



**THE HYBRID DEFENSE OF THE SPLIT-6
AND WIDE TACKLE-6 DEFENSES**

by John Carbon

With Reference from Drew Tallman's
*Directory of Football Defenses: Successful Defenses
and How to Attack Them, 1969 and 1978*

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The **Jaws of Death Defense**, named after the "Lufkin Jaws" defense—Texas 5A champs in 2001, is a hybrid of the Split-6 and WideTackle-6 defenses. As I research I see more and more information backing up what we already know, our "D" is tough to beat. It is simple. It's simple to run and simple to adjust. It is based on the Bum Phillips defense and has been greatly influenced by Spike Dykes, Jerry Claiborne, Don James, Vince Dooley, and Erik Russell. I have refined my modified Gap-Air-Mirror and it is now the **Jaws of Death Defense**.

We do several things a bit different. To start we move our front four around so we get many looks. We go from a Gap-Air-Mirror to WideTackle-6 to Split-6 to "G" as well as reduce fronts. So you have an idea our Wide Tackle-6 places DTs in the "C" gap and DGs in "A" gap. The Split-6 has those players in the "C" and "B" gaps and the "G" is "CBAC" to strength. We can have half Gap-Air-Mirror to one side and half Split-6 to the other side as an example. We will keep the bear crawl at youth level for the DGs but change our technique for the DTs in the "C" gap. We will make the DTs read the QB. If he keeps his arms low, we clog the gap. If he shows pass with arms high we bring it. The DEs don't box but read. They look like they crash but they take a few steps and read the backfield movement. The other big change is our coverage. We have CBs on #1 to their side, FS has #2 strong, SLB takes #3 and WLB takes #2 weak. Our WLB is more like a strong safety so we can switch coverage with MLB in case of trips.

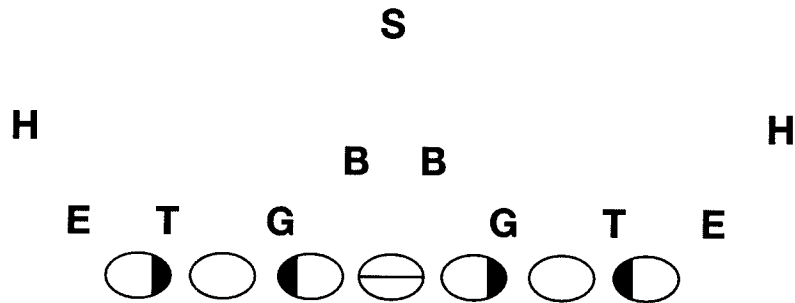
Now, unless you are facing five vertical (no back) we would stay in these fronts and coverage. If we do face five vertical we will do several things but the simplest would be to have MLB position himself to cover #4 vs. quads or #2 weak vs. trips/twins and go to a Gap-Air-Mirror front and bring six.

I run split to strength and wide six to the weakside. This should give you an idea of how we play the front six. We play around with the coverage and stunt package. The stunt package is based on Bob Altshuler's *20 Gap Defense*. The goal line package is based on Jerry Claiborne and the coverage is all Virginia Tech "G" with some University of Washington.

The remainder of this document is excerpts from the sources which I've drawn to create the **Jaws of Death Defense**. These include Drew Tallman's descriptions of the Split-6 and Wide Tackle-6 defenses as outlined in his book, *Directory of Football Defenses: Successful Defenses and How to Attack Them*, 1969 and 1978, Jerry Claiborne's *Goal Line Defense* as well as the Virginia Tech's *Attack Defense* as presented to the AFCA, and Don James' presentation of the "G" Defense utilized by the University of Washington during his tenure.

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THE SPLIT-6 DEFENSE



Strengths:

- 1) Very strong outside
- 2) Tackle over tight end
- 3) 8-man front versus the running game
- 4) Strong against outside option game
- 5) Good stunt and blitz defense
- 6) 3 deep secondary

Weaknesses:

- 1) LB diversity is limited outside
- 2) Middle area with various blocking schemes
- 3) Over offensive tackle
- 4) Quick hitting plays
- 5) Curl or flat area is weak with no LB support
- 6) Two defensive linemen between offensive tackles (are DGs strong?)

