
CHAPTER 12



Sprint & Drop Back Pass

Every coach must develop a philosophy as to why they want to run or pass the ball, how often they want to do either one, and select plays that match their players genetics. The Wing-T coach is committed to running the football and therefore should develop a passing philosophy that makes running the ball easier.

- Passing out of multiple formations can disguise your running game.
- Lots of formations leads to confused defenses
- Passing the ball spreads out the defense and stops them from “crowding the box”
- Threat of 4 verticals forces 4 defensive backs to defend receivers first before helping on the run

All of these reasons make the job of the offensive line easier in regards to run blocking. The Wing-T philosophy is to create confusion and put players in conflict. This philosophy needs to also happen in your passing attack. Mixing drop back with sprint out and short pass with screens puts a lot of pressure on an opposing defense that only has 3 days to prepare. But just like in the run game, don’t try to do much because you don’t need a lot of pass plays to keep the defense honest.

When a team predominantly throws the ball by dropping back, the defense can regulate its coverage since they only have to mirror the drop-back depth with its own drop-back. Adding sprint-out passing forces the defense to rotate which leaves gaping holes in the coverage zones. Having both sprint-out passing and drop-back passing keeps the defense confused and uncertain as to whether it should rotate or drop back, cover pass or defend the run.

My philosophy of pass protection is to be very aggressive and solid at the guard and center positions. The tackles must keep the outside edges strong. I have a saying about how fast the linemen need to get set on pass protection: “They can’t get set fast enough.” However fast they can get set, it is not fast enough.

All pass plays fall into these basic categories:

Play action: (Belly, Down, and GO pass)

Quick Pass Game: (Purple). This would be 3-step game if under center.

Sprint-out: (Red & Blue): QB can sprint towards sideline or setup slightly past the offensive tackle.

Screen Pass Game: (Silver): Two blocking schemes that allow 5 different screens.

Drop Back Pass Game: (Yellow & Gray): This would be 5-step game if under center.

DEFENSIVE RUSH LANES



Figures 12-1 show the rush lanes of the defensive linemen. As the release point of the quarterback changes, so does the protection. Your linemen need to understand where the quarterback will be when throwing the ball and how that release point correlates with protection. The protection that you use needs to be functional for the desired drop of the quarterback.

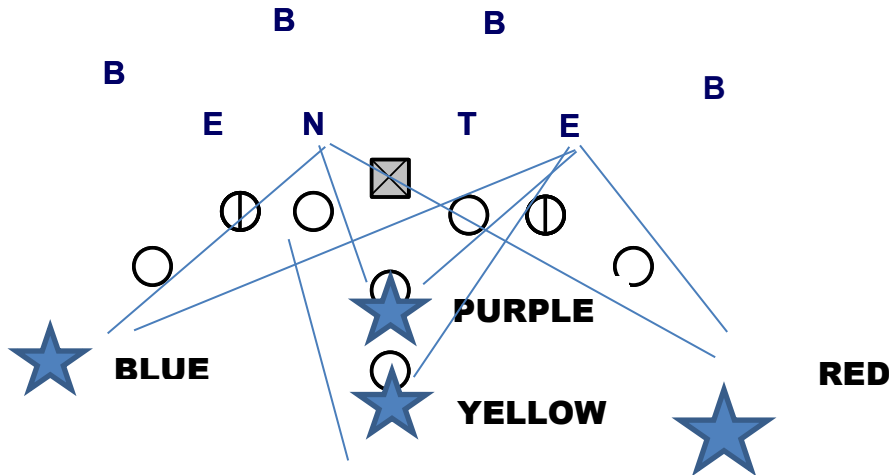


Fig 12-1: Defensive Pass Rush Lanes

PASS SETS

After taking a look at the various release points and corresponding rush lanes, you can shift your focus to concentrate on the pass sets involved with the dropback passing game. The alignment of the defender will determine the pass set of the offensive lineman.

The key in the pass set is for the lineman to position his body as if he were going to "urinate" on the defender's rush lane. Although graphic, this phrasing seems to stick well with players and this concept is key to understanding the pass set.

