

The East Coast Wing-T Offense



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Gentlemen, it is indeed a pleasure to stand before this great convention and talk to you about some of the things we believe in and do at Ship.

We have been very fortunate to have some outstandingly talented players and a lot of team-oriented players.

As most of you already know talent, speed and big play ability must be in your players from "The Get Go." They must have those things in order for your teaching of technique, strategy and competitive spirit to give them a better than average chance to win.

You know as I stand up here in front of you, I want to pinch myself to see if this is really happening.

Like many of you, I've quietly dreamt of addressing this convention on our "Xs" and "Os." Never really believing I'd actually be here doing it. I think of the great coaches that have stood on the platforms for so many conventions — The Staggs, Yosts, Blakes, Hayes, Schembechlers, Paternos, Wilkinsons, Osbornes and so on. It is overwhelming.

We at Ship run a variation of the Delaware Wing-T. In my early coaching career, I was very fortunate to be exposed to the true Delaware offense. When I was a beginning high school coach in Newark Delaware, I had coach Tubby Raymond's son, and coach Ed Maley's son on my team, and I was exposed to the philosophy as well as the techniques of the Wing-T. In later years, I was very fortunate to spend quality learning time with Ted Kempinski. The roots of our offense are deeply embedded in the Delaware Wing-T.

Over the years, however, we have diverged from the simple belly and buck sweep series. Yet we remain true to the philosophy of their origins.

Realizing many of you will never use the majority of what we will speak of I would like to share an e-mail I received and shared with my own team and I believe everyone could make use of.

One day an expert in time management was lecturing at our school of business. To drive home a point, he used a demonstration that his students will not forget.

As he stood in front of the group of high-powered overachievers he said, "Okay, time for a quiz."

Then he reached under the counter and produced a large wide-mouth mason jar and set it on the table in front of the class.

Then he produced about a dozen fist

size rocks and carefully placed them one by one into the jar till he could not get another one in. Then he said to the class, "Is it full?"

Everyone in the class replied loudly, "Yes."

He reached under the counter and produced a jar of small gravel and proceeded to pour some in the jar, shaking it periodically to let it settle into the spaces between the larger rocks. Once again he said, "Is it full?"

By this time the class was onto him, and one replied, "Probably not."

"Good", he replied, and he reached under the table again and brought out a bucket of sand. He started to dump it on the top of the open jar and it sifted down between the spaces left between the rocks and gravel.

Once again he asked, "Is it full?"

"No", the class replied.

Then he grabbed the pitcher of water and proceeded to pour water into the jar until it finally overflowed.

Then he looked at the class and said, "What is the point of this demonstration?"

One eager beaver raised his hand and said, "The point is that no matter how full your schedule is, you can always fit something more into it."

"Wrong", said the expert. "That is not it at all. The truth that this demonstration teaches us is that you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all."

So, I'll ask you the same question I asked the team, "What are the big rocks in your life?"

Time to be with your loved ones? Your faith and your relationship with your God? Your dreams? A worthy cause? Making a difference in your personal corner of this world? Your team?

Whatever they are be sure to recognize and place the big rocks of your life in your jar first and not to fill it with the small stuff of life.

I used this story because coaching is not just X's and O's and all of us must understand our priorities and needs and find a way to incorporate them into a philosophy that will keep us grounded and allow us to attain victory with honor.

Now let's move on to some football. The Wing-T is more than just a formation, it is also a philosophy of attack similar to any other well thought-out offense. It tries to identify a defensive personnel with two conflicted responsibilities and attack him

with plays that compliment each other but are not always the same.

A commonly used tactic against us in recruiting is to tell skill players that they will be in a "three yards and a cloud of dust" offense. Many believe it because the high school Wing-T tends to be a single formation, run-oriented offense.

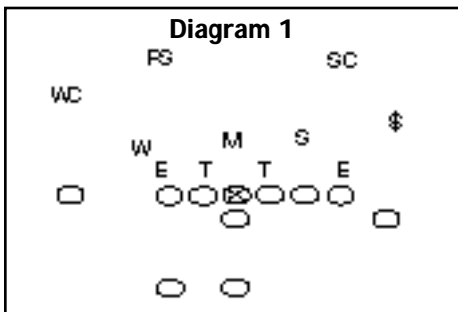
This year's Shippensburg team set university records in total offense, first downs, yards per game and points per game. In total, 58 school records were set.

