

COACHING

FLAG FOOTBALL

FOR FUN



BY: MIKE

PETERS

About the Author

I have been a successful coach in the Germantown Flag Football program for 10 years. During this time, I have learned a few lessons that I'm willing to pass along to you so that you and your players are able to gain the most out of the program. What I mean by that is you will have the ability to coach in a positive way while letting your players learn new skills and having the most fun the game can offer. The teams I coached have won many games during my coaching career, but that isn't what your main goal should be. I have learned that if the kids are having fun doing what they are doing, winning will come as a bonus. Winning is important, don't get me wrong, but at this level it's more important to learn new skills and progress as athletes. To do this, you must find each players' strengths and weaknesses. Be prepared to work hard to bring out these skills by pushing them to be the best they can be, not for you, but for themselves and their team mates. You must remind them that in order for the team to succeed, each player must do his or her best on EVERY play, not just the ones where they get the ball.

Coaching Philosophy

It's easy to coach players along with a high skill level, the hard part is finding spots for the lesser players to excel at and contribute to the team. Find something these players do well; either blocking, pass rushing, receiving, or grabbing flags, and build on that skill to help them do their part for the team and feel as if they are contributing, which they will be. One of the first things I tell my team is that I get more excited about a good block or a fine defensive play than I do about scoring a touchdown. Let them know that in order to score, everyone must do their job which means a good snap, a good handoff or pass, and good blocking by non ball carriers. Some players of lesser skills have very low self esteem, but if you can find that one thing that they do well, you will be surprised at the positive changes you will see in them. At that point you have taught them not only a football lesson, but a life lesson as well and that is something both of you can be proud of. I have done it countless times over the years, and the feeling you get from it is extraordinary and makes all the hard work worthwhile. The hardest part is when you fail to bring out the best in someone, but if you give it your best honest effort and fail, there is no shame. The big thing is not to get discouraged because it may take a while or even a whole season before something positive happens for them. Don't be afraid to change that player's roll until you find what he or she is good at. It may take some experimenting and it may even get frustrating, but stick with it or maybe let another coach work with that player.

Flag football is meant to be a wide open attacking game; fast paced with energetic players. Coach it that way! By that I mean you should be passing to set up the run, instead of running to set up the pass. Find ways to pass the ball, believe me it can be done. I have

always tried to pass more than run because not only do players learn more, but they have much more fun doing it. It's much harder to learn passing offense simply because there is so much more involved. Instead of one player getting the ball on a run, multiple players have a chance to catch a pass which keeps more players involved in each play. You may get approximately 20 to 30 plays per game (in the upper levels), and a good goal to shoot for would be to have 75% of those be pass plays. It can be done and it has been done! In several games in the last few years, out of 25 plays, we ran a total of 3 or 4 times per game. Did we win? Probably, but who cares? I measure success by how much fun the players had and how well they executed their plays, not by the final score. I've always told them that if they execute properly and play as a team, they can't lose! If they do lose, as long as they have given their best effort, then it isn't a loss per se, but a setback toward the goal of great execution.

Coaching Offense

Keep the offense simple, yet fun. That means run as few formations as possible making it easier to learn as well as teach. I used a single back set on offense which we ran 15 or so plays from. Only two of them were running plays which I will diagram in the next section. Another way to help the players understand that you mean to pass (a LOT), is to call each offensive position designed for passing. In other words, the center is the center, not able to change that much, but the positions next to the center normally reserved for the term guard or tackle, become slot receivers instead. The player who isn't a quarterback, running back, slot receiver, receiver, or center, becomes an end or tight end. See how that changes the mentality a little bit? Calling a player a "receiver" instead of a lineman reminds them that they are not only going to block (as ALL players must do!), but also be able to catch passes too. Reward players for good blocking by calling a play in which they are the primary target or ball carrier. If all players realize that you plan to pass often, suddenly you won't end up with 10 players that want to be running backs. So with that in mind, let's go over the positions on offense.

