

# **5 Man Pass Protection, With Routes That Mesh**

By Chuck Spagnoli

**It is a sincere pleasure to represent Lake Forest High School, and our football program. I would like to thank the Illinois Football Coaches Association for allowing me the opportunity to be here today. It is always a pleasure to get a chance to share ideas and discuss football with fellow coaches. I came to my first Illinois Football Coaches Association Clinic in 1984. I was a recent college graduate who wanted to coach, and found out very quickly that there is more to coaching than being able to count to 11 and know the offensive team from the defensive team.**

**I would like to discuss a passing game concept we have used for the past few years that has become a large part of our offense. The “Hide series” has given us a tremendous amount of flexibility in our passing game that we did not have in the past. It is a concept we can use versus any coverage or front, and we love versus blitz. The receiver, and quarterback rules are simple enough to learn so that each player has an opportunity understand and execute his assignment. The objective for us is to get the football in the hands of the receiver who gives us the best chance to succeed. However, given the right situation even someone with lesser ability can have great success. It is just a matter of understanding the responsibility required in your alignment, and specific rule associated with that alignment. This route gives a coach great flexibility in that each receiver can be the number 1, 2, or 3 in the progression depending on the formation.**

**We have always been concerned with the pass protection first. We simply felt that the quarterback must be protected with as many players as need be before the route can be implemented. We had used 6, 7, and 8 man protection schemes in the past, and continue to do so. We were finding more and more teams overloading a side, and bringing 4 players weak. This created some confusion for our quarterback when he had to set his protection. As a result we developed and learned more about the 5 man protections, and how best to incorporate them into what we had been doing. However, with the development of our Hide series we now have the opportunity to use a 5 man pass protection scheme with the ability to combine hot reads so our quarterback does not need to be concerned with where the pressure is going to hurt the protection. The quarterback is only concerned with his hot read first, and then his zone read if there is no pressure. This concept also allows us to guarantee the maximum amount of players in the route.**

## **Protection:**

**As I said earlier; we have always been concerned about protection first. For this reason the protection is the first part of the scheme I am going to discuss. Our 600- 700 pass protection is actually quite simple. In 600 protection we tell the running back he has a loop route to the right. In 700 he has a loop route to the left. The side of the line to the protection call is responsible for the two most dangerous rushers (inside out). If there is no pressure, then the two most dangerous rushers are the down linemen, it simply becomes big on big. If the defense**

brings pressure to the front side then the linemen have to determine the two most dangerous threats inside out.

To the back side; one lineman is double scanning away from the loop route. We are asking our linemen to be able to block “big on big” whenever they are covered. If they are not covered, then we ask the uncovered linemen to be able to recognize the defenders that can pressure the quarterback on their side of the formation, and double scan inside out. In diagram 1 you can see that the center is the uncovered lineman, and in this case we ask him to scan strong side, inside out from the Sam linebacker to the strong safety. If the center is uncovered, and there is a single inside linebacker then the center would double scan from the mike linebacker, to the Sam linebacker (diagram 2).

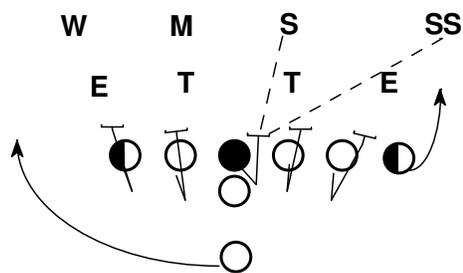


Diagram 1

4-2

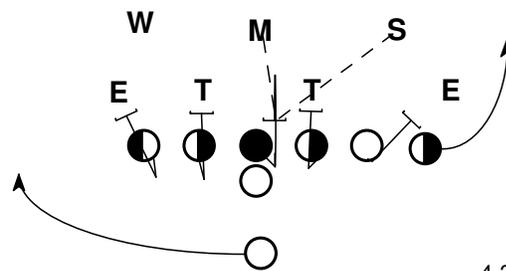
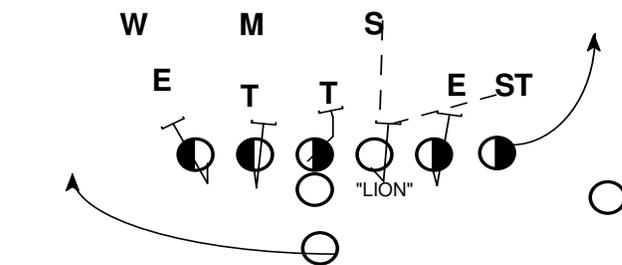


Diagram 2

4-3

If the center is covered, the uncovered lineman makes a call to let the line know he is going to scan on his side, and the opposite side linemen know they are then responsible for the most dangerous inside rushers on their side (diagram 3). If the center is covered, and both guards are uncovered (diagram 4) then both guards will double scan inside out. All line stunts are switched off between the offensive linemen.



