



(Credit: A1C Jordan Lazaro)

## Practice Notes

# Even Tom Brady and Peyton Manning Had a Quarterback Coach

## How to Observe, Coach, and Train (OC/T) Anyone, Including Those Senior to You

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*By Lieutenant Colonel Cesar B. Casal*

American Football fan or not, you have likely heard of Tom Brady and Peyton Manning. I will wager, however, that you have never heard of Clyde Christensen. At the time of his retirement in 2023, Coach Christensen had forty-four years of football coaching under his belt—twenty-seven of those in the National Football League (NFL).<sup>1</sup> In that span, he was the quarterback coach for both Peyton Manning and Tom Brady—two of the greatest ever to play the position. Manning entered the NFL Hall of Fame in 2021 as a “first-ballot” select;<sup>2</sup> that is, he was elected on his first attempt, which is an honor only eighty-nine of the 371 NFL Hall of Famers can

claim.<sup>3</sup> Brady will presumptively do the same upon his first eligibility in 2028.<sup>4</sup> Having become a coach shortly after his time as a college quarterback, Clyde Christensen is not himself a Hall of Fame quarterback, and he never played in the NFL.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, he effectively coached two legends of that position at the highest echelon of play, including Brady, who already had multiple NFL championships under his belt at the time.<sup>6</sup>

Judge advocates (JAs) from captain to colonel are frequently assigned as “coaches” in the official role as exercise evaluators or guest observer-coach/trainers (OC/Ts). In many, if not most, cases, the guest JA



Then-SFC Robert W. Love (left) and then-CPT Julia Flores (right), provide advice to Soldiers while serving as the legal NCO OC/T and JA OC/T, respectively, at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany. (Credit: CPL Tomarius Roberts)

OC/T is junior in rank to the leaders and even the branch leads of the organizations they are tasked to observe, coach, and evaluate. Many do not even hold operational positions at the time of tasking. So, what can a less-experienced captain JA with no brigade time provide to a much more experienced brigade combat team JA? Or, what coaching can a junior major or lieutenant colonel offer to a seasoned division or corps staff judge advocate (SJA)?

As it turns out: plenty. If you believe Coach Christensen's experience and the Army's own OC/T philosophy,<sup>7</sup> one does not have to exceed the talents, knowledge, or experience of the training audience to provide real-time observations, feedback, self-reflection, and potential improvement to the trainee. The aim of this practice note is to provide a basic, self-directed framework to turn oneself into a value-added coach with minimal investment. As the Army continues to contend with and prepare for an

increasingly challenging and resource-constrained operational environment, the ability to provide potentially transformative observations, feedback, and coaching (whether in a formal or informal coaching role or just as a chance passer-by) creates fertile ground for continual improvement of our formations.

### Step 1: Begin with Foundational Principles

Effective coaching begins with fundamental principles.<sup>8</sup> For example, as the laws of physics apply to both great and mediocre quarterbacks, basic throwing mechanics and offensive formations apply nearly universally.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, an effective coach need not be an artist themselves, but rather, a master of foundations. Similarly, Army and Judge Advocate General's (JAG) Corps doctrine applies to its formations universally, so a JA-coach must know relevant doctrine to build their coaching credibility. As this article is

written for augmentee or informal JA OC/Ts with a full-time job in another discipline, it assumes limited knowledge and experience in national security law or as a staff planner. The following offers a list of key doctrine such personnel should review to add value to the training process.

### Army Doctrine "Crash Course" (7-8 hours)

1. Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Operations*<sup>10</sup> (read or skim, 1-2 hours). This ADP is only 100 pages and is the best overview of how the Army conducts operations.
2. ADP 5-0, *The Operations Process*<sup>11</sup> (1 hour) (read chapters 1 and 2, and skim the remaining)
3. Field Manual (FM) 3-60, *Army Targeting*<sup>12</sup> (1 hour) (skim, read chapters 1 and 2, and 3, 4, or 5 depending on the organization you are evaluating).
4. FM 3-84, *Legal Support to Operations*<sup>13</sup> (2 hours) (read).
5. Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 6-0.5, *Command Post Organizations and Operations*<sup>14</sup> (1 hour) (skim, with attention to Appendix A, Battle Rhythm and Meetings).
6. Echelon doctrine (1 hour) (skim, depending on the organization you are evaluating):
  - Corps: ATP 3-92, *Corps Operations*<sup>15</sup>
  - Division: ATP 3-91, *Division Operations*<sup>16</sup>
  - Brigade Combat Team: FM 3-96, *Brigade Combat Team*,<sup>17</sup> etc. for MEBs, fires, and sustainment brigades)

