jon Kearney, Aquinas HS
- Nicholas McCullough, Muskego HS
- James (Will) Phebus, Waunakee HS
- Andrew Reichert, Kewaskum HS
- Bobby Salm, Appleton North HS
- Ty Schnelle, Edgar HS
- Caeden Steuerwald, Oostburg HS
- Owen Strebig Catholic, Memorial HS
- Jenner Zeutzius, Monona Grove HS



Special acknowledgment for Jude Ballinger of Marquette University HS for being named to the National Football Foundation Team of Distinction.

There were 93 players nominated and all nominees received a plaque recognizing their nomination. With this year’s scholarship awards included, the WFF Chapter, begun in the memory of George Chryst in 1993, has now awarded \$145,000 in scholarship assistance! Congratulations to these fine Scholar Athletes, their coaches, and school communities!

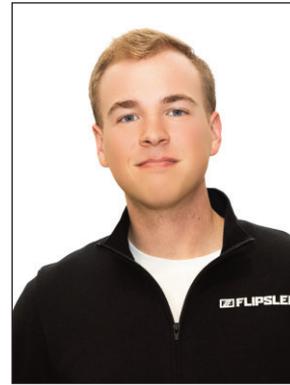


“The only true satisfaction a player receives is the satisfaction that comes from being a part of a successful team, regardless of his personal accomplishments!”

-- Vince Lombardi

FLIPSLED ENGERGIZES WFCAC CONFERENCE

By: Ryan Peterson, Marketing Manager, FlipSled a division of AIRBORNE Athletics, inc.



Ryan Peterson

Wisconsin football is built from the ground up—gritty, physical, and relentless. That’s exactly why FlipSled showed up ready to match that energy at this year’s Wisconsin Football Coaches Association (WFCAC) Clinic. We brought the energy, connected with coaches across the state, and closed out the weekend by proudly announcing Cuba City Football as the winner of our exclusive on-site FlipSled giveaway.

The FlipSled booth stayed buzzing all weekend. Coaches stopped by to talk training philosophy, get hands-on with the unit, and see why the FlipSled is being adopted rapidly by schools across Wisconsin and the US.

“The engagement at WFCAC was unreal. Coaches didn’t just stop by to talk—they got hands-on, asked questions, and saw how FlipSled can truly elevate a team’s power and performance,” said Jason Kreklow, Senior Sales Manager at FlipSled. “Giving one away was the highlight—we love investing back into the coaching community.”

The FlipSled is trusted by youth, high school, collegiate, and professional programs as the “go-to” tool for developing explosive hips, powerful leg drive, and violent finishing power. It’s more than just coined the best—it’s been proven to build movements that translate directly to game-day performance.

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MAKING THE CHANGE TO BOUND

By: Travis Wilson, Communications/Website/Combine, Co-Director: Bound Wisconsin Manager



Travis Wilson

17 years ago this month I started at WSN, and a couple years later took over the football beat, where I've been thrilled to work with the amazing football coaches in Wisconsin ever since. With unfortunate changes coming to WSN, I made the difficult decision this week to leave a place I've been incredibly proud of.

But don't worry, I'm not going far, and I am thrilled to announce that I have accepted a position with Bound as the Bound Wisconsin Manager. In my role I will create content on Bound channels as the state's high school sports expert, facilitate the build out of a new home for stats, schedules, and scores in Wisconsin (Bound is the official resource for the state of

Iowa), and help Bound introduce its outstanding full suite of tools to schools, conferences, & associations in the Badger State.

Bound (www.gobound.com) is the official home for stats, schedules, and standings for the Iowa High School Athletic Association and the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union with tools coaches have used and loved for years. The South Dakota High School Athletic Association, Canyon Athletic Association, and Sunshine Athletic Association are among the many other partners that include schools, conferences, and more.

So, what does this all mean?

- I will continue to work with the WFCIA in my role as Communications and Website Director.
- I will continue to produce content, articles, and more on Bound platforms, which ramp up very shortly.
- I will continue to promote, celebrate, and salute the great game of football in Wisconsin.
- In the next couple days, we will be providing information on using the Bound platform to manage your team, including schedules, rosters, scores, and stats. We are getting things setup right now, and will have it ready very soon. The WFCIA will be providing additional information as well in support of this endeavor.

Thank you for your support over the last 17 years, and I'm thrilled to get started on the next chapter at Bound. I am extremely excited to work with the Bound team, who is as passionate about high school sports as I am. They are committed to serving and investing in the high school sports community in the state, the right way.

Stats Entry & Info:

Please note that we provide coach accounts that allow coaches to enter/update roster, schedule, scores, and stats information directly on our site. Remember that the WFCIA requires stats entry on Bound, and WFCIA All-Region, All-State, and All-Star nominations & selections are based on the stats information you enter in our system. Numerous college coaches use our site to gather info on players, media outlets use it to develop story ideas, and it is a great outlet for parents, family, and fans. Help get your teams and players the positive recognition and exposure they deserve. If you try to log in and are having problems, you can click "Reset Password" to receive info on getting a new password.

This is an outstanding How To video on using the Bound platform:

<https://intercom.help/boundhq/en/articles/6515803-entering-scores-and-stats>

Please update your records to my new email address at travis.wilson@gobound.com.

OFFENSE

OFFENSIVE LINEMAN REQUIREMENTS

By: Luke Meadows, Offensive Line Coach, Northern Illinois University



Luke Meadows

LESSONS FROM MY MENTORS

I am sharing a document from two of the biggest mentors I have had as an offensive line coach, Monte Clark and Jim Langer. Sadly, both

have passed away, but their impact on me has drastically shaped my identity as a coach.

Coach Clark played 10 years in the NFL, on both the offensive and defensive lines. After retiring, Monte was the Offensive Line coach for the Dolphins (1970-75), Head Coach for the 49ers (1976) and Head Coach for the Lions (1978-84). Most of the top techniques and fundamentals used in offensive line play today, came directly from Coach Clark.

His center with the Dolphins was Jim Langer. Jim was undrafted out of college and finished his career winning multiple Super Bowls and was inducted into the NFL Hall of Fame in 1987 during his first year of eligibility.

I believe both of these men would want me to share this information. They believed in doing things the HARDER but BETTER WAY. Much of what they discuss refers to an "OLD SCHOOL APPROACH" but I believe it is the

identity needed in helping the people that we coach develop into young men.

OFFENSE LINEMEN REQUIREMENTS

These are the qualities and points of emphasis I look for in every lineman on every snap. These points if emphasis are corrected each and every time they are not present. Each lineman must be able to check and mentally grade or rate himself against these standards every time the ball is snapped. When these things don't get done properly—it is not ok—nothing slips by without notice and correction—and not just some of the time or once in a while. These points are our "gold standard" we learn to make certain they all get done or-- YOU HAVE NOT EARNED THE RIGHT TO BECOME OR REMAIN "ONE OF OUR GUYS". Becoming one of us (our line) is not an honor we confer lightly—it must be earned before we permit you to "belong".

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J.C. Fish

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Coaching Points of Emphasis for Offensive Linemen

- Be quick, and possess some speed and athletic skills.(the more the better)
- Be sudden and explosive in your actions. Beat your opponent to the punch.
- Never “creep or ooze” about on egg shells or with ponderous or methodical motions.
- Have adequate size, strength and mental toughness.
- Use superb work habits and work with specific professional purpose each day.
- Practice and play hard-be aggressive-compete to win even in practice.
- Make it your personal trademark to be known as a hard worker and fierce competitor.
- Be smart, and better yet clever. Must process a lot of information quickly at the LOS---Become an expert and foremost authority--no one should know more than you

about your position.—you must be composed and able to think clearly to be an O-lineman.

- Take copious notes and become a diligent student of the game. Study-- do homework.
- Develop your own personal plan of attack and motivation each week--don't wait for your coach to tell you everything-- Look after your own best interests.
- Study opponent's tape with professional expertise—learn to take advantage of all the information it reveals.
- Know all the detail of your techniques and assignments. Eliminate errors and mistakes.
- Become a stickler for smallest detail—It is not a strategy to just hope, guess or wish.
- Understand the play's action—anticipate the reaction it will induce from the defense.
- Push yourself in everything-- be a hard worker to excel and to be the best.
- Be a great competitor. Want it more and be more of a man than your opponent.
- Think of every play, run or pass as requiring a minimum of a four-second interval not one shot.

“It's hard to teach a person anything when he thinks he already knows it all.”

— Luke Meadows

- Finish every play until the whistle blows—never, ever let up or give up. (no one-shot deals)
- “The show must go on” --so you must go on in any and all conditions and adversity.
- Strike through with great force---not just to the defender.
- Ask no quarter---and give none! Offer no sympathy for opponents and expect none.
- Let sleeping dogs lie—you will have enough problems without asking for more.
- Trash talk and World Wrestling Federation dramatics demonstrate stupidity.
- Hoping or wishing is not a strategy --study and prepare meticulously to be ready.
- Anticipate a fierce battle and set yourself for a colossal effort—overestimate what you will face and never be surprised—If any thing be able to say it was not near as tough as you were prepared to face.
- Stay “up in the bit” even on sidelines between series--- you shouldn't need to “re-boot” yourself mentally every time you re-enter the field of play.
- Build a reputation as a solid, reliable, and dependable player who they can always count on to be at his best when needed most or in the toughest situations or biggest games.

- If you get hurt—get well quick-- teams look for physically, mentally and psychologically reliable men---not kids that go into the fetal position on a regular basis at the drop of a hat or the first sign of adversity.
- Get your job done error free without mental, physical breakdowns or mistakes. Whip your man—prevail on every play. Do not commit penalties, fouls or mental errors.
- Practice with intensity. Always practice, compete and force your teammate to work hard in order to beat you.— “don't let him do it to you” in practice or the game.
- Preparing to play is one thing but preparing to win is quite another.
- It's not what you teach—it's what you emphasize.
- It's hard to teach a person anything when he thinks he already knows it all.
- The Learning Attitude” The next best thing to being innocent of a fault, is to freely admit it—that's when change and improvement begins.

Comments added at my request by my Hall of Fame center, Jim Langer, after reading the above. Jim Langer's response to what is important to emphasize: “Hi Monte, A couple of my thoughts on your notes that were the most important you taught me”.

- 1) On the field, there is no “walk through” speed or tempo. The initial movement on the ball must be “full” speed--game speed. In practice drills, it is only after this full speed movement that you pull the power down as in a walk through. (Only to preserve teammates. you never throttle down for anyone during a game.
- 2) Know what constitutes a “+” grade and don't cut yourself any slack. Your opponent should be a no factor in the play--walled off, cut-on his back or whatever. I see linemen today lose control of their man and he comes back into the play. That is not a “+”.

Monte, the most important thing you told me once when I was thinking how well I was doing. You said, “this is not like riding a bicycle”. “You have to constantly push to that high “+” standard or you go backward”. “The moment you think you have it made is the moment you begin to regress as a player”.

Jim Langer's Career Defining Quantity

Jim Langer's remark—“*don't cut yourself any slack*” is the story of his incredible playing career. Nothing explains him better than that comment. He went from a free agent to cut, to numerous All-Pro honors, three super Bowls, the “Perfect Season”, and to the NFL Hall of Fame; primarily by being exceptionally demanding of himself.

I hope you are able to take some these nuggets of “PURE GOLD” and instill them into your players. Have a great 2025 Season.



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TIGHT END DEVELOPMENT AND DRILLS

By: Bryan Chung, Running Back and Tight End Coach, Macalester College, St. Paul, MN



Bryan Chung

The Tight End position is a very demanding position. It is responsible for creating additional gaps as an extension of the offensive line, as well as serving as a sure-handed receiving threat. To meet all the demands of the position, a Tight End's performance must be built on both a solid physical foundation (e.g., stance, start, release) and a sound mental foundation (e.g., motion, Mike ID, pass concept). This article focuses on Tight End development and drills that I have collected from other coaches and utilized, in the hope that it will serve as a valuable resource for readers of the WFCAs publication, *The Point After II*.

Tight Ends Teaching Progression

As a Tight Ends coach, one must be efficient. Time in both the classroom and on the field is limited; thus, it is important to have a system for teaching and instilling all the necessary aspects of both the running and passing games.

Figure 1 is a seven-step teaching progression that can be modified and altered based on your needs and circumstances. For example, here at Macalester College, an Ivy League-caliber academic institution, student-athletes' schedules are packed with classes, labs, and office hours. With student-athletes running from their biochemistry lab to the locker room minutes before practice,

Before Practice

1. A description and/or a diagram
2. A video

During Practice

3. Walk-thru or pre-practice teach period
4. Indy period focused on technique or skills
5. Group periods (e.g., 1-on-1, perimeter screen drill, 7-on-7)
6. Team periods

After Practice

7. Practice clips.

Figure 1. 7-step Teaching Progression

we have limited time for a walk-through before practice starts.

On the other hand, with the rise of new technology, video can serve as a highly effective and time-saving teaching medium. Instagram, YouTube, and X (formerly known as Twitter) are flooded with useful clips of game film and drill tapes. Beyond teaching purposes, these accounts and posts can be a great tool for enhancing player engagement.

Focusing on instruction, there are three phases in every Tight End play: the approach, the contact, and the follow-through. The approach phase includes the stance and initial get-off, target identification, footwork, and pad level. At the moment of contact, we move on to the next phase, during which coaches can discuss the hitting surface, hand placement, and other details. Lastly, the follow-through phase is where coaches can teach and critique how a player's lower and upper body should be positioned after contact and until the whistle.

Stance & Start

Stance:

We utilize both three-point and two-point stances for our Tight Ends. In the proper stance, their feet should be positioned slightly past shoulder width, with toes slightly pointed outward and weight on the insteps. In a three-point stance, the down hand should have all five fingers on the ground, with the off-hand's wrist or forearm resting on top of the post leg's thigh board. In a two-point stance, both wrists (or forearms) should rest on the thigh boards. By bending at the ankles, knees, and hips, Tight Ends must maintain a straight back and keep their eyes forward.

Start:

Getting out of the stance is crucial for both the running and passing games. I like to provide real-life examples of two different takeoffs. For instance, while the F-22 Raptor has a diagonal takeoff angle, the V-22 Osprey employs a vertical takeoff angle. Tight Ends need to be like a raptor coming out of their stances—not an osprey. Physically, a vertical takeoff requires more upward force rather than outward or forward force. Remember, the bad guys are in front of you, not above you!

Wide Zone Blocking Progression

Duck Walk

It is essential for players to be comfortable taking forward steps with their weight on the insteps. A simple visual cue is to keep their knees inside their toes. By nature, to maintain that alignment, most of the body weight should remain on the insteps. At the same time, players must understand that taking a long stride is not always the best way to cover ground. Once one foot leaves the ground, the blocker becomes more unstable and vulnerable. Thus, coaches must emphasize short, fast, and precise steps.

Understanding Leverage

Leverage means positioning yourself inside and underneath the defender. Here, we begin in an ideal, fitted position for the Wide Zone: with the facemask and play-side hand on the target's play-side armpit, the backside hand on the sternum, and the backside knee splitting the crotch. The offensive player must keep their thumbs up and slightly out. From this position, we incorporate the previously mentioned duck walk while maintaining the established leverage.

The next step in this drill is to learn when and how to press with the catch hand. Once in position, the catch/backside hand is essential for maintaining the horizontal leverage. When the defender tries to work back inside, the tight end must sense the increased pressure and apply additional force with their catch hand to protect the inside gap.

Drop Step-Crossover-Run (DCR)

Materials: One or more step-over bags

Coaching Points:

- Maintain a low pad level.
- Ensure the second step is in front of the LOS.
- “Run means run” — if you can lock it, you can leave it.

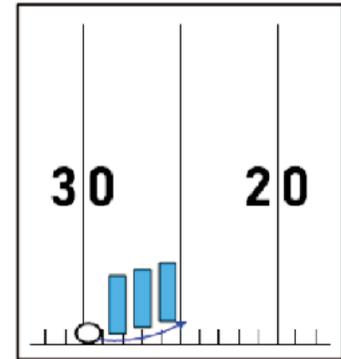


Figure 2. DCR Drill Set Up

The Drop-Step Cross-Over-Run technique is utilized on the backside of a Wide Zone run. The tight end's job on this side is often to protect the C-gap from a defensive end who is already lined up in the gap or from a stand-up linebacker attempting to cut across his face.

It is essential for the tight end to open his hips at the proper angle to cut off a defender. Although not always necessary, on the backside of a wide zone the tight end must target further in the direction of the play, since the defender is typically moving more horizontally when the ball snaps. Therefore, the first step is often a drop step that allows the tight end's hip to achieve the appropriate angle.

During the second step, the tight end must be able to exert force on the defensive player; his knee should drive through the core of the defender and across the line of scrimmage. If the second step lands behind the line of scrimmage, it almost certainly means that the tight end is

unable to generate sufficient vertical push against the defensive line.

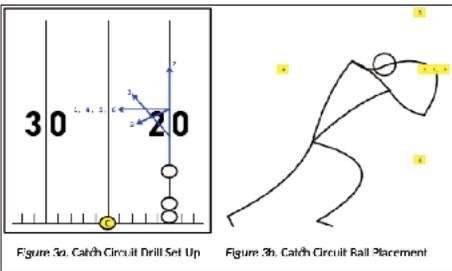
Finally, in this drill, “run means run.” Tight ends need to cover the ground to cut off the defender; if not, we must sustain our blocks and wash the defender down to give the running back a chance to cut back. Once a player successfully places his helmet to the play side, the offensive player can attempt to lock his arm out against the defender’s chest and “run around his own hand.” When the arm is locked out, the defender cannot get closer to the ball carrier, meaning the tight end has successfully accomplished his job.

