

MSU FOOTBALL: LINEBACKER METHODS  
& DEFENSIVE TACTICS

By

Ryan Manalac

AN INTERNSHIP DEFENSE

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Kinesiology

2012

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Academic and Professional Background .....	1
Career Plans .....	1
Internship Site .....	2
Internship Purposes .....	2
Glossary of Uncommon Terms, Abbreviations and Acronyms .....	3

### **Chapter 2: Internship Procedures**

Institutional Setting & Supervisor .....	9
Clientele .....	9
Time Commitment .....	9
Specific Objectives .....	10
Timeline of Activities .....	12

### **Chapter 3: Outcomes of the Internships**

Objective #1 .....	13
Objective #2 .....	24
Objective #3 .....	34

### **Chapter 4: Conclusions and Recommendations** .....44

### **Appendices:**

Weekly Logs of Activities .....	Appendix A
Linebacker Methods.....	Appendix B
Defensive Tactics.....	Appendix C
Scouting Report .....	Appendix D
Summary Reports.....	Appendix E
Evaluation Letter.....	Appendix F

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### Academic and Professional Background

I earned my Bachelor of Business Administration degree from the University of Cincinnati in 2008. Upon graduation of my undergraduate degree, I pursued a professional career in the National Football League. While my time spent at the highest level in football was not glamorous, I was able to learn firsthand the tactics and techniques utilized at the pinnacle of the football profession. From there, I began my graduate studies at Michigan State University in the summer of 2011. Presently, I have completed twenty-two credit hours in the field of Kinesiology with an emphasis in Coaching. I am expecting to graduate at the conclusion of this semester where I am taking eight credit hours to complete the thirty credit hours needed for program completion. Along with my graduate level courses I have completed two years learning as a Graduate Assistant with the Michigan State Football Team under Head Coach Mark Dantonio.

### Career Plans

My short-term career plans are to graduate this winter with a Master's degree in Kinesiology and continue to learn and add value to the Michigan State football team as we strive to become champions. I set out through my research and education hoping to graduate with a tangible set of ideals and a plan that I can take with me on my journey to becoming a successful coach and mentor of young men. Summer semester 2012 I completed an independent study on leadership, forging the ideals that will guide my coaching behavior. This internship will help complete my initial objectives, developing a plan for coaching that I can take with me to earn my first job as a position coach in the profession. My long-term career plan is to become a loyal head football coach of a university that wins a national championship while teaching young men

to be leaders, graduate with meaningful degrees, handle adversity to achieve their dreams, and to become champions on and off the field. Completing this internship will be the final step in advancement towards completing a Master's degree. This will give me a competitive advantage of education in the field as I seek to compete with others for positions as I work my way up to a head football coach.

### Internship Site

The internship took place at the Michigan State Football facilities including the football offices, meeting rooms, indoor and outdoor practice fields, and our game stadium. These locations included the following:

- Skandalaris Football Center
- Duffy Daugherty Practice Facility
- Spartan Stadium
- Joe D. Pentecost Football Team Meeting Room

### Internship Purposes

1. To learn the fundamentals of the linebacker position and how to implement the coaching progression.
2. To establish a basis of defensive strategy including general philosophy and specific tactics.
3. To expand and broaden my ability to recognize and understand opponents philosophies and tendencies utilizing opponent scouting methods.

There was a major activity that was undertaken to achieve each objective. In order to learn the fundamentals of the linebacker position and how to implement the coaching progression, I collaborated with linebacker coach Mike Tressel to see his plan each day for administering position meetings and practice drills. Through the accumulation of this information I was able to put together a coaching progression and can explain how it should be implemented. Second, in order to establish a basis of defensive strategy, including general philosophy and specific tactics, I attended weekly meetings with the defensive staff to absorb the weekly tactics used to defend

the opponents' offenses we saw through the 2012 season. At the end of the season, I compiled the strategies we used to defend our opponents. Lastly, in order to expand and broaden my ability to recognize and understand opponents' philosophies and tendencies utilizing opponent scouting methods, I broke down film each week, compiled scouting reports, generated summary reports, and completed necessary studies to seek an advantage over our opponents.

### Glossary of Uncommon Terms, Abbreviations & Acronyms

Alignment – The specific starting point for a defender in relation to the offensive formation.

Back Seven – Term referring to the three linebackers and the four defensive backs.

Backfield – The offensive players who line up behind the line of scrimmage.

Base Defense – The defensive front and coverage scheme that we run most often.

Base Pressure – The most common defensive play where we bring pressure with five or six defenders across the line of scrimmage.

Blitz – A defensive scheme in which six or more defenders are sent to rush the quarterback.

Boot Pass – An offensive play where the quarterback fakes the running play one way and exits the other with an offensive lineman who pulls out to protect him.

Boundary – The short side of the football field when the football is snapped from the hash.

Breaking Down Film – The act of extracting information from watching film and entering the data into a spreadsheet.

Bubble Pass – An offensive play where the quarterback quickly throws the ball laterally to a receiver who bends back a couple yards while running sideways away from the quarterback.

Coverage – A term that describes the strategy a defense uses to defend passing plays.

Deep Ball – A pass that is thrown vertically down the field generally to a wide receiver running full speed to catch it.

Defensive Backs – The position grouping in the secondary of the defense including the safeties and cornerbacks.

Defensive Ends – The positing on the defensive line outside of the tackles.

Defensive Scheme – The combination of front and coverage or blitz that creates a defensive play all.

Down and Distance – In football, offenses get four downs or plays to move the football ten yards towards the end zone. “Down and Distance” refers to which down the offense is currently on and how many yards they need to get that original ten yards to achieve a new set of downs.

Edge Rusher – A defender that attacks the line of scrimmage from the outside of the offensive tackle.

End Zone – The area at either end the field between the goal line and the end line where teams can score points.

Field – The wide side of the field when the football is snapped from the hash.

Film Cut-up – A group of plays lumped together for convenient film viewing purposes.

Formation – The alignment of the eleven offensive players

Front Seven – Term referring to the four defensive linemen and three linebackers. (Or vise versa)

Game Plan – The prepared plan of strategy to be executed on game day.

Goal Line Situation – A situation in the game where the offense is five yards or less from the goal line.

Huddle – The coming together of players pre-snap so that they can communicate the strategy for the play.

Install – The introduction of information and plays on a given practice.

Jailbreak Screen Pass – An offensive play where one of the wide receivers delays and comes behind blockers taking advantage of aggressive defenses or defensive back alignments.

Line of Scrimmage – An imaginary line that from the tip of the ball running parallel to the sidelines that neither team can pass until the ball is snapped.

Linebacker – Position grouping between the defensive line and the defensive backs, slightly off the line of scrimmage.

Motion – A pre-snap lateral movement by someone in the offensive backfield.

Naked Pass – An offensive play where the quarterback fakes the running play one way and exits the other way with no protection.

NFL – National Football League

Offensive Line – The position grouping including the center, guards, and tackles on offensive that block and protect.

Offensive Line Splits – This distance between each offensive lineman in their alignments.

Offensive Tackles – The position outside the guards and the outermost part of the line formation unless there is an attached Tight End.

Over Front – A defensive alignment of the defensive tackles to the strength of the formation. Specifically a three-technique to the strength and a one-technique away from the strength.

Overtime – Situation where a football game ends in a tie after four quarters of regulation. In college football this results in both teams getting equal opportunities to score from the twenty-five yard line.

Pad Level – Term used to describe the leverage of a player. Low pad level, which is desired, is the result of an athlete bending at the ankles, knees, and hips in order to play with power.

Pass Block Protection – On any given pass play, the offensive linemen and usually the running back work together to block the defensive pass rush and protect the quarterback so he can throw the football.

Pass Concepts – The sum of individual routes run by the wide receivers to attack the weakness of the defense's coverage.

Pass Route – The specific running pattern of a wide receiver on a given play.

Passing Yards – The amount of yardage accumulated by completing passes.

Personnel – The usage of players at each position on a given play.

Play-action Pass – Term used to describe a pass play that begins by faking a run play.

Pre-Snap – The time between the officials spotting the ball to start the play clock and the actual snap of the ball by the center.

Receivers – Position grouping on the offensive side of the ball that catch the passes of the quarterback and block on the perimeter.

Run Blocking – Attacking movement of the offensive line trying to create a path for the running back to gain yards.

Rushing – Running the football.

Rushing Yards – The amount of yardage accumulated by running the football.

Sacks – A tackle on the quarterback behind the line of scrimmage.

Scheme – Term used to describe the offensive or defensive strategy.

Scout Team – Group of players that execute the plays of the opponent's team.

Screen Pass – A short forward pass where the receiver is protected by a screen of blockers.



Shift – A pre-snap movement where the offense cannot snap the ball because there are not enough players on the line of scrimmage set for a second or multiple players are moving.

Short Yardage – A situation in football where the offense only has one or two yards left to get the first down.

