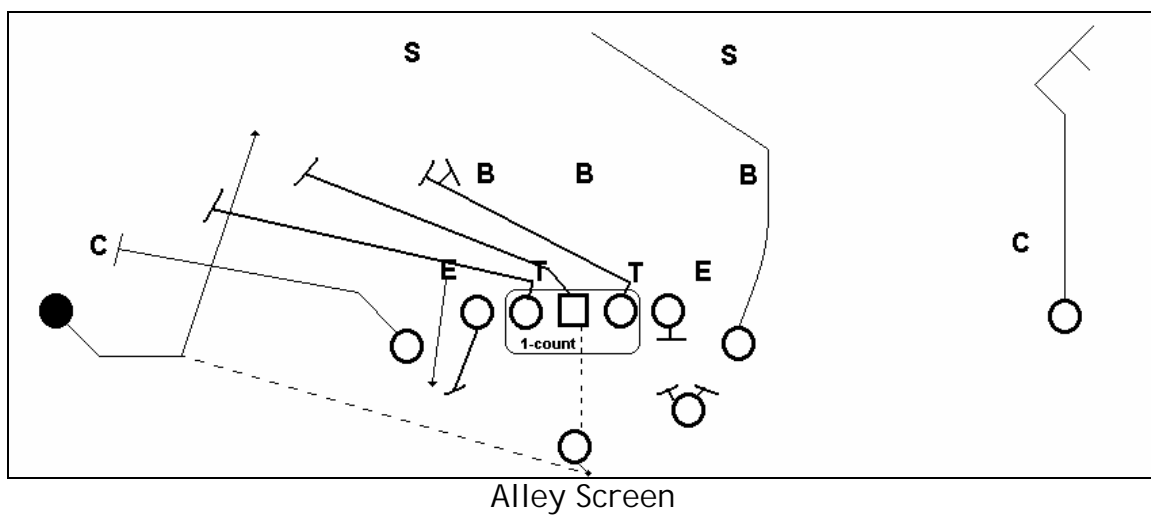


THE COWBOY PACKAGE

A Playbook



by Ted Seay

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“A lot of the Neanderthals thought it was a communist plot.”

– June Jones, on introducing the Run and Shoot offense to the NFL

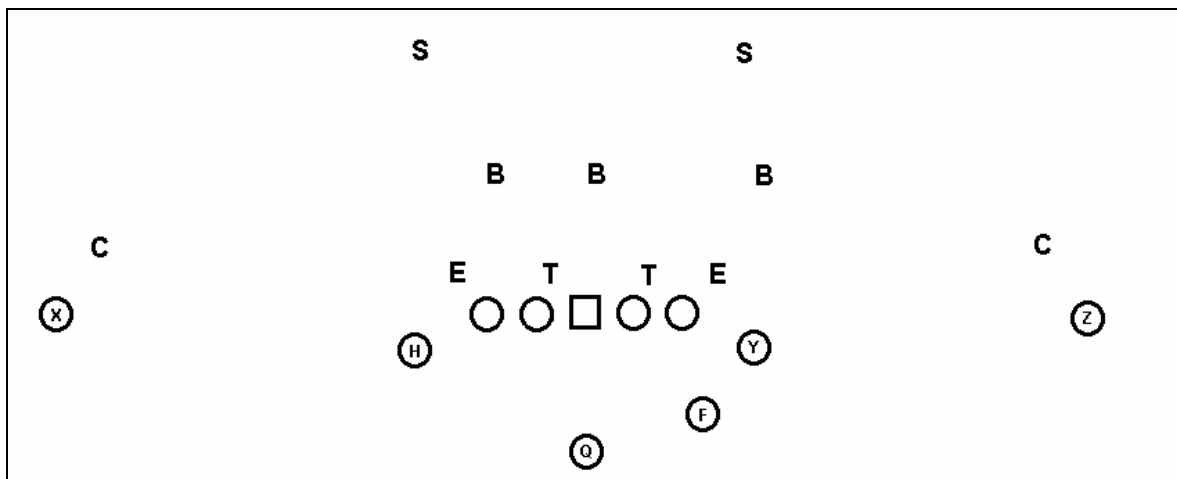
INTRODUCTION:

The plays which follow form my conception of a useful package to run from the Cowboy formation. I'm basically just going to explain the mechanics of the plays, give the QB reads where applicable, and leave the rest to you and your staff.

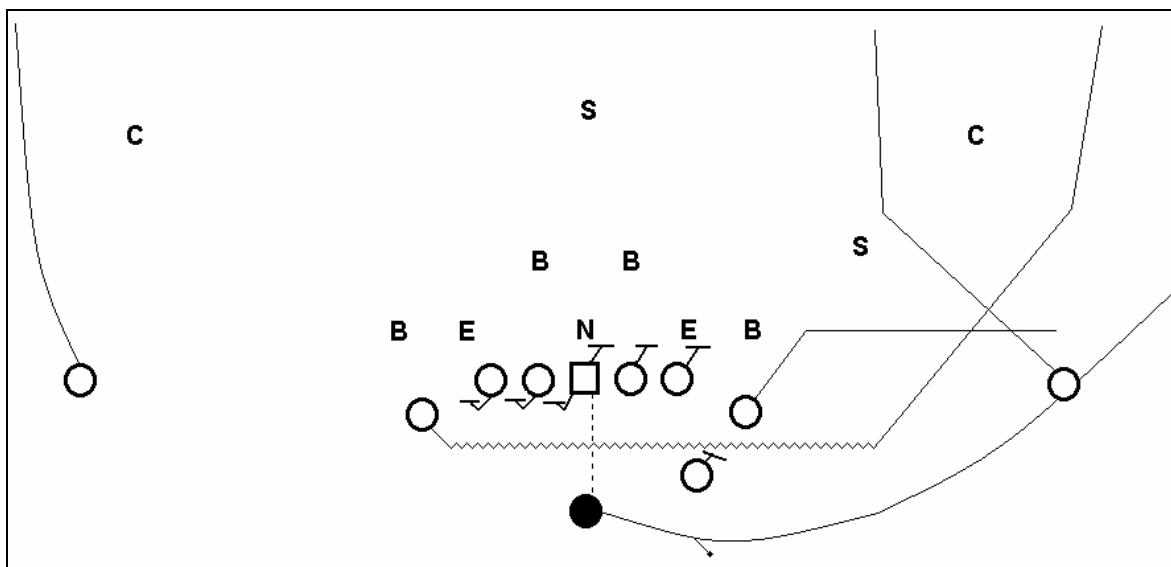
I only show plays with motion by the left slotback (whom I call H throughout the text). You can, however, mirror all these plays to the other side by motioning the right slot (Y) instead. Similarly, nothing would stop you from mirroring the no-motion plays in this document to the other side, keeping in mind the need to adjust the pass protection.

Speaking of pass pro, I suggest you use the Half-slide scheme on page 23 for the DIG, VERTS and SMASH plays, and the Sprint pro on page 24 for the GO series. You can use Half-slide for GO as well, but I really think the Sprint scheme fits better with the play designs.

My designators for the backs and receivers are given below.



GO Switch:



X: Go route with an outside vertical release (can also tag with Shallow Cross).

H: Slant outside at a 45 degree angle for 7 steps, then head straight downfield.

