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## CAN YOU IMPROVE YOUR QUARTERBACK'S SPEED?

By Dale Baskett, *Football Speed Specialist*  
and Cree Morris, *Quarterback Training Specialist*

**M**y goal each month is to deliver information useful for all aspects of football speed. This month I am working with a friend and colleague, Cree Morris, a long time quarterback training specialist, on the subject of improving a quarterback's speed.

What is the difference between football speed and football quarterback speed? Better technical applications produce more efficient movement, which creates effective speed. That is usually the requirement it takes for the QB to avoid a sack or make a play. I will give some specific movement techniques that will assist your QB on how to move better in the pocket and on the run so he has more game speed. Remember, no matter how good a QB is athletically, if he is not taught the Xs and Os of the game, he will still be late on throws and sacked more than he should be.

Balance is the key to improving your quarterback's quickness. Most coaches want to fix the back end of the drop but I believe coaches need to address the set-up. If coaches would start with their set-up under center or in the gun, they can fix 85% of the problems their quarterbacks face. There is no difference between under center and in the gun other than hand placement. It doesn't matter what the offensive system is. The core value is the same – balance at the set-up gives the athlete a better chance to be balanced at the back end. Remember, more efficient movement results in greater speed. For example, a set-up starts with the feet shoulder-width apart, knees bent but without squatting, head and chest up with arms hanging down comfortably. Solid set-up is the key to balance and fluid movement, which translates to speed. Another example is false-stepping in the quarterback's first step. Why would you teach a false step? More movements translate to slower quarterbacks. The first step dictates to the whole body the movement



and pace needed to be at to execute the play.

Most quarterbacks get off balance because they have not practiced their two-step movements enough. These movements have to be ingrained into the quarterback's motor movement patterns. Think of it as teaching a young man or woman to dance. You always start with the two-step. Once a QB understands his assignment, drop and read, he has to be able to avoid pressure. To avoid a sack, a QB needs to be able to side-step pressure, usually no more than six inches away from the defender. How he moves and keeps his balance is very important.

Let's use a right-handed QB for this discussion. In this example, the QB takes his drop and is being rushed from the left side B gap. To move forward (to the right side of the offensive set), he should be able to step with his right foot six inches and move his left foot the same to end up in the exact ready position to throw the ball. All this is done in two steps. In another example, the QB takes his drop and is being rushed from

the right side B gap. To step back and avoid the defender, the QB needs to step with his left foot back (to the left side of the offensive set) and follow with his right. This is contrary to what many have taught for years.

All the escape drills I teach are two-steps. Efficient fluid movements in less steps equals a faster QB. We need to teach our quarterbacks how to move their bodies like we've been teaching players at all positions; that is, with effective technical application which produces dynamic and efficient movement speed.

While on the run we need our upper body and lower body to work separately and yet together. Our body movements need to complement what we are trying to execute. Ball placement and where our eyes are downfield are also key to this technique. An example would be when your quarterback carries the ball on a boot-leg or roll out. He is pre-loaded and not using his fluid upper and lower combined body movement to get him out in space faster. Like trying to run and

not activating the arm rotation, his velocity is reduced. Therefore, to cover more ground effectively, his arms need to be engaged.

The ball should be up, below the chin and moving shoulder to shoulder while he runs. He should keep his elbows down. When he goes to throw, he should count one-two and keep his upper and lower limbs in rhythmic motion. As another example, quarterbacks need to keep their head up downfield to see the defense. When a play-action pass or boot is called, his head will take him where he wants to go faster. Snapping the head will force his body to come around faster and follow. Also, at the top of the arc, the quarterback should use the ball and shoulder turn to help his hips come downhill. This will get him to the spot quicker to get the ball out.



