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INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt you will experience some of the most exciting times of your life while playing football; from the year round interaction with your teammates and coaches, to the fun and unexpected moments during the season. You will build friendships and create great memories that will last far beyond your playing days. While never losing sight of the enjoyable aspects of football, the game also teaches us the most valuable lessons of life. A football player has been and will always be viewed as a grinder; a very serious hard worker; simply because our great game demands a total combination of mental, physical, and emotional qualities that no other sport demands. If it were easy then anyone could do it; but it's not, and as a football player you are not just anyone. The toughness of our game develops a totally different mind-set! What was meant to be only a game has become a culture; a set of beliefs and values; a learned behavior and an organized way of thinking.

Whether it is a company, a family, or a team, ***THE CULTURE*** is simply understood as.....*"The way we do things around here"*. A great culture has a standard, which is a model or a pattern to follow; and as a football player this book, ***THE CULTURE***, is your standard. This is your developmental guide to success! Providing answers to your many questions about the game and life, and advice for the many situations that you will encounter. The next four quarters will address character, life skills, organizational skills, and football technique. ***THE DIRECTIVES, THE PARALLELS, THE PLAN & PURPOSE, and THE FUNDAMENTALS*** will guide you to be successful on and off of the field. It is important that you are serious about the game, and that you have a desire to be the

best player that you can be; but it is even more important that you are ***GAME PLANNING FOR LIFE!*** If you can begin to take these concepts seriously at a young age, there is no doubt that you will have a satisfying future. The principles of this book are to be emphasized year round, continually discussed every year, and understood by each player and coach. So as you continue to enjoy the great pleasures of the game, be sure to embrace the many ways of ***THE CULTURE.***

- ***FOLLOW THE DIRECTIVES!***
- ***TRUST THE PARALLELS!***
- ***KNOW THE PLAN & PURPOSE!***
- ***LEARN THE FUNDAMENTALS!***
- ***EMBRACE THE CULTURE!***

THE DIRECTIVES

1st Quarter

Before ever building upward, a foundation must be laid to support whatever is being built. When a structure is able to stand strong, it is because the builders dug deep down into the ground first. Without this, no matter how high we build, at some point it will collapse. We tend to spend so much time building our bodies and building our minds, which is very important since football is demanding both physically and mentally. However, without great character as the foundation, amazing skills and a great mind can become like a building with a weak foundation; no matter how great it looks, and how high it stretches, at some point a collapse is going to happen. Throughout history many brilliant individuals have used their minds for harmful purposes, simply because they lacked character. Also, many talented people have attracted opportunities, but their poor character so easily destroyed them.

Ultimately your life is the sum of all of your decisions, and the quality of your character will lead to quality decisions. Just like the first quarter of any game, the idea is to dig deep; to set the tone and attitude that we want to maintain all the way through the fourth quarter. In this first quarter you will learn the most important and basic aspects of great character. We refer to the following ten concepts as **THE DIRECTIVES**. Understanding and displaying these qualities is crucial to your development as a person. A directive is simply an order of instruction; a guidance of operation. The goal is for you to follow these directives, and to make them a serious part of your daily life.

#1

SHOW RESPECT!

Just imagine you are creating an image of yourself; an image that you would like to sell to the rest of world. Showing respect is the first thing that makes your image attractive. It is the practice of common courtesy towards the people and the things that you come in contact with; being considerate in the way that you treat them. A general concern or care for others is the most important part of your character. Regardless of race, religion, appearance, or status, everyone has value; and when you show respect you are telling someone that you recognize that value. It also sets the stage for you to receive respect. Even if you disagree with someone, or you do not even know them, no one deserves to be disrespected. An easy way to remember this is keeping in mind the ways you would like yourself or your loved ones to be treated. This includes having a humble attitude, appreciating and understanding others, and your everyday communication and conduct. It may sound like such a simple concept, but there are so many circumstances that are based on how respectful you are. Your respect may determine the way a coach or a teacher is willing to help you, how much your parents may be willing to compromise with you, an amazing opportunity that someone has to offer you, and ultimately the lasting impression that you leave on everyone. Respect is critical to establishing and maintaining relationships, and no matter what your plans are, you **NEED** people! So yes, you definitely should care about what others may think of you. Without respect, even if you are talented, attractive, hardworking, or wealthy, people will view you in a negative light. No matter the status or position of someone else, your interactions with everyone should leave a positive impression on them.

Whether you see the janitor of your school, or even the principal walking past you, recognize and greet them equally with great respect. It goes a long way, and days or even years later, that person may remember it someday. These are some of the most basic, yet major signs of respect...

- Remaining committed to your word.
- Watching your tone of voice and choice of language.
- Sincerely apologizing when you were in the wrong.
- Displaying great manners like cleaning up after your-self, always saying “excuse me”, “please”, and “thank you”, holding a door open for someone, or offering to help.
- Giving a firm handshake when greeting someone, and direct eye contact while someone is speaking to you.
- Keeping your hands off of others and their possessions.
- Showing up on time, or cancelling and rescheduling ahead of time. Do Not stand people up!
- Returning phone calls.

These habits not only show respect, but they earn respect. Although they are too often forgotten, these should all be second nature to you.

In addition, it is very important that you understand this final concept. Since most football players are physically bigger or have more aggressive personalities; without even realizing it, you can be quite intimidating. Something very innocent can be taken the wrong way and can make someone else feel uncomfortable. Therefore, be aware of this in your interactions with girls and women. You and your teammates need to set the tone for how they are treated at your school and in your community. **BE CAREFUL!** There are many things that can be taken as verbally or physically offensive. You’re responsible for your behavior and the image that you project. Remember, respect is about showing the concern that you would want in return.

#2

LOVE AND APPRECIATE YOUR FAMILY!

No matter what our family circumstances are, we all have individuals who are directly supporting us; whether it is financial, social, or even emotional. These people in our lives need to be appreciated! Be careful to never forget anyone who has ever helped you. Too often we benefit from others, but we do not make sure that they know how much it meant to us. Sometimes it means returning a gift, offering a favor, sincerely thanking them (maybe even publicly), or doing for another, what was done for you. Saying “thank you” is one thing, but being thankful with your actions and generosity is true appreciation. Especially towards your family!

At times you may think that you are standing alone, but you do have people that care for you. They are typically your immediate family, but also extend to other close relatives, coaches, and even teachers. Another great way of showing appreciation is always being open to their input. It is how you let them know that you value their support. The adults in your life have seen and have gone through things that you have not yet experienced; too often preteens and teens tend to think that they have all of the answers. In many circumstances adults want to protect you from making the same mistakes that they made. I thought that as I got older my parents got smarter, but I was very mistaken; my parents were always smart. I just did not fully understand that experience is a great teacher that needs to be appreciated. Remember, no one is a bigger fan than your family; so you should always have an attitude of gratitude, and thank them every chance that you get.

#3

RESISTING TEMPTATION IS A SIGN OF GREAT CHARACTER!

It is only natural to be curious or have a desire to explore some of our urges; but not all urges are good for us. A major challenge of temptation is that although it is sometimes obvious, it is more often very subtle as it sneaks up on us. Life moves so fast that we are often faced with decisions that will test our character. We cannot change the fact that temptation will always exist, but how we respond is totally in our control. Every temptation in life always presents some form of pleasure. If not, then it wouldn't be tempting. The danger is that it may temporarily feel good, but it is ultimately a distraction from what is best for you.

Learning how to watch out for oncoming temptation is just as important as resisting it. You will find that it is just easier to keep yourself away from tempting situations when possible. This is especially important for teens and preteens because of the many pressures that you have. There will be peer pressure, and you will be tempted to fit in with "*the crowd*". Doing what is safe and what is best is more important than doing what is cool. Saying **NO** and standing alone is better than trying to fit in and follow the crowd. From cheating in school, to drugs and alcohol, and even violence and illegal activity, your hard work and future are in jeopardy when you give in to negative pressure that seems to be pleasure. It is even dangerous to assume that if you are succeeding athletically and academically then it is fine to indulge in any bad habits. I have seen star players who were great students; lose

scholarship offers, which derailed them for the rest of their lives. Unfortunately they lacked the inner strength needed during a tempting moment.

True power is not in how much weight you can lift, or how dominant you are out on the field; it is in your ability to say **NO** to temptation. It is up to you to ask yourself what are the rewards versus the possible consequences. This is an important practice in helping you resist. Our world has had so many prominent people who have led nations, but could not control themselves. In one instant of weakness it left a stain on their legacy. There is definitely a pay-off for resisting temptation and displaying self-control. It strengthens you and it also has a great impact on the way others view you. In too many situations, the pleasure now, leads to disappointment later. So next time, ask yourself *“is it really worth it?”*

#4

“WHAT YOU DO SPEAKS SO LOUDLY THAT I
CANNOT HEAR WHAT YOU SAY.”

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

LEAD BY EXAMPLE...