CARDINAL RULE OF PASS BLOCKING:

Make the pass rusher go around you to get to the QB

SPRINT OUT (RED & BLUE)

Sprint out Passing forces the defense to defend both the perimeter-run as well as the entire field against a good passing attack. When the QB sprints out, the defense must rotate quickly so that he will not get outside the coverage zones. The secondary rotation often leaves the backside vulnerable to screens and draws.

While having a running QB makes sprint out even more dangerous, all you really need is an athletic QB who can get 5 yards to make the defensive coordinator sweat. Additionally, the QB run threat forces one LineBacker to commit to run and not drop back to a zone. Also, the moving pocket forces the pass rush and coverage to move also.

Sprint out passing lessens the burden on the offensive linemen when it comes to blocking for the pass. The sprinting out forces the pass rushers to go in one precise direction, and since the blockers know which way the QB is sprinting, then



can expect the rushers to charge a specific way. The techniques of pass blocking become greatly simplified, often times the same techniques used in Reach run blocking can also be used in sprint protections.

PLAYSIDE

The initial steps taken by the offensive linemen reflect the direction of the sprint action: Sprint Right (Red) means blockers first step is a reach step right. Again, this is the same first step taken on Liz & Rip Jet Sweep so the defense will be slow to determine run or pass. This first step is 45-degree if defender is head up or slightly inside shade and 90-degree lateral if slightly outside shade. Playside blocking rules are REACH-ON-DOWN

The second step depends on whether the blocker is playside or backside. Playside linemen need to get their 2nd step between the defender’s legs and helmet across his chest. Backside linemen will do the same if their playside gap (inside) is immediately threatened. If not they need to hinge step back so that they are facing the sideline, followed by backpedaling in direction of the QB sprint. Backside technique is the next section.

On the playside edge, we do not reach an outside defender who is not in an outside shade. If the D-End is a full man outside, the offensive tackle leaves the end for the TailBack to hook block. The reason for this is simple: If the Tackle cannot get his helmet across the defender before the defender starts chasing the QB, then the blocker will simply end up pushing the D-End towards the QB.

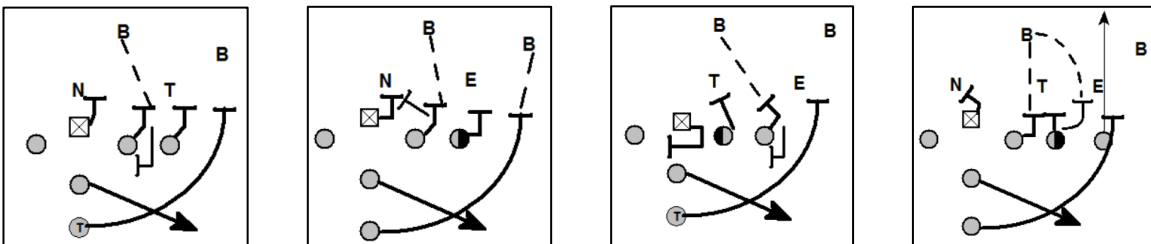


Fig 12-1: Playside Blocking for Sprint Protection

SPRINT VARIATIONS

These variations mainly change who is blocking the edge defender while also making the play look more like a running play.

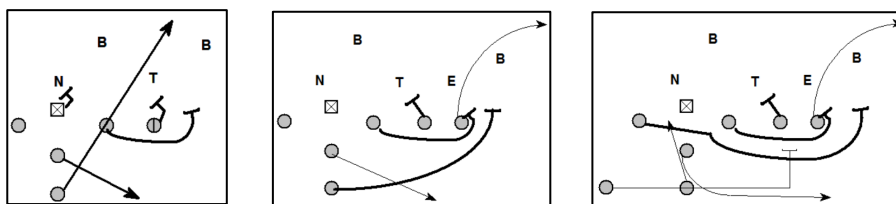


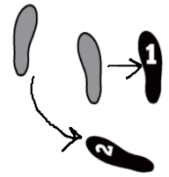
Fig 12-3: Sprint Blocking Variations

BACKSIDE



The backside guard and tackle use a blocking technique that is described as a hinge scheme. They try to gain depth while obtaining an inside leverage position that forces the rusher to go outside of them.

