



BLACKOUT

VOLUME I

**Professional Background, Origins of the Scheme,
Philosophy , Mission, and Overview**

THE MODERN MULTIPLE DEFENSE

Professional Background



**East Carolina University (FBS)
2006-2008
Defensive Staff Assistant**



**North Greenville University (D2)
2009-2011 ILB/ STC
2012- DC/ ILB**



**Gardner-Webb University (D1 FCS)
2013 OLB/ STC
2014-2015 STC/RB/TE
2016-17 RGC /RB/TE**



**West Brunswick High School
Head Football Coach
2018-2021
24-17 Career Record**



**Anderson University (D2)
2022-PRESENT
AHC/ DC**

D2 Startup Program in The SAC
• **Began Play in 2024**
• **#19 Total D in 2025 (D2)**



Origins of The Blackout (The NGU Years)

- **2009- Hired as Inside Linebacker Coach. Head Coach Jamey Chadwell wanted to run 3-4 Defense. Right up the road in Spartanburg, Wofford (FCS) was having great success under DC Nate Woody. NGU's DC Chad Staggs began to implement elements of the Wofford system with the high-pressure system he learned at South Carolina under Tyrone Nix.**
- **The Results: Nine wins in 2010, a school record 11 wins in 2011, and the school's first NCAA D2 Playoff Berth. Advanced to the Quarterfinals.**
- **My four-year stint at NGU helped shaped some key defensive and cultural philosophies. I have been part of a base Odd Front Defense ever since.**
- **Fun Fact: Current Anderson Co-DC AJ Jones was an All-American Will Linebacker for us at NGU.**



Origins of The Blackout (The GWU Years)

- **2013- Hired by Carroll McCray at Gardner-Webb. In our first year, the Runnin' Bulldogs finished top 10 in the country in many defensive categories and helped engineer a quick turnaround to seven wins.**
- **Randall McCray, GWU's DC, had a very diverse background and could coach any position on defense. He had learned from some great defensive coaches like Bret Bielema, Todd Graham , and Keith Patterson.**
- **This was my first exposure to TRAP Pressures. The system we ran at GWU focused heavily on five-man pressures and various ways to play cloud support.**
- **I spent four seasons coaching Offense while coordinating Special Teams at GWU. This was very instrumental in my growth as a defensive coach, especially as it relates to attacking protections.**



Origins of The Blackout (Head Ball Coach)

- **2018- Named Head Football Coach at West Brunswick High School (my HS alma mater). Program had lost its way. Four Head Coaches in five years. Just three winning seasons since 2000.**
- **Had to learn how to streamline communication and teaching progressions in every phase of the program. Less time with HS players and we were not a platoon team!**
- **Learned the value of an installed system when we became clients of "The Big O". It provided me a clear direction on offense being a defensive minded Head Coach.**
- **Program immediately improved from five wins in 2018 to 10-2 in 2019 (First Ten Win Season since 1997). In the Covid-Shortened 2020 season, WBHS advanced to the State Quarterfinals for the first time since 2003.**
- **In 2019 and 2020, our defense held opponents to seven or less points ELEVEN times in 20 total games.**
- **Defensive Coordinator Caleb Pardue and I made full investment into combining 3-4 defense with Rip/Liz Match Principles. This was my first foray into implementing heavy post-safety defense.**
- **Left West Brunswick for AU as first coach in 21st century to depart with a winning record.**
- **We had AWESOME kids and great players. Ten played college football at every level from FBS to D3!**