Snap Indicator – A verbal cadence or gesture usually given by the quarterback that lets the center know when to snap the football.

Sprint-out Pass – An offensive play in football where the quarterback will take the snap and literally sprint out to one side.

Tailback – Position on offense that aligns in the backfield and generally carries the ball on run plays. Also known as a running back.

Tell – A giveaway of information based on alignment or inability to conceal intentions.

Tempo – The speed at which an offense operates from the end of the play to the start of the next play.

TFL – Tackle for loss.

Thick Skin – Insensitivity to correction, criticism, or insults.

Three-step Pass – A pass play where the quarter literally takes three steps back and quickly throws the football.

Three-technique – The defensive tackle aligned outside the guard to the strength in the over defense.

Total Yards – The sum of rushing and passing yards.

Trick Play – A play that is designed to work based on deception.

Two Minute Situation – Situation at the end of a half where an offense tries to score quickly generally with two minutes or less time on the game clock.

Two Point Conversion – An opportunity from the three yard line that an offense can elect to take after scoring a touchdown.

Visual Key – The target a player looks at to help him figure out what the play is and how to react.

## **Chapter 2: Proposed Internship Procedures**

### Institutional Setting and On-Site Supervisor

The institutional setting for the proposed internship was the Michigan State Football facilities, which include the football offices, the meeting rooms, the practice fields and Spartan Stadium. Coach Mike Tressel was responsible for directing and supervising the internship. Mike Tressel, Special Teams Coordinator and Linebackers Coach, joined Michigan State on December 1, 2006 and is entering his seventh season as a Spartan. He began his professional career as a graduate assistant coach at South Dakota from 1996-1997 where he earned his master's degree in sports administration. In 1998, Coach Tressel became the offensive line coach (1998-2000) and offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach (2001) at Wartburg College in Iowa. In 2002-03, Coach Tressel was a graduate assistant linebackers coach at Ohio State, which led to him being hired at the University of Cincinnati as the linebackers and special teams coach from 2004-2006. Prior to his coaching career, Coach Tressel was a four-year starter in the secondary at Cornell College where he was a two-time Academic All-American.

### Clientele

The clientele, with whom I worked, was the Michigan State Football Team. The players were all male college students aging 17-23 years. Along with the players I worked with the coaches, support staff, athletic trainer, strength and conditioning staff, and the students that work in the office.

### Time Commitment

Over the fifteen weeks semester from August 29 until December 7, I devoted approximately 1,350 hours to this internship. Although the semester started August 29, football camp began

August 3 and so did my observations and experiences for this season as it pertains to my objectives for this internship. This early starting date added roughly 375 more hours to the internship as camp generally started at 6:00 a.m. and ended daily around 9:00 p.m. In addition to these general hours, there were five away games. These sites include the following locations:

- Mount Pleasant, MI
- Bloomington, IN
- Ann Arbor, MI
- Madison, WI
- Minneapolis, MN

The general weekly breakdown is outlined below:

#### WEEKLY HOURS

- Sunday – 12 Hours (10AM – 10PM)
- Monday – 16 Hours (6AM – 10PM)
- Tuesday – 16 Hours (6AM – 10PM)
- Wednesday – 13 Hours (6AM – 7PM)
- Thursday – 13 Hours (6AM – 7PM)
- Friday – 10 Hours (11AM – 9PM)
- Saturday – 10 Hours (6AM – 4PM)

**Total – 90 Hours**

#### Specific Objectives

Objective 1: To learn the fundamentals of the linebacker position and how to implement the coaching progression.

- Collaborated with Coach Tressel to see his plan each day for administering position meetings and practice drills.
- Applied coaching techniques specifically to the linebackers.
- Prepared for player meetings and set up drills to coincide with the master progression plan.

- Developed a coaching progression for the outcome of this activity that was self-evaluated and evaluated by Coach Tressel.

Objective 2: To establish a basis of defensive strategy including general philosophy and specific tactics.

- Attended weekly meetings with the defensive staff to absorb the weekly tactics used to defend the opponents' offenses we saw through the 2012 season.
- Prepared and executed the scout offense team to help prepare our defensive staff to familiarize our team with the tactics needed to immobilize the opponent.
- Compiled our overall defensive strategy and tactics at the end of the season to be self-evaluated and evaluated by Coach Tressel for the outcome of this activity.

Objective 3: To expand and broaden my ability to recognize and understand opponents' philosophies and tendencies utilizing opponent scouting methods.

- Broke down films each week, compiled scouting reports, generated summary reports, and completed necessary studies to gain advantages over our opponents. These reports were given to the entire defensive side of the team.
- Developed a plan of breaking down opponents so that each week we were able to utilize five games for our scouting report.
- Submitted my situational summaries of the scouting report to Coach Tressel for evaluation, demonstrating the most pressing tendencies from our opponent each week.

### Timeline of Activities

1. 09/02/12 – Compile Weekly Log. Distribute and Organize Information Per Objective.
2. 09/09/12 – Compile Weekly Log. Distribute and Organize Information Per Objective.
3. 09/16/12 – Compile Weekly Log. Distribute and Organize Information Per Objective.
4. 09/30/12 – Compile Weekly Log. Distribute and Organize Information Per Objective.
5. 10/07/12 – Compile Weekly Log. Distribute and Organize Information Per Objective.
6. 10/14/12 – Compile Weekly Log. Distribute and Organize Information Per Objective.
7. 10/21/12 – Compile Weekly Log. Distribute and Organize Information Per Objective.
8. 10/28/12 – Compile Weekly Log. Distribute and Organize Information Per Objective.
9. 11/05/12 – Compile Weekly Log. Distribute and Organize Information Per Objective.
10. 11/11/12 – Compile Weekly Log. Distribute and Organize Information Per Objective.
11. 11/18/12 – Compile Weekly Log. Distribute and Organize Information Per Objective.
12. 11/25/12 – Compile Weekly Log. Distribute and Organize Information Per Objective.
13. 12/02/12 – Compile Weekly Log. Distribute and Organize Information Per Objective.
14. 12/07/12 – Prepare Final Report (Outcomes, Conclusions & Evaluation Letter)

\*Weekly logs for the internship are located in **Appendix A**.

## Chapter 3: Outcomes of the Internship

Objective 1: To learn the fundamentals of the linebacker position and how to implement the coaching progression.

1A. Collaborate with Coach Tressel to see his plan each day for administering position meetings and practice drills.

Coach Dantonio had each position coach post the most important fundamentals of their position in their meeting rooms. In the linebacker room, Coach Tressel had these fundamentals posted:

### **FUNDAMENTALS OF SPARTAN LINEBACKERS**

#### **1. KNOW THE DEFENSE**

-Be the quarterback of the defense. Only you are involved in the front seven and the back seven. Be responsible for all eleven players on the field.

#### **2. ATTACK THE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE**

-Build a wall on their side of the line of scrimmage. Play with the knowledge that TFL's change the game.

#### **3. PLAY SQUARE**

-Defensive football is a game of reaction. Be able to change directions at all times. Always maintain an athletic position ready to play with power.

#### **4. LEVERAGE THE FOOTBALL**

-Play inside out and trust our teammates to turn the ball back to you. The worst place on the football field to be is past the ball.

#### **5. ANTICIPATE & TARGET THE BLOCKER**

-Be the hammer, not the nail. Every play has a blocker assigned to you, identify him and beat him to the ball.

#### **6. BE A GREAT PHYSICAL TACKLER**

-The bottom line: Have a killer instinct and make plays!

These posted fundamentals are most important to Coach Tressel, so I made sure to take note of these as we prepared for practice. Summer camp was a fresh start for fundamentals at every position. During camp there was time to slowly teach and progress the techniques we used throughout the season from week to week. During camp there was also more meeting time to focus on us rather than prepare for an opponent. Although performance is always demanded, camp was the time of the year when development was stressed.

During the season on Tuesday and Wednesday Coach Tressel had two eight-minute periods during practice to plan for linebackers. During these sixteen minutes of practice as the linebacker position coach, he was tasked with administering eight minutes of what we call “ABC’s” which is more technical skills and eight minutes of what we call “Teach” which is more tactical skills. Throughout the season, the technical drills in the first period remained relatively similar. In this period, we focused on the physical aspects of the position, such as movements and power transfer for block defeat and tackling. The second period, “Teach,” was different every week. Teach is where we focused on teaching the run schematics or passing routes of the weekly opponent. We demonstrated to the linebackers where they needed to be in certain situations, who to key to best read the play, and what to expect out of certain formations. On Thursdays during the season there was only a five-minute period for individual position work. Every week this period was routine unless there was an essential change to the game plan or glaring correction from the previous practice that needed correction.

Every day before practice I went to Coach Tressel and asked him what drills we would be doing that day. He usually had already jotted down his plans. He included me in these drills, to aid in my development as a young coach. If I felt comfortable with the drills he would just tell me what the drill is and expect that I coach as he has previously taught me. If it was a new drill,



he would draw it up on his white board. In his teaching, he always told me the purpose of the drill and its relevance to our success as linebackers. Next, he showed me how to set the drill up and how to run it. Then he told me what to look for so I could coach the drill and achieve the results we wished to achieve by carrying out the drill.