Science proves that the speed of light travels faster than the speed of sound. Therefore whatever is visible will always be considered first over what is heard; the same is true for leadership. What a leader shows is of greater importance than what they say. Leaders do not always have the most talent, but they always set the best example. They are the first ones on the field and last ones off. They show up on time, finish when exhausted, and work hard year round, which establishes the standard to follow. This is what gives them the credibility to push, motivate, and bring out the best in others. No one will just follow a voice that is not also putting in the work.

Leadership is when you affect someone else positively for their benefit, or for the group's benefit; not just for your own! Always be selfless, consistent, and trustworthy. Be less concerned about your popularity, and more concerned with driving someone else, or the team to reach their full potential. Supporting the coaches and the overall vision of the program shows that a leader is also willing to follow; and through following they become qualified to lead. Although you may have your own individual accomplishments and goals, great leadership is not only about what you do, but what you inspire others to do. What

you demand from yourself can totally increase what others demand of themselves. So the actions of a great leader, alone, can change the behavior and intensity of everyone else around them.

Understanding the group's objective, and being someone to constantly move the group in that direction is always something to be admired. Being vocal can definitely play a role in leading, but these great mentioned qualities do not always need spoken words. When you change the atmosphere by what you do, people will follow and respect what you say! *"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."* ~John Quincy Adams

#5

“NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER
.....GIVE UP!”

When Thomas Edison was asked about his many failed attempts in creating the light bulb, he said that he simply found one thousand ways that did not work before finding the one way that did. Similarly, Abraham Lincoln lost six different office elections before ever becoming President. Both of these great men learned from failures and were able to ignore all of the voices telling them to quit. Psychologists believe that it takes a human roughly 12 positive thoughts or outcomes, in order to outweigh only 1 negative thought or outcome. This belief supports the idea that we naturally tend to put so much more emphasis on failures. Unfortunately, as they pile on we often feel there is no need to continue; this can prevent our progress from play-to-play and day-to-day in life.

Persistence and perseverance stem from the strong belief that you will accomplish whatever you have set out to do. It is the inner motivation that has led to the many miraculous come-back stories. Everyone in life at some point gets knocked down. Even though we are not hoping for them, we at least have to expect trials and set-backs. Motivational guru Dr. Willie Jolley says that *“a setback is a setup for a comeback”*. When we are knocked down we should not stay down; in fact the sooner we get up the less we are even impacted by the difficulty. Along our journey we should view these failures as simply bumps in the road necessary to be successful. This is not just about

continuing to work hard; this is **SPECIFICALLY** about bouncing up **MULTIPLE TIMES** after failures, rejections, injuries, or any adversity! These are opportunities that we learn from that correct and strengthen us. They are not signs that we should give up.

It is one thing to keep fighting when things are going well, but perseverance is the ability to continue despite any opposition. There are many factors that can lead to a victory, but quitting is the **ONLY** thing that guarantees a loss. Winston Churchill, the former prime minister of England, has been given credit for this simple yet powerful command. These seven most important words are what influenced the people of England while under Germany's attack. "*Never, Never, Never, Never, Never.....Give Up*".

#6

MENTAL TOUGHNESS; TRAIN YOUR MIND!

Mental toughness is more than just going the hardest; it is going the hardest, but also for the longest. Training your mind is a very important part of being successful. In all areas of life everyone will eventually hit a wall, a point of total discomfort, or feel they have reached their limit. Once you have arrived at your limit, your ability only increases when you stretch your limit even further. When you totally stop at this barrier, your ability never stretches beyond it. You must gather your thoughts and recognize that your mind can take you beyond this point. You train your mind by pushing through the barriers a little further each time. In doing so, your point of discomfort or exhaustion will occur later and later. In order to arrive at a higher performance level, we must be mentally tough enough to break through the challenges at the level we are already on. This is what constantly pushes our limits further.

Toughness is defined as the ability to absorb stress or strain without breaking! It is very possible to be physically tough but mentally weak. No matter how physically gifted you are, your body can actually freeze up because your mind cannot absorb the stress or strain. Understanding that your thoughts control your actions is what develops mental toughness. Focusing longer and harder is what increases mental toughness. "*Mind over matter*" simply means that we are not allowing the circumstances to control our minds, but the thoughts in our minds are managing the circumstances. This is a discipline that needs to be practiced; it does not develop on its own. So when the school work gets harder, and football camp or the season gets tougher, this means you

have arrived at a place of stress or strain. What you do during the moments of stress or strain will determine if growth ever happens; this is where you need to increase your effort. It does not take much mental toughness to start off with great effort and enthusiasm; but you should practice the skill of increasing the intensity towards the middle and at the end of any challenge. You will notice the things that used to be hard will begin to feel a lot easier.

Mental toughness allows you to fight through discomfort, overcome frustration, and not be overwhelmed when challenged. Mentally tough people are not easily rattled when unexpected things happen. They push to get things done instead of complaining or looking for an excuse and a way out. By starting to develop this now you will excel in so many areas; including business, relationships, education, and competitions. Stay focused on your own progress, ignore the many distractions and mentally push through all of life's so called "walls".

#7

RESPOND, DON'T REACT!

Regardless of your age, everyone can look back at the favorable moments, and at the not-so-great ones. You will experience many ups and downs in your life, and it is essential to learn early how to handle them both. It is definitely ok to be excited, and it is also fine to be hurt, but the goal is to avoid any extreme in either direction. A reaction is often an immediate and sudden reflex, when you are controlled by the situation. Whereas a response is when you are able to pause, absorb the situation and settle your mind before you act. Nothing is ever as good, or ever as bad as it seems. Take it all in stride...

At times we may have major accomplishments, and we may receive praises from other people. We should thankfully take all compliments, without allowing them to boost our egos or causing us to praise ourselves. Remaining humble is key to handling the high moments in life. Often, we relax and allow our focus to slip because we are extremely excited. This is a result of simply being too high and letting our guards down. It is never as good as it seems!

The exact opposite is true when we experience bad or challenging times. When we receive bad news or even perform poorly, we should not add to the problem by continuing to dwell on it. Understand that tough times do not last; tough people do. When we allow the low moments to devastate us it becomes self-defeating. Worrying never solved anyone's problems, it only adds to it.

It is a great sign of maturity when you develop a mindset that you cannot change history; when you understand that both good times and

bad times are inevitable for us all. Deaths, divorces, sicknesses, and failures will happen; and so will victories! Never get too high or too low; keep everything in perspective. Nothing is ever as bad or as good as it seems!

#8

TO BE EARLY IS TO BE ON TIME, TO BE ON
TIME IS TO BE LATE, AND TO BE LATE IS TO
BE FORGOTTEN!

Other than life itself, time is the only thing that we can never get back. Money, health, and relationships can all return when lost, but not time! We must never disrespect it, because it is not only ours, it is also someone else's. Being a member of a team, organization or company demands that you must be on time. No large group can work effectively if the team members are not all in the same place, at the same time. If we make it a practice to always expect unexpected delays, we can make it a healthy habit to always be early! It becomes easy to build trust in someone who is consistently early. It becomes really hard for people to trust your word in other areas of your life if they cannot trust you to be on time. On the other hand, when you are consistently early, you show how dependable you are.

When possible, plan to be ten minutes earlier than the scheduled time, even if this means purposely setting your watch ahead. As much as possible, you should prevent yourself from feeling rushed. Being early lessens stress, and prevents you from inconveniencing others and yourself; because this principle also applies for your own individual schedule that does not involve other people. It helps you collect your thoughts beforehand, focus on the purpose behind what you are about to do, and it also keeps the rest of your day(s) on schedule. Cutting it

too close or barely making it is an easy way to become very casual with timing.

Being efficient with your time will help you be a better student and a better player. From teachers, to coaches and teammates, and even maybe your boss one day, it shows how much you respect them by respecting their time.

#9

EVERYONE MUST CHOOSE: THE PAIN OF DISCIPLINE VS. THE PAIN OF REGRET!

There will always be something that you are supposed to do, but you do not really feel like doing it; if you make yourself do it anyway, then that is discipline. The boxing legend Muhammad Ali said it best, *“I hate training, but I said to myself, ‘don’t quit; suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion.’”* It is very painful to look back years from now and realize any success, and even fun, that you have missed out on. These regrets can haunt you for the rest of your life, whereas the pain of discipline is rewarding. Discipline is the practice of constantly grinding to bridge the gap between the skills and abilities you now have, and the goals you have set out to achieve. It requires you to delay satisfaction, and accept immediate pain. It only makes sense to work as hard as you can because whether in regret or discipline, ***IT IS GOING TO HURT ANYWAY!*** Which pain will you choose?

Discipline is when you push yourself over and over through the same simple daily practices even when you do not feel up to doing it. There is no better feeling than going to bed at night knowing that you did so. Discipline is a never ending process; the same work that gets you to where you want to be is the same work that will keep you there. So many people accomplish a goal, lose their discipline, and then lose the goal.

