



# **YMCA Youth Sports Flag Football Coaching Tips**

**Maximize participation.** Participation and movement is key in development of young athletes. Try to keep groups and drill lines small in size. Give each of your players plenty of opportunity to participate in each drill. Rotate players into different positions so each player can begin to learn and develop in all areas of the game.

**Be creative.** Create new drills or make variations on existing drills often. Evaluate and keep notes of drills that are successful and unsuccessful for your players. Make the necessary adjustments to your practice plan and drills to create the most opportunity, participation and success for your player and team development. Ask for your players input. A players input can bring a positive energy and will empower them.

The links below are few sample flag football drills designed for all types of skill levels.

**Effective Practicing**

**Warm up & Conditioning**

**Center – QB Exchange**

**Running with the ball**

**Passing**

**Receiving**

**Offense**

**Defense**

**Thank you for your time and efforts in volunteering to coach!**

**YMCA Youth Sports Staff**

## Effective Practicing – Have a Plan

Showing up to practice with a plan or script for how things should be run is a way to take pressure off of you and your coaching staff and will provide your players with constant instruction and interaction. The following different drills will address areas of the game of flag football.

Many of the drills included can be used during practices and can rotate from week to week depending on what will need to be stressed to players for that particular week's practice. The drills can be modified to fit your team. The practice plans you create can use these drills and be guidelines for you throughout the season.

However, you choose to use the drills will be up to you, we hope that they will be helpful for you to teach your players the game of flag football.

Coaches should be early to practices, have stations set up and interact with players as they arrive. This sets a good example and engages your players from the start of practice.

Here are some tips to running a good productive practice:

- Have a plan
- Instruct all players and assistant coaches on all techniques involved in the drill.
- Include fun competitions or games to break up the instructions of drills – make it fun.
- Do NOT criticize – INSTRUCT. Players respond better to instruction and positive support than they do to criticism.
- Keep the practice moving, but include time for warm up, warm down and water breaks.
- Multiple stations should be running throughout instruction part of practice (coaching staff member at each station). This gives players continuous repetition and result should be increased skill set.

Practice plans should be geared for grade level and ability of your players. Try to instruct on all parts of the game of flag football during pre-season practices. Once season begins may start to emphasize areas of the game where your players need improvement.

## Warm ups & Conditioning

Warming your body up before practice and games help gets the body ready both physically and mentally ready for exercise and competition. Warm ups allow for the increased power and strength as well as prevention of possible injuries.

Stretch it out – Football players should stretch legs, hips and back prior to engaging in practice and games. While players are lined up or in a circle, designate new player each week to lead the warm up stretches (first practice coach should lead warm ups for example). Lunges, toe touches, butterfly toe touches will be a good start to loosen up player's legs, hips and back.

Follow up the stretches with conditioning drills (choose from examples below and depending on grade level will determine number of sets and length of time):

Jumping jacks: 10 – 15 sets

Tuck Jumps: 5 – 10 sets (while standing have players jump reaching arms up and bringing knees towards mid-section)

Jog in place: 20 – 30 seconds

Running Sprints: 4 – 6 sets (put cones or markers 10 - 15 yards apart)

Jingle – Jangle Drill: Place cones at corners about 10 yards apart in square.

Players then:

1. Sprint to first cone
2. Side-step to second cone
3. Backpedal to third cone
4. Sprint back to beginning of line

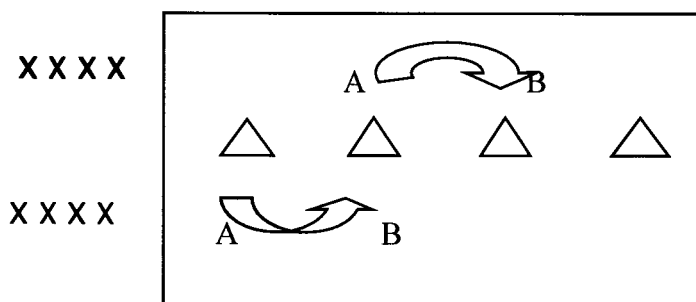
Purposes of the conditioning drills are to improve balance, strengthen legs and core, develop footwork and to help with change of direction.

Warm ups and conditioning drills can vary each week but should be included before all practices and games. Introduce the football or flag belts to the drills which will not only change things up but will increase concentration and coordination.

