

# SECTION ONE

## FOUNDATION & FRAMEWORK



CH 1: THE WING T & HERSCHEL MOORE

CH 2: SELECTING PERSONNEL

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# CHAPTER 1



## The Wing T & Herschel Moore

### A MESSAGE FROM COACH HOLMES

Football is a game that can be very complex with its 22 moving parts while at the same time being so simple. This paradox of learning all of its interconnected layers while not forgetting the simplicity of its fundamentals makes coaching football a great challenge. The successful coaches all have one thing in common: single-mindedness. They have bought into something that they really believe in and became an expert at it.

***“You Must Have a SYSTEM That Has Answers”***

I have seen to many young coaches who have not yet decided which direction they want to go on offense, defense, or just general coaching philosophy. Experimentation is good, but it can be painful and I have seen programs crumble or at the very least have stunted growth while the head coach is searching for a single, sound concept. I encourage shopping around—calling, writing, and visiting coaches you admire. Investigate all aspects of their attacks. Talk it over with your coaches and mentors, think it through. But once you decide, lock on and stick with it through the rough waters that definitely will come as your entire program is learning it.

In my experience, the biggest tests will come from within the inner circle of your program from people who believe they have the program in their best interest. These are people that you trust and they are not intentionally being disloyal, but they were not with you at every step as you formed your vision. You need to have a “contagious” confidence that comes from knowing you have a sound product. The hidden fears of uncertainty will be diminished by the knowledge that is gained by your staff and players as you shape and develop it.

It is OK to add your personal touch in many areas, in fact it is imperative that you take ownership and make it your own. The head coach must remain true to himself and not try to be someone or something that he is not. The following

statement is true in all areas of life, not just football: “Be Yourself, not your idea of what you think somebody else’s idea of yourself should be.”

As you take in all of our X’s and O’s, our techniques, and drills....please remember the most important job that you have as coach: To teach your players to be better sons, husbands, and fathers.

Many coaches have experienced success with the Wing-T offense. The breadth of the offense is tremendous, with misdirection, power, counter, option, play-action, and dropback capabilities within the system. It is an offense that can easily be adapted to take advantage of the gifted players that each team may possess on a year-to-year basis.

It has been stated and generally understood that the Wing-T offense is a system of football. As coaches, we become comfortable and find confidence in systems that are effective. For many years, and at every level of football, the Wing-T offensive system has allowed many teams to find offensive success.

## **WING-T HISTORY & HERSCHEL MOORE**

The Wing-T has been an offense that has withstood the test of time. There have been many offenses that have come into fashion over the years and have been successful for a period of time, but then they seem to fade away. The Wing-T has faded a little each time the “new fad” comes around, but it always makes a comeback, and the teams who run it the best always seem to be successful year in and year out.

The origins of the Wing -T stem from Tubby Raymond, Evasheski, and Nelson. “The Order of Football” written by Coach Tubby Raymond is a system that has answers, but is limited in my opinion, by the variations it has to its plays. The original Wing-T book written by Evasheski and Nelson was done in the early 60’s, and it also has merit, but defensive football has changed so much with its current schemes, and this book only gives certain answers to certain problems.

The system we use today originated from Coach Herschel Moore. Coach Moore has been described as the most innovative Wing T offensive minds to ever coach and the hybrid Wing-T got its early beginnings from Moore while leading the nation in rushing at Cumberland University. Chuck Klausing, Bruce Cobleigh, Dewayne Alexander, and Wes Elrod have all credited Moore with being the coach who named the Jet Sweep plays and the first to use the Jet Sweep at the college level.

I agree with Elrod and many others who call Herschel as one of the most knowledgeable coaches in the country. Tubby Raymond and Ted Kempinski sought out Moore when they wanted to install the Jet Sweep at Delaware.

I have added things over the years to continue to create conflict for defenses as they change. The key to our system is the blocking system that Coach Moore developed, and this allows us to have the answers we need to “Keep the Wing T Alive.”

