



Putting Your Spread Offense In the Hands of Your Receivers

By Chris Snyder, Offensive Coordinator, Mendocino College, Ukiah, CA

At Mendocino College, we run a spread offense that relies heavily on the production of our receivers.

Over the past three seasons, we have had eight receivers make all-conference first team and this season we finished tenth in the state (California) in passing yards a game. That's what happens when you have some gifted receivers who are willing to put in time and effort to perfect their skills.

Since we are a junior college, we have our players for only a year or two. That makes it essential for us to prepare our receivers for not only our program but for the next program they will transfer to.

It thus becomes essential to instill the proper fundamentals, techniques, and habits necessary to assure productivity.

Following are some of the drills we use, starting with route-running. After establishing proper starts, we will always do at least one route-running drill per practice.

STARTS/GET OFFS:

Receivers will set up across the line in their proper two-point stances. On the coach's command, they must explode upfield for five yards – keeping their outside leg back and the upper body/chest over the toes.

They must also have a slight bend at the waist and both hands up. This emphasis is on no false steps.

FOUR CONE (DIAG. 1):

Four cones are set up 10 yards apart from one another in a box shape. The receivers will start at one cone and run to the next cone. At each cone, WR will emphasize snapping the chest down over the toes,

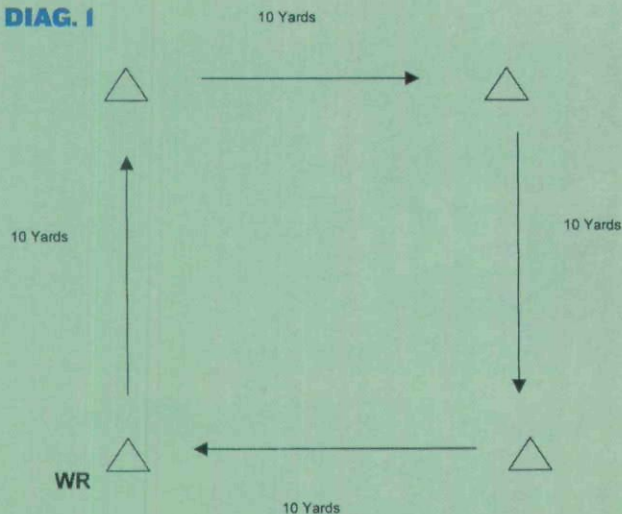
dropping the hips/butt, keeping the eyes/head up, and pumping the arms to help decelerate. The WR should also plant on the outside foot and snap the chin and arm around to the next cone. (Make sure the WRs go in both directions.)

ANGLE CUT (DIAG. 2):

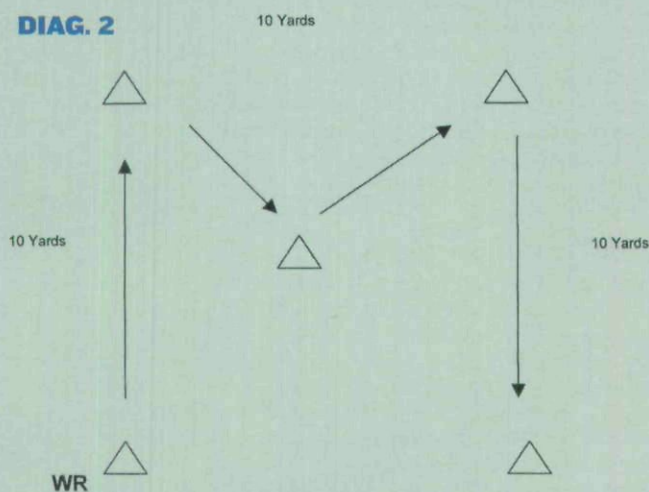
Five cones are set up 10 yards apart from one another in the shape of the letter M. The receiver starts at bottom of the M and runs to the top corner of the M. He will then go to the middle of M, back to the opposite top of M, and finish at bottom of M.

At each cone, WR will emphasize snapping chest down over toes, dropping hips/butt, keeping eyes/head up, and pumping arms to help decelerate. WR must also plant on the outside foot and snap his chin and arm around to the next cone. (Make sure the WRs go in both directions.)

