



COACHING ORIENTATION SECTION FOR FIRST TIMERS

Coaching can be one of the most rewarding experiences, both from the perspective of the adult coach (either a parent of one of the participating kids on the program, an aunt / uncle, an older sibling or just a friend of the family) and the child playing. For adults, it is the privilege and joy of teaching kids the fundamentals of the sport and helping each child unlock his or her inner spirit, confidence and potential to improve his or her skills and be a part of a team unit. From the child's perspective, it is an opportunity to learn something from a friendly and familiar face and, hopefully, have fun. This interaction between a coach and that coach's team is a special relationship that grows and develops with each game played. Win or lose, the relationship between the players and their coach evolves with the season and it is hoped that by the playoffs each and every team in each and every division has a viable prospect of winning its first playoff game.

While coaching is a unique experience, there is really no manual or "how-to" book on doing it. Having fun is the top priority and coaches must remember that the game is for the kids to play and enjoy, and not for a coach to flex his or her prowess at play-calling and strategy. It is in this spirit and context that we have developed the Coach's Memorandum of Understanding which we require all coaches to sign before participating (located at <http://fundamental-sports.com/downloads#>).

From our perspective at Funsports, each coach will bring his or her own qualities to the task, something which we fully welcome. We do, however, have some basic suggestions for coaches in this league to encourage full participation of the team's players, to assist with the development of each player's fundamental skills, and to promote sportsmanship and fair play, all the while making sure to keep it fun for the kids.

1. "Don't Go It Alone!"

Our first suggestion is to seek assistance from one or more parents of other players on the team. In short, never go it alone. It is strongly recommended to have a parent be a bench coach to oversee substitutions and make sure everyone gets sufficient playing time. You may also want to allocate responsibility for coaching the offense or defense to another parent, and thereby share the on-field duties during game time. Having such coaching assistance allows a head coach to miss a game or two because of work or other obligations which may prevent that parent or individual from attending each and every game.

2. "Practice Makes Perfect"

A common question we have been asked is whether a coach should hold practices. While they are not mandatory to play in our league, practices can help a team be better prepared for its Friday evening games. A simple practice regimen of drills, exercises and scrimmages better develop a short list of offensive plays and defensive formations, and practices can help eliminate confusion amongst not only the kids, but also the coaches. Practices give the kids and the coaches a chance to emphasize learning the proper way to catch a pass, hand off a football and pull a flag, how to play a zone defense instead of



man-to-man defense, and situational plays like extra points. Routine breeds familiarity and keeping practice and play books simple is the most recommended way to go here. Most importantly, practicing will help each player develop a better understanding of the game and a deeper appreciation of what will be expected of them in particular situations on both offense and defense.

Practices should not be too long or, as mentioned above, they should not be complicated. Practice duration should range anywhere from 30 – 45 minutes or so followed by a scrimmage of approximately 20 to 30 minutes. Lastly, please be sure to have regular water breaks to ensure that everyone, players and coaches alike, are sufficiently hydrated.

