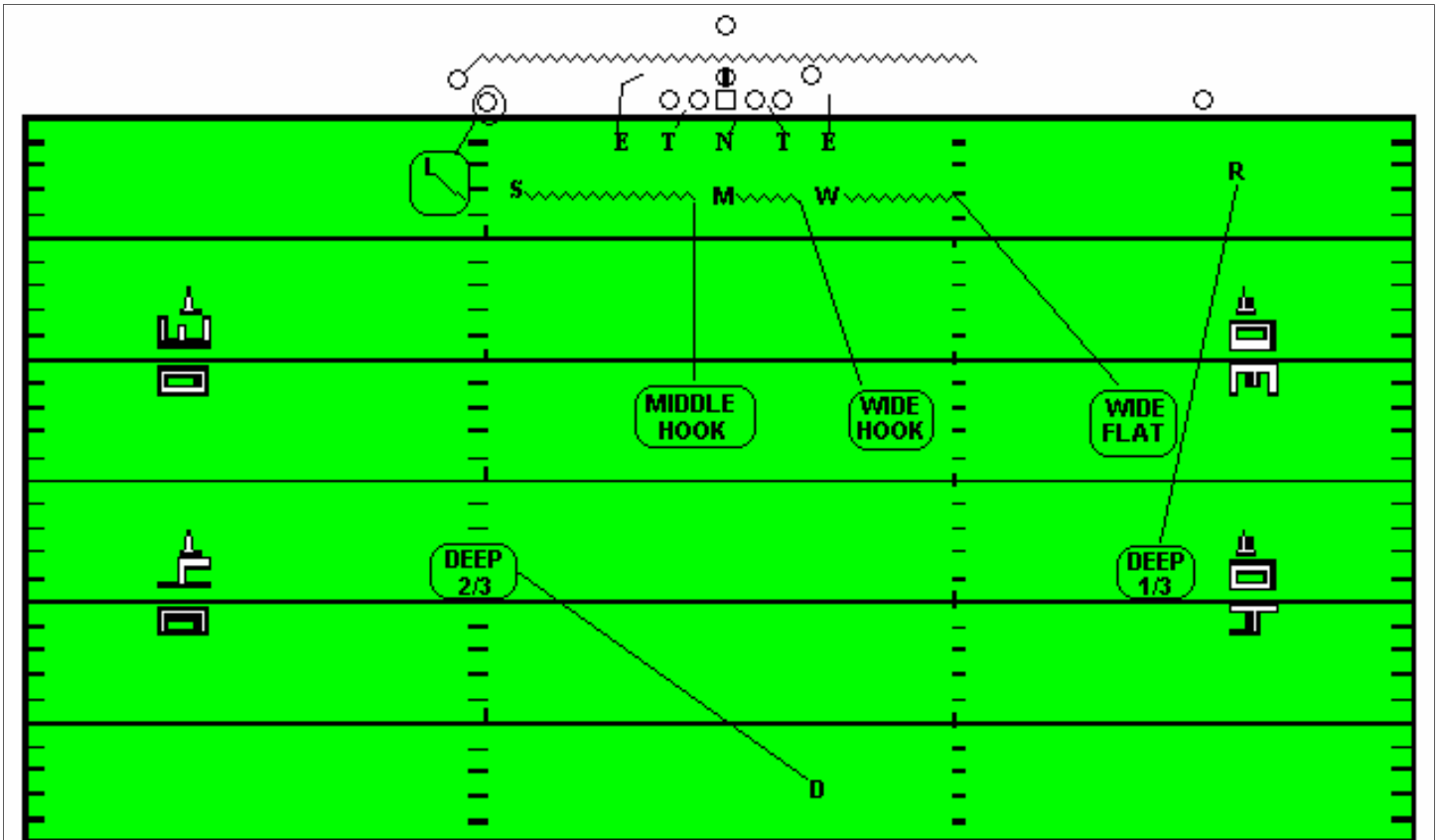


BACK TO THE FUTURE: *INSTALLING THE 2-LEVEL DEFENSE*



By Ted Seay

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|---------|
| Introduction | Page 3 |
| The Concept: Buying -- and Selling -- the Idea | Page 4 |
| The Basics: Defining Terms | Page 6 |
| Position/Personnel Requirements | Page 10 |
| 1L Alignments/2L Stacks and Positioning | Page 12 |
| Fundamentals by Position | Page 18 |
| Variations - 1L Stunts/2L Blitzes | Page 29 |
| Coverages/Two-Deep | Page 32 |
| The Basics II: Consolidation | Page 41 |
| The Schedule: Installing the 2LD in Two Weeks | Page 43 |
| The Game Plan: How to "Fine Tune" for an Opponent | Page 77 |
| Conclusion: JT and the Mouse | Page 97 |

DEDICATION:

To John M. Thomson,
creator of the 2-Level Defense;
and to Darrel "Mouse" Davis,
the man who modernized the Run and Shoot offense:

"When a true genius appears in the world, you may know him by this sign --
that the dunces are all in a confederacy against him"

--Jonathan Swift

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INTRODUCTION

This installation guide represents a labor of love -- an attempt to pass on my knowledge of the 2-Level Defense (2LD) to other coaches. Since I first purchased the 2LD textbook, Football Defense of the Future: The 2-Level Model by John M. Thomson and Bill Arnsparger (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1988), I have tried to share this fascinating defense with others. The text and Teaching Supplement have been so hard to come by, however, that until fairly recently, my efforts have been limited to a small handful of coaches.

In recent years, the Internet has given a new lease on life to a number of obscure football concepts from the Yale Formation direct-snap offense to the Gap-Air-Mirror (GAM) defense. This new medium for exchanging ideas has also revealed a 2LD "underground" -- a small but dedicated group of coaches who have kept Coach Thomson's concepts alive since the beginning.

(I should note here that I mean no disrespect at all to Coach Arnsparger, one of the great defensive minds in football, but -- the 2LD is John Thomson's baby. You won't find reference to the 2LD in any of Arnsparger's other publications, and for good reason: as John Thomson relates it, Coach Arnsparger called him shortly after publication of the 2LD text to say that coaches from all over were bugging him to death about the 2LD. Since he was still coaching at LSU, and attempting to recruit, he basically washed his hands of the whole thing and left the 2LD where it belonged, with its creator, John Thomson.)

(On a related note, there are ridiculous rumors making their way around the Internet regarding why the 2LD is so little known. The most popular version is that a hit by a 2LD Deep Safety left a receiver paralyzed or dead, and a subsequent lawsuit forced the recall of the textbook and its destruction by the publisher. This is pure hogwash -- but it says a great deal about the reputation the 2LD developed in a very short time for ferocious hits by the deep safety. Prentice-Hall only ever published about 2,000 copies, according to Doctor Thomson, and most of those were snapped up by institutional buyers -- libraries and universities. I happened to receive a mailing from Prentice-Hall in 1988 offering a number of football texts, and the 2LD book immediately caught my eye. For those coaches interested in obtaining a copy, I suggest you try an inter-library loan and a trip to your local photocopy shop.)

My intent with this installation guide is to pass on my version -- a simplified "subset" -- of the John Thomson 2-Level Defense. I outline the requirements for each position, then lay out key drills and an installation sequence. One word of warning, however: if you aren't willing to line up your deep safety at a depth of +28 yards from the LOS, you should find another defense.

THE CONCEPT: BUYING (AND SELLING) THE IDEA

There is no way around it -- the 2LD is a startling defensive concept. The first time you see a safety lined up 28 yards deep, you react. Some coaches shake their heads, some blink very hard, and some laugh out loud. Reactions from the armchair intelligentsia (parents, "fans", etc.) can be even more vehement. "What the hell are you playing that kid so deep for? That quarterback can't even throw the ball that far!" Since this was actually one of the more intelligent comments I have heard regarding the 2LD, I just smiled politely.

There is no substitute for belief in a system of offense or defense -- in order to "sell" it to assistants and players (much less parents and fans), you have to "buy" the concept yourself. With the 2LD, that means first and foremost buying into the use of a deep safety (or two!) at +28. (Note for youth coaches: this depth can be cut down in proportion to the speed and skills of your age group, just as you cut other dimensions down to suit, say, the 10-year-old player. What matters is the ability to enforce an "end line" beyond which the offense is not welcome to operate, not an exact adherence to the +28 depth.)

Before I discuss the rationale behind the depth of the safety, I want to talk about the theoretical underpinnings of the 2LD. Coach Thomson has said that his impetus in designing a new defensive look was the success of the Mouse Davis Run and Shoot offense in the late 1970's and early '80s. Thomson saw the need for a defensive look that could cover the short receivers tightly without sacrificing the deep ball.

He also saw that a model for such a defense existed in Bear Bryant's 6-5 goal-line defense. The six defensive linemen (the first level of the defense) attacked their gaps, while the defensive backs and linebackers (the second level) each "mirrored" a potential offensive receiver. The second level played tight man defense, for the most part, while the close proximity of the back of the end zone provided an "end line" beyond which the offense could not operate.

The great leap Coach Thomson made was to imagine a safety placed so deep in "centerfield" that he could effectively intercept at a set depth anything the offense tried -- thus providing the same "end line" coverage that the 6-5 enjoyed from the back of the end zone. Through "extensive experimentation", Coach Thomson determined that a deep safety (DS) placed at +28 yards could enforce an end line at +18 that would eliminate the deep pass and force the offense to concentrate on medium-range routes. The factor that made this coverage possible was that the DS could cover much more ground than a traditional defensive back because he was running forward -- not back-peddaling meant he could effectively cover twice as much ground.

The next step in the master 2LD design was the play of the second level of five pass defenders. Their basic concept was to play tight man-to-man defense on their respective "mirrors", denying the short pass by playing underneath the receiver after bumping him. This left the offense with a window of opportunity for passing the ball of between +15 and +18 -- the medium range passing game. However, because of the tight coverage by the second level defenders, the quarterback was forced to arc the ball in the air to drop it in between the second level and the deep safety. This is basic 2LD man or "Max" coverage.

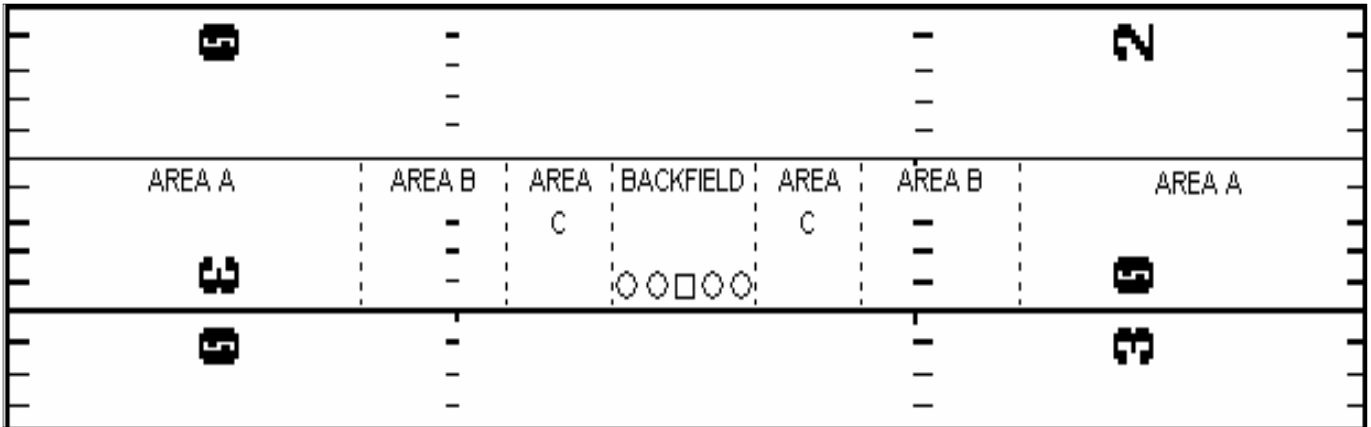
The chess game began in earnest with the other basic coverage, a zone scheme called "Cover". Here, the second level (2L) played the short zones at a depth of about +12 to +15, taking away the medium depth pass while conceding the quick stuff. Max coverage would normally dictate a "hard" alignment by the 2L defender on an outside receiver (up to +1, basically right in the receiver's face), while Cover would call for a medium depth deployment by the 2L defender (+3 - +5). If offenses start keying the depth of the 2L alignment, however, we can align them hard and run Cover, or medium and play Max -- giving no clue of our intentions before the snap. Combined with our bumping response to motion no matter what coverage we're in (page 9), we provide no pre-snap clues to the offense. They must decide -- are we taking the short pass or the medium pass away on this snap? Will we stunt and/or blitz? If so, what variation of Max coverage will we play behind it? Combined with 13 different defensive fronts which we can shift into just before the snap, and the automatic stacking of 2L defenders behind their 1L counterparts when they are mirroring an offensive backfielder in the box (or "Core", as we call it), we make pre-snap reads a nightmare for offensive coordinators and quarterbacks.

I will detail alignments, stunts, blitzes and coverages in this guide, but I will make the point again -- the deep alignment of the DS is crucial to the operation of the 2LD. It is what allows the first and second levels to attack the offensive gaps and receivers with abandon, and to disguise what they are doing until the snap. In short, it is absolutely essential to the 2LD. Coach Thomson does allow for the re-alignment of the DS at free safety depth (+ 8 to +18 yards), but only in certain special circumstances. As a rule, the 2LD absolutely requires a truly DEEP Safety. Minor adjustments for slower or faster personnel, (i.e. from +25 to +30) are perfectly acceptable; however, if you are not willing to accept the basic concept of the deep safety, the 2LD is not for you.

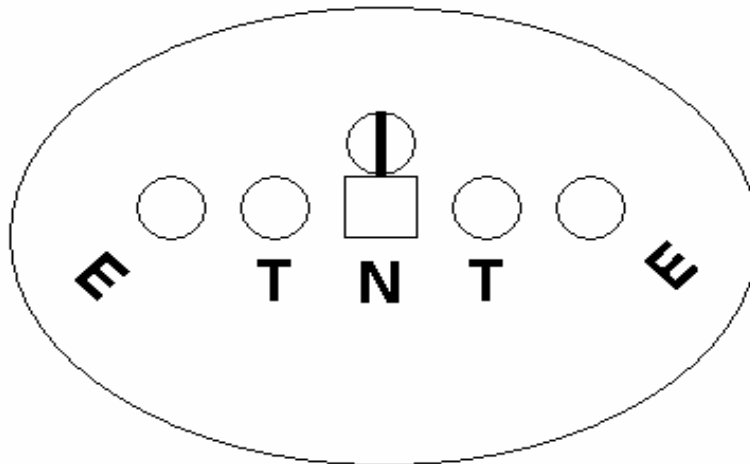
THE BASICS

WORKING WITHIN THE SYSTEM: DEFINING TERMS

Areas: By definition, the sections of the field on the offensive side of the ball where potential receivers are located. The area between the offensive tackles and 5-7 yards deep is the Backfield; Area C extends 5 yards outside the Backfield in each direction; Area B extends out from Area C a further 7 yards toward each sideline; and Area A extends from Area B to each sideline. Each Area A and C may contain only one receiver; receivers nearby are considered to be in Area B.

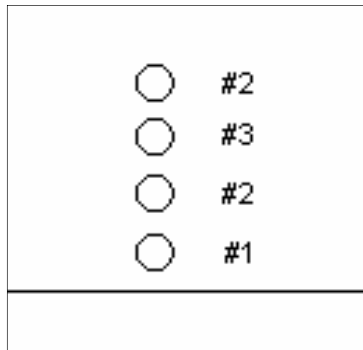


Core: An area surrounding the static offensive personnel (i.e., the offensive

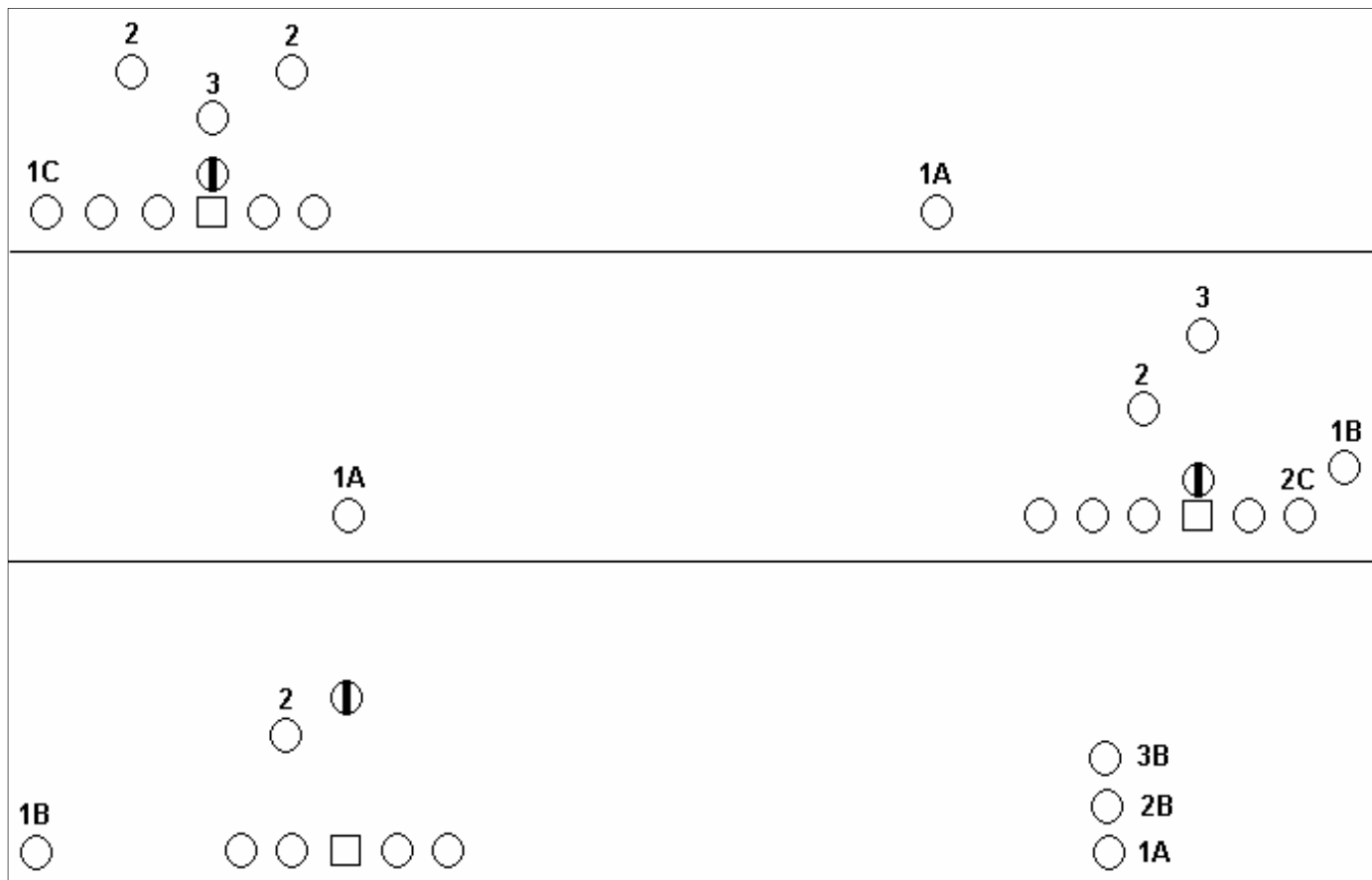


line), the quarterback, and the First Level (1L) of the defense. It may also include mobile personnel (i.e., running backs, tight ends, slotbacks and/or wingbacks) and their Second Level (2L) "mirror" defenders. The core normally extends in an oval with a radius of 5-7 yards from the football.

Numbering: Mobile offensive personnel (that is, potential receivers -- backs and ends) are given a number relative to their position. The receiver closest to each sideline is counted as #1; the next receivers in are #2; while the remaining receiver, regardless of position, is #3. Reading across the field in either direction, the numbering is always 1, 2, 3, 2, 1. Stacked receivers are numbered from front to back: if the front receiver is #1, the one behind him would be #2, a third in the stack would be #3, and in a quad stack, the fourth receiver at the back would be #2.

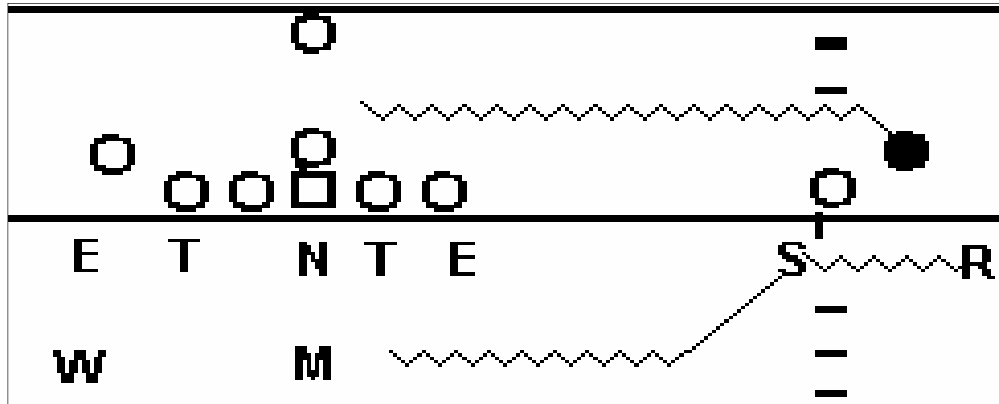


Offensive receivers are identified with reference to their number and area. By definition, there can be only one receiver in each Area A and C, so receivers stacked behind #1A are automatically #2B, followed by #3B, etc. Similarly, a TE/wingback combination will be numbered (assuming Area A to that side is empty) as #2C and #1B, respectively (see diagram next page). Two important points to note: backfield receivers are identified by number only; and quarterbacks (that is, the most likely passers) are not numbered at all, even in direct-snap (shotgun) formations.



Formations with Area A receivers can be classed as spread formations, and we further identify the set by the number of receivers to one side: Iso, Twin, Trips or Quad. Since Len and Ron always mirror #1 to their side, and Mike mirrors #3, Sam and Will by definition mirror #2 to the strong and weakside respectively. If Sam, for example, is mirroring a slotback to his side, and he sees two backs in an I formation, he can deduce one remaining receiver on the other side of the formation. If his slotback goes in motion across the formation, Sam does two things: he bumps to the Core to stack behind a 1L defender and mirror one of the I-backs; and he calls out "Twin! Twin!" so that Will can be waiting on the other side of the Core to pick up the motion man. Our bump rules (see page 9) protect us if the ball is snapped when the motion man is in the backfield -- if the ball is handed to the motion man on a fly/jet/speed sweep, the 2L defender who has bumped to cover him will pursue him inside-out, while the defender who has switched to the fullback will mirror him for trap and belly plays.

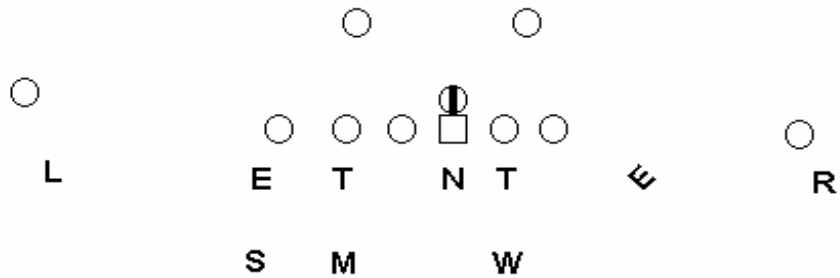
Bump: 2L defenders always react to motion the same way, regardless of the coverage we have called. If Len is mirroring a flanker who goes in motion, Len will follow him across the formation until he encounters another 2L defender -- let's say Sam. Len then physically tags Sam with his hands and says "bump" -- Sam picks up the motion man, while Len now mirrors the receiver Sam had been covering. The key to effective coverage is that a 2L defender is ONLY responsible for his man unless and until someone comes along and bumps him to another receiver.



In the diagram, Ron bumps left with motion until he contacts Sam; Sam in turn drops back at an angle as he approaches the Core (to avoid 1L defenders) and mirrors the motion man. If the ball is snapped for a fly/jet/speed sweep series play at the moment diagramed, Sam still has the motion back and will pass in front of Mike if necessary. If the motion man passes in front of the FB, on the other hand, Sam would bump him to Mike and mirror the FB himself.

Wideside: If the ball is scrimmaged from a hashmark, the wide side of the field is obvious; however, by 2LD definition, if the ball is scrimmaged from BETWEEN the hashes, BOTH sides of the field are the wideside. This has distinct effects on several 2LD coverages (see pp. 32-40).

THE 2LD BY POSITION



D

Here are some thumbnail sketches of the requirements for the various 2LD positions.

First Level (1L): Body mass is important, but quickness and agility are vital at Nose and Tackle. This is a fluid, swarming defense, so smaller/quicker personnel should be preferred at these positions to larger/slower (all other things being equal). The Ends should have speed, quickness, lean body mass, AND height. These are by far the best athletes in the First Level, and should be among the best on your team. Julius Peppers is the current prototype. (You've got a couple of those lying around, right?)

The Ends are your principal pass rush threat, yet must be able to plug the off-tackle hole. They almost always crash, and are responsible for the C gaps; the

other DL personnel usually have a one-gap responsibility as well, although we often give one Tackle or the Nose two-gap responsibility. Otherwise, we just move the unassigned gap around in a kind of shell game.

The key to all 1L maneuvers is that they begin as pass rush -- everything else is a reaction. When you give the 1L that aggressive mindset, you can still channel that aggression into fighting through blocks to stop a running play coming at them, or tearing down the LOS to pursue. I've found it much easier to teach D-line techniques this way than to teach gap responsibilities first and then pass rush as a reaction.

Second Level (2L): Speed kills, inside and out. A glue-footed Mike (what Coach Thomson calls Gael, the middle LB equivalent in the 2LD) can be caught in mismatches against speedy receivers any time the offense chooses, so you need foot speed at all five 2L positions. The two outside positions (I call them Len and Ron -- CB equivalents) must be burners with big egos -- think Deion. While we rarely hang them out to dry without top cover, these kids just have to be quick and cocky. The middle three positions (Sam, Mike and Will) are similar in requirement to the Ends, but don't have to be quite so genetically superior. Body mass for plugging the inside and height for staying with crossing TEs are important, but again, speed shouldn't be sacrificed for size. If you have to, you can play both a big LB type and a quicker SS type at one of the 2L positions, substituting them according to game plan.

Deep Safety (DS): This can be one of the most average athletes on the team. Reasonable speed is an asset, but intelligence, timing and football sense are all very important. The only critical trait is that he must LOVE TO HIT. He will get opportunities to lay the leather on receivers who are stretched out reaching for passes while looking backward, and he will be expected to make the most of these opportunities. We see very few deep Post patterns by teams after a few good hits by the DS -- most teams stick to out routes and the shorter stuff after one or two "rifle shot" collisions.

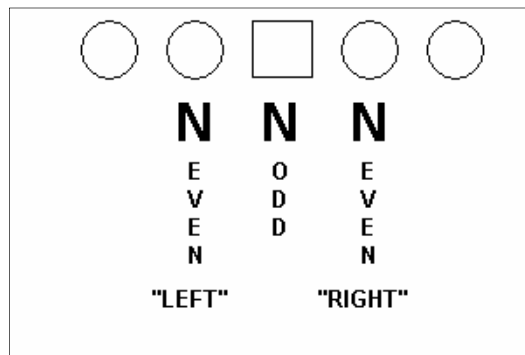
We don't coach brutality, and I certainly do NOT teach head shots, but the laws of physics dictate that a DS running forward can cover twice the ground of a FS backpedaling, and will arrive at the point of impact with twice the momentum -- which means twice the impact energy.

ALIGNMENTS (Note: The Deep Safety aligns 28 yards deep at the midpoint between the two widest receivers, but always inside the {high school} hashmarks.)

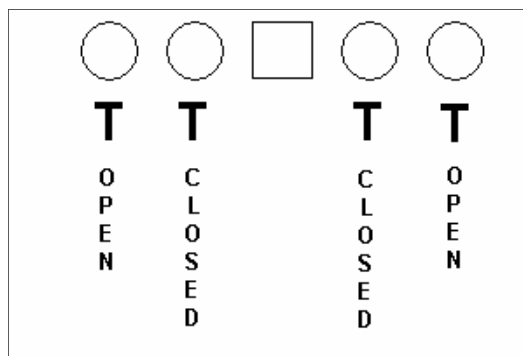
First Level: I'll give the two alignment rules for each 1L position, then demonstrate with diagrams.

Nose: Rule #1: All odd-numbered calls -- 11, 3's (3 Left and 3 Right), 33, 5's, 55 -- the Nose aligns ODD, over the center.

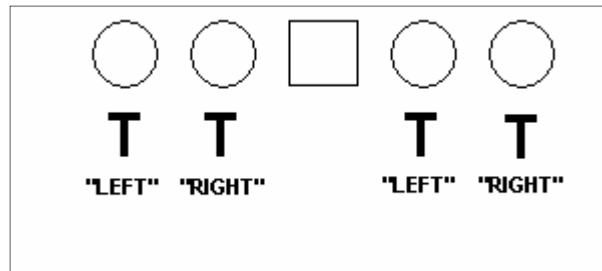
Rule #2: Even-numbered calls -- 2's, 22, 4's, 44 -- the Nose aligns EVEN, on the guard to his Left or Right, depending on the Ends' call. (Corollary: In 22 and 44, Nose aligns EVEN, but stacks behind a Tackle, again depending on the Ends' call.)



Tackles: Rule #1: All double-digit calls, alignment is pre-determined: In 11, OPEN, over offensive tackle; in 22, 33, 44 or 55, CLOSED, over offensive guard.

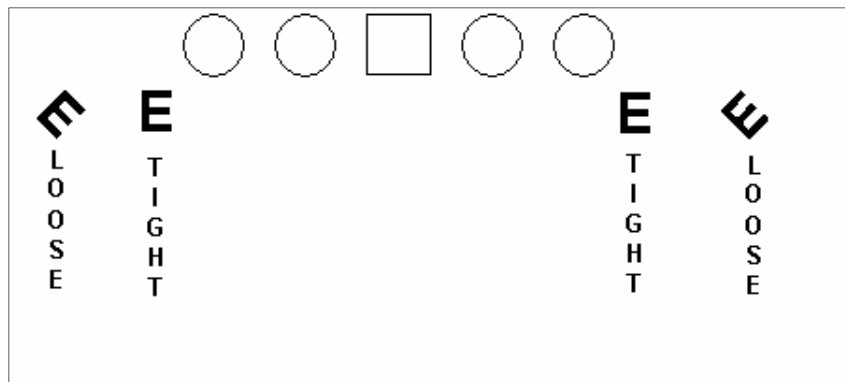


Rule #2: All single-digit calls, (2's, 3's, 4's or 5's), Tackles align according to the Ends' call at the LOS: "Left", left Tackle is OPEN and right Tackle is CLOSED (both aligned to the left); "Right", left Tackle is CLOSED and right Tackle is OPEN (both aligned to the right).



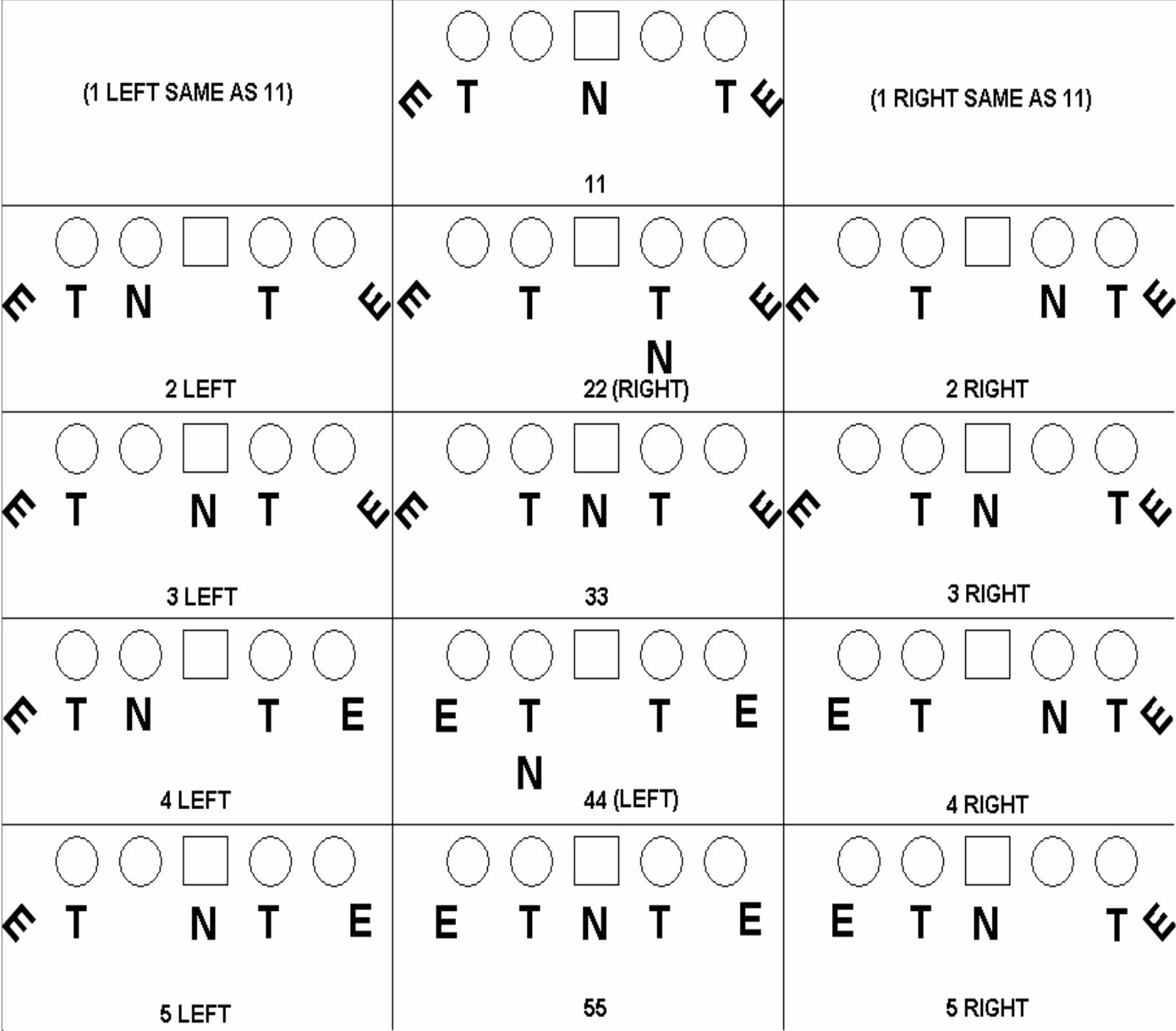
Ends: Rule #1: All calls starting with a 1, 2 or 3 (11, 2's, 22, 3's, 33), Ends align LOOSE, outflanking the offensive core.