Catch Circuit

Materials: 2-3 footballs.

Coaching Points:

- Maintain low pad level
- Accelerate out of breaks
- See the catch in
- Quickly tuck the catch away
- Get vertical now



One of the most important aspects of the tight end position is serving as a safety blanket for the quarterback in passing situations. Sometimes the ball will be thrown perfectly on a post

route, while at other times it will be thrown behind or low because the quarterback is scrambling to avoid pressure. Therefore, it is critical to practice catching the ball in various locations. In this drill, we focus on seven different types of catches:

- 1) Perfect Catch
- 2) Negative
- 3) Angle, 4) Pivot Catch
- 5) High
- 6) Low Ball
- 7) Over-the-Shoulder.

Everyone loves a ball drill—anything that gets more football into players’ hands is well received. I believe that the catch circuit is an extremely effective and efficient drill throughout the year and even as a pre-game warm-up.

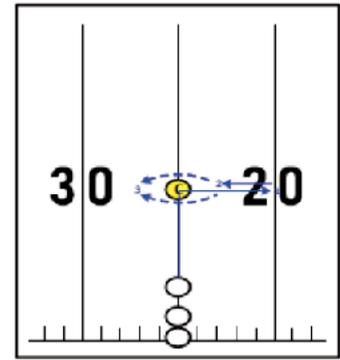
T-Drill

Materials: 1 hand shield.

Coaching Points:

- Plant foot and drive foot going into & coming out of the break
- Violently rip & exit through reroute
- Stack defender immediately after the bypass.

The T-Drill is an efficient exercise that incorporates two prevalent cut angles on tight end routes. First, the 90-degree cut simulates outbreaking routes—such as the bench or stick route—as well as in-breaking routes like the basic or under route. The second change of direction simulates a curl or hitch route, where the receiver must attack the ball at a sharp angle to prevent defenders from undercutting the route. Lastly, by having to avoid a coach equipped with a hand shield, the player works on violently exiting through the defender’s



reroute and stacking the defender immediately after bypassing him.

It is essential to emphasize using the hands and arms to fend off reroute attempts and to prevent the defender from staying too close. Although it may be “easier” to create width to avoid contact, doing so disrupts the timing and key landmarks that must be maintained. Furthermore, stacking the defender allows tight ends to play to their strengths (i.e., size) and minimizes potential downsides (i.e., speed) by enabling them to contribute on both sides of the play. This approach prevents defensive players from gaining any clue about the direction of the route.

Conclusion

With a recent trend in defensive football, the tight end position will be a force to be reckoned with against lighter Nickel personnel. Mastering both run and pass game is challenging and coaches must have well-prepared and thought out meetings and practices to make the most out of the given time and resources.

DEVELOPING WIDE RECEIVERS

By: Dan Keefe, Head Football Coach, Baldwin-Woodville High School



Dan Keefe

It’s an honor to be a part of the WFA for the last 36 years. As a retired teacher that continues to Coach Football at Baldwin-Woodville I have the time and interest to talk football anytime, please don’t hesitate to reach out. Here is a snapshot of the best things I think we are doing with our Wide Receivers.

- 1) We instill the importance of perimeter

blocking. It is a non-negotiable within that room. If you can block you can play.

- 2) From day one we teach the importance of communication between the slot and wide receivers regarding who we are going to block. This includes practicing dummy calls on pass plays. Sometimes our alignments are based on how we need to block. It’s done everyday!
- 3) We teach our guys how to solve problems by giving them schematic answers when blocking. We will stalk, double team, and fold. We practice each of these and they learn techniques, alignments and applications.
- 4) We do live compete drills vs. the perimeter defense we expect to see each week. We put the ball down and work half the field. Sometimes on a hash to the field or to the boundary. The perimeter blocking is live and the defense is live. The offense must gain five + yards for a win. Anything else is a D win. Each group will do a best of five then we rotate. Our kids compete to the edge two times a week. We emphasize the competition piece

above all else. There is a lot of pride in this drill. We signal our routes and get a lot of live reps that benefit both sides of the ball.

- 5) Our WR Coach Ethan Palmer created a drill they do weekly to determine that week’s starters. Defend the ring dummy. Each player gets a shot to compete to keep the defender from getting to the ring dummy that represents the ball carrier. This is an attitude drill. The coach will use a stopwatch to see how long you can defend it!
- 6) We work to defeat press coverages. It is very important to rep techniques using hands to keep the defender off you. We also try to vary our releases to make us harder to press.
- 7) We practice varying our releases; we employ a speed release, a jab release, and a double up release.
- 8) We teach our single side receivers to run routes that give us an advantage vs a specific alignment by the defender. Press = go route, Inside leverage = speed out, Outside leveraged defender = slant, Off defender +7 yards

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- = hitch. We should always be right.
- 9) We teach them to lie to the defender by stemming your routes. Conceal your true intentions.
 - 10) We are teaching a “decide route” or a choice route vs. match coverages.
 1. Attack the defender
 2. Step over his toes
 3. Violently release from the leverage.

Again we number these:

1. We teach the concept of slant until you can’t. Always try to win inside.
 2. If you are open, stay open. If the defender drops out, sit and stay open.
 3. If you can’t win, win out. If the defender won’t let you in, get out.
- 11) We have our kids catch as many balls as possible daily. Distraction drills, multiple

QBs & Coaches throwing them balls on air practicing routes and catching. We also do 1-on-1s vs the defense weekly.

I hope there is something here that you can use in your program. I know I have learned a ton from *The Point After II* myself. Don’t hesitate to reach out if you have questions or would like to talk some football.

IGNITE YOUR PASSING GAME

By: Riley Hill, Quarterbacks Coach, Brookfield Central High School



Riley Hill

Do you find yourself wondering how you can speed up your QBs reads? Do you feel like there must be a way he can be faster? This is something that I have always wrestled with myself. Sometimes you get a kid with a natural ability to just see “it” and get “it”, while others don’t. This kind of inconsistency at the QB position can have you and your staff rethinking your passing game each off-season.

I believe there is something that can help accelerate your QBs decision making and development, but first, how you teach your passing game. Progression Read? Defender Read? Feel it and throw it? R4? No matter how you teach your progression, I believe that the missing piece to developing our QBs is teaching the, defense

I’ve spent a ton of time this spring learning the QB IQ System, created by Chris Hixson, which now has me thinking in reverse! During my first few years of coaching, my mentors would tell me that to be the best coach, I must learn the other side of the ball... in and out. The same idea can apply to our kids. In order for your kids to be able to see the big picture, don’t just teach them routes and offense, but teach them the defense they can expect to see and the space that will be open in each coverage.

At its core, coverage is simple. Is it Man or is it Zone? Or is it Cover 3, or Cover 2? Yes, I understand that defenses can be more difficult than that but when the ball is snapped, all players on each side of the ball need to execute their responsibilities. As coaches and play callers, we know where we want our QBs to go with the ball when we call a certain pass play. But do they know where and why? Let’s start to install

coverage along with our concepts. What routes with that concept work vs what coverage. This allows us to speed the timing and processing up for our QBs. Yes, there are always exceptions to the rules... coverage breaks, match ups, and mistakes by either side. However, all those things can be talked about and covered when teaching defense as part of your pass game.

As we transitioned from a Triple Option offense into a more Shotgun Wing-T team, teaching our QBs the pass game was like feeding them with a fire hose at times. If I could go back and redo the way I approached last off-season, I would start with defense. All of our kids have played both ways at some point in football and have some basic knowledge of what our coverages are, this allows them to have an idea about where to start.

Let’s dive into how it would work. For example, let’s use a simple 2x2 smash concept. Just a Base Hitch route at five yds and Corner route at 10 yds. This is a base concept that most offenses have in their playbook. We can speed up the timing and processing for our QBs by teaching them what routes are live vs certain coverages and what space is taken away by certain coverages.

Start with the Hitch Route. Coverage the Hitch Route is on vs. Off Man 3/4/6 (to the 4-Side). Coverage the Hitch Route is off vs. Press Man/2/6 (to the 2 side). What does all this mean? It means that as we install with our QBs we can start to teach them how to see the field in a way that coaches do. You can start to have your conversation with your QBs like this, “When we get Cover 3, the ball is going to the Hitch. We can be quick with our footwork and deliver the ball on time.” You can also start to have advanced conversations with your QBs like this, “It’s Cover 2, hold your eyes and shoulders low on your drop to hold the tight CB. Reset and throw a strike to the Corner. The Hitch is off in Cover 2 but the corner is on.”

As coaches we are always looking for an edge and a way to get ahead. But really it comes down to what edge we are giving our players. As we continue to develop passers in an evolving landscape of coverage “looks”, teaching our kids what coverage is and teaching them what routes work will allow our kids to continue to grow at a faster rate. QB IQ talks about allowing the QB to get tomorrow’s news

today. They can anticipate things before they happen and know what to expect. Teaching progression allows him to get the right place after he takes his drop. The QB is reading grass/space but that takes time and thinking. Teaching defender reads puts the QB at the mercy of the defender. Teaching defenses first, allows you to have your progression reads but the QB can then get to his spot faster because he can eliminate routes and know what routes are live. You can have your defender reads but now the QB can take control, like our Cover 2 example above.

Our off-season time is limited with our kids, we have to be able to give them tangible things they can use to learn and apply in order to test themselves. Teaching defense and using some of the tools that QB IQ has given me, I am able to give the quarterbacks a tool to use by themselves. Self-teaching is really important for coaches here in our state. By taking our concepts and overlaying a defense to it, they know what routes are live and what coverages take other routes away. They can quiz themselves and also add in concept breaks and different looks. I would encourage you to go through your pass game and overlay coverages on them. Learn the live routes and routes that aren’t live. Then take all that information and teach it to your QBs.

“If you’re killing
time, it’s not murder.
It’s Suicide.

-- Lou Holtz

HOW WE USE TEMPO IN OUR SPREAD OFFENSE

By: Keldric "KD" Stokes, Head Football Coach, Thorp High School



Keldric Stokes

One of the biggest advantages of our tempo-driven spread offense is how we utilize our personnel in multiple ways. While many up-tempo offenses focus primarily on the passing game, we've designed ours to keep the run game at the forefront while still spreading the field. By using different speeds and motions, we force defenses to adjust on the fly, creating favorable matchups that allow our key players to make plays.

The Tailback: A Dual-Threat Weapon

Our tailback isn't just a ball carrier, he's a

dynamic playmaker who can attack defenses both on the ground and through the air. By aligning him in different positions and using motion, we create opportunities to get him the ball in space. Whether it's a quick swing pass, a check-down in the flats, or a wheel route down the sideline, his ability to catch out of the back-field adds another layer to our offense. Defenses that stack the box to stop the run often leave themselves vulnerable to these quick passes, allowing us to move the ball efficiently while keeping the defense off balance.

Additionally, our tempo forces defenses to communicate quickly, and we take advantage of that by using our tailback in misdirection plays. A fast-paced inside run followed by a quick play-action pass to him in the flat forces linebackers and safeties into tough decisions. If they commit to stopping the run, we can exploit the open field behind them. If they play back in coverage, we gain an edge in the running game.

The "Y" Tight End: A Versatile Mismatch

Our "Y" tight end is one of the most important pieces of our offense because of his ability to do multiple things. In our up-tempo scheme, he plays a hybrid role he can block in the run game, slip out for short and intermediate routes,

and even take a handoff in certain situations. His versatility allows us to keep defenses guessing without changing personnel, which is a major advantage when playing at a high tempo.

In the passing game, we use him as a safety valve and a matchup nightmare. When linebackers play too aggressively against the run, we leak him out into open space for quick passes that keep our offense on schedule. When we see a favorable matchup against a smaller defensive back, we use his size and strength to win contested catches. Because we rarely huddle and keep the defense reacting, we can move our Y around in different formations without allowing them to substitute, creating even more advantages.

Another key element of our Y's role is his ability to run the football. In short-yardage or goal-line situations, we can use him as a power runner to attack the defense in a different way. Whether it's a direct snap, a motion sweep, or a delayed handoff, his ability to carry the ball gives us an extra wrinkle that defenses must prepare for.

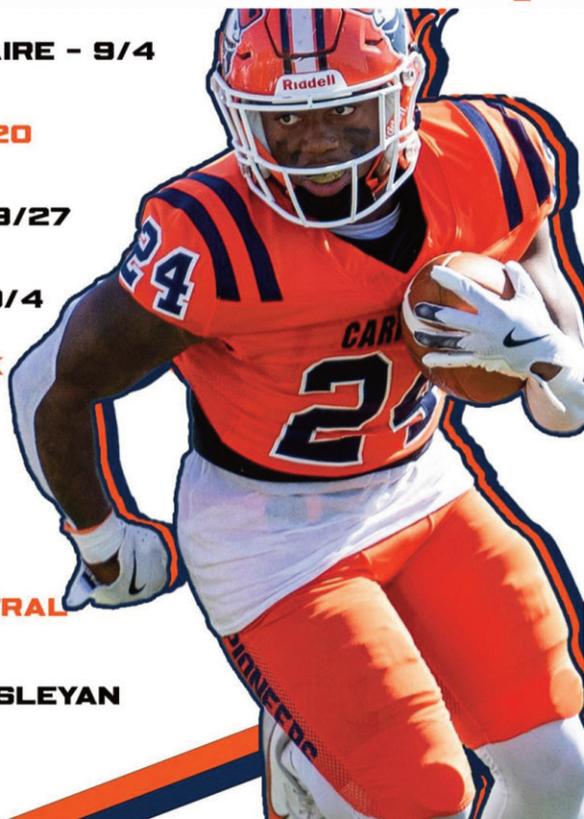
Changing Speeds to Keep Defenses Guessing

Tempo doesn't always mean playing at top speed. While we often use a fast-paced attack to

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	AUGUSTANA 10/18
	ELMHURST 10/25
	NORTH CENTRAL 11/1 (SENIOR DAY)
	ILLINOIS WESLEYAN 11/8
	CARTHAGE 11/15



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wear down defenses and prevent substitutions, we also know when to slow things down. By mixing in different tempos, we prevent the defense from settling into a rhythm. Sometimes, we'll go no-huddle for several plays in a row to keep the pressure on, then shift gears and take a more methodical approach. This constant variation forces defenses to always stay mentally engaged, increasing the likelihood of missed assignments and breakdowns in coverage.

Using motion before the snap also plays a key role in our tempo. Whether it's our Y mov-

ing across the formation to set up a blocking angle or our tailback shifting out wide to become a receiver, every motion is designed to create hesitation in the defense. Even a half-second of indecision can be the difference between a short gain and a big play.

Conclusion

Our tempo-based spread offense isn't just about playing fast, it's about dictating the game on our terms. By using our tailback as a receiving threat and our Y tight end as a do-it-all play-maker, we maximize our ability to attack

defenses in multiple ways. The combination of speed, motion, and personnel versatility makes it difficult for opponents to key in on any one aspect of our offense. Whether we're running the ball from spread formations, using quick passes to exploit mismatches, or adjusting our tempo to keep defenses uncomfortable, our system is designed to keep us in control. In 8-man football, where every player on the field has a crucial role, mastering tempo isn't just an advantage—it's the key to success for our team. kstokes@thorp.k12.wi.us

RPOS – MERGING GAP RUN WITH QUICK PASSING GAME

By: Braden Mitchell, Head Football Coach, D.C. Everest High School



Braden Mitchell

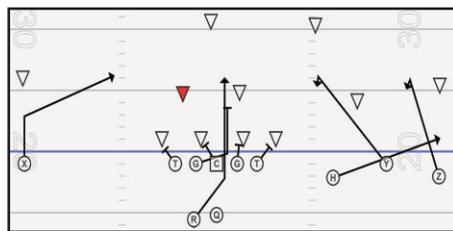
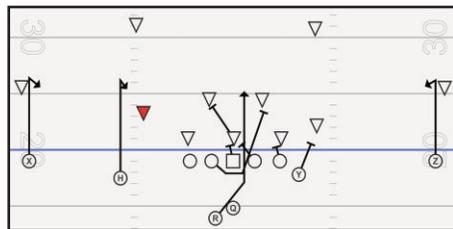
Thank you to the WFCAs for the opportunity to write this article and all they do for the coaches in Wisconsin. Still being a new guy to the state, I am still learning of all the great opportunities and outlets that the association offers coaches. Originally I am from Utah where I coached high school for 12 years, my last 3 as a head coach there before moving here to central Wisconsin in 2020. 2025 will be my second year as the head coach at D.C. Everest.

Through the years of coaching the offensive schemes I have been a part of have had different emphasis depending on our players and new trends in the game. One of those trends that we started working on was the RPO finding ways to read players instead of having to block them. Early on it was a lot of the pre-snap reads and counting the numbers in the box to determine if we would hand the ball off for the run called, or throw a receiver screen on the perimeter.

Being a gap run scheme the majority of our runs have someone pulling to get to the front side, and teams started getting good at reading guards to flow over to combat that. So our next step was to start working the 2nd level reads and reading the linebackers to determine if we would hand the ball off for the gap scheme or throw something to replace a linebacker leaving the window. Now we have gotten to the point where we can tag most of our quick passing game onto some of our power run schemes

combining them to get the best of both worlds depending on how linebackers want to play.

