

# CHAPTER FOUR

## Teaching the Play

There are a lot of things racing through the quarterback's head when he runs a play. Therefore, it is imperative that you are good at teaching the processes of the play to your quarterback. We have divided the mental processes that the quarterback must go through into two: pre-snap and post-snap.

### **PRE-SNAP**

When a quarterback gets the play call, specifically a pass play, there are certain mental processes we ask him to go through. These processes help him make better post-snap decisions. There are three primary ways that we do this: covered and uncovered rules, clean and dirty rules, and single side access.

### **Covered and Uncovered Rules**

These rules indicate when the defense has honored our receivers by either leaving them covered or uncovered. To determine this we use the hard deck line as a reference and we categorize three situations that a receiver can be in. They can be the *single* receiver to a side (think the backside of trips); they can be the *inside* receiver (think the slot receiver in any 2x2 set); and lastly, they can be the *outside* receiver (think the number one receiver anytime there are other receivers inside him).

### **Single**

This receiver is covered if a defender is within seven yards of him (or below the

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hard deck line). Contrariwise, a receiver is uncovered when there is no defender under the hard deck.

### **Inside**

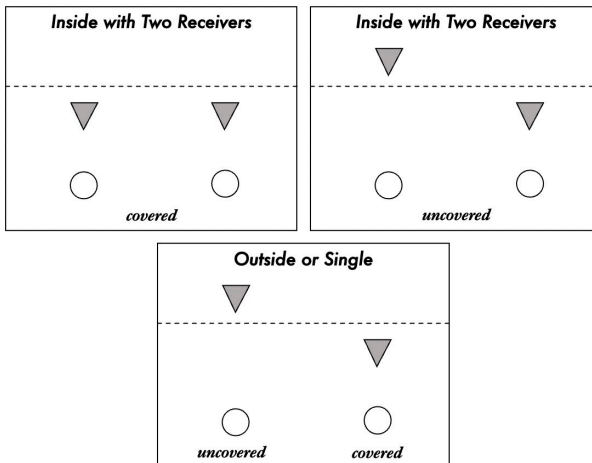
There is going to be one inside receiver in 2x2 sets and there will be two inside receivers in 3x1 sets, so there are two ways to judge whether these receivers are covered or uncovered. Below, you will find that the rule uses the hard deck, but for inside receivers you can lower your reference point to five yards.

If there is just one inside receiver, the same rule as if he was a single receiver applies. A defender under the hard deck would mean the receiver is covered while no defender under the hard deck would mean the receiver is uncovered.

For multiple inside receivers, they will be covered only if there are two defenders below the hard deck line. In all other instances, they will be uncovered. For example, if there is one defender below the hard deck line over the two inside receivers, then we would consider the pair uncovered.

### **Outside**

There are two primary places an outside receiver can find himself: to the short side of the field or to the wide side of the field. An outside receiver to the short side is uncovered if there is no defender below seven yards. An outside receiver to the wide side is uncovered if there is no defender below 10 yards. Below are drawings of the primary situations:



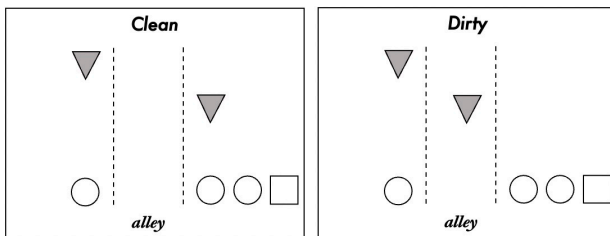
## Clean and Dirty Rules

Being able to identify whether a receiver is covered or uncovered is not enough to help the quarterback determine whether the single side receiver is open or not, so we also have clean and dirty rules. The clean and dirty analysis rounds out the picture for the quarterback by giving him tools to analyze a defender on a horizontal plan. For example, linebackers are usually involved in covering the inside receivers and can play inside or close to the run box while being near the single receiver. The clean and dirty rules will help the quarterback know if that defender is able to cover that receiver. “Clean” means no defender is in the alley and the receiver is in a one-on-one situation. “Dirty” means an overhang linebacker or safety is in the alley in position to help.

Also, because linebackers are usually involved in covering the inside receivers and can play inside or close to the run box, we will consider the receiver uncovered if the defender is within a few yards from the end man on the line of scrimmage even if he is under five yards.

