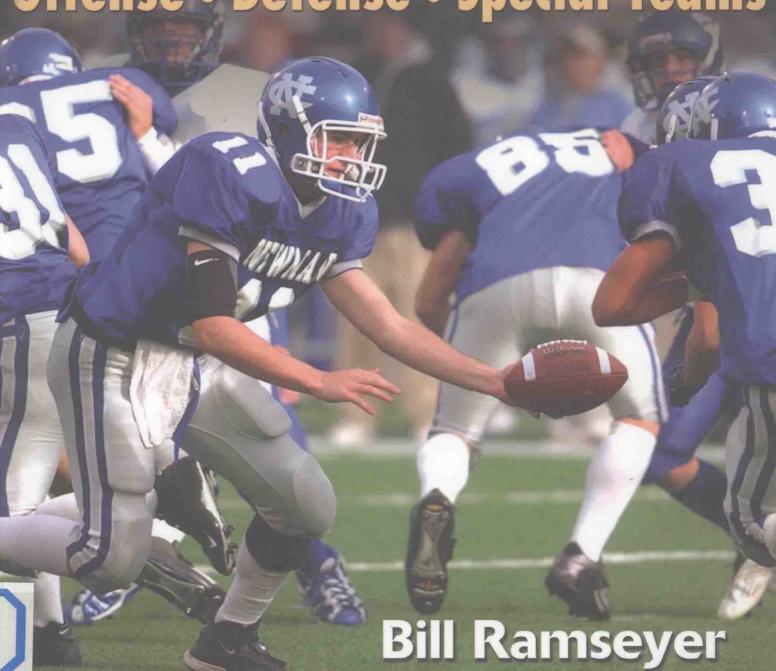
The skills, strategies, systems, and plays for

# FOOTBALL FORM

Offense • Defense • Special Teams



# Winning Football

Bill Ramsey 於大字山书的藏书章



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## **Winning Football**

## **Key to Diagrams**



QB Quarterback Left halfback LHB RHB Right halfback Fullback (R) FB Tailback (T) TB RB **Running back** Offensive guard OG RG Right guard LG Left guard OT Offensive tackle RT Right tackle Left tackle LT Left end LE RE Right end **Tight end** Y R Receiver WR Wide receiver (X, Z) **Kicker** K Punter

Block

Side of block

X or position abbreviation in dashed circle ((H))
For presnap shifts, original position before motion (defense)

Run (solid line)
Pass (dashed line)
Presnap motion (jagged line)

Optional routes (run and block)

X	Defensive player
N	Nose tackle
T	Defensive tackle
RT	Right defensive tackle
LT	Left defensive tackle
E	Defensive end
LE	Left defensive end
LB	Linebacker
M	Middle linebacker or Mike
S	Strongside linebacker or Sam
W	Weakside linebacker or Will
CB	Cornerback
S	Safety
SS	Strong safety
FS	Free safety
WS	Weakside safety
NB	Nickel back
DB	Dime back
CO	Coach

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# Elements of Success

uccess can be measured in many ways. If you are a coach, perhaps you measure success by the positive influence you have on the lives of the players you coach—the attitudes they build on and off the field, the percentage of players who graduate, the careers they enter, the relationships they develop. If you are a player, you might measure success by how hard you have worked to earn your achievements or by how much you are valued by your teammates. Many people measure coaching and playing success by the number of games or championships won or the number of winning seasons over a career. Obviously, as long as a score continues to be kept, winning will remain a vital part of success on the football field, but winning should never mean sacrificing other factors that determine achievement.

An athletic team that wants to compete consistently at the highest level must have an abundance of mental toughness. A main ingredient for producing toughness is discipline—individual discipline, team discipline,

and self-discipline. In fact, the longer I coach, the more convinced I am that discipline is the most important factor in football. Yes, Xs and Os are vital, but it's the players who play the game, and you win with players who are consistent. How do you develop consistency, even under the most extreme adverse conditions? Through mental toughness. How do you develop mental toughness? Through discipline.

