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**BUILDING EFFICIENCY IN YOUR QB DRILLS**

During the past 7 years, Winona State's QBs have been some of the most productive in the NSIC, including Jack Nelson throwing for over 12,000 during his 4-year career, the most in NSIC history. That stretch has also earned us multiple 10-win seasons, along with hosting the 1<sup>st</sup> Round of the NCAA Division II Playoffs in 2017. During my time here, we have focused daily on one word in our QB Drills that I think has helped our guys have continued success: EFFICIENCY.



No matter what we are doing, whether it's in the meeting room or on the field, our QBs get told daily about the importance of Efficiency. So, it only makes sense that all the drills I design for practice follow in this same suit. Whether it's efficiency with time, efficiency with our schemes, or efficiency with our body movements, everything I do with our guys centers around this one word. It doesn't matter what level we are talking about, teaching the QB to be an efficient player is essential for the success of any team.

## DRILL DESIGN

Coaching has changed a lot over the last 10 years with the increases in technology that all of us have at our disposal. With QBs specifically, there has been a significant increase in QB coaches and Passing Academies across the country that are showing all of us the things they are doing via Twitter and Facebook. As coaches, all of us love to watch the drill tapes and read the articles to try and incorporate the next cool drill to our practice repertoire. This can be one of the biggest mistakes younger coaches make; trying to incorporate drills they have seen from somewhere else into their practices simply because they think it looks cool. The drills you bring to practice every day with your QBs need to fit your system and your style of play. If they don't, you're simply wasting your QBs time and not being efficient with the small amount of time you have for individual practice.



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When setting my base teaching with the QBs, the first thing we talk about before all our drill work is the need to have good body position and balance. I base everything I do off this diagram: creating the E for Efficiency. That is straight out of our QB manual.



The most important thing we talk about is the need for our Shoulders, Hips, and Feet to be aligned in all our movements. And, if we do have to break from this position for whatever reason, our goal is to try and get back to this position as soon as possible. I have found the best way to keep my guys in this position is to focus on having “Quiet Shoulders”. The less the shoulders move, the less the head and eyes move which makes it easier to focus on coverages. No matter what drill I am doing with my guys, this is always going to be one of the main coaching points for me is to remind them about “Quiet Shoulders” and trying our best to remain in that “E” position. I used a clip pulled straight from a video of Peyton Manning for this diagram.

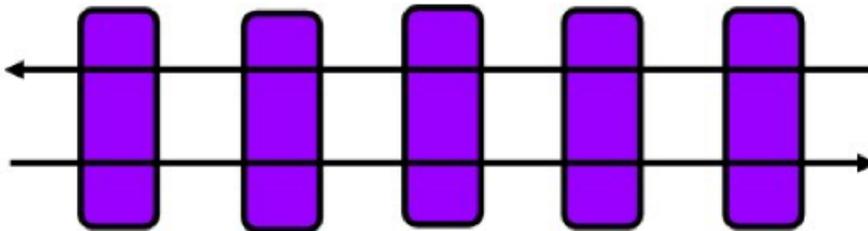
In designing drills, we must be cognizant of our offensive schemes and the style of QB we are using. If you are not a pocket team, you probably don't need your guys working on a lot of drills that keep them in the pocket. Practice the same movements they will have in a game. For us, we are a Pro-Style offense with our QB spending about 75% of the time under center. With this in mind, I do a lot of our drills being run from under center and a variation in the gun. The need to work both variations for us is very important and we will start all our teaching from Under Center.

