

Wing-T Sideline to Sideline

by Chris Smith, Head Coach and Tom Trimmer, Offensive Line Coach

Grove City College

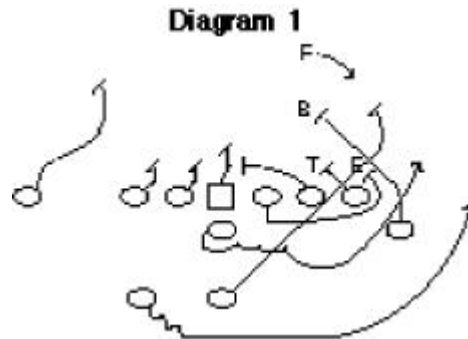
Grove City, Pennsylvania

1998 AFCA Summer Manual

It is a greatly appreciated honor to have been asked to contribute an article to the Summer Manual for the AFCA. We will attempt to give the members information that will be useful to them and may be applied to their own systems.

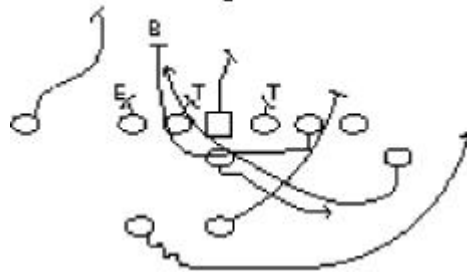
We started to run the wing-T offense in the fall of 1995. We committed ourselves to it totally, and did all that we could to make sure that we followed the basic ideas and philosophies as close as possible. We were extremely fortunate to have several programs available to us that had been committed to the wing-T for many years. We spent time with Denny Creehan, who was at South Dakota, Malen Luke at Clarion University, Tom Hermann at Gannon University and played against Carnegie Mellon's wing-T under both Chuck Klaussing and Rich Lackner. We were determined to not change the offense to fit us, but rather to try to stay with what the blue book says (Tubby Raymond's). The good thing about the wing-T is that it allows you to do so many different things. The bad thing about the wing-T is that it allows you to do so many different things.

Our first two years with the wing-T were good years, but there were two areas that we needed to expand if we were going to be successful and create problems for our opponents. One was the short yardage and goal line area, and the other was getting to the outside. We had a complete package from tight end to offensive tackle, but found people ganging up on us inside and jamming our split end. In order to get outside, we decided we had to add the option to our offense. Prior to this, we have run the option a minimal amount of time. Our thoughts about the option had always been that if you were going to run the option, you had to commit a majority of practice time to perfecting that scheme. The advice from other wing-T programs was that to run the option took time, but not the amount of time that we envisioned. The down option which is a mainstay with many wing-T teams was the first addition (Diagram 1).



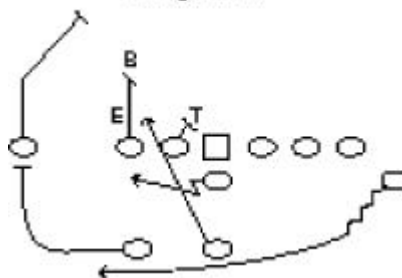
This fit in with our philosophy of having one play that gave you the same look, but accomplished many different things. This one series would give us four ways to attack the defense. The fullback off-tackle dive is a quick hitting basic football play. You are giving the ball to your featured runningback, giving your blocks good angles and forcing the defense to react quickly or give up yardage. The option part of this play features the same look, but now you are pressuring outside the flank. Keys here are that the quarterback give the fullback a chance to get around the log block, and then to attack the inside shoulder of whatever defender ends up being responsible for him. The quarterback and fullback must really be made aware of what their jobs are. Many times, defenders that first come into view after the dive is done are not players that should be blocked or optioned. The fullback will see the option defender first; he cannot block that man. He must wheel to the inside and block the alley player. The quarterback must also turn up and force the pitch support player to commit to him or the option halfback. The option back is responsible for maintaining the proper pitch relationship, and keeping that downfield. If the deep secondary begins to support quickly and create a problem, then the option pass is the next step. That gives the option of the quarterback throwing the ball and the option back setting up for pass protection; or the quarterback pitching the ball back to the halfback and having him throw the ball. If the defense begins to stop the play with overly aggressive pursuit from the inside, then the counter to the wingback will be there (scissors at #, Diagram 2).

Diagram 2



This option has been productive for us in all four phases. It is, however, a tight end side option. You must have an option going to the split end, or your opponent will again overload to your tendency side and create problems for you. Most wing-T teams will go with the cross block option to the open end side. We considered another route. We looked at a simple dive option (Diagram 3).

Diagram 3



We feel there are a few good features with this option. As a result of those features, we made the dive option our choice. The quarterback opens to the fullback dive, and then comes down the line of scrimmage. This is a tendency breaker for teams that may be reading the quarterback's back to tell them where the play is going. It also is an option that involves three backs on the outside. The quarterback, the option halfback and an arc blocking halfback. Against some defenses, you have as many blockers as they have defenders. We run this with a quarterback read on number three, which many times ends up being a quick read and pitch, so you are running an option that is heavy on the pitch. This may be putting the ball into the hands of the man you want carrying the ball. The complimentary plays to this are also effective. The option pass can be run with either the quarterback throwing the ball, or the pitch made to the halfback and then having him throw the pass. There is not a counter play off this, but there is a reverse that can be run with the slot coming back to take a pitch from the quarterback, with the tight end setting up with a circle block on the backside.

