



WESTAMPTON REC.

FLAG FOOTBALL

PRACTICE

DRILLS

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Flag Football Drills

Below are a number of drills you can use in practice with your team to improve their flag football skills. As you get to know your team, choose drills that will address your team's weaknesses (flag pulling, taking the right angle of pursuit, running N/S). Emphasize the fundamentals like the C/QB exchange and proper hand-off technique, flag pulling technique.

Try to take each drill in a progression:

- 1) introduce the skill - show the team how it's done correctly
- 2) practice the skill - each player
- 3) add a center, 1-2 defenders and simulate game situations (have offense goal to get through 2 designated cones)

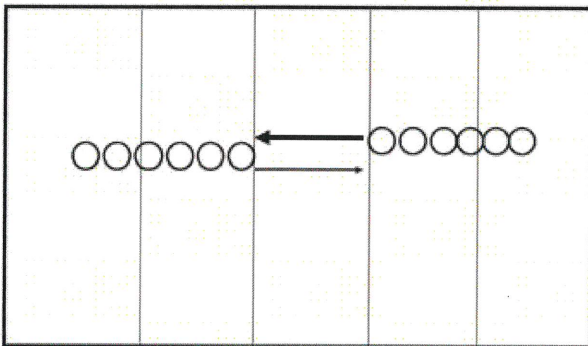
Easy Offense Practice Drills

Run Around Cones

This is a simple drill that helps develop ball carrying skills and coordination. Divide your team into 2-3 groups. Each group lines up in a straight line. Set up cones every 3 yards (3-4 cones per group should be fine for this age group). Then on the coach's command, have the first player in each group run around the cones. You can make this drill into a relay race, the first team to finish running through the cones wins the game.

Team Hand-off Exchange

Team Hand-Off Relay



With this drill, you can have a number of players work on the proper way to give and receive a hand-off. Divide your players into 2 lines approximately 20 yards away from each other. A player from one line starts with the ball. On the coach's whistle, the player with the ball races down field (maintaining the proper grip on the football). Once the player reaches the 1st player in the other line, the player with the ball hands the ball off to that 1st player. That player is now the ball carrier and races down field towards the other line. Emphasize holding the ball properly when running, good hand-off exchange (hand-off acceptance target, and good hand-offs

into target). This is a great drill to use if you are employing reverse, double or triple reverse plays that rely on a smooth hand-off to be effective.

Flag Sweep Drill

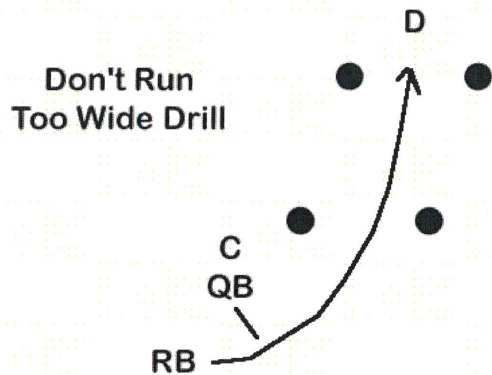
It's great to get your running backs running close to full speed when they take the hand-off from the QB, making it much easier for them to begin eluding defenders from the start. In this drill, have a center, a QB and a line of running backs

wide left or wide right. On the snap, the running back takes off toward the QB and accepts the hand-off using proper technique and sweeps wide then turns it up-field. Add cones for the RB to get through and a defender or two to simulate game play. Rotate positions on every play.

[Fly Sweep Drill Video](#)

Don't Sweep Too Wide Drill

While one of a Running Back's goals is not to be tackled, the more important goal is to gain yardage and score. Many young players only concentrate on not getting tackled and run in an East and West direction and then finally running out



of bounds for no gain. This happens quite often when a sweep play is called. To avoid having the RB bow out a sweep too wide, practice this drill. Set up a pair of cones just outside of where the Tight End would line-up. This is the area that the runner should run through. At the snap of the ball, the QB will hand-off to the RB who will then cut up field and through the cones. Add another set of cones a few yards apart about 5 yards down field and put a defender there – the RB needs to get through the cones without having his/her flag pulled by the defender. Rotate positions.