# EDDS

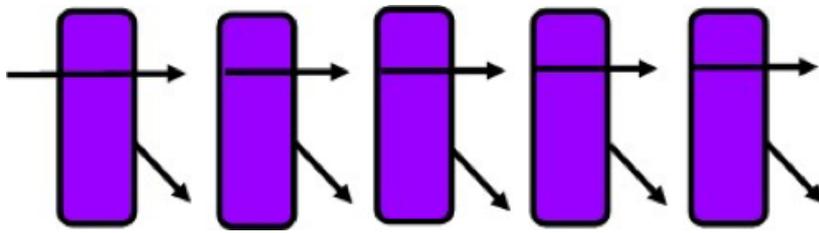
Throughout my career, I've been a big believer in establishing EDDs (Every Day Drills) that apply to your style of play. Finding the most important movements of your QBs and incorporating them into a set of drills for every practice is a good way to create muscle memory. During our Pre-Practice time, the QBs will go through their throwing progression to get warmed up. Once we start practice, I focus more on the footwork during my drills. Because we are a Pocket Based passing offense, I like to use step-over bag work for our EDDs to help with footwork and body posture. Here is our Progression which my guys can get through in 5 minutes:

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1. Using the bag set up, we will run through the bags with 2 feet in each bag to get loose going down and back. This helps work on getting them to pick their feet up. I also will incorporate times where they go backwards as well to work on keeping their feet up and eyes down the field. I have included a clinic video. Main Coaching Points: Both hands on the Football and Eyes up at all times.



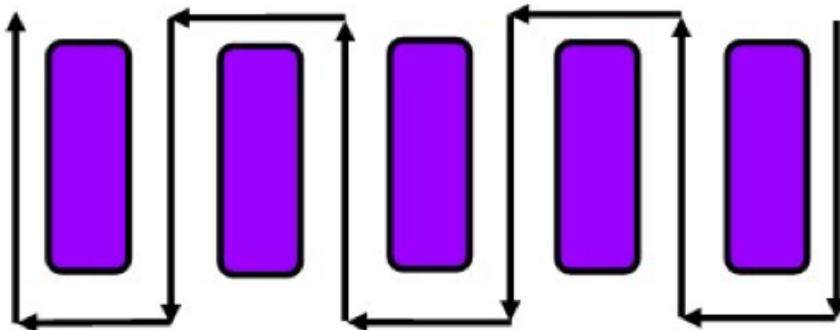
2. Being able to move the hips and feet quickly is essential for any QB, regardless of style. For this part, we continue over the bag with both feet and flip our hips at a 45-degree angle to the right. Coming back, we will flip our hips to the left. Main Coaching Points: Focus on flipping hips and feet quickly while keeping feet parallel to each other when we land. Shoulders should stay flat with eyes up towards our target.



### Keller - Winona State QB Drills 2



3. As we are a 3-Step, 5-Step, and Play-Action Passing game, we now work on our drops from under center and work a shuffle drill weaving through the bags. I have seen some different techniques taught in terms of kicking to move side to side, but I always teach to kick with the back leg (right leg for a RH QB). The kick goes first followed by the left foot keeping a good wide base. I like the right foot to move first to allow us to plant and move forward more efficiently. We then shuffle forward repeating this through the bags. (Diagram #5) Main Coaching Point: Good wide base, kick with Right leg first, Eyes always up.