Quarterback

To play this position, you should possess a general working knowledge of the plays and where everyone should be pre snap as well as post snap. A strong arm isn't a must since short passes work also. He must be able to quickly change the play when something goes wrong (missed blocks mostly) and find that open receiver.

Center

You need a smart player here and ability to block is crucial. This is where most of the rush comes from. This player has to get the ball to the QB cleanly and quickly, but also be able to block probably the other team's best defenders.

Slot Receivers

Blocking is usually straight ahead of them and along the center, must block first before going out for a pass.

Ends (tight end)

This player should have good pass catching ability and be able to block fairly well. Keeping the offense simple by calling your plays either right or left, and having the end line up on the side called with only a few exceptions, makes it an easy position to play.

Running Back

Your running back should have a certain amount of speed along with pass catching ability, but should also be great blockers. Running backs will be the main protectors of your QB on most pass plays as they fill the holes left by other receivers.

Receivers

They are what the term says they are and they should have pretty good hands and speed. Blocking isn't as great an asset in this position, so this is a spot where you would be able to put a poor blocker.

One way to get the most offense you can into a game is to have the first 4 plays of each half scripted. This way, you save time that you normally would waste huddling up since the plays can be run from the line once the ball is ready for play. Even if you score on the first play, or the third play, you can pick up with your script on the next series. To do this you should practice your sets of plays until the players know them by heart. You will have different personnel each half, so you can have a 4 play set for each half. The kids love doing this! Try not to use any complicated plays for this since it may be frustrating to learn for everyone. You could incorporate a new play each week to your offense and run it during your script. Try hard not to put a player in a position to fail since it may harm the player emotionally and they will lose interest in the game as a whole. In a passing offense there will be more failures (team) than successes, but that makes the successes that much sweeter for all involved!

Practices

Practice time must be used wisely. I started every practice by throwing passes to the players while waiting for everyone to show up. This is a good way to work on patterns and pass catching ability. Practices should consist of skills, offensive plays, defensive (coaches and extra players for offense) and finally end on a positive note with a flag pulling drill. One that I found works great is fairly simple. Start with a 8' by 12' chute in which one player, "the defender" stands. Have the rest of the team (ball carriers) line up on the 8' end or "goal line". Have those players start in their stance with the defender a few yards back. Blow the whistle or say go and have the ball carriers (without the ball for speed of the drill) try to advance to the other goal line without having their flag pulled. Keep a new ball carrier

coming every 3 to 4 seconds to make the defender react quickly. Once a ball carrier leaves, the next one must come up and get set in his stance before you give him the go signal. A variation would be to let one or two players carry the ball and keep rotating it through. Once all the players are to the other side, rotate another player into the center defender spot and start again until everyone has had a chance to be a defender. Another way to reward players for good practices, is to award that player the chance to be "captain" for the upcoming game. During game play, as a reward, allow a player to kick off the next time your team scores. Be creative and use positive reinforcement whenever you can. Since running plays can get boring for the players in a hurry, try doing something they like to do as a reward for running plays well. Even a short scrimmage with a short field can be fun if you let them call their own plays (only ones from the offense). Many things can be done at practice to keep it fun, but again, you must use your imagination.

