

# Dr. G's Playbook

*Strategies for a winning season*



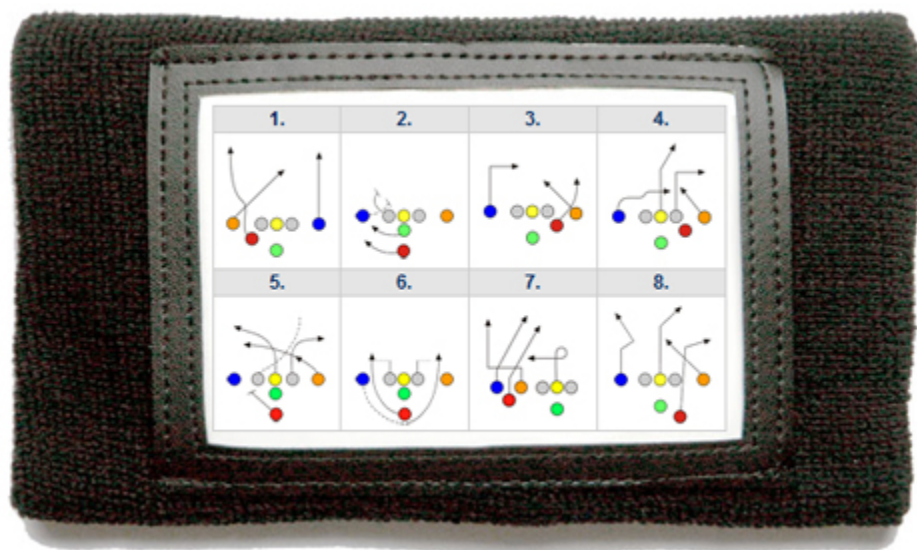
## 7 on 7 flag football plays

for youth and adults

-- and --

**Wristband Interactive**™

*mobilize your playbook*



***A MUST SEE!***

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# 7 Man Playbook

*Strategies for a successful season*

**Players and Coaches:** Welcome to the world's largest flag football resource on Earth. Our playbooks and interactive coaching tools provide everything you need to improve your team's performance on the football field. In addition to this full color playbook, we also offer:

## Additional Tools

**1. Wristband Interactive** – Wristband Interactive is an online tool that allows you to mobilize your playbook. Streamline communication and add your playbook to every player's wrist! **Approximately 65% of a football game is spent in the huddle** or in transition from play to play. Wristband Interactive will speed up your huddle and increases playing time substantially. This is a great communication tool and will dramatically improve your team's performance.

Every player should have a wristband, not just the quarterback. With a wristband on every player, you simply call the play (1 thru 8) and everyone instantly knows their assignment. Imagine a playbook that every player has on their wrist at all times. This is the perfect tool, regardless of experience level or sophistication, to develop a simplistic and efficient game plan that everyone can easily understand.

## Wristband Interactive™

*mobilize your playbook*

Improve communication with teammates	Select from hundreds of plays
Reduce explanations in the huddle	Print for your entire team
Clearly illustrate each player's assignment	Fits any size wristband
Audible from the line of scrimmage	Run the hurry up, no huddle offense
Increase actual playing time	Win the close games!

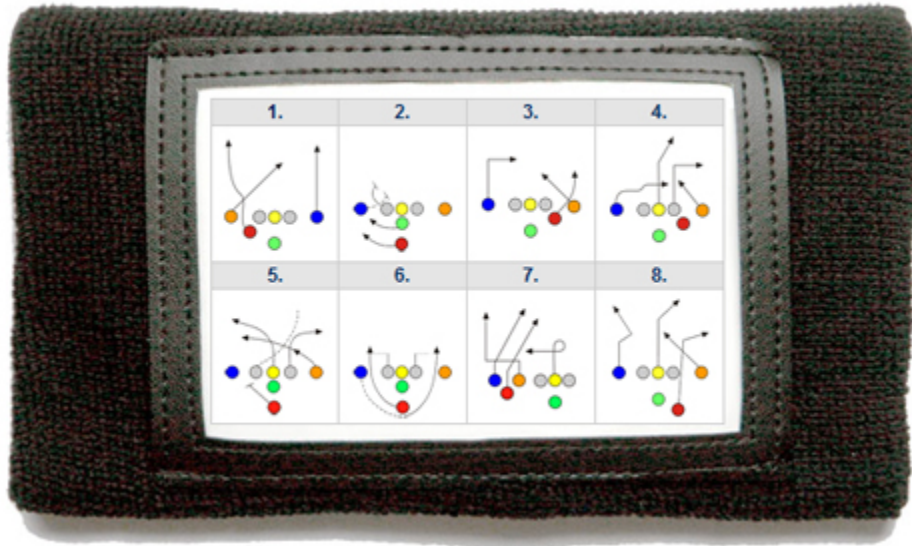
The concept of using wristbands became real to me when my team was down 28-0 at the half against the best team defense in the league. By avoiding huddles and calling plays from the line, we managed a major comeback and won 29-28, in the playoffs. If you are behind, and can't afford to huddle, you will love this tool.

Wristband Interactive is not only for a hurry up offense, however. It also helps you to stay organized, reduce chatter in the huddle, catch the opposing defense off-guard and easily illustrate everyone's exact assignment. Effective communication, in any team sport, is a critical component for success. Let us show you why Wristband Interactive wins games!

All of the features and benefits of Wristband Interactive are designed with one ultimate goal in mind - simplify the game and make it easier to communicate!

# Wristband Interactive™

*mobilize your playbook*



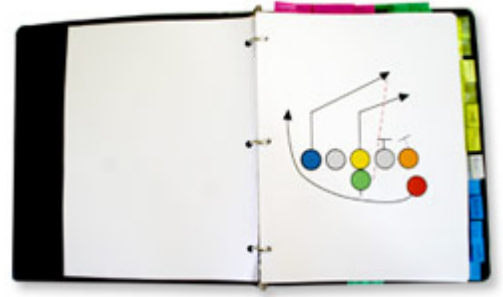
Visit our web site and try Wristband Interactive!" [www.FlagFootballStrategies.com](http://www.FlagFootballStrategies.com)

Pick your play!

 Insert for play: 2 60	 Insert for play: 60	 Insert for play: 8 60	 Insert for play: 60	 Insert for play: 1 60	 Insert for play: 60	 Insert for play: 60	 Insert for play: 4 60
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## 2. Flipbooks

Flipbooks are 8.5 x 11, high resolution print outs designed to illustrate a play to a large group. These are great for huddles since the plays are large, color-coded, and easy to read. While flipbooks are great for all ages, including adults, they are very effective for the younger kids that need a large, simplistic view of the play. The plays fit perfectly in a 3 ring binder. Flipbook upgrades are inexpensive and by logging into our site and clicking “upgrade to Flipbook.”



**TIP:** Create tabs or sections in your flipbook and organize a section for your run plays, pass plays, trick plays, and 2 point conversions. This will speed up your play calling and allow you to stay organized in the heat of the battle!

**3. Downloadable Youth Coaching Guide – SIMPLIFY your game plan, improve communication and GUARANTEE a great experience for your KIDS! The guide includes strategies, tips, drills and great practice ideas that are easy to implement.**

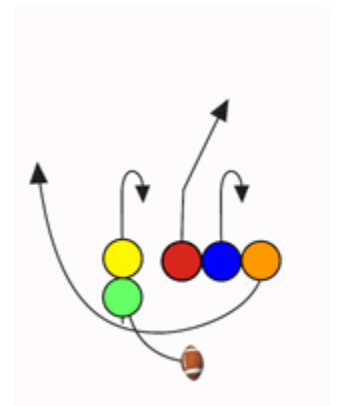
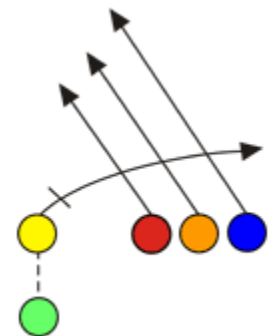
**Need Wristbands?** We offer great prices on high quality Under Armour “Playmaker” Wristbands. We carry Youth, PRO and Double PRO and can have them shipped to your door FAST.

This playbook has hundreds of color-coded plays for both offense and defense. Note that the defensive plays are at the end of the playbook.

## Understanding the Playbook

### Offensive Tips

1. Each player is assigned a specific color. To avoid confusion, each player should remain the same color throughout the game (or for at least an entire drive)
2. A small notch at the end of a player's route means block (if it's allowed in your league).
3. A small notch during a player's route means block/delay, then run your route.
4. A small football indicates who is carrying the ball. If the ball changes hands, you may see more than one ball.
5. Small notch from the QB's line is a FAKE handoff.
6. A black dotted line means a player is in motion or “jet motion”. Black dotted lines are also used to indicate a primary receiver or pitch play.
7. A red dotted line means a pass behind the line of scrimmage or double pass.
8. If the QB is rolling out, you will typically see a little ball at the end of his line. If you see no ball with the QB,



they are standing in the pocket and passing.

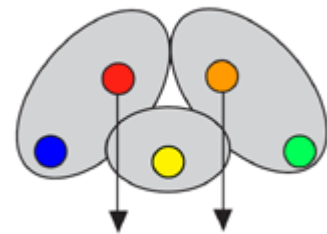
9. A dotted line between the QB and the center indicates a shotgun formation. If the Q is attached to the center, it's a standard "under center" snap.

10. If there is no route for your player, stay home and block. A small "notch" at the beginning your route means that there is a slight delay/block, prior to running the route. Assign a color to each player for the entire game. If there is a substitution, the new player gets the color of the player leaving the field.

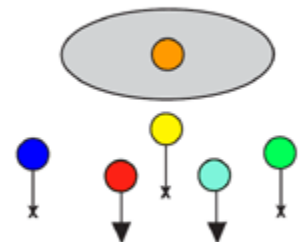
11. Note: Some offensive plays show the two linemen as grey players. As the program developed, we began making each of the players different colors, one grey, one light blue.

### Defensive Tips:

1. Each player is assigned a specific color.
2. Big grey bubbles indicate defensive zones.
3. If a player leaves his "bubble" (zone), he is no longer responsible for that area. If a player is in, or attached to, a zone, he is responsible for that area throughout the play.

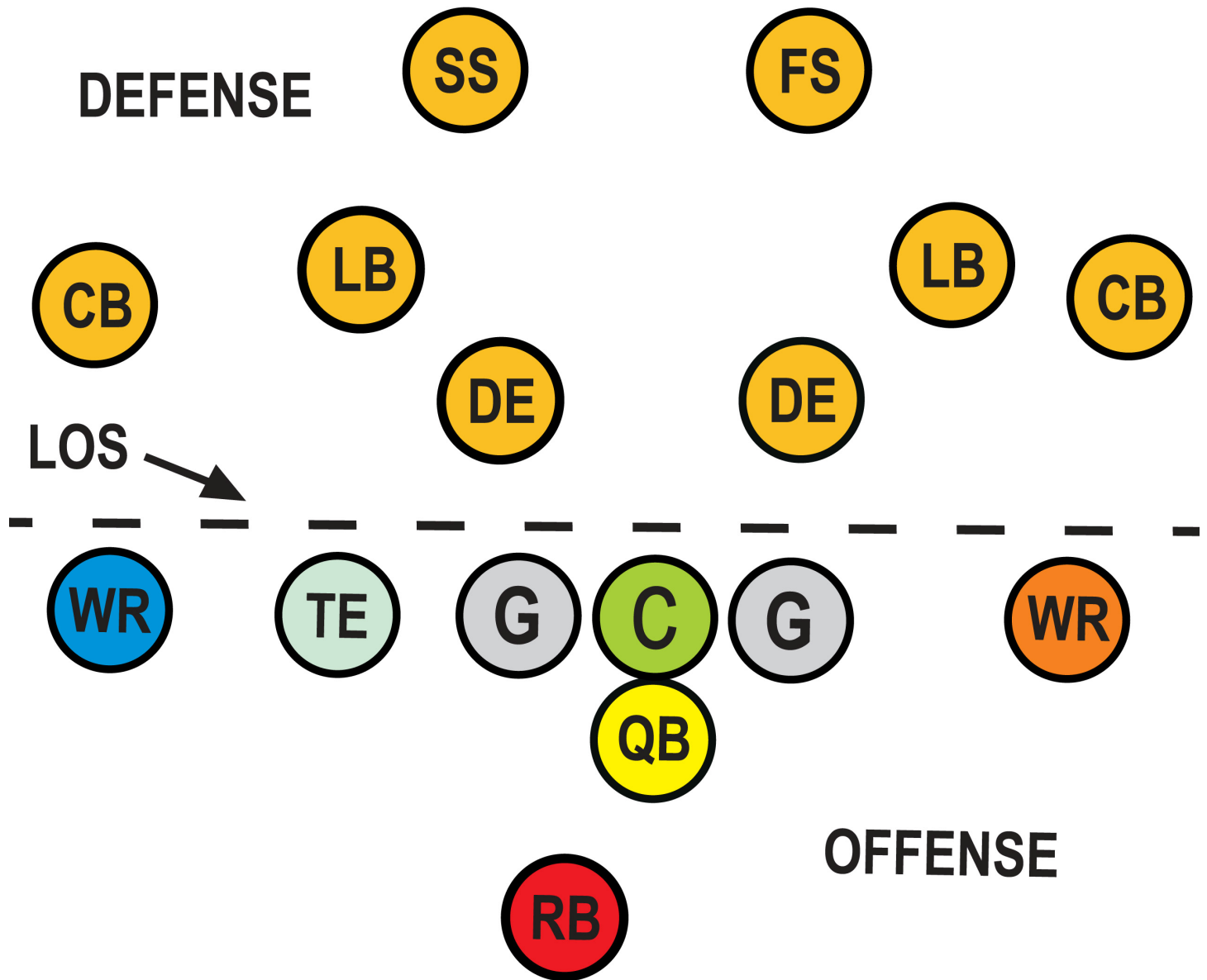


3. Arrows at the end of the route indicate blitz.
4. An "X" at the end of a route indicates man-to-man coverage.
5. A notch at the end of a route indicates a "bump-n-run" (if it is legal in your league).