Left Tackle: Hinge backside, protecting inside gap first. (See page 24.)

Left Guard: Same as Left Tackle.

Center: Even: Same as Left Tackle; Odd: Same as Right Guard.

Right Guard: Reach playside gap.

Right Tackle: Same as Right Guard.

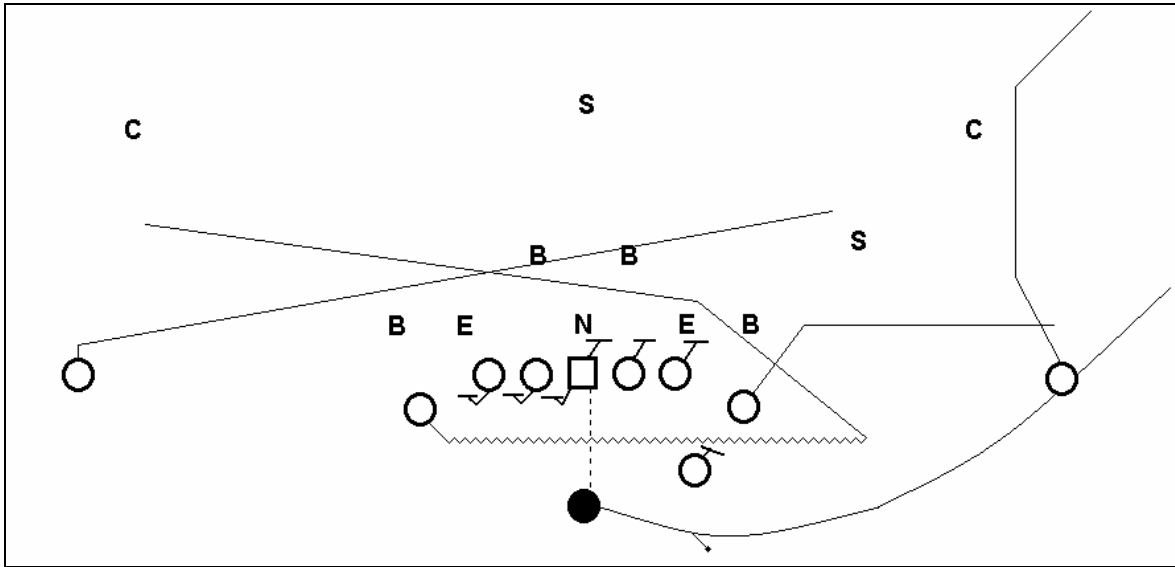
Y: A very quick Shoot route that gets horizontal at +1 yard. Speed is of the essence -- after releasing outside at a 45 degree angle, Y should snap his head and shoulders around to look for the ball as soon as he hits +1 yard.

Z: Slant inside at a 45 degree angle for 7 steps, looking for the ball. If you don't get it by then, head straight downfield.

Fullback: Block playside EMLOS defender (if Sprint pass pro is called) or double read ILB and OLB to strong side (if Half-slide protection is called -- illustrated above).

Quarterback: Against C2/C3, the reads are the same as Go: you are high-
lowing the flat defender, it's just that your high option is now Z slanting inside, then taking off downfield. Against man coverage, we clearly have a better play than with the base package. I like to tell the QB to read H's route and throw if he's open. If not, come inside to Z, then down to Y. (Y remains the Q receiver in case of sudden pressure on the QB.)

GO Mesh:



X: Shallow Cross underneath H.

H: Shallow Cross over X - scrape off any tight man coverage.

Left Tackle: Hinge backside, protecting inside gap first. (See page 24.)

Left Guard: Same as Left Tackle.

Center: Even: Same as Left Tackle; Odd: Same as Right Guard.

Right Guard: Reach playside gap.

Right Tackle: Same as Right Guard.

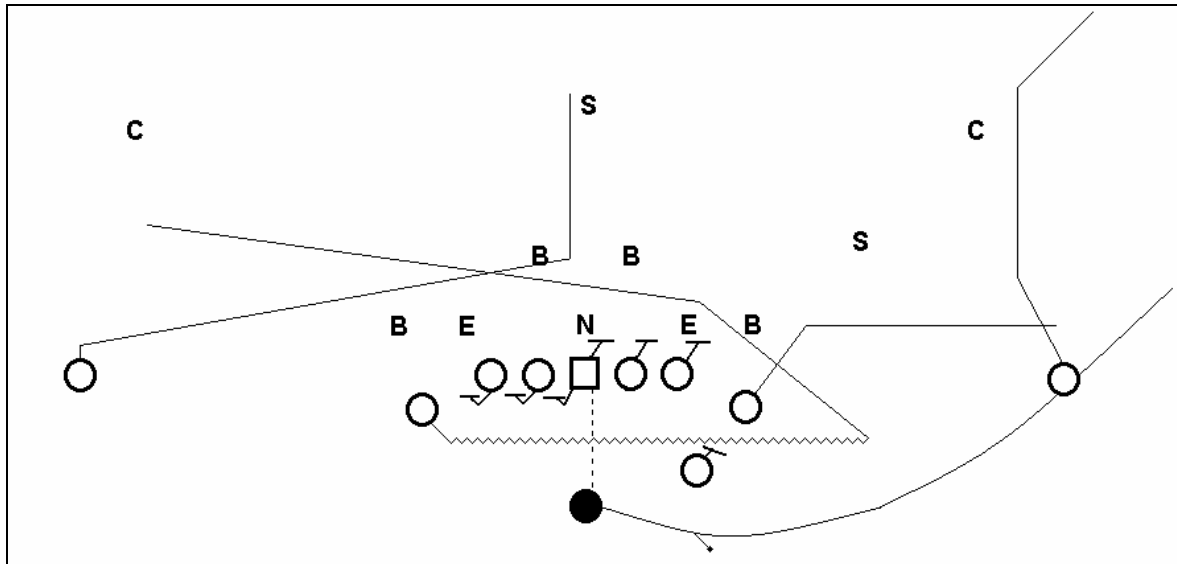
Y: A very quick Shoot route that gets horizontal at +1 yard. Speed is of the essence -- after releasing outside at a 45 degree angle, Y should snap his head and shoulders around to look for the ball as soon as he hits +1 yard.

Z: Stem inside at a shallow angle for three steps, then break vertical and cut to the Corner at +10 yards.

Fullback: Block playside EMLOS defender (if Sprint pass pro is called) or double read ILB and OLB to strong side (if Half-slide protection is called -- illustrated above).

