

I would like to thank Adam for asking me to write this article for Direct Snap. Adam asked me to write about the switch to 8 man football and our 8 man single wing offense. We run the spin series almost entirely with some direct snap and buck lateral series as well. My first exposure to the single wing offense was during a football theory class at the University of Northern Iowa. Coach John Aldrich was our guest speaker and I'll never forget going home after class and drawing up the plays to the disbelief of my roommates. Shortly after graduating from college I accepted a coaching and teaching job in Sigourney Iowa where I spent 4 years as an assistant with Bob Howard at Sigourney-Keota Iowa. After 4 years I moved to northern Iowa and accepted my first football head coaching job. I was taking over a program that had not won a game in 3 years (during my 4 years at Sigourney-Keota coach Howard had led the Savage Cobras to a 44-5 record and 1 state championship) with a group of seniors that had NEVER won a football game at any level of organized football dating back to 7th grade.

That first season we ended up with a 3-6 record on the year; finishing the season with 2 wins in a row and playing our best football. We ended the season scoring 70 points in our final game and the kids were sold on the offense. It was fun, unique and potent. We finished with 2890 yards rushing (300+ per game), and our TB ran for 355 yards in the final game on an extremely muddy field. To give a point of reference, the team had negative total yards in 2 games the prior year.

I knew that I wanted to run the single wing but I wasn't sure how things would translate to the 8 man game. I wanted to run the single wing for the following reasons, the same reasons that Bob Howard talks about in his single wing manual:

- 1- The most important reason to me was that the single wing was something that I whole heartedly believed in. I knew that there would be some grumbling from fans about the offense because it is not something that you see on TV on Saturdays and Sundays (that has changed with the University of Florida and the Miami Dolphins). I was absolute in my conviction that this was the offense that we were going to run. After spending 4 years with coach Howard I saw how the single wing gave teams fits and I was convinced that it was the offense that I wanted to run due to its flexibility, power and deception. I knew that we were going to run the full spin series because of the way it sets up blocks and causes confusion for the defense.
- 2- I wanted our football team to have a "fresh" start. I changed the jersey design, color, and painted the helmets to give our team a new identity. The most important change was attitude and the offense gave the kids a new attitude toward football. I wanted our kids to take pride in being the only 8 man team in the state that was running the single wing, one of only 3 teams in the entire state that ran the single wing at all. I knew that it would also force our opponents to prepare for something that they will only see once a year and would be hard to duplicate with a scout team, especially at the 8-man level.
- 3- I believe in shoulder blocking, double teams and trapping at the point of attack. We had linemen that moved well but didn't have the bulk to reach block and drive people off of the ball.
- 4- There is no limit to what we could do offensively, creativity was the key. I met with coach Howard after accepting the job and he helped me figure out our base plays; the trap, power, sweep and counter. We could run the same play from multiple formations and different play series. We had three backs that could run, pass, and catch from a variety of locations on any given play.

8-man football was relatively new to northern Iowa in 2004 so as soon as I took the HC job I was asked about the differences between 8-man and 11-man football quite often. Here are the differences:

- 1- The field is 40 yards wide and 80 yards long
- 2- 5 players must be on the LOS, any player on the end of the LOS is eligible along with the 3 backs
- 3- Players can wear any number, there are no eligibility rules associated with numbers
- 4- Kickoff from the 30 yard line
- 5- Ball spotted on the 15 after touchback

While there are some differences between 8 man and 11 man football, the game is the same; it comes down to the solid fundamentals of blocking and tackling. In my opinion, in 8 man football, there is no place to hide a weaker player and each mistake made on the field is magnified by the speed of the game and loss of 3 players.

We have modified coach Howard's pre-shift formations to the 8 man game in an effort to catch the defense out of position and hoping to create confusion. We feel that this enables us to create mismatches with our different formations.