The old adage that “Defensive Wins Championships,” in my opinion, has also changed. I agree that you can’t win championships without playing great defense, but you are going to have those games throughout the year where you just can’t stop their offense, and you must be able to score enough points to win the game. As we’ve evolved over the years in this Wing-T, the amount of points needed to win games has changed, Offenses are scoring a lot more points today.

We believe that for sure you will have a game or two in your season where you will have to score at least 28 points or more to win the game. Now it might be a game within the regular season that determines whether you’re a region champion and you go into the playoffs as a one-seed, it may be in the playoffs, but there’s going to become a night where



you're having a hard time stopping that other football team and you've got to be able to score points. For example, in 2019 we won our State Semi-Final game versus Thomasville 55-45. We couldn't slow them down. We won the State Championship in 2019 and gave up 32 points. We scored 42. If we weren't just as explosive on offense, it's highly possible we would have not been fortunate to eventually win the State Championship.

Being a "Wing-T Coach" is not as sexy as being a "Spread Coach," but winning beats losing, and I hope this system will be of great benefit to you in your coaching profession.

## WING-T PHILOSOPHY

The Wing-T offense is so much more than just a formation. In fact it is a BUNCH of formations, all designed to outnumber the defense at the point of attack and confuse defenders in regards to what technique they should use versus each alignment. These formations help the linemen by allowing them to gain leverage against a mis-aligned defender.

*"The Wing T Offense is NOT just a formation"*

Another key component to the Wing-T is the wing backs being both a threat as a running back as well as a receiver. There are WING-T formations that have two wings, which forces the defense to respect a 4-WR passing game in addition to a 4-back power running game. Having three running backs also allows the use of misdirection to its fullest.

Our philosophy in our Wing-T offense is very similar to the University of Delaware, as well it should be because they're the people that made this offense famous. When you look at the Wing T system itself, the plays are grouped into series. All of the plays in a particular series look identical at some point after the ball is snapped.

- Buck Series;
- Belly Series;
- Down Series.

### LOOK-A-LIKE BACKFIELD

So when any play from within a series is run, there's a point in each of those three or four plays that will look identical to the other plays after the ball is snapped.

Let's look at the Buck Series as an example.

As the quarterback is operating up and down the midline, there is the threat of the fullback running right up the middle, there is the threat of the halfback getting the hand off and attacking the off tackle, then you got the threat of the wing back coming back inside running the counter, and you have the threat of the quarterback attacking and pulling the ball down on the bootleg run to the outside. You also have the threat of the QB throwing the ball to a wide receiver in a deep outside area.

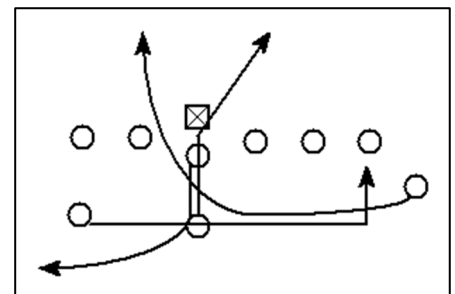


Fig 1-1: Buck Series

The goal is to prevent the defense from knowing who has the ball until everything unfolds. That's the theory: slow the defense down and make them a step slow on their reactions because you are doing a great job executing what the play is.



The next series is the down series. You have the full back on the down, you have the quarterback meeting the FB behind the tackle and continuing outside on the down option. You have the pitch, that can threaten the flank, and you have the counter. Off all the same action, the QB can also pass the ball after faking to the FB, with the tight end in the flats and the wing in the deep third.

All 4 of these plays look the same after the ball is snapped until the point that the QB meets the FB. Again, that's what you're looking for in the Wing-T philosophy.