Hands Target Drill

[Hands Target Drill Video](#)

Pass and Catch

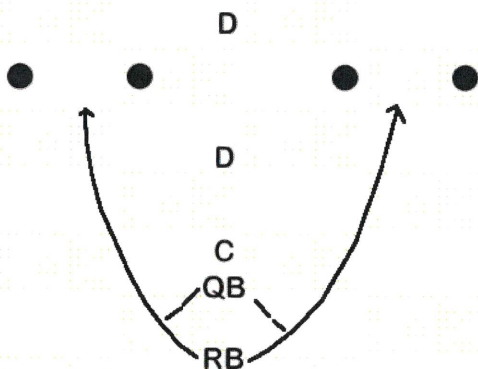
Players will pair off and begin 5 yards from each other. Have players throw the ball back and forth. Make sure players use the appropriate touch on the pass, according to the distance they are from one until another. After a few throws, have each player take a step back. Continue. Next, make it a competition: pair that drops pass, sits down - go until 1 remaining pair.

[Simple Distance Passing drill](#)

Intermediate Practice Drills

Three on Two Running Drill

This is a really effective drill that gets 5 plays at a time involved and in a game situation - simulating a running play. For



this drill, on offense you will have a center, a QB and a RB and on defense (1 Lineman and 1 Linebacker). Set up 2 pairs of cones a few yards apart, about 5 yards down field from the line of scrimmage, one pair left of center and one pair right of center - these are the areas that the Running Back needs to run through. This is a great way to practice the Center/QB exchange, the QB/RB exchange (mix it up, left and right) and pursuing the ball carrier and flag pulling. You can have 2 of these drills going on at the same time so that everyone on the team is involved. Have your Running Backs line-up in their proper stance and in their proper position in the backfield

(approximately 3-5 yards back). The QB should call out the signals, move and pivot in the correct direction and hand the ball off to the RB. The RB should have a proper hand position so as to correctly accept the hand-off. The QB should make sure that he firmly puts the ball into the RB's target area. Then, it's up to the RB to try to get through the designated cones before the 2 defenders pull his/her flag. After each play, rotate the positions.

QB 3 Step Drop, Roll-Out Drill

The first step towards a successful pass is the proper QB drop-back and set-up. In this drill have your QBs receive the snap from the Center, drop back 3 steps and setup in the proper throwing stance. After the QB sets up correctly and has the proper footwork, add a Receiver and have the QB throw a pass to the Receiver. As skills develop, add a defensive back to cover the receiver and a defensive rusher to rush the QB, simulating game situations. Practice the 3 and 5 Step Drop Back as well as the Roll-Out Right and Roll-Out Left.

Mini-Scrimmage

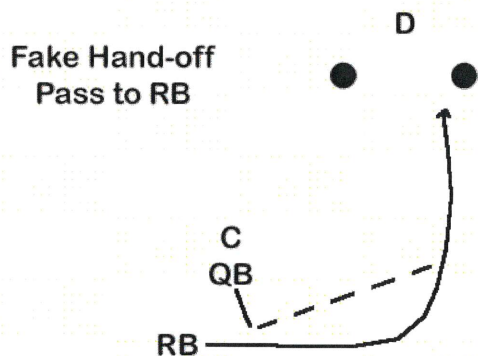
Have mini-scrimmages matching up equal teams. This gives each player more of an opportunity to practice making plays and being involved. On offense, have a center, a Quarterback and a Running Back or Wide Receiver versus 2-3 defenders (a lineman, a linebacker and a rusher 7 yards back). Follow all the rules of a regulation game, however, stop play frequently to correct any problems/mistakes and repeat the plays until they are performed correctly.

On Defense, you may want to have 1 or 2 less players on Defense than on the Offense so as to make it more challenging for your Defense to make the plays and to allow the offense to gain some confidence, especially in the passing game. Have 2 games going on at the same time to get everyone involved.

Advanced Drills

Out of the Back Field Receiving Drill

The Running Back can also be used as a Receiver. The short pass to the Running Back coming out of the back field can be a very effective play. For this you will have 1 or 2 QBs throwing to 1 or 2 groups of RBs. The QB will go through the signals and fake a hand-off to the Running Back. After the fake, the QB will set up for a pass down field, the RB will then run a "flare" pattern into the "flat" (around the line of scrimmage by the sideline). The QB will then throw a pass to the RB. Emphasize the importance of the fake hand-off, the QB's look down field and then the pass to the RB. A pair of cones 5 yards down field that the receiver has to run through and a defender or two to pull their flags, creating a game like situation.



