



CONCEPTS FOR AN UNSTOPPABLE OFFENSE

35 POWERFUL TACTICS FOR THE RUN AND PASS GAME

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Introduction

Welcome Coach! Thanks for checking out this resource.

The offensive concepts you're about to learn were designed to be practical and easy to use for all levels of play.

For each one, we'll start by explaining what the concept means in plain English. Then, we'll move onto why it's important, and how it will help you develop a more potent offensive attack.

Finally, we'll discuss how to use the concept with your team, including some specific plays you can add to your playbook.

When applied correctly, these strategies will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of your offense, while simplifying and streamlining your playbook.

Some of the concepts focus on what may seem like small things – backfield faking, wide receiver blocking – while others present larger concepts – how to use multiplicity to your advantage, picking runs and pass patterns that are truly complimentary – but they're all equally important.

You can implement them all, or pick and choose the ones that work best for your own personnel and coaching philosophy.

Ready to start? Let's get to it!



Concept #1 – Great Offenses Run the Football

What It Means

There is nothing easy or sexy about running the football, but there is no doubt that if you want to have success as an offense, it is absolutely necessary that you run early and often. This doesn't mean you have to lineup in the I form and pound the ball up the middle – use your entire arsenal of inside and outside runs as well as mixing in misdirection runs and quarterback options to really put the defense on their heels.

Why It's Important

If you want to have a tough, physical offense and defense, it is vital that you run the ball both in practice and in games. Constantly passing may yield more big plays, but it will make your offensive line passive, unable to grind out those tough yards when you need them to. It will also keep your defense tough by running against them in practice, keeping them from becoming soft and vulnerable to a team that likes to pound the ball up the middle.

Aside from keeping your entire team tougher, the physical toll of having a team smash them, down after down will tire out the opposing defense and lead to longer drives, which will in return give your defense more time to rest.

From a purely strategic standpoint, running the ball will make passing the ball easier as well. When facing an effective run offense a defense will eventually begin to cheat up towards the line, and sometimes even bring the strong safety down into the box. This will make them much more susceptible to downfield passes – even more so when you begin to work some playaction into your playcalling.

How To Use It With Your Team

There is a reason that it is so common for teams to run the ball on first and 10 – even after just a moderate gain, your offense will have a much easier time converting for a first down since even shorter passes are likely to be enough to get past the first down marker. And when it comes to short yardage situations, whether it's a third and one or first and goal, an effective run game is always going to be the toughest option for the defense to defend.

You'll also want to make use of the run game in the second half of a game in which you've established a lead. Putting points on the board will increase your lead, but more importantly, running the ball will keep the clock moving while you pound the ball upfield.



Concept #2 – An Explosive Offensive Line with a Low Pad Level is the Foundation for Effective Run Blocking

What It Means

It doesn't matter how dynamic your running back is if he has an ineffective offensive line. Exploding off the line as a unit, keeping the pads low and using the hands effectively are the only ways your offensive line is going to be able to consistently push the defense back and create holes for your backs.

Why It's Important

There are three keys to effective run blocking. The first, is the explosion off the line as a unit. The expression that a chain is only as strong as it's weakest link is a perfect metaphor for the offensive line, as if just one member is early or late, their effectiveness will be drastically reduced and you'll have a running back who has to contend with defenders in the backfield on a regular basis.

The second key is that as they explode off the line, they keep the pad level low. This is because whoever can keep their pad level lower between the offensive and defensive lines will have a huge advantage in terms of leverage – as long as they keep a flat back.

The third key lies in the punch of the hands into the chest of the defenders. Even if the offensive line explodes off the line with a low pad level, if the defense is able to initiate contact, they will be able to control the blocker, either stopping them in place and plugging the hole or shedding the block altogether. *We want to initiate that contact and put the defense on their heels.*

How To Use It With Your Team

Aside from when your offense has a chance to work on timing as an entire unit, you'll want to make sure to drill the offensive line on snap counts while working on technique with the blocking sleds. Start in the huddle, give them the snap count, and then break out of the huddle to the blocking sleds. The offense will get the benefit of refining and practicing their technique while also getting the chance to work on the timing of different snap counts in a pressure situation, not only improving explosion off the line, but reducing the occurrence of those frustrating false start penalties.



Concept #3 – Call Runs with Varied Timings

What It Means

As a playcaller, you have a ton of run options at your fingertips, and it's important that you call runs that not only attack different areas of the defense, but that have different timings in terms of when the ball is handed off and when it gets to the line of scrimmage.

Why It's Important

There are three general categories on the timing of run plays. You have quick runs, slow developing runs, and then those that fall somewhere in the middle. And there is nothing a defense likes more than an offense that calls runs that only fall into one of those categories.

Regardless of the timing, if an offense is strictly calling run plays that fall under one category, the defense will begin to pace out the runs, learning how quickly they need to crash and how long they need to maintain their cutback lanes.

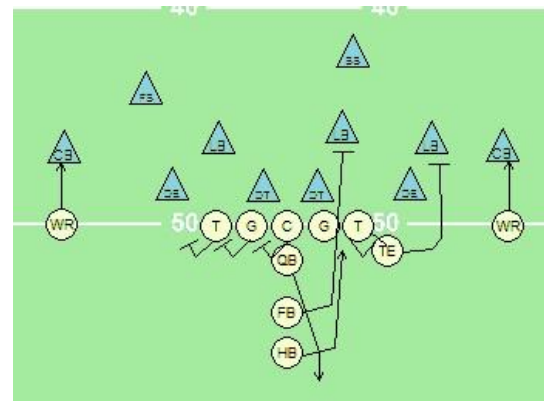
This is especially true for linebackers or safeties who like to come up and make plays in the run game - they have a ton of responsibilities on each play and allowing them to pace out the run game is just making things simple for them.

We want the defense on their heels, thinking, waiting, analyzing, not up on their toes ready to fly to the ball.

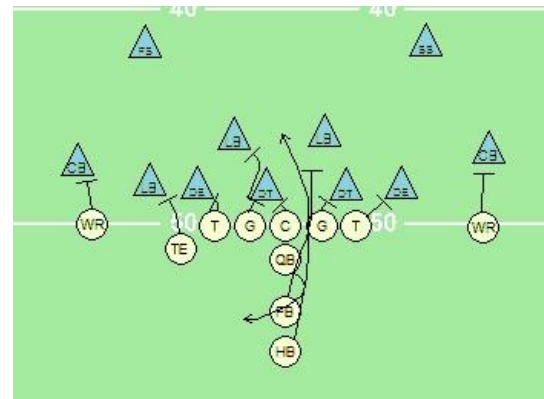
How To Use It With Your Team

If you're unsure of what category certain runs fall under just bring a stop watch to practice and find out for yourself. For a quick overview, you have your quick hitters, where we're getting the ball from center to quarterback to ball carrier as quick as possible – dives, traps, and belly plays are perfect examples.

A more intermediate timing play would be an iso, or a halfback power or blast. And the slower developing plays are the ones that generally involve some kind of misdirection – draws, counters, and cross bucks.



Quick Hitter Run: I Form Wham



Intermediate Run: I Form Iso Lead Open

Concept #4 – Use Only As Many Base Runs as You Need

What It Means

The key to a good run game isn't a huge quantity of run plays, it's having a small number of run plays that you can practice over and over to the point that you can execute them flawlessly. You should have enough base runs that you have a balanced running attack that will keep the defense honest, but adding anymore than that and you are likely to begin to see diminishing returns.

Why It's Important

The most important thing to keep in mind when designing your base run package is that what you do is important, but how you do what you do is what will really make the difference.

If you've got 15 base runs and you barely have the time necessary to work on them each practice, then the execution on all of your runs is going to suffer.

Condense your base run package and drill those same three to six runs so that your offense is able to run them perfectly from a vast array of formations and personnel plans.

How To Use It With Your Team

When choosing your base runs, make sure to choose a variety of runs, ensuring that you will have a well balanced running attack. The first two runs in your base package should be an inside run and an outside run.

These will often be runs with quick or intermediate timings, so it's a good idea to make your third run a slower developing play, like a counter or a draw. Whatever runs you choose, it's important that they blend together, compliment each other, and include varying points of attack and timings.



Concept #5 – Zone Run Blocking is Very Forgiving

What It Means

Zone run blocking – where the blockers are assigned blocking zones rather than man assignments - is a great way to simplify blocking assignments against a defense that uses a large variety of defensive fronts, stunts and blitzes.

Why It's Important

The advantage created by using zone blocking schemes is that an offensive line can be much more aggressive coming off the line.

Instead of having to pause and read the defense, worrying about making the correct play based on the movement of their assigned man, the line can push altogether hip to hip in one direction, looking to be proactive and block any defenders that come into their blocking zones, even taking advantage of double team opportunities if they present themselves.



Shotgun Inside Zone Run

How To Use It With Your Team

When calling zone runs, you'll need a running back with good vision as well as the ability to take advantage of a cutback lane when it opens up. This is because unlike a base run blocking scheme, where we have a designed hole for the running back to come up through, with a zone run the running back must read the linebackers and see whether they commit to running outside or staying inside, then react accordingly.

In the case that the defense over commits to the side the ball carrier is running to, cutback lanes will open up. Having a running back with the vision and ability to make that cutback will make your zone running game that much more effective.

Concept #6 – Quick Hitting Run Plays Keep Defenses Honest

What It Means

Calling quick hitting run plays is a surefire way to keep the defense from penetrating into the backfield unabashedly. Whether it's a fullback dive or a halfback belly, getting the ball moving downfield quickly is a great way to attack an aggressive defense.