Rule #2: All calls starting with a 4 or 5 (4's, 44, 5's, 55), Ends align TIGHT (outside eye on offensive tackle). Exception: When lining up next to an Open Tackle, the End aligns Loose.



Note: When aligned opposite a tight end or tight slotback, a Loose End will play a standard 9 technique on the TE's outside shoulder, rather than the slanting stance shown in the diagram above, which is normal for a Loose End on the Split End side. We can also make a Wide call for the Ends, which would put them a yard outside a standard TE, or outside shoulder on a TE/WB combination.

The Ends' Calls: As the offense breaks its huddle, both Ends will call out a directional indicator decided by game plan: "Left" or "Right" in response to formation strength, field width, and/or other factors. In order to give the defense as much flexibility as possible in aligning before the snap, we provide an additional bit of information in the huddle. When we call a single-digit front in the huddle, we may add the word "Away" -- for the benefit of the Ends only. Thus, if we call "5" in the huddle as the 1L alignment, and the offense lines up with its strength to the left (as previously defined by that week's game plan), the Ends would normally call out "Left! Left!" and the 1L would align in 5 Left (see diagram next page). If the huddle call was "5 Away", however, the Ends would call out "Right! Right!" -- AWAY from offensive strength -- at the LOS, and the 1L would align in 5 Right (see diagram next page). Thus all 13 alignments are available to the defense at all times, no matter how the offense lines up.



In Odd fronts, the Nose has two-gap responsibility; in Even fronts, the Tackle opposite the Nose has both gaps. All other linemen have a single gap to defend.

(Please excuse the quality of the diagram. Ends are further outside offensive tackles when aligned Loose than the pictures indicate, and the angle of slant is wrong, too.)

Second Level: There are two basic areas where 2L defenders deploy: out wide mirroring immediate receivers (in Areas A and B); or mirroring backs, TE's or tight slot/wingbacks (in Area C or the Backfield). In the latter case, the 2L defenders are considered to be within the Core, and are almost always stacked behind 1L teammates at a depth of up to +5 yards.

Unstacked: 2L alignment outside the Core consists of two components: shade (Inside or Outside the receiver) and depth (Hard, Medium or Soft).

Shade: From an Outside shade, the 2L defender will aggressively FUNNEL his receiver to the inside, denying outside (i.e., Fade) routes; from Inside, he will STEER the receiver outside, denying the inside release and crossing routes.

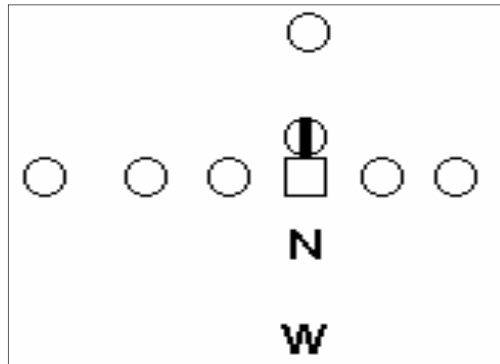
| | | |
|--------|---------|-------------------------------------|
| Depth: | Hard: | Up to +1 -- in the receiver's face; |
| | Medium: | +3 - +5; |
| | Soft: | +7 |

2L defenders in Area C may line up at a Hard (Outside shade) or Medium (either shade) depth; in Area B, all combinations of the three depths and two shades are possible; while in Area A, both shades are possible from a Hard depth alignment, but only an Inside shade is played from a Medium or Soft depth.

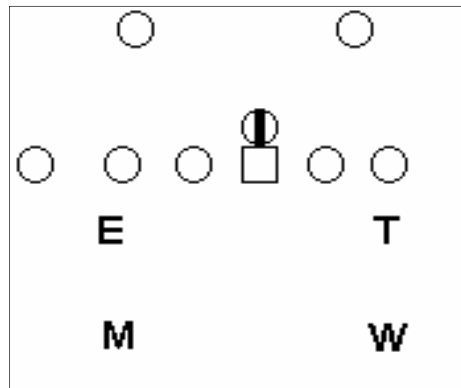
The Hard Area C Outside shade results when a TE or slotback is present and the 1L End is aligned Tight (over the offensive tackle). If Mike, for example, is stacked behind that End in a 2 Stack, Sam (who has responsibility for the TE or slot) will AUTOMATICALLY move up to a Hard Area C Outside shade, which we call "JAM". The Jam position allows Mike to mirror his man outside without colliding with Sam.

Stacked: 2L defenders will Stack in the Core at three possible locations: a 1 Stack over the center; one or two 2 Stacks over the offensive tackles; and one or two (Area) C Stacks over a TE or slotback.

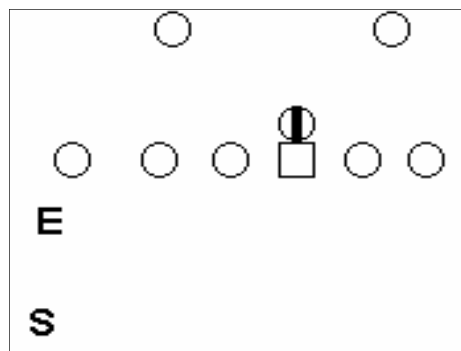
1 Stack: The 2L defender stacks behind Nose in Odd alignment (over center).



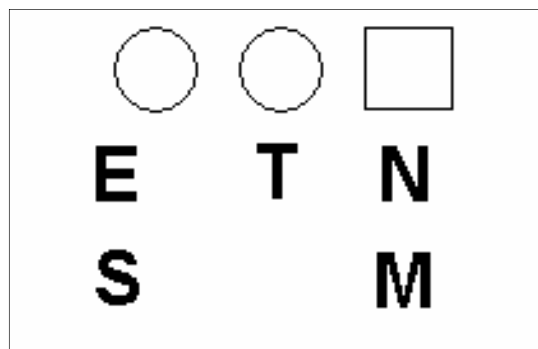
2 Stacks: The defender stacks behind a Tackle or End opposite the offensive tackle, or behind a Tackle or Nose opposite an offensive guard.



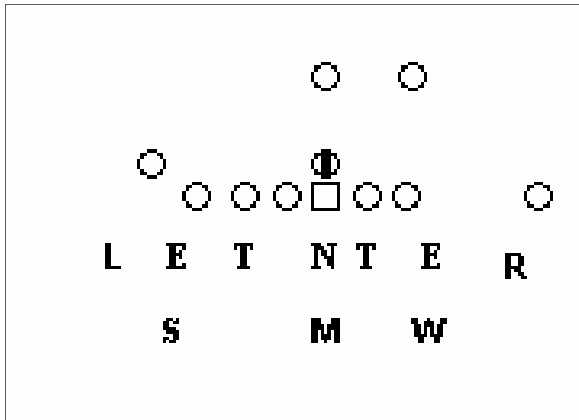
C Stacks: The 2L defender stacks behind an End opposite a tight end or slotback. (See explanation of Jam technique on page 15.)



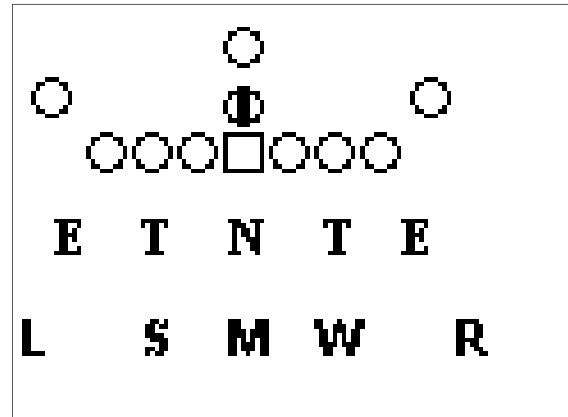
Obviously, combinations are possible. The following example shows how both 2L defenders are protected from offensive line blocks by the 1 and 2 Stacks.



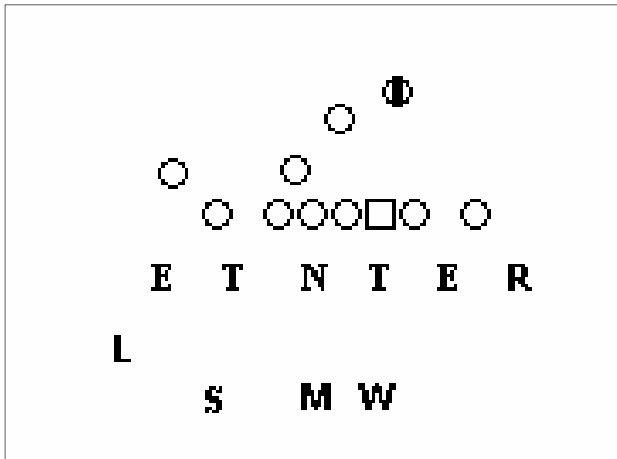
Some combinations of stacks and 1L alignments are shown below against different offensive formations.



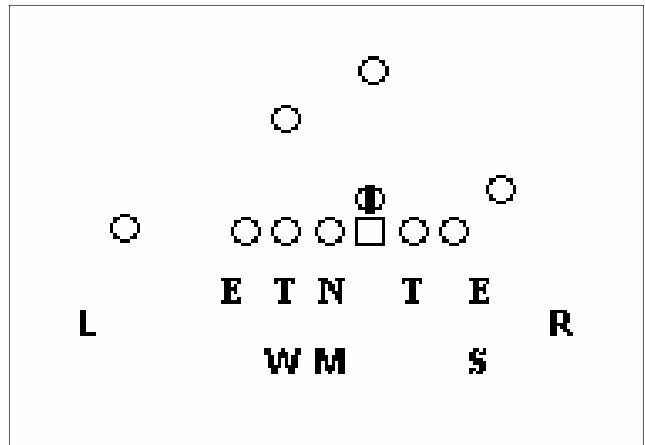
5 LEFT vs. Wing-T



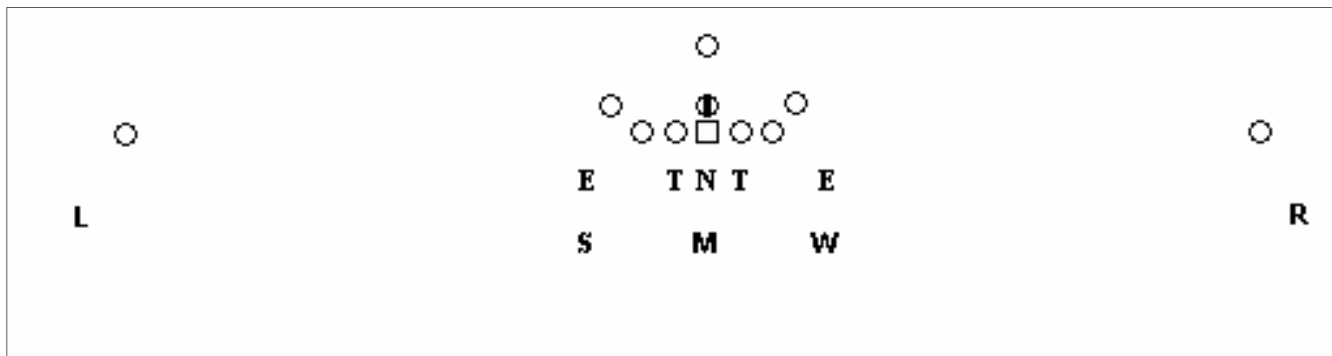
11 vs. Double Wing



4 LEFT vs. Single Wing



5 RIGHT vs. Tandem



33 vs. Run and Shoot

FUNDAMENTALS: First Level

Stance:

- Nose and Tackles use a 3-point stance with a shoulder-width base and fairly minimal stagger -- must be ready to move laterally;
- Down hand should be about 18 inches from LOS; off hand is partially extended, ready to deliver arm shiver;
- Tackles and Ends should play with their inside hand down; left-handed personnel should play on right of defense;
- Nose aligned Even and Tackles aligned Open or Closed must shift to an inside-eye (Eagle) position when the offensive lineman opposite them is split out more than two feet; otherwise alignment is always head-up on O-lineman;
- Ends' stance is either two-point or three-point; two-point is mandatory when End has pass coverage responsibilities, three-point is mandatory when End is lined up Tight (inside TE) and is relieved of pass coverage responsibilities;
- Ends' stagger is always inside foot slightly back, and initial step is always with inside foot, whether lined up Tight or Loose.

Shifting:

- We will shift from one 1L alignment to another to disguise our intentions, after the Ends' Left/Right offensive strength call and before the snap;
- From 3-point stance, Nose and Tackles shuffle laterally to new position with hands skimming grass;
- Ends start Loose, may/may shift inside to Tight 3-point stance;
- Timing against opponent's cadence (including Ends' Left/Right call) must be practiced every week.

Responsibilities:

Against the run, Nose/Tackles' responsibility sequence is:

- Primary: Defend the assigned gap(s).
Secondary: Assist with the gaps to either side.
Pursuit: Locate the ball and execute tear technique (page 20).

Against the pass, the Nose/Tackles sequence becomes:

- Primary: Line gap becomes pass rush alley, narrowing and converging at the passer; if blocked out of his alley, the pass rusher must work his way back.
- Secondary: React to screens, draws, delayed runs.
- Pursuit: Begins when QB escapes from core with the ball.

Ends' responsibility sequence against the run is:

- Primary: Contain.
- Pursuit: Backside end must trail play at the same depth as the ball, always keeping the QB in sight.
- Secondary: Very limited responsibilities. Once containment is lost, End is almost always out of the play.

Against the pass, the responsibility sequence becomes:

- Primary: Contain the QB -- rush him outside-in, cut off sprint- or roll-out.
- Secondary: React to screens outside the core, and contain draws, screens and shovels inside the core.

Note: Ends have certain specified pass coverage responsibilities. They are detailed on pp. 21-24.

Techniques:

Nose/Tackles have two techniques, power move and slant; and two reflex reactions, breakdown and tear.

Power Move: The N/T launches himself straight ahead at the blocker, striking blows on the upper arms just below the shoulder pads with the heels of the hands. The defender's helmet may also impact the blocker just above the numbers; in any case, the defender must maintain the flex in his knees and keep his back bent forward at the waist. He locks out with both arms without giving ground; even if he cannot completely lock out against larger opponents, he maintains separation from the blocker this way. Keeping his eyes on the ball-carrier, the defender pushes on one shoulder pad and pulls on the other to control the blocker and clear a path to the ball. If the blocker grabs a forearm or elbow, the defender pulls down through the blocker's thumb to clear his arm.

Slant: Defender lead-steps (never use a cross-over step) into his assigned gap at a 45 degree angle. He simultaneously punches his opposite arm and shoulder across his body to deny the offensive lineman he lines up across from a clear shot at his chest. With his head and shoulders in the gap, he can now play the

blocker: if the lineman he is slanting toward blocks down on him, he employs his power move techniques; if the lineman he originally aligned over attempts to reach-block him, the defender attacks the shoulder pad with his inside elbow, and hand-fights his way clear to secure the gap.

Breakdown: The N/T always attacks, but this attack only continues at full throttle when confirmed by pass-blocking by the offensive line. If the O-line fires out, the defender immediately breaks down with shoulders square to the LOS -- the rule for breakdown is to penetrate no further than the heels of the offensive line.

Tear: A pursuit reaction along the LOS by N/T's who have broken down from their initial pass rush attitude. The defender keeps the ball carrier in front of him without circling around blockers or getting blown off the line. He never overruns the ball, but adjusts his tear course to intersect the ball carrier.

It is important to emphasize that a N/T's original intention is to ATTACK full speed ahead; he will continue to do so if his offensive line keys (see page 46) confirm pass blocking, and will only initiate breakdown and/or tear AS A REFLEXIVE ADJUSTMENT to aggressive blocking by his key triangle (see page 46).

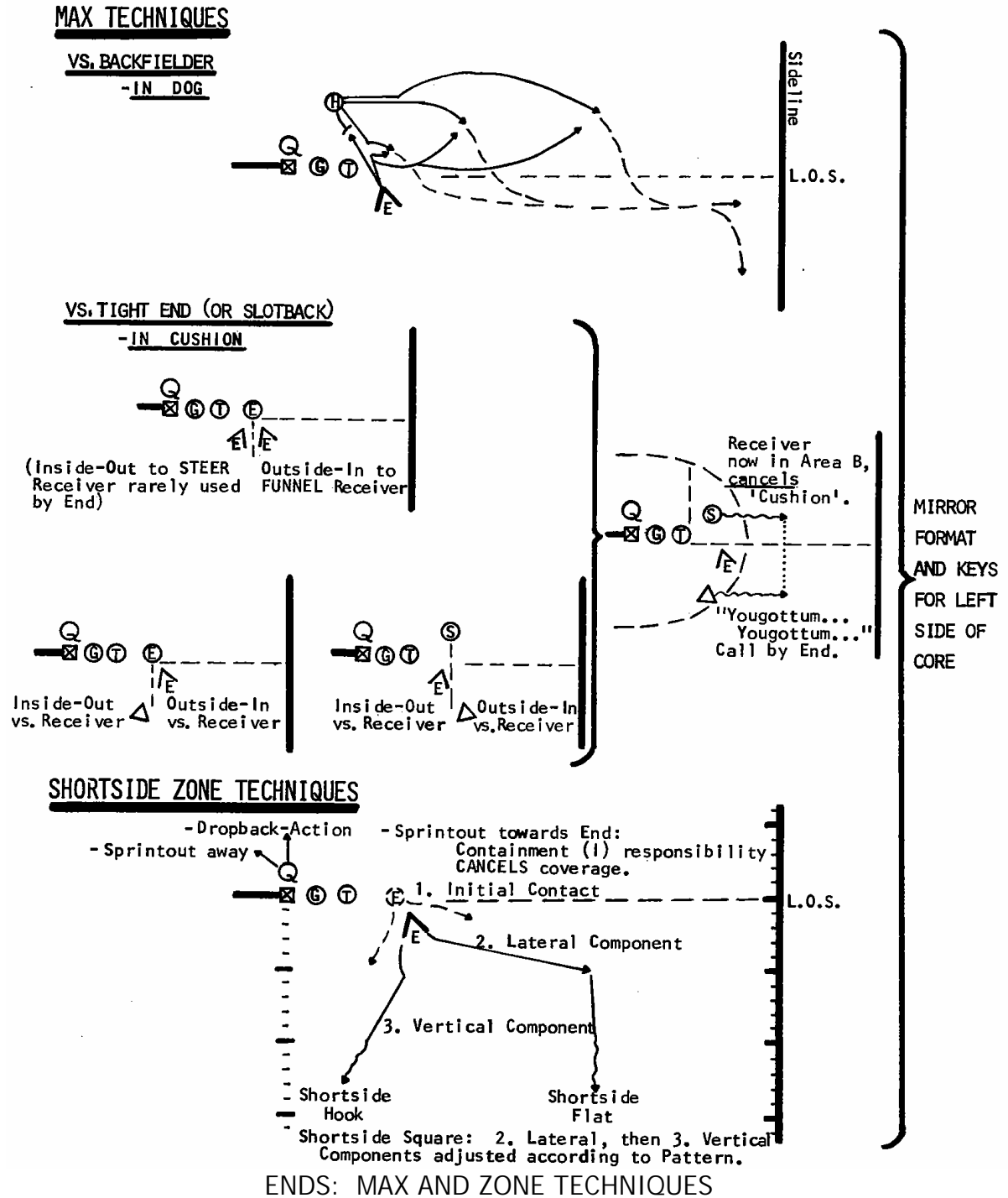
Ends have two run techniques, crash and trail.

Crash: Aligned Loose, the End is free to crash into the offensive backfield. He penetrates aggressively through the C gap aiming at the near halfback (or at the spot where one would be). He maintains outside leverage on the ball while forcing it directly -- the End should NEVER allow a ball-carrier to cut back inside him untouched. From a Tight alignment, the crash technique is more difficult to initiate, but the End should fight through blocks by the offensive line to gain his crash leverage whenever possible. The End must stay on his feet, so the arm shiver technique is preferred, fighting through the head and neck of inside-out blockers, disengaging as soon as possible and keeping his feet clear. If an End aligned Loose reads an off-tackle play coming directly at him, however, he should engage the trap or kickout-blocker with his inside shoulder to maintain outside leverage. Aligned Tight, an End should fight outside-in pressure from a TE with his outside shoulder, stringing him along the LOS while being aware of cutback attempts by the ball-carrier.

Trail: A natural extension of crash technique. If potential ball-carriers move away from him, and no blockers attack, the End immediately locates the QB and the football, trails AT FULL SPEED and expects a cutback, counter or reverse move by a ball-carrier. Reverses or bootlegs will almost always be preceded by

blockers, telling the End he must maintain his primary contain responsibility rather than initiating trail.

Ends also have three pass techniques to master: Max (man), Cover (zone), and Shortside Square.

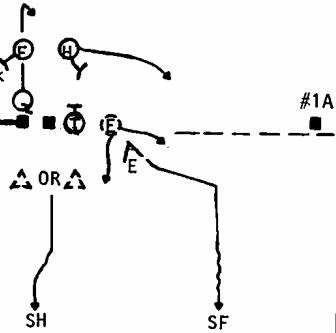


PASS COVERAGE VERIFIED: "COVER"

DROPBACK-ACTION

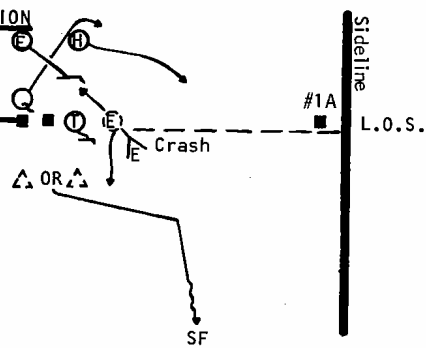
-LIVE #1A Receiver optional, to work against curl & In Routes

-One Second Level Defender (optional)



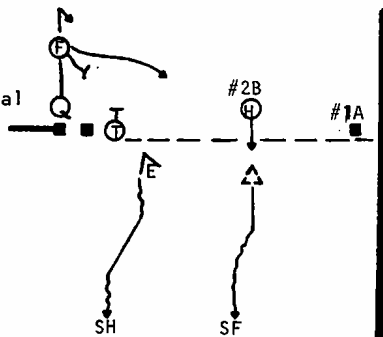
SPRINTOUT-ACTION

-Fullback Cut-Blocking optional



DROPBACK OR SPRINTOUT

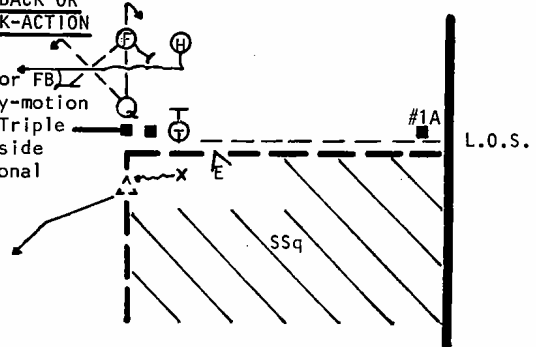
-Halfback early-motion to #2B optional



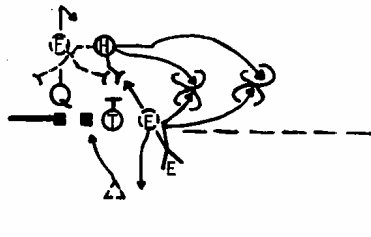
"COVER-A, -B, OR -C" VERIFIED

DROPBACK OR QUICK-ACTION

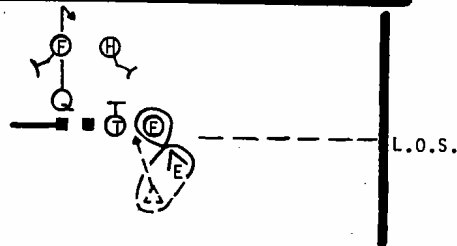
-HB (or FB) early-motion to Triple Wideside optional



"DOG" VERIFIED



"CUSHION" OR "TIGHT CUSHION" VERIFIED



ENDS: COVER, SHORTSIDE SQUARE, AND STUNTS

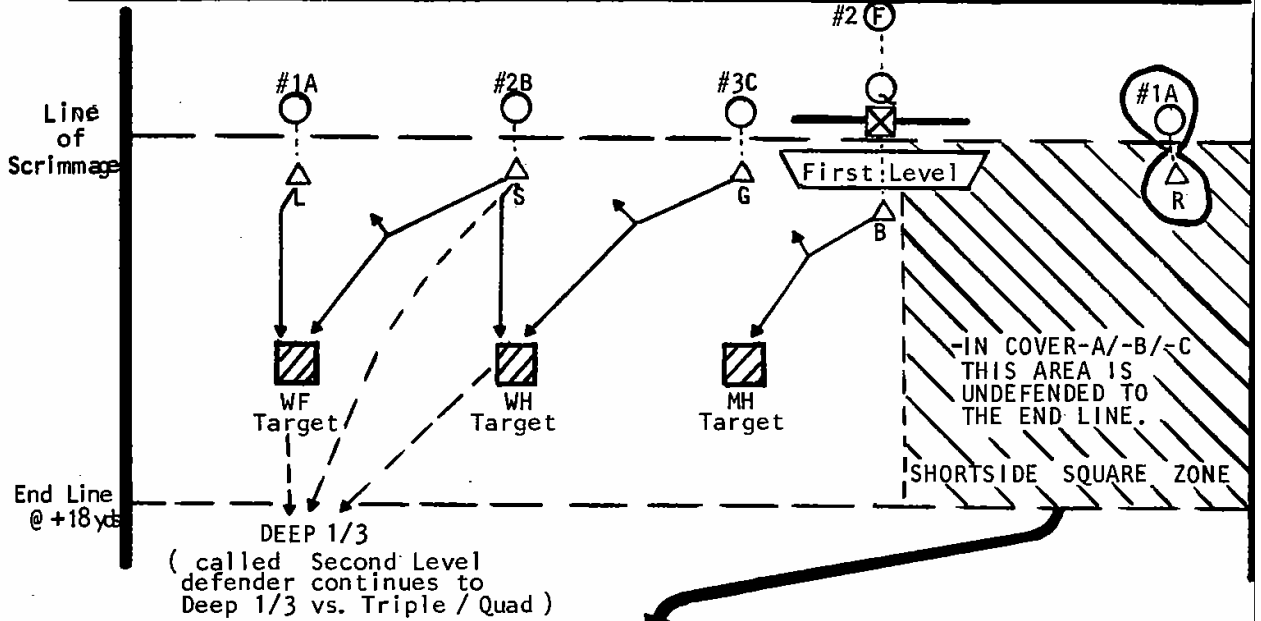
As indicated in the diagrams, the Ends have a few, very limited pass coverage responsibilities. They must be drilled relentlessly, however, if the 2L is to succeed as a pass defense platform. Ends are called on to Max backfield receivers (p. 21, top, 22 bottom left, and see p. 29) when the 2L "Dog" blitz is verified; Max TE's or tight slotbacks (p. 21, middle, 22 bottom right, and see p. 31) when the 2L blitz "Cushion" or the coverage variant "Tight Cushion" (p. 34) is verified; drop to Shortside Hook or Flat zones in Cover (p. 21, bottom and p. 22, top and middle left); or drop to Shortside Square if Wideside Trips is

authenticated from Cover (p. 22 middle right, and see pp. 23, 24, and 35). In addition, they must rush a sprintout pass in their direction even though "Cover" is called (p. 22 top right).

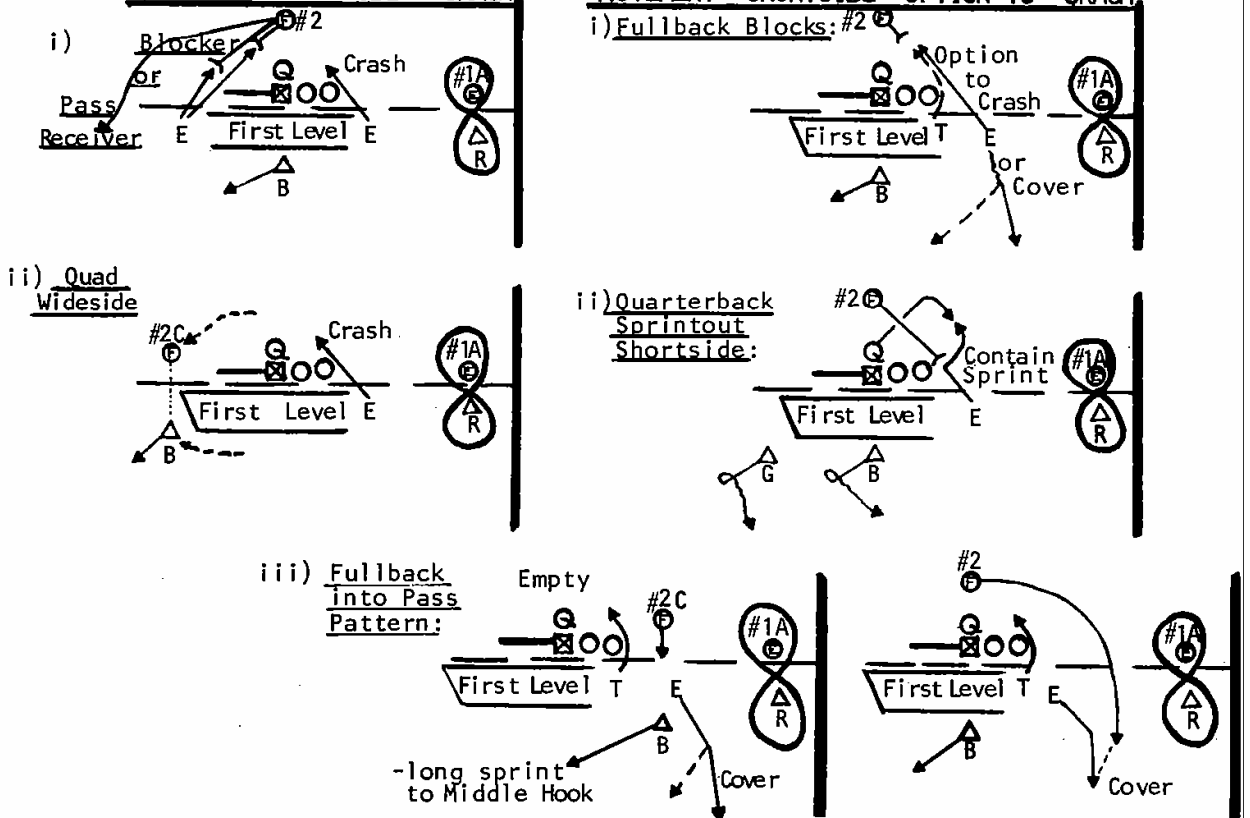
SHORTSIDE SQUARE

This is a unique feature of the 2LD. Neither man nor traditional zone coverage, SS is invoked from Cover when the ball is scrimmaged from a hashmark and the offense lines up in or motions to Trips or Quads to the Wideside of the field (p. 24). If (and only if) the remaining receiver to the shortside attacks the short side of the field as a pass receiver does the End drop to his SS responsibilities. If the receiver (usually a backfielder) sets to block shortside, the End can rush under control, but must be prepared to cover a delayed pass release to the shortside; if he sets up to block or releases for a pass to the wideside, the End is free to crash as normal. The Shortside Square extends from the LOS to the Deep Safety's end line at +18 yards, and from the shortside hashmark to the sideline.

