RIVER FALLS YOUTH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
COACHES MANUAL

Introduction

This coaches manual is produced by the RFYFA Board of Directors to use as a guideline for important fundamentals and skills for the game of football. This does not include every aspect and leaves autonomy to the coaches on how to run their team and their practices but still provides some resources for a good experience.

RFYFA is a developmental league with the goal of exposing kids to the fundamentals of football so that they will continue to grow with the game. Our goal is to get as many kids as possible to middle school and high school programs because they had a positive experience in RFYFA.

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1. WARM UP & ATHLETIC MOVEMENT

It is important to continue to grow a young athlete's motor development and athletic movement. Each practice should have some time dedicated to the various movement skills and often can be incorporated in the warm-up.

WARM UP

SETUP: Each movement should be about 10 yards. Can set up cones or use the back of the endzone to the front of the endzone. 1a is going down 10 yards, 1b is coming back 10 yards.

Every Practice

1a: High Knees	2a: Butt Kicks	3a: Skip & Arm Circles	4a: Side Shuffle	5a: Carioca
1b: Knee Pulls	2b: Quad Pulls	3b: Skip & Cross Arms	4b: Side Shuffle	5b: Carioca

6a: RDL Touches

Early Season	*Progression #1*	*Progression #2*
6b: Lunges	6b: Long Jumps	6b: Single Leg Long Jump
7a: Skip for Height	7a: A March	7a: A Skip
7b: Skip for Height	7b: A March	7b: A Skip

Movement	Explanation	Beginner	Intermediate	Expert
High Knees	Movement that emphasizes bringing the running knee as high as possible. Emphasis on getting as many reps as possible, not how fast you go.	Basic understanding of getting knees up and not just running	Start to incorporate opposite arm and opposite leg while running and getting high knees	Knees are high getting 90 degree angle with toes up and driving leg down while switching legs and using proper arm movement
Knee Pulls	Balancing on one foot while bringing the other knee up to chest. Take both hands and place them on the top of shin/lower knee and bring the knee to chest for a stretch	Can quickly grab knee with limited balancing skill	Can properly pull knee to chest with pretty good balance. Needs to take some recovery steps before switching legs	Can grab knee while balanced and take one step to start the next rep
Butt Kicks	Movement that is very similar to high knees except the heel is closer to the body almost kicking your butt instead of out in front	Basic understanding of high knees, although will probably resort to swinging heels to butt to kick them instead of high knees	Start to incorporate opposite arm and opposite leg while running and getting high knees	Good knee drive with opposite arm and opposite leg in a fluid athletic movement
Quad Pulls	Balancing on one foot and grabbing your ankle to bring the heel close to your butt.	Can quickly grab knee with limited balancing skill	Can properly pull legs with pretty good balance. Needs to take some recovery steps before switching legs	Can grab leg while balanced and take one step to start the next rep
Skip & Arm Circles	This is a dual command action that will challenge players to execute. While skipping forward, the players will make big forwards arm circles	Can only focus on either the skip or the arm circles but not both	Can string together skips and arm circles together, but the arm circles are very small and quick	Can execute the skip and big arm circles all at the same time
Skip & Cross Arms	This is a dual command action that will challenge players to execute. While skipping forward, the players will cross their arms in front. Big hugs and then all the way out.	Can only focus on either the skip or the arm crosses but not both	Can string together skips and arm crosses together, but the arms are very small and quick	Can execute the skip and big arm crosses all at the same time
Side Shuffle	In an athletic bend at the hips, knees, and ankles with chest up, laterally move while hips stay square. It is a step with the lead leg in the direction you are going, then replace with the trail leg	Have a tendency to turn hips in the direction they are going and stand up a bunch while sometimes crossing legs.	Be a little more fluid, but still see some heel clicks or crossing of the legs	Hips stay square and can step-replace with ease. They understand if they want to go faster, they move their legs faster, not a bigger stride length

