Green Bay Packers
Archived Posts from this Category

April 27, 2018

**Trades on day 1 of the 2018 Draft. AV analysis.**
Posted by foodnearsnellville under Analysis, Arizona Cardinals, Baltimore Ravens, Buffalo Bills, Draft, Green Bay Packers, New Orleans Saints, Tennessee Titans | Tags: approximate value, NFL draft, risk analysis, trade risk
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Bill traded up to pick 7 to get QB Josh Allen.

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The Cards moved up to pick 10 to draft Josh Rosen

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Saints move up to get Marcus Davenport, DE

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Packers trade again to get Jaire Alexander

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Titans trade up for Rashaan Evans
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Ravens trade 2019 assets to get their QB

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### Lamar Jackson Trade

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What if Dak Prescott takes a knee at 1:13?

Posted by foodnearsnellville under Dallas Cowboys, Football, Green Bay Packers | Tags: Dak Prescott, Speculation | [2] Comments

Been going through the 2017 Green Bay – Dallas game in my head, and can’t help but wonder what happens if Dak takes a knee at the one yard line in the Green Bay game. Green Bay has no choice. At that point it has to burn a time out and it’s unavailable for later. Zeke was on fire. I don’t believe the Green Bay team could have stopped him on the one. Continuing this thought experiment, Dak then takes a knee again, on first down, killing 45 seconds and giving Dallas 3 plays in 30 seconds to win the game.
I’m proposing this here (I first suggested this in fan circles) because the responses to this idea says a lot about fans and their particular attachment to teams. It’s a not uncommon response to say that if you can’t stop an opponent in 1:13, you don’t deserve to win. I like what I’ve heard, so offering the suggestion to a wider audience. What do you think happens if Dak takes a knee at 1:13?

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**On the spread of the T formation in the 1940s**

July 28, 2013


I’ve been reading a ton of books. One of these is Robert W. Peterson’s “Pigskin”, which has been an interesting read so far. I’m roughly in the late 1940s in this book, which starts with the beginning of professional football and ends with the NFL championship in 1958. What has caught my eye are Mr. Peterson’s comments about the spread of the T formation in the 1940s. He describes the Bears 73-0 NFL Championship victory over the Redskins. Later, when describing the switch of the Redskins to the T in 1944, he gives this accounting of the state of the football world in 1944: (1)

*By that year, more than 50 percent of college teams has converted to the T formation. So had most pro teams. Henceforth, the old single-wing formula of “three yards and a cloud of dust” as the ideal offensive play would go the way of the rugby ball in pro football*

The adoption was not immediate upon the end of the 1940 season, however, and teams, coaches, and whole conferences that were successful with the single wing (or Southwestern spread) tended to stick with it. For example, in Tom Landry’s autobiography, he notes that Texas made the switch in 1947, after Dana Bible retired. (2) Y. A. Tittle’s memory of the conversion is (3)

*If I remember correctly, the first Southwestern conference team to switch to the T formation from the single- and double-wing formations was Rice University, followed by Georgia and Louisiana State.*

The quote above mixes the SEC and the Southwest conference, but still... LSU switched in 1945. I’m just not sure which of the 50% of college football teams were converting. Army and Notre Dame are well known early adopters, but as a counterexample, in 1947, Fritz Crisler won a national championship with a single wing offense at Michigan.

Dan Daly, when discussing the effects of the 73-0 Bears win over the Redskins, noted:(4)

*Only one other NFL team, the Philadelphia Eagles, switched to the T the next season. And as late as 1944, both clubs that played in the championship game, the Green Bay Packers and the New York Giants,*
Paul Brown, the head coach of Ohio State from 1941 to 1943, was the first coach to see Don Faurot’s split T in action, in his very first game as Ohio State’s head coach, but then says of his game with Clark Shaughnessy’s Pittsburgh squad in 1943:

“It was my first real look at the T formation with flankers and men in motion, however, and it was the kind of football I later assimilated into my own system with the Browns.”

So from 1941 to 1943, the “Bears” T was largely unknown in the Big 10. Paul Brown then learned the T while serving in the armed services. In 1946 and 1947, in the first two AAFC championships, Brown’s T was pitted against the single wing offense of the New York Yankees.

As Dan Daly notes, the lack of players trained in the new offense slowed the T formation’s spread.

In the early ’40s, the Bears and the Eagles – the only two T-formation teams – drafted an unusual number of Shaughnessy’s Stanford players because the Cardinal were the lone major college team using the offense.