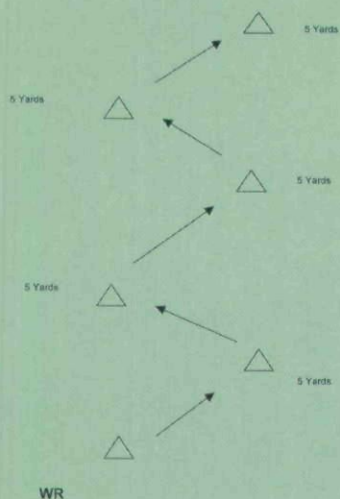
DIAG. 1



DIAG. 2



DIAG. 3



ZIG ZAG (DIAG. 3):

Cones are set up in a zigzag formation 3-5 yards apart. At each cone, the WR will emphasize snapping his chest down over the toes, dropping hips/butt, keeping eyes/head up, and pumping arms to help decelerate.

WR must also plant his outside foot and snap his chin and arm around to the next cone. (Make sure the WRs go in both directions.)

POUND:

Receivers will run three steps on an angle and emphasize planting their outside foot on the third step. The WR will continue to run in the opposite direction on an angle for three steps and do the same. We want him to emphasize pounding/planting his outside foot on each break. WRs should run this weaving motion for 20 yards.

BREAKDOWN:

Coach will begin by having the receivers line up across a line. WRs will be standing in place, while pumping their arms to simulate they are running.

On the coach's command, the WRs will execute their proper breakdown by snapping chest down over toes, dropping hips/butt, keeping eyes/head up, and pumping arms to help decelerate. They then progress to running in place and on the coach's command, will execute their breakdown.

Their emphasis is on snapping the chest down over the toes, dropping hips/butt, keeping eyes/head up, and pumping arms to help decelerate.

The next sets of drills we focus on with our receivers involve catching drills and the skills our receivers will be expected to execute throughout the game.

These drills, like our route running drills, will be done throughout the week of practice, when we will also spend quality drill time on releases and blocking.

CATCH AND TUCK:

Receivers will partner up five yards apart and catch passes from one another, emphasizing catching with the hands and tucking the ball away. Make sure to alternate the tucking and emphasizing proper catching techniques.

GOALPOST:

Receiver leans his chest against the goalpost with his hands out in front. He then catches a pass from the coach without letting the ball hit the post. The emphasis is on catching with their hands, not the body, and tucking the ball away. (Make sure to alternate tucking.)

DISTRACTION:

Receivers partner up with a DB running alongside of the WR to distract him from catching the ball. You can also have the DB come from the opposite direction in front

FOOTBALL Putting Your Spread Offense In the Hands of Your Receivers

of the WR.

Finally, you can have two defenders stand in front of the receiver to distract him by waving their hands.

HIGH BALL:

Receiver runs a short fade and catches the ball at the highest point. You can then progress to having the defender run alongside, but not up or underneath the WR (prevent injury).

SIDELINE:

Receiver must run full speed toward the sideline, catch the ball, and work on dragging his feet in bounds before going out of bounds. You can also do this drill in the back of the end zone.

COMEBACKS:

Receiver runs a curl (or hitch), while emphasizing proper breakdown technique and "working back to the QB." The WR should catch the ball

and turn over his shoulder and get up field. (Make sure WR is working back before throwing him the ball.)

HARASSMENT:

Defender runs alongside of the WR, harassing him (grabbing, pulling) while he tries to catch the ball. Also have the receiver try to work back to QB (curl route) while defender is harassing him from behind.

BAIL CB:

Receiver works routes vs a bailing CB. This can also be done with CB coming up to press. Emphasis of drill is WR working on release and knowing when to stay on routes or convert them.

CUSHION:

Receiver runs either a hitch, curl or fade vs DB or coach. WR will emphasize trying to break the defender's cushion. WR must sell vertical route

and get defender out of his back pedal. The defender will not know which route will be run.

It is important that your quarterbacks and receivers spend enough time working together. We spend 15-20 minutes per practice in our small group period. During this period, our QBs and receivers are throwing routes vs air.

This is the time that both groups can focus on the fundamentals of specific routes and on their own individual technique.

Our small group and individual period is designed for quality reps to perfect the skills necessary for us to be successful.

Remember, confidence comes from repetition and success. The road to execution is paved by repetition.

We realize there are other great receiver drills, but these are the ones we emphasize because we believe they have benefited our receivers. ■



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