

# Defensive Success at The Youth Level

Confusing the Offense with Multiple Coverages

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# The Focus 4



## DEFENSE

Solid youth football defense wins championships

- 1** Go BIG, but Don't Sacrifice Speed
- 2** Stay in the Zone
- 3** Give Your Players Ownership
- 4** Know Your Opponent

# Go Big, but Don't Sacrifice Speed

- 80% of offensive sets used by youth coaches feature at least seven blockers - five linemen and two tight ends, not to mention a full back. *The first thought would be to place some big bodies up front to match that.*
- One size does not fit all. Building a defense full of lumbering big guys isn't the solution, as that strategy leaves you open to perimeter runs. You have to find the right blend of size and athleticism to stay versatile.
- You may be tempted to just put biggest kids across the defensive front, but if they can't move, they're not going to do a whole heck of a lot of good up front. Instead consider having smaller more aggressive kids that can move than the big kids that just take up space. It's important to take the right kids and put them in position to succeed.

**Rome wasn't built in a day, and your defense will not be either.**



# Stay in the Zone

- Playing man defense on the back end can get tricky. Crossing routes can cause defenders to collide and motion can bring confusion.
- Consider using a zone scheme. Each player knows exactly what his responsibility is on every play instead of having his job dictated by what the offense does.
  - Cornerbacks cover the back thirds of the field
  - Safety takes the middle third
  - Outside linebackers have the flats
  - Middle linebacker patrols the center of the field
- Try to teaching your corners at the snap of the ball to take three steps back, just assume it's a pass, read the play, and if it's a run, come up and fill. You just don't want anybody behind you. You may give up some plays, but if its six yards on a sweep outside or off-tackle run because you're backpedaling, so be it. It's better than giving up a 60-yard pass.

# Give Your Players Ownership

- Let your players come up with audible names for their positions. Whether it's an animal, food item, cartoon name, it helps the athletes better remember what they're supposed to do.
- When the kids come up with their calls, it helps them remember. When I assign something, I will remember it because I named it, but the kids might not remember it. So I have the kids come up with them. It helps each one of them remember what their own is.
- Each player has a wristband with a set of numbers on it that, when read in combination, refer to different plays. Smith numbers his players across the line (the left defensive end is 1, the left outside linebacker is 2, etc.) so he can easily call out blitzes and coverage switches.



# Know Your Opponent

- Youth coaches can be very smart people, but they are not professional coaches, and they don't have the time with their players to install detailed defensive schemes.
- Tell your starting defense, 'When they're in this formation, they do these three things. When they do these things, here's what we're going to do.' That's what can set you apart from a defensive perspective.
- Use tools to make your job easier
  - Scout your enemy
  - Video your enemy
  - Know their tendencies - sides they run to, formations from which they tend to pass

**REMINDER!**

*There is no one-size-fits-all defense, but Smith's tips can be applied to combat a number of different offensive looks.*

# Size or Speed?



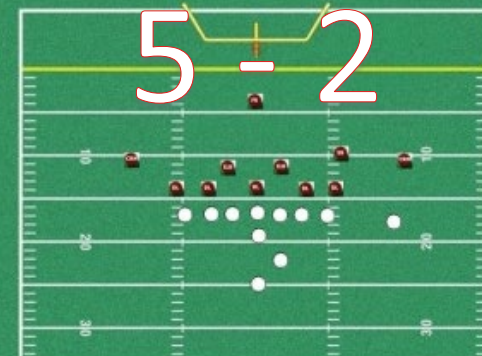
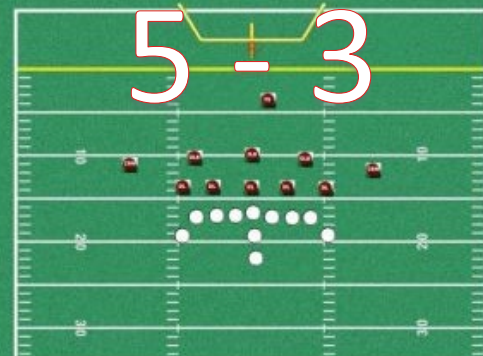
**YOU NEED BOTH TO WIN CONSISTANTLY**



# Common Defenses for Youth Football



The best way to make sure your team's skillset is utilized on the defensive side of the ball is to pick a formation that allows them to shine. A youth team defense should be simple yet effective, so that your players can fly around and pursue the ball. A well-run defense is crucial to any team who aspires to win championships and play quality football at the same time.

