

# **Running Backs Manual**

***M.O.B. SQUAD***

**Coach Jeff Nixon**

## **About the Author**

This manual was written when Jeff Nixon was the running backs coach and recruiting coordinator at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, a 1AA University. Prior to UT Chattanooga, he was the running backs coach at Princeton University and Shippensburg University

Since the publication of this manual, Coach Nixon went on to coach at Temple and then moved to the NFL with the Philadelphia Eagles, Miami Dolphins – coaching Running Backs at each stop. Jeff also coached Tight Ends with the San Francisco 49ers before moving to Baylor University as its Offensive Coordinator and recently was named Running Backs Coach with the NFL's Carolina Panthers.

A former West Virginia and Penn State running back, Jeff lettered at both schools and had the privilege to play for legendary coach Joe Paterno at Penn State University, and Don Nehlen at West Virginia University. He received his B.A. degree at Penn State University in Elementary Education before entering the coaching profession.

Before entering college, Jeff was an All-State running back out of State College, PA and played in the renowned Big 33 football game. Jeff is an active member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and served as a huddle coach at Tennessee-Chattanooga.

Jeff and his wife Laura Juvanne Nixon have three children, William Apollos Nixon, and twin girls Faith and Hope Nixon.

## Foreword

I met Jeff Nixon when he first joined the staff at Shippensburg University in 1999. A brilliant, hardworking, young coach, Jeff quickly made a positive impact on the program in numerous ways and there was a significant and immediate improvement in the overall play from the three running back positions.

In the Wing – T, at least in the variation used at Shippensburg, ALL running backs must block, catch, and run for the offense to “fire on all cylinders”. The base sweep and belly plays work only with a block from the halfback. The base Waggle and Keep Pass work best when backs are receiving threats. Finally, the Dropback and Sprintout packages that most coaches have added to the Wing-T play action package require blocking from one or both backs – usually the fullback.

During the years in which Coach Nixon coached the Shippensburg running backs, the Raiders featured very productive offenses. During the 2001 and 2002 seasons, record after record was smashed by Halfback Dave Brown and Fullback John Kuhn. Kuhn later went on to play in the NFL with the Green Bay Packers and New Orleans Saints. I am sure that both players would attribute much of their success to Coach Nixon.

The complete Running Backs Manual and the companion Running Back Drills and Fundamentals videos can be purchased in their entirety at [www.compusportsmedia.com](http://www.compusportsmedia.com) . They can also be found in the Member Resource Library at [www.optioncentral.net](http://www.optioncentral.net).

I am confident that Jeff Nixon’s Running Back Drills and Fundamentals eBook and Videos will make you a better coach.

Nick Interdonato  
Editor and Publisher

## **Introduction**

During my football career I have had the opportunity to play for and coach with many tremendous individuals who have shaped my knowledge of the game of football. These individuals have impacted me in my pursuit in putting together this running back manual and video.

Many of the drills and techniques that are featured in this video and manual were taught to be by offensive coordinator Fran Ganter of Penn State, and running backs coach Larry Holton, formerly of West Virginia University. I appreciate all the support and guidance many people have given me during my playing career and as a coach.

I developed this video and manual to help coaches at every level to develop better more complete running backs. Running Backs Drills and Fundamentals is a complete guide that will no doubt help coaches develop running backs that are adequate in all three phases of being a good running back (ball carrying, blocking, pass receiving). Through specific drills and proper teaching of techniques, Running Backs Drills and Fundamentals offers step by step instruction on fundamentals and techniques of offensive running back play.

The components of both the manual and video are arranged so that it is easy to understand and follow each drill and the teaching/coaching points. I sincerely believe that this is one of the best running back videos and manuals out there on the market and again will no doubt benefit your football program when it comes to offensive backs play.

If you are looking for a complete guide to coaching running backs, Running Back Drills and Fundamentals will help you reach your goal.

