

The T Offense

➤ “History of the T”

In an age where spread offenses are the most prevalent, in the state of Michigan, there is another offense that is popular with many high school football teams. The T offense is a 3 back, 2 tight end, under-center offense which relies on a heavy run game with Wing-T principles and deception. The T, also known as the Bay City T, Dead T, Full House T, Olivet T, or the Power T, is the oldest offensive formation in American football according to football historians. The first known coach to utilize the T was Walter Camp in 1882 at Yale. The T made its first big impact on the game of football in the 1930's by the University of Minnesota football team. The coach of that Minnesota Golden Gophers team was none other than future University of Michigan football legend, Fritz Crisler. It would eventually become one of the hottest offensive systems in college football as University of Notre Dame coach Frank Leahy used the T formation to win 4 National Championships. Leahy was infatuated with the system so much that he published a book in 1949 entitled “The T Formation”, which you may be lucky to find in a used book store. The T would even reach the professional game when it was used by the Chicago Bears to defeat the Washington Redskins, 73-0, in the 1940 NFL Championship Game. According to my research, the first book ever published on the T was written by former Chicago Bears head coach, George Halas, in 1941 entitled “The T Formation with man-to-man motion”. The book is out of print and very rare.



-Monroe Saint Mary Catholic Central and their “base” formation; The Power T-

➤ “The Father of the T in Michigan”

The man who is credited for the explosion of the T offense to Michigan, and is considered the expert on it T is Irv Sigler. Irv Sigler began using the T at Belding High School, in Belding, Michigan from 1989-1998. Sigler would leave Belding after 9 years with a 79-17

record which included two state championships, 6 conference championships, and 5 regional titles. After a couple more stops on the high school level, in 2002, Coach Sigler would be called home to be the Head Football coach at his alma mater, Olivet College.

Many doubters said that the T was a “junior high offense” that would never work in at the college level. Coach Sigler thought otherwise as he led his first squad in 2002 to a 5-4 mark, averaging 26 points per game. Coach Sigler and his “Olivet T” offense exploded in 2004 as they went 8-2 with an offense points-per-game average of 45.8. At the conclusion of the 2004 season, Irv Sigler and his Comets would finish as the N.C.A.A. (all levels) rushing leaders with 692 rushing attempts resulting in average rushing yards per game of 417.1. Following the 2004 season, Coach Sigler stepped down from the head coaching because of health issues and wanting to spend more time with his family. Coach Sigler would later resurface at the high school level an assistant coach with his son’s football program at Jenison High School in Michigan.

“The modern day T”

Fast-forward to modern day football. For those who live in the state of Michigan, when you tune in on that Friday and Saturday after Thanksgiving for the state finals, you are almost sure to find at least 1 team running the Power T offense. From 2005-2009, there were 20 teams who made it to the State Championship game utilizing the T offense while 12 of those teams won the state championship in their respective division. Some of the more successful high school football teams in Michigan who use the T as their base offense include; Beal City, Canton, Constantine, Hudson, Ubly, Zeeland West, Muskegon Catholic Central, and my alma mater, Monroe Saint Mary Catholic Central.

Just to give an example on how big of an impact this offense can make on a program, before Monroe S.M.C.C. began using the T offense, their win-loss record was 20-19 over the span of 4 years with only 2 playoff appearances using a Delaware Wing-T based attack.. After adopting the Power T system, their win-loss record drastically improved to 75-21 with 7 straight playoff appearances, 4 Huron League championships, 5 district championships, 5 regional championships, 5 state semi-finals appearances, and 2 appearances in the state title game. If you are wondering “how can I run this offense with the talent I have” or “but my linemen are pretty small”, Monroe S.M.C.C. has not had a player sign a Division 1 scholarship since the early 90’s and have had only a few players who went on to play at the Division 2 or 3 level. The point being, instead of worrying about talent, the T is extremely focused on fundamentals, deception, discipline, and taking care of the “little details” such as proper footwork and carrying out fakes.