### Keller - Winona State QB Drills 3



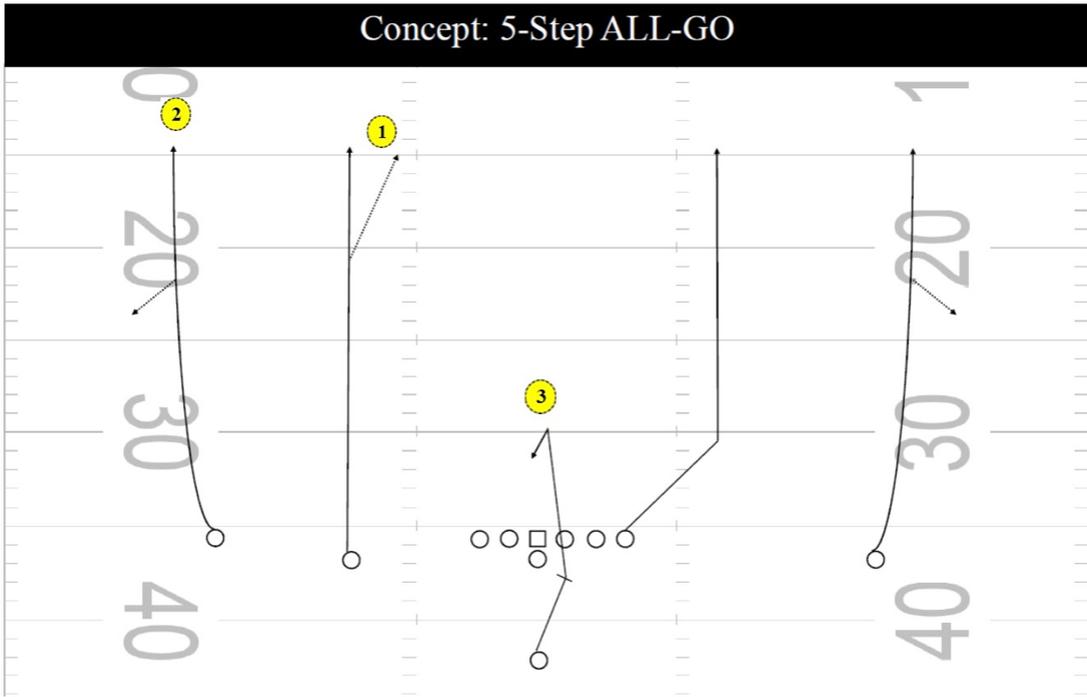
# SCHEME SPECIFIC DRILLS

Conceptually, we base everything we do out of 2 Major Concepts: 4 Verticals, and Hi/Lo Combinations. With both our Vertical Game and our base install of a Hi/Lo Concept, we have built-in an option for the QB to throw a quick route off his 5<sup>th</sup>step based on coverage or blitz. Both routes are shown below with read #1 being the throw that would come off the 5<sup>th</sup>step.

