



HACKS

25 WINNING CONCEPTS TO DOMINATE YOUR OPPONENTS

CORE CONCEPT

The idea here is to put together a small and pass plays that you can drill your way over to the point of perfection. Now that, take those same plays and begin from a multitude of formations and positions as well as motions and shifts.

WHY IT MATTERS

WHY IT MATTERS

By adding a large number of formations we prevent the defense from keying on them even begin. Even if they know what your best plays are, they can't constantly running them out of different looks.

ATTACKING A DEFENSE'S WEAKNESSES



One of the best ways to attack any defense is to find their weakness and go right at it. Most teams will have some weakness, whether it be a certain aspect of the game or simply just a couple players who are weak links in the chain, but either way, you need to make it a priority to exploit these to your advantage.

WHY IT MATTERS

If there is a weak link anywhere in the defense, you absolutely must attack it. If there's a safety who loves to get up into the running game despite his deep zone responsibilities, run the playaction! If there's a defensive linemen who is prone to jumping offside, vary your snap count even more! If they're playing a linebacker who falls asleep in pass coverage, throw right at him! I saw a game last year where a team ran the quarterback sneak for four consecutive short yardage conversions.

Clearly they felt they the size and strength of the defense up front was a weakness, and they attacked it over and over until they were able to run out the clock and win the game. Every play, formation, and personnel plan you call should be called for a specific reason - not just to change it up. So if there's a weakness that you can expose, do it!

You need to go for the jugular as an offense, and force the defense to either keep getting killed at the same spot or bend over backwards trying to prevent it.

USE MULTIPLE FORMATIONS

RE CONCEPT

There are so many formations available to you as a C that the I form to shotgun and everything in between, all own strengths and weaknesses.

Learning to get comfortable as both a coach and player formations as often as possible keeps the offensive driver's seat and forces the defense to be the one making constant adjustments rather than the other way around.

WHY IT MATTERS

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feel comfortable running certain
and coverages from their base
uple other formations they see a
certain offensive formations that
problems for certain defensive
gnments, and may result in an
scrapping or



1 Form Jump

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INTRODUCTION

Designing your playbook is one of the first things you're going to do as a coach, and doing it properly is the first step to building a lethal offense. Think of it as building the foundation for the house that is your offense – even if you add a great second and third level, if the foundation is weak, the house is bound to collapse eventually.

Over the course of this guide, we'll go over 25 critical concepts that can lay the blueprint for you to build your dream playbook from. We'll also provide some specific play examples to illustrate many of the ideas.

One of the things you'll see mentioned throughout the guide is the importance of versatility. Chances are, you probably have a slight idea of what kind of offense you'd like to implement based on your coaching philosophy and your personnel – maybe that means you'd like to run a power run offense, or you'd rather spread it out.

Whatever your preference may be, it's important that you design an offense that is versatile, able to effectively attack a wide variety of defensive looks.

Another common theme throughout the guide is applying the concept of multiplicity. I'll get into further detail later on, but the general concept is learning how to present a small number of plays in a multitude of ways, preventing the defense from picking up on patterns and ensuring you always have the mental edge pre-snap.

The greatest playbooks and offensive coordinators are the ones that are able to make a defense overthink while keeping things simple for the offense, incorporating everything from irregular personnel plans to unbalanced formations to give the offense the edge – which is just what you're going to learn to do in this guide.

So without further ado, let's get started!

TRULY OFFENSIVE FOOTBALL



CORE CONCEPT

If you have a look at the word offensive in the dictionary, it's an adjective used to describe being actively aggressive and attacking. Yet many offensive coaches have just the opposite approach, calling plays with a passive attitude, reacting instead of attacking. Your offense should have an offensive personality, finding the weakness in each defense and exploiting it to your advantage.

WHY IT MATTERS

A common mistake among offensive coaches is to scout an opposing defense and begin backpedaling immediately, before the game has even started. They'll start scratching plays out of the playbook, figuring out all of the things that they won't be able to do in the game. This is a terrible attitude to have and can really hamper a team's offensive productivity.

A passive offensive coach will see a defensive line with massive size and think - "Oh no. They'll maul our offensive line! Well we definitely can't run up the middle in this game." Where a truly offensive coach will think - "Hm. Great size and strength up front, but terrible speed, and they're overly aggressive. They'll be really vulnerable to HB screens and misdirection plays."

ON THE FIELD

A truly offensive coach uses more than just playcalling to give his team the advantage. Every adjustment the defense makes has a corresponding counter, and a good coach will find that weakness and make the defense pay. If your receivers are having trouble against a team that likes to bump and run, you might stack your receivers in a snugs or bunch formation, or move a receiver in motion to make it more difficult for the defenders to stay engaged at the line.

You have a million tools at your disposal, and instead of worrying about what the defense can do to stop you, figure out which tools you can use to give yourself the advantage.

PUSHING THE DEFENSE ON THEIR HEELS



CORE CONCEPT

Defenses love to get in a rhythm, where they can lineup, zero in on their reads, and then fly to the ball. They don't want to think - they want to get up on their toes and then attack immediately after the snap.

The job of the offense is to take them out of that rhythm, using a variety of alignments, motions and shifts, confusing them or at the very least making them think and communicate.

WHY IT MATTERS

When you watch a defender make a great play - a linebacker sniffing out the snap count and flying in for a tackle behind the line, a defensive back reading and jumping a route for the interception - you'll notice that they are very rarely communicating with their teammates, switching assignments and making adjustments pre snap.

Almost always they are up on the balls of their feet, with their eyes on the ball or their assignment, just waiting for it to move so that they can make a play. By forcing them to think and communicate pre-snap, the defense moves off their toes and back onto their heels, both literally and figuratively.

ON THE FIELD

Varying your formation alignments and personnel plans as well as using motions and shifts are your best ways of pushing the defense on their heels. We'll take an in depth look at each of these tactics over the next several concepts.

THINK TWICE ABOUT PRO RIGHT/LEFT FORMATION



CORE CONCEPT

Almost all defenses create their base defensive system to best defend an offense in a pro right/left formation. So when an offense comes out in a different formation, they're forced to make the respective adjustments to their lineup based on that formation.

