GENERAL

split back veer offense playbook

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Mastering the Split Back Veer: A Complete Playbook Guide

In the world of college and high school football, the split back veer has long been celebrated as one of the most dynamic and effective run schemes. It blends misdirection, speed, and disciplined execution to keep defenses guessing and create big yardage opportunities. Whether you're a head coach looking to add a fresh weapon to your offensive arsenal, a graduate assistant compiling a playbook, or a player eager to understand the nuances of this classic attack, this article will walk you through every aspect of the split back veer offense playbook. From basic concepts and player responsibilities to advanced variations and real world examples, you'll gain the knowledge needed to implement and dominate with this timeless strategy.

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What Is the Split Back Veer?

The split back veer is a type of option offense that uses a split back formation—two backs lined up behind the quarterback, slightly offset from each other. The quarterback, often a dual talent athlete, reads the defensive end or linebacker on the play's initial snap, then decides whether to hand the ball to the trailing back, keep it himself, or, in some variations, hand it to the sliding back. The play's core is the "veer" or "split" between the two backs, creating a split back angle that forces the defense to make a split-second decision.

Unlike a pure run and gun approach, the veer relies on the quarterback's decision making and the backs' speed. It is particularly effective against over aggressive defenses that try to collapse the pocket, as the quarterback can exploit the open space created by the defense's pursuit.

Why Use a Veer Offense?

There are several compelling reasons to incorporate a split back veer offense playbook into your program:

- Versatility – The veer can be run from a variety of formations, including shotgun, I formation, and even pistol, allowing a coach to adapt to personnel and opponent strengths.
- Speed of Execution – The play is relatively simple to teach; the decision tree for the quarterback is clear: read

the defender, then either hand off or keep.

- Exploits Defensive Tendencies – Over aggressive defenders who bite on the first read create space for the quarterback or trailing back to run deep.
- Low Talent Ceiling – While athleticism helps, the veer can be successful with players who are disciplined and have good fundamentals.
- Game Changing Momentum – A well executed veer can lead to explosive plays that swing momentum and energize the crowd.

Key Components of the Split Back Veer Playbook

To build a robust split back veer offense playbook, focus on these foundational elements:

1. Formation Flexibility – The playbook should include a range of formations that support the veer, such as the traditional split back, I formation, pistol, and shotgun with a split back.
2. Read Decision Tree – A clear, step by step decision tree for the quarterback, usually centered around the defensive end or linebacker's reaction.
3. Blocking Schemes – Inside and outside blocks, stunts, and defensive line assignments that create lanes for the back or the quarterback.
4. Motion & Timing – Pre snap motion to disguise intentions, and precise timing between the quarterback and backs.
5. Defensive Coverage Maps – Understanding how different defensive fronts and coverages affect the veer's execution.

Player Roles and Responsibilities

Each position in the split back veer offense has a specific role that must be mastered for the playbook to function effectively.

Quarterback

- Read the defensive end or outside linebacker on the snap.
- Decide within 0.5–1 second whether to hand off or keep.
- Maintain a balanced stance to allow for a quick handoff or a quick pass if needed.
- Communicate with the offensive line about stunts or blocks.

Trailing Back (Trailing Option)

- Stay behind the quarterback, ready to receive a handoff.
- Run a hard cut or a straight away run depending on the defense's reaction.
- Be disciplined in the cutback lane to avoid penalties.

Sliding Back (Sliding Option)

- Position slightly behind the trailing back to provide a safety net.
- Receive a handoff if the defense over commits to the trailing back.
- Run a quick slant or a short route to create a short yardage option.

Offensive Line

- Execute inside and outside blocks with precision.
- Read the defensive front to anticipate stunts or blitzes.
- Maintain a gap for the trailing back to cut through.

Wide Receivers & Tight Ends

- Run precise routes to keep the defense honest.
- Serve as pass blockers for the veer's short pass or play action variations.
- Provide a safety valve for the quarterback if the defense collapses.

Basic Receive Calls

Below is a foundational set of receive calls that will serve as the backbone of your split back veer offense playbook. These calls can be adapted and expanded upon based on personnel and opponent tendencies.

Formation: Split Back I Formation

- Call: "Base Veer" – Standard veer with a trailing back and sliding back.
- Call: "Veer Pass" – Option to run or pass after the read.
- Call: "Inside Veer" – Emphasize a inside cut after the handoff.
- Call: "Outside Veer" – Target the edge for a long run.

Formation: Split Back Shotgun

- Call: "Shotgun Veer" – Quarterback in shotgun, trailing back behind.
- Call: "Shotgun Pull" – The trailing back pulls to the outside for a sweep.
- Call: "Shotgun Play Action" – Fake a run to set up a pass.

Formation: Pistol

- Call: "Pistol Veer" – Quarterback and trailing back in pistol, sliding back ready.
- Call: "Pistol Quick" – Quick handoff to the sliding back.

Advanced Variations & Mix ups

Once you have the basics down, you can incorporate advanced variations that keep defenses off balance. These variations often involve motion, stunts, and hybrid runs.

Motion Based Variations

- Pre Snap Motion to the Edge – Moves a wide receiver or tight end to the edge to create a mismatch.
- Back Motion – The trailing back moves to the opposite side to disguise the run direction.

Stunt Based Variations

- Line Stunt Veer – Offensive linemen swap blocks to create a seam for the trailing back.
- Defensive Stunt Veer – Anticipate a defensive line stunt and adjust the read accordingly.

Hybrid Runs

- Halfback Pass Option – The trailing back throws a quick pass to a wide receiver if the defense over commits.
- Inside Outside Switch – The quarterback reads the inside defender and switches the run to the outside if the inside defender collapses.

Play Action Variations

- Play Action Veer – Fake a run to draw linebackers in, then pass to a wide receiver.
- Play Action Inside – The quarterback fakes the veer, then hands the ball to the sliding back for a quick run.

Executing the Veer: Timing & Mechanics

Execution is where the difference between a successful and a failed veer play lies. Below are key timing and mechanical aspects that must be drilled in practice.

Quarterback Timing

- The quarterback's snap timing should be 1.5–2 seconds to allow for a clean read.
- Hand off timing must be precise; a delayed handoff can give defenders a chance to react.
- When keeping the ball, the quarterback should have a quick transition to a pass or a quick run.

Back Cut Timing

- The trailing back must commit to the cut immediately after the handoff.
- Cut depth is critical: too shallow, and the defense will stop; too deep, and the back may get tackled on the outside.
- The sliding back's cut is usually shorter and more controlled.

Offensive Line Timing

- The line must block on the first second of the play to create a gap.
- They should be ready to adjust to a line stunt or a defensive blitz.
- Proper hand placement on the defender's shoulder or rib cage helps maintain the block.

Defensive Front Read

- The quarterback reads the defensive end or outside linebacker's reaction.
- Defensive fronts such as 4 3, 3 4, or Nickel can influence the read and the decision to hand off or keep.

Practice Drills to Master the Veer

Drills are essential for building muscle memory and understanding the nuances of the split back veer offense playbook. Below are drills

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