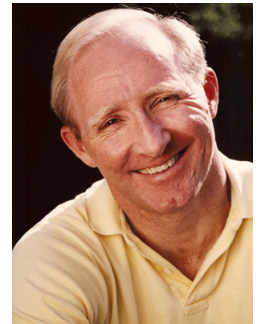


Turbo charge any offense with the warp-speed, no-huddle tempo



From the outhouse to the penthouse in one season

In the late 1980s, the Cincinnati Bengals went from the **bottom** of their division to the **SuperBowl** in one season by running a whole-game, no-huddle offense. It was causing defense so much trouble that they would fake injuries to slow it down.

In the early 1990s, the **Buffalo Bills** also went to the SuperBowl—four times in a row—in part because of their whole-game no-huddle offense.

I interviewed Coach Dana Bible of the Bengals and Marv Levy of the Bills about their no-huddle tempo. Both were quite enthused about them.

Throwing up

A **San Diego State** coach who spoke at a clinic I attended was also extremely pleased with his team's whole-game no-huddle. He said after one game, some friends of his on an opponent coaching staff told him their first-string defenders were throwing up on the sideline during the game.

Need it for two reasons

I invented my warp-speed, no-huddle in 1993 for my own team and it worked great. I've been pushing it ever since, but I have been disappointed that many have not used it and others who say they use it but actually do a slower non-warp-speed no-huddle. That's good as far as it goes. But you need the warp-speed for two reasons:

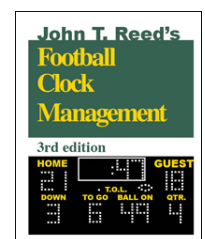
1. At the end of each half, you may **need** the warp-speed version, not the slower one, because there simply are not enough seconds on the clock to be calling cadence.
2. The effectiveness of a whole-game no-huddle is inversely proportional to the number of seconds that elapse between the ready-to-play signal and the snap. In other words, the **faster** you snap, the more you screw up the opposing defense. In other words, if you're going to run a whole-game no-huddle, **go for the gold**.

Both reasons are discussed in my book *Football Clock Management*, 3rd edition.

Benefits of the warp-speed

The warp-speed has more benefits than you would imagine:

- knocks opposing defense **off balance**
- makes it hard for defense to **huddle** between plays
- makes it hard for defense to **substitute**
- makes it hard for defense to **vary defenses and stunts**
- makes it easier for youth football coaches to comply with **minimum-play rules**
- approximately **doubles the number of offensive plays** you run (assuming you can get first downs) to 80 to 120 depending on where your official game length falls on the 40- to 60-minute spectrum
- makes your **practices far more efficient**—Marv Levy told me he actually sent the offense home earlier from practice during the years they ran the whole-game no-huddle because they had completed the normal practice script early.
- turns your normal practice periods into **conditioning** also thereby eliminating the need for pure conditioning periods
- **fatigues** your opponents' defenses
- in hot weather, **dehydrates** your opponents' defense



Warp-Speed No-Huddle

- lets you compete on **stamina**, which you can **coach**, rather than **speed**, which you cannot coach
- knowing how to do the warp-speed makes it easy to also put in the “four-minute drill” or maximum **slow down** which like the warp speed, you absolutely must have for clock-management reasons
- makes your defense much better at **defending** other teams’ no-huddle offenses
- Since the opponent does not know how to run a warp-speed no-huddle, they get **freaked out** by your players’ ability to do it

The warp-speed hurry-up is one of the tactics recommended in my book [*The Contrarian Edge for Football Offense*](#).



The hurry-up slowdown

You can even do a **hurry-up** for **fatiguing** the opposing defense while complying with the **slowdown** rules of my [*Football Clock Management*](#) book. You do that by doing multiple high-speed **shifts** in between the ready-to-play whistle and the end of the play clock.

Waiting until the end of the play clock to snap is the slow-down tempo, but running plays *per se* is not the only way to tire out the opponent. Doing **high-speed shifts** almost makes the defense exert themselves as much as defending a play.

There is also a **mental** fatigue to continually scaring the defense with different formations.

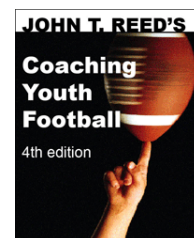
Your offense will also be fatigued to an extent by high-speed shifts. But you can structure the shifts so as to let you just move a couple of guys **slightly** but the **defense** has to **quickly flip-flop all their guys who align on the strong or weak side**.

If your opponent is in **zone pass defense**, putting just one of your men in motion will often force them to move most of their defenders to adjust repeatedly to the location of the motion man. (If they are in **man pass defense**, putting one offensive player in motion will only cause **one** defender to go in motion. But if they are in man pass coverage, you should run the **option** play because man pass defense is **not sound** against the option.)

Fun

Politically-correct, psychologically-correct parents and coaches often demand to know what I am doing as a coach to make my practices and games “fun.” If I’m in a bad mood, I say, “Nothing. The game was invented by boys to have fun. If any players do not think the game is fun they should be doing something else.”

