

CHAPTER 9: POWER READ

POWER READ: diversity in the spread run game

Power Read Evolution

Power Read is the essential Power play of one-back spread football where the contain player is optioned instead of being blocked. (Traditional power formations block the contain player.) In Power Read the running back follows a sweep path across to face the quarterback with the quarterback serving as the dive back.

Tex-Bone Power Read

Power Read adapts the Tex-Bone's base option to spread formations and motions. Power Read is also available from option heavy formations as well. The Tex-Bone Power read is a double option play. This means the dive read become a give/keep sweep read and the pitch key is blocked. We only option the dive read on this play—not the pitch key. Optioning only the dive key is what makes this play a double option rather than a triple option.

Figure 97 shows Power Read in the Tex-Bone. This play features the same fundamental execution for the offensive line as a triple option Power play. The play side tackle is B-gap to backside linebacker and the play side guard is A-gap to back side linebacker. The center back-blocks the first defender encountered, the backside guard pulls to the play side linebacker, and the backside tackle is inside-out man-to-man on the defensive end. (This is the base-blocking scheme for all our Power looks.)

Power Read and Power triple option are not looking for any level one double-teams. The intent is to find horizontal displacement across the line of scrimmage rather than vertical displacement from a double team. This strategy is chosen because we want to make it easy for the dive player (in this case the quarterback) to insert into the line of scrimmage. We also want to

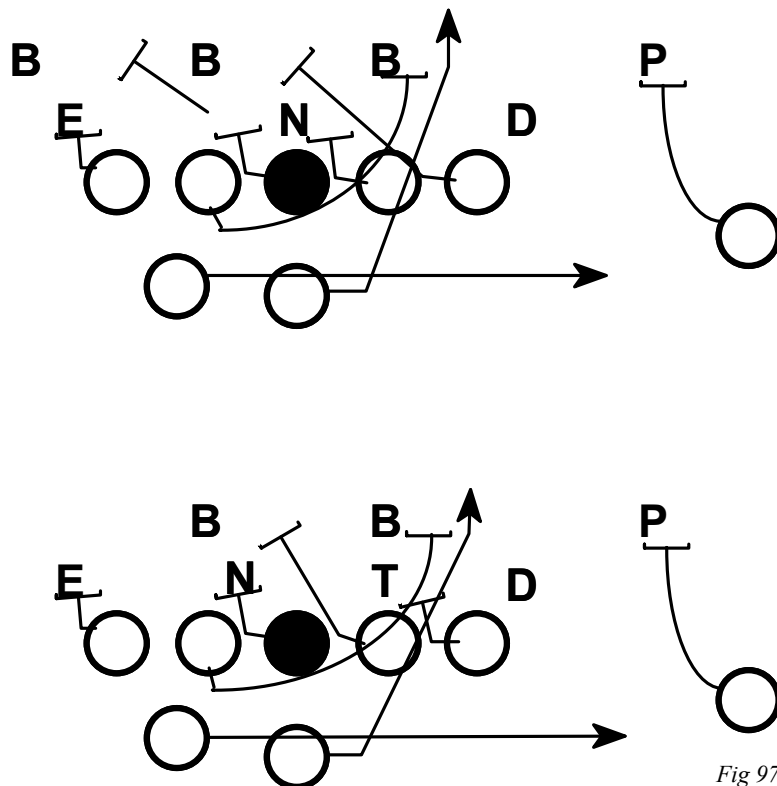


Fig 97

make it easy for the pulling guard to insert into the line of scrimmage. We do not want to force a dive player to go wide. Washing everything down the line goes a long way toward accomplishing these goals.

Washing the play horizontally allows for the dive to hit tighter to the A-gap. Doing this keeps the dive key from playing both the sweep and the dive. A double team block runs the risk of forcing the dive player wider—making a slow play by the defensive end even more problematic.