BUILDING THE BLACKOUT

- **Inaugural AU Football Staff was hired by legendary HC Bobby Lamb in 2022/2023. Staff developed system in spring of 2023. Implemented during AU practice year ('23). Startup program won five games and finished #19 in NCAA D2 in Total Defense in 2025.**
- **Every member of our Defensive Staff has coached High School Football. It was important that we hired people who could teach a team full of freshmen and could deal with early struggles.**
- **Only directive from HC was to base out of 3-down front. Essentially, we had the framework of the car, but the process of building the engine and every other component was up to us! BUILT FROM SCRATCH**
- **Defensive staff used ZERO verbiage or nomenclature used at previous stops. This was going to be OUR SYSTEM.**
- **Brett Hickman (AHC/DC/OLB's) 20-year coaching veteran with stops at the FBS, FCS, D2, and High School levels.**
- **Caleb Fuller (DL and RGC) - HS Coach's Son. App State player under Nate Woody. NC HS Coach and GA at Louisville.**
- **AJ Jones (Co-DC and ILB) - All-American Player at NGU. 10-year SC HS Coach. 4 years as a DC.**
- **Malik Chevry (Secondary/PGC/ Recruiting Coordinator) - Southeastern University Football Alum. SC HS and Erskine College.**

THE BLACKOUT PHILOSOPHY



E, E, E, T, T, T

The Blackout Defense Philosophy starts with aligning with the values of the Head Football Coach of your program. Until you sit in that chair, you will never understand the burdens he has and the ramifications and consequences of those decisions that land on his shoulders. Our first rule, be loyal to him and your players!

Defensive football, when played with these characteristics, is a beautiful blend of violence, cohesion, and fun. And when defenses play great TOGETHER, the TEAM is given the best chance to win.

The Blackout strives to put a unit on the field that prides itself on doing ordinary things, extraordinarily well. And these things are prioritized in the acronym 'E.E.E. T. T.T'. If we follow base fundamentals of EYES, EFFORT, EMOTIONAL INTENSITY, TECHNIQUE, TACKLING and TOUGHNESS, then our football team will benefit from our unit playing at its possible highest level.

"E" is for "EYES". You simply cannot play defense without eye control. Our keys give us presnap alignments and they give us an opportunity for post-snap execution. Today's offenses take advantage of poor eyes in the RPO game, in misdirection, and in general multiplicity. The goal of this defense is to give specific keys to every position and allow them to not be blinded by 'eye candy' and play fast post snap.

"E" is for "Effort". Mistakes are negated when we simply chase the football. Defensive football in its simplest form is winning your one-on-one matchup and then eleven men trying to make a play on the ball. If we are maniacal about effort to the football, then we will make up for mistakes that are inevitably going to happen in a 60-minute game.

"E" is for "Emotional Intensity". A great unit is emotionally ready for the fight every time the whistle blows. Learning how to develop and cultivate an edge and playing with passion is a non-negotiable. Coaches must set the tone and challenge the leaders to lead both by example and vocally. We are not choir-boys!

"T" is for "Technique". This sport is played with from the feet to the eyes. Your feet determine the movements of the rest of your body, so we teach all of our movements with footwork first in mind. Secondly, we want to always play from an athletic posture with proper ankle, knee, and hip flexion. And finally, great defensive technicians play great with their hands. We will strive to be the most fundamentally sound football team in stance, footwork, leverage, and block destruction.

"T" is for "Tackling". The #1 goal of defense.....make them snap it again! Be the best tackling team in America. Focus daily on tackling both in close quarters and in open space. Do not go one single day without practicing tackling. It is the core element of great defense.

"T" is for "Toughness". More So than any other unit, playing great defense is about mental and physical toughness. The mindset starts and ends with creating a unit that is stout at the line of scrimmage against the run and that is ferocious in its physicality at all three levels of the defense. It is ultimately defined by its mental toughness in adverse situations such as after an explosive play or in a sudden change situation.

THE BLACKOUT MISSION

The Three Blackout Rules To Live By.Players and Coaches!

- 1) DON'T BE SOFT**
- 2) NO ONE CARES. GET IT DONE.**
- 3) WORK THE CRAP OUT OF YOUR ROLE AND YOUR ASSIGNMENT**

Playing defense is being physical, smart and nasty. We must develop a swagger that we can defend ANYONE. We will dominate the line of scrimmage and stop the run. We will hit the quarterback. And we will limit big plays. These are non-negotiables.

