



**THE HYBRID DEFENSE OF THE SPLIT-6
AND WIDE TACKLE-6 DEFENSES**

by John Carbon

With Reference from Drew Tallman's
*Directory of Football Defenses: Successful Defenses
and How to Attack Them, 1969 and 1978*

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The **Jaws of Death Defense**, named after the “Lufkin Jaws” defense—Texas 5A champs in 2001, is a hybrid of the Split-6 and WideTackle-6 defenses. As I research I see more and more information backing up what we already know, our “D” is tough to beat. It is simple. It’s simple to run and simple to adjust. It is based on the Bum Phillips defense and has been greatly influenced by Spike Dykes, Jerry Claiborne, Don James, Vince Dooley, and Erik Russell. I have refined my modified Gap-Air-Mirror and it is now the **Jaws of Death Defense**.

We do several things a bit different. To start we move our front four around so we get many looks. We go from a Gap-Air-Mirror to WideTackle-6 to Split-6 to “G” as well as reduce fronts. So you have an idea our WideTackle-6 places DTs in the “C” gap and DGs in “A” gap. The Split-6 has those players in the “C” and “B” gaps and the “G” is “CBAC” to strength. We can have half Gap-Air-Mirror to one side and half Split-6 to the other side as an example. We will keep the bear crawl at youth level for the DGs but change our technique for the DTs in the “C” gap. We will make the DTs read the QB. If he keeps his arms low, we clog the gap. If he shows pass with arms high we bring it. The DEs don’t box but read. They look like they crash but they take a few steps and read the backfield movement. The other big change is our coverage. We have CBs on #1 to their side, FS has #2 strong, SLB takes #3 and WLB takes #2 weak. Our WLB is more like a strong safety so we can switch coverage with MLB in case of trips.

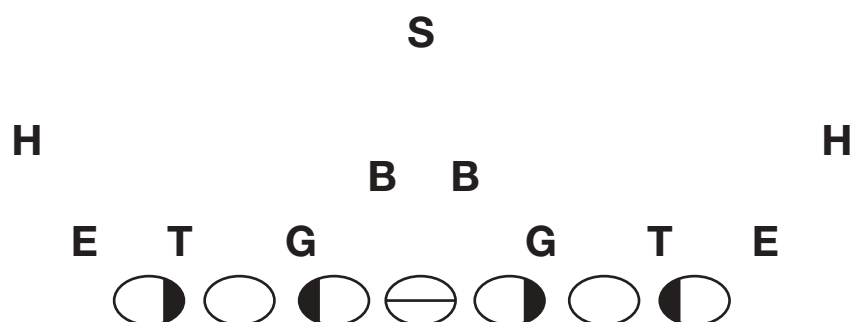
Now, unless you are facing five vertical (no back) we would stay in these fronts and coverage. If we do face five vertical we will do several things but the simplest would be to have MLB position himself to cover #4 vs. quads or #2 weak vs. trips/twins and go to a Gap-Air-Mirror front and bring six.

I run split to strength and wide six to the weakside. This should give you an idea of how we play the front six. We play around with the coverage and stunt package. The stunt package is based on Bob Altshuler’s *20 Gap Defense*. The goal line package is based on Jerry Claiborne and the coverage is all Virginia Tech “G” with some University of Washington.

The remainder of this document is excerpts from the sources which I’ve drawn to create the **Jaws of Death Defense**. These include Drew Tallman’s descriptions of the Split-6 and Wide Tackle-6 defenses as outlined in his book, *Directory of Football Defenses: Successful Defenses and How to Attack Them*, 1969 and 1978, Jerry Claiborne’s *Goal Line Defense* as well as the Virginia Tech’s *Attack Defense* as presented to the AFCA, and Don James’ presentation of the “G” Defense utilized by the University of Washington during his tenure.

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THE SPLIT-6 DEFENSE



Strengths:

- 1) Very strong outside
- 2) Tackle over tight end
- 3) 8-man front versus the running game
- 4) Strong against outside option game
- 5) Good stunt and blitz defense
- 6) 3 deep secondary

Weaknesses:

- 1) LB diversity is limited outside
- 2) Middle area with various blocking schemes
- 3) Over offensive tackle
- 4) Quick hitting plays
- 5) Curl or flat area is weak with no LB support
- 6) Two defensive linemen between offensive tackles (are DGs strong?)

Plays That Go Best

Versus the Defense: **Middle**—Sneaks, quick traps, isolation, counter-trap, quick counters; **Off-Tackle**—Power plays, outside belly, sprint draw, veer series, wishbone, cross-buck, tailback dive; **Outside**—Sweep inside end, option vs. DE.

Blocking Schemes:

Middle—Trap, fold on DG, tackle trap, double DG and isolate linebacker, wedge; **Off-Tackle**—Fold on DG, double DG and power, angle block down and trap DT and DE; **Outside**—Double DT (wing) power, options.

Comments:

Force adjustments at corner if tight and can not block DT. Use twins and wide-outs and pass or run to the defense adjustment. Attack flat and hook (LB's limited). Force DE to cover pass. Similar to 4-4 Split defense.

The Play of the Split-6 Defense

The following is the alignment, stance, initial movement and execution, responsibilities and coaching points of each position of the Split-6 even-Diamond defense. The different alignments and executions of the eight-man front will be explained and described as was previously mentioned at the start of this chapter.

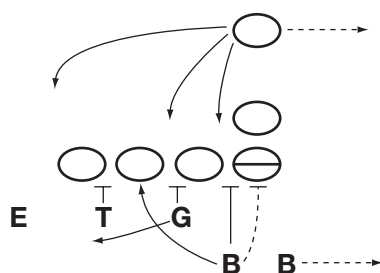
Defensive Linebackers (Number 1 Man)

Alignment: Line up either in the center-guard gap or straddling the inside leg of the defensive guard. Be approximately 1 to 3 yards in depth from the line of scrimmage, depending upon the down and distance, etc.

Stance: A low two-point stance, with the inside leg forward. Feet can be parallel, but no more than a toe-instep relationship.

Initial Movement and Execution:

The basic key is the quarterback, but can include the fullback or another offensive back. Be alert for a play in the middle, such as the sneak, wedge, or trap. If the play is toward, protect the center-guard area. If the play goes outside, step to the outside between the offensive guard and tackle. If the play is away, the linebacker will step up and meet the offensive center and deliver a forearm blow. In many instances the linebacker will react to the movements of the offensive center and not deliver a blow. The linebacker must protect the area. (Look at accompanying diagram.)



Responsibilities:

1. Play Toward—If an offensive back does not come in the guard-tackle gap, the linebacker will continue to move to the tackle-end area. If the play goes wider, the linebacker will assist with the defensive end on containment and can cover the flat if a pass develops. The defensive end and linebacker can exchange assignments with the defensive end covering the flat and the linebacker helping on containment. (It must be remembered that the more the defensive tackle aligns to the outside, the more the linebacker must protect inside, and vice versa.)

2. Play Away—The linebacker first controls the center area, reacts to his keys, and goes on a proper pursuit angle. If pass develops, go to the outside hook area.

3. Drop Back—Both linebackers will go to the outside hook areas unless involved in a stunt. One or both linebackers can be responsible for the draw.

Coaching Points: Keep shoulders square to the line of scrimmage when delivering a blow to the offensive center. The linebacker should watch for the screen and shuffle pass when going to the hook areas.

Defensive Guards (Number 2 Men)

Alignment: Line up on the outside shoulder of the offensive guard approximately 12-inches off the ball. If penetrating, align in the guard-tackle gap.

Stance: Either a low three-point or four-point stance, with the feet parallel or toe-instep relationship.

Initial Movement and Execution: On the snap of the ball, the defensive guard will strike a blow with the inside forearm into the outside shoulder of the offensive guard. The number 2 man will react from there. If penetrating, the defensive guard will charge straight ahead going low and hard. The defensive guard will take approximately two steps, or to a depth of 1 yard.

Responsibilities: 1. Play Toward—Keep the offensive guard off the linebacker. Responsible from the offensive guard to the tackle area. If not blocked, watch for the trap by the offside offensive guard. If penetrating, go hard for depth and tackle anything over and around the area. Watch for the trap.

2. Play Away—Go on pursuit. Watch for the draw on sprint-out away. If guard pulls, follow him down the line. If penetrating go on pursuit.

3. Drop Back—Rush the passer hard and close the middle area off. May be responsible for the draw play.

Coaching Points: Stay square to the line of scrimmage when delivering a blow. Keep the outside arm and leg free. When being trapped, stay low and strike a hard blow to the offensive trapper.

