

# RICK SHEPAS

## THE 5-2 PRESSURE DEFENSE WITH STUNTS

### MASSILLON WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL, OHIO

I am really excited to be here for a lot of reasons. Anytime I get a chance to go out and speak and represent Massillon Washington High School, I think it is important. The success I have enjoyed is a result of Massillon Washington High School and not because of Rick Shepas. It is a great place to be. It could be the best place to be because of its' great tradition, stadium, and fan appeal. It could also be one of the worst places to coach because of its great tradition, stadium and fans. Over the five years I have been at Massillon, the one thing that I have grown to appreciate is the staff that I work with at Massillon Washington. The staff is very cohesive and it makes my life a lot easier as a head coach. It makes my life a lot of fun.

I have a lot more resources at Massillon than I had at Seneca Valley, which is an AAAA school in Pittsburgh. At Seneca Valley, including myself, I had eight coaches. At Massillon, I have twelve coaches and a kicking specialist. We do our best to facilitate the needs of our players. Our philosophy in coaching is to try to reach every kid we can. We have a lot of kids that come from troubled backgrounds. That makes them high maintenance players. It puts a lot of stress on a coaching staff to work with those kids rather than throw them away. I have coaches that work with those kids who are not getting the parenting they need. It can be stressful because of the maintenance but can be very rewarding when you see some of the miracles our coaches create.

To start with I want to give you an overview of what we are. We are an eagle defense. To me that means five men up front, regardless of whether you are in an over or under concept. We are a 3-4 type defensive team. We are very similar to the defense you see at Ohio State. We put this defensive package in two years ago, because we found we were too conservative on the defensive side of the ball. We were sitting and reading too much. Offensive football teams were taking the game to us. We went to Ohio State, where they were putting in the tight 3-4 pressure defense, to get some ideas. We began to install their defense with their terminology. The problem we had related to their zone dog package. They ran it off the hash marks. We wanted a defense you could run in the middle of the field and still pressure the football?

I went to Oklahoma last year and took my entire staff. That is another pleasure of being at Massillon. We studied the defensive concept they were using. It was ironic because Ohio State went out there that year to fine tune what they were doing. We learned a simpler way to do things at Oklahoma. It was easier for us to install that defense. It was a K.I.S.S. method but we were coming with some kind of pressure on every down. Instead of the offenses dictating to us, we wanted to dictate to them what they have to do.

We have great coaches and great players who can make things happen. We had some keys that lead to our

success. One major difference that made us a better football team was that we found a way to get faster on defense without sacrificing being a physical football. We started with the interior positions. We wanted to put the fastest and best athletes on the field. We started looking for players who were linebackers who could possibly play up front or on the edges to make us faster. We did the same thing by looking at physical safeties playing linebackers and corners. That is one of the things that Oklahoma preaches over and over and also one of the reasons Ohio State won the national championship this year.

They found a way over the last couple of years to get faster defensively. Everybody is starting to run speed programs these days. You have to use a little caution so you don't go too far over the edge for speed. You can't sacrifice everything for speed when you are still playing teams that want to isolate you and smash you in the mouth. You have to get to the football, but you still have to be physical.

The second thing came to light in the Super Bowl last week. The Tampa Bay Bucs are a physical football team, but they only blitzed six times. I think that speaks volumes to the way they were playing the run with their front four. They came with some five-man pressure, but when they did, they played great coverage behind it. We want to play an attack front with a minimum of five players on every down.

The third key to success is using zone pressure while playing three under and three deep in the secondary. Oklahoma has the best way of teaching the three under, three deep concept. We run zone pressures that involve the inside and outside linebackers, safeties, and corners while dropping defensive line personnel.

The area that Oklahoma helped us the most was our run fits. We took some film with us and asked them what we could do to improve what we were doing. As they watched us play the thing they came up with over and over was the fact that we didn't have good fits with our linebackers and defensive backs. They gave us a five on three run drill to use in teaching fits. We took the Sam, Mike, and Will linebackers along with the strong and free safeties as the five-man defense. We used a tight end and two backs for the three-man side.

