

**KAMLOOPS ELEMENTARY**



Elementary Flag Football  
Coaches Handbook

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## Introduction

Welcome to the wonderful world of Elementary school Flag Football. It is my intent with this handbook to make your coaching life as smooth and successful as mine has been. Over the past six years Lloyd George Elementary School in Kamloops, British Columbia, has developed a vibrant football program that is both competitive and exciting for all the students involved. Many thanks need to be extended to Don Poelzer who was instrumental in initiating this program at Lloyd George Elementary and continues to act as a consultant for flag football enthusiasts throughout our district. Don took the program he began at Lloyd George and implemented it in Logan Lake, British Columbia with an equal amount of success.

As you explore this handbook you will find a variety of tools that have assisted me to take our program to the next level. In the not to distant past Kamloops was a formidable force on the provincial football scene. Many championship teams called Kamloops their home. However, in the late eighties or early nineties sweeping educational change engulfed the school system in Kamloops resulting in a gradual crumbling of the once powerful entity that was Kamloops football.

Over the years since this change many of the larger Kamloops secondary schools have struggled to maintain their football programs. The once powerful Kam-Hi Red Devils gradually dwindled and, for a brief time, had their football program fold. The same scenario is echoed by teams like the Westsyde Wundas and the Sa-hali Sabres. This down turn coupled with a strong desire to see football promoted has resulted in the creation of a Kamloops Elementary School Flag Football League.

This league, introduced in April 2005, resulted in a strong outpouring of support for this popular school yard sport. It is the intention of this league to continue to expand throughout the Kamloops school district as more educators and students discover how ideal this sport can fit into their spring/summer intramural programming.

This handbook is designed to be a tool that any willing football enthusiast can use to introduce flag football to their school program. For those who have not yet experience the benefits of a strong intramural program this may be just the tool they require to kick start an intramural program at your school.

# **Chapter One: Developing a Strong Intramural Program**

(This Chapter is still under construction)

## **Introduction:**

In this chapter you will be introduced to the Canadian Intramural Recreation Association (CIRA) program of intramurals. This will be an extremely condensed version of this program but should provide you with the basics of how to develop an intramural program in your school. If you would like a full copy of this program please see the bibliography at the end of this handbook to obtain publisher information.

## **Why Is an Intramural Program Important?**

When used to its full potential an intramural program can be used to enhance any physical education program currently running within your school. The additional benefit comes when it is used as an option for students during extended breaks in the day e.g. lunch hour. Intramurals can be used to tie into programs running within the community as well as skill development for schools participating in district level league activity.

Intramurals can also be used as a medium for promoting the interpersonal skills that are so crucial to developing an attitude of fair play and sportsmanship. Unfortunately many students have not been exposed to coach's willing to take a stand and develop high levels of sportsmanship.

I have found that our intramural program has been instrumental in the development of a successful flag football program. Without the intramural program it would be very difficult to achieve the success we have seen at Lloyd George. As a coach I use the intramural program as a tool for the players to not only become more familiar with the sport but to practice skills they

have learned in practice. It also allows the players to try some creative plays they wouldn't necessarily use during a league game but perhaps may use during a sandlot game. What this accomplishes is a comfort with the game that a regular practice alone cannot achieve.

## **Organizing Your Intramural Program**

I would like to outline quickly how I organize my program. While it is a fairly simple plan, simple is often the most successful way of managing an intramural program. I have used this process to organize soccer, volleyball, and flag football. Really it can be used for any intramural sport you want to invest in.

The first step I always take is to figure out how much time I want to put into the program. As a teacher there are always constraints on your time. Ideally, recruiting other teachers or administrators who would be willing to assist you with some of the referee duties really help to keep you motivated to keep your program going. Recruiting some solid grade 7 students to assist you with refereeing is also a way of helping you keep your program vibrant.

Once I have decided how many days per week the program will run I then will post a sign-up form for students to indicate their interest in playing. With my program I have decided to divide my groups into grade 4/5 and grade 6/7 teams. I have found that the younger kids will be far more willing to participate when they are not playing against the older grade 6/7 students. This in itself increases your commitment as you now have twice as many games to organize/referee as if you had only one grade group participating. Let me say however, that the benefit of organizing your program this way is worth the time investment. What you end up with is a group of grade 4 students who, by the time they are old enough to play on a league team, have played the game for a minimum of two years. Another benefit is that as you are refereeing you also tend to keep your coaches hat on and therefore have two years of bonus time to work with your promising players on the intramural field. There is a reason why the Lloyd George Flag

Football league team has never been defeated in regular season play and I feel it is a direct result of time invested in the younger kids.

Okay, now I have a list of students interested in playing intramurals. Here comes the challenging part. Often kids will sign up with their friends and want to play on the same team as them. While this is a nice idea, often athletes associate with other athletes and therefore, if you don't know all your kids, you could end up with a stacked team. My method of choice is to count up how many students have signed up, divide that number so that I have teams of about 10 students, and then simply number the list from one to however many teams I get from the calculation above. For example, if I have 40 kids sign up I will number my list 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2.... All the ones go on one team all the twos on the next and so on. Having organized countless intramural teams during my teaching career, I am always amazed at how balanced the teams end up. Now there may be times where you get an imbalance, simply adjust the teams accordingly.

Setting up the schedule is the next thing to do. May I recommend having a regular calendar, a school calendar, and your personal calendar handy before beginning this process? In the early years I can't tell you how many times I have scheduled a game on an in-service day or a holiday or some other day of inconvenience. Having all these calendars handy can really help to eliminate these conflicts.

With my program I try to compact my season so that each team gets the same number of games but the season doesn't drag on forever. If each team gets five games and then play offs that is more than reasonable. With outdoor sports weather can also play a factor. As an organizer you need to decide ahead of time whether or not you will make up missed games. My suggestion is to not make them up as this can cause your season to drag on.

I like to keep track on the schedule board the teams win loss record. It helps the students see where they are in the standings and helps you determine who plays who in the play-offs. I

like to end my intramurals with a play-off series. It adds closure to the season and sets itself up nicely for a teacher's verses student's game at the end. (If you are so inclined)

For my play-off structure I usually have first play last, second play second last and so on. Eventually the two best teams will meet.

### **Midseason blues:**

One of the frustrations of an intramural program is kids who have signed up to play but then never show up for games. It frustrates the teams and it frustrates you. Ironically, it tends to happen to teams that are not winning or that students perceive to be weaker and therefore don't want to play on. My solution to this is to hold a midseason draft. I can usually tell which team(s) starts to suffer from the midseason blues fairly quickly. When this starts to happen I have the teams with strong representation chose two captains to represent their team. I then call a meeting with all the captains and have a list of students, from the "no show" teams, who have shown dedication to their team. We then draw numbers from a hat to decide a picking order and, one by one, each team picks players from the list. When the draft has concluded I reprint the teams and post them next to the season schedule on the sports board. The result is that we end up with three or four strong, well represented teams to finish off the season. In this way the students who really want to play are not penalized by the rest of their "no show" teammates and can enjoy the rest of the season on a team full of likeminded players.

### **Referees**

When I start an intramural season I usually try to recruit several keen students to assist me with my refereeing duties. It is important that you work alongside these students, showing them the way you expect referees to behave. It also lets all the players know that these students are also referees and that they will at some point be inserted as the official referee for the game. It is a way of transferring authority to these kids in a very clear way. I can't emphasize enough



the importance of getting help with your refereeing duties. In my case we have intramurals every lunch hour during school days. That could easily translate into 20 – 30 games, quite a load to carry without help and still remain motivated to carry on. My experience is that kids are quite willing to help out with this and, with the proper guidance, do very well.