Why It's Important

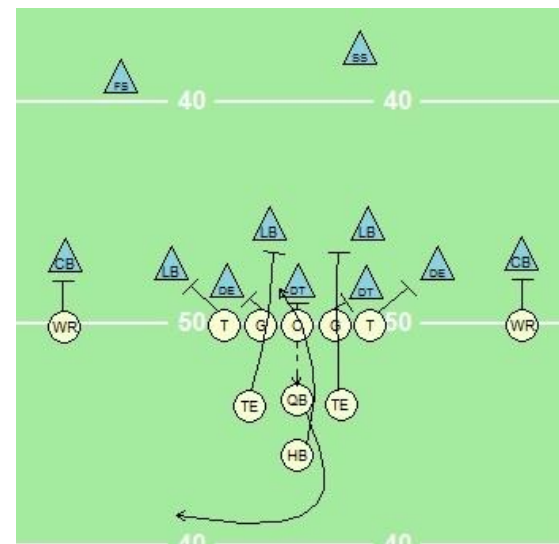
When facing a defense that likes to get upfield quickly, slower developing runs are much more difficult to run as there is a good chance the defense will get into the backfield and blow up the play before it even has a chance to start.

But we can use this to our advantage. By calling quick hitting plays, we use the defense's aggressiveness against them, sealing them out of the lane and trapping while our running back takes advantage, popping into the secondary for a big gain.

How To Use It With Your Team

When I refer to quick hitting plays, I'm talking about dives, traps, and bellies. These are all plays with a quick handoff that often use the defense's own aggressiveness against them by allowing them to chase upfield before sealing them off with a block.

These plays are often best called in situations where the defense will be looking to get upfield quickly, for example a 3rd and seven where they're expecting pass and trying to get upfield to rush the quarterback as quickly as possible.



Full House Pistol HB Dive

Concept #7 – Trapping Greatly Attacks Penetrating Defenses

What It Means

If you've ever watched or had a chance to practice judo, you understand the value of using an opponent's own momentum against him -- laying a trap and allowing him to charge forward and take the bait and taking advantage of his overeagerness.

This is the basic concept behind the trap, where an offensive lineman leaves his man to go block at the second level, allowing the defender to penetrate upfield while a second offensive lineman comes over to deliver a backside seal block, taking them out of the play.

Why It's Important

When your playing a defense that is eager to penetrate into the backfield as quickly as they can off the snap, it can make it very tough to run slower developing plays. But after a trap or two, the defense will begin to slow down, try to analyze if they are being duped into taking themselves out of the play.

This will pay dividends not only when the trap is called, but also will make all of your other play calls more effective due to the hesitation created in the mind the defenders.

How To Use It With Your Team

Much like the other quick hitting plays, the best time to call a trap is when the defense is going to be looking to get upfield. It's also a great way to surprise the defense with a carry for your fullback after a couple successful runs from your tailback.

With the entire defense keying in on the tailback's movements, they will often pull themselves way out of position to properly defend a fullback trap and a timely playcall will often lead to gains of more than 10 yards.



I Form Tight Pair Trap

Concept #8 – Draws and Screens are Essential Support Pieces to An Effective Pass Offense

What It Means

With the popularity of spread offenses growing every year, defenses have adjusted, realizing that the pass rush has become maybe the most important part of an effective defense. As an offense, you need to be able to punish an aggressive pass rush, using a variety of play calls to gouge the defense for big gains whether versus a four man rush or a heavy pass blitz.

Why It's Important

Being able to make a read and get the ball out quickly is an extremely important skill for any quarterback, but you can make his job a lot easier and your offense a lot more effective if you can slow down that pass rush and give him a little bit more time in the pocket.

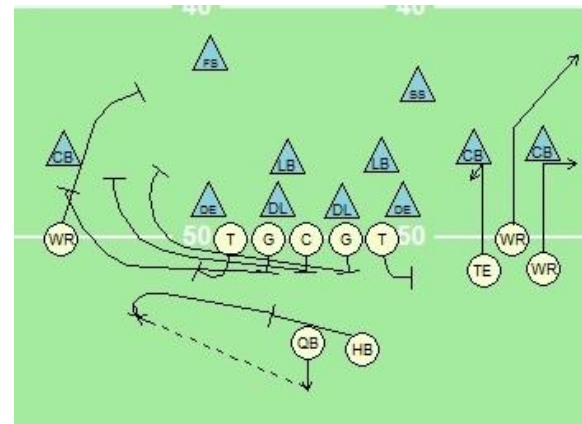
The best way to slow down the pass rush is to call plays – draws, screens, shovel passes – that will take a defense's eagerness to get to the quarterback and use it to take them out of the play. Not only do we take the pass rush out of the play, but with the linebackers taking steps to their pass coverage responsibilities, we open up the middle of the field as well, allowing for big gains when we're able to truly fool the defense.

How To Use It With Your Team

When you think of calling draw plays, your first instinct will be to call them for a running back, but don't forget to work quarterback draws into your playbook as well. These can be especially effective against man coverage, as the entire front seven of the defense will be forced to follow their respective assignments – whether that be rush upfield or follow their man in coverage – and will often leave the middle of the entire field unattended.

Against a team that likes to blitz on passing downs, the screen will be your best friend. There are a ton ways you can call the screen too, anything from a halfback slip screen, to a wide receiver bubble screen, to even a playaction screen to the tight end, and the more you rely on the passing game, the more important screens will be to your playcalling.

Lastly, don't forget to add in a shovel pass. It is probably its most effective when run from the shotgun, where your offensive line will have an easier time preventing any early pass rush efforts and much like the draw, will allow your running back to attack a group of linebackers that has already taken a step or two towards their passing responsibilities.



Shotgun Bunch HB Cross Screen

Concept #9 – Misdirection Runs are a Must

What It Means

In the same way that a draw punishes a defense that is over aggressive in trying to get to the quarterback, forcing them to slow down the pass rush, a misdirection run punishes an impatient defense that flows too aggressively towards the direction of a run, and as a result, slows down their pursuit.

Why It's Important

There are plenty of misdirection plays and the basic goal remains the same in all of them. We want to make the defense think we are running to one side of the formation, and then go in the opposite direction.

Without misdirection runs mixed into your playcalling, the defense is free to commit early, over running the ball and ignoring all their responsibilities on the back side.

After you call a couple misdirection runs however, not only will you get big gains on the actual misdirection plays, but your entire running playbook will become more effective, as the defense will have to stay home, knowing that impatience and overpursuit could once again lead to a big gain in the opposite direction.



I Form Flex Wing Counter Weak

How To Use It With Your Team

The basic concept of all misdirection runs is to show flow in one direction before countering and going back the opposite way. The amount of flow in either direction varies greatly from play to play; a counter shows the least, with the running back simply taking a step in one direction before going back the other way to receive the handoff.

The cross buck is slightly more complicated, with one running back faking taking a handoff to one side of the formation while the other takes the handoff to the other side.

The misdirection play that is the biggest risk but often offers the biggest reward is the reverse, where we actually hand the ball off and have our ball carrier take off in one direction before he hands it off to another player, usually a player with good speed and agility like the slot receiver, who then takes off in the opposite direction.

Concept #10 – Defenses Hate Option Football

What It Means

The option is a fantastic play and the simple threat of having it in your playbook will immediately make your offense more effective. The reason it gives defenses so much trouble is that the option actually creates a man advantage for the offense at the point of attack. By leaving the playside end unblocked, we allow a blocker to go up into the second level of the defense.

Normally this would result in a play being blown up in the backfield, but instead the unblocked defender is forced to make a decision – stay with the quarterback, or take away the handoff. As long as the quarterback makes the correct read as far as whether to keep the ball or hand it off, that defender is eliminated from the play and our ball carrier is now headed to the next level of the defense, often with a blocker in front of him.

Why It's Important

When the defense knows that they are facing a run option team, they have to completely adjust their playcalling and style of play.

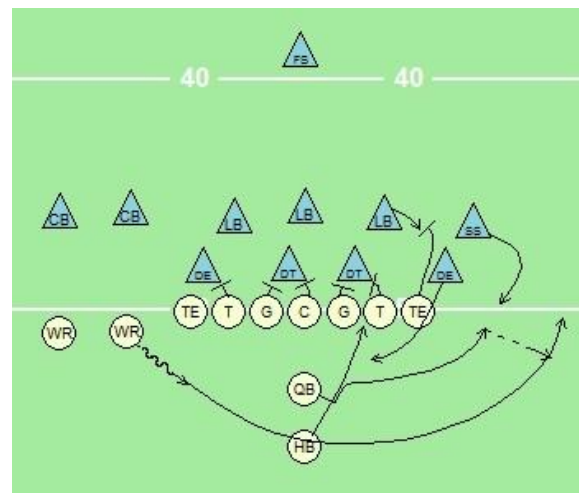
The only way to slow down the option is to dole out assignments before each play. In the case of a triple option, the defense needs to know who is covering the dive, who's covering the quarterback keep, and who's covering the pitch.

As a result, the defense's own options as far as stunts, blitzes, and different coverages will be severely limited.

How To Use It With Your Team

You don't need to be a team that runs the option every other play to reap the benefits of a limited defensive playbook.

As long as you call enough options a game that the defense has to consider it a legitimate threat, you will see that shrunken defensive playbook and make your own reads on offense much easier.



Pistol Big Doubles Left Triple Option Right

Concept #11 – Running Option Action from the Shotgun Ties the Option to the Pass Game in Explosive Fashion

What It Means

The shotgun has long been one of the most effective formations for passing the football, but aside from the occasional draw, it has often lacked potency in the run game.

