



SPREAD OFFENSE PLAYBOOK

10

**SIMPLE AND EFFECTIVE
FOOTBALL PLAYS**

 PDF

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Spread Offense 101

The spread, or at least its core ideals, have been around in football for 50+ years. In today's game, its most popular iteration is the shotgun spread. But whether it's being run out of a Singleback formation, the Shotgun, or the new in between variant – the Pistol – it remains an effective offensive philosophy.

The idea is to spread the defense out horizontally, pulling off extra blockers, like the fullback, and putting in extra receivers. With the defense spread out, it is easier to isolate man coverage, as well as to find and throw to the holes in the zone. The same goes for the running game – with the defense spread out all over the line of scrimmage, it is much more difficult for them to stack the box and prepare for the run.

As far as personnel, you need a deep stable of pass catchers, as unless all the receivers are threats, the defense will have no need to spread out and defend them. You also need a quarterback with a good arm, and a running back who is adept at reading his blocks.

Another popular variation is the spread option. By combining the classic option and the spread principles, we give our quarterback a chance to run the option against a thinned out defense, with fewer defenders to contend with. That's because when run correctly, the option is in effect blocking a defender for you, giving you an advantage at the point of attack without cluttering it up with extra players.

Spread Offense

Deep Passes

Shotgun Spread – Deep In

Setup

The offense will come out in a shotgun spread formation, with four receivers on the field and the halfback on the quarter back's right side in the backfield.

Play Objective

The Deep In is a solid playcall when you're looking to get the ball downfield, spreading the defense both horizontally and vertically and giving the quarterback plenty of viable options to throw the ball. This is a good call when you need to pick up a big chunk of yardage, like 3rd and 10, or in your 2 minute drill at the end of a half.

Positional Assignments

Offensive Line – The offensive line will be in pass protection, doing their best to give their passer enough time to get the ball downfield.

Wide Receivers – The outside receiver on the strong side will run a deep in, while the Y receiver on the same side will run a deep slant. The weak side split end will run a deep post route, and the slot receiver will run a hitch route.

Running Backs – The halfback will step up and engage in pass protection momentarily, then escape out into the flat as an outlet option for the passer.

Quarterback – The quarterback will take the snap and begin to go through his progressions from right to left. His first look is the deep in coming across the field, his second being the Y receiver dunning the deep slant. His next look is the weak side split end on a post route, and the last look is the slot receiver running the hitch.

If the defense blitzes, he can go to the halfback out in the flat.

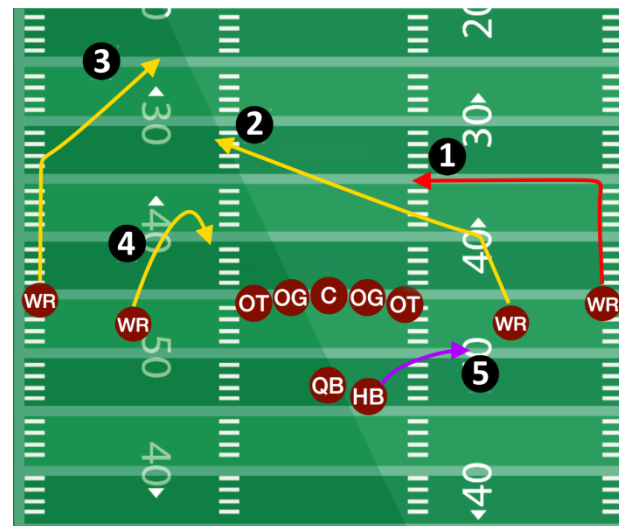


Figure 1: Deep In

Shotgun Trips TE – HB Motion Verticals

Setup

The offense will bring three receivers on the field here, having them bunch up on the weak side, with the tight end lined up on the strong side along with the halfback. The quarterback will stand in the backfield next to the halfback, putting the offense in a Shotgun Trips TE formation.

Play Objective

When you need a completion for big yardage, this is a great play to pull out of the playbook. Ideally, you would call it when you can expect your quarterback to have plenty of time in the pocket and you need a big completion. The routes are all slower developing, and neither the halfback nor tight end stay in to block, so it's important the quarterback has enough time to get the ball downfield for a big time throw and catch.

This is a great play to mix into your 2 minute offense, lulling the defense to sleep with short completions before exposing them on a deep pass for the big play.

