

Quarterbacking: The Georgetown College Way



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It's wonderful to have the opportunity to be a contributor to the AFCA *Summer Manual*. I am very grateful to the AFCA and hope that I can provide some valuable information as it pertains to quarterbacking techniques and the Georgetown College offense.

A great deal of what I have learned over the years about our offense and quarterback play has come from Stewart "Red" Faught. He is now retired but spent a number of years as the head coach at Franklin College in Indiana and then finishing with Georgetown College in the early 1990s. I owe him and many others a great deal.

The basic premise of our offense is to spread the field with four receivers so that we may isolate a defender or go two against one. Our two base sets are the "Run and Shoot" and what we call our "Orange" formation (Diagrams 1 and 2). Regardless of our alignment, we are in a "score now" mentality in which we will look to throw the ball first. This means that our quarterback is going to play a tremendous role in what we are able to accomplish offensively.

Diagram 1: Run and Shoot

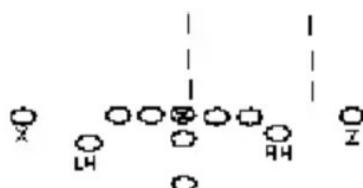
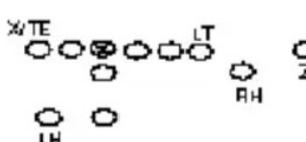


Diagram 2: Orange



Traits of a Quarterback

Be a Good Person: I know it sounds so generic but it is an essential. It gives a player instant credibility and trust with his teammates and coaches, along with promoting self-confidence. The character of the quarterback will have a big influence on the team.

Be Perceived By Others as a "Winner": This type of guy is charismatic. Others want to be around him to see what his reaction is in certain competitive or non-

competitive situations because he will find a way to be successful. He hates to lose and will find a way to win.

Good Decision Maker: The passing game usually requires him to make decisions based on a defender's reaction to our scheme. It seems pretty simple, but within there must be confidence in the system and himself. I think it also takes a courageous person to be good at this, someone that kind of enjoys having to make a crucial decision with the football at a critical time (third down, two-minute, red zone, coming out ... etc.).

Preparation and Poise: I combined these two traits because I wanted to use our quarterback, Eddie Eviston, as an example. He is one of the most poised players I have ever coached. In his three years as a starter, he is 41-1, played for three NAIA championships and won two. He has also been a three time conference and national player of the year during his tenure. You would think all that time coaching him I could have screwed him up at least one year!

Regardless, it didn't make any difference to him if we were up by seven or down by seven, if it was first and 10 on our own twenty or fourth and goal on the opponent's five. He always remained calm, focused, and confident in himself, his teammates and in many times, the outcome.

Preparing with a sense of urgency throughout the week was another big factor. Every throw and every rep had value to him. My approach with all the quarterbacks is to try to improve on something each day (knowledge, technique, footwork ... etc.). It takes a tremendous amount of focus and discipline to accomplish this. Maybe it can't happen every single day, but buying into that approach has great rewards.

Ability to Throw Accurately: If our quarterback is not accurate we had better look to the next guy or figure out another way to move the ball. After the decision making has occurred, this is the most important part of quarterbacking. I firmly believe that an average quarterback in our offense should complete at least 55 percent of his passes, given the variety of throws we will ask to be attempted. This past season our starting quarterback completed nearly 70 percent of his passes. There is no question that being a three year starter, having dependable receivers and a good offensive line played a role in his completion percentage. I would also say that continually trying

to improve fundamentals and keeping the offensive scheme consistent during his career were as equally important.

Completion percentage is always one of the first things I try to evaluate after the game through the use of statistics and film. Consider things such as: receiver drops, not taking a loss with incompletion, sacks or pressures, scrambles, poor weather, number of long ball attempts, screens attempted, third down percentage, and other factors that may not show up on the stat sheet.

Short List to Develop Accuracy in Quarterbacks

Be a Master of Good Technique: Must be obsessed with delivering the ball in any given situation with sound technique (Spiral, proper trajectory, footwork/balance).

Throw High Percentage Passes in Your Offense: Standing targets and screens are great confidence builders and easy throws. Also, I always keep a list of each of our quarterback's top ten favorite pass plays to use if he is struggling and especially if the backup is in.

Knowledge of Opponent's Defense: We both need to be on the same page as to what type of tools we feel will be effective against our opponent's style of defense. Generally discuss the overall strengths and weaknesses as it pertains to game planning.

Developing the Quarterback During the Week

There are a number of ways to work on the quarterback's fundamentals as it relates to throwing the football. I would now like to share some of my favorite drills I have incorporated into our program from an individual, group and offensive unit perspective that is oriented toward quarterback development. Every day we start from the ground to moving our feet to working with groups and then to working with the team, while trying to maintain a consistency in technique as we throw. The idea in starting on the ground (seated, one knee, two knees) is to really focus and evaluate fragments of the players delivery from the waist up. I will then start to get the feet involved so that we can develop efficient footwork and create a "feel" for how the entire body works in the delivery through a variety of drops and scrambles. Whenever the group or team session begins the focus primarily shifts to decisions and timing.