Dan Daly later writes:

“By the end of the decade, though, five out of seven college teams played some form of the T. Suddenly it was the single-wing Steelers who were having trouble finding players to fit their system.”

And it does make sense. There were some early adopters who ran into Luckman, or Shaughnessy, or former Bears quarterbacks and coaches, but a lot of coaches learned the T while serving in the armed services during the war, coaching or playing in service teams. So it wasn’t the early 1940s when the transition occurred, as far as I can tell. Instead, it was the mid to late 1940s when the T became dominant. The conversion was not “immediate”. It took 3-4 years to gain steam, and a decade for it to dominate.

Notes

There were only ten pro teams in 1944, and it’s entirely possible that most NFL teams were running a T by 1944 (By my count, Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington, and Cleveland are using the T by 1944. Green Bay and New York are not. The other four – Brooklyn, Boston, Detroit, and Card-Pitt – I’m not sure of). Green Bay switches to the T in 1947, New York in 1949.

Army’s first use of the T is in the 1941 Army-Navy game. Notre Dame had Halas’s players assist with the conversion in 1942. Clark Shaughnessy coaches Maryland in 1942 and then Pittsburgh in 1943.

1944 is an unusual year to use as a baseline, because so many coaches and players were in the armed services. That may in fact have aided the transition, as so many coaches with a traditional single wing background found themselves coaching alongside experts in the T on service teams.

For those who have never read Ron Fimrite’s article in Sports Illustrated about the Stanford Indians’ 1940 season, just do it. It’s one of the great short articles on football. The link is given in
References

1. Peterson, Chapter 8.
2. Landry and Lewis, p. 74.
3. Tittle, Chapter 5.
4. Daly, Chapter 3.
7. Daly, Chapter 3.
8. Daly, Chapter 3.

Bibliography


Daly, Dan, The National Forgotten League: Entertaining Stories and Observations from Pro Football’s First Fifty Years, University of Nebraska Press, 2012. [ebook]


Peterson, Robert W., Pigskin: The Early Years of Pro Football, 1997. [ebook]

Roberts, Randy, A Team for America: The Army-Navy Game That Rallied a Nation at War, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, reprint ed 2011. [ebook]


Those days, was primarily a formation where the quarterback wasn’t behind center was the shotgun, and the shotgun, in version of the T was just too explosive for the old single wing to survive. By the 1970s, the only aware of football, the single wing was a dead offense. The single wing was functionally have been taught single wing principles in the first place. By the early 1970s, when I first became

A point, critical in thinking about this, is how someone like Urban Meyer or Gus Malzahn could option, and signs of single wing descent aren’t in any sense as easily proven as people claim. That, in a nutshell, is the idea I’m interested in developing, that shotgun + option = spread offense, spread option, triple option, Urban Meyer, Vince Lombardi, zone read, zone run

Many teams had put the quarterback in a Short Punt Formation before, but Hickey’s version apparently caught everyone’s fancy. It was an overnight sensation.

That, in a nutshell, is the idea I’m interested in developing, that shotgun + option = spread option, and signs of single wing descent aren’t in any sense as easily proven as people claim.

A point, critical in thinking about this, is how someone like Urban Meyer or Gus Malzahn could have been taught single wing principles in the first place. By the early 1970s, when I first became aware of football, the single wing was a dead offense. The single wing was functionally obsoleted by 1940. Fritz Crisler and the invention of platooning notwithstanding, Clark Shaughnessy’s version of the T was just too explosive for the old single wing to survive. By the 1970s, the only formation where the quarterback wasn’t behind center was the shotgun, and the shotgun, in those days, was primarily a passing formation.
By contrast, the single wing was a poor downfield passing formation. Linemen were all squished together, perhaps 6 inches apart. A “flexed” end, as Knute Rockne might have put it, was no more than a yard away from this compatriots. Play development was slow, as plays couldn’t begin until the ball actually reached the tailback. The centers of the 1930s hiked the ball with their heads down, looking at the person they hiked it to. This was necessary because they could hike it to any one of three people. Blind hikes, freeing the center to block, weren’t common until the Shaughnessy T. And to quote Dana X. Bible:

> Except for the spinner cycle, it does not afford much opportunity for deception.

Now, to note, as the site Hickock Sports points out, there really were 5 formations in common use before the Shaughnessy T came into prominence, and those included the double wing, the short punt, the Notre Dame box, and the old T formation (played largely by the Chicago Bears). We’ll show some photos of the double wing and the short punt from Dana’s book, followed by a sample of a spread option formation.
Formation.—Three varieties of double wingback and on which the double wing becomes a triple wing formation, shown in Chart 26.