Massillon is a spread offense team. We had a designated area for the line and defensive line. The backs ran from under the center and in the shotgun. The drill is set up to look like a pass verse defensive shell drill. The linebackers and safeties read their run keys and see all the plays they will see in the game situation. They see the zone, trap, lead, and counter plays from the shotgun formation as well as from under center. It is a full speed non-contact leverage drill. They are working on proper fit in the run game. In this drill we used our first defensive unit and our first offensive unit. The offense is working on timing and the defense is working on fit. The defense is buzzing, learning leverages points, and where they should be. This drill develops the mindset of where they should be defensively.

When we go to our defensive shell drill we include our zone drops from the line positions. We work on the passing game full speed against a rush. We run the drill with two tackles, two backs, the quarterback, and the receivers. The defense has the secondary plus the outside rushers. We are working on our offense against our defense. We run our zone dogs, five man pressures, and our skeleton secondary. Everything is live coming off pressure. We are

working on our offensive tackles verses the defensive pressure. This year we used only our offensive tackles in the drill. Next year we are will alternate our center and two guards into the drill with the offensive tackles. That will let us work on the interior line stunts between the nose guard and 5-technique. The drill gives us good offensive and defensive work.

The thing that really improved for us this year was our third down conversion. We were forty-five percent successful in stopping the third down play. That is really important in the field position game.

I want to show you some of our comparative stats from last year. We are a shotgun, spread, and no huddle type of offense. Our offense scores a lot. My high school football coach ran an offense with two tight ends and a stacked I-formation in the backfield. We controlled the ball to where the opposing team only had the ball for three to four possessions a game. If that happened we won the game. That doesn't happen any more. The one stat that sticks out is the nine interceptions we threw as opposed to the twenty-nine passes we intercepted. We were plus twenty in the turnover margin.

However, when you are a no huddle team and spread offense you can score very quickly. Our time of possession was not a tremendous amount more than our opponents. The bad part about that is your defense ends up on the field more. Those are the things we have learned over the course of the last four years. Our time of possession is getting better. We are learning how to possess the football more so we can keep our defense off the field.

You have to get great productivity from your down linemen. They have to be given the opportunity to make as many plays as they possibly can. Our

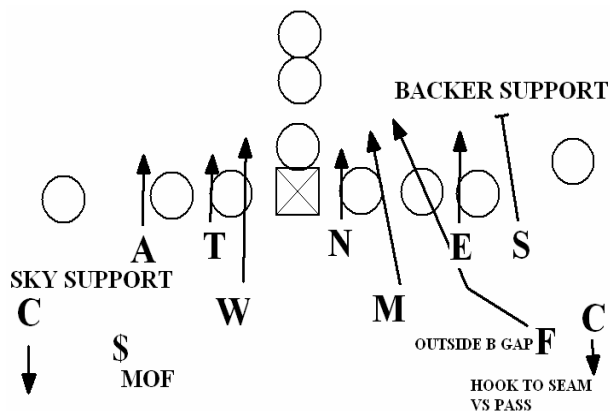
nose guard weighted 210 pounds. He was extremely aggressive. He had sixteen tackles for losses, five quarterback sacks, and twelve quarterback pressures. That was in addition to his fifty-two tackles. The 3-technique and 5-technique were equally as effective. We worked extremely hard on not rushing past the quarterback as he stepped up into the pocket. We wanted to rip and swim back inside when we get to the depth of the quarterback.

Our four linebackers were quite productive this year for us. Our Mike linebacker had quite a bit of freedom in this defense and made 118 tackles for the season. However, our Sam linebacker was the real deal. He was big at 6-6 and 235 pounds. He ran 4.5 for the forty and could take over a game. He had ninety-seven tackles and thirty for losses. Besides the athletic ability he has a 3.0 in the core classes and is a great kid.

Our secondary was able to do well because of our defensive line and linebackers. Our strong corner made twelve interceptions. We returned several interceptions for touchdowns. But that is a direct correlation of the pressure from the defensive line. We were very productive in the secondary, but it was a team goal. You can blitz all you want, but if you get picked up and don't get to the quarterback, the secondary gets burned. That is why the movement of the defensive line along with the blitzing is important.

Our base defense is an *Eagle 3 Strong*. Our nose guard is in a strong shade on the center. The end is in a 5-technique to the strong side. The tackle is in a 3-technique to the weakside. Our anchor linebacker is to the weakside in a 5-technique. The Sam linebacker is in loose 9-technique verses a tight end and a walked off position verses a slot. The Mike linebacker is in a

30-technique strong and the Will linebacker is in a 20i-technique to the weakside.