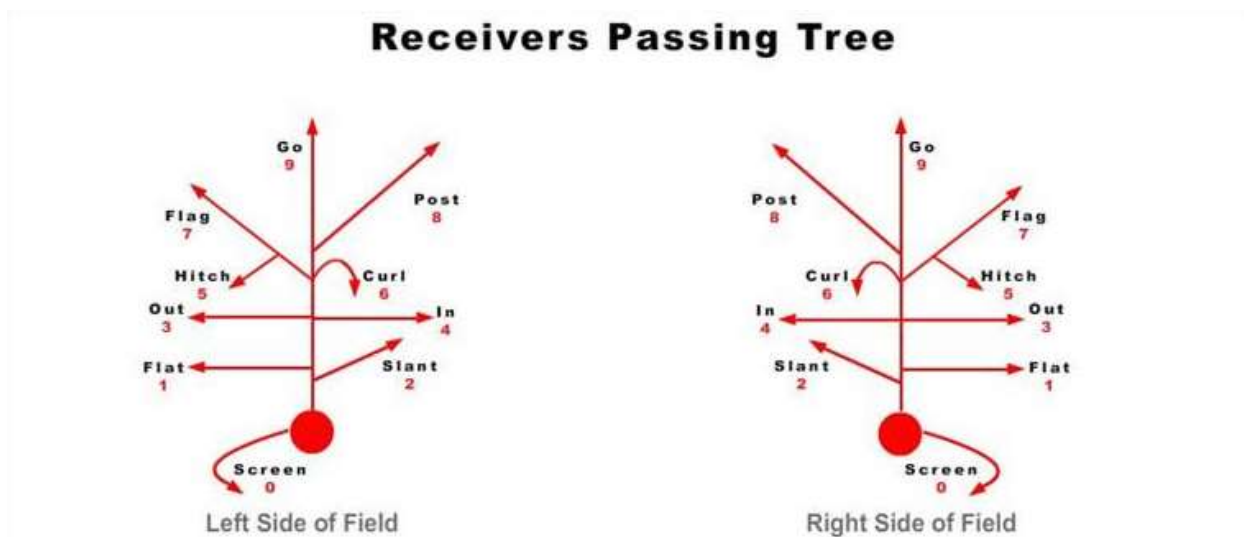
3. “Drill, Baby, Drill.”

In order to assist first time coaches with the task of preparing a schedule of drills and exercises for a team, we have posted a sample practice for each age group to focus on the skills and exercises needed for each particular age group.

SAMPLE PRACTICE SCHEDULE

- 1. 5 minutes *Stretching***
- 2. 5 minutes *2 laps around the field***
- 3. 15 minutes *Route-running drills: down and in, down and out, curl, flag, post (Passing)***
(Option for older age groups Juniors, Seniors and Pros: have a defender on each passer to simultaneously practice pass defense)
----- **(WATER BREAK – 5 MINUTES)** -----
- 4. 10 minutes *Handoffs and pitches (Running)***
- 5. 5 minutes *QB shadow drill (Defense)***
- 6. 15 minutes *“Gauntlet” flag-pulling drill: start off with one defender then two (Defense)***
(Option for older age groups Juniors, Seniors and Pros: set up the “gauntlet” drill opposite the handoff and pitches drill)
----- **(WATER BREAK – 5 MINUTES)** -----
- 7. 20/30 minutes *Scrimmage (practice your plays on offense and defense)***

Repetition is your friend. Learning the tree diagram of passing routes should become second nature for each child as they develop, and terms such as curl, slant, flag and post should similarly become very familiar to all players (and coaches).

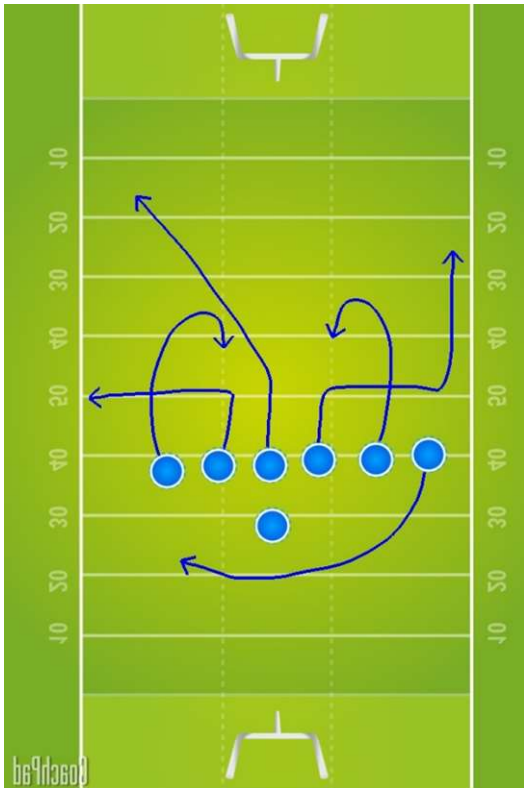


4. “The Best Laid Plans”