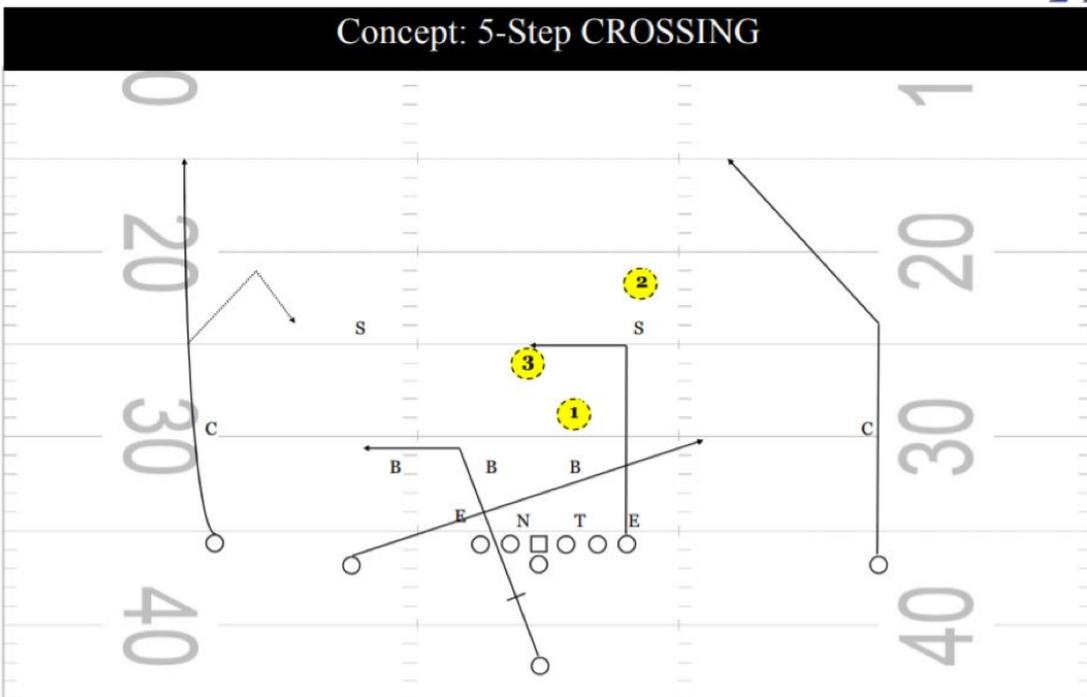
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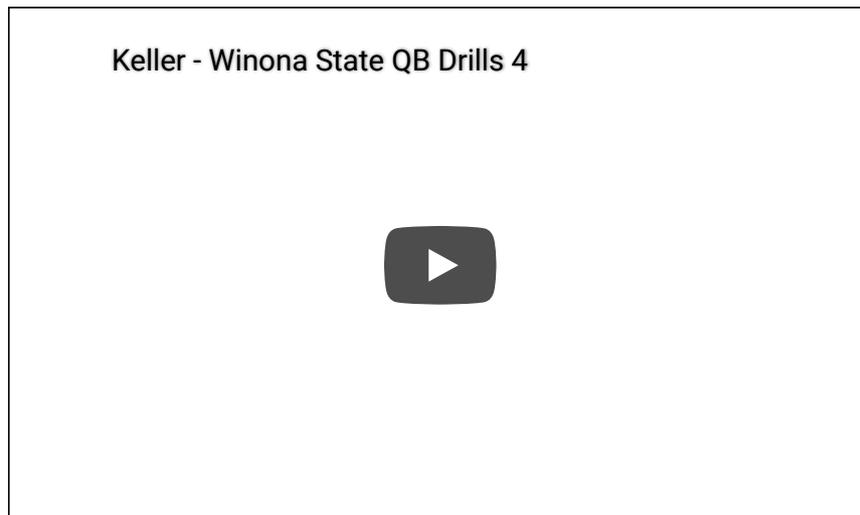
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Although both throws are shorter compared to most in our playbook, the ability of the QB to “Choke” his drop to get the ball out quicker is tougher to teach. For this throw, there are some points that I cover with my QBs to be able to not only get the ball out quicker but on target as well.