## Rules and Regulations

### SD. 73 Flag football

#### Official rules

Each game will be played on the day scheduled, rain or shine

1. The referee is always right, even if he's wrong
2. Each team will field **nine players with a minimum of 3 girls on the field at one time... (see positioning diagram)**
3. Games will consist of two 15 minute halves. The clock starts when the referee whistles in the start of the play, and stops when the play concludes. The clock is also stopped during time outs
4. Teams have one time-out per half.
5. Games will start with one team kicking off to the other. The kicking and receiving team will be decided by the flip of a coin
6. The kickoff must stay in bounds. If it goes out of bound it will be re-kicked five yards back.
7. Either team can recover a kickoff provided the ball has traveled at least 10 yards from the original kickoff mark and has touched the ground.
8. Each team will have four attempts (downs) to move the ball 10 yards downfield. If a team is unable to move the ball 10 yards after the third down, it has the option to kick (punt) or gamble.
9. If a punt goes out of bounds, the team receiving the punt will scrimmage the ball at the point where it went out of bounds.
10. A player fielding a punt must be given a 5 yard zone to catch the ball. Any defensive player within that zone before the catch is made will receive a "no-yards" penalty

11. All players are encouraged to wear cleats to create a safer and level playing field.

Rules for scrimmaging the ball:

12. The point from where a play is started by the offense is called the “line of scrimmage”. Any play from the line of scrimmage must be started with a pass between the legs (snap) from the center.

13. the quarterback:

- Has 5 seconds (steamboats) to throw the ball without being pursued by the defense. After a count of 5 steamboats however, the defensive team may pursue him. *Steamboats will be counted by an official*
- Can only cross the line of scrimmage if the defense is chasing him.
- Can hand off to any member of his team
- Can throw to any member of his team.
- *Must make a reasonable effort to attempt at least two passes to each member of his team during the game*
- Cannot intentionally throw the ball away to avoid being tackled (grounding). (5yard penalty or loss of down)

14. the receivers:

- all players on the team are eligible receivers
- must have at least one foot in bounds when making a catch
- may not make any intentional contact with a defensive player while attempting to make a catch
- must start the play 1 yard behind the line of scrimmage

15. the defense:

- must line up at least 1 yard off the ball at the beginning of each play
- may not cross the line of scrimmage before 5 steamboats have been counted
- may not make intentional contact with a receiver while attempting to make a catch (penalty – ball scrimmage where infraction occurred or at 5 yard line if infraction occurs in the end zone)

16. scoring:

- A touchdown is scored if the entire football crosses the plane of the goal line. It is the referee who determines this and makes the call
- Touchdowns are worth seven points. If they wish to, offensive teams can try for a two point convert, but if the attempt is unsuccessful, they will only receive six points
- A field goal may be attempted by the offensive team at any time, not just on 4<sup>th</sup> down.
- Field goals must be first snapped from center to a holder. The ball must be kicked off of the ground, not off the holder’s toe.

- If a field goal is missed, the defensive team takes possession at the line of scrimmage from where the kick originally occurred
- A missed field goal may be run out of the end zone
- A missed field goal may result in a single point If the ball travels out of bounds or if the point is conceded by the defensive team... the ball is then scrimmaged from the 20 yd line
- A single point may be conceded on a punt. The ball is then scrimmaged form the 20 yd line
- A 2 point safety is scored if a player brings a ball into his own end zone and is then downed

#### General Conduct Rules:

- Players are expected to conduct themselves in a polite manner and to exhibit appropriate sportsmanship.
- Players cannot “guard” their flags. Any attempt to do so will result in the play being whistled down and the ball scrimmaged from where the infraction occurred
- Blocking is permitted provided the block is not overly-aggressive and is not initiated from behind the player. An illegal block will result in the play being whistled down and the ball scrimmaged from where the infraction occurred.

## Chapter Two: Developing a Strong Flag Football League Team

### Before you start:

Before you begin your flag football season there are some essential elements that will make your coaching more enjoyable and will allow the kids to get the most out of their football experience. The following suggestions are taken from the NFL/CFL Flag Football Coaches guide and are extremely valuable for new and experienced coaches to consider prior to the beginning of the season.

### Don't Forget the Basics

Not all kids can immediately grasp the concept of football as a sport. They must be taught football beginning with the basics. The trick is explaining enough aspects of the sport without overwhelming them.

### One Step at a Time

When teaching aspects of the game to young players, coaches should use teaching drills that promote a steady progression of learning and success. For example: Don't have your players throw long passes until they have experienced success throwing shorter distances. The same holds true with teaching various receiver patterns. Start simple and progress to more complicated patterns as players become more proficient. **Teach mastery not mediocrity.**

### Positive Reinforcement

A young player's idea of having fun doesn't include getting yelled at. Coaches should always stress positive reinforcement. Show encouragement and compliment good play in front of the entire team. Show restraint and respect when criticizing young players. Talk softly and

privately so as not to embarrass them in front of their teammates. Too much negative reinforcement can push kids away from football and the adult mentorship and positive learning environment it provides. (Reebok NFL/CFL Flag Football Coach's Guide 2003)

## **Setting Up Your Team**

So you make an announcement to your school letting all the grade six and seven boys and girls know that tryouts are going to be held Tuesday after school. Anyone interested should show up on the field at 2:45 ready to get dirty. Now what??

For me this is one of the most exciting times of the football season, everyone is eager and ready to play. They have played intramurals for a while now and they want to show what they can do. At this point I can't emphasize enough for you as a coach to show up to that first practice with a well defined plan for your practice. The players need to know that you have put time into organizing their practice and that you expect them to listen and respond accordingly. Many people question whether or not they should make cuts during these tryout sessions. My philosophy is to not cut and I will elaborate on this further a little later on.

My initial practice plan includes a lot of running and a lot of touches on the ball. I want to see who is willing to put in the effort to make the team. I have included a number of skills and drills in this handbook for you to refer to for assistance in creating a practice plan. These are located in Appendix D at the end of this handbook. I will be honest with you that I have stolen these ideas from the Reebok/CFL Flag football Coach's Guide book. This is a resource that you can get on line from the CFL Flag Football website.

I have also included a practice planner for you to use that has been invaluable for me. (Appendix A) It is adapted from a basketball planner I use called Coach's Clipboard and has really been a valuable tool for me to help focus my practices.

One of the highest priorities during these initial "tryout" practices is to find out who your quarterbacks are going to be. I like to identify at least four different people to be my quarterbacks as I like to use them in different situations. Developing a quarterback is an essential component in creating a successful flag football team. This person is essentially the leader of the team on the field. They need to have that kind of personality. When it comes right down to it a quarterback does not need to be able to throw a 30 yard pass, with my team this rarely happens. I would much rather see a quarterback be able to accurately throw a 10 yard pass than the long bomb because that is what is important for team success. Don't get me wrong, I'm not going to eliminate the person who can throw the long bomb but can't complete a short pass, I'm just going to have to work a little harder with that person to get them to see the big picture and focus on what the team needs not their own personal glory. 9 times out of 10 teams need the short pass not the long pass to continue with possession.

As the tryouts continue, I try to arrange at least 3 – 4, you will become quite familiar with the abilities of each of the kids. I like to start making lists of who's fast and agile, who's has good hands, who is excellent at flagging, who is good at containing their check, who's coachable, etc. This helps me in placing people in the right positions to best suit their strengths. My goal is to try and create 2 balanced lines.

## **Picking Your Starting Lineup**

I should probably pause here to outline my philosophy on how I create my team. As I mentioned before I don't like to make cuts for my teams. At Lloyd George this can be a bit of a challenge when I get 30 players show up for tryouts. What I like to do is focus on creating these

balanced lines. Who do I see as able to work well with each other. Unlike, intramurals where you are trying to spread out the talented players among all the teams, here I am trying to find the most talented players who work well with each other. I WANT these players on the same line. The rules for our league state that we need to have 9 players on the field, a minimum 3 need to be girls. With this in mind I try to formulate 2 lines that meet this criterion. My goal is to actually have 10 or 11 players on each line because it is inevitable that someone will be away come game day. By doing this I am “using up” 22 of the players that have come to try out. Now if 30 came out to try out I can usually separate out 8 that just won’t make the starting lineups. I don’t cut these kids though; I put them on their own line and call them “Red Shirts”. These kids will be used during home games only. I invite them to all the practices, teach them all the plays, and encourage them to work on their skills during intramurals. I always make it very clear to all the students on my starting lineups that these red shirts are “hungry kids” working hard to find a place in the starting lineup. This has two advantages; one is to keep the red shirt kids coming to practice and trying hard, and two it keeps the starting lineup kids working hard to keep their position. Since taking that many kids to an away game can be very onerous, I only use the red shirt kids at home games. I try to work them into the lineups for a couple of plays each half to get them some game experience. The one thing they notice right away is that a league game is far different than an intramural game. There is a much higher level of intensity.