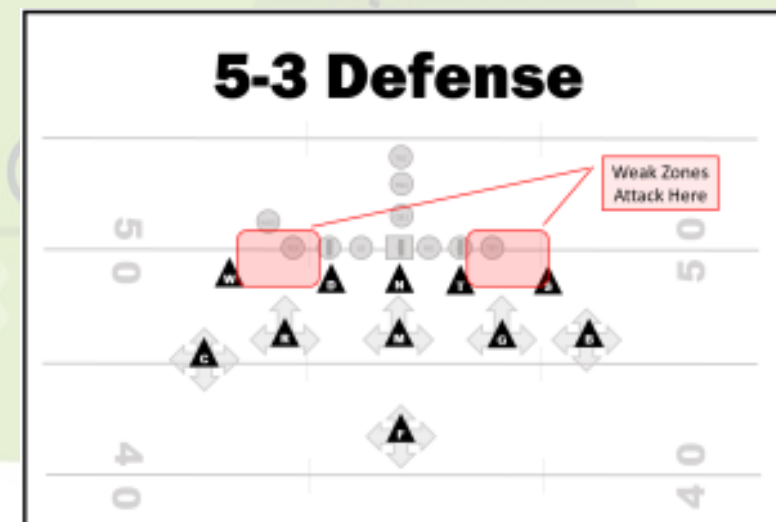
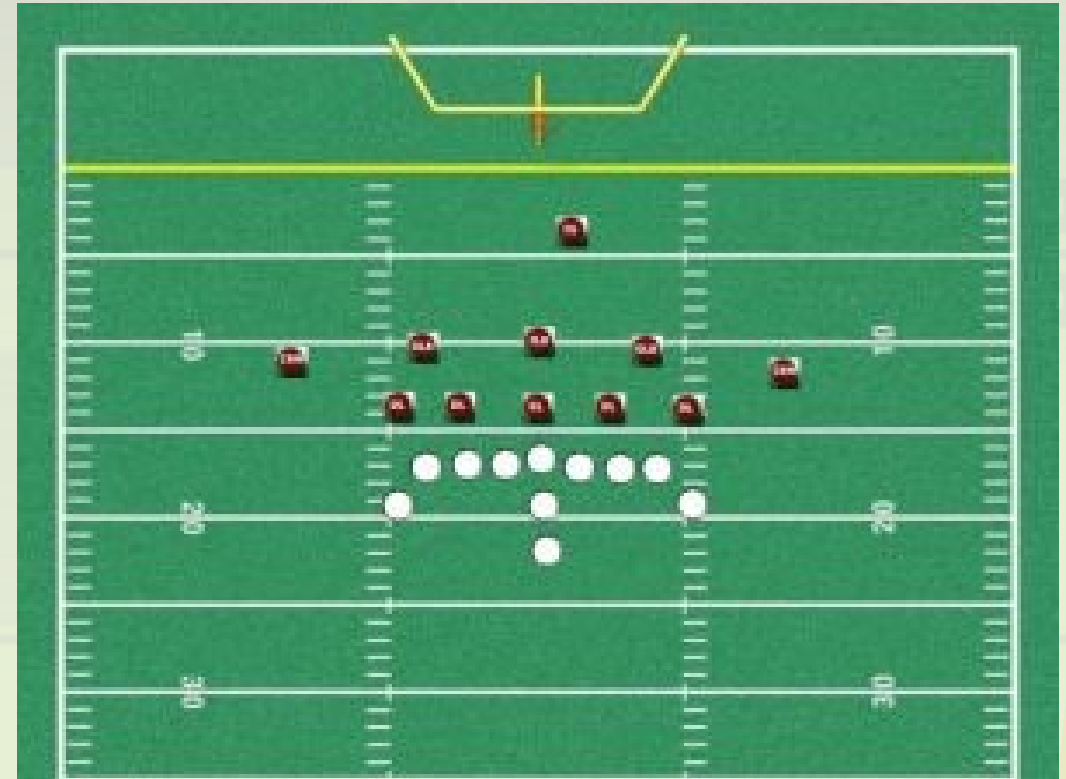