➤ “The Basics of the Power T: 31-32 Trap”

The Power T offense revolves around a core of plays, which include Trap, Power, Sweep, and Q.B. keeper. In the past few years, coaches have beginning to add to their T offense including Midline, Quick Pitch, the Belly Series and Down Series. Another important coaching point for the T is that you need an offensive line coach who is a great teacher of offensive line

techniques and a stickler for details. My suggestion is that if you really want to get the most reps possible within your practice plan, you should have at least 2 offensive line coaches. Having 2 offensive line coaches will also increase the amount of reps you can get done in practice. For example, in one segment of practice, one coach can take the centers and guards and work the trap drill while the other coach can take the tackles and tight ends and work on down-blocks. Probably the most important reason for having 2 offensive line coaches is that with 5-7 linemen on the field, it helps having an extra pair of eyes and someone to bounce ideas off of. The Power T also uses a numbering system for defenses which leads to simple blocking rules. Many coaches enjoy the defense number/blocking rules method, it leads to less confusion and missed assignments because they are not blocking a front, but blocking by rules. (See Figures 1 & 2)

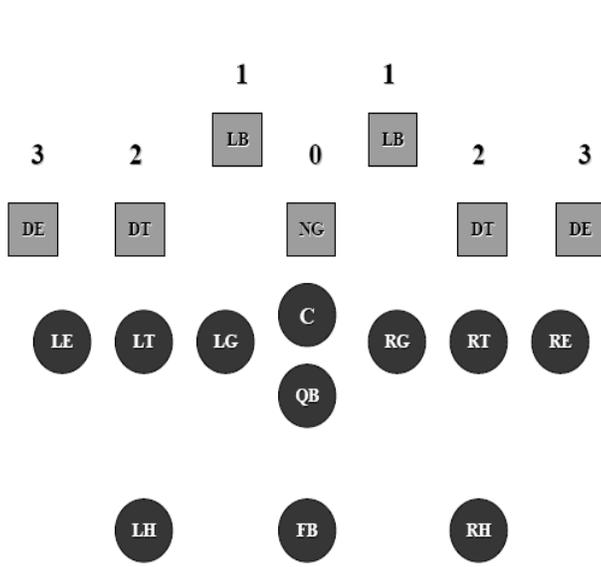


Figure 1: T vs. 5-2 Defense

NUMBERING STACK DEFENDERS

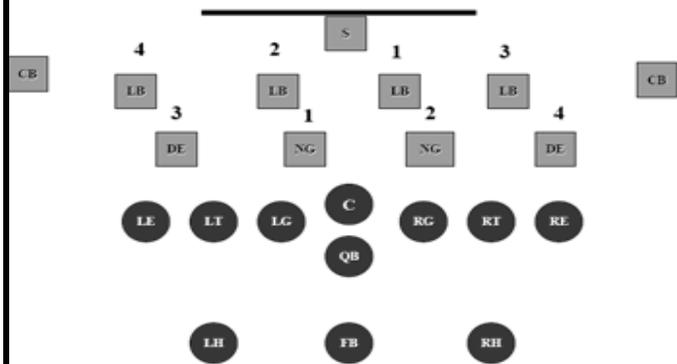


Figure 2: T vs. 4-4

The Fullback Trap play (see Figure 3) is the bread-and-butter play of most Power T teams. It is a quick hitting play which has the chance to score every time if they can get to the 2nd level. In my opinion, the trap is the best play in football and is my favorite play to run, especially against any kind of odd front. Against those defenses with hard-charging defensive linemen, the 31/32 trap play is a guard's dream. The back-side guard should execute a flat pull or a drop step (if extremely tight defender), throwing the play-side elbow back, then picking-up and putting-down the play-side foot which should point in the path to kick out the defender. The guard may have to take a tighter path (scraping off the backs of the blockers on the play-side) to the defender with the play-side foot. On contact, the back-side guard must deliver a blow with the forearm. For example if you are trapping right, you want to use the right forearm to make contact. Left trap= left forearm. Once you have made contact and delivered the blow, it is important to place your helmet across the front of the defender and to keep your feet moving through the echo of the whistle.

