The first two articles in this series discussed the logic of the option attack and gave a minimum complete running and passing attack based on the Double Split, Double Wing set. Certainly there are reasons to commit to an option based attack from this minimum set of plays. Examples from the college game go back many years. In 1982, for instance, LSU held Alabama - in my opinion the most complete and devastating Wishbone attack at the time - without a first down in the first half. It is difficult even today to conceive the accomplishment that the number one ranked defense of LSU achieved in this game.

Mississippi State came into their home stadium in Starkeville the next week as a more middle level team and the expectations of the pundits were not very inspiring for the Bulldogs. Yet, LSU received a steady diet of Double Split Wishbone the entire way, with only a few plays run from the Double Wing set on passing downs in the early part of the game. Option, option, Counter Dive, Dive Option Pass. Tim Parenton runs a single play at QB and throws a TD on a Dive Option Pass when the CB bit on the run fake and the Safety was late getting over. Mississippi State kicks a late Field Goal to beat Mighty LSU and one of the great defenses of that era.

As the years went by, the Air Force and others made this their base formation. With the appearance of the "Double Wing" of Alabama's Wishbone in the Sugar Bowl against Arkansas, the offense changed to this look. Georgia Southern completed this trend and with this came simply the end to an era in Football.
East Carolina under Art Baker ran the Freeze Option from this formation:

It is worth stating again: With this, Option Football brought an end to the need to scheme. It was complete, it required no overwhelming great talent at each position and this was unacceptable. The game was changed by rule into a passing marathon.

As the saying goes, "Politics ain't Beanbag" and the College Game isn't the High School game. Two short corners with no cut block and a defensive coach who would give up 3 TDs to get one shot into the lower back of a young QB demand an answer to the following question:

"Is there a safer, less risky set of plays that can be run that still takes advantage of the numbers logic found in the Double Wing, Double Split set?"

Certainly. The bottom line is "Success", not football purity and the Option Coach can blend in a variety of plays that do not change the dynamic of the attack - or require major revisions in practice schedules to accommodate new plays. Lou Holtz has stated that the only team you'll beat if you read the option is yourself. If the Glory Years of the Read Triple are passed, then a series that causes the defense to think Assignment First may still get a defender isolated out of position on that critical third down and two.

Let's begin moving one of the Split Ends (Or both!) toward the Tight end Position. What happens? As the SE moves to a "Nasty" position at about 2 yards from the Tackle, the defense moves two players closer to the offensive line. At first this appears to be a bad deal. The defense is more crowded and the issue of stunts and blitzes opens up more defensive possibilities.

We have seen this before. In the first chapter of Pepper Rodgers and Homer Smith's great book, _Installing Football's Wishbone T Attack_, the question is asked "How is a ten man Double Split, Split Back formation helped by the addition of (1), a Tight End or (2), another running back"?
The answer given is informative, for the diagrams shown do not show the Two Back, Flanker and Tight end set matched against a Double Split End Wishbone. Rather, the Flanker/TE set is paired against a "Standard" Split End, Tight End formation for the Wishbone.

"A tight end gives the defense another line-of-scrimmage blocker to account for and another receiver to cover." (Page 11)

This is the answer to the next set of questions, not the question posed. It is here that we begin our study.

The standard TE/SE formation for the Wishbone/T-Bone/Double Wing set brings an asymmetry to the set, makes counting a little more difficult for the Newbies - both players and staff - and invites the dreamers 'n schemers to create yet one more play that the overworked players must master to overcome the above criticisms.

If there is one critical saving grace for the "Standard" Set, it occurs when the TE is placed to the wide side of the field. The chance to seal the inside and race to the wide sideline offers a tremendous opportunity for TDs. Please find a copy of the 2007 Navy - ND game to see what sealing the inside can do to a defense that has no clue on how to adjust.

Let us turn our attention to the Unbalanced set to see if there is a way to have our plays run with the power of this "Extra Lineman" and find our advantages in counting the defenders easily. (Note: I use the "Fullhouse T" in the following Diagrams. The lack of a cut block in High School makes this adjustment necessary. The Double Wing is still OK!)

There are two types of Unbalanced Lines. The first type "merely" moves the SE to other side of the formation (Beware of any football coach who claims to "merely" do something...). The TE is now covered and is not a legal receiver.
The "Unbalanced Line" we will discuss moves a Tackle over adjacent to the other Tackle and replaces the T who moved with the TE. The Tackle who moves should "probably" move outside of the other Tackle and become the "Strong Tackle" although personnel considerations may demand a switch of positions between the two Tackles.

If the standard Wishbone set was asymmetric before, this set is way out there. Yet, it is this set that allows the count system to be easily seen. In fact, our fledgling QB (and converted defensive line coach...) has only to look at this short side to see where the offense should attack.

