

# Teaching Your Receivers to Block with the Best

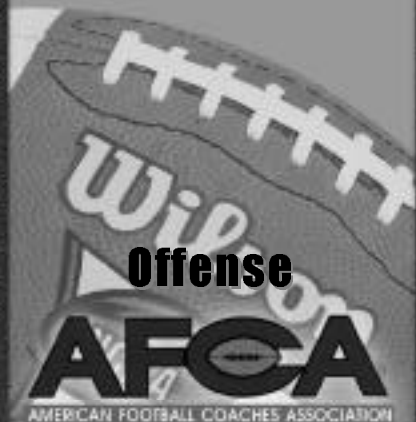


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I want to thank the AFCA for allowing me to be a part of the *Summer Manual* series. I have always enjoyed the articles that coaches have submitted and look forward to reading more great articles and keep up with my constant education in this great lifestyle. I hope you are able to take something from our program and use it in your program.

We here at Washington and Lee stress blocking for various and obvious reasons. Many times receivers are taught to "run the DB off." This not only takes away a potential tackler, but a potential blocker as well. We have also done a brief study concerning leading tacklers on a defense and we have found that the safety is usually one of the top three leading tacklers on the team and the cornerbacks are usually somewhere near the eighth or ninth on the team. Therefore, we decided to make blocking one of our points of emphasis with our receivers.

When teaching blocking to your receivers there are a few key concepts that you must stress. These concepts set the foundation for teaching how to block and will always be there as a future reference and guide for both coaches and receivers.

Attitude, technique and pride are the fundamental concepts to teach before actually teaching to block. The receiver must have the attitude that will enable him to dominate the defender; he must believe that he is better than the man in front of him. If he is not confident of this, he will play timid and he will not be able to reach his full potential. He must believe in his technique and his ability to use it. If he should miss a block, he will have to know that his technique is sound. He can rely on it and not have to adjust anything. He must also have pride in executing the best block on the field and that it was an important part of the play. Receivers who do not have pride in their blocks will typically jog off the line of scrimmage.

These concepts will help lay the foundation for effective blocking in your receivers.

## Attitude

Attitude should be the first concept taught to all football players. A football player cannot excel if he does not believe that he can do what is needed when it is needed. Blocking is not something that is resigned to the offensive line and running-backs. Typically, the three leading tacklers on the defense are the free safety, middle

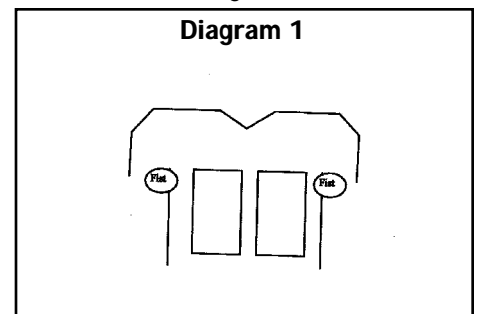
linebacker and an alley player (rover, strong safety or outside linebacker). Ensuring that the defensive backfield is blocked can turn multiple eight yard + gains into points. The receiver's block is essential and should be viewed as such. A "pancake" block by a receiver should be worth as much attention and admiration as one from an offensive lineman. Here at W&L, we keep a chart of "pancake" blocks and acknowledge them to the team in a team meeting. If the receiver is looking for a dominating block and believes he can do it, it will happen more times than not.

## Technique

The technique for downfield blocking is similar to that used by the offensive lineman. The main difference is the "break-down." The "break down" is used to slow a blocker down and square his shoulders to the defender. If the defender is downfield, the receiver will have to attack him from a sprint. When "breaking down," the receiver will bring his feet from a running position (feet inside the frame of the body and in stride) to one of having the feet almost parallel and a little more than shoulder width apart. The knees will be bent enough so that the receiver's pad level is lower than the defenders. Emphasis should be placed on the bend in the knees and not the hips. The hands will be out in front of the chest approximately four inches from the body with the elbows down and the thumbs up. The head will be up and the eyes will be watching the defender's chest.