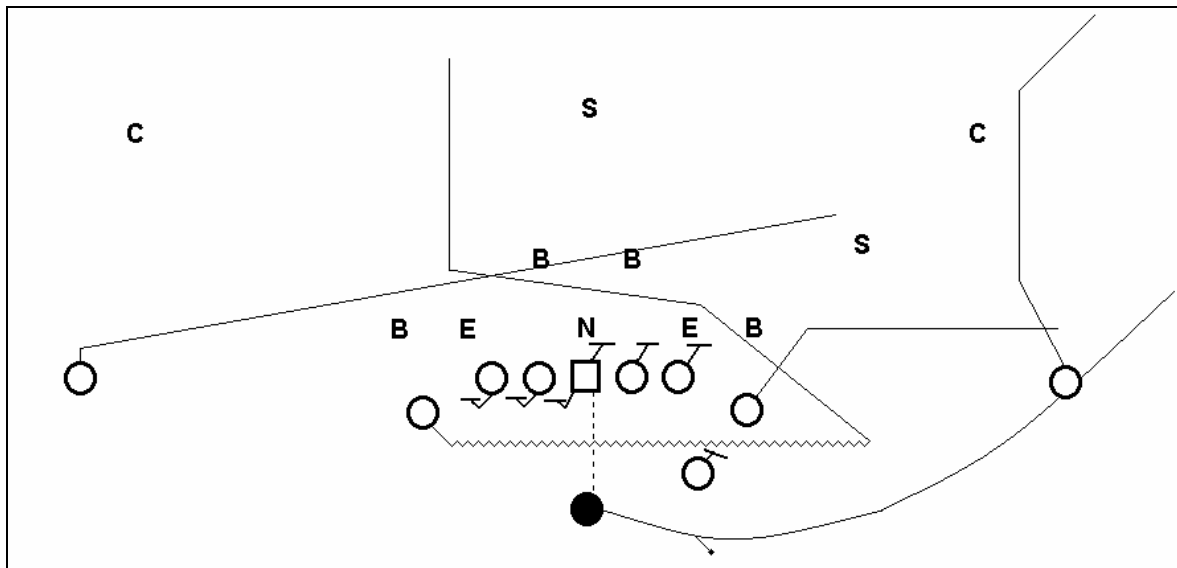
Quarterback: Versus zone, read the playside receivers deep to shallow -- Z/X/Y. (Y remains your "Q" receiver in case of sudden pressure.) Versus man, you can tag Z with a Post route, peek at him right after the snap, then if he's not open come down to the Meshing X and H to hit the first man who comes open off the rub -- this will most likely be X, who is crossing underneath H.

There is an additional tag that will prove very useful with GO Mesh: "Shaggo," or the "Shallow-and-Go" route.



GO Mesh X Shaggo

X cuts downfield immediately after he crosses under H and looks for the ball over his right shoulder.



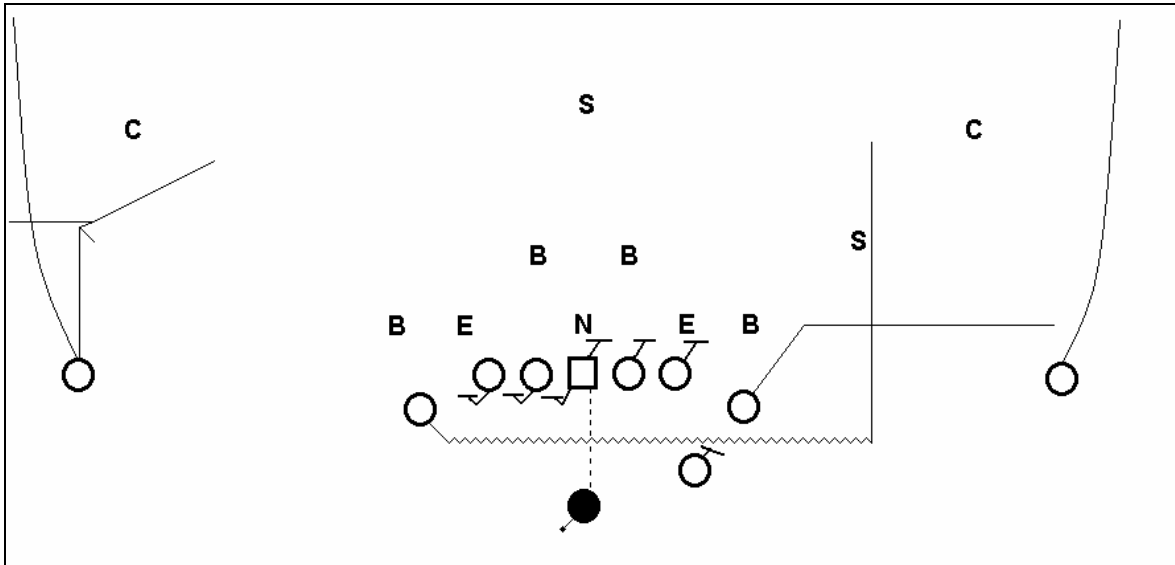
GO Mesh H Shaggo

Here H makes the same route adjustment, again right after he crosses over X. This is a useful tag any time you have someone running a Shallow Cross.

Y, meanwhile, starts out as though he's running his normal GO Shoot route, albeit at the inside leg of S. When he gets to S's original position, he will angle into empty space between S and B, looking for the ball right away. Against man coverage or an S defender who insists on playing inside leverage, Y may want to give a hard head and shoulder nod to the Flat before cutting inside to his Crease route, but he should not slow down to do so. Finally, Z will run a mini-Comeback -- releasing downfield toward the inside eye of the Corner, then cutting outside at a 45 degree angle at +8 yards before drumrolling his feet, faking a burst of speed with a forward lunge and burst of arms, then finally breaking back outside and toward the LOS at a 45 degree angle. Keep coming back until the ball arrives.

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GO Choice:



Everyone in this play does exactly what he does in GO. The exception is X, who follows these CHOICE rules:

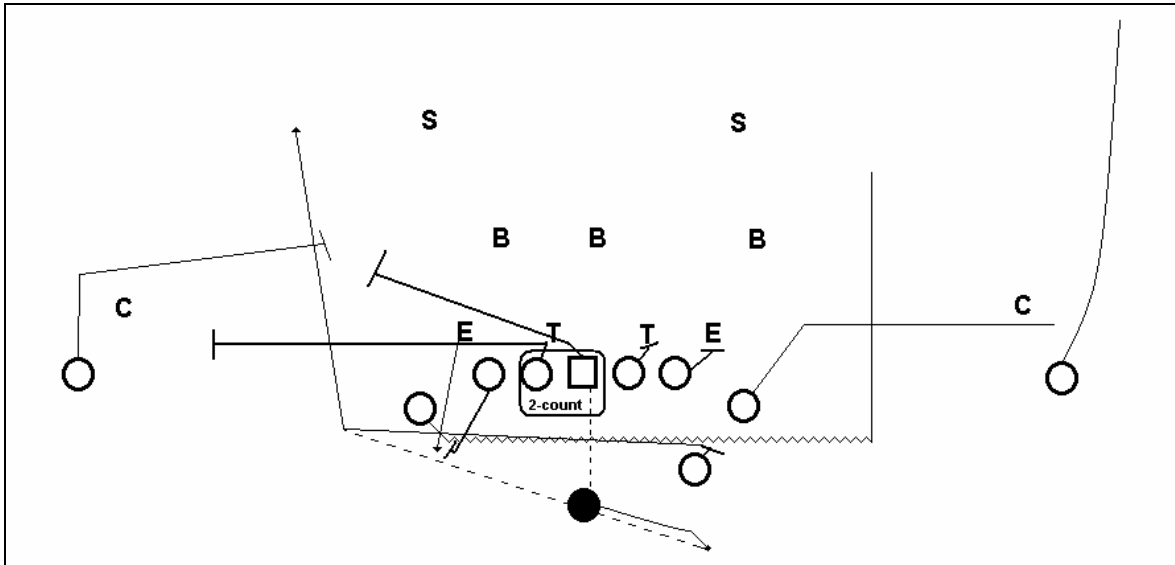
If the corner plays inside leverage, run a Speed Out at +5 yards;
if the corner presses, run the Fade route;
if the corner plays outside leverage, run the 3-step Slant; and
if the corner maintains more than a 6 yard cushion, run a 3-step Hitch.