First, the atmospherics. The cheap trick to use at the start of this offense is to flip the standard TE/SE set with this Unbalanced look. The Defense is often taught to key the TE number to determine strength of offensive alignment. OK, the TE is on a radically shortened side. No SE. Six defenders on the short side verses about nine offensive players on the Strong side. "Time Out!"

Next, the standard set appears. The SS should play on the SE side for the Wishbone. "OMIGOD! He's misaligned!...Time Out!" Fine.

Now there is a reason to run the standard set with the unbalanced and that is to slow recognition of the power set for setting the SS. Let's move to the real story.

To Prove: The Unbalanced Set is related to the Count System used in the Double Split, Double Wing formation and should be taught as the second formation of the offense. The Standard TE/SE set is taught last.

Assume that our opposition defensive coaches are relatively intelligent mammals with opposable thumbs and some football history behind them.
When faced with this Unbalanced Line, they will start with 6 defenders on the strong side and 5 defenders on the short side.

Where do we place the 6 on the strong side? We give a representative diagram here, showing a 3 technique on the short side with an inside stack of a LB. In short, a Split-6 look with the FS shaded to the short side. The defense must cover our "Split End Specialist" - our best receiver - and now we are down to five on the strong side.

**Our Number 1 rule: We want to get to One-On-None in the running game and One-On-One in Open Space in the passing attack.** This was the rule that drove our consideration of the Double Split-Double Wing running and passing attack.

We must be prepared - and want - to throw the ball to our SE with this One-On-One in open space. We would invite - or force - our defense to play an outside short zone defender here to slow this immediate and direct threat. We are down to 4 defenders. There must be a Down Lineman/ LB combination to work the inside A and B gaps and we are down to 2 defenders. One for the C gap and one for...what: Outside contain? Deep Middle? Here is where the defense is challenged.

Our representative diagram is shown here and this is seen as the old Georgia Base package - a Split Six on the Short Side and Wide Tackle Six on the Strong Side. There is not a doubt in the world that our defensive coordinators will engineer another set of defenses but let us see the problems posed by this one change.

**Our number 2 rule: If the Fullback threat is established, the offense is sound.**

This is not a stratagem to run the FB 25 times a game. This states the blocking rules for the offense:

If we can guarantee control of the first Down Lineman inside of the attacked hole and make a solid hit on the most threatening LB to that hole, the FB threat is established.

With this, we can attack any hole with a threat that must be dealt with and guarantee a reduction from 7-on-6 down to 1-on-none - and we can throw in a Double Team at the point of attack. It is important to understand this point. It is not enough to have a numbers advantage.
You must be able to force a commit from the defense to start each play with an alignment that accounts for the FB. The first defender outside of our "Guarantee" control block of the DT and our LB slam may be read, blocked or trapped. The important point is that this defender MUST commit. THIS is what brings the "7 against 6" down to a "6 against 5" and so on to a 1-on-none. If he does not, he is in the wrong game. We have already won. Re-read the article on the run aspect of this offense. We will take ANY refusal to commit as a victory, a 1-on-none. WE control who runs the ball!

Against our Wide Tackle 6, the "2i" inside eye technique provides an angle block for the Strong Guard and the LB can even be Doubled with the 2 Tackles. This is a very strong inside attack for the FB. The defense will respond by crowding the B gap and stacking this gap. The Split-6 Short Side may move the DT to a 2 or 2i technique to attack the offside A Gap or force the Center to block back. At the extreme, the Strong Side will see a 3 technique, a 5 and a collapsed outside with a LB stack and very close outside force.

Just what we are looking for. A One-on-One in open space. QED.

"But wait! There's more!"

Without dreamin' 'n schemin', let us look at 2 "New Plays".

"But wait a minute! You said that we weren't going to introduce new stuff!"

We're not. We are going to use techniques that are already in the offense (Notice that I haven't even mentioned the Midline in this series. We will come back to that another time.).

Remember that we are after safety here - and power. We are not living and dying based on the ability of a 17 year old to read the Dive Triple consistently. Is there something we already practice that allows a "rest" for our weary QB and another chance to get the ball to one our best backs? Yes. You should reintroduce yourself to the Inside Belly. The Inside Belly trades a "Pitch to the Trailing Halfback" for a "Second Mesh" with that same HB.
QB rule: "Step-step...(FB Clears)...Step-step...(HB Clears)...Sprint!" with a Point Mesh to the Trailing Back and a sprint around the end by the QB. This is as powerful an inside attack as has been seen. With the blocking variations - Combo, X, G-Pull, etc. - the A gap, B Gap and C Gap are attacked without placing the burden on the QB to read his way out of trouble. Yet, we are still determining who will run the ball. The defense that plays assignment technique runs the risk of having the defenders assigned to a particular phase blocked. If the other defenders are moving to their assignments, they risk leaving the attacked hole undefended.

