



When You Throw the Football, What Do You Want? COMPLETIONS!



By Matt Lundeen / Redwood Valley High School

As a coach there are many frustrating things that can happen during the course of a football game. One thing that always seems to frustrate me is when I call a pass play that I've been setting up all game long and at the snap of the ball everything is perfect. The defense has bitten on the fake, the defensive back has his eyes in the backfield, the protection is perfect, and my wide receiver is wide open. I'm thinking, "Yes, touchdown!" Then, I start to look for the football, but the QB is not ready to throw. When he finally does get rid of the ball, the defense has been able to recover. The touchdown we'd been working so hard to develop is gone, and I have to yell for the punt team.

Regardless of whether you throw the football a couple of times a game or all game long, the one thing you always want is completions. There are many factors that make completions possible - protection, running great routes, and having players who can catch and throw, are few of the major factors involved. In this article I want to give you a couple of points to work on with your QB's so you can have fewer frustrations and hopefully more completions.

To try to achieve more completions and to help improve our quarterback skills, we use an acronym called FAST. FAST was taught to me by my posi-

tion coach, Chris Meidt, when I attended Bethel College. He is now the head coach at St. Olaf and is by far the best teacher of the quarterback position I know. I would highly recommend his camps for your high school quarterbacks. From my years of playing quarterback, Coach Meidt's instruction, the coaching from my father, Dwight Lundeen (the long time coach at Becker High School), and from the six years of coaching football at Redwood Valley High School, I have had many different experiences with the quarterback position. Teaching high school quarterbacks the fundamentals of FAST is simplest and most effective way to improve a QB's passing skills. Let me share with you some of the basics of FAST.

Goals of FAST

To improve consistency, improve the strength of your QB's passes, and create a faster release so your QB can get the ball to the receiver as soon as they're open.

F = Face Your Target

We teach our QB's that they always need to see who they are throwing the ball to. In order to do this, they must face their target and get their eyes on the receiver. We stress the importance of never throwing the ball to a spot but seeing who and where their target is.



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A = Arms are Always Up, Ready to Throw

One of the biggest struggles I have found from working with QB's is getting them to have the football in a position to be released as soon as the receiver is open. There are so many cases when a receiver will be open and the ball needs to be delivered, but the QB simply does not have the ball in position to be released quickly. With that in mind, we stress that our QB's have the ball in a position to throw when he anticipates the receiver is going to be open. A key landmark we teach is having the up and by the ear. We also stress the importance of always securing the ball with two hands and never tapping the football. Not securing the ball with two hands and tapping the ball only delays the release and puts the quarterback at a greater risk of fumbling.

S = Shoulders Must Line Up with Your Target

The first thing we teach our QB's with their shoulders is, line them up with your target. This means that the opposite shoulder points directly at the target. For example, if the QB throws right handed, his left shoulder must point directly at the receiver. His shoulders must be that way whether he is dropping back or rolling out.

There are two main reasons why this is so important.

Reason 1 - It gets the QB lined up as to where they are going to throw.

Reason 2 - By having the shoulders turned, and by obviously having the ball up and in a position to throw, your QB is ready to throw and is now full of power to zip that ball out there. When a QB is in this position his body is like a twisted rubber band, full of power and just waiting to be unleashed. To maximize all of this strength your QB has built up, we stress the following keys when the time comes to throw.

* Drive your opposite elbow and shoulder down as hard as you can in a violent motion while you are taking your lead hand off of the ball. Keep that elbow tight to your body.

* While this is happening, your throwing hand is going to rise up a little bit. We stress keeping the hand on the top of the ball. This prevents the QB from coming under the ball which often results in passes sailing high. It also helps create a consistent follow through and helps the QB to

have a high release point. A higher release point helps to make a shorter QB "taller" and creates less of a chance for passes to be tipped or knocked down. While the hand is going up, we stress not to move the ball back. The ball will naturally go back a little bit as the lead elbow and shoulder are driving down. The reason we do not want the QB to bring the ball back is because that slows down the release. We also stress to never wind the ball up in a "mini-circle" motion. That also slows down the release.

* After the ball is raised a little bit, been naturally brought back, and the lead elbow and the shoulder are beginning to be driven down in a violent nature, the ball must come and be released as the elbow and shoulder motion are being completed.

* To complete the throw we stress keeping a nice tight release. A tight release is going to create more consistent passes, and a greater chance for a nice, tight, powerful spiral

* Some of the keys to keeping a tight release are: (1) staying on top of the ball all the way through the throw, and (2) on the follow through, have your throwing hand hit your same side thigh. For example, if you throw right handed you want your right hand to hit your right thigh. By doing these things you are keeping a straight line from your throw to your target and creating a nice tight release. A lot of QB's want to bring their throwing arm across their bodies to their opposite leg, very similar to a baseball pitcher. By doing this the release points are not in a straight line because the QB is bringing the ball across his body, not in a straight line with his target.

T = Toe at your Target

To finish the throw we always tell our QB's to point their lead foot at the target. This ensures that they are lined up for the throw and makes them complete their follow through.

I hope this article has given you one thing you can take and incorporate with your quarterbacks. Good luck during the upcoming season.