Defense

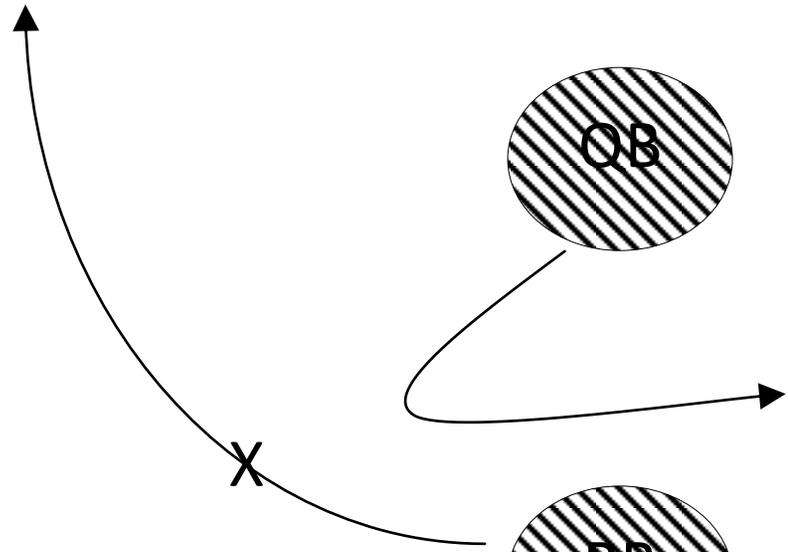
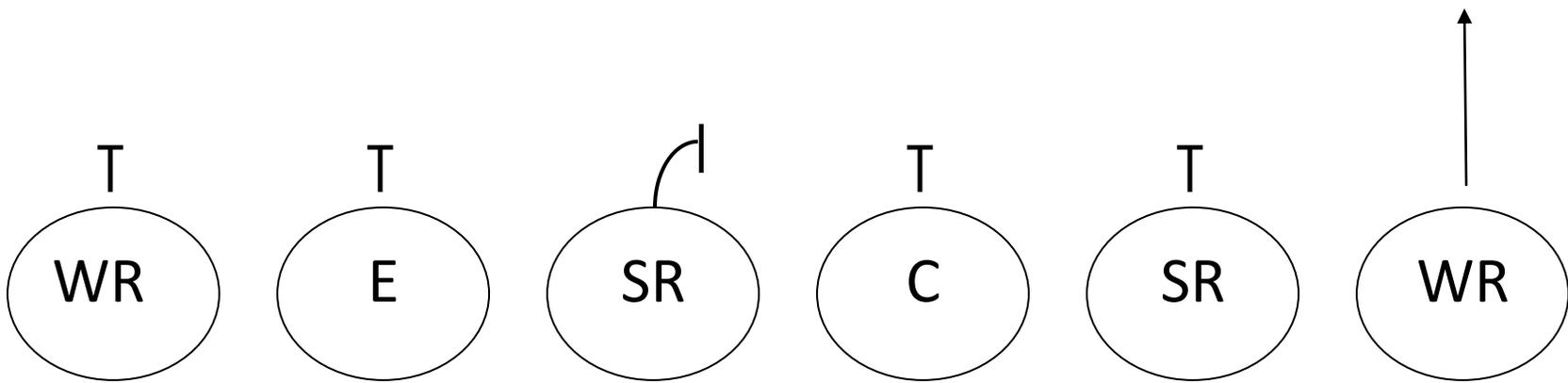
Keep your defense simple just like your offense. I used a total of three different defenses. One was just a basic 3 on the line about a yard or so apart, 2 cornerbacks to defend the outside and cover, 2 linebackers lined up on the outside shoulder of the outside lineman, and a safety to roam wherever he's needed. This worked pretty well to cover the whole field, but they must work as a unit. You can also blitz one linebacker, corner of safety for an added twist, but be careful!

Our "blitz" was called a 6-2 with six linemen and two safety/linebackers just in case someone sneaks through. This works well when you know a run is coming, but I wouldn't run it more than a few times in a game. This can also be used as a reward since the players love to blitz.

