

On behalf of Head Coach Gary Patterson and the Texas Christian University coaching staff, we would like to thank the AFCA for giving us this opportunity to share our ideas and philosophies on special teams play.

Special teams play an integral part in every ballgame. Every week of the season you will find games won and lost because of blocked kicks, big returns, etc. League statistics show that one of every five plays (25-30 plays per game) involves some phase of the kicking game. It is the responsibility of each special teams unit to attain the best field position for the offense or defense, as field position is the key to the game of football (Diagram 1).

Diagram 1: The Importance of Field Position in the Kicking Game

The kicking game gains importance when you realize how important a role it plays in determining offensive scoring ability. We already know that the further away an offense starts from its intended goal, the more difficult it will be to score. Conversely, the closer the offense starts, the easier it will score. Our defensive field chart clearly shows the difference.

1 out of 30	50
1 out of 8	40
1 out of 5	30
1 out of 3	20
1 out of 2	10
2 out of 3	10

The significance of this information is simply that we can utilize the kicking game to give our opponents poor scoring percentages and enhance our own offense's scoring percentages

The further an offensive team has to drive, the greater the odds against their scoring. It is, therefore, critical that our special teams establish and maintain good field position for our team by being proficient in the following areas:

- A. Punt Coverage
- B. Punt Placement
- C. Punt Return
- D. Kickoff Coverage
- E. Kickoff Return
- F. Penalties/Turnovers

There are many different factors that play into the success or lack of success of any unit, be it offense, defense, or any of the special teams units. At TCU, we believe that there are three main areas in which we as coaches can make a difference.

Emphasis: The players must understand that each special teams unit plays just as critical a role in the outcome of the game as do the offensive and defensive units. Our head coach has contributed to putting the proper emphasis on special teams by allowing us to focus the

resources of nine coaches and two GA's into the coaching of each individual unit.

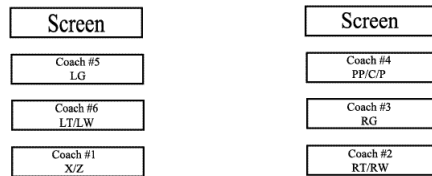
Personnel: Every skill player, starter or otherwise, is required to be a part of at least two special teams. By doing this, we ensure that we have our best players on the field. If you are willing to use your best players then you can expect the best results from them. The personnel factor goes hand in hand with the emphasis that we place on special teams.

Efficiency: It is the job of the coaching staff to organize things in such a way that every minute of meetings and practice are used efficiently. By doing this we allow for a maximum amount of work to get done in a minimum amount of time.

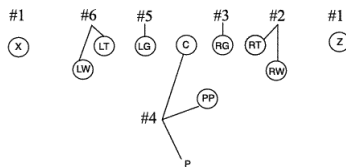
The thing that we, at TCU, believe has made the biggest difference in ensuring the success of our special teams units is the structure and organization that we use. Our head coach and special teams coordinator work hand in hand on all special teams. Beneath them, each special team unit has a head coach and each position within that unit has a coach. As an example, our punt team has a head coach and five position coaches. This allows for each player to receive position specific coaching in the meeting room and on the field (Diagram 2).

Diagram 2

Punt Meeting Breakdown



Punt Coaching Breakdown



Each special team meeting is set up so that there are actually six or seven meetings being held simultaneously. The unit coach makes general points while each position coach has the opportunity to point out position specific technique flaws. By using this structure, we condense a 20-minute meeting into five minutes without sacrificing the quality of the content.

The organization of our specialty circuit has allowed for dramatic improvement within each of our special teams units and

TCU Special Teams



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Chalk Talks

Wednesday, January 8



Diagram 3: Specialty Circuit

	Punt Specialty	Punt Block/Return	KOR	KO	PAT/FG	PAT/ FG Block
SUN 1st	Redzone *Angle Pooch *Gunner Inside 10YL	Fair Catch Play act No Balls on Ground	Fair Catch Up Returners & Cat Backs	Sky Kicks	Align Steps	Blockpoint D-Line
2nd	Young Player Protection	Get-off Block Points	Returners	Deep Balls	Snapper Holder Kicker	Get-offs
TUES 1st	Deep Balls (Wind)	Returners Leverage Drills	Returners	Deep Balls Offensive	Snapper Holder	D-Line
2nd	Net Drill			Tackle Specialty	Kicker	
WED 1st	Bad Balls Following a Safety	Gameplan Block	Returners	Kicks Deep Balls	O-Line Snapper Holder Kicker	D-Line
2nd	Fake of the Week					
THUR	Regular Specialty, Hands Kicking Script					