In our offense, we want to play catch all day with a single receiver in a clean look. We consider it kind of like backyard football where we’re going to just take opportunities throughout the game when we have a receiver that’s on the single side and the defense isn’t giving us a dirty look.

We use these words because we want our communication to be able to bring up images in our quarterback’s head to make the system very clear. When our quarterback comes off the side and we tell him that on that single side you’ve got a clean look, and you should be playing pitch and catch with him, he should know exactly what we’re talking about.



## Single Side Access

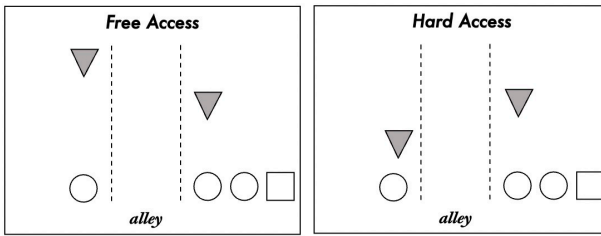
Once we identify if a single receiver side is clean or dirty, we discuss what kind

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of access we have. This identification further describes the quarterback's ability to get the ball to this receiver. The four terms we use are free or hard and limited or no. These are subcategories to clean and dirty and speak to how the defense is playing that player in the alley and the depth of the corner.

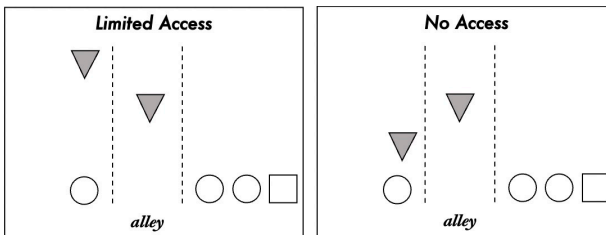
### **Clean Alley: Free Access or Hard Access**

Both of these accesses to the single side receiver exist in a clean alley, so we want to be able to get the ball to this receiver, but the type of access we have will dictate the route we are able to run. As you can see in the drawings below, both show a clean alley. Free access means the corner is soft while hard access means the corner is in press.



### **Dirty Alley: Limited Access or No Access**

Both of these accesses exist in a dirty alley, so it is more difficult to get the ball to this single side receiver. When the defense shows limited access, your best bet is going to be an RPO reading the defender in the alley to try to get him back in the box, or to use a running back route to pull him outside and try to throw behind him on a slant. No access is just that and that is not a look we'll attack.



## POST-SNAP

The post-snap decision terms we teach our quarterbacks describe the types of reads that they are going to make on passing concepts. In total, there are four different types of reads we use: progression, key defender, object receiver, and solo flight.

## Progression Read

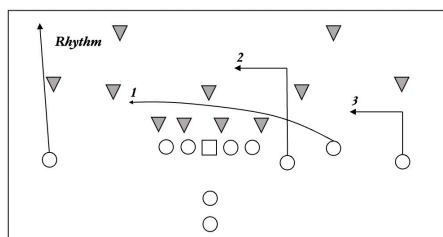
The progression read is the very first and most common read that we make. In this read, the quarterback is going through a checklist: first to second to third to fourth and sometimes he might even get to the fifth receiver. It's not so much that the quarterback is looking to see if guys are open, but as he's looking to the different route areas in the progression. Then, based on what the defense is doing we'll give him a look that will tell him to move on or throw the ball. We call this a: "1-2-3 checklist" where he's going to go across the board, and he's either going to go from right to left, or left to right on the progression.

### Keys to Executing the Progression Read

First, the quarterback must go through a pre-snap process in order to assess where the threats might be. Are they in two high or are they rolling coverage? That's the most important thing to look at in the secondary.

Second, we teach the quarterback that the progression is like a checklist that he goes through to decide whether or no to throw the ball. It is like a series of snapshots where the quarterback will decide yes or no if he can get the ball out to that receiver. If it's a no then he moves on to the next guy, not waiting for any guy to come open or give him a little more time.

Third, we work on the getting the feet and eyes synced up because the feet need to follow the eyes properly. We'll do drills with our quarterbacks where their feet are moving in sequence with their eyes, where the feet follow the eyes and the feet will help tell the quarterback if the receiver is open or not.



