

The Triple Screen: Using Characteristics of a Quality Spread Defense to Create Offensive Opportunities



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It started with a sophomore defensive end on the scout team during the 2007 spring practice. When this inexperienced defender was able to blow up our jailbreak screen because he recognized the tackle was leaving to block the perimeter, it was another sign that we needed to address the fact that defensive teams have improved in defending the spread and screen game. Only four years earlier, our jailbreak screen, at times, had easily become a big play. Now, everyone was catching on to the movement of the linemen, inside receivers, etc.

We knew we had to come up with a way to destroy the defense's ability to read and react so well to our screen game. That same spring, we visited the clinic at the University of Kentucky. In 2006, the UK staff had been very effective in using their screen package. At their clinic, Joker Phillips talked about their screens with diagrams and videos. That clinic was the beginning of the triple screen. We took ideas from the Kentucky staff, Coach John Schlarman (then the head coach at Newport H.S., now the offensive line coach at Troy University), and the blocking structure John Arn had brought to our program from Morehead State University. We were able to mesh those ideas into our triple screen. Every component was borrowed or stolen. But, to our knowledge, the total package had never been combined into one play or concept. Double screens were common, but a triple screen was an entirely different story.

The concept behind the play is pretty simple. In one play, we wanted to be able to attack the left, right and middle of the defense. We wanted to create a kick-off return type of play with an athlete car-

rying the ball with blockers in space. Nothing about the play indicates which way the ball will go.

The best formation to begin with the triple screen is the 2 x 2 set from the shotgun. We use this formation frequently so it made it an even better fit for us.

The responsibilities are as follows for **both the left and right side:**

No. 1 Wide Receiver: Drive up field for two steps. Plant outside foot, and return through the feet of the No. 2 receiver.

No. 2 Wide Receiver: Drive up field for two or three steps. Plant inside foot and drive flat to the corner to block him.

Offensive Tackle: Pass set two steps for a 1001, 1002 count, and release to an alley which would take you through an outside linebacker and to the corner. Get a piece of the defender rushing so that he cannot get to the quarterback before he makes his throw.

Offensive Guard: Pass set two steps for a 1001, 1002 count, and release to an alley which would take you through an inside linebacker and to a Cover 2 safety. Get a piece of the defender rushing so that he cannot get to the quarterback before he makes his throw.

Center: Pass set two steps for a 1001, 1002 count, and release down the middle of the field to block either the middle linebacker to a Cover 3 free safety. Get a piece of the defender rushing so that he cannot get to the quarterback before he makes his throw.

