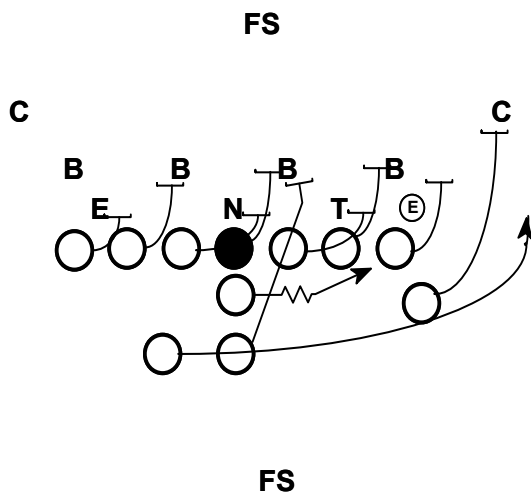


CHAPTER 8: SPEED OPTION

SPEED OPTION: the solution to pressure and line games in the Tex-Bone

The Origin of Speed Option



The Speed Option originated with coaches that ran Outside Veer and Belly schemes. An early iteration shown at the top of Figure 87 used a token fake to the fullback. Scraping linebackers eventually created the need to lead the fullback around the edge however (bottom of Figure 87).

The University of Nebraska famously ran Speed Option from the "I" formation in the 1980s and 1990s. The top of Figure 88 shows Speed Option in the "I" formation. One-back spread offenses ultimately eliminated the lead block altogether. The bottom of figure 88 shows Speed Option from a spread formation.

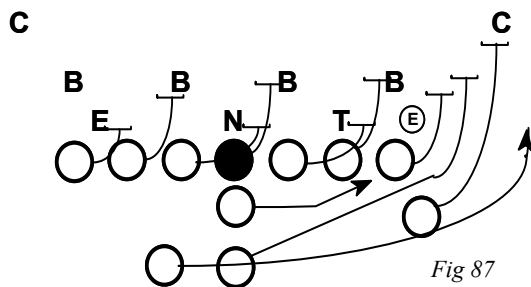


Fig 87

Benefits of Speed Option

Speed Option is a form of Outside Zone in the Tex-Bone offense. For us this means using reach and overtake (scoop) blocking techniques. The contain player of the defense becomes the unblocked pitch key in Tex-Bone Speed Option.

Speed Option heavily dissuades pressure and line games. The play gets to the edge of the defense quickly when a reach and overtake outside zone scheme options the contain player.

The defense then finds itself outnumbered if defenders are twisting or looping away from the point of attack. Overtake blocking schemes

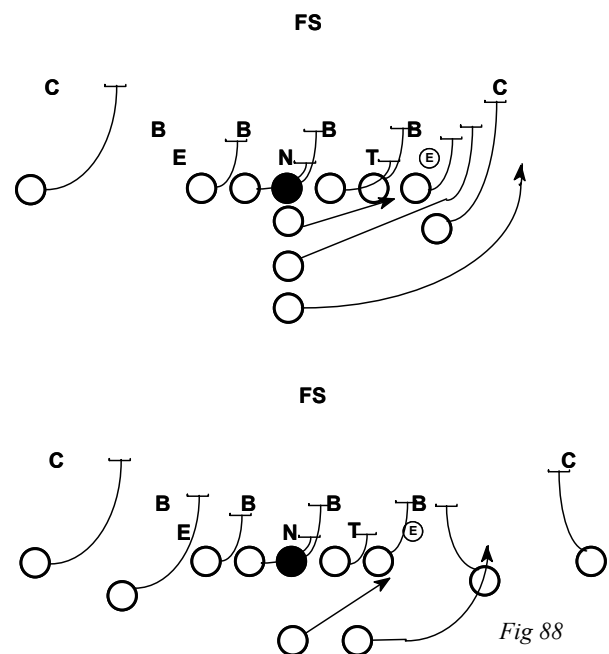


Fig 88

help alleviate the pressure created by defensive pressure or line games. Anyone that loops away from the play is not a concern because they are moving away from the ball.

Speed Option is available from different formations and with any personnel grouping. This chapter details multiple ways the Speed Option concept is executed.

