

## *On ultimate; O5: left handler*

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This is a two-pager about playing on offence as the left handler, referred to here as position O5<sup>1</sup>. The handler positions (O5-7) are generally interchangeable, and you may find yourself playing on the left (O5), in the centre (O6), and on the right (O7) within a single possession. Additionally, handling is a group, rather than individual, activity. It is not just where you throw to that matters; where you stand, when and where you move, and what you do when you don't have the disc is important too! This document focuses on handling on the left side of the field (as you look downfield), but you might also want to read the two-pagers about O6 and O7 for thoughts on handling elsewhere.

### *Receiving the pull*

Objectives when receiving the pull, in order of importance, would seem to be: (1) do not turn it over<sup>2</sup>; (2) defend against a roller<sup>3</sup>; (3) execute a set play off the pull (if there is one); (4) improve the position of the disc (e.g. move it to the centre of the field) and (5) set up a handler in a good spot to throw the next pass; (6) make territory by moving the disc downfield; and (7) give the cutters (O1-4) time to get downfield and into the called formation. All of this needs to be balanced against the risk of giving up a quick turnover<sup>4</sup>.

Figure 1 shows four pull receptions. In the top-left, O7 is shown taking possession. You (O5) are shown providing a second line of defence against a particularly good roller-pull (Objective 2)<sup>5</sup>. From there, you might proceed back across to the left side (looking downfield) of the field (black arrow). O7 has the option of centring (dashed grey lines) the disc to you (Objective 4) or centring and throwing downfield to O6 (Objectives 4 and 5)<sup>6</sup>.

The other three panels in Figure 1 show variations on the same theme. But, there are endless possibilities depending on what sort of pull is thrown. Ideally, your opposition throws it out (and then you can call a brick) or short, giving you a good position and time for the cutters to set up (Objectives 4, 6 and 7).

### *A few higher risk throws, or many lower risk throws?*

Aims on offence are: (1) score a goal; and (2) do not let your opposition score, with sub-goals (2a) do not turn the disc over, and (2b)

<sup>1</sup> This is part of a series, available at <https://github.com/James-Reynolds/Ultimate-strategy-and-tactics>

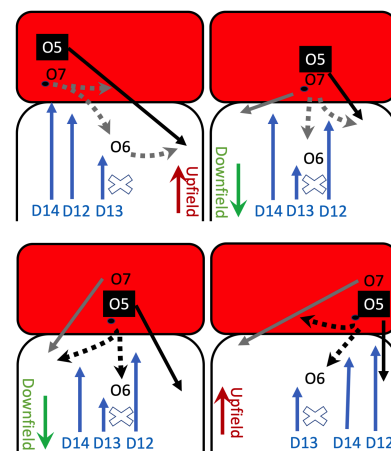


Figure 1: Potential formations for receiving a pull: O7 (top-left, top-right), and O5 (bottom-left, bottom-right)

<sup>2</sup> Trying to catch the pull risks dropping it. Letting it touch the ground first costs time. Are you really in all that much of a hurry to make the first pass?

<sup>3</sup> If it rolls out the back of the endzone, you get to put it in play from the front of the endzone, unless someone on your team has touched it before it went out (in which case it is played from the back of the endzone, which is often very hard). Again, are you really in all that much of a hurry to make the first pass?

<sup>4</sup> Often via a run-through interception. Perhaps this is because the defenders running upfield tend to have some speed up, while the handlers are often static.

<sup>5</sup> Another advantage of being behind O7 as they catch the pull is that you will be able to see them AND everyone else. Hence, you can tell them how soon the defence will arrive, whether it is person-match or zone, etc.

<sup>6</sup> A further dashed grey line indicates how O6 might then pass to you, putting you in a good position to throw down the break side (Objective 5).

if there is a turnover, get one back. The trade-offs are likely subjective and variable<sup>7</sup>. However, the risk of a turnover likely increases with the: (A) number of throws; (B) risk of turnover for each throw attempted; and (C) quality of the defence, and (D) the stall count. Hence, if your team is good at disc retention<sup>8</sup>, you might seek to only take high percentage options, assuming that you will eventually get a low-risk opportunity to score. Alternatively, in the face of a high-quality defence, your team might be willing to send a low-percentage huck early on, assuming that you are probably going to turn it over within a small number of passes anyway so you might as well have a shot at scoring immediately<sup>9</sup>.