In discussing the importance of a disciplined team, I am not talking about rules. I am talking about the way your team responds to situations based on consistent positive habits. Discipline becomes a way of life, and that leads to success.

Discipline begins with the head coach. The head coach must be disciplined, and discipline must be an integral part of every assistant coach in order for discipline to be established in the team. If the team is expected to react with confidence, every coach must react to each situation, challenge, or crisis with confidence and positive energy. When discussing discipline, focus on what's important and factor out irrelevant distractions.

To be successful in football, you must develop the mind. In the coaching profession, we discover all kinds of equipment, books, and drills to develop and strengthen every muscle group of the body, but we do too little to train the most powerful area of the body—the mind. We should spend more time developing the mind than we do developing the biceps, hamstrings, and other major muscle groups. I firmly believe that if you can visualize something, you can achieve it; if you can see it, you can become it. I don't mean to imply that ability and personnel are not important; of course they are. But we have all seen upsets, games won by the squad with less ability. How do we explain this? The victorious underdog played better as a team, was more mentally prepared for the game, came closer to realizing its potential, or all of these.

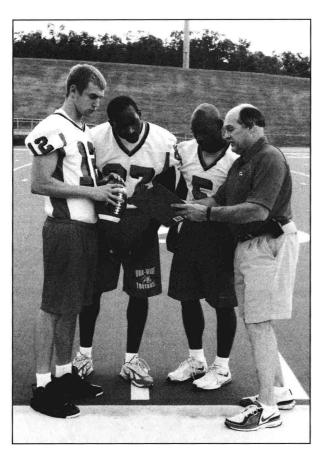
A disciplined team plays each game with consistency and confidence. Disciplined players perform in championship games as though they have been there before. They don't panic when they are behind in the final quarter. They play with poise. A disciplined team responds positively when they are the underdog, and they play with intensity when they are the overwhelming favorite. Players demonstrate consistency and confidence in their performance on the final drive of the game, when behind, or with the score tied. Simply put, a disciplined team remains focused under pressure during any given play, throughout a game, and from week to week over the course of a season. This becomes reality only when your team has attained a major dose of mental toughness, which is the ability to block out all distractions and focus only on the objective.

#### **Philosophy**

A program operates under the philosophy developed and preached by the coaching staff. This philosophy includes basic principles that guide the actions of the coaches. Each coach must completely buy into the philosophy and adhere to it.

Although there will be as many personalities as there are coaches and players, there must be only one philosophy for your football program. Your philosophy must be positive in every way. The philosophy described here has served me well in coaching and might serve as a foundation for developing your own philosophy.

- 1. Coaches will always totally support each other. All disagreements will occur behind closed doors and settled face to face by the coaches involved. Only regular coaching staff will attend any coaches' meeting. No coach will second guess another coach in any manner, either through words or facial expressions. Tactical ideas will always be presented in a spirit of constructive suggestion, never as a criticism of someone's else ideas. Each coach will examine his own areas for improvement rather than focusing on what he perceives to be someone else's inadequacies.
- 2. Coaches will be positive about and supportive of all players and promote that attitude in each player. At all times, including during games, any statements or attitudes will demonstrate confidence in all players and player groups (offense, defense, line, backs, etc.). There will be no negative statements, sarcasm, or cynicism. Coaches will not have pet players or players they are down on. Everyone will be treated fairly. Coaches evaluate players only for what they do on the practice and game field, not for any inadequacies they might otherwise have. Personnel is never discussed with other players unless the statement is positive. No statements that question commitment, guts, or the decisions of another player will be made in front of other players. Matters concerning players arriving late, violating the dress code, or committing other infractions will be handled privately by the head coach. Coaches always show poise, and they instill poise in their players. The head coach sets the pregame and halftime tone most effective for the situation, and this is the tone throughout the locker room. Coaches never lose sight of the fact that the players are the game. Each player will be treated with respect and as



Demonstrate your coaching philosophy by being supportive of your players and inviting them to buy in to your system.

an individual. Correcting players will always be done in a positive manner. If a player thinks he can do it, has been told he can do it, and been reaffirmed that he can do it, he will do it. Players must be so well-schooled in fundamentals that they are free to execute at an emotional high without fear of making a mistake or being ridiculed. Inconsistent play is caused by mental, not physical, breakdowns. We constantly strive to improve our ability to coach the mental and emotional.

