



DEFENSIVE LINE SKILLS AND DRILLS

21

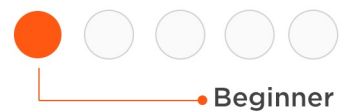
**FUN &
EFFECTIVE
DRILLS**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

3-point Stance Drill.....	pg. 3
Bag Agility Series.....	pg. 4
Quick Strike Drill.....	pg. 6
Get Off vs Sled.....	pg. 7
Popsicle Pass Rush.....	pg. 8
Pass Rush Agility Series.....	pg. 9
Redirect Drill.....	pg. 10
1 on 1 4-Way Go.....	pg. 11
1 on 1 Pass Rush Drill.....	pg. 12
Chute Drill vs Quick Set.....	pg. 13
Nose Technique.....	pg. 14
Quick Hands Drill.....	pg. 15
Butt & Press Technique.....	pg. 16
Rip vs Post Drill.....	pg. 17
Strike & Recoil Drill.....	pg. 18
Partner Rush Drill.....	pg. 19
Figure 8 Attack Drill.....	pg. 20
Bull in the Ring.....	pg. 21
Boxing Series.....	pg. 22
Push & Pull Series.....	pg. 23

3-POINT STANCE DRILL



Equipment: No equipment needed.



Purpose: To review and emphasize the importance of starting every snap in a good 3-point stance.



Setup: Players spread out in a field with at least 5 yards of space between them.



Linemen down in 3-point stance.

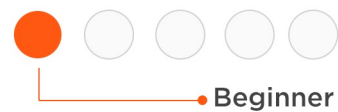
INSTRUCTIONS

1. The players will start down on all fours, and on the coach's signal will get up in to 3-point stance with their right hand down first.
2. The coach will then signal for the players to get into stance with their right hand down.
3. Lastly, you can have the players get into a 4-point stance, with both knuckles in the dirt.

COACHING TIPS

- Make sure players are establishing a good base – not too extended, not too wide, with the ability to explode forward to the left and the right.
- You can walk between the players and give them slight pushes to see if they are truly balanced in their stance.
- It's also important they have their head and eyes up and their off hand cocked and ready to strike.

BAG AGILITY SERIES



Equipment: 5-6 Agility bags, 3 cones, and a football on a stick.



Purpose: To work on agility, footwork, balance, and explosiveness.



Setup: Place the agility bags in a row one after each other, with the players forming a line at one end and the coach at the front of the line with the ball on a stick. Place 2 cones to create a line of scrimmage in front of the players line and another cone about 5 yards past the agility bags.



Player going through bags while rotating hips.

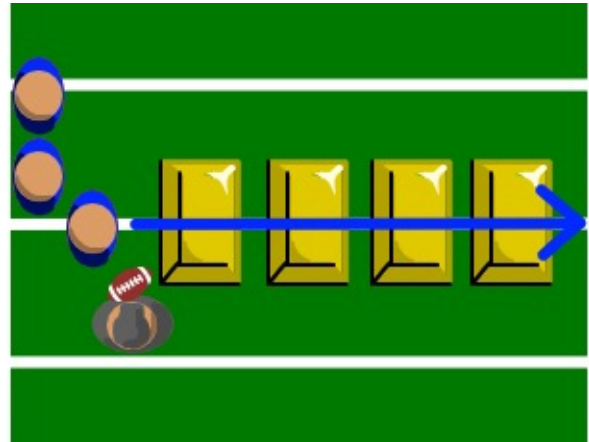


Diagram of player executing the bag agility drill.

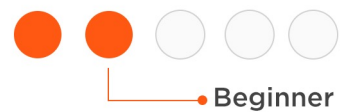
INSTRUCTIONS

1. The first player in line will get down into a 3-point stance.
2. To start the drill, the coach will 'snap' the ball on the stick.
3. The player will explode forward and run through the agility bags, putting one foot in each hole and getting their knees high as they make sprint through.
4. Player will finish the drill by sprinting through the final cone.
5. Player will return to the back of the line as the next player in line steps up into stance and continues the drill.