Passing Drill

This is a simple drill that works on a number of areas: Receivers must learn how to get open and create space from a defender. QBs focus on set up and throwing, leading the receiver into the designated areas and defenders will learn how to best stay with a receiver. Set up 2 boxes of cones about 5 yards down field and 5 yards square - these are the areas the receiver must catch the pass in. The QB must throw the pass before the receiver enters the designated area. Start without a defender to get the offense comfortable with the drill, then add a defender to cover the receiver. More advanced: add a 2nd WR and defensive back, a center and a defensive rusher 7 yards back to simulate game situations.

Passing Drill - Leading the Receiver

[Leading the receiver drill video](#)

Flag Football "Ultimate"

Like Ultimate Frisbee, but with a football. The concept is for the team with the football to pass the ball to teammates without dropping the ball, all the while moving the ball toward the end zone.

- Set up a large field with an end zone at each end - play can be 3 on 3, 4 on 4 or 5 on 5.
- The player with the football has 10 seconds to pass the ball to a teammate.
- The ball can be passed forward, sideways, or backwards.
- The player with the ball can only take 2 steps after catching the ball.
- The offensive players without the ball can move anywhere on the field.
- If the ball is caught in the end zone, 7 points are awarded to the receiving team
- After a touchdown, the team that was on defense switches to offense and takes possession of the ball on their own 5 yard line.
- If the ball is dropped or intercepted, play continues with the other team in possession of the ball from the point of the turnover.
- Each defensive player must stay at arms length from the player with the ball. When guarding the player in possession of the ball, the defensive play is similar to that of basketball.

This is a great drill for working on WRs getting open, throwing (leading the receiver) and catching and teamwork.

Defense

Easy Drills

Sharks vs. Minnows - Flag Pulling Drill

For this game, designate an area on the field for play. All players must stay within this designated area. Start with one or two players designated as the "Shark(s)". The rest of the players are the "Minnows". The object of the "Shark" is to grab the flag of the "Minnows". Once a "Minnow" has their flag grabbed, they then become "Sharks", and attempt to grab the flag from the other "Minnows". At the start of the game the "Minnows" should be on the run trying to avoid the "Sharks". The game ends when there is only 1 "Minnow" remaining.

Variation: same concept but have offense run from one end zone to the other. Once they make it safely, allow them to catch their breath, then have them go back the other way. When an offensive player has their flag pulled, they go on defense for the next run.

Pursue & Pull

[Angle tackle drill video](#)

Swarm Drill

For young players it's a good idea to use language that they can relate to. Explain to your team that a good defense is like a swarm of Bees around a Hive. Instead of Bees around a Hive, you want your Defense swarming around the Ball Carrier. This drill can be down with the entire defense vs. the entire offense or you can use a skeleton offense vs. your entire defense. At the coach's command the offense starts the play. When a defender grabs the ball carriers flag instruct all your players to FREEZE! Go around and count how many players are around the ball carrier. You want to avoid 1 on 1 play (only 1 player making the tackle is around the ball). There should be a number of players surrounding the ball carrier.

One on One Flag Pulling

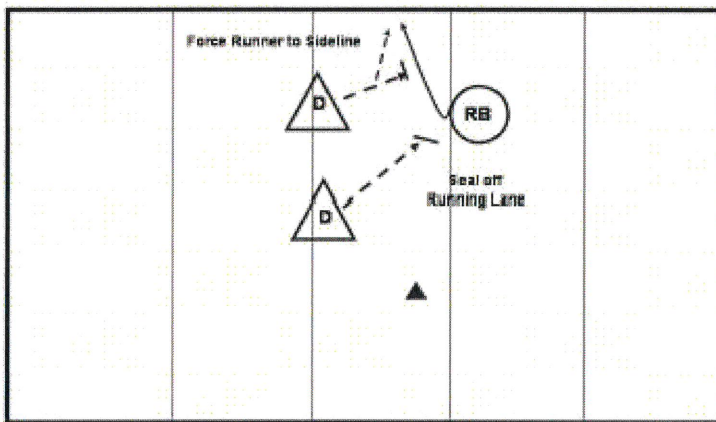
[One on One Flag Pulling Drill](#)

