

## **Training the Two-Position High School Punter and Kicker During the Season**

In high school football the punter and/or the kicker is generally a good athlete who plays another position. His ability to do all the positions well throughout the season depends upon a well-structured and thoughtful practice plan. Without the timely incorporation of punting and kicking practice with the position practice, the two-position football player will soon find himself leg weary at the end of the football season when his punting and kicking performance may have the most impact on his teams success.

Planning the athletes practice time, evaluating his ability level and coordinating his specialized training periods are three areas which require detailed planning to improve your kicking game and maximize the athletes production.

### **Planning Practice time for the Two-Position Punter and Kicker**

Typically, you will use time after practice is over or before practice begins to train your punters and kickers. Neither of these times is the most beneficial to the athlete. Before practice is bad because usually there are no coaches out there to coach the athlete, he just punts or kicks on his own. After practice is not always recommended because he may be physically stressed from a hard practice and fatigue coupled with punting or kicking may injure him or cause him to develop bad habits.

A plan that has worked well for my athletes is to use the time before practice to stretch them, and use the team stretch time, usually about twenty minutes, for them to punt and kick in. In this method, they know that they must be stretched

and ready to kick when the team stretching period starts, that their punts and kicks are limited which I feel makes them

concentrate more, that their coach is always with them, because as a general rule all coaches must be on the field for stretching and that they must perform in front of the team. The snappers and holders are required to be there also.

I do incorporate during practice punting and kicking and after practice punting and kicking their program. If the athlete is not being used for a particular practice period he will be sent to punt or kick. This simulates the actual experience he will have on game day of playing a position and then kicking. After practice punting and kicking is only scheduled on a relatively light practice day if the athlete needs specific technique help. Any after practice punting and kicking is always limited to twenty to twenty-five punts or kicks and no more.

Remember the goal is to maintain leg strength throughout the season and punting and kicking for quality instead of quantity will assist the athlete in achieving this goal. There are also days that you will not want them to punt and kick. I never allow my athletes to punt or kick the day before a game. I feel that they need a days rest for their legs to be fresh and that there is nothing they can do the twenty-four hours before a contest to either get stronger or change their technique to improve their performance.

I have found that too many times they will destroy their mental make-up if they punt or kick bad the day before a game so I eliminated it. This practice also comes from personal experience. Figure 1 shows a typical practice week for a high school punting and kicking specialist.

## **Evaluating the Ability Level to Coach the Two-Position Punter and Kicker**

Evaluating your punters and kickers ability level will help you in determining the type of coaching and practice setting they need. I classify the punters and kickers ability levels as learners, developers and performers.

The learner is the punter and kicker who is still acquiring the basic techniques of the skill. His mechanics are not the same every time and he needs constant coaching. Repetitions of the skill in great numbers is what they need to improve. At this stage the only limiting factor on the number of punts and kicks they perform in a day is muscle fatigue.

The developers is good at the basic mechanics but does not seem to perform as well as he looks doing the skill. This problem is more e mental than physical and a lot of game situation punting and kicking and drills should be used. Daily charting, constant pressure to perform and teaching him concentration and focusing skills must be used to help them become performers.

The performers are those punters and kickers who have a basic mastery of the mechanics and perform within their abilities in a game setting. This classification of punters and kickers should emphasize practicing the various game situations they may be in, be monitored for bad habits and not be allowed to punt or kick too much.

Knowing where your punter and kicker is in his ability level development is paramount to maximizing his ability. Otherwise, you will either over coach or under coach them and get minimal or no production from them at all.

### **Specialized Training Periods for the Two-Position Punter and Kicker**

While planning for the two-position punter and kicker during the season is essential, the summer time is the best period you can use for his specific punting and kicking skills training without interrupting his position skills training as you would during the season. By encouraging him to punt and kick during the summer, you can give him the specialization time he will lack during the season since he is playing another position. He can punt and kick two to three times a week thirty to thirty-five footballs a workout and focus just on his punting and kicking.

Sending him to a summer kicking camp will also give him specialization instruction to assist in his advancement in the learner, developer and performer stages. As a camp he will be able to interact with other two-position athletes, will not have to worry about fatigue from the other position and will be able to concentrate on his specific skill. Plan his summer punting and kicking work-outs for him and be there occasionally yourself to encourage, work with and evaluate how his development is progressing. If actual observation during the summer is forbidden by your high school rules, schedule meetings with him or call him and get his feedback on how he is doing in his work-outs. A simple summer time punting and kicking program can result in many improvements in your punters and kickers which will instantly improve your kicking game. Neglecting to utilize this time period to train the two-position athlete is a mistake.

## **High School Punters and Kickers Game Week Practice Shchedule**

### **Monday**

Punters - 25 ball drops, 15 leg swings, 30 punts

Kickers - 10 extra points, 10 field goals, 10 kickoffs

### **Tuesday**

Punters - 25 ball drops, 15 leg swings, 35 punts

Kickers - 10 extra points, 20 field goals (45 yard maximum)

### **Wednesday**

Punters - 25 ball drops, 15 leg swings, 30 punts

Kickers - 10 extra points, 20 field goals, 5 kickoffs

### **Thursday**

Punters - 10 ball drops, 10 leg swings, **NO** punting \*

Kickers - 10 onsides kicks, **NO** field goals or kickoffs \*

### **Friday**

Game Day - see Pre-Game Warm-up Work

### **Saturday**

Every other week during the season all punters and kickers should run a mile run to enhance recovery of the leg muscles and maintain muscular endurance. Begin this running the second week of the season.

- punters and kickers may do the few repetitions that most coaches want done for their special teams walk-thrus; however, coaches do not make them punt or kick more than 10 balls or their leg, which is a muscle, will not have time to rest and recover from the weeks training

**Figure 1**