



OFFENSIVE LINE
DRILLS AND THRILLS
BY
COACH MIKE POPE

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1. Birddog - Run Steps

This is a great warm-up period drill. The offensive linemen all work their initial steps in the run game. These are general steps, not so much play specific. They work first step, then first two, then first three steps. Steps to rep are cut-off left/right, run inside vs. inside technique right/left, run outside vs. outside technique right/left, pull left/right, trap left/right. You can rep anything in the offense at this point.

2. Zone Combo Drill

This is two offensive linemen vs. two players acting as the defensive players. The OL will combo on the defensive lineman while they read the linebacker. If the LB stays backside and fills, the backside offensive lineman comes off for the LB. If the LB slow plays the read, then both OL just continue pushing the DL back into the lap of the LB. If the LB works quickly over the top, then the playside offensive lineman comes off for the LB. You also need to work the slant part of the drill. If the DL slants backside, then the playside OL must come off immediately, get up field for the LB, and not get involved with the DL. If the DL slants playside, then the backside OL must come off immediately, get up field for the LB, and not try to chase the DL.

3. Zone Cylinder Drill

This is two OL vs. two players acting as the defensive players. Both OL must take their proper zone cylinder steps. You can have the LB slow play, fill backside, or quickly get over the top. At the same time you can have the DL slant either way or just try to read the play. The OL must take their steps, get on path, and block the first thing that crosses their faces. They can not chase or get off path at any time.

4. Restart Drill

Two offensive linemen lock their hands into the perfect blocking position but only one hand can be "inside" on the arm pit while the other hand is outside. The offensive linemen can stand as tall as they want or can lower themselves as much as they want. Most players will work on getting into a low position to help their leverage. On the HUT both offensive linemen begin blocking and working to get their outside hand to inside leverage while not losing the inside hand they already have.

On every play there is going to be a split second, right after contact, that a stalemate happens or a moment where both the offensive lineman and the defensive lineman are stopped. The winner will always be the man who is able to get restarted the quickest. The drill also teaches the OL how to keep what leverage (depth or hand position) he earns right away as well as how to reestablish leverage as he is blocking. Run blocking is not just a one or two step thing, OL must continue to work on getting better position as the play continues.

5. Perfect Start Drill

This drill is to teach offensive linemen what position they want to get into right after contact. We want the face mask right in the chest, forward body lean, and both hands have inside leverage while being placed right in the arm pits. The acting defensive player places both hands on the back of the shoulders of the offensive lineman. On the HUT, the offensive lineman must run his feet, bring his hips, and lock out his arm to control the defensive lineman. The defensive lineman will try to pull the shoulders forward so the offensive lineman can't extend and has to really work to bring his hips.

6. Chutes

This is a great drill to teach leverage and staying low. You can run any drill you want while in the chutes. The best ones are initial steps, blocking the hand shield, blocking the big bag, or two on one.

7. Boards

This is a great drill to teach keeping proper distance between your feet so you don't lose your base. You can run any drills you want while on the boards. The best ones are initial steps, blocking the hand shield, blocking the big bag, pulling to trap, or two on one.

8. Bag Warm-Ups: One Foot In Each

Use hand shields or half bags for this. Each OL simply runs through the bags with one foot in between each bag. Do not allow them to turn their hips. You want them going forward with their shoulders, hips, and feet all pointed in the same direction.

9. Bag Warm-ups: Two Feet In Each

Use hand shields or half bags for this. Each OL simply runs through the bags with both feet in between each bag. Do not allow them to turn their hips. You want them going forward with their shoulders, hips, and feet all pointed in the same direction.

10. Bag Warm-ups: Shuffle

Use hand shields or half bags for this. The OL will turn and go through the bags perpendicular to the bags. As they shuffle through you want to see them pick their knees up, not just kick their feet up behind themselves. The OL should be in a good pass set with their hands kept high the entire time during this warm-up.

11. Bag Warm-ups: 2-Over-1

Use hand shields or half bags for this. The OL will turn and go through the bags perpendicular to the bags. As they shuffle through you want to see them pick their knees up and stick the balls of their feet into the ground, not just kicking their feet up behind themselves or just sticking the toe of their shoes into the ground. They shuffle over two bags, then back one, and repeat till done.