Defensive Tackles (Number 3 Man)

- Alignment:* Can either align in the tackle-end gap, inside shoulder, head up, or outside shoulder of the offensive end. Approximately 12 to 18 inches off the ball.
- Stance:* Line up in a low three-or four-point stance. This may depend on the defensive technique employed.
- Initial Movement and Execution:* If aligned inside or in a head-up position, step with the outside foot and forearm and deliver a blow into the offensive end. If positioned on the outside shoulder of the offensive end, strike a blow with the inside shoulder of the offensive end, strike a blow with the inside shoulder. When stationed in the tackle-end gap, penetrate across the line of scrimmage.
- Responsibilities:*
1. Play Toward—If aligned inside, protect against the straight dive and the inside area. When outside, protect the territory from the offensive end to the alignment of the defensive end. If aligned inside, do not be driven in by the offensive end. Watch for the trap.
 2. Play Away—Chase the play, looking for the bootleg, reverse, etc.
 3. Drop Back—Rush the passer hard from the outside in.
 4. Play Outside—Move to the outside, fighting blockers. If roll-out pass, attempt to contain the passer. If end drops off, fight for containment.
- Coaching Points:* When penetrating, go low and hard. Get off the ground and get to the ball immediately. If not blocked, look to the inside and prepare for a trap block. Stay low and keep the shoulder square, meeting trapper with inside forearm, shoulder, and leg. Keep outside arm and leg free.

Defensive Ends (Number 4 Men)

- Alignment:* Line up on the line of scrimmage approximately 1 to 3 yards outside the offensive end, depending upon the alignment of the defensive tackle.
- Stance:* A low two-point stance, with inside leg forward.
- Initial Movement and Execution:* On the snap of the ball take a short jab step forward, approximately 6 to 9 inches with the inside leg. Can have keys on the lead offensive back, quarterback, and offensive linemen.

- Responsibilities:*
1. Play Toward—come across the line of scrimmage forcing all plays to the inside; nobody must get outside. Do not give ground. The angle of penetration will be determined by the type of play and quickness of it—“Ball comes, I come.” If sprint-out toward, can retreat to the flat and have the linebacker be responsible for containment with the defensive tackle.
 2. Play Away—Take step forward and wait for the counter, reverse, bootleg, screen pass, etc. Drop off and then go on pursuit—“Ball goes, I go.”
 3. Drop Back—Can either rush the passer hard or cover in the flat area.
- Coaching Points:* Keep shoulders parallel to the line of scrimmage when the play comes forward. When dropping off to the flat, go as deep as possible so long as it is possible to come back and cover the offensive ball carrier to the line of scrimmage. Do not be a floater when forcing the running plays.

Defensive Halfbacks (Number 5 Men)

- Alignment:* Line up 3-4 yards outside offensive end and 7-10 yards deep. Line up as wide as the widest receiver.
- Stance:* Two-point stance with outside leg back.
- Initial Movement and Execution:* Watch your required key (end?). on snap of ball, weight should be shifted back to outside foot on reading the key.
- Responsibility:* React to run, if end blocks. Approach the ball carrier from an outside-in position. On plays away, look for pass and then pursue. Must watch for the fake block. If offensive end pass protects or releases downfield, play pass first, then react to the run.
1. Play Toward—Deep outside, one-third unless indicated otherwise.
 2. Play Away—Deep outside one-third unless indicated otherwise.
 3. Drop Back—Deep outside one-third unless indicated otherwise.
- Coaching Points:* Play the man when he is in the zone. Be as deep as the deepest receiver. When the ball is thrown, go quickly and play the ball at its highest point.

Safety Man

Alignment: Directly over the center, 9-12 yards in depth.

Stance: Two-point stance

Initial Movement and Execution: Watch your required key. On snap of the ball, the first step should be back.

Responsibility: On any play the safety must think “pass” first and “run” second. The safety only assists on runs when it is definitely a run and not a pass.

1. Play Toward—Deep middle one-third of field unless indicated otherwise.

2. Play Away—Deep middle one-third of field unless indicated otherwise.

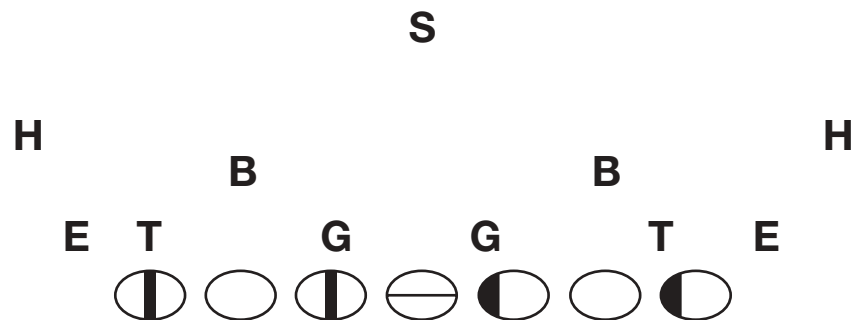
3. Play Back—Deep middle one-third of field unless indicated otherwise.

Coaching Points: Most think “pass” first and “run” second. Play as deep. Play as deep as deepest receiver. Sprint to the ball and go through the receiver to the ball.

Pass Coverage Responsibility

CBs #1, FS #2 strong, SLB #3, WLB # 2 weak. WLB and MLB can switch coverage to keep SLB inside.

THE WIDE TACKLE-6 DEFENSE



Strengths:

- 1) Strong outside (T and E).
- 2) Good LB support outside
- 3) 8-man front versus run
- 4) Excellent against option plays
- 5) 3 deep secondary

Weaknesses:

- 1) Generally weaker inside than out
- 2) Middle area (3 on 2)
- 3) Over offensive tackle (tackle against #2 LB)
- 4) Attack past DT with certain blocking combinations
- 5) DG defenders must be good against the middle game
- 6) Weak pass underneath coverage seen if E's drop off the line

Plays That Go Best

Versus the Defense: *Middle*—Quick traps, sneak, counters, isolation is excellent against LB, inside belly; *Off-Tackle*—Veer, dive, outside belly, power at LB, sprint draw, tailback drive, cross-buck; *Outside*—Sweep, options vs. DE.

Blocking Schemes *Middle*—trap DG, one-on-one with back reading DG, fold; *Off-Tackle*—One-on-one, angle block down and trap DT or DE, block out and isolate LB; *Outside*—Double DT and kick out DE.

Comments: Can the tight end block DT? If so, then attack inside and out. Split end (twins set also) and attack alignment of DE. Use play action against LBs. Attack flat or deep outside if rotation occurs.

Playing the Wide Tackle-6 Defense

The following is the alignment, stance, initial movement and execution, responsibilities and coaching points of each position of the Wide Tackle-6 defense.

Defensive Guards (Number 1 Men)

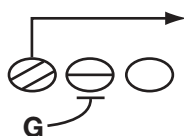
Alignment: Line nose up, inside, shoulder, or outside shoulder of the offensive guard. Can automatically line up in either of the three positions even if splits are normal. Align 1 to 4 feet off the guard according to defensive play.

Stance: A low three- or four-point stance, with feet parallel or in a toe-instep relationship.

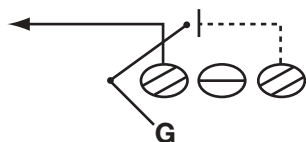
Initial Movement and Execution: Step with the outside foot, and forearm shiver with the outside shoulder and arm. Some coaches teach stepping with the inside foot first and hitting with the outside shoulder. Stay low and read and react to the movements of the offensive guard and center.

Responsibility: Responsible for the inside, sneak, quick trap, wedge and draw plays. Should not be taken by a fake in backfield.

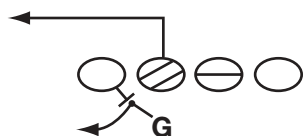
1. Play Toward—(1) Stop trap first—Offensive guard pulls past center step laterally to the nose of center, fight blocks and play traps.



If guard pulls toward end, step in the direction of the pull. If to pressure, step to inside and play trap.



If pressure from outside (offensive tackle), read backfield action and fight outside pressure.



(2) Defeat the single block of the offensive guard. Fight double-team pressure from both offensive center and guard, or tackle and guard.

2. Play Away—Play offensive guard area, then pursue. If sprint-out is away, look for the draw.

3. Drop Back—Rush the passer. One or both guards can be conscious of the draw. If one guard has the draw the other rushes the passer hard.