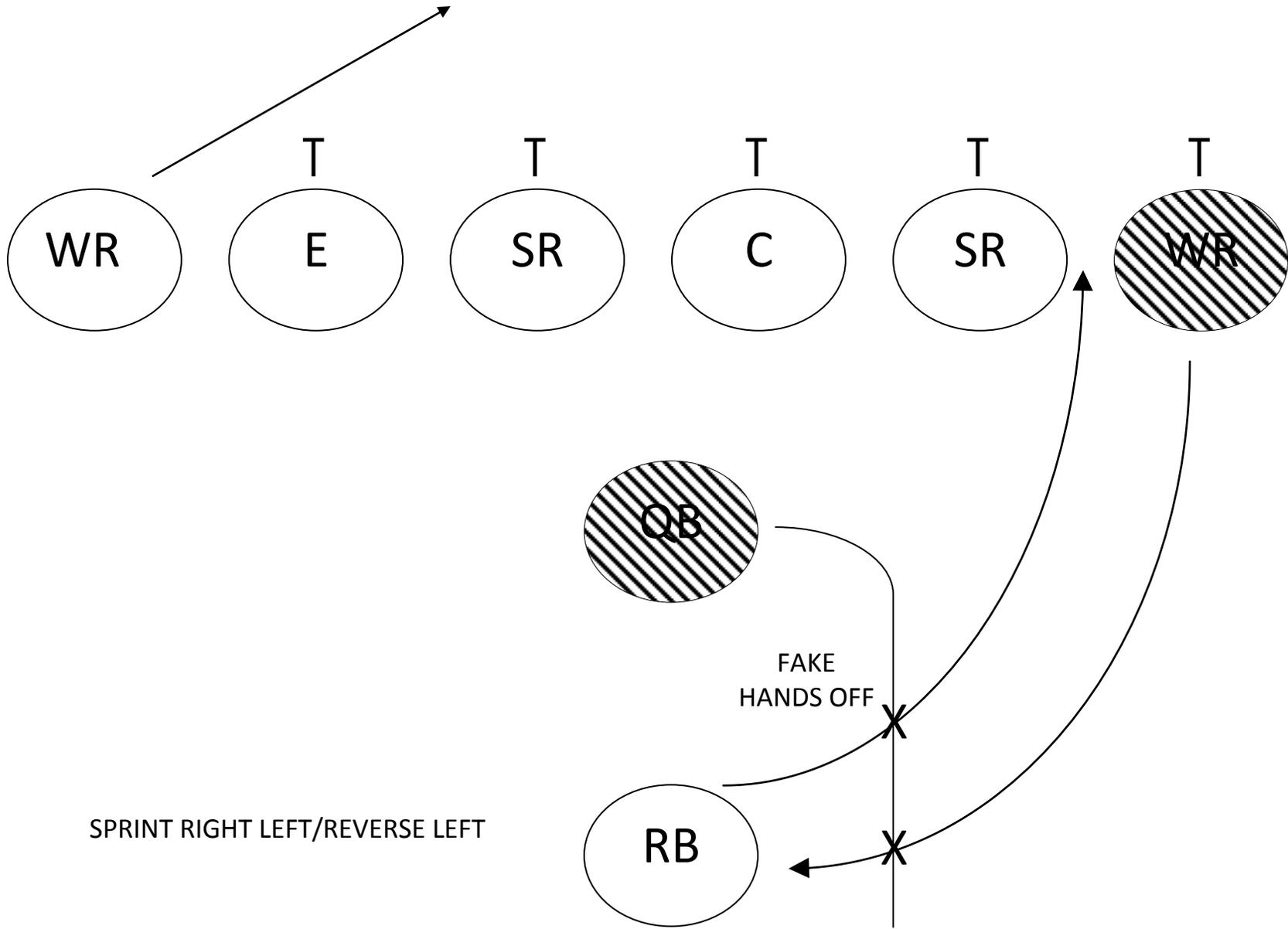
We also had a 5-3 which was used mostly against running teams. Five linemen and three linebackers shut down runs pretty well.