**3.** Coaches will be professional; they will be a credit to the coaching profession. There is no swearing or chewing tobacco around players. Coaches never get in verbal confrontations or say anything negative to any opposing coach or player. Coaches respect every opponent but are in awe of none. Coaches can't make statements, even among themselves, about beating

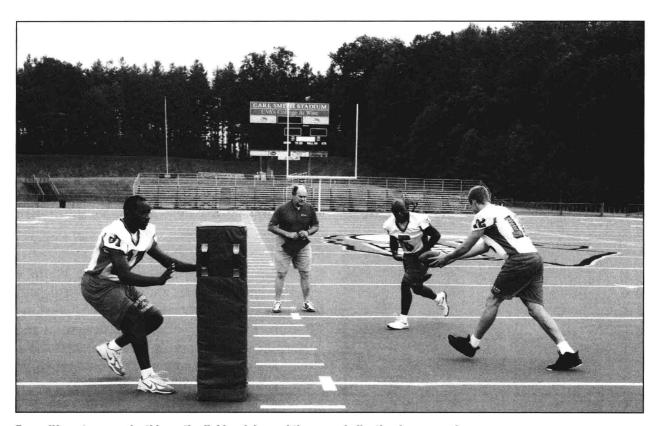
a team 50 to 0 and still feel respect for that opponent. We always prepare to win the game at hand. Coaches and players refrain from talking about future opponents. It's easier to focus on the current opponent and do a better job of coaching if the current opponent is the only one we talk about.

- **4.** Coaches must be very emotional and totally enthusiastic about coaching but always in complete control of their emotions. The best coaching decisions can be made only when both feet are on the ground and the coach is thinking clearly.
- **5.** Coaches coach the total player. We take players to their limits and saturate them with positive motivation as we work to develop total dominance on the football field. Xs and Os and technique are important, but we always strive to be the best at coaching the mind. Motivated players are successful players.

#### Communication and Leadership

If you are a coach, team captain, or a leader in some other respect, show your leadership by how you lead your life, through the example you set both on and off the field. If you are a head coach, you know that everyone else is watching you for indications of how to behave. If you are a team leader, you know that your attitude on the field is going to influence the rest of the team. Remember that communication and leadership are not limited to the words you speak. Your facial expressions and the way you listen also communicate and demonstrate your leadership. If you are a coach, when you say your door is always open, is it really? It might be physically open, but is the atmosphere conducive to players coming to you with questions, suggestions, and possible alternatives?

Great leaders demonstrate a strong work ethic, are approachable, enjoy what they do, and get others involved.



Exemplify a strong work ethic on the field and demand the same dedication from your players.

#### Demonstrate a Strong Work Ethic

You can't be a clock watcher and be successful. Make sure what you do is productive work, not just putting in time. But also be careful not to become a workaholic. Burnout is common in all vocations. You have to find the right mix of work and relaxation. I've seen too many coaches and athletes who thought that if working 8 hours a day, 5 days a week made them good, then working 16 hours a day, 7 days a week could make them great. Nothing is further from the truth. I've seen workaholics lose their marriages, experience breakdowns in communication with their families, and ultimately not like themselves. When on the field or in the office, work hard and efficiently, but always make time for your family and yourself.

#### Be Approachable

Create an environment that encourages players and coaches to come to you with problems

and suggestions. Particularly if you are a coach or want to be one someday, you need to work on developing relationships in ways that make people want to come to you and involve you in what is going on in their lives, rather than feeling that they must go to you but don't really want to. Even if you are the head coach, remember that this is not your program—it is everyone's program. Make it clear that you feel you are there for your players or teammates, not that they are there for you.