Coach Jeff Nixon

# **Running Back Drills and Fundamentals**

## **Coach Jeff Nixon**

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## **Summary**

# **Philosophy and General Information**

# Running Back Motto

**M**aking

**O**thers

**B**etter



## General Information

The **running back** position provides an outstanding opportunity for a player to make a tremendous impact on the team. Within an offense, the running back position can be the most honored position on the field. An effective balanced offense requires the running backs to be involved in each and every play. A tremendous effort must take place on every play, regardless of responsibility. A running back has to be a complete football player by being a great blocker, pass receiver, and runner. No other position on the field will touch the ball more than the running backs, and it is up to the running backs to make the plays that will enable us to be successful on offense. Are you up for the challenge?

## Mental Preparation

**Confident, aggressive, physical, athletic, intelligent, poised, explosive.....**

You have the point. You are very important to how effective our offense will perform on any given game day. You must be in excellent physical condition and willing to be a physical player! You must be mentally prepared to unleash your energy on game day in a way that is productive to the team. You must be a totally positive force for your teammates. **Confident** players believe in themselves! **Aggressive** players take it to the defense at all times. **Physical** players are willing give 100% on each and every snap. **Athletic** players make things happen! Intelligent players know the situation and their assignments. **Poised** players can play with the required emotion, without being swallowed by the same emotions. **Explosive** players know how to turn up the heat at the right time. You must be **focused!**

### The Big Play

Running backs must make **big plays** to win the game. If we expect to have a championship team, we must make the big plays that will give our team a lift during crucial situations. A big play provides the entire team excitement and energy that can last throughout the game. The pressure is on the running backs to make things happen!

## Who Plays On Saturdays?

**The performance of the individual players** will decide the outcome of who gets on the field. Each running back will be evaluated during off-season workouts, spring practice, summer camp and their overall commitment to the team. The coach's responsibility is to put the best players on the field to give the team the best chance to win. It is up to the player to compete and beat out your challengers for the position. Everyone will have an opportunity to make an impact on the team. The Coach will get the player physically and mentally ready for action. It is up to you the player to work hard and compete for a job during the year. A player must not let the team or himself down by not giving 100%

## **Fundamentals of a Running Back**

1. Being unselfish and doing what is right for the team!
2. Working hard and giving himself the best opportunity to be successful on and off the field.
3. Having pride and confidence in his ability
4. Everything starts with a good mental attitude.
5. Always know proper alignment and assignment (no mental mistakes).
6. Never fumble the football (two arms around the ball when breaking the L.O.S and being tackled).
7. No dropped passes
8. Running Skills:
  - A. Attack the tackler
  - B. Know the blocking at the point of attack
  - C. Always fight for extra yardage
9. Be a great faker!
10. Take pride in blocking
11. Always run North-South
12. Make big plays and finish off runs (think touchdown).
13. Be leaders on the field.
14. Never be afraid to ask questions.
15. Make every play and practice the best of your career.

## **Running Back Qualities**

### **Hardest Worker on the team: Always strive to be the best!**

1. Accept nothing but being the best at all times!
2. Have the best work habits and attitude of anyone on the team.
3. Be first or near the top in all activities.
4. Study the game. By watching film, studying your playbook, and by asking questions and paying attention in meetings, you will become a more complete football player.
5. Show excitement and enthusiasm on the field.

## **Running Back Goals**

- 1. To win the National Championship**
- 2. To win the Conference Championship**
- 3. To limit our number of fumbles (none)**
- 4. To limit our number of penalties (none)**
- 5. Average at least 5.0 yards per carry for the year**
- 6. Average at least 10.0 yards per catch for the year**
- 7. Have at least four big plays a game (20+ yards)**
- 8. To average 175 yards rushing per game.**

# **Law of the Jungle**

- 1. Protect the football at all cost.**
- 2. Protect the quarterback.**
- 3. Be Physical.**
- 4. Run the football with second and third effort.**
- 5. Run defined routes – catch the football.**
- 6. Score touchdowns - win the game.**