By incorporating the option into our shotgun package, we force the defense to respect both the pass as well as run game, taking the shotgun formation to a whole new level.

Why It's Important

The triple option, whether run from the I formation, wishbone, or now, from the shotgun, is one of the toughest run plays to defend in all of football.

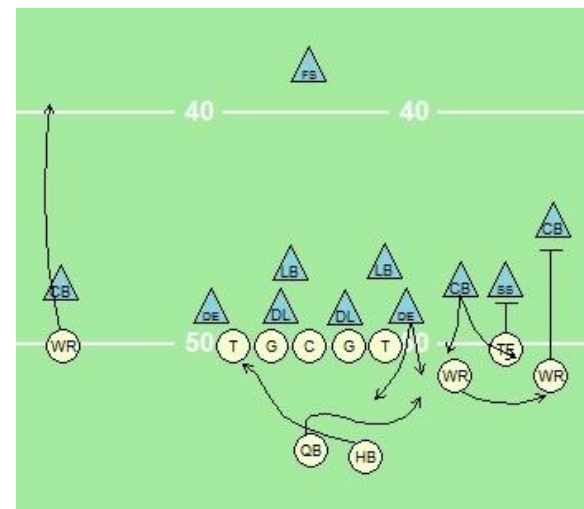
By adding this play to the shotgun, we no longer allow the defense to load up on the pass, as the option has forced them to respect the possibility of a dynamic run play as well as the pass.

How To Use It With Your Team

There are quite a few ways to run the read option from the shotgun. You can go with a standard triple option, first reading the handoff on the dive inside, then having your quarterback run outside with either a second running back or even a receiver coming over from the weak side as the pitch option.

However, since we're using the shotgun, we also have the ability to work the pass game into our option offense. The first way we can do this is by removing the dive option and instead having that back look to receive a shovel pass, with the quarterback making his first read on the playside end and then next on the playside linebacker for the pitch read.

Another great way to work the pass game into your option offense is to replace the pitch option with screen to the slot. The same general principle applies – just instead of forcing the defender between defending the keep and the pitch, we force them to defend either the keep or the pass into the flat. This is a great playcall if you have a quarterback who isn't very athletic, as you allow them to stay in the pocket and deliver a strike unless the defense commits to the screen, leaving the middle of the field wide open for the quarterback keep.



Shotgun Bunch Read Option with Bubble Screen

Concept #12 – Wide Receiver Blocking is a Big Difference Maker

What It Means

While it is often over looked, wide receiver blocking can have a huge impact on the success of your running game. This doesn't mean we need pancakes happening downfield every play, but it does mean that it can't just always be the poorest aspect of your run blocking. This will severely hamper your run offense, not only limiting potential large gains to moderate ones, but often leading to outside runs that get blown up in the backfield.

The only way your receivers will truly understand this is if you make it absolutely mandatory – let them know if they don't block, they don't play.

Why It's Important

If you want to break big runs, you need your receivers to get downfield and block corners and safeties effectively. The good news is that this is an area of the game that will see huge dividends even with just a little bit of extra time and focus applied to it. That's because wide receivers are often not held accountable for laying down good blocks, and as a result aren't taught correct technique or held accountable. This often leads to bad habits that are mostly fixed just from an attitude adjustment.

There's also an extra incentive to improving their blocking skills, as once they develop these skills, it's likely that they themselves will end up accruing more yardage in the pass game. If all the receivers out on the field have the attitude that they need to be effective blockers, they'll all end up with more yards after the catch.

How To Use It With Your Team

One of the best ways to really get the message that wide receiver blocking is important across is to include them in running play drills that they might otherwise be sitting out. I would specifically recommend this for your 9 on 9 run drill. Add the two receivers in and make it an 11 on 9 drill, with the receivers focusing on coming in and blocking the safeties.

Concept #13 – Backfield Faking is Often the Most Overlooked Offensive Technique

What It Means

One of the most underrated aspects of every offense is the backfield fake. Whether it's playaction, a crossbuck, or a trick play, there is no doubting that a well executed fake can be the difference between a big gain and a big loss.

Why It's Important

It's often noted that football is a game of inches, which is why it's such a shame to see a team just go through the motions when executing a fake.

There is a clear opportunity to create an advantage, whether it's pulling the linebacker up to the line on a play action, having them bite on a fake handoff on a reverse or cross buck type play, or simply forcing them to sit on their heels and think for an extra second or two, giving your offense the advantage at the point of attack.

The great thing about faking is that even if your team is absolutely terrible at it, it's a relatively easy thing to improve. Simply finding the time to work on it a little bit each practice will pay huge dividends.

You need to think of faking like you think of blocking, catching, passing – it's a skill that needs to be practiced and refined, at which point you will see the improvement in both the technique as well as all of your playcalls involving fakes.

How To Use It With Your Team

One of the best ways to improve the effectiveness of your team's backfield faking is to run a drill we call the 'Fool the Coach Drill'. The drill is fairly simple – you don't need the offensive line, just choose a play series and bring whatever skill players would be involved in the action onto the field.

Then stand about 5-10 yards off the line, in front of the center, facing the backfield. From there, the quarterback will snap the ball to himself, and the players will execute the play and whatever fakes that are involved in it. Afterwards, the coach will simply rate the fake on a scale of one to ten.

(continued on next page)

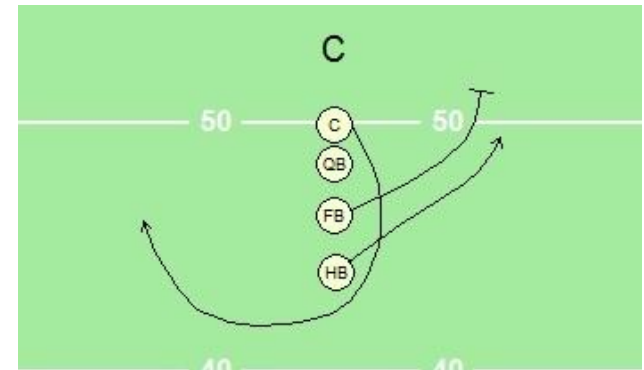
Concept #13 – Continued

For example, in the diagram on this page, we see the offense is working on a playaction stretch, with the quarterback bootlegging out after the fake.

The quarterback would communicate to the other players whether they were running the stretch or the playaction, and would then hike the ball and execute the play. After the play, if it was a poor fake, the coach might say “No good. That was a three.”

There are a couple keys to any good fake – we want the running back to remember to keep their head up, as this is a quick easy tell for the defense to pick up on. As for the quarterback, they should be dipping their shoulders on the handoff and remembering to go right into looking at their receivers after the handoff, whether they have the ball after or not.

A great way to add another layer to this drill, is to have the coach record the drill from his position with a camera. This way the players can see the fakes from the point of view of a linebacker, and see just how effective or ineffective they actually are.



Backfield Faking Drill

Concept #14 – Crackback Blocking Greatly Disturbs the Play of Linebackers

What It Means

Crackback blocking – where a receiver or tight end comes from the outside back into the middle of the field to lay a block down on a linebacker – is a fantastic way to seal the edge on outside runs and slow down the pursuit of aggressive linebackers.

Why It's Important

The linebackers are much like the quarterbacks of the defensive side of the ball. Their linemen are doing the dirty work up front to free them up to chase down ballcarriers, and make plays. That's why it's important that we disturb the play of the linebackers whenever possible

One of the great ancillary benefits of crackback blocking is that it's going to add toughness to our receivers. Often times receivers are the ones receiving big hits, and they will begin to slowly move into self preservation mode, trying to avoid as much contact as possible.

By giving them the chance to be the hunter instead of the hunted, they'll begin to play with a renewed toughness and confidence that will have benefits everywhere from beating press coverage, blocking aggressively, and making tough catches.

How To Use It With Your Team

At the beginning of the year, it's a good idea to let all of your receivers know right off the bat that crackback blocking is going to be a big part of the offense. This is more to make the ideological point that you expect toughness from each and every receiver, not that you will necessarily be using every receiver in a crackback situation. You want to be mindful of your personnel when calling the crackback – you don't want your little 132 pound receivers trying to lay a crackback block on a linebacker, you want to use your big strong receivers, or even flex out a tight end for that specific playcall.

Concept #15 – Have a Limited Amount of Base Patterns Which Can be Applied Multiply

What It Means

The most important part of offensive multiplicity isn't necessarily the amount of pass plays and run plays that your going to call, but more so the amount of different ways that you can run your limited pass and run packages.

Why It's Important

By limiting the number of pass plays, we allow our entire offense – from the quarterback to the offensive line – to learn and perfect the execution of each particular play. It's important to remember that we want quality over quantity, as adding too many plays to your playbook will dilute the effectiveness of them all, and as a result you'll end up with a much weaker offense.

But if we only run a couple pass plays from the same looks, the defense will be able to sniff out the play before it even begins. To combat that, we make use of multiple formations, personnel plans, shifts, and motions to constantly give them different looks pre-snap, keeping the defense honest and preventing them from getting a read on what the offense is trying to do.

(continued on next page)

Concept #15 – Continued

How To Use It With Your Team

To the right, we see four diagrams, each running the same route combination building off of a cross route.

But each is run using different personnel and formations, and three of them make use of pre-snap motion and shifts. How you choose to run this play should be a direct result of your game plan – if your playing against a team that is really strong in their base defense, but weak in the nickel, you'll want to go to a three wide receiver set.

However if the opposite were true, you'd want to use a heavier formation, motioning out a full back or wingback.

Regardless, our quarterback is still making the same reads, and our receivers know it will be the same route combination, preventing the sloppiness that may occur from choosing from four completely different pass plays.

