

The TEXAS Concept in the West Coast Offense

by M. Soliman and J. Hillebrand

In the San Francisco and the Green Bay Offense, the main goal, philosophically is to control and move the ball on a consistent and orderly basis using the forward pass in an intelligent manner. By placing an emphasis on ball control, it is then required for such passes to be very reliable regardless of the variation of defensive coverage. In this offense the pass exemplifies the ball control high percentage philosophy such as that of a running offense. The west coast offense uses the pass as it would a run, making it a high percentage offense. This offense can execute against any defense if you just be patient, and pay attention to the details in the coaching of this offense. One of the main concepts in this offense was the Texas concept. This concept is a delay that takes advantage of drops and holes within the hash.

This concept was made famous by the Green Bay Packers and Mike Holmgren. Holmgren and the Packers used this play exclusively against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers throughout Holmgren's stay with the Packers. The reason this play was made famous vs the Buccaneers was because of the coverages they ran, cover two and cover four. These are the main coverages for which this concept was developed. But it was successful against the Buccaneers for another reason, the use of their middle linebacker. The Buccaneers defense was mainly cover two, but with a twist. From film study the middle linebacker would drop right away to a depth of about 15 - 17yds deep, essentially playing a "robber" position. The other linebackers had the usual hook zone to defend, leaving the middle open for the Packers. Holmgren found this hole and exploited it with precision, gaining five to seven yards a pop when running 'Texas'.

Basic Rules of 'Texas':

Playside:

#1 Receiver (usually Z) - Run a hook pivoting at 12yds

#2 Receiver (usually Y or slot WR) - Take an inside release run a post/seam route breaking at 10yds

#3 Receiver (usually FB) - Run a Texas route driving to a point 3yds outside the tackle and breaking inside at a 45 degree angle

Backside:

#1 Receiver (usually X) - Run a go route clearing the outside

#2 Receiver can run a variety of routes depending on the Pass Protection scheme, (usually in "22/23" Protection scheme is a base BOB Big-On-Big with a Scat Back (the playside #3 Texas) the opposite back (assuming its split back) will read the Will and then release on a swing.) *Note; Bill Walsh had the HB curl up on a hook.

Cover 2:

In cover two supposedly, a strength of the coverage is delaying the receivers and funneling them inside to the waiting linebackers and safeties. This coverage is one that Bill Walsh thought of his chief zone opponent, and one he worked long and hard against to defeat. The main rules of cover two are the safeties align on or outside their hash and have any deep responsibility to that side. Cornerbacks will play a hard press technique with their eyes peaking into the backfield, they have flat responsibility. The main job though of the cornerback is to delay the receiver coming off the line, and force him to the inside. Outside linebackers have hook responsibility, that

is they open to the outside and drop at a 45 degree angle taking away the hook pass. The middle linebacker drops back to a depth of about ten to twelve yards and has the middle of the field taking away any cross by the tight end or 'Z' receiver.

Cover 4:

The pre-snap alignment of cover two and four look almost exactly alike which make it tough to read pre - snap. But to read it pre -snap a key is the alignment of the free safety, is he on or outside the hash? If he is outside then you can read it as cover two, if he is on the hash you can read it as cover four. To get a read on it post - snap the quarterback will key the strong side linebacker and his movement. If he moves horizontal its cover four, if he opens his hips outside its cover two. Now in cover four the coverage responsibilities are different, but look like cover two. The FS is now reading the #2 receiver to his side, if #2 goes flat then he doubles the #1 receiver. If #2 comes vertical then he has #2 man to man. The same is for the SS if #2 goes vertical he has him man to man, he crosses over the middle he lets him go. The outside linebackers have flat responsibility and rush to the flat at the snap. The middle linebacker walls off anything in the middle, essentially he is a "lurk" defender on the quarterback. The corner backs have their receivers man to man.