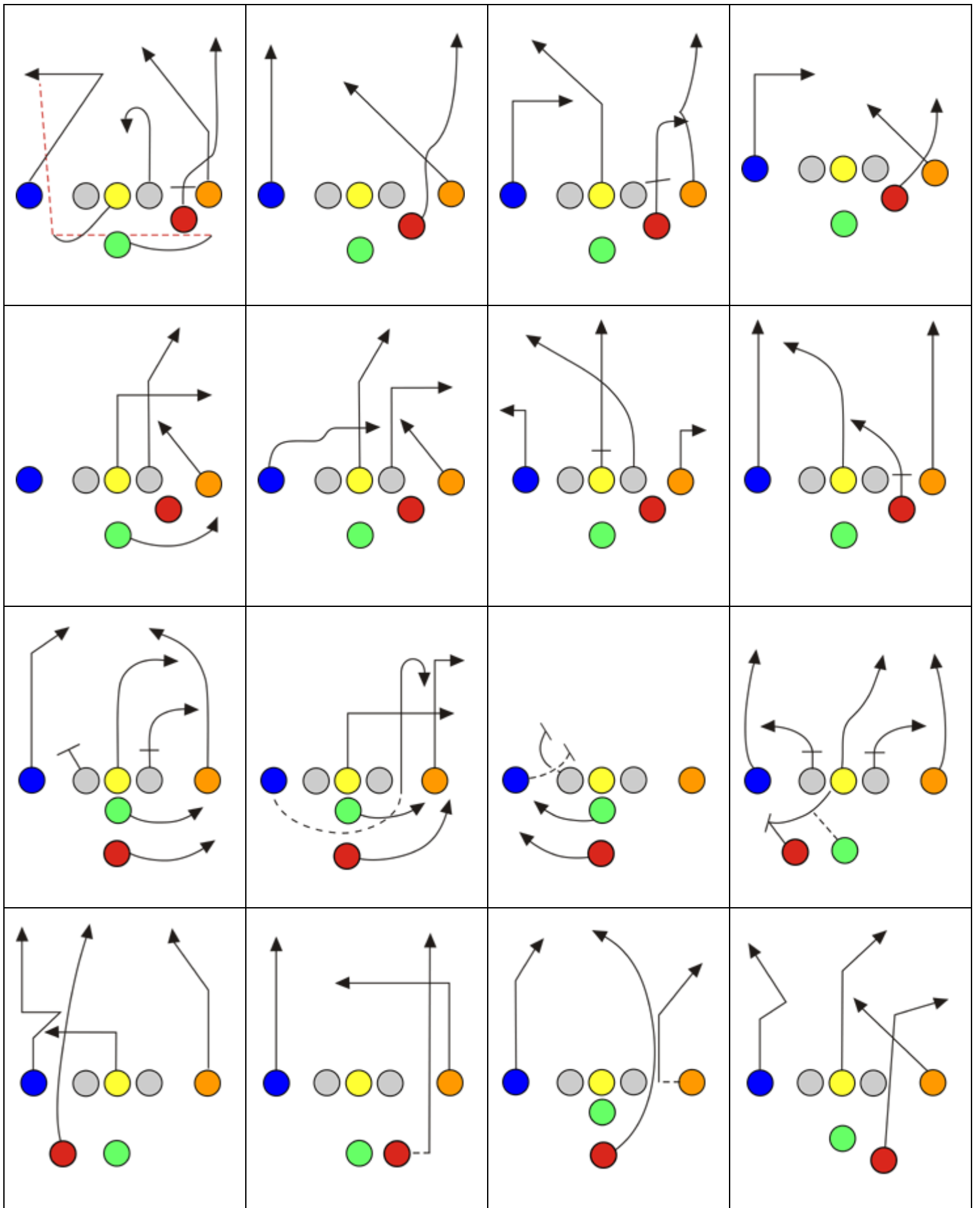
**\* Note that defensive plays are at the end of the offensive plays in this Ebook.**

Typical players and associated acronyms - Note: Some players may be absent, depending your league type.

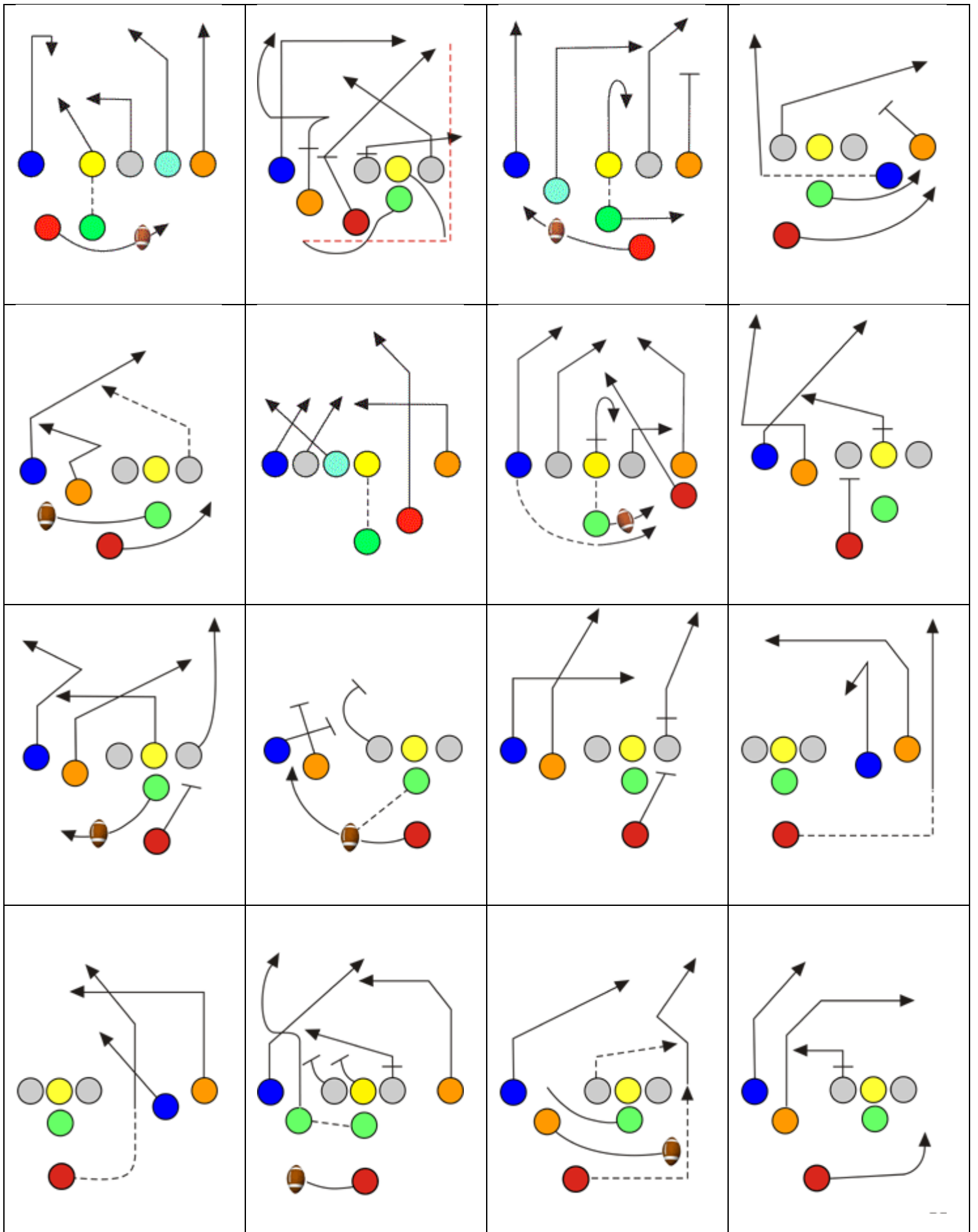


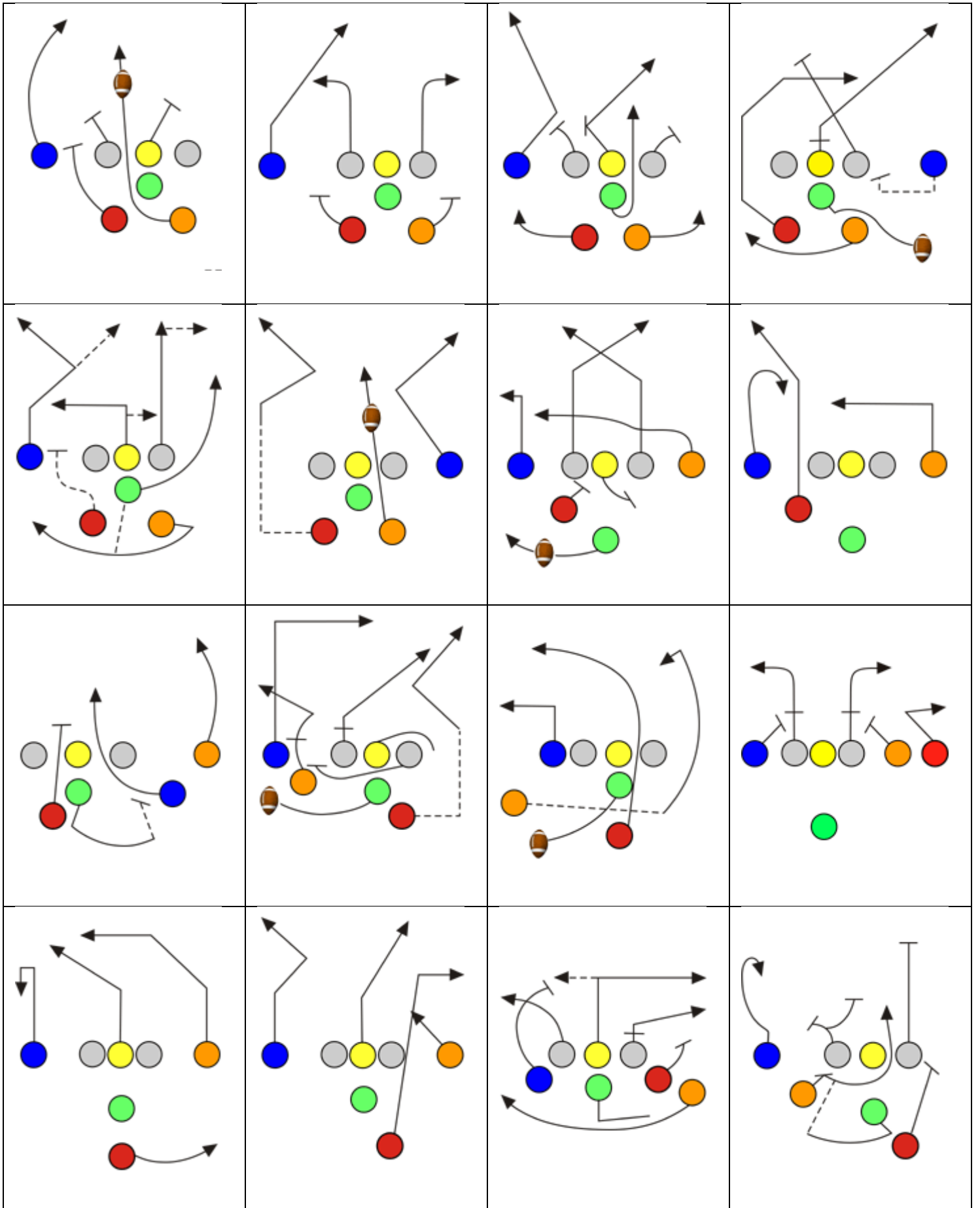
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- |                           |                                |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>C - Center</b>         | <b>DE - Defensive End</b>      |
| <b>QB - Quarterback</b>   | <b>LB - Linebacker</b>         |
| <b>RB - Running Back</b>  | <b>CB - Cornerback</b>         |
| <b>FB - Fullback</b>      | <b>FS - Free Safety</b>        |
| <b>TE - Tight End</b>     | <b>SS - Strong Safety</b>      |
| <b>WR - Wide Receiver</b> | <b>LOS - Line of Scrimmage</b> |
-