The blocking techniques of the backside are different because blockers can't always tell who they will be blocking and sometimes there will be more rushers than blockers. The technique will be cup protection (step & hinge) that will be described in more detail in the next chapter. The initial step is a 90-degree lateral step in direction of the sprint (right foot on Red, left foot on Blue). The second step is a drop step on a 45-degree angle with the line of scrimmage. Once this position is taken, the backside blockers will protect their inside area first and from there, they will block any defender coming head-on them or slightly to their outside. If more than two defenders rush then the outermost rushers will go unblocked because they should not be able to catch a sprinting QB from that deep of an angle.



Backside blockers do not have to be great blockers since the passer's pocket gets further away with each second the rusher is delayed. The act of hitting, retreating, and re-hitting makes for very effective pass protection as long as the charging defender is slowed down.

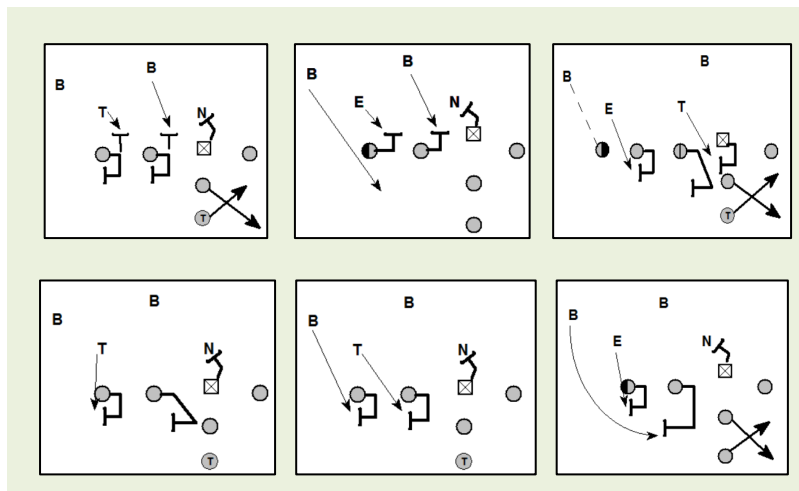


Fig 12-2: Backside Blocking for Sprint Protection

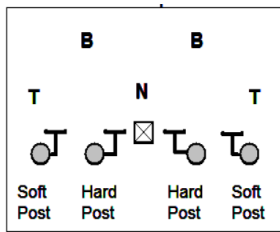


QUICK DROP (PURPLE)

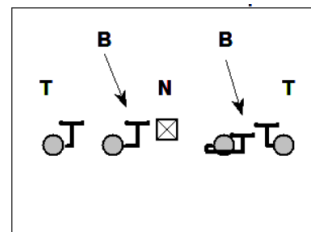
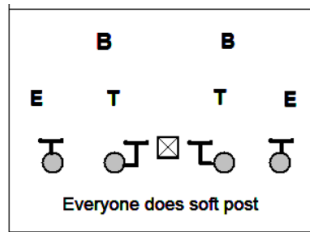
Every offense in the country has to have a quick passing game that throws outs, slants, hitch, fade, and bubbles. The PISTOL WING-T has a series of easy to learn rules that try to account for everything a defense can do, however, if there is an unaccounted for defender the QB throws to the TailBack swinging out of the backfield. The important thing is to get the linemen to maintain a flat back on the first two steps so as to not give an obvious run-pass read.

HEADUP FRONTS

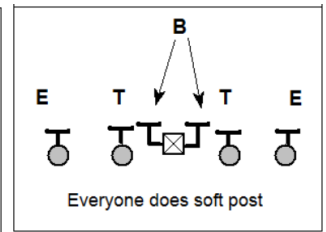
When we first teach Purple, we start with balanced fronts and D-Linemen in headup alignments.



RULE #1: Everyone Steps Inside

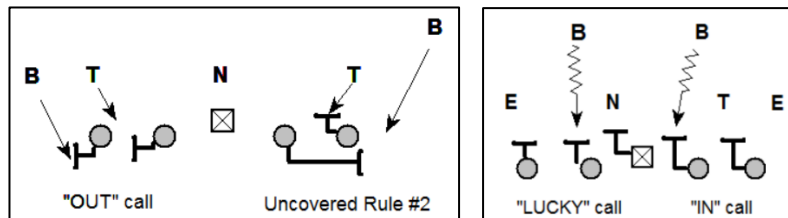


RULE #2: Uncovered Lineman pickup blitzes



Notice that Rule #2 versus the odd front the RightGuard picks up the inside left foot and puts it down. It really is a weight transfer to ensure that the blitzing LB does not beat him inside the A-gap. Once the LB accepts the RG invitation into the B-gap, then the RG can redistribute his weight.