The running backs in Figure 97 are the sweep player crossing in front of the quarterback in Power Read. The quarterback reads the dive key to either give the ball to the sweep or pull and keep for an inside dive.

Power Read vs. Blitz

Power Read is a good play to combat defensive pressure. Changing the assignment of the play side tackle is the only adjustment needed against the blitz. The dive player is no longer being read in an edge blitz once the change is made. The play side tackle is assigned to man-to-man block the dive key instead. This adjustment makes the pitch key off the edge the new option key.

Quick note on making this play easy for your quarterback: teach them to identify the dive key and pitch key before every play. Reading dive and pitch keys are a skill that option quarterbacks need to develop. Running the option becomes far easier once dive and pitch keys are recognized before the snap. Identifying these defensive players helps the quarterback know when something doesn't look right and a change is needed. Power Read versus the blitz is an example of when an adjustment is needed.

Our players know that in blitzing situations the tackle takes the end (dive key) and the read is based off of the pitch key (linebacker). They know this because the quarterback makes a call at the line of scrimmage notifying the offensive tackle to adjust his block. Everyone else is executing Power football the same way they always do in the Tex-Bone.

The backside tackle in the two illustrations on the previous page takes the inside threat against a double edge blitz by blocking inside-out first. This means he takes any inside threat before working to any outside threat. Protecting the B-gap is as always a priority over the C-gap. The wide,

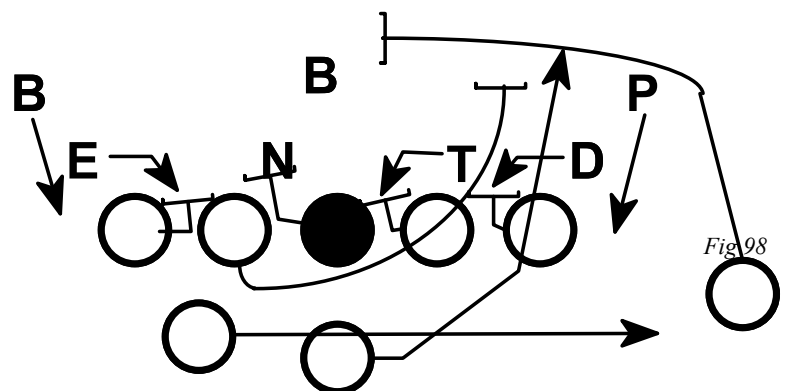
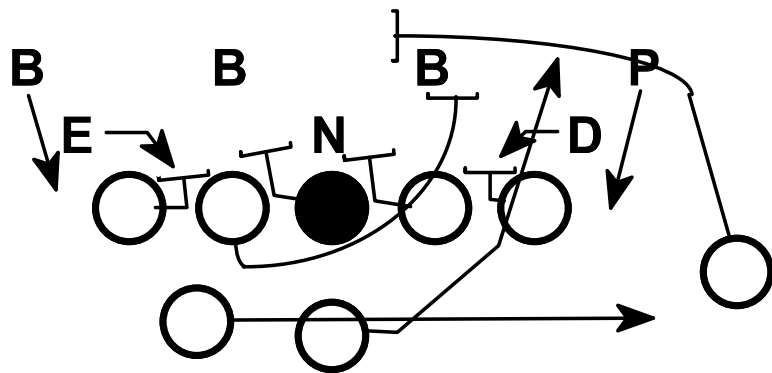


Fig 98

containment backside edge blitzer is left unblocked in a double edge blitz. The running back runs the sweep and the quarterback still runs the dive. The difference is the quarterback now looks at the pitch key for the give or pull indication.

The offense is able to look for two-on-one blocking situations against the blitz with a wing or slot in the game to the play side. Figure 98 shows two-on-one situations created by a Cover 0 (straight man to man). Even though there are no secondary players shown in the illustration we know this is a Cover 0 because there are seven defenders in the box. The un-pictured safety covering the slot player is always in man coverage. Releasing vertically and then moving inside to block the defender covering the running back man to man creates a situation where the slot blocks two players simultaneously (one physically, the other negated by chasing him away from the point of attack).

