

On behalf of Valdosta State University and our entire offensive staff, David Dean (offensive coordinator), Shawn Bostick (offensive line), and Chris Boden (runningbacks), it is a great pleasure to have the opportunity to talk football with you today.

Philosophy

One can describe our offense as a well-coached backyard team. We believe in throwing the ball short first, long second, and running the ball when the numbers in the box are favorable. Also, we like to keep things as simple as possible and put our players in a position to succeed. We never want to ask an athlete to do something that he is unable to do effectively. When establishing your philosophy, it is important to know what you are going to teach and how you will implement your plan of attack. In essence, a coach is a teacher and a motivator. You must teach the skills you believe in and then find a way to motivate your athletes to execute them properly.

If you study the history of football, the most successful teams have always been very simple in their approach to the game. Basically, it comes down to talent and preparation. Our success on offense is geared towards our quarterback's strengths. Since this is the case, when implementing our schemes, we always keep in mind that we can only run what he is capable of comprehending.

Because we have a limited package, we get a lot of repetitions on the things that we will do on Saturdays. During the pre-season practice sessions, we are able to install our offense in three days. We do this because during the course of a game week, you have basically three days of on-the-field preparation for your upcoming opponent. If we cannot practice it, we are not going to run it.

Our offense revolves around two things, playmakers and tempo. First, we want to get the ball in space to people who know how to score. Early in the game, it is crucial for us to get the ball in the hands of our best players so that they can get into the flow of the game. Secondly, we want to dictate the game's tempo. With all the pressure defenses we see, it is imperative that we keep them out of rhythm.

The beauty of our system is how simple it really is. We strive to be a well-coordinated unit. Our base offense consists of six five-step passes, six three-step passes,

three screens plays and four runs. We build off of our base patterns with tags to give us the diversity we need to stay a step ahead in game situations. Also, we are always in a tight-end right formation. This allows for easier play calling, more repetitions in practice, and lets our receivers get more comfortable running their routes from just one side.

In summary, our goal on offense each week is to score one more point than our opponent. This concept is probably the most important thing we discuss with our offensive unit.

Crossing Patterns

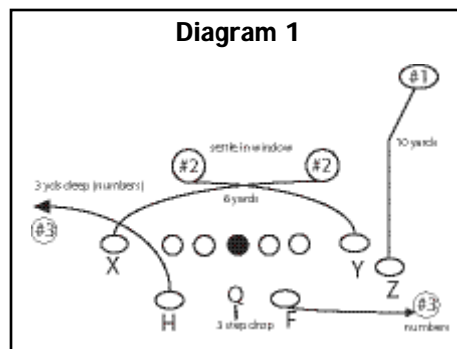
We feel like the best way to get the ball in the hands of our best players is through crossing routes. I will discuss two complimentary patterns that are the staples of our offense.

I. Mesh

When running the Mesh play, it is important to have reduced splits by your wide receivers in order for them to get to the "mesh point" quickly. The Y is responsible for setting the depth of mesh at six yards preferably over the center. As he crosses the center of the ball, he will settle in the first available window and square his shoulders to the quarterback.

The X is responsible for making the mesh happen. He always goes underneath the Y. Once he meshes with the Y, he too will settle in the first available window on the other side of the center. The Z runs a ten-yard corner route. As he comes out of his break, he will angle the route toward the front pylon. If the ball is inside the 20-yard line, his angle will take him to the back pylon.

The F runs a swing route and must get as wide as the numbers. The H runs a shoot route that will carry him to a depth of three yards once he reaches the numbers. The important coaching point for the two runningbacks is to get width as fast as pos-



Valdosta State Air Attack



Chris Hatcher

Head Coach

Valdosta State University

Valdosta, Ga.

Coaching Clinic

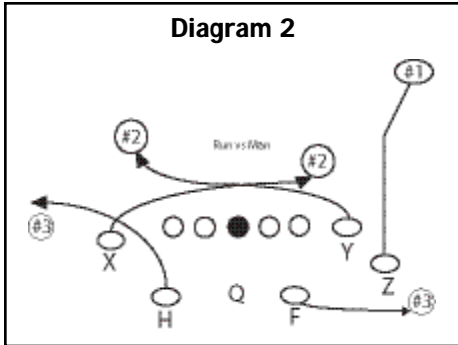
Tuesday, January 6

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sible in order to make the linebackers expand which will open the windows for the Y and X to mesh.

The quarterback always reads high to low while taking a three-step drop from the shotgun formation (Diagram 1).

Note: If the Y and X read man coverage they will continue to run after the mesh point with a slight bend up field (Diagram 2).



II. Shallow Cross

The complimentary pattern to the mesh is our shallow cross. The objective of this pattern is to give the mesh look but have a high-low read on the linebackers.

The Y runs the crossing route by replacing the heels of the defensive linemen. He must continue to run no matter the coverage.