## Center – QB Exchange

“LINCOLN” (hut-hut): All the fancy plays and schemes would not be possible if the center – QB exchange is not a clean one. The game starts with the center – QB exchange which makes this drill one that should be addressed in every practice.

Lay out an area roughly 15 x 20 yards. Divide the team into two groups and place them in even lines at one end of rectangle. Place cones down the middle roughly 3 yards apart. One football per team, the entire team participates. (X = player)



### Center – QB Exchange Drill:

1. This is a relay race
2. The quarterback (A) and center (B) on each team start the race.
3. The center (B) snaps directly to the QB (A). The center will stand while QB runs to the next cone.
4. The previous (A) snaps to (B), then (B) snaps to (A) and so on, until course is completed.
5. Ball goes back to next center/QB grouping and drill is repeated until all players have gotten a turn.

Center snaps can either be snapped between the legs or side snapped. Ball must be placed on the ground before each snap is taken.

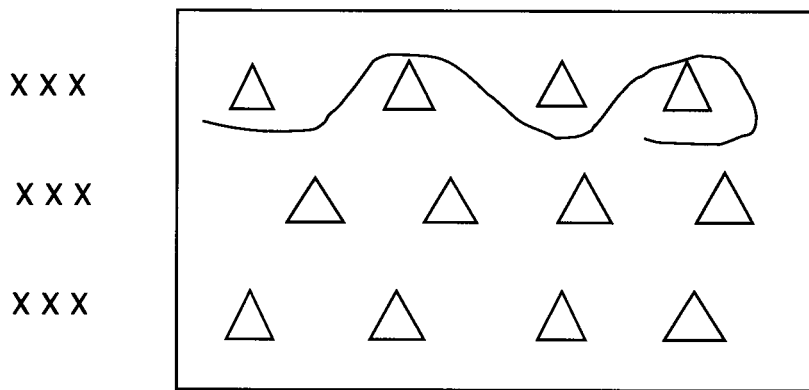
The purpose of this drill is to develop proper snapping technique.

**Reminder for YMCA Flag Football league:** Grades 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> there **must** be a second exchange prior to ball crossing the LOS. Rule once ball is snapped the QB must either hand off, pitch or throw ball and cannot run directly once receiving snapped ball (Grades 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> the QB is allowed to run once receiving snapped ball).

## Running with the Ball

Evading defenders while running to the first down marker or goal line for a score is a vital part of the any offensive game plan. Working on techniques that enable players to make cuts while running with the ball securely tucked next to their body will teach players to evade defenders as they attempt to pull the ball carrier's flag belt.

Lay out an area of 15 x 20 yards. Can divide team into two, three or four equal groups depending on size of team and place them at the starting line at one end of rectangle. Place cones 5 yards apart and may be staggered in either two, three or four lines down field area. One football per team line, the entire team participates. (X = player)



### Running with the ball drills:

1. This is a relay race between teams.
2. The first participant in each line has football secured tightly and will run around each cone down and then return back to the beginning of their line.
3. The ball will be handed off (tucked into belly of teammate) to the next participant at the front of the line who will secure football and will run around each cone down and back.
4. This is repeated until all players have run the course.

This drill can be modified to include a defender in each line who is trying to pull the flag belt off the ball carrier. Side-stepping or backpedalling through the cones can also be different options used with similar lay out of area.

Purpose of the running with the ball drills is to develop speed and elusiveness.

## Passing the Ball

Quick outs, slants, button hooks or screens are all offensive football passing plays that can help offensive team progress toward a first down or potential touchdown. The ball must be distributed quickly and accurately by offensive player who is passing the ball. Proper throwing technique will enable the football to be delivered to potential receiver down field for positive yardage.

The goal is to develop the correct throwing motion while using and strengthening the arm. Every player will be at different level of ability so adjustment to distance of throw may need to be made.

Progression of the passing the ball:

1. Begin passing drills by having players start on both knees.
2. This will focus on throwing motion without the use of their legs.
3. Progress to right knee up and then switch to left knee up.
4. After practice throwing football with being on knees have players stand straight up and pass with feet apart.

Passing motion is similar to throwing a baseball; the passer should begin with football above his or her waist and no higher than their ear level. The arm should follow through the pass so that their thumbs end up pointing down after the ball has been released.