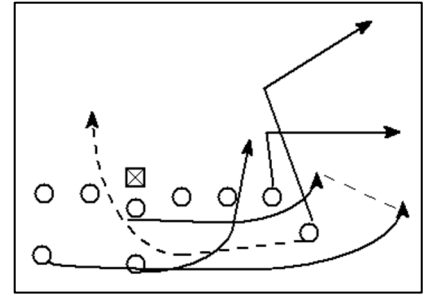


Fig 1-2: Down Series

When you look at the weak side belly series, there is the threat of the weak side iso. While your quarterback is engaged and riding the fullback, there is the threat of the belly option. You have the threat of the belly pass that happens after the FB ride. And then one of the best plays in football right now is the belly sweep, which goes to the wing who is not in motion, attacking the outside.

So again, the point I'm trying to make with this is we're trying to create the deception which is going to slow down the defense and then what we want to do is put defenders in conflict. We want to cause the defensive guy to react the proper way and take advantage of him doing what the defense would coach them to do.

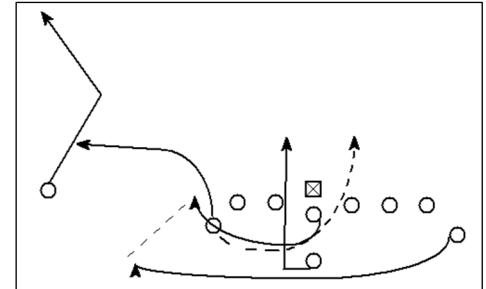


Fig 1-3: Belly Series

We want execution and kids carrying out fakes. We want to force the defenders to stay in the area that they're responsible for, in order to make to make them sound defensively. These examples have shown how each series has the ability to attack inside, outside, and backside. Threatening these attack points and also using misdirection slows down the defensive pursuit which aids the linemen.

## DEFENDERS IN CONFLICT

We showed examples of the look alike backfield concept, now let's look at how the Wing-T puts defenders in conflict. The Wing-T also uses similar blocking schemes with different backfield families which create conflicting reads for the defense. These defensive conflicts are independent of the backfield action. The blocking style is designed so that as a defensive man reacts to the blocking in his area to stop a particular threat, he will be placing himself in jeopardy for a companion play. In other words, the Wing T has an answer for whatever technique the defense is using and uses that technique against the defender.

Let's look at an outside shade defensive end that is in a 9-technique. On both the Buck and Down plays, the TE is going to block down or release inside to block the inside backer. A well coached end will squeeze, hat in hands on that TE. If that is happening and the End is doing a good job squeezing, then that makes it easy for the wingback to block down and cave that end inside. Now all of a sudden there the buck sweep being ran right outside of the End.



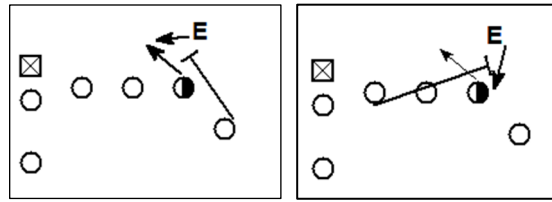


Fig 1-4: End in Conflict

That action will get their defensive end to start giving up on what his coaches have taught him to do and he starts wanting to make plays. So when the tight end steps down, he doesn't squeeze because he's been getting washed by the wingback all night long. When the end stops honoring the TE down block, we start running the Belly-G (Down) play and run up inside him.

Now, if we're running the Belly-G and the DE is squeezing like he is supposed to and we can't kick him out, then we call belly option, which is the next play in that progression. Delaware called it down option. So now instead of kicking him out, the guard is able to log block the end. That is three different plays that puts the defensive end in conflict.

We can also put the edge defender in conflict, who in this example is the strong safety, or rover. The edge defender's responsibility is pitch contain and his job is to take the pitchman on the option. So if we're able to seal the linebacker with a nice BOB block, then the quarterback is outside on the option with a pitch man. If the strong safety takes the pitchman, then there's nobody to take the quarterback. After your quarterback has run a couple of times and picked up eight or 10 yards, then the strong safety will eventually come to take quarterback and there's nobody there to take the pitch.