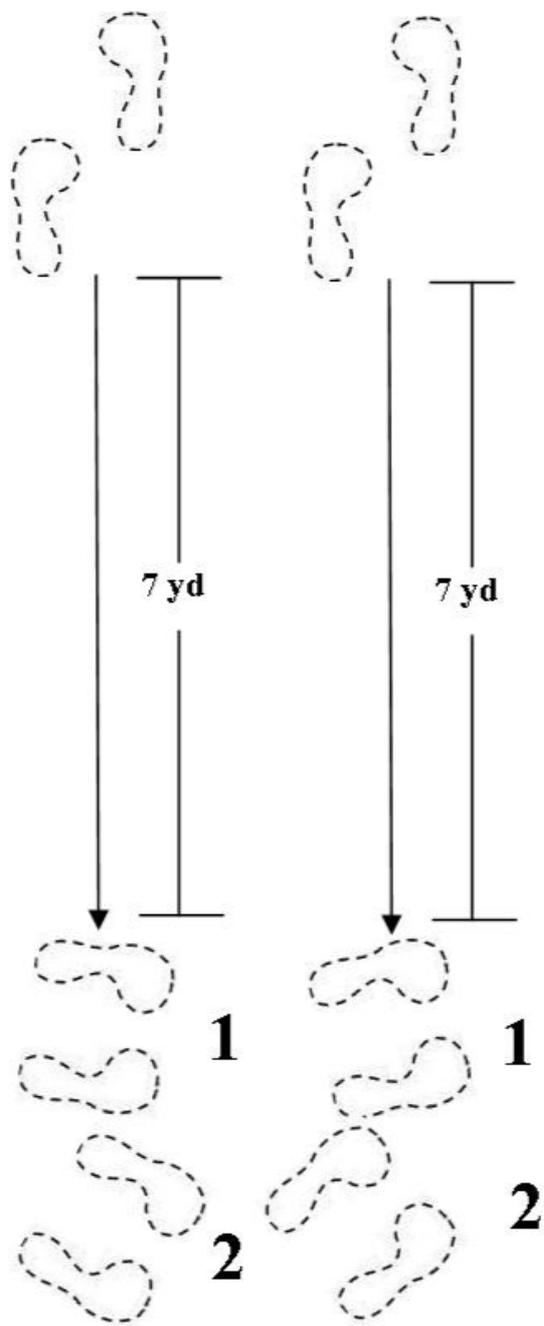
1. We will shorten our 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> steps (“Choke Down”) to be able to get the ball out quicker
2. As our right foot plants on the 5<sup>th</sup> step, we focus on pushing forward to help get our weight transferred forward preventing throwing off our back foot and the ball sailing.
3. As our right foot plants on the 5<sup>th</sup> step, we also look to open or close the right toe to help get our hips aligned to our target when throwing to one side or the other.