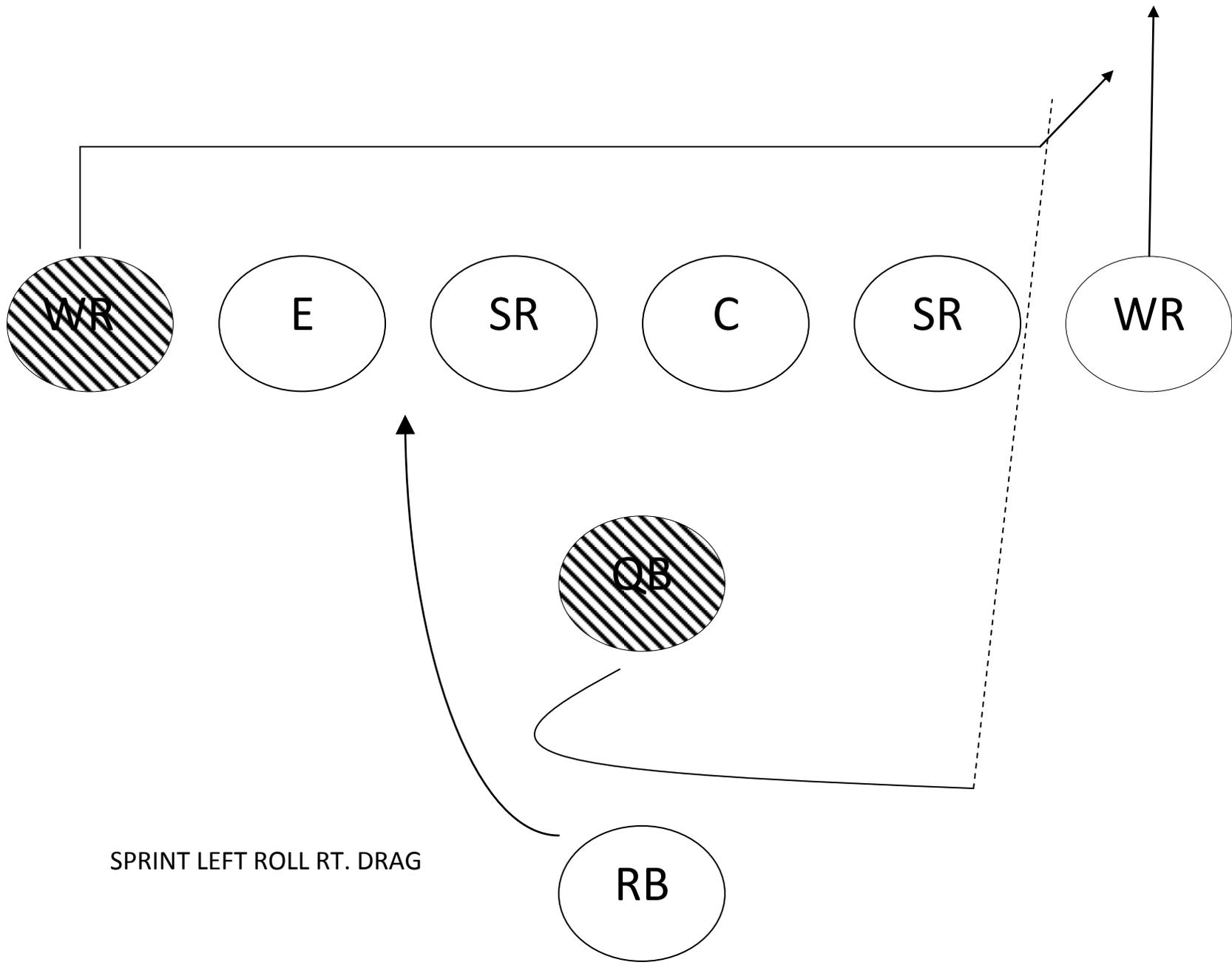
Closing

Try to keep in mind that this game should be fun for the players, coaches, and fans. To accomplish this you must be positive and remember that it's only a game, a kids game at that. You will have an impact on every player you coach to some degree, so help keep them involved in the game by creating memories that they can build on and take to the next level. Bring out the best in them and they will bring out the best in you, it's a win-win situation. Good Luck!!!