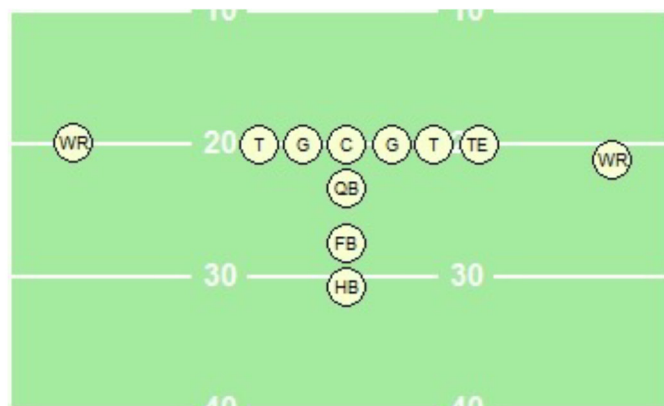
This doesn't mean that you should scrap the pro right/left formation from your playbook. It's a good formation and has stood the test of time. But it does mean that you should minimize its use, and keep in mind that when you do use it, you're allowing the defense to play in an alignment that they are most likely more comfortable in than any other.

WHY IT MATTERS

This is a great way to put the defense on their heels, as talked about in the previous concept.

When the defense has to react and make adjustments to every play pre-snap, they're going to be sitting back, focused on communicating and moving to the correct alignment to avoid missed assignments.

If you had to choose between playing against a team's base defense, that they know and practice most of the time, or their adjusted defense, which is likely to be at the very least slightly uncomfortable for most players, which would you prefer?



I Formation Right with Pro Personnel

ON THE FIELD

Practice, practice, practice! The reason why most defenses use the pro formation as their base alignment is because offenses are very comfortable running it. And just as the defense might feel slightly uncomfortable lining up against a double slot formation so too will your offense at first.

To get them used to it, I've found entering a scrimmage with the goal of not using a single pro set for the entire scrimmage is great practice for your offense.

USE MULTIPLICITY TO KEEP DEFENSES GUESSING



CORE CONCEPT

The idea here is to put together a small package of run and pass plays that you can drill your team on over and over to the point of perfection. Now once you've done that, take those same plays and begin to practice them from a multitude of formations and personnel plans as well as motions and shifts.

WHY IT MATTERS

By adding a large number of formations we prevent the defense from keying in on plays before they even begin. Even if they know what your best plays are, they can't commit to them if your constantly running them out of different looks.

For example let's say both Coach A and Coach B know that the off tackle run is their best play, and they both run it five times in a game. Coach A calls his off tackle run from his pro set formation every single time, and Coach B has used a tight I formation, a strong I formation, a singleback bunch right formation, a singleback doubles formation, and a shotgun trips left formation.

As a defensive coach or even defender on the field, which of the two coaches would you rather try to stop?

ON THE FIELD

It's important to keep in mind that this doesn't mean just add a huge number of plays to your playbook. At a certain point you'll have so many plays that you can't practice them all often enough and as a result your execution will suffer across the board. By using the same plays from different formations, your quarterback and receivers know which routes to run, and your blockers will know their assignments as well - they'll just be starting from a slightly different position.

It's also true that a small package of complementary plays is much more effective than a large package of disjointed, completely unrelated plays is. By stacking plays that are deceptive and blend into each other, we both prevent a defense from overcommitting as well as give ourselves the opportunity to punish them if they so happen to.

USE MULTIPLE FORMATIONS



CORE CONCEPT

There are so many formations available to you as a coach, from the I form to shotgun and everything in between, all with their own strengths and weaknesses.

Learning to get comfortable as both a coach and player with mixing formations as often as possible keeps the offense in the driver's seat and forces the defense to be the one making constant adjustments rather than the other way around.

WHY IT MATTERS

By mixing your formations you not only force the defense to be the one doing the reacting, but you may possibly even limit their playcalling ability.

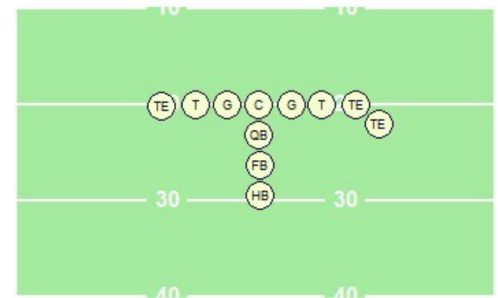
While they may feel comfortable running certain stunts, blitzes and coverages from their base defense and a couple other formations they see a fair bit, there are certain offensive formations that will create real problems for certain defensive playcalls and alignments, and may result in an opposing coach scrapping or severely limiting their use.

ON THE FIELD

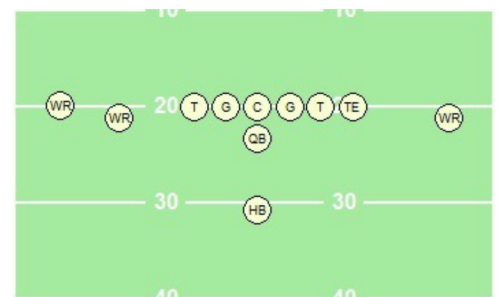
While we do want to switch up formations often, you should never switch formations just for the sake of doing it.

There are pros and cons to running each and every formation and variation thereof, and everytime you call a new formation, you should have a distinct reason for doing so - does it give you an advantage to run either a run or pass?

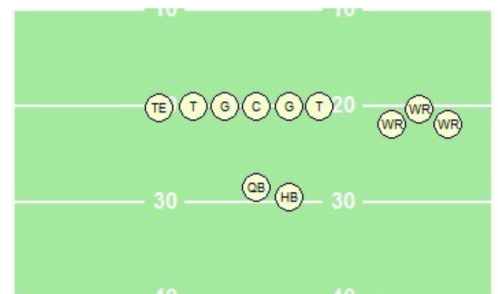
Does it make the defense react a way that you plan on taking advantage of? These are the questions you need to ask yourself each time you choose a new formation.