Another very important coaching point on this play and on the backside of several other plays is the backside-tackle technique, the “Arc Block” or what I like to call “cutoff block”. When using an Arc block, at the snap the backside tackle will step to the near hip of the defender that the center is blocking back on. The exception to this rule is that the backside tackle cannot let anyone cross his path (i.e. picking up a linebacker trying to blitz backside A gap (*see figure 4*). I also believe that it is very important to coach 2nd level blocking (Linebackers) because it almost always opens up the “homerun” play. Another tip to improve the effectiveness of the play is to use a stopwatch to time how long it takes for the fullback to hit the trap. After discussing this topic with several coaches, I have found that the perfect trap plays hits at .9 seconds (from under center) or less.

31 / 32 FULLBACK TRAP		
POSITION	FRONT-SIDE RULE	BACK-SIDE RULE
Tight End	Block the defender in the middle third or half of the field. Widen split by 1 foot.	Block the defender in the middle third or half of the field. Widen split by 1 foot
Tackle	Build a wall with the FSG and look for the first L.B. inside	Arc to the near hip of the man the center is blocking. Seal off A & B gaps.
Guard	<u>Vs. Odd:</u> double team noseguard with center; <u>vs. Even:</u> block 1 st L.B. inside	Flat pull & trap 1 st ugly jersey past the FSG's down block
Center	<u>Vs. odd:</u> double team noseguard with FSG, <u>vs. Even:</u> most dangerous man backside	<u>Vs. Guards Covered:</u> block the man over the pulling guard
Quarterback	Pivot on play-side foot, push ball back to Fullback with one hand, fake keep out play-side. <u>Sell fake for 20 yards.</u>	Run outside widest defender. <u>Sell your fake for 20 yards.</u> Make a defender chase you,
Fullback	Step forward with play-side foot. Run between downblock by FSG and trap block by BSG. <u>Refuse to be tackled</u>	Stay in the funnel & keep the ball wrapped until you know you can score. <u>Refuse to go down.</u>
Halfback	Run through C gap & block defender in outside third or half of the field. <u>Do not allow the DE to cross your face!</u>	Cross-over, pocket & run over the QB's hands. Run just outside the DE & sell fake for 20 yards. Make a defender chase you

Very important if you want this play to be a home run every time!

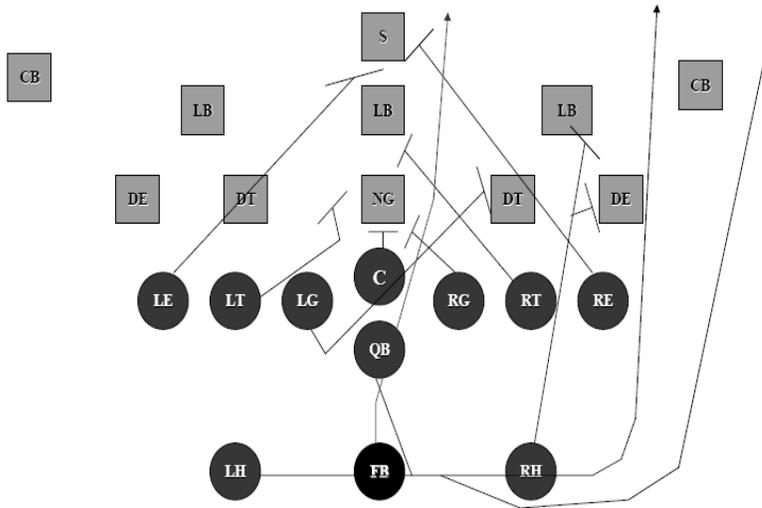


Figure 3: 32 Trap vs. 5-2 Defense

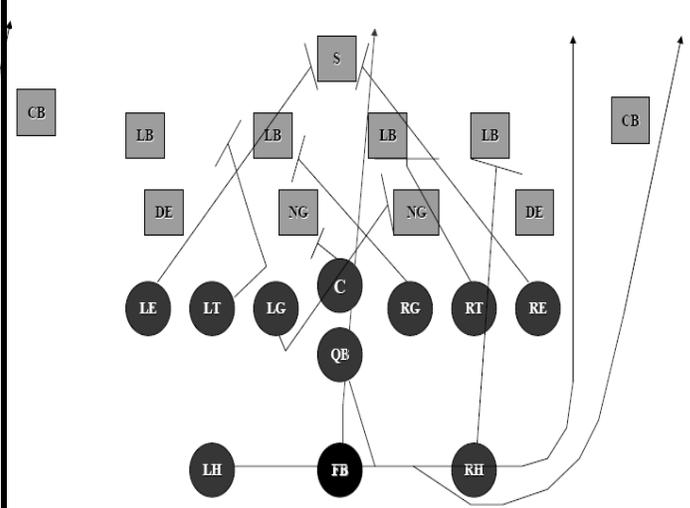


Figure 4: 32 Trap vs. 4-4 Defense

➤ “The Basics of the Power T: 26-45 Power”