For this technique, we use a partner and the yard lines to help give the QB a reference point of a straight line. One QB starts at the top of the numbers and the other QB stands on the sideline. The QB on the field will begin dropping straight down the line, with his partner walking, until his partner claps his hands. At this point, the QB chokes down his drop, pushes forward off the right foot and completes the throw. We do this to the opposite numbers and then switch partners and come back. Main Coaching Point: Make sure to chop steps 4 & 5 to slow our momentum allowing the right foot to plant and the weight to get shifted forward towards our target.



## 5-STEP DROPS

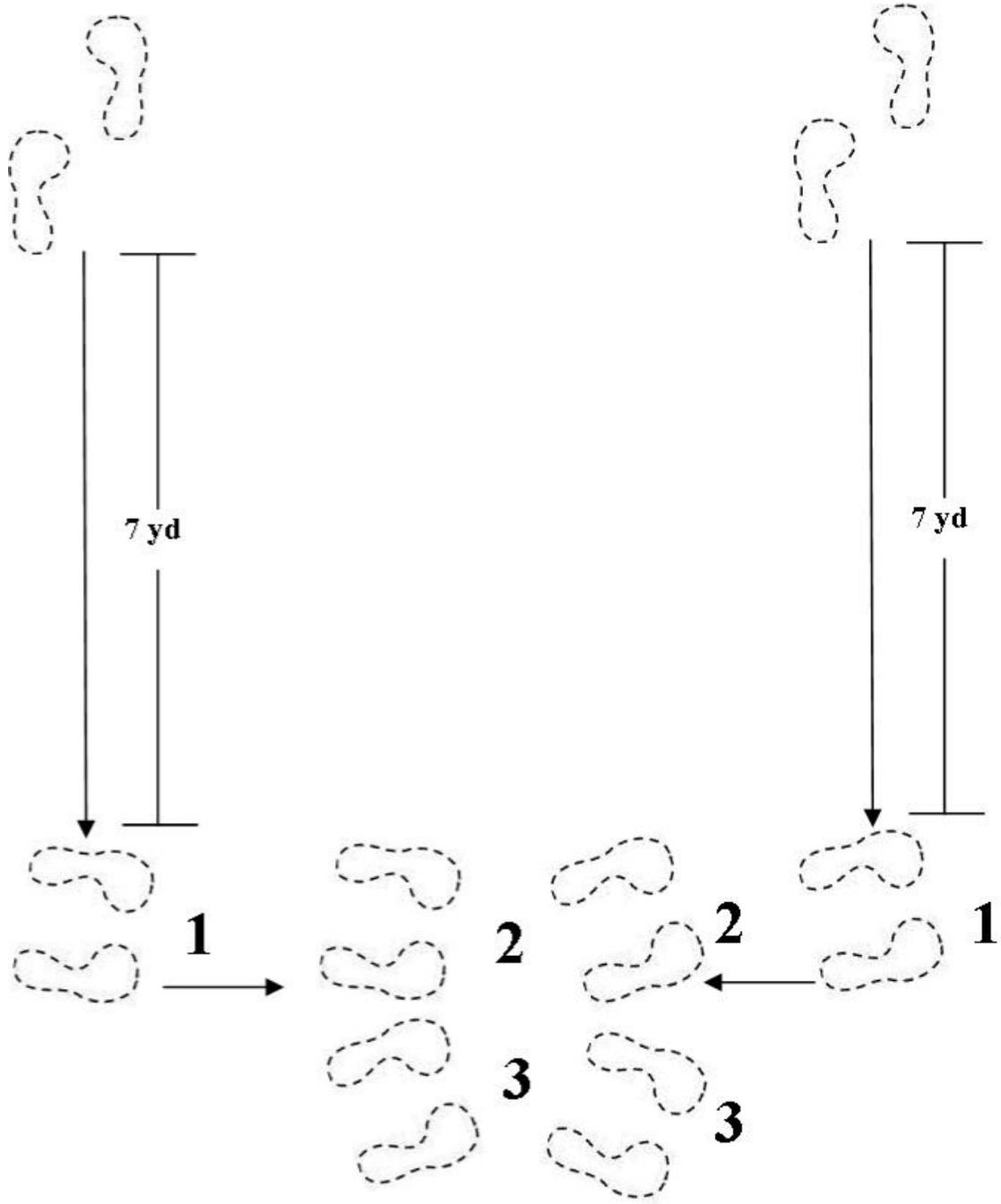
Being a 5-Step Passing team, I work on a lot of our drills based on the 5-step drop from under center. Going back to our vertical passing game from earlier, I teach our 5-step drop based on Safety read for progression #1, to a Corner read for progression #2, back to our RB check down. In all our drills, we go through this progression both right and left. We work to get back as fast as we can to allow more time to read coverage. Main Coaching Point: Make sure the feet stay parallel to each other as the feet get shifted to the 2<sup>nd</sup> progression.