Over the course of the season I collaborated with Coach Tressel and recorded our drills for each practice. The following table displays the drills we used in the linebacker individual periods during practice all year long.

2012 SEASON - LINEBACKER INDIVIDUAL DRILLS					
#	WEEK	DATE	PER	MIN	DRILL
1	BSU	08.26.12	ABC	5	STANCE, KEY, TRIGGER, CAGE MOVEMENTS, 3 MAN SHOCK
2	BSU	08.26.12	TEACH	6	JERK ROUTES VS. WRS, 2 MATCHES, 1 DROPS
3	BSU	08.27.12	ABC	7	STANCE START W/ CANS, CUT DRILL, TOSS G DRILL
4	BSU	08.27.12	TEACH	8	GUN READS, CHECK WET DRILL, 3 MATCH
5	BSU	08.28.12	ABC	7	STANCE, START, TRIGGER, 3 MAN SHOCK
6	BSU	08.28.12	TEACH	7	ROLL VS JET / JAC, DALLAS DRILL
7	BSU	08.29.12	ABC	6	KEY READS, BALL DRILLS
8	CMU	09.04.12	ABC	7	TRIGGER, CAN STANCE KEY, ISO
9	CMU	09.04.12	TEACH	7	3 MAN SHOCK, SPLITS WALK THRU
10	CMU	09.05.12	ABC	7	STANCE, KEY, TRIGGER, COMP WHEEL, REROUTES, 2 MATCHES
11	CMU	09.05.12	TEACH	7	DELTA MECHANICS
12	CMU	09.06.12	ABC	6	KEY READS, TRIGGER, BALL DRILLS
13	UND	09.11.12	ABC	7	TRIGGER, 3 MAN SHOCK, BLITZ
14	UND	09.11.12	TEACH	7	FORMATION RECOGNITION, DICK'EM FITS & MATCHES
15	UND	09.12.12	ABC	8	HOT BALLS, SHOCK DRILL
16	UND	09.12.12	TEACH	6	COMPETITIVE WHEEL, DELTA, DOS & DOC
17	UND	09.13.12	ABC	6	BALL DRILLS, BLITZ GET OFFS
18	EMU	09.18.12	ABC	7	KEY FW, TRIGGER, EDGE BLITZ, BLOCK DEFEAT
19	EMU	09.18.12	TEACH	7	MLB VS CENTER, OLB VS BOUNCE, MLB VS BT/NK, OLB BOUNCE FITS
20	EMU	09.19.12	ABC	7	STANCE, STEPS, MLB VS BOUNCE, OLB BALL DRILLS
21	EMU	09.19.12	TEACH	7	2 MATCH VS CROSSERS, COMP WHEEL
22	EMU	09.20.12	ABC	8	FOOTWORK, C.O.D., BALL DRILLS
23	OSU	09.25.12	ABC	7	TRIGGER, MAINE GET OFF, 3 MAN SHOCK
24	OSU	09.25.12	TEACH	7	GUN READS
25	OSU	09.26.12	ABC	7	KEYS, TRIGGER, CUT DEFEAT
26	OSU	09.26.12	TEACH	7	3X1 KEYS (*), CAMARO PATH (S,M), OPTION DRILL (*,M), COUNTER FW (S)
27	OSU	09.27.12	ABC	6	BALL DRILLS, RUN THE HEELS
28	OSU	09.27.12	TEACH	6	COUNTER FOOTWORK, 3 OPEN KEYS
29	IU	10.02.12	ABC	7	TRIGGER, CUT DEFEAT, BUBBLE DEFEAT
30	IU	10.02.12	TEACH	7	LB/DB SPOT/D/DBL SPOT, JET / READ
31	IU	10.03.12	ABC	7	TRIGGER, CUT DEFEAT, COMP WHEEL, DISENGAGE

32	IU	10.03.12	TEACH	7	MAINE TIGER, MASS DOC, 1 ALERT SQZ SETS, DELTA PASS MATCHES
33	IU	10.04.12	ABC	8	FW / C.O.D., BALL DRILLS
34	IOWA	10.09.12	ABC	7	KEYS / TRIGGER DRILL, SHOCK DISENGAGE, EDGE BLITZ
35	IOWA	10.09.12	TEACH	8	BASE ALIGNMENTS, 4/7 & 4/9, CHINA & ASIA
36	IOWA	10.10.12	ABC	7	STANCE, KEY, TRIGGER, EDGE BLITZ, TIP
37	IOWA	10.10.12	TEACH	7	FULMAR, DELTA
38	IOWA	10.11.12	ABC	8	FOOTWORK, C.O.D., BALL DRILLS
39	UM	10.16.12	ABC	7	TRIGGER, MAINE TIMING, BLOCK DEFEAT, REROUTES
40	UM	10.16.12	TEACH	7	POWER READ, JET SWEEPS, OPTION
41	UM	10.17.12	ABC	7	TRIGGER, MAINE VS PULLERS, GUN READS
42	UM	10.17.12	TEACH	7	DELTA MATCHES
43	UM	10.18.12	ABC	6	TRIGGER, BALL DRILLS
44	WISC	10.23.12	ABC	7	TRIGGER, BLOCK DEFEAT, BALL DRILLS
45	WISC	10.23.12	TEACH	7	JET SWEEP KEYS, WISCONSIN FAVORITES
46	WISC	10.24.12	ABC	7	TRIGGER, COMP WHEEL & HOOK & SWAT, REROUTES
47	WISC	10.24.12	TEACH	7	4 BANDIT, BASE ALIGNMENTS & KEYS
48	WISC	10.25.12	ABC	6	STANCE, START, BALL DRILLS
49	NEB	10.30.12	ABC	7	TRIGGER, EDGE BLITZ
50	NEB	10.30.12	TEACH	7	NEB RECOGNITION, GUN READS
51	NEB	10.31.12	ABC	7	WHEEL, PA REACTIONS, OPTION
52	NEB	10.31.12	TEACH	7	WHEELS, 4 STICK, HALO, TREY ROLL
53	NEB	11.01.12	ABC	6	STANCE, START, FALCON PATH
54	NW	11.06.12	ABC	8	CUT DEFEAT, OPTION DRILL
55	NW	11.06.12	TEACH	8	RUN FITS
56	NW	11.11.12	ABC	7	TRIGGER, CUT DEFEAT
57	NW	11.11.12	TEACH	7	OPTION DRILL
58	NW	11.13.12	ABC	6	BLOCK DEFEAT: CUT/IZ/BUBBLE
59	NW	11.13.12	TEACH	7	OPTION LEVERAGE DRILL
60	NW	11.14.12	ABC	7	CUT DEFEAT, BUBBLE DEFEAT
61	NW	11.14.12	TEACH	7	DELTA TEACH & ROUTE MATCHES
62	NW	11.15.12	ABC	6	TRIGGER DRILL & BALL DRILLS
63	MINN	11.20.12	ABC	6	HOTS W/ QB, STAR REROUTES, INSIDE BACKERS DISENGAGE
64	MINN	11.20.12	TEACH	6	JET MOTION ADJUSTMENTS & BLITZ VS. RB
65	MINN	11.21.12	ABC	6	HOT DRILL, BLOCK DISENGAGE
66	MINN	11.21.12	TEACH	6	DELTA TEACH
67	MINN	11.22.12	ABC	5	BLITZ PATHS

Coach Tressel was a great mentor to me and collaborating with him and observing him was paramount to learning the fundamentals of the linebacker position and how to teach football.

1B. Apply coaching techniques specifically to linebackers.

This part of the objective was all about teaching technical and tactical skills. To preface this area I think it's important to talk about three aspects of good coaches when it comes to

teaching and they are competency, uplifting positive energy, and belief. In terms of competency, a coach must be knowledgeable, prepared, and a capable teacher of what he's teaching. As it relates to uplifting positive energy, a coach must build positive attitudes as a reflection of his leadership. Enthusiasm is contagious. And lastly, there must be belief. A coach must believe in the players' abilities and believe in accomplishing the team goals. Belief is confidence building and leads to pride which diminishes fears of performance failure.

Time is a valuable commodity on the practice field. Every minute is meticulously scheduled so I've observed how Coach Tressel teaches drills to maximize the time and combined this with elements I've learned in the Kinesiology program here at Michigan State. In class, we learned about the four principles of teaching a technical skill, which are attention, retention, practice, and motivation. Attention involves getting everyone together to introduce, demonstrate, and explain the drill. Retention is reassuring verbally that the players understand the drill. Practice is the operation of the drill. Lastly, motivation entails encouragement and correction of errors.