My second most favorite play in the Power T offense is the Power play. Once the defense begins to pack the box in-between the tackles or starts to pinch their defensive lineman in an attempt to shut down the trap, is when you hit them with Power. Since the Power-T uses “6 to 1 foot splits, some blocking adjustments can be used to further the chance of a big play. Starting with the center, on most power plays, the center is helped by the play-side guard against an odd front or blocks back against an even front.

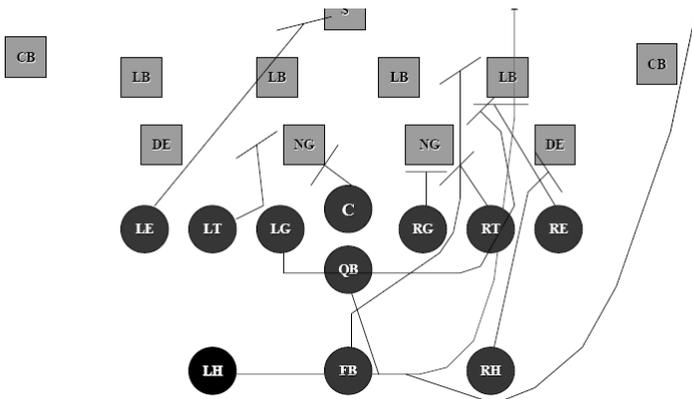
In the Power T offense, on 26/45 power, the center is responsible for the noseguard by himself. The reason for the center to be one on one with a noseguard is because of the close proximity of play-side guard and the back-side tackle who will be giving him help as he is cutting off to the center’s near hip and sealing off the backside A and B gaps. Also, another difference about the 26/45 power play in the T is that the rules for the play-side guard say to block the 1st defender past the center which would be the Mike linebacker against a 5-3 defense which is different from traditional power play where the play-side guard would normally block to the backside linebacker. The play-side tackle and tight end have more traditional techniques on the power play. The play-side tackle’s assignment is to block the 2nd man outside the center which would be the 4i/4 technique in a 5-3. The tight end’s rule is to block the first man inside the defensive end who will be kicked out by a back. By rule, the tight end will then block the play-side linebacker in a 5-3 while the play-side guard will apply his rules (block first man from center) who in the 5-3 is the Mike backer. The center could also make a “stack” call to the guard to tell him that he needs help combo-blocking the noseguard to the Mike.

As you look at diagrams of Power T plays on paper, you may be thinking “my kids aren’t strong enough to take a defender one on one”. On paper, many of the blocks in the Power T offense give the illusion of being one-on-one blocks, but once you take into account the tight splits, there is less space for the defender to move. The play will also hit so fast that any kind of 1 on 1 block will last 5 seconds or less. To reinforce the goal of firing off the football faster than the defense, one of the fundamental drills that the offensive line unit will practice daily is “stance & starts”. During “Stance & Starts”, the unit will do a series of 10 yard sprints as fast as possible using our footwork and perfect stances. The line coach will often stress to them to fire off on the “guh” of go in as many drills as possible. You would be amazed at how fast they will come off the ball during your games if you work on their stance and starts during the off and pre-season.