UNDERNEATH COVERAGE VS TRIPLE (OR QUAD) IMMEDIATE RECEIVERS IN COVER-A/-B/-C:



SHORTSIDE SQUARE IMPLEMENTATION BY THE END: KEY THE #2 MOBILE PERSONNEL
MOVEMENT WIDESIDE = CRASH MOVEMENT SHORTSIDE = OPTION TO CRASH



ENDS: SHORTSIDE SQUARE ASSIGNMENTS

FUNDAMENTALS: Second Level

Stance: Stacked in the core, 2L defenders require lateral mobility. Therefore, their two-point stance should have feet shoulder-width apart in a minimal heel-toe stagger, with weight forward over the toes, and knees and waist slightly bent. They should have a clear view into the backfield.

In an Area C Jam technique over a TE or tight slotback, the 2L defender keeps his outside foot back, widening his stance slightly and keeping his center of gravity lower.

Outside the core, covering an Area B or A receiver, the 2L defender keeps his inside foot forward and his body weight forward. (Exception: When playing a hard outside shade, the defender keeps his outside foot forward.) As a general rule, the closer the 2L defender mirrors his receiver, the more he lowers his center of gravity by lowering his hips and widening his stance (but never wider than shoulder width).

Responsibilities: The basic responsibility of the 2L defender is the man he is mirroring. This is true whether the play develops as an inside run, outside run, dropback, action or screen pass.

Mirroring a running back within the core, run defense is normally the primary responsibility for 2L defenders -- however, this may change in "sure" passing situations (i.e., 3rd and 15+). Outside the core in Area A or B, 2L defenders must play the pass first. In Area C, the 2L defender's primary versus secondary responsibilities may depend (according to game plan) on the type of receiver he is mirroring. Against a larger, slower TE, the 2L defender should play the run first; while against a smaller, faster slotback, the 2L defender should play pass responsibility first. Again, this will be controlled by the specific game plan for each opponent.

Techniques: When mirroring in the core, the 2L defender stacks behind the 1L defender closest to his mirror. If no 1L defender is aligned within one offensive lineman of the mirror back, the 2L defender may align directly opposite his mirror unstacked. When receivers go in motion across the formation, 2L defenders shuffle between stacks, keeping their shoulders parallel to the LOS at all times.

If the mirror back dives at the 2L defender, he fills aggressively. If the mirror moves outside the 2L defender, he scrapes down the LOS and plays the ball inside-out as long as it remains inside containment. He should meet blockers with a two-hand shiver to maintain separation while he keep his feet moving. If

the ball moves across the core away from the 2L defender, he must play cutback responsibility, shuffling cautiously across the formation and keeping the ball in front of him laterally so he can play the cutback if it comes. When the ball clears the core, the 2L defender immediately institutes pursuit, accelerating to catch up with the ball (but not overrun it). From the backside of the play, pursuit takes a deep course called rotation. When the ball crosses the LOS, the rotating defender should be exactly in between the two hashmarks, and takes the best available angle to intercept the ball carrier.

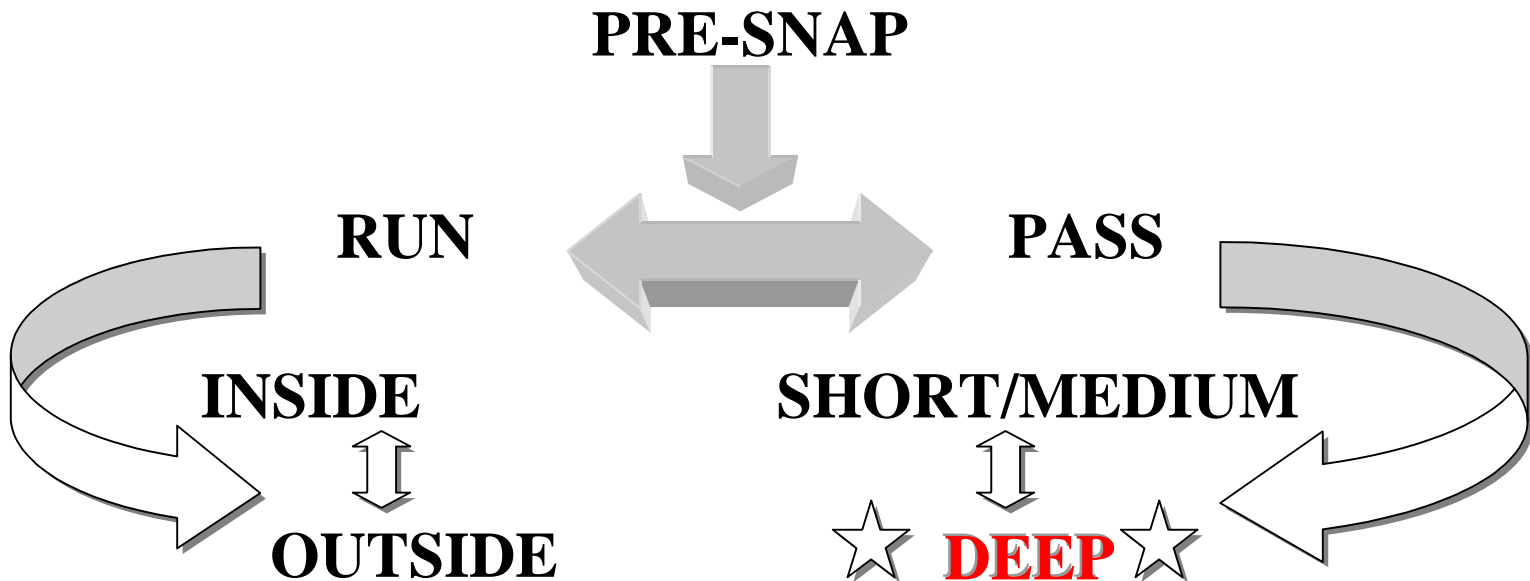
In an Area C Jam technique, the 2L defender may have to concentrate almost entirely on his primary responsibilities -- pass coverage or containment -- and ignore pursuit and rotation on plays away.

Outside the core, the 2L defender aligned at hard depth will Steer his mirror outside or Funnel him inside; at soft depth he will employ positional technique to deny specific pass routes (i.e., aligning to the inside to take away the quick Slant and Post); and at medium depth he will employ both methods.

Specific techniques are covered in the Installation/Drills section (page 43).

FUNDAMENTALS: Deep Safety

The Deep Safety (DS) position is unlike any other position in defensive football. He is not a defensive back. Defensive backs are trained to react instantly to offensive cues. The DS, however, must be trained NOT to react immediately to what he sees before or at the snap. Defensive backs must move rapidly and with great agility to prosecute their responsibilities. The DS is more like a military force being held in reserve until the crucial moment of battle. He tracks the offensive threats from long distance while pre-positioning himself during the first 1.5 to 2 seconds of any play -- then he strikes like a guillotine falling. Defensive backs read keys and react to them immediately. The DS eliminates possibilities based on keys -- he looks for what doesn't happen and eliminates it, leaving him always with only one course of action. His train of thought is like a flow chart:



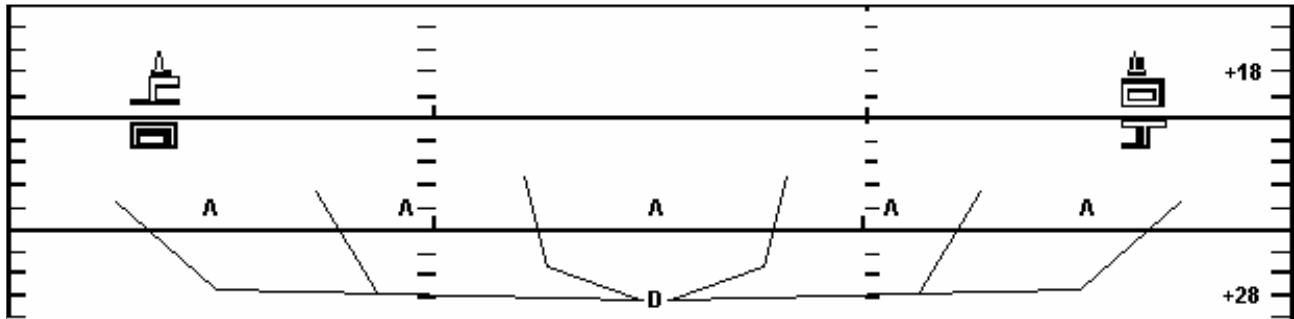
The DS will position himself before the snap at the approximate mid-point of the offensive formation (but never wider than one of the hashmarks). He will note the location of all five potential receivers, how many are available for immediate release downfield (i.e., 2, 3, 4 or 5 receiver sets) and whether the formation is balanced (1x1 or 2x2) or unbalanced (1x2, 1x3, 1x4 or 2x3).

At the snap, the DS will analyze the offensive play, eliminating possibilities by following the above flow chart. He does not give equal credence and weight to all possibilities, however. One key to the play of the DS is that he must assume that every play will be a deep pass -- to the end-line at +18 or beyond (note the stars in the flow chart). Any other offensive play becomes a reaction for the DS -- and his reaction is to secure the tackle without fail.

Stance: The DS stands tall and relaxed, bouncing lightly on his toes (like a boxer, or a tennis player waiting to return a serve) as the ball is snapped, reading the quarterback.

Responsibilities: In Max coverage, the DS will intercept the ball at the end-line (or deeper, in case of a deep pass). In Max/Double, he is responsible for double-covering a chosen receiver. In Cover, his responsibilities may include the deep middle 1/3 or a deep 2/3 of the field.

Technique: The most important point to teach the DS is the correct path to intercept the ball at the end-line (see diagram next page).



This is the DS "glide path". He should never head directly for the LOS, but should focus his attention on the offense after the snap and begin to move under control toward the likely point of intersection with the ball. If the DS first moves forward, and then is forced to sprint laterally, he will have lost all the advantage that his built-up momentum and kinetic energy would otherwise give him (i.e., intercept speed and force of impact). The DS "bounce and glide" is explained in greater detail in the Installation/Drills section (see page 57).

By the time a ball is thrown, the DS should be well on his way toward the intended receiver. If the ball will land near or past the end-line at +18 yards, the DS has a decision to make -- should he collision the receiver, or attempt the interception? In almost every case, the preferred option is to HIT THE RECEIVER. Therefore, before the ball starts downward from the high point of its trajectory, the DS will have made his hit vs. intercept decision. If he decides to impact the receiver, he must factor in two things -- the timing of the hit vs. the ball's arrival; and the position of any 2L defenders who may be covering the receiver. Taking the latter point first, the DS should TRY to hit through the shoulder of the receiver opposite the 2L defender. Of course, if this proves too difficult, the DS must still deliver a maximum blow to the receiver. We give the DS the full benefit of the doubt on his timing. If he impacts the receiver a fraction of a second before the ball arrives, well and good. We will take the penalty under those circumstances, and work with the DS after the fact to prevent recurrences. Meanwhile, the receiver will clearly understand why we "play that kid so deep."

Or, to quote Dr. Thomson:

"...(T)he safety's transition from read to enforcement, from mental integration to physical action, involves a gradual commitment, a building of momentum:
 -- at the snap, mentally eliminating the offensive possibilities, starting with the various (short) patterns, while gliding slowly;
 -- as the moment of his action-decision approaches, accelerating his glide;
 -- as the pass rush closes in on the QB, never fully committing *until cued*."

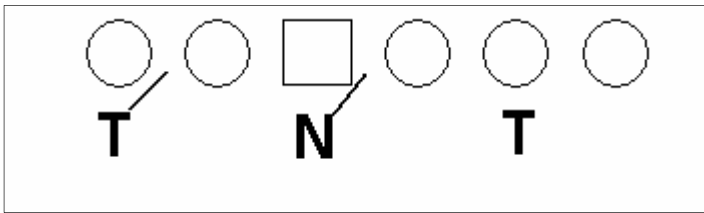
(By cued, Thomson means the ball crossing the LOS on the ground or in the air.)

VARIATIONS: 1L Stunts

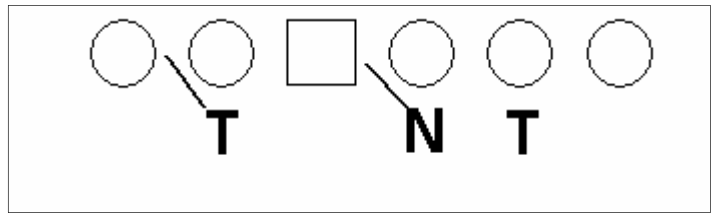
We distinguish between Stunts by the 1L and Blitzes by the 2L, even though there is some overlap.

Slant: Involves the Nose and one Tackle slanting in the same direction to disguise the final alignment of the 1L, even after the ball is snapped.

From odd-numbered fronts (11, 3's or 5's), the Nose and the Tackle away from strength will Slant toward strength, aiming for the spot where the back foot of their target offensive lineman (the one toward whom they are slanting) is lined up before the snap. Even-numbered fronts (2's, 22, 4's or 44) mean that the Nose and the Tackle who is aligned Closed (in 22 and 44, the one the Nose is NOT stacked behind) Slant away from strength -- the Nose always toward the center, and the slanting Tackle away from him.



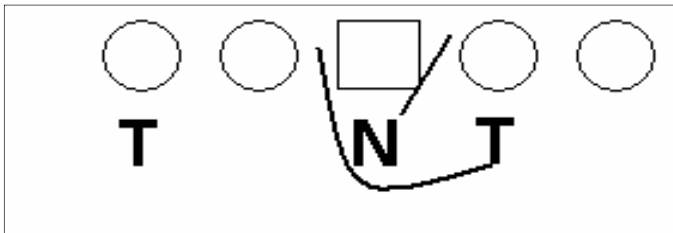
11 SLANT



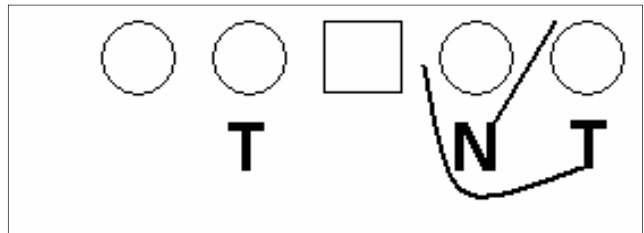
2 or 4 RIGHT SLANT

Twist: Two maneuvers involve changing gap responsibilities between 1L defenders: the Tackle-Nose Twist (TNT) and Tackle-End Twist (TET). These are not primarily pass-rush maneuvers, but we will use them to disrupt man-blocking schemes.

TNT is executed by the Nose and an adjacent Tackle (either in Odd/Closed or Even/Open alignments). The Nose slants outside, away from the Center, then the Tackle crosses behind him.

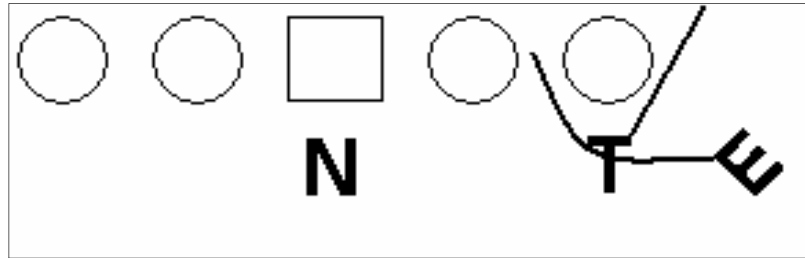


3 LEFT TNT



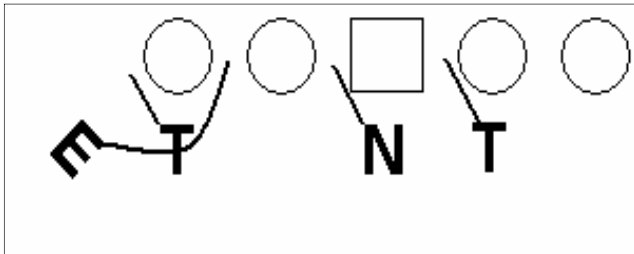
2 or 4 RIGHT TNT

TET similarly involves a Tackle and adjacent End, but requires an Open Tackle and Loose End. As with TNT, the inside 1L defender (the Tackle in this case) slants out, and the End loops behind him.

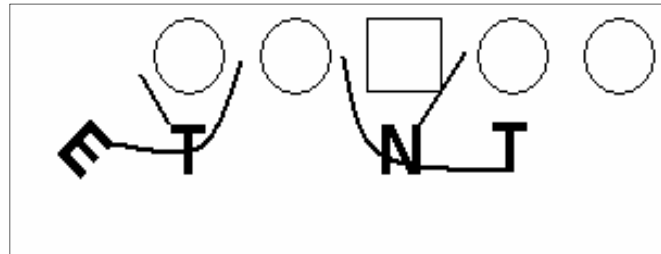


3 RIGHT TET

Once again, combinations are possible.



5 LEFT SLANT TET



5 LEFT TNT TET

VARIATIONS: 2L Blitzes

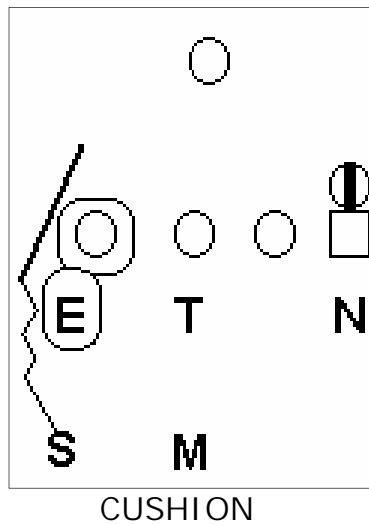
Three 2L blitzes provide the DC with more means of disrupting offensive plans. Blitzes also complement 1L stunts for a very practical reason -- a stunting 1L defender may be assigned two gaps in a particular front, but can only fill one of them -- making 2L blitzes a practical way to fill the undefended gap at unexpected moments. All blitzes must be VISUALLY VERIFIED at the LOS.

Dog: 2L defender mirroring a Backfield receiver MAY fire through a gap AT HIS DISCRETION.

The Dogging 2L defender is never wasted on a futile blitz. If his mirror back sets up to pass-block or moves laterally toward the perimeter of the Core, the defender is free to fire IF HE THINKS IT WILL BE EFFECTIVE (his mirror will be picked up by an End -- see page 21). If his back dives ahead, however (either immediately or after starting across the formation laterally), he must continue to mirror until he is sure the back is neither carrying the ball nor sneaking out on a pass route.

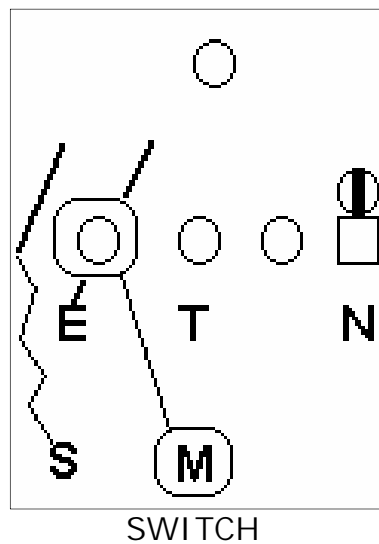
Cushion: At the Snap a Loose End attacks and Maxes a TE or slotback, while the 2L defender with mirror responsibility crashes outside-in.

Cushion is particularly effective against outside running plays -- sweeps, quick pitches, options, fly/jet/speed sweeps, etc. Cushion is ONLY verified at the LOS by a TE or slotback in the offensive formation.

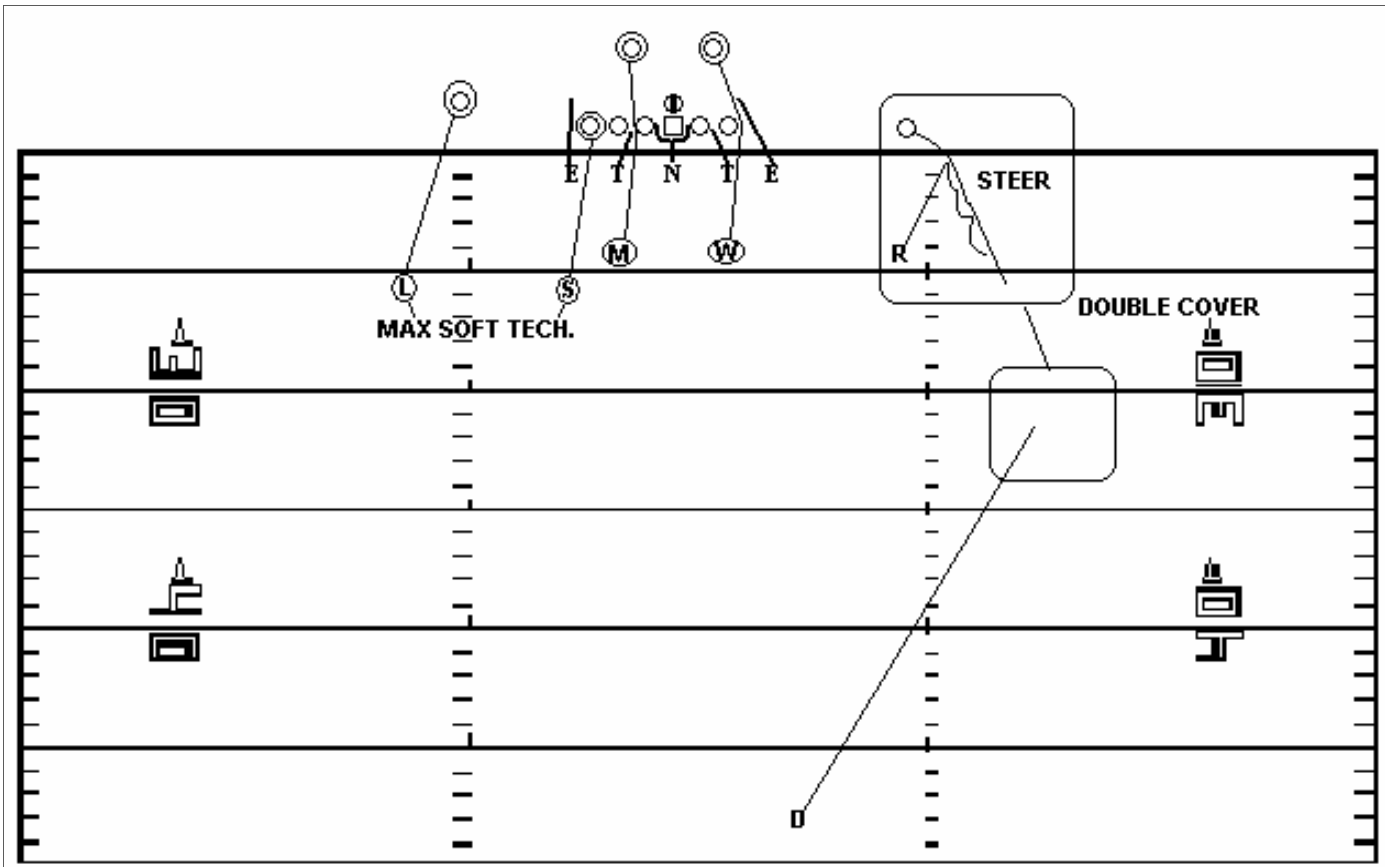


Switch: Against TE/2 Backfielder formations, Switch crashes the End and a 2L defender outside-in.

Switch is ONLY verified visually at the LOS by the presence of a TE and two Backfield receivers (meaning two 2 Stacks by the defense, and a 2L defender in position to Max the TE as the 2L defender who would normally do so crashes).

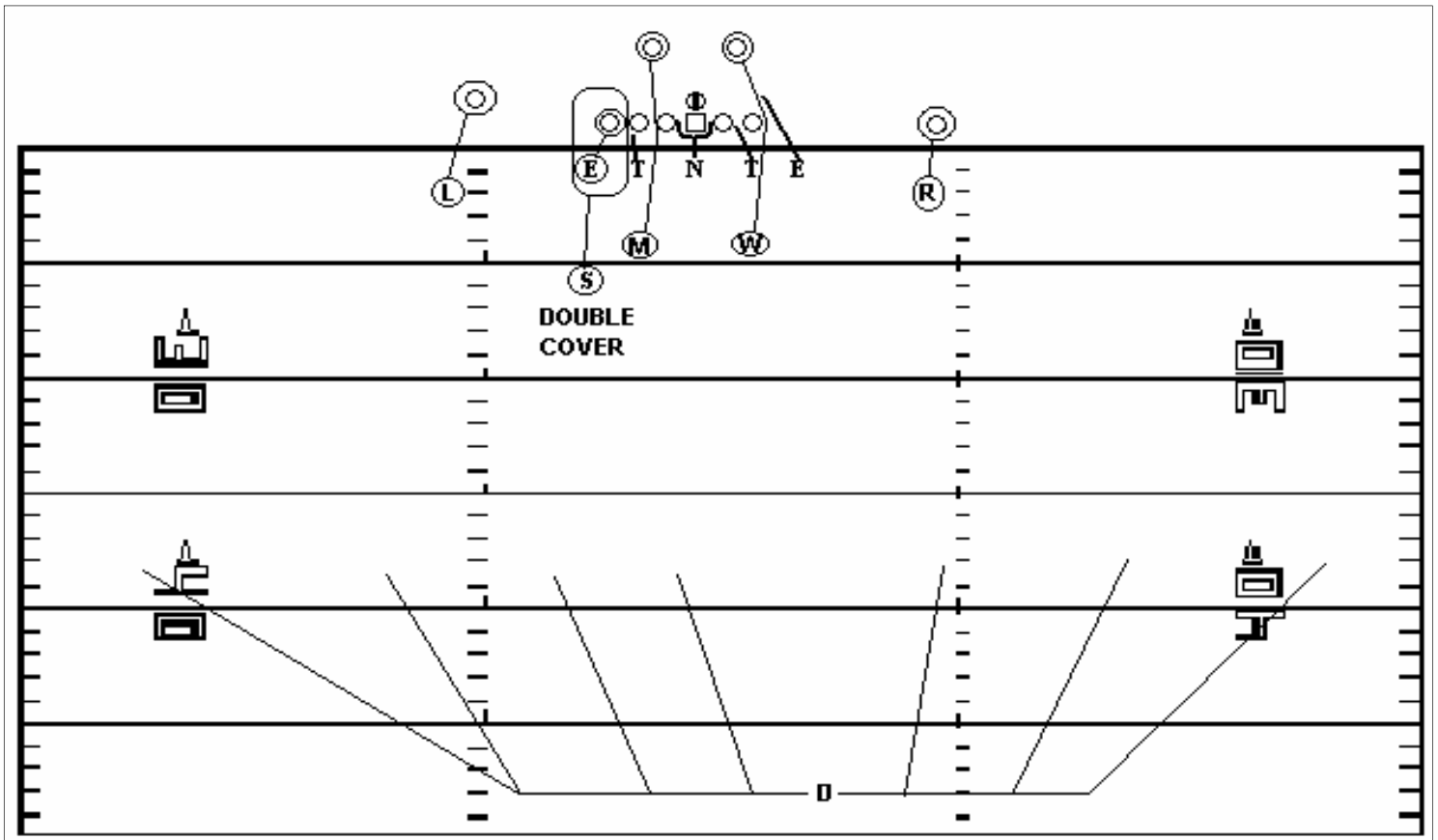


Max/Double calls the DS to provide "top cover" double coverage to a specified wide receiver. It tells certain other 2L defenders they must play Max Soft (i.e., traditional man coverage) techniques from a depth of +7 or more. The exceptions for playing Max Soft are for 2L defenders mirroring backfield receivers and for the 2L defender mirroring the receiver being double covered. In order to maintain integrity against the run, and because the deep passing threat is less immediate, defenders mirroring backfield receivers stay at their normal depth; however, they must always be aware that when Max/Double is called, there is no end line in force. The 2L defender mirroring the called Max/Double receiver (the 1A receiver to the defensive right in the diagram below) will attack and funnel or steer that receiver (depending on the game plan). The DS sprints forward at the snap to provide double coverage over the top of any deep routes -- fades, posts, etc.



11 MAX/DOUBLE 1A RIGHT

Max/Tight Cushion is an excellent mechanism for double-covering a TE or tight slotback. It requires an End aligned Loose next to an Open Tackle, who assumes the End's contain responsibilities (see p. 14 -- with a TE on the defensive left, this would limit potential 1L fronts to five choices: 11 as shown below, and "the Lefts" -- 2 Left, 3 Left, 4 Left and 5 Left). At the snap, the End bumps the TE and Maxes him from an underneath position; the 2L defender mirroring the TE/slot then plays a Max Soft technique on the receiver, double covering him all over the field. Because the DS end line is in operation, all other Max assignments are executed as usual.

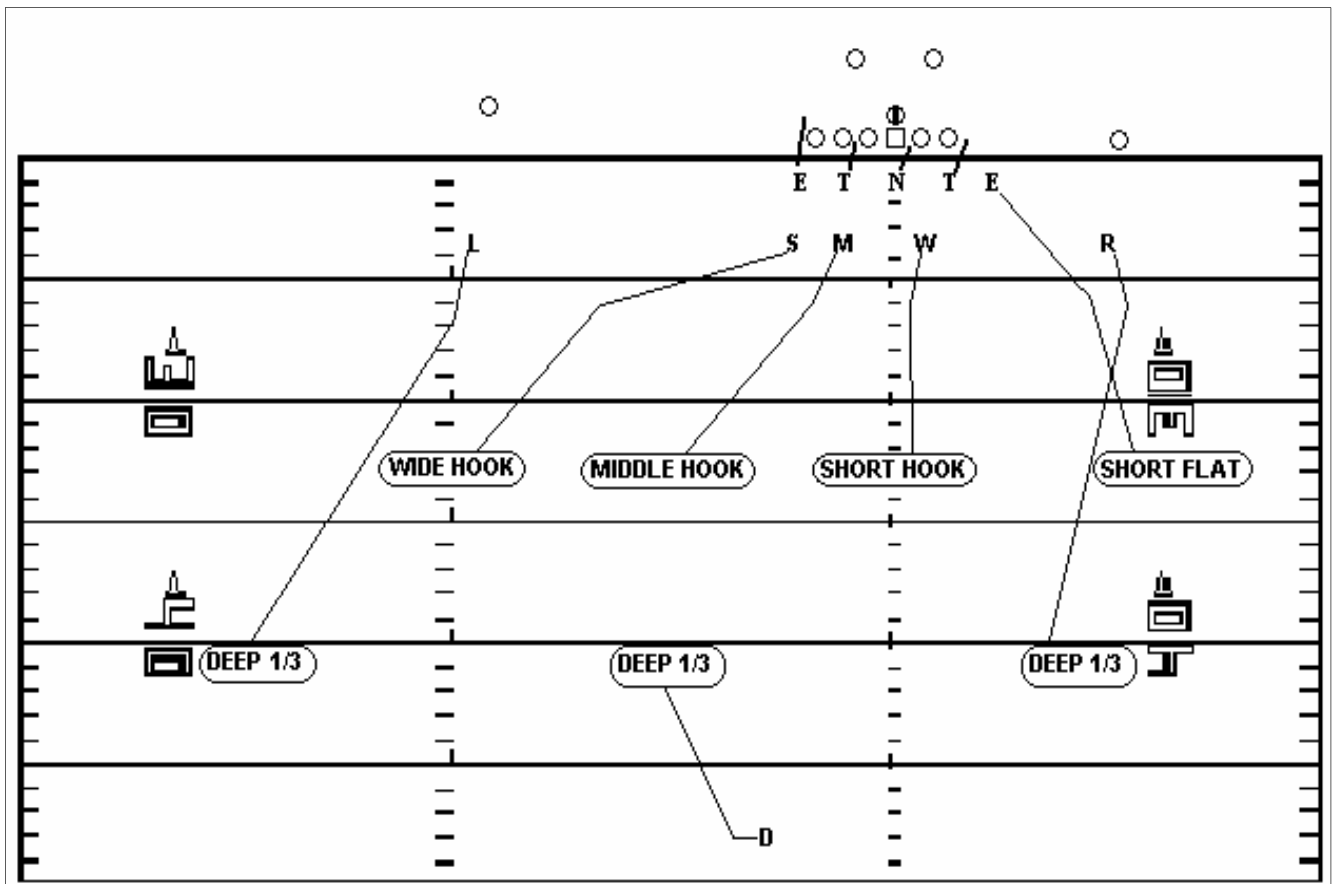


11 MAX/TIGHT CUSHION

Cover: Zone defense by the 2L, DS and Shortside End.

I have taken several of Coach Thomson's zone concepts and combined them. His Cover is the basis for my zone coverage against normal (i.e., Iso or Twin -- no more than two immediate receivers on each side) offensive formations.