But there is one thing I have done that **was** great fun for the players and parents: the warp-speed no-huddle. So, I do not schedule practice segments for fun only, but I am delighted when a legitimate practice or game segment is fun for the kids and their parents. The warp-speed is a great example of a fun practice/game activity, as I first reported in my book [*Coaching Youth Football*](#), 4th edition.



Piedmont’s A-11 offense

In the fall of 2007, I was at Piedmont High School the day they added a whole-game hurry-up to their famous A-11 offense. They were **not** going **warp-speed**, but they were trying to go as fast as possible while still calling cadence.

After ten or fifteen minutes of putting it in, the quarterback commented, “This is fun,” when he came to the sideline to get a play. (In the warp-speed, we signal the play from the sideline in code. Piedmont was having the QB go to the sideline for the play between plays.)

I also noticed that the players and parents really liked the warp-speed when I ran it in youth football. I did not expect any such reaction. I thought the players would think it was **hard**. It was, but they **did not notice**. And there is something about seeing it from the stands that is exciting and unexpected.

In 1996, when I was coaching freshmen at Granada High School, I put in a slower version of the warp-speed. It was slower because the varsity head coach insisted I use his long play names. Nevertheless, the head freshman coach, who was not big on compliments, said the warp-speed was “**impressive**” as he saw the kids getting better at it. I noticed as I had in prior years that the players were huffing and puffing and sweating profusely, but they seemed not to notice. They were **playing football**. That’s what they signed up for.

The A-11 offense is discussed in some detail in my book [*The Contrarian Edge for Football Offense*](#).

The warp-speed is stealth conditioning

Running the warp-speed in practice is stealth conditioning. The players are **getting conditioned**, but they don’t **realize it**. They see it is playing football, which they regard as fun. On the other hand, if you try to condition them with

Warp-Speed No-Huddle

gassers and such, they will **hate it** and **loaf**. When I coached at Miramonte High School, one of our players would always reach down and loosen his knee brace during the first gasser to get out of running the rest. He thought we did not know he was doing it deliberately.

Players hate traditional conditioning. They hate it so much that some of them **quit football** because of it. While you may say “Good riddance” to some who quit, many who quit are **good athletes** and **good kids** who were **assets** to your team. You must find better ways to condition, like using a warp-speed, no-huddle practice tempo. That is so important that you should use the warp speed in practice even if you never use it in games.

Even the kids who don't quit football because of conditioning loaf during conditioning drills, thereby reducing their effectiveness. They do **not** loaf during warp-speed scrimmages.

Finally, the warp-speed conditioning is **perfectly matched** to what players do in games. Gassers and running the stadium steps and the like are only **indirectly** related to what players do in an actual game and are therefore somewhat inefficient ways to condition even when players try as hard as possible.

This special report is about **offense**, but I will add that I have found **kickoff, kickoff return, punt, and punt return** practice segments, as well as **defensive pursuit drills**, to also be excellent stealth conditioning methods. I cover special teams and using high-speed special teams practices for conditioning in my books *[Coaching Youth Football](#)*, *[Coaching Freshman & Junior Varsity High School Football](#)*, and *[Coaching Youth Flag Football](#)*.

John T. Reed's
Coaching
Freshman &
Junior Varsity
High School
Football

Two quick beginning-of-the-game touchdowns; one quick beginning-of-the-second-half touchdown

When I used the warp-speed, we frequently scored two fast touchdowns on our first two possessions of the game and another quick touchdown on our first possession of the second half. This seemed to happen because the opposing defense simply was knocked off balance and took a possession or two to get their bearings. We were ripping off huge gains on every play and their coaches frequently called **timeout** after the second or third play of the game to try to regroup like in a basketball game.

In 2003, before our first game of the season, I told my freshman team that if they executed the no-huddle well, the opponent would be so shocked by it that their coach would call timeout after the second or third play of the game. Sure enough, he did. When I went out onto the field for the timeout, my players were all laughing and saying, “Just like you promised, Coach Reed.” As you probably know, predicting something like that, then seeing it happen, is fabulous for building player confidence in their new coach.

If I had it to do over, I would have gone to a **maximum slow-down** after the first two possessions of the first half and the first one of the second half. **Above the age of 16** however, I would push the warp-speed for the **whole game**. Football players older than 16 get progressively more tired during football games. The older they get, the more susceptible they are to cumulative, during-game fatigue. By running the warp-speed no-huddle, you create a cumulative oxygen debt, cumulative lactic acid build-up, cumulative muscle fatigue, cumulative dehydration, and so on.

Like playing a doubleheader

There is also harder-to-articulate **mental** fatigue from having to go through the mental parts of defense much faster than normal. In other words, the older the players above age 16, the more the warp-speed cumulatively grinds them down. They get a break at half time, but when you run the warp-speed, they have already played a complete game in the first half in terms of the number of plays. Then they have to go back out in the second half and play a double-header.