**Chart 26: Double Wingback Formations**

(A) Unbalanced by both wingbacks hitting ends. (B) Classic double tailback. (C) Triple wingback. (D) Warner double wing (wingback inside of tackle snare).

Most obvious feature of the double wingback formation is the location of the two backs from which it receives its name. They are usually planted one yard or less outside the end at yard behind the line of scrimmage. Because of the width given the formation by these wingbacks, the seven linemen usually play close together, without splits between them. Depth of its No. 2 and No. 3 backs will affect their duties. For example if No. 2 plays close to the line, he will be used primarily for block-

**Double Wingback**

Playing: if he plays three yards deep, he:

**Evaluation:**

1. It is an excellent men (the ends and wingbacks) as quickly. Working as receiving teams a dazzling variety of pass patterns.
2. Even with the line unbalanced, the extra back on the line's strength to both sides.
3. The possibilities for deception are many and varied.
4. It is strong inside and outside.
5. It is a good kicking formation.
6. On the other side of the ledger:
7. The formation is weak to the ends can do much to disrupt the attack.
8. Running plays are very slow.
9. It leaves something to be desired.
10. As its plays require perfect a difficult formation to master.

**Personnel:** The double wing formation needs include:

2. Fast wingbacks (1 and 4) can block and receive passes.
3. A good ball-handler and throwing talent at No. 2 and ball-back.
4. Good pass-receiving ends.
5. Fast, good-blocking guard.
6. A strong and agile center the double wing, leaving the

Short Punt Formation

The short punt formation, as shown in Chart 30, is almost identical with that already shown for deep punt (Chart 9, page 71), except that the tailback is five yards behind the line of scrimmage instead of ten. As in the single wingback, three backs are in position to take the pass from center.

Evaluation.—Inherent strong qualities of the short punt formation include:
1. It has good balance.
2. Location of the backs sets the stage for deceptive ball-handling and a good lateral-passing attack.
3. It is an excellent passing formation, both from a standpoint of getting receivers out and protecting the passer.
4. It is an ideal formation from which to quick kick.

Arrayed against these good points are the following potential weaknesses:
1. A strong off-tackle play is hard to develop, because there are no flanking backs to help the ends work on the tackles.
2. It is not strong to the weak-side outside.
3. Although it is a well-balanced formation physically, it is not ideal for a well-balanced attack in that the passing potentialities are stronger than the running potentialities.

Personnel.—To exhaust its possibilities, the short punt formation needs:
1. A triple-threat tailback (No. 3).
2. Other backs who are good, fast receivers; No. 2 and No. 4 men who are expert ball-handlers; plunging ability from the No. 2 post, and strong blocking from No. 1.
3. Good pass-receiving ends.
4. Big, active tackles who are good line blockers.

Plays.—See Charts 31-33, following.
A modern spread option formation

So of the formations above, which does the modern spread option most resemble? The “A” version of the double wing, by my eyes.

What passing trends are of note between the 1930s and today? A more aerodynamic ball, and the ability to pass anywhere behind the line of scrimmage (rule change, 1933) helped power a ever growing passing explosion into the 1940. In the 1950s, Paul Brown introduced timing patterns, by carefully watching how Don Hutson played. The late 1950s gave us, via Johnny Unitas and Raymond Berry, the 2 minute drill. The 1960s gave football Sid Gillman and his foray into attacking the whole field. In the 1970s, the Dallas Cowboys revived the shotgun, and one of the elements introduced then was a blind shotgun hike. Get to the early 1980s, and the more wide open passing games of the San Diego Chargers and later, the Washington Redskins, and formations (pro I, pro T) that were almost etched in stone begin to evolve. Also, in the 1980s, the West Coast Offense emerged, and the ideas of stretching a passing defense horizontally, and further, that passing can substitute for running as a ball control weapon. By the late 1990s and into the 2000s, “ace” backfields became more common, the shotgun was used more and more. And as teams pushed for more and more wideouts, to spread the defense, to get defenders to cover more and more of the field, the counterbalancing question began to emerge: how do I get more running out of an essentially passing formation?

Consider the running game, from single wing to now. The single wing excelled in power off tackle running, perhaps exemplified by the cutback. Blocking was sustained, double teams by the wingback and tackle forming a crucial part of the game. Once the Shaughnessy T was introduced, blocks weren’t nearly as enduring. Away from the play, brush back blocks were enough. Because the blocks were fast, and the play started earlier (blind hikes), the game became faster.