Carioca	This is apart of the shuffle family but adding in another layer. Same set up as the side shuffle, but instead of step/replace, players will step with lead leg, then cross over trail leg in front and behind respectively while moving forward. (Forward, cross front, forward, cross behind)	Have a hard time following the pattern. Most likely will only cross in front, has a hard time crossing behind.	Can slowly get the pattern down and understand the movement. Has some trouble speeding up and staying consistent	Stays square and can execute the pattern smooth and with quick feet
RDL Touches	Balancing on one straight leg, bend down with opposite arm and touch on the ground by the foot slightly on the other side. Slowly stand straight back up tall before stepping forward to take next rep.	Lean over but don't really activate the hamstring. Stays bent over for next rep instead of standing up. Has trouble with balanced.	Better balance and can touch the ground more effectively. Needs to use hand for better balance	Can execute the touches and reps slowed and controlled and very well balanced
Lunges	Stand tall with feet about shoulder width apart. Take a step forward with good hip and knee bend and coming down until back knee is just about to touch the ground while keeping the front knee over the toes	Limited balance and strength to lunge without knees touching the ground	Balance is improved while being able to string a few reps together without having to re-balance or knee touch the ground	Very good strength and balance where the player can execute all the reps
Long Jump	Both feet even about shoulder width apart, bending at hips, knees and ankles to generate force to jump up and out as far as they can. Landing on both feet at the same time. Continuously repeat until at the finish	Doesn't use athletic bend to get a lot of height or distance. Looks more like a bunny hop.	Can start to explode out more. Takes long pauses in-between reps to load up for the next rep.	Good explosion and arm action to get some height and distance. Takes alt less reps to complete distance
Single Leg Long Jump	Set up the same of long jump, except execute on a single leg. Balance becomes a bigger factor here.	Stumbles or trips because of the balance. Not strong enough yet for too many continuous jumps.	Can start to get a few reps before having to re-balance or take a break. Takes longer in jump transitions	Balanced enough to complete all reps and does not spend a lot of time in between reps.
Skip for Height	Goal is to jump as high as possible. Drive knee and opposite arm into the air and jump as high as possible. Land and immediately jump switching arms and legs.	Has trouble jumping with opposite arm and leg and doesn't generate a lot of height.	Gets the arm action down, put struggles taking immediate reps when landing.	Great hip and knee bend that turns into force that gets them high in the air. Quick smooth transitions into the next jump
A March	Movement focuses on proper running mechanics and getting players faster. The A march is a controlled march that focuses high knees and proper posture by getting the front leg getting to a 90-degree high knee with toes pointing up and great opposite arm action. When switching legs on the march, focus on snapping them down as fast as possible and bringing the next leg up not having any foot spend too much time on the ground.	Treats this more like high knees and not pointing the toe up. Not much quick twitch and feet have a lot of time on the ground	Start to get good arm posture and bend at the knees and hips. Still lack the snap down to generate that power.	Great running form posture and really snaps that leg down and springing the next leg up
A Skip	Executed the same os the march, but now instead of marching, you are skipping faster reps and faster speeds to execute the technique.	Treats this more like high knees and not pointing the toe up. Not much quick twitch and feet have a lot of time on the ground	Start to get good arm posture and bend at the knees and hips. Still lack the snap down to generate that power.	Great running form posture and really snaps that leg down and springing the next leg up

ATHLETIC MOVEMENT

There are several athletic movements that can also be incorporated into warmup or other drills. Anything backwards, lateral, acceleration and change of direction. Some are outlined in the RB skills, but don't be afraid to get creative and see how to drill some change of direction and agility skills.

2. SNAPPING THE BALL

Every kid in the program should work on how to snap a ball. There are 3 progressions of snaps that should be executed to teach proper fundamentals once they get to tackle football.

1. *Beginner – Simulated Under Center Snap (Side Snap)*
    a. For a right-handed player, have the center stand on the right side of the ball
    b. Place center's right knee to the ground at the same plane as the football.
    c. Place center's right arm and grab the bottom of the football with thump on top and four fingers below
    d. Center's left knee should be up and create a tabletop for the arm
    e. Center's left elbow and forearm should rest on the left leg with the hand sticking out perpendicular to the ground. (This is where the QB's hands will be for the snap)
    f. When ready to snap, bring the right arm with the football to the palm of the left hand

This snap is simulating taking and under the center snap. We are using the hand to create the QB pressure point for where a full padded center would snap it between his legs. This technique also ensures the QB's hands are properly placed to receive a snap.

