



The St. Norbert Running Back

St. Norbert College Staff

A running back must be among the most skilled players on the team. His duties encompass every primary facet of the game. Besides being an accomplished runner he must also be adept in blocking, pass receiving, and faking. To do each of these to his best ability, he must possess a thorough understanding of each play. The degree to which he is willing to master each phase will determine, in many respects, the success of our offense. Furthermore, the degree of "toughness" which he possesses will have a tangible bearing on his personal achievement.

We have determined that there are three characteristics that separate a good running back from a great running back:

1. Mental Preparation - Leads to successful play with no missed assignments.
2. Ball Security - Eliminate turnovers.
3. Yards After Contact - Toughness and character wins.

The following information explains what it takes to be a Green Knight running back.

KEYS TO BETTER RUNNING.

- A. Proper alignment and depth - Know how the play, assignment, and formation impacts alignment and depth.
- B. Proper stance - Be in a comfortable position that allows you to explode into any direction.
- C. Defensive recognition - Pre-snap read (left-right-middle).
- D. Good take-off and proper footwork.
- E. Proper body lean - Lower the shoulders through traffic.
- F. Proper exchange - Correct technique before and after the handoff.
- G. Ball security - Proper technique and no turnovers.
- H. Anticipation - Seeing the big picture.
- I. Acceleration - Get through the hole. The end zone is on the defense's side of the field.
- J. Understand line blocking schemes.

QUALITIES OF A GREAT RUNNING BACK.

1. Balance: The ability to keep feet on contact, and when changing direction.
2. Clutch Performer: Able to make the play when the play needs to be made, when the pressure to perform is at it's highest.
3. Coachable: Accepts coaching, understands that coaches want the best for him and his teammates.
4. Communication: Ability to share and comprehend key information with teammates and coaches.
5. Commitment: To himself as a student-athlete, his teammates, his coaches, his school.
6. Concentration: Is in the moment, whether it's a meeting, drill, practice or game.
7. Confidence: Believes in himself, his teammates and his coaches. (Not to be confused with cockiness.)
8. Conviction: Knowing without a doubt that what he, his teammates and coaches are doing is the best way and the right way to do it, on and off the field.
9. Courage: Facing adversity and challenges with your best effort.
10. Dedication: Doing everything necessary to make himself and his teammates better in the weight room, meeting room, classroom, practice field and game field.
11. Discipline: Doing what is expected of you – every time it's expected of you – to the absolute best of your ability.
12. Durability: You can only be great if you are on the field.
13. Intelligence: Has the ability to retain and apply what is taught or learned.
14. Mental Toughness: The will power to overcome physical or mental stress (including pain and fatigue) to achieve your goal.



15. Natural Instincts: The innate ability to react situations in a minimum amount of time.

16. Positive Attitude: Perhaps there is no greater quality than a positive attitude. It impacts everyone including teammates and coaches. Games are often won or lost based on attitude in practice and in the game.

17. Speed: A God-given talent not to be wasted, but instead to be fully developed through hard work and effort.

18. Strength: Both physical and mental. Is limited only by your attitude.

19. Unselfishness: Team success more important than personal success.

20. Vision: Ability to see the field, including running lanes, potential blocks and potential tacklers.

21. Work Ethic: Works harder than anyone on the field. Never has a “that’s enough” attitude.

WAYS TO GAIN RESPECT.

1. Always compliment your teammates, especially your linemen.
2. Work harder and longer than anyone on the field.
3. Have your character show up in your work and playing habits.
4. Concentrate to avoid the silly error (going the wrong way, missing the

snap count.)

5. Never criticize a fellow player on or off the field.

6. Always bounce back up off the ground. Let everyone know on both sides that you want the ball on the next snap.

7. Never make excuses.

8. Set the pace for execution of the little things.

9. Always hustle and never give up.

10. Most important and have confidence in yourself.

THE HAND-OFF.

1. As you take your first step (proper footwork), focus your eyes on the blocking at the hole so that you can run for daylight. Do Not look for the football.

2. Your elbow to the side of the QB must be shoulder high, the forearm parallel to the ground and your thumb pointed down the middle of the sternum to keep the elbow up.