Coaching Points: Strike a hard blow into the offensive guard. Do not run around the block. First responsibility is the inside, then go outside.

Defensive Linebackers (Number 2 Men)

Alignment: Align head up with the offensive tackle approximately 2-1/2 to 3 yards off the ball. This will depend on the tactical situation and strategic planning.

Stance: A low two-point stance, with either the feet parallel or in a toe-instep relationship.

Initial Movement and Execution: Read and key the movement of the offensive tackle, then react to the play.

Responsibility: 1. Play Toward—Step up and meet the offensive tackle with a low forearm shiver. If the offensive tackle blocks out or in, step up, stay low, and be prepared for isolation, power, and trap plays.

2. Play Outside—Protect area, then pursue. If sprint-out or roll-over pass, can either sprint to the flat and cover that area or slide down the line, pick up the offensive end, and stay with him to the hook area (slightly wider than the drop-back pass). Secondary containment of the quarterback if end or tackle loses containment.

3. Play Away—Check for the counter, then pursue to the ball. Stay at your position if the backfield divides, then pursue. If sprint-out or roll-out away, check for the draw and drive back picking up crossing receivers (or to hook zone).

4. Drop Back—Sprint to the hook area approximately 10 to 15 yards in depth. Play any receiver in your area. Stay alert for screens, draws, etc.

Coaching Points: Stay low and meet offensive tackle low, hold ground. Second, contain man on running plays to the outside. Be quicker and fast on pursuit.

Defensive Tackles (Number 3 Men)

- Alignment:*** Line nose up to inside or outside shoulder of the offensive end approximately 12 to 18 inches off the ball.
- Stance:*** A three- or four-point stance.
- Initial Movement and Execution:*** Step with the outside foot and deliver a blow with the outside shoulder and forearm. (May step with inside leg first and on the second step strike a blow with the outside shoulder and forearm.) Read and react to the offensive end and tackle movements.
- Responsibility:*** Responsible for off-tackle are and inside.
1. Play Toward—Play territory and protect against the straight dive. If outside, fight through the end's block and attempt to force the pitch on the option play.
 2. Play Away—Read the offensive end,. Be alert for the trap, then chase looking for the reverse, bootleg, etc.
 3. Drop Back—Hit end and never let him release to the inside. Be contain man and rush from outside-in.
- Coaching Points:*** Strike a hard blow into the offensive end and stay square to the line of scrimmage. Do not penetrate when there is no pressure; be aware of the trap. When hitting end, do not overextend in executing the charge.

Defensive Ends (Number 4 Man)

- Alignment:*** Line up approximately 1 to 2 yards from the defensive tackle. This will depend on the alignment of the defensive tackle. This will depend on the alignment of the defensive tackle, down and distance, sideline, etc.
- Stance:*** A low two-point stance with the outside leg back.
- Initial Movement and Execution:*** On the snap of the ball, jab step with the inside foot and react to the play.
- Responsibility:***
1. Play Toward—Contain on all wide plays. Drive across line. Force everything to the inside. Do not give ground. "Ball comes, I come."
 2. Play Away—Drop back to the flat area and look for the reverse, throwback pass, bootleg, cutback, etc., then pursue to the ball carrier. "Ball go, I go."
 3. Drop Back— Go immediately to the flat zone and turn to the outside. Cover area and sprint to ball.

Coaching Points: Push everything to the inside when the play comes toward. Be tough and hold ground. Meet play with inside shoulder and leg, keeping the outside leg and arm free. Keep shoulders parallel to the line of scrimmage.

Safety Man

Alignment: Directly over the center, 9-12 yards in depth.

Stance: Two-point stance

Initial Movement and Execution: Watch your required key. On snap of the ball, the first step should be back.

Responsibility: On any play the safety must think “pass” first and “run” second. The safety only assists on runs when it is definitely a run and not a pass.

1. Play Toward—Deep middle one-third of field unless indicated otherwise.

2. Play Away—Deep middle one-third of field unless indicated otherwise.

3. Play Back—Deep middle one-third of field unless indicated otherwise.

Coaching Points: Most think “pass” first and “run” second. Play as deep. Play as deep as deepest receiver. Sprint to the ball and go through the receiver to the ball.

Pass Coverage Responsibility

CBs #1, FS #2 strong, SLB #3, WLB # 2 weak. WLB and MLB can switch coverage to keep SLB inside.

Goal Line Defense

By JERRY D. CLAIBORNE, Virginia Polytechnic Institute

Now I am not going to try to sell you on our Goal Line defense. We play the 6-5 defense and have been fairly successful with it. On the other hand, other people have been successful with the Gap 8 and 7-Box. I happen to be completely sold on the 6-5 Goal Line defense. I believe we can keep people from scoring when they get a first down inside our ten yard line. Even more important, our players are confident they can stop the opponent with our Goal Line defense. I know that my team can score against any defense and that my team can keep any other from scoring with any defense when I have this piece of chalk and eraser in my hands. However, the proof of a successful goal line defense is the number of teams it stops in game competition. Over the past several years we have stopped our opponents who have had a first and goal situation inside our ten-yard line about 50 per cent of the time. When we have started with a first and goal situation inside the ten-yard line, we have scored on our opponents 90 per cent of the time. That has been the difference in our having winning and losing seasons. I am sure many of you can find flaws in our defense, but we try to use a few stunts to keep a team off balance.

As I said before, I believe in the 6-5 Goal Line defense as it has proven highly successful to the teams I have been associated with, both as a player and a coach. To have a highly successful defense, you must first convince yourself that it is the best defense in the world. Believe in it with a passion. Then sell this defense to your coaching staff so that they believe in it heart and soul. If you can develop this type of feeling with your defense in yourself and your staff, then it will be easier to sell it to your football players. You must be able to convince your players that they are positively not going to let any opposing team score when they get a first down inside your ten-yard line. They have to believe this and they have to believe that the defense to do the job is the one they are playing. In one of our games in 1963 a team had first downs on our one-yard line, on our five-yard line, on our nine-yard line and on our ten-yard line and only scored a field goal out of the four scoring opportunities. The opponents made yardage out in the



JERRY D. CLAIBORNE

field but our players became real tough when they got close to the goal line, and we finally won the game 28-3. The last time the opponent got inside our ten-yard line, our defensive signal caller said, "All right, we've got them right where we want them. They have to run at us. Let's take the ball." I like that type of attitude in this situation, but I still prefer stopping the opponent a little further up field—it's easier on the blood pressure.

We work hard on our Goal Line offense and defense. We finish up at least fifteen of our twenty spring practice sessions with full speed goal line scrimmage. We try to emphasize to our players that great importance of scoring or keeping the opponent from scoring when the ball gets inside the ten-yard line. During the season most all of our full speed work is done on the goal line. The only time our defense goes half speed on the goal line is when we are in sweat clothes. We will have the scout team run the offense half speed. We think it builds their confidence to never permit the scout team to penetrate into the end zone.

Now as I go through our defense, if you have any questions, just yell and I will be glad to try to answer them.

I am first going to diagram our basic alignment to show you where we place our personnel and then I will go over the technique of each one of the positions. See *Diagram #1*.



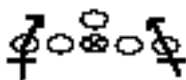
Our guards line up spacing themselves so that no one can run between them. We feel they do not have to get shoulder to shoulder to accomplish this. Their assignment is to penetrate a yard in the offensive backfield and to keep the offensive center and guards from blocking anyone. See *Diagram #2*.



The guard's stance has his elbows bent, his feet well up under him, his head close to the ground and his tail up. The guards are in a coiled position ready to explode when the ball snaps. When they explode, they drive their heads across the line of scrimmage in the gaps between the guards and center. With this charge they try to destroy the charge of the offensive guards and center. After their "explode" charge and penetration, their heads come up, tails down and they make every effort to bring their feet with them. The guards must keep a good wide base so that they do not get rolled out by the offensive guards. Their defensive charge is their step. After the charge they should make every effort to get up and pursue the ball. Even if the ball is on the one yard line, everyone should give maximum effort for pursuit as you never know when a fumble, a broken signal, a missed hand-off or any number of things will occur. When this happens, we must be pursuing in order to throw the offense for a loss or get possession of the ball.

Our tackles line up straddling the out-

side leg of a normal split offensive tackle. See Diagram #3.