Passing Drills:

1. Set up stationary targets on fence with different point values for passers to throw ball at for practice (i.e. towel rags make great targets tied to fence with point number written on them)
2. Pair off teammates into two parallel lines. With players starting on knees and about 3 – 5 yards apart have them practice throwing ball back and forth to each other working on follow through of their arm and thumbs ending up pointing down after throw.
3. Can introduce receiver down field both stationary and/or on the move for passer to throw the ball to.

Purpose of passing the ball drills is to develop accurate strong passers.



## Receiving the Ball

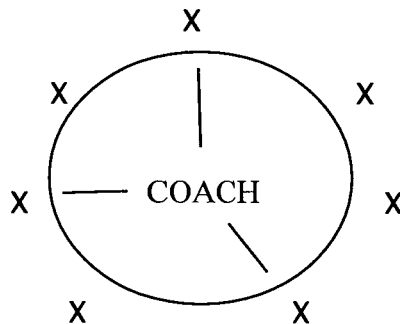
Down 5 yards then make right cut towards the sideline and the ball will be there ready to be caught. Having an accurate passer is one half the offensive forward pass plays. In order for the play to be successfully completed there must be a receiver at the end of that accurate pass to catch the ball.

The goal is to develop receivers that can run effective routes and catch the ball with their hands away from their body. Once ball is secured tightly next to body then become ball carrier and be able to run down field evading defenders for positive yardage. This all sounds simple but practice and repetition will develop all of these skills to create well rounded players.

Progression of receiving the ball:

1. Receiver forms a target with both hands.
2. Palms facing out with thumbs and pointing fingers touching in form a triangle.
3. Arms should be extended out in front of body around chest area with hands in target position.
4. Eyes should follow the ball all the way into the hand target to secure catch.

Catching the football ball can be difficult at first due to the oblong shape of football. Coaches may want to begin with Nerf type football to prevent injuries. Progress to soft toss with actual football used for YMCA grade level games. (X = players)



Receiving Drills:

1. Players put in a circle with starting with coach in the middle with football.
2. Have players stationary with their hand target formation ready for toss.
3. Coach toss/throws football to each player on the circle looking for proper technique.
4. Players use their passing drills to throw football back to coach in order to repeat to next player in the circle.

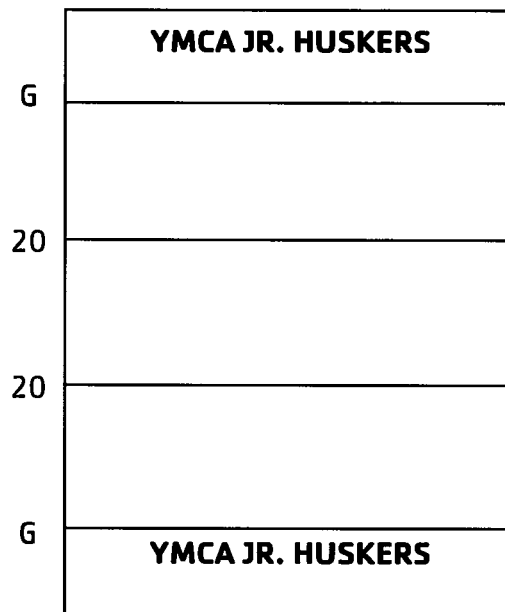
For more advance drill have the players on the circle start in motion and have passer lead the ball for receivers. Can call reverse and have receivers change directions around circle for more chaos and fun.

Purpose of receiving drills is to develop players that can complete the pass play and keep possession of the football for team.

## YMCA Jr. Huskers Offense

The YMCA Jr. Huskers flag football league play 6 v 6 and is a wide open game with no blocking allowed by offensive players. A fast paced running and passing league which enable players to be part of the action on every play. YMCA Jr. Huskers rules state that there must be a second exchange of the football after the first initial snap from center to QB. That second exchange from QB can either be a hand off, a pitch or pass to another player.

YMCA Jr. Huskers field for is laid out with TWO first down areas at each 20 yard line.



X's (offense) and O's (defense) are part of the game plan for many coaches. Create plays that play to the strength of your players on your team. All players should be given the opportunity play every position throughout the season.