COACHING TIPS

- There are several variations you can do with this drill to work on different aspects of agility and footwork we expect out of our defensive line – the first of which is putting both feet in the hole before hopping over the bag.
- Hip Movement: Like the carioca – except straight. The players will run through, putting both feet down in between each hole, keeping their shoulders facing forward while rotating their hips to the left and the right as they hop over each bag.

BAG AGILITY SERIES CONT'D.



Equipment: 5-6 Agility bags, 3 cones, and a football on a stick.



Purpose: To work on agility, footwork, balance, and explosiveness.



Setup: Place the agility bags in a row one after each other, with the players forming a line at one end and the coach at the front of the line with the ball on a stick. Place 2 cones to create a line of scrimmage in front of the players line and another cone about 5 yards past the agility bags.



Player working on the lateral movement variation of the drill.

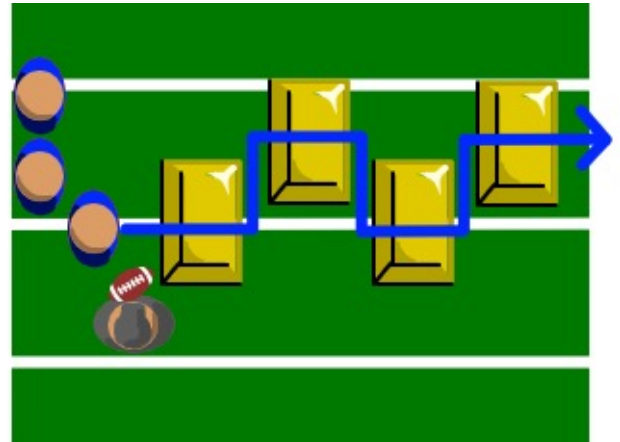
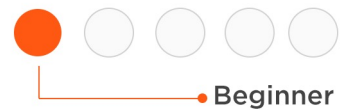


Diagram of the agility bags in a staggered alignment.

VARIATIONS

- **Shuffle steps:** Instead of placing the bags in a straight row, move every 2nd bag 3 yards to the left – this will create two staggered rows of agility bags. On the snap the players will step over the first bag, come down with both feet, and sidestep over to the bag to their left. They will then hop over that bag, come down with two feet, sidestep to the right, and hop over that bag, repeating until they get to the end of the line.
- **Lateral Movement:** With the agility bags staggered, the player will explode out of their stance, then pivot so they are perpendicular to the bags. They will then jump over the bag laterally, land with two feet, then step forward, jump over that bag laterally, continuing until they've have jumped over every bag.

QUICK STRIKE



Equipment: 3-5 Stationary Dummy Bags/Popsicle Bags, Ball on a stick.



Setup: Players will start on their knees in front of the bags with a partner holding the bag steady.



Purpose: To develop and refine defensive lineman's punch and technique off the snap.



Player coiled up, ready to strike.



Player exploding up to strike the bag.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. When the coach snaps the ball, the players will bring the hands together and strike the Dummy.
2. The player will quickly reset, as this is a fast-paced drill, and the coach will snap the ball again promptly after the players reset.
3. After 15-30 seconds, have a new group of players step up and have the current ones rotate to holding the bags.

COACHING TIPS

- The ideal strike is just outside the numbers while still staying inside the frame of the offensive lineman.
- By putting the players on their knees, we isolate the upper body and put the focus on developing proper technique with the hands.

GET OFF VS SLED



Equipment: A 1 man blocking sled, a football on a stick for the coach.



Setup: Players will form a line in front of the sled, with the coach placing the ball in the players' peripheral vision.



Purpose: To develop a defenders' ability to drive a lineman back before getting off the block.



Player in 3-point stance as coach readies ball on a stick.



Player in 3-point stance as coach readies ball on a stick.

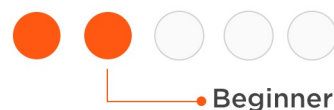
INSTRUCTIONS

1. On the snap of the ball, the player will explode out of their stance, driving the sled back for a few feet.
2. The player will then use their get off technique, separating from the block and exploding a few yards into the backfield.
3. Next player in line steps up and drill continues.