Quarterback read:

The quarterback's read on Texas is the middle linebacker, he goes opposite of his movement. Or key his shoulders. If the middle linebackers shoulders open then the quarterback should look for the fullback. If the middle linebacker drops straight back leaving his shoulders square then the quarterback should look for the tight end. The quarterback's drop is five big steps and hold. The quarterback's progression is F, Y, Z, H.

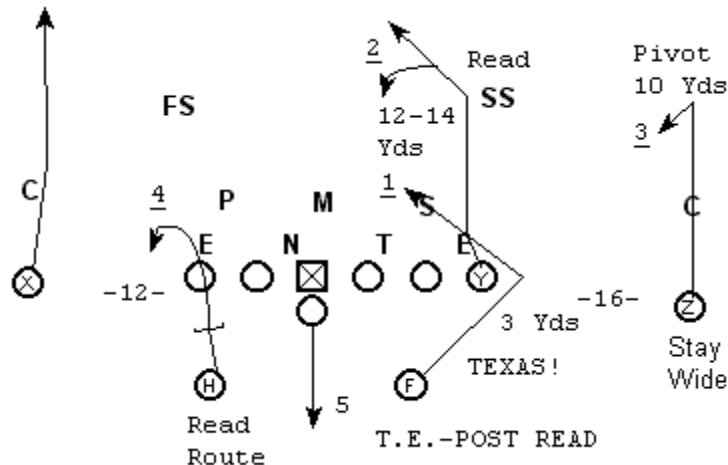
Attacking cover 2: Red Right 22 Texas

This concept wants to stretch the zone of the linebackers in this coverage, and force "dead" areas for the receivers to run to. The main formation of this play is split back (Red) set. Now in a Red Right (TE aligned right) v. a 43 cover two concept, this play is tough to stop.

Lets go through the routes, the Z runs a In route at ten yards, and on this pattern the In route must be run with great precision. Against a Cloud (Rolled) corner, he releases into the defender's technique, pushes off, and runs at a slight angle to his depth and turns in. If he encounters a rolled corner, he must think its zone so when he makes his In cut, he must find the seam in the zone and get in the view of the quarterbacks's eyes with maneuvering. The tight end takes an inside release off the LOS and runs a 10yd post / seam route just inside the safety over him. But the main coaching point is you want him to release clearly, he can't be held up at the LOS! As the tight end pushes vertically up field he wants to get great arm drive and threaten the strong safety deep. Key point for the tight end is to get his head around quickly to the quarterback. He is on a seam route and should be ready to get the ball quickly in stride for a big play. The fullback runs the Texas route wanting to get underneath the linebackers drops. Backside the halfback will read the weak side linebacker and then release on a swing, and the X is clearing out with a go route. Bill Walsh in his version of "Texas" had the HB curl up on a hook route, I believe he did this for two reasons:

- a) Keep the rules simple as in "HB Curl" the FB would run a hook and the HB would run the angle in route.
- b) To keep the weak side linebacker (plugger) from coming back inside.

Diagram 1



RED RIGHT 22 TEXAS

Attacking cover 2: Red Right Open Slot 22 Texas

The next formation 'Texas' is effective from is 'Red Right Open Slot.' The only new adjustment in this formation is that now the tight end is split outside at a distance of five to six yards from the tackle. This gives the offense an advantage if you have a big tight end that be a force over the middle, and become a big target. Second it makes the quarterback read a little easier by opening up the "dead" zones in the defense. And third this formation is a essential part of other plays in the offense such as we can run the smash concept, or sprint right option from this set. The new coaching point with this formation is the release of the tight end. Since now he is in a split position he has a little more room to maneuver, but the defense has more room to bump him. Coaching point here, the tight end must not be held up at the line of scrimmage he is a **MUST GET OFF!** You still want him to take an inside release depending on what the linebacker does over him. If he is playing press then the tight end can use anymore he wants to get by him, shuffle, rip, swim, or just drive at the defender. If he drives at the defender he should take a slight angle inside and rubbing off the linebackers inside shoulder. If the linebacker is playing off the tight end uses the same drive technique, he wants to get and inside release and rub on the linebackers inside shoulder. Once he clears the linebackers depth he needs to get his head around quickly to the quarterback. As stated before this formation opens up the "dead" areas in the zone, creating passing lanes for the quarterback. Since the tight end is split at five to six yards we have created a natural lane for the quarterback to throw too, between the middle linebacker (MIKE) and strong side linebacker (SAM).