These resources assume a U.S. Army Forces Command unit-centric exercise. Other doctrinal publications will apply to non-combat operations such as Defense Support of Civil Authorities, humanitarian, Noncombatant Evacuation Operations, etc. Note, too, that these resources are Army-centric. Those working in a joint/combined environment should look to joint publications. The CAC-required JEL+ library,<sup>18</sup> hosted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is a useful resource. In addition, the Focus Paper series published by the Joint Chiefs provides practice-oriented, user-friendly breakdowns of an array of potentially useful topics.<sup>19</sup> See



A temporary encampment at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, CA. (Credit: SGT Terrance Salinas)

especially Joint Headquarters Organization and Authorities.

As long as users comply with and are mindful of changes to future policy guidance on the left and right limits of artificial intelligence (AI) use, approved AI tools can provide a helpful starting point.<sup>20</sup> The following prompts offer suggestions for how to elicit relevant and meaningful responses:

- Division direct action exercise: “Generate a four-hour study plan for a corps-level exercise for a legal advisor/judge advocate, with an emphasis on integration of legal advice into operational planning and targeting. Provide doctrinal references for each content block.”
- Defense Support to Civil Authorities (DSCA) exercise: “Generate a four-hour study plan for a division-level exercise for a legal advisor/judge advocate, with an emphasis on DSCA from a DoD perspective. Provide doctrinal references for each content block.”

### Step 2: Learn Exercise Specifics (4 hours)

After developing a basic doctrinal foundation, the next step is to delve into exercise-specific materials. Exercises may have slightly different terminology to refer to their precursor documents, but generally, they are referred to as “Road to War” documents. Ensure you understand, at minimum:

1. Type of operation (large-scale combat operations, direct action, joint force entry, humanitarian operation, Defense Support to Civil Authorities, Noncombatant Evacuation Operations, etc.)
2. Legal basis for the operation (e.g., United Nations Security Council Resolution, Authorization for the Use of Military Force, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, other treaty or agreement, defense pact, etc.)
3. Task organization (how the forces are arrayed in the theatre and what lines of authority or coordination connect them to one another)

4. Higher echelon or exercise-developed legal materials: rules of engagement (ROE), authorities, no-strike lists, reporting requirements, process formats (e.g., ROE requests), etc.
5. Training audience-generated material: commanding general (or commander’s) training objectives and the SJA/brigade judge advocate (BJA) training objectives (if you are unfamiliar with any of the objectives, locate the doctrine related to it and skim it); operations orders, ROE, office of the staff judge advocate (OSJA)/national security law (NSL)/brigade personnel roster, battle rhythm and seating charts, and running estimates.

### Step 3: Observe, Ask, Classify

Though applying “OC/T art” at the highest levels requires significant experience and doctrinal familiarity, a junior JA can replicate the coaching interaction to a helpful extent via the following steps: intense observation, asking questions, and then classifying them



into doctrinal categories to create after-action review (AAR) lessons.

### ***Intense Observation***

The Mayo Clinic defines mindfulness as being “intensely aware of what you’re sensing and feeling at the moment, without interpretation or judgment.”<sup>21</sup> Apply a similar mindfulness to your exercise observations: *intensely* notice (and record) everything about every aspect of the OSJA/brigade without judgment or interpretation, for now. For example:

- What personnel were tasked to participate in the exercise? What are their experience levels and backgrounds? Did OSJA/brigade legal personnel appear to work well with the staff? Did they work well together?
- What is the OSJA battle rhythm, and what meetings do they attend? Which meetings do they not attend? Which personnel attended which meetings? Did you hear the words “where’s the JAG?” during the exercise? Conversely, did exercise

participants seem to understand how to incorporate their legal adviser or, worst yet, avoid consulting the JA altogether?

- Did the SJA or deputy staff judge advocate (DSJA) participate in the exercise, and to what extent? What was the NSL chief’s role?
- Did paralegals participate? Did everyone have enough computers? Did they have access to targeting systems and the correct software on those computers? If they had access, did they know how to use them?
- Did the team have analog or backup resources prepared so they could operate in a low-tech or communications-degraded/denied environment?

