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Option Pass (Run) Routes

Take some of the guessing out of playcalling.

Give the quarterback a last second chance to produce a positive play.

Give a good receiver a chance to get open.

Build in “hot” reads with the secondary receivers.

One of the most difficult tasks for a football coach is successful play-calling: just ask the fans in the stands. With zone blitzes, shifting fronts, and disguised coverages, play-calling becomes an educated guessing game. We have found two concepts that have helped us make positive plays.

One answer to the play-calling task is the option route pass/run concept. It is a good first or second down call. But some of the pass patterns are very good for obvious passing situations. Let me explain. Let us say it is first down. In the huddle, we will make a combination run/pass call. The linemen and the running back(s) perform the formation and running play, usually a zone scheme or a draw scheme. The receivers will perform the pass route called. The quarterback will be in the gun. The route will be a quick, one or three step pattern, usually a bubble screen, slant, or hitch. The quarterback makes a pre-snap read, sometimes right before the snap. It is the quarterback's decision whether to hand the ball off to the running back or to turn and throw the ball. If the defense places too many players in the box at the snap of the ball, the quarterback does not extend the ball for the exchange with the running back. He immediately goes to his quick pass reads with the receivers while the linemen and the running back

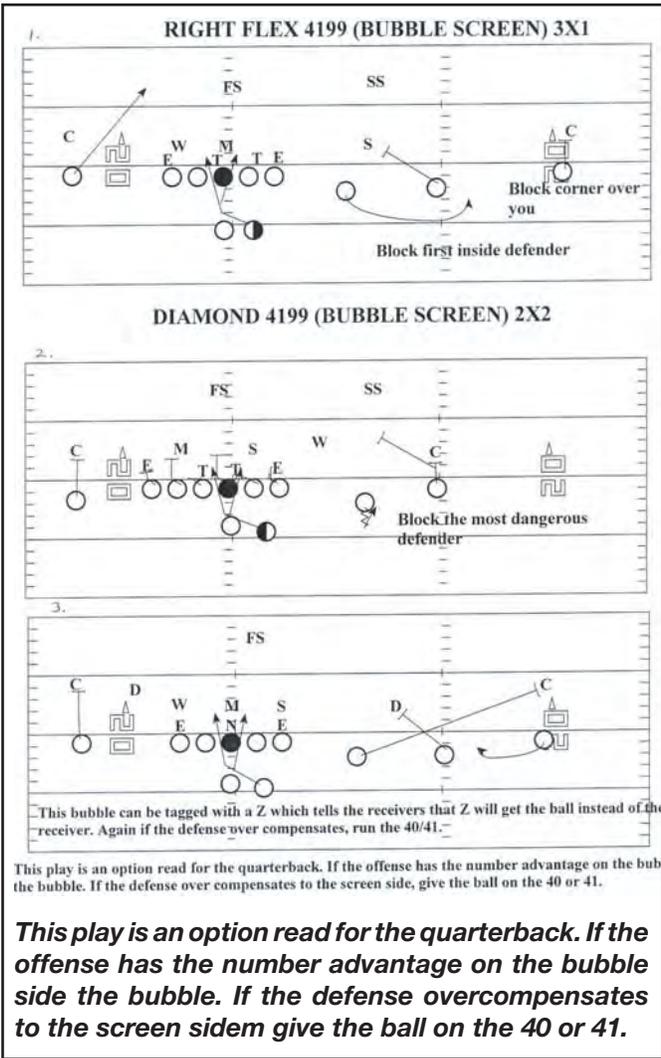
carry out the run play. The ball will be in the air before the linemen turn from their initial steps and head up field.

The first example I have is a combination of an inside zone with a bubble screen to the outside. The first diagram has us in a trips formation to the right. The #1 receiver runs off and blocks the corner over him. The #2 receiver blocks the first inside defender. The #3 receiver is bubbling outside looking to catch the ball on the run. It is his job to beat the safety. The backside receiver should run a hitch or a slant. He may get the ball if the quarterback likes the read there. Because of the aggressive run blocking by the linemen and the running back on course to get the ball, the safeties do not fly out right away to the pass play. If the defense reduces a linebacker out of the box to help in coverage, the quarterback hands off to the running back. If the quarterback gets comfortable with the progression, he can take the running play to the next progression and read the handoff mesh and possibly pull the handoff out and keep it (Diagram 1).