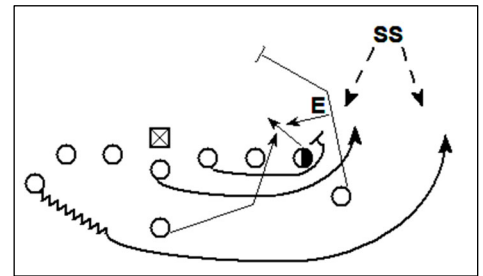


Fig 1-5 Down

The defense could have the corner, or the free safety take the pitch so that the strong safety can take the quarterback. That makes them vulnerable to play action pass because now the person responsible for the deep outside third is not maintaining his responsibility.

So what we're trying to do with these selection of plays is cause the defensive guys to have to do something that they're not responsible for, and they give us another play. You have to be willing to take what the defense is giving you when calling plays in the wing t offense.

The concept of conflict is the reason that the plays are taught in series and the reason they're called in series. If you're calling plays, you wouldn't want to come out and run the belly option until they've taken the belly itself away from me.

## FORCE DEFENSE TO ADJUST

After we slow down the defense with look alike backfield and put defenders in conflicts, the next major philosophy is to force a defense to make an adjustment. In Chapter 3 we will talk about unbalanced formations in depth, but it is important to understand the power of using unbalanced to force defensive adjustments that they are not comfortable with.



Our basic philosophy is to run *balanced* formations at un-balanced defenses and run *un-balanced* formations at balanced defenses. And it is very important that we are not trying to fool the defense because what ends up happening is we fool our kids. We run lots of formations in order to gain advantages and blocking leverages.

## **WING-T CAN PASS THE BALL**

People think the wing t offense can't throw the football. There's no reason you can't throw the football out of the wing t offense. The Wing-T play action pass is the best in all of football and adding the 3-step quick passing game with sprint out flood concepts can really hurt the defense if you have a good wide receiver and a quarterback who can throw the ball.

No offense can operate effectively without a passing game. The threat of the pass must always be present to prevent safeties from filling the alleys aggressively and corners from screaming off the edge. The presence of the two wings forces the defense to respect 4 verticals and often times will give the offense a 2-safety look, which leaves 7 men in the box. A good play action passing game creates conflicts for linebackers, especially outside backers who have to seal the edge while also defending the flats. Bottom line is that the passing game is needed in order to have a more effective running game.

We like to motion to trips out of unbalanced and we like to sprint out to get all three level combinations. We also like to get into unbalanced formations with a full back offset and empty. Now we're in trips and can run our boot stuff. Finally, the beauty of the play action pass is obvious. If they're having trouble stopping the run game, they have to get the secondary involved in the run game and now play action turns into big explosive plays and touchdowns.

I think anybody that wants to run the wing t offense can be as creative as they want to be, especially if you have our blocking system. You can do whatever it is that you want to do. If you're the person that wants to please the crowd and get in the spread, throw the football around be 50/50. Hey, I hope it works for you.

But we believe that we're balanced. We run strong as much as we run weak. Last year, our right halfback ran the ball 97 times, our left wing back ran it 96, our full back ran it 102, and our quarterback ran it 65 times. Now that's balance because you can't key on one individual. The defense can't key on one place where the balls going in a balanced Wing-t offense. And we will throw the football when the when the opportunity is there.

Running the Wing-T has proven to be an effective way to win game for many years because it allows for you, as the coach, to adapt your scheme to the personnel that you have. Over time, I've learned that you can't just run the ball in the Wing-T and win "big." I believe that in order to win against the best defenses you must be able to throw the ball OR run the option in the Wing-T. If he can do both of those things, you're going to score a lot of points. When choosing your quarterback, I think it's important to pick a kid who can handle checking plays at the line and one who has the ability to run the ball OR pass it. Once again, if he can do both, you're going to score a lot of points.