After the "breakdown," the receiver will close the distance between he and the defender, or the "cushion," to a distance no more than an arm length away. When closing the cushion, it is imperative that the receiver's pad level is lower than the defenders. When the receiver can reach the defender's chest, he will attempt to step on the defender's big toe.

**Diagram 1**



**Coaching Point:** This will enable the receiver to keep his feet inside the defender's and obtain an attacking posture. If the

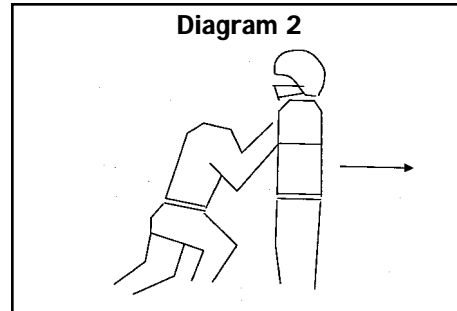
receiver should step on the defender's big toe, the lockout and drive should be easier to accomplish.

Simultaneously with the step, the receiver will thrust both of his hands into the defender's chest in a punching manner, ensuring that the thumbs are up and the elbows are pointed down. The strike of the hands is done with the heel of the hand.

**Coaching Point:** It is very important to have the thumbs up so that the elbows do not point out away from the body. The elbows should point down with the arms bent. Having the fingers up and elbows out is a sure way to have the block defeated by the defender with a "swim" or "rip" move.

Once the hands are in contact with the breastplate of the shoulder pads, the receiver can then have his fingers on the sides of the breastplate. This should look as if the receiver is grasping a steering wheel of a car. The hands should be in front of the facemask to ensure proper pad level. When the receiver has control of the defender's breastplate or "steering wheel," he can control the body position of the defender through pushing on one side of the breastplate or the other, always keep-

ing the defender's shoulders in front of his own. Once the receiver has proper pad level and control of the defender's breastplate, he can drive the defender backward or to one side until the defender falls on his back or "pancakes."



**Note:** the rule of holding applies if the receiver's hands are outside of the frame of his body or pulling on the defender. If the receiver feels he is losing the defender and his hands are outside the frame of his own body, he releases his hands and re-sets the feet to get the body in a better position.

**Coaching Point:** Using a "popsicle" sled works well to simulate the open field blocking. Have the receiver run up to the sled, break down, assume a good blocking posture and drive the sled. If the receiver

has good technique, he will be able to drive the sled wherever he wants. If the technique is not correct, the sled will pull away.

### Pride

The last fundamental of blocking is pride. This is instilled through recognition by the coaches for a great block. A receiver should be awarded, as an offensive lineman is, for "pancake," or essential blocks. Although blocking is a requirement for a receiver, great blocks should be rewarded as extra effort. The same as a missed block should be graded as a missed assignment.

When teaching attitude, technique and pride make sure that the receiver knows the importance of each fundamental. Even if the method of each of these is different, pertaining to your offensive philosophy, these core fundamentals can be used to fall back on and reiterated what you have taught to your receivers and help them play at a higher level. Believing that he is better than the man in front of him, his technique is sound and works and that he will have something to be proud of will make a previously monotonous task of blocking into one that your receivers will want to do.

## Caution Your Team About Player Agents

A problem for all coaches is the proliferation of agents and would-be agents who seek to make agreements with players prior to the completion of their eligibility. The activity of these people has increased, and it is imperative that all of the consequences of making an agreement with an agent are known by your players.

Contact with players by agents almost always is done without the knowledge of the coach. Some agents openly admit they will continue to make contacts and agreements with players before their final season has been completed.

This could lead to forfeiture of games. Some agents are advising players not to risk injury by playing. Your players must be warned about this problem. Do it more than once.