## **Roles Of The Coach**

One of the key roles I see myself being responsible for is providing every kid the opportunity to play various positions. With this in mind come game day, I will start the game with one of my two lines playing offence and the other playing defense. When the second half begins, I switch the groups so that the offence is now defense and the defense is now offence. Using this method requires you to have a quarterback on both lines. I have found this method works quite well and allows the kids to settle into their roles for an entire half. Having a quarterback on

each team allows you to have a line leader out there as well. On defense the quarterback ensures that everyone has a check or makes the decision to go to a zone defense. Spend some time with your quarterbacks helping them to recognize how the other team is setting up their offence.

Above all they want to communicate with each other regarding their check assignments. If someone is way faster than your defender, it is the defenders responsibility to switch checks with someone quickly so that the other team doesn't capitalize on that mismatch. I tell my kids that if they are over matched by the person they are defending they had better let their team know in a hurry because at that very same moment their check is letting their quarterback know they can beat your player.

Communication among your players is essential, especially on defense. This can be a difficult thing to achieve at first. Not many players want to admit they are weaker than their opponent. I like to look at the first few plays during the game as a way for our team to feel out the strengths and weaknesses of the other team. Those first few plays are key if you are interested in having success against the team you are playing. Matching your players with players of equal ability is a very important part of this. This is why I really encourage a lot of talk on the defensive line. They need to let each other know if they are outmatched by their checks.

## **Modeling Behaviour**

There is an area of coaching that I feel needs to be addressed in the manual. That is sportsmanship and the expectations for the coach within this area. I am a firm believer that the players we coach want to please us and in some ways be like us. To this end I would like to examine the way we as coaches conduct ourselves on the sidelines.

When it comes to competitive play I am a competitor. I love to win. I love how it makes you feel and I love the pride I see in the eyes of my players. Who wouldn't want to win? The challenge with this philosophy is how do you win or lose graciously. This is something that



everyone has to acknowledge at some point in their coaching career and I believe is something we need to talk about with our players. We need to ask them what it is about the game they enjoy. We need to acknowledge that the same things we enjoy about the game are probably enjoyed by the people we are playing. In my experience not many of the players really enjoy losing. I find it particularly helpful to discuss this whole idea as a team. Our actions as a team can really speak volumes about our individual character. When we lose to another team I would like to believe that we were beaten by a highly skilled opponent. One who prepared very well, executed their game plan precisely, and, on that day, had a higher level of skill than we did. As a result of this belief I also feel that we need to acknowledge them as a strong opponent by shaking their hands and telling them they played an excellent game.

As a winner in these contests, I also feel it important that we keep the feelings of the other team in mind when we shake their hands. We win with grace we lose with grace.

Early on in my coaching career I was privileged to coach a very talented bunch of kids. They were extremely skilled and knew it. During one particular game we were on the receiving end of some very fortunate breaks coupled with some excellent plays. Our opponents were very new to the game and the end result was a complete rout. How do you get your team to hold back when everything seems to be going our way? At the time I was refereeing the game and was unable to coach my team directly. I pretty much had to order them to not intercept any more passes. It was a real challenge for them to understand the idea of empathy for the other team. To them the more touchdowns they got the better they looked. Needless to say it was very difficult shaking hands with the other team after the game as many of their players were upset by the lopsided game. Unfortunately, many of my players were fairly cocky in the lineup as well.

After the game I took my team aside and explained to them my philosophy, that regardless of the score it was important for our team to be gracious in victory or defeat. One of the purposeful designs of our league is that there are no standings and at the end there is no

playoff structure, no city champion. One of the goals in organizing this league as mentioned in the introduction is to reestablish Kamloops as a powerhouse in BC football. To this end I want the players of the game to see that by cheering their opponents on during a game when a good play is made is for the good of the game. Helping an opponent up when they have fallen on the field acknowledge to them that on the playing field we are all equal regardless of team colors. One day they may play side by side with the same players they are facing today.

As coaches I see it as essential that we instill this mentality in our players. We are trying to learn from each other and improve the game across the board. By show good grace during and after the game we can move forward toward this end.

## **Developing Plays**

When it comes to developing plays I really don't have a great deal to say other than watch and learn. I often will watch a BC Lions game and look particularly at how they set up their plays. One of the best things I ever did to learn was to go to a live game at BC Place, if you ever get a chance jump on it. Try to get there early enough to watch the teams warm up. They run some excellent drills that I have adapted into plays. Remember that the skills and drills you do in practice are excellent starting points to creating plays.

One of the strategies I encourage my players to use is to assign multiple receivers during a play. Each position is given a number at the beginning of the season; easy to remember and quick to relay during a huddle. Quarterbacks find it easier to relate a position with a number rather than who is in that position. This way when the quarterback wants #5 to do a 5 yard slant pattern the player occupying that position knows to run a 5 yard slant. All the quarterback needs to do is look over to see which receiver is in that spot to know who to throw to.

One thing that I can't stress enough at this level is KEEP IT SIMPLE. Elaborate plays are fun to design but without the skill to back them up they can more often than not back fire on you.

I also like to discourage hot dogging during a play, especially when the game is out of reach for the other team. As mentioned above, rubbing the fact that you are winning in the face of the other team seldom results in good feelings.

If you are ever challenged with developing plays for your team, talk to your feeder high school football coaches. My experience has been that these individuals are more than willing to come and help you out with your football program. Really, it is an investment in their future.

## **Consistency**

Coaching football is a constant learning opportunity. One of the areas I have had to learn about is the language of football. When I began my football coaching days I thought I knew quite a bit about football. One thing I quickly found out was that football has a language all its own. Terms like slant, in, out, button hook, post pattern were somewhat familiar but not enough to use them consistently. In talking to the South Kam coaches I quickly discovered that I could introduce my players to the same language they use at the high school level at my level.

Some examples are:

**In:** a pass route that goes straight up field then inward, parallel to the yard lines toward the quarterback and away from the sidelines.

**Out:** a pass route that goes straight up field then outward toward the sideline; sometimes the outward route comes slightly back toward the line of scrimmage.

**Button Hook:** pass route in which the receiver goes straight downfield around five steps the abruptly comes back toward the passer.

For more terms google football terminology, there are many good websites out there.

