



FOOTBALL MANITOBA

**NEW FLAG
COACH
INTRODUCTION**

OVERVIEW OF FLAG FOOTBALL

Flag football is a faster-paced variation of tackle football but does not require protective equipment as flag football is a **non-contact sport**. It is easy to learn without the concerns that are sometimes associated with contact sports.

The main difference being that instead of physically tackling or blocking, ball carriers are “tackled” or “flagged” by pulling the flag on their belt.

Everyone gets involved! Aside from the QB, all players are eligible to score!

Like tackle football, teams try to move down to the opponent’s end of the field to score a touchdown by either passing or running the football.

OVERVIEW OF FLAG FOOTBALL

Flag football is played on a much smaller field, suitable for the smaller-sided sport. At flag football venues you will always see multiple flag games taking place simultaneously on one regular tackle field.

The standard for flag football around the world including the Olympics, is 5 v 5, meaning five players from each team are on the field at one time.

Games are just under one hour in length and during the spring season, teams will play two games back-to-back against a different opponent for each game, while during indoor seasons teams play one game per day.

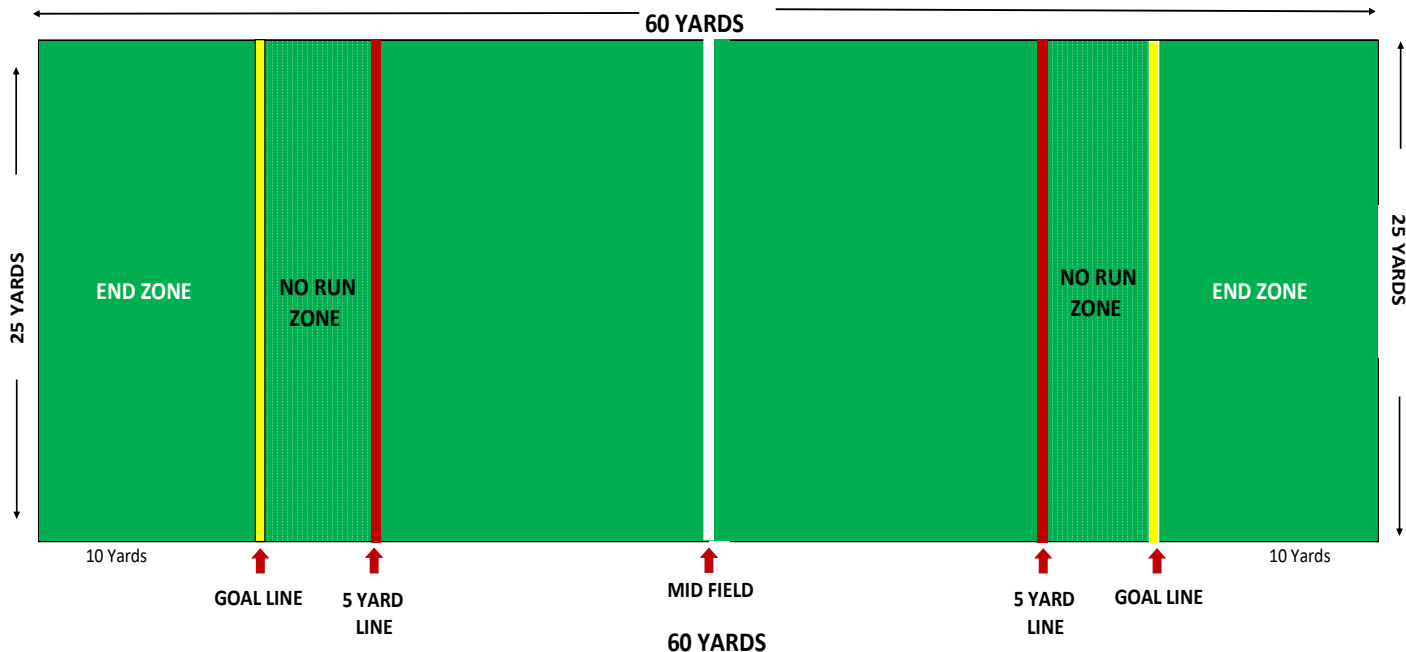
GOALS OF OUR PROGRAMS

- to provide an environment that enables children to learn new skills, get ACTIVE, all while having a positive experience and fun
- to provide an opportunity for competitive athletes to compete at a level that will allow them to excel
- Ensure that participation in our programs provide an opportunity for everyone to play open to everyone

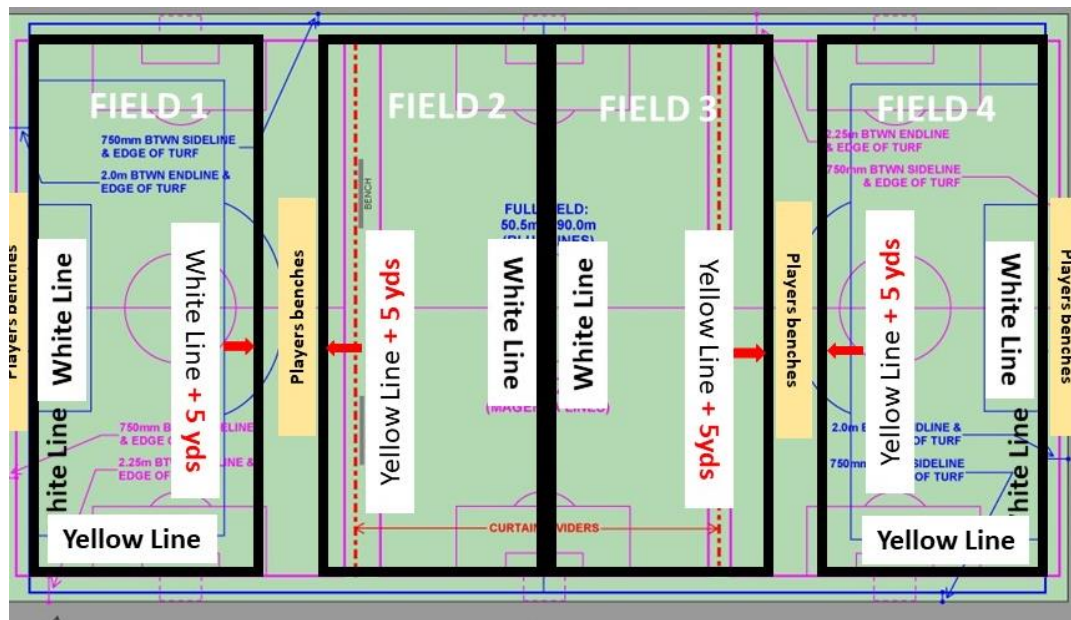


THE FLAG FIELD

There are variations on the field sizes used depending on the season, but the image below is the most common field size for youth flag football in Canada.