Here are some schemes we run:



You can make it fit whatever personnel you want to be in. It is not just for one type of offense. Last year we ran each of these, 10 pers, 11 pers, and 12 pers. So you can make it match the group that you have. Having these RPOs help us stay balanced as an offense, we were 58% run and 42% pass in our play calls and finished the year with 3003 rushing yards and 2990 passing yards. Our offense was 75% efficient of our RPOs this past season.

It does take some time getting timing and reads down for your quarterback. We teach it as a run unless... type situation. We want to run the ball, but if that linebacker or our read gets downhill or leaves the window then we will pull it and throw. We take time during our mesh/ball handling individual time to work these reads. Our RB has to know that he doesn't "take" the handoff but has to be patient and feel when the

QB is giving it to him. It also requires having the RPO tag in our play call to let linemen know that there is a possibility of our QB pulling and throwing the ball so they don't rush down field to get to the linebackers on their blocks. We stress taking time with the double teams and our puller being patient through the hole.

This has been something that has been great for us and the teams that I've been a part of. I think it can work for a variety of different offenses. If you have any questions or I can be of any help don't hesitate to reach out. bmitchell@dce.k12.wi.us

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BALL SECURITY IS JOB SECURITY

By: Jason Strickler, Running Backs Coach, Mukwonago High School



Jason Strickler

First of all, thank you to the WFCB and Mike Gnewuch, Head Football Coach of Mukwonago High School, for giving me the opportunity to write a piece for *The Point After II*. As the running backs coach for the past three years at Mukwonago High School, our running backs shared 1,062 carries, over 100 TDs, over 7,000 yards, and 4 fumbles. Fumbling on .37% of carries seems to be a major success, but with the motto “ball is all”, that is too many fumbles.

Here are four major elements that will improve your team’s ball security:

- Focus on the ball: Ball is all.
- Accountability: Everything is a big deal.
- Practice: Realistic practice situations.
- Competition: Pride and Passion.

Focus on the Ball: Teaching ball security through traditional means of five points of contact, ball placement within the frame of body, and using the rest of your body to protect the ball are important coaching points to emphasize throughout your ball security drills. Ball security drills can be found in many resources, but these drills will only be successful if the ball is the focus. Ball security is a focal point in every drill/rep of practice.

Accountability: Holding players accountable is one of the most important elements of coaching. With ball security, it’s no different. Evaluating ball security throughout the players’ week of preparation will lead to success on game night. Looking for bad ball security in individual practice drills, group drills, team drills, and special teams drills establishes the importance of protecting the ball. If you ask any of our players over the past 3 years what the comment “BS” means, they will answer “ball security”. Over the course of the season, typing “BS” on film notes over and over again is not

the most fun thing in the world. However, holding players accountable in every avenue is essential. Players are expected to watch practice and game film, and they know a conversation will be coming about many of the “BS” comments. Over the course of each season, players begin to hold each other accountable especially when it comes to the reminder that happens after a fumble in practice or during a game. No matter the situation, if a player fumbles during practice, they will leave the drill or session to do their reminder, then return to practice. In the JV games, players will follow the same script. Varsity players will face the music on Monday after practice. The young sophomores are held in check by the senior leaders, but if the senior puts one on the turf during practice, the underclassmen will more subtly remind the senior to take care of their business.

Practice: Drills are a dime a dozen, but I am a firm believer that practicing ball security must occur in realistic scenarios. Taking time to work on ball security each practice is important. If you only get five or ten minutes to work on ball security, make the most out of the time. I take the time to watch each of the fumbles from the film we had on Hudl and I look specifically at how the fumble occurred. Most of the fumbles

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SEP 20TH | AT NORTH CENTRAL COLLEGE | 1:00 PM
SEP 27TH | VS ILLINOIS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY | 1:00 PM
OCT 4TH | AT ELMHURST UNIVERSITY | 1:00 PM
OCT 11TH | VS WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY ST. LOUIS | 1:00 PM
OCT 18TH | AT WHEATON COLLEGE | 1:00 PM
OCT 25TH | VS MILLIKIN UNIVERSITY | 1:00 PM
NOV 1ST | AT NORTH PARK UNIVERSITY | 1:00 PM
NOV 8TH | VS AUGUSTANA COLLEGE | 12:00 PM
NOV 15TH | VS CARROLL UNIVERSITY | 1:00 PM

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fell into three major categories: falling to the ground or tripping, the unseen defender, or multiple defenders raking at the ball.

Taking these categories into account, our ball security drills hit on one of these major ball security threats. One of my favorite drills for falling down is having the RB place the ball in either arm, then touch the ground with their other hand while a partner attempts to punch the ball out. To prevent fumbles to the unseen defender, we use different versions of gauntlet drills with pads, fists, and shoulders flying trying everything to knock the ball out from the ball carrier. In order to prepare for multiple players going after the ball, I have the players hold the ball then I will grab the ball and

attempt to rip the ball out of their hands. In order to protect the ball, the players are taught to pull their ball side shoulder down and fall forward onto the defender in order to take their leverage away. I would recommend using a pad to fall on otherwise you will be sore the next day, week, and month.

Competition: The ball security portion of our Indy time might be the most physical session of practice for the running backs. Practicing sophomores through seniors breeds competition and forces the sophomores to earn their stripes quickly. The upperclassmen compete with each other in each ball security drill. The sophomores comment each season on how

the games are nowhere near as physically challenging because of the competitive nature of the ball security sessions. Doing hard things makes tough people, and if you survive ball security as a sophomore you have earned a toughness badge. Seeing sophomores become juniors and then seniors allows them to go from the hunted to the hunters creating a lasting legacy and pride in protecting the ball.

Everything you do in terms of ball security must focus on the ball. Push accountability in practice and games through competition, and see a reduction in your fumble rate next season. Keep chasing perfection.

DEFENSE

CLAMP TACKLING DRILL

By: Conner Guetter, Assistant Football Coach, Northwestern High School



Conner Guetter

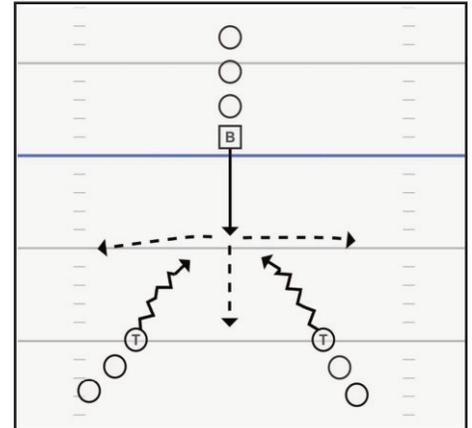
It was after week two of the 2024 campaign and we had just scraped out an overtime win against what would be one of the best quarterbacks we would see all year. He gave us fits all game with his ability to scramble and elude tacklers in the open field. He was an outstanding player but we could not close the gap and finish open field tacklers. We always seemed to be in the right position but would either stop moving

our feet or take bad angles to the ball carrier and as a result would be left in the dust.

Over that weekend I thought on how we could fix this issue and came up with a drill that would help solve this open field conundrum. I thought back to the hawk tackling technique drill where two players both tackle the same dummy using opposite shoulders keying the same side hip.

This clamp drill as displayed in the diagram is effectively the same drill as the hawk tackling drill made famous by the Seattle Seahawks; we have just modified it to be executed with a high thud wrap up. Furthermore, adding in a player as the ball carrier provides variance in reps and creates a fun competition for players.

Divide your players into three groups, we like to do this on the side of the field where the ball carrier starts at the bottom of the numbers, and the two tacklers begin on the hash being 10 yards apart. On the coaches “go” the ball carrier will run/jog at the split of the two defenders. The defenders will work to stay on the play side hip of the ball carrier. They should work in a “J path” like form working downhill to close off the outside lanes.



Then once they get close to the ball carrier engage, I thud, wrap up and clamp the ball carrier. The ball carrier can cut left, right, or go straight between the defenders. I would start slow and progress to higher levels by giving the ball carrier more freedom and speed to elude the defenders. Furthermore, you can increase these distances and space to exaggerate this drill to a greater open field drill.

THANK YOU to all who so generously submitted articles for
“The Point After II”

If your article did not appear in this issue, please look in the next one!

Articles may be emailed to the WFCFA office at office@wifca.org, or send paper copy to:
 WFCFA, PO Box 8, Poynette, WI 53955. Please include the title of the article, and the name, school and title of the author, along with the author’s photograph. Again, our thanks!

EFFICIENT LINEBACKER DRILLS WITH TWO-WAY PLAYERS IN MIND

By: Kris Berg, Linebackers Coach, Stratford High School



Kris Berg

Thank you for the opportunity to share some thoughts on linebackers, drills, and concepts I have found successful through my coaching career. I have had the awesome opportunity to coach with WFA Hall of Famers, Carl Alberti in Medford & Len Luedtke Sr. in Marshfield, as well as future Hall of Famers, Dennis Goettl in Marshfield & Jason Tubbs in Stratford. All four coaches have great qualities for leadership of athletes and coaches while also allowing everyone to grow each opportunity we are together.

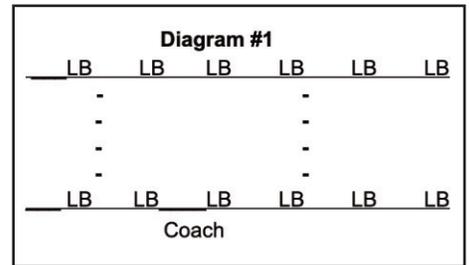
When transitioning to coaching in Stratford the last three seasons, I had to prioritize the indy drills and utilize each teaching moment available during inside rush, skelly, and team time. With many two way players, each rep was extremely important to make small changes that can make a difference on a Friday night. I have teamed up with another assistant coach, Ryan Bloom, to split the LB group. switch after five minutes, and get through more drills. He has coached LBs as long as I have and has a great eye for detail that the boys really need. Indy time is all about getting the reps to prepare us for inside rush, skelly, and team time.

The Stratford program has created real students of the game. After the DC & OC put in notes from Friday night's game, the players take notes on their positions—offense, defense, and special teams. On Mondays, we start the week with a five-minute position meeting for each offense and defense-grades 9-12. This is often coach & player led with great ideas being shared each week. The humility of the players has been awesome to see—not just a football skill, but a lifelong skill that is difficult to teach. I also take blame for not preparing the LBs for success if we struggle. It is important to show players we also make mistakes and must own

them just like the players. After our short meeting, I do feel confident we are on the same page for the upcoming opponent.

With not much time for Indy, the following drills get us where we need to be for each practice. seeing progression into the other sessions of practice. When the LBs make the connection from Indy to inside rush, skelly, & team—it is fantastic!

DRILL #1-Stance, read step, short movement



- 1) On a set hit cadence and in a great stance, the LBs take a short read step with the inside foot-replacing the toe of the foot with their heel, three separate reps
- 2) On a set hit cadence, the LBs take the read step and come forward on a clap from me emphasizing no false steps backwards with the read step foot & staying low

ATHLETICS

CUW 2025 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

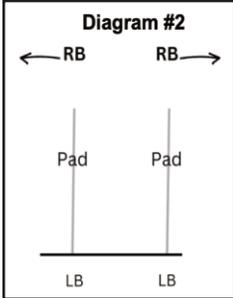
Thiel Sept. 5 (Away)	Aurora Oct. 18 (Away)
Calvin Sept. 13 (Away)	Concordia Chicago Oct. 25 (Away)
Wisconsin Lutheran Sept. 20 (Away)	Rockford Nov. 1 (Home)
Benedictine Sept. 27 (Home)	BYE WEEK Nov. 8
St. Norbert Oct. 4 (Away)	Eureka Nov. 15 (Home)
Lakeland Oct. 11 (Home)	

Good luck to all high school coaches!

- 3) On a set hit cadence, the LBs take the read step and angle shuffle forward for five yards at a 45° angle away from the read step emphasizing staying in a great stance, shoulders square to the LOS, no heel clicks or crossing feet, and being as fast as they can
 - We drill this sequence at least two times going both directions for the 1st week of camp
 - We emphasize to our players, we never want to flow laterally—we want to gain ground attacking forward or at a 45° angle. If we run sideways, we are not going to win the down!

DRILL #2-Movement to fit up-2 lines working each side

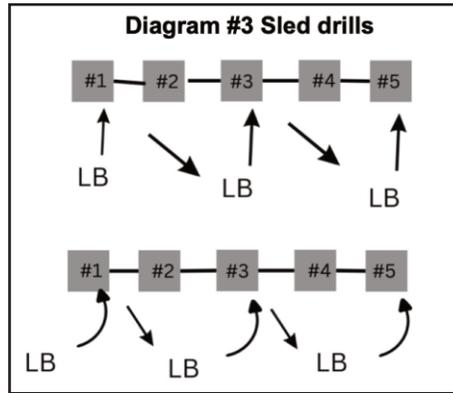
- 1) On a set hit cadence, LB takes his inside read step



- 2) LB attacks the pad with his inside shoulder/forearm & inside foot
 - Emphasize inside foot so LB can take another step to gain ground.
 - Our LBs can be more violent to create the collision needed for the next step
- 3) LB drives the pad/player back at least three steps while staying on the line
- 4) LB dips & rips with the inside shoulder past the pad/player
- 5) LB pursues the ball carrier while keying the near hip
- 6) LB fits up on the ball carrier with nearest shoulder to the ball carrier
 - Rotation is LB to RB, RB to Pad holder, Pad holder to opposite line
 - Make sure pad holder is giving resistance to the LB

DRILL #3-5 Man Sled

- 1) On a set hit cadence, the LB pad #1 with left shoulder/forearm & left (inside) foot
- 2) Drive the pad in & up while taking a step with outside (right) foot
- 3) Dip & rip with the inside shoulder and finish on the other side of the sled (past the support holding the pad) The players breakdown anticipating a tackle
- 4) LB goes to pads 3 & 5 doing the same as in the first rep
- 5) The next LB goes



when the previous player is done with pad #1.

- 6) After all LBs have gone through the sled in 1 direction, LBs work back using opposite steps
 - We also start the LBs outside of pad #1 & working on getting to the opposite side of pad #1 using a 45° attack getting to the opposite side of the pad-inside shoulder/forearm & inside foot. The LB then starts on pad #2 and gets to the other side of pad #3, goes to pad #4 to get to pad #5. The sled shows the LBs how to really collide with the pad and how it feels to create movement with their speed and violence.

DRILL #4-Pass Drops

Even though the LBs in most defensive sets are run first, we still need to work on pass drops. We want the players to be confident in their reads, use their eyes to move their bodies, and be

physical when we can. The set up is as follows:

- 1) Two LBs on a line about three yards apart facing the coaches, five yards from the LOS
- 2) On a set hit cadence, the LBs read step with the inside foot-LBs go opposite directions
- 3) LBs drop at a 45° angle about five yards looking at the imaginary two receiver (slot)
- 4) Coach throws a ball to various spots near the drop zone of the LB
 - Once we get footwork down, we will have a #2 receiver lined up as a slot, TE, or RB to make the LB change footwork to cover the #2. We tell the LBs they need to “piñata” the TE to alter the route as well as any crosser to help out with coverage. As we are not the best in pass coverage, we want our LBs to get some contact on the receiver to slow the route.

We do work in a few other drills as needed during the season if the LBs are not understanding concepts that make our defense efficient. As a team, we do a six station defensive circuit focusing on angles, tackling, vicing, and stripping that takes some pressure from Indy drills that gives the position coaches more time to focus on drills.

I challenge the LBs to be perfect on every rep during practice. They realize it is a difficult goal, but still something to strive for to make them better each opportunity. With a perfection type mindset, we are often able to achieve our daily, weekly, and season goals. I hope your team and position group is able to achieve success in 2025!

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CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD INSIDE LINEBACKER

By: Dale Lange, Assistant Coach, Lena-STAA Football Program



Dale Lange

I would like to thank the WFCA and *The Point After II* for the opportunity to present at the clinic and write a short article on a football topic. I have written a couple of coaching articles in the 1990's on pass routes and reading the linebackers and secondary, with option pass routes.

In this presentation I will talk about what qualities to look for in your inside Linebackers. Unfortunately, most of us coaches especially at small schools get what we get and have to develop our players. Fortunately, we usually get

them for four years and can start developing them and working on their skills as Freshmen. I feel the most important characteristic for a strong Linebacker is the player must be coachable; they must buy into the things you are teaching them and believe they will be successful. Next they need to develop a good tackling technique. Having coached and played rugby for decades we, use the rugby tackle and keep the head out of the impact. This helps with survival rates when you are a small team. They must like contact and not afraid to be physical. Our best Linebackers were in the weight room as Freshmen and got stronger and improved their quickness. Linebackers must be able to change directions on a dime. Quickness and lateral speed are a must.

Successful Linebackers must be intelligent, and usually have a higher GPA than many of their peers. They must be Crafty, when blitzing not to give anything away and to bluff when they are in motion; keeping the offense guessing, what they are going to do and where they are going to do it. Disciplined, Key reading - this is something I learned while playing at UW-Stout in the late 70's. Reading the keys they are assigned for the opponent we are playing that

week. Our Linebackers are reading a key, either a back or cross keying a back or reading a Line-man telling us where the offense is attacking. They cannot cheat because sooner or later that will get them into trouble and out of position to make a stop. They must be cool headed especially when things start to go wrong, and they will. This is when, if they believe in what they were taught it will work and it usually does, keep them from panicking. They are usually looked up to by the other positions on the field as the soul of the Defense. Defensive scheme will vary from team-to-team. The skills and strengths of each position and how well you match up with your opponent are sometime factors in the game's outcome. These are some of the characteristics that I consider factors in good linebackers. I have been coaching since 1980 in several conference with 11-man football, The Fox Valley Christian Conference, an independent schedule, Wolverine Conference in MI, Northern Lakes and M&O Conferences in WI, and now 8-Player with Lena-STAA for the last 21 seasons. I wish all the coaches a great season not just in records but in developing our players into future community leaders.