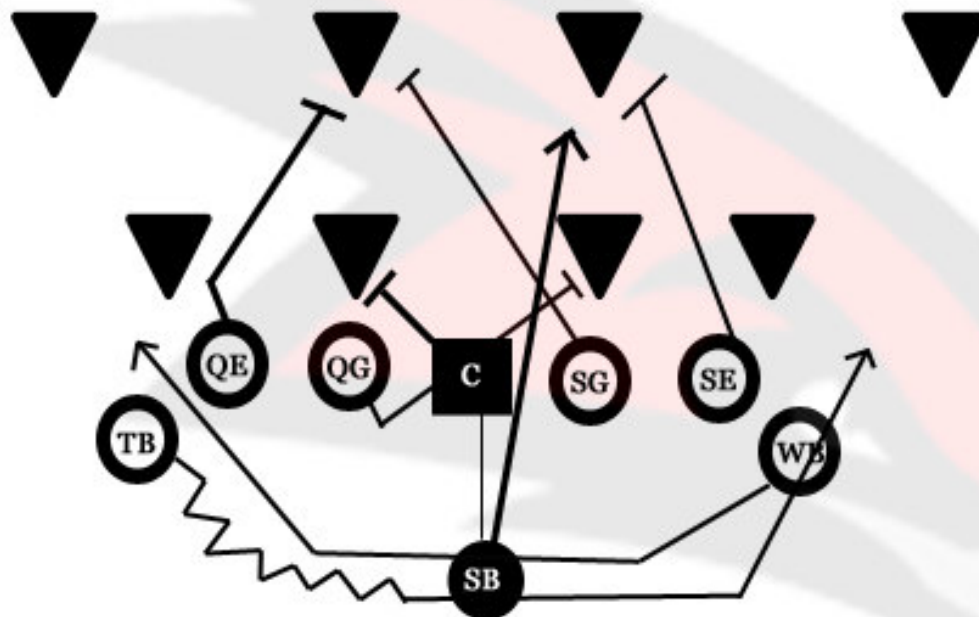
Our plays are called with the formation and then our three digit system. The first digit is who the ball is snapped to, the next digit is the play series and the third digit refers to the point of attack. An example of this would be "*Eagle Right 212*". We signal plays in through a series of hand signals. Our cadence is "Down...Go...Sethit" This is the same cadence that coach Howard uses. "Down" starts our pre-snap shift and allows our players to assemble the formation. "Go" sends a player in motion if we are motioning him; if there is no motion we often snap on "Go". "Sethit" is said as one word and will be used if we don't use "Go" to start the play.

I will describe our four base plays along with diagrams and some video.

This is the base play in our offense. We will run this play 10-15 times a game most nights. This play relies on good faking by the tailback and the wingback. We feel that these good fakes set up blocks and that is the key to our trap. We will not block either defensive end as long as the release outside of our offensive ends.

Formation: *Eagle Right*

212 Trap



WEST FORK FOOTBALL

Coaching Points

C – Block head up or away from the POA

SG – Block down and double with C if there is a NG, if there is a man in the 2 hole we block down, if there is no man in the gap or on the center he goes to the next level

SE – Block down to LB as long as the defensive end doesn't cross your face, widen split to take defensive end wider

QG – Trap the first man outside of the 2 hole, head in the hole and drive, it is an extremely short pull, must block inside out, center must get a push for QG to get position

QE – Block down to LB, do not let defensive end cross your face, widen split to take defensive end wider

TB – Motion in “Eagle” formation. Attack the near hip of the spinback, carry out good fake INTO the line of scrimmage, make eye contact with the defensive end and put a move on him without the ball, continue downfield and make a block for the spinback.

WB – Attack the near hip of the spinback, carry out good fake INTO the line of scrimmage, make eye contact with the defensive end and put a move on him without the ball, continue downfield and make a block for the spinback.