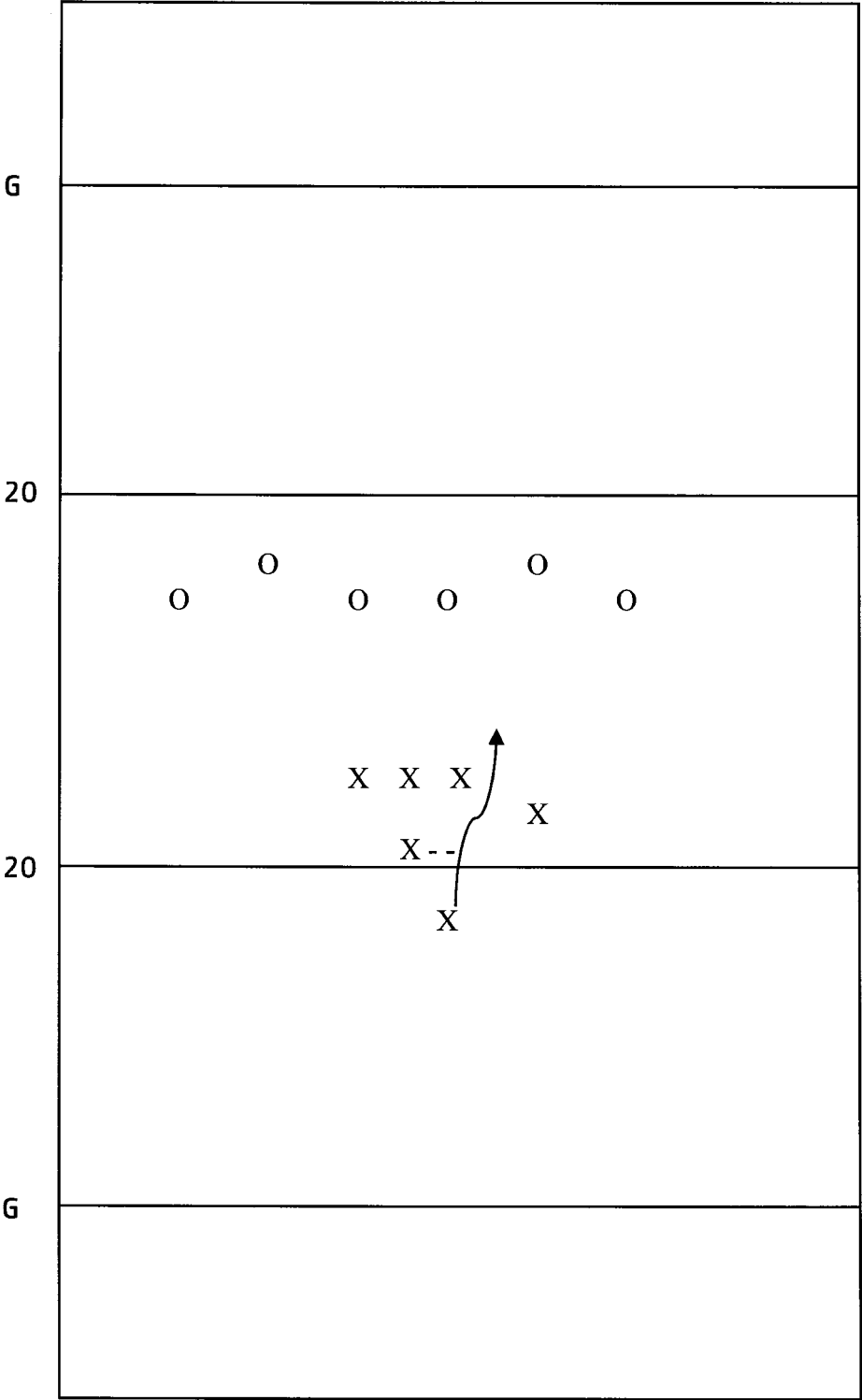
Offensive Play Selections (see following pages for diagram):

1. Run Dive right or left: after center snap QB turns and hands ball to teammate who will run towards first down/goal line marker.
2. Toss right or left: after center snap QB will toss ball back to teammate which is 1 or 2 yards apart who will run outside for first down/goal line marker.
3. Screen Pass: after center snap QB passes the ball to teammate who is out in the flat or near the line of scrimmage.
4. Downfield Pass: after center snap QB passes the ball to receiver downfield.