2. *Intermediate- Between the legs (Two Hands)*
    a. Center should address the ball with legs slightly outside shoulder width apart.
    b. Squat down like you are about to sit on a chair, then lean forward to grab the ball with both hands while elbows are slightly bent
    c. Both thumbs should be on top of the ball facing the line of scrimmage and having the other 4 fingers placed around to the bottom of the ball
    d. When ready to snap, slightly lift the ball and bring both arms back at the same time to bring ball through the legs.
    e. When the ball reaches just above the butt, flick your wrists and point both thumbs at the QB

This snap is meant to teach the speed, accuracy, and fell of snapping through the legs while still providing ball support with both hands

3. *Expert- Between the legs (One Hand)*
    a. Center should address the ball with legs slightly outside shoulder width apart.
    b. Squat down like you are about to sit on a chair, then lean forward to grab the ball with dominant hand to the ball while elbow is slightly bent
    c. Thumb should be slightly above the laces and have the other 4 fingers placed around to the bottom of the ball
    d. When ready to snap, lift the ball and arm back at the same time to bring ball through the legs.
    e. When the ball reaches just above the butt, flick your wrist and point thumb at the QB.

DRILL IT

- Don't forget to practice this. Every kid on the team should practice snapping.

3. QB SKILLS

Cadence
Have a unified set cadence to start the play. It is important that everyone knows the cadence. Voice inflection and volume are very important

Examples: Down ..... Set..... Hut
Ready.....Set..... Hike

Receive a Snap

1. *Beginner – Simulated Under Center Snap (Side Snap)*
    a. QB approach the center with feet should width apart, slight bend in knees and waist with chest up
    b. With straight arms, place QB throwing hand gently pushing up on center's hand. Make a V with hands to give an opening to receive the ball
    c. Once the ball is snapped, close the hands to receive the ball once the center places it on the top hand
2. *Intermediate- Between the legs*
    a. QB stands around 4 yards directly behind the center with feet even shoulder width apart
    b. Slight knee and waist bend with both hands just below chest level ready to receive the ball.
        i. Don't squat and bring head too far forward

Hand Offs
It is the QB's responsibility to get the ball to the running back. The QB should place that ball right under the sternum of the running back to allow a proper hand off point.

1. *Beginner – Two Hands*
    a. QB will make a V at the very bottom of the football with their hands that are closet to their body. This allows the football to be placed at the target and let go without causing a fumble.
2. *Intermediate – 2 hands while moving*
    a. QB will make a V at the very bottom of the football with their hands that are closet to their body. This allows the football to be placed at the target and let go without causing a fumble.
    b. As the QB is handing off, they should be moving at a 45-degree angle to the direction in which the play is going. This allows for the play to potentially get outside, or at least night straight downhill.
3. *Expert – One Hand*
    a. QB will grab the football with one hand with the bottom tip of the ball on their palm.
    b. The arm closest to the line of scrimmage should be the arm they use to hand it off to the running back.
    c. Right-handed handoff when moving to QB's left
    d. Left-handed handoff when moving to QB's right
    e. As the QB is handing off, they should be moving at a 45-degree angle to the direction in which the play is going. This allows for the play to potentially get outside, or at least night straight downhill.

DRILL IT

- Don't forget to practice this. Every kid on the team should hand the ball off and properly receive a hand off

Drop Back Pass

This is utilized when the QB is preparing to throw the ball behind the center after receiving the snap.