## **Wrapping Things Up**

Well, there are many more things that I could tell you about the wonderful game of football. I trust that the few areas I touched on in this manual helped you understand the

underling goals of the Kamloops Elementary Flag Football League. Above all I hope that you picked up a few nuggets that will help you establish a football program at your school. If you ever need any advice, assistance or clarification please don't hesitate to contact me. My e-mail is [bpenner@sd73.bc.ca](mailto:bpenner@sd73.bc.ca)

## Appendix A

### Practice Planner

Practice #	Date:	Time:	Day:
Thought for the Day:			

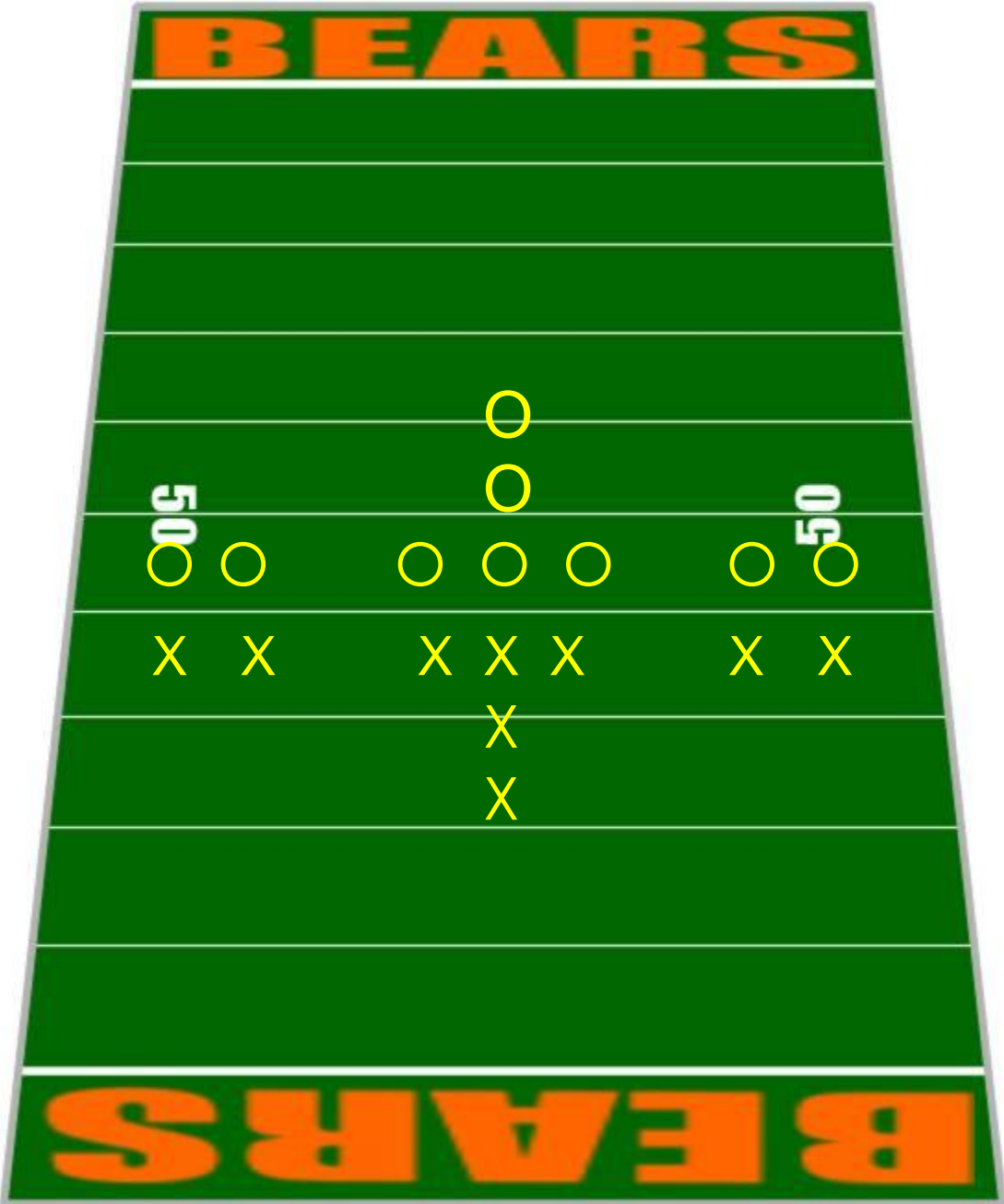
Offensive Fundamentals	Time	Drill
Footwork		
Ball Handling		
Passing		
Receiving		
Cutting		
Patterns		
Defensive Fundamentals		
Backpedaling		
Footwork		
Flagging		

Evaluation/Comments:

Reminders:

Appendix B

Flag Football Positions



# Appendix C

## Flag Tips

### Flag Tips

#### Developing a Strategy

- Go for first downs, not touchdowns
- This can be accomplished by using short passes and running plays
- Mix in long passes and trick plays to keep the defense honest and to catch them off guard

## Offensive Tips

### Throwing a Spiral

- Hold the ball near the back with your fingers over the laces
- Keep your elbow in tight to your body and the ball up by your ear
- Point your non-throwing shoulder toward your target
- Throw the ball by letting it spin off your fingers as you follow through toward your target

### Leading the Receiver

- As a quarterback you don't want to throw the ball to where the receiver is but rather where he/she is going to be
- Practicing your routes with your receivers will help you figure out how far you can lead them with your throws

### Receiving a Pass

- Form a triangle with your hands (between your index fingers and thumbs)
- Keep your eye on the ball at all times
- Try to keep the ball away from your body
- Keep your hands soft so that you can cushion the ball
- Once you have caught the ball, tuck it away so that you don't fumble it.

### Play Action

- Using a fake handoff can distract the defensive backs enough to get the receivers open for a pass
- Try a few running plays first to set up the play fake then throw the ball down the field

### Short Passing Routes

- Short passes are safe and effective ways of moving the ball
- Short passes can be run towards the sideline (out), towards the middle of the field (in), or just by turning back toward the QB when you have found an hole in the defence (button hook)
- Often a short pass can turn into a big gain with a few quick moves

### Long Passing Routes

- Long passes are great ways of moving the ball in a hurry
- Long passes can be run towards the sideline (corner pattern), towards the middle of the field (post pattern), or just by running straight (fly pattern)
- A long pass is most effective when the defence is caught off guard. Using a mixture of running plays and short passes will open up the field for the long bomb.

## Defensive Tips

### Pulling the Flag

- Watch the ball carrier's hips as opposed to his/her feet or head
- Stay low and lunge at the flag
- If you grab anything but the flag, let go immediately so that you don't get a penalty

**Playing Zone Defense**

- Each defensive back is responsible for an area as opposed to a player
- The advantage of this system is that you can keep an eye on the receiver and the quarterback at the same time
- As receivers come through your area try to anticipate where the quarterback wants to throw it and beat the receiver to the spot

**Playing Man to Man Defense**

- Leave some space between you and the receiver (this is your cushion)
- As the receiver starts his/her route you can start to back pedal
- When the receiver makes his/her break you can turn and run with them to try to break up the pass



# Appendix D

## Reebok Skills & Drills

### Reebok Skills & Drills - Drill #1

#### Warm-Up Drill: "Jingle-Jangle"

This is a good way to begin practice. After a short stretching period, this drill gets players loose and warmed up, while also helping them practice their agility and footwork.

#### Purpose:

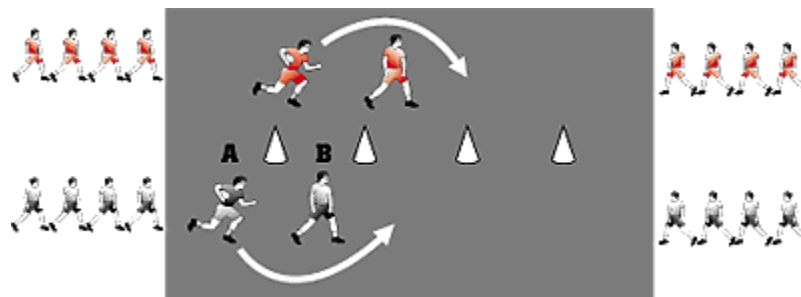
Improve balance, footwork, and change of direction.

#### Drill Outline :

- Place cones at corners of 15-yard square. Line up players at one corner of square. Players then:
  1. sprint to first cone
  2. side-step to second cone
  3. backpedal to third cone
  4. sprint back to beginning of line.
- Throw a football to each player as he or she finishes the drill. Repeat drill to other side after everyone has had a turn.

### Reebok Skills & Drills - Drill #2

#### Centre QB Exchange



**Purpose:** To develop proper snapping technique.

**Organization:** Set out a 20 x 20-yard area. Divide teams into even groups and place in even lines. Place cones in middle of drill four yards apart. One football per team; the entire class can participate.

