

How to shatter the Wishbone - T?

by Jim Johnston

Some folks say Monte Kiffin is the most eligible bachelor in Lincoln. Others say he'll never get married because he watches too many football films.

Kiffin, the only bachelor on the Nebraska football coaching staff, hasn't encouraged his chances of getting married the past week. He's spent more than the usual amount of time watching films of the Oklahoma Sooners.

KIFFIN is the Cornhuskers' defensive line coach. He's watched every game and every offensive play the Sooners have run this season several times over. His job has been preparing the Cornhuskers to stop what has been so far this season an unstoppable Wishbone-T offense.

Just how much time has Kiffin spent watching Oklahoma films?

"I'd hate to guess," said

Monte. "Let's just say I've watched every game several times."

From those observations, Kiffin feels the Wishbone can be stopped.

"**IT'S ALWAYS** risky to say you can do something before you actually do it," said Kiffin, "but I'm confident that we can do a good job against the Wishbone. This is the best defensive team I've ever been associated with and I have great confidence in them."

The big thing to defending the Wishbone, according to Kiffin, is discipline.

"The kids have to have mental discipline on defense," explained Kiffin. "Each defensive player has a specific assignment. He must carry out that assignment. The trouble starts when somebody starts guessing instead of carrying out his assignment. That's what kills you against the Wishbone."

JUST WHAT is the Wishbone

formation? What makes it so effective?

The Wishbone is basically the old T formation with the fullback lining up closer to the quarterback than the two halfbacks. (diagram one) It's a fullhouse backfield that concentrates 90 per cent of its effort on running.

The success of the Wishbone depends greatly on the ability of the quarterback. He must be an excellent ball handler and talented runner. In senior Jack Mildren, Oklahoma has perhaps the best Wishbone quarterback in the nation.

THE WISHBONE is a triple option offense which means the quarterback has three options with the football. He can handoff to the fullback going up the middle, run with it himself or pitch to the trailing halfback.

The first option available to the quarterback is handing off to the fullback as he runs off tackle or faking the handoff

and keeping the ball.

"If Mildren sees that you're not taking the fake and not tackling the fullback then he'll try to catch you by giving the ball to the fullback," said Kiffin. "You have to respect the fullback, but then if you start tackling him Mildren runs with the ball."

Leon Crosswhite, Oklahoma's fullback, definitely deserves respect. He has rambled 563 yards this season on 110 carries and has only been thrown for four yards behind the line of scrimmage.

THE SECOND option available to the quarterback is running with the ball. Diagram three shows where Mildren makes his big gains.

Mildren is an exceptional runner for a quarterback. He is the Sooners' second leading rusher with 1,069 yards and a 6.3 yards per carry average.

The third option is pitching to the trailing halfback. If the flow of the play is to the left,

then Mildren would pitch to the right halfback (Greg Pruitt) with the left halfback (Roy Bell) serving as a lead blocker.

THAT'S THE play where Pruitt, the nation's second leading rusher, has gained most of his yards. Pruitt has rushed for 1,435 yards and has been caught for just 12 yards loss.

"Mildren executes the triple option with great confidence," said Kiffin. "Sometimes he'll pitch to Pruitt 10 or 11 yards. He can really read the defenses while running the option."

Bell, Oklahoma's probable starter at left halfback, can also go for the long gains. Bell, like Pruitt, has exceptional speed and is always considered a dangerous runner.

Joy Wylie, the Big Eight Sophomore Back of the Year in 1970, has been slowed with injuries this season. Wylie probably won't start against Nebraska, but he is in better shape now than he has been at other times this season.

ALTHOUGH Mildren has proven that he's capable of throwing the football, the pass is used basically as an element of surprise in the Oklahoma offense.

Mildren has thrown just 45 passes this season, but has completed 22 for 646 yards and seven touchdowns.

Split end John Harrison is the leading pass receiver. Harrison, who is basically used as a decoy to take another defender out of the picture, has caught 11 passes for 338 yards. He's averaged 30.7 yards per pass.

How do you defend the Wishbone?