#### Have Fun

Playing and coaching football should be fun. Players and coaches must enjoy doing what they are doing. Some people think that to have effective discipline you have to be serious 100 percent of the time and that you can never let your guard down. But the truth is, the more you let others see the human side of you, the more respect they'll have for you. Your players

or teammates must know that you can have a good time and laugh, even at yourself, and not take yourself too seriously. If something funny happens during practice, feel free to laugh and kid with each other, as long as it remains positive and is never sarcastic, cynical, or malicious.

Over the years, our program has come up with many ways to keep things fun. A long day of practice makes everyone hungry, so as you might expect, much of our fun involves food. The first night players are in camp, we end the day with hot dogs, chips, and a sundae bar. Each night during summer camp, we feed them before they go to bed. We do this for several reasons: we don't want players running around town to get something to eat, we realize that some players can't afford to buy food, and we want to show them that we're going to take care of them. Each night it's something different-pizza, chicken, subs, donuts and milk, hot dogs and chips, brownies, fresh fruit, cookies—all donated from people and businesses in the community. After the final practice of summer camp, we have watermelon brought onto the practice field.

During summer camp practices, we routinely stop practice and get the squad together for some kind of team event. We might divide the squad into groups and have a trivia quiz in which all the questions are about people in the football program. We might hold a homerun derby or relay or play volleyball, softball, dodgeball, tug-of-war, crab soccer, or rugby with a big ball. We might have linemen pass to the quarterbacks and kickers, hold challenge sprints, run made-up plays with linemen in skill positions and backs on the line, pass to linemen in sprints, or chase and catch in a big circle. The objective is always to promote team unity and a positive attitude while relaxing and having fun.

By the fourth day of summer camp, players are really hurting. They ache in every muscle and are sore in places they didn't even know they had muscles. So during summer camp, usually on the fourth day of practice, we call off evening practice and have a pool party. This is a great pick-me-up for players and coaches. Everyone is required to get in the pool, which invariably leads to all sorts of water games.

Friday night at the end of summer camp is our Talent Night. Every player must be involved in some kind of talent, either solo or as a member of a group not to exceed four players. We try to promote real talent because many players have gifts for singing, playing an instrument, acting, writing, and so on. But even without a special talent, kids enjoy this night. We have judges who rate each performance from 1 to 10. A coach acts as the master of ceremonies, and we award prizes to the top three acts. Afterward we have subs, cake, and drinks for everyone.

Following our last regular-season practice, we have Senior Day. Each senior gets three punts for distance, his last block against the underclassman of his choice, and his last tackle against an underclassman. We make this ceremony a big, emotional deal. The entire squad and coaching staff form a circle around the senior performing his block or tackle to cheer and clap for him. We finish by hoisting each senior into the air and carrying him off the field.

#### Get Others Involved

If I expect support for our sport from the school and community, I believe it is imperative that we support a wide variety of activities. This means encouraging athletes and coaches to cheer for the other sports and attend their games. Coaches encourage players to use all their abilities by participating in activities such as singing in the chorus, participating in musicals and plays, or running for campus government. I tell my squad that if they have abilities off the field to use them, not waste them. I want our students, staff, faculty, and administration to see our players assuming leadership roles in a variety of ways.

As a coach, I want my players to excel in the classroom. For players with unacceptable GPAs, we hold a mandatory study hall. We also provide tutoring in any course for any player who demonstrates a need. When a player lets us know he is having trouble in a class, we immediately put him in touch with a tutor. We want to reinforce positive performance both on and off the field. Our faculty at UVA-Wise has been excellent about getting in touch with us if a player misses a class or does poorly on a test. In my 11 years here, only one player who used all four years of eligibility failed to graduate.

If you're a coach working with junior high or high school players, I suggest a mandatory study hall during the season before the start of school and, during the off-season, either before school or immediately after school. Provide tutors for those who need help, and closely monitor the study hall to ensure students are there to study.

As head coach, it is also important for me to be active in community clubs, activities, and church. At work, I take part in faculty meetings, committees, and activities, and I visit with faculty and show an interest in their expertise, projects, and demonstrations. I talk with them about their principal interests and involve as many of them as possible in our football program. There are many ways to contribute. A math teacher might help with statistics, a public-speaking teacher might be our PA announcer, a computer science instructor might run our message center, and someone in audiovisual might video our games for us.

