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## Special Bonus Report

# FOOTBALL TRYOUT SECRETS!

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## Introduction

The cuts can be tough; you have to make a decision between a speedy receiver with glue-like hands but no size, and a lumbering, crushing running back that has no head for the game. Tryouts are one of the most difficult times being a coach – you have to decide the athletic futures of some of the players that are coming out for your team.

Further, what makes this decision so demanding is that the players you select now are going to be the players that make up your team for the course of the season. This is for all of the marbles. You may not get a chance to change your roster until next season.

That's why it is important to do it properly now!

Football Tryout Secrets is designed to help take some of the gamble and guesswork out of selecting players for your team. I mean, you never really know how a player is going to turn out in the end, but you can make a good assumption based on what you see in your tryout camp.

To help you along in the selection of your team, I have provided the following resources:

A strategy on choosing the right players for your team and the characteristics that make great team players.

A Selection Matrix that is going to help you decide which players have to go and which players to keep. It also gives you an opportunity to provide players who are on the cusp, a little coaching direction to help them over the top.

In the spirit of Football Drills and Practice Plans, I have included a few different practice plans that you can use for your tryout camps.

Coaching isn't easy – especially at tryout time. You have to end up crushing a few dreams while making others come true. This plan is going to aid you in making the best overall decision for your team.

Best of Luck!

## Building Your Team

OK, how many players? This is subjective in many cases, but I can offer you a few ideas on coming up with the numbers on your team.

- How many players came out to tryouts
- How many of each position will you carry, and keep in mind special teams players.
- How many players do you want on your roster that are 'projects' and you are building for future years?
- Is your team reliable in making practices and games?

Taking into account all of these questions, I would suggest that a good sized team for football is between 24 and 30 players. If you have too many, then everybody is always splitting playing time (which no one really likes), and if you have too few players, then you risk not having enough to play. Players aren't always the most reliable, and other things like vacations, homework, and other occasions get in the way of football – leaving you short handed.

Further, there are more injuries in football than most other sports, so you may be nursing a few more injuries that have an effect on who can play in games and practices.

## Documenting the tryouts

Many teams have attempted to equalize the playing field and have adopted a strict 'documentation' process for the coaches to follow. This attempts to ensure that everyone gets a fair shake on the field during the tryouts, and forces the coaches to be accountable. Why did you make the choice to cut one player and keep another?

It will all be down in the documentation. That's why I have come up with the Selection Matrix – it provides a great opportunity for you to evaluate the players that have come out for tryouts – and it provides you with the necessary documentation to make sure you are selecting the right players.

## The Team Selection Matrix

I have put together a system that allows the coach to make fact-based decisions on their team. Here's how this system works:

1. List all of the tryout players from top to bottom on the Matrix
2. Decide on the 3 or 5 most important selection criteria for your team (I have examples below)
3. Apply a different weighting to the selection criteria, based on what you think are the most important traits.
4. Each criteria is scored between one and 10. These scores are multiplied by the weighting percentage.
5. The scores after the weighting will be added together to come up with a final tally that is used to choose the team.
6. You may come up with different selection criteria on your own, but here are three areas you can start with:
  - Player skills and positions
  - Attitude and coachability
  - Athleticism and potential

## Players and their positions

Football is an interesting sport in that each position has different skills and physical attributes that each player needs to have. At earlier ages, this might not matter as much, but it definitely will have an effect later on in the football career.

In this case, we will go through the positions and provide our assessment of the most important skills and attributes of each position so you have a little bit of an idea of what might be a good player in a certain position.

## Quarterbacks

What makes a good quarterback? So many different things. The game can hinge on the play of a quarterback, so the first thing I would look for is someone who has a good grasp of the game and is a competitor.

A good quarterback usually has a strong arm (or accurate one), decent mobility and they often have a good grasp of the game. They are the field generals for the offense and they lead the entire team, as the snap of the ball starts every play.

A good athlete can be taught the position of quarterback if they are keen on the game of football. Look for special athletes who have a head for the game, but may have never really played football before.

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## Running backs

Depending on the type of running game you have (finesse or power), a good running back will have a combination of good speed and good size. One of the overlooked assets that a good running back has is agility. Agility is the RB's ability to juke and jive and make people miss with cuts on the field.

The best running backs also should have a good head for the game. They should understand the flow of blocks and how each play will develop. You will find that some players have this natural ability and they will excel at it more than others.