The pain of regret is when you have failed to accomplish a certain thing because you did not do what was necessary; when an opportunity

presented itself but you were not disciplined enough to put in the work. Everyone constantly has to choose between the pain of discipline and the pain of regret. The pain of discipline brings tears of joy, but the pain of regret brings tears of heartache. *“Should have, could have, would have”* are loser’s laments. There is enough opposition already out there, so you do not want to be the reason that something didn’t happen for you. ***THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE AT ALL FOR HARD WORK!***

“Success is never owned; it is rented – and the rent is due every day”

~Rory Vaden

#10

BE A GREAT TEAMMATE!

Since the beginning of civilization animals were yoked together to pull wagons and carriages; mostly oxen and horses. A yoke is a bar or frame attached to the heads or necks of the animals for them to pull a heavy load together. Farmers found that when one horse was able to pull 1,000 pounds, two horses yoked together were able to pull roughly 5,000 pounds. This helps you to understand the power of a joint effort.

There is something special about individual parts joining together and becoming stronger than perfect math can explain. This **“yoke”** is the same bond that we experience on a team; the same connection that turns what should be 2,000 pounds into 5,000 pounds being pulled. If this is true for only two working together, imagine how great of an increase there will be in a team environment.

Any given season the goal of a team is **ONE** championship. This is attempted **ONE** workout, **ONE** practice, and **ONE** game at a time. But it is only possible when the individual parts become **ONE!** It is only accomplished when everyone trades in a **“me”** attitude, for a **“WE”** attitude. Not that there is anything wrong with wanting to have a great individual role or performance, but it should never be placed above the team’s goal. No matter how limited or great your talent is, being a part of a team makes anyone perform better. The individual strength of one horse only increased because it was yoked to another horse.

So many people have hurt a team, lost valuable relationships, or broke up close bonds because they had a selfish attitude. Being unselfish is something that needs to be worked on. It is taught and

developed, it does not come naturally. A great teammate is concerned about building up the group, while taking responsibility for their individual role. When you struggle, compete, sweat, create, and overcome together, you will find that a lifelong connection can be formed. It is amazing how our effort, skill, and determination increase when we know that someone else is working with us. Great teammates grab hold of one another, all pulling in the same direction, which is what eventually strengthens the bond!

THE PARALLELS 2nd Quarter

“The way you do anything is the way you do everything!”

There are so many good ways to answer the question “*Why the game of football?*” The intensity, the level of excitement, physical contact, finesse, and strategy are a few good answers. Also, the individual battles joined together in a combined effort; making football the **ULTIMATE** team sport. In multiple areas, what we do off of the field directly affects how we perform on the field. But like no other sport, football presents so many challenges, disciplines, and lessons within the game that directly relate to our lives outside of the game. Yes, there are other great games that teach life lessons, but **THE CULTURE** and even the rules of our game are what totally separate it from the rest.

Parallel means to have the same exact course or direction. Slightly different from *The Directives*, *The Parallels* are disciplines that stem directly from what happens in the game of football; disciplines that football forces you to acquire just by the design of the game. So when you are in your latter years, and presented with life’s many circumstances, you can look back and credit football for the way you approach and overcome them. The parallels between football and life is what best answers the question “*Why the game of football?*”

We are all creatures of habit, so the course or direction we follow in one area of our lives, tend to be the course or direction we will follow in other areas. The second quarter will reveal *The Parallels* that prove why football is not just the game that you play, but indeed **The Culture** that you live!

NT

Remember these two simple letters. There are so many different parts of the game which clearly take no or very little talent. Football is so great because it allows many different types of talented and not very talented players to become great. **NT** stands for **NO TALENT!** There are far more areas in our game that take **NO TALENT** to be great at. When you excel in these areas, no matter how much talent you have, you can be successful. Here are a few examples.....

- Knowing your assignments.
- Hustling on every play.
- Staying on-sides and not having costly penalties.
- Running down full speed on the kickoff team.
- Being in great shape.
- Working hard during weightlifting.
- Competing!!!

There are so many others that separate the game of football from many other sports that involve mostly talent. Size, speed, and athleticism do play a part, but there have been many professional football players with limited size, speed, and athleticism. They succeeded simply because they were great at the **NT** issues. This is an absolute parallel to real life, where the most talented people are hardly the most successful. Excelling in areas that take no talent can always compensate for having limited talent.

RELIABILITY

Unique to the sport of football, all 11 players are relied upon on **EVERY** play. We have witnessed a pitcher throw a no hitter in baseball; we have watched great basketball players solely take over games on multiple isolation plays, and other times in hockey and soccer, individual players have gone the distance and scored one on one against the goalie. Although these plays do not happen all of the time, these are **IMPOSSIBLE** occurrences in football. On each play, every single player must be trusted to accomplish their individual assignment. It gives you the mind-set that at any given point, everyone else can suffer because of **YOUR** performance. Exactly what can happen in a family, business, or community if we stand and watch, or give minimal effort. It helps you to never take your role lightly; and to become a trustworthy person. Reliability involves taking initiative and finding a way to get the job done. On the other hand, immature and unreliable people find a way to make excuses. It is a great accomplishment knowing that you did something for a team that absolutely needed for you to do it! It is not about taking turns to be reliable; this great game demands that you are reliable on every play! So many great opportunities are only offered to those who can be counted on. Are you driven by excuses, or will you do your part regardless of the circumstances? Are you reliable?

TRUST

Charles Blondin, a famous French tightrope walker, gave us a great illustration of what trust really is. On September 14, 1860, he became the first person to cross a tightrope over a quarter of a mile long, across Niagara Falls. Several times he walked across, 160 feet in the air; each time with a new difficult challenge. Once on stilts, then on a bicycle, and then even blindfolded. The crowd cheered and went wild during every trip across. The next challenge, Blondin walked the tightrope while pushing a wheelbarrow holding a sack of potatoes. When he reached the other side, the crowd was stunned and started to applaud louder than he could ever imagine! Blondin suddenly stopped and addressed his audience: "*Do you believe I can carry a person across in this wheelbarrow?*" The crowd enthusiastically yelled, "*Yes! You are the greatest tightrope walker in the world. We believe!*" So Blondin said "*Okay, well who wants to get into the wheelbarrow?*"

The flip side of being reliable is being trusting. You may be a reliable person to others, but the question is, "*will you get into the wheelbarrow to rely on someone else?*" If you are skeptical, or always looking over your shoulder because you do not fully trust your teammates, you can be ineffective in doing your job because you are so worried about everyone else doing theirs'. Another concern is having so much pride because you want to do it all. It takes a certain level of humility to understand that you cannot do it alone. At some point in life you may need to reach out to someone for help; which does not make you weak. Football requires you to trust; to fully buy into a system! Again, our game is the **ULTIMATE TEAM SPORT.**

OVERCOMING FEAR

The hard hitting and the painful nature of football can automatically present fear of physical danger. Fear is an emotion that you have control of; an emotional response to a threat that you create in your own mind. It is simply something that you imagine to be real. Your body's response to fear is what generates the nervousness and anxiety, and causes you to be tentative. In fearful moments always remember that what you are feeling is a result of a thought that is not real. In addition to changing your thoughts, in order to ever overcome a fear, at some point you must face it. When you finally take that crushing hit, catch that pass over the middle, or take on that intimidating blocker, you will realize it was all in your mind. An easy way to remember this is this: **F.E.A.R.** – **F**alse **E**vidence **A**ppearing **R**eal!

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

The consequences for a mistake in football can have a major impact on a game, or even an entire season. Unlike many other sports, it is not so easy to recover from an error, a turnover, or a blown assignment; especially when it leads to a crucial momentum swing or an injury. Exceptional focus is critical, because one error can erase **ALL** prior positive plays. This is why football forces attention to detail! It starts with how well you are actually listening when receiving instruction. There is a major difference between hearing and listening. Hearing is simply the ability to detect sound, but listening is an intentional concentration that has become a lost art. You will even find that in relationships with teammates, parents, siblings, coaches, friends, and people you will end up working with, being a better listener will improve your role in these relationships.

Attention to detail extends beyond just listening; it also requires a very specific mind frame for each different situation you encounter. For example, a defensive lineman must know when it is 3rd down and four, that an off-sides penalty will give the offense a 1st down. Or when the offense has a lead in the 4th quarter, the running back needs to stay in bounds to keep the clock running. This teaches you that the right actions can be totally wrong in other situations. Your overall awareness is important; not only knowing what to do but why to do it. Football conditions you to prevent careless mistakes, have strict concentration, limit mental errors, and understand that the minor details can make major differences. Your attention to detail will determine your sharpness during life's many unique situations, and ultimately how confident you are to execute in these situations.

EMOTIONAL CONTROL

How is it that during a physical battle, coaches so often yell ***“EVERYBODY RELAX!!!”***? It is only natural that football provides an atmosphere of heightened emotion. However, we are asked to harness the emotional, and balance it with the mental. Football prepares you so well because this balance is required while you are executing a detailed assignment, dealing with many different personalities on your team; all while hitting and being hit! Over the course of a game or season, emotional swings can limit your mental or physical execution. Over-excitement can lead to forgotten assignments, costly penalties, excessive celebration, and your inability to make adjustments. For example, if an opponent cheap shots you after the whistle, displaying emotional control would be going back to the huddle and fighting it out during the next play. It is interesting how the same aggression that is required can actually hurt you if it is a split second after the whistle.

