



Practice Ideas & Drills for New Coaches

Welcome to Westford Flag Football!



Agenda Topics that will be covered

- Offense
- Defense
- Running a practice
- Simple drills to use
- Last minute advice
- Appendix



Offensive Items to Key On

- Big Take Aways

- *Divide the kids into two five person teams, equally distributing the talent (running speed, throwing ability, etc.) among them.*
- Identify your QBs! Work with them at practice, including snaps from center, handoffs with the running backs and finding the open receiver. They are your key to running the offense!!
- Getting the kids to know & understand their team playbook and pass routes are key.
- Ensure all kids know the basic rules (scoring, first downs, flag guarding, off sides and other major penalties)
- Sportsmanship is paramount. (ie no trash talking, hot dogging or taunting will be tolerated. This will be strictly enforced by the league, so make sure the kids clearly understand this)

- 2nd Tier Items

- For a given offensive series, assign kids to a single position (ie Matt plays center, Nick is the running back, Joe is the QB, Tim & Tom are receivers.) On the following offensive series, mix up the assignments, and so on. Allows kids to play all positions (or at least the ones they want to.)
- Once the ball is spotted, you only have 30 seconds to call a play.
 - BC Coaches have play cards at the ready with player assignments already set. The key here is time!
 - BD Coaches have play card picked, instruct QB to run to sideline and grab it or show it. Meanwhile have your center call the huddle with players ready to hear the play
- *Man in motion, shot gun snaps, reverses, etc. are other items at your disposal. *Note: Player must be set 1 second prior to the ball being snapped. (See posted rules under offense for more information)



Defensive Items to Key On

- Keep defenses simple!
 - Man-to-man coverage is easier for the kids to understand, but zone defenses are more effective.
 - Zone defense works better when guarding a large amount of the field
 - Man-to-man coverage works better in short yardage situations
 - Try to align faster defenders with faster receivers. (The kids all know each other, so rely on their knowledge)
 - Don't be afraid to make on-field adjustments with personnel assignments
 - Avoid complicated defensive schemes.
- Flexibility & Timeliness with assignments
 - Pass rusher; when to rush or hold back as a rover to help weaker defenders.
 - Pairing fast receivers with faster/better defenders.
 - Time is critical! Once the ball is spotted, the offense can run a play, so be ready.
- Ensure that pass rushers are at the designated mark prior to the ball being snapped. This is especially true for faster kids, as they will likely beat the 7-second rule for the QB to throw the ball.



How to run a practice

- Getting Started
 - Break practice time into pre-defined sections with time durations
 - Phase 1: Warm ups (5 min)
 - Phase 2: Run/Pass/Flagging drills (10 min). Make it fun, like a game.
 - Phase 3: Instructional with new concept/play introduction (15 min)
 - Show play(s) on a white board
 - Have both teams practice the plays
 - Phase 4: Offense vs Defense mini game (25 min)
 - Phase 5: Ending (5 min)
 - Keep practice times to about ~1 hr, as available daylight will decrease as the season progresses.
- Remember this basic equation; keeping the kids busy will make them have fun which equates to a successful practice.



Phase 1: Warm-ups

- Coaches to arrive 5 minutes early.
- When you arrive at the field, using cones mark off an area of 30 yards x 30 yards for a practice field. Mimick $\frac{1}{2}$ of a regular flag field. (see rules for depiction)
- When kids arrive have them play catch with the football. (Allows you talk time with parents if needed)
- Prior to starting, check that all belts are correctly fasten with flags pointing outwards. (Make sure kids bring and wear their mouth guards)
- Start practice on time.
- Have the kids arrange themselves into 2 rows of 5 (or similiar)
- Perform series of leg & arm stretches, arm rotations, etc. (stand in front of them performing the same exercise)
- Have them run the perimeter of your practice field, or some other decent area. The goal being to make them winded for Phase-2.



Phase-2: New Concept Introduction

- After their run, have them sit (drink water) while you talk to them. Discuss the following:
 - Review highlights of previous game (ask kids what they did well)
 - Review low light of previous game (again, ask kids what they did not do well)
 - Get the kids involved! Have them answer and ask questions.
 - Discuss the goals of the day's practice, what items will be covered.
- With a white board, or some other graphical aid, draw out any new play(s) you will be performing. (Suggest that you keep the number of new plays introduced at any one time to ~3, as their attention span is small)
- Stay within the time period! Bored kids = no attention.
- Break the kids into their 5-player teams and have them execute the new plays, slowly at first then at full speed. Give instruction where needed.