Positional Assignments

Offensive Line – The offensive line will be in pass protection, giving the quarterback as much time in the pocket as possible.

Tight End – The tight end will run a curl route here, ready for the quick pass in case of a blitz, as he is the quarterback's hot read.

Wide Receivers – All three bunched receivers will run deep routes. Going from left to right, the receivers will run a fade route, a post, and a wheel route, putting a ton of pressure deep on that side of the field.

Running Backs – When the quarterback motions him out, the halfback will step up, and split out wide on the strong side. When the ball is snapped, he'll run a fade, looking to take advantage of an overmatched linebacker if the defense is in man coverage.

Quarterback – The quarterback will motion the halfback out wide, watching to see if a linebacker follows him out. If a linebacker does, and it's a mismatch in your advantage, the running back should be your number one option on this play. Otherwise, your quarterback's first option will be the slot receiver running the wheel route on the weak side. His second option is the split end running the post, and the third option is the flanker on the fade route. In the event of a blitz, the quarterback's hot read is the tight end.

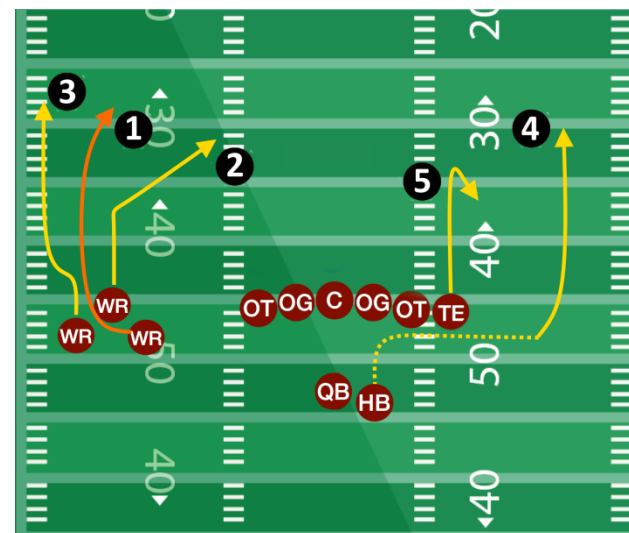


Figure 2: Halfback Motion Verticals

Shotgun Trips TE – Hi Lo Triple In

Setup

The offense will align in a Shotgun Trips TE formation, with the three receivers bunched off to the left and the tight end on the right. The halfback will also be on the right side, just in the backfield next to the quarterback.

Play Objective

The key to spread offense is to spread the defense out not only vertically, but horizontally as well.

Positional Assignments

Offensive Line – The offensive line will drop back into pass protection on the snap of the ball.

Tight End – The tight end will run a corner route, pulling the safety over to the sideline.

Wide Receivers – The split end is the number one option, running a dig route over the middle of the field. The number two option is the flanker, running a shallow drive route, and the third option is the slot receiver, running an angle route.

Running Backs – The running back will run a swing route to the weak side, available as the hot read.

Quarterback – The quarterback will receive the snap and drop back, going through his progressions. His initial read is on the linebacker over the middle. If he doesn't go up to take away the dig route, the quarterback should hit the dig. Otherwise, the drive underneath should be open. But if it's not, we have a third option coming across the middle, with the slot shaking his man before coming inside on the angle. Lastly, we have the corner route for the tight end, and the halfback swinging over to the weak side, the quarterback's hot read just in case of a blitz.

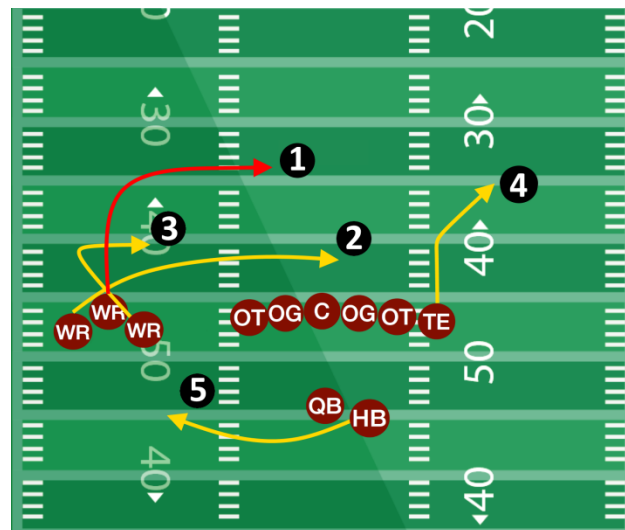


Figure 3: Hi Lo Triple In

Spread Offense

Quick Passes and Screens

Shotgun Trips TE – Flanker Screen

Setup

The tight end will line up on the strong side, with the three receivers bunching on the weak side. The halfback will line up behind the tight end on the strong side, and the quarterback will line up in the backfield, putting the offense in a shotgun trips formation.