GOOD LUCK

**TO ALL WISCONSIN FOOTBALL COACHES
THIS SEASON.**

BLUGOLD FOOTBALL

USING MULTIPLE PURSUIT DRILLS FOR TEACHING AND FUNCTIONAL CONDITIONING

By: Aaron Kraemer, Head Football Coach, Rhinelander High School



Aaron Kraemer

As the years go by, many aspects of football practice continue to evolve. One ongoing discussion among coaches is how to best prepare athletes for the demands of competitive football. How hard should we push players to ensure they are ready to compete? Conversely, how do we scale back to keep them mentally and physically fresh for peak performance?

Ten years ago, we made a significant shift at Rhinelander High School, inspired by research conducted by our track coaches—particularly in the training of sprinters. Sprinting events require specific training tailored to the distance of the sprint. Through the insights of various coaches, including Tony Holler’s “Feed the Cats,” we discovered that to optimize sprint performance, athletes need to sprint as fast as possible, as often as possible, while staying as fresh as possible.

Translating this philosophy to football—where traditional emphasis is on physicality and toughness rather than maintaining speed and freshness—was a challenge. Implementing this approach required discussions with coaches, players, families, and the community. We ultimately decided to integrate functional conditioning within a fundamental defensive period: pursuit drills. We recognized the need to coach pursuit as it is critical to defensive success. Additionally, we aimed to condition

players for repeated high-effort actions on limited rest. Thus, we merged our conditioning period with functional pursuit drills to maximize effectiveness. To prevent monotony, we diversified our approach beyond traditional “chase the rabbit” drills. Below are three drills from our pursuit drill catalog.

Packers Pursuit

- Place the ball on the yard line of choice (we use the 10-yard line).
- Position 11 defensive players in their pre-snap alignment on the side of the ball farthest from the end zone.
- A coach straddles the football with the remaining team lined up behind him.
- The coach points to a defensive player, signaling them to begin chopping their feet in an athletic stance.
- On the whistle, the player performs an up-down while the coach points left or right.
- The first offensive player in line behind the coach sprints toward the numbers in the indicated direction.
- The defensive player must locate the runner, pursue at full speed with an optimal angle, and tap the runner’s hip before passing.
- The defender then sprints back to their original position, while the offensive player jogs to the back of the line.
- The drill continues until each defensive player completes three reps (emphasizing a “three and out” mentality).
- Defenders rotate out, allowing second-team players to get reps while the first group joins the offensive line.

Chase and Tackle Grid

- A coach stands on the extra point hash, with the team aligned on the goal line facing the field
- Players are arranged in a grid pattern: two columns and three rows (aligned with the goalposts at the 5, 10, and 15-yard lines).
- Six coaches (three per side) position themselves on the numbers with tackling rolls, dummies, or agile bags at the 10, 15, and 20-yard lines.

- On the whistle, players perform an up-down, then sprint to the nearest bag.
- Each player on a given side must fit off their teammates’ tackles—quick players have the advantage of a shorter distance to the bag.
- Players cannot tackle the same bag as another teammate.
- The drill ends when all six bags are tackled.
- Players then sprint back to the goal line while the next group prepares.
- Three variations of the drill exist: one-side, two-side, and cross-pursuit.

Team Pursuit

- A coach stands on the extra point hash, with 11 defensive players positioned and the ball on the 5-yard line.
- The rest of the team waits on the goal line for their reps.
- Four additional coaches stand on the numbers at the 10 and 15-yard lines.
- On the whistle, defensive players perform an up-down as the coach on the XP hash throws the football to one of the sideline coaches.
- All defensive players must locate the ball and pursue past the receiving coach.
- Once all players arrive, the team breaks down and sprints back to their positions.
- Like the first drill, each group completes three reps.
- This drill is timed, with group times compared against each other.
- The fastest group finishes, while the others compete in a second round.

Conclusion

Our goal was to ensure our conditioning mirrored game-day movements, incorporated multi-directional effort, and replicated game-like intensity. These drills have allowed us to build speed, endurance, and relentless pursuit habits in our players.

If you have questions about these drills or other functional conditioning strategies, feel free to contact me at:

kraemaar@rhinelander.k12.wi.us



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IMPROVING DEFENSIVE PREPARATION WITH EFFICIENT SCOUT TEAM PRACTICES

By: Brandon McCormick, Assistant Head Coach, Defensive Coordinator, Dordt University, Sioux Center, Iowa



Brandon McCormick

A key part of our defensive preparation process is having our scout team offense replicate the upcoming opponent. Like many of you, I've been working to refine this process and make it as efficient as possible. We've considered using the GoRout model, as we've heard positive reviews, but we've never made the financial commitment. Instead, our current method for creating scout cards involves using Hudl practice scripts. We download these scripts as PDFs and email them to our program's iPad (pro tip: buy the biggest screen you can find).

When creating scout cards, we highlight the jersey numbers of the opponent's top offensive skill players. Our scout team then wears these jersey numbers throughout the week, allowing our defense to visually track where the opponent's best players align in each formation. At the end of this article, you'll find an example of one of our scout cards.

Here at Dordt, we've developed two "double repetition" models for practice efficiency, with each model depending on the opponent's tendencies.

Model 1: Personnel-Driven Tendencies

At the college level, we focus more on personnel-driven play call schemes than on "formation recognition." On the first day of the week, we establish that the next 10 scout cards will cover the upcoming opponent's "top 11 personnel 1st and 2nd down plays." This helps establish personnel awareness in our players' minds, which is a key component of our defensive game plan.

For each scout card, the scout team huddles up, receives instructions, and then breaks the huddle to run the play. After completing the first rep, they race back to the line of scrimmage (LOS) and run the same play again. From a defensive play-calling perspective, the first rep will feature a base defensive call (e.g., Over Cover 3 or Over Cover 4, or whatever your base defense is). The second play call will be an auxiliary call, such as a blitz, creeper, or odd front. This allows us to get a look at two defensive play calls against one of the opponent's base plays without having the scout team huddle up again.

In total, from those 10 scout cards, we get 20 repetitions of 11 personnel, 1st and 2nd down plays.

Model 2: Formation-Driven Tendencies

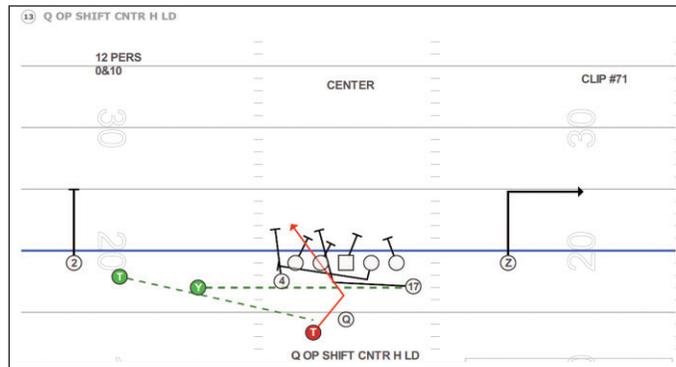
If the opponent's offense is more formation-driven, we adjust the double repetition model to focus on formations rather than personnel. In this case, we explain to our players that the next 10 scout cards will cover the upcoming opponent's "top formation 1st and 2nd down plays."

For the first rep, the defensive play call is a

"formation recognition" check. The players will see the formation upon the opponent breaking the huddle, and check to the correct formation call for that week's defensive game plan. The second play call is a defensive scheme that complements or counters the formation check. These are referred to as "keep it" calls, which override the form check and signal in the actual defensive call.

Conclusion

In 30 minutes of scout team practice, we regularly complete 20 scout cards, totaling approximately 40 repetitions, give or take a few re-dos. When substituting players, we usually complete 8 reps before rotating, ensuring each player gets to see 4 opponent scout cards. A concern many coaches have with this model is defensive players "cheating" because they know what the offense is running on the second rep. We educate our players on why we use this practice model for efficiency and encourage them to play the second rep with the same focus as the first. We have moldable players who understand that "winning" practice isn't the end goal. Overall, we haven't had issues with players cheating the second rep because they are so focused on executing the auxiliary defensive play call.



THE CORNERSTONES OF DEFENSIVE LINE PLAY

By: Wyatt Jentz, Head Football Coach, East Troy High School



Wyatt Jentz

Recent studies have suggested that roughly 65% of coaches attribute their coaching philosophies to their high school and/or college coaches. I consider myself lucky to have had not only phenomenal high school coaches (Andy and Tom Kolosso, Chris Genrich, Ben Stumpf) but also college coaches (Mark Sipple, Scott Underwood, Doug Patterson) who instilled my love for the game that still burns strong today.

During my time as a student-athlete at St. Cloud State, I played under a man by the name of Steve Gritm—who, over his 29 years, produced over 40 All-Conference honorees and six All-Americans. Among the many lessons from my time under him, my philosophies stem from

an emphasis on technique, aggressive play upfront, and a relentless approach to the craft. While he may no longer be here to teach these cornerstones, many of them still live true in philosophies I teach today.

I am sure many of us coaches have at some point heard the phrase "Alignment, assignment, and technique". We always teach our guys to "Align for Success." This might mean widening our technique in a pass rush situation to take a straight path to the quarterback's set point or adjusting foot alignment during a slant to redistribute weight and open hips for a rip. I think this also applies for coaches as we are always looking for the best opportunity to put our

players in a position to be successful. No technique is “perfect” for every athlete, team, or scheme. Whatever your basics - or cornerstones - are, believe in them wholeheartedly and teach a technique that sets your unit up for success.

I. The “Right” Stance

There is no universal “correct” stance—whether it’s a 4,3, or 2-point stance, it should allow the most explosive punch and quickest first step for the player. Having 60% of the weight forward with a toe-to-instep stagger provides an ideal explosive start, avoiding false steps like a toe-to-air alignment that resets to instep. This may also be dictated by a specific call, but our stance must be one our guys are comfortable playing in - always align for success.

II. Hit Your Aim Point

Violently striking with near hand on the breastplate and far on near shoulder simultaneously is key to controlling the offensive lineman. By creating attentive extension we can then work towards maintaining gap integrity. Attacking half a man reduces exposure to the offensive lineman and limits their ability to hold. Almost as important as the power of the strike itself are eyes that follow your strike—hitting what you can see also reinforces the importance we put on leverage as a unit. If our eyes are on our aiming point, they are not in the backfield. Vice versa - if our eyes are in the backfield before we hit our aim point we are most likely too high in terms of

our technique. Through purposeful vision we can create a violent punch that sets the tone, enabling controlled extension to locate the ball without losing leverage.

III. Keying Your Man and the Ball

Most coaches advocate keying the man or the ball, I try to emphasize “both”. Our number one priority will always be our aim point (Aka - Man), but we also want to use our peripheral vision to peek at the ball out of the corner of our eyes. Keying the man is the primary indicator for fast and violent get-offs, while keying the ball as a visual trigger gives us indication of snap/count tendencies as well. This dual focus fosters attention to detail and gives players agency in their technique. By not focusing solely on one or the other it is something our group will work on daily in practice. Focusing on these focal points is key to minimizing off-sides penalties and in the same turn maximize the aggressive nature of our get-offs.

IV. Attacking

The foundation of a great attack style front is an aggressive first step and strike—short, fast, and upfield (45 degrees roughly) toward your aim point. Without a fast and violent get-off, we will never win the neutral zone, defeat double teams, or down blocks (Indicators of great defensive line play). The effectiveness of our attack is directly driven by our ability to reach our aiming point and its movement. Attacking half

the man enhances extension to disengage and squeeze down the offensive lineman, allowing for us to steal a gap and negate traffic flow for our linebacker reads that reinforce our commitment to playing fast as a whole on defense.

V. Slants/Rips Must Be Aggressive

If aligning for success is half the equation - the other half is taking the correct, attacking steps and throwing violent rips. We teach “Short Sticks” for gap charges/slants (First Step is a 45-degree step) and “Long Sticks” for gaps farther away (First step is a parallel step with hip opening). Slant steps must be attack steps - through the gap with the foot toward the slant side, reactive to only your aim point—flattening down the line if it moves away, or using a “ricochet technique” if it moves toward you during the stick. Backing off, changing weight distribution on your feet, or tilting your stance may help based on each player, but aggression within the step and rip is non-negotiable.

VI. Pad Level and Moving Feet

High pad levels and/or dead feet are often the two leading causes behind getting driven off the ball. This also goes hand in hand with defeating double teams which can also be impossible to defeat without covering the importance of leverage and drive to split them. Keep your facemask below theirs with constant foot movement to defeat double teams—drop your pad level, violently throw your hip into one blocker, and work to their heels to split them. Staying low with pads

UW - LA CROSSE FOOTBALL 2025 SCHEDULE

9/13 at Carnegie Mellon (PA) 12 p.m. (EST)		9/20 vs Wayne State (D2) 1 p.m. (CST)
10/4 at UW Whitewater 1 p.m.		10/11 vs UW Eau Claire 11:30 a.m.
10/18 at UW Platteville 1 p.m.		10/25 vs UW Oshkosh 1 p.m.
11/1 vs UW Stout 1 p.m.		11/8 at UW River Falls 1 p.m.
 11/15 at UW Stevens Point 1 p.m.		


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under pads and screws under screws, achieved by bending, is a critical adjustment for leverage as a defensive lineman.

VII. Hands

Violent and active hands can be one of the most game changing factors to a defensive lineman’s game. Hand striking begins with your aim point on run downs/situations, starting with a violent low-to-high strike (thumbs up, elbows in) to gain full extension immediately—failing to extend means getting held, a reminder to a player’s own fault when frustration begins to creep in. Ways to reinforce this technique is a Two-Man Punch Drill - Pair up linemen, one strikes a pad with low-to-high hand motion while the other resists, simulating pressure—30 reps daily builds instinct. Use your hands to feel pressure and disengage (trust your hands, not your eyes), fighting pressure with pressure to sense the play without looking. In pass rush situations active hands create opportunities for

multiple attempts while rushing. Aggressive yet attentive hands are vital upfront.

VIII. Multiple Attempts in the Pass Rush

Have a plan and never rely on one move. While most interior guys build off a bull rush for moves like rips or pulls, and edge players using speed, your pass rush game plan needs to be adjusted weekly by game plan. A chain of moves—power series (bull rush, butt and pull, butt and rip) when the lineman’s weight is back, or clear series (dent, sweep, chop) against extended hands—offers versatility, tailored to player preference. Close the gap with the lineman, aim for five yards quickly, and honor all pass sets—yell “draw” or “screen” and retrace if needed, as some of the best hits come from this awareness. Be relentless in your effort to the Quarterback.

IX. Just Play Football

One of my favorite Gritit sayings was “Just Play Football,” often a reminder after overanalyzing technique or a mistake on film I would

look for any variable that I could change to be successful. This is a great reminder for coaches themselves as well - football is an unpredictable game and that means mistakes will happen. Make them at full speed, never overthinking—just play football

X. Play with Emotion

Lastly - any great defensive line must play with emotion. Coach Genrich always said to play defensive line you need to be a little crazy, which no matter what your philosophies I think we can all agree upon. Football’s a privilege—play with the crazy, relentless heart of a lineman, and let every snap show why you love this game. No one is good enough to play - or coach - without emotion. It is a game that we all love for one reason or another, make sure that is seen in your play on the field.

A special thank you to two of my fellow colleagues/mentors Coaches Tom Elsen and Nick Reichert as they were essential in the creation and development of these cornerstones.

DEFENDING BUBBLE AND BUBBLE/SLIP OUT OF A 2-HIGH SHELL

By: Marcus Hofmeister, Assistant Football Coach, Lourdes Academy



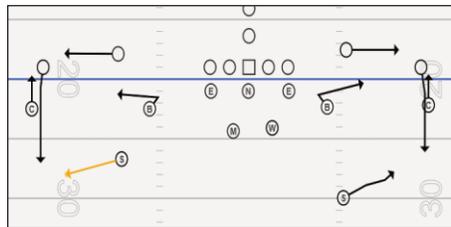
Marcus Hofmeister

We have seen the growth of spread football throughout all divisions of high school football in Wisconsin. One area we have seen teams grow, is throwing bubbles in order to get their best receiver/athlete the ball in space. If we see a team that is in a Spread or Trips offense, we will work this bubble and bubble slip drill every practice during the week.

When seeing twins, our flat defending corner facing in, lined up outside of the widest receiver, will look through #1 and #2. If the inside receiver does any lateral or backwards step, our corner will immediately go through the outside shoulder of the outside receiver to keep leverage. Your outside linebacker, when recognizing pass and

bubble, will leverage to the #2 receiver catching the bubble. Your safety, to the bubble side, will slow play and keep eyes on the #1 receiver in case he slips, blocking your corner, and stay on top of the deep throw.