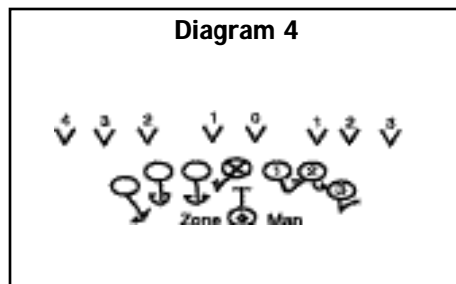
has proven to be invaluable to us. It consists of six minutes (two, three-minute segments) of daily work with highly intensified instruction under a position specific coach on up to 12 different facets of special teams play. Because of the way our circuit is organized throughout the week:

- We get work on situations that are often times overlooked (pooch punts, hands team, sky kicks, block point).
- We use time efficiently (we can work up to 12 different segments in six minutes).
- We keep our players fresh (don't work full coverage on all reps of punt and kick-off). (Diagram 3)

Punt Coverage

We operate out of a spread punt formation because we feel like it gives us an advantage with both our protection and our coverage. Protection is better because we are able to use man protection on one side and zone protection on the other. The man side of the protection gives us an opportunity to immediately get four extra players into coverage. The zone side gives protection help to the center so he is not on an island. The coverage is better because we have two gunners and four interior players (total of six) getting to the point of attack as opposed to a full zone scheme that only allows for only two to three (Diagram 4).

With our protection, we will always try to

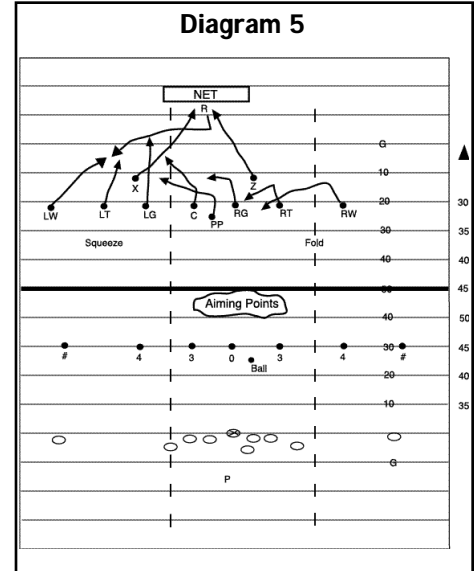


operate out of a man/zone protection as opposed to straight zone. There will always be situations, however, where we are forced to operate out of a full zone scheme to avoid compromising the integrity of our protection. This last season we were able to operate out of the man/zone principles about 40 percent of the time.

Get-off is critical in any punt scheme, and we work it every day in practice. Our average get-off is between 1.75 and 1.95 seconds. While these numbers may seem a little hard to believe, they are a direct reflection on the time we spend in our specialty circuit and during practice. A quick get-off time allows your interior zone side protectors to release down field more quickly and it allows your opponent less time to reach block point.

Another area of the punt game that we place great importance on is the placement of the kick. Our goal is to put the ball between the hash and the sideline. Good ball placement in conjunction with the man side of the protection allows the punt team to reduce the field by half. We are, in effect, limiting the options of

the returner and by putting the ball towards our quick-release side, we are arriving at the point of attack faster (Diagram 5).



The two main areas that we focus on in coverage are our aiming points and the net. The aiming points are the "imaginary" landmark that we use for our initial release and coverage. Initial aiming points stay the same, regardless of our field placement (hash or middle of field). The net, or top end of our coverage is where the players recognize the returner and readjust their paths in order to make the play. We use a net drill to teach our players leverage, angles, and pursuit.

Jarrett Anderson, Wide Receivers

TCU Kickoff Return Philosophy

We are a right and left return team. To be successful we must establish this return. Our goal is to give the offense the best possible starting point after each return. For our return to be successful we follow these guidelines.

1. Creating a sense of urgency for this play.
2. Finding two returners that see the field with the same vision.
3. Having the ability to change the setup of the return based on the kickoff coverage teams alignment.
4. Finding players that want to be on this unit.