That's because the **normal number of plays per game is one per minute of game clock time per team**. So in a 40-minute youth game, you would typically see 40 offensive plays by each team. At the high school level, with their 48-minute games, 48 offensive plays per team. And at the college and NFL levels, 60 plays each in 60 minutes. By switching to the warp-speed, you approximately **double** the number of plays. If you get out of bounds and throw incomplete passes (not that incomplete passes are a good idea), you can probably increase the number of plays **even more** than double.

Less rest between plays

Furthermore, the warp-speed not only doubles the number of plays per game run by your offense, it also **cuts the rest periods between plays by about two-thirds**. That's because most teams' normal tempo is more or less almost a maximum slowdown. That is, they snap the ball after about **36 seconds** have run since the end of the previous play. In the warp-speed, you snap the ball about **12 seconds** on average after the previous play. It varies according to how the referee behaves.

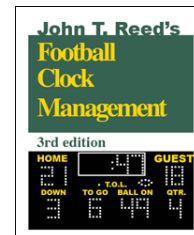
You know how to manage fatigue; your opponent does not

As a result of your warp-speed practices, your team will be both physically and mentally used to the tempo. Your opponent players will **not** be used to it. They will be **asking to be taken out of the game, throwing up** on the sideline, **gasping** for breath.

When you run the warp-speed, it is like making your opponent run 80 to 120 gassers one after another with about 12 seconds between them when you have possession of the ball. Furthermore, the defensive players cannot just rest between plays/gassers. They must jog to the new line of scrimmage and align as required by their defensive scheme and the offensive formation/shifts, and motions.

You will learn from experience that certain players and certain positions need to be replaced **sooner** than others. Your opponents will have no such experience and will not know how and when to substitute to always have their best players on the field in terms of ability, freshness, and fatigue. We had pairs of players for most positions other than wide receiver. We told the kids to decide on the substitution between themselves. Some would take two plays on and two plays off. Others would signal to the sideline that they needed a blow.

Our kids were not ashamed of being tired or trying to hide their fatigue. We all knew our limits well from dozens of practices and many games worth of experience. I told our players that the warp-speed would make the players on **both** sides tired and hot and sweaty. But I said **our** players would regard that fatigue and heat strain as an old friend that was helping us win the game. While our **opponents'** defensive players would regard the fatigue and heat with alarm and get freaked out by it. So when our old friend fatigue arose in any given player on my team, they would self-substitute or signal to their sideline partner or to me and we would substitute or give them a blow by the play we called while they were still on the field.



Friendly-side flanker streaks

Our best warp-speed fatigue trick was the **friendly-side flanker**. God must have loved wide receivers because he made so **many** of them. By that standard, God must **not** have loved cornerbacks because he made so **few** of them. And if one of them comes up against a team I coach, he will become even more convinced that God does not love cornerbacks because I will have my numerous wide receivers run him to death.

On every play, a new, fresh, friendly-side flanker goes onto to the field. The friendly side is the side where my bench is. By rule, my flanker must be inside the numbers embroidered on the modern FieldTurf or AstroPlay at least momentarily between the ready-to-play signal and the snap. He goes that far onto the field then gets to his alignment spot ASAP.

If he's covered, he then typically runs a **streak** all the way to the end line at the back of the end zone or as far as he can get before the end-of-play whistle. Then, he steps off the field. The cornerback who covered him, typically one of the fastest best players on the opposing defense, is tired out by that coverage.

My flanker is tired, too, but he is no longer in the game. When he steps off the field, his replacement steps onto the field back at the new line of scrimmage. The cornerback has to run to get back to the line of scrimmage in time to align correctly for the next play. When the ready-to-play whistle comes, my new flanker tears down the field on a **streak** route all the way to the end line or as far as he can get before the end-of-play whistle. Then he steps off the field and a new, **third**, fresh flanker steps onto the field back at the new line of scrimmage.

Essentially, my flankers **plural** and the enemy cornerback **singular** are running 40-yard dash after 40-yard dash at full speed. My flankers get a minute or two of rest between appearances on the field. We typically have eight or ten flankers. But the cornerback only gets about **12 seconds** between 40-yard dashes and he has to use most of that to jog back to the new line of scrimmage.

The more plays we run, the more tired the cornerback gets. Furthermore, because this is all done on my friendly side, it is hard for his coaches who are about 55 or 60 yards away and **have trouble seeing what their cornerback on my side of the field is going through**. Eventually, he tries to communicate it to them, but they have not worked out the fatigue hand signals like we have. His coaches do not understand at first. He may tell a substitute who is leaving the field that he needs to be replaced for a blow. Eventually, his coaches will figure out that he is asking to be taken out of the game. His coaches will typically be **angry** at him for making the request. They do not understand the fatigue management necessitated by our warp-speed tactics.