The easiest way to signal his route to the QB before the snap is to hold his hands in the usual ready position, but with subtle variations as follows:

Outside hand slightly higher than inside hand = Speed OUT
Inside hand slightly higher = SLANT in
Hands lower than usual, down near belt buckle = HITCH
Hands slightly higher than normal = FADE

The QB will drop and hit X on his Choice route; if for any reason he is not open, he can come across to H, Z and Y, in that order.

GO Flow Screen:



X: Release vertical for three steps, crack first short defender inside Corner.

H: Seam route, looking for the ball after he clears defensive line depth.

Left Tackle: Drop deep to pull EMLOS defender upfield -- give him the outside alley.

Left Guard: Impact defender on or inside gap (outside gap if Tackle is covered) for two counts, then release flat down LOS for Corner.

Center: Impact defender on or to playside for two counts, then release for first bad color that shows two yards deep behind H's original position. If no one there, look inside-out for first threat.

Right Guard: Reach playside gap.

Right Tackle: Reach playside gap.

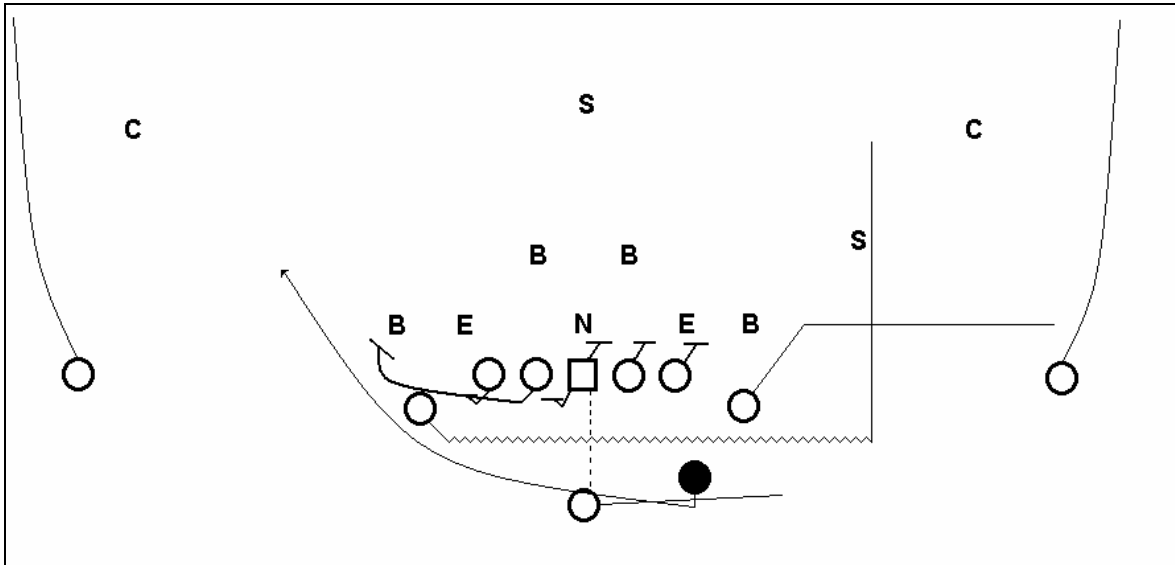
Y: A very quick Shoot route that gets horizontal at +1 yard. Speed is of the essence -- after releasing outside at a 45 degree angle, Y should snap his head and shoulders around to look for the ball as soon as he hits +1 yard.

Z: Go route with an outside vertical release.

Fullback: Fake block for one count, then slide backside to spot 4x4 yards outside and behind Tackle's original position. Catch ball, run alley between Guard, Center and X.

Quarterback: Start GO drop, plant on fifth step and throw back to FB. If he's not open, throw ball away past far sideline.

GO Statue:



X: Go route with an outside vertical release.

H: Seam route, looking for the ball after he clears defensive line depth.

Left Tackle: Covered: Man on. Uncovered - drop three steps, pull left and hook first bad color outside you to the inside. If he plays you tough outside, push him to sideline.

Left Guard: Covered: Man on. Uncovered - drop three steps, pull left and hook first bad color past Tackle to the inside. If he plays you tough outside, push him to sideline.

Center: Even front: Hinge (like GO) backside, protecting inside gap first; odd front: Reach (like GO) playside gap.

Right Guard: Reach (like GO) playside gap.

Right Tackle: Reach (like GO) playside gap.

Y: A very quick Shoot route that gets horizontal at +1 yard. Speed is of the essence -- after releasing outside at a 45 degree angle, Y should snap his head and shoulders around to look for the ball as soon as he hits +1 yard.

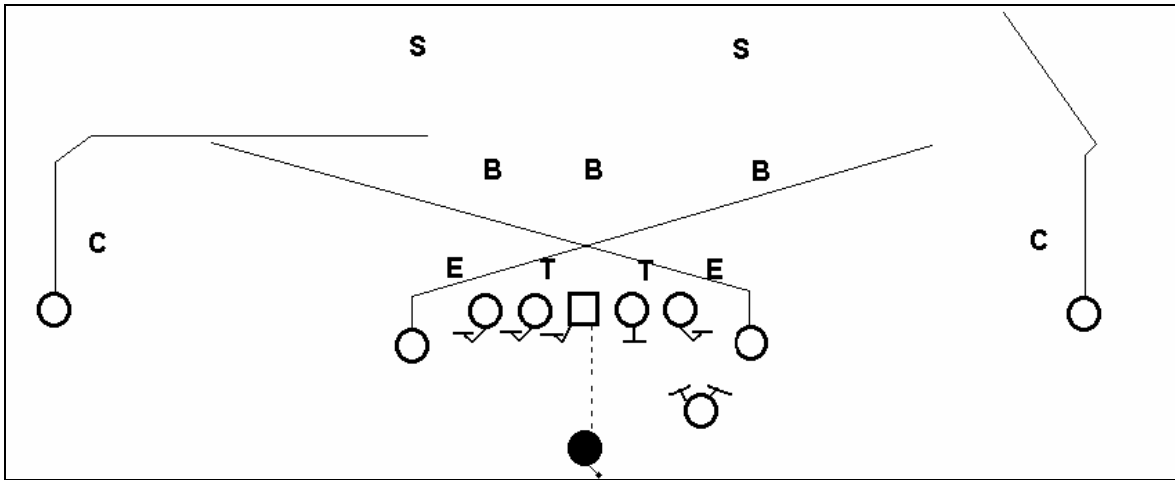
Z: Go route with an outside vertical release.

Fullback: Lose depth at snap, faking pass pro. As QB passes in front of you holding ball in his backside hand, reach and take it from him, then follow block of uncovered lineman to weakside.

Quarterback: Start GO drop, hold ball in backside hand as you pass in front of FB, make sure he takes it from your hand cleanly. If he yells "Fumble", drop on ball and cover it.

Universal rules for receivers in this series: The one named runs the Dig; the one furthest from him across the formation runs the Post; and the other two Shallow Cross, always right over left.

X DIG:



X: 10-yard Dig route.

H: Shallow Cross underneath Y.