Plays That Go Best

Versus the Defense: **Middle**—Sneaks, quick traps, isolation, counter-trap, quick counters; **Off-Tackle**—Power plays, outside belly, sprint draw, veer series, wishbone, cross-buck, tailback dive; **Outside**—Sweep inside end, option vs. DE.

Blocking Schemes:

Middle—Trap, fold on DG, tackle trap, double DG and isolate linebacker, wedge; **Off-Tackle**—Fold on DG, double DG and power, angle block down and trap DT and DE; **Outside**—Double DT (wing) power, options.

Comments:

Force adjustments at corner if tight and can not block DT. Use twins and wide-outs and pass or run to the defense adjustment. Attack flat and hook (LB's limited). Force DE to cover pass. Similar to 4-4 Split defense.

The Play of the Split-6 Defense

The following is the alignment, stance, initial movement and execution, responsibilities and coaching points of each position of the Split-6 even-Diamond defense. The different alignments and executions of the eight-man front will be explained and described as was previously mentioned at the start of this chapter.

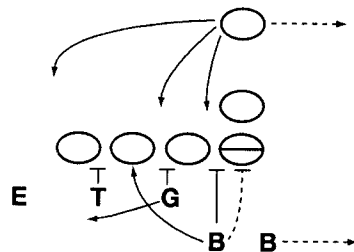
Defensive Linebackers (Number 1 Man)

Alignment: Line up either in the center-guard gap or straddling the inside leg of the defensive guard. Be approximately 1 to 3 yards in depth from the line of scrimmage, depending upon the down and distance, etc.

Stance: A low two-point stance, with the inside leg forward. Feet can be parallel, but no more than a toe-instep relationship.

Initial Movement and Execution:

The basic key is the quarterback, but can include the fullback or another offensive back. Be alert for a play in the middle, such as the sneak, wedge, or trap. If the play is toward, protect the center-guard area. If the play goes outside, step to the outside between the offensive guard and tackle. If the play is away, the linebacker will step up and meet the offensive center and deliver a forearm blow. In many instances the linebacker will react to the movements of the offensive center and not deliver a blow. The linebacker must protect the area. (Look at accompanying diagram.)



Responsibilities:

1. Play Toward—If an offensive back does not come in the guard-tackle gap, the linebacker will continue to move to the tackle-end area. If the play goes wider, the linebacker will assist with the defensive end on containment and can cover the flat if a pass develops. The defensive end and linebacker can exchange assignments with the defensive end covering the flat and the linebacker helping on containment. (It must be remembered that the more the defensive tackle aligns to the outside, the more the linebacker must protect inside, and vice versa.)

2. Play Away—The linebacker first controls the center area, reacts to his keys, and goes on a proper pursuit angle. If pass develops, go to the outside hook area.

3. Drop Back—Both linebackers will go to the outside hook areas unless involved in a stunt. One or both linebackers can be responsible for the draw.

Coaching Points: Keep shoulders square to the line of scrimmage when delivering a blow to the offensive center. The linebacker should watch for the screen and shuffle pass when going to the hook areas.

Defensive Guards (Number 2 Men)

Alignment: Line up on the outside shoulder of the offensive guard approximately 12-inches off the ball. If penetrating, align in the guard-tackle gap.

Stance: Either a low three-point or four-point stance, with the feet parallel or toe-instep relationship.

Initial Movement and Execution: On the snap of the ball, the defensive guard will strike a blow with the inside forearm into the outside shoulder of the offensive guard. The number 2 man will react from there. If penetrating, the defensive guard will charge straight ahead going low and hard. The defensive guard will take approximately two steps, or to a depth of 1 yard.

Responsibilities: 1. Play Toward—Keep the offensive guard off the linebacker. Responsible from the offensive guard to the tackle area. If not blocked, watch for the trap by the offside offensive guard. If penetrating, go hard for depth and tackle anything over and around the area. Watch for the trap.

2. Play Away—Go on pursuit. Watch for the draw on sprint-out away. If guard pulls, follow him down the line. If penetrating go on pursuit.

3. Drop Back—Rush the passer hard and close the middle area off. May be responsible for the draw play.

Coaching Points: Stay square to the line of scrimmage when delivering a blow. Keep the outside arm and leg free. When being trapped, stay low and strike a hard blow to the offensive trapper.