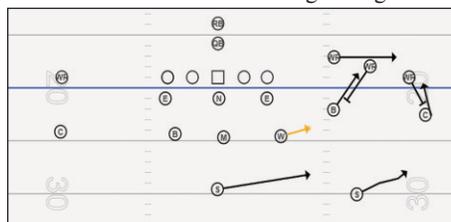
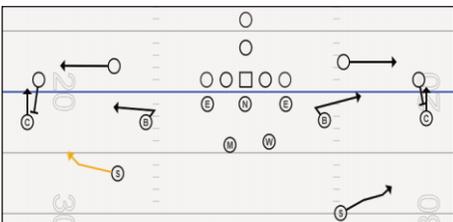
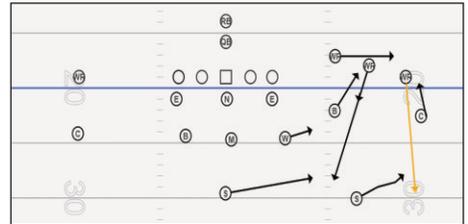
Day 1 of this drill, we only work on bubbles and hammer the emphasis of keeping outside leverage of the outside receiver. Getting hooked by the outside receiver allows the free lane to the sideline and your outside linebacker cannot help or catch the speedy slot receiver.



Day 2 of this install is all about working on the bubble slip. There are two key points of emphasis: 1. Making sure your corner gets hands on or bumps the #1 receiver and 2. Make sure your safety stays slow and does not bite on the bubble or double pass. Your safety is last resort and needs to make sure nothing gets behind him.

Out of the Trips look, we make two big changes. First, the outside linebacker will line head up over the inside receiver while staring at him at the snap. Any lateral motion observed, and he will look to attack at a 45-degree angle. Sec-

ond, the other safety moves to center field and will play any crossing route by the two outside receivers. Corner and safety to that side, their responsibility would stay the same as twins look.



“Never leave the field with a boy feeling you’re mad at him. You can chew him out, but then pat him on the shoulder”
-- Jake Gaither

INSIDE LINEBACKER FUNDAMENTALS

By: Chris Chudada, Linebackers Coach, Milwaukee Lutheran High School



Chris Chudada

I would like to thank the Wisconsin Football Coaches Association for giving me the opportunity to talk about the fundamentals of inside linebackers. A linebacker will practically be involved in every aspect of the defense. They must have excellent coordination and communication with their defensive line in our primary structure of stopping the run. They must have the same coordination and communication with the defensive backs with regard to pass coverage assignments. These assignments will require them to be the best conditioned, most

observant, most studious, most disciplined, and physically tough players on the field.

Defensive football at its very best is a team effort. As a linebacker, it is their responsibility to understand the total concept of the front and coverage call, communicate any necessary adjustment, and execute the assignment as it pertains to that adjustment. The position requires a player to be the best tackler on the squad. It is important that they take a lot of pride in becoming a great tackler. I always look for the tough scrappy kids when choosing my linebackers. Their bark isn't as important as their bite. If a kid is aggressive, I'm confident in my abilities to coach them fundamentals. If he isn't, he goes and plays a different position. I learned long ago that you cannot teach aggressiveness or nastiness; that comes from within.

There are three things a linebacker must do:

1. Out-hustle their opponent
2. Out hit their opponent
3. Be mentally tougher than their opponent

There's no excuse for not doing those 3 things. At the end of every practice and game, a linebacker should feel exhausted, because win or lose, he gave it his all. If a linebacker is not physically spent after a game, then I question the amount of effort they gave during the game.

STANCE

A linebackers' stance should create a balanced pre-hit position that allows quick movement in any direction so the assignment can be executed without any wasted movement. The two-point stance should have feet approximately shoulder width apart and toes pointed forward. The player's weight should be evenly distributed on the inside edges of the balls of their feet. There should be flexion in the hips, knees, and ankles to create good power angles. The chest should be over the toes and the back should be flat. Shoulders should be square to the line of scrimmage and hands loose between the legs ready to go.

INITIAL STEP

Many high school coaches want inside linebackers to take an attack step forward once the ball is snapped to get them downhill. I understand this philosophy and that they are run players first, but to me, taking a step forward, regardless of whether its run or pass, is a wasted step. I teach my linebackers to read with their eyes. The guard in front will always tell what the offense is doing. Whatever the guard does, we read and react off his movement.

GUARD READS

The guards will take us to the play every time. I think I saw the guard false pull only one

2025 WISCONSIN FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

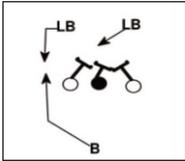
vs. MIAMI (OHIO)	AUGUST 28
vs. MIDDLE TENNESSEE	SEPTEMBER 06
AT ALABAMA	SEPTEMBER 13
vs. MARYLAND	SEPTEMBER 20
AT MICHIGAN	OCTOBER 04
vs. IOWA	OCTOBER 11
vs. OHIO STATE	OCTOBER 18
AT OREGON	OCTOBER 25
vs. WASHINGTON	NOVEMBER 08
AT INDIANA	NOVEMBER 15
vs. ILLINOIS	NOVEMBER 22
AT MINNESOTA	NOVEMBER 29

Go Wild ON WISCONSIN!

time in my coaching experience and that was the backside guard. Guard reads are part of my everyday drills (EDDs). By reading the guard we can properly recognize the blocking

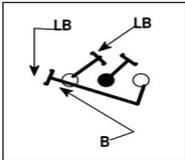
scheme and use correct technique to defeat it which will put us in the correct position to make the play.

DOWN BLOCK



The minute we see the guard on our side block down on the nose, we shoot the gap. We replace the guard's heels and are alert for something coming.

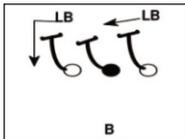
PULL BLOCK



When the guard on our side pulls, we step with it, track the nearside hip, and flow over the top of it to stop the cutback. We are careful not to over-pursue.

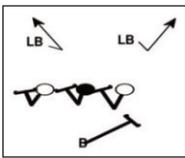
REACH BLOCK

Linebacker should shuffle for width first, then take on guard with inside foot. Squeeze guard inside and aggressively work up to the next level. Both linebackers must flow together and not allow cutback.

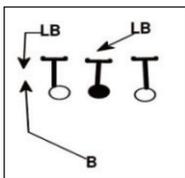


PASS BLOCK

When we see high hat (lineman stand up) we instantly step back in our zone drops (hook to curl). Our zone drops are seven yards deep on a 45 degree angle. We never take our eye off the ball when dropping back into our zones. This must be practiced everyday so that the linebacker can get to the right angle and depth every time he sinks back into coverage.



BASE BLOCK



The guard aggressively comes out at the linebacker. We attack his outside shoulder and force action inside keeping our outside shoulder free and shoulders square.

BLOCK DESTRUCTION

Hit and shed is the act of making contact with the blocker and then discarding him while maintaining proper position or getting to the correct position. When the player leads with the same side foot as his shoulder, he is in the correct position to attack a blocker. For example, if a linebacker leads into the hole with his right foot, he makes first contact with his right shoulder/forearm/hand. He must have his weight over the lead foot at contact or he could be knocked off balance and turned. He must also remain low with hips lowered so he can push upward on the blocker and stand him up with his legs, not upper body strength. If the linebacker leads with the opposite foot (commonly seen) he will always be turned. Leading with the right shoulder and the right foot back will allow him

to be spun on the left foot all day long. The blocker will constantly have to shuffle his feet underneath to even remain standing.

PURSUIT

A linebacker's objective is to get to the ball. There are different types of pursuit that must be learned.

Shuffle – A linebacker will shuffle primarily between the tackles in a high contact area.

- Slide feet laterally, do not skip or hop
- Keep shoulders square inside the tackle box
- Never cross the feet when shuffling
- Stay low
- Maintain vision
- Stay on the runner's backside hip

Alley – Alley pursuit begins when the linebacker cannot keep pace with the ball as it gains speed.

- Turn hips and run
- Keep shoulders square
- Keep a 3-yrd. cushion from runners back hip
- Be ready for the cut back

Press – Used whenever the linebacker sees an opening to the ball.

- Find open hole
- React
- Press through it

FLOW

Linebackers must pursue the football based on the action of the play. Remember to play together as a unit and recognize that each linebacker might see a different read and flow depending on if they are the play side or back side linebacker. The MIKE and WILL must work in tandem to funnel the ball carrier to each other.

Fast Flow

- Potential play structure: speed option, jet sweep, toss, outside zone (stretch)
- Running back path: side look, shoulder perpendicular to line of scrimmage
- Guard flow: wide zone step, bucket step or pull
- Linebacker post snap movement: open shoulders, get out of the box
- Block defeat: play side and back side linebacker uses dip, rip and run (no contactzone)

Split Flow

- Play structure: counter Trey, halfback counter, fullback counter, split belly, Wing-T
- Running back path: misdirection step
- Guard flow: play side uses gap step away, back side pulls away
- Linebacker post snap movement: shuffle then rock step
- Block defeat: play side and back side use compress

Slow Flow

- Potential play structure: inside zone, power, sprint draw
- Running back path: downhill with lateral step
- Guard flow: play side uses gap step away; back side uses pull away

- Linebacker post snap movement: shuffle and press to next open window
- Block defeat: play side uses compress or shock (based on cloudy or clear), back side uses compress C play with hands to squeeze (constrict) the gap

TACKLING

Tackling is the most important concept of the fundamentals – and the most obvious. Probably 90-95% of tackling is mental. You have to want to work on it, and want to hit people.

- Strong base
- Stay low
- Hat placement
- Sink the hips & clubbing arms
- Explode & wrap

Feet must be at least shoulder width apart, but preferably a step wider. Tackler must get his shoulders down, but keep eyes up. Most guys run to the ball not through the ball. The goal is to get chest to chest with the ball carrier, or at least shoe-to-shoe, and continue running through him. Never stop moving! Never stopping the feet is something that applies to every position on defense. In theory, this concept is easy to instill in the player, but in practice it is usually what separates good defenses from great ones.

To tackle the ball carrier, sink hips low (never just bend at the waist) and explode upward in a motion similar to the power-clean exercise. The defender simultaneously wraps his arms around the carrier and brings him to the ground, locking hands around him and grabbing his jersey. Keep the head up at all times!

Team pursuit is probably the most overlooked coaching point when teaching open field tackling. Relentless pursuit is a trait of any successful defense. In the open field odds are the running back will break a tackle or make someone miss in space. If your defenders are running to the ball they can usually run down the defender after one defender slows or alters the running back's path. Sometimes the best open field tackling technique is good team defensive hustle and swarming to the ball carrier.

Summary:

- Take good angles to the football.
- Run under control. Players need to keep their feet under them and maintain balance.
- The aiming point is always the inside hip of the ball carrier. Do not get caught looking at the head, shoulders, or feet of the running back. Do not get caught up in the head and shoulder fakes a running back will throw at you in the open field.
- A defender needs to stay low, shoulder pad through the inside hip, and head up. He grabs cloth (jersey) as he wraps up.
- Be smart, understand and know where your help is on the field. If near the sideline, use it as a second defender.
- Team pursuit is the best form of open field tackling. Run or pass, teach your players to get to the football. Never assume your teammate will make the tackle in the open field.

SPECIAL TEAMS

MUST-DO GAME PLANNING AND PRACTICE FOR SPECIAL TEAMS

By: Evan Walton, Special Teams Coordinator and Wide Receivers Coach, Franklin High School



Evan Walton

There is nothing like Friday nights in the fall in Wisconsin. However, coaches know that it is not just about Friday nights, but the hours of preparations from Saturday to Thursday. I have been fortunate to be the Special Teams Coordinator at Franklin High School for the past six

years under Hall of Fame coach Louis Brown who stresses the importance of Special Teams. Last season we averaged just over 20 plays a game that a Special Teams unit was on the field (20%). For a part of the game that always gets overlooked, I want to talk about six ways to prepare for Special Teams during the week.

1. Team Blocking & Tackling

I love Special Teams because it incorporates offensive and defensive players along with starters and backups. It is important to work on team blocking and tackling. My Wide Receivers are able to block because we work on stalk blocking every week. However, how can I expect them to make open field tackles if we never work on it? We have incorporated full team tackling and blocking drills to make sure that everyone has those skills. It helps in developing complete football players instead of just position specific players.

2. Hit Charts

For the last three games, make a hit chart on distance and location for your opponents punter and kickoff specialist. By watching every kick from every game, you might think that they are just spraying it around the field and have no clue what alignments should be for returners. I thought that as well. However, when you are tracking both distance and location you will be surprised with the consistency of the punter/kicker. It not only gets your guys in the right spots, but you will also know where the kicker's misses are.

3. Chart Returns

High school teams tend to have trends in the return game. Whether it is always returning left/right or every return is up their sideline, it is easy to chart the direction of returns. Once you have a telling hand on your opponent's returns, find ways for it to be hard to get to those returns. That could be kicking it away from the return, different alignments,

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SEPT 6 AT LINFIELD	SEPT 13 AT NORTH CENTRAL	SEP 20 VS. ROOSEVELT UNI.	OCT 4 VS. RIVER FALLS
OCT 11 AT STOUT	OCT 18 VS. EAU CLAIRE	OCT 25 AT LA CROSSE	NOV 1 AT PLATTEVILLE
NOV 8 VS. STEVENS POINT	NOV 15 VS. WHITEWATER		

HOME
 AWAY

or just as simple as not kicking to a certain player. When you start to see 80% of the time or more they do this, it's a good indicator that is what they are going to do against your team.

4. Key Players

While scouting your opponents, make sure you are taking note of the guys that you need to block. They are the first one down on kickoff, a gunner that gets a free release every time, or a player who makes every tackle. Put your best guys on those players and if they are not good enough, double them with two. In addition, find the players that you don't have to block. Every high school team has them. They will over pursue, miss tackles, or are just slow getting down field. When you don't need a hat on a

hat, you can now double the player(s) that will cause problems in the return game.

5. Thursday = Work Day

Thursdays at Franklin are work days. This is when we go through every special teams unit and personnel. We go over every aspect of the game, from the coin toss to taking a knee. As a coach, we need to make sure that we practice every situation that can happen in a game. If something comes up that we have not practiced, that is on me as a coach, not on the players. We work on running different units on/off the field, unique situations, and even just common situations to make sure every player knows their role. In addition, this is a time when the second unit gets reps and they understand their role as well. Players should leave Thursday having confidence

within ANY situation that could happen on Friday Nights.

6. In the Loop

My last point that I wanted to emphasize is to make sure your Head Coach is in the loop with all aspects of Special Teams. This way, when situations come up in a game or you see a certain look, your HC is comfortable with the fake punt, onside kick, etc. When the HC sees it worked on all week, they are more willing to call it in the game. Don't wait for the HC to ask about special teams, make sure you approach them and they understand why you are doing it. Make sure he has seen it worked on in practice. Once this becomes routine between you and the HC, your special teams unit will be more aggressive than complacent.

EFFECTIVE 8-PLAYER KICKOFF COVERAGE

By: Ev Wick, Head Football Coach, De Soto High School

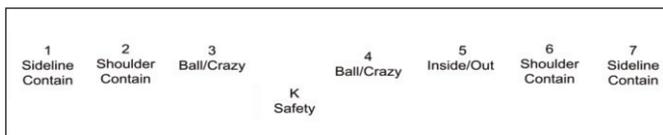


Ev Wick

I would like to take this opportunity to go through this simple, yet effective kickoff coverage system that we have implemented at De Soto. When we made the move to 8-man, we spent a fair amount of time trying to match our special teams concepts with what we were doing at the 11-man level. We're constantly trying to improve those units as we're still in the early stages of our 8-man program. We used a kickoff system similar to this when we were an 11-player program and was modeled after reading an article by Mike Mendenhall, now with Princeton University.

This chart is a basic alignment. You can move the 3/4/5 based on where you want to kick from. Just make sure you have a legal formation.

Basic Alignment



Roles/Responsibilities:

1 & 7 Sideline Contain

These players need to protect the sideline. They don't have to be the best athletes, but need to be smart and take their responsibility seriously. They need to funnel everything back into the middle of the field. Nobody should be outside of them. This will allow everyone else in coverage to help.

3/4/5 "Crazies"/Ball

These three players are your most important to the operation. We

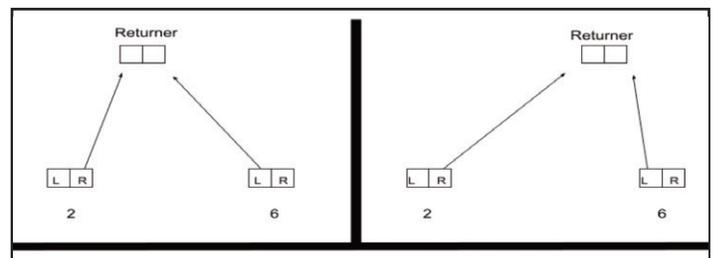
called them the "Crazies" because we wanted the kids that would fly down and do whatever it takes to make a play. These players should not run behind each other at any time. The "Crazies" can take any path they want. It is important to preach that they do not overrun the ball carrier and break down to make a play. Sometimes they get too excited and take themselves out of the play if it is not drilled into their head.

K Safety

The kicker acts as our safety. He will trail behind the play, basically splitting the field in halves to become a safety valve if the ball carrier gets free.

2 & 6 Shoulder Contain

This is probably the spot we spend the most time on in practice. We feel this spot has the most pressure and responsibility. They need to keep everything to their inside shoulder, which will/should funnel everything back into the middle to the "Crazies". This will allow everyone else in coverage to help.