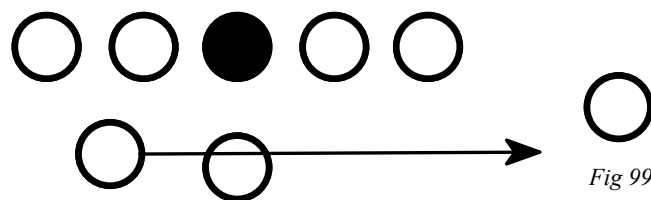
Picking up scraping linebackers against man coverage is extremely effective when attempting to get the ball to the perimeter of the defense. We also look for two-for-one's off of our inside crack blocks. These blocks are executed above the waist. (Cut blocks are illegal when working inside toward a defender.) Combined these adjustments give the Power Read an advantage against the blitz.

POSITION FUNDAMENTALS

Running Back Fundamentals

The running back must achieve full speed at the snap to mesh with and through the quarterback (Figure 99). This meshing occurs on the running back's third step. Aiming for the third step lets the back know where to align pre-snap. It is difficult for the defensive end to cross the line of scrimmage fast enough to take away the sweep (even when the defensive end is specifically assigned containment) when the running back takes off quickly and reaches the mesh as the quarterback receives the ball.

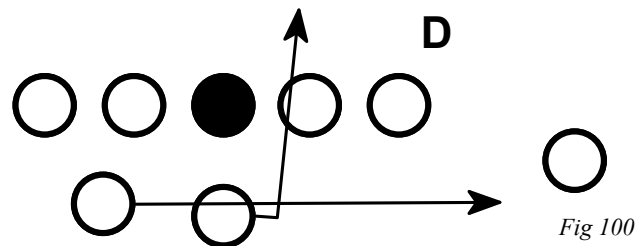
Naturally, the quarterback needs sufficient time to take the snap and present the ball to the running back. Any delay beyond this is a forfeiture of offensive advantage. The three-step mesh by the running back should provide optimal timing without compromising the speed needed to achieve large ground gains.



The sweep player must stretch the ball to the perimeter and run the same path whether receiving the ball or not. It is important for the sweep player to stretch the ball to the edge. The ball carrier cannot receive the handoff and quickly bend to the inside of the defense. Doing so contains the play on behalf of the defense and eliminates the offensive advantage.

Quarterback Fundamentals

Quarterbacks do not ride the mesh (move laterally) until the running back reaches them. This makes arriving together at the right time is critical. The dive key is able to play both the sweep and the dive if the quarterback slides too early. Quarterbacks must decide by their second shuffle whether to give the ball to the back or keep it. Additional shuffles get them too wide.



The quarterback in Figure 100 takes an inside dive path if he receives a pull read. Taking a tight, inside path the quarterback then reads the pulling guard for where to fit into level two. His job against the blitz is to alert the offensive line of blocking adjustments and change the read key. The offensive tackle now blocks the dive key (defensive end). The quarterback's primary read then becomes the pitch key for give or keep.

Quarterbacks must recognize the contain player as quickly as possible. They cannot make a quality read if this player is not identified immediately. A loss of yardage is likely if the quarterback fails to diagnose the blitz and adapt the read key accordingly.

Contain defenders spiking inside tell the quarterback to give the ball to the sweep player. The unblocked blitzing linebacker is free off the edge to tackle the sweep player for a loss however. Defenses attempt to cover both the sweep and the dive by running an edge blitz. Assigning the offensive tackle to block the dive key negates this scheme. This blocking adjustment leaves the quarterback with one player to read. The edge player is unable to cover both the sweep and the dive as a result.