1. *3-Step Drop- Shorter, quicker throws*
    a. After the snap, take the leg that is the same as the throwing arm and move backwards 180 degrees
    b. Small cross over in front with the other leg
    c. Small step with the original leg with a good base front shoulder slightly forward
        i. Don't want all the weight on back foot to create bad habits. Want to throw pushing off back foot and mobbing forward through to the receiver

2. *5-Step Drop- Longer, deeper throws*
    a. After the snap, take the leg that is the same as the throwing arm and move backwards 180 degrees
    b. Cross over in front with the other leg, then original foot back.
    c. Repeat the previous step ending with good balanced stay in preparation to throw the ball.
        i. Don't want all the weight on back foot to create bad habits. Want to throw pushing off back foot and mobbing forward through to the receiver

DRILL IT

- Start by practicing on air. Get the drop down and feel the body weight when drop is over
- *PROGRESSION #1*- Take the drop on air, then throw it to a static target
- *PROGRESSION #2*- Take the drop and throw it to routes on air

4. RB SKILLS

Stance

Running backs should have a balanced, athletic stance to start each play

1. Feet slightly less than shoulder width apart
2. Bend at ankle, knees and hips
3. Chest up slight forward lean
4. Do not tip which way you are planning on running

Take a Hand Off

Running backs are responsible for securing the football and making sure there is a proper hand off from the quarterback.

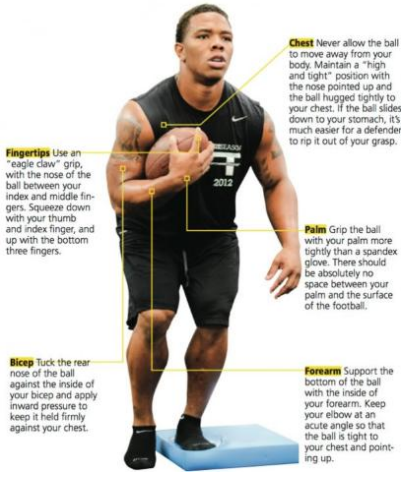
1. Make a big pocket with arms for the QB to deliver the ball
    a. Arm closet to the QB (Inside Arm) will be up with palm facing down
    b. Other arm furthest away from QB will be down with palm facing up
2. Keep body and shoulder square to the ball to not tilt or lean and create a bad handoff point
3. When QB puts the ball in the pocket, close down and secure ball with both hands

DRILL IT

Don't forget to practice this. Every kid on the team should hand the ball off and properly receive a hand off

Holding a football

All positions on the field should hold the football the same way to minimize the risk of fumbling. Should always have 5 points of pressure.



Make a Cut

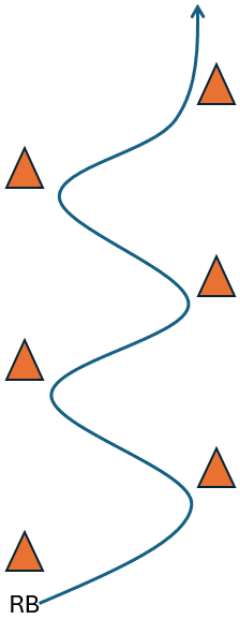
There are several moments that a running back can do to help move in space and avoid a tackle (Or flag pull)

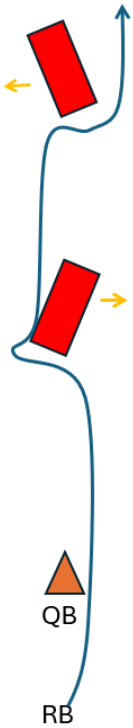
1. Side Cut
    a. When running forward, the running back plants his outside foot (Opposite direction they are cutting) and sinks hips and bends knee and ankle to prepare to push off that leg
    b. Then take lead foot and move laterally to complete the cut.
2. Jump cut
    a. When running forward, the running back plants both feet evenly at the same time, sinks hips, and bends knee and ankle to prepare to push off
    b. Then jump laterally the direction you wish to go and transition to running full speed.

DRILL IT

SET UP: Set up cones in a diagonal alley. When the ball carrier gets to a cone, have them execute one of the cuts and continue to the next cone.