#### Drill Outline:

- This is a relay race.
- The quarterback (A) and centre (B) on each team start the race.
- The centre (B) snaps directly to the QB(A). The centre will stand still while the QB runs to the next cone.
- The previous(A) snaps to (B), then (B) snaps to (A) and so on, until course is completed.
- The race is continued until each participant gets a turn.

**Progression:** Shotgun snap.

**Key Coaching Points:**

- Centre must place the ball on the ground before snapping.

**Reebok Skills & Drills - Drill #3**

Passing Drill: Progressive QB

This drill helps refine and improve passing technique by concentrating on proper arm and hand movement.

**Development Goals**

Perfect throwing motion while using only the throwing arm.

**Coaching Points**

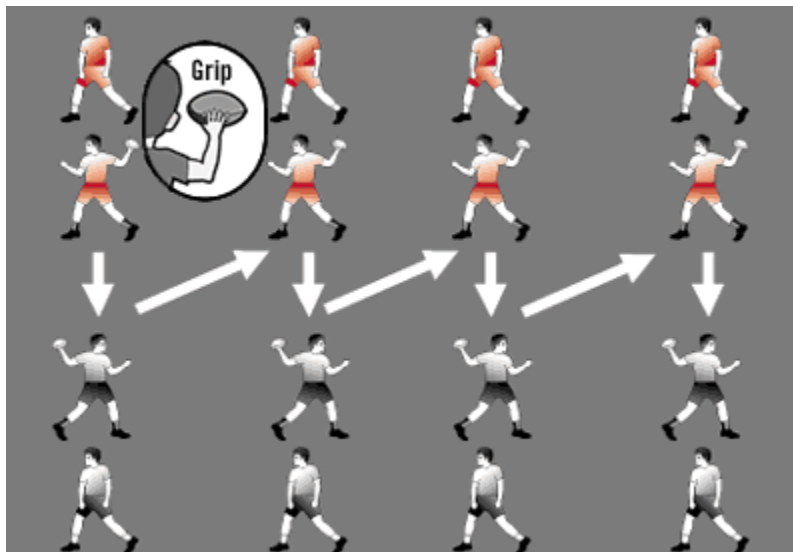
Pair off participants into two parallel lines. Players start on both knees, throwing to their partners five yards away. Show players how to follow through with their arm, so that their thumbs end up pointing down. Have each player begin with football held above his or her waist. Demonstrate how to throw from no higher than their ear.

**Progressions**

After several throws, have players switch to kneeling on right knee. Then after several throws that way, have them switch to left knee. Next, have them throw standing up with feet together. Finally, have them practice a three-step drop, then a five-step drop before throwing.

## Reebok Skills & Drills - Drill #4

### Passing



**Purpose:** To develop proper passing technique.

**Organization:** Set out a 20 x 20-yard area. Divide teams into even groups and place players opposite from each other about 3 yards apart. The entire class can participate if there are enough footballs. With a limited amount of footballs, place students behind each other and have them wait for a turn or pass the footballs available in a zig-zag pattern. (Shown above.)

**Drill Outline:** Participants pass the football back and forth to their partner.

#### Progression:

- Begin with the participants on both knees facing each other.
- Kids throwing from their knees will focus on the throwing motion without the use of their legs.
- Progress to right knee up and then switch to left knee up.
- Next, have players stand straight up and pass with feet apart.

#### Key Coaching Points:

- Passing motion is the same as throwing a baseball, javelin, or handball.
- The hand without the football points to the target or the receiver.
- Make sure kids follow through on their throws.
- Point - step - throw.
- The receiver forms a target with both hands, palms facing out with thumbs and pointing fingers touching.
- The receiver's fingers should form a triangle.

## Reebok Skills & Drills - Drill #5

### Individual Pass Patterns



**5 Yard Curl:**  
The WR runs up the field 5 yards, stops, and returns back towards the QB.



**5 Yard Out:**  
The WR runs up the field 5 yards and cuts to the sideline.



**8 Yard Post:**  
A WR runs up field 8 yards and cuts toward the centre of the field on a 45-degree angle



**Streak:**  
The WR runs straight up the field as fast as possible.



**Post Corner:**  
The WR runs up the field. At 8 yards he cuts toward the centre of the field and after 2 yards runs towards the corner of the end zone.



**5 Yard Smash:**  
The WR runs up the field 5 yards and then turns toward the QB and side shuffles with body facing the QB.

## Reebok Skills & Drills - Drill #6

### Passing and Receiving: Run & Shoot

This drill helps players understand simple passing routes, from the perspective of both quarterback and receiver.

#### Development Goals

Passers: accuracy and how to lead receivers  
Receivers: how to run pass routes  
Defensive Backs: how to watch receivers and cut to the ball.

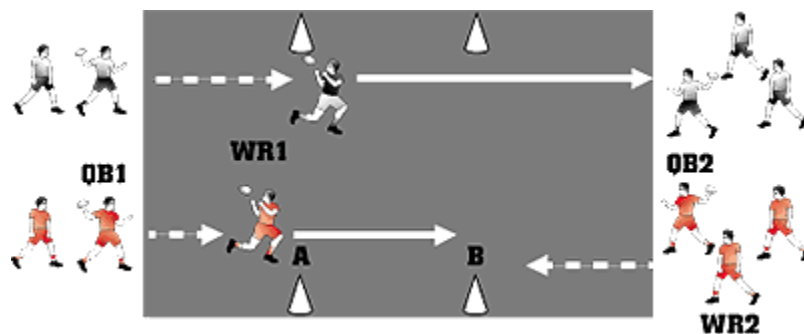
#### Coaching Points

Divide your team into three groups. The first player in line is the first passer; the second goes out to play defensive back; the third is the receiver. The outside groups run simple 10-yard square-out patterns, while the middle group runs 10-yard turn-ins or buttonhooks.

Rotate each line this way: After passing, the quarterback becomes the next receiver; the next player in line becomes the passer; the first receiver becomes the defensive back; and the first defensive back moves on to the next group. Make sure players get chances at all three positions.

## Reebok Skills & Drills - Drill #7

### Passing & Receiving



**Purpose:** To develop running, passing, and receiving skills.

**Organization:** Set out a 20 x 20-yard area and divide the team into even groups. Set cones 5 yards from each end line and 10 yards apart. Each team requires one football so the entire class can participate.

#### Drill Outline:

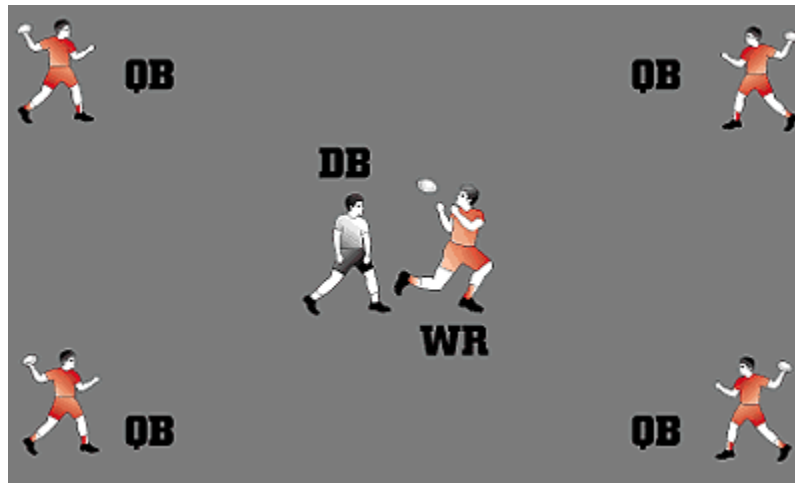
- This is a relay race.
- The object is for QB 1 to pass to WR 1, who has run to cone (A) to catch the ball.
- The second participant in line is WR 2.
- WR 2 runs to cone (B) and repeats the drill.
- The drill is repeated until every participant has a turn.
- If the ball is dropped, the WR picks it up and continues with the drill.