I Form Jumbo



Singleback Dice Slot



Shotgun Bunch TE

USE MULTIPLE PERSONNEL PLANS



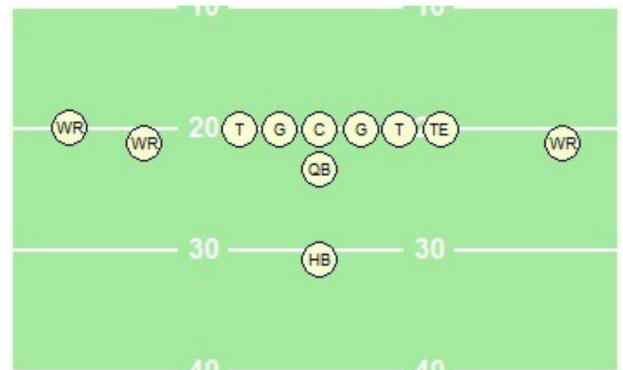
CORE CONCEPT

Whereas a formation is how our players are going to line up on the field, a personnel plan is who we send out. And much like using multiple formations, using multiple personnel plans is a great way to add another layer to your offensive playcalling that will force the defense to stop and think even more.

WHY IT MATTERS

All the advantages gained by using multiple formations are gained by using multiple personnel plans, and when the two are used in conjunction, your playbook not only grows exponentially – your opponent's headaches will too.

They will be forced to make adjustments to not only their alignment, but because of the match up nature of football today, you will actually be able to manipulate the defensive personnel as well.



A great example of the use of multiple personnel groupings would be subbing in a halfback, full back or even a second tight end in the slot of this formation.

ON THE FIELD

Lastly, keep in mind once again that the changing of personnel shouldn't be done just for the sake of changing personnel. You should have a gameplan ready and a clear reason for doing so each time you send a personnel plan out onto the field.

USE SPECIFIC PERSONNEL PLANS IN IRREGULAR FORMATIONS



CORE CONCEPT

Another way that an offense can increase the multiplicity of their offense is by using personnel plans in formations that they normally would be used in.

For example, usually when a team lines up in an empty shotgun formation, they are doing so with five wide receivers. Instead, we would use our pro personnel plan – two receivers, a tight end, a full back and a half back – and have them all line up out wide as receivers.

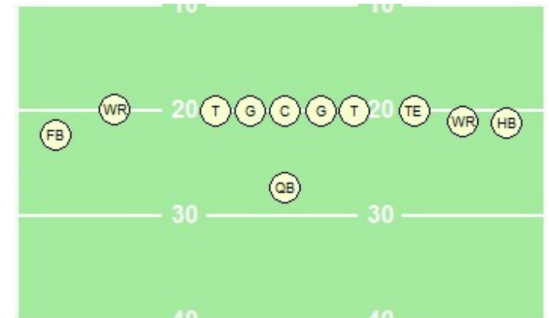
WHY IT MATTERS

A defense makes its own personnel substitutions reactively – making adjustments so that they have the players on the field who will be able to best defend the offense. So when a defense sees an offensive huddle with four wide receivers, they are going to go with their dime personnel, bringing in extra defensive backs to improve their pass coverage. However, they can't know what formation the offense is going to line up in until they get to the line of scrimmage.

Using the same example of running an empty shotgun formation from the pro personnel plan, we put the defense in a compromising position. There are five receiving threats out on the field – so how do they line up?

Normally their best corners would line up on the outside of the formation, where they would be matched up against two wide receivers. Instead, we move the receivers into the slot and move the fullback and halfback out wide.

This can create confusion and will force the defense to sit back on their heels, scrambling to get into the correct alignment, likely leading to holes in their pass coverage scheme.



Shotgun Empty Spread with a Pro Personnel Plan

ON THE FIELD

From a play design standpoint, we want to be able to take advantage of any of the mismatches and miscues that have been created as a result of the irregular formation.

However it can be tough to predict where the holes will be before even lining up, so giving your quarterback hand signals they can use at the line to make passing or running play adjustments will put your offense in the best position to succeed.

USE SHIFTS AND MOTIONS TO ADD MULTIPLICITY



CORE CONCEPT

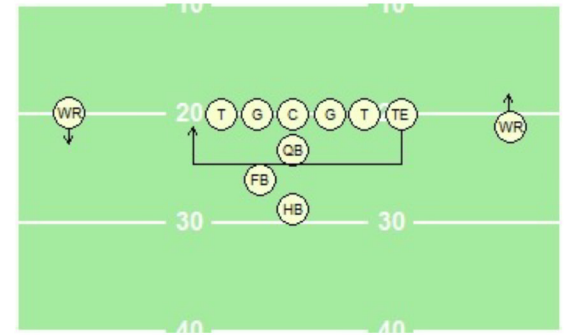
When an offense comes up to the line of scrimmage, the defense will align themselves accordingly, putting themselves in the best position to stop the offense. But by adding in shifts and motions after the offense has lined up, we force the defense to adjust their alignment and individual assignments.

Both shifts and motions are equally effective and important for an offense, and the difference between the two is quite small - a shift means the offensive player has stopped moving before the snap, whereas a motion means the ball was snapped while the player was still moving.

WHY IT MATTERS

The addition of shifts and motions can be a real headache for any defense to deal with. They can change the strength of the formation, which is a great way for the offense to create a numbers advantage at the point of attack. The shifts and motions can improve a blockers angle, leaving the defender more vulnerable to being quickly blocked out of the play. They even allow the offense to manipulate the matchups and create mismatches whenever possible.

When playing a defense that aligns to formation strength, the effect of shifts and motions is magnified. They're put in a position where they either have to try and slide across to the other side or completely flip their defense, giving your offense a huge advantage pre-snap either way.



Here's an example of a shift. Starting from the weak side, we shift the tight end to the weak side, with the left side receiver stepping off the LOS and the right side receiver stepping on the LOS after the shift. This is done to maintain the tight ends eligibility.

ON THE FIELD

Your offense should look to add shifts and motions where possible, but its important to remember that much like with personnel plans and formations, there should always be a clear purpose for each move. Whether it be to create that mismatch, blocking angle, or even just do confuse the defense, you should always be able to answer why you used that shift or motion without a moment's hesitation.