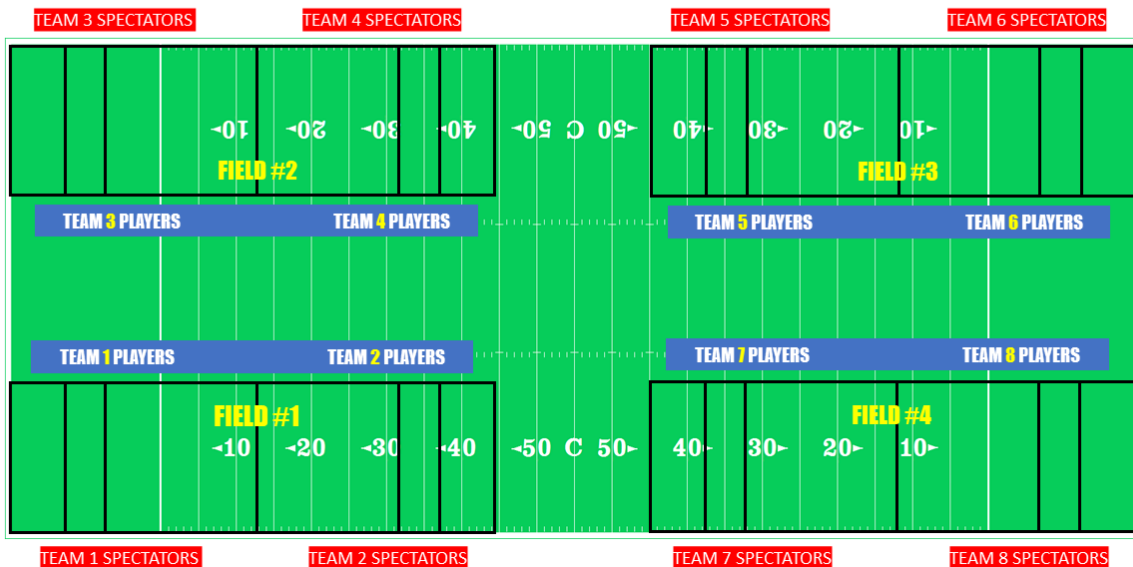


FIELD LAYOUT U of WPG - Indoor seasons



FIELD LAYOUT – OUTDOOR FIELDS

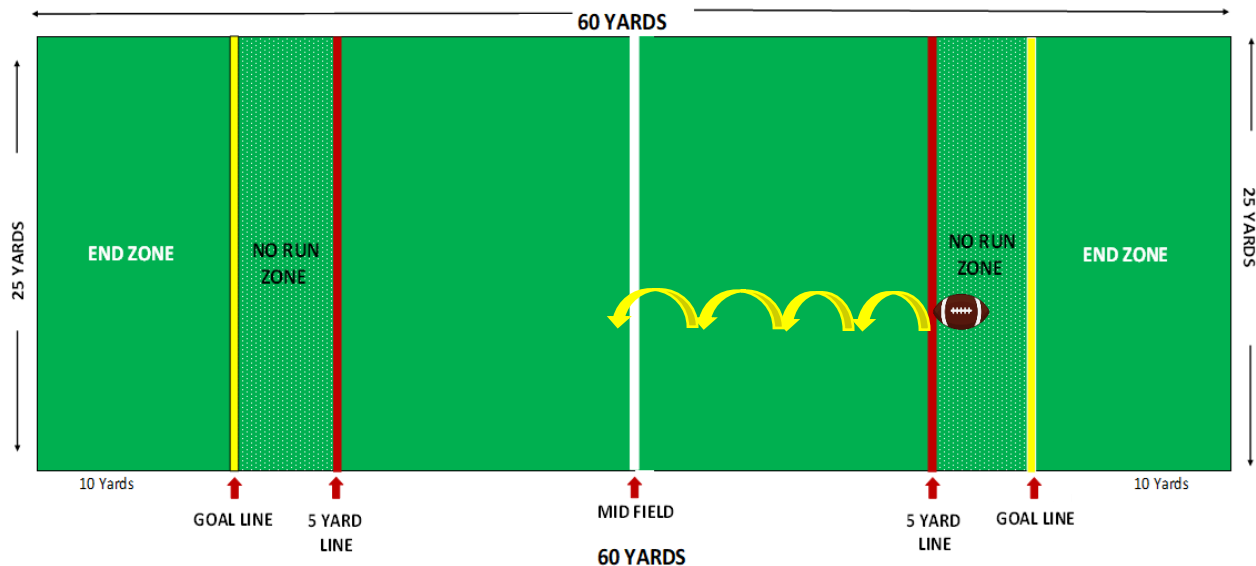
FOOTBALL MANITOBA FLAG 4 FIELD LAYOUT





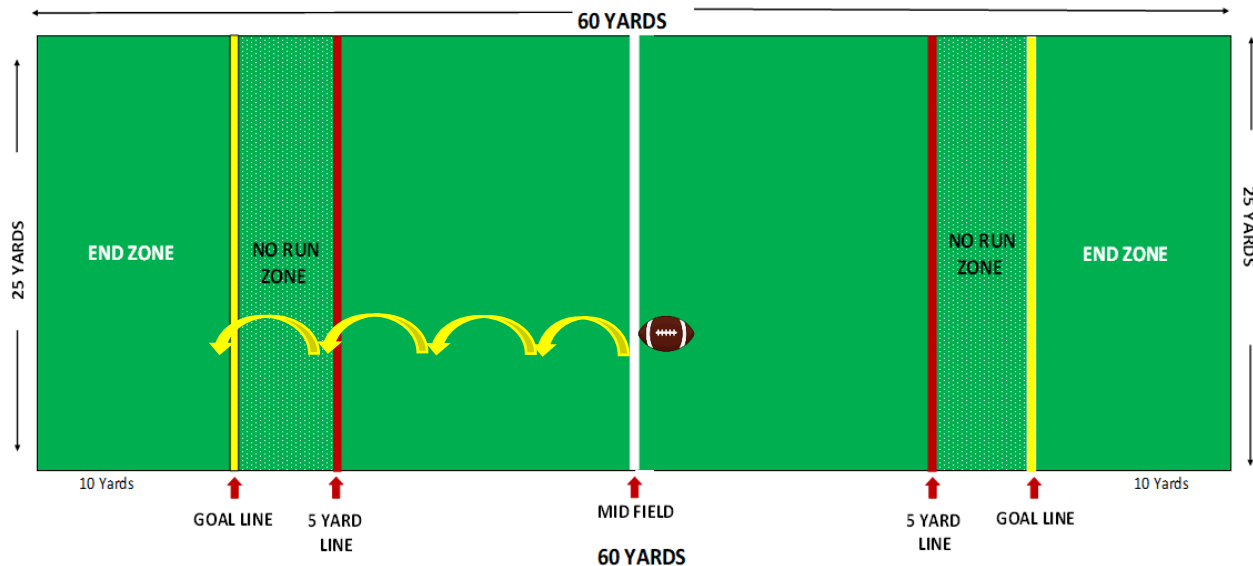
GENERAL GAME OVERVIEW

The team on offense starts each drive at their own 5-yard line and has 4 downs (or plays) to reach midfield.



GENERAL GAME OVERVIEW

If the offense reaches midfield, they get another 1st down and have 4 more plays to score. If the offense did not score or did not gain a first down (reaching mid-field) the result is a turnover and the opposing team's offense starts on their own 5-yard line



TEAM PRACTICES

Many families have other children participating in activities as well. Team practices are not mandated by Football Manitoba, but we expect that teams will practice during the outdoor seasons. Coaches should schedule practices that work for the majority of their families.

Indoor seasons – Indoor practice time is not available through the league due to very limited availability of indoor facilities through the colder months. Cost can also be a factor in booking facilities for teams, so most do not practice at all and focus on the fun of playing and staying active.

Outdoor seasons, teams will usually practice at least once per week, and possibly more than that at the start of the season, depending on the level of experience of the players. We recommend no more than three practices per week.

Practices should be never exceed 60 minutes (90 minutes for U14 and older) and should focus on flag skills more than developing “new plays”.



EQUIPMENT

Teams are provided with a Team Kit which includes footballs of the appropriate size, bean bags, discs/cones for practices and flag belts for all players

Each player receives a Blue and a Gold shirt. **Blue shirts are to be worn when your team is the Home team. Gold shirts are to be worn when you are the Away team.** Players must have their shirts tucked in at all times

Cleats for players are recommended for better footing as runners can slip if the grass is damp. Only molded rubber cleats are permitted (football or soccer cleats). No baseball or screw-in style cleats allowed.

All players must have plain-colored shorts with NO pockets!

Gloves that you see football players using are totally optional. While they do make it easier to catch the ball, players can play just fine without them.

GAME PLAY

- Teams **bring their team ball** onto the field for every offensive series. When the series is over they will take their football back to their bench.
- The offense must put the ball into play within 25 seconds from when the official blows time in.
- The offensive player who snaps the ball is deemed to be the **center** and the player receiving the snap is deemed to be the **quarterback**.
- At the start of each play, the ball can be snapped between the legs of the center, **or to the side** in one continuous motion

GAME PLAY

- Once the quarterback receives the snap, all players are eligible to accept a handoff, pitch or pass.
- The **quarterback cannot cross the line of scrimmage** with the ball without first relinquishing possession to another of his teammates.
- There can be unlimited passes (pitches) backwards on any play. There can only be one forward pass.
-

COACHES – GAME TIME

- One coach is permitted on the field with the offense/defense to help their team get organized for the next play, so coaches and players are not required to memorize an entire playbook to be able to execute plays.
- The coach will huddle with the players on the field to show them the next play to run from their playbook or sheet. After the “huddle” breaks, coaches can assist with placing players. However, once the center is positioned over the football and ready to snap, coaches are **no longer permitted to communicate** with their players during the play.
- Coaches will pick 5 players to play defense and 5 to play offense. If there are more than 10 the additional players will rotate through the series on a fair rotation basis. Usually, players are switched from offense to defense for part of the game to learn both sides of the game.
- Play Clock – The offense has 25 seconds after the official blows time in to snap the ball, so instructions must be given to your team quickly.

PASSING

After the snap, the quarterback has 7 seconds to relinquish the ball by passing or handing it to another player. Maintaining possession of the ball beyond 7 seconds results in a penalty.

A fake (pretend) handoff is referred to as “play action” to deceive the defense.

With the new IFAF rules, play action (faking a hand off) no longer nullifies the 7 second timer for the QB to relinquish possession.

Passes completed behind the line of scrimmage **are permitted and count as a pass play*** (for the purposes of our Manitoba passing requirement).

** See Exception next screen*



PASSING

If the quarterback relinquishes possession of the ball by handing off or pitching it (behind the line of scrimmage) he now becomes an eligible receiver and receive a pass.

