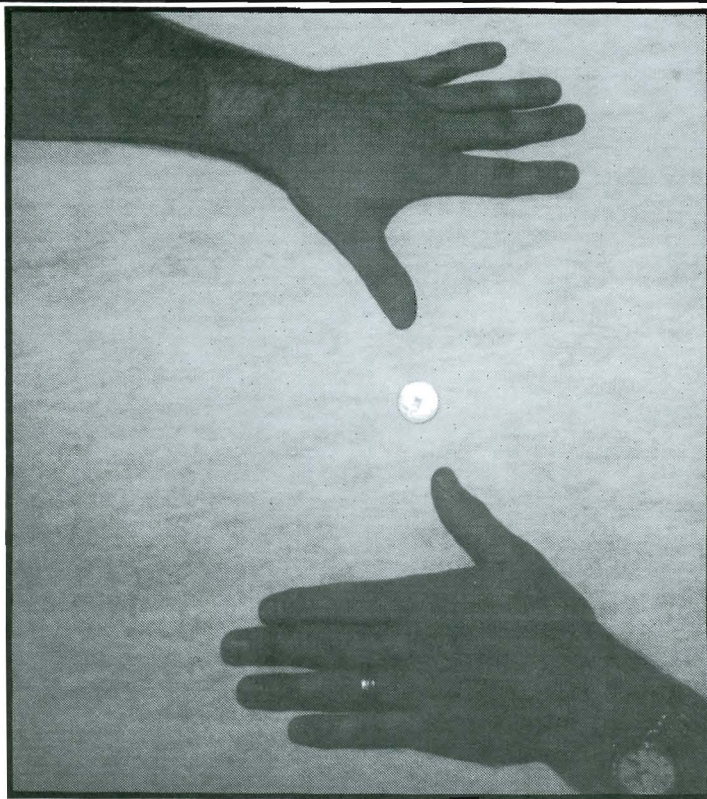
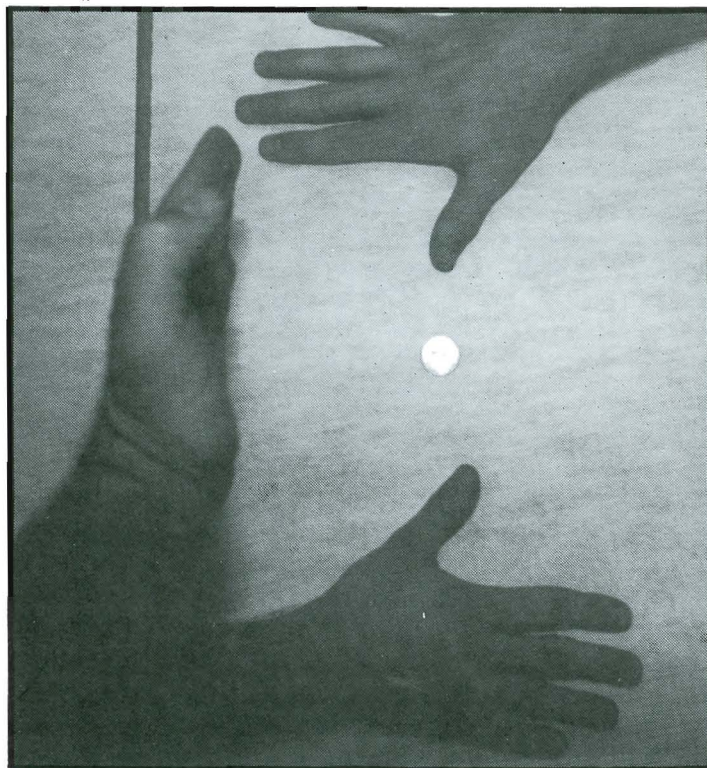


REACTION TIME FUN

Part One
In a Series by
Dr. Greg Shepard



Auditory Stimulus: Say "Set - Go" on the command of a 3rd person.



Visual Stimulus: Go on the movement of a hand of a 3rd person.

This article is the first in a series that will stress two areas in athletics. The first area will be reaction time and the second will be motivating athletes and having fun in a meaningful activity.

First, I'd like to define reaction time. It is different than speed or quickness. Reaction time can be defined as the time it takes to begin a movement from when a stimulus was given. Therefore, in simple terms, reaction time for a defensive lineman is the time it takes him to begin a movement towards the offensive line after he sees an opponent or the football move. An offensive lineman would react when he hears the QB's signal. A sprinter reacts to the starter's gun which usually takes from .15 to .2 seconds.

Speed of movement is the time it takes to get from point A to point B. Obviously, an athlete can have a fast forty yard dash time yet be slow reacting and vice versa. Quickness, as we use the term in coaching, is a combination of reaction time and speed of movement and is reserved for observing athletes in a quick burst of movement within a distance of five yards or less.

We, as coaches, spend a lot of time measuring 40-yard dashes and trying to develop speed which is, of course, of critical importance. However, in general, we spend far less time on quickness and almost no time on reaction drills. We have at the present time no standard of measurement for quickness or reaction time. For example, if I say my tailback runs a forty in 5.2, you know that I've got a slow tailback. We do not have a unit of measurement on quickness or reaction time. Yet, most coaches will tell you that quickness over a very short distance is more critical to success than a great 40-yard dash time. When you read *MOJO MAGIC*, you will note that Coach John Wilkins of Odessa-Permian High School emphasized quickness over strength or speed.

Quickness is usually measured through agility drills. A stop watch is used for these drills but as in our BFS dot drill the time span covered is 45 to 60 seconds. We are attempting to develop quick feet and the drill is an excellent one for sure. However, true quickness should be measured over a second, give or take a few tenths of a second. Unfortunately, we do not have accurate low cost measuring devices readily available plus the fact we do not have standards of excellence yet developed to deal with quickness.