Beginner	Intermediate
SET UP: Set up cones in a diagonal alley. When the ball carrier gets to a cone, have them execute one of the cuts and continue to the next cone.	SET UP: Hand the ball off to the RB. He will run in a straight line at a person. The person will move one way, the RB needs to react and execute a cut opposite of the person





5. WR SKILLS

Stance

1. Inside leg (Closest to the ball) up near the line of scrimmage, feet pointed forward
2. Outside leg (Closest to the sideline) back in stance just slightly behind. Do not have legs too far apart
3. Weight should be on both balls of your foot with slight forward bend
4. Relaxed hands

Start

1. Outside leg (Closest to sideline) should move forward first and gain ground beyond the line of scrimmage
2. Opposite arm should swing forward to help drive forward momentum

Catching the ball

When catching the ball, it is very important to always try and catch with your hands. This ensures for a soft transition and allows the maximum amount of adjustment for balls in the air.

High Ball	Low Ball
Any ball at your chest and above, make a circle with thumbs and pointer fingers closet to your body while spreading the rest of the fingers out.	Any ball below your waist should be caught by putting your pinky's together and palms up while spreading fingers out.

Route Running

It is important for a Wide Receiver to run very specific, smooth routes that are fast and deliberate. Making cuts with specific angles while maintaining speed is crucial. Below is a list of routes that every football player should know and be able to run

ROUTE	DESCRIPTION	PICTURE (Ball →)
Slant	QB Throw: 3 Step Take 3 steps up field, plant on outside foot and angle at 45 degrees to the middle of the field	
Arrow	QB Throw: 3 Step Immediately head to the sideline parallel from the line of scrimmage 1 yard downfield. Look at QB under your shoulder closest to the line of scrimmage (Not an outside WR route)	
Under	QB Throw: 3 Step Immediately head to the middle of the field parallel from the line of scrimmage 1-5 yards downfield. Look at QB under your shoulder closest to the line of scrimmage	
Hitch	QB Throw: 3 Step Take 5 steps up field, plant on outside foot and turn around and look for the ball.	
Speed Out	QB Throw: 3 Step Take 2 or 4 steps up field and on the 3rd or 5th step, round your lead leg and head to the sideline. Look at QB under your shoulder closest to the line of scrimmage (Not an outside WR route)	
Dig	QB Throw: 5 Step Take 10 steps straight up field selling the go. Then plant on outside foot and turn 90 degrees to and work straight across the middle of the field.	
Out	QB Throw: 5 Step Take 10 steps straight up field selling the go. Then plant on inside foot and turn 90 degrees to and work straight across the sideline.	
Post	QB Throw: 5 Step Take 10 steps straight up field. Plant on the outside foot and turn 45 degrees to the middle of the field.	
Corner	QB Throw: 5 Step Take 10 steps straight up field. Plant on the inside foot and turn 45 degrees to the sideline.	
Go	QB Throw: 5 Step Accelerate off the line and run straight down field as fast as you can go	

DRILL IT

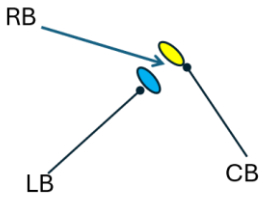
Can run all these routes on air, then with a pass from the coach, and then from a pass from a player QB.

6. DEFENSIVE SKILLS

Leverage

One of the most important skills of playing defense is understanding leverage, or the area of the field you must protect and force a ball carrier to go. Defense is played in a lot of space, and it is not in the defender's best interest to guess where people are going. Defend your leverage and attack the space you force them into.

Teaching leverage seems simple but is often hard for players to execute. There should be emphasis on using your leverage to pull the flag of the runners near hip. Below is a quick picture to illustrate. The LB's near hip should be attacking the blue flag. The CB's near hip should be attacking the yellow flag. This sometimes is the hardest because coming from the outside in, defenders often miss that they need the yellow flag in this diagram since it is facing the backfield. But If defenders try and pull the blue one, that is when most RB's can get around them and run free to the outside.