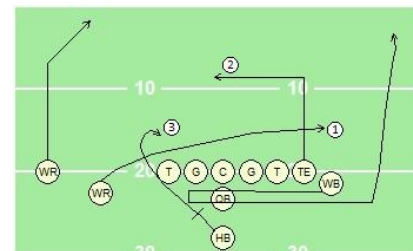
It's also important to keep in mind that when you are designing your pass plays, you have a range of plays that can effectively attack different defenses, to ensure that you have an answer regardless of what the defense is trying to do.

You need a pass package that has plays that can beat zone coverages or man coverages, and plays that can attack the safeties whether they're playing with one safety deep or two.

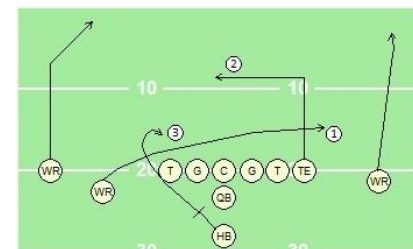
You also want routes that compliment each other. In the examples of the plays to the right, we see that the primary receiver is always the cross route, whether it's a slot receiver starting on the left or motioning over from the right.

From there we have our second option, the dig route from the tight end, and the halfback slipping out to the opposite side as our third option to form the triangle read for our quarterback. The receiver farthest to the left is running a post, and the receiver on the right is running the clear out.

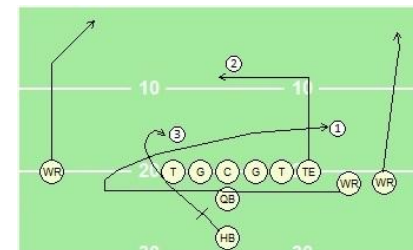
The routes are all complimentary, and avoid any congestion, stretching the defense and giving our quarterback plenty of options.



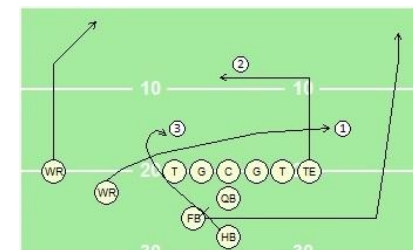
Singleback Ace Pair Slot Cross



Singleback Dice Slot Cross



Singleback Slot Strong Cross



Weak I H Twins FB Motion Cross

Concept #16 – Sum of Pattern Principals Must Attack Entire Field

What It Means

It's extremely important that your pass patterns attack the entire field, both horizontally and vertically. This means that we should have pass patterns that range from sideline to sideline, and from behind the line of scrimmage to the deep routes, ensuring that the defense stays honest and covers the entire field.

Why It's Important

Failing to attack the entire field will drastically reduce the success of your offense, as both smart players and coaches will begin to pick up on it throughout the game and make the necessary adjustments. If a defensive coordinator notices that you aren't throwing any passes to any of the zones - whether that be vertically with the short zones, intermediate zones, and deep zones, or horizontally with the flat zones, curl zones, and middle zones, he will simply ignore those areas and squeeze your favorite parts of the field, making it much tougher to do what you want to on offense.

And it's not just in zone coverage that this is important. For example, a savvy defender may notice that there is no threat of the receivers ever going deep, and feel free to gamble without consequence, jumping routes and wreaking havoc on all of your short and intermediate routes.

How To Use It With Your Team

It can be tough to know if you really are attacking the entire field, as most coaches set out to do so, but will often neglect an area of the field without even knowing it. The best way to keep things unbiased, is to just have a look at the cold hard data. Compile all of the routes from all of your passing plays, whether it be manually drawing them out, stacking them on a projector or simply doing it on your computer. From there, you have a visual guide of exactly where the sum of all of your passing plays attack. If you do find that a certain area of the field is lacking in attention, go back to square one, and start to redesign your base package with the focus of spreading routes all over the entire field.

Concept #17 – You Must Throw Deep!

What It Means

Most quarterbacks are very comfortable playing control passing – working the short and intermediate routes for high percentage passes that are going to chip away at the defense a couple yards at a time.

This sounds great in theory, as deep throws have a much lower percent chance of succeeding, but abstaining from throwing them completely will make it much tougher to complete intermediate throws, not to mention completely missing out on the chance to hit the home run on the deep ball.

Why It's Important

If we fail to throw the ball deep as an offense, both the defensive backs and defensive coordinator will begin to cheat, with the defensive back sitting on the intermediate throws, and the defensive coordinator ignoring deep zones, stacking the zones in the short and intermediate areas of the field.

It's a fairly simply concept to understand, yet still so many coaches fail to recognize the strategic benefits alone of blowing the top off the coverage.

Of course, there is the much more obvious benefit of the occasional big play on the deep throw. If you can get one on one coverage on the outside, there is a great chance that if the pass is well thrown and the catch is made in stride, that the receiver could take the ball all the way to the house.

That's why it's important to keep in mind that while having a quarterback who can throw the ball 32 or 60 yards sounds great, it's pretty rare to have a quarterback who can throw the ball that distance effectively. Instead, we want to look to make the throw at around 22 yards or even shorter, and give our receiver a chance to pick up those extra yards after the catch.

How To Use It With Your Team

The key to throwing the ball deep is the timing of the quarterback. Whether it's a streak, a post or a corner, a quarterback's ability to time the throw properly is more important than the distance they can throw it by leaps and bounds. And the only way your quarterback is going to develop that timing, is to work on those throws in practice.



Concept #18 – Drop Back Passes Must Time with Steps/Drop Depth of Quarterback

What It Means

There are three basic distances that the quarterback is going to drop on any given pass play. As a coach, it's your job when designing your playbook to coordinate these drops so that the dropback and routes are well timed, with the quarterback's drop and receiver's route in sync.

Why It's Important

The three drop depths that were going to use are the three step drop, the five step drop, and the seven step drop.

Each drop distance has a number of routes that are best suited to that particular timing, allowing the quarterback to step up into the pocket and make the throw after the receiver has made his cut and before the defense has time to react.

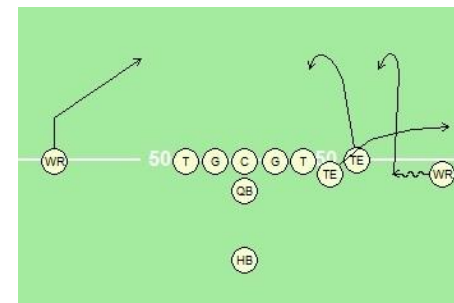
How To Use It With Your Team

The three step drop is used in the quick pass game. This is when we want to get the ball out of the quarterback's hands fast, and is generally more conducive to short, high percentage passes; slants, hitches, quick outs, and also the fade.

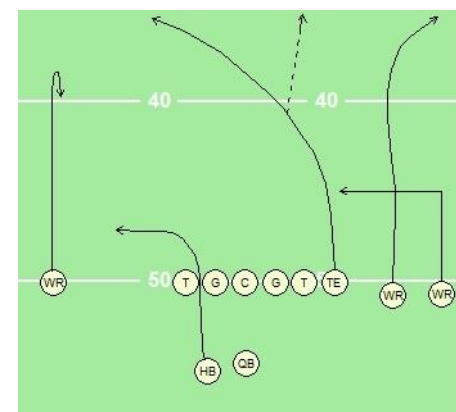
The five step drop is most appropriate when trying to complete passes in the intermediate game – your eight to twelve yard routes.

For example: outs, curls, and y-option routes. For slightly slower developing routes, we can add a pop up back into the pocket after the five step dropback – this is fantastic way to throw that 22 yard streak route or a 15 yard curl.

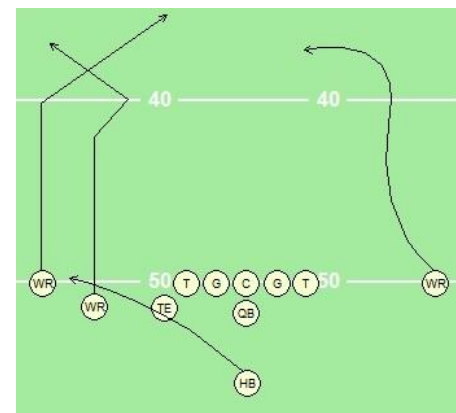
And finally, the seven step drop is for our delayed, deeper routes; comebacks, post digs, post corners, and deep hooks. These are going to be routes that are thrown for around 20 yards or more. However, you'll likely want to avoid throwing streaks when using the seven step drop – unless your quarterback has a cannon for an arm - as your receivers will be out of your quarterback's effective throwing range by the time he's able to drop back, pop up and throw.



3-Step: Singleback Ace Pair Motion to Bunch Spacing Zone



5-Step: Shotgun Trip Weak Smash Divide



7-Step: Singleback Trips Open Scissors 24

Concept #19 – Against Zone, Receivers Must Find Voids and Throttle

What It Means

A receiver's routes are not written in stone. Much like the quarterback, it's important that they read the defense and react appropriately, making slight adjustments to their routes when necessary.

One example of this is that the receiver must learn to read the zone defense when he sees it, and either slow down or, depending on the route, come to a complete stop in the holes between the zones.

Why It's Important

We've all seen these receivers before. They aren't the fastest guys, they aren't the biggest guys, they might not even have the best hands, but somehow they just always seem to get wide open and often manage to break big yardage after the catch on a consistent basis.

How? With great route running.