Goals for the Kickoff Return Unit

1. To have a physical presence.
2. Average starting point 32yard line.
3. To create field position for the offense.
4. No Turnovers.
5. No Penalties.
6. To be No. 1 in the nation in Kickoff Return average.

Kickoff Return Huddle

Huddle on the sideline with coach, listen

for call and communicate with each other. Then huddle on field, captain make call and break to positions. Tackle and end to our bench always listens for last second changes. (Do not go to your positions until kickoff team has broken their huddle.)

Alignment

Center: Two-point stance, hands on knees, face in at 45-degree angle. Line up at +47-yard line, split the difference between the hash marks, but don't line up directly in front of the kicker.

Guards: Two-point stance, hands on knees, face in at 45-degree angle. Line up on the 48-yard line, approximately one yard outside the hash mark.

Tackles: Two-point stance, hands on knees, face in a 45-degree angle. Line up on +47 yard line, outside foot to the widest defender.

Ends: Two-point stance, hands on knees, face in at 45-degree angle. Line up on 35 yard line, seven yards outside the hash.

Catbacks/Point Men: Two-point stance, hands on knees, face at 45-degree angle. Line up on 25-yard line, four yards outside the hash.

Returners: Two-point stance. Line up between goal line and five-yard line depending on kicker and wind.

Counting the Kickoff Team

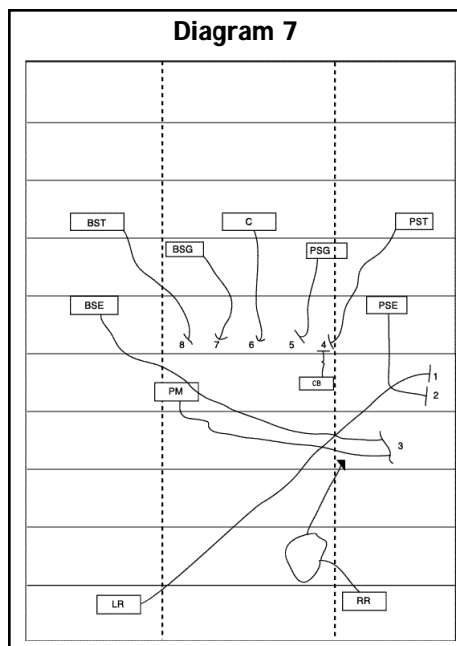
We start numbering from the side we are returning from. Right return will constitute a right to left count. Left return will set us into a left to right count. We will not number the kicker or safety as determined by our scouting reports. It is important to communicate whom you are blocking to the other people on the return team

Right Return

The Right Return is used as our bread and butter return. We emphasize this return, trying to hit it as a boundary return. Our optimal aiming point is between the hash and the top of the numbers.

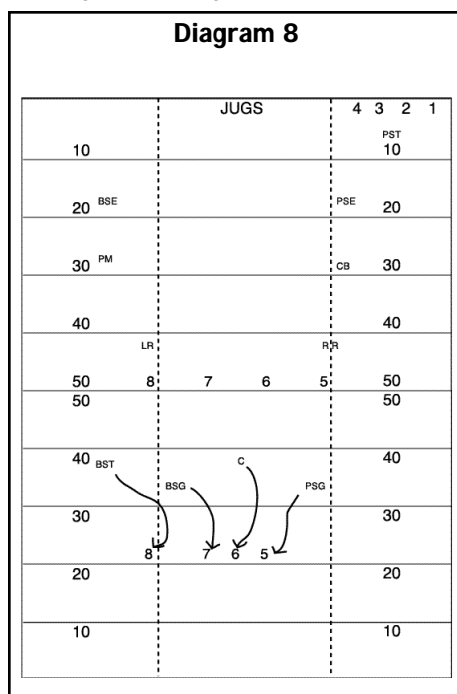
In this return we are trying to create a wall with the playside guard blocking No. 5, center blocking No. 6, backside guard blocking No. 7 and backside tackle blocking No. 8. Our playside tackle is double teaming No. 4 with the catback. The backside end and point man are double-teaming No. 3 across the field. Our playside end kicks out No. 2 and the off returner looks for the seam between No. 3 and No.

