

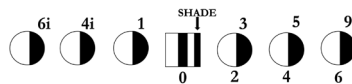
# CHAPTER THREE

## Identifying Fronts

The quarterback is an extension of the coach on the field, so although he will not audible based off fronts, he needs to know them so that he can communicate to help keep everyone on the same page. To be on the same page, we're going to teach them all the details about defenses and that includes the fronts and how the structures operate based off the fronts. We teach why a defense would play a certain core, and then how we would attack it. If we want to be on the same page, we have to be able to teach it to them, from the ground up. This is all part of the process of building a great foundation for our quarterbacks.

### DEFENSIVE LINE TECHNIQUES

Before we even get to naming different defenses that we're going to see, we teach our quarterback a communication system of the shades that defensive linemen will line up in. These shades will then help us understand their responsibilities.



Starting with our center, if they are playing one side of the center or the other, we call that lining up in a “shade.” If they line up on the inside shoulder of our guard, we call that a “1 shade.” If it’s the outside shoulder of the guard, we call it a “3 shade.”

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If they're inside the shade of the tackle, we call it a "4i." If he's outside the shade of the tackle, we call it a "5." And then with the tight end or a tight slot, if he's inside shade, we would call it a "6i," and if he's outside shade, it would be a "9."

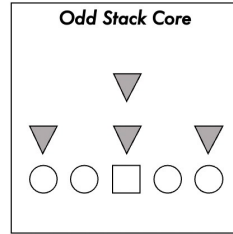
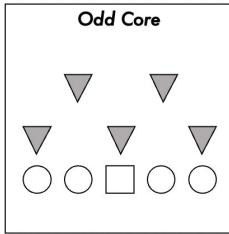
Anytime a player is head up on one of our offensive linemen, we give it an even number. So, head up on a center is "0," head up on the guard is "2." Head up on the tackle is "4," and head up on a tight end or a tight slot is "6."

If we add linebacker, we would just add a zero to the numbers to communicate. So, a linebacker at depth that is lined up head up over top of the guard would be in a "20 shade." If he's in the gap, we would just call out the gap that the linebacker is lined up in. This really helps us out with not only our quarterbacks but anytime our linemen come off the field, and we need to find out where guys are lined up. When they know these shades, they can talk us through it, and then we can draw it up, and we can diagram to draw out any adjustments that we want in terms of the blocking scheme. Having a communication system makes things much easier than a player coming back and saying, "Hey, coach, he was lined up on my shoulder." So, this way if it's a guard, he just has to come back and say, "Coach, he was lined up in a three on me."

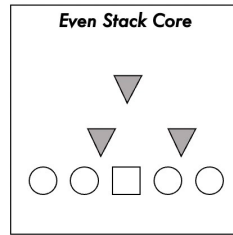
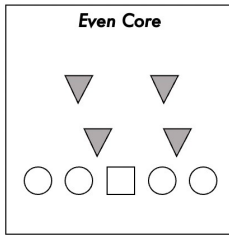
Early in my career, I often wondered why it was so important to be able to communicate the shades of defensive linemen. Well, there are some defensive linemen where it would be an advantage to run to if they were in certain shades while in other shades it would be an advantage to run away from them. For instance, anybody that would be lined up in a 5 versus our offense would be great to read in our zone ready concept. If somebody is playing a 3, we love running counter and power to the 3 shade versus if that player is in a 1 shade.

## DEFENSIVE CORES

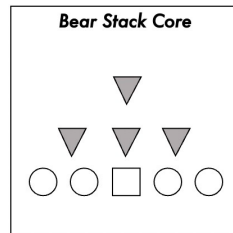
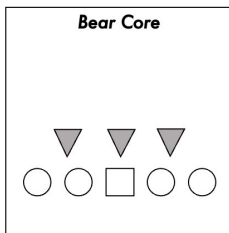
The term "Defensive Cores" refer to the interior part of the defense that will involve one, two, or three defensive lineman, and one or two linebackers. If you take a look at both of these cores that we've drawn up on the next page, these are odd structured cores. In that first drawing, the defensive linemen cover the center and tackles with the linebackers over the guards in 20 shades while the other one has just one linebacker stacked. This difference helps us know what their responsibilities are in regards to the A and B gaps. In total, there are six basic cores that you'll see.



In the drawings above, you see the two “Odd Cores.” As mentioned before, the linebackers’ shades determine if the core is just going to be normal like the drawing on the left, or if it will be a “Stack Core” like the drawing on the right.