Most notable was that we threw the football for over 3,000 yards, 28 touchdowns, with a pass efficiency of 239.74 and only five interceptions.

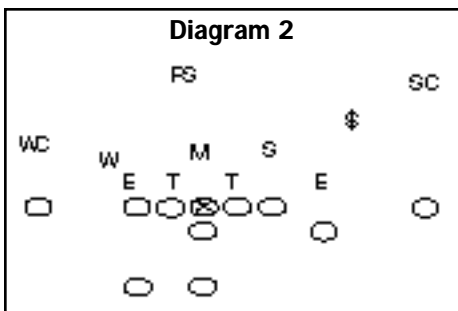
We start with a philosophy of throwing the ball so we can run, rather than run to pass.

We use multiple formation and various personnel groupings to probe the perimeter defense. When coupled with the standard Wing-T plays, the result is often limited numbers of coverages.

Our first thought is to see if the defense is run or pass oriented by alignment. A simple example is our basic Wing-T vs. cover III as shown in Diagram 1.

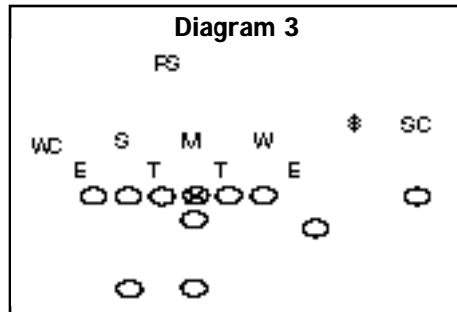


Then we will like to look at the alignment vs. a different personnel group, for example our two split end grouping (Diagram 2).



We are also looking to see the different alignments to various formations from our standard groupings such as in Diagram 3.

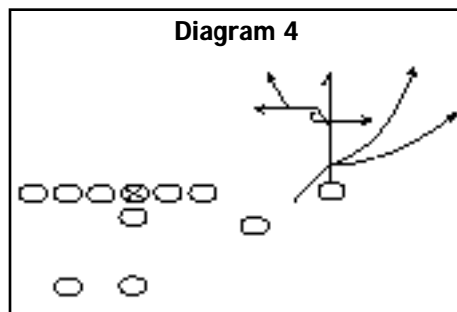
Our quarterback is taught and given the green light to audible, at will, to various pass plays. It is this freedom that creates uncertainty of the defense as to what we will do in any given situation. Basically our quarterback



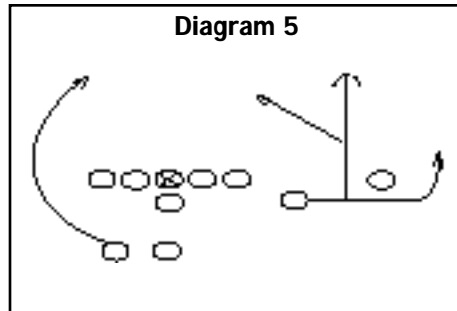
can override any of the coaches called plays, provided he can explain himself to me later.

Realize that all of our plays are plagiarized from other's successes.

The following is a diagram of our three-step drop route tree for the called receiver (Diagram 4).

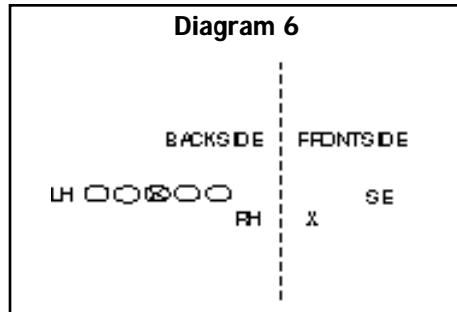


And the complimentary receivers routes are limited to Diagram 5. There is some variation vs. specific coverages.



We teach our plays as frontside/backside routes and not by positions. Since personnel groups and formations may alter who runs the route.

When we get into trips formations by either motion, personnel or formation calls, we simply declare the No. 2 receiver as the frontside/backside landmark (Diagram 6).