It will always be a challenge to make sound decisions when your emotions are not under control. This is especially true when addressing your teammates. You will be asked to work through disagreements or communicate when your emotions are racing. You never want to get into the habit of using emotions as an excuse for bad choices. This directly relates to what you will go through in your future. Your emotions will be sparked, and that is not a bad thing; but how your thinking follows your emotions is what is important. Our great game teaches this emotional and mental balance like no other!

ACCEPTING CRITICISM: ACCOUNTABILITY

There are many different styles of coaching that players must be willing to adjust to. Ideally every coach's concern is to get the best out of each player. Everyone must learn to accept constructive criticism; the only way anyone gets better is to learn from their mistakes. In football there are so many position specific techniques, so much film review, and so much detailed strategic information; constant correction is necessary. This takes place in practice, in the meeting room, during a drive, or even in between drives. There is so little room for error in football that it requires immediate correction. This should never be taken personally; embracing correction is a huge part of maturing.

Football is a very precise game, so there will always be room for improvement. Whether it is a big mistake or a small adjustment, criticism is provided to help you. If you are accountable and coachable, you take full responsibility, own-up, and accept it. The negative responses to criticism are poor demeanor or bad body language, sulking, talking back, or shutting down and giving limited effort. If your ultimate goal is to improve, these responses are counter-productive. No one does everything perfectly, but those who learn to accept criticism will have more productive lives.

COMMITMENT

Commitment in football is unique because of the nature of the game. The training, preparation, practice and meeting time totally outweighs the time you actually play the game. It demands that you are fully invested mentally and physically because football is a lot more work than play. During the season you may practice 20 hours just to compete in a three hour game. In off season weight lifting you can train up to 10 hours per week and not even play one game. During the summer you may run and condition for many hours and still not compete. Playing under the lights on a Friday night is obviously worth the wait, but the many hours of preparation is what takes a very high level of commitment!

Commitment is having an obligation, and being willing to sacrifice in order to fulfill it. It is not simply a one-time pledge; it is pouring your heart and soul into staying true to that obligation. Sacrifice often means not doing something else that you would like to do, or at least not doing it right now. Many other things that you enjoy should become secondary, because of the time and commitment associated with football. The problem with too many young people today is that they want successful games, seasons, careers, and lives, but without being willing to commit to something.

ADAPTABILITY

“It’s a funny shaped ball, you never know which way it will bounce”. It is no secret that we are playing the most unpredictable game there is. Coaches try to build into practice every situation possible to prepare their players. With so many moving parts, emotions racing or even possible injuries, our game, more than any other, demands that we are able to adjust; and adjust quickly! We are hit so often in life with the unexpected. When we have thoughtfully prepared our hardest for a situation, the one thing that we did not imagine possible often happens. Football always presents sudden change, and that change may be for the rest of the game, the quarter, or only within that one play! It requires us to think and perform in a state that may not be the norm for us. On top of the physicality and great athleticism, it is such a strategic game that the opponents are constantly adjusting their plans. Without skipping a beat, on and off the field, those who are constantly making the necessary adjustments are normally the most successful.

TAKING CARE OF YOUR BODY

The tenth and final parallel is definitely the most critical of them all. The contact in our game puts constant strain on the body; which teaches you the importance of health awareness. Football players are so conditioned to experiencing pain or soreness that we become immune to it and often ignore it. Although you should definitely play through some aches and pains, you are responsible for taking care of your body. The reason this is such a serious parallel is because too many people have health warnings that they do not have evaluated, and they end up with very serious health conditions. Ignoring health warnings does not make you a tough guy. Yes, you may have a minor sprain (that you ignore) that turns into a major injury and prevents you from playing. But even more important than missing a game or a season is, if later on in life you refuse to seek medical care and you develop a serious illness. Some can be life threatening.

It is great that our off seasons are spent recovering and building the body; maintaining a certain level of fitness in order to improve performance and prevent physical breakdowns. You will also need to do this for the rest of your life. More important than your finances or any success, your physical health will determine the quality of your life. People into their 60's, 70's and even 80's should still have a daily fitness routine to maintain their health. As you can see, this does not only apply to your playing days, but is a necessary life-long practice. Please also remain aware of **ALL** of the following concepts....

Nutrition- You are what you eat! Including meals, supplements, and even vitamins, you must understand that everything you put into your

body affects your performance. Do not assume that because it is in the marketplace that it is healthy. Even some supplements from your local health food store can be very dangerous. Do your homework! Consult with experts, trainers, doctors and nutritionists.

Hydration- The body is made up of mostly water. Hydrating starts well before any activity. This is why we must maintain and replace fluids continuously. Make sure you are drinking plenty of fluids before, during, and after training sessions, practices, and games. Once you become thirsty it is already too late.

Cleanliness- This is a practice commonly overlooked. As athletes we constantly sweat, have open cuts, and come in contact with dirty surfaces. We must be diligent in checking our skin, and reporting any irregularities. The same goes for our pads and helmets which tend to accumulate dirt and germs. Failing to maintain cleanliness can lead to infections. ***Some are very serious!!!***

Injury awareness- In a contact sport aches and pains are inevitable. Make sure you understand and follow the guidelines of your coach, trainer, and doctor.

Training- It is essential that we prepare ourselves to compete. Preparation time outweighs game time in football for a reason. Your on-field production is directly linked to how you train year round. This includes conditioning and weight training in the off-season, and maintaining your progress during the season. Pay attention to proper form and technique, understand the dangers of overtraining, and be aware of the importance of warming up, cooling down, and stretching.

THE PLAN & PURPOSE 3rd Quarter

“If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.”

~Benjamin Franklin

It is very rare, and almost impossible to succeed by mistake. A miracle may only come once in a lifetime, but there are not many accomplishments that just happen on their own. The people who succeed, they succeed **INTENTIONALLY!** They intentionally create and follow a specific plan of action. Just like a coach studying his own strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opponents'. He then designs plays and a game plan to put the team into the best position to win. So, just as your coach makes intentional decisions to guide your team to victory, it is never too early for you to do the same with your own life. Your hard work, perseverance, attention to detail, and even talent, will be extremely minimized without proper planning. A plan is simply a map with directions, to get you going where you want to go, and as fast as possible. It is so valuable to remember, that whenever success happens it is not by mistake.

A major part of planning is to fully understand the obstacles and distractions that are guaranteed to come. This is the only way to prepare for them. As far as distractions, teens and preteens in this day and age, have it so much harder than those in previous generations. But if you can carefully avoid the distractions of today, you will place yourself far ahead of your peers. This is not to strip you of the fun that you are supposed to be having at this time in your life, but mainly to guide you in having a balance between the enjoyable moments and the serious matters.

Let us take for example, the enjoyment of social media. It provides plenty of comical entertainment, an opportunity to communicate with multiple friends at once, a way to meet new people and build relationships, and also a way to express your-self and find new interests. These are all things that can be a lot of fun, and because it is available in the palm of our hands it can also become very distracting or addictive. In addition, through social media we have all eliminated a large amount of our “in person” conversations. Today you can walk into a room full of kids and instead of them speaking, laughing and joking with one another; they are all on their phones or on social media. It is too hard to develop “in person” social skills if so much of your communication happens through texting and social media.

Social media has also changed how much we communicate with people outside of our age range. Therefore, the youth of today hardly ever communicate with anyone older. At some point you may have a conflict with a teacher or even a coach, maybe about a grade or playing time that you feel is unfair. If you want it resolved, not only will there need to be an “in person” conversation, but it will also be with someone older than you.

INTENTIONALLY plan to spend some time with older and more mature people, while still connecting with your friends on social media, **AND IN PERSON!** Having balance is important, because spending most of your time with people your age makes it a lot harder for you to gain the wisdom and perspective of a more mature person. Their wisdom has come from experiencing things and making mistakes that you have not yet. You do not have to waste time making a mistake if you can learn the lesson from someone else’s. You should be exposed to

personal interactions and even wise advice to push you to higher levels of success, a lot faster. Only people above your level of thinking can pull you up to that level. So many successful and influential people talk about what they have learned through the time they spent with an older influential person, or the talks they had at the dinner table with their parents. For you it can also be your parents, or an older sibling, the boss at your summer job, or even your coach. Not just minor interactions, but a considerable amount of time. This is very rare in today's society, but it does not have to be for you!

I am pretty sure that being more mature is a goal of yours'. It increases mental toughness, emotional control, leadership qualities, and even your performance on the field. You may be wondering "*what does this all have to do with planning?*" Well, planning is also about knowing your distractions and surroundings, and building habits into your life to defeat them. There are so many other things that can become addictive or can limit your progress. Not being distracted or limited by certain trends of society, technology, or social media is just one example of something that should be a part of your plan.