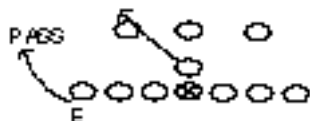
The tackle's stance is very similar to the one taken by our guards. His feet are well up under him, knees bent, tail higher than his head, elbows bent, head down and ready to explode on the snap of the ball.

The tackles will face in at a slight angle, and they will charge in the direction they are facing. We do not want them to charge straight across the line as they are easily turned out by the offensive tackles. On the snap of the ball our tackles will make an explosive charge thrusting their inside shoulder pad at the outside shin of the offensive tackles. After their charge, they bring their feet with them, penetrate and pursue the football.

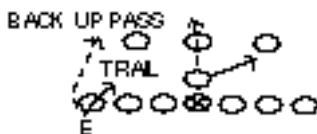
Each of our ends lines up straddling the offensive end's outside foot. See Diagram #4.



He will be in a two, three or four point stance depending on where the ball is located, and which stance he can use the best. On the snap of the ball, the end explodes into the offensive end trying to whip him right in his tracks. His responsibility is to never get blocked out. He must not let anyone run between him and the defensive tackle. If there is a flow pass toward him, our end is the contain man. See Diagram #5. On a



back-up pass he has the outside rush. When the flow is away from him, he is the trail man. See Diagram #6.

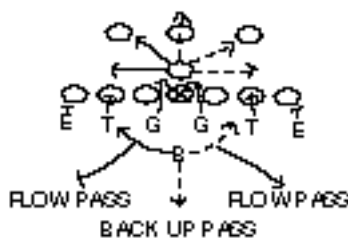


Our middle linebacker has to be the real "horse" in this defense. He should be your best football player and a great tackler. We pick this position first on his tackling ability and then on his ability to play pass defense.

He lines up between our defensive guards and head on the offensive center. See Diagram #7.



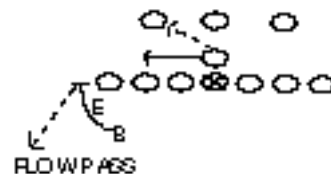
His depth depends on the position of the ball. He keys the ball and has the responsibility of filling the holes between the defensive guards and tackles. On a flow pass he has the strong hook. On a back-up pass he has the middle zone. See Diagram #8.



Each of our two inside linebackers lines up straddling the inside leg of the defensive end. See Diagram #9.

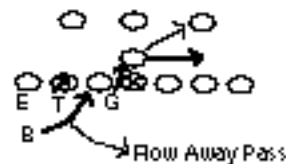


On flow toward him his first responsibility is to fill behind his defensive end. If it is a run he continues up to attack the ball carrier. If a pass develops he takes the short flat. See Diagram #10.

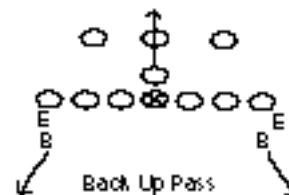


If the flow is toward him and he sees the ball handed off inside, then he may support to the inside.

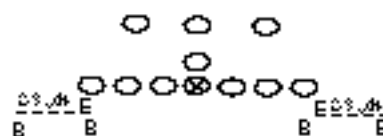
When the flow is away from him, he fills the gap between the defensive guards and tackles. If a pass develops when the flow is away from him, he covers the middle zone. See Diagram #11.



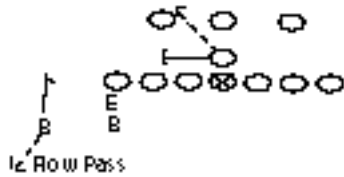
On a back-up pass he drops straight back and helps cover his one-fifth of the field. See Diagram #12.



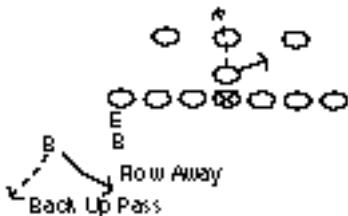
Each of our two outside linebackers lines up two to three yards outside of our defensive ends. He has his outside foot back and in a football position. His depth varies depending upon the situation. See Diagram #13.



Our outside linebacker plays slow and does not commit himself too fast. If it is a run toward him, he is the contain rusher. He must not let anyone get around him. If a pass develops on flow, he has the deep outside area. *See Diagram #14.*



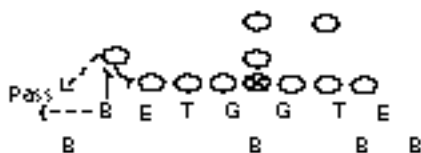
If the flow is away from him, he has a slow revolve. He must be alert for any bootleg, reserve or throwback. If it is a back-up pass, he covers his outside one-fifth. *See Diagram #15.*



On our pass defense, we play strictly zone. We do tell our defensive linebackers to get right on top of a man once he gets in his zone. We emphasize the fact that they do not have to get in the back of the end zone to cover a man in that area. We try to stay at least four yards from the end zone line.

I would like to discuss our adjustments on several different alignments. We try to keep our adjustments just as simple as possible. We never move our six linemen. We make our adjustments with our linebackers.

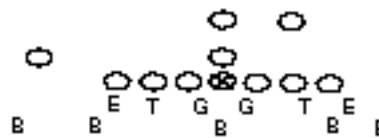
On a wing formation we only move one man—our inside linebacker on the side of the wingback. *See Diagram #16.*



We move our inside linebacker head on the wingback. He reads the wingback. If

the wingback blocks in on our end, the linebacker comes up to contain. If the wingback comes out for a pass, the linebacker will move to his coverage area. The depth of our linebacker will depend upon the position of the ball and also what the team usually does from this formation.

On a wide wing formation, we will loosen up our inside linebacker and also our outside linebacker. Our outside linebacker will move to an outside position on the split man until he is able to cover him into the boundary by lining up on his inside. Our inside linebacker will loosen. His width and depth will depend upon the situation and tendency of the team we are playing. *See Diagram #17.*



When the opponent gives us what we call a strong side, we will slide our linebackers to the strong side. *See Diagram #18.* We do not move our two outside line-



backers. If the strong flanker is split out wide, our outside linebacker will move out using his rule of staying on the flanker's outside until he is able to cover him into the boundary by lining up on his inside.

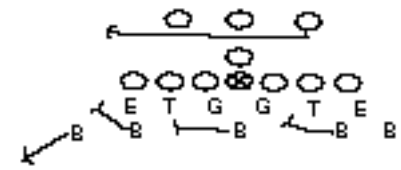
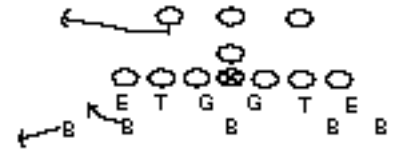
We treat an unbalanced line the same as a strong flanker. *See Diagram #19.*



We have moved our line over one man against some teams who have used the

unbalanced line—for example, Syracuse.

We treat motion the same as if the man lined up in this position. As the motion starts, we will slide our linebackers to their desired positions. *See Diagram #20 and #21.*



We will always try to do a little something different in our goal line defense in order to take advantage of our scouting report on our opponent. We try to do everything possible to stop the plays they have been using to score against other people. We feel that if we can stop their favorite plays, then they have been using to score against other people. We feel that if we can stop their favorite plays, then they will have to go to their second choice to try to score. If we can accomplish this, then we have the first part of the battle won.

We also use a tighter charge as the team gets closer to our goal line or an out charge when it is a long yardage situation. (Applause)

QUESTION: Do you allow the ends to release outside?

MR. CLAIBORNE: The question was do we allow the ends to release outside. We try to get them to release inside.

QUESTION: Where do the ends line up?

MR. CLAIBORNE: He asked: where do the ends line up. He lines up straddling the end's outside leg. He is not facing in like the tackle. He tries to keep his outside foot back and with his weight full on his outside foot where on the snap of the ball he can unload into the defensive end. There again he might be in a three-point stance and then our four-point stance, depending upon what he can do best.

QUESTION: Do you have a slot?

MR. CLAIBORNE: The question was if we have a slot. If he has a slot we still keep him here and move our linebacker out here on a slot and then depending upon what they do best in the slot we either charge this man or stay put, but he will keep this stance and charge here or charge there. I will go over that. We do not move our 6 man across there. I will get into that. Are there any other questions on the keying?

QUESTION: Does the immediate key flow?

MR. CLAIBORNE: The question was does the immediate key flow. We try to go where he is. I know there are different keys that will help you. For our linebacker we try to follow him. If he glues his eyes on the football he is going to go through the end to the back.

QUESTION: What do you do if the end is split out three feet?