#### Key Coaching Points:

- WR must stop and completely turn around giving the QB a big target.
- WR must give a solid handoff to the QB when returning to line.
- After each relay race, a WR becomes the new QB.

## Reebok Skills & Drills - Drill #8

### Passing & Receiving



**Purpose:** For a WR to find an open area in order to catch a pass.

**Organization:** Set out a 10 x 10-yard area. Divide the players into groups of six, five players on offense and a single player on defense. Station four players in the corners of the area and a lone receiver, shadowed by a defender inside the area. This can be duplicated to allow full participation for entire class. One football is needed per group.

#### Drill Outline:

- The object is for the QB's to pass the football around until an opportunity arises to throw the football to the WR.
- The length of the drill is 30 seconds. Six points are awarded for each reception and the defense is awarded three points for an interception.
- Either switch to a whole new group of players at QB, WR, and DB. Or, switch kids on the field into new positions or bring new kids into game.

#### Progression:

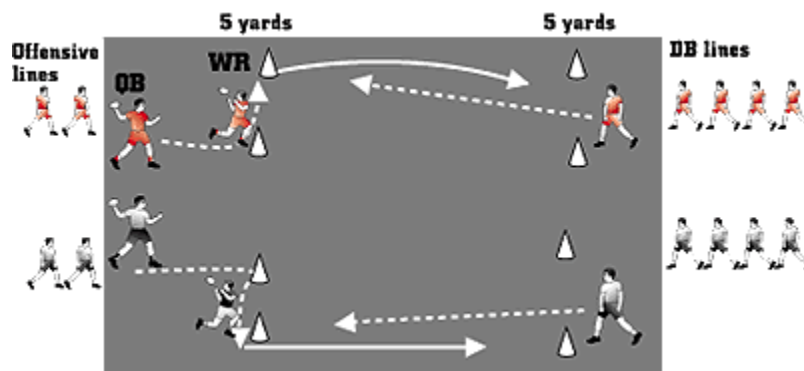
- Lower drill time to (20) seconds in length.
- Add an additional DB to the field.
- If the football is intercepted, put the QB who threw the interception on defense.

#### Key Coaching Points:

- How WR and QB communicate.
- Defenders should focus on WR hips not shoulders.

## Reebok Skills & Drills - Drill #9

### Passing & Receiving



**Purpose:** To develop proper pass patterns and defensive skills.

**Organization:** Set out a 20 x 20-yard area and place two sets of cones on either end of the drill, 5 yards off the end line. Divide into two equal teams. One half of each team starts on offense, the other half starts on defense. Each team has a football. Use the entire class in one drill.

#### Drill Outline:

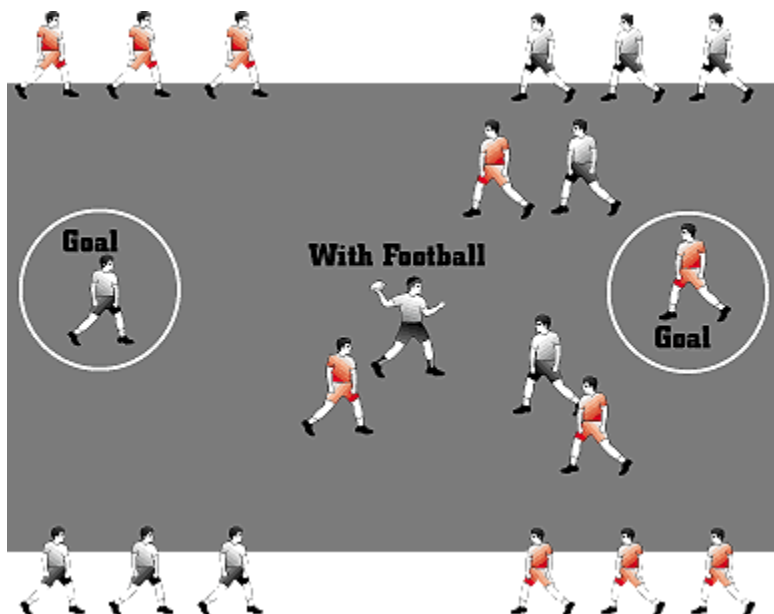
- The WR snaps the football to the QB and the WR runs a 5-yard "out" pattern. The cones are set out to indicate direction.
- When the ball is snapped, the DB runs to the area where the WR will try to catch the football.
- If a catch is made, the WR must then try to run past the DB and score without having his/her flag pulled.
- The WR then goes to the end of the DB line and the DB goes to end of the offensive line on their own team.
- The WR will give the football to the DB after the drill. The DB will hand the football to the QB in the DB's new line.
- 6 points are awarded for each TD. The coach keeps score.

#### Key Coaching Points:

- QB passes to where the WR will be at end of his/her pattern. WR looks back for football when he makes the turn to the second cone.
- DB watches WR's hips for any fakes, not the shoulders or head.

## Reebok Skills & Drills - Drill #10

### Passing & Receiving



**Purpose:** To develop proper receiving and passing skills. Teach participants how to spread out and use the entire field.

**Organization:** Set out a 40 x 40-yard area. Divide teams into even groups and place players opposite each other across the field. The entire class can participate.

#### Drill Outline:

- 
- Eight to ten participants start on the field, the remaining players stand on the sidelines.
- 
- This game concept and playing area is similar to basketball, but without the baskets or dribbling.
- 
- The ball starts with one player at the center of the field.
- 
- The object is to throw the football to a teammate in the circle or goal.
- 
- The player with the ball has to pass to his/her teammates inside the game or can get assistance from teammates on the sidelines.
- 
- The player with the ball can only take two steps, similar to basketball. The players in the playing area without the ball are free to move around.
- 
- The ball must be passed within 10 seconds or the other team gets possession of the ball.
- 
- The idea is to try to knock down or intercept a pass. If the ball is dropped or intercepted, the team on defense is awarded possession of the football.
- 
- 6 points are awarded each time the ball is passed to a player in the goal area. The player in the goal cannot leave that area.

#### Progression:

- Add players to the field, one per team.



## Key Coaching Points:

- 
- Stress the importance of spreading out and being in position to receive a pass from a teammate.
- 
- It is important to get open and not bunch up because, in a game situation, the offense has an advantage when there is more room to move

## Reebok Skills & Drills - Drill #11

### Pass Pattern Combinations



#### Streak Out:

#1 WR runs a 5-yard out toward the sideline and WR #2 runs a streak.



#### Streak Curl:

#1 WR runs a streak and #2 WR runs a 5 yard-curl inside.



#### Post Out:

WR #1 runs a post and WR #2 runs a 5-yard out.



#### Corner Smash:

WR #1 runs a corner and WR #2 runs a 5-yard smash.



#### Curl Post Corner:

WR #1 runs a 5-yard curl and WR #2 runs a post.



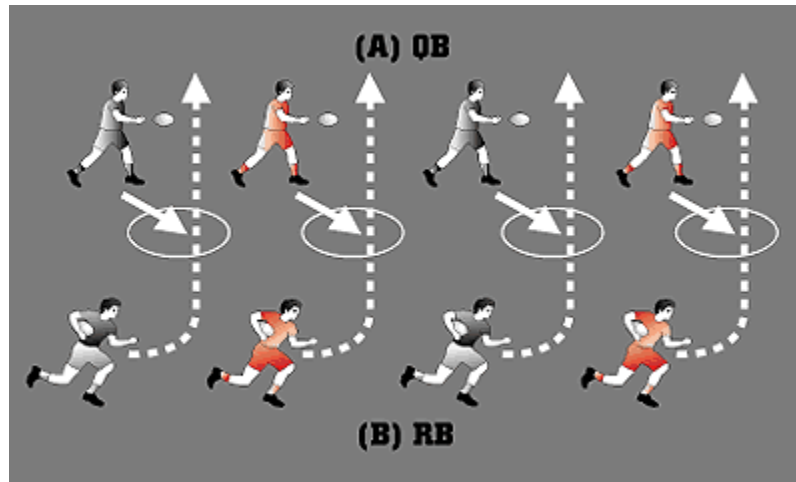
#### Twin Curl:

WR #1 and WR #2 both run 5-yard curls. This play is used in short-yardage situations.