Quarterbacks need an adjustment plan of action for all double option plays. Sending quarterbacks on the field without a plan is a mistake. Quarterbacks are slow with their execution if a plan for ball distribution isn't in place beforehand. This is because there are too many variables to analyze in real time and at game speed. (The same preplanning is needed for option pass plays as well.)

The quarterback's distribution plan on double option Power Read is to give the ball on the sweep unless the dive key is going to make the play. Pulling the ball to run the dive is done only when the sweep cannot reach the edge.

PERIMETER BLOCKING OPTIONS

There are several options for perimeter blocking. (All are discussed in greater length later.) Figure 101 shows formations with a three-player (three-for-three) blocking surface. Both include one split end. Figure 101 includes one slot receiver and one wing on top and two slot receivers on the bottom.

The base method for perimeter blocking is three-for-three on the nearest defender. Working inside-out to the defenders' outside number is particularly advantageous. It's okay if a linebacker wants to fill outside when facing an arc release. The worst-case scenario is the ball carrier cuts underneath the kick out block to gain yardage. The middle blocker usually works inside first to get the ball behind him. The safety is able to shoot inside of this blocker towards the line of scrimmage and make the tackle if the player starts too far outside.

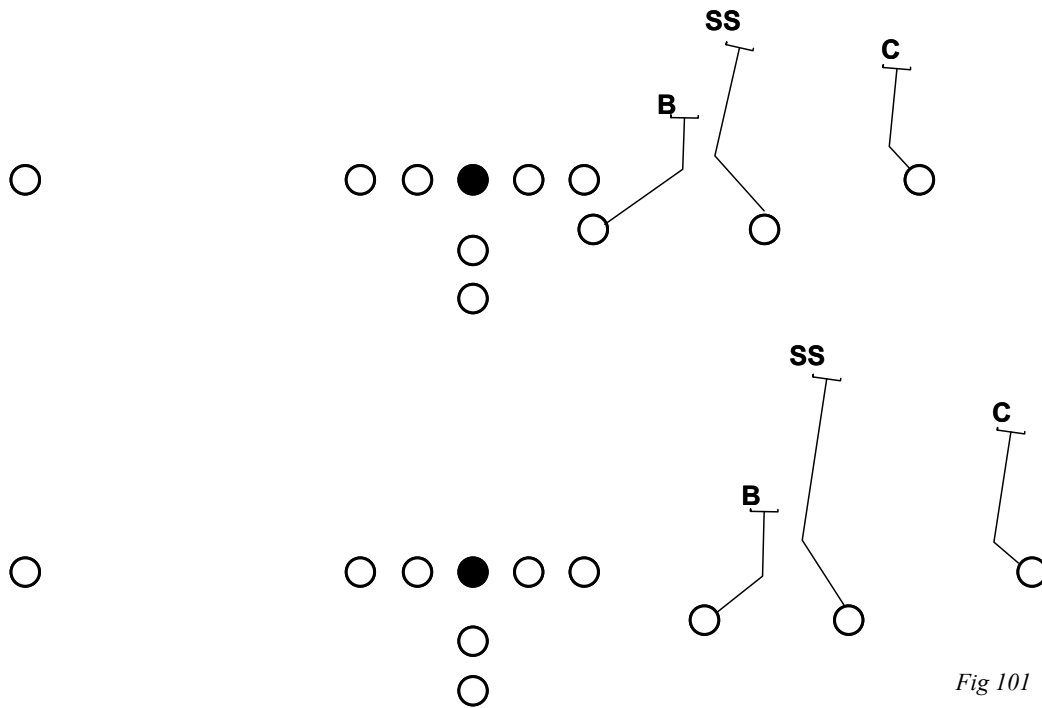


Fig 101

There are more options than blocking three-for-three on the nearest defenders of course. Figure 102 shows two inside players executing a cross block. The middle player then works inside for a crack block while the innermost player using an arc release to reach the safety. This scheme creates a nice ally for the ball carrier to follow.