3. The far arm should be placed across the belt, with palm up to act as a shelf. The elbow should be slightly raised away from hip to act as backstop.

4. Let the QB put the ball in the pocket. Keep running at when you receive the ball, accelerate through the hole.

5. Take the ball by feel. Cover over the ball as you feel it, by bringing the upper hand down to cover the outside portion of the ball and lower shelf hand over the front point of the ball, putting the ball in the proper top-security position.

CARRYING THE BALL - BALL SECURITY.

The nose of the ball rests in your hand with the forward point of the ball resting against the tips of the fingers. All of the fingers are gripped tightly around the ball. The rear of the football rests near the crook of the elbow. Put a lot of pressure on the rear of the ball with the elbow and the arm. This keeps the ball against your body and in a vice grip caused by the FIVE (5) PRESSURE POINTS applied by:

1. Fingers wrapped around the nose of the ball.
2. The palm of the hand.



3. Inside portion of the forearm.
4. Inside portion of the biceps.
5. The rib area.

After every handoff or catch, in practice or game, the ball should be locked away immediately in this position. The ball is held high on the chest, not in the stomach. The off-hand/arm is used to attack defenders or for balance purposes. Keep the ball like this while running with it and you will not fumble. This will be referred to as running with good ball security.

When running to the right - the ball is in the right hand. When running to the left - the ball is in the left hand. Never switch hands with the football. Once the ball is secure, it stays in the same arm.

BLOCKING.

A. Philosophy:

Your blocking ability, as a running back, plays a very big part in our attack. For us to consistently move the football, we must be willing to block whenever the other back is carrying the ball.

You will not be a complete player, nor in most cases, a starter, unless; you are a good blocker. The most important ingredient is that you must WANT to make your block on every play. It makes very little difference how you get the job done, but what will be discussed in your playbook, meetings, and during practice are the best ways to accomplish your goal. **OUR GOAL IS PERFECTION!**

B. Fundamentals Common to all Blocks:

Pre-Snap Look (PSL): Always take a PSL to locate your blocking assignment prior to the snap. On your first step, get your eyes on your man immediately. (Shoot your eyes) Vision is the most important aspect in blocking. You must locate the man and keep your eyes on him, as he is not going to stand in one spot. Concentrate on your target.

Stance: You must assume a good stance. A stance that will allow you to take the proper step in correlation with the proper approach and block being used. Mental weight on proper foot.

Start: Lead step directly at the aiming point. Lead arm is thrown low and hard. Head is up, eyes focused on the point of aim. Body Pitch is low. Flex in the legs and ankles rather than the waist.

Approach: Each block has an initial approach and you must concentrate on this angle of departure. Once the ball is snapped, and your man moves to play his responsibility, now your approach must automatically adjust.

Bend the Knees: Get in a hitting position by lowering the center of gravity by bending the knees and ankles.

Contact: Be a hitter. Block through the man. Keep your head up and eyes on the target and hit on the rise! Accelerate your feet on contact and keep a good base.

Base: To hit as you have to, you must have and maintain a good base under you. Keep your feet apart, approximately shoulder width. Step on his toes before you make your block.

Finish: Finish your block by running through the man. In order to maintain contact you must keep your knees bent, head up, back at proper angle and your feet moving until the whistle blows.

Pride: To be a good blocker, you must take pride in the little details of the fundamentals involved.

PASS PROTECTION TECHNIQUES

A. Position:

Proper position is broken down into 3 elements, all of which must be achieved to execute a good pass protection block.

1. Body Position:

- a. Head up eyes focused on the numbers of the rusher.
- b. Back straight.
- c. Feet shoulder width apart.
- d. Knees will bend in power producing angles, never straightened.
- e. Weight balanced on balls of feet.
- f. Tail tucked and down.
- g. Hands held in flat, arms almost to full extension, palms facing rusher.

2. Position relative to the QB: visualize a camera in your crotch facing behind you. The camera should always have the QB in sight while maintaining proper relationship to the man you are blocking.

3. Position relative to the rusher:

- a. Maintain inside leverage on the rusher; never allow him to head up on you. Establish outside foot in the crotch position.
- b. Slide with the rusher, maintaining inside leverage as you go.

