

Running the No-Huddle

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Probably the question we are asked most often is, "How does the no-huddle work?" This article will cover three basic areas of the no-huddle: why we use the no-huddle; how we communicate it; and how and why our option game fits in with this concept.

Why the No-Huddle

First, let me say that we do not use the no-huddle to affect the defense nearly as much as we use it to help ourselves. Also, some of the things mentioned were not thought of before we put in the no-huddle but were found to be true and valid after we had used it for a while.

Initially, we had five reasons for considering the no-huddle.

How it affects linemen. If linemen move seven and one-half yards from the ball to the huddle and jog that same distance back to the LOS, by the end of each play they have traveled fifteen yards. Multiply that by a minimum 60 plays and you can see we save our linemen approximately 900 yards per game. Therefore, they should be fresher in the fourth quarter.

How it affects practice time. By not using a huddle, we can run approximately one-third more plays in practice. (For example, we used to run 20-22 plays in a 15-minute period. Now we run 28-30 plays in a 15-minute period).

How it affects our QB. By being at the LOS, our QB gains an extra three or four seconds to scan the defense. This gives us a better chance to make the proper checks.

How it affects the tempo of the game. Tempo is one of the most unexplored offensive advantages. The two things that the offense knows is "where" and "when". We all seem to spend our time on the where and never give much time or effort to when. By lining up at the LOS, we push the defense into a tempo they are not accustomed to. We relate this idea to gears in a car. First gear is the gear most everyone uses. Both teams huddle then go to the LOS and execute their plays. In second gear, the offense does not huddle; therefore, the defense cannot huddle either. This changes the tempo. Third gear is hurry-

hurry offense; with the no-huddle, you can get into this tempo at any time. Now we have the ability to speed up the game or slow it down according to our wants and needs. This keeps the defense off balance.

How it affects the defense. The defense needs to prepare differently for a no-huddle offense. They must shift into second gear. If we can cause them to spend 10 minutes of practice time a day on developing a different form of communication, that translates into 40 minutes of preparation time spent on something other than defending the actual plays (10 minutes per practice day times 4 days of practice). Also, defense elicits a great deal of emotion - slapping each other, pumping up each other, etc. This is almost eliminated since there is no time to regroup.

We have found several other ideas to be true as we used our no-huddle offense. First, as coaches we teach what is important. Since the huddle has nothing to do with winning or losing the game, we end up spending more time on fundamentals and the actual plays we use.

Second, the no-huddle allows coaches to make corrections visually. Often in a huddle, we try to explain how we want something done - a blocking scheme, back's cut, etc. For us, all corrections are done at the LOS, and the players see exactly what we want. The defense is right in front of them.

Third, since we can run more plays in practice, a lot more conditioning occurs during the entire practice. Therefore, we are able to cut back on the amount of sprint work as the season continues. During the game, since more plays are being run and we are at the LOS for every play, our concentration has improved, especially when we are tired.

Finally, we have found that communication and execution of our minute-man or two-minute offense is much easier. Our players are accustomed to hearing the play called from the LOS and are better able to handle the hurry-up situation. Also, speeding up play at times in our regular offense gives them a better concept of the faster pace we want in the minute-man situation.

Communication

We signal formation and play at the same time. An advantage we have in our Wishbone offense is that we do not flip-flop a lot of people. Only our TE and SE change. We use a red wristband to show the right halfback his alignment and where to go if motion is necessary. We use no wristband on the left wrist but use the same signals for the left halfback. The SE always goes to the wide side of the field and the TE goes into the boundary. We use one signal to switch them or to get them on the same side to create an unbalanced situation.

To call the play at the LOS, we use a combination of live and dead words combined with live numbers. For example, our QB might say, "Ready! Over 33, Over 33" or on the next down he might say, "Bingo 33, Bingo 33." Now the defense does not know whether we are running Over, Bingo, or 33. The number is live only if the word is dead. It sounds complicated but it is really very simple and easy for the players to learn.

But will defenses be able to figure it out? First of all, I don't believe they can. It is a little too complicated for the untrained ear. Second, I sure hope they try. Every minute they spend trying to decipher our calls and signals is another minute they are not working to defeat our plays.

We've been asked how we communicate the snap count to our players without the other team knowing it. We have a few ways to do this but for obvious reasons I cannot relate exactly how we do it. However, I can give you the different ideas we looked at. One way is to determine your snap count by the down marker (for example, in Play 33 the snap count is 3, in Play 61 the snap count is 1). If you use this method, you must devise some way to derive the snap count for plays in the 0, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 holes. Another way would be to let all plays to the left be on 1, all plays to the right on 2, and all passes on 3. You will be surprised to see how quickly the players can learn this method. This also would be valuable when used in a huddle. We all are looking for ways to cut our words, whether in the huddle or not.

Communication at the LOS is easier than ever in the no-huddle. Our linemen are accustomed to being informed at the line and pay close attention to every word the QB says. We also have tried to make our audible system easier by pairing our plays. This gives the QB the option to say only the word "opposite", and we can attack the other side of the defense with the same