

Tackling Method and Drills (Gunslinger)

Reasons for Method

1. Safest Method
2. Kids won't need to relearn later – now taught at most colleges and high schools
3. It's effective because it will minimize many common problems:
 - Taking eyes off target
 - Arm tackling
 - Leaving feet
 - No lock up
 - No foot movement or drive
 - Not staying between ball and goal line

Principles – Derived from Bud Wilkinson

- Coaches main job is to remove fear
- Teach tackling half speed over and over until they're really good
- Rarely take ball carrier to ground
- Do full contact only when they're really good and confident

Form Tackling Technique

1. Hit (breakdown position; knees bent, tail back, arch in back, neck against helmet, eyes up)
2. Fit (numbers on numbers, helmet to side of ball carrier, eyes to sky, upper body between ball carrier and goal line)
3. Lock (At instant of contact, wrap arms around ball carrier's arms, lift his shoulder pads off)
4. Lift (forward thrust of hips drive your hips into his body this will create lift)
5. Drive (use legs, upper body holds tight, move ball carrier back or to sideline)

Drill Principles

1. Do not take ball carrier to ground; instead, Drive for 5
2. Insist on successful reps to build confidence
3. Match drill participants by size and ability
4. Start as many as possible with practice snaps alternating between 1st and 2nd string QB/center

Drill 1 – No Pads; Piggy back to check stance

- Tackler in hit position
- Partner jumps on back
- Hold for 3 count

Drill 2 – No Pads; Form tackle

1. Runner – stand erect, hands together behind back, head up
2. Tackler
 - Hit position
 - 1 feet from runner
 - Lock, lift, drive for 5
 - Arch back and keep eyes to sky

Drill 3 – No Pads; Form Tackle with Shield

- Wyatt suggests this on 2nd week of camp
- 4 lines, with 4 runners holding shields
- Runner – begin standing holding shield just below chin; backpeddle upon contact with moderate resistance
- Tackler
 - Hit position
 - Lock, lift, numbers on shield, eyes to sky
 - Drive for 5
 - Coaching point: This is just like drive block drill

Drill 3A – Form Tackle with Shield (this drill and all below with pads)

- Runner – move forward into contact; shield just below chin; provide moderate resistance
- Tackler, same as Drill 3

Drill 3B – Form Tackle from backpeddle with shield

- Tackler – back peddle 5 yards with eyes on target
- Tackler reverse direction and runner and tackler run toward each other
- Form tackle with drive for 5

Drill 3C – Form Tackle Up/Down with shield

- Tackler – back peddle 5 yards, drop to ground, pop up, then do 3B

Drill 3D – Form Tackle Wave Drill with shield

- On GO from coach, runner and tackler side step to left 3-4 steps in fit position, on second GO, they go to right for 3-4 steps, on GO they go left, on HIT, they execute 3A

Drill 4 – Form Tackling

- Do this at least once every day at practice. 3 lines runners go to tackler line and vice versa
- Everyone get a partner
- Insist on sound technique – if not good, go to back of line
- Runner – stand erect, hands behind back, give a small jump up and allow yourself to be carried
- Tackler
 - Chop feet at start
 - Hit position
 - 6 feet from runner
 - Lock, lift, drive for 5
 - Coaching point: arch back and eyes to sky

Drill 5 – Pancake Drill for Tackling

- Set up 4 blocking dummies or mattress for pad.
- Runner – stand at edge of pad with shield over bottom of face mask
- Pancake drill just like blocking drill except execute tackling fundamentals
- Runner put up just modest resistance and allow pancake

Drill 6 – Goal Line Tackling

- Wyatt's favorite drill
- Tackler and runner must keep head up.
- Coaches AND players must be confident before doing this drill
- Tackler
 - Heels on goal line
 - Attack on command
 - Stay between runner and goal line until whistle blows
- Ball Carrier
 - Fit position one yard from tackler with arms ready to receive handoff
 - Run through tackler, not side to side, head and eyes up
- Coach
 - Give ball to ball carrier to start drill
 - Blow whistle when momentum is stopped or a score