Defensive Tackles (Number 3 Man)

Alignment: Can either align in the tackle-end gap, inside shoulder, head up, or outside shoulder of the offensive end. Approximately 12 to 18 inches off the ball.

Stance: Line up in a low three-or four-point stance. This may depend on the defensive technique employed.

Initial Movement and Execution: If aligned inside or in a head-up position, step with the outside foot and forearm and deliver a blow into the offensive end. If positioned on the outside shoulder of the offensive end, strike a blow with the inside shoulder of the offensive end, strike a blow with the inside shoulder. When stationed in the tackle-end gap, penetrate across the line of scrimmage.

Responsibilities:

1. Play Toward—If aligned inside, protect against the straight dive and the inside area. When outside, protect the territory from the offensive end to the alignment of the defensive end. If aligned inside, do not be driven in by the offensive end. Watch for the trap.
2. Play Away—Chase the play, looking for the bootleg, reverse, etc.
3. Drop Back—Rush the passer hard from the outside in.
4. Play Outside—Move to the outside, fighting blockers. If roll-out pass, attempt to contain the passer. If end drops off, fight for containment.

Coaching Points: When penetrating, go low and hard. Get off the ground and get to the ball immediately. If not blocked, look to the inside and prepare for a trap block. Stay low and keep the shoulder square, meeting trapper with inside forearm, shoulder, and leg. Keep outside arm and leg free.

Defensive Ends (Number 4 Men)

Alignment: Line up on the line of scrimmage approximately 1 to 3 yards outside the offensive end, depending upon the alignment of the defensive tackle.

Stance: A low two-point stance, with inside leg forward.

Initial Movement and Execution: On the snap of the ball take a short jab step forward, approximately 6 to 9 inches with the inside leg. Can have keys on the lead offensive back, quarterback, and offensive linemen.

- Responsibilities:*
1. Play Toward—come across the line of scrimmage forcing all plays to the inside; nobody must get outside. Do not give ground. The angle of penetration will be determined by the type of play and quickness of it—“Ball comes, I come.” If sprint-out toward, can retreat to the flat and have the linebacker be responsible for containment with the defensive tackle.
 2. Play Away—Take step forward and wait for the counter, reverse, bootleg, screen pass, etc. Drop off and then go on pursuit—“Ball goes, I go.”
 3. Drop Back—Can either rush the passer hard or cover in the flat area.

Coaching Points: Keep shoulders parallel to the line of scrimmage when the play comes forward. When dropping off to the flat, go as deep as possible so long as it is possible to come back and cover the offensive ball carrier to the line of scrimmage. Do not be a floater when forcing the running plays.

Defensive Halfbacks (Number 5 Men)

Alignment: Line up 3-4 yards outside offensive end and 7-10 yards deep. Line up as wide as the widest receiver.

Stance: Two-point stance with outside leg back.

Initial Movement and Execution: Watch your required key (end?). on snap of ball, weight should be shifted back to outside foot on reading the key.

Responsibility: React to run, if end blocks. Approach the ball carrier from an outside-in position. On plays away, look for pass and then pursue. Must watch for the fake block. If offensive end pass protects or releases downfield, play pass first, then react to the run.

1. Play Toward—Deep outside, one-third unless indicated otherwise.
2. Play Away—Deep outside one-third unless indicated otherwise.
3. Drop Back—Deep outside one-third unless indicated otherwise.

Coaching Points: Play the man when he is in the zone. Be as deep as the deepest receiver. When the ball is thrown, go quickly and play the ball at its highest point.

Safety Man

Alignment: Directly over the center, 9-12 yards in depth.

Stance: Two-point stance

Initial Movement and Execution: Watch your required key. On snap of the ball, the first step should be back.

Responsibility: On any play the safety must think "pass" first and "run" second. The safety only assists on runs when it is definitely a run and not a pass.

