

## HINTS FOR THE BACKFIELD

Some of the fundamentals all backs should master are stance, starting, driving and ability to use interference to the best advantage, holding and carrying the ball, catching or receiving the ball, passing, kicking, blocking, tackling in the open field and backing up the line, pass defense, side-stepping, twisting, stiff-arming, changing pace, handling the ball and ability to fall relaxed.

Stance There are two different stances: the crouch and the semi-standing. In both the weight is on the balls of the feet, which should be spread and parallel. In the standing stance, the hands rest on the knees, or one hand may act as a balance on the ground with the other elbow on the knee and the hand outstretched.

Starting The position is not changed at the time of starting. The eyes should be glued on the ball, with no weight on the heels and no leaning or other indicators. When receiving a direct pass from center, a back less than five yards from the line of scrimmage should step off with the nearest foot in the direction he is going. If more than five yards from the line of scrimmage, he should use a cross-over step, starting with the far foot, and receive the ball on the second step. This difference in timing puts a back in good position to receive the ball at both distances. When leading interference, the cross-over start is usually considered the best.

Receiving the Ball The direct pass from center naturally places a heavier burden on the center. For short passes such as are used in close formation, the end-over-end pass is the easier for the backs to handle. For long passes used in punt formation, the spiral pass is the faster and therefore the better. The force and lead are regulated by the length of the pass and the speed of the back. In general, close formation passes should be soft floaters, and long passes should be as hard and fast as possible. In receiving any direct pass from center, the back should never take his eyes off the ball until it is caught. The ball should be caught in the hands and then tucked away properly.

For the indirect pass used in the spinner plays, the quarterback or number 3 back should get the ball to the backs as fast as possible. For close plays he should shove it up into the stomach of the buckler, keeping contact with it until the back has full control. For this type of play the runner need not concentrate on getting the ball but on where he is going. His elbow and forearm nearest the quarterback should be raised so that he can place the ball underneath. Both arms should then be clamped on the ball until clear of the line.

Carrying the Ball The ball should be carried in the arm farthest from tacklers. In general this will be the arm toward the side line the runner will be nearing. It should be held with both hands whenever the runner is thrown to the ground.

Side-Stepping and Stiff-Arming In any of the methods of side-stepping the use of the stiff-arm is very important. The stiff-arm to be of any value must have the arm extended and locked at the time of contact. Common faults in stiff-arming are as follows: arm down and back instead of up and forward, arm bent at the time of contact instead of locked, and missing the tackler with the heel of the hand because of taking the eyes of his headguard.

There are several methods of side-stepping, any one of which is considered good:

1. Push off with the near foot as the stiff-arm is delivered, taking a wide diagonal stride to the side and drawing the hips away. This may be followed by a pivot.
2. Cross over with the near leg, drawing the hips away. This may be followed by a further diagonal stride as explained in 1 above.
3. Pivot or spin - push off backward with the near foot, turning on the outside one and stiff-arming at the same time. As the body comes around, drive forward low, taking advantage of all momentum. In making the turn, throw the hip into the tackler if he breaks through the stiff-arm.
4. Weave - A weaving run made by swinging the hips and drawing them away from the tackler. The feet should be well spread when approaching a tackler

any side-stepping method. The ball-carrier should appear to be going as fast as he can, then put on a burst of speed just before he reaches the tackler to throw him out of time. It is also found that if a back gives the appearance of giving up, that is, acts as if he is cornered, it has a tendency to make the tackler relax a bit; then a quick burst of speed carries the back by the tackler before he realizes it.

6. Cutting - The effect of cutting is to throw the defensive players off balance. The sharp change of direction of a ball-carrier going off tackle, either in or out, forces the defensive backs to change their direction. A back should be careful to break out at least once out of every three or four times. If he cuts back every time, the effectiveness is soon lost; for the defensive players will lie back and wait for him.

Plunging the Line The line plunger should run low, with feet spread, head up and eyes open, lifting knees high and increasing speed at every step. He should keep his feet, hang on to the ball and go where the signal calls for the hole to be made. When once in the open he should release the ball with one hand to stiff-arm and help evade tacklers.

#### POINTS TO BE MASTERED

##### On Offense:

1. Assume an easy position from which a quick start can be made in any direction with equal ease. Keep the feet spread, head up, rump down.
2. Give no indication by look or motion where the play is going. Make any messages sent fake ones; but, better still, be a sphinx, with the eyes on nothing but the ball or straight ahead until it is snapped.
3. Start fast, with head up and eyes open, as soon as the ball is

4. Hit hard. Never stop driving.

5. When detailed to take a man out, keep after him until he is down.

6. In blocking, always maneuver for the best position and make contact at the most effective time. Keep the feet spread at the time of contact, with head up and rump down.

7. If possible use shoulder chug. If that fails, slide into a hip block. Stay on your feet as long as possible.

8. Ball-carriers should use their interference and run hard. Don't dance around, shadow-boxing.

9. Always run with feet wide until you get entirely into the open; again wide when approaching tackler to be in best position to dodge, side-step or pivot.

10. Make full use of straight-arm, side-step, twist and change of pace to elude tacklers.

11. Put the ball away properly every time it is handled in practice or scrimmages. Hold the ball with both hands whenever you go to the ground.

12. Don't fumble. Fumbles are caused by taking the eyes off the ball or fighting it when catching, and by reaching out one arm to protect yourself when going to the ground. Learn to fall relaxed.

13. Remember that success is measured in what the team accomplishes. Get the signal, start with the ball, carry out the proper assignment, and never stop fighting until the referee's whistle blows.

#### Punting and Passing:

1. When catching punts or passes, keep the eyes on the ball until it is safely tucked away.

2. When catching punts, handle everything possible but keep clear of

the touchback. It is permissible to block out the closest man.

4. Remember that a kick-off recovered in goal counts as a touchdown. Be sure to recover all kick-offs; and be sure that the opponent touches the ball down if he recovers it behind his own goal line on a kick-off.

5. An off-side man touching a punt does not make the ball dead. If he allows it to roll, it can be picked up and run back. This must be done before the referee blows his whistle and the penalty for an off-side man touching the ball refused.

6. When blocking for a punter, backs should step forward to meet the men they block, using a shoulder chug and endeavoring to keep the kicking lane free.

7. When the opponents punt, follow the assigned opponent back and drop him near the receiver where he cannot get up and make the tackle.

8. Backs should master the art of deceiving the opponents by employing different angles and runs when going down after passes. They should use the side-step, pivot, change of speed, etc.

9. Catch passes in the hands - not against the body.

10. Complete all catches even if a dive is necessary to do it.

11. Endeavor to get into such position when catching a pass that opponents cannot interfere.

12. Passers should always keep the ball well out in front of the receiver, and high. Keep him running and make him reach for it.

13. The passer must be in time; to delay too long is as bad as passing too soon. Balls should always be delivered with the front nose up.

#### On Defense:

1. Know the strategical possibilities the offensive quarterback is studying in order to choose his play.

3. As soon as the ball is passed, start stepping high, that is, running in place. It is much easier to start in any direction if the feet are already in motion.

4. Backs should take their cue from the opposing end. He is a pretty good indicator as to the type of play coming.

5. Running plays should be met on the line of scrimmage if possible.

6. Be always on the alert for passes. Backs should never let a receiver get behind them.

7. Backs should play their receivers until the ball is passed; the play the ball.

8. Backs should watch for men out. Men are usually left out when coming from out-of-bounds or after a wide run.