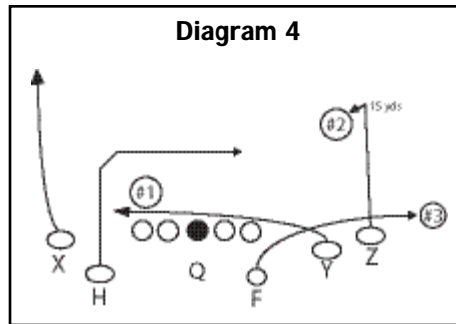
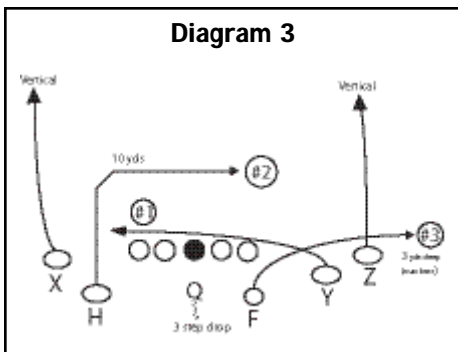
The H pushes at the outside number of the flat defender and runs a 10-yard dig route. As he runs up the field, we prefer for him to get over the top of the flat defender. However, if he cannot, he will stem the route back inside as he continues to his proper depth.

The F runs a shoot route gradually working to three yards once he reaches the numbers.

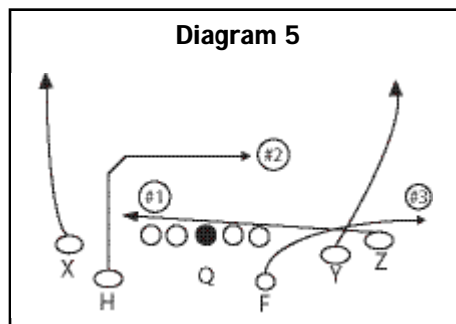
The Z will run either a go route or a 15-yard curl while the X runs vertical.

The quarterback reads the cross (Y) #1, dig (H) #2, and the shoot (F) #3 while taking a three-step drop from the shotgun formation (Diagram 3).

If the Z runs the curl route, the quarterback will then read the cross to the curl-flat combination (Diagram 4).



This pattern can be run different ways by changing the receiver who runs the crossing route. For example, if Z goes on the cross, then Y will run vertical. All the other receivers will stay the same. The only change for the quarterback's progression is now Z becomes his first look (Diagram 5).



Implementing the Plan

No matter what offense you run, your practice routine is crucial to your success as an offensive coach. Our schemes are very simple, but we work hard to become good at the few things that we do. Our practice plan is concise and emphasizes getting as many repetitions as possible in a very short period of time. Our best practice drill is called Routes on Air. We do this drill everyday during preseason practice and two times a week during the season. Also, remember that time is one thing that cannot be replaced.

I. Routes on Air

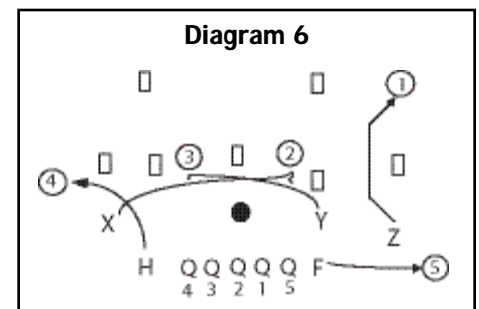
This particular drill involves everyone except our offensive linemen. Our receivers and runningbacks line up in a base formation. All five of our quarterbacks line up side by side in a pre-snap position. Across from the line of scrimmage (35 yard line), seven dummies are aligned to represent a particular coverage that we will see in the game that week. The extra receivers will line up behind their respective positions and wait for their turn to run the route.

Once everyone is lined up correctly, the coach will then call a play. All the receivers run their routes while all five quarterbacks

take their drops. Each quarterback will throw to one of the five receivers. Each receiver will catch the ball; turn straight up the field and sprint to the end zone.

During this drill, the receivers will work on proper alignment, stance and starts, and running good routes. Also by making them sprint to the end zone, the receivers are being conditioned. The quarterback's play is probably one of the most important aspects of this drill. The quarterbacks will read each route in a certain progression. For example, the quarterback with the first read will throw his ball once he hits his last step. The quarterback with the fifth read will look at the first four receivers before he releases his ball to that receiver. In essence, the balls will be released in a typewriter fashion. After this play is completed, then the next group of receivers will line up and replace the receivers who just participated. The quarterbacks will rotate and throw to a different receiver. This process will be repeated five times so that each quarterback will throw all five routes. If the balls are not being released in the proper order, then we know there is a problem with one of the quarterbacks knowing his progression of reads.

This is just one example of a drill that has been very important in developing our passing game. In fifteen minutes, we can run every one of our plays at least five times. Again, this drill allows us a lot of repetitions in a very organized short period of time (Diagram 6).

