Developing Defensive Backs

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General Philosophy on Football:

- **Special Teams:** The best players play, regardless of starter/back up
  - No charity reps (leave those for WR... then run to the other side of the field)
- **Offense:** You’re going to be as good as your offensive line regardless of what scheme you run
- **Defense:** Recruit and Develop Cornerbacks who can cover in space
  - Move the strongest/most physical to LB
  - Move the smartest to safety
  - Keep the quickest at CB
What we’ll talk about today…

- Why we feel this is the most important position in football
- How our players acquire skills through randomized drills and practice
- Deconstructing coverage Skills
- How we teach them
  - Simple directives... don’t talk too much
- How easy these principles are to adapt
Why it’s most important... With a fully developed defensive backfield you can:

- 10x your capabilities
- Load the Box on run downs
- Send Heat on pass downs
- Handle odd ball formations/motions with ease
- We believe that defensive back play is the most critical aspect of defensive football
- You’ll never beat an offensive guy on a white board. You’ll always beat them with your players.
  - Jimmy’s and Joes > X’s and O’s
  - There is no RPO answer for great man coverage
Build aggression:

- There is no such thing as a finesse DB
- Err on the side of more aggressive coverage
  - Aggressive yet technical.
    - Most calls occur when aggression goes outside of technique
- Make the refs make decisions
- If WR's in practice aren't complaining about getting held, you're probably not being aggressive enough
- Use your fingers! Quick tugs/grabs rarely get called
Decomposing Coverage skills

- Stance
- Release
- Transition
- Finish
Stance

- Hands on hips, jump and hold
- Butt down
- Back flat
- Eyes up
- Sink the hips
Release (where are their eyes?)

- Eyes are the most important aspect of release
  - You must consistently coach this, and get to an angle where you can see their eyes
- Stay with in the framework of your body
- Pad level shouldn’t raise from where your stance was at
- Elbows should be tight to the body, locked at 90 degrees
  - Upper body rhythm should match lower body rhythm
    - Ski or Running arms
    - Usually the reason back pedals are choppy can be traced back to the arm movement, and the elbows being out of 90
- Rhythm of release will be established by the WR or the Drop if you’re employing zone coverage
- Nose over Toes
Transitions

- Backpedal to break
  - Eyes must be disciplined
  - Pad level shouldn’t raise
- Key Phrase: “Plant, Gather, Go”
  - Feet should never come parallel
  - Always be firing like pistons
  - Toes will lead you where you’re going
  - Encourage 0 degree angle steps out of breaks to ensure that they aren’t rounding breaks and wasting time/space/movement
- “shot out of a cannon” when coming forward
...Transitions

- Back pedal to bail
  - Only transition when appropriate
  - Maintain Pad level
  - Three Step transition

- Key Phrase “Tilt-Point-Drive”
  - Tilt - (example with a zone turn) outside foot (foot A) points to QB/45 degrees inside
  - Point - point your inside foot (foot B) to the opposite sideline
  - Drive - Foot A is now pointed the other direction, completing the turn
  - You can teach them to throw their elbow, but I’ve found that this puts them out of sync more often than it helps them. Focus on keeping the elbow tight

- This is best drilled while staying on a yard line
Finish

- In Phase/out of phase
- In phase is the goal
  - Defined: your shoulder is locked in front of the WR’s shoulder, and you are running in step
  - Only when you’re “in phase” can you look back for the ball
  - Your body tilt will cause you to lose the WR if you look back before you are in phase
- Out of phase
  - Defined: you are not shoulder-locked and in-step with WR
  - When you are out of phase, your only goal is to get in phase
    - Eyes are locked to near hip, and you are sprinting to get in phase... NEVER looking back
Fade, or over shoulder/in stride catch:
- Don’t teach arms up and through when finishing on a fade
- Not a practical technique
- Makes sense when you’re walking and coaching, but doesn’t correlate to game scenarios
- Once in phase, look while putting pressure with near hand on the WR
- Drill, drill, drill the finish... there is no ONE way to do it

Back shoulder/End Zone jump ball with your back turned
- Play hands
- Aim for far hand
- Your hand covering up as much of the surface of the football as possible
Drill philosophy

- Motor learning emphasis... learn by doing
  - Train Ugly - Trevor Ragan
    - Block vs Random
    - No Cute Drills
    - Pottery examples
  - Optimal Minimalism - Tim Ferriss
    - Players should know your key phrases
    - Repeat yourself often... use the same coaching points
    - This allows them to diagnose and trouble shoot themselves
    - Eventually you want to just ask them “what did you do wrong there”... they should know the answer right away
    - To be great at Jiu Jitsu you don’t need to learn 4,000 moves, you need to practice 4 moves 1,000 times

- Explain drills in meetings so you don’t lose valuable practice time once you’re out there
- Establish a practice environment where no one is afraid to fail
Drill Philosophy

- Skill acquisition CAN happen in 20 hours
- “20 Hours - Learn Anything Fast” by Josh Kaufman
  - 5 rules for learning something new
    - 1. Set a goal
    - 2. Deconstruct the Skill
      - Divide Skills into sub skills and drill accordingly
    - 3. Research JUST ENOUGH
      - Optimal Minimalism ~ they should know the coaching points
      - Give them just enough information to practice properly
      - Then get out of their way and let their body figure it out
    - 4. Remove Barriers
      - Make practice practical... don’t spend all your time setting up and tearing down elaborate drills.
    - 5. Pre-commit your time to the skill acquisition
      - 60 minutes per day = 20 days
Drills for learning these techniques:

- (transition) Tilt-point-drive & varying W drill pre-practice/on your own
- (discovery) WYO drill
- (transitions) Recover drill
- (total) Confidence drill
  - Progression of fade, comeback, post, corner, & “Get Open”
- (transitions) Hip Swing Drill
- (finish) Deep ball Drill
- (transition) Turn and Burn drill
- Other Drills:
  - Figure 8 tackle
  - Clinch Tackle

*All drills are secondary teachers to 1 on 1 / skelly & live team reps
You get better at playing football by actually playing football.
PRE PRACTICE DRILLS

HIP SWING

Varying W drill
Recover Drill
Confidence Drill

Progression:
- Fade
- Hitch
- Post
- Corner (double move)
- “Get open”

Let them know the order... helps him to cognitively connect the technique to the defense of the route

See video
Figure 8 Tackle
Turn and Burn Drill
Clinch Tackle (1 yd, and right up)

- See Video
Practice and Game Film Examples:
Review:

- Find and place your best athletes at defensive back
- Deconstruct coverage skills in this way:
  - Stance
  - Release
  - Transitions
  - Finish
- No cute drills, train ugly, and randomize to maximize
  - Players should know your coaching points
- Make it about the Players. You rarely win because you as a coach outsmarted a guy. Tough, well trained, disciplined athletes win games