Now we've got the fresh, but **second-string** cornerback on the field. We may have been better off during the last several plays **before** the substitution when the cornerback was tripping on his tongue. But we are still better off with the fresh, **second-string** cornerback than we were on the first play of the game with the fresh, **first-string** cornerback.

Being tired and tripping on his tongue not only makes it harder for the corner to play pass defense, it makes it harder for him to support the run defense. **Any** play that he is responsible for should have a greater chance of working once he is tired.

Warp-Speed No-Huddle

This play is covered by my books *Coaching Youth Football*, *Coaching Youth Flag Football*, and *The Contrarian Edge For Football Offense*.



Silence

I have operated my warp-speed in **total silence** at times. Indeed, that's how we did it the first season.

It is spooky. Eerie. You have to see it to appreciate it.

Think about it, 99.9% of the teams in America shout cadence before snapping the ball. Something like “Down! Set! Blue 28! Red 16! Blue 28! Red 16! Hut! Hut!”

That takes time. I want to snap the ball within two seconds of the ready-to-play whistle. To paraphrase Jesse Ventura from his movie *Predator*, “I ain't got time to call cadence.”

Also, quarterback cadence serves as a **wake-up call** to the defense. When we operated in silence, we often snapped the ball when the opposing defense was still in their defensive **huddle**. Later in the game, the opponent would not dare huddle on defense, but we would still often snap the ball when **one or more defenders were looking the other way**.

Think about that. You are running a play with one or two of your opposing defenders not looking. **Their** wake-up call in the crash of lineman pads behind them. Then they turn around and try to figure out where the ball when after the snap. See how good **your** star linebacker is when **he** has his back to the play at the snap.

As with the warp-speed in general, all teams at the high school varsity or higher levels need to know how to operate in silence because sometimes the **crowd** is too loud to hear cadence including audibles.

Freak-out factor

The warp-speed **freaks out** opposing players and coaching staffs, especially when you do it silently. As I said above, **they** cannot run a warp-speed no-huddle. They also cannot operate their offense **silently** even at a slowdown pace. Your players can and, what's more, they do so seemingly effortlessly and with tremendous confidence.

You might have seen the 1969 classic movie *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. I had the largest collection of memorable lines of any movie ever made. One recurring line in the movie was the comment by Butch and Sundance, as the posse pursuing them kept exhibiting amazing skill, “Who **are** those guys?” I suspect the players and coaches who opposed my teams when we ran the warp-speed were thinking something similar.

At one game, a parent from our team was on the opposing sideline during the game. He said their coaches kept reassuring their players, “Don't worry. They can't keep that pace up for the whole game.” He was dead wrong. We did exactly that.

After the game, that coach was pumping my hand in the handshake line as if he were meeting a celebrity. At that time, I had only written one book, on defense, but he had not been aware of that. His reaction was based entirely on the warp-speed.

“How did you get your players to memorize such a long sequences of plays?” he asked.

“They don't memorize any plays. We hold up a white board with the current play written on it. You never noticed us doing that?” He had not, even though all our players turned and looked at our sideline between plays.

The code

We send each play in one at a time between plays. Typically, I have about 16 to 18 plays. Fewer if the players are sub-high school age. There are lots of ways you can encode the plays. I usually numbered them 1 to 9 and had pass plays numbered 1 to 9 and run plays numbered 1 to 9.

We either used four digits or a letter and three digits to send the play in. The letter or one of the four digits would indicate whether the play was a **pass or a run**. For example, odd numbers in that digit location would mean run and even numbers would mean pass. (Avoid using the number zero because kids get confused. If you use it as an odd or even indicator, it is **even** because it is next to 1.) With a letter, we would say the first half of the alphabet—A-M—meant run and the second half—N-Z—meant pass or vice versa.

Another of the digits was a **dummy** that meant nothing and was just there to make the code harder to break by the enemy. The remaining two digits were to be added together and the play number would be the last digit of the sum. You can use any of the digits but let's say we do it this way. The first letter or digit indicates run or pass. The second is a dummy and the third and fourth digits are to be added together to get the play number.

Suppose I want to send in **run play number 1** which was our base single wing play: the long-side, off-tackle. Here are a number of different ways I can do that:



Warp-Speed No-Huddle

- H701
- 5665
- B329
- 9347

In fact, there are literally $5 \times 10 \times 10 = 500$ different ways I can send in that one play if I use a digit to indicate run or pass. That's five different odd numbers multiplied by ten different dummy numbers multiplied by ten different combinations that add up to 1 or 11 (01, 92, 83, 74, 65, 56, 47, 38, 29, 10).

If I use the **letter** method of indicating the run or pass category, the number of ways I can send in the long-side, off-tackle play grows to $13 \times 10 \times 10 = 1,300$. That's because there are 13 letters in the first half of the alphabet.