Flag Pulling Breakdown Flag Pulling Technique

[Flag Pulling Technique Video](#)

Intermediate Drills

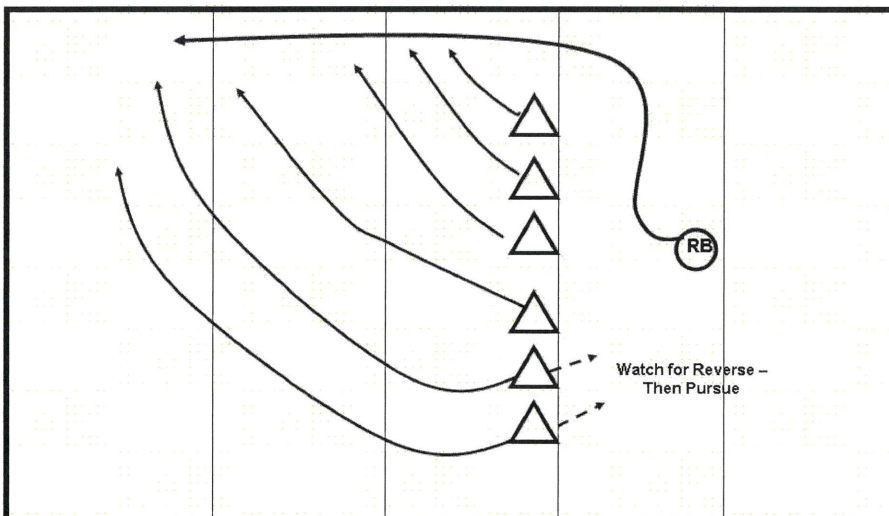
Use the Sideline Drill



Use the Sideline Drill

The sideline can be looked upon as an extra defender. If you get the ball carrier close to the sideline, you limit the number of directions the ball carrier can run. For this drill, shorten the width of the field. At one side place a cone and the sideline should be used as the other boundary. This is the area that the runner is restricted to. This drill is performed with 1 ball carrier and 2 or more Defenders. On the coach's command, the ball carrier should start down field. It is the defenders' job to cut off the ball carrier's running lanes, forcing the runner towards the sideline. The Defense is essentially cornering the ball carrier.

Angle of Pursuit Drill



Angle of Pursuit Drill

It's very important to teach your defense the proper angle of pursuit. Many young defenders will simply chase a ball carrier from behind, leaving you with 5 players lined up behind the ball carrier all the way down the field. For this drill, explain the importance of the angle of pursuit. First walk your players through their pursuit. Players furthest from the play/ ball carrier will take the largest angle to the play.

Emphasize that the players should be running to where the ball carrier will be (not where the ball carrier is now!). After walking your players through their angles, set up the drill at full speed. This drill can be done with the Defensive Line or the entire defense. At the coach's command or snap of the ball the defenders should begin pursuit of the ball carrier. For this drill the defenders should simply touch the ball carrier. The ball carrier continues down the sideline until all players have touched him. Ideally the defense should touch the ball carrier every 3-5 yards.