B. Approach:

1. Spring at your rusher and close the gap.
2. Breakdown when at arms length away.
3. Take a course that places your outside foot in his crotch with inside leverage.

C. The Set:

1. Accept the initial charge of the rusher by delivering a blow with your hands yet keeping arms and legs at power angles not extended.
2. Arms act as coils, accept, then extend once again.
3. Legs stay bent, back flat, head and eyes up.
4. Move feet and maintain leverage.

D. Handling The Rush.

1. General:

a. Be patient. Do not be over-anxious; never make an aggressive mistake if the rusher is not threatening the QB.

2. Inside Rush:

- a. As rusher starts to inside, slide with him and maintain leverage.
- b. If he continues inside use his movement and lock on and drive him down.

3. Outside Rush:

Be careful not to commit to the outside rush too soon and get beaten inside.

- a. As rusher starts outside, maintain inside leverage make him rush in as wide an arc as possible.
- b. If rusher continues to rush past depth of QB: Drive across his numbers making contact with inside shoulder and drive defender out and around the QB.

E. Common Causes of Pass Protection Breakdowns.

1. Failure to get set quickly.
2. Not establishing inside leverage.
3. Over-aggressiveness.
4. Dropping your head and losing your balance.
5. Feet too wide, toes pointing out, losing mobility.
6. Straightening the legs and losing mobility



7. Turning your shoulders parallel to the sideline giving the rusher an alley to the passing point.
8. Raising the elbows giving the rusher handles to grasp.
9. Honoring outside fakes.
10. Giving ground too rapidly.
11. Being surprised by a change in rushers technique. Lack of concentration.
12. Failure to maintain leverage.
13. Allowing the inside rusher to gain too much depth.
14. Not anticipating linebacker blitz.

F. Know Your Opponent.

1. Location, stance, position of feet, body angle.
2. What type of charge: fast, hard, straight ahead, max penetration.
3. When he anticipates or reads pass, is he reckless?
4. Is he a stunter (angle in-out)? Does he have a favorite rush side?
5. Is he a reader off the line?
6. Does he play close to the line and read on the move?
7. Is he a combination penetrator/reader/stunter?
8. When he reads pass or when there is a big split, how often does he rush inside?
9. Physical characteristics: ability, strength, quickness, and mobility?
10. Personal traits: degree of fervor, intensity, persistence, loafer or front runner?
11. Pay specific attention to his rush technique, they all have their favorites.
12. Which is his favorite and most effective arm? How does he best use it? What is his first move to make contact?
13. Know the defense.
14. Know the prevailing tactical situation.

G. Step-work.

1. SETTLE: A pick it up, put it down step.
2. UPFIELD: A straight-ahead step.
3. LEAD: An angle step (45 degree) towards the defender.
4. SLIDE: A parallel step towards the defender (lateral, side).
5. DROP: A straight-back step.
6. BUCKET: A short angle step that loses ground.
7. OPEN: A deep angle step that loses ground.
8. UNDER: A 90-degree pull step.

RECEIVING.

The back must SEE THE BALL, CATCH THE BALL and TUCK IT AWAY. There are four ingredients involved in being a good receiver:

1. Knowledge of pass coverage (Zone or Man).
2. Good body position relative to the defender and to the ball.
3. Soft hands – Don't tightened hands, don't fight the ball.
4. Concentration - See the ball into your hands.

Regardless of the route, the back must be "reading" the defense on the run. As the back approaches the "breaking point" in the route, he must have recognized the type of coverage he is facing.

As the ball approaches, the good receiver presents a "soft" pair of hands. Reach for the ball only at the last instant. Catch the ball with your hands and at the highest point reasonable in its path to you. "Soft" hands will give slightly upon impact. Always watch the ball into your hands.

After the catch, tuck the ball away immediately. Ball Security goes to the nearest shoulder. Break upfield as quickly as possible to gain the extra yard. Post catch and tuck, pivot sharply to free the defense. Stay low and expect immediate pressure from the defense.

The poor receiver will make three common mistakes:

1. His hands tighten-up as the ball approaches.
2. He looks away a fraction of a second before the ball hits his hands.
3. He reaches for the ball too early and stops running.