12. Bag Warm-ups: Lead Cross

Use hand shields or half bags for this. The OL will turn and go through the bags

perpendicular to the bags. The offensive linemen will need to build up a little speed before entering the bags for this drill. If moving to their right, they reach with their right foot into the first hole between the bags, cross over with their left foot into the next hole between the bags, and repeat until done. You have to emphasize them keeping their hips and shoulders facing forward and not turning their hips so they can simply run through the bags. As they cross over they have to really work on picking up the knee so they don't hit any bags.

13. Double Team Drill

This is done with two offensive linemen and one acting as a defensive lineman. On HUT the two offensive linemen must come together, hip to hip, and not allow any space between them. The OL will continue to drive the DL off of the ball until the drill is done. They should not allow the DL to split them. Don't allow the OL to just fall over the top of the DL.

14. One-Knee

The offensive linemen each put one knee down on the ground (you will do this drill to both sides but you want everybody to start the same way). The defender will hover over them with a hand shield, or you can use a leverage sled. On HUT, the OL will explode into the defender/sled. Driving off of their up foot and then stepping with their foot which had the knee on the ground. They then need to continue to drive, bring their hips, and lock out their arms. This is a great drill to teach proper hip explosion. In almost every play the OL will take at least one step without making contact. This drill teaches how to make proper comeback while bringing the hips and locking out. If the OL doesn't bring his hips then he will never lift the sled or bag because it will simply collapse straight back.

15. Explosion Drill: Six Points

The offensive lineman is in a six-point stance (feet, knees, and hands on the ground). You want the OL to be rocked back in his six-point stance to the point where his butt is almost on his heels. On the HUT the OL explodes into the bag/sled. The hands must extend and you should see the hips thrust out (eventually down into the ground) and the chest should be up. The OL will finish this drill face down on the ground fully extended.

16. Explosion Drill: Four Point

The offensive lineman is in a four-point stance (feet and hands on the ground). You want the OL to be rocked back in the stance as much as possible. On the HUT the OL explodes into the bag/sled. You want to see the hands extended, chest out, and the hips being thrust out (eventually down into the ground). The OL will finish this drill face down on the ground fully extended. This is not a "bring your feet drill", but instead is simply an explosion drill.

17. Explosion Drill: Two Point

The offensive lineman is in a two-point stance (feet on the ground only). On the HUT the OL will explode into the bag/sled. Now the OL must bring his feet and continue to block after the initial explosion.

18. Explosion Drill: Both Knees-Hands Only

To teach proper hand placement/explosion, you can have the OL put both knees down on the ground. You want the OL to be rocked back with their butts on their heels. The hands should be placed on the thighs. On the HUT, the OL must explode with their hands while bringing their hips and keeping their chest out and up. As soon as they explode they should immediately reload. This is a rapid fire drill where you can get several reps in a very short span of time.

19. Wax On/Wax Off

The offensive lineman will get into a perfect pass pro position with both hands being placed in the arm pits with inside positioning. On the HUT, the defender will knock the hands off (either one hand at a time or both hands). The defender should work on knocking the hands up, down, or across. Every time the hand(s) are knocked away the offensive lineman must replace his hands. The way to replace is coming from underneath up into the arm pit. The OL makes a semicircle motion each time to replace his hands.

20. Push-Push-Pull

The offensive linemen will get into a perfect pass protection position. They will have both hands inside leverage, arms almost locked out, chest out, head back, and a good bend in their knees. The defender will place both hands on the top of the shoulder pads. The defender will then push on the offensive lineman with a bull rush and will suddenly pull the OL back towards to LOS. The OL will have to sink his hips to stop from being pulled forward.

21. Pull Cut Off With Big Bag

To teach the proper way to do the backside cut-off, you can use the big blocking bag as a landmark to create the proper steps. The bag needs to be set up at least back on the hip or maybe even deeper to over exaggerate the proper steps. The offensive lineman must open, pull for depth, drop the inside shoulder, rip through the thigh, and pull the backside shoulder through.

22. Pull Cut Off With Hand Shield

The other way to teach the proper way to do the backside cut-off, you have somebody hold the hand shield. Now, the defender should be inside and crowding the LOS. On the snap the man holding the hand shield will try to get the shield on the shoulder pads of the OL, pushing him down, as well as moving up field and inside. The OL must really work hard to continue to give ground and depth to gain leverage. Once leverage is obtained, drop the inside shoulder, rip through the thigh, and pull the backside shoulder through.