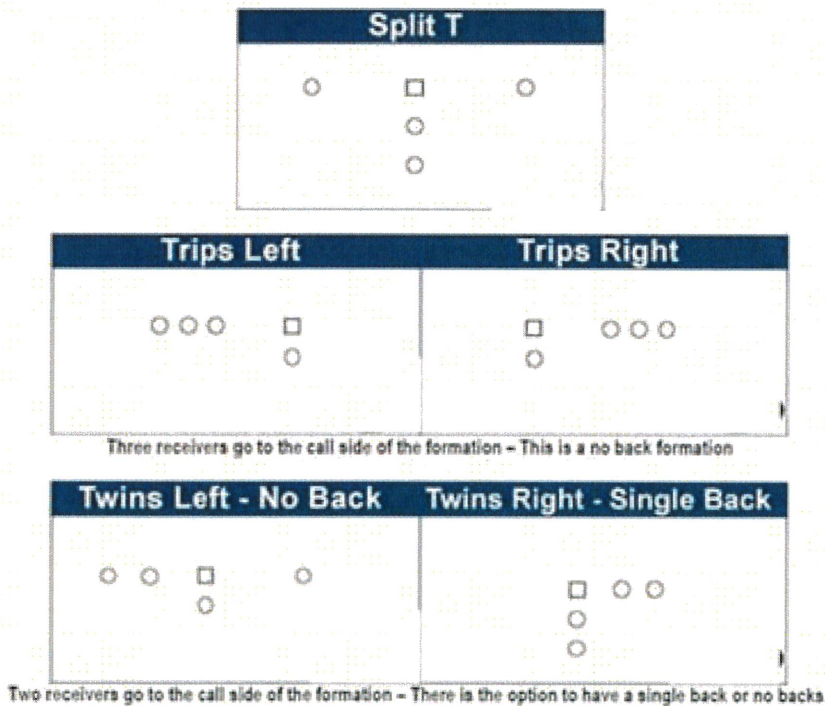
Interception Drill

[INT Drill Video](#)

PLAY CALLING

The most important aspect of play calling is being sure you are keeping communication simple enough that your young players understand what is being called. Keep it simple and appropriate for the age level you are coaching. While middle school aged kids may understand "Trips Left 249 center 4" in time, 5-6 year olds will be baffled and will need plays to be more of the "Kevin is QB, you hand off to Marcus and Marcus you run to the right side" variety.

Formations: How to Call a Formation



There are 3 basic formation calls (Split T, Twins, Trips). The first call made when setting a play will be the formation. Variations and adjustments to the formation can be made to both.

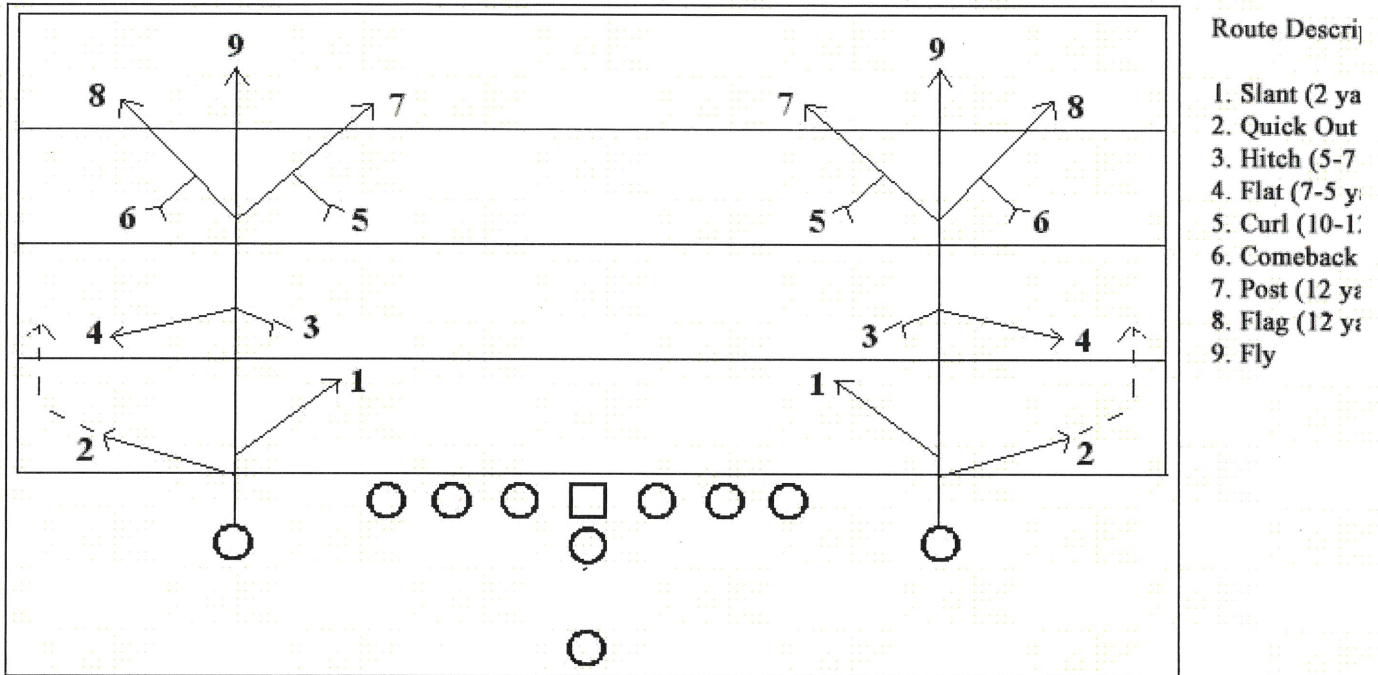
Split T (one receiver on either side of the ball, split out approximately 10-12 yards from the center, with a single running back set behind the quarterback) This is a balanced formation with no strong side – therefore we will not have a call side (no right or left). The formation when set looks like the letter "T".