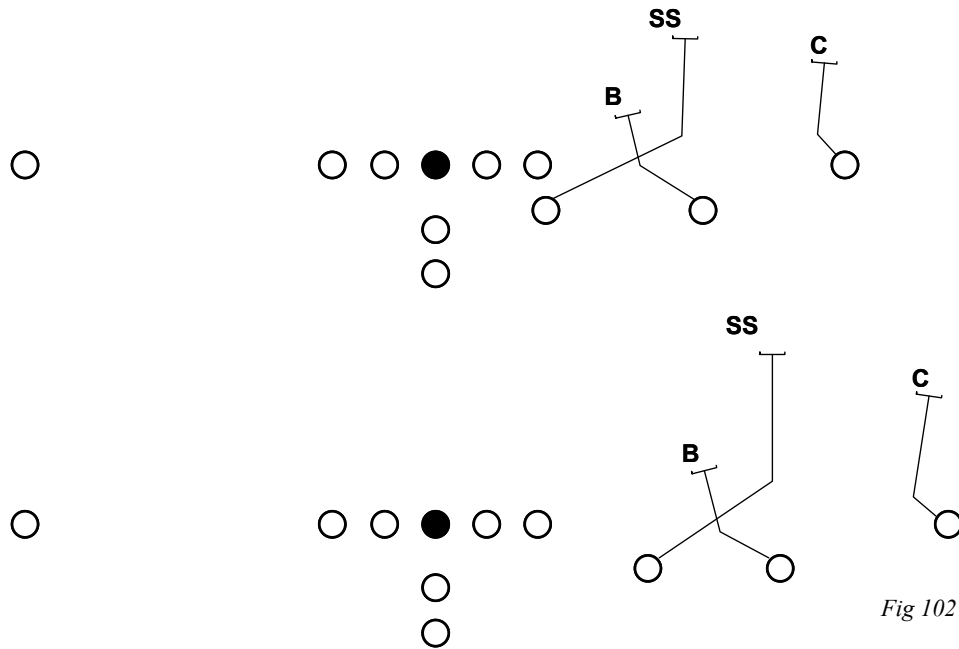


Fig 102

Figure 103 shows a cross blocking combo with two crack blocks and the inside player working out to the corner. The blocking path of the innermost player may look odd to some coaches initially. Both illustrations show the proper technique for taking an arc release that checks the outside linebacker before moving to the second level. After checking the outside linebacker he looks to see if the safety is secured before moving on to block the corner. It is an inside-out progression so the most dangerous defenders are secured in order of importance.