Another line call that is made between Guards and Tackles is the “OUT” and “IN” calls. We try to avoid making IN calls because it leaves the edge unblocked but as you can see in the example below, the Center’s LUCKY call forces the RG to make an IN call. A RINGO call would force an IN call for the LT which leaves the other end unblocked.



SHADED FRONTS

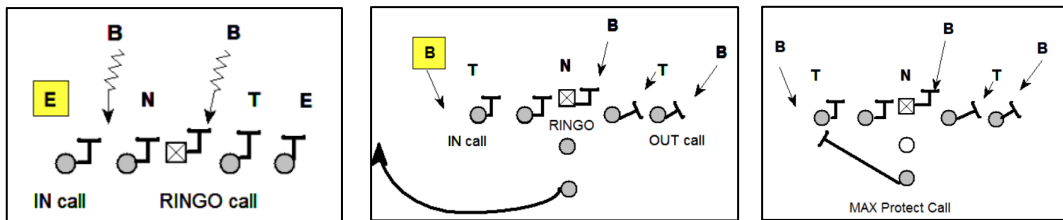
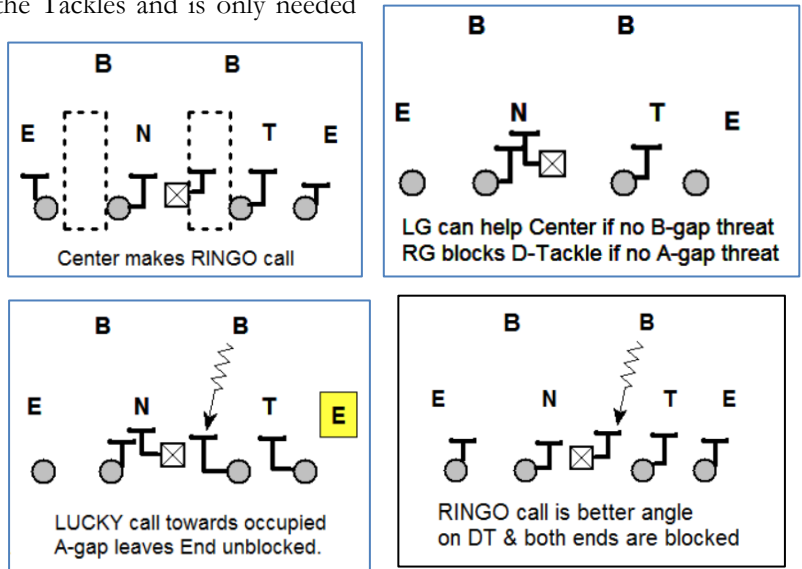
The Center and two Guards work as a team. Against shaded fronts we use the words “Lucky” and “Ringo” to indicate the direction that the Center should block which in turn tells which Guard has the other A-gap. We want our Center responsible for the unoccupied A-gap so the LUCKY/RINGO call is really telling the Guards which A-gap is unoccupied.



The LUCKY/RINGO call does not apply to the Tackles and is only needed versus shaded fronts. In the example RINGO call both Guards will take a very short 90-degree lateral jab step with their right foot to make sure that no defender attacks their gaps. This step is really a “Pick It Up, Put It Down” step. If no threat shows, the Center can help the LG. The Right Guard will soft post with inside left foot, slightly kick the right foot back, and then aggressively block the D-Tackle. It is important that he does not step the DT with his first step because he could get beaten across his face into the A-gap.