MR. CLAIBORNE: The question is: what do you do if you split the end out about three feet. There again we try to go with what they do. We try to get out there nose on him and our linebacker is in here. One thing about this man in here. We tell him "If you see this ball handed off inside, come inside and make the play."

Virginia Tech's Attack Defense



Bud Foster

**Defensive
Coordinator**

**Virginia
Polytechnic
Institute**

Blacksburg, Va.



Jim Cavanaugh

**Outside
Linebackers**



Lou West

Secondary



Charlie Wiles

Defensive Line



It is with great pride that we can represent Coach Frank Beamer and the Virginia Tech football program, and it is indeed a tremendous honor for our defensive staff to speak at this year's AFCA Convention. I would also like to recognize a special group of people in our program and that is our players. It is through the hard work and commitment of these young men that allows us this opportunity to speak with you today.

Our defense is recognized for its aggressive — attacking style of play. Our main objective is to pressure the offense by creating chaos with multiple fronts, stunts and coverages. It is a scheme that looks complicated, but yet is very simple.

We play three different packages: G, Tuff and FD/ST-G. Our G package is our base defense.

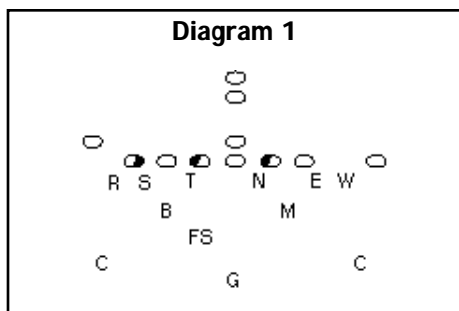


Diagram 1
A true eight man front. Our tuff package or 46 is the compliment to G=Defense.

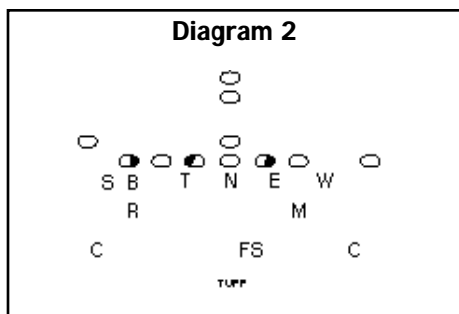


Diagram 2
What makes these two work together is that we can stem back and forth with these two fronts. Our third package is what we call FD/ST-G.

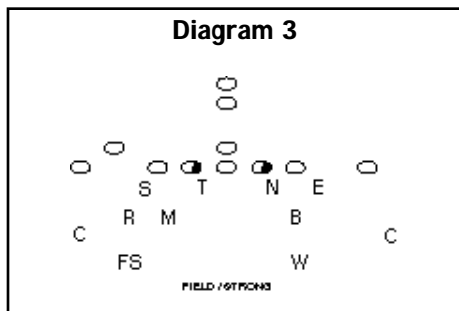


Diagram 3
It is G front with a two deep shell. With

these three looks, we are able to stem and move to different fronts, we will be able to blitz from all of these looks as well as play our coverages.

Before we get into techniques and fundamentals, I would like to share with you our base philosophy and objectives of our defense.

1. Stop the run.
 - Limit play selection.
 - Limit blocking scheme.
2. Outnumber defenders to blockers.
3. Outnumber receivers with four-man rush.
4. Attack the offense.
 - Make it defend itself.
 - Not going to see everything.
5. Attitude defense.
 - Pressure mentality.
 - Speed and desire.
6. Commitment to man coverage.
7. Study and predict protections.
 - Fewer receivers in patterns.
8. Study how offense reacts to pressure.
 - Take away quick answer.
 - Make quarterback beat you with his checks; take game out of press box.
9. Great disguise.
 - Multiple movements.
 - Up-calls.
 - Identical man-zone adjustments.
10. Solid fundamentals.
 - Block protection.
 - Tackling.
 - Get-off.
 - Pursuit — bending the body.
 - Four seconds of concentration.
 - Communication.

Charley Wiles, Defensive Line

Techniques and Fundamentals

1. Defensive Line: 10 Commandments
 - a. **Stance:** Three-point, heel-to-toe relationship, hips slightly higher than shoulders.
 - b. **Alignment:** Based on assignment and offensive line keys.
 - c. **Assignment:** Technique, stunt, etc.
 - d. **Get-Off:** Feet in neutral zone by the time the ball disappears into center's crouch.
 - e. **Target:** V of offensive lineman's neck.
 - f. **Cloth:** Jersey.
 - g. **Separate:** Lock out.
 - h. **Escape:** Rip or wipe, push with power, pull with trail, step 45 and rip your gap.
 - i. **Pursuit**
 - j. **Tackle:** Angle or Roll.
2. Gap I.D.

3. Alignments and Techniques

4. Stance keys of offensive linemen.

a. Run: Setting low in stance, weight forward, heels up-leaning forward on toes.

b. Pass: Setting high in stance, leaning back on heels, little weight on down hand, eyes zeroed in on you.

c. Pull: Leaning right of left, aligned at a different level (3), get combination of line-man leaning forward and some leaning back = a pull.

d. Draw: Overemphasis of hands at line of scrimmage.

e. Tight Splits: Combination of big vs tight splits.

f. Screen: Let you in with little resistance = screen.

Jim Cavanaugh, Outside Linebackers

I would like to thank the AFCA, Frank Beamer, our head football coach, and Bud Foster, our defensive coordinator for this opportunity to speak before you.

The outside linebackers in our eight-man front package are named the "Rover" and the "Whip." The Rover is our strong safety and the Whip is our weak outside linebacker. The Rover goes to passing strength and the Whip goes away. With the ball on the hash, the Rover goes to the field and the Whip goes to the boundary. The Rover's physical skills are those of a corner, and the Whip's skills are similar to those of a free safety.

Alignment

As Bud mentioned previously, we play three different packages without substituting personnel. In all 3 packages, our rules remain constant for lining up. In "G" defense, both the Rover and Whip will align on the line of scrimmage in our "up" position, showing blitz. We want to show pressure every time we align (See Diagram 1).

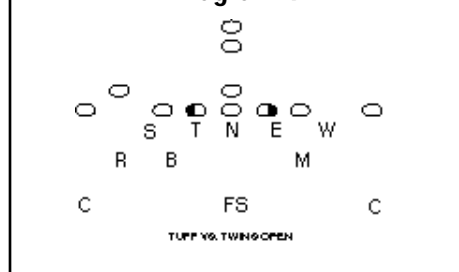
We call this our eight tech. From this position, we will blitz a crash or D-crash stunt; we will punch out and alley-run to a zone responsibility, or we will junk drop with man coverage responsibilities.

In "Tuff" defense, the Rover will align as a C-split linebacker, and Whip will I play a wide five (See Diagram 2).

The Rover and Backer will adjust as the offensive personnel reduce their offensive sets (Diagram 4).

In "Field/Strong" defense, our 4-3 package, the Rover will align in a force position to strength and our Whip will align to the boundary hash in a two deep shell (See Diagram 3).

Diagram 4



As you can see, we put our Rover and Whips in a lot of different positions.

Pressure from Rovers and Whips

In teaching our outside linebackers we pressure primarily in two ways — crash and D-crash.

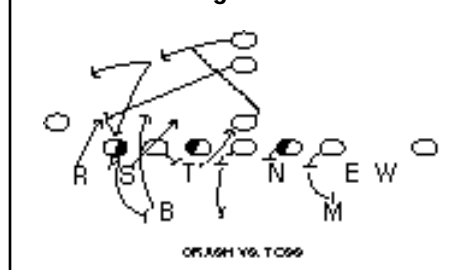
Crash Stunt

Landmark: Near knee of the deepest back.

Option responsibility: Pitch.

Power Runs: Contain; force the play inside.

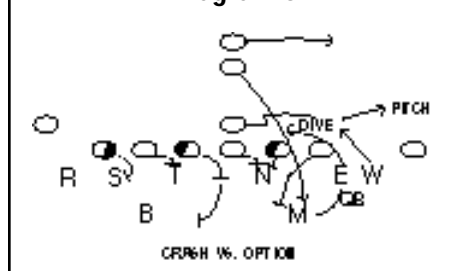
Diagram 5



Crash vs. Toss (Passing Strength)

Rover will run his inside shoulder through the outside shoulder of the fullback, forcing the tailback inside. If the tailback chooses to bounce outside, the Rover has his outside arm free to make the tackle, forcing the tailback to run laterally.