The next diagram has this run/pass concept from a two-by-two formation. The running play can be the inside zone, outside zone, or perhaps a draw. The No. 1 receiver's job is adjusted to simply block the most dangerous threat. If the Will linebacker widens, the No. 1 receiver blocks down and picks him up; but the quarterback will probably hand off to the running back because there may only be six defensive players in the box.

The bubble screen can be tagged with a “Z” (No. 1 receiver) which tells the receivers that #1 receiver will get the ball instead of the No. 3 receiver. Again, it is the defense over compensates, the quarterback hands off to the running back.

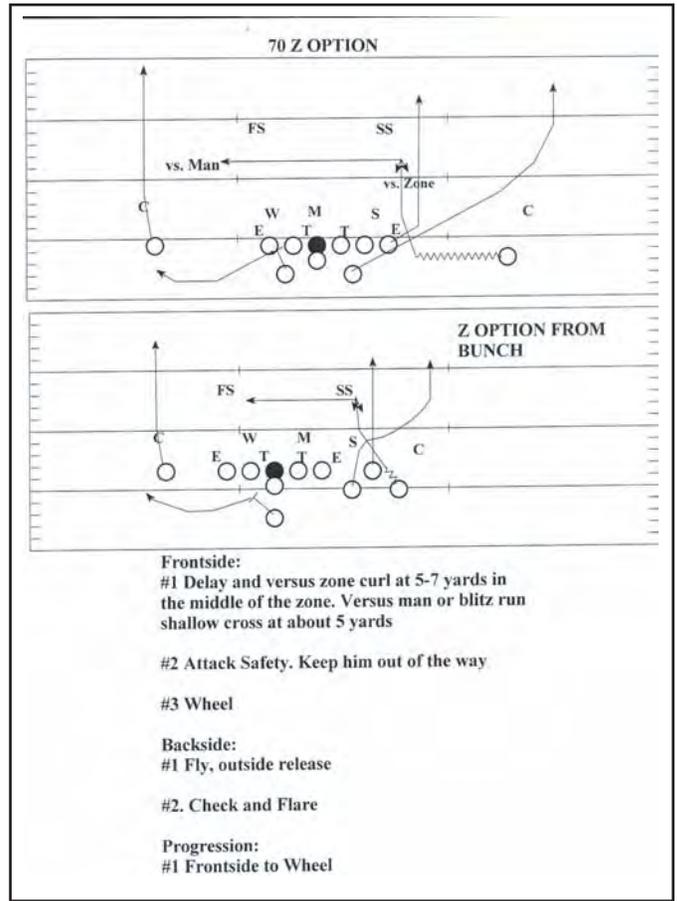
The second major concept that has helped us in the task of play-calling is the option route for



This play is an option read for the quarterback. If the offense has the number advantage on the bubble side the bubble. If the defense overcompensates to the screen side give the ball on the 40 or 41.

key receivers. The concept's basic premise is to get the ball to a desired receiver no matter how the defense wants to cover. All the other receivers run a coordinated route, but the desired receiver has an option to cut where he has an open area. This is a good route on any down. Let me explain and show a couple of example routes.

We can call a formation and a protection and say "Z option." We first experimented with this concept from a "Bunch" formation. On the frontside, the "Z" (No. 1 receiver) delays – versus a zone he curls at 5 – 7 yards in the middle of the zone (he looks for the open area). Versus man or blitz, he runs a shallow cross at about 5 yards. The No. 2 receiver attacks the safety. He must keep the safety out of the way. The No. 3 receiver cuts off the back of the No. 2 receiver and runs a "wheel" route (flat out and up). The backside No. 1 receiver runs a clear out fly pattern with an outside release. The running back checks his blocking responsibility and releases. The progression read is for the front side: check the No. 1 receiver to the No. 3 wheel route. (Diagram 4)