Left Tackle: Block backside gap, but don't block air -- double a neighbor's man if no one attacks your gap. (See page 23.)

Left Guard: Same as Left Tackle.

Center: Same as Left Tackle.

Right Guard: Block backside gap if uncovered, block man on or "overhang" if covered.

Right Tackle: Same as Right Guard.

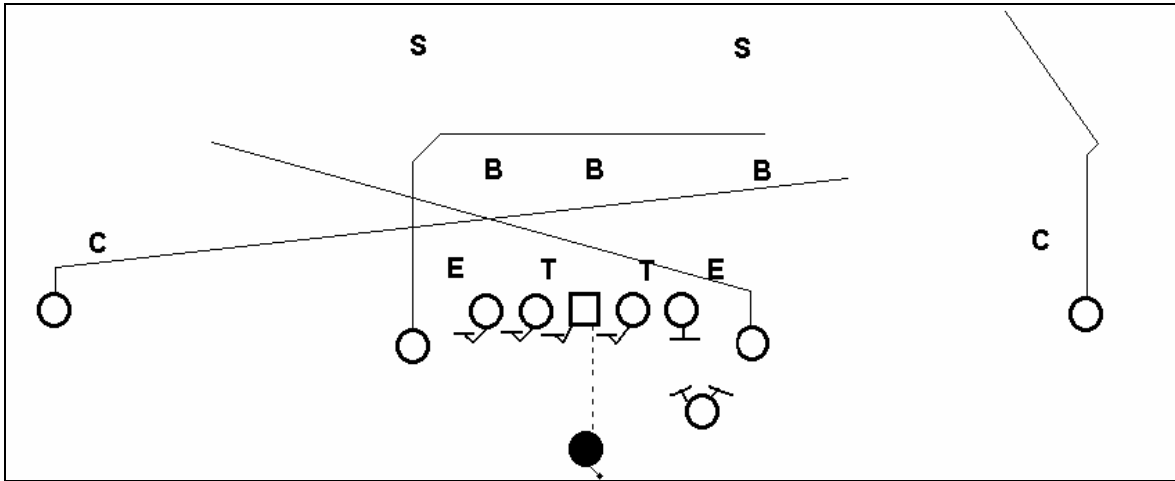
Y: Shallow Cross over H.

Z: 12-yard Post route.

Fullback: Double read playside EMLOS and ILB -- take most dangerous threat, yell "Fire! Fire!" if both come.

Quarterback: Peek at Z's Post, check X's Dig, read Mesh of Y over H -- against man coverage, look for H to come free.

H DIG:



X: Shallow Cross underneath Y.

H: 10-yard Dig route.

Left Tackle: Block backside gap, but don't block air -- double a neighbor's man if no one attacks your gap. (See page 23.)

Left Guard: Same as Left Tackle.

Center: Same as Left Tackle.

Right Guard: Block backside gap if uncovered, block man on or "overhang" if covered.

Right Tackle: Same as Right Guard.

Y: Shallow Cross over X.

Z: 12-yard Post route.

Fullback: Double read playside EMLOS and ILB -- take immediate threat, yell "Fire! Fire!" if both come.

Quarterback: Peek at Z's Post, check H's Dig, read Mesh of Y over X -- against man coverage, look for X to come free.

H: Shallow Cross underneath Z.

Left Guard: Same as Left Tackle.

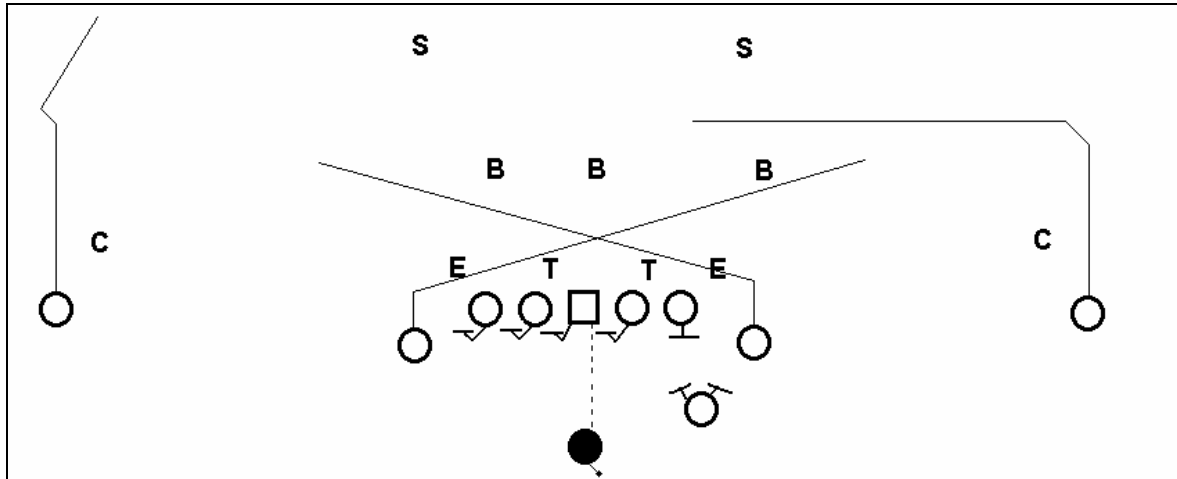
Right Guard: Block backside gap if uncovered, block man on or "overhang" if covered.

Y: 10-yard Dig route.

Fullback: Double read playside EMLOS and ILB -- take immediate threat, yell "Fire! Fire!" if both come.

Quarterback: Peek at X's Post, check Y's Dig, read Mesh of Z over H -- against man coverage, look for H to come free.

Z DIG:



X: 12-yard Post route.

H: Shallow Cross underneath Y.

Left Tackle: Block backside gap, but don't block air -- double a neighbor's man if no one attacks your gap. (See page 23.)

Left Guard: Same as Left Tackle.

Center: Same as Left Tackle.

Right Guard: Block backside gap if uncovered, block man on or "overhang" if covered.

Right Tackle: Same as Right Guard.

Y: Shallow Cross over H.

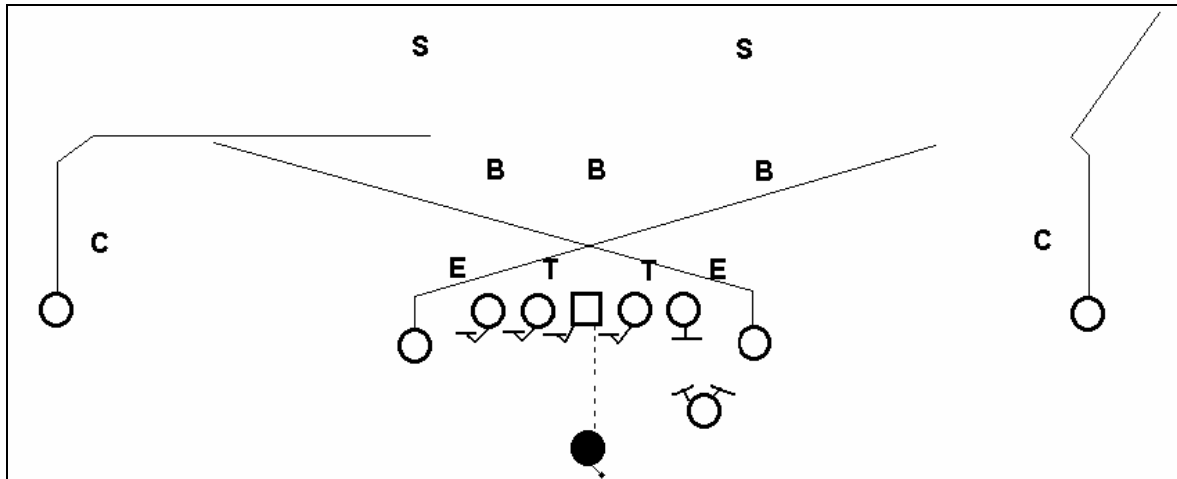
Z: 10-yard Dig route.

