

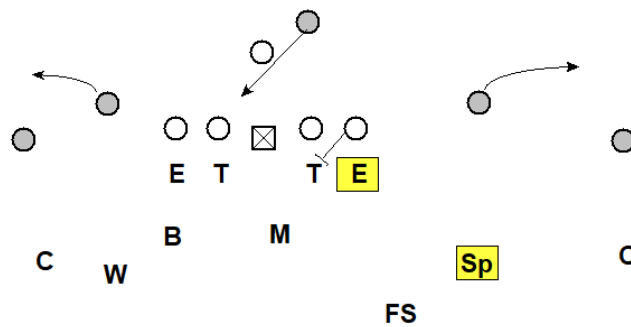
RPOs

Run/pass options are the hot topic now, but they've been around since 1997, when Mumme's Kentucky team couldn't block Florida's Jevon Kearse. The most famous RPO was the one Auburn used to tie Alabama shortly before the Kick Six in the 2013 Iron Bowl. The reason RPOs are so successful is because they require a defender to be in "conflict." because he has two jobs to do.

Types Of RPOs

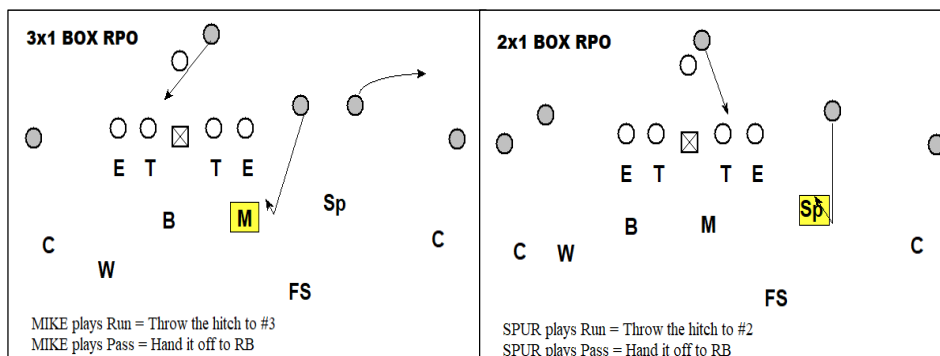
There are two categories of RPO's.

- **Pre-Snap:** QB or OC decides what to run before snapping the ball based on defensive alignment. If there is a soft corner on the wide receiver, the quarterback has a hitch pattern right NOW.
- **Post-Snap:** We see two main types of Post-Snap RPOs: Perimeter and Box. Bracket is built to defend both Perimeter and Box RPOs.



*5 IN THE BOX = AUTOMATIC GIVE
 *6 IN THE BOX = READ IT OUT
 *2 OVER 2 FRONT SIDE = THROW FRONT SIDE

- **Perimeter RPOs:** Perimeter RPOs are, essentially, a version of the Triple Option. The offense reads the END for the inside zone (dive) and the SPUR for the throw (pitch).



- **Box RPOs:** Offenses read a defender who is responsible for a gap within the box.

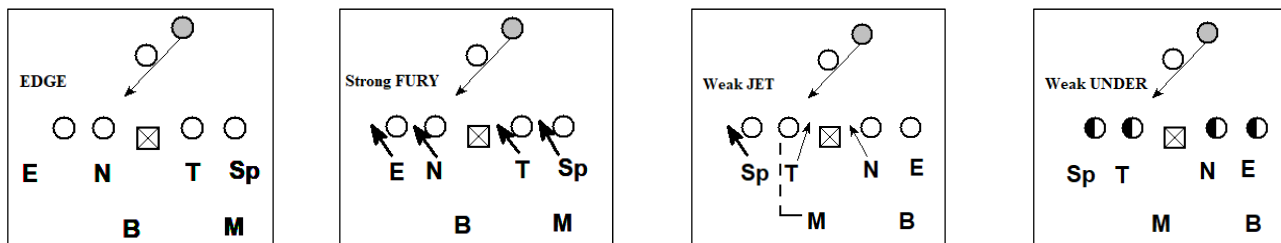
Defending RPO's

The whole object of the RPO is to put you in a run/pass conflict. You have a defender ready to fill a gap on the run but there is a bubble happening outside him. The key is to protect the defender that the RPO is trying to put into conflict. We also want to force the QB to hand the ball off and not pass the ball.

When defending RPOs we look at formations instead of the field or boundary. Another big thing is knowing where their run fit is. 85-90 percent of teams run the RPO only to the back side. It is hard for a quarterback to take the snap of the ball, read a defensive end, and throw the ball away from the back.

Our favorite fronts are to run EDGE and STORM concepts with our Defensive Ends. We also want to mix it up by putting our NOSE on the Center, which allows us to play A-gap games. Other goals are to set our TACKLE away from the running back side to force the inside zone into the A-gap.

With the Back on the Trips side, we are very vulnerable to a fast RB bouncing his run around our END. If we are worried about this, there are some games we can play on that side.



