

## Drilling for Quarterback Improvement

By Dave Arslanian

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Two good reasons Weber State has consistently been one of the top passing teams in the nation for the past 10 years are the system and the people. Credit outstanding coaches who have contributed to the development of our offensive system. The execution of the system by talented young men has contributed to some outstanding accomplishments.

The system contributes a great deal to our success, but the most critical factor is the people - the coaches and players. As with any system, specific fundamentals and techniques must be properly performed to achieve the desired results. Over the years, we developed a comprehensive list of personal qualities, basic fundamentals, and specific techniques necessary for our system to function.

We constantly evaluate and update our system. Part of that evaluation has to do with the qualities, fundamentals, and techniques. Some things change as we find better ways to do things, but most of them are constant. The key, then, is the emphasis and the teaching methods used by the coaches, and the execution and quality repetitions performed by the players.

The key is the discipline that comes from quality repetition of each drill. With that in mind, let's discuss the topic of this article, and the one position that determines the effectiveness of our system more than any other position: the quarterback.

We have drills that relate to the development of personal qualities, basic fundamentals, and specific techniques for playing QB in our system. It would take a book to adequately explain all of the drills we use to develop our QB in each category. What I will do is list everything that fits into each category, and then explain some of the drills we use within each category.

Every drill relates directly to a specific quality, fundamental, or technique necessary for proper execution of our system. Also, I do not claim credit for the origination of any of these drills, but rather credit them to the coaches through the years who have influenced my thinking on QB play.

### Personal Qualities

We recruit QBs with these qualities and then work to maximize them when the young man joins our program.

1. Leadership and responsibility. He must be a leader and must assume the responsibility that goes along with being a team leader.
2. Winning attitude. He must be willing and able to do what it takes to win. There will be setbacks, but he must have the attitude that his ability and the next play will get things going.
3. Hard worker. He must be the hardest worker on the team. He must be the first one on the practice field and the last to leave.
4. Knowledge of the offense. He must be a student of the game and must know the offense better than anyone else.
5. Confidence. He must radiate confidence. He must believe in himself, and his teammates must believe in him.
6. Loyalty. He must be able to take the public adulation as well as the criticism, always giving his teammates credit for successes and never passing along the blame for failures. He must always support his teammates and coaches 100 percent.
7. Arm and athletic ability. He must develop his arm strength and accuracy by throwing every day and developing his God-given athletic ability to its utmost through hard work and dedication. Our QB must have a strong, accurate arm, and he must be one of the best athletes on the team.

### **Basic Fundamentals**

Within each basic fundamental, we have specific techniques that make up that fundamental. Space does not allow me to list all of the techniques, but the following is a complete list of our basic fundamentals:

1. Huddle procedure and play calling
2. LOS procedure
3. QB and center exchange
4. QB and ballcarrier exchange
5. QB and ballcarrier faking
6. Short passes (1-3 steps)
7. Intermediate passes (5 steps)
8. Deep passes (7 steps)
9. Play-action passes
10. Passing
11. Running with the ball
12. Loose ball
13. Reading coverages
14. Two-minute offense
15. No-huddle offense
16. Goal line offense
17. Coming out offense
18. Preparation

The following are specific drills and the areas they improve and emphasize.

### **Chalk Talk Drills**

Chalk talk drills assist in knowledge development, leadership, and confidence. The QB conducts these sessions. He is expected to get on the chalkboard and thoroughly explain items such as specific patterns versus specific defenses, the weekly play list, and the weekly audible list. During the season, the play list is determined by Tuesday, and on Thursday the QB conducts the position meeting by listing on the chalkboard, from memory, all plays on the play list.

The QB then diagrams each pass play versus the expected coverages and discusses the reading progression and necessary audibles. He then fields questions and is expected to be able to provide clear and concise answers.

### **Run the Show Drill**

The run the show drill assists in huddle procedure and play calling, LOS procedure, leadership, and confidence.

Conducted in the classroom with the QBs, this drill is used in the early stages of development for our young quarterbacks and as a review for our veterans. It is used at the beginning of spring football and fall camp.

One QB gets up in front of the group and simulates receiving the play from the sideline, approaching the huddle, calling the play, breaking the huddle, approaching the LOS, and using the cadence and/or audible.

The important factors are: the QB receiving the play away from the huddle, stepping to the huddle with confidence, and standing arm's length from the front line; and speaking to the entire unit with confidence and self-assurance. Remember: how you receive the play and how you present the play play a major part in the ultimate success of the play. Radiate confidence.

The QB breaks the huddle and briskly approaches the LOS with confidence. Eye focus at LOS is LT to RT, RT to LT. Tap center on butt and get under him. Use audible or just the cadence.

### **Warm-Up Drills**

Warm-up drills assist in player warm-up, arm development, footwork, throwing fundamentals, and techniques for basic passes. This drill is used daily as a warm-up before practice but also is used at certain times as an intense workout. Remember: Always stretch the shoulder muscles first!

1. Bull pen pitch: Throw like a pitcher in the bull pen. Loosen up the whole body: shoulder, arm, hips, etc. Note: From this point on, always aim at a target. Throw each pass with a purpose. Hit a target.

2. Spread legs and follow through: With legs spread wide and feet planted on the ground, throw the ball and follow through by touching the grass between your legs.
3. Face north/face south: Keeping feet together and planted, turn hips and shoulders in direction of throw and throw using good motion (release and follow through).
4. Left knee/right knee/both knees: Drop the ball, pick it up quickly, release the ball quickly. Emphasize quickness with the ball, but also good motion, follow-through, and accuracy.
5. High release: With feet together and planted on the ground, face your partner and hold the ball high above your head with a straight (stiff) arm. Throw the ball with only the wrist, keeping the arm straight, really flipping the ball (like a basketball shot) with a snap of the wrist. The palm of the hand should face the ground after snapping the wrist, and the arm is still straight, high overhead. (You should only be five yards apart for this drill.)
6. Fade and throw: Fade to the right and throw off the right foot. Fade to the right and throw off the left foot. Fade to the left and throw off the left foot. Fade to the left and throw off the right foot. Take two or three steps to perform this drill and develop a feel for throwing off balance.
7. Step - throw - freeze: Just to emphasize the follow-through.
8. Three-step drop: Face each other. Face north/face south. Execute a three-step drop and throw. Hit and throw (hit your third step and throw). Remember to step slightly in the hole when throwing across your body.
9. Five-step drop: Face each other. Face north/face south. Execute a five-step drop and throw. Hit and throw on half, gather and throw on half.

### **Dan Fouts' Mental Imagery Drill**

The mental imagery drill assists with knowledge development, reading progression, vision, and footwork.

One QB throws the ball; three other QBs are used as receivers. Each pass pattern is constructed on the field with the QBs positioned as the receivers at the appropriate spots on the field where the ball would be thrown.

For example, if the pattern has a flat, curl, and post, then a QB (receiver) is positioned at each of those spots. The coach stands behind the QB throwing the ball and signals to the receiver he wants the ball thrown to. As the QB takes his drop, the designated receiver puts his hands up for the pass, and the QB sets and throws to that receiver. For best results, the receiver should put his hands up during the QB's drop, as it relates to the reading progression.

This drill can also be used by one QB and no receivers by putting towels on the field in place of the receivers. The QB rehearses his reading progression, sets up, and hits different towels. This drill is a great way for a QB to work out on his own during the off-season and summer.