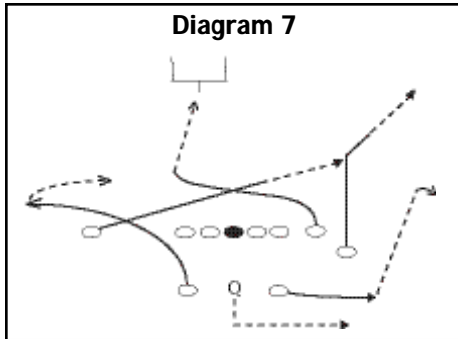


II. Scramble rules

At least once a week we work on contingency football. We like to practice situations that crop up during the course of the game. By doing this, we give our players a plan of action in case a play does not exactly work according to plan. One such situation that presents itself at least once a game is the quarterback scramble. Basically, we give everyone on the field landmarks to reach in case a "broken" play arises.


Our "scramble" rules tell the deepest

receiver to the side the quarterback scrambles to run to the back corner of the end zone. The deepest receiver away from the scramble side runs to the post. The flat receiver to the scramble side works up the field to a depth of five yards and sits down on the sideline. The remaining receivers work toward the scramble side by trying to get outside the quarterback's throwing arm at different levels. In a scramble situation, we ask our quarterback to read from short to long. The reasoning behind this progression is to decrease any sack possibilities (Diagram 7).



III. Zones of the Field

After our drill work and group work is complete, we finish practice with a fast paced team period that emphasizes the different areas of the field. We break the field into five zones. We script five to seven plays in each zone each week. Basically, this is our game plan. We practice these plays on designated days to give our players an idea of what plays we are looking to run in certain areas of the field. By breaking the field into zones, we ensure that we give ample practice time to each part of the field during the weekly course of practice. On Monday, we only work the open field script. On Tuesday, our emphasis is on the coming off zone, open field, and the orange



Chris Hatcher at a Glance

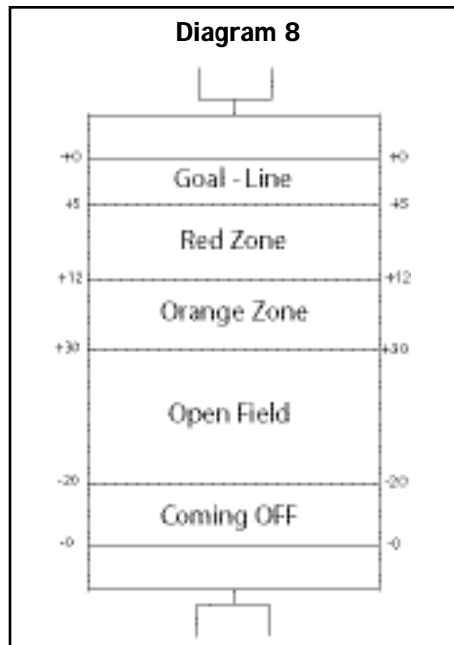
Experience: Student Asst., Valdosta State, 1995; Quarterbacks/Tight Ends Coach, Central Florida, 1996; Graduate Asst., Kentucky, 1997-98; Quarterbacks/Wide Receivers Coach, Kentucky, 1999; Head Coach, Valdosta State, 2000-present.

Career Head Coaching Record: 46-6

AFCA Regional Coach of the Year Awards: 2001, 2002

Conference Championships: Gulf South; 2000, 2001 and 2002

Notes: Chris Hatcher has won 10 or more games in each of his first four years as a head coach ... Hatcher's winning percentage is .885 in four seasons ... He was named the Gulf South Conference Coach of the Year from 2000-2002 ... Hatcher also led the Blazers to a school record 14 straight victories in 2002.



zone. Wednesday's practice is dedicated to the red zone and goal-line areas. Thursday, all the zones of the field are reviewed (Diagram 8).

Conclusion

What I have discussed today is just an overview of what we try to accomplish on a daily basis at Valdosta State University. We did not invent these ideas, but have been very fortunate to have learned from some of the best coaches in football. The best things that our staff has done are take different philosophies and mold them to fit our style of coaching. Hopefully, a few of our offensive principles will be helpful to you and your staff. Finally, I would like to thank Coach Teaff and the AFCA for allowing me to represent the coaches of Division II by speaking to this morning.

Adopt Safety-First Coaching Techniques

According to legal experts, "failure to warn" usually is one of the primary accusations made against those in the coaching profession in litigation which involves catastrophic injury to a player.

To help prevent what could result in the destruction of a coaching career, as well as massive financial loss, adopt "safety first" coaching techniques:

1. Have a clear and complete understanding of the intent and correct application of safety rules.
2. Make graphically clear to players the risk of violating these rules and use the available printed material as a constant authoritative reminder to them of the importance of correct techniques.
3. Point out in exact terms the risk of accidental catastrophic injury in athletics before the first practice begins.