An important factor in this equation is whether your team is typically able to retain possession using a dump. It appears that much of the challenge in dumping is positioning, rather than the throws themselves. As left-handler, you will be on the break side when there is a forehand force (for right handlers).

#### TRANSITION INTO DUMP DISCUSSION

#### *Beating person-match defence with a vertical stack*

Figure 2 (left) shows your team: using a vertical stack formation; having called a brick; and facing a forehand force with person-match defence<sup>10</sup>. You (O5) are shown at the front of the stack. D11 is likely to set up, as shown, to defend the open side. O6 might therefore be able to throw a break-force you going to D<sup>11</sup>. If you do not receive the disc at D, you might then cut downfield on the break side of the field, heading towards A<sup>12</sup>.

The third, solid black arrow shown in Figure 2 (left) indicates you returning to the rear of the stack, or you might continue and cut to C. However, the dashed, red, horizontal line indicates the limit of how far you would go downfield<sup>13</sup>. Figure 2 (top-right) shows what might happen if you go downfield of the dashed red line prior to the disc being thrown. Because the disc travels slowly through the air, D11 will no longer have to stay as close to you to prevent or intercept a throw (to you and/or A) D11 is therefore able to play further upfield so as to cover you if you cut back towards the disc. They might also poach, so as to potentially intercept or prevent downfield throws to O1-3<sup>14</sup>.

Figure 2 (bottom-right) provides an example of a similar situation, but where the disc has moved in the meantime to O1, who cut to C. The dashed, red, horizontal line is shown further downfield in Figure 2 (bottom-right), reflecting that if O1 throws the disc to A it will arrive more quickly than before, when O6 had it further upfield. Hence, D11 will likely have to play tighter defence on you (O5),

<sup>7</sup> For example, on a downwind point with poor weather and a lack of players on your team who are good at throwing in the wind, you might ignore (2a) and instead play huck-(1)-and-zone (2b). In contrast, games in conditions favouring offence might be won by the team with the least number of throw aways (2a!).

<sup>8</sup> Or at least better at disc retention than your opposition, as least turnovers (typically) wins!

<sup>9</sup> There are further levels to consider. For example, sending some hucks early on in the game, even if unsuccessful, might spook the defenders. This might then make it easier to throw to upfield cuts during the rest of the game.

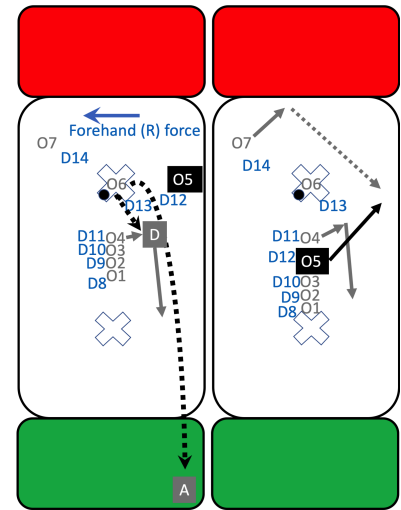


Figure 2: Vertical stack: starting position (left), D11 poaching deep (top-right) and disc moved to C means D11 covers O5 (bottom-right)

<sup>10</sup> Vertical works against other person-match defences, but might need adjustment e.g. (1) backhand force, mirror everything; (2) straight up force, maybe give the handlers time to move the disc around, and go out to the sidelines when you do cut; etc.

<sup>11</sup> You may be able to stand still, simply wait for O6 to throw, and then run onto it at D.

<sup>12</sup> Watch out that you do not cause a pick between D11, D10 and O3.