## Receivers (including Tight End)

Good hands are key here – I think the first and most important element of a receiver. After all, they are receivers and they need to catch the ball in order for things a play to work. That is why we believe the first and foremost skill for is catching.

Speed is another important element, as is agility. But, in our opinion, if you aren't able to catch the ball when it is thrown to you, then the speed and the agility don't matter anyway. Size can also be an advantage, especially if you run the ball a lot – they can make excellent outside blockers with size.

## Offensive linemen

Size matters. This is the most important attribute for these players. Next would be their ability to pick up and understand how to block and the skills behind blocking. Size and corresponding strength is important for being able to blow holes open in the defensive line and to keep the defensive linemen from barreling down on the their quarterback.

Speed might matter if you are looking at outside running plays, lots of screens or if you plan to do a lot of trap blocking.

## Defensive linemen

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Defensive linemen need to have a mean streak. Now, I might find it hard to locate a 10-year-old with a real mean streak, so let's call it a nose for the ball. Defensive lineman should be able to sniff out the ball and do everything they can to make a play on it. They need to be able to do this play in and play out and not stop. One lost effort can mean that the offense gets a big play.

Size will help in giving the defensive linemen the leverage to break through the offensive line and get to the ball carrier.

## Linebackers

These players should have a good combination of size, speed, and football intelligence. They have to make tackles inside, and they need to have the speed to move outside to make tackles, and they also have to have the intelligence to drop back, read the quarterback and then make a play.

Linebackers are some of the toughest players on the field, as they tend to make 60% of the tackles on the field. They need to be resilient and they have to be able to keep up their intensity levels up so they can keep in the game.

But, my first pick of skills for a linebacker would be tackling ability. This is crucial for the linebacker. They make the majority of tackles, and they are relied upon to come up with big tackles play after play.

## Defensive Backs (Corners and safeties)

Speed is probably the most important element for these players, along with the ability to read the play and to make a play on the ball.

Defensive backs also need to be disciplined enough to stay in their zone, and also should work to stay with receivers in man-to-man coverage. Further, the defensive backs need to be able to read whether the play is going to actually be a pass or whether they need to provide run support.

Safeties should be some of the smarter players on your defense, as they need to read the quarterback and where the play is headed. They are the last line of defense on the field and they need to know what is going on.

Note: In my selection Matrix, I have weighted players and skills as 60%

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## Attitude and Coachability

If I am the coach this is one area that I place a great deal of importance on. While you can have a player with average skill and a great attitude – and they can improve their skills with practice, the player with good skill and a bad attitude is hard to change. That’s why I might lean towards players with good attitudes.

A good attitude sets an example for the rest of the players on the team. The best players usually have the best attitudes. It is that simple.

Since football is a team sport, everyone needs to be working together when they are on the field. If you have a few players who think they are above the team, or they don’t need to put out the same effort as other players on the team, they can affect an entire lineup.

You can select players who have a questionable attitude in the hopes that the others with a good attitude will sway them. You can also keep a close eye on these players so that they don’t become a distraction to the other players. A big attitude problem isn’t something I would take on my team.

The players with good attitudes are great motivators for the players that do have the better skills and they can be valuable in pushing those players to greater heights.

When I am putting together my roster and I have the final positions to fill, I fill it based on attitude over skill every time. Attitude and coachability get a 30% on my Selection Matrix.

## Athleticism and potential

This can be hard for some coaches to gauge, but I think it is important. All you have to do is think of the players that can throw the ball 50 yards but can’t hit the broad side of a barn. Or, you might have a player that has unreal speed and athleticism but can’t throw or catch the ball. Each of these players has his own potential and you have to decide if you can tap into it.

Athleticism is an important tool in determining the quality of a player. Some players have skill, but very little overall athleticism. You are going to have to do a balancing act – in my experience, there is more potential in players with excellent athleticism and lower skills than with skill and little athleticism.

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Potential is a funny thing. But, identifying it can be a gold mine for a coach. Uncovered talent is all over the place, but some players need a little more coaching than others.

Every coach wants to find that diamond in the rough – so-to-speak. Especially if you are in a system that is providing players to the high school team. So, put some stock in potential and see if you can cultivate a new player or two every year.

I place 10% on athleticism and potential in the selection criteria.

## Making your selections

Well, after the three main areas that we have talked about, you could add some more of your own to make the process more specific. But, this will get you started.

The best way to communicate your selections to the players is to have a one on one conversation with each individual player. Recruit assistant coaches and parents to help with this.