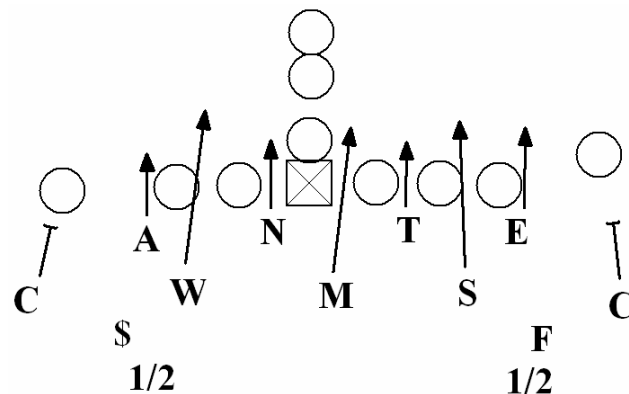


**EAGLE 3 STRONG**

We are a gap control defense. The anchor linebacker keys the tight end or offensive tackle to the near back in the backfield. He has the C-gap on flow toward him and has a chase technique on plays away. The tackle is a B-gap player and keys the guard and ball. The nose guard has the strong A-gap and keys the center and the ball. The end keys the tackle and the ball and plays the strong C-gap. The Sam linebacker keys the tight end or the tight end triangle if he is walked off. He has the D-gap backer support, and seam and flat verses pass. The Mike linebacker keys the offensive guard to the near back. He has the B-gap on action toward him and the A-gap weak on flow away from him. The Will linebacker keys the near back through the offensive guard. He has A-gap leverage on flow toward him and the cut back lane on flow away from him.

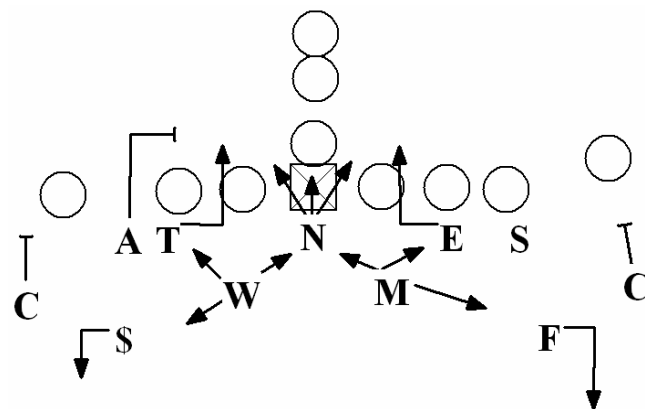
The next front we have is the *Over* look. This is the 4-3 look. The nose and tackle are aligned in a 1-technique and 3-techniques. The anchor linebacker is in a 5-technique weak and the end is in a 9 technique strong. The Sam linebacker is off the line of scrimmage in a 70i, which is an inside shade of the tight end. The Mike linebacker is in a 20i strong and the Will linebacker

is in a 40i stack behind the anchor. The secondary is in a cover two look with half coverage.



**OVER**

In our *30 front* our nose guard, end, and tackle are in head up alignments. The end and tackle are aligned in 4-techniques on the offensive tackles and the nose is in a 0-technique on the center. The anchor linebacker is in a ghost 6-technique on the open side of the formation or a 9-technique if he has a tight end.



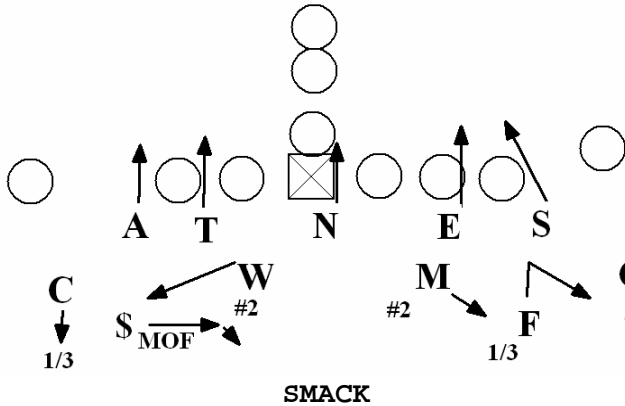
**30 FRONT**

The Sam linebacker is in loose 9-technique verses a tight end and a ghost 6-technique verses the slot formation. The Will and Mike linebacker are in 40i alignments to the strong and weak sides. We used this front when we wanted to get into nickel and dime coverage against throwing teams.