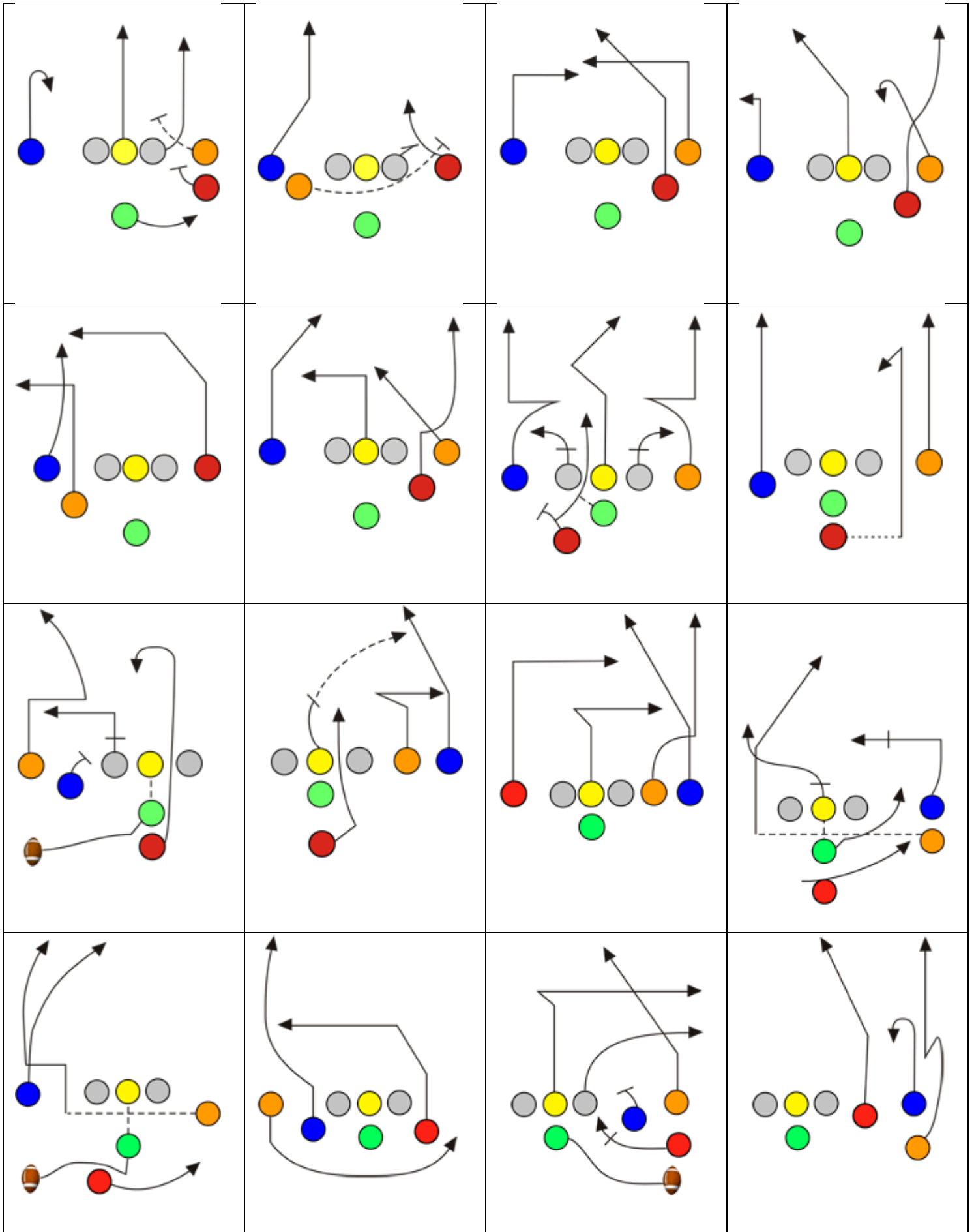




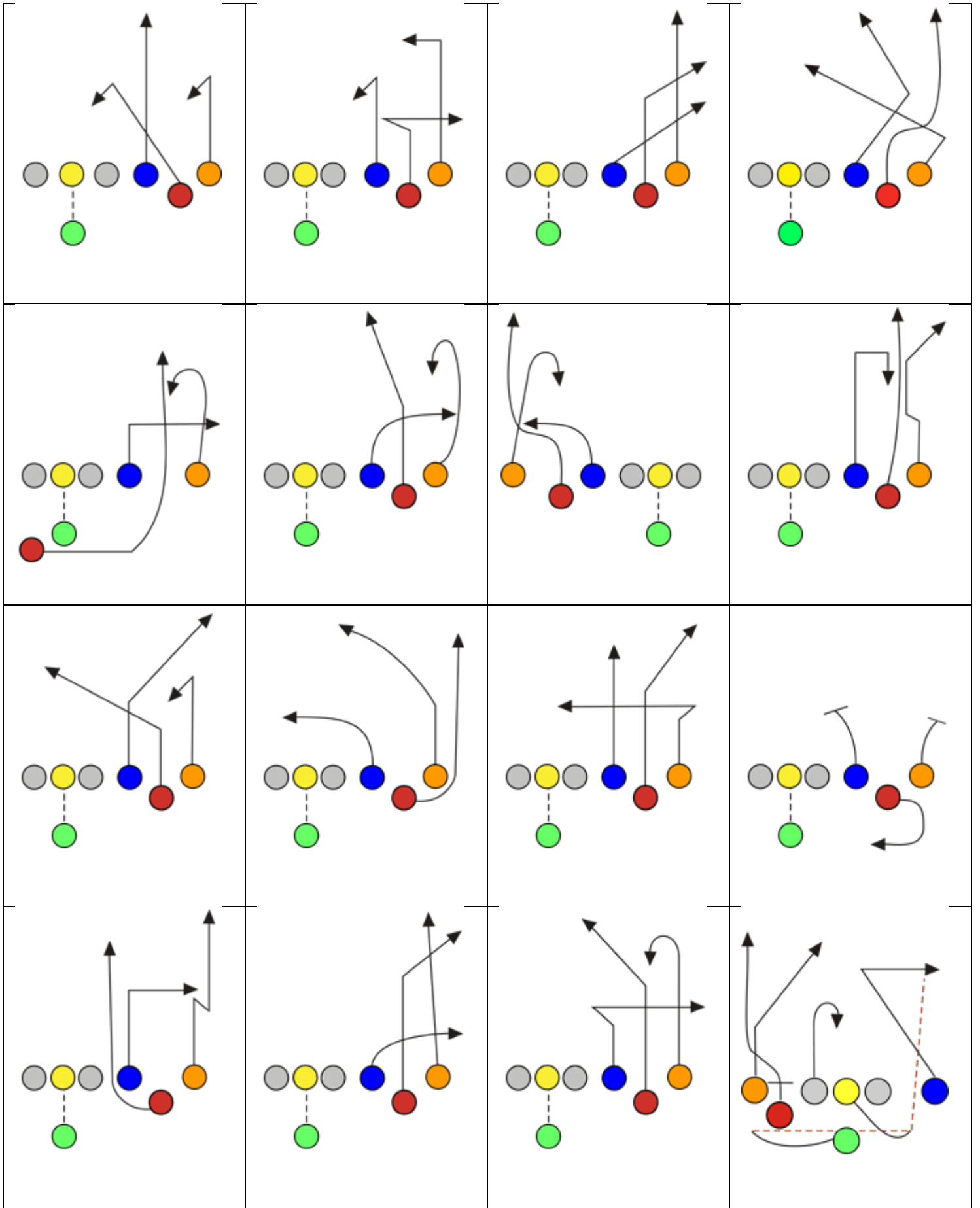


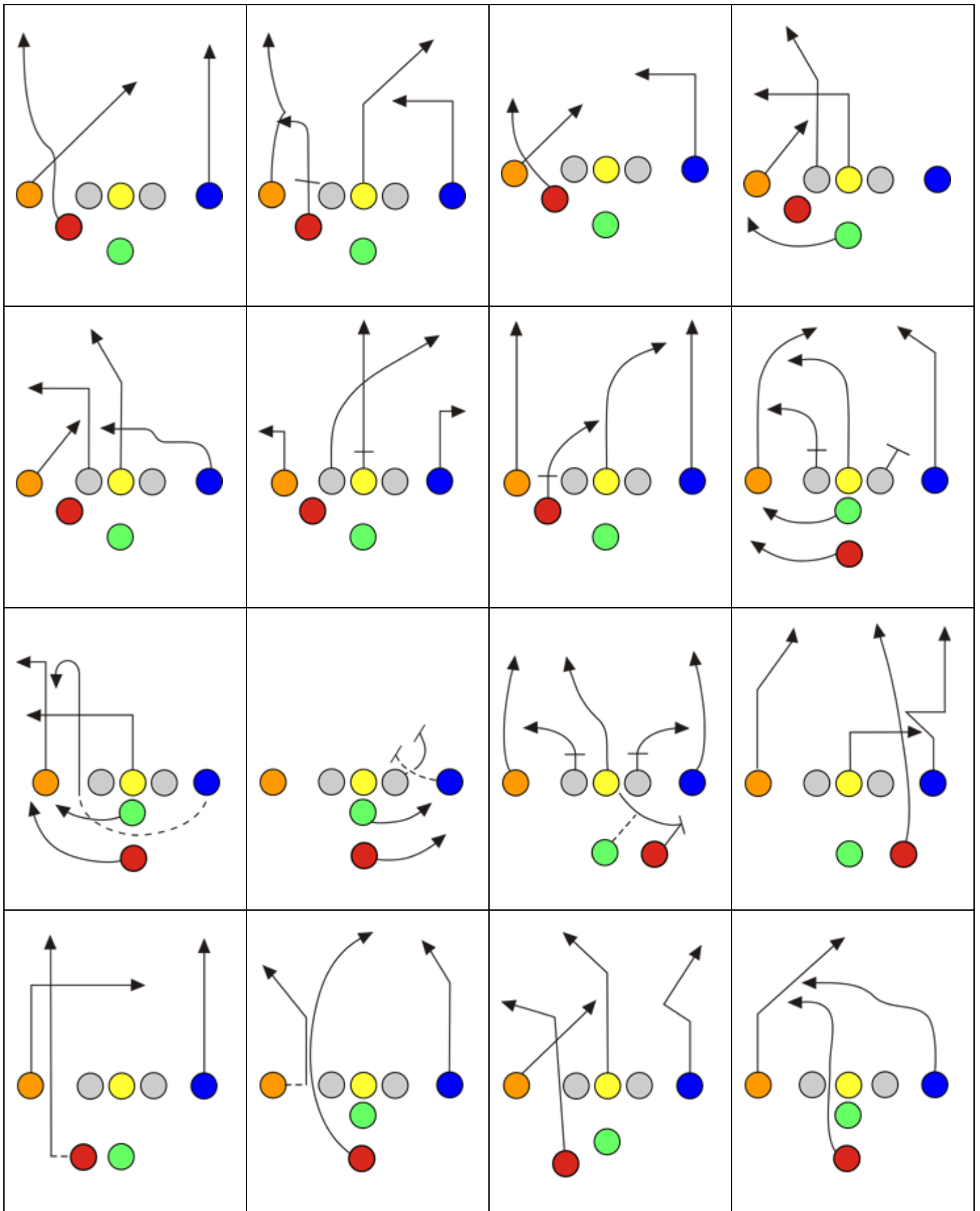




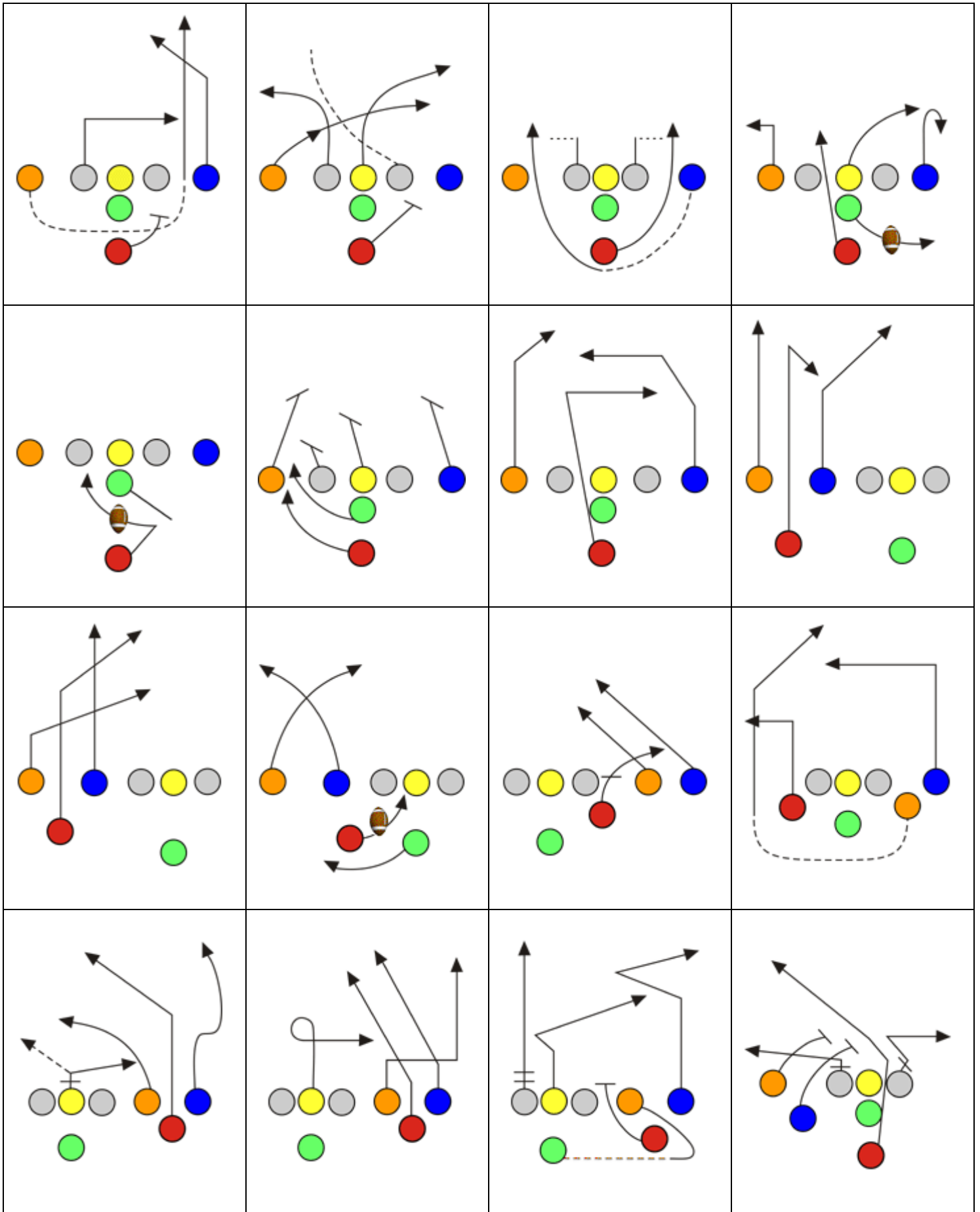




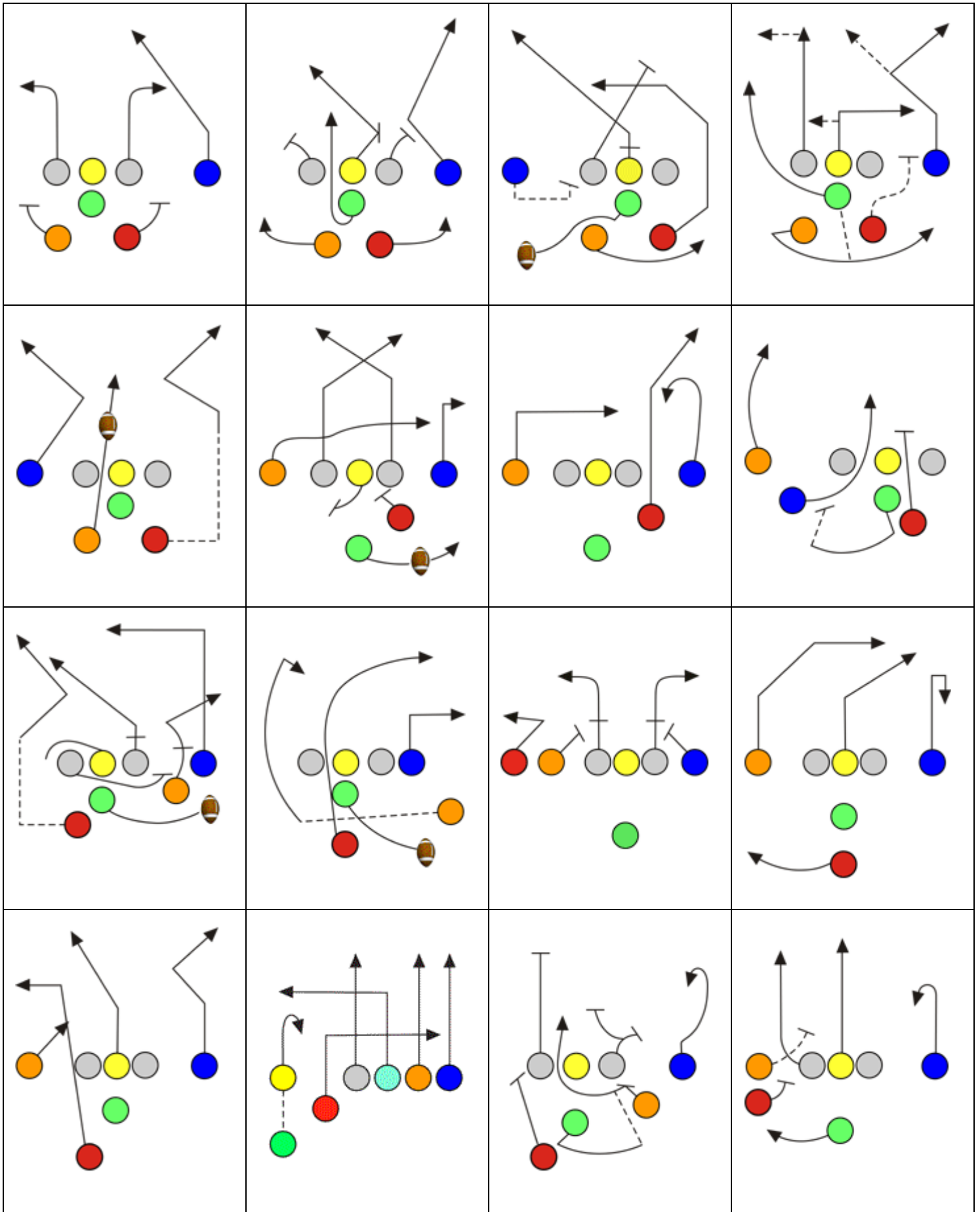


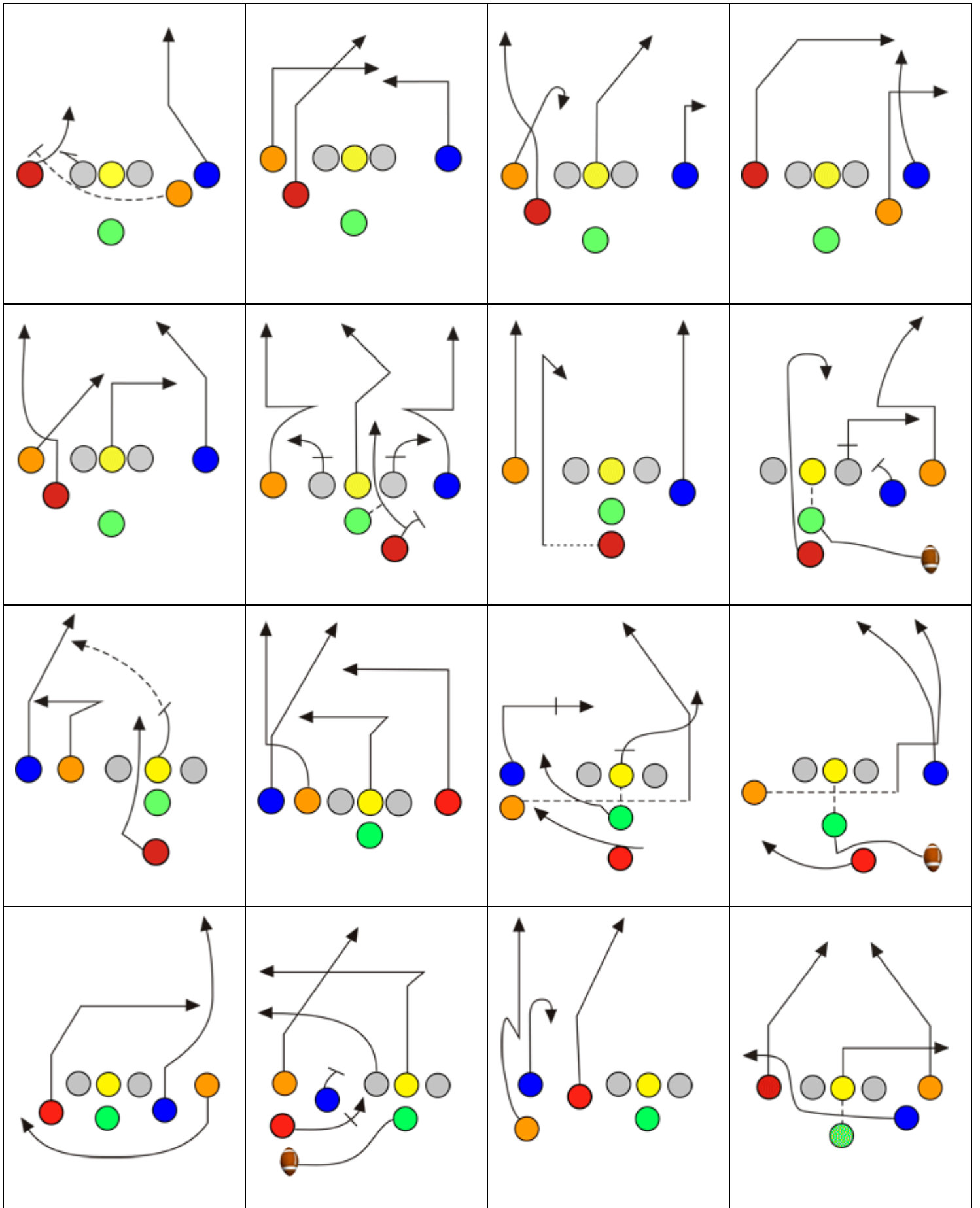


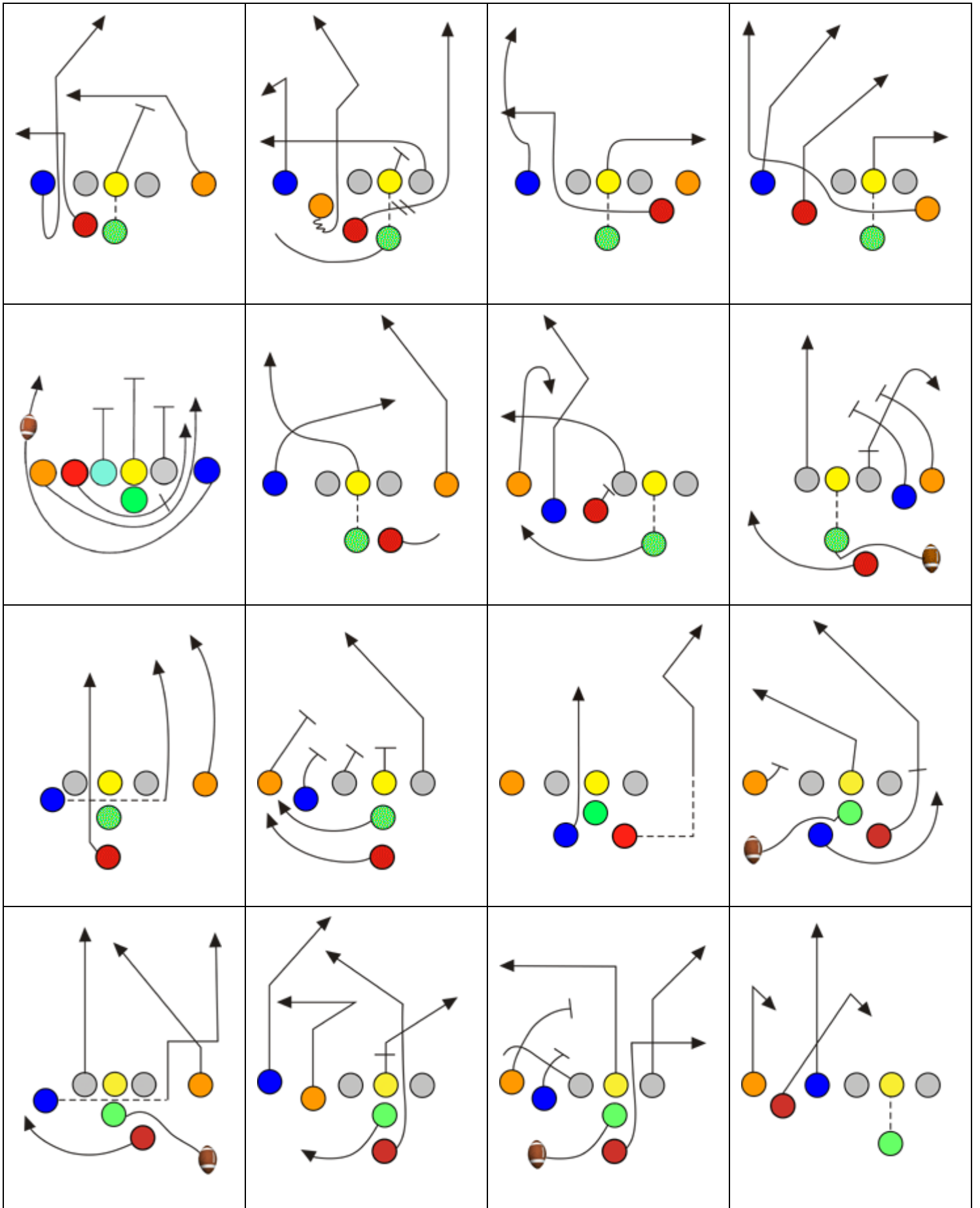


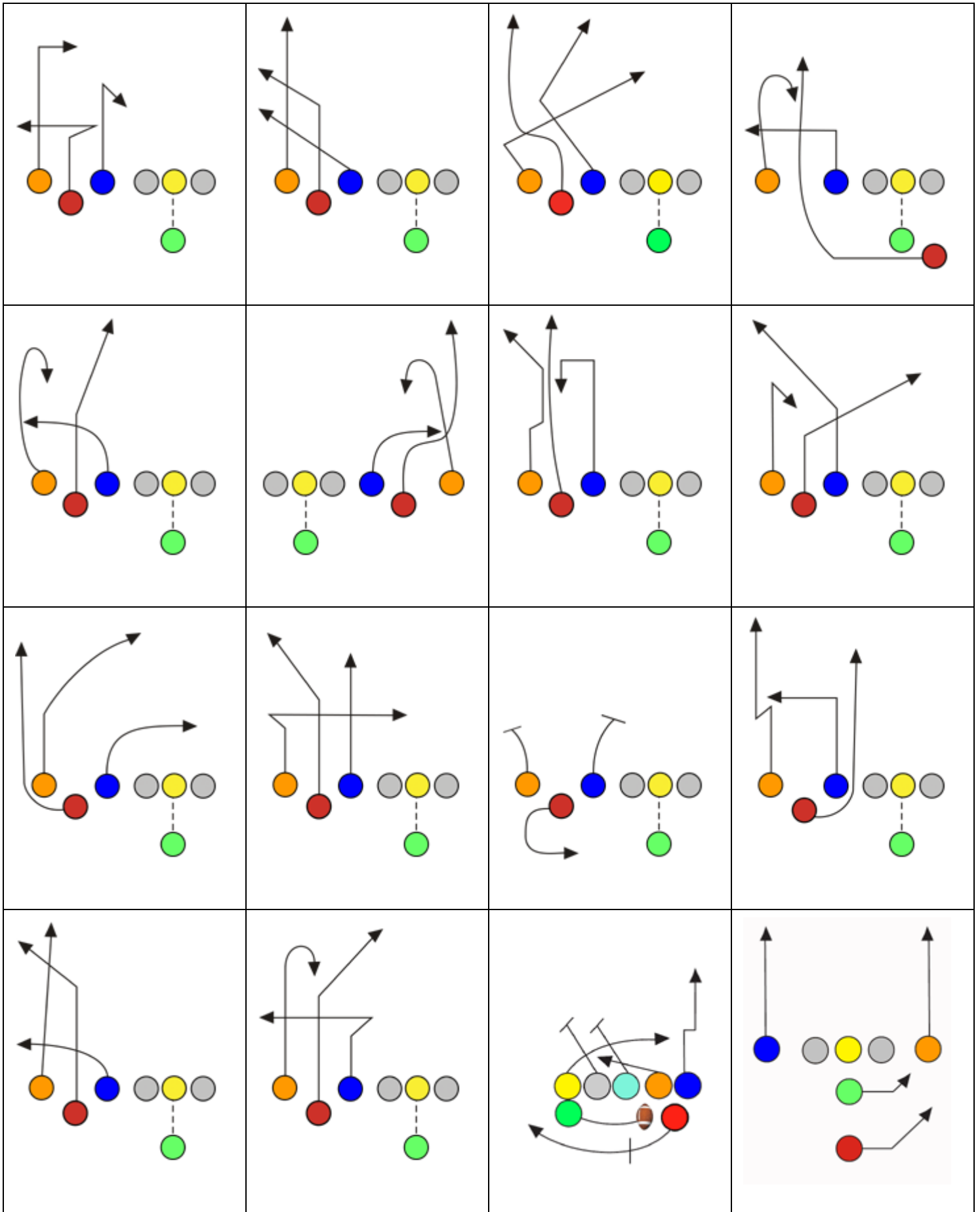




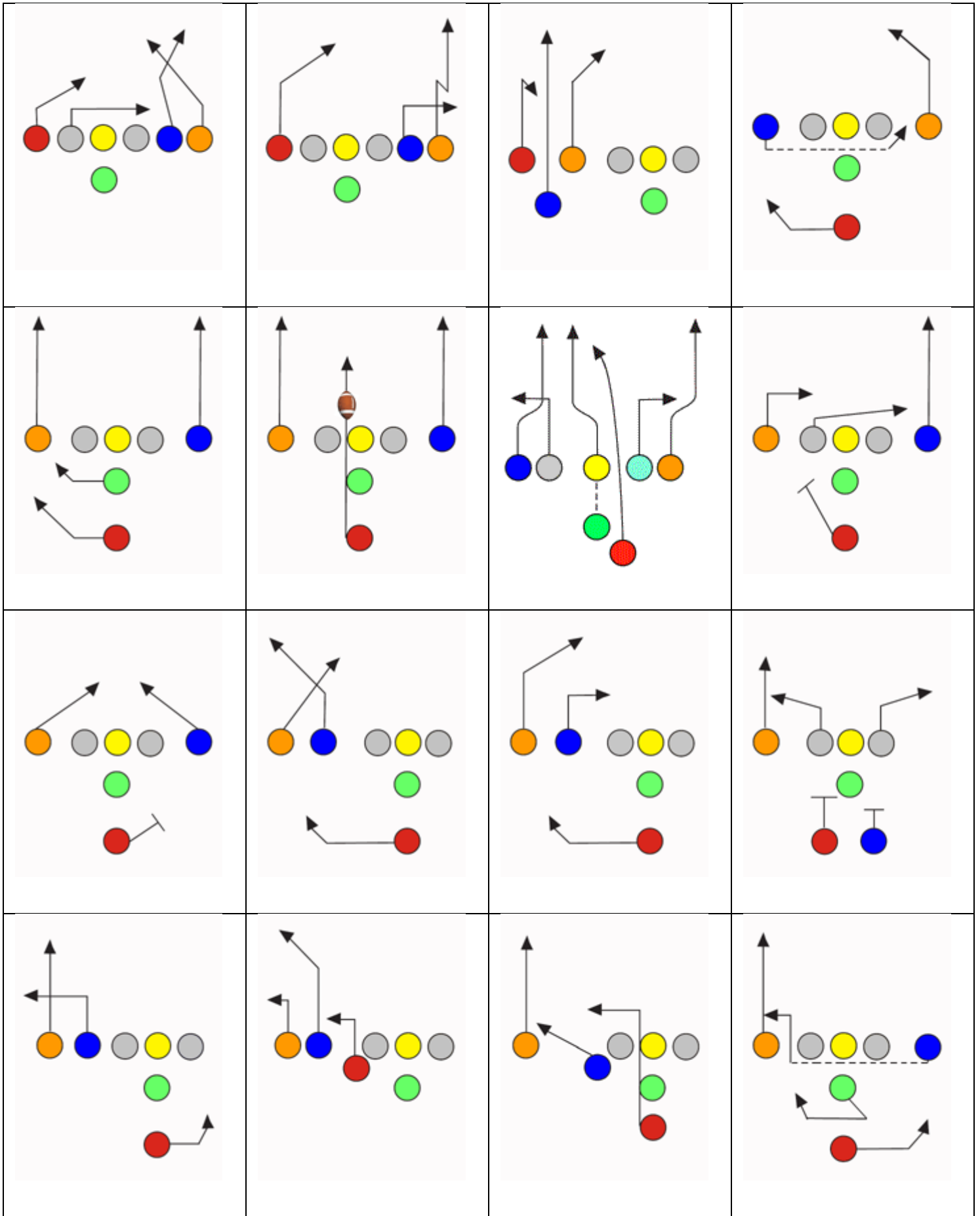




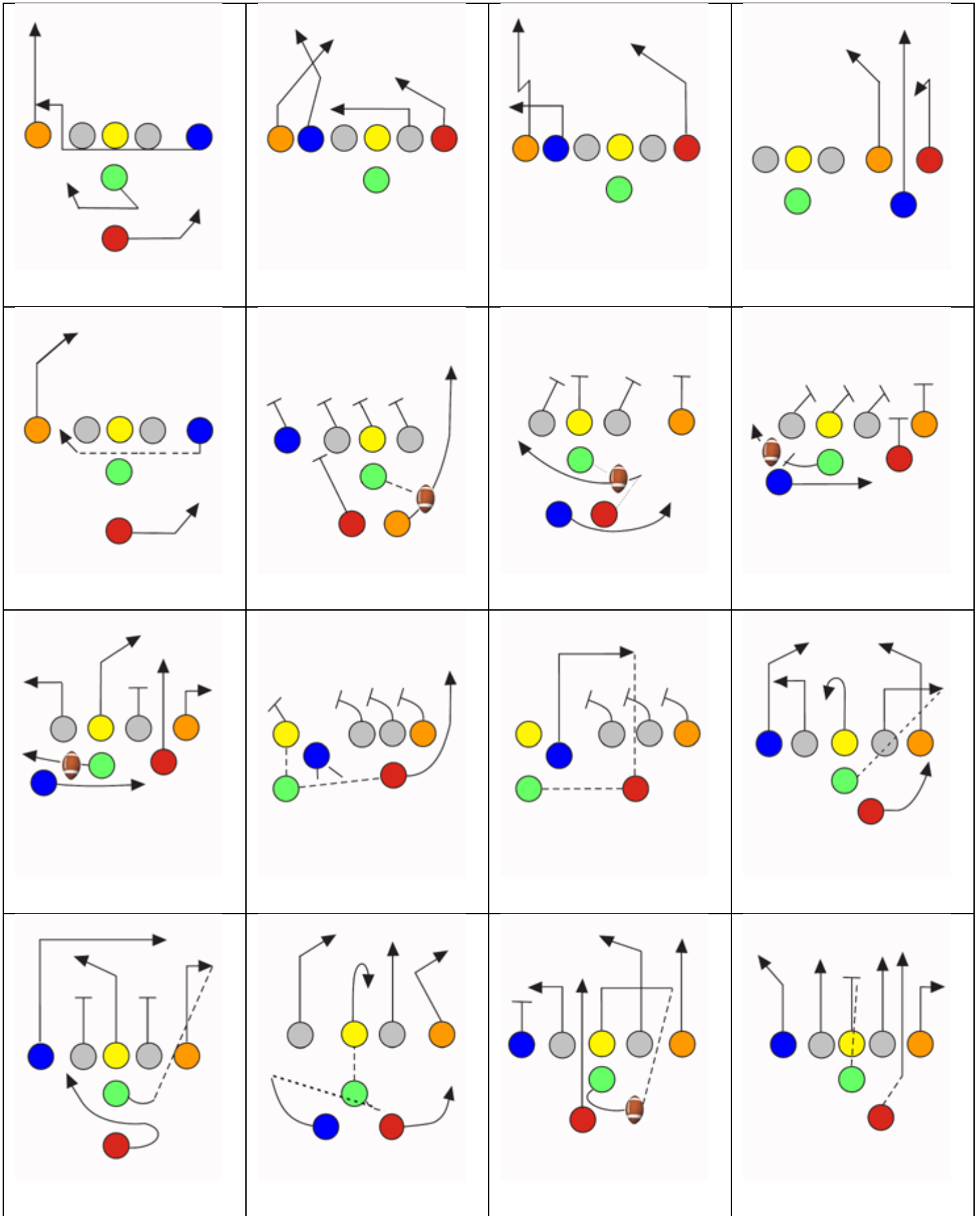




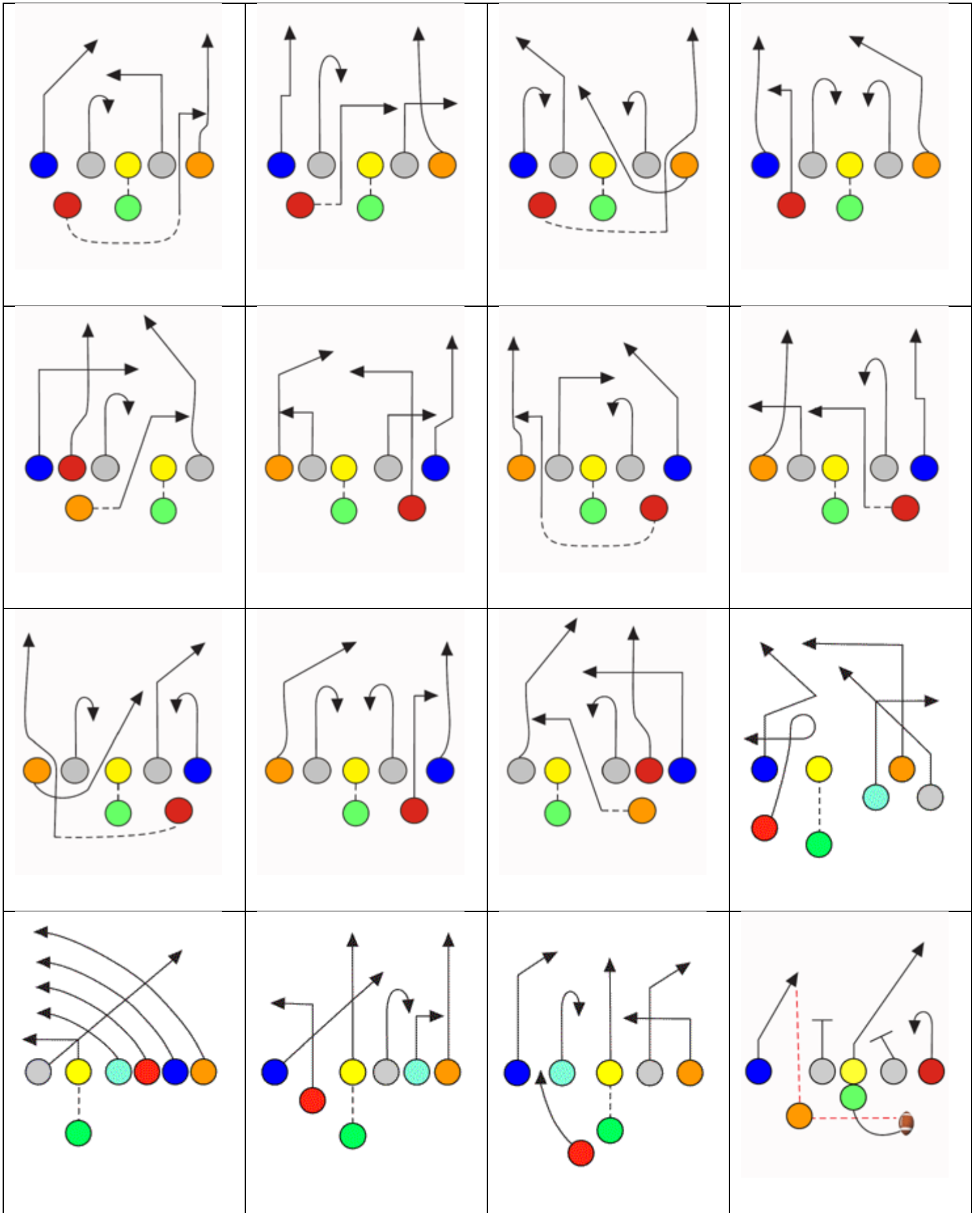




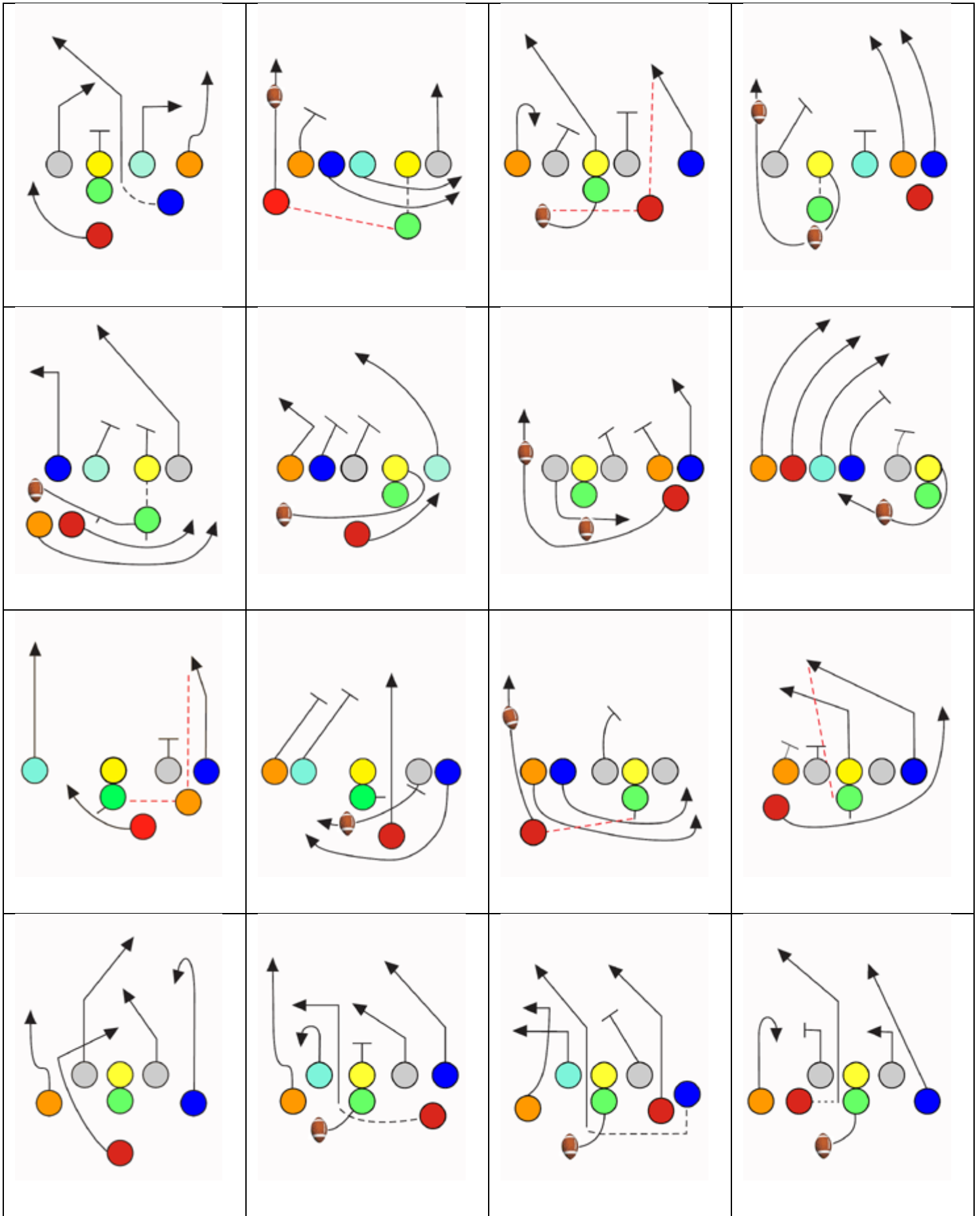


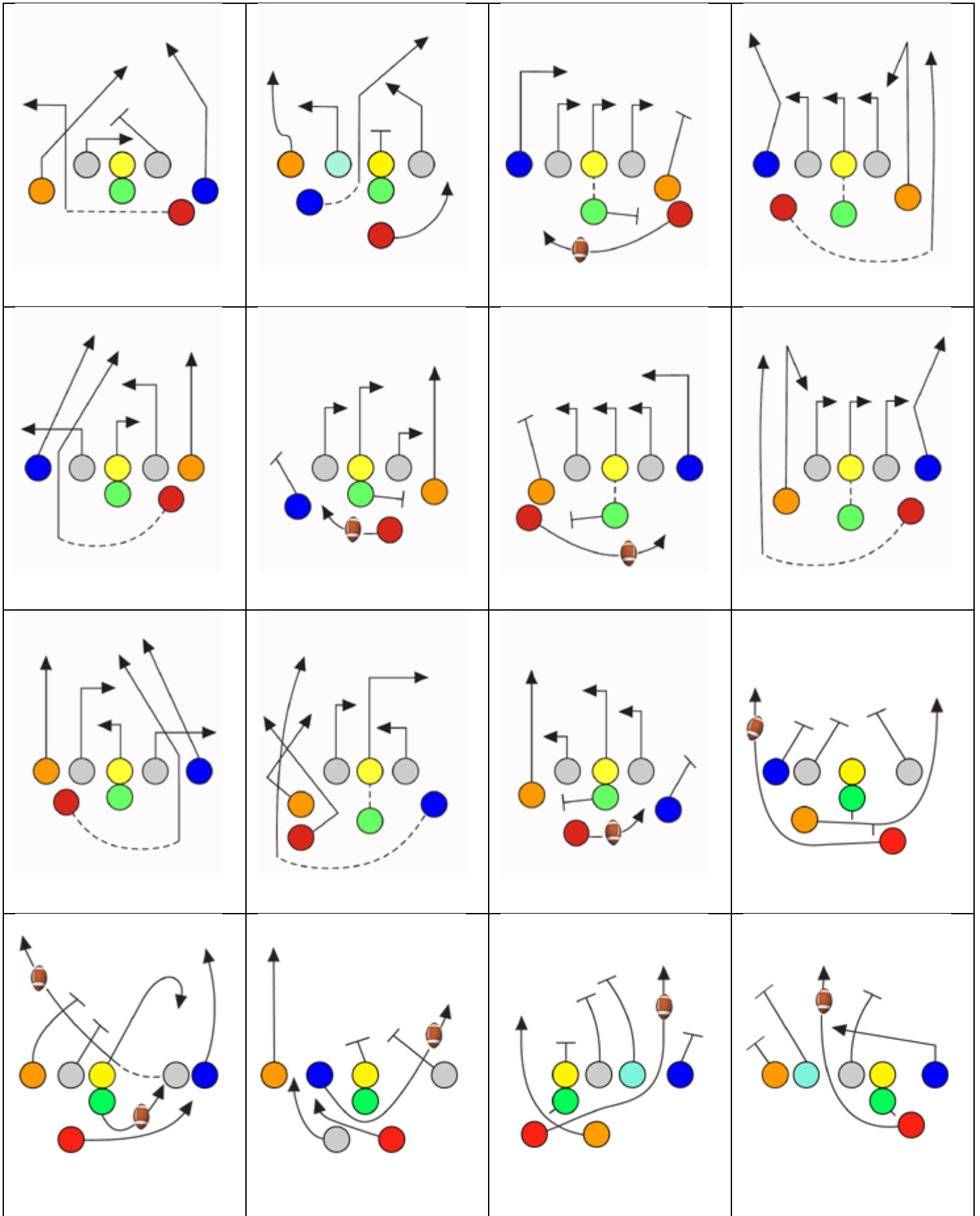


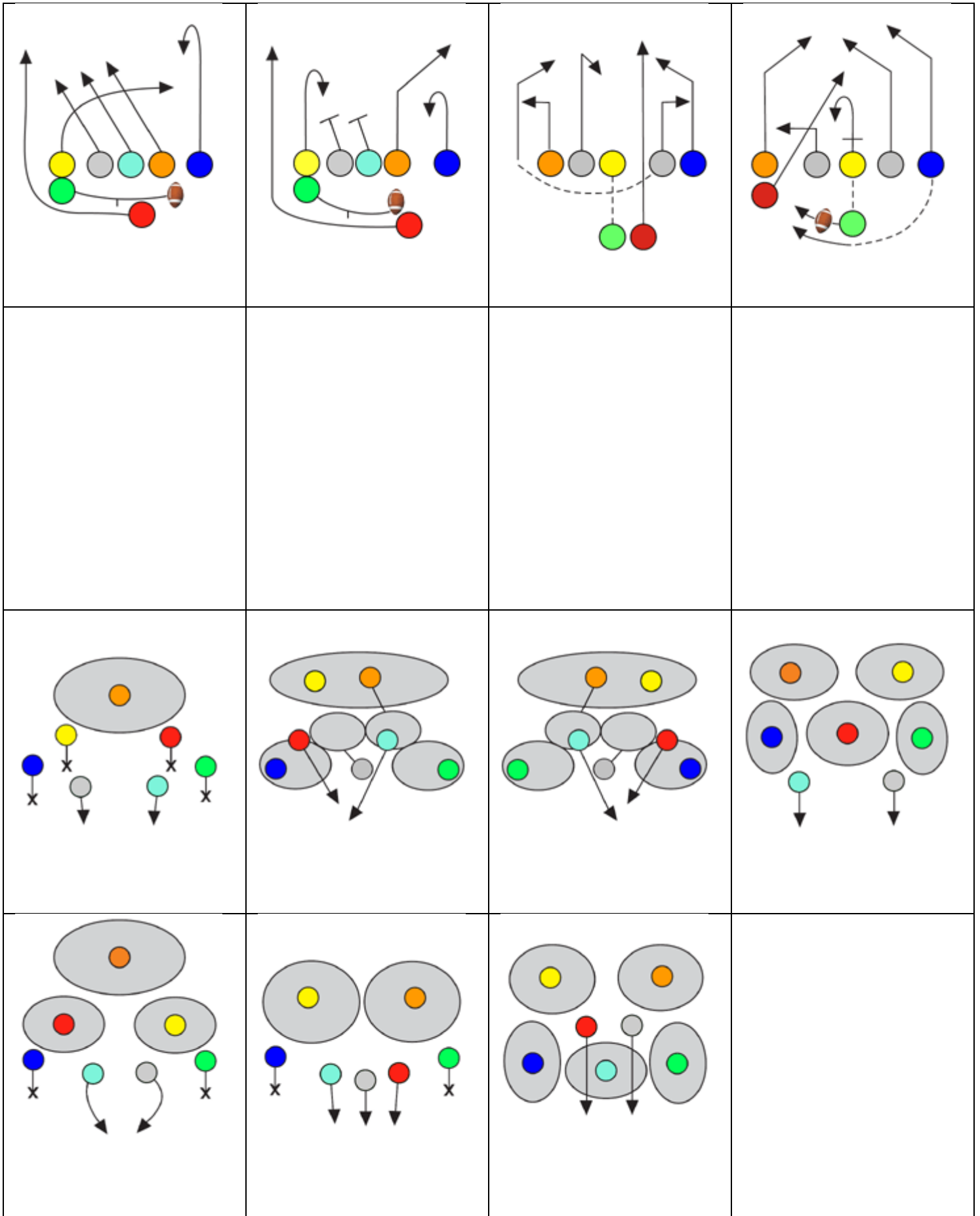












## **Practice**

Most teams are only able to put in a couple hours of practice each week, if that. Cover as many things as you can in practice without skipping the fundamentals. You should plan out your practices, just as you do a game. Prior to practice, make a list of items that you want to address.

What you teach will vary from week to week based on what your team struggled with in their last game or what the players need to be prepared for the next week. The list can range from catching balls to flag pulling. If your team struggled with coverage, then teach every aspect of coverage, from back peddling to intercepting the ball.

Practice should be fun and engaging for your players, never dull or boring. Fill your practices with games and drills that not only sharpen skills, but also keep them interested and focused on the task at hand.

Repetition is a key component to becoming good at anything in life. It is no different in flag football. Focus on fundamentals and practice catching, throwing, flag pulling, coverage, route running, blitzing, and hand-offs regularly. The players will get a kick out of it! Practice plenty of “in-game situations” like extra points, 4th and longs, and two minute offenses.