Fullback: Double read playside EMLOS and ILB -- take immediate threat, yell "Fire! Fire!" if both come.

Quarterback: Peek at X's Post, check Z's Dig, read Mesh of Y over H -- against man coverage, look for H to come free.

X DIG Z Corner:

Any receiver can be tagged with a different route to take advantage of a particular coverage scheme and/or defender -- a very simple way to focus your game planning.



X: 10-yard Dig route.

H: Shallow Cross underneath Y.

Left Tackle: Block backside gap, but don't block air -- double a neighbor's man if no one attacks your gap. (See page 23.)

Left Guard: Same as Left Tackle.

Center: Same as Left Tackle.

Right Guard: Block backside gap if uncovered, block man on or "overhang" if covered.

Right Tackle: Same as Right Guard.

Y: Shallow Cross over H.

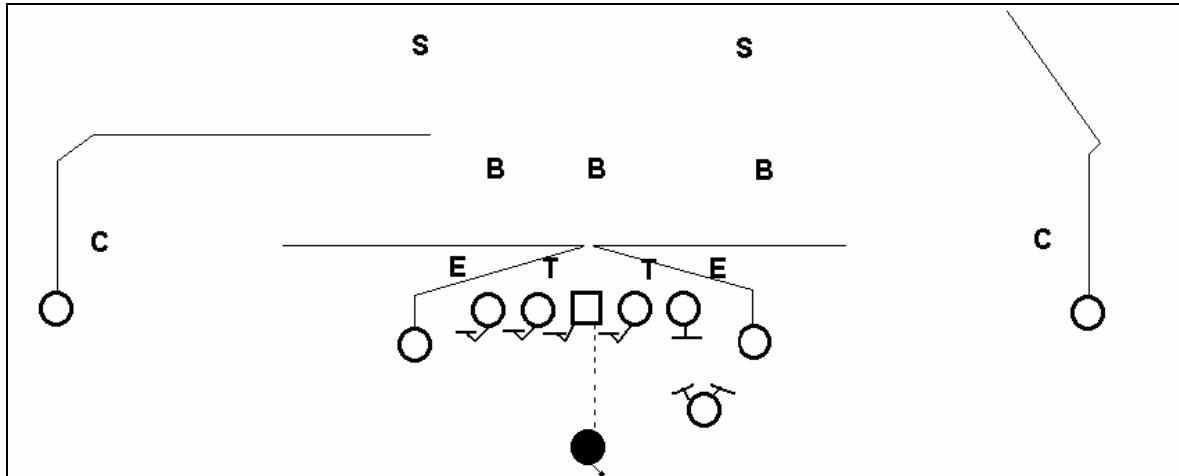
Z: 12-yard Corner route, nodding hard to Post against man coverage.

Fullback: Double read playside EMLOS and ILB -- take immediate threat, yell "Fire! Fire!" if both come.

Quarterback: Use pre-snap read to see if Corner is viable. If so, peek at Z's Corner, check X's Dig, read Mesh of Y over H -- against man coverage, look for H to come free. If not, check Dig and read Mesh.

X DIG Pivot:

The "Pivot" tag affects the two Shallow Cross meshers, and is a great way to fight "walling" short defenders.



X: 10-yard Dig route.

H: Run Shallow Cross directly at Y; when you get to within two steps of him, Pivot outside on your inside foot and run straight to the sideline, looking for the ball. Against man coverage accelerate away from the nearest defender; against zone coverage "throttle down" to about 75% speed when you hit "clean air" in between the short zones and show your numbers to the QB.

Left Tackle: Block backside gap, but don't block air -- double a neighbor's man if no one attacks your gap. (See page 23.)

Left Guard: Same as Left Tackle.

Center: Same as Left Tackle.

Right Guard: Block backside gap if uncovered, block man on or "overhang" if covered.

Right Tackle: Same as Right Guard.

Y: Same as H.

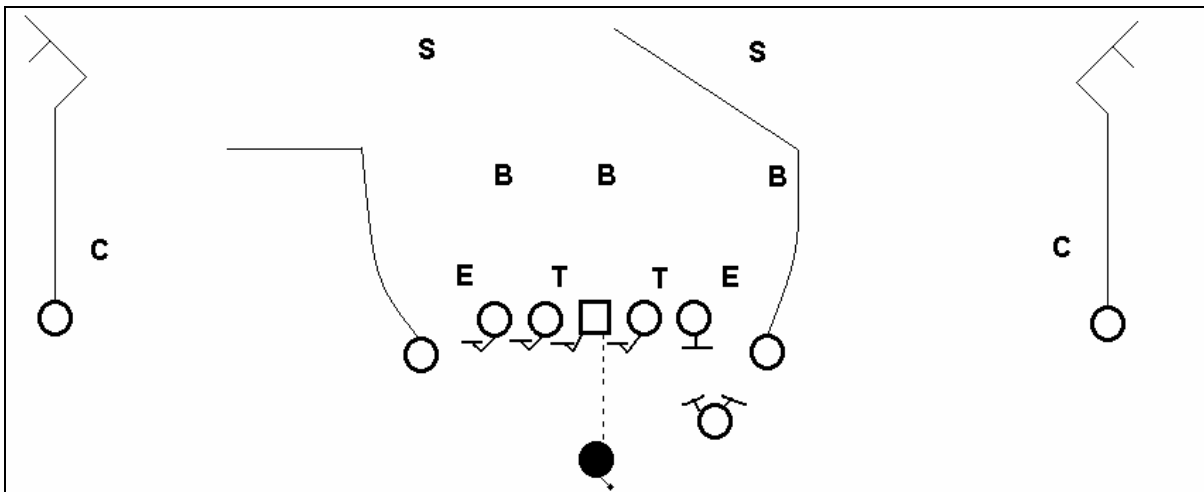
Z: 12-yard Post route.

Fullback: Double read playside EMLOS and ILB -- take immediate threat, yell "Fire! Fire!" if both come.

Quarterback: Decide pre-snap which Pivot will have the best chance of getting open -- then peek at Z's Post, check X's Dig, and go to the Pivot route of choice.

THE VERTICALS Play:

Middle of Field Open (MOFO):



X: Release vertical for 7 steps to 12 yards. Plant on outside foot and break at a 45 degree angle to the Post for three steps, looking back at QB on the second. On third step plant inside foot hard, open hips and break for the corner at a hard 45 degree angle. If CB stays inside break hard for the near pylon. If CB stays outside or quickly gets back over the top, drive outside elbow and plant outside foot flat to the LOS, and begin to come back for the football. If this happens the ball will be caught at 18-22 yards.