Different leagues face different offenses and present separate challenges, be flexible with your defensive schemes.



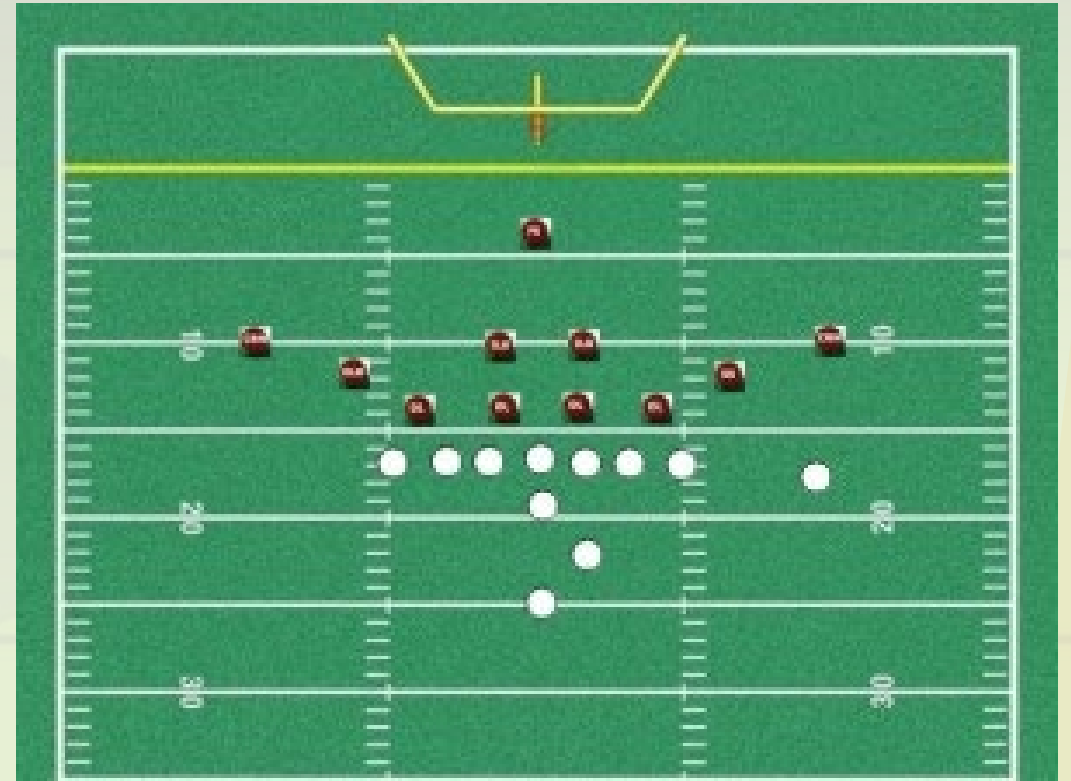
# 5 - 3 Defense

- The 53 defense is probably the most common defense in youth football.
- The defense is a solid defense for youth football. It puts 8 defenders in the box to stop the run.
- This defense is a simple, yet effective. It is sound against the run and effective against the pass.
- The great thing about this defense is that you only have to find 3 linebackers. Whereas the 44 you need 4 linebackers.
- It also has 5 down linemen which will allow your 3 linebackers to be free off blocks and make plays.
- This also a great defense to hide some of your weaker players as they get required plays.