Trips (left or right) Three receivers go to the call side of the formation – This is a no running back

Twins (left or right) Two receivers go to the call side of the formation – single back or no back.

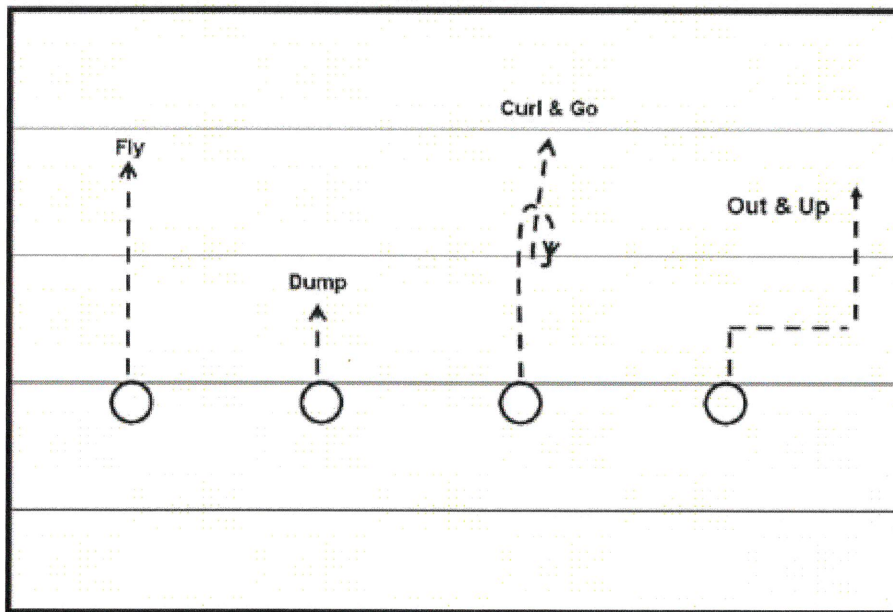
Calling Passing Routes

While there are 9 pass routes in the passing tree system, that is way too many for young players to remember. Start with 2-4 pass routes. Short pass routes are much more effective than long ones.



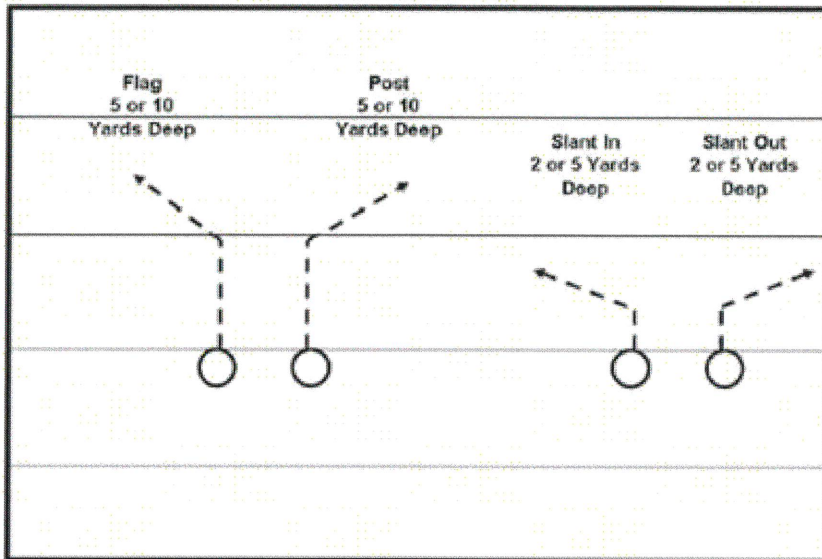
The Quick out, deep out, quick in, and curl (routes 1,3,4,6) are a good place to start and may even take you through the