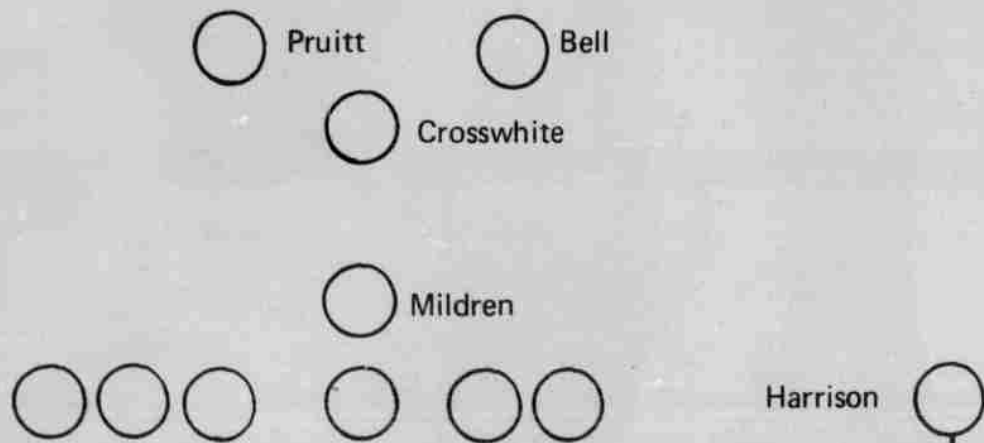
"**NOBODY** really knows if there's an ideal way to defend the Wishbone," said Kiffin. "It's not necessarily the type of defense you use, but how well you execute whatever defensive strategy you decide to use."

The Nebraska coaching staff has toyed with the idea of using a six-man defensive line against Oklahoma. Missouri, for example, used a six-man defensive line against the Sooners and didn't allow a point in the second half in a 20-3 game.

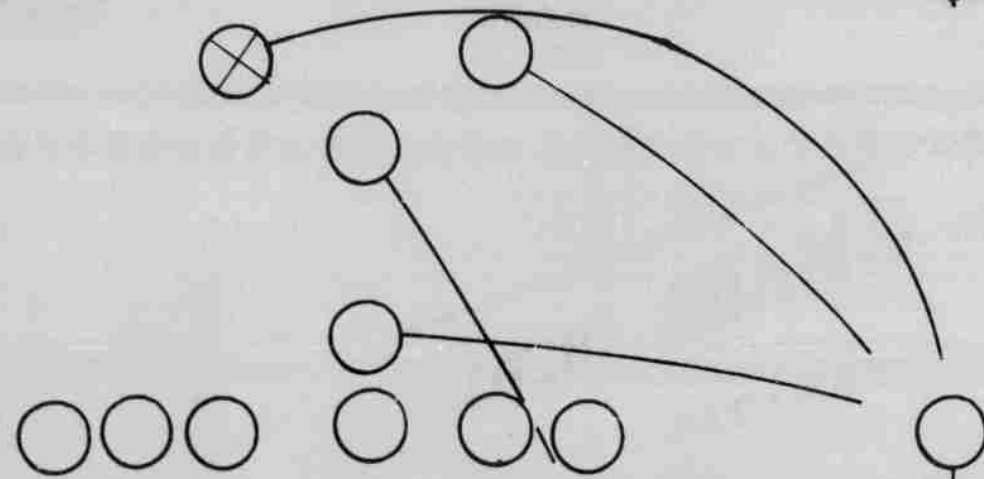
It's doubtful that the Cornhuskers will use a six-man line Thanksgiving Day, however. Head coach Bob Devaney has warned about the disadvantage of switching in the middle of the stream.

Nebraska will try to do what it's been doing all season on defense... best people one on one. The Black Shirts are the best in the nation in that department.