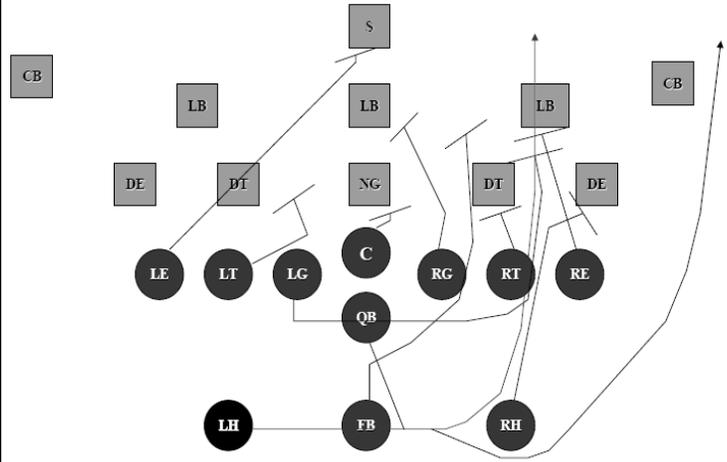
The “7 second drill” is another drill that will improve your player’s ability to sustain blocks (and conditioning). During two-a-days, we will do this drill every day. Once the regular season begins, we will do this drill twice a week. For the “7 second drill”, you will need a 7 (or 5) man sled. First, have your first group line up on the sled with one man on each bag. The players need to be an arm’s length away from the bags and then get into their proper stances. Next, go through the cadence your Q.B.’s and mix up snap counts. Each group will block for 7

seconds at full speed with one shoulder, then rotate groups, then come back and go again using the opposite shoulder.

26 Power vs. 4-4



26 Power vs. 5-3



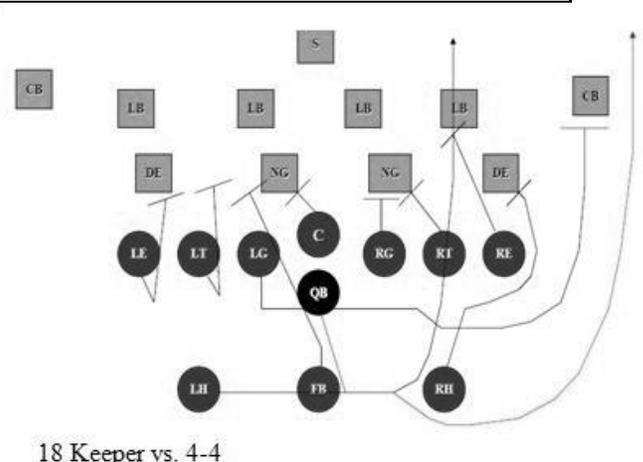
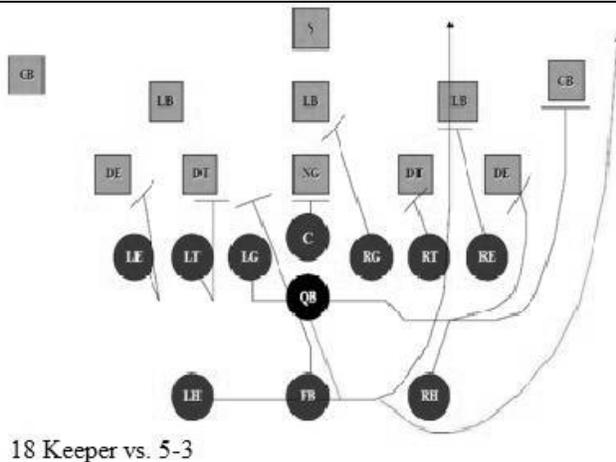
45/26 Halfback Power Rules		
<u>POSITION</u>	<u>FRONT-SIDE RULE</u>	<u>BACK-SIDE RULE</u>
Tight End	Block down on the 1 st man inside the defensive end. Apply Stack rules	Block the defender in the middle third or half of the field. Widen split by 1 foot
Tackle	Block the 2 nd man outside the center. Apply stack rules.	Arc to the near hip of the man the center is blocking. Seal off A & B gaps.
Guard	<u>Vs. Odd:</u> double team noseguard with center; <u>vs. Even:</u> block 1 st L.B. inside	Pull & on your 3 rd step push up into the off-tackle hole & block 1 st ugly shirt. <u>Eyes inside</u>
Center	<u>Vs. odd:</u> block a 1 tech if able or identify him as #1	<u>Vs. Even:</u> Block most dangerous man backside
Quarterback	Pivot on play-side foot, & clear midline. Push ball back to BSH on 2 nd step then fake keeper playside. <u>Make a defender chase you</u>	Run outside widest defender. <u>Sell your fake for 20 yards.</u> Make a defender chase you,
Fullback	Step forward with play-side foot & make proximity fake with QB. Make pocket, Sell your fake hard & try to get tackled	Run into the play-side B gap, looking for 1 st ugly jersey you see to block. Sell your fake first! Make someone try to tackle you.
Halfback	FSH: J-Block the play-side D.E. on the inside number & keep him where hes at or push him outside	Cross-over, pocket & on your next step push upfield.. Be at the line by your fourth step. Keep the ball layered until you can score!