COACHING TIPS

- Players can use either a 'Rip' or 'Swim' move, but make sure they practice getting off to both the left and right.
- Make sure players are staying low and maintaining some separation from the bag, using good hand placement to create leverage.

POPSICLE PASS RUSH



Equipment: 3 Pop-up Dummies.



Setup: Players will form 3 lines, one in front of each bag.



Purpose: To work on and refine a players get off the line and pass rush moves.



3 Players lined up in stance ready to execute the drill.



Players using the slap and rip technique.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Drill will begin with the coach snapping the ball.
2. The players will explode forward and slap and rip to get past the dummy.
3. Next group steps up and repeats.
4. After all groups have done the rip to the right, have them go back through the drill working on a rip to the left.

COACHING TIPS

- The defenders will be using a slant/go technique, meaning they are looking to explode past the block and into the backfield as quickly as they can.
- The next evolution of the drill is to have the players work on a counter step – faking a go to one side before countering and going back the other way.
- We can use this drill to work on a variety of pass rush moves – rips, swims, you can even work on fancier moves like spins!

PASS RUSH AGILITY SERIES



Equipment: 3-5 Garbage Cans, 2 Popsicle Dummies.



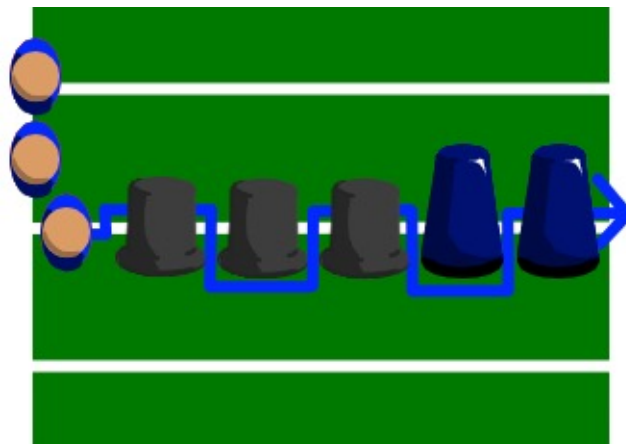
Purpose: To work on lateral movement, agility, footwork as well as refining their rip and swim technique.



Setup: Place the garbage cans in a straight line with 2-3 yards gap in between each can. After the cans place the two popsicle dummies, about 5 yards of distance between them. Have the players form a line where the cans start.



3 Players lined up in stance ready to execute the drill.



Players using the slap and rip technique.

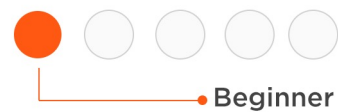
INSTRUCTIONS

1. First player in line will come out of stance and use a swim or over technique as they step around each of the garbage cans.
2. They will then use a rip or swim technique on the first popsicle bag.
3. Lastly, they must use a counter move on the final popsicle bag.

COACHING TIPS

- The player should use the same technique as they move around each garbage can – they can work on the rip or the swim, as long as they keep it consistent.
- The players need to use two different techniques on the last two bags – they can't use two rips, or two swims back-to-back for example.
- This drill is a fantastic way of getting players comfortable using a variety of pass rush moves back-to-back, emphasizing moving laterally and navigating around multiple blocks as they pursue the ballcarrier in the backfield.

REDIRECT DRILL



Equipment: A football.



Purpose: To develop a defender's ability to read and react to what is happening in the backfield.



Setup: Players will spread out and form 3 lines, Coach will stand about 5 yards in front of them with a football.

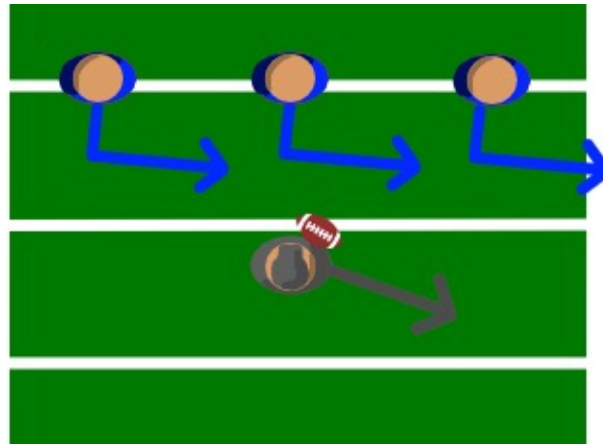


Diagram of redirect drill with players staying flat and reacting to coach's signal.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Coach will snap the ball and the players will explode out across the line.
2. The coach will then step out and mimic throwing a pitch wide to either side – the players will keep their eyes on the ball and redirect to chase the ball down the line.
3. Next group of 3 steps up, coach resets, and the drill continues.