Keller - Winona State QB Drills 5



I also like to incorporate the need to move around in the pocket along with adjusting our feet. I started by talking about the need to get back to the "E" position, so we work a lot on moving in and out of the pocket to get back to this position for the most efficient throw. To do this, I now incorporate a call side kick to avoid pressure, then resetting our feet to progression #2.



Keller - Winona State QB Drills 6



**STEPPING UP & AVOIDING**

One thing I think that can be taught no matter the system is the technique of stepping up in the pocket to avoid a rush. As a pocket passing team, I also teach a lot of kicks to avoid the rush and reset. But this is done primarily due to the fact that our QBs are pass first, run as a last resort. Because of this, we teach a lot of stepping up in the pocket with resetting of the feet to keep our shoulders in line with our target. I then build in different reads off the step up to get the QB to reset his feet to that throw building off the schemes and read progressions I talked about before. Main Coaching Point: As the QB steps up, the ball must be brought back across the body and down to avoid being hit by a defender. The QB then needs to rest and get back to the “E” position.

#### Keller - Winona State QB Drills 7

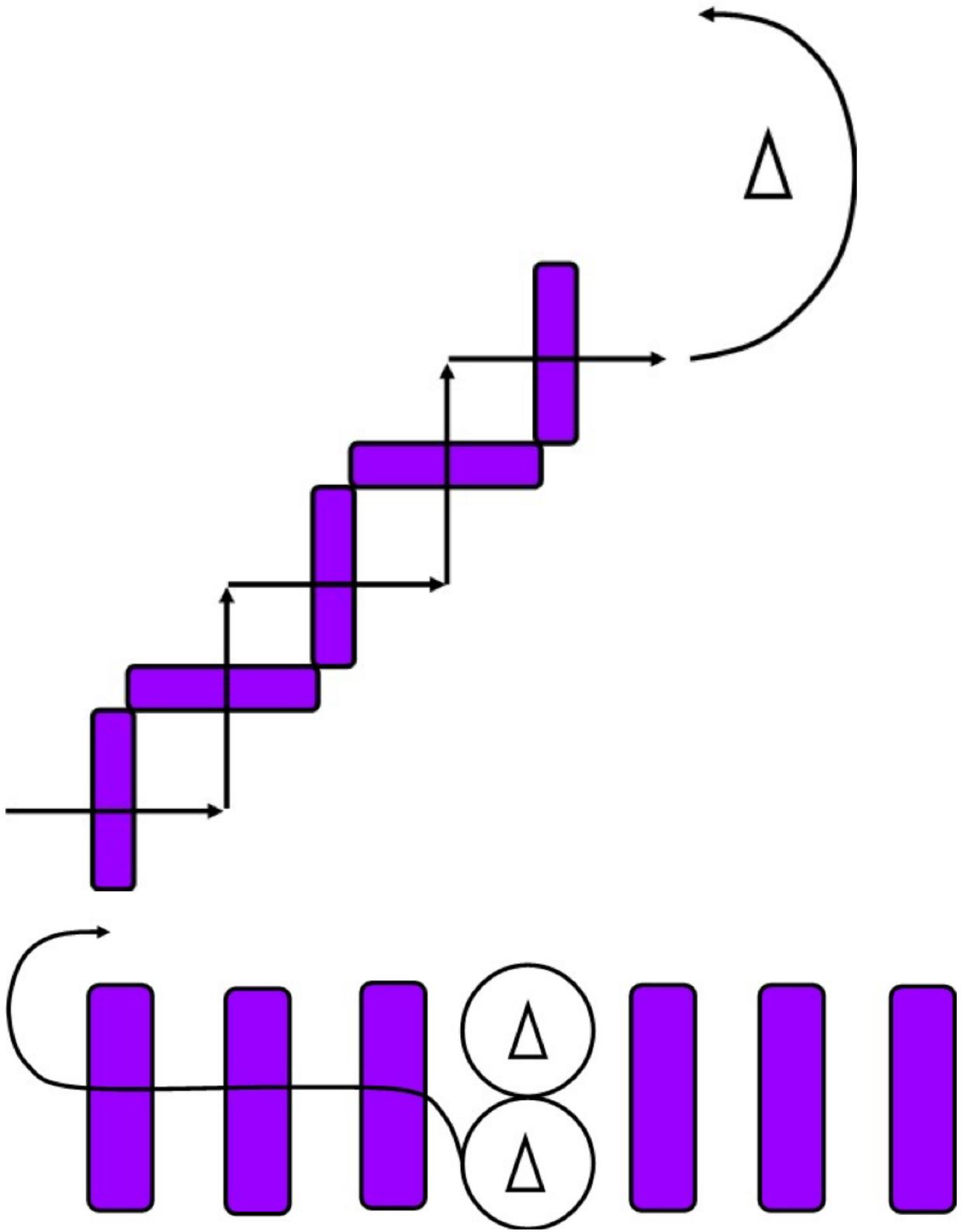


#### Keller - Winona State QB Drills 8



## **ADDITIONAL BAG/CONE WORK**

I think step over bags and cones are great tools for QBs because they teach them to pick up and move their feet rather than sliding them along the ground. Almost daily we have additional Bag or Cone drills that we do to help build on all the techniques we've covered. Here are a couple of examples with links to the drills.



Keller - Winona State QB Drills 9



### Keller - Winona State QB Drills 10



### Keller - Winona State QB Drills 11



### Keller - Winona State QB Drills 12



## **CONCLUSION**

No matter what scheme you're running in your offense, the ability to build drills for your QBs that will be applicable to the movements they will have in a game is essential to creating Efficient QB play. I picked the 2 most popular concepts that we run in our offense to build drills the QBs can use every day to try and mimic all the movements they will have on any given Saturday. You can incorporate exercise balls to help them avoid pressure, hand shields, etc., but I wanted to make sure I gave you a base of some of the things we teach here at Winona State.

I appreciate the opportunity to write this article for all the AFCA coaches who have been so invested in seeing our great sport grow and prosper. Our job is to produce the best players on and off the field possible, and it's my belief that our efficiency as coaches can go a long way in making this a reality for our players.

Cameron Keller (<https://winonastatewarriors.com/coaches.aspx?path=football&rc=884>), a longtime offensive thinker who has consistently put high-powered offenses on the field, Cameron Keller has been on staff for nine seasons and is entering his seventh as the Assistant Head Coach/Offensive Coordinator in 2019. Keller has put explosive and balanced offensive units on the field each season during his tenure at Winona State. Keller came to Winona State from Culver-Stockton, where he spent the 2010 season as head coach. During his time with the school, Keller oversaw a program that snapped a 33 game losing streak.

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