

Cyber Coach's 7 Rules of Thumb for New Youth Football Coaches

Disclaimer: *This list is not all inclusive. It is a starting point for new coaches. I would suggest that all new coaches learn as much as they can from experienced coaches. There is much more to coaching these young individuals besides X's and O's. John T Reed also has a list of common mistakes youth football coaches makes at: <http://www.johntreed.com/mistakes.html>.*

1. **Always**, place the health, safety, and well being of the participants above everything else! Don't use the movie "The Junction Boys" as a coaching aide. Value each and every participant. They signed up to play football and have fun.
2. Teach fundamental **blocking and tackling first**. Every participant needs to know how to execute a text book block and tackle irregardless of the position they will be playing. Learn some fun drills to do. Practice, Practice, Practice.
3. **It is not the X's and O's, it's who's at the X's and O's (Part 1)**. In other words, make sure you have the best fit of talent at each position on your team. Have a ball handler at QB, and kids that can contain on the outside of your defense. Keep things simple and make sure you don't ask more of each position than there is ability to give there. Don't let favoritism enter into the picture. Work with your assistant coaches and reach a consensus on who should play where for the betterment of the team.
4. **It is not the X's and O's, it's who's at the X's and O's (Part 2)**. In other words, there is no substitution for speed, athletic ability and talent. If you have it on your team you are blessed and should have a better opportunity to compete. If you do not have it on your team, please don't ask more of these young kids than they have the God given ability to give. Keep their self esteem in tack. Structure your offense and defense to account for your players abilities. You play the **game** to win, you do the best you possibly can within their and your abilities. FACT - You can not always overcome a lack of talent. Don't beat yourself or your team up over it. Enjoy the game!

5. **It is not the X's and O's, it's who's at the X's and O's (Part 3).** In other words, if there is a lack of speed, size, or athletic ability on your team, you can minimize the weaknesses by executing sound fundamentals. Have the best fit of abilities in the right positions on your team and soundly execute blocking and tackling. Consider misdirection plays on offense to help offset a lack of speed.

6. **Key team fundamentals:**

- Execute the Center QB exchange. It is amazing how many teams begin the season and do not have this down. This is extremely important. The quicker the QB can get away from the center the faster the play will move. Practice, Practice, Practice.
- Contain the corners on defense. Make sure you have athletes at the outside positions on your defense, (Defensive Ends, Outside Linebackers, or Corner Backs) that have the ability to stuff an outside play or turn in back into the middle of the defense. Never, Never, Never, give up the outside.
- Practice minimizing turnovers. Practice holding on to the ball. Practice clean center snaps and handoffs to backs. Practice putting the ball away on offense and stripping the ball on defense.

7. **It is not what you know, it is what they know.** No matter how much studying you do and no matter how good of plan you enter the season with, it will not work unless you can relate it to the participants on your team. You must be a teacher. If my team doesn't know their assignments it is my fault. I have failed to prepare them properly. You must find ways to relate what you want them to do in a manner that they can understand. Some participants have very different learning curves than others. You should account for this in your preparation. Please don't take it out on the kids. Have patience and continue to teach and work with them until they get up to speed and they have demonstrated that they can execute what you are asking. If you don't see it executed on the practice field you are not there yet and don't expect to see it executed in a game.