Play Objective

If the defense is playing off coverage, the flanker screen is a great call, giving one of your most agile playmakers a chance to get the ball in open space and make some defender's miss. This is a great call on 1st or 2nd and 10, when the defense doesn't want to give up a big completion and may give a bigger cushion than otherwise.

Positional Assignments

Offensive Line – The left tackle and left guard will both release on the snap the ball, allowing the defensive linemen to think they've got a clear path to the quarterback and letting them take themselves out of the play. They will head downfield, coming across to block any defensive backs or linebackers in the receiver's way. The rest of the offensive line will drop back in regular pass protection, to give the quarterback enough time to complete the pass.

Tight End – The tight end will help pass protect initially before releasing downfield and looking to make a block at the second level.

Wide Receivers – The slot receiver and split end will both step up and block the corners out to the sideline, giving the flanker a chance to receiver the screen pass and head downfield.

Running Backs – The running back will be in pass protection, looking to give the quarterback an extra second or two if absolutely necessary.

Quarterback – The quarterback will hike the ball, take a step back as if about to begin his drop back, then fire the ball right back out to the flanker behind the line of scrimmage.

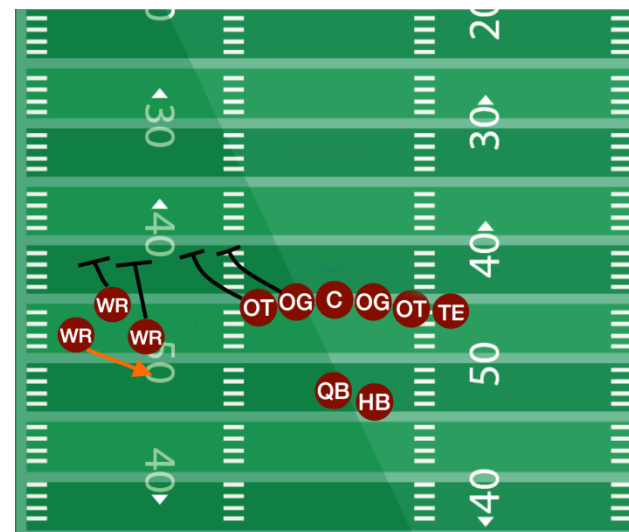


Figure 4: Flanker Screen

Shotgun Spread – PA Bubble Screen

Setup

The offense will come out in a shotgun spread formation, with four receivers on the field and one halfback in the backfield on the quarterback's right side.

Play Objective

A great companion play to the read option or inside zone – especially if your quarterback's mobility is lacking. This play can be run as an option play, with the quarterback reading the defensive end and either giving the handoff or throwing outside, or you can simply call it as a playaction pass – either way it's incredibly effective.

This is a good play on 3rd and short, when the defense needs to respect the run, allowing you to get the ball to a playmaker that you trust to pick up a couple tough yards.

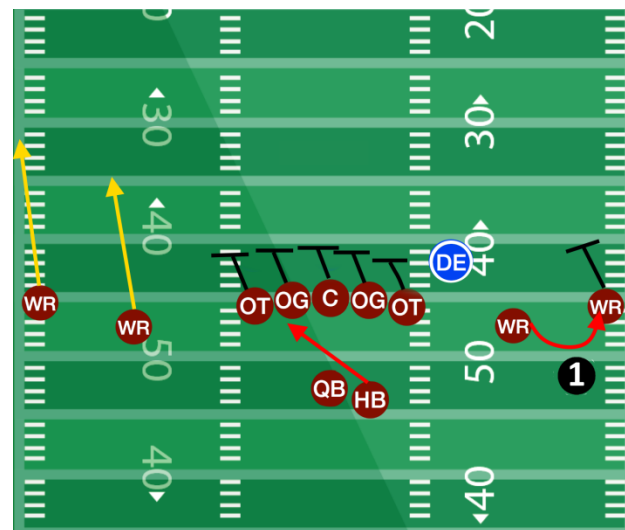


Figure 6: PlayAction Bubble Screen

Positional Assignments

Offensive Line – The offensive line will block as if this is an inside zone, taking their first step to the left side and blocking the first man that comes into their zone.