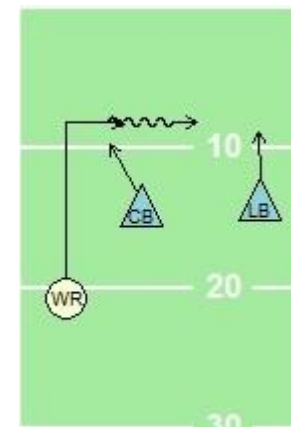
It's often misunderstood when you hear that a receiver is a great route runner that it means he's make his cuts in his routes effectively, and while this is a big part of route running against man coverage, finding the soft spots in the zone is the key to effective route running against the zone, and you should remind your receivers that this is a very easy way to quickly become their quarterback's favorite target.

How To Use It With Your Team

There is a real art to finding the voids in the zone and timing the throttle correctly, and a lot of it has to do with reading the shoulders of the defensive back.

Take the example of the diagram to the right. If the cornerback is working hard to the outside, moving aggressively and with his shoulders turned, then the receiver should throttle early, giving himself a chance to turn downfield before he gets to the linebackers middle zone.

If the cornerback is staying home, with his shoulders square, then the receiver is going to have to work deeper into the zone before he has the chance to throttle down.



Throttling Down in
Between Zones

Concept #20 – Against Man, Receivers Must Separate and Maintain Such Separation

What It Means

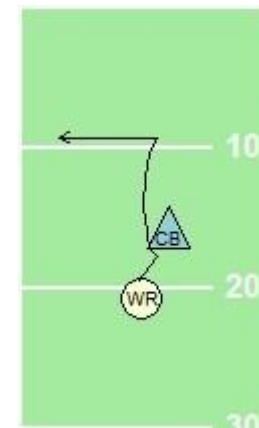
There are two keys that a receiver needs to keep in mind when facing man coverage, and they are equally important. The first is to create separation from the cornerback, and the second, is to maintain the separation they have just created.

Why It's Important

The same way a receiver needs to be able to identify zone coverage so that he can take advantage, the receiver needs to be able to identify man coverage as well.

He can't make the mistake of throttling down after separating from the defensive back, as this will simply allow the defensive back to close the distance between the two.

They need to continue running at top speed, maintaining separation and giving the quarterback a window to throw the ball into.



Creating Separation
vs. Man

How To Use It With Your Team

The key to getting separation versus man coverage is getting the corner back to lean away from where the receiver wants to go, giving him that split second advantage so that he can get open. In the example above, we see a receiver going up against man coverage.

Right away, the receiver will stick into the corner, forcing him to take away the inside, then proceed to burst downfield, driving through the corner, making sure to use their physicality. We don't want the receiver to give up and use an avoidance release, as this will simply give the corner a chance to jump right back into the body of the receiver and take back the space the receiver has just fought to get.

Next, the receiver will use a head fake, leaning away at the stem point to try to get the corner to bite inside once again so that the receiver can break away uncovered. At this point, the receiver must remember to then stay at top speed, maintaining whatever separation they've been able to create from their cut.

Stick and stem into him, force him to take away the inside, and get on his heels, then burst tightly downfield, don't give an avoidance release, will give receiver chance to jump back on us, physically drive through him, then lean away at stem point, head fake inside, get him to lean away from where we want to break hard.

Concept #21 – Don't Let Routes of a Pattern Bleed

What It Means

'Route bleeding' is a term used to describe what happens when a number of routes on a particular pass play are all far too close together, reducing the effectiveness of all the routes in that area.

Why It's Important

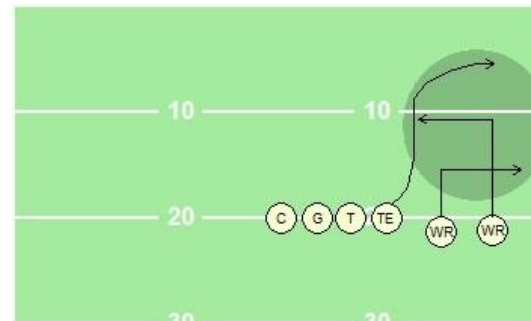
While keeping all of our routes in tight together may seem like a smart thing to do, as it will allow our quarterback to focus in on one area of the field, in reality, it will make things much tougher for him.

Versus zone coverage, putting two or more routes in one area will allow the defense to cover multiple routes with one defender. And versus zone coverage, route bleeding will lead to congestion, resulting in far too many defenders in one area.

This means they will have more angles available to jump a route for an interception, or that an errant throw or tipped ball is much more likely to end up in the hands of a defender.

How To Use It With Your Team

In the diagram to the right, we see a route combination that is much too congested. By combining a 15 yard post route, a 10 yard square in, and a 5 yard square out, we are only attacking one area of the field and drastically reducing the likelihood of success in a throw to any of those three routes.



Route Congestion in the Highlighted Zone

Concept #22 – QB Must Anticipate Where He's Going to Throw the Football

What It Means

It can't be overstated how important anticipation is for a quarterback. There is so much information that a quarterback needs to process on a given play, that simply trying to fly by the seat of their pants and figure everything out after they snap the ball is going to make things much more difficult for one of the positions that is already amongst the most difficult in all sports.

Why It's Important

The quarterback has three opportunities to collect information on the defense, and ignoring any one of them is going to result in a huge drop off in completions, and likely a rise in interceptions. Those three areas are pregame, pre-snap, and post-snap.

Before the game has started, the quarterback should have a good idea of what the defense likes to do, and how best to attack it, using a combination of practice, coaching, film study, and proper game planning.

Next, they need to process as much information as possible on every play before the ball has been hiked. They need to figure out the coverages they are likely seeing, whether there might be a blitz coming, which receiver is most likely to be open, who their hot read is.

Doing these two will make the next part of their job much easier. After the ball has been hiked, the quarterback needs to take their drop back, pop up, and ideally, make the throw right then.

Arm strength and accuracy are great attributes to have, but proper timing is absolutely vital if you want to develop a lethal passing game. And the only way to have good timing, taking advantage of those small windows of opportunity in the defense, is to anticipate where they're going to be before they even happen.

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Concept #22 – Continued

How To Use It With Your Team

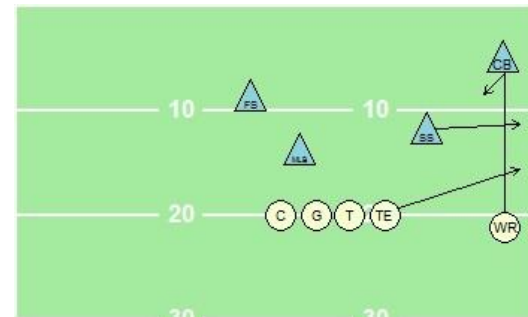
Here's a perfect example of a quarterback and team that uses all the available information to deliver a strike.

From film study, we know that the defense we're going up against likes to run cover three, leaving the free safety up top alone and inverting the strong safety so that he can buzz out into the flat. Knowing this, our offensive game plan includes the curl flat route combination, a very effective weapon against cover three defenses.

So now, in game, the coach calls the curl flat in a situation he believes the defense will likely be coming out in cover three. The quarterback comes up to the line pre-snap, seeing the lone free safety, an inverted strong safety, and corners on the outside who are playing with a cushion. He knows this means they are probably in cover three, and therefore knows that the strong safety will follow the tight end out into the flat, leaving the flanker wide open on the curl route.

Next, the quarterback hikes the ball, takes his five step drop back, and sees the safety follow the tight end out into the flat, anticipates that the flanker will be open on the curl, pops up, and delivers the strike for a first down and an easy completion.

Now every team is going to have a different coverage tendencies, and there are going to be different ways to attack it, but the concept remains the same – get as much information on the defense as possible, and use that information to exploit their weaknesses and anticipate where the open man will be.



QB Anticipating Coverage in Curl Flat Route Combination

Concept #23 – Prime Route Concept

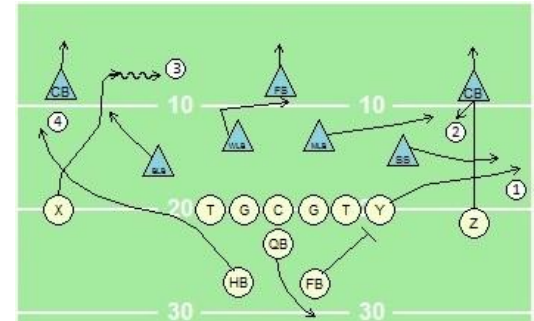
What It Means

As discussed in the concept of having a quarterback anticipate his throws, the quarterback should know where he is trying to throw the ball once the play begins. The next step after that, is having the quarterback learn to move quickly onto the backside or to checkdown routes immediately if the primary receiver is covered when the quarterback has hit his plant foot and completed his drop back.

Why It's Important

This is especially true against zone defenses. While a prime route may occasionally improve against man coverage, it is almost always going to get worst against a zone. This is because the defense will read the quarterback's eyes and shift over to that area of the field.

While this means that the prime route will likely get worse, it also means that the backside outlet routes will become more open.



Prime Route Concept in Practice

How To Use It With Your Team

In the diagram to the right we see our example of the curl flat route combination against a cover three again. The quarterback will execute his drop back, reading the strong safety and looking to hit the curl when the safety buzzes out to the flat.

In this particular example, maybe the defense has been beaten with this play a couple times, and the mike linebacker reads the curl and sprints over to take it away. The quarterback sees this as he plants on his last step for the drop back, and realizes that neither the curl nor flat have a chance of getting open, so he shifts over to the back side, and looks to hit the split end as he throttles down in the void between the will linebacker and the free safety.

There are occasions where even against zone, it can be okay for the quarterback to sit on the prime route for slightly longer than normal. Say the strong safety is headed out into the flat, but is moving slow enough that the curl isn't there right away. The quarterback then has a valid reason to sit on the curl, and can wait an extra beat to see if the route becomes available.