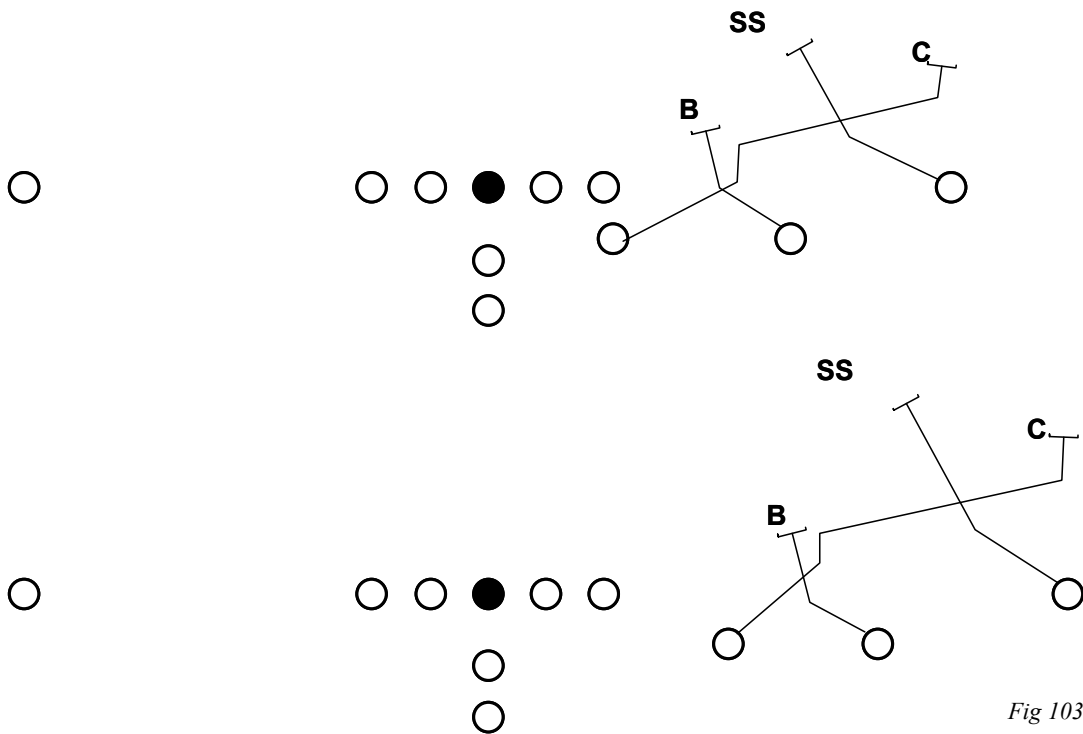


Fig 103

The progression of checking inside-out sets proper timing for when the inside receiver reaches and blocks the corner. Remember, the ideal time to engage any block is when the ball gets to the point of attack. We specifically want to match the timing of the inside receiver reaching the corner with when the ball gets there.

We are also able to cross block the outside two receivers. Figure 104 shows the innermost receiver arc blocking to the outside linebacker first. Cross blocking the second and third receiver then creates a seam between the corner and safety.

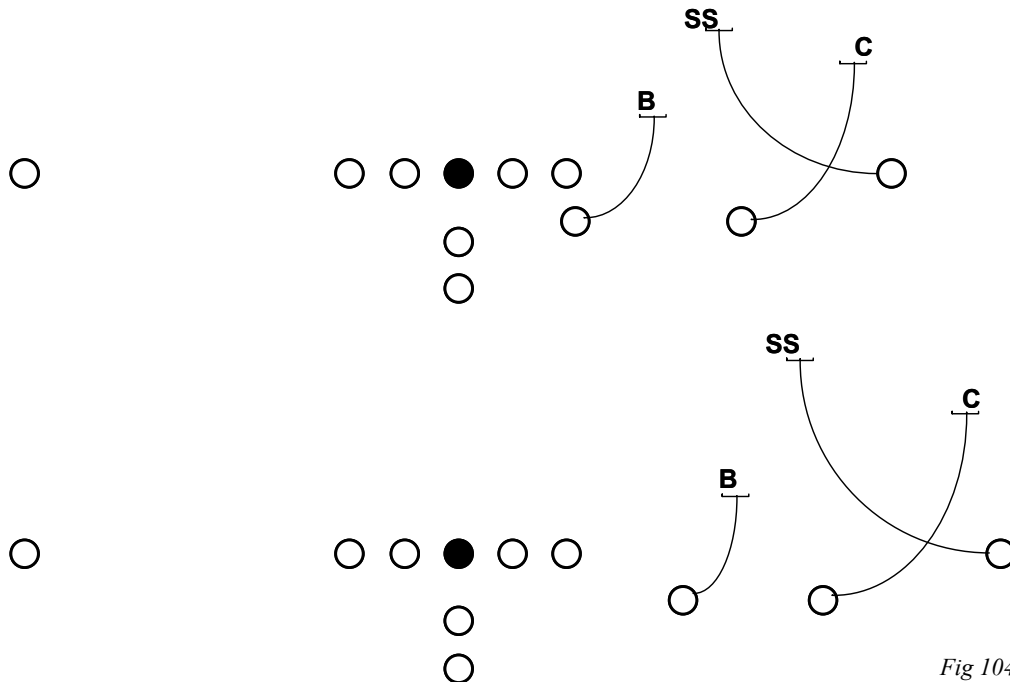


Fig 104

Additional information on perimeter blocking is provided in later chapters.