You have to be able to throw the football or be able to run the option to move the football against teams of better or equal talent. Teams will not be able to get everyone 5 yards off the ball due to the threat of the play action pass. Defensive coaches will not want to be in man coverage against teams that run the Triple Option. The belief that penetration hurts the Wing T fits into the option philosophy that "if they are hard to block, they will be easy to read."



## **GROUND ORIENTED**

The objective of offense in football is to move the ball and score. So every coach has to figure out how to do this most efficiently. Practice time and personnel should drive the ratios of run and pass, but often times coaches try to force more run or pass plays on a team that is not capable to do so.

- A powerful ground game builds a desire to dominate the opponent physically and this carries over to the defense. The physicality required in practice to successfully run the offense builds a tougher brand of player.
- During a high school game, each team will get the ball 8-10 times per game. If we can keep the ball longer by getting first downs while the clock runs, then we might get 10 possessions and our opponent only gets the ball 7-8 times.
- A consistent ground game increases the number of opportunities to enter the all important four-down red zone.
- The running game is better suited to severe weather problems.
- It is easier to replace an injured running back than it is to replace an injured QB.
- Year in and year out, a high school team will always have good running backs. The Wing-T offense does not require great running backs, just hard nosed players with 4.8 speed.
- A team that is dependent on passing game cannot be successful with an average QB and most schools only get great quarterbacks every 4-8 years.

## **DON'T DEPEND ON ONE PLAYER**

The main thing I think about the wing t offense is this. It gives you an offense to run when you're not dominant at quarterback. It gives you an offense that you can run when your starting quarterback gets hurt. You just run your basic Wing-t stuff, move the football, and shorten the game by shortening the clock. A lot of offenses out there are 100% quarterback driven. And if that guy goes down, so does your season because your backup cannot do the things that your starter can.

## **LOW RISK OFFENSE**

The Wing-T offense is low risk because you're not going to turn the football over. Fifteen years ago I believed 100% in the old saying about defense wins championships. However, the defense is no longer is going to win championships for you by itself because offenses have come too far due to rules that favor high scoring and limit the more physical and intimidating style of defense. There will be times during the course of a season when you're going to have to score 35 points to put you in a position to win a Region Championship, which puts you in a better bracket situation into the playoffs. Or once you get into the playoffs, there's going to be a night that other team has your number and they put 30 points on the board. You are going to need 35 to get out of there with a win. So you've got to be solid on offense. The wing t gives that to you.





## **SUMMARY OF THE WING-T OFFENSE**

The Wing-T has a systematic way of attacking the defense with a basic philosophy of trying to put defenders in conflict. The scope of the offense offers misdirection, power, counter, option, play action, and dropback capabilities. It easily adjusts to the gifted players that you have from year to year and does not require large, dominant offensive linemen. It is a complete system that coaches can become comfortable and find confidence with. Teams have had success at every level of football from NCAA Division 1 to youth.

The Wing-T is a multiple formation, four back running attack that depends heavily on play-action passing and misdirection. It utilizes Look-A-Like backfield action and Look-A-Like blocking schemes to place defenders in conflict.

- Designed for consistency, strength, and ball control.
- Does not depend on one star athlete, allowing you to adapt to year-to-year personnel changes due to graduation.
- The offense is designed in complete backfield families, each of which presents multiple threats to the defense on each play.
- The alignment of the wings allows them to be a dual-threat as both a running back and receiver.
- Misdirection, faking, and motion allow smaller backs to take larger linebackers out of the play.
- Angle blocking, pulling, & reading unblocked defenders allow smaller linemen to be successful.

If I'm looking for something to build a football program around, I start with the Wing-T. I start with a wing t because it's a system that has answers. Now I know that there are other offenses that have answers. The spread for example, will throw the ball if they get six in the box and run the ball when they see five in the box. Those are good answers until their starting QB gets hurt.

Well for over 50 years, theWing- T has answers. And after you read this book you will get the answers to.