As a team, we participate in community service. One year our entire squad helped build a special playground for an elementary school. At the end of our last spring practice, still in uniform, we pick up trash along the roads. In December we have a benefit basketball game that features our squad against members of the local media. The price of admission is the donation of canned goods, toys, or clothes to give to the shelter for abused spouses and children. As a squad, we make sure we have 100 percent participation in school clean-up days. We encourage our older players to visit area schools to talk about saying no to alcohol and

drugs. My fellow coaches and I also visit local schools to discuss the tough decisions students must make in choosing their careers.

#### Commitment and Accountability

We expect commitment and accountability of every person involved in our football program. This begins with our school's administration. Making provisions for an experienced and committed coaching staff and granting the head coach freedom to fill his staff with coaches who share his philosophy are concrete examples of an administration's intent on excellence. Outfitting every player with the best in protective equipment is another example of a committed and accountable administration. If your team plays in a conference, all the schools in the conference should be similar in size. values, and resources. There should be a sense of mutual respect among schools along with a development of intense but friendly rivalries.

The coaching staff must commit to doing all in their power to field the most competitive team possible. They are accountable to the people who hired them. They should be involved in their community, conference, and national organizations, taking a leadership role when possible. Coaches should continue to educate themselves in the profession, whether in their first or their 41st year of coaching. By attending clinics and conventions, visiting college spring practices and professional camps, and reading books and magazines, they should stay abreast of the Xs and Os and all the innovations in the game. They should know the rule book intimately and be familiar with any rule changes so they can relay these to the rest of the team.

When players become a part of a football program, they make a commitment. There is a big difference between a decision and a commitment. A commitment includes taking responsibility. These players are now accountable to their teammates, their coaching staff,

and their institution. They understand that they are under a microscope and that everything they do and say can affect the program.

#### **Program Resources**

All football programs must ensure they have the resources they require to be competitive on the field. Essential resources include staff, budget, and equipment.

#### Staff

All teams in a conference or league should have a similar number of assistant coaches, athletic trainers, equipment managers, and weight coaches. In junior high and some high school programs, some of these positions will be covered by coaches performing double duty. These positions are essential. The on-the-field coaching and off-the-field relationships these staff members develop with players will have a positive impact on every individual on the team and bring success to the program.

A coaching staff should surround itself with successful and loyal individuals who are knowledgeable in what they do. These individuals should be "people persons" who care deeply about the players they serve. They must understand the tremendous impact they can have on the lives of these individuals. They must understand that they are working with the total person, not only the athlete. If you are a coach, tell your staff members that you chose to surround yourself with them because you know they understand that mediocrity in the work force will yield mediocre results, and you are not interested in mediocre results.

One of the most important members of a football squad is its team trainer, who must be a certified expert in his field. I have always tried to work with trainers who work diligently at injury prevention, are cautious in their evaluation of injuries, are aggressive in their treatments, and are extremely strict in players' compliance with treatment times. Decisions on when athletes are healthy enough to return to

action are medical matters, and I always let the experts handle them.

#### Budget

Another resource all programs must consider is their financial budget. Especially at the college level, if a program is going to be able to hire qualified coaches, they must have enough money to attract the kind of individuals they want to coach their team. Very few programs at any level can provide a budget that allows coaches to purchase everything they need, but the budget must always permit a team to put each player in high-quality protective gear. Coaches need to be able to tell the parents of players that their sons will be outfitted in the best helmets and shoulder pads available. These items should never be skimped on. If a program can't afford to safely equip their players, they can't afford to field a football team. There must also be enough in the budget to outfit every player in the program. Having players stand around, waiting for gear while others are practicing, even for one day, does not reflect positively on a program.

For game jerseys and pants, I have always kept the same design from year to year. In doing so I avoid the major expense of buying new jerseys and pants for the entire team. Each year I buy two dozen new, which gives us a complete cycle every four years, avoiding a gigantic expense all at one time.

