

Game Planning **For Football Games**

What Goes Into A Game Plan?

*By Jim Donnan
Special to ESPN.com*

Rather than predicting what each team's game plan will be in the Miami-Tennessee matchup, this week I will give you an idea of how those game plans are formulated and what the teams may be doing in the days leading up to the game.

Game planning actually starts in the offseason, especially for the non-conference opponents teams do not see on a regular basis. The coaching staff will watch tapes, break down games from the previous season and spend plenty of time preparing a winter report for each opponent after the recruiting season ends in February.

That will be followed by some work during spring practice and a summer report that will set up a lot of the plans for the upcoming season.

Such early preparation gives coaches plenty of time and takes some of the pressure off. Staffs can spend a month looking at film in the offseason rather than cramming everything into one week during the season, leaving game week free to polish and perfect the plan already in place.

Few big changes are made during the week leading up to a particular game, but a lot of what happens is dictated by injuries.

As far as this game is concerned, Tennessee likely did not watch Miami's last few games and come away deciding to make wholesale changes. The Vols have probably not decided they are going to run right at the Hurricanes suddenly-weak rush defense on every play, but an injury to wide receiver Kelley Washington and the return to full health by running back Cedric Houston may result in some minor adjustments.

While preparing his players to face the No. 1 team in the nation a coach has to build up his motivational plan throughout the week, stressing what strengths can be utilized. False hope is always a poor way to communicate -- the coach needs to be concise and to the point while shooting straight with his players.

It is also good to keep the team loose but not being dead-serious all the time. I once rode a steamroller into practice to emphasize to my players that we could either be the pavement or the steamroller.

Daily short talks about pride, teamwork, unity and putting forth a great effort are vital. Tradition must be stressed, as well as the fact that big games are often lost with turnovers, penalties and special teams mistakes.

Finally, I always maintained that we had to avoid mistakes and playing loose and constantly used the slogan "We are the best third-down team in America!"

The Final Countdown

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Playing at home makes the weekend of the game a little less stressful, and here's a look at a sample itinerary for the home team starting with Friday's practice.

Friday

- 4:15 p.m. - Depart for stadium for practice
- 4:45 p.m. - Practice
- 5:45 p.m. - Depart for dinner
- 6:00 p.m. - Dinner
- TBA - Movie
- 9:30 p.m. - Arrive Ramada Inn
- 9:35 p.m. - Team meeting
- TBA - Snack
- 11:00 p.m. - Lights out and quiet!

Saturday

- 8:00 a.m. - Wake-up call
- 8:30 a.m. - Chapel
- 9:00 a.m. - Pre-game meal
- 9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. - Taping (all ankles and knees taped at hotel)
- 11:05 a.m. - Team meeting (everyone ready to leave for stadium)
- 11:10 a.m. - Depart for stadium
- 11:20 a.m. - Arrive at stadium
- 1:00 p.m. - KICKOFF! (Buses will return from stadium after game)

Sunday

- 2:00 p.m. - Treatment/training room
- 2:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m. - Optional weightlifting

Plenty To Be Done

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In my days as a head coach I delegated various aspects of the offensive game plan to each member of my staff. Here is a look at how weekly preparation was organized and the different aspects handled by the coaches.

Game Plan Organization

1. Opponent breakdown
2. Emphasis - Cut-ups
 - A. Situations
 1. Fronts/stunts/dogs/blitz
 2. Formations
 3. Red Zone
 4. Goal line
 5. Short yardage
 6. Coverages
 7. Special Plays
 8. Down and distance
 - a. P and 10
 - b. All 1st downs
 - c. 3rd and medium (3-6 yds.)
 - d. 3rd and long (7 or longer)
3. Handouts to players
4. Staff weekly organizational chart
 - A. Team schedule
 - B. Staff schedule
 - C. Game plan
 - D. Bulletin board
5. Self-scouting
 - A. Down and distance
 - B. Formation hit chart
 - C. Field position chart
6. Go-for-two chart/Kill-clock chart
7. Pass check list
8. Run check list
9. Specific situations game plan
 - A. Overall game plan organization
 - B. Fronts/games/stunts
 - C. Coverage
 - D. Red Zone
 - E. Goal line
 - F. Short yardage
 - G. Screens
 - H. Base runs
 - I. Base pass
 - J. Blitz pick-up
 - K. Two-play huddle

- L. Play action
- M. No backs
- N. Options
- O. Two-minute offense
- P. Two-point plays
- Q. Victory offense
- R. Slow and fast safety
- S. Freeze play
- T. Special plays
- U. Shifts and motions
- V. Must-runs

In addition to game-planning responsibilities, each coach was in charge of one or more more of the following areas for practices

Practice Organization

1. Position
 - A. Offensive line
 - B. Tight ends
 - C. Running backs
 - D. Wide receivers
 - E. Quarterbacks
2. Practice schedule
3. Scripts
 - A. Inside
 - B. Inside skelly
 - C. Skelly
 - D. Team pass
 - E. Team
 - F. Blitz pick-up
4. Distribution of practice schedules and scripts
5. Equipment
6. Practice areas
7. Filming of practice
8. Meeting rooms
9. Scout team
10. Center-quarterback exchange
11. Team take-off
12. PAT and go-for-two
13. Gauntlet
14. Inside drill
15. One-on-one WR/DB

16. Inside skelly

17. Skelly

The staff duties for game week begin on right away on the Sunday following a game. As you can see, actual practice time makes up a small fraction of the game preparation.