- Boxes represent the shoulder of the player
- 2 & 6 should always keep the returner on their inside shoulder. Moving wider if the returner heads toward their sideline. Backside should close the gap. If their returner cuts back, backside needs to adjust the angle.

Modification:

Over the years we have had to make adjustments based on our personnel. One modification that we have had to make several times was to have our Kicker run down as a "Crazy" after he kicked the ball. He was our best player and we needed him to do that. We then had one of the 3-4-5 players fill the safety role of the kicker. We may also adjust roles weekly based on our opponent's return game, especially if there is a player back there that we need to avoid having the ball in his hands.

Practice:

When we practice our kickoff coverage in practice, we break it down by responsibility. We will have a scout team player or coach as a returner. We will pair them up accordingly: 1 & 7, 2 & 6, and 3-4-5. We will work the kicker in on all of the groups since they are mirroring the ball carrier and finding their angle. We will look at each group individually before we do the whole unit. We usually give the 2 & 6 an extra rep or two each day because they have the toughest angles to work with. We do not move onto the full unit until each group has done their reps correctly.

Closing

This simple, yet effective kickoff coverage has been great to us. It did take some time to modify it to the 8-man game. You don't need the greatest athletes in the world to make it work. You just need players who take their role seriously and work hard to get their job done. We often congratulate the player who didn't even make the tackle after the play since they made the play happen.

Thanks to the WFOA for the opportunity to share this information with you and everything they do for high school football in the state of Wisconsin.

Feel free to contact me with any questions: ewick@desoto.k12.wi.us



From the entire JTQB family, a sincere hope that you, your families and your teams are well and looking ahead to 2025 with great expectation. Thank you for all of your hard work and the tremendous impact you have on kids. We're looking forward to seeing you this summer and helping your QBs and WRs take the next steps.

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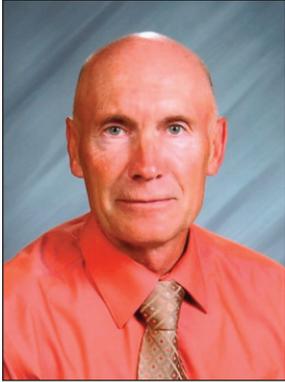
<p>SEPT. 6 1 P.M. AT AURORA</p>	<p>SEPT. 13 6 P.M. AT DUBUQUE</p>
<p>SEPT. 20 NOON VS SPRINGFIELD</p>	<p>OCT. 4 1 P.M. VS UW-STEVENS POINT</p>
<p>OCT. 11 1 P.M. AT UW-RIVER FALLS</p>	<p>OCT. 18 1 P.M. VS UW-LA CROSSE</p>
<p>OCT. 25 1 P.M. AT UW-WHITewater</p>	<p>NOV. 1 1 P.M. VS UW-OSHKOSH</p>
<p>NOV. 8 2 P.M. VS UW-STOUT</p>	<p>NOV. 15 1 P.M. AT UW-EAU CLAIRE</p>

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GENERAL FOOTBALL

THE POWER OF HABIT IN COACHING

By: Jerry Sinz, Hall of Fame Head Coach, Edgar High School



Jerry Sinz

I would like to thank the WFCa for everything they do for HS Football in Wisconsin. Particularly the Annual Spring Clinic and *The Point After II* articles.

We all understand that there are a multitude of variables involved in developing and maintaining a consistent winner in any sport. I am a firm believer that the defense or the offense you incorporate is NOT one of the keys. We have used a variety of defenses and offenses over the years and they all work well if they fit your personnel. Just last season we changed our defense between weeks two and three when our defensive captain and best defensive player broke his ankle in our week-two game vs. Stratford. Surprisingly we went on to win 12 consecutive games and the State Championship. We also made major changes to our offense as we lost our leading rusher and scorer as well. These changes require an experienced and hard working Coaching Staff as well as intelligent, dedicated, and resilient players and fortunately we had those elements.

I am a firm believer that the habits you incorporate into your daily routine are a huge factor in determining your success. In fact our most crushing defeats almost always occur when our routines are disrupted. Usually by factors beyond our immediate control. I will attempt to explain why I feel so strongly about developing good habits and thereby creating a consistent winner.

To incorporate beneficial habits into your program you must first understand a bit about how the human mind works. The most basic concept is the fact that the mind needs and craves rest and if we are doing things by habit we are on autopilot. This yields tremendous benefits at practice, in the weight room and on Friday night. Our athletes are very seldom tired at practice. They almost always ask if they can stay afterward to continue working. They also

require minimum supervision or correction once the habit is firmly established.

Here are some of the key concepts to understand about Habits:

1. **The Habit Loop:** At the core of every habit is a neurological loop consisting of three parts: The Cue, the Routine, and the Reward. The cue triggers the behavior, the routine is the behavior itself and the reward is what the brain gets out of the Habit. Recognizing these three components allows us to change our habits effectively if needed. The cue for nearly everything we do on the practice field or in the weight room is my whistle. For some it may be an air horn. If your athletes expect a cue at 3:30, give them one at 3:30, not at 3:31 or 3:32. They know the routine and do it automatically without thinking and expecting the reward. The reward can be almost insignificant but be sure to give it. An eg. for us might be a 30-45 second relaxation period where everyone lies on the ground soaking up the sun and giggling.

“We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence then is not
an Act but a Habit”

— Will Durant ~ *Attributed to Aristotle.*

2. **Cravings Drive Habits:** It is not just the reward but the craving for the reward that powers the Habit Loop. Understanding and anticipating the cravings that our habits satisfy will give you the leverage to change them when needed. This insight is crucial for developing new, healthier Routines or altering existing ones. Find things your players crave and they will develop the habits you want. Eg. Stopping at the Pizza Ranch after the State Championship Game for an All You Can Eat Buffet!
3. **The Golden Rule of Habit Change:** You can't completely extinguish a bad habit; you can only change it. Think about addicts or alcoholics or gamblers. The key here is you must keep the Cue and keep the Reward, but change the Routine that occurs as a result of the Cue.
4. **The Importance of Belief:** All change requires belief, most often facilitated by being part of a group, or team, with shared Goals. Whether it is to exercise more or to get to the State Championship, believing that change is possible is a crucial step in making it happen.

Then find a support group, your teammates, and Make it Happen.

5. **Keystone Habits Lead to Widespread Changes:** Some habits, known as Keystone Habits, such as, eating better meals, getting your sleep each night, good manners, enthusiasm, gratitude, self discipline, toughness can create a domino effect, leading to multiple positive changes in your athletes. We stress these principles almost every day in practice and meetings.
6. **Small Wins Matter:** The power of Small Wins lies in their ability to fuel major changes by using the advantage of patterns that already exist within each of us. All Coaches are instructed to celebrate the small wins by their position players each day to help build the momentum needed for more significant changes as the season progresses. I believe too many coaches spend more time pointing out the small mistakes by their players instead of the small wins. Each week in film study we say something positive about every single player on our team and very seldom say anything negative about anyone. Your players know if they made a mistake or had a bad play. Point it out privately, if at all.
7. **The Role of the Community:** Social ties and community support play a significant role in Habit change. Being a part of a community provides the social reinforcement that helps make new habits stick. A number of years ago a parent of one of our seniors began hosting pizza parties after our Friday night home games. This gave all Varsity players a place to relax, unwind, and enjoy some good food with their teammates. They now watch the game video, etc. together. It has been a great help in keeping athletes away from possible drinking parties, etc.
8. **Willpower and Self Discipline are Muscles:** Willpower is not a trait or a skill, but a muscle that gets tired as it works harder and harder. This means it also gets stronger if you train it effectively. It's crucial then to conserve willpower for things that require the most effort to change. Understanding the best times to exert self discipline can help effectively conserve our willpower for times when it is most needed. Remember things that are habits allow the brain to rest.
9. **Habits Can be Changed Anytime:** It's never too late to change a Habit. While habits become more ingrained as we age, the brain's plasticity allows us to alter them at any point in our lives. Therefore with the right approach, dedication and understanding of the Habit Loop, anyone can change their

habits. This also means if you feel your team or Coaching Staff may have developed some bad habits over the years, it is easiest to change the youngest members. You may be forced to let some of your oldest members go if they are too resistant to change.

10. Habits Shape Our Identity: Over time, our Habits become intertwined with our identity and become part of our Culture. By changing

our Habits we are not only changing our behaviors but also the perceptions of our teams and how we interact with everyone around us. This includes our classmates, our parents, the officials, the media, our teachers, etc. This transformative power of good Habits cannot be overemphasized.

Summary: I'm not here to tell you which habits you should develop with your team. Just

remember all habits consist of a Cue, a Routine, and a Reward. Remember that Keystone Habits create a domino effect that leads to widespread multiple positive changes in your team. Gratitude, Self Discipline, Good Manners, Will Power, Eating healthy, and 8+ hours of Sleep, are a few. Make them Habits and watch your team improve! "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then is not an Act but a Habit"

THE WFCA CLINIC EXPERIENCE

By: Jose Ramirez, Assistant Football Coach, Racine Horlick High School



Jose Ramirez

My experience speaking at the WFCA coaches clinic was first class. Everything was top tier as far as communication prior to the event. Explanation about when and where I'd

be speaking, and when and where to go to pick up materials. I can not thank the WFCA enough for the wonderful first experience. I was asked to speak as a result of my head coach having to pass on the opportunity due to prior professional commitments. Which I am also thankful for.

I had the opportunity to speak to a packed room about the 4-3 defense. I covered the basics of the 4-3 defense. I also spoke briefly on the expectations and wants of each position. This was to give the audience a small explanation of what to and why to look for specifics in their personal and what worked for St. Catherine's defense which was a 14-0 state championship defense. The basics in alignment and assignment against 3x1, 2x2, & empty were covered as well as some wrinkles that were unique to that specific 2024 defense and our personnel. I explained why different fronts were important for allusions & how they were purposeful in dress-

ing blitzes. I spoke about the ability to drop defensive lineman into coverage. Using different blitz packages. Once I was finished speaking and even throughout the presentation there was a delightful dialogue between the audience and I. Thoughtful questions were asked and answered to the best of my ability. All in all the experience was incredible something that I will always remember.

The experience was awesome to get together with a bunch of coaches in all different levels of experience after the presentation I spoke to coaches who were in their first year, new schools, former state championships and a few runner-ups at state looking to get closer to the gold ball. That I believe was the best part of the clinic everyone was there trying to get better because that is what the clinic is all about bettering the state's best game through a collaborative effort its a special event without a doubt.



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From Falcon Football

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BUILDING A PROGRAM FROM YOUTH TO HIGH SCHOOL

By: Bill Jacklin, Head Football Coach, Slinger High School



Bill Jacklin

I want to begin by thanking the WFCa for the opportunity to write this article and for inviting me to speak at the Spring Clinic.

The 2024 season at Slinger High School was an exciting and memorable one. I feel incredibly fortunate and honored to be part of such a supportive and passionate community. While this year brought notable success, our football program has experienced many positive seasons leading up to 2024. I believe this sustained success is the result of several key factors.

There are several key factors that have contributed to the growth and success of our football program at Slinger. These form the foundation—or pillars—of what we do: a strong youth program, community service, off-season strength training, a willingness to adapt, support for multi-sport athletes, and an emphasis on behavior and academics.

Over the years, my perspective has shifted. Winning games is still important, but it's no longer the sole focus. As a coaching staff, we've learned that when we stay committed to these pillars, we create a culture that consistently keeps us competitive—season after season.

Strong Youth Football

A strong youth football program is a cornerstone of our success at Slinger. As head coach, I personally dedicate about half of my time to working directly with our youth program. Ensuring high participation numbers at the youth level is essential—it has a lasting impact on the strength and continuity of our high school program. We focus on four main areas to build and maintain a solid foundation.

The first is our presence in elementary schools. With many sports—like club baseball and basketball—starting as early as second or third grade, we believe it's important to introduce kids to football early on. I'm fortunate to teach fourth grade at one of our elementary schools, and one of my assistant coaches teaches at another. Simply being present and engaged with students at that level helps generate interest and build relationships. If you don't

have coaches in the elementary buildings, you'll need to be creative about how you maintain a presence. One effective strategy we've used is having our high school players volunteer to read to or tutor younger students'.

We've also hosted a Packer Outreach Camp, where the Green Bay Packers bring a truck full of football equipment and set up drill stations for kids. Our players wear their jerseys and run each station, creating a fun and memorable experience for the kids while also promoting the game.

Next, we've developed a flag football program that emphasizes fun and fundamentals over competition. It includes three levels: 5K–1st grade, 2nd–3rd grade, and 4th–5th grade. The youngest group is parent-coached and plays on weeknights at a local park. A few years ago, with the support of Slinger Parks and Recreation, we shifted to having our high school players coach the 2nd–5th grade teams. We noticed that some parents were becoming too focused on winning, even at the 4th grade level, which could take away from the fun of the game.

Now, after Thursday night pasta dinners, our high school players practice with their youth teams and coach their games on Saturday mornings. While our players are naturally competitive, they understand their primary role is to create a positive experience and help young athletes fall in love with football.

In our Gridiron Club, our tackle football program, we run summer camps, have our players operate the scoreboard, clock and announce, and have high school coaches attend Saturday games. All of these show the importance of the Gridiron in helping grow our high school football program.

Finally, our high school staff provides support for our youth coaches. We provide clinics on our goals, philosophies, practice set up, drills, etc... We try and give our youth coaches as many tools as possible to help their success.

Community Service

In addition to being active within our school, we make it a priority to give back to the Slinger community. It's a valuable experience for our players to serve the same community that supports them throughout the season. While we don't participate in a large number of service events, we focus on doing an outstanding job with the ones that matter most to us.

One of the highlights is our Adaptive Basketball Tournament, an event that continues to grow each year. Slinger and Hartford High School sports teams compete in a fun and spirited basketball tournament against athletes with special needs. I'm incredibly proud of how our players embrace this event—not as an opportunity to showcase themselves, but as a chance to bring joy to others. It's a one-day event that leaves lasting smiles on everyone's faces.

We also partner with Hartford High School Football to support the Relay for Life, held each June. Together, we handle setup, concessions, and cleanup for this powerful event, which celebrates cancer survivors and honors those who have lost their lives to the disease.

Lastly, the event closest to my heart is our annual Coaches vs. Cancer football game against Hartford. Started in 2011, this tradition has grown every year. I want to give special credit to Deb Martola, the driving force behind the event, and John Redders, Hartford's head coach, for helping make it a tremendous success. Over the past 14 years, we've raised more than \$187,000 for cancer research and support.

Weight Room

Another essential part of our program is our off-season lifting. I don't believe the specific program you run is as important as your level of investment in it. If you want buy-in and long-term success, you have to be present. Many of our coaches are in the weight room daily, helping, encouraging, and motivating our athletes.

Personally, I love the off-season. It's when I really get the chance to connect with our players. The regular season can be hectic and fast-paced, leaving little time for building meaningful relationships with every athlete in the program. The off-season gives us that opportunity.

To keep things fun and competitive, we incorporate mini competitions each week. These not only push our athletes but also keep the atmosphere energetic and engaging. We've seen great buy-in because we're consistent, we show up, and we make it enjoyable.

Adapt/Change/Improve

Having a willingness to change as the years pass, will make your program better and a consistent winner. A change this year that made a huge difference in our success was to two-platoon. Like many staffs, we meet in the off-season to discuss ways we can get better. This past off-season we really looked at why we were having regular season success, but as we advanced deeper in the playoffs, we weren't getting past level 3 of the playoffs. The thing that stood out was that we were losing to teams that were two-platooning. We decided, nervously, to go all in on two-platooning. There were some growing pains at first, like how to structure practices, should we have some two way players, and how to balance competitiveness with togetherness. However, the positives were huge. We had more energy and were healthier due to players playing on only one side of the ball. By week 6, the complexity of both our offense and defense were farther than they had been in the past. In addition, players who in the past may have been third or fourth string knew they had a better chance to see the field. This definitely showed on the practice field.

This willingness to change had a direct impact on this past season’s success.

Multi-Sport/Grades

Like all programs, we encourage all our players to participate in other sports. I would say about 85% of our players are multi-sport athletes. Being a multi-sport athlete is important for several reasons, especially at the youth and high school levels. Here are the key benefits: Playing the same sport year-round increases the risk of physical burnout and overuse injuries. Multi-sport athletes use different muscle groups and movement patterns, allowing their bodies to recover and develop more evenly. Different sports require different skills—speed, agility, coordination, balance, strength, and hand-eye coordination. Athletes who participate in multiple sports tend to be more well-rounded, adaptable, and physically capable across various situations. Competing in different environments teaches athletes how to handle pressure, adversity, and success. Each sport presents unique challenges, which helps athletes develop resilience and confidence. Multi-sport athletes contribute to more than one program, helping build a stronger overall athletic culture. It also fosters school spirit and camaraderie, as students support each other across different sports seasons.

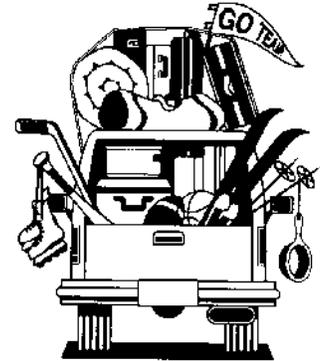
We feel good grades are critically important to our high school football program—for both the individual players and the team as a whole. Here’s why, especially in the context of regular

grade checks like the ones we do every two weeks: First and foremost, student-athletes must meet academic standards to stay eligible to play. Regular grade checks help ensure players stay on track and avoid surprises. Success on the field starts with habits off the field. Good academic performance shows that players are disciplined, manage their time well, and take responsibility for their actions—qualities that directly translate to football. When our team shows academic effort and respect for teachers, it builds strong relationships between our program and the high school staff. That positive reputation benefits everyone—players, coaches, and the Slinger High School community.