\*On all these patterns, #1 is an option if #2 is covered, and vice versa.

## Reebok Skills & Drills - Drill #12

### Tossing the Ball



**Purpose:** To develop proper tosses or pitches.

**Organization:** Set out a 20 x 20-yard area. Divide teams into even groups and place players opposite each other across the line about 5 yards apart. Players on Team A are the quarterbacks. The players on the B team are running backs. They will switch positions after each turn. Footballs for each pair are recommended and the entire class can participate if space permits.

#### Drill Outline:

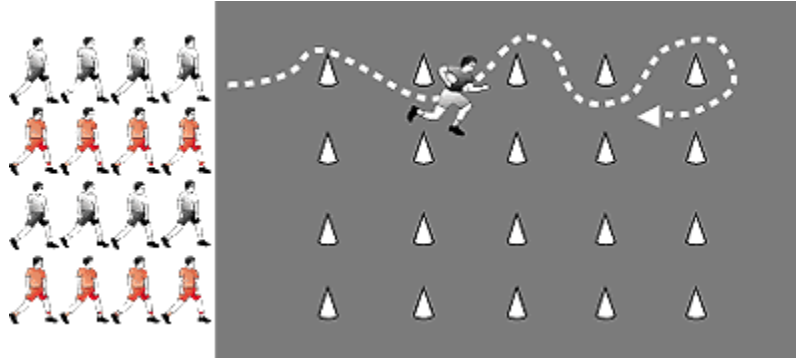
- The QBs will have their backs to the RBs.
- The first several practices, the instructor will call the cadence, "SET GO." The instructor will then choose a QB to call out the cadence.
- Each QB holds the football in front of them with their knees bent and their feet apart.
- On the QB's "SET GO" the RB moves to the right to take the pitch from the QB at a distance of 3-5 yards.
- The first time through the drill, have players move in slow motion to get the feel of the drill.
- Switch positions; the QBs are now RBs and vice versa.
- The players now run half speed through the drill to the left.
- The players switch positions again and run through the drill at full speed.

#### Key Coaching Points:

- The QB will look at the stomach area of the RB when making the pitch to that area.
- The toss or pitch is similar to passing in Rugby.

## Reebok Skills & Drills - Drill #13

### Running with the Ball



**Purpose:** To develop running skills.

**Organization:** Set out a 20 x 20-yard area. Cones are set 8 yards apart to simulate a mini-end zone. One ball per team. The entire class can participate. If cones are limited, use t-shirts, shoes, or tape on the floor as markers.

#### Drill Outline:

- This is a relay race between teams.
- The first participant in each line has a football and will run with the football around each cone and then come back to the beginning of his/her line.
- When the participant returns to the line, they will hand off to the next participant at the front of the line, then go to the back of the team's line.
- The race is won by the first team to have each participant complete the race.

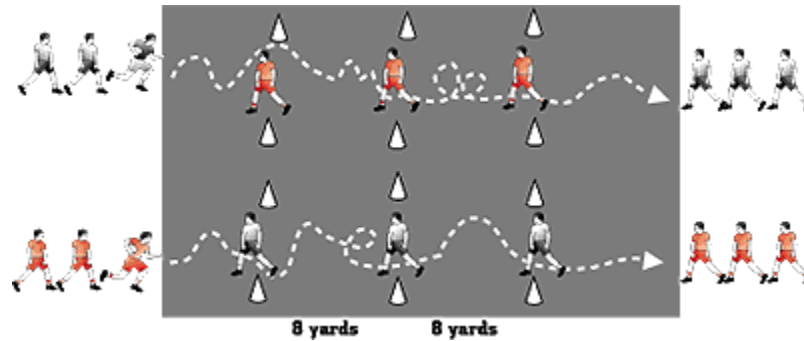
**Progression:** Have players backpedal or hop over the cones.

#### Key Coaching Points:

- Player switches arms carrying the football, with the football always carried in the arm nearest the sideline.
- Players cut on their outside foot, not crossing their legs over when they go around a cone.

## Reebok Skills & Drills - Drill #14

### Running with the Ball



**Purpose:** To develop running skills and avoid having the flag pulled.

**Organization:** Set out a 40 x 40-yard area. Place cones 8 yards apart to simulate a mini-end zone; one ball per team. The entire class can participate in one drill, or duplicate the cone set-up if space permits.

#### Drill Outline:

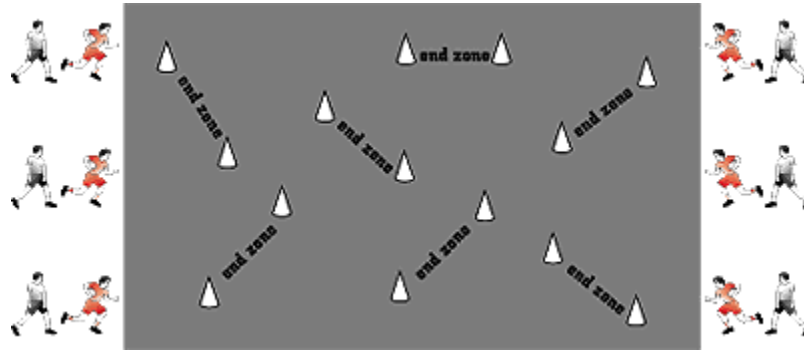
- Relay race between teams. Drill is completed when all RBs have run through the mini end zone once.
- There are 3 mini-end zones for the RB to run through.
- Offensive team has to play against the other team's defense.
- RB has to run through three mini-end zones and avoid the defenders in each.
- The DB attempts to pull the RB flag and stop him/her from scoring.
- DB's are awarded 3 points for each flag pulled. Points are counted after the race.
- The RB is awarded 6 points for each successful TD.
- The RB must run directly to the end of the line after handing off the football to a teammate on the other side of the drill.
- Offensive and defensive players are switched after each relay race is completed.
- If both RBs flags are removed before reaching the last DB, the RBs run back to the next RB in line and hands off the ball.

#### Key Coaching Points:

- RB plays with head up.
- DB watches the movement of RB's hips, not the head or shoulders.

## Reebok Skills & Drills - Drill #15

### Running With The Ball



**Purpose:** To develop running skills and avoid having the flag pulled.

**Organization:** Set out a 40 x 40-yard area. Place cones 2 yards apart to simulate a mini-end zone. Recommended for six pairs of players, the maximum number of kids is 20. If cones are not available, marks on the ground or floor, t-shirts, or tape can be used. Balls are optional.

#### Drill Outline:

- Pair players up - one as a RB and one as a DB. The DB is in back of the RB and chasing the RB from behind.
- RB's should carry a football (if available).
- Each RB starts off on the end line at either side of the playing area.
- The DBs start 5 yards behind the RBs.
- On the coach's whistle, the RBs attempt to cross through the mini-end zones without getting their flags pulled by the pursuing DBs.
- The DB must chase the RB.
- Both flags are pulled, RB is out. If one flag pulled, the RB keeps going.
- Any end zone can be crossed and there is no order in which the end zones have to be crossed.
- The drill lasts 45 seconds and then you switch RB's to DB and DB's to RB.

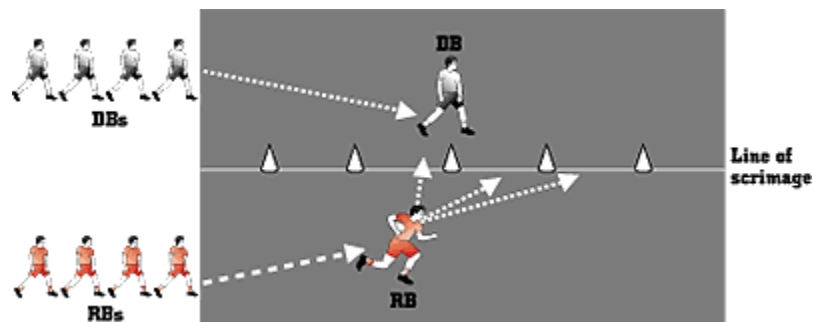
**Progression:** Shorten time to 30 seconds.