One Knee High Ball: Have two quarterbacks facing each other about five to seven yards apart with their throwing side knee down on the ground. One quarterback will then take the football in his throwing arm and elevate the football so that the elbow is slightly above his shoulder and the ball has been turned so that the front nose is pointed away from the target. We want to hold this position for just a count to get a feel for the opposite shoulder being pointed directly at the target; the football is clearly above and away from the head, as we deliver the upper body rotates so that the arm just feels like a "whip" extending off the shoulder. Exaggerating the ball height and extension away from the body will hopefully expand a comfort zone mentally for the quarterback in developing a good high release and also develop smoothness in using the upper body rotation. I like to use this drill right before I let them use both hands from the same one knee position.

Bring the Hips: At this point of our warm-up we are starting to get the feet involved. This is one of my favorite things to work on because a quarterback can get a feel for how much power is involved in the hips that transfers into arm strength, preventing an over-stride, and perfecting the use of various trajectories when throwing. Have two quarterbacks start about 10 yards apart facing each other preferably with their feet behind a line. The passer will stand as if he is at the end of his drop ready to throw. What I am looking for here is if the shoulder is pointed at the target and the ball has been pushed back close to the arm pit by the off hand. The quarterback should also have more weight on his toes with his feet just inside his shoulders. I let them patter (slightly buzz) their feet a little if they want to before they throw because it's a major part of the rest of our drops. From this position we throw the football, hopefully with a good high release but also very efficiently. No wasted motion, everything stays high and going forward.

If the quarterback was standing behind a line with his front foot, all he would need to do is pick up the front toe, get it pointed in the direction of his target as delivery begins and then transfer his weight from back to front. After the throw, I want to make sure that the back hip has crossed the line. A general rule about over-striding is that if you don't feel like your nose is over the top of your front toe after the throw,

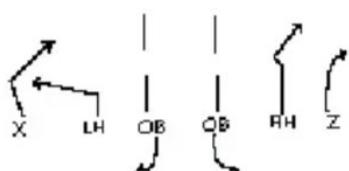
then you have over-strided. It also means that a big step in the delivery typically brings the throwing elbow down causing a low release.

The second part of this drill is varying the distance and trajectory of the throws you ask of the passers. I am constantly mixing this up because no two throws are ever the same in a game situation. Every quarterback I have ever coached likes golf, so we always use our various "clubs" from different distances to work our trajectory. If he doesn't like golf we move him to another position. Just kidding.

For instance, I may say let's get 25 yards apart and use our five iron for "x" amount of throws. That means I want medium trajectory. Next, I may tell them to use their pitching wedge (more arc) or three wood for throws that have to be delivered on a straight line. I never tell them to use the "driver" because I am not very good with mine yet.

Rights and Lefts: This is most commonly used out of our run-and-shoot set with the quarterbacks, wingbacks and wide receivers on both sides (Diagram 3). Split the quarterbacks up with one group going to the right hash and the other to the left hash. If you are a wingback or wide receiver you go to your side hash. We don't flop either position so if you are on the right side you go to the right hash. The quarterback then instructs the wingback what play he wants run. This forces both positions to recall the proper route to be executed along with the drop for the passer. The play is executed, now it's the wide receiver and the next quarterback's turn. All three positions will vary their alignment according to the play. Be sure and have both sides going at the same time to get more reps. Once we feel like we've got a good understanding of the drill and our plays we will try to go against our defensive backs. I think doing this helps players learn the offense and improve timing of individual cuts between the quarterback and receivers (on air and versus man to man).

Diagram 3: Rights and Lefts



Both sides throwing — One position at a time

Eleven on Four, Seven, Eight: This is probably my favorite thing we do to help the quarterback develop poise in the pocket along with working on our different protections versus various fronts. We set this up like a team pass "pro" session against our number one defensive line. The offense (11 players) will run their pass plays against a pass rush, usually four defensive lineman. Start the drill early in the season against just four defensive lineman and then gradually add defenders at the second level (no corners) as the season progresses. The offense and the defense want to go through this at game speed but try to avoid taking anybody to the ground. Once we have covered our base protections on one hash the ball is moved to the other. The goal of this drill is to improve and evaluate your protections against different defensive alignments and movements, pass play review with the offense, and improve pocket awareness of the quarterback.

I am extremely honored to have had the opportunity to talk about the drills we have



Georgetown College's Eddie Eviston quarterbacked the Tigers to 41 wins in 42 starts during his career. Georgetown played in three NAIA national championship games and won two titles under his leadership.

used as a part of our offense to improve quarterback play. I hope that you are able to incorporate at least one concept into the

overall scheme of your offense. If any further discussion is needed please feel free to contact me at Georgetown College.

“Smash Mouth” Football, Similar Terms, Should Not Be in a Coach’s Vocabulary

Hard-nosed, maybe, but “smash-mouth” football is not how competent football coaches refer to their game. Football is a contact game, but terms that reflect brutality and violence do not belong in a coach’s vocabulary.

Image is one reason to clean up slang terms like smash-mouth that have become popular in the media, but a more compelling reason comes from a legal standpoint. In a courtroom, descriptive terms are used against coaches and the game.

Don’t hesitate to ask your fellow coaches, student-athletes and especially the media who cover your team to cooperate and refrain from using overly-descriptive terms that reflect poorly on the game and your profession.