➤ “The Basics of the Power T: 17-18 Keeper”

Much like the Delaware Wing-T or Flexbone offenses, the T offense is sequential and play calling is based on the reactions of certain defenders and then put those defenders in conflict. As the game goes on, the offensive coordinator must take note of how the defense is aligning and reacting to his calls. If you start to notice the play-side defensive end and linebacker are crashing down/filling hard to try to stop Power, then your next call should be 17 or 18

Keeper. The initial footwork for the Keeper play is identical to the same footwork used on 26/45 Power; which starts with the Quarterback pivoting on the play-side foot and clearing the midline, then put the ball into the pocket of the BSH (back-side halfback). Having proper hand placement and footwork by the QB is the start of success on this play. The quarterback will then ride the ball with the BSH before pulling the ball. The BSH's goal on this play should be to get tackled and mistaken for the ball carrier by running low and using the layered handoff technique. After "riding the ball", the quarterback will pull the ball and put it on his outside hip. The QB MUST be patient and keep the ball on the outside hip as long as possible. As the QB puts the ball on his outside hip and begins to run, he should follow his escort (the pulling guard leading for him) and read his block accordingly. If all 11 men on the field do their job on this play, your Q.B. will make some huge gains in the run game.

17/18 Keeper		
<u>POSITION</u>	<u>FRONT-SIDE RULE</u>	<u>BACK-SIDE RULE</u>
Tight End	Block down on the 1 st man inside the defensive end. Apply Stack rules	Tailgate technique. You and BST are responsible for the outside 2 on the line.
Tackle	Block the 2 nd man outside the center. Apply stack rules.	Tailgate technique. You and BSE are responsible for the outside 2 on the line.
Guard	Block the 1 st man outside the center. Apply stack rules.	Lead step & pull. Bubble on 3 rd step & swing around the FSE's block. <u>ID Pre Snap</u> & block the force defender.
Center	<u>Vs. odd:</u> block a 1 tech if able or identify him as #1	<u>Vs. Even:</u> Block most dangerous man backside
Quarterback	Pivot on play-side foot, & clear midline. Push ball back to BSH on 2 nd step and ride him into the line.	Pull the ball & put it on your outside hip. Follow pulling guard & cut off his block. Keep ball on hip as long as possible.
Fullback	Step forward with play-side foot & veer into the backside A-B gap and block. Sell your fake & make someone try to tackle you	Must get heels to the L.O.S. You are responsible for the 3 rd man in from the outside.
Halfback	FSH:Block the play-side D.E. like on 45/26 PWR. On the last step before contact, get your head on his outside number and hook him. <u>Do not allow him to touch our QB.</u>	Run your off-tackle path tighter and slower than normal. Stay layered and sell your fake for 20 yards. Make someone chase you.