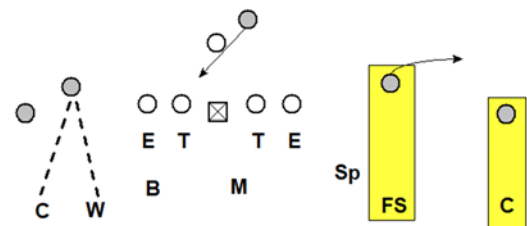
There are two ways to defend the RPO routes on the edge: play man-to-man or run Cover 5. Man would be my #1 choice if I had athletes but with my "IBMs" (itty-bitty-Mexicans), Cover 5 is the answer. Cover 5 frees up our SPUR to play run and he is a better tackler. It also allows us to keep our Inside Linebackers inside the box focused on the run game. We can also play a 1 high safety by either calling Cover 3 or man on both sides.

A great hybrid is to run man on the RB side and Cover 5 away from the Back. We know that the bubble or slant was going to come from the side where the back was aligned. The safety and Corner opposite the back knew that inside zone and stretch was going to come to their side.

Man Coverage

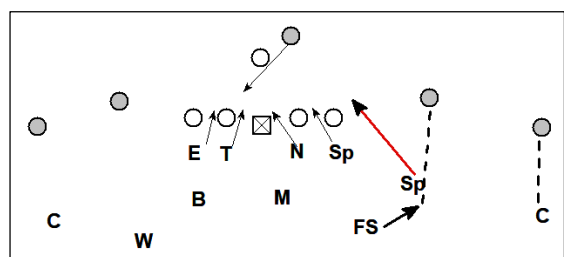
The side where the running back is set is the read side for QB. If we man-up on the two receivers on the RB side, this allows the SPUR to play the run since he has no pass responsibility. MIKE & BULL "slide" away from the SPUR vs 2x2 sets, which puts them on the side that the RB will run to. WILL runs Cover 5 on the two receivers opposite the RB.

Our man technique is not press man. It is what we call a scooch technique which means leaning on the balls of the feet without back pedaling. We have to get our hands on the receiver, be aggressive and in his face. We are primarily a zone coverage team, so we have to make sure that we find time to teach man techniques. If all you do is dabble in man-coverage, you are going to get your butt kicked.



Blitzing the Read Defender

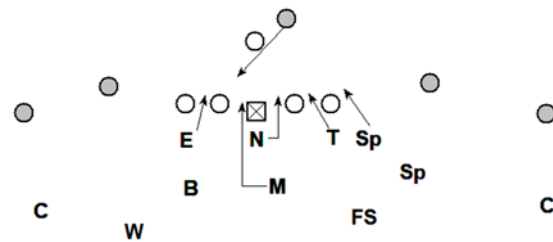
Blitzing the WILL or SPUR will make the QB think that the Pass Route is open. Our FALCON sells out on the pass route trying for the interception. We show a zone Quarters or Cover 3 look before the snap it becomes man-to-man after the snap.



Changeup Concept for B Gap

The use of line stunts can cover all the inside run gaps and allows our Outside Backer Hybrid (SPUR or WILL) to not be responsible for inside B-gap on run plays. This allows causes conflict for the QB read because the defender can stay outside longer to play QB run or short inside pass route.

The example on the right frees up BULL to handle the RB if he bounces outside. He can also drop shallow to the #2 receiver to cover slant – hitch – stick routes. WILL/SPUR/FALCON have no run responsibilities.



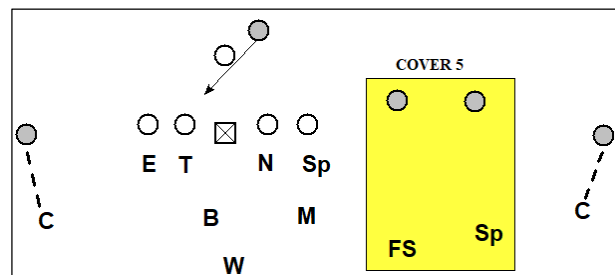
Pre-Snap Movements

For us to succeed with our game plan concepts, we do not huddle on defense. From the sidelines, all calls are sent in based on where the running back aligns. Our 4 defensive linemen align head up until QB starts his cadence then slide to the called alignment.

The secondary always aligns four across until the QB begins his cadence. At that time, the FALCON will call split field coverage to his side and the WILL makes the coverage call to his side. Our base coverage is Cover 5 to side away from running back and man to man side of running back. Our deep safeties (FALCON and possible WILL) need to move around a lot until the QB is done with his checks.

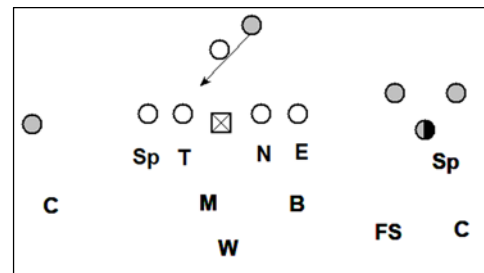
TRIPS:

We like SPECIAL the best. Our trips side Corner is man on #1 while the SPUR and FALCON play Cover 5 on #2 and #3, both reading #3. We can also call STEAL on the backside so that the WILL can drop 10 yards over QB and plays a vision concept. His read is QB runs and #3 vertical or coming underneath in the pass game.