In Manitoba, teams must attempt a minimum of 1 pass every 3 plays to encourage coaches to teach players to throw and catch. Simply put, **there cannot be more than 2 running plays in a row**, however teams can pass every play if they wish.

When reaching the opposition's end, there is a **NO-RUN** zone from the opposition's 5-yard line and the goal line. **All plays within this area must be a pass** that is completed across the line of scrimmage.

RUSHING (RUNNING THE BALL)

Once the quarterback receives the snap, all players are eligible to accept a handoff, pitch or pass, or run, including the centre (snapper).

The quarterback can hand the ball to a teammate in the backfield who can then run downfield or, throw the ball to a teammate downfield (or back to the quarterback).

They can also even hand the ball to another team-mate, such as when running a “Double Reverse” play.

SCORING

There are three methods of scoring points in Flag Football:

- **Touchdown:** 6 points
 - The ball must cross the goal line and the player must have at least one foot inbounds. This is a new rule for 2024 as previously it was based on the players hips in relation to the goal line.
- **Convert:**
Team must decide whether they are attempting either 1 or 2 point conversion.
 - If successful from the 5-yard line they get 1 point
 - If successful from the 12-yard line they get 2 points
- **Safety:** 2 points
 - Occurs when the ball carrier has their flag pulled or loses possession of the ball in their own end zone, or when an offensive “spot-foul” penalty occurs in the end zone.

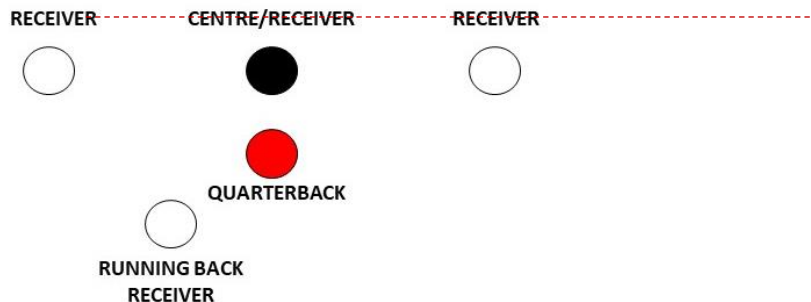
COACH REQUIREMENTS

- Anyone that is going to be on the bench must be **registered** using the Coaches form (and indicate their role – coach, manager) for insurance purposes. There is a maximum of three “coaches” on the bench.
- All non-players will require a photo **coach ID card provided by FBMB**. If not already on file, please forward a selfie (passport style) picture for your card. cannot be printed. Anyone not registered will not receive a card.

COACH REQUIREMENTS

- **Respect in Sport for Activity Leaders** is a requirement for all coaches (in all sports) by **Sport Manitoba**. If completed for another sport it is not required again. **FREE – approx. 75 minutes**
- **Background Checks** are required every five years to participate in any Football Manitoba leagues or programs. Screenings done elsewhere for work or other activities/sports will be accepted however a Declaration Form to confirm that nothing has changed since the screening is required annually. **FREE through our online service**
- **Understanding The Rule of Two** – strongly recommended that all coaches complete this short course to avoid potentially serious situations. **Free – approx. 15 minutes**
- **Safe Sport** – **Free – approx. 15 minutes**

OFFENSE – SAMPLE FORMATION

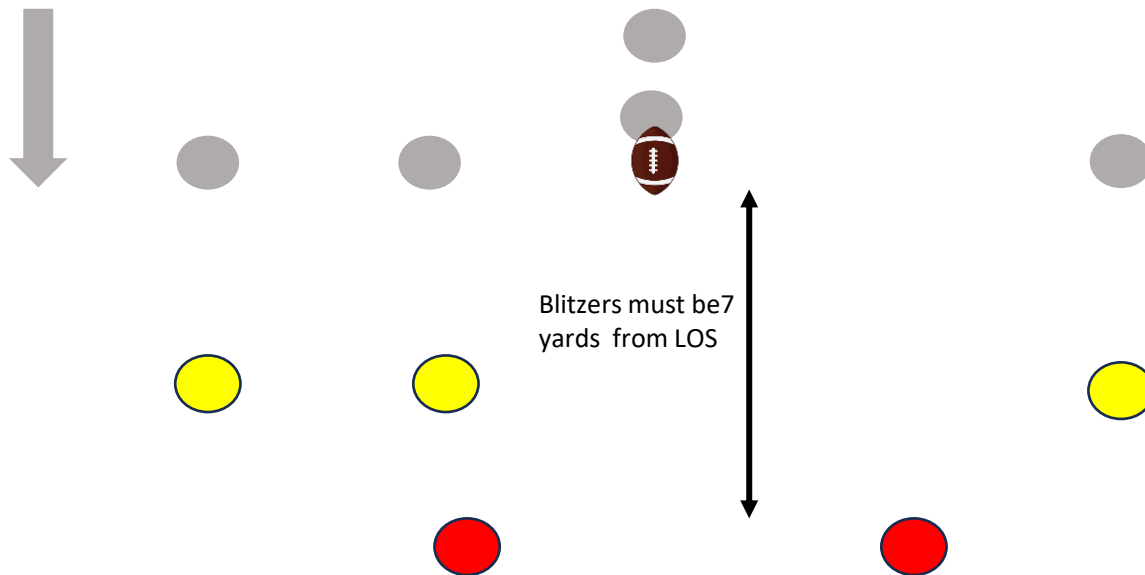


Snapper (Centre) – the offensive player who snaps the ball to a teammate.

Quarterback – the player who receives the snap and hands the ball or throws the ball to a teammate.

Receivers/Running Backs – players that are either handed the ball or catch a pass or a pitch and try to move downfield.

DEFENSE – SAMPLE FORMATION



DEFENSIVE BACKS

Generally, players on defense are fall into the “defensive backs” category. Their job is to try and interrupt or prevent a receiver from catching a pass. On a run play their job is to “flag” the ball carrier to prevent them from scoring.

Any of the 5 defensive players can pursue the QB providing they start from a minimum of 7 yards away from the line of scrimmage. Only two can have a “clear path” if they declare themselves as blitzers.

However, if the quarterback relinquishes possession as in a hand-off or pitch(or pretends to), any defensive player may cross the line of scrimmage to flag whoever has the ball.

BLITZERS AND RUSHERS

A Blitzer is the only person with a “clear path” or unobstructed path to the point the QB receives the snap. Any offensive player interfering with their path to that spot will be penalized.

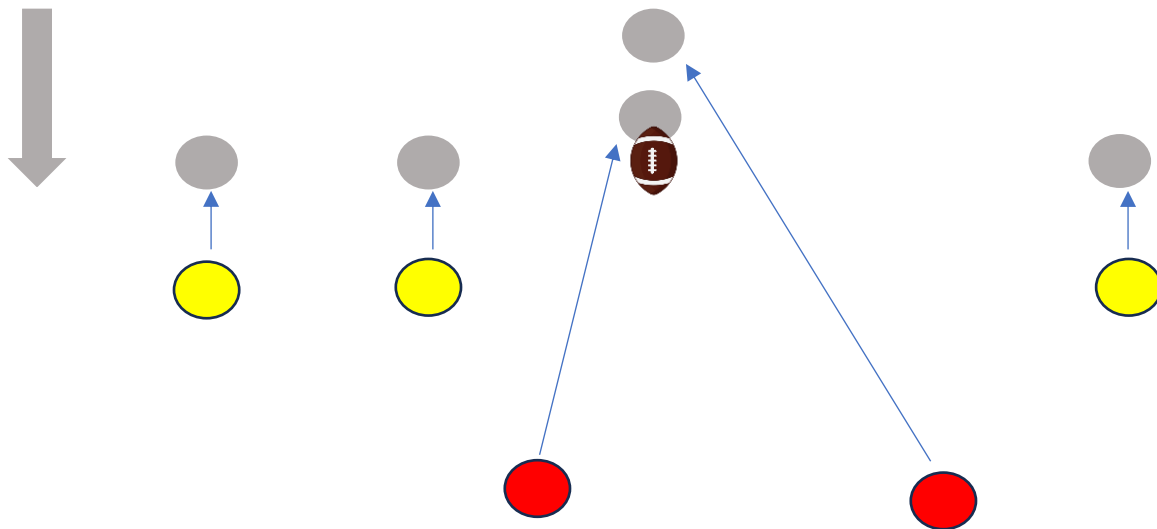
Up to two blitzers are permitted on any play and must indicate their intent to blitz by raising one hand above their head until the ball is snapped.

A Rusher is almost the same as a Blitzer except that they **do not** have a “clear path” to the point of the snap and must avoid interfering with any receivers that may be running routes in front of them. Rushers do not have to indicate with a hand up before the ball is snapped.

Players indicating that they are a blitzer **are not required to follow through** with blitzing and can stay back to cover receivers if they wish.