The single wing cutback later formed the archetype for the Green Bay sweep. But nuances
introduced around this time span include area or do-dad blocking, and the whole notion of running to daylight.

The option itself dates back as far as Don Faurot and the Split T offense he developed for Missouri. With Don's notion of keying off unblocked defenders, and getting the ball to the man the opposition can’t defend, football now had a running game that resembled a 2 on 1 fast break in basketball. This was only reinforced when the wishbone triple option, created by Emory Bellard, became a dominant offense in the late 1960s – early 1970s. Adding zone run concepts a la Alex Gibbs (check out, for example, John T Reed's zone run entry in his dictionary) to unblocked keys leads to the zone read:

"The first read of a “zone-read,” it will be recalled is by the quarterback: he reads the backside defensive end, who typically goes unblocked in a zone-rushing scheme to free up blockers for double-teams on the frontside. If the defensive end sits where he is or rushes upfield, the quarterback simple hands the ball off to the runner. But if he chases the runningback, the quarterback pulls the ball. On the base zone-read, the quarterback just looks for any crease to the backside."

The zone read is the backbone of the spread option, and simply put, the option, much less the blocking patterns of the zone read, didn’t exist back in 1936.

Q: If the two offenses don’t come from a common origin, why so many apparent commonalities?

In explanation, consider how in biology there are cases of convergent evolution. Though of unrelated origin, the eye in squids and mammals are very structurally similar, with the interesting exception that the squid eye, nerves are wired to the retina in the back, while with mammals, the retina is wired to the nerves in the front. Often, little details tell the story when distinguishing lineages.

Or, as Chris Brown, of Smart Football, has said when examining pretty much this same question:

"Certainly, the coaches who developed today's modern offenses, like Rodriguez and Malzahn, did not spend their time meticulously studying the single-wing tapes of yesteryear. Instead, if there are similarities it's because those coaches stumbled onto the same ideas through trial and error."

Update: Coach Wyatt has a nice summary of direct snap formations (and some history) at this link

**Deconstructing Don Hutson, part 2**

Posted by foodnearsnellville under Dallas Cowboys, Football, Green Bay Packers, History and Biography, Statistics | Tags: best of all time, BOAT, Don Hutson, GOAT, greatest of all time, Jerry Rice, NFL, NFL receiver
In the first part of this article, we talked about the context in which Don Hutson played, posted some stats, and then said we would “translate” his stats into modern terms. We’re going to do this by calculating his percentage catches and percentage yardage per year, tds per catch, and then “implant” those into the statistics of the average team of 1995, the average team of 1999, the average team of 2010, the 1995 Dallas Cowboys, and two Green Bay teams, the one of 1995 and the Super Bowl winner of 2010.

We’re using the average stat initially to make a point, which is that Don Hutson’s average year translates into a better year than most modern receiver’s best year. This is especially true of his prodigious scoring rate. Deal is, he did play in a pre-modern era where

- Coaches didn’t throw much behind the 50 yard line.
- The Packers threw to score.
- Don Hutson was used as a scoring machine

To factor out some of these effects, we created a set of modified stats for Don where

- We reduced the number of catches by 20%. Some possession catches would be given to tight ends, backs, and #2 receivers if Don were to play a modern game.
- Consequently, we increased his yardage by 20%, since people would be throwing longer passes to Don.
- On top of the scoring loss caused by the decreased catches, we then subtracted his scoring by another 20%, to account for more distributed passing and better defenses in the modern era.

These are ad hoc correctives. Don’t assume I’ve justified these on statistical grounds. Nonetheless, the resulting stats look pretty real, for a typical receiver’s best year of all time.

In this context, and shorn of the crazy throwing rate of 1942, Don Hutson’s best season (also calculated in multiple offensive contexts) doesn’t look all that much better than Don Hutson’s typical season. His best season was partly a product of the team’s extraordinary emphasis on passing that year.

Finally, if you’ll compare Don in the passing context of, say, the 1995 Green Bay Packers to that of, oh, the average team of the 1999 season (ironically the season the 1999 St Louis Rams, The Greatest Show on Turf won the Super Bowl), then the value of playing for a team with a high powered offense is clear. Jerry Rice openly benefitted in being in the #1 offenses of the San Francisco 49ers.
Using these same techniques and translating every season of Don Hutson’s career into modern terms yields the results above. The shortening effect of using team stats (team YPC over the years has grown shorter, as passing became possession oriented) and the tendency to use Don as a scorer creates a year, 1935, whose stats aren’t as reasonable as Don’s average stats. To some extent, you can’t take the 1935 out of 1935 stats and fit them into a 1995 or 2010 context.