Diagram 6



Crash vs. Dive Option (Away from Passing Strength)

Whip will attack the near knee of the tailback. Upon reading the flare path of the tailback, he will redirect outside to put his nose on the outside shoulder pad of the tailback. This should take away the pitch or flare screen, whatever may be the case.

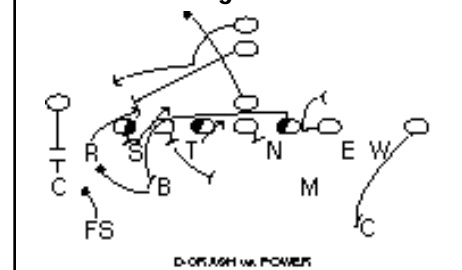
D-Crash Stunt

Landmark: Near knee of near back.

Option Responsibility: Quarterback.

Power Runs: Spill; make the play bounce outside.

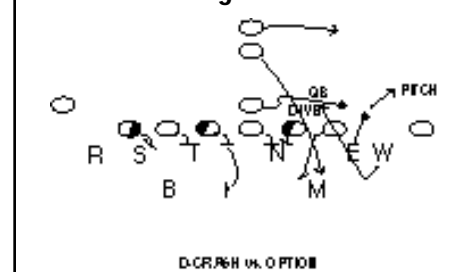
Diagram 7



D-Crash vs. Power (Passing Strength)

Rover will run his outside shoulder through the inside shoulder of the fullback, forcing the tailback to bounce outside into the pursuit of the scrape linebacker, free safety filling or the squat corner.

Diagram 8



D-Crash vs. Dive Option (Away from Passing Strength)

Whip will come off the near hip of the offensive tackle who is veer blocking the playside linebacker. The Whip is responsible for tackling the quarterback. The N/M have the dive, and the end has the pitch.

Lou West, Secondary

First, let me take a moment and say thank you to the AFCA for allowing me to speak to my friends, colleagues and peers. Indeed it is a great honor and pleasure for me to have this opportunity to share some of our defensive ideas with you all.

As stated earlier, part of our philosophy is to show one more man, in the box, than the offense can block. In the secondary, we try to get involved in this disguise as much as possible, depending on the coverage. What I would like to do is take you through our base coverage, and give you an idea on how we try to help give that pressure look in the secondary.

First, when teaching any coverage, I tell my student-athletes they must know the primary progression of every coverage. That progression is:

1. Alignment: Put yourself in the best position to execute your assignment when the ball is snapped.

2. Stance: Get your feet and body in a position to react as quick as possible, without any wasted movement.

3. Keys: Who will give you the quickest reads to help you perform your assignment when the ball is snapped.

4. Responsibilities: How to attack vs. run and what to defend vs. pass.

Along with this primary progression, they must also know who is responsible for primary run force (pitch) and who are the primary alley (quarterback) players, in every coverage.

Run Support Calls: Primary force player.

Sky = Rover.

Easy = Whip.

Read = OLB/DB off tight end's block.

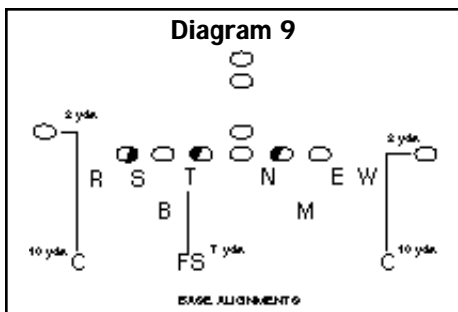
Our basic coverage is a rubber concept, with two deep half players. Our safety is the robber and our Corners are the deep half players, while our strong safety and outside linebacker are responsible for the flats. This coverage, at times and depending on the formation, will give us a nine man in the box look.

Our base coverage vs. a pro set would be taught like this:

Alignment

Corners: Ten yards deep, two yards inside Wide Receiver (start at seven yards, inside shade, move to 10 x 2 by the time the ball is snapped) (See Diagram 1).

Safety: Seven-eight yards over strong side guard (may start at 10 and over tight end) (Diagram 9).



Stance

Corners: Outside foot up slightly turned inward. Must be able to see Quarterback and wide receiver. Bent at the ankle, knees, and waist, (Good backpedal position).

Safety: Inside foot up slightly turned out. (In good back peddle stance). Inside foot up so he can get a quicker read on No. 2.

Keys

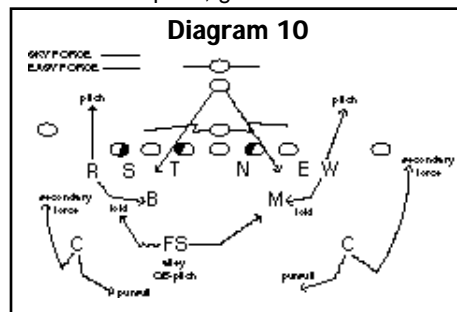
Corners: Key through end man on line of scrimmage to the ball. See wide receiver out of peripheral vision.

Safety: Key through uncovered line-man, to the ball, the No. 2 receiver strong.

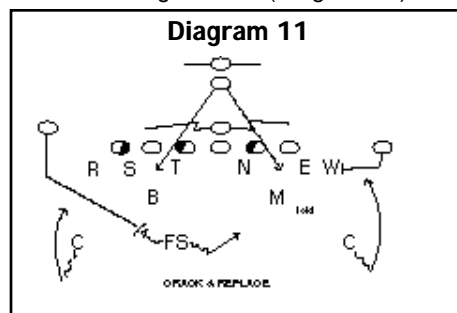
Responsibilities (Diagram 10)

Run: Sky support strong - easy support weak.

Corners: Run to you, secondary run force. Check pass, go to ball.



Any crack by wide receiver, replace defender being cracked (Diagram 11).



Example: Wide receiver cracks vs Rover, attack ball outside in. Wide receiver, cracks safety, attack ball inside out. Run away from you, get on a pursuit angle to stop the touchdown run.

Pass: Play inverted halves. Must keep good depth, protect the post, react to every thing else. Always have awareness of number one receiver to your side. Wide receiver runs underneath, route check back side post, be ready to help.

Safety - Run: Alley player to both sides. Attack ball inside out. Think quarterback to pitch on option. (Secondary fill player).

Pass: Must get read from number two receiver strong side. Reads are:

Diagram 12: No. 2 vertical, run with him man-to-man.

Diagram 13: No. 2 out, look up No. 1 and rob curl to post.

Diagram 14: No. 2 drags, look up No. 1 weak and rob dig.

Diagram 15: No. 2 blocks, free up, get depth and look for second-level crosser.

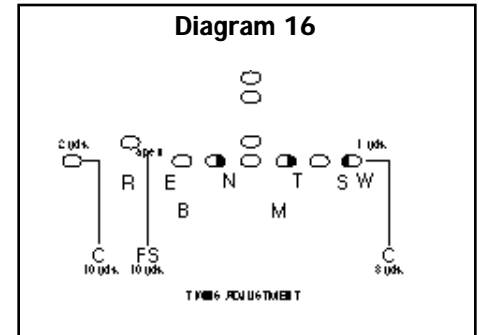
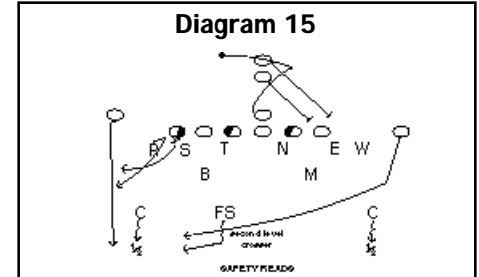
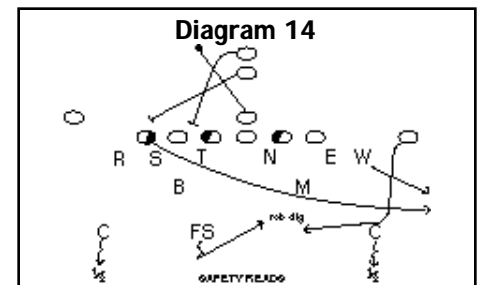
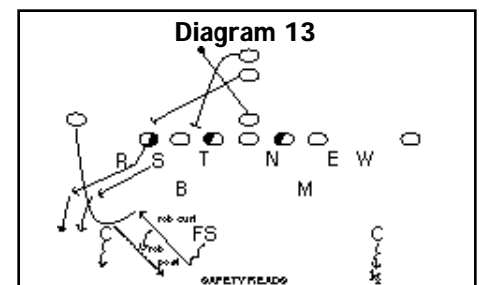
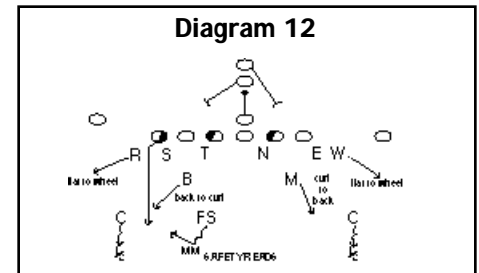
Adjustments

Vs. Twins: See Diagram 16

Corner to Split Side: Normal (2 x 10).