COACHING TIPS

- The emphasis is on getting to the ball in the shortest line possible – they should redirect 'flat', not loops or bananas with unnecessary steps.
- While we want to start the drill in base alignment, we can also add stunts – having the players slant to either the left or right when the ball is snapped.
- To start we want to focus on pitches, but eventually we want the coach to start mixing in draws up the middle, working on the defensive line's ability to get back upfield – and even counters, ensuring that they aren't overcommitting off the LOS.
- The last progression of the drill will have the Coach drop back all the way to pass, with the defenders collapsing in with their hands high as they close the distance, emphasizing the importance of taking away passing lanes from the QB if they aren't able to get to him before the throw.

1 ON 1 4-WAY GO



Equipment: 2 arm pads/a blocking pad, a football on a stick.



Purpose: To work on getting off blocks and pass rush moves as well as emphasize the importance of playing to the whistle.



Setup: Players will form a line just behind the coach, with the first player in line grabbing a blocking pad, stepping out and turn around to face his teammate. Next player in line gets into a 3-point stance.



Player in stance awaiting snap.



Player executing the 2nd of 4 consecutive pass rush techniques.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. On the coach's movement, the first player in line will explode forward and use their primary move on the player in front of them.
2. The player in front of them should extend their arms and allow the defender to use their technique.
3. Both players will then immediately turn around and re-engage, using the primary move again – but this time to the opposite side.
4. The drill will continue like this, with the player going 4 times before returning to the back of the line.
5. If the player has more than one technique in their arsenal, they should work on them for their third and fourth reps.

COACHING TIPS

- For this drill, we don't want players to worry about learning new techniques – this is more about re-enforcing proper habits at game-speed, and ensuring players are balanced and comfortable going to either the left or right with both their primary and secondary techniques.

1 ON 1 PASS RUSH



Equipment: Offense will need a football, and all players should be in at least half pads.



Setup: Offensive line and QB will line up at LOS. One player from the defense will step up and get into stance in their position.



Purpose: To work on pass rush moves in a game-like situation.

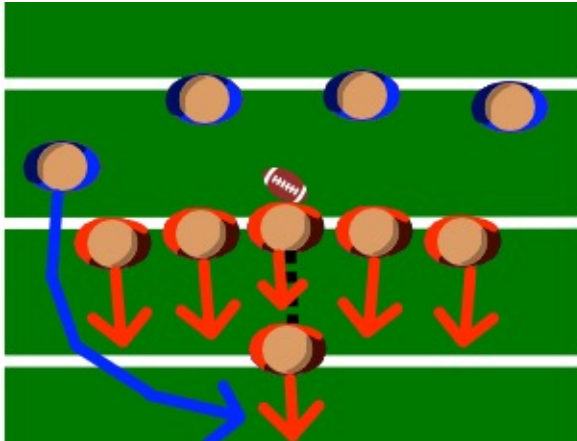


Diagram of DE using a speed rush to beat the tackle.



DE using a bull rush to put the tackle into the QB.

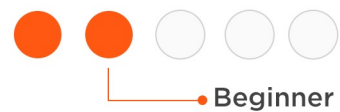
INSTRUCTIONS

1. The Center will snap the ball back to the QB.
2. The defensive lineman will explode off the line and engage with the offensive lineman using a bull-rush technique.
3. The player should be focused on getting a good punch and driving right through the O-lineman, pushing them back into the QB and using their own weight against them.
4. The player will end the rep before coming into contact with the QB.
5. Offense resets, next defender steps up and the drill continues.