Leverage is the aiming point at which you need your body to be in order to properly pull a flag. Tracking is the physical act of getting there and can be taught hand in hand

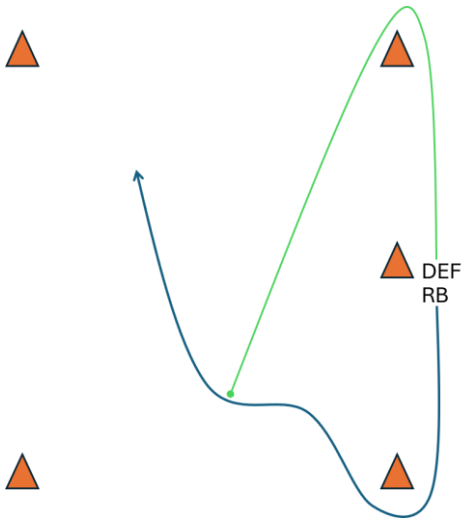
Tracking

Tracking a ball carrier is one of the most difficult things to do. There are a lot of ways to drill leverage and tracking at the same time. Few coaching points:

1. Don't run to where the ball carrier might be, track the near hip and find the quickest path there
2. Don't stop your feet or wait. The more space ball carriers have, the more of an advantage they have
3. Do not put your arms out like a basketball defender. Run to the flag and then pull it

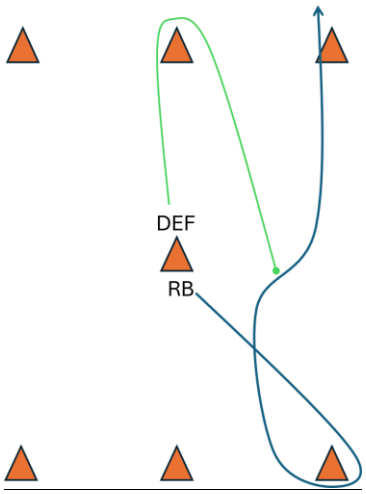
DRILL IT: Sideline Tackle-

1. **Ball carrier and defender start back-to-back.**
2. **Coach says go, they both run around the cone. The ball carrier has the whole box to work.**
3. **The defender will track the near hip and try and pull the flag at or before that starting cone.**
    a. **EMPHASIS- Make sure the defender stays tight to the cone so they can own their leverage and make the ball carrier only go one way. Defender knows their leverage to begin the drill.**



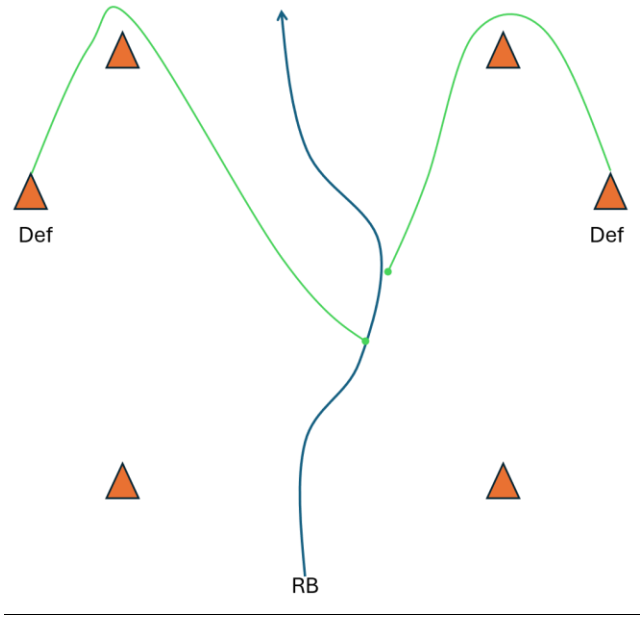
DRILL IT: 3-Cone Drill

1. Ball carrier and defender start back-to-back.
2. Coach says go, they both pick a cone to go around
3. The ball carrier has the whole outside cone box to work.
4. The defender will track the near hip and try and pull the flag at or before that starting cone.
    a. EMPHASIS- Defender does not know their leverage to begin the drill. Need to figure that out on the fly