JET MOTION POWER READ

Jet Motion is one of the most effective ways to execute Power Read. The Jet motion player accelerates to full speed before the snap. The ball is snapped as he approaches the backside offensive tackle. The quarterback then gets just enough time to present the ball to the running back and make a decision on handing off or running the ball himself.

Our goal is to make it as difficult as possible for the dive key to cover the sweep. The speed at which Jet Motion Power Read hits at makes it extremely difficult for the dive player to stop the sweep from reaching the perimeter. Figure 105 illustrates Jet Motion.

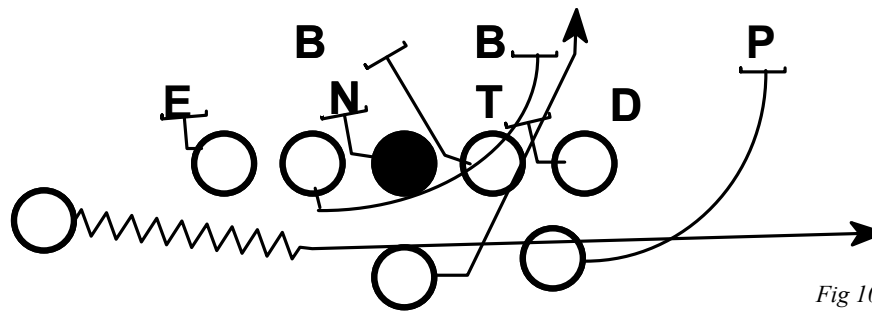
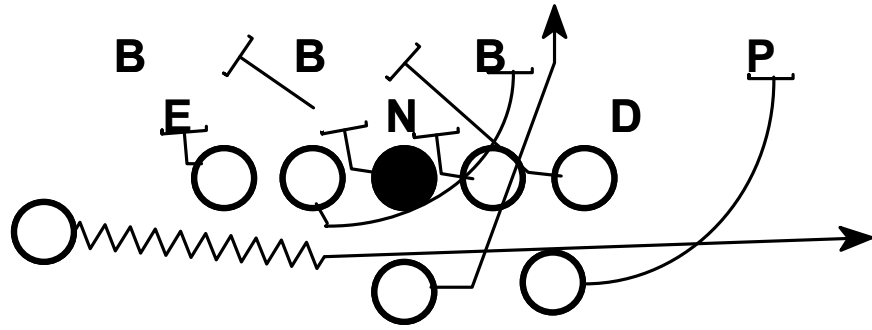


Fig 105

FLEXBONE POWER READ

Power Read is also available out of Flexbone. The Flexbone is a triple option heavy formation. Running speed sweep from this set is an excellent complement to Flexbone triple option.

The backside wing in Flexbone Power Read gets a head start before the snap on short motion—instead of coming in full speed motion. This head start (see Figure 106) allows him to arrive at the proper time to mesh with the quarterback. Wings gain an advantage by being able to move laterally before the snap without drawing a flag.

The running back in the backfield is the lead blocker on the pitch player in both Jet Motion and Flexbone Power Read. The fullback sets behind the quarterback in the Flexbone. Spread Power Read is slightly different with the running back lining up offset with the quarterback most frequently.