COACHING TIPS

- This setup is ideal for working on other pass rush moves in a game-like situation – not just the bullrush. Feel free to assign a pre-determined pass rush move and have the players drill that.
- Players should not be tackling the QB – the goal is to beat the Offensive Lineman – not the passer.
- Make sure players are running this drill from an alignment they would be using in game – however, if you want to evaluate a DE's ability to play inside or a DT's ability to rush from the outside, this is a great drill to see how they move in that space.

CHUTE DRILL VS QUICK SET



Equipment: A chute, 2 blocking pads.



Purpose: To teach and emphasize the importance coming out of stance low.



Setup: Have the players form 2 lines, and the first 2 players get into stance in the chute. 2 blockers with blocking pads will stand a few yards in front of the chute.



2 players in the chute with blockers ready to engage.



Players coming out of the chute and using an arm over technique to get past the block.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. On the coach's signal the players will explode out of stance, staying low and engaging the blocker.
2. The blocker will set their feet, and the defender will execute a swim technique to get past the blocker.
3. The defenders will return to the back of the line with the next two players in line stepping into the chutes.

COACHING TIPS

- We can also run this drill to work vs. a reach block, with the blockers stepping to their right or left – the emphasis here for the defenders on staying low, pushing and pulling on one shoulder and maintaining outside leverage.
- As another variation, we can also do this drill with no blockers, simply focusing on their speed, power and balance coming out of stance.

NOSE TECHNIQUE



Equipment: Drill should be done in full pads.



Setup: A Center and 2 Guards will line up on the LOS, with a player 5-7 yards behind the Center mimicking a QB/RB.



Purpose: To teach your tackles how to deal with a variety of blocks and play types from the nose tackle alignment.

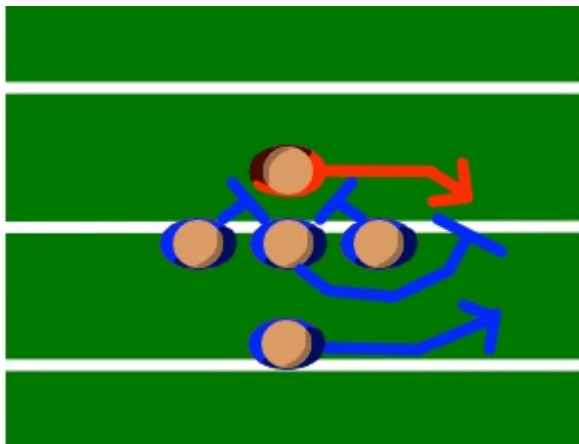


Diagram of offense using a pull technique and the nose coming across the face of the guard and shuffling wide.

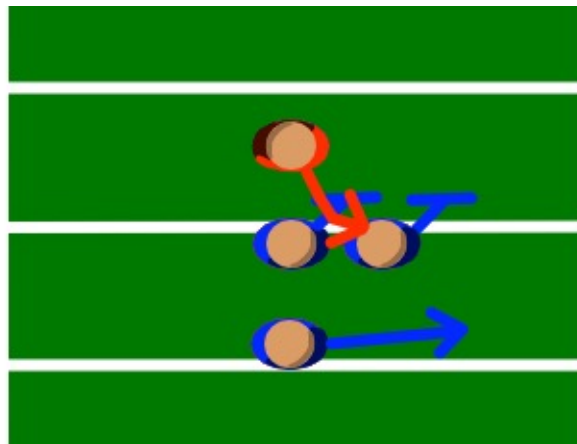


Diagram of nose in a 5 technique, squeezing the zone away.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. On the coach's signal, the center will 'snap' an imaginary football and execute one of the three pre-determined techniques based on the formation and blocks performed by the offense.
2. If the center pulls, the tackle will slide across the face of the guard and shuffle to the left or right, following the ball and maintaining inside leverage.
3. If the center and guard attack the nose with a double team, they will drop their shoulder and make a pile, making sure to not get driven back.
4. We will also work on the 5 technique, with the nose aligned just off the centers shoulder. When the ball is snapped, the center and guard will execute zone blocks away from the tackle.
5. The tackle will push down and squeeze the hole, flowing away with the ball and keeping their shoulders square to the LOS.