Drill 7 – Over the Top

- Place blocking dummy sideways with players face down one yard from dummy
- Tackler with palms on ground
 - Attack on command
 - Stay between runner and goal line until whistle blows
- Ball carrier face down holding ball with both hands
- Coach start drill with snap count or center snapping to QB adjacent to blocking dummy

Drill 8 – Roll Over Drill

- Head to head on back
- Ball carrier holding ball with both hands
- Stress keeping heads and eyes up
- Coach start drill on GO or QB/center practice snap

Drill 9 – Shiver and Shed Drill (No Ball)

- Lay down 4 blocking dummies about 2 yds apart each
- At snap or coaches command, blocker and tackler meet in first “hole”, after contact quickly go back and run into second “hole”
- Blocker use standard ice pick drive block (not our technique)
- Tackler - stress keeping outside arm free and helmet outside ball carrier’s helmet; Coach DC’s push/pull technique
- After last bag, blocker becomes runner
- Tackler head to outside, lock up, drive for 5

Drill 10 – Sideline Tackle Drill

- Set up shields in triangle with points A and B about 10-12 yds apart with point C about 15 yds away; Coach stand between points A and B
- Ball carrier and tackler stand behind points A and B
- Coach pitch to ball carrier who runs to point C
- Tackler
 - Stay square
 - Helmet in front of ball carrier
 - Run through ball carrier in T-bone position
 - During and after collision: stay on feet, drive, try to lock up
 - While trying to lock up IMPORTANT ** Turn neck and look into runners rib cage **

Drill 11 – Open Field Tackle Drill

- Ball carrier and tackler in hit position, each about 10 yds from blocking dummy that’s set up perpendicular to line between players
- On READY, both start chopping feet, on GO move forward to 5 yds and pause with feet chopping
- Coach stands behind tackler and points left or right
- Ball carrier goes that direction
- Tackler begin sideline tackle
 - Stay slightly inside (behind) ball carrier
 - Take shortest route to T-bone collision
 - Helmet in front and run through ball carrier
 - While trying to lock up IMPORTANT ** Turn neck and look into runners rib cage **
 - Stay on feet and drive
 - Don’t need to finish him off – stop momentum and help will come

Drill 12 – Fill Drill

- Set up 4-5 blocking dummies about 2 yds apart
- Ball carrier and blocker stand at end of first dummy about 2-3 yds behind it
- Coach signal a lane for ball carrier to run through
- Ball carrier
 - Both hands on ball
 - Stay relatively upright with head up
 - Run sideways then run through “hole” as signaled by coach
- Tackler
 - Prevent cutback by staying slightly inside (behind) to set up T-bone and close in to not give room for cut back
 - Stay square
 - Closest holes are more head on, further ones more sideline

Drill 13 – Eye Opener Drill

- Ultimate test of tackling skill; if kids struggle with this back up to simpler drills
- Set up 4-5 blocking dummies about 2 yds apart
- Ball carrier and tackler start in middle of dummies about 2-3 yds behind them
- Ball carrier starts one direction (say $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of way to end of dummies) then reverses direction. Reverse direction again when $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of way to other side
- Tackler mirror runners movements
- Coach yells GO and runner goes to hole and tackler meets in hole and drives until momentum is stopped and Coach blows whistle
- Ball carrier
 - Both hands on ball
 - Eyes up and stay relatively upright

Drill 14 – Reed’s Side Tackle Drill

- Set up dummies like pancake drill
- Ball carrier and tackler start about 3 feet away from pads
- Ball carrier run perpendicular to tackler half speed not resisting
- Tackler ensure head is in front of ball carrier and execute form tackle
- Drive, lock & lift (locking under the arm pit which will expose the ball to a strip) and pancake runner into pad