H: Outside Vertical release, breaking Out at +7 yards.

Left Tackle: Block backside gap, but don't block air -- double a neighbor's man if no one attacks your gap. (See page 23.)

Left Guard: Same as Left Tackle.

Center: Same as Left Tackle.

Right Guard: Block backside gap if uncovered, block man on or "overhang" if covered.

Right Tackle: Same as Right Guard.

Y: Outside Vertical release, breaking to Post at +12 yards.

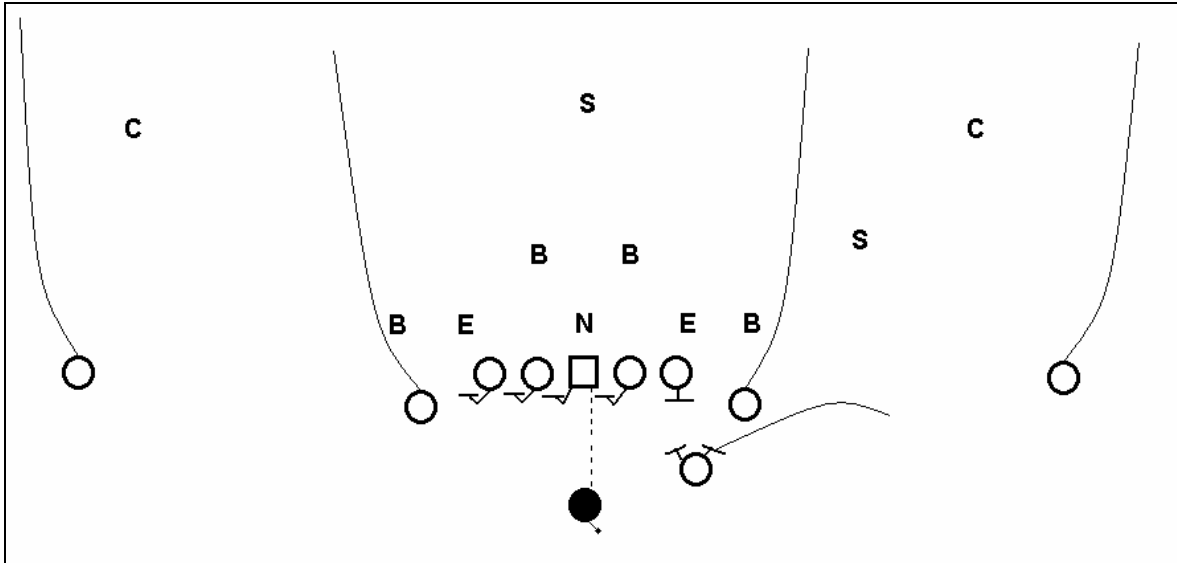
Z: Same as X.

Fullback: Double read playside EMLOS and ILB -- take immediate threat, yell "Fire! Fire!" if both come.

Quarterback: With no middle safety, look for the three-receiver-side safety. If he is low or missing entirely (i.e., down at LB depth or even tighter to the LOS), it's Cover 0 and H's 7-yard Out is your best bet to beat the blitz (if Y is astute enough to spot the blitz potential, he may look for the ball quickly as well). If that safety drops toward his Cover 2 half-field responsibilities, look for Y's Post to find the deep middle hole, and from there look to Z toward the deep Corner. Finally, if the Bunch-side safety drops down to the hole in the middle of the field, or takes off for the outside third, it is a disguised Cover 3 -- either C2-Robber or C2-Tampa. In that case, you want your best match-ups

against their defenders -- I would look for X's Corner/Cutback and then H's Out.

Middle of Field Closed (MOFC):

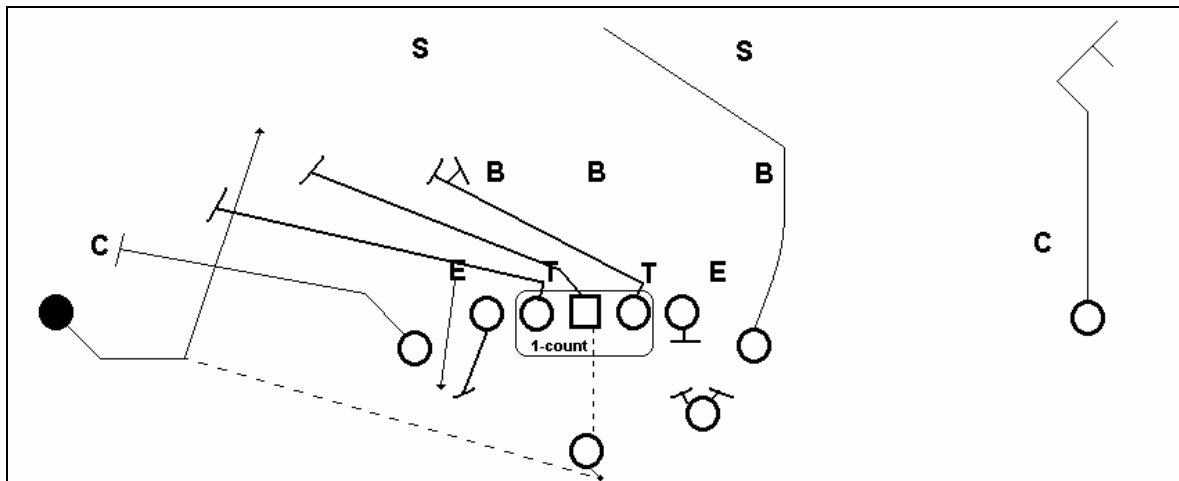


Blocking remains the same, but now X, H, Y and Z all run their landmarks with an Outside Vertical release -- X and Z run the tops of the numbers and H and Y run the hashes. With a pre-snap MOFC read, the QB will drop with an eye on the safety. If the safety remains in the middle of the field, the QB will eyeball one of his two inside receivers (H and Y) and then, if and when the safety breaks on him, throw to the other. FB is free to check-release if neither LB on his side comes. Use whatever works best for you -- Swing, Flat, Check-Down route, etc.

Hitch/Low read. MOFC, you have the safety bracketed between H and Y, with Z as a check-down and X as a safety valve.

THE SCREEN Game:

Alley Screen:



X: Step inside at snap and look for ball. Cut downfield behind blocks by H and Left Tackle.

H: Attack Cornerback.

Left Tackle: Drop deep to pull EMLOS defender upfield -- give him the outside alley.

Left Guard: Impact defender on or inside gap (outside gap if Tackle is covered) for one count, then release flat down LOS for first defender inside Corner.

Center: Impact defender on or to playside for one count, then release for first bad color that shows inside Left Guard.

Right Guard: Impact defender on or to playside for one count, then release for first bad color that shows inside Center. If no one there, look inside-out for first threat.

Right Tackle: Pass drop, block on or outside.

Y: Outside Vertical release, breaking to Post at +12 yards, nail deepest defender you can find.

Fullback: Set to pass block, look for threat through A gap on your side.

Quarterback: Gather ball, hit X in stride with 80%-velocity ball (use a bit of touch, but don't float it).

[illegible]

H: Outside Vertical release.

Left Guard: Same as Left Tackle.

Center: Same as Left Tackle.

Right Guard: Same as Left Tackle.

Right Tackle: Same as Left Tackle.