Now that we have established the purpose of a plan, this third quarter is designed to show you exactly how to plan! It starts with identifying where you are now, what your strengths, weaknesses, and habits are, and what specific steps you will take in order to get where you would like to be. Just as many great teams and organizations ask every player or member to complete this, here we provide a sample of a **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**, and also a blank one for you. Many of the greats do the same thing while evaluating themselves from time to time. Every year you are also going to complete a **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**; to help you to establish a routine, organize your

daily activities, and keep track of your progress. Just like the starting point on a map, if you are not honest and sure about where you are now, you will have a tough time finding directions for where you are planning to go.

<p>What are my strengths? (<i>your own opinion</i>)</p>	<p><i>-I am confident and positive.</i> <i>-I communicate and get along well with other people.</i></p>
<p>What are my weaknesses and bad habits? (<i>your own opinion</i>)</p>	<p><i>-I procrastinate and wait until the last minute.</i> <i>-I use my phone a lot while studying.</i> <i>-I sometimes forget assignments and plays.</i> <i>-Sometimes I joke around or fall asleep in class.</i></p>
<p>Positive or negative, what are some things that I have heard multiple people say about me?</p>	<p><i>-I have a lot of potential.</i> <i>-I have a fun personality.</i> <i>-I can be lazy or unfocused.</i> <i>-I make excuses.</i></p>
<p>What activities and things account for MOST of my time?</p>	<p><i>-School and homework</i> <i>-Football practice</i> <i>-Television</i> <i>-Facebook</i> <i>-Xbox</i></p>
<p>What changes do I want to make happen?</p>	<p><i>-Get faster and stronger, and lose weight.</i> <i>-Turn my C's into B's.</i> <i>-Get a summer job.</i></p>

-ACTION PLAN- The specific steps necessary to accomplish my goals:

-Do homework as soon as I get home to get it out of the way.

-Keep my phone in another room while studying or doing homework.

-Turn off the TV and get off of Facebook one hour before bed to review school assignments and plays.

-Change my seat in class, away from anyone who may contribute to me fooling around in class.

-Do some extra running on the weekends.

-Ask the school nurse about which foods to eat or avoid, in order to lose weight.

-Research summer jobs (maybe sports or summer camps as a counselor).

What are my strengths?
(your own opinion)

What are my weaknesses and bad habits?
(your own opinion)

Positive or negative, what are some things that I have heard multiple people say about me?

What activities and things account for MOST of my time?

What changes do I want to make happen?	
-ACTION PLAN- The specific steps necessary to accomplish my goals: - - - - - -	

You should have an adult help you with ideas for your action plan. Personal development takes a tremendous amount of discipline. It does not mean to cut out all fun, but again it is about balance!

Make sure that your plan is specific to you, and consistently reviewed to help you be efficient with your time. This comes from gathering credible information, seeking great advice, and making sure it is relevant to what you are trying to accomplish. If you do not plan wisely by asking for proper guidance, you can find yourself moving, but moving in the wrong direction. You should never confuse activity with achievement. For example, you can work very hard in the weight room doing the wrong exercises, the wrong way, leading to injury or limited growth. Before planning, study and seek advice from someone who is experienced in the specific area.

The next steps to having a great plan are setting goals and getting organized. Goal setting can be one of the greatest motivators. There have been so many sayings regarding *“living your dream”* and *“dreaming big”*, but I say, *“dreams are for those who sleep!”* The only

way to accomplish anything is to wake up and actually set goals! **WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU WANT?** It is important to make short term goals, which gradually bring you closer to your ultimate goals. This cannot be done overnight; it is accomplished through small measurable results, that need to be attainable, realistic, and specific. Having an exact time frame for each goal is what prevents you from procrastinating or getting distracted.

Getting organized will help you to manage and prioritize your responsibilities; list your tasks in order of importance. These are the things that **MUST** be done (school work, football practice/training, house chores, etc.). Once these are complete then you can move on to the things that you enjoy doing (social media, video games, going out, etc.). The idea is to get the most critical tasks done without waiting until the last minute. Organization will also help you save time and manage the stress that comes from incomplete work which piles up.

Your personal development plan is to give you a general overview in order to create your specific plan; but there is one more critical habit that most successful people practice. The lives of powerful C.E.O.'s, professional athletes, and even famous entertainers, all revolve around their calendars. They constantly update and check their schedules to make sure they are on course with their goals and tasks. You too should get into the habit of writing down assignments and goals, and checking your plan daily! Keeping a 'to-do' list and scratching things off of it is a great discipline to practice. Stay focused and be organized; *"I forgot"* is **NOT** a valid excuse. As the old Chinese proverb says *"The palest ink is better than the best memory"*; **WRITE IT ALL DOWN!** When you accomplish a certain goal, make a note of it on that day. You should be able to look back on the day, the week, and the month to check your

results. This will tell you how much progress you are making throughout the year; be sure to use these tools. If you are not filling out your personal development plan and updating your daily schedule, it is likely that you are not very organized nor goal oriented. **WRITE IT ALL DOWN!** Over time you should even compare next year's personal development plan to this year's.

WHAT IS PURPOSE?

“The two most important days in life are the day you're born and the day you discover the reason why.”

– Mark Twain

While the plan helps you to set goals and define exactly what you want, understanding purpose helps you to determine why. *Why exactly do you want to pursue a certain goal, and more importantly what deeper meaning does your life have?* There are two different scenarios when pursuing a goal, obviously one is failing to accomplish the goal, and the other is accomplishing the goal. The value of knowing your purpose will help you navigate through life, no matter which of these two scenarios you encounter; because we must embrace the reality that we will fall short of some of our goals. Purpose is what helps us understand the journey that we take and the value, knowledge, and fulfillment that we receive even if we do not accomplish a certain goal. If there is a true purpose behind what we do, even though we may be disappointed after falling short of a goal, we are still aware that there is a deeper meaning to our lives. Too many people are hopeless after failing to accomplish a goal. This is simply because their goals have

often become their reason for living. In reality, our purpose is what defines us, not simply our goals. The journey is often more important than the destination. Who we become along the way is more valuable than what we receive.

The same principle applies when we do accomplish a goal that we set out to accomplish. Many people often arrive at a certain goal, they enjoy the excitement of it, but then are left wondering “*now what?*”? There is nothing wrong with wanting nice things, setting goals and accomplishing them, wanting to use your talent at the highest level possible, but there are many circumstances where the most successful people who have accomplished some of the most amazing goals, are some of the unhappiest people. This again is simply because their goals have often become their reason for living. Chasing your goals requires strict balance so that your goals do not become all that you wrap your life around. The “*now what?*” phase in life is where you can struggle to find any further fulfillment or meaning because you may have accomplished what you have wrapped your whole life around. This is a very mature and advanced concept that will help you understand true happiness, and the sooner you grasp this concept, the happier and more fulfilling your life can be. This also helps you to not waste any time nor effort while you plan and set goals.

Goal setting often answers these questions...

-What can I get?

-How do I get it, and how fast can I get it?

-What will it do for me?

Finding purpose tends to answer these questions...

-What am I good at?

-What am I passionate about?

-What would I do for free if money didn't matter?

-How can I use this passion to give or to help other people?

Goals are more often about what you can acquire here on Earth, but purpose is mainly about what you can leave here when you're gone from this Earth. As you get older you will realize that the impact you leave, and the other lives that you have affected are what will bring you true happiness and ultimate fulfillment. The earlier you learn this lesson the earlier you will live a life based on purpose and not simply based on pleasures. You may not discover your life purpose until you're in your 30's or 40's, but you should start thinking about it now. Once again, this is not an attempt to lead you to believe that chasing a goal is a bad thing! Please understand that there is nothing wrong with being successful and wealthy, but if you have not found purpose then you are simply chasing success and wealth which by themselves do not bring happiness. Living with purpose will help to protect you from being successful and wealthy, but unhappy deep down inside. There is a reason that we hear about so many rich and famous people committing suicide, addicted to drugs and alcohol, or constantly fighting battles with the legal system.

Unfortunately, most people set goals based on the pleasures and enjoyment that they can receive, or based on comparing themselves to everyone else, and competing with those around them. For what we often call "*bragging rights*". The fancy car, the beautiful house, the

attractive spouse; there is nothing wrong with having these as goals, however, we must understand that these goals do not bring ultimate fulfillment. Ultimate fulfillment comes with understanding your individual purpose, not from showing off our accomplishments to the rest of the world.

Purpose will give you a clear direction as you set goals. There may be great opportunities presented to you that offer an increase in pay, fame and attention, but understanding your purpose may help you not accept these opportunities if they aren't aligned with what you are passionate about. Sadly, instead of chasing what we are purposed to do, or what we are passionate about, we tend to chase goals that are or will make us popular. Most of our frustration comes when we chase goals that we may not accomplish simply because it was a goal that was not in line with our true purpose. You will find as you get older that fulfillment and limited stress is worth a lot more than success and wealth. So again, chase your goals, but most importantly seek to understand your purpose. Understanding the deeper meaning behind your efforts will also protect you from being immoral or compromising great character just to accomplish your goals. Many people have had good goals, but have made bad decisions in order to accomplish them. From the outside the world can see a successful person, but on the inside that successful person can be miserably unhappy. Whatever you end up doing, whatever salary you end up making, whoever you end up marrying, purpose will always be what brings true happiness and ultimate fulfillment.