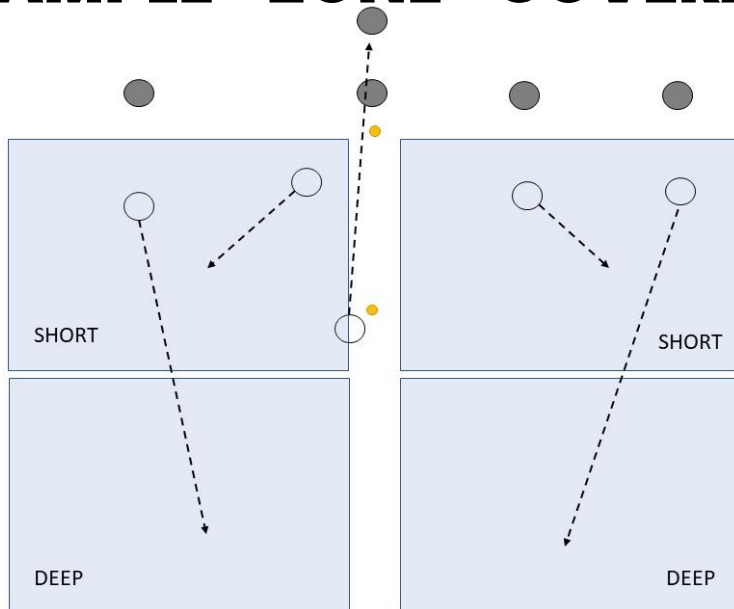
SAMPLE "MAN" COVERAGE



In "man" coverage, each defender picks or is assigned an offensive player to "cover" to prevent them from catching the ball. This works well for teams with very quick agile defenders that can "stick" with the receivers as they run downfield.



SAMPLE "ZONE" COVERAGE



In "zone" coverage, each defender is assigned an **AREA** to protect instead of a specific receiver. When the opponent's receivers are faster than your defenders, a zone defense may be the best way to defend against the pass.

SKILLS – Snapping



While not always a glamorous position, you need to have a couple of good “centres” to get the ball into play by snapping the ball to the quarterback.

The image shown to the left is what is commonly seen at the U10 – U14 age group. Older players snap or “throw” the ball to the quarterback who can be 3-5 yards behind them. This is commonly seen in tackle football.

The “shotgun” snap has the advantage of providing the quarterback a couple of extra seconds to settle and find an open receiver.

SKILLS – Throwing



To get started, run some drills to see which players are your better passers. These may be the players you have at quarterback to start things off this season.

We anticipate that at the younger levels, every player will have an opportunity to play quarterback, unless they know they are terrible at passing and decide not to.

In practices, all players should have the opportunity to throw, whether it is in a scrimmage or just playing catch.

Throwing is a Fundamental Movement skill that all children need to develop, even if they are never a quarterback!

SKILLS – Catching



Definitely a “glamour” role on the field, not everyone can do it well.

It requires eye-hand coordination and the ability to adjust your body to get to where the ball is going.

There are a lot of drills and games to help develop these skills, but the best way to help them learn is repetition...repetition.

Discourage showboating or one-handed catches. Receivers should always try to catch with two hands.

SKILLS – Flagging



Having players that can throw and catch is all fine and well, however your defense must be able to prevent the other team from scoring too.

Flagging (or non-contact tackling) is a key skill that some players excel at and other struggle with.

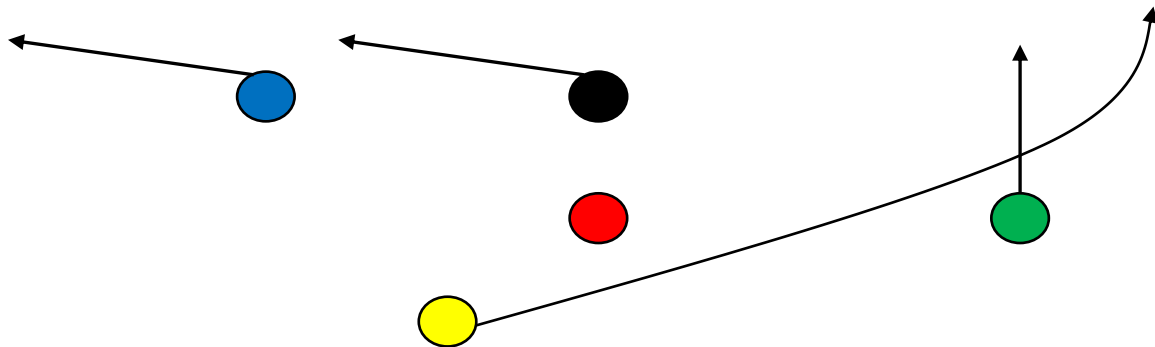
Pulling a flag is not something you expect to be a skill that players will use as they get older, however it requires, agility, control, balance and the ability to change direction all while maintaining control of their bodies.

Every practice should have a portion dedicated to drills to develop this skill!

WHAT PLAY and WHO AM I?

The easiest way to introduce plays to new players is to use **colour-coded** dots, rather than using “football” terms like wide receiver, slotback, X, Y, Z, etc. This makes it very easy for coaches to relay the next play to the players on the field.

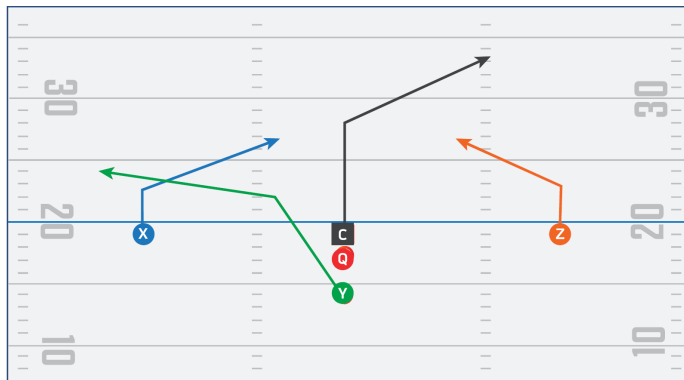
Players can very quickly look at a play to see where their “**colour**” is supposed start from, and what they are supposed to do on that play.



CALLING YOUR PLAYS

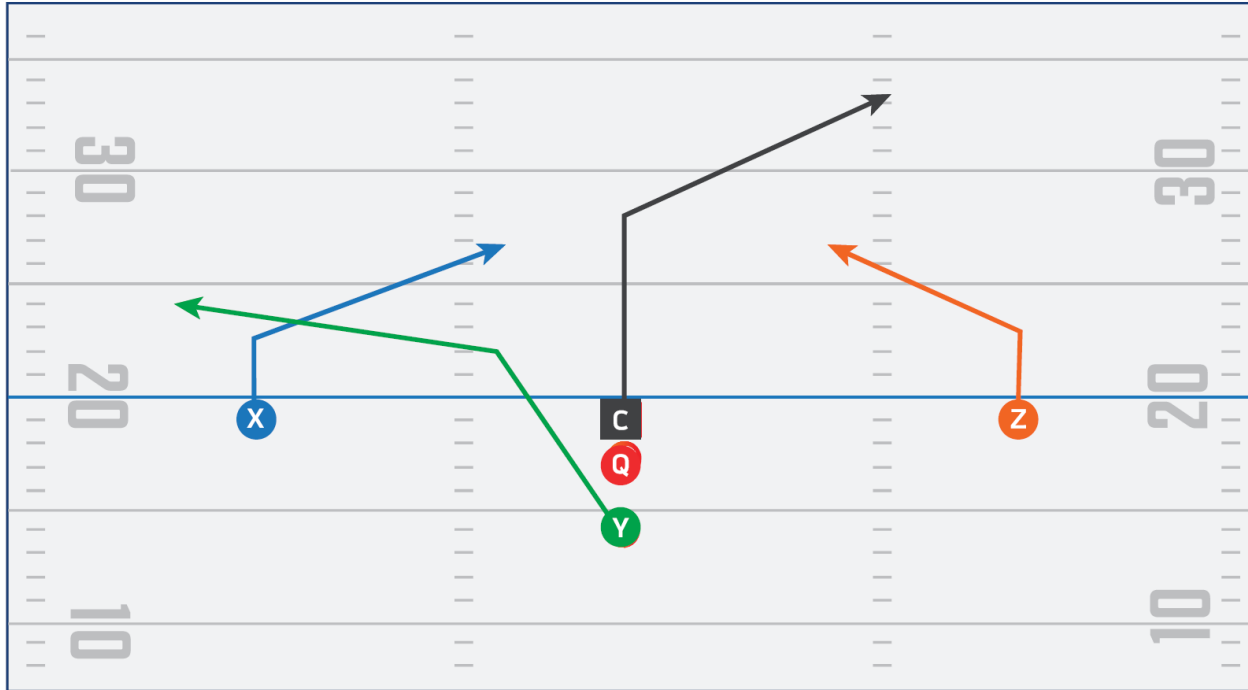
When the players on field have been assigned one of the colours in your playbook, all they need to do is look at what their colour is supposed to do.