The next defense we run is called *Smack*. The alignments look like the

eagle strong. In this defense the Sam linebacker is coming off the edge almost every time.

From this defense we are going to play three deep almost every time. Against four quick receivers we are going to play three deep, while carrying the receivers through the seam areas. From this defense we have to get to the quarterback before he can hurt us deep.

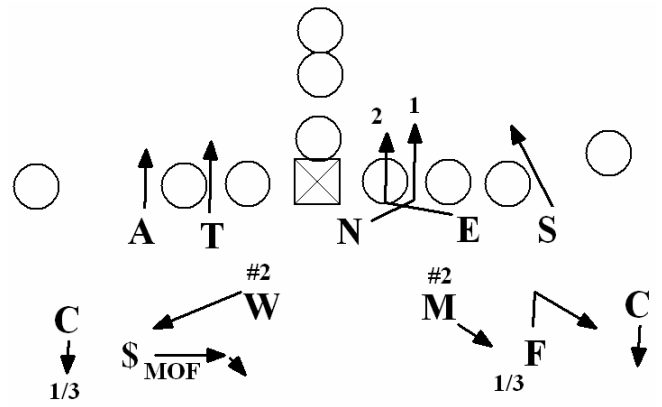


The defense we call *Smack Knee* is a line movement defense with the Sam linebacker coming hard from the outside. The alignment looks like the *Smack*.

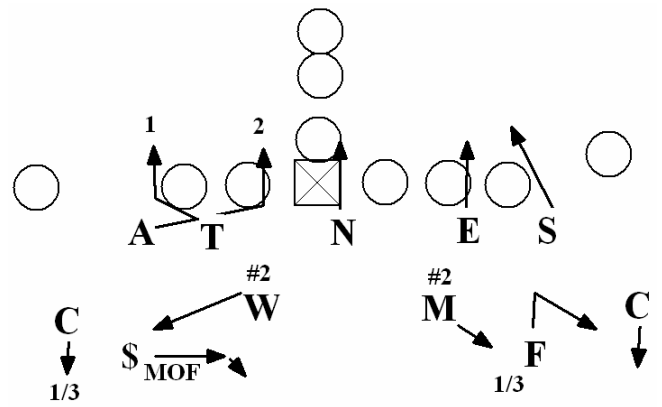
The anchor is aligned in a 5-technique and has C-gap contain. The tackle aligns in a 3-technique and plays a wide B-gap responsibility. The end is in a cheat 5-technique. He is in a loose technique because he has to come inside. The nose guard is in a not sure this is the correct alignment.

On the snap of the ball the nose guard rips across the face of the guard and into the B-gap. The end comes behind the nose guard into the A-gap. It took us two years to get good at this move.

Next year our young kids will be better at it because we have been working on it the last two years. Getting down into the A-gap was not an easy move for us. The coverage on *Smack Knee* is three under, three deep zone coverage rotating strong.



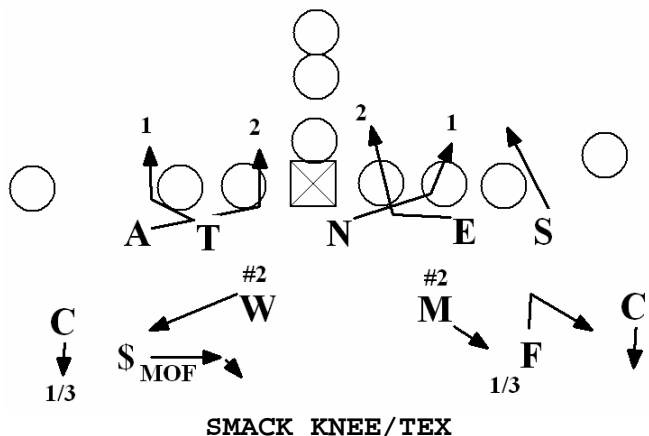
The companion stunt is called *Smack Tex*. We are in a cover three strong and are running this stunt to the weak side of the defense. The nose guard is lined up on the center shading him to the field. He is an A-gap player in this defense. The end is in a cheat 5-technique like the *Smack Knee*, except now he has a C-gap responsibility. The Sam linebacker is blitzing if he has a tight end. He is in a loose 9-technique. To the weakside the anchor linebacker and tackle are running the cross stunt like the *Smack Knee*.