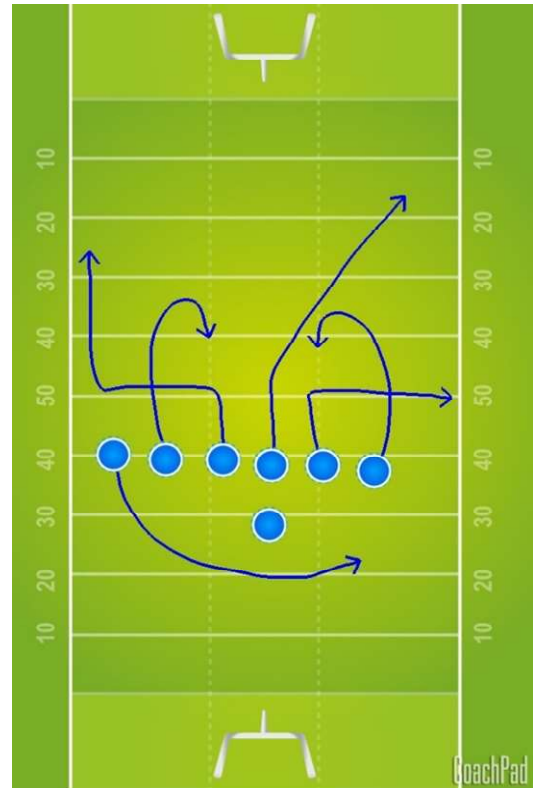
Playbooks are more difficult to fashion, and they will evolve for each team and its coaches. Nevertheless, there are some basic recommendations that we can suggest here to assist both first-time coaches and veteran coaches. The younger the team (division-wise) is, the simpler its playbook should be. For the PeeWee and Rookie divisions, passes should be designed to conform to the strength of the QB’s ability. If the QB can only throw 5 yards, the longest pass play should be five yards, and not a post pattern downfield to the endzone.

Plays should use and incorporate the passing routes and patterns that you use in practice and the same terminology should be used as well. Coaches should incorporate the routes listed in the tree diagram in any designed plays so that the kids will not be confused when executing them. Again, repetition of these plays will help the players familiarize themselves with what will be expected of them and how to prepare for their next game.

As guidance, the Funsports team has provided a few basic plays below which were used before started this league and when our children were in the 4th and 5th grades. Our team back then, the Ravens lost its first 5 games and then ran the table at the end of the season and through the playoffs culminating with a victory in the championship game. That Ravens team had only two plays which each had multiple options to ensure as many kids on the team could run, catch or even pass the ball.



RAVENS 1



RAVENS 2



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As far as defense goes, the basic defense should be zone with a variation of a 3-2 zone or 2-3 zone being used depending on whether your concern is the run or the pass in a given situation. Extra point plays and short yardage situations are usually defended with a man-to-man defense.

Man-to-Man Defense



3-2 Zone Defense



2-3 Zone Defense





Recap

In closing, we have provided these recommendations and guidance for all coaches in Funsports Friday Night Flag Football to help make it fun for everyone involved, parents and kids alike. All coaches are parents first (and some are uncles, aunts, cousins, or friends of the family) and flag football is, after all, just a game. However, we all must appreciate that as adults – be they coaches, referees or spectators -- we should all do our best to set a good example for all of our participating children and the community at large.

It is our sincere hope that coaching be a stress-free activity on Friday evenings and the directors of Funsports are available to assist you at any time. We hope that coaching becomes as much fun for you as each Friday evening game is for your participating children. Naturally, if there is a topic or issue that we have not covered here, every coach should feel free to contact the Funsports directors for suggestions or for any guidance to any coaching related questions that you might have. We are here to assist at any time and we look forward to seeing you at the games on Friday nights under the lights.