1. Play Toward—Deep middle one-third of field unless indicated otherwise.

2. Play Away—Deep middle one-third of field unless indicated otherwise.

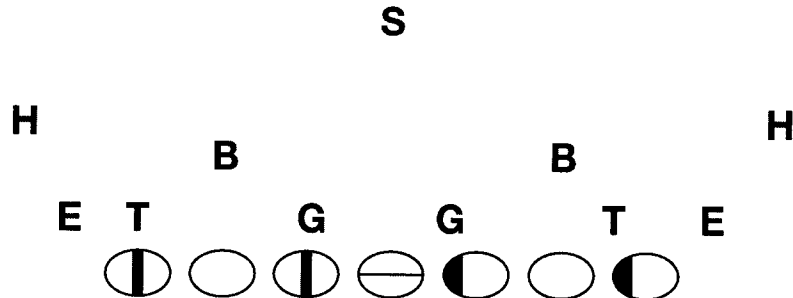
3. Play Back—Deep middle one-third of field unless indicated otherwise.

Coaching Points: Most think "pass" first and "run" second. Play as deep. Play as deep as deepest receiver. Sprint to the ball and go through the receiver to the ball.

Pass Coverage Responsibility

CBs #1, FS #2 strong, SLB #3, WLB # 2 weak. WLB and MLB can switch coverage to keep SLB inside.

THE WIDE TACKLE-6 DEFENSE



- Strengths:**
- 1) Strong outside (T and E).
 - 2) Good LB support outside
 - 3) 8-man front versus run
 - 4) Excellent against option plays
 - 5) 3 deep secondary

- Weaknesses:**
- 1) Generally weaker inside than out
 - 2) Middle area (3 on 2)
 - 3) Over offensive tackle (tackle against #2 LB)
 - 4) Attack past DT with certain blocking combinations
 - 5) DG defenders must be good against the middle game
 - 6) Weak pass underneath coverage seen if E's drop off the line

Plays That Go Best

Versus the Defense: *Middle*—Quick traps, sneak, counters, isolation is excellent against LB, inside belly; *Off-Tackle*—Veer, dive, outside belly, power at LB, sprint draw, tailback drive, cross-buck; *Outside*—Sweep, options vs. DE.

Blocking Schemes *Middle*—trap DG, one-on-one with back reading DG, fold; *Off-Tackle*—One-on-one, angle block down and trap DT or DE, block out and isolate LB; *Outside*—Double DT and kick out DE.

Comments: Can the tight end block DT? If so, then attack inside and out. Split end (twins set also) and attack alignment of DE. Use play action against LBs. Attack flat or deep outside if rotation occurs.

Playing the Wide Tackle-6 Defense

The following is the alignment, stance, initial movement and execution, responsibilities and coaching points of each position of the Wide Tackle-6 defense.

Defensive Guards (Number 1 Men)

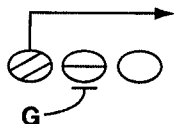
Alignment: Line nose up, inside, shoulder, or outside shoulder of the offensive guard. Can automatically line up in either of the three positions even if splits are normal. Align 1 to 4 feet off the guard according to defensive play.

Stance: A low three- or four-point stance, with feet parallel or in a toe-instep relationship.

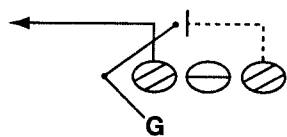
Initial Movement and Execution: Step with the outside foot, and forearm shiver with the outside shoulder and arm. Some coaches teach stepping with the inside foot first and hitting with the outside shoulder. Stay low and read and react to the movements of the offensive guard and center.

Responsibility: Responsible for the inside, sneak, quick trap, wedge and draw plays. Should not be taken by a fake in backfield.

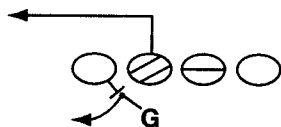
1. Play Toward—(1) Stop trap first—Offensive guard pulls past center step laterally to the nose of center, fight blocks and play traps.



If guard pulls toward end, step in the direction of the pull. If to pressure, step to inside and play trap.



If pressure from outside (offensive tackle), read backfield action and fight outside pressure.



(2) Defeat the single block of the offensive guard. Fight double-team pressure from both offensive center and guard, or tackle and guard.

2. Play Away—Play offensive guard area, then pursue. If sprint-out is away, look for the draw.

3. Drop Back—Rush the passer. One or both guards can be conscious of the draw. If one guard has the draw the other rushes the passer hard.