## Coaches' Expectations and Requirements

1. Avoid trouble with the law and fellow students at all cost. Some people love to see athletes get into trouble. Don't be stupid! You know right from wrong! You owe it to your teammates and yourself to stay out of trouble.
2. Alcohol consumption is a major problem on most college campuses. During the academic year there should be no drinking during the week. Alcohol breaks your body down over a period of time. You can't be at your best in the classroom or on the field if you are constantly drinking. You can have fun without it! If you are under 21 you should not be drinking at all. Don't be a follower!!
3. You are required to go to all of your classes. You are here to get an education first and then play football. Do your best in the classroom!
4. Be a disciplined person. You have a very hectic schedule with your academic work and football. Don't get caught up with everything else that might distract you from your goals. Be responsible for your actions.

## My Role as Your Coach

1. To help you graduate.
2. To help you develop as a football player and enjoy your experience as an athlete.
3. To give you guidance and counseling whenever needed.
4. To be there in your time of need.
5. To help you win a Championship.

## Running Backs Policy and Information Sheet

### **Running Backs have to be on time for meetings!!**

During the course of the year I know that certain circumstances will come up during the times that we are scheduled for meetings. Therefore each running back will be allowed to come late or make up a position meeting three times during the football season as long as you call before the scheduled meeting. That means if we are having a running back meeting and you walk in the door one minute late without calling, there will be consequences to pay (extra running, demotion, etc.). There is no excuse for not being responsible or for being late. Be at the meetings ten minutes in advance.

### **Running backs should and better be ready to practice when coming out of the locker room!**

That means as soon as you step on the practice field you better have all of your equipment on, helmet buckled and be ready to go. This rule will be strictly enforced. Running Backs should be out on the field at least five minutes before pre-practice warming up (the seniors are in charge until the coach gets out to the field). Failure to abide by these rules will result in punishment.

### **There are three rules that we live by!!**

1. Do what is right
2. Do your best
3. Treat others like you want to be treated

## Characteristics of Winners and Losers

### **Winner**

- Works hard all of the time
- Self-motivator
- Doesn't make excuses
- Wants to be a winner
- Plays and practices to best of his ability
- Team Player
- Lead by example

### **Loser**

- Practice hard just some of the time
- Need to be motivated on a daily basis
- Never reach their full potential
- Inconsistent
- Blames others for their own mishaps or mistakes Want to do everything their own way.

## Player Evaluation Sheet

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>WORK ETHIC (WINTER LIFTING)</b>	
<b>WORK ETHIC (SPRING RUNNING)</b>	
<b>STRENGTH</b>	
<b>SPEED</b>	
<b>OVERALL BODY CONDITIONING</b>	
<b>KNOWLEDGE OF ASSIGNMENTS (Alignment &amp; Execution)</b>	
<b>BIG PLAY POTENTIAL</b>	
<b>BALL SECURITY</b>	
<b>BLOCKING</b>	
<b>PASS RECEIVING</b>	
<b>TOUGHNESS</b>	
<b>ATTITUDE</b>	
<b>COACHABLE</b>	

**TOTAL POINTS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**COMMENTS:**

## Notes from the Coach

- Come talk to me first if you have a problem or get into any type of trouble. I would rather hear the story from you before I hear it from someone else. It will really bother me if you don't come to me.
- Give 100% effort in the classroom and on the field. Effort impresses coaches.
- Give the Offensive Linemen credit as much as possible. This gives them confidence.

• Don't be a me guy! Give your teammates all of the credit for your success. We are all in this together. There is no I in team. Let other people brag on you!

- Tardiness is completely unacceptable. There is no excuse for being late to any team function! Set your clocks and watches ahead.

• You will be disciplined for tardiness, missing class, or breaking team rules. Consequences follow your actions!

- Believe in yourself and your dreams. My dream is to win a National Championship. With hard work our dreams can come true!
- On the field, don't worry about your mistakes. Look forward to the next play. There is nothing you can do about the past except learn from your mistakes.

• Leave everything on the field. I may yell and scream on the field at times, but I am just trying to make you a better player. Don't take it personal! I have high expectations for everyone. I am not going to let you do anything poorly.

• Let's have some fun this year!