BUNCH:

We are going to put four defenders in that bunch box. The SPUR must be alert to the bubble screen. However, we outnumber the blockers, which should read as a give play. The BULL drops to the new #3 (whomever comes inside) and the MIKE is solely focused on stopping the run.

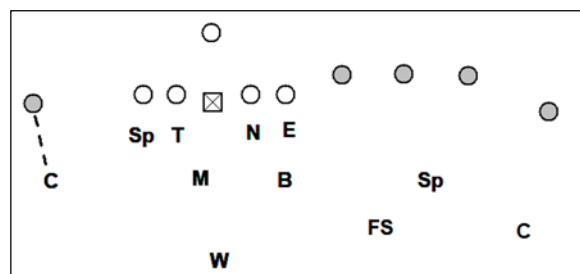


QUADS

Backside Corner is locked up man-to-man. WILL reads QB run to any deep routes from the Quad side. The Quad Corner plays deep ¼ and has wheel routes. SPUR is playing his normal Bubble/Flat coverage, breaking on any bubble routes and then getting depth to five yards if he does not have a bubble to cover slants by #1 and outs by #2 and #3. FALCON lets deep routes cross his face and takes anything towards the middle of the field. WILL takes anything up the seam.

Alignment and movement calls for the D-Line are not affected by Quads with our divorced concept. We would cancel any blitzes by the BULL, who now has C-gap vs run and all inside routes by #2, #3, and #4.

Also, the WILL has to give a “peel” call to the End opposite the Quads so he knows he has outside runs by the QB away from the Quads.

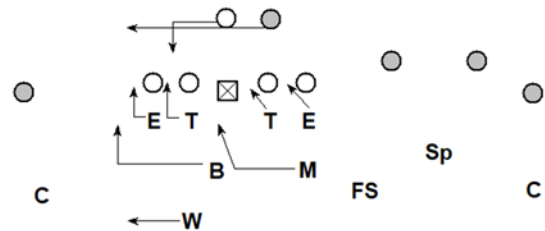


RPO away from the RB

We have to play differently if the offense runs the RPO away from the back. Versus 2x2 sets we are OK because our Inside Linebackers are slid that way. However, running the RPO to the single receiver side of trips will require our WILL and BULL to come hard towards that side once the RB goes in that direction. Sometimes the offense gives it away by putting the RB even with the QB pre-snap.

The key to this play is the quarterback. The quarterback on this play is not turning his back to the run side, he is staring at the safety to that side. The safety's key is guard to quarterback. When the safety sees the quarterback with his eyes on him, he knows his technique changes.

The quarterback is reading the BULL or WILL. The wide receiver to that side is running a skinny post and looking to get into the area vacated by the safety filling the B-gap. The linebackers change their attack mode. They do not play downhill, they are shuffling down the line of scrimmage waiting for the ball to fall off the table and break outside.



The WILL and the corner play a 2-over-1 coverage on the wide receiver. The safety sits on the skinny post. If they run the ball, he reacts up to the outside of the play.

JET motion

If they use JET motion, we do not run across the field, even if we have a man coverage call on that side. When the slot #2 receiver goes in Jet motion, we will roll the safety down to the motion and slide our Inside Linebackers. The SPUR or WILL who was in man will drop back to the middle of the field.

If the offense sends the running back in motion, the inside linebacker has to take him. The remaining Inside Linebacker and D-Linemen are thinking quarterback run. This is one of several reasons why we never tell our FALCON to be a deep middle of the field player. He must fill at the line of scrimmage on something like the quarterback draw.

Conclusion:

While completely stopping the RPOs is not a realistic, we believe that if we stay within our base schemes and do not try to create something new, then we can succeed. In the same breath, we cannot run the same concept all night long. We want to confuse the 17-year old QB reads and force the ball to where we are. Mix up the fronts, change the coverages, and add edge pressure. Our Divorced concept also allows us to play games with D-Line alignment and movements that are completely independent of the secondary.

The defense must play with patience and understanding. We want to play aggressive to the run and be patient to the pass with our zone coverages. The eyes of the quarterback are a huge key to defending RPOs. When the quarterback's eyes go to the wide side of the field, the defenders in that area play patiently. In zone coverage, we should be 2-over-1 on the slot receiver and have a triangle defense to the inside.

Regardless of the call, we must win the one-on-one match ups. We want an aggressive in your face mentality. They have to like it, get used to playing it, and win their match ups. The depth of the middle field player varies according to the QBs running ability. On the snap of the ball he bounces his feet and gets ready to play football. He does not back up.

The answers for the offense are slot-fade, vertical shot on the outside, or quarterback run. Our aggressive safety play also means that the Corners cannot let the post get behind them. The key to defending posts and fades is leverage.