At our practices, once the air horn blows to change periods, everyone had better be running to the next period. It's the coaches responsibility to shepherd those he's responsible for in that given practice period. So, if we are transitioning to individual drills Coach Tressel will be yelling something similar to, "Let's go backers! Everyone right here." He gets everyone together, looks the players in the eyes and tells them quickly and directly what we are doing.

Some days we would divide the group in half where he took a group for one drill and I took a group for another drill. Coach Tressel would instruct everyone which group they were in and everyone would depart urgently. This is where my opportunity to teach began. I would scurry my group to our designated area to work the drill. I huddled everyone up to explain the

drill. For example, “All right guys, today we are going to work on our stance and start. It begins with a perfect stance including your feet shoulder width apart and your toes straight ahead. Your knees should be bent, butt down, chest up, and eyes up. Your arms should be relaxed with your hands off your knees.” After verbally explaining the stance, I would demonstrate the stance and reiterate the coaching points. Once I had fully explained the drill, I would direct them where to go to begin and have the first guy walk through the drill and teach it one more time before beginning good practice repetitions. It’s important at our practices to get to the repetitions as quickly as possible in order to get film of the drill so that the players can see themselves perform the drill after practice in the film room.

During the practice of the drill, it’s important to progress the drill or the players will get bored. Three seems to be the magic number. Once each player has executed the drill three times, it’s time to progress the drill or change drills. In this drill, stance and start, we would progress the drill through different stages. The first stage would be stance and one mirror step. The next stage would be stance and two mirror steps. The final stage would be stance, step and run down hill. To add to the progression, as the coach I would change their visual key of tailback footwork and make them call out the corresponding running play that coincides with the footwork I demonstrate.

Throughout the practice of the drill, I’ve learned as a coach it’s important to consider my angle of observation. Coach Dantonio taught me this previously in winter workouts. I was running a drill giving hand signals as cues to the players to execute different movements and I was standing three feet in front of the finish line. Coach Dantonio told me to back up behind the finish line, so I can see the drill to completion. That way I can give the best feedback to the players in terms of how they performed the drill. Competence feedback, encouragement, and

motivation increase the quality of the drill. Every drill should simulate an aspect of the game. It's important that the players execute the drill at full speeds so they can get quality preparation for the situation in the football game where they will need the skill we are improving.

Over the course of the season, Coach Tressel gave me opportunities to teach every practice. I took away a few lessons that I will take with me as I continue to coach. First, the players will respond to the energy of the coach. Attitude truly reflects that of the leader on the field. If I have a positive attitude and enthusiasm, so will my players. Second, every drill needs to be fully prepared with a purpose and progressions. Half-prepared drills get half-hearted results and consequently you will be losing the attention of the players. Lastly, I learned it's imperative to give feedback. There's a quote from Coach Nick Saban that says, "If you're not coaching it, you're letting it happen." As a coach I want to take responsibility for the players in my position. If I let them get away with mistakes, I am hurting the team. It's all about having an attention to detail. Little things add up. If you concern yourself with the little things, the big things will take care of themselves.

A final thought on running drills and running practice in general is utilizing the motivational theory I learned in class called Flow. Flow is an area between anxiety and boredom where the difficulty of the task pairs up with the player's ability to accomplish the task. If the task is too easy the player will be bored. If the task is too difficult the player will have anxiety. If the difficulty of the task is just right, the player will be in this zone called Flow. In Flow, players are fully engaged and make the greatest improvements and have the most enjoyment of activities. My professor used video games as an example. He said, "Video games have Flow on lock-down." What he meant was that when you play a video game, the difficulty starts easy and gets tougher and tougher as you prove you can accomplish the task. The game is always one

step ahead, always challenging you to accomplish more but not so difficult that you can't achieve. Practice and drills should be the same on the football field. In order to promote flow there needs to be three aspects including moderate challenge, clear goals, and providing competence feedback. These are things I tried to bring to each drill I teach.

This activity was enormous in my development as a young coach. Truly learning how to teach involves practicing and that is what I was able to do. Watching Coach Tressel coach, and then having the opportunity to do it myself helped me achieve the desired objective.

1C. Prepare for player meetings and set up drills to coincide with the master progression plan.

During fall camp, I had the opportunity to attend all of Coach Tressel's linebacker position meetings. For many of the early meetings, I observed the way Coach Tressel ran the meeting. There are always so many pressing details to talk about, so I really paid attention to how Coach prioritized the information. Pre-practice meetings were centered on the new schematic defensive install for that day. This was deemed the most important because without this knowledge the execution of plays would be messy. In our meeting room there were at least four players for each of the three linebacker positions including seniors through freshman. Obviously the returning starters could ingest the install faster than the true freshmen that were at the bottom of the depth chart. So the question I thought was important was, how thorough should you teach when installing the defense? My observation suggested that a good barometer would be to go fast enough that the two-deep—starters and backups—have a good grasp on the information. These players will get the majority of the repetitions in practice and the players lower than this on the depth chart will have to eagerly ask questions to learn or fall behind. This

may sound cruel, but it would be a disservice to the starters if we spent too much time teaching the players who won't play on defense this year.

Post practice film is much different. These meetings are about correcting mistakes. I've been in these meetings as a player and can tell you sometimes it's difficult to take continuous criticism without feeling personally attacked. It's important that the players understand that they need thick skin and that as coaches we are correcting the performance not the person. I relate these meetings to what Pixar describes as shred sessions. Every morning at Pixar begins with the animators debating the previous day's work ruthlessly shredding each frame in sessions designed to critique, debate, and improve the film they are working on. Everyone in the room is committed to producing the best result possible. It should be the same thing in a football position meeting room with an exception. The exception I believe is that each player should focus on himself and his position and not critique another player aloud, that's reserved for the coach. Everyone should be focused on improving his craft for the betterment of the team.

Another aspect of all these meetings is the idea of positive psychology. We discussed in class to give criticism smashed between two compliments. For example, "Max, great acceleration into the block, you need to disengage sooner, but great effort getting to the ball." You can see here I complimented his acceleration and his effort and critiqued his disengage but because of the use of primacy and recency compliments, Max is left feeling good about the coaching point. It would be great if as coaches we could do this throughout a film session, but time constraints make this difficult. I don't think we would be able to cover all the necessary corrections and critiques if we added all the positive fluff to each coaching point. I discussed this with a previous professor and he came to the conclusion that a great solution would be to use the entire meeting as a critique sandwich. To do this, start the meeting with positive

compliments, then go into the film critique, and finally end the meeting with positive remarks, sending the players out of the meeting using primacy and recency positive notes.

One final thing on player meetings that I learned from Coach Tressel is self-evaluation. Often at the beginning of meetings, Coach Tressel will ask the players to pull out a piece of paper and write down what they did best from last practice and what they need to work on today. I think this is a great tool to building not only accountability but also autonomy from the players. Having the players feel that they are in control of their performance is essential for intrinsic motivation and confidence as an athlete.

From the meetings out onto the field, I will transition to setting up drills to coincide with the master progression plan. What I noticed working with Coach Tressel is that like many things, a teaching progression looks great on paper, but its execution is sometimes altered. I say this because as a position coach, you don't have complete control of the practice time and you don't know pre-season exactly what practices you will be able to teach what drills. For example, your progression may have edge blitz drill prior to coverage matches, but if on the second day of practice the coordinator doesn't install a blitz with an edge rusher, that practice would be better served teaching the coverage matches of the defense being installed. My take away learning point is to have every drill ready to go, fully prepared before the season, and then throughout camp, choose the ones each day that fit with that practice. This activity coupled with the first two gave me the understanding needed to successfully achieve my first objective in my internship learning the fundamentals of the linebacker position and implementing the coaching progression.



1D. Based on my findings of the previous sub-objectives, I have developed a coaching progression for the outcome of this activity.

Absorbing experiences and ideas from my playing days as a linebacker and the last two years as a graduate assistant, I have developed a pretty good idea of the position and all that goes into leading a group of young men toward success at the collegiate football level. My coaching progression includes my general philosophies, critical performance factors to the linebacker position, skill pyramids that I have developed for the position, technical skills, tactical skills, humble leadership quotes from my family, teaching progression and drills, my coaching creed, and lastly a template for creating a linebacker blueprint.

One of the inclusions in the coaching progression that I had not previously talked about in this objective is the quotes of leadership from my family. Last summer, I had the opportunity to take an independent study in Kinesiology and I focused this on leadership. Within the study, I read a few books about leadership, but the most dynamic impact I had was having the opportunity to talk with ten of the closest people in my life. Of these ten people includes my four grandparents, my parents, my three siblings, and my wife. Their words and advice on leadership will guide me in this profession and I will also pay these words forward to my athletes to help them grow as young leaders. From this study I devised my philosophy of leadership. The basis of my philosophy was a growth pyramid that begins with integrity, passion, and accountability. The next tier involves high standards, triage and communication, and the ability to push buttons. Lastly, in order to be a humble leader I believe you have to have the selfless confidence to step up. As a reflection of my development, I have assembled in **Appendix B** my coaching progression for the position of linebacker.