Pass Patterns

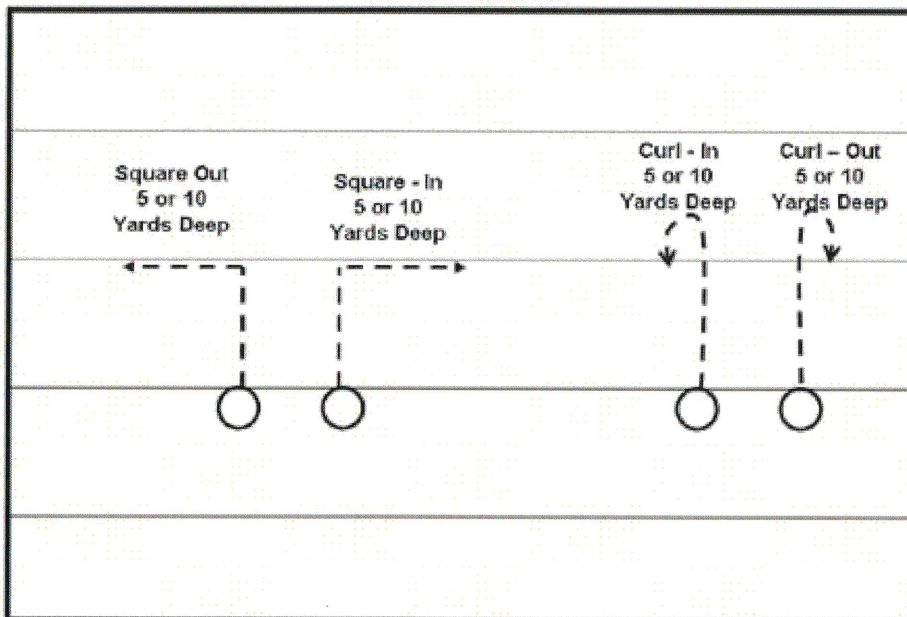


whole season.

Pass Patterns



Pass Patterns



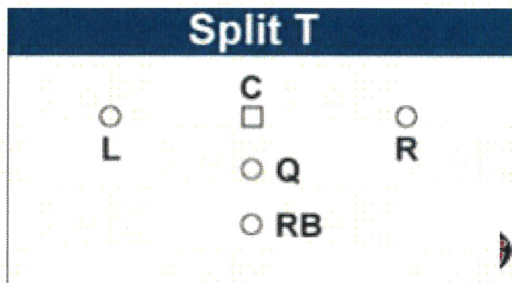
Calling the Play

If possible, have your play drawn up on letter size paper with the formation and pass routes labeled with arrows. Take a knee with your back to the line of scrimmage and your players facing the line of scrimmage. Show them the play diagram and get them lined up left to right while still in the huddle. Make sure each receiver knows their pass route and the QB knows the play. Break from the huddle and have your players stay lined up left to right as they move to the line of scrimmage.

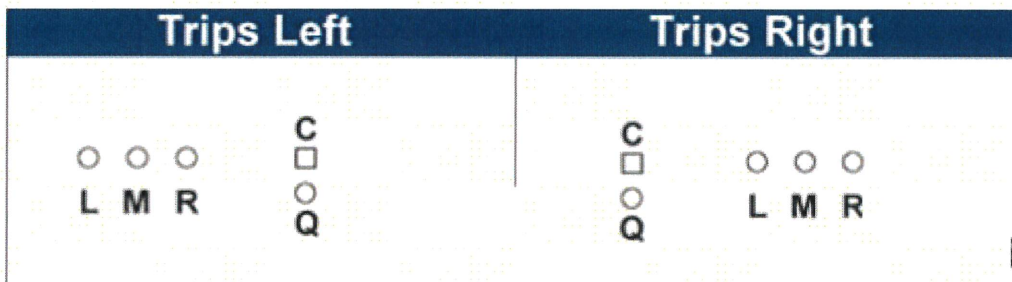
There will be a few constants when calling plays.