Concept #24 – Outlets Must Be Easy for Quarterback

What It Means

The quarterback has one of the hardest jobs in all of football, so it's important to do whatever you can to make his job easier. One of the ways we can do this is to make his secondary and tertiary options on passing plays routes that are going to be easy to read and easy to complete.

Why It's Important

If you fail to make your quarterback's secondary read easy, he is going to have to have a tough time analyzing the defense and making a high percentage decision with the limited time available to him in the pocket.

There are two ways that we can make the quarterback's secondary reads easier, and those are using backside outlet routes and using short dump off or check down routes.

The backside outlet routes are effective because they give the quarterback a chance to make a simple lateral read. A lateral read allows the quarterback to start from his primary route on one side of the field and progress back across the field, with the receivers working back towards the vision of the quarterback.

The other option for an easy outlet for your quarterback is to have short dump routes right in front of him, so that in the case of his first couple options not being available or a defender breaking quickly into the backfield, he has options right in front of him that he can analyze and get the ball too quickly.

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Concept #24 – Continued

How To Use It With Your Team

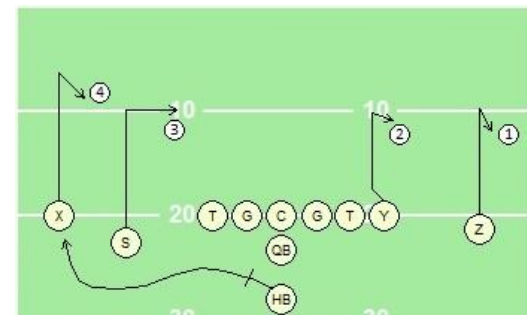
Here are two great examples, with the first showing how to setup a lateral read for your quarterback, and the second showing a high low route combination with dump offs underneath.

In the first play, our quarterback would hike the ball and drop back, looking first to get the ball to his flanker on the right side. If that isn't available, he'll work next over to the left, with the tight end breaking into the quarterback's vision.

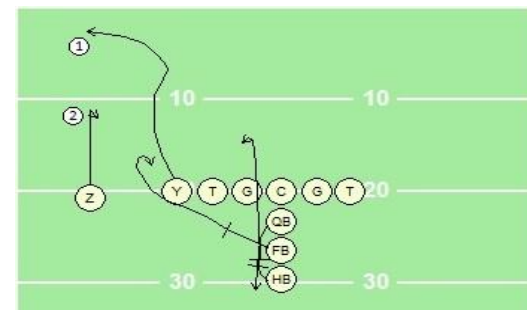
The quarterback will continue scanning over to the left, with the remaining two receivers also breaking back into his scan. And in the case of a blitz or missed block, he also has the option of dumping it to the halfback on the swing pass.

In the second play, we have the quarterback executing a high low read. We would call this play when expecting a zone coverage, so that we can isolate a defensive back and force him to make a decision between covering the flanker or the tight end. If he goes high, we go low, if he goes low, we go high.

Now in the case that the routes are covered or the defense gets into the backfield before he has a chance to make his read, we give him two dump off options, with both the fullback and halfback parking right in his line of sight for a short easy checkdown if necessary.



Right to Left Lateral Read for the Quarterback



Easy Check down after High Low Read

Concept #25 – Throw 3 Step Quick Pass Game

What It Means

The quick pass game as executed off the three step drop back is often considered one of if not the most effective passing strategies. It's

Why It's Important

When using the quick passing game, we make things very simple for our receivers, linemen, and our quarterback as well. These are going to be short routes, limiting our quarterback's time in the pocket and thus making both his reads and the blocking for the offensive line much easier than those we might see on five and seven step dropbacks.

It's a high percentage way of playing the passing game, both in terms of the completion percentage but also in avoiding interceptions. Not only is the quarterback making simple reads and throwing short passes, which will cause a drop in interceptions on their own, but since the emphasis is on getting the ball out quick, we limit the defensive pass rush, meaning we don't have a quarterback who is making the rushed decisions as a defensive lineman bears down on him that often lead interceptions.

How To Use It With Your Team

This is a simple concept to implement from the top down. For the quarterback, we want him to focus on making quick reads and throwing accurate passes – arm strength is great to have, but is ultimately secondary when it comes to the quick passing game.

As far as the offensive line, they have a pretty easy job protecting the quarterback when using the quick pass game as they should only have to block for a short time. They can even use a cut block technique, but only if this is something that you have spent a fair amount of time on in practice to ensure they are doing so safely and effectively.

It's an extremely effective concept against all defenses, using a variety of hitches, slants, quick outs, and fades. This is why it is also so effective against blitzes. These are all short routes and with proper route spacing, you should be able to attack any zone vacated by a blitzing defender and gouge the defense for big yards after the catch.

Concept #26 – Move Quarterback Launch Point

What It Means

One often overlooked aspect of the playcalling in the passing game is moving the quarterback's launch point. While it can seem innocuous to simply call a three or five step drop back on every play, it provides a huge advantage to the defense and will ultimately make things much more difficult for both your quarterback and offensive line.

Why It's Important

When the quarterback drops straight back on every single play, regardless of the exact number of steps in the drop back, the defense has a pretty good idea where the quarterback is going to end up on any given play.

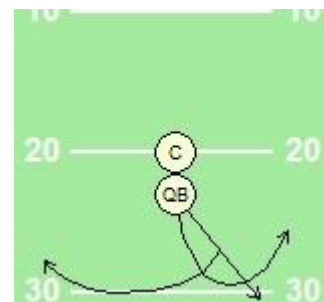
This makes pass rushing much easier on both the defense and the defensive coordinators. The coordinator can now dial up blitzes and stunts knowing exactly where the quarterback will be, and the pass rush can put their head down and attack knowing the target is always going to be in roughly the same spot.

By moving the launch point around, we slow down the pass rush, forcing them to look and analyze where the quarterback is going to be on each and every play.

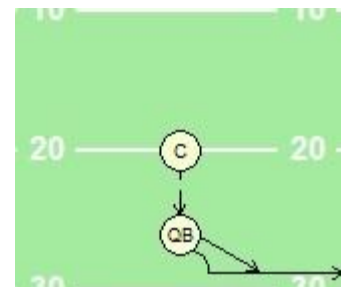
It also carries the advantage of making things easier on a shorter quarterback, getting them out from behind those behemoths and giving them a clear view where they don't have to worry about getting batted down at the line of scrimmage.

How To Use It With Your Team

There are plenty of ways to go about moving the quarterback launch point; from sprint outs to bootlegs to waggles. It's important to use all of these techniques to your advantage to keep the defense on it's heels, and remember to coordinate your routes with whatever launch point movement action you decide on – try to incorporate lateral reads to make your quarterback's job as easy as possible.



I Form Flex Wing
Counter Weak



I Form Flex Wing
Counter Weak

Concept #27 – Have Some Multiplicity in the Pass Protections You Use

What It Means

A common theme throughout all 35 concepts is that you don't want to become predictable, because when you start to fall into patterns, the defense can see them and take advantage.

While we often remember to avoid these patterns with our playcalling in both the run and pass game, we often forget that it's in our best interest to vary our pass protections as well, doing our best to make the defense frown at every level.

Why It's Important

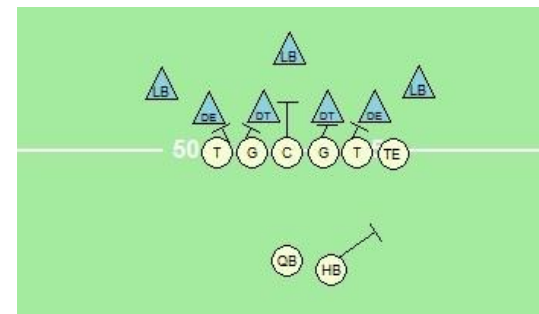
When you use the same pass protection scheme over and over, you give the defense a chance to make a plan of attack to best expose it's weaknesses.

Now this doesn't mean you need 12 different pass protection schemes – this is even worst than using just one scheme the whole time, as it will lead to confusion among the offensive linemen and drastically reduce their effectiveness.

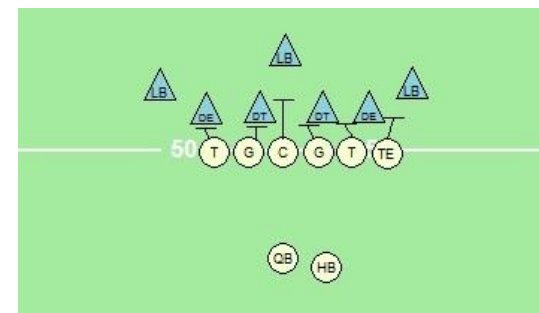
How To Use It With Your Team

You should have somewhere between four and six pass protections, affording you the flexibility to effectively protect your quarterback in any situation: dropback passing, quick passing, and play action passing.

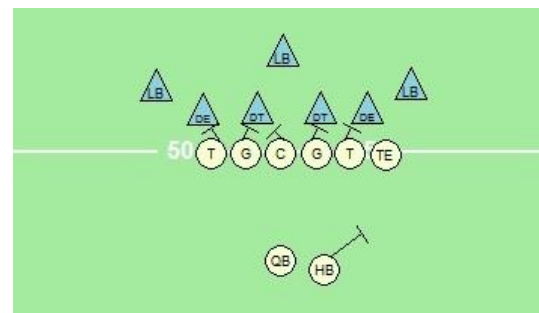
When all else fails remember – KISS! Keep it simple stupid! When in doubt, cut back on your protections.