USE MOTION TO IDENTIFY PASS COVERAGE



CORE CONCEPT

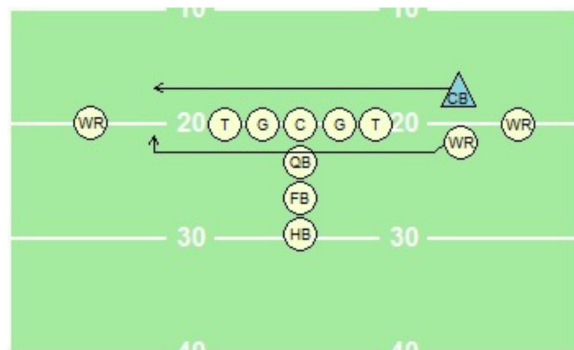
The first and maybe the most important read a quarterback makes on his drop back is whether the defense is in a man or zone coverage. A good defensive coach will blend and disguise his pre-snap looks, forcing the quarterback to add identifying man or zone to the long list of checks and reads they need to make in the few seconds they have to make a decision in the pocket.

By moving a receiver in motion pre-snap, we allow the quarterback to make the man vs. zone read before they even have the ball in their hands, making their job just a little bit easier.

WHY IT MATTERS

The identification of man or zone coverage before the play begins allows both the quarterback, receivers and backs to make the necessary adjustments to best take advantage of that specific coverage.

This may be anything from the length or timing of a route to a check into a new play at the line of scrimmage, but whatever it may be, in a game of inches, any small advantage you can glean from your opponent is an opportunity that you need to snatch up.



Here we have the 1 form, with two receivers out wide and one in the slot. By motioning the slot over to the left side of the formation, we see the corner covering him follow across, indicating man coverage.

ON THE FIELD

The motion will be most effective when bringing a receiver - usually the slot - from one side of the formation to the other.

Watching the man who was lined up in front of him before the motion, we can identify either man coverage: the defender stays with the receiver, moving across to the other side of the formation, or zone coverage: where the defense shifts over, each man bumping his assignment one over.

USE SHIFTS AND MOTIONS TO CREATE MISMATCHES



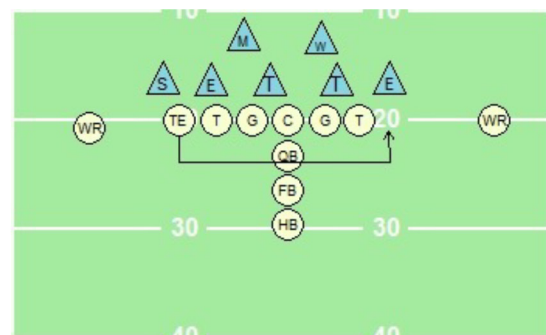
CORE CONCEPT

Using shifts and motions is a great way to manipulate the defense into favorable matchups that they would have otherwise avoided had the offense come directly out of the huddle in that formation. This can be done to create mismatches in terms of receiver and back matchups, but also just as if not more importantly, it can be done to create favorable blocking matchups.

WHY IT MATTERS

Most defenses will align themselves so that they can use the strength of the formation to their advantage. By waiting until after they're set to make the shift, we force them to show their hand, using this information to our advantage.

This allows us to do anything from split a tight end out wide on a big slow linebacker, to moving the fullback across the formation to double team an especially disruptive pass rusher.



I Formation Left. With the Sam Linebacker lined up on strong side tight end, the tight end motions to weak side to block smaller defensive end.

ON THE FIELD

Here's a great example of one of the many ways you can use these shifts to give yourself the advantage. Say an offense with pro personnel is lined up against a 4-3 defense.

With the tight end lined up on the right side of the formation, the defense will shift their linebackers over to have the Sam linebacker lined up with the tight end on the strong side, often putting a smaller speed rusher on the weak side, where they can play in space and best affect both the run and pass game.

To counter this, we shift the tight end from the right to left, putting a heavy extra blocker on what was the weak side of the formation, putting the speed rusher in a situation where their effectiveness will be drastically reduced.

USE MULTIPLICITY TO SHRINK THE DEFENSE'S PLAYBOOK



CORE CONCEPT

When an offense shows a variety of formations, personnel plans as well as shifts and motions, often times the defensive coach will have to simplify the offense, ensuring that every defensive front, stunt, blitz and coverage he calls is able to handle the multitude of possibilities they might see on any given play.

WHY IT MATTERS

When a defense is confident and in rhythm, reading, reacting and attacking the ball, the defensive coach will feel the same way, calling all kinds of exotic fronts, stunts, blitzes and coverages. Seeing pro personnel on the field against a team that doesn't have multiplicity in their offense, the defensive coach might call a blitz that works especially well against the I formation but leaves them otherwise vulnerable.

Against a coach with multiplicity in his playbook, the defensive coach will have to be ready for the possibility of an irregular formation with that same personnel, forcing them to either be ready to cancel that exotic blitz at the line of scrimmage pre-snap, or just avoid calling it altogether.

This makes things easier on the offense, as the smaller the defensive playbook gets, the easier it is to read pre and post snap.

ON THE FIELD

Multiplicity will only truly be effective against a defense when each formation, personnel plan, shift and motion is done by a coach with a plan, who knows what advantages and disadvantages each move creates and proceeds accordingly.

A good defensive coach will recognize multiplicity for the sake of multiplicity and continue to use their entire playbook as they see fit, knowing full well that even if the offensive coach is creating favorable matchups, he doesn't know how to take advantage of them.

USE WING SETS



CORE CONCEPT

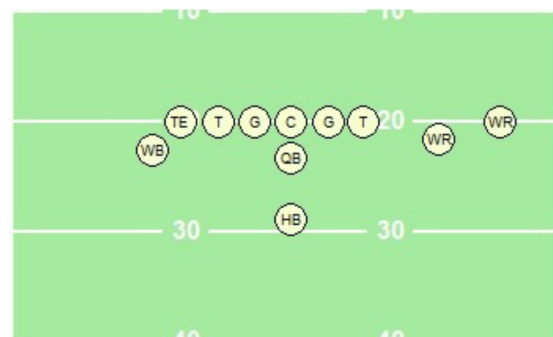
A wing back is a running back moved up to the line of scrimmage, outside of either tackle or tight end, depending on the formation and side of the formation they are lined up on.

These are unusual formations, with a multitude of options in both the run and pass games that can be very difficult for the defense to prepare for.

