

FOOTBALL



HELP DESK

'Helping Coaches Helping Kids'

Letter to a First Year Head Coach

I have posted a few times to this forum but mostly have been reading this and other forums for the last year and a half. After reading this thread I now feel I need to become a little more active as I have a lot to learn from participating in these "conversations."

I am also one of those "dad coaches." The president of my organization thought I would be a good candidate to coach football three years ago because of the way I coached baseball (his son played for me). I had no experience coaching football and played a little many years ago. Very quickly I learned that I knew very little about the game. I am now addicted to coaching football. I no longer coach baseball because football consumes my time 12-months out of the year. My child psychologist neighbor keeps telling me there is medication for my ailment!

Over the last three years, the first as an assistant on a team that scored ONE touchdown all season long and the last two as a head coach, I have learned one very important lesson. Offensive football is not about formations and QBs and RBs. It is about 11 players having responsibilities and executing them. If your focus is on the formations, QBs and backs, then most of your offensive personnel will only care about the snap count because you care about the "skilled" positions. The kids have told me in the past that is not a lot of fun not having a responsibility other than remembering the snap count.

After my second year of coaching and watching my OC implement an offense where there was a "hit somebody" approach to blocking and plays were called based on the personnel in the game at the QB, RB and receiver positions, I realized that I had to find a blocking scheme to support his skilled position driven offense. I found a number of schemes -- GOD, ZONE, SAB etc.... While I was researching the various schemes I kept stumbling on this thing called the Double Wing. I then started digging deeper into this offensive system. The DW is not for everyone. Settle on a system that YOU believe in and are confident that YOU can teach. That means all 11 positions on every single play!

The more I read the more I became interested in an OFFENSIVE SYSTEM instead of just formations and plays. I ordered CDs and playbooks and pulled a lot of material from the web. I started reading numerous football forums. The more I studied the more I realized that introducing a system would be a lot more fun for the kids. So I told my coaches prior to last season we are going to run the Double Wing offensive system.

After one season of the Double Wing I must echo the comments that are reiterated over and over on this forum. On the surface it may seem simple but it can be a bear to implement. The problem, typically, is not with the kids and their ability to learn the offense but it lies with the coaches! I can guarantee that you will be tempted to and will introduce more formations, which will lead to more plays. You will not rep the core enough. You will not understand the details well enough so you will not teach them to the kids. You, or your coaches and most likely the parents will blame the problems on the offense you selected. Nope, the problem is not with the system! The problem falls squarely on the coaching. You have diluted the system and not taught it well enough. My team did this last season. Old coaching habits die-hard!

The reason why the coaches here mention POWER, TRAP, COUNTER, SWEEP, WEDGE and a PLAY ACTION PASS as the core (YES, SIX PLAYS!) is because it isn't easy teaching 11 kids to execute in a symphony of movement. Throwing more formations and plays into the mix only complicates matters and will take the focus off of the 11 kids on the field and will place it squarely on the QB and RBs. Don't get hung up on what many perceive as a lack of pizzazz associated with the simple core and be tempted by additional formations/series -- stack I, loose (or twins), SST, Wildcat, Spread, and the list goes on -- until you understand and can teach all the details of the core. I am speaking from experience. It wasn't until I returned to the core that the team started winning and the kids started having a lot more fun. The kids don't care if you have six plays or 66 plays. They want to play and play well.

I have spent just about every day since the end of the 2007 season studying the details of the Double Wing core six. I have watched game film over and over. I have rewritten my playbook to include detailed responsibilities for each and every player so I can better teach them. I have written a coaching guide that I will give to the coaches of the new team I will be with in 2008 so they can teach the kids. All these details for six plays! Well, I have thrown in a few others but they are rooted in the core. All of this has been done and continues to evolve so I can do a better job teaching the details so the kids can have more success so we can win more football games. In the end the entire team -- kids, parents and coaches -- will have a whole lot more fun! Don't be tempted like I was in my first year running the Double Wing to do more than the core. You'll regret it.

Coach Kent 'KC' Calkins
Panthers Youth Sports
Centennial, Colorado