Pass Protection – Man Blocking



Pass Protection – Zone Blocking



Pass Protection – Combo Blocking

Concept #28 – Play Action Passing Integrates the Run and Pass Game

What It Means

As the one facet of your offense that ties both the pass and run games together, it's extremely important to work playaction into your playbook, as it will maximize the effectiveness of both.

Why It's Important

There are many coaches who believe that the most effective way to throw the football is to use the playaction pass. The advantage is that when the handoff fake is made, the linebackers are forced to hold and the secondary may take a step or two up to the line reacting to the run.

This will have the benefit of creating voids that may no otherwise be there against the zone, and by giving your receivers a step on the defensive backs they may not have otherwise been able to create.

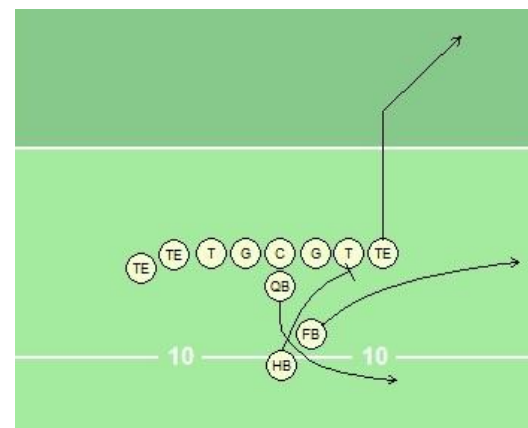
How To Use It With Your Team

For the playaction pass to be it's most effective, you need to do two things. First, you need to effectively run the football, and second, you need to run the playaction on the same runs you've been using against the defense.

All too often I see a coach who is killing the defense with a halfback iso, but then turns around and runs a playaction on the sprint draw.

This is a fatal mistake, as the defense won't have nearly the same reaction they would to a new or ineffective play that they would to a play that they've been giving up big yardage to the whole night.

So remember, your best playactions are always going to come off fakes on your best and most used runs.



Strong I Jumbo Flat 7

Concept #29 – Underneath Delays, Crosses, Scissors, Offer Extremely Effective Control Passing

What It Means

While you definitely want to attack the whole field in your passing game, there is no doubt that working over the middle of the field and using short, high percentage, controlled passing is extremely effective way to run your pass offense and move the ball downfield.

Why It's Important

As offensive coordinators, it's very easy to get sucked into trying to always get that big completion – the streak routes, the deep outs – the plays that have a good chance of taking up a good chunk of yardage. But we can do a much better job of controlling both the defense and offense by working the shorter routes, like scissors, delays, or cross routes with our running backs.

The bigger chunks of yardage will be much more rare – unless you have a playmaker who has the ability to create yards after the catch consistently – but regardless, those eight yard, ten yard, and twelve yard gains will add up and put you in a great position to put six points up on the board.

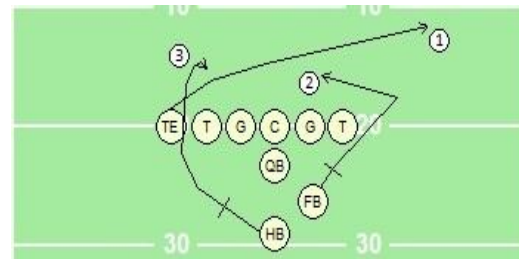
How To Use It With Your Team

For reference, we'll look at a couple great examples of control passing.

The first play we'll look at is a fullback scissors play, where we bring the tight end across the formation and have the fullback fake as if going out into the flat before crossing back into the middle of the field.

Here we have the opportunity to dump the ball to the tight end early, and if the defense over commits, a well placed pass to the fullback crossing into the middle can often lead to big yards as he attacks behind the defense after the clear out.

(continued on next page)



Weak I FB Scissors

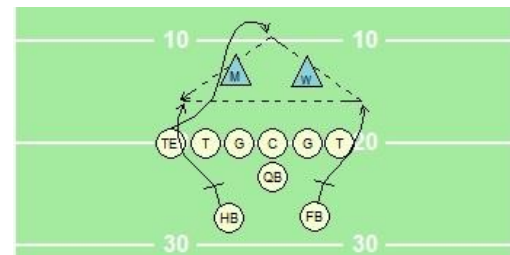
Concept #29 – Continued

How To Use It With Your Team

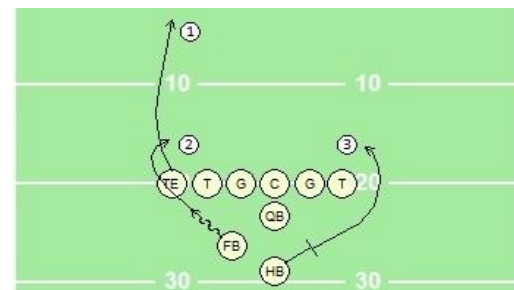
The triangle read is another great way to work the control passing game, especially against a zone defense. Here the tight end is going to work into the middle of the field, and the halfback and fullback will run sit routes, forming a triangle between the three receivers and allowing our quarterback to react to the two defenders, hitting the open receiver for effective short yardage.

Another version of the triangle read is the high low read. In the second diagram, we are doing this with a tight end clear out and a fullback delay, working the middle linebacker and forcing him to decide which receiver he's going to cover, with our tailback as an emergency dumpoff option as well.

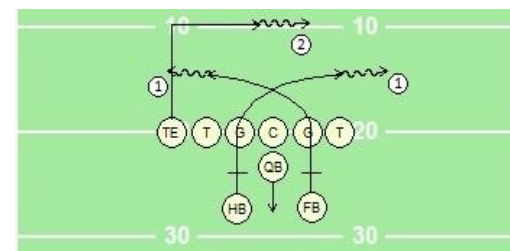
The fourth control passing play we're going to look at is one that's very effective against man coverage. It's a backs cross play. The tight end will run a ten yard square in while the backs run crossing routes underneath. The quarterback will simply read the mesh point, hitting whichever of the two running backs is able to pop out open.



Split Back Triangle Read



Strong I FB Delay



Split Back Backs Cross

Concept #30 – Bootleg, Naked Bootleg, and Waggle Passes Provide Valuable Misdirection

What It Means

We talked already about the importance of using misdirection plays in the run game. Well this same concept can be applied to the pass game by just substituting playaction bootlegs in the place of misdirection runs.

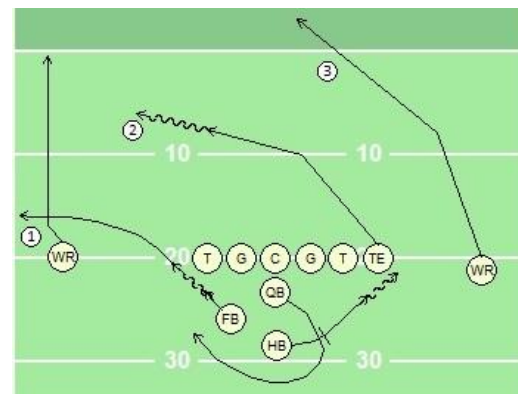
You can also use a naked bootleg or waggle, a variation in which we don't send any blockers out in front of the quarterback as they roll out of the pocket.

Why It's Important

When you have a quarterback who's a threat to run, you'll quickly find that the playaction bootleg and waggle plays will be some of the most effective plays in your playbook.

The combination of misdirection, the quarterback running threat, and the under, over, and deep routes being run by the receivers makes it very difficult for the defense to defend all the options available on the play.

This play is so potent in fact that many teams will opt to use a bootleg instead of a counter as their misdirection run off of the inside or outside zone stretch, as it accomplishes all of the same goals as the counter and depending on your personnel, is often a more effective play.



Weak I Pro PA Naked Bootleg

How To Use It With Your Team

In the diagram to the right we see a naked bootleg working off of a playaction fake on the outside zone run. The quarterback will roll out and look to break contain on the defense, while the fullback runs a slam release, getting out into the flat.

This will give us our under route, while the tight end runs a cross to give us our over route, and the flanker will run a deep post route. The quarterback will make his reads – one, two, three – and if he is unable to get the ball to any of the receivers keep the ball for himself and pick up some yardage on the ground.

The quarterback may need to hold up on the bootleg if he is unable to break contain, giving himself a couple more seconds to find an open receiver.

Concept #31 – Double Route Moves are a Must

What It Means

Double route moves, where our receivers are making two cuts, are an essential aspect to any good route tree and any good passing offense.

Why It's Important

Much in the same way that a misdirection run or a playaction pass can punish an over aggressive defense, double move routes can do the exact same thing to a secondary.

When receivers are running double move routes, the defensive backs can't just jump short routes willy nilly, as they know there is a good chance they could get burnt by biting on a fake.

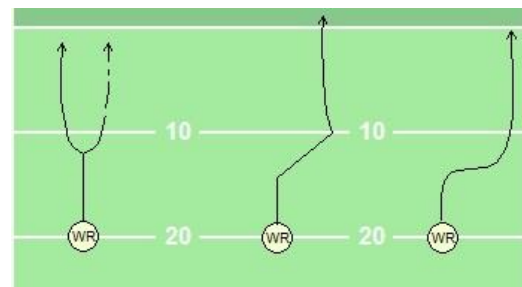
This will give us a chance at some big plays, as even though double move routes are a little bit slower developing, there is a chance to not only fool the primary defensive back, but the safeties over top may decide another receiver is a priority and move out of position just enough for the quarterback to get a completion to his receiver.

Or perhaps the vertical stretch may create seams for passes underneath that wouldn't have otherwise been there.