Objective 2: To establish a basis of defensive strategy including general philosophy and specific tactics.

2A. Attended weekly meetings with the defensive staff to absorb the weekly tactics used to defend the opponents' offenses we saw through the 2012 season.

The scouting report meeting began at 1:00 p.m. every Monday. Prior to this meeting every Monday morning Coach Narduzzi prepared formation and down and distance tendencies, Coach Barnett prepared notes on their passing game, Coach Tressel prepared notes on the running game, Coach Gill prepared notes on their offensive line and short yardage plays, and I made sure the scouting reports were ready to go.

The meeting started and the show and tell of reports began promptly at 1:00 p.m. The first things we looked at were the wins and losses for the next opponent and major statistical categories including total yards, rushing yards, and passing yards. After the major statistics, we looked at the personnel depth chart and individual statistics to get an idea of who was making plays for their offense. Next, Coach Narduzzi deliberated on down and distance tendencies, personnel tendencies, backfield tendencies, and formation tendencies. In each of these tendencies, Coach Narduzzi ordered the statistic by quantity and then calculated the run or pass percentage to see if the opponent gave anything away. For example, on third down and seven or more yards for the first down, this team will pass ninety percent of the time.

The next person to present was Coach Tressel and he discussed his findings on the opponent's running game. The first thing he showed was a breakdown of the running plays by concept, how many times each play was run and their yards per attempt. The second thing he presented was his thoughts on the opponent's personnel such as the talent level of the running

backs including their strengths and weaknesses and then the same for the tight ends. The third thing he presented was general notes he picked up from watching film such as what he wanted our linebackers to key in different backfield sets, what formations alert certain running plays, play tendencies per game, or even offensive line splits that give away tendencies. The fourth thing he presented was detailed notes on each running play including when and where they like to run the play and possible game planning ideas to stop it. The fifth thing Coach Tressel presented was parts of the passing game that relate to the linebackers such as play action, sprint out, three step quick passes, boots and naked, and screen plays. Lastly, he presented run play tendencies based on backfield sets and formations.

Next to present was Coach Barnett. He started his report with general pass game notes such as how their receivers handle press coverage and how they block, where the quarterback likes to throw, their best routes, and certain routes out of certain splits. Next, he outlined their favorite pass formations by frequency detailing the different backfield sets for each formation. Lastly, he reported their favorite pass concepts and explained what personnel groups and formations these concepts get ran.

Coach Gill would present last. He gave breakdowns of each of the offensive lineman, their strengths and weaknesses. He identified where we could attack best based on pass protection and gave run or pass tendencies based on the offensive linemen's demeanor in their stances. For example, when the entire offensive linemen are in two-point stances, they are one hundred percent pass. Or, when the tackles are up and the guards are down in three-point stances, they are seventy-five percent run.

After everyone had shared their information, we would go through the sections of the scouting report. The first section is called the "Offensive Summary." This section summarizes

all the major fields we broke down. The second section is called “Formation Hits.” The section is the collection of each formation they ran in our breakdown. On each formation page are all the run and pass plays by code and drawings of each pass routes. The third section is called “3<sup>rd</sup> / 4<sup>th</sup>.” This section actually includes all the plays the opponent ran with formation to the boundary, all the plays that were ran on the first play of a possession, all the third down plays, and all the fourth down plays. The reports for these situations are broken down by game then broken down by run hole and pass drawings. The next section is “Short Yardage.” This section includes third and fourth down plays with one or two yards to go for the first down. The next section is “Goal Line / 2 PT.” This section includes any plays the offense ran on the positive five yard line on in to the goal line including two point conversion attempts after touchdowns. The last section is “2 Min / OT.” These are all the plays ran during two minute situations or in overtime. After going through the scouting report, we began watching film.

Coach Narduzzi liked to watch film initially by personnel since this is how he ultimately called his defensive plays on game day. After completely watching a personnel cutup, we would game plan for that group. This started with identifying what fronts would best stop their running attack and where we should set the three-technique in our over front defense. After that, we looked at the coverages we thought were favorable based on their route concepts. Lastly, we identified the blitzes that gave us the best opportunity to stop their offense. From week to week, there would be different rules and checks for certain formations that our players would have to memorize because they were odd balls and didn’t conform to the general rules we would try to put in for the game plan. For instance, we might set the front to the boundary, instead of the field in a certain formation because of their running tendencies. After finishing one personnel group, we moved on to the next until we had covered each of them.

After finishing personnel game planning it was usually time to go home on Monday night around 10:00 p.m. On Tuesday morning we moved on to the critical situations we had to prepare as well as preparing for the week's practice. We game planned the situations that make up the different sections of the scouting report. Next, we would practice which was followed by evaluating the film. And then, we would fine tune the game plan until it was ready to go for game time on Saturday.

What I took away from these meetings was the need for a flexible base defense. Game planning becomes simpler when you have a base defense that can adjust to all personnel groups and formations. Instead of installing new plays each week, we are able to focus on what the opponent will do to us and how we will attack them. I also learned that having base pressures and forcing the opponent to adjust to you is beneficial. When you install new blitzes there seems to always be confusion and then on game day you get mental errors or poor execution. Having a few blitzes that you can master is a good idea. I relate it to what Bruce Lee says about fighting, "I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times." I feel like this is a fleeting philosophy as it relates to football schematics for some teams. We however, have seen the benefits of our double "A gap" blitz and we ran it about ten percent of the game. Another tactic we used is pressed corners in our base coverage. While it appears risky, our corners work on the technique every day. They understand routes based on the release of the receiver, and they are disrupting the timing of all routes. Another feature of our defense is our alignment of our defensive ends. We align them wide rather than head up to the end man on the line of scrimmage. Just as defensive backs and their coaches hate to give up the deep ball, offensive tackles and their coaches hate to give up sacks. In fact, the value of an offensive tackle is so high that you often see them going early in the first round of the

NFL draft each year. These offensive tackles are usually large stout football players with strong arms. By putting our defensive ends wide, we force them to be athletic. It puts stress on their weakness and gives our athletic defensive ends an edge. Collectively, a base defense with habitual blitzes, pressed corners, and wide ends are defensive strategies I've grown to appreciate and relish.

This activity of attending meetings was vital to learning our defensive strategy and it was a great experience. When I was a player, I watched the game as if I was playing my position. This helped prepare me on game day for what I needed to do, but the tunnel vision can't be applied as a coach in order to see the schematics. You have to see the whole picture. Watching the game with the defensive staff and each position coach pointing out different things helped shape my understanding of the game. Also, seeing and hearing our coaches deliberate on the opponents gave me a glimpse of what I will have to do in the future as a coach on the defensive side of a coaching staff. From this activity, I came away with the ability to speak to other coaches and explain my football thoughts as an unintended result.

2B. Prepare and execute the scout offense team to help prepare our defensive staff to familiarize our team with the tactics needed to immobilize the opponent.

After scouting reports were completed and distributed on Mondays, one of the things I did was prepare myself to teach the scout offense with the schematics of the opponent we were to execute. Each week, the opponent's offense was a little different, but as the season went on, the players began to see many similarities between the teams. Most teams are able to run just about every play imaginable, it's just a matter of what they emphasize or choose to do best. Through my preparation, my goal was to come up with a cut-up of twenty plays that summarized

the most pressing schematics and techniques I felt the players needed to see before going out on to the field. My first meeting of the week with the scout offense was on Tuesday and we had approximately twenty minutes before practice which is not that much time to teach.

Our opponent breakdown consisted of anywhere between three and four hundred plays each week. Trimming this down to twenty plays was not an easy task but I did not want to rush through my meeting and leave the athletes confused. I used different strategies throughout the season, but found a certain formula over time, to be what worked best for me and my athletes. Initially, I looked to have ten run plays and ten pass plays. Within the ten run plays, I wanted to make certain I included one of each of their favorite runs. Usually this was about five plays. Some run plays were featured more than others and because of this, their main running plays generally had variations I felt we needed to see. Another thing I had to show were pre-snap shifts and motions so I incorporated favorite running plays that included these movements. When it was all said and done, the formula for ten running plays to show in the meeting was as follows:

- Play 1: Favorite running play
- Play 2: Favorite running play different formation
- Play 3: Favorite running play variation with shift/motion
- Play 4: Second favorite running play
- Play 5: Second favorite running play variation with shift/motion
- Play 6: Third favorite running play
- Play 7: Third favorite running play variation with shift/motion
- Play 8: Fourth favorite running play
- Play 9: Fifth favorite running play
- Play 10: Trick running play or crazy pre-snap shift

The ten pass plays I selected followed a different approach. There are certain concepts that every team runs but executes a little differently and I felt it was important that the athletes saw all of these so there were generally no repeat plays within the ten passes. The formula for the ten pass plays and the rest of the twenty plays was as follows:

Play 11: Naked Pass  
Play 12: Boot Pass  
Play 13: Sprint-out Pass  
Play 14: Bubble Pass  
Play 15: Jailbreak Screen Pass  
Play 16: Tailback Screen Pass  
Play 17: Favorite Concept and Protection  
Play 18: Favorite Play-action Pass  
Play 19: Second favorite Play-action Pass  
Play 20: Trick Pass Play

Once I had my cut-up prepared, I created a template for the players to take notes as we watched each play. The document I created was split in thirds, designating from left to right a section for Tuesday's practice, Wednesday's practice, and Thursday's practice. On the top of Tuesday, I left prompts to fill in including, this week's opponent, scout team jersey number for the week, offensive indicator, and offensive tempo. After that I listed the twenty plays from the cut-up by name so that the players could take notes on their alignment, assignment, and responsibility for each. At the bottom, I left a blank for them to fill out one thing they will specifically focus working on at practice, such as run blocking or pad level. Wednesday's section of the document started with them identifying the one thing they did best yesterday and the one thing they did worst yesterday. After that, there was room for them to take notes as we watched the practice from Tuesday. At the bottom again, I left room for them to identify what they would work on specifically at practice. Thursday's section started with similar self-evaluation where the athlete's indicated what they did best yesterday and what they would work on that day. Again there was a section for them to make notes and corrections while we watched Wednesday's film. At the bottom there was a self-evaluation for the week where they measured their effort and toughness on a scale of one to ten. I like the self-evaluation because I think it forces you to be accountable. When you grade yourself and write it down, the only person who knows if it's accurate or not, is you. I believe this parallels the way success ought to be



measured. My grandfather told me that, “Success is reasonable accomplishments and being able to be happy with yourself.” If you can look yourself in the mirror and be happy with your performance because you did the best you can, that’s all a coach can ask of you.

Through describing the note template the player’s filled out, I’ve demonstrated the majority of the structure of my meetings with the players. There are, however, other things I’ve learned from Coach Tressel and other coaches over time that I’ve utilized in my meetings. The first of which is starting the meeting with some “food for thought.” Every day, I started the meeting with a positive quote that either I read or had one of the players read aloud in front of the group. Next, I would pass out the note cards and pencils and made certain the players sat up straight and kept their eyes up. After that, I always showed the players the practice schedule, so they could wrap their minds around the day’s work and be prepared for where they needed to be during the periods of practice. After the schedule, I would deliberate a few key corrections that were imperative to that day’s performance and then turn on the film to teach and give correction. At the end of the meeting I would give them some encouragement for the day’s practice, and then ask them to turn in their note cards and pencils and push in their chairs.

After meetings, we headed out for practice. We used software called Coach’s Office to draw plays cards for practice. Coach Tressel drew all of the run plays and Coach Barnett drew all of the pass plays. Prior to practice, Coach Narduzzi pulled from the database plays he wished to see during practice, created a script and then printed the corresponding play cards. Once I received the play cards, I translated the plays into our offense’s language so that the scout players could relate to the plays. Prior to each play in practice, I held up the card with the play name translated on the bottom. This system worked for me because I truly believe not everything can be explained through the drawing and you can’t expect the scout team to know

how to run every play by name in their offense. Combining both the translated play name and the drawing, make the responsibility of the player and our expectations very clear.

Beyond the knowledge, what I consider to be the most important part of running the scout team is leadership. My goal while running the scout offense was to be efficient and energized. I knew every day there would be mistakes. My plan was to communicate clearly before the play and then give immediate fair and honest feedback to mistakes after the play before transitioning to the next play. Once I started showing the next play, I didn't want the players talking about the previous play; they were to lock in on the present. I also knew every day that the energy of the group would take on my energy. Because of this, I made certain I was the first one to every drill, I would chest bump after big plays, and I encouraged the athletes loud and often. Through my energy and efficiency, I feel our group consistently performed well enough to prepare our defense for Saturday. Along with that, the players got better fundamentally, and most importantly they had fun and enjoyed practice.

What I learned from running the scout offense is that I am truly the example for my players. As a player I always looked to my position coach for reassurance of my performance and demeanor. As a coach, I have experienced that you get what you emphasize. There's a saying that states, "What you do speaks so loudly that I can't hear what you're saying." To me, that's one of the biggest lessons I learned as a young coach. If I praised a player for doing well, his teammate congratulated him. If I scolded a player for lack of effort, his teammate looked down on him. If I pleaded with a player to pay attention, his teammate felt bad for me. If I took advantage of my position and made light of a player's misfortune, his teammate would laugh at him. If someone did something out of character and I didn't address it, his teammate would notice the slack. In every situation, my action or inaction always resulted in a reaction.

Coaches, as leaders, have a tremendous amount of influence over our players and I've learned that is an enormous responsibility. As a result, I've had to consciously rewire my coaching reactions. I try to avoid sarcasm and communicate exactly the message I wish to be received. I bite my tongue when something embarrassing happens to a player because in most instances, he's doing his best. When players test boundaries, I let them know why their behavior is getting out of line and that it is not acceptable. Lastly, I make an effort to be more encouraging because it builds enthusiasm.

This activity, coaching the scout offense, gave me a better understanding of what offenses do to attack defenses. As I stood behind the offense and watched from this different perspective, I was able to understand strengths and weaknesses of our defense a little better. Every scheme has strengths and weaknesses. The important thing is that your strengths outweigh your weakness and that you know your weaknesses and protect them. These are ideas that aided this activity in achieving the objective of establishing a basis of defensive strategy.

2C. Compile our overall defensive strategy and tactics post-season to be evaluated by Coach Tressel for the outcome of this activity.

Examining the ideas and schematics I've learned working with our defensive staff, I have put together what I consider our overall defensive strategy. These philosophical ideas along with the specific schemes have enabled our defense to be a top ten national defense over the past two years along with the best defense in the Big Ten Conference. Make no mistake about it, these schemes are nothing but ideas on paper without great players and great coaches who are skilled at teaching. As a reflection of my understanding of defensive schematics, I have assembled in **Appendix C** a general approach to our defense and some specific tactics we utilized to hold the

Big Ten Champion Wisconsin Badgers to nineteen yards rushing when they average close to two hundred and forty yards rushing per game. This is quite a feat after watching the Badgers obliterate Nebraska in the Big Ten Championship rushing for five hundred thirty-nine yards including eight rushing touchdowns.

Objective 3. To expand and broaden my ability to recognize and understand opponents philosophies and tendencies utilizing opponent scouting methods.

3A. Breakdown films each week, compile scouting reports, generate summary reports, and complete necessary studies for advantage over our opponents. These reports will be given to the entire defensive side of the team.

Breaking down film is a season long process that is best accomplished by having a plan to evenly space out the necessary games for each opponent's scouting report. We utilized a five game breakdown for each team we played. We didn't just pick five games at random. There are ideal components we looked to have for the games included in the breakdown. Ultimately we looked for three main components. For example, if we were playing Michigan, we wanted to breakdown five Michigan games where they played a defense with a similar front as ours, similar coverage as ours, and the most recent games that were competitive. First, we looked for a similar front so that we could see how they would block their run schemes versus our front. We could game plan exactly what they did without guessing. Second, we looked for similar coverage as ours so we can see what routes they would utilize to attack our defense. The third component we wanted is a recent and competitive game. If a team was getting blown out they tended to pass more and use more aggressive, desperate plays. If a team was crushing their

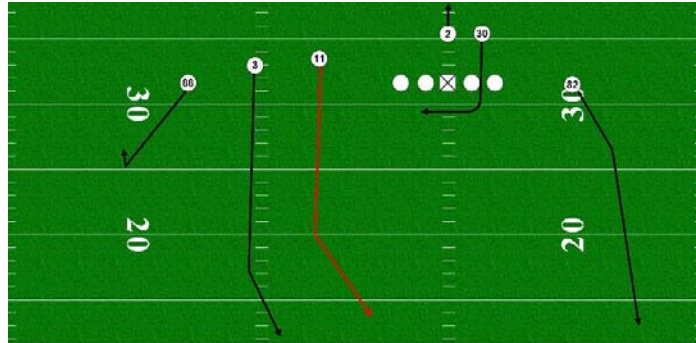
opponent they tended to run more and use more conservative, time-consuming plays. Both of these situations skew run pass percentages in the breakdown and are not optimal for accurate scouting reports. We wanted a recent game so that we can see their most current use of players to date. As mentioned, these components are ideal. It's not always possible to get a perfect five games. Some situations where we were unable to get perfect games included early opponents, out of conference opponents, and opponents with new coaching staffs. In these cases, we got the best quality we are able to put together.

Once we had decided which opponents we would break down, the film breakdown began. The software we used was XOs Thunder. On this program, we get the video of the games tied to basically a spreadsheet of data entry fields. Each play shows a shot of the scoreboard for situation information, then it pans to a wide sideline view of the play, and lastly it shows a tight view from the end zone. Below you can see a still photo of all three camera angles.