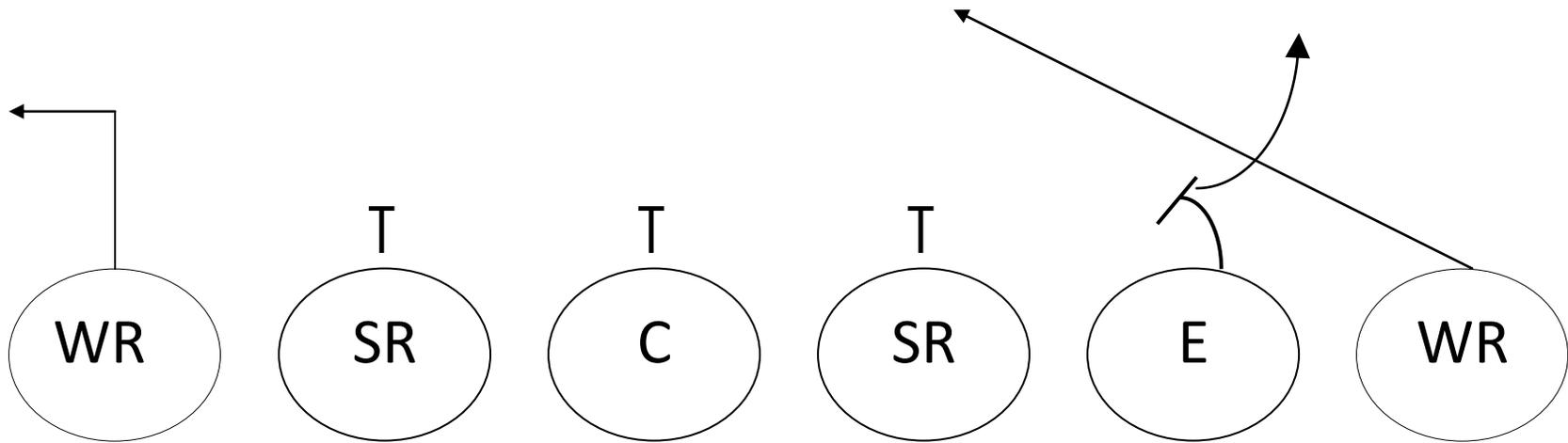


SPRINT LEFT (RIGHT)