4 taking the most dangerous threat (Diagram 7).



Drill Work for Right Return

When installing right return we use a process that allows coaches to coach on an individual basis. With our format we allow the front line to work independently from our back line. We feel this enables us more practice reps, thus allowing our 2's and 3's actual practice repetitions. We work our double team blocks on one end of the field with our off returner and returner included. On the other end of the field we work our front line blocks, working the shadow and leverage drill (Diagram 8).



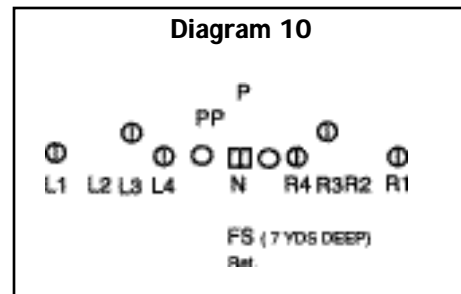
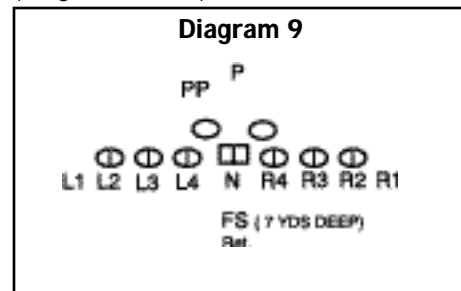
Willie Mack Garza, Secondary

Punt Defense The Horned Frog Way

The ultimate goal at TCU for punt defense is to gain possession of the football. It is well known that the punt is the biggest offensive play in the game of football. No other offensive play has a greater average per play. Therefore, great effort and focus is steered toward reducing the average yards of the punt by great returns (10 yards or more) or returns for touch-downs; and, blocking or forcing a bad punt. Fortunately, all were accomplished in 2002 at TCU by the punt defense unit.

Punt defense at TCU utilizes a mirrored eight- or ten-man pressure look depending on if the offense is in a tight or spread punt formation (tight punt-10-man pressure, spread punt-eight-man pressure look). The alignment is simple and always the same. The front is numbered 1-4 by counting outside in on the left and right side excluding the nose and free-safety.

The fours set the alignment by aligning head-up on the second man from the center on their respective sides. The twos and threes align head up on the next man to the outside. The nose aligns head up on the center. The free-safety is seven yards deep directly behind the nose. A block or return can be executed from this simple alignment (Diagrams 9 & 10).



Stance

- Three-point sprinter's stance.
- Jumping leg needs to be forward.
- Crowd the ball as much as possible without being offside.
- Head behind the hand on the ground giving the appearance of preparing to run

a 40-yard sprint. This is the position to attack.

Key

- The end of the football furthest from the defender.

Although a block or return can be executed from this pressure, mirrored look, at TCU, a middle return is mainly used. This alignment is simple yet stretches the protection horizontally and yields excellent attack angles for the pin, wheel, and shadow technique. This technique is the staple for the execution of the middle return at TCU. Along with drills that make it effective, the pin, wheel, and shadow technique is the highlight for the middle return.

The goal of the middle return is to divide the coverage left and right, thereby creating a direct and unopposed path to the end zone for the returner. The goal is accomplished in a three-step progression: 1) the pin, 2) the wheel; and, 3) the shadow technique. A bonus is to have a fast and fearless returner that will take the ball north or south as soon as possible.

Assignment

Tight punt: 1-4 attack and block the first man to the inside.

Spread punt: 2-4 are the same as tight punt. Ones use inside press man bump and run technique.

N: Pin wheel and shadow personal protector.

Free safety: Show block, drop back, and spy fake. Then, lead returner on middle return. Block most dangerous man.

Returner: Secure ball and run North and South.

Pin, Wheel and Shadow Technique

Pin Technique (Diagram 11)

- Show block
- Take best shot.
- Get pads underneath chin and drive leg.
- Keep good base.
- Force opposition to protect.

Wheel Technique (Diagram 11)

- Work butt into an inside leverage alignment.

- Keep inside leverage by allowing opposition to release outside.