23. Pass Pro: Two-On-Two

This is an unscripted two-on-two pass protection drill. The 2 OL will start in a perfect pass pro stance while the 2 defenders start standing up as well. The defenders can twist, bull, swim, spin, or whatever they want to during the rush. The most important thing is that defenders just continue to move and continue to try and get up the field towards the QB. One of the great aspects of this drill is the chaos which it creates for the 2 OL. They will probably have multiple switches if they stay on the same level and then will also have to track a few times to stay with the looper once they are no longer on the same level. This drill can become so hectic that once the OL actually go into a normal 11-on-11 setting the pass protection seems slow and easy.

24. Pass Pro: Famous Drill

This is one of the best pass protection drills you can possibly have. It will be one OL against one defender. This should be done in a very small space. The coach needs to keep in mind what position the OL plays and give the proper spot for the QB to stand. There are no helmets allowed in this drill and the only rush which can not be used by the defender is the bull rush. The OL starts in a good stance and then will pop up into a perfect pass pro position to start the drill. Once the OL has popped up, the defender starts rushing. This drill really helps to reinforce the fact that you should not use your head and shoulders during pass protections. The OL must work to get his hands on the defender, keep his head back, keep his shoulders back, and counter whatever moves the defender makes. The entire time the OL must keep the proper relationship with his feet and either play flat to the inside or give ground at a 45 to the outside.

25. Pass Pro: Twist Drill

This is a two-on-two drill done in a relatively small space. The coach will stand behind the offensive linemen and direct which way he wants the twist to happen. Every so often the coach simply needs to have the DL both slant in the same direction or simply rush. The most important part of the drill is for the two OL to learn how to properly handle the twist. First, both OL need to stay on the same imaginary plane so they are even with each other. When the drive man (defender who is slanting towards another DL) begins to drive, the lineman blocking him must assume this is simply a normal directional pass rush. When the looper (the defender who is going to twist behind the other DL) is identified, then the OL know it is a twist. The lineman who is blocking the looper will call "twist" and must turn to drive block the drive man. The combination of the twist call and the drive block on the drive man will push the other lineman off so he can play the looper. The man now playing the looper needs to push off slightly to get in a better position to play the looper. The reason you drive block the drive man is so you can constrict the possible opening for the looper to run through.

26. Cut Drill With Big Bag

Every offensive lineman must know how to cut on the LOS, cut on a pull, or cut in the open field, but you do not want to work cutting drills on your own players because of the risk of injury. You set the bag up in one of three positions. To work the cut drill on the line, place the big bag right up in front of the OL. To work the cut drill on a pull, place the big bag where the DL would be on a trap or counter play. To work the open field cut, you have to place the bag down the field so the OL has to run to the bag. The OL wants to throw the arm through the knee, drive the shoulder through the thigh, and then roll forward so they keep coming at the defender. You don't just lay down in front of a defender; you must physically attack him to put him on the ground. The cut should be used as a change up block and can only be used against defenders who are running. If you try to cut a defender who is standing still, then they have a better chance avoid the cut.

27. Quick Set

This is a drill which can be used as a warm-up prior to practice or during an individual period. On the command, the offensive linemen will all pop up out of their regular stance into a perfect pass pro position. The coach can either work on a ton of reps or can force the OL to sit in the good stance. If the coach makes the OL sit in the stance, then you have to watch to see if the OL begins to raise up or if they can properly sit down deep in their stance and stay in that position. The reason this is important is because if they can't stay in the proper pass pro position, then they will start to stand-up during a play because they get tired. This also creates a mentality in the minds of the OL that they can sit in that stance forever.

28. Quick Set And Move

This is a drill which can be used as a warm-up prior to practice or during an individual period. On the command, the linemen will all pop up out of their regular stance into a perfect pass pro position. At any point the coach can direct the OL to move by simply pointing in that direction. As long as the coach continues to point in a direction the OL continues to move that way. So, you can keep them moving one direction for a long time or you can change directions quickly to force the OL to continue to move. The other aspect of this drill is to make sure the OL are using their arms. Whichever direction the OL moves to, that arm should be locked out while the opposite hand should be held tight to the body and ready to deliver the blow when the defender changes direction.

29. Pass Pro Counter Drill

Every OL needs to know how to counter the most popular pass rush techniques and this is a drill which helps to not only teach those counters but to get a ton of reps at them. First, lets go through the drill then we will go through the counters.

Drill Part I: All of the OL pair up with one side being the offensive player and the other side being the defender. The coach will stand behind the OL and will direct the defenders on what move to make and which direction to make it. The coach should do the move on air and then point in the direction he wants the defenders to go.