Phase 3: Running & Flag Drills

- Break the kids into 2 groups; defenders and runners
- Using cones, mark off a “gauntlet” area (see depiction in Appendix)
- When whistle blows, the running back (with ball) tries to run thru the funnel, avoiding the defender, in a attempt to score a TD, meanwhile the defender runs to the funnel area and attempts to pull the runner's flag. (Coaches, watch for flag guarding and call it when it does happen!)
- After the play is complete, have the runner go to defend line and the defender go to the run line. (Do this a few times)
- Modify this drill by performing hand-off's to the running back. Run this with both coach and kid QBs.
- Modify this yet again, only with the running back catching the ball after the line-of-scrimmage.



Phase 4: Throwing & Pass Route drills

- Kids should know the names, and how to run most of the routes contained in the pass tree. (See Appendix for Flag link.)
- Break kids into two groups of receivers and have them form left and right of the center/QB. Have one line do one type and the other do a second type from the list above and throw to one receiver. Perform this drill with both Coach and kid as QB.
- Modify drill by varying the distance length of route (ie 5/10/15 yards).
- If both coaches or a parent are present, one can modify this drill by having two stations.
- Another modification is to perform this drill with a full offense.
- Throw in the “7-second” rule for the QB to get rid of the ball. (just like game)



Phase 5: Defending Drills

- Break kids into two groups; have one form to the right of the center and the other to the left, both facing the QB in a defensive stance.
- Coach acting as QB, blow whistle, then move the ball left, right or back. The acting defenders are to mimik your hand movements by back pedaling to the left, right or backwards. Pick one defender and throw ball to him/her.
- Have the right defender go to the left line and the left defender to the right line. Repeat as many times as desired.
- Modify drill by getting 2 receivers to run route patterns.
- Modify yet again, but with kid acting as QB.



Phase 6: Scrimmage Game

- Split Squad into Offense & Defense; one coach runs offense and the other runs defense.
- Use this as both instructional and fun time with the kids; ie, tell them its one side vs the other and whoever scores the most TDs doesn't run laps or something along these lines.
- Each side works on new concepts or plays that were discussed at the beginning of practice.
- In the beginning coaches should call which play(s) are to be executed. As time goes on, let the kids run their own plays along with picking which positions they want to play.
- After 10 minutes or offense has scored, reverse offense/defense and repeat.



Phase 7: Ending Practice

- Conclude practice with some sort of running activity. Some helpful ideas are:

- ★ Sprints
- ★ Relay races
- ★ Suicides
- ★ Combination

This not only serves to get them in shape, but builds on team work .

- After the running is over, end practice by reviewing & reinforcing what was covered at practice. (Do this verbally)
- Pass out any sort of handouts, new plays, rules, etc. that you want the kids to take home and review. (Ask parents to help with this activity too!)
- Remind kids/parents when their next game is.



Last Call...

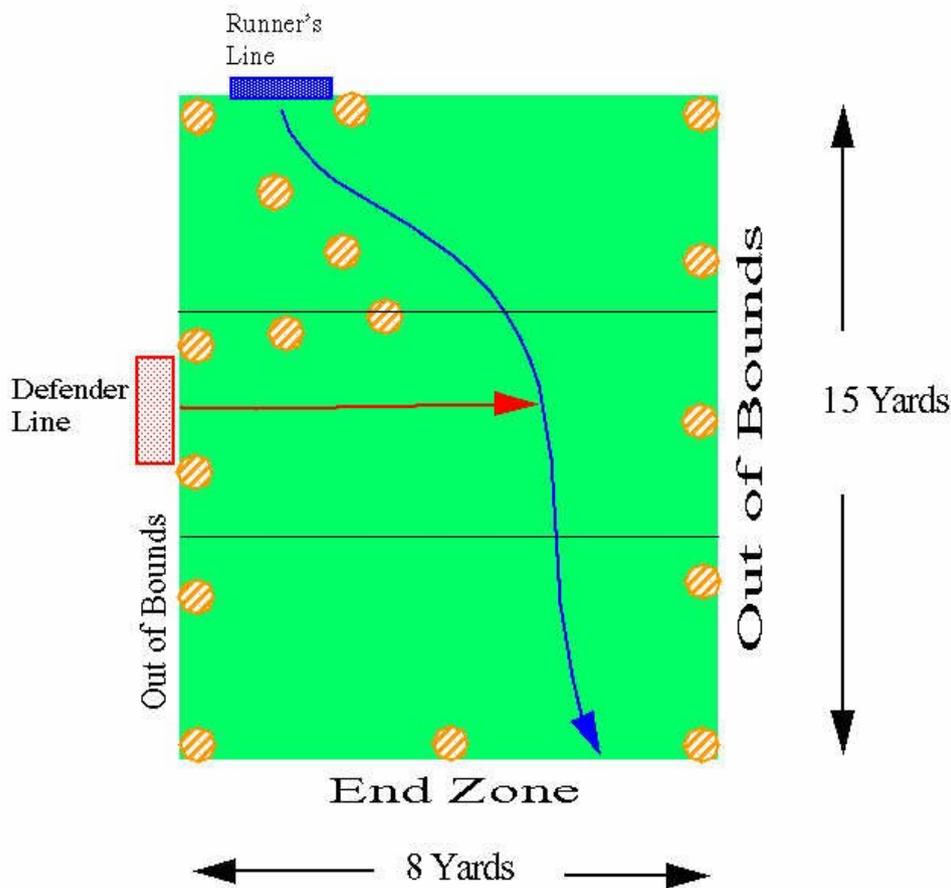
- Below are some last minute items to remember
 - With 10 kids on a team, arrange them as two equal teams of 5. This allows one 5-man team to play offense and the second 5-man team to play defense during the 1st half. Then reverse the roles during the 2nd half.
 - Limit complexity on offense. This includes formations, men in motion, advance plays, etc. And just in case someone asks, center sneaks are not allowed. Center can run with the ball *ONLY* after a clean handoff from the QB.
 - As the season progresses, spend more time on plays and team scrimmages.
 - Referees will try their best to call games. But try as they may, they will not be able to see everything or at times they might make a bad call. As coaches, you can ask for clarification on the rule/ or play. Arguing the call is not allowed and is violation of the Code of Conduct. Remember its only a game.
- Let the kids have fun!