In this progression read, the outside receiver on the left is going to run a vertical that we'll throw on rhythm if it's open. So, if we're taking a three-step drop, the quarterback will hit his third step, and if it's open, will throw right then. If it is not open, then the quarterback looks to the shallow receiver coming across the field where he's

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going to naturally be the second guy coming open in the progression. Now when you look at a progression passing system, you'll notice that all the receivers will be breaking one way so that the quarterback's eyes can move left to right. And then the last guy in the progression is not only the last guy open, but also the most outside guy to go to as he comes back to his right. So, we'd be looking for one getting the ball out on rhythm, but if that's not there the quarterback will take one hitch for every read he goes through.

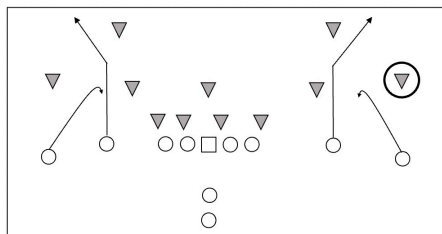
### **Key Defender Read**

The key defender read is the second most common type of read. This read is very similar to the thought process that goes on in a zone-read running play where you make a decision based off one player's movements. So, in the zone-read play you read the C gap defender and if he gets upfield, you hand the ball off to the running back, but if he squeezes down, you're going to pull the ball. The same type of read exists in the key defender read. One of the reasons why we love this read so much is because the quarterbacks naturally do it when we're running the ball, so it makes it that much easier to install in the passing game because it's already a part of what we do. Say, if we have a slant and a bubble, and he goes outside chasing the bubble, we throw inside to the slant and if he drops back to the slant, then we go outside to the bubble. Another reason we have success with this type of read is because most of the players have been doing it since youth ball.

### **Keys to Executing the Key Defender Read**

First, the quarterback needs to understand the big picture. He needs to be able to identify the defender for each concept that he needs to make his read off of.

Second, and just like the progression read, the feet follow the eyes and the feet will tell you if he's open or not.



The drawing above of the smash concept is a classic example a key defender read

on a cornerback. For this concept, we teach the quarterback to read the cornerback and that's it. If the cornerback backs out, the quarterback throws the sit route. If the cornerback comes down, the quarterback throws the corner route. Rather than reading this as high-low, we've cleaned it up by turning it into a key defender read where we watch the feet and hips of the corner, which will tell us where we're going to go with the football.

For this key defender read, the primary keys are the feet and hips of the corner. But if we're using a concept where we're going to throw a quick game off of an outside linebacker, then the shoulders of the linebacker are going to be the primary key.

Another important skill the quarterback must build to execute the key defender read is anticipation. Lots of reps will help him build the picture in his mind of what open looks like for each defender he is reading whether that be a corner or outside linebacker or down safety. Lastly, you must teach your quarterback to be willing and decisive so he is able to throw the ball immediately upon seeing somebody's reactions. Otherwise, the throw will be late, and the ball will be knocked down or intercepted.

## **Object Receiver Read**

The object receiver read is what we also can refer to as a triangle read. We always try to go to the middle of the triangle first. This receiver is who we want the ball to go to (which is why we call him the object receiver). Now, depending on how they are playing that receiver, if they squeeze him or invade from the inside, we then go to the inside part of that triangle read. Then, if they squeeze him from the outside we will then go to the outside receiver in that read. Therefore, it always starts off with wanting to go to a specific player, and then the quarterback will use his eyes to move and manipulate the defense thus turning the read into a progression.

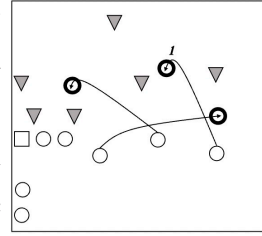
### ***Keys to making sure this object receiver read works***

First, the quarterback must know who can invade the receiver's area. We consider those players as the danger players. It could be by alignment, and so the quarterback will have to use his eyes to influence the defender to protect the route.

Second, the quarterback must see the big picture. He must be looking four yards to either side of the object receiver's break point so that he can feel if somebody is going to invade either from the outside in or from the inside out.

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The drawing on the right shows an example of an object receiver read. As you can see, if we drew and connected all of the circles, it would form a triangle. We always want to go to the middle of that triangle and then feel from which direction the defense squeezes that route. So, if the middle route winds up getting squeezed from the outside, the quarterback should anticipate that the flat route would come open. If the outside linebacker squeezed the middle route from the inside, then the quarterback should put the ball away from the next linebacker to the sit route as the number three receiver comes into the box.