There is no limit to living with purpose. You can always keep going and continue being happy in what you pursue, without the *"I've finally arrived, so now what?"* mentality. Success comes from accomplishing

goals, but satisfaction and significance comes from discovering your purpose. The satisfaction directly relates to your own enjoyment, but more importantly, your significance is measured by how much you use your success to help other people. When your passion directly changes someone else's circumstances and provides for someone else's needs, it is such a rewarding feeling.



When we find the sweet spot right in the middle; that is how we experience true fulfillment. That is fulfilling our purpose!

THE FUNDAMENTALS

4th Quarter

“Success is doing ordinary things extraordinarily well.”

~Jim Rohn

From youth football to the National Football League, there is a reason why every single practice begins with basic fundamentals. Learning and continuing to emphasize proper technique is far more important than the X's and O's. From keeping a proper stance, to taking a first step, or learning the correct leverage for blocking and tackling, fundamentals are the foundation for any player to be successful and to remain successful. In football there are so many skills specific to each position, and those who master these skills reach their maximum level of performance. Natural talent is not in your control, but how fundamentally sound you are is all up to you.

The fourth and final quarter of ***THE CULTURE*** provides the three major fundamentals for each position. We have broken down the foundational skills needed for you to improve daily. These details were compiled through one-on-one interviews with major college and NFL coaches. These are the same fundamentals that they continue to stress and teach their players every day. Regardless of the level on which you are playing, stressing fundamentals will always be critical. It is important that you learn these very specific descriptions, and practice these fundamentals to improve year round.

DEFENSE

Unlike on offense, a defensive player's responsibility is based on reaction. Your assignment may change according to the type of play the offense is running: whether it is an inside run, outside run, or pass. After reading your keys, all eleven players adjust and pursue as a collective unit. Hustle and determination are the main qualities that a defensive player must possess. It is more than just an assignment; it is an attitude.

From a mental aspect it is much more important to be in great physical condition as a defensive player than as an offensive player. An offensive player who is part of a long drive has a very positive experience. Your team is moving the ball, gaining ground, and you are feeling good about your success. This positive momentum is why an offensive player may not feel tired during a long drive.

The opposite happens when the defense is on the field for 8, 10, or 12 plays. It means that the opposing offense is moving the ball, and things are **NOT** going well for the defense. This negative momentum leads to frustration and can become both mentally and physically draining. Being in better condition will help defensive players overcome the offense's positive momentum.

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN: THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

1- STANCE

2- FIRST STEP & HAND PLACEMENT

3- FIT & FINISH

STANCE

A defensive lineman must get into a great stance. Refer to the picture below (FIG. 1). Set your feet; you should have a heel-to-toe stagger and your feet should be underneath your armpits. Squat down in a football position, reach out and take your right hand and place it on the ground as you fall forward. Make sure you have a heel-to-toe stagger, which means if your right hand is on the ground your right toes should be even with your left heel. Your toes and knees should be pointed forward with 75% of your weight shifted onto your right hand. To test this, have someone knock your right hand out from beneath you, causing you to fall to the ground. Your back should be flat and parallel to the ground. Strain to look through the top part of your helmet; look through your eyebrows. Your off arm should be bent and ready to extend directly to the outside shoulder pad of the blocker. Keep it in front of you, without winding it up (FIG. 1).



FIG. 1

Your coach might have you in a slightly different stance or even in a four point stance, depending on the defense that you run. In obvious passing situations use more of a sprinter's stance. Lift your tail in the air, slightly higher than your shoulders.

FIRST STEP & HAND PLACEMENT

When working on your first step, understand that getting your back foot into the ground as soon as possible; and the position of your hand placement are both very important. Your hands will lead your hips and get you into a good position to defend the block. You must focus on your target. A general rule is: "near hand to near number." Meaning, the target for the hand you have on the ground is the near number of the offensive lineman (FIG. 2). Let us say for example you are a defensive tackle responsible for the B gap, the gap between the guard and tackle on the left side of the line. Defensively, you would line up your right hand with the outside number of the offensive guard. If his jersey number is 75; you would put your right hand down in alignment with the 7 on his jersey. That would also be your target. Step and snap your hips and punch your right hand, without winding up, as quickly and powerfully as possible to that near number; the 7 in this example. Your off hand's target is the outside shoulder pad of the guard.



FIG. 2

FIT & FINISH

Understanding how your hips work and the meaning of the word **LEVERAGE** is very important. It may be the most important fundamental in football. Your fit determines your power angles. Always take on a blocker with your near leg, and at the same time punch him with your near hand. Step and punch, always come off of the ball low, and never stand up. This is leverage! The lineman that strikes first with leverage and stays low wins (FIG. 3). Keep a good bend in your ankles, knees, and hips. Keep your helmet lower than the offensive lineman's helmet. Always stay lower than the blocker you are defeating; in a good fit football position (FIG. 3).



FIG. 3

In this position, keep the blocker away from your body, and keep slightly bent arms when fighting to give yourself room to escape. There are many ways to escape from blocks. You can chop hands, swim hands, grab and pull, or rip through. The most important thing is to finish every play and get to the ball carrier or the QB. Play until the echo of the whistle!

LINEBACKERS: THE QUARTERBACKS OF THE DEFENSE

1- THREE A's OF LINEBACKER PLAY- ALIGNMENT, ASSIGNMENT, & ADJUSTMENT

2- BLOCK DESTRUCTION

3- TACKLING

ALIGNMENT, ASSIGNMENT, & ADJUSTMENT

There are different stances for inside and outside linebackers. Both require a bend in your ankles, knees, and hips. Inside linebackers align your feet under your armpits, pointed straight forward, level with one another, and your chest above your knees (FIG. 1).



FIG.1

Have 90% of your weight on the front three-fourths of your foot. One should be able to slide a piece of paper underneath your back heel. Outside linebackers stagger your feet, with your outside leg back in a heel-to-toe stagger. Regardless of if you are an inside or outside linebacker, lining up in exactly the right spot is critical to the entire scheme of the defense. Always check your alignment in your base defense, and in all the various stunts and blitzes. You must start right to increase your chances of finishing right.

Linebackers are responsible for many assignments. These range from run fits, to zone and man pass coverages, and also blitzes. More than any other position on the defense, linebackers have to know the entire scheme and where exactly they fit into it.

Various formations, shifts, and motions can change how we adjust on defense. Making the proper adjustments prevent the offense from gaining a pre-snap advantage. As the quarterbacks of the defense, linebackers must make the calls to move the defensive line or secondary if needed. Making the right adjustments will be critical to your defense's success or failure.

BLOCK DESTRUCTION

Linebackers must take on blockers with power. Leverage is the most important factor in defeating a block. Your feet have to be on the ground when you make contact with a blocker. You have **NO POWER** when your feet are in the air. Do not bend at the waist; have a good bend in your ankles, knees, and hips. Your feet should be shoulder width apart. With your eyes and head up, you should always be lower than the blocker. If you are taking on a blocker with your right shoulder, just before contact your right foot should be in the ground. This is

leverage! A great way to remember this is “same leg, same shoulder” (FIG. 2). Do not use the shoulder to the side of your gap responsibility. The arm to the side of your gap responsibility must always be free.



FIG. 2

TACKLING

First and foremost, **KEEP YOUR HEAD OUT OF THE TACKLE!** You need to understand the safest and most powerful way to tackle a ball carrier. Whether you are in a walk through, a drill, or in a game, always slide your head to the side, and keep your head and eyes up. **NEVER PUT YOUR HEAD DOWN!** When approaching a ball carrier get your body under control. Shorten your steps and widen your base; constantly move forward and close the gap between yourself and the runner. Some coaches use the term “breakdown,” others use the phrase “come to balance,” and others say, “shimmy” or “creep”; they all mean the same thing. Being out of control can lead to a missed tackle. Similar to block destruction, the same position and leverage is

needed when making a tackle. Your head and eyes **MUST** stay up and “*same leg, same shoulder*” applies; snap your hips and wrap your arms up and through the ball carrier. Finish the tackle by running your feet and bringing the runner to the ground.

DEFENSIVE BACKS: THE LAST LINE OF DEFENSE

1- BACK PEDAL & TRANSITION

2- BALL SKILLS

3- BLOCK AVOIDANCE & TACKLING

BACK PEDAL & TRANSITION

Mastering the backpedal starts with a great stance. Begin with your feet underneath your armpits, with a heel-to-toe stagger. Keep your chest up with a great bend in your ankles, knees, and hips. **DO NOT** bend at the waist! The break of your wrist should be at knee level, with your head up, and your chest over knees (FIG. 1).



FIG.1



When getting started, push off of your front foot and drive backwards on the ball of your foot (the front half of your foot). Skim the top of the grass; your feet should not come too far off of the ground, and your

heels should never touch the ground. Keep your arms relaxed and slightly pumping.