Corner to Tight Side: 1 x 8 on tight end with read support on run.

Safety will be 10 yards deep, align in apex of widest receiver and next man on the line of scrimmage (offensive tackle). Reads are the same.



Again, I would like to say thanks to the AFCA for allowing me to share some of our ideas and philosophies with you.

A Multiple Eight-Man-Front Package

Don James

University of Washington

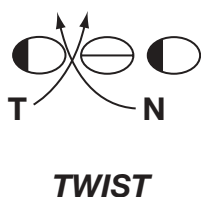
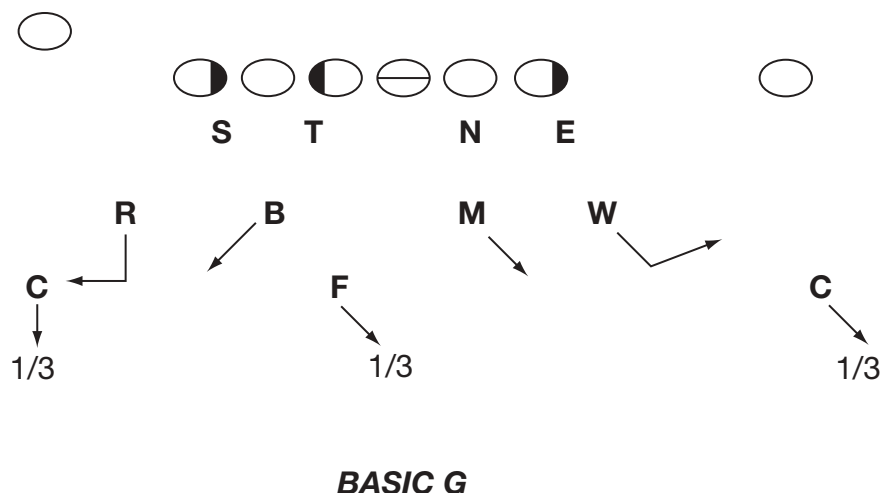
It's good to be back to this area. We're a long way from here. I spent about nine hours on an airplane, and I have an 8:30 flight leaving tonight. At 7:30 I have to be out that door. My original home is Massillon, Ohio, which is about 90 miles away.

What I thought I would do is not dwell so much on individual technique but give you a system. I want to show you what we are doing with our defensive scheme. We started out in a 50 look but have evolved into an even-front scheme. We wanted to get into a balanced defensive scheme. We were getting hammered by teams that got into alignments and then shifted or motioned to something else. We wanted something so that if we getting hurt with all those shifts, we could simplify our defense, get lined up in a defense, and keep from getting hurt. We evolved into this defense by backing the nose man off and keeping the eagle look to the tight end with an even look to the split-end side. We played our rover and Will outside linebacker in similar positions. It didn't look too good against two tight ends, but at the same time, if the offense brought the split end into the tight position, our corner walked, which balanced that advantage. We shift out of this defense, and if we put the word up into the defensive call, all 11 guys go up to the line of scrimmage. With the shifting defense and the up call, we got what we wanted. We got the quarterback checking off his huddle-called play. If we are showing a rover blitz or Will crash, that quarterback has to keep the tight end in to block or at least change the protection. The offense has to go to more maximum protection and to throwing check-down patterns or changing their plays. With our defensive alignment, we found that we were cutting down the number of running plays an offense could use.

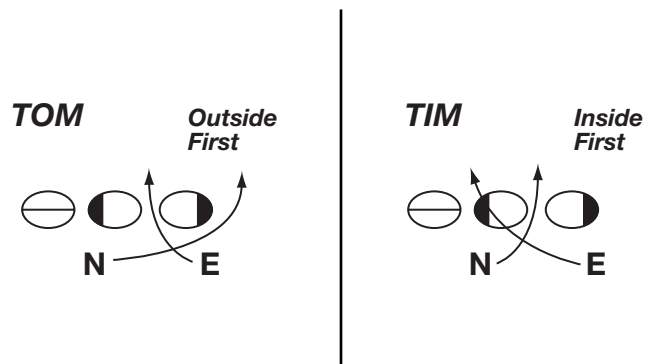
The defense was called G. We have a stud linebacker who plays over the tight end. If you play that position for us, you have to learn pass coverage. In the G call, the stud is taken out. He plays a 7 technique, which is an inside shade on the shoulder of the tight end. The direction call will tell our tackle and nose guard whether to play the 3 technique or an inside 2 shade. The end to the split-end side would be in a 5 shade. The defense is balanced and easy to adjust, and we are getting an eight-man front. That was our basic defense and the defense we are in a vast amount of time.

In our defense, we are not sitting back and reading. We are attacking the line of scrimmage and reading on the run. We don't worry about running around a block. We are trying to get upfield as fast as we can and make something happen. We used to get hurt by the offense trading their tight end from one side to the other after we declared our defense. What we do now is make a different direction call, which moves our tackle and nose guard to the opposite 3 and 2 techniques, the end to the 7 technique, and the stud to the 5 technique. We had no confusion with people trying to run from side to side. We do flip the Mike and backer linebackers because it is easy to do that. The rover and Will are interchangeable, so there is no need to flip them. We have calls to move all the down linemen anywhere we want them.

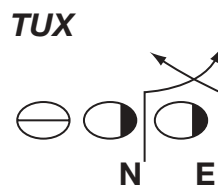
From the basic G look, let me show you some of our pass-rush stunts. We can use them on running situations also. We do that to slow down the linemen trying to pick up the stunts. The first stunt is called Twist. In the Twist, the tackle goes first. We cheat our linemen a bit to get to the proper place to make the stunt effective. The tackle comes from the 3 to the inside gap into the center. The nose guard comes from the 2-1 and goes second through the same hole.



The next stunt is called Tom. The Tom is an exchange charge stunt between the nose guard and the end. The O in Tom means outside first, or end goes first, and the nose guard loops to the outside. The end comes hard into the inside gap from the 5 technique. The nose guard takes a step up and looks for the ball. If the ball is going away, there is no need for him to run outside. The thing he has to know is that he plays contain if the quarterback drops back to throw the ball. The companion stunt is called Tim. It is like the Tom call, except the inside man goes first. The nose guard takes the outside gap and goes hard. The end draws the offensive tackle's block and fires inside.

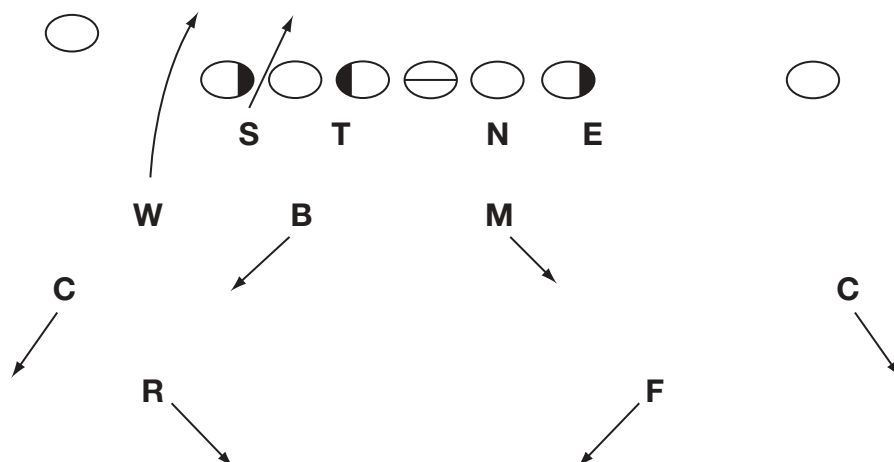


The next stunt is Tux. This is a Tom stunt delayed. We come off in our regular rush lanes, engage the offensive linemen, and then run the Tom stunt. That keeps the offensive linemen from being able to play the defense for the same responsibility every time. A lot of the big offensive linemen have trouble with this.