COACHING TIPS

- When first teaching these techniques, you will want to let the tackle know what to expect, but once they have learned them you will want to have them make the read in real time as well.
- Feel free to add other plays/blocks if there are any specific ones you want to work on – a counter going to and away from the tackle is a great place to start.

QUICK HANDS



Equipment: A blocking sled.



Setup: Players will start down on their knees right in front of the sled – if you are short on sleds, have the extra players get in line behind a teammate.



Purpose: To work on punch off the snap and emphasize the importance of creating separation from the block.



Players in front of the 2 man sled ready to strike.



Players striking and shooting the hips from their knees, driving the sled dummy back.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. The coach will snap the ball and the players will explode into the sled, hitting with their hands and shooting with their hips up through the dummy.
2. After 2 reps, have the next 2 players cycle through and get in position.
3. Repeat until all players have gone.
4. Now have the first players in line start in 3-point stance, taking the next step; now players will strike with their hands, shoot with their hips, but as they drive into the chest of the target they will keep moving with their feet for a few steps, then recoil.
5. The players will reset in 3-point stance, do one more rep, then head to the back of the line as the next 2 players step up to continue the drill.

COACHING TIPS

- Emphasize the importance of players striking the inside of the frame, keeping their thumbs up and driving into the chest with their hands as they shoot the hips and keep their feet moving.

BUTT & PRESS TECHNIQUE



Equipment: A 1 man football sled.



Purpose: To work on stopping the charge of the blocker and shedding the block.



Setup: Players will form a line in front of the sled.



Player in 3-point stance in front of 1 man sled dummy.



Player executing the butt & press technique vs a dummy.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. The first player in line will get in stance, and on the coach's signal, the player will explode out of their stance right into the sled.
2. The player will strike with the hands and drive the sled back.
3. They will then come off to the right or left and head to the back of the line.
4. Next player in line will step up and get into stance.

COACHING TIPS

- This is a vital skill for the run game, developing power and ensuring defenders can stop the blocker in their tracks before getting off into the backfield.
- Once players have a good foundation in their stance and technique, this is a great drill for further developing their ability to become a run stuffer.

RIP VS POST DRILL



Equipment: A goal post, ideally with a pad wrapped around it.



Setup: Players form a line about 5 yards from the post, with the first player down in stance.



Purpose: To practice and refine a players reduction technique while ripping past the blocker.



Player in 3-point stance in front of post.



Player using slap & rip technique, reducing their shoulder.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. On the coach's signal, the first player in line will come out of stance and explode towards the post.
2. The player will then slap the post with their left hand and rip through with their right arm.
3. After they rip, they should step behind the post with their right foot, tight to the defender, dipping the inside shoulder low as they push off their left foot and move downfield, 'reducing' and staying tight as they cut behind the post.
4. Repeat until each player has gone, then have them go to through the drill ripping to the opposite side.

COACHING TIPS

- By dipping the inside shoulder as we rip past the blocker we reduce the area in which they can get good hand placement and make it much more difficult for the offensive lineman to recover and sustain the block.
- Sometimes the offensive line will take a deep set off the snap – on a play with a 5-7 drop for example. To practice this we have a variation of the drill where the player comes at the post from a running start before ripping and reducing, getting them acclimated to moving a few yards upfield before choosing a move and engaging with the blocker.
- We can also use a 1 man dummy sled for a variation of this drill.

STRIKE & RECOIL DRILL



Equipment: A 5-man dummy sled or 5 blocking dummies.



Purpose: To work on a defenders initial punch and ability to get off blocks and move laterally.



Setup: Players will form a line at one end 5 yards from the first bag.