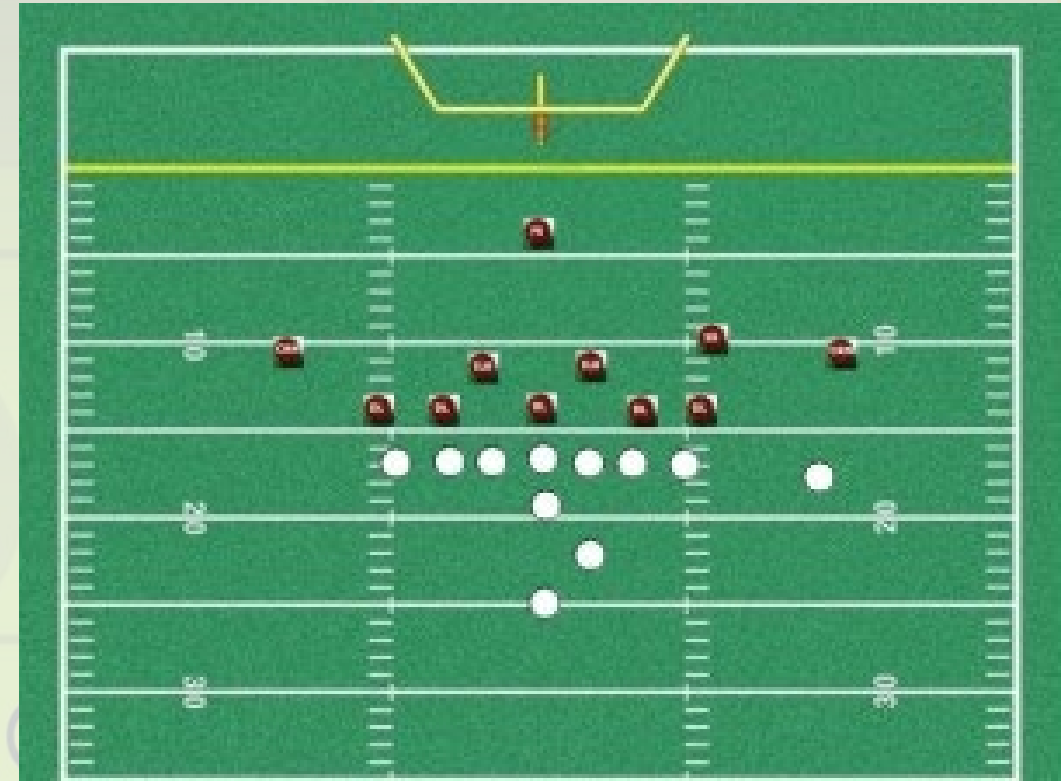
# 4 - 4 Defense

- The linebackers are stacked behind the defensive linemen. The secondary has two cornerbacks along with a free safety, playing center field.
- The 44 stack is a great way to confuse the offensive linemen's blocking scheme.
- Stacking your linebackers will hide which defender is attacking which gap.
- The 44 stack makes the offenses pre-snap read difficult.
- The 44 defense is a blitz and stunting friendly defense. This defense has 4 linebackers that can blitz at anytime.
- Having 8 defenders in the box in youth football is a good thing, stop the run.