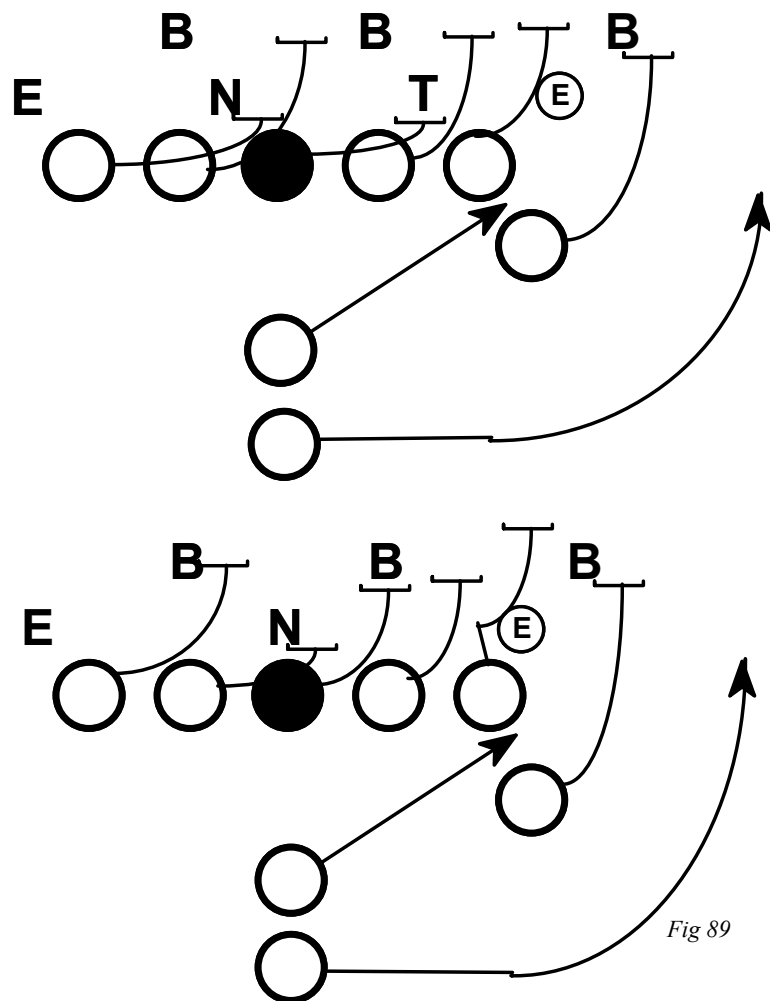
Speed Option also provides an additional advantage of creating multiple backfield alignment options as well.

SPEED OPTION WITH A WING

Figure 89 shows the play side tackle bypassing the contain player and releasing to the second level in Speed Option when a wing is in the game. The angle he takes depends on defensive end alignment. The tackle releases outside to the second level if the defensive end is tight or inside if the defense end is aligned wide. Film study and coaching provides the training tackles needs to consistently make the right choice in terms of an inside or outside release.

The play side guard's responsibility is to reach the play side B-gap. The guard overtakes and works to level two if he faces a gap threat. The center then works with the guard to reach and overtake (full scoop) a 3-technique. (Reaching a full gap over is generally not a problem for our linemen.)

We execute the same full scoops across the entire line of scrimmage on Speed Option. The fullback aligned behind the quarterback is the pitch player and the play side wing works to the play side outside linebacker. The quarterback then attacks the outside number of the contain player and pitches the ball to the fullback at the earliest opportunity. Tight End responsibilities in Speed Option are the same as a split end. Similar to a split receiver this means blocking the deep coverage over the top. Play side Tight Ends are not a part of the scoop blocking scheme.



Spread Speed Option

Spread formations and personnel groups minimally affect the blocking scheme for Speed Option. Spread Speed Option is still a reach and overtake scheme with full scoops across the line of scrimmage. Figure 90 shows the tackle bypassing the contain player (the pitch key) and releasing to the second level. He then chooses an inside or outside release based on alignment of the defensive end.

A slot receiver replaces the wing in a Spread Speed Option look. His responsibilities remain the same however—block the play side outside linebacker.