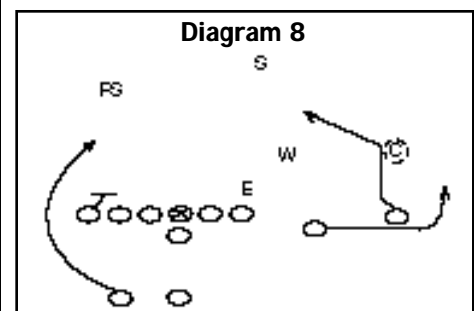
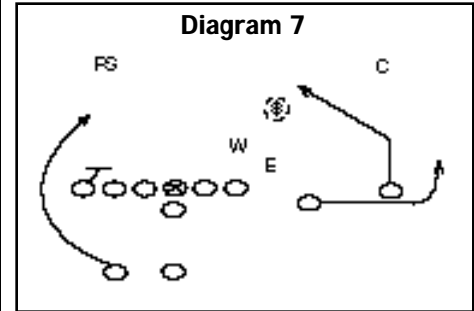


Let us look at one simple play we all run

regardless of our base offense — the simple slant.

We use our basic read as the man responsible for the flat, we do this whether it is a run or pass play, but in this example, we see the split end runs the slant and the next inside receiver, the wingback, runs an arc route.

A primary philosophy of the Wing-T is to put pressure on those players with conflicting responsibility. Diagram 7 shows this vs. a three deep zone and Diagram 8 shows it vs. a two deep zone look.



In both cases, the defensive flat player has a dual responsibility — squeeze, or hold off the slant and cover the flat, in essence he is asked to do two things at the same time — very difficult if your quarterback will read quick and release the ball.

You will note the arc route by the inside receiver. He turns his back on the quarterback and with speed runs outside the split end's position and turns up field. We want him catching the ball going forward up field outside the original alignment of the split end.

If the primary read squeezes the slant, then we should be able to throw to the arc route. And conversely, if the primary read widens with the arc then we should be able to hit the slant.

Let's look at how we determine the use of this basic pattern when in a trips formation (Diagram 9).

We can look at another simple basic route and it's complimentary route. Diagram 10 shows the quick out/seam combo. The inside receiver runs his seam through the flat defender and the quarterback reads the reaction if he squeezes or flies out to the flat.