## **Offensive Drills**

### **Passing Drills**

Drill 1 - This is the easiest and most common passing drill.

Line your QB up with a line of receivers on the left or right side of the QB. Have the receivers run routes at the same time and the QB throw to one of them. You can add a DB into the mix to make it interesting.

Drill 2 - This drill helps with accuracy and decision making.

Have two receivers line up 5 yards apart and 10 yards away from the QB. Place one defender in between the receivers. Have your QB “thread the needle” and keep the ball out of the defenders reach.

### **Catching Drills**

Drill 1 - This drill helps receivers catch unexpected or errant throws.

Have the WR line up 10 yards away from the QB with the WR's back to the QB. As soon as you say go, the QB will throw the ball at the WR and the WR should turn around and catch the ball. The WR will have no idea where the ball is going to be until the last second. The WR should react quickly and snag the ball out of the air.

Drill 2 - This helps the receiver make quick decisions and improve catching dramatically.

Two QBs should stand next to each other, each holding two balls and facing the WR. The WR should stand 5 yards back facing the two QBs. When you give the signal, the first QB should throw the ball. As soon as the ball touches the WR's hand, the other QB should throw the ball. Repeat until all the balls are thrown.

### **Route Running Drills**

The best way to improve route running is to practice, practice, practice. At first, break it down and go half speed, focusing in on the receiver's breaks. Do not throw any balls until the routes are run properly. Once the