<sup>13</sup> The position of this line varies with movement of the disc and the distance that the person with the disc can (or is likely to) throw. The dashed, yellow line, similarly indicates approximately the limit of how far you would go upfield. Any further and you are crowding the handlers, and your defender might be able to interfere with the dump

<sup>14</sup> Note how Figure 2 (top-right) shows D8-10 having changed their positioning to cover O1-3 almost exclusively upfield, preventing the under cut. This is possible because you (O5) are so deep,

meaning that O2 and O3 will be able to cut deep to B.

As primary long, your role is typically to provide a target for a scoring throw into the endzone, or otherwise gain a lot of territory. If you do get the disc, you might be able to immediately pass to one of the other cutters (O1-3). However, you are also cutter, so the most important things to do are: to make sure your team retains possession of the disc. Hence, if no (safe) pass downfield is immediately available, it is probably time to engage one of the handlers (O5-7), throw a dump, and get downfield again to do some more cutting. The handlers can take care of the throwing, but your team likely needs you to be a target, which the handlers are likely too far upfield to provide.

### *Beating person-match defence with feldrunner*

Figure ?? (left) shows a feldrunner formation, O1 as the focus, and O2 and O3 in the endzone. You are one of the four handlers. The idea of feldrunner is to pass to the isolated focus (O1). They then either pass to O2 or O3, or dump to the handlers and reset. Typically you, O5, O6 and O7 try to stay out of the way when you don't have the disc.

If you do have the disc you will be trying to throw to O1. If D8 is looking at O1 you can throw into the space behind, allowing O1 to run onto it. Alternatively, if D8 looks at you, O1 can likely cut and get clear enough for you to pass to them.

### *Beating person-match defence with a horizontal stack*

Horizontal stack typically involves cutting upfield and downfield (black arrows) within your quarter of the field<sup>15</sup> as shown in Figure ??(right). O6 can potentially throw to you in the endzone or at C<sup>16</sup>.

### *Beating zone defence*

Vertical stack probably won't work against zone.. Instead, your team needs to spread out. Three ways to beat a zone are: (1) over; (2) round; or (3) through. Figure ?? (top left) shows this against a 3-3-1 zone, with a throw direct from O6 OVER to you<sup>17</sup>. Otherwise, O6 might throw over or through (to O2 or O3), or round (to O5 or O7)<sup>18</sup>.

If the defence continues to play zone once the disc gets close to the endzone, you (O5) and the other wing (O1) can GO AND STAND ON THE BACK CORNERS (Figure ?? (bottom left)<sup>19</sup>. Figure ?? (bottom right) shows how the further you are from the back corner the more D8 can cover both you AND others, and the harder it is to throw direct to you. D11 might even be able to guard O7 closely, if you end up close enough to O2 and O3. This applies also when not close to

<sup>15</sup> Other cuts can work, but might need communication, e.g. diamond cuts involve trading places with O3.

<sup>16</sup> Black arrows show how a back-under cut opens space for the throw to C.

<sup>17</sup> This may be a blade or hammer, to get it to you as quickly as possible. So it may help to stand still and look at O6.

<sup>18</sup> You, O3, and O7 might then split D8 and D11 to make ground before the cup (D12-14) catch up. Once they do, dump to O6 so all 7 of your players are involved again.

<sup>19</sup> The defence will either leave you open, or cover you at the corner (D8) making more space for O2, O3 and O5-7 at the front of the endzone.

the endzone (top right). If you crowd forward, D8 only has to cover O1, and D9 and D11 can push upfield.

### *Beating clam defence*

Clam mixes person-match and zone defence styles, with defenders switching frequently. You might coordinate with others to overload a defender, or spread out and give the handlers space and targets deep.

...AND FINALLY this is just a two pager; there are many more offensive strategies and tactics<sup>20</sup> Remember, defence wins games, offence loses them<sup>21</sup>; and it's better to get it back with another turnover<sup>22</sup> than receiving another pull!

<sup>20</sup> Try U-stack: two side stacks, one on each side, and three handlers back. Leaving space in the middle of the field.

<sup>21</sup> Because the team with the least turnovers usually wins.

<sup>22</sup> i.e. if you offence fails, its time to play defence, even though you're the O team :)