# 5 - 2 Defense

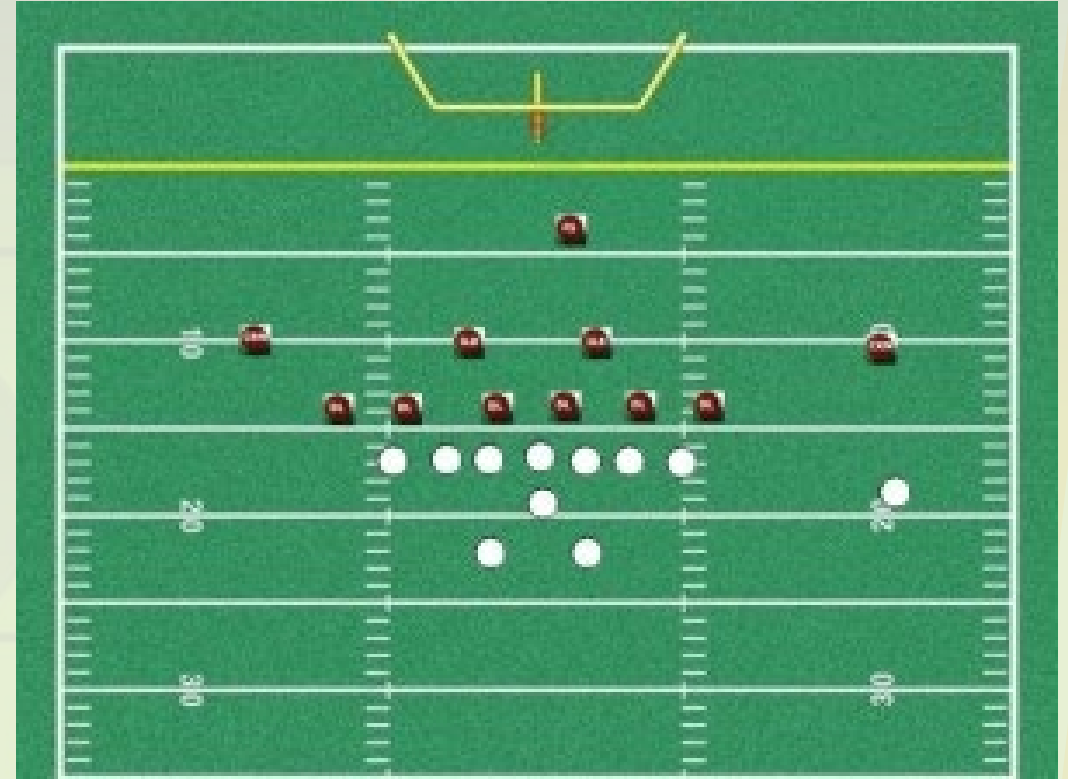
- The 52 defense is commonly used youth football defense. There are 5 down linemen. There are 2 inside linebackers, with 2 cornerbacks. There is a free safety and a strong safety.
- This defense is great because of the strong safety. The SS can be moved to any area of the field.
- Having a strong safety allows the defense to adjust accordingly to multiple offensive formations by only moving one player (bringing the strong safety over to strong side).
- In youth football it is good to keep defenses basic, focus on getting off blocks and tackling.
- What is also good about the 52 defense is that the strong safety can play the strong side flat zone (against slants, screens, flare passes).