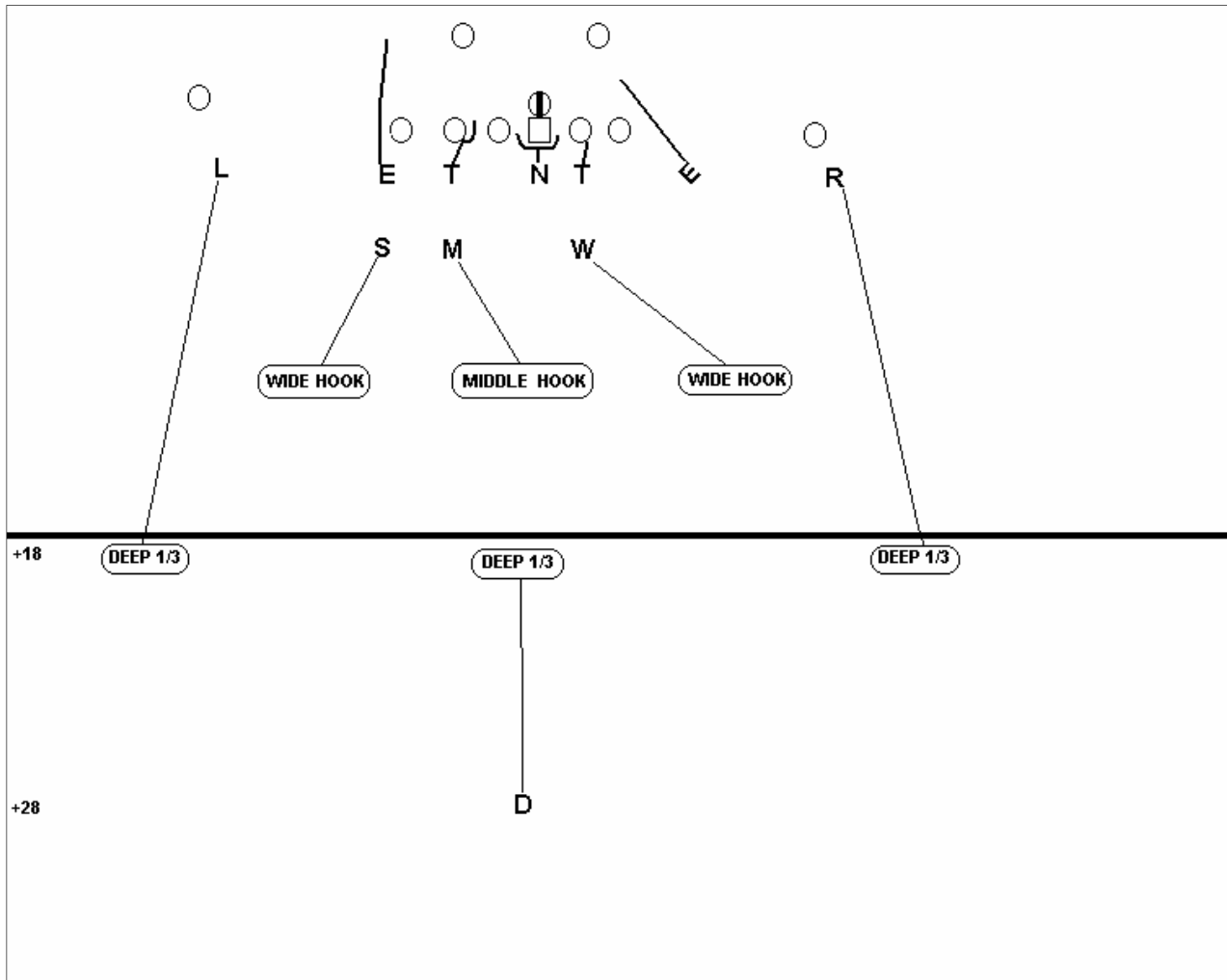
When the ball is scrimmaged from a hashmark, Cover becomes a four-under, three-deep zone with four 1L defenders rushing the passer. The wide flat is always left empty in Cover, which is a big reason we don't play a steady diet of Cover -- we always mix it up with Max. Len, Ron and the DS cover the three deep zones, while Sam, Mike, Will and the shortside End cover the Wide, Middle and Short Hook and Short Flat zones, respectively. In the event of a 2B receiver to the shortside (such as a back slotted to the defensive right), Will (in the diagram below) would mirror that receiver before the snap and drop to Short Flat after it, while the End would drop to Short Hook instead. This allows us to maintain maximum disguise while not asking too much of the End's pass coverage duties.



11 COVER (from right hash)

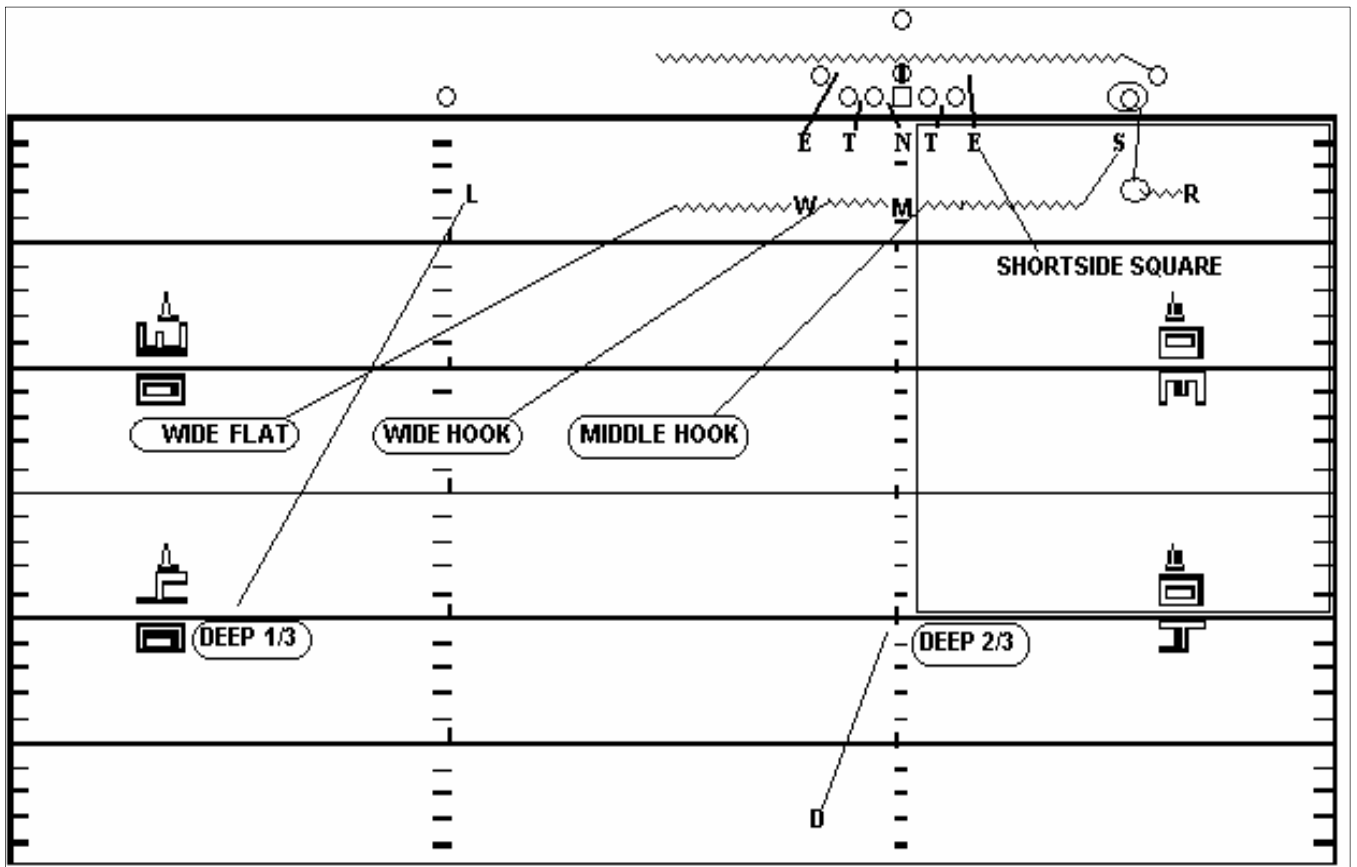
From between the hashmarks, however, there is by definition no shortside on the field -- so both wide flats are left open. This frees up both Ends to rush the passer, but it also means quick flat and/or out routes have a much higher completion possibility. One solution is to teach a "Cover-Middle" that drops the strongside End to his flat and spreads Mike and Will from Middle Hook and Wide Hook to Wide Hook and the weakside Wide Flat, respectively. Another is to game-plan dropping one or both Ends to their respective flats when Cover is called from between the hashmarks, turning flat coverage into a guessing game for the offense. In any event, this has to be factored into the defensive game plan, and makes it even more imperative that Max and Cover be mixed up when the ball is scrimmaged from between the hashes.

Again, the information on Cover on pp. 35-36 applies only to offensive formations with no more than 2 receivers deployed to each side. For formations that line up in or motion to Trips or Quad sets wideside, see pp. 37-38.



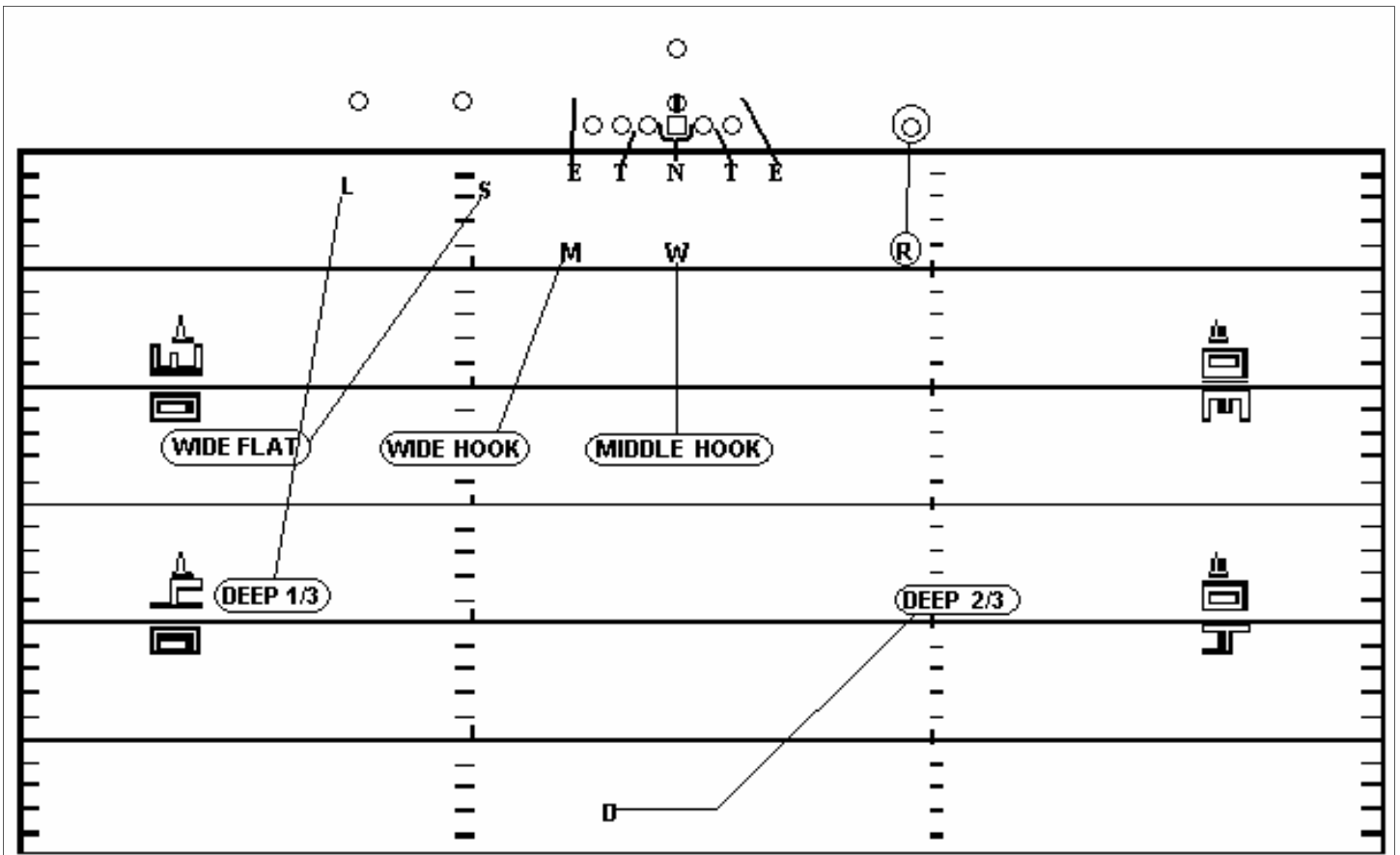
3 LEFT COVER (between hashmarks)

The diagram below shows the effect of the offense sending Trips receivers to the wideside of the field. Even though Cover has been called, defenders respond to Sam's call of "TRIPS WIDE! TRIPS WIDE!" by repeating the call, and by executing their Trips assignments: Len drops to the deep outside 1/3 on the Trips side, while Will, Mike and Sam drop to the Trips-side Wide Flat, Wide Hook and Middle Hook, respectively. The DS moves up under control to cover the remaining deep 2/3 of the field, while Ron Maxes the now-isolated backside wide receiver. The backside End executes a technique which is not quite a zone, called Shortside Square: if the remaining receiver who is in position to threaten the shortside of the field, the fullback, releases shortside, the End drops and plays his Square responsibilities (see pp. 23-24). Quad receivers would produce the same result, whether the offense lines up that way, or shifts and/or motions into a Quad formation wideside -- with the sole exception that the shortside End would be freed from the possibility of a #2 receiver releasing to his side, and could crash as usual. If crossing routes were causing problems, of course, we could still game-plan dropping that End to Shortside Square to wall off crossing receivers.



5 LEFT COVER vs. WIDE TRIPS (right hash)

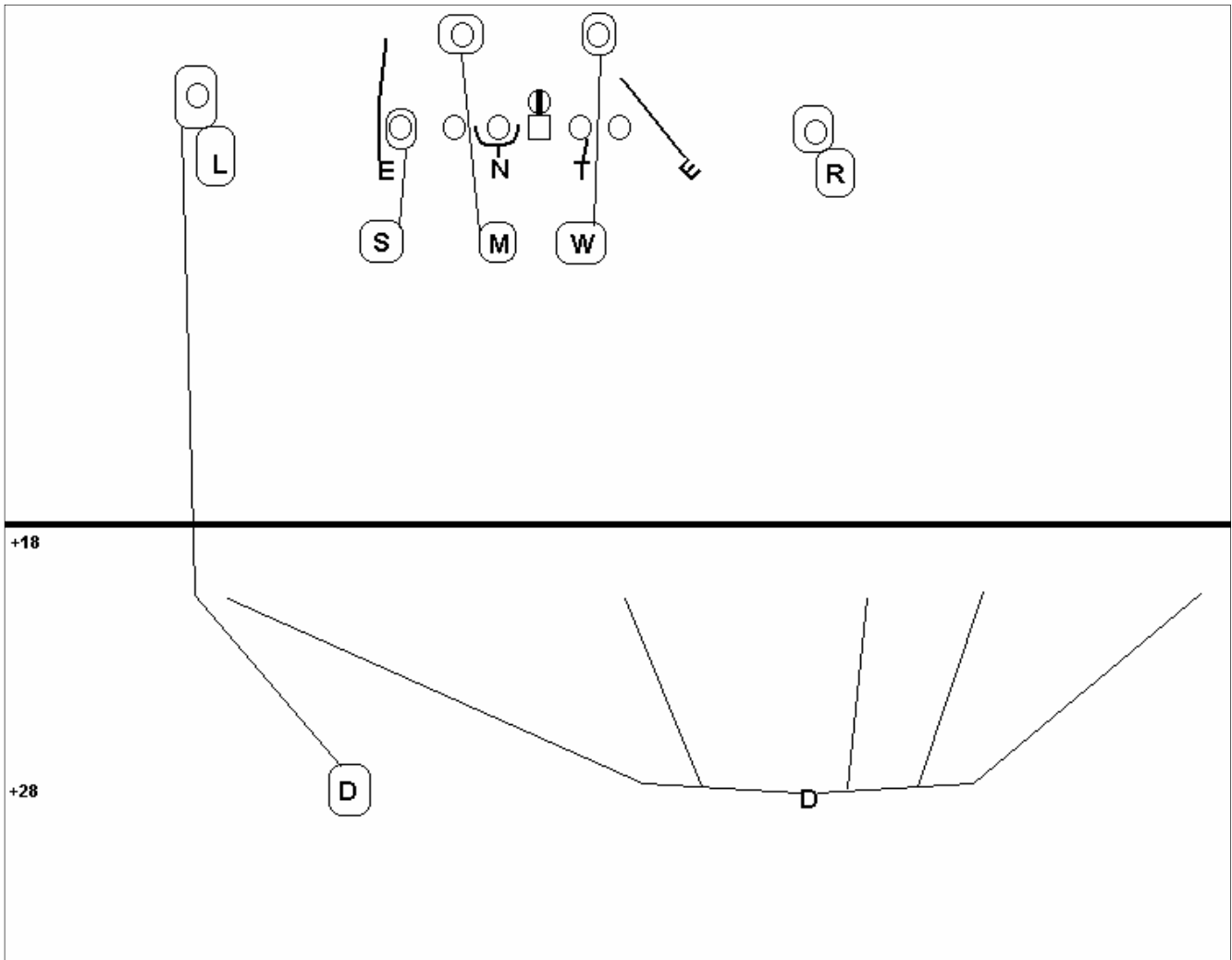
Finally, if we call Cover against a team which motions to or lines up in a Trips or Quad set from between the hashmarks, we end up with the situation diagrammed below -- no shortside means no Shortside Square, so both Ends crash; while Ron must (by rule) Max the isolated receiver he is mirroring. Otherwise, the Cover Wideside Trips rule is in effect, so Len, Sam, Mike, Will and the DS all maintain their same assignments against wide Trips.



11 COVER vs. WIDE TRIPS (between hashes)

Two-Deep: The insertion of a second DS (by removing one Tackle). Can be used with Max or Cover.

The Two-Deep adjustment is not a coverage *per se*, but it affects how you play your coverages. Tactical use of a second DS should occur for sound defensive reasons, since you are eliminating 20% of your 1L pass rush. Against some teams, the use of a second DS or other variations (see spread offense adjustments, page 93) can provide an entire range of tactical challenges for offensive coordinators to meet -- from maximum pressure to dropping off 8 defenders.



2 LEFT, MAX/DOUBLE 1B LEFT, TWO-DEEP

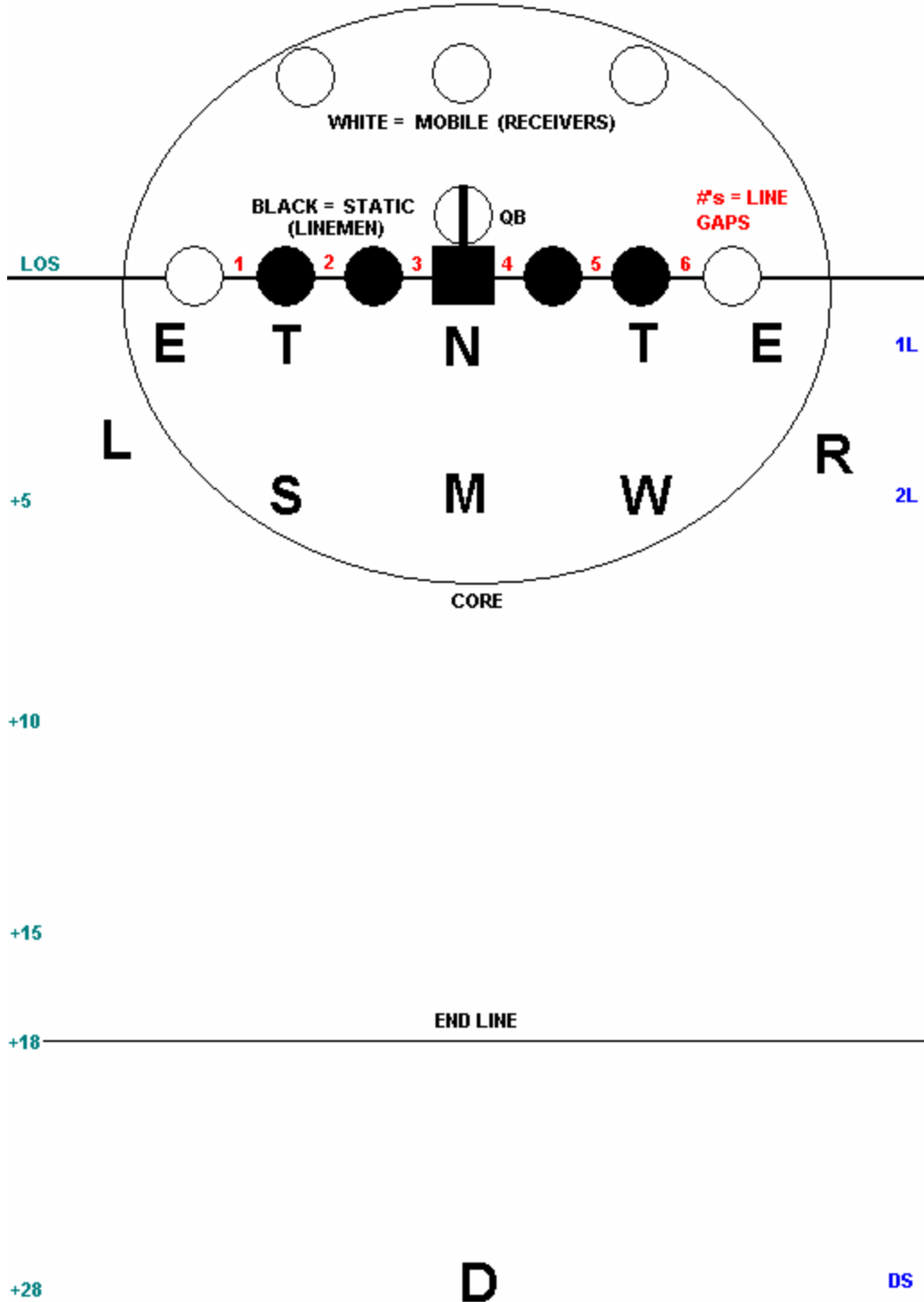
In the above diagram, the left Tackle has been substituted with a second DS who shares Max Double responsibilities with Len on the 1B receiver to the (defensive) left of the formation. (Note: While it might seem logical to remove the Nose in Two-Deep, it actually restricts the 1L alignments severely. Removing one Tackle leaves the defense with many more 1L alignment options.) The other DS enforces the end line across the entire field as usual. All other Max techniques remain in force as usual.

Depending on whether you substitute a Right or Left Tackle for the second DS in Two-Deep, three alignments are possible: If the Right Tackle is removed, you can still line up in 4-Right, 5-Left or 5-Right; while if the Left Tackle is removed in favor of a second DS, you can line up in 4-Left, 5-Left or 5-Right. If you remove the Nose man, however, only one alignment is viable -- a 44 with no stack by the Nose. This alignment is duplicated by the 4-Right and -Left alignments anyway, and you can also use the 5's if you remove one Tackle. (Using the 1L alignment rules on pp. 11-13, demonstrate for yourself that these alignments are possible with one Tackle removed. Also, the diagram on page 39 shows Two-Deep from a 2 Left 1L front; while this can be used as a "prevent" set-up in long yardage situations, it is not recommended as a base front for Two-Deep.)

While none of the coverages above may seem extraordinary (with the exception of the Deep Safety position, of course), it should be mentioned that the uniqueness of the 2LD rests with techniques and alignments, as well as with their application. In Max, for example, the 2L technique brings defenders underneath receivers to take away short routes. Beyond that, the skilful intermixing of Max and Cover with stunts, blitzes, and 2LD variations such as Two-Deep and offense-specific adjustments (see pp. 77-94) make the 2LD a very tricky proposition to attack. The game becomes a chess match between offensive and defensive coordinators, with the advantages of surprise and unfamiliarity almost always on the side of the defense.

CONSOLIDATION: THE BASICS

I will attempt to consolidate information from certain sections before moving ahead. It's a habit I follow when installing the 2LD, and I recommend it to you highly when dealing with any complex, new information.



To review (see diagram on page 41):

The offense consists of the following elements:

5 STATIC personnel (linemen)
5 MOBILE personnel (backs/receivers)
1 QB

We define the offensive line gaps as those which separate the 5 STATIC personnel ONLY. We only define A, B and C gaps to each side -- no D gap. (The gaps in the diagram are numbered in red for illustrative purposes only -- we do NOT number the gaps in our system.) The gaps are the primary responsibility of the 1L to defend.

The Core is the area which contains the STATIC personnel and QB, as well as the 1L defenders -- it MAY also contain MOBILE personnel and their 2L mirrors.

The 2L will MIRROR the MOBILE personnel wherever they line up: if within the Core, they will normally stack behind a 1L defender; outside the Core, they will align in an Inside or Outside shade, at a Hard (+1), Medium (+3-5) or Soft (+7) depth.

Normally, the DS deploys at a depth of +28 and enforces an End Line at +18. In certain coverages, he may instead double cover a receiver, or cover a deep 1/3 or 2/3 of the field.

There are 13 1L alignments possible in the 2LD, and five possible locations for 2L defenders to stack behind them. The combination yields a theoretical total of 242 possible 2LD fronts -- all from a two-digit (at most) 1L alignment call.

The 1L has three Stunts available to it -- the Slant and two Twists, TNT and TET. The 2L can use three Blitzes -- Dog, Switch and Cushion.

Coverages fall in two types: Man (Max, Max/Double and Max/Tight Cushion) or Zone (Cover). Cover changes depending on the lateral placement of the ball (hashmark vs. middle) and on the offensive formation before the snap ("Normal" -- Iso/Twin -- vs. Trips/Quad receivers).

INSTALLATION: THE SCHEDULE

The following schedule is designed to get a bare-bones 2LD up and running within two weeks, assuming 20 hours are available for defensive practice. (It is even possible to do so in 5 days if four hours a day are available for defense.)

Special attention is given to the drills Coach Thomson invented to teach the particular skills involved in playing the 2LD. Key practices are preceded by a Chalk Talk script which covers the concepts to be taught on the field.

CHALK TALK BEFORE PRACTICE 1:

(Hand out diagram on page 41 before chalk talk)

Intro: "We'll teach you a new vocabulary, new positions, new drills. You are learning something UNIQUE -- only a handful of teams in the country play this defense, and most offenses have never even HEARD of it, much less faced it."

[Diagram 6-5 goal line defense. Demonstrate simplicity of concept: First level (linemen) attacks their gaps, second level (linebackers/backs) mirrors receivers. Show how the back of the End Zone forms an End Line behind which the offense can't operate -- it cuts down on offensive options.]

[Now move 6-5 to 50 yard line. Erase one nose guard, replace him with DS at +28. Draw in End Line at +18. Explain that in theory the functions of the 2LD and 6-5 are identical.]

[Define each position. First Level (1L): Nose and Tackles responsible for interior (A and B) gaps. Ends crash through off-tackle (C) gaps.]

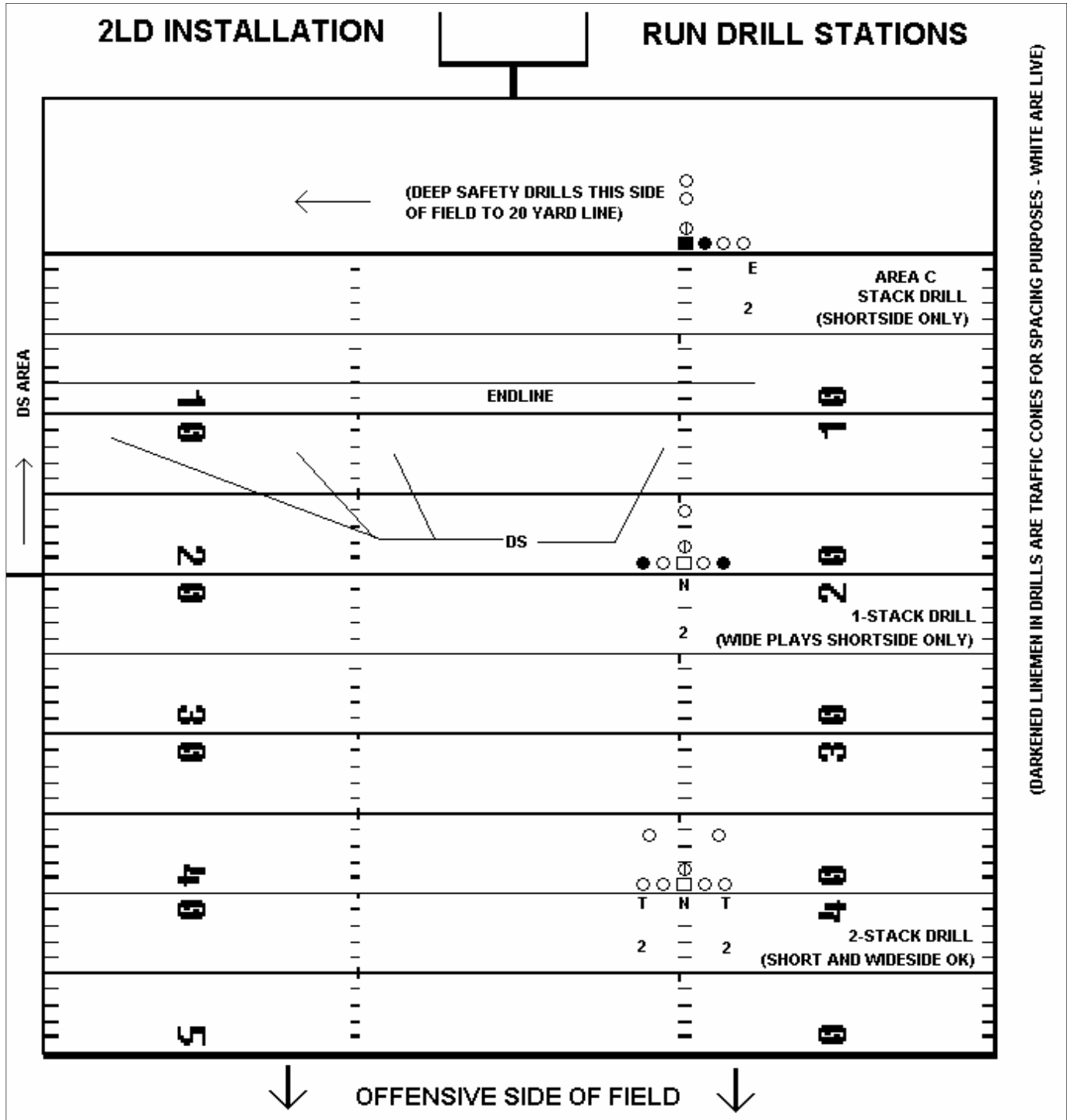
[Second Level (2L): Len and Ron always take #1 receivers to each side of formation. Mike always takes #3 receiver. Sam aligns on strongside (as defined by game plan -- pre-season, always on TE) #2 receiver; Will takes weakside #2. Note 2L defenders may be called on to cover wide-outs AND stack in the core behind 1L defender AND take on TE by themselves. They are LB/DB hybrids; there is room for all types of players in the 2L, but they had better be quick.]

[Deep Safety (DS): A new position, and one that requires an absolute LOVE of hitting -- we will choose our DS after we see who can deliver a ferocious hit, get up, shake it off, and do it over and over again.]

[Defining the Offense: Show concepts of Core, line gaps, Backfield area, Area C, Area B, Area A, and the numbering of Mobile personnel. (Refer to top diagram, page 6, and diagram on page 41.)]

[Two Key Concepts of 2LD: 1) Ten defenders ATTACK, one ENFORCES (1L attacks gaps, 2L attacks and mirrors Mobile personnel, DS enforces end line).

2) 2LD shuts down 5 offensive threats: Inside/outside running; and quick, sprint and dropback passing.]



PRACTICE #1 SCHEDULE:

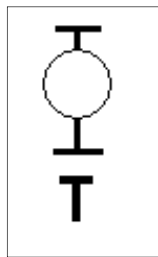
| 2-Level Defense Installation Practice #1 (Day 1 -- A.M.) | | | |
|--|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| Time | 1ST LEVEL | 2ND LEVEL | DEEP SAFETIES |
| 9:00 | N/T: Stance, Power Move | 2-point stance | Enforcement Drills I (2LD p. 262) |
| 9:05 | Key Drill: 1-on-1 lock* | Stack alignment | |
| 9:10 | E: Stance, alignment | Shiver/shed techniques | |
| 9:15 | Crash angle and technique | Scrape/cutback techniques | |
| 9:20 | N/T: 1-, 2-Stack Drills w/2L | Unit Stack Drills: | Read Drills I (2LD p. 265) |
| 9:25 | E: Crash Drill (2 pt. stance) | 1L+2L v. OL+back, lock | |
| 9:30 | (basic principles/run keys) | (basic principles/run keys) | Down-Out-Down Drill Beaten Outfielder Drill (Len/Ron rotate with C-stack drill) |
| 9:35 | N/S/M/W: 1-Stack Drill (2LD p. 162) | | |
| 9:40 | T/E/S/M/W: 2-Stack Drill | | |
| 9:45 | E/S/M/W/L/R: C-Stack Drill | | |
| 9:50 | (Len/Ron rotate with DS drills) | | |
| 9:55 | WATER | | |
| 10:00 | N/T/E: Stance (end 3 pt.) | Lollipop Drill: | Enforcement Drills II |
| 10:05 | Review Power Move | cuts 1, 2 & crack | |
| 10:10 | Intro Arm-Over rush move | (2LD p. 246) | Read Drills II |
| 10:15 | Intro Arm-Under rush move | Mirror/Max Drill (1-on-1): | |
| 10:20 | | funnel, steer | |
| 10:25 | | (coverage to +7 yds.) | |
| 10:30 | Key Drill: Intro pass key | Down-Out-Down Drill (2LD p. 248) | Beaten Out fielder Drill (S/M/W/L/R/DS rotate) |
| 10:35 | N/T: Alley Drill N/T/E: 1/2-Line Drill Progress lock to thud (N/T rotate) | Mirror Drill (2LD p. 250) | |
| 10:40 | | (Mirror Iso, Twin & Trips) | |
| 10:45 | | Max receivers for 7 yds - no ball | |
| 10:50 | | | |
| 10:55 | *1-on-1 Key Drill, Crash Drill, 2LD p. 150 | | |

KEEP IT SHORT, STUPID!