This unit will prepare properly for each opponent on our schedule. We will relentlessly pursue the football. We will GO AFTER the football! Our will to prepare and our will to compete will not be broken. These are non-negotiables.

Our unit will live for the fourth quarter. When its too hard for someone else....its just right for us. We will dominate late in the game. These are non-negotiables.

There is no “half-way” in. You’re either “all in” or you are against us. This is a non-negotiable.

Our main objective is to keep the offense from scoring and to gain possession of the football either through a takeaway or a punt. It is a priority to put our offense and special teams in the best possible position to score.

Understand that TEAM Defense is defined by everyone on the unit's best effort. Each player must know his alignment and assignment, be diligent and disciplined in completing his assignment and then relentlessly swarming to the ball at all times!



THE BLACKOUT SCHEME



- **The Blackout is a multiple system that bases out of 3-4 personnel grouping. OLB's do differentiate with the Joker being a Nickel/Sam Hybrid, while the Bandit is the traditional DE/LB hybrid defender to the short-side of the field. Our DL is compartmentalized to a Nose, Tackle, and End. Inside Linebackers follow a tradition Mike-Will alignment. We could play both field/boundary corners or right/left. Our FS goes to the Field, while our Dog is our weak safety.**
- **At AU, we have been a base personnel team about 55% of the time. The other personnel groupings we use are Penny (2-5-4) , Nickel (5 DB's), Dime (6 DB's), Rhino (GL).**
- **At its core, the Blackout is an odd front system that utilizes both Tite Fronts (4i-0-4i) and Okie Fronts (4-0-4). However, we play four down fronts about 35% of our snaps and auto-align in many calls to alleviate stress to in-line TE sets and/or four man surfaces.**
- **Over two years at AU, we have been a 41% pressure team (5 or more) across all down and distances. We are either simulated/creeper/ or five-man pressure on 59% of all snaps.**
- **The Blackout installs multiple versions of Cover 2, Cover 3, and Cover 4 and all of the various rotations and combo coverages off those three concepts. AU has been 46% percent Split-Field/Middle Open , 43% Post-Safety Coverage over the 2024 and 2025 seasons. There is also a man coverage element in Nickel and Dime personnel groupings**
- **There is a systematic way of naming your concepts already done for you with The Blackout. The word association tied with each front, coverage, or pressure concept was designed with first-year college players in mind. In 2024, we played a college football season where 87% of our defensive roster were freshmen or red-shirt freshmen**

Contents of the system available.....

- **Over 25 Hours of Video Content.**
- **Drill Tape Provided From Every Level of the defense and the key coaching points and buzzwords the AU coaches use for learning and retention.**
- **The manual for organization and daily practice plans. Coach Hickman provides the blueprint for what the staff at Anderson does on a weekly basis. He also provides the weekly agenda for what he did as Head Coach of a non-platooning small high school team.**
- **The Base Defense and The Base Pressures installed in the same way it would be to our players. Technique presentations, playbook diagrams, and in-game video cutups explained by Coach Hickman or staff. We coach imperfect players like you! You will see cutups of the goodand the bad!**
- **Special Personnel Groupings plans as well as special situations. Nickel, Dime, Goal Line, Redzone....Its all in here!**
- **Trouble with Unbalanced, Empty, or FSL formations? We devote two videos to defending "The Hully Gullies".**
- **Coach Hickman has a long-standing relationship with option football. His father won over 80 percent of his games as an Option-based HS coach and Brett played QB in the system. He's also defended the offense over 35 times in his career. An entire hour of video is available on understanding option theory and defending the Flex out of both even and odd front defenses**
- **Lastly, The Coordinators Helper Video ; Game planning, Call-Sheet Organization, Use of Analytics....everything you need to call the game on Friday or Saturday is right here.**



In – Sequence, In-Bundle, or All-In-One