WHY IT MATTERS

Against most fronts, when an offense lines up a wing back, the defense is put in a compromising position.

They have to make a decision on how they'll deal with the extra man at the line of scrimmage, often forcing them to bring a member of their secondary up or otherwise shifting their linebackers and defensive line.



Singleback F Pair Twins

ON THE FIELD

With a wingback up at the line and the defense having adjusted, they will likely have created some weakness, either via a hole in their secondary or a defensive front that is stretched too thin.

To best take advantage of whatever weakness they do end up showing, you'll have two options - either have your quarterback make an audible or hot route at the line to attack a specific weakness, or make a note of how the defense compensated for the wingback, so that next time you call a formation with a wingback, you know best which play would produce the best results.

USE TWO AND THREE TIGHT END PERSONNEL PLANS



CORE CONCEPT

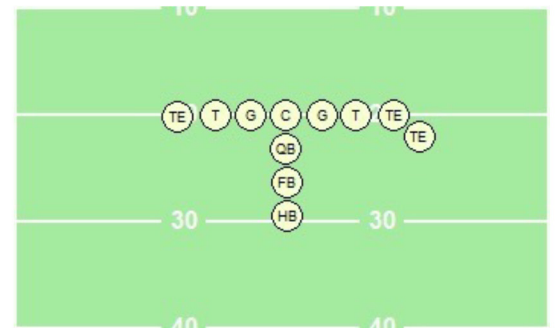
Bringing two or even three tight ends to the line of scrimmage has a very similar affect on the defense as bringing in a wing back.

It distorts the defense, putting players in uncomfortable positions and giving the offense a huge advantage in the run game due to the difference in the size of each team's respective personnel.

WHY IT MATTERS

With three big burly tight ends on the field, the defense will have to bring smaller speedier members of the secondary up to the line to help deal with the run threat presented by such a heavy formation.

Combined with two backs in the backfield, you have a power running formation that creates huge matchup problems for the defense.



I Form Jumbo

ON THE FIELD

This is clearly a great goalline or 3rd/4th and short formation, but it may be at it's most effective in other situations. When used in a clear short yardage situation, the defense will feel much more comfortable substituting their own personnel to take away the size advantage – but if you break this type of formation out on 1st and 10 at midfield, they will be much more hesitant, likely keeping their regular personnel on the field, allowing the offense to maintain a power advantage.

With such a big, heavy formation, your offense will clearly have an advantage in the running game, and whether through adjustment of personnel or simply scheme, the defense will begin to load up on the run as you use these types of formations successfully throughout the game.

That's why the most effective play out of the two and three tight end formations is often the play action, where a heavy blitz may leave a good receiving tight end in single coverage, or even a fullback to slip out into the flat uncovered.

USE UNBALANCED FORMATIONS



CORE CONCEPT

An unbalanced formation can at times be doubly difficult for the defense to deal with – it's both unusual as well as effective in its own right.

For the most part, when an offense wants to pull out an unbalanced formation, they will move one tackle over to the other side of the formation next to the other tackle, with a tight end filling in the spot of the tackle who has just moved.

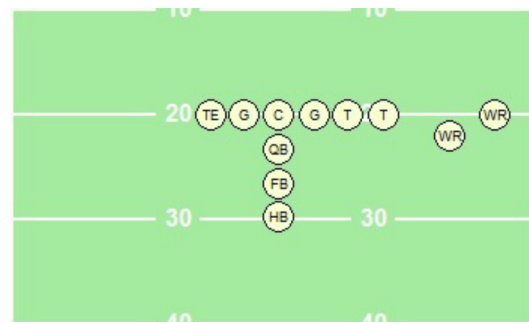
To keep the tight end eligible, even though he's lined up in a spot normally reserved for an offensive lineman, we move the receiver on the tight end's side off the line and the receiver on the overloaded side of the formation up onto the line.

WHY IT MATTERS

To an even larger degree than both wing back sets and three tight end sets, unbalanced formations are going to distort the defense and create alignment confusion.

Many defenses will define the strong side of the offense as the side the tight end lines up on, and align their personnel accordingly.

So when the tight end is lined up in the left tackle's position and the left tackle has come over to the other side next to the right tackle, the defense will have a tough time aligning themselves correctly. Even if they do get their alignments correct, the offense will still have the advantage due to the mismatches created when the defense is forced to shift over to the heavy side of the formation. They will likely have a smaller linebacker trying to deal with a big strong tackle, and a defensive end lined up on the more agile tight end.



Unbalanced Formation with an Eligible Backside Tight End

ON THE FIELD

The example described above and pictured in the diagram is an especially effective unbalanced formation, with an advantage created on the heavy side for the running game while still forcing the defense to have to contend with the tight end as an eligible receiver on the back side.

The distortion is even more exaggerated against a defense ready to play man to man coverage, as the strong side linebacker will have to communicate with the team and figure out how they will cover the weak side tight end, who would be his assignment in a balanced formation.

USE BUNCHED FORMATIONS



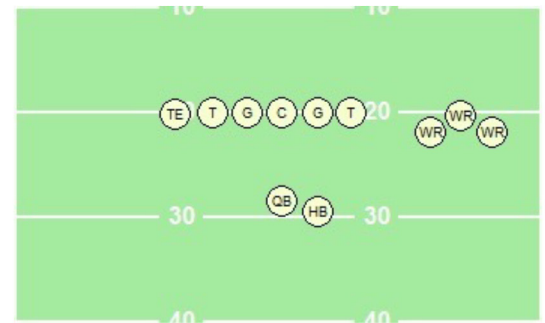
CORE CONCEPT

By bunching receivers in tight together on one side of the formation, we make it very difficult for the defense to cover effectively in both the run and pass games.

WHY IT MATTERS

This technique is so effective because the defense is forced to contract along with the offense, distorting their coverages and leaving them vulnerable to either a receiver or tailback getting outside the defense for a big gain.

This is especially true against the cover 2, where the defense will have a very tough time covering a receiver breaking off into the flat or on a corner route.



Shotgun Bunch TE

ON THE FIELD

Bunched formations can be effective in all kinds of situations, whether it's running pick plays against man coverage or overloading a cover two to one side. But it's important to remember that running plays can be just effective, especially if you have receivers that can seal the edge long enough for the running back to get outside and into open space.