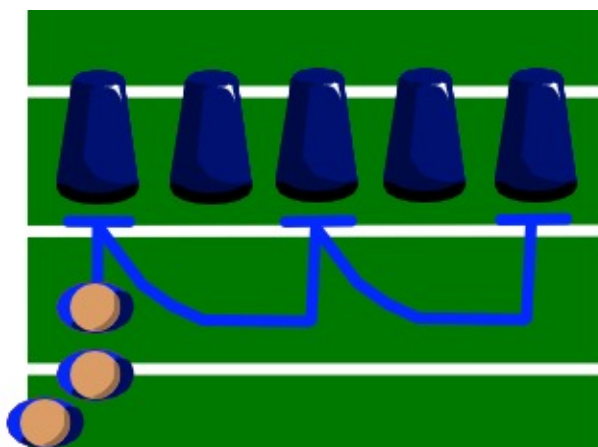


Diagram of player executing the strike & recoil drill.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. The first player in line will start in a 2-point stance, and on the coach's signal will explode forward, strike at the first bag with two hands, and immediately recoil.
2. They will then move back, keeping their shoulders square to the LOS and staying low with their hands ready, as they slide over to the center bag.
3. They will strike that bag and recoil again, this time moving to the far bag, striking one more time before ending their rep.
4. Next player in line steps up in 2-point stance and continues the drill.
5. After all players have gone through, start on the opposite side, making sure to have players work this drill going to both the left and the right.

COACHING TIPS

- Emphasize the importance of keeping a low center of gravity and keeping their balance – we want players in a low athletic position, with their hands up, ready to strike (and recoil) at any time.

PARTNER RUSH SERIES



Equipment: A cone, a ball on a stick.



Purpose: To work on a wide variety of alignments and pass rush techniques.



Setup: Have players pair off with teammates of similar size and strength, designate a LOS and place a cone roughly where the QB would be after a 5-step drop.



Player in 3-point stance awaiting the coach's snap.



Player executing a swim technique to the inside.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Have the first pair of players come onto the LOS, one lining up on defense and the other as a blocker.
2. The coach will instruct the blocker on what kind of set/block to make.
3. On the coach's snap of the ball, the defender will come out of their stance and attack the block, using a predetermined pass rush move.
4. After they beat the block, they will sprint through to the cone to finish the rep, with the next pair of players stepping up.
5. Pairs should switch offense to defense after each rep.

COACHING TIPS

- There are a number of blocks, sets, and pass rush techniques (rips, swims, spins, speed rushes, counters etc.) we can use this drill to work on.
- Wide Rush: Have the player line up from a wide alignment and have them practice both a speed rush to the outside and a counter move back to the inside.
- Deep Set: Have the player come at the defender from a running start, imitating a blocker who drops back and sets deep on plays where the QB takes a 5-7 step drop.
- Make sure to practice starting and releasing in different directions equally – we want to get defenders comfortable aligning on both the left and right of the formation as well as executing pass rush moves to both the left and right.

FIGURE 8 ATTACK DRILL



Equipment: Two cans/cones, and arm pads or boxing gloves.



Purpose: To work on pass rush techniques, motor and a defender's ability to use their hands and keep the blockers' hand off of them.



Setup: Place two cones about 5-7 yards apart. Have players pair off with partners of similar size and strength. The blocker will start with the pads or gloves on, with the defensive lineman across the LOS in 3-point stance.

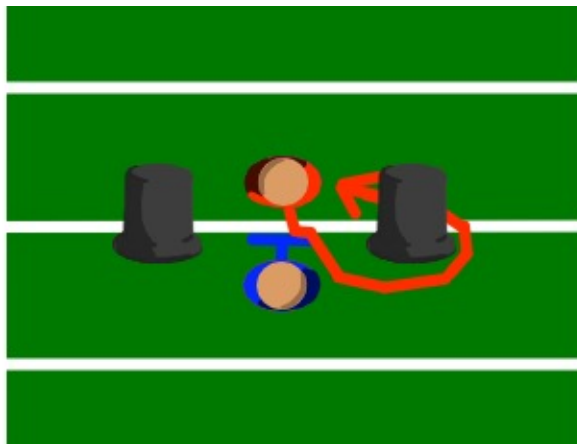


Diagram of players executing the Figure 8 Drill.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. On the coach's signal, the defender will come out of stance and use a pass rush technique to get past the blocker.
2. They must beat the blocker without getting pushed outside the cone.
3. They will then circle around the cone back to where they started, and engage the blocker and execute another pass rush move from 2 point stance.
4. They will continue in a figure 8, using a variety of pass rush techniques and attacking both the left and right shoulders of the offensive lineman.
5. After 30 seconds, have a new pair step in and restart the drill.