Here are the counters:

Bull Rush: As the offensive linemen get bull rushed, they must eventually drop their outside foot and exaggerated distance, sink their hips, lock out the arms, push the chest forward, and get the head back. This will help to change the leverage and should also rock the shoulder pads of the defender back into his throat.

Swim: As the defender begins to swim, the offensive lineman first tries to lock out the swim side arm and then has to use their opposite hand (if the defender swims to the right, the OL uses his left hand) to deliver a blow. There are two places to deliver the blow. The first is up into the arm pit of the swim man to knock him sideways and possibly turn his shoulders to the sideline. The second place to deliver a blow is just below the ribs. A shot to the ribs will hurt but a shot just below the ribs can double over a defender.

Rip: As the defender begins to rip, the offensive lineman first tries to lock out the rip side arm and then has to use the opposite hand (if the defender rips right, then use the left hand) to deliver the blow. The blow should be down on the hip of the defender. You can turn the defender's hips towards the sideline without much of a shot. The hand stays on the hip and continues to move the defender. At some point the defender will then use a second move.

Spin: As the defender begins to swim, the offensive lineman must sit back, not get over extended, and fall forward. The OL must deliver a blow to the shoulders with the spin side hand and then continue to force the defender to spin in place. As the defender finishes the spin, the OL must deliver a BIG blow to the defender. Many times the best defense against the spin is to step off and away from the spin man so he can't use the OL's body to spin off of.

Drill Part II: The next part of this drill is to use double moves. The coach tells the defenders the first move and direction and then the second move and direction. The important part of this drill is the fact that the OL must not only be able to stop the first move, but be ready for the counter move while not getting over extended stopping the first move.

30. Two-On-One

This is done with one offensive lineman, a defender holding a big bag or hand shield, and a second defender bracing the man holding the bag. The OL can either start in a perfect running blocking position or come out of his 3-point stance. On the first HUT the OL begins blocking while both defenders are providing resistance. On the second HUT, the second defender will step out of the way and no longer provide resistance while the first defender (who is holding the bag or hand shield) will also provide a little less resistance. When this happens the OL will immediately begin having much more success and this is where the drill really becomes useful. The OL must run his feet, lock out his arm, get his hips underneath him, and finish the block. The drill teaches OL how to react once they start having success on blocks. Too many times an OL comes off of

the line, makes good contact, but as the defender gives ground the OL is unable to finish the block because he doesn't know how to bring his feet and get his hips underneath him.

31. Machine Gun

All the offensive linemen are lined up in a single line (everybody in the line will be called a defender from this point on). The first OL steps out, turns towards the group, goes into a 3-point stance and then pops up into a perfect pass pro stance. Once in the pass pro stance he begins to shuffle down the line. As he gets directly in front of a defender, the defender will simply step at the OL or fall forward. The OL must deliver enough of a shot to knock the defender back. Then, the OL will shuffle down to the next defender while staying in his perfect pass pro stance and repeat the drill until he reaches the end of the line. Once he gets to the end of the line he then turns around and joins the line. This drill should initially be done very slowly to really work on staying in a good stance and delivering a great shot. Eventually, the speed must pick up until it becomes almost a frenzy so that the OL can move, stay in a good stance, and deliver a blow at simulate game speed.

32. Mini-Machine Gun

The offensive linemen must pair up so you can get more reps for this drill. The defender will be perpendicular to the OL. The OL will be in a perfect pass pro stance and must shuffle to stay next to the defender as the defender moves. Every so often the defender will turn and step at the OL. At that point, the OL must deliver a blow to the chest of the defender. You can do this as long as you want. When done, the defender and OL simply switch responsibilities. The coach can control the speed of the drill by telling everybody what he wants at the start. The other variation is to allow the defender to simply change the speed he moves during the drill.

33. Mini-Machine Gun From The Side

The offensive linemen must pair up so they can get more reps for this drill. The defender will be perpendicular to the OL. The OL will be in a perfect pass pro stance and must shuffle to stay next to the defender as the defender moves. Every so often the defender will lean in at the OL. At that point, the OL must deliver a blow to the edge of the shoulder pads of the defender. You can do this as long as you want. When done, the defender and OL simply switch responsibilities. The coach can control the speed of the drill by telling everybody what he wants at the start. The other variation is to allow the defender to simply change the speed he moves during the drill. This is a great drill to teach/reinforce OL to keep their hands very, very tight. If a lineman keeps his hands tight, he will deliver a more concentrated blow, won't have the chance of missing a defender, and can keep inside leverage as the defender continues to come at him