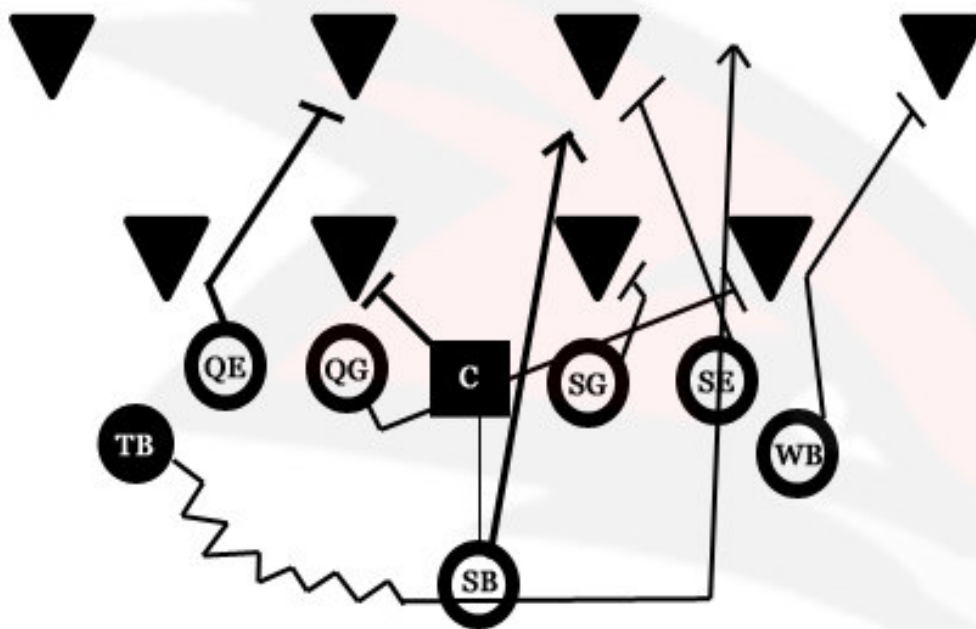
SB – We do not fake with the ball, the TB and WB will carry out their fakes causing the deception. The spinback must gain ground with his spin and attack the LOS inside the trap at the POA.

214

Depending on our team personnel this is our bread and butter play. We want to put the ball in our tailbacks hands as often as possible; he is usually our best ball carrier. This play will put the defense in conflict; because we run our tailback parallel to the LOS until he gets to the 4 hole. He should run flat, which gives the impression that he is running the sweep, until he gets to the 4 hole. This also sets up the QG block on the defensive end. He should explode up the 4 hole looking to cut inside out.

Formation: *Eagle Right*

214 Power



WEST FORK FOOTBALL

Coaching Points

C – Block head up or away from the POA

SG – Block head up or double with C up to the LB if there is a nobody head up or in the 2 gap, toughest block, must be able to take DT by himself

SE – Can double team with SG if DT is in gap or an outstanding player, double to LB, widen split to take defensive end wider

QG – Trap the first man outside of the 4 hole, head in the hole and drive, must block inside out, offensive line must get a push for QG to get position

QE – Block down to LB, do not let defensive end cross your face, widen split to take defensive end wider

TB – Motion in “Eagle” formation. Attack the near hip of the spinback, must make the play look like a sweep to set up QG block, run parallel to the LOS until he reaches 4 hole and then cuts vertically

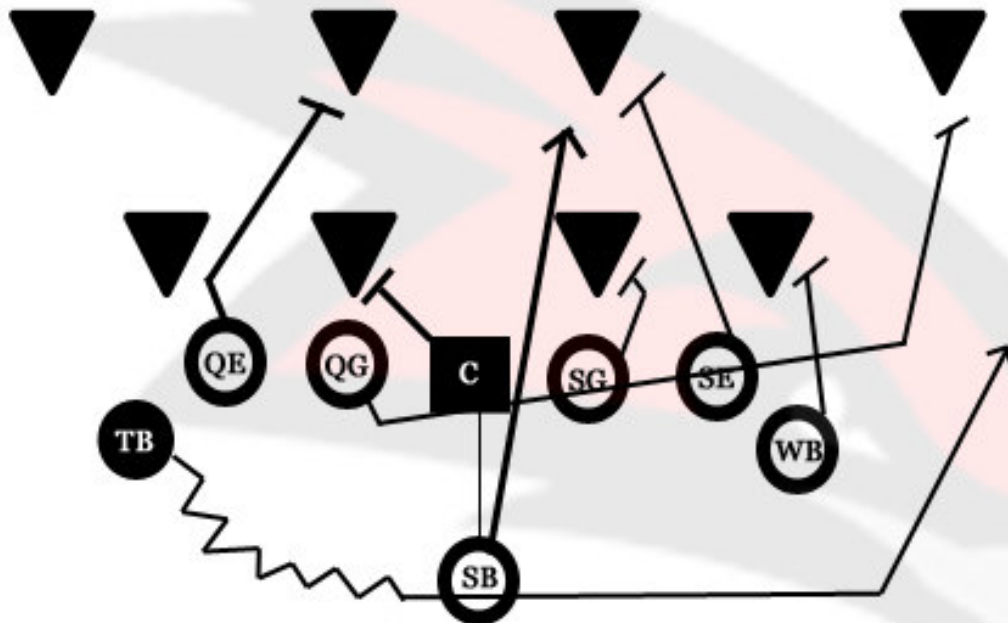
WB – Influence block on the defensive end and release to the corner, this influence will set up the QG block