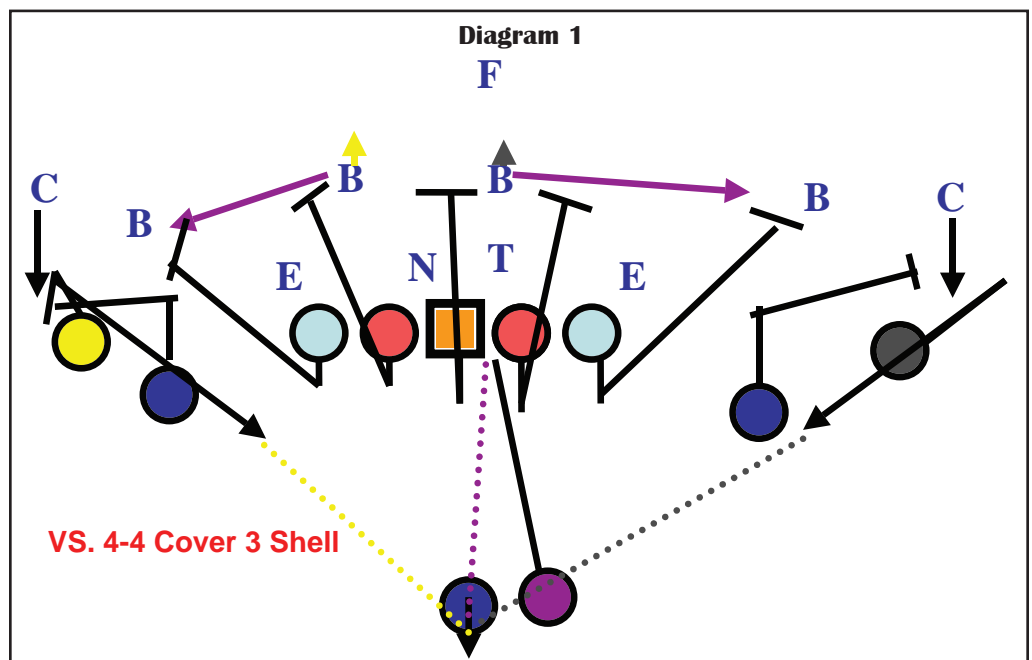
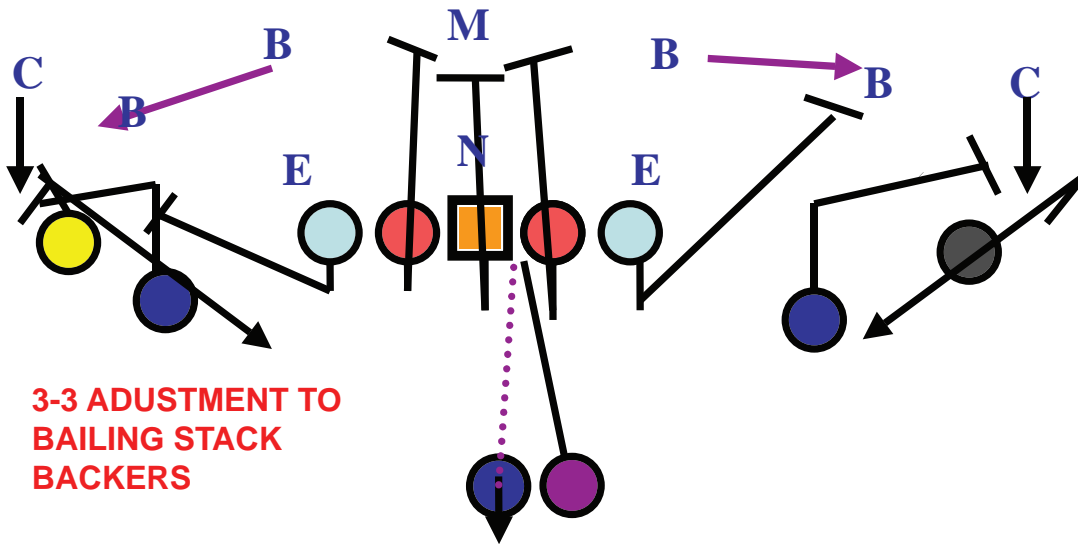