Y: Release outside and back for one step, look for ball as you run toward sideline, gather ball and head downfield outside block of Z. Try to get hashes, numbers, and sideline at full speed.

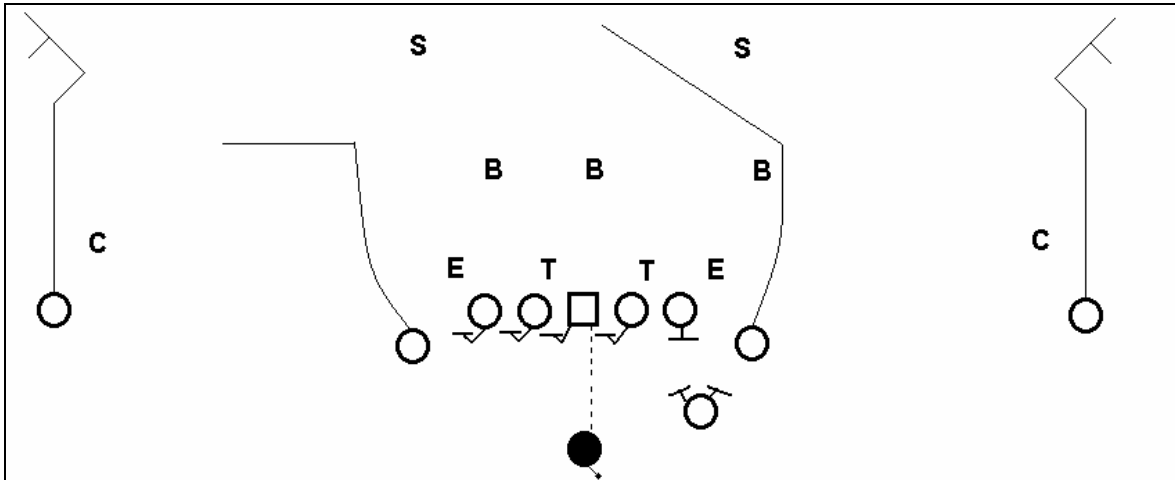
Z: Crack first short defender to your inside.

Fullback: Set to pass block -- ball will be away before blitzers can impact play.

Quarterback: Hit Y with "touch" ball -- about 75% of full speed.

PASS PROTECTION:

Half-Slide Protection

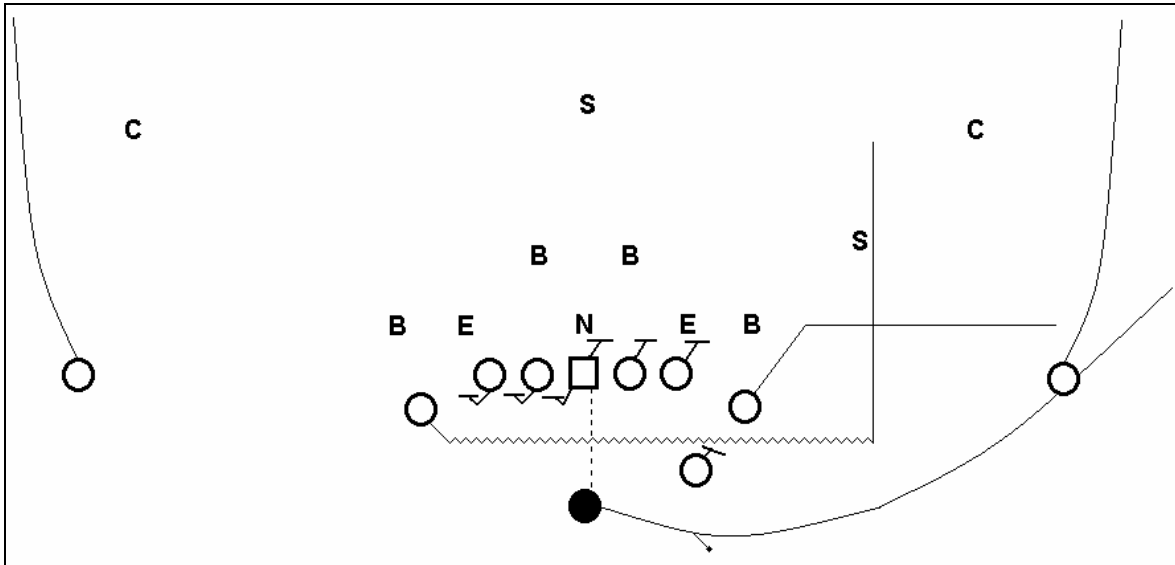


All of the pass plays in this package have a front side (the side of the play that the FB checks first for blocking responsibilities). Half-slide pass protection starts on that front side with linemen blocking the man over them (from outside shoulder to inside gap) until you reach the first bubble -- the first lineman with no DL over him. From that point, the line slides to the backside to block the first DL back from them. The FB, meanwhile, will read from the LB in the bubble to the first LB outside the playside tackle, if any. This may mean he has a double read, and must pick up the most dangerous and immediate threat; if so, he yells "Fire! Fire!", making the QB responsible for the unblocked defender.

I got this protection from Chris Brown, who has this to say about it:

"When sliding, the #1 rule is 'don't block air.' What this means is don't be in such a hurry to slide to your point that you expose a new gap or put your teammate in a bad position. We look at the slide as a flow, but the bottom line is we are still picking up defenders, not just flying to our respective A or B gaps. Again, the parallel shoulders are huge in sliding. And finally, don't be afraid to be aggressive. In pass blocking you can't be too aggressive or you will get beat, but it does not mean you have to receive all the punishment. This is one reason we like the slide, is it seems like our line can do more punching and aggressive maneuvers and not be afraid of their man beating them. Particularly on 3-step, the OL should get their fists in the defender's chests/stomachs. For us the biggest weakness of the protection is the bane of most one-back protections: 4-weak. Also, second, are inside dog blitzes. You will also need to identify hot. The hot more than likely needs to come from the slide side, but obviously the man side can be overloaded as well. We always build the hot routes in."

Sprint Protection



This is the mechanism for (deliberately) shifting the launch point for the football by rolling the QB.

- Left Tackle: Hinge backside, protecting inside gap first.
- Left Guard: Same as Left Tackle.
- Center: Even: Same as Left Tackle; Odd: Same as Right Guard.
- Right Guard: Reach playside gap.
- Right Tackle: Same as Right Guard.

Two important points: First, "Hinge" means the lineman takes an immediate step to protect his inside gap -- not flat to the LOS, but back at a slight angle to give him a faster jump on gaining depth when he pivots and drop-steps on his second step, looking for the first rusher to his outside. The backside Tackle will drop further and faster than the backside Guard (and Center, against Even fronts).

Second point: "Reach" means that, if you cannot gain outside leverage on the DL you are trying to reach-block, you should lock him out and push him to the sideline. If you have a Reach assignment and are uncovered, step playside looking for stunting DL's or blitzing LB's; if none show, gain depth and help out backside. Protect your QB's back at all costs.

In Sprint protection, the FB takes two steps toward the frontside sideline while reading the outside rush. If the EMLOS rusher takes an inside charge, the FB seals him inside and rides him past the QB. If he runs deep to contain, the FB locks out and takes him deep. If he attacks the FB hard and head on, the FB attacks the outside hip with his inside shoulder. If no one rushes, the FB checks middle and backside, then may release into the route package.