17 Keeper in Action



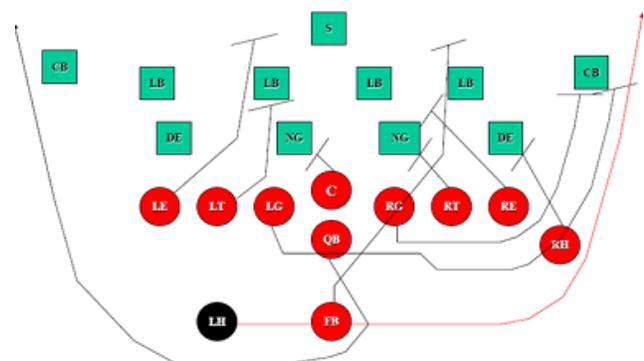
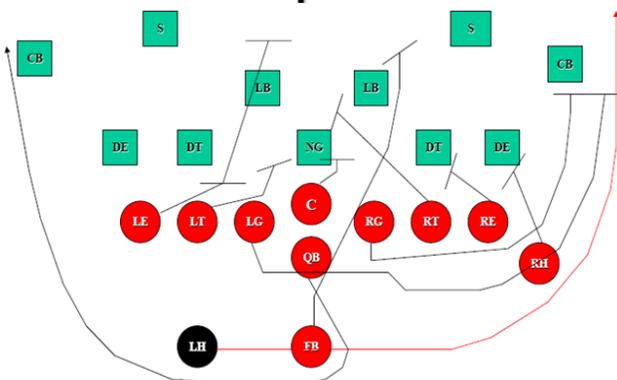
➤ **“The Basics of the Power T: 47-28 Sweep”**

When you hear “Power T” offense, you probably think about the power running game like 31/32 trap or 45/26 power which attacks the heart of the defenses. Although the trap and power play can be very effective on their own, any play caller with common sense knows you need an outside threat to use when the numbers advantage is there. Besides the 17/18 Keeper play, there is one other scheme designed to attack the perimeter. The sweep play relies on the play-side blockers blocking down on defenders while both the front-side guard and back-side guard will pull to the intended call side. The play-side guard’s assignment is to flat pull and block the force defender by kicking him out or hooking him if he tries to rush inside. The back-side guard’s assignment is to flat pull to the call side, and on the 3rd step, gain depth then based on the F.S.G.’s block, you will likely turn up field, looking inside-out for the first ugly jersey you see. 47/28 Sweep is mostly run from double-tight-end with a wingback on the play-side.

47/28 Sweep Rules:		
<u>POSITION</u>	<u>FRONT-SIDE RULE</u>	<u>BACK-SIDE RULE</u>
Tight End	Block down on the 1 st man inside the defensive end. No penetration by the D-Line	Tailgate technique then hunt for a big block
Tackle	Block down on the 1 st man inside the defensive end. No penetration by the D-Line	Pull and peel any defender off the pulling guard then hunt for a big block.
Guard	Flat pull and block the primary force defender. Hook him or block him out	Lead step & pull. Bubble on 3 rd step & swing around the FSG’s block looking inside-out for 1 st ugly jersey
Center	<u>Vs. odd:</u> lead step playside vs. 1 & 2 techs, <u>vs. zero:</u> block on and aim for playside #	<u>Vs. Even:</u> Block most dangerous man backside
Quarterback	Pivot on play-side foot, & clear midline. Push ball back to BSH on 2 nd step and boot away. <u>Hand on hip selling keeper.</u>	Run outside the widest defender & sell your fake for 20 yards. Make a defender chase you!
Fullback	Step forward with play-side foot & make proximity fake with QB. Make pocket, Sell your fake hard & try to get tackled	Sell fake through the line, run into the playside B gap & block first ugly jersey.
Halfback	<u>FSH:</u> Block down or hook play-side DE. He cannot cross your face either way	<u>BSH:</u> Lead step to far sideline, pocket & receive ball from QB. Read FSG’s block & keep ball layered until you know your going to score