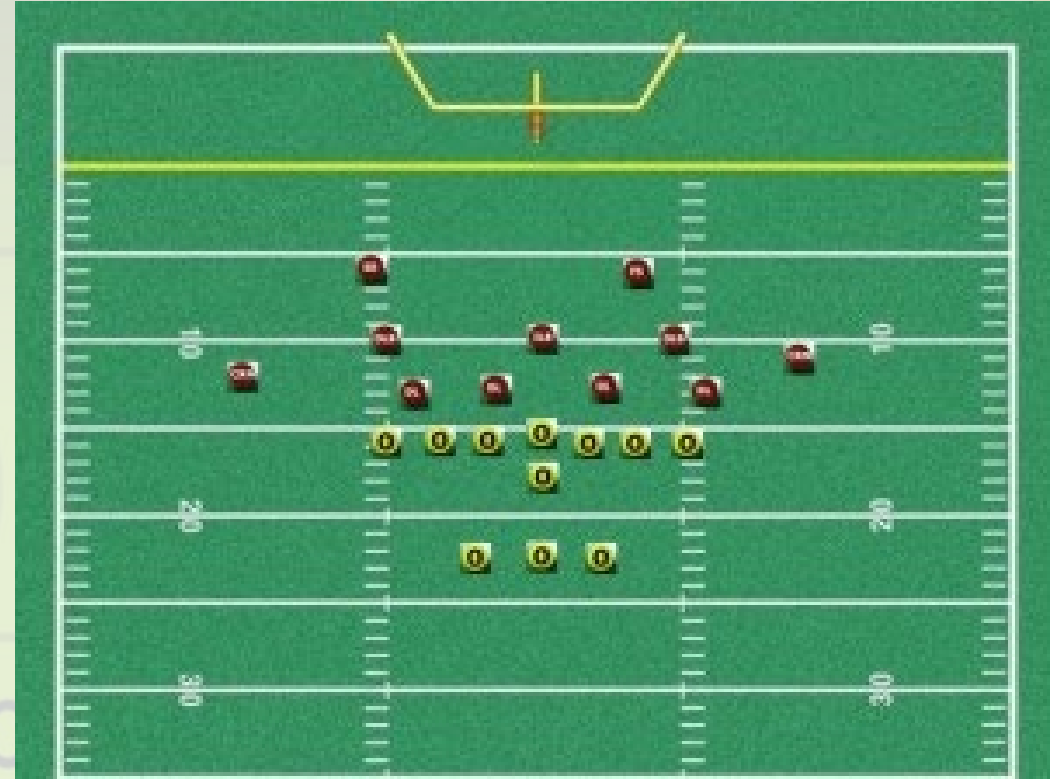
# 6 - 2 Defense

- The 62 consists of 6 down linemen, 2 inside linebacker and 3 secondary players (2 corners and 1 safety).
- This defense is tough against the inside isolation and power plays.
- The 62 defense is also good for hiding some of your weaker players (minimum play players) in the interior of the line with little chance of giving up large yardage.
- Youth football linebackers are sometimes hard to find, so coaches usually can put your two best players at the inside linebacker positions.
- Having 6 down linemen will also occupy most of the interior gaps. This will leave your two linebackers free from blocks, allowing them