If substituting players each series, make sure that everyone knows which colour they are before your first play.



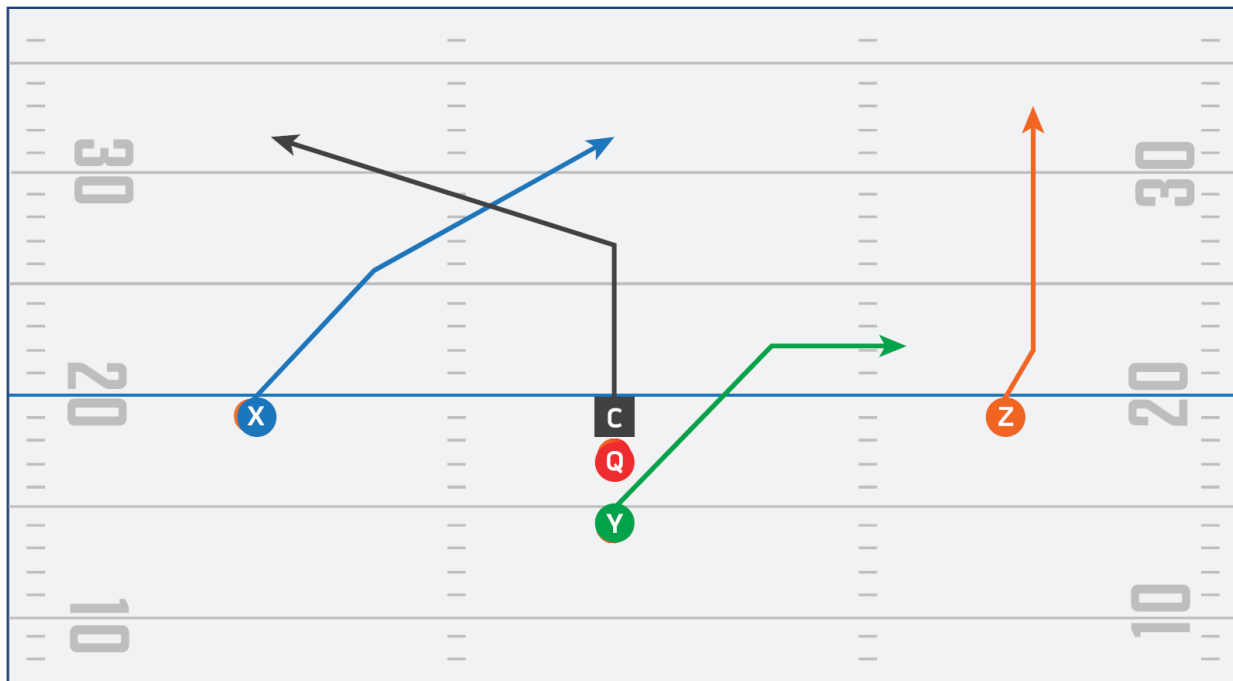
SINGLE BACK PLAY 1

Hand off to green for a run
or pass to any of the 4 receivers



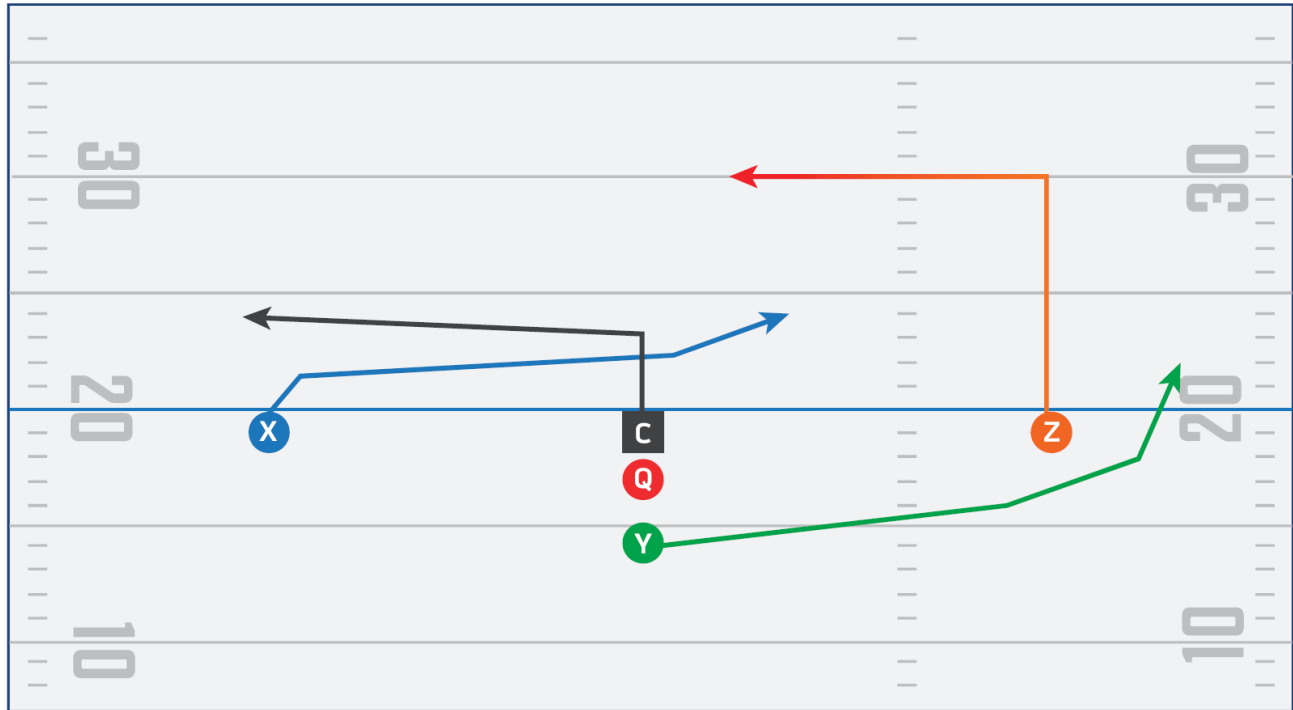
SINGLE BACK PLAY 2

Hand off to green for a run
or pass to any of the 4 receivers



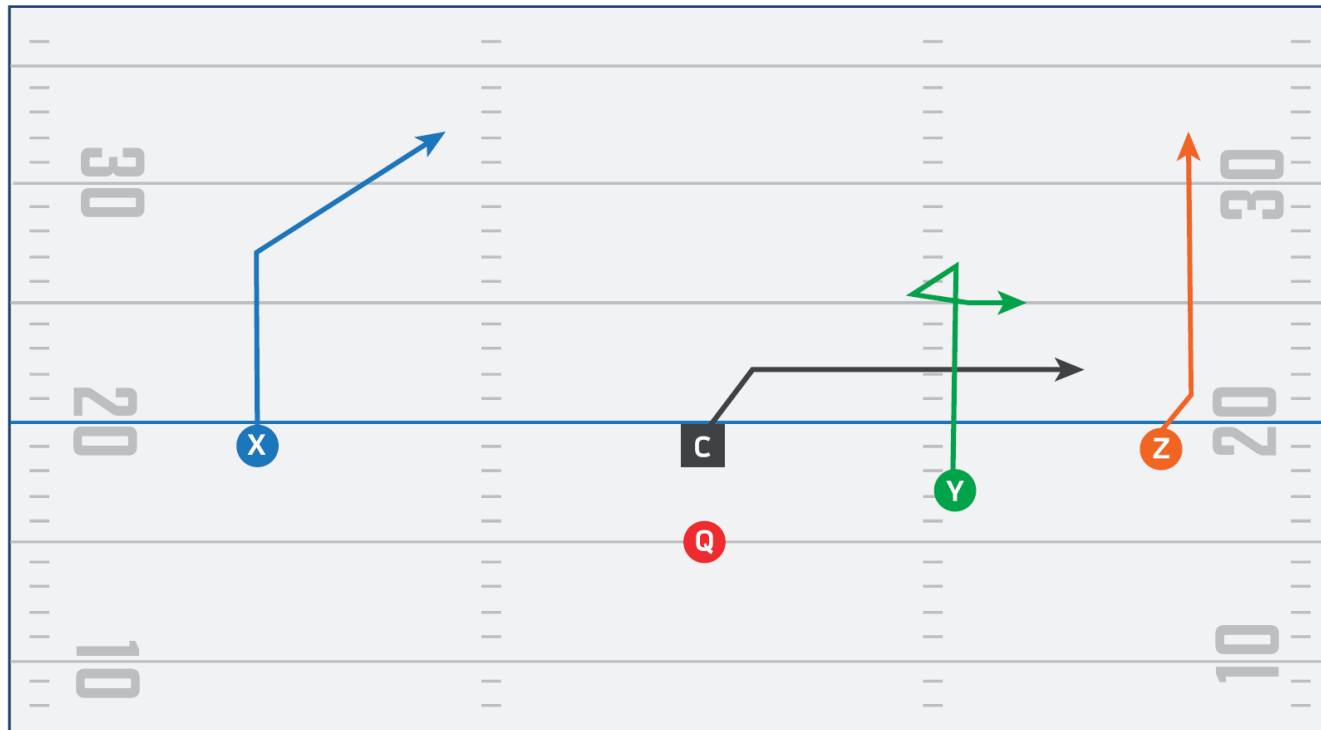
SINGLE BACK PLAY 3

Hand off to green for a run
or pass to any of the receivers



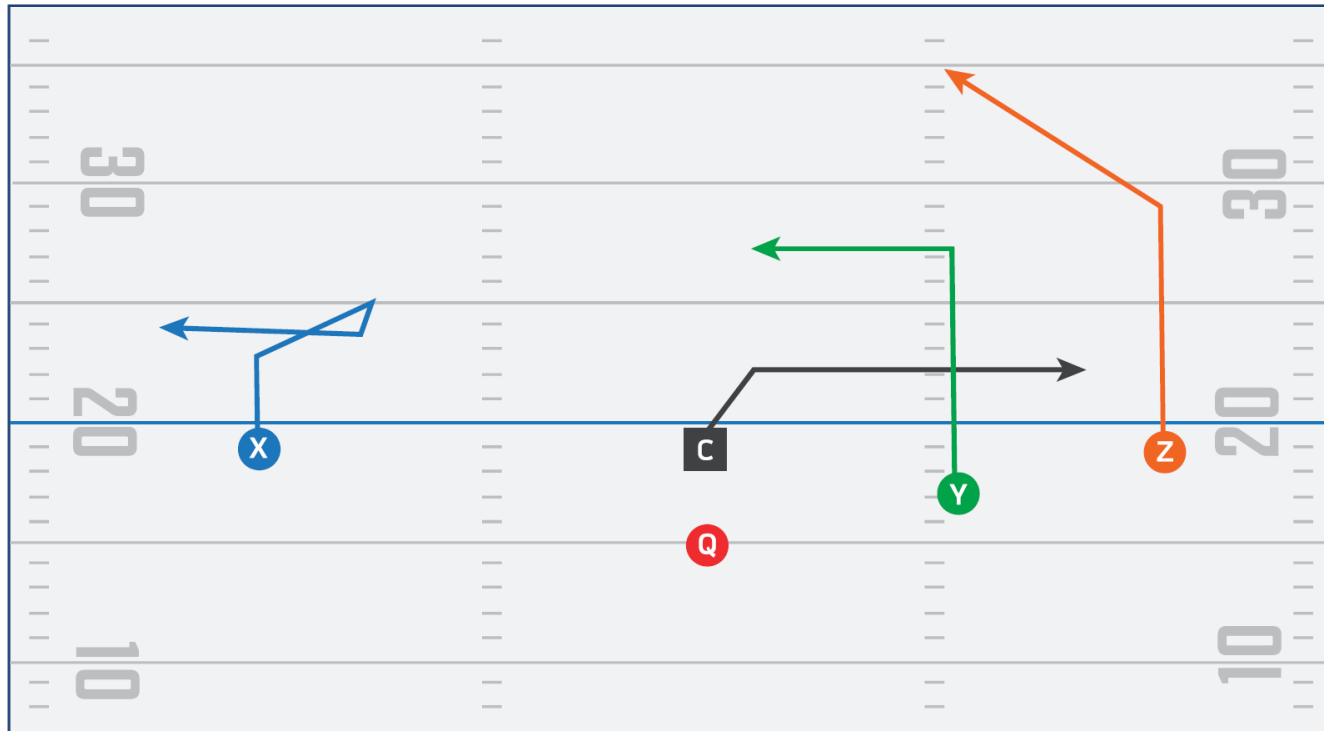
SPREAD PLAY 1

PASS PLAY



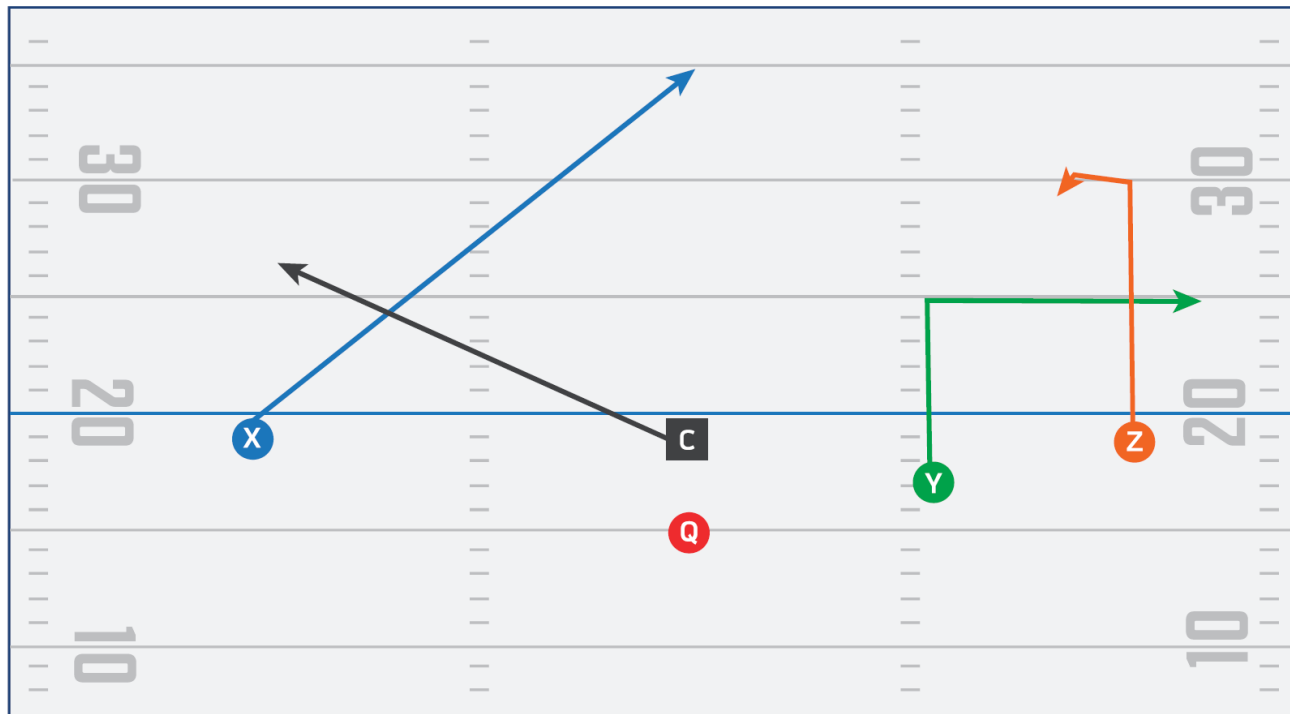
SPREAD PLAY 2

PASS PLAY



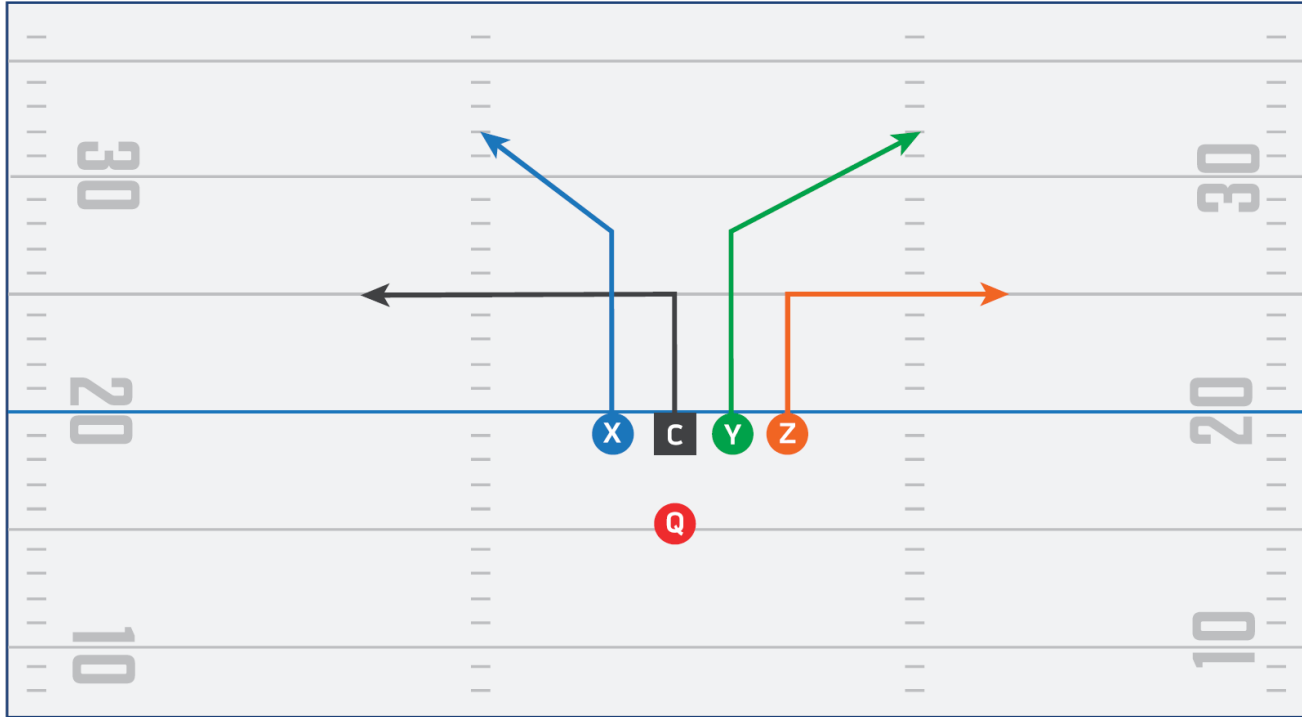
SPREAD PLAY 3