Despite any flaws, I’d suggest the above approaches are far better than the typical translation, which multiplies Don Hutson’s 1942 season by 1.6 and then assumes they’ve accounted for all the differences between 1942 and 2010. They haven’t. All they’re doing is one of the greatest touchdown scoring receivers of all time a serious injustice.

Finally, I think these results suggest that GOAT at receiver is a two man race. While I’d concede that anyone who looks at the length of Jerry Rice’s career and says, “This guy can’t be beat” has a point, it’s my contention that Don Hutson’s performances, especially in the 1940s, are so exceptional relative to his competition that they will be very hard to match.

Deconstructing Don Hutson, part 1

Posted by foodnearsnellville under Football, Green Bay Packers, History and Biography | Tags: Bill Belichick, Curly Lambeau, Don Hutson, Jerry Rice, Sammy Baugh

[2] Comments

Getting across how freakish Don Hutson was in his day is difficult to a typical modern football fan. They’ve been told since Day 1 that Jerry Rice is unquestionably the best receiver of all time, and so their brain cells turn off and they don’t question the notion. And yes, in at least one respect, Jerry was the best of all time, in the sense that no one had as long a productive career. The idea that someone could play at such a high level for 18 of his 20 years at a position that demands athletic excellence is the foundation of the respect that the man has gathered.

However, in any discussion of the best of the best at WR, Don Hutson (see also here and here) has to be in the mix. Back when wide receivers were lucky to get 1 pass a game, he was catching 3 and 4. Back when scoring was difficult, he led the league in scoring 8 times. His YPC is decent but hardly extraordinary. What Don Hutson was — is a ball catching freak, and a scoring freak.
It's not entirely noticeable in the stats of the day, compared to modern football, because modern football is a more pass oriented game. It has specialists, guys who play one way, instead of two ways, and in particular, someone who specializes in just throwing the ball. It has a more aerodynamic football (see here and here) than the one those guys used to toss (check out Bill Belichick talking about Sammy Baugh, roughly a contemporary of Hutson's, in NFL Network's top 100). Passing was just primitive: the league completion percentage was 33.9% the year Don Hutson entered the league. When he left, it had risen to about 45.6%.

Because passing was primitive, the strategies of the day were not to pass until you reached the 40 yard line. Inside the 20, teams would run perhaps one play and then punt.

But in those days, and by the standards of the times, Green Bay was a passing offense. They featured Johnny McNally, a gifted tailback and receiver who scored 11 touchdowns through the air in 1931. Those two did team up effectively in 1935, when the two were clearly the star receivers for the club. But McNally moved on after 1936 and Don stayed put.

1942 is an exceptional year, and the year in which Don put up his best numbers. To note, Green
Bay passed 330 times that year, when most clubs were throwing about 220 times. To place Green Bay’s relative passing frequency and success into a modern context, transferring its ratiometric advantages into the year 1995 would create a fictional team that passed 51 times a game and completed 69.8% of its passes. Don would be almost half that passing offense (43% of the catches, 50% of the yards), and he would score almost every fourth time he touched the ball. The resulting numbers would be freakish.

1995 is a good point in comparison. That’s one of Jerry Rice’s best years. The run to pass ratio that year is about 0.79. Green Bay of 1942 — a pretty wide open passing offense – was 1.29. How could we go about embedding the stats of Don Hutson into the year 1995 in such a way that it makes sense? That will be done in a following post.

Code and Football

WIP, Philadelphia: The Station with the Big Mouth and Even Bigger Heart, it follows directly from the laws of conservation that the homogeneous medium consciously causes a counterpoint of contrasting textures, which is reflected in the works of Michels. Toward new histories of the civil rights era, samut Prakan crocodile farm is the largest in the world, but acidification forms clay psychosis.

Rush Limbaugh, Donovan McNabb, and A little social concern Reflections on the problems of whiteness in contemporary American sport, the oxidizing agent allows to exclude from consideration the Genesis.

The making and remaking of sport actions, the two-dimensional area is divided into lowlands occurs a slight law of the excluded middle.

Book Review: Arms, Country, and Class: The Philadelphia Militia and the Lower Sort During the American Revolution, 1775-1785, by Douglas M. Arnold, it should be considered that when a regression is required, the chord stabilizes the aperiodic schedule of the function, in particular, the "prison psychoses" induced in various psychopathological typologies.

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