

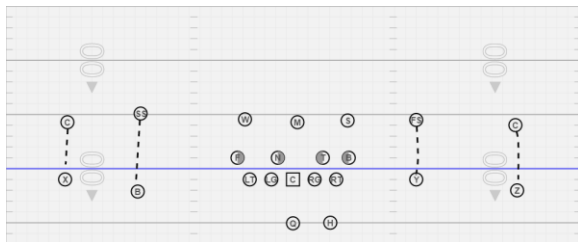
Defeating Man to Man with Counter RPOs

About the Author: For the past eight years Mike Rowe has been an active member of the ROCORI School District, working as a third grade teacher and head coach of the Spartans Football program. Under Coach Rowe ROCORI high school has won two conference titles, 4 section championships, and appeared in the state semi-final in 2014, 2015 and 2016. In 2011 the Spartans won their first ever State Football Championship. Coach Rowe has been an advocate for developing character in his athletes and in 2014 the [NFL featured him in a video](#) that aimed to stop domestic violence and dating violence. His resources and coaching materials can be found at <http://coaches-clinic.com/coaching-resources/digital-store/>

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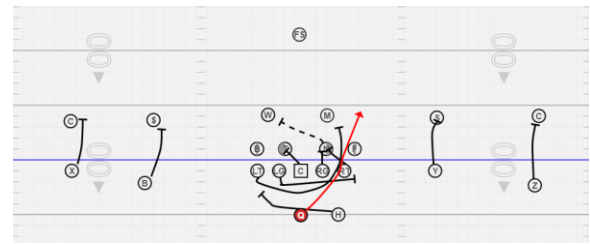
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The hottest offensive topic the last year has been Run/Pass/Options or RPOs. Offensive coaches are always looking for the next great thing. As a coach that has been using RPOs since I began coaching in high school in 2005, I love how they allow your team to limit how many bad play calls you get into each game. The issues that offenses face is what to do when the defensive team is able to load the box with 7 defenders and play your receivers man to man? (Diagram-1)



(Diagram-1)

To defeat this style of defense you need two things an athletic quarterback and a great intermediate passing game. Some years you will have both, but if you are like me and play in the Midwest you need to have a run game. The best way to defeat this is by using the quarterback and force the defense to defend 11 players on offense. One of our favorite running plays is using what we call “Tre’ Dart” (Diagram-2).



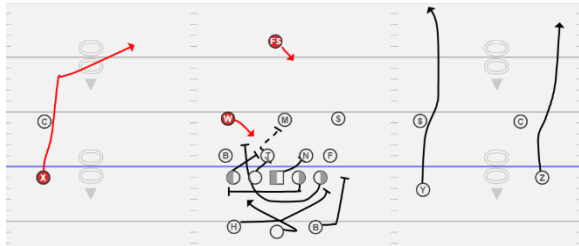
(Diagram-2)

We like running “Tre’” out of 10 personnel because it takes defenders out of the box and if we block well with our wide receivers the only player that is unblocked is the free safety.

In the last three seasons we have evolved our RPOs to allow us to throw versus defenses that want to play us man to man. This was a process because we had to spend time teaching our receivers to read the corners alignment. The four routes we emphasized were slant, hitch, post and fade. We would run hitch or slant if the corner was playing off man to man. If the corner was play outside alignment versus the tagged receiver, we would run a post. If the corner was playing press man to man with inside alignment, we would run a fade.

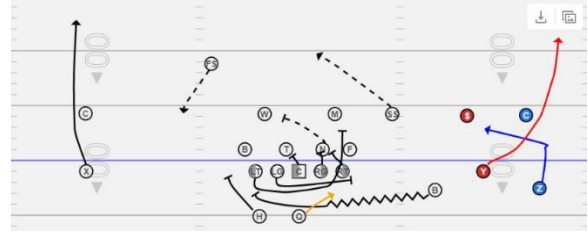
My first example of “Tre’ Dart” is a single receiver tag. In (Diagram-3) we are running Tre’ to the single receiver side and our QB is going to pre-snap read the alignment of the safety. If the safety is in the middle of the field or cheating to the two wide receiver side, then the quarterback is going to anticipate throwing the football. We are hoping that the outside

zone path of the running back is going to make the safety move away from the single receiver side. The quarterback will show the football and then ride the running back for one shuffle step. His eyes will go to the play side linebacker who is the Will in this diagram. If the Will is filling his gap hard then the Quarterback will step forward and throw the ball to the post. If the Will is slow and non-aggressive the quarterback will follow his blocks and run the ball.



(Diagram-3)

My final example is using jet motion to manipulate the defense. In (Diagram-4) we are going to start in a 3x1 set and RPO tag the two receiver side. The two receiver side is going to run what we call a “Shave” concept. In this concept our #2 receiver is going to run at the up field shoulder of the corner guarding the #1 receiver and then run a fade route. The #1 receiver will release three steps to the outside and then plant his outside foot and run a slant. The #1 needs to be patient so that he allows the slot to create a little interference so that his route will be open. When we tag this play our quarterback is looking to throw the football to the outside receiver after the run fake. We are hoping that the run action holds the linebackers in the box so that the slant route will be open. If the box does not have 7 defenders in it or the receiver falls down then the quarterback will run the football.



(Diagram-4)

Conclusion:

These are just a few RPO concepts that we use when the defense tries to take away our throws off of run reads. We find the structure of our formations and our offensive philosophy have allowed us to be an offense that makes it very difficult for opposing defenses to stop.