Transition is the term used for breaking or changing directions out of your backpedal. You want to transition as fast as possible to close the distance between yourself and the offensive player. When breaking forward, either straight or on an angle, the T-step is the most popular technique used. When you turn your back foot sideways to plant, with your front foot pointing forward, they form a T shape (FIG. 2).



FIG.2



Turning your foot gives it more area to push off of the ground, rather than just planting your toe. For example, if you are transitioning forward to the right, you want to T-step with your left foot and drive forward with the right foot (FIG. 2). Your back leg becomes the plant leg, and your front leg becomes the drive leg. Unlike breaking forward, when transitioning backwards you just simply need to open your hips, stay low, and turn and run. Whip your elbow in the direction that you are opening up to, this will help you to turn and run.

BALL SKILLS

Ball skills refer to the ability to judge, close on, and ultimately intercept the ball. When judging the ball you have to quickly determine its speed, height, and distance. This will let you know whether to slow down, to speed up, or to change your angle. When closing on the ball you have to decide whether to knock it down, break up the receiver's hands, or intercept it, all without interfering with the receiver and making sure a tackle can be secured. As for intercepting the ball, it is important to attack the football and not wait for it. On a deep ball this means catching it at its highest point. To improve your ball skills, always finish your backpedaling and transitioning drills with catching a football. It is best that they are not thrown perfectly at you; this will force you to have to adjust to the ball.

BLOCK AVOIDANCE & TACKLING

The best way to defend a block is by totally avoiding it. You should never get blocked in the open field. When you avoid a block, make sure there is enough space for you to recover to get into a tackling position. Never avoid when the ball carrier is within five yards of you. You can use head and body fakes to elude a blocker. Or if he gets his hands on you, you must keep him at arm's length, and either swim or rip yourself through to escape from the blocker. Because we are the last line of defense, a secondary player must make a sure tackle. An open field tackle is the toughest type of tackle to make, so **DO NOT** look to make a big hit. The runner has the advantage because he has so much space to work with. You want to close the distance between yourself and the ball carrier, use the sideline to only give him one way to go, or even in the middle of the field take a slight angle not allowing him to cut back

on you. Come to balance while continuously moving forward, taking short and choppy 6 inch steps. Get as close to the ball carrier as possible, **KEEP YOUR HEAD AND EYES UP**, slide your head and snap your hips. Wrap your arms up and through the runner, while grabbing as much of his jersey as possible. Run your feet and bring the ball carrier to the ground. Your mentality must be, *“I have to stop him or at least slow him down.”*

OFFENSE

There is no other aspect of sport where eleven players, with individual assignments, all have to move at the same exact time. Offensive football demands precision and everyone working in unison, right when the ball is snapped. Unlike defense, even a high school offense can have an upwards of a hundred plays. Studying and understanding the concept of each play is critical to the offense's success. An offense has more individual positions, and each position has more techniques and skills required to execute.

Timing is a key factor, because on every play multiple positions are working together. Just to name a few: linemen need perfect timing for their double team blocks, quarterbacks and running backs need it for handoffs, and quarterbacks and receivers rely on it in the passing game. Learning to work together with perfect timing is what makes individuals become a cohesive offensive unit.

RECEIVERS: THE EXPLOSIVE FORCE OF THE OFFENSE

1- STALK BLOCKING

2- ROUTE RUNNING

3- CATCHING THE FOOTBALL

STALK BLOCKING

Making big plays as a receiver goes far beyond just catching the deep ball. Great receivers also pride themselves on being great blockers! Being willing, tenacious, and tough will determine how well you block; and do so until the whistle is blown! These ABCs will help you remember the simple steps of stalk blocking...

- 1- **Alignment-** Knowing where to line up is very important: which hash the ball is on, the type of play that is being run, knowing whether the ball is being run inside or outside. These factors will all have an effect on your alignment.
- 2- **Burst-** You must burst off of the line of scrimmage and close the gap between yourself and the defender. Keep attacking him until he stops in his backpedal. When he stops, you gather yourself.
- 3- **Control-** Get your body under control. Shorten your steps and widen your base. Some coaches call this “breaking down,” while others call it a “creep” or a “shimmy.” Take short and choppy 6 inch steps, and get ready to punch with your hands (FIG. 1).

4- **Drive-** Get your feet into the ground! Step and punch with the lower part of your hands. Keep your thumbs up and strike at the numbers of the defender. This keeps your hands inside and prevents you from holding. At the same time, snap your hips and keep a wide base. Your feet should be outside the framework of the defender's body. Run your feet and continue to drive the defender backwards (FIG. 2).

5- **Effort-** While you are engaged with the defender you must work hard to stay with him and control him. He might look to knock your hands off, and if he does, just reset them quickly to gain back control. Fight the defender for as long and as hard as you can.

6- **Finish-** Stay on the block until the whistle blows. Keep a wide base and keep running your feet. This takes no talent; it is purely effort and will. The defender can see the ball carrier and you cannot. So keep your feet live and active, ready to redirect.



FIG. 1



FIG. 2

ROUTE RUNNING

The art of route running is based on precision and understanding the defense. You are simply trying to create separation and get open. Get into the habit of varying your alignment so the defense cannot anticipate which route you are running. For example, do not line up too wide every time you are running an in-breaking route, or too tight when running an out-breaking route.

In zone coverage you are trying to get into a specific area, and in man coverage you are trying to separate from your man. Regardless of the coverage or route, acceleration off of the ball is pivotal. Keep your arms pumping and your hips down as low as possible while maintaining top speed. For any route where you are stopping, coming back to the quarterback or breaking straight in or out, at some point you have to gather yourself and slightly slow down to stop or break. These are typically curls, stops, in-routes, and out-routes. When it is time to make your break, keep your arms pumping, and always plant on the foot opposite of the direction in which you are going. Your plant step should be sharp and precise. We call it “stomping the bug”. Stab your foot into the ground as if you are stomping a bug. Make a straight line cut without rounding, and stay low and accelerate coming out of the break. For deeper routes when you are continuing up the field (slants, posts, flags, fades, etc.) you can continue full speed into your cut, without gathering yourself or slowing down. Continue pushing off of the foot opposite of the direction in which you are going.

The best route runners typically make every route appear as if they are running another route. At the top of their routes, while making their plant steps, they give head and shoulder fakes in the opposite

direction. You always want to separate and push the defense away from where you are running.

CATCHING THE FOOTBALL

Catching the football starts and ends with your eyes. The first thing you must do is locate the football. On certain routes you should actually see the ball come out of the quarterback's hand. Once you locate the ball, keep your eyes on the tip of it the entire time it is in the air. Do not wait on the football to come to you, **GO AND GET IT!** As the ball gets close to you extend your arms, and with your fingertips softly absorb the speed off of the ball. This means to not hit the ball or allow it to crash into your hands. As gently as possible slow it down, and follow it with your eyes all the way into your hands. If the ball is above your waist make a diamond shape with your thumbs and index fingers (FIG. 3). If the ball is below your waist, or if it is an over the shoulder catch, turn your hands up and cross your pinky fingers (FIG 4).



FIG. 3



FIG. 4

A catch is not complete until the ball is tucked and completely secured high and tight to the body.

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN: THE ENGINE THAT MAKES THE OFFENSE RUN

1- STANCE

2- RUN BLOCKING (FOOTWORK, FIT, & FINISH)

3- PASS BLOCKING

STANCE

An offensive lineman has to be in a balanced stance. He must be able to move backwards, forward, and sideways to accomplish all of the different blocks that he needs to make. Only have 20% - 30% of your weight on your hand; the rest is in your legs. While in your stance you should be able to lift your hand and remain comfortable. Set your feet slightly outside of your shoulders with a toe-to-instep stagger. The toe of your back foot should be aligned with the middle of your front foot, and have your feet pointed straight ahead. Bigger guys are allowed a slightly wider stance and a bigger stagger. From here you need to squat down into a coiled and compact position. Have a good bend in your ankles, knees, and hips. This produces your power angles. Keep an arch in your neck, with your head and eyes up looking at the defense and your target. If you are in a right-handed stance, reach your right hand straight out in front of your right eye and place it on the ground. Your left arm should be bent next to your body, the elbow at the hip and the hand at the knee. You should feel comfortable and balanced. Your back should be flat, with your tail slightly higher than your shoulders. Keep

your eyes up and looking through the top of your helmet (FIG. 1).



FIG. 1

RUN BLOCKING (FOOTWORK, FIT, & FINISH)

When run blocking, the goal is to get vertical press and movement on the defender. The first step is a shorter timing step; it is never more than a 6 inch step. The goal of this step is to set up the second step by putting the lineman in a position to engage the defender with balance. During the first step, maintain power angles in your ankles, knees, and hips, while keeping the same flat back and chest over knee as in the stance. Furthermore, while this step is taking place, the arms simultaneously need to load in preparation to punch. The key to executing a technically sound first step is to remain compacted, coiled, and in a powerful balanced position (FIG. 2).

