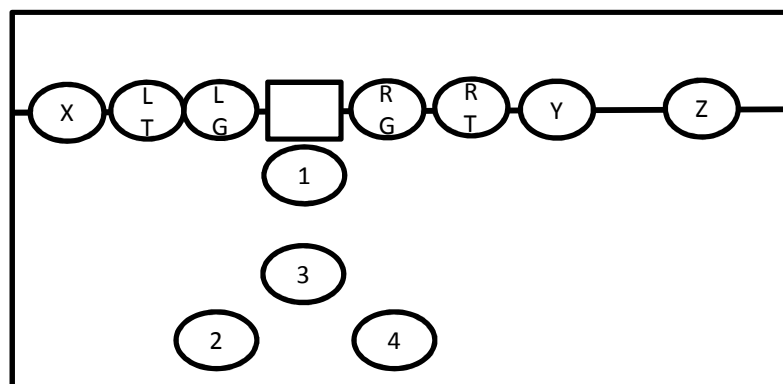


Playcalling Cheat Sheet



I have a simple, four part playcalling system that has been around since long before I began coaching, and will be here for long after. The four components that make up each play are:

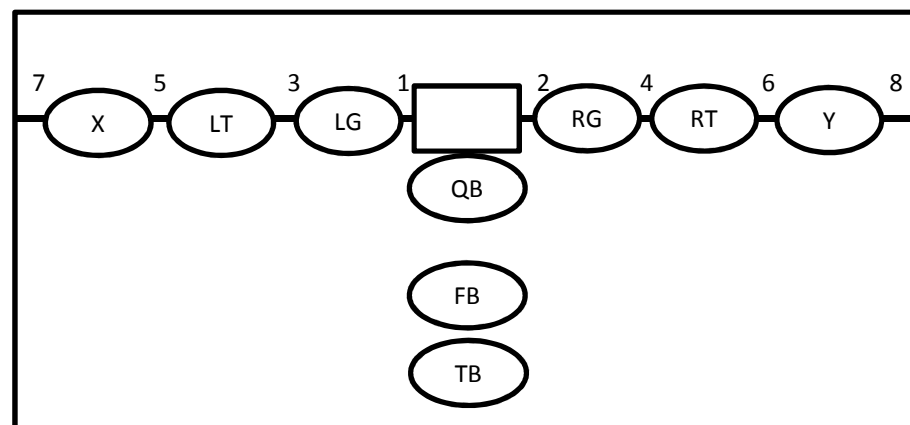
1. The Formation
2. The Ball Carrier
3. The Point of Attack
4. The Blocking Description

First up is the formation. (ie. I-Form, Wing T, Singleback etc).

Each back is assigned a number that if called, would mean they are carrying the ball on that play. The QB is always '1', and the FB is always '3'. Your TB will be '2', but when it comes to offenses like that Double Wing, you'll actually have four backs in the backfield. When that's the case, 2 will correspond to any back to the left of the FB, and 4 will be for the back to the right. And in a split back formation, the FB is usually the back on the TE's side.

Your receivers will also always be ordered by letter, ending on the right side with a Z. This is important – when the QB calls out the numbers from the passing tree, the first number will always correspond to the left most receiver, the second number to the second left most receiver, and so on, with the last number going to the receiver on the far right.

The point of attack is only designated on running plays, and is used to indicate which hole the ball carrier should be running through. The holes are numbered odd on the left and even on the right, with 0 being directly behind the center.



Playcalling Key Cont.

Now that the backs and receivers know what they're supposed to do, we can tell the offensive line what kind of blocking scheme they should execute. Each of these words explains the objective of their particular plays and where and how the offensive line needs to block.

Dive

The dive is a direct, quick hitting power run designed to get short yardage, and is especially effective in any 3rd or 4th and short.

Blast

The blast is a running play designed to the guard tackle gap, or just off tackle.

Power

The power play uses maximum blocking at the POA, sending all offensive backs through the same hole, lead blocking for the ball carrier, who is usually whichever back started farthest away from the hole.

Trap/Counter

The ball carrier will take one or two steps in away from the intended hole, before cutting back to receive the handoff and attack. The difference between a trap and a counter, is that in a trap you will see a guard on the back side of the play pull and lead block for the ball carrier.

Toss

The pitch or toss is run like the sweep, run out towards the sideline, except that the ball carrier does not come across the entire backfield.

Sweep

Here the quarterback will handoff or pitch to a back coming around from outside of the guard and trying to beat the defense around the corner to the sideline.

Reverse

This play looks like a sweep to start off – and that's what we want the defense to think. But here we have another receiver going in the opposite direction as the original ball carrier, taking a handoff and sprinting back to the opposite sideline.

Option

There are two kinds of option, the double, and the triple. In the triple option, the FB will dive inside and the QB will put the ball in his belly and ride with him, watching the defensive line. If the defense reacts to the fullback, the QB will pull the ball back and run for the outside, with the tailback staying at least three yards deep and outside of him at all times. The offensive line will also usually double team a key defender, leaving another defender at the POA open to attack the QB. The QB will make the read based on this defender, either keeping it and turning upfield or pitching it out and behind to the TB. The double option is the same option without the fullback fake at the beginning.

Waggle/Bootleg

A play where the QB fakes a hand off then rolls out to the opposite side of the field, usually with receivers running along downfield in the same direction. To extend the QB's time to make a passing decision, normally at least one lineman will pull out as well.

Draw/Delay

To sell the draw, the offensive line has to drop back into pass protection, and the QB will take a dropback as if scanning the field for a pass. Then he hands the ball off, and the ball carrier will sprint past the defense after they

Playcalling Key Cont.

Using the play naming order discussed on the previous two pages, here's an example. If I wanted to have my tailback run right up the middle on the center's side, I would first pick a formation; for this example, we'll just use the classic I Form. Next, we have to designate a ball carrier; so we'll use 2, to designate the tailback.

Once we know the ball carrier, we have to let him know which hole the ball is headed to, and if we check our hole number key, we know that just to the right of the center is known as the 2 hole. Lastly, we have to let our offensive line know what kind of blocking scheme to run, in this case being a dive. So all together, that would be I Form Right 22 Dive. The right after the I Form is so that we know which side is the strong side.

For a passing play, the first step is the same – we name the formation and its variant, if applicable, we'll stick with I Form for now. In the I Form, we have two receivers, so we'll use two numbers to tell them what their routes are – lets go with two streaks, that would be 99. Next we need to tell our fullback, halfback, tight end, and quarterback what to do.

Usually I'll just tag the end of the play with any special instructions I want to give out to them – otherwise they should know their responsibilities. For example if I wanted my QB to bootleg, I would just tag that at the end of the play: I Form Right 99 Bootleg Right. Now my tight end knows on a bootleg he always runs his crossing route in the direction of the QB, and the rest of the offensive players know what they need to do on a bootleg right as well. If I wanted all players except my wide receivers to stay in and block, I would just tag that: I Form Right 99 Max Protect.

You don't have to use these words specifically, as long as your players know what you mean when you say it. That's why I suggest for some of the longer play names, changing them to a single word that your players know is specific to that play, for example the Singleback Slot Left 99 Y Motion Right Option TB Protect can be a real mouthful in normal conditions, so imagine how tough that is on your QB and all of your other players at the end of a long game.

I would suggest limiting that play name to a few words, still including the formation and routes for receivers, but just calling the rest of the play a unique name, like Thunder, or Wolf. Every player will know that a 'Thunder' means Y Motion Right Option TB Protect, and it will be much easier to understand.