Wide Receivers – The playside split end will block inside, freeing up the Y receiver to receive the screen and allowing him a chance to get in space and beat the next man in the open field. The backside receivers will both attempt to distract the defense, dragging them downfield on clear out routes.

Running Backs – The running back will come up and fake as if taking the handoff, diving hard into the line after and really selling the run playaction.

Quarterback – The quarterback will take the snap, fake the handoff to the running back, and fire the ball to the receiver running the bubble route on the play side.

Shotgun Spread – Playaction Fake Bubble Slant

Setup

The offense will come out in a shotgun spread formation, with four receivers on the field and one halfback in the backfield on the quarterback's right side.

Play Objective

Once you've run the play action bubble pass on the defense a couple times, they will begin to adjust – whoever is responsible for the outside receiver in pass coverage will more than likely start to gear up to jump the route. That's when you call this play. It will use the defense's aggressiveness against them, and force them to respect the read option and bubble screen all that much more.

Positional Assignments

Offensive Line – The offensive line will block as if this is an inside zone, taking their first step to the left side and blocking the first man that comes into their zone.

Wide Receivers – The backside receivers will both run clear out routes, just looking to pull their defenders away from the play. On the play side, the Y receiver will run a bubble route, with the split end stepping up as if about to block for the screen and then running a slant route to the inside.

Running Backs – The running back will fake as if receiver the handoff, running hard into the line and hoping to draw some linebackers up to the line.

Quarterback – The quarterback will hike the ball and fake the handoff, all the while keeping his eyes on the slot receiver's bubble route.

This can be run as a packaged play, with the quarterback making an in-game decision on whether to go with the inside zone, bubble screen, or the slant, or you can call it in the huddle as a coach. Here the play is designed to go to the receiver on the slant route, with the bubble just there as a backup option if the defense over commits.

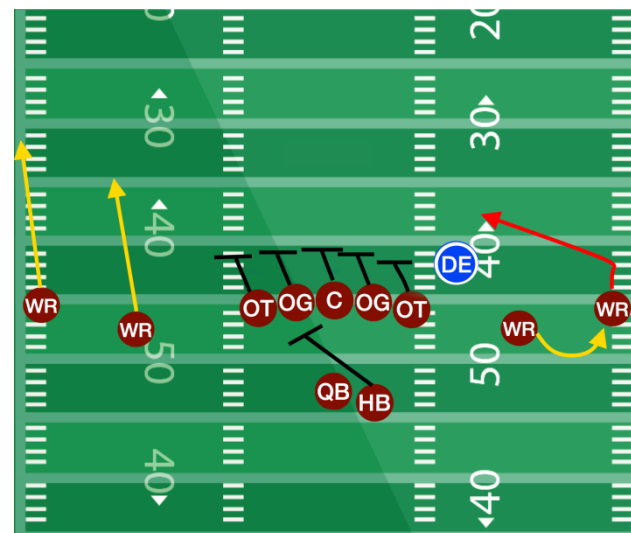


Figure 5: PlayAction Fake Bubble Slant

Spread Offense

Run Plays

Shotgun Spread – Inside Zone

Setup

The offense will come out in a Spread shotgun formation, with four receivers on the field – two on each side – and one halfback in the backfield.

Play Objective

A classic play that has been growing in popularity recently, the inside zone run from the shotgun spreads the defense out and forces them to respect the pass, leaving fewer men in the box for you to run against. This is a great play on first and 10, with the threat of the pass leaving your running back in good position to set your team up for second down, or maybe even pick up another first.

Positional Assignments

Offensive Line – The zone blocking scheme on this play requires all offensive linemen to immediately take a step playside when the ball is snapped, moving downhill and blocking the first defender to come into their assigned zone.

Wide Receivers – All four receivers will try to leverage inside of their corners, then block them to the outside, away from the play.

Running Backs – The running back will step up, taking the snap from the quarterback and heading for the inside hip of the left guard. He will take his time, watching the play unfold and staying ready to continue flowing left, accelerate downhill, or cutback across to the backside.