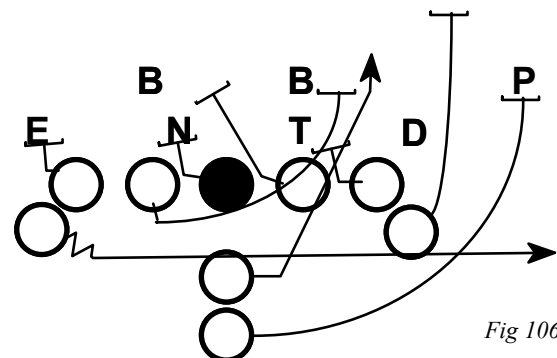
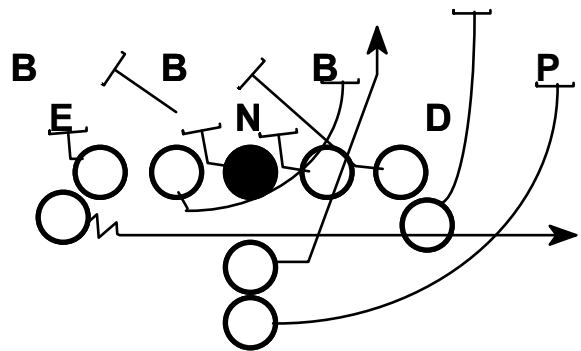


Fig 106

Wing blocking assignments

Wing blocking rules still apply. The wing works directly to the play side safety versus a two-high safety look. Versus a one high safety the wing checks for a scraping linebacker before moving to the single safety in the middle of the field. These rules are the same throughout the Tex-Bone system. They apply to the play side blocker whether he is a wing or a slot. The two diagrams in Figure 107 show these play side wing responsibilities.

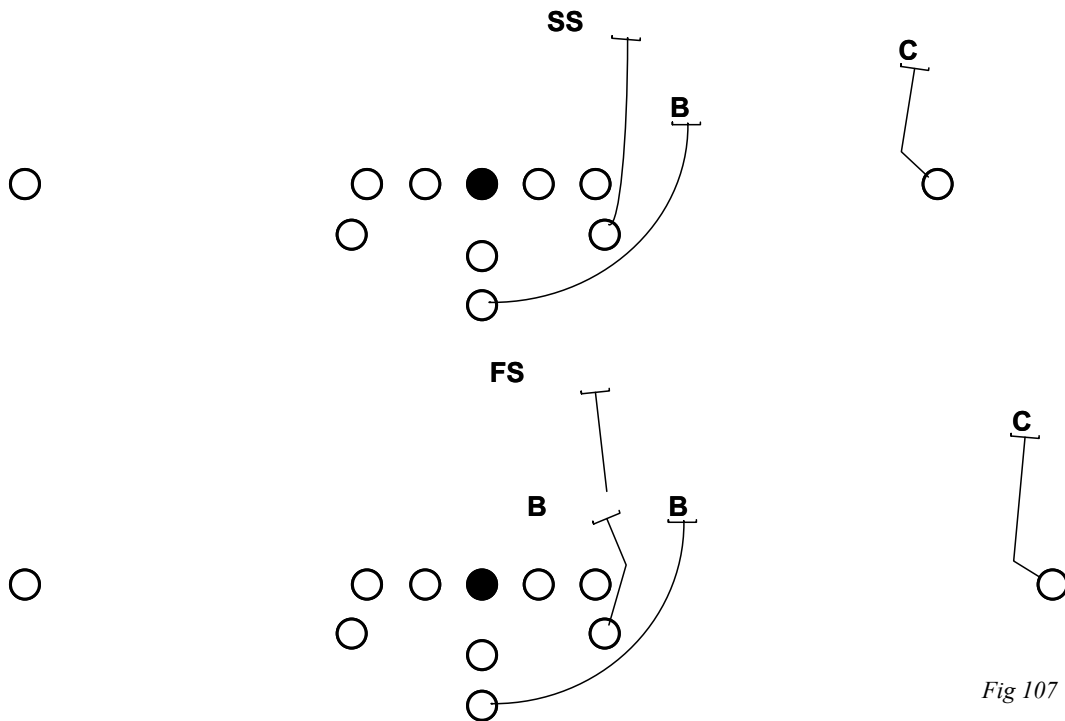


Fig 107