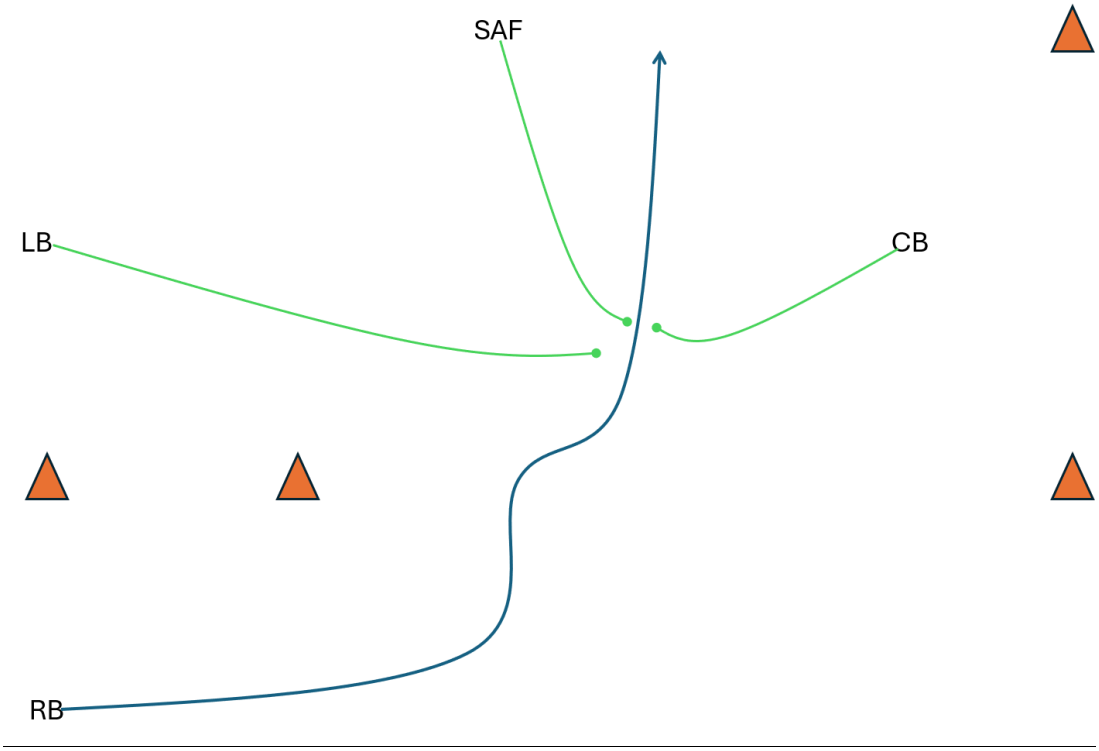
DRILL IT: Partner Vice Tackle

1. Ball carrier starts in the middle and one defender on each side has their backs to the RB
2. Coach says go, they run around the cone tight and start to track near hip
3. The ball carrier has the whole outside cone box to work.
4. The defenders will track the near hip and work with their partner to try and pull the flag of the RB
    a. EMPHASIS- Each defender needs to own their leverage and force the ball carrier between them



DRILL IT: ½ Field Triangle Tracking – Set up to teach the defense of how they work together to pull a flag

1. Ball carrier will get a pitch and has the whole ½ of the field to work.
    a. Set up a cone they must run around so its not a run straight up the middle.
2. As the ball carrier is running, each defender will track the near hip and force the ball carrier to run to his teammates
3. This forces tracking in space and help defenders understand that they can still positively effect the play without making a tackle



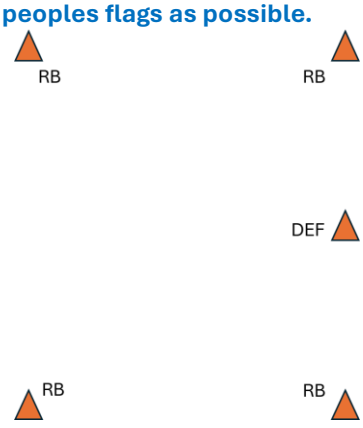
Pulling a Flag

It is important to use all of the leverage and tracking skills to set up for a proper flag pull. We want to put our bodies in good, close position to pull a flag, knowing that eventually that is the same position they need to be in to tackle someone.