Be creative with play calling but know your team and its abilities.

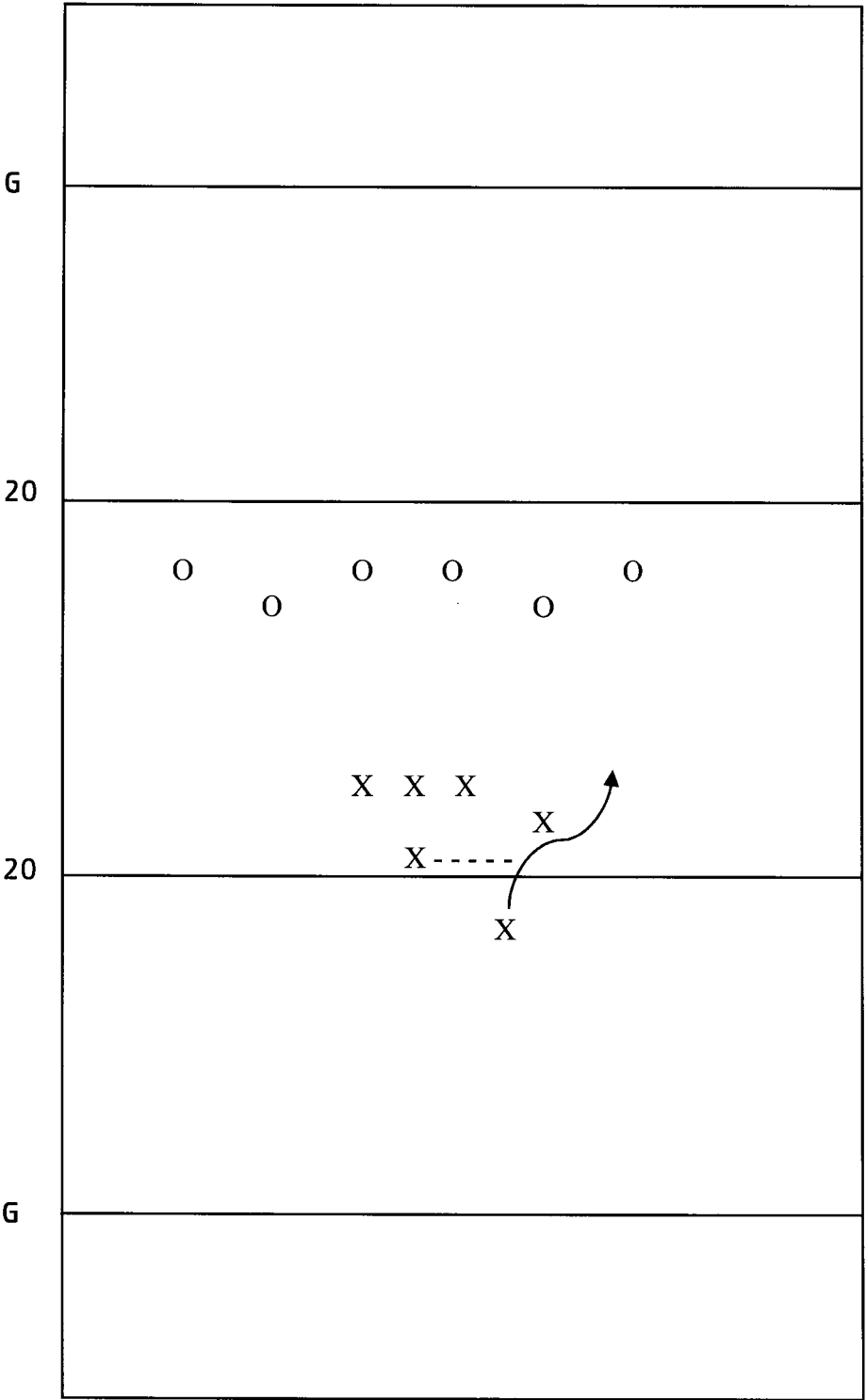


**Run Dive Play (Right):**



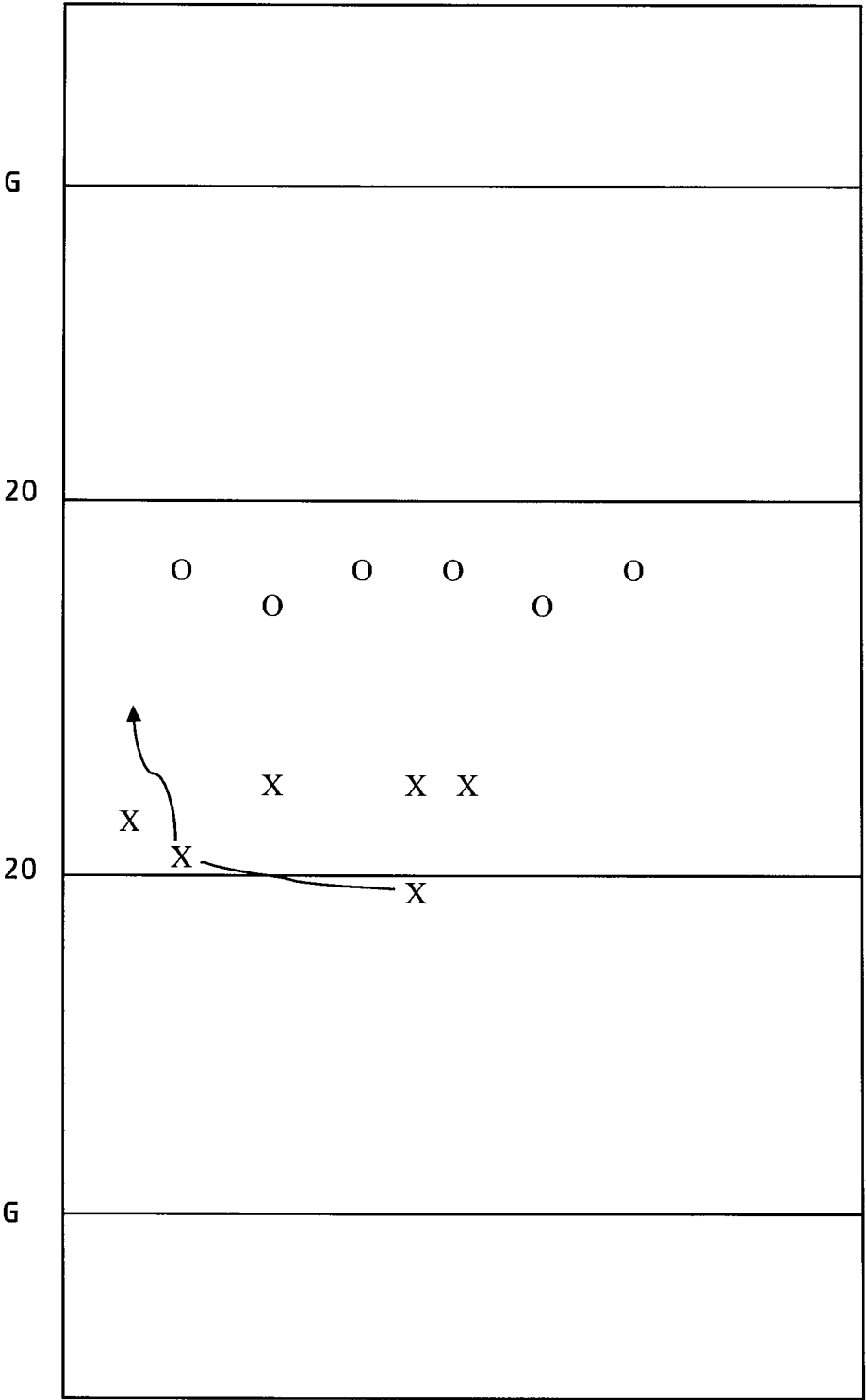
Please note: Offensive line and other teammate in backfield may go downfield and set non-contact screen block in front of defender that ball carrier will evade.