Final Thoughts

Surround yourself with great people—especially your coaching staff. Invest significant time in your youth program, as it lays the foundation for long-term success. Be present beyond the football field; relationships built in the hallways, classrooms, and community are just as important as those built at practice. Always be genuine—be yourself. Authenticity builds trust with players, parents, and fellow coaches. Make sure you have a strong support system, both professionally and personally. Keep faith at the center of your journey—having God in your life provides purpose and perspective. And finally, never underestimate the power of small gestures. Sometimes the simplest actions, those that require the least effort, can have the most profound impact on someone else.

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OR CHANGED YOUR
EMAIL ADDRESS?**



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Drop us a line at:
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THANK YOU!



St. Norbert College Green Knights Football



19
CONFERENCE
CHAMPIONSHIPS

13
NCAA DIV III
PLAYOFF
APPEARANCES

2025 schedule

- Sat., Sept. 6 **Wabash College**
- Sat., Sept. 13 **at UW-Stevens Point**
- Sat., Sept. 20 **at Concordia Univ. Chicago**
- Sat., Oct. 4 **Concordia Univ. Wisconsin**
- Sat., Oct. 11 **at Wis. Lutheran College**
- Sat., Oct. 18 **Eureka College**
- Sat., Oct. 25 **Rockford Univ.**
- Sat., Nov. 1 **Benedictine Univ.**
- Sat., Nov. 8 **at Aurora Univ.**
- Sat., Nov. 15 **at Lakeland Univ.**

TEN KEYS TO BUILDING A CHAMPIONSHIP PROGRAM

By: Jason Tubbs, Head Football Coach, Stratford High School



Jason Tubbs

I would like to first thank the WFCAs for this opportunity to share an article with the football community of Wisconsin. As I reflect on my football coaching career, the WFCAs has been a big part of my growth with amazing clinics, opportunities to participate in All-Star games, and connections to great coaches throughout the state. With 30 plus years coaching football in multiple states, I've had a lot of great memories and teams to celebrate. At Stratford, I was fortunate to coach in 11 state championship games as an assistant, head coach, and as a dad. From those experiences I have come up with 10 keys that have worked in Stratford. I like to think that some of the following keys will work in all football programs, but my experiences are geared more towards smaller enrolled schools.

1. **Team Culture:** There is a reason that team culture is my number one. I have seen a lot of talented football teams come up short in big games because of their team culture. Building connections with your athletes is a big component of team culture. Listening to their needs and developing a rapport that goes beyond football is crucial. There are some great resources available to coaches, the two I have incorporated are: Tim and Brian Kight's methods and Joe Ehrman's Inside Out coaching. Developing a team culture playbook as well as investing in your why will pay dividends when games and life gets difficult.

2. **Community Support:** Football is an expensive sport when you have expensive equipment, uniforms, technology, and everything in between to pay for. Schools across the state are cutting athletic budgets and teams need to fill the void. Developing a Club to help fundraise is an absolute need to compete at a high level. The Clubs should have parents, alumni, youth teams, and administrators support within your community. I was fortunate that my Community Club has helped pay for coach buses, end zone and sideline video equipment, practice equipment for all levels, and weight room/training room needs.

3. **Off Season Buy In:** Once you get culture and community support established, getting your athletes to buy into your program starts in the off season. Football doesn't have club ball issues yet, but your multi-sport athletes definitely have other commitments, and getting them to carve out time is super important. Hopefully, 7-on-7 leagues, camps, and combines are encouraged by your staff. In addition, weight and speed training is year-round now, and with any luck other sports are including it within their programs. Developing a summer school strength program is a must, as well as utilizing your contact days for basic fundamentals and installs.

4. **Numbers in the Program:** Football participation is decreasing throughout the state of Wisconsin and it is very difficult to have three levels of high school football these days. Developing a youth football program and a middle school program is also a difficult task to achieve. My biggest recommendation is to try everything you can to make football fun and competitive at the younger levels. In my opinion, flag or tackle is insignificant, the younger players need to have fun and develop the love of the game. If they are having fun, they will be your best recruiter that will increase numbers at the lower levels. Getting more high school players out is connected with your team's culture, and having one-on-one discussions with current and new players.

5. **Hard Working Support Group:** The old saying it takes a village...is definitely related to a successful football program. Assistant coaches are the lifeblood of the program. They make different connections with the athletes as well as implement your system. Sharing the workload is crucial to winning games. Trying to do everything yourself could possibly lead to career burnout. Having quality team managers at all levels boosts your program up during practices and especially games. Filming is a huge part of football and having reliable individuals running your cameras and technology is a must. Finally, a quality athletic trainer that understands the needs of the players and works with them on their rehab is huge going through a long physical season.

6. **Blocking and Tackling Drills:** Blocking and tackling is a huge part of the game of football, and championship teams do both well. Having a weekly routine with both of these components is a must. We have a tackling circuit every Tuesday with all levels participating. We try not to beat the players up in these drills, and focus more on the details of tackling. Head placement, drive for five, and gator rolls are crucial to a quality defense.

For blocking, we also have base blocking station work during the week. Sometimes it is 7-man sled work or chutes for pad level, but both have to be drilled weekly to be a successful running team.

7. **Practice Structure for Weekly Opponent:** Being a team that has multiple players playing both ways, practice organization is quite important week to week. Getting quality reps at their positions to perform their jobs on the field is a difficult task. We found using offensive pods was one way to increase players' knowledge and productivity. We will group certain positions to focus on 1-2 parts of their jobs. For example: tackles and tight ends working on combo down blocks while the centers, guards, and full backs are working on pulls and kick out blocks. Both groups are working on their techniques as well as specifically what the week's opponent's defensive alignment tendencies are. On the defensive side, we structure practice to counter what the opponent's offensive keys are. If a team runs the ball a lot we will crank up inside run plays, and if a team is a passing team, then 7-on-7 is our emphasis. Tweaking every week's goals is a great way to develop the needed skills on game night.

8. **Team Leadership:** Being a team leader can be a difficult job especially telling your friends/teammates to act accordingly. One thing that a lot of teams are implementing is a leadership council to provide skills needed for your captains and leaders of your teams. Having all grades part of the council helps build future captains as well as developing leadership skills throughout the program. Hopefully, the leaders will initiate film nights, team outings, and other team bonding events. In my opinion, the buy-in to your program gets stronger and players will put more effort into the sport knowing they are playing for their buddies.

9. **Do the Little Things:** Earlier in my head coaching career I learned the hard way that not doing the little things in football can cost your team wins. In August is a great time to implement ball security and turnover drills for your team. However, continuing with those drills can get lost once the week-to-week grind of the regular season begins. Finding some time for these drills really paid dividends the past three seasons. Another little thing that can be missed is communication throughout the game. Making sure the whole O line and defense is on the same page prior to the snap leads to less mental mistakes. Finally, every team is watching game film and opponent scout film, but are your players and coaches locked in on the keys of the game? Usually

the answer is between probably not and watching the games on their phones!
 10. Special Teams: I'm guilty of not stressing special teams and losing games because of that lack of importance. However, everyone should learn from their mistakes, and we

started implementing weekly practice time to special teams, and it paid off. Having consistent kicking and punting teams made our defense better as well as increasing our points on average. At our level, we try to incorporate as many non-starters into the spe-

cial teams and get those players to buy into what their role is for the team.
 If any school would like to sit down and discuss these 10 keys more in depth, reach out through email and we can discuss consulting options. jktubbs2001@gmail.com

FOURTH QUARTER MENTALITY

By: Brandon Baldry, Co-Head Football Coach, New Auburn High School



Brandon Baldry

The past two seasons, the Trojans Football Program found new life. After having many losing and winless seasons for almost a decade, we set new program records on both sides of the

ball. We can accredit this to our "Fourth Quarter Mentality". Everything we do Monday through Friday is based on the Fourth quarter.

For those who don't know, the last two seasons, we have been that old school ugly football team, running the ball from the I formation behind 1,200 pounds on our offensive line. Nothing flashy, nothing fancy, just power football. Our philosophy was to wear down teams as the game went on. For us to execute this at a high rate, we had to be able to excel in the fourth quarter when our opposition was tired. So, we practiced all four quarters in everything we did.

When planning practices, we based them on the four quarters. First Quarter was our stretches, team talk, warm ups, and progression drills. The Second Quarter was our fundamental and agility drills. The Third Quarter was our implementation of our scheme for offense and defenses breaking out in our skilled groups. The

Fourth Quarter was our team offense, team defense, and special teams, (always leave time for special teams). Now, this sounds like a pretty common practice set up, however we put emphasis on each quarter.

We didn't stop there. When we ran ARQ or agility circuits we did our circuits four times, each one labeled 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th quarter, and the occasional overtime if I felt we weren't performing high enough. When we ran any drill that allowed us to run through four times, we did it and we did it with a purpose. We end all practices with conditioning. We condition with a purpose. The bulk of our conditioning is done through our drills and circuits, but the end of practice conditioning was special. We either ended with a team building conditioning drill or the timed four quarter sprints.

The timed four quarter sprints, aka "get to the sideline," has been a staple of our program

2025 POINTER FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Opponent	Date	Notes
ALBION	SEPT 6	(SPUD BOWL)
ST. NORBERT	SEPT 13	(PINK GAME)
PACIFIC (OR)	SEPT 20	
PLATTEVILLE	OCT 4	
WHITEWATER	OCT 11	
RIVER FALLS	OCT 18	(HOMECOMING)
STOUT	OCT 25	
EAU CLAIRE	NOV 1	
OSHKOSH	NOV 8	
LA CROSSE	NOV 15	(SENIOR DAY)

HOME | AWAY

Logos: UWSP, WIAC, Nike

the last two years. For this drill we split up into two groups: backs and linemen. One group will line up on the sideline of our 40-yard field, while the other group waits. When the whistle blows, the timer starts, and the first group will sprint from one sideline to the opposite sideline and then sprint back across the line. The timer stops when the last person crosses the sideline. Once again, a pretty basic drill, however we add a “Four Quarter Mentality” to it.

We add our “Four Quarter Mentality”, through timing and attempts. We get our baseline times during contact days in the summer. Each group gets a baseline time to start with, from there we decrease the time every time we run the drill throughout the season. The time also decreases, quarter by quarter. If a group crosses the line, and they have not met their goal, we cannot move on to the next quarter. We must try again, and again, and again until we do. We bat-

tled through every quarter until we reached our goal in the fourth quarter.

I believe this simple conditioning drill teaches our players to value their time and energy and to be purposeful in everything they do. We cannot move from one quarter to the next without giving our all. If one of us dogs it, the whole team suffers. We teach and train our bodies that they can do amazing things when we are mentally prepared for them. Champions are made in the fourth Quarter.

AN EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME

By: James Becker, Assistant Football Coach, Milwaukee University High School



James Becker

I would like to thank coaches Jake Davis and Joel Nellis for reaching out about writing an article for this fantastic resource for coaches throughout the state. Instead of talking about schemes or a favorite drill it occurred to me that something deeper was necessary, an article of gratitude to the many people who have impacted me on my journey, and the greatest coaches association in the country.

In 2023 I was blessed to be a small part of the Division 1 State Champion Marquette Hilltoppers, a team that never blinked despite what was going on around them. We gained our strength from coach Keith Klestinski, who was mourning the loss of his father, and our dear friend and colleague Jeff Bolle who was battling terminal cancer. Regardless of the physical and mental pain both of these men were fighting, they showed up, each day, committed to making us better, and on a personal level, keeping me sane. As the season progressed the realization that we had something special began to set in

until coach Gumm and Sussex Hamilton dealt us the dose of reality we deserved. In that moment the fighting spirit of our two warriors guided our way. Our athletes never blinked again, and, under the lights of Camp Randall Stadium were able to hoist that Gold Ball to the sky in honor of not only Marquette High, but in honor of those who supported us on our journey.

After the season I received an email from the Broyles Association informing me that as the current state assistant coach of the year, I was invited to accept the national high school award in Hot Springs, Arkansas which occurred in mid February. Knowing what the Broyles Award means to so many coaches at the collegiate and high school levels, I was blown away. As I shared the news with my rock, my wife Brandi, I realized just how special this was, and how many people deserve the credit for putting me in a position to accept an award, not for me, but for them. From my mentor and WFC Hall of Famer, Dave Keel, who gave me the opportunity to fall in love with the game, and later coaching, Brian Sommers, my long-time friend and head coach at University School, to Drake Zortman who was able to cast a vote for me as state assistant, and to coach Klestinski who took a chance and gave me an opportunity to be a part of the MUHS family, I need to say thank you.

When we arrived in Arkansas and began to meet the other award winners I had another epiphany, one that struck me over a conversation with a group of coaches at the dinner table. This profession is not only about wins and losses, or Xs and Os (there were 30 guys there much more accomplished than me in those avenues), but about relationships. Relationships with the kids we are fortunate to

coach, and relationships with our coaching brethren. When my name was called and the state of Wisconsin along with it, I felt a great sense of humility realizing that I was representing the state where some of the country's best minds call home. That moment made me think of what this game and state have blessed me with, and the men who impact me on a constant basis. Coach Stenbroten from UWOC, coach Lucchesi from Muskego who had some tremendous words or encouragement and advice as we headed into the state game, coach Sarver who has been a part of the All-Star game opportunities I have had, coaches Jeff Ferguson, Vince LoCoco, Jon Kaszubowski, Everett Jenkins, and Jake Josetti, all of you have impacted me in more ways than you know. To the coaches of the Greater Metro Conference, thank you for making me a better coach through your expertise and trying to defend you each week, and finally, to the staff at MUHS, this award was given to one person but is a direct reflection of all of you and your tireless work.

There will be others, far more deserving, who receive this award and my advice to you is to embrace those moments, reflect on the relationships, and thank the people who supported you through the ups and downs the game of football and life brings, and know you belong. Like myself, you will be more than the award, you'll be a representative of the WFC and the thousands in this state who dedicate their time and expertise to making those around them better, it's an experience of a lifetime.

James Becker is the 2023 WFC Assistant Coach of the Year & 2024 High School Broyles Award Recipient

Is there something you would like to share with your peers? Submit your article for...

“The Point After II”

Articles may be emailed to the WFC office at office@wifca.org, or send paper copy to:
WFC, PO Box 8, Poynette, WI 53955. Please include the title of the article, and the name, school and title of the author, along with the author's photograph!

LESSONS LEARNED FROM A HALL OF FAME COACH

By: Jamie Link, Head Football Coach, Cambria-Friesland



Jamie Link

In November of 2023, I was sitting at a local establishment with a man who in many ways was a second father figure to me, Hall of Fame Coach, Jim Bylsma. We had recently finished up a season that ended with Level 2 loss and reflected on the season and what the future might look like. After some time, the conversation changed and it became obvious what was coming next..... retirement. Coach Bylsma had given 41 years to Cambria-Friesland and in that time came highs and lows, but he felt that this

was his time to step away and hoped that I would be the one to replace him.

Fast forward to February of 2024 and I am hired as the 18th head football for Cambria-Friesland. I consider myself a third generation Hilltopper as my grandfather and father both graduated and played football at the school, so to take on this role of head coach was both exciting and surreal. A feeling I am sure most feel when they have an opportunity to give back to their alma mater. I felt I was ready though, not because of the years I had spent on the sidelines in various roles, but because I had been Coach Bylsma’s assistant for the previous four years. I consider it my Master-Class for coaching. It was one thing to learn as one of his players, but to see the process as his assistant helped me considerably grow as a person and as a coach. There are five lessons I would like to share with you today that have helped me establish myself as a first year head coach this past season.

Lesson 1: If The Culture Isn’t Broken, Don’t Fix It!

The values of Cambria-Friesland football established by Coach Bylsma were simple: Faith, Family, and Football. Coach Bylsma was

unapologetically a Christian man who found peace and guidance in his religious beliefs. However, he never forced his beliefs upon any of his players or coaches. He led a voluntary quiet meditation before each game with his players and coaches, but rarely talked openly about any specific beliefs. Any biblical story told was always centered around the game to be played. This past season, we took it one step further to explain to our players that faith is just “belief without guarantees.” That includes themselves, their teammates, their coaches, and their family. We refer back to this consistently when talking about the qualities we wish to see in them. Qualities like hard work, perseverance, and selflessness. Faith is then followed by family. This was as much true for his assistant coaches as his players. As a member of his staff, we never met on the weekends. Communication would happen on Saturday and/or Sunday. Game planning would happen over the course of Sunday and into Monday. I have continued to not meet with my staff on the weekends. Coaches, by our nature, tend to be workaholics and can be consumed by the work. However, our time with our families is time we can’t get back. As important as the game of football is to all of us, it’s more important to us



UW-STOUT FOOTBALL

2025 SCHEDULE

Sep. 6	Dubuque (IA)
Sep. 13	Wartburg (IA)
Sep. 20	at Northwestern (MN)
Oct. 4	at UW-Eau Claire
Oct. 11	UW-Oshkosh
Oct. 17	at UW-Whitewater
Oct. 25	UW-Stevens Point
Nov. 1	at UW-La Crosse
Nov. 8	at UW-Platteville
Nov. 15	UW-River Falls



that we are using the game of football to develop boys into scholars and gentlemen. Finally, the game of football itself. For 41 years, Cambria-Friesland has played one brand of football, a power running attack. It's the brand that has won 16 conference championships and 2 state championship appearances. Our community and athletes are bought into that philosophy. If it's not broken, don't fix it.