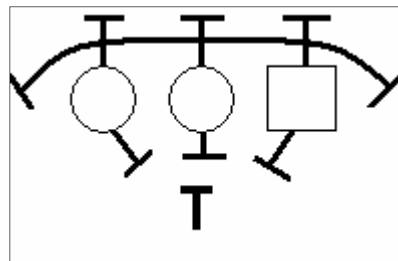
I believe in keeping the players' attention span engaged at all times by the use of short, intense learning sessions during installation (and for that matter, in any practice). I have found short multiples of five-minute segments during two-hour practices to be the best way to break down teaching time. There are very few things in football that require more than 20 minutes at a time to focus on; my normal maximum for teaching any one concept or technique is 15 minutes. See diagrams on pages 44 and 60 for layout of practice workstations on the one-half football field which is the minimum requirement for installing the 2LD. Drills (keyed to the practice schedules on this and succeeding pages) are described below. Ten new drills are covered at the first practice, so your schedule may slip slightly at that one practice -- but they are simple, powerful drills for teaching 2LD fundamentals, so take the time to teach them right the first time.

PRACTICE #1:

FIRST LEVEL: Whether Nose, Tackle or End, the primary instruction tool for the 1L defender is the 1-on-1 key drill, followed closely in importance by the 3-on-1 drill. The 1L defender lines up opposite an "offensive" lineman (who can be another 1L defender rotating through the drill station) in the 1-on-1 drill and reads his primary key -- the lineman's helmet, either firing across the LOS or retreating. Secondary keys are obtained during the 3-on-1 drill by reading the "key triangle" -- the offensive lineman the 1L defender lines up across from, as well as the offensive players immediately to each side. Thus, a fire-out (run) key can be further distinguished by direction -- straight ahead, inside, outside or pull. The 1L defender focuses on 2 things: his gap and the offensive keys. He must not be blocked out of his assigned gap (established before the drill starts, and changed frequently), and he must respond to his keys by throttling up to rush the pass, breaking down to attack run blocks, and/or tearing laterally to pursue the ball through the Core.

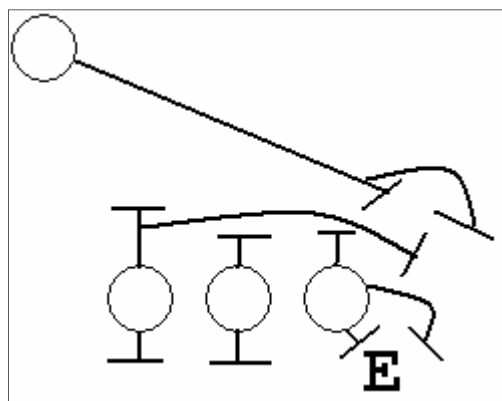


ONE-ON-ONE



THREE-ON-ONE

Defensive Ends use the identical 1-on-1 and 3-on-1 drills as the Tackles and Noses when aligned Tight (outside shoulder of OT/5 technique). When they are aligned Loose, however, Ends require a different drill, the Crash Drill.



CRASH DRILL

In this drill, the End will take the same keys from the offensive linemen in his key triangle as the other DL's do from their 3-on-1 drills (pp. 46, 47). The OL the

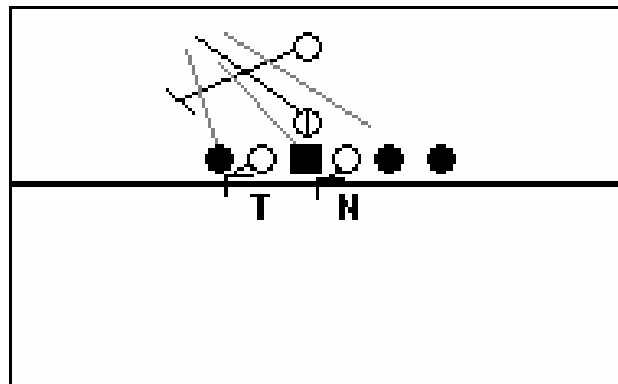
End is lined up closest to will provide the strongest key, of course (OT when aligned Loose or Tight, TE or tight slot when aligned Loose). After the initial 3-on-1 drills, a blocking back can be added to attempt to kick out or log the End. Finally, a running back can be added to the drill to run inside, off-tackle and outside. Regardless of the specific parameters of the drill, the End must:

- Crash under control;
- Read his key triangle to anticipate what play is coming; and
- Stay on his feet.

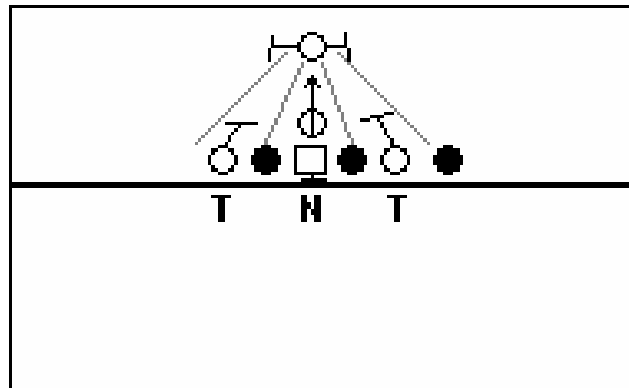
In run drills, the End must either Crash or Trail; when pass drills are added, he must also be prepared to Max a receiver, drop to a Cover zone, or defend his Shortside Square (pp. 21-24).

ALLEY/HALF-LINE DRILLS

The purpose of these drills is to integrate 1L defenders in pass rush situations. The Alley Drill can take several forms -- 2 on 2, 3 on 3, or 5 on 3 linemen operating live (but under control -- i.e., lock-up to thud). With a live quarterback and (optional) running back, the drill teaches 1L defenders to rush the passer from within their gaps, which turn into pass-rush alleys as they read pass by the offense.



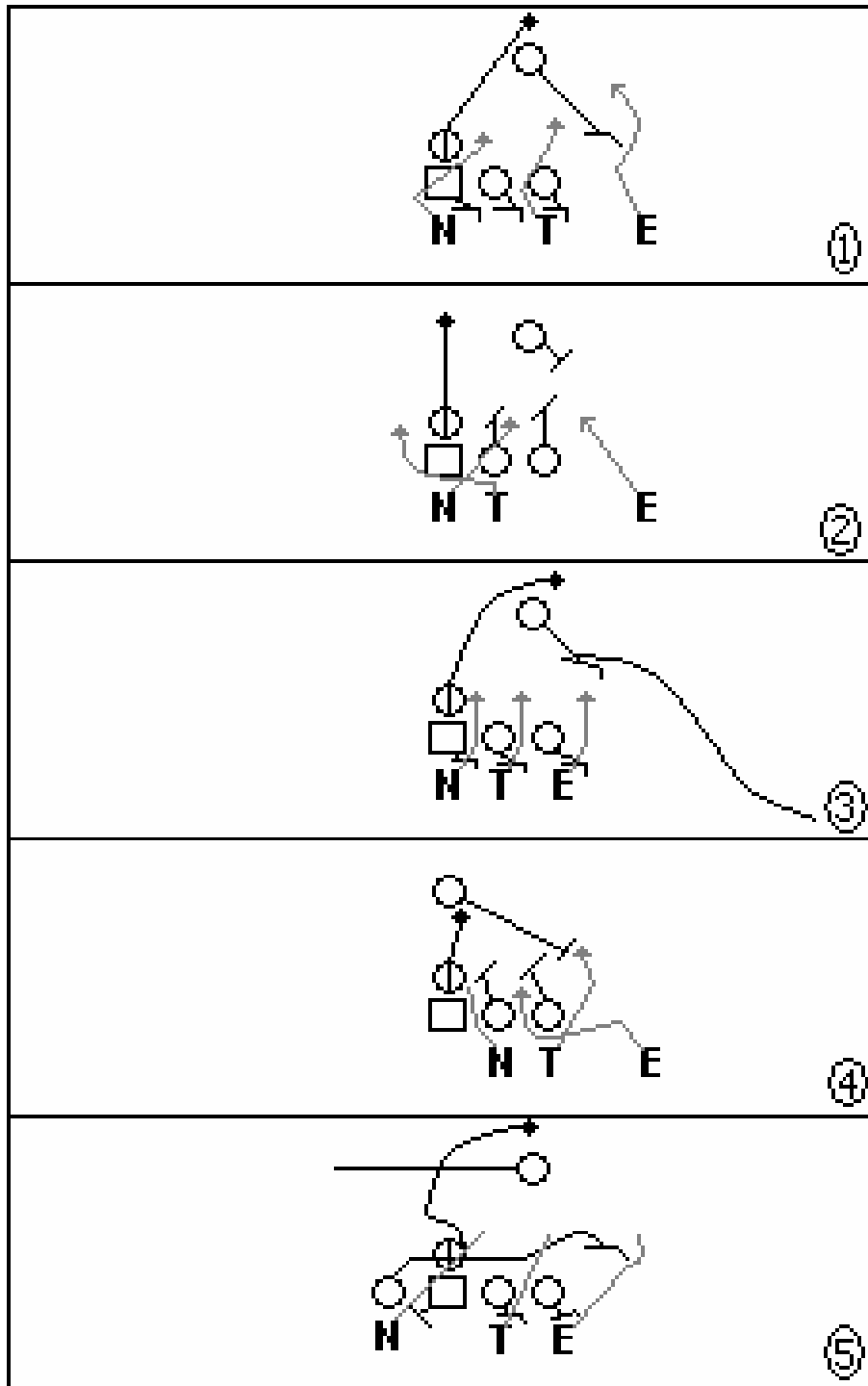
ALLEY DRILL (Even Front vs. Sprint-Out)



ALLEY DRILL (Odd Front vs. Drop-back)

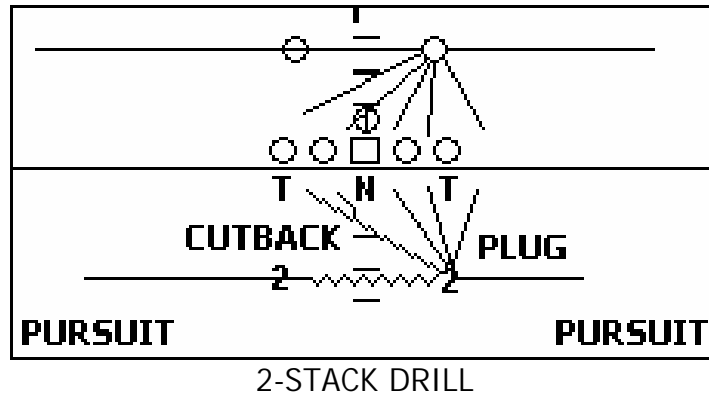
The gray lines in the above diagrams represent the pass-rush alleys that 1L defenders stay in as they attack the passer (dark offensive linemen represent traffic cones). This serves as protection against draw plays by the QB or running back, while allowing the defense to keep the pressure on the QB as he sets up to throw. Note its use against both drop-back and sprint-out quarterbacks. When running the drill, be sure to run all fronts against live counterparts -- 11 against tackles and center as shown, 33 against guards and center, etc., and even fronts against guards and/or tackles. The 5-on-3 format is especially useful for drilling the shifts between fronts, and 1L stunts at the snap. In both formats, offensive linemen should show three basic keys -- deep pass set, shallow set for quick passing, and fire-out run blocking. 1L defenders learn to attack their gaps and then pursue the ball.

The half-line drill (p. 49) is an extremely useful method to prepare 1L defenders for drop-back, sprint-out, quick, and play-action passing actions by offenses. 1L defenders practice shifts and stunts, based on the End's formation call. Offensive players line up in one of the three formation variations shown, while the 1L defenders have five different looks to switch between. This drill should

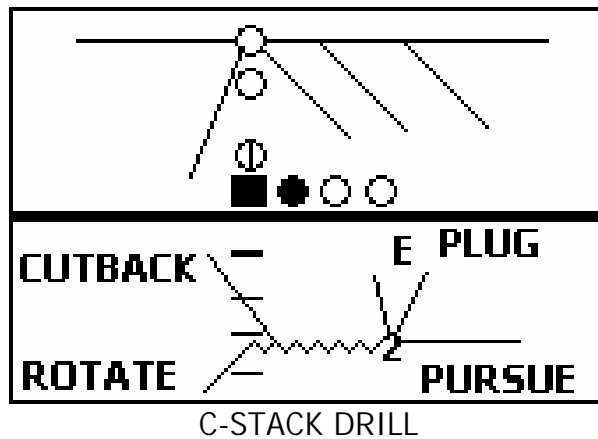


HALF-LINE DRILL - FIVE FORMATS

proceed from lock-up to thud, except the End, who can be cut blocked live at any time, and should anticipate this based on his keys. The diagrams illustrate 1&3) sprint-out action with cut-block on the End; 2) Drop-back action (with screen or draw); 4) Quick passing action; and 5) Waggle or bootleg action.



The 2-stack drill is most often run in tandem with another stack; usually another 2-stack, but we will also practice with a 1- and 2-stack combination, as well as a 2- and C-stack combo. In the diagram above, you can see that the responsibilities of the 2L defender are very similar to those in a 1-stack. The difference is the cutback responsibility, which we define for 2L defenders who mirror a back who crosses behind the center toward the far side of the offensive formation. In cutback, the 2L defender cautiously plays the ball inside-out – at least a yard behind the ball carrier until he clears the core -- and guards against the ball carrier cutting back against the grain.



A C-stack places a 2L defender behind a 1L End in Area C (see pass defense area designations, p. 6). From here, his responsibilities resemble those of 2L defenders, with two important differences: the further outside stacked 2L defenders are from the center, the more they must be aware of:

- 1) cutback runs; and
- 2) passes.

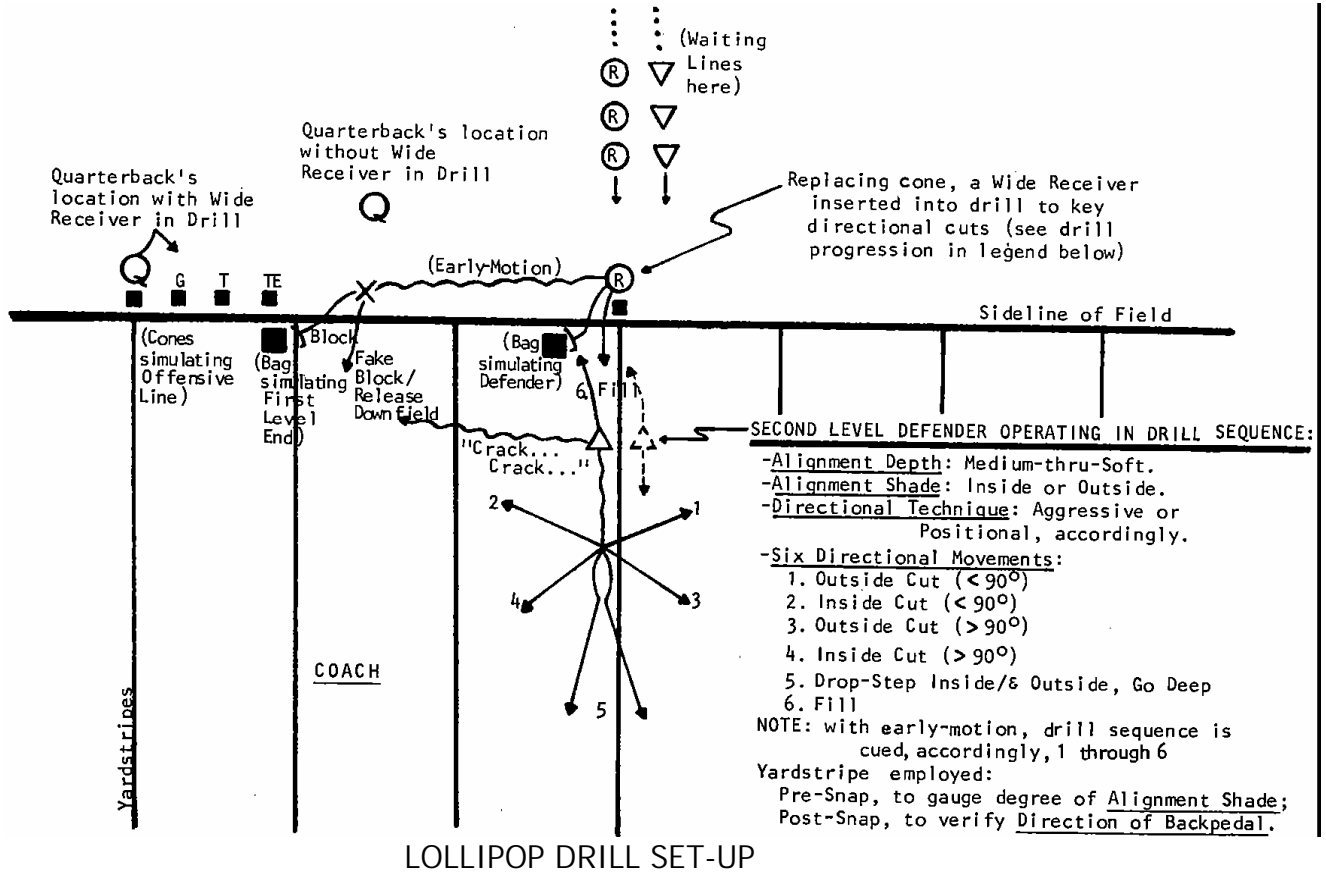
To that end, I should note that C-stacks are the only place you will find Len and/or Ron personnel stacked in the defensive core. By definition, they must be covering a TE. The additional responsibility they have is rotation, whereby 2L

personnel in C-stacks take a deep pursuit angle to cut off the ball downfield – it is a touchdown preventing technique as much as anything.

RUNNING STACK DRILLS/UNIT STACK DRILLS

To run 1-stack, 2-stack and/or C-stack drills, the appropriate 1L and 2L defenders should line up against either offensive teammates rotating through the drills, or against other defenders being used as offensive players for the purposes of the drill. If defenders are used, the ball should not be snapped, but simply held in the hands of the “quarterback” ready for handing off. The blacked-out offensive players in the drills diagrams represent cones placed where offensive linemen would be – this prevents needlessly wasting the time of linemen who are not essential to the drill, but maintains the kind of spacing defenders will see in game conditions. Note: Unit Stack Drills (p. 63, spreadsheet) are identical in format to the stack drills diagramed above, but put cones in place of 1L defenders -- they involve 2L defenders only against OL and backs.

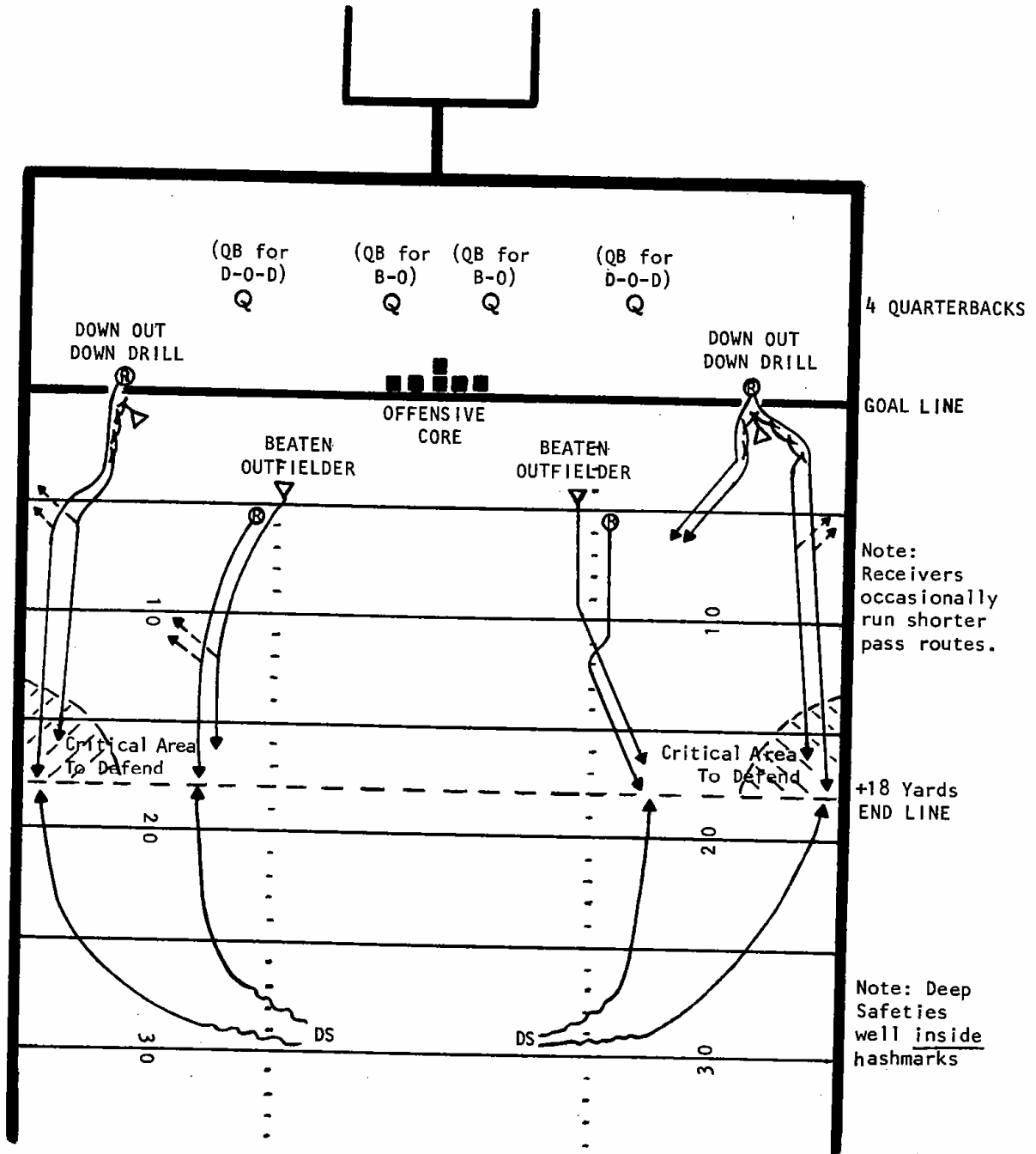
LOLLIPOP DRILL



This drill prepares 2L defenders to Max receivers by concentrating on 6 common pass routes. The drill should begin with a traffic cone to give the 2L defender his

location key; he works on his backpedal and turns his shoulders and breaks on the ball as a coach calls out "Right", "Left", or "Deep". The QB in the drill should start by lobbing the ball up in the air with lots of arc, then work on throwing a faster, more direct ball. Finally, the drill should proceed to live WR's taking the place of the cone and running the 6 pass routes shown in the drill. Motion should then be added, but with the receiver always starting his route from the original cone location. Only basic pass routes are run, with minimal faking by the receiver. (Note: Study the 6 pass cuts defined by the diagram on page 52. These should be introduced no more than two at a time during any one practice.) During the season, only the final form with live receivers will be run.

BEATEN-OUTFIELDER/DOWN-OUT-DOWN DRILLS



DEEP PASSING DRILLS FOR 2L/DS

In the Beaten Outfielder Drill (BOD), a receiver on a hash at the 5-yard line will run a Go, Post, or Flag route. The 2L defender starts behind the receiver and takes the correct pursuit angle to catch him. The QB will arc the ball over the defender to the receiver; when the DS sees the ball in the air, he calls "BALL! BALL!", at which point the 2L defender reads the receiver's eyes and hands.

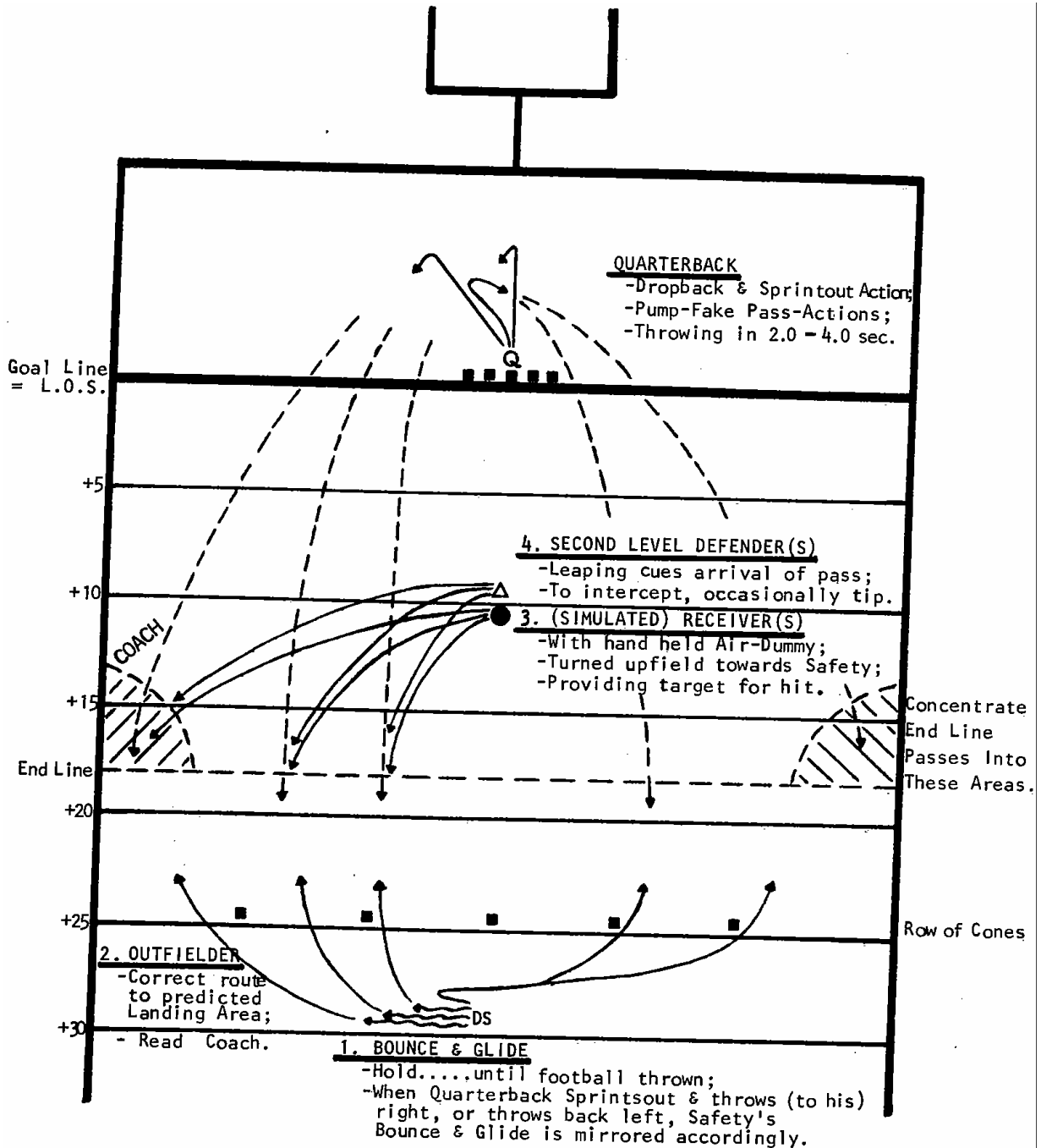
When the ball is imminent, the 2L defender will time his turn and leap into the air with his hands held high. This screens the receiver from the ball (which makes it imperative that the 2L defender turn and face the ball, to prevent pass interference calls) and allows the 2L defender to either tip the ball up and over the receiver into the hands of the DS who is closing fast, or else to intercept the ball if it is underthrown. The 2L defender must be aware that the receiver can sometimes break off his deep route to run a medium-depth route -- he must adjust and cover the new route.

The Down-Out-Down (DOD) drill is run with a receiver within 5 yards of the sideline on the inside of the goal line. A 2L defender aligns at a Hard depth, either inside or outside the receiver. He will either steer the receiver outside or funnel him inside (see p. 15). The receivers will usually run deep fade routes to a depth of about 18 yards (i.e., the DS's end line). However, other routes can and will be inserted into the drill with no warning to the 2L defender after all 2L defenders have practiced defending the Fade a few times. Also, receivers may illegally push off and even grab 2L defenders, but the defenders MUST play "clean" and avoid interference penalties. As with the BOD, 2L defenders in the DOD will turn and jump for the ball based on their visual keys and on the DS's call of "BALL! BALL!" when the ball reaches its highest point in the air. The 2L defender must concentrate on pinning the receiver against the sideline through his body position, since this is the area of the field where the DS must run the furthest to reach, and is thus the most vulnerable part of the Max defense against the pass.

As the diagram on page 54 illustrates, the BOD and DOD drills should be run on both sides of the field simultaneously, meaning 4 quarterbacks or coaches (or managers, etc.) who can throw the ball are needed. This will keep all 2L defenders and DS's busy during this drill period.

DEEP SAFETY:

ENFORCEMENT DRILLS



ENFORCEMENT DRILLS

These drills teach DS's how to judge the trajectory and landing points of footballs when they are thrown -- they are the equivalent of fly-ball practice for baseball

outfielders. The DS learns through repetition when and where he needs to be to intersect ball and receiver.

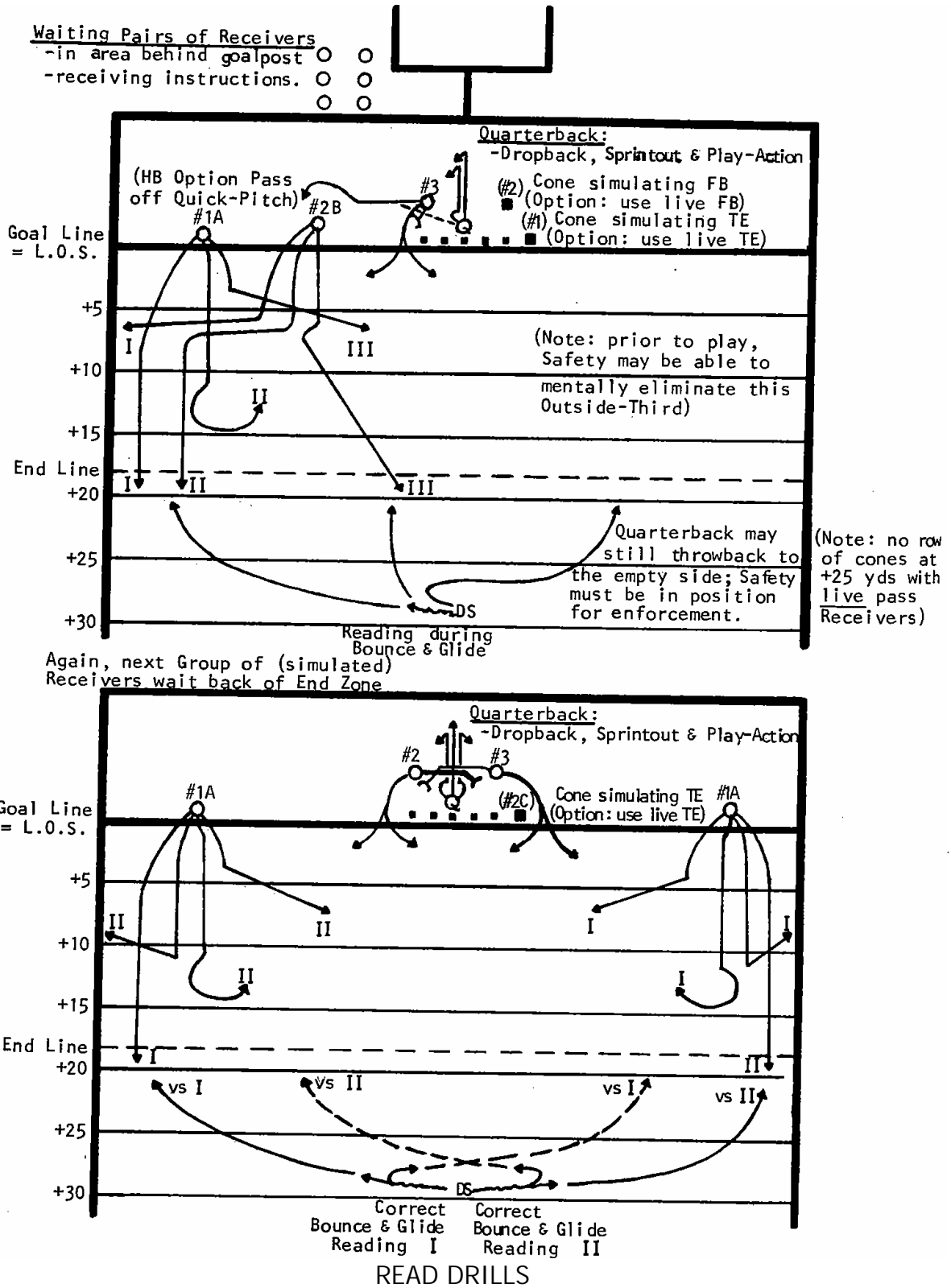
The first phase is the bounce and glide drill, where the DS learns to read a QB who is dropping back or sprinting out from behind the goal line, who is trying to look off the DS, who pump-fakes and then throws the ball. The DS must continue his low bounce and glide as he reads the QB, not breaking until the ball is thrown. When the ball is launched, the DS SPRINTS along the appropriate path (indicated by the traffic cones on the 25 yard line -- see diagram p. 56) and calls out "BALL! BALL!" when the ball reaches its highest point. Once he knows where the ball is heading, the DS looks to the coach who is standing to the side just before the end line, who holds up 1-3 fingers, which the DS must yell out as he closes on the end line. The majority of these reps should be in the Fade danger area at the sideline from +15-18 yards deep, since this is the hardest route for the DS to defend.