The conversation doesn't need to be in person. You can do it over the phone as well. Just make sure each player is told specifically why he didn't make the team and what he needs to do to have a better chance of making it next year. Provide constructive comments and suggestions of specific drills the player can perform to improve.

Now, following is an example of how the Selection Matrix works. You may alter it and adjust it, but I find that this works for me. I have included one sample matrix, and then a blank matrix that you can use for your next try out.

Note: The key to making the Selection Matrix work is if you are honest about a player's skills. Don't count anyone out unless they are really not up to par in the three skill areas. Some players may surprise you – others may not. But they all deserve the same chance. You do want the best team, don't you?

Tryout Selection Matrix Sample

Player	Position	Pos'n Skill	Pos'n Skill (wtd 60%)	Att. & Coachability	Att. & Coachability (wtd 30%)	Athleticism & Potential	Athleticism & Potential (wtd 10%)	Total Wtd Score	Decision	Comments
Steve Jones	G	6	3.6	8	2.4	3	.3	6.3	Yes	Great attitude, can work on being in shape
Jay Stone	RB	4	2.4	5	1.5	8	.8	4.7	No	Great outside runner but no inside skills
Dustin Shivers	MLB	9	5.4	4	1.2	6	.6	7.2	Yes	We can work on his attitude
Chuck Harding	WR	3	1.8	9	2.7	9	.9	5.4		Diamond in the rough?
Ryan Hughes	QB	8	4.8	8	2.4	6	.6	7.8	Yes	Could be our star player
Steve Cruz	DE	5	3.0	6	1.8	6	.6	5.4	Yes	Great speed and size
Chance Martin	TE	9	5.4	2	.6	6	.6	6.6	Yes	Poor attitude – can it change?
Steve Jones	G	6	3.6	8	2.4	3	.3	6.3	Yes	Great attitude, can work on being in shape



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## Practice Plans for Tryouts

Here are three basic tryout practice plans that you can use for your football tryouts. These plans are based on the drills included in Football Drills and Practice Plans, and refer to the section numbers from that book.

### Tryout Practice Plan #1

0 to :10 – Passing, ball control, quick sprints

:10 to :15 - Stretching

:15 to :20 – Warm up jog around the field

:20 to :35 – 2WR and 2DB (10.12), and Block the backer (8.14) – Good passing is essential and solid drive block on backer

:35 to :40 – Water break

:40 to :50 – High low pass (10.13) and Zone recognition (6.8) – Good receiving technique and linebackers and DBs should know the zones.

:50 to 1:10 – Pit drill (9.13) – all players involved.

1:10 to 1:20 – Conditioning

1:20 to 1:30 – Progression drill with defenders (10.11) – Good passes, good defense. This will be a good drill to recognize skills.

1:30 to 1:45 – Read and Recognition Skeleton (11.20) – Get a good idea of who brings what to the table.

1:45 to 2:00 – Cool down and end of tryout practice talk

## Tryout Practice Plan #2

0 to :10 - Passing, ball control, quick sprints

:10 to :15 - Stretching

:15 to :20 – Warm up lap around the field

:20 to :35 – High low pass (10.13) and Zone recognition (6.8)– Good hand position and ability to read the zone

:35 to :40 – Water break

:40 to :50 – Angle of attack (9.2) – Good angles for tackling means a smart player

:50 to 1:10 – Pit drill (9.13) – All players tackling

1:10 to 1:20 – Scrimmage

1:20 to 1:30 – Conditioning

1:30 to 1:45 – Team drills (section 11)

1:45 to 2:00 – Cool down and end of tryout practice talk

## Tryout Practice Plan #3

0 to :10 - Passing, ball control, quick sprints

:10 to :15 - Stretching

:15 to :20 – Warm up jog around the field

:20 to :35 – High low pass (10.13) and Zone recognition (6.8)– Good hand position and ability to read the zone

:35 to :40 – Water break

:40 to :50 – Tactical scenarios practice – You can use these to find out who has a ‘head’ for the game.

:50 to 1:10 – Over the shoulder (3.13) and Camera on back (8.5) good catching skills and make sure the camera stays on the RB.

1:10 to 1:20 – Pit drill (9.13) – All players tackling

1:20 to 1:30 – Backpedal and change (6.1) and Passing Tree (3.5) – good backpedal then break on the ball, and good knowledge of the passing tree with good cuts.

1:30 to 1:45 – Scrimmage

1:45 to 1:55 – Conditioning

1:55 to 2:00 – Coach wrap up and cool down