



TEACHING KIDS TO PLAY LOW

BY COACH TOM BASS

This is a very common problem that I have observed as I watch many youth football practices and games. I believe one of the causes for players standing up to block is that the players are using their hands as the initial point of contact when blocking. They have gone away from making contact with their shoulder pads first and then using their hands to finish the block.

I realize that with limited funding for many programs, equipment may be hard to obtain. But one of the best investments a coach can make is to purchase a very lightweight standup blocking dummy.

With this dummy, you can teach your players how to come off low and hard and hit first with their shoulder pad and not chest block. You want them to pre-determine which shoulder they are going to use to make the block.

On the snap, they need to take a short power step first with the opposite foot to start their block. Their second step with the foot on the side of the blocking shoulder should be an explosive step into the center of the bag.

As they make contact with their shoulder pad, their helmet should slide to the side of the blocking dummy. You should then have them drive the bag back using strong power steps for two or three yards without standing up.

It is important to immediately stop and re-start the block if the player stands up and does not fire out making contact with his shoulder pad.

You might also want to incorporate in your warm-up routine a six-point drill where you have the players get down on their toes, knees, and hands and then explode forward as far as they can, keeping their head up and arms extended, so that they get a feel for rotating their hips moving forward and not up.

Many times with players this age, the defensive player will also stand straight up so the blocker does the same. By practicing against a standup dummy, your offensive line will start to learn and retain the muscle memory that will allow them to stay low when they block in the game, regardless of the reaction of the defensive player.

Good luck, it can be a constant struggle to achieve the desired result, but stay positive and keep up the good work.