SB – We do not fake with the ball, the SB must attack the LOS through the 2 hole, if he isn’t tackled he will be a downfield blocker for the TB

This is our sweep play. This play works hand in hand with our 214 power play causing conflict for the defensive end, linebackers and corner. We want to seal the end and let our TB get outside and go with a lead blocker. The TB needs to be patient and let the QG throw his block on the corner outrunning the block.

Formation: *Eagle Right*

216 Sweep



WEST FORK FOOTBALL

Coaching Points

C – Block head up or away from the POA

SG – Block head up or double with C to the LB if there is a nobody head up or in the 2 hole, toughest block, must be able to take DT by himself,

SE – Can double team with SG if DT is in gap or an outstanding player, double to LB, narrow split to take defensive end in setting up WB down block

QG – Trap the first man outside of the 6 hole, if there is nobody on the LOS QB will lead up to the corner looking inside out, offensive line must get a push for QG to get position

QE – Block down to LB, do not let defensive end cross your face, widen split to take defensive end wider

TB – Motion in “Eagle” formation. Attack the near hip of the spinback, must run parallel to the LOS to set up QG block, race to the sideline making sure not to overrun the QG block

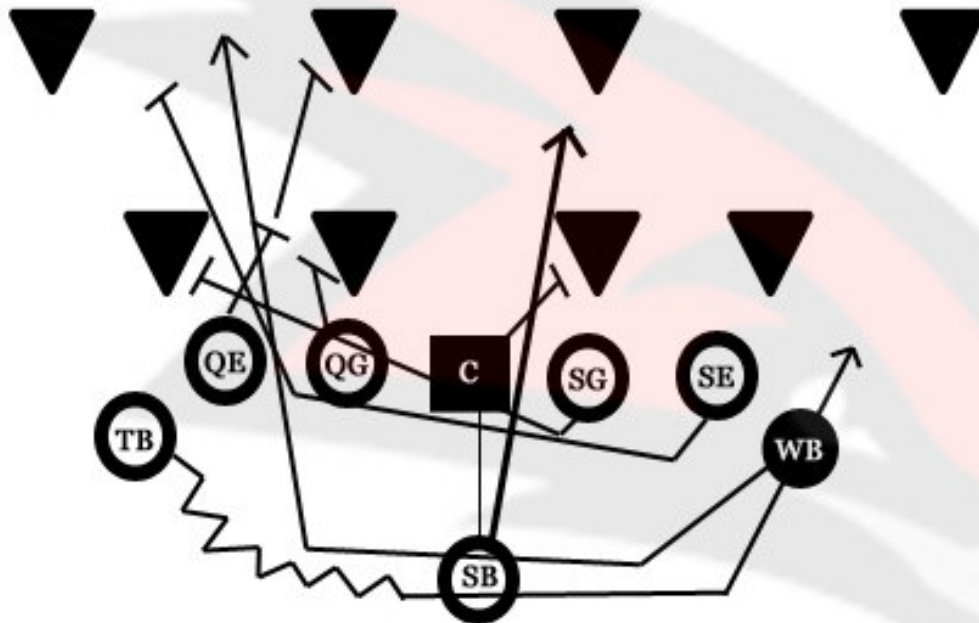
WB – Block down on the defensive end, WB is in the free blocking zone so he can cut, if he needs help we will adjust and double up to the LB with the SE

SB – We do not fake with the ball, the SB must attack the LOS through the 2 hole, if he isn't tackled he will be a downfield blocker for the TB

This is our “big hitter” play. This play has been very good to us providing many long gains. The biggest problem that we run in to is having a wingback that wants to run too wide and overrun the kick out block. The wingback must run this play inside and then cut out. Too often wingbacks try and run this play outside and then cut into the heart of the defense.

Formation: *Eagle Right*

213 Counter



Coaching Points

C – Block head up or away from the POA

SG – Pull and trap the first man outside of the 3 hole. Must work head in the hole and be able to adjust to depth of defensive end. SG must be able to adjust to a boxing or rush end.