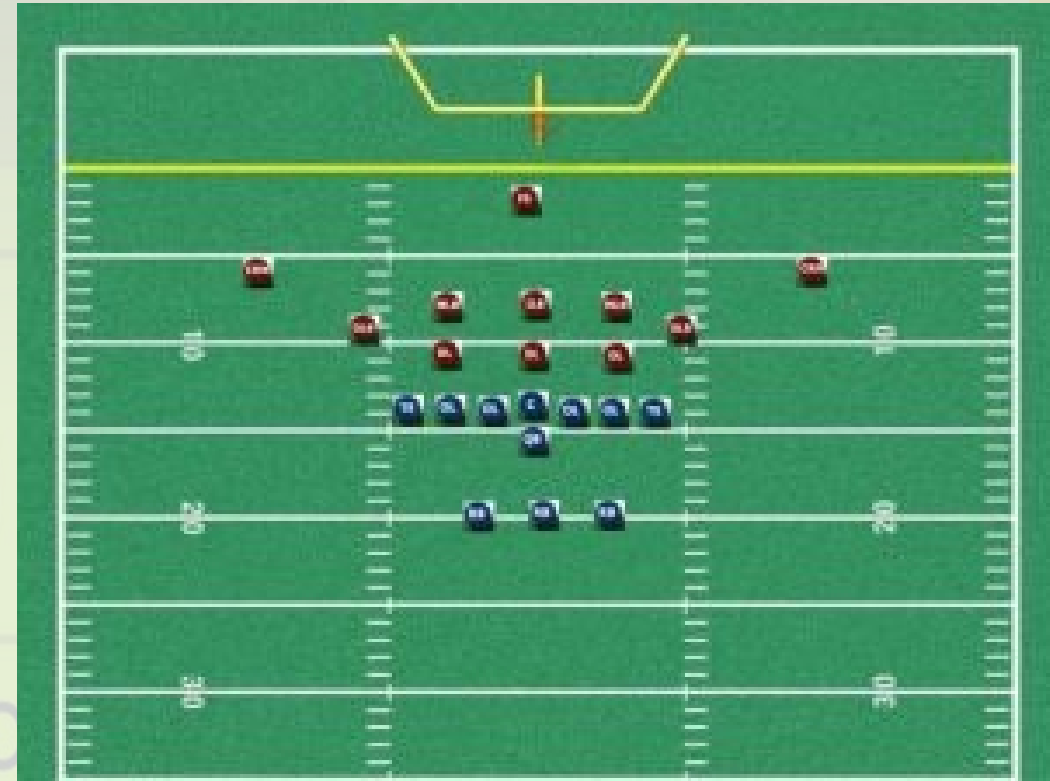
# 4 - 3 Defense

- The 43 defense is not a very common defense in youth football, because it only has 7 defenders in the box.
- What is good about this defense is that it has two safeties. This will allow you to adjust to the strong side of the offense only having to move one player (one of the safeties).
- You can shift into a 44 defense easily as well; bringing down a safety to make an 8-man box.
- The 43 is also very successful in pass coverage. The cover two works well in passing situations.
- Cover 4 (four deep coverage) is also great for prevent. Although, this defense is decently rare in youth football, it can still be a successful defense.
- It is simple to implement, which is definitely a good thing. Easy and simple is key for youth football.



# 3 - 3 Stack Defense

- 🏈 The 33 stack defense is designed to confuse the offense with the “stack” look. Having the stacked linebackers will really confuse the offense.
- 🏈 Combination blitzes and defensive linemen slants will be a nightmare for offenses.
- 🏈 This defense is also very flexible; it is easy to get into the 44 or 53 defense-with minor player movement.
- 🏈 The 33 defense will put pressure on the offense, because they will not know where the blitz is going to come from.
- 🏈 It is a great defense for youth football. It will eat up many different youth football blocking schemes. Even though I have always had a 5-man front, I use a lot of 33 stack defensive philosophies.





# Youth Football Defense



## Win 3<sup>rd</sup> Down

You cannot allow the offense to have a consistent offensive attack. Playing solid defense on 3<sup>rd</sup> down will limit the time of possession of the opposing offense. If offenses cannot possess the ball they cannot score.

## Stop the Run

The success of a youth football offense is based entirely on the offense's ability to run the ball successfully. When implementing or creating a defensive scheme make sure it is designed to stop the run first.



## Blitzing

This is when the defense sends additional players to rush the quarterback in order to sack or pressure him into throwing an inaccurate pass. The defense usually tends to send one or more linebackers or defensive backs to rush the quarterback, in addition to the defensive lineman.

## Stunts

A stunt is a pass-rushing maneuver by two or more defensive players in which they alter their course to the quarterback by temporarily switching roles, hoping to confuse the offensive linemen and get to the quarterback.

# By The Numbers



**80%**

The overwhelming majority of youth coaches run the 5 – 3 Defense

**50%**

The amount of time your defense will be on the field.

**33%**

1/3 of your team will be standing around doing nothing during one of your practices.

**25%**

Good youth teams never pass on more than 25% of their offensive plays.

**10%**

Winning teams in the last three Pop Warner, AYF and Rocky Top National Championships blitzed less than 10% of the time.





# TOP 4 Mistakes Youth Coaches Make

01

## Scrimmaging too much

Spending more than 50 % of your practice scrimmaging leaves little time for developing players and allows bad habits to go unnoticed.

02

## Too much conditioning

Bad teams spend 25% or more of their practice time doing non-football related conditioning type drills

03

## Poor Defenses

Most of the poorly coached teams devoted less than 25% of their practice time to defense.

04

## Poor Teaching Methods

Coaching youth football is teaching, whoever teaches the most effectively and efficiently will consistently win.



# Questions & Comments



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