In this second diagram, we’re going to look at cores with two defensive linemen. If we take a look at the diagram on the left, the center doesn’t have a defensive lineman head up on him. In essence, the center is uncovered while both guards are covered by some sort of defensive lineman shade. Then there’s going to be two players at linebacker depth over the B gaps. We would then call this an “Even Core.” The reason the drawing on the left is an “Even Stack Core” is because there is a linebacker right over the center. That single linebacker could be playing anywhere within the B gaps.



The third structure is when all three of your interior linemen are covered by defensive lineman and we call that a “Bear Core.” Anytime we get this look, we’re going to get one of two types. On the left we’re going to have the center and both guards covered, but no linebacker in the B gap to B gap areas. They’re generally going

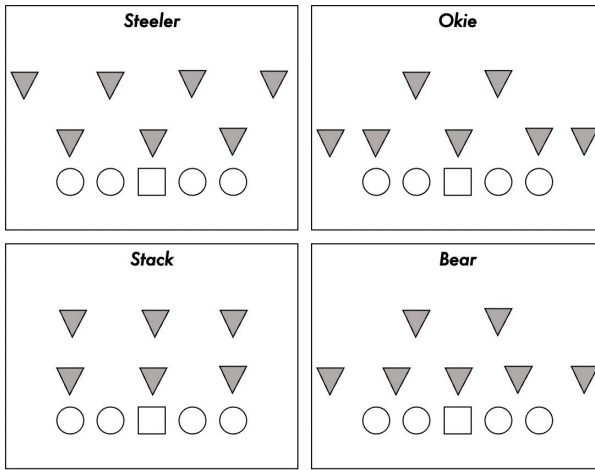
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to be aligned over the tackles in the C gaps in that case. When all three defensive linemen are lined up on top of the center and guards and there's one linebacker over the center, we call that "Bear Stack."

## COMMUNICATING FRONTS

The next thing we do is we try to use the same terminology on both sides of the ball. You want to communicate the front in a concise way so that you'll be able to get a description or an image in your head.

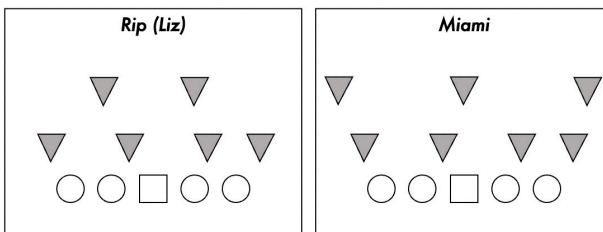
### Fronts in Odd and Bear Cores



The main difference between Steeler and Okie, although they look very similar in terms of the core, is that in Okie, the outside linebackers have no pass responsibility and they're more like rush ends. This leads to the strong and free safety generally being involved in coverage. A lot of times this will be a pressure defense bringing Cover 0. Against a Steeler front, they're more going to be C gap run defenders getting inside and underneath the number two receiver.

### Fronts in Even Cores

Below you can see two popular fronts that we see within the Even Core. In the



drawing on the left, we call this front “Rip” if the 3 shade is on the right, and we call the front “Liz” when the 3 shade is on the left. On the right, we will call the front “Miami” when there is one linebacker over the center.

## **Joker Fronts**

Sometimes you’ll go against teams and you’ll see that you can’t even identify the front. Until we figure it out, we will call it “Joker” and that tells our guys that the front was non-identifiable.

## **Teaching Through Game Day Samples**

It is also important to use pictures in the classroom. We take screenshots from pro and college games that show various teams playing different fronts. It helps the quarterback to see the fronts in a real game and from a defensive perspective. We like to put the images up and then ask a quarterback to identify the core and then describe the shades that defensive linemen and the linebackers are in.

## **CONCLUSION**

When your quarterback comes off the field, you need to make sure that you and your team have a system of communication in place, so that everyone is on the same page. A perfect example would be if there’s certain plays that we’re going to call that our quarterback needs to know the direction that we’re going to run that play. For instance, if we were running trap against a team that has an even core, we want to run to the wider of the two interior shaded defensive lineman. We would just signal trap and then the quarterback would look and he would know that we’re gonna run it at the one that’s in the three shade. The only way this is possible, however, is if you have a strong off-season program which allows you the time and structure to teach these important things to your quarterbacks.