The offensive line at Grove City College is coached by Tom Trimmer. The line play in the down option is very similar to its sister play, 56-57 down.

Rules

1. The playside tight end must block his inside gap, and down to any defensive man, head up on the offensive tackle. After following that path, if no defensive man appears, he then moves to the next level and blocks the first linebacker to cross his face.

2. The playside tackle will block his inside gap, and down all the way to the center area. The tackle must not allow his pulling guard to be tailgated by any defensive player.

3. The playside guard will pull in the direction of the play, and log the first man outside the block of the tight end. A log block is successful when the pulling guard is able to gain outside control of the end man on the line of scrimmage. If the log block is not possible, the guard will cut the defensive man by taking away his outside leg. At no time will the guard allow the last man to string out the end of the line of scrimmage.

4. The center, backside guard and tackle will execute a slip block. Stepping with the playside foot and blocking aggressively to the next level, the offensive man will pass off any man head up to the next offside lineman. The backside tackle may adjust with a pull check if the defense sends backside pressure in an attempt to run the play down from behind.

Line play in the dive option is the only play in the Grove City College offense that requires the playside linemen to count the defensive men. Though usually run to the open end, the play may be run to the tight end with an area release by the tight end on the number four man. Grove City counts from the inside out, including all men on and off the line of scrimmage, with the down man in any stack being the lower number.

Rules

1. The center must make the first call to allow the playside guard to know if the center considers either the down man or linebacker in his area to be a zero call and the center's responsibility.

2. The playside guard and tackle are then responsible to block the No. 1 and No. 2 man in the defensive alignment. Many different combinations of blocks may be used, with the major goal being to be able to block outside-in on both defensive men. These blocks could include, but are not limited to, base, lead, fold and swing. The defensive men cannot be allowed to string the play out. Our adjustment to this defensive scheme would be to run the defender to the sideline, and to allow the play to cut underneath.

3. The center, backside guard and backside tackle will execute the slip block as previously discussed in the down option. If defensive penetration is a problem, the backside of the line will change to a scoop block. This requires aggressive initial contact, which is sustained until the whistle. The scoop block and the slip block are both initiated by stepping in the playside direction, and attempting to have the offensive lineman's inside hand make contact with the defensive man's outside number.

It is important to remember that Grove City is a hand-blocking team which allows for stunts to be more easily picked up, along with the ability to use the momentum of the defensive man to eliminate him from the play. The offensive line also makes a pre-snap call at the line of scrimmage, to allow blocking schemes to be changed to meet defensive adjustments. The Grove City options are successful, because the sister plays have been successful and allows the blocks to be made aggressively.

Bill Jordan, GCC's runningbacks coach, describes the runningbacks steps and blocking assignments for these two options.

In the down option, the alignment of the wingback in relationship to the tight end is critical to the success of the play. Currently, we are aligning our wingback tight to the tight end with a two foot depth and width. Our wingback is responsible for blocking the first linebacker to the inside of his alignment, without exception. His route to the mesh point with this linebacker is very shallow, through the defensive end's pre-snap alignment. By weighting the outside foot and taking this shallow angle, we have been able to get on the linebacker quickly and effectively.

The fullback aiming point is the inside leg of our offensive tackle. The fullback will attack this area taking a fake from the quarterback as he runs his path. After the fake, he will generally have to bow his course to the outside to run around our logging guard's block on end of line. At this point, the fullback attacks the alley player which could be the free safety or strong safety. He is instructed to not block the cornerback, as this is the defender that we are optioning.

The pitch man is the back side halfback on the down option. This player generally starts in the dive back position, and uses one-and-a-half step of motion back toward a tailback's normal alignment prior to the snap. This pitch man strives to obtain a two yard behind and five yard outside relationship with the quarterback. His objective is to get the pitch with his shoulders squared upfield at near full speed. On all options, the ball carrier should maintain pitch relationship with the quarterback until the whistle if he does not get the pitch. A 98-yard run by the quarterback with a pitch on the one yard line is a 99-yard touchdown for the runningback.

The dive option can be run from a number of different alignments, with our play side runningback always blocking the widest defender on the field. The runningback will have to arc release to get his shoulders upfield on this defender prior to contact. This arc release insures that the ball carrier can have choice of outside or inside path on a defender being blocked head up. The arc release also keeps our blocker from making contact with the defender early in the play, and having to hold the block too long.

The fullback 's aiming point on the dive option is the area occupied by our offensive guard pre-snap. The fullback is to make a great fade, and by doing so, draw number three defender in to make the hit. No. 3 can be described as the defensive end in an even front defense. If No. 3 flies out, the fullback will block the next level.

The backside halfback is the pitch man in this option, and will use motion if in a slot position to return to a normal dive back position. His route and relationship with the quarterback is the same as the down option.

Utilizing these options helped to make our last season one of our best seasons in the history of the school. It gave us effective plays, and took practice time away from our opponents, as they had to make sure all of their defensive fronts and stunts were sound against the option. We were able to make our version of the wing-T offense a threat from sideline to sideline.