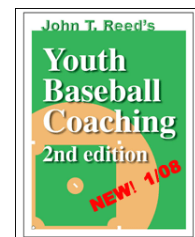
Some seasons, we sent the play in with a white board using a Jumbo Expo II dry-erase marker. I tested it. It can be read in the worst case which is our team on the far hash mark at the one yard-line and our whiteboard on our 30-yard line on our sideline. You may have some players who **need glasses or contacts** and who are not wearing them. They will ask their neighbor what the play is. That neighbor must be careful to repeat the **code**, **not** the **decoded actual play** name that might be heard by a defender.

Eye test

Or you could eye test each play as I did and tell their parents they need to wear contacts to have their best chance of success in football. I just made an eye chart with a computer laser printer and figured out which height letter should be read at 20 feet distance if your vision is 20/20. There's an eye chart at <http://www.disabled-world.com/artman/publish/eye-chart.shtml>.

A couple of people tried to give me crap for practicing optometry without a license. I pointed out that I had not prescribed corrective lenses. I just told parents that their kid flunked my eyesight test and that they should get him tested by an optometrist and take appropriate action. No optometrist ever disagreed that the kid needed glasses when I said he did.

My oldest son discovered he needed them from my youth coaching test. (Possibly the worst day of his life. I simply told him that he needed glasses as if I were telling him he had lint on his shirt. He responded as if I had diagnosed him with terminal cancer. Until he got contacts as a teenager, he was extremely self-conscious about wearing glasses. So take it easy with dropping that bomb on the kids.) I discussed my eye test in my book *Youth Baseball Coaching*, 2nd edition.



Magna Doodle

The second year, my assistant Cy Doerner discovered a **toy** that he thought would be a better way to send in the plays.

We are in California where it generally does not **rain** until late in the season. We were concerned that we would not be able to use the white board in a late-season game if it rained. In the event, that never happened, but it could have. The toy, a MagnaDoodle, seemed to offer the solution.

It is like the more well-known Etch-A-Sketch, only bigger. It comes with a **magnet** that is about the size of a quarter and has a small handle on it. Using that tool, we could make letters or numbers with inch-wide lines. Again, they were easily read by our players with good eyesight when they were on the far hash and one-yard line.

After the snap, you just slid a slide along the bottom of the MagnaDoodle to erase the previous numbers. In the event, we never had to use it in the rain. It's possible that MagnaDoodles have some problem in the rain. They do malfunction after a time. The slide stops working. So we had a back-up MagnaDoodle. Inevitably, our fellow coaches on our sister teams made fun of our "Etch-a-Sketch" as they called it. Since we were secure in our manhood—apparently a rare condition—we ignored them.

Our wet weather backup system if the MagnaDoodle would not work in the rain was **verbal**.

Write two numbers in advance

To achieve **high speed**, the way you do the written signals is to write the dummy number and one of the two numbers to be added together for the play number **immediately** after the snap, but before you know the results of the play. Then, when you see the results of the play, you call the next play and your assistant who has the white board or MagnaDoodle adds the odd-even or alphabet run-pass indicator and the second number needed to add up to the play number. There is no need to wait until the play result to write two of the letters or digits so you do not wait. That way you only have to add two characters after the play result is evident.

The best way to signal to play code is probably a device sold to **track coaches**. It has sets of metal numbers 0 to 9

Warp-Speed No-Huddle

that you flip to get to the combination you want. It's like the old-time sideline down indicators only it has four or more sets of digits and they go 0 to 9, not 1 to 4. It's a lap counter or some such. Whatever, it's all-weather.

Verbal code

When I coached freshman high school in 2003-2005, we called out a **verbal** version of the code. For the letters and the number nine, we used the **military phonetic alphabet** to avoid one letter or the numbers five and nine being heard incorrectly and confused with another. The phonetic alphabet pronunciation of the number nine is "**niner**" to distinguish it from five. The phonetic alphabet, which our quarterbacks had to memorize, was:

Alpha	Hotel	November	Uniform
Beta	India	Oscar	Victor
Charlie	Juliet	Papa	Whiskey
Delta	Kilo	Quebec	X-ray
Echo	Lima	Romeo	Yankee
Foxtrot	Mike	Sierra	Zulu
Golf		Tango	

I would yell the code from the sideline to the quarterback shortly after the end of the prior play. He would move a little bit toward the sideline to hear as his teammates lined up for the next play. Then he would repeat the code to the left, then the right, side of the formation and they would all then await the ready-to-play signal. As soon as they got that signal, they would snap the ball and run the play. For example, I might yell out, "Delta six five three" (running play 8).

Note that we **never combined two numbers** like sixteen or fifty-three. We always said each number individually for clarity, i.e., one six or five three.

Wake-up call

I did **not** like the verbal version, but our high school varsity ran a whole-game no-huddle and they called out the play in code verbally so I was sort of preparing my players for that approach. They used a **different** code, apparently simply calling out several actual play names in a row with the last being the live one. The quarterback would repeat that very long string of words to the players on the field. I say apparently because the varsity coach would not let us use his code and would not tell us what it was. But we attended the games and that's what it apparently was.

