

## Calling Audibles

### From Complete Quarterbacking by Don Read

Audibles are a necessary part of any offensive attack. The audible allows the offense to get away from a bad play or move to a better play. The system needs to be simple yet complete. Any system used is only as effective as the quarterback's ability to evaluate, calculate, and make decisions. This process must be completed in approximately seven seconds, or a delay of game will kick in.

#### Color Code

There are several ways to check to new plays. A simple method is to call a live color that indicates that the next play called is a change from what was called in the huddle. If a dead color is called, the play following the dead color means nothing. Regardless of whether the color called is dead or alive, it is yelled out two or three times on the line of scrimmage, to ensure that everyone heard it. For example, a quarterback could call an audible using red as the live color. To change the play, he would call "red, red," then the play desired. Because most offensive systems use a numbering system to represent a play, a number would follow the color. Confidence, not confusion, on changing the play is crucial for any offense. Avoid trick plays, shifts, and motions on check plays unless it has been practiced and predetermined. When changing the play, check out of a bad RUNNING PLAY to a good RUNNING PLAY. Also try to change a bad PASSING PLAY to a GOOD PASSING PLAY. Always try to check to simple, base plays. This keeps things simple for the men up front. Also remember to use the same cadence after checking out of plays...continuity and consistency will help your team execute every time.

#### **Why Change The Play?**

There are two distinct reasons for changing a huddle call: if the play called in the huddle appears to be a bad choice once the quarterback sees the defense or if a good play can be changed to a more productive choice based on the defensive alignment. These are good general guidelines, although the ability of the quarterback should influence the latitude he is given. A young, inexperienced quarterback should be restricted to perhaps only checking out of a bad play.

If a run play is called, the field general must analyze the defenders in the tight end to tight end box. He should determine their number, their alignment, and the balance of the defense. The more players in the box or on the side of the run play called, the more perception he must display. Six or seven in the box generally means go with the play called. Eight in the box becomes a larger obstacle. When there are six or seven this near to the line of scrimmage, then the quarterback must determine if the alignment fits with

the blocking scheme called. If it does not, he must call an audible.

When a pass play has been selected in the huddle, the role of the quarterback on the line of scrimmage is to concentrate on the potential coverage. He must decide if the pattern selected is good against the likely coverage. He scans the number of defenders in the secondary, their alignment, their distance off the offensive formation, and if it is zone or man coverage. Experienced field generals will look for and see more, such as matchups and defensive huddle adjustments to a formation and, of course, a potential blitz. From his analysis, he must determine to go with the huddle call or choose a pattern or route that will get the offense out of potential trouble. That is why a coach needs to plan pass plays to beat any coverage and alignment.

Regardless of the play call (run or pass), the key for the quarterback on the line of scrimmage is to be aware of the time on the clock, the formation called, his personnel, the game conditions, and the score. These elements influence his decision, too, as much as the criteria discussed already. Improper audibles can backfire big time. The idea of the change is to improve the status quo. Drawing in the dirt, so to speak, on the line of scrimmage must not be tolerated.

The primary factor about using any form of audibles is that a quarterback and coach improve the execution of the offense at the line of scrimmage. Practice provides the opportunity to incorporate audibles into existing drills. A team with a quarterback who is confident, knowledgeable, and possesses good common football sense is going to master this process. As is the case in all of quarterbacking, productive execution of any segment of his position leads to a more explosive and effective offense.