player's routes are "crisp", start throwing balls to them. Have a contest to see which player runs the best routes and they will all compete and strive for perfection! The best receiver of all-time, Jerry Rice, was not the fastest, tallest, or the best jumper in the game. He did, however, run crisp discipline routes that set him apart from all the others.

### **Ball Carrying Drills**

Drill 1 - This drill helps the ball carrier get better at cutting and juking.

Set up an obstacle course with cones. Tell your ball carrier to run and juke when they reach each cone. You can also use spins or back steps in place of jukes.

Drill 2 - This drill helps the ball carrier beat defenders in open space.

Set up a 5 x 7 yard square with cones. Place a defender in the middle. Have your ball carrier go one-on-one with a defender. See if the runner can make it to the other end without getting caught.

### **QB Mobility Drills**

Drill 1 - This drill teaches QB mobility from an accelerated blitz.

Have the QB line up in shotgun behind the C. The C should snap the ball and run a 7 step hook. Have a defender blitz the QB, starting 3 yards closer than the usual blitz location. The QB should avoid the blitz as best as possible before hitting the C as the C turns and looks for the ball.

Drill 2 - This drill shows the QB why vision is important.

Have the QB line up in shotgun behind the C. Have a defender blitz the QB from the usual DB position from different angles. The QB should "elude" the defenders for 5 seconds before they throw the ball.

### **Defensive Drills**

#### **Flag Pulling Drills**

Drill 1 - This is a good flag pulling and vision drill.

Set up a 10 x10 yard square. Put all your players in the middle of the square. When you give the signal, each player must pull the other players flags while dodging others trying to pull their own flag. Last player standing wins. This is FUN!