The next stage is to add a simulated receiver holding an air shield to protect himself when the DS delivers a 3/4- to full-speed hit. First, two simulated receivers stand holding air shields on the end line on either side of the two hashmarks (i.e., about 18 yards apart). The end-zone QB drops as usual, looks the DS off, etc., then throws in the general direction of one of the receivers. The receivers look back at the QB until the ball is thrown, then turn to face the DS, who starts his bounce and glide and then sprints to the ball. The receiver who is "catching" the ball holds his shield up to chest height as the ball arrives, both to cue the DS that the ball is arriving and to protect himself. Once this format is mastered, the drill can be expanded to include the receiver running with his air shield to simulate all possible pass routes the DS will face.

The next stage is to add a 2L defender to the drill to give the DS an additional cue for his peripheral vision -- the 2L defender can leap and tip the ball over the receiver, and must also be factored in when the DS decides to hit the receiver rather than intercept the ball -- whenever possible, the DS should hit through the shoulder of the receiver AWAY from the 2L defender.

The drill can also be run with a live receiver and 2L defender, with the DS either bear-hugging the receiver or two-hand touching him if he decides to "hit" him. Whatever the format, no one should ever be on the ground at the end of this drill.

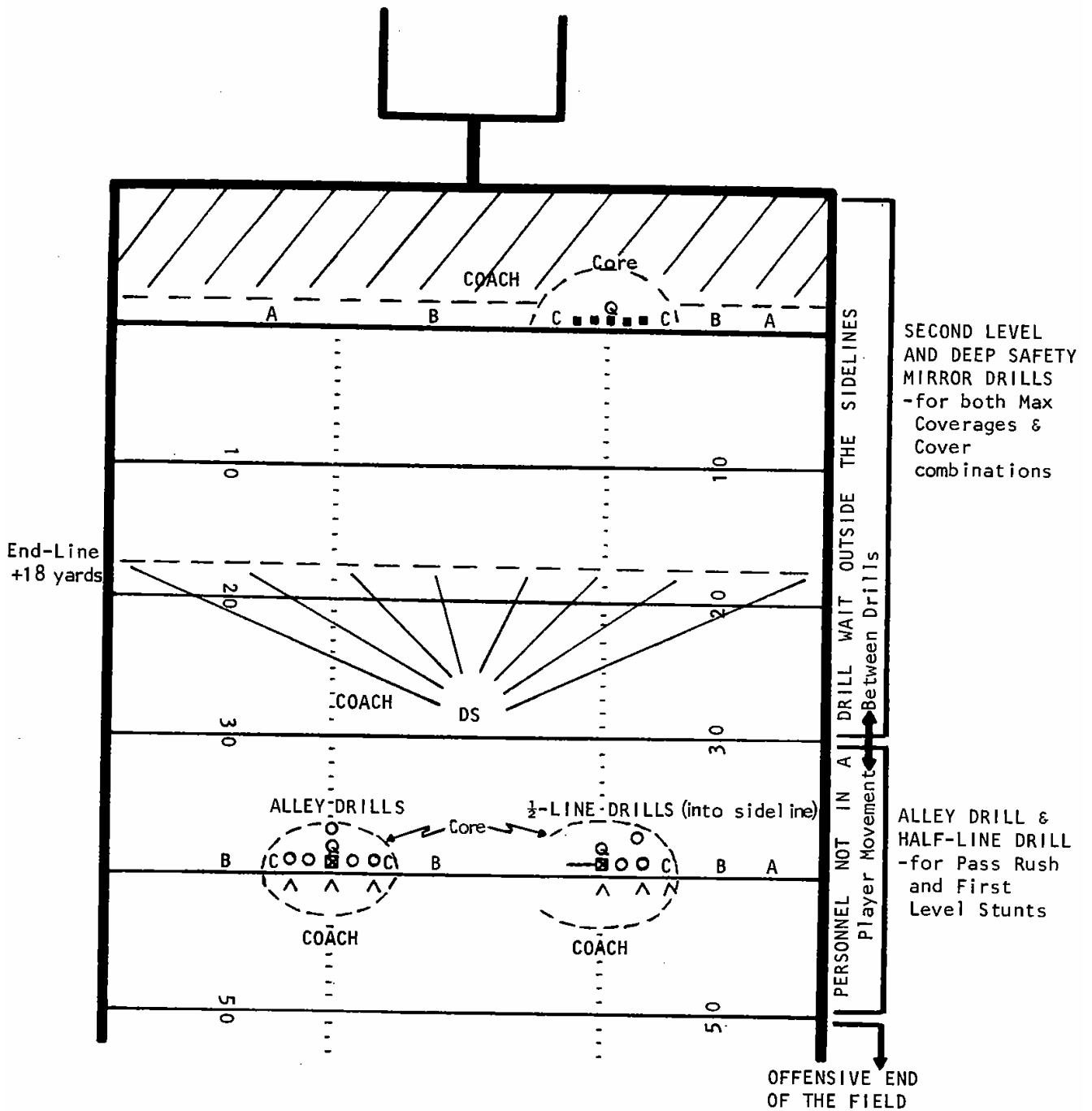
READ DRILLS



In the Read drills, the hitting portion of the Enforcement drills is always replaced with bear-hug or two-hand touch. The object is for the DS to cover more and more of the width of the field with his peripheral vision as he reads the QB and backfield action. Live receivers run progressively more complicated pass route packages, always involving one deep route. These start on one half of the field (p. 58, top), but then progress to the entire width of the field, forcing the DS to expand his peripheral read to eventually encompass all 53.33 yards of width of the football field (p. 58, bottom).

The first phase involves the DS reading the QB, bouncing and gliding, and breaking on the ball as it is thrown, then calling out the correct number of fingers from the nearby coach. This phase should be very brief, no more than one rep per DS. Then live receivers are added, running the basic pass route packages (i.e., Flood -- #1 Fade, #2 Out, #3 Flat; Curl -- #1 Curl, #2 Flat; Cross -- #1 Shallow Cross, #2 Post; etc.) These are only on one side of the field at a time, involve only basic pass routes without elaborate fakes, and only have one deep pass route. Finally the route packages are expanded to include 4 or 5 receivers across the entire width of the field, but still only running the basic route packages to cue DS pattern recognition. Others are added as the pre-season goes on -- Seam and Hook packages, and quick passing packages including Slant, Pick and Circle, as well as Choice routes to an isolated backside receiver.

The final pre-season phase turns into pass skeleton drills with a complete 2L in place, and using the actual pass route packages (i.e., Bunch, Kentucky Mesh, Go, Smash, etc.) that opponents will run during the season. In-season practices, in fact, will only use this final format.



The above diagram illustrates that the 1L performs its pass drills between the 30 and 50 yard lines, while 2L and DS drills take place from the end zone to the 30 yard line.

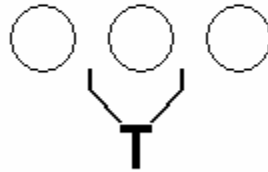
PRACTICE #2 SCHEDULE:

| 2-Level Defense Installation Practice #2 (Day 1 -- P.M.) | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Time | 1ST LEVEL | 2ND LEVEL | DEEP SAFETIES |
| 15:00 | Alignment review | Lollipop Drill: | Enforcement Drills III |
| 15:05 | Review Arm-Over, -Under | Review 1/2/crack | |
| 15:10 | Intro Quick Arm-Over | Intro cuts 3&4 | Read Drills III |
| 15:15 | Key Drill (1-on-1) | Max Drill: | |
| 15:20 | Review basic run, pass keys | Progress 7 yds to End-Line* | |
| 15:25 | Alley Drill (3-on-3, 5-on-3) | Down-Out- Down Drill | Beaten Out fielder Drill (Add Out to D-O-D; Fade & Post to Beaten Outfield) |
| 15:30 | From 11, intro Link/Rip shift | | |
| 15:35 | (2LD p. 200) | | |
| 15:40 | 1/2-Line Drill | Mirror Drill: | (Add I backs, Quad receivers, motion) |
| 15:45 | Intro shift from 5-Rip/2-Link | | |
| 15:50 | (2LD p. 202) | | |
| 15:55 | WATER | | |
| 16:00 | N/T/E: Stance & align | Review stance/stacks/shiver | Enforcement Drills III |
| 16:05 | N/T: Intro slant moves | | |
| 16:10 | E: Review Power Move | | |
| 16:15 | N/T: Key Drill (1-on-1) | Review scrape & cutback | Read Drills III |
| 16:20 | (review basic run key) | | |
| 16:25 | E: Review crash tight/loose | | |
| 16:30 | N/T: Key Drill (3-on-1) | Unit Stack Drills: 1-, 2- and Area C-Stacks (Cones for 1L) vs. QB/RB/OLx2 | Down-Out-Down Drill (rotate Len/Ron) |
| 16:35 | (Power Move only) | | |
| 16:40 | E: Crash Drill loose | | |
| 16:45 | N/T: Slant Key Drill | | Beaten Outfielder Drill (rotate L/R/S/M/W) |
| 16:50 | (3-on-1 lock) slant-in | | |
| 16:55 | E: Crash Drill tight | | |

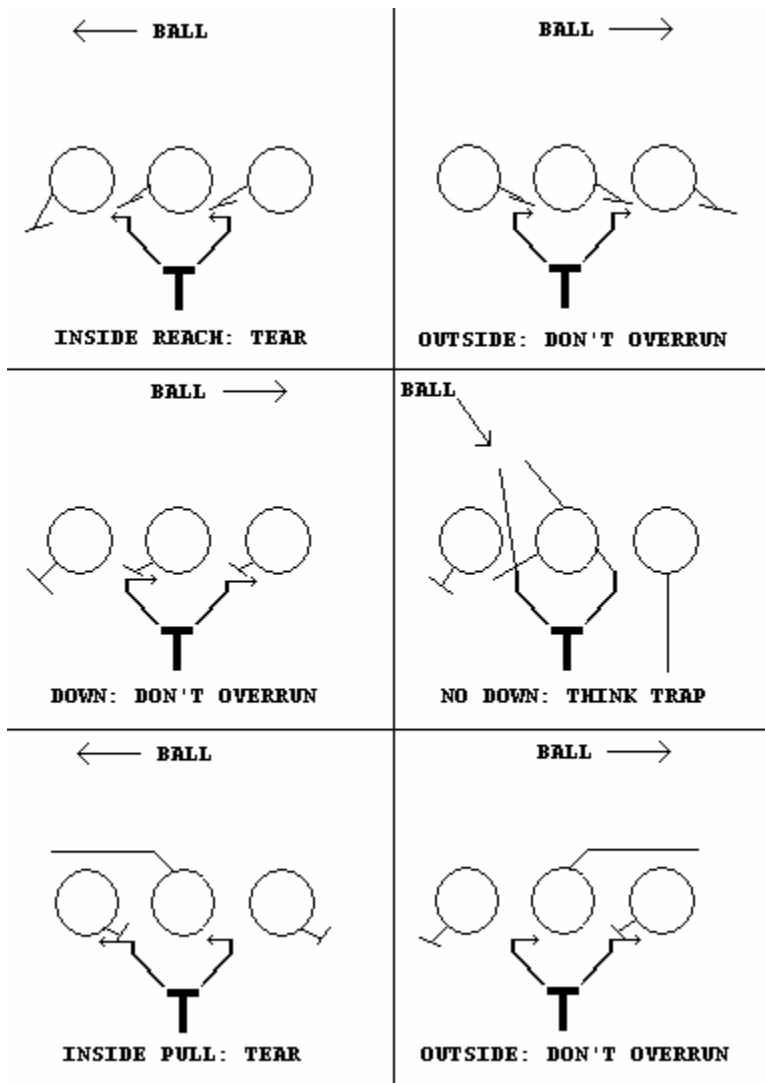
The second practice introduces three new drills -- the 1L Slant Key drill for Noses and Tackles, the 2L Unit Stack drills; and the 2L/DS Mirror drills, especially the I-back format. In the Slant Key drills, (p. 62) both Nose and Tackles practice against 3 OL's (or fellow 1L defenders playing OL's and read the keys given by the OL as they slant one way or the other. Each 1L defender should practice all six reads shown while slanting both in and out, meaning each 1L defender should do a minimum of 12 reps of this drill -- preferably more early on in the pre-season. Later on, the reps can be cut down.

In the Unit Stack drills (p. 63), a 2L defender faces two OL's and a back (a QB can be added after several reps) with cones to show the 1L and as space-holders for absent OL's. The 2L must read through the live OL's to the backfielder he is mirroring for his basic keys. He should take on run blocks only in this practice. (Later, he will key pass-blocks to practice his Cover pass drops, Max mirroring, and/or draw and screen reads.)

PRACTICE #2:

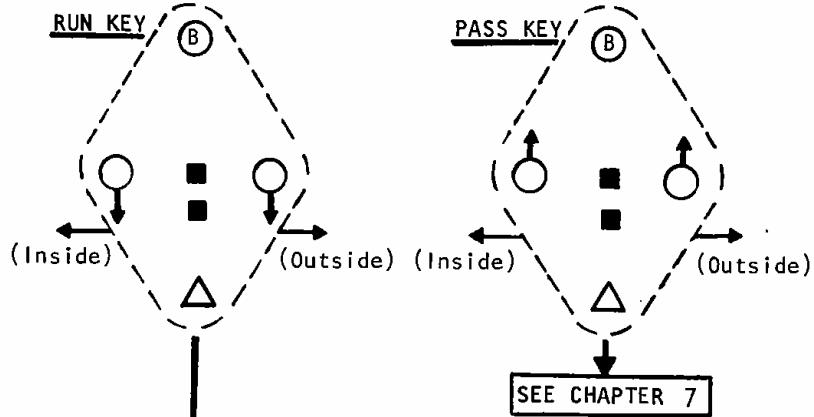


3-ON-1 SLANT KEY



N/T SLANT KEY READS

BASIC UNIT FORMAT



BASIC UNIT DRILL: RUN

SECONDARY KEYS
 OFFENSIVE LINE FIRES
 ACROSS THE LINE OF
 SCRIMMAGE, AND...

BACK DIVES

= 'FILL'
 IMMEDIATELY

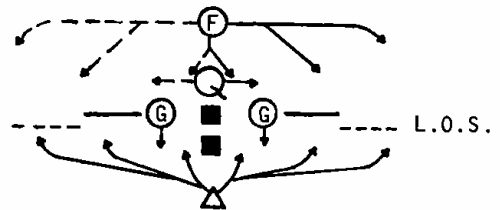
BACK MOVES
 LATERALLY:

TO THE INSIDE
 = CUTBACK
 CAUTIOUSLY

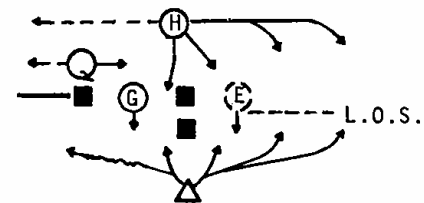
TO THE OUTSIDE
 = SCRAPE
 IMMEDIATELY

APPLICATION TO INDIVIDUAL STACK DRILLS

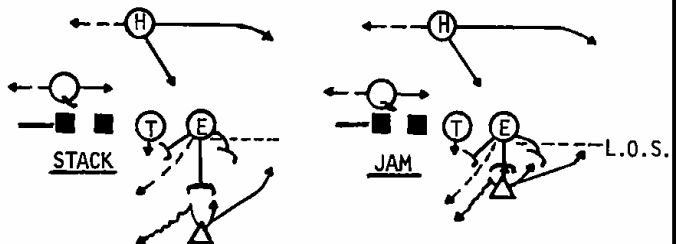
1-STACK



2-STACK



AREA C DRILLS

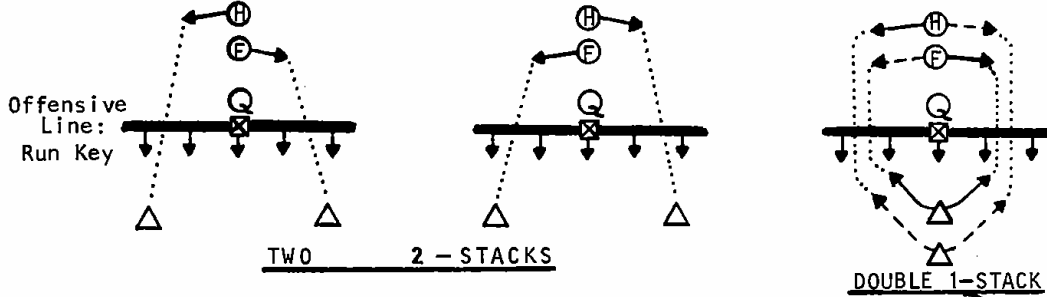


UNIT STACK DRILLS

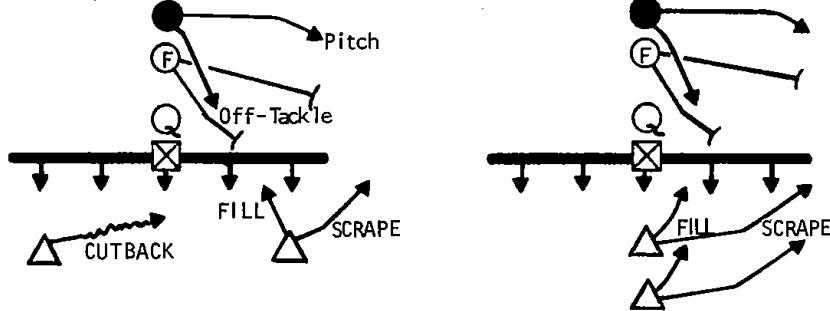
The I-back drill (p. 64) is introduced early because this formation is so common, and to give 2L defenders extra practice against its power, option and misdirection variations.

APPLICATION OF (REGULAR) STACK TECHNIQUES

AT THE SNAP, I-BACKS SPLIT TO THE HALFBACK POSITIONS:

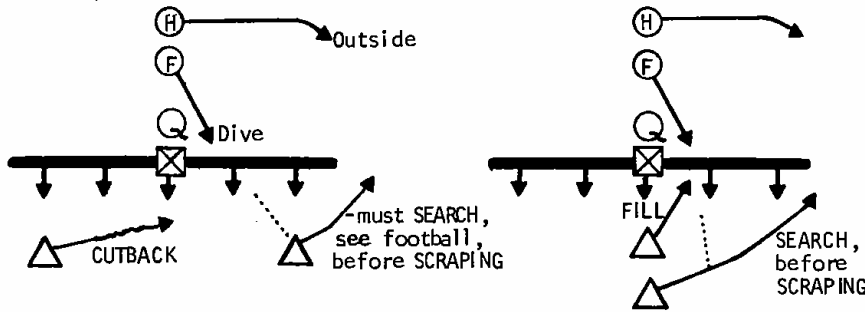


AT THE SNAP, I-BACKS MOVE IN TANDEM, FULLBACK BLOCKING FOR HALFBACK:



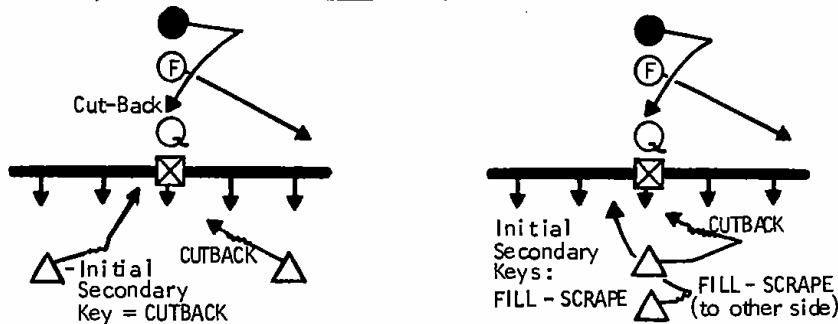
MODIFICATION OF (REGULAR) STACK TECHNIQUES

AT THE SNAP, I-BACKS MOVE TO SAME SIDE OF THE OFFENSE, THEN SPLIT:



MIRROR
FORMAT
FOR I-BACKS
MOVING
TO THE LEFT
SIDE OF THE
OFFENSIVE
FORMATION

AT THE SNAP, I-BACK MOVE TO SAME SIDE, THEN HALFBACK CUTS BACK:



I-BACK MIRROR DRILLS

Note: This drill will only be run with two 2-Stacks (left side of diagram) -- the double 1-Stack may be used by special game-plan during the season. Note the progression from easy to hard reads for the 2L defenders reading the I-backs.

PRACTICE #3 SCHEDULE:

| 2-Level Defense Installation Practice #3 (Day 2 -- A.M.) | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| Time | 1ST LEVEL | 2ND LEVEL | DEEP SAFETIES |
| 9:00 | Basic technique; N/T eagle | Stack Drills: | Enforcement Drills IV |
| 9:05 | N/T: Key Drill (3-on-1) | 1-Stack: lock to thud | |
| 9:10 | (Add new run keys) | S/M/W | |
| 9:15 | E: Crash Drill | 2-Stack: intro split backs | Read Drills IV Intro Seam, crossing routes |
| 9:20 | N/T: Slant Key Drill (3/3) | S/M/W | |
| 9:25 | (Add new run keys) | C-Stack: intro I-backs, jam | |
| 9:30 | E: Crash w/ I backs | S/M/W/L/R | |
| 9:35 | Unit Stack Drills | | Intro Cover, Cover/2 Deep Intro Max/Double, variations (2 Deep, etc.) (Rotate Len/Ron) |
| 9:40 | 1-Stack: N/M/S/W | 2-Stack: T(O)/E(T)/M/S/W* | |
| 9:45 | C-Stack: E(Loose)/S/M/W/L/R | (L in left C-stack; R in right) | |
| 9:50 | (Rotate Len/Ron to DS coverage reviews) | | |
| 9:55 | WATER | | |
| 10:00 | N/T/E: Review | Lollipop Drill: | Enforcement Drills V |
| 10:05 | alignment, pass rush tech. | Review 1-4, crack; intro 5 | |
| 10:10 | | | |
| 10:15 | N/T: Key Drill (1-on-1) | Max Drill: | Read Drills V Review; add Flood |
| 10:20 | E: Intro pass coverage | Review funnel/steer | |
| 10:25 | (Max; Cushion; Short Flat) | Intro Max Soft/under zones | |
| 10:30 | Alley Drill: | Down-Out-Down Drill; Beaten Outfielder Drill | |
| 10:35 | 3-on-3 in 11; 5-on-3 shifts | Mirror Drill: I backs, motion to Trips; max to +7 | |
| 10:40 | (lock to thud) | Drop-Off Drill Intro: Left E's, then Right; only 1 DS | |
| 10:45 | 1/2-line Drill: | Start vs. static O; progress to motion; receivers run +5-7 | |
| 10:50 | Use all alignment calls | then stop, defenders continue to zones. | |
| 10:55 | (lock to thud) | | |

* Tackle (Open), End (Tight)

Chalk talk #2:

- 1) Terms: Offensive numbers/areas, formations, wideside/shortside.
- 2) Mirroring math -- the mental process of identifying any offensive formation.
- 3) The 13 1L alignments by rule; Eagle alignment (7-foot rule).
- 4) Max - allow no short or deep passes; Cover - no medium or deep. Mix them up.
- 5) Absolute concealment from offense; pre-snap 1L shifting.
- 6) 1L stunts; Max/Double pass coverage (introduce 2-Deep concept - one Tackle out).

(This chalk talk should take place the night before Practice #3.)

PRACTICE #4 SCHEDULE:

| 2-Level Defense Installation Practice #4 (Day 2 -- P.M.) | | | |
|---|--|--|---------------------------|
| Time | 1ST LEVEL | 2ND LEVEL | DEEP SAFETIES |
| 15:00 | N/T: Live pass rush 1/1 | Lollipop Drill: | Enforcement Drills VI |
| 15:05 | Intro Cone Signal Drill: | Review cuts 1-5, crack | |
| 15:10 | Shift to Slant | Max Drill: | Read Drills VI |
| 15:15 | E: Max C, Short Flat/Hook | Funnel/steer/max double | Review; intro Curl |
| 15:20 | Crash Drill: Intro TET move | Down-Out-Down Drill; Beaten Outfielder Drill | |
| 15:25 | N/T: Alley Drill -- | | |
| 15:30 | Progress 3-on-3 to 5/3 | Mirror Drill: motion to new formation; I backs | |
| 15:35 | intro 2-, 4-, TNT | Cover: Review; note 2B Short exception to rule*; add | |
| 15:40 | N/T/E: 1/2-Line Drill -- | motion, esp. to 2B Short; Intro Max/Double 1A Short; | |
| 15:45 | Practice pre-snap shifts | Max/Double 1A Short&Wide/2 Deep; Max/Double 1A | |
| 15:50 | Intro TET | Wideside/2 Deep; review differences in End Line for each | |
| 15:55 | WATER | | |
| 16:00 | N/T: Key Drills/Slant Key | Review Stack techniques: | Enforcement Drills VII |
| 16:05 | 3/1, review slant, eagle | Align, shiver, scrape/cutback | |
| 16:10 | E: Crash Drill - loose, tight | | Read Drills VII |
| 16:15 | N/T/E: Cone Signal Drill | Unit Stack Drills: Combine | Review all envelopes |
| 16:20 | Slant from 2-/4-; shift/slant | 2 2-Stacks, 2-Stack and | Review Cover/Max: 1 and 2 |
| 16:25 | Review TNT/TET | Area C-Stack | DS; rotate Len/Ron |
| 16:30 | Integrated Stack Drills: 1, 2 and C-Stacks | | Intro Max/Double Wide |
| 16:35 | (both Jam and Stack); Lock-up to thud | | Receiver/2 Deep; |
| 16:40 | | | Cover-A |
| 16:45 | Combined/Integrated Stack Drills: | | (Rotate Sam/Will) |
| 16:50 | 2 2-Stacks (1L 11); 2- and C- Stacks; 1-&2- + C-Stacks | | |
| 16:55 | (Script TNT/TET); C-Stack add 1 DS (sweep/ HB option) | | |

PRACTICE #5 SCHEDULE:

| 2-Level Defense Installation Practice #5 (Day 3 -- A.M.) | | | |
|--|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Time | 1ST LEVEL | 2ND LEVEL | DEEP SAFETIES |
| 9:00 | N/T: Key/Slant Key Drills* | Stack Drills: (lock to thud) | Enforcement Drills VIII |
| 9:05 | E: Crash Drill - review | 2-Stack: Crosskey vs. split | |
| 9:10 | N/T: Live 5/3 with OLine | C-Stack: review jam; | Read Drills VIII |
| 9:15 | E: Crash Drill - power run | intro Cushion; double | review play-action crosses; |
| 9:20 | at End | coverage technique | Curl - out&up by 2B |
| 9:25 | N/T: Cone Signal (slant/TNT) | | |
| 9:30 | E: Crash Drill - 1 backs | Combined Stacks: | Review: Max, Max 2 Deep; |
| 9:35 | flow away -- trailer tech. | 2 2-Stacks cross key | Max Double, /2 Deep; |
| 9:40 | N/T/E: Cone Signal | vs. split backs; 1-/2- + | Max/Tight Cushion; |
| 9:45 | Slant/TNT/TET; then | C Stacks (jam and stack) | Max/Double Wide/2 Deep |
| 9:50 | remove 1 T (2 Deep) | | (rotate S/M/W) |
| 9:55 | WATER | | |
| 10:00 | Integrated Stacks: Install Cushion, Max/Tight Cushion in C | | |
| 10:05 | | | Review: Cover, /2 Deep; |
| 10:10 | | | Cover-A; |
| 10:15 | Combined/Integrated: 2 2-Stacks - script cross-key in 11 | | Intro Cover-A/2 Deep |
| 10:20 | 1-&2-Stack + C: script Cushion on pass; limit TET; add | | |
| 10:25 | 1 DS, script sweep/pitch/option w/ HB option pass | | (rotate Len/Ron) |
| 10:30 | Scripted Defensive Scrimmage: | | |
| 10:35 | 1) Only Max coverage, 1 DS; limited dropback passing (emphasis on Run D) | | |
| 10:40 | 2) No stunting; but script appropriate alignments against offensive plays | | |
| 10:45 | 3) I formation - off-tackle/sweep only; backs must move together; may split to pass block | | |
| 10:50 | 4) Every play is 2nd & Long (8-10); ball is at mid-field | | |
| 10:55 | 5) Run half of scrimmage from each hashmark | | |

*3-on-1; stress secondary run responsibilities

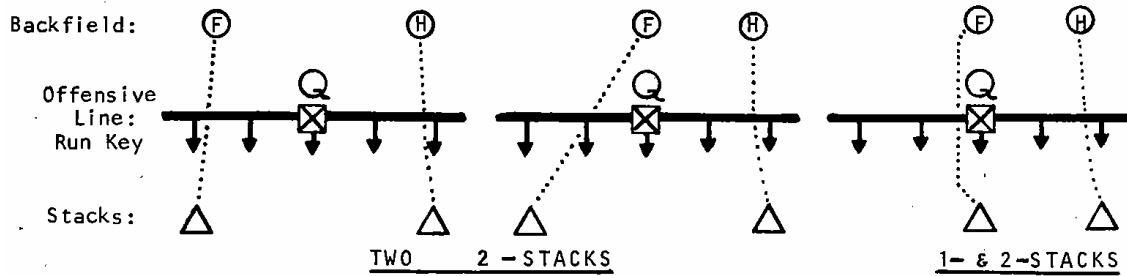
Chalk talk #3:

- 1) Calling defensive signals.
- 2) 1L alignments in 2-Deep; 2L stunt "Cushion"; Max/Tight Cushion; Cover-A.
- 3) 2L stunts "Switch" and "Dog".
- 4) Review Max and Cover variations, 2-Deep.

(Again, this chalk talk is given the night before this practice.)

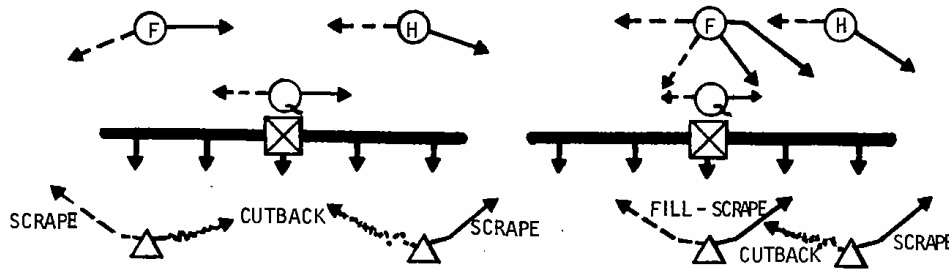
PRACTICE #5

CROSS-KEY FORMATS

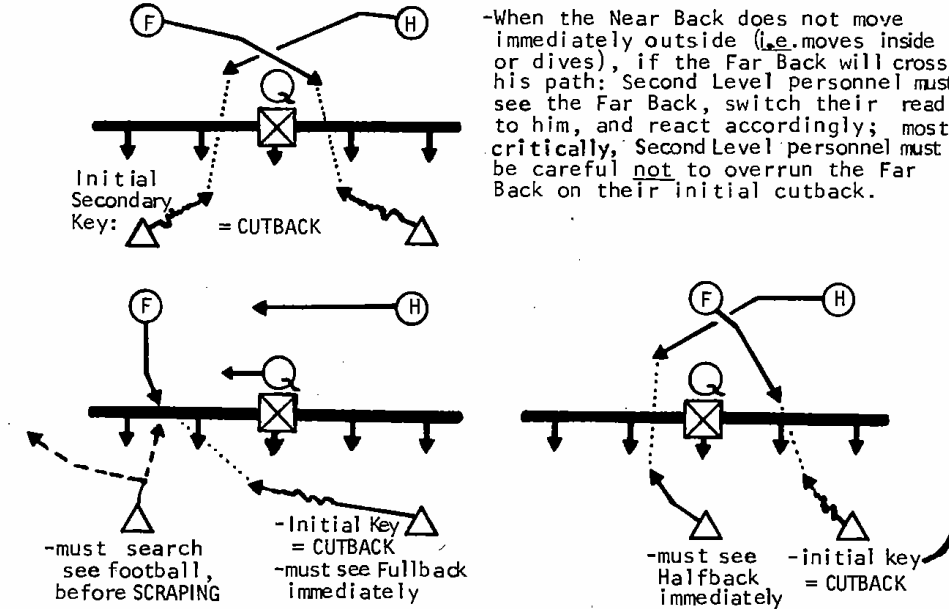


DRILLS

AT THE SNAP, BACKFIELDERS MOVE IN SAME DIRECTION: NO CHANGE IN TECHNIQUES



AT THE SNAP, BACKFIELDERS CROSS: MODIFICATION OF (REGULAR) STACK TECHNIQUES



MIRROR
FORMAT
FOR THE
HALFBACK
POSITIONED
TO THE LEFT
SIDE OF THE
OFFENSIVE
FORMATION

CROSS-KEY DRILLS -- RUN FORMAT

Practice 5 brings the last major drill to be introduced -- the run-format cross-key drill. Even though 2L defenders have been practicing against I-backs cutting back since Practice #2, they now work against Split and Pro backfields.