SE – Follow SG and cut off of his block picking up the next off colored jersey.

QG – Block head up or down. If there is a man head up on him he is the most dangerous man. Must take a good reach step and call for a double team if he can't handle the DT by himself. If there is nobody head up he must double with the center up to the ILB.

QE – Block down to LB. If the defensive end crosses your face you can wash him down turning the play into a sweep, widen split to take defensive end wider. If the QG needs help he will double up to the LB.

TB – Motion in “Eagle” formation. Attack the near hip of the spinback, must run parallel to the LOS and run the power route. Make eye contact on the DE and put a move on him. Must fake in to the LOS. If he is not tackled he should look to make a block downfield.

WB – Attack the nearside hip of the SB running parallel to the LOS. Plant and cut up the 3 hole setting up blocks for the SG and the SE. Must stay inside the blocks and run the play inside out.

SB – We do not fake with the ball, the SB must attack the LOS through the 2 hole, if he isn't tackled he will be a downfield blocker for the TB

If you have any questions feel free to contact me at:
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8 Man Single Wing Formations

(All Formations Can Be Flipped To Left)

<h2>Eagle Right</h2>	<h2>Ram</h2>
<p>Points of Attack</p> <p>Diagram of Eagle Right formation. The center (C) is at the top. To its left are the Quarterback (QE) and Quarter Guard (QG). To its right are the Strong Guard (SG) and Strong End (SE). Below the center is the Sub (SB). On the far left is the Tight Back (TB) and on the far right is the Weak Back (WB). Points of attack are numbered 1 through 6 above the players.</p>	<p>Line Splits</p> <p>Diagram of Ram formation. The center (C) is at the top. To its left are the Quarterback (QE) and Quarter Guard (QG). To its right are the Strong Guard (SG) and Strong End (SE). Below the center are the Tight Back (TB) and Sub (SB). To the right of the Strong End is the Weak Back (WB). Line splits are indicated: 1-2' between QE and QG, 12" between QG and C, 12" between C and SG, and 1-2' between SG and SE. A 1 Yard split is shown between SE and WB. A 3 1/2 Yards split is shown between TB and SB. A 1 Yard split is shown between SB and WB.</p>
<h2>Beast Right</h2>	<h2>Beast Right Out</h2>
<p>Diagram of Beast Right formation. The center (C) is at the top. To its left are the Quarterback (QE) and Quarter Guard (QG). To its right are the Strong Guard (SG) and Strong End (SE). Below the center is the Sub (SB). To the right of the Strong End are the Tight Back (TB) and Weak Back (WB).</p>	<p>Diagram of Beast Right Out formation. The center (C) is at the top. To its left are the Quarterback (QE) and Quarter Guard (QG). To its right are the Strong Guard (SG) and Strong End (SE). Below the center is the Sub (SB). To the right of the Strong End are the Weak Back (WB) and Tight Back (TB).</p>
<h2>Hammer Right</h2>	<h2>Hammer Right Opposite</h2>
<p>Diagram of Hammer Right formation. The center (C) is at the top. To its left is the Quarterback (QE). To its right are the Quarter Guard (QG), Strong Guard (SG), and Strong End (SE). Below the center are the Tight Back (TB) and Sub (SB). To the right of the Strong End is the Weak Back (WB).</p>	<p>Diagram of Hammer Right Opposite formation. The center (C) is at the top. To its left is the Quarterback (QE). To its right are the Quarter Guard (QG), Strong Guard (SG), and Strong End (SE). Below the center is the Sub (SB). To the left of the Quarterback is the Weak Back (WB). To the right of the Quarterback is the Tight Back (TB).</p>
<h2>Rhino</h2>	<h2>A Right</h2>
<p>Diagram of Rhino formation. The center (C) is at the top. To its left are the Quarterback (QE) and Quarter Guard (QG). To its right are the Strong Guard (SG) and Strong End (SE). Below the center is the Sub (SB). To the right of the Strong End are the Weak Back (WB) and Tight Back (TB).</p>	<p>Diagram of A Right formation. The center (C) is at the top. To its left are the Quarterback (QE) and Quarter Guard (QG). To its right are the Strong Guard (SG) and Strong End (SE). Below the center are the Weak Back (WB) and Tight Back (TB). Below the Tight Back is the Sub (SB).</p>