Quarterback read:

The quarterback read is still the middle or MIKE linebacker. Quarterback reads his shoulders and goes opposite of them. In the slot formation the quarterback's read gets a little easier and now he has a better throwing lane to the seam / post route. The quarterback when he sees the lane to the tight end needs to hitch up and fire the ball on rope through the window of the SAM and MIKE. The quarterback should never throw over a defender, for risk of an interception or deflection.

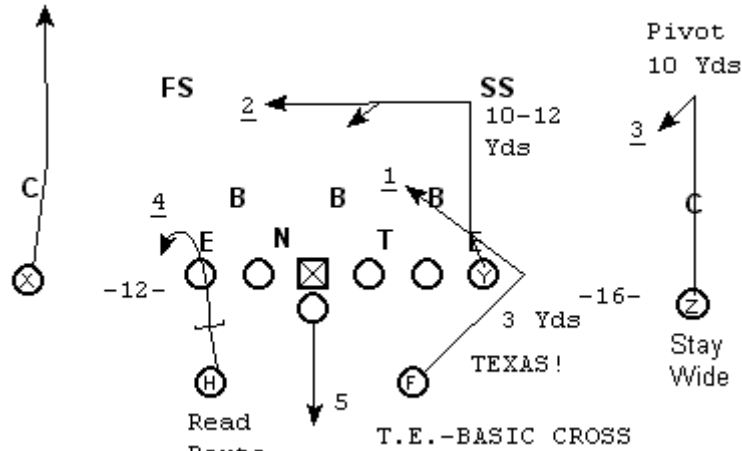
(Advanced) Coaching Point TE: Read middle of field (MOF); if open run a post route, or settle over the playside guard at a depth of 12 - 14 yards make yourself and big target; if closed run seam route and look for the ball quickly.

Attacking cover 4: Red Right Open Slot 22 Texas

Versus cover two 'Red Right Open Slot' is another way to get a good match up against the defense. You can get a mismatch with a linebacker pressing your tight end. And you can get a good mismatch on the strong safety (SS) because he is now playing the tight end man for man and is in chase mode. The key for the tight end is again is his release, he must get off the LOS!

The QB still has the same read the MIKE linebacker, but what makes this play so successful is its use vs cover four. This play picks on the MLBer as to what he is going to do, will he sit for the FB or will he drop and take away the cross? Whatever the MLBer does he is wrong.

Diagram 3



RED RIGHT 22 TEXAS 'Y' CROSS

Strong Right Z Close 2 Jet Z Drive Texas / Brown Right Slot (A Right) 2 Jet Z Drive Texas:

While the basic "Texas" Package with its multiple front side options presents answers against nearly all standard coverages, an excellent adjustment to this base play is to infuse another highly effective west coast concept: the "Drive". In a drive concept, we are allowing the 'X' or 'Z' receiver on either side to be aided by a "pick" by the TE for the purposes of cleanly and clearly driving across the field, unhindered by the coverage man and driving into an area while the linebackers are chasing into the opposite area via the backfield flow and protection scheme. Similarly, the opposite #1 receiver runs either a Post or Fly pattern to clear out the underneath area and attempt to influence the safety to his route and not the underneath dragging pattern. Against Man Under defenses, this concept is extremely effective.

While there are multiple variations to both the Texas and Drive plays, for the purposes of this treatise, I will focus on Flanker Drive Texas. These plays, in the opinion of this author, are probably among the handful of best ball control passes I have ever seen. In both an X Drive and Flanker Drive Texas, we are incorporating a delay route (Texas) to attack zone coverage drops within the hashes, and an TE Option route to take advantages of the weakness outside the hashes. Against man under we go with the drive pattern off the pick. As a secondary route against Man the Delay is also effective.