You also have plenty more options than just the three wide receiver bunch set seen in the diagram above. You can bunch receivers to both sides, mix in different personnel plans, and add motions and shifts to create further confusion for the defense.

USE EMPTY FORMATIONS



CORE CONCEPT

Spreading the defense out horizontally is a great way to create holes in coverage that might not have been otherwise present with a defense in their standard alignment.

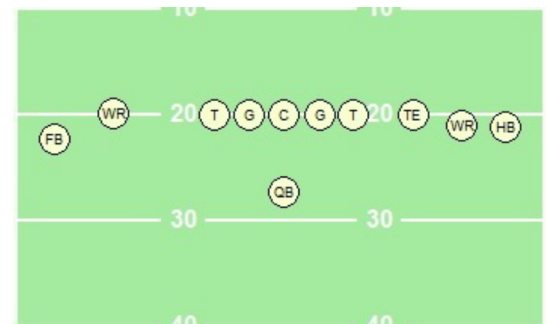
Where in the previous concept we used contraction to put the defense in an uncomfortable position, here we expand the formation, thinning out the defense and creating another advantageous situation for our offense.

WHY IT MATTERS

Spread concepts are becoming more and more common at all levels of football, as offensive coaches have begun to take advantage of every inch of grass on the field, both horizontally and vertically.

This puts the defense in a reactive position, as they are forced to adjust their pre-snap alignments as well as forcing them to contemplate whether to stick to any blitzes or stunts they may have called before seeing the empty formation.

It allows you as the offense to dictate to the defense, manipulating their on field personnel, pre-snap positions, and even playcalling to a certain degree.



Shotgun Empty Spread

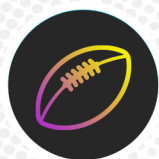
ON THE FIELD

Most empty formations involve either five wide receivers or three to four wide receivers and one or two tight ends. The advantage to these personnel groupings is that you have your best receivers on the field, but the disadvantage is that the defense will be able to anticipate an empty formation simply from your substitutions.

This is why using a pro personnel plan in an empty formation is so effective – the defense never sees it coming, and has to scramble to deal with it. Another great way of hiding the empty formation is to line up in a single back formation, then motion the tail back out wide and snap the ball before the defense has time to react.

Lastly, while it is definitely a pass first formation, you can use that to your advantage in the run game. With the defense strewn out all over the line of scrimmage, scrambling to get their coverages set properly, they will be susceptible to the run game. A receiver can be motioned into the backfield for a reverse, or, depending on the mobility of your quarterback, a draw or run can gouge the defense for huge gains at a time.

USE THE EXPANSION AND CONTRACTION THEORY OF FORMATIONING



CORE CONCEPT

The previous two concepts are perfect examples of formations that use the expansion and contraction theory. The next step is to call plays that best take advantage of the alignment that you have forced the defense into – when the defense is spread out thin, attack the middle of the field, and when they are packed in tight, attack the outside.

WHY IT MATTERS

This concept is effective because the offense is able to dictate the defense's position on the field and attack accordingly. When the offense comes out in a four or five wide set, the defense will be forced to spread out, accounting for each receiver and weakening the middle of their defense.

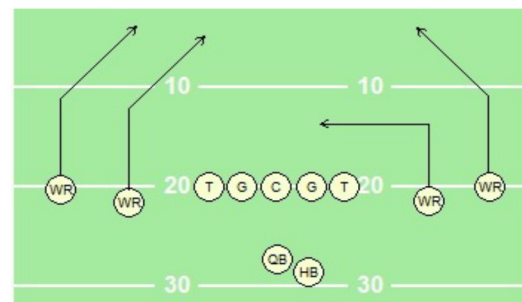
To best take advantage of this, we want to make the point of attack the middle of the defense, either by calling a designed run up the inside, or by having our receivers run routes that break towards the middle of the field.

Conversely, when the offense comes out in a tight formation the defense will be contracted into the middle of the field, making the best course of action to call outside runs or pass plays with out breaking routes.

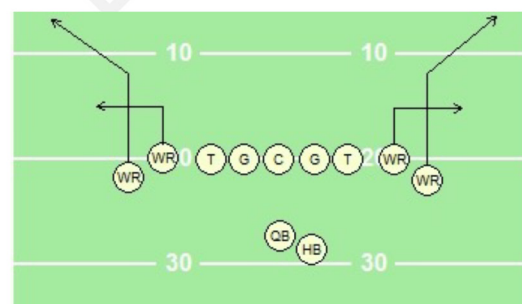
ON THE FIELD

Some great examples of formations that put the contraction theory to use are those that involve wingbacks, extra tight ends and fullbacks. Whereas the best expansion formations are generally going to be sets that involve three or more receivers spread out over the line.

It's important to remember to mix in varying personnel plans to best take advantage of the defensive alignments you have created. A snugs formation, as seen in the second diagram, forces the defense to contract while also keeping your speediest players on the field, putting them in a great position to take advantage of the open space outside that a tight end or wingback might not be able to exploit as effectively.



Shotgun Spread with Double Slants



Shotgun Snugs with Square Outs and Corners

ATTACK THE PERIMETER



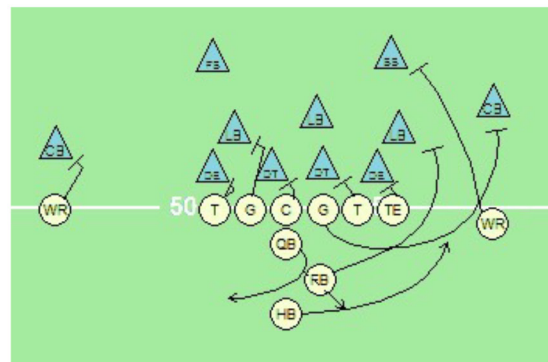
CORE CONCEPT

There's a whole lot of space to the outside of the field, and if you're able to break contain and get outside the defense, you're almost guaranteed to make a big gain, whether in the run or pass game.

WHY IT MATTERS

It can be tough for an offense to attack the perimeter constantly, as the offense is at a greater risk of having a play blown up in the backfield for a couple yard loss than say when running a halfback dive. After a couple unsuccessful outside plays, it's all too common to see offenses abandon attacking the perimeter. But there is nothing more devastating to a defense than a player with good speed out in the open space available on the outside of the field.