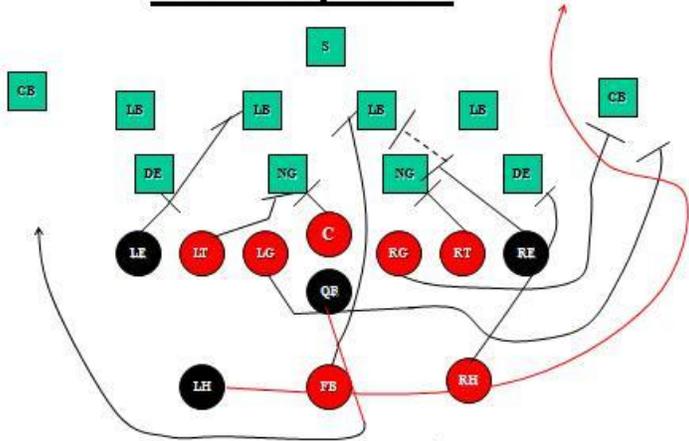
28 Sweep vs. 5-2

28 Sweep vs. 4-4

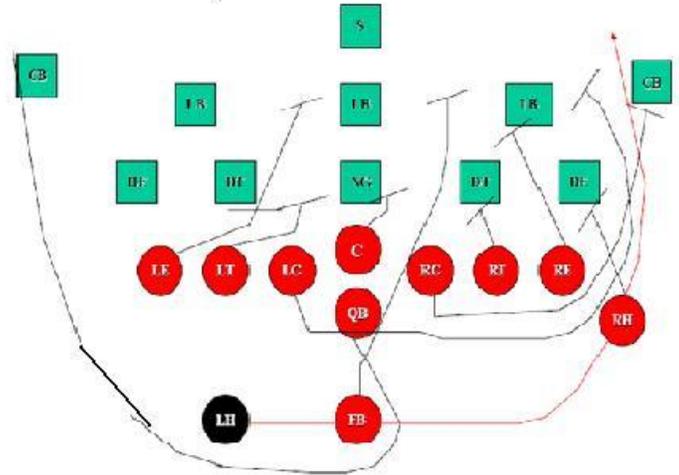


By the use of motions and shifts, it is possible to run 47/28 sweep from more than a tight-end/ wing sets, below you will find some different formations to cause the defense stress while maintaining consistency with the Power T's blocking system:

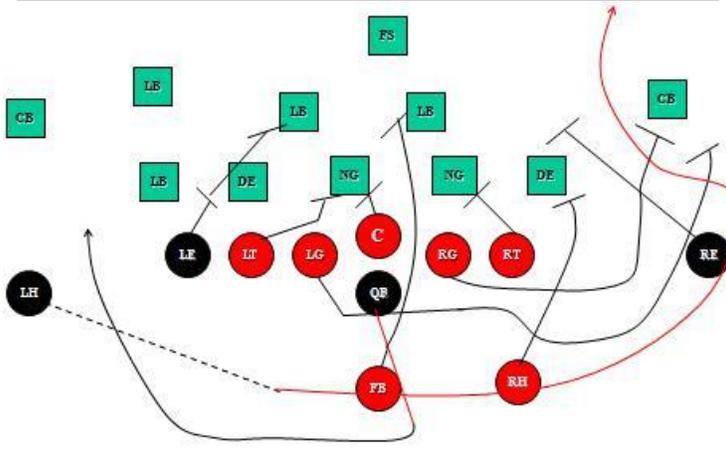
T 28 Sweep vs. 4-4



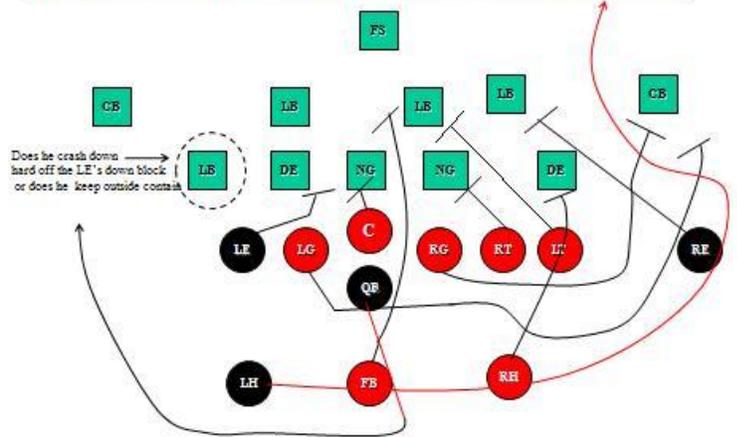
Wing Right 28 Sweep vs. 5-3



Pro Left Zip 28 SWEEP VS. 4-4 DEFENSE



Jumbo Right 28 Sweep VS. Double Eagle



I hope you have enjoyed reading this article as much as I enjoyed writing it. The plays I have written about are considered the "core" of the Power T offense. There are many plays I did not include in this article that successful T coaches do use in their offense but I wanted to write this article with the intention of describing the basics of the offense. If you would like to learn more about the Power T offense, I suggest you check out the sources I used in developing this article. Thank you for taking the time to read this and if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, feel free to contact me.

References:

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