

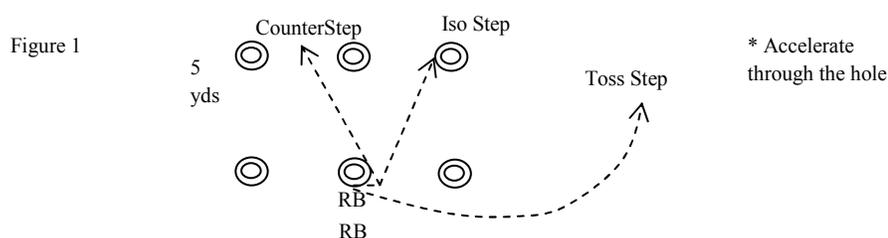
Organizing Your Running Back Individual Period  
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No matter what career or level, I find that two qualities play a major factor in individual success: knowledge and preparation. As Running Backs Coach at Miami Country Day School, I see to it that my individual session is organized (requiring knowledge) and efficient (requiring preparation). We will have anywhere from 15 – 30 minutes of individual time depending on certain factors, such as when game day is, what side of the ball is the focal point, among other factors. In the thirty minute period, I am expected to teach plays and formations to consume some of my thirty minutes.

During the fifteen minute days, I need to maximize my individual time; therefore what I do is to lay out five minute blocks for drills. Depending on the number of backs, I will reduce that time to three minute blocks; particularly later in the season, when they are all familiar with the drills. On a fifteen minute session, that gives me three blocks. I will break down my blocks by start-of-play drills, during-play drills, and blocking drill. Furthermore, I try to coach multiple techniques during each drill, so I can reinforce techniques and get more bang for my drill buck!

For my start-of-play drills, I will frequently use an initial step drill. What are my three most common plays? What is the foot work required to run those plays? We are an I-formation team and we are iso, counter and toss heavy. These are the initial steps we cover. However, to do a drill just on that initial step is inefficient. We also teach our backs to accelerate through the hole, not to the hole. Frequently, when a young coach teaches the initial step drill, they'll stop at the initial step and then wonder why their backs hit the hole slow. A separate drill can be set up for acceleration but that goes against the efficiency concept.

I work my initial step drill by setting up cones as the offensive line would align about five yards apart (figure 1). We teach proper alignment. When that first group goes, that second group better be in proper alignment or they're slowing us down. We teach our players not to move in order to move. Another way to say it is "no false steps" or "no negative steps." The first step should be direct. After they start, the next coaching point is to accelerate through the hole.



For those physics junkies: Force = Mass x Acceleration. If they run at a constant speed, their acceleration is  $0 \text{ m/s}^2$ ; giving us zero force. If their acceleration is negative (meaning they are decelerating or slowing down) Force is negative. Therefore, they need to accelerate positively through the hole, and I need to see that change in speed when they run. I like to be able to switch



gained is a yard toward their run per carry average. We will combine this drill with our hand off drill to again, stress ball carrying, receiving hand offs, stance, initial step, etc.

We can vary these up with other drills or combine several drills together to maximize teaching.

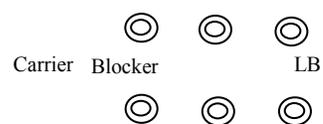
Being an I formation team, our FB has many blocking responsibilities. However, we still expect our HB to block particularly in the passing game. We also cross train our backs. We do this to create depth, but also, because when our HBs understand what our FBs do and vice versa, it gives the players a more thorough understanding of the game thereby creating a more complete player. Hence, everyone must block!

We can split blocks into two categories, pass blocks and run blocks. Again, we want to maximize our time, so, we focus on the blocks our players actually do in our game plan. In our I-formation scheme, we trap defensive ends, isolate linebackers, pass block defensive ends, and pick up blitzing linebackers. Therefore, work on lining up six inches from a sled and drive, this is not what we do. When we go over our blocks, we will do it in several ways. We can have everyone perform the drill or involve multiple players in a drill. The more players you can have involved in a drill, the more they are moving around (conditioning) and there is less boredom.

Trap block drill is an example of the multiple player/variation concepts. We can have each player trap block a dummy as I, the coach, provide resistance. We can have the back actually trap an end, involving a second player. We can have the second provide resistance with the dummy. We can have a back cut behind the block. I am particularly fond of this drill because backs like to take the ball outside frequently, and this teaches him to read his blocks and it can involve as many as three players in the drill: the ball carrier, the blocker, and the defensive end.

Similarly with the iso drill, we can do this with a linebacker or with a dummy. We can have a ball carrier or not. We can have a half back follow the FB. Again, I am fond of the multiple player drill so, I will go over that variation.

We will mark off an alley with cones (Figure 3). The width will be slightly wider than the width of our biggest back. A linebacker will be at one end, a blocking back will be at the other with a ball carrier right behind the blocking back with his hand on the blocker's back. On the whistle, the blocker must block the linebacker as the linebacker is attempting the tackle the ball carrier. The blocker's responsibility is to make contact, not to stop in the hole and force the linebacker one direction or the other. This is why the ball carrier's hand is on the back. The ball carrier can either influence where the blocker takes the linebacker and if the blocker is already taking the linebacker in one direction, this helps the ball carrier make his cut.



Whatever drill is used, is it important not just to understand its primary focus but secondary and tertiary foci as well. Coaching is teaching and as teachers we need to understand that repetition is crucial to learning. Where do we get the extra reps? In the secondary and tertiary foci! Organizing individual sessions and gaining a thorough knowledge of the skills required for your players is crucial to helping your players be the best they can be.

For questions or comments, please feel free to e-mail me at [CoachMetz@CoachMetz.com](mailto:CoachMetz@CoachMetz.com)