Generally there will be one or two defenders with contain responsibility to the outside of their side of the field, and if you can get by those players with either a well placed block or a nice move, the only players left are going to be a corner and a safety who are by and large much more comfortable making plays in the passing game. Not to mention that the entire backside of the defense is going to have a very tough time just covering enough grass to get back into the play.



Strong I Pro Sweep Right

ON THE FIELD

There are countless ways to attack the perimeter, and you should make use of each and everyone. In the passing game, getting the ball to a playmaker behind the line of scrimmage via a bubble screen or flare screen is a great way to put some real pressure on the secondary to make a tackle to avoid a big gain, and pulling your quarterback out on a bootleg or rollout will force those same defenders to respect the threat of a quarterback scramble which could open up seams in the passing game.

And don't forget to use the running game as well. Running to the outside is a great low risk, high reward way to attack the perimeter, using any combination of zone stretch, sweep and option plays to break contain and get out to the sideline.

CHANGE PACE WITH NO HUDDLE OFFENSE



CORE CONCEPT

The no huddle offense, while usually reserved for two minute drills or attempting to come back from a large deficit in the second half, should also be used occasionally as an offensive tactic to change up the pace and give the defense a new look.

WHY IT MATTERS

More and more at the highest levels of football we're seeing teams completely neglect the huddle, having the quarterback instead call the play from the line of scrimmage. This presents huge problems for the defense both physically and strategically. Physically, it's exhausting, especially for those big brutes up front, to go play after play without getting a chance to substitute off the field or even just to catch their breath.

And strategically, most defenses will shrink their playbook when defending the no huddle, trying to keep things simple and avoid any mistakes due to miscommunication. This will make your quarterback's read much easier, and severely limit the amount of exotic blitzes and stunts the defense might otherwise be willing to attempt.

ON THE FIELD

One of the great thing about this tactic is that you don't even need to install any new plays. You should already have a two minute offense, designed for end of half or end of game situations, so all you need to do is use that same package of plays in a different situation.

Offensive players love it, and defensive players hate it, which is a great indicator of why you should try and include it more throughout the game. The only problem with using the no huddle on offense is that if you have a quick three and out, your defense won't have had much time to rest before having to trot back out onto the field.

So it's best to avoid using this tactic if your defense is coming off a long drive on the previous possession and they need some time to catch their breath.

ATTACKING A DEFENSE'S WEAKNESSES



CORE CONCEPT

One of the best ways to attack any defense is to find their weakness and go right at it. Most teams will have some weakness, whether it be a certain aspect of the game or simply just a couple players who are weak links in the chain, but either way, you need to make it a priority to exploit these to your advantage.

WHY IT MATTERS

If there is a weak link anywhere in the defense, you absolutely must attack it. If there's a safety who loves to get up into the running game despite his deep zone responsibilities, run the playaction! If there's a defensive lineman who is prone to jumping offside, vary your snap count even more! If they're playing a linebacker who falls asleep in pass coverage, throw right at him! I saw a game last year where a team ran the quarterback sneak for four consecutive short yardage conversions.

Clearly they felt they the size and strength of the defense up front was a weakness, and they attacked it over and over until they were able to run out the clock and win the game. Every play, formation, and personnel plan you call should be called for a specific reason – not just to change it up. So if there's a weakness that you can expose, do it!

You need to go for the jugular as an offense, and force the defense to either keep getting killed at the same spot or bend over backwards trying to prevent it.

ON THE FIELD

When you're facing a particularly good defense, weaknesses are going to be hard to come by. You always want to be looking for mismatches, but if there aren't any available, take matters into your own hands.

There are plenty of ways you can do this at all levels of the offense. You could sub a tackle in at the tight end spot, giving yourself a size advantage at the point of attack on a running play; or you could split a tight end or halfback out wide, isolating a linebacker in man coverage.

ATTACKING THE DEFENSE'S STRENGTHS



CORE CONCEPT

One of the areas of the game where great offensive coaches separate themselves is by finding ways to attack a defense's strengths. Sometimes this may be an aspect of their defense, sometimes it may be a particular player or two. But either way, there's nothing like taking what the defense may perceive as an advantage and turning the tables on them.

WHY IT MATTERS

When a defense hangs its hat on a particular trait or area of the game, there is nothing more devastating to them than getting beat at just that. If you can successfully attack a defense's strength, you will have destroyed their confidence and broken their will - all they will be thinking is "Well if that isn't working then what the hell else are we supposed to do!?"

This same thinking applies to individual players as well - maybe even more so. Oftentimes if a defense has a star player - an All-American defensive lineman for example - he will be the emotional leader of the team.

But if you double team that All-American the whole game, you can tire him out, render him ineffective, taking away that strength and rendering a defense's emotional leader and most dangerous player impotent, a feeling that may quickly become contagious among the rest of the defense.

ON THE FIELD

You have to use your imagination and every scheme at your disposal when trying to figure out how to best attack a defense's strength. For instance if you were playing against a team with a linebacker with incredible range, always getting from sideline to sideline, moving with incredible speed laterally. Then the best way to attack that linebacker is to defang him - run right at him, plough through him at the point of attack so he doesn't have the ability to use the lateral speed to his advantage.

Another example might be that you're playing against a ball-hawking secondary, who's very aggressive in jumping routes and looking for interceptions. Well then add more double move routes to your package for that week, and work some pump and go's into the offense to see if you can punish them for their aggressiveness.

PUT THE BALL IN THE HANDS OF YOUR BEST PLAYERS



CORE CONCEPT

One thing you need to always keep in mind is doing everything you can to get the ball in the hands of your playmakers. Learning to adjust your offensive design to get the ball into the hands of your best backs and receivers is the only way your offense is going to perform at the peak level it's capable of.

WHY IT MATTERS

It doesn't matter if you have the best receiver in your league, or an all-state running back if you aren't getting the ball in their hands enough as an offense.

If you've got a receiver who is a walking mismatch and he's only getting two or three catches a game, your simply not doing a good enough job in getting him the ball and letting him produce his magic. Your offensive design can't be a liability and prevent you from getting the ball to your best players.