#### Equipment

Teams must have up-to-date field equipment, including sleds and dummies and punting, passing, and kicking machines that permit coaches to train athletes at a level competitive with opponents. An option for programs with limited funds is to visit universities or professional teams and ask for used field equipment they are planning to replace.

Other expensive but very important equipment includes the components required for video breakdown. Current video technology enables teams to instantly recall plays on a

monitor or to compile a DVD of hundreds of offensive plays or defensive stunts, extremely helpful both for self-scouting and for scouting opponents. Teams can see their own tendencies that must be broken or tendencies of an opponent that will help in preparing their game plan. Video equipment is expensive but should not be considered a frill. This equipment is essential for teams to compete each week. In a pinch, teams with small budgets might ask someone with an interest in video to film their practices and games using a home video camera. This will require more time to break

down tendencies but can be done at little to no expense.

The primary principles discussed in this chapter are being positive and having discipline. The two go hand in hand. As a coach, absolutely nothing will prevent me from being positive. Because I am disciplined, I adhere to the philosophy of completely controlling everything I have the ability to control and not wasting time or energy worrying about things beyond my control. I set this example for everyone around me and teach them through my speech and actions to do the same.

# Personnel and Position Assignments

waluating the abilities of coaches and players and assessing how their skills will best fit a team is a challenge for all football programs, but these decisions are among the most important a head coach will make. They might be the difference between a successful season and a disappointing season. Part of the decision-making process is determining who the positive leaders are and who might become leaders, and then putting these individuals in positions to maximize their skills both on and off the field. The head coach needs to determine who has the self-discipline to put his team on his back and carry it through the difficult and demanding times that occur in every season. The coaching staff works with these individuals and gives them responsibilities of leadership, understanding that they will lead as their personalities dictate—some vocally and others through their actions.

#### **Coaching Staff Essentials**

On a coaching staff, there is no substitute for loyalty. You must have two-directional loyalty throughout your staff. Loyalty is more important than any other trait. When looking to fill a coaching vacancy, many head coaches think mainly of the candidate's knowledge of the Xs and Os in the area of his expertise. Although knowledge and expertise are extremely important, they are teachable. It's much harder, and maybe impossible in some cases, to teach loyalty, character, professionalism, and integrity. But these are essential ingredients if your program is going to pass the test of time and succeed long term.

Lack of loyalty can quickly tear a staff, and ultimately a program, apart. Disloyalty can be detected in several ways. It might not show itself in negative talk. It might be seen in what is left unsaid or in the look on someone's face. When a head coach suspects a staff member of disloyalty, he should communicate with him as quickly as he can. He should pull him aside and make sure they understand each other. Sometimes what appears to be disloyalty is simply miscommunication. Head coaches should be fair, but also trust their instincts. Disloyalty must be dealt with immediately, before it infects a team.

When I say that loyalty is of prime importance to a coaching staff, I do not mean to minimize the value of one's knowledge of the game. That said, I remember that Bo Schembechler at Michigan used to routinely change staff members' on-the-field coaching duties every few years because he felt it was good to learn something new and that this would invigorate the coaches, who in turn would get players excited about a new coach at their position.

Regardless of the title given to each coach, there must be a well-delineated hierarchy of responsibility. Table 2.1 shows an example of how duties can be assigned to assistant coaches. This is fairly easily done in the areas of offense and defense but much more difficult for special teams.

To take advantage of coaching expertise, consider having most, if not all, coaches participate in teaching each special team. Whether there is one special-teams coordinator or a different coach in charge of each special team, break down every unit so that each coach is in charge of a small number of players. Don't have players standing around watching while a special-team unit is practicing. Because offensive linemen are not usually involved in many kicking game practices, keep these players together with their offensive line coach to practice offensive line drills while the rest of the team works on special teams. The same can be said for quarterbacks and many wide receivers. Keep them busy with meaningful drills. To emphasize to their squads how vital it is to have good special-teams play, some head coaches assume responsibility for their special teams and include Special-Teams Coordinator as part of their title. Game-day responsibility should include having each kicking team gather at the 50-yard line around the coordinator with each coach responsible for substitution just as he is for offensive or defensive group substitution.