Quarterback – The quarterback will hand the ball off to the running back, then sell the quarterback keeper fake, running out to the backside of the play to keep the backside end occupied.

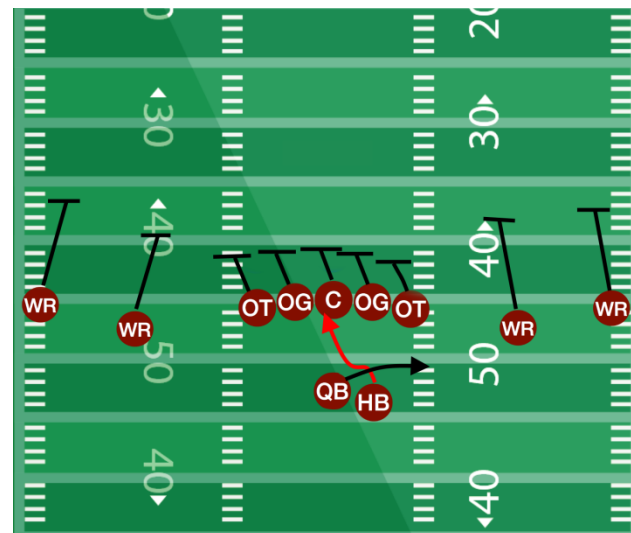


Figure 10: Inside Zone

Shotgun Trips TE – One Back Power

Setup

The receivers will bunch up to the left, with the halfback also lining up on the weak side of the quarterback. The tight end will line up on the strong side, leaving us in a Shotgun Trips TE formation.

Play Objective

A great playcall against a defense that comes out in a Cover 2, especially if they have nickel personnel on the field. If the guard can get across the formation and make his lead block on the middle linebacker through the hole, there isn't much help available for the defense until the secondary.

Positional Assignments

Offensive Line – The center and strong side guard will double team the nose tackle, while the right tackle executes a down block on the defensive linemen to his inside. The backside guard will pull, coming all the way across the formation to lead the halfback through the hole with a big block on the Mike backer.

Tight End – The tight end will kick out on the edge defender, blocking him out to the sideline.

Wide Receivers – The receivers will all block their men, staying engaged and preventing them from having an effect on the running play.

Running Backs – The halfback will take the hand off and follow the back side guard through the hole and into the next level of the defense.

Quarterback – The quarterback will take the snap and hand it off to the halfback.

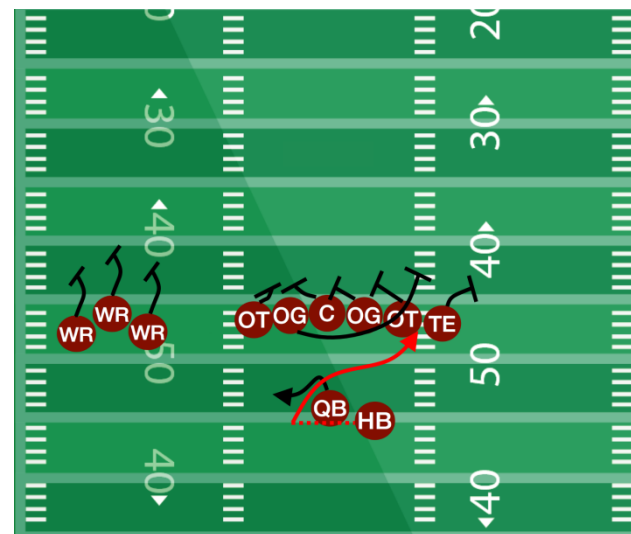


Figure 7: One Back Power

Shotgun Trips TE – Buck Sweep Read Option

Setup

The offense will come out in the shotgun, with the receivers bunched up to the left and tight right end lined up on the strong side. The halfback can either motion over to the quarterback's left side at the line, or he can just begin there.

Play Objective

The Read Option version of the classic Buck Sweep uses a pulling action from both the center and right tackle to give the halfback running lanes to the outside.

Positional Assignments

Offensive Line – The right guard will step to the playside and flow, blocking the defender in his area and moving up to the second level to find one if necessary. The left guard will ignore the defensive tackle lined up over him, moving up to block a linebacker at the next level. The backside tackle will hinge block the cutback defender, letting him work up field and then blocking him that way to keep him out of the play. The center and right tackle will both pull, with the center working over to the right tackle's spot and the right tackle pulling to the outside.