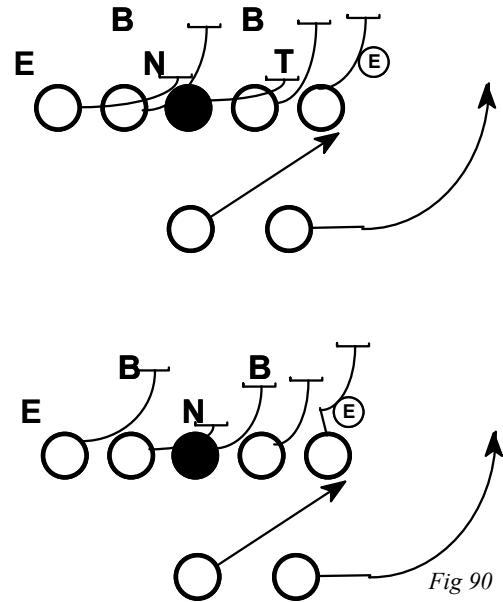


Fig 90

Speed Option vs. Blitz

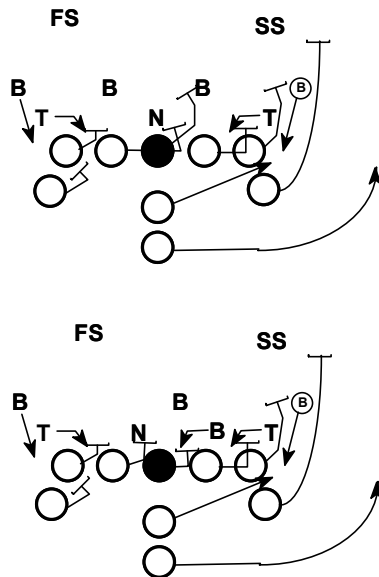


Fig 91

There are several choices in terms of blitz pickup when running Speed Option. Figure 91 shows situations where we keep the contain player as the pitch key. The contain player and pitch player are now the outside linebacker because of the double edge blitz.

The defensive end (who usually is the pitch player in most base defenses) now works inside to the B-gap and is the responsibility of the play side guard that is reaching the gap that the defensive end is slanting to.

The play side tackle still works to the second level and bypasses the defensive end and the blitzing contain player. Everyone else works to reach and overtake (full scoop). The quarterback's point of attack is now wider because the outside linebacker is the new pitch key.

POSITION FUNDAMENTALS

Pitch Back Fundamentals

The pitch relationship is extremely critical. The pitch back must gain ground with his first step to reach the right position whether he is aligned behind or next to the quarterback (we will utilize both). The pitch back's goal is to defeat the leverage of the defensive end as fast as possible. The quarterback should pitch the ball once this leverage is overcome (Figure 92).

We coach the pitch back to work to a distance of 4 to 5 yards from the quarterback. Most important to us is that the pitch back receives the ball moving downhill exactly as the illustration on the right demonstrates.

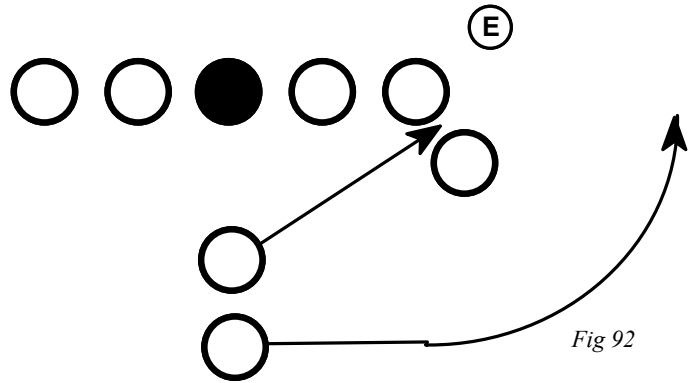


Fig 92

We want our pitch players to receive all pitches—no matter if it is a triple option or Speed Option—as flat as possible. Some option coaches talk about pitching the ball backwards. We do not want this negative relationship because the goal is avoid giving up yardage already gained during the pitch phase. This is why we want a flat pitch.

We sometimes pitch the ball slightly forward when we're behind the line of scrimmage. Pitches across the line of scrimmage are always sideways. Our quarterbacks are coached accordingly. It is important to remember that in the rules of football there is no such thing as a lateral (passes are either forward or backward). When coaching the backwards pitch we highlight the idea of the pitch being flat or sideways.

Quarterback Fundamentals

The number one concept for quarterbacks is that Speed Option is really Speed Pitch as far as they are concerned. The goal is to see how fast the quarterback is able to get the defensive end to commit and then make the pitch. The quarterback must gain ground on the first step and move directly towards the contain player's outside number in order to execute Speed Pitch properly.