Drill 2 - This is a great drill for taking angles and pulling flags.

Set up a 15 x 15 yard triangle with cones. Have two sets of lines, one on each bottom corner. One side is the ball carrier, the other the flag puller. When you give the signal, the ball carrier should sprint towards the point of the triangle while the flag puller cuts the ball carrier off before they reach either top cone.

#### **Interception Drills**

Drill 1 - This drill helps the DB "make a play" off a tipped ball.

Have a defender line up 5 yards from the QB. Have another defender line up 3 yards behind the first defender. Have the QB throw a high ball to the first defender. The first defender should then "tip" the ball backwards. The second defender then makes an attempt to intercept the ball.

Drill 2 - This drill helps teach receivers how to "jump" routes and steal the ball.

Have a WR line up 10 yards away from the QB. The defender should line up two yards behind the WR and 1 yard offset left or right. On your signal, the QB should throw the ball and the defender should then "jump" the ball, cutting the receiver off and intercepting the ball in stride.

### **Coverage Drills**

Drill 1 - This drill helps teach reaction and foot work.

A WR and a defender should face each other, standing 1 yard apart. The WR should then shuffle left, right, forwards, and backwards. The defender should stick with the WR, matching their every move. It is also important that the barrier of 1 yard stays the same throughout the whole drill.

Drill 2 - This drill teaches how to make up speed and catch players from behind.

A WR faces down field. The defender lines up directly behind the WR so they are back to back. On your signal, the receiver will run straight forward. The defender then has to turn around and catch up to the WR before the ball is thrown by the QB.