I did not like the verbal version because it served as a wake-up call to the defense. It also failed to provide the spooky eeriness of the silent play signalling, but it worked reasonably well and was all-weather.

Some players occasionally **screwed up** the verbal version. They **almost never** did when we used a **sign**.

In **practices**, we had to use **written** plays either in a sugar huddle right by the ball or by white board behind the defense. Otherwise, the **scout defense** would **hear** the code and know what play was coming. When we held up a white board from behind the scout defense, we had to order the scout defenders **not to peek** at the white board so the play would be a surprise.

Enemy attempts to decode the play codes

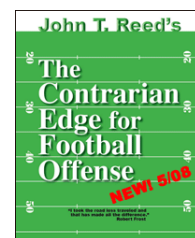
Our opponents would always try to **decode** our plays. We could hear them talking about it.

One coach said he broke our code, but when we asked him what our code was he declined to say. I do not think there is any chance he had decoded our code. Even if he did, how could he signal our play and his defense for it into to his players during the game before we snapped the ball?

By the way, **you** need to use a different code from the one in this report because you are not the only one who will read this. For example, you could add the first and fourth digits together, instead of the third and fourth to get the play number. There are **six** different ways to combine two numbers in a four-digit sequence: AB BC CD AC AD BD. You could make vowels (a e i o u y) passes and consonants (the rest of the alphabet), runs. You could use numbers 1-5 for runs and numbers 6-9 for passes, etc., etc.

One good thing about sending the code in verbally is that it **seems** tantalizingly easy to decode. So the enemy defenders waste time trying to do that. They also mess up their brains thinking they got it, then seeing that the play was different.

There also seemed to be a **freak-out factor** as our quarterback barked out the code in a supremely confident voice and our players' faces instantly showed recognition of the play that had been called. Once again, we were doing something effortlessly that our opponents could not do to save their lives, namely, communicating plays at high speed with



Warp-Speed No-Huddle

four-character codes and running the plays in question as fast as the rules allow.

Ultimately, whether we used the sign or the verbal way of signalling in the play code, the enemy **abandoned** efforts to decode it during the first quarter. We could hear them stop talking about it and see them stop looking at the white board or MagnaDoodle.

Putting in the warp-speed

It takes about **five minutes** for the players to **learn the code**. Put 'em in the bleachers and teach it with a white board. Again, **never** use the number 0 as a play number or an odd or even indicator. It would probably be OK as a bottom half of the numbers 0 to 5 for run or pass.

Then assign numbers to each play and make them learn those. For example, 1 is off-tackle, 2 is sweep, 3 is wing reverse, and so on.

Then **act as the referee** and have them run plays **against air**. We did this in summer when we could not run plays *per se*. We were allowed to do conditioning drills. The “plays” we ran were “same hash” or “opposite hash” and a number of yards.

In other words, “same hash ten yards” would mean that we were running a non-play, but that the next location of the ball would be ten yards in front of where it was before the snap. We typically had **three or four teams on the field at the same time** about ten yards apart vertically. In other words, we had one team on the end line, one on the goal line, one at the ten, and one at the twenty.

We might yell out “Opposite hash fifteen yards.” Then I would act as ref and blow the ready-to-play whistle and give one of the two ready-to-play arm signals (pump arm down or wind the clock). One quarterback would call cadence for all four teams. On the snap, all the players would sprint to the sext called hash mark and get ready for the next play.

This was a **gasser sprint conditioning** drill, but we added the hurry-up procedure to get double benefit out of the period. We also did a slowdown version of this where I would yell out the next hash and distance from the sideline then become a **human play clock**. See my [Coaching Youth Football](#) and [Football Clock Management](#) books for details on that.

The quarterback in charge of calling cadence for all four teams would watch my arm and call for the ball when there was one second left on the human play clock. I would also yell out “Assume there are now only six seconds left on the play clock” so our slowdown sprints were really run at a hurry-up tempo for conditioning and efficiency purposes, but the slowdown snap would be initiated by the quarterback watching the human play clock rather than the ref’s ready-to-play signal, as in the hurry-up. You rarely practice a slowdown where you actually wait the whole 40 seconds because that takes forever and you get little done. I wait the whole 40 seconds about twice a week to make sure the players know how long it is if we have to do it in a game. If they **never** experience the 40 seconds, they get antsy and get set too soon or think something’s wrong.

Just one or two days

Once you get into August and you are allowed to practice football *per se*, it goes like this for a day or two.

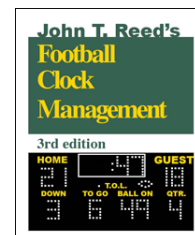
I am the referee/coach in charge of the practice segment. No other coach is allowed to talk out loud. I yell at the offense, “Get your play! Defense, no peeking!” One of my assistant coaches standing behind the scout defense has a **script** of the plays I want to run taped to the back of the white board or MagnaDoodle. He writes the first one on the board and holds it up. The offensive players all look at it. I have a hash position script that I use to place the ball after each play.

