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# Exploring Tempo Ideas



Tempo and procedural tools are areas where all offensive coaches can look for opportunities to create an advantage. This manual shows the opportunities that can be created for an offense by closely examining operational procedures.

## **The Uptempo Huddle**

One of the objectives of an uptempo offense is to force the defense to play vanilla because the speed at which the offense is getting up to the ball does not allow for the defense to make very many checks or get in calls.

Uptempo does not have to exist only in no-huddle operations. While watching the 2013 SEC Championship on DVR, I noticed that Auburn used a huddle very effectively at different points throughout the game. In fact, following a big gain ripped off after aligning and snapping the ball in 10 seconds from the previous whistle, Auburn changed personnel and huddled. This is of course the team whose head coach is in the process of trying to get a trademark for the phrase “Hurry Up No Huddle.”

I’d suggest that Auburn’s use of the huddle is perfect to use each time personnel is changed and tight ends, h-backs, or fullbacks are coming into the game and will align somewhere in the box. Again, one of the purposes of going fast is to not allow time for defensive communication of their calls or checks. The rule is that if personnel is changed, the defense is also allowed time to change personnel. Most times an official will stand over the ball and not allow the offense to snap the ball while the defense is adjusting their personnel. Unfortunately, unless the offense is shifting (Boise State does this frequently), the defense gets a chance to see the formation and begin making their calls and adjustments without the pressure of the ball being snapped quickly.

For those of you who never have used a huddle, I realize this applies to some of the younger coaches out there, the procedure was the quarterback calls the play once with the snap count, the receivers leave the huddle to get a head start to get to their position, then the quarterback repeats the cadence (some teams would repeat the whole call) and says “ready” and the remaining players say, “Break” while clapping their hands and getting to the line of scrimmage.

There's a slight twist on Auburn's huddle which allows them to get in motion and snap the ball within four seconds of breaking the huddle.

The quarterback, Marshall calls the play in the huddle and lets his receivers deploy. Notice that the line is only about two yards away from the ball. Marshall strategically waits until his receivers are in position, then breaks the huddle with himself and the remaining seven players aligning quickly. The ball is snapped at about four seconds after the huddle was broken.

While the previous whistle to snap wasn't 10 second like the previous play, the defense was still left with very little time to recognize, align and adjust. This is a tool worth considering for all offenses.

### **Next Play in a Sequence**

Sequencing certainly has a place in offense. Calling look-alike plays was something that the late Homer Smith was a huge proponent of. Series football dominates certain types of offensive systems. Why not build sequence into tempo?

Here's how it could be done. The players are taught a basic play within the system they use. For example, a traditional wing-t team might start the process with the buck sweep. They are taught that if they see the tempo signal for "Next" they align as fast as possible in the previous formation and run the next play they normally call in the sequence. For discussion purposes, let's say it's waggle. This tempo can be used with "Again" to really keep the defense off balance. Here is an example of Oregon running a bubble in which they have a big gain, followed by a bubble-and-go for a touchdown. Oregon shows the tendency to run the same play again. Up to this point in the Rose Bowl, they have aligned quickly and ran the same play as the previous several times. Now the defense thinks they are running the same play again because of the fast pace at which they align, but they go to the "and-go" off of the same look. The tempo and the look alike play provide for a huge opportunity. From an installation and practice perspective, this would be something that you would want to install early in the season and continue to work throughout the season.

## The “Inbounds” Play

Andrew Coverdale shared a concept that has the flexibility to be utilized in any offensive system. He relates the procedure to an inbounds play in basketball in that those types of plays are designed to get an easy lay-up, and if the opportunity isn't there, the team gets into its regular offense. This procedure works the same way. It starts with aligning in a formation to create a situation where the defense must adjust to take away the offense's numbers advantage. If they don't, then a simple now screen is thrown, and the offense picks up easy yards. If they adjust then the back motions or shifts into the backfield and the offense runs the play that is called. *The Movie in this course* gives a brief overview of how this concept works.

## Jump Tempo

The name for this procedural tool comes from the idea that it is designed to get the defense keyed up to stop a short yardage personnel grouping that has come onto the field in a 4th and short situation. The personnel group would hurry onto the field with their play and get to the line of scrimmage and align quickly. From here, procedures would take over. The offense will work a false cadence to try to get the defense to jump offside. Again, the speed at which they come onto the field forces the defense to get aligned and potentially takes their focus off of snap count. After checking the sideline for a decision, the offense can go ahead and run their short yardage play, change to a different short yardage play, or drop into a kick formation and punt with that group on the field. Two things can probably be guaranteed with this procedure when punting: first the defense will not have a return on. Second, the defense will most likely not rush. One concern would be having offensive linemen covering a punt. However, the defense will stay in a safe punt situation without their return team on the field, so that concern is negated.

Obviously, a defense will see this on film and know what the offense is doing in these situations. If the offense creates a mix of running out onto the field and just going for it sometimes and then using Jump tempo, the defense will not be able to use that as a tendency.

After picking up the first down with the big personnel, they can be utilized to create a mismatch. If the defense brought in a defensive lineman and took out a defensive back, now the personnel group can get into a spread set and run a simple concept like stick. The defense will have to adjust from that personnel or decide to take a timeout. Word Tempo could be utilized to accomplish this. This is explained in *a move in this course*.

The area of tempo and procedures has a lot of room for creativity and development in the future of football offense. Please use the feedback in interactive tools to share your ideas.