The tackle aligns in a 3-technique and goes first. He loops outside into the C-gap looking to contain the play. The anchor linebacker comes behind the tackle from a 5-technique and rips into the A-gap. This has been a very good line movement for us. We don't want to cheat on the alignments. We don't want to tip what we are going to do before the ball is snapped. We hope the movement of the tackle will draw the

block of the offensive guard and the anchor linebacker will come free up the middle.

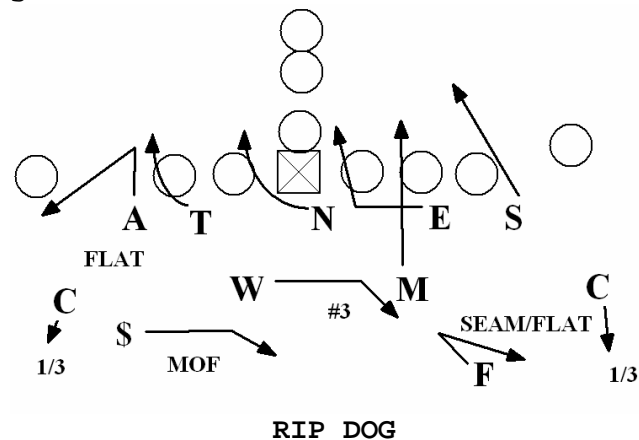
The last one I am going to show you today is a *Smack Knee/Tex stunt*. This is the combination stunt of running the *Knee* and *Tex* stunts on the same play. We align the same and run the *Knee* cross to the strong side and the *Tex* stunt to the weak-side. We only ran this stunt seven times the whole year. This is a full line movement. It is not like a line slant. We have a full deal to both sides. We pick and choose the situations we want to use this stunt.



I've got one zone dog stunt to show you. This is the one that most everyone is running. The stunt is called *Rip Dog*. It is important to have a good athlete at the end position to run this stunt. The end aligns in a 5-technique and has to get all the way down into the A-gap. The anchor linebacker is lined up in a 5-technique on the weakside offensive tackle. He loops to the 9-technique and verses pass he drops under the number one receiver to his side. The tackle lines up in a 3-technique on the weakside offensive guard and controls the B-gap working out for containment. The nose guard aligns in a field shade on the center. He rips across the center's face into the boundary A-gap. The Sam linebacker is in a loose 9-technique and blitzes off the edge if he is over a tight end. If there

is a slot his way, he walks off and keys the triangle of slot, tackle, and near back. The Mike linebacker aligns in a 30-technique to the field. On flow at him he blitzes the B-gap. On flow away from him he plays the field A-gap. The Will linebacker is lined up in a boundary 30-technique. On flow toward him he is a B-gap player. On flow away, he covers for the Mike linebacker and flows into that hook zone.

We are dropping the anchor linebacker and blitzing the Sam and Mike linebackers. We have a couple of adjustments we run off this stunt. If the end is a good enough athlete to get into the A-gap, the Mike linebacker will come free almost every time. In the secondary, the corners are playing outside thirds of the field. The free safety is playing the middle of the field and the strong safety is moving up for run support and has the seam/flat area to the strong side in the passing game.



I'm going to show you some tape of these defensive stunts and let you see how we run them. It is a privilege for me to be here representing Massillon Washington. If you want to talk about football at Massillon to myself or any of our coaches we will be happy to sit down and show you what we are doing. If you are ever in our area and want to come by and see what we are about, just give us a call. We try to open our doors to anyone who would like to see what we do. If you want to visit please call

the athletic department phone. We have one of the best strength coaches around and he would be happy to sit down and talk about our program. He runs a great speed program. We have six coaches on each side of the ball who will sit down with you and talk position coaching. It is really nice to be here. Thank you very much.