Coaches Duties

A. Sunday

1. Grade film
2. Run game stats
3. pass game stats
4. Game summary
5. Turn in grades
6. Staff meeting
7. Review tape as a staff
8. Injuries
9. Self-scouting
10. Breakdown of opponents last game
11. Formulate scouting report
 - a. Base fronts
 - b. Coverages
 - c. Stunts/dogs/blitzes
 - d. Down and distance hit chart
 - e. Field position hit chart
 - f. Personnel
 - g. Cover page

B. Monday

1. Complete scouting report
2. Copy scouting report for distribution
3. Concerns vs.
 - a. Base runs
 - b. base protections
4. Formations - Shifts and motions
5. Lits runs by formation
6. List passes by formations
7. Goal line package
8. New ideas
9. Individual meeting
10. Goals meeting
11. Review Saturday game tapes (players)
12. Practice

13. Scouting report distribution
14. Kicking game responsibility

C. Tuesday

1. Options
2. Two-play huddle
3. Red zone
4. Play action
5. Sprint package
6. No backs
7. First down
8. Screens
9. New ideas
10. Review Monday
11. Individual meeting
12. Special teams
13. Practice

D. Wednesday

1. Complete goal line package
2. Short yardage upfield
3. Special plays
4. No huddle
5. Third down
6. Must-runs
7. Special motions or shifts
8. Fourth down
9. Two-point play
10. Review Monday and Tuesday
11. Individual meetings
12. Special teams
13. Practice
14. Begin tape breakdown of next opponent
15. Recruiting

E. Thursday

1. Pre-game plan ready
2. Wristbands
3. Review
 - a. Short yardage/goal line
 - b. Red Zone
 - c. Third and long
 - d. Two-minute offense
 - e. Blitz pick-up
 - f. Down-and-distance tendency

- g. Two-play checks
- h. Two-point play
- i. Special plays

- 4. Begin tests and tips
- 5. Individual meeting
- 6. Practice

F. Friday

- 1. Give tests and tips
- 2. Final adjustments
- 3. Final game plan
- 4. Game objectives
- 5. Emphasis
 - a. Game plan
 - b. Special situations
 - c. Special teams
 - d. Offensive substitutions
 - e. Review anything new
 - f. Overtime
 - g. Victory offense

1ST SITUATION	BIG PLAYS	COMING OUT
3RD 1 or Less – 34/35 Lead (GT) Dot Close 3RD 1-2 – 34/35 Lead (GT) Dot 3RD 3-3 – 728 FT/ST (B) Deuce Jet 3RD 7+ - 572 OPSM (H) Trips Play Action Deep – CH 34/35 878 (R) Tuff Drop Back Deep – 999 SM/OP (P)(H) Dual 2-Pl. Play – Sprint Flood (GT) DBL Change (Shift)	1. Cock Screen (P) Twins @ T 2. 86/87 Wheel (N) @ Y 3. 272 RD/AN (P) Dual @ T 4. 288 CO/WD (B) Flank @ X 5. 88/89 (P) Flex @ T Dual @ X 6. CTR Strong X REV WK (B) Twins @ X	<u>Runs</u> 1. Lead (Ice) 2. Sneak (Ice) <u>Pass</u> 1. 192 (R) Dot Open 2. 180 (B) Flank
BEST DEEP THROWS	3RD & 1-2 YARDS	COV. 0 PACKAGE
1. 984 (P) Flex 2. 999 (P) (H) Dual 3. 799 (B) Twins	1. 34/35 Lead (GT) Dot	1. CH 34/35 (R) Tuff Open 2. 818 WD/FAN (B) Trey 3. 181 BK/BK (R) Dot Open 4. 288 CO/WD (B) Flank
BEST % THROWS	3RD & 3-6 YARDS	COV. 1 PACKAGE
1. 86/87, 88/89 2. 192, 166 3. 444 4. Slip Screen	<u>Runs</u> 1. √ Option (H) Trips 2. √ Overdraw/QK (R) R/L Open <u>Pass</u> 1. 818 (B) Trey 2. CH 34/35, 484/878 (R) Tuff	1. BK/BK (R) (G) Dot Open 2. 272 IN/WD (B) Flank 3. 799 KB/SM (B) Flank 4. 536 ST/FT (R) R/L Open
BLITZ BEATERS	3RD & 7+ YARDS	INDY PACKAGE
1. 88/89 2. Sneak 3. 536 Scat		Curl Hook Smoke Smash Go Fade Zig Sneak In 40 Option Gut
MISDIRECTION	<u>Passes</u> 1. 572 OP/SM (H) Trips 2. 999 SM/OP (P) (H) Dual 3. 984 OP/ST (P) Flex <u>RUNS/SCREENS</u> 1. Slip Screen (P) Twins 2. 40/41 Dual, Twins, Trips 3. 88/89 (P) (H) Dual	
FK Gut ST NKD WK Trey FK T Counter NKD Tuff		