Since they will look at it for 20 minutes if you let them, I start a **countdown**, “Six. Five. Four. Three. Two. One.” Then the assistant coach pulls down the board so they cannot see it anymore. That’s to get them into the habit of getting the play quickly then turning away from the sign.

I then position myself at the ball and play referee raising my hand over my head. I then yank it down or wind the clock and blow my whistle and start **counting out loud**, “One one thousand. Two one thousand. Three one thousand.” If I get to three, I stop counting and start complaining, “What’s the problem? Why haven’t you snapped the ball yet?”

Initially, they will be **too slow**. But after they get chewed out a few times, they get the idea. Occasionally you have a player who is chronically slow. Chew him out extra and replace him if he does not get with the program. I never had to replace a kid, but some take more persuading than others, especially those with experience in **non-hurry-up** offenses.

Once they snap on time, I blow the play dead artificially regardless of whether a tackle has been made after five or six seconds. I then place the ball at the new yard line and hash position achieved by the play and start the sequence over again, “**Walk, do not run, to the new ball location!**” That’s because the ref will take about 9 to 15 seconds no matter what so don’t tire yourself out.



“Get your formation!”

There is no huddle, the players just line up at the ball. In years when I use **multiple formations**, we signal the new formation from the sideline with an **arm signal or verbally** yell it out. We do not encode the formations because they are in plain view to the enemy.

Some years, I always run the **same formation all season**. In 2004, for example, we were always in twins left (split end and slot back on the right) unless the ball was on the right hash in which case we were in pro left (split end on the right, flanker on the left). The kids would automatically align in the right one based on the hash position.

“Get your play!”

“Six. Five. Four. Three. Two. One.”

Ready-to-play whistle

“One one thousand Two one thousand Three one thousand”

End-of-play whistle and so on.

It takes the kids about a day or two to get this down. After that, it is second nature. They do not even think about it. Effortless. But opposing scout offensive teams cannot replicate it to save their lives so their defense never gets a good look at it.

What about the snap count?

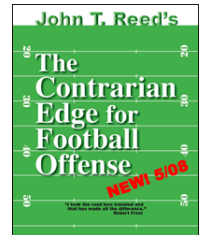
There is no snap count. The interior linemen other than the center go on ball movement. That’s what the other positions have always gone on: ball movement. The guy who’s receiving the snap signals the center by hand pressure if his hands are in contact with the center and by visual signal—as in scrimmage kicks or shotgun snaps—if he’s not. The signal means “Snap when you’re ready”—as it does in scrimmage kicks—not snap right now.

Doesn’t not having a snap count give up the normal offensive advantage of knowing the snap count when the defense does not?

Yep.

It also has the **advantage** of all but eliminating false starts and their five-yard penalties. Furthermore, studying game video reveals no problem from not knowing the snap count. The defense doesn’t know it either. So neither side has an advantage.

The advantage of knowing the snap count has long been way overrated both in terms of ignoring the resulting false-start penalties and in terms of the actual advantage in terms of seconds.



Reaction time of linemen to cadence

The International Association of Athletic Federations says that if an athlete moves sooner than .1 second after the start signal, he **false started** on the grounds that a human cannot react that fast to a signal. The world record reaction time was .101 seconds which may have been achieved by anticipating rather than reacting. It takes .006 seconds for the sound of the “hut” to travel from the quarterback’s mouth to the tackle’s ear. It takes .026 seconds for the brain to send the signal to the feet to move.

False-start penalties

In football, there is no electronic disqualification time, but coaches who emphasize get-off risk false-start penalties which more than offset the value of extraordinary get-off. In addition, the **defensive** line is going on **visual** ball movement which takes no time at all to go from the ball to the eyes of the defender. Light moves at 186,000 miles per second. Sound only travels about 340 meters per second at sea level under normal conditions.

Sprinter reaction times

An article at <http://condellpark.com/kd/reactiontime.htm> says reaction times are mostly .13 to .15 seconds and these are **world championship sprint races** not lard butt linemen wearing football equipment.

Football Physics

According to the book *Football Physics* by Timothy Gay Ph.D., the reaction time of a football player is .2 seconds, that is, it takes .2 seconds from when the quarterback says “hut” until the brain receives the command to go until when the body starts to go.

Rhythmic cadence

A rhythmic cadence enables the offensive linemen's brains to issue the command to their muscles to go .2 seconds **in advance** of the actual "hut." The defense cannot issue a go command from their brains until they see the ball or the offense begin to move so they are .2 seconds **late** getting going.

Swimming and track

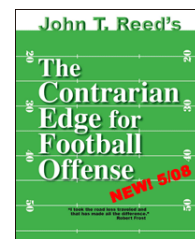
In high-level swimming and track competition, the go signal is a light and any racer who starts moving before humanly possible, that is, before the fastest reaction time of superb athletes, is disqualified on the grounds that he or she must have issued their brain command to go **before** the light.