COACHING TIPS

- By The blocker should stay on the LOS, extending the arms and trying to push the defender outside the cones – its important that the blocker give a good effort as well, to ensure his teammate gets the most out of the drill.

BULL IN THE RING



Advanced



Equipment: Boxing gloves (optional)



Purpose: To work on quick reactions, agility and conditioning.



Setup: Have one player stand in the middle of a circle, with the other 8-9 teammates forming a circle around them. If you have boxing gloves, have the outside players forming the ring all put on a pair.

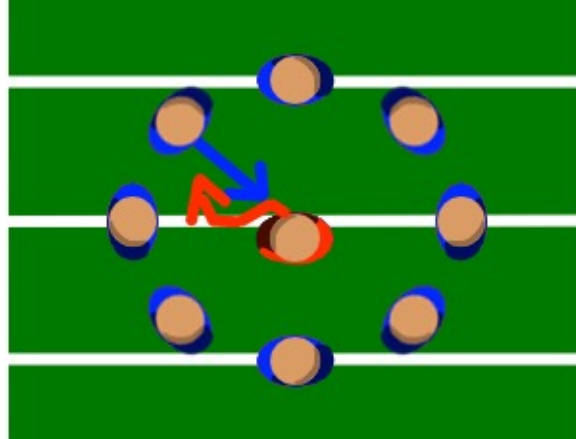


Diagram of player executing the strike & recoil drill.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. The coach will start the drill by calling out a player's name.
2. That player will then charge through the circle and attempt to land a block on the defender in the middle.
3. The defender must react, avoiding the block by using a pass rush technique, making the blocker go by.
4. The coach will continue to call out names, with the defender avoiding each one successively.
5. After about 30 seconds, have a new player step into the circle.

COACHING TIPS

- Different techniques will be more effective based on which direction the blocker is coming from – the player in the middle will need to use their full arsenal and stay active and light on their feet.
- Emphasize safety with this drill – while you do want to call players from all directions, we want blockers to come into the circle in a safe, controlled motion.



Equipment: Each player will need a pair of boxing gloves.



Purpose: To work on a defenders ability to parry and deflect the blockers hands.



Setup: Players will pair off and stand a couple yards apart facing each other with their gloves on.



Defender using their hands to deflect an incoming punch.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. One player will be designated the blocker, and the other will be the defender.
2. On the coach's signal, the blocker will attempt to land 'punches' on the defender.
3. The defender will use their hands to parry and deflect the punches, preventing the blocker from making or sustaining any contact.
4. After 30 seconds switch offense to defense.
5. Once both players have had a chance to be the defender, have them separate another few yards.
6. Now the defender will come to the blocker at a running start, and the blocker will attempt to punch.
7. The defender will now parry the punch but combine that with a rush move like a rip or arm over technique and move past the blocker.
8. Repeat for 3-5 reps then switch offense to defense.
9. The final progression of this drill will have the defender line up in 3-point stance and explode towards the blocker, using the fundamentals they've just been working on to parry with their hands and perform a pass rush technique to pass the blocker.

COACHING TIPS

- Emphasize the importance of keeping a low center of gravity and keeping their balance – we want players in a low athletic position, with their hands up, ready to strike (and recoil) at any time.

PUSH & PULL SERIES



Equipment: A goal post, ideally with a pad wrapped around it.



Setup: Players form a line about 5 yards from the post, with the first player down in stance.



Purpose: To practice and refine a players reduction technique while ripping past the blocker.



Defender engaged with the blocker, driving them back.



Defender feeling the set and switching from push to pull and executing a pass rush technique.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. On the coach's signal, the defender will bull rush and start to drive the offensive lineman back.
2. The blocker will let themselves be driven back a few yards before 'setting' and planting their feet.
3. The defender should feel their weight set, and at this point they will go from push to pull, executing a rip or arm over technique and blowing past the block.
4. After a few reps, have offense switch to defense and continue the drill.

COACHING TIPS

- The key to this drill is teaching the defender how to use the blockers momentum against them – in the moment that the blocker attempts to set, a strong pull can throw them off-balance and provide the perfect opportunity to execute a pass rush technique.
- Make sure players are using techniques to both the left and right side.