ON THE FIELD

For example, if you've got a dynamic running back and a big, slow, physical fullback, you can't be running a split back offense where they are going to be getting an even amount of carries. Put them in the I formation and let that big fullback clear the way for your star running back.

The same thinking applies to receivers – if you've got a receiver who's great at creating yards after the catch, you need to throw in a mix of screens and short completions to give him his best chance to do what he does best.

VARY YOUR SNAP COUNT



CORE CONCEPT

The snap count is completely under the offense's control, yet so many coaches make the mistake of letting it become an advantage for the defense by constantly using the same snap count. Learn to vary your snap count and you can turn it into an advantage for your offense.

WHY IT MATTERS

By consistently beginning your plays with the same cadence, whatever it may be, you're completely ignoring a part of the offense that can go a long way towards improving your ability to attack a defense.

When you use the same count all the time, not only are you losing the ability to catch the defense offside, getting five yards and a free play every once in a while, but you're also making it much easier for them to gain the upper hand right off the bat of every play.

When your snap times out to the same count, the defense is going to put it together and begin to jump the count, giving them a split second advantage over the offensive linemen and making their jobs as a whole – whether in the run or pass game – much tougher. There's also the fact that the defense will be able to better hide and time their blitzes.

This will limit your ability to check into a blitz beater or even just adjust your protections which will have a direct correlation to an uptick in sacks, incompletions, and interceptions.

ON THE FIELD

To best prepare your offense for using multiple snap counts, you need to make it one of the first things you install in practice. Coaches will often make the mistake of sticking with just one snap count early on, trying to keep things simple so that they have better practices with fewer sloppy false starts.

The problem with this is that by the time the first game rolls around, you'll have mastered that one snap count, and nothing else. You're better off having a few more false start penalties in the first couple practices of your season than going into the first couple games of your season with just one snap count and putting your offense at a clear disadvantage.

BE UNPREDICTABLE WITH YOUR PLAY CALLING



CORE CONCEPT

Learning to be unpredictable, changing up your playcalling tendencies constantly and making it tough for the defense to guess your next move is an excellent way to give yourself the upper hand on a defensive coordinator.

WHY IT MATTERS

If you fall into a pattern, often calling similar plays in similar situations, the defensive coordinator will begin to pick up on this and make life miserable for you on offense.

For example if you like to run on first and second down and throw on third down, and you do this consistently throughout a game, it won't take long for the defensive coordinator to clue in and make adjustments to his playcalling tendencies to put his team in the best position to defend those particular plays.

You need to keep in mind that the job of the defensive coordinator is to try predict what you are going to do in a particular situation and then call a play to defend it. So therefore the harder you make it for the defense to guess what you're going to do, the less likely it is for the defense to be able to defend your offense effectively.

ON THE FIELD

A couple of great ways to attack a defense is to call a play that is the opposite of what they're likely expecting. Go to the playaction on a third and short and punish them for committing to the run. Or use a trap or draw play on a third and long, punishing them for doing just the opposite.

One of the best ways to prevent yourself from becoming predictable is to self-scout, so that you can observe your own tendencies and patterns, so that you see the same thing that an opposing team will be seeing and can adjust accordingly.

DEFENSES HATE TO SEE TRICK PLAYS



CORE CONCEPT

If you ask any defensive coach about trick plays, they'll have a similar answer to when you ask them about the option – they hate them.

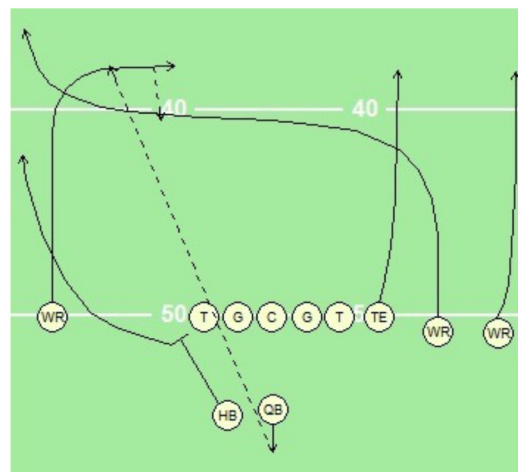
Trick plays are huge threats to pick up big chunks of yards, and I would recommend that every offense install at least five trick plays throughout the year.

WHY IT MATTERS

Not only is it important to add some trick plays to your repertoire – it's also pretty fun. The offense always gets a real kick out of successfully running a trick play, and the defense will feel incredibly deflated.

That's why the defense must spend a huge chunk of time working on defending trick plays in any game week when they are playing a team who likes to run them.

This means that the threat alone of being a team who might call a trick play is going to drastically change the gameplanning of your opponent in the week leading up to the game, using time that they might have otherwise used on improving pass coverage or run stopping on a series of plays they might not even see.



Hook and Ladder Trick Play

ON THE FIELD

You don't need to spend a huge amount of time every week on trick plays to see results. One of the best ways to work on trick plays is to simply work on them 11-0 right after you've finished loosening up, as a kind of pre-practice warm up.

The players will have a chance to learn the play without any defense on them, so that if there were a game you wanted to use a trick play in, you would simply need to tune it up that game week and you'll be ready to go on game day.

You'll want to make sure to work on the whole cadre of trick plays, including ones that are only effective on certain hashes – like a halfback option pass. Overall, I would say about six to seven trick plays is about right, and you don't need to be in any rush to use them.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

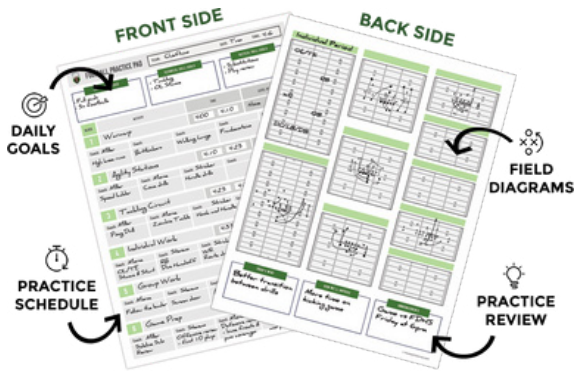


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