Lesson 2: No Job Is A Stepping Stone, But An Opportunity

Coach would joke that the only reason he coached at Cambria-Friesland for so long was because he could not move his farm. He had plenty of opportunities to coach at much larger high schools or even at the college level. While his farm did play a role in him staying, he also thoroughly enjoyed playing the underdog. We all coach for different reasons. However, I feel that reason should not be to excel in order to move onto the next, "bigger and better" job. When Coach Bylsma was hired as head coach in 1982, Cambria-Friesland was not a good program. In fact, the school could not hold a coach in the position for more than three or four seasons and had only won three conference titles in 44 years. The program needed a complete renovation. The process was slow, but rewarding. In my particular case, I have the luxury of coming into the program after all the major work has been done. Yet, I am taking over the smallest (by school enrollment) 11-man program in the state of Wisconsin. My problems are different from Coach Bylsma's when he started. Some of those problems are within my control, but some are outside my control. Yet, there is no place I would rather be.

Lesson 3: Do Not Be Afraid To Change, But Do Not Lose Your Identity In The Process.

In 1995, Cambria-Friesland had its greatest season in school history up to that point. Having won three of the past four conference titles, the team fought all the way to Madison. Unfortu-

nately between the weather and field conditions on the old Camp Randall astroturf, they lost 6-3 to Turtle Lake. Yet it would be the next game between Darlington and Hurley that would change the course of our program. Darlington, under Coach Douglas McArthur, defeated Hurley 63-6 running a different version of the Wing-T that had just gotten Cambria-Friesland to state, a version of the Mayville Wing-T run to success by Coach Alex Hilber. Even after a state appearance, Coach Bylsma felt change was necessary because it would make the team more competitive, but would not change the identity of the program that had been established. History would prove him right by winning 158 games and 12 conference championships over the next 26 years. Time and time again, hard decisions about the offense were made in order to ensure the best chance at success with the limited athletes we tend to have. Yet, it should never come at the expense of the identity and culture established.

Lesson 4: A Head Coach Is Only As Good As The Assistants Around Him

It took Coach Bylsma 11 seasons to win his first conference title in 1992. Two significant assistants would join his staff prior to that 1992 season: Defensive Coordinator and Hall of Fame Coach Jim Knudson and Offensive Coordinator and Hall of Fame Coach Scott Wotruba. For over 30 years, the three of them brought success and consistency to the program. When many programs struggle to keep coaches around for one, two, or three years, the idea of having coaches around for three decades is unheard of. However if you look at some of the best programs in the state, you see a similar trend. Coaches who have stayed together for a long time, maybe not three decades, but a long time. Finding great assistants is not easy. I could argue Coach Bylsma had two fall into his lap, two men who were teachers in the building and wanted to coach. In my case, I know I will not have many future teaching colleagues who are

interested in coaching football. So I have looked within our program. A number of recent graduates have expressed interest in coaching. Creating an opportunity for graduates by acting as a coaching mentor has created a pipeline of new coaches that we would not have had before.

Lesson 5: When All Else Fails, Keep Running The Ball

Prior to Coach Bylsma being hired as head coach, Cambria played a more wide open, pass friendly offense. This resulted in few players being excited about playing and even fewer wins. The first offense he installed upon being hired was the wishbone. The Wishbone would transition into the Power T to eventually the Wing-T. No matter what offense was run the point was clear: Run The Ball and Good Things Will Happen. The reasoning was simple; with as few athletes as we have at our disposal, we do not have the luxury of spending four years to develop a quarterback. It has just been much easier to develop effective running backs to take pressure off our first or second year starting quarterbacks. That has not changed since I have taken over.

Taking over for a "legend" can be daunting. Trying to live up to someone else's standard with the expectation that you can do things just as well as he did. This is also why so many coaches "fail" after taking over for someone who had a lot of success. It took the Packers 25 years and five coaches to replace Vince Lombardi with someone who brought success back to Green Bay. I have seen many coaches' "failure" trying to emulate their predecessors and expecting the same results. An imitation is never as good as the genuine article. My approach has been to take the best parts of our program and keep those, while also recognizing and working to improve the parts that need work, while also being true to who I am as a coach. As a final note, I would like to thank Kevin Wopat and the WFCFA for the opportunity to share these thoughts with you.

HOW TO GET BUY-IN FROM YOUR PLAYERS

By: Trent Nyhus, Head Football Coach, Unity High School



Trent Nyhus

First, I want to thank the WFCFA for everything they do for our state, coaches, and players.

One of the most common questions I hear from fellow coaches is, "How can I get my players to buy into the program?" It's a question I've asked myself many times. We all want our players to commit fully—not just to the program, but also to us as coaches.

As I reflected on this challenge, I realized that the first place to start was with myself. As an out-of-school coach, I don't see the players every day, which makes building those relationships even more crucial.

There were three key areas I identified for improvement:

1. Be Present and Engaged

I realized that I needed to be more than just a figure in the weight room. I started actively engaging with the players—first bumps, high fives, and taking time to talk

with them between sets. I didn't want them just going through the motions. I wanted them to work hard, feel supported, and know that I genuinely cared about them. Whether it's cracking jokes, having "90s Country Fridays," or theme lifts, the atmosphere should be positive and energized. If you set a theme, make sure you're participating too—lead by example.

2. Support Them Beyond Football

I always preached the importance of being a multi-sport athlete, but I wasn't showing up to their games or practices in other sports. Now, I make it a point to attend wrestling matches, basketball games, baseball games, school plays, or band performances—whatever they're involved in. I'm not perfect; with four kids, a wife who's also

a head coach, and running a small business, it's hard to make every event. But even showing up once or twice makes a difference. It shows the players that you care about them as people, not just athletes.

3. Build Personal Connections

The final thing I learned is that football may not be every kid's true love. So, I started taking an interest in what they care about, whether it's cars, hunting, or PS5 games. I make it a goal to learn something new about a player every day. It's a tough task, but it's incredibly rewarding to get to know the players on a deeper level. These connections also help build trust, making players more likely to stick with the program when things get tough.

I also make sure to connect with new players who join the program. It's not just about recruiting the hallways—it's about keeping those kids once they're part of the team. I take time to check in with them, ask how they're adjusting, and make sure they know they're appreciated.

Lessons from Leadership Books

One of the books that helped shape my approach was Extreme Ownership by Jocko Willink. I'm sure many of you have read it, but if you haven't, I highly recommend it. The concept of taking full ownership as a leader resonated with me. I knew that if I wanted the players to buy into the weight room, I had to lead the charge by being present and engaged. It wasn't enough to

just show up—I had to show them what hard work and commitment looked like.

Final Thoughts

There's no one-size-fits-all answer to getting players to buy into your program. It's a combination of factors—being present, building personal connections, supporting them outside of football, and leading by example. These steps have made a noticeable difference in the programs I've been part of, and I hope they can help you too.

Ultimately, when we talk about "buy-in," it's not about a quick fix. It's about investing in your players, showing them you care, and earning their trust. When you do that, the results will follow.

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2025 SCHEDULE


 SEPT 06


 SEPT 13


 SEPT 20


 OCT 04


 OCT 11


 OCT 17


 OCT 25


 NOV 01


 NOV 8


 NOV 15



8-MAN VS. 11-MAN; SO MUCH THE SAME

By: Joe Brennan, Northwood-Salon Springs Football

Coming from 11-Man football, it was difficult to anticipate the challenges we would face in 8-man football until you actually go through it. While I wasn't hired until 2 weeks before the season started, having the soon-to-be 8-man player of the year on my team and experienced coaches sure made the transition easy. My goals were to develop the younger players, create a relaxed atmosphere, stress fundamentals, and hopefully success will follow.

What I soon realized is that my freshmen have never played contact football. While some schools start contact football much earlier, we were having to make sure kids knew the very basics of football. While that is teachable, until they overcome the apprehension of competing against players who are bigger, stronger, and faster, the learning curve is gradual.

Their development during the pre-season is instrumental, but it doesn't have the same impact as live action. The benefits of joint practices or scrimmages with another team is immeasurable. While I was fortunate to have 22 players, I know some of our opponents couldn't even suit up a scout team for their own practices. Junior Varsity games during the season are a double-edged sword. While the benefits are obvious, the games end up costing the varsity a practice day because 75% of the team is at the JV game. We watch film on Saturday's so that time is used to either condition

or watch more film. With a shortage of officials, some games are played on a Thursday which can leave us with just 2 practices before a game.

One of the most important areas of development to focus on is tackling. In addition to the drills, we will have the kids watch high school, college, and professional football tape of both exceptional and poor tackling. What may be different from other schools is that we don't tackle in practice. This mindset came from my college coach, John Gagliardi. While we practiced at full speed, we would never take someone to the ground. I can only assume that he was sick and tired of rolled ankles, broken collar bones from falling, or knee injuries from gang tackling. He would lose his mind if you touched the arm of a quarterback. What I took from it was that by game day we were so hungry to actually hit somebody!

Sometimes we as coaches focus too much on winning and forget that the game has to remain fun. I try to communicate to the players what my intentions are with play designs, route combinations, play verbiage, formations, etc... What I've found is that they will oftentimes make observations and/or suggestions that will improve the concepts. If you ask for input, you just may be surprised where great ideas come from. There are certain times during the year I will have them design a play that we will use in a game. Granted, my expectations are limited. I

have also asked the players to name a particular blitz, personnel package, or offensive play. I think they like having a voice in the process.

I try to get as much input as I can from players throughout the season. What I find to be the most beneficial is the end of season questionnaire I ask the players (and parents) for feedback on not only the program but the coaches as well. I want to know what they liked, disliked and any suggestions for next year. It's amazing there are certain things we take for granted, but to some kids, it meant the world to them. I have no problem talking to them about the mistakes I have made in my life or the circumstances I've had to overcome. I do believe in transparency. As a retired police officer, I relish every opportunity I get to humanize my profession and use it as a way to instill core values like compassion, teamwork, and respect. One example I recall was a player(s) justifying their unsportsmanlike behavior because of the opponent's verbal abuse. My immediate retort was "Do you have any idea how many times during an 8 hour shift I was called some derogatory name? Why would you possibly care what he thinks?"

At my very first coaching interview in 1990, the Athletic Director told me "You won't know if you were a good coach until long after you are gone, some ex-player will approach you on the street just to say hello." I thought that was ridiculous. I thought wrong.

USING HUDL TO PREPARE YOUR DEFENSIVE GAME PLAN

By: Dan Weiland, Assistant Football Coach, Hudson High School



Dan Weiland

When it comes to film work, I am sure most teams do something similar to us in Hudson, but if you are anything like me you are always curious to find out what other teams are doing. When I attend coaching clinics I often find myself checking out the new technology vendors, seeing if there is a session that relates to HUDL and film breakdown, or something similar to find out if there is an untapped idea.

As a veteran football coach, I have come to learn that game preparation is one of the most critical aspects of ensuring your team's success. In today's digital age, technology provides an incredible advantage, and HUDL is one of the most powerful tools available for scouting and strategizing. Here's how we utilize its features to ready our football team and prepare for opponents.

We use HUDL to track an opponent's best players and their impact on the game as well as focus on their strengths and weaknesses to determine how to neutralize them on game day. As defensive coaches, we will give the opponent's key players a 1-5 star rating with 5 being the best. This helps us and our players focus on our opponents strongest players and help us on our defensive plan of attack.

We take advantage of a couple of HUDL's add-on features. HUDL Assist and Practice Scripts are valuable features that we use. These add-ons have enhanced our game preparation and efficiency. HUDL Assist has saved us hours of data entry and the Practice Scripts has made creating the Scout plays easier to prepare for practice.

By Saturday morning we will have the HUDL Assist breakdown data from the previous

night's game. Defensively, we take a deep dive into film analysis and incorporate additional data. To streamline the process, we divide data entry tasks among coaches, each inputting information into custom columns we've created. Some of these columns include Route Combo (description of route combinations), multiple play direction columns (to or away from the TE, to or away from the field, & left or right), and also notes (other unique observations that deserve further discussion among the staff). Additionally, we have created a custom column called formation category that we use with the off-form column. While HUDL Assist will identify and input the opposing offensive formations, we then use the formation category column to group them by key similarities. These identifiers can include personnel, backfield sets, balanced receivers, or exotic formations. A formation board is then created and we write down the key plays and tendencies that correspond to them.

Once the data is entered, it's organized into various playlists, such as all offense, all run plays, all pass plays, and additional playlists based on the formation categories column. These playlists are shared with our entire defensive staff

and serve as the foundation for game planning. From there, we analyze film to scout plays, identify tendencies, and develop strategies. Specifically the formation category playlists helps us understand what our opponents patterns are and what is their plan of attack.

Our defensive position coaches use HUDL to create specialized playlists and share notes with their respective position players. They do this after games, for an upcoming opponent, and during the pre-season. We are especially heavy in our video analysis in June during the contact days, fall camp practices, and during those first few weeks of the season. This is the time when we see the most growth and the feedback that we can provide to the players helps them grow exponentially. Summer can also be a great time to use HUDL as a spark for player film study. Coaches will create summer learning film playlists for their positions. These playlists are given over our summer contact period. As the players go into the summer they will have a list of films they can learn from. These playlists will have example clips for past seasons, college and pro examples, notes and diagrams, and slides to help them prepare for August. This has been a great catalyst to get them ready and excited for the upcoming season.

Game preparation isn't just about watching film—it's about executing what you've learned on the practice field. HUDL practice scripts help our coaches design focused, efficient practices

that simulate game situations. Some of the defensive coaches have the job of using the practice scripts feature on HUDL to draw scout plays for practice. We generally draw the top six run plays, and the top six pass plays. We may do more depending on the opponent. We use iPads with the HUDL practice script plays on them to quickly show two different rotating scout huddles, so our defense can get as many reps as possible during practice. While one scout offense is running a play, the other is looking at the iPad to see what the next play is. During a ten minute period, the two huddles allow for us to be able to rotate up to three deep on defense with each player able to get a multitude of reps and see a variety of scout plays.

By Monday we are developing our game plan. HUDL allows us to create and store digital playbooks that can be easily shared with your team. While we use the playbook feature, we use it more than just a playbook, for us it is a library. We will create multiple collections of drills, clinic info diagrams, defensive calls, blitzes, and formations. It can be a great resource for helping us game plan. We already have a playbook created during the preseason, but we will look at our defensive playbook each week and decide what fits best with the upcoming opposing team's offense. If an opponent frequently runs certain plays out of specific formations or situations, we create a defensive package from our library that attempts to counter them. We

may create new defensive plays during a specific week, but we typically focus on a certain part of our playbook library that best fits attacking an opponent's offense.

Don't forget about special teams! Analyzing opponent kickoff, punt, and field goal formations can give you a critical edge in close games. In our program, each non-coordinator coach on the staff is in charge of a particular special team. They too will watch the film, create a playlist with annotations, share it with the players, and have time during the week to watch it together and talk about what they need to do to be successful. We feel this helps the coaches feel more connected and promotes their engagement with HUDL and our program.

Using HUDL effectively can give our team a major advantage when preparing for the next opponent. By breaking down film, analyzing key data, implementing a focused game plan, and maximizing practice efficiency, we ensure that our team steps onto the field with confidence. The ability to make informed decisions based on concrete data which allows us to anticipate our opponent's moves and put our players in the best possible position to succeed.

Whether you're an experienced coach or just getting started with HUDL, integrating strategies into your preparation can take your game planning to the next level. With the right approach, you can turn every week's film study into a formula for improvement.

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JOHN 15:13



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In addition, Participant/Accident Coverage is required for coaches and/or participants. Should an accident occur during a camp, clinic or event, this secondary coverage helps offset the loss suffered by families affected by such accidents.

PROCEDURE FOR CAMP INSURANCE

As a member benefit of your state coaches association, all members in good standing have a \$1,000,000 per occurrence General Liability policy limit that provides coverage for their coaching activities. In order to protect the General Liability policy from potential claims, the insurance company has mandated that all coaches must obtain signed waivers and provide Participant/Accident insurance for their participants.

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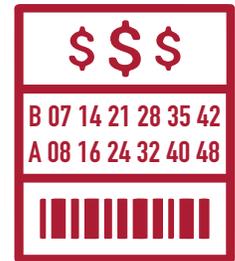
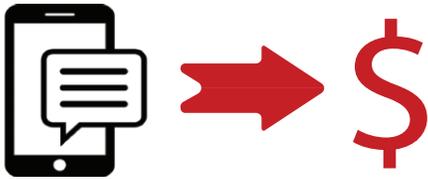
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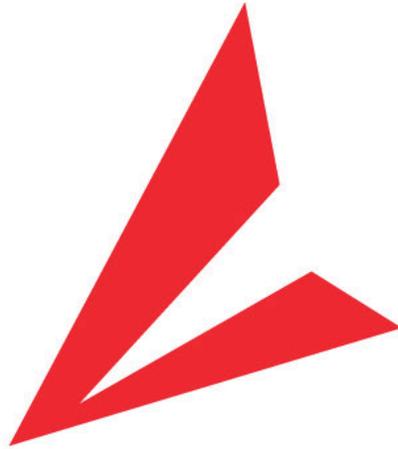


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