Two problem areas: The HB ALWAYS wants to run wide of the hole - ALWAYS! He must be taught to control his acceleration and make his cut at the point he touches the area that the FB started from. This is not an "artistic" cut or a robot movement. It is a smooth approach to the hole outside of the Tackle. Mesh perfectly, Accelerate. Backs who go crazy to accelerate out of control are trouble for this play!

Second, the QB tends to rush also. The signs for a QB out of control are simple as they are obvious. The QB drops his back shoulder, points his back toes, knee and hips back away from the line of scrimmage and attempts to pull the ball and circle the FBs feet in an effort to "get to the next part FAST!". This is actually slower than the correct technique: Let the FB clear! SIMPLE! If there is a train wreck occurring in front of the QB, he can push off his foot and take a hop step away from the Line of Scrimmage and keep his shoulders square and without a dip.

After my High School coaching daze, I helped set up the Belly for a team in a league of 12 year olds. Amount of time taken to install the first play, from teaching the mesh technique to running the backfield play? 20 minutes. Thereafter, we called this our "Twenty Minute Offense".

The second play in this attack is a very seldom seen play. It is the Outside Dive with the 4 step mesh. Consider the collapsed defensive front seen above. We could bang away at this front into the B Gap and fight a strength and numbers fight. Or, we could establish the the FB threat one hole wider (re-read the definition again...) and re-establish OUR numbers advantage. This is a standard play in the Veer Offense and we run this with a lead blocker running a Load scheme. We are not attempting to be as fast hitting the hole as in the Veer. We don't have to.
The ease in installing this play is astonishing given the mechanics of the play as it appears.

We will separate the legwork from the mesh. If we can get the QB and FB to the mesh point at the same time, the mesh will occur is its normal, short ride form. Here is the easy part: The QB and the FB start from the same "stacked" position and accelerate at approximately the same rate towards the Mesh Point. Their intersection at the mesh is "Pre-Timed". In all of my years of setting up this offense, this was one of the easiest plays. Again, we are NOT in competition with the Veer Offense. The Veer slashes the Outside Veer with two players starting from different places and running to get to the Mesh Point at the same time. In this play, the QB and FB accelerate together from the same stack position.

QB steps: Drive off the offside foot (Left foot if the play goes right, right foot if the play goes left) and rotate your shoulders 90 degrees. Your first step should plant OUTSIDE your shoulder, to stop the rotation and begin the movement to the sideline. Toes pointed to the sideline! The next step is an adjustment step and this step is simply...a comfortable step made straight to the sideline with a controlled movement. The third step is slightly outside of the shoulder and the fourth glides slightly forward and slightly outside the shoulder through the mesh, again stopping just outside of the shoulders. Now the toes end up pointing more uphill - toes, knees and hips point uphill to the attack angle that wins games. The shoulders NEVER dip!

FB steps: Drive off the offside foot, "throwing a handful of grass sideways away from you" to move your upper body (Assuming a 4 point stance). Lift your onside arm and then set it as the bottom hand for the mesh. You will rotate about 45 degrees and take a lateral step, almost sideways, to align yourself to the hole. The second step is pointed to the (new) hole. The mesh occurs with the leg closest to the QB UP (The number of steps may vary with depth of FB or other factors) and the offside hand also UP with the bottom hand in good mesh position. You must be prepared to cut inside the block of the HB or outside.

The onside HB's block is the Loaded Option with the back attacking a straight course to the middle of the OLs numbers. With no cut block, this must be a Climb Block with legs moving to make the OLB make a decision to go inside or outside. This leaves the Option Man in a 2-on-1 situation. The QB thinks, "Give, Give, until the number 3 makes me keep and I will option number 2." Other blocking situations will arise but recognition starts with an anticipation that this defender will attack.
With this, a 6-5 defensive structure will collapse to the Strong Side or be outnumbered. Notice that the "Half Shift" defensive idea is taken care of by our four step Outside Dive. A "Half Man" shift will not hold.

This leads to our key idea:

***The defense must commit an extra man to the Strong Side***.

And that leaves just four defenders to the Short Side. And this is easy to count. With our "Standard Wishbone" set, a count on the SE side gives us a numbers read to attack the SE side with an increased complexity on the TE side. Obviously, QBs have been trained to see the count on both sides for about 40 years now so it must not be THAT much of a deal. But we want more.

The "Four Count" is exactly what we are looking for.

Even if we do not count the Center, we have T, G, QB, FB and 2 Halfbacks against four. We can even run the Belly to the Short Side now.

This is why the Unbalanced Line is the second formation to teach in the option attack. The young QB counts to 4 on both sides of the Base Set with 2 Split Ends. With the Unbalanced Line, he now only needs to count to 4 on the Short Side to see that there MUST be a numbers advantage to this Short Side. If he sees 5, he knows he MUST have a numbers advantage to the Strong Side.

QED.

What is left is the Short Side attack - with passes and screens! - and taking care of the Blocking Patterns. Does this mean I have to write another article?

CW