### **Pursuit Drills**

Drill 1 - This drill helps teach your team proper angles of pursuit.

Have your defense line up in their base defense. Your faster players should line up as close to the sideline as they can before going out of bounds. On your command, have a RB take a hand off and run across the LOS towards the end zone, giving him a slight head start. Once he has crossed 5 yards beyond the line of scrimmage, the defense can begin to chase him. Every defensive player needs to pursue the offense player aggressively. This teaches pursuit skill and team flag pulling concepts.

Drill 2 - This drill helps teach defenders how to "sniff" out a play.

Line up a center, a QB in shotgun, and two RBs in wishbone. Line up one defender 7 yards back. Once the center snaps the ball, the two RBs should run towards their nearest side line. The QB should then purposely stare down the RB he wants to hit. The defender should be watching the QB and then shuffle parallel with the LOS towards the RB the QB is eyeing. The QB should then throw the pass and the defender should burst toward the RB as he is receiving the ball. The defender should then cut the RB off and pull the flag before the RB can gain positive yards. Repeat this over and over. Each time, the QB should make it less obvious which RB he is targeting.

### **Blitzing Drills (Blitzer = BZ)**

Drill 1 - This drill helps reduce the time it takes to sack the QB.

Have the BZ attack the QB like they would in a regular game but add 3 more yards on to the designated blitzing location. Have the BZ blitz from this new spot on your command. Count to five and if the QB is not sacked, then the QB wins. But if the BZ gets the sack, then the BZ wins. With this added yardage and time pressure, your BZ should have more urgency and focus when blitzing.

Drill 2 - This drill helps simulate WRs crossing through the BZ path to the QB.

The BZ should line up in their normal location. Strategically place cones in the BZ path. On your whistle, have the BZ attack the QB without knocking over any cones. The BZ should dodge the cones and still be able to get to the QB in a 5 second window.

## **Offense - Player Descriptions/Responsibilities**

### **Center (C)**

The C lines up over the ball. The C's main responsibility is to give clean snaps to the QB. Also, the C is basically a receiver and can catch balls. Most of the time, Cs are over-looked by the defense and can be used as a dangerous weapon. The C can be very successful in short yardage and red zone situations. The C should try to keep a low profile during games and then expose the defense when it matters the most. Note: An "eligible center" is the most dangerous receiver on the field.

### **Quarter back (QB)**

The QB lines up directly behind the center, facing the opposing team's end zone. The QB can line up in two different spots, either under center (directly behind the center) or in shotgun (3-5 yards behind the center). The QB is the offensive captain and the leader of the offense. There are three major things that your QB should be able to do:

1. Protect the ball. Turnovers (interceptions) are detrimental to an offense.
2. Throw accurately. Accuracy is more important than arm strength.
3. Have mobility. QB should have the ability to scramble and elude the BZs.

It's fine if your QB doesn't have all three of these qualities, but two out of three would be helpful. You should warm up with the QB before they begin throwing in the game. Remind your QB that if the receivers aren't open, to throw the ball away. A wasted down is much better than a turn over.

### **Running Back (RB)**

The running back can line up in multiple locations but almost always lines up in the back field. Here are some formations your RB can set up in:

1. The "I" formation- 1 yard behind the QB.
2. Wishbone- 1 yard behind the QB but offset 2 yards from the ball
3. Spread- lined up like a WR.

The RB's main responsibilities are: making positive yards when running the ball, helping set up the pass, and catching out of the back field. Your RB should never be afraid of defenders and should always run forward, never moving laterally or backwards. The RB needs to show quickness and vision. "Power" running is not really an option with the no blocking rules so your RB should behave like a jack rabbit, not a rhino. Also, the RB needs to be able to dodge defenders in open space with virtually no contact. Lowering the shoulder, stiff arming, and hurdling are not appropriate ways to "shed" defenders. Jukes, spin moves, and back steps are the best options.

### **Full Back (FB)**

The FB is basically the same as a RB except that the FB lines up between the QB and RB. The FB has no blocking duties and should be considered as another RB.

## **Wide Receiver (WR)**

WRs can line up anywhere on the LOS. The WR's primary responsibility is to catch the ball for positive yardage. Ideally, the WR should catch the ball in stride, but should also be able to catch a large array of imperfect passes including high passes, low passes, and passes behind the WR. The WR should also be quick enough to beat coverage and get open. If your WR's aren't particularly fast, you can work around this with "crisp" route running techniques that will allow them to elude the DBs and get open.

### **Offense - Basic Skills and Fundamentals**

Before you teach your players anything else, start with the basic fundamentals. Work on snapping the ball, performing clean handoffs, fake hand-offs, play action, pitches, short passes and basic route running. Give at least 40% of your practice and pre-game warm ups to "fundamental" routines. Otherwise, you will be haunted with mis-handoffs, bad snaps, and RBs crashing into each other in the back field. Here are a few flag football fundamentals:

#### **"Blocking"**

Blocking (or "screening") rules vary from league to league. In most youth flag football leagues, the rules for blocking are pretty sensitive. To keep it clean, have your players run up to the defender, STOP, then place his hands behind his back. You shouldn't actually "block" or touch the defender (unless your league allows it), but creating a little separation for one or two seconds is usually ok with the referee. Be careful not to shadow block. Shadow blocking is when a teammate/blocker runs down the field parallel with the runner, preventing the defense access to the runner's flags. This is a penalty in some leagues.

#### **Running the Ball**

There are three simple steps to running the ball:

1. The ball carrier should keep their body low to the ground. Flags low to the ground are harder to pull.
2. The ball carrier should keep their arms up. They should never swing or slap away defender's hands. This will result in a "flag guarding", a universal penalty in flag football.
3. The ball carrier should run fast and be elusive. Encourage your plays to juke, cut, spin, back step, and duck past defenders. Remind them to never go backwards or make contact with defenders.

#### **Catching the Ball**

There are just a few steps in becoming a great receiver.

1. The player should always keep their "eye on the ball" and watch it into their hands. Concentration is key. Do NOT be scared of the ball. A receiver who is nervous or flinches is more likely to get hurt than a player who keeps his eye on the ball. Don't run until you catch the ball!
2. The receiver should always catch with their hands away from their body. Teach your players to not "T-Rex" and avoid keeping their arms tucked in too tight. Extend the arms towards the ball and catch it with your hands, not your body.
3. Hand placement - when the ball is thrown at the chest or higher, the player should spread their fingers outwards with their palms facing the ball and the two thumbs touching one another. When the ball is thrown low, the receiver should place their hands with their palms facing the sky and their pinkies touching.
4. The receiver should never attack the ball but absorb it. Catching should look natural and smooth.

## Throwing the Ball

Placing the ball exactly where you want it can take years of practice. Even PROs make bad throws. Here are a few techniques and throwing mechanics players should know before playing QB.

1. The player's body should be parallel with the side line, never facing up field.
2. The passer must make sure that their feet aren't too close or too far apart. Their feet should be slightly wider than their hips.
3. The passer should grip the ball towards the end or the nose of the ball. They should never grip it in the middle. The QB's pinkie, ring, and middle fingers should rest on the grips while the thumb and pointer fingers grip the actual nose.
4. The passer should grip the ball at their chest, never below the sternum or above the chin. The arms should be bent with their elbows facing the ground. This allows for a faster release.
5. The passer should never drop their throwing arm before passing. The motion should look like a sling shot, not a windmill.
6. The first motion. When the passer finds an open receiver and decides to throw, they will perform the first passing motion. The passer should raise their elbow, making it parallel to the ground.
7. The passer should now load the ball, pulling it from the chest and placing it behind their head quickly. This should be done in a quick wiping motion, like a windshield wiper going full speed. Also, the passer's other arm should be bent and parallel to the ground with their non-passing hand pointing toward the side line. Simultaneously, the passer should shift his weight backwards, leaning on his back foot.
8. Now that the ball is loaded, the QB can fire. To do this, the passer rolls the elbow, bringing the ball over his shoulder passing his ear, and flings the ball forward to the receiver. While the ball is moving forward, the passer's weight should be too. While the passer's arm is coming forward, their other arm should drop to their side.
9. The passer should release the ball before their arm is completely straight. When releasing the ball, they should flick their wrist, giving the ball a spiral along with added velocity. The passer should now be leaning forward with all their weight on their front foot while their back leg lifts slightly off the ground at the point of release. The ball should roll smoothly off the finger tips, creating the required touch for a spiral.
10. The passer must follow through their pass. To do this, they should swing their arm toward their opposite hip. Passing the ball and swinging the arm should be done in one motion. The passer should always follow through.

The motions of a pass should be done in less than two seconds, from raising the elbow to swinging the arm.

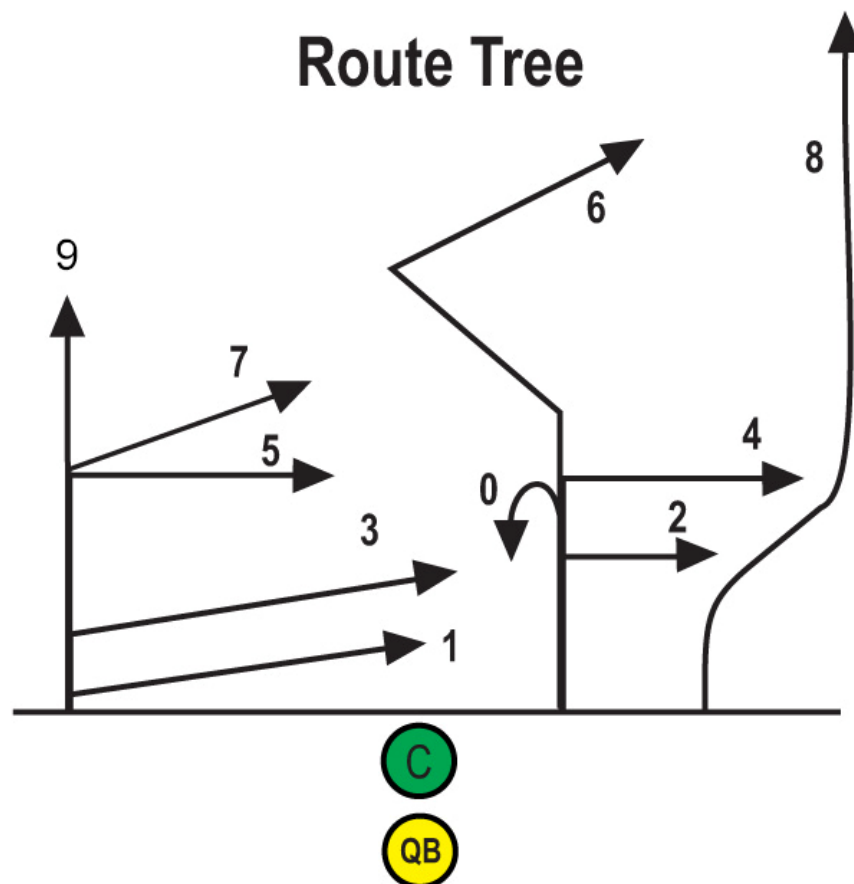
## Route Running

Route running is a great skill for all players to learn. It is also a great neutralizer for players that aren't very fast. The goal of route running is to separate a WR from a DB so the WR can get open for a pass.

There are a few keys to becoming a great route runner:

1. Foot work - Receivers need clean foot work coming out of breaks.
2. Great vision - The receiver should always look for a way to break free.
3. Deception - The receiver should always be deceptive to their defender. This includes masking their true speed, being able to trick a defender into jumping routes when the ball isn't there, and making their defender believe they're going one way then break the other way.
4. Discipline - Receiver should run "crisp" routes exactly as they were drawn up. Cut hard at each turn and do not take short cuts. For example, on a 5-n-in, the runner should run up 5 yards and cut in 90 degrees. Precision route running will allow the WR to separate from the LB and allow the QB to make a safe pass.

Below, is a route tree that your entire team should memorize. It's a great tool for running warm routes in practice, but it's also nice for calling individual "hot routes" from the line scrimmage. Notice that odd numbers go towards the center of the field and even numbers go towards the sidelines. The same rules apply no matter what side of the field you are running from. For example: A "4" route run from the left side of the QB would be a "10 yard out" also, but to the left sideline not the right. A "3" route run from the right side of the quarterback would be a quick slant, running from the right to left, towards the center of the field.



**Odd numbers run inward** (center of field)

**Even numbers run outward** (sidelines)

## **Misdirection**

Misdirection is the single most effective way to beat a defense. Misdirection is the art of making a defense think a play is going one way, when it is actually going the other. The key to successful misdirection is freezing the defense for one or two seconds and then attacking the opposite side they think you are attacking. Pull them one way and go the other.

## **Bootleg**

A bootleg is a form of play action that allows the quarterback to fake a handoff and then scramble outside of the pocket. The bootleg opens up the secondary and allows the quarterback to locate his receiver while scrambling out of the pocket. Generally the quarterback should scramble to the side that favors his throwing arm.

## **Play action**

Play action is a fake handoff designed to make the defense think the play is a run. It will generally pull the defense up to the line of scrimmage, creating vulnerabilities in the secondary or the flats. Play action is a great option for throwing the longer passes and creating confusion within a defense. The fake handoff also takes a few seconds to mature and it allows the receivers to get further down the field by the time the ball is thrown.

## **Setting up the defense**

Lets assume you have a playbook filled with easy, yet effective plays and a good system for naming your plays. Now you need to know which plays to use and call in different situations. You can start off the game three ways:

1. Using the run to set up the pass.
2. Using the pass to set up the run.
3. Going "west coast" and using the short pass to setup the long ball and the run at the same time.

You should feel the defense out: What scheme do they use? Are they a good passing defense, running defense, or both? Do they have a fast BZ? You can usually answer these questions in the first two plays. Try a running play then a passing play or vice-versa. That leaves you with two more downs to attack their weak spots. If they have exceptional coverage skills and keep your QB from completing a pass, run the ball. If their CBs are great flag pullers, run right up the middle. Suck the defense in, then strike deep with a play action pass.