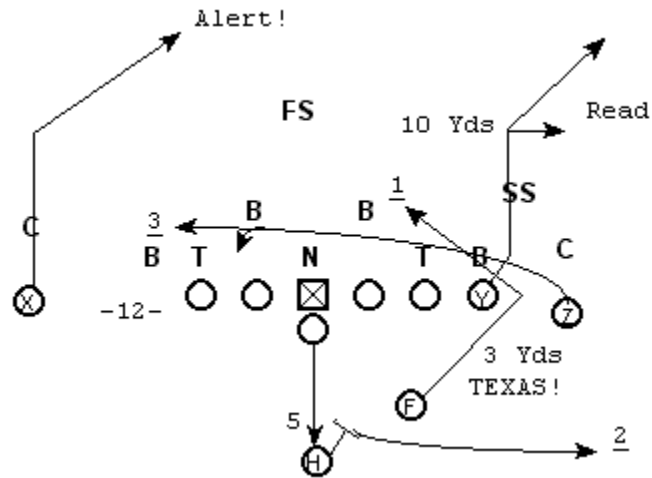
Let us look at Flanker (Z) Drive Texas. A common formation used for this effective pass play is Strong Right, (Offset 1 to the Strong Side). Usually we would use a Z Short motion (not across the field, but rather to a point about 2 feet by 2 feet outside of the Tight End. On the Snap the Tight End, which would be the number two receiver on the play side in this play takes an Outside release. This is very important because it allows for the Z to slip under the outside release, and cross through across the field without having to beat, or stem the defender at the LOS in any way. The Z drives across the field at a depth of 4-6 yards and stays under the Linebackers. If the Linebackers are chasing laterally to the Strong side, the Z continues dragging across and begins to look back at the Quarterback. If the linebackers drop into Zone, the Z finds the open area just inside the numbers and "sits down" pivoting and showing the QB his numbers. The TE, after taking his outside release (and aiming his release directly at a 45 degree angle thus blocking the Corner from chasing), finds and bursts up the hash giving his defender the impression of a post.

At 10 yards, the TE reads the area between the hashes, if the Middle is Open, he presses inside then cuts back and out to a Corner Route, driving into the open grass outside of the hash at a 45 degree angle after creating the initial separation from his move. Usually this situation would mean the coverage would be either a two deep man under coverage, a man-blitz coverage, or a two deep zone coverage. The Corner route is effective against all three. If the Middle is closed, however, the TE curls to the outside of the hash and finds the underneath seam. Usually, in Middle Closed situations, the defense is playing a version of the three deep four under zone. The FB, who is offset in this formation, runs the Texas Delay route aiming for an area outside of the TE of three yards at the maximum, as if to sell the Flat. Similarly, it is imperative for the FB run his initial shoot pattern past the crossing Z receiver in order to get the Middle linebacker to be chasing strongly in a lateral direction. At a depth of three yards outside the TE, while selling the Shoot/Flat, the FB should plant for one count and then cut inside to the open area. Against Zone, the FB after planting and reading hits the window, against man, he accelerates back inside the hash to the open area vacated by the linebackers chasing laterally in the strong side direction. The HB, who is directly behind the quarterback, plays an important role in the protection of this play. In this play we use 2 Jet protection, (A Six man blocking scheme that uses slide protection opposite the strong side). While the Texas route runner, (the FB in this case) has scat, or no pass block responsibility, the HB checks from MIKE to SAM and then releases on a swing route strong side. Thus, the WHIP and MIKE backers are both chasing strong side on the Delay (appearance of an initial shoot) and the check-swing route. The X in this play runs a Post at 10 yards, to which he must attack the FS and bar him from jumping on the Drive route. The X also clears out the Weak side corner and against a man-blitz, this Post serves the purpose of being a Safety blitz beater.