The pitch back receives the ball as soon as the defensive end commits to containing the quarterback. This emphasis needs coaching over and over again so it becomes internalized and automatic for the quarterback. As soon as the pitch back defeats the leverage of the defensive end he should receive the pitch.

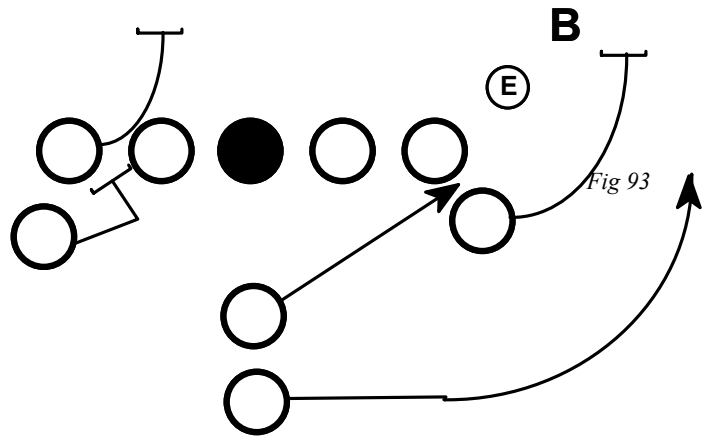
It is important for the quarterback to attack the outside number of the pitch key to prevent slow play (playing halfway between the running back and quarterback) from interfering with the developing exchange. We want to force the pitch key to make a definitive decision on whether he is taking the pitchman or the quarterback as early as possible.

A situation where the quarterback keeps the ball when the pitch key is a zone defensive end occurs extremely rarely. A defensive end occasionally takes a wide and fast uphill contain path that forces the quarterback to keep the ball. This occurs when the defense blitzes inside (using a double A-gap blitz for example).

On all option plays the quarterback must begin the play with a plan. It is important to emphasize that a quarterback keeper on Speed Option against a base defensive end pitch key is exceptionally rare. This is particularly true for teams that run triple option alongside to Speed Option. Teams that run triple option likely see a lot of defensive end contain players that close very quickly on inside releases by tackles. This results in easy ball distribution by the quarterback. The quarterback must first think, "I'm going to pitch this ball" and then react to a situation accordingly when a pitch isn't possible.

Play Side Wing Fundamentals

The play side wing in Figure 93 executes an arc release to the outside linebacker. This angle is inside-out to the outside number of the defender. The wing gains leverage to the outside and attacks towards the goal line when executing an arc release properly. A cut block is highly effective in the situation. In college football the cut block must take place within five yards of the line of scrimmage and must come from a vertical angle toward the defender. Satisfying the criterion for a legal cut block is fairly easy when an offensive player takes the right initial departure from the line of scrimmage.



When wings are aligned as a slot they maintain the same responsibility of blocking the play side outside linebacker. The difference is the slot player moves outside-in rather than inside-out to block the linebacker. Coaching note: cut blocks from an outside-in angle are illegal at all levels of football. The slot maintains an outside number aiming point on the defender when a cut block is not possible.

Backside Wing Fundamentals

Backside wings follow the same blocking rules as a backside tight end (Figure 93). His job is to reach block the gap vacated by the tackle that is leaving to cut-off level one pursuit players. The backside wing is not part of the scoop scheme as a pseudo-Tight End however. He is actually a C-gap player in Speed Option.

Offensive Line Scoop Block Fundamentals

Gaining ground with the first step is essential when reach blocking. We accept that this first step is often backwards slightly (even though we don't coach this technique explicitly). This is not a "bucket step" however. "Bucket steps" are backward steps that do not gain much width for our linemen. Our emphasis

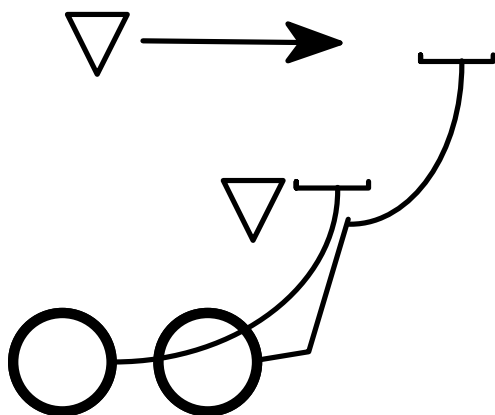


Fig 94

is not on getting depth behind the line of scrimmage. We set our pre-snap alignment as far back from the center as possible in order to already have depth. We coach our players to take an angle that allows a reach block even if a slightly backward step is needed.