**Toss Pitch Play (Right):**



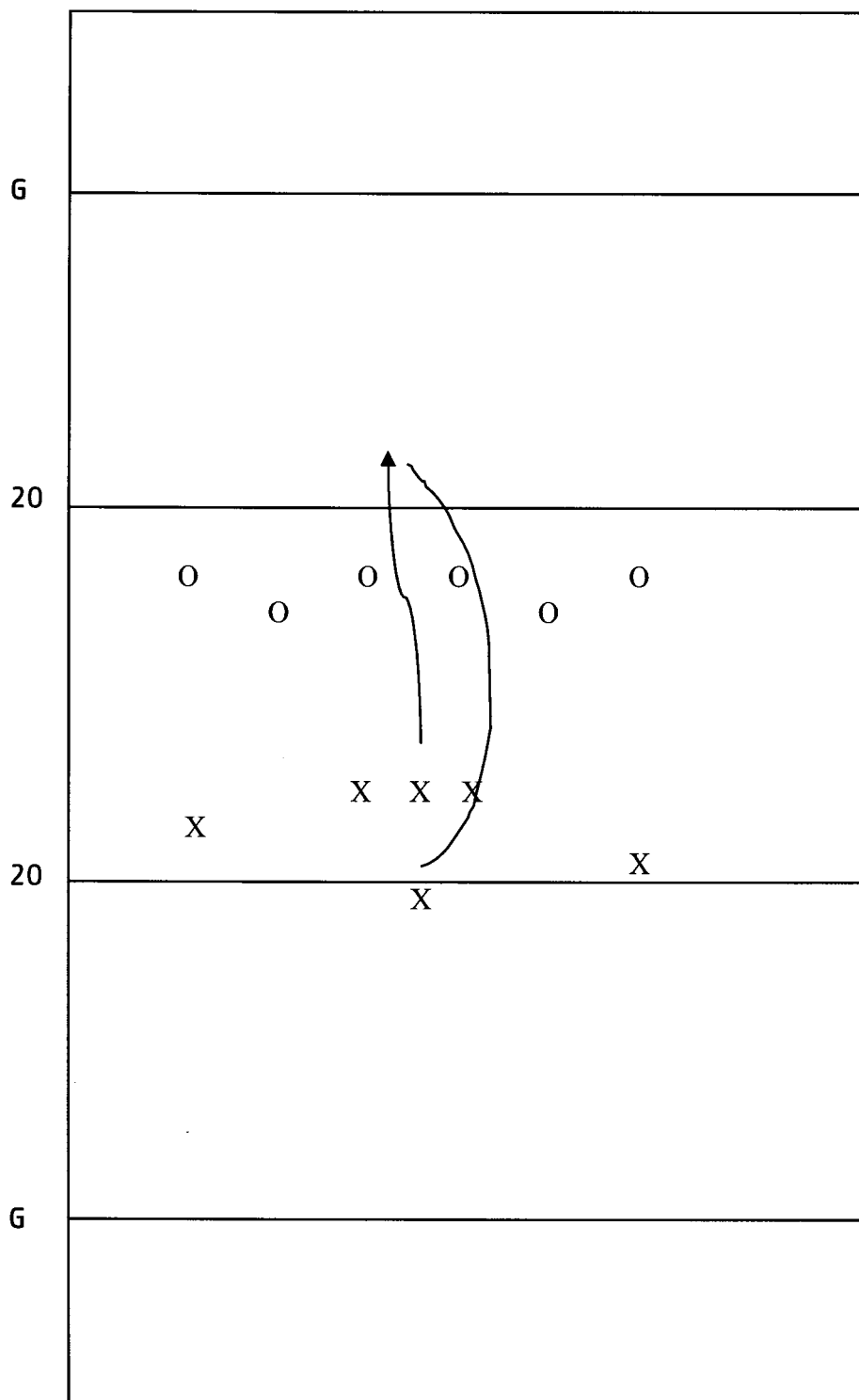
Please note: Offensive line and other teammate in backfield may go downfield and set non-contact screen block in front of defender that ball carrier will evade.

**Screen Pass (left):**



Please note: Offensive line and other teammate in backfield may go downfield and set non-contact screen block in front of defender that ball carrier will evade.

