

Hands vs. Shoulder Technique in the Wing-T Offense

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I enjoyed Bryan Schaumloffel's article and insight into what is one of the most fun discussions amongst wing-t coaches and those that don't run the wing. I have an appreciation for both techniques depending upon the situation and types of plays the different techniques are incorporated with. First lets talk about the Shoulder skill.

The shoulder skill should be thought of as a primary base or straight ahead skill. Short yardage and goal line for 2 yards or less, go get it. Face up, shoulders targeted for the belt buckle of a hunkered down lower than low defensive line. Deliver a Cobra quick, sledge hammer type forearm blow. The simultaneous extension of the hips multiplies the power to the forearm delivery. Get those feet ripping thru the turf like a On-Site shredder ripping thru paper. Feet wide based for balance. Smash mouth football at its best. The back field action is quick hitting, get the first down or touchdown now!!!!!! Add to this the heart, soul, and spirit of the human being behind the technique and the magic of the one on one confrontation that draws us all to the great sport of football is underway.

As you can read, you realize I have a pure appreciation for the shoulder surface. Which is really misnamed a shoulder, when in reality it is really a chest surface technique with the head turned and positioned up to see the face of the defensive player the offensive lineman is blocking. This technique has a limited role in this era of football.

The shoulder skill takes longer to perfect. It requires unrealistic expectations with the height of the block. Sustaining the block for any length of time is not possible. It requires a much better athlete in terms of flexibility, and balance. Once you establish the fit into the defensive lineman your blocking it is not possible to transition to finish with an extension of the hands because the forearm is pinned into position against the man your blocking. I am strongly against the idea that you can not create power by using your hands as a surface. That is exactly what the difference is between these two techniques.

Hands is nothing more than a change in the surface. Having leverage in your favor is the most important issue of either technique. If my center of gravity is lower than the center of gravity of the man I am blocking I win. Hip extension is necessary to multiply the power of either technique. The feet widen at contact for balance and the 4" steps are all that the physics of football will allow you to take in either case. The face is up. The difference is the hands are the surface in contact with the defensive mans body and the height of the block is higher and makes it easier to use a lesser athlete to get the same job done.

Secondly lets discuss the proper techniques for the hands.

The target is helmet just above the forehead is aimed at the chin of the defensive lineman. As the defensive player raises his center of gravity to initiate contact the offensive player punches his hands at the bottom corners of the front apron of the shoulder pads. The butt of the hands use the protruding bottom corner edges of the shoulder pad apron as a landmark for placement. The hands strike the blow as the hips extend to a slightly hyper extended position between the shoulders and the feet. The level of the eyes are at the front collar of the defensive players jersey. The feet widen to a position outside the width of the shoulders. The position of the base offers balance, stability, and efficient movement through the more natural range of motion.

Once the legs have created movement the arms are extended and the center of gravity rises as high as the offensive player can take it and still have his center of gravity below the opponents. Once movement is created we climbed as high as we can, extend the arms to full extension, and rip the wide feet through the turf with 4" long steps. The extension of the body creates a longer more efficient lever, and physics then works in your favor.

If I were back coaching tomorrow I would use hands for all my traditional techniques. I would begin preseason with the shoulder because it is easier to understand the concept of hip extension from the knees using the body as a shorter lever. I would quickly graduate to the hands as a surface. Down, Log, Reach Fire Hook Blocking backers in open space, blocking db's in open space traps, You name it and it is easier for your players to play with hands.

Starting in the early 90's I was teaching the shoulder technique to recruited football players that had never used a shoulder skill. By the time they started playing youth football they were being taught hand skill. They never knew shoulder skills.

Let me make sure you understand where I am coming from. I would be completely committed to Hands for everything. Shoulders for short yardage and goal line. Coach the intensity into the technique. The hands are as physical or more physical the the shoulder. Coach it right. There is absolutely no doubt that once you get full extension when finishing a hands technique, that defensive lineman or whoever is going backwards faster than his feet can back peddle, which leads to the defensive mans shoulder blades getting slammed into the buckwheat, or sprinturf.

So this fall when the big braced bodies of the offensive linemen takeoff from the line of scrimmage with the eyes laser focused at the Adams Apple of the defensive lineman he is about to smash atoms with, his hands exploding into the bottom corners of the shoulder pad apron like rocket propelled grenades slamming through tank metal. His hips catapulting forward to the proper position of extension at the same time the rpg's detonate. The feet widening and short stepping like a proud powerful Clydesdale pulling the wagon full of kegs. The backward acceleration of the defensive player at the moment of full extension, and the Grand Finale, The defensive players body is in the air and then so harshly finds the ground rising to meet his back as the wind in his lungs forcibly exits past his mouthpiece when the victorious offensive lineman adds insult to injury by avalanching on top chest, and comes to rest face mask to face mask staring into the now dominated mind of the defensive tackle that he just completely defeated. This demonstration of intelligence, understanding of proper technique, strength, will, spirit, soul, hardness, enthusiasm, flexibility, quickness, and whatever else went into the success of this one rep. This one rep has planted the seed of doubt in the mind of the opponent, and will make it easier to do the same thing on the next play. Wow!!!! I guess I let it get away from a little bit here. I hope you enjoyed this as much as I did.

Boy do I love football.