****If in any case a defensive lineman is tightly aligned to you, in order to get immediate movement you need to punch with your hands, making contact at the **SAME EXACT** time that this first step hits the ground; not waiting to punch on the second step. In this case your first step is not to get you into position, but for you to actually make contact.*



FIG. 2

The second step is the most vital aspect of the block, and should be violent and explosive. The second step is when you will engage the defender by punching the intended landmark. The second step is longer than the first, typically 12 inches. Your hands need to punch at the **SAME EXACT** time that this second step hits the ground. This is your fit position. There should be little separation between you and the defender. Aim to step through him and not just to him, but **DO NOT** take too large of a step. Keep your hands within the framework of the defender and your elbows tight to the body (FIG. 3).



FIG. 3

After engaging the defender and winning inside hand control, you need to finish the block. Take consistent powerful 12 inch steps downfield with your weight on your insteps; stabbing the ground with the inside half of your feet. It is important to stay low and maintain a flat back with power angles throughout the ankles, knees, and hips. Finish downfield with square shoulders. Your feet should never cross or touch, but remain firmly planted into the ground. **FINISH** every block until the whistle! (FIG. 4)



FIG. 4

PASS BLOCKING

When pass blocking the goal is to limit forward momentum and keep the defender away from the quarterback. Quite different than a run blocking stance, you should be squatted down with your chest up and a vertical back. Your feet, knees, hips, and shoulders should be pointed straight forward. To take away the inside path to the quarterback, 75 percent of your body weight needs to be on your inside foot. Three types of steps are associated with pass blocking. The post step is a powerful lateral step to the inside. This takes away a hard

inside rush. The kick step is a backward step slightly angled to the outside. This step is taken with the outside foot while the front foot slides back. The vertical step is straight back, typically used at the tackle position to cut off defensive ends. Your eyes should be locked onto the breastplate of the defender. Like a boxer, your arms should be near full extension as you take short powerful jabs. Strike with your palms, and make sure your hands stay up.

QUARTERBACKS: THE LEADER OF THE OFFENSE

1- THROWING THE FOOTBALL

2- DROPS

3- ZONE VS. MAN COVERAGE

THROWING THE FOOTBALL

The mechanics of throwing the football starts with your grip. When gripping the ball, we say “2 fingers on, 2 fingers off.” Your pointer and middle fingers should be at the top of the ball above the laces. Your ring and pinky fingers should grip the laces. It is important not to palm the football; make sure you can see some daylight between your hand and the ball (FIG. 1).



FIG. 1

Before releasing the football both hands should be holding it above your shoulder, right beside your ear. Your passing motion will start by stepping towards and slightly outside of your target. Your front toe and front shoulder should be pointed in this direction. This will stop

you from throwing across your body, and allow you to bring your hips through. Step, and turn your hips and stomach into the throw (FIG. 2).



FIG. 2

This motion involves your entire body and not just your arm. When you throw the ball make sure you are in balance, transferring your weight properly from your back foot to your front foot. Make sure your elbow is higher than your shoulder and follow through over the top. You do not want to throw sidearm! When the ball leaves your hand, your wrist should turn down, your thumb should be down pointed at your opposite hip, and your index finger should be the last finger in contact with the ball. This is what creates a spiral. When finishing make sure your belt buckle is pointed at your target.

DROPS

All drops start by getting into a comfortable stance; a bend in the ankles, knees, and hips. You should not be standing erect. If you are a right-handed quarterback, 80% of your body weight should be on your

left foot. This will help you to drive away from the line of scrimmage (FIG. 3).



FIG. 3

After the snap immediately pull the ball into your chest while focusing on a large driving step away from the center. In your drop the ball should move from “pec to pec,” just underneath your chin. Always have two hands on the ball, and never allow it to move outside or below your chest. Always drop straight back, keep your eyes down field, and maintain the bend in your ankles, knees, and hips. These mechanics are true for all drops: 3 step, 5 step, and 7 step.

The final two steps of any of these drops are a crossover step and a plant step. These should be quicker steps because you are now gathering yourself to throw. When operating from the shotgun you need to take the first two steps off of these drops. For example, a 5 step drop under center becomes a 3 step drop while in the shotgun.

ZONE VS. MAN COVERAGE

Recognizing the coverage will allow you to operate most effectively in the passing game. You can get a pre-snap read by looking for the amount of deep defenders. Understand that this can change once the ball is snapped. The amount of deep defenders that the defense ends up with determines the coverage. A deep defender is anyone beyond linebacker depth. Two deep defenders is COVER 2, three deep is COVER 3, and four deep is COVER 4. These are the most common zone coverages. All of these defenders are responsible for an area of the field, and not a specific man. Their heads and eyes will be scanning the field, watching both the receivers and the quarterback.

Unlike zone coverage, in man coverage the defenders will focus entirely on their man. Looking at the cornerbacks will help you determine man coverage. A cornerback will typically show this by lining up inside the receiver and closer to him. The two most common man coverages are COVER 0 (no deep defenders), and COVER 1 (1 deep defender). Generally these coverages are associated with a blitz.

RUNNING BACKS: THE SPARKPLUG OF THE OFFENSE

1- BALL SECURITY

2- VISION

3- TACKLE AVOIDANCE

BALL SECURITY

Statistics continue to prove that losing the turnover battle is the number one factor in losing a football game. On top of that, it is the easiest way for a player to lose playing time. The number one fundamental for a running back is ball security. Many accidents happen during the course of a season, so it is rare to go through an entire one without fumbling; but it is all about working to minimize turnovers. There should never be any air between the ball and the ball carrier's body. Using the four points of pressure is the safest and most proper way to carry the football.

- 1- Eagle Claw- Gripping the nose of the ball between the pointer and middle fingers. There should be a slight separation between these two fingers, but all five fingers should squeeze tightly.
- 2- Forearm- Bend the wrist to place the side of the ball up against your forearm.
- 3- Bicep- Bend the elbow and tuck the other end of the ball against the inside of your bicep.
- 4- Chest- Clamp your elbow down to your side, causing the nose of the ball to point upward, and tuck the ball tightly to your chest.

As you run, the arm carrying the ball should not swing at all, and the ball should remain “high and tight,” using all four points of pressure (FIG. 1). Keeping a forward lean and low pad level keeps your chest and the ball unexposed. It keeps defenders from getting underneath your pads, into the area that you are carrying the football. Low pad level also prevents you from taking big hits which often leads to fumbles.



FIG. 1



VISION

The ability to see multiple defenders on different levels is key to being a great running back. Great vision is when you have a wide view of the football field, not only seeing what is directly in front of you, but also what is coming from a further distance or from the sides. Runners with great vision are looking at linebackers and secondary defenders, while taking the handoff or making a cut off of a lineman’s block on the first level. They can see a safety’s angle from 10 yards away and set him up to cut back on him. While in the open field they are constantly and very quickly scanning the traffic on the field.

Vision is developed by first understanding the entire blocking scheme of each play, and taking a good look at the entire defense before each snap. You never want to have tunnel vision as a runner and have your eyes locked onto one spot on the field. In practice drills you can improve your vision by having a coach or a teammate run at you from the side and from a distance up ahead; all while you are focusing on cutting off cones or through bags. You can also practice cutting off a block while another defender is running at you 5-10 yards behind that block. This mimics a safety running downfield on an angle at you, and while you are reading a block on a linebacker, you are setting up the safety to cut back or outrun his angle. This helps you see multiple things at once. It improves your reaction to unexpected traffic and movement on the field while still concentrating on the defenders right in front of you. It is not only field vision, but it is overall peripheral vision.

TACKLE AVOIDANCE

Running backs should continue to work on their ability to account for unblocked defenders in tight closed spaces and in the open field. The tools you use depend on how much space you have around you and ultimately what type of athlete you are. Ball carriers have many different styles; be careful in thinking that you need to change your style or have someone else's.

A running back should always have his "off arm" (the arm without the ball) ready to ward off defenders. The stiff arm is the most common and effective tool (FIG. 2). You can practice this by having a coach or teammate toss medicine balls, or hold up bags during or at the end of drills. They should do it randomly and spontaneously so that you do not

know when to expect their movement; always keeping the off arm alert and ready. It can be a defender diving at your ankles, or even aiming for as high as your waist or chest. It is your job as a runner to see where the tackler is aiming. Shoot your arm out and use your palm to aggressively push the defender away or simply keep them from getting their helmet, shoulders, or arms any closer to you. Use the palm, not the fingers! This prevents you from mistakenly grabbing their facemask (FIG. 2).



FIG. 2

When a tackle cannot be totally avoided, a stiff arm can allow for extra yardage after contact. Regardless of your skill set or speed, this tool can be used in tight spaces or in the open field. As for a more quick and shifty running back, freezing a defender and making him miss is a great way to avoid tackles in the open field, but in tight closed spaces you may neither have the room nor time to make moves. Your individual cutting, catching, or ball security drills should always be combined with some form of tackle avoidance.

- **FOLLOW THE DIRECTIVES!**
- **TRUST THE PARALLELS!**
- **KNOW THE PLAN & PURPOSE!**
- **LEARN THE FUNDAMENTALS!**
- **EMBRACE THE CULTURE!**