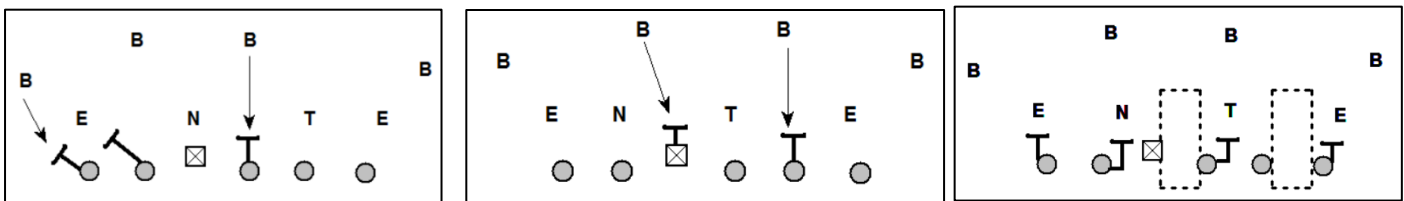
Now let’s talk about blitzes that outnumber your blockers. If the defense brings 6 versus any of our non-TE sets then we only have three choices:

- (1) Throw to the TB out of the backfield
- (2) Have TB block
- (3) Bring a TE in to block

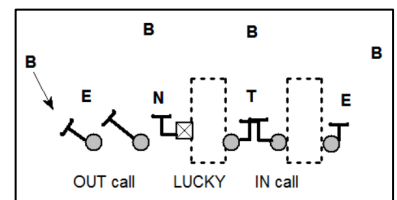


USING TIGHT END IN PURPLE

When we are in TIGHT or OVER the Tight End blocks in Purple. The downside to this is that we lose a receiver in our routes, but that is compensated by the TailBack still being able to swing out of the backfield. Also, Purple is quick throws under 10 yards so we don’t really need 4 receivers in the pass routes.



Rule #1 and Rule #2 still apply even with a Tight End. Only now we can block 6-man pressures. We also make a LUCKY/RINGO call to tell the Center to block an unoccupied A-gap versus shaded fronts. On the weakside, if they brought edge pressure at the LeftTackle, an OUT call would be made, which would change the Center to a LUCKY call.



MAXIMUM PROTECTION

The inside-Gap protection is the easiest to teach and used when the TailBack is helping to block. The play call is “PURPLE MAX”, which tells the TailBack to stay in and block. He has the C-gap opposite the TightEnd or opposite the route if there is not Tight End in the formation. Our TightEnds always block in Purple protection if they are lined up in a TIGHT or OVER call.

DROP BACK (YELLOW)

The Pistol formation allows the drop back passing game to be an integral part of the Wing-T attack. It is easier for the QB to read defenses and find receivers. The double wing alignment always threatens the defense with a 4-WR passing game. Drop Back Blocking however involves more technique and requires far greater skill and talent than does running of routes. Drop Back pass protection is an art that requires precision, balance, agility, intelligence, and technique.

Play: Turnback Protection		
	Rule	Notes
BST	Step and fan	C gap
BSG	Step and fan	B gap
C	Post—right	A gap
PSG	Gap—on—lead	Manside
PST	Gap—on—area—outside	Manside
TB	Check inside to outside	Release

Note: The manside is left for description and diagramming purposes.

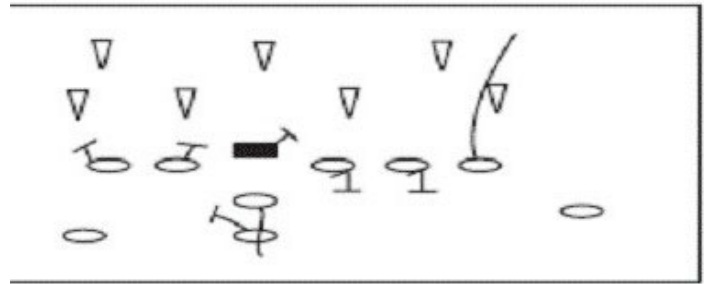


Figure 11-23. Turnback pass protection versus 4-3 defense

RT—Use Long Kick Pass Set on the outside 9 technique.

RG—Use Soft Kick Pass Set on the 3 technique. Use Long Kick Pass Set on the 5 tech in Fig 11-24.

C—If the center has nobody to post, he should punch the playside shade, but hinge to the backside A gap.

Center will post the headup NG, waiting for help from LG. If NG slants strong, then center blocks him.

LG—Soft Post inside on the 2i is in the on area for the guard.

Help the center with the NG.

