WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A GREAT DEFENSIVE LINEMAN!

YOU MUST BE ABLE TO LIVE AND SURVIVE THE THREE ASPECTS OF PLAYING DEFENSIVE LINE. THESE ARE:

1.) MENTAL
   A) ALIGNMENT
   B) ASSIGNMENT
   C) STANCE

2.) TECHNIQUE
   A) GET OFF
   B) HANDS/HEAD LANDMARKS
   C) ATTACK AND REACT
   D) ESCAPE AND RUSH THE PASSER

3.) EFFORT
   A) PURSUIT
   B) TACKLE
The basic objective of a defensive lineman is to attack and destroy the offensive lineman’s block. Certain PRINCIPLES are constant whether the block is bas, reach, fold, trap, down, etc.

1.) **LEVERAGE:** Your pads must be either under, or at worst, even with the blocker to defeat his block. The lows of physics apply: if his pads are under yours, he can displace you; if your pads are under his, you can neutralize and defeat his power.

2.) **POSITION:** At the point of contact, your head needs to be in the “V” of the neck of the blocker if you want to break him down and control him. If instead, your point of contact is on his “WING” or shoulder, he needs not to drive you, he only needs to swing his body in position to cut you off from the ball carrier or hole and defeat you.

3.) **SQUEEZE:** The squeeze principle implies that you reduce the hold by fighting pressure rather than “running around” or “matadoring” the block, which works with the HOLD GAP responsibility as it takes a few seconds for the ball carrier to reach the LOS. IF you run-around or cross-face of the blocker too quickly, you may give up your gap responsibility.

4.) **SEPARATE:** Disengage form the block in order to PURSUE AND TACKLE. After attacking the blocker with LEVERAGE, breaking him down and establishing good body position, squeezing the hole while holding your gap responsibility, it is not time to SEPARATE and get to the ball. The legs, head, and shoulders break down the blocker, but the HANDS and ARMS coming up under and through the breastplate and pads are necessary for separation. A good defensive lineman must separate or ball carriers run through or over him. Separation is necessary to make tackles.

5.) **PURSUIT AND TACKLE:** The object of defensive football is to tackle the one that has the football. Much of this ability depends on the principles mentioned above. This principle depends a great deal on pure EFFORT, INTENSITY, and DESIRE. Crazed people without great ability make great defensive players because the “WANT TO” badly enough.
BLOW DELIVERY

PUSH & PRESS: Used on Reach or Zone Blocks
- Get Up field
- Eyes in throat
- Elbows in
- Thumbs up
- Attack and press upfield
- Keep feet moving and throw hips outside

RICHOCHET: Used on Scoop Blocks
  o Get upfield
  o Drop outside shoulder
  o Let blocker knock you inside

BACKDOOR/SPIN: Used on G-Pulls
- Get upfield
- Beat back door by dropping hand, touch and go
- If you feel high pressure spin

Double Anchor: Used on Dbl Team
- Nose in seam
- Force seam
- If caught by guard, drop outside knee (seat roll)
  Hold onto guard
PRINCIPLES OF RUSHING THE PASSER

It is always considered a great compliment for a defensive team to lead in QB sacks, especially if they also lead in defense against the run. More important than the number of QB sacks though, is putting constant pressure on the passer forcing bad throws, forcing to tuck it and run and in general making him so jittery his timing and effectiveness are destroyed.

Probably the most isolate place on the field is a defender covering man for man. In order for us to expect good man to man coverage, we must put enough continuous pressure on the passer for our defenders to cover close and confidently without fear fo the QB's having to much time to throw. Every time the line fails in their pass rush to harass the passer in sufficient time, we are generally destroying the confidence of the defender to cover his man closely. **“THE BEST PASS DEFENSE IS A PASS RUSH”**.

Few lineman are endowed with all the desirable traits to be an outstanding pass rusher, but fewer ever accomplish a great deal without a strong desire to improve through hard work and dedication. As much time should be spent in developing a pass rush technique as an offensive blocker spends in developing his pass blocking.

The basic key for success then is to develop the fanatic desire to get tot eh passer – **NEVER LETTING UP** - always applying pressure.

1.) **PENETRATION AND PRESSURE:** A pass rusher may sue a variety of techniques, usually some being more natural than others. But he must penetrate upfield to apply pressure to the QB. The elements of technique, upper body power, leg drive, hands, all contribute to effective penetration and pressure.

2.) **TECHNIQUE:** A good pass rusher will develop two or three techniques to master in rushing the passer. User your strengths and abilities to determine which are best for you and practice, practice, practice.

3.) **EFFORT:** The ways will vary, but the HOW is always EFFORT, INTENSITY, DESIRE, AND RESULTS. He who has the HOW will find a way.