On game day, coaches should be selected to view the game from the press box. These coaches must have the ability to analyze Xs and Os as well as individual performance. They must be able to inform sideline coaches, who have the worst vantage point in the stadium, when players employ the wrong technique or fall short of expectations and ways to counter the defensive and offensive looks being used by the opponent. If a team has few assistants, the best assistant should be in the press box. If there's only one assistant, he shouldn't be on the sideline; he needs to be where he can see alignments and spacings. He is the eyes of the head coach, and it is vital that he communicates well. The head coach should spend considerable time with this assistant prior to game day, describing exactly what information he wants from him and teaching him where to train his eyes when the ball is snapped. The assistant should be supplied with forms to complete so that at halftime the head coach can get the information he needs to make adjustments for the second half.

All coaches have to deal with a variety of people in public, so they need to have engaging personalities. They must be motivators and be able to relate to the players they coach. Although the head coach makes final disciplinary decisions, each coach must himself be a disciplinarian and accept nothing less than constant improvement and striving for perfection in how the player plays his position. An exceptional coach will not be a clock watcher. He will work tirelessly to prepare his players and get the best execution possible out of each player under his care.

Coaches must be effective recruiters. For high school coaches, this means recruiting potential athletes out of the hallway or

#### TABLE 2.1 Primary Responsibilities for Assistant Coaches

Assistant coach	Primary duties
Offensive line coach	<ol> <li>Coordinate the interior offensive line.</li> <li>Work with special teams: extra point/field goal interior offensive line, shotgun punt interior offensive line.</li> <li>Prepare offensive 9 vs. 7 practice scripts.</li> <li>Break down opponent video.</li> <li>Work with equipment manager.</li> </ol>
Receivers coach	<ol> <li>Coordinate the wide receivers.</li> <li>Work with special teams: extra point/field goal holder and kicker, hands team (LE, LH, RH, RE), shotgun punt punter, semispread punt punter, spread punt punter.</li> <li>Prepare offensive 7 vs. 7 practice scripts.</li> <li>Break down opponent video.</li> <li>Break down own team's offensive tendencies.</li> </ol>
Running backs coach	<ol> <li>Coordinate the offensive backs.</li> <li>Work with special teams: kickoff reception (LH, RH, FB, S), kickoff coverage (5, 6, 7), hands team (FB, S).</li> <li>Break down opponent video</li> <li>Record helmet awards for offense and special teams.</li> <li>Work with athletic trainer.</li> <li>Break down opponent's defensive tendencies.</li> </ol>
Secondary coach	<ol> <li>Coordinate the defensive backs.</li> <li>Work with special teams: kickoff coverage (H, S, K), hands team (LT, LG, C, RG, RT), Oskie (K, S, H), extra point/field goal defense (LC, RC, free, SS), punt coverage (gunners and wings for spread; ends for semispread; wide receivers for shotgun).</li> <li>Prepare defensive 7 vs. 7 practice scripts.</li> <li>Break down opponent video.</li> <li>Break down own team's defensive tendencies.</li> </ol>
Defensive line coach	<ol> <li>Coordinate the defensive line.</li> <li>Work with special teams: kickoff coverage (2, 3, 4), kickoff return (LT, LG, C, RG, RT), Oskie (5, 6, 7, 8), extra point/field goal defense (LT, LE, RT, RE), punt defense defensive line, punt coverage for spread.</li> <li>Prepare defensive 9 vs. 7 practice scripts.</li> <li>Break down opponent video.</li> <li>Break down opponent's offensive tendencies.</li> </ol>
Linebacker coach	<ol> <li>Coordinate the inside and outside linebackers.</li> <li>Work with special teams: kickoff coverage (1, 8), kickoff return (LE, RE), Oskie (1, 2, 3, 4), extra point/field goal defense (S, M, W), punt defense (S, M, W), punt coverage (interior five for spread and semispread, TE for shotgun).</li> <li>Break down opponent video.</li> <li>Record helmet awards for defense and special teams.</li> </ol>