Coaching Points: Strike a hard blow into the offensive guard. Do not run around the block. First responsibility is the inside, then go outside.

Defensive Linebackers (Number 2 Men)

Alignment: Align head up with the offensive tackle approximately 2-1/2 to 3 yards off the ball. This will depend on the tactical situation and strategical planning.

Stance: A low two-point stance, with either the feet parallel or in a toe-instep relationship.

Initial Movement and Execution: Read and key the movement of the offensive tackle, then react to the play.

Responsibility: 1. Play Toward—Step up and meet the offensive tackle with a low forearm shiver. If the offensive tackle blocks out or in, step up, stay low, and be prepared for isolation, power, and trap plays.

2. Play Outside—Protect area, then pursue. If sprint-out or roll-over pass, can either sprint to the flat and cover that area or slide down the line, pick up the offensive end, and stay with him to the hook area (slightly wider than the drop-back pass). Secondary containment of the quarterback if end or tackle loses containment.

3. Play Away—Check for the counter, then pursue to the ball. Stay at your position if the backfield divides, then pursue. If sprint-out or roll-out away, check for the draw and drive back picking up crossing receivers (or to hook zone).

4. Drop Back—Sprint to the hook area approximately 10 to 15 yards in depth. Play any receiver in your area. Stay alert for screens, draws, etc.

Coaching Points: Stay low and meet offensive tackle low, hold ground. Second, contain man on running plays to the outside. Be quicker and fast on pursuit.

Defensive Tackles (Number 3 Men)

Alignment: Line nose up to inside or outside shoulder of the offensive end approximately 12 to 18 inches off the ball.

Stance: A three- or four-point stance.

Initial Movement and Execution: Step with the outside foot and deliver a blow with the outside shoulder and forearm. (May step with inside leg first and on the second step strike a blow with the outside shoulder and forearm.) Read and react to the offensive end and tackle movements.

Responsibility: Responsible for off-tackle area and inside.

1. Play Toward—Play territory and protect against the straight dive. If outside, fight through the end's block and attempt to force the pitch on the option play.
2. Play Away—Read the offensive end. Be alert for the trap, then chase looking for the reverse, bootleg, etc.
3. Drop Back—Hit end and never let him release to the inside. Be contain man and rush from outside-in.

Coaching Points: Strike a hard blow into the offensive end and stay square to the line of scrimmage. Do not penetrate when there is no pressure; be aware of the trap. When hitting end, do not overextend in executing the charge.

Defensive Ends (Number 4 Man)

Alignment: Line up approximately 1 to 2 yards from the defensive tackle. This will depend on the alignment of the defensive tackle. This will depend on the alignment of the defensive tackle, down and distance, sideline, etc.

Stance: A low two-point stance with the outside leg back.

Initial Movement and Execution: On the snap of the ball, jab step with the inside foot and react to the play.

Responsibility:

1. Play Toward—Contain on all wide plays. Drive across line. Force everything to the inside. Do not give ground. "Ball comes, I come."
2. Play Away—Drop back to the flat area and look for the reverse, throwback pass, bootleg, cutback, etc., then pursue to the ball carrier. "Ball go, I go."
3. Drop Back—Go immediately to the flat zone and turn to the outside. Cover area and sprint to ball.

Coaching Points: Push everything to the inside when the play comes toward. Be tough and hold ground. Meet play with inside shoulder and leg, keeping the outside leg and arm free. Keep shoulders parallel to the line of scrimmage.

Safety Man

Alignment: Directly over the center, 9-12 yards in depth.

Stance: Two-point stance

Initial Movement and Execution: Watch your required key. On snap of the ball, the first step should be back.

Responsibility: On any play the safety must think "pass" first and "run" second. The safety only assists on runs when it is definitely a run and not a pass.

1. Play Toward—Deep middle one-third of field unless indicated otherwise.
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3. Play Back—Deep middle one-third of field unless indicated otherwise.

Coaching Points: Most think "pass" first and "run" second. Play as deep. Play as deep as deepest receiver. Sprint to the ball and go through the receiver to the ball.

Pass Coverage Responsibility

CBs #1, FS #2 strong, SLB #3, WLB # 2 weak. WLB and MLB can switch coverage to keep SLB inside.