## Downfield Pass (middle):



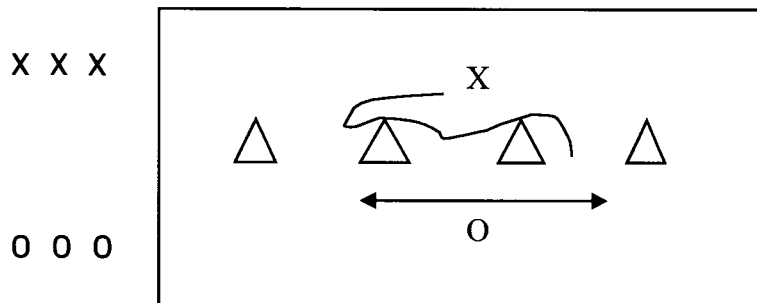
Please note: All offensive players are eligible to receive forward pass. Have multiple players in pass patterns to give passer option on where to throw football.

## YMCA Jr. Huskers Defense

Defense wins games is the old saying and that is true in YMCA Jr. Huskers flag football league. The objective for defenses is to pull the flag belt off the ball carrier preventing the offense from advancing for a first down or scoring a touchdown. Being able to hold the offense to minimal gain on each snap means the defense has done their job from preventing opponent from scoring and thus allowing their own offense to take possession of the ball.

Defenses begin 5 yards off the line of scrimmage as long as the offensive possession is not within 5 yards of first down or goal line. At snap of ball two defensive players may rush and cross line of scrimmage to try and pull flag belt from ball carrier. If second exchange is made from QB to teammate then all defensive players may cross line of scrimmage to try and pull flag belt from ball carrier.

Lay out an area 15 x 20 yards. Split team into two groups, one offensive (X) and one defensive (O). Put cones 5 yards apart. Flag belt on offensive player and one football for the drill.



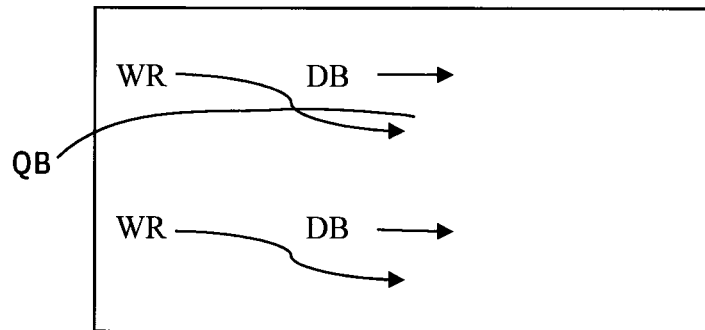
### One – on – One Defensive Drill:

1. Flag belt on and football tucked securely offensive runner (X) will run along line of scrimmage (cones represent LOS) and will select an area between cones to run through.
2. The defender (O) will mirror the running back on their side of the line of scrimmage and will attempt to pull the flag belt off before the ball carrier selects a hole between the cones.
3. Can make a contest out of it and give point to either ball carrier if they get through cones and pass defender with flag belt still attached or point given to defender if flag belt gets pulled before ball carrier pass through cones.

Running back must keep head up and the football securely tucked away. Defender must keep shoulders square and head/eyes watching the ball carrier's hips for direction running back may want to run.

Purpose of this drill helps both the offensive and defensive player. For offensive player it works on ability to evade defender and for defensive player is develops skills for one on one defending and capturing the flag belt.

Lay out an area 15 x 20 yards. Split team into two groups, one wide receivers (WRs) and one defensive backs (DBs) and coach as QB with football. Flag belt on offensive player and one football for the drill.



#### Wide Receiver and Defensive Back Drill:

1. Pair up kids – one group WRs and one group DBs.
2. Begin this drill is slow motion then work towards full speed.
3. WR with flag belt on begins their route to try and run past the defender and DB will backpedal to start and mirror WR.
4. Coach will then throw pass to either WR, DB will either knock down, intercept pass or if pass is completed then DB will be in position to pull WR flag belt.
5. WRs become DBs and give flag belts to next WRs to continue same drill until all have participated at both WR and DB.

Defensive backs must keep head up and eyes on wide receiver hips to watch for direction the WR will be taking. DBs cannot contact the WRs to knock down ball or try for interception of ball, they must evade contact and play the ball only.

Purpose of this drill is to develop defensive skills of backpedaling, playing the ball not the receiver and pulling the flag belt.

The YMCA would like to again thank you for volunteering to coach and we hope these coaching tips will be helpful for you to use at your practices and games. If you have any questions regarding YMCA Jr. Huskers flag football rules or would like some other helpful tips please feel free to contact the YMCA Youth Sports Office, M-F, 8:00am – 5:00pm.