Tight End – The tight end will block down on the edge, sealing the end inside.

Wide Receivers – The receivers will all block their men, pushing them downfield and to the sideline to keep them from making a play.

Running Backs – The halfback will come to the mesh point, waiting on the quarterback to either hand the ball off or keep it. If he hands it off to the halfback, the half back will follow the right tackle pulling out to the outside, reading his block and cutting in or outside from there.

Quarterback – The quarterback will snap the ball, immediately dropping his eyes to the back side defensive tackle. The offensive line will leave him unblocked and it is where he runs that will inform the quarterback's decision on whether to hand off or not. If the tackle crashes inside, following the running back, the quarterback will keep the ball and run the ball up the gut of the defense. If the defender slow plays or stays on the quarterback, he will handoff to the halfback and let him work to the outside.

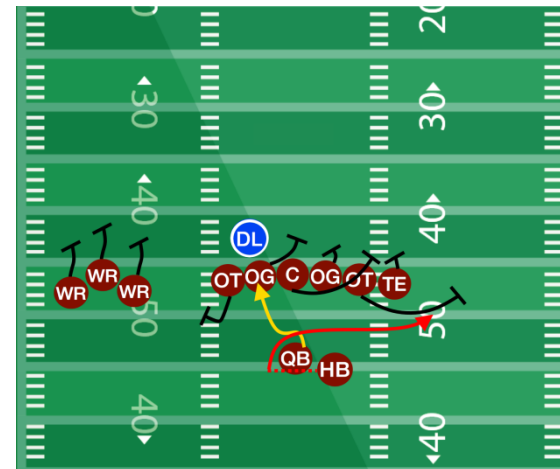


Figure 8: Buck Sweep Read Option

Shotgun Spread – Motion Power Read Option

Setup

The offense will come out in a shotgun spread formation, with four receivers on the field and the halfback on the quarter back's right side in the backfield.

Play Objective

The read option is a great play in any playbook, but is especially effective when you've got a quarterback with some wheels. Here we bring four receivers on the field to spread the defense out, then punch them up the gut with the run. You can call this play in a ton of situations, and is especially useful when the offense needs to respect the threat of the pass and has to bring their dime formation on the field, leaving them vulnerable to the run.

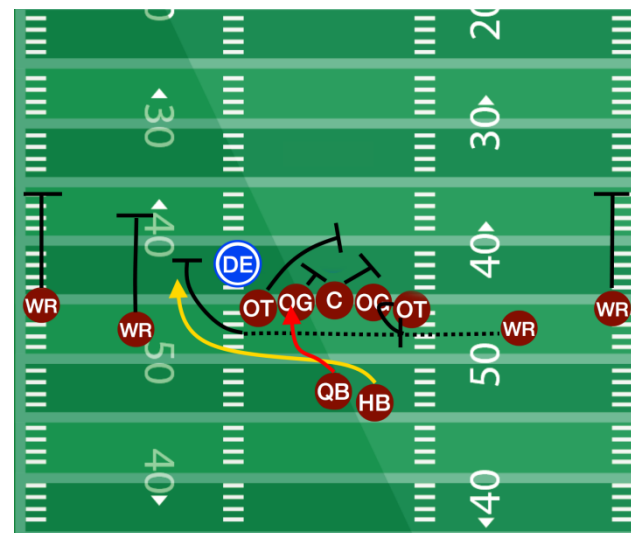


Figure 9: Motion Power Read Option

Positional Assignments

Offensive Line – The left tackle will ignore the playside defensive end, chipping on the defensive tackle before moving up to the next level to block a linebacker. The left guard will block the defensive tackle over him to the back side of the play, while the center and right guard double team the nose tackle. The backside tackle will step out and hinge block, preventing any backside pursuit.

Wide Receivers – Aside from the Y receiver on the strong side, the wide receivers will all block downfield. The Y receiver will come across the field in motion over to the strong side and acting as a lead blocker for the halfback outside.

Running Backs – The halfback will come up to the mesh point with the quarterback, giving him time to make a decision and then running hard to the outside whether he gets the ball or not.

Quarterback – The quarterback will take the snap and put the ball in the gut of the halfback, reading the playside defensive end. If he crashes inside, he'll hand the ball off to the halfback, and if he stays on the edge, the quarterback will keep the ball and run hard inside, up the back of the left guard.

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