For the first two steps the QB looks straight down the field disguising his read as not to immediately tip off defenders and allow them to get an early jump on the ball. An added advantage of this "look-off" is that our read in this play, linebacker movement to middle of field allows the quarterback to both engage in a look off procedure as well as get the basic reads uninhibited of the linebacker lateral or vertical motion and safety rotation simultaneously because he does not have, a corner, or specific safety read (in some cases, with "Smash" passes for example, quarterbacks often turn and read a corner or slide their shoulders and projection to a 45 degree angle reading for example, exclusively SS or FS movement). The QB drop on this play is 5 BIG (5, step up and throw). The read is MIKE Linebacker to Middle of Field. If the linebackers chase strong side laterally, its man underneath and the Z driving across will be open for a big play. If the MIKE drops back weak(it is probably a version of three deep), however, just to be sure, whenever the MIKE is dropping back, read the middle. If the Middle is open, you have the Y Corner attacking the opening outside the hash between the Deep half safety and rolled corner, and you have the delay inside the hash attacking the window. Against a closed middle (three deep variation), you have the inside delay and the outside curl pattern by the Y attacking the seam between the Hook/Curl backer and Hook/Flat Safety. This is an excellent play and a great tag for the basic Texas play.

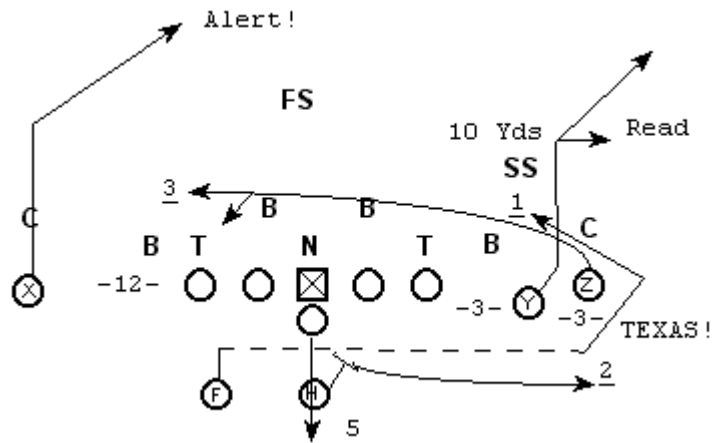
This Texas/ Drive variation can be run from a multitude of formations. For example, the Z receiver can be brought across in a slot formation and you can run an X Drive Texas utilizing the HB as the delaying player and the Y(who can be split wide) as the clearing out receiver with the Post. Similarly, the OLine scheme would be Slide Protection to the other side.

Diagram 4



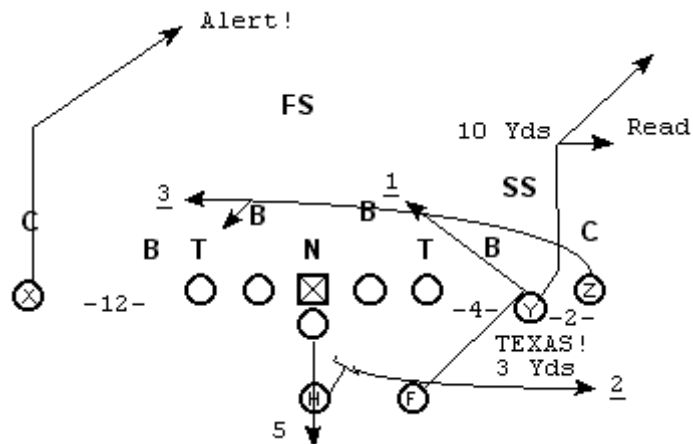
STRONG RIGHT Z CLOSE 2 JET 'Z' DRIVE TEXAS

Diagram 5



BROWN RIGHT SLOT 'A' RIGHT 2 JET 'Z' DRIVE TEXAS

Diagram 6



BLUE RIGHT SLOT 2 JET 'Z' DRIVE TEXAS

In sum, however, Texas as a concept, can be used in multiple ways allowing for adjustments like this to change and enhance the personality of an already effective base play. Using proven ballcontrol passing schemes, adding effective adjustments from other useful base passes, and accounting for multiple coverages are essential in creation of successful drives using the West Coast Offense.