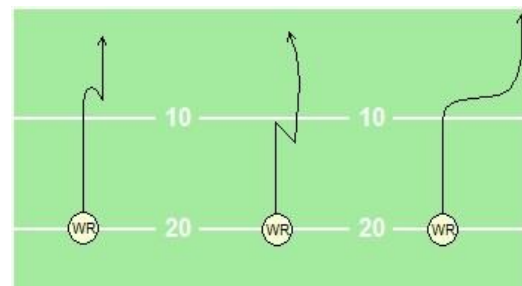
How To Use It With Your Team

In the two diagrams to the right, we see six extremely effective double moves. But for them to be there most effective, we need to install and practice both the double move route and the complimentary single move route.

There is no point in adding a hitch and go to a pass play when you don't use hitches. So make sure that these double moves aren't idle threats, and that your receivers will be ready and capable to punish the secondary on either of the two complimentary routes.



Routes From Right to Left: Hitch & Go, Slant & Go, Quick Out & Up



Routes From Right to Left: Curl & Go, Y-Nod, Out & Up

Concept #32 – Must Have Aggressive Receiver Play

What It Means

While it is true that physical strength isn't one of the first traits we're looking for in a good receiver, it doesn't mean they shouldn't still be aggressive and physical at their position. This doesn't mean they need to get in shoving matches or lay down big hits, just that they need to be aggressive and physical in whatever you ask of them in your offense.

Why It's Important

If your receivers are a weak link – literally – in your offense, your going to have a tougher time in all facets of the game. You need your receivers to be tough, hard-nosed players, working aggressiveness and physicality into everything they do on the field.

This applies to their releases off the line and running their routes, especially against bump and run man coverage – we can't afford to have a receiver jammed up at the line and just taken out of the play.

This also applies to blocking. Your offense's propensity for large runs will skyrocket with good wide receiver blocking, and the only way your receivers are going to be good blockers is if they play aggressive, using their strength and physicality to really lay down some good hard blocks.

And finally, they need to be aggressive when the ball is up in the air. When the ball goes up in the air, every single receiver on your roster needs to have the attitude that it is *their* football. *Not* the secondary's football. They need go get the football and snatch it out of the air. This will not only improve the quarterback's confidence in terms of believing he'll get a completion, but also not having to worry about a receiver of his getting bullied off the ball and allowing a defensive back to steal an interception.

How To Use It With Your Team

If you want your receivers to be aggressive in game, it's an attitude your going to have to demand and foster every day in practice. It doesn't matter if it's a little guy – in fact, it's probably even more important for a little guy to play aggressively.

Everyday remind your players to play with aggressive attitude – strong releases off the line, good physicality when separating in their route running, tough blocks in the run game, and attacking the ball in the air whenever it's thrown to them. Drive it through their heads every day in practice that those four skills are necessary if they want to succeed in your offense.

Concept #33 – Receivers Must Beat Man Bump and Press Coverages

What It Means

One of the biggest shocks to an offense is when they go into a game and are surprised by a team running man bump and press coverages.

If the receivers are unable to get off the line, the timing of the entire offense is thrown off and completing the short underneath routes is going to be almost impossible. In Superbowl 30, we saw the Denver Broncos – the highest scoring offense in the history of the NFL – get shut out in the first half and held to just one score the entire game by a Seattle Seahawks defense built on man press coverage.

Now it wasn't a surprise that the Seahawks ran press coverage, but the point remains that the Broncos receivers were unable to create separation, leading to their arsenal of quick slants, fades, and screens being taken away, and leaving us with a Broncos offense that was completely ineffective.

Why It's Important

This is why you need to work on beating press coverage both in the coaching booth and on the practice field before game day. If your team is unable to deal with press coverage it won't matter how well your routes are designed or how talented your receivers are, because your quarterback isn't going to have the time or the targets to complete any passes.

How To Use It With Your Team

There are a number of ways to prepare your receivers to deal with man bump and press coverages. The first is to have a package of plays – even if it's against a team that has used press against you before – that are specifically designed to beat man press coverages. Quick hitting routes like slants and fades have a chance to go for massive gains, as every defensive back on the field will be so preoccupied with their own responsibilities they won't be able to help on a teammate's assignment.

The second is to develop the skills they need to beat man press coverages in practice. They need to learn how to stick into their defender and then break away, creating separation and then maintaining it. By giving them time to work on these skills in practice we give them the best chance to be ready to handle them come game time.

It's also important that the quarterback do his job as well. They need to understand that with such small windows, ball placement is going to be important, and if they can lead a receiver tightly, hitting him in stride, there's a good chance the receiver will be able to catch on the run and knife downfield for a big gain.

Concept #34 – Must Beat Blitz

What It Means

Learning to deal with the blitz is one of the most important skills for any quarterback, but a big chunk of that is the coaches' responsibility as well. Every team will have its own way or ways of dealing with different blitzes, and it's vital that a coach develop his own systematic answer that the team and quarterback can then understand and get comfortable with.

Why It's Important

The consequences of not being able to beat the blitz are simple and numerous – we don't need to go over them here. But figuring out your strategy for effectively dealing with the blitz, whatever it may be, is absolutely vital.

You need to figure out your team's strengths and weaknesses and choose the plan of attack so that when the defense comes out in a blitz, your quarterback knows what his options are and can make the right checks at the line.

Having a systematic answer as well as a package of seven to eight different plays for dealing with the blitz is essential to getting your entire team ready and comfortable with handling the blitz in-game.

How To Use It With Your Team

There are a number of popular strategies for dealing with blitz packages. Some of the most effective and popular ones include going to the quick pass game, minimizing your quarterback's time in the pocket and giving him short routes to dump the ball off to.

You can also have your receivers run sight adjustments, where they ditch their route and instead fill in the hole where the blitzing defender is coming from. A more conservative approach would be to keep extra blockers, going to seven and eight man maximum protections to deal with the extra defenders rushing the quarterback.

Whatever you decide to do, you need to develop a system that your players can know and understand that will allow you to deal with any blitz package you might see. Your quarterback needs to be able to make adjustments at the line, checking out of plays and into the blitz beater package.

This doesn't mean that recognizing the blitz lies solely on your quarterback's shoulder though. You need to recognize patterns in the defense and based on the situation sometimes call a blitz beater out of the huddle. If you do so and the defense shows blitz, you can have your quarterback run a lock; this is where the quarterback fakes as if checking out of the play called in the huddle to deceive the defense.

Concept #35 – Scramble Concept

What It Means

The scramble concept is something that's really easy to take for granted, as your quarterback is likely only going to be scrambling a couple times a game and it seems like something that receivers would just figure out on their own – but it's not.

If you want that occasional big play when the quarterback scrambles out of the pocket for the deep throw, or even just that five yard dump off to get the first down and keep the drive alive, the scramble concept is something that you're going to have to put time into before you'll see consistent results.

Why It's Important

The scramble concept needs to be built into the offense, something that you work on with both your quarterback's and receivers so that you can maximize your chances of a completion and good yardage on even a broken play.

Scrambling out of the pocket with a couple behemoth defensive linemen chasing him down is one of the highest pressure moments for a quarterback, and it can be very easy for him to try and force a throw or miscommunicate with a receiver, leading to an interception.

By establishing a system with firm rules, we cut down on these kinds of errors and give ourselves a chance to turn plays that might be sacks, incompletions, or interceptions into big plays for the offense.

(continued on next page)

Concept #35 – Continued

How To Use It With Your Team

There are quite a few different possible scramble systems, so while you don't have to necessarily use this system, you should use one – and this just so happens to be a very good one.

If a receiver is to the side of the field the quarterback is scrambling to they do one of two things. If they are in the low to intermediate area, they go deep. If they are deep, they come back to the ball. The rest of the receivers, on the opposite side of the field, will trail across the field, trying to get back into the quarterback's vision.

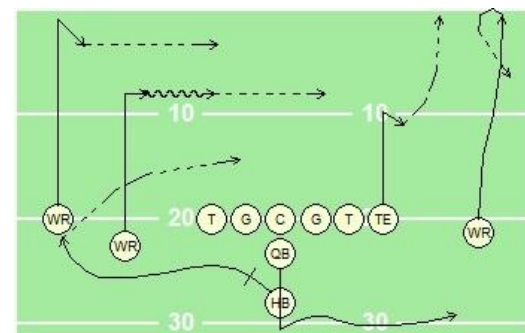
If the quarterback were to extend the play, and scramble to the other side, the same rules would apply.

That is the foundation of our scramble concept, as well as a couple simple extra rules. For example your receivers must 'stair-step' when they are trailing receivers in front of them.

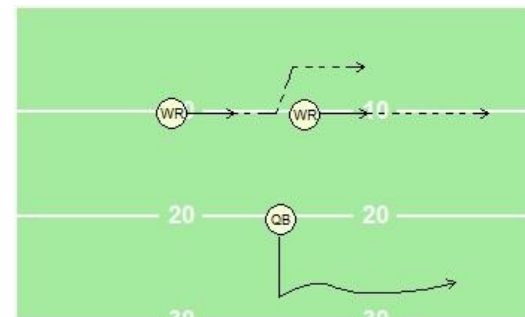
This means that if both receivers are trailing towards the quarterback on the same plane, the second receiver will break five yards down field and then re trail. This maximizes the quarterback's throwing windows and reduces the possibility of route bleeding and congestion.

As far as working on this in practice, I've found a great way to do this is to have a signal with your quarterback that he knows means scramble. Then when you're running your seven on seven drills, give him the signal before a play here and there.

He'll drop back, go through his reads, then sprint out of the pocket, with the receivers reacting accordingly based on your scramble concept and their position.



Scramble Concept Example



Wide Receiver Stair-Stepping

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