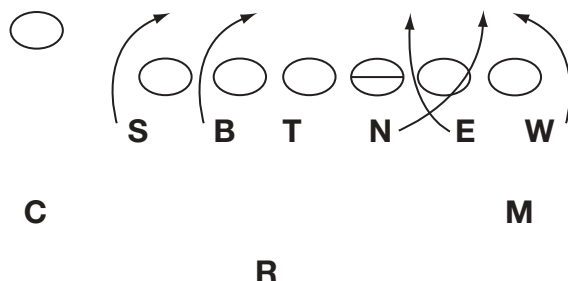


The last one is a double Tom. You have to be careful with this one. It leaves a lot of holes. We want to almost know that you are going to throw before we run this. The end and stud come hard, and the nose guard and tackle take a good look at what is happening then work their way outside. If the quarterback is flushed out of the pocket, they will probably be chasing him rather than being on the outside.

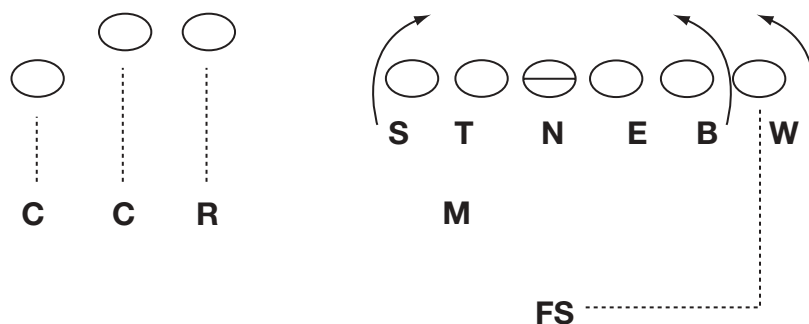
The next thing I want to show you is what we call a field G. We go to a two-deep with the rover and free safety. The Will comes to the field side. We are solid into the boundary. From this defense, we can run a field-G torpedo. This tells Will that he is free to go on a blitz. We change stud's charge to an inside charge because he doesn't have to worry about containing the quarterback on a sprint-out pass. We are playing two deep, four under, and a five-man rush. That has been a simple adjustment and a good call for us.



We have pass-rush stunts from this defense also. The first one is called Tuff backer. In this stunt, we like to run a twist with our nose guard and the end. The Twist is away from the backer. The end goes first, and the nose guard comes around. The Will also comes upfield and gives us a six-man rush.

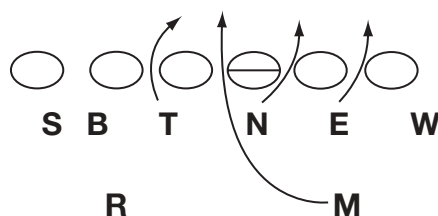


If the offense comes out in a trips set with the one back, we have to make some adjustments. We take our two corners and match up on the two wide receivers. The rover takes the H-back or third receiver. The backer moves to the tight end to be consistent with our rules. Now the Twist is run with the nose guard and tackle. The free safety moves over to take the tight end man to man. However, if the tight end releases, the offense is one man short in their blocking scheme. That is why they very seldom release him.

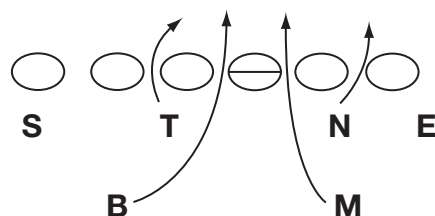


The next stunt is probably one of our best calls. It is called Mike Tuff. We call this in running situations as often as we do in passing situations. We have to put a man coverage behind it because of our alignment.

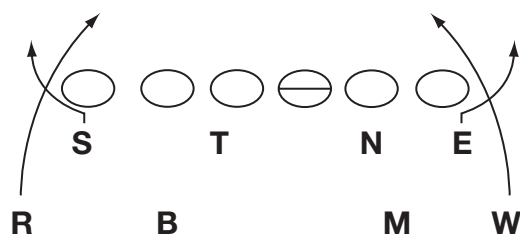
I don't know why, but this is a bear to block. If the offense doesn't put a back on the Mike linebacker, this stunt will kill them. Everyone lines up the same way. The tackle, nose guard, and end hit the gaps to their outside, and the Mike linebacker blitzes the strong-side A gap.



From the G scheme, we run a stunt that we have used for years. It is called Dog Inside and Dog Outside. We use this stunt in running situations as well as passing situations. On the Dog Inside, the Mike and backer linebackers hit the A gaps to their side, and the nose guard and tackle penetrate through the B gap to their side. The inside goes to the linebackers. If we call "Dog Outside," the linebackers hit the B gaps, and the nose guard and tackle come into the A gaps.

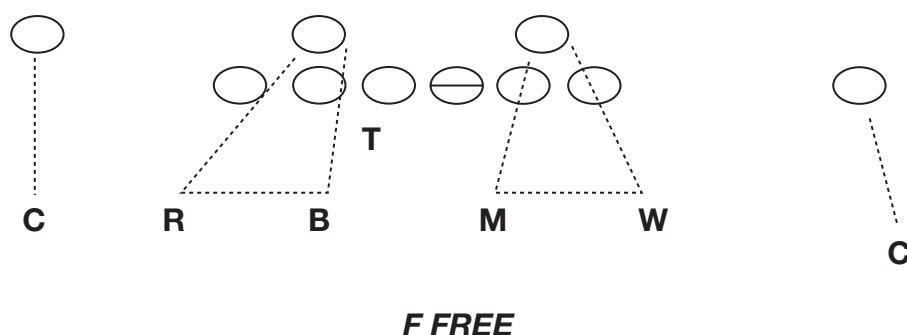


If we need a stop by the defense or a big play to pump us up, we have found that the double crash and double blitz have been good stunts for us. This gives us an extreme amount of pressure coming off the corners. The tackle and nose guard are playing straight defense. The rover and Will are crashing from the outside. The stud and end have to take contain, pitch on the option, and turn in the sweep. The double blitz is very close to the crash. The only difference is stud and end work up the field, and the rover and Will come on a delayed blitz to the inside. The stunts look alike, but the technique used in running them gives the offense a different look.



I want to talk about our secondary coverages. The base cover is called Cover 4. From the G scheme, it is a three-deep and four-under pass coverages. The corners have outside thirds of the field, and the free safety has the middle. The rover, Will, Mike and backer have the four-under zones. If we add the word Freeze, that means we are not going to make any changes in the coverage, regardless of set. That takes out the game-plan calls in the secondary if you want to go basic the half or at the end of the game. The rover goes with the passing strength, and the Will goes with the running strength.

The next coverage we use is Cover 6. We have three or four adjustments to our Cover 6. The Cover 6 is our man-to-man coverage. The first one is G-Cover 6 Free. In 1990 we had won the Pac-10 championship, but we still had to play UCLA. Homer Smith was the offensive coordinator at UCLA. We were a three-touchdown favorite. They came out and went into a shotgun set. They threw the three-step-drop passing game from that. Every pass they threw was a 5-yard pattern. If we were in Cover 4, everything was the 5-yard routes. If we were in man, everything was crossing rub-off patterns. They kept the ball afternooon. The game was tied, but we needed to win the game to be in contention for the national championship. They intercepted a pass and kicked a field goal to win the game. The point here was that we had to get into teaching more combination coverages. Now when we go one-on-one with our defensive backs and receivers, I send the running backs to work with the linebackers. That has helped our linebackers with our man coverage.



The Cover 6 Free looks like Cover 4 from our alignment. The corners take an outside shade on the receiver. The way it used to be was that if the defensive back was looking at the quarterback, it was zone. If he was looking at the receiver, it was to man. We line up looking at the quarterback and especially look for the three-step drop.

Once the quarterback goes beyond the three-step drop, the corner goes ahead and plays his normal man coverage. We want to take away the quick hitch, slant, and out. After that, he plays an outside-shade man technique, knowing that if the receiver breaks to the post, he has a free safety in center field to help. The rover and backer will combo the tight end fullback. The Mike and Will combo the tailback.

The next problem is the one-back set with an H-back in the slot. The corner and rover get in the outside shade on the split end and H-back. The free safety has too much ground to cove, so he gives a signal to the boundary corner that he has no help on the post move. The corner has to disguise his coverage and stop anything going to the post. We get a three-way combo with the Will, backer, and Mike on the tight end and fullback.