PRACTICE #6 SCHEDULE:

| 2-Level Defense Installation Practice #6 (Day 3 -- P.M.) | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| Time | 1ST LEVEL | 2ND LEVEL | DEEP SAFETIES |
| 15:00 | N/T: Key Drill (1-on-1) | Lollipop Drill: | Enforcement Drills IX |
| 15:05 | Review basic tech, rush tech | Review cuts 1-5, crack | |
| 15:10 | Intro screen/draw keys | Max Drill: | Read Drills IX Review Seam/Curl/Flood Intro variations |
| 15:15 | E: Crash Drill: review tight, loose, Max, Cover, Cushion* | Funnel, steer, double | |
| 15:20 | | Mirror Drill: Max | |
| 15:25 | N/T/E: | Motion, Trips, Twinsx2 | |
| 15:30 | Live pass rush w/ O-Line | Intro Pick patterns -- | |
| 15:35 | 1/1, 3/3, 5/3, 5/5 | FIGHT THROUGH picks | |
| 15:40 | Practice pre-snap shifts, | Mirror Drill: Cover | With 2L in drills |
| 15:45 | slant, TNT, TET | Drop tech.; intro draw | |
| 15:50 | Coach/mgr as drop QB | keys; Cover, -A, motion Trips | |
| 15:55 | WATER | | |
| 16:00 | Alley Drill (5/3) | 2L/DS/Shortside E -- Cover Integration | |
| 16:05 | Live QB/HB, script draws, | Cover, Cover/2 Deep, Cover-A, Cover-A/2 Deep; start | |
| 16:10 | slant, TNT, use shift | with static offensive formations & no ball; add motion to | |
| 16:15 | 1/2-Line Drill | Trips and 2 Twins, then add footballs | |
| 16:20 | Live QB, HB blocks; sprint, | | |
| 16:25 | dash, TET/TNT w/ shift | | |
| 16:30 | Scripted Defensive Scrimmage: | | |
| 16:35 | 1) Max, /Double, Cover, Cover-A, mostly 1 DS; limited running (emphasis on Pass D) | | |
| 16:40 | 2) Script some slant, TNT & TET, Cushion; on offense, some screens/draws | | |
| 16:45 | 3) I formation - off-tackle/sweep only; backs must move together; may split to pass block | | |
| 16:50 | 4) Script Max vs. 3-step; Cover-A verify Trips or revert to Cover; /2 Deep vs. deep Seam | | |
| 16:55 | 5) Every play 2nd & 8-10 from 50; run half of scrimmage from each hashmark | | |

*Rotate S/M/W/L/R to Crash Drill to practice Cushion, Max/Tight Cushion; Shortside
Ends practice Shortside Square tech. For Cover-A

PRACTICE #7 SCHEDULE:

| 2-Level Defense Installation Practice #7 (Day 4 -- A.M.) | | | | |
|--|--|------------------------------|---|---|
| Time | 1ST LEVEL | 2ND LEVEL | DEEP SAFETIES | |
| 9:00 | N/T: Key Drill/Slant Key (3/1) | Stack Drills: | Enforcement Drills X | |
| 9:05 | Review techs, stress | 1-: Intro Dog; find 6th gap | Read Drills X | |
| 9:10 | "tear" (second. run respons.) | 2-: Cross-key Split, Intro I | | |
| 9:15 | N/T: Live 5/3 with OLine | C-: Review jam/stack | review; stress End-Line | |
| 9:20 | run & pass blocking | Combine Stacks: | enforcement vs. deep routes | |
| 9:25 | E: (From 0900) Crash | | 1-: 2 2L, stack vs. I | Down-out-Down Drill: (Rotate 2L personnel) |
| 9:30 | Drill - review, Intro Dog* | | 2x2-: Cross-key I backs | |
| 9:35 | N/T/E: Cone Signal Drill | | 1-/-&C-: Intro Switch, cancel Switch (i.e., vs. Ace) | Review Max: |
| 9:40 | shifts, post-snap moves; | | /Double, 1 and 2 DS | |
| 9:45 | Intro Dog - rotate S/M/W | | (Rotate L/R/S/W) | |
| 9:50 | | | | |
| 9:55 | WATER | | | |
| 10:00 | Integrated Combined Stack Drills: lock/thud | | Review Cover: | |
| 10:05 | 1 Stack: 2 2L defenders "stack" vs. I backs | | /2 Deep; -A; -A/2 Deep | |
| 10:10 | 2x2-Stack: Cross-key I backs; 11 only; limit stunting | | For Cover-A, 50/50 | |
| 10:15 | 1-/-&C-Stacks: Script Cushion, Switch: limited TET; script | | verify/revert to Cover | |
| 10:20 | Dog vs. dropback; rotate DS for sweep/pitch/option w/ HB option pass | | (i.e., 2 Twins vs. Trips) (rotate Len/Ron) | |
| 10:25 | | | | |
| 10:30 | Scripted Defensive Scrimmage: Mainly run, intersperse some dropback | | | |
| 10:35 | 1) Ball at 50; rotate hashes; plays in following sequence: 3rd&9, 7, 5, 3; repeat seq. | | | |
| 10:40 | 2) Max, Max/2 Deep, Cover-A, Cover-A/2 Deep; non-verify -A half the time vs. passes | | | |
| 10:45 | 3) I Backs -- no limits (but don't intro new plays in scrimmage). | | | |
| 10:50 | 4) Scoring: Defense wins 1 pt when it prevents 1st down; offense 1 pt. per 1st down | | | |
| 10:55 | | | | |

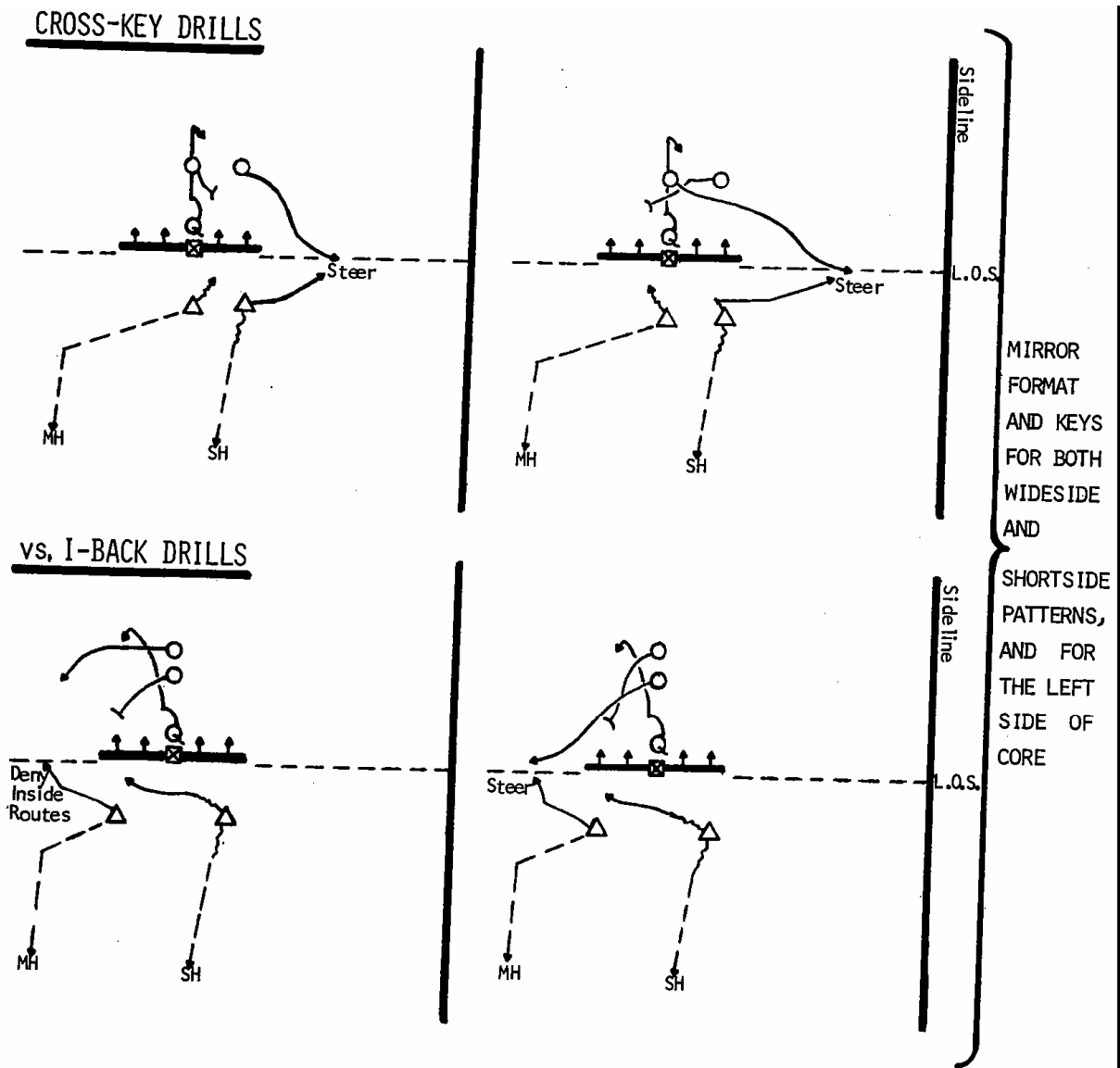
* Primary crash, secondary trailer responsibilities; in Dog, Max near back

Chalk talk #4:

- 1) Primary run responsibilities (1L gaps; 2L mirrors).
- 2) Secondary run responsibilities and pursuit.
- 3) Review stunts: 1L Slant/Twists; 2L Cushion, Switch and Dog.
- 4) Pass rush mechanisms: 5-man rush; outside rush & overload principles (2LD p. 120).
- 5) Pass coverage mechanisms: Max, /Double, /Tight Cushion, Cover, -A; also in 2-Deep.
- 6) Formation reading/pattern recognition/reading the QB.

(Chalk talk for before this practice.)

PRACTICE #7



I-BACKS CROSS-KEY - PASS KEYS

(See also I-back diagram p. 64, bottom and cross-key drill, p. 68). 2L defenders must practice against backs splitting and/or crossing on counter plays and on pass plays. This drill teaches 2L defenders to drop to their Cover assignments while reading various backfield actions -- it prepares them for play-action pass drops.

PRACTICE #8 SCHEDULE:

| 2-Level Defense Installation Practice #8 (Day 4 -- P.M.) | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| Time | 1ST LEVEL | 2ND LEVEL | DEEP SAFETIES |
| 15:00 | N/T: Key Drill (1/1) | Lollipop Drill: | Enforcement Drills XI |
| 15:05 | Review draw/screen; T's | Review cuts 1-5, crack | |
| 15:10 | contain dropback; vs. sprint | Max Drill: | Read Drills XI review; stress End-Line enforcement vs. deep routes |
| 15:15 | frontside "tears" | Funnel, steer, double | |
| 15:20 | E: Crash Drill - adjust | Mirror Drill: Max | |
| 15:25 | crash angle v. sprint; vs. | Review Pick, Intro Circle; | |
| 15:30 | drop, review Cushions, Dog, | quick iso routes 1A | |
| 15:35 | drops-S/S Flat/Hook; S/S Sq. | Mirror Drill: Cover | |
| 15:40 | N/T/E: Live 1-on-1 pass rush | zone drops; read QB; 2L | With 2L in |
| 15:45 | w/ O-Line | rotate through core; L/R | Mirror Drill |
| 15:50 | | rotate Flat to Deep 1/3 | |
| 15:55 | WATER | | |
| 16:00 | Alley Drill: vs. dropback, | 2L/DS/Shortside E -- Cover Integration | |
| 16:05 | script slant/TNT, Dog (T | Review Maxes; review Cover-A w/ motion (verify/revert) | |
| 16:10 | contain); sprint/screen - tear | Introduce Curl route package, QB sprint short. | |
| 16:15 | 1/2-Line Drill: Covers/Dog | E's rotate to practice Shortside Square drop & techniques | |
| 16:20 | (T contain); shift 2-/4- Dog; | (i.e. max FB/help shallow cross/double 1A short) | |
| 16:25 | sprint S/side, E cover | | |
| 16:30 | Scripted Defensive Scrimmage: Mix run, pass 50/50 (by 3rd down distance) | | |
| 16:35 | 1) Ball at 50; rotate hashes; plays in following order: 3rd&9, 7, 5, 3; repeat sequence | | |
| 16:40 | 2) Max, Max/2 Deep, Cover-A, Cover-A/2 Deep; non-verify -A half the time vs. passes | | |
| 16:45 | 3) Offense -- no new plays; can use anything in basic run/pass game | | |
| 16:50 | 4) Scoring: Defense wins 1 pt when it prevents 1st down; offense 1 pt. per 1st down | | |
| 16:55 | | | |

PRACTICE #9 SCHEDULE:

| 2-Level Defense Installation Practice #9 (Day 5 -- A.M.) | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| Time | 1ST LEVEL | 2ND LEVEL | DEEP SAFETIES | | |
| 9:00 | N/T: Key/Slant Key | Unit Stack Drills: run keys/screen/draw; set cones for 11 Eagle/ 56 and 65 Goal | Enforcement Drills XII | | |
| 9:05 | Review; Eagle; "Hog" tech. | | Unit Stack Drills: run keys/screen/draw; set cones for 11 Eagle/ 56 and 65 Goal | Read Drills XII Review basic route packages; emphasis on play-action | |
| 9:10 | E:Crash - Dog/Cushions w/2L | | | | |
| 9:15 | Live run/pass blocking w/ OL | | | | |
| 9:20 | 5-on-3, progress to 5-on-4 -- | | | | |
| 9:25 | 11 Goal - "Hog" tech. | | | | |
| 9:30 | | | | | |
| 9:35 | N/T/E: Cone Signal Drill | | | | Review Max: Max Doubles/Tight Cushion 1 and 2 Deep |
| 9:40 | All shifts/stunts, esp. | | | | |
| 9:45 | Dog/Covers where T contains | | | | |
| 9:50 | | | | | |
| 9:55 | | | | | |
| 9:55 WATER | | | | | |
| 10:00 | Stack Drills: lock to thud | Review Cover: /2 Deep; -A; -A/2 Deep For Cover-A, 50/50 verify/revert to Cover (i.e., 2 Twins vs. Trips) (rotate Len/Ron) | | | |
| 10:05 | Review Dog, Cushions, Switch in Area C-Stack | | | | |
| 10:10 | Combined Integrated Stacks: Eagle/Goal Installation | | | | |
| 10:15 | Five-man 1L: 2x2-Stacks in 11 Eagle; C-Stack, Cushion; | | | | |
| 10:20 | vs. play-action & off-tackle runs; rotate 1 DS; 56 Goal | | | | |
| 10:25 | Six-man 1L: 65 Goal -- 2 N's use "Hog" technique | | | | |
| 10:30 | Scripted Defensive Scrimmage: Short Yardage/Goal line | | | | |
| 10:35 | 1) 11 Eagle: Midfield 3rd&1; rotate hashes; script off-tackle/iso/dive/option, play action | | | | |
| 10:40 | 2) 56/65 Goal: 1st/goal from 8 yard line, rotate hashes*; score TD 6 for O; stops 6 for D | | | | |
| 10:45 | 3) Offense -- no new plays; can use anything in basic run/pass game | | | | |
| 10:50 | (1/3 of scrimmage 11 Eagle; 2/3 56/65 Goal) | | | | |
| 10:55 | | | | | |

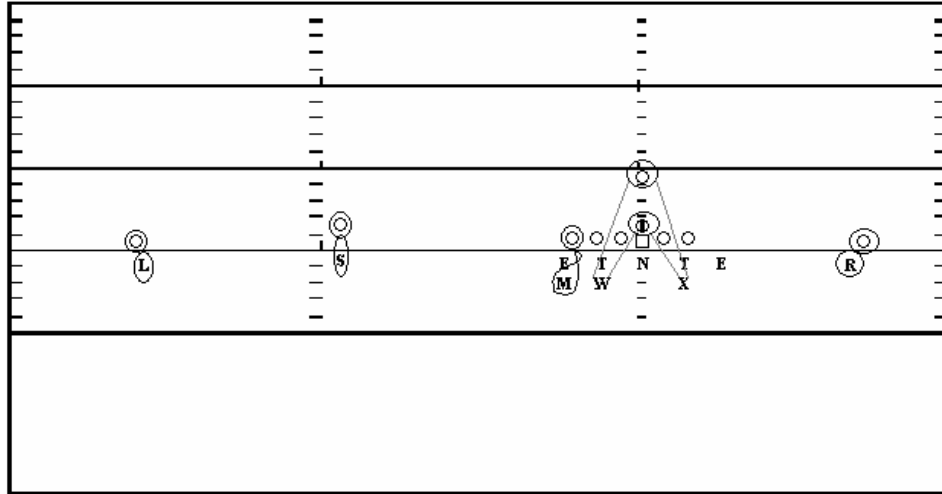
* to prevent defensive confusion wideside vs. shortside

Chalk talk #5:

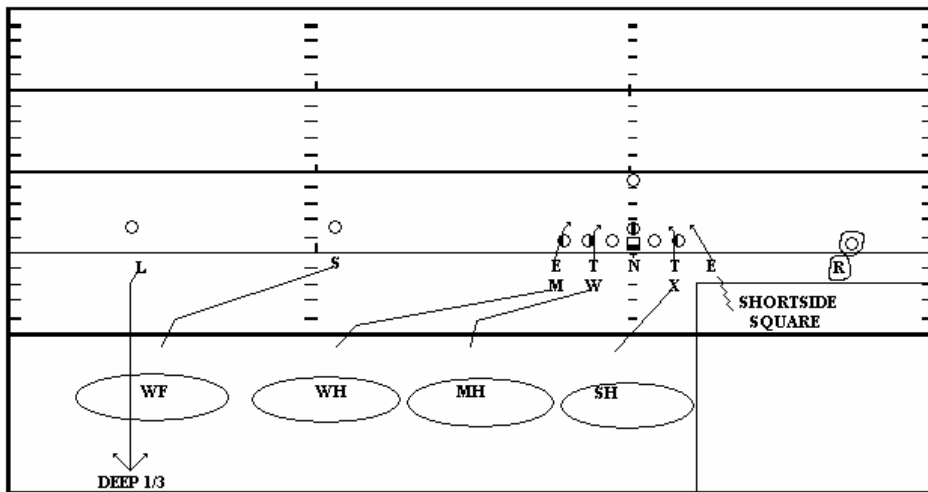
- 1) Short yardage adjustments: 11 Eagle.
- 2) Goal line adjustments: 65 Goal - N's submarine A gaps). Review 56 Goal option.
- 3) Review: Signals (introduce "-Away" call); primary/secondary responsibilities; stunts (review visual verification); pass coverage.

(Chalk talk before Practice #9.)

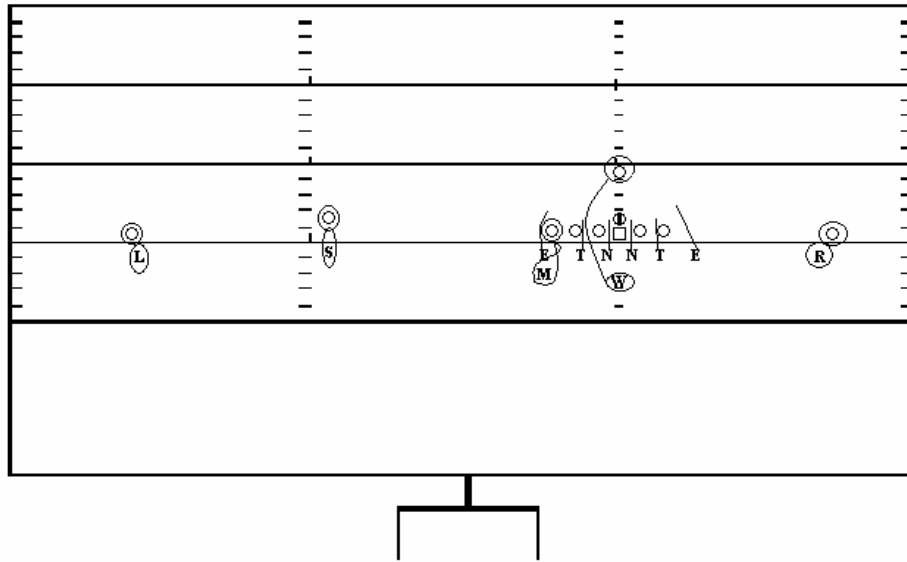
PRACTICE #9



56 GOAL -- MAX



56 GOAL - COVER V. WIDE TRIPS FROM HASH



65 GOAL - MAX

The goal line alignments and coverages (pp. 74-75) are introduced in Practice #9). They are to familiarize the defense with the two possible Goal personnel groups (5-6, with a Rover (X) substituted for the DS; or 6-5, with an additional Nose man in place of the DS); the two coverages from 56 Goal (Max and Cover); and the Max coverage always used from 65 Goal. Goal alignments and assignments should be practiced from the 8 yard line down to the 1 yard line. Tackles should always be in an Eagle adjustment, on the inside eye of their OL. The defense must be practiced against power, option and misdirection runs; and against dropback, sprint out, play action and trick passes.

The 2LD is an outstanding short yardage defense normally; but there is one adjustment that can be made in close short yardage situations (3rd and inches, etc.) With the DS at his normal depth (to guard against the long bomb play-action pass), both tackles in 11 Eagle will align on the inside eye of their OL.

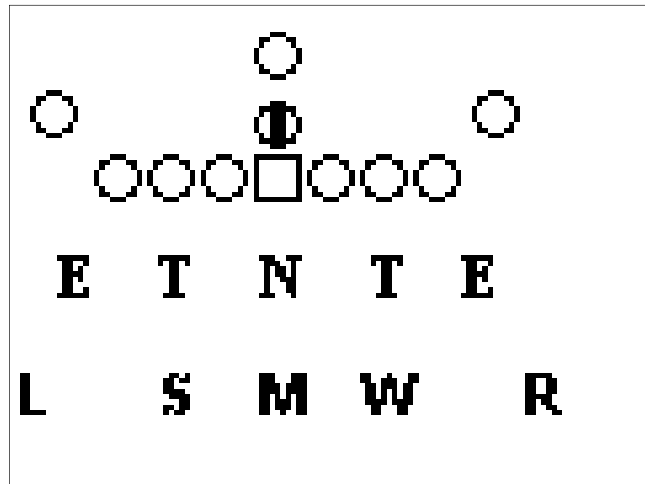
PRACTICE #10 SCHEDULE:

| 2-Level Defense Installation Practice #10 (Day 5 -- P.M.) | | | |
|--|---|--|-------------------------|
| Time | 1ST LEVEL | 2ND LEVEL | DEEP SAFETIES |
| 15:00 | N/T: Key Drill: 3-on-1 | Lollipop Drill: cuts 1-5, crack | Enforcement Drills XIII |
| 15:05 | Pass rush techniques | | |
| 15:10 | E: Crash-pass rush tech. | Mirror Drill: Max | Read Drills XIII |
| 15:15 | Live 1-on-1 pass rush | Funnel/steer; 3-step | Review all basic route |
| 15:20 | with O-Line | pattern recognition | packages - Seam, Curl & |
| 15:25 | Alley Drill: 5-on-3 | Mirror Drill: Cover | Flood - and variations |
| 15:30 | Drop/sprint/run - read keys; | Drops; read QB; read | Play-action; End Line |
| 15:35 | progress to 5-on-4 (11 Goal) | Seam/Curl/Flood | enforcement |
| 15:40 | 1/2-Line Drill: E loose, Dog | 2L/DS/Shortside E - Pass Coverage Integration | |
| 15:45 | & Cushions; sprint out; TET | Consolidate all Maxes, Covers, 1 and 2 Deep; review 11 | |
| 15:50 | | Eagle and 11 Goal coverages, stunts | |
| 15:55 | WATER | | |
| 16:00 | Final Consolidation Defensive Scripted Scrimmage | | |
| 16:05 | | | |
| 16:10 | 1) All basic offense allowed | | |
| 16:15 | 2) 35 minutes regular offense; 10 minutes short yardage; 15 minutes goal line | | |
| 16:20 | 3) All alignments, shifts, stunts, coverages (including 11 Eagle and 11 Goal) | | |
| 16:25 | 4) Continue to run plays from alternating hashes; otherwise script plays the same | | |
| 16:30 | as previous normal/short yardage/goal line scrimmages | | |
| 16:35 | 5) At end of scrimmage, point tallies from this and other scrimmages totaled and | | |
| 16:40 | winner -- Offense or Defense -- declared | | |
| 16:45 | | | |
| 16:50 | | | |
| 16:55 | | | |

The final scrimmage of the installation period should be a major highlight -- build it up among both defense and offense to make the points competition as meaningful as possible. Reinforce to the defenders how far they have come in mastering this strange new defense in so little time.

BUILDING THE GAME PLAN

Here is how I game-plan for specific opponents and systems.



11 VERSUS TIGHT DOUBLE WING

DOUBLE WING: SCOUTING AND GAME-PLANNING TEAM "X"

In planning my defensive game plan, I'm going to present scouting information on "Team X", an imaginary (but not too unusual) Double Wing team. For the sake of this exercise, Team X is a small high school that plays in the Midwest, and doesn't think much of the forward pass. (Not that it matters -- I could just as easily game-plan for them if they were a five-wide junior college from Southern California; it's just a question of emphasis.)

I'm making a pretty heroic assumption, which is that we've scouted every play from scrimmage they ran the previous season, and that they're using the same system under the same coaches. It wouldn't make that much difference if we had less complete information, though -- we'd still have a pretty good handle on tendencies. The more (good) information the better, though, of course.

So: Here is a breakdown of Team X's offensive preferences. I've deliberately simplified this so this won't run to 20 pages, but the idea is the same if you're facing a WCO club that runs 80 plays from 10 formations.

I. SCOUTING THE OFFENSE

Formations: Team X runs exclusively from Tight and Spread (ends split out 8-10 yards).

Plays: Team X used the following plays last season:

| <u>Play</u> | <u>% of all plays run</u> |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 2 Wedge | 35 |
| 88 Super Power (Toss) | 25 |
| 99 SP | 15 |
| 47 Counter/XX 47 C | 10 |
| Wedge Sweep* | 10 |
| Passes** | 05 |
| 56 Counter | <1 |

* The Wedge Sweep is a counter around left end (9 hole) off the 2 Wedge

** Assorted play-action (from Tight) and dropback (from Spread) passes

Our scouting has revealed the following tendencies by down and distance:

| <u>D&D</u> | <u>Play</u> | <u>%age</u> |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1&7+ | 2 Wedge | 55 |
| | 88 SP | 25 |
| | 99 SP | 10 |
| | 47 C | 05 |
| | 56 C | 05 |
| 2&5+ | 88 SP | 50 |
| | 2 Wedge | 30 |
| | 99 SP | 15 |
| | 47 C | 05 |
| 2&3- | 2 Wedge | 50 |
| | 88 SP | 30 |
| | 99 SP | 10 |
| | Wedge Sweep | 10 |
| 3&7+ | 88 SP | 25 |
| | 2 Wedge | 25 |
| | 99 SP | 20 |
| | Wedge Sweep | 10 |
| | XX 47 C | 10 |

| | | |
|------|-------------|----|
| 3&3- | 2 Wedge | 55 |
| | 88 SP | 15 |
| | Wedge Sweep | 12 |
| | 99 SP | 06 |
| | 47 C | 06 |
| | XX 47 C | 06 |

So what useful information can we glean from this data?

- ☉ Team X runs 95% of the time; when they pass, it's from Spread
- ☉ Team X is definitely "right-handed" -- they run to the right 75% of the time
- ☉ Super Powers and Counters start with quick WB motion
- ☉ Ergo, no motion = Wedge or (much less often) Wedge Sweep

First off, we know with good precision which holes we need to watch closely in which situations. This is not to say that stopping the plays will be easy -- like the Lombardi Packers, you knew where the plays were going, but stopping them was another matter.

Furthermore, with the strong indicator of play direction that motion provides (including Counters), we are further able to break down Team X's offensive tendencies:

- ◆ No motion: 2 Hole (90%) or 9 Hole (10%)
- ◆ A-back motion: 8 hole (75%) or 7 hole (25%)
- ◆ C-back motion: 9 hole (75%) or 6 hole (25%)

These overall tendencies become even clearer by situation:

NO MOTION:

| D&D | 2 Hole% | 9 Hole% |
|------|---------|---------|
| 1&7+ | 100 | 0 |
| 2&5+ | 100 | 0 |
| 2&3- | 84 | 16 |
| 3&7+ | 66 | 34 |
| 3&3- | 82 | 18 |

A-BACK MOTION:

| D&D | 8 Hole% | 7 Hole% |
|------|---------|---------|
| 1&7+ | 90 | 10 |
| 2&5+ | 90 | 10 |
| 2&3- | 100 | 00 |
| 3&7+ | 50 | 50 |
| 3&3- | 65 | 35 |

C-BACK MOTION:

| D&D | 9 Hole% | 6 Hole% |
|------|---------|---------|
| 1&7+ | 95 | 05 |
| 2&5+ | 100 | 00 |
| 2&3- | 100 | 00 |
| 3&7+ | 100 | 00 |
| 3&3- | 100 | 00 |

Now, even assuming no coaching changes since last season, we have to believe that there will be some changes in play-calling based on personnel changes -- but that won't stop us from using these stats to build our defensive game plan and preparing our call sheets. We will stay fundamentally sound at all times, and not sell out completely to stop one particular play or sequence -- at least, not until we're forced to.

Another obvious question is "what happens if they don't use motion, or use it on every play?" Then we're back to the original down & distance tendency chart on page 2. That gives us less precision in planning, but we're still able to plan fairly precisely where the ball will end up in any given situation.

II. PLANNING THE DEFENSE

Given what we know about Team X's tendencies, we will start to build our game plan around these ideas:

- ❖ Stop the Wedge first. Team X runs it once every three plays. If we can't stop the Wedge, we're in for a long day.
- ❖ Be ready to switch focus from the 2 and 9 holes to the 8 and 7 holes with A-back motion, or the 9 and 6 holes with C-back motion.
- ❖ If we can force team X to start lining up in Spread and throwing the ball, we'll be more than halfway to winning.
- ❖ If we can win 1st and second down by keeping them to under 3 yards a carry, we can dominate 3rd down.

What adjustments will we make in practice before we play Team X?

When Team X lines up in Tight with their normal personnel:

- We will play linebacker-type personnel at the two outside Second Level (2L) positions -- what Coach Thomson calls "Lou" and "Rose" and I call "Len" and "Ron"
- We will play our Deep Safety at Free Safety depth -- +8 to +12 -- instead of his normal +18 - +20 (youth level -- high school is +25 - +30)
- We will favor Cover (zone) over Max (man) coverage -- Cover allows Len and Ron to maintain good outside leverage from a walkaway position
- We will line up initially in balanced fronts -- 22, 33, 44 or 55; sometimes we will stem to 2 Left/Right or 3 Left/Right, sometimes we won't; if we do stem, sometimes we will Slant a Tackle and the Nose back toward their pre-stem position, sometimes we won't

When team X lines up in Spread with their passing personnel:

- ❑ We will play our normal DB-type kids at Len and Ron
- ❑ We will play our DS at normal depth
- ❑ We will favor Max over Cover
- ❑ We will line up in 33, 44, or 55 and sometimes stem to 3 or 4 Right/Left, and sometimes Slant back to the pre-stem positions
- ❑ We may Twist (TNT or TET) in passing situations

When we stem against a Tight formation play, we can either stem early, as the QB aligns under center, or else when motion starts. This will mean the shift takes place as, or a fraction of a second before, the ball is being snapped, which we must practice repeatedly during the week. We will start the game off alternating between stemming and not stemming, to get the OC thinking, then stay away from it for the rest of the first half. We may or may not show stemming again in the game, but we will have forced the offense to prepare for it in the second half.