I teach my students to feel their own motor movement patterns they apply and let me tweak what minor changes they must apply accordingly. That will be the key to maximal effectiveness. We're all built differently, and have different athletic abilities. However, we must teach methods that are mechanically solid for delivering positions for maximal effectiveness. The key is to deliver maximum results according to proven mechanical factors. ▲

*Cree Morris is one of the leading quarterback training specialists in the country. He has worked with NFL quarterbacks Drew Brees, Carson Palmer, and Chase Daniel and has trained athletes at all levels of football. He can be reached at his email – [Stoolqb@gmail.com](mailto:Stoolqb@gmail.com) or his web site, [www.5toolqb.com](http://www.5toolqb.com).*



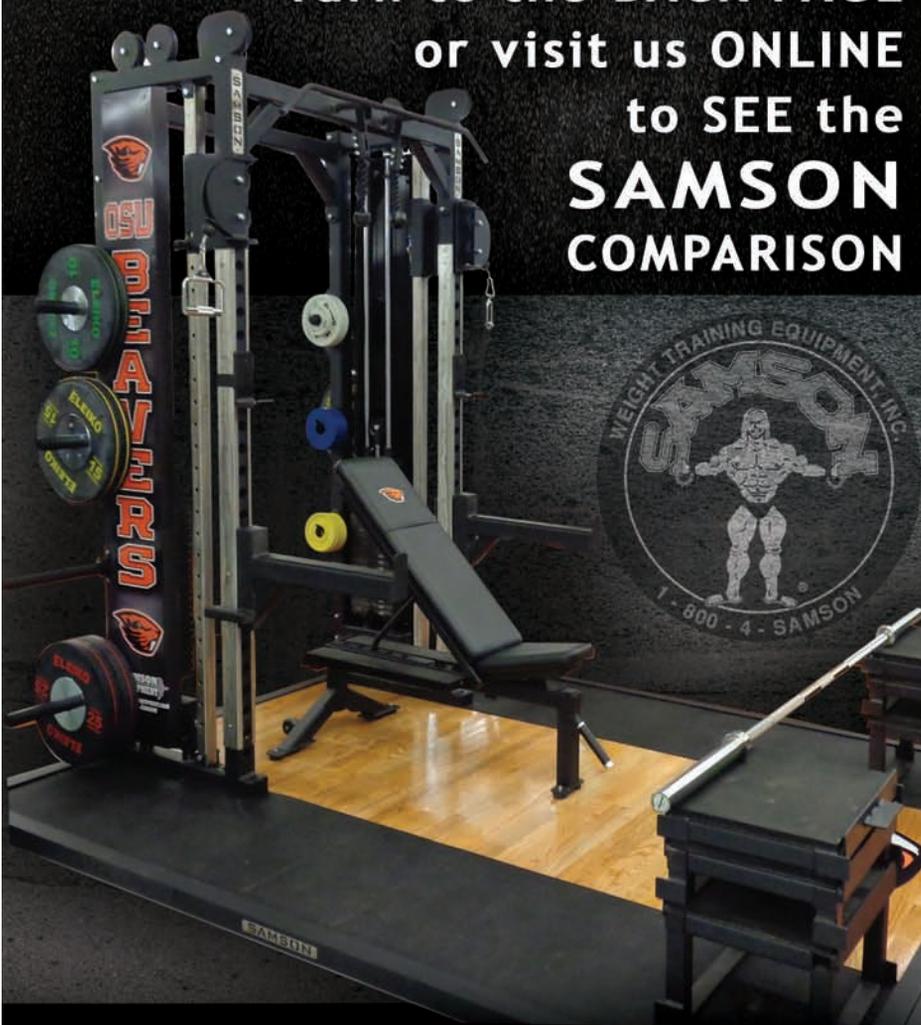
*Coach Baskett began his career as a football speed coach in 1979. During the last 35 years he's consulted and trained hundreds of coaches and thousands of athletes nationwide. In the last year he has worked directly with high schools in California, Texas, Minnesota, Kansas, and Pennsylvania. Over the last few years he has also consulted with Texas Tech, Ohio State, USC, University of Washington, and the University of Mount Union. You can reach him directly for more information or if you have specific questions on your training program. Coach Baskett is at [dbspeed@hotmail.com](mailto:dbspeed@hotmail.com) and 858-568-3751.*

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