Use height as an advantage. If one of your WRs is considerably taller than their defender, throw a jump ball right over the defender's head. Try to find the holes in the defense. Find a spot where no one covers and attack it. Find bad habits and techniques from defenders and exploit them. If a CB has poor speed, send your WR on a streak. If the defense takes poor angles, run a sweep and burn it up the side line.

## **Final Notes:**

1. Protect the ball - At any level of football, including the PROS, turnovers almost always determine the final outcome of a game.

Consider this scenario. Team A plays Team B and the match up is perfect. All athletes and coaches have the same skill level:

Team A: Gets 7 drives (attempts to score)

Team B: Gets 3 drives (attempts to score)

Who will typically win this game? Team A, right?

Well... this is what happens if Team B throws 2 interceptions. They have two less drives and Team A gets two more drives – a “swing” of 4 drives.

If you want to win tough games, you MUST win the turnover ratio!

Since there are no fumbles in flag football, turnovers (interceptions) will almost always come from your QB. Pull your QB aside and train him that an incompleting or a sack is much better than throwing an interception. Have him practice throwing the ball away if coverage is tight. Never be careless with the ball! Protecting it should be your main priority.

2. Extra points – making your extra points are the second most important aspect of running a successful offense. Have a specific plan in place for your extra points. Many coaches/players blow this off as unimportant, but I have found that 40% of flag football games are determined by 4 points or less. This is usually because one team made their extra points and the other team didn't. For example, both teams may score three touchdowns, but the difference is the extra point tries (22-18).

3. Rhythm is an important part of an offense. Try to chain together a good set of positive plays starting with easier plays to build confidence in the offense, especially in the early drives of the game.

4. Do not be afraid to throw in a trick play every once in a while. This keeps things exciting for your team and will usually result in a big play.

5. Use ONE play to set up another. For example, run a 5-n-out a few times and throw a short pass to your receiver near the side line. Now the DB thinks you will do it again so he is likely to make a move on the next ball thrown. After your WR runs a 5-n-out, have your QB pump the ball then lob it deep for the touchdown.

6. Operate out of shotgun as much as possible. It adds another 3-5 yards for the BZ to run.

7. Remember, every player will bring a different skill or gift to the table. Make sure you play to each player's skills. If you play to their skills, they will obviously play better. A guy who is really fast but can't catch well might be a RB. The really smart player that is somewhat slow might be a good QB.

### **Defensive positions and responsibilities**

#### **Safety (SS or FS)**

In a single safety set, the safety should line up directly over the ball 10-15 yards from the LOS. The safety's primary responsibility is to make sure no offensive player gets behind him and the play always stays in front of him. Since the safety is the last line of defense, they should have solid flag pulling skills to prevent big plays and/or touchdowns. The safety must be willing to fight for jump balls and be aggressive enough to chase down RBs that have escaped the first lines of defense. In the event that there are 2 safeties, the field is split in half creating a right side and a left side. Safeties should be fast, alert, and have good hands for intercepting or swatting down balls.

**Designated Zones** - The safety should cover the whole field 15 yards from the LOS and back.



### **Corner back (CB)**

The CB should line up 3-5 yards from the LOS, depending on the speed of the receiver. Their inside shoulder should line up with the farthest WR's outside foot in order to keep the play to the inside. The CB's primary responsibility is to contain the sidelines and make sure the play stays inside. This mainly includes pass coverage but also some run stopping. The CB needs to have coverage, back peddling, and flag pulling skills. The CB must be able to hold down zones and also play man coverage. The CB must be willing to swat/intercept balls and chase down ball carriers. Your CBs should be fast. A good set of hands doesn't hurt either!

**Designated Zones** - Each CB has a zone on their respected side. The zones range from the LOS and back 15 yards. The zones, which are on the right and left sides of the field, should only reach about 7 yards wide.

### **Line Backer (LB)**

The LB should line up directly over the ball 7 yards from the LOS. The LB has two primary responsibilities, run stopping and pass coverage. The LB must have great vision and take efficient angles when chasing down the ball carriers. The LB also needs to have great reflexes and decision making skills. The LB is covering the most common weak spot on the defense, the center of the field. For pass coverage, the LB should keep their eye on receivers crossing through the middle of the field in addition to keeping an eye on the QB. The LB is one of the main weapons in shutting down the running game. Good flag pulling skills will help in the LB position.

**Designated Zones** - The LB zone is from the LOS back 15 yards. The zone is located in the middle of the defense. The LB's zone should reach across the field with each side ending where the CB's zone starts. When a DT is in the line up, the LB's zone is pushed back 5 yards.

### **Defensive Tackle (DT)**

The DT should line up directly over the ball 2-3 yards from the LOS. The DT should be run stopper first, pass defender second. The DT responsibilities include penetrating the LOS and stopping the RB. The back field may be crowded so if the DT can't reach the ball carrier, he should chase him to a defensive player who can pull the flag. If the ball is not handed off, the DT should drop into a zone and shut down potential pass routes like flats and screens. The DT does not have to be fast, but solid flag pulling skills are important.

**Designated Zones** - The DT's zone is located along the LOS on the right or left side, and should only be about 3 to 5 yards deep.

### **Defensive Ends (DE)**

The DE's primary responsibility is to STAY HOME and protect against sweeps, reverses, screen passes, or flat routes. He should also avoid letting a ball carrier get around him on the outside or sideline part of the field. The DE should always beat the runner to the sideline, forcing him back to the inside of the field where other defenders can help out. This player should be fast and also a good flag puller.

## **Defensive skills and fundamentals**

### **Flag Pulling**

When pulling flags, the defensive player must remember six things:

1. Keep their eyes on the ball carrier's belly button. The ball carrier will try to "juke" the flag puller with quick movements from the head, arms, legs, and hips, but their belly isn't going anywhere so the player should always focus on the runner's belly.

2. The defensive player must be relaxed and loose, never tense. Keep bent knees and be ready to lunge in any direction.
3. The flag puller must be the aggressor. He should never back down from the ball carrier and should wait for the runner to come to him.
4. The player should never plant one foot and reach for the flag. He should always keep a shuffle with his feet and be prepared to lunge if the runner quickly changes directions.
5. The flag puller should always use two hands when going after flags. This is the best technique and it doubles the chance of a successful flag pull.
6. The flag puller should never yank a flag off. Instead, the player should squeeze the flag and let the ball carrier run out of their own flags. This reduces the chance of missing flags.

### **Back Peddling**

Back peddling, a helpful defensive skill, is easy to teach and it will become natural to players once they learn the technique. Back peddling is running backwards so you can cover the receiver and watch the quarterback at the same time. There are a few simple steps to become a great back peddler:

1. The defensive player's body should always stay low to the ground in a squatting position with the defender's weight forward, standing on the balls of their feet. This not only helps keep balance but makes the defender a loaded spring, ready to pounce on any balls that come their way.
2. The defender's arms should be pumping. This helps with balance and also makes the whole motion smoother and less awkward. The motion of back peddling should look clean.
3. The defender should always keep their feet low to the ground, almost dragging them. This also helps the defender change directions and break quickly. When the back peddler raises their feet too high off the ground, it makes them less explosive and have slower reaction time.
4. When starting to back peddle, the defender should never make "false steps" or turn his hips the opposite way the receiver is going.
5. The defender should always keep their head up, never looking down at their feet or the receiver's feet. This makes the back peddler more aware of their surroundings and puts them in a better position to make a play.

### **Blitzing**

Blitzing is the most vital part of successful flag football defense. An effective blitzing plan will shut down any offense. The BZ is the anchor of the defense and his performance will often determine the outcome of each play, even the game! Sacking or hurrying the QB is the primary goal. A pressured QB will make mistakes. Mistakes lead to big plays for the defense. The BZ is also the main run stopper because the BZ will be in the back field before anyone else.

Here are a few simple steps for blitzing:

1. The BZ should always line up behind the designated blitzing spot (if there is one) and two yards to the left so that when he blitzes, it pushes the QB onto his back foot which will cause forced or inaccurate passes.

2. The BZ needs to sprint towards the QB every time, never "half speed". The BZ should slow down once they are in the back field to avoid over pursuing the play. Sub the BZ out with fresh legs often since they will get tired.
3. The BZ should always keep their left hand up to swat away the ball as it leaves the QB's hand (assuming the QB is right handed and is passing). The BZ should never hit the QB's throwing arm or hand. It also allows the QB a great chance to escape. The BZ's right hand should be down reaching for the QB's flag.
4. The BZ should never jump in the air to distract the QB. This just wastes time when the BZ could be sacking the QB. The BZ should be one of your fastest players on the team and also be a good flag puller.

## **Selecting a Defense**

### **Man Defense**

Man defense is coverage where every defensive back is assigned to a particular player. Instead of being responsible for a certain area (zone), they are responsible for an offensive player no matter where he goes on the field.

If a WR gets away from the defender, there is usually no back up support from any other players. In most cases, the CBs are the ones that play man-to-man but safeties and LBs can too. When defenders play man defense, the defender must choose the appropriate distance from the WR prior to the snap. If the WR is faster than the defender, then the defender needs to give the WR a good cushion of space. If the defender lines up too close to the WR, the chances of getting beat right off the line are very high. If the WR is slower than the defender, then the defender can give the WR a smaller cushion. When setting up your players in man defense, try to line up your defenders so they are equal in height, speed, and skill of the offensive player they are guarding. To be successful at man, follow these steps:

1. The defender needs to have good back peddling skills.
2. The defender must know when to turn his hips and run with the receiver. "Turning" with the receiver means the defender comes out of their back peddle and transitions into a forward sprint to follow their receiver. The CB should always be on their receiver's hip. Playing on the inside hip (hip closest to the ball) is more risky but can yield big results. Playing on the outside hip (the hip closer to the end zone) is safer because you keep the play in front of you.
3. The defender needs to be aggressive enough to swat away balls or intercept if the opportunity is right.
4. Never look at the QB. Keep your eyes on your receiver's waist.
5. Give a second effort. Even if the receiver catches the ball, the defender needs to go for the flag.

### **Zone Defense**

Unlike man defense where you have to cover a specific receiver, zone defense is guarding a specific area. If receivers enter your "zone" or area, you are responsible for them as long as they are in your zone. Sometimes you might have several receivers in your zone, so be ready. In zone defense, it's ok and recommended to look at the QB (unlike in man coverage). Here are a few tips for playing zone defense:

1. The defender always needs to have the receivers in front of them. The defender can't make a play when the receivers are behind them.

2. The defender should try to stay in the middle of their zone and try not to move too close to any edge.
3. The defender should always be prepared to cover multiple receivers at one time and stay in the middle of the receivers if there is more than one in your zone.
4. The safety should always try to assist if a zone gets over loaded.
5. Once the ball has been passed to a receiver, the defenders are free to attack the ball but should always be wary of cut backs.

### **Tips to run Successful Defense-**

There are several steps to running a successful defense. With a little practice, your team can master these steps:

1. Your team needs to have good communication and team work.
2. Your team should always be looking for an opportunity, from bad passes to tipped balls. Good defense creates offense!
3. Your defense is only as good as your flag pulling. You should practice flag pulling regularly.
4. A good defense plays their toughest on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4th downs, the last two minutes, and during final games. Make sure your team is ready to stop the big plays.
5. Make sure you have a good rotation. A tired defender is a vulnerable defender.
6. Make sure your players attack the ball and "team tackle" (pull flags together). Never give up on a play.

### **Top 10 tips for a successful season**

1. **Flag football playbook** - an architect would never attempt to build a house without a blue print or "plans". Just the same, a team should never show up to a game without good plays or an organized game plan. Make sure you have reliable flag football plays and your teammates have access to it.
2. **Wristbands** - having your flag football playbook "portable" is also important. Determine what your top plays are and transfer them to your wristband. Not only will this help to hurry up offense, but it also reduces time in the huddle.
3. **Pressure the opposing QB** - Even the best QBs play poorly when they get too much pressure. Get in there and get in there fast! Most interceptions are created by excessive defensive pressure. Often times, the slower players are used to rush the QB. Instead, send your fastest and most athletic players after that QB! Speed and agility are needed to really shake things up. Keeping "fresh legs" for BZs is also important, so plan on rotating players every few plays.
4. **Pitch the ball!** - In most flag football leagues, a fumble is a dead ball. Because of this, pitching the ball is a MUST. The risk-reward continuum is outstanding in your favor and your team should take full advantage of this. Flipping the ball is a team concept and everyone should be thinking "flip". Just be sure that your players

know that they can only flip it behind them. The chance of you turning a short yardage play into a touchdown far outweighs the possibility of a turn over.

**5. Learn the “Route Tree”** – Make sure that every player on the team learns the route tree. It’s a great tool for running warm routes in practice, but it’s also nice for calling individual “hot routes” from the line scrimmage.

**6. Play to your talents** – All players have different skills and attributes. Some players have the ability to think through complex situations and react well on their feet. Other players have great hands, good speed, or an uncanny ability to pull flags. Put your players where they are likely to perform best.

**7. Turnovers** - Avoiding turnovers is the most critical component of the game. When the game begins, you can assume that your team will get 6 drives (possessions) and your opponent will get 6 drives. If you throw 2 interceptions, they get 8 drives and you get 4. All things equal, this is a tremendous obstacle to overcome. Since almost all turnovers are passes, train your QB to be wise. On those low percentages or dangerous throws, don't force it. Just throw it away!

**8. Extra Points** - Spend a substantial part of your planning time working on the conversions. If both teams score the same amount of touchdowns, which happens quite often, the deciding factor will often be determined who makes the extra points.

**9. Misdirection** - Misdirection is the single most effective way to beat a defense. Misdirection is the art of making a defense think a play is going one way when, in fact, it’s going the other. The key to successful misdirection is to freeze the defense for one or two seconds, then attack the opposite side they think you are attacking. Pull them one way and then go the other.

**10. Pulling flags** - Every missed flag means 5 to 7 more yards for the other team. Make sure you practice grabbing flags. This is often overlooked but very important in stopping your opponent's offense.

We thank you for your purchase and we wish you the best of luck with your season!

Sincerely,

Management  
Wristband Interactive, LLC