60 EAGLE WEAK

Diagram 3

50

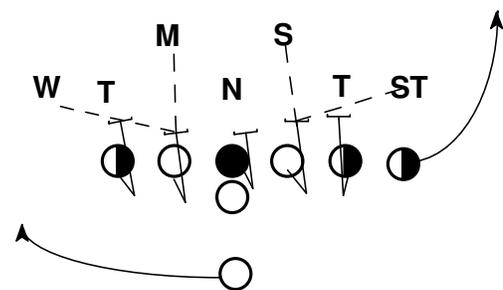
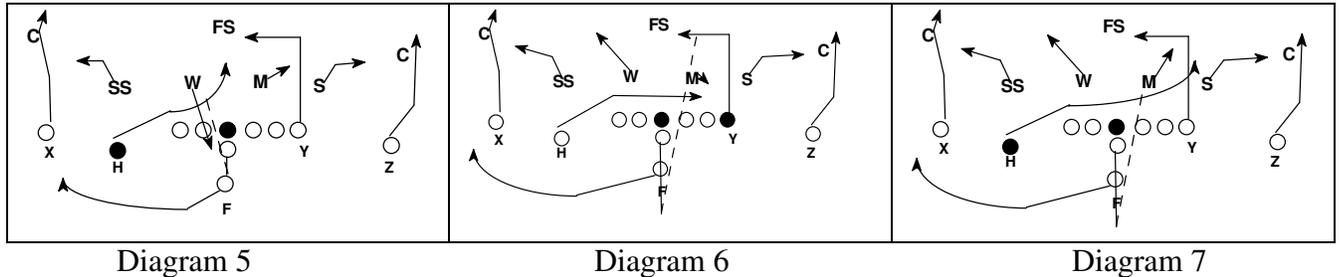


Diagram 4

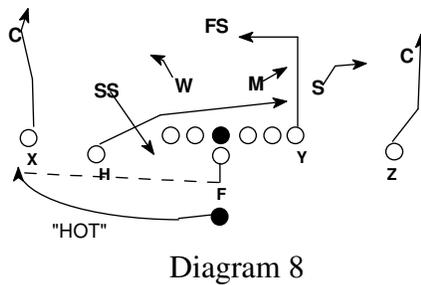
Quarterback:

The play is a 5 step drop play. The QB needs to read the front side inside linebacker on his drop. The linebacker will either blitz, drop to his zone and get depth, or stay down to play the hide route. Let's clarify first what to do if the linebacker blitzes. If the QB sees the linebacker blitz, he must then set his feet quickly and give the ball to the receiver running the hide route in the void created by the

blitzing linebacker (diagram 5). If the linebacker does anything else, the QB finishes his 5 step drop reading the backside linebacker. If the backside linebacker stays down on the hide route, then he hitches and throws the dig to the receiver coming from the opposite side of the formation (diagram 6). If the linebacker drops to get depth, then he finishes his 5 step drop, sets his feet and throws to the hide route (diagram 7).



We do not ask him to read all three linebackers. We think it is hard enough to see the two inside linebackers. We ask the back running the loop route to alert him if the linebacker to his side is blitzing by using a “HOT” call. Usually that means there is no one in the flat to the loop side, or the man responsible for the back (usually the inside linebacker) can’t get to him in time to stop a good gain on the play. If the Quarterback does not see a blitz, but hears a “HOT” call, he will then open up, and immediately throw to the loop route (diagram 8)



### The Hide Route Receiver:

One of the best parts of this play is that any of your 5 eligible receivers can be the tagged receive. You have to be aware of who runs the route best in what situations. You may have on guy who does a better job near the goal line, and another player who is more comfortable in the middle of the field. It is up to you and your judgment as a coach to decide to who, and where on the field the play is called.

The receiver running the hide route should first tighten hi split by at least two yards. We would like him to be within 5 yards of the end man on his side of the formation. We prefer him tighter so he can receive the ball quickly if blitz does occur. The release is very important. You do not want to gain any ground up field on the snap of the ball. Release flat and to the inside. The receiver must run his route no deeper than 3 yards. We ask him to run through the heels of the defensive linemen. The receivers read is the inside linebacker to your side. You must stay under him! If you read zone, continue through and find the void. If you read man, keep running! If the linebacker blitzes, then make eye contact with the quarterback and show him your numbers when you want the ball. After the

catch is made, get vertical as soon as possible so you do not run into coverage on the other side of the field.

#### Dig Route:

The receiver running the dig route is the first receiver opposite the hide route. Regardless of formation the first receiver opposite the hide route always has a dig route. The dig route is run between 10 and 12 yards deep. If it is an inside receiver (tight end) he will need to be at 10, if it is someone who has a little more speed, then he can take it to 12 yards. If he gets held up at all then break it off at 10. We prefer him to always release outside so as not to turn the linebacker on his side back to the hide route. Versus zone; the receiver should break his route off and look for the open window between the linebackers to the quarterback. Versus man; we ask him to stay on the run after his break to force the defender to chase him.

#### Loop Route:

The loop route is run to the same side the hide route is coming from. The running back is responsible for running the loop route out of the backfield. The running back's eyes should be on the outside linebacker to his side; this is his "HOT" read. He needs to gain width toward the sideline. If the linebacker blitzes, he should then call "HOT" "HOT" "HOT", and look for the ball from the quarterback. Versus anything else; the running back will open up and stay parallel with the line of scrimmage. On the boundary side he should get no wider than the widest receivers alignment to that side. To the field side, he should first clear the hash, then look to gain leverage on the flat player to his side. If the running back gains leverage on the flat player at any time, then make a "HOT" call!

#### Fade Routes:

The widest receivers on each side of the formation run a fade route. They should never be closer than the bottom of the numbers until the ball is in the air. If the ball is on the far hash, then they should align between the near hash and the numbers. If they are to the boundary side, then they should align on the bottom of the numbers. If there are two receivers on the same side, then the inside receiver runs inside the hash, and the outside receiver stays at the bottom of the numbers. The quarterback always has the option of throwing the fade route if he feels he has a desirable match up.

The hide routes along with a 5 man pass protection can be as versatile as you want it to be. As stated earlier, this has become a huge part of our passing game during the last few seasons. The only limitations are those you place on yourself, and your players. The concept is versatile enough to work most of your player's abilities into the package, without suffering from poor execution. I would be happy to share any information I have with you. Regarding this or anything else we do. My e-mail address is [csagnoli@lfschools.net](mailto:csagnoli@lfschools.net). Feel free to call if you have questions. My phone number is 847-582-7367.