Now to the nitty gritty of this article. Here are two fun, meaningful reaction time drills you can use with any athlete without any equipment. A great place to do this drill is in the cafeteria at a table. Two athletes face each other. Place a quarter in the middle of the table. Try these drills with the right hand first and place the thumb within one inch of the quarter. Then a coach or a 3rd person will say "Set - Go." On "Go" snap your

Continued on Page 16

MOJO MAGIC

Continued from Page 13

consists of 55 juniors and seniors and 80 sophomores. Coach Wilkins has been our Head Coach the last fourteen years."

"Coach Jones, what is your number one priority?"

"Quickness is of super importance and mental toughness is what is stressed mostly. I'd have to say the actual lifting is down the list on our priorities. However, we do the Squat, Bench, Incline and Clean. We teach Form Running and test the Vertical Jump. For quickness we do a 30-second Dummy Jump and a 20-yard Shuttle Run. We stretch before and after workouts. Defensively we have a 4-3 front so all the things we do, utilize our speed and quickness."

Permian High School has Tim O'Connell, a full-time trainer. The four Varsity Assistant Coaches are Larry Curry, Mike Belew, Bucky Jones and Ken Herring. The Assistant Coaches make a little over \$30,000 per year. The Head Coach makes over \$40,000 while the Junior High Coaches make over \$23,000 per year.

I asked Coach Wilkins about his new job as Athletic Director and the new Head Football Coach. He said, "I'm enjoying being Athletic Director. It was a different Spring and missing Spring practice and all. I know come Fall, I'll miss the comraderie of my fellow coaches and players but I'm happy. As far as the new Coach, we selected Gary Gaines. He was an assistant with me before he got a Head job at another school. We didn't want the system to change because of our success. All our assistants are remaining and so for our situation, Coach Gaines was our man. The transition was and is smooth."

In the weight room I talked with Joey Lee who was a sophomore at the time. He now is just starting his junior year. Joey has typical Permian size: 5-6½ and 130 pounds. He has been lifting since the 7th grade and had just benched 140 pounds. "Joey," I asked, "What about burnout? Do you ever get tired of it?" "No sir," came the reply, "I still love it!" Joey plays Quarterback and could very well be a starter his senior year. I further asked, "Joey, what's it take to be a winner?" He answered the question with great aplomb and poise as he said, "I'd say listen to your coaches and work hard, very hard. No matter how much it hurts you keep going, you just got to keep going!"

I turned to Patrick Wilson, a 6-0, 175 pound Linebacker who is blazing fast and could be Permian's best football player this Fall. I asked Patrick a question which required a yes or no answer. Patrick replied, "Yes sir." I asked Patrick why he said, "Yes sir." "Because we're supposed to I guess, I've never thought about it," came the reply. "Well, what if you don't?" I challenged. I was very surprised at this answer as Patrick responded, "I don't know, nothing I guess."

I then thought about Coach Wilkins' ten reasons for winning. It was readily apparent they were not just words but there was something very special about Permian. I got the feeling that if I asked Patrick how come Permian wins all the time, he would say, "Because we're supposed to." But Patrick, what if you don't, he'd say, "I don't know,

I've never thought about it." Confidence had been unabashedly internalized to the upper limit.

Finally, I asked Coach Wilkins if he had any advice for a young coach. He thought and sagely suggested, "There is no substitute for working hard and for spending time at what you want to accomplish. You've got to utilize your talents and be positive. Work with your players and convince them good things happen to good people. Do all your work and then 'GO GET 'EM!'"

We wish to thank Coach Wilkins, Coach Jones, the players and the rest of the Permian Staff for helping us more fully understand the meaning of becoming Bigger Faster and Stronger with the mental and spiritual side of life and coaching. May the magic of MOJO be with us all.

REACTION TIME

Continued from Page 6

hand to cover the quarter. The winner is obviously who covers the quarter first. This contest is reacting to an auditory stimulus.

The second contest will be to react to a visual stimulus. This is set up the same way. The coach or 3rd party will now place their hand suspended 6 to 12 inches over the quarter. The coach will say "Ready" then pause before moving his hand in a quick burst. The athletes will concentrate on the hand and when it moves they'll try to cover the quarter first. You can have a little fun by trying to draw them "Offsides" by saying "Go." If they attempt to cover the quarter on "Go" instead of waiting for your hand to move, you of course, must penalize the guilty athlete. The penalty is that the thumb must be placed an additional five inches away from the quarter. This represents a five-yard offside penalty.

I'll guarantee you, if this is done in the cafeteria, you'll have a big crowd around you in no time. Everyone will want to try it. There will be a lot of smiles, joking and laughing. It'll be a good time. It is a great way to recruit more athletes into your program. This drill takes no effort, sweat or previous experience. It is very non-threatening. It is a way to heap some praise on an individual that may need it.

Finally, for evaluation purposes, you may observe an athlete in a different way after the drill. What if a second team athlete who has average strength and speed kills everybody in this reaction drill? You may want to give him a better look on the field. Another very important evaluation purpose is to see if a difference exists between a visual and auditory stimulus. It is very possible to be very good at one and poor at the other. In other words, if you have an athlete killing everybody on a visual stimulus but gets beat on the auditory stimulus and he is playing offense you should consider him very strongly for defense and switch him.

In my next article, I will illustrate some fun yet informative reaction contests for backs. It will be extremely interesting. If you are ever at a BFS Clinic, feel welcome to challenge me. It's great fun for me for I seem to have the uncanny ability to beat anyone who gets in my way.