And so on. Record observations in exacting detail and attempt to notice as much as you can, regardless of whether they appear to be conscious decisions by the training audience.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Ask Questions***

The next and key step is to ask plenty of “why” or open-ended

questions—particularly of the SJA, DSJA, BJA, chief/senior paralegal, or whoever made the decisions about the legal section’s participation in the exercise. You can do this step in real time (making and recording observations, then asking why the Training Audience (TA) decided on that approach) and, of course, note the answers.

### ***Categorize Observations and Compare with Doctrine***

The final step is to then “bin” (i.e., classify) your observations/Q&As into the doctrinal categories referenced in Step 1 above (operations, the operations process, targeting, JAG-specific operations and processes, command post operations, or echelon-specific matters). More than one may apply. Select a few key observations that appeared to impact<sup>23</sup> the TA and compare the observation (i.e., what happened) with the doctrine (i.e., what should happen). This is an AAR point.<sup>24</sup>

The use of AI would also be helpful here. First, you can input your observations from the field, but with caution. Ensure they

are sufficiently generalized and do not include classified, controlled, or sensitive data.<sup>25</sup> Hypothetical or fictitious scenarios should also be properly scrubbed and redacted, even if they implicate no real, sensitive DoD operations or individual personally identifiable information.<sup>26</sup> With your observations, you can also include the applicable doctrine and prompt the AI tool to “assess the observations and link them with applicable portions of the enclosed doctrinal references. Rank most frequent and related observations first.” The top few will be your most likely and impactful AAR points.

Here is an example AI prompt based on a hypothetical observation: “A paralegal attended a staff meeting and provided the notes afterward. Two attorneys in the legal office interpreted the notes differently and subsequently offered conflicting legal guidance to the staff.” See Appendix 1 for the AI output. This prompt results in a starting point of doctrinal references to explore and incorporate into a discussion with the training audience.

For an experienced OC/T, real-time coaching is possible as their doctrinal familiarity would enable them to provide feedback and generate discussions as the exercise develops. This real-time coaching, however, will be limited if the OC/T is inexperienced. However, formal JA-specific AARs typically at the mid and endpoints of an exercise will provide an opportunity for junior or non-NSL postured OC/Ts to provide feedback and AAR points. A junior OC/T JA can provide one to three key observations and corresponding AAR points during the formal JA AARs, subject to the senior OC/T’s guidance.

## Conclusion

The goal of this article is to give any JA, regardless of career and operational experience, a time-effective roadmap to self-development as a value-added exercise observer and coach. A quality coach understands fundamentals and makes timely/relevant observations. This should be sufficient to promote the self-awareness and yield the positive training experiences our Corps needs to enjoy enduring improvement. In the arena in which our Army plays, that can make all the difference. **TAL**

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## Notes

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2. Aric DiLalla, *The Gold Standard: Peyton Manning Named a First-Ballot Pro Football Hall of Famer*, DENVER BRONCOS (Feb. 6, 2021), <https://www.denverbroncos.com/news/the-gold-standard-peyton-manning-named-a-first-ballot-pro-football-hall-of-famer> [<https://perma.cc/P3Y2-64EZ>].
3. Darin Gantt, *Will Julius Peppers Become a First-Ballot Hall of Famer Tonight?*, PANTHERS (Feb. 08, 2024), <https://www.panthers.com/news/will-julius-peppers-become-a-first-ballot-hall-of-famer-tonight> [<https://perma.cc/3MJQ-3UHD>].
4. *G.O.A.T.*, DICTIONARY (June 28, 2018), <https://www.dictionary.com/e/slang/g-o-a-t> [<https://perma.cc/G57J-Z46T>].
5. *Clyde Christensen*, *supra* note 1.
6. *Id.*
7. Jean Dubiel, *Joint Readiness Training Center Academy Teaches Soldiers How to Coach, Facilitate Training*, ARMY (Apr. 14, 2017), [https://www.army.mil/article/186103/joint\\_readiness\\_training\\_center\\_academy\\_teaches\\_soldiers\\_how\\_to\\_coach\\_facilitate\\_training](https://www.army.mil/article/186103/joint_readiness_training_center_academy_teaches_soldiers_how_to_coach_facilitate_training) [<https://perma.cc/UAM6-TMKZ>].
8. James Clear, *Vince Lombardi on the Hidden Power of Mastering the Fundamentals*, JAMES CLEAR, <https://jamesclear.com/vince-lombardi-fundamentals> (last visited July 15, 2025).
9. Patrick Mahomes of the Kansas City Chiefs being one notable exception.
10. U.S. DEP’T OF ARMY, DOCTRINE PUB. 3-0, OPERATIONS (21 Mar. 2025).
11. U.S. DEP’T OF ARMY, DOCTRINE PUB. 5-0, THE OPERATIONS PROCESS (31 July 2019).
12. U.S. DEP’T OF ARMY, FIELD MANUAL 3-60, ARMY TARGETING (11 Aug. 2023).
13. U.S. DEP’T OF ARMY, FIELD MANUAL 3-84, LEGAL SUPPORT TO OPERATIONS (1 Sept. 2023).
14. U.S. DEP’T OF ARMY, TECHS. PUB. 6-0.5, COMMAND POST ORGANIZATIONS AND OPERATIONS (1 Mar. 2017).
15. U.S. DEP’T OF ARMY, TECHS. PUB. 3-92, CORPS OPERATIONS (7 Apr. 2016).
16. U.S. DEP’T OF ARMY, TECHS. PUB. 3-91, DIVISION OPERATIONS (17 Oct. 2014).