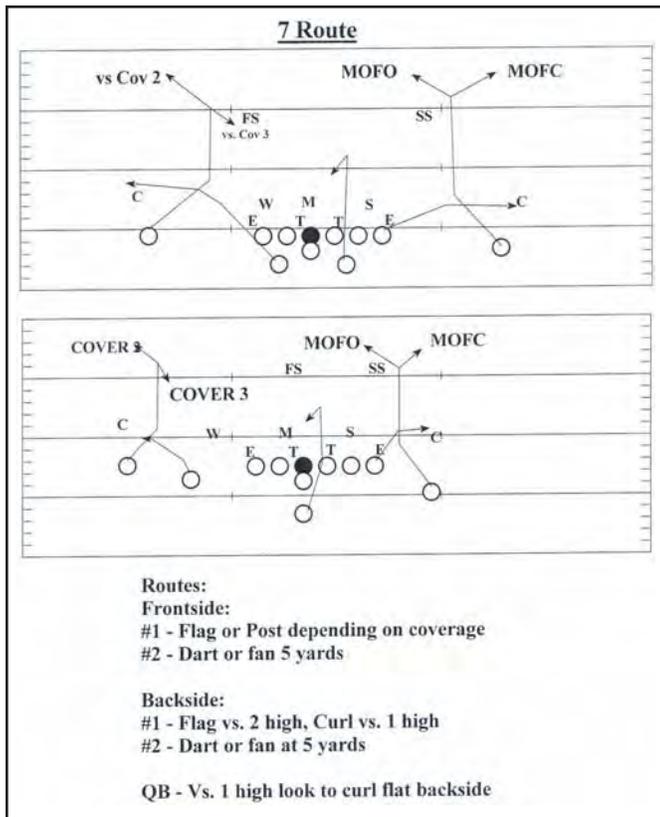
We can motion the "Z" (No. 1 receiver) in on a normal pro style formation with split backs and run this pattern.

We evolved this concept where we can be in a true trips formation and clear out the No. 2 and No. 3 receiver and delay the "Z" to just get open underneath.

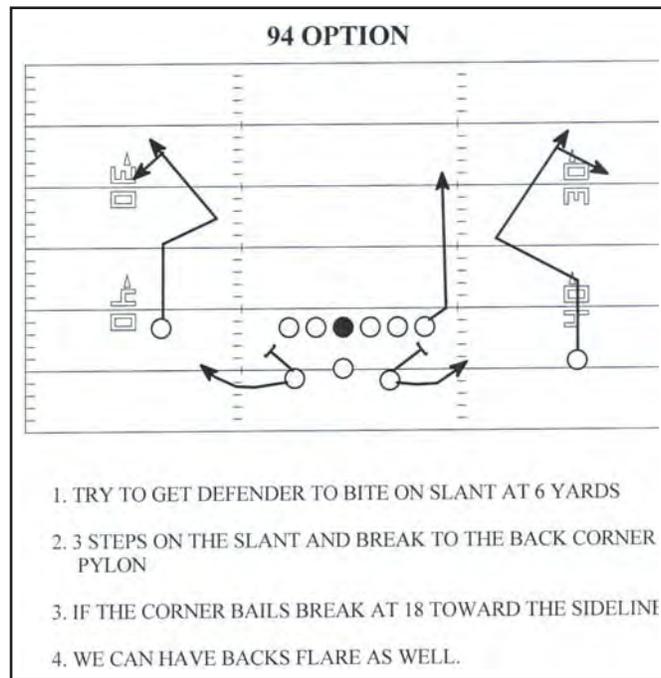
Another option route is our wide receiver double option route (we call it the No. 7 route).

On the frontside, the No. 1 receiver runs a flag route or a post route depending on the coverage. The No. 2 receiver runs a flat route or flare route – just get to the flat. On the backside, the No. 1 receiver runs a flag against four deep. He should run a curl against three deep zone or man-to-man coverage. The No. 2 receiver runs a flat route at 5 yards. The quarterback's read is to look at the front side first against four deep. If there is a safety in the middle of the field, look at the backside read. There should be a curl flat read. (Diagrams 6 & 7)

Another option route is based off our quick passing game. We like this out of the shotgun, but it can be done with the QB dropping from under the center. The stem of the route is the basic slant route from both wide receivers with the tight end (No. 2 receiver) taking an outside release and running a fly route at the safety. He should look early if the



quarterback's job is to loft the ball for the back pylon of the end zone: big play on the double cut. What defeats that play is when the corner bails out deep on the snap of the ball. If the corner bails deep, the receiver should do his double cut breaking toward the back pylon, but he should break it off at 18 yards for a third cut toward the sideline. We want to be in two backs. That gives us maximum protection. If the backs are not challenged, they can flare so the quarterback has a release. (Diagram 8)



quarterback is being blitzed. The stem of the No. 1 receivers is the slant route. The receiver tries to get the defender to bite on the slant at 6 yards. On the third step after the slant break, both No. 1 receivers break to the back corner pylon of the end zone.

If the corner back bites up to break up the slant, the receiver should sprint deep, and the

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