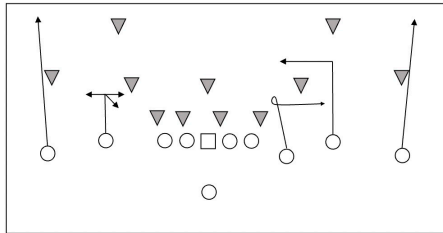
### **Solo Flight Read**

Solo Flight Read is the last read that we teach our quarterback. This read just revolves around a one-on-one matchup pattern, and it doesn't matter if they're playing man or zone. If he's not open, then it always turns into a progression read from that just like with the key defender read.

### **Keys to making sure this solo flight read works**

First, analyze the matchup. Is he leveraged inside or outside? Is he uncovered?

Second, the quarterback needs to make sure he still sees the big picture, so that he can work through the progression if the solo flight read is not open.

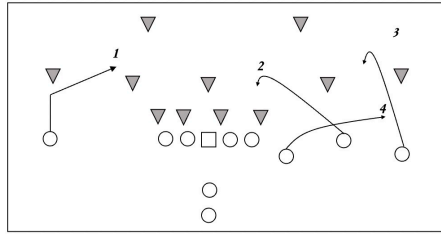


In this read you want to match up a receiver on a route versus a particular defender of coverage. The drawing above is an example of where we'll use a choice route on one side combined with a dig grab on the other. We also have two outside receivers that are running matchup routes as well (which we call "gift routes" because they're just going to run take offs like they're going to take the top off the coverage). Then, if you have a receiver that you feel like you have a mismatch with, you can take a shot, but the read actually starts off on the left slot's choice route. This route will



break depending on the defender's leverage. The slot is either going to run a hitch, break out, or slant in. So, if we had no outside linebacker and they brought inside pressure and the safety was down, then he would run in. If he was uncovered he would just spot up. If he's leveraged inside, then he would break out. If that route is not there, the quarterbacks will reset his feet and progress from the dig to the grab.

## Combining Reads



The drawing above is an example of both a key defender read and a progression read because we often combine the two. Here, we'll just focus on the passing concept on the right which is an object receiver read called the spacing concept. However, we treat this as a progression read because we are combining a key defender read on the left with an object receiver read on the right. So, the quarterback will start left and go through the read for that key defender read. If it's not open, then he will scan right and go to each route in the progression.

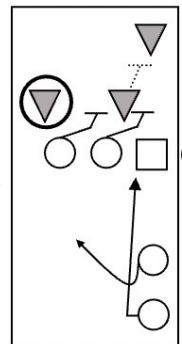
## RUN GAME

### Core Drill

The Core Drill is a great drill to teach your quarterbacks how to operate the run game, and it is also good at teaching them the foundational process of going through a pass read. This drill is also a great refresher drill for your running backs and offensive linemen early in the season because you can present them with a variety of defensive cores in a short amount of time.

If you take a look at the drawing on the right, you will see that this is a half line drill. You can run this drill with any of your run plays, and in this case, we're running one of our zone read concepts.

We will run this drill with multiple groups going at the same time lined up down the field.



## CONCLUSION

We believe that all of these tools give our quarterbacks a great chance to succeed when they step on the game field. The pre-snap processes of identifying covered and uncovered as well as identifying clean and dirty give the quarterback quick images in his head to help put the team in the best situation. For example, we like for the quarterback to check if the single side is clean and dirty even on run plays because that will tell us if there is an extra defender over there that we can potentially throw an RPO off soon.

When you combine the pre-snap reads with the post-snap reads of progression, key defender, object receiver, and solo flight, it can seem like a lot. However, it is all built into the system in a clean way which builds off upon itself. When a player comes into the program as a freshman, we don't expect that he's going to be able to execute all four reads. But we know that what we can do is perform a quick game with him and so we'll teach him the key defender read and run a lot of quick game.

Then as they progress through the program, from sub-varsity up to varsity, we will make sure that they get to the point where they know all four reads. During the freshman year, the key defender read would be on day one, and they would progress into the object receiver and progression read, but we don't get too much into the solo flight read yet because that usually ties in with coming off and going into a progression read. Also, because each play has a read tied to it, the quarterbacks will have to learn the read they are going to use every time we teach them a new play or concept.

We're always keeping the quarterbacks at the edge of their seat, making them feel that it's not going to be cushy through practice. We're always going to force the issue on them so that they feel a little uncomfortable. That way, when they get to the game, they are used to the pressure and ready to execute at an elite level.