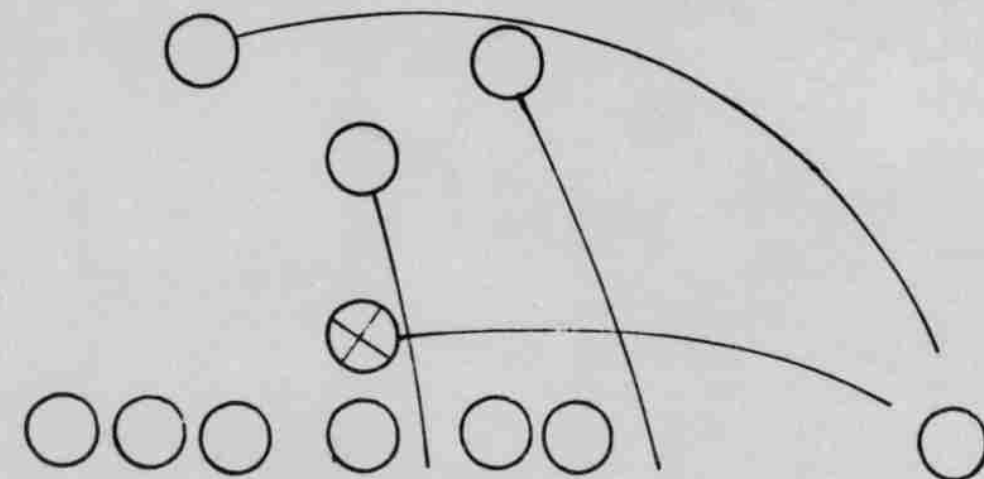
Wishbone-T formation. Split end Jon Harrison is split to his left. This is basically a running formation, however, if Harrison is not covered quarterback Jack Mildren is capable of throwing to him while rolling to his left.



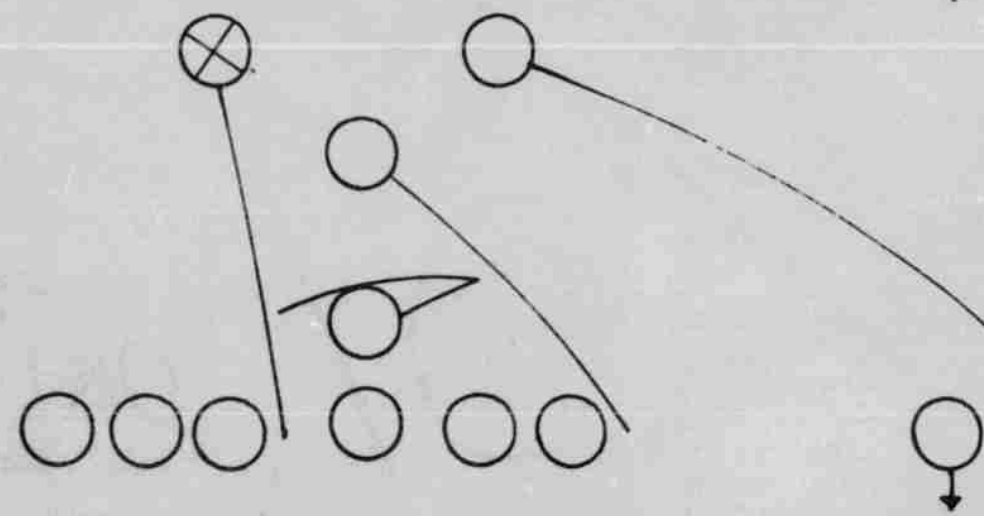
Halfback's long gain play. Quarterback Jack Mildren rolls to his left, fakes to fullback Leon Crosswhite and then pitches to right halfback Greg Pruitt with left halfback Roy Bell leading the blocking. This is the play where Pruitt has gained most of his yards.



Quarterback's long-gain play. Mildren rolls to his left, fakes to Crosswhite and then runs around end with the halfbacks leading the blocking. This is where Mildren has gained most of his yardage.



Counter-dive. Mildren goes to his left and fakes to Crosswhite. Bell also flows left. Mildren then changes direction and hands off to Pruitt up the middle. Oklahoma hurt Nebraska with this play last year. Oklahoma tries to get the defense to flow with the play and then Mildren switches direction.



Huskies Sooners risk records

Nebraska and Oklahoma both take winning streaks into their Thanksgiving Day game.

The Cornhuskers have logged 29 games without a defeat, marred only by a 21-21 tie with Southern Cal last year. The Huskers have won 20 straight games since the USC tie.

Oklahoma's last loss was a 28-21 decision to Nebraska last year. Since that meeting, the Sooners have gone 11 games without a loss marred only by a 24-24 tie with Alabama in the Astro-Bluebonnet Bowl.