Here are two examples of how to build a situational call sheet from the bottom up:

FIRST and 7+:

Overall, Team X runs 2 Wedge 55% of the time in this situation; if the ball is snapped without motion, it becomes 100%. Therefore, we must be ready to stop the Wedge first. To do so, we must make sure we have as many First Level (1L) defenders covering the right side of the offensive line as possible. That tells us we can choose from among 2 Left, 33, 44 Left, 5 Right, and 55 (see page 14 for 1L fronts). The next biggest threat is Super Power, which means we want a good concentration of defensive personnel around the C gaps. If a WB goes in motion in this situation, odds are 19-1 that the ball is going to the off-tackle hole farthest from the motion back. If we choose

to stem on motion, we can shift out of 33 or 55 and into 3 Left or 5 Left on A-back motion or 3 Right or 5 Right on C-back motion.

BASE FRONT:

STEM ON MOTION TO:

2 LEFT

33

44 LEFT

5 RIGHT

55

3 LEFT/RIGHT

5 LEFT/RIGHT

THIRD and 7+:

This is the hardest situation to pre-judge. Team X likes to go to their 47 C and Wedge Sweep here, so we have to be aware of counter and reverse action. The 2L defenders bear a particular burden for calling out when they see their mirror "disappear" across the formation on a misdirection play. Yet Team X will still go to their bread and butter plays, 2 Wedge and the Super Powers, almost 3/4 of the time in this situation.

We can't afford to unbalance to our left quite as much in this situation, so we're looking at staying with some of the 2-digit fronts:

33

44 LEFT

55

What we can do is shift among these three fronts pre-snap -- if nothing else, this will complicate the thought process for the offensive line. I would also not recommend stunts or blitzes in this situation as long as Team X lines up in Tight.

If they line up in Spread, the situation is completely different. We are now looking at more of a balanced attack, since Team X only passes from Spread. So what threat will we prepare for first? That's right, 2 Wedge. Seriously, without the two tight ends, we are more free to run fronts that have our Ends loose, but we still need to make sure we have a hat over the offensive right guard, so 11 is still out.

22 LEFT

33

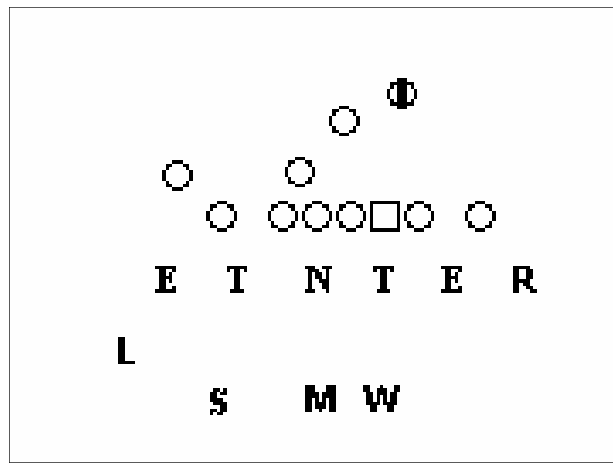
44 LEFT

55

We may choose to stunt from the edges in this situation when they line up in Spread, so we may call one or both Tackle-End Twists (TETs).

So there you have it -- how I would plan to shut down the Double Wing offense of Team X. Without the statistical analysis, I would next like to examine how we would game-plan for an opponent running the classic unbalanced-line Single Wing.

SINGLE WING



4 LEFT VS. SINGLE WING

Your Ends must think contain, contain, and more contain. The strong-side End will face a machine-gun drill of guards and fullbacks coming at him to kick him out or hook him in, as well as the occasional attempt by the wingback to hook him on the Sweep. The Strong End crashes through the outside shoulder of the tight end, and "takes a chunk out of him" with a forearm shiver at the snap. This slows pass release and places your End in the best position to defend the off-tackle hole. I prefer this position to having the End play further outside over the wingback, because I believe you're asking for trouble by opening up more daylight between your Strong Tackle and Strong End before the ball is snapped.

The Strong End wants to turn everything in, and so maintains his leverage against whoever the offense sends to block him by crashing outside-in. Len can help by calling "CRACK-CRACK" if he sees the wingback attempting to clip the Strong End; Len is then free to fill outside against the Sweep or Running Pass. The Backside End must turn his initial crash steps into a trail technique at the same depth as the deepest offensive back, looking for reverses and counters. This offense has few tools for hitting the weak side quickly, so the trailing End must be prepared for slow-developing deep reverses.

The Tackles should play a tough Eagle technique against their opposite numbers. The Strong Tackle will get double-teamed from either direction, trapped or wedged. He must play under control, hitting and reacting. His initial charge should rip the inside shoulder of the tight end. The best response to the double team is to submarine and cause a pile-up, grabbing ankles along the way. If the man over him disappears, he must think "TRAP", stay low, and anticipate the angle block. A Wedge play should see him submarining again to cause a big pile-up.

The Nose faces a similar situation, if anything more likely to see Traps and Wedges coming his way. He will also face a down-block from the inside offensive tackle when the offensive guard over him pulls on the Sweep or Off-Tackle play, and possibly a down-block from the center on a delayed Trap. Again, play it low and slow -- that is, under control -- and pile things up when two or more men try to block you.

Your 2L defenders in the Core should play at least five yards off the LOS. Quick hitting plays are not the threat here, and that extra split-second to read and react can make all the difference against the delayed misdirection of the Single Wing. Your Mike and Will 2L defenders share a common key triangle. Don't be too concerned about false keys -- the reads I'm about to give you are nearly foolproof, because very few Single Wing teams can be bothered to install true key-breakers for these keys. The Mike and Will defenders read both offensive guards (the men over your Nose and Weak Tackle in the diagram on Page 1) through to the blocking back (the back just between and behind the inside and outside offensive tackles) for Mike and the fullback for Will. They are heading where the ball is going, especially when all three move in the same direction. When all three head toward the wingback, it's Sweep, Off-Tackle or Running Pass (a naked Reverse is possible, but that's why your Backside End is trailing the play). When all three head away from wing, you're looking at an outside play to the weak side -- maybe a Spin Reverse. When any two of the three move in opposite directions, think Trap and Counter inside.

Len (or Ron against a Single Wing Left formation) has his own key triangle -- the wing, the tight end, and the blocking back. If the wing tries to clip the Strong End, Len yells "CRACK-CRACK". If he goes in motion weak or disappears to the weak side at the snap, Len yells "WING-WING". If the wing, tight end and/or blocking back release outside or straight downfield for a pass, Len yells "PASS-PASS" and executes his Max or Cover assignment. If Mike and Will hear Len call "WING-WING" and observe their key triangle moving weak-side, the Reverse is on; if the key triangle splits and moves in both directions, it's an inside Counter Trap.

The threats you face from this offense are basic, but substantial. First, they will try to ride you out of the off-tackle hole with double teams on both your Strong Tackle (by the tight end and outside offensive tackle) and Strong End (by the fullback and blocking back), with one or both guards pulling and leading through the hole. If they can establish consistent gains with this play, you're in for a long day. As soon as he sees the double double-team develop in front of him, and the wing and TE moving inside to block, Len must step up to take on the pulling guard and jam the hole shut. Mike and Will must scrape with the flow -- the wingback will try to block Mike inside, while a guard will come through the hole looking for Will. Len is in the best position to stop the play or at least force it outside, where Sam and/or your Deep Safety can make an easy play.

Next, they will try to hook you inside and Sweep or throw the Running Pass. The Sweep per se is no big threat if you have tough kids playing Strong End and Rover, and good flow from Mike and Will. The Running Pass is another story -- one of the best plays in all of football, and worthy of considerable attention in practice. Len is in position to help, but you should also consider calling Cover to give the 2L defenders an extra second to diagnose the play before they have to drop to cover their zone -- unlike Max, which would make their pass coverage duties primary and immediate. With your playside End crashing, and Sam and Mike scraping to flow, you should have both the run and pass components covered. DS and Ron, meanwhile, cover the deep zones in case a pass develops.

The inside game is the next threat -- the Wedge can be a surprisingly consistent yardage-gainer if you don't play it properly, while the Trap is a slower-hitting version of its T-formation counterpart, but can be every bit as effective. When combined with a full spin by the fullback, the Trap can be a very difficult play to defend against unless you drill the proper reactions into your team.

The Wedge requires two unusual responses from your front seven. The Ends crash as usual, making sure no daylight develops outside late in the play. Their job is strictly to pin the Fullback inside where the middle of your defense can deal with him. For the Nose and Tackles, the only answer to the Wedge is to eat dirt -- all three need to submarine underneath their counterparts and start grabbing whatever ankles they can find -- some of them are bound to belong to the fullback. (We've never been penalized for this approach, as it is very clear to most referees that the inside of a Wedge play is no place to make fine distinctions like identifying the ownership of body parts.) Your Mike and Will must also control their instincts and hang back. If your line is doing its job, the 2L defenders will not be confronted with a rampaging pack of offensive linemen with the fullback buried somewhere inside. Instead, they will face a frustrated mass milling in front of them, trying to create an opening for the fullback through brute force. If and when such an opening appears -- and never before that -- Mike or Will should shoot through the gap and make the tackle low and

hard. If your 1L succeeds in stopping the Wedge cold, there is every chance the refs will whistle the play dead before a crack ever appears. That's defensive football.

The Trap, especially off Spin action, requires similar restraint by your Core defenders. Once again, your 1L is subject to double- and triple-teaming on this play, so must submarine and build a pile when they feel that pressure. Mike and Will will most likely face angle blocks, and must fight to hold their position. The lineman being trapped should stay low and look for the trapper out of his peripheral vision. I favor turning the defender's shoulders to face the oncoming trap block, but I know other coaches disagree with that technique. The important thing is that you are prepared to face the Trap through repetition in practice. Again, this is a slower-evolving play than the T-formation quick trap. Your 2L defenders will have time to read and react, as long as they don't go charging ahead to "make things happen" before carefully diagnosing the play.

Finally, there is the weak-side game -- inside, off-tackle, and outside reverses. These can come from straight series (tailback starts off strong and hands to the wingback heading weak) or spin action (fullback initiates the play with a full spin before handing to wingback heading weak). The play of the Backside End is crucial to containing this threat. Ron (or Len against a Single Wing Left Formation) should alert with a call of "CRACK-CRACK" if the split end attempts to clip the Backside End. If Mike and Will are reading their key triangles properly, they should either be: 1) holding position in the middle waiting for a Trap or Counter to develop, which will put them in better position to play the outside reverse than if they had followed the tailback to the strong side, and in perfect position to fight the off-tackle or inside reverse; or 2) following the guards and blocking back to the weak side, forming a seamless wall along with the Backside End for the reverse to crash into.

The drop-back passing game is not the strong point of most Single Wing offenses -- if this was a good passing team you were facing, they'd be in a shotgun or spread formation, not bunched in tight. Nevertheless, you should be prepared to follow certain rules. The Single Wing is well adapted to forming a passing pocket, so your Ends should remain concerned with containment even as they rush the tailback (or fullback, in some Single Wing offenses). The minimal splits between offensive linemen mean your best bet for pressure will come from the corners rather than up the middle -- consider Cushion and Switch blitzes (p. 31). Otherwise, mix up straight Cover to account for play-action passes with Max. A Single Wing offense can't easily send four men deep without resorting to motion and tipping their hand. Your Deep Safety is your best insurance against the "home-run ball" being completed. He will find after a few drop-back passes that the Single Wing is a fairly predictable passing formation, and that he will get good reads all day long from the tailback or fullback passing the ball.

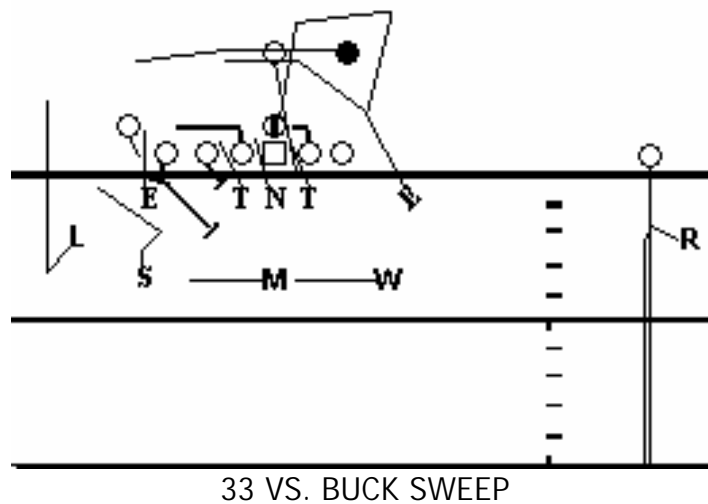
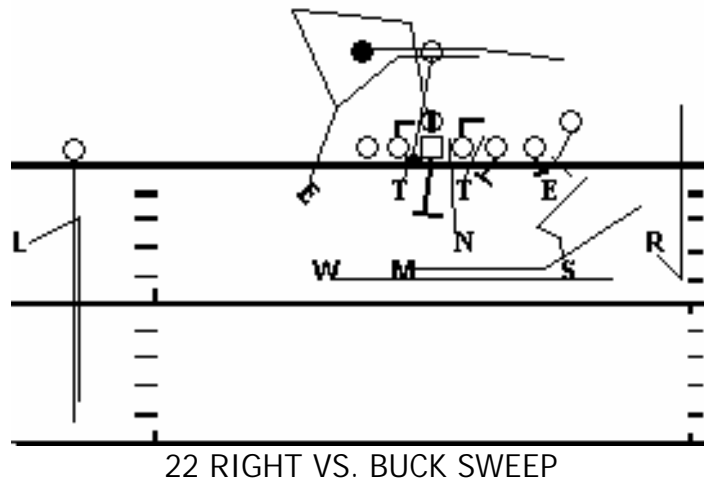
WING-T: The Wing-T is a powerful, four-back, run-oriented offensive system which achieves a balance of passing yardage through a series of excellent play-action passes. The recent addition of the fly/jet/speed sweep series (a recent Coach of the Year Clinics book listed articles about the same play under all three names) to the traditional buck sweep/belly/option threats has given the Wing-T a new lease on life, and made it even more dangerous to face defensively.

That said, I believe the 2-Level Defense (either the John Thomson or the Richard Lex variety) is the best possible platform for defending the Wing-T, for the following reasons:

- **Mirroring:** The automatic mirroring of potential receivers by the Second Level (2L) ensures that we are never out of position to cover running or passing plays, including the speed sweep;
- **Stemming:** Our use of pre-snap shifting among the 13 possible First Level (1L) fronts, combined with the five potential locations for 2L defenders to stack in the defensive core, yields a total of 242 possible 2LD fronts that we can move among just prior to the snap. A rule-blocking-based offense like the Wing-T is placed at a serious disadvantage if the offensive linemen are forced to mentally adjust their blocks a split-second before the ball is snapped; and
- **The Deep Safety Blanket:** The Deep Safety (DS) gives the 2LD an advantage no other defense has -- a last line of defense that shuts down the deep pass, the breakaway run, and ultimately the cheap touchdown. Offenses realize after a few series that they will have to grind it out against a good 2LD team. Defenders also quickly build confidence that, if they execute their assignments properly, the "Deep Safety Blanket" will protect them from a quick offensive strike.

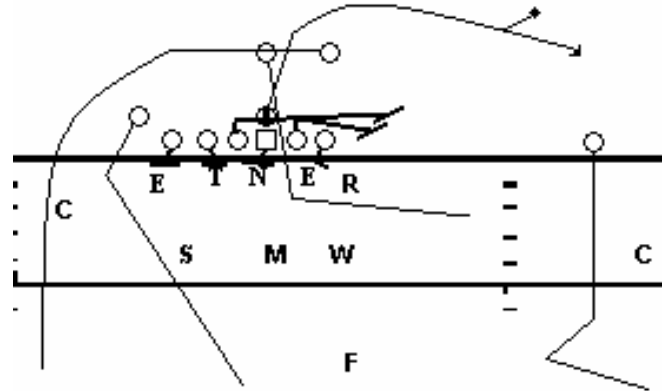
The key to stopping the Wing-T from the 2LD is jumping between 1L fronts and running 1L Slant stunts on every down -- to prevent the Wing-T OL from locking in its rule blocking assignments early. Making the OL think for even a half-second before the snap tilts the strategic balance in favor of the defense. A thinking OL can't fire out with abandon. Mike, Will and Sam are all in good position to turn the sweep back inside and/or stop it cold after they read their keys. The backside Tackle will end up reading the fullback for the ball, while Will is responsible for possible cutbacks or counters off the sweep action. The backside End searches the QB for bootleg, then trails the ball carrier looking for reverses and counters.

See how different fronts present different problems to the assignment-blocking Wing-T OL in stopping the Buck Sweep.

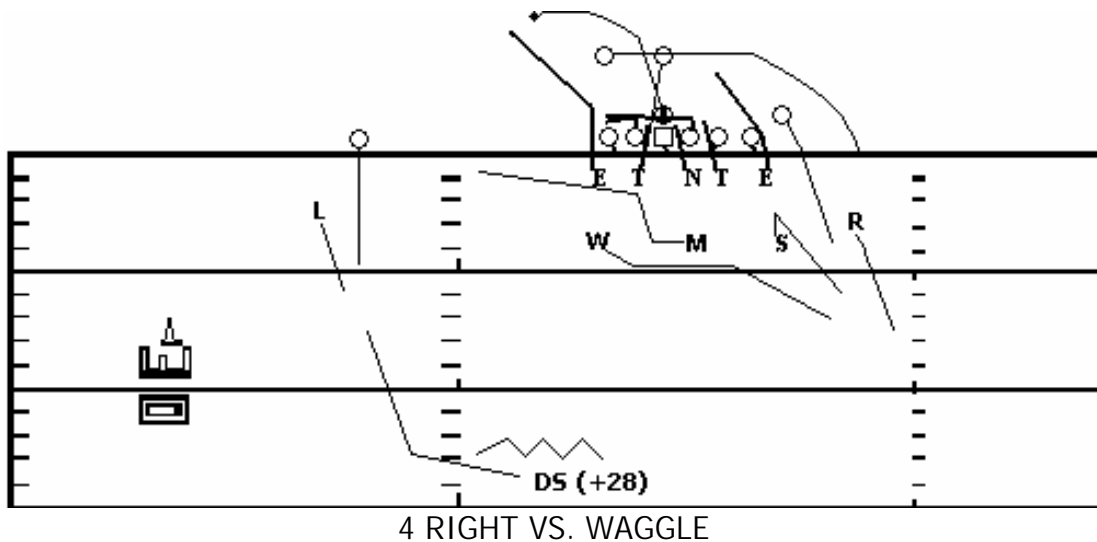


Waggle:

This is what the offense hopes to accomplish from Waggle:



The key players in stopping Waggle are the backside End, who must crash so hard the pulling guard has no chance to keep him off the bootlegging QB, who must throw quickly and off balance or be sacked. Will and Mike use their cross-key drill experience to stay on the FB as he runs a Flat pattern weakside, while Ron covers the split end as he always would, or else drops to the deep outside 1/3. The Deep Safety patrols his end line from Max or the middle 1/3 from Cover.

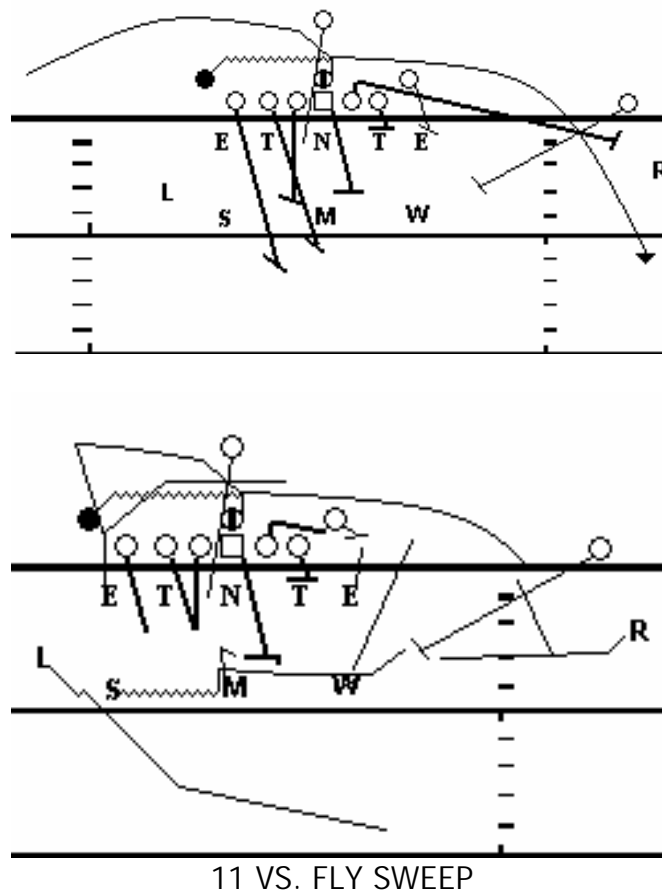


There are multiple 2LD solutions to stopping the Wing-T (including other base plays such as FB Belly/Belly Option/Tackle Trap/Jet Sweep), but the key is to continually shift between 1L fronts before the snap, and to use Slant to move 1L defenders back toward their pre-snap positions on some plays. Sowing confusion in the minds of a Wing-T OL will shut down this formidable offense faster than anything.

Without going into all the detail I did for the Double Wing, Single Wing, and Wing-T, here is how we would start our planning for various other popular offensive systems:

FLY/JET/SPEED SWEEP SERIES: The 2LD has a built-in advantage in dealing with this new and increasingly popular offensive wrinkle -- mirroring. Second level defenders should never be caught off-guard by the fast motion of the sweeper back, since they cover him every time he goes in motion. Practice is essential, however, to get the 2L ready fro the speed with which they must bump to cover the motion man (see page 9).

Here is what a Fly offense wants to do in establishing its core play, the Sweep:

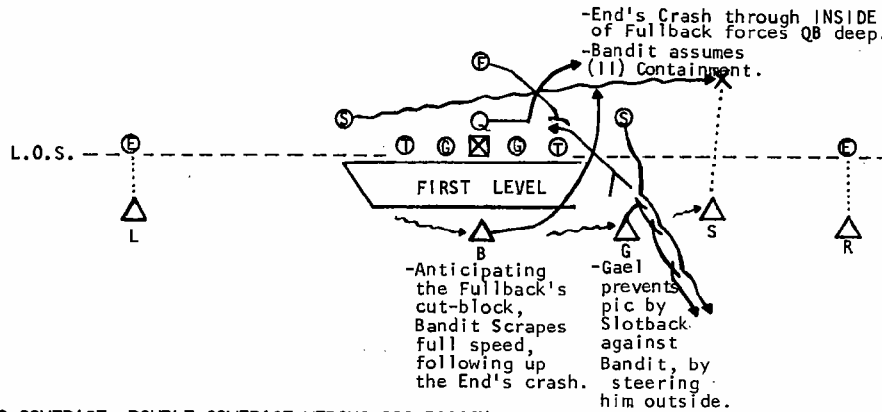


The playside End has a major responsibility to stop or slow the Fly Sweep. Mike must check the fullback trap threat, so can be blocked on the Sweep. Will and Sam, however, can run free and fast-flow to the ball. Ron is free to break on the ball at any point if the SE cracks, or will fight through the block if the SE tries to pin him. Len will rotate to deep middle to backstop any chance of a breakaway

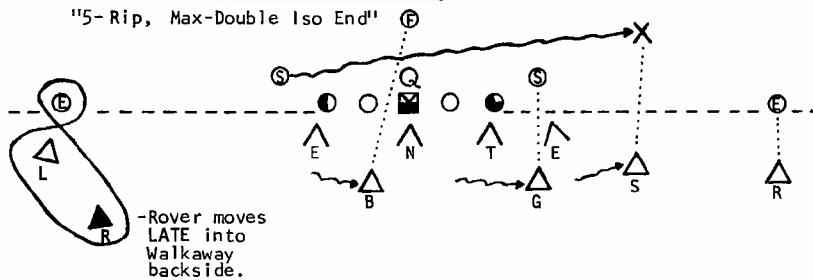
by the sweeper back. And of course, there is the Deep Safety. The backside End has an important job -- searching the QB to make sure the bootleg is not on.

ONE-BACK QUICK PASSING There are a number of ways to combat quick passing. One important factor (as always) is shifting among different fronts and mixing up coverages. In addition, however, once the offense spread the field horizontally and attempts to throw the ball, the 2LD must consider the trade-off between rushing 5 and keeping two Deep safeties in the game (page 39). The 2LD has at its disposal the classic 5-5-1 personnel group, as well as a 4-5-2, or even, if facing a strong running QB, a 4-6-1, with the additional 2L defender (Rover, as in 5-6 Goal) responsible for dropping to the short middle zone (no matter the coverage), walling off crossing receivers, and spying on the QB for draws and delayed scrambles.

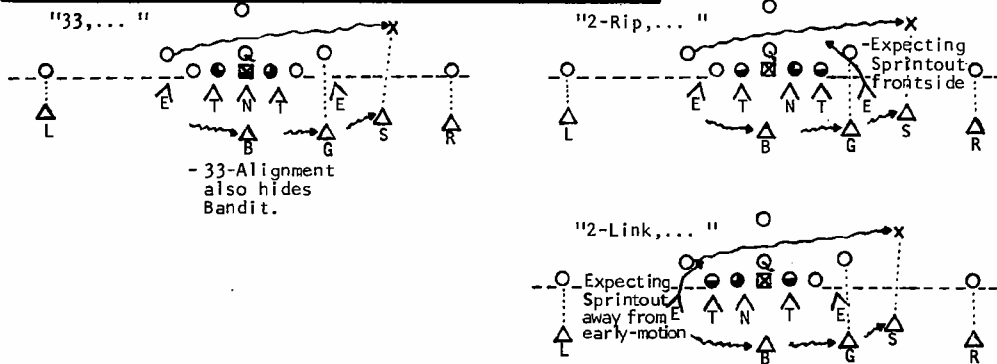
PASS RUSH: THE FOLLOW-UP PRINCIPLE



PASS COVERAGE: DOUBLE COVERAGE VERSUS ISO PASSING



RUN DEFENSE: SHIFT LATE INTO 2-ALIGNMENTS AND 33-ALIGNMENT



Facing the pick patterns that quick passing offenses so frequently employ, the 2L defenders must drill hard on fighting through picks. See the diagram on page 92 (top) on fighting through picks, as well as delayed rushing of a roll-out QB by 2L defenders. (Note: the following conversions are necessary from Dr. Thomson's original 2LD terminology to mine:

Bandit (B) = Will
Gael (G) = Mike
Strong (S) = Sam

2-Link = 2 Left
5-Rip = 5 Right

Cover-A, -B, -C, Etc. = Cover Wideside Trips.)

You can see how assigning Mike (Gael in the top diagram) to Steer the slotback outside frees up Will (Bandit) by preventing the pick from taking place.

If using a 4-5-2 against quick passing, you can either split the deep middle zone between the 2 DS's; or else have one enforce his end line, while the other double covers the offense's best receiver.

SHOTGUN 5-WIDE: Another increasingly popular offense, the 4- and 5-wide shotgun attacks made popular in recent years by Clemson, Purdue, West Virginia and Oklahoma, present a different set of challenges to the 2LD. The defense has great resources to combat this style of offense, however, starting as usual with multiple, frequent changes of fronts, coverages and personnel packages. The threat of simultaneous fades by two wide receivers on opposite sides of the field means that 2 Deep Safeties are a prudent precaution, although another useful variation is to play a 4-1-5-1, with the Rover doing nothing but mirroring the shotgun QB. Otherwise, deploying in a 4-5-2 and constantly shifting among the six available fronts and multiple coverage possibilities that 2 DS's provide is your best bet to confuse and frustrate shotgun spreads.

SPREAD OPTION (AIR FORCE STYLE): Option football in general is worthy of its own discussion -- arguably its own book -- but I doubt readers are interested in another 100 pages at this point. I will instead outline Dr. Thomson's principles for combating triple option football:

1) *Never alter primary run responsibilities to defend any type of option.*

This means not altering the fundamental 2LD to the point where it becomes unsound against passing, power running, etc., just to shut down the Triple,

Midline, etc. A key principle for 2L defenders is that they not release their Max receivers to attack the ball until it has been pitched -- and they hear the End call "PITCH! PITCH!" See Principle 3 below for a corollary to this fact.

2) *Constantly vary the mode by which you attack the option.*

Secondary run responsibilities can be swapped without violating the first principle -- from a 4-5-1-1, an inserted Rover playing a yard or two deeper than the 2L can mirror the QB without any pass responsibilities, for example.

3) *Turn the late option pitch into a quick pitch by crashing the Ends.*

Crashing into the QB regularly and with great force in the first half will pay big dividends in the second half -- if the starting QB is still in the game. The faster the QB pitches the ball, also, the faster 2L defenders can break off to their secondary responsibility, pursuing and attacking the ball carrier. In terms of 1L fronts to deploy against the option, remember you can't go wrong against the Inside Veer from 11 -- both the Tackles and Ends are outside where they can attack the Dive and QB, respectively. However, given related threats (Midline, play-action, etc.) it is best AS ALWAYS to constantly move between fronts before the snap -- 11, 22, 33, 44, and 55 to start, with single-digit fronts called in the direction of a TE if the option team is in a pro set, or in the direction of motion for spread option teams. Constant pre-snap shifting will complicate the option offense's ability to get clear, unambiguous reads. Also consider limited use of stunts and blitzes, notably Slant and Switch, with some Twists (TET, TNT) and Cushion thrown into the game plan mix.

"CRAZY SPREAD" RULES: The 2LD has built-in advantages over almost every other defense when facing strange spread offensive formations, but a few rules must be drilled into your players to prepare them for a surprise switch to a spread offense by an opponent.

(Note: These rules apply to formations where one or more core offensive linemen -- tackles, guards, center -- are split more than five yards from their normal position(s). Against spread shotgun formations with quad receivers, for example, normal 2LD rules will apply with very minor variations.)

1) The 1L lines up on every other offensive player on the LOS, starting with the Nose (who locates the middle OL player, whether he snaps the ball or not) and working outside. This way the Ends may well line up very wide on WR's. However, their job if this happens will be to jolt that receiver HARD when the ball is snapped, then look for lateral passes to offensive players in front of them. If the WR they are playing over releases deep and no lateral eventuates in their direction, they should drop back and to the inside, looking to play a short zone

near the normal Hook zone locations (i.e., on or near the hash marks). Keep dropping back vertically until the ball is thrown or crosses the LOS.

2) The 2L mirrors receivers as normal. HOWEVER, if the ball is passed laterally to a receiver who is then in position to pass the ball downfield, two things MUST happen: The 2L defender mirroring the player who receives the lateral must yell out "THROWBACK!! THROWBACK!!" to alert teammates that the original passer is now an eligible receiver, and must be covered; and he must then rush the man he has been mirroring and try to break up a forward pass before it happens (or tackle the receiver if he runs, obviously). Meanwhile, both the Deep Safety and any 1L defenders in the area must try to cover the original passer who is now a receiver. (If this gets to be too difficult, and the offense remains in the spread formation, consider pulling one Tackle for a sixth 2L defender (Rover) who mirrors the original passer/QB.)

Obviously it is possible to game-plan better spread defenses given enough warning -- but these basic rules will account for surprise spread formations until adjustments can be made on the sideline.

CONCLUSION

Make no mistake -- the 2LD is a radical course. Like any good marriage, it is not to be entered into lightly. I hope I have proven to you, however, that it is a remarkably powerful defensive system that can be quickly and easily taught to players at any level. It is a coaching-intensive defense, but a player-friendly one.

I spoke with Coach Thomson for over an hour in March 2002 about the 2LD and the Internet. He was amazed to hear that there is such persistent interest in his brainchild, saying he thought the defense must have been "dead and buried." He has corresponded (snail mail only) with over 100 coaches over the years since Defense of the Future: The 2-Level Model was first published.

- ❖ The origin of the concept was as a response to the Mouse Davis Run-and-Shoot in Canada in the early '80s -- to jam the short receivers without conceding the deep ball;
- ❖ The title was a response to Tiger Ellison's Run and Shoot Football: Offense of the Future;
- ❖ Eliminating the deep pass (and the cheap touchdown) was the first effect he noticed;
- ❖ Watching films from some 2LD coaches, he saw them playing a static odd defense, almost a 5-2;
 - In contrast, he stressed constant shifting before the snap and slanting and stunting after: "I'm not sure we ever played head-up";
- ❖ He says everyone realized very quickly that Cover-B and -C (variations where Mike, Sam or Will dropped to Deep 1/3 coverage) were "unplayable";
- ❖ Adaptations recently include 4-6-1 and even 4-5-1-1 adjustments to Clemson/Purdue/Northwestern spread shotgun attacks;
- ❖ The CFL Calgary Stampeders have recently used a 3-6-3 with 2LD principles;
- ❖ Dr. Thomson is now concentrating on offense, working on blending the Wishbone and WCO (but in Canadian rules, with unlimited motion).

The upshot of this extraordinary conversation was that I came away with a better appreciation of this man and his invention; he, in turn, understands that the 2LD is not dead and with any luck will never die.

Between them, Mouse Davis and John Thomson made football history in the 1980's, in a classic cycle of action and reaction. Davis's thesis -- the modern Run and Shoot -- and Thomson's antithesis -- the 2LD -- together formed a remarkable synthesis of reactive offense and counter-reactive defense. Given the recent popularity of the 3-5-3 Stack defense, it's hard to disagree with Dr. Thomson -- some part of the 2LD is still the Defense of the Future...