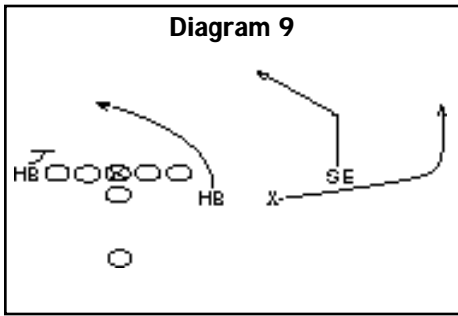


Diagram 9

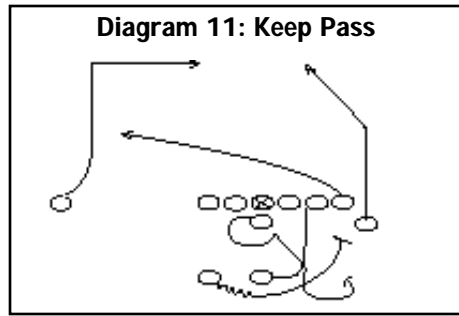


Diagram 11: Keep Pass

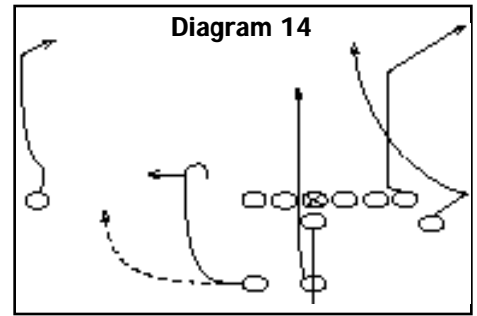


Diagram 14

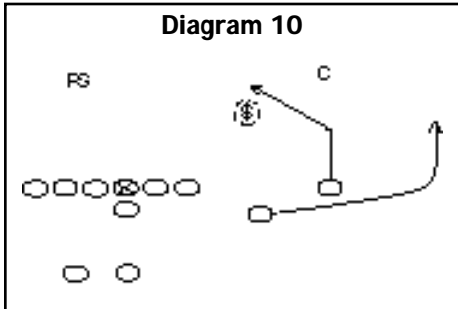


Diagram 10

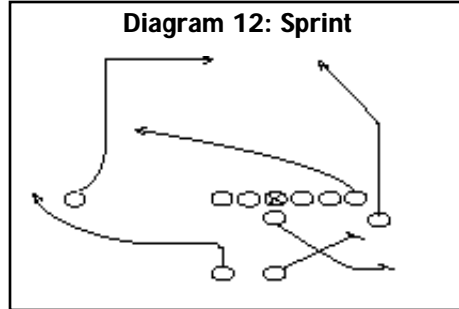


Diagram 12: Sprint

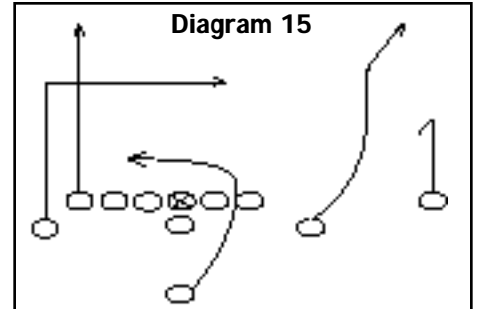


Diagram 15

Our belly keep pass (play action/cup protection), our dropback, and our sprint out series all have a base route but share the same variation combinations, there is a set of seven variations that can be used from these three backfield looks. This gives 21 different looks which can then be multiplied by several different formations and again multiplied by using several different personnel groupings.

Let's look at one basic route from all three series (Diagrams 11-13).

Because we use the same routes from many looks, actions and personnel groups, our quarterback still is limited in his application, but only changes his launch point.

Probably the most significant help to our pass game came from the five-step package. We use an option read route to our

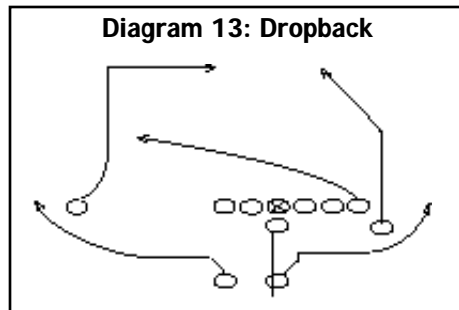


Diagram 13: Dropback

halfback, tight end and flanker. Again, we read the flat defender. If he breaks hard to the flat we sit down, if he sits inside we break hard to the flat, if he blitzes we break hot (Diagram 14).

A simple and extremely effective five-step drop was our under and cross play. The called receiver on an under runs a six-yard read down if he is the outside man — a six-yard dig in if he is an insider receiver.

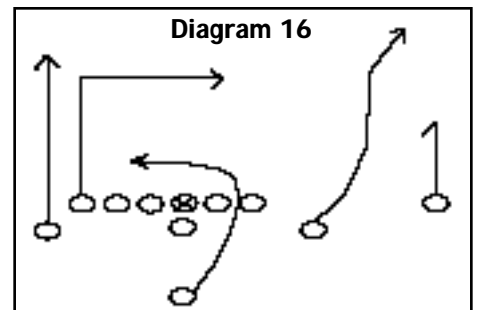


Diagram 16

The other playside receiver runs an eight-yard flag if he is inside the call man or a fly if he is the outside man.

The inside backside receiver runs a fly and the outside A 15-yard dig across (Diagram 15).

The frontside remains the same on a cross call, but the backside inside and the backside outside reverse their assignments (Diagram 16).

“Smash Mouth” Football, Similar Terms, Should Not Be in a Coach’s Vocabulary

Hard-nosed, maybe, but “smash-mouth” football is not how competent football coaches refer to their game. Football is a contact game, but terms that reflect brutality and violence do not belong in a coach’s vocabulary.

Image is one reason to clean up slang terms like smash-mouth that have become popular in the media, but a more compelling reason comes from a legal standpoint. In a courtroom, descriptive terms are used against coaches and the game.

Don’t hesitate to ask your fellow coaches, student-athletes and especially the media who cover your team to cooperate and refrain from using overly-descriptive terms that reflect poorly on the game and your profession.