LT—Use Soft Kick on the 5 technique

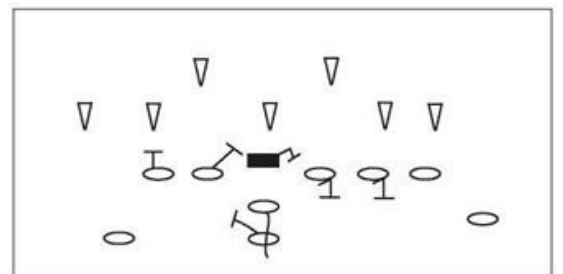
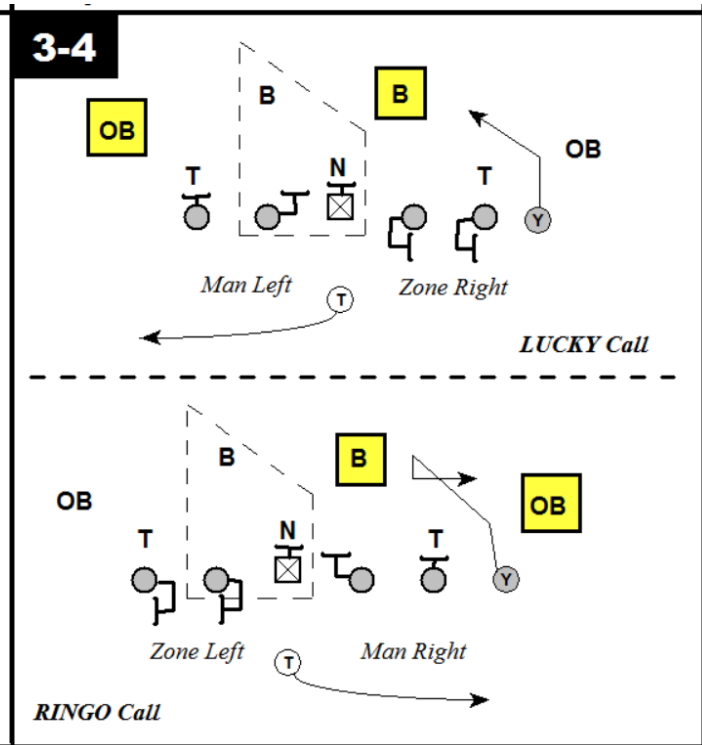
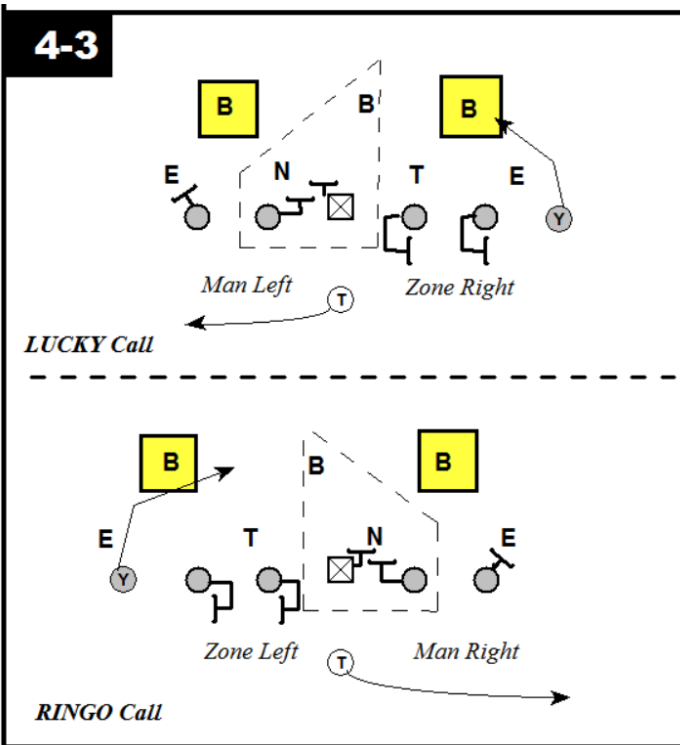
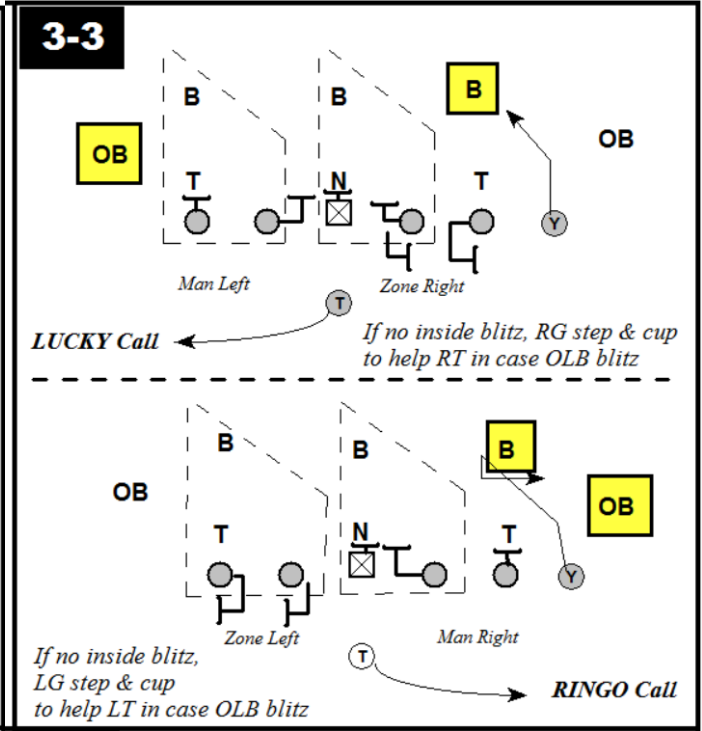
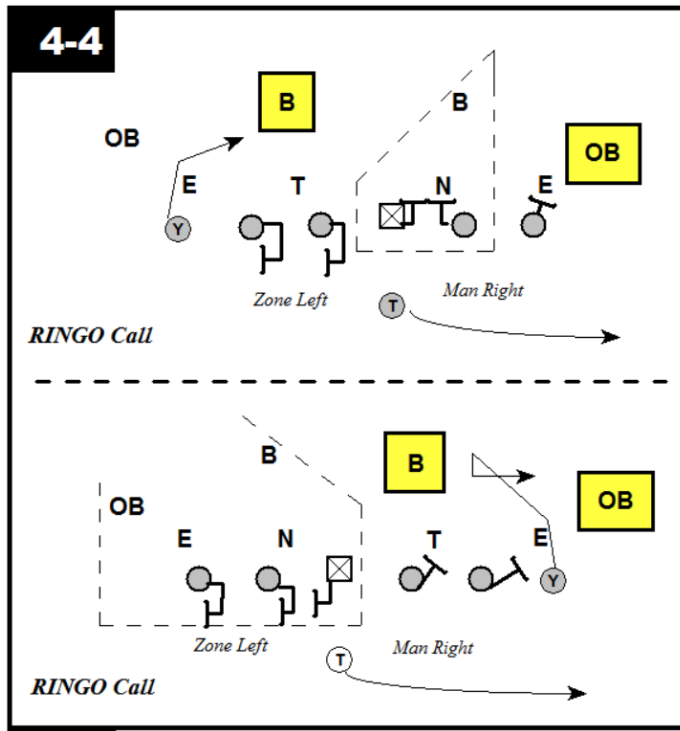


Figure 11-24. Turnback pass protection versus 5-2 defense





FINAL THOUGHTS ON PASS PROTECTION

If the concept of rule blocking is taught in the correct way, it can be easily understood. No substitute exists for repetition when the offensive line is first trying to learn or completely understand the schemes in the wing-T.

Your offensive linemen must understand that they can depend on the rules of each specific play. No matter what the defensive alignment, the rule progression will take care of their assignment. Linemen need to know their rules to be completely effective on game day. It is the job of the coach to prepare the offensive line to play against each defense anticipated, and no situation should arise during a game for which your linemen are unprepared.

With the challenge of time constraints and the amount of knowledge that the wing-T line coach must teach to his players, the pass-protection drills may be tough to fit in. It is the job of the coach to avoid using the limits of time as an excuse, but instead to be creative with his use of time and combine drills as frequently as possible. The mirror progression could be taught in a pre-practice segment, while the kick-step and power-step drills could be used as a conditioner. Again, know what the run-to-pass ratio will be in your offense and plan accordingly.