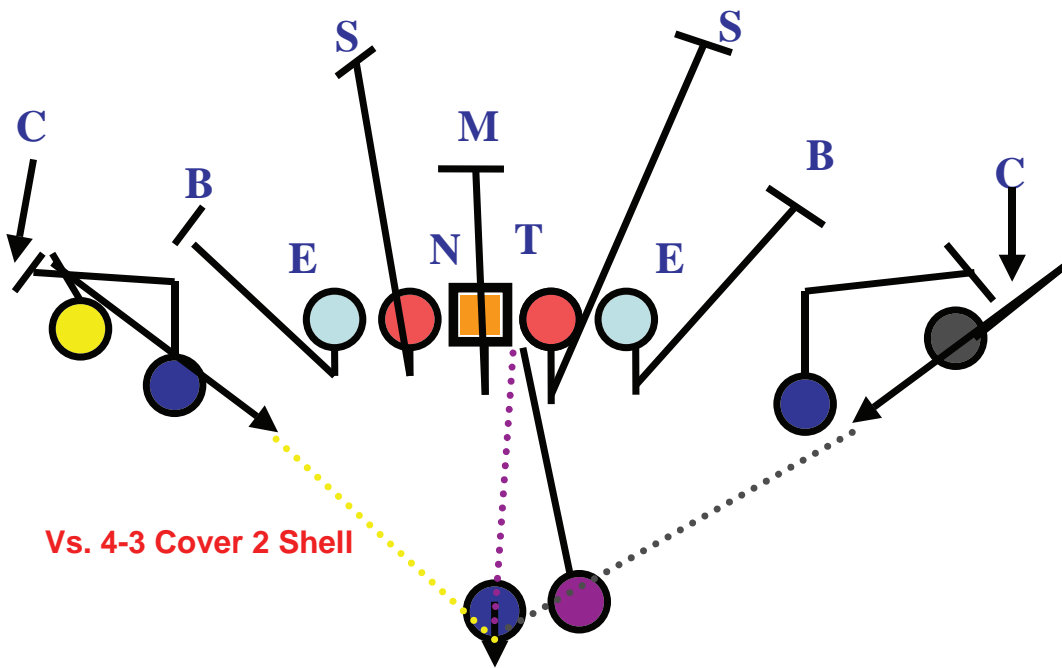
Diagram 2

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3-3 ADJUSTMENT TO BAILING STACK BACKERS

Diagram 3



Vs. 4-3 Cover 2 Shell

A few observations so far include:

1. The most frequent and best opportunity has been the throw to the runningback at this point. The edge players leave with the tackles, and the interior defenders are trying to get a rush.

2. Even if the linebackers hang, if you have quality offensive guards, the throw to the runningback can still be effective.

3. The triple screen has the potential to be a very effective tool against the popular and successful 3-3 stack defense. If the stack backers bail, your guards can double team the middle linebacker, and the opportunity for a big play presents itself. One advantage of the 3-3 is that it can get nine defenders (10 if you count the middle linebacker) to the perimeter in a hurry. Against the triple screen, that becomes an advantage to the offense.

4. Another option on the No. 1 wide receiver is to release outside to the sideline at a 45 degree angle for two steps and then re-trace his steps all the way back to the No. 2's feet. This way, our different screens don't all look the same – now maybe the corner thinks the wide receiver is releasing to run a fade or hit the sideline. We can get him to back up and set up the No. 2 or the tackle's block.

5. The depth of the No. 1 wide receiver is critical. His landmark must be at the No. 2 wide receiver's feet. By being too deep, it disrupts the timing of the play and by being too shallow, we risk the screen being thrown illegally and

any defender coming off has a better chance of making the play.

When the 3-3 defense became more prominent, and as defenses have caught up with the spread game, the thought has crossed my mind that maybe "the party is over" when it comes to spreading the field, scoring a bunch of points, etc. In building our program over the past 12 years, the spread game was a way for us to catch up with, compete, and win games against opponents that have been established much longer and have had quality programs for decades. One of our signature wins came on a night when we rushed for 26 yards. If teams were able to shut down our spread game, we would be in big trouble. We anticipate that the triple screen will be a major factor in allowing us to continue using our spread game with success.

Mason County H.S. Offensive Coordinator Chris Ullery assisted with the writing of this article.

Runningback: Step to the front side A gap as you would in pass protection. As you feel the pressure pass you, slide away from any defender and turn to face quarterback.

Quarterback: Take a three-step drop, looking down the field. Throw to the wide receiver on the side of the inside linebacker that chooses to hang in the middle. If both inside linebackers bail, throw the ball to the runningback in the middle.

This play has been great for destroying reads. Before the triple screen, the releasing linemen would take you to the ball. Now, the left tackle is releasing, but the ball could be in the middle of the field or on the right side of the formation. No longer could defenders count on running with the releasing lineman and be confident that they would reach the ball.

We are still learning about and experimenting with the triple screen.