4.) **HANDS:** The HANDS principle affects both the ability to get by blockers, and the ability to aggravate, agitate, and irritate the passer. High hands in the passing lane makes it difficult for the passer to see down field and you may block, deflect, or at least force the QB to hesitate before he throws long enough to be sacked by a teammate. The timing and practice is critical.
PASS RUSH

I.) MENTAL APPROACH: Pressure on the passer, this exemplifies the spirit and aggressiveness of a strong defensive team. There must be an aggressive “HELL BENT” attitude by every rusher if we are to have a winner. Each player must bring to bear all his kills in developing his pass rush technique to the point that he will become an effective pass rusher and will not become known as the weakest of the group.

A.) DRIVING FOR THE QB:
   1. Squeeze his area of operation
   2. Force him closer to another rusher
   3. Don’t give him time for secondary choices
   4. Force him out of the pocket
   5. Force him to run – he is most likely a poor runner
   6. Force him to throw on the run
   7. Throw him for a loss
   8. Cause a fumble
   9. Make him Jittery, getting away from center and not setting his feet to throw
   10. Lose confidence in his protection

B.) GETTING HAND UP WILL:
   1. Divert the QB’s attention
   2. Bat the ball down
   3. Tip it for an interception
   4. Force a bad throw
   5. Force QB to pull ball down and run
   6. Force elevation of throw – give secondary more time to react – more range – easier interceptions

II.) BASIC FUNDAMENTALS:
   1.) Anticipation and quick recognition of a pass
   2.) Quickness and decisiveness on your initial move
   3.) Coordination of the hands, feet, and head movement
   4.) Keeping momentum towards the passer without lost motion
   5.) Keeping your shoulders forward of your feet to prevent blocker from getting under you.
   6.) When you beat your blocker, you must put on a burst and get by him before he can recover
   7.) Keep your eyes on the passer while your hands, head, and feet get you there
   8.) If you have not reached the passer, get your hands up as he starts to throw, to block the ball, force elevation of throw or make him pull it down and run
   9.) Once the ball is thrown, sprint to block for interception, make tackle or recover fumble.

III.) KNOW YOUR OPPONENT:
   It is important that you should know all types of blocking techniques that are used in protecting the passer; however, it is equally important that you know your opponent. Each game will present you with a different blocker, and it is vital that you study his techniques and search for a weakness that you can exploit.
PASS RUSH TECHNIQUES: The techniques described later are the ones that are commonly used. These techniques will serve as a guide for you, but utilize your own style, or whatever will make you an effective pass rusher. The key thing to keep in mind is to always keep progressing toward the passer while you make your moves.

DEFENSIVE ENDS PASS RUSH LANES: You normal rush lane will be from the outside. Rush at an angle that will force the QB but at the same time will keep him in the pocket. There will be time you can go inside of your blocker either because you have taken him up field on your initial move or by defensive design. There will also be situations and certain QB’s that outside rush lane will mean nothing. Getting him to run out of the pocket will be our objective.

DEFENSIVE TACKLE PASS RUSH LANES: Your normal rush lane will be from the inside, your objective is to get push, get by blocker, or force him into the QB. Force the QB out of the pocket or be in his face so he can’t throw.
PASS RUSH TECHNIQUES

1.) **HARD CHARGE:** The hard charge is a power surge through the offensive blocker, driving him back on his heels, and not picking a side until you make a read on the QB as to which side he is opening up to. It is designed to defeat the “set-back” blocker that will give ground and just try to occupy you. This is an all-out assault to whip your man physically and must be the first technique you master because it sets your man up for all other escape moves. You must keep your feet going upfield. Keep driving him back to the QB until he commits his power to stop your charge. When he extends, jerk his pads and release to the QB. Hold our leverage and momentum throughout the rush.

2.) **SWAT AND PUNCH:** This move is designed to defeat the blocker that sets quickly on the line of scrimmage and extends. Explode to one side of the blocker, leading with a tremendous swat to his shoulder pads, grab the back of that pad, pull with the swat hand, and punch over the top of the pads with the other arm. Follow through and “jack yourself by” and accelerate to the QB.

3.) **SWAT AND RIP:** The swat and rip is a companion to the swat and swim and is especially effective against the high pass blocker, the pre-shift, and the one that sets on the line of scrimmage. Again, explode to one side or the other with the swat, then dip the opposite shoulder and thrust the arm underneath and by the blocker’s body, then follow through with the elbow behind his back and “jack yourself by” and accelerate to the QB.

4.) **PUSH AND PULL:** The push and pull comes off the hard charge. As you charge hard, your anticipate his setting and extending toward you. When he extends, you grab his jersey and jerk him toward the LOS, turning his pads as you do so which gets him off balance. You must sprint off on the ball or he will not extend to you. Release and accelerate to the QB.

5.) **SPRINT PASS:** This rush is a reckless speed rush, used usually in certain pass situation. You are actually fanatic about getting pressure on the QB, anyway and anyhow. Even if he scrambles you have disrupted the timing and he usually is still trying to pass rather than run. This gives you more freedom for a daring, reckless rush but simply must create pressure on the passer.