#### Key Coaching Points:

- RBs run plays with their heads up.
- DB watches the movement of RB's hips, not his/her head or shoulders.

## Reebok Skills & Drills - Drill #16

### Defense



**Purpose:** To develop defensive back skills.

**Organization:** Set out a 10 x 20-yard area. Place the cones five yards apart. One football is needed. The entire class can participate in this drill which, can be duplicated for more players if space permits.

#### Drill Outline:

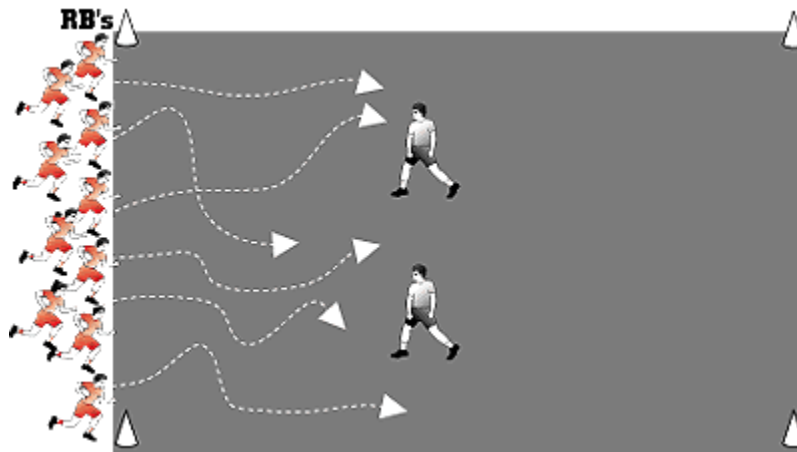
- The object is for the RB to run along the line of scrimmage and select an area between the cones to run through.
- RB starts with the football. On coach's signal, RB begins running. The DB must mirror the RB and attempt to capture the RB's flag before the RB selects a hole between the cones.
- This drill simulates making a one-on-one flag capture. Progression: Progress to two defensive players.

#### Key Coaching Points:

- RB must keep head up and the football firmly tucked away.
- DB must keep shoulders square and head and eyes looking upfield.
- DB watches the RB's hips.

## Reebok Skills & Drills - Drill #17

### Defense



**Purpose:** To develop running skills and avoid the DB. Also teaches RBs to run to an open area.

**Organization:** Set out a 20 x 20-yard area. 10 players start at one end zone, each with a football (if available). Two DBs are stationed in the middle of the field.

#### Drill Outline:

- The object is for the RBs to run past the DBs to the opposite end zone without getting their flags pulled.
- If a RB has his/her flag pulled, he/she sits out.
- Stop the drill after RBs reach the opposite end zone. Identify kids with pulled flags and allow players to catch their breath.
- The drill continues then by changing direction until there is one RB remaining.

**Progression:** Instead a RB sitting out after his/her flag is pulled, have him switch to a DB and assist in pulling other RB's flags.

#### Key Coaching Points:

- DBs should run to where the RB is going, not to where they are.
- Watch RB's waist, not his/her head or shoulders.

## Reebok Skills & Drills - Drill #18

### Defense



**Purpose:** To develop the defensive skills of pulling the flag and following a WR.

**Organization:** Set out a 20 x 20-yard area. Pair up 10-12 participants. The coach gives each team a name. The entire class can play, or duplicate drill if space permits.

#### Drill Outline:

- This is a mirror drill.
- Players must "mirror" and stay with the player lined up across from them.
- When the coach calls out a team name, that team becomes the offense and tries to score in the defensive team's end zone. A score is worth 6 points.
- If a player has his/her flag pulled they are out for that one drill.
- Defensive players can go after other offensive players if they have pulled the flag of their partner.
- Offensive players have 45 seconds to score. Each score is worth 6 points.

**Progression:** Coach will lower the time limit to 30 seconds. Coach keeps track of offensive player scores and subtracts 3 points for players who had their flags pulled.

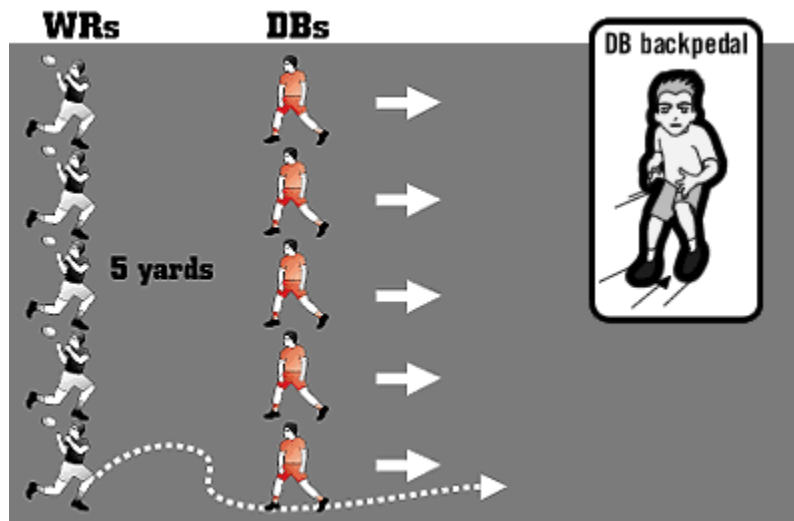
#### Key Coaching Points:

- DB practices staying in front of offensive player.



## Reebok Skills & Drills - Drill #19

Defense



**Purpose:** To develop defensive skills of backpedaling and pulling the flag.

**Organization:** Set out a 20 x 20-yard area. Pair up 10-12 participants or as many as space allows.

### Drill Outline:

- Pair up kids - one group is WRs, the other DBs.
- Each DB will backpedal and "mirror" the WR. All players will start in slow motion on the instructor's command.
- Switch, making WRs play as DBs. Progress to half speed.
- Switch positions again. Now go to full speed. On the instructor's whistle, the WRs will try to run past the DBs, who are backpedaling.
- During the drill, the instructor calls out "GO", the DB is now allowed to pull the flag of the WR who is still running for the end zone.
- The "GO" simulates the WR catching the football.

**Progression:** The coach will pass a football to an open offensive player when "GO" is called.

### Key Coaching Points:

- DB stays in front of offensive player.
- DB watches WR's waist and hips.

## Reebok Skills & Drills - Drill #20

NFL Ultimate



**Purpose:** To develop an awareness and feel for the flag football concept.

**Organization:** Set out a 20 x 40-yard area. Pair up 10 participants. Rotate players, or duplicate the drill if space permits.

### Drill Outline:

- The concept is for the team with the football to pass the ball to teammates without dropping the ball, all the while moving the ball toward the end zone.
- The player with the football has 10 seconds to pass or pitch the ball to a teammate.
- The ball can be passed or pitched forward, sideways, or backwards.
- The player with the ball can only take 2 steps after catching the ball.
- The offensive players without the ball can move anywhere on the field.
- The ball always has to be passed toward the end zone - 6 points are awarded for a touchdown.
- After a touchdown, the team that was on defense switches to offense and takes possession of the ball on their own 5 yard line.
- If the ball is dropped or intercepted, play continues with the other team in possession of the ball from the point of the turnover.
- Each defensive player must stay at arms length from the player with the ball. The defensive play is similar to that of basketball.

### Key Coaching Points:

- WRs must work to get open and not bunch up.

## **Bibliography**

Reebok NFL/CFL Flag Football Coach's Guide 2003

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