17. U.S. DEP’T OF ARMY, FIELD MANUAL 3-96, BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM (19 Jan. 2021).

18. *Joint Electronic Library +*, JOINT DOCTRINE, EDUC. & TRAINING INFO. SYS., <https://jdeis.js.mil/jdeis/generic.jsp> [<https://perma.cc/J78Y-TVFF>] (last visited July 15, 2025).

19. *Insights and Best Practices*, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, [https://www.jcs.mil/Doctrine/focus\\_papers](https://www.jcs.mil/Doctrine/focus_papers) [<https://perma.cc/3BHG-9X7B>] (last visited July 15, 2025).

20. The Judge Advocate General’s Legal Center and School offers training and resources on AI use, including restrictions on including any confidential, classified, or controlled information relating to individuals (including, for instance, personally identifiable information/protected health information in violation of The Privacy Act, HIPAA, and implementing Department of Defense instructions, manuals, Army Regulation 25-22, etc.), or confidential client information (regardless of whether the client is an individual or the U.S. Army). See *Standard Training Packages (STPs): Special Topics: Artificial Intelligence*, THE JUDGE ADVOC. GEN.’S LEGAL CTR. & SCH. [hereinafter *TJAGLCS AI STPs*], <https://tjagles.army.mil/en/resources/stp> [<https://perma.cc/JM3A-PAYE>]; see also *Artificial Intelligence & Professional Responsibility – TJAGLCS Training Products Now Available!*, JAGCNET (July 16, 2025), <https://www.jagcnet2.army.mil/Sites/JAGC.nsf/homeContent.xsp?open&doctype=announcement&documentid=9D537E11715C4E1285258CC9004D050A&refreshed=true> (on file with The Army Lawyer).

21. *Mindfulness Exercises*, MAYO CLINIC, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/consumer-health/in-depth/mindfulness-exercises/art-20046356> (last visited July 15, 2025).

22. This step is a workaround to compensate for lack of experience. As an OC/T develops experience, they will know where and when the most fruitful observations and areas of improvement will most likely occur, obviating the need for intense recording of observations.

23. Impactful events are where the OSJA/BDE had a particular success overcoming a problem, or where the section had an observable shortfall, difficulty, or gap in knowledge or expertise. Examples include: failing a mission due to lack of authority or lack of understanding as to such, an ROE violation or successful ROE change, no JA advice when the advice was requested or required on a time-sensitive issue, etc.

24. Note, a delta between occurrence/observation and doctrine does not necessarily mean that a mistake or wrong decision occurred. An AAR point may be a correction, a better/best practice, or a “best practice for our organization,” i.e., a JA leader applying the art of leadership to their own formations. These are all equally valuable.

25. See sources cited *supra* note 20 and accompanying text.

26. The purpose behind this policy is twofold: (1) Users should “train as we fight”; if users are improperly handling fictitious information about people and operations, they are certainly more likely to do the same with real information, especially in high-stress and high-ops-tempo environments. (2) Users should be mindful of the “Data Aggregation” or “Mosaic Theory” where adversaries are able to see and analyze otherwise harmless prompts in the aggregate to discover government secrets, operations, client information, etc. See *TJAGLCS AI STPs*, *supra* note 20.