In football, it is legal to give the brain command to the muscles .2 seconds early, but it can **only** be accomplished with a **rhythmic cadence**. But if you use a rhythmic cadence, and **always go on the same count** which is arguably advisable to avoid false starts, the **defense** can anticipate, too.

Speed differential

According to the book *The Physics of Football* by Dr. Timothy Gay, the advantage of Anthony Muñoz knowing the snap count and his direct opponent Lawrence Taylor **not** knowing was that Muñoz was going 8.3 feet per second and Taylor was going 5.1 feet per second when they hit. Taylor was going slower because he started later than Muñoz which means Muñoz had more time to accelerate toward his top speed.

Is this good? Sure. But then L.T. was all-pro without ever having the advantage of knowing the snap count. So it was not decisive.



Never an advantage to the defense

An old coach colleague of mine told me that his quarterback once kept going on one in a game in college and the coach said he was getting killed as a result. He said he finally told the QB to change the snap count or he was going to kick his ass.

Nice story. It's an often-heard football story. But it makes no sense. Going on one or not, the **defender never** has an advantage over the offensive player. Even if the defender "knows" the snap count, it just puts him on an **equal** footing with the offensive player. It gives him **no advantage**.

So if my coach colleague was getting his ass kicked when **both** players had the snap count, he must have been an inferior player who had no chance to best his man unless he had a two-tenths of a second head start on him.

The defense never knows the count for sure

More importantly, the defense **never** knows the snap count the way the offense knows the snap count. If you always go on one, the defense **still** cannot count on it. If you always go on one and you sense that the defense is going on the snap count instead of visually as they are trained, you can easily run a **freeze play** where you just line up and call cadence, but no one moves on your team. The defenders who "know" that the ball will be snapped on one all jump offside and you get a free five-yard gain.

That, in turn, will cause the defense to go back to watching the ball rather than trying to go on the first "hut."

Terry Bowden

When he became the head coach at Auburn, Terry Bowden told his offense to always go on one. How did that work out? His team went undefeated.

Only applies to guards, tackles, and tight ends

When you think about it, the benefit of knowing the snap count only accrues to the guards, tackles, and tight ends. The wide receivers are too far away. Wide receivers rarely false start. When they do, it's because they ignored the admonition to go on ball movement and forgot the snap count. They are supposed to go **visual** so they get no benefit from knowing the snap count. The center, in my "no cadence at all" approach, snaps whenever he wants after he feels QB hand pressure or sees a hand or foot signal so he is the first to know because **he decides**.

The quarterback is the one who gives the silent hand pressure in my approach, so **he** does not need to hear a snap count. Finally, the offensive backs do not need to hear the snap count because they have no defender right in front of them the way the linemen do. They can just watch the ball.

Second team all league

I coached varsity tight ends one year. After a few games, I could tell that the starting tight end was not making any effort to remember the snap count. He obviously was waiting for others to move and going on that visual sign rather than the audible “hut.” I chewed him out and gave him some tips to help him remember like balling his fist up and pushing the snap count number of fingers into his palm in the huddle. He ignored me and continued to wait until the other offensive players got off before he would move.

How did that work out? We were league champs. He never false started. He was named second-team all-league at tight end.

Reaction time of wide receiver to hut sound

At sea level, sound travels 340 meters per second. Actually, it depends on humidity and temperature, but that’s an average. Wide receivers, on average, are about 18 meters from the quarterback. That means it takes .05 seconds for the sound of the hut to reach them or about $.05 \div .006 = 8.33$ times as long as it takes to get to the tackle’s ear.

As a result, wide receivers are trained to **watch** the ball rather than listen for the snap “hut.” Therefore, there no benefit whatsoever to varying the snap count or even having a snap count with regard to the wide receivers.

See if the world comes to an end

Tell you what, instead of us arguing about this based on what we’ve always heard or science and all that, why don’t you just try it. See if the world comes to an end because your interior linemen do not know a snap count. Like I said, you are already doing this or should be with regard to your scrimmage kicks and wide receivers. I bet you cannot see any difference between going on ball movement and going on a snap count in game film shot down the line of scrimmage.

Summary

Investing and implementing the warp-speed no huddle was one of the best, most effective, and most fun things I ever did in 35 seasons of coaching. You **must** have the warp-speed for end-of-half situations where there are only a few seconds left on the clock. Even if you never use it in games, the warp-speed is a fabulous ways to make your practices more efficient, more fun, and more effective for conditioning your players.

But the main thing about the warp-speed, no-huddle is that it fouls up the and astonishes opposing defenses. The warp-speed, no-huddle tempo turbocharges any offensive scheme. Try it and you’ll see.

**Good luck this season,
John T. Reed**

John T. Reed’s Football Coaching Products