1. When approaching to tackle – near leg and near leg should reach for the flag (Keep outside arm and leg free)
2. Stay as square as possible, do not want a chance to miss and break your leverage
3. DO NOT dip head down. Eyes up, chest up and bend at the knees and ankles
4. Aiming point should be where the flag meets the belt. You may not pull it there every time, but aiming point should be there so that you can easily adjust.

DRILL IT: First practice- make players run and pull a flag when the RB is just standing there. Teach them where the near hip is and make them pull a flag from someone not moving to get the fundamentals. You can progress to having the ball carrier jog to a certain point. After that, can start to incorporate tracking and leverage drills

DRILL IT: Box Tag- Make a big square and put 4 people in the box. There is one defender and the goal is to give the defender 20 seconds to try and pull as many peoples flags as possible.



7. SAMPLE PRACTICE PLANS

Below is a rough outline of a potential progression that you can work on throughout the season. Remember, there are a lot of fundamentals to work on and just because you did it once, doesn't mean you can't do it again. Consistency and multiple repetition help develop skill and confidence.

1. There are many ways of doing it, just make sure you spend more time on skills than just running plays
2. Everyone should at least practice every position / skill.
3. Try and keep people moving / involve as many people as possible
4. Don't forget about movement development

This is just a small 4-week progression that can be repeated throughout the season. Blue weeks are non-game weeks, and green weeks are game weeks

Week 1			
Minutes	Day #1	Minutes	Day #2
5	Introduction / Know your teammates	10	Warm-Up & Atheltic Movement
10	Warm-Up & Atheltic Movement	15	***Skill Stations #1***
15	***Skill Stations #1***		1. Snaps & QB Drops
	1. Snapping the Ball		2. Side Cut Movements
	2. Static Flag Pull	10	GROUP: Sideline Tackle
15	***Skill Stations #2***	15	***Skill Stations #2***
	1. Taking a Handoff		1. Taking a Handoff
	2. Catching		2. Catching
10	Teach Route #1&#2		
5	Movement Game (Box Tag)	10	QB Throw Route from Day #1
Week 2			
Minutes	Day #1	Minutes	Day #2
10	Warm-Up & Atheltic Movement	10	Warm-Up & Atheltic Movement
15	***Skill Stations #1***	15	***Skill Stations #1***
	1. Snaps & Handoffs		1. Snaps & QB Drops
	2. Catching		2. Run & Catch Routes
5	Install / Introduce Defense	5	Re-Install / Re-Introduce Defense
10	GROUP: Sideline Tackle	10	GROUP: 1/2 Field Triangle Tackle
10	Teach Route #3 & #4	20	Prep for Game
10	Offensive Plays on Air		Plays on Air / Additonal Routes etc
Week 3			
Minutes	Day #1	Minutes	Day #2
10	Warm-Up & Atheltic Movement	10	Warm-Up & Atheltic Movement
15	***Skill Stations #1***	15	***Skill Stations #1***
	1. Snaps & Handoffs		1. Snaps & QB Drops
	2. Catching		2. Handoff & Cut Movements
10	GROUP: Sideline Tackle	10	GROUP: 3 Cone Tackle
15	***Skill Stations #2***	15	***Skill Stations #2***
	1. Snaps & QB Drops		1. Snaps & Handoffs
	2. Handoff & Cut Movements		2. Catching
10	Movement Game (Box Tag)	10	Routes on Air
Week 4			
Minutes	Day #1	Minutes	Day #2
10	Warm-Up & Atheltic Movement	10	Warm-Up & Atheltic Movement
15	***Skill Stations #1***	15	***Skill Stations #1***
	1. Snaps & QB Drops		1. Catching
	2. Run & Catch Routes		2. Handoff & Cut Movements
5	Install Defense	5	Install Defense
10	GROUP: Partner Vice Tackle	10	GROUP: 1/2 Field Triangle Tackle
10	Route Progression (QB throw)	20	Prep for Game
10	Offensive plays		Plays on Air / Additonal Routes etc