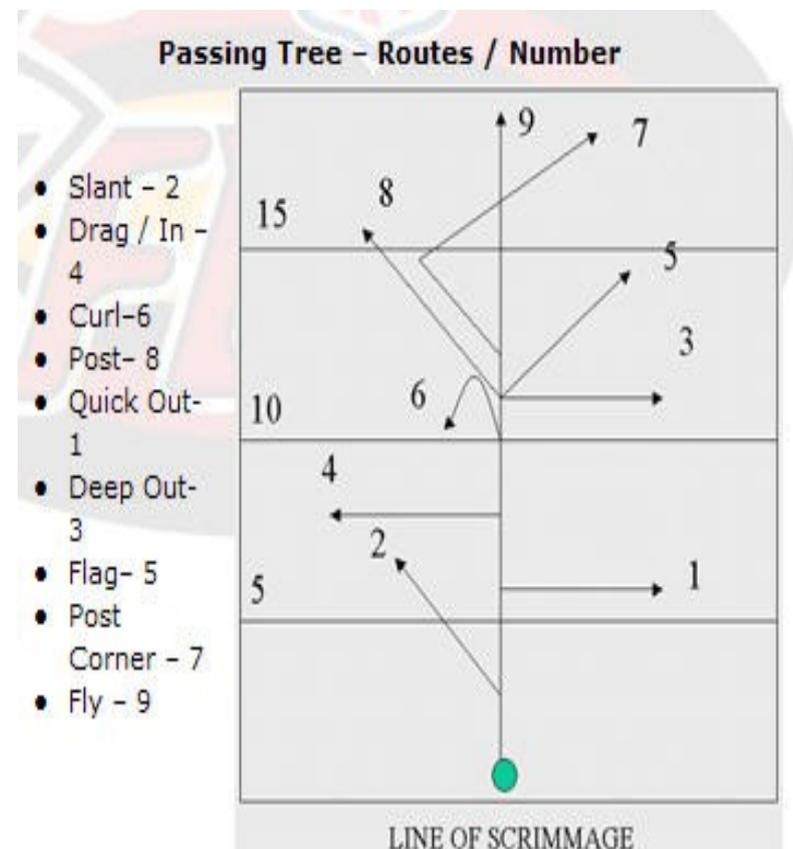
Appendix-A

- A great source for information concerning plays and formations is located at: http://www.nflyouthfootball.com/exec/nfl_flag/FLAG-Plays1.cfm?publicationID=19