Together with the three screen shots we are able to extract all the information we need to enter in our data fields. To break the film down this year we utilized two people to divide the workload. Both of could work on our parts simultaneously, thus achieving a very efficient work strategy. Our defensive student assistant began by putting in the down and distance data. As he did this, I would complete the data entry of all the other fields. Once the student assistant finished the down and distance portion he would draw the plays using the software to give exact alignments for the formations and the exact depths of the passing patterns.

Below is a sample drawing.



These drawings generate pictures that correspond to the plays for the scouting reports. Once I finished entering the data for the breakdown I would speed check all the data for mistakes and inconsistencies. This entire process takes roughly three hours if done all at once. We call this method of breakdown “grinding” because this method leaves you feeling like an overused break pad on a car, thin and weary. Because of the monotony of the work, I found it more enjoyable to break down sections at a time and weave in other duties and responsibilities. To each his own I suppose but I feel I was sharpest, most accurate, and able to pick up more minute details when I broke the work into sections.

Once all the information was entered for each of the five games and they were all drawn, I did one final speed check of all the data to make sure that each game matched the others in terms of consistency of nomenclature. This took roughly an hour to complete. Once this was finished, the scouting reports were ready to be printed. Printing the scouting report begins with publishing the data on the software then generating each of the reports to print off. Our scouting reports include seven sections. The sections are as follows: Summary Report, Formation Hits, 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup>, Red Zone, Short Yardage, Goal Line, and 2 Minute. Each one of these sections is printed and put into a binder divided by tabs with the different sections labeled accordingly. On the front of the binder we created a cover page for each opponent. Printing the sections, ordering

formation hits to scan and print, and stuffing the coaches binders takes about two hours. Running the copies for the players scouting reports, removing old and inserting new cover sheets, and stuffing their binders takes another two hours. In all, with two people from start to finish breaking down the film and creating finished scouting reports takes approximately twenty hours of work without breaks. (Checking the math. 5 games multiplied by 3 hours equals fifteen hours. Add to that 1 hour for speed checking, 2 hours for coach's binders, and 2 hours for players binders equals twenty hours of work) **Appendix D** represents an example of one of our scouting reports.

What I learned from completing this task of breaking down film and producing scouting reports is a monumental education in football. Just as a scientist uses a dichotomous key to categorize species and to make sense of the world around us, football coaches use systems of jargon to describe the game of football. The average football play lasts six seconds. But within those six seconds, there is an endless choreography of twenty-two starting alignments and movements and play results. The more of these variations I watched the more my capacity for understanding the schematics of the game increased. Taking schematics out of the equation, the more I watched film, the more the physics of the game became more evident. It makes complete sense to me now why size, speed, and strength are so important for a football player. These are the components behind succeeding at a game marked by a defined rectangle of space with frequent human collisions where two forces of eleven men are competing against each other. Offenses must use space, time, angles, numbers, force, deception, and match-ups to move the ball down the field. Defenses have to defend this space, time, angles, numbers, force, deception, and match-ups to neutralize the opponent and give the ball back to their own offense. As a defensive coach, I want to know everything I can about an opponent's offense before competing.

The best way to do this is to break down every detail on each play and analyze the results for tendencies.

After I have broken down the games and generated the scouting reports, one of things I did was analyze the critical situations of the game and make summary reports. This ultimately led to how Coach Narduzzi would call plays on the day of the game in these situations. The first report involved three down and distance situations including possession and ten, first and ten, and second and long. These situations make up the majority of plays for an offense and represents what we will defend with our base defense. The second report involved red zone and goal line. Hopefully you don't have to defend many of these situations on game day, but when you do, the situation is critical because this is where the opponent can easily score. The third report includes short yardage, third down and medium, and third down and long. We call these situations "Money Down" because it is critical to ending the opponent's drive by forcing them to punt. The fourth report includes coming out and two-minute situations. Coming out refers to the opponent starting a drive within ten yards of their own end zone. A two-minute situation is when the opponent is behind late in the game or just before the half and they are trying to score quickly while conserving time. All of these reports included run and pass percentages, personnel tendencies, favorite play tendencies, and any other obvious tells.

This activity, breaking down film, making scouting reports, and creating summary reports successfully expanded and broadened my ability to recognize and understand opponents' philosophies and tendencies. These tasks represent the research needed to fully understand the intricacies of football schemes. That is why being a graduate assistant is almost a rite of passage to get into the industry of collegiate coaching. After having this experience, it would be hard for me to respect a coach who hasn't done the years of film breakdown.



3B. Develop a plan of breaking down future opponents so that each week we are able to utilize five games for our scouting report.

The plan to break down the opponent’s for the season begins well in advance. Last year for us, breaking games started in January not long after the bowl trip. My plan of attack started with a composite schedule for the 2012 season. This schedule has all of our opponents listed vertically. Extending laterally and chronologically is each team’s schedule throughout the season. Going diagonally from the top left to the bottom right, our games against the opponent’s are highlighted. Below is a sample piece of this schedule. You can see our first four opponents from this year and their schedules.

### 2012 BIG TEN COMPOSITE SCHEDULE

<i>MSU Opponents</i>	Aug. 31 Sept. 1	Sept. 8	Sept. 15	Sept. 22	Sept. 29	Oct. 6	Oct. 13	Oct. 20	Oct. 27	Nov. 3	Nov. 10	Nov. 17	Nov. 24	Dec. 1
<b>BOISE STATE</b>	@ MSU (Aug 31)	Bye	Miami (OH)	BYU	@ New Mexico	@ Southern Miss	Fresno State	UNLV	@ Wyoming	San Diego State	@ Hawaii	Colorado State	@ Nevada	
<b>CENTRAL MICHIGAN</b>	Southeast Missouri State (Aug. 30)	MSU	Bye	@ Iowa	@ Northern Illinois	@ Toledo	Navy (Oct. 12)	Ball State	Akron	Western Michigan	@ Eastern Michigan	Miami (OH)	@ Massachusetts (Nov. 23)	
<b>NOTRE DAME</b>	Navy (Dublin, Ireland)	Purdue	@ MSU	Michigan	Bye	Miami (FL) (Soldier Field)	Stanford	BYU	@ Oklahoma	Pittsburgh	@ Boston College	Wake Forest	@ USC	
<b>EASTERN MICHIGAN</b>	@ Ball State (Aug. 30)	Illinois State	@ Purdue	@ MSU	Bye	Kent State	Toledo	Army	@ Bowling Green	@ Ohio (Nov. 1)	Central Michigan	@ Western Michigan	Northern Illinois (Nov. 23)	

From this document, I was able to map out which games we use for the breakdown. If we had played the team in 2011, we used that game as one of the five. From there, I used the strategy outlined in sub-objective 3A to pick the games including teams with similar fronts, similar coverages, and most recent competitive games.

Early opponents required going to film of the previous year in order to create a full break down of games. Because of this we were able to identify which games we needed from 2011, broke those down in advance, and then waited for them to play their 2012 games for the break down. Our first opponent for the 2012 season was Boise State, a new non-conference opponent. Boise State was a team that dominated most of their schedule in 2011, so finding competitive

games was the biggest challenge. Because of this, we ended up using parts of eight different games from their previous season. These games included Nevada, U.N.L.V., Arizona State, half of Colorado State, half of Tulane, half of Texas Christian, a quarter of Fresno State, and a quarter of New Mexico State. Our second opponent was Central Michigan, who we had played in 2011. We used three other games from 2011 including Ball State, Ohio, and Toledo. These four games plus their season opener against Southeast Missouri State completed our breakdown. Our third opponent was Notre, who we had played in 2011. We used two other games from 2011 including Boston College and Florida State. These three games plus their first two games of 2012 including Navy and Purdue completed our breakdown. Our fourth and final non-conference game against Eastern Michigan was an opponent we had not played in 2011. Like Boise State, for this game we used parts of many games, seven to be exact. From 2011, we used Northern Illinois, first half of Toledo, first quarter of Penn State, and the first quarter of Michigan. We combined this with their 2012 games including Ball State, Illinois State, and the first quarter against Purdue to give us our complete breakdown. From this you can see that we used parts of games on several occasions because of the competitive game component.

We know our conference opponents much better than our non-conference opponents. With that said, there were new coaching staffs and new coordinators on several teams, so things change from year to year. Ohio State was a unique opponent in that Urban Meyer was a first year head coach there and hadn't coached the previous year. He assembled a new staff with a new offensive coordinator. Trying to get a beat on these guys in the offseason included watching film from when Meyer was at Florida in 2010, watching film from the offensive coordinator at Iowa State in 2011, and watching the spring game which is always a watered down version of a team's schematics. For Ohio State, we ended up using their four games from 2012 because we

felt it was most relevant. These games included Miami Ohio, Central Florida, California, and Alabama Birmingham. The rest of the opponents including Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Northwestern, and Minnesota we used the composite schedule to identify the games we would add to our previous game in 2011 to complete the breakdown.