### **In summary, here's why you should run the Wing-T:**

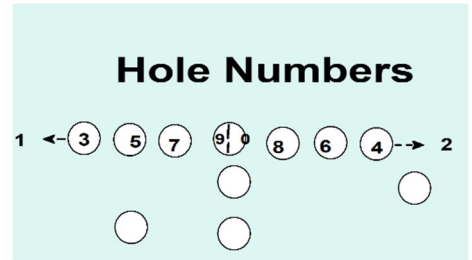
- **Allows multiple players to be involved.**
- **Very tough to defend multiple formation, misdirection, and fakes.**
- **Every play attacks backside, middle, outside, and secondary.**
- **Win with undersized linemen.**
- **Makes your team tough and physical.**



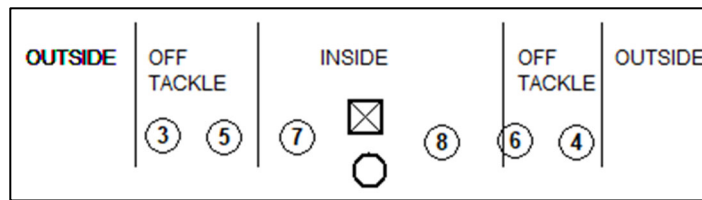
## RUN PLAYS

For many offensive systems, the hole the ball is going is the gap between linemen. In our system each of our offensive linemen have a number and they are known as the call man. Everything is predicated by the call man.

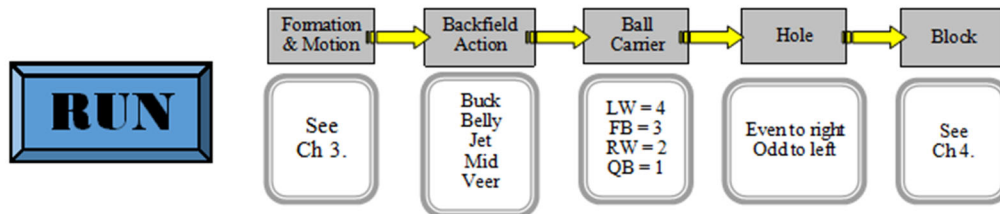
In our numbering system all even numbers are to the right and odd numbers are to the left. The numbers do not flip with a play call. Example Buck 42 Special is always Bucksweep to the Right and Buck 21 Special is always Bucksweep to the Left. Our center will have two numbers assigned to him to determine which side the lead block is coming from. His numbers are 0 on his right cheek and 9 on his left cheek.



In our offense, there are only three areas to run: INSIDE, OFF TACKLE, or OUTSIDE



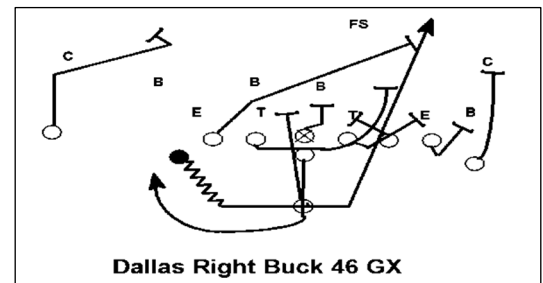
Inside Holes are 0, 9, 7, & 8. Off-Tackle Holes are 3,5,6, & 4. Outside are 1 & 2 hole plays



An example of a play call is: Buck 46 GX (Buck Sweep variation to the right).

- Buck – tells our backs the backfield action and this is how we teach the backs their steps.
- 46 – “4” back is getting the ball (Left Half) and running to the 6 hole.
  - The “6” is also the call man and the blocking rules begin with him.
- GX – is the blocking rule and who is pulling and the technique the pullers will use.

The part of this system that I love the most is that the linemen only have to learn the last digit and their blocking assignment. We joke in practice by having the linemen cover their ears and mumble “blah, blah, blah” until the last number and word after it is called. For example, we can run.



All the linemen heard on the above plays was the 6-Hole and the Blocking assignment, “GX”.