- Gauntlet Depiction



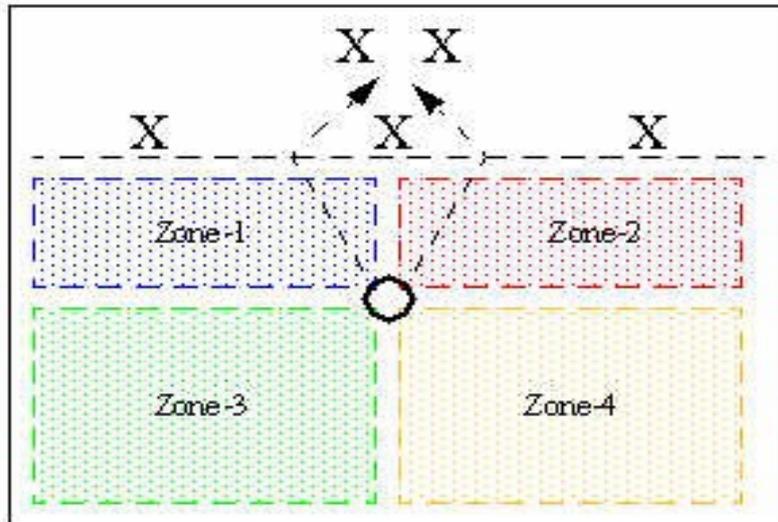
- Route Tree



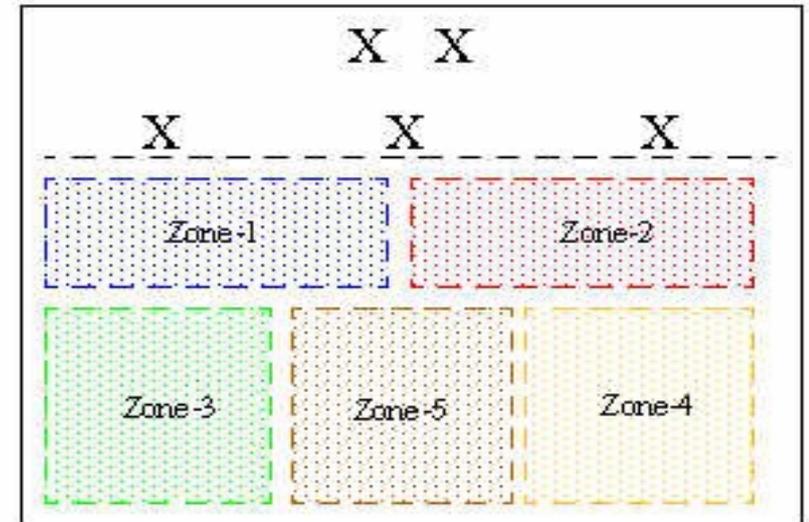
Appendix -B: Zone Defense Samples



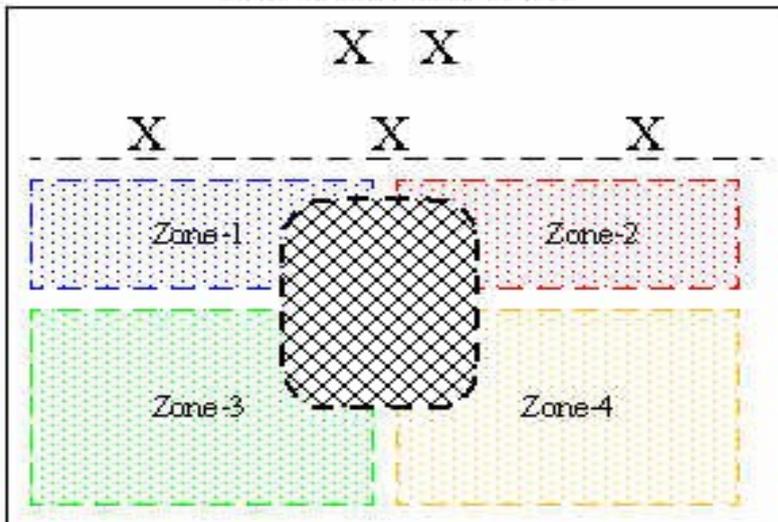
Two-Two Zone with Rusher



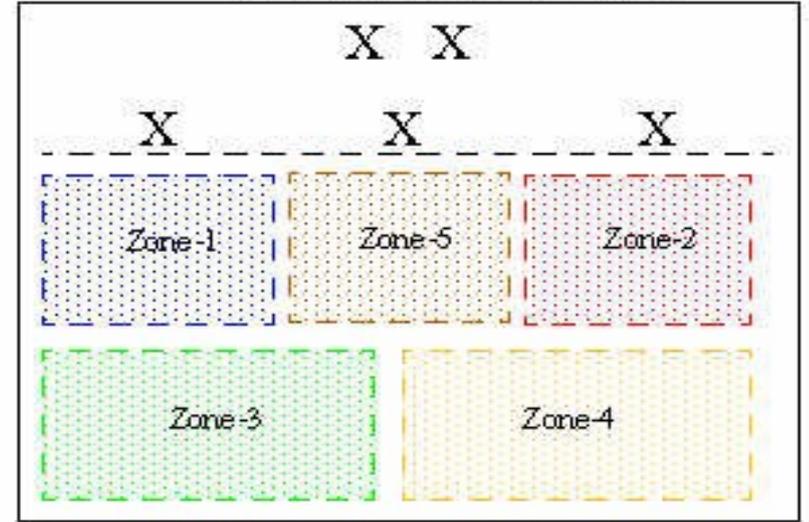
Two-Three Zone with No Rusher



Two-Two Zone with Rover



Three -Two Zone with No Rusher



Appendix-C: Sample Offense Plays