Once the games were planned out that we would have in the break down, I planned out when we would actually breakdown the games. Obviously, any game that we were using from 2011 we leisurely broken down in the off-season without any rush. During the season, when duties and responsibilities are maximized, I wanted to have a strategy for me and the student assistant to pace the work. Taking a look at the entire composite schedule, I will explain how I planned this out. Below you can see the entire composite schedule with all of the breakdown games highlighted.

### 2012 BIG TEN COMPOSITE SCHEDULE

<i>MSU Opponents</i>	Aug. 31 Sept. 1	Sept. 8	Sept. 15	Sept. 22	Sept. 29	Oct. 6	Oct. 13	Oct. 20	Oct. 27	Nov. 3	Nov. 10	Nov. 17	Nov. 24	Dec. 1
<b>BOISE STATE</b>	@ MSU (Aug 31)	Bye	Miami (OH)	BYU	@ New Mexico	@ Southern Miss	Fresno State	UNLV	@ Wyoming	San Diego State	@ Hawaii	Colorado State	@ Nevada	
<b>CENTRAL MICHIGAN</b>	Southeast Missouri State (Aug. 30)	MSU	Bye	@ Iowa	@ Northern Illinois	@ Toledo	Navy (Oct. 12)	Ball State	Akron	Western Michigan	@ Eastern Michigan	Miami (OH)	@ Massachusetts (Nov. 23)	
<b>NOTRE DAME</b>	Navy (Dublin, Ireland)	Purdue	@ MSU	Michigan	Bye	Miami (FL) (Soldier Field)	Stanford	BYU	@ Oklahoma	Pittsburgh	@ Boston College	Wake Forest	@ USC	
<b>EASTERN MICHIGAN</b>	@ Ball State (Aug. 30)	Illinois State	@ Purdue	@ MSU	Bye	Kent State	Toledo	Army	@ Bowling Green	@ Ohio (Nov. 1)	Central Michigan	@ Western Michigan	Northern Illinois (Nov. 23)	
<b>OHIO STATE</b>	Miami (OH)	Central Florida	California	UAB	@ MSU	Nebraska	@ Indiana	Purdue	@ Penn State	Illinois	Bye	@ Wisconsin	Michigan	
<b>INDIANA</b>	Indiana State	@ Massachusetts (Gillette Stadium)	Ball State	Bye	@ Northwestern	MSU	Ohio State	@ Navy	@ Illinois	Iowa	Wisconsin	@ Penn State	@ Purdue	
<b>IOWA</b>	@ Northern Illinois (Soldier Field)	Iowa State	Northern Iowa	Central Michigan	Minnesota	Bye	@ MSU	Penn State	@ Northwestern	@ Indiana	Purdue	@ Michigan	Nebraska (Nov. 23)	
<b>MICHIGAN</b>	Alabama (Cowboy Stadium)	Air Force	Massachusetts	@ Notre Dame	Bye	@ Purdue	Illinois	MSU	@ Nebraska	@ Minnesota	Northwestern	Iowa	@ Ohio State	
<b>WISCONSIN</b>	Northern Iowa	@ Oregon State	Utah State	UTEP	@ Nebraska	Illinois	@ Purdue	Minnesota	MSU	Bye	@ Indiana	Ohio State	@ Penn State	
<b>NEBRASKA</b>	Southern Miss	@ UCLA	Arkansas State	Idaho State	Wisconsin	@ Ohio State	Bye	@ Northwestern	Michigan	@ MSU	Penn State	Minnesota	@ Iowa (Nov. 23)	
<b>NORTHWESTERN</b>	@ Syracuse	Vanderbilt	Boston College	South Dakota	Indiana	@ Penn State	@ Minnesota	Nebraska	Iowa	Bye	@ Michigan	@ MSU	Illinois	
<b>MINNESOTA</b>	@ UNLV (Aug. 30)	New Hampshire	Western Michigan	Syracuse	@ Iowa	Bye	Northwestern	@ Wisconsin	Purdue	Michigan	@ Illinois	@ Nebraska	MSU	

I always wanted to stay as current as I could on our future opponents so that if the coaches inquired about one of them I would be prepared to answer questions and be knowledgeable about my area of responsibility. Another benefit of breaking the games down as

the season progresses is that I was able to refresh myself with the opponent each week. So here was the plan I devised. Once week one games concluded. The following week we would break down any games we were going to use in the future from that week. For example after we played Boise State, on Sunday we would break down Central Michigan versus Southeast Missouri State. This game was added to the previous games we broke down for Central Michigan, sped checked, and then we made scouting reports. Once scouting reports were completed for the coaches, we began breaking down the games played that previous week we were using in the future. Using Central Michigan week again as an example, we broke down Notre Dame versus Navy, Eastern Michigan versus Ball State, Ohio State versus Miami Ohio, and Indiana versus Indiana State. Using the math discussed earlier, five games multiplied by three hours for two men to break down equals a total of fifteen hours we had to a lot for this that week. We followed this plan each week. As the season went on, there were fewer games to breakdown as was evident on the composite schedule. This gave us more time to look through other games for opponents for trick plays so that we would be prepared.

From this planning, I learned several things. First, having a plan for your responsibility is comforting to your superior. Anytime responsibility is delegated from the top, reassurance of the job being completed gives confidence to the superior. I feel the best way to convey this is with a plan on paper and timely updates as to the progress status of the project. The second thing I learned from this planning is that having a plan for such a task, kept my anxiety down. Everyone hates that feeling of being behind on a project and having to stay up all night the day before it's due. I knew that I had a plan, and if I followed that plan, all the work would be done in a timely manner. This is a bigger advantage than I thought because it allowed me to remain stress free in an industry that has a lot of ups and downs. One thing I'm not sure on is why we target five

games. I'm not certain the advantage of five games versus six games or four games or even three games. All I know is that Coach Narduzzi likes to prepare as much as possible and five games seems to provide enough plays to keep the defensive staff busy at all times. Any more games and I feel like there wouldn't be enough time to thoroughly watch and analyze the film.

This activity of planning for breakdowns gave me a better understanding of scouting methods necessary for proper analysis of an opponent. While planning how and when to breakdown games doesn't necessarily help my abilities to recognize and understand opponent's philosophies, the activity did add to my efficiency of watching tape which allows me to see things faster. This increases the amount of film I am able to watch and consequently helped me accomplish the objective.

3C. Submit my situational summaries of the scouting report to Coach Tressel for evaluation, demonstrating the most pressing tendencies from our opponent each week.

We live in an information age where information is at our finger tips and it is essential to absorb as much useful knowledge as we can. All the reports that we create during a week preparing for an opponent can't be diagnosed by the players, it's just too much. These summary reports allow us to teach the most pressing tendencies. We do our best to simplify the message while still getting the necessary information in front of the athletes. An example of these situational reports is located in **Appendix E**. In order to compare these reports to the entire scouting report, as mentioned before the full report is located in Appendix D.

## **Chapter 4: Conclusions and Recommendations**

First and foremost, I am humbled and honored to have had the opportunity to work for Head Football Coach Mark Dantonio. Without his generosity, I wouldn't be here. He gave me an opportunity to play Division 1 football and I capitalized on the opportunity. A few years later he again has given me another opportunity. This time it is to learn and coach at the Division 1 football level. The football program Coach Dantonio has built is a system and a model of which I hope to utilize in my future.

I am also very fortunate to have been a part of this master's program here at Michigan State. Some graduate assistants take all online classes in fields they don't care about to get in the door as football coaches. I have been blessed with the opportunity to have the best of both worlds. I was able to learn football from a great coaching staff and get an education in coaching, the field in which I wish to pursue excellence. This internship was a phenomenal experience and has given me the knowledge and competence I believe to coach college football. I set out this winter to develop a plan for coaching that I can take with me to earn my first job as a position coach in the profession. I now have that plan. Through my research and education in the Kinesiology program I will graduate with a tangible set of ideals to take with me on my journey to become a successful coach and mentor of young men. Completing this internship was the final step in completing my Master of Science degree in Kinesiology. This degree will give a competitive advantage over other job candidates and put in a position to one day be an educated head football coach.

I didn't have any shortcomings with the experience because of the guidance of Dr. McNeil. Initially, I had aimed to have five objectives. Dr. McNeil wisely suggested that I scale back to three objectives so that I could focus and give proper attention to all three areas. I think

having three solid objectives worked out great and didn't mean that I couldn't learn other facets of coaching along the way, such as special teams and recruiting.

I would recommend to this internship experience to any driven individual. Football is a tough game for tough people. I believe college football is the greatest game in the world. The game allows us to tap into the inner core of who we are as competitors, challenge ourselves to be dominant, to be recognized as a winner, and to achieve the status of champion. Football is a game of unlimited opportunity. I will never forget the experiences and memories of playing this great game. The relationships that were forged by truth and love with my teammates will last forever. I aim to pay forward the pure enjoyment the game has afforded me.