PASS PLAY



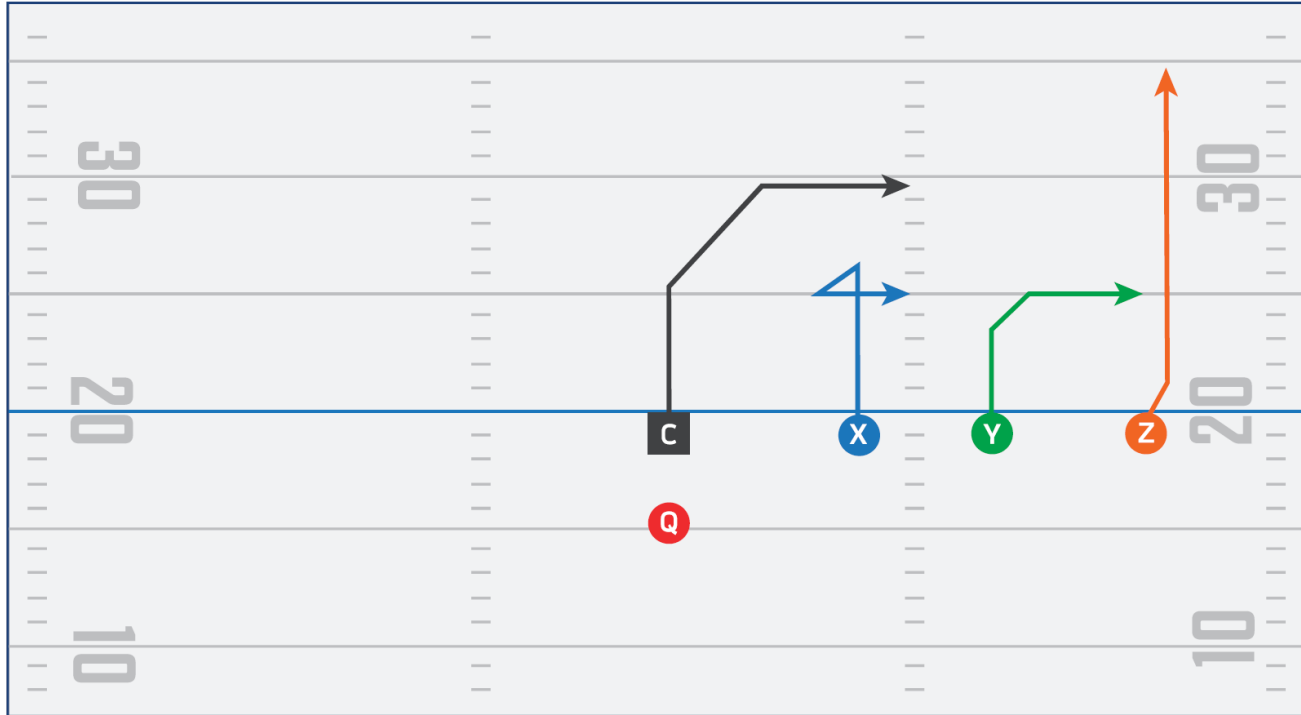
BUNCH PLAY 3

PASS PLAY



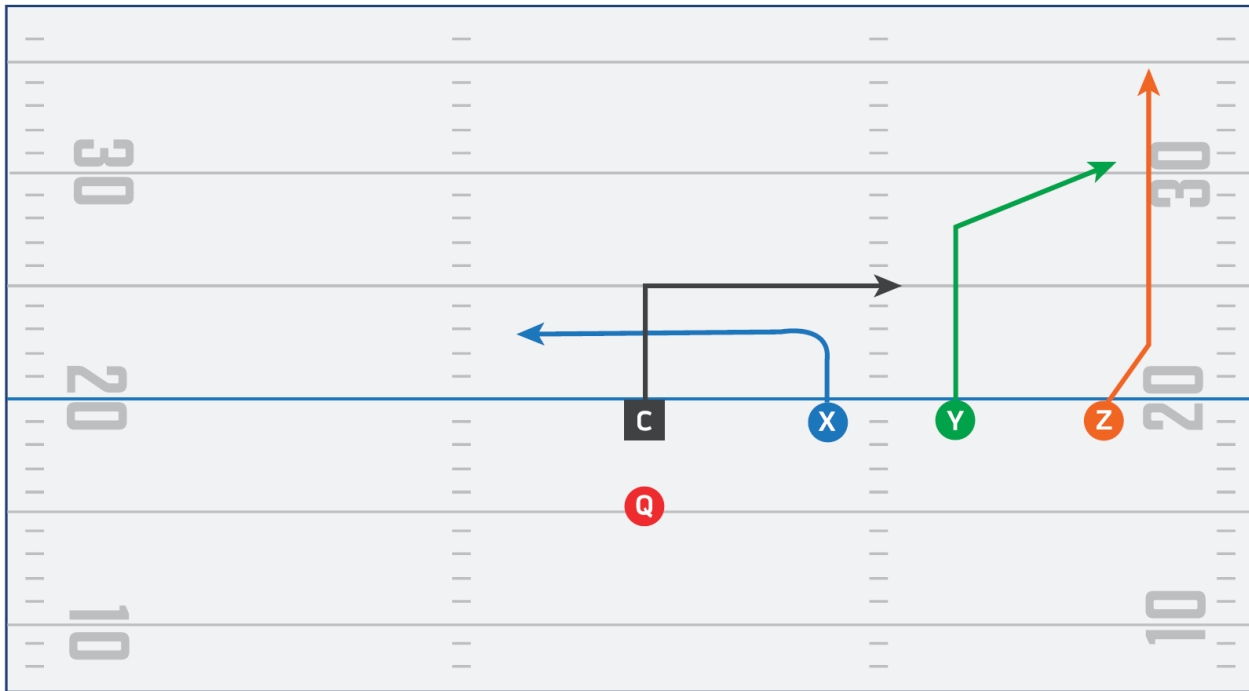
TRIPS PLAY 1

PASS PLAY



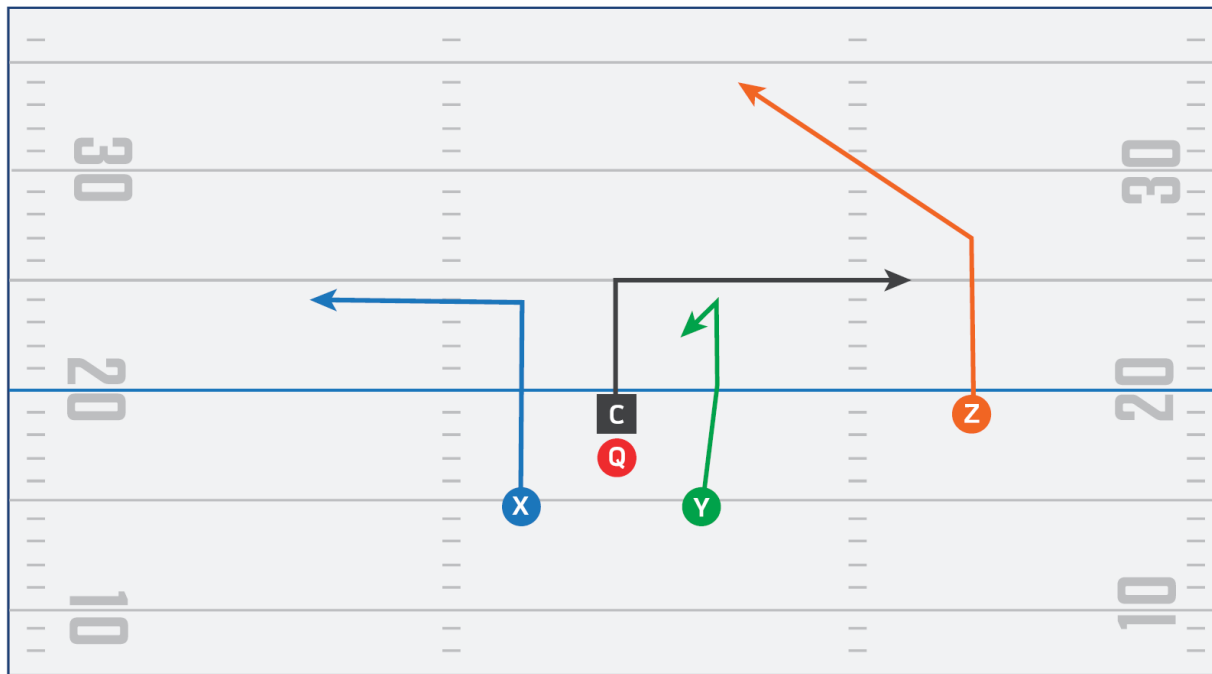
TRIPS PLAY 2

PASS PLAY



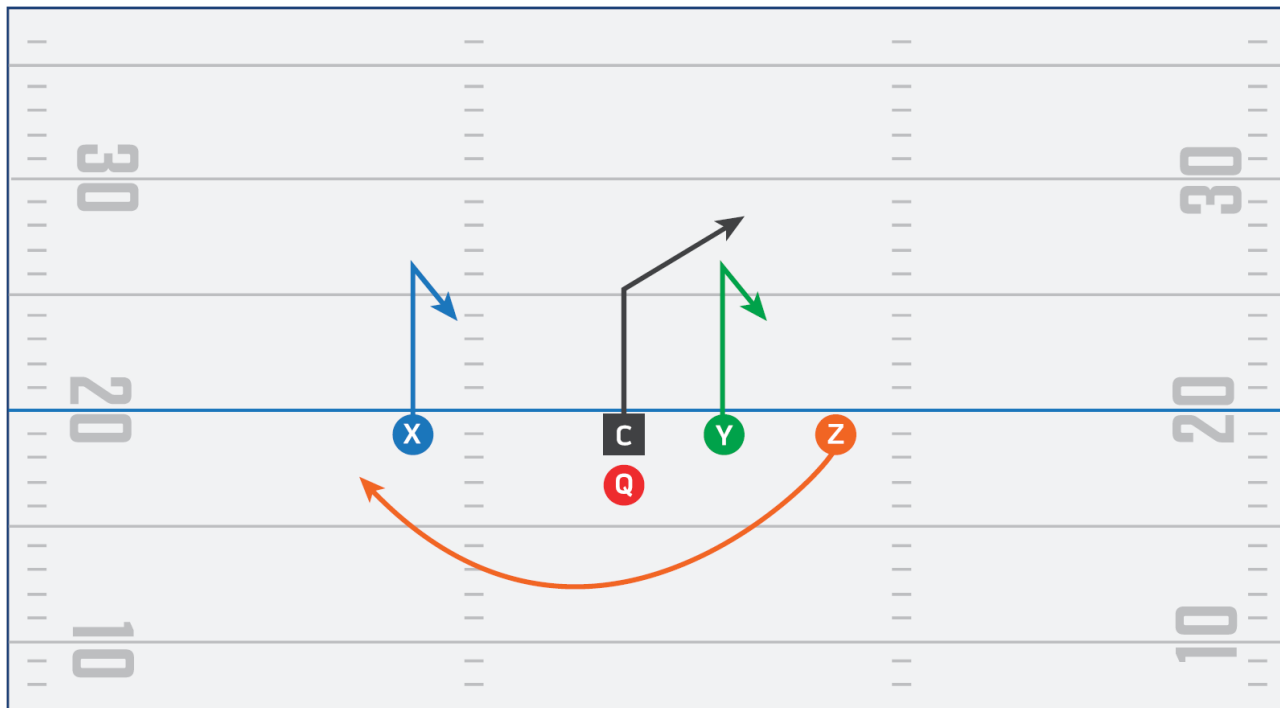
DOUBLE BACK PLAY 1

PASS PLAY – FAKE OR HAND OFF TO BLUE OR GREEN



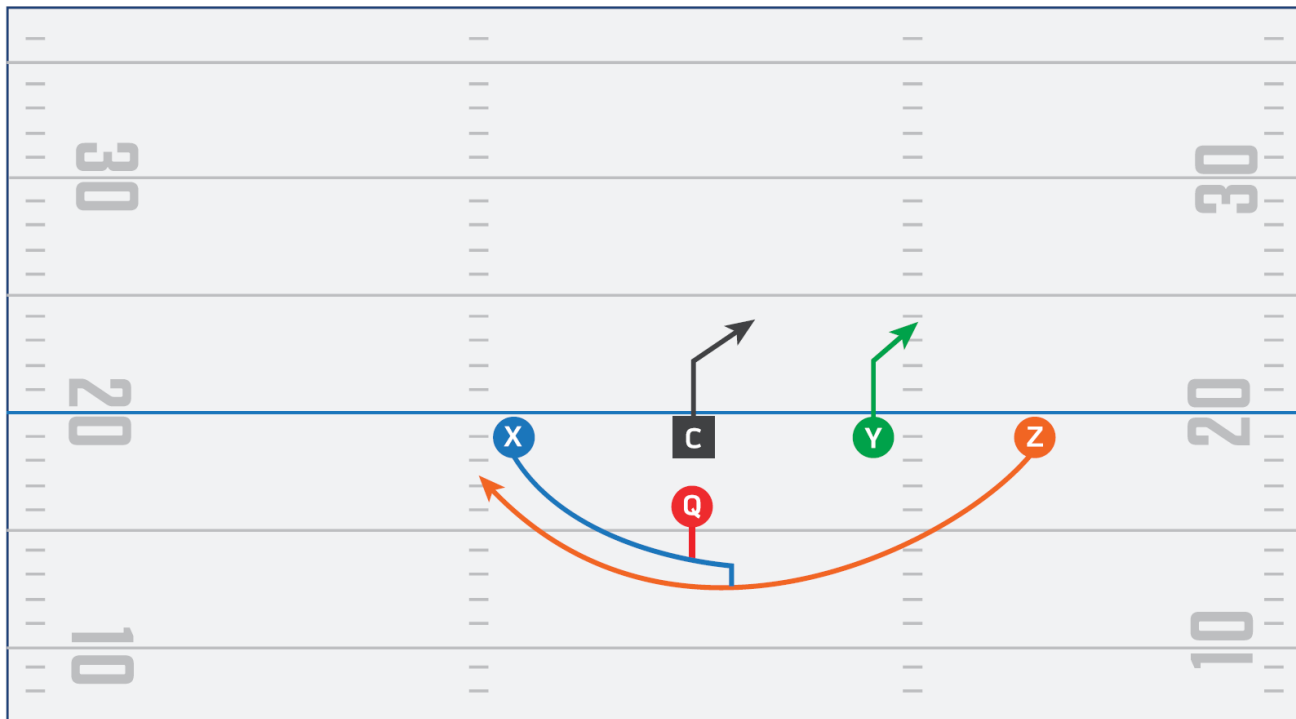
END AROUND

RUN PLAY - HAND OFF TO ORANGE



DOUBLE REVERSE

QUARTERBACK hands off to BLUE
BLUE hands off to ORANGE



EXPECTATIONS

- Everyone has different expectations of the coaches. Coaches, Parents, Players all have their own.
- Players expect to have fun regardless of game outcomes
- Studies have shown without exception that winning is **one of, if not the lowest expectation** of parents of youth athletes.
- A coach must balance these expectations, even when they appear to conflict. This helps ensure a positive and fulfilling experience for everyone involved.

OUR EXPECTATIONS

- Coaches will set a **positive example** for their athletes by their actions, words and responses to various situations at all times.
- Coaches **will not** engage in arguments or heated discussions with officials or other coaches at games.
- Coaches will conduct themselves in a **respectful manner** at all times.
- Coaches will focus on **player safety first**, ensuring that all interactions are positive.
- Do your best to **improve the skill level and understanding** of the sport among your players, **while making it fun** at every practice and game.

KEY RULE CHANGES

As of the 2026 Fall Flag season, Football Manitoba is adopting the IFAF Flag Rules which are used at all National and International competitions, including the 2028 Olympics.

The following are the most obvious changes from prior seasons:

- 4 downs to cross midfield and 4 downs to score – instead of 3 downs.
- Only one player can be in motion prior to the snap of the ball and only parallel to the LOS.
- Maximum of 2 “Blitzers” per play– formerly “Rusher” with a clear path.



FOOTBALL MANITOBA

**THANK YOU FOR
COACHING!**