The "post" player in Speed Option is the covered player. He executes a technique in Figure 94 called "lane-ing through" the defender on his way to the second level. The post player holds up the defensive linemen ever so slightly on his way to the linebacker. In the illustration the offensive linemen to the right is a post player. He takes a

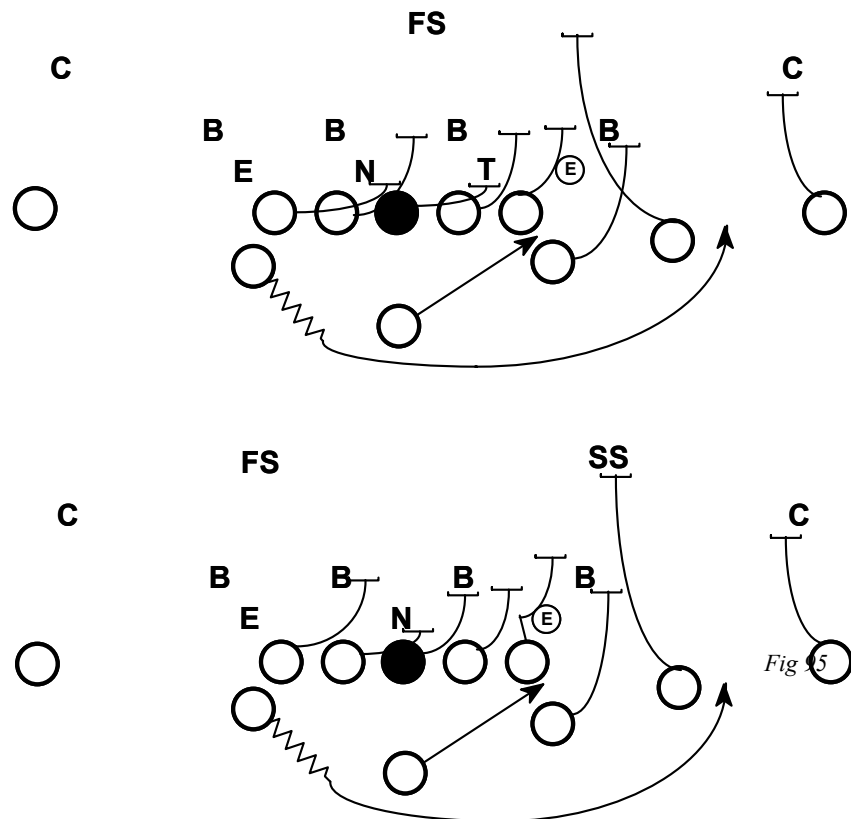
hard outside step and then works at a 45-degree angle through the outside shoulder of the defender. The post player working through to the second level gives his partner a chance to cross the face of a defensive lineman and complete the reach block.

The “lead” player in Speed Option follows a post player to complete the scoop block. He is responsible for completing the scoop of the level one defensive lineman. Angles are very important for both the post and lead player. We teach the critical importance of working at a 45-degree angle after taking their first steps at the line of scrimmage. Working at a 45-degree angle allows the post player to get to the linebacker and allows the lead player to gain leverage on the level one defender in order to reach and overtake.

Empty Speed Option

We like to run Speed Option from empty formations (see Figure 95). We especially like our Double Wing Empty formations in particular because they create a lot of variety in what we execute.

A major factor in us favoring empty formations is that our Double Wing Empty provides five immediate pass threats. This five-headed threat is particularly difficult for defenses to cover. We also like that we are able to run triple option, Speed Option, or anything else in the Tex-Bone arsenal in any direction from empty formations. We also like Double Pull Power from an empty formation.



Speed Option to the perimeter is a great adjustment when teams load up the middle of the field. To execute Speed Option from a Double Wing Empty formation the wing that becomes the pitch back gets a slight head start before the ball is snapped. The short motion gives the wing all the time he needs to get around the quarterback and into pitch relationship.

Jet Motion Speed Option

Figure 96 shows Jet motion sweep with Speed Option blocking. The offensive linemen execute reach and overtake blocks similar other Speed Option looks. The play illustrated on the next page shows that instead