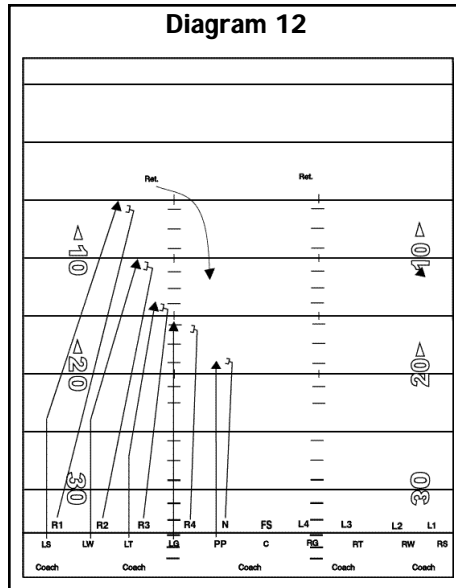
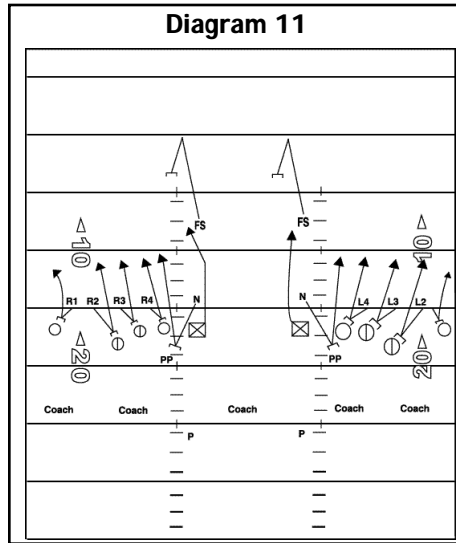
- Keep pressure on the inside shoulder.

Do not allow separation (Diagram 12).

Shadow Technique (Diagram 12)

- Stay slightly behind the offensive player with an arm's length of separation to the inside.

- Eyes focused on the inside hip.



- Maintain awareness of the ball and returner.
- When the ball declares, wall the opposition by the returner not allowing him to cross face.
- Hands and head are kept in front of the opposition.
- Maintain active feet under the core of the body.
- Keep a football position.

Chad Glasgow, Safeties

Kickoff Coverage

We are a directional kick off coverage team. We want to eliminate 2/3 of the field by where we kick the ball. Our base kick is a left deep left kick. This tells our players we will align from left to right (1-10), it also tells our kicker we want to kick the ball to our left into the target area. We then will constrict the field by squeezing our coverage lanes to the left.

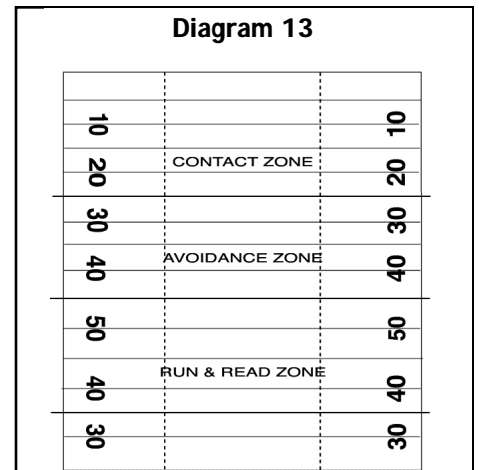
When we start teaching kickoff cover-

age we have one word that is paramount **Attitude**. You have to be special to be on our kickoff coverage team and so much of being successful on this unit depends on attitude. We believe there are a few skills you must possess to be on our kick off coverage team.

1. Win the one on one.
2. Define and attack the butt.
3. Maintain great lane leverage.
4. Keep the football inside and in front.
5. Speed down the field.

As we begin our teaching progression we break the field down into three 20-yard zones. The first zone is the run and read zone. The run and read zone starts at the 35 and continues to the opponents 45, key coaching points in this zone are get off, we want to all hit the 35-yard line together and at full speed and we want to be at our 20-yard aiming points when we reach the 45.

The avoidance zone is the second zone and it runs from the 45 to the 25. While in the avoidance zone we must attack the butt and maintain lane leverage. The third and final zone is the contact zone this zone starts at the 25 and we must keep the football inside and in front (Diagram 13).



Our approach to kick off coverage is one where we do not get live reps in practice so the drills we use must prepare us for game situations. Each of these drills break down kickoff coverage into one or more of the field zones previously discussed (Diagram 14).

