

Tennis Ball Drill for Improving Offensive Linemen in Youth Football

BY COACH DAVE CISAR

Tennis Ball Drill for Offensive Linemen

This is a drill used by many teams to get their offensive linemen to quickly come off the ball. I first learned about it from Concord De LaSalle High School in California. Yes, the school that had the 151 game winning streak. This is a great drill for guys coaching youth football as well.

The De LaSalle football coaches believe rightfully so, that the keys to great offensive line play is getting your 2 first steps down quicker than the opponents 2 first steps. I noticed the speed the De LaSalle linemen came off the ball was pretty amazing during a televised game with nationally ranked Evangel High School from Louisiana. While Evangel had a number of Division I prospects on their offensive line and averaged over 50 pound more per man than De LaSalle, De LaSalle just dominated the line.

This is a drill they use that youth football teams have used successfully to improve line play and quickness:

Put your linemen in two groups, those to the right of the center in one line, those to the left of the center in another. Have the players at the front of the line execute their first two steps quickly and perfectly, inside step stepping first at 60 degree angle to the inside with knee to chest, all the while loading the hands to the sides at "Six Shooter" level. The second step at same angle coming very quickly after the first step has been placed down. The second step also would be performed with bent knees and when the foot is placed down the forearms come up to deliver the blow along with the shoulder.

Once these steps have been repped, we add in the coach with the tennis ball. The coach is at a 60 degree angle to the inside of the offensive linemen and about 1 yard along that 60 degree path away from the player. On the snap count the offensive linemen takes his first step as outlined above and then takes his second step along the line to the coach using the above technique. The coach on the snap count drops the ball straight down from a height of 3 feet or so. The lineman must take his 2 perfect steps using proper technique and catch the tennis ball before it hits the ground. Vary the distance and height to force your offensive linemen to perform the drill to their individual speed potential.

We alternate our center in both lines, as he is required to step in both directions. This is a drill we bring in week 4-5 after our kids have mastered the basics and we are working on more advanced skill building. It is a great change of pace drill, it works and the kids love it.

See how this football drill helps your offensive linemen come off the ball quicker and allowing them to get their second step down faster than their opponent. This will allow

you to execute your football plays with greater precision and effectiveness if combined with proper blocking technique.

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