1. You will always call the formation first, including the alignment (left or right – if necessary). You'll call an alignment in an unbalanced formation (anything but a Split T – see examples below).

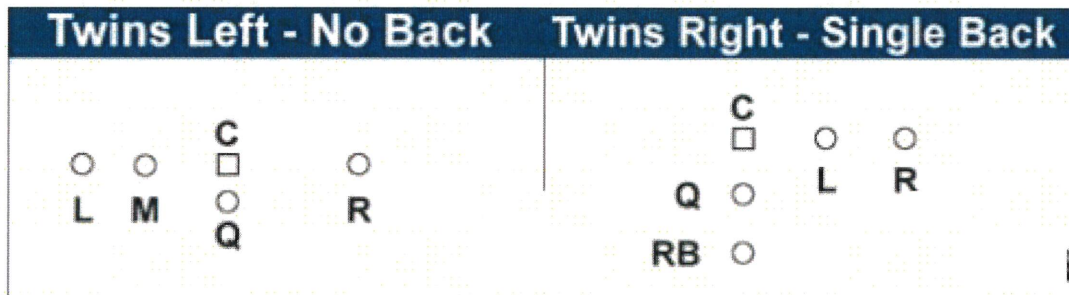
2. You will always call your receiver pass routes from left to right (then your Halfback (H) route, followed by the Center route)



Position Key
 Q - Quarterback
 L - Left Receiver
 M - Middle Receiver
 R - Right Receiver
 RB - Running Back
 C - Center

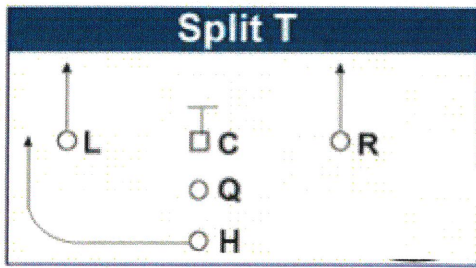


Three receivers go to the call side of the formation – This is a no back formation



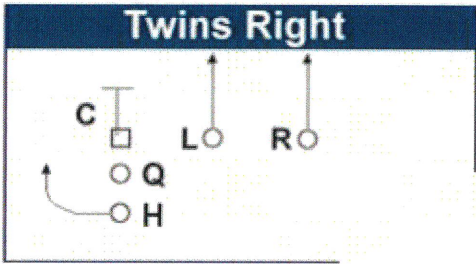
Two receivers go to the call side of the formation – There is the option to have a single back or no backs.

Based on the passing tree routes and using our formula of calling your receiver routes from left to right followed by the running back route then the center route the following play would be called:



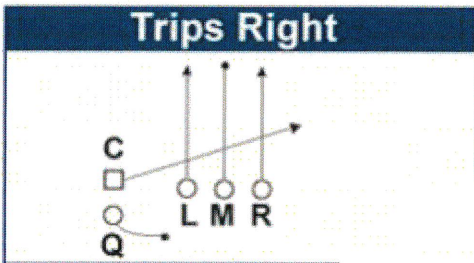
Split T – Left Fly – Right Fly – H Flare Left – Center Stop

If we stick with our formula, the **same play in a different formation** will look like this.



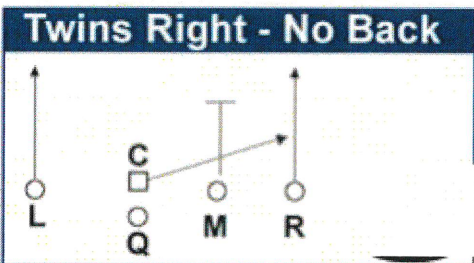
Twins Right – Single Back – Left Fly – Right Fly – H Flare Left – Center Stop

If we move to a (3) receiver set, with no running back, (a trips formation or twins with a single receiver split opposite the call side), we will now have a middle, or M receiver. Our play call formula remains the same – the play call is your receivers from left to right followed by the center call (since there is no running back in these formations there are no running back calls)



Trips Right – Left Fly – Middle Fly – Right Fly – Center Arrow

If we stick with our formula, the **same play in a different formation** will look like this.



Twins Right – No Back – Left Fly – Middle Stop – Right Fly – Center Arrow