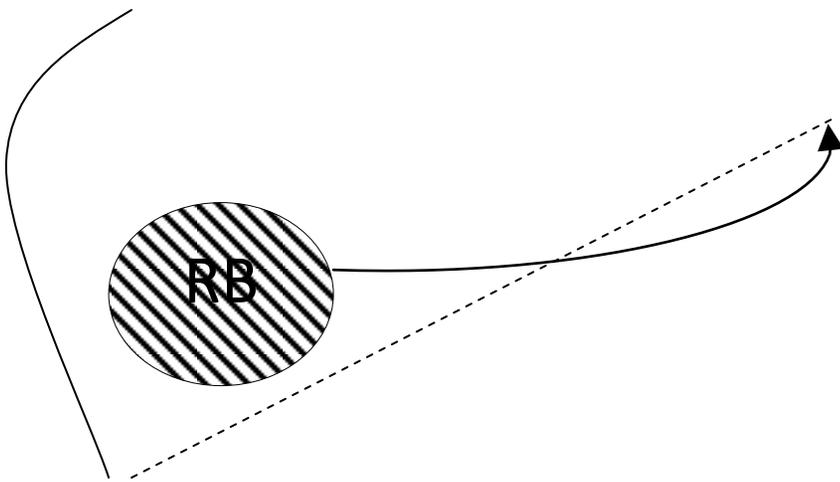


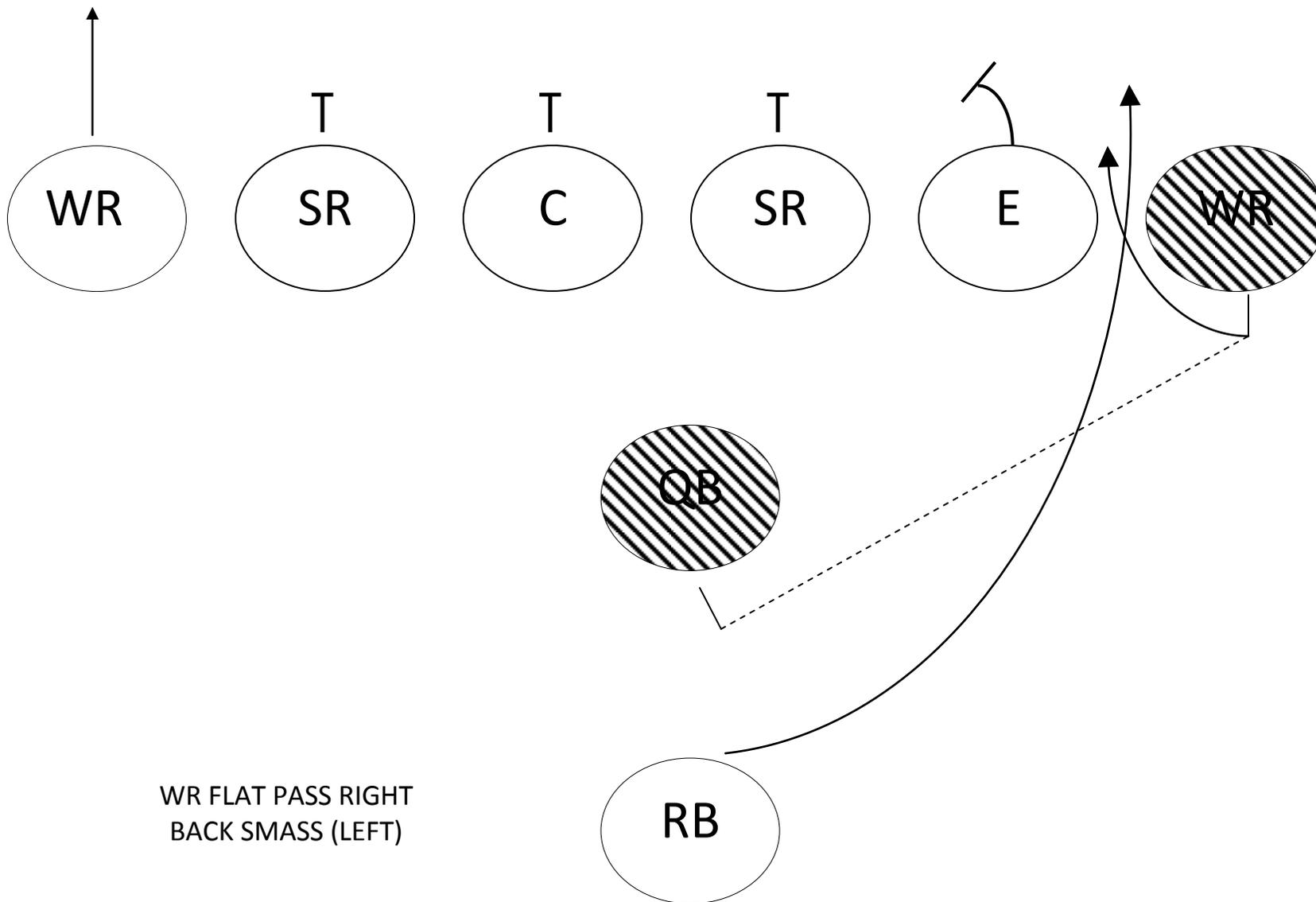


SPRINT LEFT ROLL RT. DRAG



BACK SWING PASS RIGHT (LEFT)





WR FLAT PASS RIGHT
BACK SMASS (LEFT)